

SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Subjective well-being consists of life satisfaction, the presence of positive experiences and feelings, and the absence of negative experiences and feelings. Each of these three elements represents a separate dimension of subjective well-being, and is subject to a different range of determinants.

Definition

Measures of life satisfaction reflect the cognitive evaluation of life as a whole, now and five years from now, made by each person. The measures shown here are based on ladder-of-life questions, which ask respondents to rate their life from the worst (0) to the best (10) level, and refer to the share of people who rate their life (today and in the future) at step 7 or higher.

Measures of positive and negative experiences and feelings refer to people who declared having experienced six different forms of negative and positive experiences during the previous day. Also shown are two composite indexes of positive and negative experiences, calculated at the individual record level. For each person, the 6 items are recoded so that positive answers are scored as 1 and negative answers (including “don’t know” and “refused to answer”) a 0; an individual record has an index calculated if it has at least 5 out of 6 valid scores. Each person’s

composite index is the mean of valid items multiplied by 100, and the country level score shown in the table is the mean of all individual records for which an index was calculated.

Population shares are calculated as a percentage of all respondents excluding those who refused or didn’t know how to answer the various survey questions.

Comparability

The data shown here are drawn from the IV wave of the World Gallup Survey, and refer to 2008 or earlier. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in around 140 countries around the world based on a common questionnaire, translated into the predominant languages of each country. With few exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 and over in the entire country (including rural areas).

While this assures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling errors. Sample sizes are limited to around 1 000 persons in each country.

Overview

On average, around 60% of people in OECD countries reported a high satisfaction with their life, and a slightly higher share for their life five years from now. Among OECD countries, the share of people reporting high life satisfaction ranges between 85% or more in the Netherlands, Finland and Denmark, and less than 30% in Turkey, Hungary and the Slovak Republic. The non-OECD countries report lower life-satisfaction but are generally more optimistic about their future. Satisfaction with current life is around 20% or lower in Indonesia, China, India and South Africa, but higher in Brazil.

When looking at positive experiences, close to 90% of the OECD population declare having been treated with respect, or enjoyed something they did on the previous day, while much lower proportions report having learned something, or being proud of something they did.

Among negative experiences, around one third of OECD people report having been worried in the previous day, while around 10% reported feeling depressed. For OECD countries, the composite “positive experience index” is highest in Canada and lowest in the Netherlands, while the “negative experience index” is highest in the Netherlands and lowest in Denmark. The cross-country correlation between the positive and negative experience index is -98%.

Source

- Gallup World Survey.

Further information

Analytical publications

- Deaton A. (2008), “Income Health and Well-Being Around the World: Evidence from the Gallup World Poll”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Spring.



People reporting various positive and negative experiences

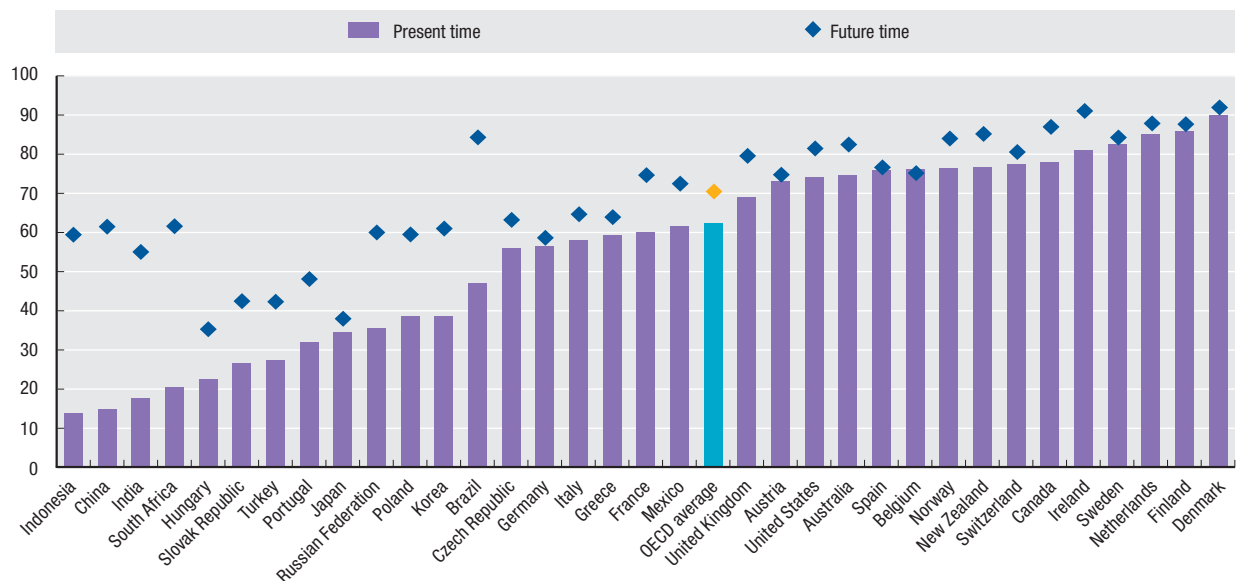
2008 or latest available year

	Positive experiences						Positive Experience Index	Negative experiences						Negative Experience Index
	As a percentage of respondents							As a percentage of respondents						
	Well rested	Treated with respect	Chose how time was spent	Proud of something you did	Learnt or did something interesting	Enjoyment		Pain	Worry	Sadness	Boredom	Depression	Anger	
Australia	65.8	90.6	70.7	73.7	58.9	83.2	74.3	23.0	30.6	17.3	20.3	8.2	17.6	22.1
Austria	73.5	93.8	78.3	63.8	52.7	84.4	75.1	21.2	23.5	16.5	11.6	5.8	12.3	18.2
Belgium	70.6	92.5	82.9	60.6	50.1	79.1	73.7	28.1	33.3	18.6	11.5	8.6	20.7	23.8
Canada	71.1	92.3	75.8	78.6	63.8	90.6	80.5	24.4	32.3	14.3	22.4	7.3	14.0	21.3
Czech Republic	59.8	74.0	54.6	52.2	50.8	77.9	21.4	20.9	33.9	18.8	14.9	13.0	30.9	59.5
Denmark	66.3	96.0	71.9	62.6	61.4	88.8	76.8	21.0	23.7	12.2	12.3	2.9	13.3	15.1
Finland	69.8	93.2	74.0	61.8	57.6	73.2	72.8	17.7	29.1	9.9	18.1	6.5	4.4	15.3
France	60.3	95.1	78.5	49.9	52.8	77.0	22.6	27.9	31.3	19.7	16.0	5.4	35.5	68.5
Germany	63.8	92.6	61.7	56.2	47.7	73.1	18.1	20.7	29.3	23.0	13.7	4.9	17.0	66.6
Greece	60.1	89.1	63.0	45.0	41.5	77.1	21.0	23.2	34.1	16.0	29.1	7.7	16.3	63.0
Hungary	51.5	87.9	68.6	61.2	39.8	77.1	21.3	27.6	34.5	20.6	10.1	21.7	14.2	62.6
Ireland	75.2	95.5	80.6	75.2	53.1	86.8	78.6	14.3	19.9	13.7	21.6	6.1	10.7	15.6
Italy	61.1	93.1	79.7	63.0	51.8	71.5	24.5	23.2	45.8	26.3	23.7	10.6	18.9	67.4
Japan	73.8	57.6	85.3	46.9	55.6	71.8	68.8	23.0	31.8	16.4	21.8	24.3	17.7	24.6
Korea	66.7	66.6	78.8	62.3	44.7	65.0	23.1	21.6	38.0	13.6	29.7	20.1	16.6	61.5
Mexico	78.9	91.1	74.6	70.0	64.6	82.7	79.6	26.3	32.3	19.4	30.8	12.4	8.8	20.8
Netherlands	74.0	95.1	67.6	65.1	50.9	84.9	16.6	19.9	37.0	17.6	9.5	6.3	9.4	73.6
New Zealand	66.3	91.1	70.5	76.4	70.9	84.6	77.8	23.5	31.4	18.0	24.0	8.8	20.2	23.6
Norway	67.8	93.5	66.8	58.6	63.4	88.1	..	19.8	29.1	16.7	22.2	7.7	13.4	19.5
Poland	62.1	93.2	70.6	63.1	47.5	76.8	19.1	16.2	28.6	19.6	22.3	5.9	23.0	65.9
Portugal	73.2	96.6	75.5	57.2	51.5	64.8	..	31.9	57.6	31.3	16.2	20.5	11.3	29.3
Slovak Republic	59.2	82.3	60.2	54.6	38.6	74.9	..	24.1	39.3	22.9	16.8	12.6	30.8	25.5
Spain	73.7	96.4	84.7	69.5	49.9	63.2	72.3	27.9	35.5	21.6	20.8	10.0	20.8	24.0
Sweden	64.1	94.1	70.0	66.5	61.6	86.8	76.4	22.9	15.9	12.0	19.0	4.4	12.4	15.8
Switzerland	69.8	94.4	70.1	60.3	57.5	86.1	..	26.2	32.1	17.9	14.2	4.2	13.8	19.8
Turkey	69.9	74.2	61.2	60.9	33.6	49.9	56.5	18.5	32.6	31.7	60.3	15.1	39.2	28.1
United Kingdom	62.5	90.0	75.6	59.1	56.7	82.4	73.5	24.8	26.8	20.9	27.1	11.2	17.9	22.6
United States	68.5	92.4	71.4	74.2	62.0	89.0	78.4	24.8	33.7	17.9	29.8	10.3	16.4	24.6
OECD average	67.1	89.1	72.3	62.4	53.3	78.2	54.3	23.0	32.3	18.7	21.1	10.1	17.8	35.6
Brazil	66.2	94.3	82.7	75.3	60.6	84.6	23.2	27.4	48.1	25.4	13.9	8.4	16.2	77.7
China	79.3	86.6	82.9	35.5	35.0	84.4	17.7	13.1	24.5	8.5	21.4	8.8	14.5	64.8
India	59.0	76.1	53.6	33.0	40.8	71.2	59.1	27.2	32.4	23.3	21.5	25.8	21.7	25.9
Indonesia	83.1	89.7	69.9	69.8	47.8	74.5	72.4	17.4	29.5	19.4	31.8	2.5	22.8	16.4
Russian Federation	60.2	87.8	63.6	46.2	41.1	67.4	17.9	19.9	22.6	18.0	18.7	13.1	10.2	54.6
South Africa	71.4	79.7	70.6	56.0	50.0	68.3	20.6	21.2	28.6	19.6	22.0	18.3	14.9	67.0

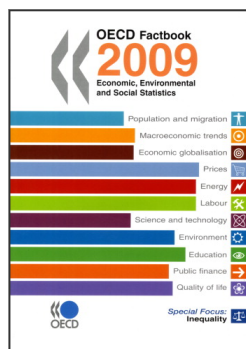
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/544524513718>

People reporting high evaluation of their life as a whole

As a percentage of respondents, 2008 or latest available year



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/538608771301>



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