

Helping others

Donations to charities, voluntary work or help to strangers as ways of showing solidarity with other people are most common in Anglophone countries. **In general, the six Anglophone OECD countries rank highest when it comes to donations of money to a charity (Figure 7.13, Panel A).** Only Iceland and the Netherlands are at the same level.

Low levels of donations to charities are typically found among Mediterranean, Eastern European countries and countries outside of Europe, not belonging to the Anglophone group. Countries in the middle and north of Europe are typically found to be in a position between the high and low level countries. Income levels can to some extent explain observed differences between countries, but also different traditions regarding the supporting role of the state or networks of family and friends can be of importance.

The economic crisis has put strong pressure on the welfare systems in many countries. Changes in donations, help to strangers and voluntary work are indications to what extent solidarity between citizens can alleviate the effects of the crisis. As an average across the OECD countries, **the share of the population which donated to charities decreased somewhat from 2007 to 2012 (Figure 7.13, Panel B).** Reduced incomes could be an explanation, leaving people with less financial room for donations. There are also indications from some countries that average donations were reduced during the crisis, limiting the role voluntary donations can have as a social safety net during a crisis.

Alternative ways of showing solidarity can be helping a stranger or doing voluntary work for an organisation. **Among the OECD countries, the share of people who reported that they helped a stranger or someone they did not know, but who needed help, slowly increased from 2007 to 2012 (Figure 7.14).** The increase was strongest in Finland and Italy, while Israel and Switzerland had the largest decline. The share of the population who had helped a stranger increased or was stable in the countries hit hardest by the crisis, with the exception of Greece.

The share of people who reported that they had volunteered time to an organisation remained quite stable from 2007 to 2012 (Figure 7.15). The share increased most in Italy, Korea, Mexico and Portugal, while the decline was strongest in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Turkey.

Indonesia is the country among the emerging economies where solidarity outside the network of family and friends is most common. The level of donations to charities is at the same level as the best performing OECD countries, and increased from 2007 to 2012. In addition, the share who reported that they had helped a stranger or volunteered time to an organisation increased over the same period. Also in India, the share of people who donated money, reported helping a stranger and volunteered time to an organisation increased, albeit from a lower level. In Brazil and the Russian Federation, the share of the population showing these forms of solidarity declined during the same period.

Definition and measurement

Data on solidarity comes from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in more than 150 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 years and over in the entire country, including rural areas. While this ensures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling error, and variation in response rates. Sample sizes vary between around 1 000 and 4 000, depending on the country and data should be interpreted carefully. These probability surveys are valid within a statistical margin of error, also called a 95% confidence interval. This means that if the survey is conducted 100 times using the exact same procedures, the margin of error would include the “true value” in 95 out of the 100 surveys. With a sample size of 1 000 the margin of error at 50% is ± 3 percentage points. Because these surveys use a clustered sample design, the margin of error varies by question.

Solidarity is based on binary questions created by Gallup. For example: “Have you done any of the following in the past month? How about donated money to a charity? How about helped a stranger or someone you didn’t know who needed help? How about volunteered your time to an organisation?”. There are no questions about the amount of money donated or number of hours volunteered. Rates are calculated omitting “Don’t know” and “Refused” from the denominator.

Further reading

- Charities Aid Foundation (2012), *World Giving Index 2012 – A Global View of Giving Trends*.
- Reich, R. and C. Wimer (2012), *Charitable Giving and the Great Recession, Recession Trends*, Russell Sage Foundation and Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality.

Figure notes

Figures 7.13., 7.14 and 7.15: 2011 for Brazil, Chile, Germany, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. 2006 for Austria, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland; 2008 for Iceland and Luxembourg.

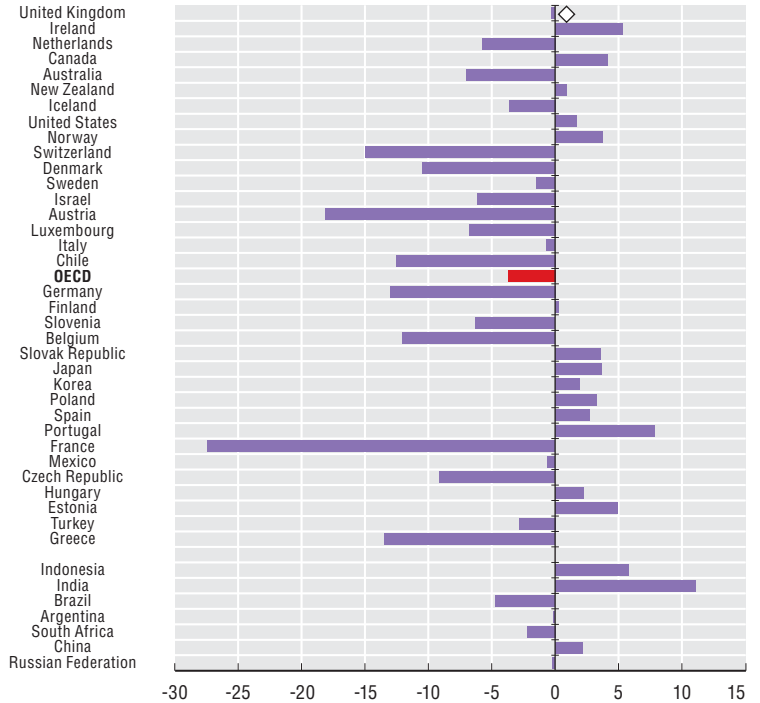
Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

7.13. Charities are most widespread in Anglophone countries and Northern Europe

Panel A. Percentage of people who have donated money to a charity in the last month, 2012 (%)

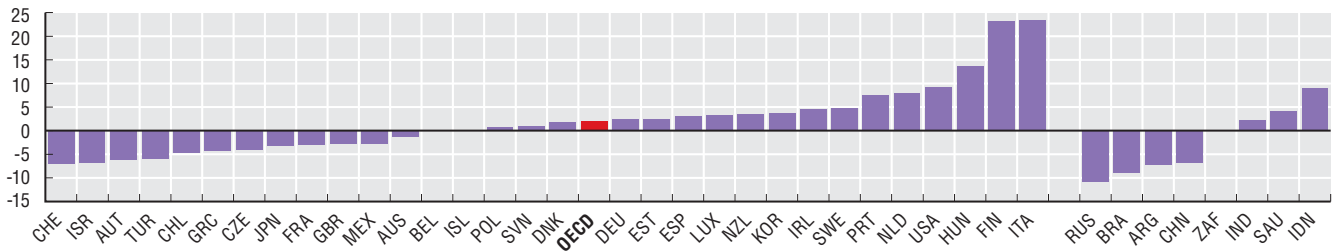


Panel B. Percentage point change between 2007 and 2012



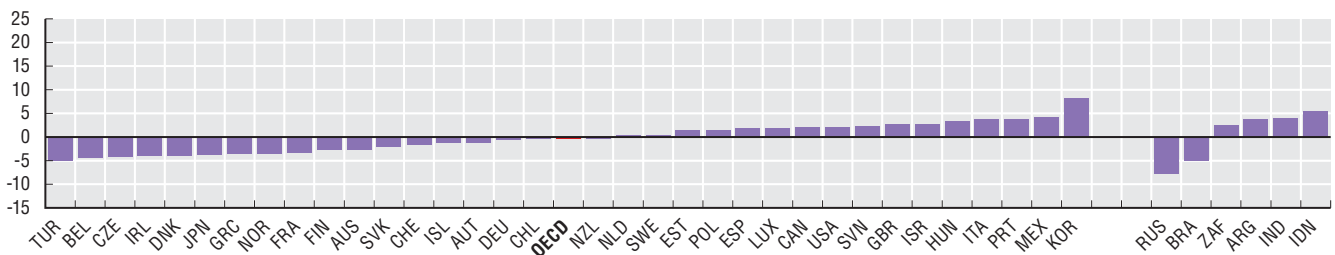
7.14. The share of people who helped a stranger increased in many countries

Percentage points variation in the share of people who reported that they helped a stranger or someone they did not know who needed help between 2007 and 2012



7.15. The share of people who volunteered time to an organisation remained stable

Percentage points variation in the share of people who reported having given volunteered time to an organisation between 2007 and 2012



Source: Gallup World Poll (www.gallup.com).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932966732>



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