## 7. SOCIAL COHESION INDICATORS

## Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is determined not only by economic development, but also by people's diverse experiences and living conditions. People in Switzerland and Denmark are most satisfied with their lives (Figure 7.1). The measured level in these countries was 2.5 steps higher than in Greece or Portugal, the countries at the bottom of the 11 -step ladder in 2014/15. Indeed life satisfaction deteriorated during the crisis, particularly in European Mediterranean countries. Countries which experienced the greatest deterioration in incomes and labour-market prospects are more likely to have low levels of subjective well-being.

There are broad regional or cultural country groupings of life satisfaction. Four of the top five countries are Nordic. Continental Western, Eastern European and Asian OECD members are less satisfied with their lives, with the notable exceptions of Switzerland and, to a lesser extent, Austria and the Netherlands. Predominantly Anglophone OECD countries are all in the top half of the list when measuring life satisfaction, and follow in a tight group after the predominately Nordic top cluster. As for emerging economies, life satisfaction also varies between them, from above 6 in Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia and Saudi Arabia, to below 5 in India and South Africa.
Young people are happier that older groups, as the level of life satisfaction tends to decrease with age. Youth from Switzerland, Israel and Norway are the most satisfied with their lives in OECD, whereas in Hungary, Turkey and Estonia, they report the lowest levels. However, life satisfaction is "u-shaped" in some countries, increasing from about the age of 55.
Teenage boys usually report higher life satisfaction than girls. Figure 7.2 presents the data on the proportion of teenagers aged 15 years old that reported levels of life satisfaction in the top half of the scale (6 or above). On average the proportion of teenagers reporting high levels of life satisfaction is almost 10 percentage points higher among boys compared to girls. The gap is even larger in Poland and France (i.e. 15 percentage points). Overall highest levels of life satisfaction were reported in the Netherlands and Denmark where about $90 \%$ of teenagers were satisfied with their life.
Life satisfaction is higher among people who are satisfied with their work-life balance. The difference is largest in Austria where people who are satisfied with their work-life balance report an average life satisfaction score more than 1.7 point greater than people who are dissatisfied with their work-life balance (Figure 7.3). Policies aiming at enhancing the combination of work and private life are important factors of quality of life.

## Definition and measurement

The Gallup World Poll asked respondents to: "Imagine an eleven-rung ladder where the bottom (0) represents the worst possible life for you and the top (10) represents the best possible life for you. On which step of the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?". The main indicator used in this section is the average country score. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in more than 150 countries around the world based on a common questionnaire. With few exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 years and over in the entire country. While this ensures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling errors, and variation in response rates; for example, data, especially for youth, should be interpreted carefully.
Data on life satisfaction among children are taken from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey. Children aged 11 to 15 years are asked to report on the quality of their current life based on the Cantril life satisfaction scale of 0 to 10 (Cantril, 1965), with 0 representing the worst possible life and 10 representing the best possible life. A child is said to be satisfied with his or her own life if they report a score in the top half of the scale -6 or above (Currie et al., 2012). Thus, life satisfaction is presented as the proportion of children reporting a score of 6 or above.
Data on the relationship between life satisfaction and work-life balance are based on the European Quality of Life (EQLS) survey. To measure life satisfaction, the survey asks persons aged 15 and over to rate the level of satisfaction with their life overall based on the questions "All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days?" on a scale of 1 to 10 , where 1 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied. Life satisfaction is presented as the average score among adults. Dissatisfaction with work-family life balance is based on a person reporting home and work conflict.

## Further reading

OECD (2015), How's Life? Measuring Well-being, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/how_life-2015-en.

## Figure notes

Figure 7.1: Data for Iceland refer to 2013. Data for age 15-29 are not available for Iceland and Japan.
Figure 7.2: Data for Belgium were computed using population shares for Flemish (60\%) and French (40\%); data for the United Kingdom were computed using population shares for England (85\%), Scotland (9\%) and Wales (5\%).

### 7.1. Young people generally report higher levels of life satisfaction

Average points of life satisfaction on an 11-step ladder from 0-10 by age group, 2014/15


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


### 7.2. Teenage boys usually report higher life satisfaction than girls

Proportion of teenagers aged 15 years old reporting a life satisfaction score of 6 or above, on a scale of 0 to 10, 2014


Source: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey (HBSC 2013/14) www.hbsc.org/.
StatLink .inाst http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933405690

### 7.3. People satisfied with work-life balance are more happy

 Life satisfaction by satisfaction in work-life balance, 2012

Source: European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-quality-of-life-surveys.
StatLink .anlista http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933405707


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