

Subjective well-being in regions

Subjective well-being reflects the notion of measuring how people experience and evaluate their lives. It includes evaluation of life as a whole (generally referred as “life satisfaction”), evaluations of particular domains of life (for example, “satisfaction with time available for leisure”), feelings and emotions, as well as measures of “meaningfulness” or “purpose” in life. People’s evaluations of different domains and their expectations are useful information to guide policy making.

While in many OECD countries data on life satisfaction are now available from official sources, only in a few cases these data are representative at the subnational level. The data shown here are estimates derived by a unique data source, the Gallup World Poll, reweighted to improve regional representativeness. These data represent an innovation in the OECD Regional Well-Being Database that previously included only well-being dimensions measured by objective indicators.

The average values of life satisfaction by country vary from 4.9 in Hungary to 7.6 in Denmark and Switzerland. The regional values, instead, range from 4.4 in the Mediterranean Region

Definition

Life satisfaction is expressed as the mean score on an 11-point scale (based on the Cantril ladder measure). It is measured using a survey question in which respondents are asked “Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?”.

Perceived social network support is based on the survey question: “If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?”. The data shown here reflect the percentage of the regional sample responding “Yes”.

The indicators on life satisfaction and social network in regions were calculated using microdata from the Gallup World Poll (see Brezzi and Díaz Ramírez, 2016).

East (Turkey) to 8.6 in Campeche (Mexico). Mexico, Chile and Turkey display the largest regional differences in life satisfaction, more than 2 points on a 0-10 point scale (Figure 1.27).

Good interpersonal relations, social network supports and general trust in others and institutions are considered important sources of individual well-being and social cohesion. Not only do they represent additional resources to the material and cultural ones, but they can also improve performance of institutions and reduce transaction costs.

In most OECD regions, at least 80% of people report having someone to rely on in case of need. The exceptions are Korea where the values range between 73% to 79%, and Mexico, Chile, Turkey and Greece where regional differences are very large with some regions below 75% (Figure 1.28).

Source

Gallup World Poll (2015), www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx.

See Annex B for data sources and country-related metadata.

Reference years and territorial level

Average 2006-14; TL2 (Estonia, TL3).

Further information

OECD Regional Well-Being: www.oecdregionalwellbeing.org/.

Brezzi, M. and M. Díaz Ramírez (2016), “Building subjective well-being indicators at the subnational level: A preliminary assessment in OECD regions”, *OECD Regional Development Working Papers*, No. 2016/03, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jm2hhcjftvh-en>.

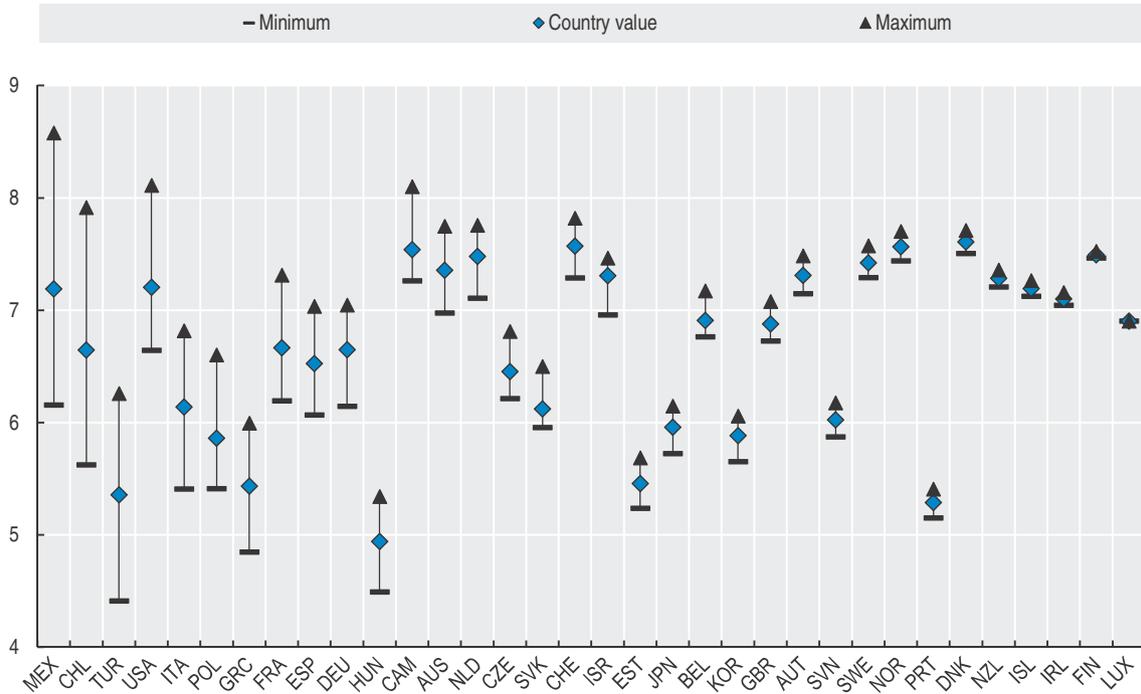
OECD (2013), *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264191655-en>.

Figure note

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

1.27. Estimated regional variation in life satisfaction

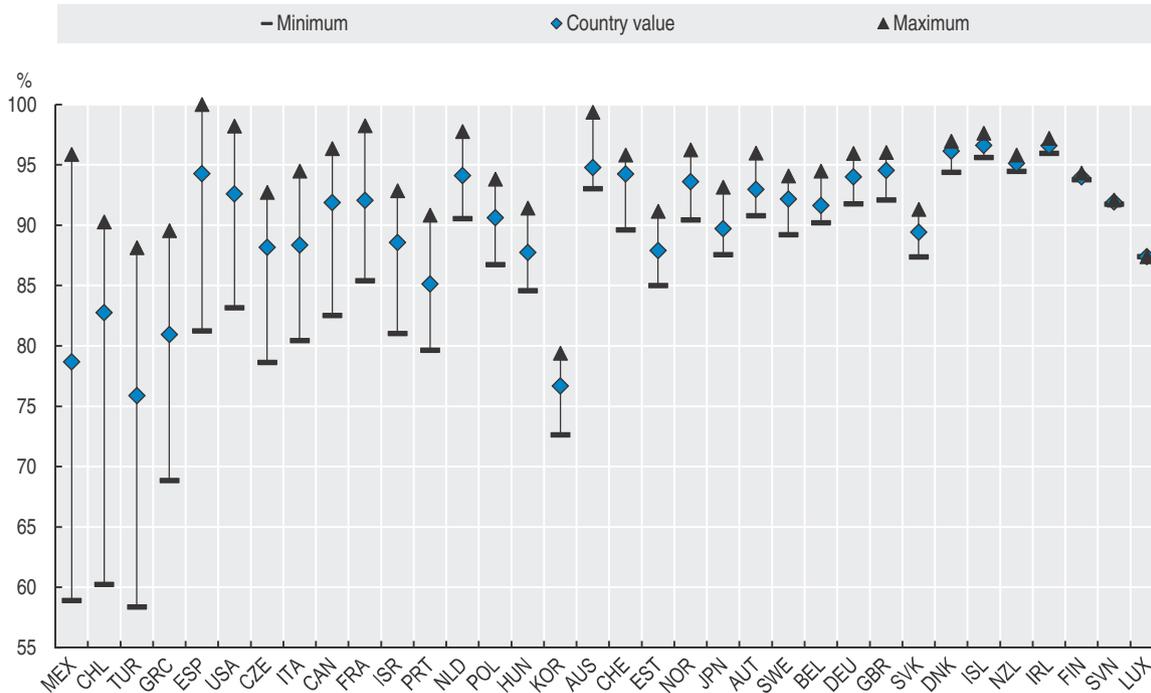
Mean satisfaction with life; 0-10 points scale; average 2006-14



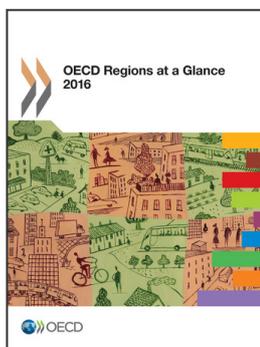
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933363115>

1.28. Estimated regional variation in perceived social network support

Percentage of people who report having relatives or friends they can count on, average 2006-14



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933363124>



From:
OECD Regions at a Glance 2016

Access the complete publication at:
https://doi.org/10.1787/reg_glance-2016-en

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2016), "Subjective well-being in regions", in *OECD Regions at a Glance 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/reg_glance-2016-15-en

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