5. Tolerance

Definition and measurement

Data on tolerance is drawn from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in over 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 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. Sample sizes vary between around 1 000 and 4 000, depending on the country. The tolerance index is the ratio of the people who respond yes to the question of whether the city or area where they live a good place or not a good place to live for ethnic minorities, migrants, or gay or lesbian people to all people contacted.

The degree of community acceptance of minority groups is a measurable dimension of social cohesion. Acceptance of three such groups is considered here: ethnic minorities, migrants and gay and lesbian people.

Canada was the most tolerant country regarding average community acceptance of the minority groups (Panel A, CO5.1). Australia, New Zealand and the United States tended to be relatively tolerant as well. The Nordic countries were dispersed throughout the top half of the OECD. The less tolerant end of CO5.1 was dominated by southern and eastern European countries and the OECD Asian members.

There is little or no evidence that the onset of the crisis in late 2008 has presaged a fall in tolerance of minority groups (Panel B, CO5.1). On average, there was little change, with significant rises in tolerance in Slovenia, Austria and France offset by some large falls in tolerance in Italy, Turkey and Mexico.

In terms of groups, tolerance of ethnic minorities was the highest for almost all countries and lowest for gays and lesbians, with tolerance of migrants in between (CO5.2). There were very few exceptions to this strong ranking pattern by country. Exceptions included the Netherlands, Spain and Belgium, where higher numbers saw their communities as being more tolerant gay and lesbian people than ethnic minorities and migrants. Inclusive countries tended to be tolerant along all three dimensions. The country correlations of the three tolerance measures all exceed 0.83.

Country income was strongly and positively related to perceptions of community tolerance (CO5.3). By way of contrast, there was no relationship found between tolerance and income inequality. A further notable feature of the data is that "Don't know" responses on tolerance were often very high relative to other Gallup questions. Higher non-response rates were also a feature of lower tolerance countries, suggesting that this is a more sensitive question where tolerance is harder to find.

Figure notes

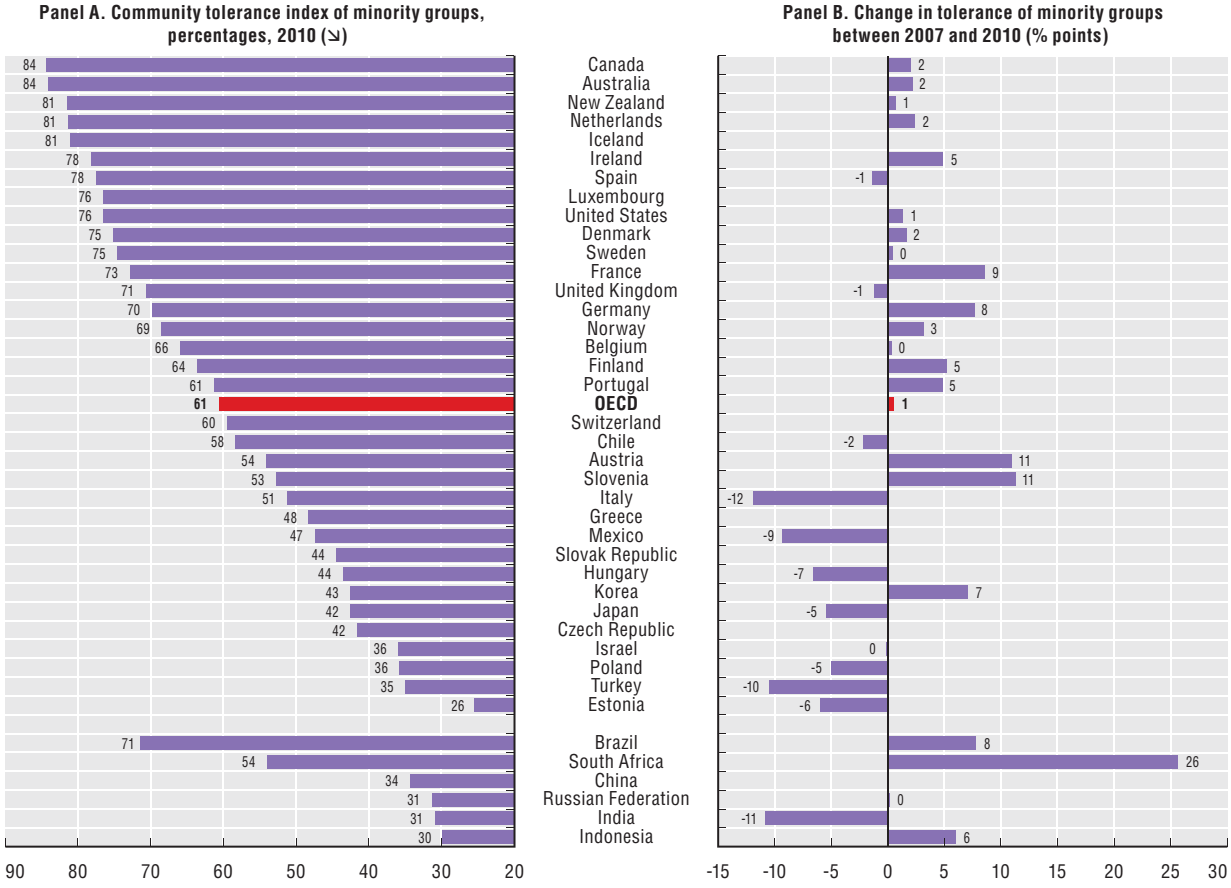
Figure CO5.1: 2006 for Switzerland, 2008 for Iceland and Norway, 2009 for Estonia, Israel and South Africa. Change refers to 2005/10 for Canada, 2006/08 for Norway, 2006/09 for Estonia and South Africa, 2006/10 for France, Ireland, New Zealand, Finland, Portugal, Chile, Austria, Slovenia, Korea, the Russian Federation and Indonesia.

Figure CO5.2: 2006 for Switzerland, 2008 for Iceland and Norway, 2009 for Estonia, Israel and South Africa.

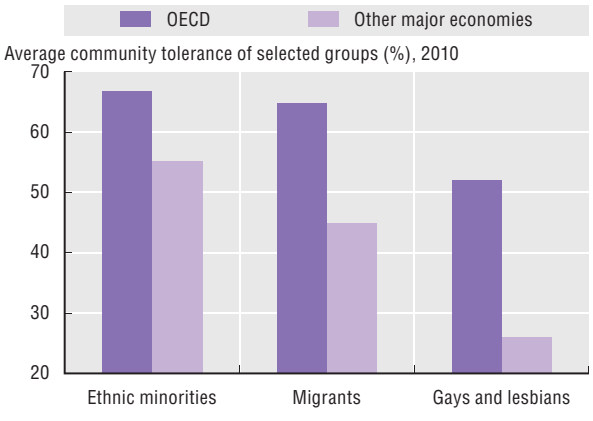
Figure CO5.3: Community tolerance of minority groups: 2006 for Switzerland, 2008 for Iceland and Norway.

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

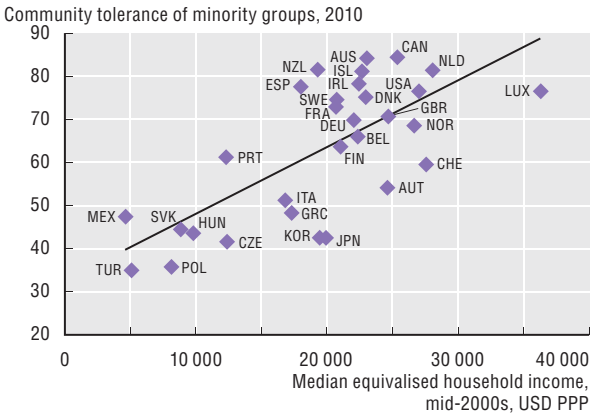
CO5.1. Tolerance of minorities is highest in Anglophone and Northern European countries



CO5.2. Tolerance is highest for ethnic minorities and lowest for gays and lesbians across the OECD



CO5.3. Richer countries have more tolerant communities



Source: Gallup World Poll (*www.gallup.com*), OECD (2008), *Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* (*www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality*).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932382140