

Life satisfaction

Did you know?

The *World Value Surveys* ask respondents to rank their feelings of satisfaction with their lives on a scale from 1 to 10. The surveys now cover 80 countries and use standardised questionnaires. The latest wave of surveys took place between 1999 and 2002.

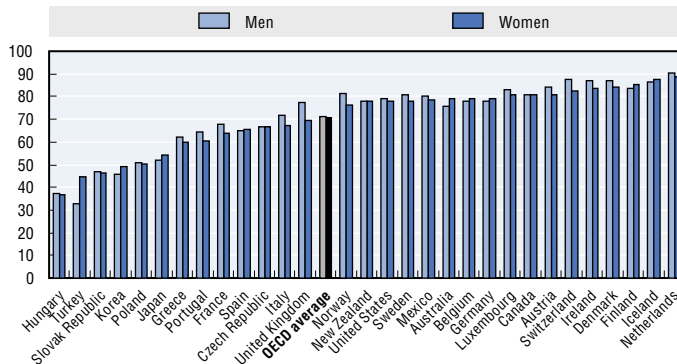
Test your prejudices. In two of these countries – United Kingdom, Turkey, Norway and Korea – women are significantly more satisfied with their lives than men. Which were they?

Answer. In Turkey and Korea, women report greater life satisfaction than men. Women report lower life satisfaction than men in the United Kingdom and Norway.

In over half of OECD countries, more than three-quarters of both men and women reported “above average” scores (7 to 10) for life satisfaction. However, the percentages were 50% or less in the four eastern European countries and in Korea and Japan.

Percentage of people who feel an above average level of satisfaction with their lives

Years between 1999 and 2002

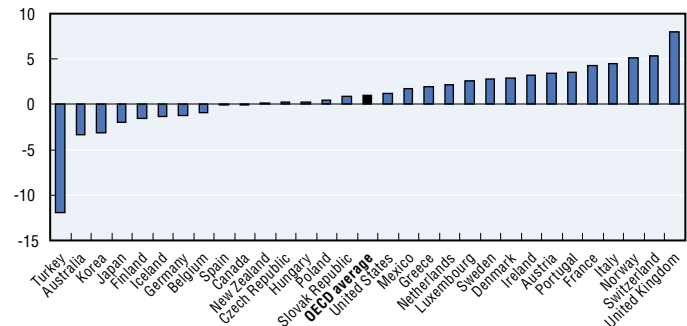


There is some correlation between life satisfaction and per capita income, though some people argue that the correlation becomes weaker when comparisons are limited to the richest countries. Over time, societies which get richer do not report greater life satisfaction.

In most countries more men than women reported feeling satisfied “above average” with their lives. The chart below shows the percentage of satisfied men minus the percentage of satisfied women. The “satisfaction gap” favours men in twenty countries. Do women tend to apply higher standards than men in assessing their life satisfaction? Or do cultural and economic factors conspire to create less satisfying lives for women in most OECD countries?

The satisfaction gap

Percentage of satisfied men minus percentage of satisfied women



Source: OECD (2005), *Society at a Glance*, OECD, Paris; EFILWIC (2003), *Quality of Life in Europe: an illustrative report*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin; World Value Surveys.

Further reading:

OECD (2005), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD, Paris.
 OECD (2006), *Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth – 2006 Edition*, OECD, Paris.

Social isolation

Did you know?

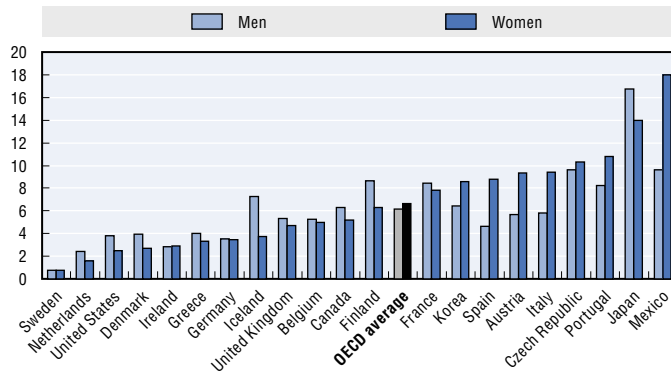
The *World Value Surveys* ask respondents about their contact with other people in their normal daily lives. In the latest wave of surveys (1999 to 2002) 56 countries supplied information on whether respondents “rarely” or “never” had contact with friends, work colleagues and other acquaintances in places of worship, and in sports and cultural associations.

In 12 out of the 21 OECD countries for which data are available, men reported greater social isolation than women.

Very low percentages for all respondents were reported by the African countries in the surveys. The highest percentages were reported in Russia, China and Chile.

Among the 21 OECD countries for which data are available, percentages of respondents (all adults regardless of gender) in the never or rarely categories exceeded 10% in Mexico (where women feel particularly isolated) and Japan (where it is a male problem).

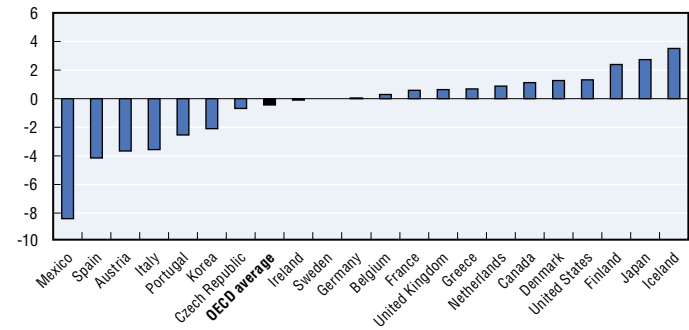
Percentage of persons who rarely or never spend time with friends, colleagues or others in social groups



Total rates under 4% were reported in Sweden, the Netherlands, the United States, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Germany and Ireland.

The chart below show the gender differences in social isolation: positive values above the line mean that more men than women answered “rarely” or “never” while negative values show more social isolation among women. The chart suggests that social isolation is more often a man than woman problem, although the gender gaps are not large except in Iceland, Japan and Finland (social isolation among men) and in Mexico, Spain and Austria (social isolation among women).

Gender gap in social isolation



Source: OECD (2005), *Society at a Glance*, OECD, Paris; EFILWIC (2003), *Quality of Life in Europe: an illustrative report*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin; World Value Surveys.

Further reading:

OECD (2005), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD, Paris.

Prison population

Did you know?

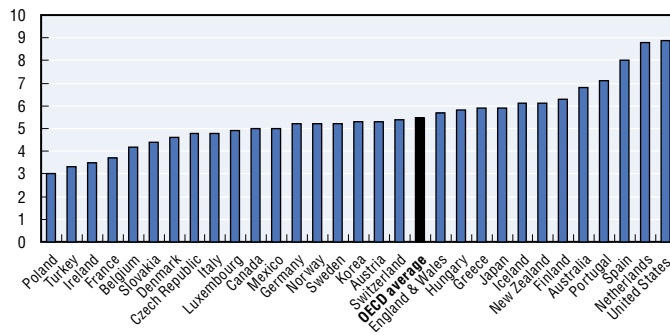
The *Prison Population Rate* is the number of people (adults as well as those under 18) in prison per 100 000 population.

In every country far more men are in prison than women but there are large differences between countries. For instance, there are the same number of female prisoners per 100 000 population in the United States as female and male prisoners combined in Japan.

In all OECD countries except Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and the United States less than 7% of prison populations are women. The commonest crimes for which women are convicted include prostitution, drug abuse and fraud. These offences are not punished by prison sentences in most countries although the high percentage of women in American prisons is partly explained by prison sentences for economic crimes such as cheque and credit card fraud.

Female prisoners as a percentage of total prison population

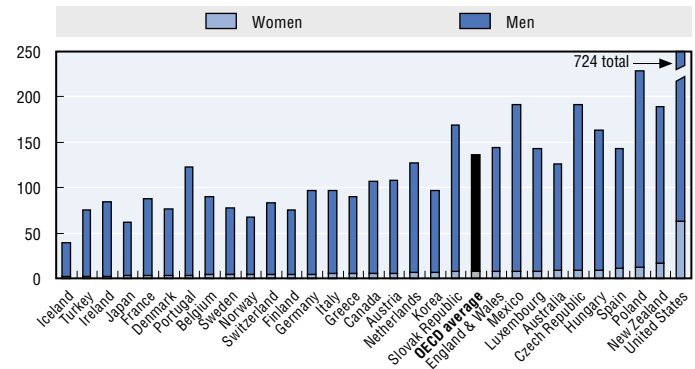
Including pre-trial and remand prisoners 2004 or latest year available



Half of the OECD countries have less than 100 people in prison per 100 000 inhabitants. Thirteen have between 100 and 200. Two countries exceed this – Poland with 230 and the United States with more than 700. The US rate is the highest in the world followed by Russia with about 600 per 100 000 inhabitants. Except in the United States imprisonment rates for women are negligible.

Prisoners per 100 000 inhabitants

Including pre-trial detainees and remand prisoners
2004 or latest year available



Source: International Centre for Prison Studies, King's College, London, website: www.prisonstudies.org and then select World Prison Brief.

Further reading:

OECD (2006), *OECD Factbook 2006: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2005), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD, Paris.