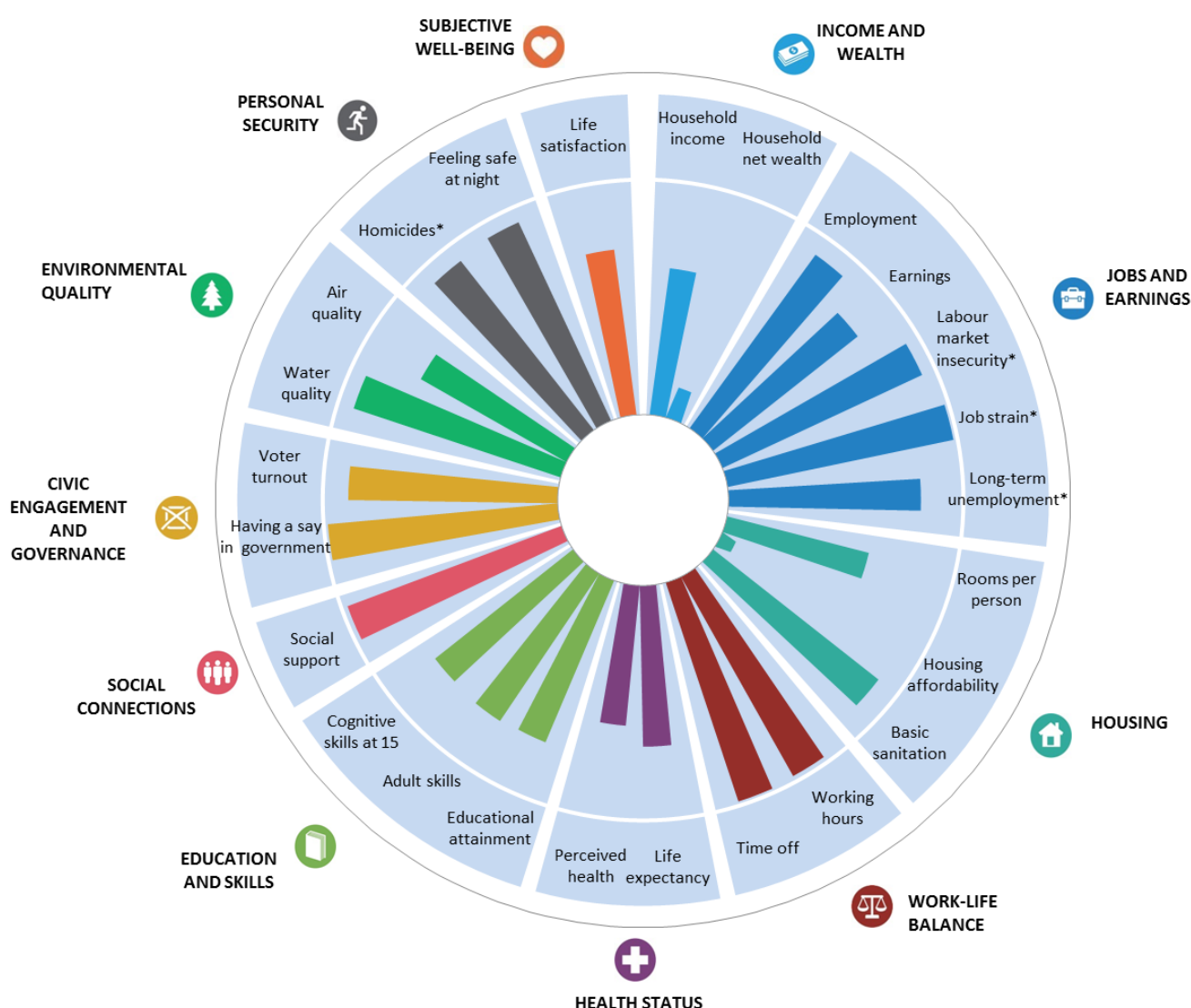


# How's Life in Denmark?

Relative to other OECD countries, Denmark generally performs very well across the different well-being dimensions. Although **average household net adjusted disposable income** is just below the OECD average, Denmark is among the top tier of OECD countries in terms of both **earnings** and the **employment** rate. Denmark also benefits from low levels of both **labour market insecurity** and **job strain**, and only 2% of employees regularly **work very long hours**, one of the lowest percentages in the OECD. Civic engagement and governance is also an area of comparative strength: Denmark has both a high **voter turnout** and a high share of people who feel they **have a say in what the government does**. **Social support** is also very high, with 95% of people reporting that they have friends or relatives whom they can count on in times of trouble, compared to the OECD average of 89%. However, **housing affordability** is an area of weakness: the average household in Denmark spends 24% of its disposable income on housing costs, well above the OECD average of 21%.

## Denmark's average level of current well-being: Comparative strengths and weaknesses














Note: This chart shows Denmark's relative strengths and weaknesses in well-being when compared with other OECD countries. For both positive and negative indicators (such as homicides, marked with an "\*\*"), longer bars always indicate better outcomes (i.e. higher well-being), whereas shorter bars always indicate worse outcomes (i.e. lower well-being). If data are missing for any given indicator, the relevant segment of the circle is shaded in white.

Additional information, including the data used in this country note, can be found at:


[www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2017-country-notes-data.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2017-country-notes-data.xlsx)


## Change in Denmark's average well-being over the past 10 years

Dimension	Description	Change
 <b>Income and wealth</b>	Household net adjusted disposable income is currently 11% higher, in real terms, than in 2005, which is 3 points more than the OECD average cumulative gain in the last 10 years. However, the growth stalled from 2006 to 2008 and again from 2011 to 2013.	↗
 <b>Jobs and earnings</b>	The employment rate in Denmark is 1 percentage point lower than in 2005; following a period of improvement, the rate slumped in 2008 and began to show signs of recovery only in 2014. Earnings improved consistently over the past decade, with a cumulative growth of 13%. By contrast, labour market insecurity and long-term unemployment worsened: both rose sharply during the crisis, and have not yet recovered fully. Job strain has remained reasonably stable since 2005, with around 21% of employees affected in 2015.	↘ ↗ ↘ ↘ ↔
 <b>Housing conditions</b>	The average number of rooms per person in Denmark has remained stably high (at 1.9 in 2011-2015), but the share of households lacking basic sanitation has risen from zero to 0.5%. Housing affordability has also seen little change in the last decade, with the proportion of income spent on housing costs currently only 0.2 percentage point higher than in 2005.	↔ ↘ ↔
 <b>Work-life balance</b>	The share of Danes who work very long hours (2%) is now less than half the 2005 level (6%). This is due to a large fall in the first half of the 10-year period, with levels remaining relatively stable since 2010.	↗
 <b>Health status</b>	Life expectancy at birth surpassed the OECD average in 2011 and has grown by two-and-a-half years since 2005. By contrast, the share of people reporting to be in "good" or "very good" health has fallen by 5 percentage points.	↗ ↘
 <b>Education and skills</b>	The 10-year change in upper secondary educational attainment cannot be assessed, due to a recent break in the data. However, between 2014 and 2016, attainment rates in Denmark increased by 1.2 percentage points.	↗
 <b>Social connections</b>	The percentage of people who have relatives or friends whom they can count on to help in case of need has seen little change since 2005-07.	↔
 <b>Civic engagement</b>	The percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote has improved marginally since the start of the decade, from 85% in the 2005 parliamentary elections to 86% in 2015.	↗
 <b>Environmental quality</b>	Consistent with the OECD average trend, there has been no major change in the level of satisfaction with local water quality since 2005. Annual exposure to PM <sub>2.5</sub> air pollution has improved over the past decade, and was one-third lower than the OECD average in 2013.	↔ ↗
 <b>Personal security</b>	The homicide rate in Denmark has fallen by almost one-third compared to 2005, while feelings of safety are broadly similar to their level 10 years ago.	↗ ↔
 <b>Subjective well-being</b>	People's life satisfaction has fallen gradually in Denmark during the last 10 years, from an average of 7.9 to 7.5 (measured on a 0-10 scale). This decline is twice as large as the OECD average change.	↘


Note: For each indicator in every dimension: ↗ refers to an improvement; ↔ indicates little or no change; and ↘ signals deterioration. This is based on a comparison of the starting year (2005 in most cases) and the latest available year (usually 2015 or 2016). The order of the arrows shown in column three corresponds to that of the indicators mentioned in column two.


## Denmark's resources and risks for future well-being: Illustrative indicators

 <b>Natural capital</b>		
Indicator	Tier	Change
Greenhouse gas emissions from domestic production	2	↗ 2005-2015
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from domestic consumption	2	↗ 2001-2011
Exposure to PM <sub>2.5</sub> air pollution	1	↗ 2005-2013
Forest area	3	↔ 2005-2014
Renewable freshwater resources	3	.. Long-term annual avg
Freshwater abstractions	1	.. 2014
Threatened birds	2	.. Latest available
Threatened mammals	1	.. Latest available
Threatened plants	1	.. Latest available

 <b>Economic capital</b>		
Indicator	Tier	Change
Produced fixed assets	1	↔ 2005-2015
Gross fixed capital formation	1	↔ 2005-2016
Financial net worth of total economy	1	↗ 2005-2016
Intellectual property assets	1	↗ 2005-2015
Investment in R&D	1	↗ 2005-2014
Household debt	3	↘ 2005-2016
Household net wealth	3	.. 2015
Financial net worth of government	1	↗ 2005-2016
Banking sector leverage	1	↔ 2005-2016

1	Top-performing OECD tier, latest available year
2	Middle-performing OECD tier, latest available year
3	Bottom-performing OECD tier, latest available year

 <b>Human capital</b>		
Indicator	Tier	Change
Young adult educational attainment	3	↗ 2014-2016
Educational expectancy	1	.. 2015
Cognitive skills at age 15	2	.. 2015
Adult skills	2	.. 2011/2012
Long-term unemployment	1	↘ 2005-2016
Life expectancy at birth	2	↗ 2005-2015
Smoking prevalence	1	↗ 2010-2015
Obesity prevalence	1	↘ 2005-2014

 <b>Social capital</b>		
Indicator	Tier	Change
Trust in others	1	.. 2013
Trust in the police	1	.. 2013
Trust in the national government	1	↘ 2005-2016
Voter turnout	1	↗ 2005-2015
Government stakeholder engagement	2	.. 2014
Volunteering through organisations	1	.. 2011/2012

↗	Improving over time
↘	Worsening over time
↔	No change
..	No data available

## HOW LARGE ARE WELL-BEING INEQUALITIES IN DENMARK?

**What is inequality and how is it measured?** Measuring inequality means trying to describe **how unevenly distributed** outcomes are in society. *How's Life? 2017* adopts several different approaches:

- Measures of “**vertical**” inequalities address how unequally outcomes are spread across all people in society – for example, by looking at the size of the gap between people at the bottom of the distribution and people at the top
- Measures of “**horizontal**” inequalities focus on the gap between population groups defined by specific characteristics (such as men and women, young and old, people with higher and lower levels of education).
- Measures of “**deprivation**” report the share of people who live below a certain level of well-being (such as those who face income poverty or live in an overcrowded household).

**Vertical inequalities** in Denmark are comparatively low in terms of household income and earnings, but more pronounced than in many OECD countries for household net wealth, with the wealthiest 10% owning around 64% of the net wealth of all households in the country. Comparatively high levels of vertical inequality are also found in adult skills, life expectancy, and life satisfaction.

While **women** still fare less well than **men** in jobs, earnings, perceived health and feelings of safety, the **gender divide** in Denmark tends to be less pronounced than in most OECD countries. However, Danish women do not fare better than men in several areas in which their peers in other countries tend to be more advantaged, such as social support and homicide rates.

In OECD countries, **young people** usually outperform the **middle-aged** when it comes to the risk of working long hours and life satisfaction. In Denmark, however, they are more likely than the middle-aged to work long hours – while also reporting very similar levels of life satisfaction. Additionally, in several areas in which the young typically lag behind the middle-aged, such as net wealth or earnings, gaps in Denmark are larger than in most OECD countries.

**Well-being inequalities in Denmark**

	Vertical inequality	Horizontal inequality by			Deprivation
		Gender	Age	Education	
		Women relative to men	Young relative to middle-aged	Secondary relative to tertiary	
Household income	●		●		●
Household net wealth	●		●	●	●
Earnings	●	●	●	●	
Low pay		●			●
Employment		●	●	●	
Unemployment		●	●	●	●
Housing affordability					●
Rooms per person					●
Life expectancy	●				
Perceived health		●	●	●	●
Working hours	●	●	●	●	●
Time off		●	●		
Educational attainment		●	●		●
Cognitive skills at 15	●	●		●	●
Adult skills	●	●	●	●	●
Time spent socialising		●	●		
Social support		●	●	●	●
Voter turnout		○	○	○	●
Having a say in government	●	●	●	●	●
Air quality					●
Water quality		●	●	●	●
Homicides		●			●
Feeling safe at night		●	●	●	●
Life satisfaction	●	●	●	●	●
Negative affect balance					●

People with a **tertiary education** tend fare better than those without across a wide range of well-being outcomes. Compared to other OECD countries, these education-related gaps are often relatively narrow in Denmark – for example, on earnings, jobs, social support and life satisfaction. By contrast, the gaps are large in relation to wealth. And unlike in many other OECD countries, there is a roughly equal incidence of very long working hours among the tertiary educated and those with only a secondary education.

Most indicators of **deprivation** are ranked in the top third of OECD countries, suggesting that few people experience extremely low well-being outcomes in Denmark. Housing cost overburden is the only indicator that falls into the bottom third, with around 18% of the population spending at least 40% of their disposable income on interests and rents.

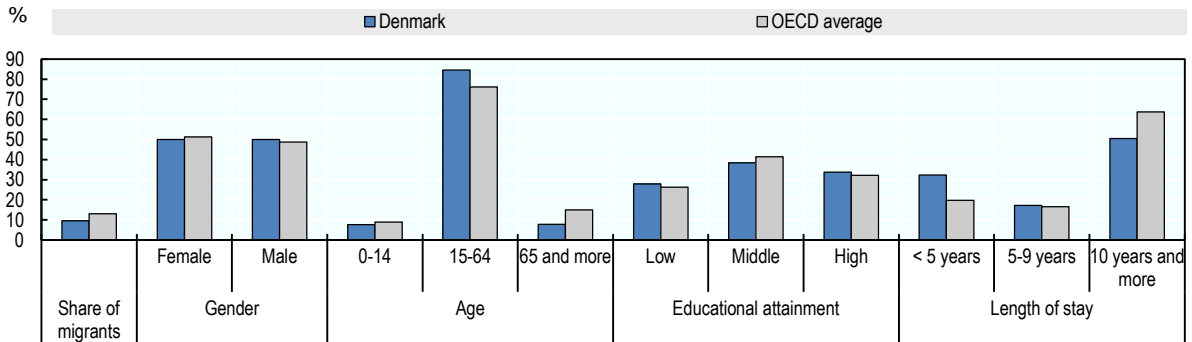
## HOW'S LIFE FOR MIGRANTS IN DENMARK?

Migrants (defined as people living in a different country from the one in which they were born) represent an important share of the population in most OECD countries. Capturing information about their well-being is critical for gaining a fuller picture of how life is going, and whether it is going equally well for all members of society.

### Who are the migrants in Denmark and OECD?

Around one in ten people living in Denmark were born elsewhere, below the OECD average (13%), and 50% of them are women (51% for the OECD average). Migrants in Denmark are more likely to be of working age than in the OECD on average (85% of them are aged 15 to 64, as compared to 76% across the OECD), and are more likely to have a middle or a high educational attainment than a low level. Half of migrants arrived in Denmark ten years ago or more.

Share of migrants in the total population and selected characteristics

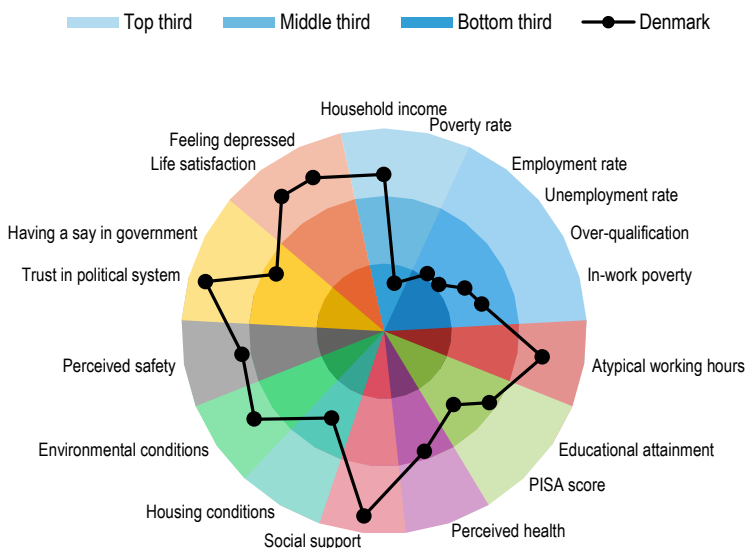


### How is migrants' well-being in Denmark?

When compared with the migrant populations of other OECD countries, migrants living in Denmark have a relatively good situation for 8 out of 18 selected well-being indicators. Moreover, migrants settled in Denmark rank in the middle third of OECD-country migrants for employment, unemployment, over-qualification, in-work poverty, educational attainment, PISA performance, perceived health, housing conditions and having a say in government. They are in the bottom third for poverty.

As in many other OECD countries, migrants in Denmark tend to experience lower well-being outcomes than the native-born population: in Denmark, this is the case for 7 out of 12 selected well-being indicators. However, migrants in Denmark are just as likely as the native-born to report the same level of perceived health, perceived safety, social support, trust in the political system and feeling depressed.

Comparing well-being outcomes for migrants in Denmark with the migrant populations of other OECD countries



Comparison of migrants' and native-born well-being in Denmark

	Migrants have a worse situation	Same situation	Migrants have a better situation
Household income	▲		
Atypical working hours	▲		
PISA score	▲		
Perceived health		▲	
Social support		▲	
Housing conditions	▲		
Environmental conditions	▲		
Perceived safety		▲	
Trust in political system		▲	
Having a say in government	▲		
Life satisfaction	▲		
Feeling depressed		▲	

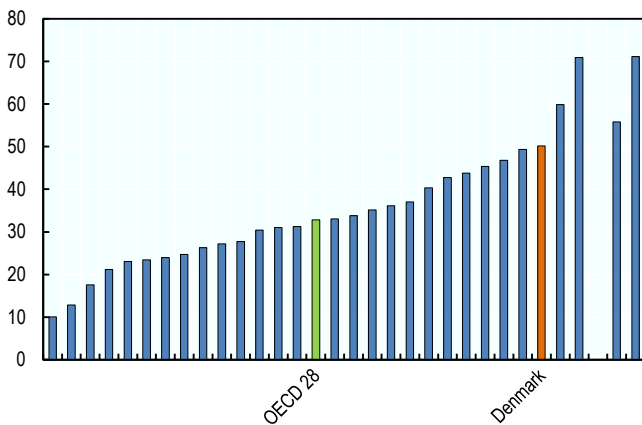
## GOVERNANCE AND WELL-BEING IN DENMARK

Public institutions play an important role in well-being, both by guaranteeing that people’s fundamental rights are protected, and by ensuring the provision of goods and services necessary for people to thrive and prosper. How people experience and engage with public institutions also matters: people’s political voice, agency and representation are outcomes of value in their own right.

In Denmark, 50% of the population feels that they have a say in what the government does, much higher than the OECD average of 33%. In recent years, voter turnout has remained relatively steady, with 86% of eligible voters casting a ballot in 2015, compared to 85% in 2005. When asked about whether or not corruption is widespread across government, 21% of Danes answered "yes", which is much lower than the OECD average of 56%. Since around 2006, the share of people in the OECD who report that they have confidence in their national government has fallen from 42% to 38%.

### Having a say in what the government does

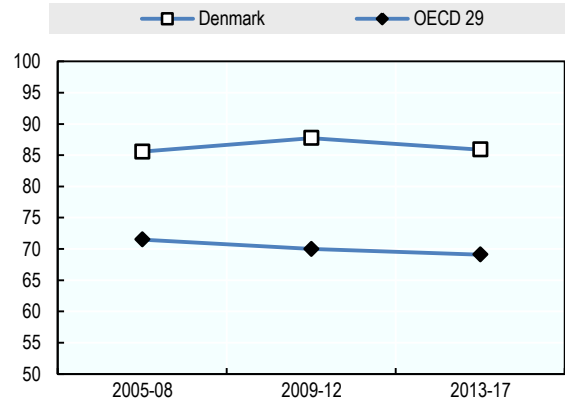
Percentage of people aged 16-65 who feel that they have a say in what the government does, around 2012



Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC database).

### Voter turnout

Percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote



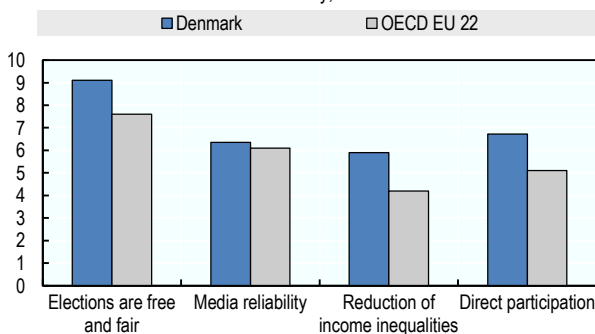
Note: Data refers to parliamentary elections. If more than one election took place over the time period indicated, the simple average voter turnout from all elections is shown. The OECD average sums elections that occurred over the time periods shown in 29 OECD countries.

Source: IDEA dataset

Overall, Danish satisfaction with the way democracy works is higher than the OECD European average level. People in Denmark are very satisfied with the freedom and fairness of elections (9.1 on a 0-10 scale), while they are reasonably satisfied with policies to reduce inequalities (5.9) and are quite satisfied with the existence of direct participation mechanisms at the local level (6.7). Meanwhile, satisfaction with public services varies according to whether people have used those services in the last year: people with direct experience of using those services recently more likely to be satisfied than those without. In Denmark, satisfaction with both health and education services is consistently higher than the OECD European average level.

### Satisfaction with different elements of democracy

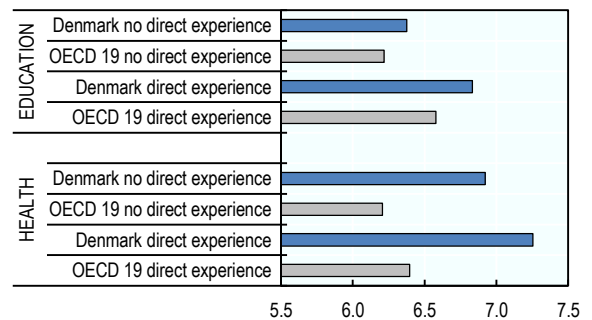
Mean score on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction with elements of democracy, 2012



Source: OECD calculations based on wave 6 of the European Social Survey (ESS), special rotating module on citizens’ valuations of different elements of democracy.

### Satisfaction with public services by direct experience, 2013

Mean score on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction



Source: OECD calculations based on the EU Quality of Government (QoG) for 19 European OECD countries.

## BETTER LIFE INDEX

The **Better Life Index** is an interactive web application that allows users to compare well-being across OECD countries and beyond on the basis of the set of well-being indicators used in *How's Life?*. Users chose what weight to give to each of the eleven dimensions shown below and then see how countries perform, based on their own personal priorities in life.

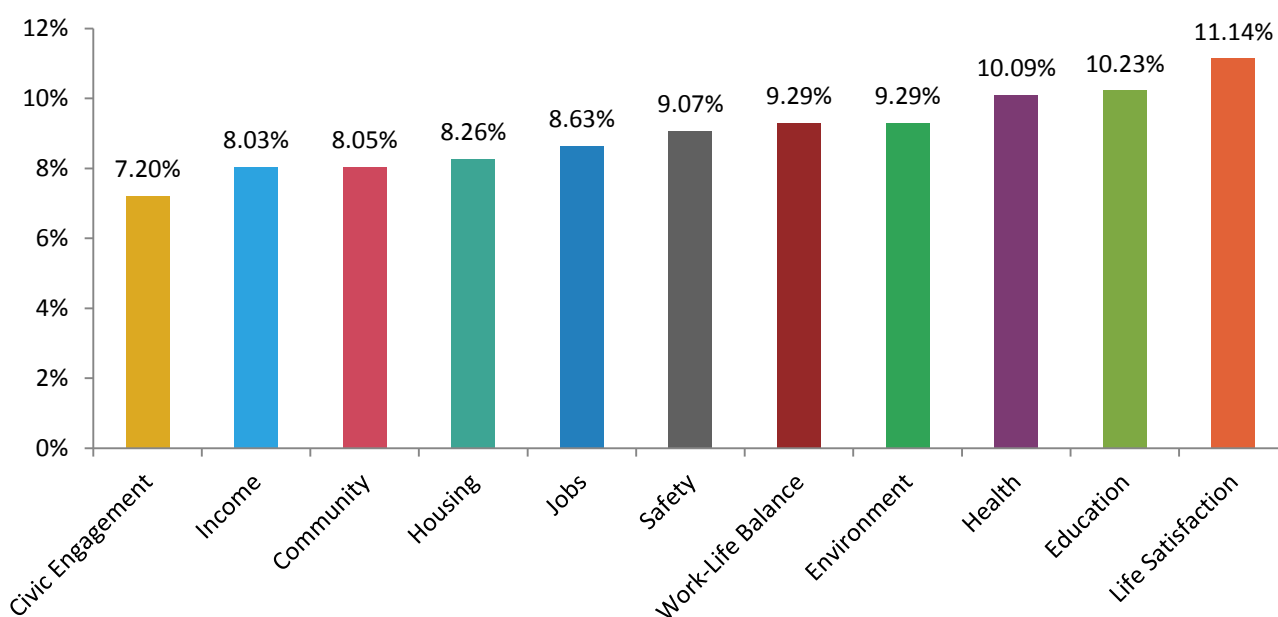


Users can also share their index with other people in their networks, as well as with the OECD. This allows the OECD to gather valuable information on the importance that users attach to various life dimensions, and how these preferences differ across countries and population groups.

## WHAT MATTERS MOST TO PEOPLE IN DENMARK?

Since its launch in May 2011, the Better Life Index has attracted **over ten million visits from just about every country on the planet** and has received over **22 million page views**. To date, over 96,000 people in Denmark have visited the website making Denmark the 26th country overall in traffic to the website. The top cities are Copenhagen (36% of visits), Aarhus, Odense, Aalborg and Frederiksberg.

The following country findings reflect the ratings voluntarily shared with the OECD by 841 website visitors in Denmark. Findings are only indicative and are not representative of the population at large. **For Danish users of the Better Life Index, life satisfaction, education and health are the three most important topics** (shown below).<sup>1</sup> Up to date information, including a breakdown of participants in each country by gender and age can be found here: [www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#DNK](http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#DNK).



<sup>1</sup> User information for Denmark is based on shared indexes submitted between May 2011 and September 2017.

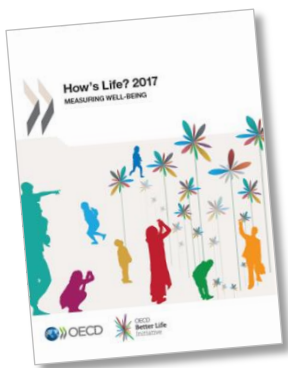
The **OECD Better Life Initiative**, launched in 2011, focuses on the aspects of life that matter the most to people and that shape the quality of their lives. The Initiative comprises a set of regularly updated well-being indicators and an in-depth analysis of specific topics, published in the *How's Life?* report. It also includes an interactive web application, the *Better Life Index*, and a number of *methodological and research projects* to improve the information base available to understand well-being levels, trends and their drivers.

The OECD Better Life Initiative:

- Helps to inform policy making to improve quality of life.
- Connects policies to people's lives.
- Generates support for needed policy measures.
- Improves civic engagement by encouraging the public to create their own *Better Life Index* and share their preferences about what matters most for well-being
- Empowers the public by improving their understanding of policy-making.

This note presents **selected findings for Denmark from the *How's Life? 2017* report** (pages 1-6) and shows what **Danish users of the Better Life Index** are telling us about their **well-being priorities** (page 7).

## HOW'S LIFE?



*How's Life?*, published every two years, provides a comprehensive picture of well-being in OECD and selected partner countries by bringing together an internationally comparable set of well-being indicators. It considers eleven dimensions of current well-being including: income and wealth; jobs and earnings; housing; health status; work-life balance; education and skills; social connections; civic engagement and governance; environmental quality; personal security; and subjective well-being. It also looks at four types of resources that help to sustain well-being over time: natural, human, economic and social capital.

The *How's Life? 2017* report presents the latest data on well-being in OECD and partner countries, including how lives have changed since 2005. It includes a special focus on inequalities, the well-being of migrants in OECD countries, and the issue of governance – particularly how people experience and engage with public institutions. To read more, visit: [www.oecd.org/howslife](http://www.oecd.org/howslife).

**For media requests contact:**  
**[news.contact@oecd.org](mailto:news.contact@oecd.org) or +33 1 45 24 97 00**

**For more information contact:**  
**[wellbeing@oecd.org](mailto:wellbeing@oecd.org)**