

LMF2.7: Subjective well-being and satisfaction with work-life balance

Definitions and methodology

Subjective well-being among adults and children can be measured based on self-reported levels of satisfaction among respondents in life-satisfaction surveys.

Data on overall life satisfaction among adults are taken from the Gallup World Poll survey conducted among a nationally representative sample of persons aged 15 and over. Respondents are asked to evaluate the quality of their life at the time of the survey based on the question “What is the quality of your life today?” on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 representing the worst possible life and 10 representing the best possible life. Life satisfaction is presented as the average score among adults. The data are presented for 2009 or the most recent year available.

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.*, 2008). Thus, life satisfaction is presented as the proportion of children reporting a score of 6 or above. The data are presented for 2006.

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. Data on gender and employment are self reported. Dissatisfaction with work-family life balance is based on a person reporting to spending too much or too little time in their job/paid work. The data are presented for 2007.

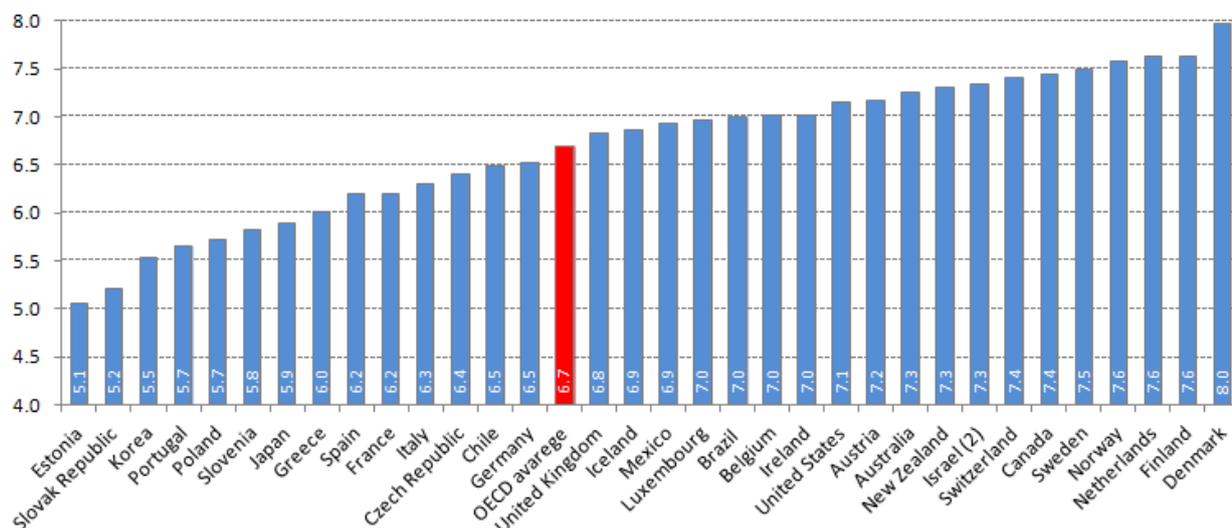
Key findings

Chart 2.7.A presents data on the average level of life satisfaction reported by adults. The highest levels of life satisfaction were reported among adults in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries (except Iceland), where adults reported an average satisfaction level of 7.5 or above on a scale of 0 to 10. The lowest levels of satisfaction were reported in Estonia, Korea and the Slovak Republic where adults reported an average score of 5.5 or below. In Estonia, reported levels of satisfaction were particularly low with the average adult reporting that their life is only about half as good as it could be (score of 5.1)

Chart 2.7.B presents the data on the proportion of children that reported levels of life satisfaction in the top half of the scale (6 or above). Except for Turkey, at least 4 out of 5 children in all OECD countries reported that their life is in the top half of the scale. Life satisfaction (a score of 6 or more) was particularly high in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Spain, where over 90% of children were satisfied with their life.

Other relevant indicators: LMF2.1 Usual weekly working hours among men and women by broad hours groups; LMF2.4 Family-friendly workplace practices; LMF2.5 Time used for work, care and daily household chores.

Chart 2.7.A: Life satisfaction among persons aged 15 and over, 2009¹
Average level of satisfaction reported, on a scale of 0 to 10



0 = worst possible life; 10 = best possible life. Countries are ranked in ascending order of reported life satisfaction.

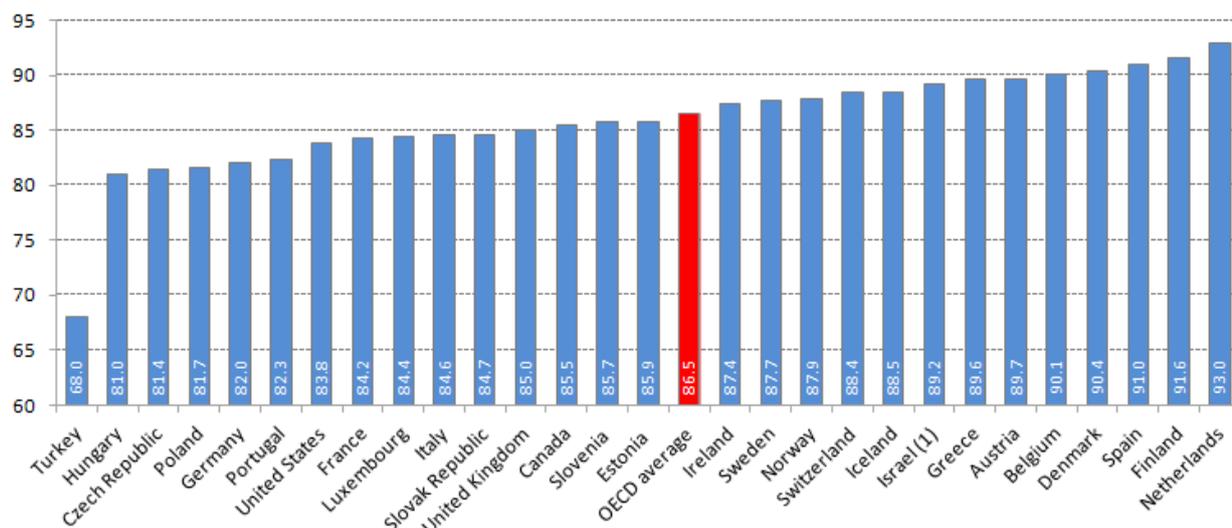
1 2008 Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal and Sweden; 2007 for the Czech Republic, 2006 for the Slovak Republic and Switzerland.

2 The data for Israel are based on the EQLS 2007 survey. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law

Sources: World Gallup Survey, 2006-2009.

Chart 2.7.B: Life satisfaction among children aged 11 to 15, 2006

Proportion of children reporting a life satisfaction score of 6 or above, on a scale of 0 to 10



0 = worst possible life; 10 = best possible life. Countries are ranked in ascending order of proportion of children reporting life satisfaction score of 6 or above.

1 see note 2 for Chart 1.

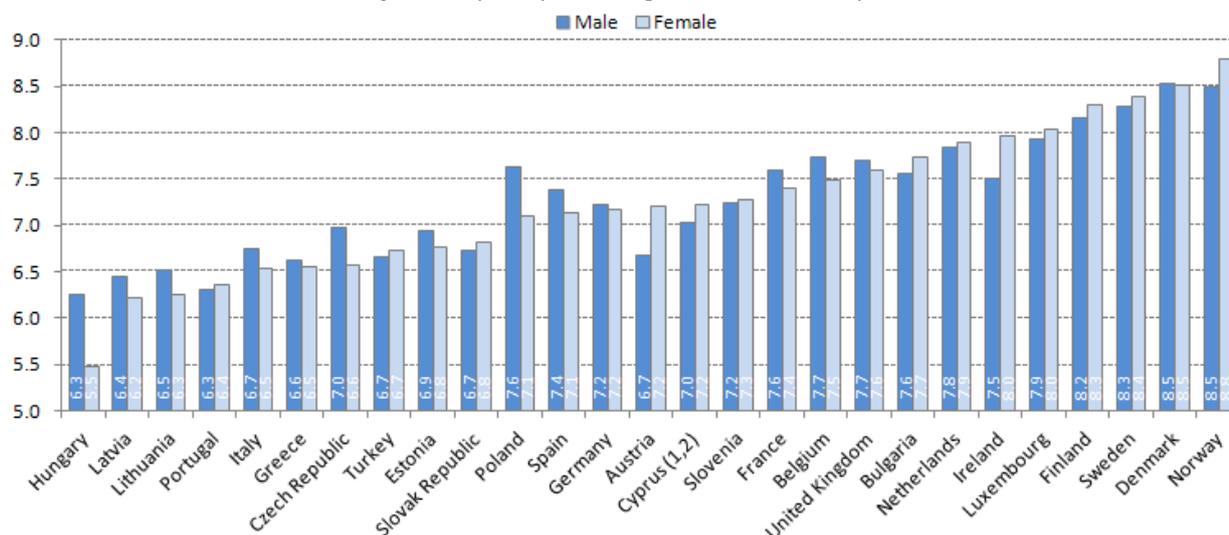
Sources: Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey, 2006.

Chart 2.7.C presents the data on the average levels of life satisfaction among men and women. In most countries the average level of satisfaction is higher among men than women, with the exception of Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands Norway, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden and Turkey. In general the gap in the average life satisfaction between men and women is small. Life satisfaction is highest among the Nordic countries (with the exception of Iceland) for both men and women with an average score greater than 8 in a scale of 1 to 10.

Chart 2.7.D presents data on the average levels of life satisfaction by adult employment status. In all countries respondents who are employed report a higher level of satisfaction, on average, than those who are unemployed. The gap in life satisfaction between employed and unemployed people is largest in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden, where people who are employed report, on average, a life satisfaction score of two points or greater than people who are unemployed.

Chart 2.7.E presents data on the average levels of life satisfaction among employed persons who are either satisfied or dissatisfied with their work-life balance (see *Definitions and methodology* for the definition of satisfaction with work-life balance). Life satisfaction is higher among people who are satisfied with their work-life balance than those who are not, with the exception of the Czech Republic, Estonia and the United Kingdom where people who are dissatisfied with their work-life balance have a higher level of life satisfaction, and in Poland and Norway where there is no difference in the life satisfaction of the two groups. The difference is largest in Turkey where people who are satisfied with their work-life balance report an average life satisfaction score more than one point greater than people who are dissatisfied with their work-life balance.

Chart 2.7.C: Life satisfaction by gender, 2007
 Average level of satisfaction reported, on a scale of 1 to 10

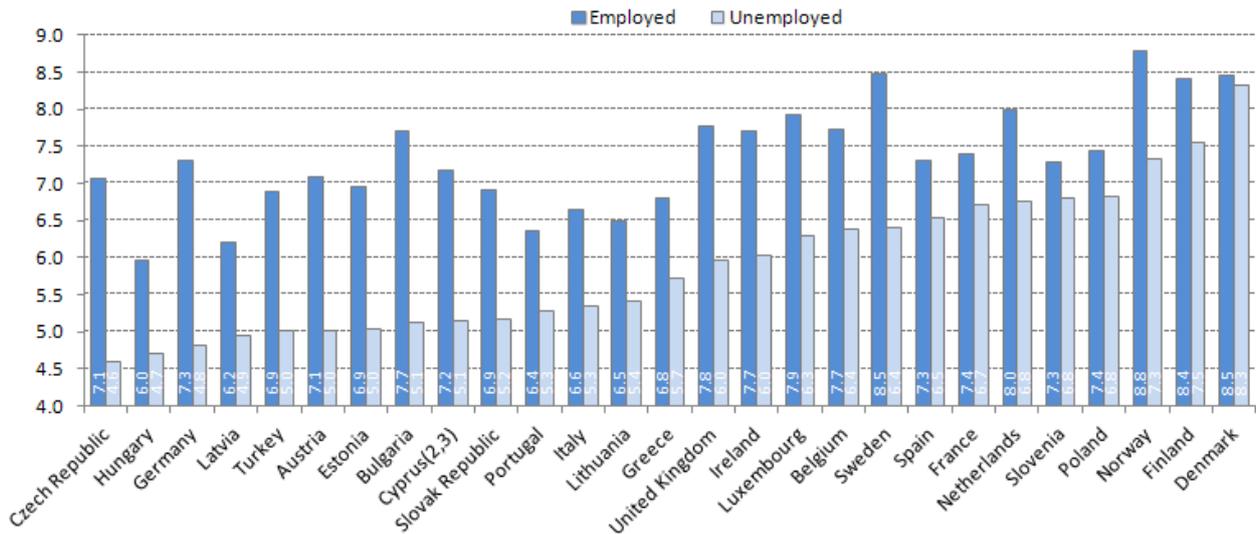


1 = very dissatisfied with life; 10 = very satisfied with life. Countries are ranked in ascending order of reported life satisfaction among women.

1 Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue". 2 Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Sources: European Quality of Life Survey, 2007.

Chart 2.7.D: Life satisfaction by employment status¹, 2007
 Average level of satisfaction reported, on a scale of 1 to 10



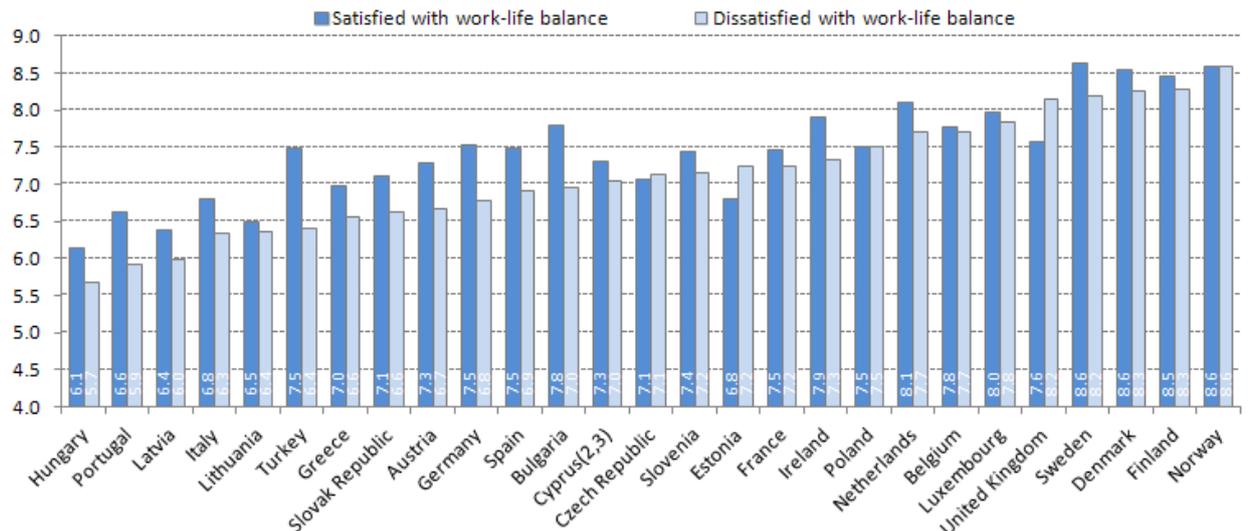
1 = very dissatisfied with life; 10 = best possible life. Countries are ranked in ascending order of reported life satisfaction among unemployed people.

1 Employed persons include those who are self-employed and are on child-related or other leave. Unemployed persons include those who are not employed and are actively seeking employment. Employment status is self reported.

2 and 3 see notes 1 and 2 for Chart 3.

Sources: European Quality of Life Survey, 2007.

Chart 2.7.E: Life satisfaction by satisfaction in work-life balance¹, 2007
 Average level of satisfaction reported, on a scale of 1 to 10



1 = very dissatisfied with life; 10 = best possible life. Countries are ranked in ascending order of reported life satisfaction among people who are dissatisfied with their work-family life balance.

1 A person is said to be dissatisfied with their work-life balance if they report spending too much or too little time on their job/paid work.

2 and 3 see notes 1 and 2 for Chart 3.

Sources: European Quality of Life Survey, 2007.

Comparability and data issues

All three surveys used for this indicator ask respondents to report the level of satisfaction at the time of the survey. As such the response may be influenced by seasonal variation, for example, if the survey was conducted before or after a holiday period. The response may also be affected by temporary changes in the respondent's personal situations such as a family bereavement or promotion at work, and may not reflect their overall life satisfaction.

For each of the three surveys life satisfaction is reported on a numerical scale. While the scales are similar in range the definitions vary slightly and as such responses between the surveys should not be compared. However, there is a great deal of agreement in the relative life satisfactions scores between the surveys for each country. For example, as a reference, the level of satisfaction reported among adults in the Gallup World Poll survey (range of 0 to 10) and the European Quality of Life survey (range of 1 to 10) are strongly correlated with a correlation coefficient of 0.80 between the countries.

Sources and further reading: European Quality of Life Survey, 2007 <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/qualityoflife/eqls/2007/index.htm> ; Gallup World Poll, 2006-2009 <http://www.gallup.com/se/social-economic-analysis.aspx>; Health Behaviour in School-Aged children, 2006 <http://www.hbsc.org/index.html> ; Currie C, Gabhainn SN, Godeau E, Roberts, C Smith R Currie D Picket W Richter M Morgan A Barnekow Rasmussen V (2008), *Inequalities in young people's health : Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) international report from the 2005/2006 survey*, Health policy for children and adolescents series 5, WHO Regional Office for Europe. Copenhagen. Cantril, H (1965). *The pattern of human concern*. Rutgers University Press.