

UNICEF

Office of Research - Innocenti

Child well-being Consultation, Paris.
24th and 25th of November, 2015.

How's Life for Children?

Dominic Richardson - drichardson@unicef.org

Romina Boarini – romina.boarini@oecd.org

unite for
children



Main messages

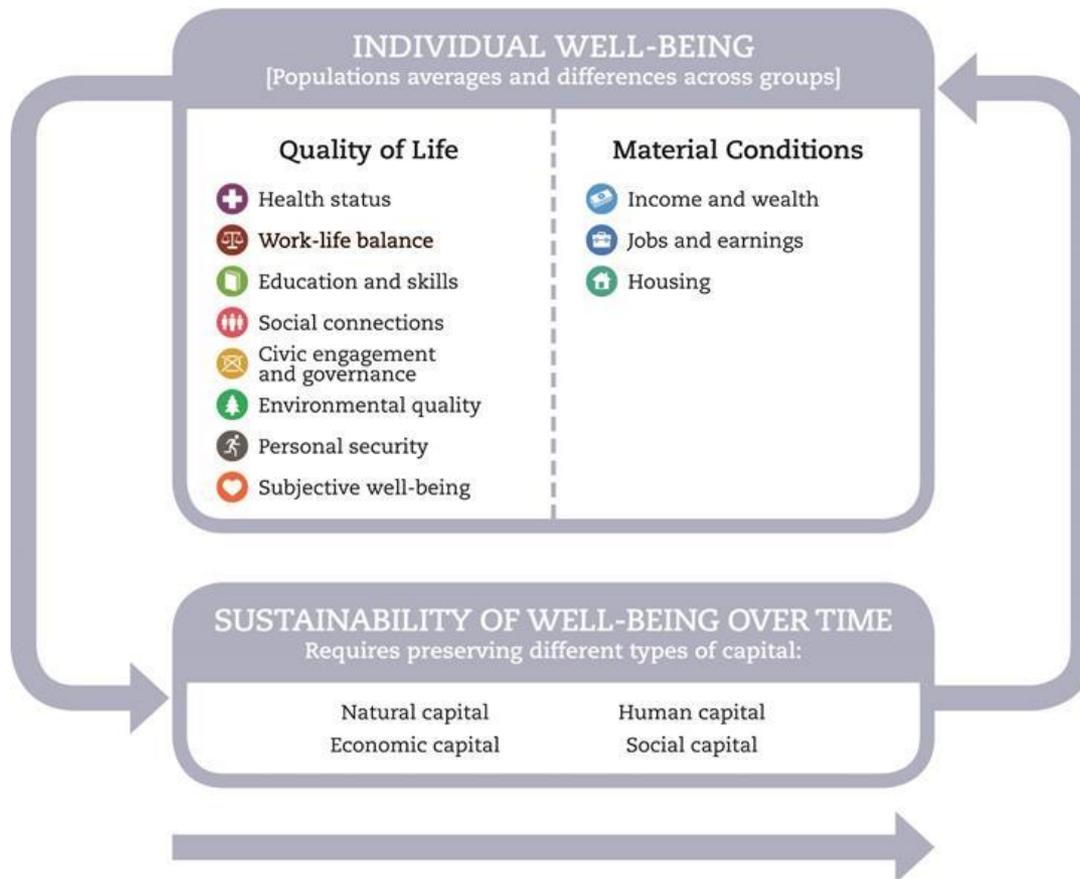
- A significant number of children live in poverty and in workless households in many OECD countries...
- ...and that risk of poverty has increased during the Great Recession
- Children's experiences are also extremely diverse between genders, but across ages and socio-economic background patterns exist:
 - Health risks are substantially higher among adolescents
 - Older children's relationships with schoolmates / parents more difficult
 - Life satisfaction and self-reported health fall as children age.
 - Children from poorer families experience lower well-being than children from richer families in almost all dimensions
- Countries with better child well-being have better adult well-being
- Data limitations, conceptual coverage and quality, remain a concern

Broad context: the OECD Better Life Initiative

- Launched in 2011 as a response to the global movement “Beyond GDP”
- Adding new and better measures; developing statistical capability and **comparability**
 - Key audiences: **National statistical offices** and **policy-makers** (plus interactive **Better Life Index** website for a wider audience)
 - Embedding broader “alternative” indicators of societies’ progress into the **mainstream statistical system**



The OECD well-being framework



- A focus on **people** rather than the economic system or GDP
- Measures **outcomes** rather than inputs and outputs
- Examines both **averages** and **inequalities**
- Considers both **objective** and **subjective** aspects
- Concerned with well-being both **today** and **tomorrow**

Source: OECD (2011) How's Life? Measuring Well-Being, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264121164-en>

How's Life? 2015

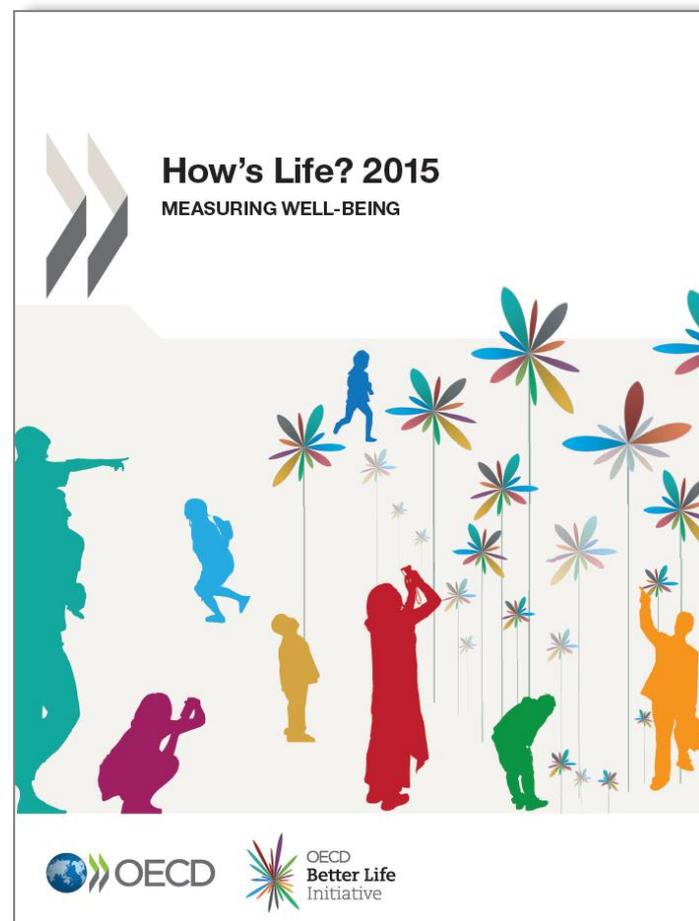
How's Life? in figures: an update on well-being, and changes since 2009

Resources for future well-being

How's life for children?

The value of giving: Volunteering and well-being

Going local: Measuring well-being in regions



Why child well-being matters

- Childhood is a unique period of human development, and a critical phase for preparing future societies to be prosperous and sustainable.
- Wealth of literature links well-being to education, and adult outcomes
 - Future of our societies
- Children's rights matter
- Youth and radicalization
 - Education, aspirations, opportunities

Overlapping frameworks of well-being

How's Life

Jobs and earnings

Work-life balance

Social connections

Civic engagement

Personal security

Subjective well-being

Doing Better for Children

Income and wealth
Housing conditions
Health status
Education and skills
Environmental quality

Risk behaviour
Quality of school life

Organizing dimensions, selecting indicators

- 10 dimensions of child well-being in two groups:
 - the well-being conditions of families where children live
 - the well-being conditions specific to children that focus on the individual level
- Indicators selection as with How's Life?:
 - face validity; focus on summary outcomes; be amenable to change and sensitive to policy interventions; be commonly used and accepted in the relevant literature; ensure comparability across countries and maximum country coverage; and be collected through a recurrent instrument
- Two more from *Doing Better for Children* methodology:
 - Ideally cover *all children* from birth to age 17 inclusive at a minimum
 - whenever possible, the *child* should be the unit of analysis (child-centred approach)

Results by Country: traffic lights

Income and Wealth	Disposable income of households with children	●
	Child income poverty	●
Jobs and Earnings	Children in workless households	●
	Children with a long-term unemployed parent	●
Housing conditions	Average rooms per child	●
	Children in homes that lack basic facilities	●
Environmental quality	Children in homes with poor environmental conditions	●
Health status	Infant mortality	●
	Low birth weight	●
	Self-reported health status	●
	Obesity	●
	Adolescent suicide rate	●
	Teenage birth rate	●
Education and Skills	Reading skills among 15 year olds (PISA)	●
	Creative problem solving among 15 year olds (PISA)	●
	Youth neither in employment nor education/training	●
	Educational deprivation	●
Civic engagement	Intention to vote	●
	Civic participation	●
Social and family environment	Children who find it easy to talk to their parents	●
	Students reporting having kind classmates	●
	Students feeling a lot of pressure from schoolwork	●
	Students liking school	●
	Sense of belonging in school at 15 years old (PISA)	●
	Time children spend with parents	●
Personal security	Child homicide rate	●
	Bullying	●
Subjective well-being	Life satisfaction	●

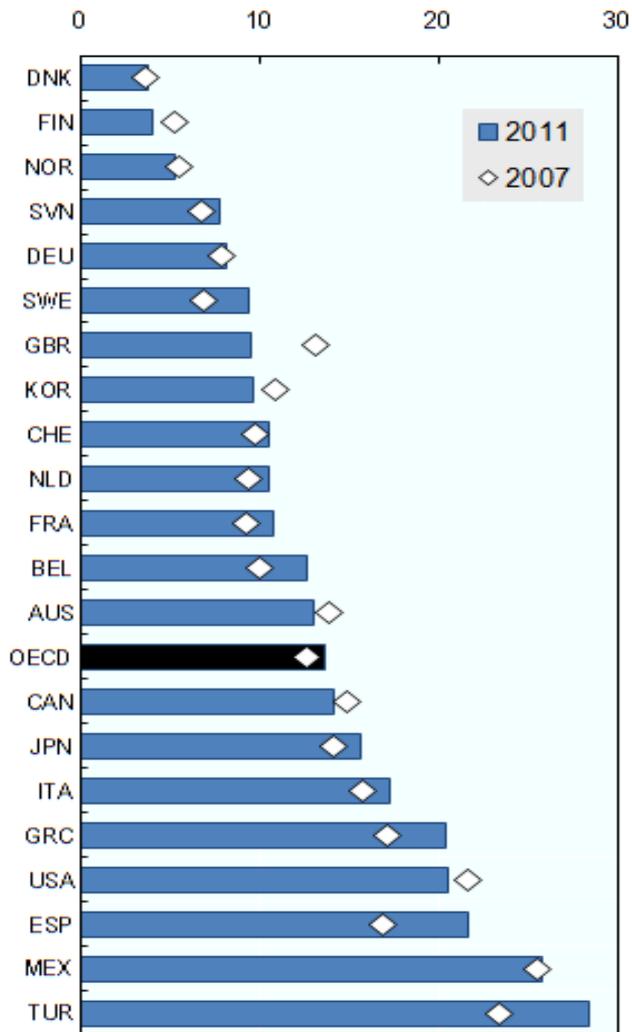
How's life for children in Sweden?

- Over half of indicators in the top third!
- Strong on indicators for the conditions of families
- PISA results and civic participation are low performing areas...
- But... no country does well across the board!

Some examples: income, health and education

Well-being conditions of families where children live	
Income and Wealth	Disposable income of households with children*
	Child income poverty*
	Jobs and earnings
	Children in workless households
	Children with a long-term unemployed parent
Well-being conditions specific to children	
Health status	Infant mortality*
	Low birth weight*
	Self-reported health status
	Overweight and obesity*
	Adolescent suicide rates
	Teenage birth rates
Education and skills	PISA mean reading score**
	PISA creative problem solving score**
	Youth neither in employment nor in education or training*
	Educational deprivation*

Income: child poverty remains high



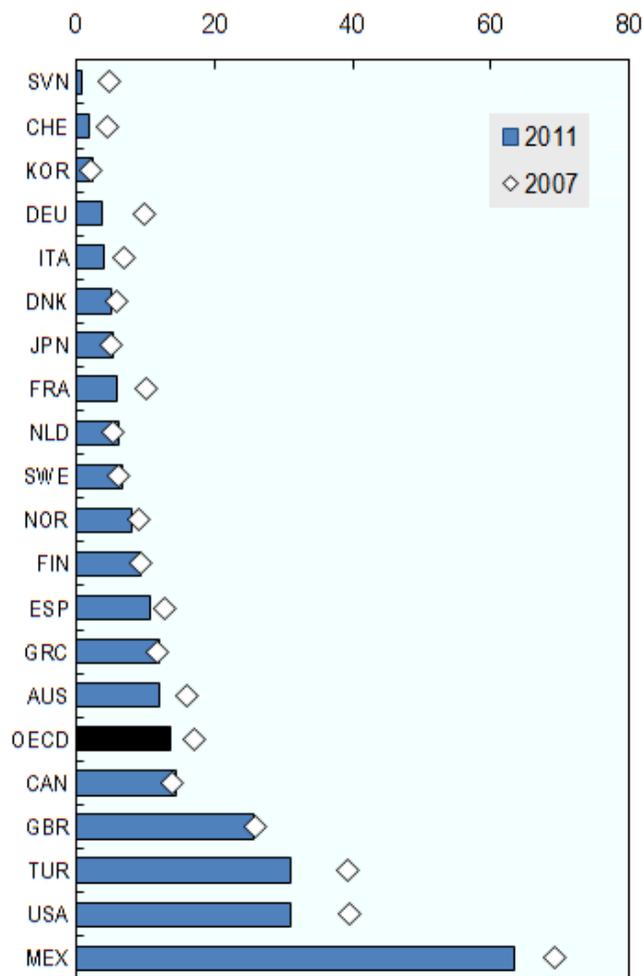
Findings on distributions:

- By gender, difficult to determine at the household level, but girls in most countries are less likely to be educationally deprived
- Joblessness more common in single parent households
- Parents with young children have less space, and more difficulty accessing the labour market

Note: The latest available year is 2012 for Australia, Hungary, Mexico and the Netherlands; 2010 for Belgium and 2009 for Japan.

Source: OECD Income Distribution Database, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/459aa7f1-en>

Health: Fewer teenage births

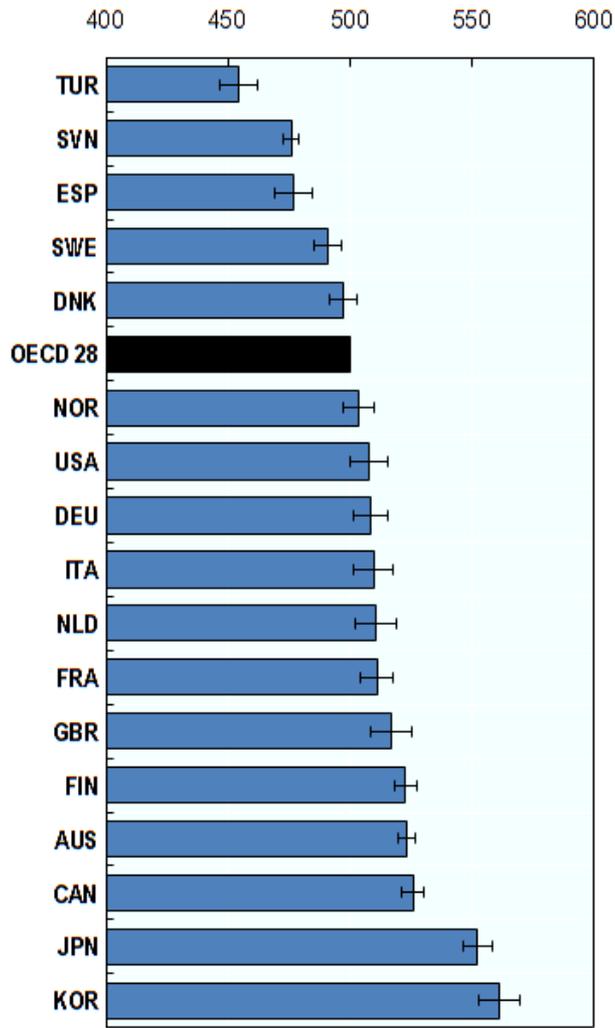


Findings on distributions

- Girls report lower levels of perceived health, but boys are more often overweight, and at a higher risk of suicide
- Greater FAS often means higher perceived health, lower rates of obesity
- Poor health reporting increases with age, and reported life satisfaction falls. Older children are less likely to be obese or overweight.

Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>

Education: Literate problem-solvers



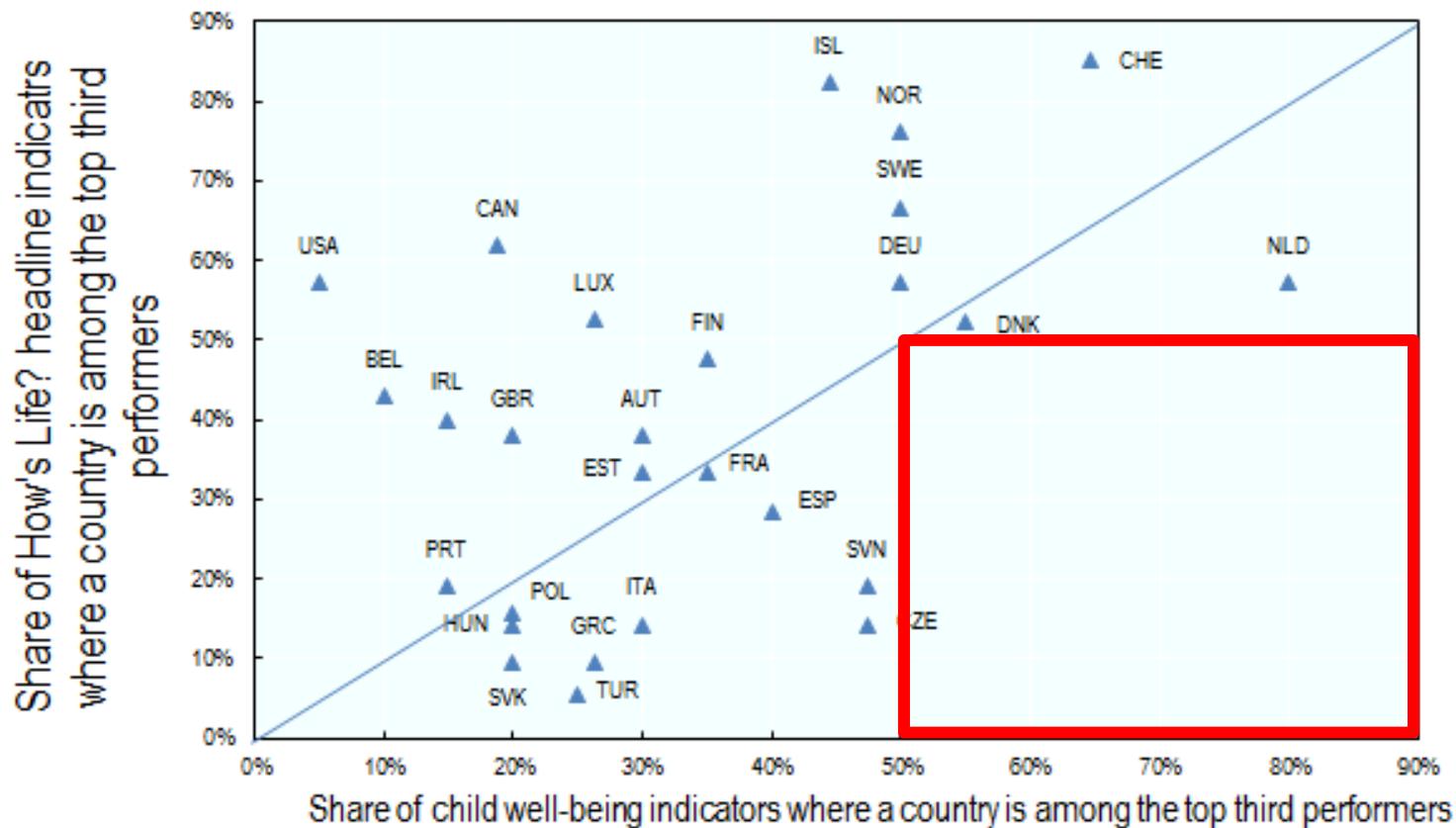
Findings on distributions

- Yet girls tend to have advantages in reading, and boys in problem solving. Girls more often NEET
- High SES, higher literacy. Low SES is associated with greater educational deprivation, disliking school. Family structure may play an indirect role...
- School children find peers less kind as the age, but reported bullying also falls

Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval of the national estimate.

Source: PISA 2012, OECD (2014b), PISA 2012 Results: Creative Problem Solving (Volume V), Students' Skills in Tackling Real-Life Problems, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/19963785>

Correlation between child well-being and 'overall' well-being

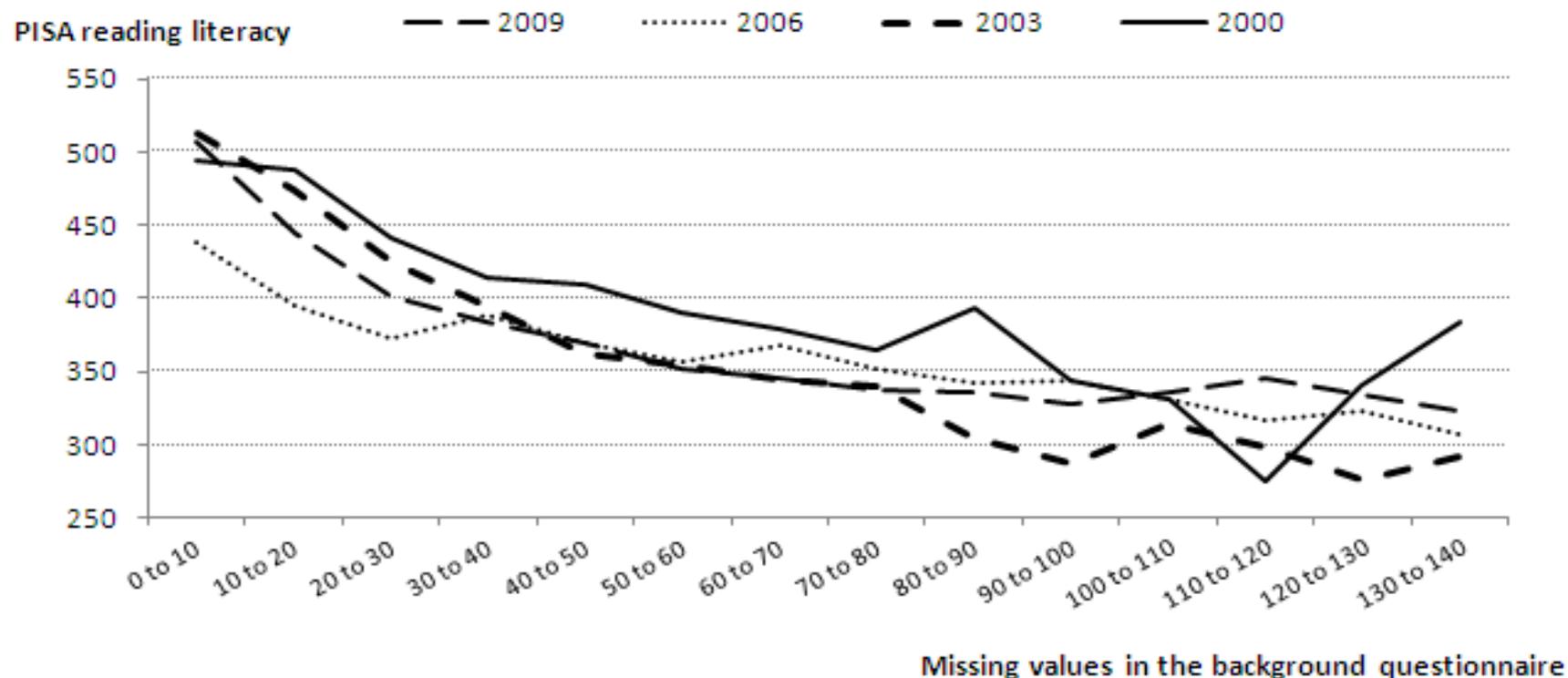


Statistical developments

- Key developments include:
 - Inclusion of additional indicators and dimensions
 - Links to a matching adult framework
 - Breakdowns by gender, social gradient, and age where possible
- Systematic testing for non-response
 - Adjustment, and checks for deviation from original estimates

For some children non-response is influenced by their abilities

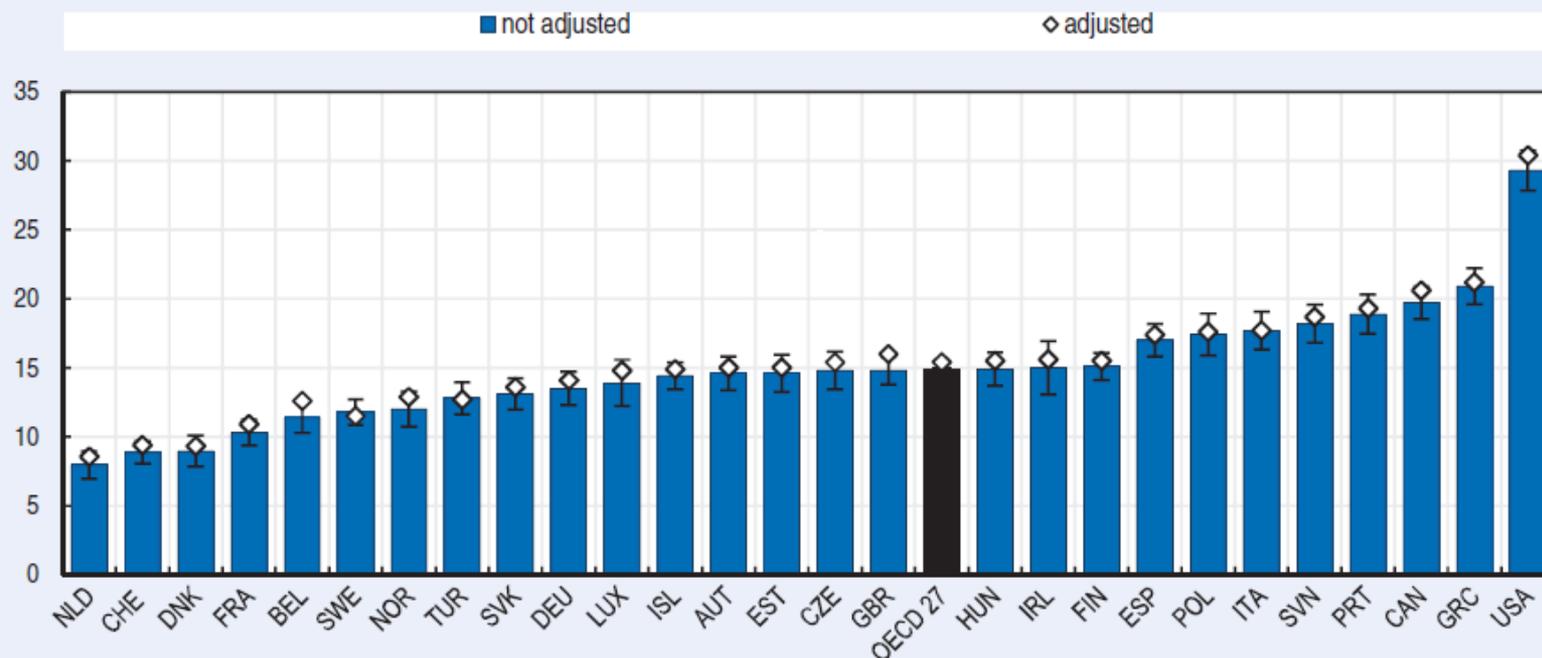
Less able students are not completing important information in PISA



Source: OECD calculations, OECD PISA (various waves)

Estimates are not affected, but ranks can change

Figure 4.1. **Overweight children**
Percentage of 11,13 and 15-years-old, 2010



Statistical developments

- Key developments include:
 - Inclusion of additional indicators and dimensions
 - Links to an matching adult framework
 - Breakdowns by gender, social gradient, and age where possible
- Systematic testing for non-response
 - Adjustment, and checks for deviation from original estimates
- But...
 - Outcomes not linked to policy responses
 - No appreciation of complementarity or tradeoffs
- **And statistical challenges remain for future work...**

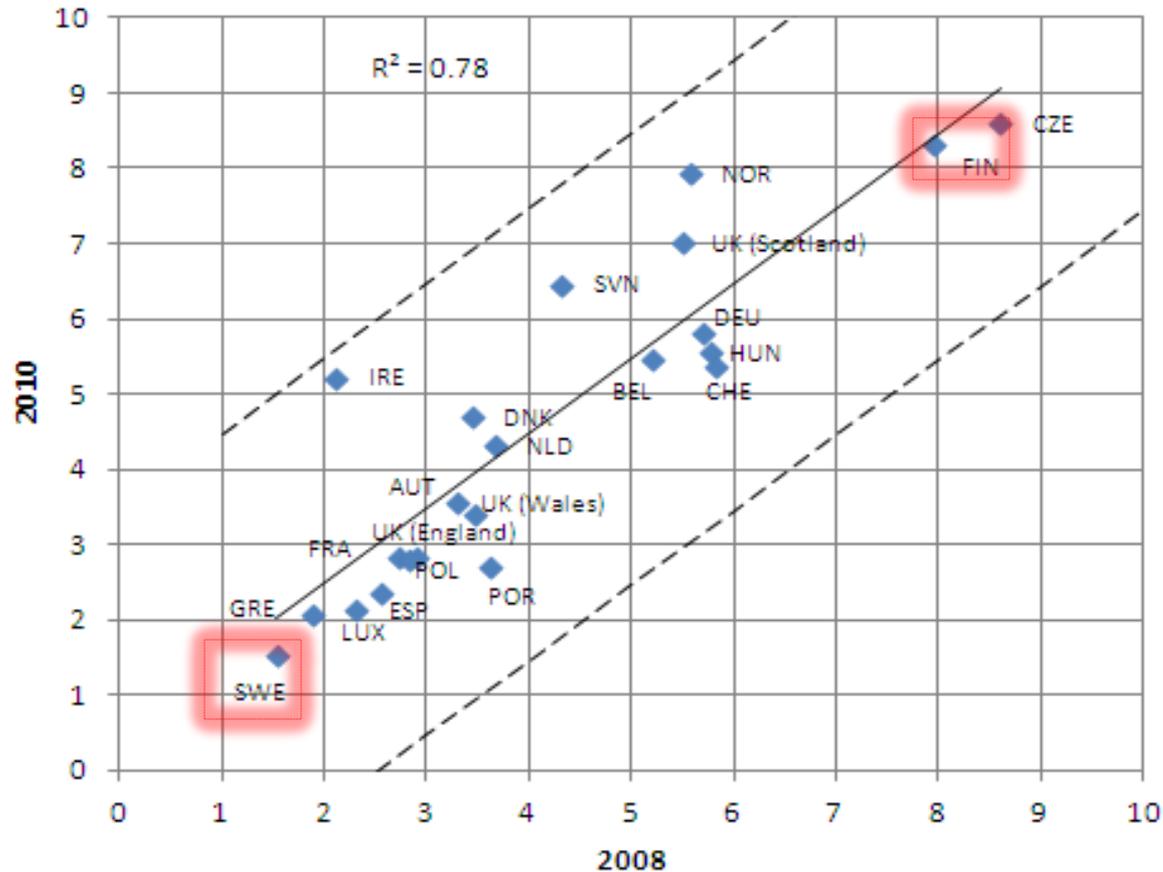
Some conceptual / coverage concerns

- Lack of purpose built cross-national surveys
 - Children's World? MYWEB?
- Adolescent focus
- Not all data can be disaggregated
- Absence of information about duration and persistence
- Longitudinal surveys?
- Systematic exclusion of children from surveys
- Non-response on key items, selected responses (Revelin?)
- Changes to surveys over time

Some children are systematically excluded

Special educational needs

No country year-on-year differences deviate substantially from the best fit line



Future OECD Better Life follow-up

- We're considering update child well-being indicators every 2 or 3 years in collaboration with ELS
- We may carry out in-depth analysis of the following:
 - Relationship between parental time (quality and quantity)/education and various child well-being outcomes
 - Relationship between child emotional and social development and academic skills
 - Life-time impacts of child well-being

Thanks!

Contacts: romina.boarini@OECD.org
drichardson@unicef.org