

How's Life in the Netherlands?

In general, the Netherlands performs well across the OECD's headline well-being indicators relative to the other OECD countries. **Household net wealth** was about half of the OECD average level in 2015, but **average earnings** (around 53 000 USD in 2016) are nearly 20% higher than the OECD average. The Netherlands benefits from comparatively low levels of both **labour market insecurity** and **job strain**. In addition, less than 1% of employees regularly **work very long hours**, the lowest share in the OECD. However, the **long-term unemployment rate** in 2016 stood at 3%, above the OECD average of 2.3%. Housing conditions in the Netherlands are good, but **air quality** (assessed in terms of exposure to PM_{2.5} air pollution) is close to the OECD average. 77% of the adult working-age population have completed at least an upper secondary education, compared to the OECD average of 75%, and the literacy and numeracy skills of Dutch adults are among the highest in the OECD. Personal security is also good, and **life satisfaction** is just above the OECD average level.

The Netherlands' average level of current well-being: Comparative strengths and weaknesses














Note: This chart shows the Netherlands' 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


Change in the Netherlands' average well-being over the past 10 years


Dimension	Description	Change
 Income and wealth	Household net adjusted disposable income increased steadily by 8% from 2005 to 2009, but then fell gradually until 2013, before resuming growth in 2014. Its current level is now 8% higher (in real terms) than in 2005. Household net wealth fell by 16% cumulatively between 2010 and 2015, in real terms.*	↗ ↘
 Jobs and earnings	The employment rate in 2016 was 3.3 percentage points higher than in 2005 but remains over 1 percentage point below its 2008 peak. Despite minor setbacks in 2011 and 2014, real earnings have increased overall in the last decade, and are now 8% higher than in 2005. Labour market insecurity has risen since 2010, and long-term unemployment rose sharply in recent years, peaking at 3% in 2015. The proportion of employees experiencing job strain has remained relatively stable.	↗ ↗ ↘ ↘ ↔
 Housing conditions	The number of rooms per person has remained stable over the past decade. Housing has become slightly less affordable, with the proportion of disposable income spent on housing rising from 19.1% in 2005 to 19.5% in 2015. The share of people living in dwellings without basic sanitary facilities has been kept at 0% over the past decade.	↔ ↘ ↔
 Work-life balance	The proportion of employees working 50 hours or more per week has seen little change over the last 10 years.	↔
 Health status	Despite falling slightly between 2014 and 2015, life expectancy at birth has increased by around 2 years overall since 2005. The percentage of adults reporting to be in "good" or "very good" health has remained stable.	↗ ↔
 Education and skills	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 increased by 1.2 percentage points.	↗
 Social connections	The percentage of people who have relatives or friends whom they can count on to help in case of need has fallen from 94% to 90% in the last 10 years.	↘
 Civic engagement	Voter turnout has increased over the past decade. In the 2017 general elections, the percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote stood at 82%: this is 2 points higher than in 2006, and 7 points higher than in 2010.	↗
 Environmental quality	Satisfaction with local water quality has remained relatively stable in the Netherlands. However, annual exposure to PM _{2.5} air pollution has improved over the past decade, and in 2013 was 10% lower than in 2005.	↔ ↗
 Personal security	Compared to 2005, personal security has improved: the rate of deaths due to assault has fallen from 1.1 to 0.6 per 100 000, and the share of people who report feeling safe when walking alone at night has risen from 73% to 81%.	↗ ↗
 Subjective well-being	Current life satisfaction levels are very similar to those reported a decade earlier.	↔


* Household net wealth data for 2010 and 2015 are drawn from different sources in the Netherlands, which may limit their comparability.


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.

The Netherlands' resources and risks for future well-being: Illustrative indicators

 Natural capital		
Indicator	Tier	Change
Greenhouse gas emissions from domestic production	3	↗ 2005-2015
CO ₂ emissions from domestic consumption	2	↗ 2001-2011
Exposure to PM _{2.5} air pollution	2	↗ 2005-2013
Forest area	3	↔ 2005-2014
Renewable freshwater resources	2	.. Long-term annual avg
Freshwater abstractions	2	.. 2012
Threatened birds	2	.. Latest available
Threatened mammals	2	.. Latest available
Threatened plants	3	.. Latest available

 Human capital		
Indicator	Tier	Change
Young adult educational attainment	2	↗ 2014-2016
Educational expectancy	1	.. 2015
Cognitive skills at age 15	1	.. 2015
Adult skills	1	.. 2011/2012
Long-term unemployment	3	↘ 2005-2016
Life expectancy at birth	2	↗ 2005-2015
Smoking prevalence	2	↗ 2005-2013
Obesity prevalence	1	.. 2015

 Economic capital		
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	2	↔ 2005-2015
Household debt	3	↘ 2005-2016
Household net wealth*	3	↘ 2010-2015
Financial net worth of government	2	↘ 2005-2016
Banking sector leverage	3	↘ 2005-2016

 Social capital		
Indicator	Tier	Change
Trust in others	1	.. 2013
Trust in the police	2	.. 2013
Trust in the national government	1	↔ 2005-2016
Voter turnout	1	↗ 2006-2017
Government stakeholder engagement	3	.. 2014
Volunteering through organisations	1	.. 2011/2012

*Household net wealth data for 2010 and 2015 are drawn from different sources in the Netherlands, which may limit their comparability.

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

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

HOW LARGE ARE WELL-BEING INEQUALITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS?

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 unevenly 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 working hours and life satisfaction in the Netherlands are lower than for the OECD on average. However, wealth is more unevenly distributed than elsewhere: the wealthiest 10% of Dutch households own almost 70% of the country’s wealth, the second highest share among OECD countries.

Across OECD countries, **women** typically fare worse than **men** on earnings, low pay and employment. Moreover, in the Netherlands, women are 14% more likely than men to be unemployed. Gender gaps (in favour of men) are also comparatively large in terms of adult skills. However, in the Netherlands women on average have more time off (time spent on leisure and personal care) than men – a situation that is usually reversed in the majority of OECD countries.

Across most OECD countries, **young people** are at a disadvantage on the job market, compared to the **middle-aged**. In the Netherlands the employment gap is relatively small, but young Dutch people earn almost 60% less than the older age group – a larger gap than in the OECD on average. Wealth gaps are also comparatively large. In addition, for several outcomes in which younger people typically outperform the middle aged (e.g. perceived health, long working hours, time spent socialising, quality of support network and life satisfaction), their comparative advantage in the Netherlands is smaller than in most OECD countries.

Throughout the OECD, people with a **tertiary education** tend to fare better than those with only a **secondary education** across a range of well-being outcomes. The Netherlands shows mixed outcomes regarding the educational divide. For example, these gaps are narrower than in most OECD countries when skills are considered, but they are relatively large in other areas: individuals with a secondary education are almost twice as likely as those with a university degree to be unemployed, and those with jobs are also more likely to work long hours.

Well-being inequalities in the Netherlands

- top third of OECD countries
- middle third of OECD countries
- bottom third of OECD countries
- data gaps
- no measures

	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				●

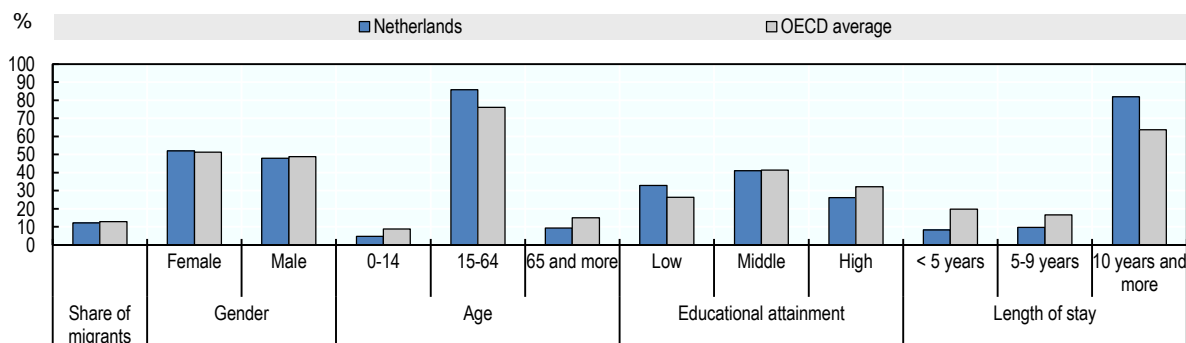
HOW'S LIFE FOR MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS?

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 the Netherlands and OECD?

More than one in ten people living in the Netherlands (12%) were born elsewhere, slightly below the OECD average (13%), and 52% of them are women (51% for the OECD on average). Migrants in the Netherlands are more likely to be of working age than in the OECD on average (86% of them are aged 15 to 64, as compared to 76% across the OECD), and are more likely to have a middle educational attainment than a low or a high level. More than eight in ten migrants arrived in the Netherlands ten years ago or more.

Share of migrants in the total population and selected characteristics

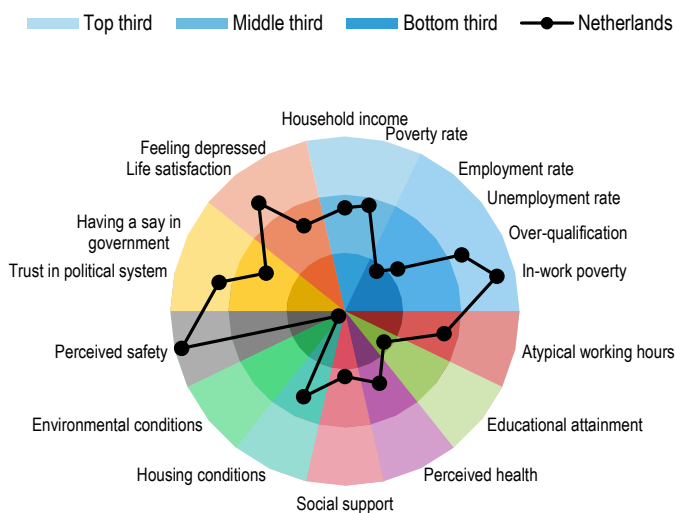


How is migrants' well-being in the Netherlands?

Compared with the migrant populations of other OECD countries, migrants living in the Netherlands have a relatively good situation regarding over-qualification, in-work poverty, perceived safety, trust in the political system and life satisfaction. Moreover, migrants settled in the Netherlands rank in the middle third of OECD-country migrants for 9 out of 17 selected well-being indicators. They are in the bottom third for employment, educational attainment and environmental conditions.

As in many other OECD countries, migrants in the Netherlands tend to experience lower well-being outcomes than the native-born population: in the Netherlands, this is the case for 8 out of 12 selected well-being indicators. However, migrants in the Netherlands are just as likely as the native-born to work atypical working hours, and to report similar levels of perceived safety, trust in the political system and feeling depressed.

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



Comparison of migrants' and native-born well-being in the Netherlands

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

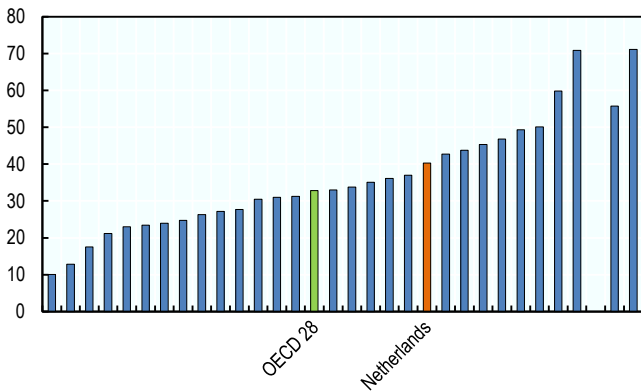
GOVERNANCE AND WELL-BEING IN THE NETHERLANDS

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 the Netherlands, just over 40% of the population feel that they have a say in what their government does, which is higher than the OECD average of 33%. In recent years, voter turnout has slightly increased, with almost 82% of the population casting a ballot in 2017, compared to slightly over 80% in 2006. When asked about whether or not corruption is widespread across government, 40% of Dutch people answered "yes", as compared to 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

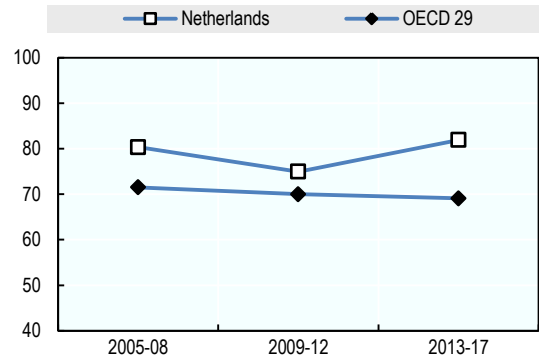
Percentage of people aged 16-65 who feel that they have a say in what the government does, around 2012



Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC database)

Voter turnout

Percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote



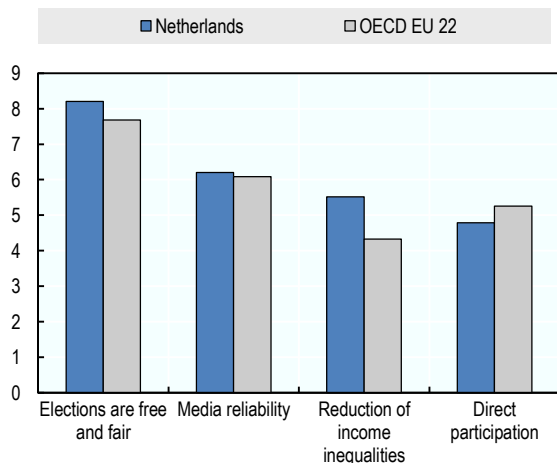
Note: Data refers to parliamentary elections. If more than one election took place over the time period indicated, the simple average voter turnout from all elections is shown. The OECD average sums elections that occurred over the time periods shown in 29 OECD countries.

Source: IDEA dataset

Overall, Dutch satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country is slightly above the OECD European average level. People in the Netherlands tend to be relatively satisfied with the freedom and fairness of elections (8.2 on a 0-10 scale), but less so with policies aimed at reducing income inequalities (5.5), and with the existence of direct participation mechanisms at the local level (4.8). Meanwhile, satisfaction with public services varies according to whether people have used those services in the last year: those with direct recent experience of using health and education services tend to be more satisfied than those without. In the Netherlands, satisfaction with both health and education services is above the OECD European average level.

People’s satisfaction with different elements of democracy

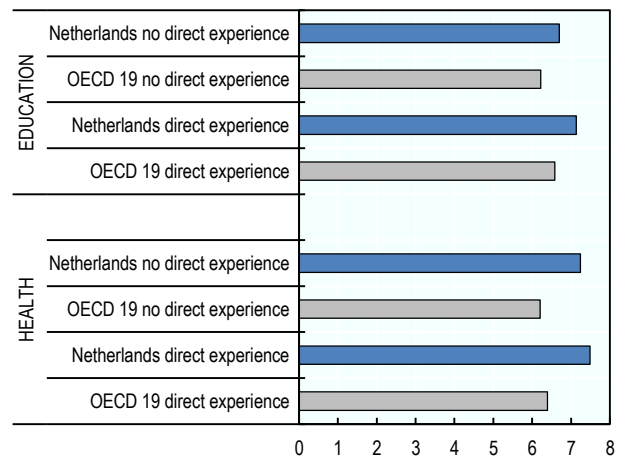
Mean score on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction with elements of democracy, 2012



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

Mean score on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction, 2013



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.

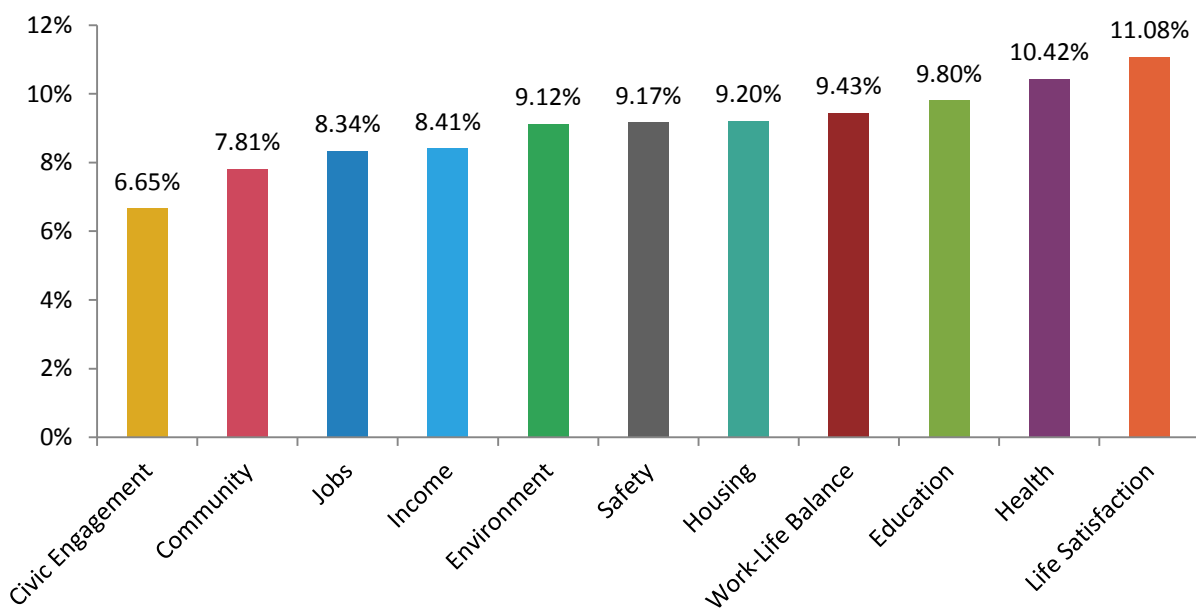


Users can also share their index with other people in their networks, as well as with the OECD. This allows the OECD to gather valuable information on the importance that users attach to various life dimensions, and how these preferences differ across countries and population groups.

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO PEOPLE IN NETHERLANDS?

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 156,700 people in the Netherlands have visited the website making the Netherlands the 13th country overall in traffic to the website. The top cities are Amsterdam (17% of visits), The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Groningen.

The following country findings reflect the ratings voluntarily shared with the OECD by 1,219 website visitors in the Netherlands. Findings are only indicative and are not representative of the population at large. **For Dutch users of the Better Life Index, life satisfaction, health and education are the three most important topics** (shown below).¹ Up to date information, including a breakdown of participants in each country by gender and age can be found here: www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#NLD.



¹ User information for the Netherlands 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 the Netherlands from the *How's Life? 2017* report** (pages 1-6) and shows what **Dutch 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.

For media requests contact:
news.contact@oecd.org or +33 1 45 24 97 00

For more information contact:
wellbeing@oecd.org