

Social isolation

Did you know?

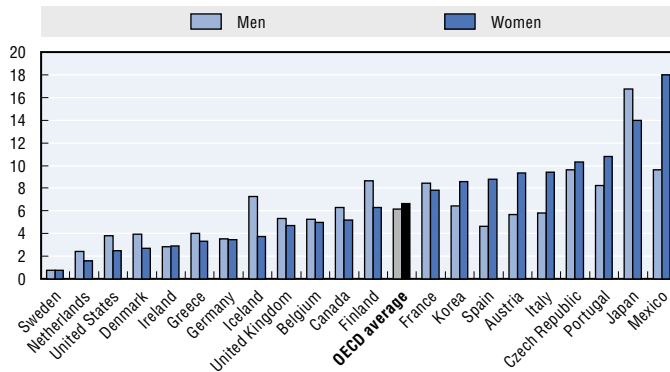
The *World Value Surveys* ask respondents about their contact with other people in their normal daily lives. In the latest wave of surveys (1999 to 2002) 56 countries supplied information on whether respondents “rarely” or “never” had contact with friends, work colleagues and other acquaintances in places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

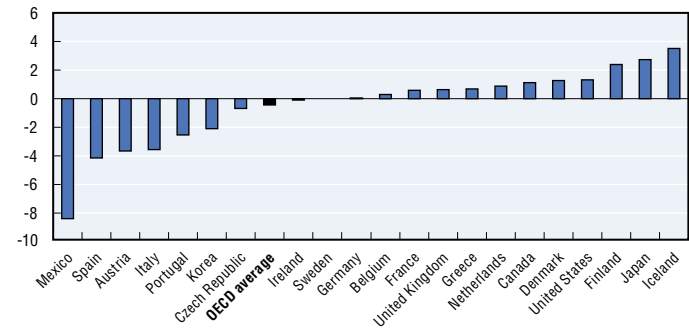
Percentage of persons who rarely or never spend time with friends, colleagues or others in social groups



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.