How’s Life in Spain?

Additional information, including the data used in this country note, can be found here: www.oecd.org/statistics/Hows-Life-2015-country-notes-data.xlsx
HOW’S LIFE IN SPAIN IN 2015?

During the past few years Spain has faced several challenges to the material well-being of its citizens. Average household disposable income per capita and average earnings dropped substantially between 2009 and 2013. Spanish employees also experience very low job security. Between 2009 and 2014 the long-term unemployment rate increased by 8.7 percentage points to 12.9%, the second highest rate in the OECD.

Spain performs comparatively well in terms of work-life balance and health status. Life expectancy in Spain is 83.2 years and among the highest in the OECD, while time off (time spent on leisure and personal care by full-time employees) is also above the OECD average. With respect to educational attainment, Spain ranks towards the bottom of the OECD: only 55.6% of the Spanish adult working-age population have completed at least an upper secondary education compared to the OECD average of 77.2%. The literacy and numeracy skills of Spanish adults are also low on average compared to those of adults in other OECD countries. Regarding social network support, 94.7% of the Spanish report having friends or relatives that they can count on in times of trouble compared to the OECD average of 88%.

Current well-being in Spain

This chart shows areas of well-being strengths and weaknesses in Spain, based on a ranking of all OECD countries. Longer lines show areas of relative strength, while shorter lines show areas of relative weakness. For more details, see: www.oecd.org/statistics/Hows-Life-2015-country-notes-data.xlsx.

Resources for future well-being in Spain

Beyond measuring well-being today, How’s Life? 2015 looks at some of the resources (or “capital stocks”) that will shape people’s well-being in the future. These include aspects of natural capital, human capital, social capital and economic capital.

For example, trust in other people is an important component of social capital. In Spain trust in others lies above the European OECD average level: on a scale from 0 (“you do not trust any other person”) to 10 (“most people can be trusted”), the average score given by the Spanish is 6.3, while the European OECD average stands at 5.8.
HOW’S LIFE FOR CHILDREN IN SPAIN?

Giving children a good start in life is important both for well-being today, and in the future.

The material well-being of Spanish children reflects the difficult economic conditions in Spain. For example, child income poverty is among the highest in the OECD: 21.7% of Spanish children live in a household with a disposable income of less than half of the Spanish median income.

By contrast, Spanish children report a high health status on average, and the Spanish adolescent suicide rate is the second lowest in the OECD.

10.7% of Spanish teenagers aged 15 to 19 are neither in employment nor in education or training, well above the OECD average of 7.1%. The reading and creative problem-solving skills of Spanish students lie below the OECD average level. At the same time 20.7% of Spanish students feel a lot of pressure from schoolwork, the second highest share in the OECD.

Spain ranks towards the top of the OECD in terms of personal security for children. Spanish children have the highest life satisfaction in the OECD.

### Inequalities in child well-being

Across all OECD countries there are large inequalities in child well-being. Children from wealthier households enjoy both better material living conditions, and a higher quality of life, on average. Spanish children from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to perceive their health as fair or poor than children from high socio-economic backgrounds. However, the difference is smaller than in the OECD on average. Furthermore, there are also substantial differences in life satisfaction.

#### Inequalities in health status

Percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 15 with self-perceived fair or poor health

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<td>11 years</td>
<td>11.2</td>
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<td>13 years</td>
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<td>15 years</td>
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#### Inequalities in subjective well-being

Average life satisfaction score of children aged 11,13 and 15 on a scale from 0 to 10 (highest)

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THE VALUE OF GIVING: VOLUNTEERING AND WELL-BEING

Volunteering makes an important “hidden contribution” to well-being, producing goods and services that are not captured by conventional economic statistics. When you add up the value of the time people spend on volunteering in OECD countries, it amounts to roughly 2% of GDP per year.

Volunteering in Spain and the OECD

The main sector of volunteering activity in Spain is education and culture, followed by social and health services. Volunteering through an organisation (termed “formal volunteering”) is less common in Spain than in other OECD countries. 18.1% of the Spanish working-age population report that they engaged in formal volunteering during the past 12 months, one of the lowest shares in the OECD area. The OECD average stands at 34.2%.

How often do people volunteer? 44.5% of the Spanish who participate in formal volunteering do so less than once a month. However, Spanish volunteers tend to engage in volunteering activities on a more frequent basis than the average OECD volunteer: the share of formal volunteers who volunteer every day is 9.5% and lies above the OECD average of 4.7%.

Who volunteers? Across the OECD area, people with a university degree are more likely to participate in formal volunteering than those with lower levels of education. Similarly, people who are in employment are more likely to volunteer than those who are unemployed. Participation in formal volunteering also increases with people’s level of household income.

Volunteering brings benefits for volunteers themselves, as well as for the people and communities they help. For example, people who engage in volunteering are more likely to have higher literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills and receive higher wages, on average, relative to non-volunteers.

In OECD countries, older people who volunteer formally are more likely to report a better health status than non-volunteers. Formal volunteers also report higher life satisfaction than non-volunteers in all OECD countries.
GOING LOCAL: MEASURING WELL-BEING IN REGIONS

Where people live has an important impact on their opportunities to live well. There can be large differences in average levels of well-being in different regions within the same country. How’s Life in your Region? and the OECD regional well-being web-tool assess performance across 9 dimensions of well-being in the 362 OECD large regions – 19 of which are in Spain. Drawing on this work, How’s Life? 2015 includes a special focus on measuring well-being in regions.

Regional well-being in Spain
Performance of Spanish regions across selected well-being indicators relative to the other OECD regions

Regional gaps in material living conditions

Compared to other OECD countries regional inequalities in income and jobs are relatively large in Spain. Household adjusted disposable income is 1.7 times higher in Basque Country than in Extremadura. Regarding relative income poverty, while 6.3% of people in Navarra have an income of less than half of the Spanish median income, the share is 25.5% in Extremadura as well as Melilla. Unemployment rates range from 15.7% in Navarra to 34.8% in Andalusia. This gap (19.1 percentage points) is the second largest gap in regional unemployment rates in the OECD.

Regional differences in people’s quality of life

Regarding educational attainment, 73.2% of the labour force has at least a secondary education in Basque Country, while this share is only 44.2% in Extremadura. This gap (29 percentage points) is one of the largest regional differences in educational attainment in the OECD area.

In Spain regional variation of air quality is smaller than in Italy and France, but larger than Portugal.

The share of households with a broadband connection ranges from 81% in Ceuta to only 60% in Extremadura.

* For more information (including data for other regions) see the www.oecd.org/statistics/Hows-Life-2015-country-notes-data.xlsx.
BETTER LIFE INDEX

The Better Life Index is an interactive web application that invites citizens to compare well-being across OECD countries and beyond on the basis of the set of well-being indicators explored 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, on how these preferences differ across countries, and on the demographic characteristics of users.

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO PEOPLE IN SPAIN?

Since its launch in May 2011, the Better Life Index has attracted over seven million visits from just about every country on the planet and has received over 15 million page views. To date, over 189,000 people in Spain have visited the website making Spain the 9th country overall in traffic to the website. The top cities are Madrid (25% of visits), Barcelona (15%), Valencia, Seville and Granada.

The following country findings reflect the ratings voluntarily shared by 2,800 website visitors in Spain. Findings are only indicative and are not representative of the population at large. For Spanish users of the Better Life Index, health, education and work-life balance 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 here: www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#ESP

¹ User information for Spain is based on shared indexes submitted between May 2011 and April 2015.
The **OECD Better Life Initiative**, launched in 2011, focuses on the aspects of life that matter to people and that shape their quality of life. The Initiative comprises a set of regularly updated well-being indicators and an analysis, published in the *How’s Life?* report as well as an interactive web application, the **Better Life Index**. It also includes a number of methodological and research projects to improve the information base towards a better understanding of well-being 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 brochure presents **selected findings for Spain from the How’s Life? report** (pages 2-5) and shows what **Spanish users of the Better Life Index** are telling us about their well-being priorities (page 6). A supporting Excel file with the data underlying the graphs shown in this note and further information is available here: [www.oecd.org/statistics/Hows-Life-2015-country-notes-data.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/Hows-Life-2015-country-notes-data.xlsx).

**HOW’S LIFE?**

*How’s Life?*, published every two years, provides a comprehensive picture of well-being in OECD countries and other major economies by bringing together an internationally comparable set of well-being indicators that the OECD considers as essential to a good life. It looks at people’s material conditions and quality of life across the population in eleven dimensions 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.

The *How’s Life? 2015* report includes for the first time a set of indicators to measure the stocks of resources that help to support **well-being over time**. The report also contains three special chapters focusing on **child well-being**, **volunteering** and **regional well-being**.
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