How's Life in Colombia?

The figure below shows Colombia's relative strengths and weaknesses in well-being, with reference to both the OECD average and the average outcomes of OECD partner countries considered in *How's Life? 2017* (i.e. Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Lithuania, the Russian Federation and South Africa).

Colombia has several areas of strength relative to both the OECD and partner countries. **Housing affordability** is good, and **air quality** (measured in terms of mean exposure to outdoor air pollution by fine particulate matter, $PM_{2.5}$) is better than both the OECD and partner country averages. In addition, the **employment rate,** at 67.2% in 2016, was higher than the average for both the OECD (67%) and the partner countries (63.9%), while the **long-term unemployment** rate (below 0.6%) was the lowest among partner countries and well below the OECD average.

In the case of **social support**, almost 89% of Colombians report having friends or relatives whom they can count on in times of trouble, in line with the average for both the OECD (89%) and the partner countries (90%).

In several outcomes Colombia is above the average for the partner countries but below the OECD average. **Life expectancy** at birth, at 74 years, is above the average level among partner countries (72) but below the OECD average (80). Satisfaction with local **water quality** is also higher in Colombia: around 74% of Colombians say that they are satisfied with their local water quality compared to only 66% on average among all partner countries. Finally, 45% of Colombia's people report feeling **safe walking alone at night** in the area where they live, which is slightly higher than the partner country average (43%) but well below the OECD average (almost 69%).

Colombia has some areas of weakness compared to both the OECD and other partner countries. 28% of employees regularly **worked very long hours** in 2016, well above 13% in the OECD and 9% in partner countries, on average. The rates of both adults' upper secondary **educational attainment** (52%) and students' **cognitive skills at age 15** are among the lowest in both the OECD and partner countries. **Voter turnout** (44% in 2014) is the lowest, and the **homicide rate** the highest, across all OECD and partner countries.

Current well-being strengths and weaknesses in Colombia

Strengths	Strengths relative to the OECD average	Strengths relative to partner countries	Weaknesses
Above average for both the OECD and partner countries	Above the OECD average, but below partner countries' average	Above partner countries' average, but below the OECD average	Below average for both the OECD and partner countries
🚌 Employment 💼 Long-term unemployment 🏠 Housing affordability 🌲 Air quality		➕ Life expectancy 🌲 Water quality 🏃 Feeling safe at night	⏰ Working hours 📖 Educational attainment 📄 Cognitive skills at 15 ✉ Voter turnout 🏃 Homicides

Note: Both the OECD and partner country averages are typically population-weighted (see the online data annex for further details). Only headline well-being indicators with a complete or almost complete coverage of the OECD partner countries are considered (i.e. one or no missing countries per indicator).

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 Colombia's average well-being over the past 10 years

Dimension		Description	Change
	Income and wealth	[No time series data available]	..
	Jobs and earnings	The employment rate increased by 6 percentage points between 2005 and 2016. The long-term unemployment rate has also improved over the past decade, falling from 3.3% in 2005 to 0.7% in 2016.	⤢ ⤢
	Housing conditions	Housing has become more affordable since 2005, with the share of household disposable income spent on housing costs down by 1.7 percentage points. The average number of rooms per person has remained stable over the past decade, and remains below the OECD average.	⤢ ⇔
	Work-life balance	The percentage of employees working 50 hours or more per week decreased from 37% in 2005 to 28% in 2016.	⤢
	Health status	Life expectancy at birth has increased by nearly 2 years since 2005, but stands almost 6 years below the OECD average.	⤢
	Education and skills	The 10-year change in upper secondary educational attainment cannot be assessed, due to missing data. However, the share of adults with at least an upper secondary level of education increased by 0.5% between 2014 and 2016.	⤢
	Social connections	Social support (measured as the share of people reporting that they have relatives or friends whom they can count on to help in case of need) has been relatively stable since 2005, in contrast with the slight fall recorded for the OECD average.	⇔
	Civic engagement	The percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote has improved in the past decade, from 40.5% in the 2006 presidential elections to 43.6% in 2014.	⤢
	Environmental quality	Satisfaction with local water quality has fallen slightly in the last few years. On the other hand, air pollution levels remained broadly stable between 2005 and 2013.	⬂ ⇔
	Personal security	The rate of deaths due to assault has fallen in recent years, from close to 48 deaths per 100 000 people in 2005 to 30 in 2013. However, the percentage of the population declaring that they feel safe when walking alone at night in the area where they live has also decreased, from 54% to 45%.	⤢ ⬂
	Subjective well-being	Life satisfaction has improved slightly over the past decade and, at 6.4, is just below the OECD average of 6.5 (measured on a 0-10 scale).	⤢

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.

Colombia's resources and risks for future well-being: Illustrative indicators

Natural capital

Indicator	Equivalent OECD tier	Change	
CO_2 emissions from domestic consumption	①	⇔	2001-2011
Exposure to PM$_{2.5}$ air pollution	①	⇔	2005-2013
Forest area	①	↘	2005-2014
Freshwater abstractions	❸	..	2012
Threatened birds	①	..	Latest available
Threatened mammals	①	..	Latest available
Threatened plants	①	..	Latest available
No data available on greenhouse gas emissions and renewable freshwater resources.			

Human capital

Indicator	Equivalent OECD tier	Change	
Young adult educational attainment	❸	↗	2014-2016
Educational expectancy	❸	..	2015
Cognitive skills at age 15	❸	..	2015
Long-term unemployment	①	↗	2005-2016
Life expectancy at birth	❸	↗	2005-2015
Smoking prevalence	①	↗	2005-2015
Obesity prevalence	②	↘	2005-2014
No data available on adult skills.			

Economic capital

Indicator	Equivalent OECD tier	Change	
Gross fixed capital formation	②	↗	2005-2015
Financial net worth of total economy	②	↘	2005-2015
Financial net worth of government	②	⇔	2015-2016
Banking sector leverage	①	..	2015
No data available on produced fixed assets, intellectual property assets, investment in R&D, household debt and household net wealth.			

Social capital

Indicator	Equivalent OECD tier	Change	
Trust in the national government	❸	↘	2005-2016
Voter turnout	❸	↗	2006-2014
Government stakeholder engagement	❸	..	2014
No data available on trust in others, trust in the police or volunteering in organisations.			

①	Equivalent to the top-performing OECD tier, latest available year
②	Equivalent to the middle-performing OECD tier, latest available year
❸	Equivalent to the 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 COLOMBIA?

> **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 unequally 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).

Indicators of **vertical inequality** for Colombia suggest that earnings and the cognitive skills of 15-year-old students are very unevenly spread across the country's population. In particular, the level of inequality in earnings recorded in Colombia is the highest found among all OECD and partner countries considered.

Colombia has mixed outcomes in terms of **gender inequality**. For example, there are large gaps between women and men when it comes to employment and unemployment, with women 70% more likely to be unemployed than men – a divide larger than the OECD average. By contrast, women fare better than men in education and skills, and (unlike in the large majority of OECD countries) women are at less risk of low pay.

The gaps in well-being experienced by Colombian **young people** in comparison to **middle-aged** adults vary from indicator to indicator. Younger people are less likely to feel safe at night – with a gap that is wider than in the OECD on average. By contrast, they fare comparatively well in terms of educational attainment and social support.

Legend: ● top third of OECD countries (green) ● middle third of OECD countries (yellow) ● bottom third of OECD countries (red) ○ data gaps ▨ no measures

Well-being inequalities in Colombia

Indicator	Vertical inequality	Horizontal inequality by Gender: Women relative to men	Age: Young relative to middle-aged	Education: Secondary relative to tertiary	Deprivation
Household income	○	—	○	—	○
Household net wealth	○	—	○	○	○
Earnings	red	○	○	○	—
Low pay	—	green	—	—	red
Employment	—	red	yellow	green	—
Unemployment	—	red	yellow	green	red
Housing affordability	—	—	—	—	○
Rooms per person	—	—	—	—	○
Life expectancy	○	—	—	—	—
Perceived health	—	○	○	○	○
Working hours	○	○	○	○	○
Time off	—	○	○	—	—
Educational attainment	—	green	green	—	red
Cognitive skills at 15	red	green	—	yellow	red
Adult skills	○	○	○	○	○
Time spent socialising	—	○	○	—	—
Social support	—	red	green	red	red
Voter turnout	—	○	○	○	○
Having a say in government	○	○	○	○	○
Air quality	—	—	—	—	green
Water quality	—	red	red	yellow	red
Homicides	—	green	—	—	red
Feeling safe at night	—	green	red	green	red
Life satisfaction	○	○	○	○	○
Negative affect balance	—	—	—	—	○

In OECD countries, people having attained only a **secondary level of education** usually fare significantly worse on the labour market, compared to those having attained a **tertiary education**. In Colombia, these inequalities are smaller than in the OECD on average. However, education-related gaps in social support are comparatively large in Colombia.

In many aspects of well-being, Colombia has a comparatively high share of people suffering from **deprivations**, including the incidence of low pay (25.3%), educational attainment (49.5%) and the homicide rate (30 per 100 000 population). The only exception is the indicator of air quality: Colombia has a comparatively small share of the population exposed to high levels of fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) air pollution.

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 COLOMBIA?

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 146,000 people in Colombia have visited the website making Colombia the 16th country overall in traffic to the website. The top cities are Bogota (46% of visits), Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga and Ibague.

The following country findings reflect the ratings voluntarily shared with the OECD by 925 website visitors in Colombia. Findings are indicative and are not representative of the population at large. **For Colombian users of the Better Life Index, education, health and work-life balance are the three most important aspects of their life** (shown below).[1] Up-to-date information, including a breakdown of participants in each country by gender and age can be found here: **http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#COL**.

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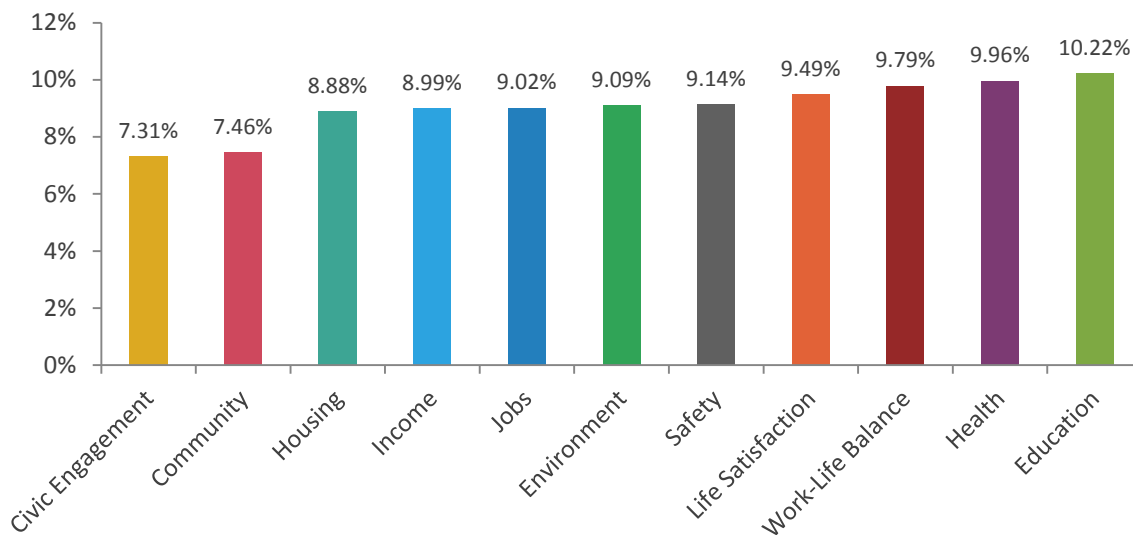
[1] User information for Colombia is based on shared indexes submitted between May 2011 and September 2017.

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 Colombia from the *How's Life?* 2017 report** (pages 1-4) and shows what **Colombian users of the Better Life Index** are telling us about their **well-being priorities** (page 5).

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.

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