

How's Life in Sweden?

On average, Sweden performs very well across the different well-being dimensions relative to other OECD countries. In 2016, the **employment rate** was one of the highest in the OECD, and only 1% of employees in Sweden regularly **worked very long hours**, the second-lowest share in the OECD. However, the **household net adjusted disposable income** and **earnings** are just below the OECD average levels. In terms of education and skills, 83% of the adult working-age population have attained at least an upper secondary education, compared to the OECD average of 75%, while both **adult skills** and students' **cognitive skills** also exceed the OECD average. Civic engagement and governance, assessed in terms of **voter turnout** and the percentage of adults who feel that they **have a say in what the government does**, are in the top third of the OECD. Sweden's environmental quality and health status are also good, and **life satisfaction** was among the highest in the OECD in 2013.

Sweden's average level of current well-being: Comparative strengths and weaknesses














Note: This chart shows Sweden's 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 Sweden's average well-being over the past 10 years

| Dimension | Description | Change |
|--|--|-----------------------|
|  Income and wealth | Household net adjusted disposable income has increased steadily over the past decade and is now 20% higher than in 2005. | ↗ |
|  Jobs and earnings | The employment rate in Sweden is now 2.2 percentage points higher than in 2005. Following a decline from 2006 to 2010, it has fully recovered in recent years to exceed its previous peak. Real earnings improved consistently over the past decade, with a cumulative growth of 19%, in contrast to labour market insecurity and long-term unemployment, which both increased sharply during the crisis and are yet to recover to their pre-crisis levels. Finally, the proportion of employees experiencing job strain has remained broadly stable over the past decade. | ↗ ↗ ↘ ↘ ↔ |
|  Housing conditions | The average number of rooms per person has remained stable over the 10-year period, while the share of households lacking basic sanitation has remained close to 0%. Housing has become more affordable since 2005, with the share of household disposable income spent on housing costs falling by 2.2 percentage points. | ↔ ↔ ↗ |
|  Work-life balance | At 1.1%, the share of employees working 50 hours or more per week in 2016 is very similar to the level reported in 2005. | ↔ |
|  Health status | Life expectancy at birth has increased by one-and-a-half years since 2005, and at 82.3 in 2015 it stands 2 years above the OECD average. The share of adults reporting to be in "good" or "very good" health has increased by 4.1 percentage points. | ↗ ↗ |
|  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 reporting to have relatives or friends whom they can count on to help in case of need has seen little change since 2005-07. | ↔ |
|  Civic engagement | The percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote has improved since the start of the decade, rising from 82% in the 2006 general elections to 86% in 2014. | ↗ |
|  Environmental quality | Satisfaction with local water quality has remained stable in the last few years. Between 2005 and 2011, exposure to PM _{2.5} air pollution was also relatively stable, but a sharp decrease since 2012 means that levels are now below those experienced 10 years ago. | ↔ ↗ |
|  Personal security | While there has been little change in the rate of deaths due to assault over the past decade, the share of people saying that they feel safe when walking alone at night has increased by 5 percentage points – in line with the trend in over half of all OECD countries. | ↔ ↗ |
|  Subjective well-being | Life satisfaction has remained broadly stable over the decade. | ↔ |


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.


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

|  Natural capital | | |
|---|------|-------------------------|
| Indicator | Tier | Change |
| Greenhouse gas emissions from domestic production | 1 | ↗ 2005-2015 |
| CO ₂ emissions from domestic consumption | 1 | ↔ 2001-2011 |
| Exposure to PM _{2.5} air pollution | 1 | ↗ 2005-2013 |
| Forest area | 1 | ↘ 2005-2014 |
| Renewable freshwater resources | 1 | .. Long-term annual avg |
| Freshwater abstractions | 1 | .. 2010 |
| Threatened birds | 2 | .. Latest available |
| Threatened mammals | 2 | .. Latest available |
| Threatened plants | 2 | .. Latest available |

|  Economic capital | | |
|--|------|-------------|
| Indicator | Tier | Change |
| Produced fixed assets | 1 | ↗ 2005-2015 |
| Gross fixed capital formation | 1 | ↔ 2005-2016 |
| Financial net worth of total economy | 2 | ↗ 2005-2016 |
| Intellectual property assets | 1 | ↗ 2005-2015 |
| Investment in R&D | 1 | ↗ 2005-2014 |
| Household debt | 3 | ↘ 2005-2016 |
| Financial net worth of government | 1 | ↗ 2005-2016 |
| Banking sector leverage | 1 | ↔ 2005-2016 |
| No data available on household net wealth. | | |

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

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

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

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

HOW LARGE ARE WELL-BEING INEQUALITIES IN SWEDEN?

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).

In Sweden, **vertical inequalities** in well-being are typically low, with 5 out of 8 available indicators ranked in the top third (i.e. most equal) of OECD countries. Household income, earnings, working hours, having a say in government and life satisfaction are distributed across the population more evenly than in the OECD on average. In particular, the distribution of earnings is the second most equal among member countries. However, differences in cognitive skills by the parents’ educational level are larger than elsewhere.

Across OECD countries, **women** typically fare worse than **men** on earnings, low pay and employment. In Sweden the gender divide in employment is narrower than in the OECD on average. Nevertheless, the gaps favouring men are comparatively large in cognitive skills and feelings of safety.

In all OECD countries, **young people** are at disadvantage on the job market, compared to **middle-aged adults**. In Sweden this gap is comparatively large for unemployment. Moreover, in well-being dimensions where the age gap typically favours the young (e.g. perceived health status, working hours), this advantage is narrower than in most OECD countries.

In most OECD countries, people with a **tertiary education** tend to fare better than those with only a **secondary education** across

a range of well-being outcomes. In Sweden, this gap is often comparatively small. For example, those with a secondary education earn 14% less than those with a tertiary degree, a gap much narrower than the OECD average (31%). The education divide in unemployment is also smaller than elsewhere.

Levels of **deprivation** are comparatively low – with Sweden falling in the least deprived third of the OECD for 10 out of the 20 available indicators. However, 12.6% of households are overcrowded (measured by rooms per person), which is worse than the OECD average (11.5%).

Well-being inequalities in Sweden

| | Vertical inequality | Horizontal inequality by | | | Deprivation |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| | | Gender Women relative to men | Age Young relative to middle-aged | Education 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 | | | | | ● |

Legend:

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

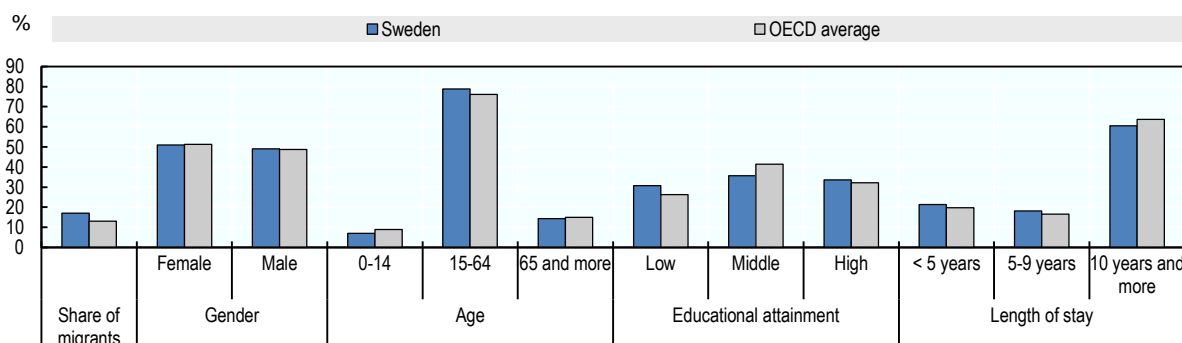
HOW'S LIFE FOR MIGRANTS IN SWEDEN?

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 Sweden and OECD?

More than one in six people living in Sweden (17%) were born elsewhere, slightly above the OECD average (13%), and 51% of them are women (the same as the OECD average). Migrants in Sweden are slightly more likely to be of working age than in the OECD on average (79% of them are aged 15 to 64, as compared to 76% across the OECD), and are more likely to have a middle or a high educational attainment than a low level. Three in five migrants arrived in Sweden ten years ago or more.

Share of migrants in the total population and selected characteristics

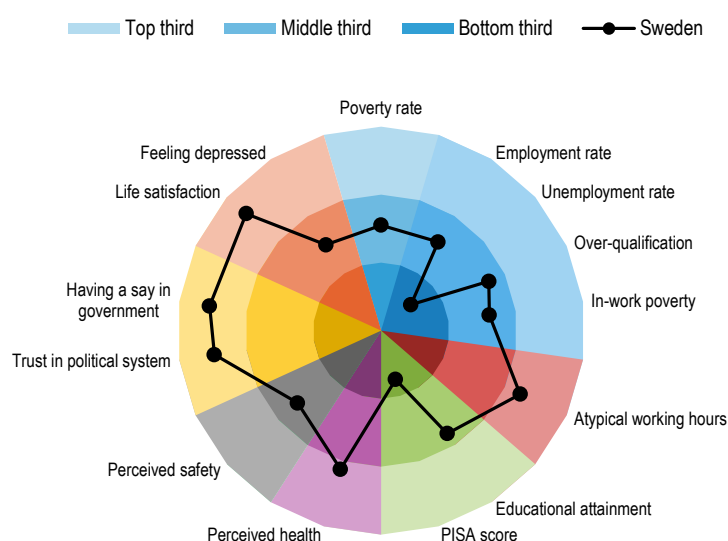


How is migrants' well-being in Sweden?

Compared with the migrant populations of other OECD countries, migrants living in Sweden have a relatively good situation regarding atypical working hours, perceived health, trust in the political system, having a say in government and life satisfaction. Moreover, migrants settled in Sweden rank in the middle third of OECD-country migrants for 7 out of 14 selected well-being indicators. They are in the bottom third for unemployment rate and PISA performance.

As in many other OECD countries, migrants in Sweden tend to experience lower well-being outcomes than the native-born population: in Sweden, this is the case for 9 out of 10 selected well-being indicators. However, migrants in Sweden report a similar level of trust than the native-born in the political system.

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



Comparison of migrants' and native-born well-being in Sweden

| | Migrants have a worse situation | Same situation | Migrants have a better situation |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Physical health risks at work | ▲ | | |
| Atypical working hours | ▲ | | |
| PISA score | ▲ | | |
| Perceived health | ▲ | | |
| Social support | ▲ | | |
| Perceived safety | ▲ | | |
| Trust in political system | | ▲ | |
| Having a say in government | ▲ | | |
| Life satisfaction | ▲ | | |
| Feeling depressed | ▲ | | |

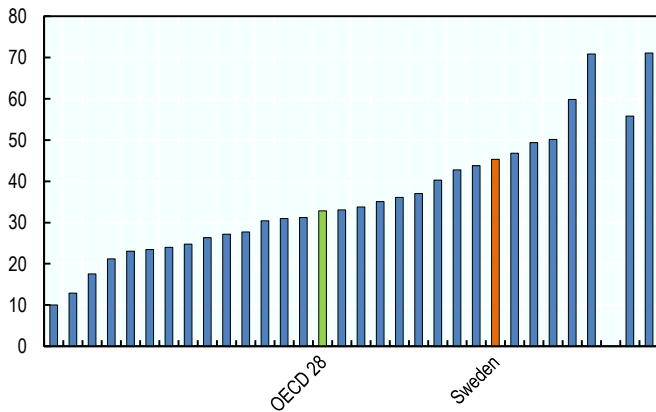
GOVERNANCE AND WELL-BEING IN SWEDEN

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 Sweden, over 45% of the population feels that they have a say in what their government does, which is higher than the OECD average of 33%. Voter turnout in Sweden has increased in recent years, with almost 86% of registered voters casting a ballot in 2014, compared to 82% in 2006. When asked about whether or not corruption is widespread across government, only 18% of Swedes 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

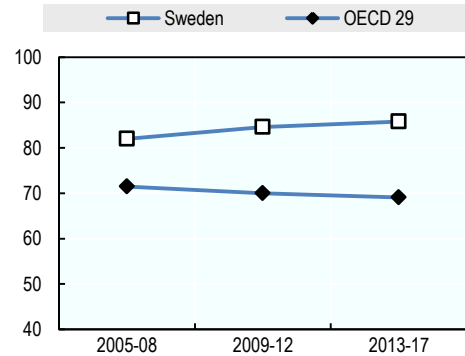
Percentage of people aged 16-65 who feel that they have a say in what the government does, around 2012



Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC database)

Voter turnout

Percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote



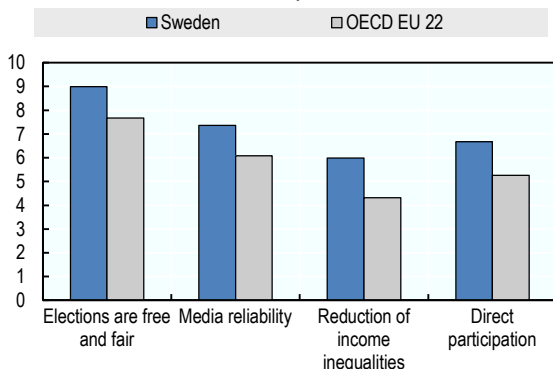
Note: Data refers to parliamentary elections. If more than one election took place over the time period indicated, the simple average voter turnout from all elections is shown. The OECD average sums elections that occurred over the time periods shown in 29 OECD countries.

Source: IDEA dataset

Overall, Swedish satisfaction with the way democracy works in their country is consistently above the OECD European average. Swedish people are generally very satisfied with the freedom and fairness of elections (9.0 on a 0-10 scale), relatively satisfied with policies to reduce income inequalities (6.0), as well as with the existence of direct participation mechanisms at the local level (6.7). Meanwhile, satisfaction with public services varies according to whether people have used those services in the last year: people who have had direct recent experience of using health and education services tend to be satisfied than those without. In Sweden, people’s satisfaction with education services is lower than the OECD European average; however, people’s satisfaction with health services is higher than average.

People’s satisfaction with different elements of democracy

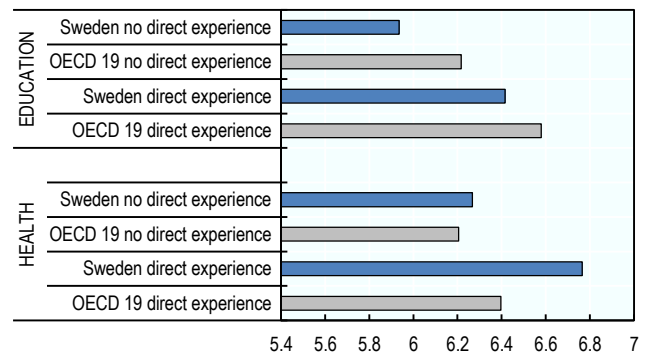
Mean score on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction with elements of democracy, 2012



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.

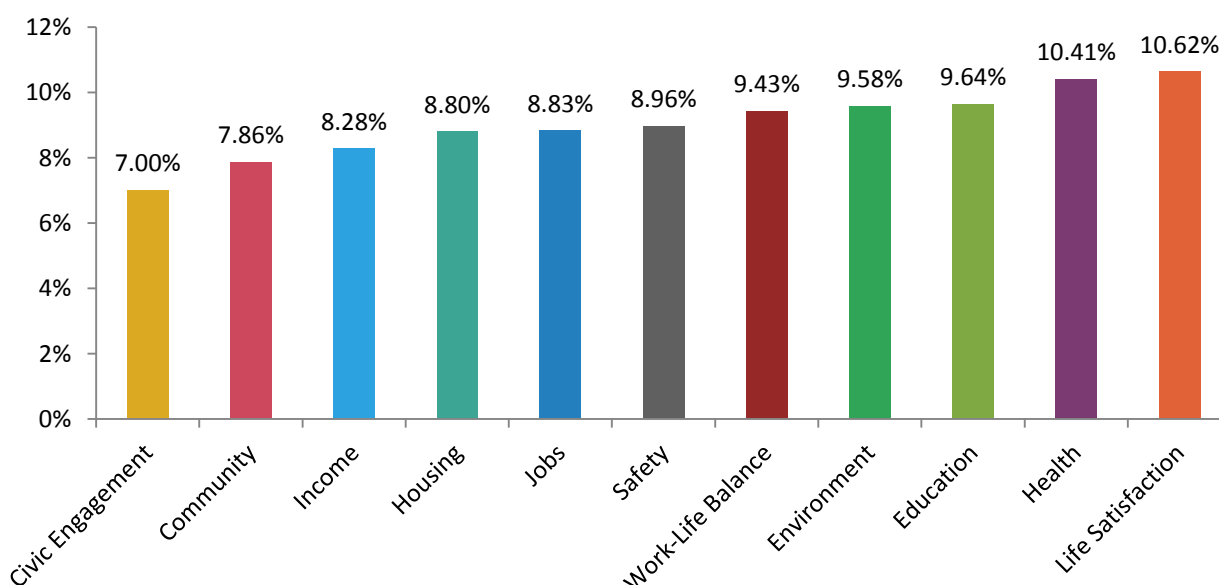


Users can also share their index with other people in their networks, as well as with the OECD. This allows the OECD to gather valuable information on the importance that users attach to various life dimensions, and how these preferences differ across countries and population groups.

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO PEOPLE IN SWEDEN?

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 113,300 people in Sweden have visited the website making Sweden the 22nd country overall in traffic to the website. The top cities are Stockholm (36% of visits), Gothenburg, Malmo, Uppsala, Lund and Linköping.

The following country findings reflect the ratings voluntarily shared with the OECD by 1,183 website visitors in Sweden. Findings are only indicative and are not representative of the population at large. **For Swedish 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/#SWE.



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

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