3. Pro- and anti-social behaviour

Definition and measurement

Data on pro- and anti-social behaviour are drawn from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in over 140 countries around the world based on a common questionnaire, translated into the predominant languages of each country. With few exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 years and over in the entire country, including rural areas. While this ensures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling error. Sample sizes vary between around 1 000 and 4 000, depending on the country. Pro-social behaviour averages country responses to three questions about whether the respondent has volunteered time, donated money to a charity and helped a stranger in the last month. Anti-social behaviour averages responses to questions on whether the respondent has had money or property stolen in the last year and been assaulted.

The Gini coefficient is a measure of income inequality. Values range between 0 – perfect equality – and 1 – all income goes to one person.

Pro-social behaviour is behaviour which contributes to the positive functioning of society, whereas anti-social behaviour is the contrary.

High levels of pro-social behaviour were found in five Anglophone countries, all of which were in the top six of the OECD (Panel A, CO3.1). The Nordic countries, which feature at the top of many social indicators in this publication, were unusually ordinary performers in terms of pro-social behaviour. Mediterranean and eastern European countries typically had low levels of pro-social behaviour.

Chile and Mexico, amongst OECD countries, stood out as having high levels of anti-social behaviour (Panel B, CO3.1). Low levels of anti-social behaviour were found in an eclectic mix of countries – Israel, Japan, Korea and Poland. Again, the Nordics were generally modest performers, with Denmark, Norway and Sweden having levels of anti-social behaviour at or above the OECD average.

There was no tendency for countries which had high levels of pro-social behaviour to have low levels of anti-social behaviour or *vice versa*. For example, Poland was a good performer with low rates of anti-social behaviour. However, it was also in the bottom third of the OECD on pro-social behaviour. New Zealand was a good performer on pro-social behaviour, but was also above the OECD average with anti-social behaviour.

Higher income countries had more pro-social behaviour (CO3.2). This income-pro-social relationship was quite strong. The Anglophones had more pro-social behaviour than expected on the basis of their income, as did Mexico. Greece and Japan had much lower pro-social behaviour than would be expected given their incomes.

On the other hand, there was only a weak positive relationship between income inequality and anti-social behavior (CO3.3). The weak observed relationship was driven entirely by Mexico, a country with the highest level of anti-social behaviour in the OECD, combined with the highest rate of income inequality. Sweden and the Czech Republic stand out as relatively equal societies, at least in terms of income, with high reported anti-social behaviour.
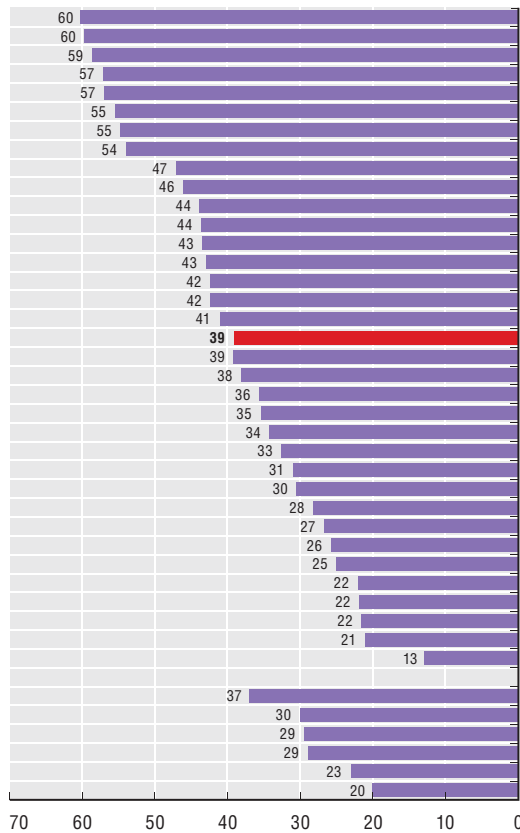
Figure note

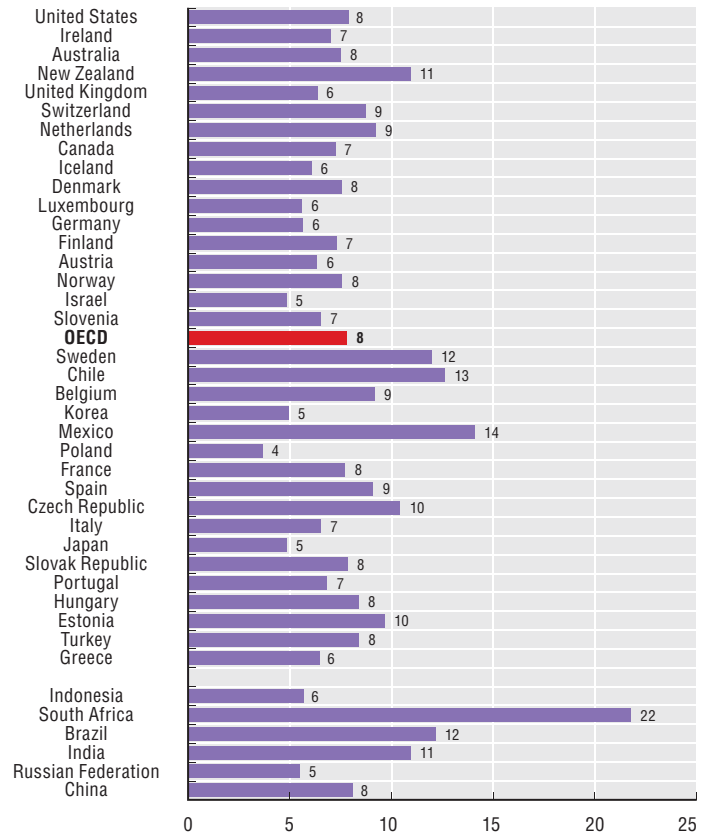Figure CO3.1: 2006: Switzerland; 2008: Iceland and Norway; 2009: Estonia, Israel and South Africa.

Information on data for Israel: *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602.*

CO3.1. Anglophone countries show the highest levels of pro-social behaviour

Panel A. Pro-social behaviour index, 2010, percentages (↘)
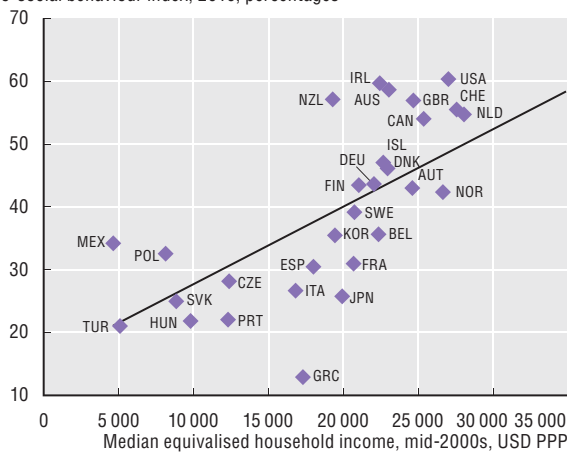
Panel B. Anti-social behaviour index, 2010, percentages

CO3.2. Higher income countries have more pro-social behaviour

Pro-social behaviour index, 2010, percentages

Median equivalised household income, mid-2000s, USD PPP

CO3.3. A weak positive relationship between income inequality and anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour index, 2010, percentages

Gini coefficient of income inequality, mid-2000s
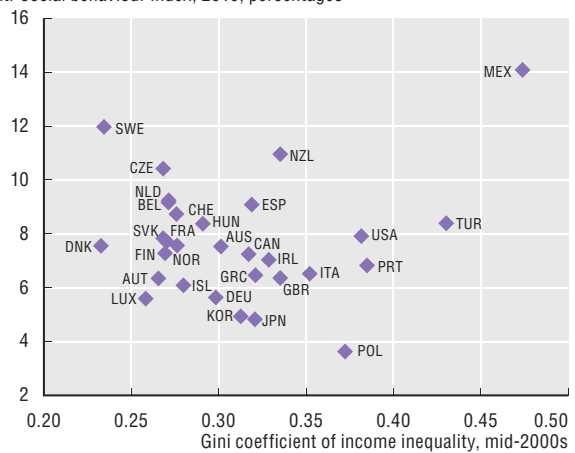
Source: Gallup World Poll (*www.gallup.com*); OECD (2008), *Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* (*www.oecd.org/els/social/inequality*).

StatLink ⬛ http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932382102