

## Chapter 2

# How's life? in figures

*Measuring what matters for people's well-being requires wide range of indicators, captured on a human scale, and able to reflect the diverse experiences of different population groups. This chapter documents the latest evidence on current well-being in OECD and partner countries, providing key statistics on 11 different dimensions of life, ranging from people's material living conditions (such as their income and wealth, jobs and earnings, and housing), through to the factors that affect their quality of life (from their health status, to work-life balance, education and skills, social connections, civic engagement and governance, environment quality, personal security and subjective well-being). Besides providing a snapshot of people's current levels of well-being, this chapter also examines whether life has been getting better lately. It focuses on the five years since 2009 and reports a very mixed performance – both across indicators and among countries. Differences in the levels of people's well-being by age, gender, education and income are also described, highlighting how inequalities in well-being outcomes can differ substantially across OECD countries.*

This chapter provides the latest evidence on cross-country differences, changes over time and inequalities in well-being across OECD and partner countries. It builds on and updates the headline indicators from the 2011 and 2013 editions of *How's Life?* (OECD 2011a; 2013a), spanning the eleven dimensions of current well-being included the OECD framework (see Chapter 1), and documenting how life has changed in the five years since 2009.

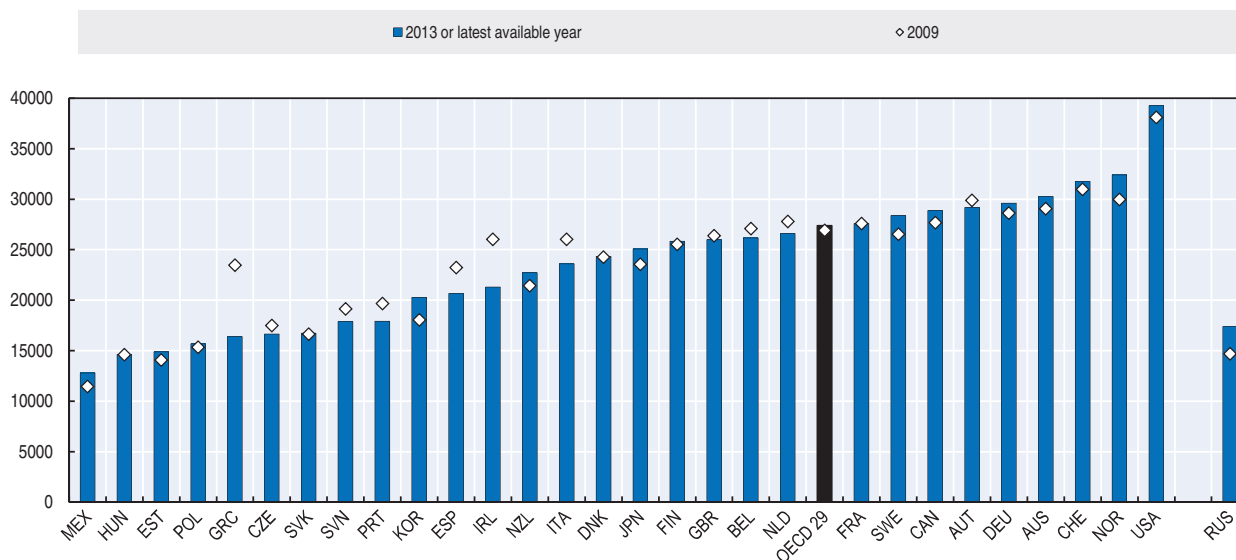
## Income and wealth

While money is not all that matters for well-being, income is important for meeting people's basic needs, ranging from adequate housing to good nutrition. Having a store of wealth to draw on cushions people from economic shocks and can help to provide security for the future. Beyond this, income and wealth enhance people's freedom to make choices about their lives, whether that means spending more time with friends and family or investing in securing a comfortable retirement.

In 2013, the OECD average *household net adjusted disposable income* (HADI) – i.e. the income available to people after taxes have been paid, and including both cash and in-kind transfers received (see Box 2.1 for the exact definition) – was around 27 630 USD per capita. Cross-country variations are large, however: the average HADI in the United States was around three times larger than that in Mexico and Hungary, while incomes in Estonia and the Slovak Republic were around half the size of those in Australia, Canada and Switzerland (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. **Household net adjusted disposable income**

USD at 2010 PPPs, per capita



Note: The latest available year for Italy, Norway, Portugal and Sweden is 2014; and 2012 for Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Switzerland and the Russian Federation. The first year shown for Korea is 2010. The OECD average is population-weighted.

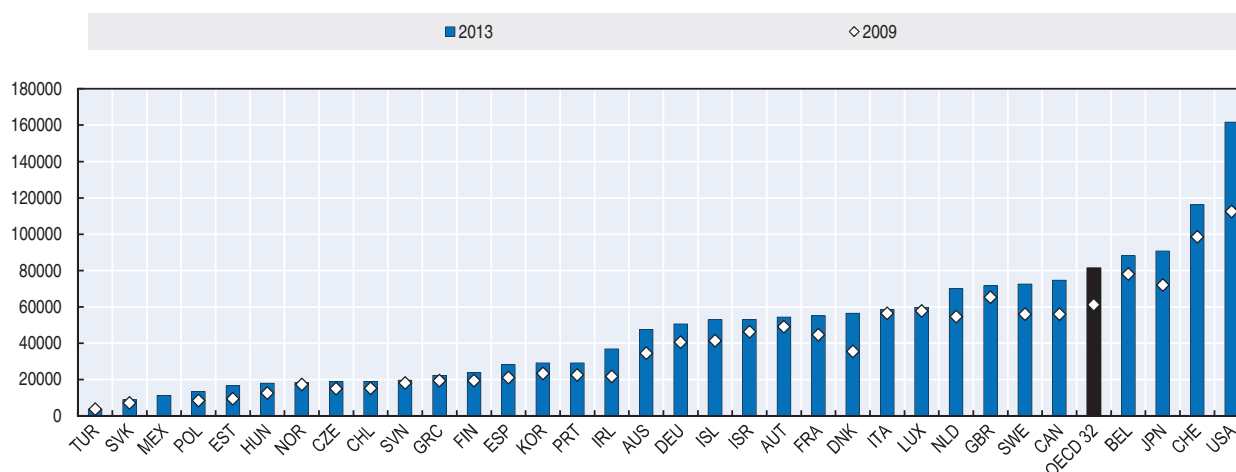
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD National Accounts Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/na-data-en>; data for Norway are drawn from Statistics Norway's Statbank (database), <https://www.ssb.no/en/statistikbanken>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933258909>

Between 2009 and 2013, the OECD average HADI per capita grew by 1.9% cumulatively. However, one-third of OECD countries experienced a fall in household incomes over this period. The largest cumulative falls occurred in the countries most affected by the financial and economic crisis, i.e. Greece (-30%), Ireland (-18%), Spain (-11%), Portugal and Italy (both -9%). By contrast, the largest gains were recorded in Norway (8%), Mexico and Korea (both 12%) and the Russian Federation (18%).

In 2013, *household net financial wealth* (see Box 2.1 for the definition) was higher than in 2009 in all OECD countries with available data, and the average cumulative increase was around 30% (Figure 2.2). In 2013, it ranged from over 160 000 USD per capita in the United States to less than 10 000 USD in the Slovak Republic and Turkey. This measure, however, excludes non-financial assets such as land and dwellings, which represent the largest share of households' overall net wealth in most OECD countries.

Figure 2.2. **Household net financial wealth**  
USD at current PPPs, per capita



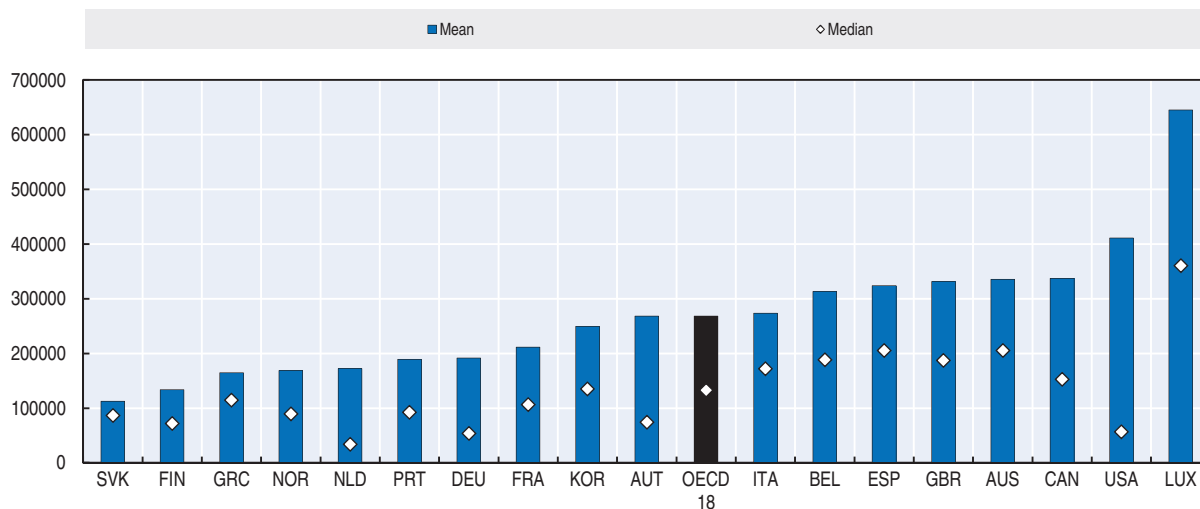
Note: The latest available year for Korea is 2012, and 2009 for Mexico. Data refer to SNA 2008, except for Chile, Japan, Korea and Mexico, which refer to SNA 1993. Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) are those for private consumption of households. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD calculations based on OECD National Accounts Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/na-data-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933258917>

Estimates of households' total *net wealth* (i.e. including non-financial assets; see Box 2.1) are available from a new OECD data collection covering 18 OECD countries. In around 2010, mean levels of net wealth per household were highest in Luxembourg and the United States, and lowest in the Slovak Republic and Finland (Figure 2.3). The median value is much lower than the mean for the United States, Austria and Germany and the Netherlands in particular, suggesting a very unequal distribution of net wealth.

Figure 2.3. **Mean and median net wealth per household, including non-financial assets**  
2010 or latest available year, values in 2005 USD



Note: The latest available year ranges between 2010 and 2013. Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) are those for private consumption of households. Data for the United Kingdom are limited to Great Britain only.

Source: OECD Wealth Distribution (database), <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=WEALTH>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933258927>

### Box 2.1. Measuring household income and wealth and their distribution

The indicators used to capture income and wealth are defined as follows:

- **Household net adjusted disposable income (HADI)** per capita is obtained by adding to people's gross income (earnings, self-employment and capital income, as well as current monetary transfers received from other sectors) the social transfers in-kind that households receive from government (such as education and health care services), and then subtracting taxes on income and wealth as well as the social security contributions paid by households. The measure used here, which is drawn from the OECD National Accounts, also takes into account the depreciation of capital goods consumed by households. HADI is shown in per capita terms, and expressed in United States dollars (USD) at 2010 prices, adjusted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for actual individual consumption.
- **Household net financial wealth** per capita consists of currency and deposits, securities other than shares, loans, shares and other equity (including shares issued by investment funds), insurance technical reserves, and other accounts receivable or payable, net of household financial liabilities, as defined by the System of National Accounts (SNA). In most cases, unfunded pension entitlements are not included. Household net financial wealth is shown here in per capita terms, expressed in USD at current prices, adjusted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for household private consumption. The data shown here are drawn from the OECD National Accounts Statistics Database.
- **Household net wealth** refers to both the real and financial assets and liabilities held by private households resident in the country, as measured in microdata. Values are expressed in USD at 2005 prices, adjusted using purchasing power parities (PPPs) for household private consumption. The concept of wealth corresponds to the recommendations of the *OECD Guidelines for Micro Statistics on Household Wealth* (OECD, 2013b) and data are shown per household (rather than per person or per adult), with no adjustment made to reflect differences in household size. Data are drawn from the OECD Wealth Distribution Database, which includes data supplied by National Statistical Offices and other producers

### Box 2.1. Measuring household income and wealth and their distribution (cont.)

of official statistics (based on household surveys or tax and administrative records), and public use data from the European Central Bank (for 11 countries participating in the Euro-System Household Finance and Consumption Survey). These data exclude pension wealth, the size and distribution of which differs markedly across OECD countries, depending on the characteristics of retirement systems. There are some country differences in the degree to which rich households are oversampled (ranging from no oversampling in Australia, to large oversampling for the United States and Spain).

- The **Gini Index** is a summary measure of income inequality in the population. It is computed based on microdata (collected from household surveys and administrative records) for household income after taxes and transfers, where household income is adjusted to reflect the differences in the needs of households of different sizes. The Gini index, which is more sensitive to changes in the middle of the distribution, ranges between zero (where everybody has the same mean level of income) and one (where all the income goes to the richest individual only). A change of one “Gini point” means a change of 0.01, on this 0-1 scale. The estimates presented here are based on household income data from the OECD Income Distribution Database.
- The **inter-decile income share ratio (S90/S10)** is a measure of income inequality that is more sensitive to changes in the extremes of the distribution; it refers to the share of all income received by the richest 10% of the population, divided by the share of all income received by the poorest 10%. It is computed based on measures of equivalised household disposable income (i.e. adjusted for differences in household size), after taxes and transfers. Estimates shown here come from the OECD Income Distribution Database.

For the first two (National Account-based) indicators, data refer to the aggregate of households, including unincorporated enterprises and non-profit institutions serving households. The indicators shown here are consistent with economy-wide indicators, such as GDP and productivity. The income concept used is the broadest measure of households' consumption possibilities available within the national accounts system. The net financial wealth measure, however, excludes a range of assets that are critical for households' material well-being, such as dwellings and land. Data on these non-financial assets are currently only available in the National Accounts for a small number of OECD and partner countries. The measure of household net wealth shown above does include non-financial assets for 18 OECD countries, but is based on micro data.

The data shown here have limitations. First, only a few national accounts systems provide data that exclude non-profit institutions serving households: this means that the coverage of the first two indicators shown here is somewhat broader than the one used in household surveys. Second, to better reflect differences in household needs, data should ideally be “equivalised”, i.e. expressed in terms of consumption units, while the SNA data are per capita. More generally, national accounts data at the macro-economic level do not provide information on the distribution of economic resources. To reconcile micro and macro-data on households, the OECD is pursuing work to measure disparities among households within a national accounting framework (e.g. Fesseau and Mattonetti, 2013a; Fesseau, Wolff and Mattonetti, 2013b). The OECD has also recently published guidelines for the measurement of the distribution of household wealth (OECD, 2013b), as well as a framework for the integrated analysis of income, consumption and wealth (OECD, 2013c).

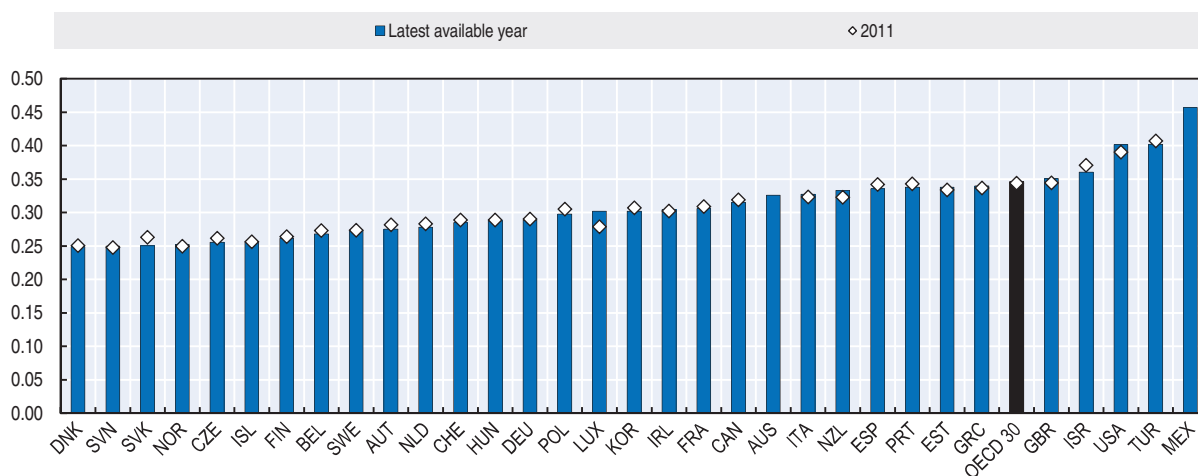
#### Further reading:

- Murtin, F. and M. Mira d'Ercole (2015), “Household wealth inequality across OECD countries: New OECD evidence”, *OECD Statistics Brief*, No. 21, [www.oecd.org/social/household-wealth-inequality-across-OECD-countries-OECD21.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/social/household-wealth-inequality-across-OECD-countries-OECD21.pdf).
- OECD (2015a), *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*. OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264235120-en>.
- OECD (2013b), *OECD Guidelines for Micro Statistics on Household Wealth*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264194878-en>.

### The distribution of income and wealth

In most OECD countries the gap between rich and poor households is now at its highest level in 30 years (OECD, 2015a). The *Gini index* of income inequality (see Box 2.1 for a definition) in around 2012 was highest in Mexico, Turkey, the United States and Israel, and lowest in Denmark, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, Norway and the Czech Republic (Figure 2.4). Since 2011, which is the earliest available year for strictly comparable data,<sup>1</sup> the OECD average Gini index has remained broadly stable. However, the level of income inequality decreased by 1 Gini point in the Slovak Republic and Israel, while it increased by 1 point or more in the United States, New Zealand, and Luxembourg.

Figure 2.4. **Gini index of income inequality**



Note: The latest available year is 2014 for Hungary; 2013 for Finland, Israel, Korea, the Netherlands and the United States; and 2012 for all other countries. The first year shown refers to 2010 for Canada; and 2012 for Hungary, Korea and the United States. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Income Distribution", OECD Social and Welfare Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00654-en>.

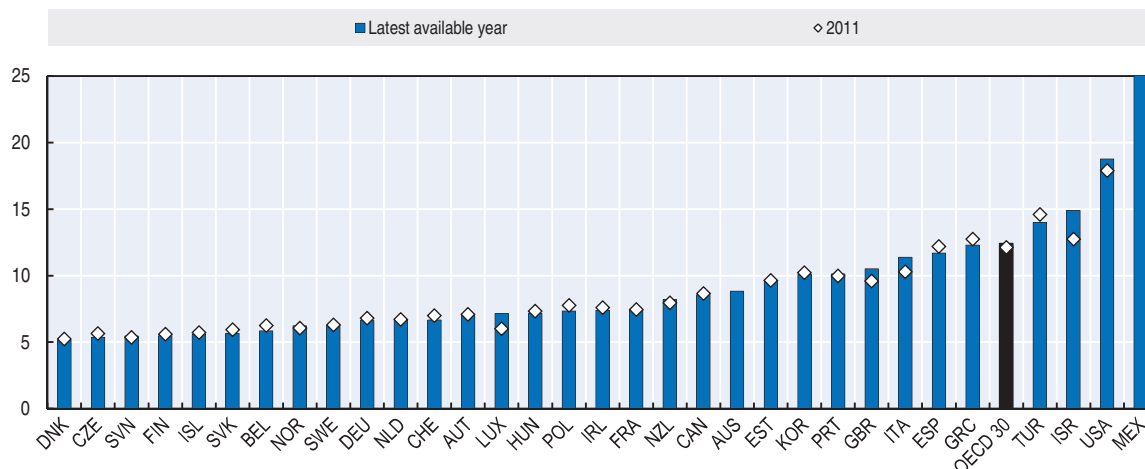
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An alternative perspective on income distribution is provided by the *inter-decile income share ratio* S90/S10 (Figure 2.5; see Box 2.1 for the definition). In around 2012, this ratio was lowest in Denmark, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Finland, where the share of income received by the top 10% was just over five times that received by the bottom 10%. By contrast, in Israel, people in the top decile received 15 times the income of people in the bottom decile, in United States this was close to 19 times, and in Mexico it was 25 times. Since 2011, the inter-decile income share ratio has increased by around 1 point in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy and Luxembourg, and by around 2 points in Israel.

Household net wealth in OECD countries is heavily concentrated towards the top of the distribution. Figure 2.6 shows that in the majority of countries, the top 1% of the distribution usually own more wealth than the bottom 60% combined. On average, the bottom 60% own around 13% of household net wealth in the OECD, while the top 1% owns 18%. Wealth is more unequally distributed than income: in the countries shown here, the top 10% of the distribution accounts for 50% of all household wealth, but only around 25% of all household income (OECD, 2015a). These data, however, exclude pension wealth – the

Figure 2.5. **Inter-decile income share ratio (S90/S10)**

The share of income received by the top 10% divided by the share of income received by the bottom 10%



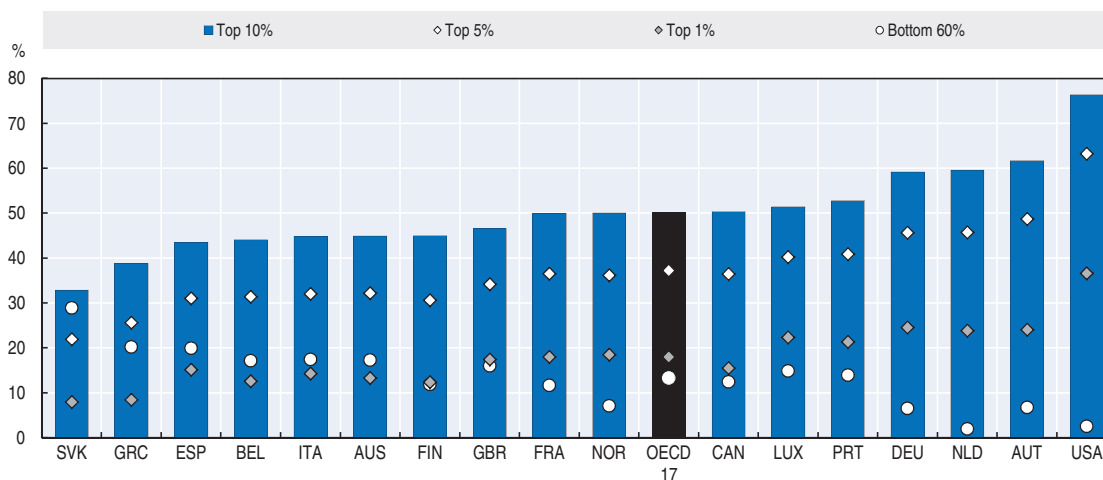
Note: The latest available year is 2014 for Hungary; and 2013 for Finland, Israel, Korea, the Netherlands and the United States. The first year shown refers to 2010 for Canada; and 2012 for Hungary, Korea and the United States. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Income Distribution", OECD Social and Welfare Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00654-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933258949>

Figure 2.6. **The distribution of household net wealth**

2010 or latest available year



Note: The latest available year ranges between 2010 and 2013. Data for the United Kingdom are limited to Great Britain only.

Source: OECD Wealth Distribution (database), <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?DataSetCode=WEALTH>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933258958>

size and distribution of which differs markedly across OECD countries depending on the characteristics of retirement systems.

As discussed in more depth in OECD (2015a), household wealth is generally higher when the head of the household is better educated and aged between 55 and 64. The principal residence is the most important asset for most households, and non-financial assets are more equally distributed than financial assets. Levels of debt increase with rising income, but over-indebtedness is highest among middle-income groups and among households headed by young adults.

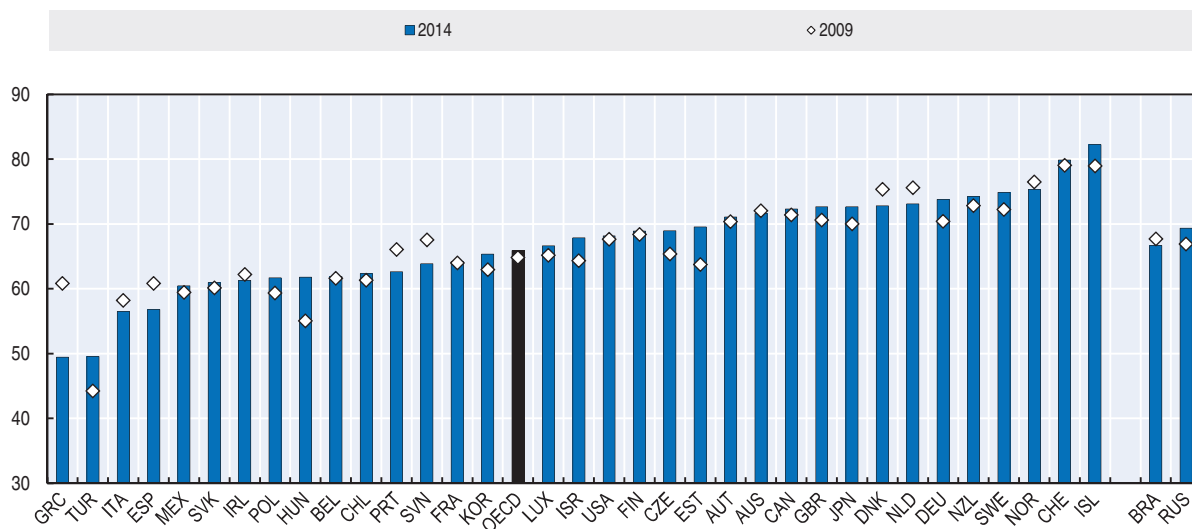


## Jobs and earnings

Jobs play a central role in many people's lives. Beyond providing a source of income, good jobs can bring many other well-being benefits, from extending people's social networks to providing people with new skills. Unemployment affects a household's financial security, but it can also have a negative effect on physical and mental health as well as on subjective well-being. Both quantity and quality matter when it comes to jobs, however: while being unemployed is bad for well-being on many levels, poor quality jobs can also put workers' health and broader well-being at risk.

The *employment rate* provides important information about the availability of jobs (see Box 2.2 for definitions). In general, employment rates are relatively low in Southern and (some) Eastern European countries, and high among Nordic and Northern European countries, as well as Switzerland, New Zealand and Japan. The employment rate has risen by around 1 percentage point between 2009 and 2014 on average in the OECD (Figure 2.7).<sup>2</sup> However, large reductions have been recorded over the same time period in countries most affected by the crisis: in Greece, the employment rate in 2014 was still 11.4 percentage points lower than in 2009, and large reductions have also been recorded over the same time period in Spain (-4.0 percentage points), Slovenia (-3.6 points), Portugal (-3.5 points), Denmark (-2.5 points), and the Netherlands (-2.5 points).

Figure 2.7. **Employment rate**  
Employed people aged 15-64, as a percentage of the population of the same age



Note: The latest available year is 2013 for Chile and Brazil. The first year shown for Chile is 2011 due to a break in the series. Comparisons over time for Germany and Portugal need to be interpreted with caution, due to a redesign of the labour force survey that occurred in 2010. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Labour Force Statistics", OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-lfs-data-en>.

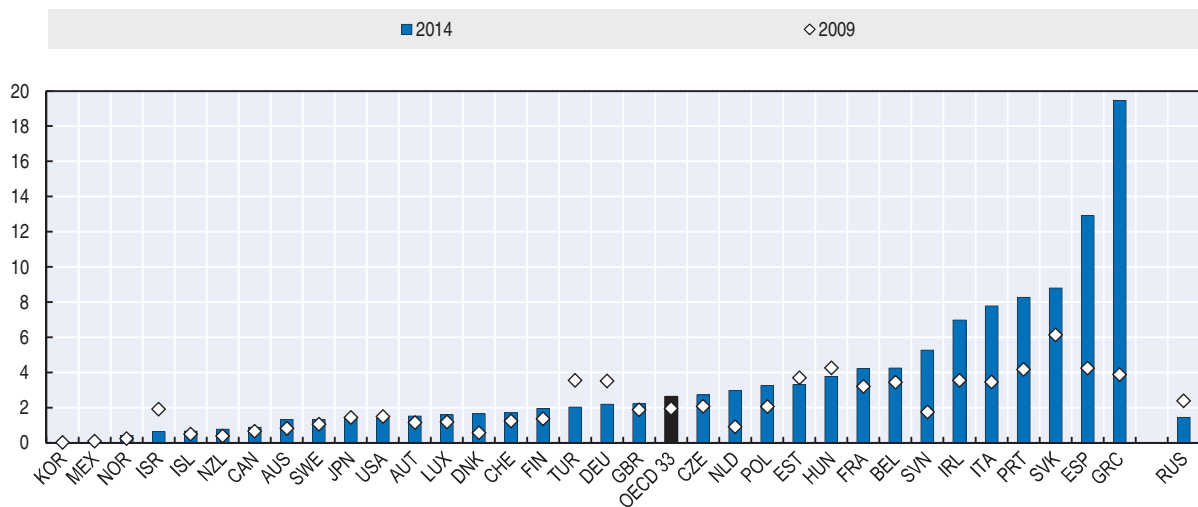
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**Long-term unemployment** places people at risk of poverty, deprivation, social exclusion and stigmatisation, and can involve psychological costs such as lower self-esteem and discouragement. In 2014, the proportion of the labour force unemployed for one year or more ranged from below 1% in Korea, Mexico, Norway, Israel, Iceland,



New Zealand and Canada, to more than 7% in Italy, Portugal and the Slovak Republic, 12.9% in Spain, and 19.5% in Greece (Figure 2.8). Since 2009, long-term unemployment has risen in over two thirds of OECD countries, and the OECD average has increased by 0.7 percentage points (cumulatively). In Greece, long-term unemployment in 2014 was over five times higher than in 2009; it tripled over the same period in the Netherlands, Spain, Slovenia and Denmark; and doubled in Italy, New Zealand, Portugal and Ireland. By contrast, long-term unemployment fell by more than one percentage point in Turkey, Germany and Israel.

**Figure 2.8. Long-term unemployment rate**  
Percentage of the labour force unemployed for one year or more



Note: The latest available year is 2013 for Korea. The first year shown for Belgium is 2011 due to a break in the series. Comparisons over time for Germany and Portugal need to be interpreted with caution, due to a redesign of the labour force survey that occurred in 2010. The OECD average is population-weighted.

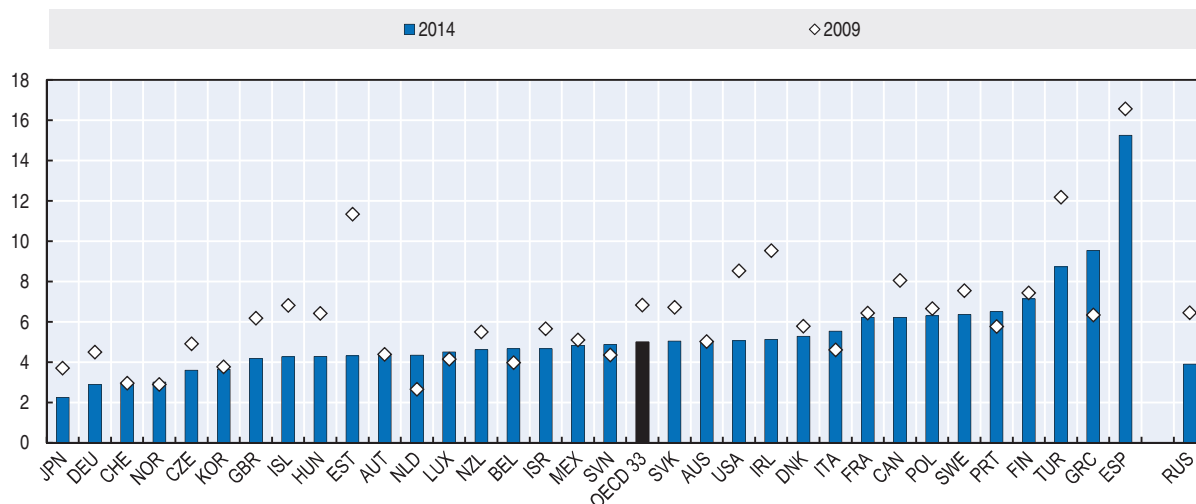
Source: "Labour Force Statistics", OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-lfs-data-en>.

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In 2014, the *probability of becoming unemployed* (see Box 2.2 for the definition) was lowest in Japan, Germany, Switzerland and Norway, where it affected fewer than 1 in every 33 workers (Figure 2.9). By contrast, it affected around 1 in every 15 workers in Portugal and Finland, more than 1 in 11 workers in Turkey, nearly 1 in 10 workers in Greece, and more than 1 in 7 workers in Spain. Across the OECD as a whole, the probability of becoming unemployed in 2014 was 1.8 percentage points lower than in 2009. However, the risk of unemployment increased in around one quarter of OECD countries, including in Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands and Greece.

Average gross annual *earnings* of full-time employees in 2013 (see Box 2.2 for the definition) ranged from USD 56 000 in the United States and Luxembourg, to below USD 20 000 in Estonia and Mexico (Figure 2.10). Gross earnings decreased between 2009 and 2013 in one-third of countries, dropping by 22% in Greece, 6% in Ireland and Spain, 4% in the United Kingdom and 3% in Mexico. By contrast, average earnings grew by 5% or more in Norway, Korea, Canada and Poland.

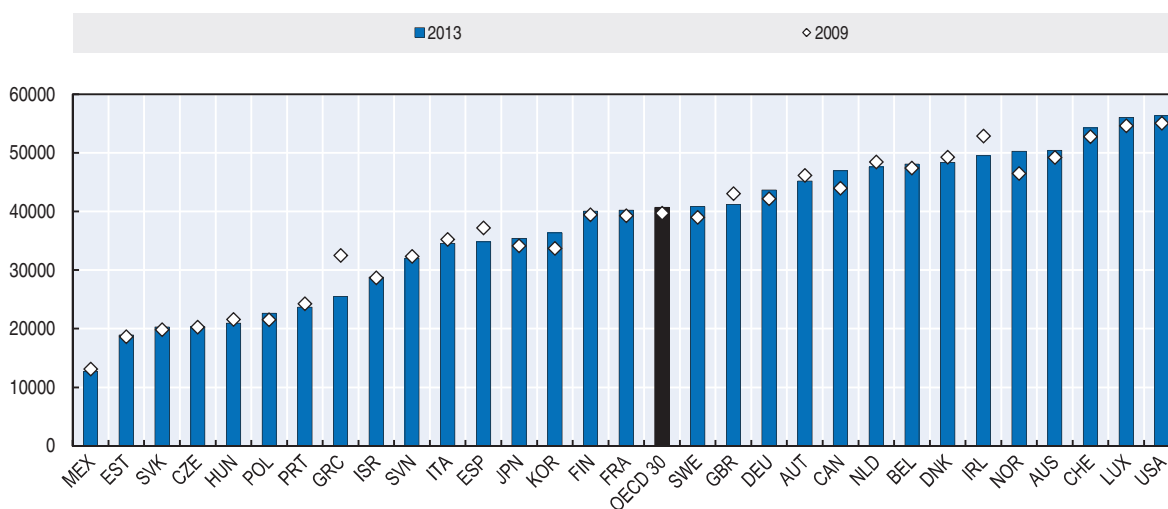
Figure 2.9. **Probability of becoming unemployed**  
Annual inflows into unemployment, as a percentage of employed people in the preceding year



Note: The first year shown for Belgium refers to 2011 due to a break in the series. Comparisons over time for Germany and Portugal need to be interpreted with caution, due to a redesign of the labour force survey that occurred in 2010. The OECD average is population-weighted.  
Source: OECD calculations based on "Labour Force Statistics", *OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics* (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-lfs-data-en>.

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Figure 2.10. **Average annual gross earnings per full-time employee**  
USD at 2013 PPPs and 2013 constant prices



Note: The latest year available for Mexico is 2011. Wages are expressed on a full-time, full-year basis. Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) are those for private consumption of households. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD calculations combining data from the *OECD Earnings Distribution Database* and the *OECD Average Annual Earnings per Full-time and Full-year Equivalent Dependent Employee Database*.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933258996>

### Measuring job quality: The OECD Job Quality Framework

The well-being of workers is also affected by the *quality of jobs* available, not just their quantity. In line with the *How's Life?* approach, and building on the International Labour Office (2012) and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2015) work in this area, the OECD

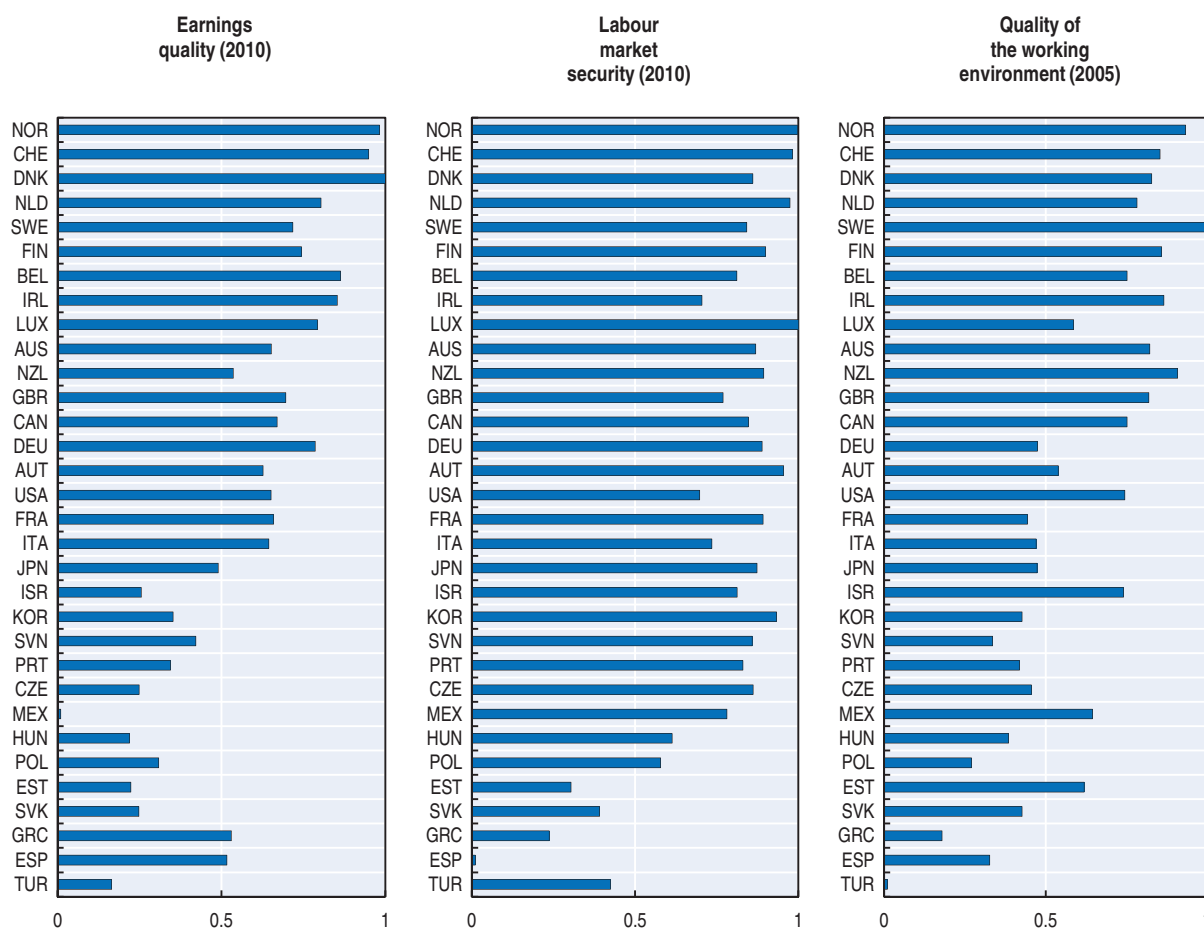
has developed a framework for measuring and assessing job quality that focuses on outcomes at the individual level, as well as their distribution. It has three distinct dimensions:

- **Earnings quality**, a measure that considers both hourly wages and their distribution across the workforce.<sup>3</sup>
- **Labour market (in)security**, which captures the expected earnings loss associated with unemployment, combining the probability of becoming unemployed, the average expected duration of completed unemployment spells and the unemployment insurance available.
- **Quality of the working environment**, measured as the incidence of job strain among employees. This is defined as a combination of high job demands (e.g. time pressure, and exposure to physical health risks) and low job resources (e.g. work autonomy, opportunities for learning, and good workplace relationships), and is measured through self-reports.


Detailed findings for these three dimensions are reported in the *OECD Employment Outlook 2014* for OECD countries, and in the *OECD Employment Outlook 2015* for twelve emerging economies. As shown in Figure 2.11, some countries perform well across all dimensions of job quality (e.g. Norway, Switzerland, Denmark), while others have more clearly defined areas of relative strength and weakness.

Figure 2.11. **Job quality in OECD countries**

Normalised score between 0 and 1<sup>4</sup>



Note: Data refer to 2010 for earnings quality and labour market security; and 2005 for the quality of the working environment.

Source: OECD calculations based on "Job Quality", *OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics* (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-data-en>.  
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### Box 2.2. Measuring jobs and earnings

The four headline indicators used to measure jobs and earnings are defined as follows:

- The **employment rate** is the share of the working-age population (people aged 15 to 64 in most OECD countries) who declare having worked in gainful employment for at least one hour in the previous week. This also includes persons who, having already worked in their present job, were temporarily absent from work during the reference period while having retained a formal attachment to their job (e.g. due to parental leave, sickness, annual leave). The data on employment rates come from national Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) as compiled in the *OECD Annual Labour Force Statistics (ALFS) Database*, and are consistent with International Labour Office (ILO) recommendations.
- The **long-term unemployment rate** is the number of persons who have been unemployed for one year or more, as a percentage of the labour force (the sum of employed and unemployed persons). Unemployed persons are defined as those who are currently not working but are willing to do so and actively searching for work. The data are drawn from national Labour Force Surveys as available in the *OECD Employment Outlook Database*.
- The **probability of becoming unemployed** is calculated as the annual inflow into unemployment – i.e. the number of people who have been unemployed for less than one year, as a proportion of the number of employed persons the year before. The indicator is calculated based on the OECD's Labour Force Statistics Database and is expressed as an annual figure. While the unemployment rate measures the “stock” of people who cannot find a job, the probability of becoming unemployed measures how many people are at risk of not having a job tomorrow even though they have one today.
- **Average gross annual earnings of full-time employees** refer to the average annual wages of employees working in all sectors of the economy and in all types of dependent employment; they are expressed as full-time and full-year equivalents. Wages include employees' gross remuneration, i.e. including employers' social contributions and before any deductions are made by the employer in respect of taxes, workers' contributions to social security and pension schemes, life insurance premiums, union dues and other employee obligations. The indicator is computed as the total wage bill from National Accounts, divided by the number of full-time equivalent employees in the economy. The number of full-time equivalent employees is obtained by multiplying data on the number of employees by the ratio of hours worked by all employees and by those working full-time, in order to correct for the prevalence of part-time work, which varies considerably across countries. The indicator combines data from the *OECD Earnings Distribution Database* and *OECD Average Annual Earnings per Full-time and Full-year Equivalent Dependent Employee Database*.

Generally, data on employment, unemployment and earnings are of good quality, and are collected according to internationally standardised definitions. The measure shown here for the probability of becoming unemployed relies on cross-sectional data (rather than panel data from the same individuals over time). This assumes that all inflows into unemployment come from employment, while all outflows from unemployment go to employment, and means that flows into and out of the labour force are not captured.

#### Further reading:

- Cazes, S., Hijzen, A. and A. Saint-Martin, (2015), “How good is your job? the new OECD framework for measuring and assessing job quality”, *OECD Working Paper*, forthcoming.
- OECD (2015b), *OECD Employment Outlook 2015*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/empl\\_outlook-2015-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2015-en).
- OECD (2013d), “Well-being in the workplace: Measuring job quality”, in OECD, *How's Life? 2013: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/how\\_life-2013-9-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/how_life-2013-9-en).

### The distribution of jobs and earnings

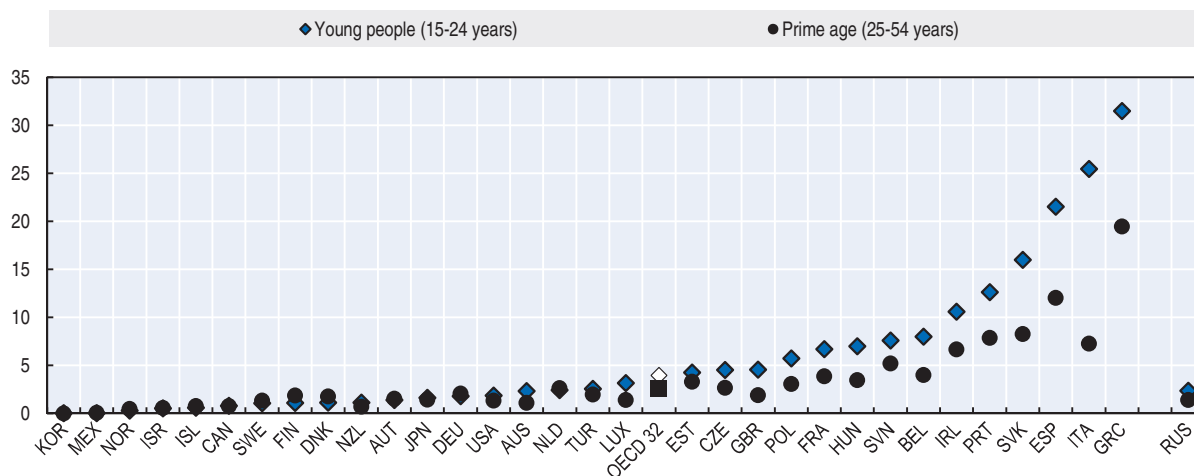
In two thirds of all OECD countries, young people are more likely to suffer long-term unemployment than prime-aged workers (Figure 2.12). In Belgium, Hungary, Australia, Luxembourg, and the United Kingdom, long-term unemployment among younger workers

is at least double that of prime-aged workers. In Italy, 1 in every 14 prime-age workers is long-term unemployed, but for young people the rate increases to 1 in every 4. In Greece, 1 in 3 workers aged 15-24 is long-term unemployed.

Increases in the long-term unemployment rate between 2009 and 2014 have also hit younger workers particularly hard, for example in the Slovak Republic, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece (Figure 2.13). Younger workers generally also face challenges in terms of non-regular employment, with a high incidence of temporary work, often coupled with low transition rates from temporary to permanent jobs (OECD, 2014a).<sup>5</sup>

Figure 2.12. **Differences in long-term unemployment rates for young and prime-aged workers**

Percentage of the labour force unemployed for one year or more, 2014



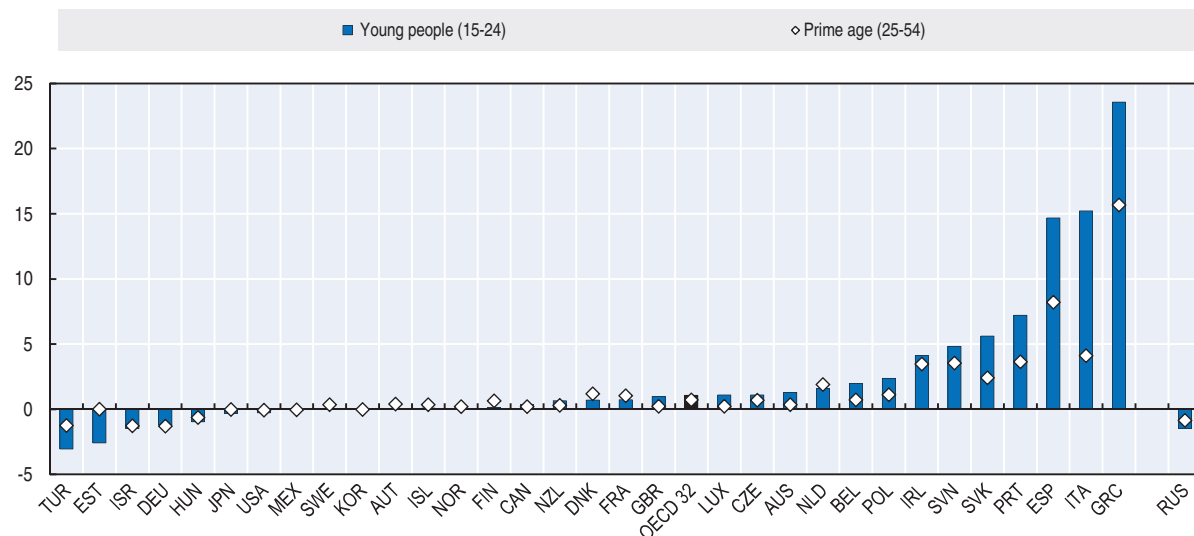
Note: The latest available year is 2013 for Korea. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Labour Force Statistics", OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-lfs-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259013>

Figure 2.13. **Changes in long-term unemployment from 2009 to 2014, by age**

Percentage point increase or decrease in the proportion of the labour force unemployed for one year or more



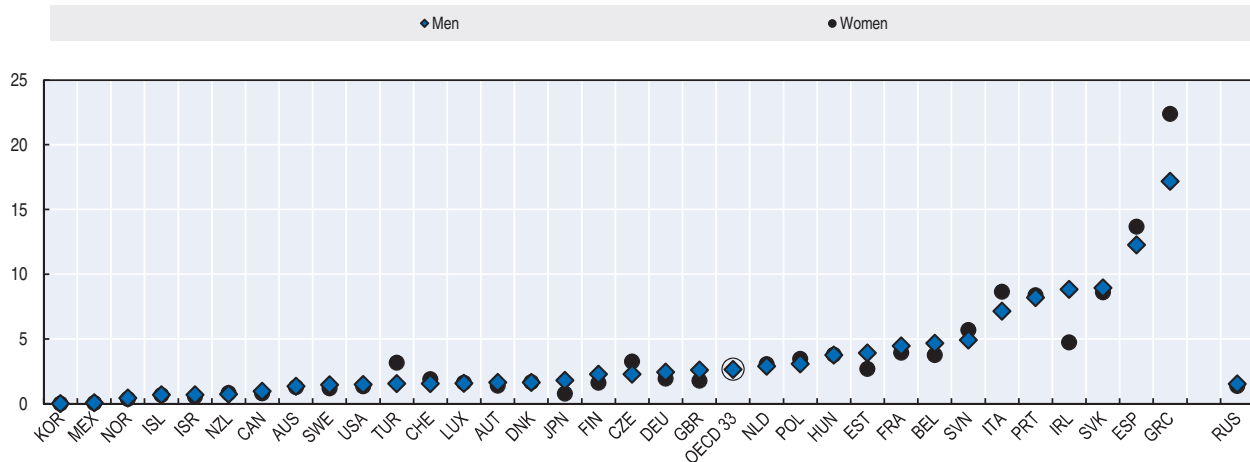
Note: The latest available year is 2013 for Korea. Changes for Belgium are calculated over the period 2011-2014 due to a break in the series. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Labour Force Statistics", OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-lfs-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259023>

Across the OECD area as a whole, men and women are equally likely to be long-term unemployed (at a rate of 1 in every 38 people in the labour force). However, there are large gender differences in Ireland, where long-term unemployment rates among men are almost double those among women, and in Turkey, Greece and the Czech Republic, where rates are higher among women.

Figure 2.14. **Gender differences in long-term unemployment rates**  
Percentage of the labour force unemployed for one year or more, 2014



Note: The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Labour Force Statistics", OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-lfs-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259039>

Men's (full-time, full-year) earnings are higher than women's in every OECD country, and the average gender wage gap<sup>6</sup> now stands at 15.5% (OECD, 2015c). In other words, women earn just under 85 cents for every dollar earned by men. The difference in earnings between men and women is largest in Korea, Estonia, Japan and Israel (with wage gaps well above 20%), and smallest in Greece, Luxembourg, Belgium and New Zealand (where the wage gap is less than 7%).

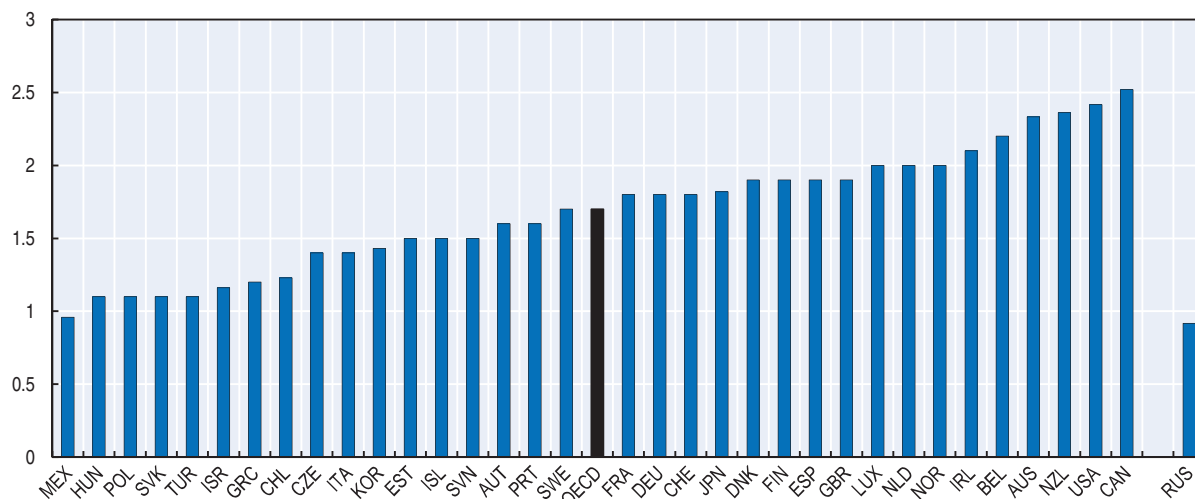
## Housing conditions

Where people live can have a big impact on their lives, including their housing conditions, access to sanitation, and other infrastructure. Housing is essential for meeting the basic need for shelter, but good quality housing also provides a sense of security, privacy and personal space. Homes matter for people's relationships, providing a space to socialise with friends, and a place to raise a family. Housing affordability is often a major financial consideration for home-owners and renters alike.

The *number of rooms per person* (see Box 2.3 for definitions) varies widely across OECD countries. On average, homes in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia and Belgium have twice as many rooms per person, relative to homes in Mexico, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Turkey (Figure 2.15).

Access to *basic sanitation* (see Box 2.3 for definition) is widespread throughout the OECD, but significant numbers of people still live without an indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household – including over 5% of people in Japan, Estonia, Chile, Turkey, Brazil and the Russian Federation (Figure 2.16). In most countries, the proportion of people living in housing that lacks basic sanitation has generally declined since 2009.

Figure 2.15. **Rooms per person**  
Average number, 2013 or latest available year

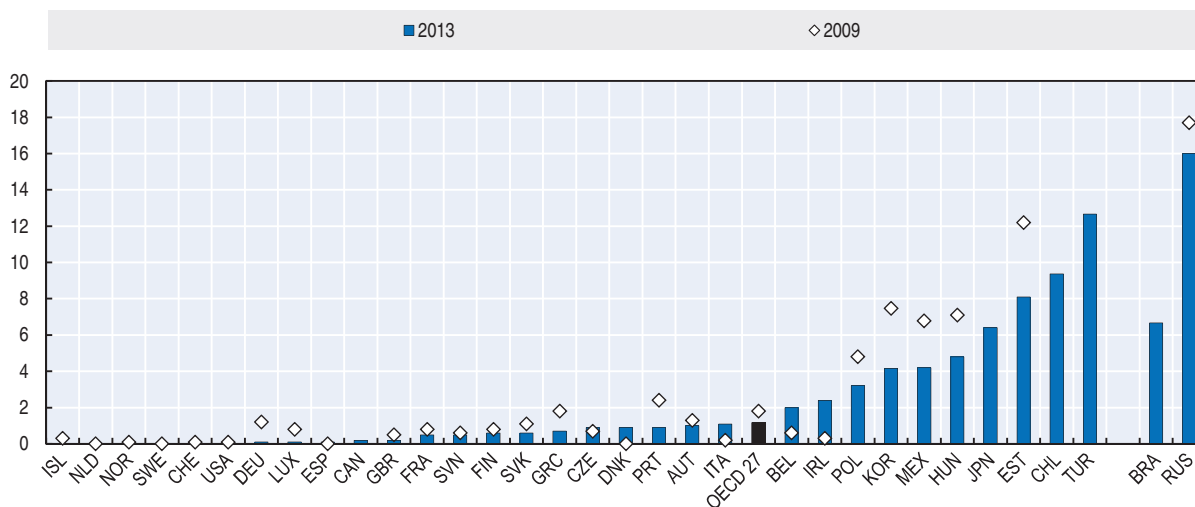


Notes: OECD estimates for Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, the United States, Chile and the Russian Federation are based on national data. The latest available year is 2012 for Ireland and Israel; 2011 for Australia, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Canada; 2010 for Korea and Mexico; 2008 for Japan; and 2002 for Chile. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Sources: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) for EU countries and Norway; 2011 ABS Census of Population and Housing for Australia; Canadian National Household Survey for Canada; INE Censo 2002 for Chile; Israeli Household Expenditure Survey for Israel; Housing and Land Survey of Japan for Japan; Population and Housing Census of Korea for Korea; INEGI Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010 for Mexico; Census of New Zealand for New Zealand; Population and Housing census of Turkey for Turkey; American Community Survey for the United States; and ROSSTAT Income, Expenditure and Consumption of Households statistical report for the Russian Federation.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259048>

Figure 2.16. **People living in dwellings without basic sanitary facilities**  
Percentage of people living in dwellings without an indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household



Notes: The latest available data for Ireland refer to 2012; and to 2010 for Korea and Mexico. The first year shown refers to 2006 Mexico, and to 2005 for Korea. The only available observation refers to 2010 for Brazil and Turkey; to 2008 for Japan; to 2001 for Chile; and to 1997 for Canada. The OECD average is population-weighted.

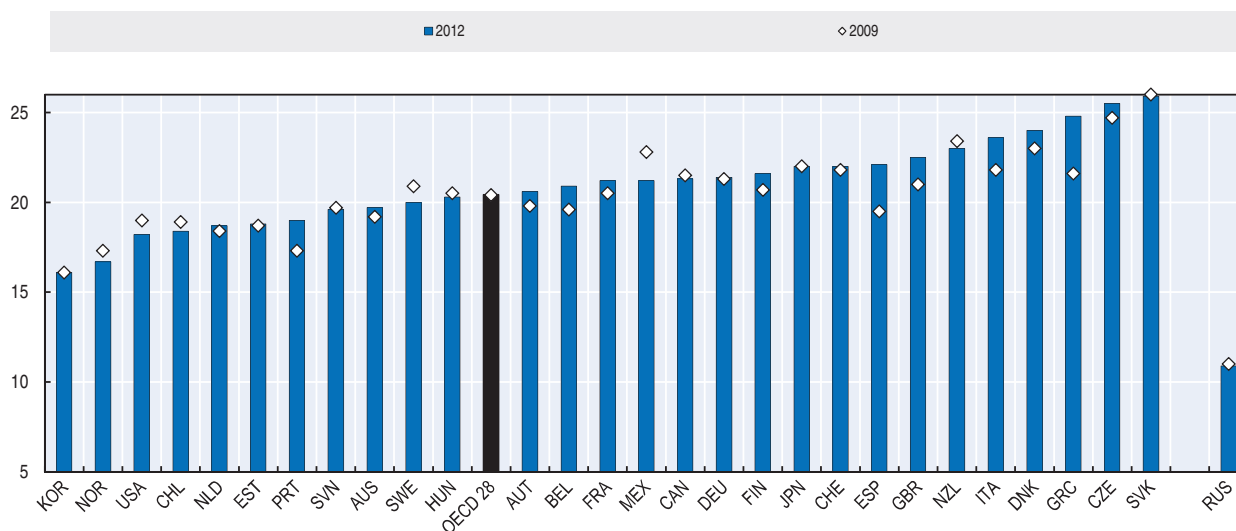
Sources: European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/eu\\_silc](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/eu_silc) for EU countries and Norway; Canadian Household Facilities and Equipment Survey for Canada; INE Censo 2002 for Chile; Housing and Land Survey of Japan for Japan; Population and Housing Census of Korea for Korea; INEGI Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010 for Mexico; Turkish Income and Living Conditions survey for Turkey; American Housing Survey for the United States; Universo do Censo Demográfico 2010 of Brazil for Brazil; and ROSSTAT Income, Expenditure and Consumption of Households statistical report for the Russian Federation.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259057>



**Housing costs** typically take up a sizeable proportion of household budgets. On average, people in OECD countries spend just over 20% of their annual gross adjusted disposable household income on housing (see Box 2.3 for a full definition). Housing expenditure exceeds 23% of household annual gross adjusted income in New Zealand, Italy and Denmark, and 25% in the Czech and Slovak Republics (Figure 2.17). Housing expenditure increased in around half of all OECD countries between 2009 and 2012. The steepest rises occurred in Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece, where household income fell further and more rapidly than housing costs.

Figure 2.17. **Housing expenditure**  
As a percentage of household gross adjusted disposable income



Notes: The latest available year for New Zealand is 2011. The earlier year shown for Korea and the Netherlands is 2010. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD calculations based on OECD National Accounts Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/na-data-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259064>

### Box 2.3. Measuring housing conditions

The three headline indicators of housing conditions presented above are defined as follows:

- The **number of rooms per person** is a measure of whether people are living in crowded conditions. It is measured as the number of rooms in a dwelling, divided by the number of persons living in the dwelling. It excludes rooms such as a kitchenette, scullery/utility room, bathroom, toilet, garage, consulting rooms, office or shop. The data sources are detailed in the note for Figure 2.15.
- The **percentage of people living in dwellings without access to basic facilities** refers to the percentage of the population living in a dwelling without an indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of the household. Flushing toilets outside the dwelling are not considered, but flushing toilets in a room where there is also a shower unit or a bath are included. Data sources are detailed in the note for Figure 2.16.
- The **share of household gross adjusted disposable income spent on housing and maintenance of the house**, as defined in the System of National Accounts (SNA), includes actual and imputed rentals for housing, expenditure on maintenance and repair of the dwelling (including miscellaneous services), on water supply, electricity, gas and other fuels, as well as the expenditure on furniture, furnishings,

### Box 2.3. Measuring housing conditions (cont.)

household equipment and goods and services for routine home maintenance, expressed as a percentage of the household gross adjusted disposable income. This measure of housing costs excludes household payments for interest and principal on housing mortgages. The data refer to the sum of households and non-profit institutions serving households and are sourced from the *OECD National Accounts Database*.

The indicator on household crowding suffers from a number of limitations. First, it does not take into account the possible trade-off between the size of the dwelling and its location: some households may choose to live in smaller dwellings located in better serviced areas than in larger homes in less desirable locations. Second, an ideal indicator of the available space per person should refer not only to the number of rooms available, but also to their overall size (e.g. number of square metres per person). For instance, the size of accommodation is generally smaller in urban areas than in rural ones, which may hamper international comparisons. Indicators of housing overcrowding should ideally be complemented with data on the perceived lack of space, as reported in household surveys.

The second indicator, which focuses on access to indoor flushing toilets, provides a proxy measure of the notion of “decent housing”. However, an ideal indicator set would also include other basic aspects of housing conditions such as adequate electrical and plumbing installations, the quality of floors and doors, structural damage and adequate heating. An ideal set of housing indicators would also inform about the tenure status of households, people’s subjective perceptions of the pressure of housing costs on household budgets, and other types of housing expenditures (e.g. those related to mortgages) that are not covered by the indicator used here. It would also include measures of the environmental characteristics of the areas where dwellings are located (e.g. outdoor pollution, exposure to noise and the proximity to public services). In practice, it is difficult to measure housing conditions, as there are very few internationally comparable indicators and no harmonised housing surveys across countries. The OECD is currently developing an internationally comparable database focusing on House Price Indices (HPIs) – also called Residential Property Prices Indices (RPPIs) – and other associated indicators to provide a more complete picture of the residential real estate market. This work includes the release of a new OECD “House prices and related indicators” database in summer 2015.

#### Further reading:

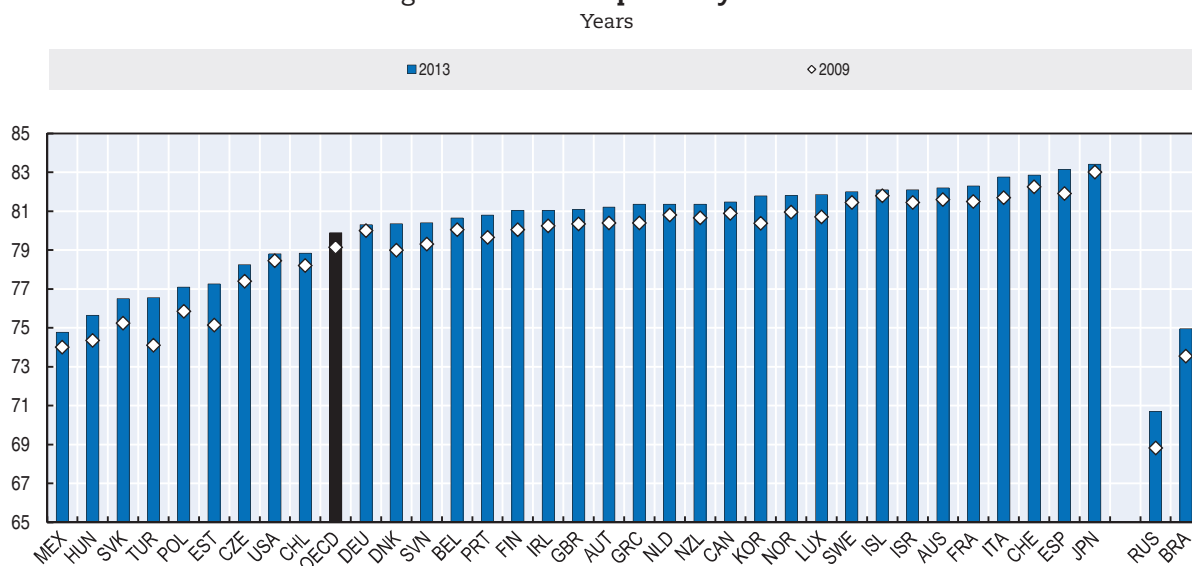
- Balestra, C. and J. Sultan (2013), “Home Sweet Home: The Determinants of Residential Satisfaction and its Relation with Well-being”, *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, No. 2013/05, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jzbcx0czc0x-en>.
- OECD (2011b), “Housing conditions”, in *OECD, How’s Life? Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264121164-6-en>.

## Health Status

Health and well-being go hand-in-hand. Being healthy enough to participate in the activities that people value, and to pursue the lives that they want to live, is a crucial element of well-being for people of all ages. Poor health is consistently associated with lower satisfaction with life as a whole and with worse daily emotions and experiences. Health also affects people’s ability to work, study and make the most of their leisure time.

In more than two-thirds of OECD countries, *life expectancy* at birth now exceeds 80 years (Figure 2.18, see Box 2.4 for definitions). The lowest level of life expectancy is observed in Mexico, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and Turkey, where it is below 77 years. Cumulative gains in life expectancy between 2009 and 2013 vary from around 4 months in Iceland, Germany, the United States and Japan, to more than two years in Turkey and Estonia.

Figure 2.18. Life expectancy at birth



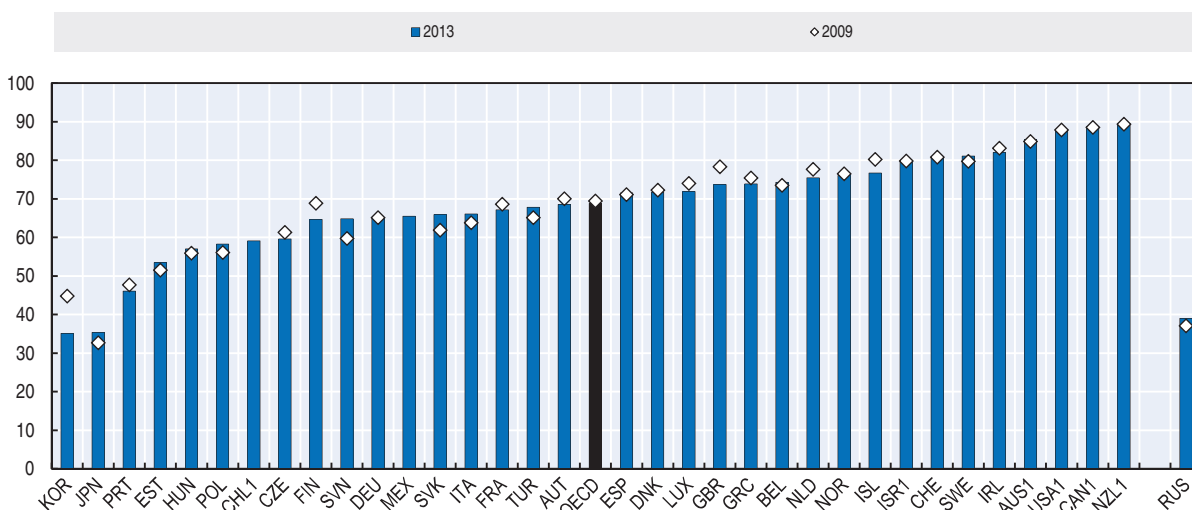
Notes: The latest available year is 2014 for Mexico and 2011 for Canada. Values for Germany are provided by Destatis, and refer to 2007-09 and 2010-12. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Health status", OECD Health Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00540-en>; and Destatis (2015), [www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/Sterbefaele/Tabellen/SterbetafelDeutschland.xlsx](http://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/Sterbefaele/Tabellen/SterbetafelDeutschland.xlsx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259075>

Longer lives are not necessarily healthier lives, and *perceived health* offers a complementary perspective on people's experiences. Just over two-thirds of people in the OECD area report that they are in "good" or "very good" health (Figure 2.19; see Box 2.4 for a definition). Between 2009 and 2013, the proportion remained fairly stable in most countries, though it declined by 3 percentage points or more in Korea, Finland, Iceland and the United Kingdom, and increased by 4 percentage points or more in Slovenia and the Slovak Republic.

Figure 2.19. Perceived health status  
Percentage of adults reporting "good" or "very good" health



Notes: The latest available year is 2014 for the Russian Federation. 2009 values refer to 2007 for Australia, Japan and New Zealand; and to 2011 for the Russian Federation. The single data point for Mexico refers to 2006; and to 2011 for Chile. Adults are generally defined as people aged 15 years and over. Results for countries marked with a "1" are not directly comparable with those for other countries, due to differences in reporting scales, which may lead to an upward bias in the reported estimates. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "Health status", OECD Health Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00540-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259086>

### Box 2.4. Measuring health status

The two headline indicators of health status presented above are defined as follows:

- **Life expectancy at birth** measures the average number of years that people born today could expect to live based on currently prevailing age-specific death rates. Life expectancy at birth for the population as a whole is computed as a weighted average of life expectancy for men and women. The data are based on official national statistics compiled by the OECD and available in the OECD Health Statistics Database.
- **Perceived health** refers to the percentage of the population aged 15 and over who report being in “good” or “very good” health. The indicator is based on the following question: “How is your health in general?” with, in most countries, response categories of the type, “very good/ good/ fair/ bad/ very bad”. Some cross-country differences in the measurement methodology (for example, the use of different response scales) can limit comparability across countries; the note for Figure 2.19 provides more details. Data are compiled as part of the OECD Health Statistics Database, and are drawn from European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), general household surveys or more detailed Health Interviews undertaken as part of national official surveys in various countries.

Life expectancy at birth provides only an estimate of the expected life span of people born in a specific year, as the actual age-specific death rates of any particular birth cohort are not known in advance. Measures of life expectancy at birth are based on good quality data for all OECD countries, and can be broken down by gender. However, relatively few countries are able to provide routine information on life expectancy by educational attainment and income, as these measures require either linking mortality records to a population census, or information on the educational attainment of the deceased to be reported on the death certificate.

Measuring morbidity (i.e. the incidence of disease and illness) is more challenging. One approach is to focus on a person's *functioning* – i.e. whether they experience any limitations in domains such as vision, hearing, walking, cognition or affect (moods, emotions and feelings) – as well as pain and fatigue. The UNECE-WHO-Eurostat taskforce on measuring health status (or Budapest Initiative) and the Washington Group on disability statistics have proposed a set of questions to measure functioning, but comparable data are yet to emerge on an international level. A major gap also exists for internationally comparable statistics on mental health outcomes. The European Health Interview Survey 2014 should produce comparable data on a range of health status indicators in the near future for European countries.

Indicators of perceived health are among the few morbidity indicators that are available for all OECD countries. Such measures can summarise a broad range of dimensions of morbidity, since they address the overall health status of the respondent. However, indicators of perceived health focus on people's *experiences* of their health, rather than defining morbidity in objective terms. The use of different measurement methods, possible cultural biases and other contextual factors can potentially constrain data comparability across countries.

#### Further reading:

- OECD (2015d), *Health at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, forthcoming.
- OECD (2014b), *Making Mental Health Count: The Social and Economic Costs of Neglecting Mental Health Care*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208445-en>.

### The distribution of health outcomes

Women live longer lives but generally feel less healthy than men: women's life expectancy is higher than men's in every OECD country but their self-reported health status is typically worse (OECD, 2013a). Evidence also suggests that health varies by education, with highly educated people enjoying a longer life expectancy relative to those with less education (OECD, 2012; OECD 2015d; EU, 2013). For instance, among the 15 OECD countries

for which data are available,<sup>7</sup> a 30-year-old man with a tertiary education can expect to live, on average, 8 years longer than someone without upper secondary education; among women the average difference is 4 years (OECD, 2015d). These differences are largest in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Poland, and smallest in Italy, Sweden, and Portugal. For example, in the Czech Republic, a 30-year-old man with a tertiary degree can expect to live 18 years longer than a man who has not attained an upper secondary education; in Estonia the difference is 15 years, while in Italy, Sweden and Portugal the difference is just 4 years.

A social gradient also exists for perceived health in OECD countries: while 78% of people with incomes in the highest quintile report being in good or better health, only 60% of those with income in the lowest quintile do so (Figure 2.20). Inequalities in self-reported health status are particularly large in Estonia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom and Slovenia, where the gap in perceived health between the highest and lowest income quintile is 25 percentage points or greater. By contrast, the gap is less than 10 points in New Zealand, Greece and Iceland.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 2.20. **The gap in perceived health between high and low income groups**

Percentage of adults reporting “good” or “very good” health, 2013 or latest available year



Notes: Data refer to 2014 for New Zealand; 2011 for Chile; and 2007 for Australia. Adults are generally defined as people aged 15 years and over. Results for countries marked with a “1” are not strictly comparable with those for other countries, due to differences in reporting scales, which may lead to an upward bias in the reported estimates. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: “Health status”, OECD Health Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00540-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259090>

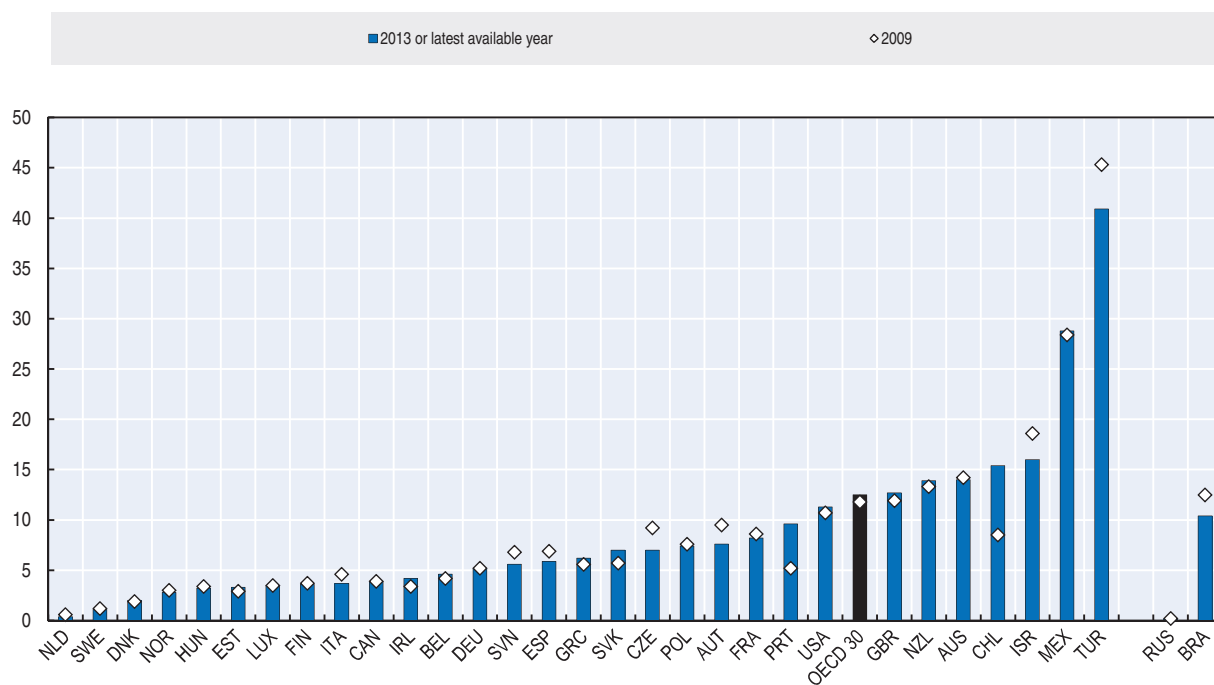
## Work-life balance

How people spend their time is a critical determinant of their broader well-being, and most workers dedicate a larger proportion of their waking hours to work than to any other type of activity. Getting the right balance between life and work matters for people’s health and happiness, but also for the relationships that people have with their friends, families and the wider community. People’s ability to balance work and life also

has implications for the well-being of others: caring for children and other dependents is an important form of “unpaid work” that many people need to reconcile alongside a full-time job.

One in every eight employees across the OECD works 50 hours or more each week on a routine basis (Figure 2.21, see Box 2.5 for definitions). The proportion of employees *working very long hours* varies from just 1 in every 250 in the Netherlands to 1 in every 2.4 employees in Turkey. Since 2009, the average proportion of employees working very long hours increased by 0.7 percentage points across the OECD. In Portugal and Chile, the incidence of very long hours in 2013 was nearly double the level in 2009 – an increase of 6.9 percentage points in Chile, and 4.4 percentage points in Portugal. It also increased by around 1 percentage point in Slovak Republic, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Greece and New Zealand. By contrast, reductions of around 2 percentage points or more have been recorded in Turkey, Israel, the Czech Republic, Austria and Brazil.

Figure 2.21. **Employees working very long hours**  
Percentage of all employees usually working 50 hours or more per week



Note: Data refer to the percentage of all employees usually working 50 hours or more per week, except for the Russian Federation for which data refer to people who worked 51 hours or more. The jobs covered are the main job for Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Sweden, Turkey and the United States, and all jobs for Australia, New Zealand and Norway. Starting from 2002, the number of usual hours worked excludes the main meal breaks for the Slovak Republic. Data refer to 2012 for Chile and Brazil. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: “Labour Force Statistics”, OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/lfs-lfs-data-en>.

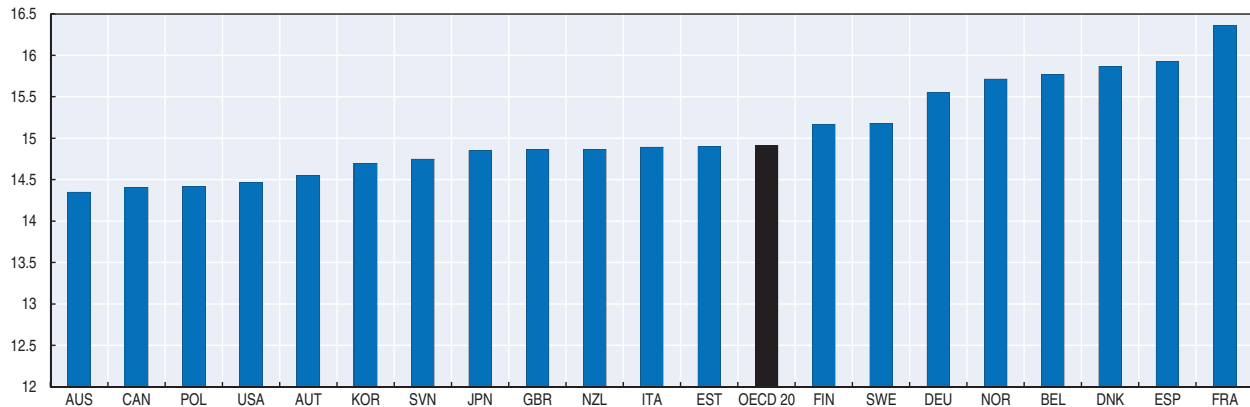
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Having sufficient time for *leisure and personal care* – which include activities such as sleep, eating, hygiene, exercise and time with friends and family – is important for people’s sense of work-life balance and for their overall well-being. Among the 20 OECD countries where data are available, the average full-time worker spends just under



15 hours per day on leisure and personal care (Figure 2.22). There is some variation in how time is spent across countries: full-time employed people living in France, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, Norway and Germany spend more than 15½ hours per day on leisure and personal care. This drops to less than 14½ hours in the United States, Poland, Canada and Australia.

Figure 2.22. **Time devoted to leisure and personal care**  
Hours per day, people in full-time employment, latest available year



Notes: Data refer to 2013 for the United States; 2011 for Japan; 2010 for Canada; 2009-10 for Spain, New Zealand, France, and Estonia; 2008-09 for Austria and Italy; 2006 for Australia; 2005 for Belgium and the United Kingdom; 2003-04 for Poland; 2001-02 for Germany; 2001 for Denmark; and to 2000-01 for Norway, Slovenia and Sweden. Data have been normalised to 1440 minutes per day: in other words, for those countries for which the time use did not sum up to 1440 minutes, the missing or extra minutes (around 30-40 minutes usually) were equally distributed across all activities. Data for Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Turkey and South Africa were excluded as they also include part-time employed. Full samples include people aged 12 or more in New Zealand; 15 or more in Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United States; 20 to 74 years old in Belgium, Germany, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden; and 20 or more in Korea – but in practice data are limited to those who are full-time employed only. In Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States a minimum number of hours worked per week is also set at 30, 35, 36 and 35 respectively. The OECD average is the population-weighted average of the values included in the chart.

Source: OECD calculations based on the Harmonised European Time Use Survey web application for European countries (<https://www.h2.scb.se/tus/tus/>); Eurostat database, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tus\\_00selfstat&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tus_00selfstat&lang=en); and public-use time use survey micro-data and tabulations from National Statistical Offices for non-European countries.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259111>

### Box 2.5. Measuring work-life balance

The two headline indicators of work-life balance presented above are defined as follows:

- Data on **employees who usually work for pay for 50 hours or more per week** are shown as a percentage of the total number of employees, of all ages. The indicator excludes self-employed workers. The threshold is set at 50 hours because, after commuting, unpaid work and basic needs (such as sleeping and eating) are taken into account, workers routinely working more than 50 hours per week are likely to be left with very few hours (one or two per day) for other activities. Moreover, in countries where there is a regulation on maximum working time, this is generally limited to 48 hours per week. Data come from National Labour Force Surveys and are broadly comparable across countries.
- Data on the **time devoted to leisure and personal care** are shown for a typical day and refer to full-time employed people only in order to improve comparability across countries where employment rates differ. The information is collected through national Time Use Surveys, which



### Box 2.5. Measuring work-life balance (cont.)

involve respondents keeping a diary of their activities over one or several representative days for a given period. Activities considered under the definition of “time devoted to leisure and personal care” include sleep, eating, hygiene, exercise, time spent with friends and family, and travel time devoted to leisure and personal care. For some countries and some specific types of activities, the comparability of these surveys might be an issue. The data shown here have been harmonised *ex post* by the OECD. Data are sourced from the Harmonised European Time Use Survey; the Eurostat time use database, public-use time use survey micro-data, and tabulations from National Statistical Offices.

The headline indicators used here provide both an indirect and a direct measure of the time available for non-work activities that contribute to individual and family well-being. Yet measuring work-life balance is a more challenging task. First, the way people allocate their time is determined by necessity, individual preference and cultural, social and family contexts. This means that what feels “balanced” for one person might not feel balanced for someone else. People running their own business might have an extra incentive to work long hours – and as a consequence the self-employed are excluded from data on very long working hours, but this can have a bearing on the results when self-employed people form a significant proportion of the total workforce. Second, because the indicators used here focus only on the quantity of time allocated to different tasks, they do not shed light on the *quality* of the time spent outside work, and thus on people’s personal enjoyment or perceived time stress. Third, Time Use Surveys are, in most OECD countries, undertaken on an ad hoc or infrequent basis (i.e. every 5 or 10 years), leading to estimates that are typically not very timely.

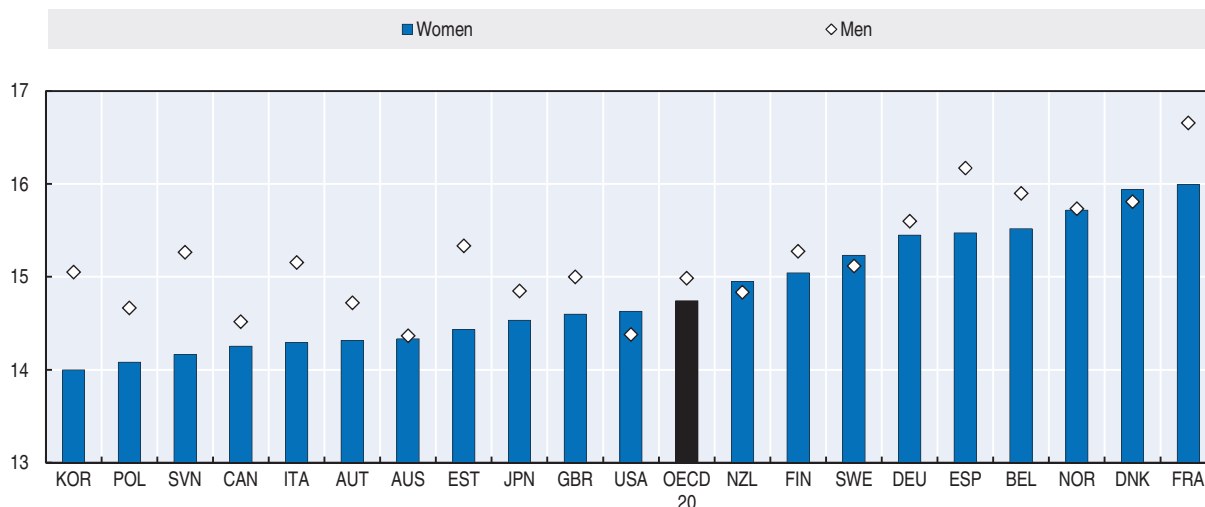
#### Further reading:

- OECD (2014c), “Improving well-being”, in OECD, *OECD Economic Surveys: United States 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco\\_surveys-usa-2014-5-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-usa-2014-5-en).
- OECD (2011c), *The Future of Families to 2030*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264168367-en>.
- OECD (2007), *Babies and Bosses – Reconciling Work and Family Life: A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264032477-en>.

### The distribution of work-life balance outcomes

Gender is a key factor when considering inequalities in work-life balance (OECD, 2013a). In all OECD countries, male employees are more likely than female employees to work for pay for 50 hours or more per week. However, while men spend longer hours in paid work, women have the longest hours when considering paid and unpaid work (such as domestic work) together (OECD, 2013a). Indeed, in two-thirds of the OECD countries for which data are available, women who work full-time devote less time to leisure and personal care than men who work full-time (Figure 2.23). The largest differences are found in Korea and Slovenia, where men spend over 1 hour more than women per day on leisure and personal care, and in Italy and Estonia where the gender gap is around 55 minutes. By contrast, women spend around 6 minutes more on leisure and personal care than men do in Sweden, New Zealand and Denmark, and around 18 minutes more than men in the United States.

Figure 2.23. **Time spent on leisure and personal care for men and women**  
Hours per day, people in full-time employment, latest available year



Note: Data refer to 2013 for the United States; 2011 for Japan; 2010 for Canada; 2009-10 for Spain, New Zealand, France, and Estonia; 2008-09 for Austria and Italy; 2006 for Australia; 2005 for Belgium and the United Kingdom; 2003-04 for Poland; 2001-02 for Germany; 2001 for Denmark; and to 2000-01 for Norway, Slovenia and Sweden. Data have been normalised to 1440 minutes per day: in other words, for those countries for which the time use did not sum up to 1440 minutes, the missing or extra minutes (around 30-40 minutes usually) were equally distributed across all activities. Data for Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Turkey and South Africa were excluded as they also include part-time employed. Full samples include people aged 12 or more in New Zealand; 15 or more in Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Spain and the United States; 20 to 74 years old in Belgium, Germany, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden; and 20 or more in Korea – but in practice data are limited to those who are full-time employed only. In Canada, Japan, Korea and the United States a minimum number of hours worked per week is also set at 30, 35, 36 and 35 respectively. The OECD average is the population-weighted average of the values included in the chart.

Source: OECD calculations based on the Harmonised European Time Use Survey web application for European countries (<https://www.h2.scb.se/tus/tus/>), Eurostat database, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tus\\_00selfstat&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tus_00selfstat&lang=en), public-use time use survey micro-data and tabulations from National Statistical Offices for non-European countries.

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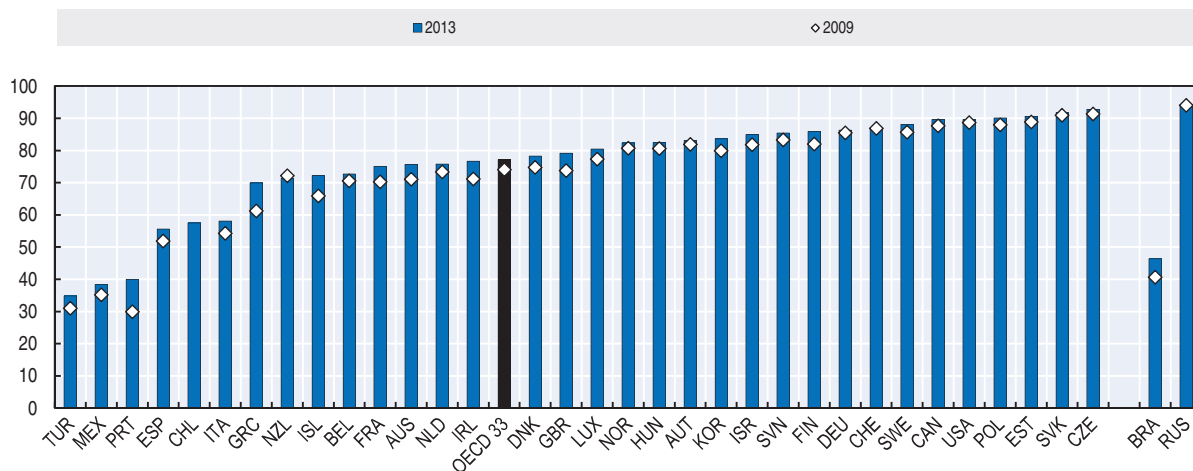
## Education and skills

While having a good education makes it easier for people to get a good job, a good education is more than just a passport to work. The opportunity to learn new skills can be intrinsically rewarding, and education is generally valued by people as an outcome in its own right. Higher levels of education are also associated with better health status and greater civic engagement.

Across the OECD, just over three-quarters of the population aged 25-64 have completed **upper secondary education** (Figure 2.24, see Box 2.6 for definitions). The share rises to 90% or more in Poland, Estonia, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and the Russian Federation. On the other hand, fewer than 60% of 25-64 year olds have completed upper-secondary education in Italy, Chile, Spain, Portugal, Mexico and Turkey. Between 2009 and 2013, educational attainment increased in almost every OECD country, and by 3.2 percentage points on average.

**Cognitive skills** in reading, mathematics and science at age 15 (Figure 2.25, see Box 2.6 for the definition) refer to what students know and can do, rather than the number of years spent at school or the qualifications attained. In 2012, the cognitive skills of students across OECD countries were highest in Korea, Japan, Finland and Estonia, and lowest in Mexico, Chile, Turkey and Greece.

Figure 2.24. **Educational attainment of the adult working-age population**  
Percentage of people aged 25-64 with at least an upper secondary education

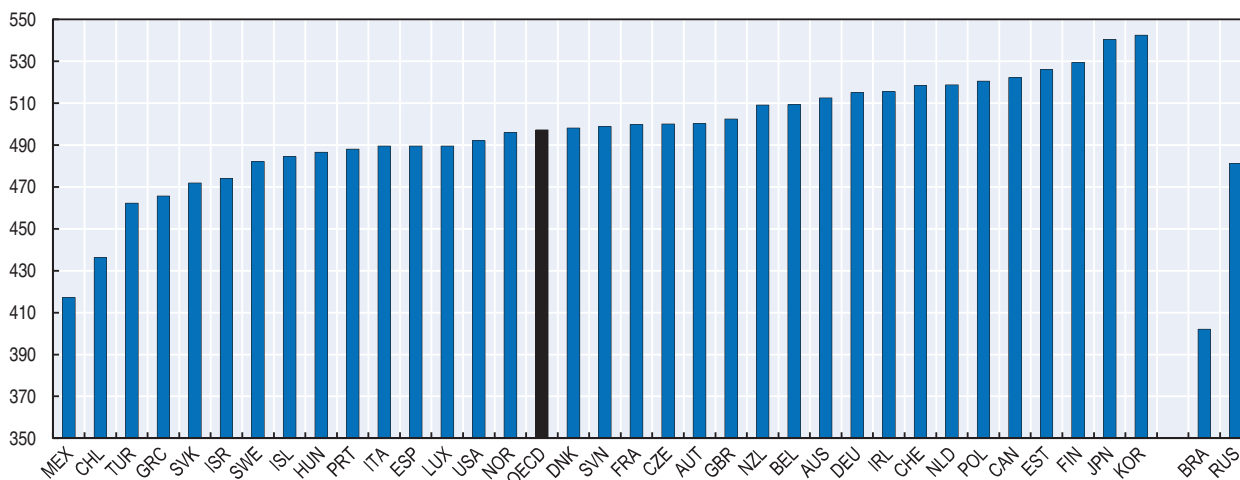


Note: Data for Chile refer to 2011 only. For the Russian Federation, the latest available year is 2012, and the first available year is 2011. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD (2015e), *Education at a Glance Interim Report: Update of Employment and Educational Attainment Indicators*, OECD, Paris, [www.oecd.org/edu/EAG-Interim-report.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG-Interim-report.pdf).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259133>

Figure 2.25. **Cognitive skills of 15-year-old students**  
PISA mean scores in reading, mathematics and science, 2012



Note: The PISA scores on reading, mathematics and science are each measured on a scale which is normalised to be 500 for the OECD average.

Source: OECD (2014e), *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do (Volume I, Revised edition): Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208780-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259140>

The OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) assesses the proficiency of adults in the domains of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments (see Box 2.6 for the precise definition). According to this source, *adults' competencies* vary significantly across countries (Figure 2.26), especially in the case of numeracy. Japan and Finland have the highest levels of proficiency in both numeracy and literacy, while Italy and Spain perform poorly in both of these domains. Countries' relative rankings for

adult skills tend to mirror the results for cognitive skills among 15-year-olds, although Sweden and Norway rank much more highly on the adult skills measure, and Korea's top-ranking for cognitive skills among 15-year-olds contrasts with its average ranking on adult skills.

### Box 2.6. Measuring education and skills

The three headline indicators of education and skills presented above are defined as follows:

- The **educational attainment of the adult population** is the number of adults aged 25 to 64 having completed at least an upper secondary education, over the total population of the same age. The definition of "at least upper secondary education" corresponds to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 3 and above (excluding ISCED level 3C short programmes), and includes both i) programmes defined as "general" which are often designed for preparing students for further education, and ii) programmes geared towards vocational education and training (VET). The data underlying this indicator are collected through the annual OECD questionnaire on National Educational Attainment Categories (NEAC) and are based on national Labour Force Survey (LFS) data.
- **Students' average score in reading, mathematics and science** is based on data collected through the Programme on International Student Assessment (PISA) coordinated by the OECD, and refers to students aged 15. Skills in reading, mathematics and science are each assessed separately, and measured on a scale which is normalised such that a value of 500 represents the OECD average. The summary shown here represents the average score across the three assessments.
- The **mean proficiency in numeracy and literacy for the adult population** is based on data collected through the OECD Survey of Adult Skills, which is part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) coordinated by the OECD. The indicator refers to adults aged 16-65. A major component of the PIAAC is the direct assessment of key information-processing skills: literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in the context of technology-rich environments. In each of the domains assessed, proficiency is considered as a continuum of ability involving the mastery of information-processing tasks of increasing complexity. The results are represented on a 500-point scale.

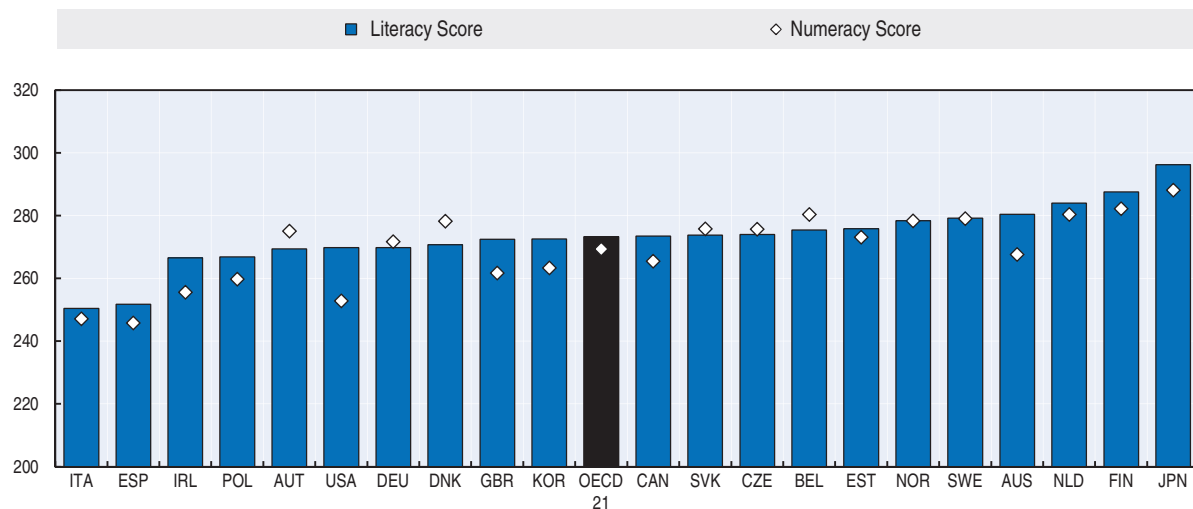
Educational attainment reflects the level of schooling or paper qualifications that people have achieved, while PIAAC aims to capture the net result of a person's lifetime learning experiences to date, both formal and informal. At present, however, PIAAC has limited country coverage, and is carried out on a 10 year cycle.

An ideal set of measures of people's education and skills would include both the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of the entire population, based on standardised achievement scores. The indicators presented here are proxies for this ideal. They have some limitations: first, they measure individuals' acquired abilities, without informing about how these abilities are actually used in life; and second, they do not capture non-cognitive (i.e. social and emotional) skills. The OECD project on Education and Social Progress (see OECD, 2015f) is developing a set of measures to capture this latter construct, which will be the subject of a longitudinal study, co-ordinated by the OECD, to be launched in 2019.

#### Further reading:

- OECD (2015f), *Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264226159-en>.
- OECD (2014d), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.
- OECD (2013e), *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264204256-en>.

Figure 2.26. **Competencies of the adult population**  
Mean proficiency of adults aged 16-65, 2012



Note: Data for Belgium refer to Flanders; data for the United Kingdom refer to England and Northern Ireland. In each domain, the results are represented on a 500-point scale.

Source: OECD (2013e), *OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264204256-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259156>

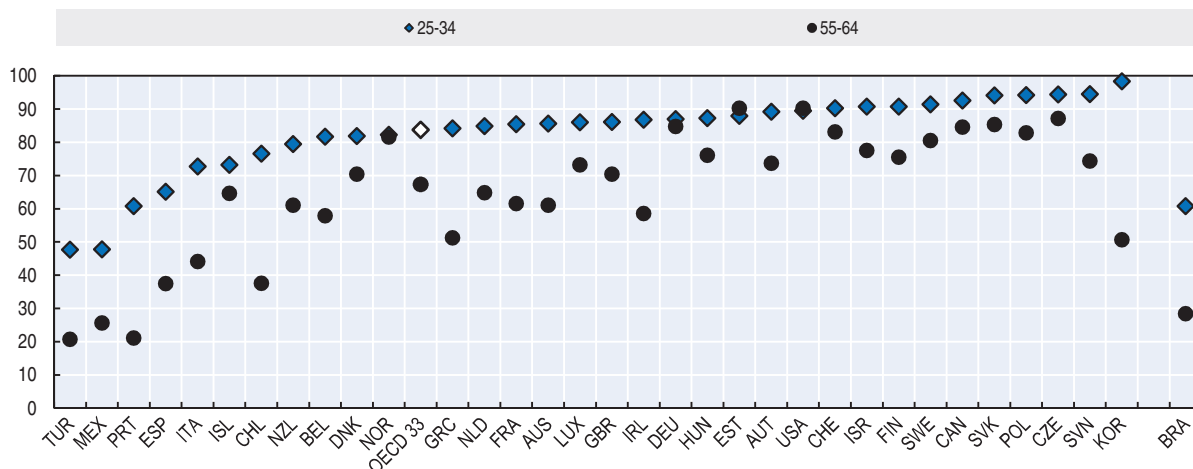
### The distribution of education and skills

While in all OECD countries young women have generally closed the gap with young men in terms of educational attainment, this is not yet the case for competencies at age 25-64; according to the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), women's proficiency is generally lower than men's, particularly in numeracy (OECD, 2013e). Among 15-year-olds, gender gaps in education vary depending on the subject of study: boys perform worse than girls, on average, in reading but do better in mathematics (OECD, 2015g; OECD, 2015h).

15-year olds' educational outcomes are strongly related to parents' socio-economic background. Gaps in cognitive skills between students from the highest and lowest socio-economic backgrounds (defined as the top and bottom quintile of the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status) vary widely across countries – and are roughly equivalent to the skills acquired in more than two school years in countries with the widest gap (OECD, 2013a). Countries such as Belgium, New Zealand, Germany and France have average or above-average PISA scores, but suffer from large gaps between the performance of students with high and low socioeconomic status; by contrast, Korea, Japan, Finland, Estonia and Canada are characterised by high PISA scores overall and smaller gaps between students from different backgrounds.

The gap in educational attainment between younger and older working-age adults also varies across countries (Figure 2.27). The younger generation of working adults are much more likely than the older generation to have completed upper secondary education: on average across the OECD area, the attainment rate among 25-34 year olds is 16 percentage points higher than that among 55-64 year olds.

**Figure 2.27. Educational attainment among younger and older adults of working age**  
 Percentage of age groups 25-34 and 55-64 with at least upper secondary education, 2013



Note: Data for Chile refer to 2011. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD (2015e), *Education at a Glance Interim Report: Update of Employment and Educational Attainment Indicators*, OECD, Paris, [www.oecd.org/edu/EAG-Interim-report.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG-Interim-report.pdf).

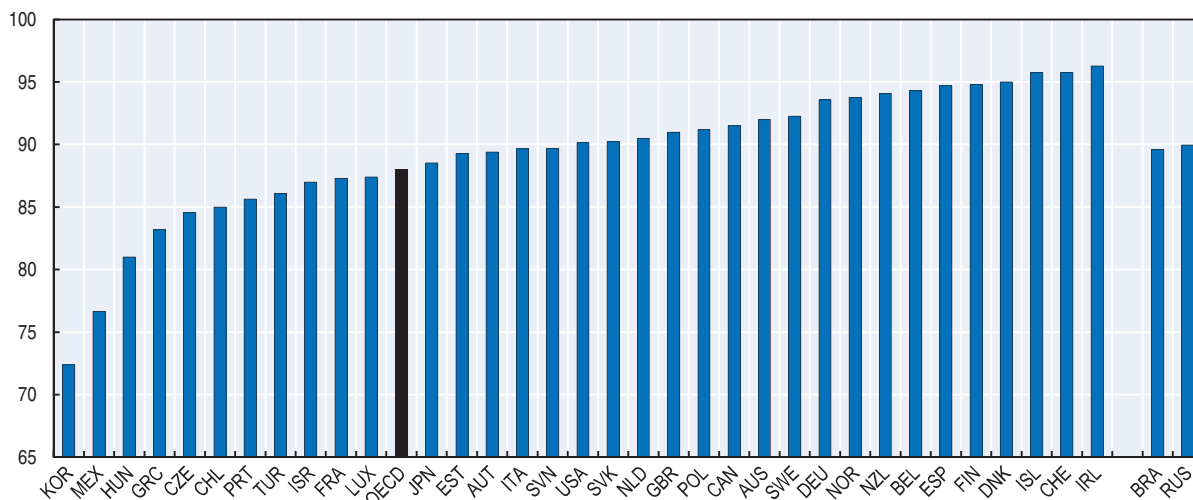
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259168>

## Social connections

Positive social relationships are a powerful source of well-being. Time-use surveys suggest that socialising is the highlight of most people’s daily activities. Loneliness and a lack of **social support** are critical factors in low subjective well-being. People with strong social networks are also more likely to have a job and to be in better health.

In most OECD countries, at least 85% of people report having someone to count on in times of need (Figure 2.28). While the differences in social support among the top-performing OECD countries are small, there is a 20 percentage point gap between the

**Figure 2.28. Perceived social network support**  
 Percentage of people who report having relatives or friends they can count on, 2014



Note: The latest available year is 2013 for Iceland. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259177>



support levels reported in Switzerland, Ireland and Iceland (where this share is around 95-97%) relative to those reported in Mexico and Korea (around 72-77%). Between 2009 and 2014, the levels of perceived support declined in Mexico (by 9 percentage points) and Korea (by 7 points), but rose in Turkey (by 10 points)(Gallup, 2015).

### Box 2.7. Measuring social connections

The headline indicator for social connections presented above refers to:

- **Perceived social network support.** This is based on the survey question: “If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?”. The data shown here reflect the percentage of the sample responding “yes”. The source for these data is the Gallup World Poll, which samples around 1 000 people per country, per year. The sample is *ex ante* designed to be nationally representative of the population aged 15 and over (including rural areas); to correct for non-random response patterns, the sample data are weighted to the population using weights supplied by Gallup.\*

Social support can come from a variety of sources (e.g. a partner, a friend, a family member, a work colleague) and take many different forms: emotional support; practical support (e.g. caring for dependents); financial support; and career- or work-related support, to name just a few. The measure presented here focuses on help in times of trouble, but does not provide any information about the quality or nature of the support provided.

Ideally, a set of indicators of social connections would describe a range of different relationships – both in terms of quality and quantity. Some of the most common approaches to measuring social connections have relied on indirect indicators, such as statistics on membership in associations (e.g. sporting clubs, religious or professional organisations) or on the density of voluntary organisations in a given area (see also Chapter 5). However, such measures have been criticised because they are limited to participation in formal networks, and do not describe informal connections such as those that people maintain with friends and relatives. Moreover, formal membership in associations and its importance for people’s well-being can differ over time and across countries, thus hampering international comparability. Time use diaries could prove to be a useful source of information about time spent with others – both in terms of quantity, but also quality.

Various official surveys collect information on social networks and personal relationships, e.g. the General Social Surveys in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. However, most official statistics on social connections are not internationally comparable (Scrivens and Smith, 2013).

#### Further reading:

- Scrivens, K. and C. Smith (2013), “Four Interpretations of Social Capital: An Agenda for Measurement”, *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, No. 2013/06, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jzbcx010wmt-en>.
- Siegler, V. (2015), “Measuring National Well-Being – An Analysis of Social Capital in the UK”, Office for National Statistics, [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/analysis-of-social-well-being--social-capital-in-the-uk---2013-14/art-measuring-national-well-being---an-analysis-of-social-capital-in-the-uk.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/analysis-of-social-well-being--social-capital-in-the-uk---2013-14/art-measuring-national-well-being---an-analysis-of-social-capital-in-the-uk.html).

\* The weighting procedure used for data in the Gallup World Poll has multiple stages: first, an adjustment is made for geographic disproportionalities (e.g. due to oversampling in major cities); second, an adjustment is applied for sample selection probabilities (number of adults in the household; landline and mobile dual users); and third, weights are adjusted to reflect the distribution of the population by age, gender and educational attainment.

### The distribution of social connections

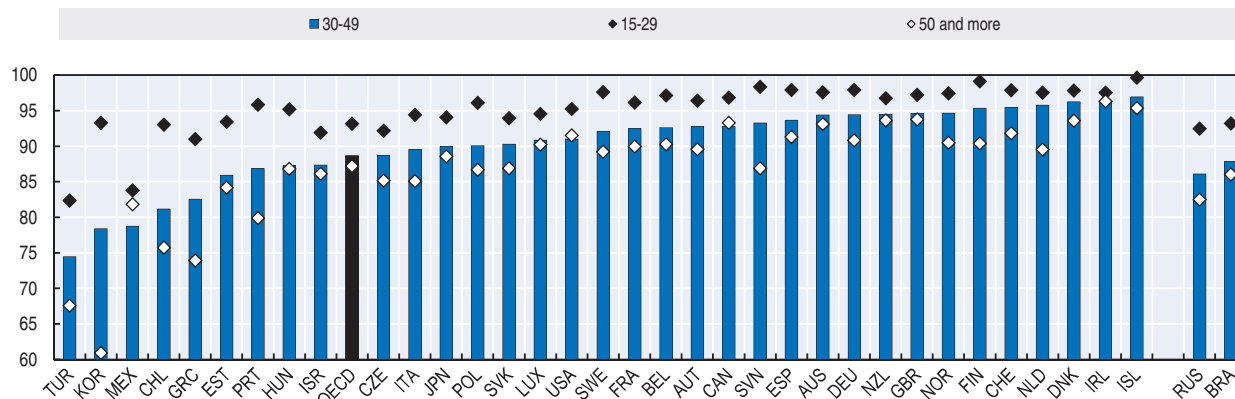
In most OECD countries, people with higher levels of education and income are more likely to report having someone to count on in times of need (OECD, 2013a). Younger people (aged 15-29) are also generally more likely than older people (aged 50 and over) to report



having someone they can count on (Figure 2.29). Among OECD countries, age-related gaps are largest in Korea, Chile, Greece, Portugal and Turkey and smallest in English-speaking countries, Mexico, Denmark and Iceland. In two-thirds of OECD countries, the proportion of older people *without* social support is between two and three times higher than for younger people, and this holds true even in countries where the overall level of support is very high.

Figure 2.29. **Differences in social support among different age groups**

Percentage of people who report having relatives or friends they can count on, by age, pooled results 2006-2014



Note: Data are pooled across all available years, 2006-2014. The OECD average is population-weighted.

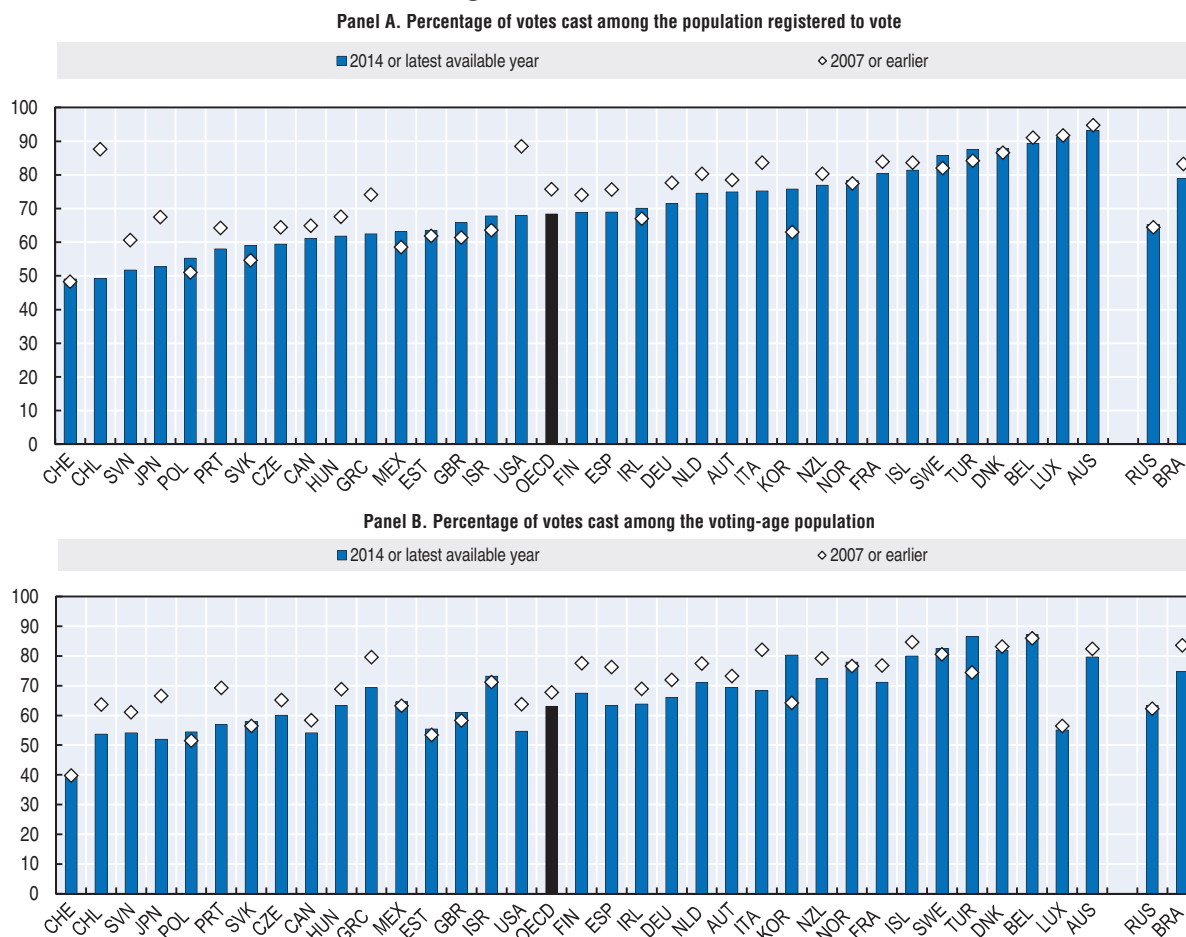
Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259181>

## Civic engagement and governance

For a society to function well, people need to play their part in it: civic engagement and the right to express one's political voice are basic freedoms and essential components of effective democracies. There are large variations across OECD countries in *voter turnout* for national elections, expressed as a ratio of the population registered to vote (Figure 2.30, Panel A). These partly reflect differences in countries' electoral systems, and in particular the practice of compulsory voting in some OECD countries (e.g. Australia, Luxembourg, Belgium and Turkey, IDEA, 2015)<sup>9</sup> which consequently have very high levels of voter turnout (above 85% of the registered population). Switzerland has the lowest voter turnout rate for national elections in the OECD, but also practices a highly participatory form of direct democracy where voters are polled several times a year on issues at the community, regional or national level. Since 2007, voter turnout rates have declined in nearly two-thirds of the OECD countries, with the largest reductions occurring in Chile (which abandoned compulsory voting in 2012), the United States, Japan, Greece, Slovenia and Italy.<sup>10</sup>

When considering the percentage of votes cast among the voting-age population as a whole (rather than only those registered to vote) the cross-country pattern in levels of voter turnout is slightly different (Figure 2.30, Panel B), reflecting country differences in voter registration, how electoral registers are maintained, rules on non-resident voting and the number of residents who are not eligible to vote in national elections. Nonetheless, both Panel A and Panel B generally tell a consistent story of a downward trend in voting patterns in recent years across the OECD area as a whole.

Figure 2.30. **Voter turnout**

Note: National elections refer to parliamentary elections, with the exceptions of Finland, France, Korea, Mexico, Poland, the United States, Brazil and the Russian Federation, where Presidential elections are considered. The latest available year refers to 2014 for Slovenia, Japan, New Zealand, Hungary, Sweden, Brazil and Belgium; 2013 for Luxembourg, Chile, Germany, Norway, Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Australia and Iceland; 2012 for the United States, the Russian Federation, Israel, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, Finland, Mexico, Greece and Korea; 2011 for Spain, Portugal, Canada, Switzerland, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland and Turkey; and 2010 for the United Kingdom and Poland. The first year refers to 2007 for Australia, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Turkey, France and Korea; 2006 in Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, Sweden, Finland, Mexico and Brazil; 2005 for Chile, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, Norway, New Zealand, Portugal and Poland; and 2004 for Spain, Luxembourg, Slovenia, the United States and the Russian Federation. The OECD average is population-weighted in each panel.

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2015), [www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int).

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Institutional arrangements also influence *citizen's ability to engage in public policy making*. Engaging stakeholders in the development of laws and regulations improves the quality and inclusiveness of those acts, by gathering inputs from people affected by the proposals, enabling public scrutiny, safeguarding against corruption, and promoting citizens' trust in government. Nearly two thirds of OECD member countries have implemented a requirement to engage stakeholders when developing all primary laws, and just over half have a similar requirement when developing subordinate regulations (Table 2.1). However, much stakeholder engagement in rule-making tends to take place at a late stage in the process, when a legislative draft has already been prepared. Most OECD countries engage

Table 2.1. **Government stakeholder engagement when developing regulations**

|                         | Requirement to conduct stakeholder engagement |                         | Early-stage stakeholder engagement to inform officials about the problem and possible solutions |                         | Later-stage: Consultation on draft regulations/proposed rules |                         |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|                         | Primary laws                                  | Subordinate regulations | Primary laws  | Subordinate regulations | Primary laws  | Subordinate regulations |
| Australia               | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ▲                       |
| Austria                 | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| Belgium                 | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| Canada                  | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ■                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Chile                   | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| Czech Republic          | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Denmark                 | ■   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ▲                       |
| Estonia                 | ■   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Finland                 | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| France                  | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| Germany                 | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Greece                  | ■   | ●                       | ▲   | ●                       | ■   | ▲                       |
| Hungary                 | ■   | ■                       | ●   | ●                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Iceland                 | ▲   | ●                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| Ireland                 | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ●                       | ■   | ●                       |
| Israel                  | ●   | ▲                       | ●   | ●                       | ■   | ▲                       |
| Italy                   | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| Japan                   | ●   | ▲                       | ●   | ●                       | ●   | ▲                       |
| Korea                   | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ●                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Luxembourg              | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Mexico                  | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Netherlands             | ▲   | ●                       | ●   | ●                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| New Zealand             | ■   | ■                       | ■   | ■                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Norway                  | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Poland                  | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Portugal                | ▲   | ▲                       | ●   | ●                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Slovak Republic         | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Slovenia                | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Spain                   | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| Sweden                  | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ▲                       |
| Switzerland             | ■   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ▲                       |
| Turkey                  | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       |
| United Kingdom          | ■   | ■                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ■   | ■                       |
| United States           | ×   | ■                       | ×   | ▲                       | ×   | ■                       |
| EU                      | ▲   | ▲                       | ▲   | ▲                       | ●   | ■                       |
| OECD total              |   |                         |   |                         |   |                         |
| ■ For all regulations   | 21  | 18                      | 1   | 2                       | 24  | 18                      |
| ▲ For major regulations | 4   | 7                       | 5   | 3                       | 2   | 7                       |
| ▲ For some regulations  | 6   | 6                       | 22  | 21                      | 6   | 8                       |
| ● Never                 | 2   | 3                       | 5   | 8                       | 1   | 1                       |
| × Not applicable        | 1   | 0                       | 1   | 0                       | 1   | 0                       |

Note: Data only cover primary laws and subordinate regulations initiated by the executive. All questions on primary laws are not applicable in the United States.

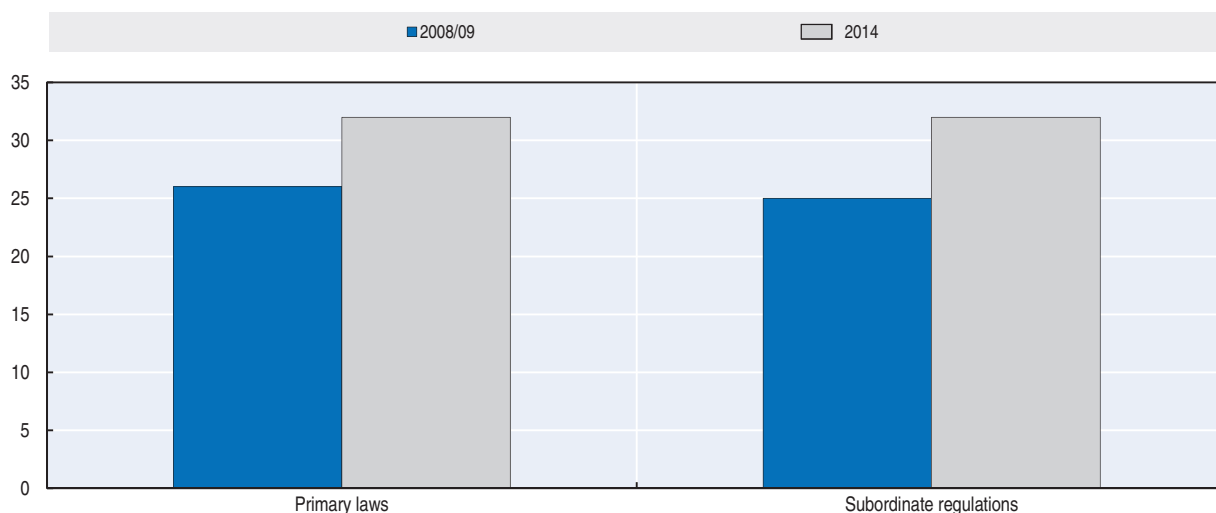
Source: OECD (2015i), *Regulatory Policy Outlook 2015*, based on the 2014 OECD Regulatory Indicators Survey results.

in this type of later-stage consultation during the development of all primary laws, and around half of OECD countries also consult at a later stage for all subordinate regulations. Stakeholder engagement to inform officials about problems and possible solutions at an early stage in the policy-making process is more rare, and in most countries this applies only to some regulations.

Figure 2.31 shows the change over time in the number of OECD countries that have mandatory requirements to consult with stakeholders when developing new regulations. As of 2014, only two countries have no requirement to consult in relation to primary laws, and only three countries have no requirements in relation to subordinate regulations. This suggests an improvement since the OECD's previous data collection in 2008/09.


**Figure 2.31. Changes in government consultation on rule-making over time**

Number of countries in which mandatory consultation with parties affected by regulations is part of developing new draft regulations



Note: Results shown here are based on the OECD Regulatory Management Systems' Indicators Survey 2008/09, and on the 2014 OECD Regulatory Indicators Survey.

Source: OECD (2015j) *Government at a Glance*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov\\_glance-2015-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259208>

### Box 2.8. Measuring civic engagement and governance

The headline indicators of civic engagement and governance presented above are defined as follows:

- Voter turnout** concerns the extent of electoral participation in national elections. It is shown here using two different measures: i) the number of individuals who cast a ballot in a national election, as a percentage of the population registered to vote; and ii) the number of individuals who cast a ballot in a national election, as a percentage of the total voting-age population. As institutional features of voting systems vary across countries and by types of elections, the measures shown here refer to national elections (parliamentary or presidential), which attract the largest proportions of voters in each country. The registered population refers to the population listed on the electoral register. Data on voter turnout are gathered by National Statistical Offices and National Electoral Management Bodies, and are compiled by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

### Box 2.8. Measuring civic engagement and governance (cont.)

- **Stakeholder engagement:** The indicators presented draw upon country responses to the 2014 OECD Regulatory Indicators Survey for all OECD countries and the European Commission. Responses were provided by central government officials to the OECD Regulatory Policy Committee. The indicators reflect country requirements and practices as of 31 December 2014 and follow up on previous Regulatory Management Surveys carried out in 1998, 2005, and 2008/09. Compared to previous indicators, those presented in Table 2.1 put a stronger focus on evidence and examples to support expert responses, as well as on insights into how different countries approach similar regulatory policy requirements. The data only cover primary laws and subordinate regulations initiated by the executive. Primary laws must be approved by the legislature, while subordinate regulations can be approved by the head of government, by an individual minister or by the cabinet. All questions on primary laws are not applicable to the United States, as the US executive does not initiate primary laws at all. Early-stage consultation refers to stakeholder engagement that occurs at an early stage to inform officials about the nature of the problem and possible solutions. Later-stage consultation refers to stakeholder engagement where the preferred solution has already been identified and/or a draft version of the regulation has been issued.

Based on the OECD Regulatory Indicators Survey, new a composite indicator on stakeholder engagement for all OECD countries and the European Commission will be published as part of the *Regulatory Policy Outlook* (OECD, 2015i; see also [www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/measuring-regulatory-performance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/measuring-regulatory-performance.htm)). This composite indicator will be composed of four equally weighted categories covering: *systematic adoption* of requirements to engage stakeholders, the *methodology* used for consultation, *oversight and quality control*, and *transparency* (which relates to principles of open government, such as whether government decisions are made publicly available).

The indicators for civic engagement and governance shown here cover only a limited set of activities, while an ideal indicator set would also include measures of whether citizens are involved in a range of civic and political activities that enable them to shape the society in which they live. Stakeholder engagement in regulatory policy-making is only one form of government stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, having the systems in place for stakeholder engagement in rule-making may not necessarily lead to real and widespread citizen engagement in practice.

Comparative evidence on the *quality* of governance is currently limited in scope. The newly-initiated UN Praia Group on Governance Statistics will address the conceptualisation, methodology and instruments for producing governance statistics, with the aim of providing international recommendations in this area. The OECD is also undertaking new methodological work to create better and more policy-relevant indicators of trust, both in public institutions and in other people more generally, as part of the OECD's Trust Strategy.

#### Further reading:

- Boarini, R. and M. Díaz (2015), "Cast a Ballot or Protest in the Street – Did our Grandparents Do More of Both?: An Age-Period-Cohort Analysis in Political Participation", *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, 2015/02, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5js636gn50jb-en>.
- OECD (2015j), *Government at a Glance 2015*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov\\_glance-2015-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en).
- OECD (2015i), *Regulatory Policy Outlook 2015*, OECD Publishing, Paris, forthcoming.

### The distribution of civic engagement

The limited comparative data available suggest that people under the age of 35 are less likely to vote, and turnout among the under 25s is, on average, 28 percentage points below that of people aged 65 and over (OECD, 2011a). Using data from the *European Social Survey*,

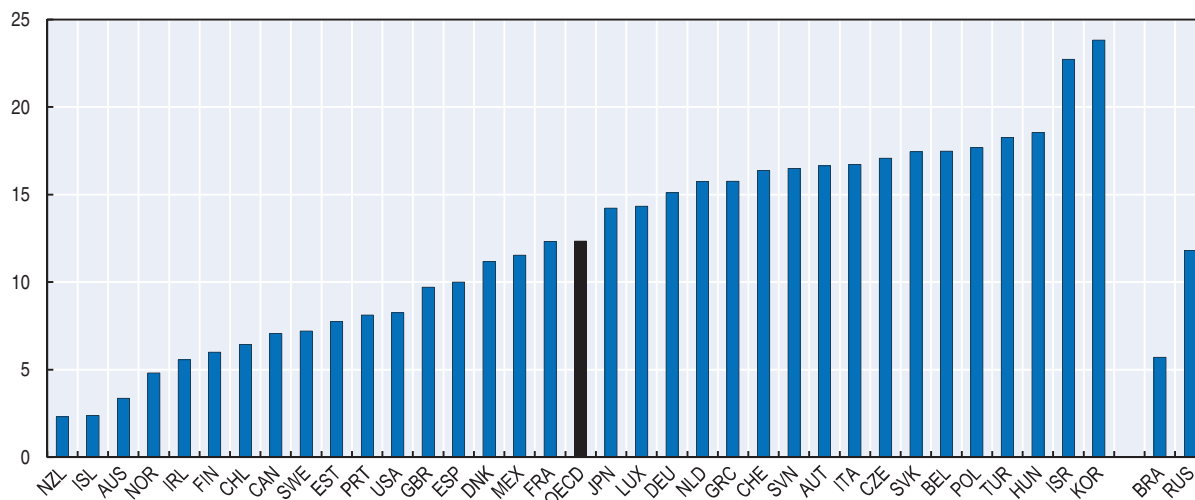
Boarini and Díaz (2015) also found less political participation among younger birth-cohorts in Europe, both for formal participation (such as voting) and less formal (such as protest) activities. People with lower incomes are also less likely to vote, although this varies across countries (OECD, 2011a).

## Environment quality

The environment plays an important role in people's quality of life. Living in an environment that is free from dangerous pollutants, hazards and noise contributes to individual physical and mental health. The health of the environment also has intrinsic value to people, ranging from the quality of green space through to the preservation of natural environments for other species. More broadly, humans rely on the natural environment to provide a wide range of natural resources and services that are important for maintaining well-being over time. While these longer-term considerations are discussed in more depth in Chapter 3, this section concentrates on aspects of the quality of the environment that have an immediate bearing on current quality of life.

*Exposure to air pollution* is a public health concern. The greatest health risks are associated with long-term exposure to poor quality air: for example, chronic exposure to particulate matter (PM) contributes to the risk of developing cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as well as lung cancer (OECD, 2014f). Fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) from sources such as vehicle emissions, energy production, and the burning of agricultural biomass poses a particular threat to people's health. Air quality guidelines from the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommend a PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration standard below 10 micrograms per cubic metre for average annual exposure (WHO, 2006). A European Union Air Quality Directive places an obligation on countries to limit the population's annual PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration exposure to 20 micrograms per cubic metre, based on a three-year average period (European Commission, 2015).

Ground-level monitoring stations offer the most accurate information about air pollution in local areas, enabling a wide range of pollutants to be studied over short time periods and in specific locations. However, data from ground-level monitoring can be difficult to compare across countries due to the uneven coverage of monitoring stations across locations, as well as variations in measurement techniques and reporting methods (Brezzi and Sanchez-Serra, 2014). As a complement to local data collected through ground-level monitoring stations, new air pollution measures derived from satellite-based observations offer estimates that, although less precise (particularly for desert and snow-covered surfaces), are based on comparable methods across all countries, and consider the average exposure of the whole population rather than only those living in urban centres (see Box 2.9 for further details). These satellite-based data indicate that the average annual exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> exceeds the WHO recommended threshold in 21 out of 34 OECD countries (Figure 2.32). Annual exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> is lowest in New Zealand, Iceland, Australia and Norway and highest in Israel and Korea, where it exceeds both the WHO and EU air quality recommendations.

Figure 2.32. Annual exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> air pollutionPopulation-weighted exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations, micrograms per cubic metre, averaged over 2010-2012

Note: Values are OECD estimates, averaged over three years (2010-2012), and based on satellite image data from van Donkelaar, A., R.V. Martin, M. Brauer and B.L. Boys (2015), "Use of Satellite Observations for Long-Term Exposure Assessment of Global Concentrations of Fine Particulate Matter", *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 123, Issue 2. A 50% relative humidity standard has been adopted for consistency with ground-level measurements. The values for each country represent the population weighted average of the annual concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub>. The OECD average is also population-weighted.

Source: OECD Regional Well-being Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00707-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259218>

Because air pollution is particularly associated with urbanisation, industry and transport, there are substantial within-country differences in exposure to air pollution, both at the regional and city level (see Chapter 6; Brezzi and Sanchez-Serra, 2014; and OECD, 2014g). In 2010-12, around 40% of OECD residents had an average annual exposure below the WHO-recommended threshold of 10 micrograms per cubic metre (Figure 2.33). However, an estimated 42 million people across the OECD area were exposed to PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels of 25 micrograms per cubic metre or above in 2010-2012, in excess of both WHO and EU air quality guidelines. This includes more than 15% of the population in Korea, Israel, and Italy.

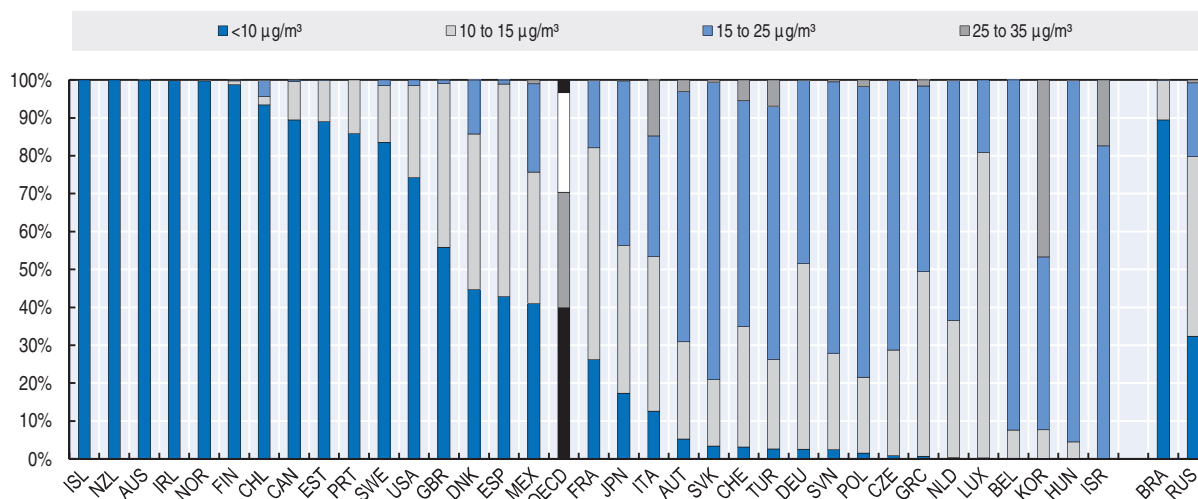
Other important forms of air pollution include ground-level ozone, sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), and (PM<sub>10</sub>) particulate matter. World Bank PM<sub>10</sub> estimates previously reported in *How's Life?* (OECD, 2013a) show that, although urban exposure to PM<sub>10</sub> has been reduced over the last two decades, in 2009 nearly half of all OECD countries had annual urban PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations above the 20 micrograms per cubic metre level recommended by the WHO (WHO, 2006). European data from Eurostat meanwhile indicate that exposure to ambient ozone concentrations increased in the EU between 2000 and 2011 by 1.7% per year on average – though there is considerable variation in exposure both across cities and over time (OECD, 2014f).

Access to **clean, safe water** is another aspect of environmental quality. While comparable objective measures of water quality across all OECD countries are lacking, data are available that capture people's subjective satisfaction with the quality of local water (Figure 2.34,



see Box 2.9 for a definition). In 2014, a large majority of respondents in OECD countries reported being satisfied with the quality of local water. However, in Turkey, Mexico, Israel and Greece, less than 70% of people were satisfied, and in the Russian Federation the share was around 50%.

**Figure 2.33. Population exposed to PM<sub>2.5</sub> air pollution, by different thresholds**  
Percentage of the population, mean annual exposure, 2010-2012

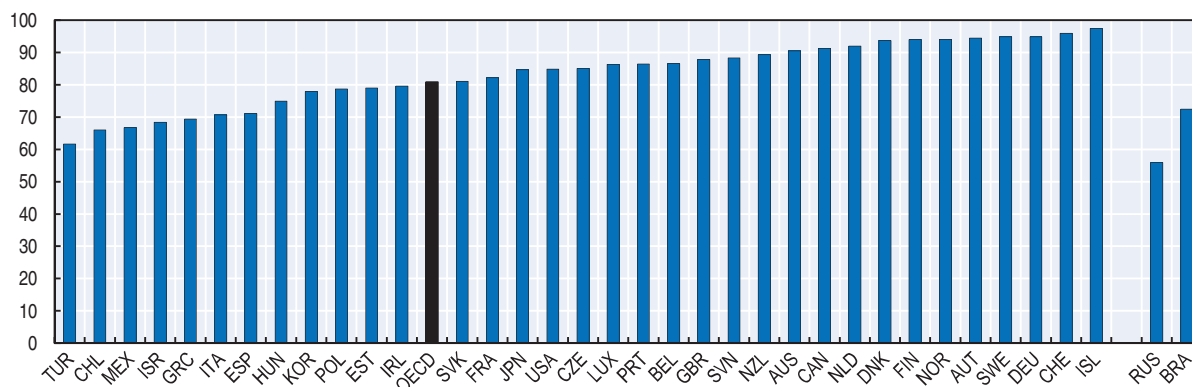


Note: Values are OECD estimates, averaged over three years. A 50% relative humidity standard has been adopted for consistency with ground-level measurements. The figure displays percentages of the population exposed according to four PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration levels based on the WHO guidelines. Average annual exposures higher than 35 ug/m3 are not shown as this applies to less than 1% of the population in all countries shown. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD (forthcoming) *Regions at a Glance 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259225>

**Figure 2.34. Satisfaction with local water quality**  
Percentage of satisfied people in the overall population, 2014 or latest available year



Note: Data refer to 2013 for Iceland. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259236>

### Box 2.9. Measuring environmental quality

The two headline indicators of environmental quality presented above are defined as follows:

- **Annual exposure to air pollution** refers to the population-wide average exposure to fine particulate matter that is less than 2.5 microns in diameter ( $PM_{2.5}$ ), as well as the share of the population exposed at different levels of  $PM_{2.5}$ . The major components of particulate matter are sulphate, nitrates, ammonia, sodium chloride, black carbon, mineral dust and water. The data shown here are drawn from the OECD *Regional Well-Being Database*, and are calculated from satellite-based observations reported in van Donkelaar et al. (2014). Population exposure is calculated by taking the satellite-based estimates of air pollution at a 1 km<sup>2</sup> resolution, multiplied by the population living in that area. National average exposure is then given by the sum of the population-weighted values of  $PM_{2.5}$  in the 1 km<sup>2</sup> grid cells that fall within the country's borders.
- **Satisfaction with water quality** captures people's perceptions about the quality of water in their local area. It is based on the question: "In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of water?", and it considers people who declared being satisfied. Data come from the Gallup World Poll, which samples around 1 000 people per country, per year. The sample is *ex ante* designed to be nationally representative of the population aged 15 and over, including rural areas (see Box 2.7 for details).

The concept of "environmental quality" is broad, and an ideal set of indicators would inform on a number of environmental media (soil, water, air), on people's access to environmental services and amenities, as well as on the impact of environmental hazards on human health. Unfortunately, available data are scattered and not comparable across countries. The absence of objective data on water quality is a significant gap, and the perception-based measure shown may suffer from comparability problems (e.g. it is not clear whether the question refers to drinking water or all forms of water in the local area). Data on access to green space is another important omission that could potentially be addressed in the future through satellite-based data.

Developing summary measures of air pollution is also challenging, as air quality is the result of a complex mixture of pollutants that vary over time, space and form. Brezzi and Sanchez-Serra (2014) provide a detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of satellite-based estimates of air pollution, as compared to data from ground-based monitoring stations. In brief, ground-level monitoring stations offer more precise estimates of local exposure to pollution, over shorter time periods, and covering a wider range of pollutants (such as ground-level ozone), but suffer limited comparability across countries and regions, due to the uneven coverage of monitoring stations and variations in measurement techniques and reporting methods.  $PM_{2.5}$  concentrations are also rarely monitored through ground-based stations. By contrast, satellite-based estimates can provide methodological consistency across countries and over time, globally, and including rural areas – thus enabling exposure to be estimated for a country's whole population. However, satellite-based estimates rely on modelled data, are less precise for bright surfaces (e.g. snow or desert), and do not enable the evaluation of short time periods as they currently rely on multi-year averages.

Even within a single urban area, personal exposure to air pollution varies substantially, depending on where people live and work and on their occupations, lifestyles and behaviours. This means that the average population exposure can hide substantial variations and inequalities. The young, elderly and people who are already ill are particularly vulnerable to the damaging health effects of air pollution.

#### Further reading:

- Brezzi, M. and D. Sanchez-Serra (2014), "Breathing the Same Air? Measuring Air Pollution in Cities and Regions", *OECD Regional Development Working Papers*, No. 2014/11, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jxrb7rkxf21-en>.

### Box 2.9. Measuring environmental quality (cont.)

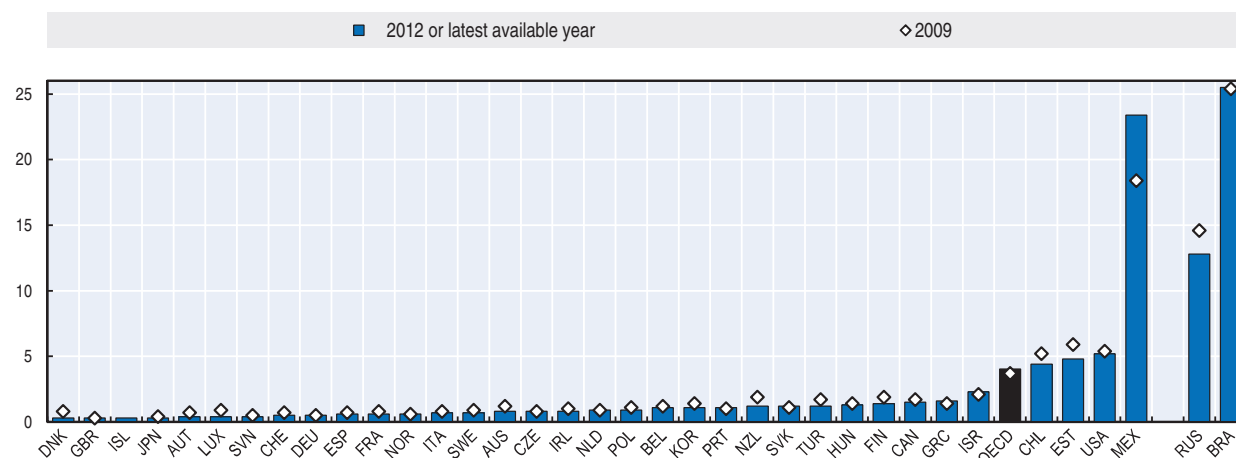
- OECD (2014g), *How's Life in Your Region?: Measuring Regional and Local Well-being for Policy Making*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264217416-en>.
- OECD (2014h), "Environmental quality of life", in OECD, *Green Growth Indicators 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264202030-9-en>.

## Personal security

Personal security concerns people's vulnerability to a wide range of threats, as well as how safe they feel. Experiences of crime and violence can have a strong impact on victims' physical and mental health in both the short and long term. Both the risk of crime and violence, and people's perceptions about their own safety, have wider impacts on well-being either through increased anxiety and worry or by restricting people's behaviour.


In most OECD countries, *deaths due to assault* (see Box 2.10 for the definition) are relatively rare, with rates typically below 2 per 100 000 people per year (Figure 2.35). The highest rates of death by assault are recorded in Chile, Estonia, the United States and Mexico – with Mexico experiencing rates more than five times the OECD average. Between 2009 and 2012, deaths by assault decreased in over two-thirds of OECD countries, but increased in Mexico.

Figure 2.35. **Deaths due to assault**  
Age-standardised rate, per 100 000 population



Note: The latest available year is 2011 for Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Greece, Israel, Luxembourg, Japan and Turkey; 2010 for Belgium, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Russian Federation and Brazil; and 2009 for Iceland. The OECD average is population-weighted.

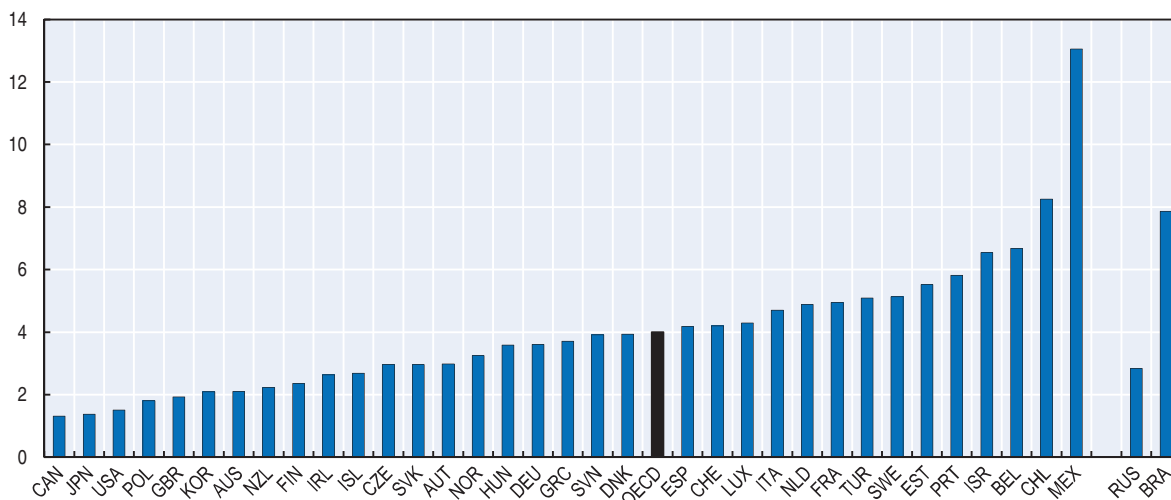
Source: "OECD Health Data: Causes of Mortality", OECD Health Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00540-en>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259242>

In 2010, 1 out of every 25 people in the OECD area *reported having been the victim of an assault* in the last 12 months (Figure 2.36). Several countries with higher rates of death by assault also have higher rates of self-reported victimisation: around 1 in every 8 people in Mexico, and around 1 in every 13 people in Chile and Brazil reported having been the victim of an assault in the last 12 months.

Figure 2.36. **Self-reported victimisation**

Percentage of people declaring that they have been assaulted in the previous 12 months, 2010



Note: Data refer to 2012 for Mexico; 2011 for Chile; 2009 for Estonia and Switzerland; and 2008 for Iceland and Norway. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259259>

### Box 2.10. **Measuring personal security**

The indicators used to measure personal security are defined as follows:

- **Deaths due to assault** refer to cases in which assault is registered as the cause of death in official death registers. It is shown as an age-standardised rate, and expressed per 100 000 people.\* Cause-of-death statistics come from country civil registration systems, compiled by national authorities and collated by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Only medically certified causes of death are included. The data shown here are available in the OECD Causes of Mortality Database.
- **Self-reported victimisation** is based on the survey question: “Within the past 12 months, have you been assaulted or mugged?”, and the data shown here reflect the percentage of all respondents who replied “yes”. The data come from the Gallup World Poll, which samples around 1 000 people per country, per year. Latest data refer to 2010 because this question has been discontinued in the Gallup core questionnaire. The sample is *ex ante* designed to be nationally representative of the population aged 15 and over, including rural areas (see Box 2.7 for details).
- **Feeling safe when walking alone at night** is based on the survey question: “Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?”, and the data shown here reflect the percentage of all respondents who replied “yes”. The source for these data is the Gallup World Poll (see above and Box 2.7 for details).

An ideal set of indicators of personal security would inform about the various crimes and offences experienced by individuals, weighting these crimes according to their seriousness. However, official crime records are not comparable across countries due to differences in what is counted as a crime and in both reporting and recording practices. The data shown here refer to deaths due to assault as recorded in country civil registration systems, rather than homicides as recorded by the police. A recent joint report by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provides a roadmap to improve the availability and quality of crime statistics at national and international level (UNODC, 2013, see below).

Crime victimisation surveys are a critical tool for measuring people’s experience of crime, and while these do exist in some countries, they are not based on common standards and methodologies. The indicator presented here refers to assaults only (rather than property and other crimes), and is based on data from the

### Box 2.10. Measuring personal security (cont.)

Gallup World Poll, a non-official survey characterised by small sample sizes – a feature that can be particularly problematic when measuring events that typically affect only a small proportion of the entire population.

Survey data can bring into focus the crime problems that affect people most often and – if conducted at regular intervals and with a consistent methodology – can provide measures of changes in levels of crime over time. Unfortunately, few OECD countries regularly conduct such surveys, and the national data that exist are not comparable across countries. The available data provide only a proxy for the volume of illegal acts that occur in society. First, some crimes may be underestimated or overestimated due to respondents' subjective interpretation of what constitutes a crime. Second, some people may be reluctant to disclose information for incidents of a sensitive nature, such as sexual assaults or inter-partner violence. Third, the accuracy of victimisation surveys is influenced by people's ability to recall past crimes (the longer the elapsed period, the less likely it is that a victimisation will be recalled accurately). Finally, unconventional types of crime such as corruption may be difficult to capture through household surveys.

Risks to people's personal security can come from sources other than crime. Transport and road-traffic accidents, work-related hazards and the risk of natural disaster are among the factors that can affect personal security. Violent conflict and war also have a profound impact on security by putting people's lives and livelihoods in danger.

#### Further reading:

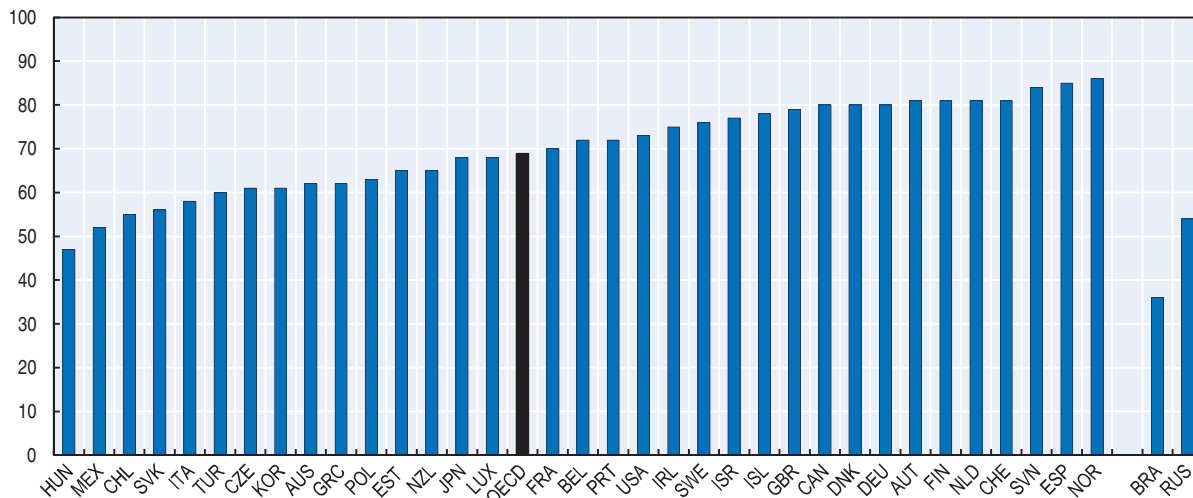
- OECD (2011d), "Personal security", in *OECD, How's Life?: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264121164-13-en>.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)(2013), *Report of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/2013-11-CrimeStats-E.pdf>.

\* Age-standardisation is used to ensure that the data are comparable across countries with different population age structures.

**Feelings of safety** (Figure 2.37; see Box 2.10 for a definition) are another important aspect of personal security. In the OECD area as a whole, only two-thirds of people report feeling safe when walking alone at night in the area where they live.

Figure 2.37. **Feelings of safety when walking alone at night**

Percentage of the population declaring feeling safe when walking alone at night in the city or area where they live, 2014



Note: The latest available year for Iceland is 2013. The OECD average is population-weighted.

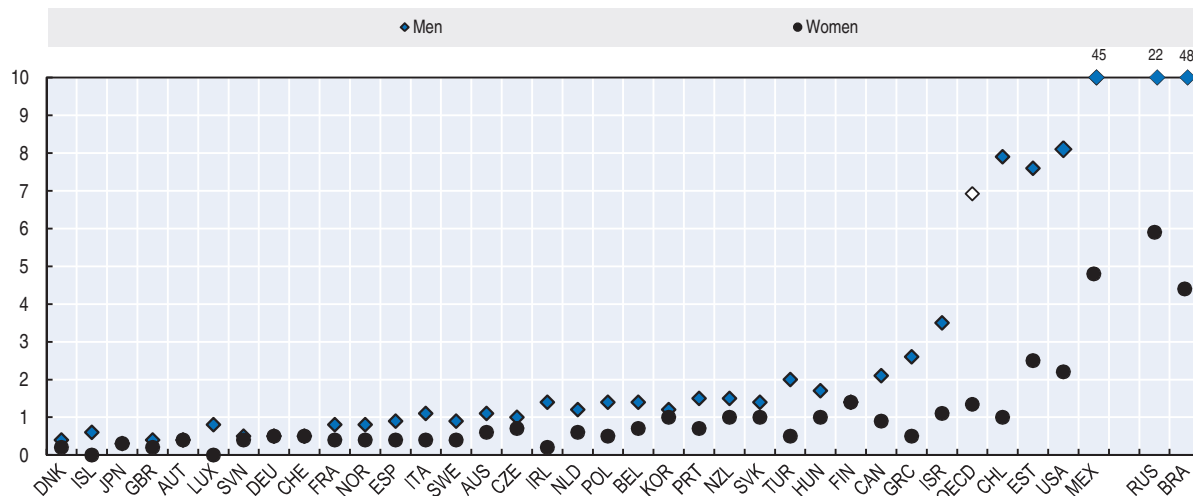
Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259265>

### The distribution of personal security

On average across the OECD, men are five times more likely than women to die from assault (Figure 2.38). Women in Mexico, Russia and Brazil run a much higher risk than women elsewhere, but their risks are still lower relative to men living in these countries. In all OECD countries, women report feeling less safe than men when walking alone at night in the area where they live (Figure 2.39), and in most countries, people aged 50 and over also feel less safe than younger people (Figure 2.40).

Figure 2.38. **Deaths due to assault among men and women**  
Age-standardised annual rate, per 100 000 people, 2012 or latest available year



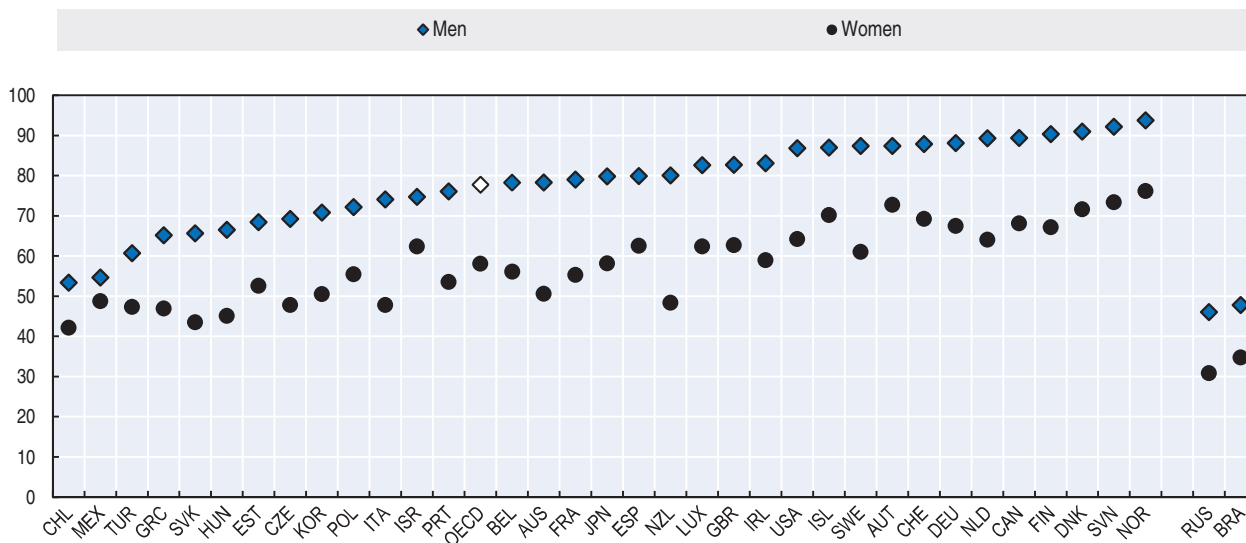
Notes: Death by assault rates for men in Mexico (44.5), Russia (21.8) and Brazil (48.1) exceed the upper boundary of the y-axis. The latest available year is 2011 for Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Greece, Israel, Japan and Turkey; 2010 for Belgium, Brazil, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, the Slovak republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States; and 2009 for Iceland. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: "OECD Health Data: Causes of Mortality", OECD Health Statistics (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00540-en>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259279>

Figure 2.39. **Feelings of safety among men and women**

Percentage of the population who declare feeling safe when walking alone at night in the area where they live, pooled results 2006-2014

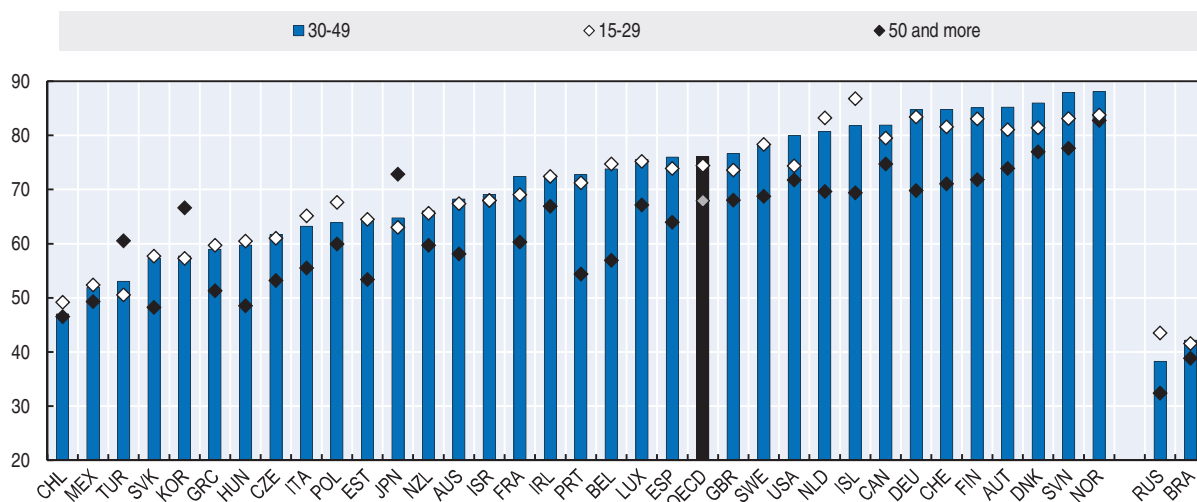


Note: The data are pooled across all available years 2006-2014. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259283>

Figure 2.40. **Feelings of safety among people of different ages**  
 Percentage of the population who feel safe when walking alone at night in the area where they live,  
 pooled results 2006-2014



Note: The data are pooled across all available years 2006-2014. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259299>

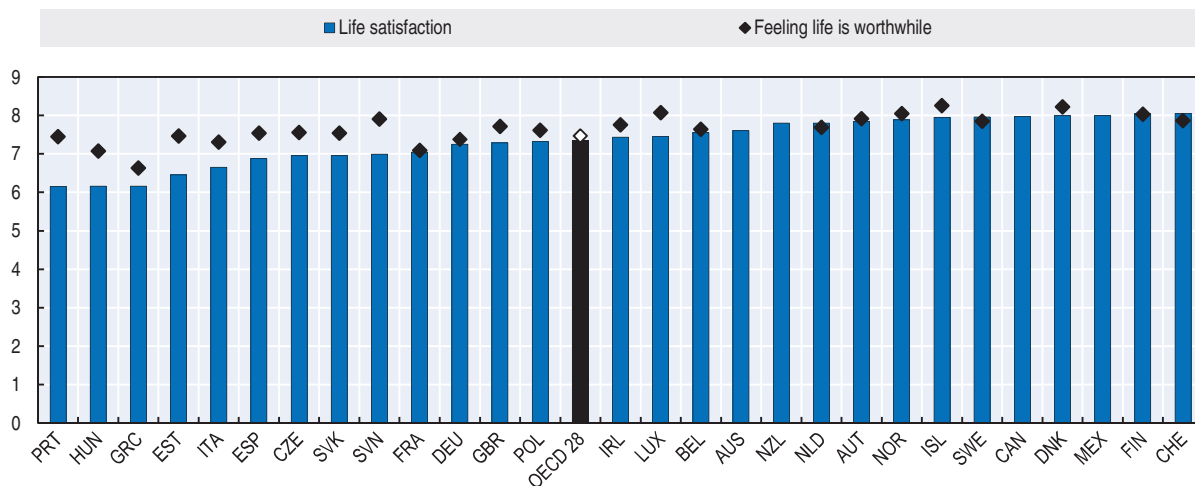
## Subjective well-being

No answer to the question “how’s life?” would be complete without considering people’s own views of their lives. Subjective well-being consists of people’s evaluations, feelings and experiences of their lives. There are three distinct components of subjective well-being, each offering a different perspective: *life evaluations* focus on a person’s overall assessment of their life as a whole (such as their life satisfaction); *eudaimonic* measures<sup>11</sup> concern a person’s sense of meaning, purpose and worthwhileness in life; and *affect* measures (also known as *experienced well-being*) focus on moods, feelings and emotions, including experiences of both positive (enjoyment, well-rested) and negative (sadness, worry) states (OECD, 2013f).

In a large majority of OECD countries, data on *life satisfaction* are now available from official sources, based on comparable measures that are consistent with the recommendations of the *OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-Being* (OECD, 2013f; see Box 2.11). Mean average life satisfaction ranges from just above 6 out of 10 in Portugal, Hungary and Greece to 8 out of 10 in Sweden, Canada, Denmark, Mexico, Finland and Switzerland (Figure 2.41).<sup>12</sup> Generally, people living in Southern and Eastern Europe report being less satisfied with their lives than those living in Northern and Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Mexico. For European countries, data about life feeling worthwhile are also shown in Figure 2.41. Country differences on this indicator are generally smaller than those for life satisfaction.



Figure 2.41. **Life satisfaction and feeling life is worthwhile**  
Mean values on a 0-10 scale, 2013 or closest available year



Note: Data refer to 2014 for New Zealand and Australia; and to the first quarter of 2012 for Mexico. Data on life feeling worthwhile include European countries only (OECD 24). The OECD average is population-weighted.

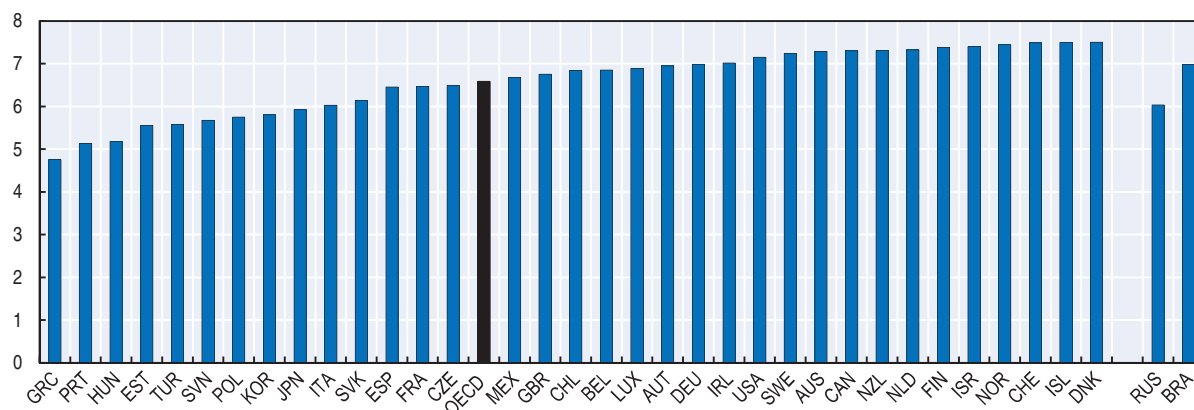
Source: Eurostat (2015), "European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)", <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/overview> for EU countries; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014 General Social Survey, [www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0#Anchor3](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0#Anchor3) for Australia; Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey 2013, <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=3226> for Canada; INEGI, the National Survey of Household Expenditure (BIARE-ENGASTO) 2012, [www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/contenidos/investigacion/Experimentales/Bienestar/default.aspx](http://www.inegi.org.mx/inegi/contenidos/investigacion/Experimentales/Bienestar/default.aspx) for Mexico; and Statistics New Zealand, 2014 General Social Survey, [www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/people\\_and\\_communities/Households/nzcss\\_HOTP2014/Tables.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/Households/nzcss_HOTP2014/Tables.aspx), for New Zealand.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259308>

In the near future, comparable official data are expected to cover additional OECD countries, including Korea and Israel. In the interim, an alternative life evaluation measure (Figure 2.42, see Box 2.11 for the definition) is shown. In 2014, life evaluations in Turkey, Korea, Japan and the Russian Federation were below the OECD average, while Chile, Brazil, the United States and Israel were slightly above the average. Between 2009 and 2014, life evaluations in Greece dropped by 1.3 scale points on a 0-10 scale (Gallup, 2015). Several of the countries most affected by the Great Recession also experienced declines in life evaluations during the first years of the crisis (OECD, 2013a).

People's everyday experiences and emotions also matter for their quality of life overall. In 2014, three-quarters of people in the OECD had a **positive affect balance** (i.e., they experienced more positive than negative emotions, see Box 2.11 for the full definition). In Mexico, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Iceland, the rate was more than 80%, while in Turkey, Greece, Italy and Portugal it was less than 65%. In 2014, the proportion of people with a positive affect balance was 8 percentage points lower than in 2009 in Greece, Italy, Korea and Portugal, but it was 9 percentage points higher than 2009 in France (OECD calculations, based on Gallup, 2015).

Figure 2.42. **People's evaluations of their lives as a whole**  
Measured on a 0-10 scale from "best possible" to "worst possible", mean values, 2014

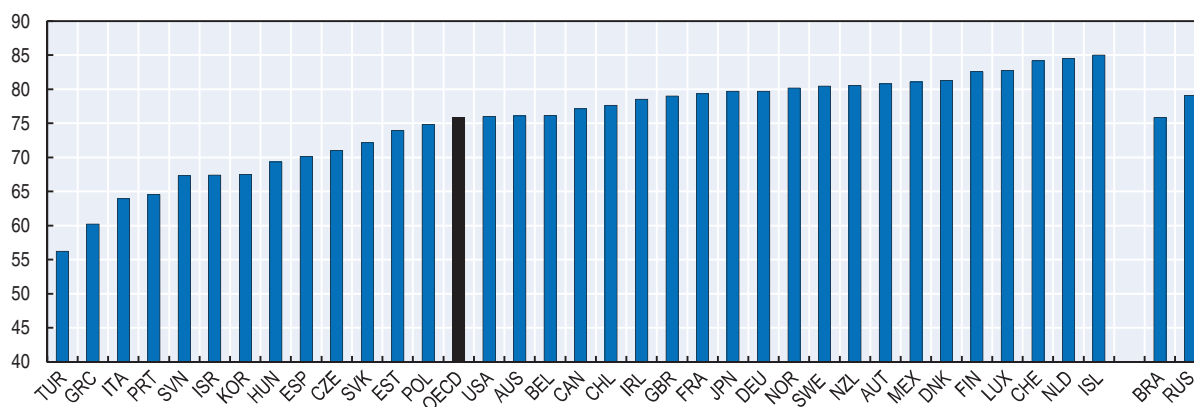


Note: The latest available data for Iceland refer to 2013. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259317>

Figure 2.43. **Positive affect balance**  
Percentage of people reporting more positive than negative feelings overall yesterday, 2014



Note: The latest available year is 2013 for Iceland. Positive feelings assessed relate to enjoyment, feeling well-rested and laughing or smiling a lot; negative feelings were worry, anger and sadness. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD calculations based on the Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259326>

### Box 2.11. Measuring subjective well-being

This edition of *How's Life?* features a range of different measures of subjective well-being, reflecting the recent measurement advances that have been made in this area:

- Life satisfaction**, which refers to the mean average score on an 11-point scale. It is based on survey questions that broadly follow the format recommended by the *OECD Guidelines* (OECD, 2013f): "Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days?", with responses ranging from 0 ("not at all satisfied") to 10 ("completely satisfied"). The European data come from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) ad hoc module on well-being, conducted in 2013, and are available for all EU countries. EU-SILC is a nationally representative survey with large samples (from around 4 000 individuals in the smallest member states, to around 16 000 in the largest) covering all members of private households aged 16 or older. Data for Australia are based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' General

### Box 2.11. Measuring subjective well-being (cont.)

Social Survey 2014; for Canada, Statistics Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey 2013; for Mexico, INEGI's National Survey of Household Expenditure for the first quarter of 2012; and for New Zealand, Statistics New Zealand's General Social Survey 2014. Data for Australia, Canada and New Zealand refer to the population aged 15 and over; data for Mexico refer to people aged 18-70 years old.

- **Life feeling worthwhile** refers to the mean average score on an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 (not worthwhile at all) to 10 (completely worthwhile). It is based on the question: "Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?" The data shown here come from the EU-SILC ad hoc module on well-being (see above) and are available for all EU countries.
- **Life evaluation based on the Cantril ladder measure** is expressed as the mean score on an 11-point scale. It is measured using the "Cantril Ladder" scale, a survey question in which respondents are asked to imagine a ladder with rungs from 0 to 10, where 10 is the best possible life for them and 0 the worst possible life. They are then asked to indicate whereabouts on the ladder they see themselves. The data shown here come from the Gallup World Poll, which samples around 1 000 people per country per year. The sample is *ex ante* designed to be nationally representative of the population aged 15 and over (see Box 2.7).
- **Positive affect balance** is defined here as the proportion of the population who reported experiencing more positive than negative emotions yesterday. It is based on responses to six different questions formulated as: "Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? ...how about worry?" Answers are provided using a simple yes/no response format. Negative affect is measured by experiences of worry, anger and sadness, while positive affect is captured by experiences of enjoyment, feeling well-rested, and smiling or laughing a lot. An individual is considered to have a positive affect balance if the number of "yes" responses to the positive questions is greater than the number of "yes" responses to the negative questions. The data shown here come from the Gallup World Poll (see above, and Box 2.7, for details).

The OECD *Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-Being* (OECD, 2013f) provide international recommendations on collecting, reporting and analysing subjective well-being data across the three major components of subjective well-being (life evaluations, eudaimonia and affect). The *Guidelines* give detailed consideration to methodological issues and survey design, and include a number of prototype question modules that national and international agencies can adopt if they wish to measure subjective well-being in their surveys. While there is much evidence that subjective well-being questions produce valid and meaningful responses even when used in different cultural contexts, it remains possible that differences introduced when translating items into different languages, or systematic country differences in how people use response scales, can introduce some degree of measurement error that affects the comparability of estimates between countries. As a result, small differences in the mean average estimates of subjective well-being between countries should not be given a strong interpretation (OECD, 2013f; Exton, Smith and Vandendriessche, forthcoming OECD *Statistics Working Paper*).

#### Further reading:

- Eurostat (2015), "Quality of life in Europe – facts and views – overall life satisfaction", [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Quality\\_of\\_life\\_in\\_Europe\\_-\\_facts\\_and\\_views\\_-\\_overall\\_life\\_satisfaction](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Quality_of_life_in_Europe_-_facts_and_views_-_overall_life_satisfaction).
- OECD (2013f), *Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-Being*, [www.oecd.org/statistics/guidelines-on-measuring-subjective-well-being.htm](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/guidelines-on-measuring-subjective-well-being.htm).

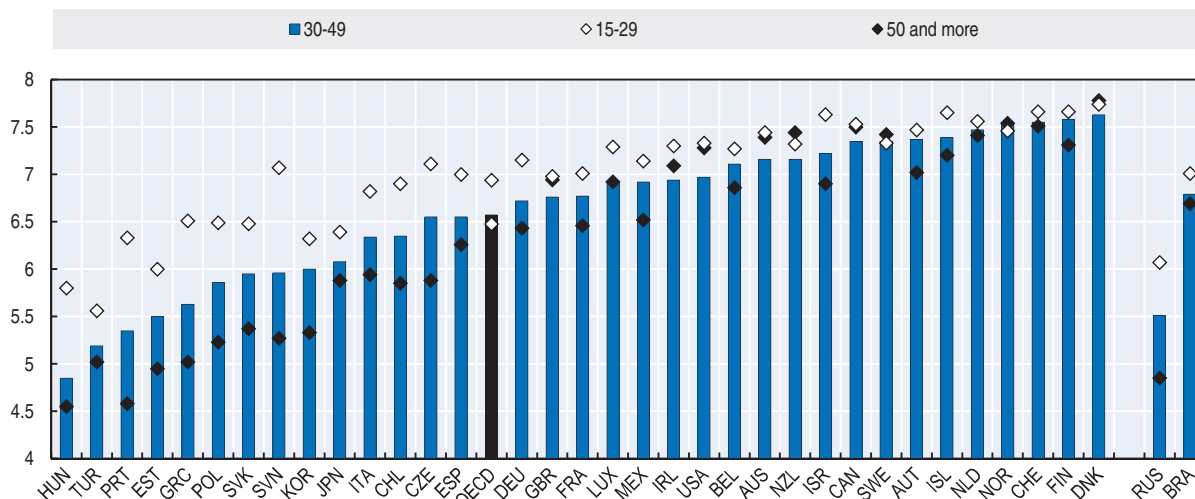
### The distribution of subjective well-being

On average, men and women's experiences of life satisfaction are quite similar across the OECD area, but in most countries men are more likely to report a positive affect balance (OECD, 2013a). Higher levels of education are generally associated with higher life satisfaction, but the effect of education is stronger in some countries (most notably Portugal, Korea, Greece and Hungary) than in others (OECD, 2013a). Life satisfaction data collected for EU countries also show a similar pattern in relation to both gender and education (Eurostat, 2015).

For a majority of OECD countries, life evaluations are lowest among those aged 50 and over (Figure 2.44). However, among English-speaking countries in particular, the lowest life evaluations are reported in middle age (Figure 2.44). A small "retirement effect" (slightly higher life satisfaction among the 65-74 age group, relative to the 50-64 age group) has also been observed in many European countries (based on official European life satisfaction data, Eurostat, 2015).

Figure 2.44. **Life evaluations among people of different ages**

Measured on a 0-10 scale from "best possible" to "worst possible", mean values, pooled results 2006-14



Note: Data are pooled across all available years 2006-2014. The OECD average is population-weighted.

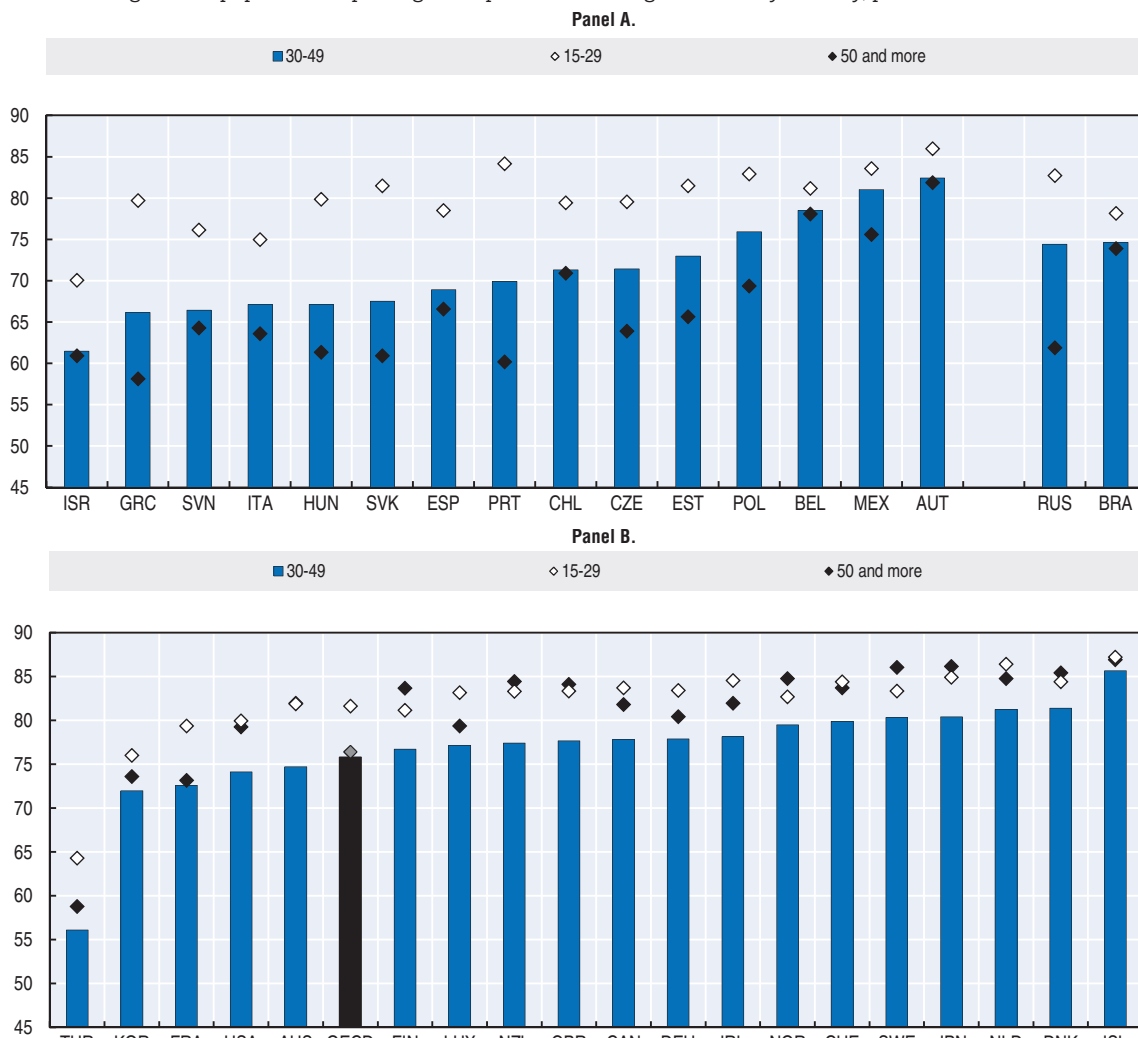
Source: Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259332>

In some OECD countries, there are also wide differences in experienced well-being at different ages. Young people (aged 15-29) tend to report the highest levels of positive affect balance in over half of all OECD countries (Figure 2.45, Panels A and B), but middle age is the emotional low-point for English-speaking countries, as well as most of Northern Europe, Turkey, Japan and Korea.

Figure 2.45. **Positive affect balance among people of different ages**

Percentage of the population reporting more positive than negative affect yesterday, pooled results 2006-2014



Note: Data are pooled across all available years from 2006-2014. Positive feelings assessed relate to enjoyment, feeling well-rested and laughing or smiling a lot; negative feelings were worry, anger and sadness. The OECD average is population-weighted.

Source: OECD calculations based on the Gallup World Poll, [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933259342>

### Notes

1. The earliest available comparison year is usually 2011 for the Gini index and the inter-decile income share ratio, due to a recent methodological change in how these values are estimated. Changes in income inequality over longer time periods are documented in *In It Together* (OECD, 2015a).
2. The evolution of employment and unemployment rates between 2007 and 2014 has varied widely across the OECD. In Japan and the United States (and on average across the OECD as a whole), employment growth was lowest, and unemployment peaked, in 2009, before gradually recovering towards pre-crisis levels in 2014. By contrast, unemployment continued to increase in the Euro area after 2009, peaking in 2013. OECD (2015b) provides further detail.

3. The OECD Job Quality framework considers hourly earnings to abstract from differences in working time between workers – differences that relate more to job quantity than to job quality.
4. 
$$x' = \frac{x - \min(x)}{\max(x) - \min(x)}$$
5. For example, one-quarter or more of employees aged 15 to 24 had a fixed-term contract in almost all OECD countries in 2011-12, a rate often three times higher than that for prime-aged workers 25-54 years old (OECD, 2014a).
6. i.e., difference between the median wage of men and women, divided by the median wage of men.
7. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, the United States, Ireland, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Portugal. Reference years range from 2005 to 2010.
8. In interpreting these findings, consideration should be given to the interactions between age, income, and health, since both younger people and retirees may have lower incomes than prime-aged workers, but different susceptibilities to ill-health.
9. Several other OECD countries have non-enforced rules (e.g. Greece) or some history of compulsory voting in the past (e.g. Italy, France, Netherlands and Austria). Chile abandoned compulsory voting in 2012.
10. Changes in this indicator are considered over a longer time period than that used in other sections of this chapter, to ensure that all countries have experienced at least one election during the intervening years.
11. *Eudaimonic* measures are also sometimes referred to as “psychological well-being” or “flourishing”; they cover aspects of psychological functioning such as feelings of self-esteem and competence.
12. The indicator shown in Figure 2.41 is limited to EU Countries because it is sourced from European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

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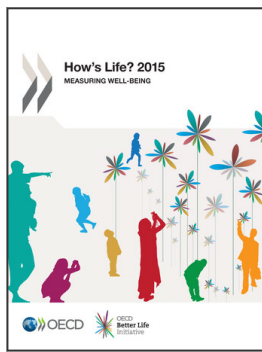
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