

LIFE SATISFACTION

Life satisfaction represents people's subjective evaluation of their satisfaction with life as a whole. Life satisfaction is associated with good family relationships, health, living conditions and wealth as well as confidence in governance in the broader society.

People in OECD countries are more satisfied with their life than those in the Asia/Pacific region (Figure 7.1). On a scale of 1 to 10, **life satisfaction** scores are about 1 point higher on average across the OECD than across the Asia/Pacific region. Australians and New Zealanders report the highest life satisfaction of the countries observed, averaging a score of 7 out of 10; while residents in Cambodia, Armenia and India report the lowest life-satisfaction scores in 2015/17.

On average across the Asia/Pacific region and the OECD, life satisfaction has **not changed** markedly since the last decade (Figure 7.1, right scale). Trends also differ across countries, for example, life satisfaction is low in India and Cambodia, but while it improved in Cambodia it declined further in India. Life satisfaction increased in about two third of the countries since 2006/08, and the increase appeared most pronounced in Mongolia, Tajikistan and the Philippines.

Life satisfaction scores are broadly similar for **men and women** (Figure 7.2). Women in India and Armenia report the lowest levels of life satisfaction, while women in New Zealand, Australia and Singapore report the highest levels, being also slightly happier than men.

People in **wealthy countries** tend to be more satisfied with life than those in less wealthy countries (Figure 7.3). This appears to have a higher life satisfaction than what might have been expected on the basis of their average income, but, results for Australia, New Zealand on the one hand, and India and Cambodia on the other, illustrate the relationship between average life satisfaction and prosperity.

Data and measurement

Data on life satisfaction has been taken from the Gallup World Poll. The Gallup World Poll is conducted in more than 150 countries around the world based on a common questionnaire, translated into the predominant languages of each country. With few exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 years and over in the entire country, including rural areas. While this ensures a high degree of comparability across countries, results may be affected by sampling and non-sampling error, and variation in response rates. Hence, results should be interpreted with care. These probability surveys are valid within a statistical margin of error, also called a 95% confidence interval. This means that if the survey is conducted 100 times using the exact same procedures, the margin of error would include the "true value" in 95 out of 100 surveys. Sample sizes vary across countries from 1 000 to 4 000, and as the surveys use a clustered sample design the margin of error varies by question. The margin of error declines with increasing sample size: with a sample size of 1 000, the margin of error at a 95% confidence interval is $0.98/\sqrt{\text{sample size}}$ or 3%, with a sample size of 4 000, this is 1.5%. To minimise the effect of annual fluctuations in responses related to small sample sizes, results are averaged over a three-year period, or two-year period in case of missing data. If only one observation in a three-year period is available this finding is not reported.

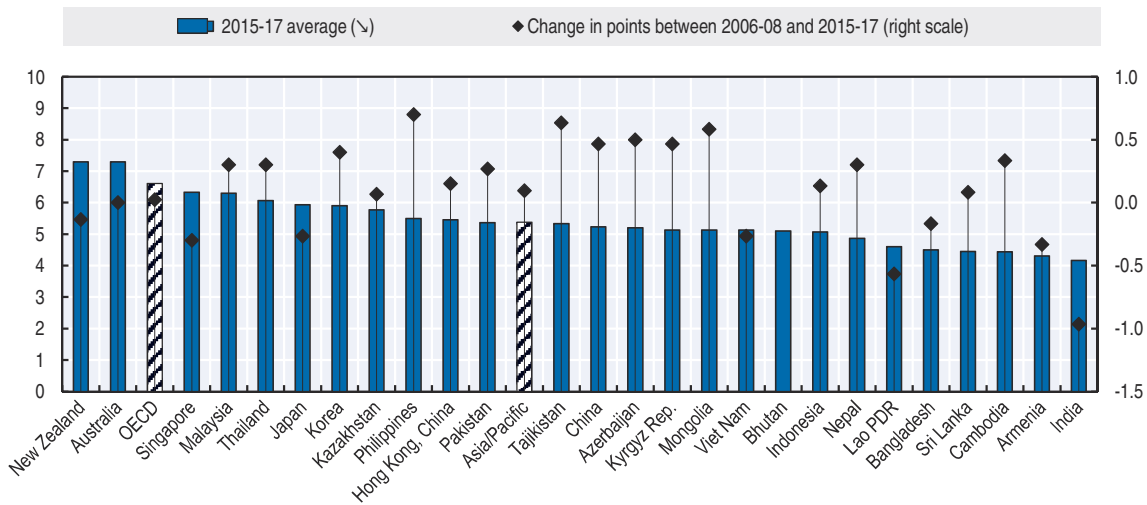
The Gallup World Poll asked respondents to: "Imagine an eleven-rung ladder where the bottom (0) represents the worst possible life for you and the top (10) represents the best possible life for you. On which step of the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?" The main indicator used in this section is the average country score. Data are also shown by gender and broad age groups.

Figure Note

Figure 7.3. GDP per capita is gross domestic product divided by midyear population. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources. Data are in current USD.

Figure 7.1. **Life satisfaction and trends therein vary considerably across countries**

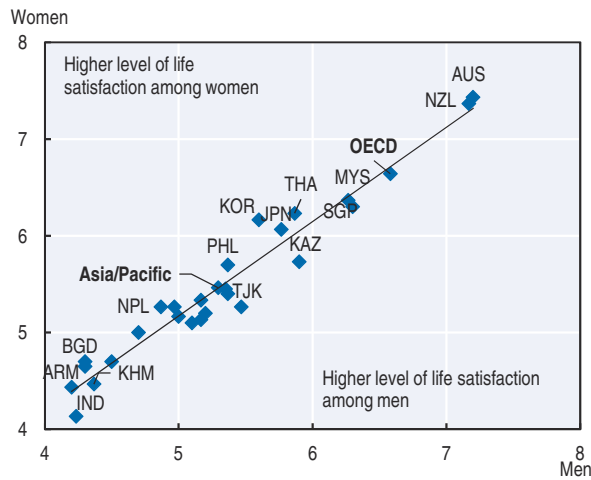
Average points of life satisfaction on an 11-step ladder from 0-10



Source: Gallup World Poll (www.gallup.com) and World Bank, World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933900857>

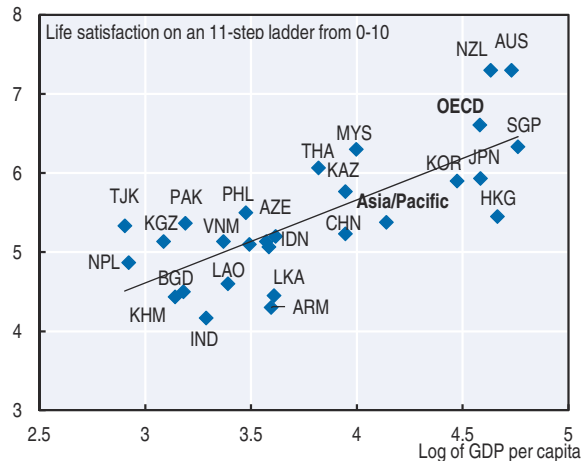
Figure 7.2. **Life satisfaction seems broadly similar for men and women, 2015-17 average**



Source: Gallup World Poll (www.gallup.com) and World Bank, World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933900876>

Figure 7.3. **People in wealthy countries tend to be more satisfied with life than those in less wealthy countries**



Source: Gallup World Poll (www.gallup.com) and World Bank, World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933900895>



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