

Quality of life indicators - overall experience of life

Statistics Explained

*Data extracted in December 2024.
Planned update: December 2025.*

Highlights

" Life satisfaction rated at 7.3 on a 0-10 scale on average in the EU in 2023."

" Average life satisfaction rating ranged from 7.8 in Finland to 5.9 in Bulgaria in 2023."

" Younger people (16-29) in the EU rated in 2023 their life satisfaction highest on average, except in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Finland."

" People living in households with children in the EU rated their life satisfaction higher in 2023, on average, than those living in households without."

This article is part of the [Eurostat](#) online publication [Quality of life indicators](#) , providing statistics on the quality of life in the [EU](#) . It focuses on overall experience of life, the last dimension of the '8+1' [quality of life indicators](#) framework. The first eight quality of life dimensions focus on various individual aspects such as material living conditions and living environment or employment, which are often analysed from both an objective and a subjective perspective. This article aims to capture the trends in the subjective well-being based on the 'life satisfaction' indicator (self-assessed on a 0-10 scale) collected as part of the [statistics on income and living conditions \(EU-SILC\)](#) .

Key findings

- EU residents tend to be quite satisfied with their life in general, reporting an average of 7.3 points out of 10.0, and in all but one country, the average level was over 6 (i.e. satisfactory and above).
- In 2023, younger people (16-29) in the EU were more satisfied with their lives overall compared to people aged 65 and over. However, this was not the case in all EU countries: in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Finland those aged 65 years and over were more satisfied with their lives.
- Income and level of education affect life satisfaction in the EU. However, while people who are the highest earners/ most educated tend to be more satisfied with their lives on average than those with the lowest incomes or who have, at most, a primary education, even people in the lowest categories tend to be more satisfied with their lives than not (with a rating above 6).
- People living in households with dependent children rated their life satisfaction higher on average. However, there is no difference between men and women and by degree of urbanisation.

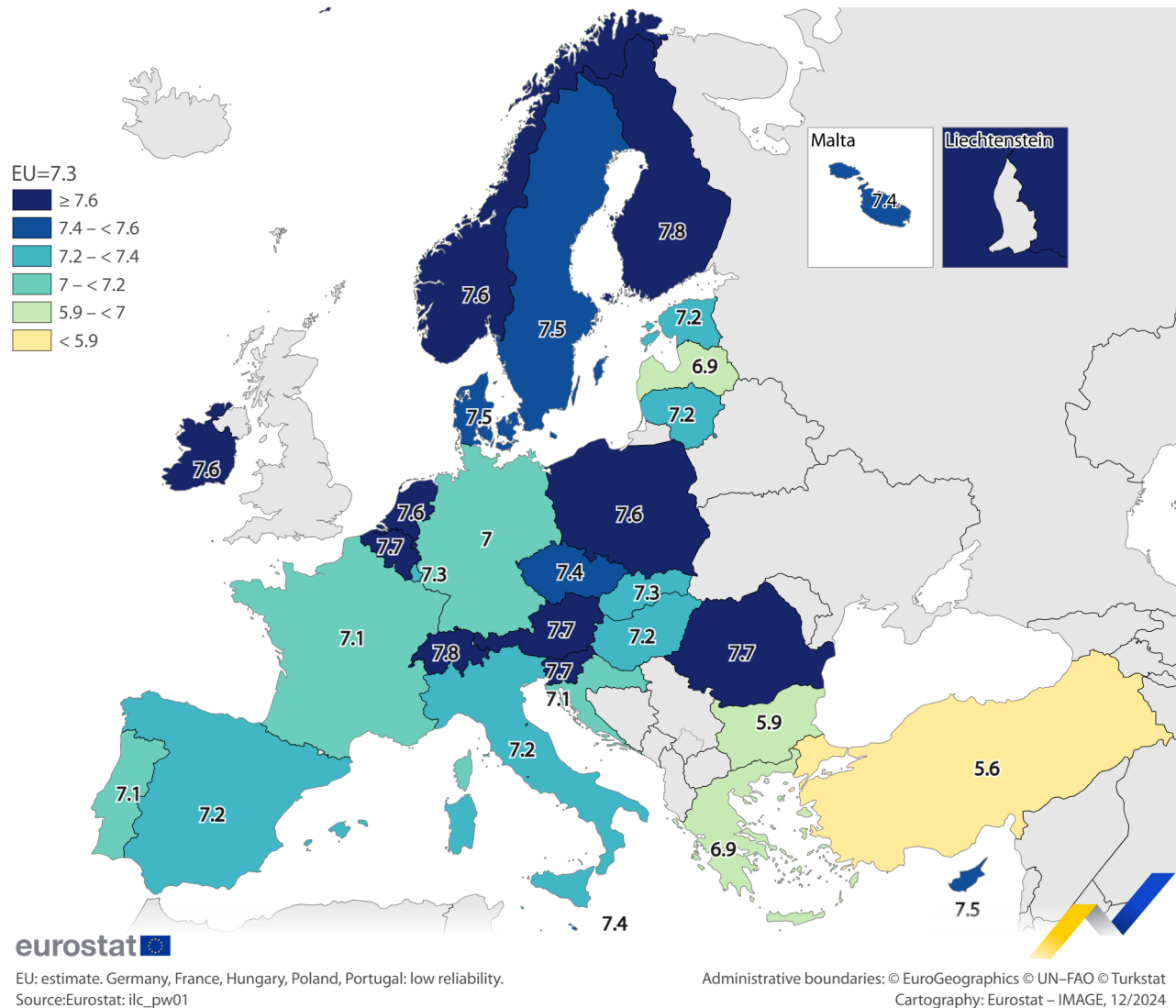
EU citizens were generally satisfied with their lives in 2023

In 2023, EU residents rated their satisfaction with life on average at 7.3 points on a scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). The rating was highest in Finland (7.8), Belgium, Austria, Romania and Slovenia (each at

7.7), while it was lowest in Bulgaria (5.9), Latvia and Greece (both at 6.9). However, in all EU countries except Bulgaria, average levels of life satisfaction were higher than 6, meaning that respondents to the survey declared themselves satisfied rather than dissatisfied (see Map 1).

Overall life satisfaction, 2023

(mean scale 0-10)



Map 1: Overall life satisfaction, 2023 (mean scale 0-10) Source: Eurostat (ilc_pw01)

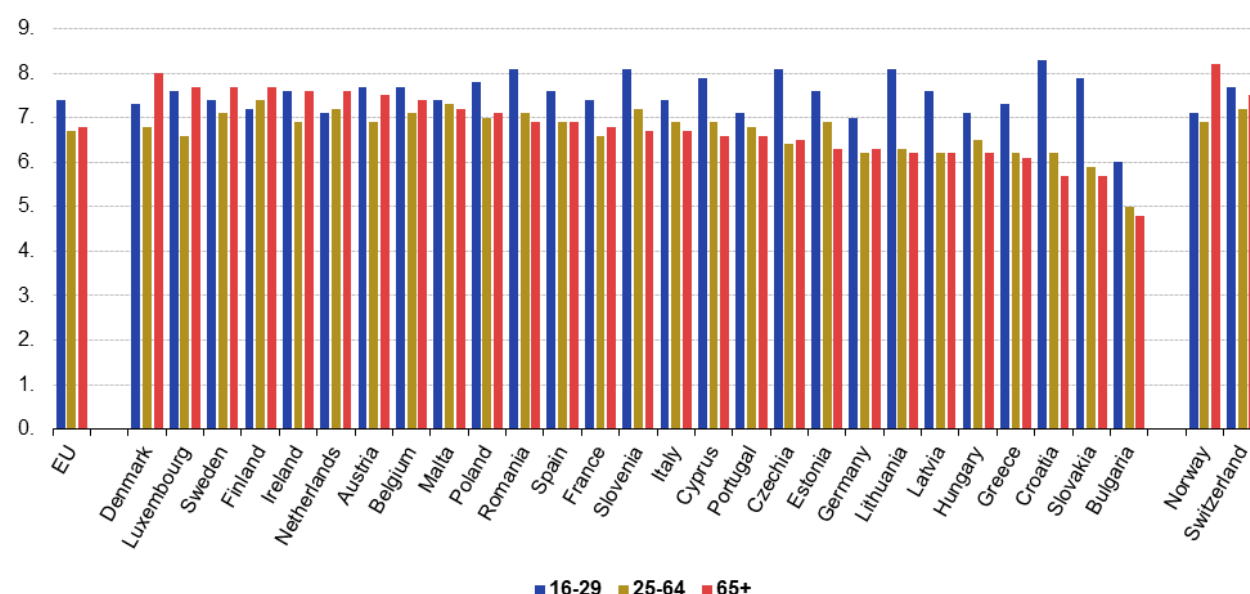
The level of satisfaction may be influenced by many factors such as age, level of education, family and financial situation. Some of these factors are analysed below.

Young people in the EU were more satisfied with their lives

In 2023, at EU level people aged 16-29 showed higher life satisfaction compared to those aged 65 and over, who were in turn slightly more satisfied than those aged between 25 and 64. However the pattern varies across countries.

Overall life satisfaction by age group, 2023

(mean scale 0-10)



EU: estimate. Germany, France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat: ilc_pw01

eurostat

Figure 1: Overall life satisfaction by age group, 2023 (mean scale 0-10) Source: Eurostat (ilc_pw01)

In most EU countries (15) in 2023, there was a decreasing trend of life satisfaction by age group. However, those between 25 and 64 and those above 65 show similar levels of life satisfaction on average, while the gap is bigger when compared to the younger generation. The largest gap between the younger (16-29) and the older (65+) age groups is seen in Croatia (2.6) and Slovakia (2.2).

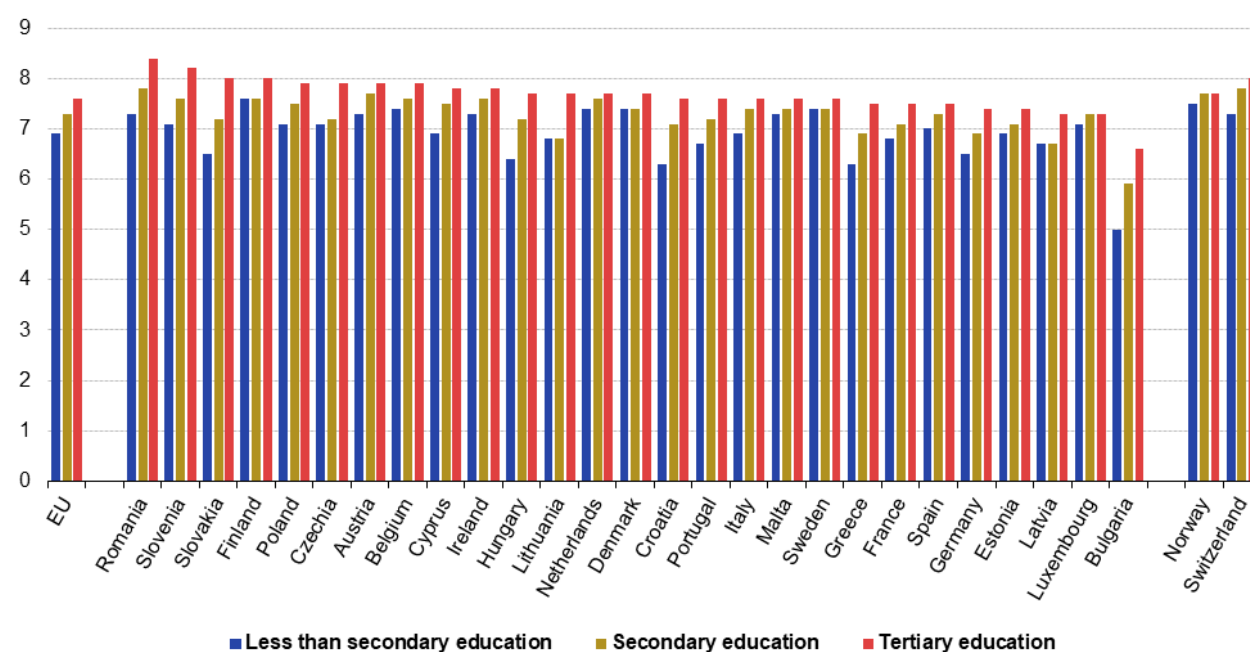
At EU level and in 7 EU countries (Denmark, Luxembourg, Sweden, Ireland, Austria, Belgium and France) a U shape can be seen when looking at the relationship between age and life satisfaction (see Figure 1). The age category with the lowest average life satisfaction is that in the middle. In Finland and the Netherlands there is a slight increase of average life satisfaction with age, i.e. the age group 65+ are more satisfied with life than the two younger age groups. In these 2 countries, as well as in Sweden, Denmark and Luxembourg, the 65+ age group has the highest average life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction increased with level of education

At the EU and national level, life satisfaction increased with the level of education. Those with a tertiary level of education had rated their life satisfaction on average from 8.4 in Romania to 6.6 in Bulgaria. Those with secondary education were most satisfied in Romania (7.8 average rating) and least satisfied in Bulgaria (5.9). For those with less than a secondary level of education, the average life satisfaction rating ranged from 7.6 in Finland to 5.0 in Bulgaria. The highest gap between those with tertiary education and those with less than a secondary level of education was observed in Bulgaria (1.6), Slovakia (1.5), Croatia and Hungary (both 1.3) (see Figure 2).

Overall life satisfaction by education level, 2023

(mean scale 0-10)



EU: estimate. Germany, France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat: ilc_pw01

eurostat 

Figure 2: Overall life satisfaction by education level, 2023 (mean scale 0-10) Source: Eurostat (ilc_pw01)

Other factors: income, household type, sex and level of urbanisation

Individuals with a higher income and those living in a household with children rate their life satisfaction higher

Figure 3 shows that life satisfaction at EU level mainly varied according to household composition and income level.

Overall life satisfaction by socio-economic characteristics at EU level, 2023 (mean scale 0-10)

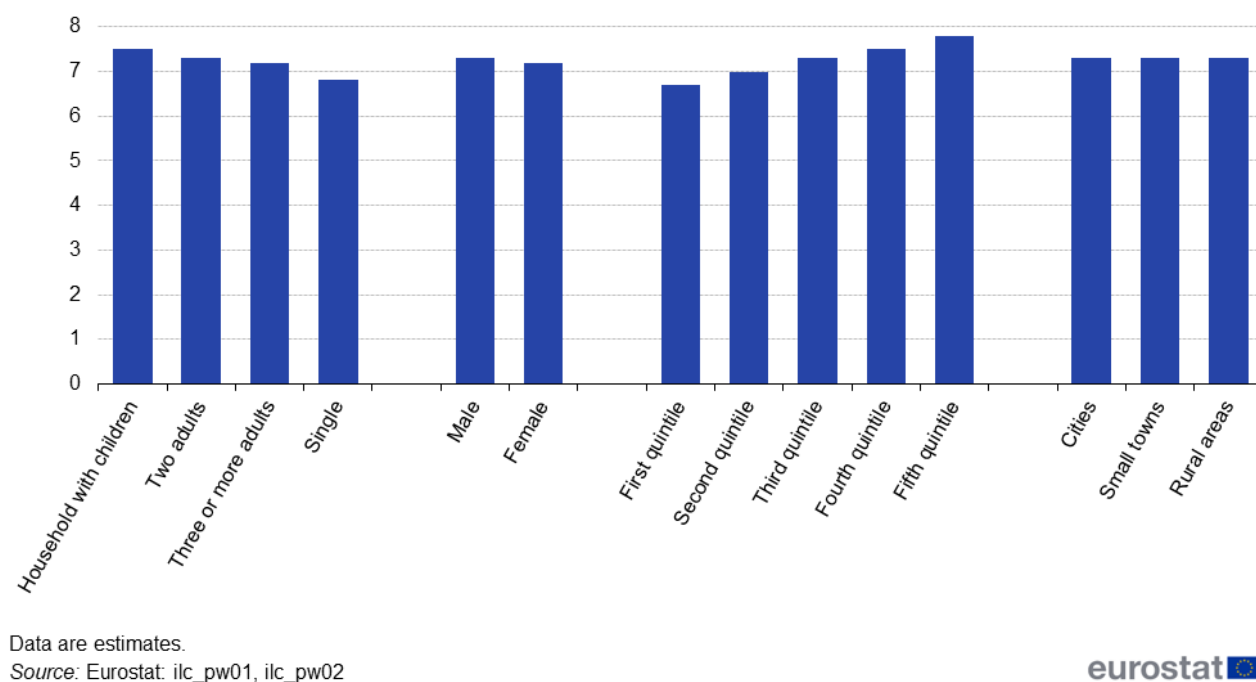


Figure 3: Overall life satisfaction by socio-economic characteristics at EU level, 2023 (mean scale 0-10)
Source: Eurostat ilc_pw02/default/table?lang=en (ilc_pw01, ilc_pw02)

People in households with dependent children consistently reported the highest levels of life satisfaction. In 2023, at EU level, this was 7.5, compared with an average of 7.3 for two adults living together, 7.2 for households with three or more adults and without dependent children, and 6.8 for single-person households. On the other hand, the proportion of EU residents living in a single-person household is increasing (see [Young people - family and society](#)). The fact that households with dependent children were more satisfied than those without, is rather specific to the European context, as [research](#) on other continents has often found the opposite.

Very little difference (0.1 points) was found in the average life satisfaction of people by sex.

People belonging to the highest income quintile rated their life satisfaction on average higher than those having the lowest earnings (7.9 compared to 6.7). However, even people in the lowest income quintile rated their level of satisfaction with their lives, on average, above 6 meaning 'more satisfied than dissatisfied'. The relationship between income quintile and life satisfaction seems to have remained constant over the past decade.

At EU level, data showed no difference in life satisfaction between urban and rural areas, although there might be differences (or even opposing trends) at country level.

Source data for tables and graphs

- [Quality of life - Overall experience of life](#)

Data sources

Subjective well-being encompasses three distinct but complementary subdimensions:

- life satisfaction (or evaluation), i.e. a person's cognitive overall assessment of their life
- affects (the presence of positive feelings, such as joy and the absence of negative feelings, such as sadness or anger)

- eudaimonia (the feeling that one's life has meaning), as specified in the [OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being](#) .

Context

Measuring well-being has an inherent appeal: promoting the well-being of people in Europe is one of the EU's principal aims, as set out by the [Treaty on European Union](#) .

Measuring subjective well-being provides valuable insight into the role played by objective capabilities as determinants of well-being. In a comparative European context, we need to consider the fact that differing priorities and values are also shaped by societal structures, norms and cultural backgrounds, which may vary between countries. Therefore, the importance assigned to each of the objective dimensions of quality of life may also differ at the aggregate country level.

Life satisfaction involves a cognitive and evaluative reflection on past and present experiences. It provides a more stable perspective. However, this lifetime encompassing perspective also presents difficulties for the statistical measurement of life satisfaction: making an unbiased overall evaluation of one's life requires a survey respondent to make a conscious effort and the results may depend on the timing and circumstances of the survey. For example, fleeting experiences could influence the assessment, e.g. the time of day, day of the week, or even weather conditions. However, these influences should cancel out in a large sample. An additional methodological difficulty stems from the entirely subjective nature of this metric. In other aspects of quality of life, which focus on functional capabilities, assessments based on perceptions can often be compared with and cross-checked against objective measures. There is, however, no such objectively measurable counterpart for life satisfaction. Nonetheless, this is a measure that is easy to understand and communicate.

Notes

Explore further

Other articles

- [Living conditions in Europe - income distribution and income inequality](#)
- [Quality of life indicators](#) (online publication)

Database

- [Quality of life](#) , see:

Material living conditions (qol_mlc)

Productive or other main activity (qol_act)

Health (qol_hlt)

Education (qol_edu)

Leisure and social interactions (qol_lei)

Economic security and physical safety (qol_saf)

Governance and basic rights (qol_gov)

Natural and living environment (qol_env)

Overall experience of life (qol_lif)

Dedicated section

- [Quality of life](#)

Publications

- [Quality of life in Europe - Facts and Views](#)

External links

- [OECD Guidelines on measuring subjective well-being](#)
- [Capability approach](#)