Inequalities in quality of life in Europe

European Quality of Life Survey

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Research manager, Living conditions and quality of life unit

Workshop on measuring human development
Eschborn, 14 June 2013
What is Eurofound?

- A tripartite European agency
- Carrying out comparative socio-economic research
- Budget of EUR 20.7m (2013)
- 115 people in Dublin and in Brussels
- Established in 1975
European Quality of Life Survey

- 3rd EQLS – 34 countries (EU27, TR, HR, MK, IS, ME, RS, XK)
- Residents (18+)
  - Register based stratified random sampling
    - Random route if no register available
    - Stratification by urbanisation and region
- 43636 interviews
  - 1000-3000 interviews per country
  - Response rate (RR3) 41.3% (EU27) & 44.7% (non-EU)
- 38 minute face to face interviews at peoples’ homes
- 25 languages and 13 language variants
Core surveyed aspects of quality of life

Subjective well-being
Living standards and deprivation
Home, housing, local environment

Employment and work-life balance
Family and social life
Social exclusion and community involvement

Public services, health, healthcare
Quality of society

EQLS 2011/12:
73 questions
183 items
Various dimensions of monitoring and reporting on the basis of EF surveys

• Monitoring change over time
• Social inequalities
• Convergence and divergence between Member States
• Policy pointers
Subjective well-being

Social inequalities in quality of life

Quality of Society and Public Services

Life satisfaction (1-10) in EU27, 2011
Mean: 7.1
Part 1: Deprivation
Items people cannot afford (out of 6): top and bottom income quartiles
Can you household afford it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paying for a week’s <em>annual holiday away from home</em> (not staying with relatives)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacing any worn-out furniture</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying new, rather than second-hand, clothes</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having friends or family for a drink or meal at least once a month</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Keeping the home adequately warm</em></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Having a meal with meat, chicken, fish every second day</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Europeans (EU27) reporting that their households cannot afford at least one of these six items increased from 38% in 2007 to 45% in 2011.*
The importance of social elements of poverty

Effect of not being able to afford...

- Week’s annual holiday
- Having guests for a drink or meal
- Keeping house warm
- Buying new clothes
- Meal with meat or fish every other day
- Replacing worn-out furniture

Effect size on life satisfaction
Financial strain and situation of old people
Have difficulties making ends meet by age groups
Health
Consistent social inequalities: health satisfaction (scale 1-10), EU27, EQLS
Part 2: Subjective well-being
Life satisfaction (1-10) in EU27, 2011
Mean: 7.1
Bulgaria, Greece and Hungary have the lowest levels of life satisfaction and most wellbeing measures.

Specific measures reveal:
- High levels of stress in France
- High levels of loneliness in Italy
- Low levels of vitality in the UK

Population groups:
- Unemployed
- Severely limited by health problems
- Lower levels of education
- Separated/divorced
- Bottom income quartile
- Those aged 35-50
Who has falling well-being?

- Overall life satisfaction rose, but happiness fell and social exclusion rose.
- Biggest falls 2007-2011: Greece, Estonia, but note also Sweden, Finland and Netherlands.
- Generally, WB gap between richest and poorest grew.
- Students and those aged 50-64, have fallen.
Who has high/rising well-being?

- Social democrat countries
- Nordic and NL have lowest WB inequality
- Rising WB in Southern Europe (except Greece), in higher income quartiles.
- Across the board, in Bulgaria, Romania, Poland and Denmark.
Well-being inequality (within countries)

• Biggest WB inequalities:
  ▶ Between males and females: Cyprus
  ▶ Between rich and poor: Bulgaria
  ▶ Between severely limited by health and others: Slovakia

• Biggest overall WB inequality in Romania.
Life satisfaction: 20% top – 20% bottom
Life satisfaction: mean pair distance

Eurofound

Mean pair distance (life satisfaction)

Life satisfaction (average)
Q30 All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days?

Please tell me on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 10 means very satisfied (%, EU27, EQLS 2011/12)
Risk factors amongst low life satisfaction group (those 1-4)

- Deprivation (2 or more items)
- Lower secondary level education or less
- Limited by illness/disability
- Housing problems (2 or more items)
- Arrears (2 or more items)
- Unemployed
- Separated / Divorced
- No close support

Percentage of respondents with particular factor

- Low life satisfaction group
- All other respondents
What helps protect against the negative wellbeing impact of low income and physical or mental illness?

- **People with low incomes benefit most from:**
  - Not being in debt
  - Permanent employment
  - Face-to-face contact with family members

- **People with poor health benefit most from:**
  - Face-to-face contact with family members
Life satisfaction by income quartiles, for respondents with no arrears versus those with 4 arrears
Life satisfaction for different income quartiles, for respondents on a permanent contract versus those on a temporary contract of less than a year.
Life satisfaction for different income quartiles, for different frequencies of face-to-face contact with siblings

![Graph showing life satisfaction for different income quartiles and contact frequency with siblings]

- **Income quartiles (1=lowest, 4=highest)**
- **Life satisfaction**
- **Once a week or more often**
- **Less often than once a month**
Thank you

Next EQLS – in 2016

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deprivation - 6 items</th>
<th>Equivalent income loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having 5 housing problems</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprivation - 2 items</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being unemployed (versus having a job)</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never having contact with friends (versus at least once a week)</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being separated or divorced</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being widowed</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprivation - 1 item</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never having been married</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being unable to work due to long-term illness or disability</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never participating in sports (versus at least once a week)</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being employed (versus being retired)</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a larger urban area (versus in open countryside)</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having close support on one of five items</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having 1 housing problem</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrears - 1 item</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a single parent</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a larger urban area (versus in a village or small town)</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never attending religious services (versus at least once a week)</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrears - 1 item</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a single parent</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a larger urban area (versus in a village or small town)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never attending religious services (versus at least once a week)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived exclusion
Perceived tensions
Perceived social exclusion index

[1-5], EU27

student: 2.09
retired: 2.09
at work: 2.10
on leave: 2.11
full-time homemaker: 2.28
at work as an assisting relative: 2.36
unemployed <12 months: 2.42
unemployed 12 months +: 2.76
unable to work: 2.81
How much tension is there between..?

- Different racial and ethnic groups: 37% (2011), 40% (2007)
- Poor and rich people: 30% (2011), 36% (2007)
- Different religious groups: 28% (2011), 31% (2007)
- Old people and young people: 13% (2011), 18% (2007)
- Men and women: 10% (2011), 12% (2007)
- People with different sexual orientations: 18% (2011)
Some concluding points from the 3rd EQLS

• A growing proportion of people identify tensions between the rich and poor. Such social tensions are particularly felt by those who are most disadvantaged by low income or unemployment.

• The cost of services appears to be an important barrier for access to childcare and long-term care.

• Not all measures to address social exclusion can be through the labour market or even through improving income; people involved in associations and doing voluntary work feel less excluded. There is a need to increase opportunities for civic and political involvement.

• There is declining trust in key political institutions, specifically in governments and parliaments at national level; and this is particularly evident in the countries most affected by the economic crisis.
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
Additional material
Key elements of the quality assurance strategy for Eurofound surveys

1. **Planning**: using a systematic Quality Control Framework developed specifically for each Survey

2. **Consultation**: experts and users of the survey participate in the development of the questionnaire, concepts and methodology

3. **Transparency**: opening up the process both internally and externally

4. **Documentation**: keeping track of everything, making sure that interventions can be traced back

5. **Assessment of the quality of the process and output**: EF surveys subscribe to the quality criteria of European Statistical system. External quality assessment are carried out after each round.
- Eurofound Survey web pages
- Technical reports
- External Quality Assessment reports
- Survey mapping tool on Eurofound website
  - http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/smt/eqls/results.htm
- Data sets freely available on the UK Data archive
Eurofound’s conceptual framework of measuring quality of life in EQLS

- Scope that people have to attain their goals.
- Quality of life is measured by objective as well subjective indicators.
- Quality of life as overarching frame that entails concepts at level of individual, family, community, and society.

EQLS is based on a multi-dimensional concept of QoL:
- Goes beyond focus on living conditions or resources,
- The survey covers broad spectrum of domains of life (employment, housing, family, health, community, participation in society, socioeconomic (in)security);
- and analyses interrelationship between domains (such as work, family, health and wellbeing);
- Addresses quality of society: trust, intergroup relations, quality of public and neighbourhood services.