

May 2016

# How's Life in the Netherlands?



Additional information, including the data used in this country note, can be found at:  
[www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx)

The **OECD Better Life Initiative**, launched in 2011, focuses on the aspects of life that matter to people and that shape the quality of their lives. The Initiative comprises a set of regularly updated well-being indicators and an in-depth analysis of specific topics, published in the *How's Life?* report. It also includes an interactive web application, the *Better Life Index*, and a number of methodological and research projects to improve the information base towards a better understanding of well-being trends and their drivers.

The OECD Better Life Initiative:

- Helps to inform policy making to improve quality of life.
- Connects policies to people's lives.
- Generates support for needed policy measures.
- Improves civic engagement by encouraging the public to create their own *Better Life Index* and share their preferences about what matters most for well-being.
- Empowers the public by improving their understanding of policy-making.

This brochure presents **selected findings for the Netherlands from the OECD Better Life Index 2016** (page 3), **the *How's Life?* report** (pages 4-6) and shows what **Dutch users of the Better Life Index** are telling us about their **well-being priorities** (page 7). A supporting Excel file with the data underlying the graphs shown in this note and further information is available here: [www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx).

## HOW'S LIFE?



*How's Life?*, published every two years, provides a comprehensive picture of well-being in OECD countries and other major economies by bringing together an internationally comparable set of well-being indicators that the OECD considers as essential to a good life. It looks at people's material conditions and quality of life across the population in eleven dimensions including: income and wealth; jobs and earnings; housing; health status; work-life balance; education and skills; social connections; civic engagement and governance; environmental quality; personal security; and subjective well-being.

The *How's Life? 2015* report includes for the first time a set of indicators to measure the stocks of resources that help to support **well-being over time**. The report also contains three special chapters focusing on **child well-being**, **volunteering** and **regional well-being**.

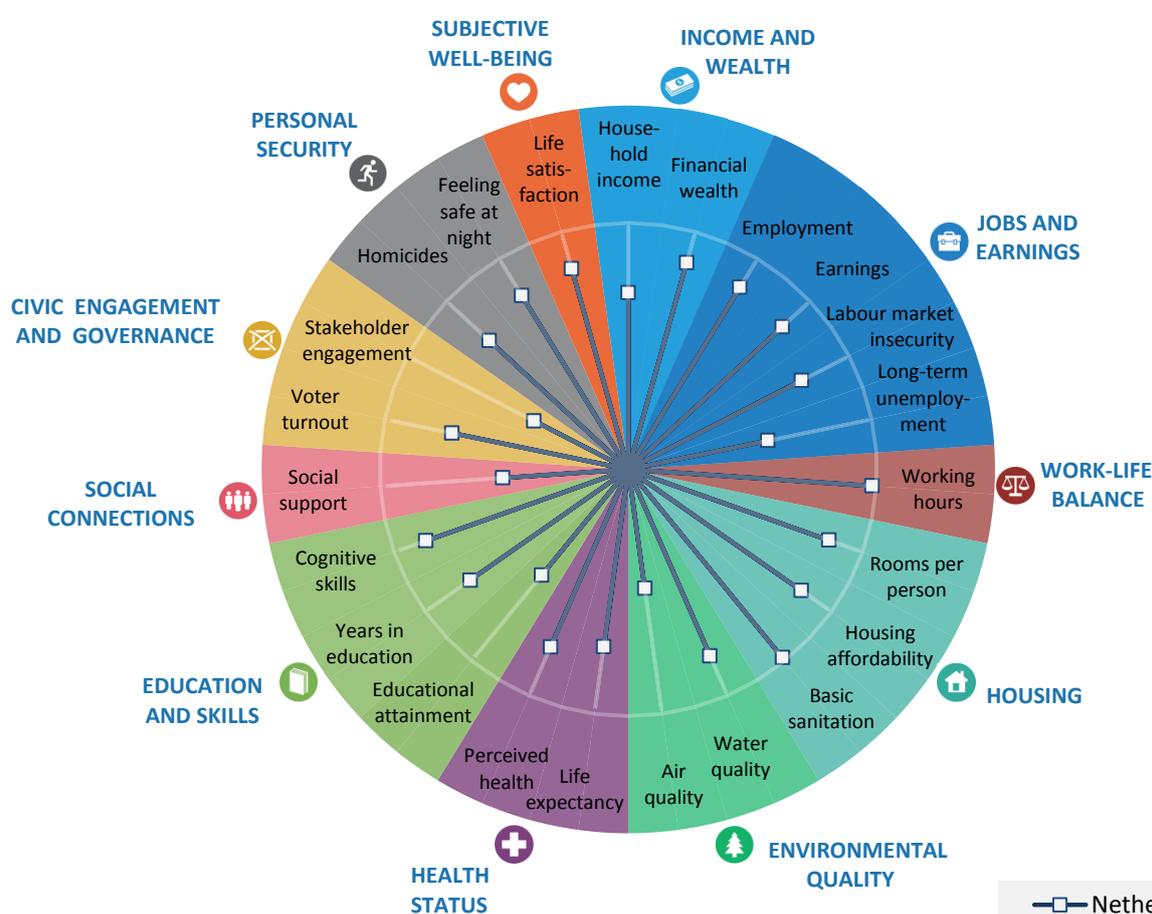


## HOW'S LIFE IN THE NETHERLANDS IN 2016?

In general, the Netherlands performs well across the OECD's headline well-being indicators. **Average earnings** lie above the OECD average, and **labour market insecurity** is comparatively low. Only 0.4% of employees usually **work very long hours** compared to the OECD average of 13%. However, between 2009 and 2014 the **long-term unemployment** rate in the Netherlands tripled and is now of almost 3%, which lies above the OECD average of 2.6%.

On average the population in the Netherlands enjoys very good **housing conditions**. However, **air quality** (assessed in terms of concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> in the air) lies below the OECD average. In terms of **educational attainment**, only 75.9% of the adult working-age population have completed at least an upper secondary education compared to the OECD average of 76.4%. Nevertheless, the literacy and numeracy **skills of Dutch adults** lie far above the OECD average. **Stakeholder engagement for developing regulations** is low in the Netherlands, but **voter turnout** is higher than the OECD average. **Life satisfaction** in the Netherlands is also substantially higher than the OECD average level.

### Current well-being in the Netherlands



This chart shows areas of well-being strengths and weaknesses in the Netherlands, based on a ranking of all OECD countries. Longer lines show areas of relative strength, while shorter lines show areas of relative weakness. For more details, see [www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx).

Source: OECD calculation based on the OECD Better Life Index 2016 database, <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=BLI>.

### Resources for future well-being in the Netherlands

Beyond measuring well-being today, *How's Life? 2015* looks at some of the resources (or "capital stocks") that will shape people's well-being in the future. These include aspects of **natural capital**, **human capital**, **social capital** and **economic capital**.

For example, **trust in other people** is an important component of **social capital**. In the Netherlands trust in others lies above the European OECD average level: on a scale from 0 ("you do not trust any other person") to 10 ("most people can be trusted"), the average score given by people in the Netherlands is 6.9, while the European OECD average stands at 5.8.

## HOW'S LIFE FOR CHILDREN IN THE NETHERLANDS?

Giving children a good start in life is important both for well-being today, and in the future.

Overall child well-being is high in the Netherlands. Only 0.6% of Dutch children live in a household with at least one **long-term unemployed parent**, the lowest share in the OECD. However, the share of Dutch children living in homes with self-reported poor **environmental condition** stands at 31.1% compared to the OECD average of 21.6%.

In terms of civic engagement, 73.5% of Dutch 14-year olds **intend to vote** when they are adults. This lies below the OECD average of 78.7%.

Dutch students are less likely to **feel a lot of pressure from schoolwork** than the average student in the OECD. 83.5% of Dutch students **like school** compared to the OECD average of only 73.6%.

Furthermore, 93.7% of Dutch teenagers **find it easy to talk to their parents**, one of the highest shares of the OECD. The **life satisfaction** of Dutch children is among the highest in the OECD.

Child well-being in the Netherlands		
Ranking of the Netherlands compared to other OECD countries		
● top third    ● middle third    ● bottom third		
Income and Wealth	Disposable income of households with children	●
	Child income poverty	●
Jobs and Earnings	Children in workless households	●
	Children with a long-term unemployed parent	●
Housing conditions	Average rooms per child	●
	Children in homes that lack basic facilities	●
Environmental quality	Children in homes with poor environmental conditions	●
Health status	Infant mortality	●
	Low birth weight	●
	Self-reported health status	●
	Obesity	●
	Adolescent suicide rate	●
	Teenage birth rate	●
Education and Skills	Reading skills among 15 year olds (PISA)	●
	Creative problem solving among 15 year olds (PISA)	●
	Youth neither in employment nor education/training	●
	Educational deprivation	●
Civic engagement	Intention to vote	●
	Civic participation	●
Social and family environment	Children who find it easy to talk to their parents	●
	Students reporting having kind classmates	●
	Students feeling a lot of pressure from schoolwork	●
	Students liking school	●
	Sense of belonging in school at 15 years old (PISA)	●
Personal security	Child homicide rate	●
	Bullying	●
Subjective well-being	Life satisfaction	●

### Inequalities in child well-being

Across all OECD countries there are **large inequalities in child well-being**. Children from wealthier households enjoy both better material living conditions, and a higher **quality of life**, on average. In the Netherlands, children from higher socio-economic backgrounds are far less likely to perceive their health as fair or poor, relative to children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Children from higher socio-economic backgrounds are also more likely to report that their classmates are kind and helpful.

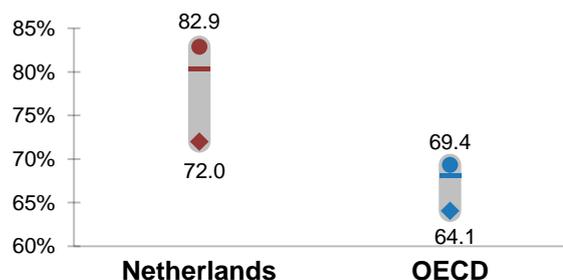
#### Inequalities in health status

Percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 15 with self-perceived fair or poor health



#### Inequalities in social and family environment

Percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 15 who report that their classmates are kind and helpful



● High socio-economic status    ◆ Low socio-economic status    — National average

\* For more information (including definitions), see [www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx).

## THE VALUE OF GIVING: VOLUNTEERING AND WELL-BEING

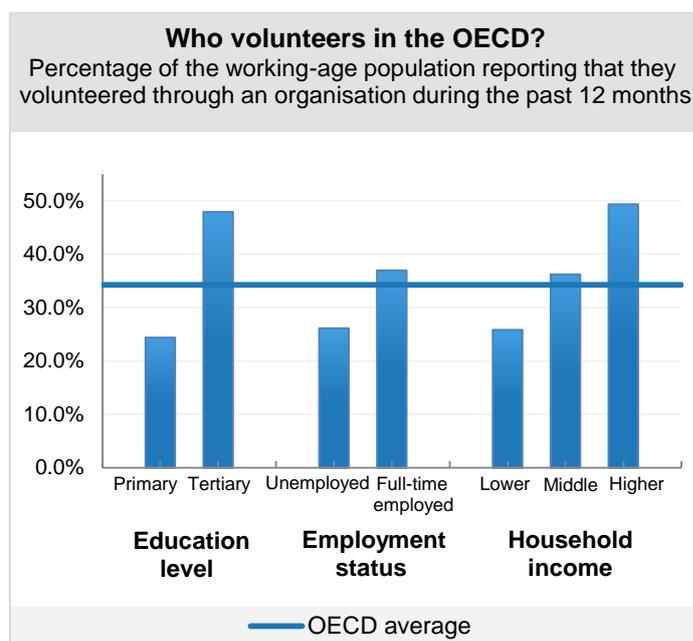
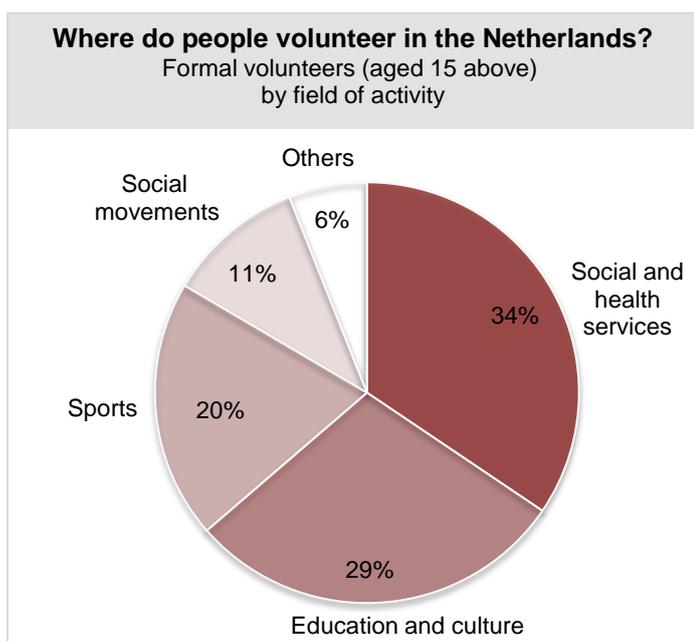
Volunteering makes an important “hidden contribution” to well-being, producing goods and services that are not captured by conventional economic statistics. When you add up the value of the time people spend on volunteering in OECD countries, it amounts to roughly 2% of GDP per year.

### Volunteering in the Netherlands and the OECD

The main sectors of volunteering activity in the Netherlands are social and health services, followed by education and culture. Volunteering through an organisation (termed “**formal volunteering**”) is relatively common in the Netherlands. 40.8% of the Dutch working-age population report that they engaged in formal volunteering during the past 12 months. The share lies above the OECD average of 34.2%.

**How often do people volunteer?** 33.5% of people in the Netherlands who participate in formal volunteering do so less than once a month. The share of formal volunteers who volunteer every day is 5.8% and lies above the OECD average of 4.7%. In general, volunteers in the Netherlands tend to engage in volunteering activities on a more frequent basis than the average OECD volunteer.

**Who volunteers?** Across the OECD area, people with a university degree are more likely to participate in formal volunteering than those with lower levels of education. Similarly, people who are in employment are more likely to volunteer than those who are unemployed. Participation in formal volunteering also increases with people’s level of household income.

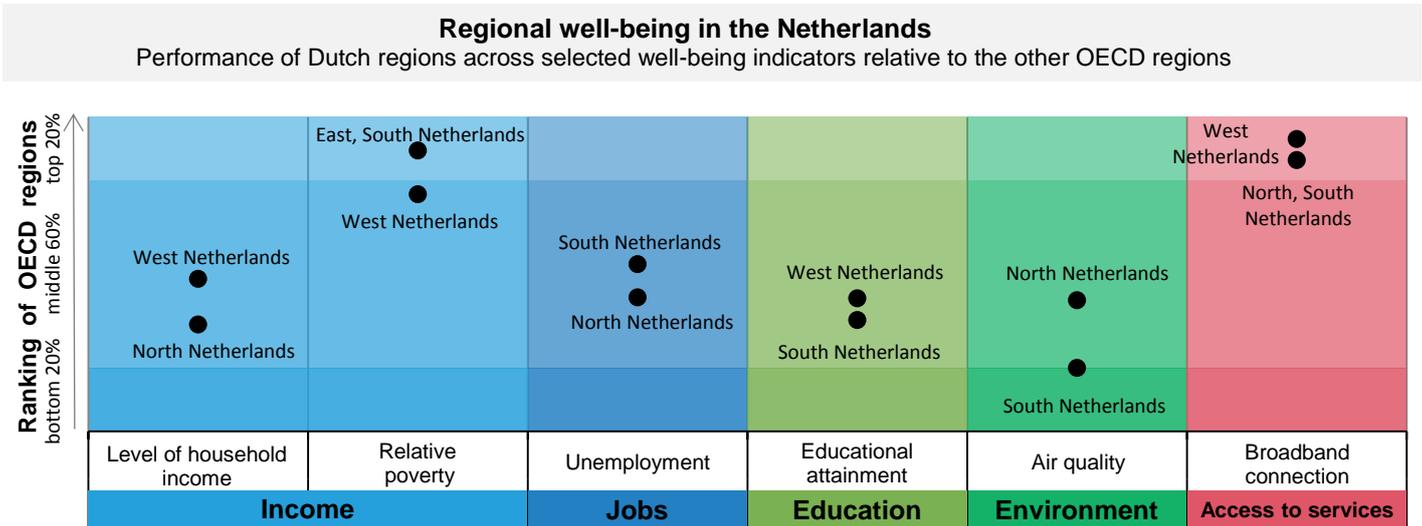


Volunteering brings benefits for volunteers themselves, as well as for the people and communities they help. For example, people who engage in volunteering are more likely to have higher literacy, numeracy and problem-solving **skills** and receive **higher wages**, on average, relative to non-volunteers.

In OECD countries, older people who volunteer formally are more likely to report a **better health status** than non-volunteers. Furthermore, formal volunteers in the OECD, on average, also report higher **life satisfaction** than non-volunteers.

## GOING LOCAL: MEASURING WELL-BEING IN REGIONS

Where people live has an important impact on their opportunities to live well. There can be large differences in average levels of well-being in different regions within the same country. *How's Life in your Region?* and the *OECD regional well-being web-tool* assess performance across 9 dimensions of well-being in the 362 OECD large regions – 4 of which are in the Netherlands. Drawing on this work, *How's Life? 2015* includes a special focus on measuring well-being in regions.



\* For more information (including data for other regions), see [www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2016-country-notes-data.xlsx).

### Regional gaps in material living conditions

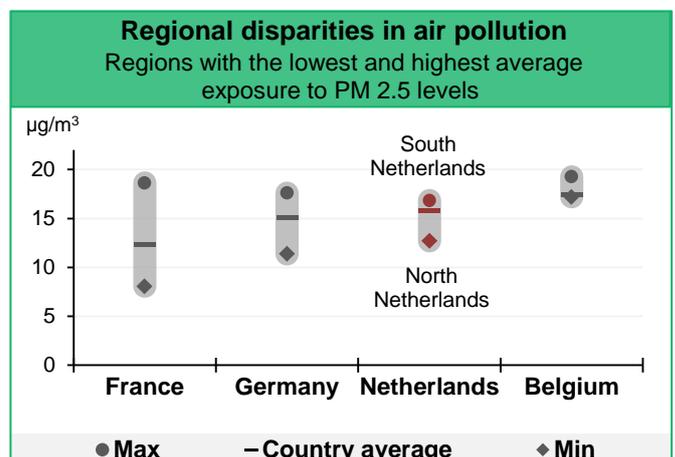
Compared to other OECD countries regional inequalities in income and jobs are small in the Netherlands. The **average household adjusted disposable income** is 22% higher in the West Netherlands than in the North Netherlands. Regarding **relative income poverty**, while 6.6% of people in the East Netherlands and the South Netherlands have an income of less than half of the Dutch median income, the share is 8.6% in the West Netherlands. **Unemployment rates** range from 6.5% in the South Netherlands to 7.2% in the North Netherlands. This gap (0.7 percentage points) is the smallest regional difference in unemployment rates in the OECD.

### Regional differences in people's quality of life

Regarding **educational attainment**, 76.7% of the labour force has at least a secondary education in the West Netherlands, while this share is 73.5% in the South Netherlands. This gap (3.2 percentage points) is among the lowest regional difference in educational attainment in the OECD area.

The regional variation of **air quality** in the Netherlands is smaller than in France or Germany, but larger than in Belgium.

The share of households with a **broadband connection** ranges from 88% in the West Netherlands to 85% in the North Netherlands and the South Netherlands.



## BETTER LIFE INDEX

The **Better Life Index** is an interactive web application that invites citizens to compare well-being across OECD countries and beyond on the basis of the set of well-being indicators explored in *How's Life?*. Users chose what weight to give to each of the eleven dimensions shown below and then see how countries' perform, based on their own personal priorities in life.

11 topics to define well-being

Housing	Community	Health
Income	Education	Life Satisfaction
Jobs	Environment	Safety
	Civic Engagement	Work-Life Balance

Each flower represents a country and each petal represents a topic

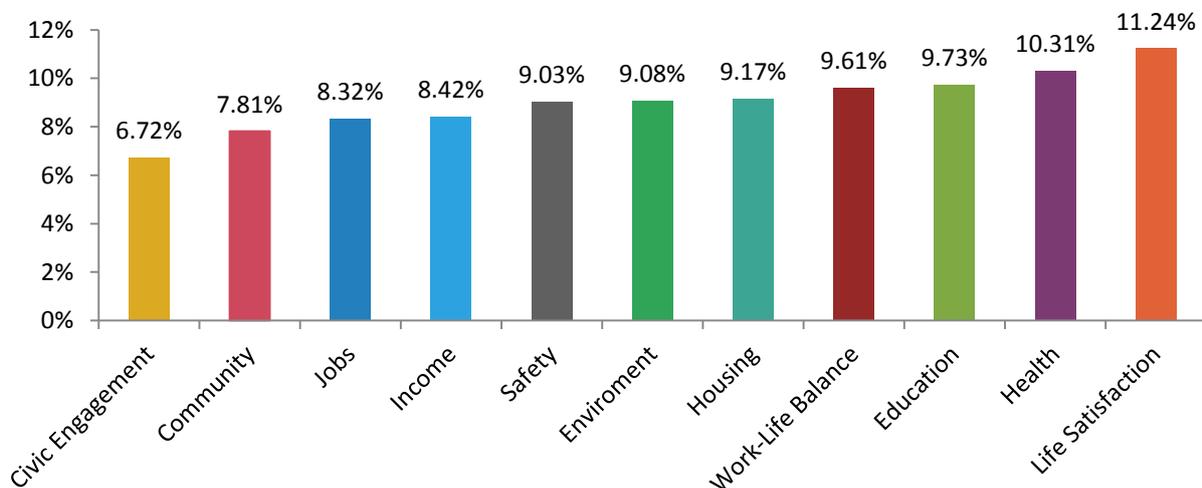
Rate the topics according to their importance to you

Users can also share their index with other people in their networks, as well as with the OECD. This allows the OECD to gather valuable information on the importance that users attach to various life dimensions, on how these preferences differ across countries, and on the demographic characteristics of users.

## WHAT MATTERS MOST TO PEOPLE IN THE NETHERLANDS?

Since its launch in May 2011, the Better Life Index has attracted **over eight million visits from just about every country on the planet** and has received over **17 million page views**. To date, over 126,700 people in the Netherlands have visited the website making the Netherlands the 13th country overall in traffic to the website. The top cities are Amsterdam (17% of visits), The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Groningen.

The following country findings reflect the ratings voluntarily shared by 1062 website visitors in the Netherlands. Findings are only indicative and are not representative of the population at large. **For Dutch users of the Better Life Index, life satisfaction, health and education are the three most important topics** (shown below).<sup>1</sup> Up to date information, including a breakdown of participants in each country by gender and age can be found here: [www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#NLD](http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#NLD).



<sup>1</sup> User information for the Netherlands is based on shared indexes submitted between May 2011 and May 2016.

**For media requests contact:**  
**[news.contact@oecd.org](mailto:news.contact@oecd.org) or +33 1 45 24 97 00**

**For more information contact:**  
**[BLI@oecd.org](mailto:BLI@oecd.org)**

