

Main results of well-being survey in Hungary

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Introduction

In the recent decades, it became more and more evident that economic development is not by all means synchronized with social processes and the improvement of life quality. A number of studies urged to reconsider the traditional concepts of living conditions and well-being and highlighted subjective indicators measuring the satisfaction and well-being of people.

In line with the new trend, Eurostat built a new module measuring subjective well-being into the EU-SILC¹ population survey in 2013, which, in addition to objective indicators measuring life quality, allowed the subjective examination of life satisfaction and well-being as well. In Hungary, there was no survey in this topic with such a large sample (nearly 18 thousand respondents) earlier. Now, by connecting variables referring to subjective well-being with the available objective indicators, background variables characteristic of the individual's living conditions and household, it is possible to explore their correlations and to prepare comprehensive analyses as well.

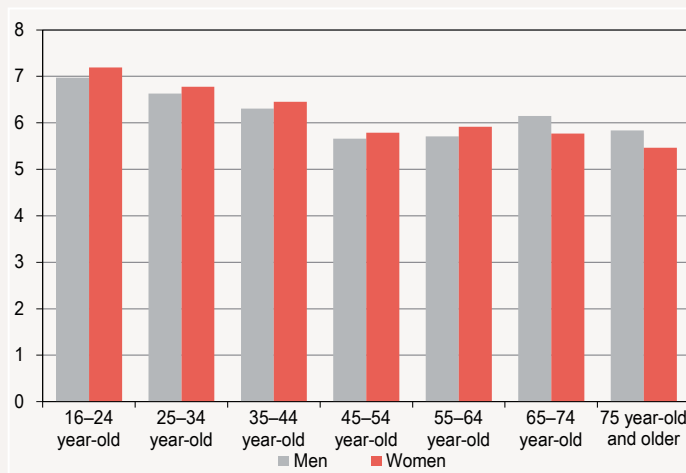
Life satisfaction

The question regarding overall life satisfaction is the key indicator of subjective well-being, and its results are easy to explain and understand. The respondents evaluated on a scale of 0 to 10 how satisfied they are overall with their lives (0 = not at all satisfied, 10 = completely satisfied).

The average of the responses was 6.15 in the total population. Satisfaction is the highest among young adults and it is considerably decreasing with advancing age until the age group 45–54. Among people aged 16–64, women are more satisfied on average, while among the elderly, aged 65 and over, men are more satisfied.

Figure 1

Overall life satisfaction by sex and age groups



Averages do not inform on the characteristics of people near the two ends of the scale, therefore, the differences by sex and age groups are further examined by the proportion of those who are very satisfied (answers 8, 9 or 10) and who are very unsatisfied (answers 0, 1 or 2).

Figure 2

Proportion of people very satisfied and very unsatisfied with their lives (%) by sex and age groups



¹ Statistics on Income and Living Conditions: annual, internationally harmonized, large sample survey providing wide range of information on the social, income, demographic, labour market, housing and living conditions of the population living in EU member states.

More than half of young people aged 16–24 years (50.9%) are very satisfied with their lives. Overall life satisfaction is gradually diminishing with advancing age, so, among people aged 75 years and over, the proportion of those who are very satisfied with their lives is below 20% (19.9%). Among women aged 16–64 years, the proportion of those very satisfied is higher than among men of corresponding age, while this reverses in the older age groups, and the proportion of those who are very satisfied with their lives is 4.4 percentage points higher among 65–74 year-old men and 6.1 percentage points higher among men aged 75 years and over than that of women of corresponding age.

The proportion of people who are very unsatisfied is 6.2% in the total population and it is below 10% in each age group. This proportion is the highest (9.62%) among 55–64 year-old men followed by 45–54 year-old women (9.43%). Young men are in general more unsatisfied with their lives than young women, while in older ages, the proportion of women unsatisfied with their lives is higher.

In parallel with the increase in the highest **educational attainment**, overall life satisfaction is gradually increasing. People with primary educational attainment at most are the most unsatisfied (5.45), while the most satisfied are those with tertiary educational attainment (7.02). In the overall life satisfaction of people having completed the consecutive stages of education, the difference is the highest between those with secondary educational attainment without G.C.S.E. (5.77) and those who have G.C.S.E. (6.51).

If we examine the issue in respect of **activity status**, among those who have a job, full-time workers are more satisfied with their lives; higher life satisfaction is especially characteristic of entrepreneurs (6.76). Among those who do not have a job, overall life satisfaction of students is outstanding; they are more satisfied than any of the other groups (7.62). Homemakers are also more satisfied (6.74) than the average of the total population (6.15), while the satisfaction of other groups of people having no job is below the average. Unemployed people are the least satisfied (4.40), which confirms that unemployment is not only an economic problem, but it puts great burden on the psychological, mental condition of the individual as well.

There are no significant differences by **settlement types**. While people living in towns are more satisfied (6.20), lower overall life satisfaction is characteristic of those living in villages (6.04).

In **regional** breakdown, people living in Western Transdanubia are the most satisfied (6.38). Overall life satisfaction is higher than the national average in Central Transdanubia (6.32), Southern Great Plain (6.32) and in Budapest, the capital city (6.16) as well. People living in Northern Hungary are the least satisfied with their lives (5.90). A reason for regional differences may be the different social composition and settlement structure of regions as well.

Personal and social usefulness

One of the key factors of overall life satisfaction is the feeling of success and utility in work, private life or even in hobby and sports. This was examined by the question referring to what extent the respondents feel that **the things they do in their lives are worthwhile** (0 = not worthwhile at all, 10 = completely worthwhile).

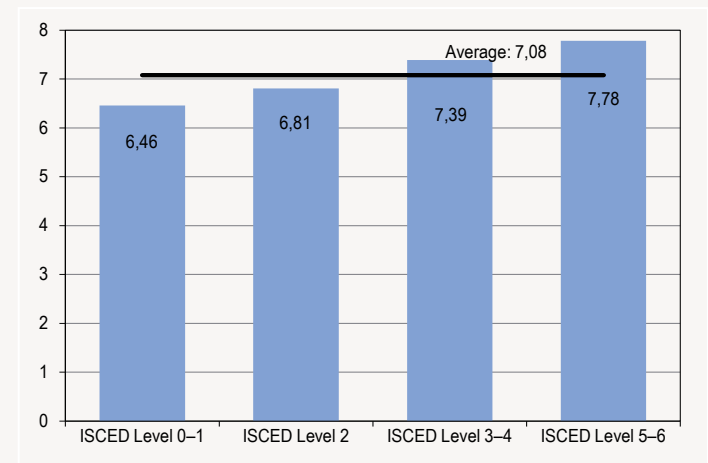
The average for the total population is 7.08, i.e. people feel their activities are worthwhile rather than not worthwhile. Women regard their activities as more worthwhile on average (7.13) than men (7.01). In respect of **age groups**, the average for young people aged 16–34 is the highest (7.47), it is around the average among the 35–54 year-olds (7.11) and the lowest in the older age groups (6.83).

If we examine the issue in respect of **activity status**, the situation is similar to the one in case of overall life satisfaction. Those who have a job regard their activities as more worthwhile (7.51) than those who do not have (6.73). Among employed people, the average for entrepreneurs working full-time is the highest (7.62). Students feel the most that their

activities are worthwhile with an average (7.96) higher than in any of the other groups. Pensioners regard their activities as less useful (6.80) than the average, and the average for unemployed people is the lowest (5.61).

Figure 3

Judgement about how worthwhile activities are by highest educational attainment



Educational attainment determines how people think that the things they do are worthwhile and useful. The higher the educational attainment of a person, the more worthwhile he/she probably regards the activities he/she performs. Thus, in addition to its direct importance in society, the educational system affects the feeling of success and utility indirectly as well.

In a breakdown by **settlement types**, those living in county seats or towns with county rights feel the most that their activities are worthwhile and useful. (7.25). The average for those living in smaller towns is higher than the national average (7.14), the average for people living in Budapest is slightly below the national average (7.04), while people living in villages feel the least that their activities are useful (6.95). The average is the highest in Western Transdanubia (7.50) and the lowest in Northern Hungary (6.87).

Due to the interaction between the individual and the society, the self-esteem of a person is inseparable from his/her role in the society. The **feeling of usefulness in the society** is determinant in respect of the self-esteem and thus of the comfort and well-being of a person. In addition to the evaluation of their own activities, we examined the self-evaluation of the respondents in respect of their contribution to social values and objectives as well. (Overall, to what extent do you feel that you are an important, useful member of the society? 0 = not at all important, useful, 10 = definitely important, useful).

The average for the total population was 7.03, and it diminished with advancing age: the average of social usefulness is 7.47 among people aged 16–24 and 25–34, it reaches the national average (7.03) in the age group 45–54, while it is much below that in the oldest age group (5.92).

The connection between highest **educational attainment** and feeling of social usefulness is unambiguous. The average for people with primary educational attainment is the lowest (6.28). The national average of 7.03 is already exceeded by the average for people with G.C.S.E. (7.31). The feeling of social usefulness is gradually increasing by the increase in educational attainment, and the average for those with tertiary educational attainment is the highest (8.43).

There are no significant differences in the evaluation of usefulness by **settlement types**. In **regional** breakdown, the average of feeling of social usefulness is considerably higher than the national average in Western Transdanubia (7.46) and Northern Great Plain (7.44), while it is the lowest in Southern Transdanubia (6.72).

In respect of the **activity status** of the individual, those who have a job regard themselves as more useful in the society, while, except for students and

homemakers, the averages of those who have no job are lower than the national average. Students feel the most that they are useful and important in the society (7.89), which shows the ambitions of young, studying people as well.

Figure 4

Feeling of social usefulness by activity status



Full-time workers have the second highest average (7.70) irrespective of whether they are employees or entrepreneurs and they are followed by homemakers (7.26). The average for part-time workers is slightly higher than the national average (7.14).

The low self-esteem and difficult emotional situation of unemployed people is shown by their low averages, i.e. they feel the least that they are useful members of the society (5.37). This confirms that the decrease of unemployment is not only an economic but also a social objective.

Personal relationships, trust in others

The personal relationships, social network of the individual and their conserving force were examined by the question “Do you have anyone to discuss personal matters with?” (with two options: yes, no). The psychological health, well-being and mood are strongly influenced by how much the demand of an individual for social contact is met. Furthermore, personal relationships have a significant role in managing daily emotional stimuli, pleasures and frustrations.

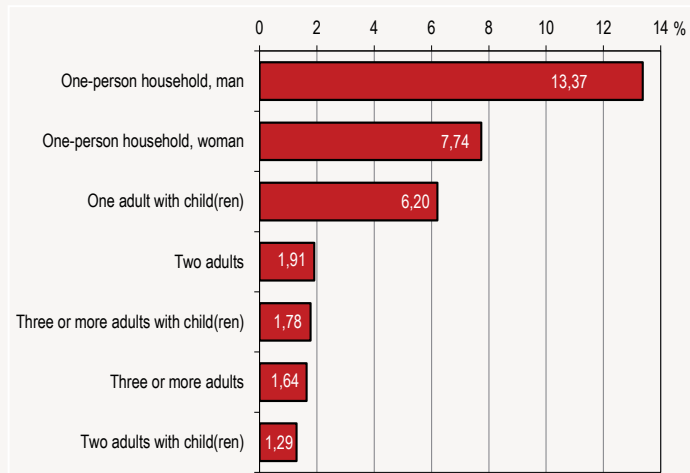
2.82% of the population does not have anyone to discuss personal matters with. According to the answers to another question regarding the possibility to ask for help, 2.63% of the respondents do not have anyone to ask for help from in case of any trouble.

In the youngest, 16–24 age group, the proportion of those who do not have anyone to discuss personal matters with is below 1%. This proportion is gradually increasing with advancing age, and it reaches 5.18% among people aged 75 years and over. There is no difference in this respect between **genders**, but with the increase of the highest **educational attainment**, the probability of loneliness is decreasing.

Out of the measured background variables, the differences in the loneliness of the respondents are the largest by the **composition of the respondent’s household**. More than 13% of men living in one-person household do not have anyone to discuss personal matters with. Their proportion is the highest not among the elderly but among people younger than 65 years of age (14.2%). In respect of loneliness, they are followed by women living in one-person household. In the proportions there is a large jump between people living in one-person household and those living with other adults. Loneliness is the least characteristic of household structures similar to the traditional family model.

Figure 5

Proportion of people who do not have anyone to discuss personal matters with by household structure

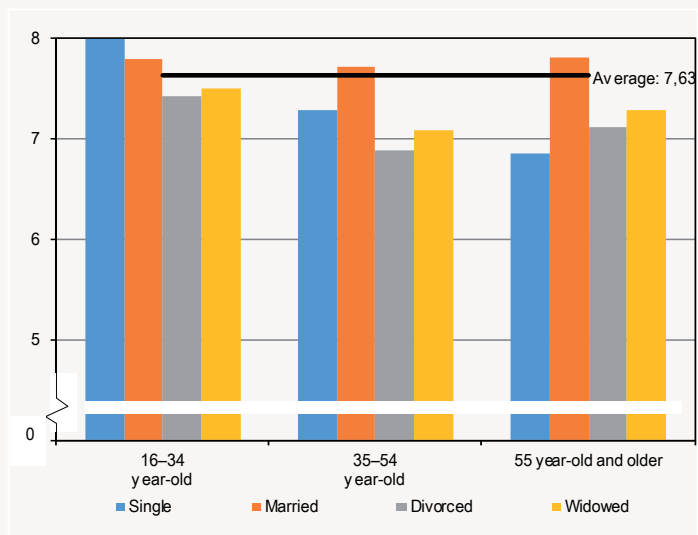


From the evaluation of satisfaction with personal relationships we can draw some conclusions about the quantitative and qualitative state of social relations of the person as well. The relations with relatives and friends have a significant impact on well-being. In addition to solving problems and helping each other, social relationships have a key importance in respect of leisure time and recreation as well.

The average of satisfaction with personal relationships was 7.63 on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = not at all satisfied, 10 = completely satisfied).

Figure 6

Satisfaction with personal relationships by age groups and marital status



People aged 16–34 years are the most satisfied with their social relations, while older people are the least satisfied. The differences by **marital status** change with advancing age. Among young people, singles are the most satisfied with their social relations, while the average for people aged 35–54 years is much lower and it continues to drop among the elderly. Only people living in marriage are more satisfied with their personal relationships than the average for middle-aged and elderly people.

There are definite differences by **educational attainment** as well. In respect of personal relationships, there is no considerable difference in

the satisfaction of people with G.C.S.E. and those with tertiary educational attainment; the satisfaction of both groups is above the national average (7.80 and 7.89, respectively). In case of people having no G.C.S.E., the satisfaction with personal relationships is below the national average. Those who have only primary educational attainment are the most unsatisfied with their personal relationships (7.33).

People living in smaller towns are the most satisfied with their personal relationships (7.88). The satisfaction of those living in villages and county seats is near the national average (7.57 and 7.60, respectively), while people living in Budapest are the least satisfied with their personal relationships (7.37). In regional breakdown, people living in Western Transdanubia are the most satisfied with their personal relationships (7.83) and the averages of Northern Great Plain (7.78), Southern Great Plain and Pest county (7.73 each) reach the national average.

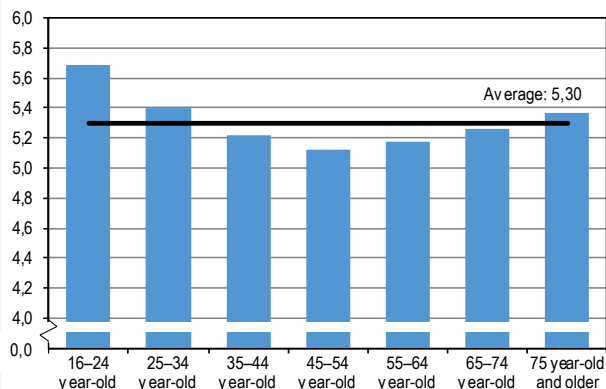
The personal relation with the broader social environment is influenced by the trust in other people, which is a crucial precondition for building social relations and making new acquaintances.

Among all subjective variables, the average of **trust in other people** is the lowest and its standard deviation is also the smallest. The average calculated for the total population was 5.30 on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = do not trust in any other person, 10 = most people can be trusted).

The higher the completed **educational attainment** of a person, the larger his/her trust in other people is. The average for people with primary educational attainment at most was the lowest (4.94), while that for people with tertiary educational attainment was the highest (5.87).

Figure 7

Trust in others by age groups



In respect of **regional differences** in trust in other people, the average of 5.56 for Budapest is **outstanding**. Besides, people living in county seats and towns with county rights have more trust than the average (5.45). The average for people living in villages is below the national average (5.22), while that for inhabitants of smaller towns is even lower (5.03). In **regional** breakdown, trust in other people is the highest in Central Transdanubia (5.72). The

averages for Budapest (5.56), Western Transdanubia (5.52) and Southern Great Plain (5.51) are also above the national average. Mistrust in others is the most characteristic of people living in Northern Great Plain (4.83).

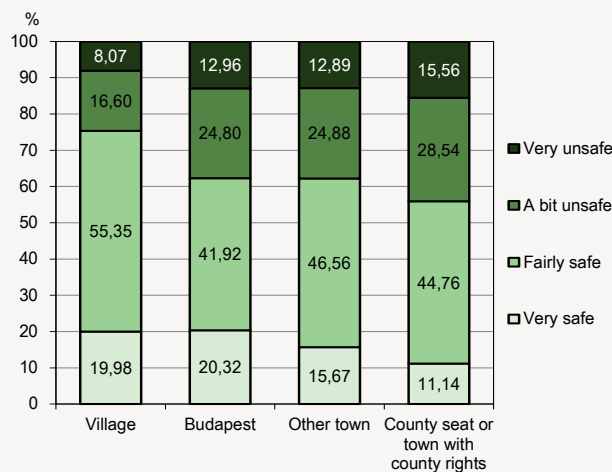
The results of measuring general trust in others by **age groups** are different from the “decline by age” characteristic of the other variables. Higher trust is characteristic of young and elderly people, while middle-aged people seem to be the most mistrustful.

Among people aged 45–54 years, a number of measured well-being variables considerably decrease and hit their low. This is true for the trust in others as well, since its average is the lowest for this age group. An increasing trust is characteristic of the elderly: the average for the 65–74 year-olds is near the average of the total population and that for people aged 75 and over is even higher than that.

The **feeling of safety in the area close to the place of residence** is influenced by the general trust in the narrower environment and the state of the place of residence. In addition to the negative impact of fear and distress on the way you feel, they influence the quality of life as well. Namely, the fear of walking in the street after dark may strongly restrain people from attending social, cultural events and participating in leisure and sport activities.

Figure 8

Feeling of safety in the area close to the place of residence after dark by settlement types



Feeling of safety is the highest in villages where more than 75% of people feel safe walking alone in their area after dark as well. Trust in each other and responsibility for others is stronger in smaller communities where people know each other. According to the answers to the question “How safe do you feel walking alone in your area after dark?”, 62% of people living in Budapest and smaller towns feel safe walking in the streets in the evening. Among the regions, the feeling of physical safety is the highest in Western Transdanubia (72.57% of people feel themselves safe) and the lowest in Central Hungary (61.99% of the respondents feel themselves safe).

Further information, data (links):

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