

# Feeling down? Try a move Down Under

## Australia tops happiness league (with UK at No 10)

WITH its idyllic beaches and seemingly limitless sunshine, most of us have long known that it is the lucky country.

And according to an international league table of happiness, Australia truly does take some beating on its quality of life.

It has ranked number one on the OECD's first such chart – and,

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somewhat unsurprisingly, well ahead of Britain, which came tenth.

But while Britons may not be quite as content as our friends Down Under, we're happier than the Germans or the French, according to the rankings.

Australia's strong economy, good public health, low pollution

and low levels of crime were some of the reasons why it is better off, the OECD said.

The attraction is already well known to the tens of thousands of Britons flocking there each year in search of a better life. In 2011 49,000 emigrated Down Under.

The OECD's Better Life Index is based on 11 categories, including income, jobs, housing and health, surveyed in 36 nations. Overall, the UK was beaten by a string of Scan-

dinavian countries, among them Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

Britain scored highly on income levels, high employment, low crime, and community spirit – measured by polls that found almost everyone knew a person they could rely on in times of trouble. It also ranked highly on the environment, based on lower air pollution and water quality.

But it was marked down because of overcrowding, a school system which 'favours the rich over the poor', and because the OECD says state spending and benefit cuts 'will affect many families'.

Its report added: 'Progress in child poverty reduction in the UK has stalled; social protection spending on families needs to be protected.'

'Providing services such as affordable and good quality local day-care centres, with flexible opening hours, is key to helping families with children on low incomes into work.'

Specifically on happiness levels, grumpy Britons lagged behind. In surveys on life satisfaction, recently introduced to national statistics by David Cameron, they rated themselves at 6.8

THE TOP TEN	
1	Australia
2	Sweden
3	Canada
4	Norway
5	Switzerland
6	United States
7	Denmark
8	Netherlands
9	Iceland
10	United Kingdom

Source: OECD

out of 10. However, the French are even less cheerful, giving themselves 6.6 out of 10. Australians, by contrast, scored 7.2, well above the OECD average of 6.6.

France came 18th due to high unemployment and poor education for some of its people, beaten by the Germans, who were in 17th place. Despite high life expectancy and levels of health spending, they rated poorly on health.

However, if work-life balance is given the most weight, Australia becomes one of the worst developed nations in which to live. More than 14 per cent of Australian workers put in more than 50 hours a week, way above the OECD average of 9 per cent.

Eurozone countries, many struggling with debt crises and high unemployment, did badly in the index. France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece were all rated in the bottom half of the table.

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