# How's Life in Mexico?

Relative to other OECD countries, Mexico has a mixed performance across the different well-being dimensions. At 61% in 2016, Mexico's **employment** rate was below the OECD average (67%), but the **long-term unemployment rate** was close to zero, one of the lowest levels in the OECD. Housing conditions are below the OECD average for all three indicators, and the average **life expectancy** at birth (75 years in 2015) is 5 years below the OECD average. Mexico has the highest **homicide rate** in the OECD, with 18 homicides per 100 000 people in 2014. In addition, a relatively low share of people report feeling **safe walking alone at night** in the area where they live (46% compared to an OECD average of 69%). **Social support** is also among the lowest in the OECD area: only 80% of Mexicans report having friends or relatives whom they can count on in times of need, compared to 89% in the OECD on average. Mexico also ranks low in terms of education and skills but is in the top tier of OECD countries in terms of **life satisfaction**.

Mexico's average level of current well-being: Comparative strengths and weaknesses
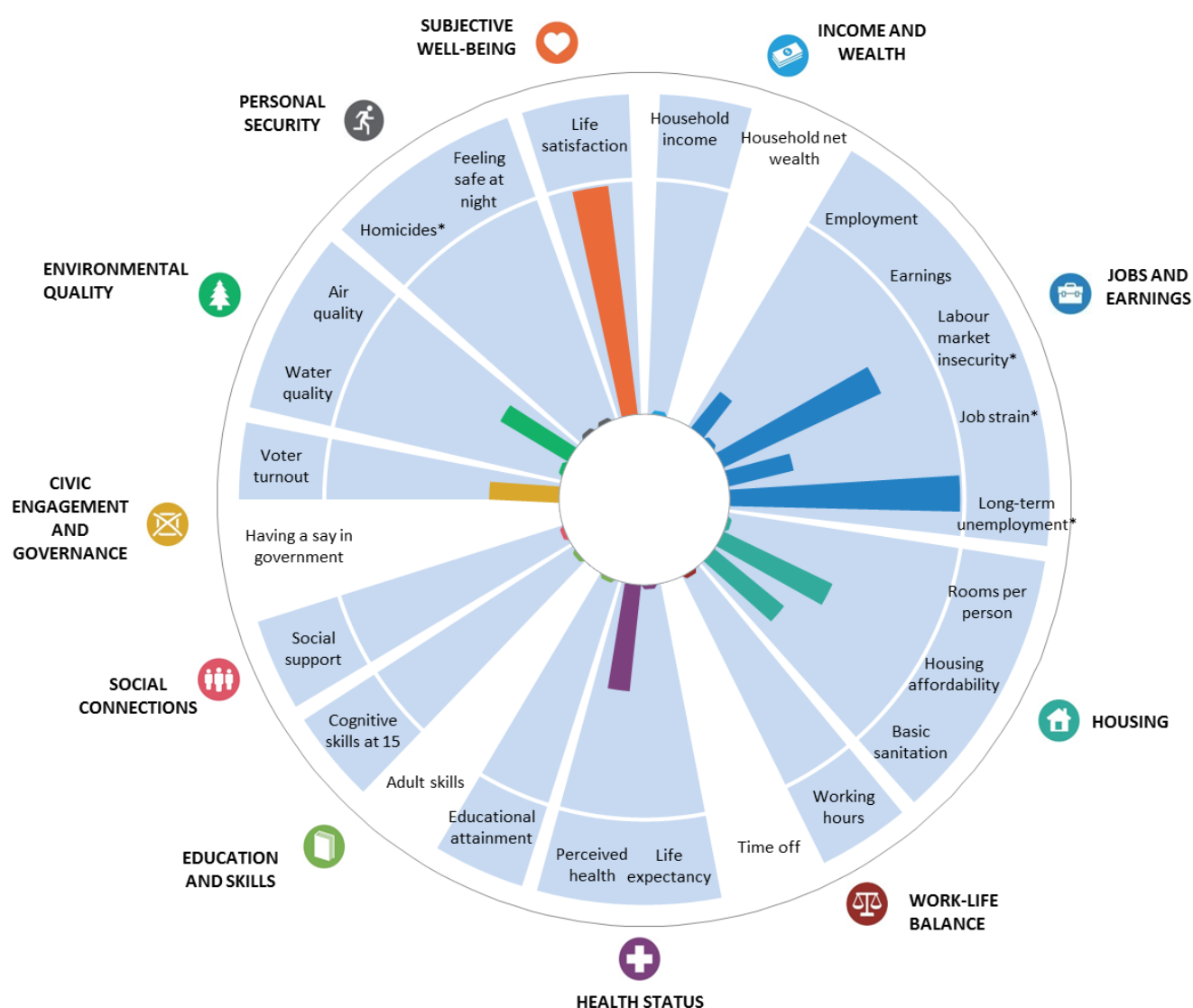
Note: This chart shows Mexico's relative strengths and weaknesses in well-being when compared with other OECD countries. For both positive and negative indicators (such as homicides, marked with an "*"), longer bars always indicate better outcomes (i.e. higher well-being), whereas shorter bars always indicate worse outcomes (i.e. lower well-being). If data are missing for any given indicator, the relevant segment of the circle is shaded in white.

Additional information, including the data used in this country note, can be found at:

www.oecd.org/statistics/Better-Life-Initiative-2017-country-notes-data.xlsx

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Change in Mexico's average well-being over the past 10 years

Dimension	Description	Change
Income and wealth	After a period of growth from 2005-08, household net adjusted disposable income fell sharply in 2009. It has recovered strongly since, with a cumulative gain of 11% over the decade, compared to 8% for the OECD average.	⬀
Jobs and earnings	While the employment rate has grown by 1 percentage point in the past decade, real earnings have seen little sustained improvement over the same period. Labour market insecurity rose sharply in 2009, with gradual signs of improvement since then but without full recovery. Long-term unemployment has meanwhile remained stable and low, unlike job strain which is also stable but still among the highest in the OECD.	⬀ ⬌ ⬂ ⬌ ⬌
Housing conditions	There has been an improvement in housing affordability in the past decade, with the proportion of household disposable income spent on housing falling from 24% in 2005 to 20.7% in 2015. The average number of rooms per person has remained relatively stable over the past decade.	⬀ ⬌
Work-life balance	In 2016, Mexico had the second-highest rate of employees working 50 hours or more per week, at almost 30%. It has seen little change in the past decade.	⬌
Health status	Life expectancy at birth has grown at a slower rate than the OECD average over the last decade, from 74 years in 2005 to 75 years in 2015.	⬀
Education and skills	The 10-year change in upper secondary educational attainment cannot be assessed, due to a recent break in the data. However, between 2014 and 2016, attainment rates in Mexico increased by 1.5 percentage points.	⬀
Social connections	Social support has fallen in Mexico over the past decade. While 88% of people reported having a friend or relative whom they could count on in 2005-07, by 2014-16 this share had dropped to 80%.	⬂
Civic engagement	Voter turnout increased by 4.5 percentage points between the 2006 and 2012 presidential elections.	⬀
Environmental quality	The average annual exposure to $PM_{2.5}$ air pollution fell by 7% between 2005 and 2013 despite a sharp rise in 2012. In line with the OECD average, satisfaction with local water quality has fallen in recent years, to its lowest level since 2005 (67%).	⬀ ⬂
Personal security	The rate of deaths due to assault has risen by almost two-thirds over the last 10 years, by far the largest increase in the OECD. The percentage of the population who report feeling safe at night has fallen accordingly to 46%, 11 percentage points lower than a decade ago.	⬂ ⬂
Subjective well-being	Having gradually improved up until 2013, life satisfaction in Mexico has now fallen, returning to the levels seen 10 years ago.	⬌

Note: For each indicator in every dimension: ⬀ refers to an improvement; ⬌ indicates little or no change; and ⬂ signals deterioration. This is based on a comparison of the starting year (2005 in most cases) and the latest available year (usually 2015 or 2016). The order of the arrows shown in column three corresponds to that of the indicators mentioned in column two.

Mexico's resources and risks for future well-being: Illustrative indicators

Natural capital

Indicator	Tier	Change	
Greenhouse gas emissions from domestic production	➊	⇔	2005-2013
CO_2 emissions from domestic consumption	➊	⇔	2001-2011
Exposure to $PM_{2.5}$ air pollution	➋	↗	2005-2013
Forest area	➊	↘	2005-2014
Renewable freshwater resources	➋	..	Long-term annual avg
Freshwater abstractions	❸	..	2014
Threatened birds	➋	..	Latest available
Threatened mammals	❸	..	Latest available
Threatened plants	➊	..	Latest available

Human capital

Indicator	Tier	Change	
Young adult educational attainment	❸	↗	2014-2016
Educational expectancy	❸	..	2015
Cognitive skills at age 15	❸	..	2015
Long-term unemployment	➊	⇔	2005-2016
Life expectancy at birth	❸	↗	2005-2015
Smoking prevalence	➊	↗	2006-2012
Obesity prevalence	❸	↘	2005-2016

No data available on adult skills.

Economic capital

Indicator	Tier	Change	
Gross fixed capital formation	➊	↘	2005-2015
Financial worth of total economy	..	↗	2005-2009

No data available on produced fixed assets, intellectual property assets, investment in R&D, household debt, household net wealth, financial worth of government and banking sector leverage.

Social capital

Indicator	Tier	Change	
Trust in national government	❸	↘	2005-2016
Voter turnout	❸	↗	2006-2012
Government stakeholder engagement	➊	..	2014

No data available on trust in others, trust in the police and volunteering through organisations.

➊	Top-performing OECD tier, latest available year
➋	Middle-performing OECD tier, latest available year
❸	Bottom-performing OECD tier, latest available year

↗	Improving over time
↘	Worsening over time
⇔	No change
..	No data available

HOW LARGE ARE WELL-BEING INEQUALITIES IN MEXICO?

What is inequality and how is it measured? Measuring inequality means trying to describe **how unevenly distributed** outcomes are in society. *How's Life? 2017* adopts several different approaches:

- Measures of "*vertical*" inequalities address how unequally outcomes are spread across all people in society – for example, by looking at the size of the gap between people at the bottom of the distribution and people at the top.

- Measures of "*horizontal*" inequalities focus on the gap between population groups defined by specific characteristics (such as men and women, young and old, people with higher and lower levels of education).

- Measures of "*deprivation*" report the share of people who live below a certain level of well-being (such as those who face income poverty or live in an overcrowded household).

Among OECD countries, Mexico records the largest inequalities in household income, with individuals in the top 20% earning 10 times more than those in the lowest 20%. High levels of **vertical inequality** are also found in earnings and health, while differences in PISA scores of 15-year-old students appear to be less pronounced than for the OECD on average.

A mixed picture emerges for the **gender divide** in well-being in Mexico. For example, women in Mexico are at a larger disadvantage than women in the OECD on average when it comes to employment, educational attainment, and time off (i.e. time devoted to leisure and personal care). By contrast, for earnings, cognitive skills at age 15, and social support, there are few differences between women and men on average in Mexico – which is not the case in all OECD countries.

Younger Mexicans are much more likely than **middle-aged** Mexicans to have attained higher levels of education – and this generational gap is more pronounced than in most OECD countries. Nevertheless, the younger generation tends to be disadvantaged in terms of income, wealth, jobs and earnings throughout all OECD countries. This is also true in Mexico, where there are comparatively large age-related gaps in income – although the earnings gap is smaller than in the OECD on average.

Compared to those with a **tertiary education**, individuals with **only a secondary level of education** are more disadvantaged than in the OECD on average in terms of earnings and social support in Mexico. However, education-related gaps in voter turnout, cognitive skills and unemployment are smaller than the OECD average gaps.

Well-being inequalities in Mexico

Legend:
- green = top third of OECD countries
- yellow = middle third of OECD countries
- red = bottom third of OECD countries
- white = data gaps
- grey = no measures

Indicator	Vertical inequality	Horizontal inequality by Gender (Women relative to men)	Horizontal inequality by Age (Young relative to middle-aged)	Horizontal inequality by Education (Secondary relative to tertiary)	Deprivation
Household income	red	—	red	—	red
Household net wealth	white	—	white	white	white
Earnings	red	green	green	red	—
Low pay	—	yellow	—	—	yellow
Employment	—	red	yellow	yellow	—
Unemployment	—	yellow	yellow	green	green
Housing affordability	—	—	—	—	green
Rooms per person	—	—	—	—	red
Life expectancy	red	—	—	—	—
Perceived health	—	white	white	white	white
Working hours	white	white	white	white	white
Time off	—	red	yellow	—	—
Educational attainment	—	red	green	—	red
Cognitive skills at 15	green	green	—	red	—
Adult skills	white	white	white	white	white
Time spent socialising	—	red	red	—	—
Social support	—	green	yellow	red	red
Voter turnout	—	yellow	green	green	red
Having a say in government	white	white	white	white	white
Air quality	—	—	—	—	yellow
Water quality	—	green	red	yellow	red
Homicides	—	green	—	—	red
Feeling safe at night	—	green	yellow	yellow	red
Life satisfaction	white	white	white	white	red
Negative affect balance	—	—	—	—	yellow

disadvantaged than in the OECD on average in terms of earnings and social support in Mexico. However, education-related gaps in voter turnout, cognitive skills and unemployment are smaller than the OECD average gaps.

In many aspects of well-being, Mexico has a comparatively high share of people suffering from **deprivations**, including low educational attainment (64%), low scores in PISA tests of cognitive skills (34%), dissatisfaction with water quality (33%), feeling unsafe at night (51%) and deaths due to assault (18 per 100 000 population).

HOW'S LIFE FOR MIGRANTS IN MEXICO?

Migrants (defined as people living in a different country from the one in which they were born) represent an important share of the population in most OECD countries. Capturing information about their well-being is critical for gaining a fuller picture of how life is going, and whether it is going equally well for all members of society.

Who are migrants in Mexico and the OECD?

Only 1% of people living in Mexico were born elsewhere, far below the OECD average (13%), and 50% of them are women (51% for the OECD average). Migrants in Mexico are more likely to be young than in the OECD on average (56% of them are aged 14 or below, as compared to 9% across the OECD), and they are slightly more likely to have a high educational attainment than a low or a middle level.

Share of migrants in the total population and selected characteristics
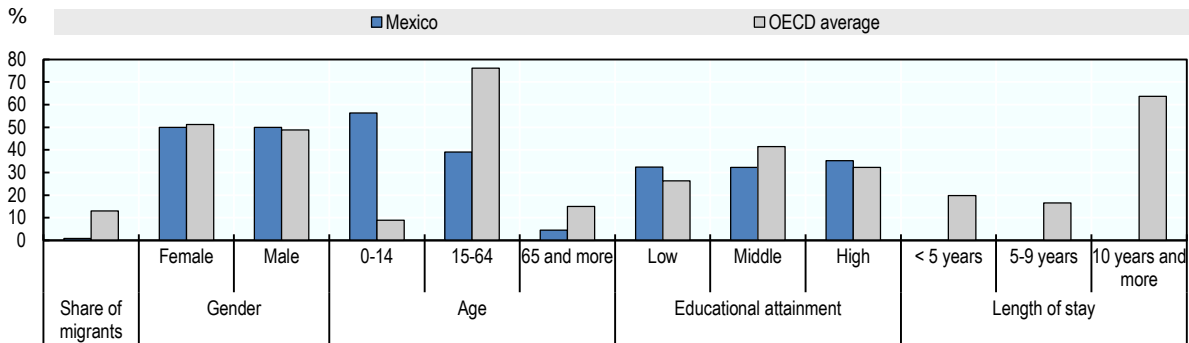

How is migrants' well-being in OECD countries?

While detailed information on migrants' well-being in Mexico is not available, in a majority of OECD countries migrants have a worse situation than the native-born population for 10 out of 12 selected well-being indicators. Migrants in at least 75% of OECD countries report lower outcomes than the native-born population for household income, housing conditions, life satisfaction, social support and PISA performance.

Trust in the political system is the only indicator where migrants report having a better situation than the native-born for a majority of OECD countries.

Relative outcomes for migrants and the native-born population for selected well-being outcomes

Share of OECD countries, %
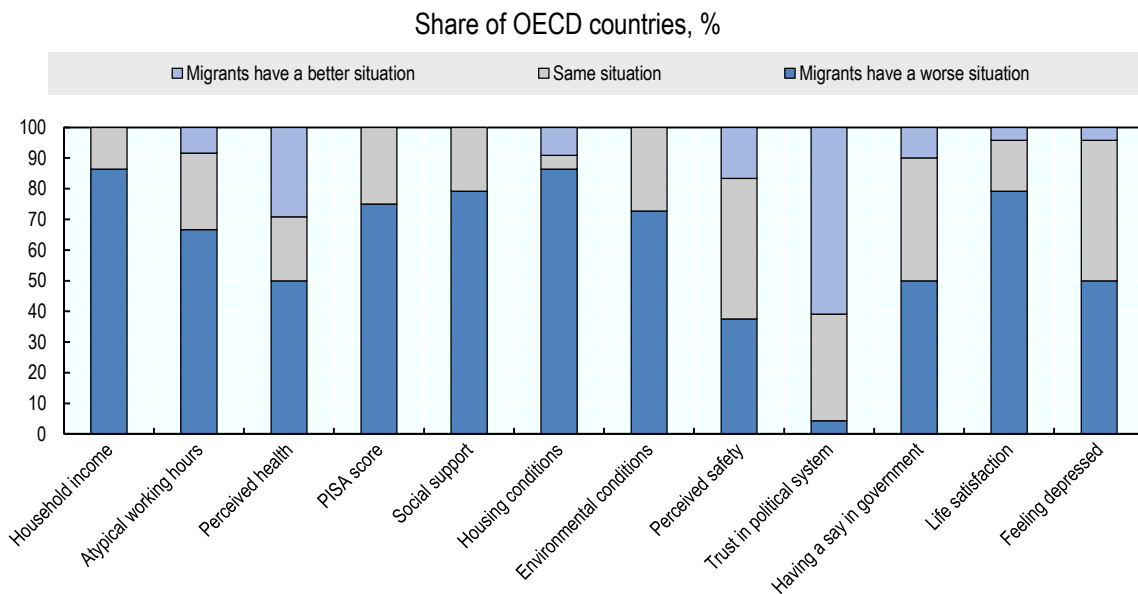
Note: Results are based on the analysis of the confidence intervals at 90%

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GOVERNANCE AND WELL-BEING IN MEXICO

Public institutions play an important role in well-being, both by guaranteeing that people's fundamental rights are protected, and by ensuring the provision of goods and services necessary for people to thrive and prosper. How people experience and engage with public institutions also matters: people's political voice, agency and representation are outcomes of value in their own right.

On average, 33% of the population in OECD member countries feel that they have a say in what their government does. In recent years, voter turnout has increased in Mexico, with 63% of eligible voters casting their ballot in 2012, compared to almost 59% in 2006. When asked about whether or not corruption is widespread across government, 83% of Mexicans answered "yes", which is higher than the OECD average of 56%. Since around 2006, the share of people in the OECD who report that they have confidence in their national government has fallen from 42% to 38%.

Voter turnout
Percentage of votes cast among the population registered to vote
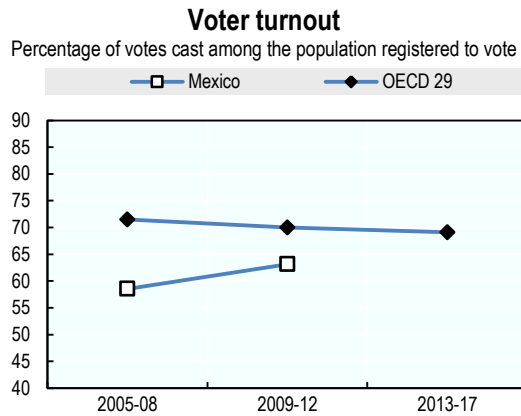
Note: Data refers to parliamentary elections. If more than one election took place over the time period indicated, the simple average voter turnout from all elections is shown. The OECD average sums elections that occurred over the time periods shown in 29 OECD countries.
Source: IDEA dataset

In the 22 European OECD countries where it can be assessed, satisfaction with democracy varies, depending on which aspect is considered. While Europeans tend to be reasonably satisfied with the way elections are held (7.7 on a 0-10 scale), they are relatively less satisfied with policies to reduce inequalities (4.3) or the existence of direct participation mechanisms at the local level (5.3). Europeans' satisfaction with public services varies according to whether people have used those services in the last year. For example, satisfaction with education is higher among those with direct recent experience (6.6 vs 6.2 on average), and this is also true of the health system (6.4 vs 6.2 on average). These data relate to 19 European countries only, and unfortunately no comparable data are available for Mexico.

OECD EU average satisfaction with different elements of democracy
Mean score on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction with elements of democracy, 2012
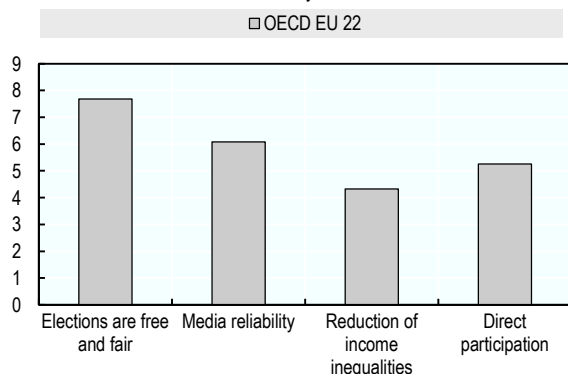
Source: OECD calculations based on wave 6 of the European Social Survey (ESS), special rotating module on citizens' valuations of different elements of democracy.

OECD EU average satisfaction with public services by direct experience
Mean score on a 0-10 scale, with higher scores indicating higher satisfaction with elements of democracy, 2013
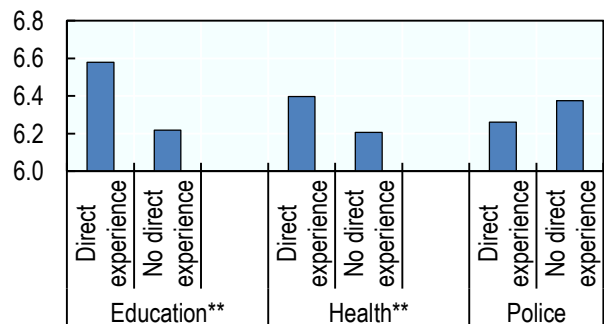
Note: ** Difference is statistically significant at 95%
Source: OECD calculations based on the EU Quality of Government (QoG) for 19 European OECD countries.

BETTER LIFE INDEX

The ***Better Life Index*** is an interactive web application that allows users to compare well-being across OECD countries and beyond on the basis of the set of well-being indicators used 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.


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, and how these preferences differ across countries and population groups.

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO PEOPLE IN MEXICO?

Since its launch in May 2011, the Better Life Index has attracted **over ten million visits from just about every country on the planet** and has received over **22 million page views**. To date, over 877,600 people in Mexico have visited the website making Mexico the 2nd country overall in traffic to the website. The top cities are Mexico City (26% of visits), Guadalajara, Monterrey, Toluca and Santiago de Queretaro.

The following country findings reflect the ratings voluntarily shared with the OECD by 7,313 website visitors in Mexico. Findings are only indicative and are not representative of the population at large. **For Mexican users of the Better Life Index, education, health and life satisfaction are the three most important topics** (shown below).[1] Up to date information, including a breakdown of participation in each country by gender and age can be found here: **www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/responses/#MEX**.

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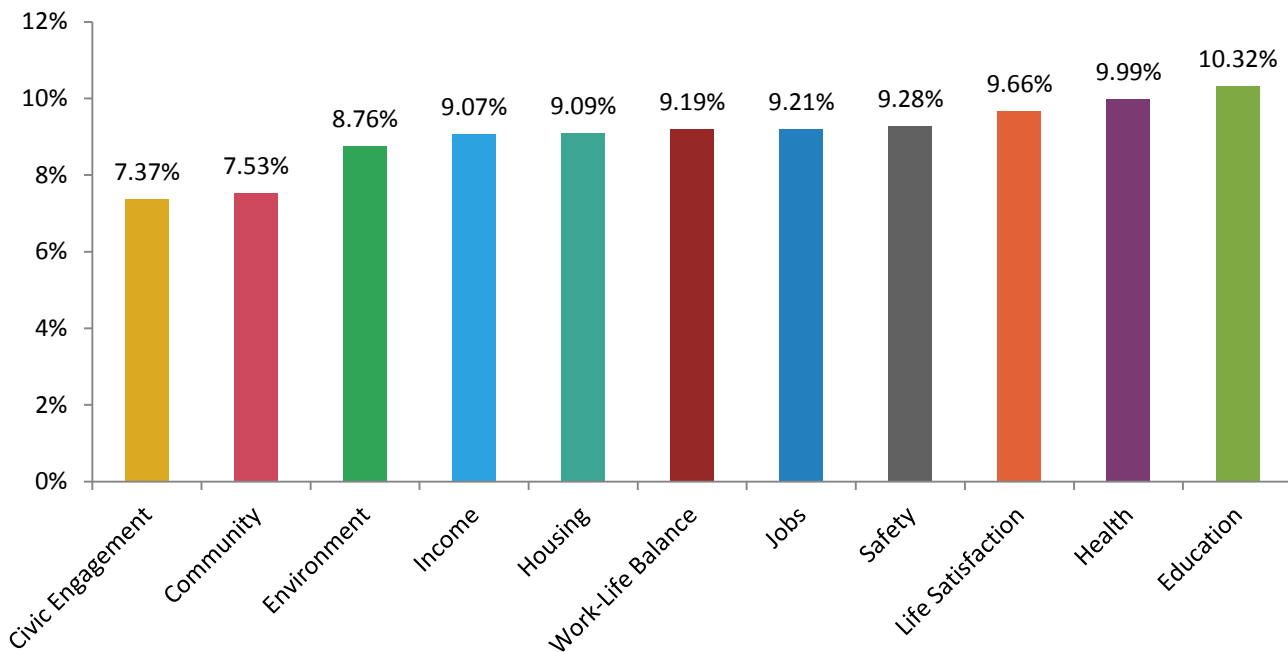
[1] User information for Mexico is based on shared indexes submitted between May 2011 and September 2017.

The **OECD Better Life Initiative**, launched in 2011, focuses on the aspects of life that matter the most 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 available to understand well-being levels, 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 note presents **selected findings for Mexico from the *How's Life?* 2017 report** (pages 1-6) and shows what **Mexican users of the Better Life Index** are telling us about their **well-being priorities** (page 7).

HOW'S LIFE?

How's Life?, published every two years, provides a comprehensive picture of well-being in OECD and selected partner countries by bringing together an internationally comparable set of well-being indicators. It considers eleven dimensions of current well-being 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. It also looks at four types of resources that help to sustain well-being over time: natural, human, economic and social capital.

The *How's Life? 2017* report presents the latest data on well-being in OECD and partner countries, including how lives have changed since 2005. It includes a special focus on inequalities, the well-being of migrants in OECD countries, and the issue of governance – particularly how people experience and engage with public institutions. To read more, visit: www.oecd.org/howslife.

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