

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HISTORY

For over fifty years, the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (OECD) has helped governments design better policies for better lives for their citizens. It provides a forum in which leaders and policy makers can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems, and produces high-quality internationally comparable statistics used to understand what drives economic, social and environmental change.

Ever since the OECD started out in 1961, GDP has been the main factor by which it has measured and understood economic and social progress. But it has failed to capture many of the factors that influence people's lives, such as security, leisure, income distribution and a clean environment.

Is life really getting better? How can we tell? What are the key ingredients to improving life – is it better education, environment, healthcare, housing, or working hours? Does progress mean the same thing to all people or in all countries and societies? A pioneer in this emerging field of research, [the OECD has been working for almost ten years](#) to identify the best way to [measure the progress of societies](#) – moving beyond GDP and examining the areas that impact everyday people's lives. Today, the fruit of this work is manifested in the OECD [Better Life Initiative](#).

BETTER LIFE INITIATIVE

The OECD was an important contributor to the work of the [Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress](#). Drawing upon the recommendations of the Commission, it has identified 11 dimensions as essential to well-being. A new report, entitled "How's Life?", to be released in October 2011, will explore these 11 topics in detail. The report will measure and compare the quality of people's lives in the areas of health, education, local environment, personal security, richness of community ties, and overall satisfaction with life, to name a few. The new [Compendium of OECD Well-Being Indicators](#) is a preview of this report.

YOUR BETTER LIFE INDEX

A key instrument of this Initiative, *Your Better Life Index* is reaching out to those most affected by this research: **you**. Your voice is critical in this debate on what matters most in the progress of our societies.

Your Better Life Index was designed as an [interactive tool](#) that allows you to see how countries perform according to the importance you give to each of 11 topics – like education, housing, environment, and so on – that contribute to well-being in OECD countries.

Your Better Life Index currently profiles the 34 OECD member countries across the 11 topics of well-being, and will eventually include the OECD's six partner countries (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Russia, and South Africa), representing the world's major economies. The Index contains an overall description of the quality of life in each country, followed by its performance across the 25 individual indicators that make up the 11 topics of well-being. Freely-accessible OECD reports and other sources of information are also provided to assist those who want to learn even more.

Your Better Life Index allows you to put different weights on each of the topics, and thus to decide for yourself what contributes most to well-being. It also helps show how prioritising specific issues of well-being affects the overall picture. By comparing your vision of a better life with the actual progress of your country, you can become a better-informed citizen and better impact the policymaking process. It is a pioneering, interactive tool combining OECD substance with modern technology in order to educate, promote dialogue and encourage consensus on the balance between societal and economic well-being.

YOUR FUTURE

Your Better Life Index will be maintained on an ongoing basis. We aim to provide updated data when available, add in new indicators representing the priorities that matter to you, and fine tune our research methodologies as this field of study evolves. We, as an organisation, will be listening closely to your feedback on this exciting project and are eager to learn what matters most to citizens worldwide.

Over the past 50 years, the OECD has developed a rich set of recommendations on policies that can best support economic growth. The task that we face today is to develop an equally rich set of policies to support societal progress. We hope you will join us in this mission to deliver *better policies for better lives*.

