

UNICEF  
Innocenti Research Centre

Report Card 7

Child poverty in perspective:

# An overview of child well-being in rich countries

**A comprehensive assessment of the lives  
and well-being of children and adolescents  
in the economically advanced nations**

For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY



**UNICEF**  
**Innocenti Research Centre**

*The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.*

## CHILD WELL-BEING IN RICH COUNTRIES: A SUMMARY TABLE

The chart below presents the findings of this *Report Card* in summary form. Countries are listed in order of their average rank for the six dimensions of child well-being that have been assessed.<sup>1</sup> A light blue background indicates a place in the top third of the table; mid-blue denotes the middle third and dark blue the bottom third.

		Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5	Dimension 6
Dimensions of child well-being	Average ranking position (for all 6 dimensions)	Material well-being	Health and safety	Educational well-being	Family and peer relationships	Behaviours and risks	Subjective well-being
Netherlands	4.2	10	2	6	3	3	1
Sweden	5.0	1	1	5	15	1	7
Denmark	7.2	4	4	8	9	6	12
Finland	7.5	3	3	4	17	7	11
Spain	8.0	12	6	15	8	5	2
Switzerland	8.3	5	9	14	4	12	6
Norway	8.7	2	8	11	10	13	8
Italy	10.0	14	5	20	1	10	10
Ireland	10.2	19	19	7	7	4	5
Belgium	10.7	7	16	1	5	19	16
Germany	11.2	13	11	10	13	11	9
Canada	11.8	6	13	2	18	17	15
Greece	11.8	15	18	16	11	8	3
Poland	12.3	21	15	3	14	2	19
Czech Republic	12.5	11	10	9	19	9	17
France	13.0	9	7	18	12	14	18
Portugal	13.7	16	14	21	2	15	14
Austria	13.8	8	20	19	16	16	4
Hungary	14.5	20	17	13	6	18	13
United States	18.0	17	21	12	20	20	–
United Kingdom	18.2	18	12	17	21	21	20

OECD countries with insufficient data to be included in the overview: Australia, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, South Korea, Turkey.

This *Report Card* provides a comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and young people in 21 nations of the industrialized world. Its purpose is to encourage monitoring, to permit comparison, and to stimulate the discussion and development of policies to improve children's lives.

The report represents a significant advance on previous titles in this series which have used income poverty as a proxy measure for overall child well-being in the OECD countries. Specifically, it attempts to measure and compare

child well-being under six different headings or dimensions: material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks, and young people's own subjective sense of well-being. In all, it draws upon 40 separate indicators relevant to children's lives and children's rights.

Although heavily dependent on the available data, this assessment is also guided by a concept of child well-being that is in turn guided by the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

## *Main findings*

- *The Netherlands heads the table of overall child well-being, ranking in the top 10 for all six dimensions of child well-being covered by this report.*
- *European countries dominate the top half of the overall league table, with Northern European countries claiming the top four places.*
- *All countries have weaknesses that need to be addressed and no country features in the top third of the rankings for all six dimensions of child well-being (though the Netherlands and Sweden come close to doing so).*
- *The United Kingdom and the United States find themselves in the bottom third of the rankings for five of the six dimensions reviewed.*
- *No single dimension of well-being stands as a reliable proxy for child well-being as a whole and several OECD countries find themselves with widely differing rankings for different dimensions of child well-being.*
- *There is no obvious relationship between levels of child well-being and GDP per capita. The Czech Republic, for example, achieves a higher overall rank for child well-being than several much wealthier countries including France, Austria, the United States and the United Kingdom.*
- *Overall, approximately 80% of children in the countries under review are living with both parents. But the range is considerable – from more than 90% in Greece and Italy to less than 70% in the United Kingdom and 60% in the United States. Results: In Chart 4.4.1 among the OECD countries the proportion reporting living in lone parent family structures varies from 7.0 per cent in Italy to 21 per cent in the United States. The US has significantly higher proportions of this type of family structure than all other OECD nations.*

**Note:** This document contains only 3 pages from the full report. For a complete copy of the report please visit <http://www.unicef-icdc.org/presscentre/indexNewsroom.html> .