

# QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPE – LEISURE

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**Abstract:** *The paper presents indicators regarding the quality of life with a focus on leisure. The main activities analysed for recreation were: cinema, live performances (theatre, concerts, and ballet), cultural sites (historical monuments, museums, art galleries or archaeological sites, and sports events. The main causes of non-participation in one or more of the activities chosen for leisure are also presented. Those possible causes were financial reasons, no interest, no time, no such activities in the neighbourhood and other reasons. The overall life satisfaction is also presented, by level of satisfaction, as well as by level of education.*

**Key words:** *quality of life, satisfaction, leisure, life as a whole.*

## 1. Introduction

According to EUROSTAT, “Quality of life indicators” is a Eurostat online publication which provides recent statistics on the quality of life in the European Union (EU). The publication “Population and social conditions, Quality of life Online publications Population and social conditions - statistical publications presents a detailed analysis of 8+1 dimensions which can be measured statistically to represent the different complementary aspects of the quality of life, complementing the indicator traditionally used as the measure of economic and social development, the gross domestic product (GDP). Eight of these dimensions concern the functional capabilities citizens should have available to effectively pursue their self-defined well-being, according to their own values and priorities. The last dimension refers to the personal achievement of life satisfaction and well-being. For each quality of life dimension, a set of selected relevant statistical indicators is presented and analysed. Trends over time and differences between countries or demographic groups are discussed. In each case the emphasis has been on highlighting interesting findings, rather than providing a complete and exhaustive presentation of all available statistical data”.

From the multitude of indicators related to the quality of life, the present paper aims to analyse leisure, taking into account the importance of a balanced life that, in addition to professional and family activity, also includes recreational, artistic, social and sports activities with a major impact on the well-being of the individual

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## 2. Methodology

Official EUROSTAT information was used: databases, Year Book 2023, Quality of life indicators, Population and social conditions (statistical publications).

## 3. Results

The overall life satisfaction by level of satisfaction and level of education was analysed in the European Union 27 countries from 2020, meaning, how people perceive life as a whole in percentages.

The results in the European Union 27 countries during the analysed period are presented in Table 1:

*Overall life satisfaction in Europe*

Table 1

Years	2013	2018	2021	2022	2023
Satisfaction level [%]					
High	21.2	24.4	20	20.2	21.8
Medium	57.7	58.7	60	62.1	62.9
Low	21.1	16.9	20	17.7	15.4

It can be observed that in the European Union most people consider that the general standard of living, life as a whole, has an average level, with an increase towards the end of the analysed period 2022 to 62.9%. The highest share of people who consider the level of life satisfaction to be high was 24.4% in 2018, falling to 21.8% in 2022. As for the share of people who consider the level of satisfaction to be low, it fluctuated during the analysed period, the highest share being in 2013, i.e. 21.1%, and the lowest in 2022, 15.4%, which represents an improvement of this perception.

In Romania, during the same period of time, the situation was as presented in Table 2:

*Overall life satisfaction in Romania*

Table 2

Years	2013	2018	2021	2022	2023
Satisfaction level [%]					
High	20.4	25.6	31.2	29.8	29.1
Medium	63.0	59.3	59.6	60.9	64.2
Low	16.6	15.2	9.2	9.3	6.6

In Romania, the evolution of the perception of life satisfaction as a whole is approximately similar to that in the European Union, the largest share also being held by the average level, which, in the last year analysed, 2022, exceeds the European average, i.e. 64.2%. A gratifying aspect can be seen in the negative perception of life satisfaction, which decreases year after year, from 16.6% in 2013 to 6.6% in 2022.

Taking into account the level of education of people, there is a substantial difference in terms of the assessment of the level of life satisfaction as a whole.

The situation by levels of education at the level of the European Union in 2023 is presented in Table 3:

*Satisfaction by education level in Europe*

Table 3

Education level	Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	Tertiary education
<b>Satisfaction level [%]</b>			
High	17.5	21.3	26.5
Medium	60.1	63.7	64.2
Low	22.4	15.0	9.3

By levels of education, there are significant differences in perception, being obvious that graduates with higher education have a perception directed more towards positive aspects in terms of appreciation of life satisfaction. The higher the level of education, the more the level of perception tends towards medium or high satisfaction with life as a whole. A possible explanation could be their access to better-paid jobs as a result of their higher qualification and, as such, easier access to artistic, cultural, sports, educational and other activities, with positive effects on satisfaction and well-being.

Table 4 shows the situation of the level of satisfaction with life as a whole, taking into account the level of education of the population in Romania, in the same year 2023.

*Satisfaction by education level in Romania*

Table 4

Education level	Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	Tertiary education
<b>Satisfaction level [%]</b>			
High	20.2	28.0	50.4
Medium	66.3	67.2	48.3
Low	13.5	4.7	1.3

By education levels, in Romania the difference in perception is even more evident, the vast majority of people with higher education being satisfied (medium and high) in 2022 the share being 50.4%. Only small fractions, 1.3%, offer a low level of satisfaction with life as a whole. On the other hand, people with less than that primary, primary and lower secondary education consider 13.5% to have a low standard of living and only 20.2% to have a high level of life satisfaction as a whole.

Leisure activities have an important role in assessing life satisfaction as a whole and at the same time, they are an important factor in increasing the quality of life.

Several leisure activities that positively influence the quality of life were analysed, as well as the probable causes why some people choose not to access them.

The activities analysed were: going to the cinema, live performance (theatre, concerts,

and ballet), cultural sites (historical monuments, museums, art galleries or archaeological sites) and sports events.

The main reasons why people did not participate in one or the other of these activities were: financial reasons, no interest, no time, no such activities in the neighbourhood, and other reasons.

Across the European Union, 27 countries, in 2022, data updated on 25.04.2024 on each type of activity of the five previously presented, the situation is as follows:

*Cinema:* The countries with the highest non-participation for financial reasons were: Greece 31.8%, Spain 31.5% and Lithuania 31.7%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to financial reasons were: Norway 6.1%, Finland 6.3%, Malta 7.2% and Croatia 9.3%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to lack of interest were: Norway 50.8%, Greece 56.2%, Malta 50.7%, the Netherlands 56.1% and Austria 55.3%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to lack of interest were: Lithuania 14.5%, Bulgaria 19.7% and Spain 21.5%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to lack of time were: Luxembourg 17.8%, Poland 12.9%, Cyprus 9.4% and Slovakia 9.1%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to lack of time were: Malta 1.6%, Ireland 2.4%, Finland 2.1% and Latvia 3.1%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood were: Romania 28.9%, Latvia 20.3% and Estonia 15.3%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood were: Cyprus 1.3%, Luxembourg 1.4% and Malta 0.6%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: Croatia 60.2% and Montenegro 60.1%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: the Netherlands 18% and Greece 6.8%.

*Live performance (theatre, concerts, and ballet):*

The countries with the highest non-participation for financial reasons were: Greece 33.5%, Spain 30.3%, Latvia 30.7% and Lithuania 31.7%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to financial reasons were: Norway 7.81%, Finland 7.1%, Malta 7.1% and Croatia 9.1%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to lack of interest were: Malta 52.2%, the Netherlands 54.0% and Austria 52.8%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to lack of interest were: Lithuania 11.15%, Romania 22.9% and Latvia 23.0%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to lack of time were: Luxembourg 12.9%, Poland 11.7%, Cyprus 13.5%, Romania 13.1% and Hungary 10.6%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to lack of time were: Malta 3.3%, Ireland and Denmark, both countries with 2.5%, and Finland 1.9%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood were: Romania 25.2%, Bulgaria 11.4% and Estonia 10.3%. The

countries with the lowest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood were: Belgium 0.7%, Luxembourg 1.2% and Malta 0.6%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: Croatia 61.9%, Luxembourg 51.6% and Montenegro 59.9%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: the Netherlands 17.8% and Greece 5.7%.

*Cultural sites (historical monuments, museums, art galleries or archaeological sites):*

The countries with the highest non-participation for financial reasons were: Hungary 17.2%, Spain 17.4% and Latvia 14.1%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to financial reasons were: Norway 4.6%, Finland 2.7%, Malta 4.2% and Sweden 5.5%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to lack of interest were: Malta 53.6%, Cyprus 52.1% and Greece 50.2%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to lack of interest were: Bulgaria 19.5%, Estonia 22.1% and Latvia 24.1%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to lack of time were: Luxembourg 16.1%, Poland 16.1%, Romania 15.3% and Croatia 10.8%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to lack of time were: Malta 3.8%, Ireland 3.15%, and Denmark 4.5%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood were: Romania 12.9% and Norway 11.4%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood were: Belgium 1.4%, Cyprus 0.5% and Malta 0.3%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: Estonia 58.8%, Lithuania 56.1%, Slovakia 57.4% and Finland 55.3%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: Belgium 23.9%, Luxembourg 26.0% and Greece 26.8%.

*Sports events:*

The countries with the highest non-participation for financial reasons were: Hungary 8.6%, Spain 13.6%, Luxembourg 8.2%, Greece 7.3% and Ireland 7.3%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to financial reasons were: Croatia 1.3%, Estonia 1.9%, Austria 0.8% and Poland 2.1%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to the lack of interest were: Cyprus 58.1%, Greece 51.7%, Belgium 62.3% and France 50.2%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to lack of interest were: Bulgaria 21.0%, Estonia 25.6% and Czechia 15.8%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to the lack of time were: Luxembourg 13.4%, Poland 6.9%, the Czech Republic 16.0% and Slovenia 6.3%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to the lack of time were: Malta 2.0%, Finland 1.9%, Latvia 2.2% and Lithuania 2.4%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood were: the Czech Republic 62.4% and Finland 57%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to the lack of such activities in the neighbourhood

were: Belgium 0.9%, Cyprus 0.1%, Croatia 0.8%, and Estonia and Ireland, both with 1.5%.

The countries with the highest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: Sweden 34.9%, Italy 43.7%, Bulgaria 37.7%, Ireland 37.1% and Finland 33.4%. The countries with the lowest non-participation due to other unspecified factors were: Hungary 8.5%, Cyprus 10.0%, Croatia 17.8% and Greece 18.7%.

#### 4. Conclusions

According to the Quality of life indicator –leisure publication (data extracted in May 2024) “Data from 2022 suggest that Europeans are rather satisfied with their amount of leisure time, and this has not changed since 2018 when this aspect was last surveyed.

- Men and women rate their satisfaction with their amount of leisure time similarly, while older and younger people, as well as those with a lower level of education are more satisfied.
- Adults living in households with dependent children are less satisfied, while the satisfaction does not differ much between people living in urban and rural areas. One reason why people can be dissatisfied is not having time for activities they would like to do in their leisure time. For reasons of data availability in this article, only one such activity is analysed: reading books.
- On average, a bit more than one in five Europeans who did not read any books declared lack of time as the main reason in 2022.
- This varied significantly by country (ranging between 35.2 % in Romania to 15. 5% in Portugal) as well as between sexes and age groups (with women between 25 and 54 much more likely to declare not having enough time for reading books than men at any age)”.

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