

8. Subjective well-being¹

The subjective well-being indicators are stable or slightly improving compared to the 2022 values. The levels recovered those reached in 2019, which had declined clearly following the pandemic emergency. This has occurred particularly in leisure time satisfaction. In 2023, 68.2% of people say they are very or quite satisfied with their leisure time.

The percentage of people who rate their satisfaction with life overall between 8 and 10 reached its highest value in the last year (46.6%), up by more than 3 points compared to 2019 (43.2%). The assessment of future prospects is slightly better than it was in 2022. The percentage of those who think that their life will improve in the next five years (30.3%), returns to 2019 levels, although it remains lower than the proportion registered in 2021 (31.9%), when expectations of a positive evolution of the health crisis had led people to show a more optimistic attitude towards the future. On the other side, the percentage of those who believe that their personal situation will get worse (12.1%) decreases compared to 2022, although it is still almost 2 percentage points above the minimum reached in 2021.

Table 1. Subjective well-being indicators: value for the latest available year and percentage changes compared with the previous year and 2019

INDICATORS	Year	Value	Unit of measurement	Polarity	Percentage changes	
					compared with previous year	compared with 2019
Life satisfaction	2023	46.6	%	+		
Leisure time satisfaction	2023	68.2	%	+		
Positive judgement of future perspectives	2023	30.3	%	+		
Negative judgement of future perspectives	2023	12.1	%	-		

Source: Istat, Bes Indicators

Note: the green colour indicates improvement, red worsening and grey stability, taking into account the polarity of the indicator. The indicators have positive polarity if the increase in their value shows an improvement in well-being, negative polarity if the increase in their value shows a deterioration in well-being. For variations within $\pm 1\%$ the indicators are considered stable in the reference period.

The national average value of each indicator is the result of different situations across the territory. In Figure 1, for each indicator, the distance of each region or autonomous province from the national value is compared. This brings out a detailed picture. In the northern regions, in general, it is possible to observe values higher than the national average for satisfaction indicators, but not for the indicators on future prospects.

The percentage of people who are very satisfied with life for most regions does not differ much from the national average, however it shows some extreme values. On the positive side, the autonomous province of Bolzano/Bozen reaches 63.3% of very satisfied people, a value more than a third higher than the national average; Campania, on the other hand, is at the opposite side, with 38.7%.

Furthermore, northern regions register values of satisfaction with leisure time above national values. In Bolzano/Bozen, 80.3% of citizens are very or quite satisfied, while Emilia Romagna (67.2%) is the only northern region with a level lower than the Italian average. Central regions show, in general, values close to the national ones for the satisfaction indicators. Umbria stands out, with values worse than the average on all indicators and, in particular, for the share of people who have a negative judgement on the future, which,

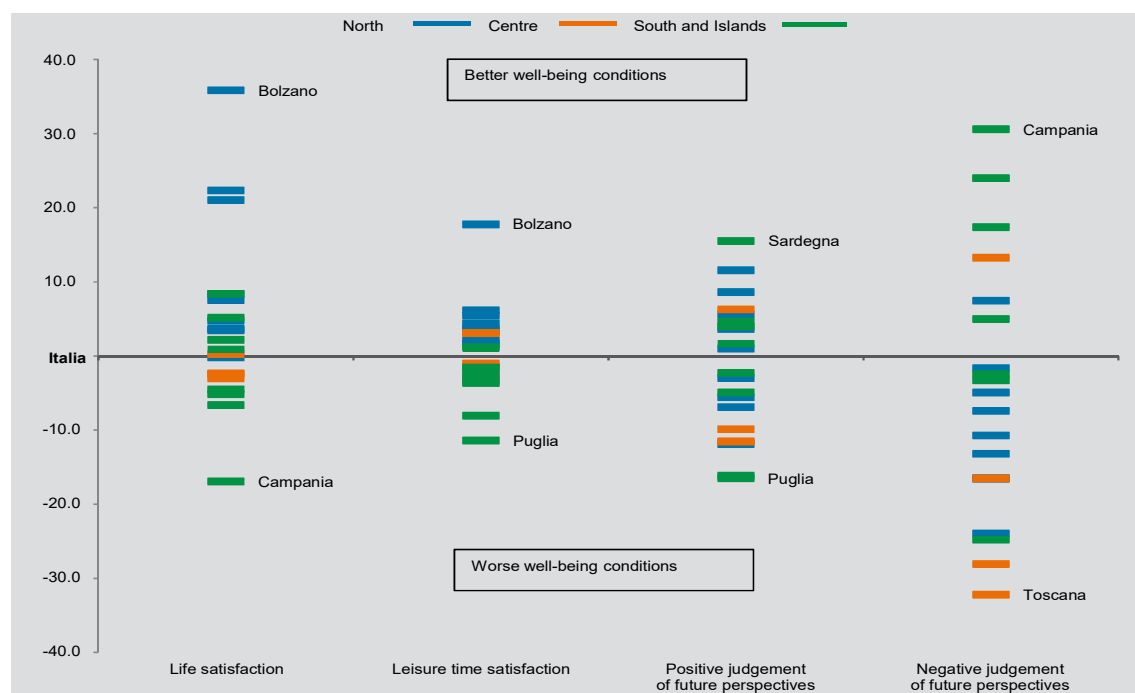
¹ This Chapter was edited by Paola Conigliaro. The box “A measure of eudaimonia” was edited by Paola Conigliaro and Alessandra Tinto.

together with that of Toscana, is more than 3 percentage points higher if compared to the Italian average. The regions in the South and Islands, albeit with some exceptions, are often placed in the lower part of the ranking, especially for what concerns the two satisfaction indicators. For the exceptions, the percentage of people satisfied with leisure time in Abruzzo and Calabria, for example, is above average, while the lowest value is recorded in Puglia, with 60.4% of people very or quite satisfied.

For what concerns the judgement on future prospects, the regions rank differently than for satisfaction indicators. In many regions in the South and Islands, it is possible to observe more frequently an optimistic perception of future prospects, while it is less frequent a perspective of worsening. Sardegna stands out with 35% of optimists (about 15% more than the Italian value), while the smallest share of pessimists belongs to Campania (8.4%, a value about 30% better compared to the Italian average), Sardegna and Calabria (9.2%). Puglia and Sicilia are on the contrary the regions with the lowest percentage of people who believe that their life will improve (just over 25% of optimists). In the North, in the province of Bolzano/Bozen, which as mentioned is characterised by the highest proportions of people satisfied with their lives, only 26.7% of people think that their situation will improve (3.6 p.p. less if compared to the national average) and a greater share of people (1.3 p.p. more than the Italy value) that think it will get worse.

The most critical situation can be found in Puglia and Sicilia where worse percentages than the average values are recorded for all four indicators. The shares of those satisfied with leisure time (60.4% in Puglia and 62.7% in Sicilia) and of people who believe their personal situation will improve (around 25% in both regions) are lower, and slightly lower is the percentage of those who are very satisfied with life (around 44% in both regions).

Figure 1. Subjective well-being indicators: percentage differences between regional values and the Italian value. Year 2023. Italy = 0



Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life

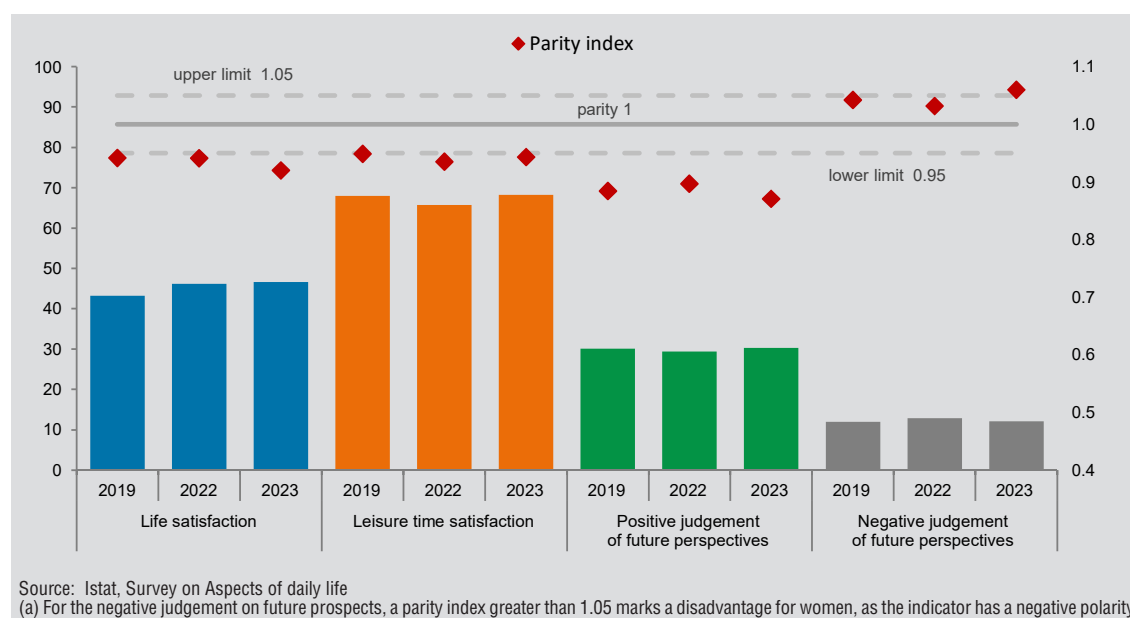
Note: The values represented on the graph are calculated as $100 \times (V_{reg} - Vita) / Vita$, where V_{reg} is the value of a region and $Vita$ is the value for Italy. The calculation shall take into account the polarity of the indicator. Values greater than zero indicate a better state of well-being than the average Italy; on the other side, values lower than zero indicate a worse condition. For greater usability of the Figure, please visit <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/296050> (in Italian).

Women's disadvantage in life satisfaction is widening

Life satisfaction values are, also in 2023, higher among men than among women, with a gap that has been increasing in recent years. The difference, which in 2019 was 2.6 percentage points, reaches 3.9 points in 2023, with 48.7% of men declaring themselves very satisfied compared to 44.8% of women (Figure 2). The parity index², obtained by calculating the ratio between the indicator of the female population and the indicator of the male population, stands at 0.92.

The increase in the percentage of people who are very or quite satisfied with their leisure time concerned both men and women, reaching 70.2% and 66.2% respectively, with a gender gap that remains almost unchanged (parity index 0.94).

Figure 2. Subjective well-being indicators and parity index (right axis). Years 2019, 2022 and 2023. Per 100 people aged 14 and over (a)



The percentage of people who look to the future with optimism is also higher among men: in 2023, 28.3% of women believe that they will improve their situation, compared to 32.5% of men (parity index 0.87). Therefore, the differences recorded in previous years remain unchanged. The percentage of pessimists is stable, with women at 12.4% and men at 11.7%. Through a deep analysis of gender differences with a focus on future, women find themselves more often than men in a situation of uncertainty (the answer “don’t know” is chosen by the 28.0% and 24.1% respectively). 30.4% of people aged 14 and over, without particular differences between males and females, believe that life “will remain the same”.

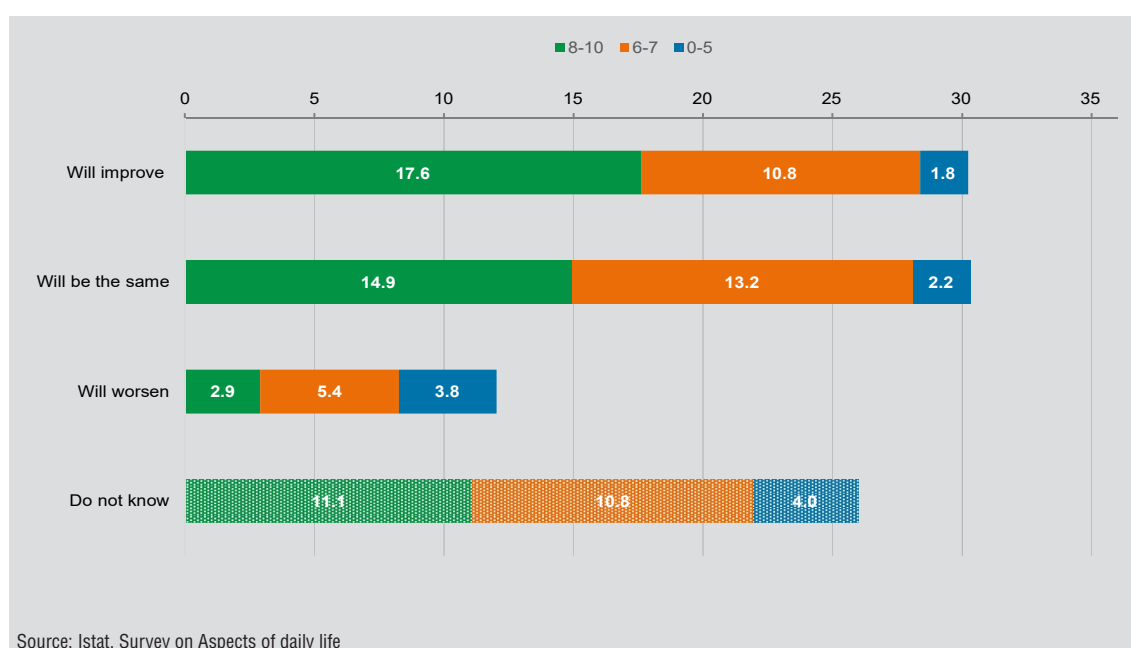
Believing that your life will remain the same has different consequences in terms of well-being, depending on whether you evaluate your current life as very, quite or not at all satisfactory. A combined reading of the two indicators shows how the majority of the

² The index has a value of 1 in conditions of perfect parity, values higher than 1 if the value expressed by women is higher than that of men, and, on the other side, values lower than 1, when men register a higher value. With values between 0.95 and 1.05 it is possible to assume that there is a gender balance. Also for this index the type of inequality must be evaluated taking into account the polarity of the indicators.

30.4% of the population who believe that their life will remain the same declare themselves very or quite satisfied with life (they are 14.9% and 13.2%, respectively, of total people). On the other hand, 2.2% of the population believes that their situation will remain the same and is at the same time little or not at all satisfied with life (Figure 3). A minor, but not less important, part of the population (3.8%) is not satisfied with their life, and at the same time thinks that the situation will worsen in the next five years.

Optimism, defined as a general expectation that good things will happen, is known in the literature to be positively connected with psychological and physical well-being and longevity. Optimists tend to direct their attention to the positive aspects and minimise the negative ones. The different combinations of life satisfaction indicators with those of vision for the future show that this relationship is complex and articulated, and often inverse. Those who express high levels of satisfaction with life probably already have an “optimistic” vision. Not imagining improvements for the future can in many of these cases be an acknowledgement of one’s already very positive condition, rather than a mistrust in the future.

Figure 3. Vision of life in the next five years of people aged 14 and over by level of life satisfaction. Year 2023.
Percentage values



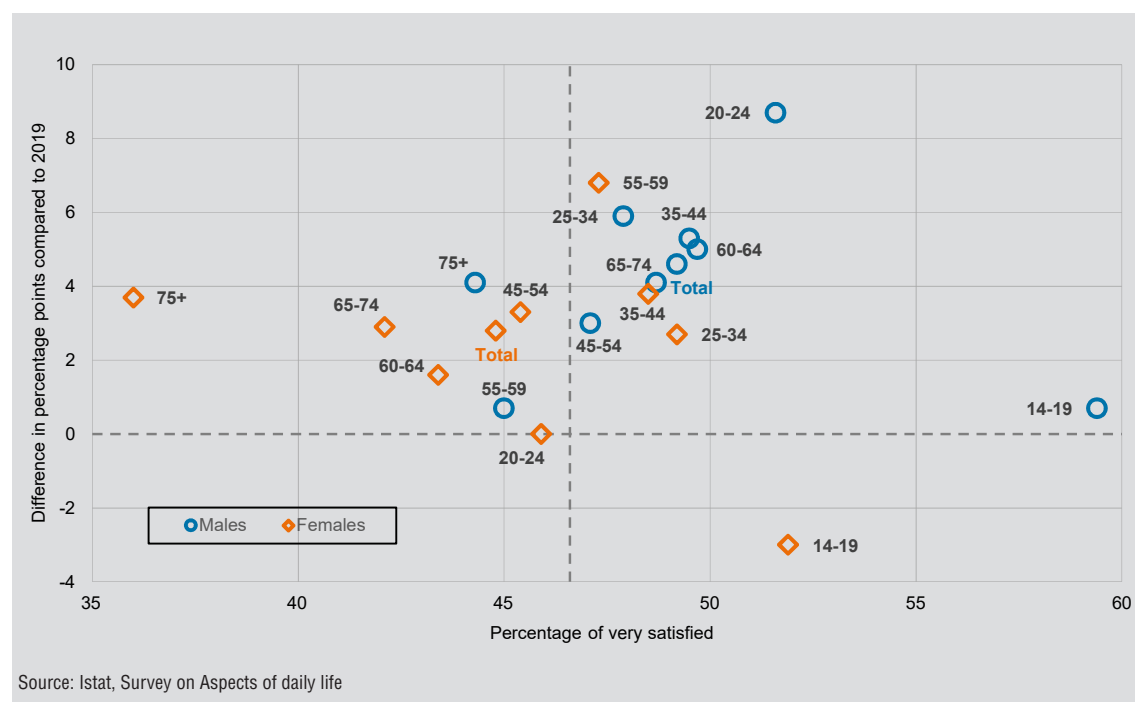
Satisfaction with life remains high among young people, but shows lower values among young women

In 2023, levels of life satisfaction remain significantly higher among young people (14-19 year olds). However, the percentage of very satisfied is different between boys (59.4%) and girls (51.9%), with a parity index of 0.87. The gap has increased compared to the previous year due to the marked decrease in the share of young women very satisfied with life (-4.5 percentage points), while the percentage is unchanged comparing to 2022 among men in

the same age. The gap increased also for people in the age group 20-24, in which satisfied young men record the greatest increase (+5.6 percentage points), while young women show a decrease by 1.9 percentage points. There is also a clear gender difference among people aged 60 and over. In 2023, 49.7% of men aged 60-64 are satisfied with life (4.1 percentage points more than in 2022), while women stand at 43.4%. People between 55 and 59 years of age, however, are the only group in which there is a decrease in satisfaction with life for men (-2.7 percentage points) compared to an increase for women (+4.3).

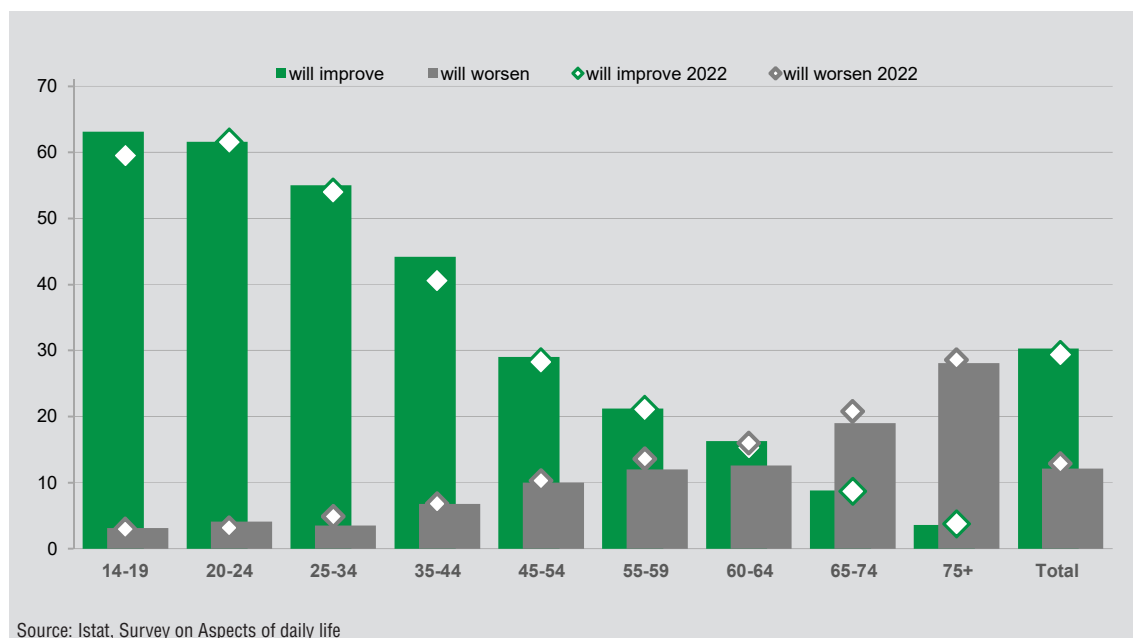
In terms of variation compared to the period before the pandemic, boys between 14 and 19 in 2023 are slightly above the levels recorded in 2019 for the same age group, while girls lose around 3 points, being the only group with a decrease compared to 2019 (Figure 4). Men show a lower than average percentage of very satisfied only in the 55-59 age group (45%) and among those over 75 (44.3%). For every group there was an improvement compared to 2019 which reaches the maximum (+8.7 points) among young people aged 20-24. Young women in the age group 20-24 not only have a level of satisfaction slightly lower than average (45.9%), but they remain at the same levels recorded in 2019, turning a gender gap that was an advantage (parity index 1.07) in a difference that became a disadvantage (0.89).

Figure 4. Life satisfaction among people aged 14 and over by age group and gender. Year 2023. Percentage values and difference in percentage points compared to 2019



Also with regard to their future prospects, young people keep a more positive view of life, with over 60% of those aged between 14 and 24 believing that their life will improve in the next 5 years (Figure 5). The percentage decreases with age, with the lowest level among those over 75 who rarely see prospects for improvement, also showing the highest percentage of pessimists (28.1%). Overall, from age 45 and over the main response (over a third) is that life will remain the same.

Figure 5. People aged 14 and over who believe that their life will improve or worsen in the next 5 years, by age group. Years 2022 and 2023. Percentage values



The very young have not yet fully recovered pre-pandemic levels of satisfaction with leisure time

Satisfaction with leisure time among very young people stands at 80.7%, but despite the good level it has not yet returned to the 2019 values (84.4%). 78.6% of girls between 14 and 19 are quite or very satisfied, still 5.5 percentage points below the 2019 level. The percentage is 82.6% among boys of the same age, -2.1 percentage points compared to the 2019 level.

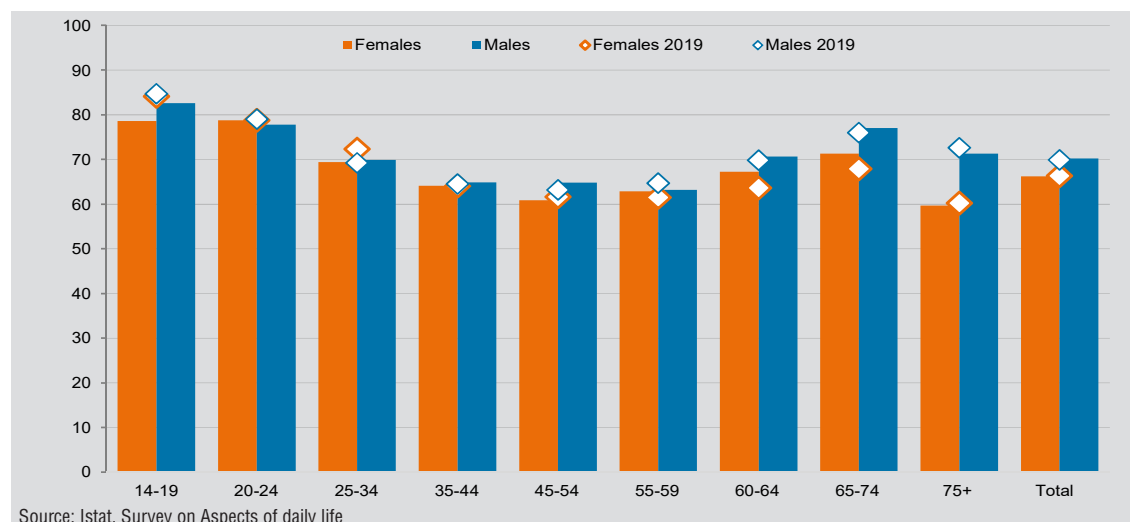
The indicator, observed by age group, presents a U-shaped trend, with higher shares of satisfied with leisure time among young and old people, and lower levels among people aged between 35 and 59. Between the ages of 65 and 74, 74.1% of people are satisfied. The lowest level is instead among those aged between 45 and 54 (62.9%) and in this age group only 60.9% of women are satisfied (-3.9 percentage points compared to men in the same age group). In this period of life there are more people who do not have leisure time, even if they want, due to work commitments and/or family burdens.

In general, the percentage of people satisfied with leisure time is lower among women than among men, but if in some age groups the gap is close to zero, in others it is quite marked (Figure 6). The greatest differences between genders, without considering people aged 75 and over who show a difference of 11.6 points, are recorded among those aged between 65 and 74 (-5.7 points) and among the very young (-4 points).

8. Subjective well-being

189

Figure 6. People aged 14 and over who are very or quite satisfied with leisure time by age group and gender. Years 2019 and 2023. Percentage values

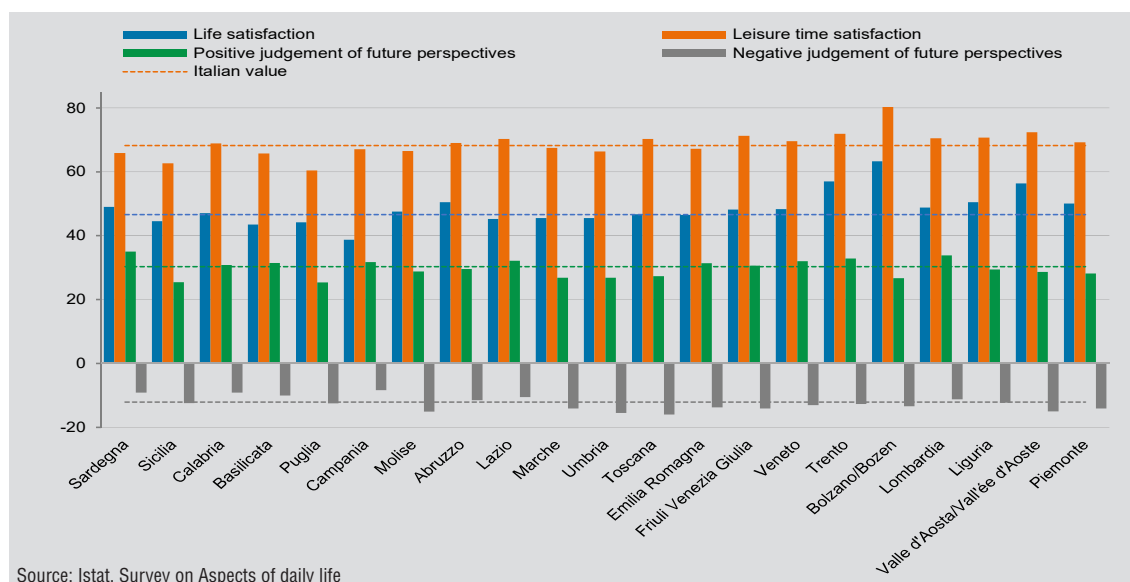


Different trends at regional level

The profiles of subjective well-being, identified on the basis of the combinations of the four indicators, are even more articulated across the territory when looking at trends over time and the differences by gender.

In the South, those very satisfied with life increased overall by 2.5 percentage points compared to 2022, this was driven by the increase in Abruzzo (+8.7 p.p.) and Campania (+3 p.p.), which however remains last in the ranking for the percentage of very satisfied (38.7%). The distance with the North-West, which shows the highest values, is therefore reduced, going from 8.9 points in 2022 to 6.4 percentage points.

Figure 7. People aged 14 and over by levels achieved for subjective well-being indicators by region. Year 2023. Percentage values



Trends at regional level sometimes show different patterns according to gender. While the life satisfaction indicator on a national average level is stable compared to 2022 among women and with a weak increase among men, clearly different trends by the gender emerge in some regions. For example, in Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste and Liguria the improvement recorded (3.8 and 4.4 percentage points respectively) is mainly due to the increase in the levels of the female component, which in both regions was over 5.5 points, exceeding 50% of very satisfied women. In Lombardia, the decline in the population's satisfaction with life observed between 2022 and 2023 is entirely due to the decline in women's satisfaction levels (-2.8 percentage points), while the level for men remains stable. In the province of Trento, there is an opposite trend between males and females with the percentage of women decreasing by 4 points and that of men increasing by 1.5. The same thing can be seen in Calabria, where the very satisfied people increases among men by 4.5 percentage points, reaching 51.2%, while they decrease by 3.6 points among women, falling to 43.2% (parity index 0.84, the lowest among the regions).

Satisfaction remains higher among graduates and the active population in the labour market

The percentage of people who are very satisfied with life is higher among those who with at least a tertiary degree (50.9%), however the gap compared to those with a low level of education (44.1%) has narrowed to 6.8 percentage points, due to a slight decline in the percentage of satisfied people among graduates (-1.2 p.p.) and a slight increase (+1 p.p.) among those with at most a lower secondary school diploma. This applies to all age groups with the exception of the youngest up to 34 years of age, among whom there are no differences.

For all age groups, as the level of education increases, the proportion of those with positive expectations for the future increases. Those with at most a lower secondary school diploma believe in 22.7% of cases that their life will improve and in 14.8% that it will get worse in the next 5 years. For those with at least a tertiary degree the percentages are 40.8% and 9.7% respectively. In previous years, the differences were similar. Satisfaction with leisure time does not differ much according to educational attainment.

As in previous years, people look to the future with greater optimism if they are employed (37.5% of them say that their life will improve) and in particular if they are managers, entrepreneurs, freelancers, directors, executives, office workers. But even among those looking for new employment, 37.7% are optimists.

A MEASURE OF EUDAIMONIA

Measuring subjective well-being requires a multidimensional approach, as highlighted in the OECD guidelines¹ provided to define a methodology for producing internationally comparable statistics on subjective well-being. The OECD model, thanks to its references to a wide literature, identifies three main dimensions that contribute to defining subjective well-being: the cognitive dimension, the emotional dimension and the eudaimonic dimension. The surveys on large samples of population mostly adopt satisfaction indicators, suitable for defining the cognitive dimension through well-established survey tools and analysis methods. Less common is the use of emotional state indicators, mainly borrowed from tools for measuring mental health. The methods for measuring the eudaimonic dimension are still debated.

Using data from the survey on Aspects of Daily Life, we propose a method of measuring eudaimonia based on the synthesis of 14 subjective indicators collected since 2013. This allows us to analyse the eudaimonic dimension for subsets of population, outlining its trend over time and comparing it with the indicator of satisfaction with life as a whole. The selected indicators are grouped into four components of eudaimonia, identified by taking into account the literature: trust, relationships, active life and positive vision of the future (Table A).

Table A. Components of eudaimonia, indicators representing them and thresholds

Component	Indicators (a)	Modalities / threshold	Component threshold
Trust	Generalised trust	Most people are worthy of trust	At least 2 out of 5 indicators above the threshold
	Trust in institutions	Four different indicators of trust: Parliament, judicial system, political parties, police and fire brigade; Response modalities from 0 to 10 Threshold ≥ 6	
Relationship	Satisfaction with friends relations	Four modalities from very to not at all satisfied. Threshold = Very	At least 2 out of 4 indicators above the threshold
	Satisfaction with family relations	Four modalities from very to not at all satisfied. Threshold = Very	
	Leisure time satisfaction	Four modalities from very to not at all satisfied. Threshold = Very or Quite	
	People to rely on	Having non cohabiting relatives, friends or neighbors they can rely on	
Active life	Social participation	Having performed at least one social participation activity in the last 12 months (e.g. cultural, sports, recreational, spiritual ecological, civil rights, peace)	At least 2 out of 4 indicators above the threshold
	Civic and political participation	Having performed at least one of the activities of civic and political participation (e.g. to inform of the facts of Italian politics at least once a week; to attend online consultation or voting on social issues or political) (e.g. urban planning, sign a petition)	
	Voluntary activity	Having performed free activities for voluntary associations or groups	
	Cultural participation outside the home	Having carried out 2 or more activities in the previous 12 months (e.g. going to the cinema, theatre, exhibitions and museums, archaeological sites, concerts)	
Optimism	Judgement of future perspectives	Positive judgement of future perspectives in the next 5 years	The personal situation will improve

(a) For the definitions of single indicators, please refer to the metadata file available in the statistical appendix of the Bes Report.

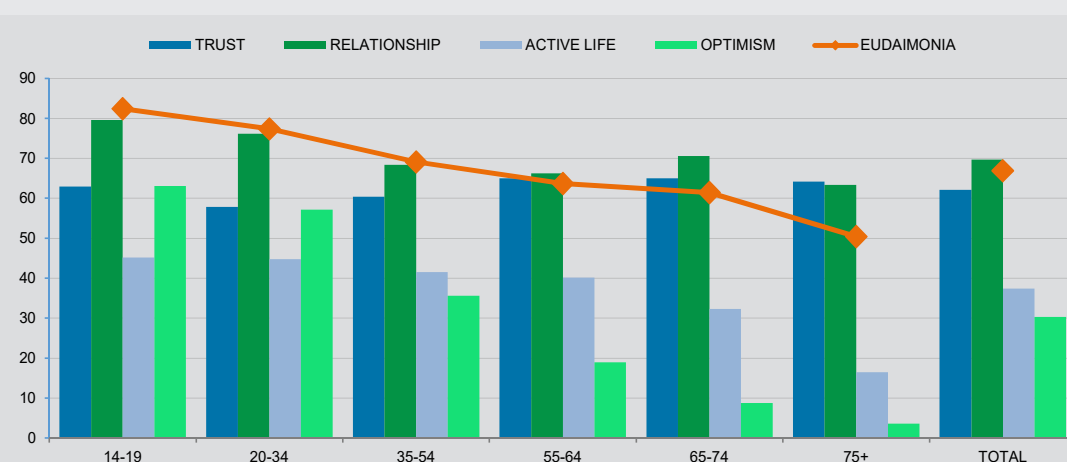
¹ Studies on the concept of eudaimonia include many disciplines, from philosophy to psychology, and in recent decades, also social statistical studies. The OECD guidelines contain references to the most relevant literature up to time. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - OECD. 2013. OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being. Paris, France: OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264191655-en>.

The synthesis process operates in two steps: the first step leads from the indicators to the component and the second from the components to the eudaimonia indicator. For each indicator, a threshold is identified below which the respondent is considered “deprived” of a specific quality of well-being (Table A). Counting the number of indicators for which the respondent is above the threshold determines whether the respondent is in a state of well-being for the reference component. The same operation is carried out by synthesising the four components into a single indicator, which represents the eudaimonic dimension, defined as positive if at least two components exceed the threshold. For the syntheses, the counting approach was used (Alkire, S., and J. Foster. 2008. “Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measures”. OPHI Working Paper 7)².

It is possible to observe that in 2023 (Figure A) 68.9% of the population aged 14 and over shows a positive value in terms of eudaimonic well-being.

Breaking down the indicator into the four dimensions we see that almost a third of the population (62.1%) takes on positive values for the trust component, the social relations indicator stands at 69.7% and that of active life at 37.4%. In addition, 30.3% of people see prospects for improvement in their future. Age has a strong impact on all aspects of well-being, but in particular on active participation and vision of the future with values that decrease at increasing the age groups. The percentage of those with a positive value for trust is instead higher among those aged 75 and over (64.1%) than among those aged under 55, and the relationship indicator remains at a rather high level among those aged between 65 and 74 (70.6%) and among older people (63.4%).

Figure A. Eudaimonia and its components by age group. Year 2023. Percentage values



Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life

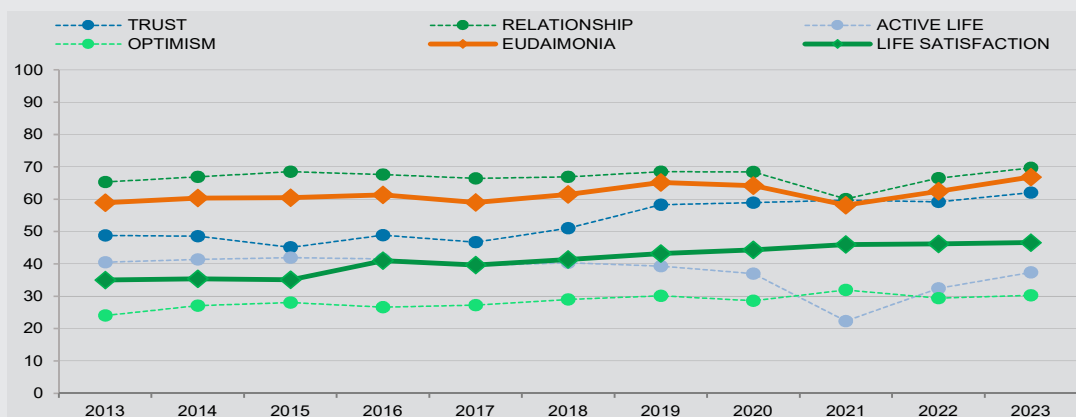
By comparing general satisfaction with life with the eudaimonia indicator and its components (Figure B), it is possible to observe that satisfaction with life shows constant growth between 2013 and 2023, even in period of pandemic emergency, while the eudaimonia indicator, although it stands at higher values, captures different aspects of subjective well-being, more influenced by the effect of temporary perturbation situations. In 2013, the percentage of people with a positive eudaimonia value stood at 59%, the share then reached 65.2% in 2019, dropped suddenly to 58.2% in 2021, to raise again in 2022, up to 66.9 % of 2023.

² The choice of thresholds for each indicator is based on the threshold identified for the Bes indicators (for a detailed definition of each indicator see the metadata file contained in the Statistical Appendix); the thresholds for the components are based on empirical analysis, to guarantee the representativeness of each individual indicator.

Looking at the different components, the decline in the eudaimonia indicator observed in 2021 is mainly connected to the relationships component and that of active life. The indicator on relations decreases by about 8 percentage points between 2020 and 2021, going from 68.4% to 60.9%. Even more evident is the decrease in the active life indicator, which fell from 37% in 2020 to 22.3% in 2021, raising again in 2023 back to previous value.

The trust indicator, which tends to grow between 2013 and 2019, remains stable until 2022 and then increases in 2023. The optimistic vision of the future remains stable until it reaches its highest level in 2021 (31.9%).

Figure B. Life satisfaction, Eudaimonia and its components. Years 2013-2023. Percentage values



Source: Istat, Survey on Aspects of daily life

Indicators

1. **Life satisfaction:** percentage of people aged 14 and over with a level of life satisfaction score from 8 to 10 on total population aged 14 and over.
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.
2. **Leisure time satisfaction:** percentage of people aged 14 and over very or quite satisfied with their leisure time on total population aged 14 and over .
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.
3. **Positive judgement of future perspectives:** percentage of people aged 14 and over that believe their personal situation will improve in the next 5 years on total population aged 14 and over.
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.
4. **Negative judgement of future perspectives:** percentage of people aged 14 and over that believe their personal situation will worsen in the next 5 years on total population aged 14 and over.
Source: Istat - Survey on Aspects of daily life.

Indicators by region and geographic area

REGIONS GEOGRAPHIC AREAS	Life satisfaction (a)	Leisure time satisfaction (a)
	2023	2023
Piemonte	50.1	69.3
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	56.4	72.4
Liguria	50.5	70.7
Lombardia	48.8	70.5
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	60.1	76.0
<i>Bolzano/Bozen</i>	<i>63.3</i>	<i>80.3</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>57.0</i>	<i>71.9</i>
Veneto	48.3	69.6
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	48.2	71.2
Emilia-Romagna	46.5	67.2
Toscana	46.7	70.3
Umbria	45.5	66.4
Marche	45.5	67.5
Lazio	45.2	70.3
Abruzzo	50.5	69.0
Molise	47.6	66.5
Campania	38.7	67.1
Puglia	44.2	60.4
Basilicata	43.5	65.7
Calabria	47.0	68.9
Sicilia	44.5	62.7
Sardegna	49.0	65.9
North	49.1	69.9
North-West	49.4	70.2
North-East	48.7	69.4
Centre	45.7	69.7
South and Islands	43.8	64.9
South	43.0	65.5
Islands	45.6	63.5
Italy	46.6	68.2

(a) Per 100 persons aged 14 and over.

8. Subjective well-being

197

Positive judgement of future perspectives (a)	Negative judgement of future perspectives (a)
2023	2023
28.2	14.1
28.6	15.0
29.4	12.3
33.8	11.2
29.8	13.0
26.7	13.4
32.9	12.7
32.0	13.0
30.6	14.1
31.4	13.7
27.3	16.0
26.8	15.5
26.8	14.1
32.2	10.5
29.6	11.5
28.8	15.1
31.7	8.4
25.3	12.5
31.5	10.0
30.8	9.2
25.4	12.4
35.0	9.2
31.7	12.7
31.8	12.1
31.4	13.4
29.6	13.1
28.9	10.7
29.4	10.2
27.9	11.6
30.3	12.1

