

8. Subjective well-being¹

The domain indicators showed a generally positive trend in the years prior to the pandemic crisis, with the only exception being the proportion of those who rated their life satisfaction as between 8 and 10. This proportion dropped by 10 points in 2012, in coincidence with the accentuation of the social as well as economic effects of the great crisis, and it had not yet fully recovered in 2019. The year 2019 is assumed to be the pre-COVID situation. Between 2019 and 2021, life satisfaction and the assessment of future prospects maintained generally stable, or even improved, consistent with the country's positive reaction to the severe conditions brought about by the pandemic (Table 1). In 2022, the percentage of people who consider themselves very satisfied with their lives is the highest to date, and the share of people scoring insufficient is among the lowest. Substantially almost nine out of 10 people say they are very (score between 8 and 10) or sufficiently (score 6 or 7) satisfied. Leisure satisfaction, which suffered an unprecedented slump in 2021 due to the protracted restrictive measures to contain the effects of the pandemic, shows a marked recovery in 2022, although not enough to regain the levels observed in 2019.

In contrast, the trend of an increasing optimistic outlook and a lower share of pessimists, observed from 2012 to 2021 and also confirmed in the two pandemic years, reverses. The percentage of people who believe their situation will improve in the next five years decreases in 2022, with the largest decline recorded in a single year, while the percentage of people who believe things will get worse increases for the first time (Table 1).

Table 1. Subjective well-being indicators: value for the latest available year and percentage changes for different periods

Indicators	Starting year	Latest available year	Latest available year value	Percentage changes			
				2019 compared with starting year	2021 compared with 2019	2022 compared with 2021	2022 compared with 2019
Life satisfaction 8-10 (%)	2010	2022	46.2	●	●	●	●
Leisure time satisfaction (%)	2010	2022	65.7	●	●	●	●
Positive judgement of future perspectives (%)	2012	2022	29.4	●	●	●	●
Negative judgement of future perspectives (%)	2012	2022	12.9	●	●	●	●

● Better ● Worse ● Stable - Not available

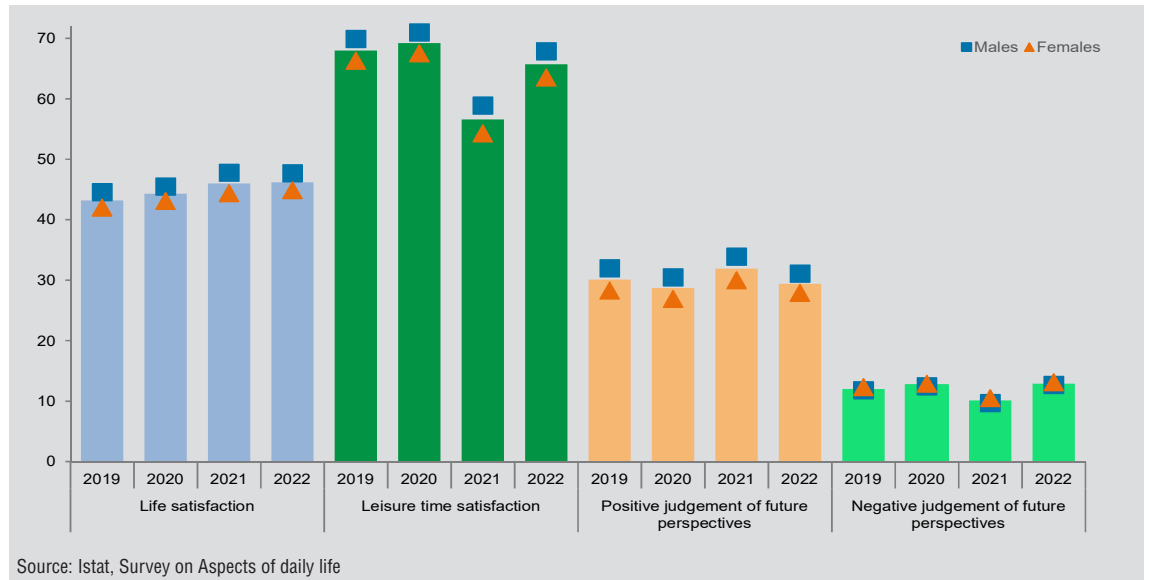
Note: If the relative change between the two years exceeds 1% it is considered positive (green), if it is lower than -1% it is considered negative (red). In the range -1 and +1% the change is considered stable (yellow). The polarity of the indicator was taken into account when calculating the changes to consider the improvement or worsening in terms of well-being.

Young people aged 14-19 regain in terms of satisfaction with life

The highest percentage so far of people who consider themselves very satisfied with their lives (46.2%) is reached in 2022 (Figure 1). At the same time, one of the lowest shares of people assigning an insufficient score is observed. Substantially almost nine out of 10 people say they are very (score between 8 and 10) or sufficiently (score 6 or 7) satisfied. The percentage of those saying they were very satisfied also increased for the youngest, aged 14-19, reaching the highest value (58.2%) among those recorded since 2010. The youngest were the only ones who experienced a decline between 2019 and 2021.

¹ This chapter was edited by Paola Conigliaro and Alessandra Tinto. Contributors to the box: Daniela Lo Castro and Maria Gloria Narilli.

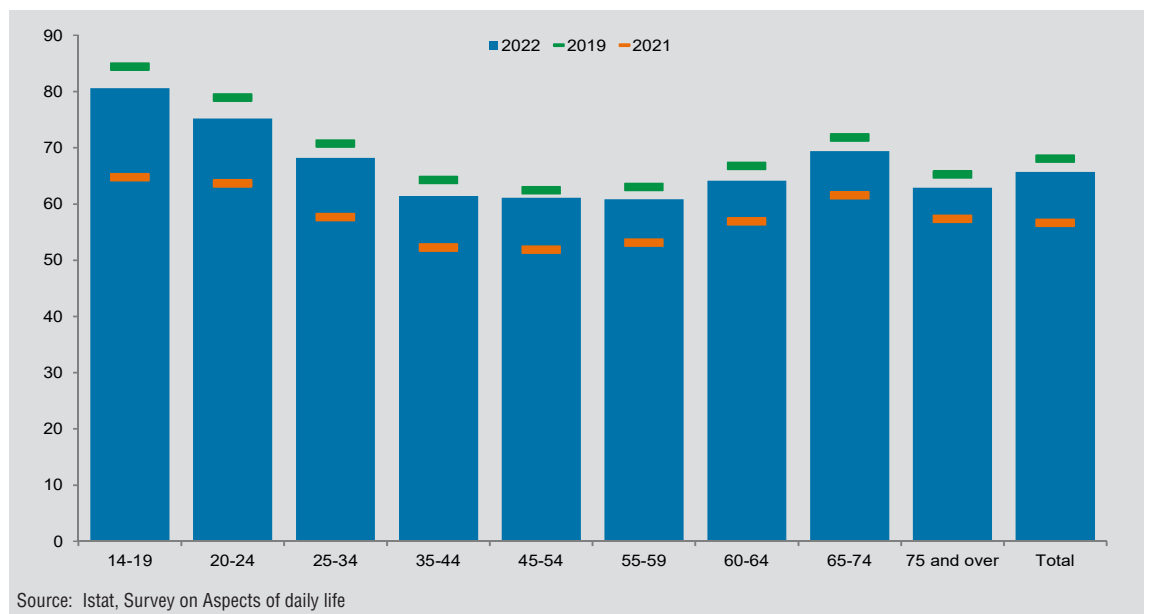
Figure 1. Subjective well-being indicators by gender. Years 2019-2022. Per 100 persons aged 14 and over with the same characteristics



Recover, though not fully, the value of leisure time satisfaction

Satisfaction with leisure time shows a substantial recovery (+9.1 percentage points) from the slump that occurred in 2021, although it has not yet reached the level observed before the pandemic (68.0% in 2019). In 2022, 65.7% of people aged 14 and older say they are very or fairly satisfied. The improvement occurs across all age groups (Figure 2), particularly among the very young (14-19-year-olds) who return to levels above 80%, a rise of 16.1 percentage points from 2021.

Figure 2. People aged 14 and over who are very or quite satisfied with their leisure time, by age group. Years 2019, 2021 and 2022. Percentage values



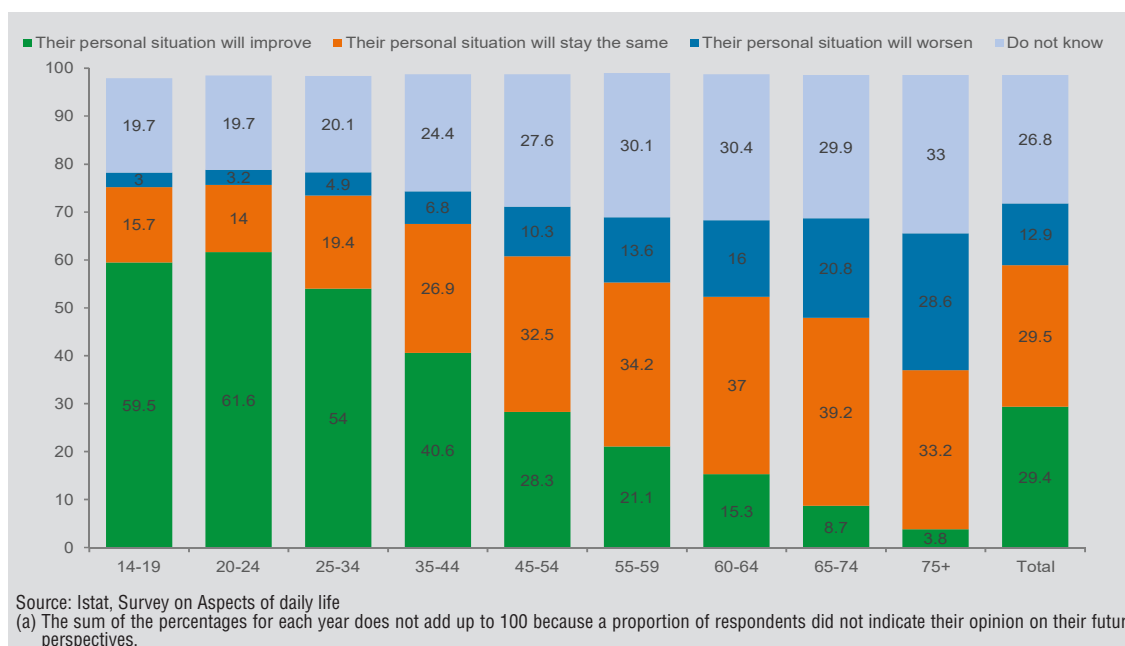
Optimists decreasing and pessimists increasing from 2021

The percentage of optimists decreases and the percentage of pessimists increases. 2022 thus marks the end of the general improvement observed for both indicators since 2012. Those who think their lives will get better account for 29.4%, compared to 31.9% in 2021. Meanwhile, for the first time, the proportion of people who expect their lives to get worse in the next five years rises (12.9% in 2022 compared to 10.2% in 2021).

Despite the data being less positive for everyone compared to the previous year, the youngest continue to be predominantly optimistic (Figure 3), with a peak in the 20-24 age group (61.6%), followed by the very young under 20 (59.5%) and 25-34-year-olds (54%). The percentage drops sharply in the subsequent age groups, down to 3.8% optimists (and 28.6% pessimists) among those aged 75 and over.

In terms of opinions about the future, Sardinia is the most positive region in 2022, having the highest percentage of people who are optimistic (34.1%) and one of the lowest of pessimistic people (9.9%); conversely, the Marche region has one of the lowest proportion of optimists (25.3%) and the highest proportion of pessimists (18.1%).

Figure 3. People aged 14 and over by opinion on their future perspectives, by age group. Year 2022. Percentage values (a)

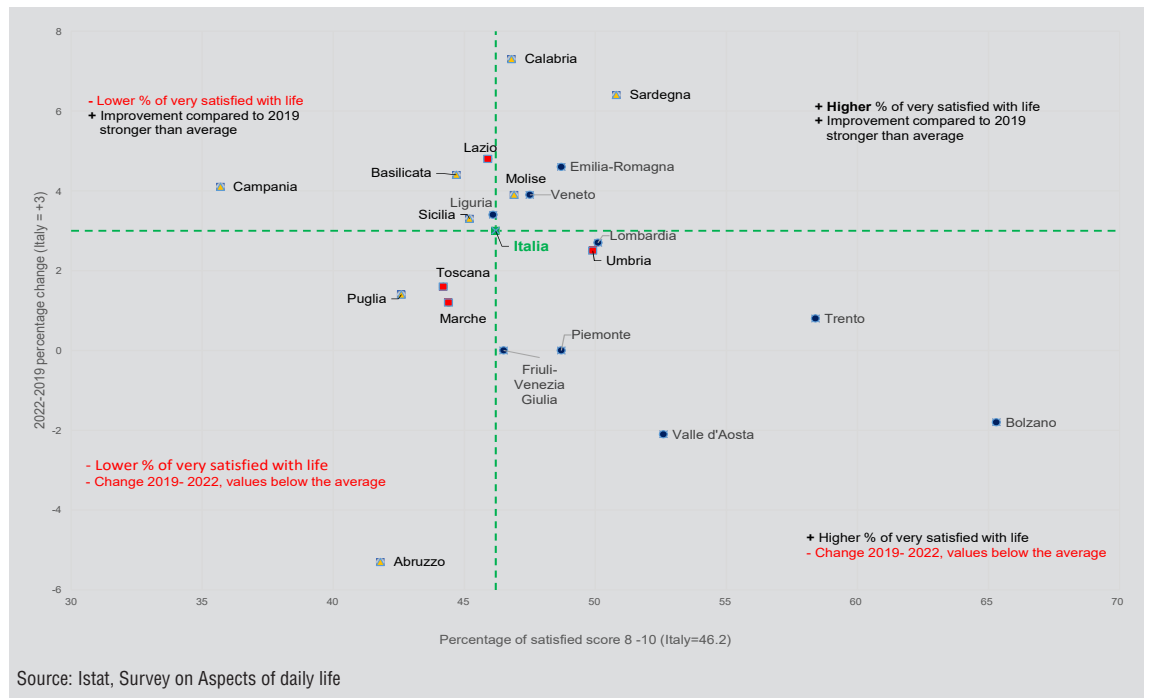


Peculiarities of well-being at regional level

The territorial analysis shows how, compared to the pandemic years, the North-West has regained its advantage over the rest of the country for all subjective well-being indicators. At the regional level, the situation is more nuanced. In order to jointly analyse levels and evolution over time of life satisfaction, let us consider the share of very satisfied in 2022 and the change in terms of percentage points compared to the pre-pandemic period (2019). Figure 4 shows a dispersion of positions that reflects some specificities. For example, the

northern regions (blue dots) all have a proportion of very satisfied in 2022 equal to or above the Italian average, but there is a strong differentiation among them in terms of percentage change compared to 2019.

Figure 4. People aged 14 and over who gave a high score (8-10) to their life satisfaction, by region (Nuts 2). Percentage values 2022 and 2022 – 2019 percentage change.



FEELING LONELY

Studies in the field of social isolation show that people who do not feel lonely have better health outcomes, and are also happier (Hawkley, L. C., & Cacioppo, J. T., 2010. Loneliness matters: A theoretical and empirical review of consequences and mechanisms. *Annals of behavioral medicine*, 40(2), 218-227).

This focus compares the sense of loneliness expressed in 2021 (latest available data) to that expressed in 2018 (pre-pandemic period). Data comes from Eu-SILC survey, an official survey harmonised at EU level.

In 2021, 26.8% of people aged 16 and over reported feeling alone at least some of the time, 8.5 percentage points higher than in 2018 (18.3%). Specifically, 6.5% felt alone all of the time or most of the time, 20.3% some of the time, 61.2% a little or none of the time, and 12% did not answer. In 2018, the proportion of those who never or almost never felt alone was higher (77.3%); this decrease was mainly due to a reduction in those choosing the 'never' option from 50.9% to 32.3%. The shift in choice was mainly towards the 'sometimes' response, which increased by 6.7 percentage points from 13.6% in 2018. In both years, women were more likely to feel lonely than men, with 29.2% of women feeling lonely at least some of the time in 2021 (Figure A).

Figure A. People aged 16 and over by the time they felt lonely in the previous 4 weeks and gender. Years 2018 and 2021. Percentage values



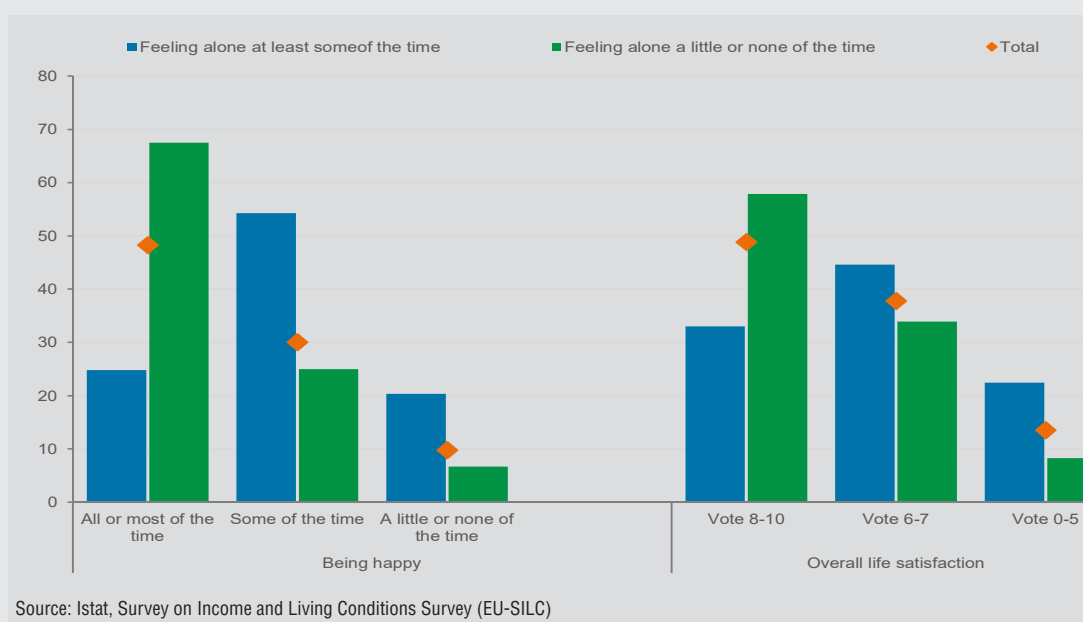
Source: Istat, Survey on Income and Living Conditions Survey (EU-SILC)

Further reflection focuses on the relationship of this indicator with other aspects of subjective well-being¹. The analysis confirms what emerges from the literature: those who feel lonely are also less often happy and satisfied with their lives than those who do not feel lonely (Figure B). Barely one fourth (24.8%) of the people who felt lonely for at least some of the time in the previous four weeks declare that they were happy all or most of the time. They rise to more

¹ This analysis uses data from Eu-SILC 2021 survey. It must be noted that they provide a slightly different value for the life satisfaction comparing with that coming from the Aspects of Daily Life survey, used for the BES indicator.

than two thirds (67.5%) among those who did not usually feel lonely. The difference is also very marked, albeit to a lesser extent, for satisfaction with one's own life: 33% of lonely people are very satisfied, compared with 57.8% of those who do not usually feel lonely.

Figure B. Happiness and life satisfaction by sense of loneliness. Year 2021. Percentage values



Indicators

- 1. Life satisfaction:** Percentage of people aged 14 and over who expressed a life satisfaction score between 8 and 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)
	2022	2022
Piemonte	48.7	67.4
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	52.6	65.8
Liguria	46.1	69.0
Lombardia	50.1	68.8
Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	61.8	76.0
<i>Bolzano/Bozen</i>	<i>65.3</i>	<i>79.5</i>
<i>Trento</i>	<i>58.4</i>	<i>72.6</i>
Veneto	47.5	64.3
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	46.5	65.0
Emilia-Romagna	48.7	67.4
Toscana	44.2	67.2
Umbria	49.9	71.2
Marche	44.4	63.9
Lazio	45.9	66.6
Abruzzo	41.8	62.9
Molise	46.9	66.7
Campania	35.7	65.2
Puglia	42.6	61.2
Basilicata	44.7	63.2
Calabria	46.8	65.8
Sicilia	45.2	58.2
Sardegna	50.8	60.5
North	49.3	67.7
North-west	49.4	68.4
North-east	49.1	66.6
Centre	45.5	66.8
South and Islands	42.4	62.2
South	40.5	63.8
Islands	46.6	58.8
Italy	46.2	65.7

(a) Per 100 persons aged 14 and over.

8. Subjective well-being

Positive judgement of future perspectives (a)	Negative judgement of future perspectives (a)
2022	2022
28.7	15.1
27.8	14.3
27.4	15.2
32.7	11.4
30.6	12.0
<i>28.6</i>	<i>11.7</i>
<i>32.5</i>	<i>12.3</i>
29.0	14.0
29.0	16.6
27.8	15.3
28.7	15.2
26.3	14.7
25.3	18.1
32.1	12.3
31.2	12.5
25.5	16.3
30.2	9.4
28.6	10.3
30.8	8.5
24.8	13.7
24.7	13.4
34.1	9.9
30.0	13.6
31.0	12.8
28.7	14.6
29.8	14.1
28.4	11.3
29.0	10.7
27.1	12.6
29.4	12.9

