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Social cohesion and well-being in Europe

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for the Improvement of
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Conditions

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Executive summary

Introduction

Social cohesion implies a sense of togetherness, resilience and orientation towards the common good. There is evidence that living in a cohesive society has a positive impact on subjective well-being, helping to improve the lives of citizens. The well-being of countries and individuals has been increasingly recognised as a societal asset and as an important benchmark for evaluating human progress.

Against this background, the present report uses five research questions to assess the current level of social cohesion in the EU, its change over time, risk groups and main drivers, as well as the extent to which it relates to subjective well-being.

In line with the conceptualisation of social cohesion offered by the Council of Europe (Jenson, 2010), five aspects of social cohesion are addressed:

- perceived social exclusion
- perceived economic and ethno-cultural social tensions
- interpersonal trust
- participation in society (civic engagement and political activity)
- sense of community (attachment to people in the local area and frequency of interpersonal contact)

The potential societal drivers of social cohesion analysed in the report have relevance to issues addressed by the European Pillar of Social Rights. Subjective well-being, the expected positive outcome of social cohesion, is assessed in terms of positive and negative emotions, life evaluation and psychological functioning.

Policy context

Public concerns about social cohesion in the EU has been widespread in recent years, particularly since the euro zone crisis in 2009. The discussion has further intensified in recent years with the so-called refugee crisis and an apparent rise in anti-immigration attitudes and populist parties.

The present report draws on data from the three most recent rounds of Eurofound's European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), conducted in the years 2007, 2011 and 2016. The surveys thus frame the attitudes and behaviour of European citizens shortly before the onset of the global financial crisis, in the midst of the euro zone crisis, and shortly after the peak of the refugee crisis.

Through a thorough analysis of the findings, the report derives a number of key policy pointers for policymakers in the EU.

Key findings

The report provides a number of insights relevant for EU policymaking. Firstly, social cohesion in the EU as a whole does not appear to be at risk. Perceptions of social exclusion at EU level are generally low and have not changed considerably over time. Nevertheless, there are country differences. Perceived social exclusion is relatively low in the northern countries and higher in the south-eastern Member States. The Mediterranean Member States have struggled to recover from the economic crisis and have not yet returned to their pre-crisis levels of social cohesion. Perceived social tensions, both economic and ethno-cultural, are high. Ethno-cultural tensions are more prevalent in the richer, western Member States that have recently experienced increased levels of immigration. Economic tensions tend to be higher in the post-communist societies. Tensions between rich and poor peaked in 2011, while tensions between managers and workers have declined over time.

Interpersonal trust varies considerably across the EU. While it is high in the Nordic countries, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, south-eastern Europe remains a region of low trust in people. As for participation in society, the rates of political activity and civic engagement in some northern and western Member States are four times higher than some of those in south-eastern Europe. However, participation rates are disturbingly low in the EU overall, remaining largely unchanged over time. Sense of community is generally high. Attachment to the local area is somewhat higher in the eastern Member States, whereas the frequency of contact with friends and neighbours is slightly higher in the southern countries.

The socioeconomically disadvantaged segments of society are the key risk groups for social exclusion, low trust, low participation in society and perceived economic tensions. In addition to this, age is seen to play a role in building a sense of community, with younger citizens reporting the lowest level of attachment to others in their area, coupled with the highest level of communication with their social contacts. Age is furthermore a critical factor for participation in society, as the elderly are comparatively less engaged in civic and political participation. Ethno-cultural tensions are mostly perceived by the chronically ill, rural dwellers, the employed and the

highly educated. This might be presumably attributed to a higher awareness of such tensions or concerns about the sustainability of welfare systems. Another emerging concern relates to the possible polarisation of the middle class: In several aspects of social cohesion, the lower-middle income class is more similar to the low income class, whereas the upper-middle income class is more similar to the high income class - such as in terms of perceived social exclusion, trust in people, participation in society, as well as perceptions of economic tensions.

Social cohesion goes hand in hand with subjective well-being. The organic aspects of social cohesion – low levels of social exclusion, high levels of interpersonal trust and high levels of participation in society – are associated with more positive emotions, better life evaluation and better psychological functioning. The mechanical aspects of social cohesion – perceived social tensions and a sense of community – do not appear to be related to well-being. It is only perceptions of economic tensions that are associated with transitory negative emotions and reduced well-being in terms of life evaluation and psychological functioning. Sense of community, in contrast, does not have a positive relationship with well-being; if anything, the relationship is slightly negative: life evaluation is lower in countries with high levels of attachment to people in the local area.

Policy pointers

The results show that inclusive economic prosperity and digitalisation can help sustain social cohesion. Alongside upward economic convergence, an inclusive and generous welfare system and the acquisition of digital skills stimulate the organic components of social cohesion, which are related to positive subjective well-being of citizens.

Economic tensions can be alleviated by preventing downward mobility and reducing large income gaps. However, income inequality has a surprisingly limited impact on other aspects of social cohesion. Nevertheless, despite the high prevalence of ethno-cultural tensions in a number of Member States – apparently driven by increased migration flows – more attention should be attributed to economic tensions, at least from a well-being perspective.

Overall, the retrenchment of welfare systems can potentially impact on social cohesion in a negative way: social cohesion can be fostered by policies specially targeted at improving the situation of risk groups. Appropriate measures may involve reducing unemployment, increasing average income and preventing the polarisation of the middle class. More citizens should be encouraged to complete at least upper-secondary education. The needs of people with chronic illness and disabilities should be taken into account, while the elderly can be encouraged to become more involved in civic and political activities.

Finally, to sustain and promote cohesion, the beneficial potential of migration for host societies should be harnessed and more citizens should have the opportunity to acquire digital skills.

Introduction

There is growing interest in the EU and around the world in having reliable information about the quality of society and the quality of life experienced by citizens. The well-being of countries and individuals is increasingly seen as an important benchmark against which to evaluate human progress. In the past, information on economic conditions was generally seen as the main indicator of human progress. However, national governments, as well as international and supranational bodies, have more recently come to acknowledge the importance of moving beyond economic indicators and gathering subjective information about the quality of society and life (Stiglitz et al, 2009). Such subjective information relates to citizens' perceptions and opinions of the society they live in, their emotions and their experiences of life. This new, subjective approach has not only informed various social reporting activities, but also found its way into official statistics. For example, Eurostat has developed a dashboard of indicators to measure quality of life in the EU Member States (Eurostat, n.d.).

The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) is a valuable element of this growing data infrastructure for social reporting. It is the key monitoring tool for the EU Member States, as it captures the two main facets of quality of life – objective living conditions and subjective well-being – as well as perceptions of the quality of societies from a multi-dimensional perspective. A general account of the findings of the latest round of the EQLS, conducted in 2016, is provided in Eurofound's overview report (Eurofound, 2017a).

The present report enhances the contribution of Eurofound to the EU policy agenda by proposing a framework for assessing the quality of societies. Specifically, this framework includes the current state of social cohesion, its development over time, groups at risk of experiencing poor social cohesion, and societal drivers. The scope of this report is broadened by an empirical exploration of how social cohesion relates to individual well-being and quality of life.

As a concept, cohesion describes the collective nature of a group of people, such as a country's society. Individuals cannot be 'socially cohesive', but societies can. Consequently, cohesion is regarded as a quality of society. The concept of cohesion is not designed to assess national well-being in a comprehensive manner; it relates specifically to the social dimension of a society, rather than to its economy, politics or environment, for example. Although other indices, such as the United Nations' Human Development Index, measure quality of life and societies, their scope is different to that which is covered by this concept of cohesion.

In a nutshell, cohesive societies display solidarity, togetherness and team spirit. The latter is a term commonly used in the world of sport, where concerted collective efforts often help to accomplish otherwise unattainable achievements. Social scientists are convinced that, in societies as in sports teams, cohesion represents a positive quality that brings with it a sense of resilience and a marked orientation towards the common good. Moreover, there is evidence to show that living in a cohesive society has a positive impact on subjective well-being – for instance in terms of greater life satisfaction (Delhey and Dragolov, 2016). In other words, building a more cohesive society can help improve the lives of its citizens. A more extensive definition of the concept of social cohesion is provided in the 'Social cohesion' section on page 5.

Policy context

In recent years, public discussion about social climates has taken place in many EU Member States. A significant proportion of observers and citizens appear to be deeply concerned that today's societies are displaying less cohesion than those of the past. The debates seem to be fuelled by mega-trends in the socioeconomic and cultural spheres of our societies, such as swings in the world economy, globalisation and intensified migration flows.

The unfolding of unfavourable socioeconomic developments in many EU societies can be traced back at least as far as the 1990s, when an upswing in income inequality gave rise to widespread feelings of disintegrating solidarity across social classes (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2017). Indeed, income inequality has been identified as a major factor in population health problems and various social ills (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010).

In more recent times, the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 was followed by a crisis in the euro zone towards the end of 2009. As the EU's individual economies are closely interconnected, they were all affected by this crisis, albeit to varying degrees. Living and working conditions deteriorated – less so in the northern and western parts of the EU, but much more noticeably in southern and eastern Member States. One of the most pronounced effects of the economic crisis was the surge in unemployment rates, particularly among young people in the southern EU Member States (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain), exposing a greater share of the population to the risk of poverty and social exclusion (Eurostat, 2017). A side effect of the crisis took place in the form of intensified intra-EU migration from

societies with more strongly affected economies, but also from generally less affluent countries (central and eastern European Member States) to the better positioned north-western Member States. Unsurprisingly, the discontent of EU citizens with the handling of the crisis led to a decline in trust in public institutions at national level (Eurofound, 2012), a deterioration of the functional quality of democracy in EU societies (Morlino and Quaranta, 2016) and growing support for nationalist and Eurosceptic political parties (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016). One particularly striking development that may in part have been a result of this process was the decision of the United Kingdom (UK) to leave the EU.

Alongside these socioeconomic issues, EU societies were faced in 2015 and 2016 with the unprecedented arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing from conflict in neighbouring countries, as well as migrants from economically disadvantaged parts of Asia and Africa. Perceptions of risks related to growing cultural diversity, anti-Islamic attitudes, right-wing populism and violent extremism have become more widespread, even in EU societies with long-standing democratic traditions, such as in Germany.

Public worries about the alleged deterioration of social cohesion have certainly not been disregarded. Social cohesion has received the attention of a large number of national governments across the world. For example, the topic has been addressed by the governments of Canada (Toye, 2007), Germany (Bundesregierung, 2002, 2012), the Netherlands (Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2009), New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2004) and the UK (Great Britain Neighbourhood Renewal Unit et al, 2003; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008).

As well as national governments, several internationally active non-governmental think tanks and institutions have paid attention to the issue of social cohesion. The World Bank, for example, has dealt with social cohesion and conflict prevention in Asian societies (Colletta et al, 2001; Larsen and Boehnke, 2016). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) regards cohesion as a means to inclusive development (OECD, 2011) and has initiated a series of policy reviews to link social cohesion to policy interventions (OECD, 2014).

While social and economic cohesion is a fundamental point of reference at EU level, there is no single policy instrument specially dedicated to social cohesion. Moreover, there is a need to clarify the potential double use of the term 'cohesion' in the EU policy context. The academic understanding of social cohesion, as outlined on pages 5-7, refers to a quality of society. This use should not be confused with that of the cohesion policy of the EU. Economic and social cohesion, as defined in the Single European Act in 1986 and later extended to territorial cohesion with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, entails a reduction of socioeconomic disparities between regions. This type of cohesion can be better defined as convergence.

Nevertheless, the objectives to strengthen social cohesion and quality of life have been an integral part of EU social policy. As stated in the reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe: 'The European Union has always had a social dimension, closely linked to its economic ambitions.' (European Commission, 2017, p. 7). With the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the founders of the European Economic Community committed to ensuring the social progress of their countries and the continual improvement of living and working conditions. A few years later, the European Social Charter laid out the social constitution of Europe with fundamental rights regarding the social protection, welfare and non-discrimination of citizens. Its cornerstones have been incorporated in the Treaty on European Union, which is currently in force.

In recent years, the EU has put increasing emphasis on promoting aspects of the social dimension, not least as a reaction to the financial crisis of the euro zone and the resulting pronounced regional disparities in terms of social aspects and quality of life across the EU (Eurofound, 2012). The main steps in this direction have been the Europe 2020 strategy, launched in 2010; the social investment package, launched in 2013; and the European Pillar of Social Rights, proclaimed in November 2017. All three initiatives have centred around goals to promote fairer and more inclusive societies by combating poverty, social exclusion and discrimination. The monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency of these policies is primarily based on hard, objective measures, such as the EU 2020 targets and the Social Scoreboard (European Commission, 2017b). However, a closer look at the development of social cohesion based on citizens' experiences and perceptions, as in the present report, provides a fuller picture of the situation in EU societies.

Research aims

This report examines the link between the quality of the society in which people live and the quality of life that they experience. Quality of society is understood in terms of social cohesion, whereas quality of life is understood in terms of subjective well-being. While there is abundant research on the latter, only a few recent studies have dealt with the social cohesion of EU societies from a comparative perspective (for instance, Abbott et al, 2016; Dickes and Valentova, 2013; Dragolov et al, 2016; and Green and Janmaat, 2011). Considering the complexity of the concept, the report does not aim to summarise the cohesion of the EU societies. Rather, it undertakes a detailed approach by identifying key aspects of social cohesion that are most relevant in the context of EU policymaking.

In a first step, these aspects of cohesion are examined in detail with respect to the strength of social cohesion at present, its development over time, and the individual and societal characteristics that influence these aspects in European societies. The main objective of this first step is to explore levels and trajectories of social cohesion, and to learn more about conditions that have the potential to strengthen the social fabric of EU Member States.

In a second step, the report outlines the differences in subjective well-being across the EU Member States and explores the relationship between subjective well-being and the identified aspects of social cohesion. The main objective is to identify those aspects of cohesion that are particularly relevant for citizens' subjective well-being, and thus deserve particular attention from policymakers.

In particular, the present report addresses the following five research questions:

1. What is the current level of social cohesion in EU societies?

The first research question aims to provide a descriptive account of the current level of social cohesion in EU Member States. Instead of relying on a composite index, as other studies have done (Dragolov et al, 2016), this report draws a detailed picture by looking into indicators of key aspects of social cohesion. This descriptive aim of the report should not be misunderstood as an attempt to benchmark the EU Member States.

2. How has the level of social cohesion changed over the period 2007–2016?

The second research question aims to identify changes over time in the indicators for the key aspects of social cohesion in each of the EU societies covered. Focusing on the years 2007, 2011 and 2016, the report frames the attitudes and behaviour of European citizens around important events in contemporary history: shortly before the onset of the global financial crisis, in the midst of the crisis of the euro zone, and just after the peak of the refugee crisis.

3. Which social groups are at risk of experiencing low social cohesion?

The third research question sets out to explore differences in relation to the key aspects of social cohesion across members of various social groups. By comparing the experiences of different social groups within EU societies, the report aims to identify vulnerable groups that need particular policy attention.

4. What are the main societal drivers of social cohesion?

The fourth research question seeks to identify the main socioeconomic characteristics that display a correlation with the key aspects of social cohesion in EU societies. The objective of this question is to highlight the structural characteristics that are of greatest importance for the promotion of social cohesion. These insights have the potential to inform EU policies by identifying which aspects of economic and social convergence need more attention.

5. To what extent is social cohesion related to subjective well-being?

The final research question aims to establish the relationship between the key aspects of social cohesion and well-being in EU societies. Taking subjective well-being as a standard against which the relevance of social cohesion to citizens' lives can be evaluated, this question attempts to deliver insights into the aspects of social cohesion that need targeted policy action.

The findings of the report provide up-to-date, detailed information on the key aspects of social cohesion in EU societies. The report delivers valuable insights into the effectiveness of upward convergence and other important social strategies of the EU – such as the European Pillar of Social Rights – when it comes to the social cohesion of EU societies and the well-being of their citizens.

The next two sections set out in more detail the core concepts on which this report builds: social cohesion and subjective well-being.

Social cohesion

Cohesion was highlighted earlier as a central social quality of societies, characterised by togetherness and team spirit. Although this understanding of cohesion is expressed in the work of many sociologists and social philosophers, the essence of cohesion is difficult to define in operational terms and even more difficult to measure empirically. It is no wonder, therefore, that researchers have devised various ideas as to how the abstract notion of social cohesion can be made more concrete.

Nevertheless, in an extensive review of the subject, Schiefer and van der Noll (2017) point to a considerable consensus with regard to the key properties of cohesion. Firstly, cohesion refers to a quality of society, although it predominantly manifests itself in the attitudes and behaviour of the society's members. Secondly, cohesion is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that involves individuals, groups and societal institutions. Thirdly, cohesion is empirically measurable on a graded scale, meaning that societies can be found to be more or less cohesive.

Schiefer and van der Noll also identify six overarching spheres of social interaction that make up the concept of social cohesion: social relations among people, how connected they feel to society, their orientation towards the common good, (objective) socioeconomic disparities, shared values and quality of life. Defining cohesion with such a broad scope does, however, make it difficult to conduct a systematic analysis of its drivers and outcomes, which is crucial for informed policy action.

Based on the insights of Schiefer and van der Noll's review, Dragolov et al (2016) offer a comprehensive account of social cohesion in the societies of the Western world. They formulate a simplified concept of social cohesion that pragmatically excludes objective inequalities, which are instead classified as drivers, and quality of life, which is seen as an outcome. The concept does not consider the notion of shared values, given that a strong normative stance would be required to set out the values that members of society would need to maintain for a cohesive society. Dragolov et al's so-called 'radar' takes into account the following three domains:

- **social relations**, including social networks, trust in other people and acceptance of diversity
- **connectedness**, including identification, trust in institutions and perceptions of fairness
- **focus on the common good**, including solidarity and helpfulness, respect for social rules and civic participation

The above-mentioned social reporting initiative was able to demonstrate empirically that inclusive economic prosperity and progress towards a knowledge society, among other factors, are conducive to stronger social cohesion. This social cohesion, in turn, supports the well-being of citizens. Despite proposing a relatively narrow definition of the concept of social cohesion, the radar has a strong academic orientation and, moreover, requires a broad set of data sources and sophisticated methodological apparatus for its operationalisation.

Given that the present report seeks to support policymaking at EU level, it is best served by a conceptualisation that, firstly, has pronounced implications for policy action within Europe and, secondly, requires a single, EU-specific source of survey data, such as the EQLS. The report therefore draws on the definition of social cohesion proposed by the Council of Europe:

> *… social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means.*
>
> (Jenson, 2010, p. 7)

On the basis of this definition, the present report outlines five key aspects of social cohesion: perceived social exclusion, perceived social tensions, interpersonal trust, participation in society and a sense of community.

Perceived social exclusion refers to both social relations and socioeconomic disparities, similar to the spheres of social interaction identified by Schiefer and van der Noll (2017). This aspect takes into account the extent to which people feel they live on the margins of society, or – in more extreme cases – feel excluded from it entirely. If members of a society feel like this, a plausible implication is that social disparities are too large. This, in turn, is assumed to indicate low social cohesion. Similarly, perceived social tensions cover both social relations and socioeconomic disparities. More concretely, this aspect refers to the degree to which members of society see the relationships between major groups in their society as being conflictual, indicating a society that is polarised. Interpersonal trust is an essential aspect of social cohesion, acting as a glue that binds society. When members of society believe that most other people are honest and benevolent, it provides a solid basis for mutual support and cooperation. The fourth aspect, participation in society, manifests itself in actions towards the common good of the collective. It encompasses citizens' civic engagement and political activity, both of which indicate a concern for common goals and the well-being of others. Finally, sense of community refers to a combination of social relations and citizens' feelings of attachment to others and connection to the collective entity.

In light of Durkheim's understanding of solidarity in societies articulated in 1893, these aspects of social cohesion form a complex amalgam of organic and mechanical types of social interaction (Durkheim, 1977). The mechanical dimension is characteristic of traditional societies in which the integration of individuals is primarily based on their homogeneity, for example in terms of lifestyle, religious and ethnic background, or socioeconomic status. Modern, advanced societies, in contrast, tend to be held together by organic interactions that are rooted in the mutual interdependence of their members, resulting from the specialisation of labour. Perceived social exclusion, interpersonal trust and participation in society can therefore be treated as organic aspects of social cohesion, while perceived social tensions and a sense of community are more mechanical aspects.

In a nutshell, cohesive societies are characterised by feelings of inclusion – or rather the absence of social exclusion – a lack of social tensions between different groups in society, high levels of interpersonal trust, pronounced participation in civic and political life, and a strong sense of community.

These aspects of social cohesion, as identified on the basis of the Council of Europe's definition, delineate the concept as distinct from objective manifestations of socioeconomic inequalities, quality of life and normative shared values. This approach enables drivers and outcomes to be systematically established. A further distinctive quality of the approach is its detailed focus on the individual aspects of social cohesion. It is preferable to take this approach, rather than attempt to devise a summary index, for two reasons: first, it is not clear whether the identified organic and mechanical aspects of cohesion can form a uniform construct in empirical terms. The composite Human Development Index, for instance, has been criticised for its lack of empirical consistency (Noorbakhsh, 1998). The report therefore aims to avoid any such inconsistency in its approach. Due to the relatively low number of societies analysed in the present study (28 EU Member States), it would not have been feasible to conduct a robust, unidimensional empirical test based on the five aspects of social cohesion. Instead, it is useful to analyse the relationships between the aspects of cohesion and aspects of subjective well-being. The second reason is that this approach enables the analysis of risk groups and changes over time, as well as of drivers and outcomes that can be linked to the particular aspects of social cohesion.

Subjective well-being

Alongside social cohesion, the second concept that is central to this report is subjective well-being. This concept captures people's subjective experiences of their quality of life. The approach to subjective quality of life, developed in the 1970s in the United States, draws on citizens' individual perceptions and evaluations of their lives (see Campbell et al, 1976). Such an approach is able to go beyond objective information about living conditions and resources. The key idea is that, ultimately, quality of life is in the eyes of the beholder. The added value of this approach, as compared to objective measures of citizens' life circumstances, has been recognised by key policymakers around the world. For example, subjective assessments of quality of life have received the attention of the United Nations, as evidenced in its annual World Happiness Report. One of the OECD's continuous reporting initiatives, the Better Life Index, also partially draws on subjective assessments.

Typically, research on subjective well-being covers two different internal dimensions: emotions and satisfaction. In most theory, emotions – including positive emotions such as enthusiasm and negative ones such as sadness – are seen to reflect the more corporeal and transitory state of well-being, whereas satisfaction is understood as being a more cognitive and lasting state. As such, the experience of emotions is typically surveyed with reference to a shorter time frame (such as the past two weeks), which is not the case for satisfaction.

Satisfaction may be surveyed for particular life domains, or for life in general – so-called life satisfaction. Capturing satisfaction with life on the basis of specific domains is challenging for at least two reasons. First, it is questionable which exact combination of life domains offers an exhaustive and, thereby, valid representation of subjective well-being. The OECD's (2013) guidelines on measuring subjective well-being identify the ten most relevant domains: standard of living, health status, achievements in life, personal relationships, safety, belongingness to a community, future security, free time for personal interests, quality of the living environment and job. Domains of life satisfaction are, however, better suited to being specific predictors of global measures of subjective well-being. Therefore, it is beyond the scope of this report to cover all these domains.

Following Veenhoven (2012), the report instead considers citizens' evaluations of life as a whole. In particular, it takes both their cognitive (life satisfaction) and affective (emotions) components. Indeed, emotions and satisfaction can be separated on paper, but they are inter-related in reality, as our emotional experiences – among other information – feed into our evaluation of life in terms of satisfaction.

Yet there is a third concept used in subjective well-being research, known as psychological functioning, or eudaimonic[1] well-being (OECD, 2013). This component of subjective well-being does not correspond to a single internal state in the way that emotions or satisfactions do; rather, it utilises individuals' self-reports on a broader suite of elements that psychologists deem necessary for a person to flourish or to fulfil their potential. Among other things, this includes the feeling of purpose in life.

The above tripartite perspective on subjective well-being is fully in line with OECD's guidelines on measuring subjective well-being (OECD, 2013), informed by best academic practices in the field. Based on this perspective, the report looks into the following key aspects of well-being:

- positive and negative emotions (transitory hedonic well-being)
- life evaluation (enduring hedonic well-being)
- psychological functioning (eudaimonia)

1 The etymologically correct Greek spelling has been used here, although standard British English prefers 'eudaemonic' and standard American English uses 'eudemonic'.

As regards the relationship between subjective well-being and social cohesion, the chief interest relates to whether various aspects of social cohesion benefit the population's well-being. In this context, subjective well-being is treated as the ultimate outcome, whereas aspects of cohesion are understood to be potentially influencing factors. This is fully in line with how conceptual models depict the creation of subjective well-being.

The idea is that cohesive societies, as defined above, are pleasant social environments in which various human needs are provided for, especially needs related to loving and being (Allardt, 1993; Delhey and Steckermeier, 2016). Other things being equal, aspects of social cohesion should therefore be conducive to subjective well-being. A positive influence of social cohesion on subjective well-being would also be expected based on the sequence model of life evaluation (Veenhoven, 2012). Living in a cohesive society should trigger more positive and fewer negative life experiences, leading to a shift in cognitive representations of the social environment. This would lead more individuals to perceive the social environment as pleasant, liveable and rewarding, thereby improving their mood, life evaluation and psychological functioning. It goes without saying that other societal factors, as well as cohesion, also have an impact on subjective happiness. These may include economic prosperity, rule of law, absence of corruption or gender equality (Veenhoven, 2012). However, the principal objective of this report is to explore which aspects of social cohesion are of particular importance for well-being.

Data sources used

The present report maintains an exclusive focus on the 28 EU Member States. This section introduces the data sources for the analyses that follow.

Social cohesion and subjective well-being

The data on key aspects of social cohesion and subjective well-being are derived from the EQLS (Eurofound, 2018). Commissioned and coordinated by Eurofound, the EQLS is a high-quality source of cross-sectional, comparative, representative samples of the population aged 18 and above in all EU Member States. Since its inception, the EQLS has completed four rounds of data collection at regular intervals of approximately four years: the EQLS 2003, EQLS 2007, EQLS 2011 and EQLS 2016. Particularly since its second round in 2007, the EQLS has maintained a harmonised framework of indicators. The present report therefore measures the aspects of social cohesion using data from the EQLS 2007, 2011 and 2016, enabling an analysis of changes in social cohesion in all current EU Member States since 2007. In order to explore the relationship between social cohesion and subjective well-being, the present report utilises data from 2016, the most recent EQLS. Table A1 in Annex 1 lists the working sample sizes from the EU Member States in each of the three rounds of the EQLS included in this report.

Social groups

In addition, the EQLS 2016 data are used to identify social groups that are currently at risk of experiencing low social cohesion. For this purpose, the report examines differences in the key indicators of social cohesion with respect to characteristics depicting sociodemographic divisions, both horizontal and vertical, in society. Horizontal divisions refer to social categories that are inherently different from one another, for instance men and women, but cannot be ranked in a particular order. Vertical divisions, in contrast, involve social categories that can be classified in some form of ranking system, such as income classes.

In terms of the horizontal areas of interest, groups of respondents have been categorised according to the characteristics presented in Table 1 below. The respective sample sizes are provided in Table A2 in Annex 1.

Table 1: Horizontal sociodemographic divisions

Social characteristic	Categories
Sex	Male Female
Age	18–24 years of age 25–64 years of age 65 years of age or more
Health	Have a chronic physical or mental health problem Do not have any such health problem
Level of urbanisation of area of residence (subjective)	Open countryside Village/small town Medium- to large-sized town City or suburb
Migration background	First or second generation migrant No recent migration background

As for vertical divisions in society, the report categorises the respondents as follows in Table 2:

Table 2: Vertical sociodemographic divisions

Social characteristic	Categories
Education level	Tertiary Post-secondary or upper secondary Lower secondary or below
Employment status [2]	Employed Unemployed Retired Other [3]
Income class [4]	Lower class: ≤ 60% of country-specific median income Lower-middle class: > 60% and ≤ 100% of country-specific median income Upper-middle class: > 100% and ≤ 200% of country-specific median income Upper class: > 200% of country-specific median income

Societal drivers

In light of the policy focus of the present report, the exploration of societal drivers of social cohesion has predominantly been informed by the policy goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The role of the EU's continuous policy of upward economic prosperity (so-called convergence) has also been considered. The findings of the report can thus inform policymaking by highlighting key focus areas that need to be pursued to sustain, or improve, the social cohesion of EU societies. The selection of characteristics is also relevant from the perspective of social science research (see, for example, Dragolov et al, 2016). The report maintains a set of core societal characteristics throughout all aspects of social cohesion and, where applicable, a variable set of characteristics that are specific to a given aspect of cohesion.

The core set of societal drivers explored encompasses the following characteristics of the socioeconomic structure of the societies of the EU Member States.

Upward economic prosperity

Gross domestic product: A country's gross domestic product (GDP) is the most widely used measure of its economic activity. GDP refers to the total output of goods and services produced, plus net taxes on products and imports, minus intermediate consumption. More specifically, the report uses the GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (GDP pc PPP), which expresses the GDP relative to the population of a respective country, adjusted for differences in the purchasing power of the EU Member States. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.[5]

Education, skills and lifelong learning

Tertiary education attainment: This indicator provides the percentage of individuals aged 30 to 34 who have successfully completed tertiary education. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Individuals with digital skills: This indicator provides the percentage of individuals aged 16 to 74 who have at least basic digital skills, meaning they are able to carry out basic activities on a computer and the internet. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Gender equality in the labour market

Gender employment gap: This indicator provides information on differences between the employment rates of men and women aged 20 to 64. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Inequality and upward mobility

Income inequality: This indicator provides information on the ratio of total equivalised disposable income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income (top quintile; S80) to that received by the 20% of the population with the lowest income (lowest quintile; S20). Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Downward to upward mobility ratio: This indicator provides the ratio of the share of downwardly mobile men from the cohort born between the years 1964 and 1977 to the share of upwardly mobile men from the same cohort. The report focuses on the mobility patterns of this cohort, as most of its members are highly likely to be active in the labour force at present. Men constitute the focus group, as they are more likely to be the main earners in their households, even though women have increasingly been represented in the labour markets of the EU Member States in recent decades. These mobility rates have been computed by

2 Employment status has been classified as a vertical division for the purpose of this analysis, although it could also be seen as a horizontal division.

3 The 'other' group predominantly encompasses individuals who are unable to work due to long-term illness, but also homemakers and respondents who are still in education.

4 In line with research on income distribution (see, for example, Anxo, 2016), four income classes have been used to categorise respondents' net equivalised household income.

5 The raw values are expressed in natural logarithms (ln), as per standard research practice.

Eurofound (2017b) on the basis of the European Social Survey rounds fielded between 2002 and 2010. Data are available for 24 EU Member States (all Member States except for Italy, Latvia, Malta and Romania).

Living conditions and poverty

At-risk-of-poverty rate: This indicator provides the share of persons who receive an equivalised net disposable income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers). Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Severe material deprivation: This indicator provides the share of persons whose living conditions are severely constrained by a lack of resources. Severely deprived persons may experience deprivations relating to economic strain, consumer durables or housing. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Labour force structure

Unemployment rate: This indicator provides the percentage of unemployed persons in the total labour force. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Impact of public policies on reducing poverty

Government expenditure on public policies: This indicator provides the total government expenditure (% of GDP) on social protection, health and education. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

In addition, the report considers a variable set of societal characteristics that are of relevance to specific aspects of social cohesion only. These include other indicators along the dimensions of the European Pillar of Social Rights, as well as indicators on diversity.

Living conditions and poverty by age

At-risk-of-poverty rate among individuals aged 18–24: This indicator provides the share of persons aged 18 to 24 who receive an equivalised net disposable income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers). Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

At-risk-of-poverty rate among individuals aged 65 or above: This indicator provides the share of persons aged 65 or above who receive an equivalised net disposable income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers). Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Youth

Youth not in education, employment or training: This indicator provides the share of persons aged 15 to 24 who are neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET). Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Employment-related income

Pay gap between managers and workers: This indicator provides the ratio of the earnings of senior managers to those of their lower-level employees (skilled manual or clerical workers, supervisors or graduates in entry-level positions). Data stem from a study of the Hay Group (2015), a globally operating consulting company. The study utilises company data on more than 16 million job holders from 24,000 organisations in more than 110 countries. For the EU Member States, data refer to the year 2014 and are available for 22 countries (all Member States except for Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Malta and Slovenia).

Diversity

Net migration rate: This indicator provides the difference between the total change and the natural change (live births minus deaths) of the population. Positive values indicate immigration to the respective country, whereas negative values indicate emigration from the respective country. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Asylum seekers: This indicator provides the number of first-time asylum applicants per million inhabitants in a given country. Data stem from Eurostat (2018) and refer to the years 2015 and 2016.

Religious diversity index: The religious diversity index takes into account the shares of the world's eight major religious groups in the respective society. A higher score indicates higher religious diversity. Data stem from the Pew Research Center (2014) and refer to the year 2010.[6]

Importance of religion in daily life: This indicator provides the percentage of respondents who respond with 'yes' to the question 'Is religion an important part of your daily life?'. It serves to measure the degree of religiosity of European societies. Data stem from the Gallup World Poll (Gallup, 2016) and refer to the year 2015.

6 Further measures of diversity such as ethnic or linguistic fractionalization are of high theoretical relevance, particularly to the aspects of social tensions and interpersonal trust. However, data on these measures are by now outdated (see Alesina et al, 2003).

Methodology

This section describes the methodological steps undertaken to address each of the research questions.

Research question 1: Current level of social cohesion

The analysis of the current level of social cohesion provides a descriptive account of the countries' average scores for the indicators relating to the key aspects of social cohesion, as measured in the EQLS 2016. In addition to the country averages, the graphical presentation of the data shows the respective confidence intervals.[7] Interpreting the country scores in relation to their confidence interval has the practical benefit of acting as a test of country-level differences. If two EU Member States have overlapping confidence intervals, it is almost certain that the countries in question do not differ from one another in terms of their central tendency. The results also make reference to the average score of the EU. Again, it is possible to compare individual Member States to the overall EU average using the confidence intervals of the country averages. It should be noted that the confidence intervals have not been adjusted for the numerous comparisons between pairs of countries, as would be the case in conservative post hoc tests within the framework of analysis of variance (Field, 2009).

Since the central aim of the report is not to benchmark the cohesion of EU Member States, the graphical presentation of the data does not rank the countries with respect to their score on the given indicator of social cohesion. It instead consistently orders them with respect to their GDP pc PPP, as measured in 2015–2016. This strategy has the additional advantage of giving a first impression as to whether the EU's continuous policy goal of upward economic prosperity is conducive to positive outcomes in relation to social cohesion.

Research question 2: Trend of social cohesion over time

The report considers trends regarding the indicators of social cohesion over time, both between countries and within individual Member States. It covers the three most recent rounds of the EQLS, in the years 2007, 2011 and 2016.

The intercountry trend of the examined indicators of social cohesion highlights patterns of convergence (or divergence) among the EU Member States over time. In particular, we are interested in reductions and increases in the dispersion of the country scores from one EQLS round to the next. These trends are presented with the help of box plots[8].

As for the differences identified over time within individual Member States, the analyses compare the average country scores for the examined indicators of social cohesion across the three years covered. They employ a one-way analysis of variance in the case of indicators measured on a continuous scale, and logistic regression in the case of dichotomous indicators. Since the comparisons involve three points in time, the analyses of variance apply the Scheffé correction for multiple pairwise comparisons (Field, 2009). Due to methodological limitations, the application of such corrections is not possible in the framework of logistic regression. The results can serve as an indication as to whether the euro zone crisis or the refugee crisis have left a mark on the resilience of EU societies.

Research question 3: Social cohesion across social groups

In order to identify differences in the key aspects of social cohesion across groups of individuals of the selected social categories, the report utilises one-way analyses of variance. In the case of continuous indicators, this involves applying the Scheffé correction for multiple pairwise comparisons, while logistic regression is used for dichotomous indicators. The report presents the estimated marginal means of each social group along with their 95% confidence intervals. The logic of comparison from the first research question applies here, too.

Research question 4: Societal drivers of social cohesion

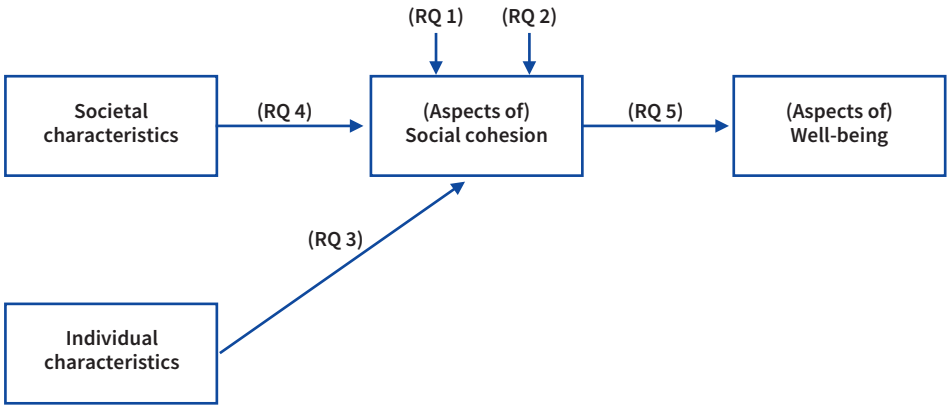
As already explained, the analyses seeking to explore drivers of social cohesion use measures of the key aspects of social cohesion from the EQLS 2016. In order to identify the societal drivers of these key aspects of social cohesion, the report employs bivariate Pearson and partial correlational tests (Field, 2009; see also Annex 1). The partial correlation control for the wealth of countries is measured with the GDP pc PPP, which is closely linked to many societal characteristics.[9] Taking the countries' economic situation away from the societal characteristics reveals the extent to which the societal characteristics studied alone affect social cohesion.

7 More detailed information on the confidence intervals can be found in the relevant section on page 60 in Annex 1.

8 More detailed information on box plots can be found in the relevant section in Annex 1.

9 Additional analyses, not reported here, investigated the stability of the associations between the key aspects of social cohesion, as measured with indicators from the 2016 EQLS wave, and the countries' GDP per capita, as measured in each of the years in the period 2008–2016. Regardless of the span of the tested time lag, the relationships remain remarkably stable. On these grounds, it is safe to assume that the use of a greater time lag in the measurement of the explored societal characteristics is unlikely to produce a significantly different picture from the one presented in this report. The stability in question also reduces the explanatory potential of dynamic measures of the societal characteristics (such as GDP growth), which is why dynamic measures are not considered in the present report.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study



It should be noted that the correlational nature of the analyses precludes any claims on the possibility of causality in the correlations, although the reporting style may occasionally seem to do so.

Research question 5: Social cohesion and subjective well-being

The report studies the correlations between the key aspects of social cohesion and the aspects of subjective well-being at the country level using data from the EQLS 2016. The analyses utilise bivariate Pearson correlation tests.

The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study, including the five research questions.

Structure of the report

The report includes dedicated chapters for each aspect of cohesion, systematically presenting the empirical data on the respective levels, trends, differences across social groups and societal drivers.

The first chapter explores the level of perceived social exclusion in the EU, comparing the respective levels across the Member States, the trend over time and differences between social groups. It then examines the correlations between social exclusion and a number of relevant societal characteristics, in order to identify the main societal drivers for this aspect of cohesion.

The second chapter covers perceived social tensions. As the research identifies two prevalent sub-aspects of social tensions – namely, economic tensions and cultural tensions – the chapter deals extensively with each. Again, this chapter reveals the current level, variations over time, differences between social groups and main societal drivers for both types of tensions.

The third chapter focuses on interpersonal trust, including its current level in the EU, changes over time, differences between social groups and associated societal drivers.

The fourth chapter explores participation in society, which also utilises two indicators: civic engagement and political participation. The chapter analyses the current levels, variations over time, differences between social groups and main societal drivers for both types of participation.

In the fifth chapter, the sense of community is again measured by two indicators: citizens' level of attachment to other people in their local area, and the frequency with which they have contact with friends and neighbours. This chapter again follows the same structure, detailing the current levels, changes over time, differences between social groups and associated societal drivers.

A separate chapter deals with subjective well-being, compiling the evidence on its correlation with social cohesion. This chapter looks at three separate aspects of subjective well-being: transitory well-being, life evaluation and eudaimonia, exploring their respective prevalence, distribution and correlations with social cohesion.

The report concludes with a summary and discussion of the insights gained, including policy pointers for strengthening and sustaining social cohesion in the societies of the EU.

1 Perceived social exclusion

Policy context

As social beings, individuals typically have a strong desire to feel part of the society they live in – in other words, to be socially included. In contemporary societies, social inclusion is chiefly organised through systems such as the labour market – or the educational system for younger people – and the welfare state, as well as smaller-scale communities. Social exclusion, on the other hand, refers to people being and feeling excluded from society, and can pose a severe threat to well-being. Where social exclusion is found to be widespread, this is indicative of a society with deep social divisions that fails to adequately integrate all its members.

Eradicating poverty and social exclusion has been a long-standing policy goal of the EU. This was emphasised by the European Commission when it launched the social investment package in 2013, with its focus on promoting social inclusion. Specifically, the European Social Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived provide financial resources to prevent social exclusion. As it is recognised that adverse economic conditions contribute to social exclusion, it is particularly interesting to analyse perceived social exclusion in EU societies in the aftermath of the euro zone crisis.

It is important to note that this report does not focus on objective social exclusion, as shown by established indicators such as the at-risk-of-poverty rate. Instead, the report examines perceived social exclusion, drawing entirely on citizens' feelings about their position in society and the challenges they face. Such an approach is in line with the recommendations of Stiglitz et al (2009) on the superiority of subjective accounts over objective manifestations.

Measuring social exclusion

The operationalisation of social exclusion in this report directly borrows from the approach of Eurofound (2017a). It takes the form of a composite index based on the following four statements that are used as items in the EQLS:

- 'I feel left out of society.'
- 'Life has become so complicated today that I almost can't find my way.'
- 'I feel that the value of what I do is not recognised by others.'
- 'Some people look down on me because of my job situation or income.'

For the purposes of this report, the original Likert scale – which ranges from 1 ('strongly agree') to 5 ('strongly disagree') – has been reversed and rescaled: going from 0 (strongly disagree) to 100 (strongly agree). This revised approach has been adopted here in order to streamline the scales of all indicators throughout the report, and also to gauge smaller, country-level differences in this aspect of social cohesion (Eurofound, 2017a). As the occurrence of missing values for each of the items did not exceed 5%, they have been substituted with the country-specific means from each round of the EQLS. The index of perceived social exclusion has been constructed by calculating the average of the four items.

Current levels

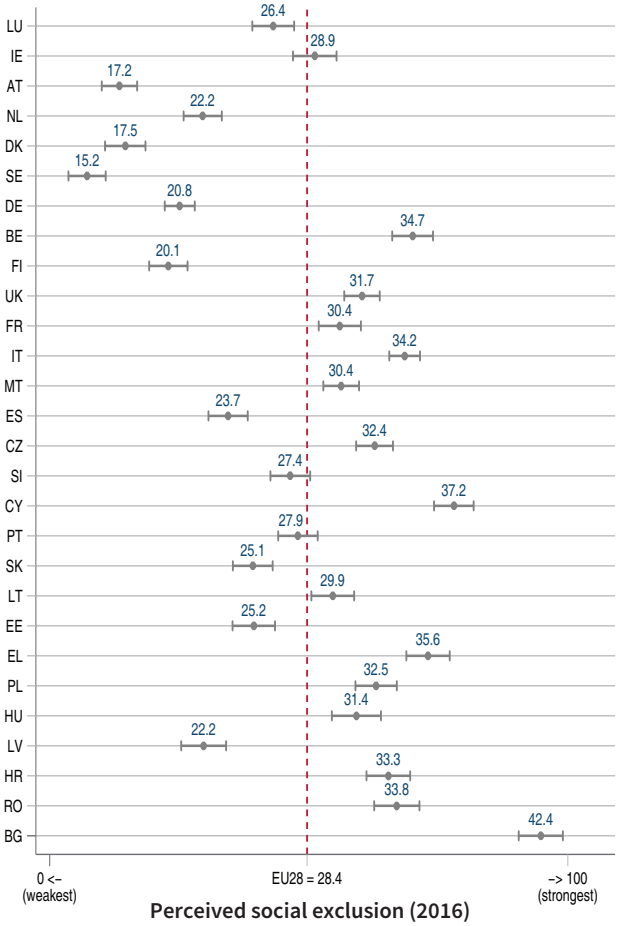
Figure 2 presents the average perception of social exclusion across the EU Member States in 2016. Calculated on the scale of 0 (no perception of social exclusion) to 100 (extremely strong perception of social exclusion), the overall EU average is 28.4. In terms of the span of the scale, the average level of perceived social exclusion in the EU, located at the lower end of the second quartile, appears to be rather low. Nevertheless, considering that social exclusion refers to a severe condition of social marginalisation, the EU average should not be underestimated. It is also worth noting that, although the EU average is relatively low, there is a wide variation in the perceptions across individual countries.

Of all EU Member States, social exclusion is lowest in Sweden (15.2). Based on the 95% confidence interval of the Swedish average, it is very similar, in statistical terms, to the level of perceived social exclusion in Austria (17.2) and Denmark (17.5). At the opposite end of the range, Bulgaria clearly stands out as the EU Member State with the highest perception of social exclusion, with a score of 42.4. Cyprus (37.2) and Greece (35.6) have the second and third highest levels of social exclusion respectively.

The index of perceived social exclusion somewhat demonstrates geographical patterns, with relatively low levels of social exclusion perceived in the Nordic and Germanic Member States, and higher levels of social exclusion experienced in south-eastern Member States. It is, however, difficult to identify a clear geographical trend across the EU. Similarly, there is no clear trend with respect to the countries' levels of economic prosperity. Three Member States – Sweden (15.2), Austria (17.2) and Denmark (17.5) – display by far the lowest levels of social exclusion, followed by Finland

(20.1), Germany (20.8) and the Netherlands (22.2). The latter, however, has exactly the same level as Latvia (also 22.2) – a country that is located in the Baltic region and has a much smaller economy – and a similar level to Spain (23.7). Interestingly, the level of social exclusion in Greece (35.6) is not only similar to that in poorer countries such as Croatia (33.3) and Romania (33.8), but is also comparable to that in more economically affluent Member States such as Belgium (34.7) and Italy (34.2). Furthermore, the economically stronger, western societies of France (30.4) and the UK (31.7) have similar levels of social exclusion to those in Hungary (31.4), the Czech Republic (32.4) and Poland (32.5). Meanwhile, the level of social exclusion in Luxembourg (26.4) – the richest Member State according to GDP per capita – does not differ significantly from that in Slovakia (25.1), Estonia (25.2), Slovenia (27.4) and Portugal (27.9). Portugal and Ireland are the closest to the EU average, at 27.9 and 28 respectively.

Figure 2: Level of perceived social exclusion in 2016



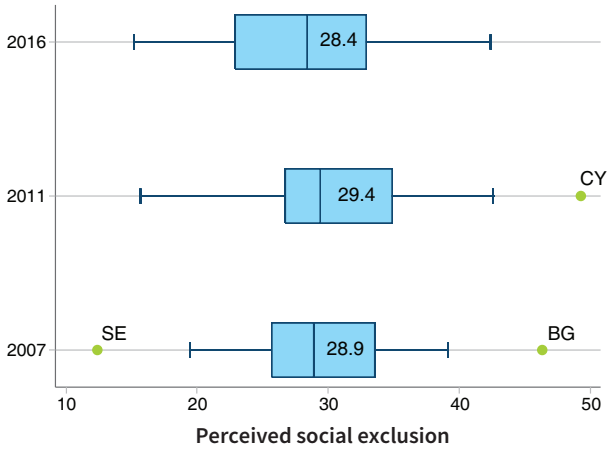
Note: *The figure shows the average level of perceived social exclusion in EU Member States in 2016, represented by a dot. The lines stretching out to the left and right of each country average indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals.Estimates with overlapping confidence intervals can be considered as not differing significantly from each other (this applies to all graphs of this type in the report); for an explanation of the confidence intervals, see Annex 1. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order on the basis of their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

Based on these findings, it can be assumed that perceptions of social exclusion are not wholly determined by a country's economic prosperity, which is a core policy focus of the EU with its continuous goal to foster upward convergence. The section on page 16 on the main societal drivers explores which specific socio-structural characteristics may have an influence on the levels of social exclusion across the EU.

Trends over time

The box plots in Figure 3 indicate the levels of social exclusion across the EU from before (2007), during (2011) and after (2016) the crisis of the euro zone. Detailed data are available in Table A3 in Annex 2, which shows the average levels of social exclusion in the EU Member States and the EU as a whole, along with changes over time in each country.

Figure 3: Convergence/divergence in perceived social exclusion



Note: *The box plots in the figure display the variation of perceived social exclusion across EU Member States in 2007, 2011 and 2016. The vertical line in each box plot displays the EU population average in the respective year. Outlier Member States are explicitly labelled outside the range of the lines stretching to the left and right of the box plots, known as whiskers. For guidance on how this type of graph is constructed and how to read it, please refer to Annex 1.*

Although the box plots across the three years point to an upward shift from 2007 to 2011, followed by a downward shift from 2011 to 2016, perceptions of social exclusion in the EU as a whole have remained largely unchanged, as the negligible oscillations in the overall EU average suggest (see Table A3 in Annex 2). This is due to an internal pattern of divergence across the Member States. On the one hand, most of the central and eastern European Member States have experienced significant declines in the levels of perceived social exclusion. This trend is particularly evident in comparisons of the pre- and post-crisis years (2007 and 2016). As well as in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, declines in levels of perceived social exclusion were also recorded

in Austria, Denmark, Finland and the UK. On the other hand, the Mediterranean countries of Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain, in addition to the Czech Republic and Sweden, have not recovered to their lower pre-crisis levels of social exclusion.

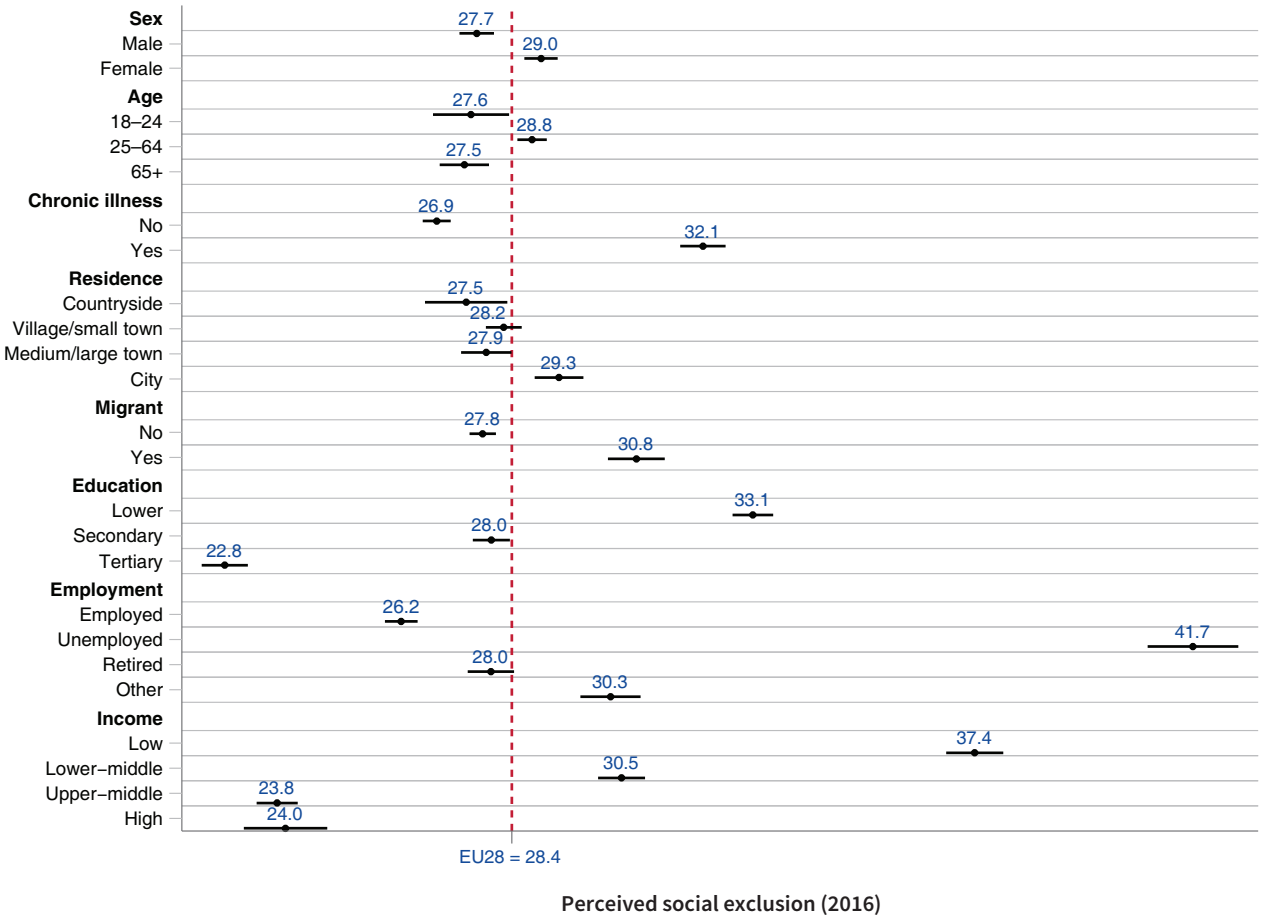
Interestingly, the levels of social exclusion in Belgium, France, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia have remained remarkably stable over this period.

Differences between social groups

Figure 4 presents differences in perceptions of social exclusion across various social groups. Alongside the average perception for a given social group, the figure displays its 95% confidence interval, as estimated using the Scheffé correction for pairwise comparisons in one-way analyses of variance. If social categories have overlapping confidence intervals, they can be considered as not differing significantly from one another. Given the large sub-sample sizes used, even minute differences between social categories are of statistical significance. Therefore, in order to pick out a number of key conclusions, this report focuses on differences of a minimum of five points.

Firstly, a substantially higher level of social exclusion is perceived by those who are chronically ill (32.1) as compared to respondents who do not suffer from a chronic health issue (26.9). Another important factor is education; in comparison to citizens who hold a tertiary degree (22.8), those with a secondary level of education (28) appear to be at a significantly higher risk of social exclusion, and those with a lower level of education (33.1) even more so. However, the greatest differences are found in relation to employment status and income class. Unemployed respondents have the strongest perception of social exclusion (41.7), followed by citizens in the low income class (37.4). Considerably higher social exclusion is also perceived by citizens in the lower-middle income class (30.5), as compared to respondents in the upper-middle and high income classes (23.8 and 24 respectively).

Figure 4: Perceived social exclusion, by social group



Note: *Figure 4 displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of perceived social exclusion in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

In summary, the groups that are most at risk of social exclusion appear to be – in descending order – the unemployed, those in the low income class, those with a lower level of education and the chronically ill. The groups least at risk of social exclusion are citizens with tertiary education, as well as those with upper-middle and high income levels.

Main societal drivers

In order to analyse which societal conditions are related to stronger perceptions of social exclusion, the report examines the correlations between social exclusion and a number of relevant societal characteristics. These characteristics have been selected primarily on the basis of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The raw correlations (bivariate) are presented in Table 3, alongside the correlations as adjusted for differences in countries' economic prosperity (partial).

Firstly, social exclusion is lower in the more affluent EU societies (r = -.49, $p \leq .01$), although the correlation is only moderately strong. This could already be observed in Figure 2, which presented the average level of social exclusion in the EU Member States, ranked on the basis of their GDP pc PPP.

Secondly, the insignificant bivariate and partial correlations between the percentage of individuals with tertiary education and the average level of social exclusion show that societies with a higher level of education do not necessarily have a lower level of social exclusion. However, the acquisition of digital skills by members of society is associated with significantly lower feelings of social exclusion. This moderately strong association operates regardless of the level of economic prosperity, as the partial correlation shows (r = -.57, $p \leq .01$).

Table 3: Societal drivers of perceived social exclusion

Characteristic	Bivariate	Partial
GDP pc PPP (ln)	-0.49 ***	
Tertiary education level (%)	-0.25	-0.02
Individuals with digital skills (%)	-0.70 ***	-0.57 ***
Income inequality: S80/S20	0.40 **	0.19
Downward to upward mobility ratio	0.18	-0.06
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	0.35 *	0.14
Severe material deprivation (%)	0.69 ***	0.57 ***
Unemployment rate	0.24	0.13
Government expenditure on public policies	-0.48 **	-0.35 *

Note: *The table presents country-level bivariate and partial correlations between perceived social exclusion in 2016 and selected societal characteristics. The partial correlations adjust for differences in the countries' GDP pc PPP. The significance of the correlations in the case of two-sided tests is as follows:* *** p ≤ *.01,* ** p ≤ *.05,* * p ≤ *.10.*

When it comes to the structure of the labour market, neither downward mobility nor unemployment shows significant correlations with social exclusion. Furthermore, no significant correlations were found between social exclusion and income inequality (r = .19) or the percentage of poor individuals (r = .14).

However, societies with a greater rate of severe material deprivation appear to have higher levels of social exclusion (r = .57, $p \leq .01$), regardless of their national affluence. It therefore appears that a country's economic prosperity alone, although generally conducive to lower social exclusion, cannot fully mitigate the negative impact of its citizens not being able to afford basic necessities. Incidentally, high government expenditure on public policies is also found to reduce social exclusion, whether in richer or poorer societies (r = -.35, $p \leq .10$).

Social exclusion – Key findings

Prevalence

Perceptions of social exclusion in the EU Member States appear not to be strongly pronounced. However, the issue should be addressed by policymakers, given the substantive severity of social exclusion for the individuals affected.

Distribution

In 2016, the level of social exclusion was found to be highest in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece. It was relatively low in the Nordic and Germanic countries.

Trend

The average perception of social exclusion across the EU has by and large remained stable over time, due to an internal pattern of divergence across Member States. While there have been major reductions in Austria and Latvia, the Mediterranean Member States have not recovered to their pre-financial crisis levels.

Risk groups

The groups most at risk of social exclusion were found to be those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged: citizens who are unemployed, have low incomes or low levels of education, or are chronically ill. There are also substantial differences between the lower-middle and upper-middle income classes. Citizens in the upper-middle or high income classes appear least likely to experience feelings of social exclusion.

Societal drivers

Economic prosperity, government expenditure on public policies and digital skills are associated with weaker perceptions of social exclusion.

2 Perceived social tensions

Policy context

Modern societies are composed of a multitude of social groups. Citizens may, for example, be categorised in terms of their income class, ethnicity or age. Perceived social tensions indicate how cooperative, or indeed conflictual, the interactions among social groups can be – a key aspect of social cohesion. Still, cohesion is not to be equated with complete social harmony, especially in open, democratic societies. Experts who study cohesion have therefore pointed out that, while some tensions between social groups are to be considered as normal and unproblematic, strong tensions pose a serious issue (see, for example, Delhey and Keck, 2008). In other words, widespread perceptions of strong tensions between major social groups indicate a problem in society and a threat to social cohesion. This chapter focuses primarily on such strong tensions in society, as perceived by citizens.

Economic inequality has increased in a number of EU Member States, many of which have also been severely affected by the crisis of the euro zone and the ensuing rises in poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, there has long been a trend of growing divisions in EU societies with respect to horizontal social characteristics and vertical hierarchies (Nachtwey, 2016). In light of this, the widening of socioeconomic differences between individuals living in the same societies is of particular interest. Increasing diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion – which accelerated during the refugee crisis – is also highly relevant, especially in the western EU Member States. In particular, discussions have been taking place regarding the role of religion in society across the EU, particularly with regard to Islam. Such trends have a tendency to cause divisions, or even conflict, between different societal groups, which may in turn harm the social fabric of the EU's largely modern and pluralistic societies.

Measuring social tensions

In order to operationalise this aspect, the present report considers subjective perceptions of social tensions, rather than their objective manifestations. In terms of vertical hierarchies, the report examines perceptions of socioeconomic tensions between two sets of societal groups:

- rich and poor
- managers and workers

As for horizontal divisions, the report focuses on perceptions of ethno-cultural tensions. In particular, it examines tensions between:

- different racial and ethnic groups
- different religious groups

The EQLS question relating to the social tensions outlined above asks respondents to assess how much tension exists between the given social groups. The original measurement scale offers respondents three options: 'a lot of tension', 'some tension', and 'no tension'.

This scale presents a number of issues. Firstly, from a semantic point of view, it could be argued that the gap between 'a lot of tension' and 'some tension' is much larger than that between 'some tension' and 'no tension'. Moreover, experiences of 'some tension' are inherent in pluralistic, democratic societies and thus should not be taken as a strong indication of major societal polarisation. This question has therefore been dichotomised in the present report such that social cohesion is only considered to be at risk if respondents indicate 'a lot of tension' between the relevant social groups.

In order to maintain a uniform scale for all aspects of social cohesion, the items have been recoded, with 100 standing for a high level of tension and 0 standing for no tension. Given the dichotomous nature of these indicators, the figures in this section are presented as percentages, referring to the proportion of citizens of a given country who perceive a high level of tension in society.

As the items cover diverse facets of tensions, each one is analysed separately.

Current levels

This section begins by analysing economic tensions, before moving on to ethno-cultural tensions.

Economic tensions

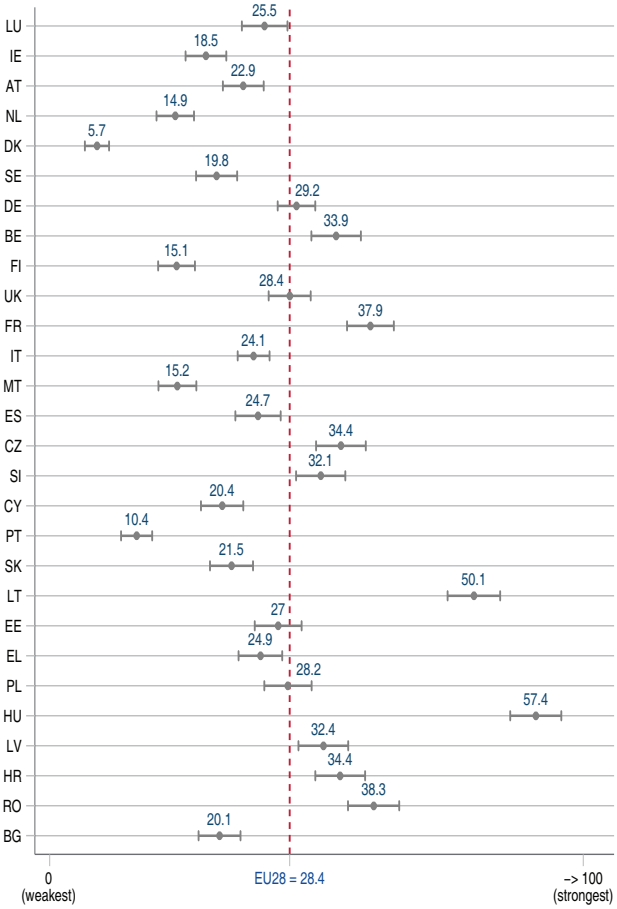
Figures 5a and 5b illustrate the rates at which citizens of EU Member States perceive high levels of tension between rich and poor people and between managers and workers respectively.

As regards the first indicator, slightly more than a quarter (28%) of EU citizens perceive a high level of tension between rich and poor people in their society. However, this relatively low rate for the EU as a whole masks the considerable variability among Member States. The lowest level of tension between rich and poor was found in Denmark (6%), whereas the highest

rate was found in Hungary (58%), closely followed by Lithuania (50%). Aside from these extremes at either end of the scale, the rest of the Member States exhibit rates of between 10% (in Portugal) and 38% (in Romania). Overall, it is difficult to identify a particular pattern of tensions between rich and poor people across the EU. Although there is a slight tendency for the post-communist Member States to perceive more tensions, the overlapping 95% confidence intervals indicate that Member States do not differ significantly according to their economic prosperity. For example, the perceived level of tension in the richest Member State, Luxembourg, is 26%. This is comparable to the rates in Spain (25%), the UK (28%) and Germany (29%) – and also to those of the considerably poorer societies of Greece (25%), Estonia (27%) and Poland (28%). In the same vein, the perceived level of tension in Ireland (19%), the second richest EU Member State, is not significantly different from that in Bulgaria (20%), the EU's poorest country. Furthermore, 38% of French citizens perceive a high level of tension, a similar proportion to that in Croatia (34%) or Romania (38%).

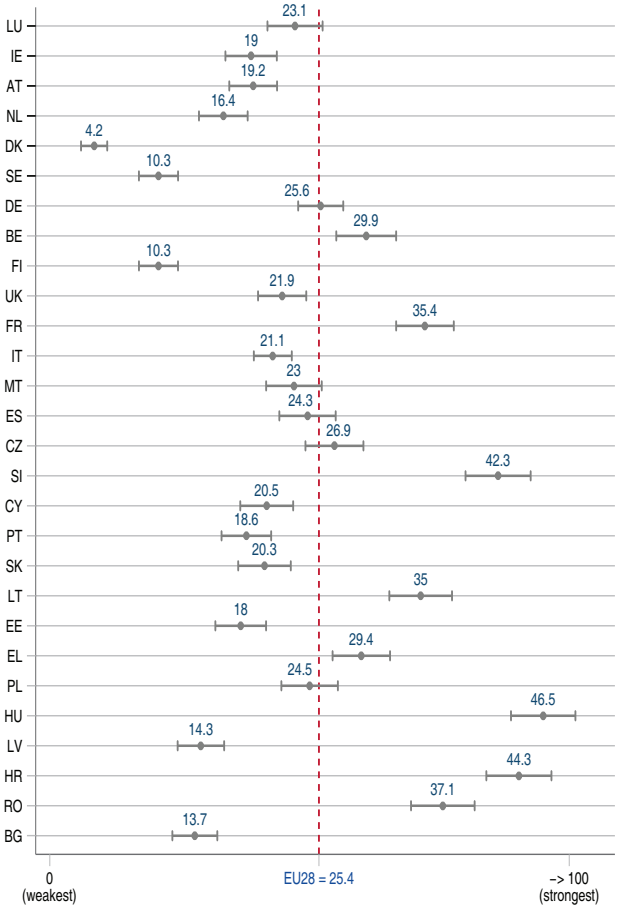
As regards tensions between managers and workers, the picture is very much the same. The overall rate across the EU is 25%, meaning one in four citizens perceive a high level of tension between the two occupational classes. Hungarian citizens reported the highest rate (47%), closely followed by those in Croatia (44%) and Slovenia (42%). At the opposite end of the scale, once again, is Denmark: only 4% of the Danish population perceive a high level of tension between managers and workers. As with the perceptions of tensions between rich and poor, citizens in the post-communist societies are slightly more likely to perceive a high level of tension between the two occupational classes, but there is no clear pattern across the EU. Again, comparable rates are found across different Member States, irrespective of their economic prosperity. For example, the rate in Luxembourg (23%) does not differ significantly from that in Malta (23%),

Figure 5a: Level of perceived economic tensions in 2016 (rich and poor)



Perceived tensions: rich and poor (2016)

Figure 5b: Level of perceived economic tensions in 2016 (managers and workers)



Perceived tensions: management and workers (2016)

Note: *The two figures show the proportion of citizens in each EU Member State who perceive a high level of tensions between rich and poor people (Figure 5a) and between managers and workers (Figure 5b). The lines stretching out to the left and right of each dot – which represents the country mean – indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order on the basis of their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

Spain (24%), Poland (25%), Germany (26%) or the Czech Republic (27%). Similarly, France (35%), Lithuania (35%) and Romania (37%) do not differ significantly, just as the rate in the much richer society of the Netherlands (16%) is scarcely different from that in Estonia (18%), Portugal (19%), or even the EU's poorest country, Bulgaria (13%).

Ethno-cultural tensions

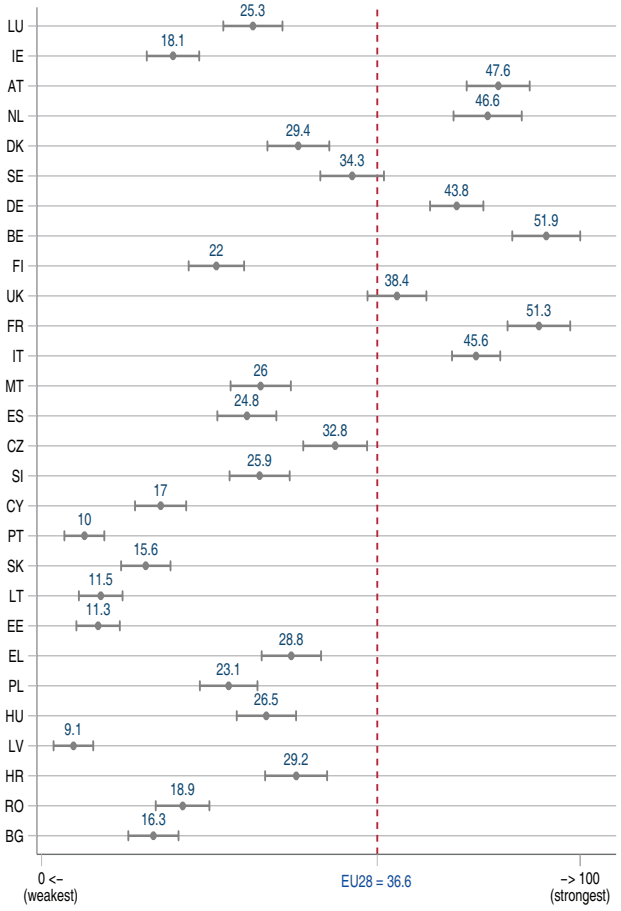
The rates at which EU citizens perceive tensions between racial and ethnic groups and between religious groups in their country are presented in Figures 6a and 6b respectively.

As regards the first indicator, 40% of all EU citizens perceive a high level of tensions between racial and ethnic groups, which is the most prominent type of tension in the EU as a whole. The trend across the EU is quite clear: the western Member States that have experienced high levels of immigration in recent years also tend to have higher levels of perceived racial and ethnic tensions. Four to five out of 10 citizens in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK report perceiving a high level of tension on the basis of race and ethnicity. Comparable rates can also be found in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Malta. In the remaining Member States, the level of perceived ethnic and racial tension is below the EU average, ranging from 19% in Lithuania to 35% in Finland.

Perceived religious tensions constitute the second most prominent type of tension in the EU, at an average rate of 37%. Stated in substantive terms, every third or fourth EU citizen perceives a high level of tension between religious groups. The trend across the EU Member States is very similar to that of racial and ethnic tensions. It is again the western Member States of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK that have the highest levels of perceived religious tension. In these Member States, which have experienced high levels of immigration in

Figure 6a: Level of perceived ethno-cultural tensions in 2016 (racial/ethnic groups)

Figure 6b: Level of perceived ethno-cultural tensions in 2016 (religious groups)



Note: *The two figures show the proportion of citizens in each EU Member State who perceive a high level of tension between different racial and ethnic groups (Figure 6a) and between different religious groups (Figure 6b). The lines stretching out to the left and right of each dot – which represents the country mean – indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order based on their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

recent years, 4 to 5 out of 10 citizens perceive a high level of religious tension. The lowest rates are found in Latvia (9%), Portugal (10%), Estonia (11%) and Lithuania (12%). Bulgaria and Cyprus, which have the highest percentages of Muslims of all EU Member States (about 13% and 25% respectively; see Pew Research Center, 2014) experience relatively moderate levels of religious tension, at 16% and 17% respectively. Meanwhile, less than one in five citizens perceive a high level of religious tension in Ireland (18%), a country that has experienced longstanding religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Taken together, the findings suggest that religious tensions are currently more pronounced in the societies that have in recent years been confronted with increased religious diversity.

Trends over time

This section of the report looks at the trends regarding economic and ethno-cultural tensions in the EU.

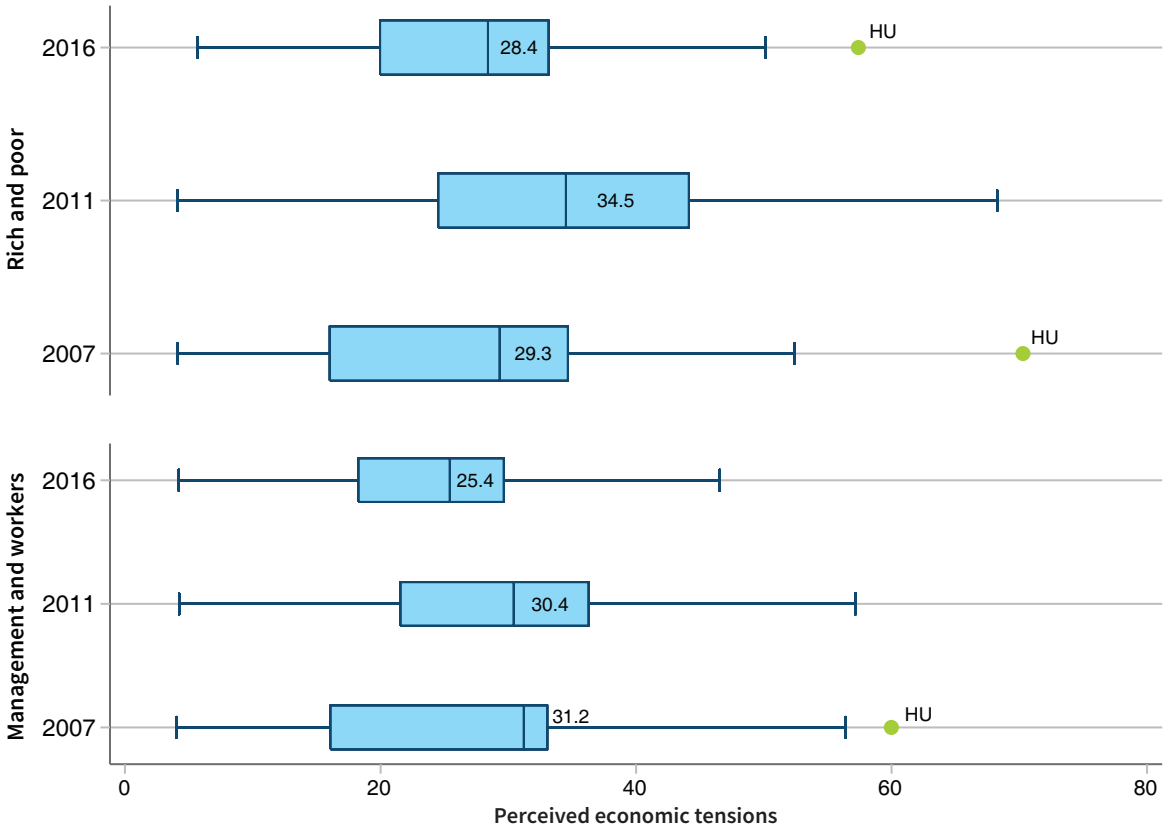
Economic tensions

Figure 7 presents the variation in the rates of perceptions of high levels of tension between rich and poor people (upper panel) and between managers and workers (lower panel) in the EU over time. Detailed data on both indicators of economic tensions is available for each country, as well as for the EU as a whole, in Tables A4 and A5 in Annex 2.

The overall rate of tensions between rich and poor people in the EU as a whole initially increased from 2007 to 2011, before falling back to slightly below its pre-crisis level in 2016, with around 3 in 10 citizens (28%) perceiving a high level of such tension. It is noteworthy that 19 EU Member States registered significant increases for this indicator from 2007 to 2011 (see Table A4 in Annex 2). Among these countries, tensions between rich and poor people increased by more than 10 percentage points in Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Romania and the UK. In the second period, from 2011 to 2016, the proportion of citizens reporting a high level of tension between rich and poor people declined significantly in 17 Member States. It should also be noted that, despite a reduction in its rate of perceived tensions between rich and poor in 2016, Hungary stands out as a significant outlier with a relatively high rate of perceived tensions.

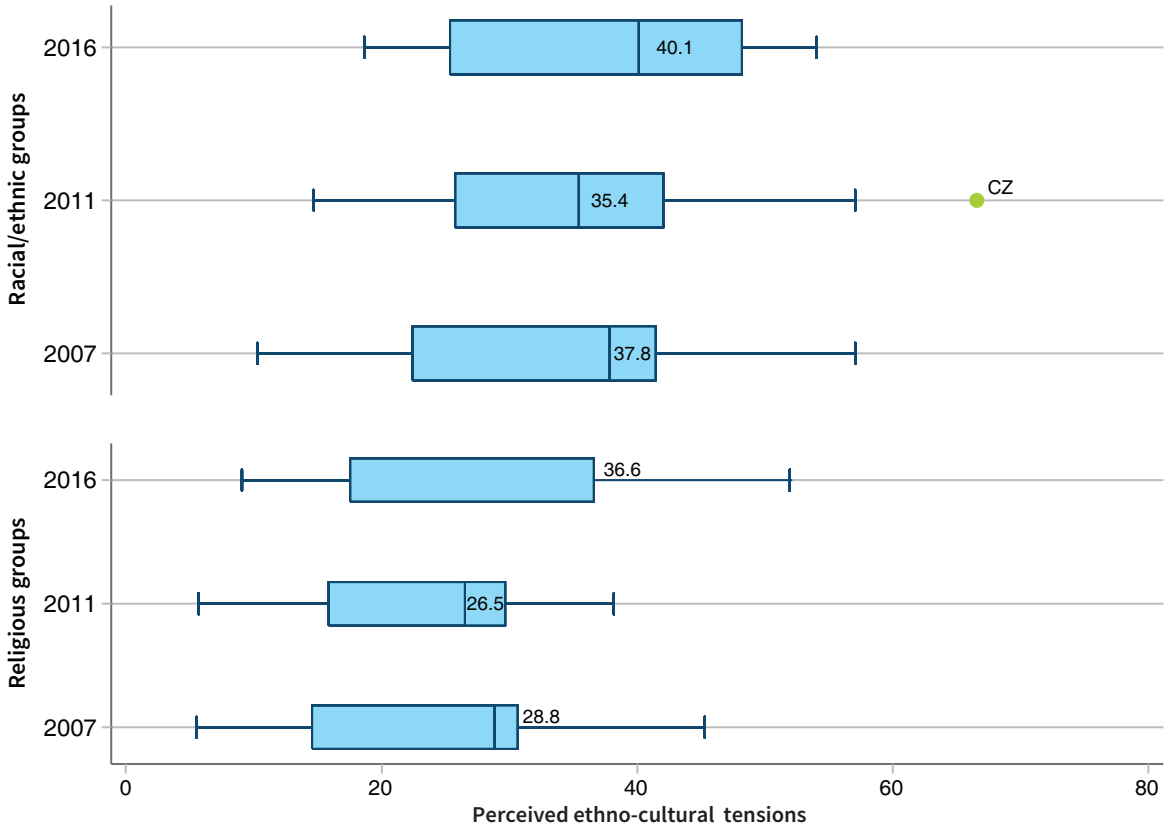
The overall rate of tensions between managers and workers has been on the decline in the EU as a whole. This development is illustrated in the lower panel of Figure 7, which shows a clear reduction in the spread of the distribution of this type of tension. In 2007 and 2011,

Figure 7: Convergence/divergence in perceived economic tensions



Note: *The box plots in the figure display the variation of perceived economic tensions across EU Member States in 2007, 2011 and 2016. The vertical line in each box plot displays the EU average in the respective year. Outlier countries are explicitly labelled outside the range of the whiskers.*

Figure 8: Convergence/divergence in perceived ethno-cultural tensions



Note: *The box plots in the figure display the variation of perceived ethno-cultural tensions across EU Member States in 2007, 2011 and 2016. The vertical line in each box plot displays the EU average in the respective year. Outlier countries are explicitly labelled outside the range of the whiskers.*

almost one in three EU citizens perceived a high level of tension between managers and workers (31% and 30% respectively), but by 2016, the rate had fallen to one in four citizens (25%). The latter is due to 19 countries registering significant declines in the extent of these tensions (see Table A5 in Annex 2). The most sizeable decline was observed in Greece, from 57% in 2011 to 29% in 2016. Perceptions of this type of tension also fell by more than 10 percentage points in Cyprus, France and Slovenia.

Overall, EU Member States appear to be converging towards lower levels of perceived economic tensions, both between rich and poor people and between managers and workers. Despite this overall pattern of convergence, it should be noted that five countries – Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Sweden and the UK – have not yet recovered to their pre-crisis levels of economic tensions.

Ethno-cultural tensions

The data show that ethno-cultural tensions peaked in the EU around 2016, when 40% of EU citizens perceived a high level of tension between racial and ethnic groups and 37% perceived a high level of tension between religious groups.

As illustrated in Figure 8, perceptions of racial and ethnic tensions have remained relatively similar across the three years examined in the present study. Moreover, EU Member States seem to be on a path of convergence, as indicated by the reduction in the ranges of the figures over time. The detailed country information in Table A6 in Annex 2 shows that 11 societies experienced significant increases in perceived ethnic tensions from 2007 to 2016, although this is partially counterbalanced by five Member States experiencing significant declines. There is no clear geographical pattern in this development. Sizeable increases were registered in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden. Declines were observed in Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain.

The picture is different when it comes to the rate of perceived religious tensions. As can be seen in the lower panel of Figure 8, there was a decrease in the level of perceived religious tensions in the EU Member States between 2007 and 2011. However, the level then increased markedly in the ensuing period, from 2011 to 2016. In concrete terms, perceptions of high levels of religious tensions across the EU increased by

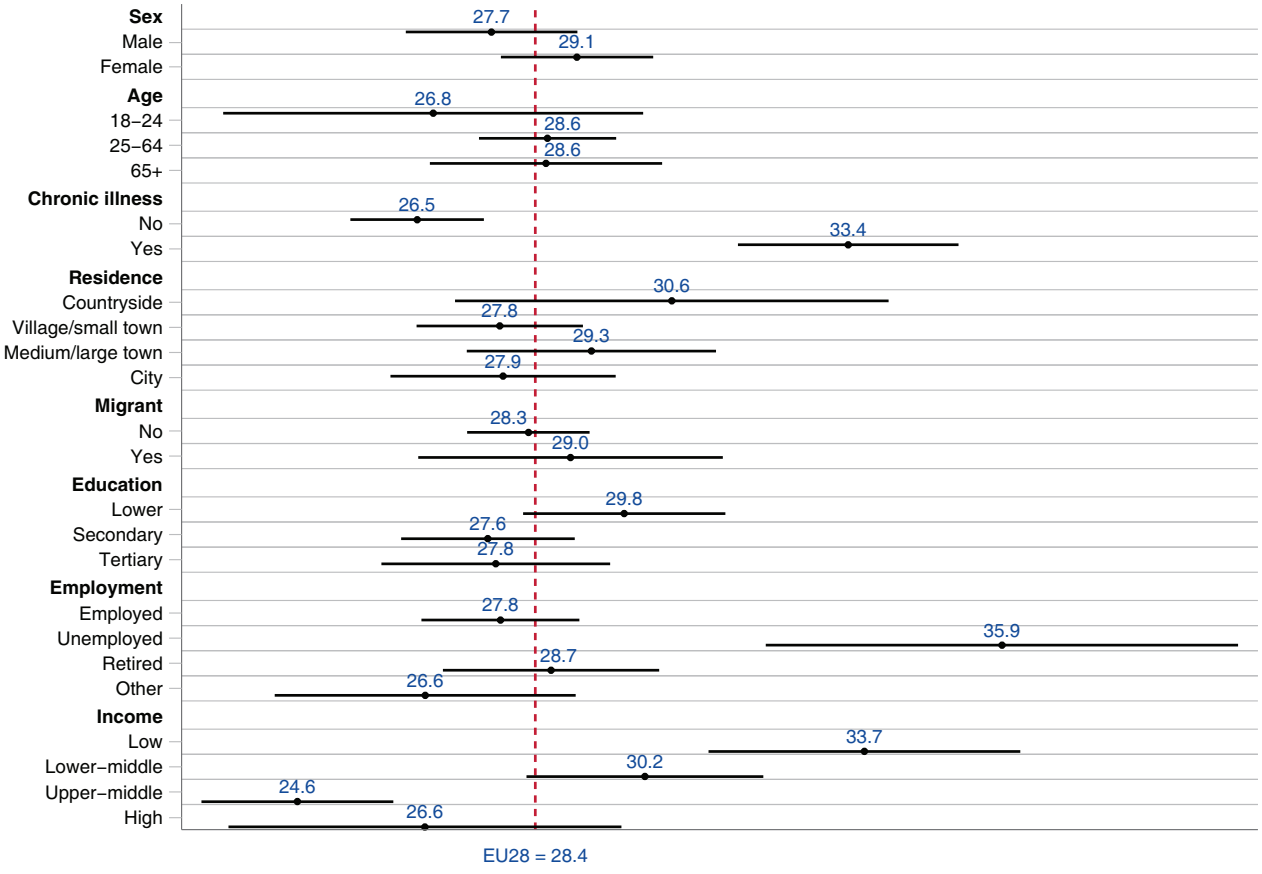
10 percentage points, to a rate of 37% in 2016. In terms of individual Member States, the rate of perceived religious tensions increased significantly in 19 countries during this period. It is thought that this development may be due to the migration crisis of 2015–2016, although this has not been explicitly tested. The largest increases were found in the western Member States of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands (see Table A7 in Annex 2), all of which have experienced high levels of immigration in recent years. The fact that these Member States are also among the most populous in the EU may explain why the average rate of perceived religious tensions in the EU in 2016 is higher than the rates of more than half of its Member States.

Differences between social groups

This section examines differences between social groups in their perceptions of tensions in society. Since the indicators for the individual perceptions of tensions are of a dichotomous nature, comparisons of the relevant social groups are carried out in the framework of logistic regression. The figures on the level of tensions perceived by each social group include 95% confidence intervals for each of the respective estimates. Groups with overlapping confidence intervals can be regarded as not differing significantly from each other. Given the large sample size, only differences of at least five points between social groups are considered to be substantial.

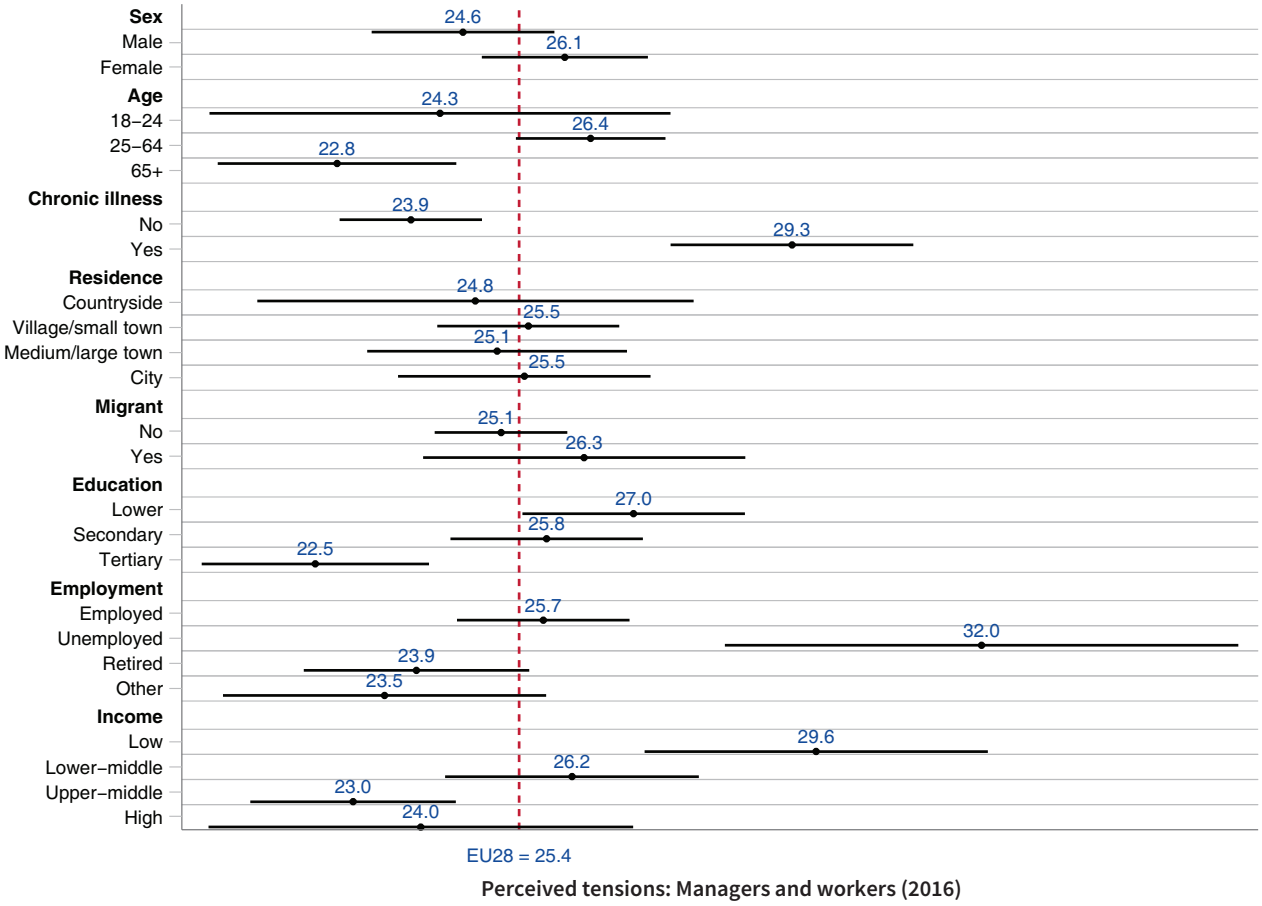
The section begins by examining the extent to which social groups differ in their perceptions of economic tensions, before moving on to differences related to ethno-cultural tensions.

Figure 9: Perceived tensions between rich and poor, by social group



Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of perceived tensions between rich and poor in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

Figure 10: Perceived tensions between managers and workers, by social group



Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of perceived tensions between managers and workers in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

Economic tensions

The levels of tensions between rich and poor people in the EU, as perceived by different social groups, are presented in Figure 9 (previous page). The perceived levels of tensions between managers and workers can be seen in Figure 10. In both cases, the difference between the group with the highest level of perceived tensions and the group with the lowest level is relatively small, at around 10 percentage points. Although some of the confidence intervals appear to be quite large, indicating a degree of variation in the perceptions of tensions within individual social groups, this is an inevitable result of the dichotomous nature of the indicators.

This being said, there is remarkable correspondence in the patterns of differences between social groups for both indicators. Characteristics such as sex, age, degree of urbanisation of respondents' place of residence and migration background appear irrelevant when it comes to perceptions of economic tensions. More variation is, however, identified with respect to employment status, income class and health status.

Unemployed citizens perceive higher levels of tensions between rich and poor people (36%) and between managers and workers (32%), as compared to the other categories of labour market participation. Those in the low-income class also indicate a higher level of economic tension, especially in comparison to the upper-middle class. It is important to note that the level of tension between rich and poor perceived by the lower-middle income class (30%), although only slightly higher than the EU average, is substantially higher than that of the upper-middle class (25%). The gap between the two middle-income classes is, however, not as pronounced when it comes to tensions between managers and workers. The chronically ill also perceive higher levels of economic tensions as compared to citizens who do not have a chronic health issue.

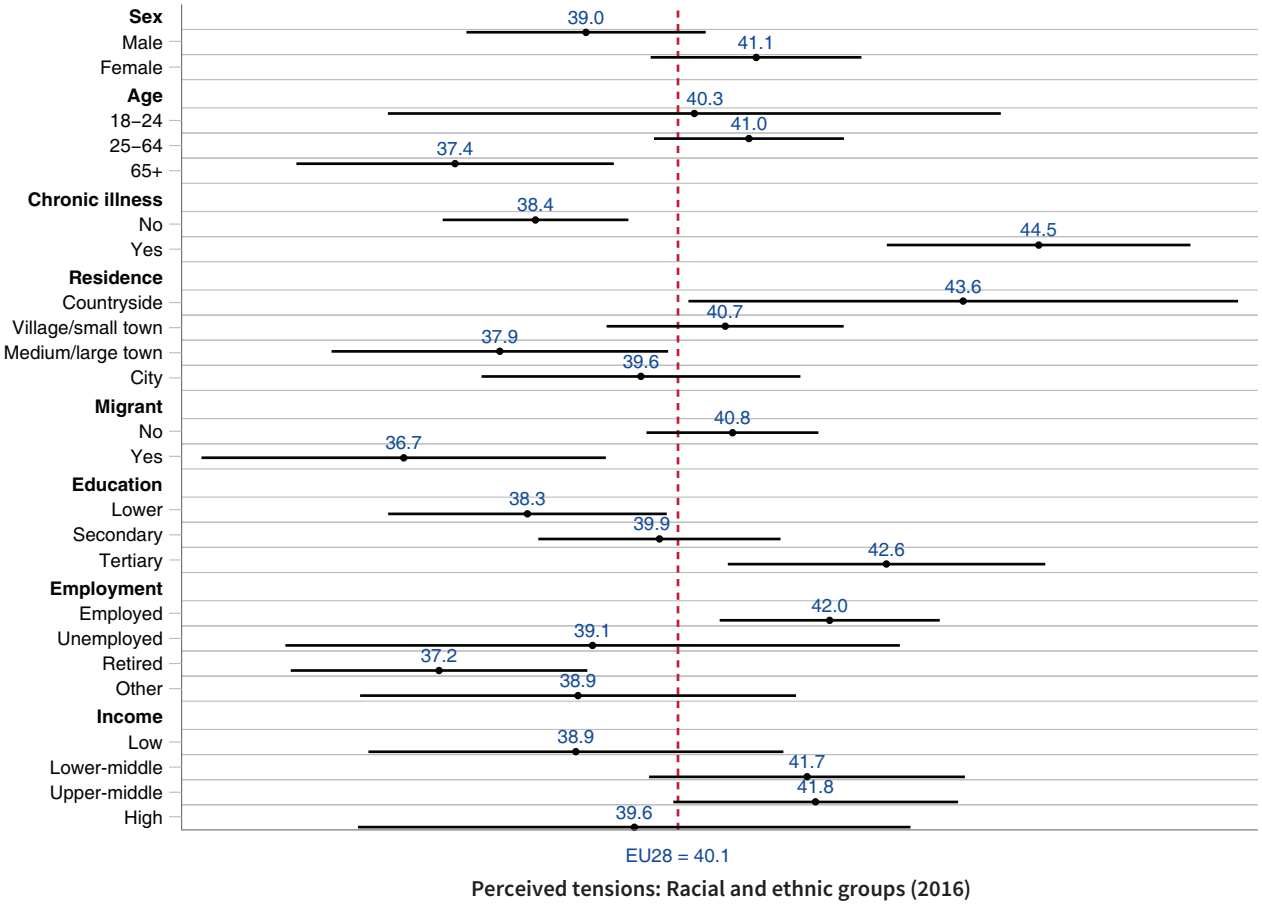
Ethno-cultural tensions

Figures 11 and 12 summarise the EU28 data on tensions between racial and ethnic groups and between religious groups respectively, as perceived by different social groups. For both indicators, no pronounced differences are identified, although there are some slight trends. Overall, this suggests that ethno-cultural tensions are felt rather uniformly by EU citizens.

Only a few trends are of statistical significance. The chronically ill clearly perceive higher levels of ethno-cultural tensions, as measured for both indicators. Employed respondents also perceive higher levels of ethno-cultural tensions for both indicators, especially in comparison to those who are retired.

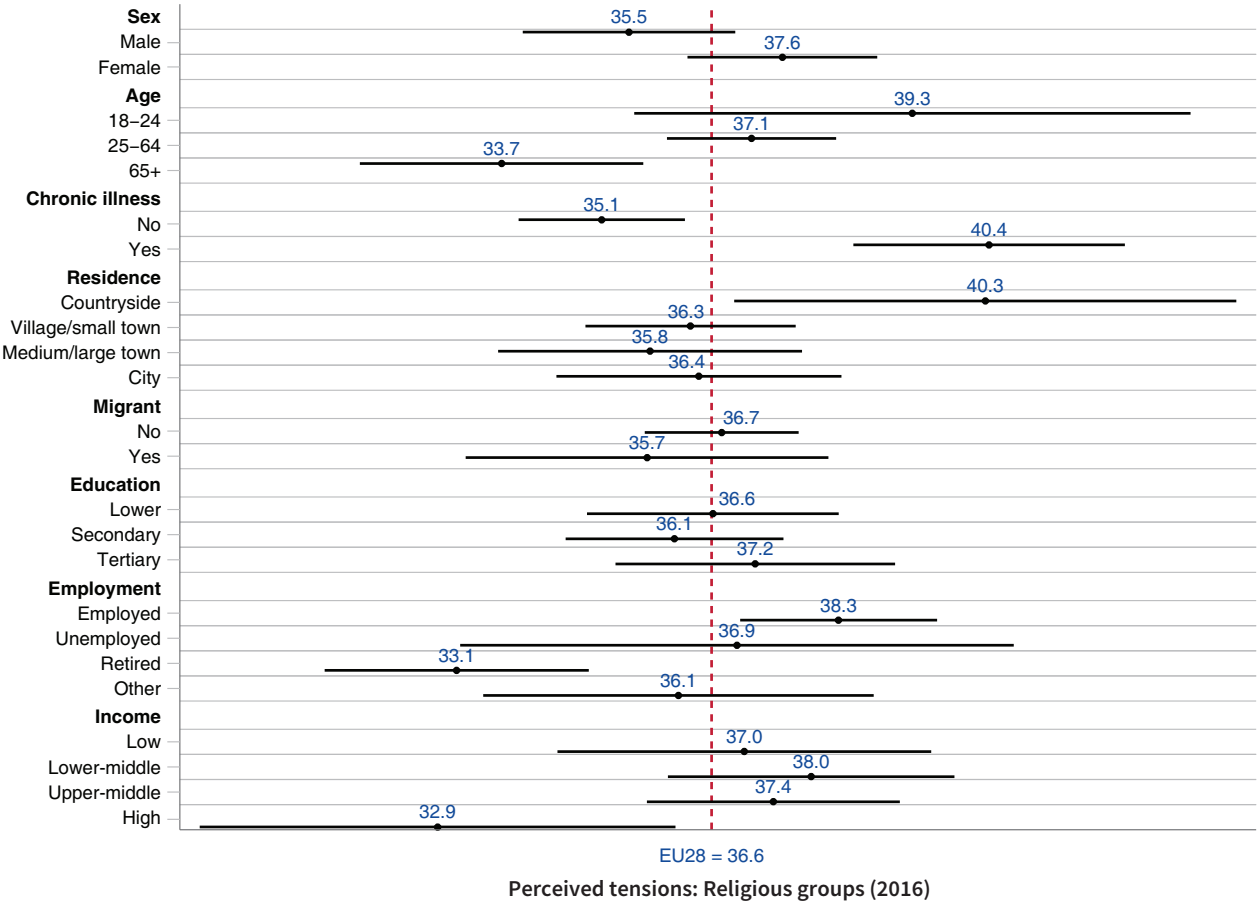
Higher levels of tensions between racial and ethnic groups are perceived by the highly educated (43%), as compared to citizens with a lower education level (38%). In addition, those living in the countryside perceive much higher levels of tensions (44%) than residents of medium and large towns (38%).

Figure 11: Perceived tensions between racial and ethnic groups, by social group



Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of perceived tensions between different racial and ethnic groups in 2016, for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

Figure 12: Perceived tensions between religious groups, by social group



Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of perceived tensions between religious groups in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

Main societal drivers

In order to address the question of which societal conditions are associated with higher rates of perceived economic and ethno-cultural tensions, the report examines the correlations between relevant societal characteristics and the average rates of tensions in the EU Member States, as measured with the four indicators in this section.

Economic tensions

The raw correlations of the selected societal characteristics with the rates of perceived tensions between rich and poor people, and between managers and workers can be found in Table 4. The table also provides the correlations after adjustment for differences in economic prosperity across the EU Member States.

National affluence is among the few characteristics that plays a significant role in this regard. National affluence, as measured by the GDP pc PPP, somewhat reduces both the rate of perceived tensions between rich and poor people (r = -.33, $p \leq .10$) and that between managers and workers (r = -.32, $p \leq .10$). Pronounced economic tensions are therefore slightly less prevalent in the more affluent European societies.

However, socio-structural characteristics – a key focus of the European Pillar of Social Rights – appear to have no bearing on perceived economic tensions in EU societies. For example, no correlation is found between the perceived prevalence of economic tensions and the levels of education and digital skills, income inequality, poverty, unemployment and government expenditure on public policies. Even high severe material deprivation rates do not necessarily imply high levels of tensions between rich and poor or between managers and workers. One possible explanation for this lack of correlations may be that a number of individual Member States are acting as outliers in the data. Hungary, for instance, has the lowest income inequality in the EU but was found to have the highest level of perceived economic tensions. At the same time, Bulgaria is characterised by one of the highest levels of income inequality in the EU, but one of the lowest levels of perceived economic tensions.

Table 4: Societal drivers of perceived economic tensions

	Rich and poor		Managers and workers	
Characteristic	Bivariate	Partial	Bivariate	Partial
GDP pc PPP (ln)	-0.33 *		-0.32 *	
Tertiary education level (%)	-0.06	0.11	-0.25	-0.11
Individuals with digital skills (%)	-0.25	-0.01	-0.33 *	-0.15
Income inequality: S80/S20	0.19	0.03	0.08	-0.11
Downward to upward mobility ratio	0.50 **	0.44 **	0.15	0.02
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	0.21	0.05	0.15	-0.01
Severe material deprivation (%)	0.29	0.08	0.26	0.05
Unemployment rate	-0.09	-0.19	0.13	0.04
Government expenditure on public policies	-0.30	-0.20	-0.26	-0.15
Pay gap: managers–workers [10]	0.50 **	0.33	0.55 **	0.42 *

Note: *The table presents country-level bivariate and partial correlations between perceived economic tensions in 2016 and selected societal characteristics. The partial correlations adjust for differences in the countries' GDP pc PPP. The significance of the correlations in the case of two-sided tests is as follows:* *** p ≤ *.01,* ** p ≤ *.05,* * p ≤ *.10.*

Experiences of downward mobility appear to be the key driver of perceptions of tensions between rich and poor people in EU societies. In this regard, the present study analyses the experiences of the cohort of men born between the years 1964 and 1977 – in other words, those most likely to be active in the labour force and the main earners in their households. The study compares the ratio of men in this cohort who have experienced downward mobility to those who have experienced upward mobility. The ratio is highest in the post-communist societies of central and eastern Europe (except for Croatia and Slovenia), particularly in Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania. The fact that there is a clear correlation between downward mobility and the perception of high levels of tensions between rich and poor – one that persists even after the country-level differences in economic prosperity have been levelled out ($r = .44$, $p \leq .05$) – is probably reflective of the economic stumbling blocks on the road to political transformation faced by these countries.

Tensions between managers and workers, meanwhile, are clearly associated with the pay gap between the two occupational categories. In societies in which managers receive much higher salaries than skilled and unskilled workers, the perceived levels of occupational tensions tend to be more pronounced ($r = .42$, $p \leq .10$).

Ethno-cultural tensions

Table 5 presents the correlations of the rates of perceived tensions between racial and ethnic groups, and between religious groups, with a number of societal characteristics. Alongside the raw correlations, the table includes the respective correlations after adjustment for country-level differences in economic prosperity.

Apart from the results relating to education, the findings could be seen as highly counter-intuitive with respect to the core socio-structural aspects of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Firstly, the correlations between societies' GDP pc PPP and the two indicators for tensions are positive and moderately strong, although only in the case of religious tensions is the relationship statistically significant ($r = .42$, $p \leq .05$). It does, however, appear that people in more affluent societies tend to perceive stronger ethno-cultural tensions. In the same vein, it is apparent that societies with higher levels of income inequality and poverty, including severe material deprivation and higher unemployment rates, perceive lower levels of ethno-cultural tensions. Some of these correlations remain significant even after statistically adjusting for the economic differences between Member States. This is particularly the case with the level of government expenditure: citizens of Member States that dedicate a greater percentage of

10 As explained in the introductory chapter of this report, data on the pay gap stem from a study by the Hay Group (2015). It should be noted that a pay gap index based on Eurostat data for the same occupational classes as in the Hay Group index yields much narrower pay gaps and does not reproduce such significant correlations. It may well be the case that the Hay Group data more accurately reflect the distribution of income across the top and bottom occupational classes, although there is no clear explanation as to why this does not appear to be the case when using official data from Eurostat.

Table 5: Societal drivers of perceived ethno-cultural tensions

	Racial and ethnic groups		Religious groups	
Characteristic	Bivariate	Partial	Bivariate	Partial
GDP pc PPP (ln)	0.30		0.42 **	
Tertiary education level (%)	-0.25	-0.47 **	-0.09	-0.36 *
Individuals with digital skills (%)	0.35 *	0.20	0.38 **	0.12
Income inequality: S80/S20	-0.54 ***	-0.47 **	-0.44 **	-0.29
Downward to upward mobility ratio	-0.12	-0.02	-0.36 *	-0.24
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	-0.54 ***	-0.47 **	-0.44 **	-0.29
Severe material deprivation (%)	-0.37 *	-0.23	-0.39 **	-0.13
Unemployment rate	-0.33 *	-0.27	-0.16	-0.05
Government expenditure on public policies	0.51 ***	0.44 **	0.62 ***	0.54 ***
Net migration rate	0.44 **	0.34 *	0.46 **	0.23
Asylum seekers (per million inhabitants)	0.50 ***	0.43 **	0.52 ***	0.40 **
Religious diversity index	0.37 *	0.30	0.43 **	0.33 *
Importance of religion in life	-0.23	-0.15	-0.16	-0.04

Note: *The table presents country-level bivariate and partial correlations between perceived ethno-cultural tensions in 2016 and selected societal characteristics. The partial correlations adjust for differences in the countries' GDP pc PPP. The significance of the correlations in the case of two-sided tests is as follows:* *** p ≤ *.01,* ** p ≤ *.05,* * p ≤ *.10.*

their GDP to public support policies perceive higher levels of tensions between racial and ethnic groups ($r = .44$, $p \leq .05$) and between religious groups ($r = .54$, $p \leq .05$). These findings should certainly not be interpreted as suggesting that higher income inequality or poverty reduce ethno-cultural tensions. They do, however, fit with the descriptive findings on the geographical distribution of ethno-cultural tensions. As already mentioned, citizens of the western EU Member States that have recently experienced high levels of immigration perceive high levels of tensions between ethnic, racial and religious groups; these societies also tend to be the most prosperous, with lower at-risk-of-poverty rates and higher government expenditure on public policies.

It is not quite clear what drives these processes. One possibility is that citizens of western EU societies are developing a sense of welfare chauvinism (see, for example, Cappelen and Peters, 2017; Mewes and Mau, 2013; and Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012). This term refers to the attitude that the benefits of the welfare system should remain for 'us', rather than be shared with 'them' – a notion that has played a part in recent political rhetoric, such as in the campaign for the United Kingdom to vote to leave the EU. Another explanation for the manifestation of stronger ethno-cultural tensions in the western EU societies may rest on differences in historical trajectories. It is proposed here that ethnic, religious and cultural diversity is a relatively 'new' phenomenon for the western Member States, which has its roots as recently as in the immediate post-World War II situation, when economies, for example, that of Germany, had to be rebuilt. In comparison, low ethno-cultural tensions were found in Member States such as Bulgaria, where ethno-cultural diversity has been high in a much longer historical perspective of more than 500 years (Ottoman imperialism in this example). Though to a degree speculative, western EU Member States may thus lack the social and institutional experience needed to deal constructively with the diversity they have had to face quite recently.

The observation that people in EU societies with high levels of immigration also perceive higher levels of ethno-cultural tensions is further supported by the data on the correlations between the two tension indicators and characteristics such as net migration and the share of asylum seekers. The net migration rate exhibits positive, moderately strong and significant bivariate correlations with both indicators of ethno-cultural tensions. Specifically with respect to racial and ethnic tensions, the positive and significant correlation with the net migration rate remains present even after adjustment for the economic prosperity of the countries ($r = .34$, $p \leq .10$). Furthermore, societies with a greater share of asylum seekers have higher rates of perceived racial and ethnic tensions ($r = .43$, $p \leq .05$), and a higher prevalence of perceived religious tensions ($r = .40$, $p \leq .05$).

As regards religion, although the importance of religion in society is unrelated to ethno-cultural tensions, perceptions of religious tensions are more prevalent in societies with greater religious diversity. The relationship weakens slightly after adjustment for economic prosperity, but remains moderately positive and significant ($r = .33$, $p \leq .10$).

In contrast to the above patterns of association, it appears that societies with higher levels of education have lower rates of ethno-cultural tensions. Whether richer or poorer, societies with a higher share of individuals with a tertiary degree are less polarised on the basis of race and ethnicity ($r = -.47$, $p \leq .05$) and religious affiliation ($r = -.36$, $p \leq .10$).

Social tensions – Key findings

Prevalence

In 2016, ethno-cultural tensions were more pronounced in Europe than economic tensions. Thus, 4 out of 10 EU citizens perceive a high level of tension between racial and ethnic groups and between religious groups. About 3 out of 10 EU citizens perceive a high level of tension between rich and poor people, and between managers and workers.

Distribution

Perceptions of ethno-cultural tensions are highest by far in the western EU Member States that have experienced high levels of immigration in recent years. Economic tensions tend to be slightly higher in the post-communist societies.

Trend

Perceptions of tensions between rich and poor increased in 2011 (euro zone crisis), returning in 2016 to pre-crisis levels. Generally, EU Member States are currently converging towards weaker perceptions of economic tensions, also with respect to managers and workers.

Ethnic and racial tensions – and to a greater extent religious tensions – have been on the rise since 2007.

Risk groups

Ethno-cultural tensions are mostly felt by citizens who are chronically ill or employed. In addition, racial and ethnic tensions are more strongly felt by those who live in the countryside and have a tertiary level of education. Religious tensions also tend to be more strongly felt by rural inhabitants.

Economic tensions are mostly felt by the socioeconomically disadvantaged, including those who are chronically ill, unemployed or in the low income class. The lower-middle income class has a stronger perception of tensions between rich and poor than the upper-middle income class.

Drivers

Prosperity, upward social mobility and lower pay gaps reduce perceptions of economic tensions.

Immigration gives rise to perceptions of ethno-cultural tensions, while objective religious diversity is associated with religious tensions.

Economic prosperity and generous government expenditure on public policies appear to contribute to stronger perceptions of ethno-cultural tensions, while higher education levels among the population tend to reduce such perceptions.

3 Interpersonal trust

Policy context

Interpersonal trust acts as a glue that binds together society, and is often referred to as an integral part of so-called 'social capital'. According to the definition that underpins this report, a cohesive society is a 'mutually supportive community' in which its members pursue common goals. In modern, large-scale societies, trust in fellow citizens is a building block for mutual support and civic orientation. Trust is the expectation that others act reasonably, and are honest and benevolent (Sztompka, 1999). Moreover, citizens who put their trust in others tend to commit themselves to displaying the same personal qualities. A trusting attitude leads to the inclusion of others in a 'moral community' (Uslaner, 2002) and the commitment to the interests and needs of others. In general, trust in others is a key resource for modern societies that works both as a social adhesive and facilitates cooperation (Phillips, 2006). In the social science literature, economic prosperity is often highlighted as fertile ground for social trust, whereas gaping inequalities and high levels of ethno-cultural diversity are often portrayed as complicating factors for trust (Delhey and Newton, 2005). From a policy perspective, it is therefore relevant to analyse the extent to which trust levels across the EU have been affected by deteriorating economic conditions – a key issue in many Mediterranean Member States in particular – and the increase of ethno-cultural diversity – a particularly important issue in the economically prosperous Member States of western Europe.

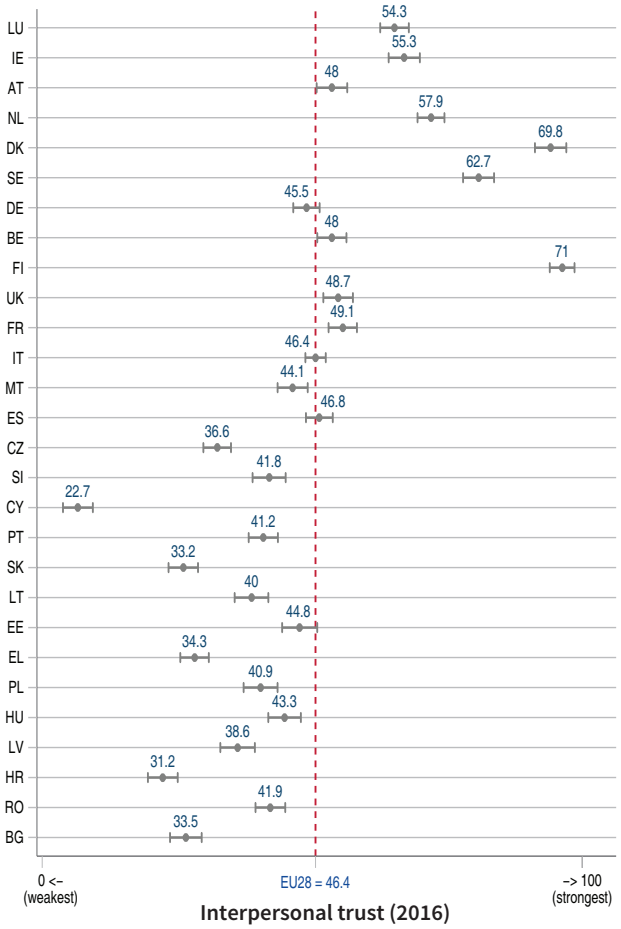
Measuring interpersonal trust

In the framework of the present report, trust has been measured with the following, tried-and-tested item: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?'. For the purpose of the report, the original multi-point measurement scale (1–10) has been transformed to a scale from 0 ('you can't be too careful') to 100 ('most people can be trusted'). Missing values (in no country sample above 5%) have been substituted with the country-specific means in the respective round of the EQLS.

Current levels

Figure 13 presents the average level of trust in the EU Member States in 2016. On the scale of 0–100, the overall EU average was found to be 46.4 – slightly below the implied mean of the scale (50). The average interpersonal trust in the EU can therefore be deemed slightly below medium.

Figure 13: Level of interpersonal trust in 2016



Note: *The figure shows the average level of interpersonal trust in EU Member States in 2016, represented by a dot. The lines stretching out to the left and right of each country mean indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order on the basis of their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

There is a wide range in the level of interpersonal trust across EU Member States. The level is by far the highest in the Nordic societies of Finland (71) and Denmark (69.8), closely followed by Sweden (62.7). The lowest level of trust, by some distance, is found in Cyprus (22.7).

These two poles aside, the level of interpersonal trust in the rest of the EU Member States closely follows their level of economic prosperity, as can be seen in Figure 13, which orders the countries by their GDP pc PPP. This observation is an initial indication that upward economic convergence in the EU has the potential to bring about higher levels of trust, thereby helping societies function better in the social domain. Against this background, it is understandable that interpersonal

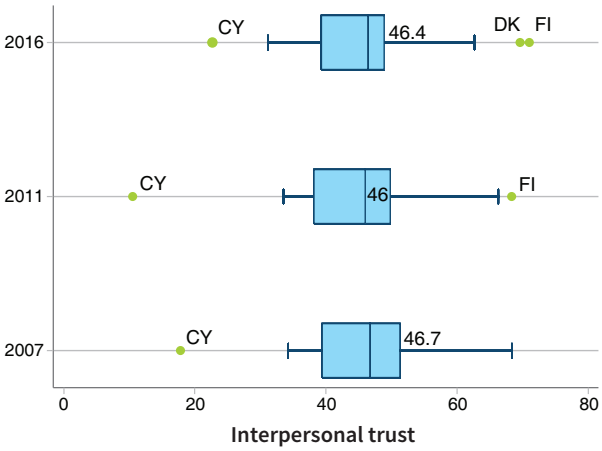
trust is higher in western EU Member States, for example the Netherlands (57.9), Ireland (55.3) and Luxembourg (54.3), and much lower in central and eastern EU societies such as Croatia (31.2), Slovakia (33.2), Bulgaria (33.5) and Greece (34.3).

The level of interpersonal trust is similar to the overall EU28 average (46.4) in the more affluent western Member States of France (49.1), the UK (48.7), Belgium and Austria (both 48), Spain (46.8), Italy (46.4) and Germany (45.5), as well as in the Baltic state of Estonia (44.8). However, a number of central and eastern EU Member States that have a relatively low GDP pc PPP are also quite close to the EU average in this respect, for instance Hungary (43.4), Romania (41.9), Slovenia (41.8), Poland (40.9), Lithuania (40) and Latvia (38.6).

Trends over time

As illustrated in the box plots of Figure 14, the average level of interpersonal trust in the EU has remained unchanged during the nine-year period studied, standing at around 46. Furthermore, the box plots show that the distribution of trust across the societies of the EU has changed very little and can therefore be seen as stable. With its low level of trust, Cyprus stands out as an outlier in all three years examined, whereas Denmark, in 2016, and Finland, in both 2011 and 2016, emerge as positive outliers with their much higher levels of trust.

Figure 14: Convergence/divergence in interpersonal trust



Note: *The box plots in the figure display the variation of interpersonal trust across EU Member States in 2007, 2011 and 2016. The vertical line in each box plot displays the EU average in the respective year. Outlier countries are explicitly labelled outside the range of the whiskers.*

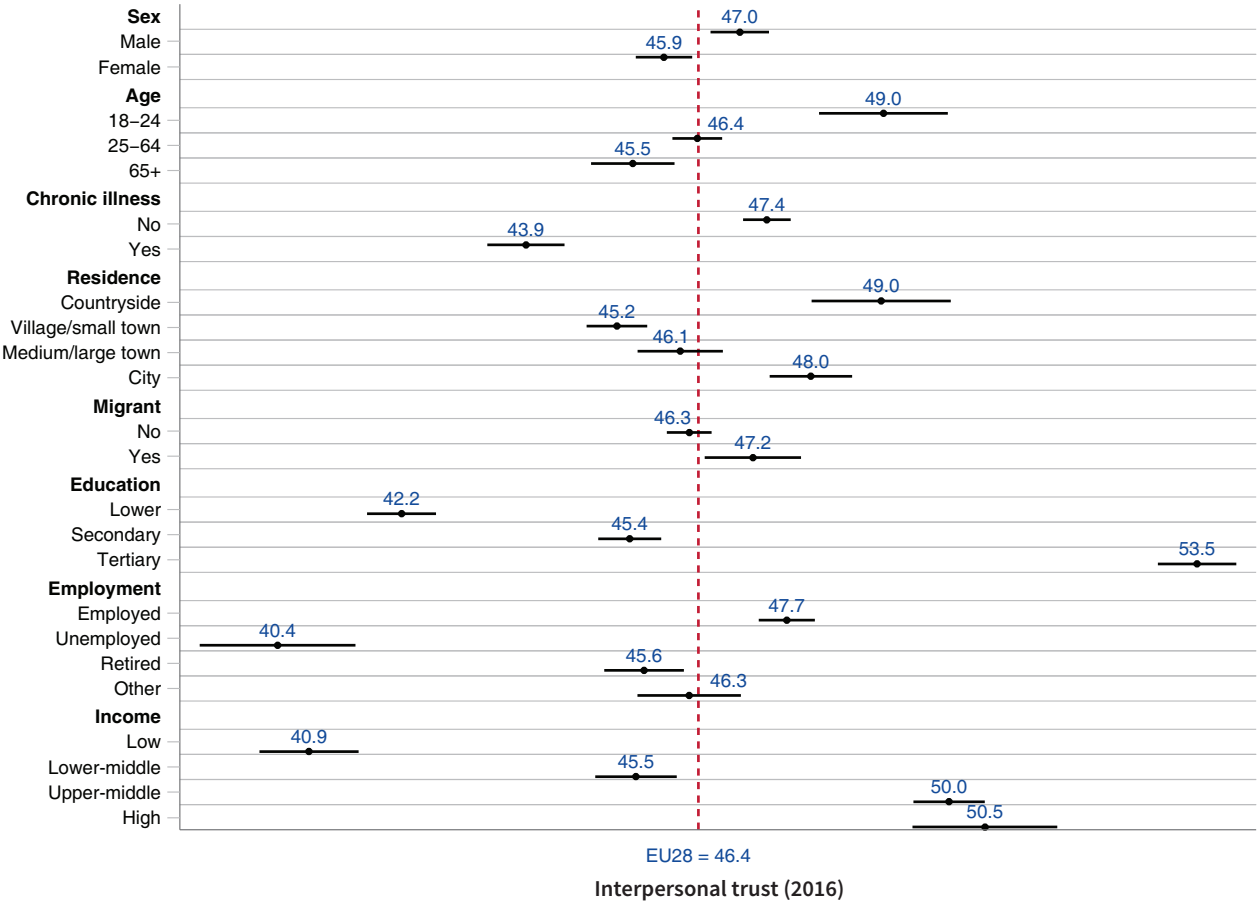
Despite the EU average remaining stable over time, there have been fluctuations within some EU Member States during this period (see Table A8 in Annex 2). The level of interpersonal trust increased significantly in six Member States between the years 2007 and 2016: Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Portugal. It also decreased significantly in eight countries, most of which are central or eastern European Member States: Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

Differences between social groups

This section examines differences in the level of interpersonal trust across social groups, as summarised in Figure 15. Alongside the average levels of trust for each social group, the figure presents the respective 95% confidence intervals, as estimated with the Scheffé correction for pairwise comparisons in one-way analyses of variance. Groups with overlapping confidence intervals can be considered as not differing significantly from each other. Given the large sample size, only differences of at least five points between social groups are considered substantial on the scale of 0 (lowest level of trust) to 100 (highest level of trust).

The data show that socioeconomically disadvantaged groups report considerably lower levels of interpersonal trust. Firstly, those with a lower level of education (42.2) and those with secondary education (45.4) demonstrate significantly lower levels of trust in other people, as compared to citizens with tertiary education (53.5), who register the highest level among all the social groups. The unemployed reveal the lowest average level of interpersonal trust (40.4) of all the social groups. Those in the low income class (40.9) have a substantially lower level of interpersonal trust, not only in comparison to the average EU citizen (46.4) but also in comparison to other income classes. Furthermore, those in the lower-middle income class (45.5), though positioned close to the EU28 average, demonstrate a lower level of trust than the high income class (50.5). Those in the latter group do not differ substantially from the upper-middle income class (50) in terms of their interpersonal trust.

Figure 15: Interpersonal trust, by social group



Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of interpersonal trust in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

Main societal drivers

This section explores the societal conditions that are conducive to higher levels of interpersonal trust. For this purpose, the analyses look at bivariate correlations of the selected societal characteristics in relation to the average level of interpersonal trust in the EU Member States. Table 6 summarises the results, including the correlations after adjustment for country-level differences in economic prosperity.

First of all, it is evident that economic prosperity is positively and strongly related to average interpersonal trust ($r = .65$, $p \leq .01$). In other words, citizens of more affluent societies tend to be more trusting. The majority of the core socio-structural aspects of the European Pillar of Social Rights display correlations in the expected direction. Higher levels of interpersonal trust can be found in societies with higher shares of highly educated citizens and in those where income inequality,

Table 6: Societal drivers of interpersonal trust

Characteristic	Bivariate	Partial
GDP pc PPP (ln)	0.65 ***	
Tertiary education level (%)	0.34 *	0.05
Individuals with digital skills (%)	0.67 ***	0.37 *
Income inequality: S80/S20	-0.38 **	-0.06
Downward to upward mobility ratio	-0.15	0.18
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	-0.39 **	-0.09
Severe material deprivation (%)	-0.60 ***	-0.25
Unemployment rate	-0.34 *	-0.22
Government expenditure on public policies	0.61 ***	0.51 ***
Religious diversity index	0.24	0.00
Importance of religion in life	-0.53 ***	-0.47 **

Note: *The table presents country-level bivariate and partial correlations between interpersonal trust in 2016 and selected societal characteristics. The partial correlations adjust for differences in the countries' GDP pc PPP. The significance of the correlations in the case of two-sided tests is as follows:* *** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$. *ln = natural logarithm (see footnote 6 on p. 9)*

at-risk-of-poverty rates, severe material deprivation and unemployment are low. These relationships largely appear to be driven by the economic prosperity of the respective countries. However, even after adjustment for GDP pc PPP, it is clear that interpersonal trust is higher in societies with a greater share of digitally-skilled citizens ($r = .37$, $p \leq .10$) and higher government expenditure on public policies ($r = .51$, $p \leq .01$).

Another important aspect of interpersonal trust is in-group and out-group patterns with respect to diversity (Delhey, Newton, and Welzel, 2011). More specifically, this report considers patterns relating to religion, given the current relevance of religious tensions across European societies (see previous chapter on perceived social tensions). Although religious diversity was found to be associated with higher levels of ethno-cultural tensions, it has no statistical correlation with interpersonal trust ($r = .00$). However, more religious societies – meaning those in which religion plays an important role in daily life – are found to be less trusting. This correlation persists even after differences in countries' respective levels of economic prosperity have been accounted for ($r = -.47$, $p \leq .05$).

Interpersonal trust – Key findings

Prevalence

The average EU citizen places a medium level of trust in other people, although there is a wide variation in trust across the 28 Member States.

Distribution

The highest levels of interpersonal trust were found in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Nordic Countries. Citizens of the south-eastern EU Member States appear to be the least trusting.

Trend

The level of interpersonal trust in the EU has remained stable over the period 2007–2016. Austria and Cyprus are catching up with the other Member States in this regard, while Croatia, Romania and Slovakia have experienced declines in interpersonal trust.

Risk groups

Those who are unemployed, have low incomes or lower levels of education – in other words, those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged – are least likely to trust other people. Those in the lower-middle income class are less trusting than those in the high-income group.

Drivers

Member States with higher GDP pc PPP, higher government expenditure on public policies and greater proportions of citizens with digital skills have higher levels of interpersonal trust. Interpersonal trust is lower in societies where religion is a more important part of the daily lives of citizens.

4 Participation in society

Policy context

Civic engagement in voluntary associations and participation in political activity are two key characteristics of a cohesive society. Through civic engagement – participating in clubs, associations or political activities – citizens connect strongly with other people. This is one reason why promoting participation in society is viewed as a key strategy to combat social exclusion. Moreover, by actively participating in society, citizens demonstrate and develop concern for the well-being of others and the public good. Recently, EU policies to promote participation in society have chiefly focused on young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training. However, the issue of older citizens is also on the agenda at EU level. The present report analyses the two abovementioned aspects of participation in society: civic engagement and political activity.

Measuring participation in society

The measurement of civic engagement draws on a sequence of items in the EQLS that asks respondents about the frequency with which they have undertaken unpaid voluntary work in the last 12 months, for the following types of organisations:

- community and social services
- educational, cultural, sports or professional associations
- social movements or charities
- political parties or trade unions
- other voluntary associations

In the present report, respondents are defined as engaging in civic activities if they have undertaken unpaid voluntary work for any of the listed organisations at least once a month.

The measurement of the second aspect considered in this report – political activity – involved drawing on a range of items in the EQLS that questioned respondents on whether they have undertaken any of the following activities over the last 12 months:

- attended a meeting of a trade union, a political party or a political action group
- attended a protest or demonstration
- signed a petition, including an email or online petition
- contacted a politician or public official

Respondents are defined as being politically active if they have undertaken at least one of the listed activities.

In order to maintain a consistent measurement scale across all indicators for the aspects of social cohesion, the constructed indices of civic engagement and political activity have been assigned a value of 0 for inactive respondents and 100 for active respondents.

Current levels

The research first sought to assess how engaged Europeans are in civic life and political activities. The rate of civic engagement in the EU Member States in 2016 is presented in Figure 16a, while the rate of political activity can be found in Figure 16b. Due to the dichotomous measurement of the two indices at the individual level, these country aggregate scores can be interpreted as percentages of active respondents.

The average rate of civic engagement in the EU as a whole is 17%. Roughly speaking, this means that every sixth EU citizen has frequently undertaken unpaid voluntary work for the benefit of the common good. Taking the two observed extreme cases, the rate is around double the EU average in Sweden (36%) and three to four times lower than the EU average in Bulgaria (5%).

In general, the rate of civic engagement across the EU Member States closely corresponds to the countries' respective levels of economic prosperity, as shown by the clear trend in Figure 16a. The figure orders the countries with respect to their GDP pc PPP. This is an initial indication that economic growth in Europe can stimulate higher commitment to contribute to the common good. Citizens of the more affluent northern and western EU Member States tend to have much higher rates of civic engagement than their counterparts in central and eastern Member States. In northern and western countries, every third to fourth citizen does unpaid voluntary work, as for example in the Netherlands (32%) and Finland (27%). In the less affluent EU Member States, such as Latvia (11%) and Romania (7%), only 1 in 10 to 15 citizens engages in such activities. The Member States with the closest rates of civic engagement to the overall EU average are Slovenia (17%), Cyprus (16%) and Malta (15%).

Figure 16a: Rate of participation in society in 2016 (civic engagement)

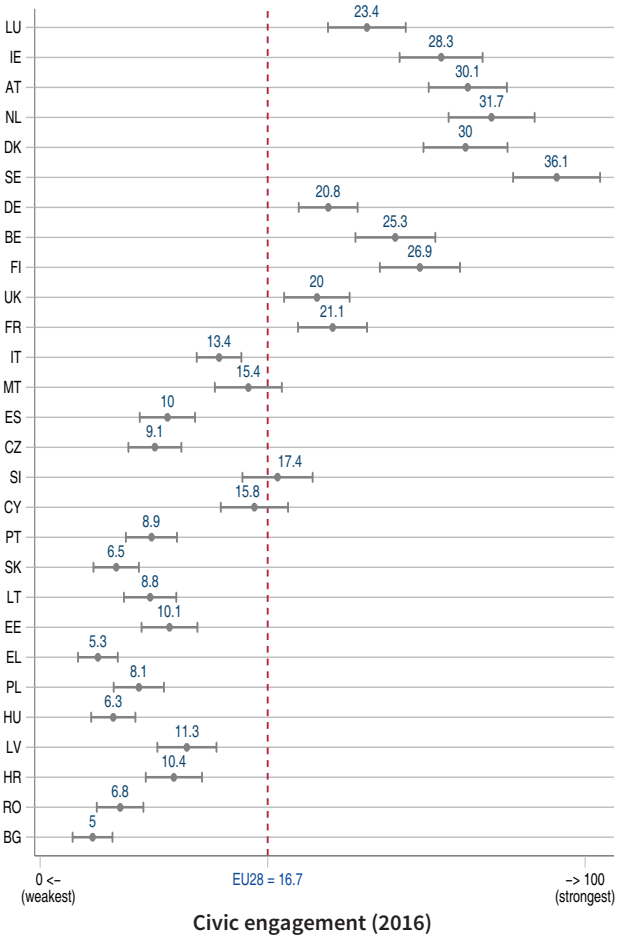
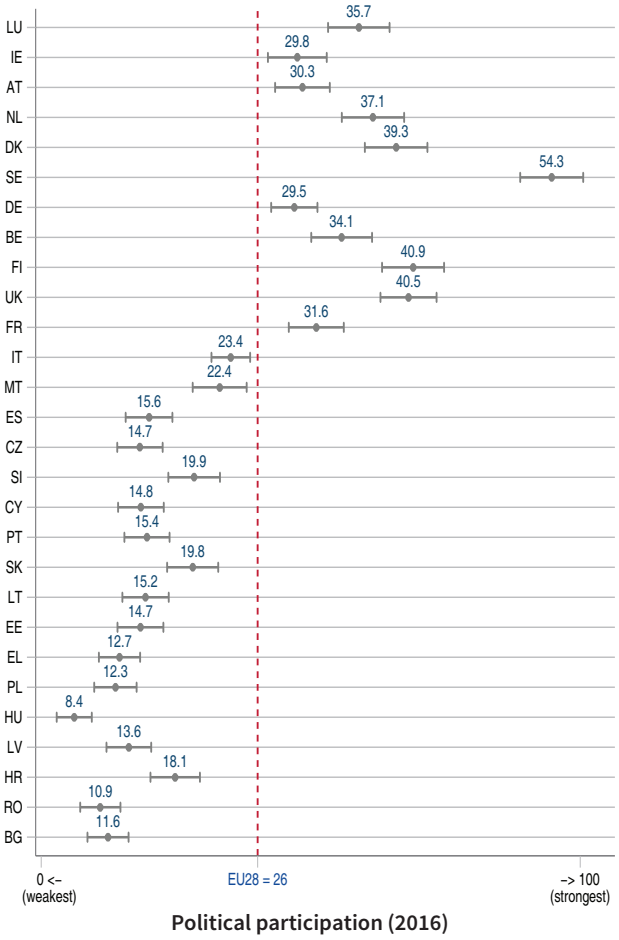


Figure 16b: Rate of participation in society in 2016 (political participation)



Note: *The figures show, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens who are engaged in civic life (Figure 16a) and political activities (Figure 16b). The country mean is represented by a dot and the lines stretching out to the left and right of each country mean indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order on the basis of their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

The picture regarding the rates of political activity across European societies in 2016 is almost identical to that of civic engagement. In fact, the distribution by geographical region and economic prosperity is quite clear (see Figure 16b). Once again, the Nordic and western European societies have the highest rates of political participation. These Member States are also the richest in terms of GDP pc PPP. They are positioned above the average rate for the EU as a whole (26%), which means that every fourth European is politically active. Political participation is by far the highest in Sweden, where one in two citizens participates in political life (54%). In the remaining countries of this region, the rate of political activity ranges from 30% (in Germany) to 41% (in Finland). All Member States in the southern, central and eastern parts of the EU have below-average rates of political activity. Within this group, the political participation rate is highest in Italy (23%) and lowest in Hungary (8%).

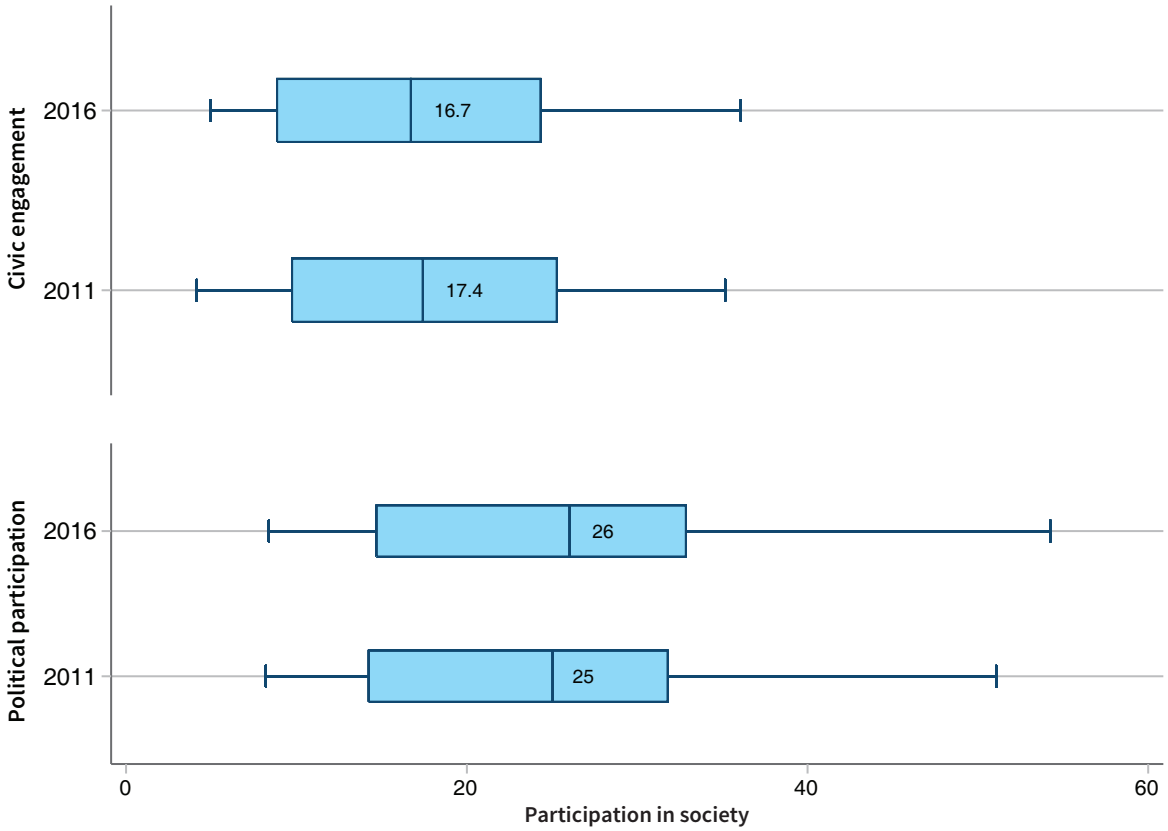
The observation that economic prosperity is closely linked to political participation again underscores the importance of upward convergence in the EU.

Trends over time

While it is possible that the turbulent times during the euro zone crisis and refugee crisis may have influenced the rates of civic engagement and political participation in the EU, Figure 17 suggests that both types of participation in society have remained largely unchanged since 2011. This is also supported by the detailed data presented in Tables A9 and A10 in Annex 2.

Despite the overall stability of civic engagement and political activity at EU level since 2011, there have been significant fluctuations at country level during this period. While five countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Slovenia and Sweden) recorded significant increases in

Figure 17: Convergence/divergence in participation in society



Note: *The box plots in Figure 17 display the variation of civic engagement and political participation across EU Member States in 2011 and 2016. The vertical line in each box plot displays the EU average in the respective year.*

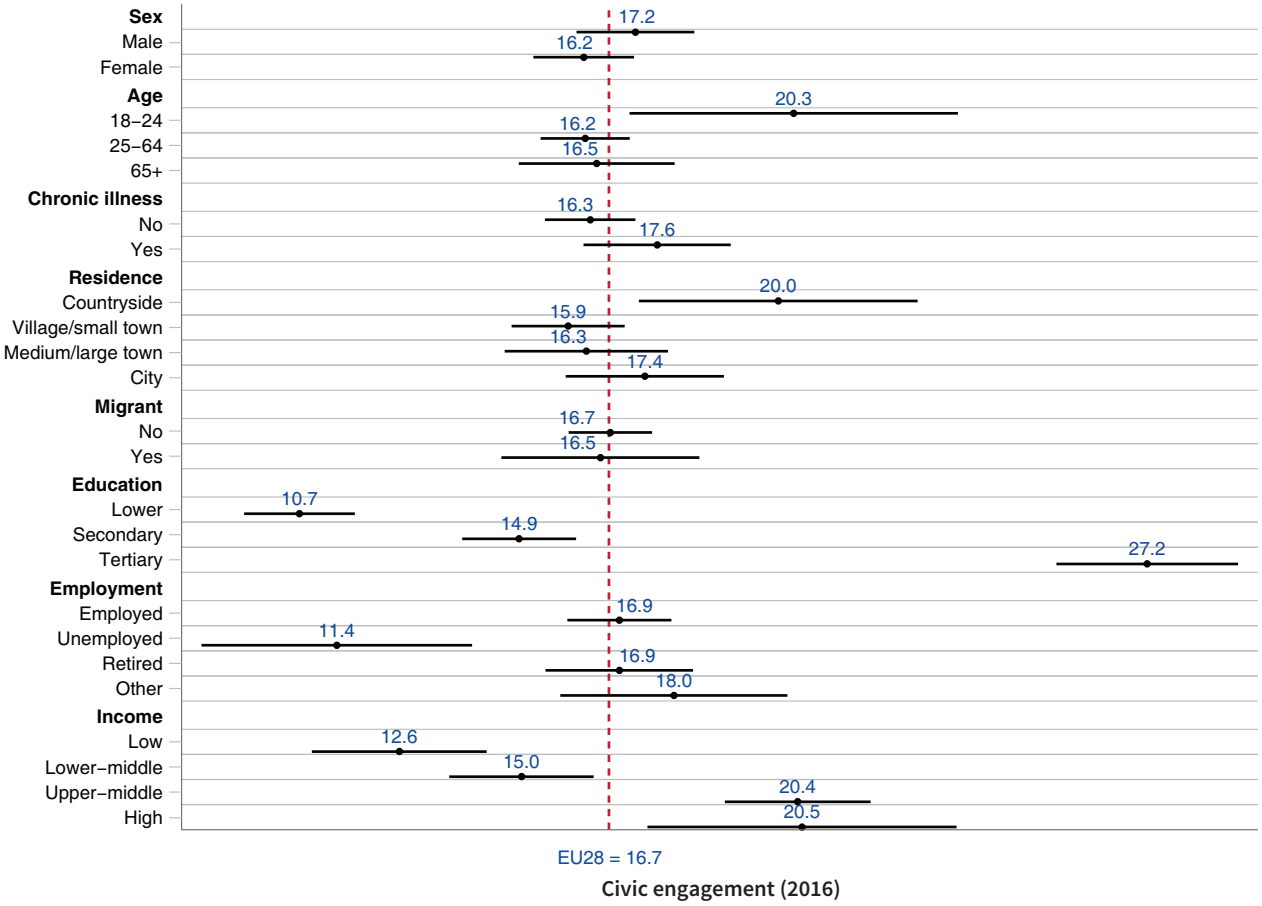
civic engagement, it declined significantly in six other societies (Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Portugal and Spain). The same pattern was found for political activity, with seven countries exhibiting significant increases: Belgium, Finland, Germany, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK. At the same time, however, the rate of political activity declined in Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Greece and Spain.

Differences between social groups

Figures 18 and 19 present the differences across social groups for civic engagement and political activity respectively. Alongside the average rates for each group, the graphs present the 95% confidence intervals, as estimated in logistic regression due to the dichotomous nature of the indicators at individual level. Groups with overlapping confidence intervals can be considered as not differing significantly from each other. Again, only differences of at least five points between social groups are considered substantial.

In terms of civic engagement, none of the horizontal characteristics – sex, age, health status, place of residence and migration status – appear relevant. However, the vertical socioeconomic aspects again display correlations when it comes to the rate of civic engagement.

Figure 18: Rate of civic engagement, by social group

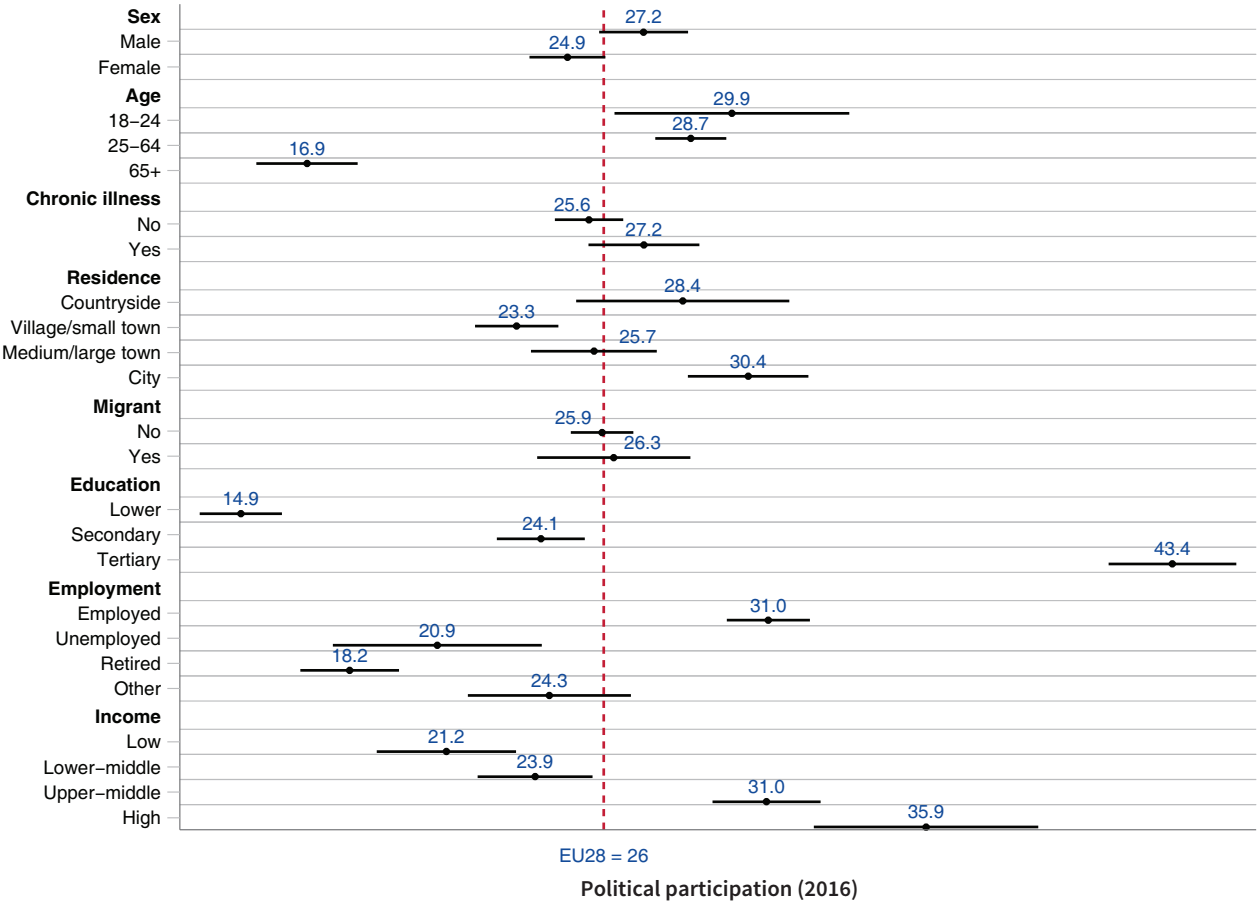


Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of civic engagement in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

When it comes to education, citizens with tertiary degrees clearly stand out: 27% of the highly educated are engaged in civic life. This rate contrasts sharply with the rate of engagement of respondents with lower education (only 11%) and those with secondary education (15%). Unemployed citizens are also substantially less engaged in civic activities (11%) in comparison to those in the other employment groups, which range from 17% to 18%. Finally, the low and lower-middle income classes also have low rates of participation in civic life (13% and 15% respectively) compared to citizens whose income level is in the upper-middle and high classes (20% and 21% respectively).

The rates of political activity are more nuanced. While horizontal characteristics such as sex, health status and migration background do not play a role, age and place of residence do to some extent. Firstly, the elderly stand out in comparison to the other age groups: only 17% of those in the over-65 age group are active in political life, whereas slightly below 30% of those in the other two age groups report this. However, the findings outline a paradox in relation to voting activity. According to the survey data presented here, younger people are more actively engaged than the elderly in political participation – for example, in terms of protests or petitions. Such activities may, of course, have a certain influence on the course of political affairs. However, it is the elderly whose voting turnout in elections tends to be higher (see, for example, Goerres, 2007).

Figure 19: Rate of political participation, by social group



Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of political participation in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

As regards the degree of urbanisation of respondents' place of residence, fewer than one in four (23%) of those residing in villages and small towns are politically active, compared to 28% of rural inhabitants and 30% of those living in cities or their suburbs.

Of all characteristics studied, education displays the largest differences in terms of political engagement. Only 15% of those with lower levels of education report that they are politically active, compared to 24% of those with secondary education and as many as 43% – almost one in two – of those with a tertiary education level.

Regarding employment status, employed respondents show the highest rate of participation in politics (31%), followed by those with other status (24%), the unemployed (21%) and the retired (18%).

Finally, around one in three citizens in the upper-middle income class (31%) and the high income class (36%) take part in political activities, whereas only 24% of the lower-middle income class and 21% of the low income class are politically engaged.

Main societal drivers

This section explores the extent to which civic engagement and political activity are shaped by economic and social policies. In order to address this question, the report explores correlations between the rates of participation in society and socio-structural characteristics, selected in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. The data are summarised in Table 7, presenting the raw correlations, as well as those after adjustment for country-level differences in economic prosperity.

There is remarkable consistency in the pattern of correlations across the two types of participation. Moreover, civic engagement and political activity are the only aspects of social cohesion that correlate significantly with all core socio-structural characteristics on a bivariate basis. More concretely, rates of participation are higher in the societies that are more highly educated, better equipped with digital skills, more equal in terms of income, more upwardly mobile, less affected by severe material deprivation and unemployment, and more generous in their expenditure on public policies.

Table 7: Societal drivers of participation in society

Characteristic	Civic engagement		Political participation	
	Bivariate	Partial	Bivariate	Partial
GDP pc PPP (ln)	0.79 ***		0.75 ***	
Tertiary education level (%)	0.49 ***	0.21	0.42 **	0.11
Individuals with digital skills (%)	0.69 ***	0.28	0.76 ***	0.46 **
Income inequality: S80/S20	-0.58 ***	-0.32	-0.53 ***	-0.24
Downward to upward mobility ratio	-0.47 **	-0.24	-0.41 **	-0.16
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	-0.54 ***	-0.27	-0.51 ***	-0.23
Severe material deprivation (%)	-0.68 ***	-0.25	-0.67 ***	-0.28
Unemployment rate	-0.34 *	-0.22	-0.32	-0.17
Government expenditure on public policies	0.57 ***	0.47 **	0.66 ***	0.60 ***

Note: *The table presents country-level bivariate and partial correlations between participation in society in 2016 and selected societal characteristics. The partial correlations adjust for differences in the countries' GDP pc PPP. The significance of the correlations in the case of two-sided tests is as follows:* *** p ≤ *.01,* ** p ≤ *.05,* * p ≤ *.10.*

However, after controlling for individual countries' GDP pc PPP, it is clear that the majority of these correlations are linked to economic prosperity. The only characteristics that display a correlation with political participation regardless of economic prosperity are the level of digital skills ($r = .46$, $p \leq .05$) and government expenditure on public policies ($r = .60$, $p \leq .01$). The latter also shows a correlation with the rate of civic engagement ($r = .47$, $p \leq .05$) after controlling for GDP pc PPP.

Participation in Society – Key findings

Prevalence

The level of participation in society in the EU as a whole is discouragingly low. Only around 2 out of 10 EU citizens are engaged in civic activities or are politically active.

Distribution

Participation rates are highest in the northern and western EU Member States. The south-eastern Member States are least active in civic and political life.

Trend

The average rates of participation in the EU as a whole remain by and large unchanged over time, although many individual Member States have seen fluctuations.

Risk groups

The socioeconomically disadvantaged – the unemployed and those with low incomes and lower levels of education – are least engaged in civic life. Those with a low level of education, along with the over-65 age group, are also the least politically active. People with tertiary levels of education have the highest participation rates. Despite having participation rates close to the EU average, the lower-middle income class is less engaged in civic and political activities than the upper-middle income class.

Drivers

Rates of civic engagement and political activity are higher in affluent countries with higher government expenditure on public policies. Both of these conditions, as well as the acquisition of digital skills by a greater share of citizens, appear conducive to higher political activity rates.

5 Sense of community

Policy context

Another important aspect of social cohesion relates to citizens having close contact with friends and neighbours, as well as feeling attached to the people in their local community. This aspect relates not so much to people's connection to society at large and to others in general, but rather to small-scale connections with specific people and areas. This aspect of social cohesion seems at first sight quite detached from EU-level policymaking, as it refers to personal lifestyles and the behaviour of smaller communities. Nowadays, however, the lives of more and more EU citizens are no longer established in one particular place – for various possible reasons – which can in turn weaken their social contacts and support networks. In its recent reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe, the European Commission (2017a) acknowledges social isolation as a growing problem in Europe. It is therefore important to gain more insights into the alleged prevalence of this phenomenon, what social and economic policies can alleviate it and, ultimately, how it relates to well-being.

Measuring a sense of community

The report analyses citizens' sense of community from the perspectives of attachment and contact with relevant others. The operationalisation of attachment uses the item 'I feel close to people in the area where I live'. For the purpose of this report, the original, Likert-type measurement scale – ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) – was reversed and rescaled to range from 0 (strongly disagree) to 100 (strongly agree).

The operationalisation of contacts with relevant others uses two items drawn from the EQLS that ask respondents to indicate the frequency with which they have contact with friends and neighbours. The first item asks about face-to-face contact, whereas the second refers to contact by telephone, the internet or post. Due to the ordinal scales of both items, if a respondent reports having contact every day or almost every day for either of the two items, they are attributed a score of 100; less frequent or no contact translates to a score of 0. The scores for this particular indicator are therefore presented as percentages.

Current levels

Figure 20a displays the country scores for citizens' feelings of attachment to the people in their area, while Figure 20b presents the respective scores for frequent contact with friends and neighbours.

In terms of EU citizens' feelings of attachment to the other people in their immediate area, the scores are generally high. The overall EU average stands at 65.9, while the strongest feelings of attachment can be found in Latvia (81.2) and the weakest in Finland (61.4). Moreover, this is the indicator of social cohesion with the narrowest range at the country level. As such, the majority of Member States do not differ significantly from each other, as the 95% confidence intervals suggest. Against this background, it is difficult to point to a specific pattern of attachment across the EU. Countries have comparable levels of attachment, irrespective of their level of economic prosperity. For example, the average score in Luxembourg, the richest of all EU Member States, is 66.7, which is exactly the same as that in Italy and not significantly different from the levels in Malta and Poland (both 64.9) or Hungary (64.1). Similarly, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece and Sweden have roughly the same levels of attachment, ranging from 73.7 to 74.7. There appears to be only a slight trend in that citizens of the eastern EU Member States tend to feel stronger levels of attachment compared to citizens of western Member States.

As for the second indicator for this aspect of social cohesion, the overall EU average of 55% means that every second EU citizen has contact with their friends and neighbours on a daily basis, whether face-to-face interactions or through other means of communication. However, there is a large variation in the rates across the Member States. This rate is lowest in the Czech Republic (32%), where one citizen in three interacts with friends and neighbours on a daily basis. The highest rate is found in Portugal (76%), where three-quarters of citizens do so. Similarly to levels of attachment, there is no clear pattern across Europe. Countries do not differ significantly, irrespective of their economic prosperity. This is best illustrated by the analogous rates in Luxembourg (55%), Malta (55%) and Romania (54%), and in Croatia, Ireland and Spain (all 65%). Again, there appears to be only a slight trend in that citizens of the southern EU Member States – such as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain – have somewhat more frequent contact with their friends and neighbours.

Figure 20a: Level of sense of community in 2016 (attachment to people in area)

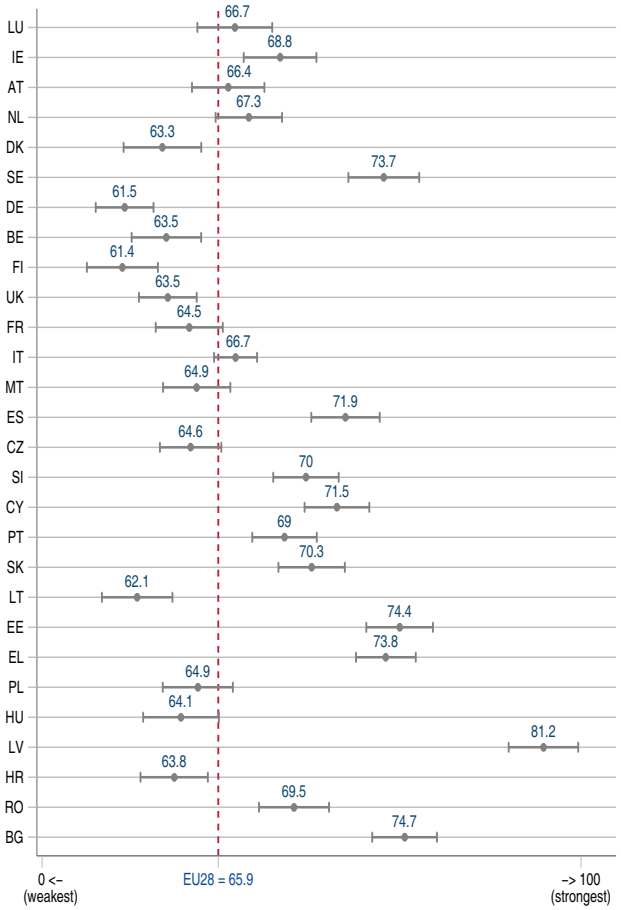
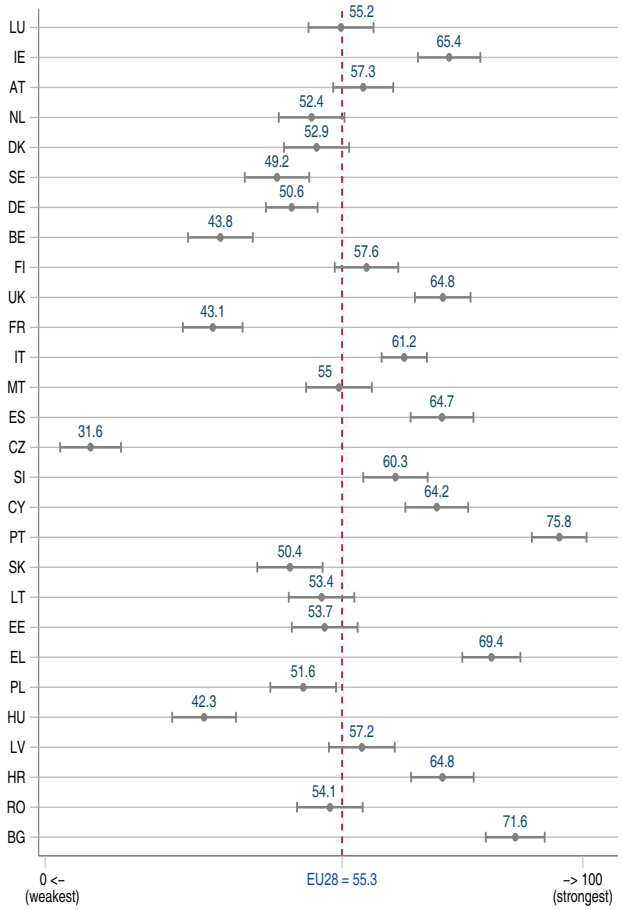


Figure 20b: Level of sense of community in 2016 (frequent contact with friends/neighbours)

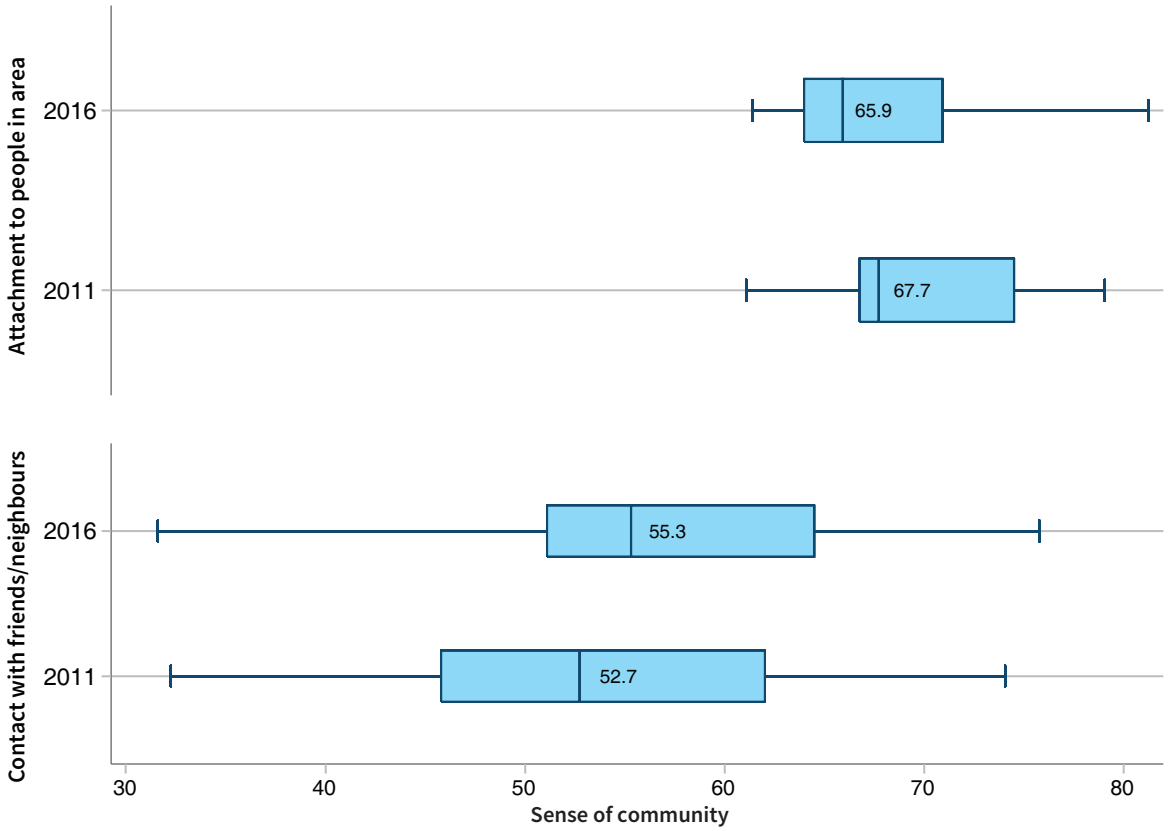


Note: *The figures show, for each EU Member State, citizens' average levels of attachment to people in their residential area (Figure 20a) and the share of citizens who have daily contact with friends and neighbours (Figure 20b). The country mean is represented by a dot and the lines stretching out to the left and right of each country mean indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order on the basis of their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

Trends over time

As shown in the upper panel of Figure 21, the overall EU average in terms of citizens' attachment to people in their area has declined only slightly since 2011, from 67.7 to 65.9. However, Table A11 in Annex 2 shows that the average score for this indicator has declined significantly in 14 Member States, whereas it has increased in only four. This paradox can be explained by the fact that the declines predominantly took place in less populous Member States, such as Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark and Luxembourg. Conversely, it was in the more populous societies of Greece, Latvia, Slovakia and the UK where feelings of attachment to local people increased significantly.

Figure 21: Convergence/divergence in sense of community



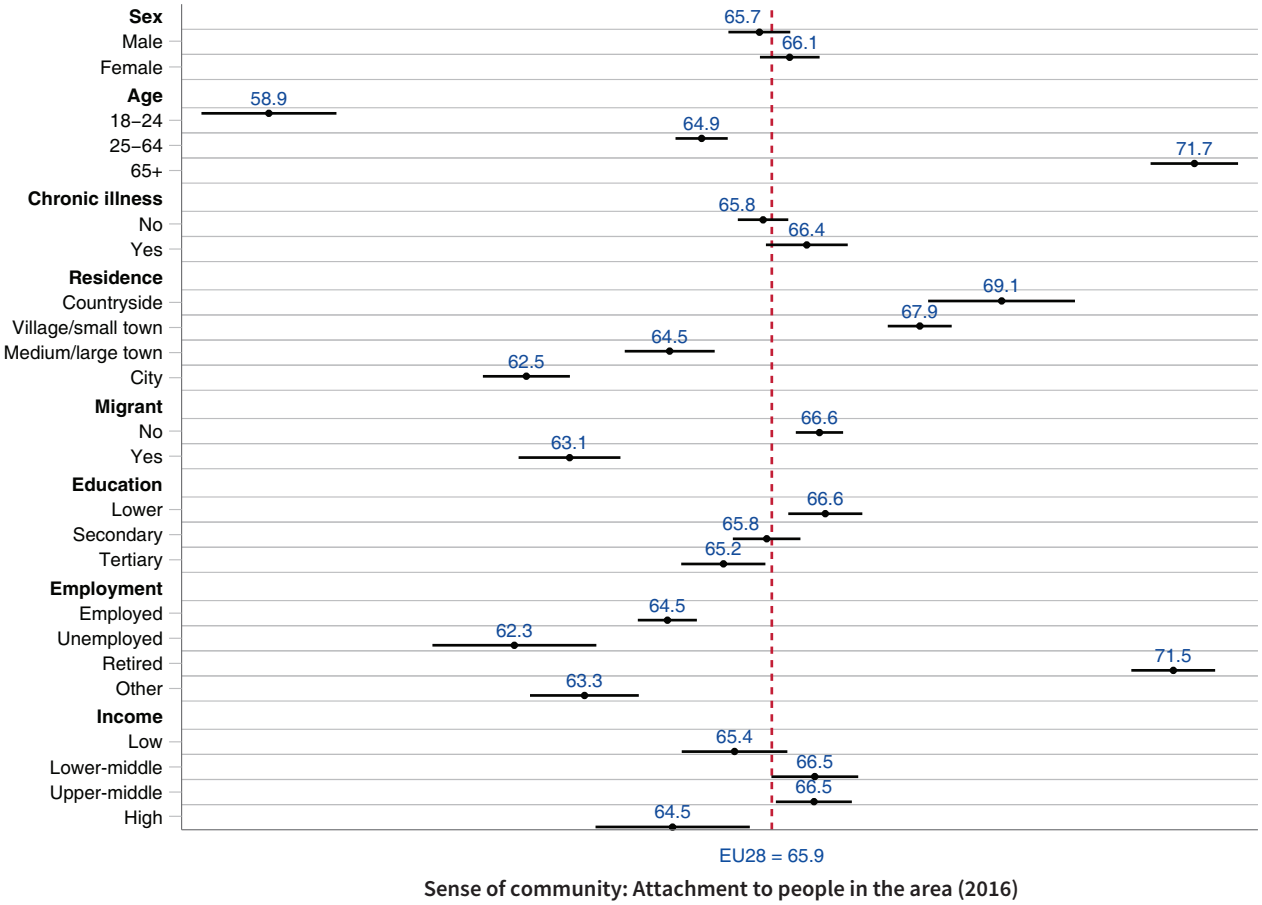
Note: *The box plots in Figure 21 display the variation in the sense of community across the EU in 2011 and 2016. The vertical line in each box plot displays the EU average in the respective year.*

Contact with friends and neighbours follows the opposite pattern to that of attachment. The lower panel of Figure 21 shows that the overall proportion of citizens in the EU who have contact with friends and neighbours increased slightly (to 55%) in 2016. However, as documented in Table A12 in Annex 2, the percentage increased in 11 Member States during this period and decreased in only five. It is noteworthy that the increases were identified predominantly in older EU Member States, such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK. The declines, meanwhile, were found in the relatively newer Member States of Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania and Romania.

Differences between social groups

This section first explores differences between social groups for the indicator measuring the degree to which respondents feel attached to other people living in their area. The respective EU28 average rates for each social group are presented in Figure 22. As in previous chapters, in addition to the average levels for each social group, the figure provides the respective 95% confidence intervals, as estimated with the Scheffé correction for pairwise comparisons in one-way analyses of variance. Groups with overlapping confidence intervals can be considered as not differing significantly from each other. Due to the large sample sizes, only differences of at least five points are considered sizeable enough for interpretation.

Figure 22: Attachment to people in area, by social group

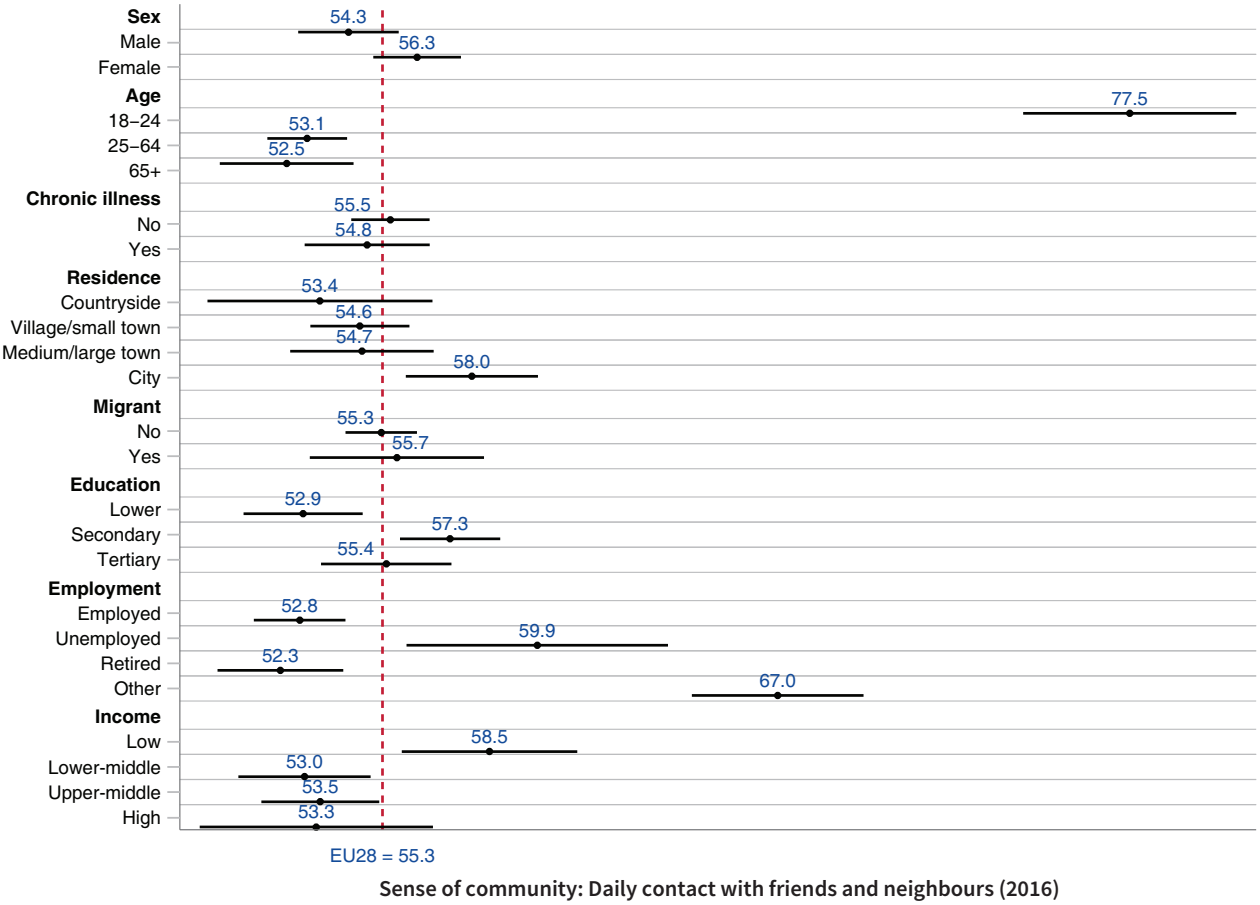


Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of feeling attached to people in one's area in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

EU citizens do not differ substantially in terms of sex, health status, migration background, education or income when it comes to their attachment to people in their area. The characteristic that presents the clearest differences is age. The average level of attachment among the elderly is as high as 71.7, compared to the respective levels of 64.9 among people aged 25–64 and 58.9 in the youngest age group. Furthermore, in comparison to rural dwellers, citizens living in medium-to-large towns and cities feel significantly less attached to the people in their residential area. Retired respondents – in line with the results relating to age – report an average level of attachment of 71.5, thereby standing out in comparison to those who are employed, unemployed or have another employment status.

The respective data regarding daily contact with friends and neighbours are presented in Figure 23. Due to the dichotomous nature of this indicator at the individual level, differences across social groups have been tested in logistic regression. Again, alongside the average rate for each social group, the figure displays the 95% confidence interval for each estimate. Groups with overlapping confidence intervals can be considered as not differing significantly from each other. Similarly, only differences of at least five percentage points are deemed meaningful, given the large sample size.

Figure 23: Daily contact with friends and neighbours, by social group



Note: *The figure displays the estimated marginal mean and its 95% confidence interval of daily contact to friends and neighbours in 2016 for each of the listed social groups. The dashed vertical line represents the EU28 average.*

When it comes to respondents' frequency of contact with their friends and neighbours, there are few differences between social groups. Nevertheless, several observations are worth pointing out. Firstly, younger respondents report by far the highest rate: 78% of the 18–24 age group have daily contact with friends and neighbours, either in face-to-face interactions or by telephone, post or the internet. The youngest cohort therefore stands out as an interesting case. As described earlier, younger citizens feel relatively less attached to the people in their residential area, but at the same time maintain the most frequent contact with friends and neighbours. This apparent contradiction suggests that the social networks of younger people are considerably less grounded in their local area. Secondly, citizens who are unemployed or inactive in the labour market, including students and those with chronic illnesses, also report higher rates than those who are employed or retired. Interestingly, the low-income class maintains more frequent contact (59%) than the other income classes.

Main societal drivers

This section aims to explore which socioeconomic policies can stimulate a stronger sense of community in EU societies. In order to address this question, the report explores the correlations between the two indicators for this aspect of social cohesion and the societal characteristics selected in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. Table 8 summarises the raw correlations and the respective relationships after accounting for differences in economic prosperity among the EU Member States.

Table 8: Societal drivers of a sense of community

	Attachment to people		Contact with friends/neighbours	
Characteristic	Bivariate	Partial	Bivariate	Partial
GDP pc PPP (ln)	-0.33 *		-0.17	
Tertiary education level (%)	0.01	0.20	0.03	0.13
Individuals with digital skills (%)	-0.35 *	-0.17	-0.31	-0.27
Income inequality: S80/S20	0.42 **	0.31	0.50 ***	0.49 ***
Downward to upward mobility ratio	-0.07	-0.20	-0.34	-0.47 **
At-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	0.48 ***	0.39 **	0.52 ***	0.50 ***
Severe material deprivation (%)	0.38 **	0.22	0.37 *	0.36 *
Unemployment rate	0.37 *	0.31	0.53 ***	0.51 ***
Government expenditure on public policies	-0.39 **	-0.3	-0.18	-0.12

Note: *The table presents country-level bivariate and partial correlations between a sense of community in 2016 and selected societal characteristics. The partial correlations adjust for differences in the countries' GDP pc PPP. The significance of the correlations in the case of two-sided tests is as follows:* *** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$.

The results are in part counter-intuitive and similar to those seen for perceived ethno-cultural tensions. It appears that citizens of the more affluent EU Member States, having lower levels of inequality, poverty and unemployment, feel less attached to the people in their area, although they do have higher rates of contact with friends and neighbours. In the case of the latter, the correlations persist even after GDP pc PPP has been accounted for. Regarding feelings of attachment, the correlation with poverty also remains after adjustment for economic prosperity.

Taken together, the evidence points to two main conclusions. Firstly, attachment is an aspect of social cohesion that belongs to the realm of mechanical solidarity – as described by Durkheim (1977) – which is characteristic of traditional, rather than modern and economically advanced, societies. Secondly, contact with friends and neighbours seems to act as a sort of safety net against social ills such as inequality, poverty and unemployment. In general, a sense of community appears to be the aspect of social cohesion that is least connected to social and economic policies. The question of whether it affects well-being in any way is explored in the next chapter, on subjective well-being and happiness.

Sense of community – Key findings

Prevalence

A sense of community is consistently high across the EU. Citizens generally feel strongly attached to the people in their immediate living environment. Around 6 out of 10 citizens also maintain daily contact with friends and neighbours.

Distribution

There is no clear pattern across Member States, but only a slight tendency for feelings of attachment to be somewhat higher in the east than in the west. Social contacts appear slightly more frequent in the southern EU Member States.

Trend

Sense of community across the EU generally remained stable in the period 2011–2016, due largely to counterbalancing in-country changes.

Risk groups

There are no clear risk groups when it comes to a sense of community. Younger citizens do, however, stand out as the group with the lowest level of attachment to people in their residential area. At the same time, they also display the highest rate of social contact.

Drivers

Citizens' feelings of attachment to people in their local area were found to be higher in less affluent Member States. Social contact appears to be more frequent in societies that are affected by socioeconomic problems.

6 Subjective well-being

This chapter explores the question of whether and to what extent the quality of a society is related to the quality of life of its citizens. In simpler terms, the chapter analyses whether and to what extent social cohesion benefits the well-being of citizens.

Measuring subjective well-being

As outlined in the introduction, the present report focuses on three aspects of subjective well-being: transitory well-being, life evaluation and eudaimonia. Their operationalisation follows the approach undertaken in Eurofound and Bertelsmann Stiftung (2014), which is also based on EQLS data. The approach is also in line with the OECD's guidelines on measuring subjective well-being (OECD, 2013).

Transitory well-being

Transitory well-being refers to temporary positive and negative emotional states. The measurement of positive and negative emotions uses a sequence of items from the EQLS 2016 that asks respondents to indicate how they have been feeling over the last two weeks.

In terms of positive emotions, the items are:

- 'I have felt cheerful and in good spirits.'
- 'I have felt calm and relaxed.'
- 'I have felt active and vigorous.'
- 'I woke up feeling fresh and rested.'
- 'My daily life has been filled with things that interest me.'

In fact, this sequence of items is identical to the item inventory of the World Health Organisation's five-item well-being index, known as WHO-5. This index is often used to detect individuals at risk of depression (Topp, Østergaard, Søndergaard, and Bech, 2015).

As for negative emotions, the items are:

- 'I have felt particularly tense.'
- 'I have felt lonely.'
- 'I have felt downhearted and depressed.'

Each of these items was originally measured on a six-point scale, ranging from 'all of the time' to 'at no time'. In line with the present report's strategy of unifying the measurement scales of all the indicators of social cohesion, the items on positive and negative emotions have been rescaled to range from 0 (never experienced) to 100 (experienced all of the time).

Missing values for each item (none above 5%) have been substituted with the country-specific average. Respondents' scores on the respective items have been averaged in order to produce a composite index for positive emotions and a separate one for negative emotions. Comparing the respective scores of these two indices reveals which emotions – more positive or more negative – are prevalent in the lives of EU citizens.

Life evaluation

Life evaluation, an enduring hedonic orientation, has been operationalised as the arithmetic mean of the following two widely-used items:

- 'Taking all things together […], how happy would you say you are?'
- 'All things considered, how satisfied would you say you are with your life these days?'

The original measurement scale for the two items, ranging from 1 (very unhappy/very dissatisfied) to 10 (very happy/very satisfied), has been rescaled to range from 0 to 100, maintaining the original meaning of the two poles. Missing values (not above 5%) have been substituted with the country-specific means.

Eudaimonia

Finally, the operationalisation of eudaimonia draws on the following sequence of items:

- 'I am optimistic about my future.'
- 'I generally feel that what I do in life is worthwhile.'
- 'I feel I am free to decide how to live my life.'
- 'In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy.'
- 'I find it difficult to deal with important problems that come up in my life.'
- 'When things go wrong in my life, it generally takes me a long time to get back to normal.'

The original, Likert-type answering scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), has been reversed for the first three items, and rescaled for all items to range from 0 to 100, such that a higher numerical value on each item stands for a stronger positive experience of eudaimonia. Missing values (not above 5%) have been substituted with the country-specific means. The composite index of eudaimonia has been computed by averaging respondents' scores on the items listed above.

Figure 24a: Transitory well-being in 2016 (prevalence of positive emotions)

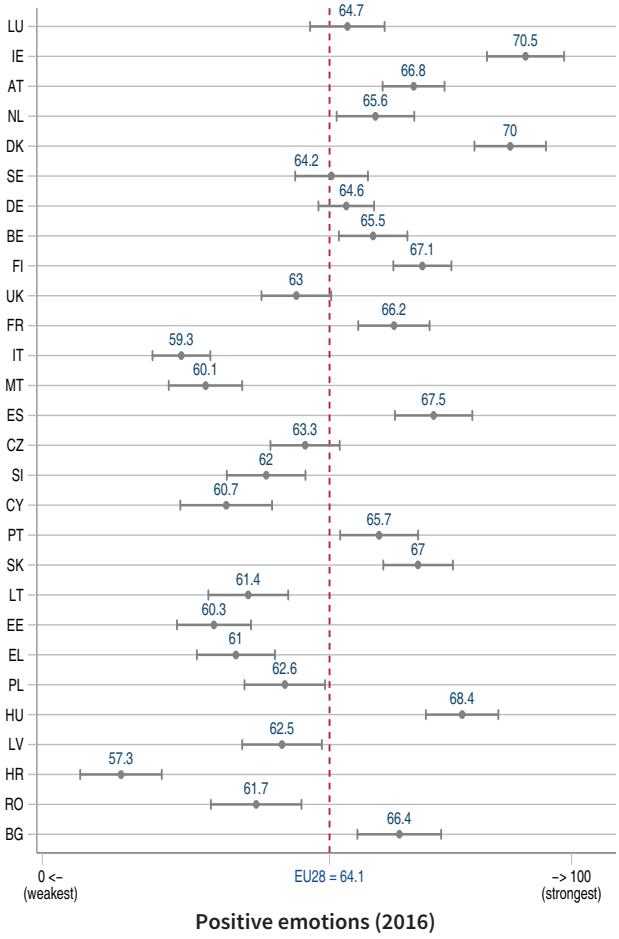
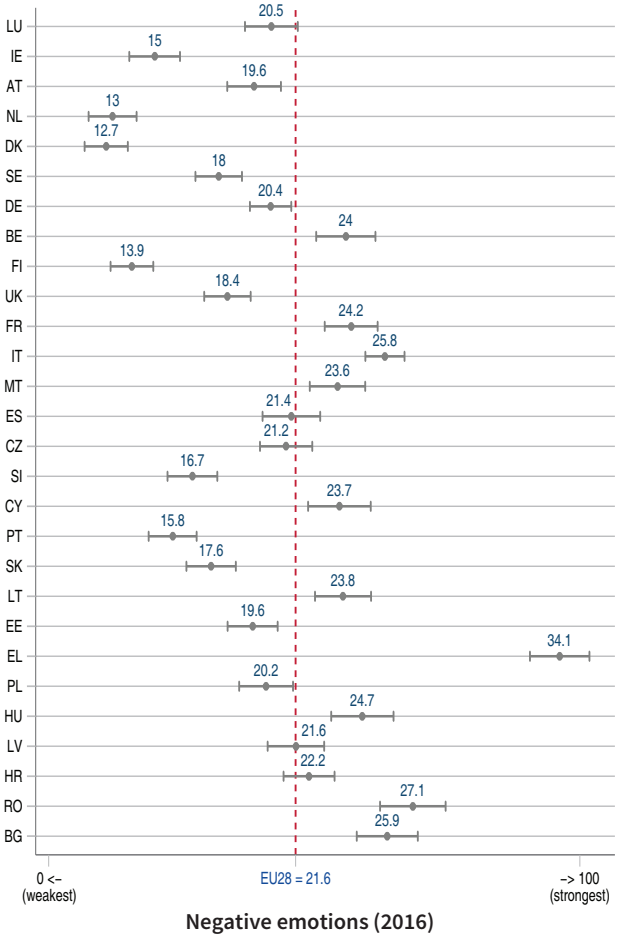


Figure 24b: Transitory well-being in 2016 (prevalence of negative emotions)



Note: *The figures show, for each EU Member State, the average level of positive emotions (Figure 24a) and negative emotions (Figure 24b). The country mean is represented by a dot and the lines stretching out to the left and right of each country mean indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order on the basis of their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

Current levels

The multifaceted measurement undertaken by the present report provides an opportunity to analyse the well-being of EU citizens from a number of different angles, the first of which is transitory well-being. Figures 24a and 24b illustrate the transitory well-being of EU citizens by presenting the respective prevalence of positive and negative emotions.

Transitory well-being

In terms of transitory well-being, the prevalence of positive emotions in the EU as a whole in 2016 was found to be 64.1, which is above the implied mean of the scale from 0 to 100 (50). Using the same scale, the overall EU average for negative emotions was 21.6. In other words, citizens across the EU generally experience relatively few emotions such as tenseness, loneliness or depression. Experiences of positive emotions, such as feeling cheerful, calm, vigorous and fresh, are comparatively more prevalent in the lives of EU citizens. Furthermore, in no EU Member State are negative emotions more widespread than positive ones.

The gap between the country with the highest level of positive emotions and that with the lowest level is quite narrow. Specifically, these two poles are Ireland (70.5) and Croatia (57.3). As suggested by the 95% confidence intervals, the average experience of positive emotions in Ireland is no different from that in Denmark (70) or Hungary (68.4). At the other end, Croatia does not differ significantly from Italy (59.3) or Malta (60.1). The prevalence of positive emotions in Luxembourg (64.7), Germany (64.6), Sweden (64.2), the Czech Republic (63.3) and the UK (63) is comparable to the overall EU average. Although many countries do not differ from each other, positive emotions tend to be somewhat more common in the more prosperous EU Member States. This trend is illustrated by Figure 24a, which ranks the countries based on their GDP pc PPP. There are however some notable exceptions, such as the high

Figure 25a: Level of enduring well-being in 2016 (life evaluation)

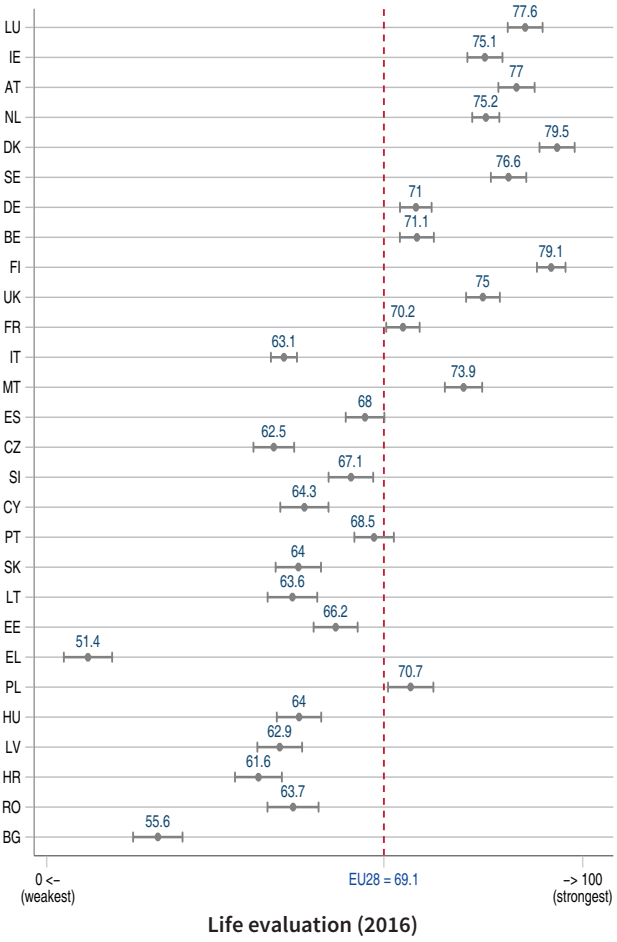
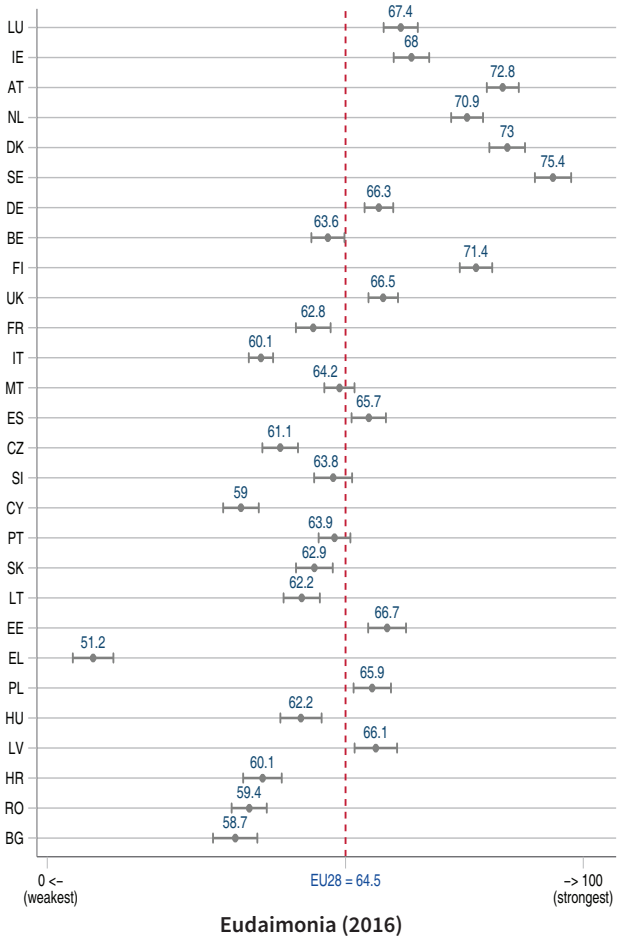


Figure 25b: Level of enduring well-being in 2016 (eudaimonia)



Note: *The figures show, for each EU Member State, the average level of life evaluation (Figure 25a) and eudaimonia (Figure 25b). The country mean is represented by a dot, and the lines stretching out to the left and right of each country mean indicate the lower and upper bounds, respectively, of the 95% confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line indicates the EU28 average. Countries are ranked in descending order on the basis of their GDP pc PPP in 2015–2016.*

prevalence of positive emotions found in the much poorer central and eastern Member States of Bulgaria (66.4) and Hungary (68.4).

The prevalence of negative emotions in the EU generally follows the opposite pattern to that of positive emotions. The lowest prevalence of negative emotions is found in Denmark (12.7), the Netherlands (13) and Finland (13.9). Greece stands out as the society with the highest prevalence of negative emotions (34.1). Countries with similar levels of negative emotions to the EU average of 21.6 are the Czech Republic (21.2), Spain (21.4), Latvia (21.6) and Croatia (22.2). Figure 24b (on previous page), which again ranks the Member States with respect to their level of economic prosperity, shows a clear trend in that citizens of the richer Member States tend to experience fewer negative emotions than their counterparts in less economically prosperous societies. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the prevalence of negative emotions in a number of more prosperous western Member States, such as Belgium (24), France (24.2) and Italy (25.8), does not differ significantly from that in Hungary (24.7), Bulgaria (25.9) or Romania (27.1).

Enduring well-being

While transitory well-being refers to temporary positive and negative emotions, the next two aspects of subjective well-being reflect on enduring well-being – in other words, experiences of life over an extended period of time. These two aspects of subjective well-being are life evaluation, which includes happiness and satisfaction, and eudaimonia, or psychological functioning. The data on these two aspects are presented in Figures 25a and 25b respectively.

On the measurement scale of 0 (very unhappy/very dissatisfied) to 100 (very happy/very satisfied), the average level of life evaluation in the EU was found to be 69.1. Using the same 0–100 scale – on which 100 in this case represents very positive psychological functioning – the average level of eudaimonic well-being in the EU was 64.5. As such, both values are clearly located above

the implied mean of the scale (50). Moreover, no individual Member State achieves an average score below the implied mean for either of these two aspects of enduring well-being. It can be therefore concluded that EU citizens have, on average, high levels of happiness and life satisfaction, and positive psychological functioning.

Despite this optimistic outlook, it is clear from the data that one country stands out: Greece. Citizens of Greece clearly report the lowest levels of both life evaluation (51.4) and eudaimonia (51.2) in comparison to their counterparts in other EU Member States. Bulgaria also stands out, with the second lowest score for life evaluation (55.6). However, in terms of eudaimonia, Bulgaria's level of psychological functioning (58.7) is no different from that in Cyprus (59), Romania (59.4), Croatia (60.1) or Italy (60.1).

The majority of the Nordic and western Member States find themselves at the positive end of the scale. These countries exhibit relatively higher scores for both life evaluation and eudaimonia. Life evaluation was found to be highest in Denmark (79.5), closely followed by Finland (79.1). Closely behind these two countries are Luxembourg (77.6), Austria (77) and Sweden (76.6). The level of eudaimonia is clearly highest in Sweden (75.4), followed by Denmark (73), Austria (72.8), Finland (71.4) and the Netherlands (70.9).

As Figures 25a and 25b order the countries by their level of economic prosperity, it is evident that both aspects of enduring well-being closely correspond to the economic prosperity of the respective Member States. In other words, the richer societies in terms of GDP pc PPP enjoy greater happiness and life satisfaction and better psychological functioning. This observation underscores the importance of the EU policy of upward convergence.

Social cohesion and well-being

This section aims to find out to what extent social cohesion benefits citizens' well-being. For this purpose, it explores the correlations between the country scores for the key aspects of social cohesion and the average level of well-being in the EU Member States. Table 9 summarises the relevant data stemming from bivariate correlational analyses.

The results by and large demonstrate that social cohesion is positive for the well-being of EU citizens. Firstly, societies with more pronounced perceptions of social exclusion are characterised by fewer experiences of positive emotions and more experiences of negative emotions. They also display lower levels of life evaluation (happiness and satisfaction with life) and eudaimonia (psychological functioning).

The same pattern of correlations with well-being is exhibited by economic tensions, although the associations are substantively weaker. As for the prevalence of perceived ethno-cultural tensions, the evidence suggests this is entirely irrelevant to any aspect of subjective well-being. This finding is surprising given the relevance of perceived tensions between racial, ethnic and religious groups across the EU.

The third key aspect of social cohesion – interpersonal trust – consistently exhibits strong correlations with all four measures of subjective well-being. Citizens of the more trusting EU societies experience more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions. They are also

Table 9: Correlations between social cohesion and well-being

Aspect of social cohesion	Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Life evaluation	Eudaimonia
Perceived social exclusion	-0.39 **	0.66 ***	-0.66 ***	-0.85 ***
Perceived tensions between:				
Rich and poor	-0.23	0.50 ***	-0.40 **	-0.39 **
Managers and workers	-0.34 *	0.48 ***	-0.42 **	-0.55 ***
Racial/ethnic groups	0.04	0.04	0.27	0.18
Religious groups	0.08	0.04	0.32	0.18
Interpersonal trust	0.53 ***	-0.59 ***	0.80 ***	0.78 ***
Participation in society:				
Civic engagement	0.40 **	-0.59 ***	0.83 ***	0.78 ***
Political participation	0.33*	-0.53 ***	0.79 ***	0.73 ***
Sense of community:				
Attachment to people in area	-0.12	0.19	-0.43 **	-0.15
Daily contact with friends/neighbours	-0.12	0.04	-0.20	-0.24

Note: *The table presents the bivariate correlation coefficient for the correlations of the key aspects of social cohesion with those of subjective well-being at the country level. The significance of the correlations in the case of two-sided tests is as follows:* *** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$.

happier and more satisfied with life, and score better in terms of psychological functioning.

Exactly the same pattern of correlations emerges for participation in society. Civic engagement and political participation are associated with more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions, as well as with higher life satisfaction and better eudaimonia.

Sense of community, however, does not display any correlation with the well-being of EU citizens. This aspect of cohesion, referring to feelings of attachment to local people and frequent contact with relevant others, is not even associated with emotional states, e.g. feeling cheerful, lonely or depressed – a particularly surprising and counter-intuitive finding. The only link is found between feelings of attachment to local people and life evaluation, revealing a significantly negative correlation. In substantive terms, the finding suggests that in societies in which people feel closer to others, happiness and life satisfaction are in fact lower. In this respect, the finding points to the dark side of closely knit communities, in which individuals may feel that other members of the community exert informal social control on them and restrict their personal freedoms (Graeff, 2009).

In light of the correlational evidence reported here, a number of important conclusions can be drawn regarding the relevance of social cohesion for the societies of the EU and their citizens. If subjective well-being is the ultimate good that the institutional arrangement of societies should aim to provide, then social cohesion emerges as a necessary condition. However, not all of the aspects identified for the purposes of this report appear to be important at present. The findings demonstrate that mechanical aspects of social cohesion are, by and large, irrelevant. The prevalence of ethno-cultural tensions does not have any bearing on the well-being of EU citizens. Moreover, a strong sense of community appears to be harmful to happiness and life satisfaction. Only the perception of economic tensions – between rich and poor, and between managers and workers – is related to well-being. On the other hand, all organic aspects of social cohesion are clearly important for the well-being of EU citizens. Perceptions of not being socially excluded and – above all – interpersonal trust and participation in society are strongly and positively related to well-being.

The insights discussed above support the approach of the present report not to opt for a summary index of social cohesion, since not all of its five identified aspects belong together. In future, if an attempt is made to develop a composite index, the evidence compiled here speaks in favour of focusing on organic aspects of social cohesion. In line with the conceptualisation used in the present report, these essential aspects of cohesion are the perception of social exclusion, interpersonal trust and participation in society. They are exactly the ones that are conducive to citizens' quality of life.

Subjective well-being – Key findings

Prevalence

The life of the average EU citizen is characterised by more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions.

Happiness and life satisfaction (life evaluation) and psychological functioning (eudaimonia) are high, but not exceptionally so, across most EU societies.

Distribution

While the pattern is less clear with regard to positive emotions, negative emotions tend to be more pronounced in the less economically prosperous EU Member States. The stable forms of well-being, life evaluation and eudaimonia, are clearly higher in richer countries.

Greece stands out as a problematic case when it comes to negative emotions, life evaluation and eudaimonia.

Correlations with social cohesion

Low levels of social exclusion, high interpersonal trust and participation in society strongly contribute to positive well-being.

Economic tensions bring about transitory negative emotions and, more importantly, reduce life satisfaction, happiness and psychological functioning.

Ethno-cultural tensions, despite being very pronounced, are unrelated to well-being outcomes, while a strong sense of community may even be harmful to happiness and life satisfaction.

7 Conclusions and policy pointers

Social cohesion is often said to be in jeopardy, on an unstoppable downward slide. There is however little empirical evidence to back up such claims, or indeed to reject them. Single country studies, such as the recent Social Cohesion Radar of the Bertelsmann Stiftung in Germany (Arant, Dragolov, and Boehnke, 2017), have offered conclusive evidence that there is no indication of any such unstoppable negative trend. On the contrary, the level of social cohesion in Germany is relatively high, although there are clear risk factors. These include ongoing national divisions, particularly between the former West and East, and certain social ills such as a high risk of poverty. While specific to Germany, these findings broadly correspond to those of the present report, which has dealt with the levels, drivers and consequences of social cohesion in the societies of the EU.

Drawing on the definition of the Council of Europe (Jenson, 2010), the present report identified five key aspects of social cohesion: perceived social exclusion, perceived social tensions, interpersonal trust, participation in society and a sense of community. These aspects were operationalised using data from Eurofound's European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS).

The evidence demonstrates that social cohesion – particularly as manifested in its organic aspects of perceived social inclusion, interpersonal trust and participation in society – is a necessary quality of societies. It is affected by socioeconomic risk factors in society and clearly has a bearing on the well-being of citizens. If the happiness of citizens is indeed a valued focus area of national governments and EU institutions, social cohesion should become an integral component of their policy agendas.

The following paragraphs summarise the core findings of the report and draw conclusions.

Social fabric of European societies

The first aspect of social cohesion addressed in this report relates to perceived social exclusion. The level of perceived social exclusion is not particularly high in Europe, although certain social groups are at risk in this regard. In general, the EU can be regarded as a community that does not exclude major sections of its population. This being said, there is considerable variation across the 28 Member States: social exclusion tends to be less common in the northern Member States, and more common in south-eastern Member States such as Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece. The latter two countries have been heavily affected by the crisis of the euro zone and clearly need particular policy attention with regard to social exclusion. It appears that the austerity measures undertaken to alleviate fiscal problems have had noticeable repercussions in the everyday lives of citizens, as sizable proportions of citizens feel socially excluded. As to the case of Bulgaria, the country's level of economic prosperity is still barely half of the EU average (Eurostat, 2018). There is no evidence of a general downslide in social cohesion, as would perhaps be presumed by increasing levels of social exclusion. Furthermore, feelings of social exclusion are in fact on the decline in a number of countries. It does appear, however, that the Mediterranean Member States have found it difficult to recover to their pre-financial-crisis levels of social exclusion.

Social tensions constitute the second aspect of social cohesion covered in the present report. It is important here to highlight that this aspect of social cohesion is assessed as perceived subjectively by citizens, rather than through objective measures such as the numbers of strikes (for economic tensions) or criminal offenses relating to ethnic or religious background (for ethno-cultural tensions). On the one hand, this creates a problem commonly experienced in criminological studies whereby official incidence rates of crimes and subjective evaluations of crime prevalence often differ. Sometimes, opposite trends may even emerge, as perceptions of increased crime rates coincide with actual decreases in documented criminal offenses. On the other hand, the importance of subjective perceptions of crime is highlighted by the so-called Thomas theorem. This suggests that problems that people report are 'real' for them and therefore must be given due attention, not least by policymakers. In terms of the findings of this report, the prevalence of perceived ethno-cultural tensions in the EU is relatively high, as a sizeable minority of citizens (some 40%) perceive a high level of tension. Levels of perceived economic tensions are also quite prevalent. One in three EU citizens perceives a high level of tension in the economic sphere. There is a divide in the EU when it comes to which form of social tension is more salient. Ethno-cultural tensions are predominantly more prevalent in the more affluent, western EU Member States, most of which have recently seen strongly increased numbers of immigrants. However, comparable rates can also be found in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Malta. Economic tensions are slightly higher in post-communist societies than in the western Member States, a trend that most likely stems from the economic restructuring of these societies during their political transformations. Perceived tensions between rich and poor increased between

2007 and 2011, before returning to their pre-crisis levels in 2016. Tensions between managers and workers have also declined. Meanwhile, religious tensions seem to have become a significant issue in the EU that needs to be closely attended to by policymakers.

The level of general interpersonal trust differs across the EU Member States. As has been reported in many studies, the Nordic countries, as well as Luxembourg and the Netherlands, exhibit high levels of trust. The south-eastern Member States, on the other hand, are characterised by low levels of trust. Changes across time are negligible, with the levels in Austria and Cyprus on the rise and declines observed in Croatia, Romania and Slovakia. Although there is a clear set of drivers of high trust levels (see the discussion on risks to cohesion below), the question as to the origin of trust remains. It is not yet clear whether trust is primarily a personality trait – rooted in genetic predispositions – or rather formed by the socio-structural contexts of citizens' lives. This question must be left to further research and cannot be answered within the current framework of the EQLS.

From a normative standpoint of desirability, participation in society is discouragingly low in the EU. Fewer than 2 out of 10 EU citizens participate in civil society activities. As for political participation, the situation appears slightly more positive: some 3 out of 10 citizens are politically active in some form. These figures do not necessarily mean that civic engagement and political participation are low, but they do indicate that there is substantial room for improvement. In addition, there are clear divisions between regions in the EU. Participation in the northern and western Member States is in some cases four times as high as that in certain south-eastern Member States. As for trends, average levels of activity have largely remained unchanged over time, despite some fluctuations within individual countries.

Sense of community, when measured in terms of feelings of attachment to other people in one's immediate living environment, exhibits results that differ somewhat from those relating to daily contact with friends and neighbours. Both measures display relatively high levels throughout the EU. However, there are regional differences: feelings of attachment are slightly more prevalent in the eastern Member States than in the western countries, while the frequency of social contact is somewhat higher in the southern Member States. Attachment appears to have declined over the years analysed in the present study, whereas the rate of social contacts has risen slightly. As both element of sense of community come out as relatively high in Europe, this aspect of social cohesion need not be of primary concern to policymakers.

An overall assessment of social cohesion in the EU depends largely on the reader's personal tendency to see the glass as half full or half empty. What is evident from the five aspects measured is that there is clearly no reason to be alarmed. Social cohesion is clearly not in jeopardy, nor is it on an all-out downward slide. There are, however, issues of concern. Relatively high levels of perceived social tensions, as well as noticeably low levels of interpersonal trust in certain parts of the EU, should receive due attention from policymakers.

Social polarisation and groups at risk

An innovative component of the present report relates to its focus on possible groups at risk of being affected by low levels of social cohesion, which could in turn have an impact on happiness and well-being. The analyses looked at the importance of horizontal and vertical divisions in society for the five key aspects of social cohesion. The findings can serve as pointers for policymakers as to which measures might bring success in the quest for social cohesion.

Social exclusion predominantly affects the socioeconomically disadvantaged segments of society: the unemployed, people in the low income class and/or with low levels of education, and particularly those who are chronically ill.

Ethno-cultural social tensions are also most commonly perceived by the chronically ill, as well as those who live in the countryside and, perhaps surprisingly, by those who are employed and/or highly educated. Whereas the findings relating to rural dwellers may fit with stronger preferences for traditional, conservative values, the reasons for the counter-intuitive perceptions of the employed and highly educated groups are less apparent. One possible explanation, albeit speculative, could be that these two groups are more aware of the nature of social interactions among members of society from the respective ethnic, racial and religious groups. A second possible answer may refer to what the social science literature calls welfare chauvinism (see, for example, Cappelen and Peters, 2017; Mewes and Mau, 2013; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2012). In this light, the employed – and, perhaps less plausibly so, the highly educated – may have developed so-called us-and-them attitudes in relation to benefits and the social welfare system. Further research is, however, needed in order to uncover the underlying reasons for the perceptions of these two social groups. As regards economic tensions, the picture that emerges is as expected: such tensions are mostly felt by the chronically ill, the unemployed and people in the low income class.

Regarding interpersonal trust, the picture is largely similar to that of perceived economic tensions: the unemployed, as well as people with low incomes and low levels of education, put substantially lower trust in others.

Exactly the same findings emerge for participation in society. With regard to this aspect of social cohesion, it is again predominantly people who are unemployed, have low incomes and/or have low levels of education who exhibit low participation levels. In this case, however, old age is an additional risk factor for low participation. The elderly are least politically active in terms of participating in protests or petitions, although their voting turnout at elections is typically the highest of all age groups (Goerres, 2007). This paradox raises the question as to how the greater engagement of younger segments in political activities can translate into increased voter turnout. It is also worth noting that citizens with tertiary levels of education have the highest rate of political participation.

Interestingly, age is an important factor when it comes to a sense of community. Younger EU citizens report the lowest levels of attachment to their local communities, coupled with the highest levels of contact with their friends and neighbours. It is possible that a new generation is growing up that actively forms fewer place-based social contacts.

The findings further point to a worrying indication of polarisation between the lower-middle income class and upper-middle income class. The two middle-income classes generally score close to the average for the studied aspects of social cohesion, but there are indications of a division between the two at present. The lower-middle income class is more similar to the low income class in its perceptions of social cohesion, whereas the upper-middle income class is more closely positioned to the high income segment of society. This is the case for all three organic aspects of social cohesion, as well as for economic tensions. This issue deserves the attention of policymakers since, as has been illustrated, it is exactly these aspects of cohesion that are of importance for subjective well-being.

In summary, it is evident that chronically ill citizens are a group at high risk of being affected by low social cohesion. The same is true for the unemployed, the low educated and those in the low income class. Old age also emerges as a potential risk factor for participation in society. In terms of policymaking, the EU must continue to keep unemployment rates low, reduce poverty risks and enable *Bildung* for all citizens. However, more concretely, three groups need special policy attention: the chronically ill, the elderly and the middle-income class. Any actions to reduce the exclusion of people with chronic illnesses from societal life are likely to aid social cohesion. The elderly need new opportunities that allow them to engage more easily in civil society activities. Finally, when it comes to the respective experiences of the lower-middle and upper-middle income classes, the existing gap in relation to the organic aspects of social cohesion must not widen any further.

Quality of society and quality of life

If social cohesion is a key factor for greater happiness and well-being in the EU, it is instructive to closely assess its current state in an attempt to improve it through targeted policy interventions. The present report concludes that social cohesion does indeed have a largely positive influence on the citizens of the EU.

It is important to state that, overall, EU citizens enjoy high to very high levels of happiness and well-being. Moreover, these high levels of well-being are clearly, and sometimes strongly, associated with aspects of social cohesion. However, the beneficial role of social cohesion for well-being predominantly pertains to its organic aspects. Low levels of social exclusion, high levels of interpersonal trust and high levels of participation in civic and political life covary systematically with indicators of subjective well-being. It appears that reducing social exclusion of individuals and groups, increasing the level of participation in society and increasing levels of interpersonal trust will indeed foster happiness among EU citizens. Such measures are likely to pave the way towards an even better quality of life across the EU.

As regards the mechanical aspects of social cohesion, their relationship to well-being is not so straightforward. Levels of perceived social tensions and a sense of community do not necessarily go hand in hand with quality of life. While citizens' frequency of social contact with relevant others is unrelated to well-being, attachment to their local community appears to actually have a negative impact on their life satisfaction. Sense of belonging as analysed in the present report is therefore not conducive to life satisfaction and as such should not be pushed by EU policymakers. As for social tensions, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions. People's experiences of social tensions exhibit very few correlations with measures of subjective well-being. Only economic tensions bring about negative emotions and reduce lasting experiences of happiness, life satisfaction and positive psychological functioning. All other perceived tensions appear unrelated to the indicators of well-being. Ethno-cultural tensions are clearly present, and in some cases widespread, but have no apparent repercussions in terms of well-being. The key finding for policymakers is therefore that economic divisions appear more important to the quality of life of EU citizens and may merit greater attention than ethno-cultural tensions in this regard.

Building on the comparison between the respective contributions of the organic and mechanical aspects of social cohesion to well-being, it can be concluded that the organic components are the essential aspects. The mechanical components, in contrast, can be dismissed from future assessments of social cohesion, an

approach that makes sense in the modern EU societies of today. Yet, readers may wonder why the analyses render perceptions of ethno-cultural tensions as an irrelevant aspect of social cohesion – at least with respect to subjective well-being. After all, it is precisely this issue that is currently giving rise to a number of nationalistic and populist parties across the EU, causing much political instability. A speculative explanation relates to the populist strategy of scapegoating – that is, attributing one's own problems to others who often have little to nothing to do with these issues. A more empirically informed explanation can be found in the correlation of trust with the importance of religion in daily life. Where religion is more influential in shaping people's lives, trust in others – an integral, organic part of social cohesion – is lower.

Policy pointers

In addition to the insights on social groups at risk, a number of empirically informed policy pointers can be derived from the analyses of the socio-structural drivers of social cohesion.

Economic prosperity and generous and inclusive welfare systems are widely thought to be of importance to the prevention of social exclusion. In the present study, digital skills also emerge as an effective tool to help citizens avoid falling into feelings of social exclusion. If Member States take major steps to become comprehensive knowledge societies with a strong digital emphasis, perceptions of social exclusion are likely to decline.

Lower economic prosperity, downward social mobility and wide pay gaps between workers and managers are related to increased perceptions of economic tensions. Consequently, it appears that measures aiming to increase economic prosperity, prevent downward mobility and reduce pay gaps may reduce economic tensions. Ethno-cultural tensions seem to have been intensified by the recent arrivals of large numbers of refugees and migrants in the EU. The world is becoming ever more interconnected, while at the same time being plagued by rising inequalities, violent conflicts and climate change. Against this background, it is conceivable that the perceived pressure on the EU, as a relatively attractive place to live, will not disappear immediately. However, the issue of ethno-cultural tensions pertains mostly to the EU Member States that have the greatest capacity to cope with such high levels of immigration. Undoubtedly, the host societies need to develop the necessary social and institutional tools to deal constructively with their rising ethno-cultural diversity. A possible pathway is to harness migration through efficient integration policies, thereby making its benefits more visible to the host societies.

In terms of interpersonal trust, high prosperity levels and an inclusive welfare system again appear to play a role. The acquisition of digital skills is also key here, as people with high levels of digital skills are more trusting. Increasing average computer literacy may therefore aid social cohesion and, consequently, happiness and well-being in the EU. More controversially, secularisation also seems to be important. Interpersonal trust, as already discussed above, is significantly higher in societies where daily life is not perceived as strongly shaped by religion. Religion seems to be a tool of exclusion, rather than inclusion, and thereby detrimental to social cohesion.

High levels of economic prosperity, generous government expenditure on public policies and high levels of digital skills are driving forces for high rates of participation in society.

Finally, policy pointers in relation to a sense of community are of lesser importance, as there is no positive relationship between this aspect and subjective well-being. On the contrary, there is a negative correlation between citizens' levels of attachment to their local areas and their satisfaction with life, meaning this aspect of social cohesion should not be fostered by policymakers.

Perhaps unexpectedly, income inequality has a limited impact on aspects of social cohesion. It appears that the existence of inequality does not really influence the attitudes, emotions and behaviour of citizens.

Overall, the findings of the present study reveal that the usual suspects – high economic prosperity, generous and inclusive welfare systems, high levels of education and low unemployment rates – are indeed the drivers that are most positively related to social cohesion. One factor has however emerged as a new, important driver for social cohesion: digital skills. Policies targeting the economic and social inclusion of citizens, as well as an increased focus on digital skills, therefore represent a pathway to more cohesive societies and happier citizens in the EU.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Methodological annex

Working sample sizes

The present report utilises data on the 28 EU Member States from the EQLS in 2007, 2011 and 2016. The original total sample size, pooled in 28 countries across the three rounds of the survey, is 98,952 respondents. Due to missing information on the variable capturing respondents' assessment of the degree of urbanisation of their place of residence (*Y16_Q53*) and on the variable capturing education in three categories (*Y16_Education_3categories*), the original total sample size was reduced to 97,814 respondents. The operationalisation of the other variables used for this report did not require further listwise deletion of cases with missing information. Thus, the sample sizes per country and survey round are as presented in Table A1.

Table A1: Working sample sizes per country and survey round

Country	EQLS 2007	EQLS 2011	EQLS 2016
AT	1,043	1,032	1,177
BE	1,010	1,003	1,013
BG	1,030	987	1,014
CY	924	1,004	1,008
CZ	1,226	1,012	1,013
DE	1,996	3,028	1,621
DK	1,004	1,022	1,017
EE	971	1,000	996
EL	997	996	1,089
ES	995	1,505	1,004
FI	991	1,018	1,048
FR	1,521	2,259	1,192
HR	991	1,001	1,009
HU	999	1,024	1,039
IE	976	1,044	1,009
IT	1,434	2,243	1,997
LT	928	1,132	1,003
LU	951	910	1,013
LV	923	1,006	981
MT	972	993	994
NL	990	1,006	1,002
PL	1,495	2,255	1,004
PT	990	1,010	1,063
RO	994	1,538	999
SE	993	1,001	1,043
SI	1,034	1,000	997
SK	1,127	985	1,013
UK	1,453	2,208	1,276
Total	**30,958**	**36,222**	**30,634**

As for comparisons of social groups on the basis of the EQLS 2016, these do not apply breakdowns by country or country clusters. The respective pooled sample sizes at the EU level are as presented in Table A2.

Table A2: Sample sizes per social group in EQLS 2016

Social group	Sample size
Sex	
Male	13,114
Female	17,520
Age	
18–24 years	1,829
25–64 years	20,228
65+ years	8,577
Chronic illness	
No	21,277
Yes	9,357
Residence	
Countryside	3,261
Village/small town	12,704
Medium/large town	7,548
City	7,121
Migrant	
No	25,361
Yes	5,273
Education	
Lower	9,181
Secondary	12,916
Tertiary	8,537
Employment	
Employed	15,437
Unemployed	1,807
Retired	9,645
Other	3,745
Income class	
Low	4,637
Lower-middle	8,165
Upper-middle	9,299
High	2,678
Missing	5,855

Note: *Respondents with missing data on income were not considered in comparisons of the four income classes.*

Data weighting

All analyses based on individual data and all aggregations of individual data to higher levels, for instance national, utilise the readily available weight *WCalib_crossnational_EU28* in the data set.

The following paragraphs introduce the core statistical concepts used in this report. They are intended to aid the readers' understanding of the methodology and interpretation of the reported findings. The presented information is based on Field (2009) and Neuman (2013).

Confidence intervals

Social science and social policy research are compelled to work with – ideally representative – samples of the populations of interest. This is exactly the case here, too. The report draws on survey data stemming from representative samples of the societies of the EU Member States. For many reasons, it is simply not possible to ask each and every citizen of Germany (the most populous EU country with over 80 million citizens), or even of Malta (the least populous with about 450,000 citizens), how happy they feel. Using sample statistics such as averages or arithmetic means, the report is able to illustrate a picture as close as possible to the 'true' one in the population. However, it is difficult to be sure that these descriptions and inferences are 100% precise. These are estimates, but they are data-informed estimates with a certain level of confidence.

The report sticks to the so-called 95% confidence interval for all estimates. A confidence interval designates a range for the estimate, taken from a sample, in which the actual population parameter will be located at the defined level of confidence. For example, using a representative sample, it may be estimated that the average level of happiness in a particular society is 9.0, as measured on a scale from 0 (not at all happy) to 10 (extremely happy). The 95% confidence interval of this estimate then ranges from 8.3 to 9.7. This means that there is a 95% certainty that the 'true' average level of happiness is 9.0 ± 0.7. This means it could be 8.8, 8.3, 8.5, 8.9 or 9.7. It could also be 8.0 or 10.0, although this would be highly unlikely and improbable (5% chance only) based on the sample.

A confidence interval for a sample mean ($\bar{x}$) can easily be calculated based on the standard error (SE) of the mean. The boundaries of a 95% confidence interval are:

- Lower boundary = $\bar{x}$ – 1.95 * SE
- Upper boundary = $\bar{x}$ + 1.95 * SE

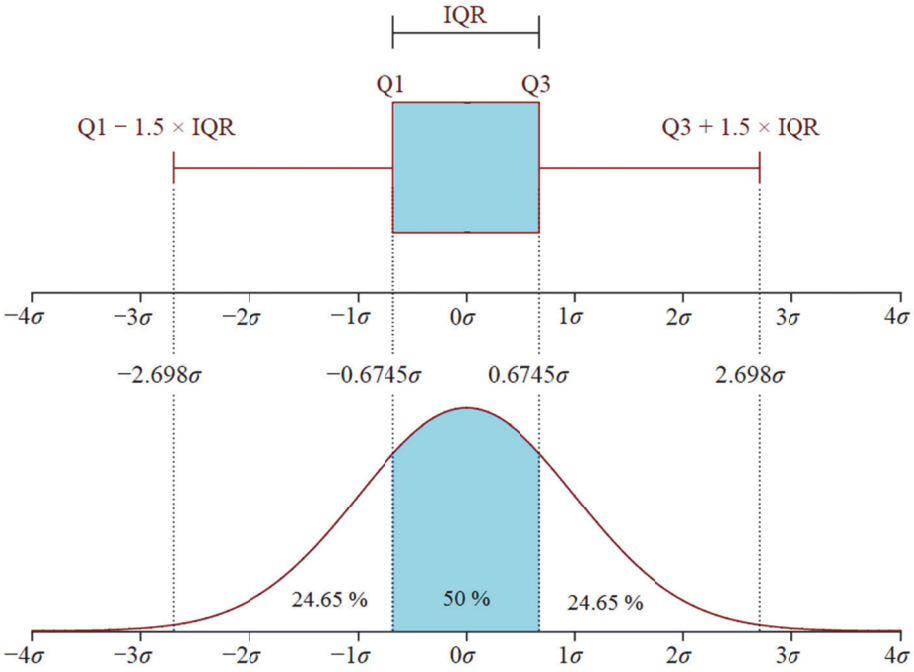
The standard error of a mean is a measure of its precision as an estimator of the true population mean. The standard error is, in fact, dependent on the sample size: the larger the sample size, the higher the precision. Estimates with overlapping confidence intervals can be considered as not differing significantly from each other.

Box plots

Box plots are a convenient way to graphically depict a distribution of scores. They summarise in one place the entire range of the scores, the range within which the middle 50% of the scores are located, the mid-point of the distribution (median, or 50th percentile) as well as its 25th (Q1) and 75th (Q3) percentiles. Hence, a box plot shows the symmetry or skewness of a distribution. In addition, a box plot can mark outlier cases (scores that are too distant from the other observations).

The top part of Figure A1 exemplifies a box plot for a normal distribution of scores. It is important to remind readers that a normal distribution follows a bell-shaped curve and is symmetric with respect to its measures of central tendency (mode, median, mean). The shape of the distribution is depicted in the bottom part of the figure. The shaded rectangle of the box plot spans the so-called interquartile range (IQR). The IQR equals the difference between the 75th percentile (marked as Q3 in the figure) and the 25th percentile (Q1) of the distribution. The shaded rectangle, thereby, spans the middle 50% of the scores. The lines stretching to the left and right of it are called whiskers. The left whisker is set to cover the part of the distribution that is up to one and a half times the IQR away from the 25th percentile (Q1 – 1.5 * IQR). As for the right whisker, it is set to cover the part of the distribution that is up to one and a half times the IQR away from the 75th percentile (Q3 + 1.5 * IQR).

Figure A1: Boxplot for a normal distribution of scores



Note: *The figure presents the shape of a boxplot (top of the figure) for scores that follow a normal distribution (bottom of the figure). Q1: end of first quartile of the distribution (also 25th percentile). Q3: end of third quartile of the distribution (also 75th percentile). IQR: Interquartile range (= Q3 – Q1). σ: standard deviation. Source: Adapted from Wikipedia (n.d.).*

In Figure A1, there are no outlier cases: the set range of the whiskers covers the full range of the scores. Were there outlier cases, as there are in some of the box plots in this report, the outliers would be clearly labelled outside the set range of the whiskers.

The box plots presented in this report offer, in addition, the EU average for the respective indicator or aspect of social cohesion. Whereas the box plot presents the distribution of the country averages, the EU average is computed on the basis of the pooled individual data for all 28 EU countries in the respective year.

Correlation

A correlation is a statistical measure of the association between two variables, such as X and Y. The Pearson bivariate correlation is best suited to exploring the relationship of two variables measured on a continuous scale (interval or ratio level of measurement). The association of the variables can be summarised with a correlation coefficient (*r*). The coefficient has a sign, size and significance. It can take values between -1 and 0, or between 0 and +1. If $r = 0$, the two variables are not correlated: changes in the values of Variable X do not at all correspond to changes in the values of Variable Y. If $r = +1$, this is a perfect positive correlation: the data points of the two variables, when plotted, will form a straight line with an upward slope. If $r = -1$, this is a perfect negative correlation: the data points of the two variables, when plotted, will form a straight line with a downward slope. In general, a positive correlation indicates that as the values of Variable X increase, the values of Variable Y also increase. In turn, a negative correlation indicates that as the values of Variable X increase, those of Variable Y decrease. The closer *r* is to 0, the weaker the relationship between the variables. The closer *r* is to ±1, the stronger the relationship. Following Cohen's typology of effect size, a correlation is considered weak when $0.10 \leq r < 0.30$, moderately strong when $0.30 \leq r < 0.50$, and strong when $r \geq 0.50$.

For example, if the number of storks in European regions is positively correlated to the number of babies born there, this means that more children are born in regions with a larger number of storks. However, a correlation does not equate to causality, meaning the fictitious correlation in the example here does not prove that storks bring babies.

A partial correlation is a measure of the strength and direction of association between two variables, X and Y, controlling or accounting for the effect of a third variable, Z. To return to the fictitious example of storks and babies, if a control is conducted for the degree of urbanisation of the regions studied, storks and babies will no longer be correlated. It may be that there are more storks in rural (less urbanised) regions and also more babies born in such regions, for instance because people maintain more traditional values. Variables X and Y (storks and babies) are therefore not truly correlated. Their relationship is spurious and due to Variable Z (in this case urbanisation).

Significance

Statistical significance is central to inferential statistics and, thereby, hypothesis testing. This branch of statistics deals with measures (for example means or correlations) in a sample, typically randomly drawn from the entire population of interest, in order to make inferences with a certain level of confidence as to how things 'truly' are in that population. Statistical significance indicates the probability, for example that the relationship between Variables X and Y in the sample analysed is due to random factors instead of a true systematic relationship in the population. Typically, if the statistical significance of a finding falls below 5%, it is assumed that the finding does not occur by chance, meaning it is not attributable to random errors. It should be noted that statistical significance cannot prove anything with absolute certainty.

Annex 2: Trends over time

Table A3: Trend of perceived social exclusion

Country	Level			Change		
	2007	2011	2016	2007–2011	2011–2016	2007–2016
CY	29.7	49.3	37.2	19.6 ***	-12.1 ***	7.5 ***
MT	26.2	35.0	30.4	8.8 ***	-4.5 ***	4.2 ***
ES	19.5	24.0	23.7	4.5 ***	-0.3	4.2 ***
EL	31.5	38.7	35.6	7.3 ***	-3.1 ***	4.2 ***
IT	31.3	31.0	34.2	-0.3	3.2 ***	2.9 ***
SE	12.4	22.3	15.2	9.9 ***	-7.1 ***	2.8 ***
CZ	30.6	36.7	32.4	6.2 ***	-4.3 ***	1.9 *
LU	25.3	28.4	26.4	3.1 ***	-2.0 *	1.1
BE	33.7	33.4	34.7	-0.3	1.3	1.0
NL	22.5	25.4	22.1	2.9 ***	-3.3 ***	-0.3
DE	21.2	21.3	20.8	0.1	-0.5	-0.5
FR	31.3	31.0	30.4	-0.2	-0.7	-0.9
SI	28.7	28.1	27.4	-0.6	-0.7	-1.3
PT	29.4	28.7	27.9	-0.7	-0.8	-1.6
UK	33.4	33.5	31.7	0.1	-1.8 **	-1.7 *
IE	30.6	31.1	28.9	0.6	-2.3 **	-1.7
HU	33.3	29.8	31.4	-3.5 ***	1.5	-1.9
DK	20.6	15.7	17.5	-4.9 ***	1.8 *	-3.1 ***
EE	29.0	34.7	25.2	5.7 ***	-9.5 ***	-3.8 ***
PL	36.5	35.6	32.5	-0.9	-3.1 ***	-3.9 ***
BG	46.3	42.6	42.4	-3.7 ***	-0.2	-3.9 ***
SK	29.3	30.1	25.1	0.8	-4.9 ***	-4.1 ***
HR	37.9	34.1	33.3	-3.8 ***	-0.8	-4.7 ***
FI	25.1	24.6	20.1	-0.5	-4.5 ***	-5.0 ***
RO	39.1	35.5	33.8	-3.6 ***	-1.7	-5.3 ***
LT	36.3	34.8	29.9	-1.6	-4.8 ***	-6.4 ***
LV	34.1	34.8	22.2	0.7	-12.6 ***	-11.9 ***
AT	29.5	21.9	17.2	-7.6 ***	-4.8 ***	-12.3 ***
Max	46.3	49.3	42.4			
Min	12.4	15.7	15.2			
SD	6.8	7.0	6.6			
EU28	28.9	29.4	28.4			

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the level of perceived social exclusion in 2007, 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2007 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested in one-way analyses of variance, applying the Scheffé correction. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests:* *** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$. *In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A4: Trend of perceived social tensions: rich and poor

	Level			Change		
Country	2007	2011	2016	2007–2011	2011–2016	2007–2016
UK	15.6	29.9	28.4	14.3 ***	-1.5	12.8 ***
BE	22.8	32.1	33.9	9.3 ***	1.8	11.1 ***
CY	10.7	40.1	20.4	29.4 ***	-19.6 ***	9.7 ***
SE	11.1	20.9	19.8	9.8 ***	-1.1	8.7 ***
AT	18.7	23.2	22.9	4.5 **	-0.2	4.3 **
RO	34.1	46.0	38.3	11.9 ***	-7.8 ***	4.2
LT	46.4	58.7	50.1	12.3 ***	-8.6 ***	3.7
NL	12.3	19.0	14.9	6.7 ***	-4.1 **	2.6
MT	12.6	26.3	15.2	13.7 ***	-11.1 ***	2.6
LV	29.9	35.2	32.4	5.3 **	-2.8	2.4
IE	16.5	26.9	18.5	10.4 ***	-8.3 ***	2.0
FI	13.1	16.5	15.1	3.4 **	-1.4	1.9
ES	23.0	25.9	24.7	2.9	-1.2	1.7
DK	4.1	4.1	5.7	0.0	1.6	1.6
SI	34.0	42.2	32.1	8.2 ***	-10.1 ***	-1.9
IT	26.9	30.5	24.1	3.5 *	-6.3 ***	-2.8
EE	29.9	37.8	27.0	8.0 ***	-10.8 ***	-2.8
BG	23.2	22.3	20.1	-0.9	-2.2	-3.1
PL	31.8	32.9	28.2	1.1	-4.7 **	-3.6
FR	41.8	54.0	37.9	12.2 ***	-16.1 ***	-3.9 *
CZ	39.1	46.8	34.4	7.7 ***	-12.4 ***	-4.7 *
LU	30.4	28.8	25.5	-1.6	-3.3	-5.0 **
DE	35.2	31.1	29.2	-4.1 ***	-1.9	-6.0 ***
SK	30.0	30.1	21.5	0.1	-8.6 ***	-8.5 ***
EL	35.6	50.5	25.0	14.9 ***	-25.5 ***	-10.6 ***
PT	22.3	20.2	10.4	-2.1	-9.8 ***	-11.9 ***
HU	70.3	68.3	57.4	-2.0	-10.9 ***	-12.9 ***
HR	52.4	59.5	34.4	7.2 ***	-25.2 ***	-18.0 ***
Max	70.3	68.3	57.4			
Min	4.1	4.1	5.7			
SD	14.4	14.7	11.2			
EU28	29.3	34.5	28.4			

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens perceiving a lot of tension between rich and poor people in 2007, 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2007 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested with logistic regression. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests:* *** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$. *In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A5: Trend of perceived social tensions: Managers and workers

	Level			Change		
Country	2007	2011	2016	2007–2011	2011–2016	2007–2016
CY	11.2	36.6	20.5	25.4 ***	-16.2 ***	9.3 ***
BE	21.9	28.9	29.9	6.9 ***	1.0	7.9 ***
MT	16.6	21.7	23.0	5.1 ***	1.4	6.5 ***
RO	30.7	41.0	37.1	10.3 ***	-3.9	6.4 **
AT	15.6	24.5	19.2	8.8 ***	-5.3 **	3.6 *
LT	31.6	33.6	35.0	2.0	1.4	3.4
SE	7.2	14.2	10.3	7.0 ***	-3.9 **	3.1 **
UK	18.9	21.7	21.9	2.8 *	0.2	3.0 *
IE	16.9	21.6	19.0	4.7 **	-2.6	2.1
LV	13.7	20.8	14.3	7.1 ***	-6.6 ***	0.6
DK	4.0	4.2	4.2	0.2	0.0	0.2
EE	18.5	21.5	18.0	3.1	-3.5 *	-0.4
BG	14.3	13.1	13.7	-1.1	0.6	-0.6
SI	44.1	55.2	42.3	11.1 ***	-12.9 ***	-1.8
NL	18.4	21.5	16.4	3.2	-5.2 ***	-2.0
FI	13.4	14.1	10.3	0.6	-3.8 **	-3.2 *
PL	28.9	30.3	24.5	1.4	-5.8 ***	-4.4 **
SK	25.2	25.1	20.3	0.0	-4.9 **	-4.9 **
CZ	32.5	35.9	26.9	3.4	-9.0 ***	-5.6 **
PT	24.7	23.6	18.6	-1.1	-5.1 **	-6.2 ***
ES	31.3	30.1	24.3	-1.2	-5.8 ***	-7.0 ***
FR	42.7	47.4	35.4	4.7 ***	-12.0 ***	-7.3 ***
IT	30.3	30.3	21.0	0.0	-9.2 ***	-9.3 ***
LU	33.6	30.1	23.1	-3.4	-7.0 ***	-10.4 ***
HR	56.4	53.6	44.3	-2.8	-9.4 ***	-12.1 ***
HU	60.0	56.1	46.5	-3.9	-9.5 ***	-13.4 ***
DE	40.5	22.5	25.6	-18.0 ***	3.0 **	-14.9 ***
EL	45.0	57.2	29.4	12.2	-27.8 ***	-15.6 ***
Max	60.0	57.2	46.5			
Min	4.0	4.2	4.2			
SD	14.2	13.8	10.4			
EU28	31.2	30.4	25.4			

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens who perceived a lot of tension between managers and workers in 2007, 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2007 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested with logistic regression. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests:* *** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$. *In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A6: Trend of perceived social tensions: Racial/ethnic groups

	Level			Change		
Country	2007	2011	2016	2007–2011	2011–2016	2007–2016
BG	10.3	18.7	23.1	8.4 ***	4.4 *	12.9 ***
BE	43.3	47.7	53.7	4.4 *	6.0 **	10.4 ***
PL	15.8	21.0	26.2	5.2 ***	5.2 **	10.4 ***
EE	18.1	14.7	27.0	-3.5 *	12.4 ***	8.9 ***
DE	32.8	28.0	41.6	-4.9 ***	13.6 ***	8.8 ***
SE	35.8	35.6	44.5	-0.2	8.9 ***	8.7 ***
MT	39.4	33.6	47.7	-5.8 **	14.1 ***	8.3 ***
AT	41.3	38.0	48.8	-3.3	10.9 ***	7.5 ***
LV	13.4	16.2	18.7	2.8	2.5	5.3 **
LT	13.4	14.8	18.6	1.4	3.8 *	5.2 **
SK	21.9	28.2	26.3	6.2 ***	-1.9	4.3 *
FI	31.8	34.8	34.7	3.0	-0.1	2.9
SI	28.3	31.2	29.9	3.0	-1.3	1.6
CZ	52.4	66.6	53.8	14.2 ***	-12.8 ***	1.4
IT	53.5	37.3	54.0	-16.2 ***	16.8 ***	0.5
UK	41.5	38.7	41.2	-2.8	2.6	-0.3
HU	49.4	57.0	48.7	7.6 ***	-8.4 ***	-0.8
CY	22.9	45.4	21.9	22.5 ***	-23.5 ***	-1.0
PT	20.9	20.3	19.8	-0.6	-0.4	-1.1
DK	35.1	24.3	33.5	-10.7 ***	9.2 ***	-1.5
RO	26.5	30.0	24.8	3.5 *	-5.2 **	-1.8
FR	52.0	49.2	49.5	-2.7	0.3	-2.5
HR	31.8	29.9	29.1	-1.9	-0.8	-2.6
EL	35.4	46.5	30.9	11.1 ***	-15.5 ***	-4.4 *
NL	57.0	47.3	51.6	-9.8 ***	4.3 *	-5.4 **
ES	32.3	29.0	25.9	-3.3	-3.1	-6.4 ***
LU	34.2	28.5	26.9	-5.7 **	-1.6	-7.2 ***
IE	31.9	27.2	20.6	-4.8 **	-6.5 ***	-11.3 ***
Max	57.0	66.6	54.0			
Min	10.3	14.7	18.6			
SD	13.0	12.9	12.3			
EU28	37.8	35.4	40.1			

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens who perceived a lot of tension between different racial and ethnic groups in 2007, 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2007 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested with logistic regression. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests: *** p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05, * p ≤ .10. In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A7: Trend of perceived social tensions: Religious groups

Country	Level			Change		
	2007	2011	2016	2007–2011	2011–2016	2007–2016
BE	30.4	38.2	51.9	7.8 ***	13.8 ***	21.5 ***
DE	30.8	26.6	43.8	-4.2 ***	17.2 ***	13.0 ***
FR	38.3	38.0	51.3	-0.2	13.2 ***	13.0 ***
MT	14.9	18.8	26.0	4.0 **	7.2 ***	11.2 ***
BG	5.5	11.2	16.3	5.7 ***	5.1 **	10.8 ***
CZ	22.8	23.7	32.8	0.8	9.1 ***	9.9 ***
PL	14.8	21.1	23.1	6.3 ***	2.0	8.3 ***
AT	39.9	30.4	47.6	-9.5 ***	17.1 ***	7.7 ***
EL	21.8	29.4	28.8	7.6 ***	-0.6	7.0 ***
NL	39.9	34.8	46.6	-5.0 **	11.8 ***	6.7 ***
HU	19.9	21.0	26.5	1.0	5.6 **	6.6 ***
FI	15.4	18.8	22.0	3.4 *	3.2	6.6 ***
SK	9.4	8.6	15.6	-0.8	7.0 ***	6.2 ***
SI	19.9	29.9	25.9	10.0 ***	-4.0 *	6.1 ***
UK	33.0	32.4	38.4	-0.6	6.0 ***	5.4 **
EE	6.0	7.2	11.3	1.2	4.1 ***	5.3 ***
SE	29.5	29.0	34.3	-0.5	5.3 **	4.8 **
ES	20.0	20.0	24.8	0.0	4.8 ***	4.8 **
LU	21.6	19.3	25.3	-2.4	6.1 ***	3.7 *
LV	5.8	5.7	9.1	-0.2	3.4 **	3.2 **
CY	14.2	37.2	17.0	23.0 ***	-20.2 ***	2.7
RO	17.2	16.6	19.0	-0.6	2.4	1.8
LT	10.6	9.9	11.5	-0.7	1.6	0.9
IT	45.3	27.0	45.6	-18.3 ***	18.5 ***	0.3
HR	29.0	25.0	29.2	-4.0 *	4.2 *	0.2
IE	18.2	15.1	18.1	-3.1 *	2.9	-0.1
PT	11.4	9.7	10.0	-1.7	0.4	-1.3
DK	31.1	20.1	29.5	-11.1 ***	9.4 ***	-1.7
Max	45.3	38.2	51.9			
Min	5.5	5.7	9.1			
SD	11.1	9.6	12.9			
EU28	28.8	26.5	36.6			

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens who perceived a lot of tension between different religious groups in 2007, 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2007 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested with logistic regression. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests:* *** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .10$. *In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A8: Trend of interpersonal trust

	Level			Change		
Country	2007	2011	2016	2007–2011	2011–2016	2007–2016
AT	42.0	47.2	48.0	5.3 ***	0.8	6.1 ***
CY	17.8	10.6	22.7	-7.3 ***	12.1 ***	4.9 ***
FI	66.3	68.3	71.0	2.0	2.7 **	4.7 ***
PT	36.7	36.5	41.2	-0.3	4.7 ***	4.5 ***
LV	34.3	34.7	38.6	0.4	3.9 ***	4.3 ***
DE	42.7	44.7	45.5	2.0 **	0.8	2.8 ***
LT	37.8	40.7	40.0	2.9 *	-0.7	2.2
HU	41.3	37.0	43.3	-4.3 ***	6.3 ***	2.0
IT	44.6	42.8	46.4	-1.8 **	3.6 ***	1.8 *
IE	53.7	50.1	55.3	-3.7 ***	5.2 ***	1.5
DK	68.3	66.3	69.8	-2.1	3.6 ***	1.5
LU	52.8	54.7	54.3	1.9	-0.4	1.5
UK	47.9	50.0	48.7	2.1 *	-1.3	0.8
MT	43.5	40.7	44.1	-2.8 **	3.4 ***	0.6
FR	49.6	48.2	49.1	-1.4	0.9	-0.5
BG	34.3	39.3	33.5	5.1 ***	-5.9 ***	-0.8
PL	41.7	42.0	40.9	0.3	-1.1	-0.8
EE	46.1	42.0	44.8	-4.1 ***	2.8 *	-1.3
EL	35.7	36.6	34.3	0.9	-2.3	-1.3
SE	64.1	60.1	62.7	-4.0 ***	2.6 *	-1.5
CZ	39.1	33.5	36.6	-5.5 ***	3.0 **	-2.5 *
BE	50.7	49.6	48.0	-1.0	-1.6	-2.6 *
NL	61.3	58.6	57.9	-2.7 **	-0.7	-3.4 ***
SI	46.8	46.6	41.8	-0.2	-4.8 ***	-5.0 ***
ES	51.9	49.4	46.8	-2.5 **	-2.6 **	-5.1 ***
RO	50.3	44.4	41.9	-5.9 ***	-2.5 *	-8.4 ***
HR	39.8	40.2	31.2	0.3	-9.0 ***	-8.6 ***
SK	46.1	35.5	33.2	-10.7 ***	-2.2	-12.9 ***
Max	68.3	68.3	71.0			
Min	17.8	10.6	22.7			
SD	10.8	11.3	11.0			
EU28	46.7	46.0	46.4			

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the level of interpersonal trust in 2007, 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2007 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested in one-way analyses of variance, applying the Scheffé correction. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests: *** p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05, * p ≤ .10. In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A9: Trend of participation in society: Civic engagement

Country	Level		Change
	2011	2016	2011–2016
BE	18.0	25.3	7.3 ***
CY	10.8	15.8	5.0 ***
SE	31.7	36.1	4.4 *
SI	13.9	17.4	3.5 *
DE	18.2	20.8	2.5 *
DK	27.7	30.0	2.3
LV	9.1	11.3	2.2
NL	30.4	31.7	1.4
PL	6.9	8.1	1.1
BG	4.1	4.9	0.8
RO	6.2	6.8	0.6
IT	13.6	13.4	-0.2
SK	6.8	6.5	-0.3
EE	10.4	10.1	-0.3
HU	6.9	6.3	-0.5
FI	27.5	26.9	-0.6
MT	16.4	15.4	-0.9
EL	6.9	5.3	-1.6
LU	25.3	23.4	-1.9
LT	10.9	8.8	-2.1
IE	30.9	28.3	-2.6
UK	22.6	20.0	-2.7
HR	13.4	10.4	-3.0 *
PT	12.6	8.9	-3.7 **
ES	14.1	10.0	-4.2 ***
FR	25.3	21.0	-4.2 **
AT	35.2	30.1	-5.0 **
CZ	16.9	9.1	-7.8 ***
Max	35.2	36.1	
Min	4.1	4.9	
SD	9.1	9.4	
EU28	17.4	16.7	

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens who were engaged in civic life in 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2011 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested with logistic regression. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests: *** p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05, * p ≤ .10. In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A10: Trend of participation in society: Political activity

Country	Level		Change
	2011	2016	2011–2016
FI	32.4	40.9	8.5 ***
BE	25.7	34.1	8.3 ***
SI	12.1	19.9	7.8 ***
MT	14.7	22.4	7.7 ***
UK	34.2	40.5	6.3 ***
DE	23.8	29.5	5.7 ***
PT	11.7	15.4	3.7 ***
SE	51.1	54.3	3.2
NL	34.2	37.1	2.9
SK	17.6	19.8	2.2
IT	21.4	23.4	2.1
DK	38.1	39.3	1.3
EE	13.7	14.7	1.0
BG	10.7	11.6	0.9
LU	35.1	35.7	0.7
IE	29.3	29.8	0.5
AT	30.1	30.3	0.2
HU	8.2	8.4	0.2
LT	15.6	15.2	-0.3
PL	13.4	12.3	-1.0
LV	15.7	13.6	-2.1
RO	13.8	10.9	-2.9
EL	16.9	12.7	-4.2 **
FR	36.0	31.6	-4.4 **
CZ	21.3	14.7	-6.6 ***
ES	22.4	15.6	-6.8 ***
CY	24.0	14.8	-9.2 ***
HR	31.2	18.1	-13.1 ***
Max	51.1	54.3	
Min	8.2	8.4	
SD	10.5	11.8	
EU28	25.0	26.0	

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens who were engaged in political activities in 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2011 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested with logistic regression. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests: *** p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05, * p ≤ .10. In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A11: Trend of sense of community: Attachment to people in area

Country	Level		Change
	2011	2016	2011–2016
EL	69.2	73.8	4.6 ***
LV	76.8	81.2	4.4 ***
UK	61.1	63.5	2.4 ***
SK	68.2	70.3	2.1 *
BG	74.7	74.7	0.0
IT	66.8	66.7	-0.1
AT	66.8	66.4	-0.4
SE	74.3	73.7	-0.6
EE	75.1	74.4	-0.7
IE	69.5	68.8	-0.7
PT	70.1	69.0	-1.1
PL	66.1	64.9	-1.2
DE	62.8	61.5	-1.4
BE	65.1	63.5	-1.6
FR	67.5	64.5	-3.0 ***
SI	73.4	70.0	-3.4 ***
MT	68.3	64.9	-3.4 ***
FI	65.0	61.4	-3.6 ***
NL	71.2	67.3	-3.9 ***
LT	66.5	62.1	-4.4 ***
ES	76.3	71.9	-4.4 ***
HU	68.9	64.1	-4.8 ***
CZ	69.4	64.6	-4.8 ***
DK	69.6	63.3	-6.3 ***
LU	73.0	66.7	-6.3 ***
CY	79.0	71.5	-7.5 ***
RO	77.5	69.5	-8.0 ***
HR	76.2	63.8	-12.4 ***
Max	79.0	81.2	
Min	61.1	61.4	
SD	4.7	4.8	
EU28	67.7	65.9	

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the level of citizens' feelings of attachment to people in their area of residence in 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2011 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested in one-way analyses of variance, applying the Scheffé correction. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests: *** p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05, * p ≤ .10. In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

Table A12: Trend of sense of community: Daily contact with friends/neighbours

Country	Level		Change
	2011	2016	2011–2016
AT	42.5	57.3	14.8 ***
PT	62.5	75.8	13.3 ***
LU	44.8	55.2	10.4 ***
NL	42.5	52.4	9.9 ***
SK	41.3	50.4	9.1 ***
BE	34.8	43.8	9.0 ***
ES	56.2	64.7	8.6 ***
DK	45.0	52.9	7.9 ***
UK	57.4	64.8	7.4 ***
IT	54.0	61.2	7.1 ***
BG	64.8	71.6	6.8 ***
SI	57.0	60.3	3.3
EE	50.5	53.7	3.2
DE	47.8	50.6	2.7
CY	61.6	64.2	2.7
IE	63.1	65.4	2.3
PL	49.8	51.6	1.8
EL	69.6	69.4	-0.2
CZ	32.2	31.6	-0.6
MT	55.9	55.0	-0.9
LV	58.5	57.2	-1.4
FR	46.6	43.1	-3.5
FI	61.1	57.6	-3.5
SE	54.2	49.2	-5.0 **
HR	74.1	64.8	-9.3 ***
LT	63.5	53.4	-10.1 ***
HU	54.6	42.3	-12.3 ***
RO	73.2	54.2	-19.0 ***
Max	74.1	75.8	
Min	32.2	31.6	
SD	10.7	9.7	
EU28	52.7	55.3	

Note: *The table presents, for each EU Member State, the proportion of citizens who had daily contact with friends and neighbours in 2011 and 2016, as well as changes over time. The order of the countries is based on the size of the difference between 2011 and 2016. Changes over time in each country were tested with logistic regression. Significance of the estimates in the case of two-sided tests: *** p ≤ .01, ** p ≤ .05, * p ≤ .10. In addition, the table provides the highest (Max) and lowest (Min) country score and the standard deviation (SD) of the country scores in the respective year, as well as the EU28 average.*

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In recent years, it has often been claimed that social cohesion, the social fabric of our societies, is decaying. The present report undertakes an empirical exploration of the validity of this alarmist view and considers the importance of social cohesion for citizens' assessments of their quality of life. Drawing on data from the three most recent rounds of Eurofound's European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) – carried out in 2007, 2011 and 2016 – the report sets out to assess the current level of social cohesion in the EU and its evolution over time. It focuses on groups that are at risk of experiencing low social cohesion and on societal characteristics that contribute to creating cohesion. Overall, the findings reveal that in addition to the predictable drivers of social cohesion – prosperity, a generous and inclusive welfare system, high levels of education and low unemployment – digital skills has emerged as a critical driver, leading to more cohesive societies and thereby happier citizens in the EU.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75 to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe.

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