



Latvia

Satisfaction with the situation at the country level and with personal circumstances

About 28 and 11 per cent of respondents believe that the economic and the political situation in Latvia was better in 2016 than four years prior to the survey. Both figures are just below the corresponding averages for central Europe and the Baltic states (CEB), at 30 and 24 per cent, respectively, and below the percentages for Germany. Only 14 per cent of Latvian respondents believe that improvements in corruption levels occurred during the four years preceding the survey, a number substantially below both the CEB and transition region averages of 23 per cent.

Among Latvian respondents, 35 per cent report that they are satisfied with their current financial situation and 39 per cent believe that households in their country live better than they did four years prior to the survey. Both figures indicate a steep increase in satisfaction relative to 2010, just after the global financial crisis, when only 17 per cent of respondents were satisfied with their financial situation and only 1 in 10 Latvians thought that households had a better life at that time than before.

Life satisfaction levels substantially increased as well, from 38 per cent in 2010 to 64 per cent in 2016, and they are now higher than the CEB average (54 per cent), the transition region average (43 per cent) and the corresponding figure for Italy (42 per cent). However, Latvia still fares worse relative to Germany, where as many as three in four respondents are satisfied with their life. Relative to 2010, life satisfaction has increased for all demographic groups in Latvia and is now particularly strong in the middle-income group and amongst those between 18-39 years of age.

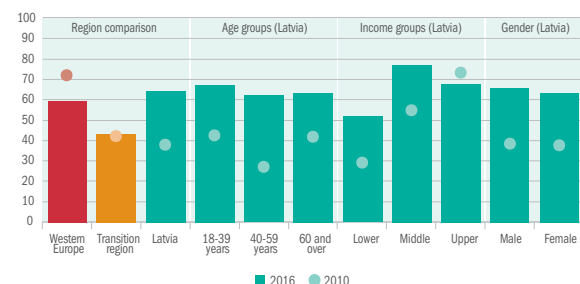
The belief that future generations will have a better life has remained almost unchanged since the last survey, at 53 per cent, and optimism is still higher than the transition region average as well as the corresponding figures for Germany and Italy. While optimism declined by about 10 percentage points among the younger cohorts (those aged 18-39), it also increased by 10 percentage points among the middle-aged.

Attitudes towards democracy and the market economy

Support for democracy increased slightly from 38 per cent in 2010 to 41 per cent in 2016, but it is still below the corresponding average for the transition region. Support for the market economy is rather weak, at 24 per cent, the second lowest value in the transition region and well below the average for CEB. Around one-third of the respondents do not have a marked preference for a specific economic or political system, while the remaining ones state that they would favour, under some circumstances, a planned economy (34 per cent) or an authoritarian regime (31 per cent).

When asked which democratic institutions exist in the country, 66 per cent of respondents mentioned gender equality, followed by peace and stability, and freedom of speech at 60 and 59 per cent, respectively. The extent to which Latvians agree that other basic democratic institutions are in place varies and is lower than 50 per cent. Latvia fares worse than Germany on all accounts. The comparison with Italy, however, yields mixed results: Latvians are more likely to answer that there is peace and stability in their country, an independent press, a strong political opposition and gender equality, while they are less likely to indicate that other institutions, such as free elections, law and order, freedom of speech and a fair court system, are present.

CHART 1. Life satisfaction: percentage of respondents who are satisfied with life, all things considered



Priorities for government spending

Fifty-three per cent of Latvian respondents think the main priority for extra government spending should be health care, the highest percentage in the transition region, followed by education (19 per cent) and pensions (14 per cent). Additional analysis of the LiTS III data shows that 50 and 35 per cent of Latvians would be willing to pay more tax, in order to have better public health care and to improve the education system, respectively.

Sources of information

The main daily sources of information for Latvians are television and radio, discussions with family and friends, and internet and social media, utilised each day by 76, 68 and 63 per cent of the respondents. The usage rate of the internet and social media is the highest in the transition region and is even above the levels of both western comparator countries. As expected, this high utilisation rate is predominantly driven by the younger generations.

Self-assessed health

Only 40 per cent of Latvian consider their health to be “good” or “very good”, one of the lowest figures in the sample and well below the overall average of 54 per cent for the transition region. However, compared to 2010 levels the country has experienced a 6 percentage point improvement in the indicator.

Quality of public services

The majority of Latvian respondents are satisfied with the general quality of public services in their country, the only exception being the local road network, which causes dissatisfaction for about 59 per cent of the population. Overall, 95 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the quality of the provision of pipeline gas, 91 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the electricity, and 87 per cent deem the quality of their telephone line satisfying. All these figures are in line with the averages for the transition region, while the satisfaction rate for the provision of pipeline gas is among the highest in the sample.

Social and economic mobility

When respondents were asked from a list of options what they thought were the most important factors for success in life in their country, 51 per cent of Latvian respondents chose “intelligence and skills” and nearly 25 per cent opted for “effort and hard work”, respectively – one of the highest and one of the lowest percentages in the transition region. Only 6 per cent viewed “breaking the law” as a way to succeed in life, which is a small minority but still higher than the corresponding figures for Germany and Italy (1 and 4 per cent, respectively).

Attitudes towards women

Over 88 per cent of Latvian men and almost 92 per cent of Latvian women consider female business executives to be as competent as male business executives, and around 88 per cent of respondents think that it is important that their daughter achieves a university education. However, 43 per cent of male respondents also believe that men make better politicians than women, 32 per cent of respondents believe that a woman should do the household chores, even if her husband is not working, and 55 per cent favour a traditional family arrangement, where the man works and the woman takes care of the house and children.

CHART 2. Optimism: percentage of respondents who are optimistic about the future of the younger generation

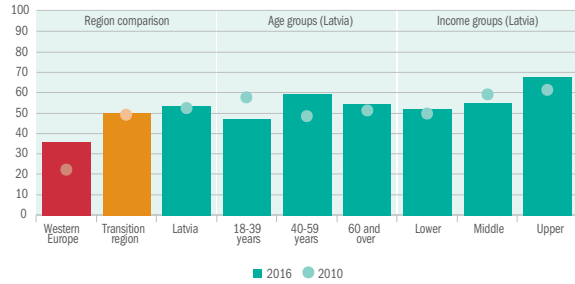


CHART 3. Market economy and democracy: percentage of respondents who prefer a market over a planned economy and democracy over an authoritarian government

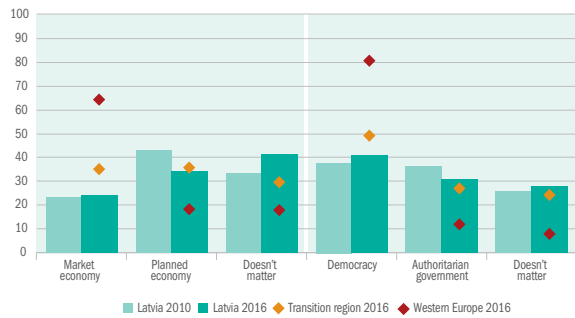


CHART 4. Basic democratic institutions: percentage of respondents who agree that the country has these basic democratic institutions

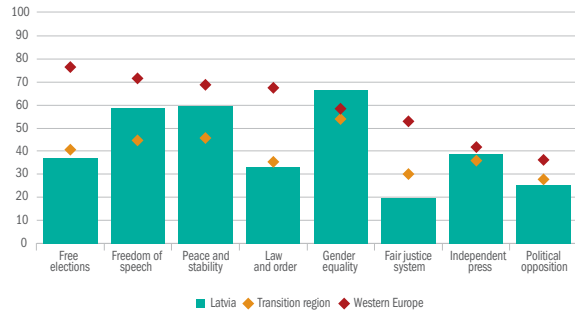
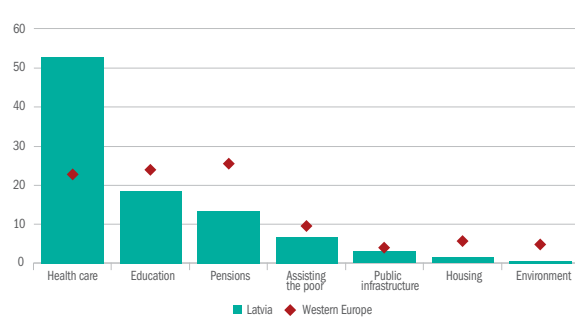


CHART 5. Priorities for government spending

Panel A: Percentage of respondents who identify a given area as a priority in terms of government spending



Panel B: Breakdown of preferences for the top priority (health care)

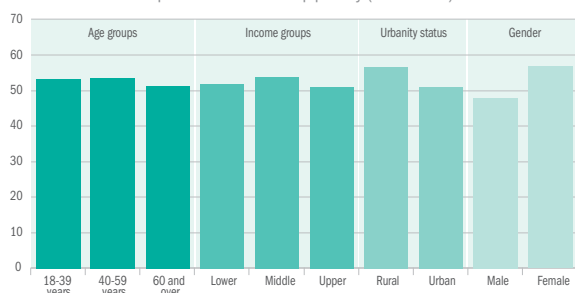


CHART 6. Sources of information: percentage of respondents who use these different sources of information



CHART 7. Health assessment: percentage of respondents who report themselves to be in good health (self-assessed)

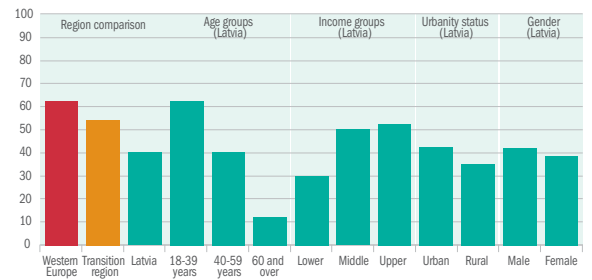


CHART 8. Quality of services: percentage of respondents who are satisfied with the quality of public services, by category

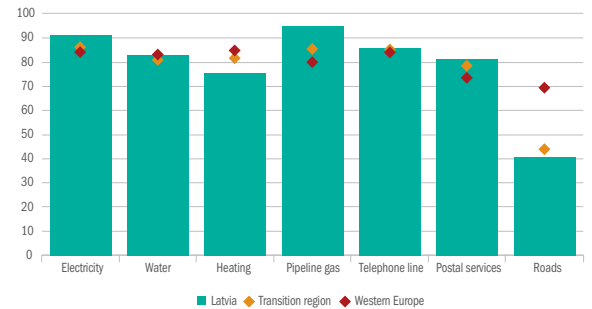


CHART 9. Factors for success: percentage of respondents who identify the given factor as the most important for success, by income level

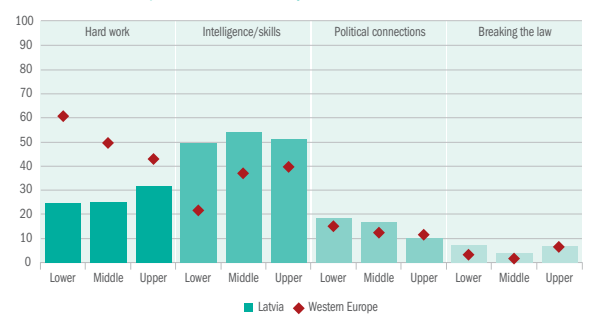


CHART 10. Attitudes towards women: percentage of respondents who agree with the statements below

