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Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

STATISTICS MAURITIUS



How satisfied are Mauritians with their lives?

*Living Conditions Survey,
2018-2019*

August, 2020

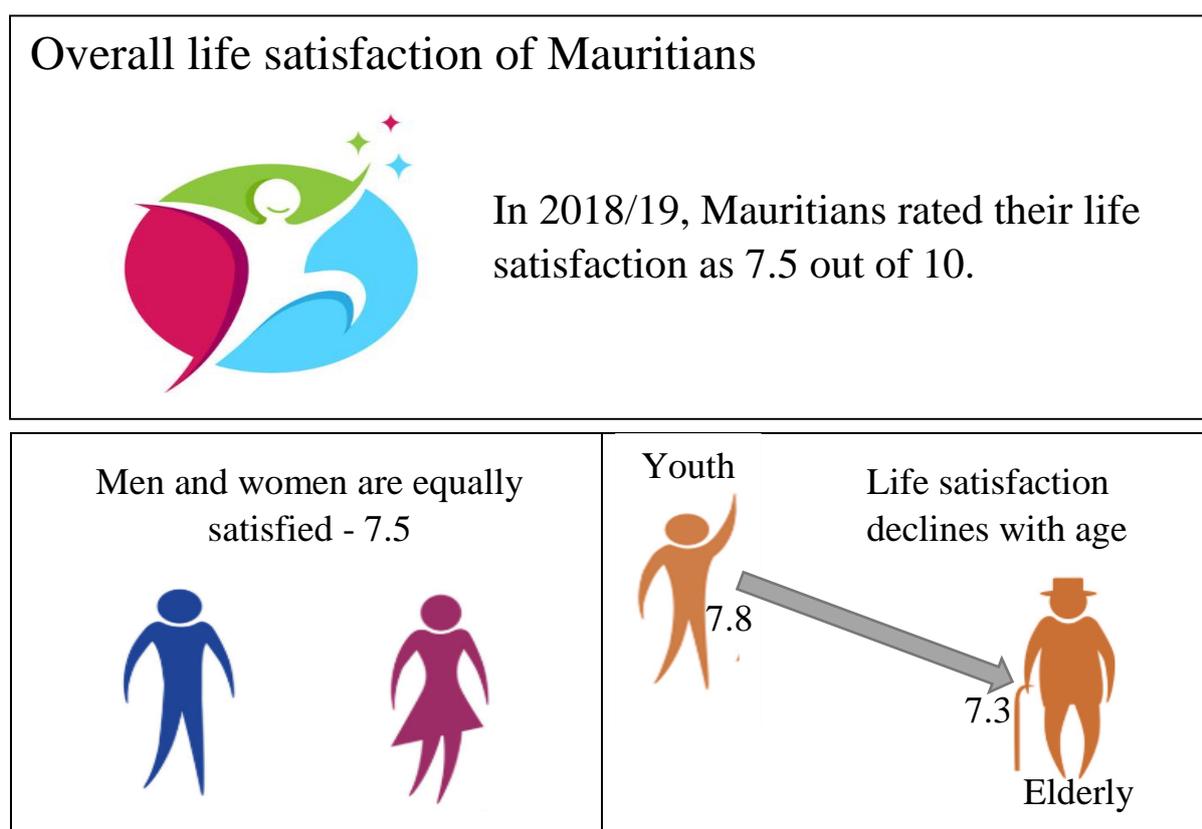
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1. Introduction

This paper provides a snapshot on how satisfied Mauricians are with their lives based on data collected at the Living Conditions Survey (LCS) conducted from October 2018 to September 2019. It also highlights how life satisfaction varies with an individual's socio-economic characteristics (sex, age, marital status, etc.) and situations (health status, living arrangements, etc.).

The analysis pertains to the population aged 16 years and over in the Republic of Mauritius.



2. Key findings

- Overall, Mauricians (aged 16 years and over) were satisfied with their lives in 2018/19 – on the average, they rated their level of life satisfaction at 7.5, on a scale of 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied).
- Life satisfaction is highest among the youth, aged 16 to 25 years, (7.8) and declines with age.

- Socio-demographic factors also impact on life satisfaction.
 - a. Persons in very good health reported a higher rating of life satisfaction (8.4),
 - b. so do persons with high income (8.1) and
 - c. persons living in a family (7.6).
- However, the widowed, divorced and separated are least satisfied (6.8) compared to the married (7.7).
- Positive and negative feelings (stressed, feeling anxiety, nervous, calm and happy) influence individual's life satisfaction. Persons with positive feelings (not at all stressed, feeling calm or happy most of the time, or never felt nervous) rated higher level of life satisfaction (8.2).

3. Detailed findings

In 2018/19, Mauritians were somewhat satisfied, but ...

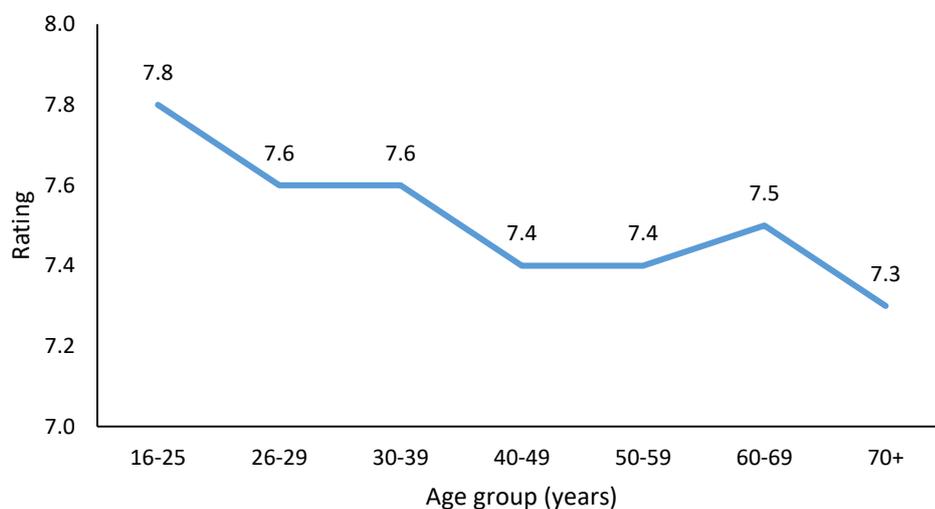
Overall, Mauritians (aged 16 years and over) were somewhat satisfied with their lives – they rated their level of life satisfaction at 7.5, on a scale of 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied).

... life satisfaction decreases with age

Chart 1 shows that the young are more satisfied with their lives compared to other age groups.

Rating of life satisfaction was highest among the youngest persons aged 16 to 25 years (7.8), and lowest among persons in their 40's and 50's (7.4) and in their 70's (7.3).

Chart 1 – Average rating of life satisfaction by age group, 2018/19



This age differential in life satisfaction can be explained by several factors (e.g. age, marital status, economic activity status, health status, etc.) as observed from the LCS data.

- ❖ 16-25 years (average life satisfaction 7.8), they were mostly single (92%) and therefore less likely to have household responsibilities. They were in good health (93% reported to be in 'good or very good' health).
- ❖ 26 – 59 years (average life satisfaction between 7.4 and 7.6), a high proportion were ever-married (84%) and in employment (77%), and are therefore more likely to have household responsibilities. They reported to be less healthy compared to the young.
- ❖ 60 years and over (average life satisfaction between 7.3 and 7.5), they are more likely to be unhealthy and live alone. Some 42% were widowed, separated/divorced, and 27% lived alone without their spouse, children and relatives. Over 50% reported their health status to be in 'fair, bad or very bad'.

It is to be noted that persons aged 60-69 years rated a higher level of life satisfaction (7.5). 41% were young retirees, and a few were still in employment (28%). They were healthier than those who aged 70 years and over.

Men and women, in general, are equally satisfied, ...

Men and women were equally satisfied with an average rating of 7.5.

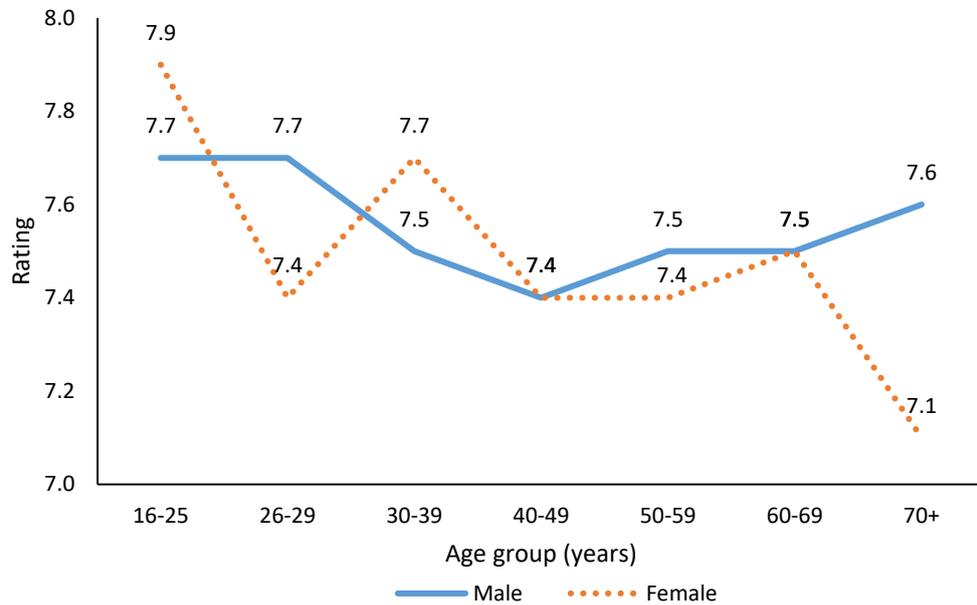
... however, substantial differences are observed at some particular age groups.

Chart 2 shows that the level of life satisfaction as reported by men is more or less stable across all ages (between 7.4 and 7.7), while that reported by women fluctuates widely across age groups (between 7.1 and 7.9).

For men, life satisfaction peaks at younger age groups, decreases at the middle age and rises again at old age.

In contrast for women, life satisfaction is higher when they are below 25 years (7.9) and when they are in their 30's (7.7). As women enter their 40's they become less satisfied to worsen at the age of 70's (7.1), probably explained by the fact that at that age they are more likely to be widowed (71%), living alone (52%) and less healthy (20% described their health as 'good or very good').

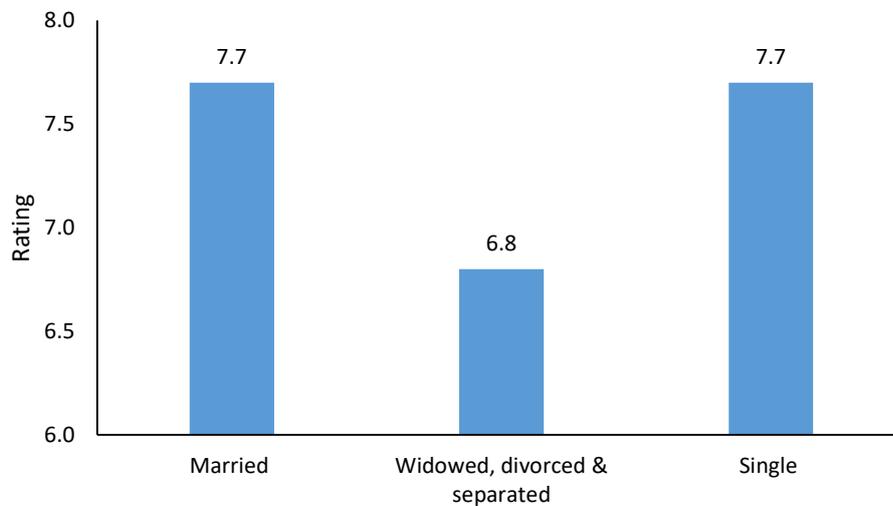
Chart 2 – Average rating of life satisfaction by sex and age group, 2018/19



Single and married were equally satisfied

Life events such as marriage or divorce also have an impact on life satisfaction. Analysis by marital status shows that single and married people were equally satisfied with an average rating of 7.7, much higher than the widowed, separated or divorced (6.8).

Chart 3 – Average rating of life satisfaction by marital status, 2018/19

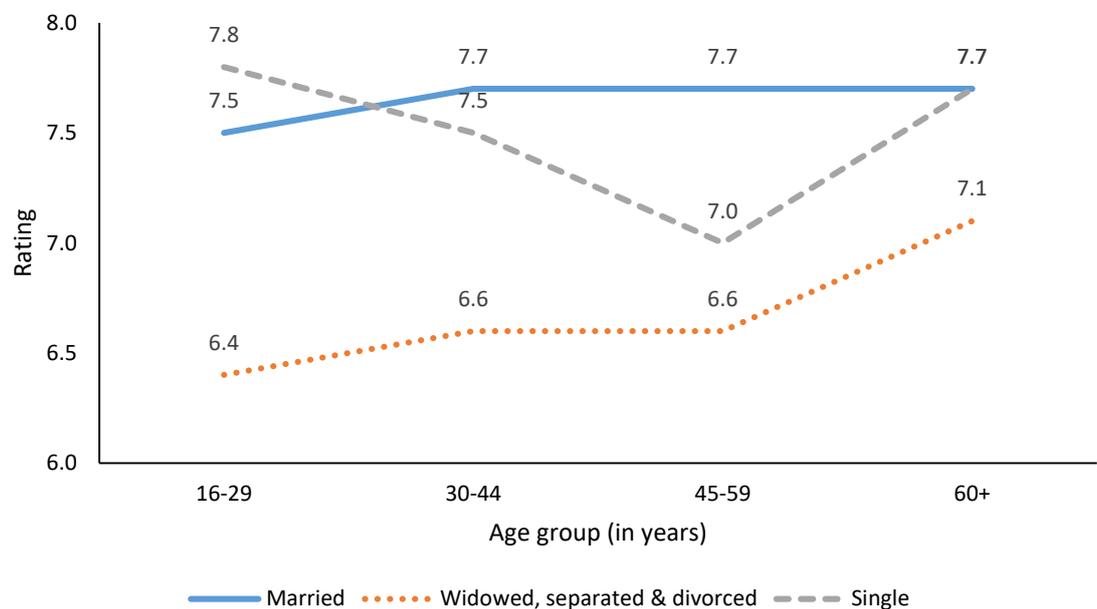


... but this is not true across all ages

Disaggregated data by age reveal that married persons are more satisfied than single persons at all ages, except below 30 years.

Life satisfaction of single persons is less stable across all ages – single persons are most satisfied when they are young (below 30 years) and when they are old (above 60 years), and least satisfied in their late 40's and in their 50's.

Chart 4 – Average rating of life satisfaction by marital status and age group, 2018/19



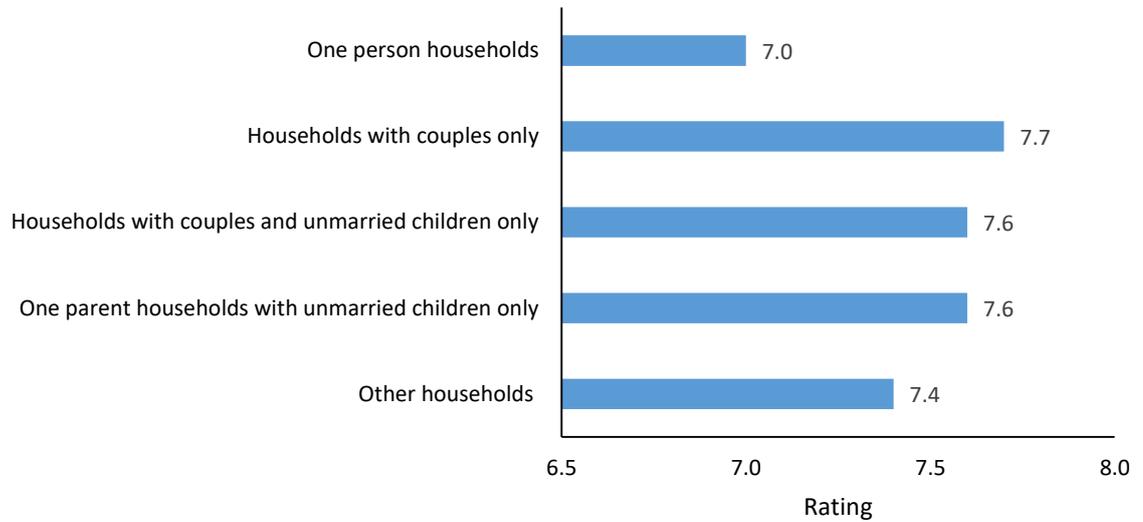
Living in a family fosters higher level of satisfaction. Persons living in a family with spouse, children or relatives were more satisfied than those living alone.

The structure of the family helps in promoting individual overall life satisfaction.

As shown in Chart 5, persons living with partners, children or other family members were more satisfied (7.6) than those living alone (7.0).

Among the former groups, households made up of couples only were the most satisfied (7.7); these comprised mainly elderly couples 60 years and over. Households with couples and married children only, and one parent households with unmarried child only rated their level of satisfaction at 7.6.

Chart 5 – Average rating of life satisfaction by type of households, 2018/19



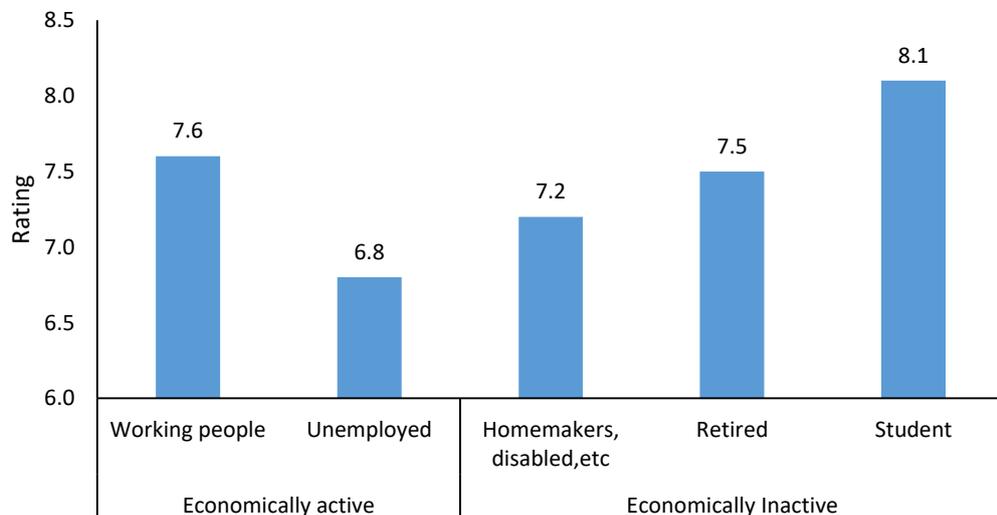
Having a job is a booster for self-development and overall life satisfaction, persons with a job were most satisfied.

Having a job influences a person’s well-being in many ways for example in terms of financial stability, social interaction as well as self-achievement. Conversely, being unemployed has a negative effect on an individual well-being as it does not only affect the financial situation but also impacts on his/her mental health.

As shown in Chart 6, unemployed people were least satisfied with an average rating of 6.8, well below the employed (7.6) and national average (7.5).

The rating was highest among students (8.1) compared to retired (7.5) and homemakers (7.2).

Chart 6 – Average rating of life satisfaction by activity status, 2018/19

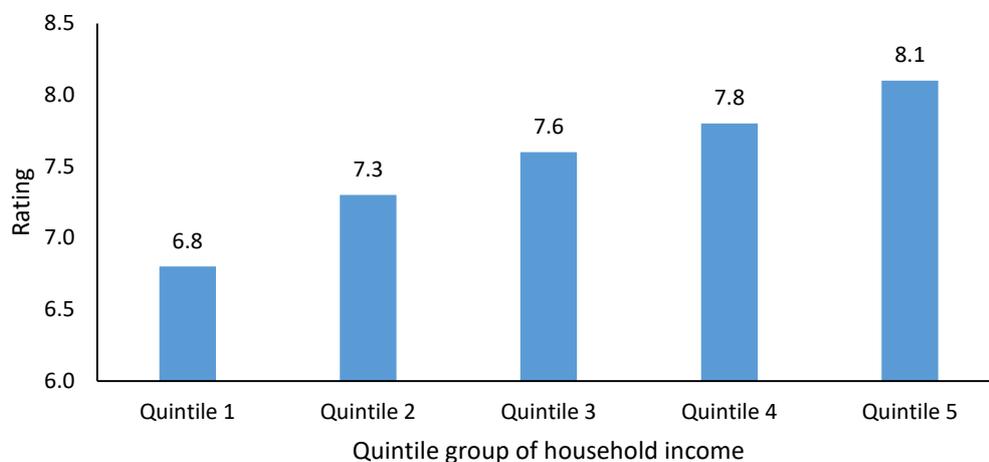


Life satisfaction increases with level of income,

Income provides financial security to individuals and families, and alongside brings better health, higher education, good living conditions, etc.,

People with higher income are more satisfied than those with lower income. Chart 7 shows that average life satisfaction increases consistently with income. People in the first quintile¹ (poorest 20% households) has the lowest average rating of life satisfaction (6.8), while those in the fifth quintile (richest 20% households) reported an average rating of life satisfaction as high as 8.1.

Chart 7 – Average rating of life satisfaction by quintile group of household income, 2018/19



At the LCS, households were also asked the following to define their financial situation ‘To what extent can you meet your household expenses with your household total monthly income’.

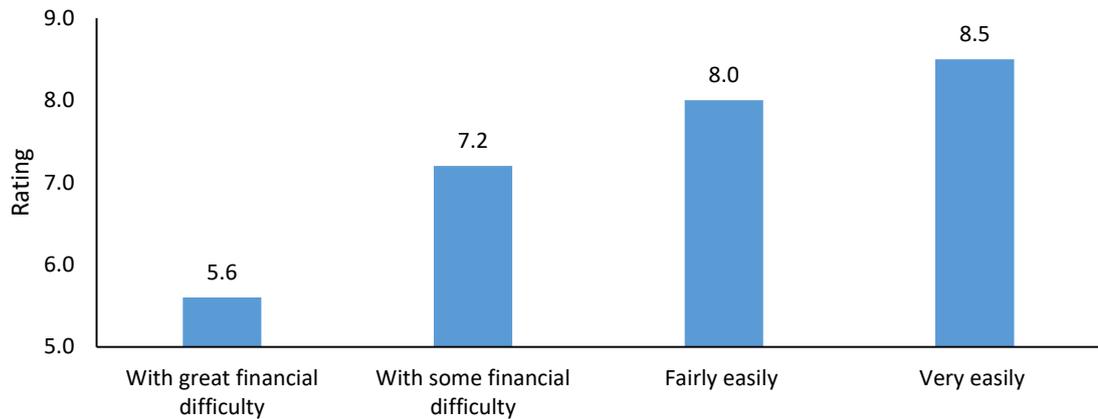
Chart 8 shows that households who reported that they could meet their expenses very easily were more satisfied (8.5) than those who reported having ‘great financial difficulties’ (5.6).

The latter were mostly households with more unemployed as well as households with members with low level of education (lower than the Cambridge School Certificate).

¹ Quintile is a specific type of quantile which divides the sorted household by income level in five equal parts - Quintile 1 (poorest 20% households) to Quintile 5 (richest 20% households). Each quintile comprises 20% households.

The income data used to calculate the quintile refers to 2017. Given that the LCS is a sub sample of the 2017 Household Budget Survey (HBS), some information like household income collected at the HBS was re-used in the LCS to complement the analysis.

Chart 8 – Average rating of life satisfaction by household financial status, 2018/19



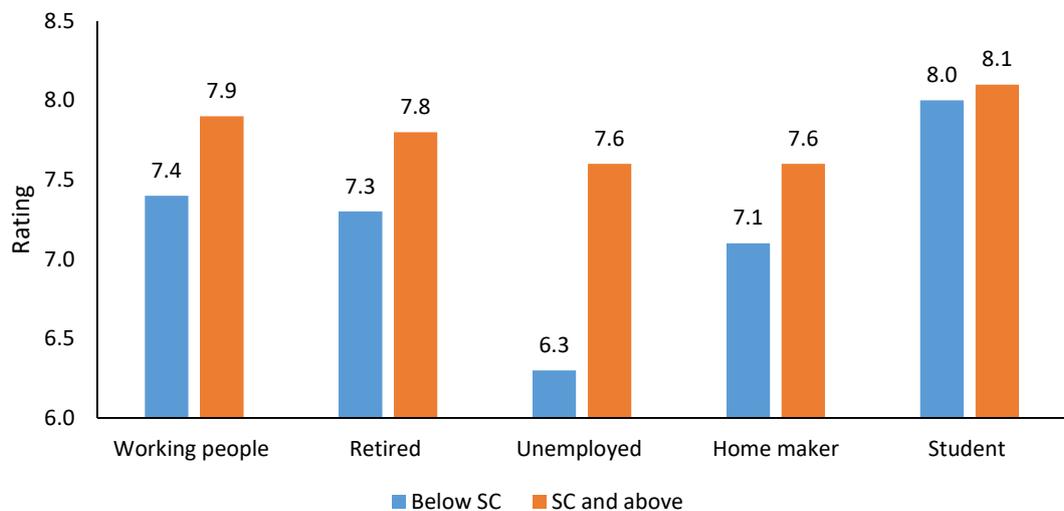
Educational attainment promotes individual life satisfaction

Education is important for acquiring better job and decent pay, and ultimately - better living conditions. Persons with higher education level are more likely to report a higher level of life satisfaction.

The LCS results show that persons with at least a Cambridge School Certificate (SC) qualification were more satisfied (7.9) than those who have an education level below the SC (7.3). This is confirmed across all economic activity status (Chart 9).

Unemployed persons who have an education level below the SC reported the lowest rating (6.3). In contrast, unemployed persons with an education level of SC and above reported a high rating (7.6), comparable with persons with SC and above in the other activity status categories.

Chart 9 – Average rating of life satisfaction by educational attainment and activity status, 2018/19

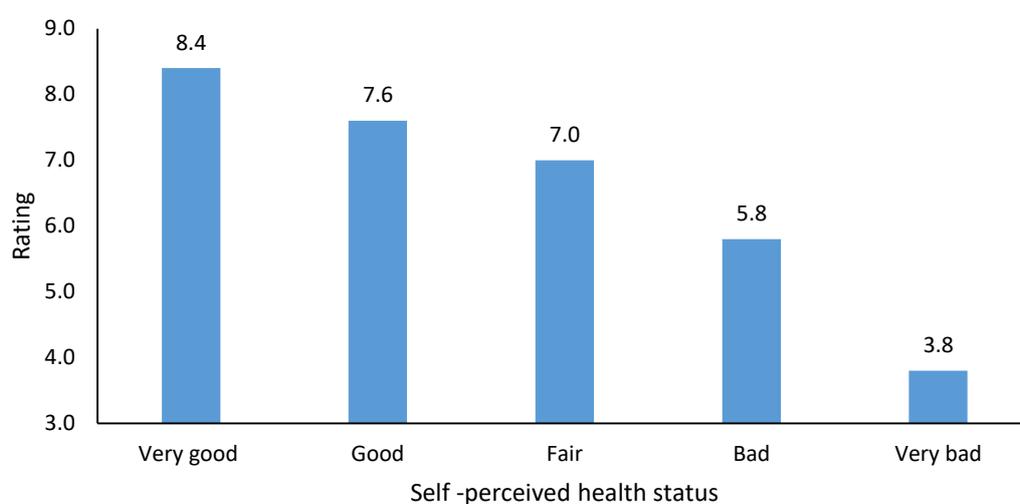


Persons in good health have higher level of life satisfaction

Health is an important predictor for life satisfaction, as persons in a good health are more likely to participate actively in social life, pursue higher education, hold a job, and take up exercises.

Data on self-perceived health show that individual's life satisfaction decreases as the health status deteriorates (Chart 10). The average life satisfaction rating for persons who described their health as 'very good' (8.4 points) was significantly higher than those who described their health status as 'very bad' (3.8 points).

Chart 10 – Average rating of life satisfaction by self-perceived health status, 2018/19



Poor health does not only affect the life of the individual but may also affect other members of the households emotionally as well as financially.

LCS data indicate that persons in households with a sick member, a disabled or an elderly who needs constant assistance for daily activities had a lower life satisfaction (6.9) than those in other households (7.6).

Persons with positive feelings² tend to rate higher level of life satisfaction

At the LCS, members were asked to rate their level of stress, and to state how often they are happy, calm and nervous.

Data reveal that persons who reported to be 'not all stressed', 'never felt nervous', or 'being happy or calm most of the time' (8.2) were more satisfied with their lives than those who reported to be 'very stressed', 'most of the time nervous' or 'feeling rarely calm or happy' (5.6).

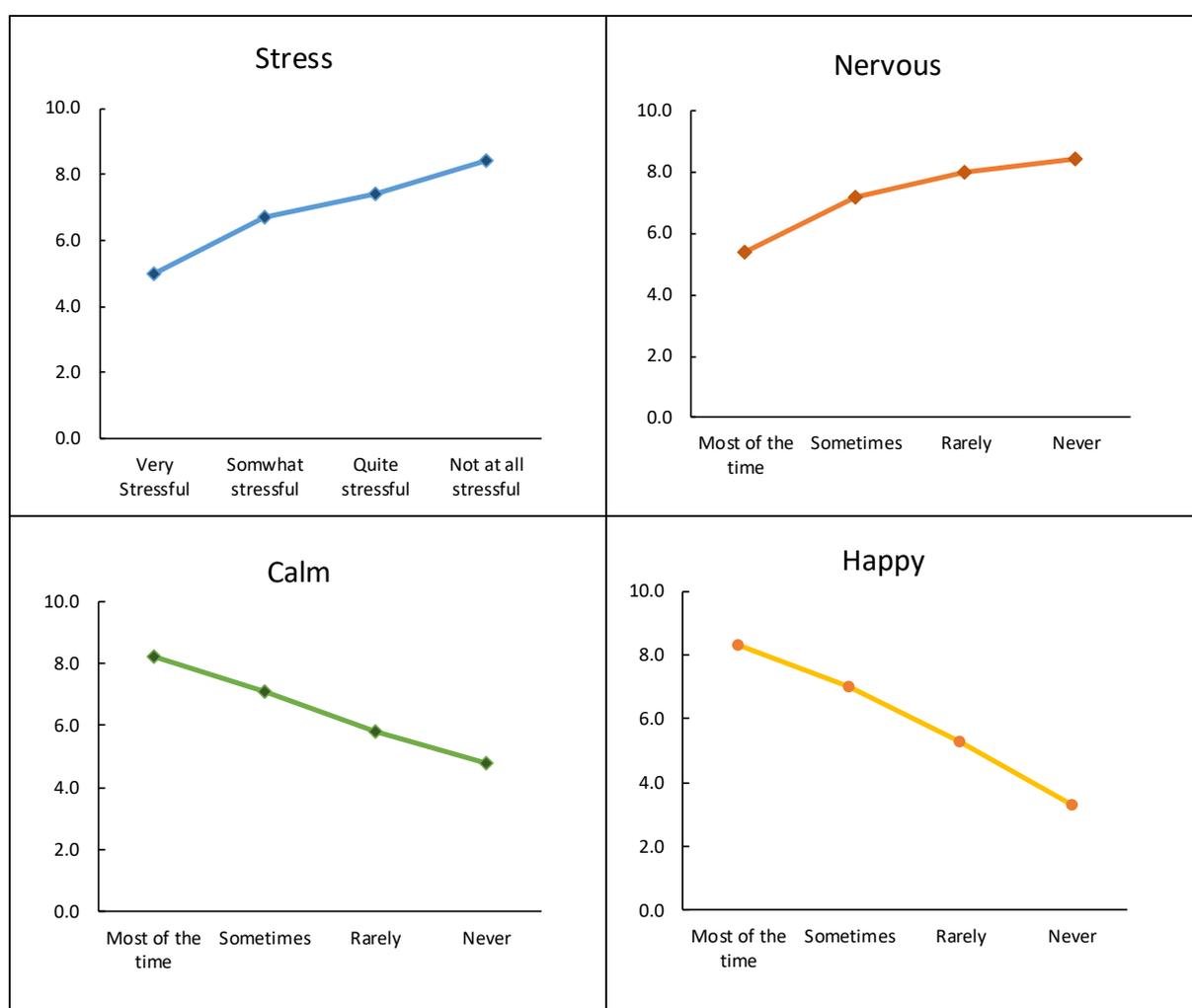
² World Health Organisation – Quality of life: Positive feelings (e.g. joy, happiness, contentment, peace, etc.); Negative feelings (e.g. nervousness, sadness, etc.)

Chart 11 gives a broader picture on how level of life satisfaction varies with positive and negative feelings.

It is worth pointing out that positive and negative feelings are the two facets considered in the measurement of overall life satisfaction and general health by the World Health Organisation – WHOQOL³.

In addition, the WHO recognise the fact that there is no health without mental health – ‘Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. Mental health is an integral part of health; indeed, there is no health without mental health. ...’⁴.

Chart 11 – Average rating of life satisfaction by positive/ negative feelings experienced by Mauritians, 2018/19



³ <https://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/whogol-qualityoflife/en/>

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

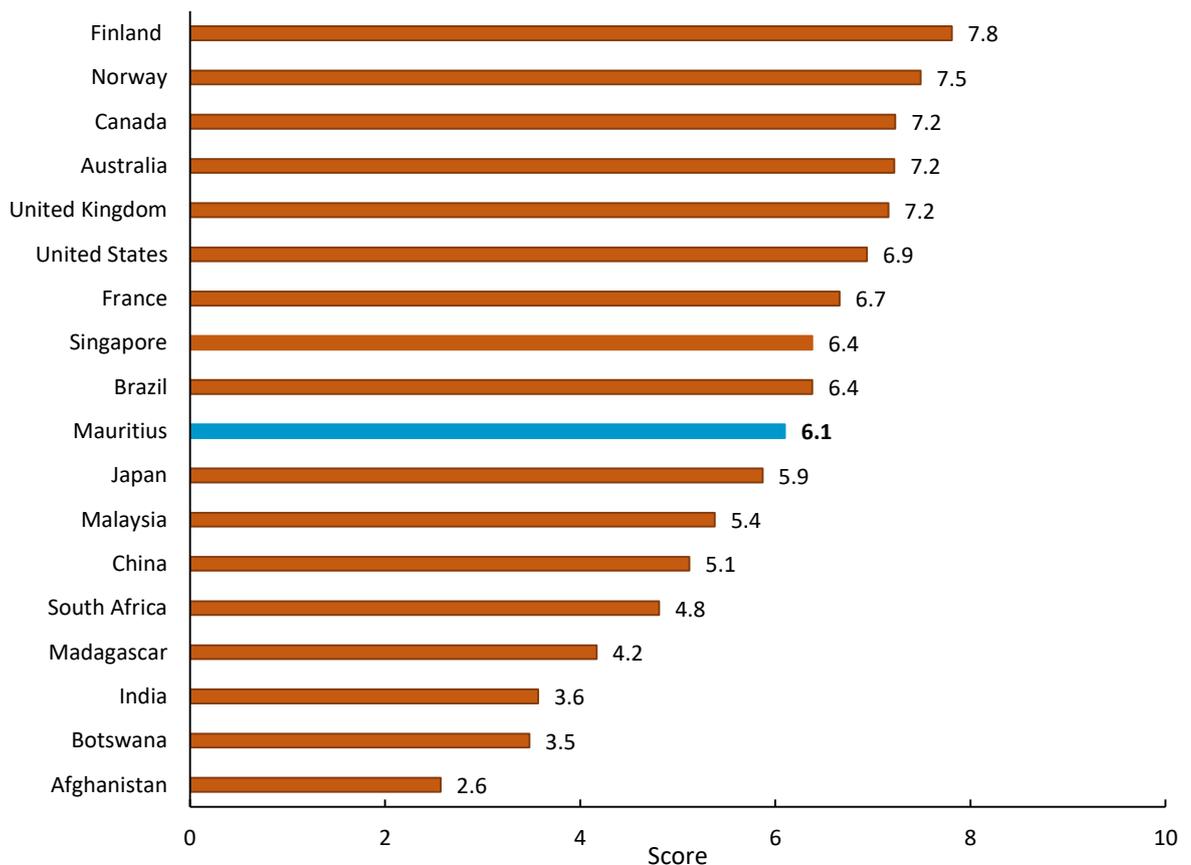
The 2020 World Happiness Report ranks Mauritius 49th out of 153 countries

According to the 2020 World Happiness Report⁵, Mauritius ranked 49th out of 153 countries with a score of 6.101 on a scale from 0 (worst score) to 10 (best score). Finland ranked first with a rating of 7.809 whilst Afghanistan ranked last with a rating of 2.567.

*The World Happiness Score is an average of total scores obtained at 2017 to 2019 using data collected at Gallup World Poll (a survey conducted on a sample of 1000 to 3000 people aged 15 years and over in 153 countries). The score is based on answers to the main life evaluation question asked in the poll which is called **Cantril Ladder**: it asks respondents to think of a ladder, with the best possible life for them being a 10, and the worst possible life being a 0. They are then asked to rate their own current lives on that 0 to 10 scale.*

The average life satisfaction rating based on the results of the LCS (7.5) is not strictly comparable with the 2017-19 World Happiness Score as they differ in terms of survey methodology and time reference.

Chart 12 – World Happiness Score⁶ by selected countries, 2017-2019



⁵ The World Happiness Report is produced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

⁶ Figures rounded to 1 decimal place

4. Notes to readers

What is life satisfaction?

Life satisfaction is the way in which people show their emotions, feelings (moods) and how they feel about their directions and options for the future. It concerns everybody and is affected by a broad range of factors related to an individual's socio-economic characteristics (sex, age, etc.) and situations (health status, living arrangement, etc.).

Life satisfaction as a measure of Quality of Life

Life satisfaction is a key indicator of Subjective Wellbeing⁷ complementing many objective indicators (per capita income, life expectancy, crime rate, etc.) under Quality of Life measurement. It measures how people evaluate their life as a whole.

As part of the 'Beyond GDP'⁸ initiative and 2009 Report by the Commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress (Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi)⁹, life satisfaction indicators are becoming more widely accepted to assess social progress that is, improvements in the wellbeing of individuals and households.

About the Living Conditions Survey

The Living Conditions Survey was conducted among on 3,500 households in the Islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues. The question on life satisfaction was asked to one member, aged 16 years and over, of the household as follows:

How satisfied are you with your life?

- 1 - *Very satisfied*
- 2 - *Satisfied*
- 3 - *Somewhat satisfied*
- 4 - *Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*
- 5 - *Somewhat dissatisfied*
- 6 - *Dissatisfied*
- 7 - *Very dissatisfied*

⁷ Subjective well-being reflects the notion that how people experience a set of circumstances is as important as the circumstances themselves, and that people are the best judges of how their own lives are going. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/how-s-life/subjective-well-being_9789264121164-14-en

⁸ The Beyond GDP initiative is about developing indicators that are as clear and appealing as GDP, but more inclusive of environmental and social aspects of progress. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond_gdp/index_en.html

⁹ In September 2009 the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission submitted its report on the measurement of economic performance and social progress. The report is based on a large body of applied research work conducted in recent years in various fields of the economic and social sciences. <http://files.harmonywithnatureun.org/uploads/upload112.pdf>

Scale used for analysis

The life satisfaction scale of 1 (very satisfied) to 7 (very dissatisfied) was rescaled from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied) to be in line with international studies such as World Happiness Report, Personal and economic well-being – Office for National Statistics, UK.

The analysis is based mainly on averages as in many research papers.

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