

## OVERALL LIFE SATISFACTION IN LATVIA

**Kate Cipane**

*University of Latvia, Latvia  
katecipane@gmail.com*

**Biruta Sloka**

*University of Latvia, Latvia  
Biruta.Sloka@lu.lv*

### ABSTRACT

*The concept of life satisfaction has always been important part of providing well-being of population. Life satisfaction of inhabitants of the country is becoming a greater challenge for country to solve as it affects both personal and professional life of citizens and performances that are made in these fields therefore it is necessary to be aware of the current situation in order to know in what situation Latvia is, what are the challenges and what needs to be improved in the future. The purpose of the study is to analyse overall life satisfaction development in Latvia by gender, age group and education level. The tasks of the study:*

- 1. to analyse different approaches of theoretical findings reflected in scientific publications and previous conducted research results of overall life satisfaction;*
- 2. to investigate existing research findings of overall life satisfaction in the regions in EU and OECD countries;*
- 3. to analyse main factors and problems affecting overall life satisfaction among inhabitants of Latvia.*

*Research methods used in preparation of the paper: scientific publication and previous conducted research results analysis and analysis of Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia conducted survey data on Quality of Life results. Survey results are analysed using indicators of descriptive statistics (indicators of central tendency or location – arithmetic mean, mode, median), indicators of variability (indicators of dispersion – range, standard deviation and standard error of mean), cross-tabulations by age groups, by gender, by education level and by type of household. The results of analysis indicated that Latvia is among the most dissatisfied countries in Europe and for decision makers there are several challenges that need to be overcome.*

**Keywords:** *Life satisfaction, Quality of life, Well-being*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, life satisfaction has been researched by a lot of studies in the all world. These researches have been focused on several areas, firstly, there are studies about the relationship between overall life satisfaction and personality (Siebert, Kunz, Rolf, 2020; Oravec, Dirsmith, Heshmati, Vandekerckhove, Brick, 2020; Schimmack, Oishi, Funder, 2004; Kjell, Nima, Sikstrom, Archer, Garcia, 2013), secondly, researchers have investigating the link between satisfaction on life and various variables such as income (Bomhoff, Siah, 2019; Gere, Schimmack, 2017), education (Powdthavee, N., Lekfuangfu, W., N., Wooden, M., 2015), health (Lin, Cheng, 2019; Deghani, 2018), leisure (Agyar, 2013; Heal, Sirgy, Uysal, 1999) and other. Several studies have explored the link between cultural differences and life satisfaction (Yuen, 2016; Sabri, Hamid, Sahar, Besral, 2019; Park, Huebner, Laughlin, Valois, Gilman, 2004) and have provided some evidence that also gender and age-group could have an influence on the life satisfaction, however, more research is needed.

## 2. THEORETICAL FINDINGS

Life satisfaction is a multi-dimensional construct reflecting the self-assessed quality of an individual's relationship with oneself, significant others, living conditions and community (Diener, Diener, 1995) and is considered to be a key element of mental health and quality of life across the lifespan, and an important indicator of positive development among adolescents (Proctor, Linley, Maltby, 2009). In the scientific literature the terms – life satisfaction, quality of life, subjective well-being and happiness – are often used interchangeably what might not be entirely appropriate, but it is understandable as these terms overlap at some point (Land, Michalos, Sirgy, 2012). As a field of social science quality of life first researched in the mid-1960s in the United States of America when NASA was detecting and anticipating the impact and side effects of the American space program on society (Heinz-Herbert, 2002). From an economic perspective, quality of life is often measured by gross domestic product considering that income is the best measure of quality of life, however, it has been researched that income level really affects people health and longevity (Diener, Diener, 1995). From sociology perspective it is also necessary to analyse such indicators as access to education and health services, crime rate and other social indicators to measure quality of life. Afterall, economic indices, subjective well-being and social indicators should be measured to understand people quality of life and make informed policy decisions (Diener, Suh, 1997). Over time the term of quality of life has evolved in various fields – healthcare, sociology, psychology, politics, economics etc. therefore the definition of the term varies in different fields of research, but also the term itself compile several indicators which combines subjective and objective ones such as environment, employment, physical and mental health, education, social belonging, leisure time etc. Researches on quality of life, life satisfaction, well-being and happiness at work have been growing in recent decades and the newest studies indicate that quality of life increase with the job satisfaction (Akova, Hasdemir, 2019), that job satisfaction plays the central role in terms of relationship between job design and well-being (Magnier-Watanabe, et al, 2019), that subjective well-being is relevant predictor of job performance (Salgado, et al, 2019) and employees who experience higher social well-being are also likely to experience a sense of vitality that helps to successfully accomplish their job performance (Khoreva, Wechtler, 2017). The concept of the quality of life has always been important part of providing well-being of population and within a recent development of internet and modern technology it is accepted almost from everyone that internet and modern technology plays an increasingly high role in people's daily lives (Silva, et al, 2018; Beneito-Montagut, et al, 2018). Whether it is about job or business, information, communication and leisure time – everything is related to this technological innovation. As the new generation so-called millennials who are about to embark on working careers have grown up alongside the Internet and modern technology their values are different from those of older generations (Andrade, Westover, 2018); (Weeks, Schaffert, 2019). therefore company managers in order to retain millennials will have to reshape internal environment of the organization to better reflect to this new generation's views (Črešnar, Jevšenak, 2019). Researchers around the world are increasingly studying the impact of the internet and modern technology on people's civic life (Filsinger, Freitag, 2019), enterprises (Okundaye, et.al, 2018), quality of life in terms of social isolation and loneliness (Beneito-Montagut, et al, 2018) as well as impact of modern technology on quality of life (Ghahramani, Wang, 2019) and other factors, for example, research in Taiwan was studying impact of information and communication technology on older adults' quality of life in Taiwan (Gustafson, et al, 2015). Other researchers have studied internet addictions from different aspects and its impact on quality of life (Longstreet, et al, 2019); (Pontes, et al, 2015). But research in South Africa (Cohen, et al, 2018) about the impact of digitally connected living on quality of life indicate that people with access and digital autonomy (when internet is widely

available) experience greater satisfaction with life and feel less isolated in the city, but people who own digital devices are more satisfied with their life as a whole and their standard of living.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most difficult to measure is life satisfaction which is usually measured as a personal evaluation and is included in quality of life measures in economics. The other dimensions are material living conditions, productive or main activity, health, education, leisure and social interactions, economic security and physical safety, governance and basic rights and natural and living environment (Eurostat, 2019). The most recent data of overall satisfaction with quality of life in European Union countries is available only from 2013 and it is included in Figure 1.

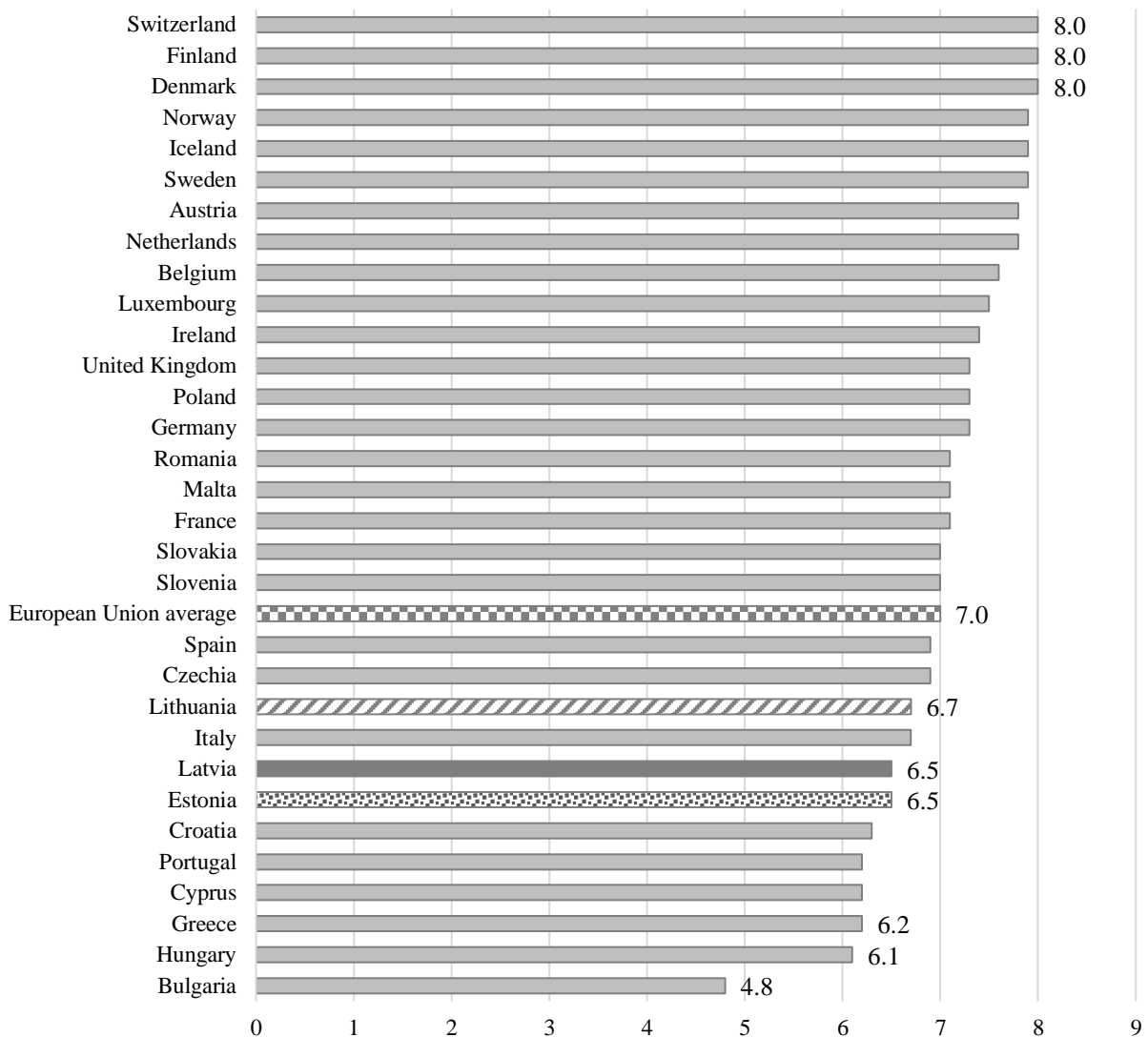
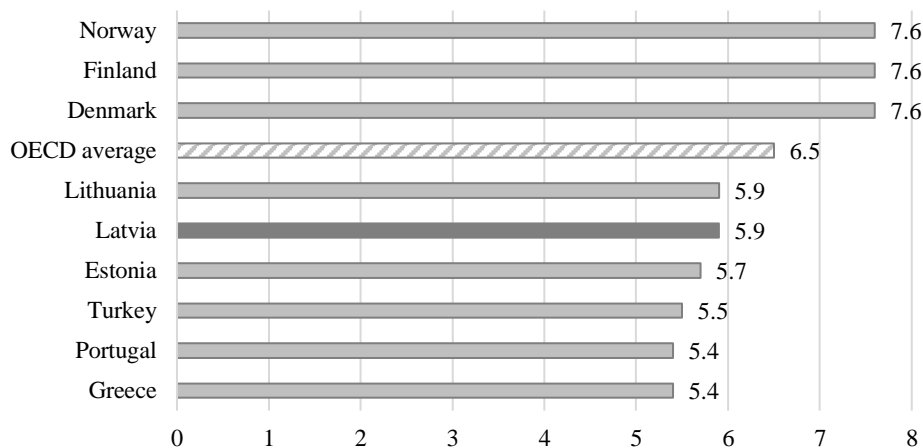


Figure 1: Satisfaction with quality of life in European Union in 2013 (Source: Kate Čipāne construction based on data bases of Eurostat - data on September 20, 2019)

The statistics shows that satisfaction with quality of life in Latvia in 2013 was lower than average in EU and Estonia was in the same level, while Lithuanians were more satisfied with their lives. Swiss, Finnish and Danish were the most satisfied with their quality of life, while Bulgarians, Hungarians and Greeks were the least satisfied from EU countries. However, life satisfaction data from OECD shows different situation which is analysed in more detailed in Figure 2.



*Figure 2: Life satisfaction in OECD countries in 2017 (Source: Kate Čipāne calculations based on OECD data, in 2017, available on OECD, Evaluation scale 0-10, where: 0- fully dissatisfied; 10 – fully satisfied)*

In 2017 life satisfaction of inhabitants in Latvia and Lithuania was in the same level and below OECD average level. It is unusual as Estonia inhabitants evaluations with satisfaction of life was below Latvia and Lithuania. The highest level of life satisfaction of inhabitants already for long time is in Norway, Finland and Denmark, while the lowest life satisfaction of inhabitants already for long time is in Greece and Portugal and Latvia is more close to this lower level. Analysing life satisfaction by age group in Latvia, most satisfied with life are youngsters from 15 to 29 years old. Seniors over the age of 65 are also very satisfied with their lives, which may be explained by the rapid increase in satisfaction right after reaching retirement age, receiving pensions and taking advantage of possibility to be still involved in labour market and receiving pensions and in addition earned salaries and wages (recently it was time when retired persons could receive either pension or salary, but this was finished by the decision of the Constitutional Court of Republic of Latvia – Latvijas Republikas Satversmes tiesa). Many retired people are socially active and using the possibly of taking part in many leisure time activities offers for seniors (singing in choirs, dancing in senior dancing groups, acting in arts and crafts circles, participating in many life-long education programs, travelling as well as taking part in other activities often not having time for them during active employment age. Most dissatisfied with life in Latvia are people from 30 to 64 years old. Dissatisfaction with life of inhabitants in this age group could be explained by problematic involvement in labour market in ages before the retirement and often difficulties for covering all expenses for inhabitants having children which do not have municipality places in pre-school education establishments and need to pay for private ones as well as by need to work in several working places to cover everyday expenses and by this lacking enough free time to spend with children and family. Distribution of evaluation results on life satisfaction of inhabitants by age group is included in figure 3.

*Figure following on the next page*

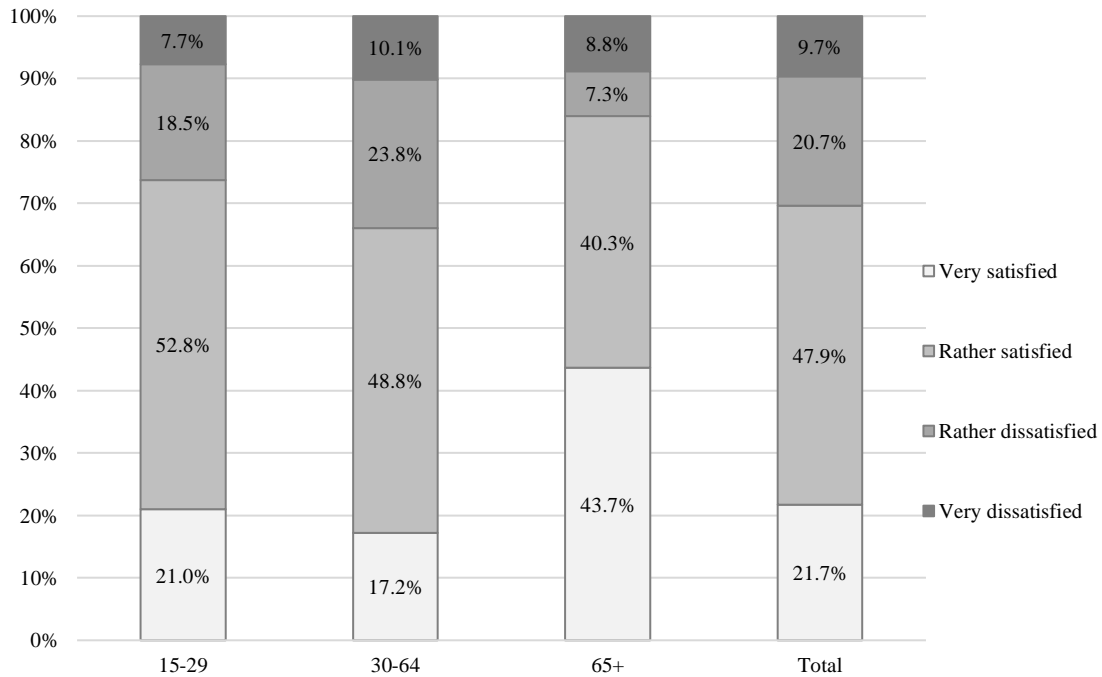


Figure 3: Life satisfaction by age group in Latvia in 2017 (Source: Kate Čipāne calculations based on CSB data, in 2017, available on CSB, n=4033, Evaluation scale 1-4, where: 1- fully dissatisfied; 4 – fully satisfied)

To evaluate – does life satisfaction in Latvia depends on age group – life satisfaction evaluations by respondents is compared using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results of ANOVA are included in table 1.

Table 1: Analysis on Life Satisfaction in Latvia by Age Group in 2017 with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Source: Kate Čipāne calculations based on CSB data, in 2017, available on CSB, n=4033, Evaluation scale 1-4, where: 1- fully dissatisfied; 4 – fully satisfied)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1217.738	2	608.869	61.427	0.000
Within Groups	39945.428	4030	9.912		
Total	41163.166	4032			

Data of table 1 (results of ANOVA) indicate that there are differences in evaluations on life satisfaction by age group in Latvia and they are statistically significant (sig. 0.000).

Table 2: Main Statistical Indicators on Evaluations of Life Satisfaction in Latvia in 2017 by gender (Source: Kate Čipāne calculations based on CSB data, in 2017, available on CSB, n=4033, Evaluation scale 1-4, where: 1- fully dissatisfied; 4 – fully satisfied)

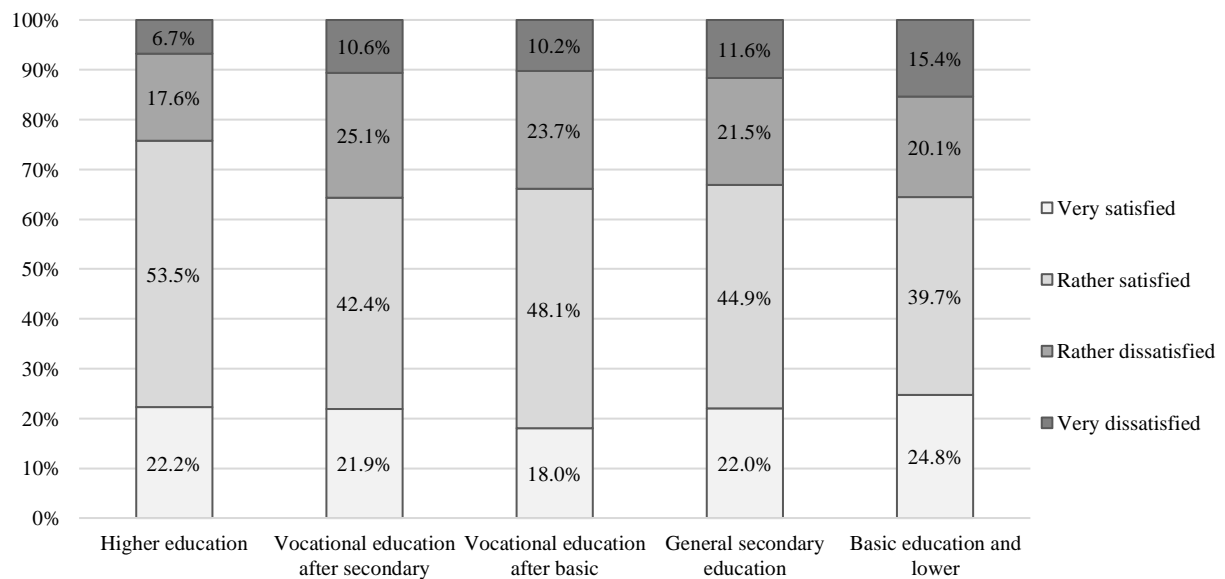
Gender	N	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean
Male	1488	3.38	2.430	0.063
Female	2545	3.44	3.567	0.071

Data of table 2 indicate that there are differences in life satisfaction by gender in Latvia. To evaluate – does life satisfaction depends on gender – life satisfaction and gender is compared using t-test. Results of t-test analysis are included in table 3.

*Table 3: Analysis of Differences with t – test in Evaluations on Life Satisfaction by Gender in Latvia in 2017 (Source: Kate Čipāne calculations based on CSB data, in 2017, available on CSB, n=4033, Evaluation scale 1-4, where: 1- fully dissatisfied; 4 – fully satisfied)*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.252	0.616	-0.634	4031	0.526	-0.066	0.104	-0.271	0.138
Equal variances not assumed			-0.698	3939.240	0.485	-0.066	0.095	-0.252	0.120

Data of table 3 (results of t-test) indicate that there are no differences in life satisfaction by gender in Latvia and they are not statistically significant (sig. 0.526 and 0.485). Level of education is also very important part of life satisfaction, because it affects economic activity status and job opportunities, which can later reflect of life satisfaction. In Figure 4 is revealed life satisfaction by education level in Latvia.



*Figure 4: Life satisfaction by Education Level in Latvia in 2017 (Source: Kate Čipāne calculations based on CSB data in 2017, available on CSB, n=4033, Evaluation scale 1-4, where: 1- fully dissatisfied; 4 – fully satisfied)*

Data of figure 4 indicate the higher the education level is, more satisfied with life people are, because more than 75% of respondents with higher education are satisfied with their life. Very dissatisfied with their life are respondents with basic education and lower, followed by those only with secondary education. Rather dissatisfied are respondents with vocational education after secondary education, but the most respondents who are rather satisfied with their life – more than a half of respondents – with higher education. According to the administrative breakdown, there are 6 regions in Latvia: Rīga, Pierīga, Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Zemgale and Latgale. In Figure 5 is revealed the average evaluations of overall life satisfaction of inhabitants in the regions of Latvia in 2017 and 2018.

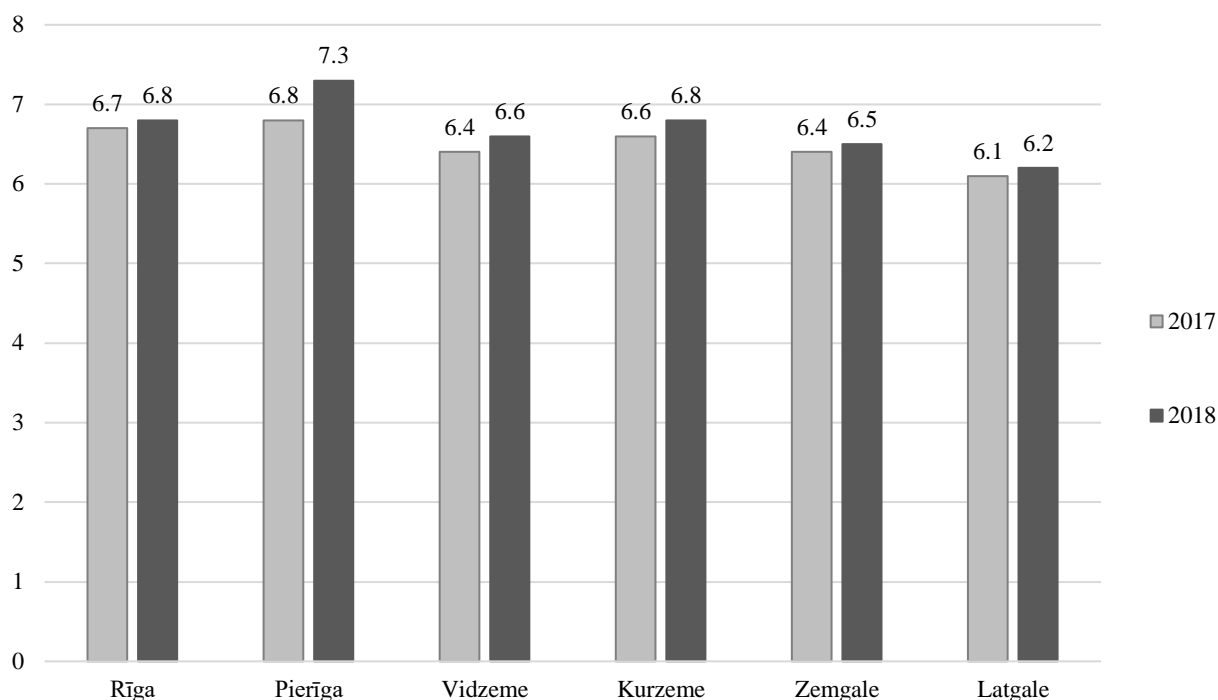


Figure 5: Overall life satisfaction by the Regions in Latvia in 2017 and 2018 (Source: Kate Čipāne calculations based on CSB data in 2017 and 2018, available on CSB, n=4033, Evaluation scale 1-10, where: 1- fully dissatisfied; 10 – fully satisfied)

The statistics show that overall life satisfaction for inhabitants in Republic of Latvia has increased in 2018 compared to 2017, however situation is improving very slowly - exception is Pierīga region (region near capital of Latvia - Riga) where overall life satisfaction has increased the most. Special concern is about Latgale region where overall life satisfaction is the lowest in the country and economic development in this region is major problem during last years.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

1. The analysis of theoretical research showed that life satisfaction has been investigated in different contexts around the world – the link between personality issues and life satisfaction, the link between life satisfaction and various variables such as income, health, education, leisure etc. and the link between cultural differences and life satisfaction.
2. The analysis of theoretical research also showed that life satisfaction is important factor for job satisfaction and for better results in professional career.
3. Latvia and the other Baltic countries are beyond the average level in evaluations of satisfaction with quality of life in European Union as well as in OECD countries, while the highest life satisfaction is in Switzerland, Denmark, Finland and Norway, but the lowest – in Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal and Turkey.
4. Male and female in Latvia are equally satisfied with their lives, while more satisfied are people from 15 to 29 years old, who live in Pierīga region and who have higher education.
5. Special concern is about Latgale region where life satisfaction is the lowest in the country and economic development is a major problem in the last years.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** The paper was supported by the NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME “Latvian heritage and future challenges for the sustainability of the state” project “Challenges for the Latvian State and society and the solutions in international context (Interframe-LV)”.

## LITERATURE:

1. Agyar, E. (2018). Life satisfaction, perceived freedom in leisure and self-esteem: The case of physical education and sport students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 2186 – 2193.
2. Akova, I., Hasdemir, O. (2019). Job Satisfaction, Quality of Life Levels, and Other Factors Affecting Physicians Working in Primary Health Care Institutions (Sivas), *Erciyes Medical Journal*, 41(1), 69-76.
3. Andrade, M.S., Westover, J.H., (2018). Generational Differences in Work Quality Characteristics and Job Satisfaction, Evidence-Based HRM: A Global Forum for Empirical Scholarship, *Journal of Hospital Administration*, 6(3), 287-304.
4. Beneito-Montagut, R., Cassian-Yde, N., Begueria, A. (2018). What Do We Know about the Relationship between Internet-Mediated Interaction and Social Isolation and Loneliness in Later Life? Quality in Ageing and Older Adults, *Journal of Exercise Rehabilitation*, 19(1), 14-30.
5. Bomhoff, E.J., Siah, A.K.L. (2019). The relationship between income, religiosity and health: Their effects on life satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 144, 168 – 173.
6. Cohen, J., Bancilhon, J.M., Grace, T. (2018). Digitally Connected Living and Quality of Life: An Analysis of the Gauteng City-Region, South Africa. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, (84), 1-12.
7. Črešnar, R., Jevšenak, S. (2019). The Millennials' Effect: How Can Their Personal Values Shape the Future Business Environment of Industry 4.0? *Naše gospodarstvo/Our Economy*, 65(1), 57-65.
8. Dehghani, F. (2018). Type D personality and life satisfaction: The mediating role of social support. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 134, 75-80.
9. Diener, E., Diener, C. (1995). The Wealth of Nations Revisited: Income and Quality of Life. *Social Indicators Research*, 3(36), 275–286.
10. Diener, E., Diener, M. (1995). Cross-cultural correlates of life satisfaction and self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(4), 653–663.
11. Diener, E., Suh, E. (1997). Measuring Quality of Life: Economic, Social, and Subjective Indicators. *Social Indicators Research*, 5(40), 189–216.
12. Eurostat, (2019). *Quality of Life Indicators*. Retrieved 24.09.2019. from [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality\\_of\\_life\\_indicators](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality_of_life_indicators)
13. Filsinger, M., Freitag, M. (2019). Internet Use and Volunteering: Relationships and Differences Across Age and Applications, *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30, 87-97.
14. Gere, J., Schimmack, U. (2017). Benefits of income: Association with life satisfaction among earners and homemakers. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 119, 92-95.
15. Ghahramani, F., Wang, J. (2019). Impact of Smartphones on Quality of Life: A Health Information Behavior Perspective, *Information Systems Frontiers*, DOI: 10.1007/s10796-019-09931-z (Springer Link database)
16. Gustafson, D.H., Sr., McTavish, F., Gustafson, D.H., Jr., Mahoney, J.E., Johanson, R.A., Lee, J.D., Quanbeck, A., Atwood, A.K., Isham, A., Veeramani, R., Clemson, L., Shah, D. (2015). The Effect of an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on Older Adults' Quality of Life: Study protocol for a Randomized Control Trial, *Trials*, 16(191), 1-12.
17. Heinz-Herbert, N. (2002). Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research: Background, Achievements and Current Trends, *Advances in Sociological Knowledge over Half a Century*, pp. 1-36.



18. Khoreva, V., Wechtler, H. (2017). HR Practices and Employee Performance: The Mediating Role of Well-Being, *Employee Relations*, 40(2), 227-243.
19. Kjell, O.N., Nima, A.A., Siktrom, S., Archer, T., Garcia, D. (2013). Iranian and Swedish adolescents: differences in personality traits and well-being. *PeerJ*, 1(1):e197.
20. Land, K.C., Michalos A.C., Sirgy, M.J. (2012). Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Publishers, 63-77.
21. Lin, C.-Y., Cheng, T.-C. (2019). Health status and life satisfaction among people with disabilities: Evidence from Taiwan, *Disability and Health Journal*, 12, 249-256.
22. Longstreet, P., Brooks, S., Gonzalez, E.S. (2019). Internet Addiction: When the Positive Emotions are not so Positive. *Technology in Society*, (57), 76-85.
23. Magnier-Watanabe, R., Benton, C.F., Uchida, T., Orsini, P. (2019). Designing Jobs to Make Employees Happy? Focus on Job Satisfaction First, *Social Science Japan Journal*, 22(1), 85-107.
24. Neal, J. D., Sirgy, M.J., Uysal, M. (1999). The Role of Satisfaction with Leisure Travel/Tourism Services and Experience in Satisfaction with Leisure Life and Overall Life. *Journal of Business Research*, 44(3), 153-163.
25. Okundaye, K., Fan, S.K., Dwyer, R.J. (2018). Impact of Information and Communication technology in Nigerian Small-to-Medium-Sized Enterprises, *Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science*, 24(47), 29-46.
26. Oravec, Z., Dirsmith, J., Heshmati, A., Vandekerckhove, J., Brick, R.T. (2020). Psychological well-being and personality traits associated with experiencing love in everyday life, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 153, 109620, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109620>
27. Park, N., Huebner, E.S., Laughlin, J.E., Valois, R.F., Gilman, R. (2004), A Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Dimensions of Child and Adolescent Life Satisfaction reports. *Quality-of-Life Research on Children and Adolescents, Social Indicators Research Series*, (23) Springer, Dordrecht, 61-79.
28. Pontes, H.M., Szabo, A., Griffiths, M.D. (2015). The impact of Internet-based Specific Activities on the Perceptions of Internet Addiction, Quality of Life, and Excessive Usage: A Cross-sectional Study. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, (1), 19-25.
29. Powdthavee, N., Lekfuangfu, W.N., Wooden, M. (2015). What's the good of education on our overall quality of life? A simultaneous equation model of education and life satisfaction for Australia, *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, 54, 10-21.
30. Proctor, C., Linley, P., Maltby, J. (2009). Youth life satisfaction: A review of the literature. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10, 583–630.
31. Sabri, R., Hamid, A.Y.S., Besral, S.J. (2019). The effect of culture-based interventions on satisfaction and quality of life of elderly at social welfare institution in West Sumatera. *Enfermeria Clinica*, 29(2), 619-624.
32. Salgado, J.F., Blanco, S., Moscoso, S. (2019). Subjective Well-being and Job Performance: Testing of a Suppressor Effect, *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 35(2), 93-102.
33. Schimmack, U., Oishi, S., Furr, R.M., Funder, D.C. (2004). Personality and life satisfaction: A facet level analysis, *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 30(8), 1062-1075.
34. Siebert, J.U., Kunz, E.R., Rolf, P. (2020). Effects of proactive decision making on life satisfaction. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 280, 1171-1187.
35. Silva, P., Matos, A.D., Martinez-Pecino, R. (2018). Confidant Network and Quality of Life of Individuals Aged 50+: The Positive Role of Internet Use, *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 21(11), 694-702.
36. Weeks, K.P., Schaffert, C. (2019). Generational Differences in Definition of Meaningful Work: A Mixed Methods Study, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 156, 1045-1061.

37. Yuen, C., Y.M. (2016). Linking life satisfaction with school engagement of secondary students from diverse cultural backgrounds in Hong King. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 77, 74-82.