

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2016.023.087](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2016.023.087)

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## **SOME APPROACHES TO THE ISSUE OF SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE**

### **Abstract:**

The concept of the measurement of quality of life is used to evaluate the general state of well-being of individual persons and society. The quality of life should not be exchanged with the concept of standard of living, which is primarily based on income. The objective quality of life issues are based on measurements of so called "hard data", i.e. data from institutions and organizations that include financial accounts, civil records, medical statistics, pollution and other information that are routinely collected. Subjective aspect of quality of life is evaluated on the degree of satisfaction with various items and needs. This is a category associated with subjective perceptions of their lives within a system of values and within certain social, economic and political conditions. Subjective indicators (feelings of happiness, satisfaction, etc.) are usually measured and evaluated on the basis of quantitative and qualitative research. Some results of the survey of quality of life are shown in this paper. Several results of a survey conducted point on the subjective perception for example safety and other factors.

### **Keywords:**

quality of life, subjective aspect, survey

**JEL Classification:** I39

## Introduction

Countries with developed market economies, including Slovak Republic, consider quality of life as an integral part of its social policy. They have drawn up national programs for quality of life for its citizens.

The quality of life integrates social and individual lives, lead to the synthesis of various aspects related interdisciplinary sciences. The concept of quality of life is used to evaluate the general state of well-being of individual people and society. It appears in a wide range of contexts, including as international development, as well as health care and policy. The concept of quality of life should not be confused with the concept of standard of living, which is primarily based on income. Quality of life is gradually becoming an important baseline category of social policies and other local areas of social life. Some results of the survey of quality of life is shown in this paper.

## Socio-economic aspects of quality of life

The subject of interest of the quality of life research was primarily the material aspect of society as a whole (based on an objectified concept of quality of life), but gradually we notice a growing stream of research and a shift to subjective perception and evaluation of the quality of life of the individual himself (Rapley, 2003).

Since it is possible to analyse the development, quality of life is an important concept in international development and to a greater extent than is the standard of living (primarily based on income). Standard indicators of quality of life include not only wealth and employment, but also environmental, physical and mental health, education, recreation (recreation), leisure and social affiliation (Svobodová, 2010).

Quality of life is interpreted as a reaction to the problems of society, which must address the citizens and of course also the company. It is the identification of these problems, and also specification of possible solutions. An important boundary condition is the recognition of the importance of the natural balance in the relationship between people and their environment. Similarly to quality of life also other terms do not have uniformly accepted definition. Nearby often used synonymously can include in particular wellbeing, life satisfaction, happiness, health, quality of place, sustainability, liveability. (Andraško, 2008).

Defining quality of life and determination of its components (indicators) is an interdisciplinary problem, which has an applied character. This is an area in which the overlaps research from a wide range of scientific disciplines such as sociology, economics, political science, ecology, demography, ethics etc. The solution requires the integration and synthesis of various aspects of scientific disciplines (Tokarová, 2002).

There are several important areas that directly affect the quality of life and its sustainability. It is about social cohesion and the welfare state, labour market and employment, education, population structure, housing, family, health care, external and internal security, environmental protection and regional development potentials. The way of life is superior to the standard of living. Standard of living reflects mainly physical and economic conditions as a means of satisfying basic human needs. The high degree

of satisfaction of material needs does not necessarily mean the real quality of life. (Potůček, 2002)

### **Approach to quality of life**

The worldwide used method in a global comparison of quality of life is the Human Development Index (HDI). It is a synthetic socio-economic indicator. The results of exploration of the objective site of quality of life are published since 1990 in over 150 countries and provide information on the society's stage of development (stage reflects the average performance of the country). It combines the measurement of the average life expectancy at birth, education and living standards in an effort to quantify the options available to individuals within society. (World bank)

European Commission was organizing a survey of subjective perception of quality of life in European countries EQLS ("European Quality of Life Survey"), which aims to detect the level of quality of life in Europe and the detection of trends in achieving a higher level of well-being of EU citizens. The European society as a result of globalization, aging of population and the shift to a knowledge economy is changing rapidly. These changes may result in a pessimistic view of life and a higher level of dissatisfaction, even when economic indicators can point to grow and general improvement. (Anderson, 2009)

As a composite indicator can be used as RDI (Rural Development Index) for analysis of the main factors of regional development in various areas, as well as for Cohesion Policy structural programs at various regional levels.

The measuring of quality of life in Slovak Republic was carried out within an international research on the assessment of subjective quality of life called "Slovak index of quality of life (SIQZ)." Used questionnaire consisted of fifteen questions were compiled into two blocks. The first is related to satisfaction with personal life (8 issues), the second of satisfaction with life in Slovakia (7 questions). The choice of answers was chosen ten point scale (from 0 – completely dissatisfied, middle 5 - neutral, and 10 - completely satisfied). (Slovenský index)

Self-assessment of quality of life is generally expressed in terms such as subjective well-being, life-satisfaction and happiness. Subjective site of quality of life speaks about the valuation of level of needs satisfaction. This is a category associated with the subjective perception of the own life with in a certain system of values, and within certain social, economic and political conditions.

### **Objective and subjective social indicators**

As mentioned above, the most common tool for measuring quality of life in the qualitative and quantitative research. Today there is more or less a consensus around the need to combine objective with subjective aspects of quality of life, based on an acknowledgment of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. However the debate continues about the relative importance of objective versus subjective factors in determining quality of life, and about the relationship between the two. Other evidence

from the mental health field demonstrates a strong correlation between psychological well-being and objective socio-economic factors (Table1).

**Table 1: Objective and subjective social indicators**

<b>Frequently used objective social indicators</b> (represent social data independently of individual evaluations)	<b>Frequently used subjective social indicators</b> (individual appraisal and evaluation of social conditions)
Life expectancy	Sense of community
Crime rate	Material possessions
Unemployment rate	Sense of safety
Gross Domestic Product	Happiness
Poverty rate	Satisfaction with "life as a whole"
School attendance	Relationships with family
Working hours per week	Job satisfaction
Perinatal rate	Sex life
Suicide rate	Perception of distributional justice
	Class identification
	Hobbies and club membership

Source: Rapley (2003) p.11

There are three main approaches in literature, each of which presents methodological issues relating to measurement:

- Uni-dimensional single scale measures
- Multi-dimensional, single-scale measures: these break down QOL into its various dimensions or domains and use a single question, rating or item to measure each one.
- Multiple separate scales: these used a number of separate scales each measuring individual dimensions of QOL, for example satisfaction or social relationships. Each scale comprises a "battery" of questions, the scores of which may be aggregated and weighted to give an overall measure for each dimension.

Decisions about the weighting of indicators can have a huge effect on research outcomes. Methods of weighting variables are therefore of great importance and the subject of much debate.

Self-assessment of life-this quality refers to the subjective evaluation of life. This is generally expressed in terms such as subjective well-being, life-satisfaction and happiness. As mentioned above, the most common tool for measuring quality of life in the qualitative and quantitative research.

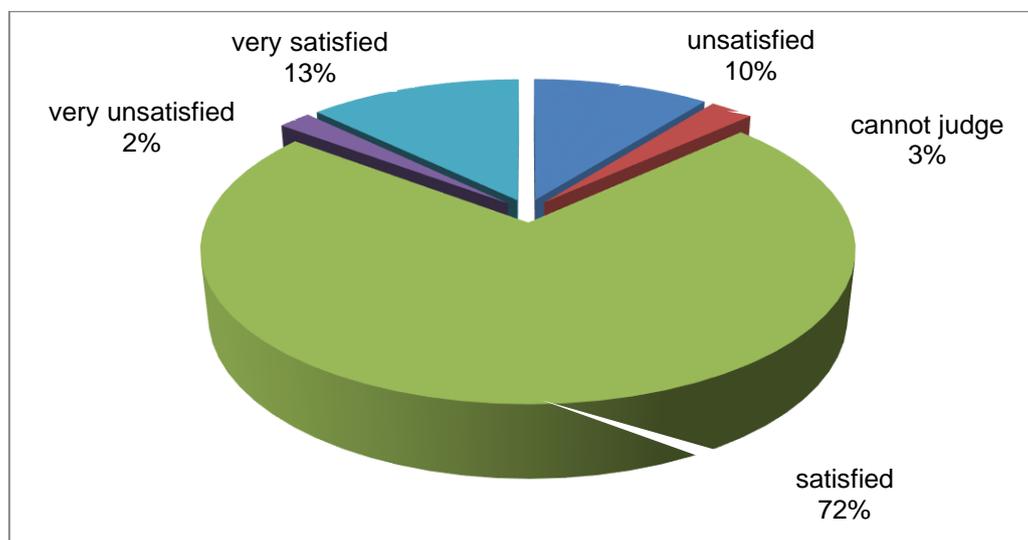
## Some results of the survey

The research activities conducted by the University of Žilina determined how the citizens perceive their quality of life. Marketing survey was carried out in order to determine the perceived quality of life, which areas are unsatisfying and which spheres of life, on the contrary contribute to their overall well-being and balance.

Questions were directed to satisfaction - municipality (town) as a place to live and work, transport accessibility, quality of transport infrastructure, public facilities, environmental quality, quality of the natural environment and surrounding landscape, availability of health facilities, quality of health services, conditions for culture, sport and leisure, quality of public services, measures to ensure the safety of persons and property etc. (Štofková, 2013)

The question related to whole satisfaction with quality of life, quality of service provided by educational institutions, conditions for culture, sport and leisure, quality of services, business services, transport accessibility and facilities of the site, public transport, availability of information, its level of safety and security of property etc. Figure 1 shows satisfaction with whole satisfaction with quality of life in the place of their residence. The research was conducted in the Žilina county (about 455 people) with 19 questions will bring valuable input to management of public administration for the next period.

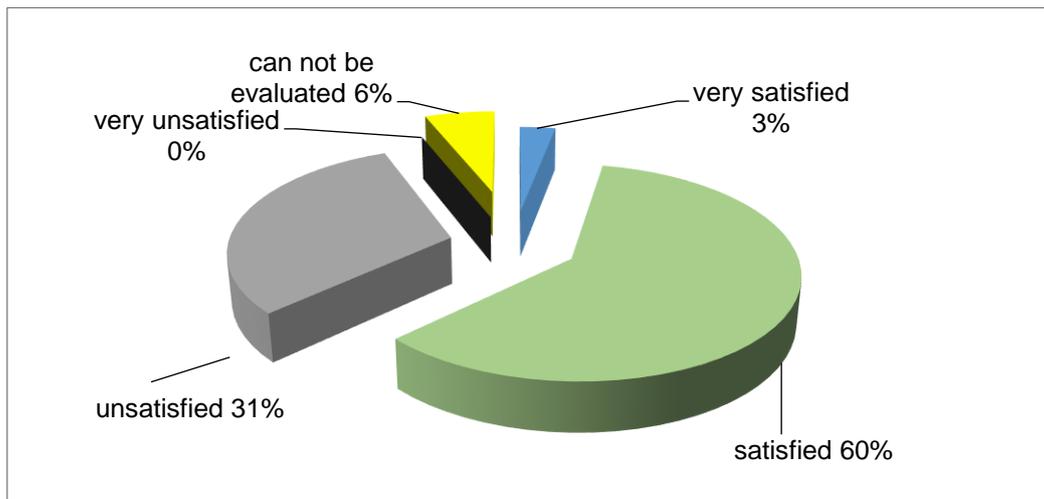
**Figure1: Satisfaction with whole satisfaction with quality of life in the place of their residence**



Source: own processing

Below are some results of questionnaire. For some questions, respondents answered as shown in the following text and illustrations. For example satisfaction with transport infrastructure - it is one of the main conditions for the development of all regions. More than half of respondents said that they were satisfied with the transport infrastructure, but almost a third is unhappy with the transport infrastructure. The result indicated in Figure 2

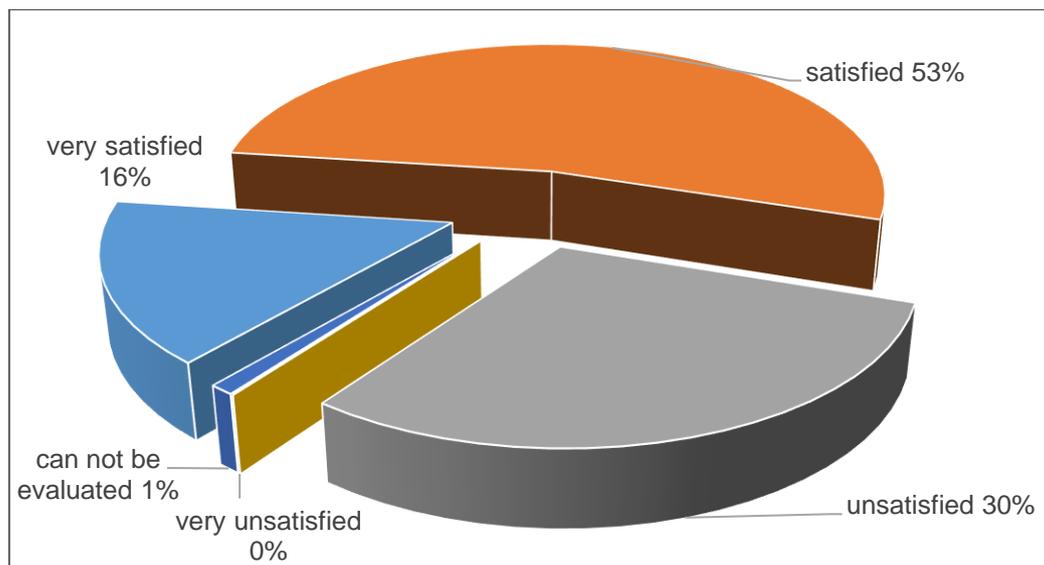
**Figure 2: Satisfaction with the quality of transport infrastructure**



Source: own processing

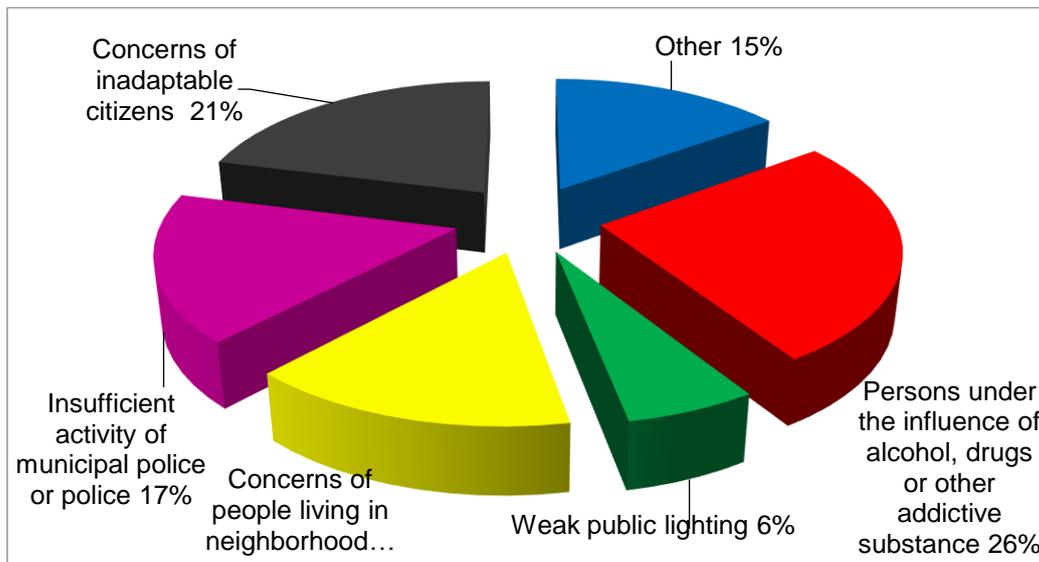
Cultural, sports and spending free time is a key element in the quality of life. For this area, more than two-thirds of respondents expressed positive. The majority of dissatisfied respondents indicated have rural residence - Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Citizens' satisfaction with the conditions for culture, sport and leisure time**



Source: own processing

Factors negatively affecting the feeling of safety – Figure 4 - in this issue, some respondents identified a number of possibilities of these responses are most frequently found in the answer that it is a person under the influence of alcohol, drugs and similar.

**Figure 4: Factors negatively affecting the feeling of safety**

Source: own processing

Subjective site of quality of life speaks about the valuation of level of needs and satisfaction. This is a category associated with the subjective perception of the own life with in a certain system of values, and within certain social, economic and political conditions. There are several approaches discribed in literature, each of which presents methodological issues relating to measurement. A survey of this aspect of the quality of life was obtained by questionnaire and showed that some areas are perceived differently, with more or less satisfaction.

## Conclusions

Subjective site of quality of life speaks about the valuation of level of needs and satisfaction. This is a category associated with the subjective perception of the own life with in a certain system of values, and within certain social, economic and political conditions. There are several approaches, each presents methodological issues relating to measurement. A survey of this aspect of the quality of life was obtained by questionnaire and showed that some areas are perceived differently, with more or less satisfaction.

Acknowledgment: This contribution was undertaken, as parts of the research project VEGA 1/0787/14, VEGA 1/0733/15, VEGA/0693/16 and VEGA 1/0693/16.

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