Measuring Societal Wellbeing with ESS Data

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International Workshop
Kaunas
October 2015
Overview of Presentation

- A little background
- Existing resources for measuring societal wellbeing
- Overview of societal wellbeing module
- Cross-national empirical analysis

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GDP: And beyond...
From there to here: The fall and rise of social indicators

- 1960s the ‘social indicators movement’ became influential: Journal Social Indicators Research, 1974
- Loses momentum in 1980s but leaves academic legacy - journal *SIR* and research network, the International Society for the Study of Quality of Life (ISQOLS).
- Recent developments:
  - EU policies of ‘convergence’ → interest in social inclusion and the adoption of Atkinson indicators
  - The new science of happiness (Layard 2005; Oswald, 2006) has led to renewed focus on the concept of wellbeing.

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Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi: So what else is new?

Better measures of economic performance in a complex economy

Multi-dimensional concept of wellbeing:
- Material living standards (income, consumption and wealth);
  Health; Education; Personal activities including work; Political voice and governance; Social connections and relationships; Environment (present and future conditions); Insecurity, of an economic as well as a physical nature

Pragmatic approach to measuring sustainability
Existing sets of indicators
## Existing sets of indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campbell et al (1976)</td>
<td>Marriage, family life, health, neighbourhood, friendships, housework, job, life in the US, city/county, non-work, housing, usefulness of education, standard of living, amount of education, savings, your religion, our national govt, organisations belong to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European System of Social Indicators (Noll, 2002)</td>
<td>Population, household and family, housing, transport, leisure, media and culture, social participation and integration, education and training, labour market and work, standard of living, health, environment, social security, public safety, total life situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD Society at a Glance (2006 to date)</td>
<td>General context, self-sufficiency, equity, health, social cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Audit commission (2005)</td>
<td>People and place, community cohesion and involvement, community safety, culture and leisure, economic well-being, education and lifelong learning, environment, health and social well-being, housing, transport and access, other indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallup World Path: Microeconomics (since 2005)</td>
<td>Law and Order, Food and Shelter Institutions and Infrastructure, Good Jobs, Wellbeing, Brain Gain, Quality GDP Growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCP life situation index (Boelhouwer 2010)</td>
<td>Health, housing, mobility, holidays, ownership of durable consumer goods, socio-cultural leisure activities, social participation, sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferris (2010)</td>
<td>Survival of the species, social acceptance, mastery, affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy, harmony, conservatism, hierarchy, egalitarian commitment, health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallup-Healthways Wellbeing Index (2011)</td>
<td>Life evaluation, emotional health, physical health, healthy behaviour, work environment, basic access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESS Attitudinal Indicators (2011)</td>
<td>Trust in Institutions, wellbeing and happiness, tolerance (attitudes towards immigration), social trust, fear of crime, neighbourhood cohesion, social inclusion, environment, economic insecurity, attitude to the future of society, quality of public services, perception of conflict</td>
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European System of Social Indicators

- Objective living conditions: ‘ascertainable living circumstances’ (work, health, standard of living)
- Subjective Well-Being: perceptions, evaluations and appreciation of life and living conditions by the individual citizens: e.g. satisfaction or happiness.
- Aggregate measures of social cohesion: Disparities, Inequalities and Social Exclusion
- Social Relations, Ties and Inclusion:
- Sustainability

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EurLIFE

EurLIFE is an interactive database on quality of life in Europe, offering data drawn from the Foundation’s own surveys and from other published sources. The data provided deals with the objective living conditions and subjective well-being of European citizens. Today we have 27 EU Member States and the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey in the database.

Select indicator

- List indicators from the domain: Select an indicator ▼ List
- Search for an indicator:

Display all indicators

Health | Employment | Income deprivation | Education | Family | Social participation | Housing |
Gallup World Path: Macroeconomics

Gallup employs a unique approach to understanding and improving wellbeing by focusing on the importance of metrics and continuous monitoring. The Gallup World Path: Macroeconomics highlights this approach. The constituent parts of the path comprise a pattern of relationships. The model provides the framework Gallup researchers believe societies must follow to thrive.

The Gallup World Path: Macroeconomics highlights the link between every resident's individual contribution and the community's or country's overall success. The heart of the path is wellbeing. Just as great workplaces must deliberately create conditions to produce engaged employees and customers, communities must deliberately promote wellbeing to attract the best talent and promote quality GDP growth. As engaged employees and customers make growth and prosperity possible for companies, engaged residents do the same for their communities.
Gallup World Poll: Indexes

- Law and Order:
- Food and Shelter Index:
- Personal Economy Index:
- Personal Health:
- Citizen Engagement Index:
- Well-Being Indexes: Thriving, Struggling, Suffering:
- Well-Being Indexes: Positive Experience:
- Well-Being Indexes: Negative Experience:

- National Institutions Index:
- Corruption Index:
- Youth Development Index:
- Community Basics Index:
- Diversity Index
- Optimism Index
- Communications Index:
- Violence Index:
- Religiosity Index:

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Create Your Better Life Index

How do you define a better life? Use our interactive tool to see how your country performs on the topics you feel make for a better life.

Start with all topics rated equally or set your own preferences here.
Measuring progress
Sustainable development indicators 2010

Measuring national well-being
Conceptual frameworks
JOIN THE DEBATE!

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www.ons.gov.uk/well-being
Going beyond the individual
Societal Wellbeing: More than the sum of the parts?

- Recent literature on wellbeing assumes unit of analysis is the individual
- But commentary/observation is often about aggregates – communities, cities or countries
- The Broken Society, The Good Society, The Big Society
- When we say ‘Place X has a great quality of life’, we don’t mean 64% of inhabitants are above a 7/10 happiness threshold, we are evaluating collective characteristics

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The good life, as we conceive it, demands a multitude of social conditions and cannot be realized without them. ...

The good life must be lived in a good society and is not fully possible otherwise.

Bertrand Russell, 1925
Societal Wellbeing: A literature of many parts

- Four categories of work

1. Individual subjective, ‘perceived’ wellbeing (‘happiness’)
2. Individual ‘objective’ wellbeing (living conditions)
3. Societal ‘objective’ wellbeing (societal outcomes)
4. Evaluations by individuals of societies (pQoS)

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Measuring Societal Wellbeing: The missing link?

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| Societal Level | ? | Features of society: crime rate, income distribution, quality of education/health etc (Atkinson et al) |
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And measured all together...

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| Societal Level | Perception of the quality of society or societal wellbeing | Features of society: crime rate, income distribution, quality of education/health etc (Atkinson et al) |

= Societal wellbeing
c.f. Social quality model
(ABBOTT and Wallace, 2011)
Obstacles to comparative research on social quality

- Shortage of good quality empirical data – no current vehicle for a module measuring perceived quality of society
- Much academic analysis within individual domains – and often in small areas
- Need for greater conceptual coherence in existing indicator sets:
  - Same form of measurement in each domain
  - Same territorial reference unit
In the Meantime...

Scoreboards and Dashboards with existing data
Example: The three-item Diversity index from the Gallup World Poll

% saying area 'good place for...to live'

Gay-Lesbian  Ethnic minority  Immigrants

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Example: European Quality of Life Survey

percentage perceiving 'lot of tension' 2007

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‘Hope is a species of happiness’?

Feeling optimistic about the future
European Quality of Life Survey 2007
ESS and ‘Attitudinal Indicators

- Founding aim of ESS to provide soundly based indicators of citizens evaluations of their own societies
- Roger Jowell and Gillian Eva – ‘Happiness is not enough’ (2008) SIR
- Harrison, Jowell, Sibley and Eva (2011) ASK – reviews agenda and proposes short list of items
- ESS SAB rejects proposed addition of 7 items to core questionnaire pending further research
Series of pilot initiatives

- Developed a refined ‘module’ of 40 items (36 + 4 personal wellbeing)
- Placed these on commercial Omnibus survey in GB in April 2012
- Translated questions into Polish and fielded there in April 2013
- Lithuania carried module on ISSP in Jan/Feb 2013
- Continuing to explore options for testing items elsewhere (LISS panel, Gesis panel, etc)
- Disseminate to and lobby national and international statistical organisations and academic research networks

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Indicators of Societal Wellbeing

This is the microsite for the Indicators of Societal Wellbeing project, part of a broader programme of work conducted under the auspices of the European Social Survey. The broad aim is to advance the use of social indicators alongside more familiar economic ones. This page will discuss the progress of that project, and also act as a portal to a wide range of other resources of interest to those researching in the field.

We have divided the existing literature into four main segments, and you can read short summaries of each area. In addition there are quick links to existing sets of indicators, all working in parallel but with a slightly different emphasis.
A Model of Perceived Societal Wellbeing

- Perceived Societal wellbeing
  - Perception of Social integration
  - Overall Perception of society
  - Perception of System integration
Overall perceptions: Dimensions

- Satisfaction with society
- Comparisons over time and place
- Intention to remain/leave
Social Integration: Dimensions

- Perception of social integration
  - Trust within society
  - Perception of societal tolerance
  - Absence or presence of conflict
  - Perception of distributive justice
System Integration: Dimensions

Perception of system integration

Trust in institutions
Evaluation of national performance
Quality of public service provision
Responsiveness of political system
1. Overall perceptions of society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short name of domain</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with society</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eurobarometer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to emigrate/remain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gallup World Poll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation of society relative to time and place</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Eurobarometer 72.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2. Perceptions of social integration

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<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust within society</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ESS since 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of societal tolerance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gallup world poll (Diversity index)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence/presence of conflict</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>EQLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of distributive justice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ISSP, ESS (2008)</td>
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### 3. Perceptions of System integration

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<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust/confidence in national institutions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ESS or EVS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of national performance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ESS since 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of public services</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ESS since 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice/responsiveness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Eurobarometer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some results from the 2013 Lithuania module
‘The Big 4’ Personal Wellbeing

- lifesat
- worthwhile
- happy
- anxious
Finding reference points for pQoS

- Easy enough to offer a synoptic score out of 10
- But also need perspective – across time and over space
- Optimism and pessimism are effective proxies of citizen evaluation of society

‘We’ve never had it so good’ – Harold Macmillan
‘This country is going to the dogs’ – London taxi driver

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Comparison over space

Q5. SHOWCARD WB05 Using this card, how would you describe the quality of life in (COUNTRY) compared to the average of the European Union countries? Is it... (READ OUT)

- Much better 00
- Somewhat better 01
- A little better 02
- About the same 03
- A little worse 04
- Somewhat worse 05
- Much worse 06
- (Don’t know) 88
- Refused 99
Comparison back over time

Q6. SHOWCARD WB05 Again using this card, how would you describe the quality of life in (COUNTRY) now compared to twelve months ago? Is it...

(READ OUT)

- Much better 00
- Somewhat better 01
- A little better 02
- About the same 03
- A little worse 04
- Somewhat worse 05
- Much worse 06
- (Don’t know) 88
- Refused 99
Comparison forward in time

Q7. SHOWCARD WB05 Still using this card, what are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the quality of life in (COUNTRY) be... (READ OUT)

- Much better 00
- Somewhat better 01
- A little better 02
- About the same 03
- A little worse 04
- Somewhat worse 05
- Much worse 06
- (Don’t know) 88
- Refused 99
Prediction into medium term (optimism/pessimism)

Q8 SHOWCARD WB06 Using now this card, do you think that the life of those who are children today will be easier, more difficult or about the same as the life of those from your own generation? Will it be...

- Much easier 00
- Somewhat easier 01
- A little easier 02
- About the same 03
- A little more difficult 04
- Somewhat more difficult 05
- Much more difficult 06
- (Don’t know) 88
- Refused 99
Senses of relative wellbeing

- v Europe
- v last year
- next year
- Next generation

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Overall satisfaction and with three elements

Q22. SHOWCARD WB16 All things considered, how satisfied are you with the kind of society we live in? Please use this card where 0 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied.
Q23. SHOWCARD WB16 AGAIN On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in (COUNTRY)? Still use this card.

| Extremely dissatisfied | | | | | | | Extremely satisfied | (Don’t Know) |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 | 88 |

Q24. SHOWCARD WB16 AGAIN Now thinking about the [COUNTRY] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job? Still use this card.

| Extremely dissatisfied | | | | | | | Extremely satisfied | (Don’t Know) |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 | 88 |

Q25 SHOWCARD WB16 AGAIN And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in (COUNTRY)? Still use this card.

| Extremely dissatisfied | | | | | | | Extremely satisfied | (Don’t Know) |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 | 88 |
Satisfaction with society and its elements

- Overall: 5
- Economy: 3
- Govt: 4
- Democracy: 4
Welfare: Efficiency and Equity

- Efficient education: 6
- Efficient health: 5
- Fair education: 4
- Fair health: 3
The State of Public Services

education

health

pensions
The perception of tensions

- poor/rich: 2.5
- ethnic: 2
- religious: 1.5
- men/women: 1
- old/young: 1.5
The perception of tolerance
Comparative relative wellbeing

- v Europe
- v last year
- next year
- Next generation
Welfare: Efficiency and Equity

- Efficient education
- Efficient health
- Fair education
- Fair health

LT, PL, UK
Conclusions

- Tentative – only 2,000 cases in total from 3 countries at one time point
- But items perform reasonably well – most groups of items load on single factors
- Still unacceptably high ‘don’t knows’ on some items
- Distributions/means seem in line with other surveys (ESS, EQLS)
- Broader coverage of items reveal more nuanced picture
Thanks for listening!

Current ESRC Research Project
www.wellbeingcounts.org

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