The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index

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http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol
Quality of Life

Objective Conditions
- e.g. Physical health

Subjective Perceptions
- e.g. Satisfaction with health

Objective QOL
- [Quality of living]

Subjective QOL
- [Mood Happiness]
The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index

Surveys

Geographically representative sample

N = 2,000

Telephone interview

#1: April 2001

#24: September 2010
The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index Surveys

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N = 2,000

Telephone interview

#1: April 2001

#24: September 2010

Rationale: To measure the Mood Happiness of the Australian population
Personal Wellbeing Index
http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol

How satisfied are you with your-----?

• Standard of living
• Health
• Achieving in life
• Relationships
• Safety
• Community connectedness
• Future security
• Spirituality/Religion
We code all data to lie on a range from

Complete dissatisfaction

0

Complete satisfaction

100
Personal Wellbeing Index
2001 - 2010

Key:

- a = September 11
- b = Bali Bombing
- c = Pre-Iraq War
- d = Hussein Depose
- e = Athens Olympics
- f = Asian Tsunami
- g = Second Bali Bombing
- h = New IR Laws
- i = Labor Government Elected
- j = Stock market collapse
- k = Fires and floods
- l = Stock market recovery
- m = Labor government re-elected

Survey Dates:

- S1 April 2001
- S2 Sept 2001
- S3 Mar 2002
- S4 Aug 2002
- S5 Nov 2002
- S6 Mar 2003
- S7 Jun 2003
- S8 Aug 2003
- S9 Nov 2003
- S10 Feb 2004
- S11 Mar 2004
- S12 Aug 2004
- S13 May 2005
- S14 Oct 2005
- S15 May 2006
- S16 Oct 2006
- S17 Apr 2007
- S18 Oct 2007
- S19 Apr 2008
- S20 Oct 2008
- S21 May 2009
- S22 Jan 2010
- S23 April 2010
- S24 Sept 2010

Scores above the line are significantly higher than S1.

Maximum = 76.3
Current = 76.2
Minimum = 73.2
Personal Wellbeing Index
2001 - 2010

This represents a 3.0 percentage point variation

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So, if the Index changes so little, what is the **justification** for its use?
We can use the Index to identify individuals and groups who are ‘at risk’ of depression

ie. They have lower-than-normal positive mood

We can identify such people by measuring Mood Happiness
Normal distribution of Mood Happiness for individuals

N≈40,000

Response scale 0 - 100
Mood happiness of each individual should be >50

Response scale 0 - 100
Normal range for group means

We have established the Mood Happiness normal range using population sample mean scores as data.

N = 24 survey mean score
Mean = 74.90
Standard deviation = 0.75
Normal range = 73.6 – 76.6
Abnormal groups can be identified through the group mean

Mood

Happiness

Very satisfied

Very dissatisfied

Group contains a higher-than-normal proportion of people in homeostatic failure
A group at this level needs more resources.
What groups have we identified as being ‘at risk’ and what are the policy implications?
Money as a defensive resource: [Diminishing Marginal Utility]

Total N ≈ 40,000

Household Income ($'000)

Normal range
Money as a defensive resource: 
[Diminishing Marginal Utility] 

Total N ≈ 40,000

Do all low income groups do equally badly?
Australian Unity Wellbeing Index
[cumulative data]
Australian Unity Wellbeing Index
[cumulative data]

Mood
Happiness

Household Income ($'000)

Partner only
Partner & children

Normative Range

70.3
72.6
75.4
76.5
77.3
77.4
78.9
79.1
80.7
Australian Unity Wellbeing Index
[cumulative data]

Mood
Happiness

Household Income ($'000)

- Partner only
- Partner & children
- Sole parent

Normative Range

76.3
73.0 - 79.1
77.4
77.3
76.5
64.1
70.4
78.2
78.9
79.1
80.7
Australian Unity Wellbeing Index
[cumulative data]

Household Income ($'000)

- Partner only
- Partner & children
- Sole parent

Normative Range
73.0 - 79.1

Policy implications
These groups need more financial resources
Implications for national happiness

How can measures of mood happiness inform national policy how to make the nation happier?
Implications for national happiness

How can measures of mood happiness inform national policy how to make the nation happier?

#1

By distributing more resources to areas of low mood happiness

The normative range can be used to identify geographic regions at risk
How can measures of mood happiness inform national policy how to make the nation happier?

#2

By regulating the geographic distribution of the population

The Personal Wellbeing Index can be used to determine the optimal size of towns
Personal Wellbeing Index

How satisfied are you with your-----?

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- Achieving in life
- Relationships
- Safety
- **Community connectedness**
- Future security
- Spirituality/Religion

Each domain has its own normal range
PWI Normal range for the domain of Community Connection

Town/City Size

Satisfaction with Community Connection
Community connection

Satisfaction with Community Connection

Normal range

Town/City Size

Largest  |  Smallest

68.8   |  76.0

1  |  13
Community connection

Satisfaction with Community Connection

Town/City Size

Largest

Smallest

Normal range

71.0

72.0

72.7

73.0

73.8

74.5

75.2

75.1

74.1

72.3

68.8

Largest

30,000 to 40,000
Summary

1. The measurement of Mood Happiness is simple, quick, reliable and valid

2. A crucial aspect for policy usefulness is to establish a normal range for each country.

3. Areas of disadvantage can be identified by reference to the normal range