

1 AIMS OF THIS COLLECTION OF HAPPINESS MEASURES

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This collection lists methods for measuring happiness. It is limited to measures that fit a specific definition of happiness. At 1-1-2015 the collection contained 1033 such measures, mostly single questions on the enjoyment of life as a whole.

The collection forms part of the wider 'World Database of Happiness', which stores the available research findings on happiness, both 'distributional' findings on prevalence of happiness in various populations and 'correlational' findings about its relation to other variables. This collection provides access to the indicators of happiness that form the basis of these findings. It presents full texts of questions and instructions in English, and occasionally also in other languages. Available information about reliability is noted with each measure.

1/1 Relevance context

This all serves to get a better view on the conditions for happiness. The wider ambition is to find out what environments provide the best chances for a happy life and what ways of life are most conducive to happiness in given circumstances.

That search does not depart from a preconception of the good life. It rather sets the scene for empirical tests of such blueprints. The inquiry is essentially inductive and does not focus on a particular theory. The approach is similar to the investigation of factors that promote good health in epidemiology, which is also ideologically neutral and data driven.

If successful, this endeavor will substantiate the utilitarian creed that the morality of major decisions should be judged by their contribution to the greatest happiness of the greatest number (Bentham, 1789).

1/2 Difference with other collections of measures of subjective wellbeing

There are several collections of indicators that are similar at first sight. Cummins (1997) has published a 'Directory of instruments to measure quality of life and cognate areas' and Tilson and Spilker (1990) have listed the many measurement methods in the field of health related quality-of-life research. Most 'test-banks' in psychology also have an entry on 'quality-of-life' or 'subjective wellbeing'.

This collection of happiness measures differs in two respects. Firstly this collection is far more selective. It does not include everything labeled as wellbeing or the like, but limits to methods that meet a strict definition of happiness as explained in chapter 2 of this introductory text. Secondly, this inventory does not merely list

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measurement methods and their bibliographical reference; it also links directly to the findings observed with them.

1/3 Plan of this introduction

This project requires that we start from a clear definition of happiness. That concept of happiness should not involve any moral prescription or causal theory. Happiness is defined as *the subjective enjoyment of one's life as a whole*. That concept is outlined in [chapter 2](#) of this text.

Having established what we mean by happiness we go on to consider the measurement of this phenomenon. We start with an overview of the common approach to the measurement of attitudinal phenomena in [chapter 3](#).

Next in [chapter 4](#) such measures of happiness are considered in detail. Measures that fit the concept of happiness as defined in chapter 2 are distinguished from measures that tap slightly different phenomena. About half of the measures that claim to assess happiness is rejected.

Having selected the measures that fit the concept, we are still left with a multitude of slightly different measures, for the greater part differently phrased questions. A detailed classification of these measures is given in [chapter 5](#).

The differences in accepted measures of happiness call for methods to make the scores obtained with these comparable. These methods are described in [chapter 6](#).

Finally the uses of this collection is listed in [chapter 7](#).

References

Bentham, J.(1789)

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