World Database of Happiness
How to continue this findings-archive

by Ruut Veenhoven, April 2024

This database will be continued in its present form as long as I am able to, which will not be for long, given my age (81) and health condition (cancer).

When I close this archive for further additions, its Bibliography will be complete up to and including the year 2020 and hold some 18.000 scientific publications on happiness in the sense of life-satisfaction. The archive will further hold about 50.000 standardized descriptions of empirical findings on happiness, completeness differing across subjects.

The archive, as I leave it will be saved as *World Database of Happiness: Version 1*. That first version will be stored in the Library of Erasmus University Rotterdam and be kept available on the internet. Continued availability of this last version under my responsibility will be supervised by the Foundation for the Study of Happiness.

Colleague scientists can build on this findings-archive in two ways: continuation of the database as a whole or prolongation of parts of it.

1 OPTIONS FOR CONTINUATION

1.1 Continuation of the World Database of Happiness as-a-whole

1.2 Required investment
Continuation of this project as-a-whole will require an investment of minimally 3 full time equivalents (fte) per year. Greater investment will be required when the research output on happiness keeps growing and the aim of complete coverage is maintained. Considerable scientific expertise is required on concepts used in the different social sciences and on methods of statistical analysis.

How I did on low-budget
I ran this database with the help of many volunteers, free facilities of Erasmus University, incidental grants by the Erasmus Trust Fund and the Dutch Science Foundation NWO and considerable support from the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organization EHERO.

I did not succeed in obtaining structural funding for this project from research support agencies. In my time it was easier to raise money for new primary research than for organizing the many findings that are available already. Possibly, chances for the funding of research synthesis will be better in your time.

Part of the work is shared with research associates, who bring in their own time and assistance. Associates are typically willing to invest if that results in joint publications.

Options for funding
I was not successful either in getting business organizations [sponsor](#) the charting of effects of their products and services on the happiness of their customers. For example, the pension funds I approached were not willing to pay for gathering the available research on happiness among pensioners. Possibly, chances for sponsoring will get better when the trend to evidence based marketing holds on.

An option for raising money not fully tried out is having [researchers pay](#) for the entry of their findings in the archive. Now that the World Database of Happiness is well established and increasingly used in synthetic papers, this will provide researchers with an additional shop window to present their work and better chance to get cited.

Foreseeable yields
Continuing the World Database of Happiness as-a-whole will provide you a central position in this research field. The work will keep you updated on all developments on happiness research, more than colleagues working on a particular topic.

The archive provides ample opportunities for publication, such as research syntheses on subjects for which sufficient findings has been entered in the archive. See my papers of that kind published together with research associates listed [here](#).

1.3   Continuation of parts of the database.

You can also limit to maintaining a part of the database which you can manage on your own or for which more funding is available.

Illustrative options are:

1.3.1   *Continue the Bibliography: limiting to the gathering of publications.*

This requires that 1) you keep track of the research literature on subjective wellbeing, 2) select publications on happiness as defined [here,](#) 3) classify the main subjects addressed and, preferably, 4) whether the publication reports an empirical study in which an acceptable measure of happiness was used.

Perpetuation of the Bibliography in that way would lay a basis for eventual later continuation of the World Database of Happiness as a whole and would be extremely helpful for the accumulation of knowledge on happiness anyway, which would otherwise be smothered in the confusion of tongues that haunts the social sciences.

For you personally, this work would keep you up-to-date on this subject and provide a basis for literature reviews.

1.3.2   Restrict to Distributional findings

Continue the collection of findings on level and inequality of happiness (means and standard deviations) in populations. Some options are:

- *Continue the collection of Happiness in Nations*
  This requires that you gather the new findings on happiness obtained in probability samples of the general population in nations. The system will generate Rank reports on the basis of which you can also update Trend reports on happiness in nations.

  Understanding of the observed differences in ranking and trends will be facilitated if you also maintain the datafiles States of Nations and Trends in Nations. Understanding will also benefit from maintenance of the collection of observed correlations between happiness and nation characteristics, e.g. Nation: Economy

- *Develop a collection of Happiness in Regions*
  The archive holds some 4400 findings on the distribution of happiness in areas other than nations, such as provinces, cities and transnational regions. These findings are not yet organized as well as the data on happiness in nations, but that can easily be achieved.

  A collection of findings on happiness in regions will open the way for a more systematic analysis of regional differences than possible on basis of the now available single studies. Understanding can be more advanced when combined when this is combined with the putting together of a dataset on regional characteristics similar to the above-mentioned datasets of States of Nations and Trends in Nations. In this context, it is also advisable to maintain the collection of correlational findings on happiness and regional characteristics, e.g. Region: Economy.

- *Continue a collection of Happiness in Special Publics.*
  For example, continue the collection of Happiness in the Elderly people. Currently, the archive holds 224 findings on happiness in the third age, which allow identification of differences across places and time. Understanding will be furthered by combination with observed correlations in this age group.

1.3.3   Restrict to a particular Correlate of happiness

For example, restrict to findings on the relation between happiness and income or effects of policy interventions on happiness. This requires that you update the available collection of correlational findings on such subject, which you will typically do to prepare for a research synthesis on that matter. Updating a collection continuously, you lay a basis for periodical progress reports on the subject.

For an overview of correlate subjects and the number of findings in these, look on chart 5/2.1 in chapter 5 of the Introductory text to the to the collection of correlational

findings [Classification by Correlate subject](#).

1.3.4   Maintain connectivity with the database as-a-whole

If you restrict to continuing \\\a part of the database, you can still work on the file of the World Database of Happiness as-a-whole, but present only the findings on your subject on the website.

If the World Database of Happiness is continued as a whole, you do best to join the project as a [research associate](#). That will free you from much of the requirements listed below in section 3 and enrich your collection with bycatch of other participants.

If you go by yourself, keep to the existing structure of the database as much as possible, so that your contributions can eventually be added to bigger archive when continued later.

2   TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTINUATION

In all the above cases, the following requirement must be met.

1. An account at an internet provider on which you can host the website, typically a scientific institute.

2. A subscription to Microsoft Azure: https://azure.microsoft.com/

3. A copy of the Microsoft Access database to be used for entering data on happiness in an Microsoft Azure SQL database.

4. A copy of the Microsoft Azure SQL database on which the available findings are stored.

5. An ODBC driver to connect Access (3) with Azure (4).

6. A copy of the website in WordPress, on which you must at least adjust the version presented.

7. Technical support.

    Though the software is not high-tech, you will need support of a professional who is acquainted with the following programs.

    - Microsoft-Access: the standard database in Microsoft-Office
    - Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) for Office, a simple but powerful programming language that you can use to extend Office applications.
    - Microsoft-Azure SQL database.
    - WordPress: a much used and user-friendly website manager. Without such expertise you will get lost.

Copies of 3, 4 and 6 are available at the library of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The next section 3 explains how to get these.

3 WHERE TO GET COPIES OF THE FILES

3.1 Erasmus University Rotterdam Library
Copies will be provided on request by the Library of Erasmus University Rotterdam. An application can be made using this link https://eur-nl.libwizard.com/f/WDH

You will receive a form on which you provide information on who you are and what you plan to do with the copy. Once submitted you will get a zipped file with the following 3 folders.

Once submitted you will get a download link to a zipped file with the following 3 sub files.

- **WDH-2024-MS-Access-SQL-website**
  To be used for continuation of the database as a whole, continuation of parts of the database or use of the finding archive technique for another subject than happiness

- **WDH-2017-MS-Access**
  To be used for small scale finding archives on other subjects than happiness using MS-Access as a stand-alone (no SQL database, no website)

- **WDH-Documentation**
  Manuals and instructions on using WDH

All provided copies of WDH are version 'World Database of Happiness Version 1'
The 2024 versions will be updated to later years as-long-as I maintain the World Database of Happiness. When I close the database, the last version will be saved as 'World Database of Happiness version 1'.

3.2 Foundation for the study of happiness
Copies are also available from the Foundation for the study of happiness, the main aim of which is to support the continued availability of World Database of Happiness Version 1. The foundation keeps track of the applicants for downloads and their aims, which will avoid double work and facilitate cooperation.

3.3 Web archive
If, in the far future, the above might fail, as when Erasmus University stopped to host the database and Foundation does not exist anymore, you can still find clues in the last copy of the website which you can retrieve using the Way Back Machine of the Internet Archive. Go to https://web.archive.org/web/2/http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/

4 WHERE TO CALL FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Though there is much information to be found in the software and in verbal descriptions of the technique, you may need more information. You can knock the following doors.

4.1 Organizations

The World Database of Happiness is currently (2024) a project of the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organization EHERO. Email: ehero@eur.nl

If EHERO does not exist anymore or lacks the expertise to help you out, you can contact the Foundation for the study of Happiness, the aim of which is to keep the World Database of Happiness and its underlying technique available. The website of the Foundation is https://stichtingstudiegeluk.site on which you find a contact box.

4.2 Developers

You can also contact the people involved in the development of this tool, as mentioned below.

Developers of the Microsoft-Access database
The IT of this database was initially designed by the late Henk DeHeer and was further developed by Fredrik Radema, who can be contacted at radema@ese.eur.nl or privately at radema30@gmail.com.

Developers of the website
The website in WordPress and link to that using Microsoft-Azure was developed with the help of Erasmus IT Services, section Web and App Development, the following staff members in particular:

- Philip Brands: philip.brands@eur.nl
- Ferry de Groot: ferrrydegroot@eur.nl
- Omar Gabriel-Tellers: omar.tellers@eur.nl

4.3 Web archive

If all the above might fail, such as when Erasmus University stopped hosting The World Database of Happiness and the Foundation for the study of happiness does not exist anymore, , you can still clues in the last copy which you can retrieve using the Way Back Machine of the Internet Archive. Go to https://web.archive.org/web/2/http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/

5   COPY RIGHT

I have the copyright of this version 1 of the World Database of Happiness and I authorized the Library of Erasmus University Rotterdam to provide copies on request to interested scientists.

I have now passed my copy right to the [Foundation for the study of Happiness](), the main aim of which is to support the continued availability of World Database of happiness Version 1 (WDH1).

You will be the copyright holder of the later version you develop, e.g. WDH2

Copies of World Database of Happiness Version 1 are available as Open Access with the following restrictions:

5.1   You must cite the earlier version on which you build, cf. section 5.3
         A link to that citation should be available on all pages in your version.

5.2   You can *add* to an earlier version, typically by adding finding pages or classifications.

5.3   But you are **not** allowed to *change* anything in an earlier version.
         If you might detect a mistake in an earlier version, add a remark, preferably in the color used for your version.

         Your rights and obligations are spelled out in more detail HERE

6   HOW TO NAME LATER VERSIONS OF THIS WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS

6.1   Name a new version of the World Database of Happiness **as-a-whole**

- Add a version number in the banner, e.g., version 2 if you build on the original version 1.
  The text in the banner may read as follows*: World Database of Happiness 2, directed by X (your name) since (date of start), building on version 1 as left by Ruut Veenhoven in 2024*

- If you build on a later version, mention these earlier versions as well so that all contributors to the growing collection of findings on happiness be acknowledged.

- To allow identification of your additions, add a page with the ID numbers of the collections with which you started; that is, the *highest Id* in the lists of
  - publications in the Bibliography
  - measures of the core subject
  - distributional findings
  - correlational findings
  - statistics

  You can also identify your additions to the archive using a different color.

6.2   Name a **part** of the World Database of Happiness

- Change the name indicating the restriction, e.g. *World Database of Happiness in Elderly People*.

- Acknowledge that you build on a version of the World Database of Happiness as a whole, e.g. Continuation by X (your name) since (date) of the collection of findings on happiness in the elderly in the World Database of Happiness as left by Ruut Veenhoven in 2024.

- To allow identification of your additions, add a page with the ID numbers of the collections with which you started; that is, the *highest Id* in the lists of
  - publications in the Bibliography
  - measures of the core subject
  - distributional findings
  - correlational findings
  - statistics

6.3   Cite the original version as:

Veenhoven, R (2024) World Database of Happiness: Archive of research findings on the subjective enjoyment of life. Version 1 (WDH1). Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands, Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organization EHERO. Available at: https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl