



Measuring Well-Being: ‘the pursuit of happiness’

Brian Gaffney

Chief Executive

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Shooting versus Nationalists - the street conflicts 1968



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Destination Guide Belfast



NÍ Health and Social Wellbeing Surveys 1997-2001-2005

Self-assessed general health has improved from 1997 to 2001. 53.1 percent of all respondents reported 'good' general health in 2001 compared to 50.5 percent in 1997.

In 2005/6 63% of people said their health had been 'good' in the previous 12 months, 23% said it was 'fairly good' and 15% said it was 'not good'.

Overall, respondents in 2001 had better GHQ12 scores than in 1997. In 2001, over 60 percent of respondents had a GHQ12 score which suggested that their mental health was better than 12 months ago.

Mental Health

Respondents were asked about the level of stress they had experienced over the previous 12 months. Overall, 10% of persons aged 16 and over had experienced a great deal of worry or stress and 67% had experienced little or no worry or stress.

Women were more likely to have experienced a great deal of worry or stress than men, 11% compared with 8%.

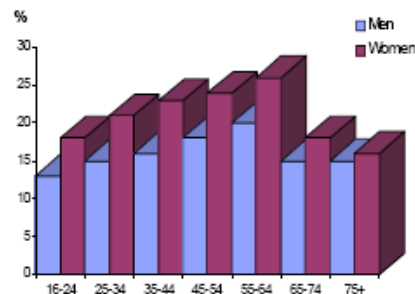
19% of all people aged 16 and over showed signs of a possible mental health problem such as depression, by scoring highly on the GHQ12. Women were more likely to show signs of a possible mental health problem (21%) than men (16%).

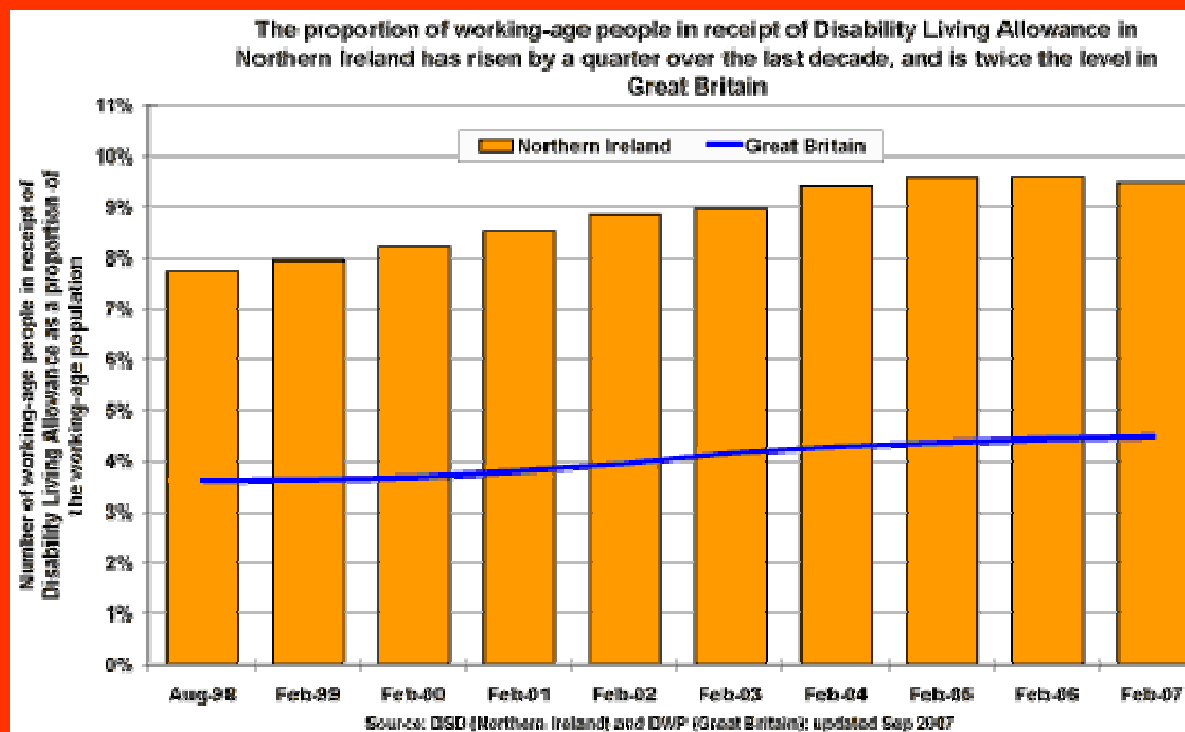
Respondents were asked about the amount of social support they received from family and friends.

Overall, 39% of people aged 16 and over experienced a lack of social support, with 13% experiencing a 'severe lack' of social support.

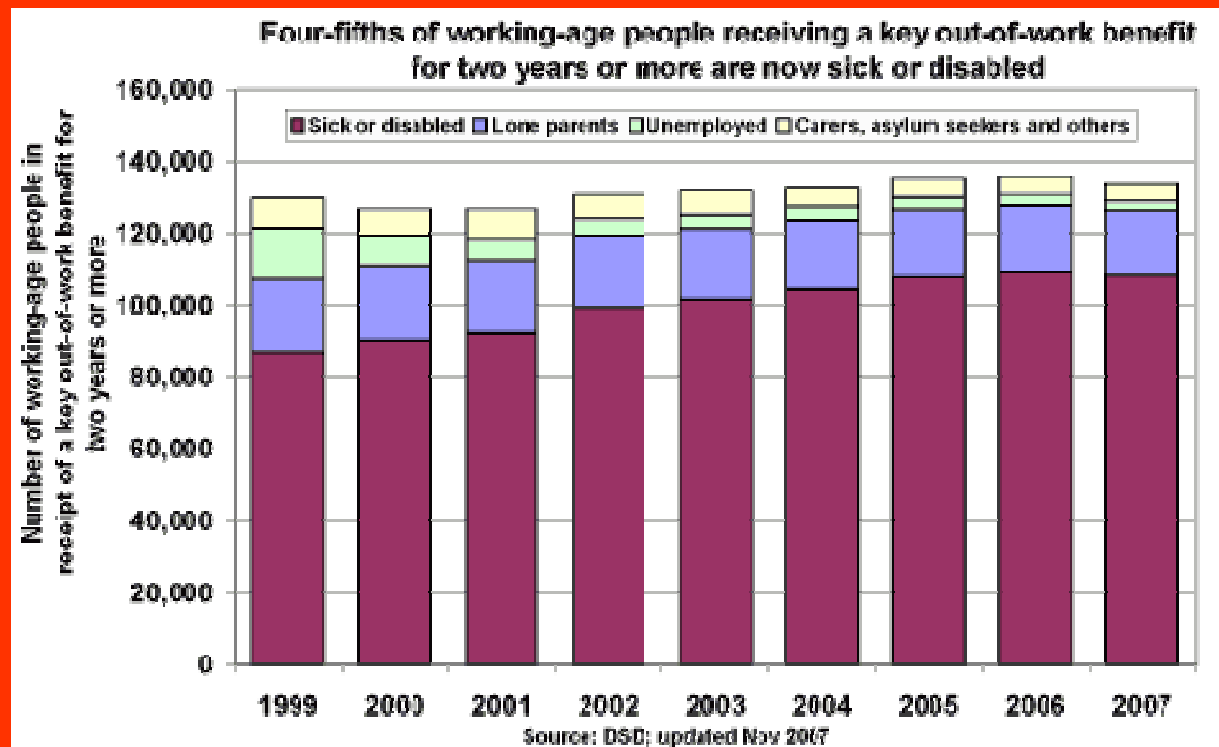
Men were more likely to have experienced a severe lack of social support (15%) than women (12%).

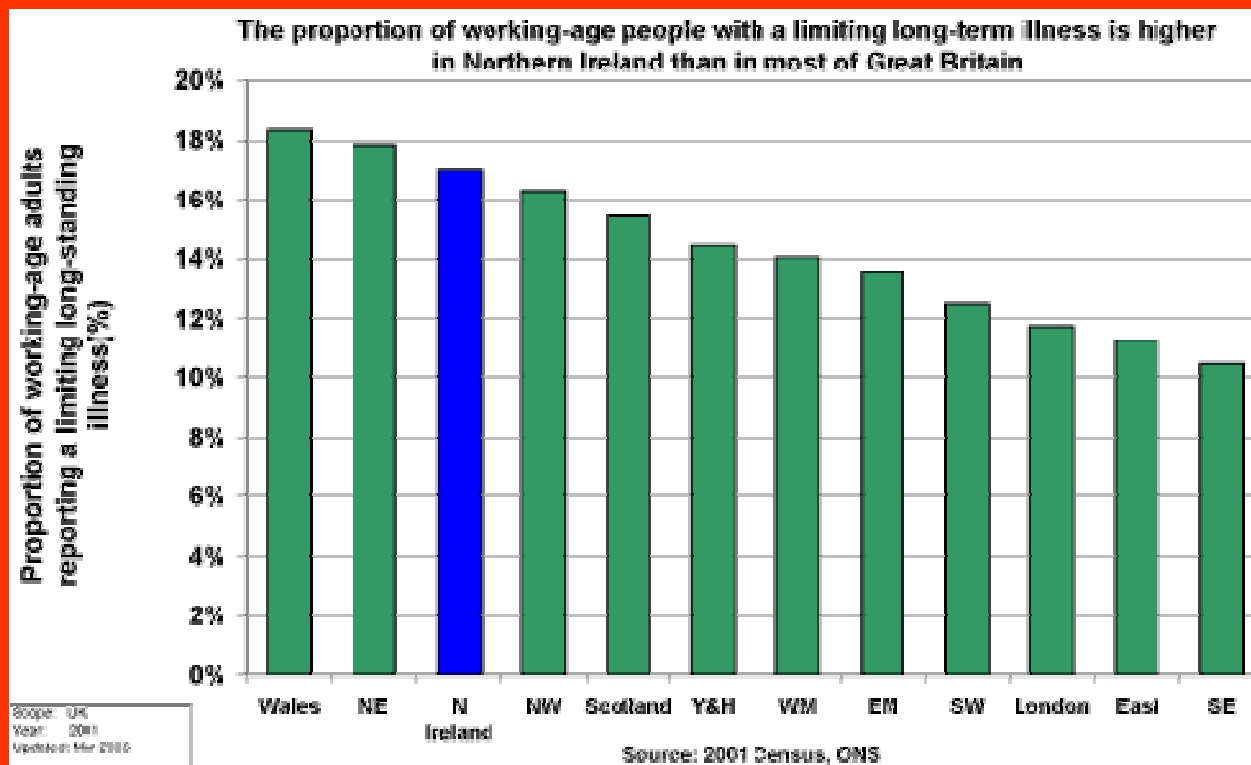
Figure 2. Possible indication of a mental health problem by gender and age

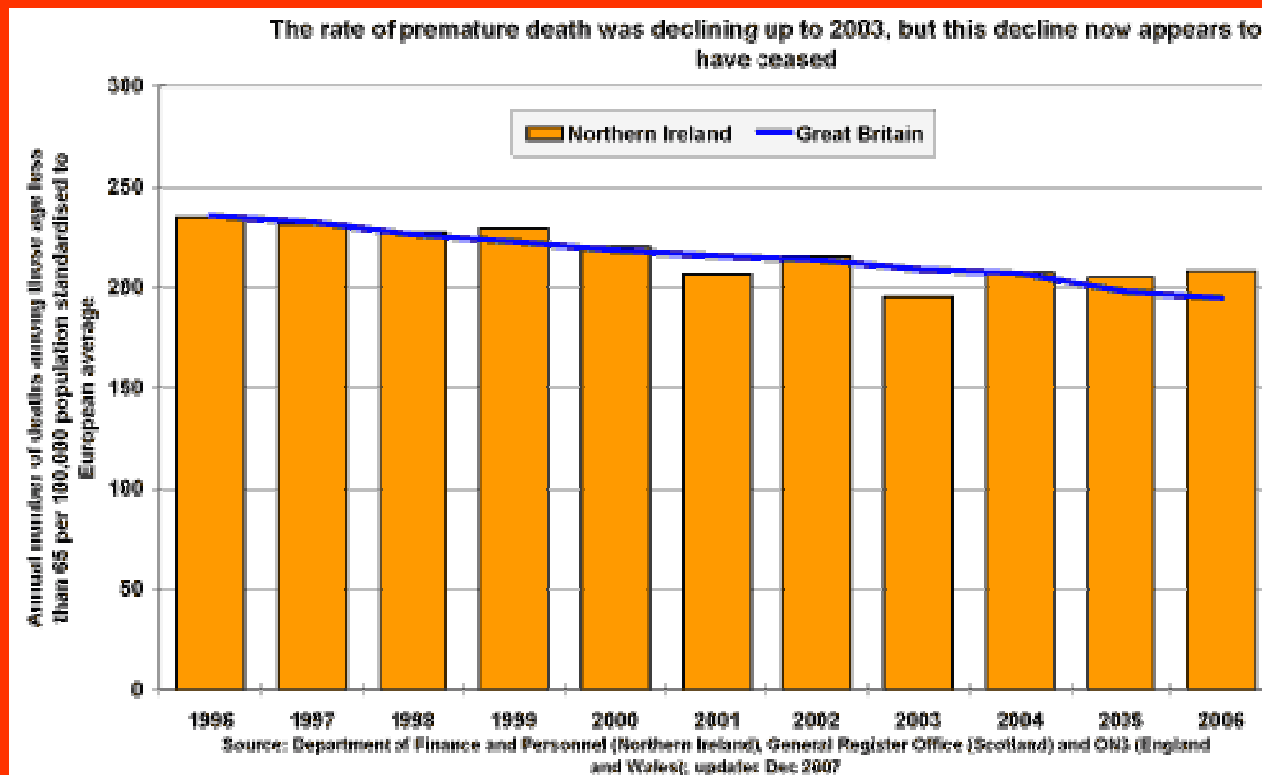


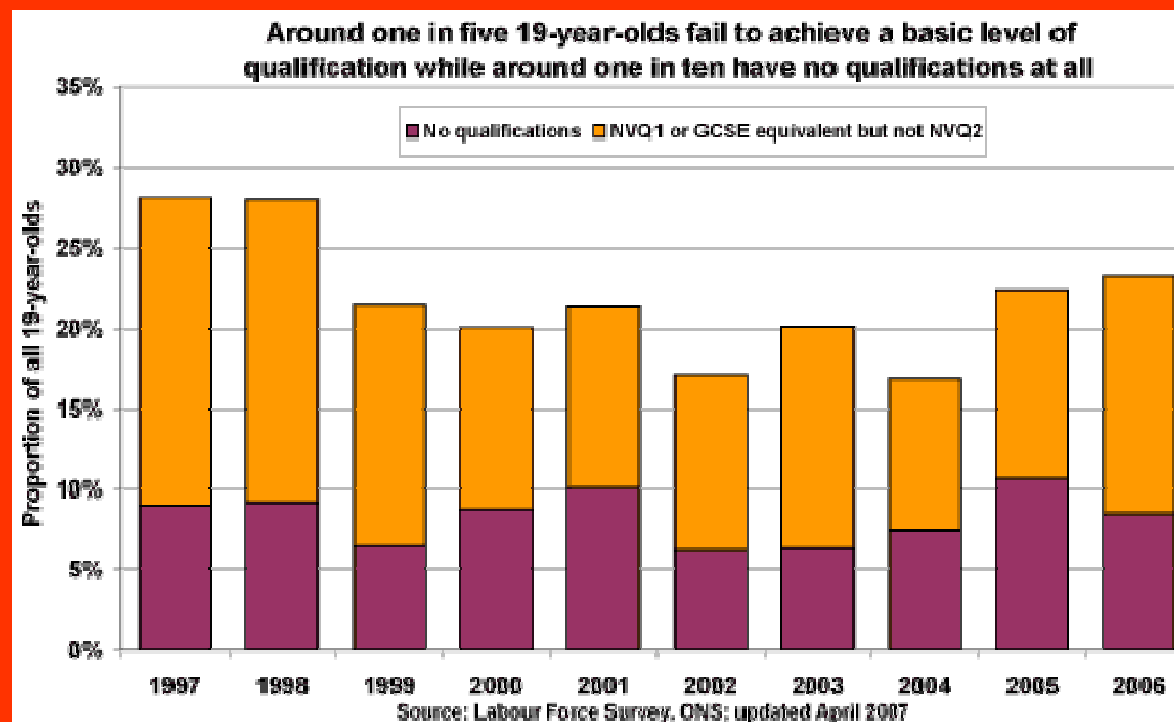


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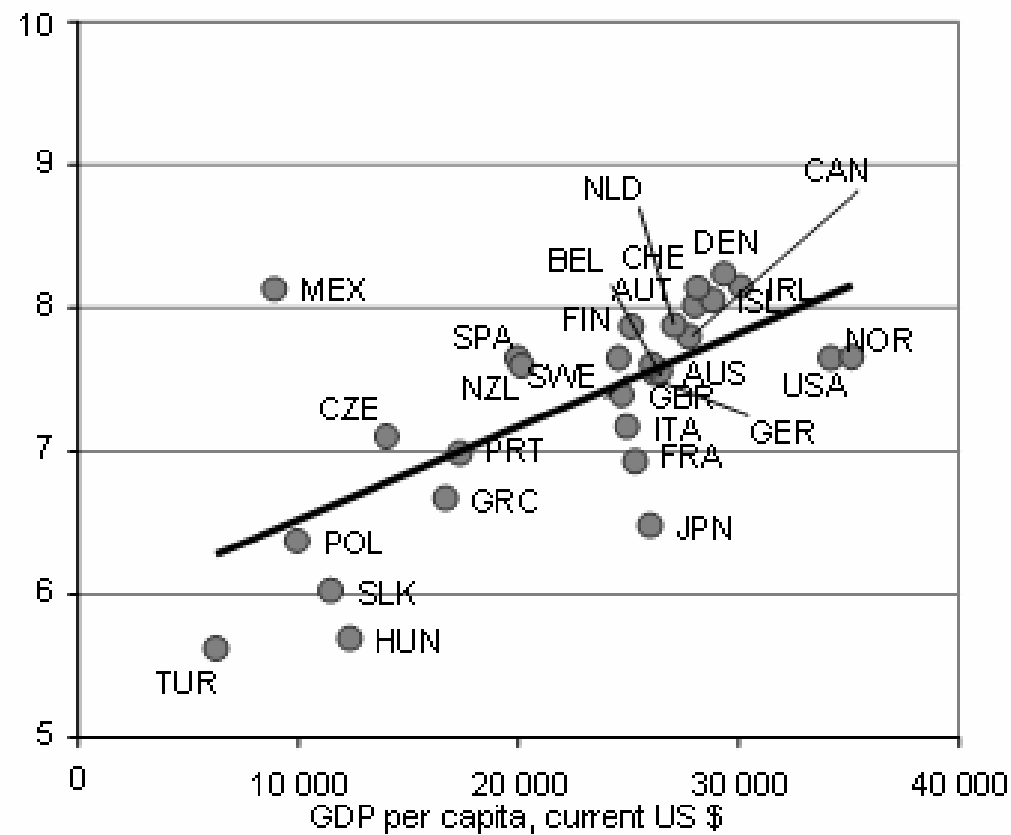


The concept of “well-being” is central to economic analysis

Economists call it “utility” and postulate that all individuals are “utility maximizers”—that is, they choose not only which goods to consume but also the very fundamental choices of whether to marry, how many children to have, whether to work in the labor market as well as how much time and money to invest producing health from themselves and their children.

Since the Second World War, economic growth statistics based on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have been widely used as a proxy for societal wellbeing and prosperity.

Life-satisfaction, average score



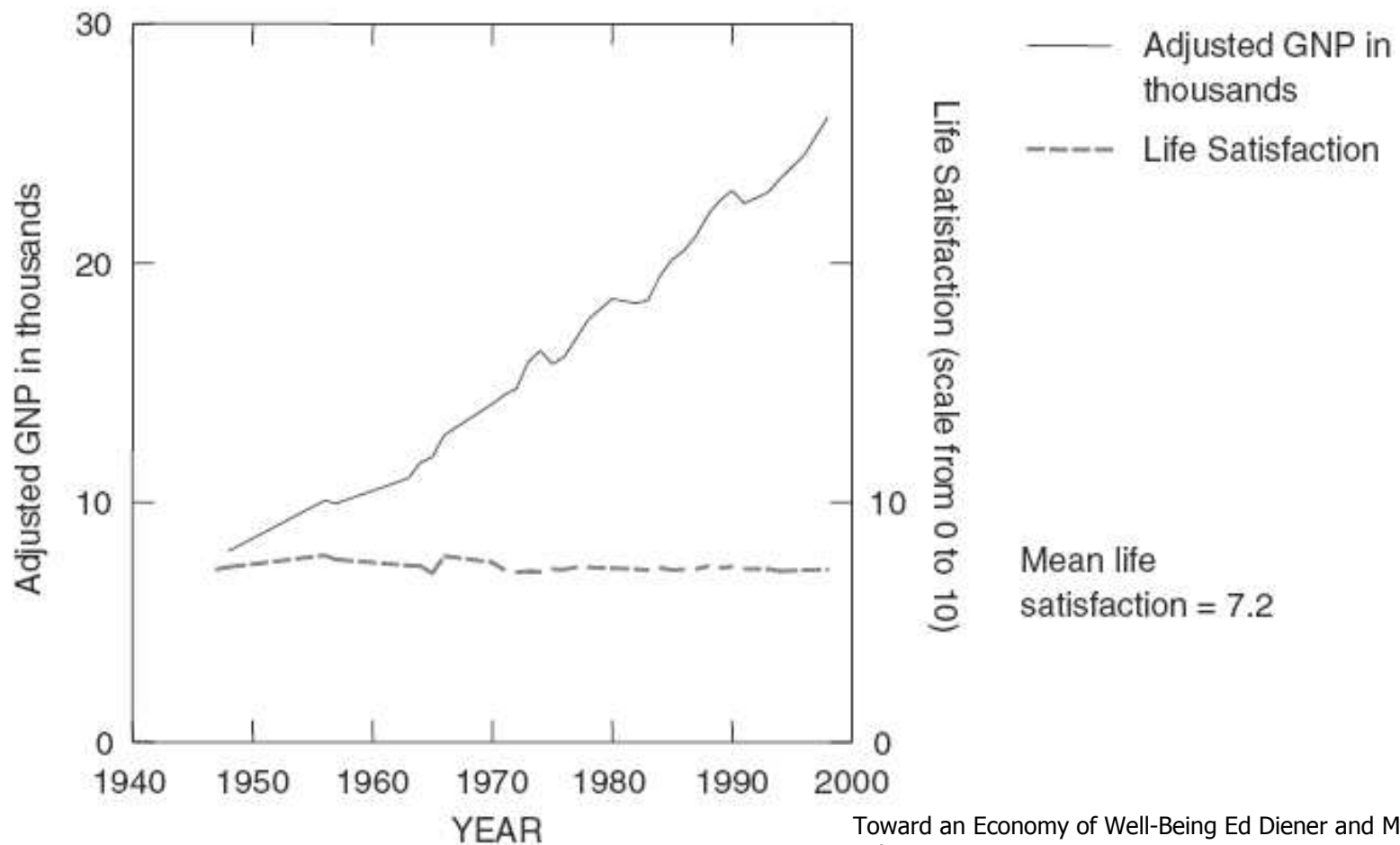


Fig. 1. U.S. gross national product (GNP) and mean life satisfaction from 1947 to 1993.

Toward an Economy of Well-Being Ed Diener and Martin E.P. Seligman

Psychological Science vol 5 no 1

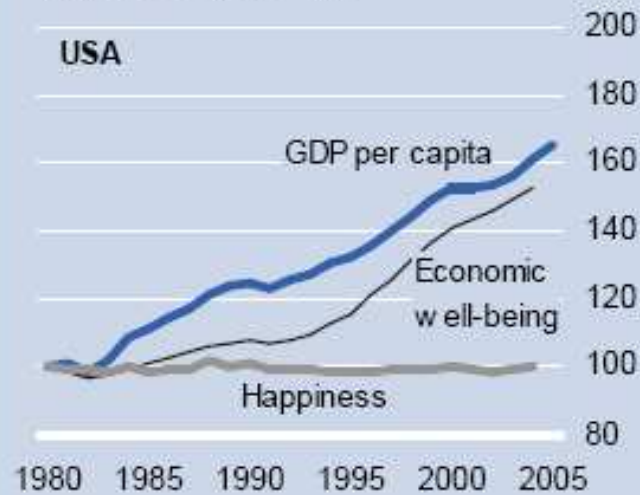
GDP per capita is the most commonly used measure of a country's economic success, yet it is frequently criticised as a guide to a nation's wellbeing.

GDP: is a measure of production whereas wellbeing depends more on income and consumption of individuals and households; does not allow for the using-up of non-renewable resources; excludes leisure time; does not account for variations in income distribution; and rarely takes account of co-production 'externalities' such as pollution and the impact on the environment, species and habitat.

Wellbeing and happiness in OECD
countries
Greg Coombs

How the USA and France do...

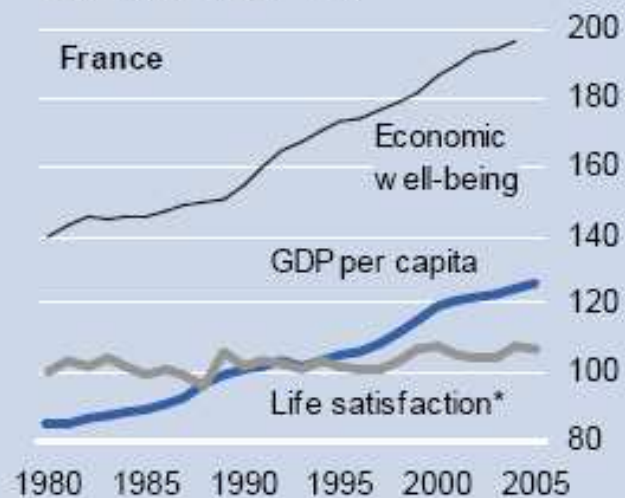
Index, USA 1980 = 100



* here: France 1980=100

depends on the measure

Index, USA 1980 = 100



Sources: GGDC, CSLS, GSS, Eurobarometer



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Economic output has nearly doubled in the last 30 years, life satisfaction levels in the UK have remained flat

.....there is a growing restlessness among social scientists about the wisdom of harnessing policy to the yoke of economic performance

(Frank, 1997, 1999; Layard, 2002, 2003)

GDP-based measures were never meant to be used as a measure of progress, as they are today. In fact, activities that degrade our quality of life, like crime, pollution, and addictive gambling, all make the economy grow. The more fish we sell and the more trees we cut down, the more the economy grows. Working longer hours makes the economy grow. And the economy can grow even if inequality and poverty increase.

Well-being (according to Sen) is a process involving an individual's capabilities and the choice of functionings they enable an individual to achieve.

.....education, health, autonomy, and security appear to be attributes which would extend or limit an individual's opportunity set. An increase in capability (such as autonomy), all else equal, would increase one part of an individual's well-being regardless of the impact it had on their subjective well-being.

...from GDP to economic wellbeing

GNP

Measure of Economic Welfare

Canadian Index of Economic Wellbeing

United Nations Human Development Index

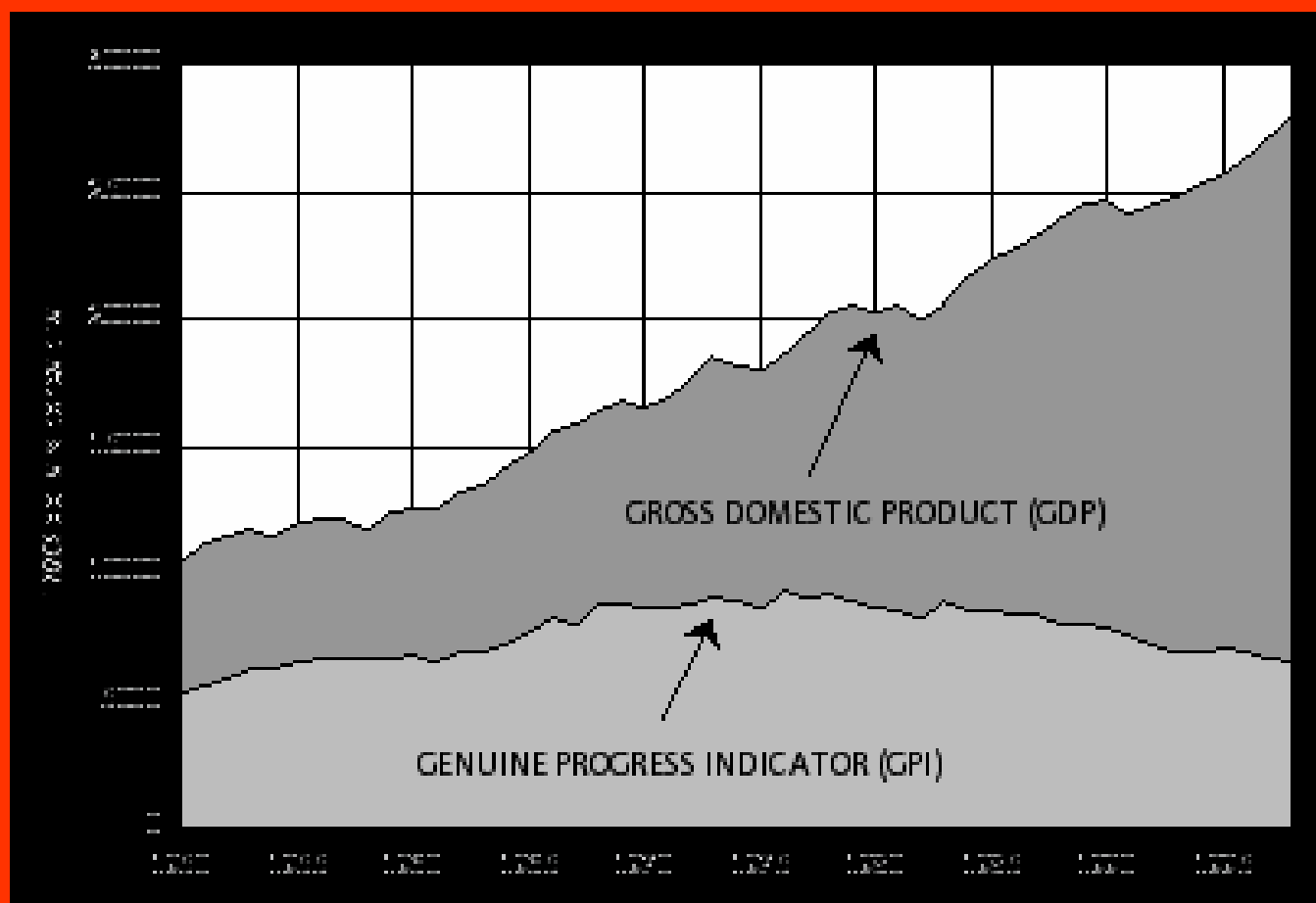
Weighted Index of Social Progress

Genuine Progress Indicator

Measure of domestic progress

California researchers developed a Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) in 1995, incorporating 26 social, economic, and environmental variables,

The GPI system and framework is based on a capital accounting framework, in which the value of human, social, and natural capital are recognized along with the manufactured and financial capital that are currently measured.



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Boosting per capita incomes has been the main focus of most government economic policy for a very long time. the well-being of individuals and households also depends on other factors, such as leisure time, environmental quality, health and distributive issues.

The growing *happiness* literature has raised serious doubts as to whether money matters more than these other factors.

.....people's happiness also depends on the broader circumstances of the community where they live.



A New Measure of Well-Being From a Happy Little Kingdom



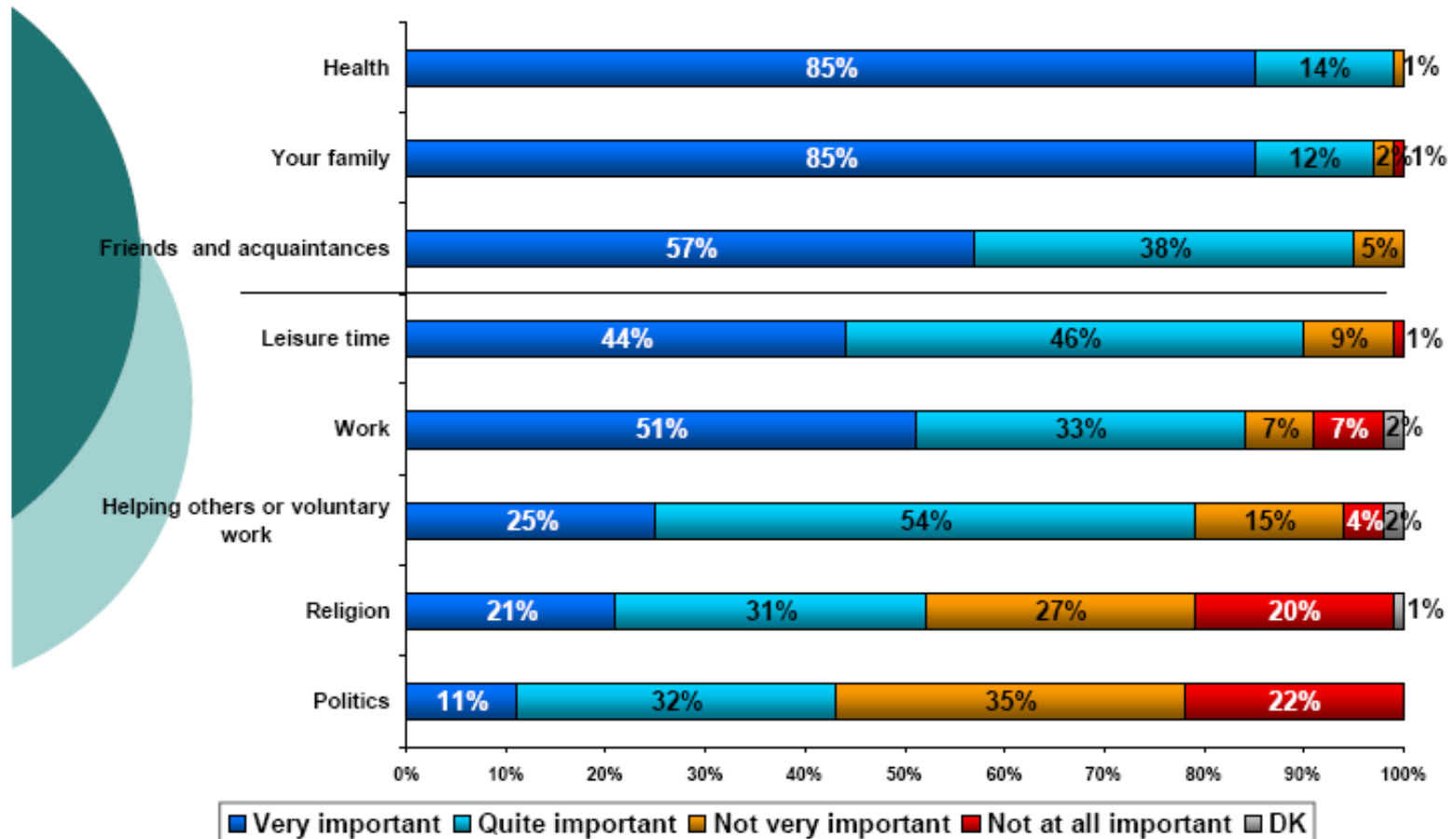
By [ANDREW C. REVKIN](#)
Published: October 4, 2005

In 1972, concerned about the problems afflicting other developing countries that focused only on economic growth, Bhutan's leader, King Wangchuck, decided to make his nation's priority not its G.D.P. but its G.N.H., or gross national happiness

While household incomes in Bhutan remain among the world's lowest, life expectancy increased by 19 years from 1984 to 1998, jumping to 66 years. The country, which is preparing to shift to a constitution and an elected government, requires that at least 60 percent of its lands remain forested, welcomes a limited stream of wealthy tourists and exports hydropower to India.

.....measuring and improving life satisfaction will become a more important focus of policymakers.

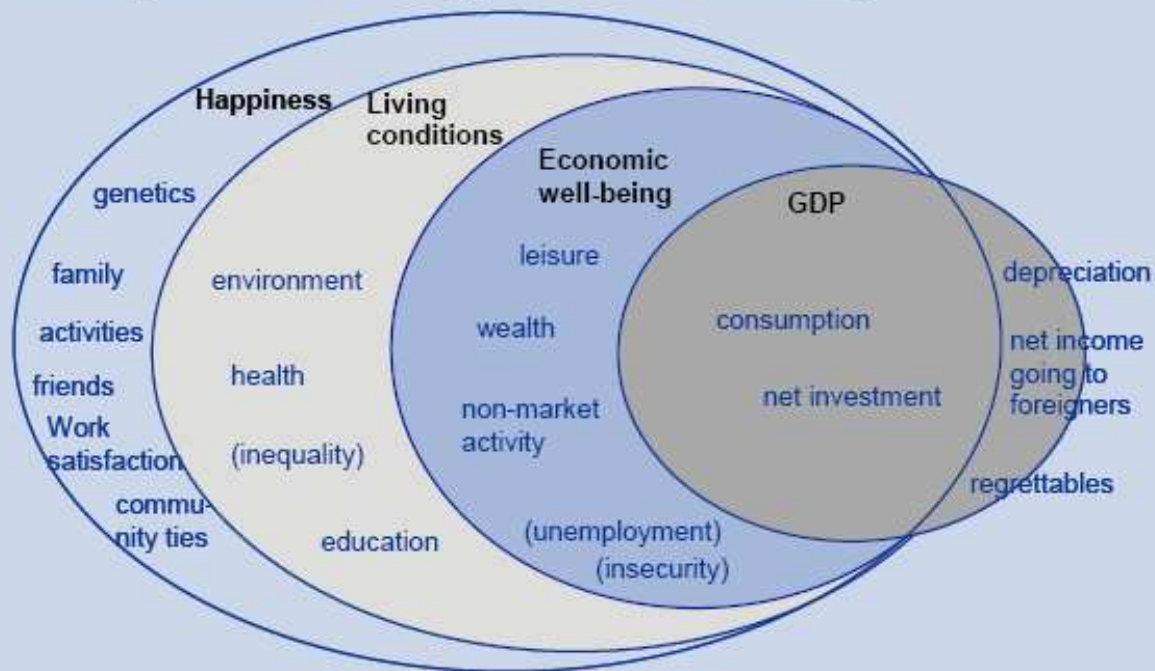
Things that are important to people



..... economists, social scientists, corporate leaders and bureaucrats are trying to develop measurements not just the flow of money but also access to health care, free time with family, conservation of natural resources and other noneconomic factors.

..... in part to return to a richer definition of the word happiness,

The many elements of happiness and well-being



Brackets indicate negative impact. Source: Deutsche Bank Research

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While still PM Tony Blair announced that Britain would be developing an "index of well-being," taking into account not only income but mental illness, civility, access to parks and crime rates.



Cameron draws line under Thatcher policies

By Rosemary Bennett, Deputy Political Editor

DAVID CAMERON will tell business leaders today that there is “more to life than money” as he attempts to make a clean break with Thatcherism. He will tell business leaders that “general wellbeing” is more important than personal wealth and will list beautiful surroundings, culture and better relationships as society’s new goals.

The Times, 22 May 2006

Some of the policy conclusions drawn by researchers in the happiness field differ significantly from those in standard economics.

1. **Measure well-being.** To know what is important and to be able to influence it, societies have to measure well-being, happiness and their components.

2. **Reduce unemployment.** Unemployment has a major negative effect on well-being both for those directly affected and for all other citizens.

3. **Foster happiness-boosting use of time.** People tend to work too much because they overestimate the impact of income on happiness.

4. **Strengthen civil society and active citizenship, participation and engagement.** Foster interaction among friends and family; contain geographic relocation, which hurts social interaction with friends and neighbours.

5. **Limit materialistic advertisement.** Research shows that people who watch a lot of TV feel poorer. Comparison with the pretty, successful and happy but artificial individuals in commercials makes one's own weaknesses visible – especially for children and teenagers. Sweden has banned advertisements targeted at children below 12 years of age.

6. **Focus the health sector on complete health.** This includes a stronger focus on mental illness and on longevity.

(BergheimS)

The Minister for Finance:

Growing a dynamic economy will be our top priority during the lifetime of this Programme for Government.

.....the means through which we can enhance quality of life, reduce poverty and disadvantage, increase health and well-being, and build stronger and more sustainable and empowered communities.

PfG 2007

Equality and Social Inclusion in Ireland Project

.....when it came to *happiness*, however, it was a different story. Now, the standard of living was but one source of happiness and it was not even the most important source.

The most importance source of happiness was good health determined either through self-assessment or, more objectively, in terms of an absence of any health problems. Another important source of happiness was the quality of the area in which people lived. A third source of happiness was age - younger people were less happy than older persons.

..... The important point is that each of these three items had a greater influence on the level of happiness than the standard of living.

What Makes People Happy?Some Evidence from Ireland

Vani K. Borooah*

University of Ulster



With Inclusion in Mind

The local authority's role in promoting wellbeing and social development

MENTAL HEALTH (CARE AND TREATMENT) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003
SECTIONS 25-31

All areas of life

All aspects of a local authority's services go towards enriching lives.....the areas to consider addressing to meet the duties of the Act include:

- Housing
- Communities
- Employment
- Personal finances
- Parenting
- Statutory education
- Lifelong learning
- Volunteering
- Civic engagement
- Arts and cultural activities
- Healthy living
- Health and social care services



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Positive parenting and parenting support

increase the wellbeing of both parents and children and how the overall impact on the wellbeing of parents can be evaluated.

Promoting emotional resilience among 11 to 13 year olds in secondary schools

The project will roll out Martin Seligman's resilience programme to schools through PSHE lessons using specially trained teachers.

Young people's progress through the 16 to 19 transition

This will focus on ways in which interventions that encourage young people's employability lead to increased wellbeing.sponsored by local employers.

Reducing isolation of older people

offer more benefits to anxious, depressed and isolated older people, for example through peer support, neighbouring and befriending initiatives and inter-generational work.


Neighbourhood and community wellbeing

will assess the impact of different models of neighbourhood working and community empowerment being rolled out in the three authorities.

The “golden thread” running through this project is that of ethnicity, diversity and the effects of multiple disadvantage and deprivation, and these will be considered as an integral component of the themes identified.

Detailed work is also being carried out in relation to measurement of wellbeing with the aim of developing or defining indicators primarily for assessing and measuring wellbeing activity at the local level.





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The biggest study yet from unique coalition of major UK poverty and environment groups reveals scale of climate impacts on international work - immediate action needed before Asia goes 'Up in Smoke'??

Competition enquiry hijacked in interests of supermarkets it was set up to investigate 31/10/07
Key outcomes from the Commission's provisional findings are a travesty. Instead of acting to preserve an open market the Commission is suggesting moves that will increase the collective dominance of a handful of supermarkets over UK plc

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From today, Saturday 6 October, the world as a whole goes into 'ecological debt'

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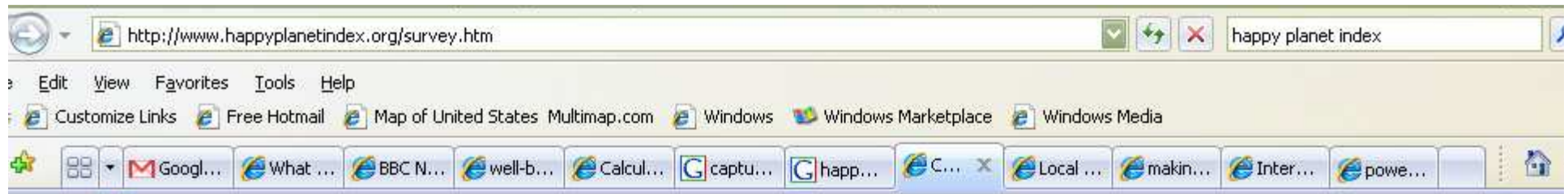
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THE HAPPY PLANET INDEX

An index of human well-being and environmental impact



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Is Wellbeing U-Shaped over the Life Cycle?

Recent research suggests a robust U-shape curve is found.....wellbeing reaches its minimum -- on both sides of the Atlantic and for both males and females -- in people's mid to late 40s.

David G. Blanchflower
Andrew J. Oswald
Department of Economics
University of Warwick UK

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