Greater Happiness for a Greater Number
What can education contribute?

Ruut Veenhoven

Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Presentation at conference
Key competence: Happiness

Nuremberg, Germany November 14 2011

Greater happiness: Questions

- Why focus on happiness?

- What do we know about happiness?

- How create greater happiness?

- What can education contribute?

Why focus on greater happiness?

Why focus on greater happiness?

- Moral philosophy

- History

- Present day policy relevance

Why focus on greater happiness?
Moral philosophy

- Morally good is what works out well
  Morality appears in consequences

- Most moral is what produces
  'greatest happiness for greatest number'

- This philosophy is called 'utilitarianism'

Why focus on greater happiness?
Moral philosophy

Variants

- Applied on individual choice
  Actor utilitarianism

- Applied on public choice
  Rule utilitarianism or *Political utilitarianism*

Why focus on greater happiness?
History

- Idea roots in 18th century Enlightenment

- Articulated by Jeremy Bentham
  'On morals and legislation' (1789)

- Rejected by leading ideologies
  in the 19th and early 20th century
  - Church
  - Liberalism
  - Socialism
  - Nationalism

Why focus on greater happiness?
Present day relevance

- End of great ideologies of deficit
  Call for 'positive' policy goals

- Rising public appreciation of happiness

- Greater knowledge about happiness

What do we know about happiness?

What we know about happiness

- What is 'happiness'?

- How is that measured?

- How happy are we?

- What makes us happy?

What we know about happiness
What is 'happiness'?

What is 'happiness'?
Four qualities of life

	external	internal
chances		
outcomes		

What is 'happiness'?
Four qualities of life

	external	*internal*
chances	**Livability**	**Life-ability**
outcomes	**Utility**	**Satisfaction**

What is 'happiness'?
Four kinds of satisfaction

	Passing	*Enduring*
Part		
Whole		

What is 'happiness'?
Four kinds of satisfaction

	Passing	*Enduring*
Part	**Pleasure**	**Domain satisfaction**
Whole	**Top experience**	**Life satisfaction** (Happiness)

How do we assess how happy we are?

global assessment	**OVERALL HAPPINESS** Satisfaction with one's life-as-whole	
sub-assessment:	**Hedonic level of affect** Balance of pleasant and unpleasant affect	**Contentment** Perceived realization of wants
information basis	Affective experience	Cognitive comparison
underlying process	Need gratification	Standard setting
substrate	Human nature	Culture

Ho do we assess how happy we are?

global assessment **OVERALL HAPPINESS**
Satisfaction with one's life-as-whole

sub-assessment: **Hedonic level of affect** **Contentment**
Balance of pleasant and Perceived realization
unpleasant affect of wants

information basis Affective experience Cognitive comparison

underlying process Need gratification Standard setting
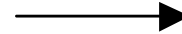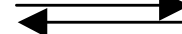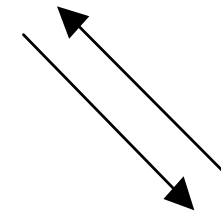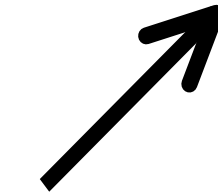
substrate Human nature Culture

What we know about happiness
Measurement of happiness

Measurement of happiness
Best practice in direct questioning

- ## global self estimate
  - ### single question   for large scale surveys
  - ### multiple questions

- ## multi-moment average   for small scale follow-up

Measurement of happiness
Best practice in direct questioning

- ## global self estimate
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- ## multi-moment average   for small scale follow-up

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Your Comparative Happiness Indicator

You can use the Comparative Happiness Indicator to see how happy you are with respect to the other participants. We distinguish between 'all participants' and 'participants with a profile similar to yours'. If you take part more often in the Happiness Indicator, you will also have the option to compare yourself with participants with a different profile from your own.

Answer the following questions on a scale from 0 to 10.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How happy do you feel today?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
How happy did you feel over the past month?	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Internet   75%

Measurement of happiness
Best practice in direct questioning

- ## global self estimate
  – single question   for large scale surveys
  – multiple questions

- ## multi-moment average   for small scale follow-up

Measurement of happiness
Example of a survey question

Taking all together, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
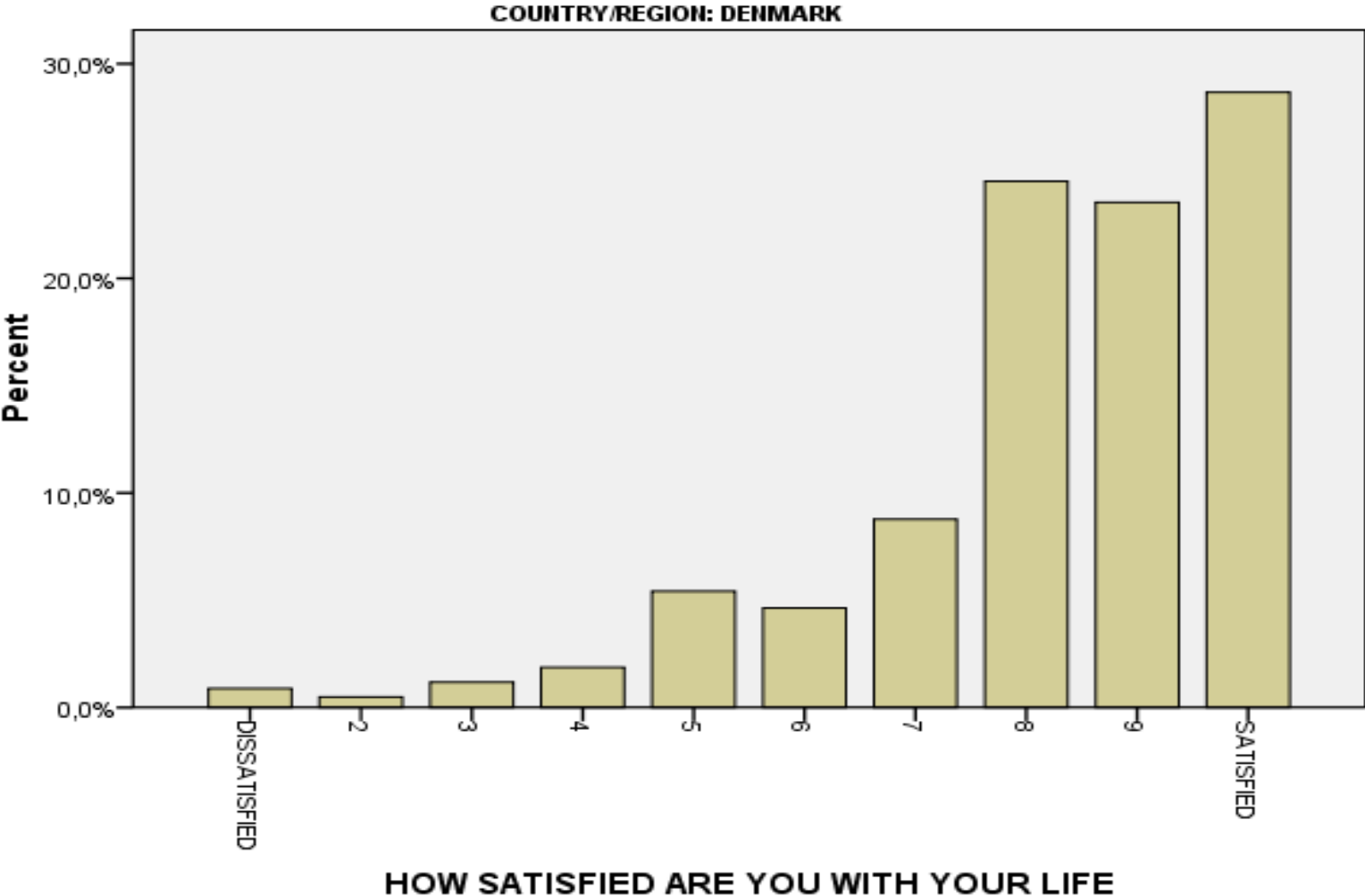
Dissatisfied   Satisfied
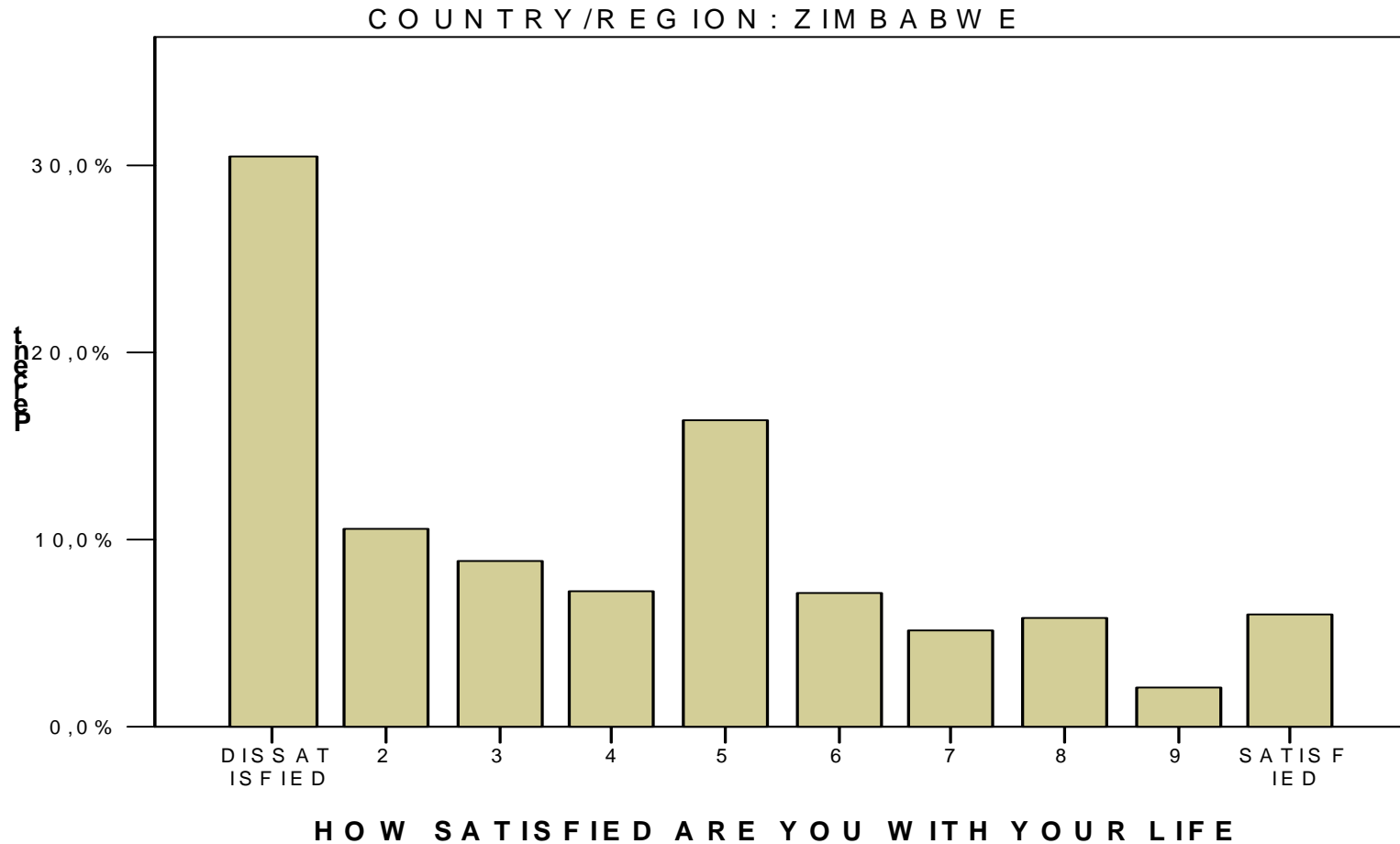
What we know about happiness
How happy are we?

How happy are we?
Denmark

COUNTRY/REGION: DENMARK

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE

How happy are we?
Zimbabwe

COUNTRY/REGION: ZIMBABWE

How happy are we?
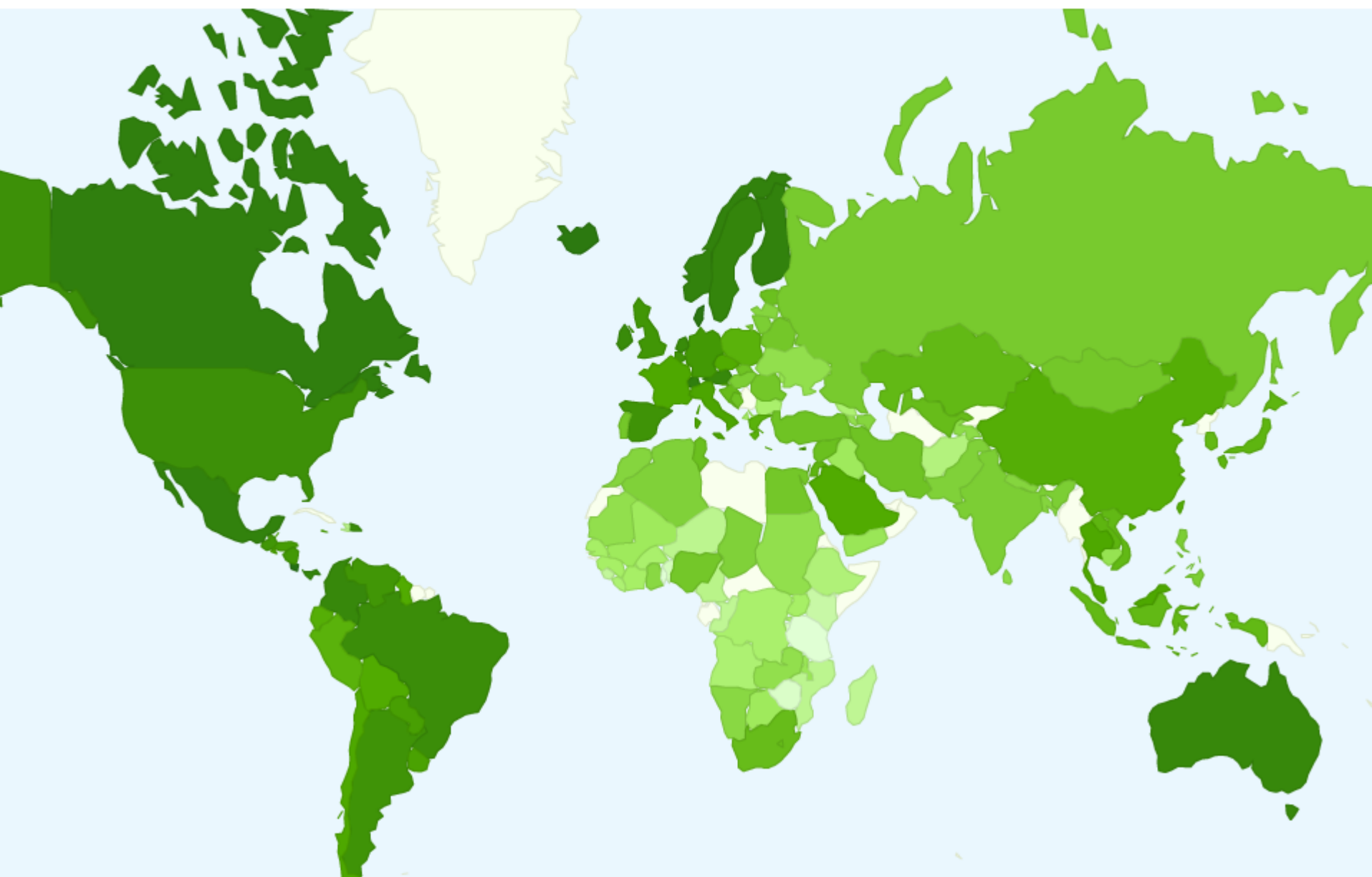## Happiness in nations 2000-2009

- Denmark   8,3
- USA   7,4
- **Germany**   **7,2**
- France   6,6
- Russia   5,5
- Iraq   4,7
- Zimbabwe   3,0

HAPPINESS IN 148 NATIONS 2000-2009

eople enjoy their life-as-a-whole on scale 0 to 10

What we know about happiness
What makes us happy?

What makes us happy?

	external	*internal*
chances	**Livability**	**Life-ability**
outcomes	**Utility**	**Happiness**
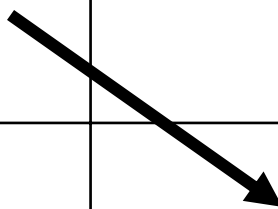
Analogous concepts in biology

	external	internal
chances	**Biotope**	**Fitness**
outcomes	**Ecological function**	**Survival**

What makes us happy?

	external	internal
chances	**Livability** kind of society	**Life ability**
outcomes	**Utility**	**Happiness**

What makes us happy?
Wealth of the nation
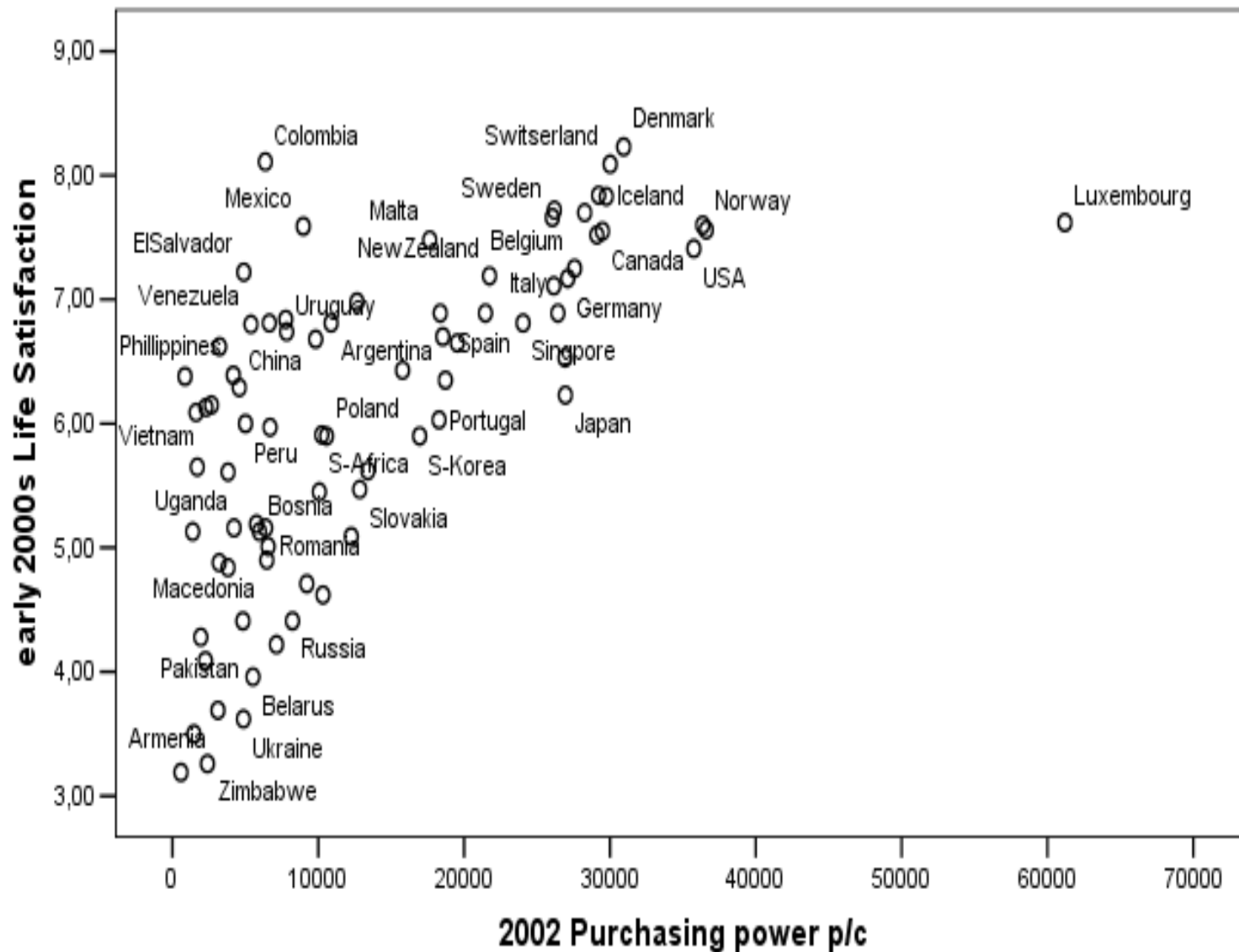
What makes us happy?
Inequality of incomes in the nation
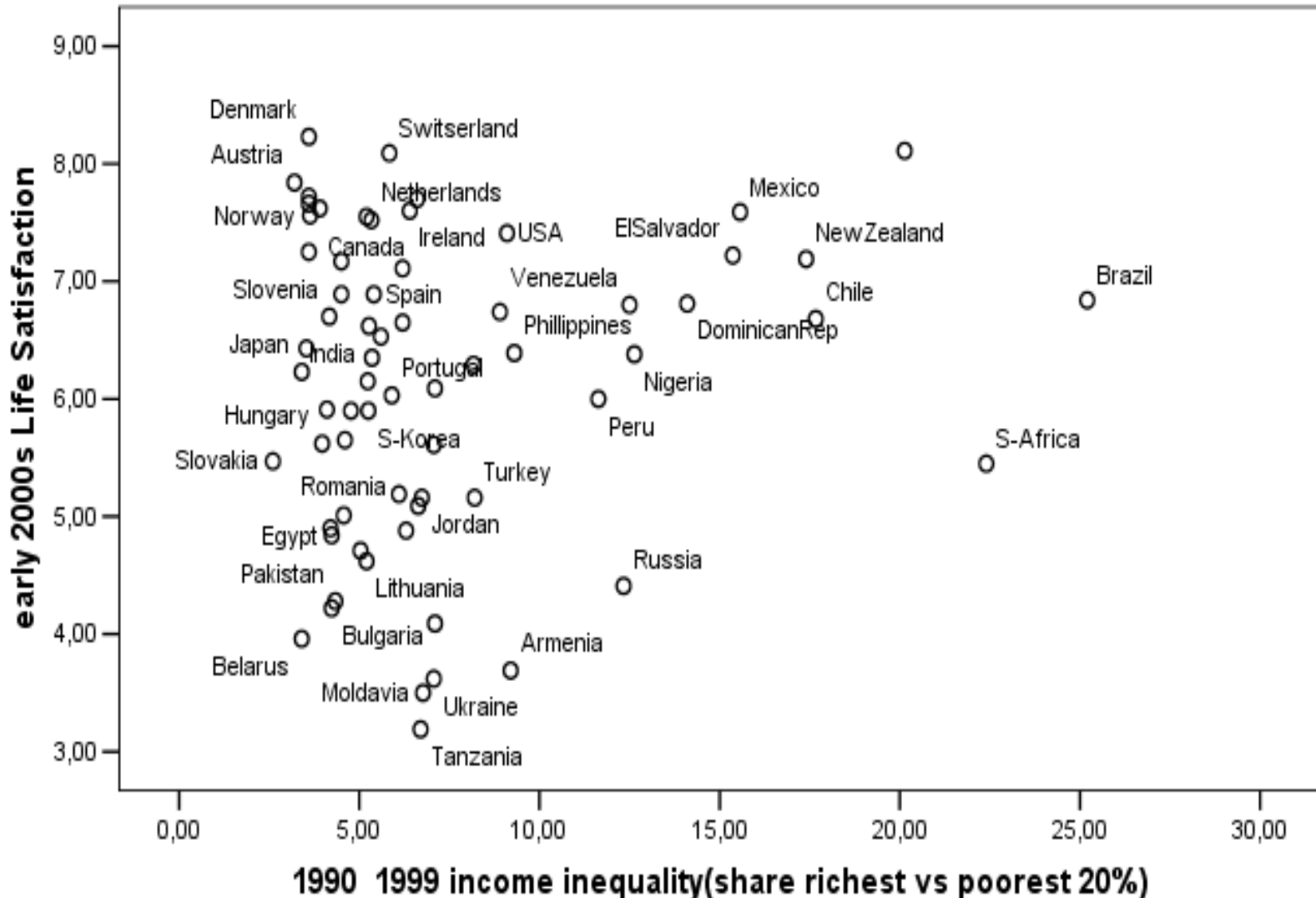
What makes us happy?
Education
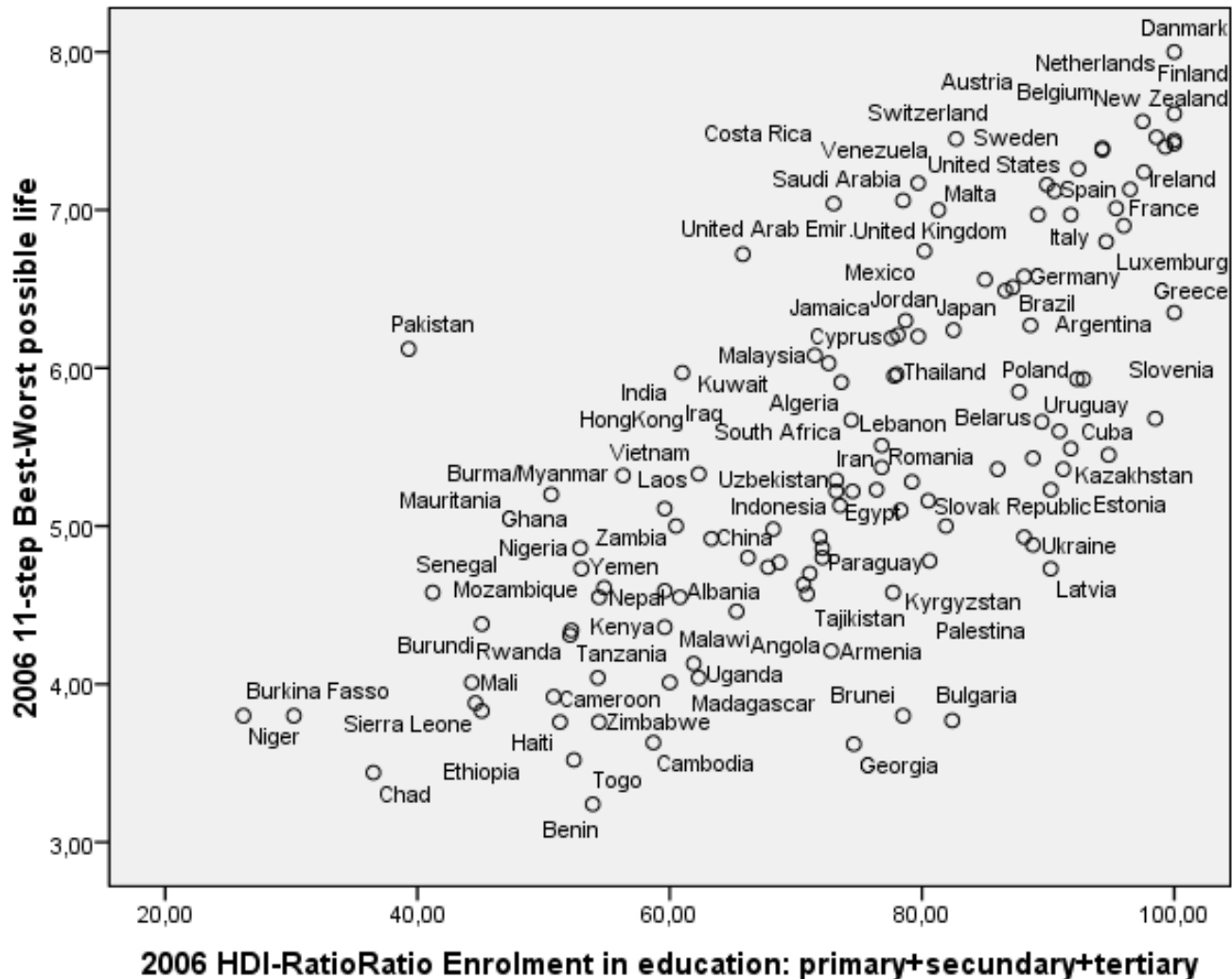
What makes us happy?
Societal conditions

- Education   +.69
- Economic affluence   +.65
- Rule of law   +.58
- Democracy   +.50
- Personal freedom   +.46
- State welfare   +.22
- Income inequality   +.18

Explained variance   *75%*

What makes us happy?
Sources of difference <u>in</u> modern nations

Livability of environment

- Good/bad luck   ± 10%
- Social position   ± 10%

Life ability of person

- Heredity   ± 30%
- Abilities   25%?
- Choice   25%?

What makes us happy?
Sources of difference <u>in</u> modern nations

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What makes us happy?

	external	*internal*
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outcomes	**Utility**	**Happiness**

What makes us happy?
Life abilities

- Physical

- Mental

What makes us happy?
Life abilities

- Physical

- Mental

What makes us happy?
Life abilities: Mental

- Intelligence
  - School-intelligence (IQ)   0
  - Social intelligence   +

- Control
  - Inner control orientation   +
  - Assertiveness   +

- Self acceptance   +

What we know about happiness
What does happiness?

What does happiness?
Idea that happiness is no good

- Happiness of little value in itself

- Happiness degenerates

- Pursuit conflicts with other values

All depicted in 'Brave New World'

What does happiness?
Idea that happiness is no good
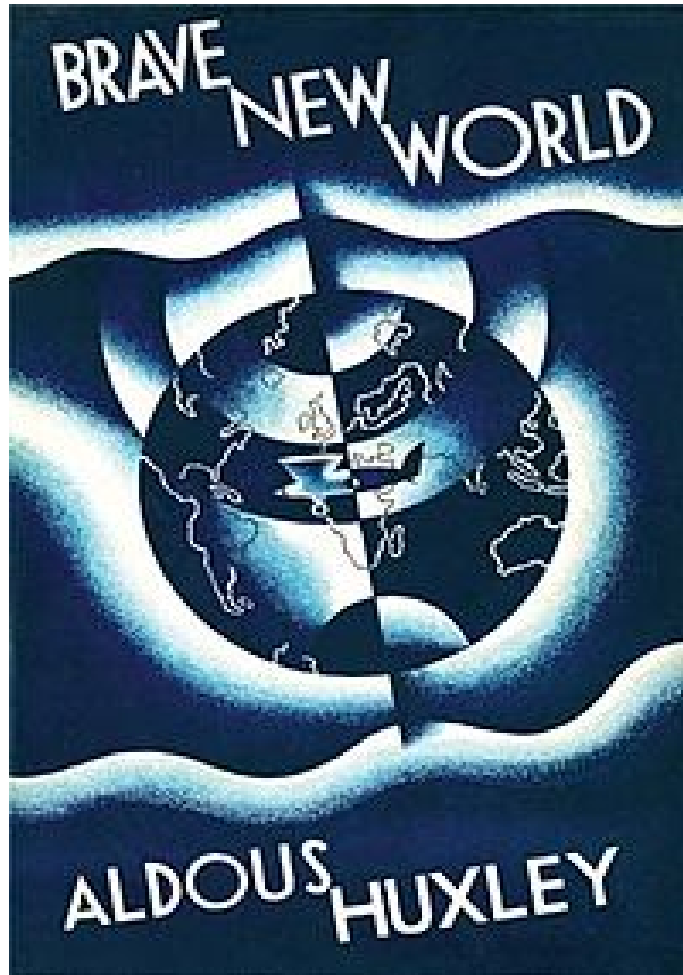
Idea that happiness is no good
No mere pleasure

	Passing	*Enduring*
Part	**Pleasure**	**Domain satisfaction**
Whole	**Top experience**	**Life satisfaction** (Happiness)

Idea that happiness is no good
Positive effects rather than negative

on individuals
- Physical   *longer life*
- Mental   *more active, interested*
- Social   *more sociable*

on society
- Economic   *more productive?*
- Political   *more democratic*
- Social   *more tolerant*

Idea that happiness is no good
Synergy with things we value

In conditions for happiness
- Freedom
- Democracy
- Peace
- …

In consequences of happiness
- Health
- creativity
- Sociability
- …
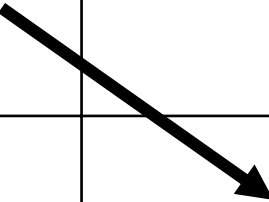
Ways to greater happiness

Ways to greater happiness

- Improving livability of society

- Improving individual life-ability

What makes us happy?

	external	*internal*
chances	**Livability** of society	**Life ability**
outcomes	**Utility**	**Happiness**

Ways to greater happiness
Improve livability of society

- Society as-a-whole   *macro level*

- Institutions in society   *meso level*

Ways to greater happiness
Macro level: **More livable society**

Do invest in:
- Rule of law
- Freedom

Don't invest in more
- Income equality
- State welfare
- Economic growth?

Ways to greater happiness
Meso level: **More livable institutions**

- Happiness is a major aim of
  - Schools
  - Care homes

- As yet no measurement of happiness effects

- Hence, no competition on happiness

What makes us happy?

	external	*internal*
chances	**Livability**	**Life ability**
outcomes	**Utility**	**Happiness**

(An arrow points downward from "Life ability" to "Happiness".)

Ways to greater happiness
Strengthen life-abilities of individuals

Do invest in*:*

- (preventive) mental health care
- Support of life choices
- More schooling?

Ways to greater happiness
Strengthen life-abilities of individuals

Do invest in*:*
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- More schooling?

Ways to greater happiness
Better informed life choice

Problem

- Happiness depends partly on choice: 25%?

- Difficult to predict our own happiness
  Gilbert: 'Stumbling on happiness'

- Hence much sub-optimal choice
  Kahneman: Expected vs experienced utility
  Frey: Mis-predicting utility

Ways to greater happiness
Better informed life choice

Solution 1: Mood monitoring

- Use of happiness diary for education

- Feedback on
  - How happy you are
    compared to comparable people
  - Profile of your enjoyment of activities

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My Happiness

Welcome back Ruut Veenhoven.

You have already taken part 4 time/times. Your last visit was on 10-06-2011.

Comparative Happiness Indicator

Are you happier than other people? The Happiness Indicator answers this question, including if you could be happier than you are now.

Happiness Diary

People derive happiness from daily life...' 'Will offer you a better understanding of your own happiness, which is vital in identifying the lifestyle that suits you best.

Happiness Indicator - Windows Internet Explorer

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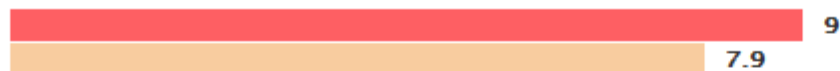
Happiness Indicator

■ You
■ Other participants

How happy was your day compared to the other participants?
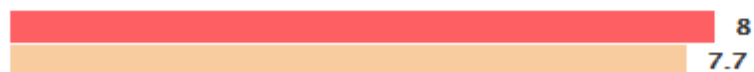
9

6.4
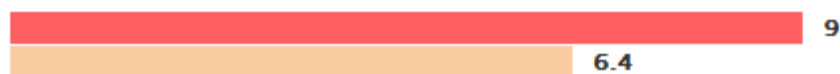
How happy was your day compared to participants with a profile similar to yours?ⓘ
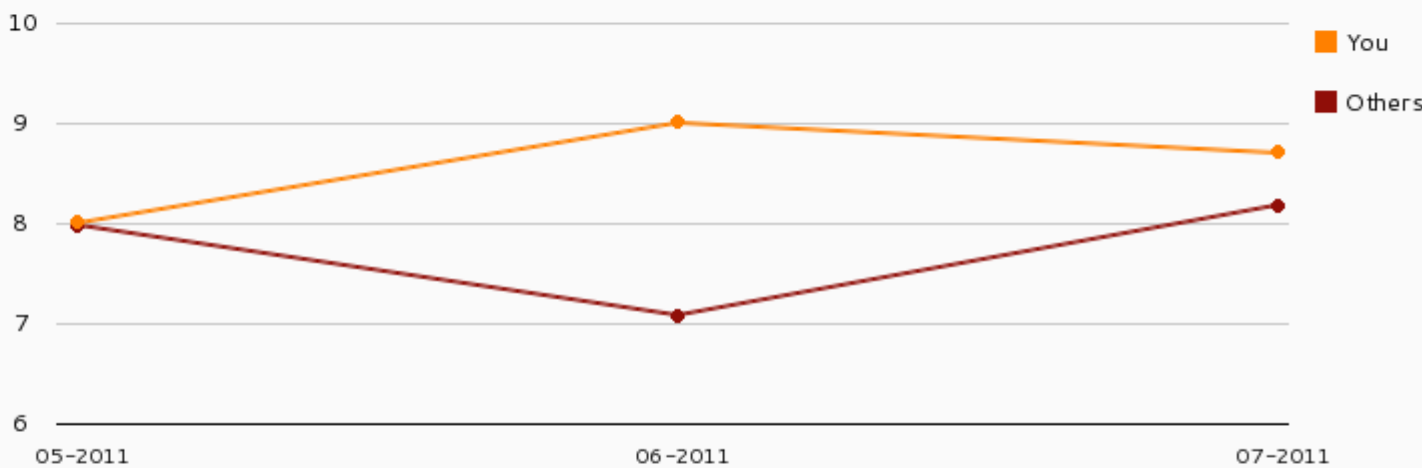
9

7.9

How happy did you feel during the past month compared to the average of the scores reported by the other participa

8

6.1

How happy did you feel during the past month compared to participants with a profile similar to yours?ⓘ

8

7.7

Happiness Indicator - Windows Internet Explorer

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Happiness Indicator

Compare your happiness to that of all participants

Happiness Diary from yesterday

Describe what you did yesterday.

	Time activity started	Time activity ended	Activity	Where	With whom	Subactivities
1.	▼		Getting up	▼	▼	
2.	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	

[Add an activity]   [Delete last activity]

48.	▼		Going to bed	▼	▼	Showing affection | Having sex | Sleeping

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	Time activity started	Time activity ended	Activity	Where	With whom	Subactivities
1.	7:00		Getting up	Home	My partner	
2.	7:00	7:30	Taking care of:	Home	Alone	Yourself | Partner | Children | Others
3.	7:30	8:00	Exercising	Elsewhere	Alone	Going for a walk | Cycling | Playing sports | Other
4.	8:00	8:30	Eating	Home	My partner	Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner | Snack | Other
5.	8:30	9:30	In transit	Elsewhere	Alone	By foot | By bicycle | By moped | By car | By public transport | Other
6.	9:30	12:00	Working	Work	Colleagues	Paid | Unpaid | Formal communication | Informal communication | Taking a break
7.	12:00	12:30	Eating	Work	Colleagues	Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner | Snack | Other
8.	12:30	17:00	Working	Work	Colleagues	Paid | Unpaid | Formal communication | Informal communication | Taking a break
9.	17:00	18:00	In transit	Elsewhere	Alone	By foot | By bicycle | By moped | By car | By public transport | Other
10.	18:00	19:00	Eating	Home	My partner	Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner | Snack | Other
11.	19:00	21:00	Studying	Home	Alone	Course of study | Workshop or training course | Homework | Independent study | Other
12.	21:00	22:30	Relaxing	Home	My partner	Hobby | Computer | Reading | Watching TV | Listening to music | Talking | Playing | Other

(Add an activity)   (Delete last activity)

48.	22:30		Going to bed	Home	My partner	Showing affection | Having sex | Sleeping

Results

Understanding your happiness

Your Happiness Diary

The Happiness Diary enables you to see how much happiness you derive from daily activities. The more often you complete the Happiness Diary, the more useful the information you will receive about your lifestyle and happiness. You can use this information to identify the lifestyle that suits you best.
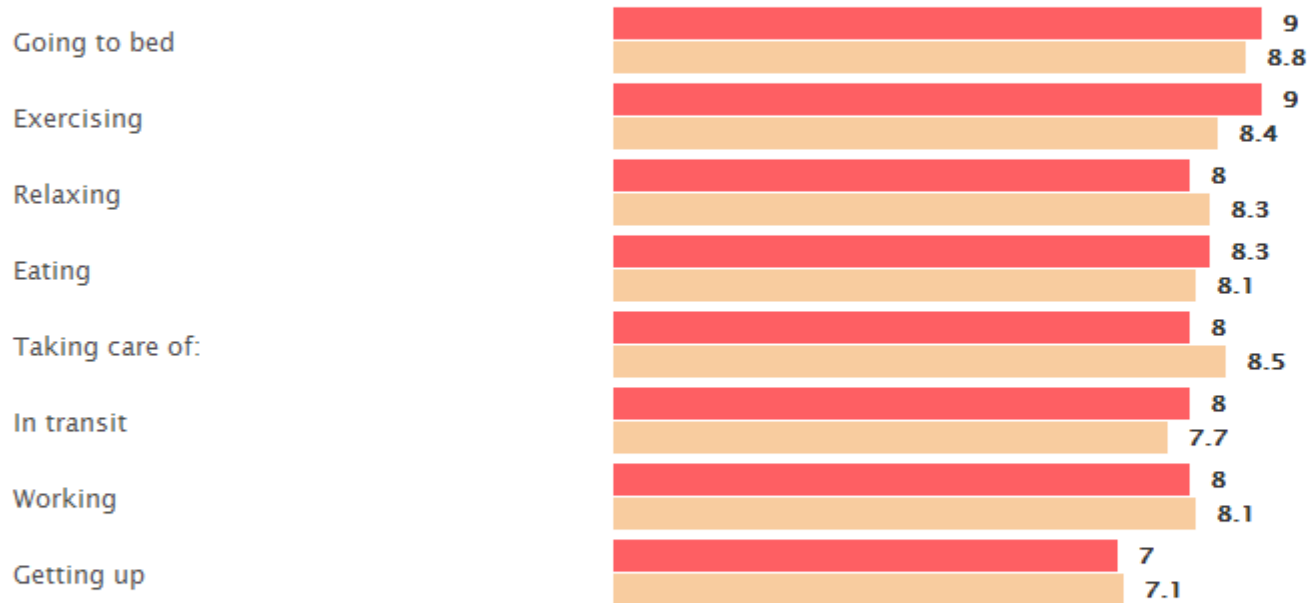
🟥 You
🟧 Other participants

😦 😦 😦 😦 😦 😐 🙂 🙂 😃 😄 😄

What kind of activities do you enjoy the most?

Activity	Score
Going to bed	9
Exercising	9
Relaxing	8
Eating	8.33
Taking care of:	8
In transit	8
Working	8
Getting up	7

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😦 😦 😦 😦 😦 😐 🙂 🙂 😃 😃 😃

What kind of activities do you enjoy the most compared to participants with a profile similar to yours? ⓘ

Going to bed
9
8.8

Exercising
9
8.4

Relaxing
8
8.3

Eating
8.3
8.1

Taking care of:
8
8.5

In transit
8
7.7

Working
8
8.1

Getting up
7
7.1

😦 😦 😦 😦 😦 😐 🙂 🙂 😃 😃 😃

How enjoyable was your day compared to the average level of happiness experienced by participants over the past year?

8.2
6.5
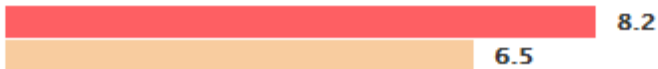
Ways to greater happiness
Better informed life choice

Solution 2: Chart consequences of choice

- Investigate long-term effects on happiness
  - of major choices
  - in large scale panels

- Assess probabilities for people like you

- Analogous to
  - tests of consumer goods
  - Research on health consequences of behavior

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What can education contribute?
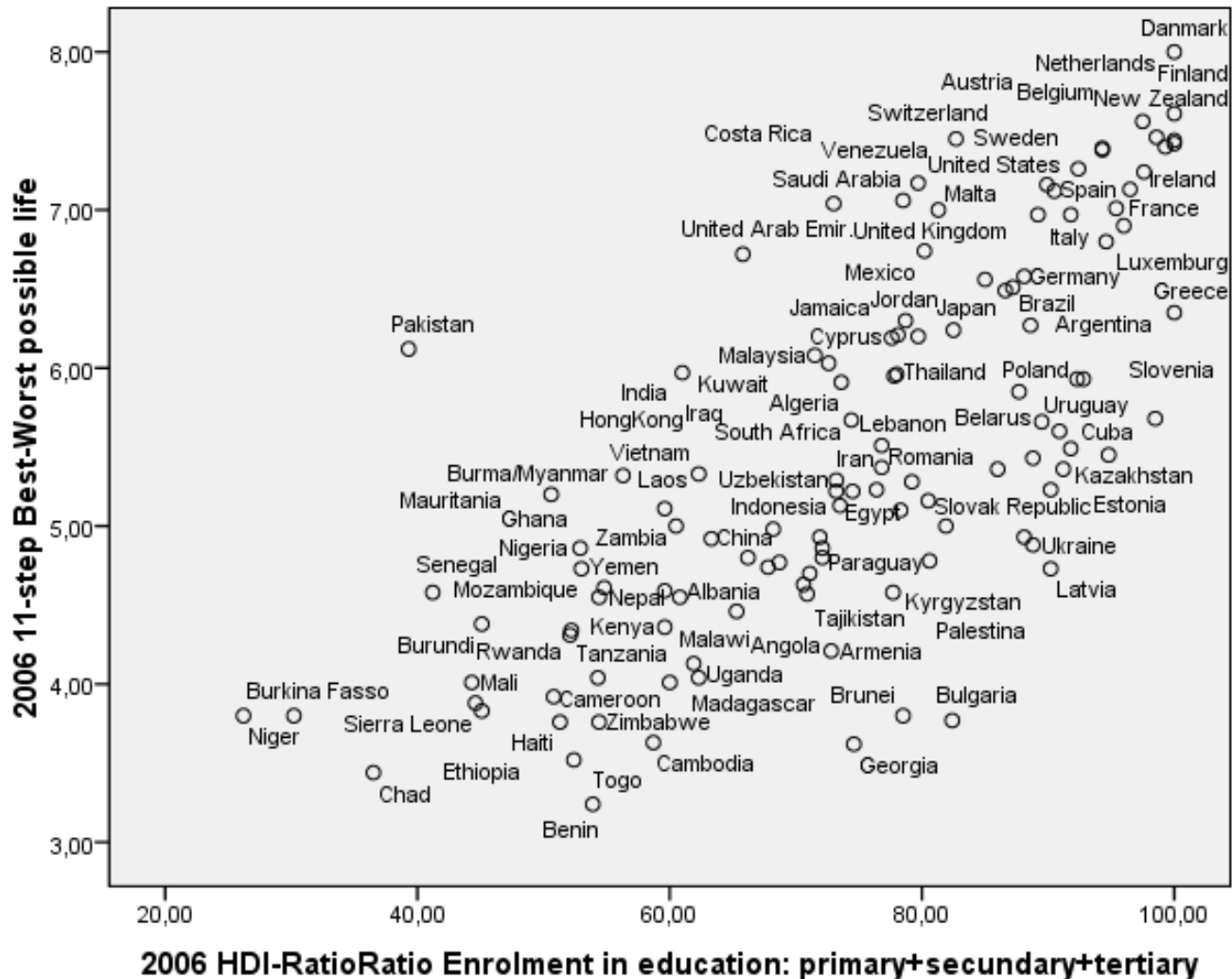
What can education contribute?

- Mixed blessing of school education

- Possible 'leaks' in school system

- Implications for education
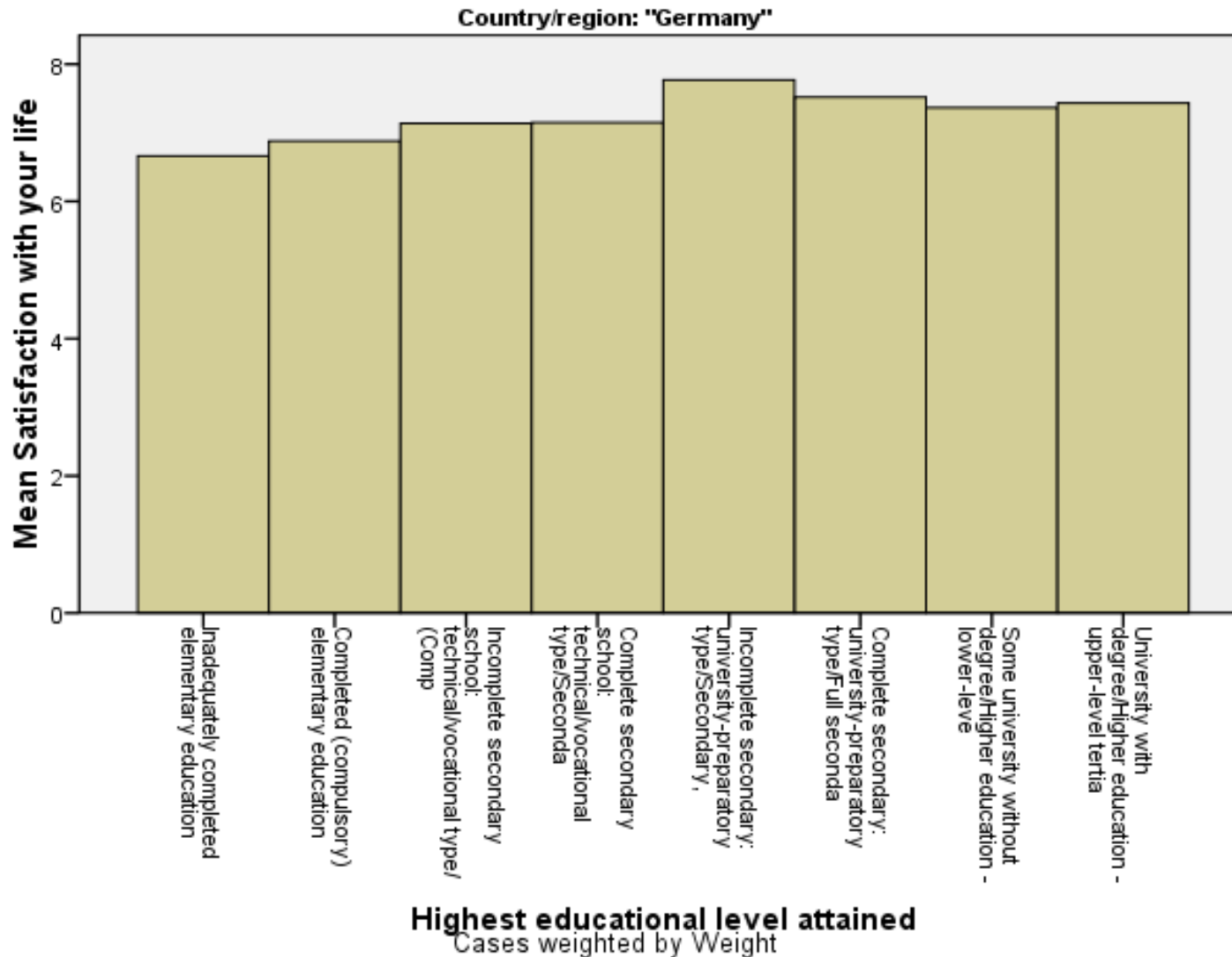
What can education contribute?
Mixed blessings of schooling

- *Macro level: across nations*
  Greater happiness in educated nations

- *Micro level: within nations*
  Educated people hardly happier

Education and happiness in nations

Education and Happiness in Germany

Country/region: "Germany"

Mean Satisfaction with your life

Highest educational level attained

Cases weighted by Weight

What can education contribute?
Why are highly educated not happier?

- Evident benefits of school education
  - Higher income
  - Better health behavior → health
  - Etc….

- Possible 'leaks'
  - Irrelevant skills
  - Inflated expectations
  - ………

What can education contribute? **Implications for education**

- More education not always better

- Focus on life abilities

- Test effects: What works for whom?

What can education contribute?
Test effect: What works for whom?

- Prediction difficult, trial and error

- Test required
  - Long-term follow-up
  - Comparison with control group

- Happiness Indicator suitable tool
  http://www.happinessindicator.com

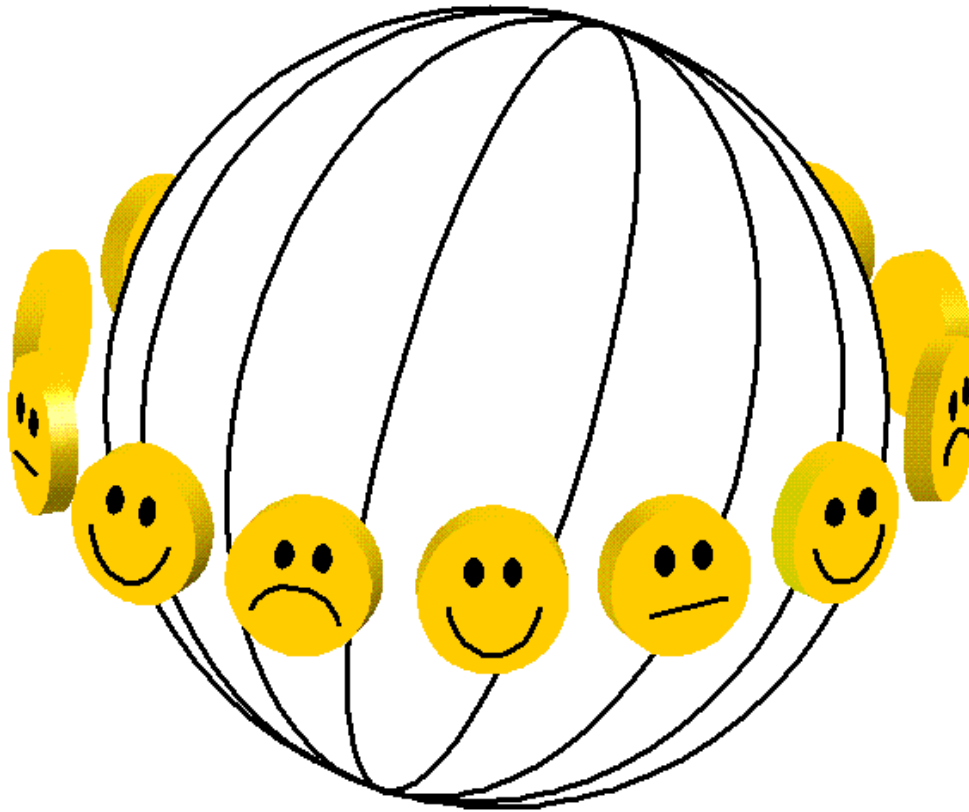# What can education contribute?
Test effect: Example

- 12- 14 aged lower secondary school Netherlands

- 'Lessons in Happiness'
  based on Positive Psychology

- Happiness Indicator part of program

- Pupils equally happy at 6 month follow-up
  Controls suffered puberty dip

Conclusion

- Greater happiness is possible

- Education can add to that

- Focused on life-abilities

- Effect research required

- Happiness-Indicator suitable tool

World Database of Happiness

http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl