

Greater Happiness for a Greater Number

What can education contribute?

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Presentation at conference

Key competence: Happiness

Vienna, Austria February 24 2012

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

| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>chances</i> | | |
| <i>outcomes</i> | | |

What is 'happiness'?

Four qualities of life

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
| <i>chances</i> | Livability | Life-ability |
| <i>outcomes</i> | Utility | Satisfaction |

What is 'happiness'?

Four kinds of satisfaction

| | <i>Passing</i> | <i>Enduring</i> |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Part</i> | | |
| <i>Whole</i> | | |

What is 'happiness'?

Four kinds of satisfaction

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|---|
| | <i>Passing</i> | <i>Enduring</i> |
| <i>Part</i> | Pleasure | Domain satisfaction |
| <i>Whole</i> | Top experience | Life satisfaction (Happiness) |

How do we assess how happy we are?

global assessment

OVERALL HAPPINESS
Satisfaction with one's life-as-a-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



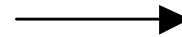
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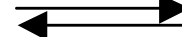
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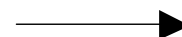
Need gratification



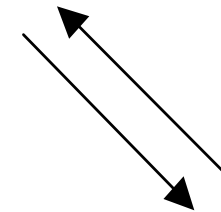
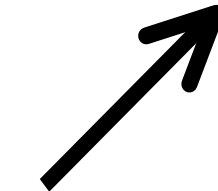
Standard setting

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
 - single question for large scale surveys
 - multiple questions
- **multi-moment average** for small scale follow-up



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? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| How happy did you feel over the past month? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

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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

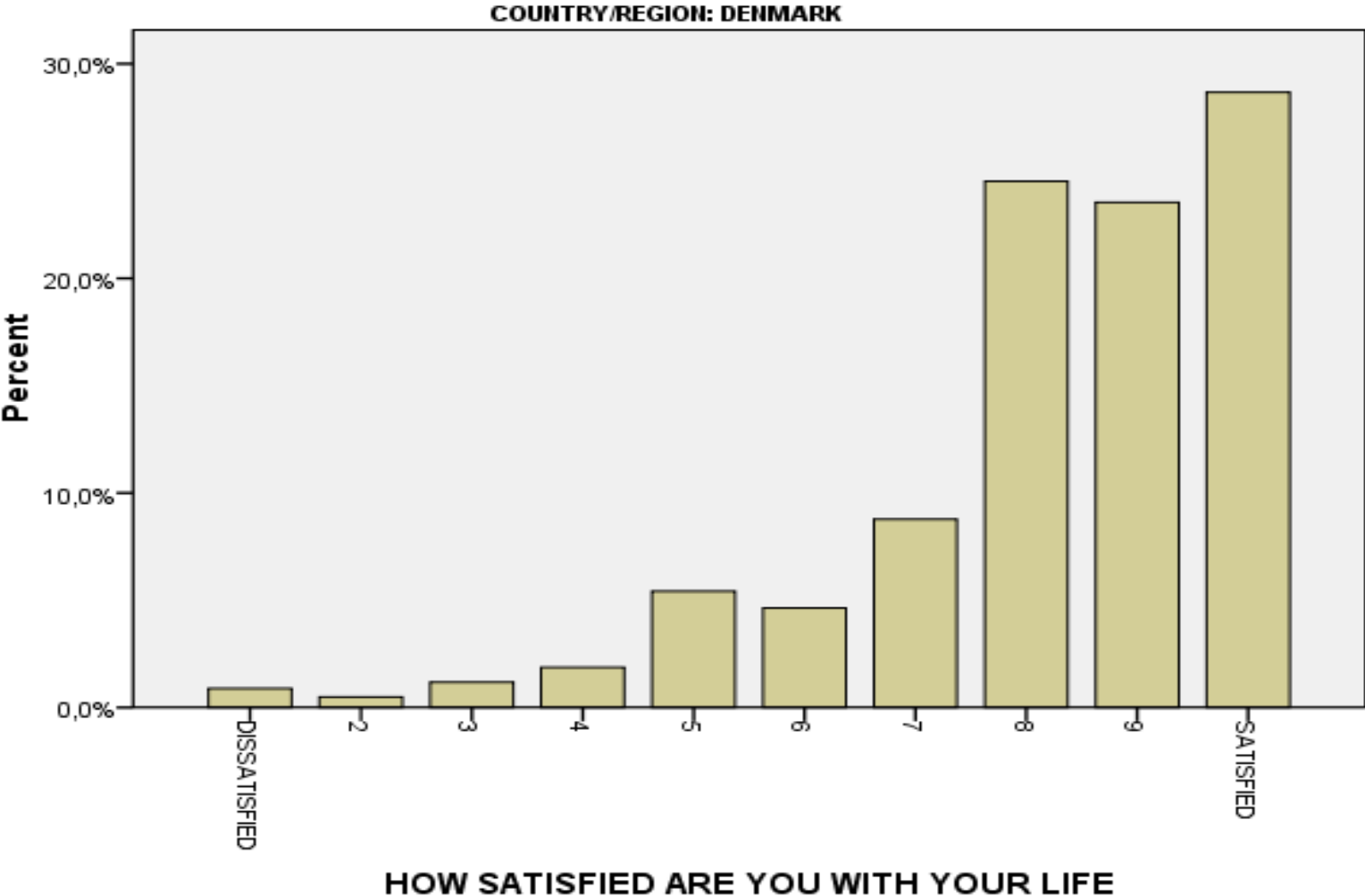
Satisfied

What we know about happiness

How happy are we?

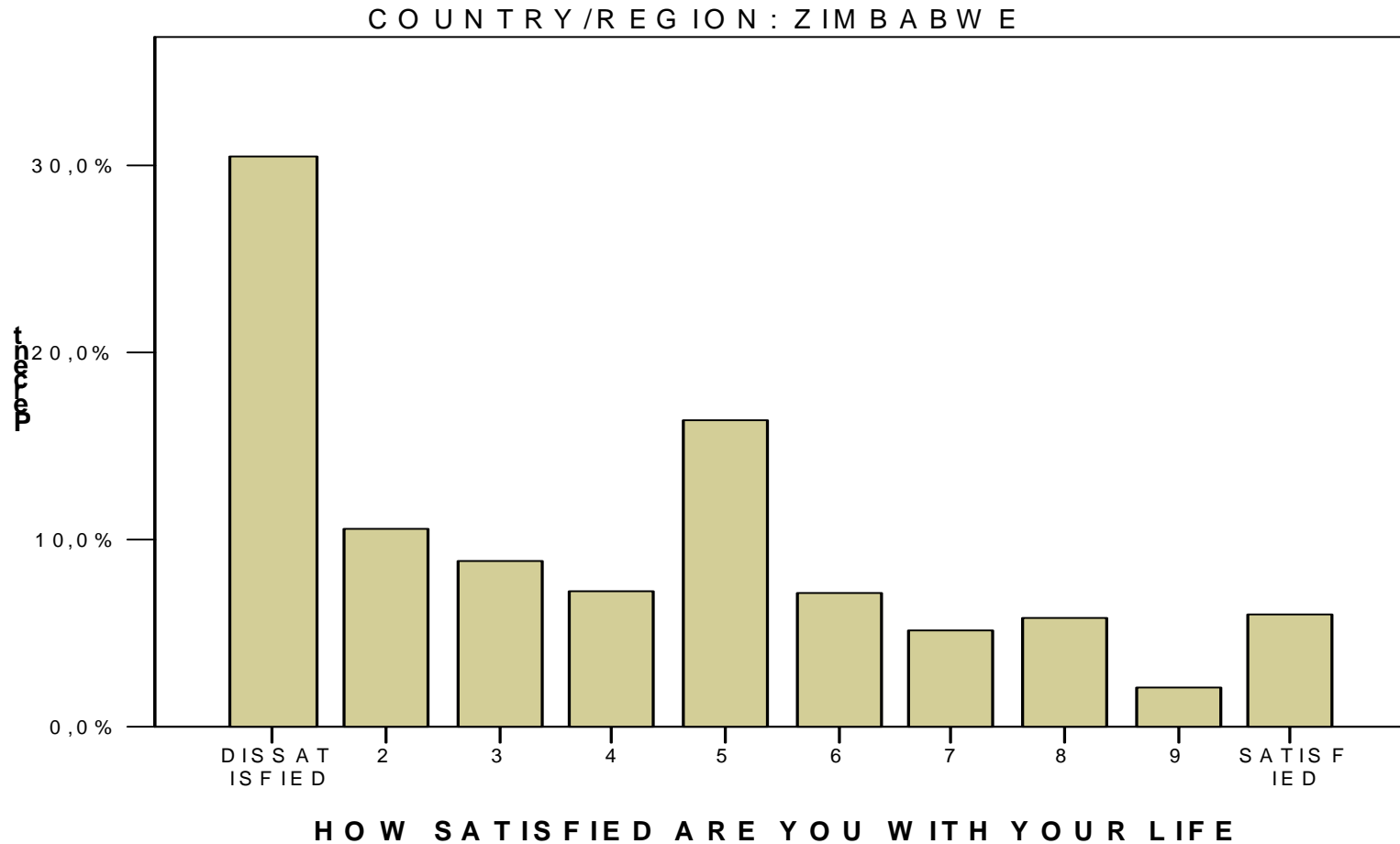
How happy are we?

Denmark



How happy are we?

Zimbabwe



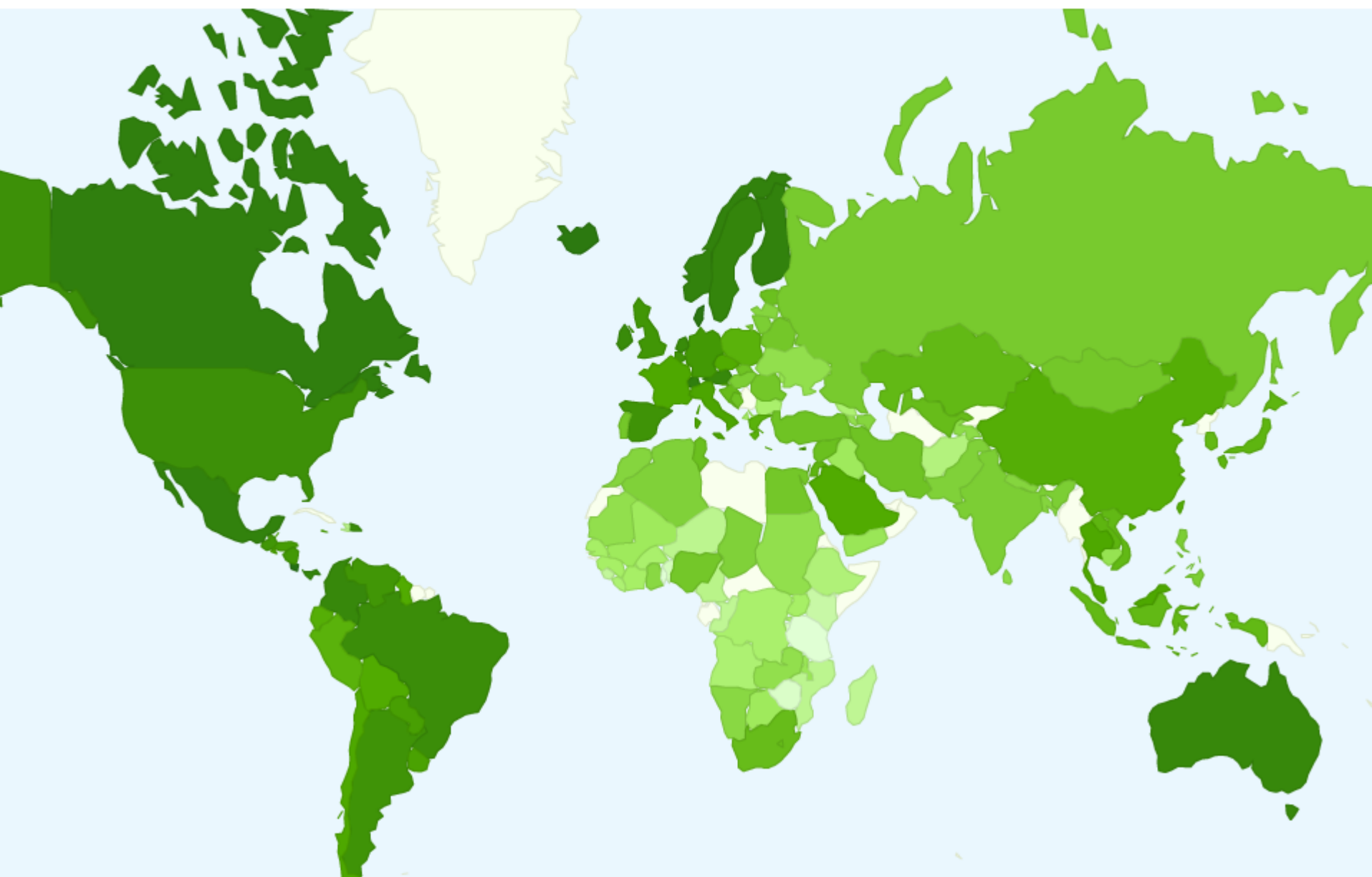
How happy are we?

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

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



What we know about happiness

What makes us happy?


What makes us happy?

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
| <i>chances</i> | Livability | Life-ability |
| <i>outcomes</i> | Utility | Happiness |

The diagram consists of a 3x2 grid. The top row is empty. The middle row contains 'Livability' under 'external' and 'Life-ability' under 'internal'. The bottom row contains 'Utility' under 'external' and 'Happiness' under 'internal'. A horizontal line spans the width of the middle row, and an arrow points from its center down to the word 'Happiness'.

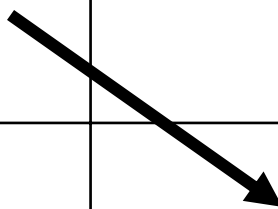
Analogous concepts in biology

| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>chances</i> | Biotope | Fitness |
| <i>outcomes</i> | Ecological function | Survival |



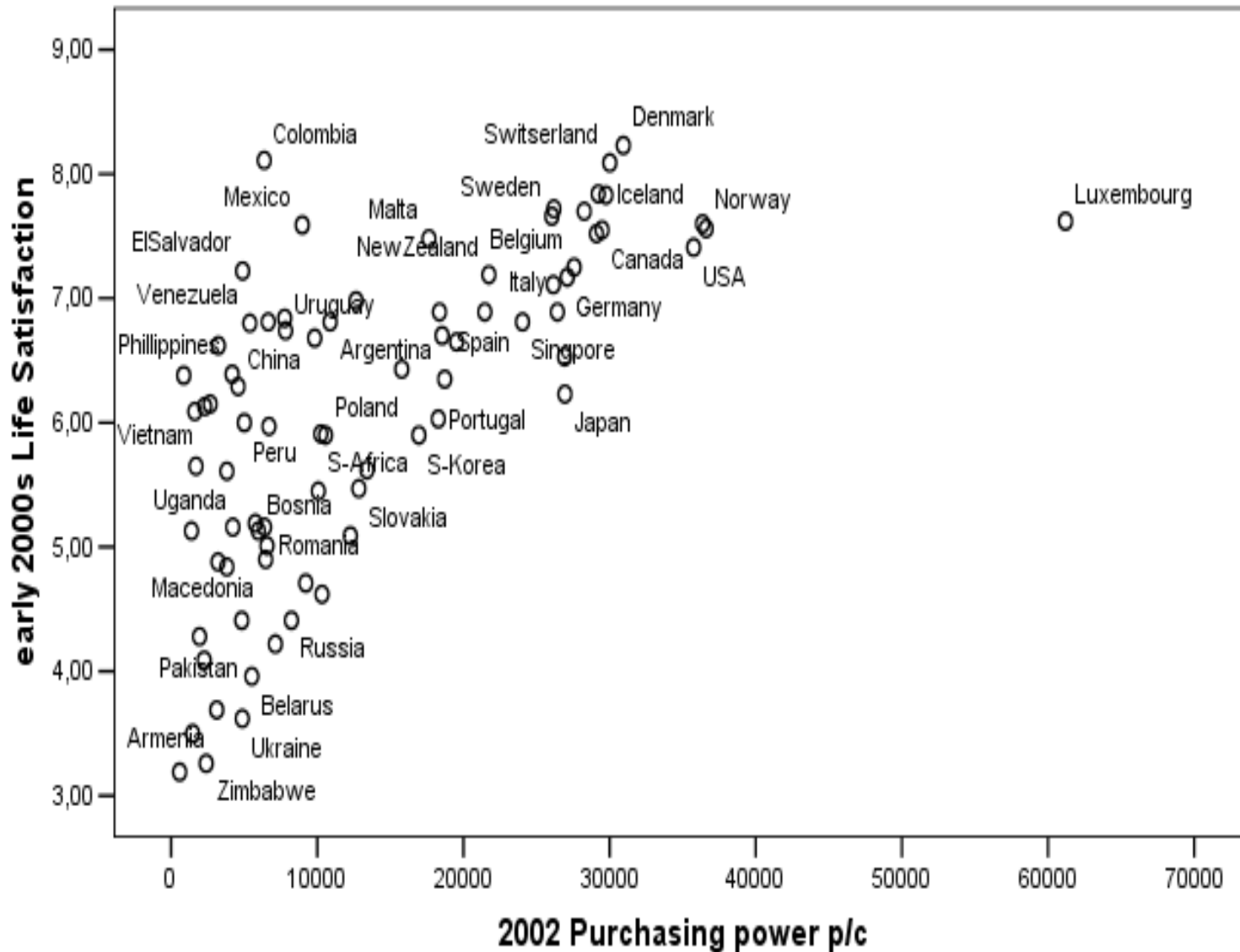
What makes us happy?

| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>chances</i> | Livability kind of society | Life ability |
| <i>outcomes</i> | Utility | Happiness |

An arrow originates from the text 'Livability' in the middle-right cell of the table and points diagonally down and to the right towards the text 'Happiness' in the bottom-right cell.

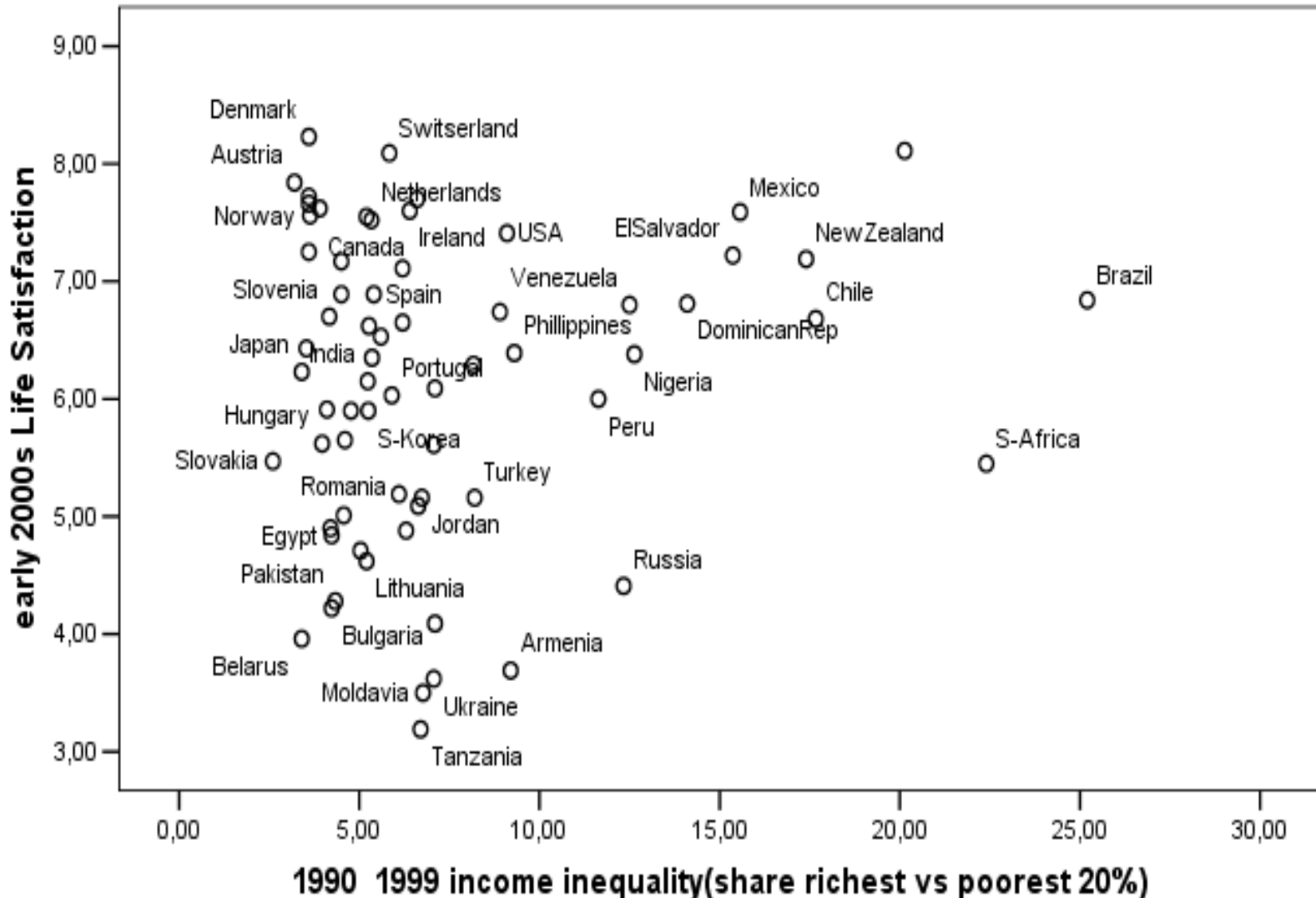
What makes us happy?

Wealth of the nation



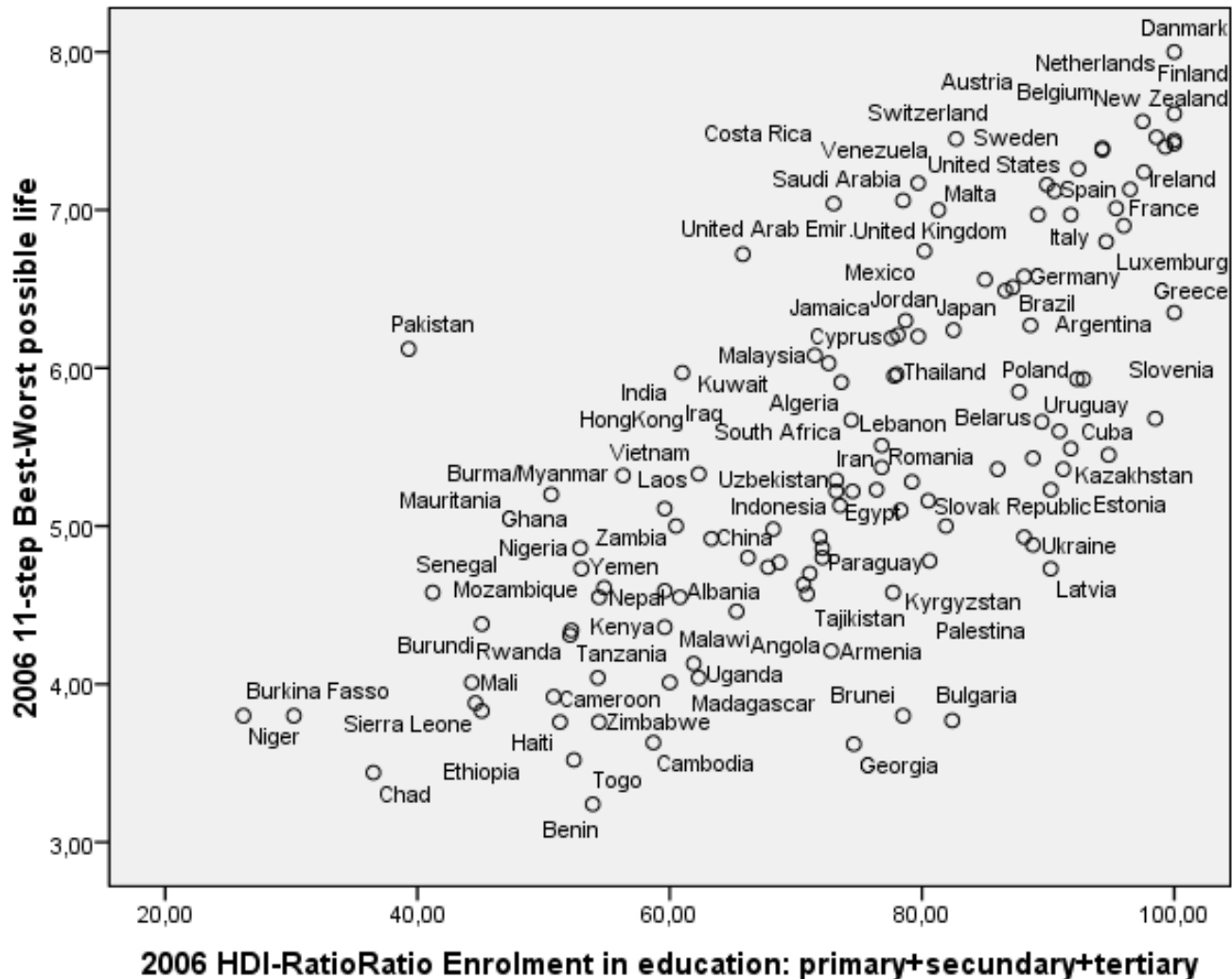
What makes us happy?

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 in modern nations

Livability of environment

- Good/bad luck $\pm 10\%$
- Social position $\pm 10\%$

Life ability of person

- Heredity $\pm 30\%$
- Abilities 25%?
- Choice 25%?

What makes us happy?

Sources of difference in modern nations

Livability of environment

- Good/bad luck $\pm 10\%$
- Social position $\pm 10\%$

Life ability of person

- Heredity $\pm 30\%$
- Abilities $25\%?$
- Choice $25\%?$

What makes us happy?

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
| <i>chances</i> | Livability | Life ability ↓ |
| <i>outcomes</i> | 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?

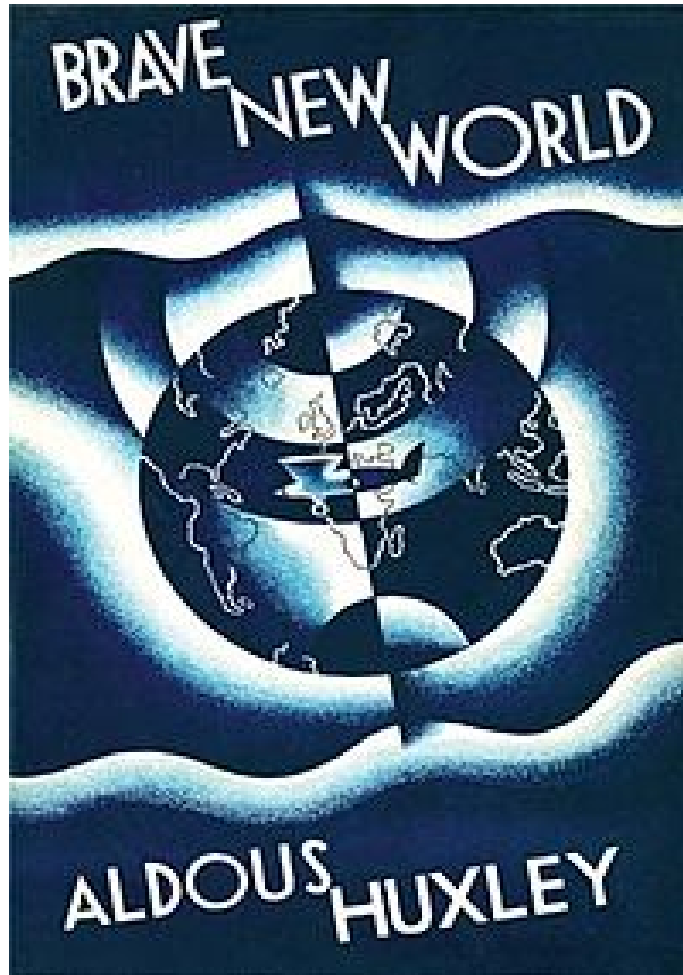
Idea that happiness is no good

- 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

| | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|---|
| | <i>Passing</i> | <i>Enduring</i> |
| <i>Part</i> | Pleasure | Domain satisfaction |
| <i>Whole</i> | 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
- ...

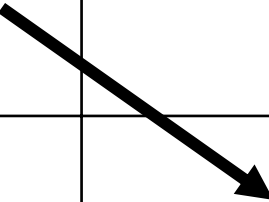
Ways to greater happiness

Ways to greater happiness

- Improving livability of society
- Improving individual life-ability

What makes us happy?

| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>chances</i> | Livability of society | Life ability |
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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?

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | <i>external</i> | <i>internal</i> |
| <i>chances</i> | Livability | Life ability ↓ |
| <i>outcomes</i> | Utility | 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:

- (preventive) mental health care
- **Support of life choices**
- 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



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.



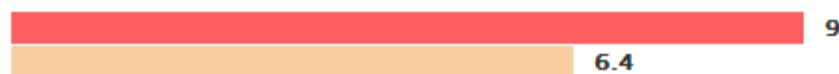
Happiness Diary

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.

You
Other participants



How happy was your day compared to the other participants?



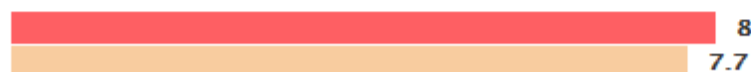
How happy was your day compared to participants with a profile similar to yours?



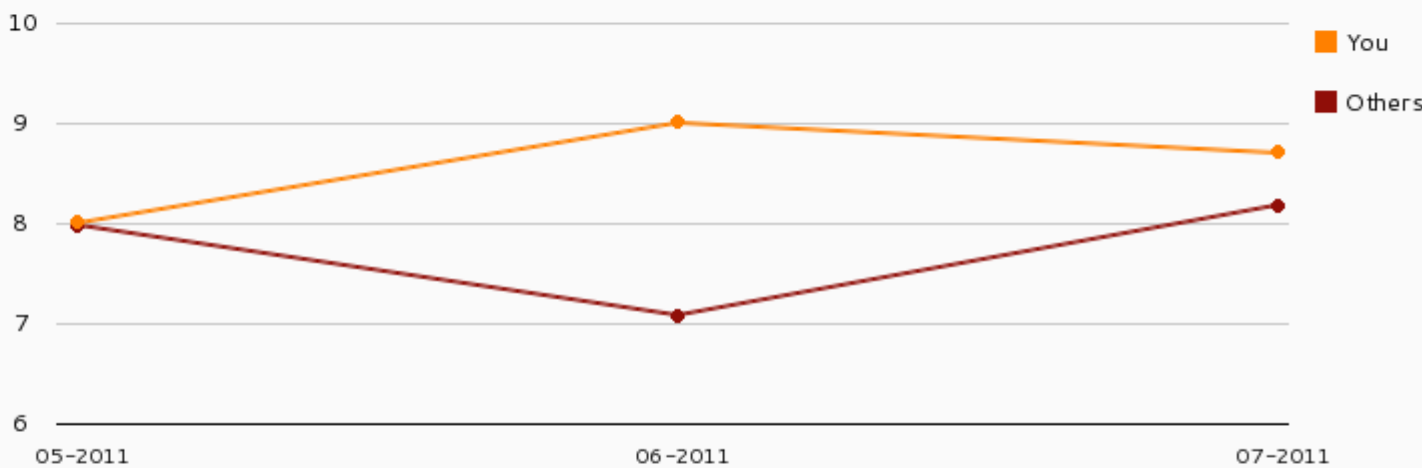
How happy did you feel during the past month compared to the average of the scores reported by the other participants?



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



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. | <input type="text"/> | | Getting up | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | |
| 2. | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | |

Add an activity

Delete last activity

| | | | | | | |
|-----|----------------------|--|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| 48. | <input type="text"/> | | Going to bed | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | Showing affection Having sex Sleeping |
|-----|----------------------|--|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|

Previous

Next

| | 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

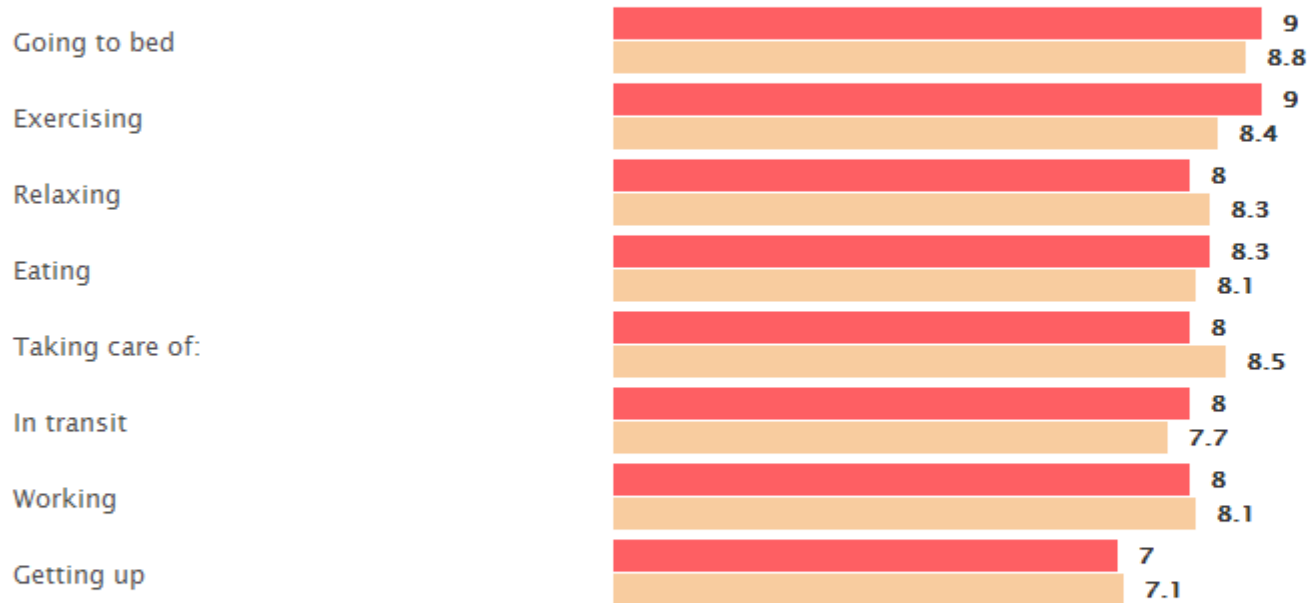


What kind of activities do you enjoy the most?

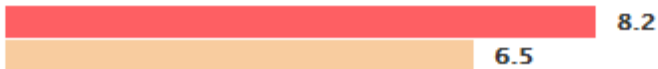




What kind of activities do you enjoy the most compared to participants with a profile similar to yours? ⓘ



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



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



Your Comparative Happiness Indicator

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What can education contribute?

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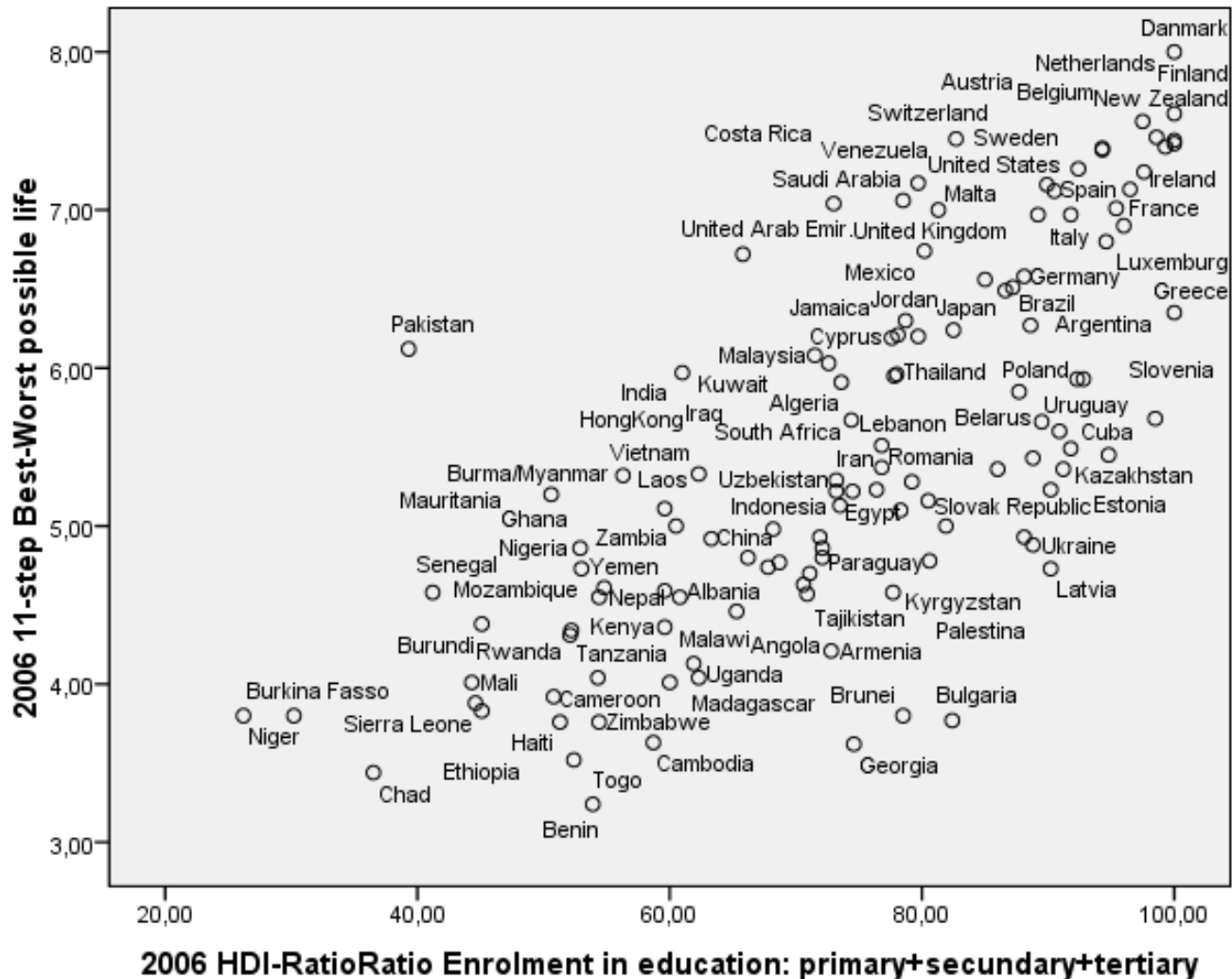
- Mixed blessing of school education
- Possible 'leaks' in school system
- Implications for education

What can education contribute?

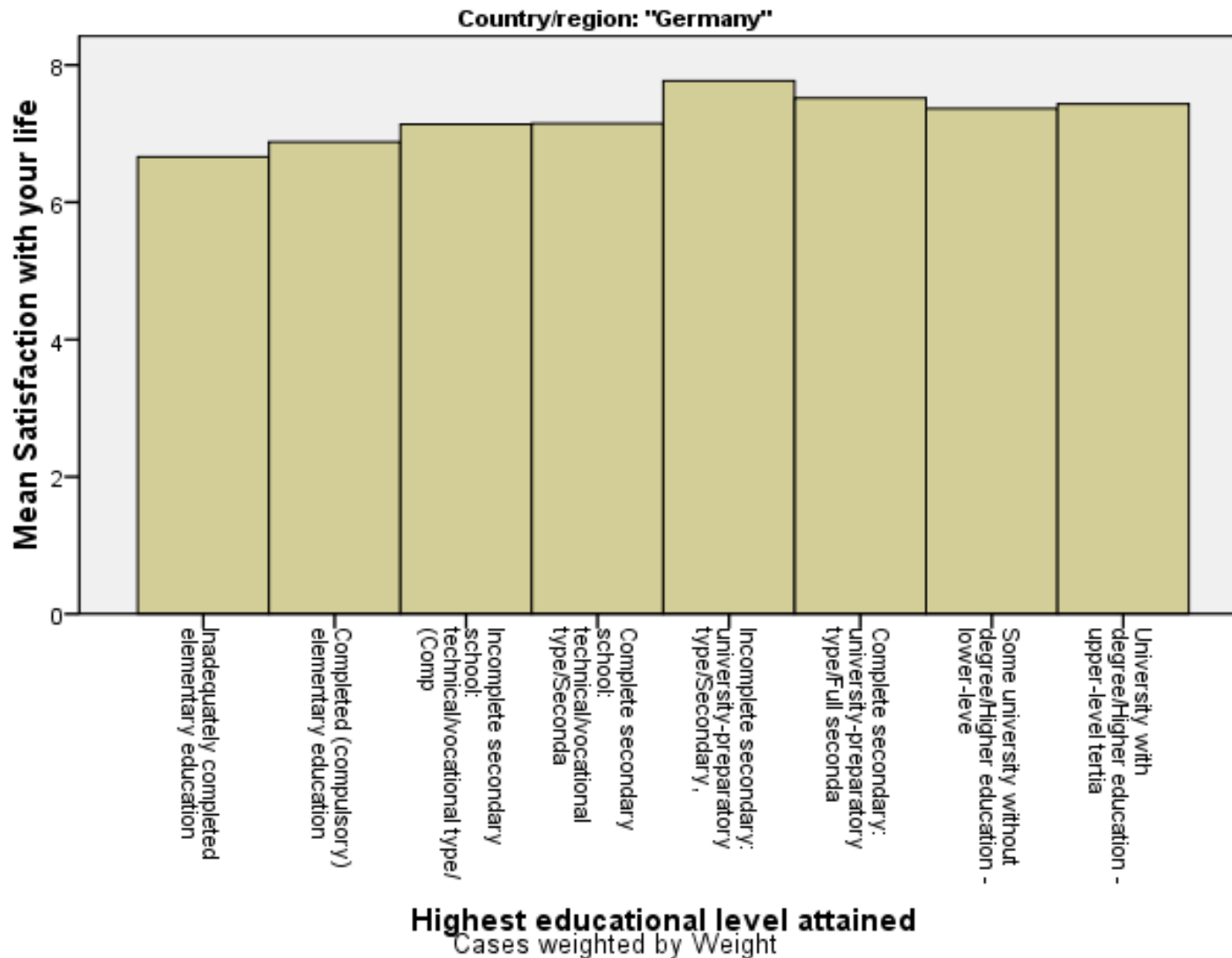
Mixed blessings of schooling

- *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



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?

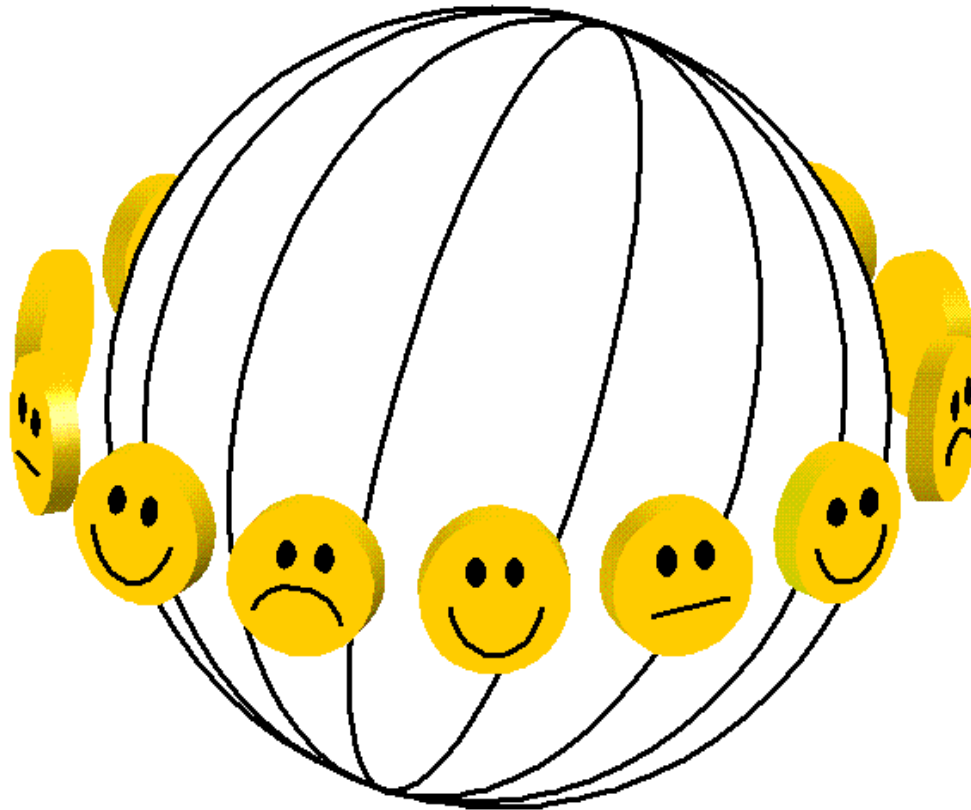
Test effect: Example

- 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>