

# PERSONAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING MODULE

## European Social Survey Wave 3 Questionnaire

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### GENERAL BACKGROUND

Whilst national governments and the EU spend millions of euros collecting and analysing economic (and to a lesser extent social and environmental) indicators, very little attention has been given to how citizens across Europe are actually faring. In other words, much is known about the material conditions of people's lives but much less about their actual experience of the quality of their lives, which we refer to as their 'well-being'.

Leading psychologists, such as Ed Diener, Martin Seligman and Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman, have started to call for governments to create national well-being accounts to supplement existing, predominantly economic data. In their influential 2004 paper called '*Beyond Money: toward an economy of well-being*' Diener and Seligman write:

*Policy decisions at the organisational, corporate and government levels should be more heavily influenced by issues relating to well-being... For example, although economic output has risen steeply over the past decades, there has been no rise in life satisfaction during this period, and there has been a substantial increase in depression and distrust... [however] ... a major problem with using current findings on well-being to guide policy is that they derive from diverse and incommensurable measures of different concepts, in a haphazard mix of respondents... Periodic, systematic assessment of well-being will offer policymakers a much stronger set of findings to use in policy making decisions. (Diener and Seligman, 2004 p1)*

In the UK these issues have recently started to be addressed by policy-makers, initiated by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit producing a paper in 2002 on the policy implications of life satisfaction (Donovan & Halpern, 2002) and further developed by Layard's book on economics and happiness (Layard, 2005) and the new economics foundation's well-being manifesto (Shah & Marks, 2004; Marks & Shah, 2005). This momentum is reflected in the UK Government's sustainable development strategy, *Securing the Future*, published in April 2005, which strongly supports the notion that well-being is an appropriate aim of government. It states:

*The issue of wellbeing lies at the heart of sustainable development, and it remains important to develop appropriate well-being indicators... What is missing is a means of making sure that wellbeing issues are being tackled consistently, in the right way, and that we are genuinely making a difference to people's lives. (HM Government 2005, p23)*

The EU has also started to consider the implications of taking people's quality of life seriously, and the (now defunct) draft constitution reflected this by referring to the aspiration of creating a well-being society within Europe. In October 2005 the European Commission adopted a green paper on mental health, in which it states:

*The Green Paper, aims to launch a public consultation on how better to tackle mental illness and promote mental well-being in the EU. Mental illness affects over 27% of European adults every year, and is responsible for the majority of the annual 58 000 deaths by suicide, more than the number who die from motor vehicle traffic accidents. Moreover, mental health levels can have a significant influence on the economic and social welfare of society. Until recently, however, the importance of mental health has been largely overshadowed by other public health matters. The Commission is therefore*

*being and to examine how best to develop a comprehensive EU strategy on mental health. (Commission of the European Communities 2005)*

## **Aims of the well-being module**

This module seeks to gain a deeper, systematic understanding of people's well-being, with a view to describing how it varies across European nations, identifying the structural, social and individual factors associated with different levels of well-being, and using this information to provide a foundation for policies that are concerned with human well-being.

The specific aim of the module is to provide a new set of well-being indicators, which will offer a more textured approach to the measurement and understanding of well-being. These new measures will supplement the single-item, global measures of life satisfaction and happiness that are included in the core ESS.

In addition, following the spirit of Amartya Sen's work on development, freedom and capabilities (Sen, 1999), the module includes questions on people's functioning as well as their feelings. This aspect of the module has its philosophical roots in Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, the life well-lived, and creates a bridge between the more private realm of personal happiness to the more public issues of competencies, freedoms and opportunities. Further, while numerous surveys have shown a relationship between material circumstances and how people feel about their lives (eg Donovan & Halpern, 2002; Helliwell, 2003; Helliwell & Putnam, 2005), it has been reported that in economically developed countries, material circumstances account for only about 10% of the variation between individuals in measures of life satisfaction or happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). A far greater amount of the variation is explained by "intentional activities", that is, the way individuals are functioning in their daily lives, and it is this often neglected aspect of well-being that this module seeks to illuminate further.

To summarise, the module extends the measurement of well-being in several ways:

- It adopts a definition of well-being which incorporates not only how people feel, i.e. hedonic aspects of well-being such as pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction, but also how people function, i.e. eudaimonic aspects of well-being, such as competency, interest or engagement, meaning or purpose in life.
- It gives emphasis to inter-personal, or social, well-being as well as personal well-being.
- It incorporates two complementary methodologies: (a) general evaluative questions that assess the individual's feelings and functionings (within or across domains), and (b) more specific questions that ask about events that are relatively fresh in the respondent's mind (what happened during the past week).

## **Item selection**

While the overall aim and framework for this module can be readily specified, the choice of specific concepts within the field of well-being, and the choice of specific items to measure these concepts has proved to be a major challenge. This is because there is not yet a consensus among psychologists about the components of well-being, or what would constitute the "gold standard" for measuring well-being. However, there is a consensus that the measurement of well-being is important and should be undertaken in major surveys, while recognising that this is an emerging science (Diener, In press).

Some investigators have adopted a very pragmatic approach to the assessment of well-being using global life satisfaction and domain satisfaction as their key indicators (eg Cummins, 1997).

While we have included some measures of satisfaction in the module (in addition to the global life satisfaction question in the ESS core), we believe that a dependence on satisfaction measures is unwise. Satisfaction indicates the extent to which one's experiences match one's expectations, so a high level of satisfaction will be reported both by people who have very positive experiences, and by people who have less positive experiences but low expectations. Other well-being investigators have adopted a variety of theoretical approaches. For example, Seligman defines happiness as the combination of pleasure, engagement and meaning (Seligman, 2002), identifying pleasure as the hedonic component and engagement and meaning as the eudaimonic components. Ryff defines eudaimonic well-being as comprising six components: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998). On the other hand, Deci & Ryan (2000) regard autonomy, competence (similar to environmental mastery) and positive relationships as the precursors of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being rather than components of well-being. They measure well-being outcomes using a range of measures including self esteem, life satisfaction and health.

We have tried to steer a course between these and various other pragmatic and theoretical approaches to well-being, by including in this module, concepts that most investigators regard as being important aspects of well-being, whether conceived as components or precursors. Where possible, we have used or adapted questions from existing items or scales, but in many cases, we found that existing items did not express succinctly the concept that we were trying to measure, or that the way in which the question was worded would lead to difficulties in interpretation or translation. Accordingly, a number of items have been developed for this survey. The origins of all items are indicated.

We recommend that the data obtained from the module be used in a flexible way. At one extreme, Europe-wide responses to individual items will provide valuable descriptive, and often policy-relevant information. At the other extreme, psychometric analysis of the data obtained from the survey will indicate how to combine items into the most informative summary measures of well-being. At an intermediate level of analysis, examination of the relationship between these new measures and the single-item life satisfaction/happiness questions should also yield valuable insights into the meaning and validity of these widely used measures.

The framework of the well-being module is as follows. It is divided into two sections, corresponding to personal and inter-personal dimensions of well-being. Each of these is further sub-divided into feelings and functionings. There are also a few supplementary items mostly concerned with job characteristics which have an effect on well-being. Note that in this document, items are listed in the relevant section of the conceptual framework although in the final or pilot version of the module they are intermixed, according to question topic and type of response code.

**Note** In this document, items are generally listed in the section of the conceptual framework to which they belong. However, they are presented in a different order in the questionnaire (see Pilot version attached). The code in square brackets that follows each item in this document indicates the location of the item in the pilot questionnaire (the PE number: P=Pilot; E=Section E, The Well-being Module).

## **SECTION 1.1 Personal feelings**

### Background

Whilst this module seeks to expand the concept of well-being to include functioning and inter-personal aspects of well-being, people's reports of their personal feelings remain one of the foundations of any concept of well-being. The measures used in this section, together with the

items on life satisfaction and happiness in the ESS core, are predominantly well established and have a strong research history. By using statistical techniques such as factor analysis, psychologists have shown that a number of factors contribute independently to the overall level of subjective well-being (SWB). These factors include life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood (eg Diener et al., 1999). These can to some degree be systemised in temporal terms by assessing people's feelings about the past, present and future. In addition, some individual characteristics or behaviours have been identified which predispose the person to having high levels of SWB or increasing their quality of life.

Specifically, this part of the module includes an extension of the concept of satisfaction with life by adding questions on satisfaction with specific domains; work, standard of living, discretionary time and work-life balance. We have augmented the happiness (positive mood) item in the ESS core, by adding a standard set of questions about experiences of positive and negative moods in the past week – the 8-item CES-D, which is an established depression scale (HRS Health Working Group, 2000: Radloff, 1977). We are supplementing this set of questions with 3 items about energy from the Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), as well as one additional positive mood item from the MIDUS study (feeling calm and peaceful; Brim et al, 2004

), and three additional negative mood items (fear, anxiety, anger) which we regard as being as important as depression. As well as these direct evaluations of people's feelings, this part of the module assesses some factors that predispose people towards high levels of well-being; these include satisfaction with one's achievements (positive feelings about the past), optimism (positive feelings about the future) and self esteem (positive feelings about oneself).

1. I'm always optimistic about my future. [Optimism: from Revised Life Orientation Test: Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994] [PE2]
2. If something can go wrong for me, it will. [Optimism: from Revised Life Orientation Test: Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994] [PE3]
3. I take a positive attitude towards myself. [Self esteem - from Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, 1965] [PE4]
4. At times I think I am no good at all. [Self esteem - from Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale, 1965] [PE5]
5. In most ways my life is close to my ideal. [Satisfaction with the present – From Diener Life Satisfaction scale] [PE6]
6. How satisfied are you with how your life has turned out so far? [Satisfaction with the past - adapted from Diener: Life Satisfaction scale] [PE7]
7. How satisfied are you with your present standard of living? [Satisfaction with material circumstances – Cummins, 1997] [PE8]
8. How satisfied are you with the balance between your job and the rest of your life? [Satisfaction with work-life balance - adapted from David Guest's survey for Chartered Institute of Personnel Development and the ESS Round 2 module on family and work] [PE60]
9. In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy. [Discretionary time use - developed for this survey] [PE29]

10. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your present job? [Job satisfaction - various sources including British Household Panel Survey] [PE59]
11. How often do you find your job interesting? [Interest/engagement (work) - developed for this survey] [PE61]
12. How often do you find your job stressful? [Negative affect (work) - developed for this survey] [PE62]
13. How often do you find your job enjoyable? [Positive affect (Work) - developed for this survey] [PE63]
14. I will now read out a list of the ways you might have felt or behaved in the past week. [Positive and negative affect: 8-item CES-D (a) – (h); 3 energy items from SHARE (i) – (k); one additional positive item from MIDUS (l), plus additional negative items developed for this survey] [PE9-23].

Please tell me how much of the time during the past week:

- (a) ... you felt depressed
- (b) ... you felt that everything you did was an effort
- (c) ... your sleep was restless
- (d) ... you were happy
- (e) ... you felt lonely
- (f) ... you enjoyed life
- (g) ... you felt sad
- (h) ... you could not get going
- (i) ... you felt tired
- (j) ... you had a lot of energy
- (k) ... you felt really rested when you woke up in the morning
- (l) ... you felt calm and peaceful
- (m) ... you felt fearful
- (n) ... you felt angry
- (o) ... you felt anxious

## **SECTION 1.2 Personal functioning**

### Background

Evidence from a variety of sources shows that people's perceptions of how well they are functioning, how much control they have over their lives, and the extent to which they perceive their activities as having meaning, are central to an overall sense of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Diener & Fujita, In press; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Seligman, 2002). For example, Ryan and Deci have demonstrated that three basic psychological needs have to be satisfied in order for people to function in healthy or optimal ways; these are the need for autonomy (having a sense of control over one's life), competence (a sense that one is functioning effectively) and relatedness (having positive interactions with others) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, the relative importance of each of these needs can vary widely across countries (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Other investigators have shown that health and overall life satisfaction are strongly related to having a sense of meaning or purpose in life (Ryff & Singer, 1998; Diener & Fujita, In press; Seligman, 2002). Purpose in life is closely related to the notion of pursuing goals and investing in the future.

Some investigators have shown that there are further aspects of functioning that are central to psychological well-being and are the hallmarks of productivity and creativity; these include being fully engaged in one's activities and finding them challenging (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) and having a sense of curiosity or willingness to learn new things (Kashdan et al, 2004). We have also incorporated a question about psychological resilience (the ability to recover rapidly or 'bounce back'), since this indicates the permanence of people's responses to specific setbacks (Seligman, 2002 p91).

This part of the module assesses individual aspects of all these concepts. Specifically, it includes questions about autonomy, competence and self efficacy, curiosity, interest in learning, sense of meaning and purpose, and resilience.

1. I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life. [Autonomy - from Ryan & Deci: Autonomy scale] [PE30]
2. In my daily life I get very little chance to show how capable I am. [Competence - adapted from Ryan & Deci: Competence scale] [PE31]
3. I enjoy tackling problems that are completely new to me [Challenge – from Curiosity subscale of Cloninger's Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI)] [PE32]
4. Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do. [Competence/achievement – from Ryan & Deci: Competence scale] [PE33]
5. I seldom get a chance to learn new things. [Opportunities for learning - adapted from Ryan & Deci: Competence scale] [PE37]
6. I enjoy learning new things. [ Developed for this survey] [PE38]
7. During your free time last week, for how much of this time were you absorbed in what you were doing? [Interest/engagement (discretionary time) – developed for this survey] [PE27]
8. During your free time last week, for how much of this time did you feel bored? [Interest/engagement (discretionary time) – developed for this survey] [PE28]
9. When things go wrong in my life, it generally takes me a long time to get back to normal. [Resilience - developed for this survey] [PE34]
10. I like making plans for the future. [Future orientation - adapted from Ryff: Purpose in Life scale] [PE39]
11. I like working to make my plans a reality. [Future orientation - adapted from Ryff: Purpose in Life scale] [PE40]
12. I generally feel that what I do in my life is worthwhile. [Purpose in life - adapted from Antonovsky: Sense of Coherence scale] [PE45]

## **SECTION 1.3 Inter-personal feelings**

### Background

Extensive research shows that the quality of interactions with others influences all aspects of health and functioning (Elliott & Umberson, 2004; House et al, 1988). For example, it is well

known that social isolation is strongly associated with all aspects of health and well-being, while social support has a strong positive relationship with physical and mental health and healthy lifestyle (eg House et al, 1988). The concept of social reciprocity (the perceived relationship between what one gives and what one receives) is related to the concepts of being treated fairly, and this has been strongly linked to health and productive activities (Siegrist et al., 2004; Siegrist, 2005). Other concepts within this section and the following one come from Keyes' concept of social well-being (Keyes, 1998) which he divides into social coherence, social integration, social acceptance, social contribution and social actualization.

This part of the module augments the questions incorporated in the core ESS about trust, safety in the neighbourhood, whether one has an intimate relationship, whether one is in a group that is discriminated against, and religious affiliation. All but one of these core ESS questions (intimate relationship) are essentially objective. In order to understand more about relationship quality, we have included questions about how people evaluate their relationships.

In this section of the module, we assess social isolation with a question about loneliness and a question about a sense of belonging to a group or community (Keyes 2003). This section also includes questions about being treated fairly, being treated with respect, being cared for and supported, as well as questions about the quality of family relationships, social reciprocity and perceived social progress.

1. There is no group that I feel I am really part of. [Social isolation (communal) – adapted from Keyes: Social Integration scale] [PE46]
2. There are people in my life who really care about me. [Being cared for – adapted from Ryan & Deci: Relatedness scale] [PE47]
3. Life in [COUNTRY] isn't improving for people like me. [Perceived social progress – adapted from Keyes: Social Actualisation scale] [PE48]
4. Whenever I get into difficulties, I know there is a friend or family member I can turn to. [Social support – developed for this survey] [PE49]
5. How much of the time spent with your immediate family is enjoyable? [Developed for this survey] [PE35]
6. How much of the time spent with your immediate family is stressful? [Developed for this survey] [PE36]
7. To what extent do you feel that people in your local area help one another? [Social support (communal) – developed for this survey] [PE41]
8. To what extent do you feel that people treat you with respect? [Respectful treatment – developed for this survey] [PE42]
9. To what extent do you feel that people treat you unfairly? [Fair treatment - adapted from Antonovsky: Sense of Coherence scale] [PE43]
10. To what extent do you feel that you get the recognition you deserve for what you do? [Social reciprocity - Siegrist: Effort/reward Imbalance scale] [PE44]

## **SECTION 1.4 Inter-personal functioning**

## Background

The previous section concerned being the recipient of what other people or society have to offer, whereas this section concerns what the individual does for other people or for their community. In other words, it is about pro-social behaviour. While policies across Europe are concerned with reducing anti-social behaviour, there is evidence that pro-social behaviour, behaviour that builds social capital, improves the well-being of both the person behaving pro-socially, and those around them (Helliwell & Putnam, 2005). Identifying the prevalence of pro-social behaviour around Europe as well as the factors that contribute to it will have implications both for understanding this form of inter-personal functioning, and developing policies that encourage it in many more people.

The core ESS interview contains no relevant items, but the self-report ESS Values section includes a wealth of information about the extent to which the individual values inter-personal functioning. This new well-being module, in contrast, enquires about the actual performance of such activities, since even if a high value is placed on them, they may not in fact form a part of the individual's life. This part of the module assesses several aspects of pro-social behaviour, including caring, volunteering and social engagement, generosity and altruism.

How often, if at all, did you do each of the following in the past 12 months:

1. ... got involved in events or activities in your local area? [Social engagement – developed for this survey] [PE51]
2. ... got involved in voluntary or charitable work? [Volunteering - developed for this survey] [PE52]
3. ... voluntarily gave practical help or support to someone outside your household? [Caring for others – adapted from BSA/ISSP] [PE53]
4. ... gave money to a charity? [Generosity – adapted from BSA/ISSP] [PE54]
5. If I help someone, I expect some help in return. [Altruism (reverse coded) - developed for this survey] [PE50]
6. In the last 7 days, how much time, if any, did you spend looking after members of your family who needed taking care of? [Caring for family - adapted from ESS Round 2 Work and Family module] [PE55]

## **FURTHER QUESTIONS**

There are a number of additional questions which we regard as being important for the understanding of well-being and which are incorporated at appropriate points in the questionnaire.

### **Use of discretionary time**

During your free time last week, for how much of this time:

1. ... were you with friends or family? [Developed for this survey] [PE24]
2. ... were you relaxing on your own? [Developed for this survey] [PE25]

3. ... were you physically active? [Developed for this survey] [PE26]
4. Do you ever feel frustrated by having watched too much television? [Developed for this survey] [PE56]

### **Risk of unemployment**

5. How likely would you say you are to become unemployed in the next 12 months? [Adapted from Swiss Household Panel Survey] [PE64]

### **Income and income comparisons**

6. Considering all my efforts and achievements at work, I regard my income as appropriate. [Adapted from Siegrist: Effort/reward Imbalance scale] [PE65]
7. I feel I get paid fairly for the job I do. [Developed for this survey] [PE66]
8. How important is it to you to compare your income with other people's incomes? [Developed for this survey] [PE67]
9. Whose income would you be most likely to compare your own with? Please choose one of the following groups: work colleagues, family members, friends, others. [Developed for this survey] [PE68]
10. To what extent do you worry that you spend more money than you can afford? [Developed for this survey] [PE57]

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