

“Exploring perceptions of Wellbeing”

A description of the research presently in progress

The reason for the research:

There is considerable interest in supplementing or replacing Gross National Product to take more account of other means of measuring the success of a society. Accordingly, this project is concerned to identify contemporary measures of personal wellbeing and to understand how those measures relate to the current economic measures as published by the ONS at a macro and, where appropriate, at an individual level. Accordingly we propose an extensive program of qualitative research to explore people’s experience of and attitudes towards a wide range of topics which underlie concepts of welfare and wellbeing.

By means of a series of text focus groups we intend to explore each of the Domains as currently measured by the ONS and listed in the appendix; probing for opinions on the individual indicators that contribute to each Domain. We will also cover:

- The degree to which people’s perceptions of wellbeing is determined by their working lives and what role employment plays in providing a feeling of security as compared to the independence of self-employment. Covering awareness of and attitudes towards changes in employment practice such as:
 - zero hour contracts
 - IR35
 - productivity gains
 - the gig economy
- The usage and perceived value of free goods and other ‘rewards’
- Use of social media
- Perceived value of data /statistics? What value do people place on figures such as the recent data on Covid, unemployment rates, GDP etc? Should people be rewarded for providing answers to Government questions?
- Knowledge of and attitudes to climate change and the green economy.

Our objectives are therefore:

- 1) firstly to create a comprehensive battery of Likert scales covering all aspects of perceptions of wellbeing / welfare, and then
- 2) to obtain responses to those scales from a larger sample for factor analysis.

We then envisage a subsequent survey to measure the population on the reduced list of scales, as determined from the factor analysis; thus measuring the populations perceptions of wellbeing

Method:

The core element of this study will be a series of extended focus groups and the project will be conducted in 6 phases as follows:

1. Further literature review and analysis of existing ONS wellbeing measures, including correlation analysis across the various measures. Preparation of topic guides and stimulus material. Sample selection.
2. Recruitment of participants to the research aged 16+ from random samples of target populations with financial inducements to take part. Example specific groups are: self-employed persons, the elderly (70+), health workers; students, ethnic minorities as well as mixed groups (no specific category). [Sample Answers Ltd](#) will be the primary source of sample for potential respondents.
3. 1st phase of online focus groups using text communication, supported by telephone links as required. The platforms to be employed will include WhatsApp, Facebook and [Qtube](#), with each group lasting for up to a week to provide participants with the opportunity to engage at times of their convenience and help ensure more considered responses.
4. Following analysis of the text groups to identify potential Likert scales, we will conduct a second wave of video link focus groups, using the Qtube platform to further explore any remaining areas of concern.
5. Complete the creation of 5 point agree/disagree Likert scales as indicated by the focus group work and place them on the web to gain feedback from all participants. Also make available for completion by a wider public through advertising on social media.
6. Analysis and reporting, to include factor analysis of the scales and observations of any key differences by various classification data (e.g. age, region, gender etc). Note that we envisage that a minimum of 100 scales will be tested in the final stage

To summarise:

Every aspect of our society, including our economy, has received a major shock during the past 12 months as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. At the same time government statistical offices are under increasing international pressure to include data on their citizens' welfare as part of the consideration of economic success. Consideration of what is meant by welfare is influenced by climate change which also is affecting considerations of

risk and security, both physical and economic. It seems timely to seek insight into individual awareness and attitudes towards these issues, to create a new base line for understanding developments as we enter an entirely new 'world' for the citizens of the United Kingdom given the fact of the other changes in progress due to Brexit.

The Authors:

The authors are all founder directors of Better Statistics CIC, which organisation has evolved from the Campaign for Better Statistics. That campaign had originated from dis-satisfaction with the information available on the growing self-employed sector. In particular, campaign members felt that the economic contribution of this sector was being under-estimated whilst the growing numbers of self-employed persons represented a significant change in the fabric of our society. Concomitantly, the Bean report on Economic Statistics had also highlighted the failure of data on the economy to keep pace with the changes in society.

Individuals are:

Tony Dent MSc – Director Better Statistics CIC and of CMRGroup.com Ltd;

Phyllis Macfarlane BSc – Director Better Statistics CIC and past Chairman of the Market Research Society, member ESOMAR Committee for Education and Trustee of NatCen ;

Iain MacKay MA – Director Better Statistics CIC and founder and Director of X-MR Ltd and leading IT consultant for Market Research

The authors are each from a commercial market research background, with considerable experience of seminal research projects exploring the issues created by changing circumstances for both households and businesses.

Additionally we are pleased to have the support of ***Professor Paul Allin*** of Imperial College to advise on drafting topic guides for the work and review the results at each stage. Professor Allin is the co-author (with David Hand) of ***The Wellbeing of Nations: Meaning Motive and Measurement*** and also of ***From GDP to Sustainable Lives: Changing Statistics to Changing Live.***

Finally, the chief moderator for the focus groups will be ***Nick Dent MA***, a mental health professional with extensive experience of focus group moderation with PALS and other elements of NHS engagement.

Appendix: Domains from ONS Publication [Measuring National Wellbeing](#):

Domain	Sheet	Measure
<u>Personal well-being</u>	1.1	Very high rating of satisfaction with their lives overall
-	1.2	Very high rating of how worthwhile they feel the things they do are
-	1.3	Rated their happiness yesterday as very high
-	1.4	Rated their anxiety yesterday as very low
-	1.5	Population mental well-being
<u>Our relationships</u>	2.1	Proportion of those in fairly or extremely unhappy relationships
-	2.2	Feelings of loneliness often/always
-	2.3	Has a spouse or partner, family member or friend to rely on if they have a serious problem
<u>Health</u>	3.1	Healthy life expectancy at birth (male/female)
-	3.2	Percentage who reported a disability
-	3.3	Mostly or completely satisfied with their health
-	3.4	Some evidence indicating depression or anxiety
<u>What we do</u>	4.1	Unemployment rate
-	4.2	Mostly or completely satisfied with their job
-	4.3	Mostly or completely satisfied with their amount of leisure time
-	4.4	Volunteered more than once in the last 12 months
-	4.5	Engaged with/participated in arts or cultural activity at least 3 times in last year
-	4.6	Percentage who have taken part in at least 150 minutes of sport and physical activities a week
<u>Where we live</u>	5.1	Crimes against the person (per 1,000 adults)
-	5.2	Felt fairly/very safe walking alone after dark (men/women)
-	5.3	Accessed natural environment at least once a week in the last 12 months
-	5.4	Agreed/agreed strongly they felt they belonged to their neighbourhood
-	5.5	Average minimum travel time to reach the nearest key services
-	5.6	Fairly/very satisfied with their accommodation
<u>Personal finance</u>	6.1	Individuals in households with less than 60% of median income before housing costs
-	6.2	Median wealth per household, including pension wealth
-	6.3	Real median household income
-	6.4	Mostly or completely satisfied with the income of their household
-	6.5	Report finding it quite or very difficult to get by financially
<u>The economy</u>	7.1	Real net national disposable income per head
-	7.2	UK public sector net debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product
-	7.3	Inflation rate (as measured by CPIH)
<u>Education and skills</u>	8.1	Human capital - the value of individuals' skills, knowledge and competences in labour market
-	8.2	Those not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
-	8.3	UK residents aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications
<u>Governance</u>	9.1	Voter turnout in UK General Elections
-	9.2	Those who have trust in national Government
<u>The natural environment</u>	10.1	Total greenhouse gas emissions (millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent)
-	10.2	Protected areas in the UK (Millions hectares)
-	10.3	Energy consumed within the UK from renewable sources
-	10.4	Waste from households that is recycled

Note: Links to the documents used for the work are provided [here](#)