Understanding Happiness

Counting so it counts

ReThinking Development: Local Pathways to Global Well-Being

Plenary Session

Wednesday, July 22 or 23 or so

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National averages of Life Satisfaction, on a scale of 1 to 10.
Index of Life Satisfaction, BC, Lower Mainland
What Supports Well-Being?

- Trust
- Engagement - the more we get together...
- Employment (paid or not, in a good job)
- Family, friends and neighbours
- Good health
- High-quality of government, at all levels
- Adequate income, relative to expectations
- No TV? (ref Tannis MacBeth)
Trust in Neighbours, BC, Lower Mainland
SWB effects of age and serious illness in two Canadian surveys
Happiness by age group in Europe, by decade on a 4-point scale
Relative Income and Happiness

SWB relative to decile 1

- OECD below
- Developing above
Effects of income on financial and life satisfaction in Canada

- Below $20k
- Ca$20~39
- Ca$40~59
- Ca$60~99
- Ca$100

GSS, Life satisfaction
GSS, Financial Satisfaction
SWB effects of frequent visits/contacts with family, friends and neighbors

EDS & ESC

- Contacting, EDS
- Visiting, ESC

 familial, friends, and neighbors contact levels are shown with bars of different heights.
Income equivalents of factors affecting life satisfaction

Income equivalents:
- $320,000
- $270,000
- $220,000
- $170,000
- $120,000
- $70,000
- $20,000
- $30,000
- $80,000
- $130,000

Factors:
- trust
- married
- separ
- divorced
- unemp
- illness

Chart shows the impact of these factors on life satisfaction, with a decrease in income equivalents for each factor.
More Income equivalents of factors affecting SWB

- $150,000
- $100,000
- $50,000
- $0
- $50,000
- $100,000
- $150,000

per membership frequently
family frequently
friends frequently
neighbours frequently
discrimination
god
How’s the Job?

- Workplace trust: $120,000
- Job requires skills: $100,000
- Enough time: $60,000
- Free of conflicting demands: $50,000
- Variety of tasks: $120,000
Explaining international differences in well-being and suicide

Betas

Mem  Trust  God  Div  Unem  Govt

Suicide
SWB
More global evidence on good government and well-being

► The Swiss results (Frey and Stutzer): people are more satisfied with their lives in cantons with more responsive local government

► Suicide rates much lower (Chandler and Lalonde) in BC aboriginal communities with stronger cultures and local governance

► Latest average measures of the quality of govt (Kaufmann-Kraay) US 1.58, Canada 1.71, Mexico .048. [Range -0.98 (Belarus) to +1.95 (Finland) in WVS countries.]
Linking Happiness and Sustainability

- Doing the right things create happiness
- But people still want to keep up with the Joneses. (consuming creates unhappiness)
- So why not change the Joneses, and emulate families with small footprints?
- This will take personal and family engagement (TV is a bad parent); but engagement is what makes us happy, so why not?