

Subjective Well-Being

Concepts, measurement and policy applications

Juan Carlos Parra and Malte Johann

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This session

- Why should we care
- How to measure
- How to use for policy

Why do you like (not) your current job?

- Rank the 5 most important positive attributes
- Rank the 5 most important negative attributes

Why should we care?

- It is widely recognized that (observable) outcomes can tell us only part of the story about quality of life.
- The relationship between happiness or life satisfaction and the economic domain is not straightforward.
- Between 40% and 60% of the variation in life satisfaction can be explained by per capita income. Measures of SWB go beyond what can be explained by differences in income.
- Measures of subjective well-being can provide information on the relative importance of several domains in people's lives.

What we mean

“Subjective well-being refers to how people experience and evaluate their lives and specific domains and activities in their lives” (Stone and Mackie, 2014)

Perceptions = SWB ?

Opinions imply judgment.

Perceptions are a description/interpretation of (sensory) information.

Intrinsically initiate accurate alignments.

Perceptions are a common way to measure SWB.

Perceptions

Perceptions are important in themselves and because they affect behavior.

Even under perfect information people might perceive, value and behave differently.

Examples include trust and prejudice.

Misperceptions might become self-fulfilling prophecies (e.g., ethnic minority is less productive)

Misperceptions

theguardian

Today's key fact: you are probably wrong about almost everything

Most people around the world are pretty bad when it comes to knowing the numbers behind the news. But how issues such as immigration are perceived can shape political opinion and promote misconceptions

Misperceptions

theguardian

“Britons overstate the proportion of Muslims in their country by a factor of four, according to a new survey by Ipsos Mori that reveals public understanding of the numbers behind the daily news in 14 countries.

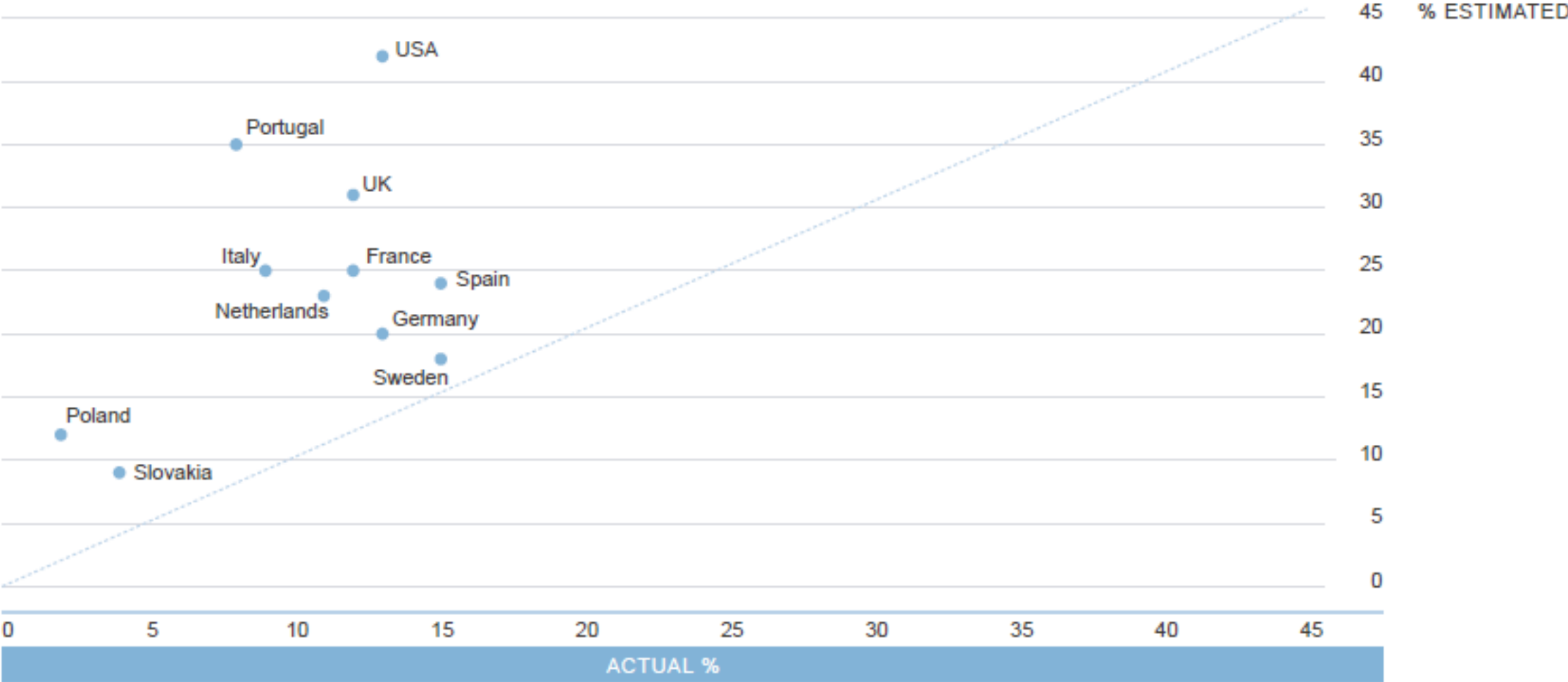
People from the UK also think immigrants make up twice the proportion of the population as is really the case – and that many more people are unemployed than actually are.

Such misconceptions are typical around the world, but they can have a significant impact as politicians aim to focus on voter perceptions, not on the actual data.”

Source: www.theguardian.com (October 2014)

Overestimation of immigrants

In your opinion, what percentage of the total (COUNTRY) population are immigrants? You can answer any number between 0 and 100.



How to measure

- Most times it makes more sense to add modules or questions on SWB to existing surveys than creating a new instrument
- There are very rich sources of SWB measures:
 - Afrobarometer (afrobarometer.org) and other barometers (Euro, Latin)
 - World Values Survey (worldvaluessurvey.org)
 - Gallup World Poll Survey (gallup.com)

Examples of measures

- Life satisfaction
“Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with your life these days?”
- Self-esteem
How much do you agree with the following statement?
“I describe myself as a confident person”
- Empowerment
“How are decisions made at home regarding _____”
- Tolerance
“Who would you like to have as a neighbor?”

Examples of measures

- Fairness
 - “Do you think [group A] and [group B] are treated equally in society”
- Perceptions of inequality
 - Objective vs. subjective inequality (Egypt)



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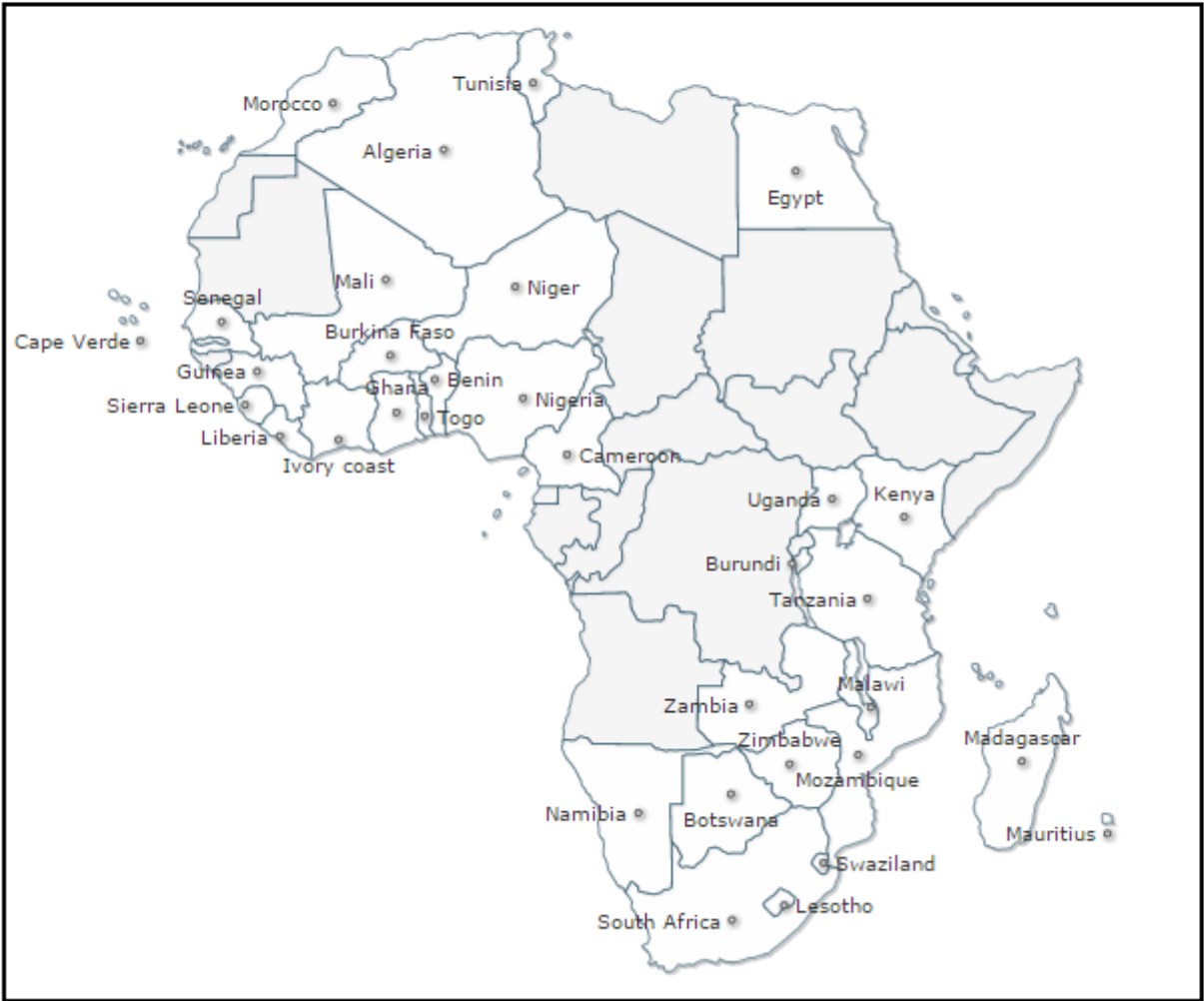
Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer Data Analysis: Country Selection

Select language English ▼

- Country Selection
- Data Points
- Responses
- Mapping
- Time Series

Welcome to the Afrobarometer online analysis tool. Select a round to view data, click on a country name to restrict analysis to selected regions.



Select the Afrobarometer Round

- R1 1999/2001
- R2 2002/2003
- R3 2005/2006
- R4 2008/2009
- R5 2011/2013
- R6 2014/2015

Select countries to analyze

- Select all
- Clear selection
- Algeria
- Mauritius
- Benin
- Morocco
- Botswana
- Mozambique
- Burkina Faso
- Namibia
- Burundi
- Niger
- Cameroon
- Nigeria
- Cape Verde
- Senegal
- Ivory coast
- Sierra Leone
- Egypt
- South Africa
- Ghana
- Swaziland
- Guinea
- Tanzania
- Kenya
- Togo
- Lesotho
- Tunisia
- Liberia
- Uganda
- Madagascar
- Zambia
- Malawi
- Zimbabwe
- Mali

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Afrobarometer

Afrobarometer R5 2011/2013

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Search questions

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Select a Survey Topic

[Socio-Demographics & Sample Characteristics](#)[Interview Conditions](#)[Economy](#)[Democracy and politics](#)[Politics and government too complicated](#)[Institutions and leaders](#)[Participation-Civic engagement](#)[Government Services and Performance
Policy preferences](#)[Citizenship and Identity](#)[Equality and Gender](#)[Taxation](#)[Crime and Security](#)[Other](#)[MENA Issues](#)

The survey questions for the topic chosen on the left will appear here.

Then click on a question to see the results and analyze the response data.

Crime and Security

-  Payments required to powerful people
-  How much fear political intimidation or violence
-  How often felt unsafe walking in neighbourhood
-  [How often feared crime in home](#)
-  Had something stolen from house
-  Have been physically attacked
-  Reported the incident to the police
-  Main reason for not reporting crimes to the police
-  If a victim of crime, whom to go to first for assistance

Fear of crime

Country Selection

Data Points

Responses

Mapping

Time Series

How often feared crime in home

(Base: All respondents)

"Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Feared crime in your own home?"

R2 2002/2003

R3 2005/2006

R4 2008/2009

R5 2011/2013

R6 2014/2015

		Country			
		Côte d'Ivoire	Cameroon	South Africa	Uganda
Never	5.6%	63.0%	46.0%	66.7%	
Just once or twice	7.6%	12.5%	18.1%	13.7%	
Several times	12.5%	14.4%	11.1%	14.7%	10.0%
Many times	7.6%	6.5%	9.4%	10.4%	4.4%
Always	6.6%	5.7%	3.5%	10.6%	4.5%
Missing; Unknown	0.1%	-	0.2%	-	0.1%
Don't know	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.6%
(N)	(7,199)	(1,200)	(1,200)	(2,399)	(2,400)

Selected Samples: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, Uganda

Source: Afrobarometer, R5, 2011/2013

World Values Survey

Online Data Analysis

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World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014

Select Wave

Select Countries

Survey questions

Responses

Maps

Time Series

Please choose the countries you want to compare. You can change selection at any time. Click [Survey questions] to browse the questions, [Select Wave] to change wave or any other tab to display results.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Algeria | <input type="checkbox"/> Argentina | <input type="checkbox"/> Armenia | <input type="checkbox"/> Australia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Azerbaijan | <input type="checkbox"/> Bahrain | <input type="checkbox"/> Belarus | <input type="checkbox"/> Brazil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colombia | <input type="checkbox"/> Cyprus | <input type="checkbox"/> Chile | <input type="checkbox"/> China |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecuador | <input type="checkbox"/> Egypt | <input type="checkbox"/> Estonia | <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Germany | <input type="checkbox"/> Ghana | <input type="checkbox"/> Hong Kong | <input type="checkbox"/> India |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iraq | <input type="checkbox"/> Japan | <input type="checkbox"/> Jordan | <input type="checkbox"/> Kazakhstan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kuwait | <input type="checkbox"/> Kyrgyzstan | <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanon | <input type="checkbox"/> Libya |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Malaysia | <input type="checkbox"/> Mexico | <input type="checkbox"/> Morocco | <input type="checkbox"/> Netherlands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Zealand | <input type="checkbox"/> Nigeria | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan | <input type="checkbox"/> Palestine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peru | <input type="checkbox"/> Philippines | <input type="checkbox"/> Poland | <input type="checkbox"/> Qatar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Romania | <input type="checkbox"/> Russian Federation | <input type="checkbox"/> Rwanda | <input type="checkbox"/> Singapore |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slovenia | <input type="checkbox"/> South Africa | <input type="checkbox"/> South Korea | <input type="checkbox"/> Spain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweden | <input type="checkbox"/> Taiwan | <input type="checkbox"/> Thailand | <input type="checkbox"/> Trinidad and Tobago |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tunisia | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey | <input type="checkbox"/> Ukraine | <input type="checkbox"/> United States |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Uruguay | <input type="checkbox"/> Uzbekistan | <input type="checkbox"/> Yemen | <input type="checkbox"/> Zimbabwe |

Xenophobia

Select Wave | Select Countries | Survey questions | **Responses** | Maps | Time Series

V39.- Would not like to have as neighbors: Immigrants/foreign workers

Cross by: -- Change --

Display: Show Column % (all responses)

	TOTAL	Country Code				
		Ghana	Nigeria	Rwanda	South Africa	Zimbabwe
Mentioned	21.9%	20.2%	20.1%	5.4%	40.9%	13.7%
Not mentioned	78.1%	79.8%	79.9%	94.6%	59.1%	86.3%
(N)	(12,073)	(1,552)	(1,759)	(1,527)	(3,531)	(1,499)

	Country Code	
	Tunisia	Uruguay
Mentioned	18.8%	1.7%
Not mentioned	81.2%	98.3%
(N)	(1,205)	(1,000)

Selected samples: Ghana 2011, Nigeria 2011, Rwanda 2012, South-Africa 2013, Tunisia 2013, Uruguay 2011, Zimbabwe 2011

Question wording

On this list are various groups of people. Could you please mention any that you would not like to have as neighbors?:

Immigrants/Foreign workers

Equivalences in other waves

- 1981/1984: V57
- 1990/1994: V77
- 1995/1999: V57
- 2000/2004: V73
- 2005/2009: V37
- 2010/2013: V39

Additional translations

--Select a language--

Source: World Values Survey Wave 6, 2010-2014

Social Cohesion

Select Wave Select Countries Survey questions **Responses** Maps Time Series

V105.- How much you trust: People you meet for the first time

Cross by -- Change --

Display Show Column % (all responses)

	TOTAL	Country Code				
		Ghana	Nigeria	Rwanda	South Africa	Tunisia
Trust completely	5.7%	2.5%	4.5%	5.2%	8.9%	2.5%
Trust somewhat	24.1%	13.1%	17.2%	35.9%	30.7%	14.4%
Do not trust very much	38.8%	46.0%	43.0%	43.9%	33.8%	31.6%
Do not trust at all	30.0%	38.4%	35.3%	15.0%	23.4%	50.1%
No answer	*	-	-	0.1%	-	-
Don't know	1.3%	-	-	-	3.2%	1.3%
(N)	(9,574)	(1,552)	(1,759)	(1,527)	(3,531)	(1,205)

Selected samples: Ghana 2011, Nigeria 2011, Rwanda 2012, South-Africa 2013, Tunisia 2013

Question wording

I'd like to ask you how much you trust people from various groups. Could you tell me for each whether you trust people from this group completely, somewhat, not very much or not at all?

People you meet for the first time

Equivalences in other waves

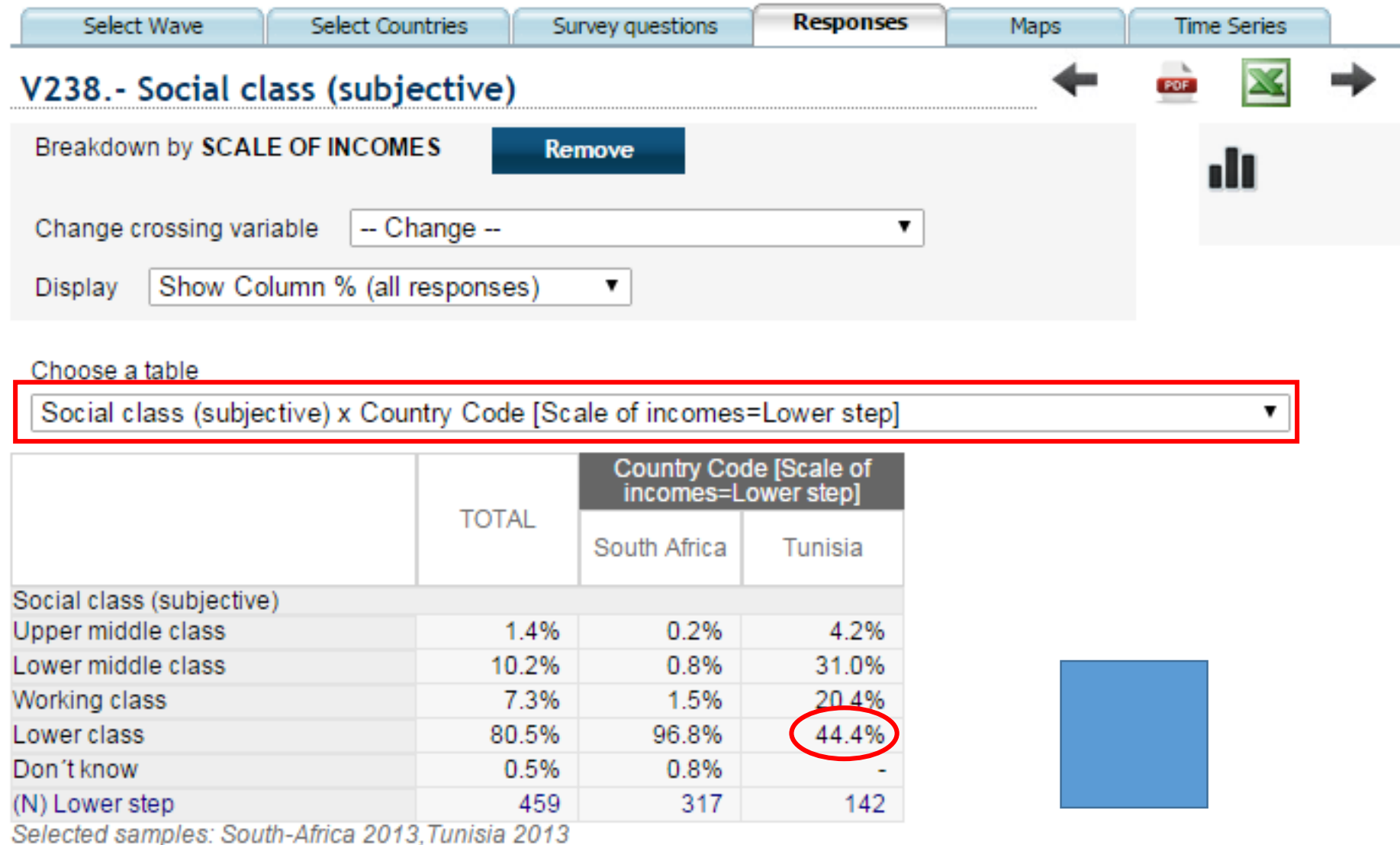
2005/2009: V128

2010/2013: V105

Additional translations

--Select a language--

Social Class & Income



How to measure - validity

- Validity refers to the extent to which a measure actually assesses what is supposed to assess.
- There is a relatively strong correlation between SWB and objective measures
 - National levels of income and life satisfaction
 - Affect and hormonal measures
 - Mortality and low levels of SWB

Using SWB measures in policy

Health

- Checkups for school children. Mental health problems have direct consequences on overall well-being (anxiety, social phobias, and depression are associated with drop-outs, failing grades, drinking, etc). SWB can be used as an effective screening tool.
- Subjective health measures (quick, easy, cheap) add valid information about a person's true health status. Simple self-rated measures predict mortality and longevity even after controlling for objective reports!
- A study found that people who are low in social integration report twice the number of sick days as do people high in social integration.

Using SWB measures in policy

Unemployment

- Unemployment has psychological effects. It might signal to an individual that he or she is not as valuable, and this might affect self-esteem and optimism.

Social psychological stress & Empowerment

After return from migration, the weakening of economic independence and autonomy put left-behind women in permanent stress and anxiety. These have exerted negative impact on their highly valued sense of self respect and family power relations. The transition keeps disturbing them and might become a pusher for them to migration again.

(The World Bank, 2013: 147-8)

Empowerment

“In the past, when we quarreled and threw angry words to each other, my husband always said, ‘who lets you not to make money, go out and make money if you have the ability!’ Now I also go out and make money. He dares not to say those any more. In the past, I didn’t make money, so I had no choice when he said so. But now I am not afraid of those words at all since I also can make money. He cannot still let me follow him. Now no matter what kind of business, he discusses it with me. Neither he nor I make decisions but we two together. For things without my agreement he also cannot do.”

Interview with a 46 years old left-behind woman from Yetai Village of Gushi County in Henan Province.

(The World Bank, 2013: 149)

Using SWB measures in policy

Well-being in the workplace

- Several studies find a positive (~0.3) correlation between job satisfaction and performance and it is significantly stronger for complex jobs
- Other studies find that average satisfaction of specific work unit predicted factors such as profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction

Management of cities

- Perception surveys have gained popularity among large cities. Improving urban life is high in the agenda of local governments. What services are providing good value in relation to their underlying cost?

Criticisms and answers

- These measures capture irrelevant information. Empirical evidence suggests that trivial concerns (weather) don't have a large influence on well-being measures.
- SWB can be manipulated.
 - Any measure can be manipulated if poorly captured (e.g., income from HHS).
 - SWB is not the only criterion for policy (e.g., men and women with comparable levels of life satisfaction despite unequal access to opportunities).
 - Only preferences formed under free conditions should be used (SWB of minority groups based on imposed cultural norms or ideals freely chosen?)
 - We assume that voting decisions are a valid reflection of people's political preferences.
- One question, multiple answers. No different from economic indicators.

Takeaways

- SWB gives us a more holistic view about people's well-being
- SWB adds valuable information about priorities
- SWB can be measured validly and reliably
- Measurement issues are not too different from the encountered when measuring objective well-being
- Increasing availability of SWB data and instruments makes the design of modules/questions easier
- Adding short modules to standard LSMS/HHS has good potential and is relatively inexpensive