Der *Good Life Index*.
Ein neuer Vorschlag zur Messung von Lebensqualität

Tagung „Lebensqualitätsforschung zwischen Wissenschaft und Politikberatung",

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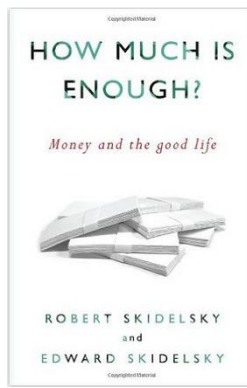SOZIOLOGIE

Elements of the good life
(Skidelsky & Skidelsky 2012)

- Equally dissatisfied with both the capabilities

approach...

- ...and with subjective well-being (SWB)
- Propose a new approach to QOL for affluent societies
- Focus on ends rather than means (money, consumption)
- But not in terms of "happiness"
- Critics of modern capitalism and affluence

Elements of the good life
(Skidelsky & Skidelsky 2012)

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Money and the good life

ROBERT SKIDELSKY
and
EDWARD SKIDELSKY

Personality
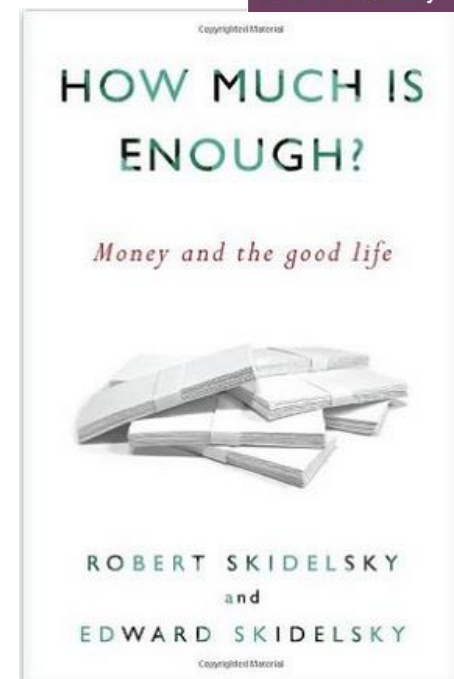
Health

Leisure

Friendship

Respect

Security

Harmony with nature

Aristotle's eudaimonia

„The Good Life"

"a life that is desirable, or worthy of desire" (2013, p. 145).
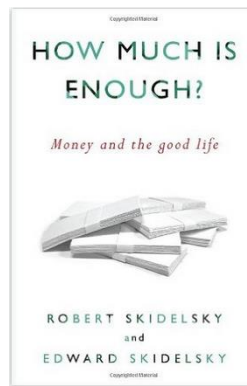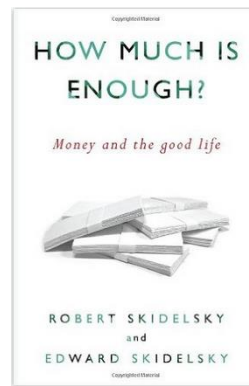
How to identify basic goods?

Four criteria:

- **Universal**: universally value
- **Final**: not just means to other goods
- **Sui generis**: not incorporated into a larger good
- **Indispensable:** Lack of one good leads to loss or harm

Claim # 1: National prosperity and quality of life

"[t]he continued pursuit of growth is not only unnecessary to realize the basic goods; it may actually damage them" (Skidelsky and Skidelsky 2013: 170).
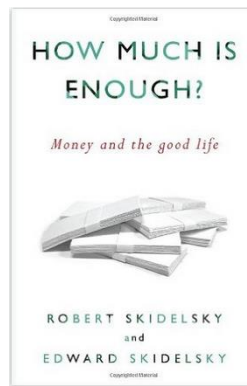
- Basic good essentially non marketable
- Modern economy turns basic goods into commodities or replaces them with something marketable and thus divests them of their actual quality

➡ *Neutral or even negative impact of national affluence on the good life*

= Prosperity-does-not-help-hypotheses

Claim # 2:
The good life and happiness

- Happiness portrayed as an emotionally pleasant, temporary state, cannot be the supreme good behind a life time of hard work.

- "measure only what people say about their happiness, they […] cannot measure happiness itself" (2013: 113).

- "Our proper goal, as individuals and as citizens, is not just to be happy, but to have reasons to be happy" (2013: 123).

➜ *At best weak relationship between the good life and self-reported happiness and life satisfaction*

= Self-reported-happiness-is-inauthentic-hypothesis

Flaws of the book
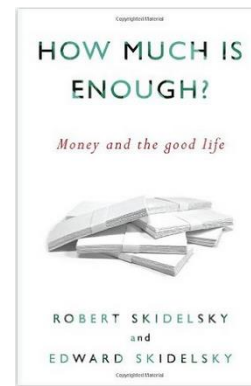
Unconvincing application:

- Individual QOL, but macro-level indicators suggested
- Detached from original meaning of the basic good
- Example: income inequality as a proxy measure for respect

The two (bold) claims remain untested

EQLS survey data

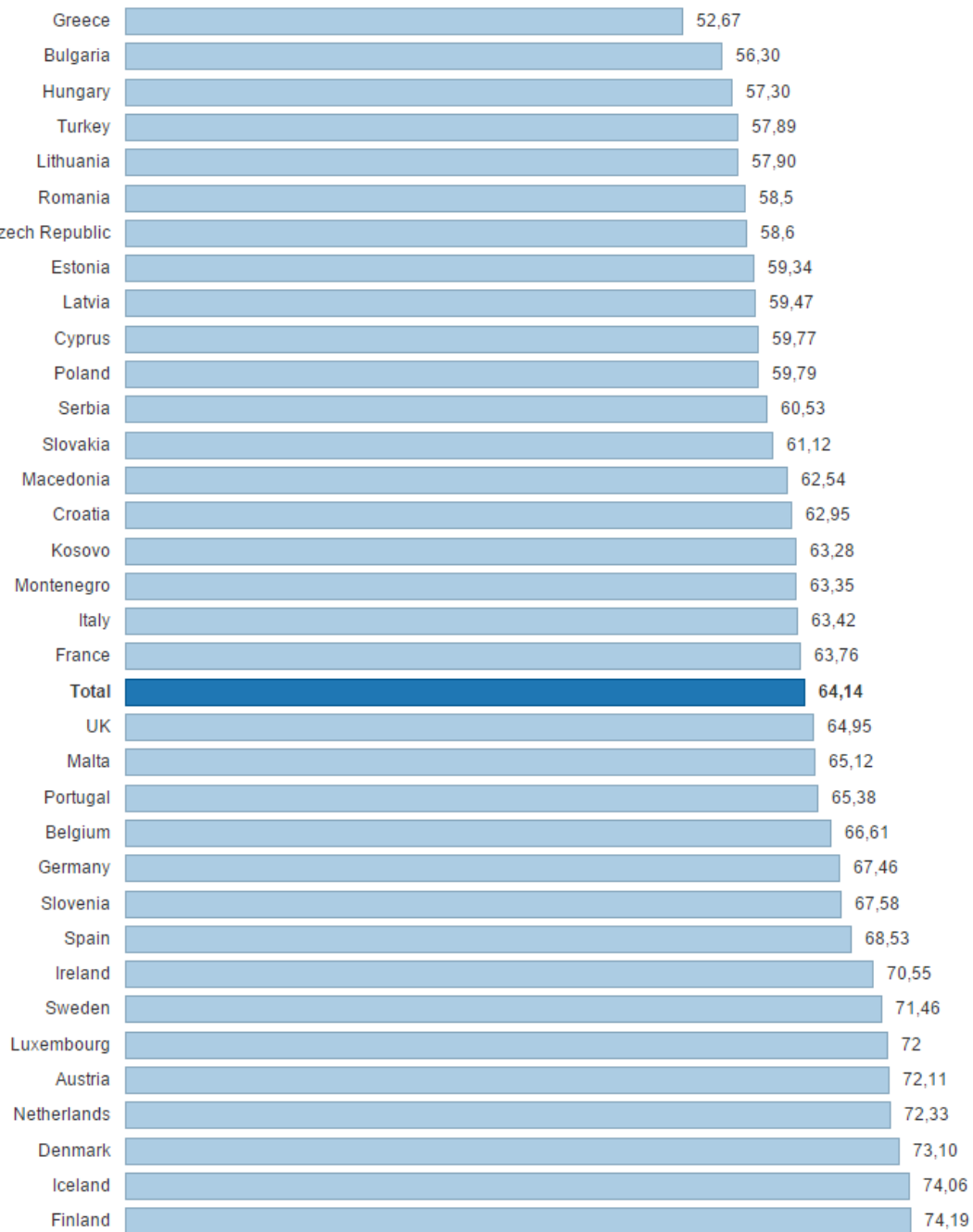European Quality of Life Survey, Round 3 (2011/12)

- 34 Countries

- Over 40,000 respondents

- Rich data source to operationalize the basic goods (bar leisure)

- 16 items used to measure six basic goods

- Tried-and-tested measures of subjective well-being (happiness, life satisfaction…)

Operationalizing the basic goods

Health	• satisfaction with own health • self-assessment of health • existence of chronic health problem (reversed item) • limitation in life due to chronic health problem (reversed item)
Security	• problems in the immediate neighborhood with crime, violence, vandalism • difficulties in making ends meet
Respect	• feeling that the value of what one does is not recognized by others (reversed item) • feeling that people look down on oneself because of one's job or income situation (reversed item)
Self-development	• having time to do things one really enjoys • feeling free to decide how to live one's life • feeling that what one does in life is worthwhile
Harmony with nature	• living in a rural/urban area • access to recreational or green areas
Friendship	• living with other people • generalized trust • feeling of loneliness during past two weeks (reversed item)

Good Life Index Scores (population averages), by country

Country	Score
Greece	52,67
Bulgaria	56,30
Hungary	57,30
Turkey	57,89
Lithuania	57,90
Romania	58,5
Czech Republic	58,6
Estonia	59,34
Latvia	59,47
Cyprus	59,77
Poland	59,79
Serbia	60,53
Slovakia	61,12
Macedonia	62,54
Croatia	62,95
Kosovo	63,28
Montenegro	63,35
Italy	63,42
France	63,76
Total	**64,14**
UK	64,95
Malta	65,12
Portugal	65,38
Belgium	66,61
Germany	67,46
Slovenia	67,58
Spain	68,53
Ireland	70,55
Sweden	71,46
Luxembourg	72
Austria	72,11
Netherlands	72,33
Denmark	73,10
Iceland	74,06
Finland	74,19

Good Life Index:
Länderranking in Europa

Region	Score
Central and Eastern	**60,57**
Southern	**62,48**
Anglophone	**67,75**
Continental	**69,05**
Nordic	**73,2**
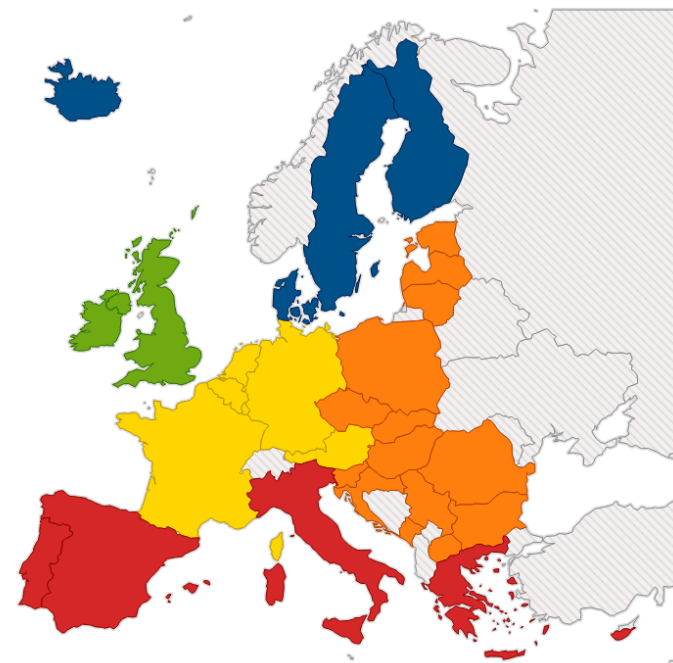
Gaps between countries

Point difference between highest and lowest scoring country (0-100 scale)

Category	Lowest country	Gap	Highest country
Health	Estonia	24	Kosovo
Respect	Czech-Republic	29	Denmark
Self-development	Greece	40	Netherlands
Security	Greece	47	Luxembourg
Harmony w/ nature	Turkey	35	Luxembourg
Friendship	Czech-Republic	22	Netherlands
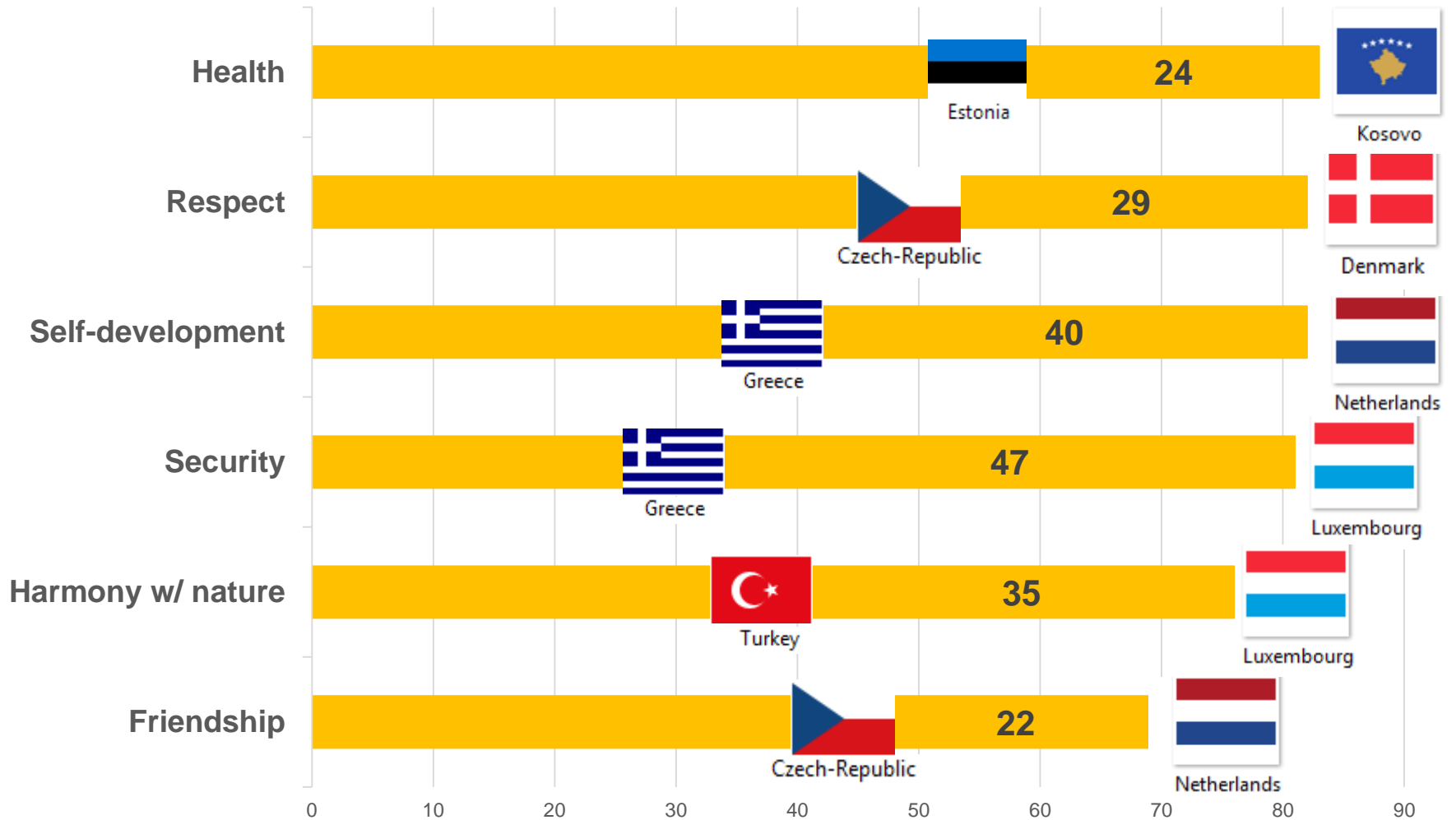
The six basic goods:
Country profiles

Finland

respect — self-development

nature — health

security — friendship

Greece

respect — self-development

nature — health

security — friendship
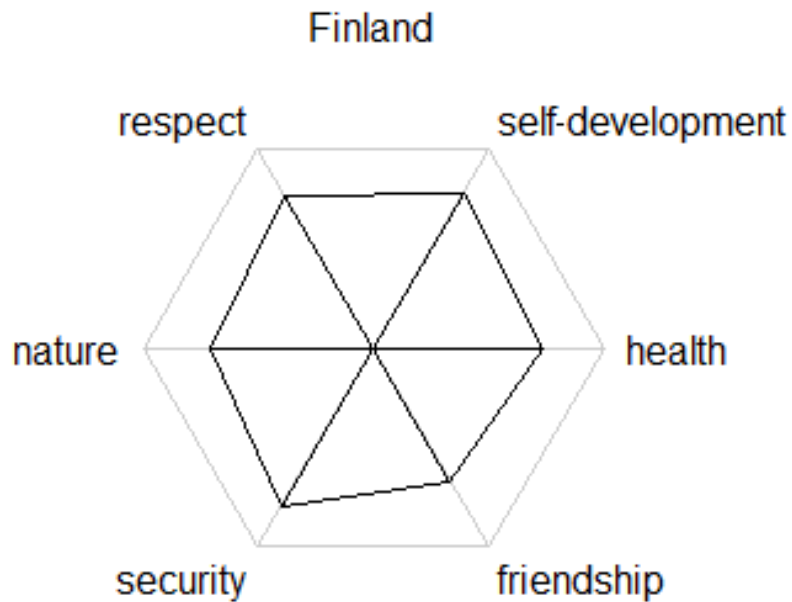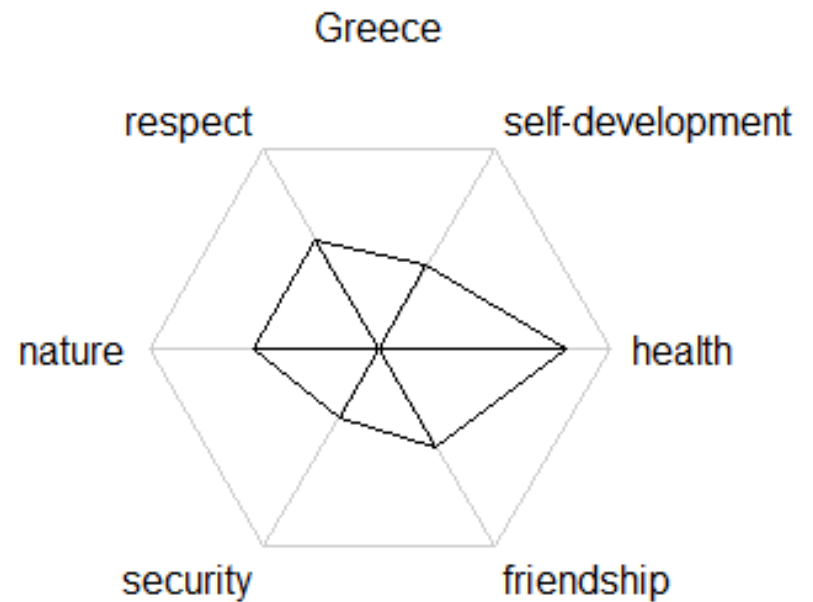
Country #1   Country #34

Table 2: Regression Effects on individual *Good Life* scores of demographic characteristics, national wealth and income inequality (multi-level analysis)

	base model	LVL 1	LVL 2
income quartiles		2.552***	2.552***
		(0.08)	(0.08)
living w. partner		6.289***	6.289***
		(0.17)	(0.17)
currently employed		0.577**	0.569**
		(0.19)	(0.19)
education		1.410***	1.410***
		(0.07)	(0.07)
age		-0.108***	-0.108***
		(0.01)	(0.01)
male		1.671***	1.673***
		(0.17)	(0.17)
GDP pc ppp/1000			0.233***
			(0.05)
GINI mean 2007-11			-0.335
			(0.18)
constant	64.441***	59.602***	59.551***
	(1.11)	(1.07)	(0.76)
Number of obs.	41.729	41.729	41.729
Number of groups	34	34	34

Note: standard errors in parenthesis. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

National wealth does make life better!

Affluence is good
for the majority of basic goods

Every +10,000 USD GDP p.c. result in x points increase for:

Security	+5 P
Self-development	+2,5 P
Harmony w/ nature	+2,5 P
Friendship	+2 P
Health n.s.	
Respect n.s.	

	self-reported happiness		
	Base model	LVL 1	LVL 2
good life index		0.047***	0.047***
		(0.00)	(0.00)
income quartiles		0.068***	0.069***
		(0.01)	(0.01)
living w. partner		0.296***	0.297***
		(0.02)	(0.02)
currently employed		-0.009	-0.009
		(0.02)	(0.02)
education		0.029***	0.029***
		(0.01)	(0.01)
Age		-0.005***	-0.005***
		(0.00)	(0.00)
Male		-0.150***	-0.150***
		(0.02)	(0.02)
GDP pc ppp/1000			0.008*
			(0.00)
GINI mean 2007-11			-0.007
			(0.01)
constant	7.325***	7.207***	7.208***
	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Number of observations	41.729	41.729	41.729
Number of groups	34	34	34

Note: standard errors in parenthesis. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The good life and happiness
are closely associated

	Base model	LVL 1	LVL 2
self-reported life satisfaction			
good life index		0.053***	0.053***
		(0.00)	(0.00)
income quartiles		0.133***	0.133***
		(0.01)	(0.01)
living w. partner		0.021	0.021
		(0.02)	(0.02)
currently employed		-0.002	-0.003
		(0.02)	(0.02)
education		0.014	0.013
		(0.01)	(0.01)
Age		0.004***	0.004***
		(0.00)	(0.00)
Male		-0.136***	-0.136***
		(0.02)	(0.02)
GDP pc ppp/1000			0.016***
			(0.00)
GINI mean 2007-11			-0.002
			(0.01)
constant	7.034***	7.073***	7.079***
	(0.12)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Number of observations	41.729	41.729	41.729
Number of groups	34	34	34

Note: standard errors in parenthesis. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The good life and life satisfaction
are closely associated

Effect of basic goods (0-1) on happiness and life satisfaction (1-10)

Results from ML-Analysis
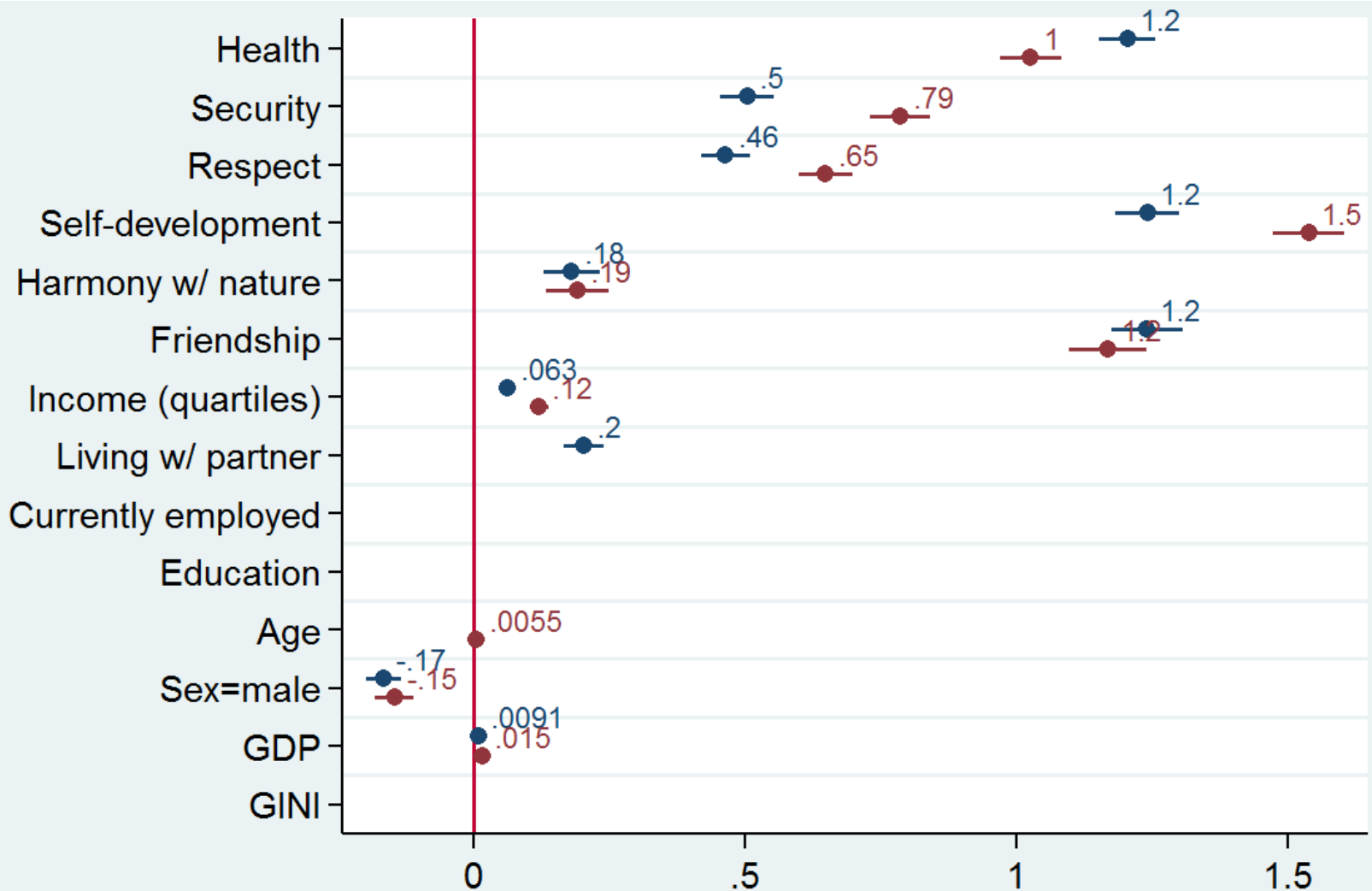
Summary: Key messages (1)

- Empirical claims of Skildelsky & Skidelsky are wrong!

Still:

- The elements of the good life can be operationalized with micro data (good life index)

- Meaningful „geography" of QOL

- Meaningful relations with individual-level and country-level determinants

- Allows new insights into human well-being (as dependent or independent variable)

Summary: Key messages (2)

- Deserves a place in the QOL researchers' tool box

- Easier to operationalize than Capabilities

- More informative than SWB

- Probably most powerful in an enlarged framework:

resources – good life – overall life satisfaction