

Measuring National Well-being – A UK perspective

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The Measuring National Well-being Programme began in the UK in November 2010. Traditional measures of progress such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have long been recognised as an incomplete picture of the state of the nation. Following a six month National Debate that elicited 34,000 responses, ONS developed a framework for measuring national well-being consisting of 10 domains and 40 headline indicators. The indicators include a mixture of both subjective and objective measures. Through supplementing existing economic measures, such as GDP, with measures that reflect social and environmental well-being, national well-being looks at the state of the nation through a broader lens. The paper will describe the development of the framework of indicators, including developing subjective well-being measures, and the dissemination of this information using a range of interactive tools developed for this purpose. This is a long term development programme and is still in its early days of measurement. How these data are used to improve policy design, delivery and evaluation will be important to assess the success of the programme. In particular, having a more complete picture of national well-being will lead to a better understanding of policy impacts on well-being; better allocation of resources; more informed decisions; assessment of government performance; and international comparisons.

Key words: subjective well-being; sustainability; beyond GDP; interactive tools.