

Measurement of quality of life and well being in France: the drivers for subjective well being

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Ever since the publication of the Stiglitz Report, France has been heavily involved in the measurement of Well-Being. The French Statistical Institute (INSEE) has expanded the scope of its existing surveys. It has also launched an innovative experimental one. This survey aims to explore for the first time drawing upon a single statistical source, the different dimensions of both objective and subjective Quality of Life, as highlighted in the Stiglitz Report. It allows us to study, at the individual level, correlations between these dimensions and the accumulation of deprivations. It has enabled us to better understand the links between determinants generally referred to as objective dimensions of Quality of Life (such as health, education) and subjective well-being. This information is of paramount importance for policy makers who cannot act directly on the level of people's satisfaction but can only act upon the levers of objective dimensions. This paper presents the main findings of the experimental survey. As has often been shown in previous studies, this survey finds that life satisfaction increases with the standard of living, but the gains become smaller at the top of the distribution. It also shows that, when the various dimensions of Quality of Life are taken into account to explain the perceived level of Well-Being, income has a lower explanatory power. Weak social ties or the stress of everyday life play at least as much a role as limited financial resources do. Deprivations in health and housing, and physical and economic insecurity then follow. For the first time in France, this survey has allowed us to assess the impact of psycho-social risks in the workplace. It appears that professional stress only adds to the stress at home instead of substituting for it. Its impact is comparable to physical health problems. The survey also shows that the other components of Quality of Life do not impact the level of satisfaction in the same way. It is the weakness of social ties that is the most often associated with the risk of being dissatisfied, while it is the stress in everyday life, at the upper end of the scale, which reduces more the odds of declaring a high level of subjective Well Being. Panel data analyses indicate that a causal effect seems to exist between objective conditions of Quality of Life and Well-Being; that all of this is not only the expression of intrinsic differences between individuals.

Key Words: Well being, Quality of life, Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report, Drivers for subjective well being