Governance, wellbeing and the perceived quality of society
Background briefings and engagement from the Making Wellbeing Count for Policy project

This document contains background materials related to the Making Wellbeing Count for Policy project funded by the ESRC, conducted by Cambridge University, City University London, and the New Economics Foundation.

As part of that project, three roundtables were held, each with a mix of policy makers, practitioners and academics to share emerging findings, discuss their implications for policy and practice and identify areas for further research. The three roundtables covered:

- Inequalities in wellbeing
- Wellbeing, governance and the perceived quality of society
- The five ways to wellbeing

This paper brings together the background materials on inequalities in wellbeing. Below can be found the following:

Briefing paper:

- Roundtable briefing: Governance, wellbeing and the perceived quality of society (City University London and the New Economics Foundation)
- Summary of roundtable discussion

The briefing paper was shared with participants ahead of the roundtable. Roundtables followed Chatham House rules, and comments are therefore not attributed to participants.

The project culminated in the final report *Looking through the wellbeing kaleidoscope*. The report, and background documents on the other two roundtables are available at the project website www.wellbeingcounts.org.

Roundtable briefing: Governance, wellbeing and the perceived quality of society

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Summary

This paper presents two studies on the overlapping themes of governance, peoples' perceptions of society and individual wellbeing, with a particular focus on inequalities within these domains.

In the first of these studies, we explored peoples' perceptions of society and its institutions. We found that:

- Perceived quality of society is closely associated with individuals' satisfaction with their own lives.
- More marginalised groups (people with low incomes, women, those with lower education and who were in insecure employment) had a lower estimation of the functioning of society and its institutions. Within the UK, London and the South East have high levels of satisfaction with government and the economy, compared to the other regions, with the Midlands having the lowest.
- At the same time, those who are economically active and those who are citizens of the country seem to have a lower perception of the quality of society. This may be because they are more engaged in society, and therefore more critical of, as well as more personally invested in, the way society is governed.
- Those who place themselves on the right of the political scale (i.e. who are more conservative) have higher perceptions of the quality of society than those on the left.

In our second study, we explore more 'objective' measures of governance – the collated opinions of a wide range of experts, collected by the World Bank. The UK has higher than average scores on governance compared to other countries in the European Social Survey, but they have been falling slightly between 2002 and 2012.

We found that in many cases, measures of good governance (such as voice and accountability, or the control of corruption) were not only associated with higher average life satisfaction, but also with lower *inequalities* in life satisfaction.

The European Social Survey

This research has been carried out using data from the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS is an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted every two years across Europe since 2002. The survey measures the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of diverse populations in more than thirty nations.

Study 1: The patterns and drivers of the perceived quality of society

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Introduction

In this research, we are interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how people perceive the society they live in. We call these perceptions – peoples' satisfaction and trust in the people and institutions which govern society and the outcomes they achieve –'perceived quality of society' (PQOS). Armed with a better understanding of this area, policymakers can identify those subgroups of the population that are suffering from the lowest perceived quality of society, and consider how to improve it. While there is a welcome increase in attention to personal wellbeing, combining this with a better understanding of perceptions of the quality of society can be valuable: the policy solutions to create and maintain 'good lives' (reflected in increased individual life satisfaction) may be quite different from those leading to the 'good society'. Wellbeing embodies how people feel about themselves in relation to their personal, social and material worlds and thus requires an engagement with objective realities as well as emotional states.[1] Therefore, it is necessary to contextualise wellbeing not only as personal, but as a social and institutional phenomenon. This focus – on external evaluations of society as well as internal reflections of wellbeing and happiness – requires due investigation to get a more holistic picture of the phenomenon of wellbeing.

Research Questions

Our research aimed to answer the following questions:

1) Is there a difference in peoples' perceived quality of society over time and between countries?
2) How do perceptions of the quality of society differ for different sub-groups of the populations?
3) What drives perceptions of the quality of society?
4) How are measures of personal, subjective wellbeing related to perceptions of the quality of society?
5) How does the UK fare compared to the rest of Europe with regard to peoples' perceptions of the quality of society?

Methods

We identified the following variables to measure perceptions of society (questions in appendix 1):

- Satisfaction with the economy; satisfaction with the national government; satisfaction with the way democracy works

- Trust in parliament; trust in politicians; trust in the police and the legal system
- Evaluations of the state of the health and education systems

Because the European Social Survey has been conducted every two years from 2002 to 2012, we were able to explore the performance on these questions across time as well as across and between countries.[2]

We were interested in combining these questions into one single indicator of perceived quality of society. In order to ensure that all questions measure the same concept, we used a method called factor analysis, which assesses whether a set of inter-related measures are measuring one, or a number of different underlying concepts, or 'factors'.[3]

Although evaluations of health services and the economy had a slightly weaker relationship to the other factors, we found sufficient evidence to establish that there is an underlying relationship between all questions that persists across time and space. In other words, there is one single factor which can be understood as 'perceived quality of society'.[4] This allowed us to create a single 'summary measure' of PQOS incorporating the above aspects.

Empirical evidence from our own analyses, and previous studies, have confirmed the correlation between measures of institutional and societal trust and satisfaction. Sanders et al. (2012) point out that the measure of satisfaction with democracy, for example, "correlates with specific and diffuse support (Klingemann 1999; Kornberg and Clarke 1994), with political trust (Dalton, 1999) and with perceptions of economic satisfaction (Castillo 2006)"[5]. Hooghe and Zmerli attribute this to, in part, cognitive processes in the survey process: "if respondents have a favourable view of political parties, they most likely have a positive attitude to their parliament, the police, the courts and other political institutions as well"[6] but also to the fact that the performance of these institutions are both interrelated as well as usually on even parity within each country in line with its own political and institutional culture.

In order to explore the predictors of perceived quality of society, we conducted regression analyses, which assess which other factors are associated with perceived quality of society across countries and over time. We included demographic variables covering gender, age, education level, work status and occupation, subjective perceptions of household income, as well as marriage, citizenship and subjective general health. To these were added a set of other attitudinal and behavioural measures covering religiosity and religious behaviour, political engagement and orientation, social trust and social activity, feelings of safety and life satisfaction indicators.[7]

Because the ESS is a survey with different respondents in each wave, we were unable to track people over time. This means that our analysis is not able to establish the direction of any causal relationship – it might be that, for example, having a higher income makes people more satisfied with society, or alternatively that having a positive outlook and high satisfaction with society leads to behaviour that results in a higher income.

Results

We ran descriptive statistics[8] for all the countries in the sample for each round (see appendix 1). The objective here was primarily to ascertain if there was a gross change of the mean of these three variables over time, and whether countries with similar means had polarised distributions.

Variations in different aspects of societal wellbeing

There is a lot of similarity between countries when it comes to peoples' satisfaction with politics, government and democracy:

- In a number of cases – Croatia, Poland, and Lithuania being notable – people tend to be more dissatisfied with the government and the economy, although there is a more balanced set of responses for satisfaction with democracy.
- Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are some of the few countries that score highly on democracy, government and the economy.
- For certain cases such as Spain, Greece and Portugal, there seems to be a decrease in the average response to all these questions over time.
- Nearly all the countries exhibit a considerable dip in economic satisfaction in 2008, at the height of the recession. The UK fares averagely compared to the other countries included although the decline in economic satisfaction from 2006 to 2008 is visibly more pronounced (see figure 1).
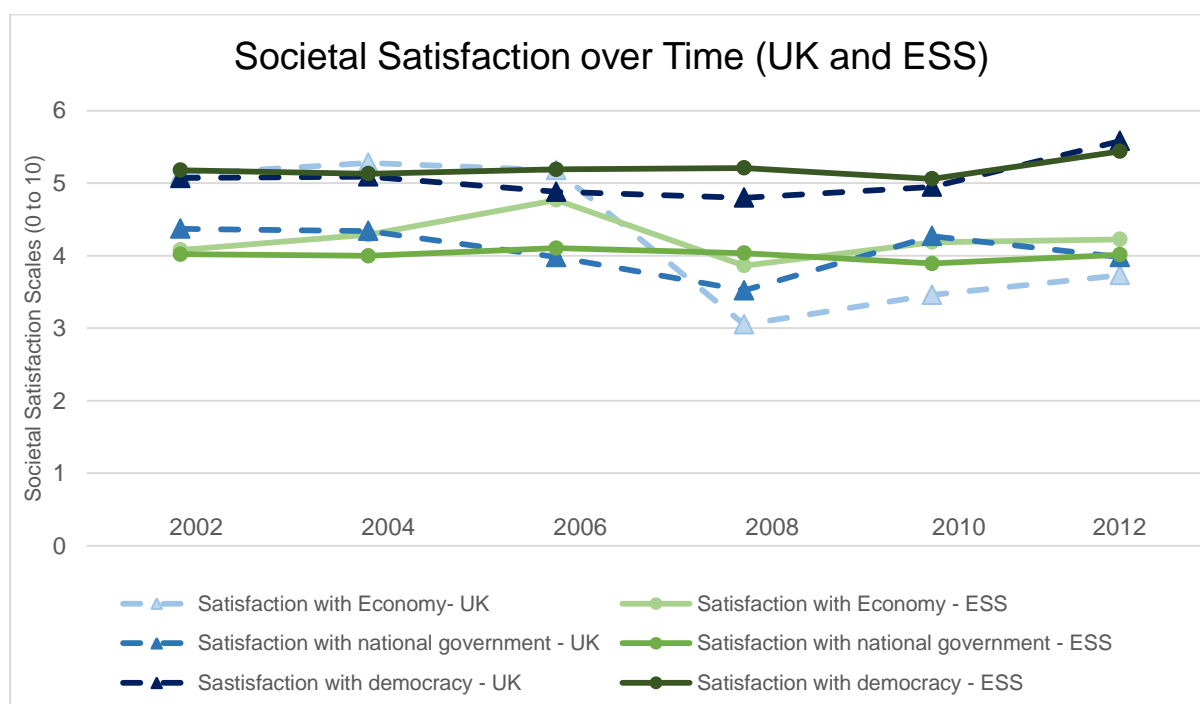

Figure 1: Societal satisfaction scores over time for the UK and for the European sample as a whole

A number of findings were identified relating to political and institutional trust:

- Trust in politicians is low in all countries while trust in the police has been generally high and unwavering.

- Peoples' trust in institutions was somewhat steadier over time compared to the questions on satisfaction with democracy, government and the economy. For example, in the UK, there was little change, including over the 2008 recession.
- There has been a considerable decline in trust over time for some of the Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, including Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Ukraine.
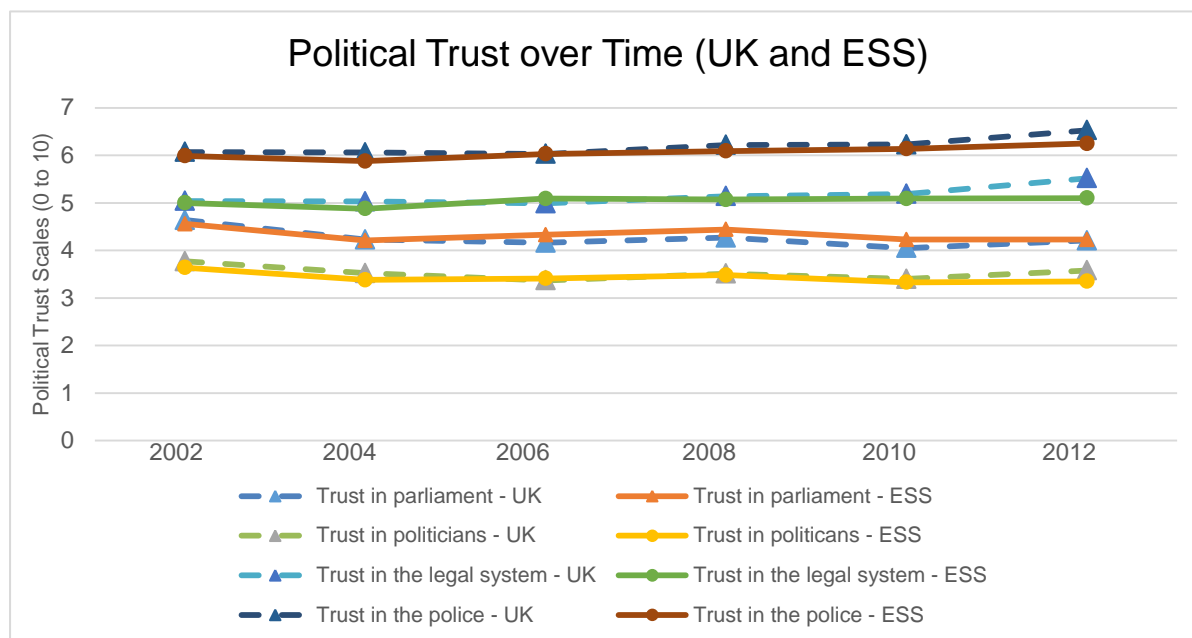
Figure 2: Political trust scores over time for the UK and for the European sample as a whole

A number of differences were evident across different regions of the UK:

- London and the South East have high levels of economic and governmental satisfaction compared to the other regions, particularly the Midlands. However, they fare more similarly to the other regions on trust in politicians and trust in the legal system.
- Trust in the police is consistently high, particularly in the South of England, but also in some Northern regions, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Variations in the composite measure of perceived quality of society

As you can see from figure 3, the UK's overall PQOS score largely followed the European average between 2002 and 2012. Like Germany, France, Belgium, and Denmark it is also relatively stable over time. This compares to others such as Hungary and Ireland which experienced much more volatility, particularly after 2008.
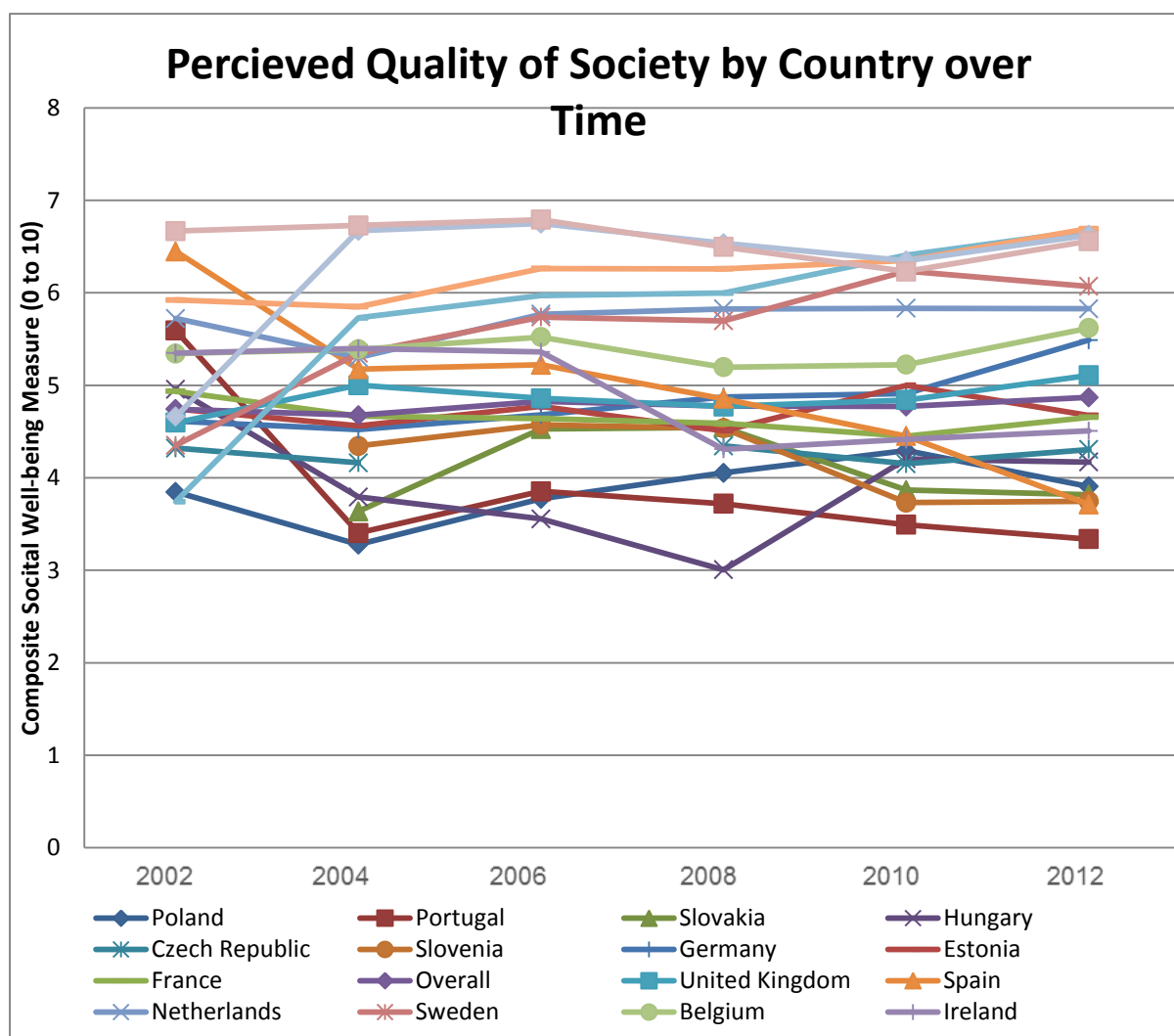
Figure 3: Composite perceived quality of society (PQOS) scores over time for the UK and for the European sample as a whole

Societal Wellbeing across sub-groups of the population

We found in our preliminary exploratory analyses looking at sub-groups of the population that on average, young people, men and those with a degree are marginally more satisfied with the functioning of society than the older age groups, women, and those with lower levels of education.

Men with higher education, i.e. university degrees, hold the most stable and positive perceptions of the quality of society across all combinations of gender and education, closely followed by women with higher education.

Numerous studies have identified a link between education and institutional trust and satisfaction. Tiemeijer's 2010 study of education and conceptions of democracy in the Netherlands found a consistent pattern on higher satisfaction with democracy over time for higher educated than lower educated people. This pattern also holds for trust in politicians, which arguably indicates that the lower educated feel more acutely that their interests and opinion are not being taken into account.[9]

Predictors of Perceived Quality of Society across the ESS

We carried out a series of linear regression analyses that allowed us to assess how well a range of variables, including the demographics we delved into above, predicted variations in the overall 'perceived quality of society' measure. The methodology we used allowed multiple variables to be tested at the same time, meaning that each effect should be independent of the other variables tested.

Figure 4 depicts the results of the analyses with our composite PQOS measure as our dependent variable. The length of the bar indicates the effect size, with positive numbers on the x axis indicating a positive relationship between the variable in question and perceived quality of society. Only those effects that are significant are shown here, which means they are unlikely to be the result simply of random variation.[10]

Good subjective general health and feeling like you have a comfortable income is positively associated with PQOS in this model, as are those indicators exploring social trust and trust in people. In the UK model (see appendices), fewer of the variables in question were found to hold a statistically significant relationship with our dependent variable, but the patterns among the ones that were are similar to those in the European model. Life satisfaction, religiosity, trust in people and political conservatism are all strongly and positively associated with perceived quality of society. Being in a managerial position and being in the middle age group – i.e. the latter working age group of 45-64 years – are both strongly and negatively associated with PQOS. For Europe, being female is negatively associated with PQOS; however this is not statistically significant in the UK model.

The chart shows predictor values across the following categories:

- How satisfied with life as a whole
- Feel safe walking in my local area after dark
- Respondent or household member victim of burglary/assault last 5 years
- Take part in social activities more than most
- People mostly try to be helpful
- Most people try to be fair
- Most people can be trusted
- Employment relation: Self-employed
- Placement on left right scale
- Skilled and non-skilled manual worker
- Interested in Politics
- Hampered in daily activities by illness/disability/infirmity/mental problem
- Subjective general health: Very good
- Subjective general health: Good
- Subjective general health: Fair
- Frequent attendance at religious services
- How religious are you
- Belonging to particular religion or denomination
- Member of a group discriminated against in this country
- Born in country
- Citizen of country
- Married or in civil union
- Feeling about HH income: Living comfortably
- Feeling about HH income: Coping
- ES-ISCED: Tertiary education (BA/MA)
- Female
- Age: 75 and over
- Age: 65 to 74 years
- Age: 45 to 64 years
- Age: 25 to 44 years

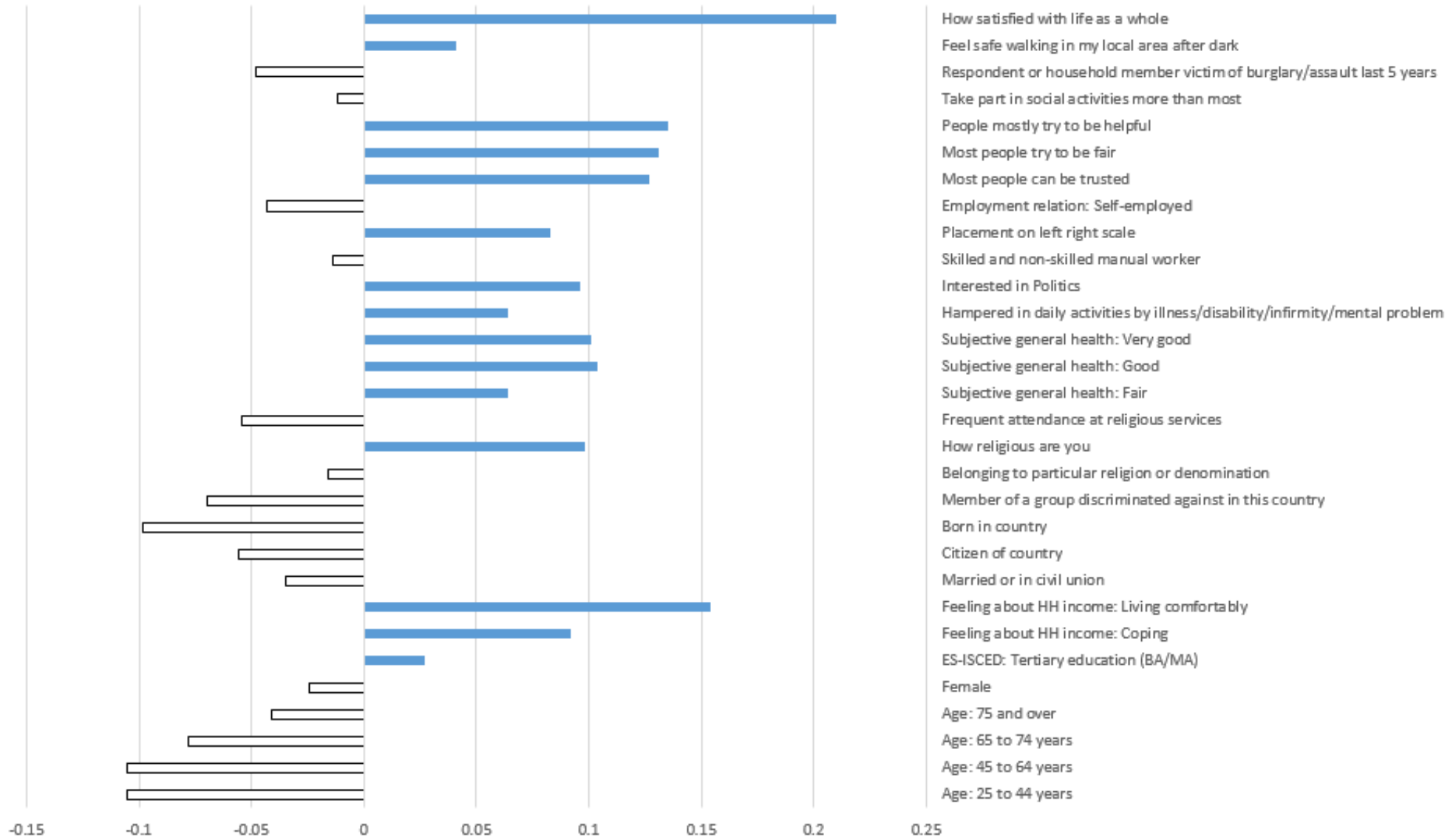Axis values: -0.15, -0.1, -0.05, 0, 0.05, 0.1, 0.15, 0.2, 0.25

Figure 4: Predictors of PQOS across the Europe sample

Conclusion

There seem to be a number of dispositions and characteristics, as well as demographic patterns, which we can associate with having a positive evaluation of national performance.

First and foremost, there is a close relationship between personal wellbeing, i.e. life satisfaction and happiness, and all elements of institution satisfaction and trust. The direction of this relationship is unclear however, as positive subjective evaluations of how well the government/economy/legal system and so on function may impact individual evaluations of one's own wellbeing as well as vice versa. The same goes for the positive relationship between perceived quality of society and political engagement. As we might intuitively believe, those who trust the people around them and engage with their community, friends and family are likely to have higher levels of societal wellbeing.

We can say with some certainty that the more marginalised groups in society – women and those who identify as members of a discriminated group – have a more negative view of the functioning of societal institutions and particularly the efficacy of those actors implicated in the process of governance – politicians, the police and the parliament. We have also seen that the perception of the quality of society differs significantly by age, suggesting that your position in society – of working age, of parenting age, of retirement age – affects the way, and the extent to which you judge societal institutions.

There are policy lessons here from a labour market perspective, a social capital perspective, a public health and a political engagement perspective. It seems as if engagement in society itself – being economically active, being a citizen of the country, and being married, for instance – are all associated with lower levels of societal wellbeing, most probably making individuals more critical of, as well as more personally invested in, the way society is governed. It is clear from this that the predictors of societal and of individual wellbeing and happiness may not necessarily be perfectly aligned if we consider literature which has linked employment and marriage to life satisfaction. Attention needs to be paid to the older cohorts of society, those balancing work and family pressures in the 25-64 age group, as well as those over 65 who have left work and are at most risk of being feeling socially excluded.

Study 2: Governance and wellbeing

Annie Quick and Saamah Abdallah, New Economics Foundation

Introduction

There are a number of reasons why governance might be associated with higher wellbeing. It could produce better quality services and better economic outcomes, or indeed the process of being involved in decisions could support personal autonomy and higher levels of trust. These things could, in turn, improve personal wellbeing.

A number of studies have explored this question directly. Many showed a positive association between governance and wellbeing. Studies by Helliwell et al.[11][12] found such an association. They found that, in poorer countries with generally lower quality governance, indicators associated with the efficiency of government and policy delivery were more closely associated with wellbeing. Conversely, in countries with higher levels of income and government efficiency, indicators associated with electoral democracy (voice and accountability and political stability) became more important to wellbeing. In this case, the association between wellbeing and governance held whether or not GDP per capita was controlled for, discounting the possibility that the relationship was only a result of better governance leading to higher economic growth, which in turn led to higher wellbeing.

Two studies were also found associating better governance with lower wellbeing inequality (though one of these did not test for statistical significance).[13][14]

Studies have also been carried out exploring specific aspects of governance. For example, research has found that Swiss states with higher levels of accountability (through direct democracy) and a more autonomous federal structure have higher levels of individual wellbeing.[15][16]

Other studies, however, did not find such clear results. In 2000, Ruut Veenhoven found a positive association between political freedom and happiness, but this association disappeared when GDP was taken into account.[17] Yet another study found no association between wellbeing and governance, and a negative association with wellbeing for some population groups.[18]

Our research question for this study was:

> What is the association between governance and wellbeing, and wellbeing inequality for ESS countries between 2002 and 2012?

Methods

Variables

Our outcome variables were wellbeing, and wellbeing inequality. We used life satisfaction as our measure of wellbeing, and the mean pair distance in life satisfaction[19] as our measure of wellbeing inequality.

Our predictor variables were the World Bank Governance Matters indicators. These are widely used as the best available internationally comparable indicators of governance. They are perception-based measures, based on the views of members of the public as well as country analysts at major multilateral development agencies (such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), nongovernmental organisations (such as Freedom House and the Bertelsmann Foundation) and commercial business information providers (such as Political Risk Services).

Box 1: Governance Matters Indicators[20]

The World Bank describes their indicators in the following way:

1. Voice and Accountability – capturing perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.

2. Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism – capturing perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically-motivated violence and terrorism.

3. Government Effectiveness – capturing perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.

4. Regulatory Quality – capturing perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development.

5. Rule of Law – capturing perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.

6. Control of Corruption – capturing perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests.

Statistical tests

Given that our dataset involved countries over multiple years, we conducted multilevel modelling. This enabled us to explore associations over time as well as between countries. Our multilevel model also controlled for country fixed effects. This should include variables such as cultural biases, which might be associated with both governance and wellbeing, reducing the chance of a misleading finding.[21]

Existing research suggests that governance is associated with a number of other variables, and that some of these may be on the causal pathway in their association with wellbeing. We therefore controlled for GDP[22] and unemployment in our analyses. This allowed us to test for the association between governance and wellbeing *independent* of any effect governance might have on GDP or unemployment.

Previous studies indicate that mean life satisfaction is associated both with inequalities in life satisfaction, and also governance. This suggests that our analyses on wellbeing inequality could have been confounded by changes in mean life satisfaction. Therefore, analyses of wellbeing inequality controlled for mean life satisfaction.[23] In this way, anything found to be associated with low wellbeing inequality reveals an effect above and beyond the reduction in wellbeing inequality that is found with higher *average* wellbeing.

We conducted two additional sets of analyses, firstly without controlling for any other variables (except for country fixed effects, and mean life satisfaction in the case of the inequality analysis), and secondly controlling for just GDP. These were conducted in order to gain a fuller understanding of the role of economic indicators in mediating the relationship between governance and wellbeing.

Each governance indicator was tested separately.[24]

Results

Governance over time and between countries

Figure 5 shows how the ratings for governance have changed over time in the UK. Notable changes are the decline in the control of corruption (indicating less control over corruption) until 2010, after which it rises slightly; the decline in government effectiveness since 2004 and the sharp changes in voice and accountability, and political stability between 2002 – 2006.
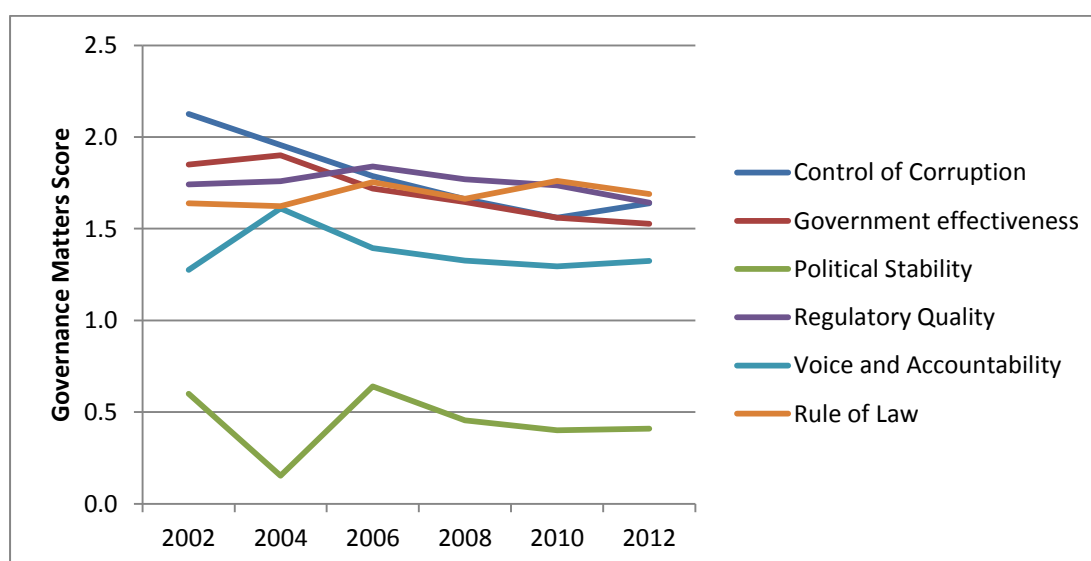
Figure 5: UK governance over time

When compared to other ESS countries, the UK was rated above average in 2012 on control of corruption (8th of 28), government effectiveness (10th out of 28), regulatory quality (6th of 28), voice and accountability (10th of 28), the rule of law (8[h] of 28), but below average on political stability (22nd of 28).

The relationship between governance and life satisfaction

Figures 6 and 7 show the straightforward relationship between the average of these governance measures and mean wellbeing, and wellbeing inequality respectively. This does not take into account any other variables. Here we can see that better governance is associated with higher average wellbeing and lower wellbeing inequality.

The UK fits this pattern, doing relatively well on all three measures compared to other European countries. The UK is highlighted in red, with other countries doing well or badly also highlighted for illustrative purposes.
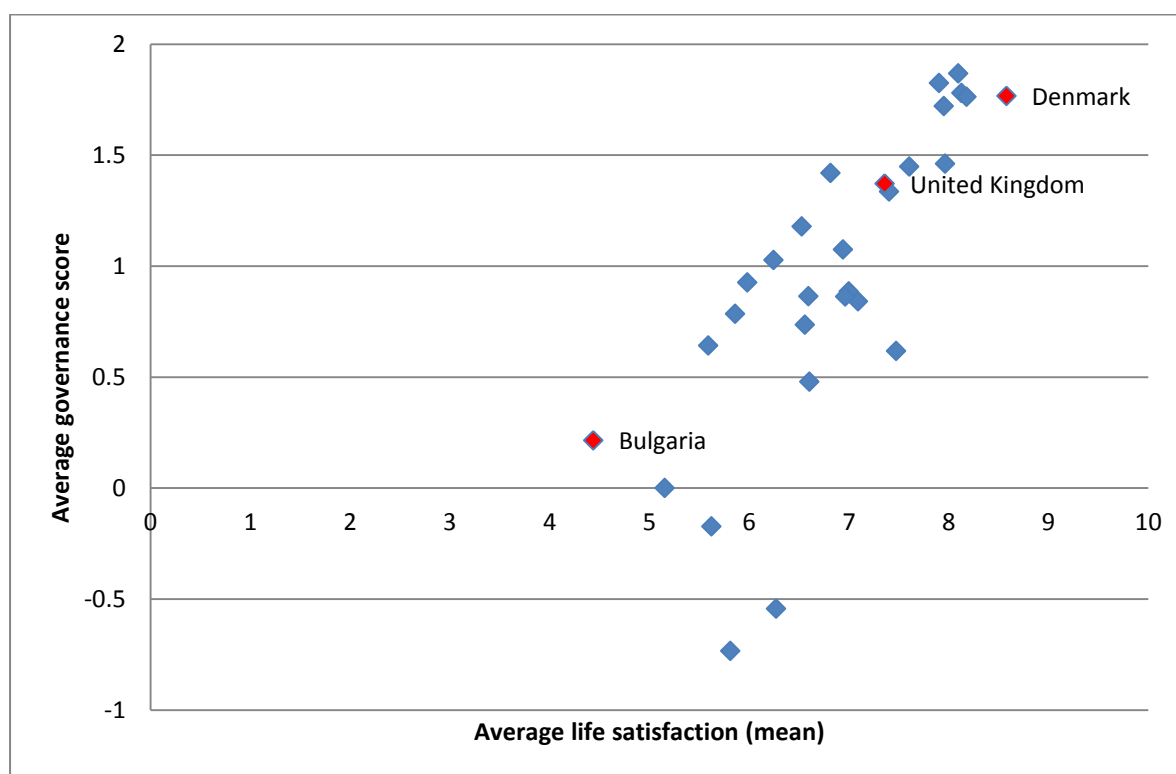
Figure 6: Average governance score and average wellbeing, 2012
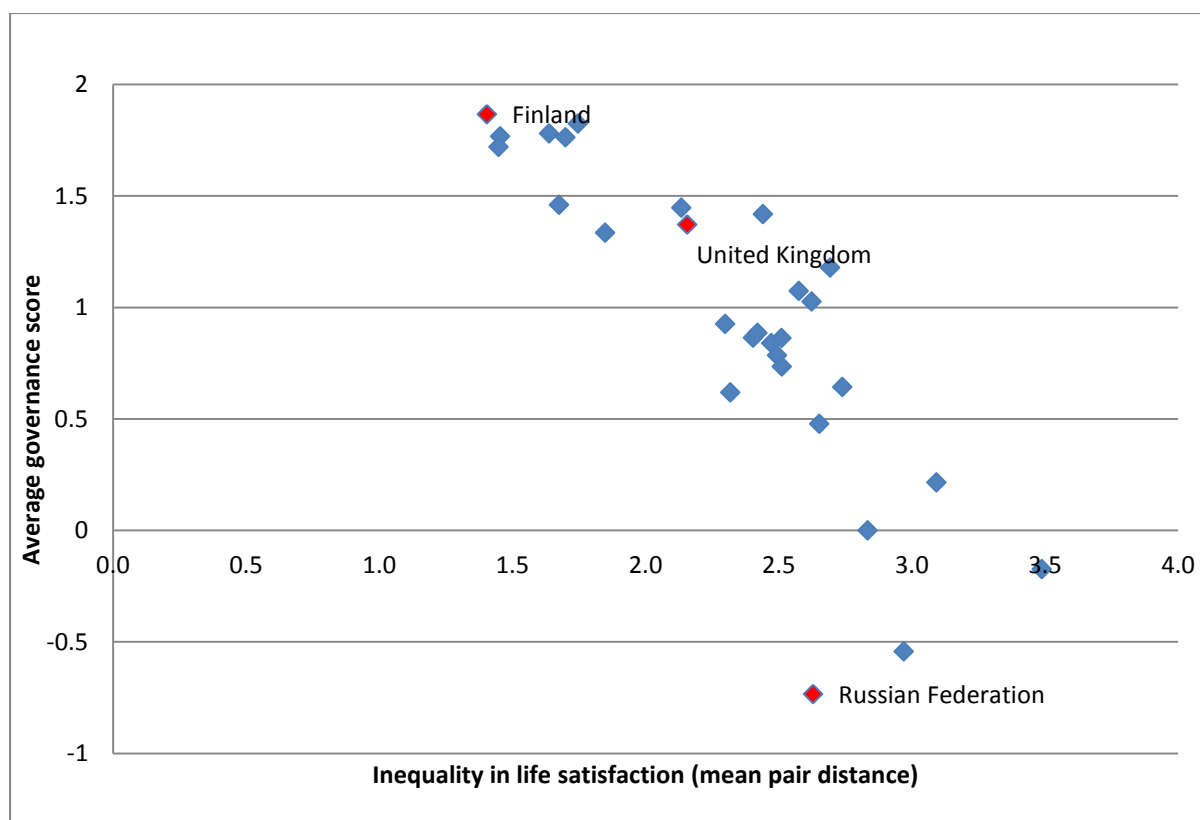
Figure 7: Average governance scores and wellbeing inequality, 2012

Table 1 shows the association between governance and wellbeing controlling for GDP and unemployment.

The results generally confirm the association observed in the figures above. Those findings that are marked with asterisks were found to be statistically significant, meaning that the finding is unlikely to be just the result of random variation. Associations were found both between countries and over time, and in general the results were in the expected direction: better governance predicted higher and more equitable wellbeing. One exception was political stability, which predicted *higher* inequality in wellbeing over time.

Mostly, the effects shown in Table 1 are somewhat weaker than those in appendix 2, where fewer variables are controlled for, suggesting that variation in GDP and/or unemployment explain *some* of the relationship between governance and wellbeing. However, the results demonstrate that there is large part of the relationship which is independent of these two economic variables, and indeed some effects emerged even stronger when controlling for GDP. The results of our two other analyses, firstly without controlling for any other variables, and secondly controlling for just GDP, can be found in appendix 2. This suggests that the observed association between governance and wellbeing is independent of the association between governance and GDP and unemployment.

World bank governance matters indicator	Inequality in life satisfaction		Average life satisfaction	
	Between countries	Over time	Between countries	Over time
Control of corruption	-0.17*	0.03	0.56**	-0.05
Government effectiveness	-0.22*	0.06	0.68**	0.22
Political stability	-0.14*	0.15**	-0.02	0.31**
Regulatory quality	-0.19	-0.09	0.48	0.02
Voice and accountability	-0.23*	-0.16	0.43	-0.07
Rule of law	-0.19*	-0.07	0.49*	-0.04

Table 1 Results of multilevel models of the association between six governance indicators and wellbeing, and wellbeing inequality, controlling for GDP and unemployment.

* indicates significance at 5%

** indicates significance at 1%

Each indicator was inputted into a separate model, so that 12 models were run in total. Models on inequality in life satisfaction also controlled for mean life satisfaction.

Conclusion

In our analysis, we found that a number of governance indicators are associated with average life satisfaction *and* inequalities in life satisfaction. In accordance with some previous studies, we found that these associations held even when controlling for economic variables (in our case GDP and unemployment). This suggests that governance is important to wellbeing *above and beyond* its influence on economic performance.

Appendix 1

The following variables were included to measure perceptions of society:

- Satisfaction with the economy; satisfaction with the national government; satisfaction with the way democracy works
  - o 'Please answer using this card, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied:
    - On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in [country]?
    - Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?
    - And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?'
- Trust in parliament; trust in politicians; trust in the police and the legal system:
  - o 'Please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust'.
- Evaluations of the state of the health and education systems:
  - o [From Extremely Bad (00) to Extremely good (10)]
    - 'Please say what you think overall about the state of education in [country] nowadays?
    - Please say what you think overall about the state of health services in [country] nowadays?'

Figures 1 and 2 depict the mean values for the three societal satisfaction variables – economy, government and democracy, each on a 10-point scale – and the four political trust variables – parliament, politicians, legal system and police, again on a 10-point scale – for both the UK and the ESS samples, over the 6 rounds of the survey (from 2002 to 2012). The tables below list the exact mean values along with the sample sizes, the minimum and maximum values, and statistics representing the spread of the values, the standard deviation and variance (unweighted).

Descriptive Statistics: Societal Satisfaction Over Time (UK)						
ESS round		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1	How satisfied with economy	1985	0	10	5.12	2.109	4.449
	How satisfied with democracy	1977	0	10	5.07	2.273	5.167

	How satisfied with government	2033	0	10	4.37	2.303	5.305
	Valid N (listwise)	1928					
2	How satisfied with economy	1832	0	10	5.28	2.094	4.384
	How satisfied with democracy	1810	0	10	5.09	2.335	5.451
	How satisfied with government	1865	0	10	4.34	2.287	5.229
	Valid N (listwise)	1770					
3	How satisfied with economy	2309	0	10	5.18	2.167	4.698
	How satisfied with democracy	2270	0	10	4.88	2.369	5.613
	How satisfied with government	2353	0	10	3.98	2.326	5.412
	Valid N (listwise)	2216					
4	How satisfied with economy	2318	0	10	3.05	2.093	4.382
	How satisfied with democracy	2258	0	10	4.80	2.436	5.933
	How satisfied with government	2325	0	10	3.52	2.312	5.344

	Valid N (listwise)	2240					
5	How satisfied with economy	2359	0	10	3.46	2.040	4.162
	How satisfied with democracy	2237	0	10	4.95	2.419	5.853
	How satisfied with government	2299	0	10	4.27	2.355	5.548
	Valid N (listwise)	2146					
6	How satisfied with economy	2228	0	10	3.73	2.078	4.318
	How satisfied with democracy	2121	0	10	5.58	2.276	5.181
	How satisfied with government	2218	0	10	3.98	2.361	5.575
	Valid N (listwise)	2082					

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Societal Satisfaction Over Time (UK)

Descriptive Statistics: Societal Satisfaction over Time (ESS)						
ESS round	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1						
How satisfied with economy	31368	0	10	4.60	2.363	5.586
How satisfied with democracy	30920	0	10	5.44	2.330	5.430
How satisfied	29165	0	10	4.44	2.316	5.362

	with government						
	Valid N (listwise)	28108					
2	How satisfied with economy	35795	0	10	4.67	2.411	5.811
	How satisfied with democracy	35177	0	10	5.23	2.416	5.837
	How satisfied with government	35408	0	10	4.22	2.350	5.522
	Valid N (listwise)	34120					
3	How satisfied with economy	32796	0	10	5.27	2.413	5.822
	How satisfied with democracy	32406	0	10	5.45	2.386	5.691
	How satisfied with government	32461	0	10	4.58	2.374	5.634
	Valid N (listwise)	31260					
4	How satisfied with economy	35659	0	10	4.22	2.429	5.902
	How satisfied with democracy	35109	0	10	5.33	2.432	5.914
	How satisfied with government	35403	0	10	4.24	2.427	5.892

	Valid N (listwise)	34260					
5	How satisfied with economy	35431	0	10	4.32	2.484	6.171
	How satisfied with democracy	34835	0	10	5.19	2.452	6.010
	How satisfied with government	35051	0	10	4.07	2.415	5.830
	Valid N (listwise)	33934					
6	How satisfied with economy	37217	0	10	4.37	2.599	6.757
	How satisfied with democracy	36667	0	10	5.55	2.459	6.044
	How satisfied with government	36917	0	10	4.18	2.546	6.480
	Valid N (listwise)	35959					

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics: Societal Satisfaction over Time (ESS)

Descriptive Statistics: Political Trust over Time (ESS)						
ESS round		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1	Trust in the legal system	31428	0	10	5.25	2.542	6.463
	Trust in the police	31914	0	10	6.14	2.436	5.935

	Trust in politicians	31677	0	10	3.98	2.259	5.103
	Trust in country's parliament	31243	0	10	4.89	2.390	5.711
	Valid N (listwise)	30561					
2	Trust in the legal system	35712	0	10	5.02	2.576	6.636
	Trust in the police	36218	0	10	5.93	2.508	6.291
	Trust in politicians	35955	0	10	3.60	2.308	5.329
	Trust in country's parliament	35738	0	10	4.43	2.453	6.018
	Valid N (listwise)	34716					
3	Trust in the legal system	32870	0	10	5.28	2.507	6.287
	Trust in the police	33349	0	10	6.12	2.426	5.887
	Trust in politicians	33053	0	10	3.77	2.312	5.344
	Trust in country's parliament	32719	0	10	4.69	2.438	5.942
	Valid N (listwise)	31963					
4	Trust in the legal system	35591	0	10	5.18	2.554	6.521
	Trust in the police	36084	0	10	6.10	2.417	5.842

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Trust in politicians	35786	0	10	3.68	2.318	5.372
	Trust in country's parliament	35378	0	10	4.57	2.469	6.094
	Valid N (listwise)	34675					
5	Trust in the legal system	35155	0	10	5.14	2.569	6.600
	Trust in the police	35725	0	10	6.14	2.409	5.805
	Trust in politicians	35451	0	10	3.52	2.348	5.511
	Trust in country's parliament	35127	0	10	4.33	2.493	6.215
	Valid N (listwise)	34329					
6	Trust in the legal system	37004	0	10	5.18	2.657	7.062
	Trust in the police	37461	0	10	6.23	2.430	5.907
	Trust in politicians	37234	0	10	3.55	2.413	5.821
	Trust in country's parliament	36934	0	10	4.35	2.594	6.727
	Valid N (listwise)	36271					

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics: Political Trust over Time (ESS)

ESS round		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Descriptive Statistics: Political Trust over Time (UK)							
1	Trust in the legal system	2032	0	10	5.04	2.404	5.780
	Trust in the police	2046	0	10	6.07	2.408	5.796
	Trust in politicians	2033	0	10	3.77	2.210	4.885
	Trust in country's parliament	2027	0	10	4.64	2.337	5.464
	Valid N (listwise)	2001					
2	Trust in the legal system	1857	0	10	5.03	2.367	5.603
	Trust in the police	1890	0	10	6.06	2.359	5.566
	Trust in politicians	1870	0	10	3.52	2.220	4.930
	Trust in country's parliament	1874	0	10	4.23	2.351	5.526
	Valid N (listwise)	1828					
3	Trust in the legal system	2352	0	10	4.99	2.403	5.774
	Trust in the police	2380	0	10	6.03	2.379	5.658
	Trust in politicians	2348	0	10	3.37	2.194	4.812
	Trust in country's	2349	0	10	4.16	2.391	5.718

	parliament						
	Valid N (listwise)	2296					
4	Trust in the legal system	2315	0	10	5.14	2.434	5.924
	Trust in the police	2344	0	10	6.22	2.406	5.789
	Trust in politicians	2325	0	10	3.51	2.219	4.924
	Trust in country's parliament	2318	0	10	4.27	2.453	6.015
	Valid N (listwise)	2282					
5	Trust in the legal system	2333	0	10	5.19	2.413	5.824
	Trust in the police	2395	0	10	6.23	2.362	5.580
	Trust in politicians	2365	0	10	3.40	2.271	5.159
	Trust in country's parliament	2344	0	10	4.05	2.440	5.951
	Valid N (listwise)	2263					
6	Trust in the legal system	2207	0	10	5.52	2.327	5.415
	Trust in the police	2263	0	10	6.53	2.222	4.939
	Trust in politicians	2222	0	10	3.58	2.215	4.905
	Trust in country's	2219	0	10	4.21	2.367	5.601

parliament						
Valid N (listwise)	2142					

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics: Political Trust over Time (UK)

Figure 3 depicts the mean PQOS score by country over time. The tables below list the exact PQOS average along with the sample sizes, the minimum and maximum values, and statistics representing the spread of the values, the standard deviation and variance (unweighted).

Below are the full results of the PQOS OLS regression models for the ESS as well as for the UK, with significant (***:p<0.001; **p<0.01; *:p<0.05) and non-significant (no asterisk) results. Included are the unstandardised and standardised (beta) coefficient estimates, the standard errors for the former (estimates the variation of the coefficient across cases) and the significance values.

	OLS Regression model with PQOS composite measure – UK only				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.675	.301		.000
	ESS round 6	.475***	.103	.154	.000
	Age: 25 to 44 years	-.198*	.084	-.060	.019
	Age: 45 to 64 years	-.394***	.089	-.123	.000
	Age: 65 to 74 years	-.457***	.109	-.095	.000
	Age: 75 and over	-.351**	.120	-.060	.003
	Female	-.092	.048	-.030	.056
	ES-ISCED: Upper secondary and vocational	.037	.054	.011	.497
	ES-ISCED: Tertiary education (BA/MA)	.202**	.067	.055	.003
	Feeling about HH income: Difficult	.022	.120	.005	.855
	Feeling about HH income: Coping	.142	.114	.046	.213
	Feeling about HH income: Living comfortably	.201	.118	.064	.089

Married or in civil union	-.011	.051	-.004	.822
Citizen of country	-.473***	.128	-.067	.000
Born in country	-.243**	.082	-.053	.003
Member of a group discriminated against in this country	-.454***	.071	-.094	.000
Belonging to particular religion or denomination	-.015	.058	-.005	.804
How religious are you	.072***	.011	.138	.000
Frequent attendance at religious services	-.014	.070	-.003	.845
Subjective general health: Bad	-.071	.227	-.011	.754
Subjective general health: Fair	.074	.220	.019	.735
Subjective general health: Good	.273	.225	.088	.225
Subjective general health: Very good	.177	.229	.053	.441
Hampered in daily activities by illness/disability/infirmity/mental problem	.000	.050	.000	.998
Interested in Politics	.138**	.049	.044	.005
Voted in last election	.005	.055	.001	.934
Placement on left right scale	.113***	.012	.137	.000
In Paid Work	-.029	.126	-.009	.819
Managers and Professionals	-.506***	.116	-.116	.000
Technicians, clerical, service and sales	-.323**	.111	-.083	.004
Skilled and non-skilled manual	-.385***	.118	-.081	.001
Contract type: Permanent	-.136	.168	-.043	.419

Contract type: Temporary	-.193	.193	-.027	.318
Contract type: No contract	-.203	.183	-.026	.265
Employment relation: Employee	.067	.171	.022	.696
Employment relation: Self-employed	-.053	.140	-.010	.707
Employment relation: Unemployed	-.082	.122	-.011	.501
Most people can be trusted	.491***	.051	.160	.000
Most people try to be fair	.254***	.051	.083	.000
People mostly try to be helpful	.279***	.049	.090	.000
Meet people socially at least once a week	-.032	.048	-.010	.507
Take part in social activities more than most	-.014	.057	-.004	.802
Respondent victim of burglary/assault last 5 years	-.141*	.056	-.037	.012
Feel safe walking in my local area after dark	.151**	.056	.041	.007
How satisfied with life as a whole	.163***	.017	.212	.000
How happy are you	.042*	.018	.050	.018

Weighted data

Dependent Variable: Composite 9 scale item PQOS

Adjusted R Square (model fit) = .314

Table 6: OLS Regression model with PQOS composite measure – UK only

OLS Regression model with PQOS composite measure - ESS				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	2.923	.127		.000
Age: 25 to 44 years	-.395***	.039	-.105	.000
Age: 45 to 64 years	-.377***	.041	-.105	.000
Age: 65 to 74 years	-.384***	.045	-.078	.000
Age: 75 and over	-.243***	.049	-.041	.000
Female	-.084***	.019	-.024	.000
ES-ISCED: Upper secondary and vocational	.031	.023	.008	.190
ES-ISCED: Tertiary education (BA/MA)	.111***	.029	.027	.000
Feeling about HH income: Difficult	.050	.050	.011	.311
Feeling about HH income: Coping	.319***	.048	.092	.000
Feeling about HH income: Living comfortably	.571***	.051	.154	.000
Married or in civil union	-.123***	.020	-.035	.000
Citizen of country	-.508***	.058	-.056	.000
Born in country	-.571***	.036	-.098	.000
Member of a group discriminated against in this country	-.478***	.036	-.070	.000
Belonging to particular religion or denomination	-.057*	.023	-.016	.014
How religious are you	.055***	.004	.098	.000
Frequent attendance at religious services	-.223***	.025	-.054	.000
Subjective general	.076	.091	.011	.402

health: Bad				
Subjective general health: Fair	.250**	.089	.064	.005
Subjective general health: Good	.361***	.091	.104	.000
Subjective general health: Very good	.435***	.094	.101	.000
Hampered in daily activities by illness/disability/infirmity/mental problem	.187***	.019	.064	.000
Interested in Politics	.333***	.019	.096	.000
Voted in last election	.038	.024	.009	.116
Placement on left right scale	.064***	.004	.083	.000
In Paid Work	.002	.007	.002	.760
Managers and Professionals	-.044	.026	-.011	.093
Skilled and non-skilled manual	-.051*	.023	-.014	.025
Contract type: Permanent	-.006	.064	-.002	.922
Contract type: Temporary	-.114	.072	-.016	.112
Contract type: No contract	-.041	.088	-.003	.638
Employment relation: Employee	-.020	.065	-.006	.753
Employment relation: Self-employed	-.274***	.038	-.043	.000
Employment relation: Unemployed	-.072	.046	-.009	.123
Most people can be trusted	.447***	.021	.127	.000
Most people try to be fair	.456***	.021	.131	.000
People mostly try to be helpful	.478***	.020	.135	.000

Meet people socially at least once a week	.005	.019	.001	.809
Take part in social activities more than most	-.056*	.024	-.012	.020
Respondent or household member victim of burglary/assault last 5 years	-.216***	.024	-.048	.000
Feel safe walking in my local area after dark	.174***	.023	.041	.000
How satisfied with life as a whole	.167***	.006	.210	.000
How happy are you	.000	.007	.000	.948

Weighted data

Dependent Variable: Composite 9 scale item PQOS
Adjusted R Square (model fit) = .323

Table 7: OLS Regression model with PQOS composite measure - ESS

Appendix 2

Our primary analysis (outlined in the main text) controlled for both GDP and unemployment. However, we also conducted two other analyses, firstly without controlling for any other variables (except for mean life satisfaction in the case of the inequality analysis), shown in table 8, and secondly controlling for just GDP, shown in table 9. These were conducted in order to gain a fuller understanding of the role of economic indicators in the analysis. As can be seen, the results do change with the addition of GDP and unemployment respectively, although in each case some indicators remain significant.

	Inequality in life satisfaction		**Mean life satisfaction**	
World bank governance matters indicator	Between countries	Over time	Between countries	Over time
Control of corruption	-0.07	0.00	0.82**	-0.01
Government effectiveness	-0.10	0.04	0.99*	0.19
Political stability	-0.12*	0.07	0.65**	0.36**
Regulatory quality	-0.14	-0.19**	1.24*	0.34
Voice and	-0.14*	-0.21*	1.16**	0.08

accountability				
Rule of law	-0.10	-0.14	0.94**	0.19

Table 8: Results of multilevel models of the association between six governance indicators and wellbeing, and wellbeing inequality, without controlling for other variables.

* indicates significance at 5%

** indicates significance at 1%

Each indicator was inputted into a separate model, so that 12 models were run in total. Association with mean life satisfaction is controlled for mean life satisfaction only.

	Inequality in life satisfaction		Mean life satisfaction	
World bank governance matters indicator	Between countries	Over time	Between countries	Over time
Control of corruption	-0.17*	-0.03	0.52**	0.10
Government effectiveness	-0.21**	-0.01	0.51**	0.37**
Political stability	-0.16**	0.05	-0.08	0.43**
Regulatory quality	-0.20	-0.20**	0.34	0.32
Voice and accountability	-0.22*	-0.22**	0.27	0.10
Rule of law	-0.19*	-0.11	0.37	0.05

Table 9: Results of multilevel models of the association between six governance indicators and wellbeing, and wellbeing inequality, controlling for GDP.

* indicates significance at 5%

** indicates significance at 1%

Each indicator was inputted into a separate model, so that 12 models were run in total. Association with mean life satisfaction is controlled for mean life satisfaction.

Endnotes

[1] Barnes, M., Taylor, D., & Ward, L. (2013). Being well enough in old age. *Critical Social Policy, 33*(3), 473-493.

[2] We began our work with a time and country-pooled dataset from the core modules of the ESS which house the relevant societal wellbeing variables. We started working with all the countries, but after the first round of preliminary analyses we decided to concentrate, for comparative purposes, on the 19 countries within the ESS sample that had five rounds of unbroken data. The countries are: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.

[3] We performed both Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses. These were performed in Stata and SPSS on weighted and unweighted data using Maximum-Likelihood estimation.

[4] We also used the 'Cronbach's alpha' measure to test the reliability of the scale and this returned a very high value indicating a high level of internal consistency.

[5] Sanders, D., Magalhães, P.C., & Tóka G. (2012). *Citizens and the European Polity: Mass Attitudes towards the European and National Polities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.10.

[6] Hooghe, M., & Zmerli, S. (2011). Introduction: The Context of Political Trust. In M. Hooghe and S. Zmerli (Eds) *Political Trust: Why Context Matters* (p.4). Colchester: ECPR Press.

[7] In our previous models we have included the religiosity and religious attendance variables, the subjective health variables, the political interest and political orientation variables, the 'trust in people' and the social activity variables as well as safety, life satisfaction and happiness as categorical measures. In the initial stages we utilised fairly generalised statements to describe the relationship of the above with our societal wellbeing response variable, referring only loosely to the size of the coefficient in the models. We discussed the rationale of recoding some of these variables, i.e. subsuming them into two-category variables for the sake of more accurate interpretation, given that there may not be linear relationship between each incremental category of the variable in question and the subsequent increase or decrease in the proportional change in societal wellbeing.

We decided to keep happiness, life satisfaction, religiosity and political orientation as they utilise 'out-of-ten scales' instead of pre-defined response categories.

For the others listed above, it made sense to subsume some of the categories to achieve a dichotomous or a least a more parsimonious 'less or more' measure with which to better achieve conclusive and clearly communicated results.

[8] Descriptive statistics comprised mean values (the average of the distribution), median values (the halfway point of the distribution), the standard deviation and variance (the spread and dispersion of the distribution and skewness (a measure of the symmetry of the distribution).

[9] Thomassen, J. (2015). What's gone wrong with democracy, or with theories explaining why it has? In T. Poguntke, S. Rossteutscher, R. Schmitt-Beek and S. Zmerli (Eds) *Citizenship and Democracy in an Era of Crisis*. New York and London: Routledge.

[10] The predictor variables in this model: Age in categories (reference category as 16-24 years); level of education 'ES-ISCED, a variation on the International Standard Classification of Education) reference category as Lower secondary education); Feelings about household income (reference category as very difficult); Married or in a civil union; citizen of country; born in country; member of a group discriminated against; religiosity (scale); attendance at religious services; subjective general health (reference category as very bad); hampered by illness; political interest (scale); voted in last election,

placement on left-right scale; in paid work; occupational type (reference category as no occupation); contract type; employment relation; social trust; social activity; victim of violence; feeling of safety; life satisfaction and happiness.

[11] Helliwell, J. F. (2003). How's life? Combining individual and national variables to explain subjective wellbeing. *Economic Modelling, 20*(2), 331-360.

[12] Helliwell, J. F., & Huang, H. (2006). *How's Your Government?: International Evidence Linking Good Government and Wellbeing* (No. w11988). National Bureau of Economic Research.

[13] Ott, J. (2005). Level and inequality of happiness in nations: Does greater happiness of a greater number imply greater inequality in happiness? *Journal of Happiness Studies, 6*(4), 397-420.

[14] Ovaska, T., & Takashima, R. (2010). Does a rising tide lift all the boats? Explaining the national inequality of happiness. *Journal of Economic Issues, 44*(1), 205-224.

[15] Frey, B. S., & Stutzer, A. (2000). Happiness, economy and institutions. *The Economic Journal, 110*(466), 918-938.

[16] Frey, B. S., & Stutzer, A. (2002). The economics of happiness. *World Economics, 3*(1), 1-17.

[17] Veenhoven , R. (2000). Freedom and happiness: A comparative study in 46 nations in the early 1990's. In Diener, E. & Suh, E.M. (Eds) *Culture and Subjective Wellbeing* (257-288), Cambridge: MIT press.

[18] Bjørnskov, C., Dreher, A., & Fischer, J. A. (2008). Cross-country determinants of life satisfaction: Exploring different determinants across groups in society. *Social Choice and Welfare, 30*(1), 119-173.

[19] The mean pair distance is the average distance between two randomly selected data points. It is an established measure of distribution.

[20] Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2011). The worldwide governance indicators: methodology and analytical issues. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law, 3*(02), 220-246.

[21] Country fixed effects are only able to limit confounding between countries. Variables which change over time will not be controlled for in this analysis, unless they are included as independent variables in the multilevel model.

[22] We used the logarithm of GDP in the model, instead of GDP because of the closer relationship found in most studies. For discussion, see Stoll et al. Wellbeing evidence for policy: A review, London, NEF. Found at: http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/10b8aabd90c5771ff9_a0m6bvv5a.pdf

[23] This confounding is particularly relevant as it is possible that at least some of the association between mean life satisfaction and inequality in life satisfaction is mathematical, rather than substantive, given the effect of the bounded life satisfaction scale. Further discussion of this issue can be found at Quick, A. (2015). Inequalities in wellbeing Challenges and opportunities for research and policy. NEF working paper. Found at: http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/933d35dcf874bba4f4_ygm6i2evp.pdf

[24] Each indicator was put into a separate model because of the high level of co-linearity between the various governance indicators.

Governance, wellbeing, and the perceived quality of society roundtable: Summary of discussion

Making Wellbeing Count for Policy

The Foundry, January 13 2016

Summary of priorities and next steps:

- A natural conclusion from the policy findings is that issues of governance should be prioritised above GDP. This could be applied domestically, but also potentially in terms of international development, where debates focus on whether economic or political aid should be prioritised (although the findings should be checked against data from lower income countries).
- Stronger efforts should be made to engage more with more marginalised groups, who currently have lower estimations of the quality of society.
- More in-depth analysis on participation aspects of governance and wellbeing inequality is needed, particularly pulling out different aspects of participation below the level of the World Bank Governance Matters Indicators.
- More local and regional data and analysis is needed to make it relevant for local policy makers. This would be useful both regarding Perceived Quality of Society as well as looking at wellbeing inequalities, and their relationship to local level participation initiatives.

Discussion

Participants felt that highlighting the positive relationship between governance and low wellbeing inequality could be useful to advocacy and policy

- Roundtable participants were interested in the findings, in particular those related to participation. For those working in governance and participation, showing that governance improves wellbeing and reduces inequalities in wellbeing is key in making the case for investment in governance and participation. This is particularly the case for wellbeing as it is an indicator which is sensitive to a number of other outcomes of interest.
- Those participants whose focus was on wellbeing also appreciated the focus on governance, and the perception of the quality of society because it highlights collective good, relationships between people and trust, instead of leading to a more individualistic focus on personal behaviour (which can be a criticism of the wellbeing agenda).

Participants felt that the findings could shed light on the relationship between participation and inequality, although a number of research questions remain
Here 'voice and accountability' refers to the World Bank Governance Matters Indicator used in this analysis, which measures the extent to which a country's

citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.

- The finding that voice and accountability is related to higher average wellbeing was reassuring but not surprising for participants. However, the fact that governance is associated with lower *inequality* in life satisfaction surprised some participants. An argument is often made that not everyone benefits equally from increases in participation – e.g. more advantaged people may be more likely to use systems such as consultations, community rights etc. This could lead to an *increase* inequality. The analysis presented would seem to discredit that argument.
- However, the Governance Matters indicator is too broad to be able to make this case clearly – more information on the relationship between participation and engagement and wellbeing inequality would be needed to establish whether this is the case. Data from the UK Citizenship Survey could be used to undertake this analysis.
- In a somewhat contrasting finding, the project team presented evidence suggesting that being a member of a discriminated group is negatively associated with Perceived Quality of Society. Participants were not surprised, suggesting that certain groups continue to be under-represented in democratic structures and engagement mechanisms, which means that institutional structures are less likely to effectively serve their needs.
- The presentation from City University suggested that those who are more engaged in society may have lower estimations of the quality of society. Participants reflected that this could be because of poor quality of mechanisms for engagement. For example, consultation responses not being seriously taken into account in decision-making, and/or poor feedback mechanisms.
- Participants reflected that what matters to most people is the perception that they can get involved and that their voices would be listened to if they chose to, rather than actually being involved.

Questions were raised regarding the study's methodology and presentation

- Participants raised some questions about the use of external indicators for the studies. The Governance Matters Indictors are based on external expert opinion, which isn't necessarily the best measure of governance. However, it's important to be able to explain differences between countries, so that we can say more than 'Denmark' is different because it's 'Denmark' – external indicators are useful to plug into analysis to enable cross-country comparisons.
- Participants queried the choice of indicators to include in the Perceived Quality of Society, how does one choose which aspects to measure/include in "society"? This study was based on data available in the European Social Survey, but another interesting approach to deciding what to measure might be a public consultation on people's perceptions of what is important to society.
- It was queried whether Perceived Quality of Society was an accurate description as some participants felt that the included indicators were more about governance and institutions and didn't include a number of factors that some people would think of regarding 'society'.

Participants identified a number of policy relevant findings

- It was noted that trust in institutions has been broadly flat over time. This is in opposition to presentation in the media that suggests broad fluctuations in public opinion in response to various scandals, which can prompt knee-jerk policy reactions. The finding that trust is relatively steady suggests policy makers and politicians may not need to be so reactive.
- The analyses suggest that policy that encourages political participation might improve people's wellbeing. However, the discussions also suggested that what people want is to feel that they can have a voice, rather than to be engaged all the time. Perhaps the indicator (and policy suggestion) that we should be interested in is not to increase participation per se, but the belief that people can get involved with, and influence decisions.
- In international development circles, an important question is whether political aid or economic aid is more important - this study suggests that governance might be more important than GDP.

Many participants raised questions for further research for policy.

- More information is needed on what kinds of participation actually increases trust in government. Longitudinal research is needed on how different forms of participation (consultations, public dialogue, community rights engagement) affect people's perceptions of society.
- A lot of policy implications are felt at the local and regional level. More information is needed on this. How do we connect between a representative national survey and where policy actually happens, on a street, in a town? What is going on locally regarding perceptions of society?
- UK policy makers are most interested in other democracies most like them, e.g. New Zealand and Canada, rather than other Continental European countries. Further research comparing perceptions of society to these countries could be useful.
- Further research is needed to explore the surprising findings regarding political stability. Further research could include exploration of indicators on whether people feel their lives are worthwhile, and how this relates to political stability. It could be that people living in politically unstable environments don't pursue worthwhile lives, or engage in behaviours to promote flourishing because of their focus on basic needs.
- Regarding the finding that people who are less engaged in society have lower estimations of its quality, further research is needed regarding the direction of causation: are people less engaged in society because they have a lower Perceived Quality of Society or is it the other way around?
- Are there diminishing returns on the relationship between wellbeing inequality and governance? I.e. is it the case that once you've reached a certain level of governance, it is not worth investing further?
- There was a lot of general interest (and discord) about what prevents people from engaging in politics. Some participants cited apathy, some, a lack of direct relevance. Further research into this might look at the Scottish referendum as a case study.

Participants highlighted various relevant research during the roundtable

- Although Britain is flat on institutional trust in this study, a German study found that the UK is sliding down national rankings for 'sense of connection to

people and institutions'. This study also found that social cohesion is the single strongest indicator of subjective wellbeing.

- The RSA's project Hounslow: Cranford Stronger Together was referred to during the roundtable as a good example of a more local level project exploring wellbeing and participation. The resulting report can be found here.