



Journal of Economic Perspectives

ISSN 0895-3309 (Print) | ISSN 1944-7965 (Online)

≡ Menu

Developments in the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being

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JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES
VOL. 20, NO. 1, WINTER 2006
(pp. 3–24)

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Article Information

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Abstract

Direct reports of subjective well-being may have a useful role in the measurement of consumer preferences and social welfare, if they can be done in a credible way. Can well-being be measured by a subjective survey, even approximately? In this paper, we discuss research on how individuals' responses to subjective well-being questions

vary with their circumstances and other factors. We will argue that it is fruitful to

This website uses cookies. different conceptions of utility rather than presume to measure a

By clicking the "Accept" button or continuing to browse our site, you agree to first-party and session-only cookies being stored on your device to enhance site navigation and analyze site performance and traffic. For more information on our use of cookies, please see our [Privacy Policy](#). subjective well-being measures features of

individuals' perceptions of their experiences, not their utility as economists typically conceive of it. Those perceptions are a more accurate gauge of actual feelings if they

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are reported closer to the time of, and in direct reference to, the actual experience. We conclude by proposing the U- index, a misery index of sorts, which measures the proportion of time that people spend in an unpleasant state, and has the virtue of not requiring a cardinal conception of individuals' feelings.

Citation

Kahneman, Daniel, and Alan B. Krueger. 2006. "Developments in the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20 (1): 3–24.

DOI: 10.1257/089533006776526030

Choose Format:



JEL Classification

I31 General Welfare; Well-Being

O15 Economic Development: Human Resources; Human Development; Income Distribution; Migration

P36 Socialist Institutions and Their Transitions: Consumer Economics; Health; Education and Training; Welfare, Income, Wealth, and Poverty

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