



UNECE Guidelines on Measurement of Well-being

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Task force on Measurement of well-being

- **Participants:** Armenia, Canada, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat, OECD, UNICEF, UNECLAC, UNSD, UNECE
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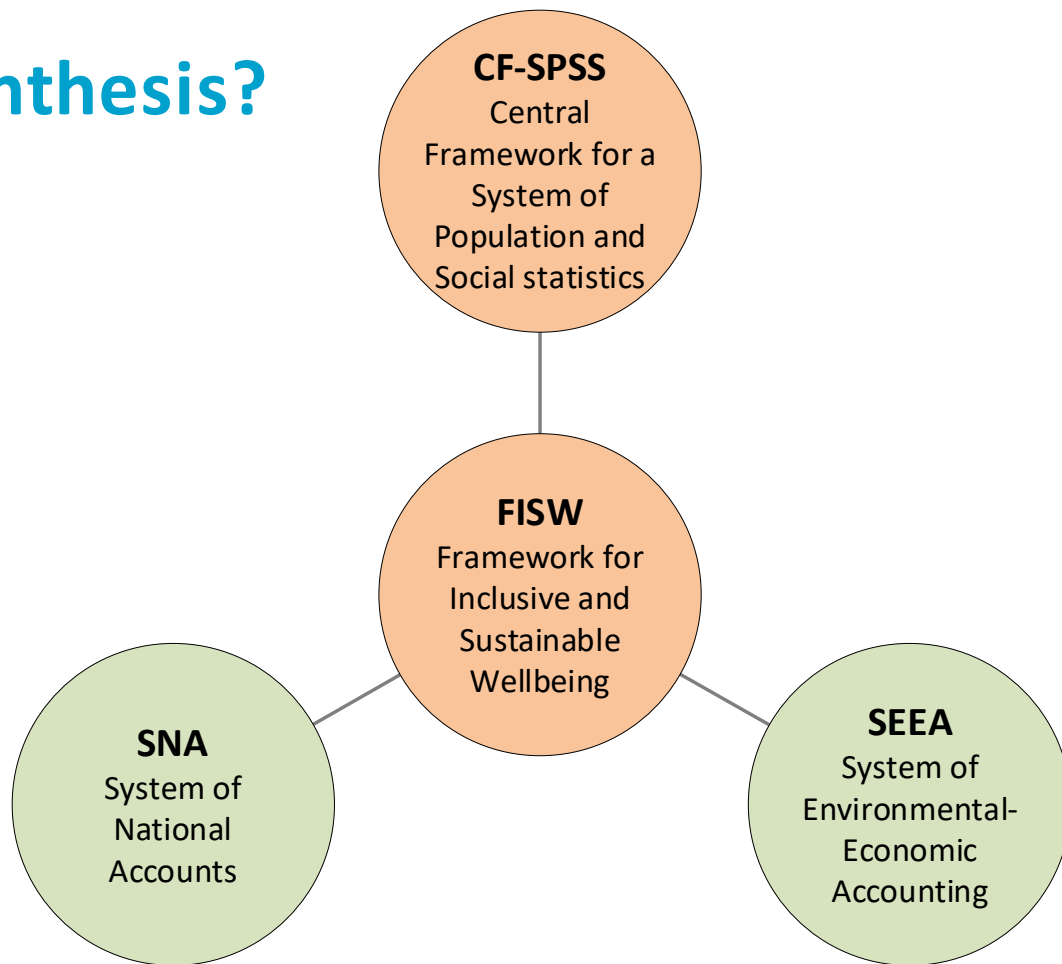
Objectives

Synthesis of existing well-being frameworks

- Core dimensions and indicators for current well-being
- Calculation methods, measurement challenges and data sources
- Examples of good practices in dissemination and communication of current well-being measures
- Adapt to country needs



Why a synthesis?



Existing frameworks

- Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (2009) – the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report
- OECD Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress (2011)
- Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development (2014)
- Eurostat's Quality of Life indicators (2016)
- *Sustainable Development Goals (2015)*
- *National well-being measurement frameworks*



Figure 2.1
Overview of international initiatives that have advanced the conceptual underpinnings of measuring societal progress



Common principles

1. Distinguish between current well-being (and its distribution) and resources for future well-being
2. Well-being is multidimensional
3. Indicators in well-being frameworks are outcome-focused and include both objective and subjective assessments of people's circumstances

Based predominantly on the recommendations of Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi



Common dimensions



Common dimensions in international well-being frameworks

Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi	CES Recommendations	OECD Well-being Framework	Eurostat Quality of Life framework	UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
	subjective well-being	subjective well-being	overall experience of life	economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality (art. 22)
material living standards	consumption and income	income and wealth	material living conditions (income and consumption)	a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and of his family (art. 25), right to own property (art. 17)
	nutrition			food (art. 25)
health	health	health	health	health (art. 25)
personal activities (work)	labour	work and job quality	productive or other main activity	no slavery or servitude (art. 4), right to work, free choice of employment, just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment (art. 23)
education	education	knowledge and skills	education	education (art. 26)
	housing	housing	material living conditions (housing)	housing (art. 25)
personal activities (other than work)	leisure	work-life balance	leisure and social interactions (leisure)	rest and leisure (art. 24)
insecurity (physical)	physical safety	safety	economic and physical safety (physical and personal security)	right to life, liberty and security of person (art. 3), no torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 5)
insecurity (economic)			economic and physical safety (economic security and vulnerability)	right to social security (art. 22), right to security in the event of [...] lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control (art. 25)
environment (present conditions)	land and ecosystems water air	environmental quality	natural and living environment	While the right to a clean environment is not specified in the UDHR, the human right to a healthy environment is clearly stated in international human rights law.
social connections and relationships	trust	social connections	leisure and social interactions (social interactions)	right to marry and to found a family (art. 16), freely to participate in the cultural life of the community (art. 27), right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association (art. 20)
political voice and governance	institutions	civic engagement	governance and basic rights	legal protection clauses (art. 6 thru 12, 15), right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 18), right to freedom of opinion and expression (art. 19), right to take part in the government and right of equal access to public service (art. 21), duties to the community (art. 29)

Recommended common dimensions

- Subjective well-being
- Material living conditions
- Work and leisure
- Housing
- Health
- Knowledge and skills
- Physical safety
- Social connections
- Civic engagement
- Environmental conditions



Recommended indicators



Selection criteria for indicators

Timeliness and frequency	as current as possible and be updated periodically, preferably at least annually
Credibility and comparability	reliable and reproducible, so they remain consistent and comparable; based on international standards
Accuracy	correctly reflect the underlying concepts that they are intended to capture
Relevance	reflect existing scientific understanding of well-being (intrinsic relevance) and related to well-being outcomes (instrumental relevance)
Directional meaning	possible to interpret a change in the value of an indicator unambiguously
Universality	reasonably applicable across countries, cultures, scales, and population groups
Measurability	regular and timely data collection can be done with reasonable cost and effort; within the capacity of most statistical offices
Disaggregation	possible to disaggregate by population group or region
Understandability	easy to understand, communicate and interpret



Properties of the indicator set

- comprehensive, covering all dimensions of well-being
- balanced across dimensions
- contain both subjective and objective indicators
- indicators that are considered highly relevant but do not exist may be included in the set of indicators to signal a data gap



Both subjective and objective indicators

- **Subjective indicators** measure how people perceive, emotionally experience or otherwise feel about an aspect of their life
- **Objective indicators** measure conditions, achievements and behaviours concerning an aspect of well-being for groups of people, independent of how people perceive their lives concerning that aspect.



Examples of indicators

Box 3.3

Objective and subjective indicators and measurement methods

Reporting method			
Nature of the phenomenon		Administrative records, monitoring systems, and censuses	Surveys
	Objective	Urban population exposure to air pollution by particulate matter	Presence of specific defects in a house
	Subjective	Sentiment ¹¹	Life satisfaction



Dimensions and indicators



Dimension 8: Social connections

3.68 Social connections capture the quantity and quality of social interactions and the support provided by these connections. People derive intrinsic pleasure from spending time with others. People with extensive and supportive networks have better health, tend to live longer, report higher life satisfaction, and are more likely to be employed. Social isolation is the deprivation of social interactions (contact with family, friends, neighbours, colleagues).

3.69 Relevant subdimensions: social interactions, support, quality, community, trust.

Table 3.8

8. Social connections^{a)}

nr.	indicator	use	type
8.1	Frequency of social contacts	O,E,C	obj
8.2	Having someone to rely on	O	obj
8.3	Satisfaction with personal relationships	O,E	subj
8.4	Experience of discrimination		subj
8.5	Loneliness	O	subj
8.6	Trust in other people	O ^{b)} , ^{a)} ,C	subj
8.7	Participation in cultural activities	E	obj
8.8	Volunteering	O ^{b)} ,C	obj

O = OECD How's Life? Well-being Dashboard, E = Eurostat QoL Framework, C = CES Recommendations.

^{a)} Relevant international statistical guidance: OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust (2017). The OECD is currently working on producing guidelines for measuring social connections.

^{b)} Under social capital/resources for future well-being in the OECD Well-being Framework.



Dimension 8: Social connections

Relevance

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Use in existing
frameworks



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Possible data gaps

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**Objective and
subjective indicators**



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International
guidelines



Metadata

Short name	Frequency of social contacts (8.1)
Long name	Share of the population having contact with family (relatives) or friends, by frequency of contact
Dimension	Social connections
Definition	The percentage of the population who report having contact with family and friends, categorized by the frequency of contact (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, or less often).
Use	To monitor the frequency of social interactions, evaluate social connectedness, and inform policies aimed at reducing social isolation and fostering stronger community ties.
Type	Objective
Unit of measurement	Percentage of population
Data sources	Household surveys or Time Use Surveys. Administrative registers may collect information about social support services, which may indicate levels of contact with family or friends. International sources include EU-SILC and the European Social Survey (ESS).
Frameworks	CES Recommendations – guidelines on producing leading, composite and sentiment indicators Eurostat Quality of Life Framework OECD How's Life? (the OECD Well-being Database considers the time spent interacting with friends and family as primary activity, hours per week which is drawn from time use surveys)
More metadata	Eurostat's data is collected through the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/ilc_sieusilc.htm Access indicator data on self-reported frequency of contacts from Eurostat Access indicator data on time spent in social interactions in hours from OECD



Distribution of well-being

- *horizontal inequalities*: gaps between population groups
- *vertical inequalities*: gaps between top and bottom of the scale
- *deprivation*: share of the population falling below a given threshold of achievement
- *children and elderly people*



Composite indexes

- Dashboard with all indicators or composite index?
- Each has its pros and cons
- Follow the best technical guidelines:
 - OECD (2008). Handbook on constructing composite indicators: methodology and user guide. OECD publishing: Paris.
 - UNECE (2019). Guidelines on producing leading, composite and sentiment indicators. United Nations: Geneva.
- Be transparent about methods, assumptions and limitations





Facts that matter