

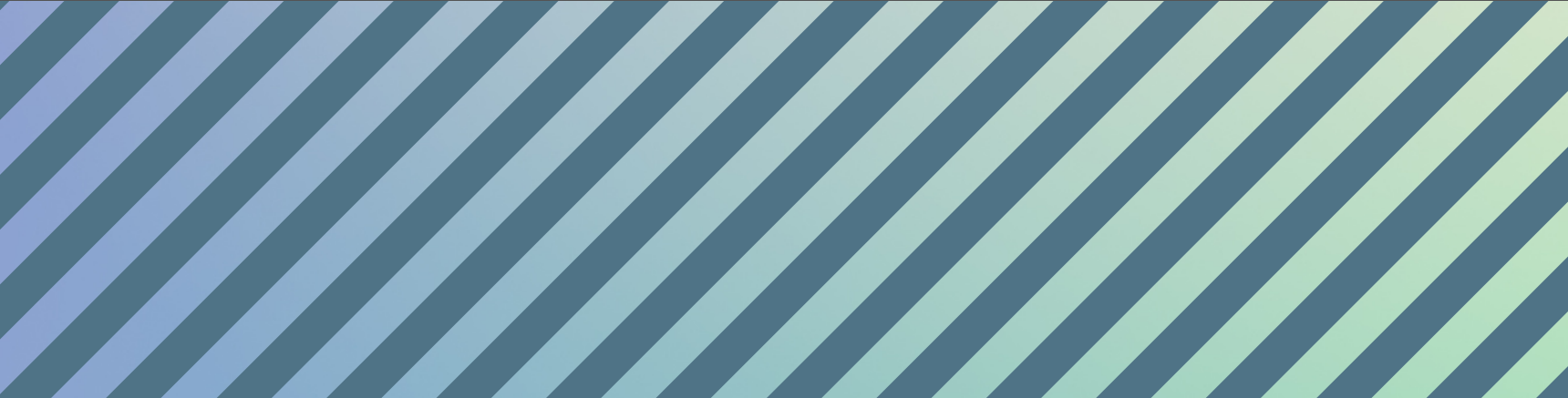
EVALUATING WELL-BEING MEASURES FOR PUBLIC POLICY

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Current state of
subjective well-being
in public policy



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**Happiness (i.e.
positive affect)
and life
satisfaction**

Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989)

Self-acceptance
Positive relations
Autonomy
Environmental mastery
Purpose in life
Personal growth

Basic needs from Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

Autonomy
Competence
Relatedness

Psychological functioning in Warwick–Edinburgh mental well-being scale
(Tennant et al., 2007)

Energy
Clear thinking
Self-acceptance
Personal development
Competence
Autonomy

Positive functioning (New Economic Foundation, 2008)

Competence
Autonomy
Engagement
Meaning and purpose

The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being (Waterman et al., 2010)

Self-discovery
Development of best potentials
Purpose and meaning in life
Effort in pursuing excellence
Intense involvement in activities
Activities as personally expressive

Flourishing Scale (Diener, Wirtz, et al., 2010)

Purpose and meaning
Supportive relationships
Engagement
Contribution to others
Competence
Optimism
Being respected
Being a good person

PERMA theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011)

Positive emotions
Engagement
Meaning
Accomplishment
Relationships

Mental Health as Flourishing (Huppert & So, 2013)

Positive emotion
Emotional stability
Vitality
Optimism
Resilience
Self-esteem
Engagement
Competence
Meaning
Positive relationships

There are several theories on what well-being is which aren't covered by current happiness and satisfaction measures

Alternative wellbeing account: “The secret of realizing the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is: to live dangerously! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius!” - Nietzsche, 1883



Breaking down and evaluating well-being

Meaning

What should the outcome variables of well-being be?



Clear and comprehensive

Measurement

How can we reliably measure subjective well-being?



Coherent, reliable and standardized

Analysis

How can we analyse subjective well-being data?



Compare and quantify subjective well-being

The meaning of well-being

Current Meaning

Experiences of positive affect or life satisfaction

Problem with meaning

Not comprehensive enough

Many positive experiences have **low levels of positive affect** i.e. climbing a mountain or running a marathon.

New meaning

A range of psychological needs which humans require to thrive and fulfil their functions. Each of these are irreducible and to be assessed separately (Deci and Ryan, 2000)

Measuring well-being

Current measurement

Self-reported measurements through directly asking about life satisfaction or happiness

Problem with measurement

A lack of standardization and reliability

No common **standard** for type or intensity of well-being experience

Problems with **reliable recall** - focusing effects, peak end effects, polyanna effect etc. (Krueger and Schkade, 2008)

New Measurement

Measurements which measure **different universal, specific psychological needs** such as autonomy, competence and relatedness **indirectly** rather than assess well-being directly (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Analysing well-being

Current analysis method

Respondents provide a number on their well-being and then these are added up into a single metric

Problem with analysis:

Subjective data doesn't always add up

Some happy experiences are preferred to others even if there are less 'units' of happiness. (Taurek, 1977; Voorhoeve, 2018)

Leaving it to respondents to create the well-being metric

New analysis method

Retain a **dashboard of differing irreducible psychological needs** which are to be kept separate (Thoma, 2021). Receiving qualitative data and turning it into quantifiable data

Evaluation of new indicators

Comprehensive

Dashboard of diverse needs

Well-being is a **diverse** and so we must **cover** its many elements

(Austin, 2016)

Coherent

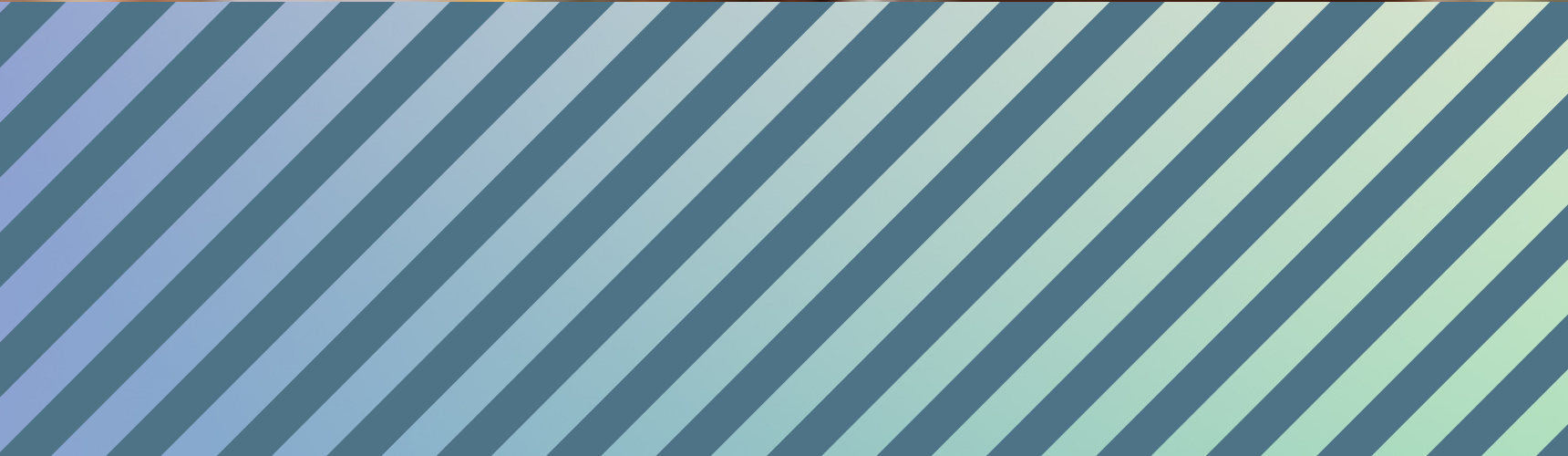
Universal, specific and fundamental psychological needs

Making turning subjective feelings into objective data **easy, reliable** and **coherent** (Krueger and Schkade, 2008)

Comparable

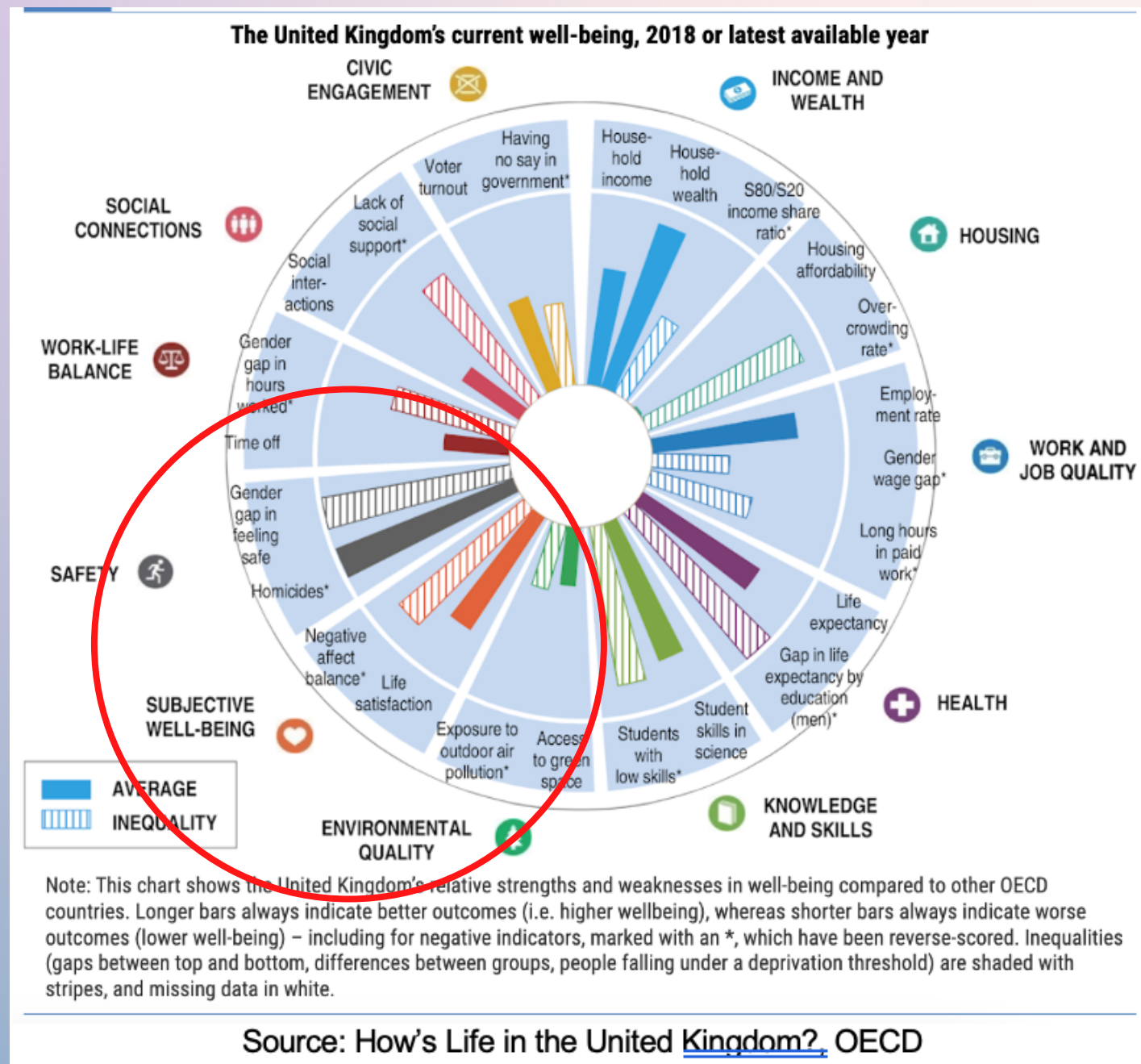
Setting a common analysis standard

Making comparisons easier by setting a **common analysis standard** and comparing **similar needs and experiences**

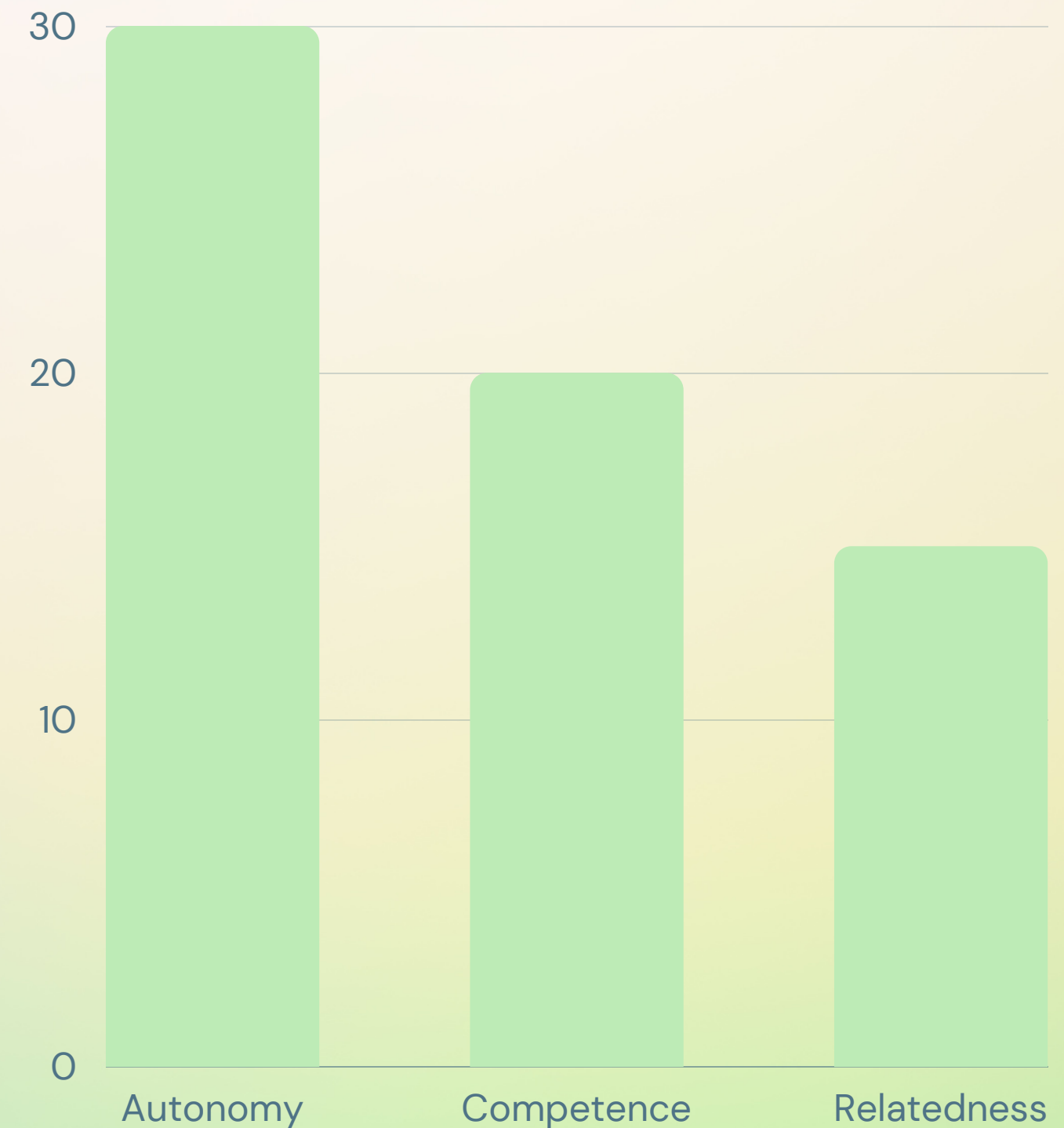


Implementation

Current Subjective Wellbeing outputs



New in-depth subjective well-being metrics



1	2	3	4	5
Not true at all				Completely true

1.	I feel a sense of choice and freedom in the things I undertake.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Most of the things I do feel like "I have to".	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I feel that the people I care about also care about me.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I feel excluded from the group I want to belong to.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I feel confident that I can do things well.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I have serious doubts about whether I can do things well.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I feel that my decisions reflect what I really want.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I feel forced to do many things I wouldn't choose to do.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I feel connected with people who care for me, and for whom I care.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I feel that people who are important to me are cold and distant towards me.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I feel capable at what I do.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I feel disappointed with many of my performances.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I feel my choices express who I really am.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I feel pressured to do too many things.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I feel close and connected with other people who are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I have the impression that people I spend time with dislike me.	1	2	3	4	5

Measurements would probe into how much of a psychological need an individuals has through indirect survey responses



“Different people seek after happiness in different ways and by different means, and so make for themselves different modes of life” – Aristotle, 340 BC





THANKS!

