

“How's Life?” and the Measurement of Well-being

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The paper will describe a range of activities pursued by the OECD Statistics Directorate as part of its work on measuring performance ‘Beyond GDP’. Recent OECD statistical work in this field has pursued two main objectives. First, to develop better metrics of people’s well-being in the future, where well-being is understood as a multi-dimensional concept articulated around several dimensions pertaining to both people’s material conditions and their quality of life. In this field, the article will highlight some of the OECD methodological contributions on the measurement of material conditions (i.e. guidelines on the measurement of household wealth at the micro-level) and quality of life (i.e. guidelines on the measurement of subjective well-being), drawing on the OECD reports published in 2013. Second, to present and analyze evidence on people’s well-being in OECD countries and other major economies based on a large range of indicators. In this field, the article will describe some of the key findings of the next edition of “How’s Life?” (to be released in September 2013), which will focus on the impact of the recession, quality of work, sustainability and gender issues. The article will conclude by emphasizing that better well-being metrics hold the promise of changing policies, moving them away from their typical ‘silo’ approach and towards a joined-up approach that takes into account policies interactions across the board.

Key Words: quality of life, material conditions, subjective well-being, sustainability