

**“ Understanding and improving wellbeing requires a sound evidence base that can inform policymakers and citizens alike where, when, and for whom life is getting better... To be most useful ... subjective wellbeing data need to be collected with large and representative samples and in a consistent way across different population groups and over time... Subjective wellbeing data can provide an important complement to other indicators already used for monitoring and benchmarking countries’ performance... ”**

**Martine Durand**

OECD Chief Statistician,

Director of the OECD Statistics Directorate

*Foreword to OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being, 2013*

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## INFORMING THE DEBATE ABOUT EUROPEANS' WELLBEING

Questions regarding what constitutes subjective wellbeing and how both individual and societal wellbeing might be improved now occupy a prominent place on research and policy agendas. Cross-national surveys such as the European Social Survey (ESS), which provide high-quality comparative data on public attitudes and behaviour, have an important role to play in answering these questions.

This booklet 'Measuring and reporting on Europeans' Wellbeing' presents findings on Europeans' wellbeing using data from the first six rounds of the ESS. We aim to showcase the scope that ESS data provide for exploring the definition, distribution and drivers of subjective wellbeing across Europe and to encourage others to make full use of ESS data in advancing society's understanding of these important issues.

We have collaborated with leading experts on wellbeing in Europe and prominent researchers in fields such as sociology, political science, demography, psychology and geography, to identify some highlights from the rich body of research into wellbeing carried out using ESS data. By making a variety of innovative, methodologically sophisticated, and policy-relevant findings easily accessible we hope to make a valuable contribution to both academic and policy debates around wellbeing.

The ten contributions presented here include an exploration of the complex, multidimensional nature of subjective wellbeing. ESS wellbeing data provide a valuable source of data for going beyond summary measures of happiness and exploring different dimensions of individual and societal wellbeing. Contributions draw on the rich variety of topics addressed by the ESS to fully explore different drivers of wellbeing including: working conditions, gender, parenthood, migration, democracy, the environment and cultural values. The ESS also allows researchers to explore the experiences of particular subgroups within the population, for example, migrants from eastern to western Europe, and to compare the wellbeing of groups such as parents versus non-parents.

All of the research presented here offers a comparative, cross-national perspective and illustrates how experiences of wellbeing can vary significantly across countries. Many of the contributions draw on contextual data from outside the survey to explore how institutional, societal and cultural differences between and within countries might explain this variation.

This booklet provides only a brief snapshot of ESS research on wellbeing. All the contributions included here can be explored in more detail via the interactive website [www.esswellbeingmatters.org](http://www.esswellbeingmatters.org) which accompanies this publication. We encourage you to visit the site to access further results and to find out more about the different aspects of wellbeing that can be explored using ESS data. ◀

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