

A Quarterly Review of Social Reports and Research on Social Indicators, Social Trends, and the Quality-of-Life.  
News Included of Working Group 6 on Social Indicators and Social Reporting of the International Sociological Association.  
Newsletter of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

## THE AUSTRALIAN UNITY WELLBEING INDEX 2001-2008: VARIATIONS IN SUBJECTIVE WELL- BEING LINKED WITH MAJOR EVENTS AND INFLATION

### Introduction

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index monitors the Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) of the Australian population. Our first survey, of 2,000 adults, was conducted in April 2001. Since then 18 additional surveys have been conducted, with the most recent conducted in April 2008. Copies of reports on each of these surveys can be obtained from the Australian Centre on Quality of Life website at Deakin University (<http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/index.htm>).

Our measure of SWB is provided by the Personal Wellbeing Index (International Wellbeing Group, 2006). This is calculated as the average level of satisfaction across seven life domains as— health, personal relationships, safety, standard of living, achieving in life, community connectedness, and future security. The theory underpinning this Index and its psychometric characteristics are provided in the Personal Wellbeing Index manual, which can be downloaded from [http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/instruments/wellbeing\\_index.htm](http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/instruments/wellbeing_index.htm)

The first part of this report describes changes in the mean population level of this Index over the past seven years. The second part describes the relationship between the rate of inflation and movements in the Index. The following overview of SWB provides a theoretical framework for the interpretation of results.  
Understanding Subjective Wellbeing

The Personal Wellbeing Index is designed as the first level deconstruction of 'Satisfaction with Life as a Whole'. It comprises seven questions relating to satisfaction with the life domains listed above, and each question is answered on a 0-10 scale of satisfaction. The scores are then combined across the domains to yield an overall Index score, which is adjusted to have a range of 0-100.

On a population basis, the most striking characteristic of the scores that we derive from this PWI is stability. Using the 19 survey mean scores as data, the normal range for group mean scores in Australia is from 73.2 to 76.3 points. What is the reason for such stable results?

We hypothesize that SWB is not simply free to vary over the theoretical 0-100 range. Rather, it is held fairly constant for each individual in a manner analogous to blood pressure or body temperature. This implies an active management system for personal wellbeing that has the task of maintaining SWB, on average, at about 75 points. We call this process Subjective Wellbeing Homeostasis (Cummins, Gullone & Lau, 2002).

In the terms of this theory, each person's SWB approximates their level of Core Affect, which is a mood-state genetically held around a set-point (Davern, Cummins & Stokes, 2007). These individual set-points probably vary from about 60 to 90 on the 0-100 scale, and we suspect that the

(Continued on next page.)

### In this Issue...

#### REVIEWS:

- Recommendations to the New U.S. President from ISQOLS Members ..... 6
- The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index 2001-2008: Variations in subjective wellbeing linked with major events and inflation ..... 1-4
- Advice to the New U.S. President from Scientists in *Discover Magazine* ..... 5

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Message from the President of ISQOLS ..... 7
- Call for Papers, Conference IX of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies ..... 7
- Message from the Executive Director of ISQOLS ..... 5
- 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) ..... 5
- Call For Papers Applied Research in Quality of Life ..... 8

*Editor's Note: In addition to the Call for Papers for the 2009 ISQOLS Conference in Florence, Italy, this issue contains articles on recommendations to the new U.S. President, from several ISQOLS members as well as a brief review of a similar set of advices from scientists published recently in Discover magazine and a report from Bob Cummins on findings from several years of experience with the Australian Unity Well-Being Index.*

# SINET

Social Indicators Network News

## EDITOR EMERITUS:

Abbott L. Ferriss,  
Atlanta, GA

## COORDINATING EDITOR/PUBLISHER:

Kenneth C. Land,  
Duke University, Durham, NC

## MANAGING EDITOR:

Rob Marks,  
Duke University, Durham, NC

## CORRESPONDING EDITORS:

### Children, Youth and Education:

Donald J. Hernandez  
Bureau of the Census,  
Washington, DC

### Health and Aging:

Linda K. George and  
Deborah T. Gold,  
Duke University, Durham, NC

### General Social and Cultural Trends:

James A. Davis,  
National Opinion Research Center,  
Chicago, IL

John P. Robinson,  
University of Maryland,  
College Park, MD

### Marketing/Quality of Life Research:

M. Joseph Sirgy,  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute  
& State University

### Social Forecasting/Futurology

Joseph Coates,  
Coates and Jarratt, Inc.  
Washington, DC

### Subjective Well-Being and the Quality of Life:

Ed Diener,  
University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign

### International Correspondents:

#### Asia and the Pacific:

Mahar Mangahas, Philippines,  
Social Weather Stations,  
Quezon City, The Philippines

Dudley L. Poston  
Texas A&M University,  
College Station, TX

#### Europe:

Maria Ciecocińska,  
University of Agriculture & Educa-  
tion, Zytni, Poland

Lief Gouiedo  
Stockholm, Sweden

Wolfgang Glatzer  
Frankfurt, Germany

Zsolt Speder  
Budapest, Hungary

(Continued from previous page.)

normal range of each one extends to about 5-6 points on either side of its mid-point (Cummins, Lau and Davern, 2009). The level of each set-point constitutes a genetically-determined individual difference, and this explains the consistency in our data. Due to SWB homeostasis, people normally lie within their set-point-range and, thus, a random sampling of the population will include a normal distribution of set-points, thus yielding a fairly consistent SWB mean score.

The proper functioning of the SWB homeostatic system is essential to psychological health. At normal levels of wellbeing, when people are within their set-point-ranges, people feel good about themselves, are well motivated to conduct their lives, and have a strong sense of optimism. When this homeostatic system fails, however, these essential qualities are severely compromised, and people are at risk of depression (Cummins et al., 2009). This can come about through such circumstances as exposure to chronic stress, chronic pain, failed personal relationships, etc.

Fortunately for us, the homeostatic system is remarkably robust. Many people live in difficult personal circumstances which may involve low income or medical problems, and yet manage to maintain normal levels of wellbeing. This is another reason the Index is so stable when averaged across the population. But as with any human attribute, some homeostatic systems are more robust than others. Or, put around the other way, some people have fragile systems which are prone to failure.

Homeostatic fragility, in these terms, can be caused by two different influences. The first of these is genetic. Some people have a constitutional weakness in their ability to maintain wellbeing within the normal range. The second influence is the experience of life. Here, as has been mentioned, some experiences such as chronic stress can challenge homeostasis. On the other hand, other influences, such as intimate personal relationships, can strengthen homeostasis.

In summary, homeostatic theory proposes that personal wellbeing is under active management. Because of this, most people are able to maintain normal levels of wellbeing even when challenged by negative life experiences. A minority of people, however, have weaker homeostatic systems as a result of either constitutional or experiential influences. These people are

vulnerable to their environment and may evidence homeostatic failure. When homeostasis fails, SWB falls below its set-point-range and people are highly likely to experience depression.

There are, thus, two systematic forces acting to change the SWB of populations. The first is mild events that cause the systematic movement of SWB within set-point-ranges. That is, any generic positive or negative experience applied to a population will change the probability that people will inhabit the upper or lower portion of their set-point-range. The maximum variation that can be achieved from this is determined by the average width of the set-point-range (10-12 points) and the ability of the experience to maintain chronic change. An example of positive conditions might be major national sporting success and of negative conditions a national disgrace of some kind. The second type of influence, which is much rarer, is some systematic negative experience powerful enough to cause a significant proportion of people to suffer homeostatic defeat. This could, conceivably, occur as a result of an economic depression.

### The Survey Methodology

Each survey involves a geographically representative national sample of people aged 18 years or over and fluent in English. They are surveyed by telephone and the period of data collection normally takes 2-3 weeks. Interviewers ask to speak to the person in the house who had the most recent birthday and is at least 18 years old. A total of around 45,000 calls are made. Of these, about 20,000 connect with a respondent and 2,000 agree to complete the survey. This gives an effective response rate of about 25.0%. This response rate reflects, in part, the methodological constraint that an even geographic and gender split is maintained at all times throughout the survey. Initial data screening is always completed before data analysis. Changes Over Time in the Personal Wellbeing Index

Figure 1 shows the survey mean scores over the period April 2001 to April 2008. Consistent with theory as described above, the values for the Personal Wellbeing Index are very stable. Over the 19 surveys the mean scores have varied by just 3.1 points and, except for the changes around three events (September 11-a, Athens Olympics-e and the Second Bali bombing-g), the change from one survey to the next has been 1 point or less. The total range of values is 73.2 to 76.3 points.

The most obvious trend for the Personal

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from previous page.)

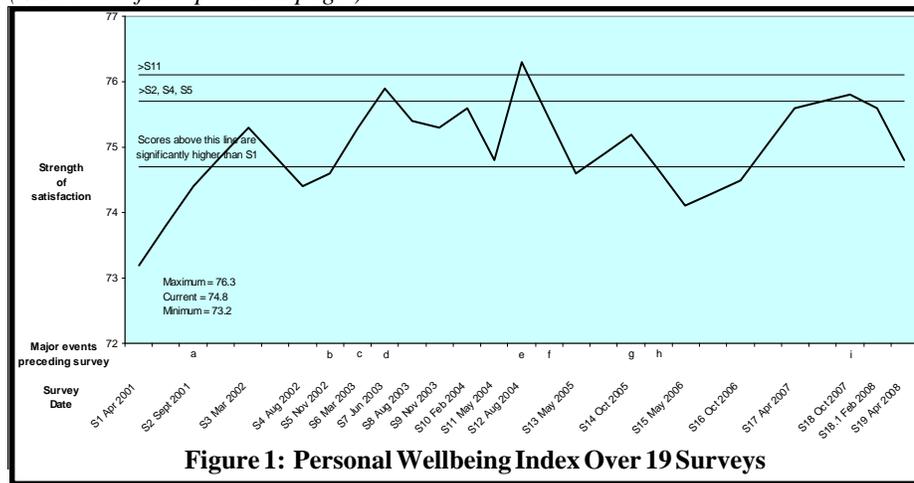


Figure 1: Personal Wellbeing Index Over 19 Surveys

Wellbeing Index is that it rose following September 11 (a) and has remained generally higher. It is unfortunate that so much responsibility rests on the first survey in relation to this result. However, these initial values have been scrutinized for errors and the subsequent methodology for data collection remained the same over the next few surveys, so it seems most likely to be a reliable result.

In support of this finding, the second rise occurred immediately following the First Bali Bombing (b) and ran into the build-up in tension surrounding the Iraq war (c) and (d). However, no such rise accompanied the Second Bali Bombing (g), even though this substantially increased the perceived probability of a terrorist attack in Australia (see Cummins, Woerner, Gibson, Lai, Weinberg & Collard, 2008). This raises doubt as to the general effectiveness of external threat in raising the wellbeing of the population.

The most positive national event during this period was the Athens Olympics and the data for Survey 12 (e) were gathered during the immediate Olympic period. These games followed the Sydney Olympics and national pride was boosted by continued athletic success. The coincident rise in the PWI took it to its highest level.

The largest fall was recorded after the introduction of new Industrial Relations legislation (h) designed to diminish the power of unions. The repeal of this generally unpopular legislation was a major pre-election promise of the Labor party, elected in November 2007 (i).

While the above descriptions seem plausible, it is not possible to determine causation of the changes in personal wellbeing between surveys with confidence. It is possible that these fluctuations in SWB

are either random or being caused by a quite different set of forces, such as the prevailing economic conditions.

It is important to note that the general economic situation in Australia remained strong throughout the period of these surveys, with low interest rates and low unemployment. However, the rate of inflation has shown variation beyond the 3 percent per annum ceiling mandated by the Reserve Bank. Whether such quarterly fluctuations might influence wellbeing is the second topic of this paper.

**The Relationship Between Inflation and the PWI**

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures quarterly changes in the price of a 'basket' of goods and services which account for a high proportion of expenditure by metropolitan households (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). This 'basket' covers a wide range of goods and services, arranged in the following eleven groups: Food; Alcohol and tobacco; Clothing and footwear; Housing; Household contents and services; Health; Transportation; Communication; Recreation; Education; Financial and insurance services. Further information about the CPI is contained in Australian Consumer Price Index: Concepts, Sources and Methods, 2005 (cat. no. 6461.0) which is available on the ABS web site <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>.

The CPI versus PWI correlations are presented in Table 1. Since the surveys have been conducted at irregular intervals, the value chosen for each CPI has been from the quarter closest to the period during which the data were collected. Each of these values is then subtracted from the value that most closely corresponds with the date of the previous survey, and the result divided by the number of interven-

ing months. Thus, each value used for the correlation is the CPI/month in the period preceding each survey.

Table 1 reports the correlations of the CPI changes against the PWI over the course of the 19 surveys. ie N=19. The PWI is calculated as the mean for each gender for each survey.

Table 1 shows the effects of inflation on the SWB of males and females as follows:

1. The first line in the table shows no relationship between the measure of inflation (CPI) and the PWI for either gender. This is how it should be because the CPI is taken in the future quarter of the measurement. This simply confirms that there is nothing inherent in these data causing significant correlations.
2. The second line shows the correlations using the single CPI value that is closest to the period in which the survey data were collected. This shows a significant relationship for females but not for males. This seems to indicate that females are exquisitely sensitive to the cost of goods and services.
3. The third line shows the relationship between the PWI and the single CPI value for the quarter prior to the survey. This shows much the same result as for line two.
4. Line 4 shows the result of combining, and averaging, the CPI in the period six months prior to the data collection. It continues to show a negative relationship for females but not for males.
5. Line 5 shows the result of combining CPI data over nine months prior to the survey. At this point males also show a significant correlation and the correlation for females is increased.
6. Line 6 shows the most powerful result for both genders together. The power of the female correlation is very high, explaining 56.3% of the variation within the PWI. By contrast, the highest level of relationship for males, at Line 8, explains 33.6% of the variation.
7. Following the averaging of the CPI over more than two years (line 8+) the correlations for both genders decrease. This is expected as the averaging process progressively diminishes the differences between data points.

In conclusion, it seems evident that the survey mean scores are sensitive to the rate of inflation. Moreover, the greatest

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from previous page.)

sensitivity is shown to the cumulative inflation over the previous 12 month period, and the SWB of females is more sensitive than that of males.

In order to visualize this relationship for females, Figure 2 plots each of the 19 survey mean scores against each corresponding CPI past-year average.

**Summary**

These overall findings illustrate great consistency in the average SWB of the Australian population. Nevertheless, variation does occur within a range of 3-4 percentage points, and this range is roughly consistent with the magnitude predicted by Homeostasis Theory. Two possible causes for this variation have been explored as Major Events and the rate of inflation. While the first of these is destined to remain uncertain due to its post-hoc nature, the power of inflation to change population wellbeing seems an interesting avenue for further exploration in extant databases from other countries.

~Robert A. Cummins, School of Psychology, Deakin University

**References**

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2008). *6401.0 Consumer Price Index*. Retrieved 24 November, 2007, from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6401.0?OpenDocument>

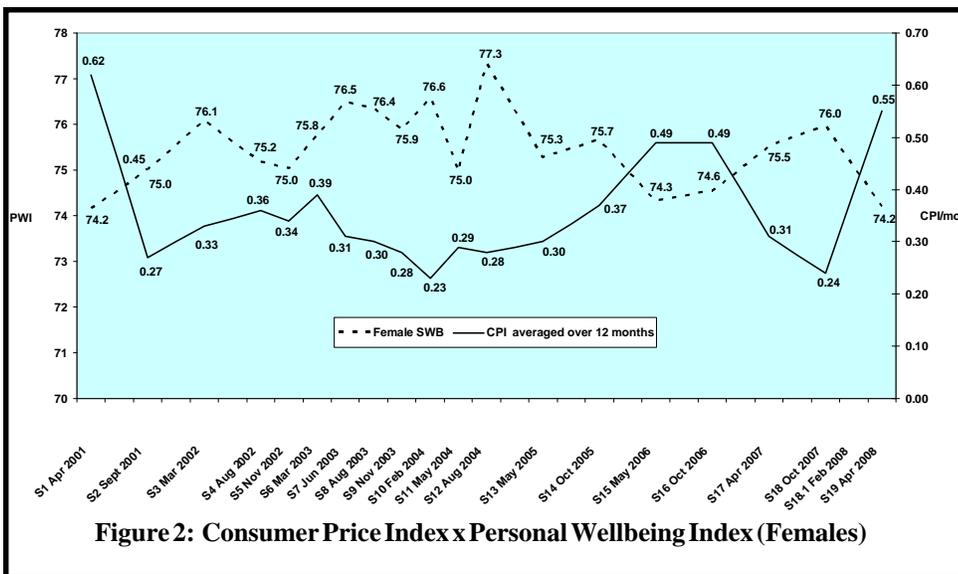
Cummins, R. A., Gullone, E. & Lau, A. L. D. (2002). A model of subjective well being homeostasis: The role of personality. In E. Gullone & R. A. Cummins (Eds.), *The universality of subjective wellbeing indicators: Social Indicators Research Series* (pp. 7-46). Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Cummins, R. A., Lau, A. D. L., & Davern, M. (2009). Homeostatic mechanisms and the quality of life. In K.C. Land (Ed.), *Handbook of social indicators and quality-of-life studies. Volume 1: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations*. New York: Springer. (in press).

Cummins, R. A., Woerner, J., Gibson, A., Lai, L., Weinberg, M. & Collard, J. (2008). *Australian Unity Wellbeing Index: - Report 19.0. The Wellbeing of Australians – Links with exercise, nicotine and alcohol*. Melbourne: Australian Centre on Quality of Life, School of Psychology,

Row number	Character of CPI quarters	Males		Female	
		R	p<	r	p<
1	Future quarter (1)	.27	ns	-.01	ns
2	Same quarter (2)	-.24	ns	-.40	.05
3	Past 1 (3)	-.08	ns	-.55	.01
4	Past $\Sigma$ 2	-.04	ns	-.43	.05
5	Past $\Sigma$ 3	-.53	.01	-.64	.01
6	Past $\Sigma$ 4	-.43	.05	-.75	.001
7	Past $\Sigma$ 5	-.59	.01	-.66	.001
8	Past $\Sigma$ 6	-.58	.01	-.67	.001
9	Past $\Sigma$ 7	-.58	.01	-.49	.025
10	Past $\Sigma$ 8	-.47	.05	-.53	.01
11	Past $\Sigma$ 9	-.37	ns	-.44	.05
12	Past $\Sigma$ 10	-.38	ns	-.48	.05

Notes:  
 (1) This uses the single CPI/month value that is more recent than the quarter during which the data were collected.  
 (2) This uses the single CPI/month value that is closest to the time of data collection for the survey.  
 (3) This is the number of consecutive past quarterly CPI values that have been combined to yield an average figure for the CPI. For example, 'Past 1' is the difference between the CPI value closest to the period of data collection minus the CPI value in the previous quarter. 'Past 2' indicates the difference between the CPI value closest to the period of data collection and the value of the CPI two quarters previously. Thus, this latter procedure yields an average figure for inflation over the six months prior to the survey period.



Deakin University, ISBN 978 1 74156 113 5. Retrieved 24 November, 2007, from [http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/index\\_wellbeing/index.htm](http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/index_wellbeing/index.htm)

Davern, M., Cummins, R. A., & Stokes, M. (2007). Subjective wellbeing as an affective/cognitive construct. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 8(4), 429-449.

International Wellbeing Group. (2006). *Personal Wellbeing Index Manual*. Deakin University, ISBN 1 74156 048 9. Retrieved 24 November, 2007, from [http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/instruments/wellbeing\\_index.htm](http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol/instruments/wellbeing_index.htm)

**MESSAGE FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
ISQOLS**

Dear ISQOLS members:

It is time to renew your membership in the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) for 2009. Doing so now would allow you to continue maintaining your membership in good standing and take advantage of receiving all issues of ISQOLS publications (SINET + ARQOL) on time and without skipping issues (as well as significant and huge discounts on JOHS and SIR), this is an opportune time to do so. You can do so by completing the attached 2009 Membership Application (and mail/e-mail/fax the form for further processing at ISQOLS Central Office in Blacksburg, Virginia) or you can apply directly online at [www.isqols.org](http://www.isqols.org).

As a reminder, membership benefits in ISQOLS include:

- Three issues of Social Indicators Network News (SINET) every year
- Free access to back issues of SINET
- Four issues of Applied Research in Quality of Life (ARQOL) every year
- ISQOLS membership directory
- Significant subscription discounts for Social Indicators Research (SIR) and the Journal of Happiness Studies (JOHS)
- Significant discount to books in Springer's Social Indicators Research Book Series
- Significant discount to ISQOLS conferences and publications - Communications with other QOL researchers through a listserv
- Putting up one's personal (or one's institute) expertise profile on ISQOLS homepage
- Getting recognized for important work through ISQOLS awards program
- Apply for research support through ISQOLS Foundation
- Free access to lectures, slide presentations, and other educational resources from ISQOLS website
- Free access to oral histories of guru QOL researchers from ISQOLS website

If you have any questions regarding your membership in ISQOLS or any logistical aspect regarding the registration process, do not hesitate to contact ISQOLS central office at [isqols@vt.edu](mailto:isqols@vt.edu).

~Warm Regards, M. Joseph Sirgy

**ADVICE TO THE NEW U.S.  
PRESIDENT  
FROM SCIENTISTS IN DISCOVER  
MAGAZINE**

The November 2008 issue of *Discover* magazine carried advice to the next president of the U.S. from various scientists. Here is a sample of their advice:

**A biologist** advises to announce that the U. S. will lead in science and technology research, and establish a commission to guide on leadership in the Science research arena.

**A planetary scientist:** "act as an evangelist" for more science in public life, improve scientific literacy, expand production of scientists.'

**A genomic scientist:** promote research in alternative energy, end the ban of stem cell research, promote multidisciplinary approaches.

**A physicist:** spend more for the public good, build the next accelerator for elementary particle physics, ask Congress to increase the tax on gasoline, reduce the flow of money to oil producers, cut the spaceflight program back, explore the solar system with robots.

**A physicist:** Use Science to inform decisions, public policy should follow Science's method of impartially examining evidence before making a decision, government should function by following the scientific procedure of questioning evidence, not authority figures, like scientists, keep things that work and discard those that don't, keep a truly open mind like scientists, abandon abstinence-only sex education, for it has been proven ineffective, avoid promoting the belief that the world is six thousand years old only, have the courage to support beliefs that are consistent with science, restore the place of science in influencing public policies, especially as concern nuclear weapons.

**A former surgeon general:** Appoint a scientific person as the next surgeon general, provide a grant to hear both sides of the stem cell situation.

**A cardiologist:** Restore funding for the National Institute of Health, do not restrict government scientists from speaking their minds.

**An author:** Elevate the science advisor position to cabinet rank, increase the budget for pure research, revolutionize science teaching by emphasizing life stories of scientists.

**An ethicist:** Revoke the stem cell ban on research, promote research on climate change, develop solar energy, promote research to help those most in need.

**An epidemiologist:** restore research funding, promote research into finding ways to apply scientific findings to daily life.

There is more. You will find it in the November 2008 *Discover* magazine. Scientists basically want to advance scientific research.

~Abbott L. Ferriss

**Counting Children In!  
Child Indicators: Research,  
Theory, Policy and Practice  
2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference  
of  
International Society for  
Child Indicators (ISCI)  
4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2009  
&  
The Social Justice and Social  
Change Research Centre  
Univ. of Western Sydney  
(UWS) Symposium  
'Children as Experts in Their  
Own Lives:  
Developing Child Inclusive  
Research Policy and Practice  
3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2009**

The Conference Organising Committee for the second ISCI conference advises you of the opportunity to participate in the conference Counting Children In! Child Indicators: Research Theory, Policy and Practice to be held in Sydney, Australia on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2009. This conference will be held at the Parramatta campus of the University of Western Sydney.

An associated conference - The Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre (UWS) Symposium 'Children as Experts in Their Own Lives: Developing Child Inclusive Research Policy and Practice' - will be held at the same venue on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2009.

**THE ISCI CONFERENCE Counting Children In!**

The ISCI conference has been designed to promote dialogue around concepts of child indicators and of child well-being, amongst diverse stakeholders and between research, theory, policy and practice. Abstracts and poster presentations will be invited from practitioners, researchers, policy makers and academics.

The conference will include plenary sessions addressed by keynote speakers, contributed papers and structured opportunities for conference participants to discuss issues arising at the conference.

## RECOMMENDATION TO THE NEW U.S. PRESIDENT FROM ISQOLS MEMBERS

Many members of ISQOLS know our most senior member, Abbott L. Ferriss, either personally through his participation in ISQOLS Conferences or through his many contributions to social indicators and quality-of-life research over the past five decades, including service for many years as the founding Editor of *SINET*. In October 2008, well before the November 4<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election in the United States and President-Elect Barack Obama's victory, Abbott wrote the following message to a number of ISQOLS members:

What would you recommend to the next U.S. president for actions by the Federal government to improve the QOL and happiness of citizens? *SINET* will publish your recommendations in its next issue if received by November One. Send them via email to me, Abbott Ferriss. Thank you.

### Responses

The following responses were received, including Abbott's own recommendations:

From Abbott L. Ferriss, Professor of Sociology Emeritus, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

The President, The White House:  
Mr. President, when you take over your new job, you will be faced with decisions, decisions, decisions. Each action you take will impact the lives of many people, foreign and domestic. In making decisions, please keep in mind the effect your action will have upon the quality of life of the common person. Ask your advisers what effect the action will have upon the quality of life, the level of living, the well-being, and the happiness of citizens. Strive always to improve the majority quality of life. During your administration, you will be best informed if you monitor the quality of life of the people, so you know the trend of the times and can act, always, to improve the job satisfaction, family life, leisure time activities, community and religious involvement, and civic engagement of citizens. If you do so your administration will stand as a model for future presidents.

From Valerie Moller, Professor and Direc-

tor of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, and President, ISQOLS

My recommendation to the next president of the US to influence quality of life positively would be to make citizens of his country walk tall. So Americans can take pride in their country and what it stands for in the global community. In our era, people beyond the US borders are affected by policies adopted by the US that impact on global security, finance, energy, food, and the protection of our planet's natural resources, to name but a few domains of influence. The next US president should send out a beacon of hope to the world during his term of office.

From William P. O'Hare, Senior Fellow, Annie E. Casey Foundation

I think one of the most important things a new President should do is undertake programs to improve the lives of children. Nothing is more important to the future security and prosperity of the Nation that the well-being of the next generation. The country made dramatic improvements in child well-being in the late-1990s, but since 2000 overall progress has stalled. The overall progress is reflected in the child poverty rates which fell from 23% in 1994 to 16% in 2000. Since 2000, the child poverty rate has crept up by a percentage point or two. The recent decline in child well-being is reflected in opinion polls which shows that for the first time ever, parents believe that today's children will NOT be better off than they were. The improvements seen in the last half of the 1990s can be traced to implementation or expansion of government programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, The State Child Health Insurance Program and a tripling of federal funds for child care subsidies. The new President should continue to enhance and expand these kinds of programs which help low-income parents meet their responsibilities as parents and as workers.

From Ruut Veenhoven, Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Erasmus University,

Rotterdam, The Netherlands

There are two main approaches for creating greater happiness for a greater number of US citizens. One approach is improving the livability of society. Cross-national research has shown that in the developed world the following societal conditions are beneficial to happiness: full employment (rather than economic growth), good governance, freedom and a climate of trust. Comparison across US states suggests that some more social security will add to the happiness of the Americans. The second approach is to strengthen the ability of individual citizens to live a happy life. The traditional ways to do so are education and mental health care and investments in these fields should be continued. New ways to achieve that end are a) informing people about long-term consequences of major life choices and b) professionalizing the life-coaching business.

From M. Joseph Sirgy, Management Psychologist, Virginia Tech University, and Executive Director, ISQOLS

Hi Abbott. Good idea about publishing recommendations. Here is my recommendation to the next president: Develop and implement public policies that are supported by good science, not political ideology. Don't take partisan positions because of political pressures and expediency; try to bring the country back together; unify the country and heal the wounds and ugly divisions created by a long history of partisan administrations. Use the science of quality-of-life studies to guide public policy in non-partisan ways. Creating a national accounts system based on the science of quality-of-life studies to measure and monitor the quality of life of the nation is a first step in that direction. In that vein, please support the State of the USA indicators project and the many community quality-of-life indicators initiatives across the country.

### Comment

First of all, I thank Abbott for initiating this

*(Continued at bottom of next page.)*

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### CONFERENCE IX OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR QUALITY OF LIFE STUDIES

FLORENCE, ITALY, JULY 19-23, 2009

All information regarding the conference, including submission deadlines and registration information, will be available through the conference website: [www.isqols2009.istitutodeglinnocenti.it](http://www.isqols2009.istitutodeglinnocenti.it). Please note that the registration fee is cheaper for ISQOLS members and the cost of ISQOLS membership is about the same as the difference in registration cost, if not less, so please consider becoming a 2009 ISQOLS member before registering for the 2009 conference. You can visit [www.isqols.org](http://www.isqols.org) <http://www.isqols.org/> to become a member and then register for the conference (at the conference website) at the reduced price.

At the Conference, Quality of Life Studies will be seen in terms of Measures and Goals for the Progress of Societies. In this perspective, we would like that the following key questions could guide the discussion and find an answer at the conference:

- Can we measure progress without identifying some goal or target toward which we are aiming?
- How can we measure progress in terms of community and environmental well-being, instead of economic growth?
- What models can be used to help integrate the ideas, aims, energy and work of technical and non-technical people in the pursuit of progress?
- What models can be used to help integrate the work of large and small local communities with provinces/states, regions and countries?
- How can the wealthiest countries and citizens be most helpful to less wealthy countries and citizens?

The IX ISQOLS Conference in Florence is considered one of the key events in the OECD Global Project "Measuring the Progress of Societies" in view of the III OECD World Forum that will be held in late 2009 in Korea. In the organization of the Global Project, ISQOLS is an "associate organization".

More information on the Conference and instructions for paper submission are available on the Conference website: [www.isqols2009.istitutodeglinnocenti.it](http://www.isqols2009.istitutodeglinnocenti.it)

We look forward to welcoming you to IX ISQOLS Conference in Florence!

Conference Chairs: Filomena Maggino, Alex Michalos, and Giampaolo Nuvolati.

*(Continued from previous page.)*

exchange and to each of these ISQOLS members and quality-of-life researchers for their responses to Abbott' invitation. Second, one takes away from these responses the fundamental recommendations that (1) the quality-of-life is a good construct around which to organize political and policy decisions, both for adults and for children, (2) that good science, including the systematic research on the quality-of-life that our community of scholars has conducted, should be used to guide public policies, and (3) that the body of accumulated research we have produced already provides a number of evidence-based guidelines that can be drawn upon to improve the well-being both of U.S. citizens and of other people around the world.

~ Kenneth C. Land & Abbott L. Ferriss

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ISQOLS

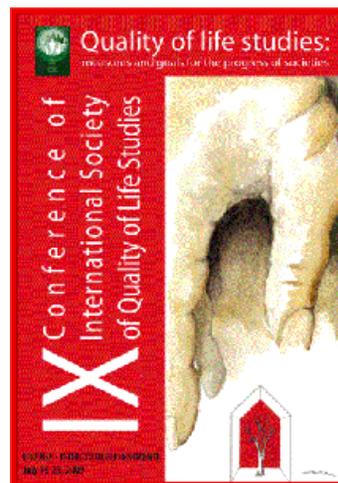
Dear Colleagues,

My term of office as ISQOLS President (2007-2008) will come to an end in December this year. It has been a good learning experience – getting to know our members and their needs better, and working with quality-of-life scholars and students from around the globe. In January, I shall be handing over to Bob Cummins who, as most of you will know, is a very active member of ISQOLS and one of our most distinguished quality-of-life scholars. I know his vision, international connections, and drive will serve our Society well in the coming years.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank ISQOLS Directors and the Executive, in particular our Executive Director and our Vice-Presidents, who have contributed so much time and effort to take our society forward in the past two years. Without their collegial support and expertise, acting as your President would have been a lonely task. Thank you.

The call for papers for our next meeting in Florence has been circulated and is reproduced in this issue of *SINET* as well. Filomena Maggino with Giampaolo Nuvolati and Alex Michalos and their team are preparing a very special conference for us with the theme *Measures and Goals for the Progress of Societies*. Those of you who were with us in San Diego will have seen what a stunning background the cultural centre of Florence will lend to our meeting. This is a conference not to be missed – in spite of the economically difficult times. I hope to see you in Florence next July.

~Valerie Møller



## Call For Papers

### *Applied Research in Quality of Life*

*The Official Journal of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies*

The aim of this journal is to publish conceptual, methodological and empirical papers dealing with quality-of-life studies in the applied areas of the natural and social sciences. As the official journal of ISQOLS, it is designed to attract papers that have some direct implications for or impact on practical applications of research on the quality-of-life. We welcome papers crafted from inter-disciplinary, inter-professional and international perspectives. This research should guide decision making in a variety of professions, industries, nonprofit, and government sectors such as healthcare, travel and tourism, marketing, corporate management, community planning, social work, public administration, human resource management, among others. The goal is to help decision makers apply performance measures and outcome assessment techniques based on concepts such as well-being, human satisfaction, human development, happiness, wellness and quality of life. The Editorial Review Board is divided into specific sections indicating the broad scope of practice covered by the journal, and the section editors are distinguished scholars from many countries across the globe.

Authors interested in submitting manuscripts for publication should consult the website <http://ariq.edmgr.com>. Manuscripts should be directed to the relevant Section Editor of the Editorial Review Board. If an appropriate Section Editor can not be identified, direct the manuscript to the current Editor in Chief, Alex Michalos.

# SINET

Social Indicators Network News

## Subscription Information

As a service to the world-wide social indicators community, SINET is issued quarterly (February, May, August, November). Subscribers and network participants are invited to report news of their social indicator activity, research, policy development, etc., to the Editor for publication. Deadlines are the 20th of the month prior to each issue.

### Address:

SINET, Kenneth C. Land, Editor,  
Department of Sociology, Box 90088,  
Duke University, Durham, NC 27708-0088, USA  
E-mail: [kland@soc.duke.edu](mailto:kland@soc.duke.edu)  
Telephone: 919-660-5615  
Fax: 919-660-5623

Subscriptions are on a calendar year basis; annual rates:

Libraries/Institutions ..... US\$26.00

Individual:

US & Canada ..... US\$18.00

All Others ..... US\$20.00

Sorry; credit cards are not accepted. Check must be in US dollars. Payment may be made through a wired money order; check with your financial institution for further information. Advance payments are always welcomed. Call or write for a multiple-year invoice.

Archived issues are available for purchase. Please call or write for prices and details.

# SINET

Social Indicators Network News

Kenneth C. Land, Editor  
Department of Sociology  
Box 90088, Duke University  
Durham, NC 27708-0088 USA  
151-1057-6936-22940