World Database of Happiness
Renewed website of this finding archive

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WHAT IT IS

The [World Database of Happiness](#) is an online finding archive used to store results of empirical research on happiness in the sense of life-satisfaction. Findings are described in a standard format and terminology in electronic 'finding pages', of which each has a unique internet address. Finding pages are sorted by subject and methodology using fine grained classifications.

BUILDING BLOCKS

The basic elements of the database are electronic *pages*, which are linked in various ways. "Pages" are organized in *collections*, from which *reports* are generated. "Reports" are bunches of pages on a particular subject. This make-up is presented graphically in [Chart 1](#).

WEBSITE

The website was recently renewed. Its start page in shown on [Chart 2](#). The new website is equipped with more powerful search functions, which help users to find their way in the growing amount of research findings on happiness.

USES OF THE FINDING ARCHIVE

Accumulation of knowledge
The main function of the archive is to facilitate the *continuous* gathering of research findings on happiness, by providing a structure to which new research results can be easily added.

Overview of the available findings

The database provides an overview of research on happiness in the sense of life-satisfaction. Getting an overview is enabled by: 1) Pre-selecting work on happiness as defined; while a search on Google Scholar on the *word* 'happiness' yields some 2.700.000 hits, the selection on concept for this database limits to 17.500 scientific publications. 2) Fine grained subject classifications

Preparation for research synthesis

The database puts the findings into order for a research synthesis by 1) describing all research findings in a standard format and terminology, 2) homogenizing the statistics used to describe the findings as far as possible and 3) sorting the findings by subject and methodology.

Presentation in review papers

The database allows for a new way of *reporting* research findings in a review paper. Using links to online finding pages, a lot of information can be condensed into a few tabular overviews. An example is presented below.

Example of use for presentation in a research synthesis

There is a considerable body of research literature on the relationship between happiness and economic growth in nations, most of which has been inspired by the 'Easterlin Paradox' (Easterlin 1974), which holds that an increase in personal individual income adds to happiness, but that a rise in the national income per head does not.

By 1-10-2019, 47 research results on this subject were available in the collection of Correlational Findings, in the subject category Economic growth/decline. These finding pages contain information about the directions and strengths of the statistical relationships observed between economic growth and change of average happiness in nations. This allows the presentation of results in a stem-leaf diagram, as shown in Chart 3. The numbers in this diagram denote observed correlations, which vary between +.001 and +.36. Links to online detail are embedded in each of these numbers. Using control+click the reader can open the corresponding findings page on his/her screen

At a glance one can see that economic growth typically goes with rising happiness and the few zero-correlations at the bottom of the diagram show that the Easterlin Paradox describes exceptions rather than the rule.

APPLICATIONS IN SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH

Although developed for the study of happiness, the technique of a findings archive can also be used for synthetic studies on other subjects. The basic software can be applied in different fields, such as in medical research or in cross-cultural

psychology. Field specific elements, such as the classification of indicators and the list of statistics can easily be adapted. If used for related matters, such as depression or self-esteem, the current classifications can be largely copied. This finding archive technique is particularly suited for Social Indicators Research, for the following reasons:

Ongoing data collection
Much of Social Indicators Research is about monitoring social change and entails the constant gathering and storing of research findings. A common findings-archive is helpful for this purpose, in particular when findings are taken from different sources.

Standard presentation
Social Indicators Research commonly draws on secondary data and encounters as such with the problem that these are presented under different names.

Technical terminology
Different words are used to denote a statistical 'relationship, e.g. association, correlation, correspondence, dependency and the much used correlation-coefficient has been labeled as á Pearson's correlation' or 'product-moment correlation'. Likewise, there are different terms for the same kind of sampling of a particular kind of people, such as young urban professionals, e.g. 'quota sampling', non-probability purposive sampling' or interviewer selected sampling'. The standard technical terminology provided in the World Database of Happiness helps to bypass this problem.

Labeling of theoretical concepts
A related problem in Social Indicators Research is that substantive concepts are often denoted using different terms, such as the case of 'socio-economic status, which is also referred to as 'social class', 'caste', 'social rank' or 'social position'. The subject classification provided in the World Database of Happiness helps to deal with this problem, as standard labels are provided that can be found using synonyms and links to related but different concepts in a subject classification.

Automatic updates, generation of reports
Social Indicators Research is much concerned with trends over time, such as the percentage of people living below a poverty line. Trend reports are often outdated when published, because date become available with some delay and processing and publication takes time. The latter delay can be reduced using a finding archive.

Homogenization of survey data
A major part of Social Indicator Research draws on survey data, such as data on 'support for democracy' and 'trust in institutions'. Responses to questions on such matters are compared across time and nations and within nations across social groups. These comparisons are often thwarted by variations in the survey questions

used, questions being differently worded, rating scales having been changed over series and the connotations of wording used differing across languages. This comparability problem also figures in comparative happiness research and for that reason several solutions have been developed which are an integral part of the World Database of Happiness.

Probably the best solution to overcome this problem is the elaborate documentation of the questions used and subsequent classification of these in sets of 'equivalent questions. This is done in the 'Collection of Measures of Happiness' A next step is to transform answers to differently worded and scaled questions on happiness to a common 0-10 numerical scale and several scale-homogenization techniques have been developed for this purpose (De Jonge et. al 2017) which are implemented in the World Database of Happiness. These techniques can easily be applied to other subjects.

Correlational findings

Although Social Indicators Research is mainly concerned with *distributional* findings, such as trends in average support for democracy in a general population, explanations of such trends often call for *correlational* findings, such as the relationship of support for democracy with education. The findings-archive technique is particularly suited for filing such research findings.

REFERENCES

De Jonge, T., Kalmijn, W.M. & Veenhoven, R. (2017) *Diversity in survey questions on the same topic: Techniques for improving comparability.* Social Indicators Research book series, vol 68, Springer Press, Dordrecht, Netherlands

Slag, M.R. (2017) *The Easterlin Paradox or Easterlin Illusion: Some Empirical Tests.* MSc Thesis, School of Economics, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, Netherlands
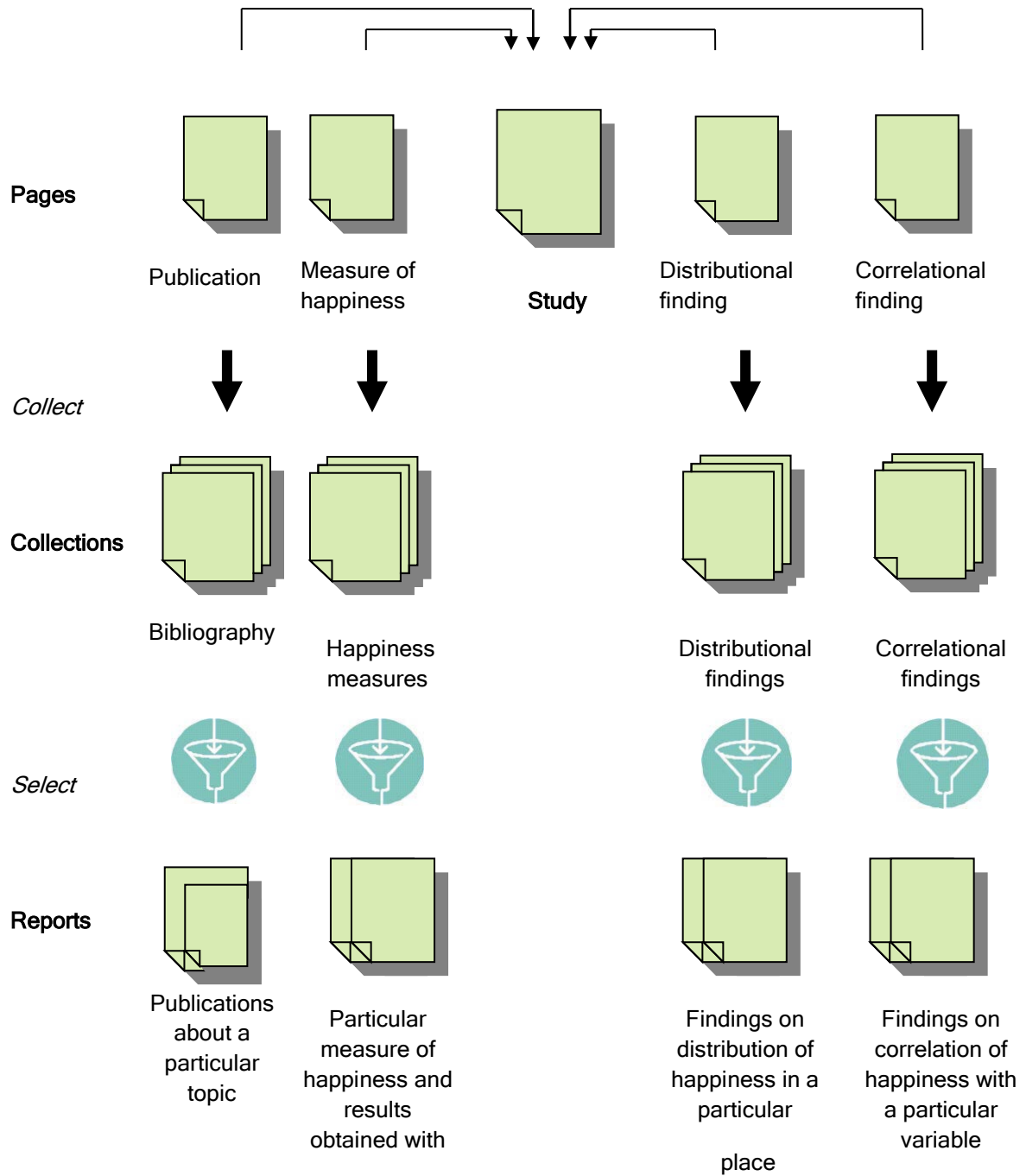
Chart 1
Building blocks of the findings archive

Pages	Publication	Measure of happiness	**Study**	Distributional finding	Correlational finding

Collect

Collections

Bibliography | Happiness measures | | Distributional findings | Correlational findings

Select

Reports

Publications about a particular topic | Particular measure of happiness and results obtained with | | Findings on distribution of happiness in a particular place | Findings on correlation of happiness with a particular variable

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Chart 2
Start page of the World Database of Happiness

WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS
ARCHIVE OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON SUBJECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF LIFE

▸ This database ▸ Collections ▸ Search ▸ Reports ▸ Related ▸ Research Field ▸ FAQs ▸ About us ▸ Join us
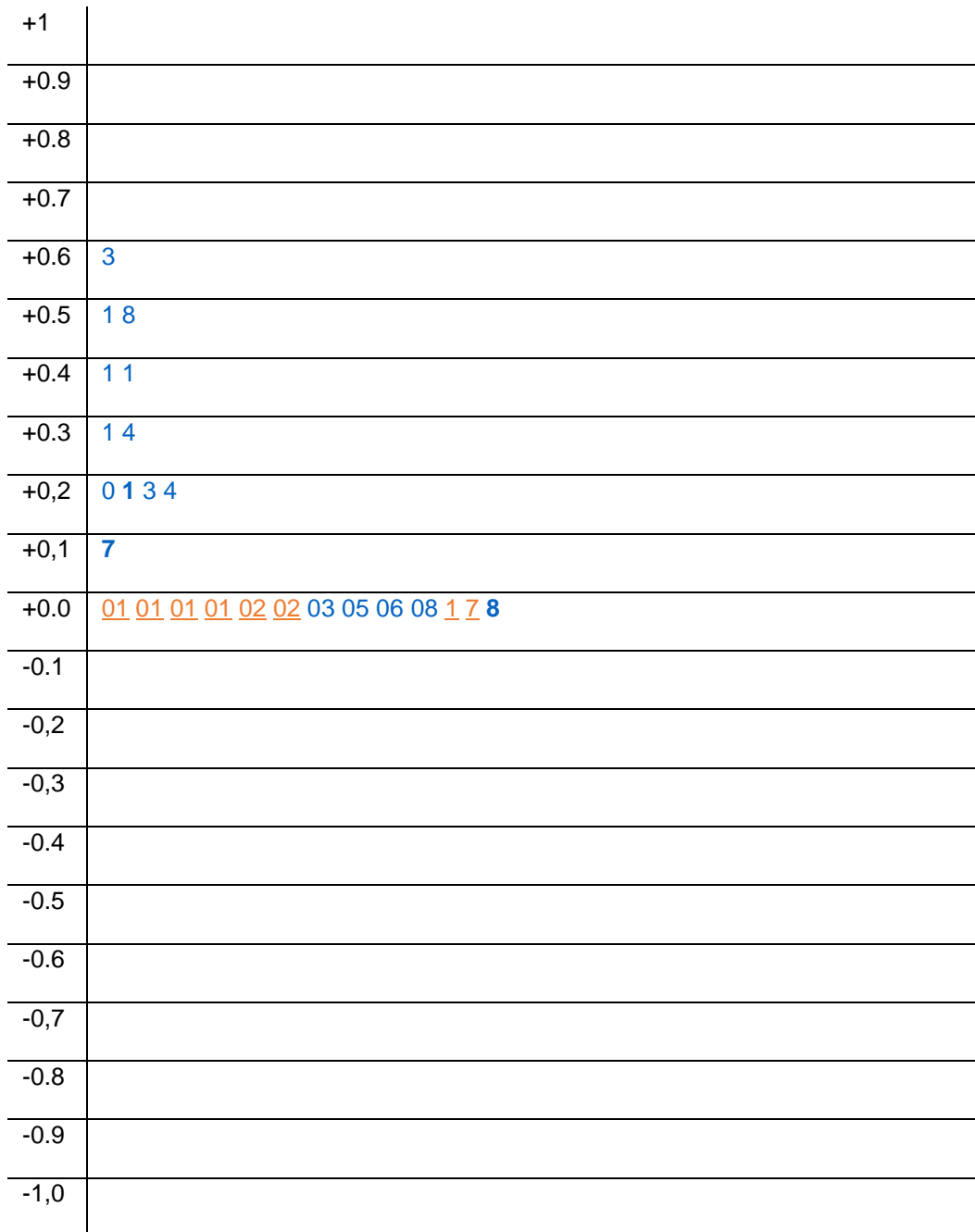
🖶 print

What is this World Database of Happiness

The World Database of Happiness (WDoH)is an archive of research findings on subjective enjoyment of one's life-as-a-whole. Next to a bibliography of scientific publications on this subject, the WDoH provides standardized abstracts of research findings. Two kinds of findings are involved: 1) 'distributional findings' on how happy people are in particular times and places and 2) 'correlational findings' on the things that go together with more or less happiness.

The WDoH allows an overview of the otherwise nebulous research literature by a) limiting to a clearly defined concept of happiness (life satisfaction), b) presenting the available findings in a standard format and terminology and c) providing fine-grained classifications by means of which users can find their way in the growing mass of happiness facts.

The WDoH is available free of charge for everybody, all over the world.

How to search in this source

RESEARCH LITERATURE ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

Selection on concept

14845 PUBLICATIONS IN BIBLIOGRAPHY ➦

Selection on valid measurement

Extraction of research findings

HOW HAPPY PEOPLE ARE

17532 DISTRIBUTIONAL FINDINGS ➦

WHAT GOES TOGETHER WITH HAPPINESS

20020 CORRELATIONAL FINDINGS ➦

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Chart 3

24 Research findings in correlation between economic growth and change of average happiness in nations

+1	
+0.9	
+0.8	
+0.7	
+0.6	3
+0.5	1 8
+0.4	1 1
+0.3	1 4
+0,2	0 **1** 3 4
+0,1	**7**
+0.0	01 01 01 01 02 02 03 05 06 08 1 7 **8**
-0.1	
-0,2	
-0,3	
-0.4	
-0.5	
-0.6	
-0,7	
-0.8	
-0.9	
-1,0	

Each sign represents a correlational finding reported in the World Database of Happiness. Use Control+click to see the details. All blue numbers link to findings that are significant at the 5%-level. Orange findings are not significant at the 5%-level.

Source: Slag (2017)