

# Happiness Report Card for Seattle



## The Happiness Initiative

2011

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>6</b>
The Happiness Data	7
<b>Seattle's Happiness Report Card</b>	<b>8</b>
The domains of happiness	9
<b>Survey results</b>	<b>10</b>
Where we are thriving	11
Where we are hurting	11
<b>Trends in the survey data</b>	<b>13</b>
Which Seattle neighborhoods are happier places?	13
Does money make you happy?	18
Are men happier than women?	20
Young people appear less happy	21
Are married people happier?	22
<b>What will make you happy?</b>	<b>23</b>
Does the environment make you (un)happy?	24
Does having no time make you unhappy?	24
Community makes you happy	25
<b>Objective indicators</b>	<b>27</b>
Psychological Well-Being	27
Material Well-Being	28
Health	29
Community Vitality	29
Cultural Vitality	30
Governance	32
Ecological Vitality	32
Time Balance	33
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Next Steps and Conclusion</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix A:</b>	
<b>Breakdown of component scores for domains</b>	<b>36</b>

## Introduction

As we issue the first Happiness Report Card for the city of Seattle, the Occupy movement is in full force in our city, our nation and around the world. At no time has it been more clear that Gross Domestic Product, short-term business profit, and personal wealth provide an incomplete picture of societal needs, opportunities and successes. We need a new way to measure and manage a happy, healthy, and fair future for our cities and towns, our businesses, our campuses and our own lives.

The Happiness Initiative is a national project designed to transform communities across the country. It is a new quality of life movement based upon measures of civic success and prosperity in the place of GNP and other traditional measures. The project provides policy makers with information, awareness, tools, technical assistance and services so that anyone can conduct a Happiness Initiative in their own community. It also provides individuals with a guide for deeper awareness and a means for a more thoughtful assessment of their own lives.

The Seattle Area Happiness Initiative is the first project of The Happiness Initiative. Cities and campuses in Wisconsin, Iowa, California and other states have now started their own Happiness Initiatives. They will be looking to Seattle, and this report, to guide their efforts.

The Happiness Initiative is based on Bhutan's effort to measure "Gross National Happiness," a term used to convey a commitment to building an economy that would serve Bhutan's unique culture based on [Buddhist](#) spiritual values. It also speaks to the original American dream of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Using this model, happiness is measured by an interactive survey that anyone can take (go to [www.happycounts.org](http://www.happycounts.org) to take the survey). The survey is a key to measuring happiness because it provides people's own assessment of their lives and our city. The Happiness Report Card uses survey data to understand where people feel they are hurting, and where they are thriving. Survey results are complemented by objective data that give a more balanced picture of our happiness, or wellbeing.

The Seattle City Council was the first governmental body in the United States to officially proclaim that it would take into account the survey results and objective data for policy decisions and resource allocation.

This report is the result of thousands of volunteer work hours by members of the Happiness Initiative core team. The team conducted the survey, gathered the objective indicator data and compiled the report, all while working to obtain project funding so the work can continue. We are inspired to do this work because we believe that what we are doing is deeply needed at this critical time in our country's history.

After reading this report, we ask you to join us in the effort to transform our city and others into just, healthy and happy communities where all people have equal opportunities to pursue happiness. We invite you to take the Happiness Initiative survey by visiting [happycounts.org](http://happycounts.org), and to explore with others what it really means to be happy.

Last, we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to do this work. The reward of contributing to a better future for all of us inspires us now and for tomorrow.

In gratitude,

The Happiness Initiative Team: Laura Musikanski, John de Graaf, Eldan Goldenberg, Tim Flynn, Andrew Cozin and Sekai Senwosret, and the many wonderful volunteers and advisors who helped along the way.

## ***Executive Summary***

Are Seattleites happy? The Happiness Initiative measures happiness along nine domains of wellbeing:

- Material wellbeing
- Governance
- Environment and access to nature
- Health
- Psychological wellbeing
- Time balance
- Community, Culture
- Education

It also asks questions about affect – our most recent emotions – and overall satisfaction with life. It does this with a survey complemented by objective indicators.

In Seattle, we scored lowest in our time balance, a 43 out of 100, community participation, (one of three components of the community vitality domain) at 41.7 out of 100 and our environment, 45.8 out of 100. We are also not satisfied with government, only 57.5 out of 100. The objective indicators for the environment tell a similar story; for example, greenhouse gases increased between 2005 and 2008. When it comes to time-balance, the average commute time for Seattleites—at 26.8 minutes on average—has not gotten worse, but is still high. Community vitality and governance, according to our objective indicators, have improved, with fewer violent crimes reported and more registered voters sending in ballots.

Our highest scores are in psychological and material well-being, at 77.8 and 73.1 respectively. But objective indicators tell a somewhat different story. The demand for domestic violence support services has increased from 2189 requests for services in one day in Washington State to 3518. Moreover, our annual income per capita dropped between 2008 and 2009. One explanation for this might be the relative prosperity of those who took the voluntary survey. Our data can be enhanced by a more representative sampling. We believe that a fuller understanding of happiness, or well-being, and sustainability, can help us in measuring and managing our future.

One potentially troubling survey finding was that youth, ages 19-24, are among the unhappiest segments of our population: they feel happy (affect), and score lower than other groups when we measure their time balance or community participation. They trust people less and do not feel as strong a sense of social support. This is certainly a concern, particularly in these tough times. As yet, these results have not been duplicated by other surveys, including Gallup's. However, our survey asks people about their well-being in a holistic context, and this may have an impact on the results. It may also be a result of the fact that the people who took the survey are self-selected and in the case of young people, may have chosen to take it because they are less satisfied with their lives. In any case, the results strongly indicate a need for more extensive survey work to determine whether or not the trends toward greater unhappiness among 19-24 year olds indicated in our survey results are significant.

The survey also revealed that people in South Seattle are, for the most part, less happy than in other neighborhoods. This is not a shock, but it is important to note that the survey is a self-assessment of how where we are hurting and where we are thriving. This means people in the southern neighborhoods of Seattle *feel* they are not doing as well as those in our northern, higher-income neighborhoods.

So what can Seattleites do to be happier?

**Build community.** This is number one. Strong ties with family and friends, a sense of trust, and active participation with non profits, informal groups or other community activities increases happiness. People who live with other people, from married couples to people sharing homes and single mothers with children, are happier than those who live alone. One of the most important things we can do to improve levels of happiness is to strengthen our sense of community.

**Help residents improve their sense of time balance.** For individuals, that might mean spending more time doing the things they enjoy and with people you love, and finding ways to “take things off your plate.” Improving income matters until families earn about \$75,000. If you make this much or more, you are not going to be that much happier by making more money. The Happiness Report gives more detail about these results.

## **Background**

The Seattle Area Happiness Initiative was launched as Sustainable Seattle's fifth set of indicators. Sustainable Seattle was founded in 1991 by a team of sustainability advocates including Vicki Robin, Alan AtKisson and current Seattle City Council President Richard Conlin. Sustainable Seattle brought a wide range of area residents together to create the world's first set of regional well-being/sustainability indicators, released in 1993. The organization was honored for its work by the United Nations in 1995. In subsequent years, Sustainable Seattle released three additional iterations of indicators. The 4<sup>th</sup> set of indicators, B-Sustainable included over 180 objective indicators. The first four sets of indicators used only objective data. This information was important and helpful to policy makers, but the sheer number of indicators and their "objective" quality made them increasingly less engaging for the public and the media. In 2010, Sustainable Seattle decided to take a new approach to indicators with The Seattle Area Happiness Initiative.

The Happiness Initiative is based on work begun in Bhutan 40 years ago, when its young king famously proclaimed that "gross national happiness is more important than gross national product." With assistance from the United Nations Development program and a team of international scientists, Bhutan developed a lengthy four-hour survey of well-being covering nine domains of happiness. That survey was shortened by a team of researchers for use in Brazil and in the city of Victoria, British Columbia. Using the revised 30-minute version, Victoria created a Happiness Index Partnership (HIP) in 2008, conducted a random happiness survey, and held a town meeting to discuss the results and recommend ways to improve Victoria's overall well-being. The Victoria survey was presented to the Seattle City Council in April of 2010. Two months later, Bhutan's commissioner of happiness visited Seattle and met with several council members.

In January 2011, The Happiness Initiative put the 30-minute version of Bhutan's survey online for anyone to take, using an IT platform that provided immediate feedback scores to whoever took the survey. The Happiness Initiative received many comments from people who took the survey. Most said they learned a great deal about themselves by taking it, though some said the experience made them feel uncomfortable because it asked them to probe deeply into their lives, something they weren't used to doing.

A common complaint, from both individuals and experts in the field of surveys, was that the survey was too long. We corrected this and are now using a fully validated shorter survey. We have also conducted a national random sampling using the shorter survey and so have baseline data for comparisons between communities and individuals.

## **The Happiness Data**

The Seattle Area Happiness Initiative survey was taken by voluntary (or “opt-in”) survey takers. More than 7,200 people completed the survey, close to half in King County. About 2,600 Seattle residents completed the survey.

The results are not a result of a fully random sample survey. But three factors that indicate that data from the survey is valuable are (1) the size of the sample (2) comparability to other data produced through a random sample and (3) analysis of survey result alignments with findings by generally accepted research.

The size of our sample for Seattle was large (2,638). Several researchers who conduct surveys in their line of work and professional pollsters told us that a random sampling might differ very little from ours, due to the number of people who took the survey.

We are able to compare our survey results with those produced by a random sample because our set of questions for overall satisfaction with life is drawn from the Gallup Healthways poll. Our results from this section were within one percentage point of those registered by Gallup.

Findings from analysis of the survey results that align with prior accepted research can indicate the validity of the data. Our findings show that happiness increases more as income increases up to a certain amount, and then does not substantially increase once someone has reached a certain income. This is consistent with research findings developed using random sample survey results.

These three factors indicate the survey data in this report tell us important information.

Two-thirds of the survey takers were female. More people with higher income took the survey than people living in the lower income brackets. Similarly, the survey reflects the responses of more people who have attained higher levels of formal education.

The data from this report is not from a random sample. We acknowledge this drawback. We did not have funding to do a random sample survey of Seattle citizens, and hope to receive the support to correct this. However, we see the value of a voluntary (or “opt-in”) survey, and the data it provides to individuals and to our community. People tell us it is a valuable tool for self-reflection, awareness, and an assessment of their own lives. Activists tell us they are using it as a tool for building community. We fully intend to keep the survey online indefinitely.

In this survey, we did not gather data on race. We decided not to do this because we understand the idea of “race” is a social construct. However, the illusion of race has a powerful influence on individuals and in our society. We corrected this for our future work and used data from the 2000 United States Census to indicate the percentage of the population identifying as non-white or Latino for the Culture domain.

While we acknowledge limitations in our data, we believe that the Happiness Initiative survey reveals important trends which will be valuable to Seattle residents and policy makers, and that further work on the Happiness Initiative, including ongoing opt-in surveying and a representative survey, is warranted.

## Seattle's Happiness Report Card

This is Seattle's Happiness Report Card. The survey results are from 2,638 Seattleites and are compared to the result of 4,601 survey takers from the rest of the United States.<sup>1</sup> The objective indicators are paired with the survey results and give a balanced picture of our well-being and sustainability.

Domain	Survey results		Objective indicators		
	Seattle's median score	Median score outside Seattle	Indicator	Value	Trend
Overall Well-Being*	66.0	66.9			
Psychological Well-Being	77.8	77.8	Demand for domestic violence support services	3518 requests per day in Washington	☹
Material Well-Being	73.1	73.1	Metropolitan area GDP	\$67,135 per capita	☹
Health	66.7	66.7	Obesity rate	21.4%	☹
Community Vitality	64.9	64.7	Violent crimes reported	5.67 per thousand people	☺
Cultural Vitality	64.2	64.5	Percentage of population identifying as non-white or Latino	13.3% - 77.6% range across neighborhoods	?
Governance	57.5	56.9	Voter turnout in the latest presidential election	83.9% of registered voters	☺
Ecological Vitality	45.8	45.8	Greenhouse gas emissions	6,913,000 metric tons CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent	☹
Time Balance	43.3	43.3	Mean travel time to work	26.8 minutes	☹

\* Overall well-being is affect (feeling) and satisfaction with life, not a composite of all the domains.

<sup>1</sup> We excluded the Seattle survey takers from the comparison group because they make up 36% of the whole sample, while Seattle is home to less than 0.2% of the U.S. population. This over-representation reflects the project being based in Seattle and having been much more effective at getting publicity in our own local media market than elsewhere. We are recruiting local partners in many other regions of the United States to balance this.



Survey scores are on a scale of 0-100, with 0 being the lowest score and 100 the highest. A description of the domains is below. The survey results for each domain are listed in descending score order, so where people in Seattle are thriving is listed first and where people are hurting most is at the bottom of the list.

Seattle's median scores are all relatively close to the scores from elsewhere, while there is considerable variation across the domains. There are some consistent patterns of variation between demographic groups within Seattle, however, which are explored by the "Trends" section below.

## The domains of happiness

**Overall Well-Being** is a combination of questions about long-term satisfaction with life and questions about emotional state over the past four weeks. It is not a combination of the score for all the domains!

The questions in the domains examine the conditions of happiness. These are the factors in a domain that influence a personal satisfaction with life and emotional state. This survey included eight domains:

- **Psychological Well-Being** addresses issues of self-esteem, autonomy and sense of purpose.
- **Material Well-Being** addresses satisfaction with financial situation, optimism or pessimism for financial future, and whether the survey taker had experienced financial hardship in the previous 12 months.
- **Health** asks questions about physical health and experience of disability or long-term illness.
- **Community Vitality** is the combination of interpersonal trust, social support and community participation.
- **Cultural Vitality** asks survey takers about their experience of discrimination, along with how often they participated in education, arts, culture, sport and recreation, and how satisfied they were with their opportunities to do so.
- **Governance** asks survey takers about their confidence in each level of government and institutions such as major companies, labor unions and non-profits, as well as their perception of political freedoms and freedom from discrimination.
- **Ecological Vitality** combines questions about the quality of the local and global environment with access to nature.
- **Time Balance** measures survey takers' senses of stress, control over their lives, and overwork.



## Survey results

The happiness survey gave each survey taker a score for Overall Well-Being, along with scores on eight domains, each of which is a contributor to happiness. The results for all these domains are depicted graphically here:

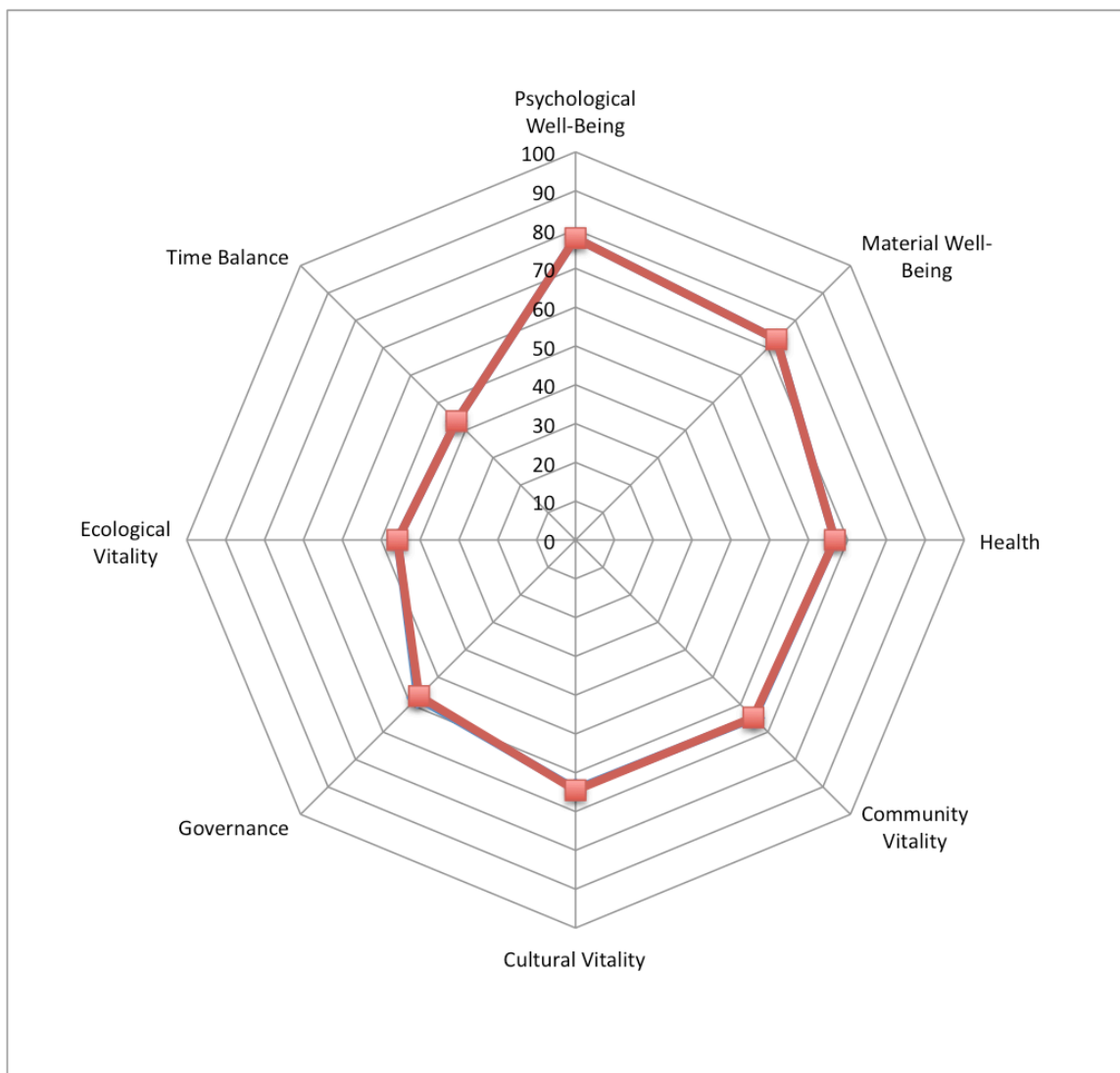


Figure 1. Summary of Seattle's survey results

## Where we are thriving

Seattle's scores generally follow the pattern our survey reveals for the United States as a whole. Like other areas, we score well in Psychological Well-Being (77.8) and Material Well-Being (73.1), Inclusion (73.7) and Rights and Freedoms (70.8). Our scores are identical to elsewhere in these domains, or in the case of Inclusion and Rights and Freedoms, components of domains. See Appendix A for an explanation of components of domains.

### Material Well-Being

Here, the high overall score is a composite of the very different scores for people's satisfaction with their current material standard of living, which is high (77.8), and their sense of economic security, which is much lower (62.5). More research is needed to further analyze these differences, which may be exacerbated by the current economic climate.

### Interpersonal Trust

Interpersonal Trust, which is a component of Community Vitality, is one area where Seattleites scored particularly well in comparison to elsewhere. Here, the score (70.8) is over four points higher than the median for elsewhere (66.7). These relatively high scores are a positive sign, and indicate that further survey work with opt-in surveying and a representative survey of Seattle is warranted.

## Where we are hurting

### Time Balance

Time Balance was Seattle's lowest domain score, indicating that survey takers often feel they do not have enough time to do things they need to do or things they enjoy. Poor time balance has long-term consequences. It contributes to health-damaging stress, decreases the time people can devote to community and relationship building, and leads to behavior that harms the environment—people recycle less and use more disposables and more energy-intensive transport.

Nationally, the time balance score was also the lowest. This was also the case in Victoria, which inspired the report "The Challenge of Time Balance."<sup>2</sup>

### Ecological Vitality

Ecological Vitality scores in Seattle and elsewhere were also among the lowest in the survey. There were different patterns for different questions within this domain<sup>3</sup>, as follows:

- The first question for this domain asked, "How satisfied are you with the opportunities that you have to enjoy the natural environment?" 85% of people who took the survey in Seattle chose either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" in response to this question.
- This is in sharp contrast to the questions about environmental protection and people's expectations for the environment in future, each of which the majority of Seattle survey takers answered pessimistically. 55% said they worry "a great deal"

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/web/files/Time%20Crunch\\_2010-12-02.pdf](http://www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/web/files/Time%20Crunch_2010-12-02.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The new survey addresses this problem by completely redesigning the Ecological Vitality section.

- or “a lot” about the state of the environment, 78% said they expect opportunities to enjoy the environment to be worse in future than today, 36% said they were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with efforts to preserve the natural environment, and 69% agreed with the statement “If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.”
- The final question for this domain asked how much survey takers agreed with the statement “I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution.” and in Seattle 67% of people chose either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.”

### **Community Participation**

While Seattle scored relatively high on the Community Vitality domain, its Community Participation sub-domain score was low. This is the area where Seattle’s results were the most different from elsewhere. We think there may be two reasons for this low score.

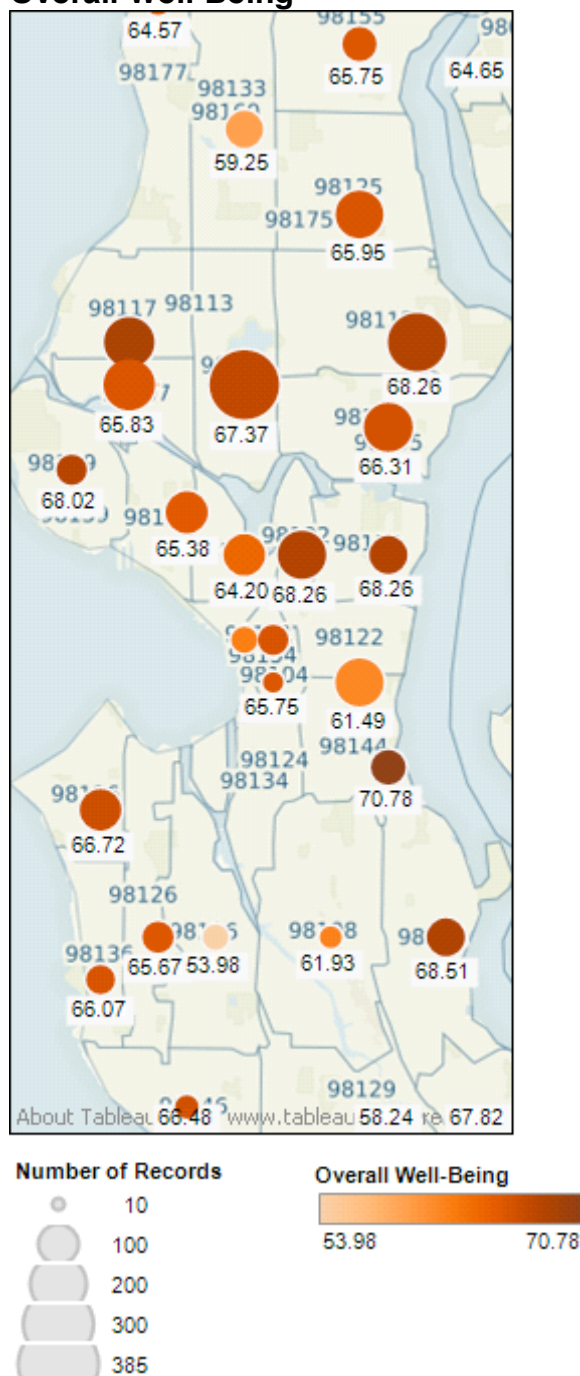
The Community Participation score was averaged from three questions, two of which asked about membership in and volunteering for “voluntary organizations or associations such as school groups, church social groups, community centers, ethnic associations or social, civic or fraternal clubs.” It is possible that Seattleites underestimated their participation because they did not see the type of organization where they volunteered listed. Secondly, the survey did not register the difference between responses of “Not at all” and “Not applicable” to several questions. 44% responded “Not at all / Not applicable” to the question about membership, and 34% responded “Not at all / Not applicable” to the question about volunteering. This may have skewed the survey results.

## Trends in the survey data

### Which Seattle neighborhoods are happier places?

The maps in this section show the results for every ZIP Code within the Seattle City limits, as well as those partially within Seattle city limits, from which we had at least 10 respondents<sup>4</sup>. Each map shows the number of responses from each ZIP Code and the median score. The shading denotes scores, with darker circles indicating higher median scores. The size of the circles denotes number of responses, with larger circles indicating larger numbers of survey takers.

#### Overall Well-Being



<sup>4</sup> 98113, 98124 and 98134 were all excluded from this analysis because they had fewer than 10 respondents, which makes median scores highly unreliable as any individual's responses have too large an influence over the median.

Figure 2. Overall Well-Being is generally lowest in the Duwamish watershed, Northgate and the Central District.

## Psychological Well-Being

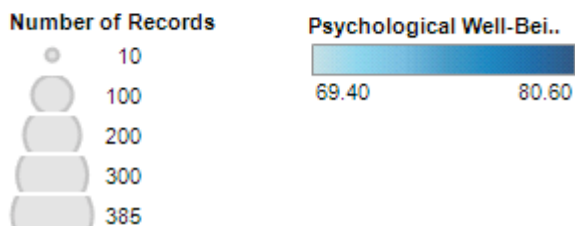
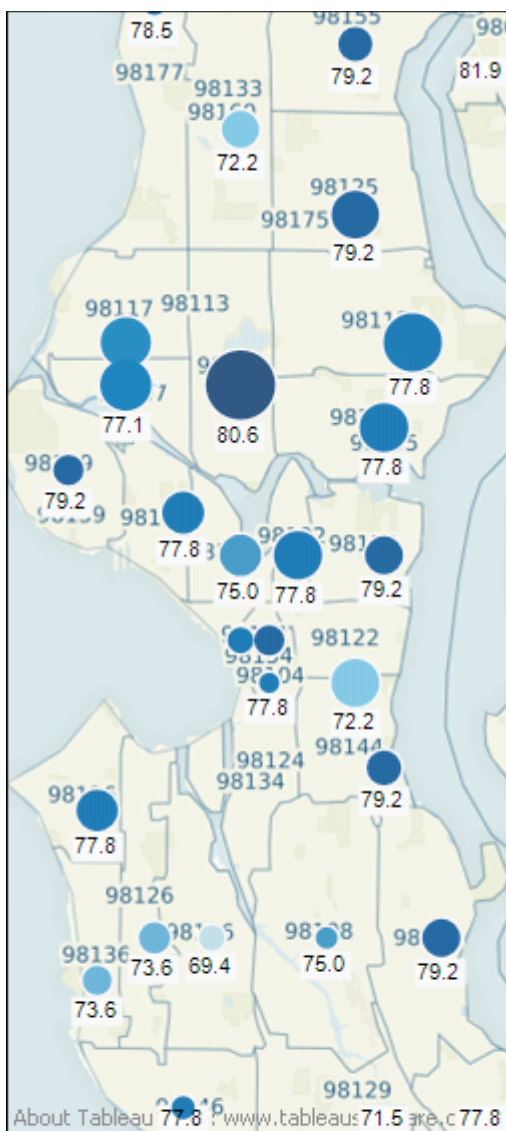


Figure 3. Psychological Well-Being is highest in the Fremont / Green Lake area and lowest in the Delridge / White Center area.

## Material Well-Being

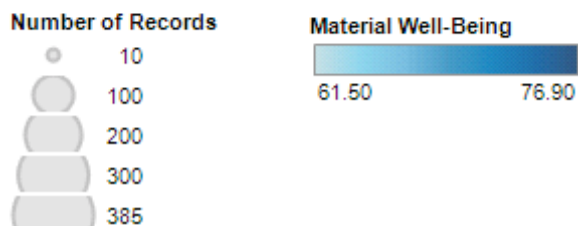
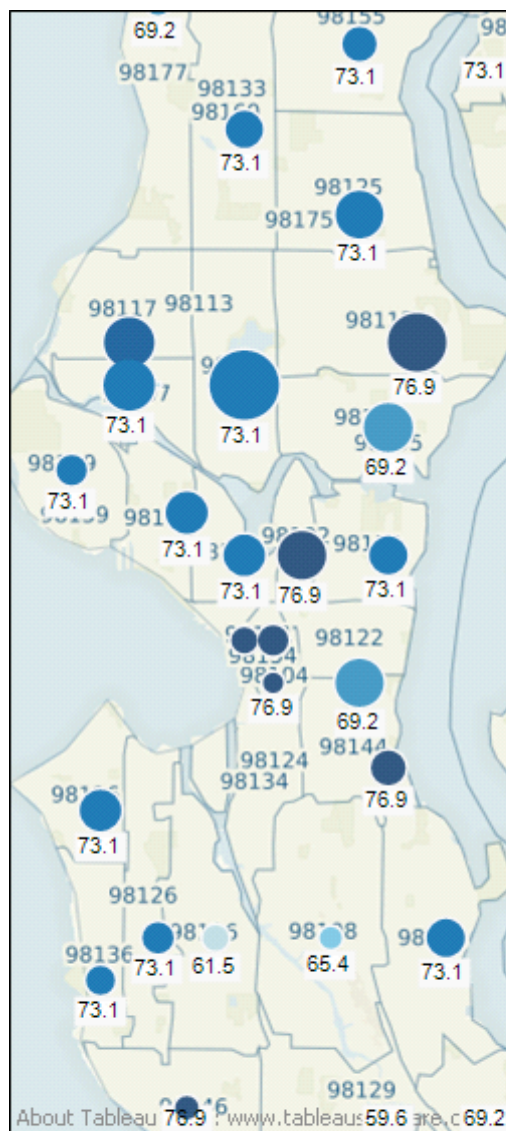


Figure 4. Material Well-Being is lowest in the Duwamish basin, and highest in the Downtown, Eastlake, Mount Baker and Wedgewood / View Ridge areas.



Health

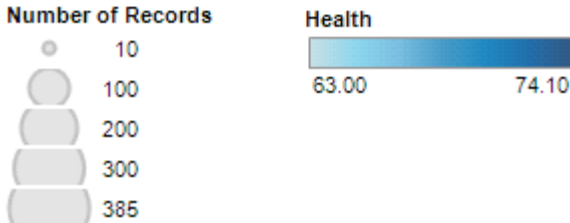
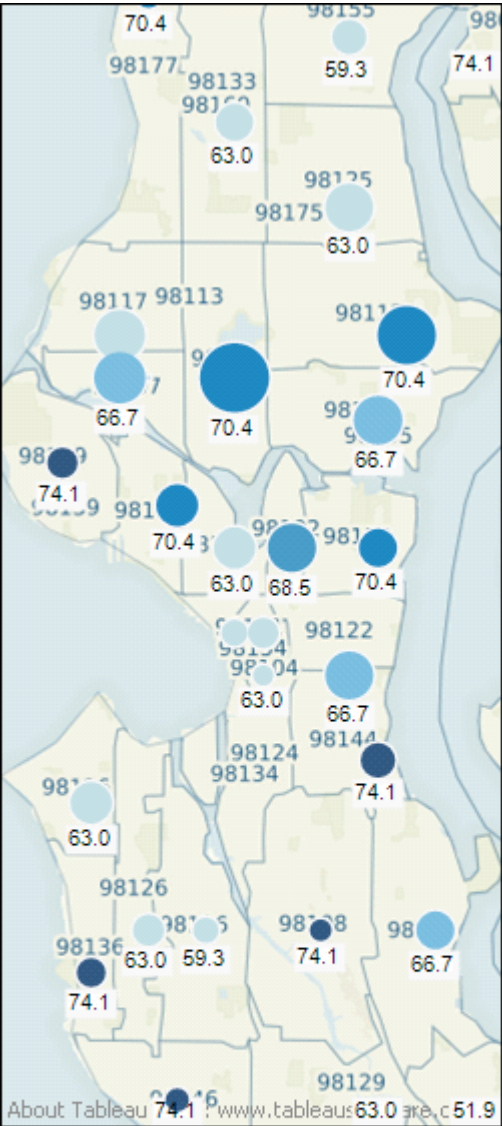


Figure 5. Health scores are unevenly distributed around Seattle.

Community Vitality

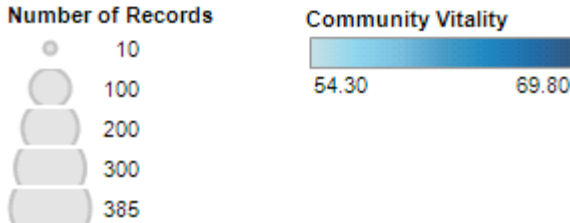
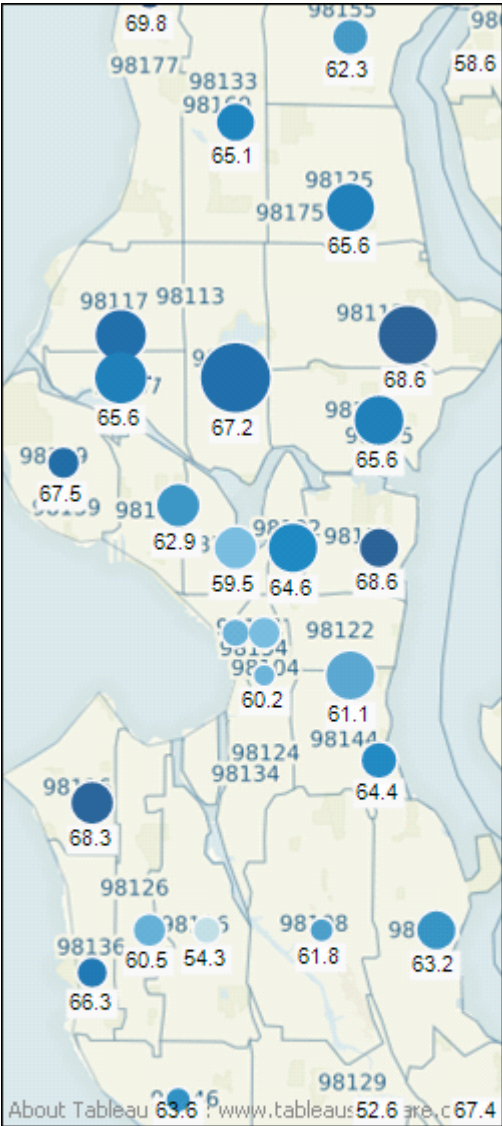


Figure 6. Community Vitality scores are highest in North Seattle, Magnolia, the Madison Valley and Alki and lowest in the Duwamish valley and Seattle's urban core.

Cultural Vitality

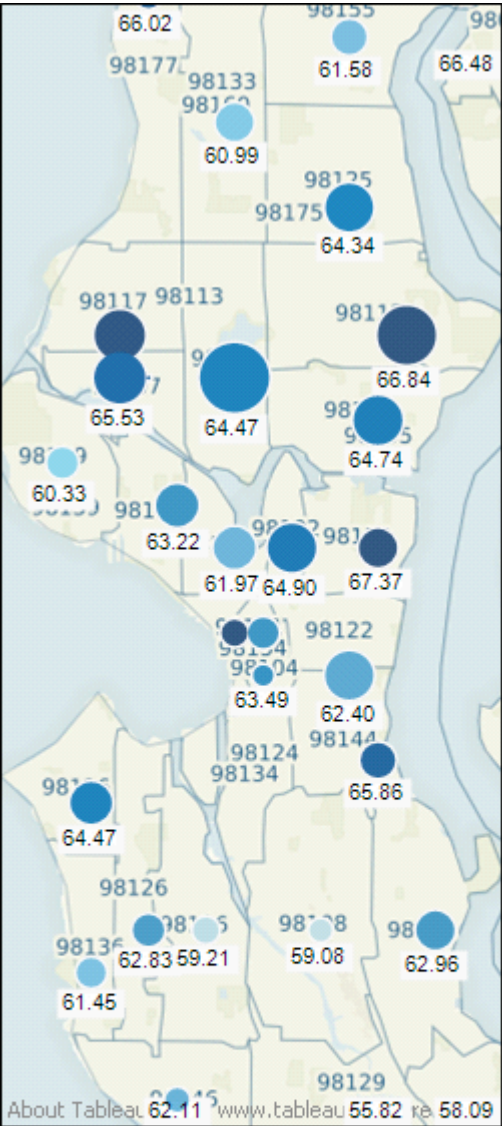


Figure 7. Cultural Vitality is unevenly distributed around Seattle's neighborhoods.

Governance

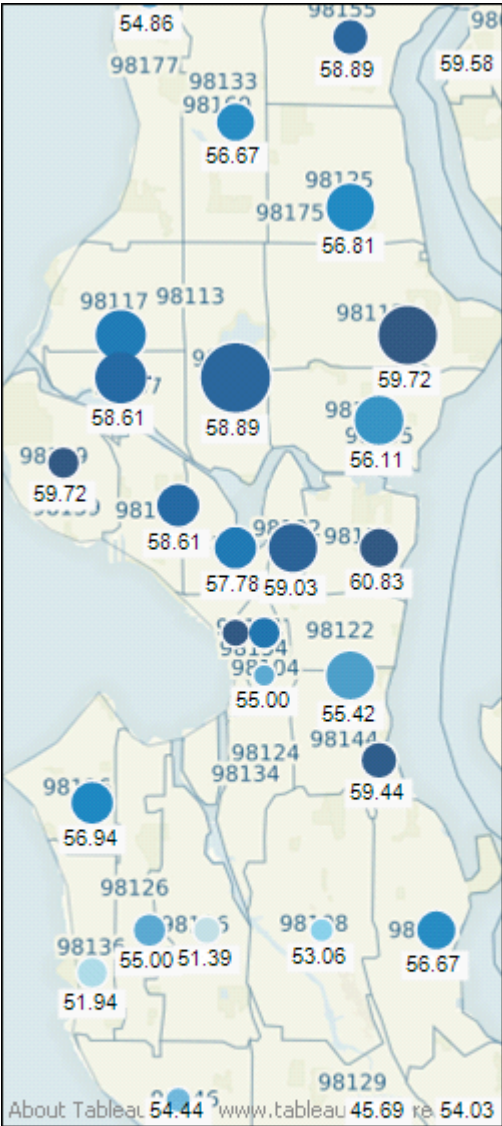


Figure 8. Governance scores are highest for Downtown, Mount Baker and the northern neighborhoods and lowest for Beacon Hill and parts of West Seattle.



Ecological Vitality

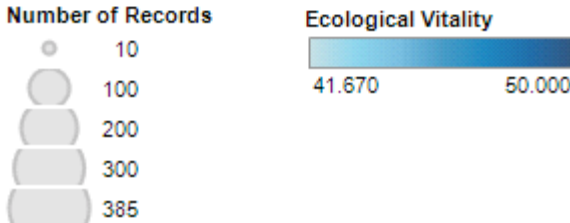
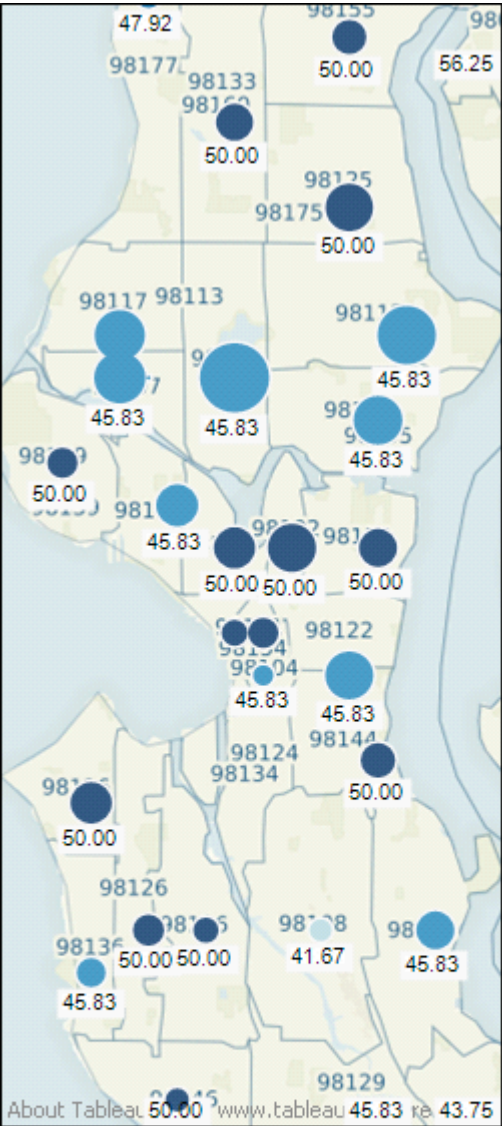


Figure 9. Ecological Vitality scores were lowest in Beacon Hill, while many neighborhoods tied for the highest score.

Time Balance

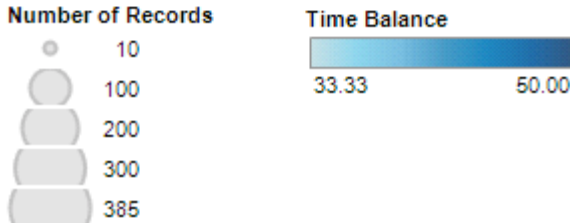
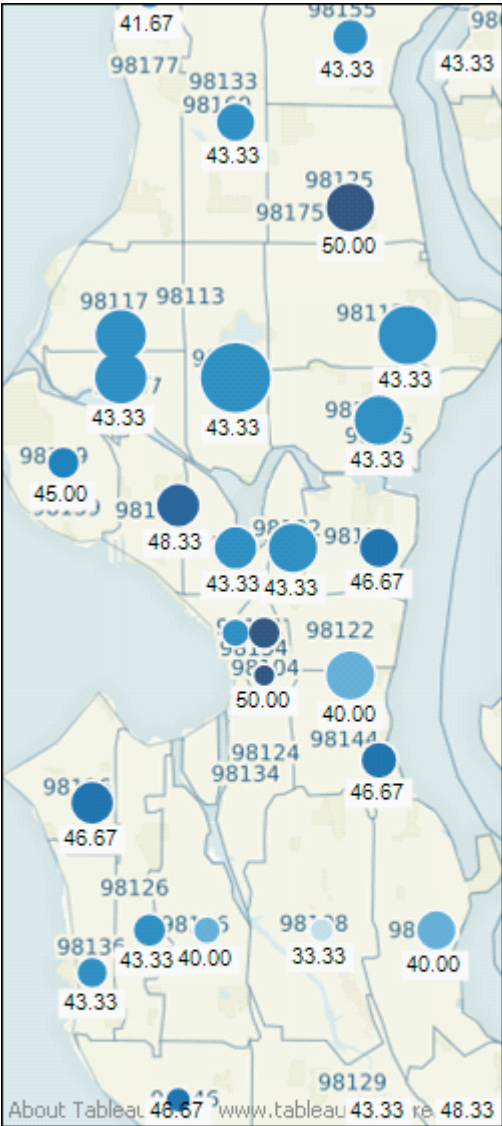


Figure 10. Time Balance scores were lowest in Beacon Hill and highest Downtown and in the Lake City / Northgate area.

## Does money make you happy?

Our survey results confirmed that life satisfaction rises with increasing income, with a much larger effect for the transition between poverty and middle income than between middle income and great wealth. This is consistent with generally accepted research findings.

Within Seattle, the median Overall Well-Being score for people with an income of \$25,000 or less is 55.4, while it is 69.6—a 14.2 point difference—for people earning \$100,000 or more. Almost half of this difference (6.7 points) is in the step between those earning \$25,000 or less and those earning \$25,000 - \$50,000. The differences between the higher income brackets are all less than 3 points each.

The survey results showed that higher incomes result in fairly large improvements in Satisfaction With Life scores, with a difference of 18.2 from 56.8 to 75.0 for those with the lowest to highest income. As with Overall Well-Being, increases are most dramatic between the two lowest income brackets, and much smaller for the higher income brackets.

The survey results showed higher income results in a much smaller increase to Positive Affect, or emotional well-being, than Satisfaction With Life, with a difference of 7.2, from 57.1 to 64.3, between the lowest and highest incomes. Affect, or emotional state changes the most for those in the lowest levels, with a difference of 4.4 between those earning less than \$25,000 and those earning \$25,000 - \$50,000, and a difference of 1.8 for those earning \$75,000 - \$100,000 compared to those earning \$100,000 or more.

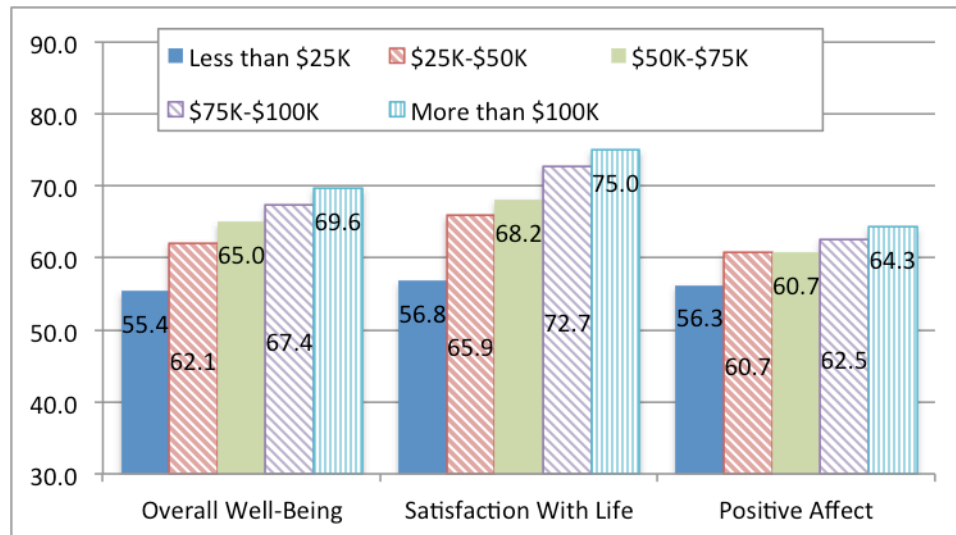


Figure 11. Overall Well-Being broken down by income group

Other notable findings with regard to income include:

- Income does not seem to seriously impact Time Balance scores, with a difference of 3.4 with 43.3 for the lowest income to 46.7 for the highest income, and satisfaction with educational opportunities with a difference of 2.5 between 52.5 to 55.0 for low and high income levels.
- People with lower income scored higher in Community Participation, with the highest community participation by those earning under \$25,000 and the lowest by those earning over \$100,000. Scores were 50 and 41.7 for low and high incomes respectively.
- People with higher incomes scored higher in Interpersonal Trust with 58.3 for the lowest income and 75.0 for the highest Social Support with 73.7 for lowest and 86.8

for the highest, Inclusion with 68.4 for the lowest income and 78.9 for the highest, Governance with 52.2 for the lowest income and 61.2 for the highest and the biggest difference in Rights & Freedoms scores with 62.5 for the lowest income and 79.2 for the highest..

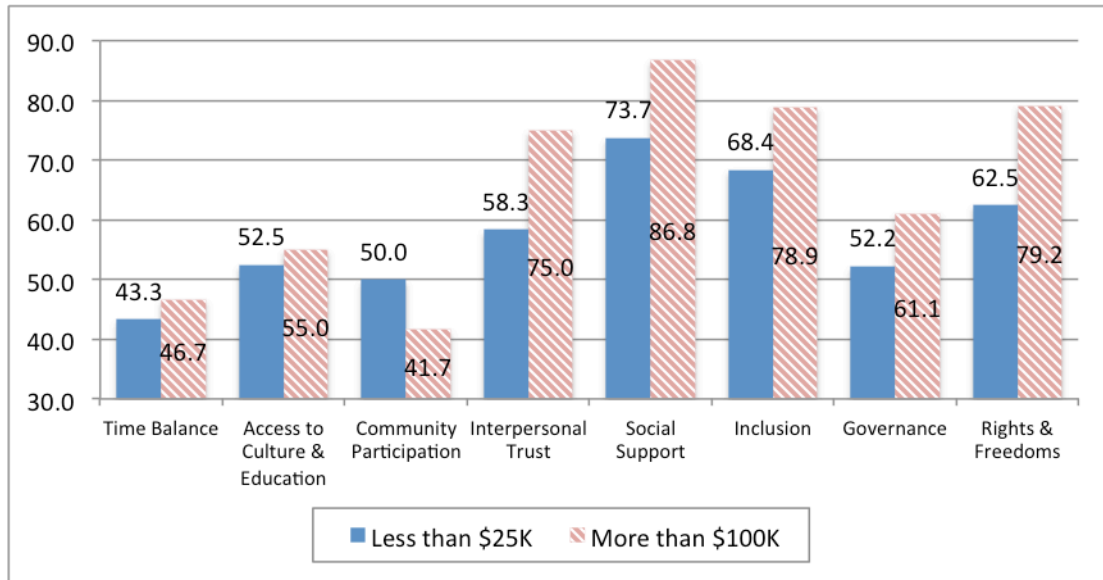


Figure 12. Selected survey scores broken down by income group  
Only the highest and lowest income groups are shown.

These findings are consistent with generally accepted research. A recent University of Virginia study—“Income Inequality and Happiness”—indicates that income inequality itself has a clear negative impact on well-being<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> “Income Inequality and Happiness” by Shigehiro Oishi, Selin Kesebir & Ed Diener. Downloadable at <http://people.virginia.edu/~sk8dm/Papers/Oishi-Kesebir-Diener-Inequality%20and%20Happiness-Psych%20Science.pdf>

## Are men happier than women?

Our survey indicated a small difference between men and women in Seattle for Overall Well-Being, with women scoring 64.2 and men, 66.5. Both men and women had low Time Balance scores (43.3) and low scores in Confidence in Government and other institutions. Women reported better Social Connections and higher Community Participation. Men scored higher in Inclusion. The differences in the other domains were very low.

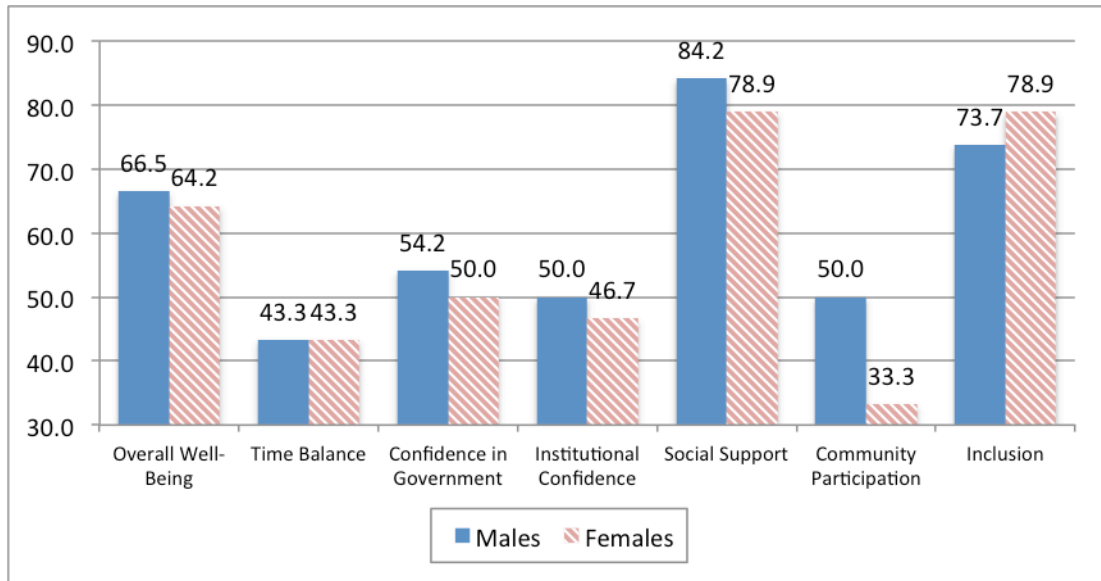


Figure 13. Gender differences for selected survey scores

## Young people appear less happy

One of the more notable aspects of the survey results is the difference among age groups. Youth aged 19-24 scored lower than expected. Typically happiness scores, as gathered by Gallup and others, follow a smile-shaped curve with people being happiest before the age of 30 and after the age of 60 or so, and unhappiest during middle age—around 40-55. The reason for this may be the characteristics of the people who took the survey (or the cohort), or the survey results may reflect that young people are hurting in many areas of their lives. In either case, we feel these results indicate further work to gather opt-in and representative data is warranted.

Note that we did not include the results from the under-19 age group because the sample was statistically small, but the results for this group were as high as expected.

Our survey did not produce this smile-shaped curve with a slight curve down as people pass 70 years of age, but rather a sort of W-shape, as shown in the chart below. Our results for those between 19-24 years of age reported some of the lowest life satisfaction and domain scores in the survey.

The Overall Well-Being score for 19-24 year olds was 61.6. No age group scored lower. By contrast, scores were somewhat higher for those between 25-44. The 19-24 age group scored lowest in Positive Affect (immediate emotional well-being) of all groups and also were lowest in Time Balance (40.0), Community Vitality (61.0), Interpersonal Trust (58.3), Social Support (81.6), and Psychological Well-Being (73.2).

The low scores for ages 19-24 may reflect the situation for young people who must deal with fewer job opportunities; greater debt; more competitive stress; and other factors. This trend could adversely affect the health of these young people, and it is possible that the stresses they face will further erode their sense of well-being and connection with others. We believe this data (if confirmed by further study) should be taken seriously by policy makers and the entire community.

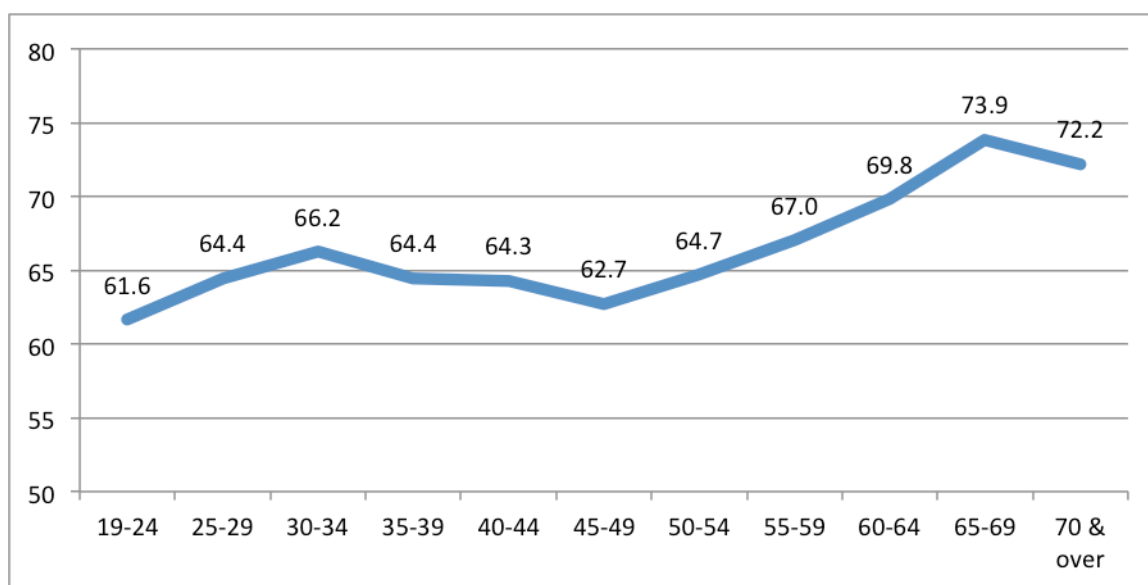


Figure 14. Overall Well-Being by age group  
The age groups displayed each had over 100 responses

## Are married people happier?

Our analysis of the survey results shows there is a strong correlation, or connection, between social connection and happiness. Put simply, well-being scores for those living with other people were higher than for those living alone. We cannot prove causality with this data. It is possible that unhappier people are more likely to choose to live alone. More survey work in this area would allow us to learn more.

According to our data, the median Overall Well-Being score for those living alone was 61.3 compared with a median of 67.2 for those who live with one or more other people. Scores for those living with others were higher in all domains except Time Balance.

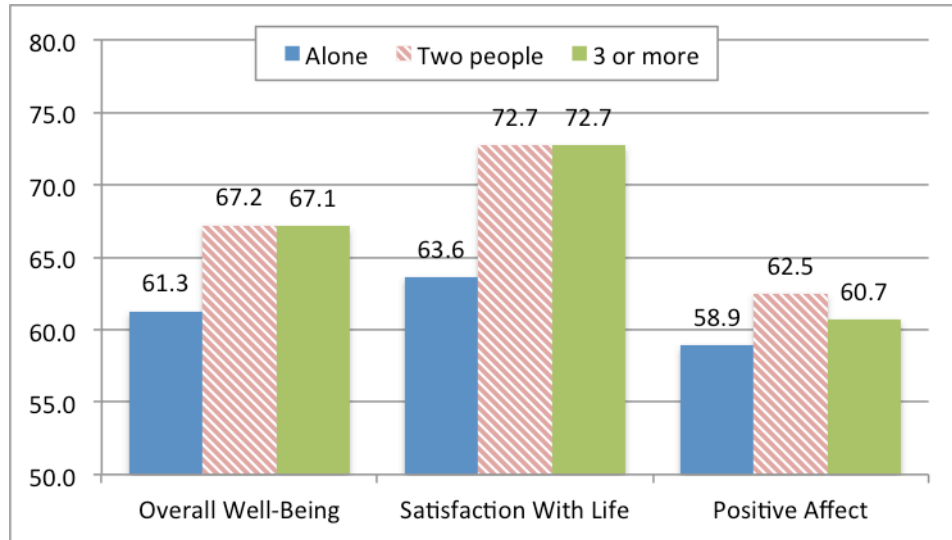


Figure 15. Overall Well-Being by household size

When broken up by household *type*, our data suggest that highest well-being is among married people without children in their home. The difference in well-being between those living alone and married couples without children is 8 points, with 60.8 for those living alone and 68.0 for married people. However, single parents score more than 4 points higher than those living alone.

Single parents have the highest Psychological Well-Being scores and Community Vitality scores of any family group members. On the other hand, single parents score poorly in Material Well-Being, Confidence in Government, and their feelings regarding the Rights and Freedoms they enjoy:

Household Type	Overall Well-Being	Community Vitality	Psychological Well-Being	Material Well-Being	Confidence in Government	Rights & Freedoms
Alone	61.4	61.7	76.4	69.2	50.0	70.8
With parents	64.9	65.3	72.2	69.2	50.0	70.8
Room-mates	63.4	65.0	76.4	65.4	50.0	68.8
Single with children	67.8	70.1	84.7	57.7	50.0	66.7
Spouse and children	68.3	67.5	77.8	73.1	54.2	75.0
Spouse no children	68.1	64.9	77.8	76.9	54.2	70.8

## What will make you happy?

This section presents such an analysis of the data from Seattle by demographic groups, and analyzes the relationship between individual domains and Overall Well-Being and for individual questions on the survey. It is important to remember that we can only see *correlations*, or connections, and cannot definitively establish *causality*. However, we believe that this analysis is useful and points to where further study is warranted.

The following chart shows the correlation between each primary domain score discussed in the “Seattle’s Happiness Report Card” section above and survey takers’ Overall Well-Being scores:

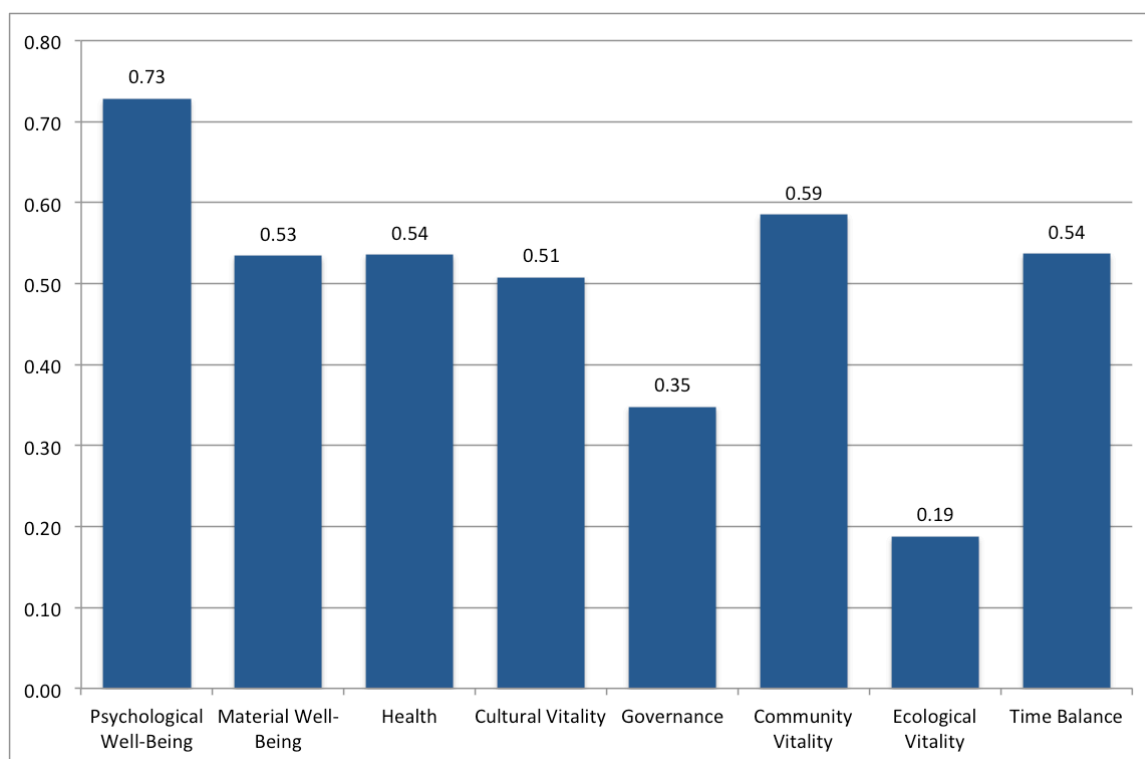


Figure 16. Correlations between scores on the individual domains and Overall Well-Being.  
A correlation of 0 implies no connection, and 1 implies a complete connection.

The domains are ordered by Seattle’s median score for that domain, with the highest-scoring domains on the left. Two of the domains where Seattle scored low are relatively strongly correlated with Overall Well-Being: Community Vitality and Time Balance. For the other domains, Seattle scored relatively highly.

Below, we will examine the relationship between the three areas in which Seattle scored the worst and Overall Well-Being.

## Does the environment make you (un)happy?

Overall, Ecological Vitality appears to be only weakly correlated with Overall Well-Being. One question is much more strongly correlated with Overall Well-Being than the domain overall, with a correlation of 28%. The correlation for the other questions ranged from 0.10 to negative 0.019, indicating little connection to Overall Well-Being. This may be because the questions do not fit well within the domain. The correlation for Access to Nature implies that access to nature has a larger impact on happiness than the quality of the environment, expectations of how environmental quality will change in future, or commitment to environmental protection. That said, the questions in this survey may not have been the best way to determine happiness. Our current survey is a better measurement tool.

Question	Correlation
10.1 How satisfied are you with the opportunities that you have to enjoy the natural environment?	0.28

## Does having no time make you unhappy?

Two questions for Time Balance stood out as particularly strongly correlated with Overall Well-Being:

Question	Correlation
2.2 How much control do you feel you have in making decisions that affect your everyday activities?	0.57
2.1 In a typical week, how much of your time are you able to spend doing the kinds of things that you enjoy?	0.50

Time Balance overall is strongly correlated with Overall Well-Being, with a correlation coefficient of 0.54. Combined with the low score on this domain, we can see that time poverty is a significant barrier to well-being for Seattleites, as indeed it is for U.S. citizens in general.



## Community makes you happy

Community Vitality is the second most strongly correlated domain to Overall Well-Being, following Psychological Well-Being. Community Vitality is an aggregate of three components that are easier to analyze separately. See Appendix A for an explanation of the components.

The chart to the right breaks Community Vitality down into the three components of Social Support, Interpersonal Trust and Community Participation, and shows the correlation between each and Overall Well-Being.

As shown in the chart, the Social Support component is particularly strongly correlated with Overall Well-Being. All but two of its questions had correlation coefficients between 0.47 and 0.56. The two questions that were less strongly correlated with Overall Well-Being asked about practical rather than emotional support:

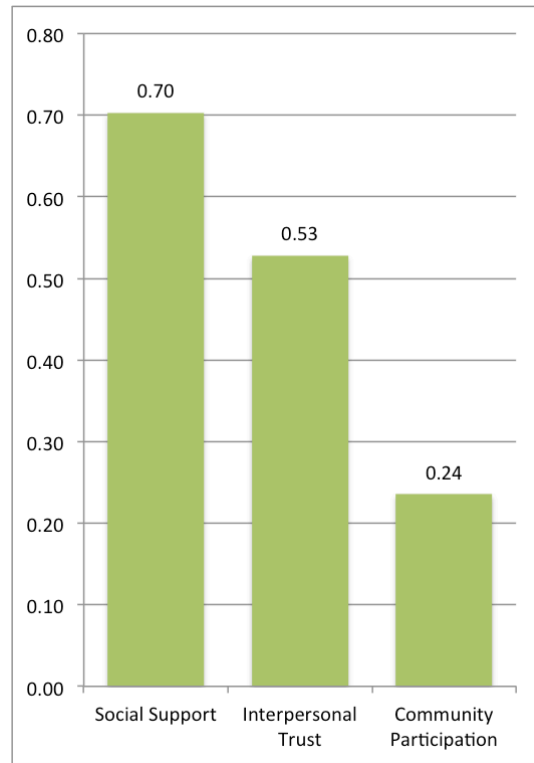


Figure 17. Correlations between Overall Well-Being and the three components of Community Vitality

Question (with preamble: "How often is each of the following kinds of support available to you when you need it?")	Correlation	Percentage choosing most positive answer
4.3 Someone to take you to the doctor if you needed it	0.42	73%
4.4 Someone to help you with daily chores if you were sick	0.40	62%

This indicates that the availability of emotional support is more strongly related to Seattleites' well-being than the availability of practical assistance. Coupled with the high percentages of people who reported having their needs for practical assistance met, this suggests that the relationship between living alone and unhappiness (as reported in the "Trends" section above) is more due to loneliness than the practical difficulties of living alone.

Within the Interpersonal Trust component of Community Vitality, no individual question stood out as correlated especially strongly with Overall Well-Being (all correlations below 0.48). The three questions that correlated most strongly with Overall Well-Being focused on the survey takers' trust in people around them:

<b>Question</b> ( <i>with preamble: "How much do you trust..."</i> )	<b>Correlation</b>
3.1 People you work with or go to school with?	0.47
3.2 Your neighbors?	0.41
3.4 Businesses in your community?	0.41

The questions about trust in strangers or perceived safety all had correlation coefficients of 0.38 or below. This suggests that Seattleites' sense of trust in their own community is more important for their well-being than trust in strangers.

## Objective indicators

The survey results provide a subjective measure of well-being. Objective indicators provide a balanced picture. This section presents data for objective indicators for the domains of happiness.

The indicators were selected using a hybrid process, with a crowd-sourcing model used to produce a short list of potential indicators for each domain, and a panel of experts convened to narrow that short list down to a final set of 1-3 indicators per domain.<sup>6</sup> Indicators were chosen based on the criteria of relevance to the domain, availability of primary data to the general public, availability of a time series to establish trends, and understandability.

The data is given for as close to local as was available; however, we were limited by the lack of available data. Depending on the indicator, the most recent data can be as recent as 2010 or as old as 2000. The geographical scopes also vary: while some statistics are available at the city level, others are only available at the county, Metropolitan Statistical Area or State level. We have made these limitations explicit for each indicator.

Below we present one key indicator per domain of our survey. For most domains, we list one or two additional indicators. We were not able to gather data for these indicators, but feel that they are also important to understanding our happiness, well-being and sustainability.

Where we could, we gathered data for Seattle. In some cases, the data was more reliable for a wider geography.

## Psychological Well-Being

### Indicator: Demand for Domestic Violence support services

Geographic scope: Washington State

Data:

Time period	Requests for DV support services in one day
2006	2189
2007	1953
2008	2330
2009	2458
2010	3518

**Trend:** worsening

**Rationale for indicator selection:** Domestic violence is defined as at least two cycles of physical violence. It often includes psychological forms of control and oppression. Domestic violence includes partner and child abuse. Studies show domestic violence rates

---

<sup>6</sup> A fuller description of this process is available on our website at:  
<http://sustainableseattle.org/sahi/gnh-objective-indicators>

are between 25% to 35% of all marriages and partnerships in the U.S. Children raised in domestic violence are very likely to become victims or perpetrators of violence.

**Data source:** The National Network to End Domestic Violence's National Census of Domestic Violence Services

**Data availability:** This data is available for each state.

**Secondary indicators**

- Suicide rate
- Prevalence of serious mental illness

## Material Well-Being

**Indicator: Metropolitan area GDP**

**Geographic scope:** Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue Metropolitan Statistical Area

**Data:**

Time period	Metropolitan area GDP per capita
2006	\$62,205
2007	\$67,045
2008	\$68,512
2009	\$67,135

**Trend:** declining

**Rationale for indicator selection:** While it is an imperfect measure of people's material well-being, GDP is a broadly recognized measure of the growth of an economy overall. Localizing this to a metropolitan area allows people to understand how their local economy is performing. Expressing GDP per capita rather than for the whole metropolitan area makes comparisons between different-sized areas easier and removes distortions from population growth or migration.

**Data source:** GDP figures are from the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis; MSA population estimated by United States Census Bureau.

**Data availability:** This data is available for every Metropolitan Statistical Area defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget

**Secondary indicators**

- Poverty rate
- Median income

## Health

### Indicator: Obesity rate

Geographic scope: King County

Data:

Time period	Percentage of population who are obese
2004	18.6
2005	19.0
2006	19.9
2007	20.2
2008	21.4

**Trend:** worsening

**Rationale for indicator selection:** Obesity is associated with a broad range of negative health outcomes, and is itself a symptom of unhealthy environments and lifestyles. It has a nationally agreed medical definition, so the obesity rate can be readily compared between any two areas.

**Data source:** Centers for Disease Control

**Data availability:** This data is available for every county and state in the United States.

## Community Vitality

### Indicator: Violent crime rate

Geographic scope: City of Seattle

Data:

Time period	Violent crimes reported per thousand people
2009	6.23
2010	5.67

**Trend:** improving

**Rationale for indicator selection:** Violent crime is both a symptom of problems in a community and a contributor to low levels of interpersonal trust and satisfaction with communities. The data is readily available and comparable for many cities.

**Data source:** Federal Bureau of Investigation

**Data availability:** This data is available for every U.S. city with a population of 100,000 or more.

### Secondary indicator

- Volunteer rate

## Cultural Vitality

**Indicator: Multi-racial neighborhoods**

**Geographic scope:** ZIP Codes within Seattle

**Data:** All for the year 2000 – we will add 2010 when that data is made available.

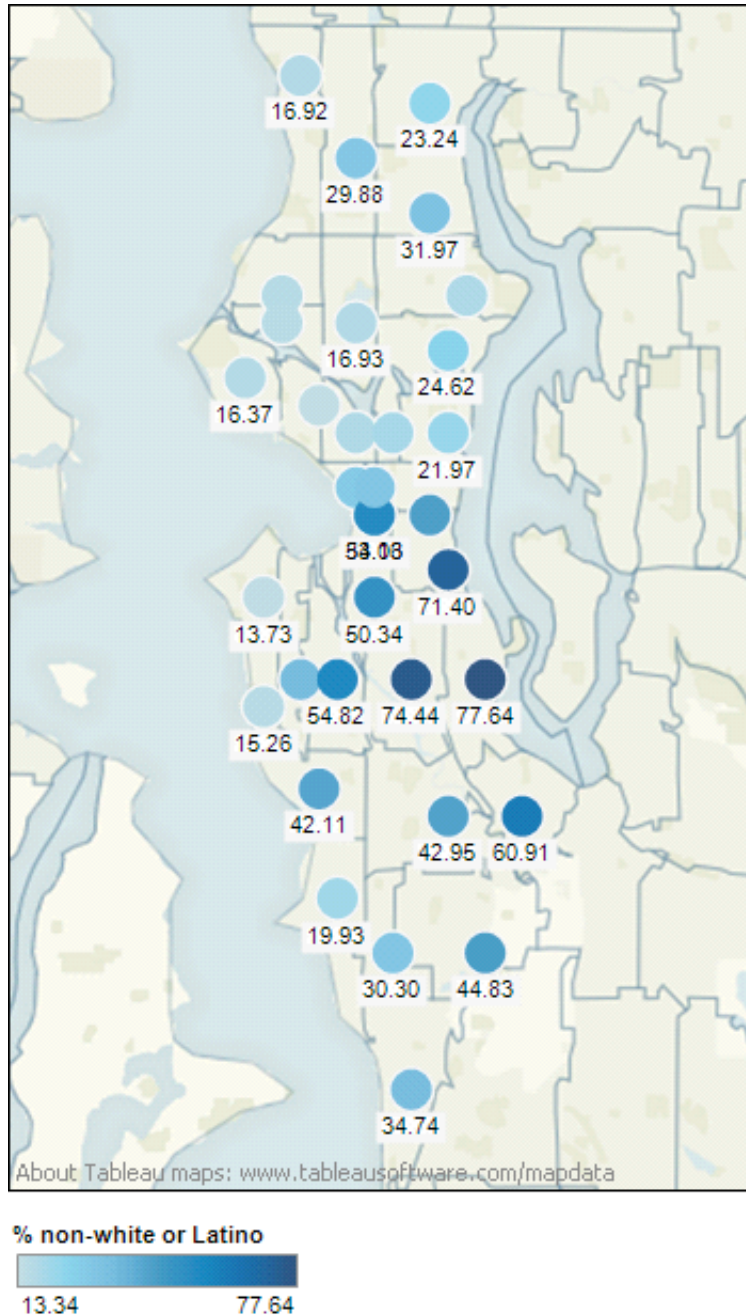


Figure 18. The percentage of people in each Seattle ZIP Code identifying as non-white or Latino. Note the cluster corresponding to the Rainier Valley, the Central District and Beacon Hill.

ZIP	Neighborhood	Percentage of population identifying as non-white or Latino
98119	Queen Anne West	13.3
98116	Alki, Genesee	13.7
98107	Ballard	15.1
98136	Gatewood, Lincoln Park	15.3
98117	Loyal Heights, Whittier Heights	15.7
98199	Magnolia	16.4
98177	The Highlands	16.9
98103	Wallingford	16.9
98109	Eastlake	17.4
98115	Wedgwood	17.6
98102	Eastlake	18.9
98166	Seahurst, Burien	19.9
98112	Broadmoor	22.0
98155	Lake Forest Park	23.2
98105	Laurelhurst	24.6
98121	Belltown	28.2
98133	Shoreline	29.9
98148	Normandy Park, Seatac	30.3
98101	Downtown	30.4
98125	Lake City, Victory Heights	32.0
98174	Kirkland	33.1
98198	Des Moines	34.7
98126	High Point	34.9
98146	Shorewood	42.1
98168	Highline	43.0
98122	Mann	44.2
98188	McMicken Heights	44.8
98134	Industrial District East	50.3
98104	Pioneer Square	54.1
98106	Delridge	54.8
98178	Bryn Mawr-Skyway	60.9
98144	Rainier	71.4
98108	Georgetown	74.4
98118	Brighton	77.6 <sup>7</sup>

**Trend:** No trend can be analyzed because we only have one year of data. For comparison purposes, King County as a whole has a minority rate of 26.6%.

**Rationale for indicator selection:** The Cultural Vitality domain of our survey asks about inclusiveness and discrimination. The diversity of neighborhoods around a city reflects how inclusive its culture is, and historic discrimination can be seen in the concentration of minorities in a small part of a city.

**Data source:** United States Census

**Data availability:** This data is available for every ZIP Code and county in the United States.

---

<sup>7</sup> 98118 has been widely reported as the most diverse ZIP Code in the United States, though there is some doubt about this claim – for more information see:

<http://www.rainiervalleypost.com/98118-americas-most-diverse-zip-code-who-said/>

**Additional note:** While the diversity of some Seattle neighborhoods is striking, it is important to note that the wide variation in this statistic and the clustering of all the most diverse ZIP Codes in one contiguous area reflect a significant degree of segregation within contemporary Seattle.

## Governance

### Indicator: Voter turnout in general elections

**Geographic scope:** Washington State

**Data:**

Time period	Percentage of registered voters who submitted a ballot
2000	74.7%
2004	83.1%
2008	83.9%

**Trend:** improving

**Rationale for indicator selection:** While our survey asks people directly about their confidence in government, voter turnout is a way to measure their *participation* in the local democratic process. We opted to report Presidential election years only because turnout in those years is less affected by local referenda and issues, so it provides a more reliable sense of the overall trend.

**Data source:** King County Elections

**Data availability:** This data is not consistent among local authorities.

**Additional note:** It is important to note that this indicator expresses turnout as a percentage of *registered* voters, and therefore does not account for what proportion of *eligible* voters are registered. We are working to find data for that statistic, to improve the clarity of this indicator.

### Secondary indicator

- Tax fairness

## Ecological Vitality

### Indicator: Greenhouse gas emissions

**Geographic scope:** City of Seattle

**Data:**

Time period	Greenhouse gas emissions in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, before accounting for offsets
1990	7,280,000
2005	6,886,000
2008	6,913,000



**Trend:** mixed

**Rationale for indicator selection:** Global climate change is the pre-eminent environmental issue of our time, and greenhouse gas emissions measure the local area's contribution to it.

**Data source:** Seattle Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory

**Data availability:** This data is not consistent among local authorities.

**Secondary indicators**

- Volatile Organic Compound emissions
- Municipal Solid Waste

## Time Balance

**Indicator:** Mean travel time to work

**Geographic scope:** King County

**Data:**

Time period	Mean travel time to work in minutes
2005-2007	26.5
2006-2008	26.8
2007-2009	26.8

**Trend:** no significant change.

**Rationale for indicator selection:** Commuting adds significantly to the time that work takes out of each person's life. Gallup polls indicate the time spent commuting is typically the least happy part of a person's day. Long commutes are associated with many negative outcomes, including stress, high blood pressure, taking more sick days, and negative mood at home<sup>8</sup>.

**Data source:** American Community Survey, compiled and published by the U.S. Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

**Data availability:** This data is available at the county level for the entire United States.

**Secondary indicator**

- Working hours

---

<sup>8</sup> Source: Novaco, R. W., & Gonzalez, O. (2009). Commuting and well-being. In Y. Amichai-Hamburger (Ed). *Technology and well-being* (pp. 174-205). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Also reported in Washington Post, April 9, 2007: "Your Car + Your Commute = A Visit to Your Doctor" [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/08/AR2007040801177\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/08/AR2007040801177_pf.html)

## ***Recommendations***

The Seattle Area Happiness Initiative results for 2011 indicate that the greatest opportunities for our city policy makers are in community, the environment and governance; and the greatest opportunities for individuals are in community and time-balance. Furthermore, our work with other communities in areas struck by natural and man-made disasters, including Japan for Sustainability and GHNUSA in Vermont, has convinced us that a strong community is a key factor in resilience, and one of the best ways to prepare for disaster. In a time when agencies and individuals are facing increasingly scarcer resources, we must find new ways to meet our needs.

With this initial study, Seattle is poised to show tangible, measurable means to improve the quality of life and pursuit of happiness. To keep the momentum going toward achieving our city's highest happiness potential, we offer the following recommendations:

- 1) Increase facilitation and support of volunteer-driven, community based activities within microclimates in neighborhoods as well as learning across neighborhoods. The city can encourage volunteerism within neighborhoods by showcasing best practices of informal and formal volunteer groups and organizations in our area, across our nation and globally; providing suggested guidelines and handbooks for community organizing and action; and facilitating activities supportive to the building of community such as asset mapping, community blogs and other means of information and communication.
- 2) Officially adopt the Happiness Initiative data for informing policy and resource allocation. With the recommendation by the United Nations (see conclusion, below), the efforts in the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Brazil, and recommendations by leading experts such as Daniel Kahneman, Seattle can quickly become the first Happiness city, leading the way for other cities in our nation and on our globe. For best possible results, we recommend the city conduct a representative sampling to complement the opt-in survey data and objective indicators.

## ***Next Steps and Conclusion***

On July 19, 2011, the United Nations called on governments to make “the pursuit of happiness” their primary goal and to find new ways to measure their success in achieving it. The Seattle Area Happiness Initiative provides data measurements that can help us manage a happy, healthy, and fair future for our city. We expect the journey to reaching that future will be long. To that end, we plan the following next steps:

- We plan to issue reports annually to the public.
- We will continue to promote the survey among Seattle’s citizens to ensure all voices are heard and neighborhoods are represented:
  - We are working to make the survey available in languages spoken by immigrants and refugees in our area. Funding for the translations was provided by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. Our hope is to translate it into as many languages as possible.
  - In addition, we plan to reach out to underserved populations who are unlikely to take the survey on the internet to assure that these populations are represented included in new data collection. To do this, we are partnering with such organizations as Neighborhood House, Rainer Valley Food Bank, and homeless and domestic violence shelters and hope to do survey gathering work with their constituents in November of 2011.
  - The survey will be online indefinitely so anyone can take it, and use it for self-assessment and as a guide for personal development. The new survey, fully validated and shortened by the Personality and Wellbeing Laboratory at San Francisco State University, is now online, at our new Web site: [www.happycounts.org](http://www.happycounts.org).
- The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods is also funding small “happiness projects” by our community partners to increase the well-being of their community.

Our hope is to gather policy changes, organizational actions and personal stories taken because of the survey result and report card. In a time of scarce resources and increasing risk of catastrophe, we hope that policy makers, organizations and individuals can learn how to forge a more resilient, just and healthy future by taking into account our areas self-assessment of where we are hurting and thriving. These policies, actions and stories will be the stepping stones for a better future.

The Happiness Initiative started in Seattle, but interest in the project has now blossomed in other American cities, which will conduct aspects of the Initiative in the coming months. In addition, many campuses are planning to include the happiness survey and other aspects of the Happiness Initiative in classes or broader conversations on campus.

The Happiness Initiative is, at its core, a grass roots project. The Seattle Area Happiness Initiative is one project of the Happiness Initiative. Happiness Initiatives are scalable for nations, states, cities, towns, organizations, groups or even for families. We invite you to conduct a happiness initiative in your workplace, home or volunteer group. We ask you to spread the word in our city and elsewhere. Visit the [happycounts.org](http://happycounts.org) website and download the toolkit and take the survey!

## Appendix A: Breakdown of component scores for domains

Some of these scores for a domain are themselves composed of two or three components. The domains with compound scores are Overall Well-Being, Community Vitality, Cultural Vitality and Governance. Below are breakdowns of these scores.

### Overall Well-Being

The Overall Well-Being score is the average of two components: Satisfaction With Life and reported Positive Affect. As illustrated by the chart below, the difference between Seattle and elsewhere was entirely in the Positive Affect component.

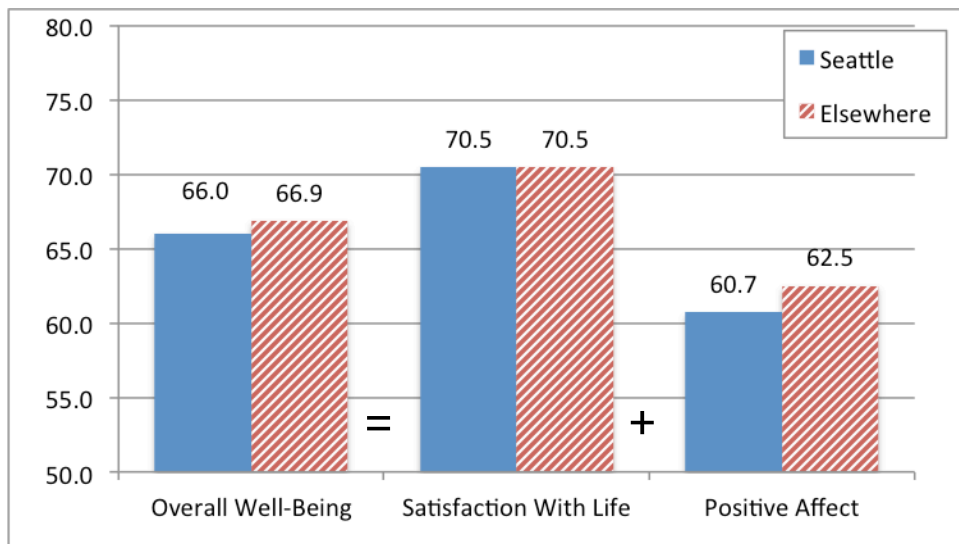


Figure 19. Overall Well-Being and its components

- **Satisfaction With Life** is the survey takers' overall assessment of their lives, indicated by responses to questions including "Taking it all together, how satisfied are you currently with your life as a whole?"
- **Positive Affect** measures survey takers' emotional state, by asking them how much they had experienced a range of emotions such as "love", "gratitude", "anger" and "worry" over the past four weeks.

### Community Vitality

Community Vitality is the average of three components: Social Support, Interpersonal Trust and Community Participation. This domain had particularly large differences between its component parts, as shown in this chart:

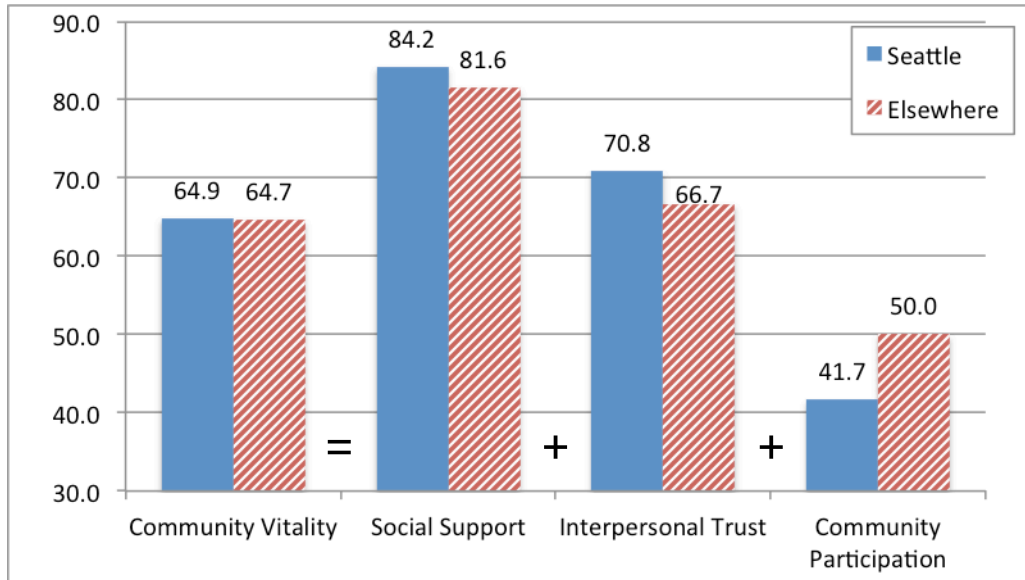


Figure 20. Community Vitality and its components

- **Social Support** asked survey takers how satisfied they were with relationships in their lives and whether they had various kinds of help and companionship available to them.
- **Interpersonal Trust** was assessed with questions about perceived personal safety, trust in people encountered, and whether the survey taker would expect various groups of people to return a lost wallet.
- **Community Participation** asked about participation in voluntary organizations and informal volunteering.

As shown in the chart above, Seattle scored somewhat higher than average on the Social Support and Interpersonal Trust domains, but lower on Community Participation.

### Cultural Vitality

Cultural Vitality is the average of Access to Culture and Education and Inclusion.

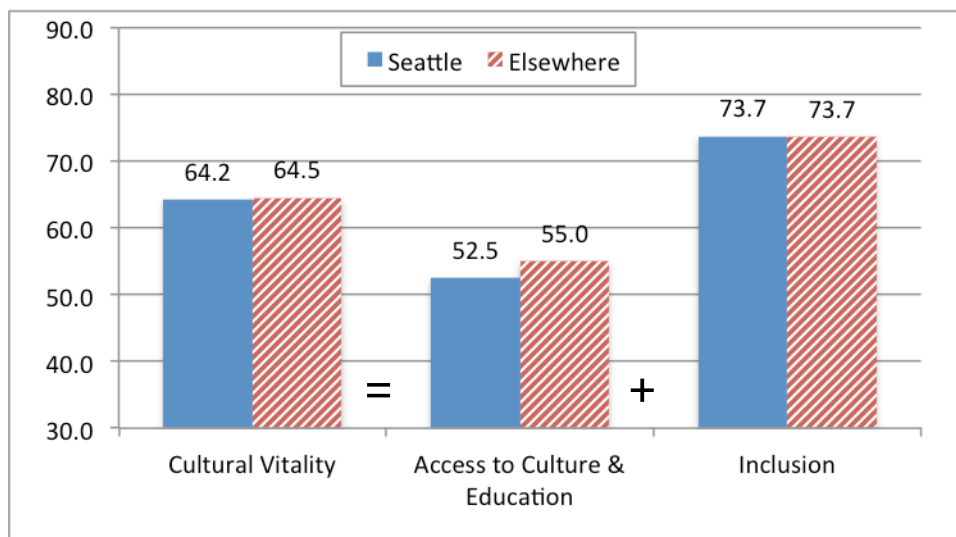


Figure 21. Cultural Vitality and its components

- **Access to Culture and Education** asked survey takers how frequently they participated in formal & informal education, arts, culture & sports, and how satisfied they were with their participation.
- **Inclusion** assessed survey takers' sense of belonging and experiences of discrimination or being out of place.

The survey result revealed no difference between Seattle and elsewhere for Inclusion, but shows Seattleites as slightly less satisfied with their Access to Culture and Education.

## Governance

Governance is the average of Confidence in Government, Institutional Confidence and Rights and Freedoms.

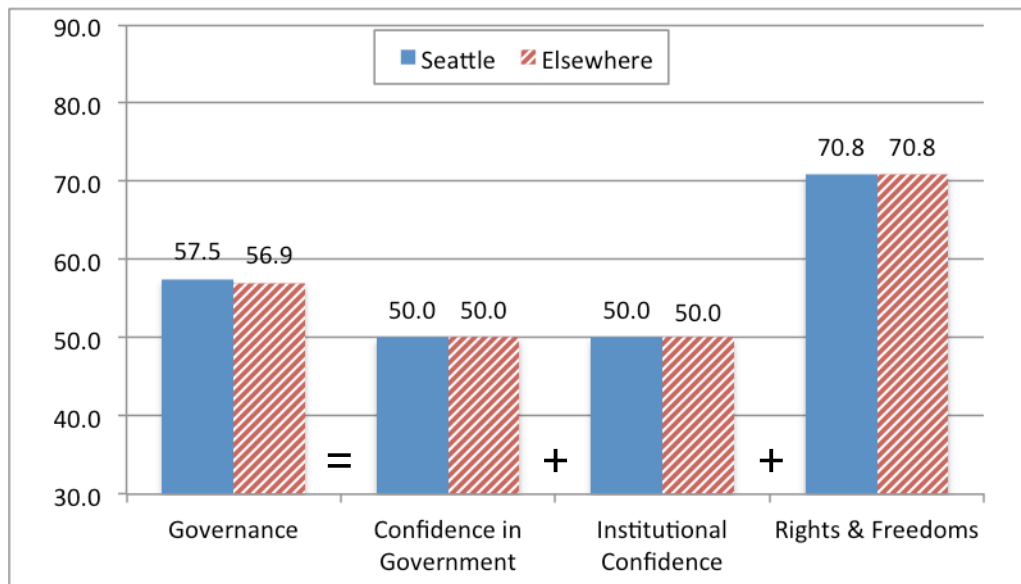


Figure 22. Governance and its components

- **Confidence in Government** assessed survey takers' confidence in various levels of government, trust in the police, and satisfaction with the electoral system.
- **Institutional Confidence** directly asked survey takers how much confidence they had in a range of institutions such as churches, the press and the health care system.
- **Rights and Freedoms** measured survey takers' satisfaction with their political and vocational freedom, government transparency and equal pay.

Seattle survey takers' scores for the components of Governance were close enough to elsewhere that the differences rounded out, leaving less than one point of difference between survey takers elsewhere. All survey takers reported higher satisfaction with their Rights and Freedoms than confidence in any sort of institution.