

OECDs Better Life Index: How to use it for the Sustainable Development course

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How do different people around the world characterize what well-being is for them? The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has led the way in survey work to provide “bottom-up” answers to this question, grounded in the views of individuals (mostly, it must be said, from the richer parts of the world). This OECD interactive web site provides an entry point to the methods and results of their work:

OECD. (n.d.). OECD Better Life Index. <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>.

You can use it to explore the constituents of well-being most important to you, and to see how your views about important constituents and their distribution compare with those of other people in other places. Here are instructions for the assignment given in Unit 2.1 on Goals in our Sustainable Development course:

a. Use the sliders on the right of the home page of the OECD “Better Life...” web site referenced in the readings for this unit to create your own better life index by providing your rank-ordering each of the 11 OECD constituents. Record (with a screen-shot?) the result. Which of well-being constituents identified by OECD are most important to you? Which seem to be describing the ultimate end of a “better life?” Which are better seen as means for achieving well-being? Which other items would you add to OECD’s list in order to have it better capture the constituents of well-being that you would be comfortable using to define your goal for sustainable development?

b. Click ‘Display countries alphabetically’ in the field at the bottom of the listing of countries (i.e. just below and to the left of the “Work-life balance” slider). The result ranks countries by well-being, defined by OECD’s objective data on each of the 11 listed constituents together with the subjective weights reflecting *your own* priorities. Which are the places (of those indexed by OECD) where your vision of the good life is most likely to be realized? Least likely to be realized?

c. Scroll down to just below the sliders to click “Explore the map.” Click on a country you identified in (b) as one of your “best” bets for your good life. At the bottom of that list, fill in the name of a country you identified in (b) as one of those where you where your vision of the good life is least likely to be realized. Compare the rankings of constituents in the two countries. What do you think is behind the differences?