

**S**ubjective measures of happiness and life satisfaction provide a valuable lens for analysing social welfare. The 2012 Pacific Living Conditions Survey incorporates subjective measures to better inform decision-makers on the status of wellbeing in Vanuatu.

**H**appiness is an individual pursuit that is constant and bound by a subjective notion of what it means to be happy. Governments can do little to influence an individual's happiness but can be instrumental in creating an environment conducive to the pursuit itself. By contrast, the pursuit of economic growth is a collective pursuit that is boundless and considered a high priority of governments, partly due to its presumed effect of making people happy.

**H**appiness is a subjective condition that can be difficult to measure and interpret. Subjective well-being (SWB) is an increasingly standard measure of happiness around the world, and refers to how individuals understand the quality of their lives. It provides policy-makers with valuable insights on the determinants of well-

being and, over time, will indicate impacts of national policies and programs aimed at improving living conditions for Ni-Vanuatu.

**T**he concept of happiness as a direct measure of quality of life captures the notion that what matters, or should matter, for decision makers are the impacts of a specific set of circumstances on how people feel about their life and living conditions. Acknowledging that people are best placed to describe how life is treating them, the concept of SWB provides valuable insights into contemporary living conditions in Vanuatu, and its capture may provide powerful and useful complementary information to more traditional and abstract measures such as poverty or general human development indices.

# HAPPINESS

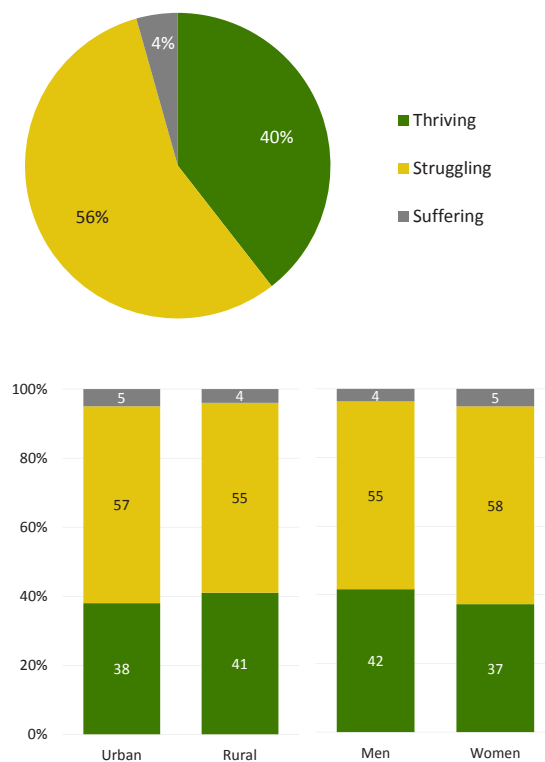
## 1. SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB)

**T**he 2012 Pacific Living Conditions Survey used the Cantrill Ladder, or self-anchoring striving scale, for collection of SWB data in Vanuatu. Responses to the scale are recorded for present and expected levels of happiness on a scale from 0 to 10. Using the Gallup analysis methodology for SWB data, individuals that rate the quality of their lives at 7 or higher, and expect it to 8 or higher in five years' time, are categorised as 'thriving' individuals. Empirical evidence on thriving individuals show that they are healthier, (reporting fewer sick days), and typically experience less sadness, anger and stress, and more enjoyment and respect.

**B**y contrast, individuals that rate the quality of their lives at 4 or lower, and do not expect it to improve within the next five years, are categorised as 'suffering'. These individuals are typically more likely to report lacking basics of food and shelter, more likely to have physical pain, and a lot of stress, sadness and anger. All of the individuals in the spectrum in between thriving and suffering are categorised as 'struggling'.

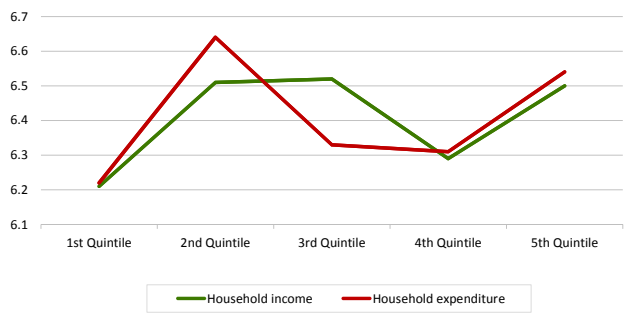
**F**rom the data collected in the survey we find that 40% of the population is thriving in Vanuatu, with only 4% of the population considered to be suffering, using this analysis method (see Fig. 1). There is no significant difference in the proportion suffering between urban and rural dwellers, nor is there a significant difference between men and women.

**Figure 1: Applied Gallup well-being categories**



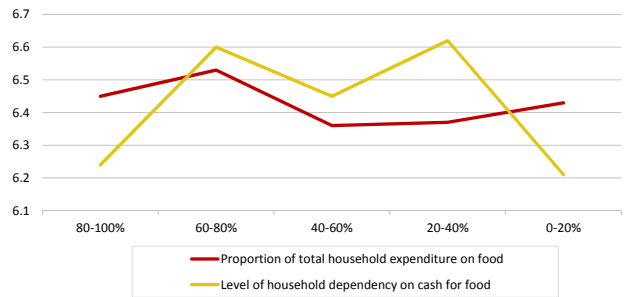
Average happiness in Vanuatu, using the scale described earlier, stands at **6.47** out of a scale 0 to 10, which is applied to all subsequent figures. The data obtained in the survey fails to show any consistent relationship between happiness and household income or expenditure as mean happiness fluctuates in both directions from one quintile to another (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Average happiness and household income/ expenditure



There remains no discernible relationship between happiness and household income or expenditure when looking at per-capita figures. Interestingly, this lack of a trend continues to hold, when looking at households that spend a greater proportion of their income on food, as well as those households that depend more on money for food as a result of lower subsistence production levels (Fig. 3).

Figure 3: Average happiness and sood security



The most visible trends discovered in the survey show a distinct positive relationship between happiness and age, and with achieved level of education. Happiness increases with age and higher levels of education, which is consistent with empirical evidence around the world that increases in wisdom and knowledge lead to increases in sense of happiness (Figs 4 and 5).

Figure 4: Average happiness by age group

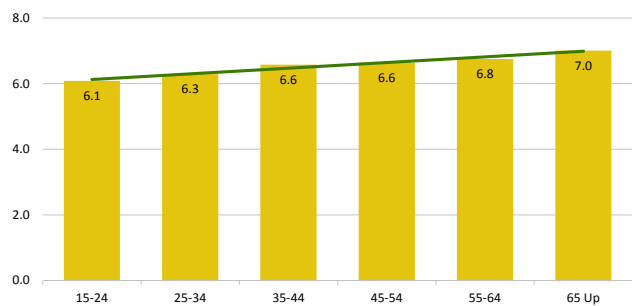
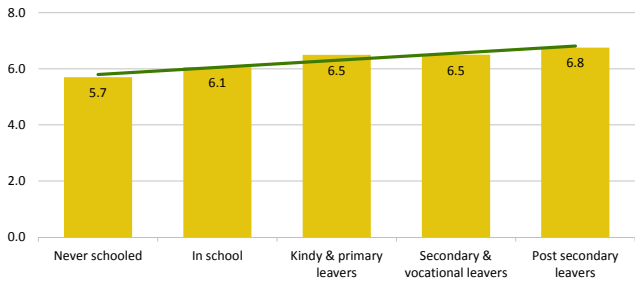


Figure 5: Average happiness by level of schooling achieved



A clear negative relationship between happiness and household size was also visible at the national level, implying that individual happiness decreases as the number of household members increases. This is also consistent with empirical evidence found in Bhutan and other countries that have undertaken studies of happiness. It should be noted, however, that the relationship between happiness and household size is more pronounced in urban Vanuatu, perhaps due to the added stress of providing food and shelter to extended family members with limited resources. By contrast, no such differences emerge in rural Vanuatu, where all household members, irrespective of age, would contribute in varying degrees to household food security (Figs 6 to 8).

Figure 6: Average happiness by HH size

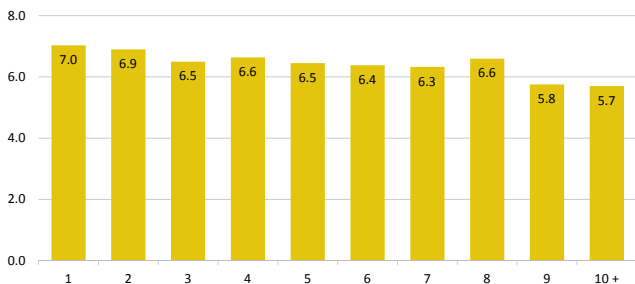


Figure 7: Urban happiness by HH size

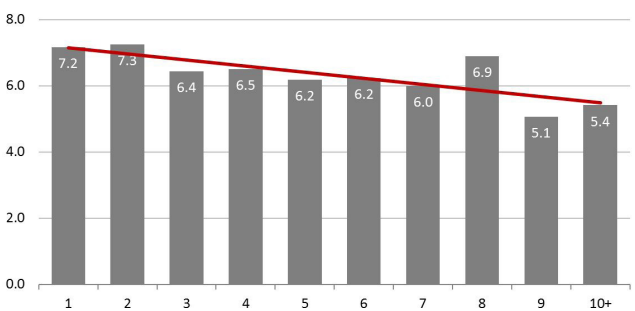
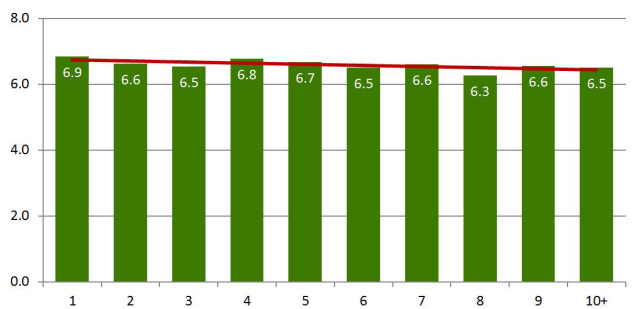


Figure 8: Rural happiness by HH size



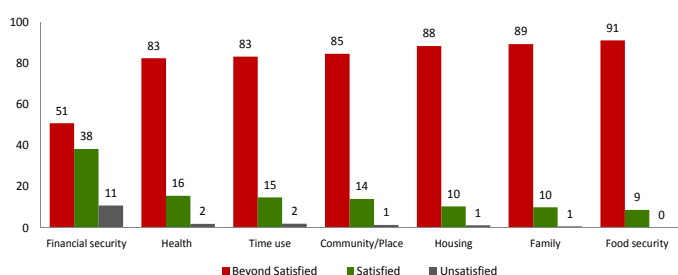
The survey found some modest differences in average happiness among individuals who possess basic production skills – farming and cooking, weaving, and housing construction skills – and those who do not. Similar differences in average happiness were also found among individuals that speak their indigenous language every day and those that do not (see below).

National average happiness <b>6.47</b>			
Lacking basic production skills	6.28	6.62	Possessing basic production skills
Infrequent use of indigenous language	6.22	6.51	Daily use of indigenous language



## 2. SATISFACTION

Figure 9: Satisfaction levels (in%)



The survey also collected subjective information on perceived satisfaction levels in areas of importance that were identified through social research including personal health, family well-being, how personal time is spent, food security, housing, financial security and community, at the time of the survey, as well as perceived changes in satisfaction over the past year. Table 1 compares satisfaction levels in all seven dimensions by sex and region.

In almost all dimensions, a vast majority (over 80%) of Ni-Vanuatu report being more than satisfied with their current condition, with the notable exception of financial security. The highest levels of dissatisfaction were found in the dimension of financial security, with 11% of Ni-Vanuatu reportedly unsatisfied with the status of their personal finances, and this dissatisfaction is more pronounced in rural areas. Food security is, conversely, the dimension with the highest levels of satisfaction and lowest levels of dissatisfaction, with virtually no one (0.2%) reportedly unsatisfied with the status of their food supplies.



Table 1: Satisfaction levels (in %)

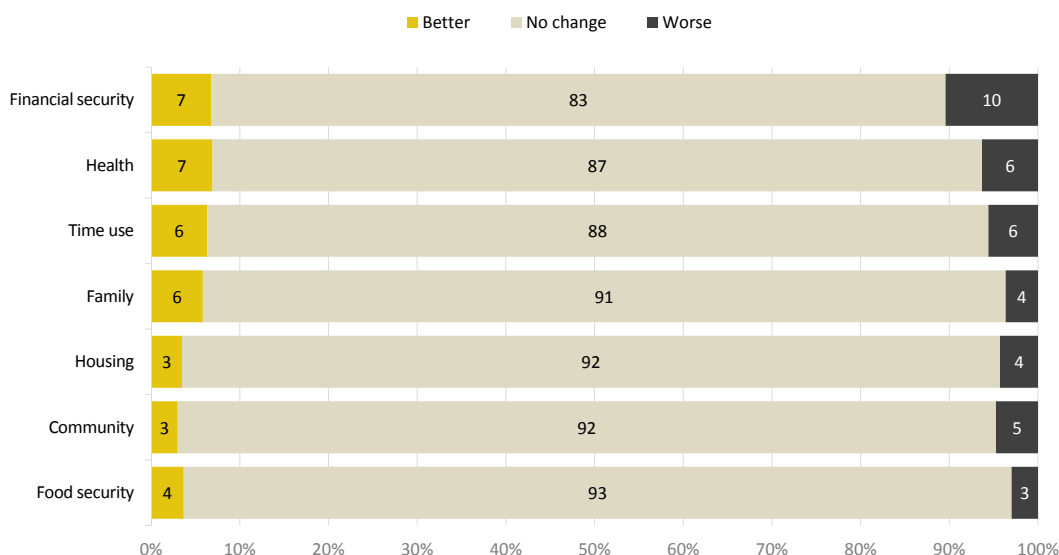
	Beyond satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied
<b>Health</b>	<b>82.5</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>
Urban	88.0	10.3	1.8
Rural	76.7	21.3	2.1
Men	83.5	14.8	1.7
Women	81.5	16.3	2.2
<b>Family</b>	<b>89.4</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Urban	91.3	8.2	0.6
Rural	87.4	11.9	0.7
Men	89.9	9.4	0.7
Women	88.9	10.5	0.6
<b>How time is used</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Urban	85.8	12.1	2.1
Rural	80.5	17.6	1.8
Men	83.2	14.5	2.3
Women	83.3	15.0	1.7
<b>Food security</b>	<b>91.2</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Urban	92.0	7.7	0.2
Rural	90.2	9.7	0.1
Men	91.1	8.8	0.1
Women	91.2	8.6	0.2
<b>Housing</b>	<b>88.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Urban	88.8	9.3	1.9
Rural	88.0	11.5	0.5
Men	89.1	9.7	1.2
Women	87.8	11.0	1.2
<b>Financial security</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>38.3</b>	<b>10.8</b>
Urban	65.2	28.0	6.8
Rural	35.3	49.5	15.3
Men	51.2	39.0	9.8
Women	50.5	37.7	11.8
<b>Community/Place</b>	<b>84.7</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Urban	88.0	10.6	1.4
Rural	81.1	17.6	1.3
Men	85.3	13.5	1.2
Women	84.1	14.4	1.5



The vast majority of Ni-Vanuatu (over 80%) did not perceive any change in their level of satisfaction along the seven dimensions investigated in the survey (Fig. 10). It was discovered, however, that the dimension with the highest proportion of perceived change (both negative and positive) was financial security.

The dimension with the lowest perceived change in satisfaction was food security, which suggests that the subsistence and more 'traditional' economy in Vanuatu remains relatively constant and provides a greater sense of security than does the cash economy.

**Figure 10: Perceived change in satisfaction, last 12 Months**



### 3. STRESS

A typical feature of happiness research includes questioning about inhibitors to the individual's pursuit of happiness. The survey obtained information on the main sources of stress faced by Ni-Vanuatu and found personal finances to be at the top of the list of most frequently responses (fig. 11). Those responses coded as 'Finance' included worries about school fees, living expenses, debts and not having enough money to meet the needs of the family.

**Figure 11: Main sources of stress in Vanuatu**

