Wellbeing Determinants among Adults in Malta

The Malta Wellbeing INDEX Project

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Executive Summary

The measurement and analysis of factors that affect individuals' wellbeing are increasingly used to help shape policy decisions and ultimately help contribute to better lives. As part of the Malta Wellbeing INDEX project, this report presents an analysis of microdata on the wellbeing of the Maltese population collected by the National Statistics Office (NSO) through the Survey on Income and Living Conditions. The wellbeing indicators are based on respondents' own evaluation of wellbeing, referred to as subjective wellbeing.

In 2018, the reported overall level of life satisfaction among survey respondents is 7.5 out of 10; with 8 being the most frequently reported score. Similar outcomes are noted for respondents' satisfaction with their financial situation, job and use of time. These relatively high ratings suggest that the Maltese were, on average, satisfied with all of these aspects of their lives. Moreover, when compared to the EU-average, the Maltese appear to have marginally higher levels of satisfaction in all domains except with the use of time. However, analysis beyond averages reveals that a significant portion of the population reports being less satisfied with certain aspects of their lives. For example, 25% of the population rate the satisfaction with their financial situation at a maximum of 5 out of 10.

The evaluation of SWB in Malta is based on indices that were constructed to capture the evaluative and affective domains of wellbeing and their relationship with various determinants of SWB across the different sub-groups of the population. Multivariate regressions revealed that while demographics play a role in predicting wellbeing (notably marital status and age), by far the strongest contributor is health. Illness, material deprivation, the inability to interact socially, and the inability to work due to disability all contribute to poorer wellbeing. Interestingly, districts emerge as powerful predictors of wellbeing, possibly capturing some of the unexplained variance. While some of the determinants contribute to emotional wellbeing and evaluative satisfaction in the same direction, some determinants are positively associated

with one measure of wellbeing and negatively with another. For instance, higher income raises satisfaction, but not happiness. Labour market status matters most for satisfaction with financial situation and leisure time. Similarly, living in Gozo is associated with more positive affect but lower satisfactions relative to the other districts.

On the basis of the insights drawn from the analysis we recommend:

i.   The systematic measurement of SWB on a regular basis, since the usefulness of SWB in guiding policy decision hinges on the ongoing monitoring of such indicators rather than ad-hoc analysis;

ii.   A better capture of under-represented groups in the collection of data used for the development of SWB indicators, such as migrants, homeless and institutionalised individuals;

iii.   Greater use of SWB data in policy-making, especially for projects that suppress SWB of those groups whose SWB is already low (e.g., the ill, the materially deprived, the socially isolated).