



Are Japanese People Happy?

Measuring Well-being and Beyond

**Inclusive and Sustainable Development in East and North-east Asia:
Strengthening National Capacity To Produce and Use Statistical Information**

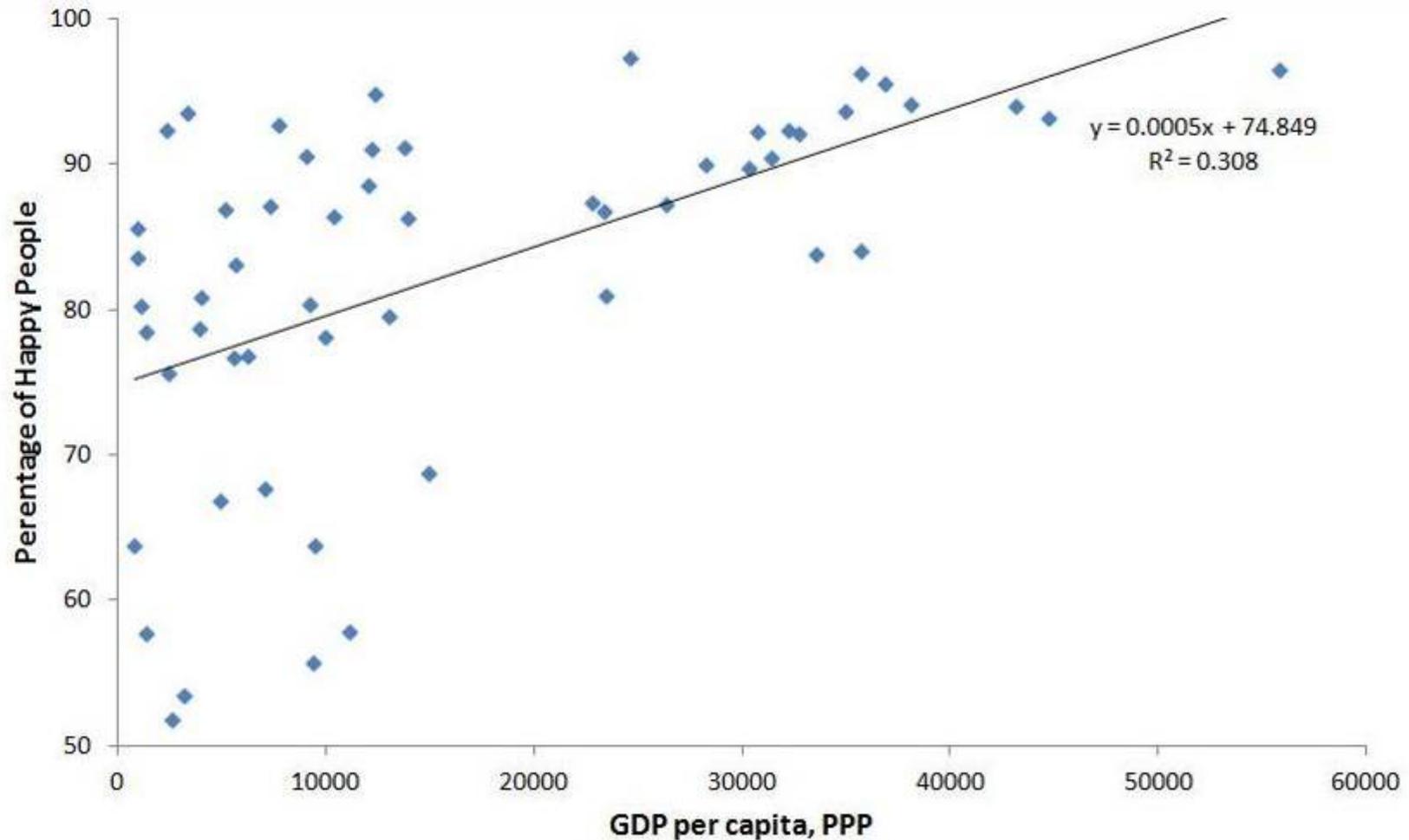
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Easterlin Paradox

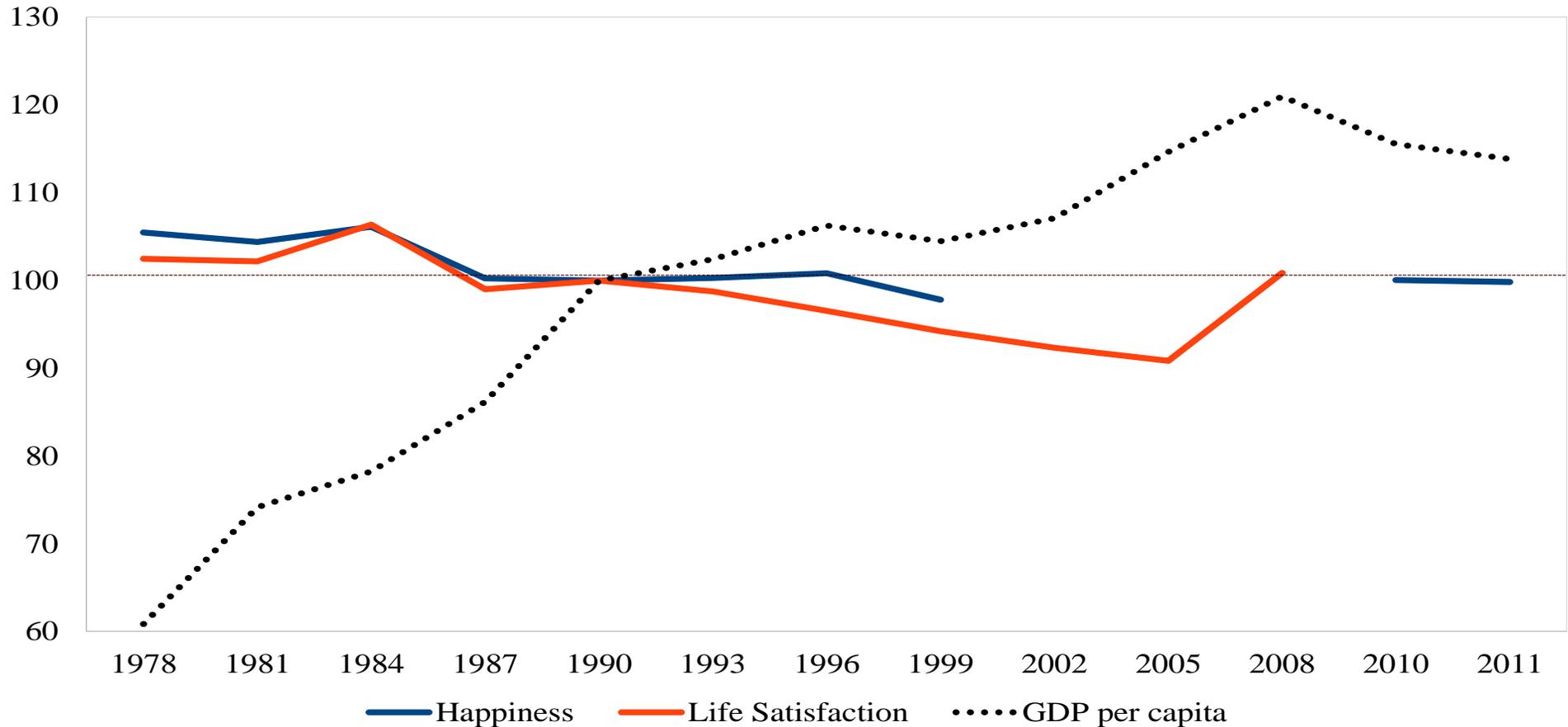


(Note 1). The data of “happiness” is extracted from the World Values Survey from 2005 to 2008. Percentage of people answered very happy or quite happy is used here. GDP ppp per capita (current international \$) is extracted from WORLD BANK DATA BANK.

(Note 2) For each country, the year of the survey is matched for the data of happiness and GDP ppp per capita.

Easterlin Paradox in Japan

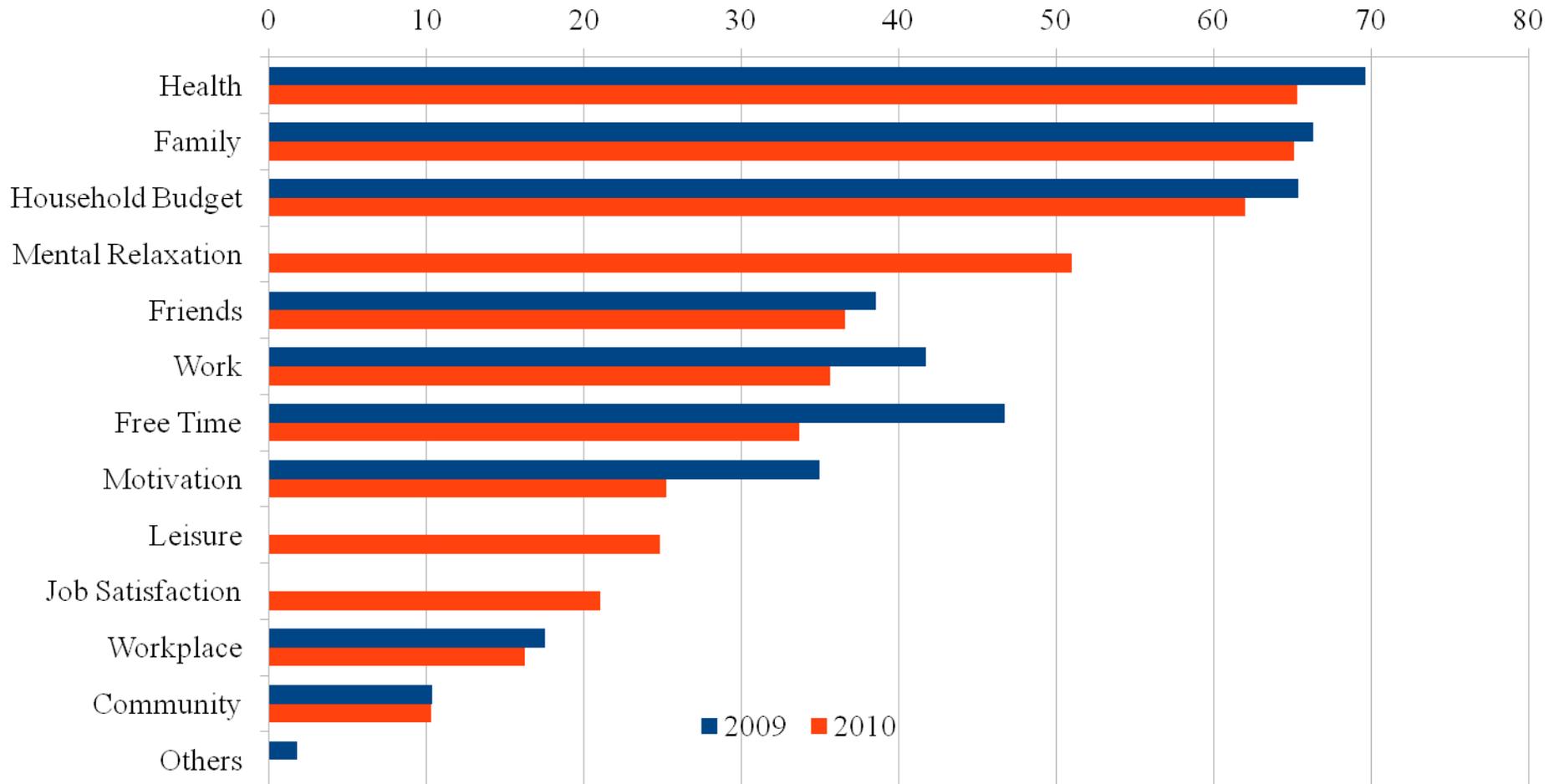
(1990=100)



(Note 1). The data of “happiness” and “life satisfaction” are extracted from the National Survey of Lifestyle Preference (NSLP) from fiscal year 1978 to 2011. (1990=100)

(Note2) GDP per capita is calculated by using the System of National Accounts, and the GDP Quarterly Report, and the Population Forecast. (1990=100)

Key factors affecting Well-being



(Note) The data was extracted from Cabinet Office (2010 and 2011). Some answer choices are different in the 2010 survey and 2011 survey.

Debate on Well-being in Japan

- In the World Values Survey, Japan's average score for happiness is at lower-middle level. Comparing with other developed countries, it is low.
- Suicide rates are high and suicide is one of the main causes of death for young and middle-aged adults in Japan. The percentage of fifteen-year-old students answered "I am feeling lonely" is the highest among developed countries. Approximately one in three people in their 20s and 30s answered "I have thought of suicide in the past."
- These issues have increased the demand for measuring well-being and new growth as part of the Government's "New Growth Strategy" and led to the establishment of the Commission on Measuring Well-being in the Cabinet Office.
- By casting light on well-being, it is aimed to focus on individuals' status of mind and to discuss and understand what situations the country, society and communities are facing and what they are seeking for.

Determinants of Well-being

According to research, the following are the factors affecting subjective well-being.

- Income: increases happiness (to some extent)
- Employment: Loss of a job lowers happiness
- Family: Marriage increases happiness by having their own family
- Inequality: Greater inequality leads lower level of happiness
- Age: In other countries' surveys, the relationship between age and happiness is U-shaped. As people age, they cannot be as ambitious as they used to be when they are younger, which lowers happiness. As they get older, they try to enjoy the rest of their life and happiness increases.
- However, in Japan, older adults are less happier (Survey conducted by Osaka University). In the White Paper on the National Lifestyle, Japanese people's happiness decreases as they get old while Americans' happiness increases after they reach their 50s.

New Initiative by the New Administration

- In Japan, we have changed the way of thinking to manage our economy and society differently, in the new administration started three years ago.
- We have decided to measure well-being and reflect it as best we can in our national policy.
- The New Growth Strategy, which was decided by the Cabinet two years ago, incorporates a program to promote research on measuring well-being that will contribute to policy making.

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on on Measuring Well-Being

sion on Measuring Well-Being, which consists the issue and is jointly supported by Director Economic, Fiscal and Social Structure and established on December 2010, to promote new growth and well-being included in the h Strategy.”

y understand people’s well-being by GDP or ve indicators?

h America, Oceania, and Asia ...now roduce well-being indicators beyond GDP. ctive well-being remains low, even though ncreased.