

Satisfaction with Life and Economic Well-Being: Evidence from Germany

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Abstract: The relationship between an individual's economic well-being and satisfaction with own life has been the focus of many studies both within and across countries, in one period of time and over time. As a proxy of economic well-being household income both adjusted and unadjusted for household needs has been generally used. The aim of the present paper is to propose a more comprehensive measure of well-being considering the role that wealth and permanent income play in *simultaneously* determining satisfaction with life. The results suggest that both income and wealth increase satisfaction, that long-run income is more appropriate than short-term income and that life-satisfaction is particularly high for those who are at the top of both the income and wealth distributions.

Keywords: Life Satisfaction, Income, Wealth, SOEP

JEL-codes: I30, D60

1. Introduction

The relationship between an individual's economic well-being and satisfaction with own life has been the focus of many studies both within and across countries, during a single time period and over time.¹ Household income, both adjusted and unadjusted for household needs, has been used as a proxy for the economic well-being of the household. Three main aspects of this relationship have been highlighted: 1) within each country at a given point in time, richer people are more satisfied with their lives; 2) within each country over time, an increase in average income does not increase substantially satisfaction with life; 3) across-countries, on average, individuals living in richer countries are more satisfied with their lives.² As far as point 1) is concerned "additional income does not raise happiness ad infinitum, and not for certain. (...) (T)he same proportional increase in income yields a lower increase in happiness at higher income levels." (Frey and Stutzer, 2002, p.409). Furthermore income matters but other factors are also important in explaining differences in satisfaction with own life. "In particular, other economic (in particular unemployment) and noneconomic (in particular health but also personality) factors exert strong influences beyond the indirect consequences on income." (Frey and Stutzer, 2002, p.410).

But what about wealth? Does wealth exert an additional role in determining life satisfaction? Are the richer individuals mentioned above in point 1) income rich or wealth rich or both? For economists the distinction between income and wealth is clear and obvious, but for laymen this may not be the case. A rich individual may be more satisfied with his life, but he could feel rich either because he earns a lot (he is income rich) or because he already has a lot of money (he is wealth rich). There is a good rationale for considering as an indicator of economic well-being both income and wealth also from an economist's point of view. Income, properly measured, is an indicator of the individual ability to consume commodities in a given time period. Wealth, on the other hand, plays a different role: it generates income, such as capital income and imputed rents; it confers economic security allowing the individual to be prepared for emergencies and to consume out of wealth in case of an illness and in any other bad situation caused by uninsurable risks; it enables individuals to take care of their offspring and of themselves when retired. Hence, we believe that a more comprehensive measure might shed a clearer light on the relationship between economic well-being and satisfaction with own life.

Three other papers, to the best of our knowledge, have addressed similar issues. Mullis (1990) includes household wealth in a measure of economic well-being based on the life cycle/permanent income hypothesis of Modigliani and Brumberg (1954) and Friedman (1957).

¹ For a survey see among others Diener and Biswas-Diener (2002), Di Tella and MacCulloch (2006), Frey and Stutzer (2002) and Senik (2005). For a survey on the cross-disciplinary relevance (between economics and psychology) of happiness research, see Frey and Stutzer (2007).

In his interpretation of the latter, economic well-being depends on not only current income but also on wealth and future income of the individual. Current and future income are proxied by the individual's permanent income as derived from averaging incomes in the periods previous to the one under analysis. The resulting measure of economic well-being is the sum of permanent income and annuitized net worth divided by the poverty level income which is used for capturing relative economic demands of the household. Using the National Longitudinal Survey Mature Male cohort, Mullis (1990) showed that the proposed composite index outperformed the current income measure in explaining satisfaction with life. Headey and Wooden (2004) using data from the 2001 and 2002 waves of the Australian national panel found that in Australia, wealth is at least as important to well-being as income. Headey, Muffels and Wooden (2008) confirm the above findings using national panel surveys for Australia in 2002, Britain in 2000, Germany in 2002, Hungary in 1996 and the Netherlands in 1997.

The aim of the present paper is to build on this literature exploring the role that, in addition to current income, wealth and permanent income play in determining satisfaction with life. The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) constitutes a unique source for this aim, because in 2002, the year for which wealth data is available, a special sample of high income, and presumably high wealth, households was added. Making full use of the panel data nature of SOEP, we analyze the effects of contemporaneous wealth (wealth in 2002) and permanent income (measured as mean income over the period 1992-2002) on life satisfaction in 2002, controlling for events that took place in 1992-2002 and contemporaneous variables in 2002. In addition, we analyze the effects of past wealth (wealth in 2002) and permanent income (measured as mean income over the period 2002-2006) on life satisfaction in 2006, controlling for events that took place in 2002-2006 and contemporaneous variables in 2006.

The wealth concept used in this paper is marketable wealth (or net worth), which is defined as the current value of all marketable or fungible assets less the current value of debts (see Section 2 for details).

In line with many empirical findings in the cross-disciplinary literature, our results suggest that life satisfaction is associated with marital/partner status and changes therein, as well as with having children and labour market history. However, our results also show these associations between such standard correlates and satisfaction to be fairly robust with respect to controlling for income *and* for wealth. We do find that life satisfaction increases with income and with wealth, that controlling for long-run as opposed to contemporaneous income is associated with larger differences in life satisfaction and that both income and wealth matter. Indeed, our evidence suggests that those who are at the higher end of both the distribution of income and the distribution of wealth are most satisfied with life.

² See, among others, Blanchflower and Oswald (2004), Clark, Frijters and Shields (2007), Deaton

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: The next section (Section 2) contains a description of the data sources. Results are contained in Section 3. Section 4 concludes.

2. Data Sources

The dataset used in the paper is the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP). The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is an ongoing panel survey with a yearly re-interview design (see Wagner, Frick and Schupp 2007, and <http://www.diw.de/gsoep>). The starting sample in 1984 was almost 6,000 households based on a random multi-stage sampling design. A sample of about 2,200 East German households was added in June 1990, half a year after the fall of the Berlin wall. This gives a very good picture of the GDR society on the eve of the German currency, social and economic unification which happened on July 1, 1990. In 1994/95, an additional subsample of 500 immigrant households was included to capture the massive influx of immigrants since the late 1980s. In 1998 and 2000 two more random samples were added which increased the overall number of interviewed households in 2000 to about 13,000. Finally, in 2002 a subsample of 1,200 “rich” households, representing the top 2.5 percentiles of the German income distribution, was interviewed for the first time, yielding a total of 23,900 individual interviews in about 12,700 households in the survey year 2002.

The data used in this analysis covers the period 1992 (the first data available for the East German sample) to 2006. We make use of two balanced panel populations made up by all adult respondents in East and West Germany providing valid information on income and subjective satisfaction over the periods 1992 to 2002 and 2002 to 2006, respectively. This restriction leaves us with 7,012 observations and 16,165 observations in each period. By applying appropriately defined weighting factors, we explicitly account for variation in the sampling design of the various SOEP subsamples described above as well as for selective attrition behaviour over time.

Satisfaction with life – our dependent variable – is measured on an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied) [see Appendix Figures A.1 and A.2]. Landua (1991) argues that there is evidence of panel effects concerning these satisfaction scales, i.e. respondents tend to use these scales differently after getting used to them (especially there is a tendency away from the extreme values such as 10). This will have to be considered when interpreting the changes in satisfaction over the first waves of a panel. Frick, Goebel, Schechtman, Wagner, and Yitzhaki (2006) confirm this finding for more recent waves of SOEP data providing evidence for learning effects on behalf of the respondents with respect to satisfaction as well as income.³

(2007), Di Tella and MacCulloch (2006), Easterlin (1974, 1995), Frey and Stutzer (2002).

³ Due to these learning effects, we exclude wave 1 of the more recently started sub-samples.

The wealth measure applied in the following is per capita *net* household wealth. This information is currently only available in the 2002 survey year of SOEP, and considers owner-occupied property (net), other real estate (net), financial assets, private insurances, business assets, collectibles, and consumer debts. Although the wealth data in SOEP is collected at the individual level, we aggregate wealth holdings across household members and re-assign a per capita value to each adult household member. We chose to follow the rationale of “pooling and (equally) sharing” within private households for two reasons: (a) we must assume that individuals without own wealth also profit from wealth held by their spouse or other adult household members, as can be seen in the case of residing in owner-occupied housing, and (b) because we also have to follow this standard approach in the welfare economics literature with respect to income. Our income measure is annual post-government household income over the previous year, defined as the sum of income received across all household members from labor, capital, private sources, plus public transfers and pensions, minus direct taxes and social security contributions. In order to compare income over time, all income measures are deflated to 2000 prices, also accounting for purchasing power differences between East and West Germany. In line with the per-capita wealth measure described above, we use a per capita-adjusted post-government household income.⁴ As usual in survey data, both our economic outcome measures, income and wealth, suffer from item-non-response – in those cases we make use of imputed values which are designed to control for eventual selectivity involved in the missing process.⁵

We estimate linear regressions of life satisfaction conditional on a set of control variables in three different versions. First, we include neither income nor wealth. Next, we add controls for income (using alternative functional forms). Finally, we add also controls for wealth (again, using alternative functional forms).

3. Results

Our focus is on how income *and* wealth affect life satisfaction. In order to bring out the importance of distinguishing between contemporaneous associations between income, wealth and life satisfaction on the one hand, and associations between long-run economic status and life satisfaction, on the other, we show regression results with economic status measured over

⁴ In an alternative specification we make use of a more standard equivalent income instead of a per capita measure. In order to control for differences in household size and the economies of scale, we apply the modified equivalence scale suggested by the OECD, which assigns a needs weight of one to the household head, 0.5 to any additional adult household member, and a weight of 0.3 to children up to 14 years of age. Regression results shown in the empirical section below are in principle robust with respect to the choice of using either equivalent or per capita incomes.

⁵ For a detailed description of the imputation procedures correcting for missing data on income and wealth due to non-response and the respective impact of imputation on inequality and mobility measures see Frick and Grabka (2005) and Frick, Grabka and Sierminska (2007), respectively.

both longer and shorter periods.⁶ In particular, we estimate regressions that relate life satisfaction in 2002 to *long-run* (“permanent”) income over the period 1992-2002 and wealth in 2002 (see Table 1), life satisfaction in 2006 to *long-run* income averaged over the period 2002-2006 and *lagged* wealth in 2002 (see Table 2), and for robustness purposes, life satisfaction in 2002 to *contemporaneous* income and wealth (see Table 3).

We begin by discussing differences in life satisfaction associated with the other covariates (see appendix Table A.1 for descriptive statistics), focussing on the two outcome years 2002 and 2006 when we use long-run income and 2002 wealth as covariates (Regression results in Tables 1 and 2). We control for gender, migration background, changes across time in marital/partner status, changes in health, having children, initial levels of education and labour market history as well as age. Being male is consistently associated with lower life satisfaction in all of our regressions. The male-female difference is on the order of .12 to .16 (with the scale varying from 0 [completely dissatisfied] to 10 [completely satisfied]). Although the coefficient estimate is often only weakly statistically significant, the point estimates are very similar across different specifications and also across time. Indeed, the point estimates in 2006 tend to be marginally higher than those in 2002 and the difference is never estimated to be less than 0.121 (column 6, in Table 1 for LSAT2002 with long-run income controls).

Having a migration background (*migback*) does not exert an independent significant impact on life satisfaction and the sign of the estimate changes from negative to positive once we add more flexible controls for income and wealth. The controls for marital/partner status, by contrast, are associated with substantial differences in life satisfaction which tend to be consistent across specifications and are often statistically significant. For instance, in contrast to the reference group of those being single throughout the period 1992-2002, having had the same partner over that period is associated with a significant increase in life satisfaction that ranges from 0.134-0.309 in 2002. In 2006, having had the same partner from 2002-2006 is associated with increase of 0.300-0.370. Similarly and in line with other findings in the literature, getting married is associated with a statistically significant large positive coefficient in 2002, ranging between 0.221-0.293. These effects are not to be found in 2006. Divorce is associated with negative but statistically insignificant point estimates in both 2002 and 2006, although the point estimates are substantially larger in the latter period, indicating perhaps that a recent divorce is more of a drag in life satisfaction. Finally, becoming widowed is not associated with statistically significant differences in life satisfaction.

⁶ Given that our dependent variable is based on an 11-point scale, we apply simple OLS regressions, thus assuming linearity. In an alternative specification we estimate ordered regression models which substantively show the same results as those presented here. All regression results are available from the authors upon request.

Reporting being in bad health (as opposed to medium health) in the first year of each panel is associated with a statistically significant, between three quarters of to one point lower life satisfaction. Being in good health is similarly associated with a statistically significant, close to or more than full point increase in life satisfaction. A decrease in health status across the panel years is similarly associated with a decline of close to or more than a full point on the life satisfaction scale. Above and beyond the individual health status, it may matter whether a person is living together with other persons in need of long-term care, assuming that the physical and psychological burden associated with caring for others negatively affects life satisfaction. Indeed, if household member has been in long-term care at some point during the panel years, this is associated with a significant decline in life satisfaction of more than half a point of satisfaction (about -0.5 to -0.6).

Having children in the first year of the panel is associated with rather small, and not always significant coefficient estimates, but additional children during the panel is associated with increased satisfaction. Over the longer period 1992-2002, the coefficients vary around 0.3 and in the later period, they are statistically significant in the range of 0.419-0.541.

Any sort of higher education in Germany (we control separately for lower vocational training, higher vocational training and university education in contrast to having no or only basic education) does not seem to be associated with higher life satisfaction, even when we do not control for income and wealth. If anything, we find a mild tendency for higher educated persons to be, *ceteris paribus*, less satisfied. However, acquiring more education during the panel between 2002 and 2006 is associated with statistically significantly higher life satisfaction in 2006 in the range of 0.210-0.327 points (an effect which is absent in 2002).

Past and current unemployment is associated with lower life satisfaction in both periods. One additional year of unemployment prior to the outcome year is associated with statistically significant lower life satisfaction of about -0.036 to -0.071 in the first period and between -0.061 and -0.088 in the latter panel. Current unemployment is – as expected – associated with a much stronger decrease in life satisfaction⁷, depending on year and specification, with most estimates in both years being very close to -0.6. A high level of job autonomy consistently exerts a mild positive impact on life satisfaction, however, this effect is only found to be statistically significant in the first panel and only when we do not control for income.

Finally, as respondents age, they become at first less and then more satisfied when compared to the reference group of those aged up to 35 years, although the size of the estimates and their statistical significance varies quite a bit across specifications.

⁷ Unemployment has been found to be one of the most important detrimental effects on life satisfaction in a range of empirical applications (see e.g. Winkelmann and Winkelmann 1998, Clark 2003).

Differences in life satisfaction across income and wealth

We next examine to what extent differences in life satisfaction are associated with income and wealth. We do so across a range of different specifications. First, we include neither income nor wealth (column 1, Tables 1 and 2). In column 2, we add the natural logarithm of the average of income across the panel years -- 1992 to 2002 and 2002 to 2006 for life satisfaction measured in 2002 (Table 1) and 2006 (Table 2), respectively. The point estimates, which are statistically significant, suggest life satisfaction increases with both income and wealth, but that these increases peter out as the level of income and wealth increases. When only the log of long-run income is controlled for, its coefficient estimate is 0.554 and 0.412 in 2002 and 2006, respectively which is reduced to 0.464 and 0.364 when net wealth is controlled for as well.

Next, we allow the association between life satisfaction and the resource variables to be more flexible. In particular, in column 4 we enter indicator variables for each decile group of income and in column 5 we add to this the decile group of net worth (omitting the two bottom deciles⁸). The coefficient estimates suggest being higher up in the distribution of long-run income is associated with higher life satisfaction, but that the association is not monotonic. For instance, in 2002, being in the second long-term income decile group is associated with 0.407 points higher life satisfaction than being at the bottom (controlling for wealth decile group in column 5), but being in the fourth group is statistically insignificantly associated with only 0.211 points higher life satisfaction. Moreover, being in the 9th income decile group is associated with the highest level of satisfaction in both specifications, without and with controlling for wealth (columns 4 and 5, respectively). In general, being in the upper half of the income distribution is associated with an increase in life satisfaction of about .47 to .74 points when controlling for wealth and about .55 to .90 without wealth controls. However, in 2006, the highest life satisfaction is measured at the top income decile, but we still have a small decline on moving from the 5th to the 6th and 7th income decile groups.

There are non-monotonocities in the effect of wealth as well. Comparing our results for the two time periods we have to consider that in the first panel (1992-2002) the wealth measure is taken as *contemporaneous* information together with our outcome variable on life satisfaction whereas in the second panel (2002-2006) the wealth measure is *lagged* by four years. In 2002 being in the 4th or 5th decile group of net worth was associated with a lower life satisfaction relative to the 3rd decile group. In 2006, there is no significant difference in the wealth effect in the lower half of the distribution, but again, the strongest effects are found in the top three deciles. Some minor dips in the income and wealth life satisfaction gradient notwithstanding,

⁸ This is necessary because of the shape of the distribution of net wealth. The share of those with negative net wealth is clearly less than ten percent of the entire population and the share of those holding negative and zero net wealth is almost 20 percent. Thus we decided to leave the lowest quintile group as the reference group.

the general pattern that emerges is that the more income you have and the more wealth you have, the more satisfied you are with life. Moreover, while the income gradient does decline a little when wealth decile group is controlled for, the two certainly both belong in the regression in terms of statistical significance.

In column 6, we revert to the entering of a single measure of income and wealth, as in column 3, but now add controls for whether income has increased or decreased across the panel years. We compare average income in the first half of the period to the income in the second half of the period, which gives us a rather robust picture of the overall income movement. *Ceteris paribus*, an increase is associated with a smallish increase in satisfaction in both years (but only significant in 2002-2006) and a decrease is associated with a small effect whose sign changes from 2002 to 2006.

The last three specifications presented in columns (7) to (9) in Tables 1 and 2 examine the effects of entering both income and components of net worth. In particular, we control linearly for household per capita amount of gross property wealth, other real estate, financial assets, insurance wealth, business wealth, collectibles and total debt. The coefficient estimates are quite stable across columns 7 to 9, which only differ in how we control for income. Focusing on column 7, in which we control for decile group of long-run average income, we see that total debt is associated with lower life satisfaction – although this is statistically significant only for 2006 – and most of the (gross) wealth components are associated with higher life satisfaction. The exception is, interestingly enough, business assets, more of which are in 2002 associated with statistically significantly lower satisfaction. In 2006, the point estimates are still negative but are not statistically significant. Insurance wealth is associated with the highest life satisfaction in 2002 but property and tangible assets in 2006.

A few points should be added to this. First, the coefficient estimates on the other control variables are reasonably robust to whether or not, and how, income and wealth are controlled for. Second, measuring income in long-run or short-run terms matters. According to Table 3, column 1, the regression coefficient for single-year income is .193 whereas the corresponding long-run income effect in Table 1, column 3, is .464. The wealth coefficients in both estimations are quite similar, .034 and .031, respectively. The standardized beta coefficients (not shown in the table) are .112 for long-term income and .098 for wealth, respectively thus indicating a similar relevance of both economic outcomes for contemporaneous satisfaction with life. However, in the one-year income specification used in Table 1 for the year 2002, these beta coefficients were .058 for short-term income and .108 for wealth. This indicates the stronger impact long-run income has on current satisfaction with life without reducing the discrete effect of (net) wealth. Table 3, column 2, reports a regression that enters the contemporaneous income

decile group based on 2002 incomes alone. The differences in life satisfaction associated with different parts of the income distribution are consistently smaller than those for long-run income (see Table 1, column 3) – as might be expected – but the general pattern remains pretty much the same.

Finally, we show in Figure 1a the observed and in Figure 1b the predicted differences in life satisfaction across the *joint* distribution of long-term income and wealth, expressed relative to the overall average (so the average across all cells is one)⁹; the predicted values in Figure 1b are derived from the model estimated in Table 1, column 5. The bars suggest that, holding wealth decile group constant, life satisfaction tends to increase with income (although not monotonically, as might be expected based on our regression results). Similarly, holding income decile group constant, increases in wealth are associated with increases in life satisfaction. However, the joint distribution reveals some quite striking non-linearities. First, being in the (two) bottom decile groups of net worth in 2002 is associated with below average life satisfaction up to the 7th income decile. Second, and perhaps most strikingly, life satisfaction increases quite substantially once we move toward the higher end of *both* the income and the wealth distribution. Life satisfaction is very clearly the highest for those who enjoy both high long-run income and high wealth.

4. Conclusions

Based on data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) over the period 1992 to 2006 the aim of this study is to investigate the relevance of income and wealth as determinants of life satisfaction. While our results widely coincide with the existing literature on the relevance of non-monetary correlates of life satisfaction (or happiness), the most relevant empirical findings of this study include the following: (a) long-run income is more important than short-run income in explaining differences in life satisfaction, thus pointing to the relevance of panel data to model determinants of life satisfaction rather than just correlates, (b) wealth has a self-contained impact on life satisfaction, (c) income and wealth also appears to be jointly important.

The last point is in light of our graphs particularly important. Namely, while holding wealth (income) constant, increasing income (wealth) increases life satisfaction, the big gains in life satisfaction result from moving up in both distributions. This, in turn, suggests that well-being may be very heavily concentrated at the top of joint distribution of income and wealth.

⁹ Figure 2 gives the same graphical illustration based on contemporaneous income only.

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Tables

Table 1: Determinants of LIFE SATISFACTION in 2002 (0-10 scale) using longitudinal information on income 1992-2002 and wealth 2002 (OLS Regressions based on balanced panel 1992-2002)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002
male	-0.155*	-0.139+	-0.123+	-0.144*	-0.126+	-0.121+	-0.143*	-0.137+	-0.136+
	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.071)
migback	-0.156	-0.081	0.003	-0.052	0.050	0.004	0.083	0.059	0.060
	(0.096)	(0.097)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.102)	(0.099)	(0.102)	(0.100)	(0.099)
samepart9202	0.248**	0.309**	0.218**	0.292**	0.177*	0.225**	0.134+	0.145+	0.152+
	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.079)	(0.081)	(0.079)	(0.080)	(0.081)
gotmarried9202	0.293**	0.273*	0.250*	0.247*	0.221*	0.232*	0.237*	0.255*	0.236*
	(0.107)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.108)
gotdivorced9202	-0.155	-0.173	-0.127	-0.191	-0.147	-0.142	-0.123	-0.106	-0.121
	(0.180)	(0.184)	(0.172)	(0.184)	(0.178)	(0.171)	(0.174)	(0.174)	(0.173)
gotwidowed9202	0.099	0.095	0.048	0.067	-0.001	0.043	-0.001	0.021	0.019
	(0.199)	(0.195)	(0.191)	(0.195)	(0.186)	(0.192)	(0.183)	(0.183)	(0.184)
badhlth92	-0.795**	-0.777**	-0.748**	-0.776**	-0.745**	-0.743**	-0.749**	-0.750**	-0.745**
	(0.119)	(0.117)	(0.117)	(0.116)	(0.116)	(0.117)	(0.116)	(0.117)	(0.116)
goodhlth92	1.056**	1.022**	1.003**	1.021**	1.007**	1.004**	1.002**	1.006**	1.007**
	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.075)
hlth_worse9202	-1.034**	-1.018**	-0.999**	-1.016**	-1.006**	-0.997**	-0.994**	-0.995**	-0.992**
	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.064)
kids92	-0.016	0.099*	0.094*	0.111*	0.097*	0.099*	0.094*	0.082+	0.087*
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.046)	(0.046)	(0.043)	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.044)
newkids9202	0.164+	0.286**	0.262**	0.331**	0.321**	0.239*	0.338**	0.298**	0.271**
	(0.098)	(0.100)	(0.099)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.102)	(0.101)	(0.100)	(0.103)
care9202	-0.605**	-0.567**	-0.583**	-0.575**	-0.600**	-0.585**	-0.593**	-0.585**	-0.585**
	(0.114)	(0.113)	(0.113)	(0.114)	(0.112)	(0.111)	(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.110)
edu92==2 (low voc)	-0.009	-0.048	-0.058	-0.052	-0.069	-0.055	-0.062	-0.058	-0.056
	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)
edu92==3 (high voc)	-0.107	-0.195	-0.211+	-0.204+	-0.219+	-0.209+	-0.208+	-0.200+	-0.198+
	(0.123)	(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.123)	(0.122)	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.120)
edu92==4 (university)	-0.021	-0.213+	-0.222+	-0.182	-0.208+	-0.224+	-0.210+	-0.231+	-0.234+
	(0.122)	(0.122)	(0.123)	(0.123)	(0.122)	(0.123)	(0.122)	(0.121)	(0.121)
newedu9202	-0.035	-0.059	-0.064	-0.060	-0.059	-0.065	-0.062	-0.062	-0.063
	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.071)
yrs FT/PT<=2002	0.004	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
yrs unempl. <2002	-0.071**	-0.054**	-0.043**	-0.051**	-0.038*	-0.044**	-0.036*	-0.038*	-0.039*
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.017)
curr. unempl. 2002	-0.622**	-0.634**	-0.605**	-0.623**	-0.599**	-0.611**	-0.586**	-0.594**	-0.601**
	(0.164)	(0.167)	(0.156)	(0.166)	(0.161)	(0.156)	(0.158)	(0.160)	(0.160)
autonom02	0.213*	0.136	0.119	0.128	0.117	0.115	0.128	0.133	0.129
	(0.100)	(0.101)	(0.103)	(0.101)	(0.102)	(0.103)	(0.098)	(0.098)	(0.098)
agecat==44	-0.235+	-0.243+	-0.242+	-0.248+	-0.224+	-0.242+	-0.214+	-0.213+	-0.213+
	(0.127)	(0.128)	(0.127)	(0.128)	(0.126)	(0.127)	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.125)
agecat==54	-0.257+	-0.306*	-0.322*	-0.308*	-0.300*	-0.319*	-0.280*	-0.278+	-0.274+
	(0.145)	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.143)	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.141)	(0.143)	(0.143)
agecat==64	0.100	0.075	0.053	0.075	0.071	0.051	0.084	0.088	0.086
	(0.160)	(0.158)	(0.158)	(0.157)	(0.157)	(0.158)	(0.158)	(0.158)	(0.158)
agecat==74	0.453**	0.504**	0.479**	0.514**	0.509**	0.481**	0.584**	0.585**	0.588**
	(0.164)	(0.163)	(0.164)	(0.162)	(0.163)	(0.164)	(0.167)	(0.169)	(0.169)
agecat==99	0.469**	0.513**	0.492**	0.510**	0.513**	0.512**	0.608**	0.619**	0.642**
	(0.179)	(0.178)	(0.180)	(0.175)	(0.178)	(0.181)	(0.183)	(0.186)	(0.186)
loc89east	-0.599**	-0.461**	-0.422**	-0.477**	-0.412**	-0.414**	-0.421**	-0.407**	-0.398**
	(0.068)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.071)
hiedu_father	0.198	0.139	0.103	0.179	0.148	0.099	0.129	0.095	0.092
	(0.151)	(0.152)	(0.153)	(0.152)	(0.157)	(0.152)	(0.154)	(0.154)	(0.153)
hiedu_mother	-0.018	-0.018	0.025	-0.065	-0.018	0.008	0.013	0.053	0.034
	(0.255)	(0.257)	(0.257)	(0.252)	(0.260)	(0.254)	(0.256)	(0.261)	(0.258)
lnpcinc9202		0.554**	0.464**			0.472**		0.376**	0.384**
		(0.093)	(0.096)			(0.096)		(0.099)	(0.100)
hyperpcwealth			0.031**			0.032**			
			(0.007)			(0.007)			

xpc9202decil==2				0.429**	0.407**		0.375**		
				(0.127)	(0.127)		(0.126)		
xpc9202decil==3				0.339*	0.319*		0.259+		
				(0.137)	(0.136)		(0.138)		
xpc9202decil==4				0.268+	0.211		0.165		
				(0.145)	(0.145)		(0.144)		
xpc9202decil==5				0.588**	0.506**		0.458**		
				(0.149)	(0.150)		(0.150)		
xpc9202decil==6				0.747**	0.669**		0.608**		
				(0.156)	(0.156)		(0.156)		
xpc9202decil==7				0.547**	0.471**		0.404*		
				(0.176)	(0.175)		(0.174)		
xpc9202decil==8				0.816**	0.682**		0.616**		
				(0.157)	(0.161)		(0.161)		
xpc9202decil==9				0.902**	0.738**		0.666**		
				(0.164)	(0.169)		(0.171)		
xpc9202decil==10				0.881**	0.641**		0.622**		
				(0.182)	(0.195)		(0.189)		
xpcwealthdecil==3					0.419**				
					(0.124)				
xpcwealthdecil==4					0.318*				
					(0.128)				
xpcwealthdecil==5					0.293*				
					(0.124)				
xpcwealthdecil==6					0.427**				
					(0.121)				
xpcwealthdecil==7					0.372**				
					(0.119)				
xpcwealthdecil==8					0.459**				
					(0.129)				
xpcwealthdecil==9					0.580**				
					(0.136)				
xpcwealthdecil==10					0.750**				
					(0.147)				
pcinc9297_9702up						0.185			0.180
						(0.164)			(0.164)
pcinc9297_9702down						0.333+			0.375*
						(0.186)			(0.189)
pc_prop_gross							0.017**	0.017**	0.017**
							(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
pc_estate_gross							0.019*	0.017*	0.017*
							(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
pc_financial							0.023**	0.024**	0.025**
							(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
pc_insurance							0.037**	0.039**	0.039**
							(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
pc_business							-0.041**	-0.041**	-0.041**
							(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
pc_tangible							0.019	0.020	0.019
							(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
pc_totaldebt							-0.012	-0.011	-0.011
							(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Constant	6.653**	1.461	2.102*	6.084**	5.872**	1.957*	5.894**	2.787**	2.644**
	(0.150)	(0.904)	(0.914)	(0.208)	(0.212)	(0.920)	(0.208)	(0.940)	(0.950)
Observations	7012	7012	7012	7012	7012	7012	7012	7012	7012
R-squared	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.24	0.23	0.23
Robust standard errors in parentheses. + significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%									

Source: own estimations from SOEP 1992-2002

Table 2: Determinants of LIFE SATISFACTION in 2006 (0-10 scale) using longitudinal information on income 2002-2006 and wealth 2002 (OLS Regressions based on balanced panel 2002-2006)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006	LSAT 2006
male	-0.161** (0.053)	-0.166** (0.053)	-0.160** (0.054)	-0.162** (0.053)	-0.163** (0.053)	-0.162** (0.054)	-0.166** (0.053)	-0.167** (0.053)	-0.169** (0.053)
migback	-0.121+ (0.073)	-0.037 (0.073)	0.017 (0.074)	-0.037 (0.074)	0.064 (0.074)	0.009 (0.072)	0.049 (0.074)	0.048 (0.074)	0.040 (0.073)
samepart0206	0.330** (0.053)	0.370** (0.053)	0.336** (0.054)	0.366** (0.053)	0.301** (0.053)	0.339** (0.054)	0.300** (0.054)	0.309** (0.054)	0.309** (0.054)
gotmarried0206	0.052 (0.138)	0.060 (0.143)	0.079 (0.141)	0.072 (0.144)	0.106 (0.139)	0.090 (0.142)	0.092 (0.143)	0.077 (0.142)	0.089 (0.143)
gotdivorced0206	-0.112 (0.167)	-0.092 (0.165)	-0.069 (0.169)	-0.073 (0.168)	-0.070 (0.169)	-0.099 (0.161)	-0.065 (0.167)	-0.081 (0.163)	-0.108 (0.158)
gotwidowed0206	-0.097 (0.156)	-0.084 (0.157)	-0.114 (0.161)	-0.079 (0.158)	-0.127 (0.164)	-0.149 (0.161)	-0.130 (0.161)	-0.128 (0.161)	-0.162 (0.161)
badhlth02	-0.958** (0.076)	-0.936** (0.075)	-0.911** (0.075)	-0.934** (0.075)	-0.905** (0.074)	-0.907** (0.075)	-0.909** (0.075)	-0.912** (0.075)	-0.907** (0.075)
goodhlth02	0.952** (0.049)	0.927** (0.049)	0.912** (0.049)	0.932** (0.049)	0.913** (0.049)	0.912** (0.049)	0.908** (0.049)	0.905** (0.049)	0.905** (0.049)
hlth_worse0206	-0.946** (0.057)	-0.937** (0.057)	-0.925** (0.057)	-0.938** (0.056)	-0.921** (0.056)	-0.920** (0.058)	-0.923** (0.057)	-0.923** (0.057)	-0.919** (0.057)
kids02	-0.021 (0.030)	0.065* (0.032)	0.053+ (0.032)	0.071* (0.031)	0.064* (0.030)	0.059+ (0.030)	0.052+ (0.031)	0.050 (0.032)	0.053+ (0.031)
newkids0206	0.419** (0.086)	0.482** (0.089)	0.470** (0.089)	0.479** (0.090)	0.483** (0.088)	0.523** (0.090)	0.482** (0.089)	0.486** (0.089)	0.541** (0.091)
care0206	-0.587** (0.092)	-0.564** (0.091)	-0.568** (0.094)	-0.564** (0.090)	-0.565** (0.090)	-0.566** (0.093)	-0.560** (0.091)	-0.559** (0.093)	-0.557** (0.092)
edu92==2 (low voc)	-0.047 (0.062)	-0.086 (0.062)	-0.100 (0.062)	-0.081 (0.062)	-0.093 (0.061)	-0.098 (0.062)	-0.089 (0.061)	-0.094 (0.061)	-0.092 (0.061)
edu92==3 (high voc)	-0.023 (0.082)	-0.103 (0.081)	-0.122 (0.082)	-0.101 (0.081)	-0.122 (0.081)	-0.122 (0.082)	-0.112 (0.081)	-0.115 (0.081)	-0.115 (0.081)
edu92==4 (university)	0.132+ (0.074)	-0.010 (0.077)	-0.026 (0.077)	-0.006 (0.077)	-0.020 (0.076)	-0.029 (0.076)	-0.028 (0.078)	-0.036 (0.078)	-0.037 (0.078)
newedu0206	0.327** (0.088)	0.299** (0.088)	0.261** (0.089)	0.309** (0.087)	0.225** (0.085)	0.264** (0.089)	0.214* (0.086)	0.210* (0.087)	0.214* (0.087)
yrs FT/PT<=2006	0.005+ (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)
yrs unempl. <2006	-0.088** (0.012)	-0.072** (0.012)	-0.064** (0.012)	-0.071** (0.012)	-0.061** (0.012)	-0.064** (0.012)	-0.063** (0.012)	-0.064** (0.012)	-0.064** (0.012)
curr. unempl. 2006	-0.664** (0.107)	-0.586** (0.108)	-0.573** (0.108)	-0.569** (0.109)	-0.551** (0.108)	-0.568** (0.107)	-0.564** (0.108)	-0.582** (0.108)	-0.574** (0.107)
autonom06	0.129 (0.108)	0.028 (0.109)	0.026 (0.111)	0.032 (0.107)	0.023 (0.104)	0.008 (0.110)	0.038 (0.109)	0.032 (0.111)	0.014 (0.111)
agecat==44	-0.221* (0.088)	-0.245** (0.089)	-0.261** (0.090)	-0.248** (0.088)	-0.286** (0.088)	-0.258** (0.089)	-0.264** (0.087)	-0.262** (0.088)	-0.260** (0.088)
agecat==54	-0.111 (0.099)	-0.144 (0.099)	-0.189+ (0.101)	-0.142 (0.097)	-0.243* (0.096)	-0.186+ (0.101)	-0.232* (0.096)	-0.232* (0.098)	-0.229* (0.098)
agecat==64	0.257* (0.106)	0.250* (0.105)	0.176 (0.108)	0.254* (0.103)	0.099 (0.103)	0.181+ (0.108)	0.093 (0.105)	0.093 (0.106)	0.100 (0.106)
agecat==74	0.471** (0.106)	0.505** (0.105)	0.428** (0.108)	0.516** (0.103)	0.355** (0.104)	0.437** (0.108)	0.333** (0.107)	0.328** (0.109)	0.338** (0.108)
agecat==99	0.554** (0.132)	0.572** (0.131)	0.500** (0.133)	0.569** (0.129)	0.439** (0.128)	0.505** (0.133)	0.396** (0.131)	0.403** (0.133)	0.410** (0.133)
loc89east	-0.568** (0.049)	-0.486** (0.050)	-0.466** (0.050)	-0.488** (0.050)	-0.418** (0.051)	-0.464** (0.049)	-0.443** (0.050)	-0.438** (0.051)	-0.437** (0.050)
hiedu_father	0.213** (0.076)	0.167* (0.075)	0.150* (0.075)	0.177* (0.077)	0.161* (0.075)	0.137+ (0.073)	0.150* (0.075)	0.142+ (0.073)	0.132+ (0.071)
hiedu_mother	0.008 (0.112)	0.005 (0.111)	0.021 (0.110)	0.005 (0.111)	-0.003 (0.110)	0.036 (0.108)	-0.006 (0.110)	-0.004 (0.110)	0.011 (0.109)
lnpcinc0206		0.421** (0.063)	0.364** (0.063)			0.385** (0.055)		0.348** (0.066)	0.364** (0.058)
hyperpcwealth			0.024** (0.004)			0.024** (0.004)			
xpc0206decil==2				0.216+ (0.119)	0.206+ (0.117)		0.200+ (0.118)		
xpc0206decil==3				0.315**	0.290*		0.282*		

				(0.119)	(0.118)		(0.119)		
xpc0206decil==4				0.297*	0.254*		0.266*		
				(0.119)	(0.119)		(0.119)		
xpc0206decil==5				0.561**	0.517**		0.529**		
				(0.120)	(0.120)		(0.121)		
xpc0206decil==6				0.440**	0.361**		0.364**		
				(0.118)	(0.118)		(0.120)		
xpc0206decil==7				0.463**	0.352**		0.365**		
				(0.123)	(0.122)		(0.125)		
xpc0206decil==8				0.674**	0.569**		0.583**		
				(0.119)	(0.119)		(0.122)		
xpc0206decil==9				0.620**	0.492**		0.508**		
				(0.145)	(0.141)		(0.144)		
xpc0206decil==10				0.846**	0.644**		0.684**		
				(0.127)	(0.127)		(0.133)		
xpcwealthdecil==3					0.070				
					(0.088)				
xpcwealthdecil==4					0.093				
					(0.096)				
xpcwealthdecil==5					0.159				
					(0.115)				
xpcwealthdecil==6					0.333**				
					(0.099)				
xpcwealthdecil==7					0.320**				
					(0.079)				
xpcwealthdecil==8					0.524**				
					(0.084)				
xpcwealthdecil==9					0.567**				
					(0.082)				
xpcwealthdecil==10					0.526**				
					(0.089)				
pcinc0204_0406up						0.304*			0.274+
						(0.142)			(0.141)
pcinc0204_0406down						-0.148			-0.186
						(0.143)			(0.150)
pc_prop_gross							0.026**	0.025**	0.025**
							(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
pc_estate_gross							0.011*	0.010+	0.009+
							(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
pc_financial							0.013*	0.012*	0.012*
							(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
pc_insurance							0.005	0.006	0.006
							(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
pc_business							-0.008	-0.010	-0.010
							(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
pc_tangible							0.025**	0.024**	0.024**
							(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
pc_totaldebt							-0.018**	-0.019**	-0.018**
							(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Constant	6.612**	2.685**	3.076**	6.170**	6.072**	2.848**	6.144**	3.274**	3.099**
	(0.093)	(0.600)	(0.590)	(0.137)	(0.133)	(0.518)	(0.133)	(0.621)	(0.544)
Observations	16165	16165	16165	16165	16165	16165	16165	16165	16165
R-squared	0.25	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26
Robust standard errors in parentheses. + significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%									

Source: own estimations from SOEP 1992-2002

**Table 3: Determinants of LIFE SATISFACTION in 2002 (0-10 scale)
using only contemporaneous information on income and wealth
(OLS Regressions based on balanced panel 1992-2002)**

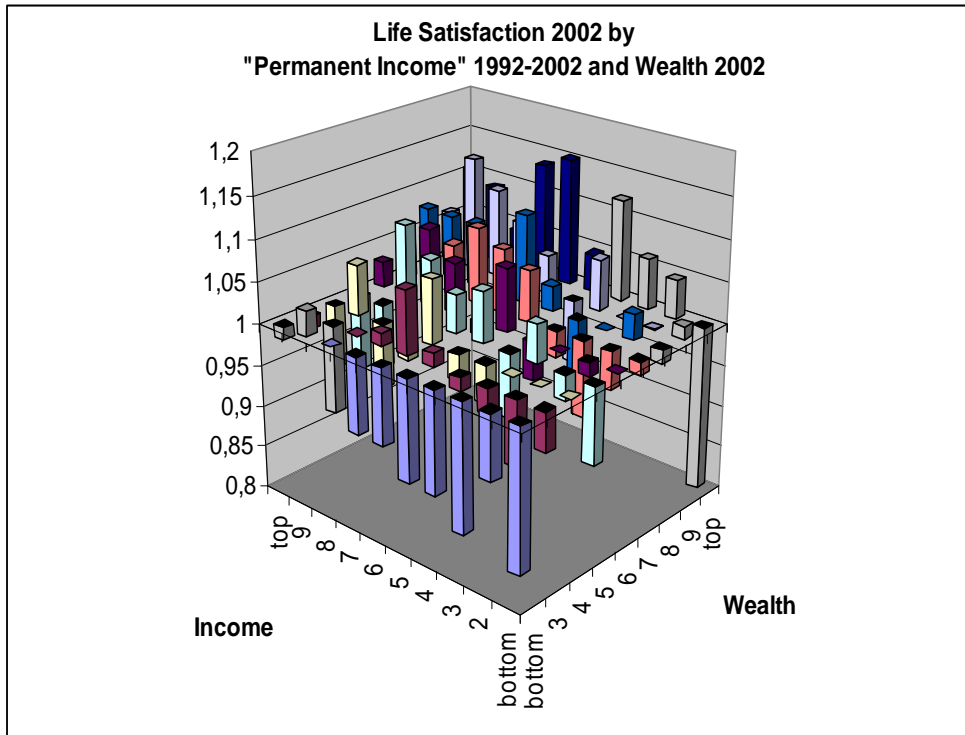
	(1)	(2)
	LSAT 2002	LSAT 2002
male	-0.133+	-0.127+
	(0.072)	(0.073)
migback	-0.021	0.018
	(0.100)	(0.101)
samepart9202	0.182*	0.158*
	(0.082)	(0.080)
gotmarried9202	0.266*	0.256*
	(0.107)	(0.105)
gotdivorced9202	-0.111	-0.123
	(0.169)	(0.176)
gotwidowed9202	0.027	-0.007
	(0.193)	(0.186)
badhlth92	-0.757**	-0.761**
	(0.119)	(0.117)
goodhlth92	1.015**	1.013**
	(0.077)	(0.076)
hlth_worse9202	-1.007**	-1.013**
	(0.065)	(0.064)
kids92	0.029	0.046
	(0.040)	(0.039)
newkids9202	0.240*	0.278**
	(0.104)	(0.102)
care9202	-0.610**	-0.614**
	(0.113)	(0.111)
edu92==2 (low voc)	-0.037	-0.049
	(0.083)	(0.083)
edu92==3 (high voc)	-0.163	-0.175
	(0.122)	(0.122)
edu92==4 (university)	-0.126	-0.168
	(0.124)	(0.120)
newedu9202	-0.051	-0.054
	(0.071)	(0.070)
yrs in FT / PT <=2002	0.002	0.001
	(0.004)	(0.004)
yrs in unemployment <2002	-0.050**	-0.044*
	(0.017)	(0.017)
currently unemployed 2002	-0.572**	-0.576**
	(0.155)	(0.164)
high job autonomy 2002	0.134	0.124
	(0.103)	(0.100)
agecat==44	-0.240+	-0.241+
	(0.126)	(0.125)
agecat==54	-0.301*	-0.314*
	(0.146)	(0.145)
agecat==64	0.076	0.077
	(0.159)	(0.157)
agecat==74	0.468**	0.482**
	(0.165)	(0.163)
agecat==99	0.478**	0.484**
	(0.181)	(0.180)
loc89east	-0.495**	-0.445**
	(0.070)	(0.071)
hiedu_father	0.126	0.132
	(0.153)	(0.157)
hiedu_mother	0.037	0.028
	(0.256)	(0.268)
lnpcinc02	0.193*	
	(0.090)	
hyperpcwealth	0.034**	
	(0.007)	
xpcdecil02==2		0.343*
		(0.142)
xpcdecil02==3		0.153
		(0.155)

xpcdecil02==4		0.420**
		(0.145)
xpcdecil02==5		0.362*
		(0.152)
xpcdecil02==6		0.423**
		(0.162)
xpcdecil02==7		0.423**
		(0.156)
xpcdecil02==8		0.487**
		(0.163)
xpcdecil02==9		0.510**
		(0.172)
xpcdecil02==10		0.548**
		(0.195)
xpcwealthdecil==3		0.426**
		(0.123)
xpcwealthdecil==4		0.333*
		(0.129)
xpcwealthdecil==5		0.325**
		(0.125)
xpcwealthdecil==6		0.441**
		(0.121)
xpcwealthdecil==7		0.414**
		(0.119)
xpcwealthdecil==8		0.516**
		(0.127)
xpcwealthdecil==9		0.623**
		(0.136)
xpcwealthdecil==10		0.797**
		(0.146)
Constant	4.619**	5.967**
	(0.852)	(0.211)
Observations	7012	7012
R-squared	0.22	0.22
Robust standard errors in parentheses		
+ significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%		

Source: own estimations from SOEP 1992-2002

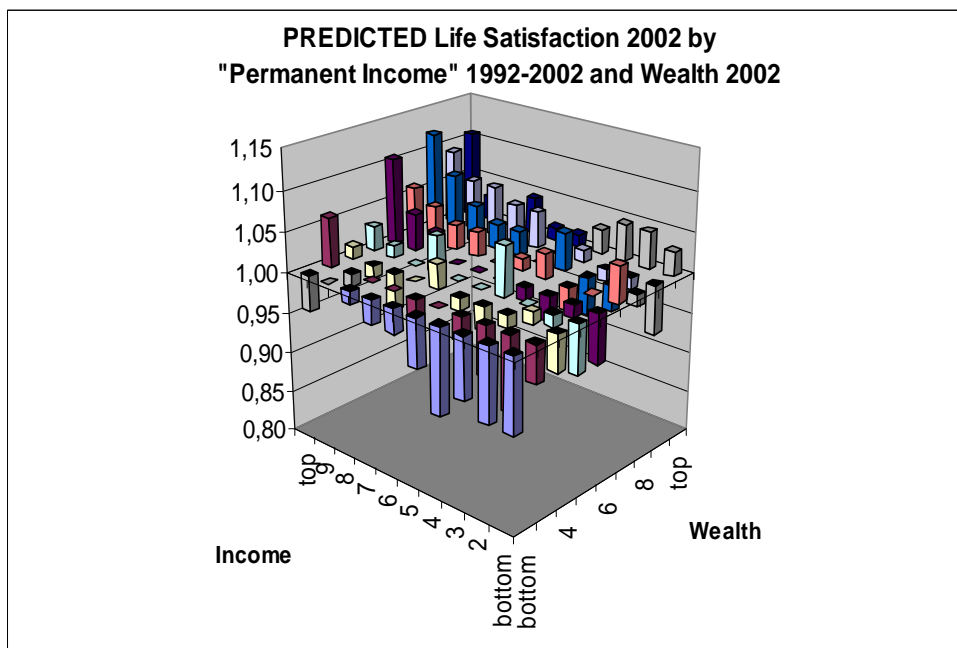
Figures

Figure 1a: OBSERVED Life Satisfaction in 2002 (as a proportion of overall mean) by Permanent Income in 1992-2002 and Wealth in 2002.



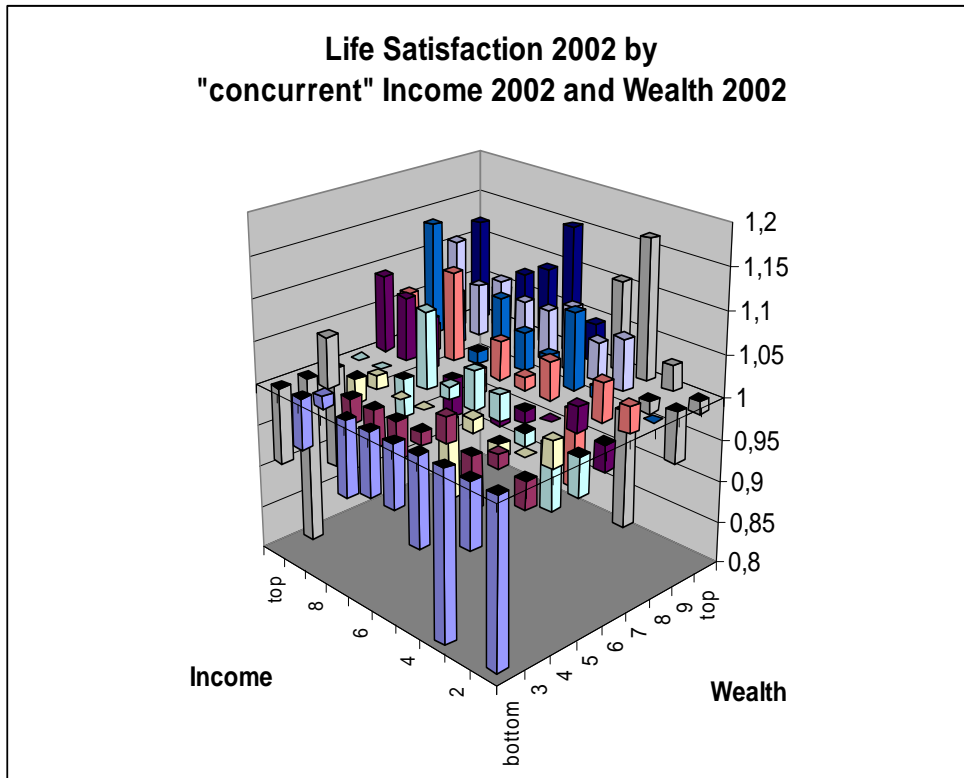
Source: own estimations from SOEP. Light grey bars indicate that the sample is <30 individuals.

Figure 1b: PREDICTED Life Satisfaction in 2002 (as a proportion of overall mean) by Permanent Income in 1992-2002 and Wealth in 2002.



Source: own estimations from SOEP. Light grey bars indicate that the sample is <30 individuals.

Figure 2: Life Satisfaction in 2002 (as a proportion of overall mean) by Contemporaneous Income 2002 and Wealth in 2002.



Source: own estimations from SOEP. Light grey bars indicate that the sample is <30 individuals.

Appendix:

Figure A.1: Life Satisfaction in 2002

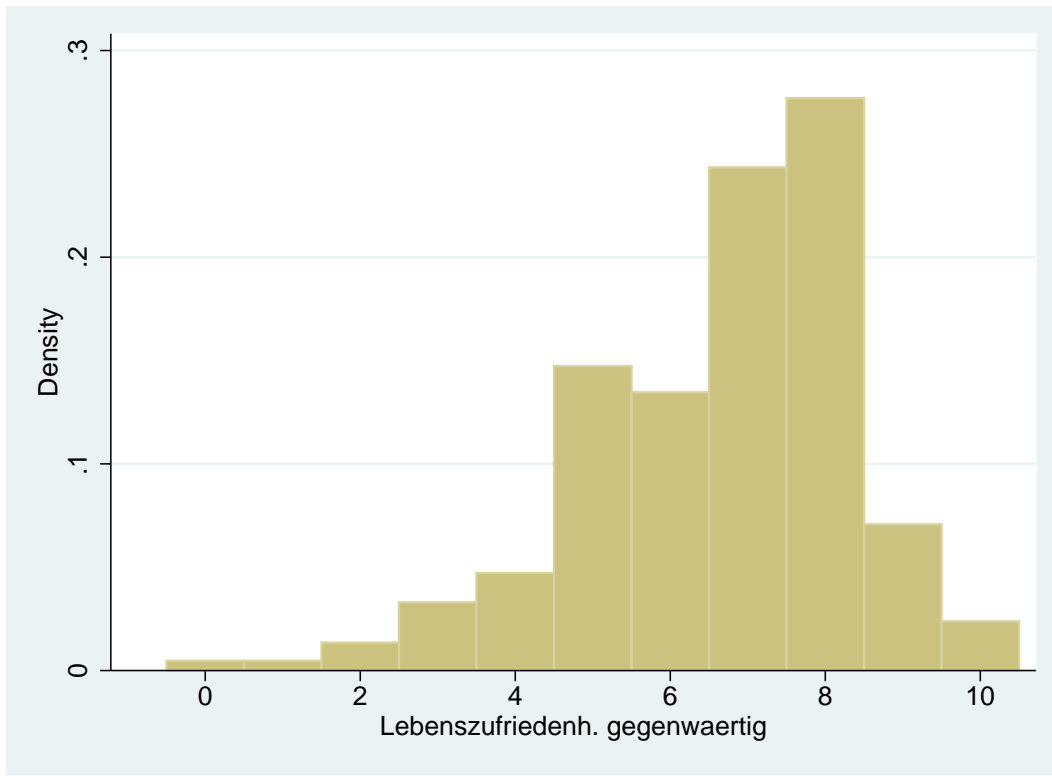


Figure A.2: Life Satisfaction in 2006

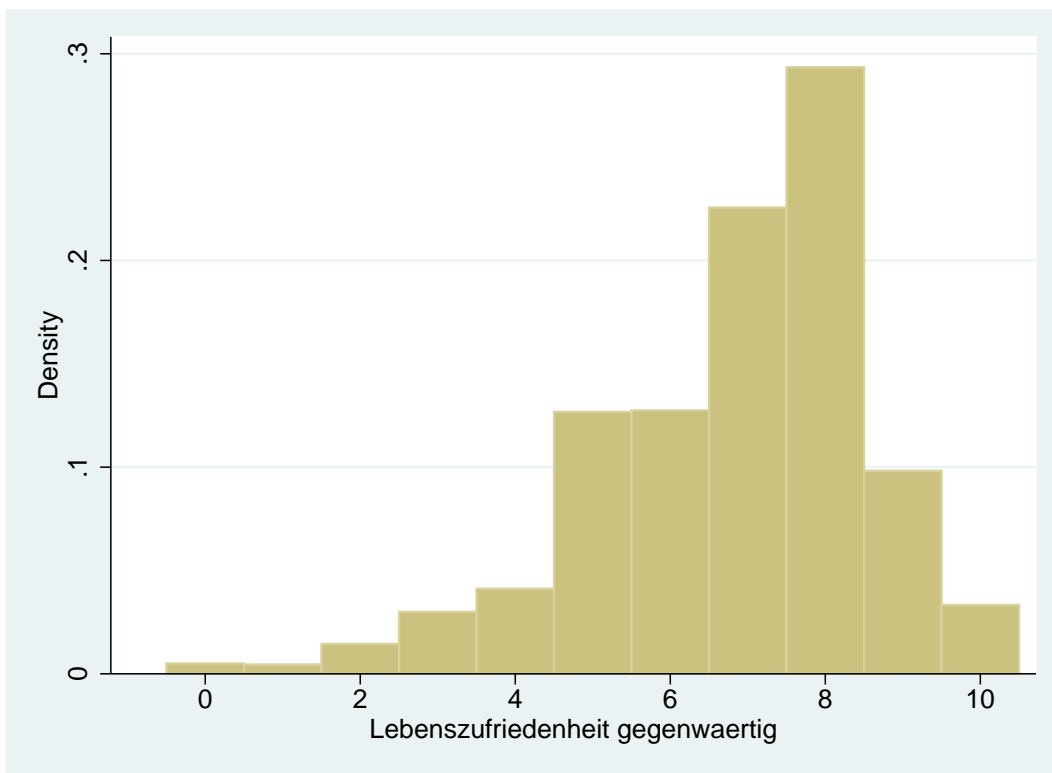


Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean (Std. Dev.)
lsat02	6.66 (1.75)
male	.473 (.499)
migback	.153 (.360)
samepart9202	.660 (.473)
single9202	.147 (.354)
gotmarried9202	.099 (.299)
gotdivorced9202	.036 (.188)
gotwidowed9202	.034 (.183)
badhlth92	.122 (.328)
goodhlth92	.592 (.491)
hlth_worse9202	.441 (.496)
kids92	.744 (1.008)
newkids9202	.145 (.352)
care9202	.114 (.318)
Iedu92_2	.496 (.500)
Iedu92_3	.095 (.294)
Iedu92_4	.141 (.348)
newedu9202	.305 (.460)
expftpt02	21.3 (12.6)
expue01	.890 (1.92)
unempl02	.063 (.243)
autonom02	.138 (.344)
Iagecat_44	.235 (.424)
Iagecat_54	.219 (.414)
Iagecat_64	.195 (.396)
Iagecat_74	.146 (.353)
Iagecat_99	.078 (.269)
loc89east	.318 (.465)
hiedu_father	.042 (.201)
hiedu_mother	.009 (.098)
lnpcinc9202	9.29 (.42)
hyperpcwealth	8.55 (5.70)
pcinc9297_9802up	.129 (.172)
pcinc9297_9802down	.072 (.152)
pc_prop_gross	5.569 (5.556)
pc_estate_gross	1.538 (3.712)
pc_financial	4.822 (4.493)
pc_insurance	5.343 (4.223)
pc_business	.710 (2.553)
pc_tangible	.804 (2.457)
pc_totaldebt	3.781 (4.731)
N	7012