



The Netherlands Institute for Social
Research



Measuring Quality of Life

-

With a composite index?

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Outline

- Social monitoring and reporting
- What is quality of life
- What about indices

There is a problem with GDP

Robert Kennedy (1968): “GDP measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile”

[youtube.com/watch?v=mCH3KvcAf9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCH3KvcAf9w)

Amartya Sen (1990): “We need a measure of the same level of vulgarity as GNP – just one number- but a measure that is not as blind to social aspects of human lives as GNP is”

STIGLITZ, SEN, FITOUSSI (2009): the time is ripe for our measurement system to *shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people’s well-being.*





Social monitoring and reporting

- strong focus on the well-being of individuals and the general population;
- the units of observation are individuals and private households;
- measurement primarily focused on outcomes rather than inputs;
- seeks to identify progress as well as inequalities;
- policy orientation;
- empirical or quantitative measurement approach;
- representativeness;
- timeliness and continuity across time;
- intelligibility.

Noll 2002; Boelhouwer and Roes 2004; Noll and Berger 2014



What is monitored?

Related concepts: quality of life, social inclusion, wellbeing,
(broad) welfare, happiness, life situation

Economic?

Resources? Outcomes?

Subjective(USA)? Objective(Scandinavië)?

7-10 domains:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Social networks; | 6. leisure time; |
| 2. education; | 7. health; |
| 3. labour; | 8. participation; |
| 4. housing; | 9. material welfare; |
| 5. safety | 10. environment |

Micro, macro?

Sustainability



	Bericht über die soziale Lage (Austria)	Indicatoren, Herman Deleek Centre (Belgium)	Vriind (Belgium)	Portrait Social (France)	Datenreport (Germany)	Measuring Ireland's Progress (Ireland)	De sociale staat van de Nederland (Netherlands)	Sozialbe- richt, FORS (Switzer- land)	Social Trends (UK)
Social security	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Income	x		x	x	x		x	x	x
Poverty/Social exclusion	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Employment	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Demography		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Health	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Housing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Education	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sustainability			x	x	x	x		x	x
Leisure time			x	x	x		x	x	x
Mobility			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Safety				x	x	x	x	x	x



the guardian

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David Cameron aims to make happiness the new GDP

Prime minister acts on pledge to ... that makes the nation content



Allegra Stratton
The Guardian
November 2010 21:41 GMT

All-party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics



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Was ist Lebensqualität?

Experten und Abgeordnete sollten für Alternative zum Wachstum finden. S...

N nieuwsuur

voorpagina live archief weblogs over nieuwsuur contact

Rutte: 'Geluk komt niet uit Den Haag'



Toegevoegd: dinsdag 26 okt 2010, 08:42

Premier Rutte keerde zich in zijn [regeringsverklaring](#) vandaag tegen 'betutteling en overbodige

de Volkskrant

Nieuws Cultuur & Leven
Opinie



Article history



BBP meet niet gezondheid van kinderen, of geluk

column in den haag

Hoe een parlementaire commissie vrije tijd, geluk en veiligheid wil meten.

Door: Ariejan Korteweg 22 oktober 2015, 02:01

De eensgezindheid is groot in de Aletta Jacobszaal aan het Binnenhof. Zes keer komt de naam van Rik Grashoff van GroenLinks uit de hoed als voorzitter van de zes koppige 'parlementaire onderzoekscmissie breed welvaartsbegrip' - men stemt bij dit soort gelegenheden kennelijk ook op zichzelf. Enzeldde unanimiteit als het om de ondervoorzitter gaat: Wassila Hachchi van D66.



What does a comprehensive index add ?

Quick first and global look

- Attracts attention
- Signals developments

Integrative way of describing complex phenomena

- Focuses attention on overall developments
- shows the compensating possibilities between domains



Could (potentially) make social indicators as important as economic indicators – GDP!

Why shouldn't we use indices?

1. There is no consensus on

- the choice of indicators,
- the way to combine them
- the way weights should be reached at



2. A composite index oversimplifies complexity

3. Interpreting both index scores and developments is unclear

4. Unclear procedure of index construction







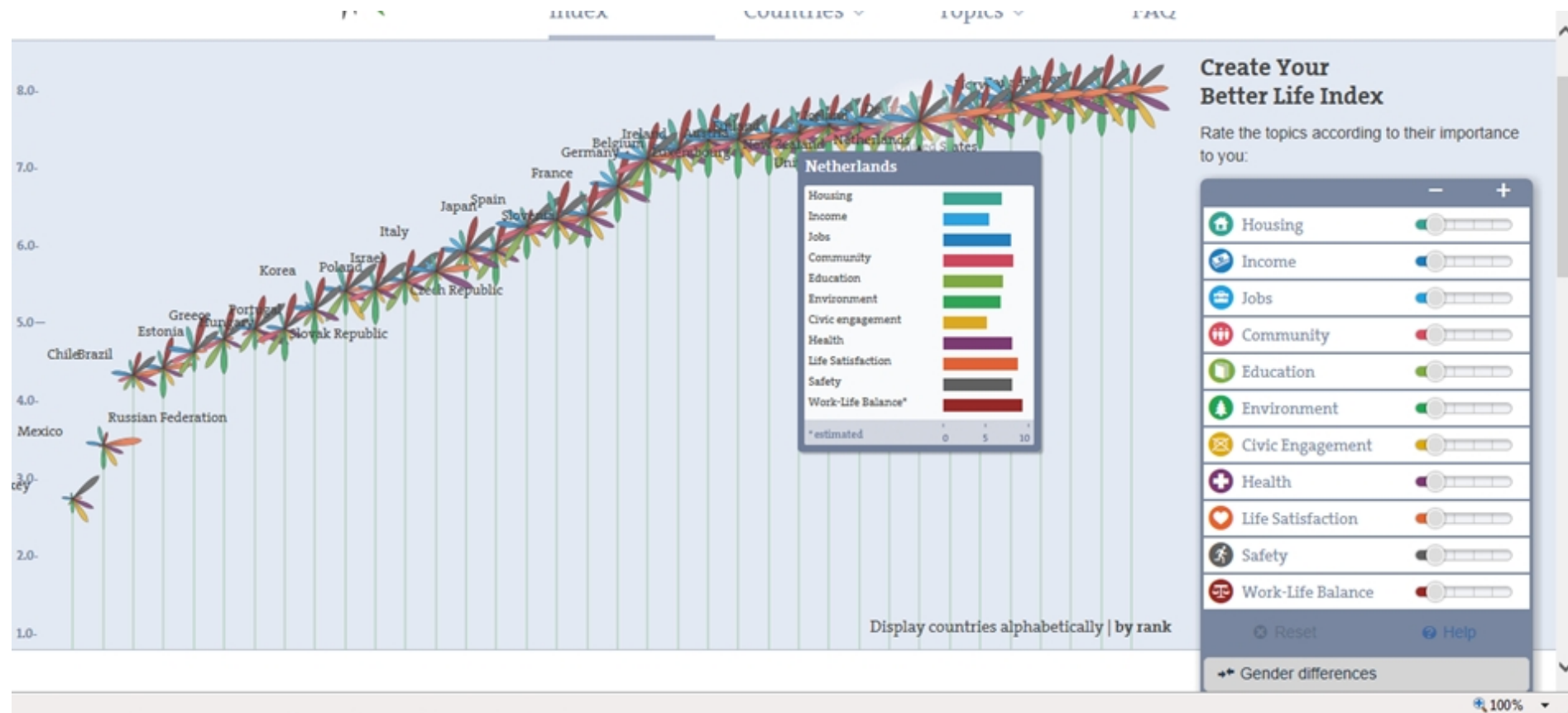
Some of the (growing list of) initiatives

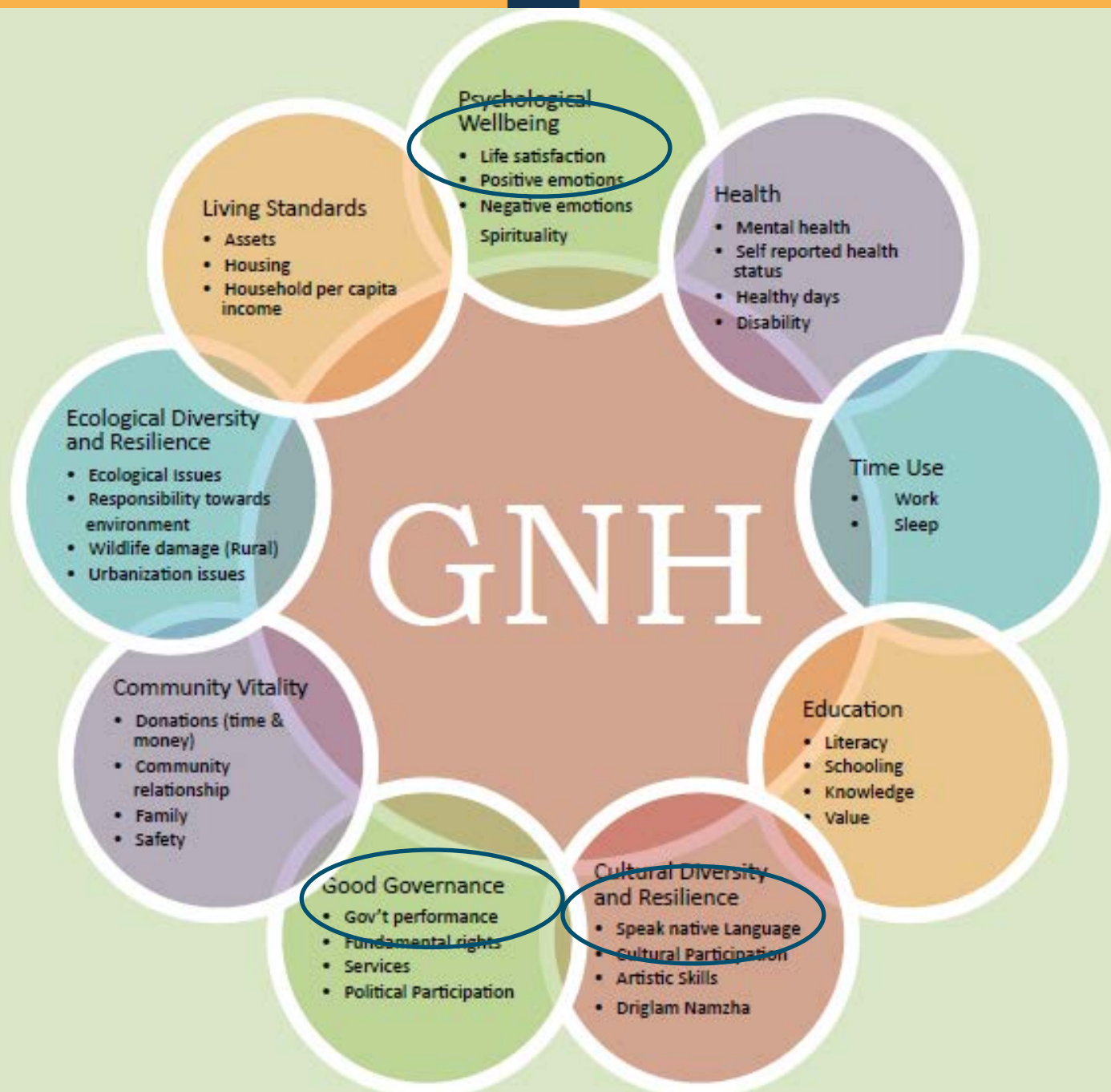
- Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW)
- Genuine progress indicator (GPI)
- Human Development Index (HDI)
- Happy Planet Index (HPI)
- Sustainable Society Index (SSI)
- Your Better Life Initiative (BLI)
- Gross National Happiness (GNH)
- SCP Life Situation Index (SLI)



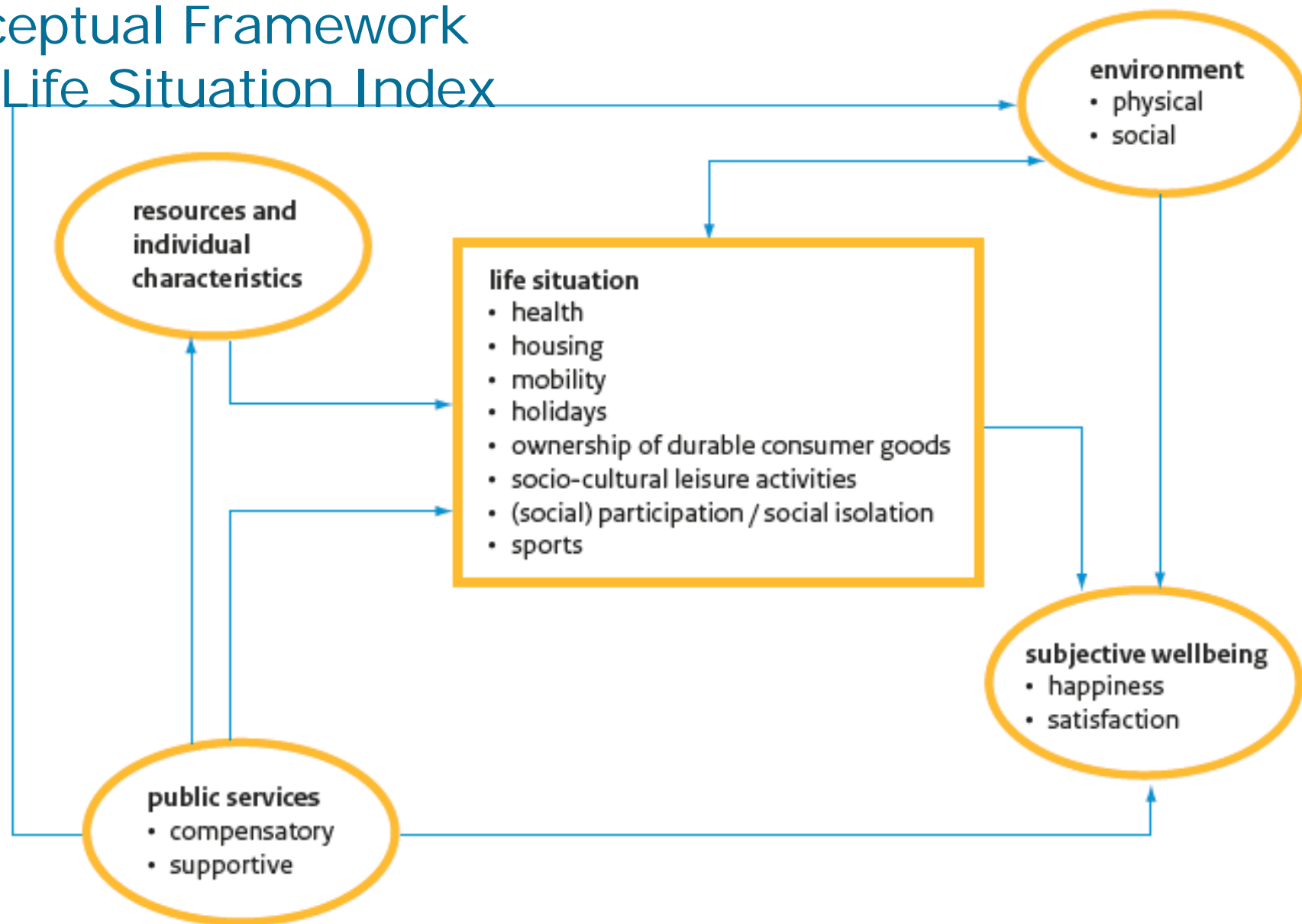


Your Better Life Index (OECD)



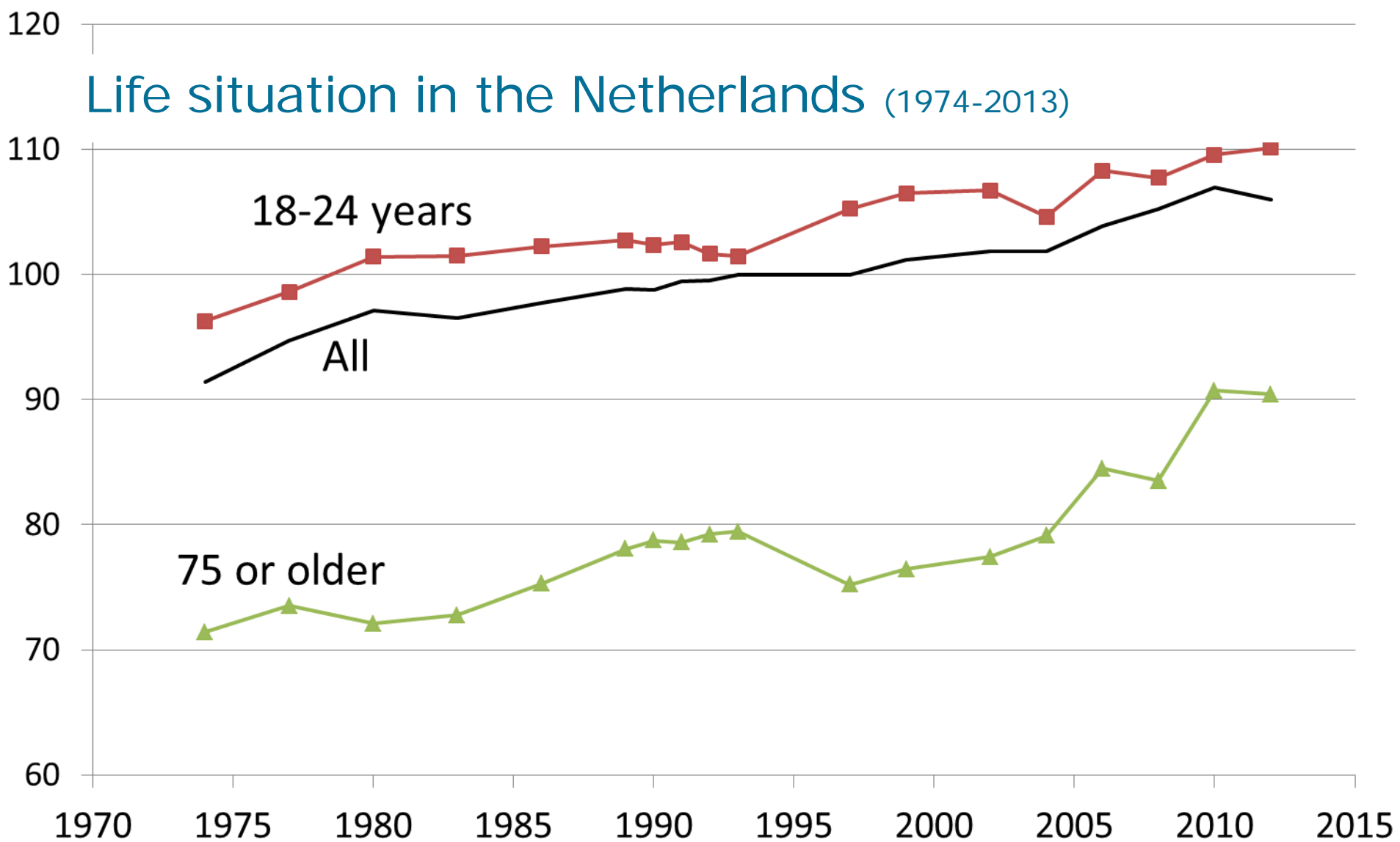


Conceptual Framework SCP Life Situation Index





Life situation in the Netherlands (1974-2013)





Conclusions

- Social monitoring and social reporting are important additions to economic outlooks
- Quality of life
 - Is a multi-dimensional concept
 - Includes both objective and subjective elements – but separate
 - Can be measured with a dashboard or with a composite index
- Quality of life and sustainable development have to be looked at separately
- Micro data needed for cumulation of disadvantages