

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FOR ESSENTIAL, PLUS AND ADVANCED USERS

DESIGN AND CONTENT

1. **How did you decide what topics to cover?**

The Happiness Pulse questions were selected from two processes: a) a review of the academic and policy literature on wellbeing measurement; and b) focus groups with individuals and community organisations. This enabled us to develop three domains, encompassing the primary influences on wellbeing — emotional wellbeing (BE), behavioural wellbeing (DO) and social wellbeing (CONNECT). We chose questions that give a comprehensive picture of people’s wellbeing that is both intuitive and informative and academically rigorous.

2. **Is there an academic model behind the Happiness Pulse?**

Wellbeing is a complex construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning. Current research on wellbeing has been derived from two general perspectives: the hedonic approach, which defines wellbeing in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance, and the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realisation and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning. The Happiness Pulse is based on eudaimonic wellbeing.

In terms of our research methodology, the Happiness Pulse gathers data on self-reported subjective wellbeing.

3. **Do the questions come from existing sources or do you design them yourself?**

Both. We use two questions from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) quality of life set of four questions. The BE section of the Happiness Pulse uses all seven questions from the (Short) Warwick Edinburgh Mental WellBeing Survey (SWEMWBS). Many other questions are based on existing surveys such as Understanding Society Survey and the Community Life Survey, slightly adapted to our survey style.

4. How do you calculate the individual results?

Several steps are taken to calculate an individual's results.

Step 1 Standardising scores

Questions in the Pulse have different response scales. To make them easier to compare, we standardise the scores by converting them to Z-scores:

$$\text{Z-score} = \frac{\text{original response} - \text{mean response}}{\text{standard deviation of responses}}$$

We use the means and standard deviations from a nationally representative sample of Pulse responses, which was collected by YouGov.

Step 2 Aggregation

To get a score for a whole domain from the responses to individual questions, we aggregate scores by adding together all the Z-scores within a domain, and dividing by the number of questions in the domain.

Step 3 Rescaling

Although Z-scores are comparable, to aid understanding we rescale the domain scores so that the overall mean for each domain is 6.5 and the range is 0-10.

Step 4 Transformation to percentiles

To aid interpretation of scores, we also transform scores into a percentile: a 1-100 scale, where each unit on the scale represents a 100th of the range of scores in the nationally representative sample.

To show users of the Pulse their percentile score for a domain, we look up what percentile their domain score falls into in the nationally representative sample. For example, if they got a general wellbeing score of 5, this score falls into the 23rd percentile of scores for the nationally representative sample and a score of 23% is displayed. This means they scored better than 23% of the UK population.

5. Has the survey been validated?

Yes. We validated the survey with researchers at the University of Bristol using the data we received as part of our small-scale city pilot in 2015. We continue to validate our approach with the data we collect to ensure the Happiness Pulse can be taken by and produce valid results for a representative sample of people.

6. Why do you want this data and what will you use it for?

We hope that by taking your Happiness Pulse, not only will you gain a better understanding of your wellbeing and how to improve it, you will also be helping us to gain a better understand of wellbeing more widely. All of this learning helps us to mainstream wellbeing as the primary policy focus, rather than an afterthought. All user data is anonymous, we don't ask any questions which can identify who you are - we never ask for your name or address. We do ask for a full postcode, however we only use the sector element of the postcode for analysis if it's relevant to a client need.

TAKING THE HAPPINESS PULSE

7. Do I have to sign up to use the Happiness Pulse?

If you just want to take the Pulse yourself and look at your own results, you do not have to sign up. But if you want multiple people to take the Pulse and be able to look at results across a whole group, then you need to sign up for one of our packages. See our package comparison page here.

8. How can taking a survey help me be happier?

The survey can help you understand and improve your wellbeing. Measuring your wellbeing in this way may be something you hadn't thought about before - but people find it a very effective way to get a clearer picture of how they are doing overall. The survey will help you see how well you are doing in three key life domains: BE, DO and CONNECT. Based on your scores for each domain, you can then explore more about how you can make changes to your life in order to improve or change aspects of your wellbeing.

9. How long does it take to complete the survey?

The main survey takes around five minutes to complete. The Community Pulse adds another four minutes to that.

10. Do I have to answer all of the questions?

If you don't answer all the wellbeing questions then you won't be able to get your results! Each question is important for understanding your wellbeing in both depth and breadth.

11. Is all user information confidential? What do you do with the data?

All sensitive and/or potentially identifying user information is kept confidential. Results of individual users of the Pulse are not shared.

The Pulse does not ask individuals for their name or their exact age, so we do not hold this information.

We do ask for a full postcode, however we only use part of the postcode for analysis at bespoke level and only if it is relevant. For example, a district council might be interested in whether particular postcode

areas have lower wellbeing.

For Essential, Plus and Advanced packages we do not carry out our own data analysis, so the data is simply stored securely in order to display the summarised results on Pulse dashboards.

For bespoke work, we do carry out our own data analysis. However, as mentioned, potentially identifying information is kept fully confidential. If there is a risk of identifying individuals due to small groups, we suppress those results.

We ensure that all Pulse data is stored securely. See our data protection statement for more information on this.

12. Is the Happiness Pulse available in other languages?

We have a version of the Happiness Pulse in Welsh. We can also provide other language versions of the seven questions in the BE domain. Where clients do require the Happiness Pulse in another language we would facilitate this and add the new version to our Happiness Pulse language bank.

13. I have some feedback on the Happiness Pulse. Who do I contact?

We always welcome feedback, which you can leave via happinesspulse@happycity.org.uk.

14. What else does Happy City do, other than the Happiness Pulse?

Founded in 2010, we are a small UK charity with a big mission: to 'make what matters count'. We offer a place-based model of change that puts the wellbeing of current and future generations centre stage. We do this by developing new measures of progress and delivering training, projects and campaigns to help embed them into how places work. Based in Bristol, we work with organisations large and small from the public, private and community sector, right around the UK. We have received interest in our work from around the world.

USING THE HAPPINESS PULSE IN YOUR ORGANISATION

15. How do I sign up for an automated version of the Happiness Pulse?

Go to www.happinesspulse.org/features/ to see an overview of the three different levels of automated report that we offer. You can find out about each level and what it offers, and make a decision about what meets your needs. From there you can create an account.

16. How do I decide which package I want?

The automated levels differ in several ways - 1) the level of data analysis provided 2) the number of different teams or projects you want to take the Pulse and 3) the option of an additional Community module which provides more information about the neighbourhood where respondents live. By browsing the information at each level you can decide which one most meets your needs.

17. Is it possible to transfer or upgrade between packages once I've signed up?

Yes, you can upgrade from our Essential to our Plus level at the click of a button, in order to release more in-depth data analysis. You can decide that you would like to increase the number of projects and upgrade to our Advanced level, and receive more than one Pulse URL. However you cannot upgrade retrospectively to include the Community Pulse in your package as it adds an additional set of questions to be completed. This is because your all your respondents need to complete the same survey questions for results to make sense and be valid.

18. Do I have to create a new account every time I want a new Happiness Pulse?

Not necessarily.

If you sign up for an Advanced package, then you only need to sign up once, but you can create up to 10 projects within your account, each with their own unique Pulse survey URL.

If you have the Essential or Plus package, you are only eligible for a single Pulse project and associated survey URL.

19. Is there a limit to how many times the Pulse can be taken?

Yes and no.

No - There is no limit to the number of people who can complete the Pulse survey via a Pulse URL.

Yes - We do not advise that the same individuals take the Pulse multiple times at the same URL as it will be difficult for you to identify change over time. If you would like to ask the same people to take the Pulse more than once, e.g. before and after a six-week project intervention, we recommend that you purchase the Advanced package which will allow you to create separate Pulse projects with their own unique URLs for the 'before' and 'after' survey completion.

Outside of a before and after application, we don't recommend you ask the same group of people to take the Pulse too frequently, in order to give people time to make changes to improve their wellbeing.

20. **Can you explain the URL approach in more detail?**

When you create an account, you are automatically issued with a unique URL where respondents can take your Pulse survey. Your respondents complete the Pulse survey via this URL. The results are saved to your Pulse project, and when four responses have been collected you can view the results in your Results Dashboard.

To collect Pulse survey responses, you can share the URL with your targeted respondents anywhere you like, such as via your website or by email.

At Advanced level, you can create multiple Pulse projects, each with their own unique Pulse survey URL. At Advanced level, the text in the Pulse survey URL is customisable (otherwise your URL will be composed of a randomly generated string of numbers and letters).

21. **Am I able to add my own questions to the existing survey?**

No, not within the survey itself. The core Happiness Pulse is a validated survey which we compare with a national representative sample of people who have also taken the Pulse. It works as a whole set of questions and hence cannot be supplemented.

Our demographic questions are also standard for Essential, Plus and Advanced packages. If you require additional or different demographic information for an additional cost, please contact us to discuss bespoke options: hpapp@happycity.org.uk

We are aware that users of the Pulse sometimes want to use the survey opportunity to ask additional questions to help understand their respondents more. That's why we created the Community Pulse and why are currently working on a Youth Pulse, a Housing Pulse and a Workplace Pulse to add to our portfolio.

If you would like us to work with you at a bespoke level, If we work at a bespoke level with clients, then we can design very specific add-on questions that to help you help them to meet your their project outcomes. Contact us to discuss bespoke options: hpapp@happycity.org.uk.