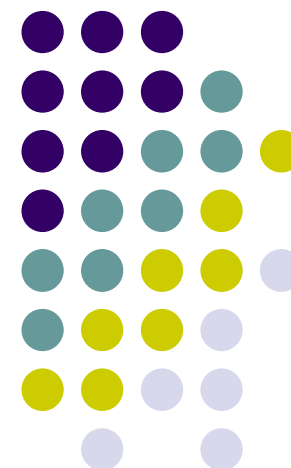


Happy! Or can't get no satisfaction?: Concept equivalence in the measurement of subjective well-being

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ESRC National Centre for

Research
Methods

Ipsos MORI

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Objectives



- Are 'happiness' and 'satisfaction' equivalent measures of subjective well-being
- Are subjective well-being questions susceptible to mode effects?



The good society

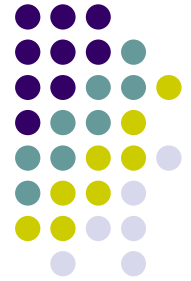
- Post-enlightenment focus on utilitarianism
- “The greatest good for the greatest number”
- Longstanding focus on economic growth (GDP etc.)
- But does this achieve desired objective?
- Inequality, environmental and social sustainability, etc. etc.
- Time for a different focus?

The science of well-being



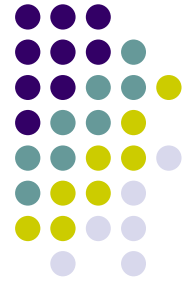
“Now is the time for every government to collect data on a uniform basis on the happiness of its population...every survey of individuals should automatically measure their well-being, so that in time we can really say what matters to people and by how much. When we do, it will produce very different priorities for our society.” Layard 2010, Science.

Survey measures of subjective well-being



- Tend to ask about ‘happiness’ or ‘satisfaction’ with life
- And treat these as if they are measuring the same concept

Happiness = Satisfaction?



- Yes – time-series models show same pattern of effects (Blanchlower and Oswald, 2002)
- No – happiness and satisfaction correlated but not equivalent in European Values Survey (Gundelach and Kreiner 2004)



Mode effects

- Widely different estimates of well-being across different surveys
- Could mode be an explanatory factor?
 - Being unhappy with your life is not socially desirable (people may over-state happiness to an interviewer)
- Conti and Pudney (2008) find higher ratings of satisfaction in interviewer relative to self-administered questions



Design

- Ipsos-MORI face-to-face omnibus survey (quota sample), April 2010
- n=2033
- Respondents randomly allocated to:
 1. interviewer administered life satisfaction
 2. Self-administered life satisfaction
 3. Interviewer administered happiness
 4. Self-administered happiness

Questions (from European Social Survey)



All things considered, how happy would you say you are? Please answer using the scale on the card where 1 means 'extremely unhappy' and 10 means 'extremely happy'.

1. Extremely unhappy

.

.

10. Extremely happy

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Please answer using the scale on the card where 1 means 'extremely dissatisfied' and 10 means 'extremely satisfied'

1. Extremely dissatisfied

.

.

10. Extremely satisfied

Verbatims



Now, thinking about your answer to the last question, please tell me what came to mind when thinking about your answer. There are no right or wrong answers; I just want you to tell me everything that came to mind in thinking about how happy you are. What else?

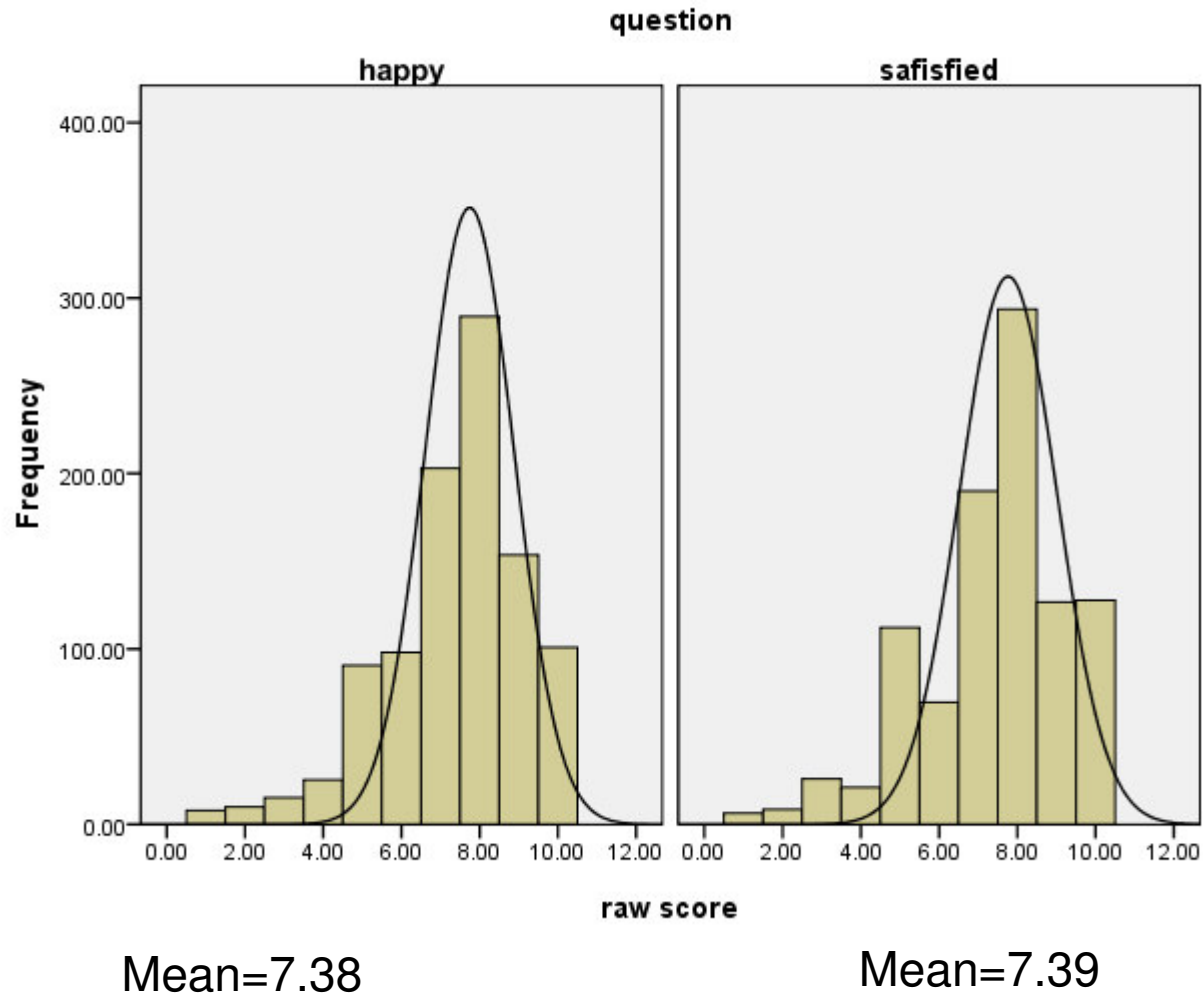
PROBE FULLY



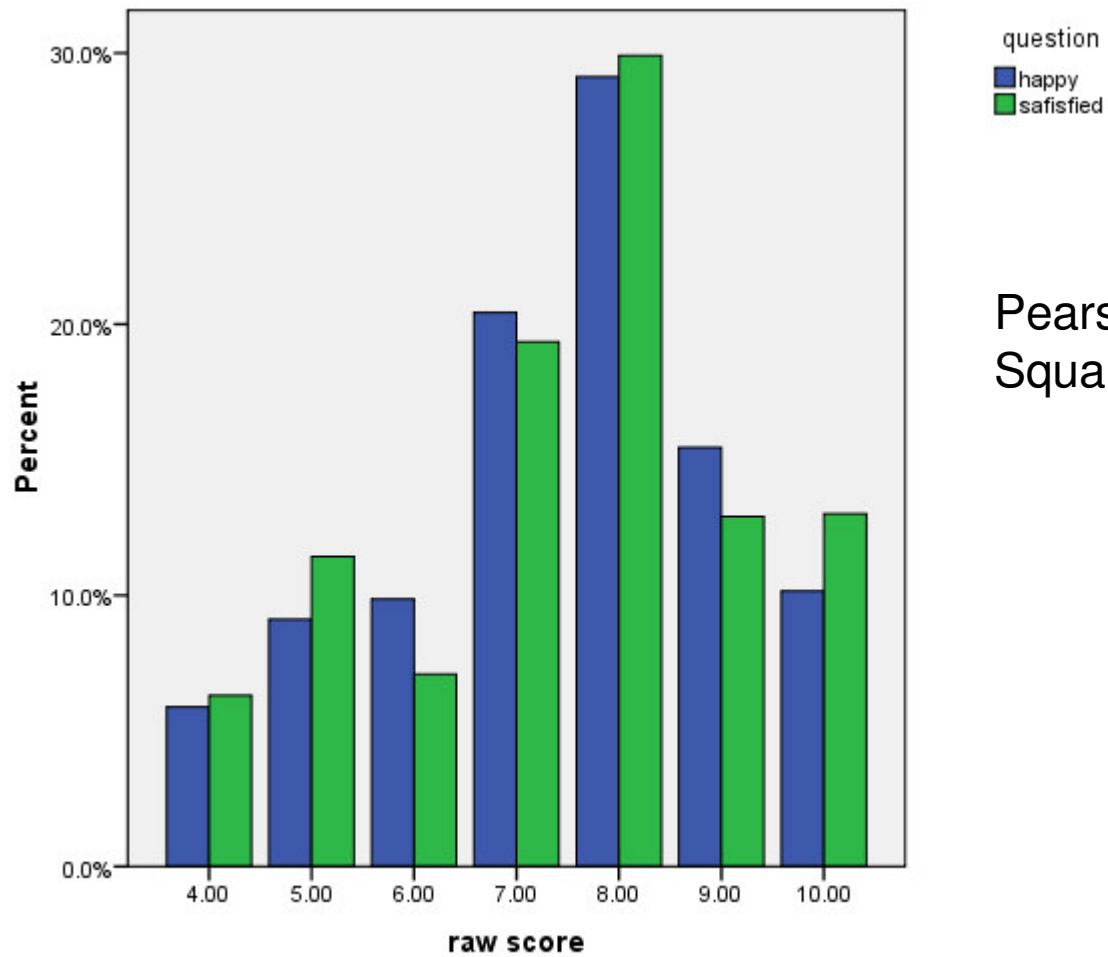
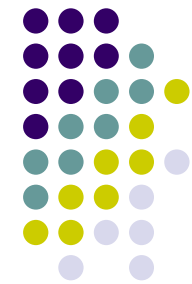
Results 1

satisfaction = happiness?

Raw distributions for happiness and satisfaction

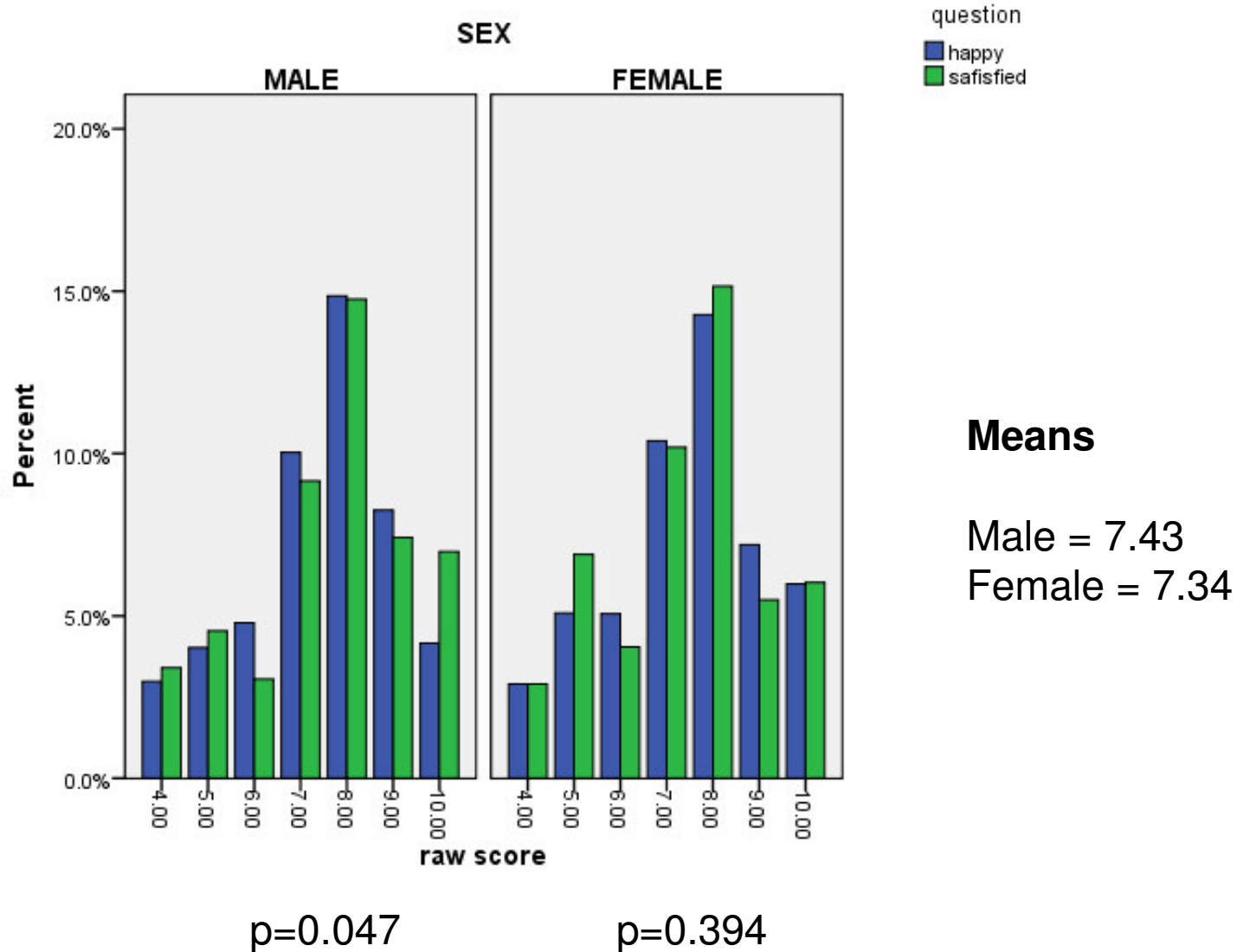


Satisfaction v Happiness - distributions



Pearson's Chi Square, $p=0.041$

Satisfaction v Happiness by sex





Results 2

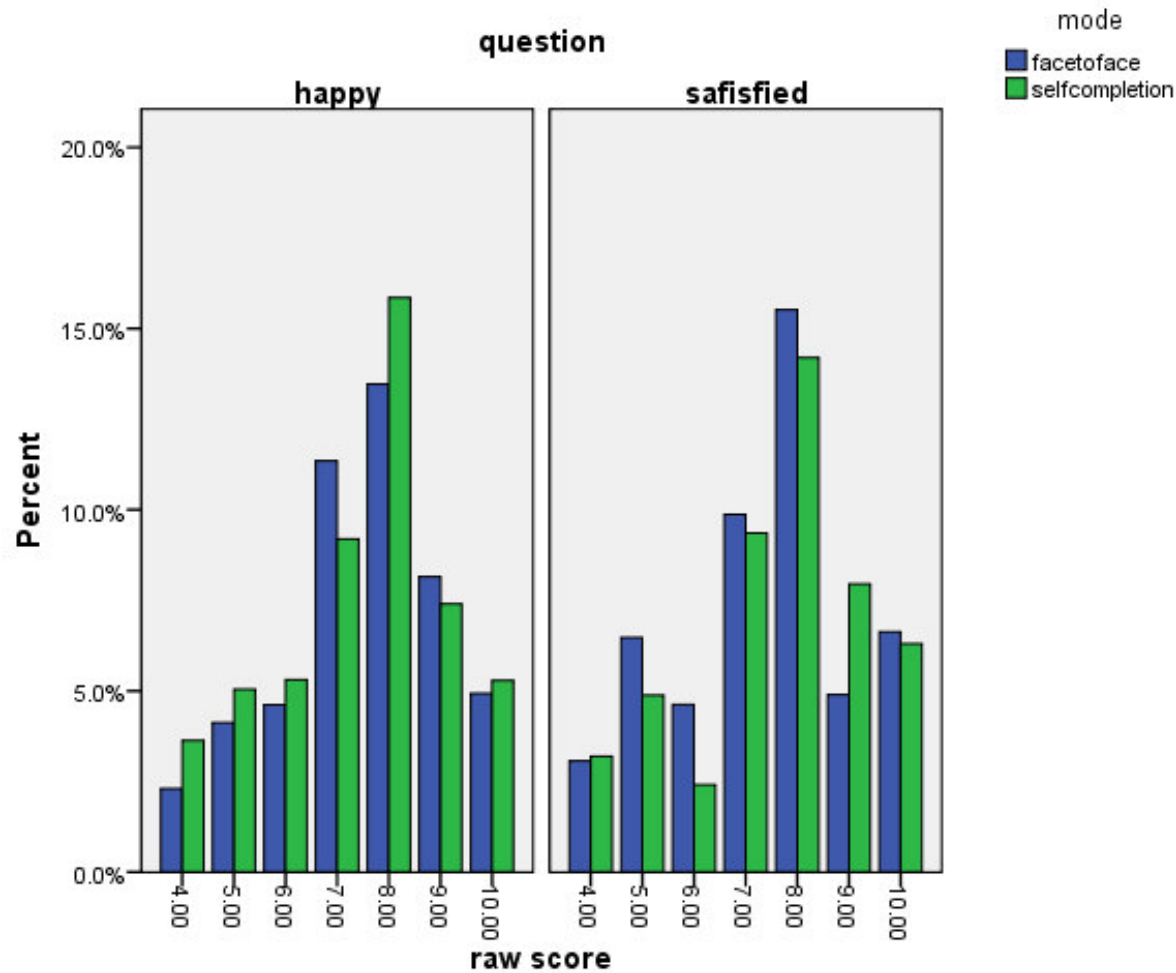
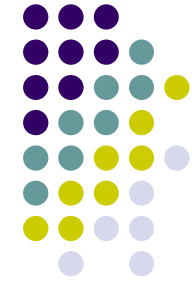
mode effects

Mode effect by question - means



Question	CAPI (s.e.)	CASI (s.e.)
Happiness	7.45 (.077)	7.32 (.081)
Satisfaction	7.29 (.081)	7.49 (.085)*

Mode effect by question - distributions



$p=0.209$

$p=0.015$

Question*mode*sex - means



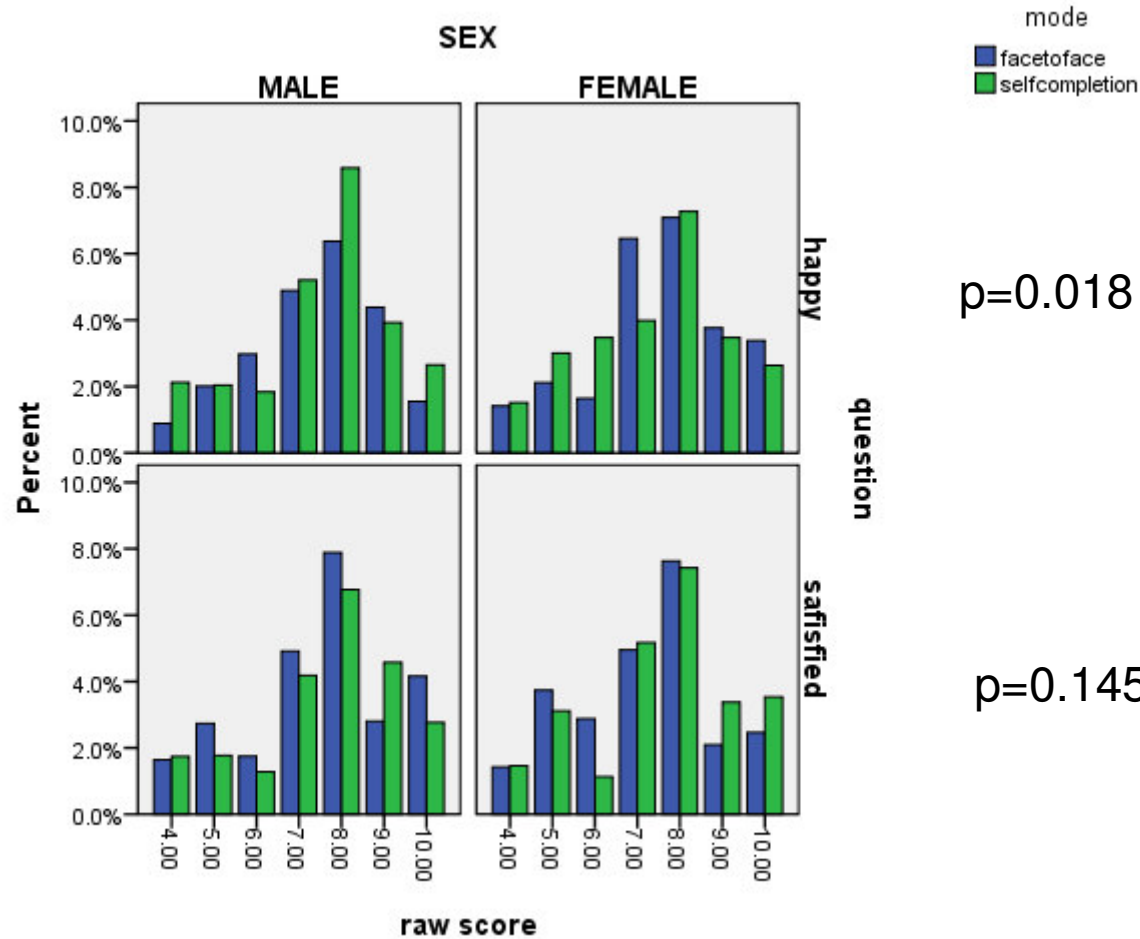
Question	CAPI (s.e.)	CASI (s.e.)
<u>men</u>		
Happiness	7.40 (.105)	7.36 (.118)
Satisfaction	7.46 (.118)	7.52 (.127)
<u>women</u>		
Happiness	7.50 (.111)	7.28 (.112)
Satisfaction	7.12 (.118)	7.48 (.127)**

Question*mode*sex - distributions



p=0.053

p=0.037



p=0.018

p=0.145

Prediction model



	happiness	s.e.	satisfaction	s.e.
(Constant)	6.154	.351	6.385	.352
sex (male)	-.012	.137	.292	.137
age (years)	<u>.016</u>	.004	.006	.004
social grade (AB)	.062	.187	.337	.188
social grade (CD)	-.050	.179	.217	.175
net income (banded)	<u>.131</u>	.058	<u>.206</u>	.055
parent(yes)	-.049	.156	-.070	.158
highest qual (degree)	.201	.171	-.263	.169
no qualifications	-.169	.217	.052	.212
mode (CASI)	-.060	.134	<u>-.280</u>	.134
n	643.000		645.000	
R2	.053		.052	



Verbatim responses



Verbatim responses

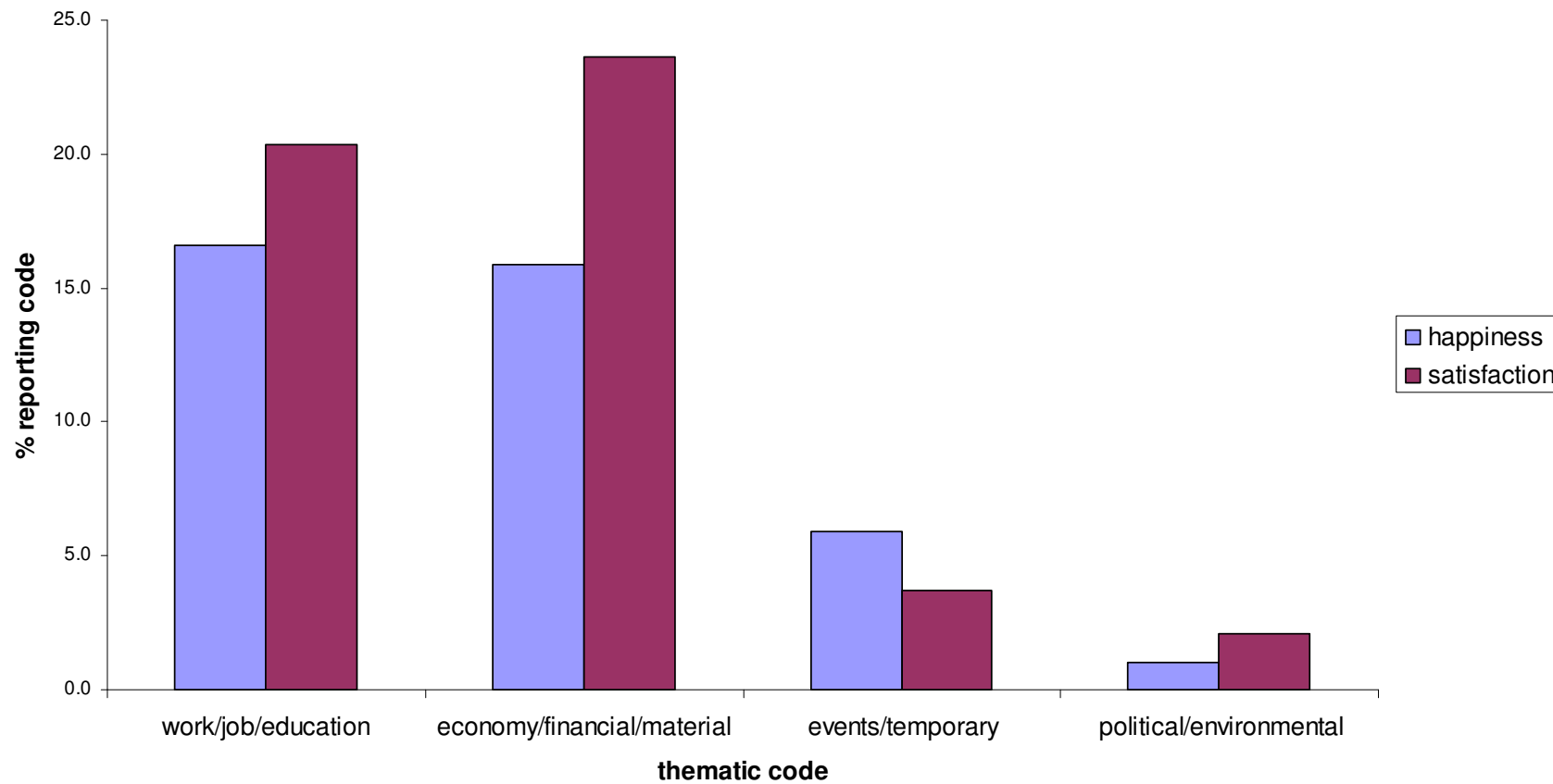
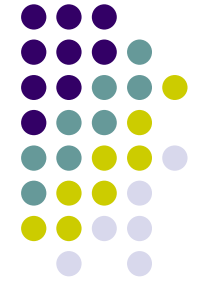
- Verbatim responses coded to a descriptive frame with 111 codes
- These were then allocated to one of 14 thematic codes

Thematic Codes



1. work/job/education
2. family/friends/pets
3. emotions/feelings/outlook
4. ageing
5. house/home/area
6. financial/material possessions
7. social life/hobby
8. freedom/independence
9. events/temporary
10. health (self)
11. health (other)
12. political/environmental concerns
13. neutral/in the middle
14. other/idiosyncratic

Significant differences in thematic codes across questions





Conclusions

- When asked using identical response formats, satisfaction and happiness questions appear to be measuring the same broad concept
- But some potentially important differences at the margins
- Weak evidence of mode effect – statistically significant but no strong pattern
- Some evidence of differential cognitive frames evoked by happiness and satisfaction questions