While happiness is a common value, the forms it may take in individual lives vary widely, and this understanding presents challenges to those charged with measuring the quality of life. The economic-based objective, index-oriented evaluation of happiness has been replaced by an evaluation that includes social and subjective indices as well. Among policymakers, achieving majority consensus on defining this index has been difficult. At present, a variety of research results on measuring happiness are reported by central and local governments, the academic community, and the business community. When compared with social, subjective indices, economic and objective indices reveal major differences in that the latter uses one single measurement (monetary value) and its utility is limited when evaluating an individual’s happiness. The former, on the other hand, uses a flexible variety of measurements that can be interpreted differently according to diverse contexts. This difference does not simply mean that the criterion for the evaluation of happiness should be one single measurement or a mixture of multiple measurements, but rather it means that the interpretation of the level of happiness within a society should require multiple conceptual approaches that allow for philosophical and ideological differences.

The concept Quality of Life (QoL) itself is under active scrutiny so that happiness levels are no longer defined solely through monetary indices but through ever-broadening perspectives on just what happiness means, thereby facilitating more precise measurements of the welfare of both individuals and the society as large. Korea has achieved remarkable socio-economic development through industrialization and democratization but has faced new social problems such as decreased life satisfaction of individual citizens, and weakening social trust and social integration. Policy efforts to solve this problem have been carried out in recent years. Since 2011, the government has used quality of life indicators to objectively measure the people’s “quality of life” and to use it as a basis for establishing and implementing relevant policies. As of 2019, the quality of life measures included 71 indicators in 11 sectors. The results showed that 16 indicators, such as employment rate, unemployment rate, and air quality satisfaction, had worsened over the previous year. One indicator, percentage of households living in their own homes, remained the same. All 54 remaining indicators measured improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Satisfaction</th>
<th>Workplace Satisfaction</th>
<th>Leisure Satisfaction</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Note: Life satisfaction reflects an average based on a scale of 0-10 for how satisfied individuals are with their lives currently.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note: Job satisfaction refers to the percentage of people currently employed who answered “very satisfied” or “slightly satisfied” with their current job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note: Leisure life satisfaction refers to the percentage of people who responded “very satisfied” or “slightly satisfied” about their current use of leisure time.</td>
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Statistics Korea (2017)
Families and communities contribute to improving the quality of life by providing emotional, physical, and financial care and support. Not only are individuals provided with care, support, and security through their families and communities, but also identity, belonging, social values and norms are reproduced through their families and communities. In health, longevity and the quality of life matter. Good health not only increases the subjective life satisfaction but also contributes to society by improving activity capabilities in various areas of life. Of the five indicators in the family and community sectors in 2018, family satisfaction, community affiliation, social group participation, and social isolation index all improved except for the suicide rate among seven indicators in health. The distribution of subjective health status showed the rate of elderly living alone. In particular, Sejong, Jeollanam-do, and Gangwon rated the highest in the distribution of family capability in various areas of life.

Healthy Life Expectancy

Social Isolation Index

Behavioral Risk Factors

Healthy Life Expectancy

School Life Satisfaction

Unemployment Rate of Youth

Burden of Education Expenses

Rate of Jobs Satisfaction

Education is a process of not only acquiring and storing knowledge but also determining the individual’s quality of life through social stability and development. Education is measured in terms of the distributions of educational resources, mobilization of educational resources, and educational performance. The opportunity for economic activity, the appropriate compensation, and the quality of economic activity determine the quality of life of the individual through income. Therefore, the individual’s quality of life in the society where the guarantee of opportunities for economic activities exists and the appropriate compensation is made is evaluated as high.

Education and Jobs

Employment Rate of Youth

Unemployment Rate of Youth

Rate of Irregular Workers

Rate of Wage Growth

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Income and Leisure

Income and leisure are key determinants of an individual’s quality of life. Income influences the quality of life through consumption activities, and income distribution determines the overall “quality of society.” On the other hand, in contrast to working hours, leisure time contributes to the physical and mental health of the individual through sports, culture, and arts, and provides the opportunity to associate with others. These play a positive role in developing individual happiness and a sense of community. In particular, culture and arts contribute to enhancing the quality of life by enhancing the human spirit and forming the participant’s cultural identity.

With the exception of the household debt ratio out of seven indicators in the income, consumption, and asset categories in 2018, national per capita income, median household income, income satisfaction, consumer life satisfaction, household net assets, and relative poverty rate are improving. Income of income satisfaction, Sejong, Seoul, and Busan are the highest, while Daegu, Ulsan, and Busan are the lowest. In terms of consumer life satisfaction, Seoul, and Busan are the highest, while Daegu, Changwon-gu, and Daegu were the lowest. Among the six indicators in the leisure sector, except for the sufficiency of leisure time, cultural leisure expenditure rate, leisure time, the number of cultural arts and sports visits, the number of travel days per person, and leisure life satisfaction all improved. In addition, the satisfaction level of leisure activities is highest in Sejong, Seoul, and Daegu, while Daegu, Busan, and Daegu on the least satisfied.

Housing and Environment

Housing refers to the services enjoyed in the living space and is about not only personal consumption but also social consumption. Therefore, although it should be regarded as a personal asset, housing in itself works as an aggregate factor for the quality of life because it acts as an important factor in determining the Korean quality of life. The environment, on the other hand, has a definite impact on the quality of life. The environment not only affects people’s health through fine dust and climate change, but also provides environmental services such as water and nature. The environment is also an important factor in people’s choice of residence, and natural disasters can have a big impact on people’s health and quality of life.

Of the six indicators in the housing category in 2018 (except for housing vacancy and the residential environment satisfaction), the proportion of self-owned households, the share of rents, per-capita residence, and natural disasters can have a big impact on people’s health and quality of life. Of the six indicators in the housing category in 2018 (except for housing vacancy and the residential environment satisfaction), the proportion of self-owned households, the share of rents, per-capita residence, and natural disasters can have a big impact on people’s health and quality of life.