Good Societies Index 2012
Comparing Quality of Life in Relatively Wealthy Societies

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Background of the Good Society Index

- The Good Society Index was first constructed in 2009 for presentation at ISQOLS in Florence
- Good Societies Index 2012 has the following new features:
  - Expanded from 32 to 48 indicators
  - New emphasis on Social Cohesion
  - New future oriented emphasis with indexes on sustainability: social, economic, and environmental
  - Integration of concept of caring capital throughout
- Inclusion the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) in <u>some</u> analyses

Conceptual Roots

- **The notion of a good society stems from Aristotle and utilitarian philosophy in the West and thinking on social harmony and in the East**
- **In the past 3 decades, major new books began to explicate the concept of a good society, e.g.,**
  - *The Good Society* **by Robert Bellah and associates, 1991**
  - *Next: The Road to the Good Society* **by Amitai Etzioni, 2001**
  - *The Good Society* **by Alan Draper and Ansil Ramsay, 2008**
- **Etzioni advanced the construct by explicating the sociological community element and the moral core. The essence of the latter are community values that treat individuals as ends, thus recognizing the delicate balance between caring communities and individual autonomy.**

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Building Blocks for Good Societies

- **Many moral strategies and social values have been proposed as building blocks for good societies. Etzioni argues that all of these approaches need be considered in refinements in the evolving conceptions and practices of good societies.**

- **One of the most detailed approaches to delineating basic building blocks of good societies is the "human capabilities" approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Their contribute includes**
  - **Physical well being**
  - **Civil and Political rights**
  - **Social justice**

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Caring Capital

- The most critical, underdeveloped dimension of good societies is that of mutual caring. Recent work in that area by sociologists includes:
  - _Toward a Caring Society_ by S. and P. Oliner
  - _Acts of Compassion_ by R. Wuthrow
  - "_Caring Capital_" _Information, Communication and Society_ by R. Anderson
- 'Caring capital' is that subset of social capital characterized by compassion, caring, and altruism when these actions are intended for the primary purpose of others' well-being.
- The object of altruistic or caring capital is to avoid or reduce suffering of all human beings.
- For individuals & networks of communities to come to value caring capital would transform them into good societies.

Caring Capital (cont.)

- Caring capital typically involves diverse types of informal giving of care not necessarily dependent upon formal exchanges of goods or services.

- Caring capital cross cuts both bonding and bridging capital.

- Caring capital can be institutional/organizational as well as individual.

- Good societies foster institutions that promote informal caring capital and create social policies that formalize caring capital activities and services.

- These principles are infused throughout the Good Society Index

Methodological Roots

– Social Indicators movement; new journal in 1974
– International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies founded in 1996
– OECD World Forums on Measuring the Progress of Societies
– UNDP (Development Programme) Human Development Indexes (HDI) reporting project
– "Quality of Life" Index from the *Economist* magazine's Economist Intelligence Unit
– Gallup Global Well Being surveys in 155 nations
– Progress in combining three types of indicators:
  1. **Official government statistics, e.g., life expectancy**
  2. **Responses to international questionnaire surveys, e. g., attitudes**
  3. **Existing, published indexes with a narrow scope, e.g., "Free Press"**

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How we measure characteristics that reflect 'good societies?

- 48 social indicators representing either processes or outcomes of good societies:
- These 48 indicators organized into 12 categories or components called indexes.

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Good Societies Index 2012

Twelve Components* (& Sample Indicators)

1 **Economic Sustainability** (*Income, inequality*)
2 **Child Well-Being** (*Often eating with parents*)
3 **Safety** (*Few homicides*)
4 **Health** (*Self-reported health, incidence of AIDS*)
5 **Non-Violence** (*Low arms exports*)
6 **Integrity & Social Justice** (*Corruption-free organizations*)
7 **Civil Society** (*Freedom of the Press*)
8 **Compassion** (*Caregiving time, also hosting refugees*)
9 **Environmental Sustainability** (*Emissions, renewables*)
10 **Education** (*Reading, graduation rates*)
11 **Social Sustainability** (*Subjective well-being, migration*)
12 **Social Cohesion** (*Trust, tolerance, union membership*)

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Countries in the Main Good Societies Index, 2012

The Twenty Most Affluent* Countries		
Australia	Germany	Portugal
Austria	Ireland	Spain
Belgium	Italy	Sweden
Canada	Japan	Switzerland
Denmark	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Finland	New Zealand	United States
France	Norway	

*These were the most affluent countries in 2009, after eliminating countries with populations under 3 million.

**The BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) added in some analyses.

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Calculation of the Good Societies Index

Steps

1. Locate the statistic (e.g., % or mean) for each country for any given indicator
2. Calculate standard scores (z-scores) by subtracting each county statistic, x, from the mean of all countries, and dividing the result by the standard deviation of all countries
3. Re-standardize each z-score to give each set of scores a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15, just like an intelligence test score
4. After this is done for all the indicators in a component set, e.g., health, then the mean of all non-missing scores is calculated for each country, to produce the component index score.
5. The Good Societies (overall) Index is the mean for each country across all eight component scores.
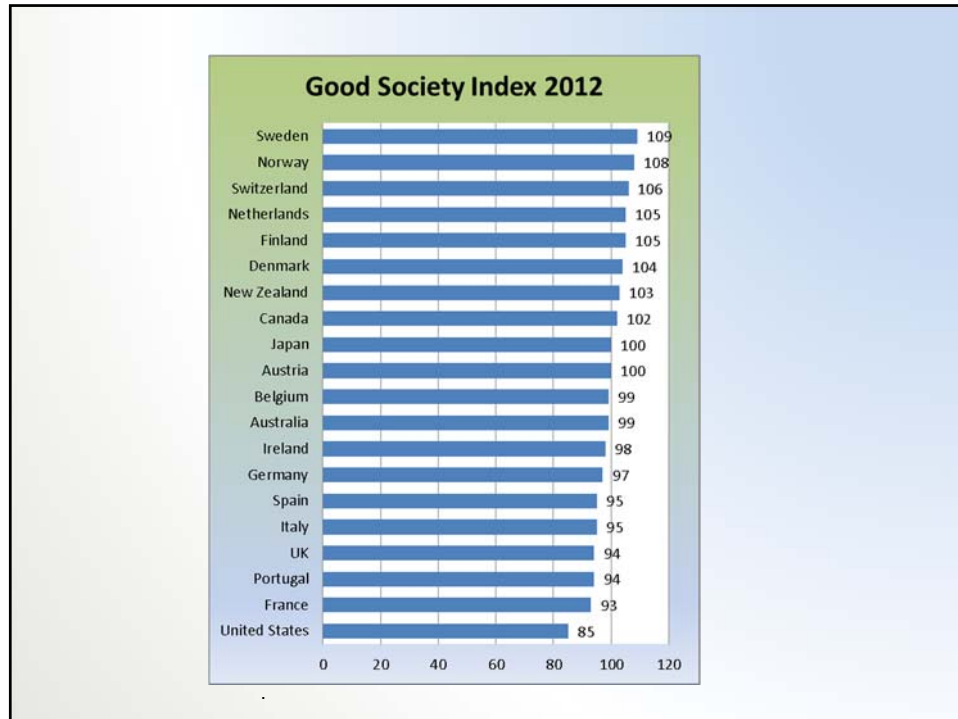
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A Glimpse at the Scores for 20 countries & 12 Components

	Good Society Index (All Components)	1. Economic Sustainability Index	2. Child Well-being Index	3. Safety Index	4. Health & Health-care Index	5. Non-Violence Index	6. Integrity and Social Justice Index	7. Civil Society Index	8. Compassion Index	9. Environmental Sustainability	10. Education	11. Social Sustainability Index	12. Social Cohesion Index	Overall (average) Good Society Index
Australia	96	98	104	100	93	97	105	98	81	98	111	102	98	
Austria	106	101	97	99	111	96	101	107	107	94	99	96	101	
Belgium	96	110	95	105	103	101	104	98	92	97	86	103	99	
Canada	100	95	103	106	103	110	100	107	96	99	103	107	102	
Denmark	117	106	97	104	103	109	115	103	95	94	109	107	105	
Finland	107	106	96	98	109	114	110	99	106	114	105	117	106	
France	103	97	100	98	92	92	84	90	104	89	91	85	93	
Germany	100	92	101	97	102	92	103	104	97	104	90	96	98	
Ireland	85	100	98	106	103	96	96	104	88	92	107	97	97	
Italy	84	109	105	96	103	99	85	90	101	97	88	96	96	
Japan	97	111	110	102	112	91	87	100	102	112	90	89	100	
Netherlands	109	109	105	105	95	106	114	110	91	101	104	108	104	
New Zealand	99	86	105	100	102	106	108	110	113	108	100	98	102	
Norway	115	106	109	108	102	108	115	114	106	100	109	111	108	
Portugal	93	99	94	89	117	97	89	97	109	99	75	86	95	
Spain	92	102	97	97	109	96	97	86	96	88	94	98	96	
Sweden	106	104	107	102	93	108	118	118	119	95	108	118	107	
Switzerland	109	109	108	110	102	111	97	96	111	110	120	94	106	
UK	95	86	98	101	81	91	87	94	98	101	93	94	93	
United States	82	72	80	70	68	73	78	91	79	90	101	92	85	

Good Society Index 2012

Country	Index
Sweden	109
Norway	108
Switzerland	106
Netherlands	105
Finland	105
Denmark	104
New Zealand	103
Canada	102
Japan	100
Austria	100
Belgium	99
Australia	99
Ireland	98
Germany	97
Spain	95
Italy	95
UK	94
Portugal	94
France	93
United States	85

Country Tiers below are Based upon Rankings on the Good Society Index and the Similarity of Inter-correlations among 12 Index Components

Top Tier	*Middle Tier*	*Bottom Tier*
Sweden	Japan	United States
Norway	Australia	United Kingdom
Finland	Canada	France
Switzerland	Germany	Spain
Netherlands	Austria	Portugal

Note: The remaining countries are all in Europe & fall into the Middle Tier.

1 Economic Sustainability **Indicators**

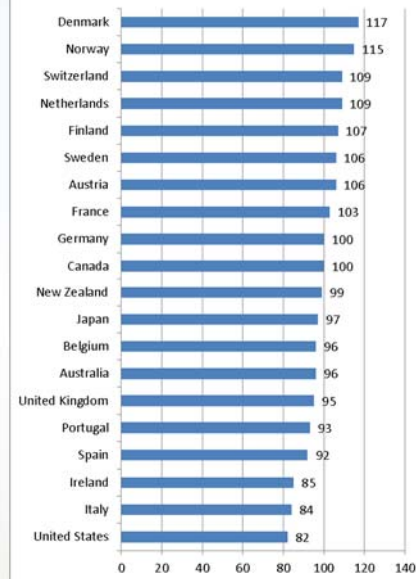| Indicator	Data Used	Source
Inequality-adjusted income	Income downgraded for inequality	OECD. *Society at a Glance, 2011.*
Low Adult Poverty	Percent below 50% of median income (reversed*)	UN Dev. Program, Human Development Report, 2011
Employment	Working portion of working eligible in ages 15-64	OECD Employment Outlook, 2011
Technology Innovation Policies	Adjusted for global impacts	Center for Global Development, 2011

*Reversed means to make larger values lower on a scale and vice versa.
For example, subtracting a percent from 100, reverses the values.

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1 Economic Sustainability Index

Country	Value
Denmark	117
Norway	115
Switzerland	109
Netherlands	109
Finland	107
Sweden	106
Austria	106
France	103
Germany	100
Canada	100
New Zealand	99
Japan	97
Belgium	96
Australia	96
United Kingdom	95
Portugal	93
Spain	92
Ireland	85
Italy	84
United States	82

2 Child Well-Being Index
Indicators

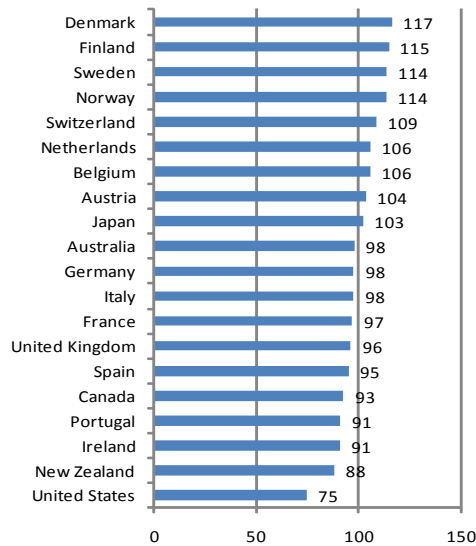| Indicator	Data Used	Source
Low child poverty	Percent of children living below poverty line (reversed*)	OECD *Growing Unequal* 2008
Low percent living in single-parent families	Percent of children age 11, 13,15 in single-parenting (rev.*)	OECD Family Database, mid-2000s
Low % of children often eating evening meal with parents	Age 15 self-report (reversed*)	UNICEF *Innnocenti Report Card*, 2007 and OECD PISA
Few births to teens	Births per 1,000 mothers age 15-19 (reversed*)	OECD, *Society at a Glance, 2011*

*Reversed means to make larger values lower on a scale and vice versa.

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Child Well-Being Index

Denmark	117
Finland	115
Sweden	114
Norway	114
Switzerland	109
Netherlands	106
Belgium	106
Austria	104
Japan	103
Australia	98
Germany	98
Italy	98
France	97
United Kingdom	96
Spain	95
Canada	93
Portugal	91
Ireland	91
New Zealand	88
United States	75

0   50   100   150

3 Safety Index Indicators

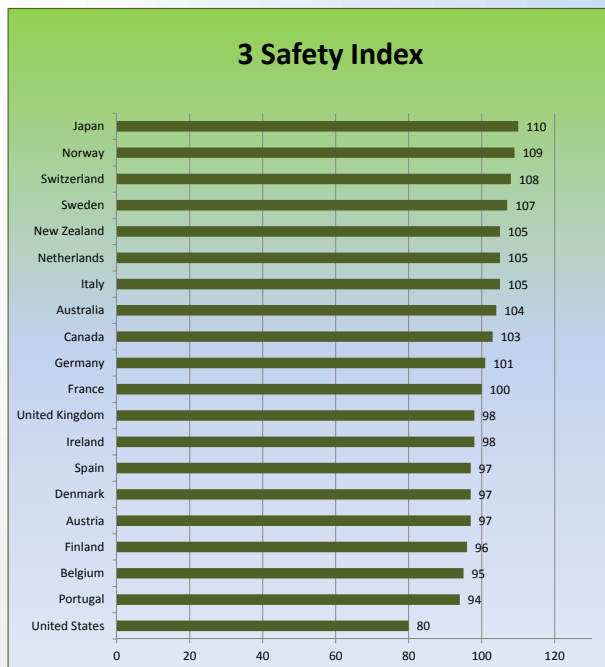| Indicator	Data Used	Source
Low homicide rate	Homicide rate (reversed)	UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010
National Security Index	Index of Aid to Developing Countries, 2009	Center for Global Development, Commit. To Development Index
Life Expectancy	Total Life Expectancy at birth	OECD, *Health Database, 2010.*
Few road fatalities	Road fatalities per million population (reversed)	OECD, *Factbook, 2008.*

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3 Safety Index

Country	Value
Japan	110
Norway	109
Switzerland	108
Sweden	107
New Zealand	105
Netherlands	105
Italy	105
Australia	104
Canada	103
Germany	101
France	100
United Kingdom	98
Ireland	98
Spain	97
Denmark	97
Austria	97
Finland	96
Belgium	95
Portugal	94
United States	80

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4 Health & Heathcare Indicators

Indicator	Data Used	Source
Self-reported good health	Life expectancy at birth, 2007	OECD *Society at a Glance, 2011*.
Low incidence of AIDS	AIDS rate (reversed)	OECD, *Health at a Glance, 2009*
Low obesity	Percent obese age 15+ (reversed)	OECD *Factbook, 2010*.
Low avoidable hospital admissions for congestive heart failure (CHF)	Avoidable admissions for CHF (reversed)	OECD, *Health at a Glance, 2009*

4 Health & Healthcare Index

Country	Value
Switzerland	110
Norway	108
Ireland	106
Canada	106
Netherlands	105
Belgium	105
Denmark	104
Sweden	102
Japan	102
UK	101
New Zealand	100
Australia	100
Austria	99
France	98
Finland	98
Spain	97
Germany	97
Italy	96
Portugal	89
United States	70

5 Non-Violence Index Indicators

Indicator	Data Used	Source
Contributions to peace	Index of Contributions to Global Peace	Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008
Low Total Armed Forces per capita	Total Armed Forces per capita (reversed)	The Military Balance, 2010
Low defense spending per person	Per capita spending for defense in 2008 (reversed)	The Military Balance, 2010
Low arms exports per person	Arms exports per capita, 2009 (reversed)	Stockholm Int'l Peace Research Institute, 2010

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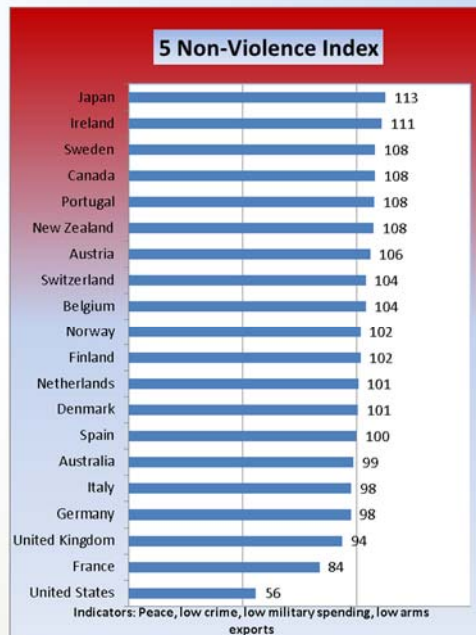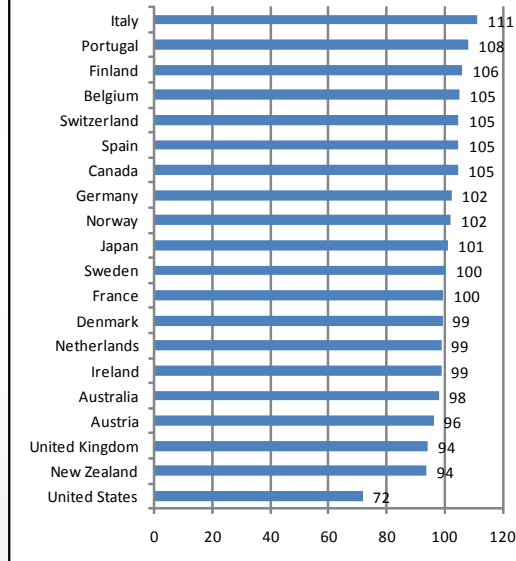
6 Integrity & Justice Indicators

Indicator	Data Used	Source
Corruption-free organizations	Corruption Perceptions Index, 2009	Transparency International
Corporate Social Responsibility	Index of Corporate Social Responsibility	*Scand. J. of Management* 25 (2009), 10-22.
Protection of Citizens from Surveillance	International Privacy Index	Privacy International, 2007
Low prison populations	Prisoners per 100,000 persons in 2009 (reversed)	OECD *Society at a Glance, 2011*

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Integrity & Social Justice Index

Country	Value
Italy	111
Portugal	108
Finland	106
Belgium	105
Switzerland	105
Spain	105
Canada	105
Germany	102
Norway	102
Japan	101
Sweden	100
France	100
Denmark	99
Netherlands	99
Ireland	99
Australia	98
Austria	96
United Kingdom	94
New Zealand	94
United States	72

7 Civil Society Index Indicators

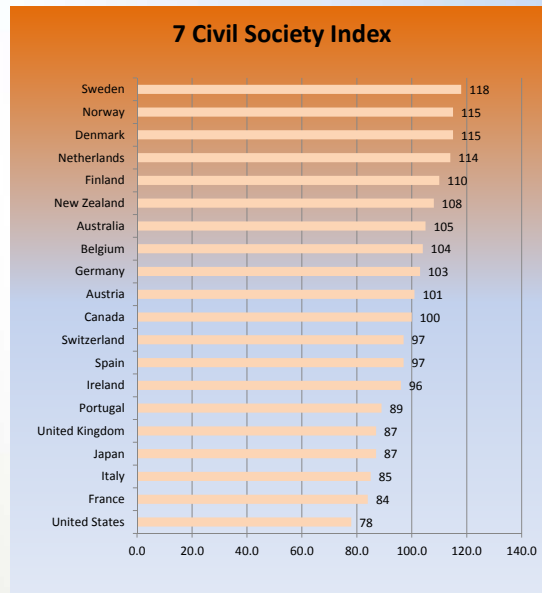| Indicator	Data Used	Source
Democracy Index	Democracy rating by nation	Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008
Turnout in national elections	Percent voting in most recent parliamentary/congressional elections	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2010
Freedom of the press	Index of Freedom of the Press	Freedom House, Global Press Freedom, 2009
Women members of Parliament/Congress	Percent of members who are women in 2011 or earliest year	UNDP (2011), *Human Development Report 2011- Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*.

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7 Civil Society Index

Country	Value
Sweden	118
Norway	115
Denmark	115
Netherlands	114
Finland	110
New Zealand	108
Australia	105
Belgium	104
Germany	103
Austria	101
Canada	100
Switzerland	97
Spain	97
Ireland	96
Portugal	89
United Kingdom	87
Japan	87
Italy	85
France	84
United States	78

8 Compassion Index
Indicators

Indicator	Data Used	Source
Kindness & helpfulness of peers	Percent of children age 11, 13, 15, who reported kind peers	Health Behavior of School age Children study, 2001
Refugees hosted per citizen	Refugees hosted per 1,000 citizens	UM Refugee Agency Statistical Yearbook, 2008
Government aid to developing countries	Index of Aid to Developing Countries, 2009	Center for Global Development, Commit. To Development Index
Caregiving minutes per day	OECD	*OECD* (2011), Society at a Glance 2011

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One indicator is amount of "Aid to Developing Countries"

The index takes into account the quality as well as quantity of the aid given. For instance, military aid is weighted much less than unencumbered economic assistance.
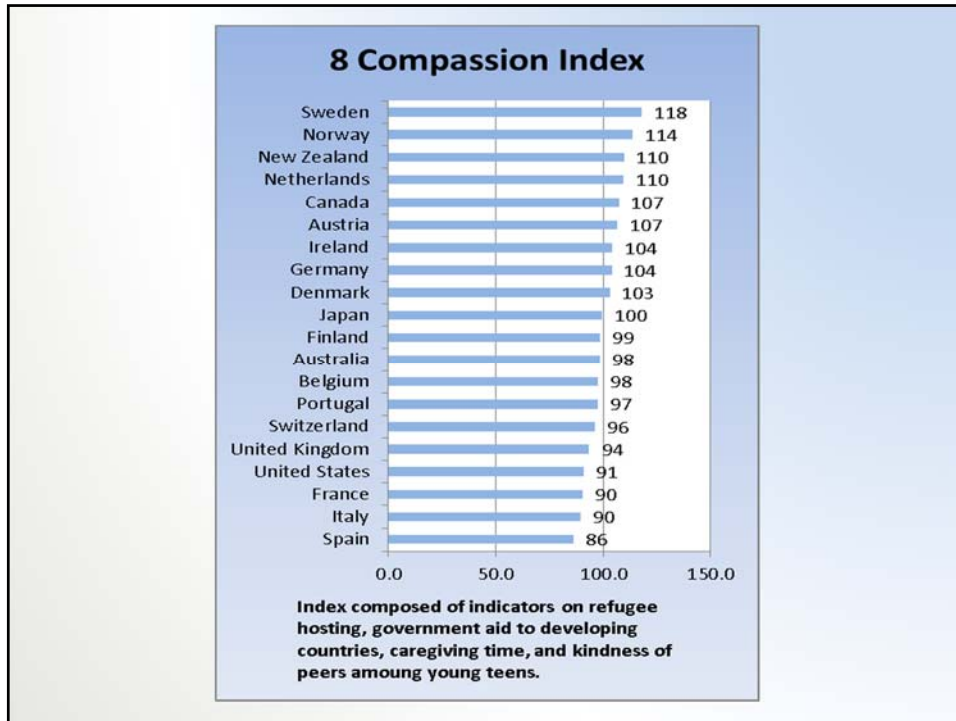
8c. Index of Aid to Developing Countries

Country	Value
Sweden	14.3
Denmark	12.2
Norway	11.7
Netherlands	11.2
Ireland	9.8
Finland	5.7
Belgium	5.6
Switzerland	5.2
United Kingdom	5
Canada	4.8
France	4.4
Spain	4.3
Australia	3.6
New Zealand	3.4
Germany	3.4
Austria	3.2
Portugal	2.8
United States	2.3
Italy	2.1
Japan	0.9

Axis Title

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8 Compassion Index

Country	Value
Sweden	118
Norway	114
New Zealand	110
Netherlands	110
Canada	107
Austria	107
Ireland	104
Germany	104
Denmark	103
Japan	100
Finland	99
Australia	98
Belgium	98
Portugal	97
Switzerland	96
United Kingdom	94
United States	91
France	90
Italy	90
Spain	86

Index composed of indicators on refugee hosting, government aid to developing countries, caregiving time, and kindness of peers among young teens.

9 Environmental Sustainability Index

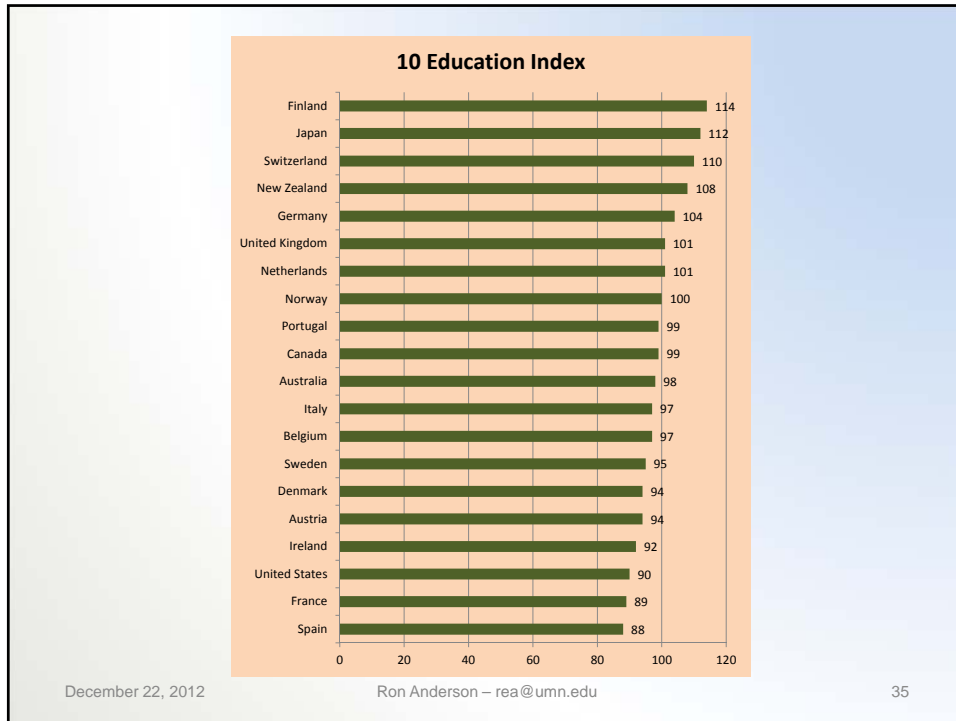| Indicator	Data Used	Source
Low Carbon Dioxide Emissions	Tons per capita (reversed)	UNDP *Human Development Report, 2011*.
Environmental Performance Index.	UNDP Composite Index	UNDP *Human Development Report, 2011*.
Low Municipal Waste per capita	Municipal waste per capita in 2005 (reversed)	OCED Factbook 2008.
Renewables share of energy	Government social expenditures in 2005	*OECD* (2011), *Society at a Glance 2011*

9 Environmental Sustainability Index

Country	Value
Sweden	119
New Zealand	113
Switzerland	111
Portugal	109
Austria	107
Norway	106
Finland	106
France	104
Japan	102
Italy	101
United Kingdom	98
Germany	97
Spain	96
Canada	96
Denmark	95
Belgium	92
Netherlands	91
Ireland	88
Australia	81
United States	79

Includes indicators on carbon emissions, municipal waste and energy consumed, all per capita.
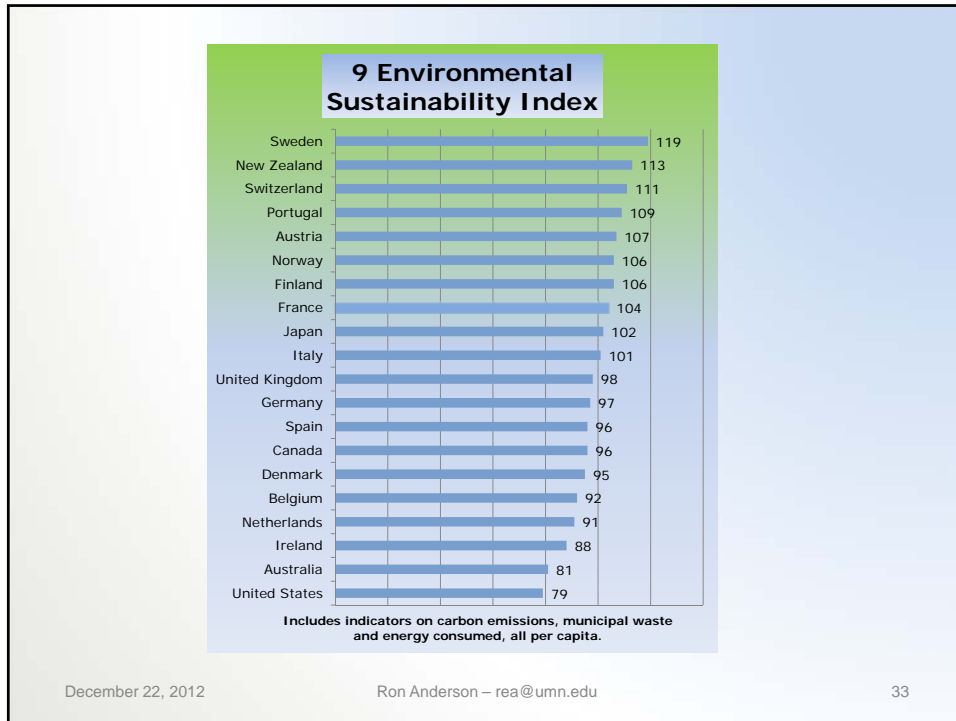
10 Education Index Indicators

Indicator	Data Used	Source
Upper Secondary School Graduation Rates	Percent of children age 11, 13, 15, who reported kind peers	OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance, 2011*
Adult Education Participation Rates	Adults 25-64 who enroll at any educational level	OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance, 2011*
Reading Competencies	PISA assessment of 15-year olds in 2009	OECD (2011) *Society at a Glance, 2011*
Teacher salary levels	Ratio of teacher salary to GDP per capita	OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance, 2011*

10 Education Index

Country	Index
Finland	114
Japan	112
Switzerland	110
New Zealand	108
Germany	104
United Kingdom	101
Netherlands	101
Norway	100
Portugal	99
Canada	99
Australia	98
Italy	97
Belgium	97
Sweden	95
Denmark	94
Austria	94
Ireland	92
United States	90
France	89
Spain	88

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11 Social Sustainability Index

Indicator	Data Used	Source
Sustainable Society Index	Sustainable Society Foundation, 2012	http://www.ssfindex.com/
Public Confidence in Social Institutions	Question from Gallup World Poll 2010	OECD (2011) *Society at a Glance, 2011*
Economist's Quality of Life Index	Composite Index 2005	Economist Intelligence Unit
Migration Inflow	Government social expenditures in 2005	*OECD Factbook*, 2010

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Social Sustainability

- Is social process and institution focused, designing strategies and tactics toward desired futures.
- Emphasizes the inter-relatedness of environmental and economic systems in social functioning
- Is future focused, defining desired states, goals and meanings
-

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11 Social Sustainability Index

Country	Index
Finland	115
Denmark	114
Norway	112
Canada	109
Australia	108
Sweden	106
Netherlands	105
Switzerland	103
New Zealand	102
Italy	101
Ireland	101
United States	99
Austria	98
United Kingdom	95
France	95
Spain	92
Belgium	92
Japan	91
Germany	89
Portugal	83

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12 Social Cohesion Indicators

Indicator	Data Used	Source
Trust	Percent of adults who self-report trust	OECD (2011) *Society at a Glance, 2011*
Tolerance of community diversity	Percent who say their community is good place for various minorities	OECD (2011) *Society at a Glance, 2011*
Union Membership	Union members as percent of employed in 2002	Lesch (2004) (see footnotes)
Families or domestic partnerships	Government social expenditures in 2005	OECD (2011) *Society at a Glance, 2011*

Conceptual framework: The Social Cohesion "Triangle"

SOCIAL INCLUSION

SOCIAL CAPITAL

SOCIAL COHESION

SOCIAL MOBILITY

12 Social Cohesion Index

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Good Society Index is closely related to Lower Levels of Subjective Suffering

*For analysis with BRIC countries, a 9-item short form of the GSI was used.
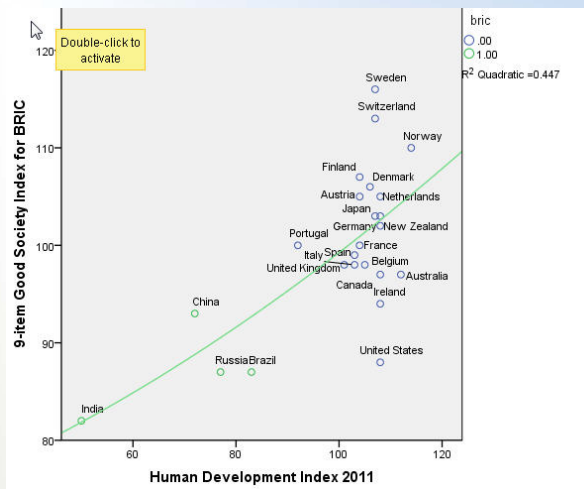
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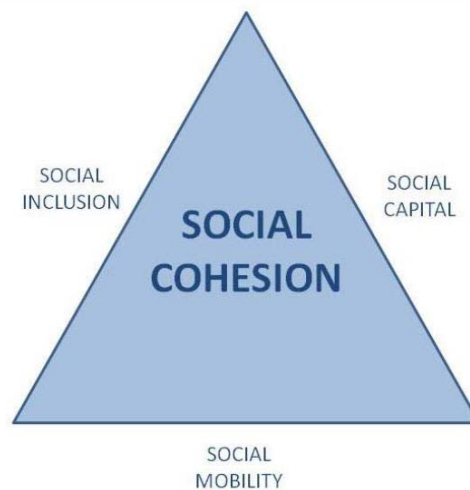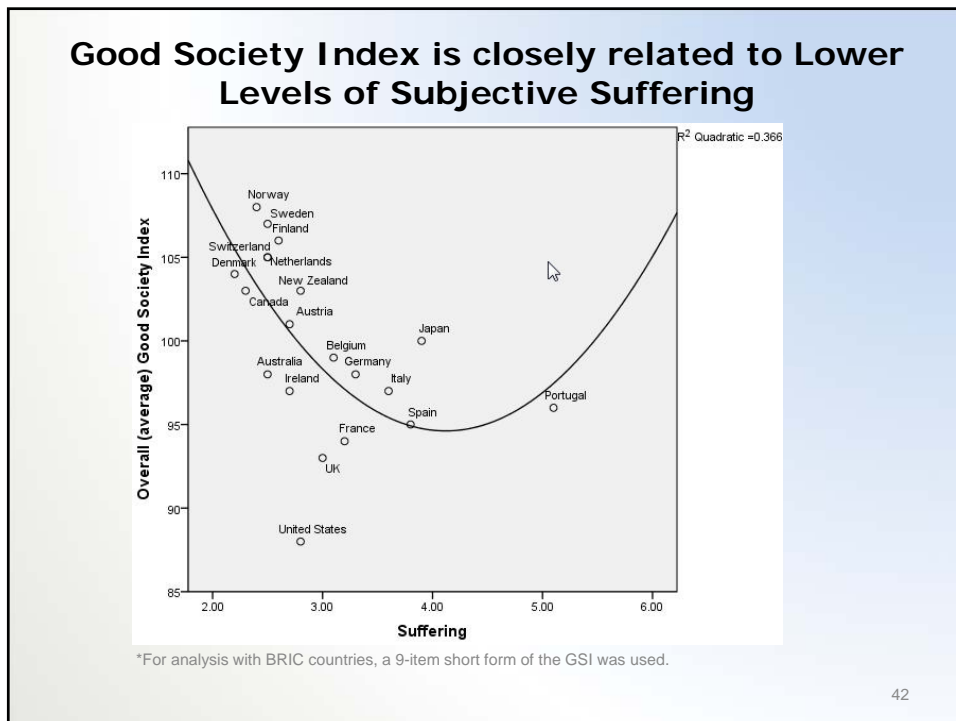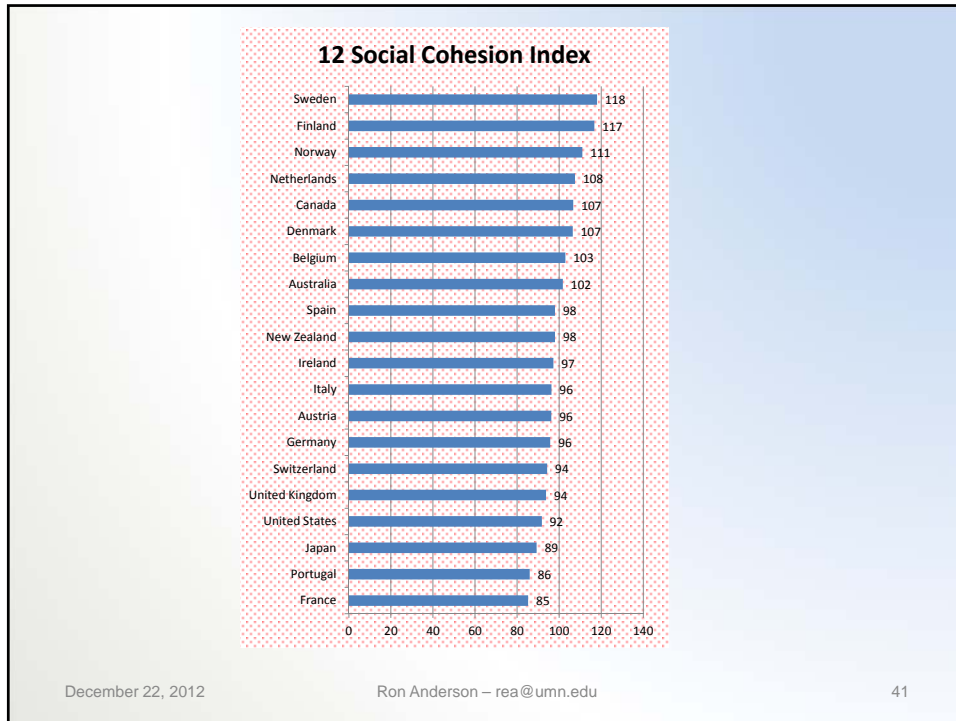
Good Society Index and Suffering
including
BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, & China)
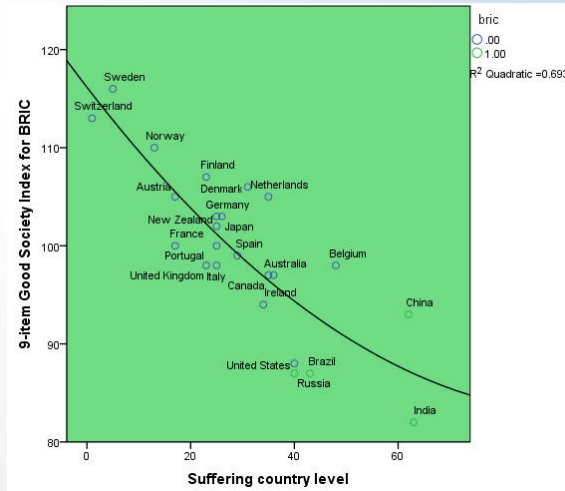
December 22, 2012 *For analysis with BRIC countries, a 9-item short form of the GSI was used. 43

Good Society Index* compared to the
UNDP Human Development Index 2011

*For analysis with BRIC countries, a 9-item short form of the GSI was used. 44

Conclusion 1 of 4

a) Quality of life differences among affluent societies obviously can not be explained by economics (wealth or income) alone. The meaning of others to members of a society underlies the functioning of 'good societies.'

b) How people view their responsibilities for each other and their commitment for caring capital and compassionate action shapes the distribution of well-being in societies.

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Conclusion 2 of 4

a) Consistent with numerous comparative analysts (such as Lindert (2004), Pontusso (2005), and Kenworthy (2004)) the Nordic countries topped the Good Societies Index.

b) Countries like the USA, where neo-liberal economics predominate, did very poorly on all dimensions of the Index. One can point to the weakness of several of the indicators, but it is difficult to dismiss the overall profile of the results.

c) These results confirm that it is not necessary for an affluent society to be an individualistic, anti-government society.

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Conclusion 3 of 4

a) It may be surprising to some that the United States falls at or near the bottom of each of the eight 'Good Societies' dimensions. Furthermore, on prison rates, obesity, murders, and defense spending, the USA is not just higher, but two to three times higher than the next highest nation.

b) These measures of national character were not arbitrarily selected, but chosen to reflect the 'good society' framework.

c) While critics might argue for selection of different indicators, these results shown here give cause to pause and reflect on how countries like the USA, at the low end of the Good Society Index, could change course and improve the well-being of all its citizens.

Conclusion 4 of 4

a) Most of the 20 most affluent countries clustered around the middle range of the continuum of indicators for the 'Good Society'. The fact that few of the countries scored at extremely high points on the indicators suggests how challenging it is for a rich society to become or remain a 'Good Society.'

b) We who enjoy the comfort of living in these 'rich' societies should not forget about the many millions who live with us but struggle daily from homelessness, discrimination, and even hunger.

For further information about the

Good Societies Index 2012

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