MAKING SENSE OF YOUR RESULTS FOR A FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

This guidance helps you make sense of results from a follow-up survey.

Interpreting your results may seem daunting but if you follow our guidance it shouldn't be!

There are three parts to making sense of your results:

1.   Familiarise yourself with the presentation of the results

Download your report and understand its contents.

2.   Identify patterns in your results

Ask questions about what you see in your report, and the differences you see when you filter your results.

3.   Explain these patterns

Ask questions about why you see these patterns. Understand your results in context.

Each of these steps is explained below.

If you have completed an initial survey only, you need to refer to our guidance specifically for that purpose.

 Before you begin, follow these simple tips…

- Have an open mind. It is important to be honest and not expect just to find what you want to find. Whatever your results say, they will tell an interesting story.

- Get a second opinion. It's always useful to have someone else discuss your results with. If you can, get a colleague to help you.

- Ask the simple questions first. You don't want to miss anything obvious or become lost in the detail.

- Think about your results in context. Remember that every survey is unique so you are usually best-placed to explain your results. However, there may also be external factors that you need to consider.

- Write down your observations. You don't want to forget them!

1. Familiarise yourself

Print out your report and read through it. You will see that it has four sections.

- **Summary** – this gives a snapshot of your sample and the results for the whole group.

- **Sample** – this describes the characteristics of the group of young people who completed both the initial and follow-up survey.
- **Your results** – this presents the results of NPC's Well-being Measure for the young people who completed both the initial and follow-up survey. Graph 1 shows the well-being of the whole group and Graph 2 and 3 show male and female participants.
- **Appendix** – this contains numbers behind the results shown in the graphs.

The first thing to be aware of is that your results only show participants that have completed both the initial and follow-up survey. This methodology is called a 'matched pairs analysis' and allows you to accurately look at the differences within the same sample between the two points in time. Young people that have completed only one of the surveys are not included in the analysis.

Now take a closer look at the graphs. The guide overleaf describes how to interpret the graphs and is a copy of page 6 of your report. Note that the graphs only show change that are statistically significant to a 95% confidence level. You can also check out all the numbers behind the graph – including those that are not statistical significant – in the report's Appendix.

Once you've familiarised yourself with presentation of the report, you can begin to analyse your results.

What is statistical significance?

Statistical significance is a way of determining how likely a finding is to have occurred due to chance. It is a calculation based on the characteristics of a sample.

The graphs in your report only show changes that are 'statistically significant' to a 95% confidence level, a benchmark generally accepted by social researchers. It means that we can be very confident—95% certain—that the changes shown are not just due to chance. Put another way, if you were to repeat the process 100 times, you would expect to see similar results 95 times.

Where changes are not statistically significant, this does not mean that there was no difference between the samples. Changes that do not meet the 95% confidence level are displayed in Appendix 2 of your report alongside with their own confidence level.

For more information about how we calculate statistical significance, see the FAQs section of our website www.well-beingmeasure.com.
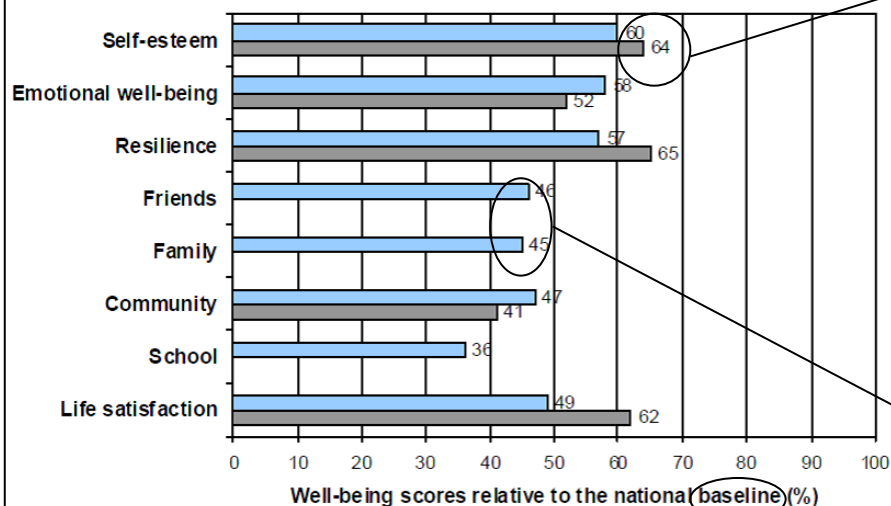
How to interpret the graphs—initial and follow-up survey

The title of the graph shows who these results apply to. It might be the whole sample or a group within the sample (for example, girls).

The national baseline is a sample of young people from across the UK, used to put your results in context.

For example, if your results show a self-esteem score of 60%, it means that 60% of the national population has lower self-esteem than your group and 40% of the population has higher self-esteem than your group.

On each graph, the baseline is adjusted to account for the age and gender of young people surveyed.

Graph 1: The well-being of the whole group

The blue bar shows the group's average well-being score for the initial survey, and the grey bar shows the average score for the follow-up survey. The difference represents the change that has taken place.

Scores are shown as percentages and are relative to the national baseline.

The results for the follow-up survey are only shown if we can be 95% confident that there has been a statistically significant change from the initial survey.

			Well-being scores
Self-esteem	60	64	
Emotional well-being	58	52	
Resilience	57	65	
Friends	46		
Family	45		
Community	47	41	
School	36		
Life satisfaction	49	62	

Well-being scores relative to the national baseline (%) (0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100)

This describes the change, if any, that has taken place between the initial survey and the follow-up survey.

An upward arrow shows that there has been an improvement in well-being. A sideways arrow shows that there has been no significant change in well-being. A downward arrow shows that there has been a reduction in well-being.

Effect size describes the size and consistency of the change.

For example, if all children in the group become happier, even by a small amount, then the impact is consistent, giving a large effect size. If there is a lot of variation among the children, the effect size is small.

Aspect of well-being	Change		Effect size
Self-esteem	↑	There was a significant improvement in self-esteem, which increased by 4 percentage points, relative to the national baseline.	Medium
Emotional well-being	↓	There was a significant reduction in emotional well-being, which decreased by 6 percentage points, relative to the national baseline.	Medium
Resilience	↑	There was a significant improvement in resilience, which increased by 8 percentage points, relative to the national baseline.	Small
Satisfaction with friends	→	There was no significant change in satisfaction with friends.	N/A
Satisfaction with family	→	There was no significant change in satisfaction with family.	N/A
Satisfaction with community	↓	There was a significant reduction in satisfaction with community, which decreased by 6 percentage points, relative to the national baseline.	Medium
Satisfaction with school	→	There was no significant change in satisfaction with school.	N/A
Life satisfaction	↑	There was a significant improvement in life satisfaction, which increased by 13 percentage points, relative to the national baseline.	Small

2. Identify patterns

By now you will have a basic understanding of your results.

At this stage, the most important thing is to ask the right questions and be structured about what you do.

We recommend that you begin by asking three questions, which are outlined below. There are many ways to approach interpreting your results but we think that these provide a straightforward and logical starting point for analysis. As you become more familiar with the tool, you can adopt your own approach.

Question 1: What changes do you see in the group's scores between the initial and follow-up survey?

If there has been a significant change in an aspect of well-being, the graph will display two adjacent bars – one showing the score at the initial survey and the second showing the score at the follow-up survey. If there has not been a significant change, then the graph only displays one bar.

How does your group's scores change overall? Are the changes positive or negative? How many percentage points do the scores increase/decrease by?

Note that it is highly unlikely that you see significant changes in all aspects of well-being. (The most common result is that changes are observed in one to four aspects.)

Write down your observations.

Question 2: How do the changes for the aspects of well-being differ?

Look at how the different aspects of well-being on the same graph change. Is there a large change in one area than the others? Are there any results that stand out?

For example, is there an increase in one aspect of well-being but a decrease in another? Is there a bigger change in low initial scores than in higher initial scores?

Write down your observations.

Question 3: Are there differences between subgroups?

Your report contains a graph that has overall scores for the whole group, and then two graphs for boys and girls.

Use the filtering tool to look at the differences between other subgroups, using the tag questions you entered when setting up your survey. Go to the 'View results' screen for the survey and select the tag you want using the drop down boxes. Please be patient while the page loads.

What differences can you see between the subgroups you have chosen? Which subgroup do you see the most significant change?

Write down your observations.

3. Explain your results

The next step is to ask why you have observed the patterns. The answers to this question will depend on the group you have chosen to survey. It will also be influenced by how and when you delivered your surveys.

There are many reasons why you have got the results that you have, most of which will be unique to your project. Below we describe how you might explain the results and some of the general issues that you should consider. We illustrate how to make sense of your results using an example.

If you see positive change …

There is a good chance that this is due to the project you are measuring. However, should also consider environmental factors, and whether or not your sample is biased in some way (see below).

If you see negative change …

This may be due to your project, or it may be due to external factors.

It may be that your project did have a positive impact on well-being, but this impact was counteracted by negative environmental factors. For example, the transition from primary to secondary school can initially have a negative impact on well-being.

You might see a positive impact in some aspects of well-being and a negative impact in others. There can often be a logical explanation for this. For example, when working with disadvantaged young people, it is not uncommon to see a decrease in resilience scores as they become more aware of the difficulties in their lives and begin to learn to cope with them. Over a longer period of time, you might expect these scores to increase again but this may not be picked up in your results.

If you see no change …

This may be due to your project or it may be due to external factors.

Note that NPC's Well-being Measure shows change between two points in time – the period between the initial and follow-up survey. It doesn't capture any changes that happens in young people's lives before or after this period.

If you administered the initial survey after the beginning of your project, you may have missed some of the changes to young people's well-being. For example, in some projects, most of the change happens early in the project and the remaining part of the project is about maintaining and embedding these changes. That is why is so important to plan your survey and that you use the initial survey to get an accurate sense of young people's starting points.

When looking at your results there are also a number of general issues you should consider.

Your results as a reflection of the characteristics of your group

You can expect the characteristics of the young people you work with to show up in the changes that you see. For example, if you work with a group that score very highly in an aspect of well-being on the initial survey (a score of 80 or more), you may be less likely to see an increase. Conversely, if scores began very low (a score of 20 or less), you might be more likely to see positive change.

When looking at your results, consider whether they might have been affected by bias in who filled out the surveys. Remember your results only show participants that have completed both the initial and follow-up survey. Young people that have completed only one of the surveys are not included in the analysis. Look at the details of your sample and ask yourself whether there are some groups that are over-represented in the survey. If so, you should expect this to be reflected in the results.

Your results as a snapshot of young people's well-being

Remember that your results show the well-being of your group at two particular points in time. The questions ask young people to rate how they feel about their lives as they are now.

As a result there may be external factors or events that influenced the results that you should think about. Did you ask children to fill out the survey at a time when they were particularly unsettled or excited? Was there any external event, such as a holiday, that might have affected how they answered? If so, you should take this into account when judging the scores.

Disentangling your impact

Your results describes the well-being of your group at two points in time that you chose – perhaps two weeks, six months or a year apart. The change you observe is a result of what happens in between the two points.

The larger the period of time between surveys the more external influences there are on young people's lives. For example, over a period of a year, a young person may experience changes in their family situation, move house, or their parent might lose their job – all of which can affect well-being. These changes are picked up by the Well-being Measure – something which is unavoidable.

This makes it difficult to disentangle what changes are due to your activities and what changes are due to external influences.

Because of this, you may have chosen to use a control group. If you have, you can isolate the impact of your programme by subtracting any differences seen in the control group (or what would have happened anyway). This should give you an accurate sense of the change that can be attributed to your work.

Further help

If you would like our help interpreting your results, you can contact us about NPC's consulting services. Email us at wellbeing@thinknpc.org.

Example – Project Wildfire

Project Wildfire is a charity that runs three-week activity courses for young people outside school. It aims to help them to develop new skills and improve self-esteem by giving them new experiences and building friendships. Young people undertake a mixture of outdoor activities and classroom-based projects, and work together as a team.

Overall results

Below are the results from a follow-up survey, with 53 young people having completed both the initial and follow-up surveys. Young people were age 13 and 14 and were chosen by their school to participate in the project. All young people were from the same school. The initial survey was completed a week before the project began and the follow-up was completed three days after.

Graph 1: Overall results
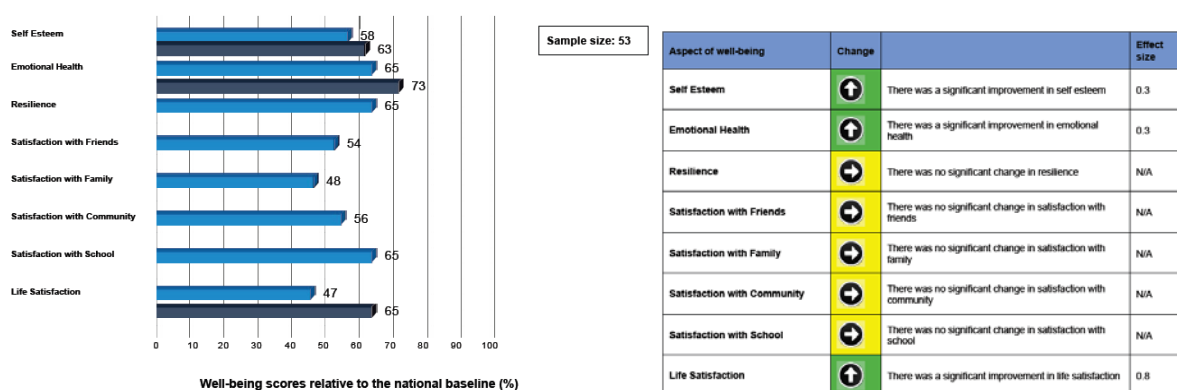
Overall, the group shows significant change in three areas of well-being. There is no significant change in five areas.

All changes are positive, indicating an increased level of well-being. The largest significant increase is seen in life satisfaction (+18 percentage points), followed by emotional well-being (+7) and self-esteem (+5).

Project Wildfire's stated aim is to improve young people's self-esteem. Overall, the results suggest that it has been successful at achieving this. The results suggest that Project Wildfire also helps build resilience – perhaps the exposure of young people to new experiences gives them greater confidence about dealing with difficulties in their lives, and what they might encounter in the future.

Project Wildfire hoped to see increases in satisfaction with friends, but there was no significant change.

No significant change was seen in satisfaction with family, community or school. Project Wildfire was not surprised by these findings.

Differences between subgroups

The survey contained a tag question on whether the young people were eligible for free school meals, a common indicator of poverty, and which allows us to divide the sample. The two graphs below show the results divided into two groups: those young people that are eligible for free school meals and those that are not.

Graph 2: Young people eligible for free schools meals
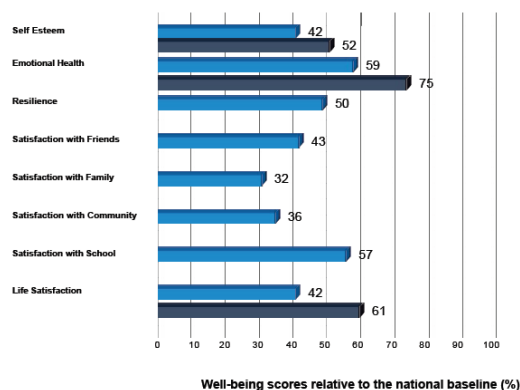
Aspect of well-being	Change		Effect size
Self Esteem	⬆	There was a significant improvement in self esteem	0.6
Emotional Health	⬆	There was a significant improvement in emotional health	0.7
Resilience	➡	There was no significant change in resilience	N/A
Satisfaction with Friends	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with friends	N/A
Satisfaction with Family	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with family	N/A
Satisfaction with Community	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with community	N/A
Satisfaction with School	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with school	N/A
Life Satisfaction	⬆	There was a significant improvement in life satisfaction	0.8

Sample size: 22

Graph 3: Young people NOT eligible for free schools meals
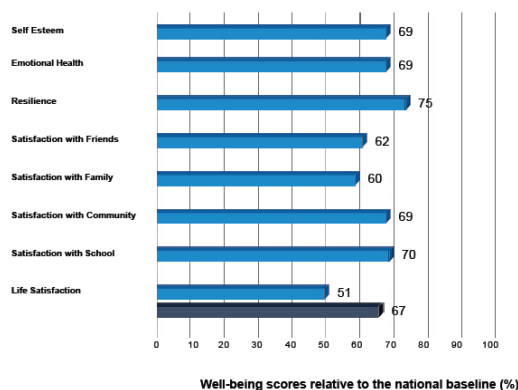
Aspect of well-being	Change		Effect size
Self Esteem	➡	There was no significant change in self esteem	N/A
Emotional Health	➡	There was no significant change in emotional health	N/A
Resilience	➡	There was no significant change in resilience	N/A
Satisfaction with Friends	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with friends	N/A
Satisfaction with Family	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with family	N/A
Satisfaction with Community	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with community	N/A
Satisfaction with School	➡	There was no significant change in satisfaction with school	N/A
Life Satisfaction	⬆	There was a significant improvement in life satisfaction	0.7

Sample size: 31

At a glance, the differences between the subgroups are obvious. Young people that are eligible for free school meals show positive change in three areas of well-being, whereas young people that are NOT eligible for free school meals show positive change in only one area. The results suggest that Project Wildfire has a more beneficial impact on the well-being of poorer children.

Referring back to Graph 1 of the overall results, it becomes clear that it is the changes in young people eligible for free school meals that are driving the changes we observe.

Broadly, these results were consistent with what Project Wildfire expected. However, even though the project appears to have a more beneficial impact on poorer children, working with young people from a range of backgrounds it is an integral part of their activities. Project Wildfire has other evidence to suggest that this achieves social and educational benefits not picked up by the Well-being Measure.

Overall, by using NPC's Well-being Measure Project Wildfire felt it had a rigorous validation of its work, as well as learning more about the characteristics of young people on its courses and the way its impact varies by group.

Further information

More examples and case studies will be published on our blog http://wellbeingmeasure.wordpress.com.