

Trend Average Happiness in Nations 1946-2010

How much people like the life they live

Table 1

Change average happiness 1973-2010 in points on scale 0-10

Rise Significant increase		Stable No significant change		Decline Significant decrease	
Italy	+ 0.63	Spain *	+ 0.29	Portugal *	- 0.68
Denmark	+ 0.55	Japan	+0.20		
France	+ 0.55	Ireland	+ 0.19		
Luxembourg	+ 0.41	West-Germany	+ 0.00		
EU9	+ 0.32	Greece *	- 0.30		
USA	+ 0.29	Belgium	- 0.33		
UK	+ 0.26				
Netherlands	+ 0.26				

* Greece since 1981, Portugal and Spain since 1985, EU9 until 2009

Table 2
Trend average happiness expressed in average annual increase

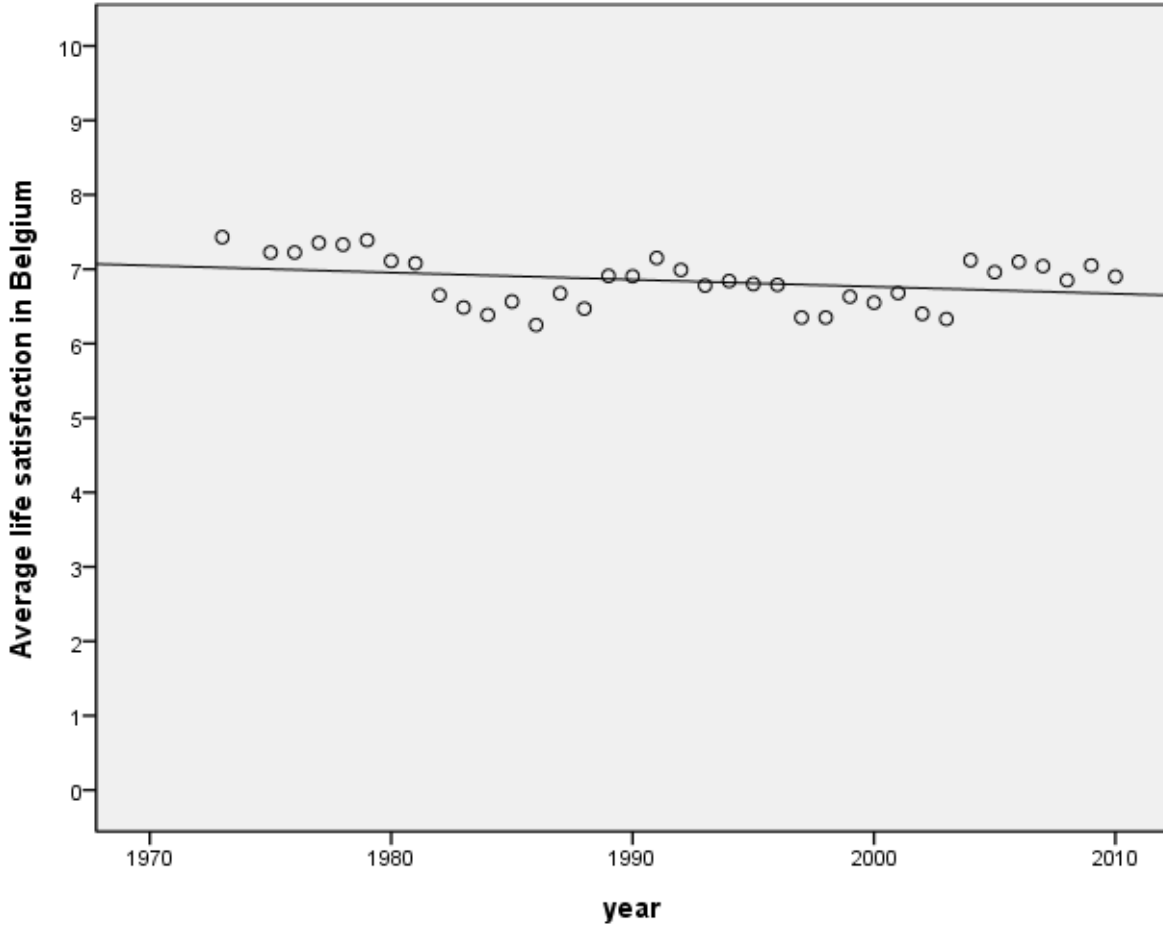
Nation	Period ⁴	Trend average happiness ^{1, 2}	
		Average annual increase ³	95% confidence interval ⁴
Belgium	1973-2010	-.009	-.019 +.001
UK	1973-2010	+.007	+.003 +.011
Denmark	1973-2010	+.015	+.011 +.018
EU9	1973-2009	+.009	+.005 +.012
France	1973-2009	+.015	+.009 +.021
Germany	1990-2010	+.001	-.017 +.020
- former West	1973-2009	+.000	-.007 +.007
- former East	1990-2009	+.000	-.017 +.018
Greece	1981-2010	-.010	-.023 +.004
Ireland	1973-2010	+.005	-.004 +.013
Italy	1973-2010	+.017	+.009 +.025
Japan	1958-2007	+.007	-.002 +.012
	1973-2007	+.006	-.003 +.014
Luxembourg	1973-2010	+.011	+.006 +.015
Netherlands	1973-2010	+.007	-.002 +.012

Portugal	1985-2010	-.026	-.039 -.013
Spain	1985-2010	+.011	-.002 +.024
USA	1946-2008	+.003	-.001 +.007
	1973-2008	+.009	+.002 +.016

Bold: p<.05 (two-sided)

GRAPHS

Belgium



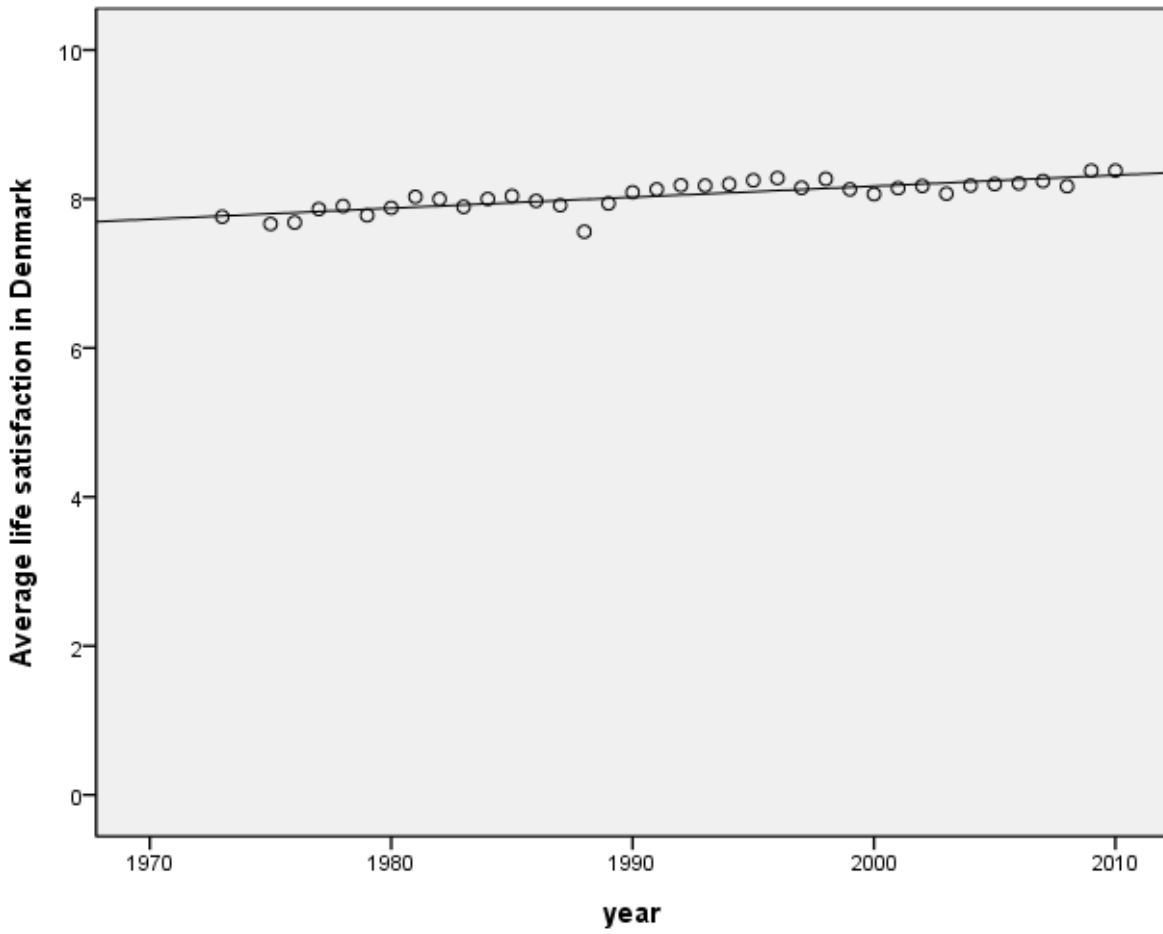
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Belgium](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).

Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_be

Denmark



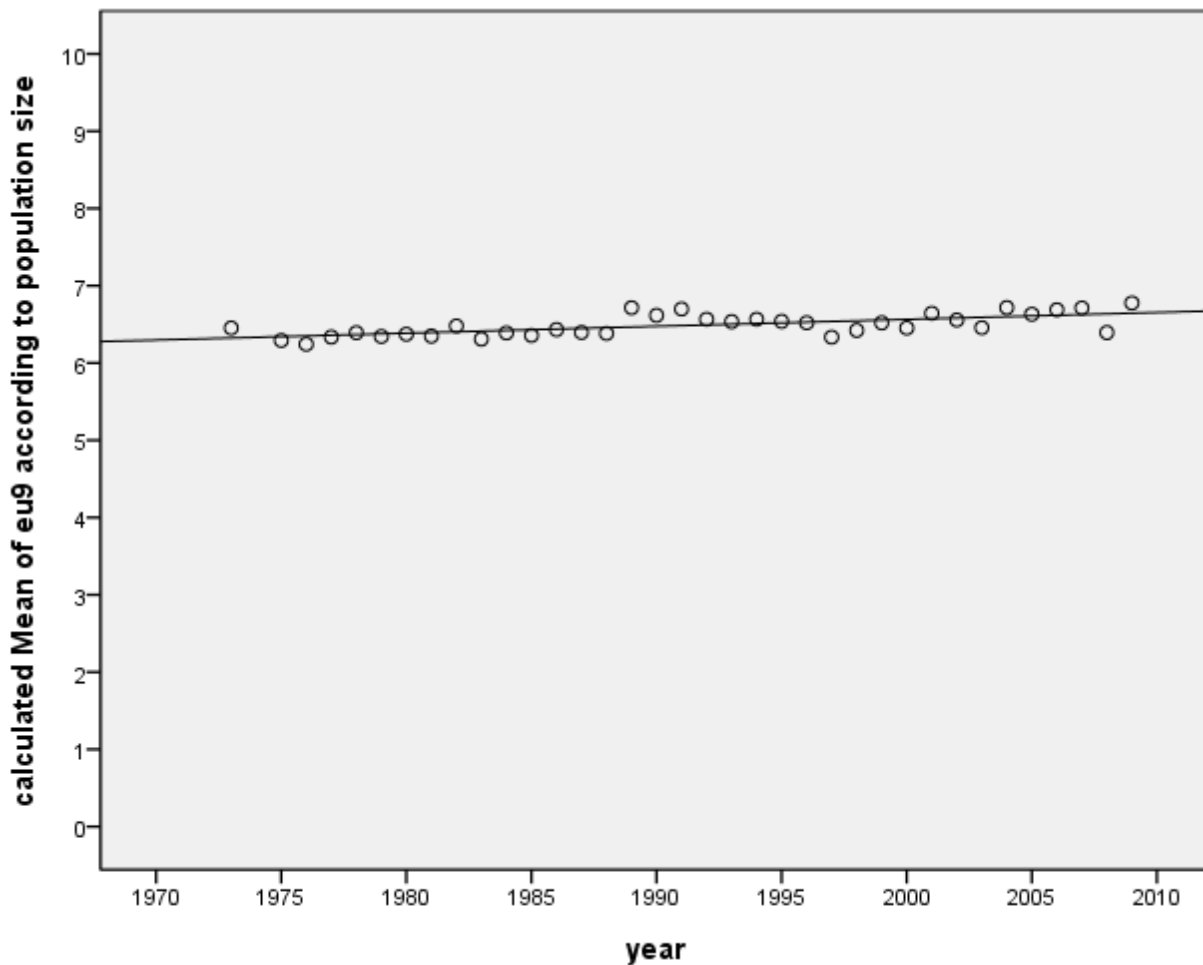
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Denmark](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)

Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_dk

EU9



Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](https://o-sll.u/sq/v/4/b).

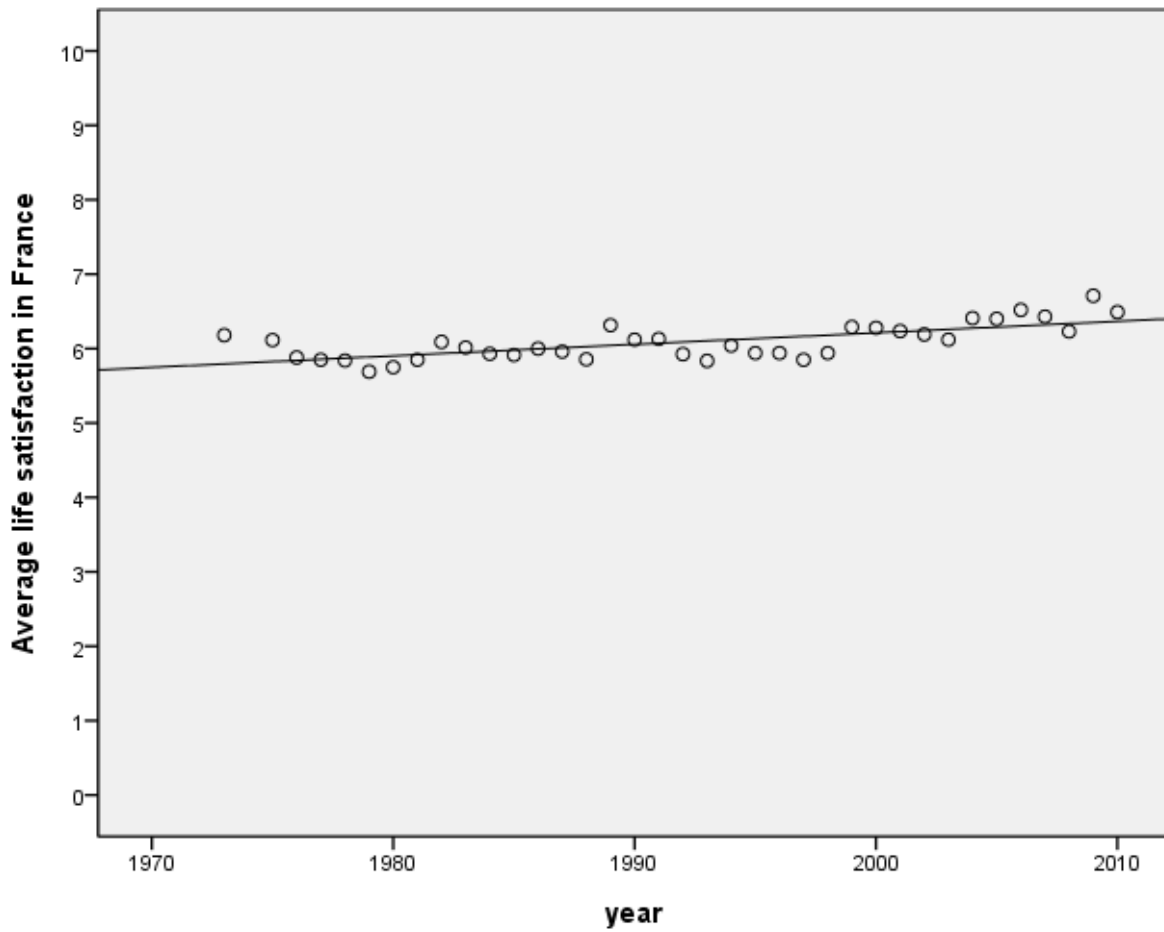
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_eu9

Weighted average of first 9 member states of the European Union 1973-2009

The population weights are about as follows (1995):

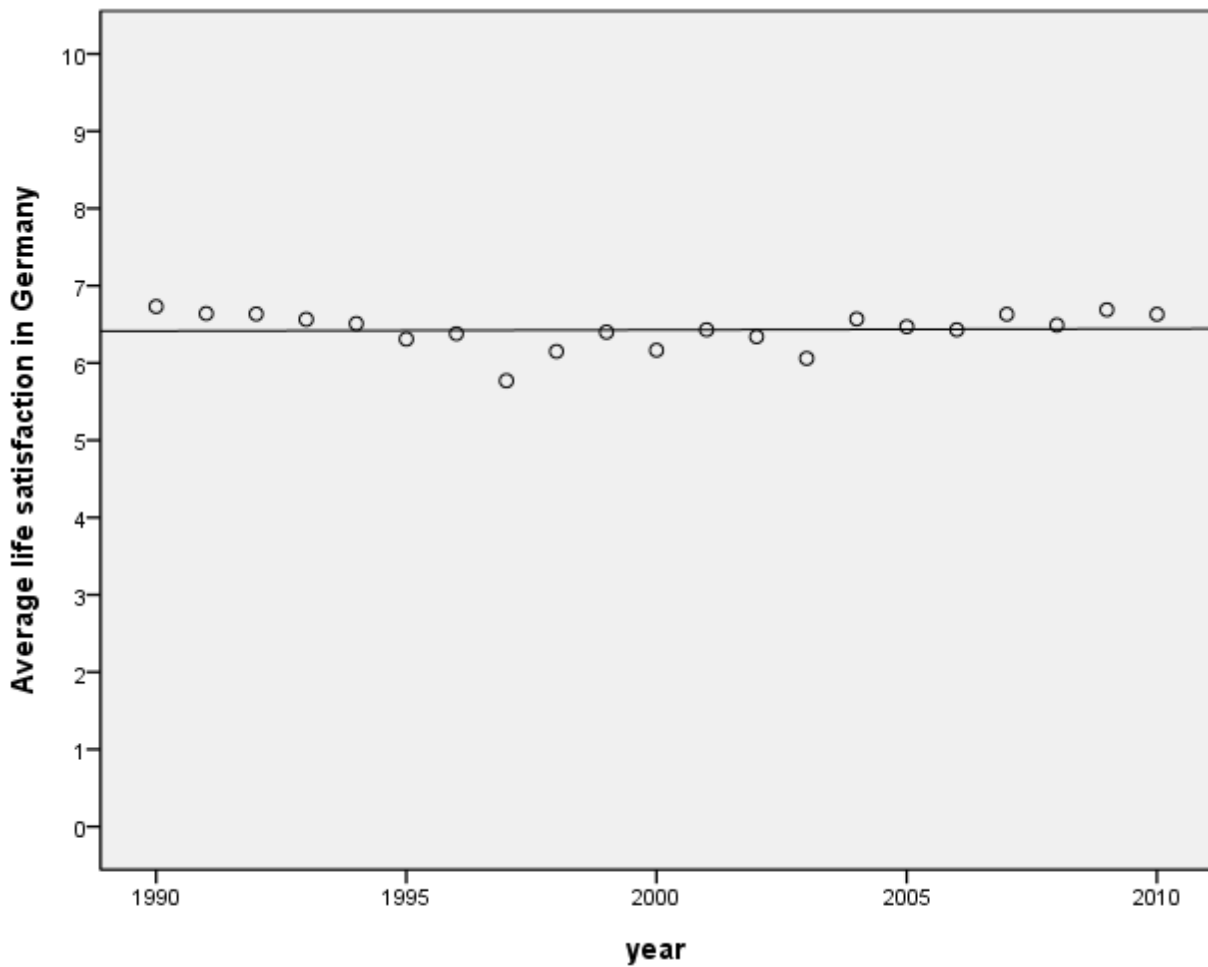
Belgium	0.037
France	0.215
(West)Germany	0.234
Ireland	0.015
Italy	0.207
Luxembourg	0.002
Netherlands	0.058
Denmark	0.019
United Kingdom	0.212

France



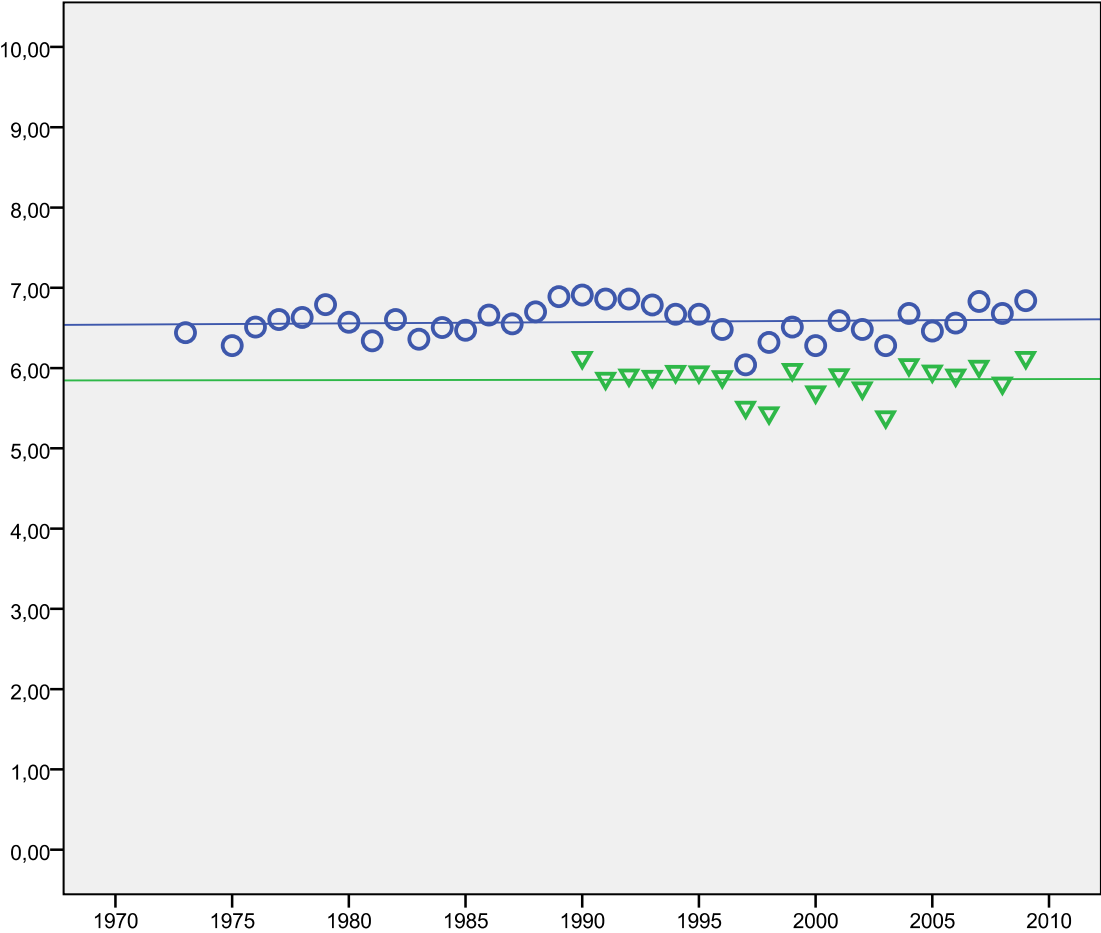
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report France](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_fr

Germany: Re-united after 1990



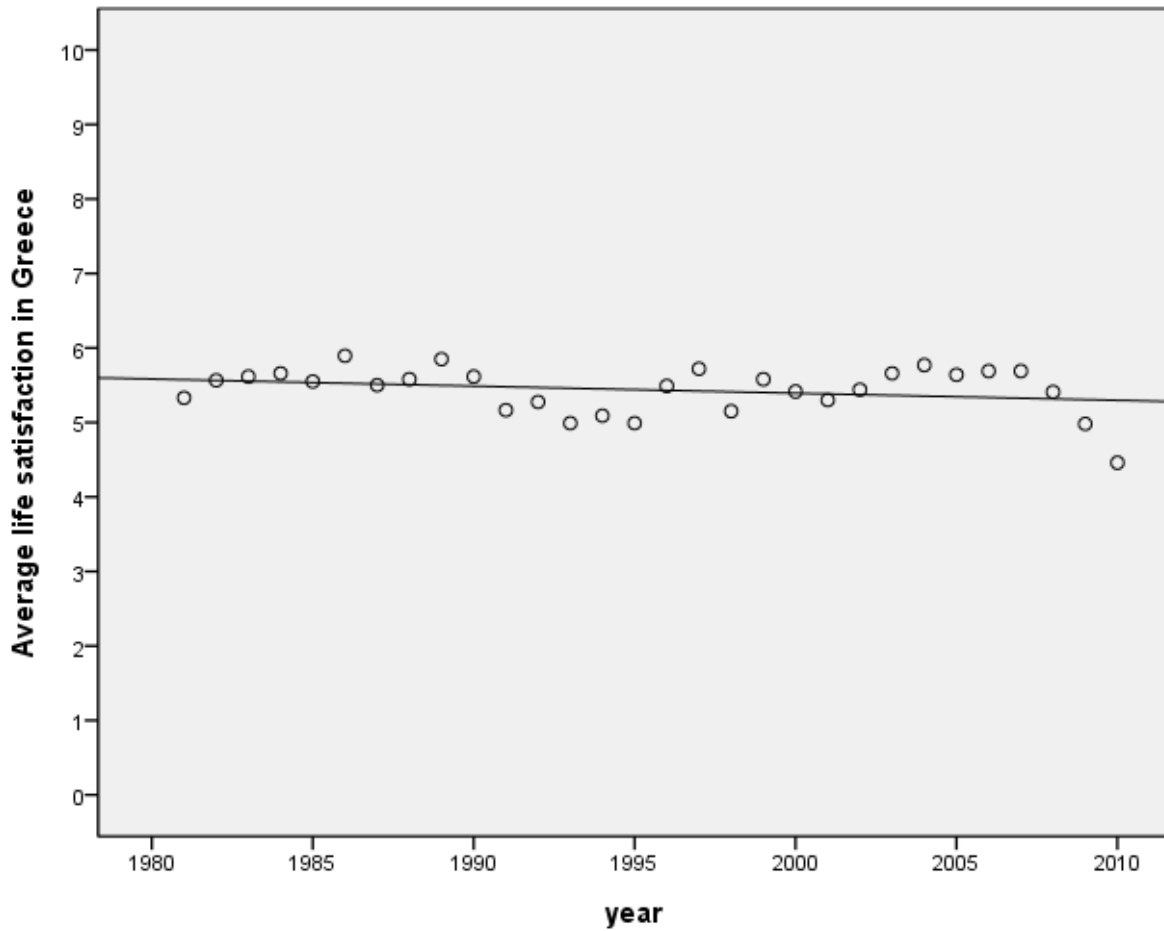
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Germany](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).
Variable codes in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_de

Germany: Former East (triangles) and West (circles)



Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)
Variable codes in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_dew and ls4_dee

Greece



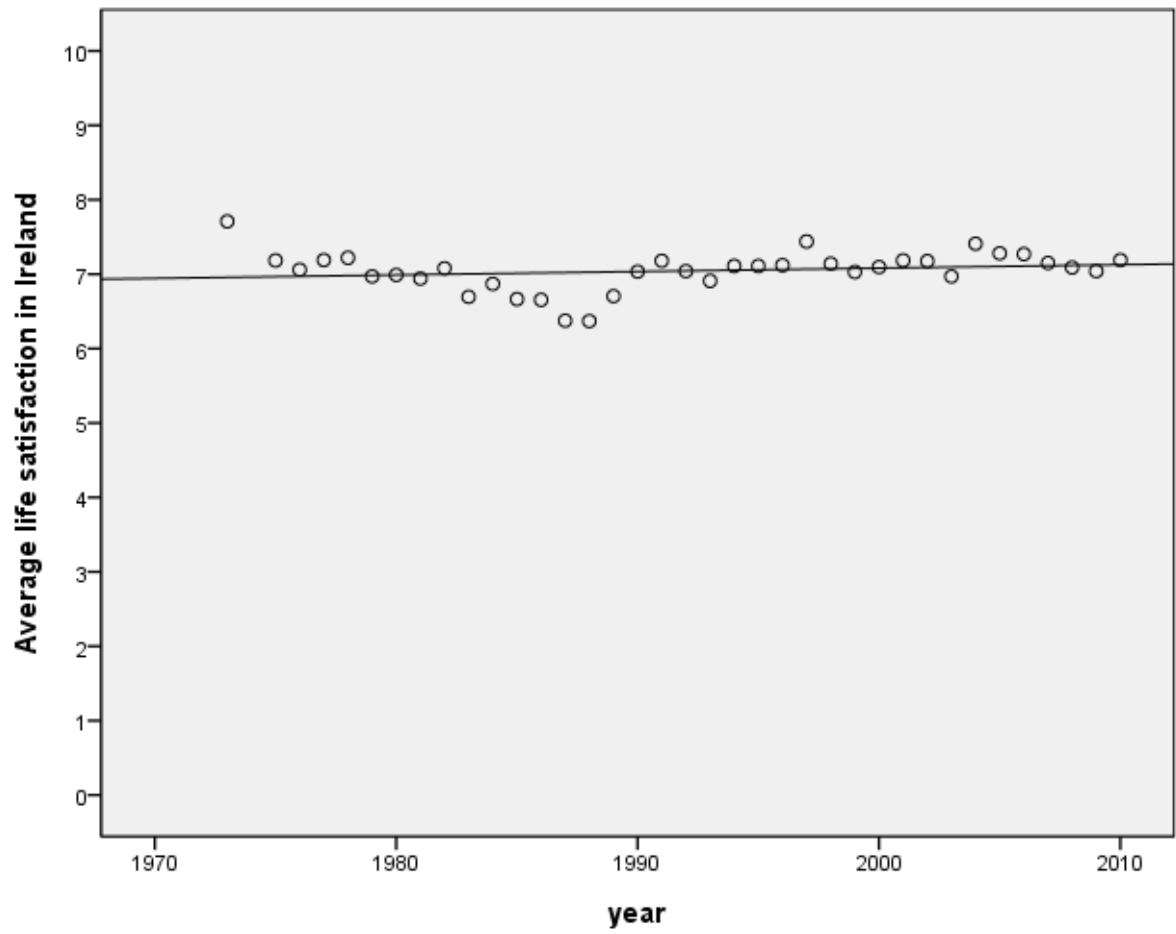
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Greece](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).

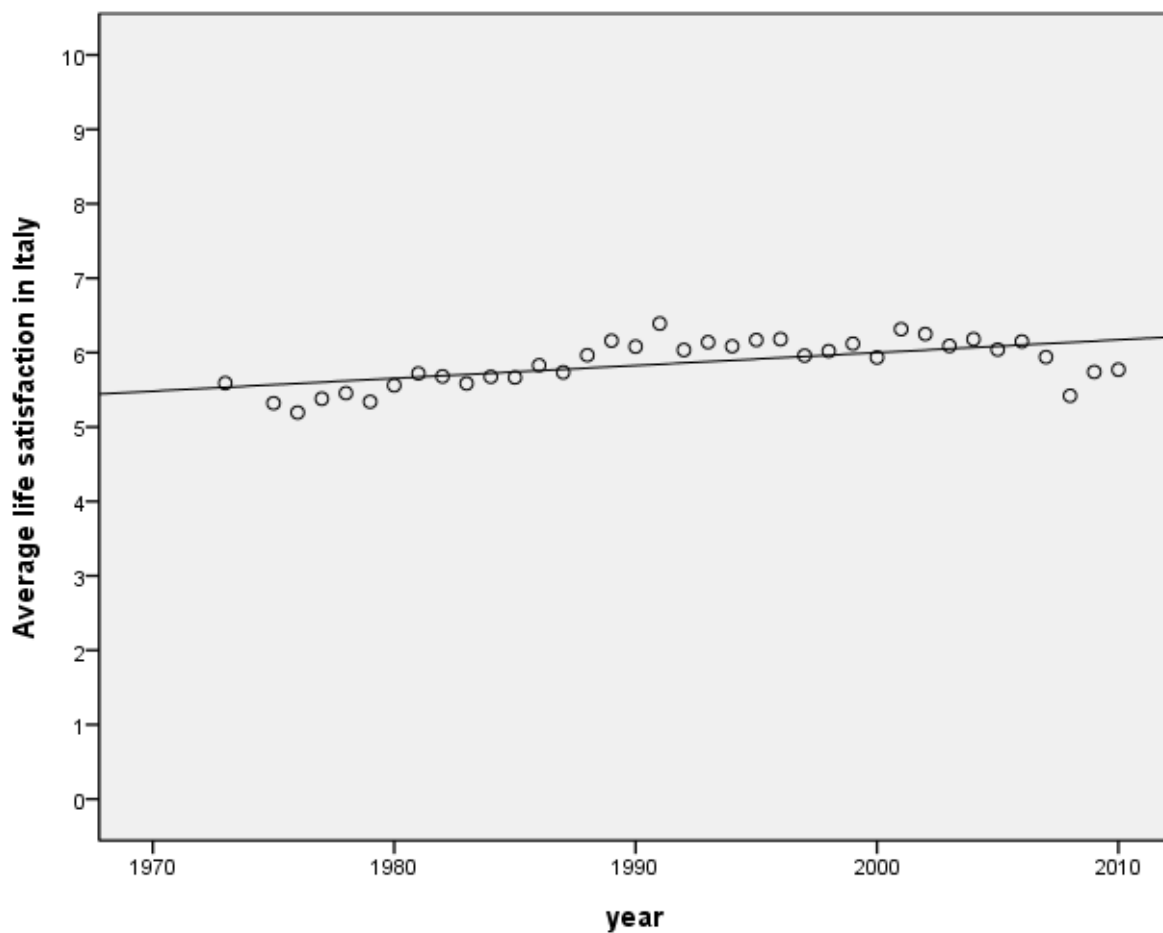
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_gr

Ireland



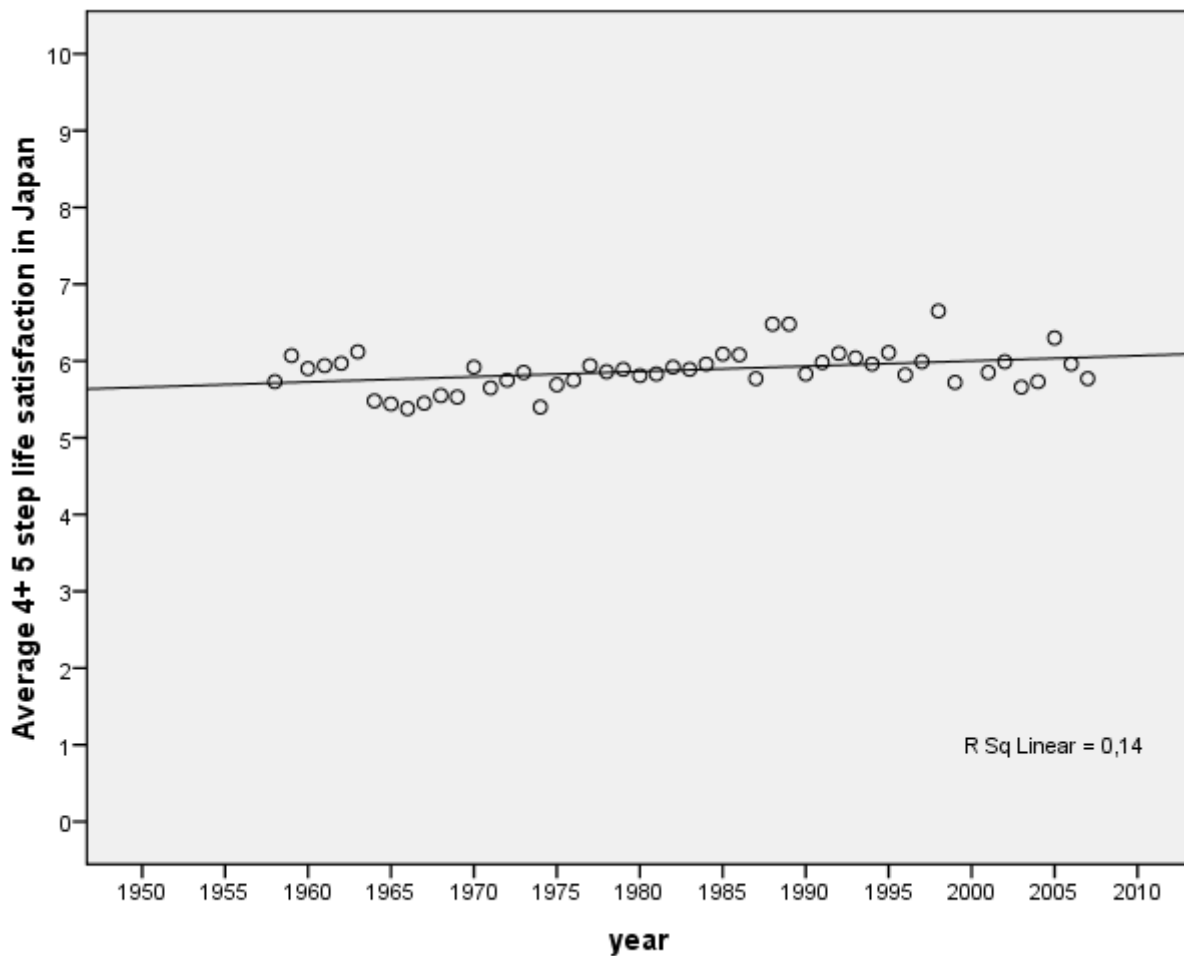
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Ireland](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_ie

Italy



Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Italy](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_it

Japan

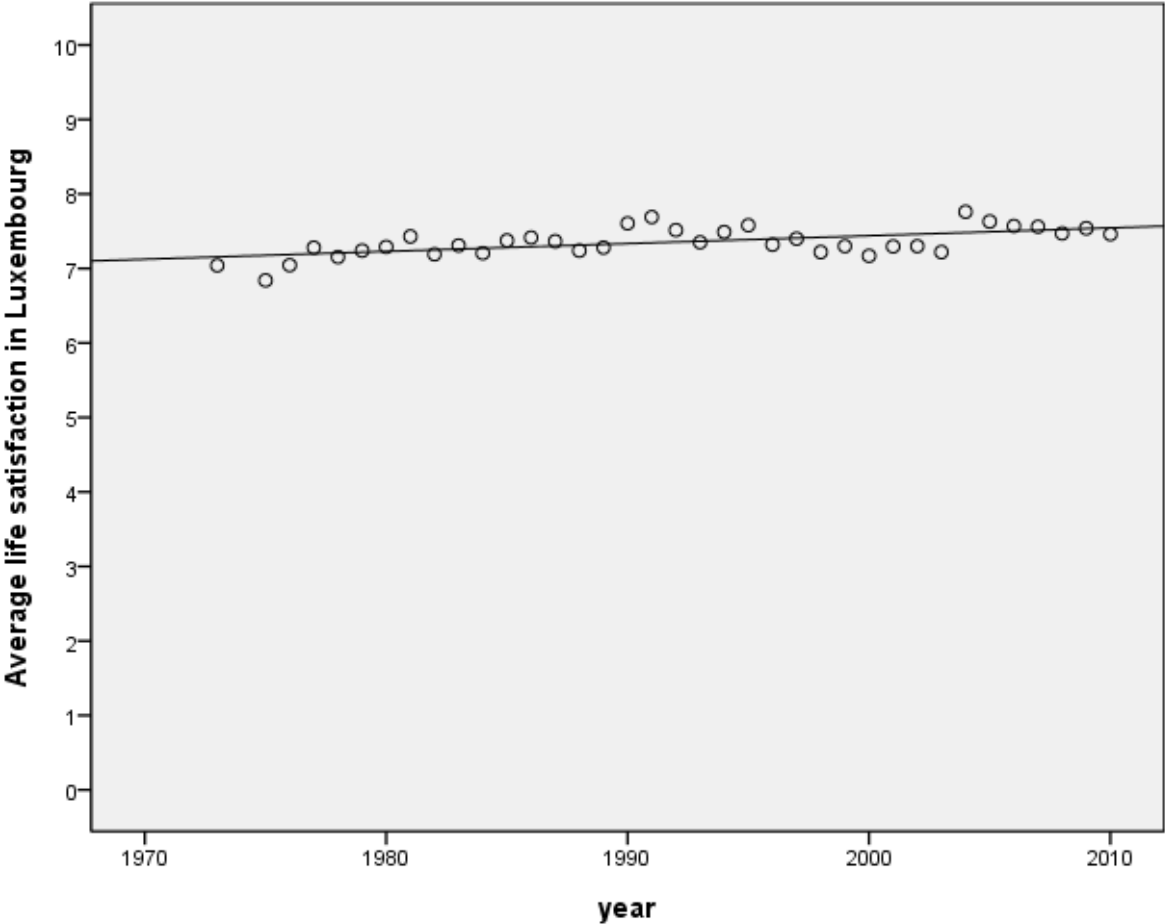


Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Japan](#)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Code*</i>	<i>Era</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>CI 95</i>
4-step life satisfaction type O-SLL/u/sq/v/4.. variants a , e , O-SLu/c/sq/v/4/f	ls4a_jp	1958-1991	+0.007	.000; +0.014
4-step life satisfaction type O-SLW/c/sq/v/4/e	ls4b_jp	1992-2007	-.028	-.059; +0.003
5-step life satisfaction type O-SLu/g/sq/v/5/e , O-SLW/c/sq/v/5 .. variants fc , k , l , r and O-SLW/u/sq/v/5/h	ls5_jp	1978-2005	+0.009	-.027; +0.045
Average (in chart above)	ls45_jp	1958-2007	+0.007	+0.002; +0.012

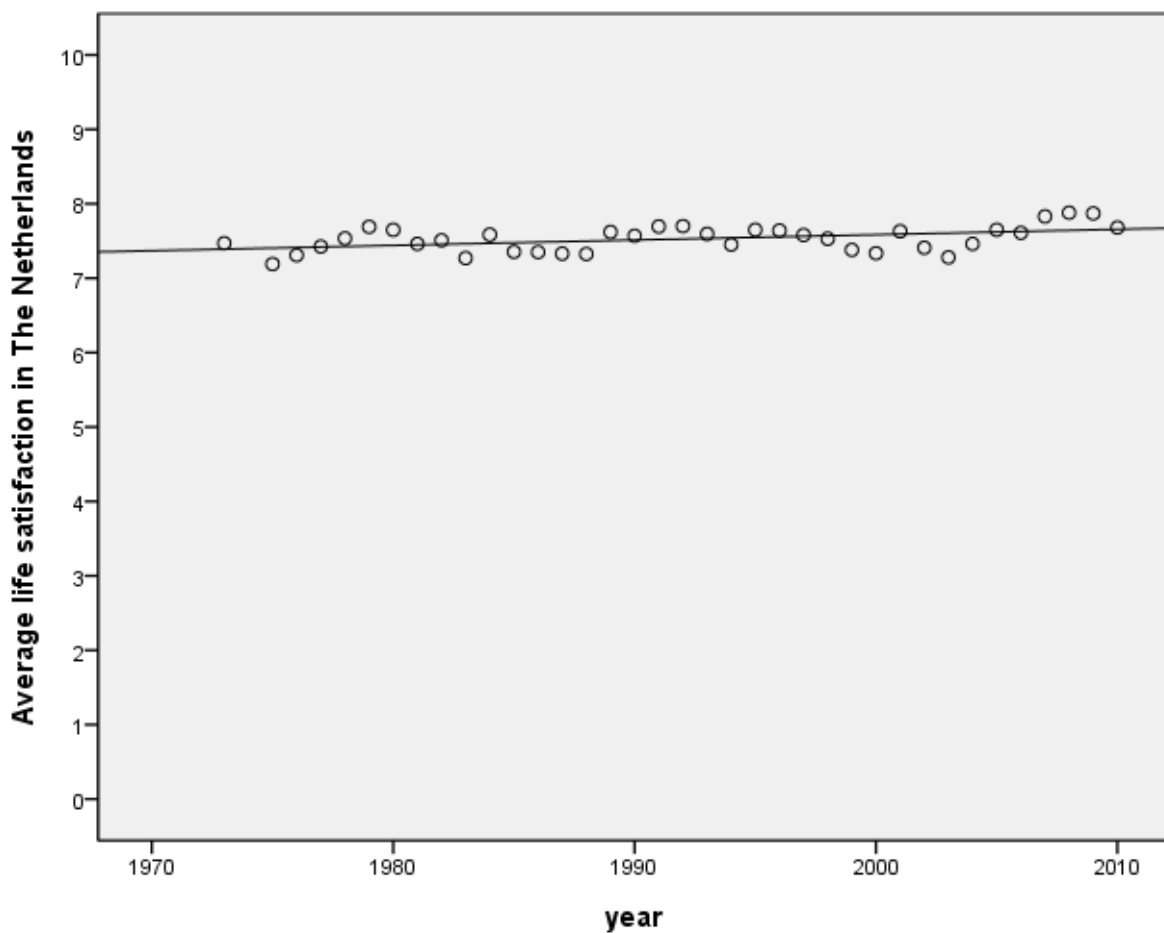
* Variable code in datafile 'Trend in nations'

Luxembourg



Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Luxembourg](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': Is4_lu

The Netherlands



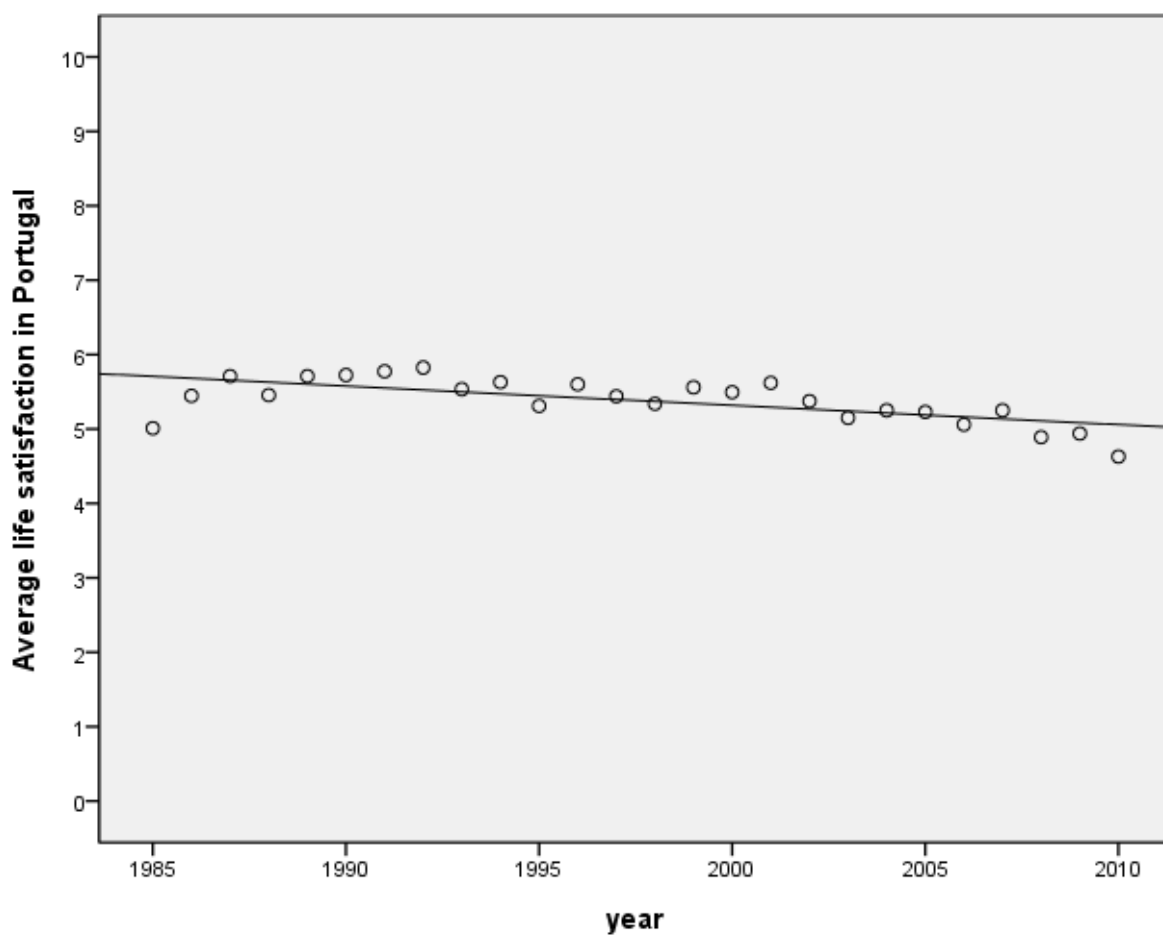
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Netherlands](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)

Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_nl

Portugal



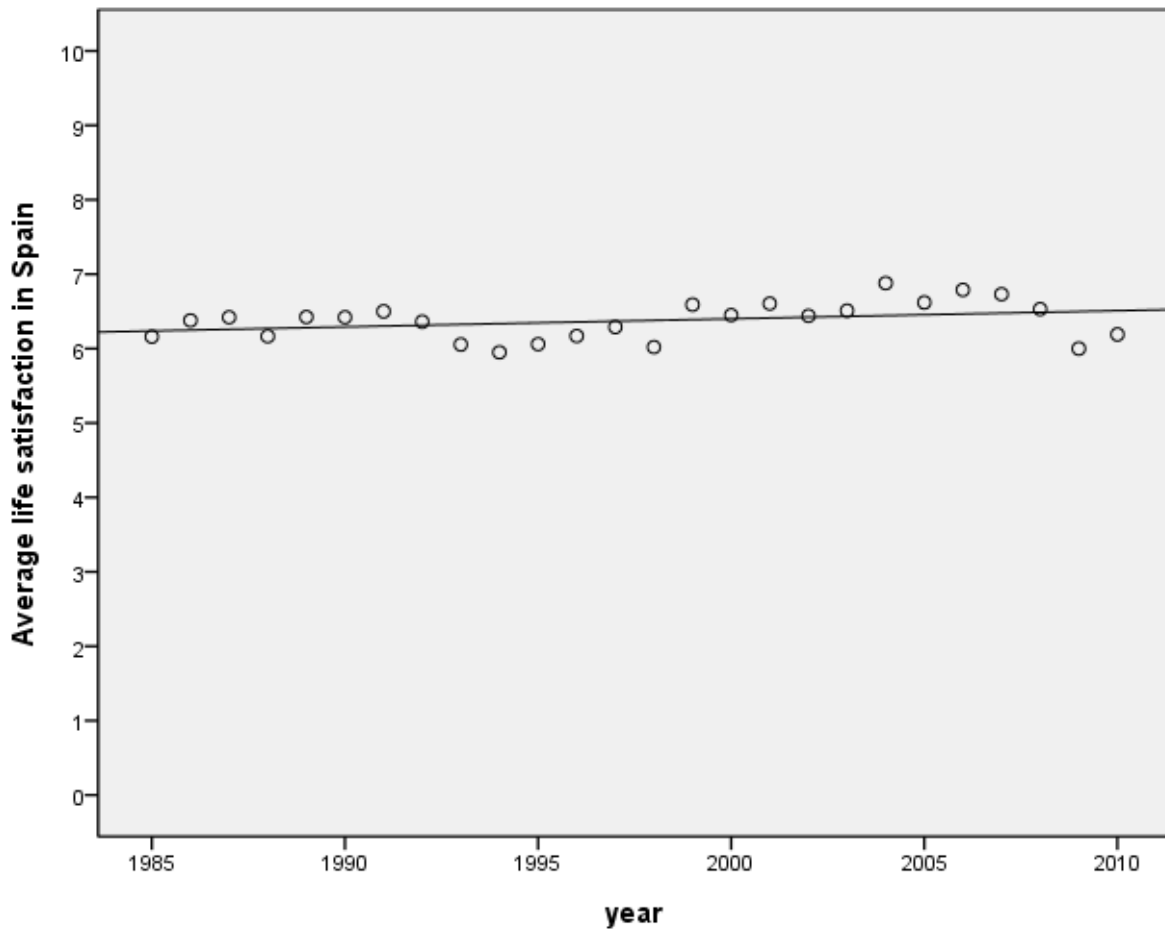
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Portugal](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)

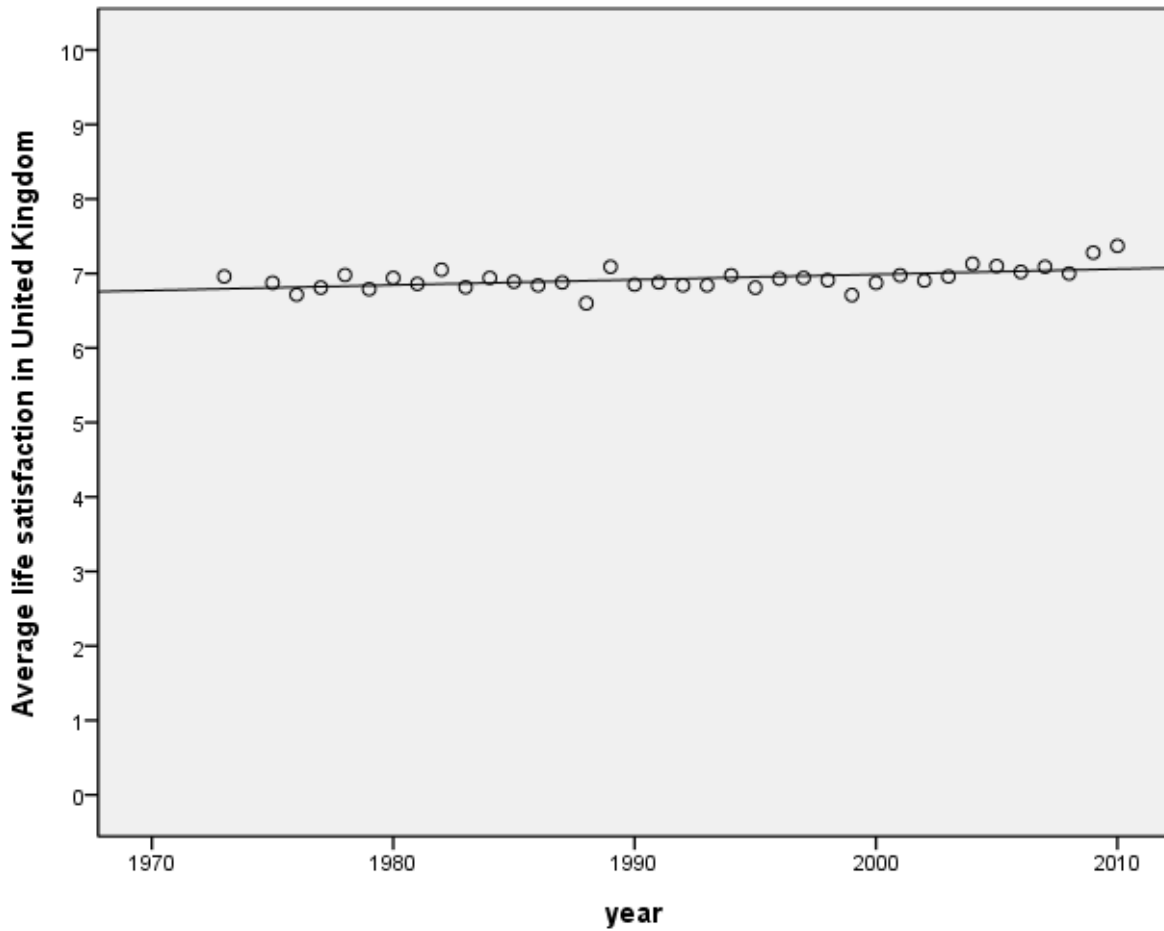
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_pt

Spain



Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Spain](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_sp

UK (Great Britain)



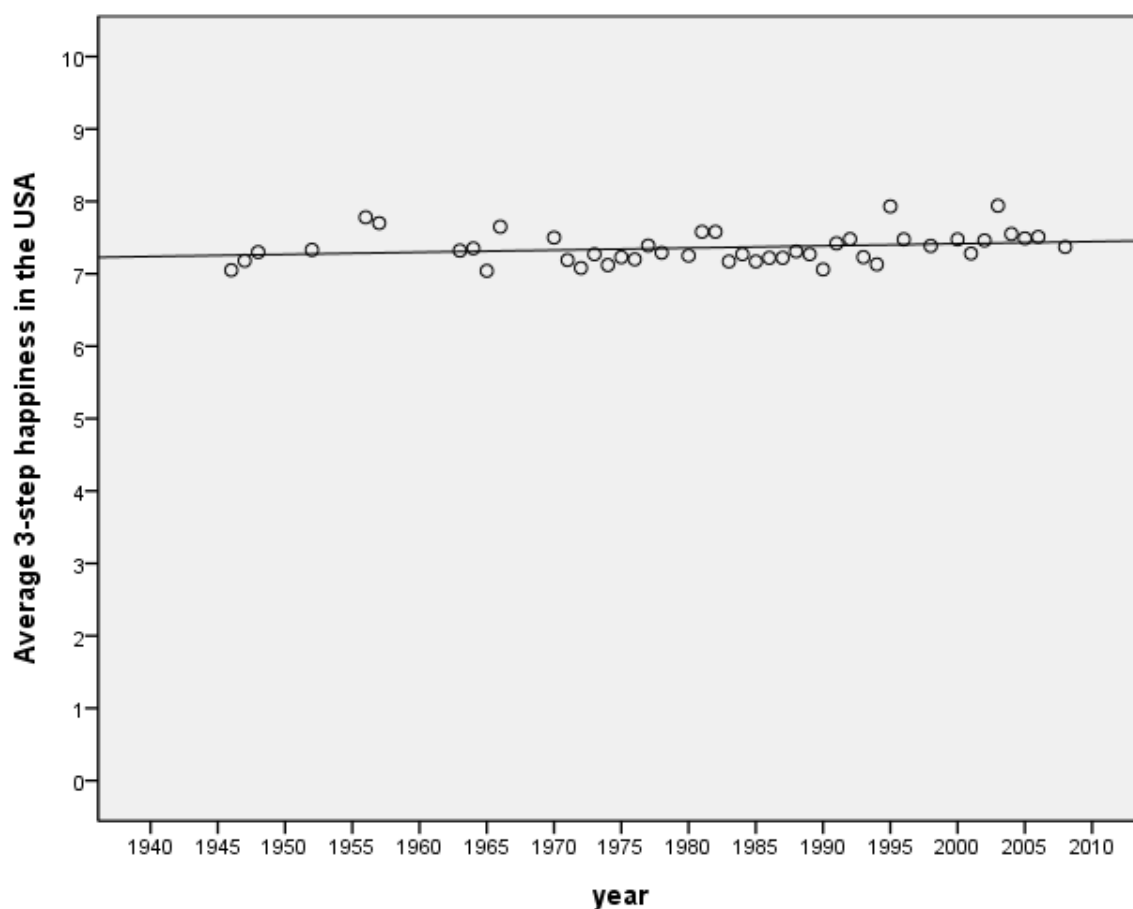
Data on happiness taken from Nation report [United Kingdom](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)

Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_uk

USA



Data on happiness taken from [Nation report USA](#)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Code*</i>	<i>Era</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>CI 95</i>
2-step life satisfaction O-SLP/g/sq/2/b	ls2_us	1973-2008	+.011	+0.005; +0.017
3-step happiness (chart above) O-HL/c/sq/v/3/aa and O-HL/g/sq/v/3/ variants a , d , f , g	hl3_us	1946-2008	+0.003	-.001; +0.007
4-step happiness O-HL/c/sq/v/4/f , O-HL/g/sq/v/4/b and O-HL/u/sq/v/4/a and aa	hl4_us	1946-2006	+0.003	-.005; +0.010
11-step best worst C-BW/c/sq/l/11/a	bw11_us	1959-2006	+.013	+0.006; +0.020
Average	mix_us	1946-2008	+0.005	.000; +0.010

* Variable code in data file 'Trends in Nations'

Technical details

1. Happiness assessed by means of surveys in general public samples. This list is based on standard surveys that used the same question over the years.

2. The trend lines in this report are based on slightly different questions:

- In the EU nations, happiness was assessed by a single item on life satisfaction:

"How satisfied are you with the life you lead?"

- Very satisfied (4)
- Fairly satisfied (3)
- Not very satisfied (2)
- Not at all satisfied (1)

This question is categorized as type 121B, subtype [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).

- In Japan a similar question on life-satisfaction was used:

"On the whole, are you with the life you lead?"

- Fully satisfied (4)
- Not fully, but to some extent satisfied (3)
- As yet unsatisfied (2)
- Very dissatisfied (1)

This question is categorized as O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/. Three slightly different variants have been used: in 1958-63 version [a](#), 1964-1983 version [e](#) and 1980-1991 also version [O-SLu/c/sq/v/4/f](#) . Since 1992 the question [O-SLW/c/sq/v/4/e](#) is used.

Since 1978, the following question has also been used in Japan

"Overall, how satisfied are you with your present life?"

- Very satisfied (5)
- Fairly satisfied (4)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)
- Fairly dissatisfied (2)
- Very dissatisfied (1)

This question is categorized as [O-SLW/u/sq/v/5/h](#) and has also been used in slightly different variants O-SLW/c/sq/v/5 ([fc](#), [k](#), [l](#), [r](#)).

- In the USA happiness has been assessed with several slightly different questions about happiness, type 111A. The most commonly used question is:

"Taken all together, how would you say things are these days?"

Would you say you are.....:

- Very happy (3)
- Pretty happy (2)
- Not too happy (1)

This question is categorized as sub-type [O-HL/c/sq/v/3/aa](#). and O-HL/g/sq/v/3/ variants [a](#), [d](#), [f](#), [g](#), [l](#)

In the USA happiness has also been assessed by means of three other types of questions:

- 2-step life satisfaction, code: [O-SLP/g/sq/2/b](#)
- 4-step happiness, several variants code [O-HL/c/sq/v/4/f](#), [O-HL/g/sq/v/4/b](#) and [O-HL/u/sq/v/4/a](#) and [aa](#)
- 11-step best-worst possible life, code: [C-BW/c/sq/l/11/a](#)

These questions and the observed trend in the responses are mentioned in a separate table below the graph of the trend in 3-step happiness in the USA.

- The full text of the above items can be found in the [collection 'Measures of Happiness'](#).
 - The original scores on these questions were transformed to a comparable 0-10 scale. Section 7/3.3.3 of the introductory text provides more detail about the classification of items and transformation of scores.
 - Mean scores were taken from the [country tables](#) of this collection of distributional findings on happiness in nations
 - When happiness was assessed more than once in a year in a country, the average of the mean scores is used.
 - The variables used here are also described in the codebook of the data file 'Trend in nations', variable list [mean happiness](#)
3. The average annual change is expressed in a regression coefficient that stands for the size of the slope of the linear regression line through the dots (averages) in the time charts. A positive coefficient denotes an average increase in average happiness, and a negative coefficient a decline. A regression coefficient of +.01 means 0.01 point increase on this 0-10 happiness scale per year, which implies that a one point rise of happiness would take one hundred years at this pace of change.
 4. The observed regression coefficient is based on a sample of assessments of happiness during this era and the coefficient in this sample may differ from the 'true' coefficient. The confidence interval gives an estimated range in which this true coefficient is likely to be included with 95% probability.
 5. This report restricts to time series of at least 20 years involving 10 or more comparable data points.
 6. The data are recorded in the SPSS file [Trends in Nations](#), which is available on request.

Cite as:

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Earlier trend reports

- http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/findingreports/Archive/TrendReport_AverageHappiness_1946-2006.pdf
- http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/findingreports/Archive/TrendReport_AverageHappiness_1946-2008.pdf

Back to start page of [World Database of Happiness](#), Distribution of [Happiness in Nations](#)