

Trend Average Happiness in Nations 1946-2015

How much people like the life they live

Table 1

Change average happiness 1973-2015 in points on scale 0-10

| <i>Rise</i> Significant increase | | <i>Stable</i> No significant change | | <i>Decline</i> Significant decrease | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--|---------------|--|---------------|
| Finland | +0.77 | Japan | +0.20 | Portugal * | - 1.05 |
| France | + 0.67 | Ireland | + 0.08 | Greece * | - 1.05 |
| Denmark | + 0.63 | West-Germany | + 0.00 | Spain * | -0,09 |
| Germany | +0.50 | Italy | + 0.25 | | |
| UK | + 0.46 | Austria | --0.24 | | |
| Luxembourg | + 0.34 | Belgium | --0.21 | | |
| Netherlands | + 0.34 | | | | |
| EU9 | + 0.32 | | | | |
| USA | + 0.29 | | | | |

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

NB Finland is inclusief een score uit 1960. Groen is nieuw

Table 2

Trend average happiness expressed in average annual increase

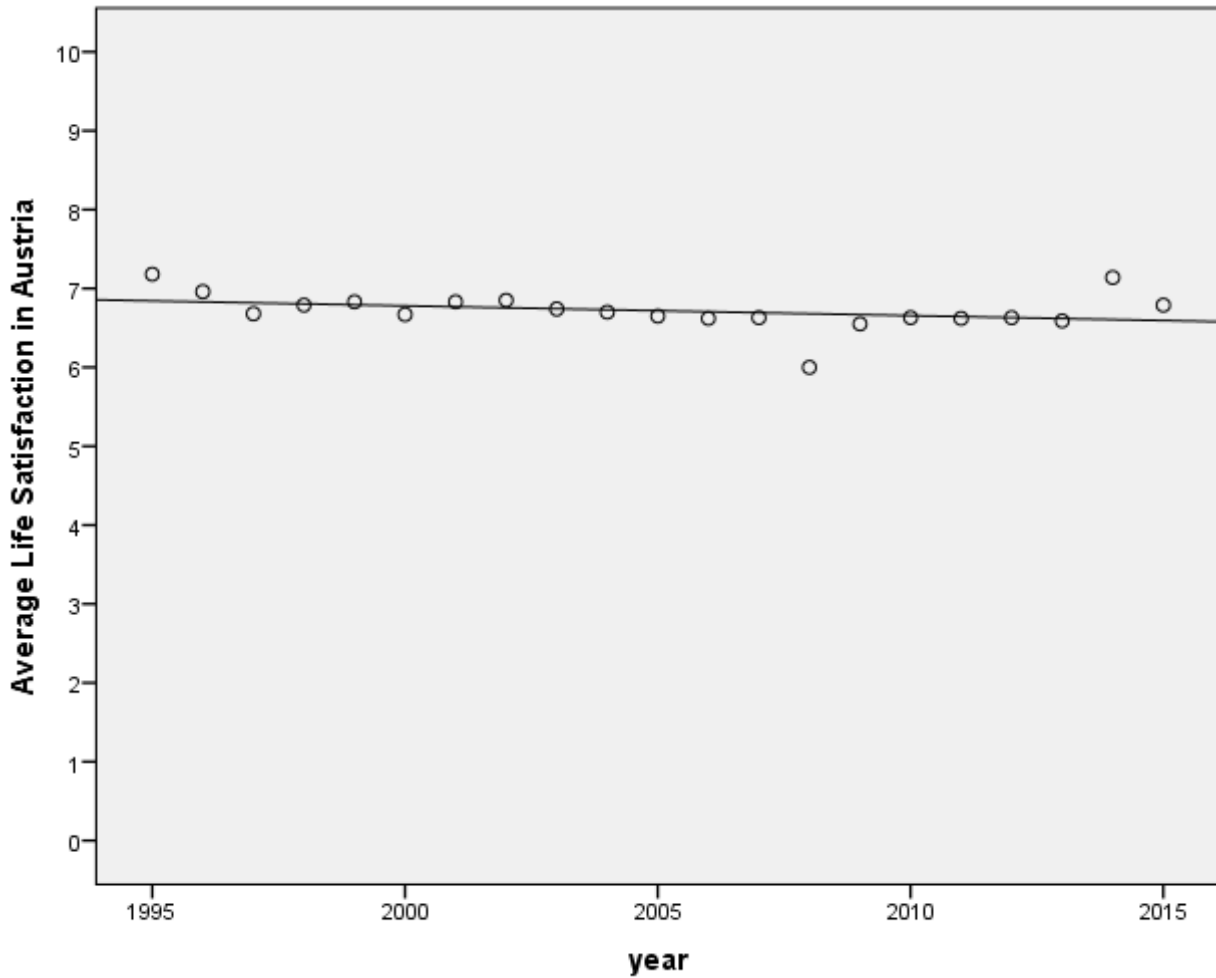
| Nation | Period ⁴ | Trend average happiness ^{1, 2} | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| | | Average annual increase ³ | 95% confidence interval ⁴ |
| Austria | 1995-2015 | -.012 | --.030 +.005 |
| Belgium | 1973-2015 | -.005 | -.014 +.003 |
| UK | 1973-2015 | +.011 | +0.007 +.014 |
| Denmark | 1973-2015 | +.015 | +0.012 +.018 |
| EU9 | 1973-2009 | +.009 | +0.005 +.012 |
| Finland | 1960-2015 | +.014 | +0.005 +.022 |
| France | 1973-2015 | +.016 | +0.012 +.021 |
| Germany | 1990-2015 | +.020 | +0.006 +.035 |
| - former West | 1973-2009 | +0.000 | -.007 +.007 |
| - former East | 1990-2009 | +0.000 | -.017 +.018 |
| Greece | 1981-2015 | -.031 | -.045 -.017 |
| Ireland | 1973-2015 | +0.002 | -.005 +.009 |
| Italy | 1973-2015 | +0.006 | +0.002 +.014 |
| Japan | 1964-2013 | +.004 | .000; +.008 |
| | | | |
| Luxembourg | 1973-2015 | +.008 | +0.003 +.012 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| Netherlands | 1973-2015 | +0.008 | +0.004 +0.012 |
| Portugal | 1985-2015 | -0.035 | -0.048 -0.023 |
| Spain | 1985-2015 | -0.003 | -0.015 +0.009 |
| USA | 1946-2008 | +0.003 | -0.001 +0.007 |
| | 1973-2008 | +0.009 | +0.002 +0.016 |

Bold: p<.05 (two-sided)

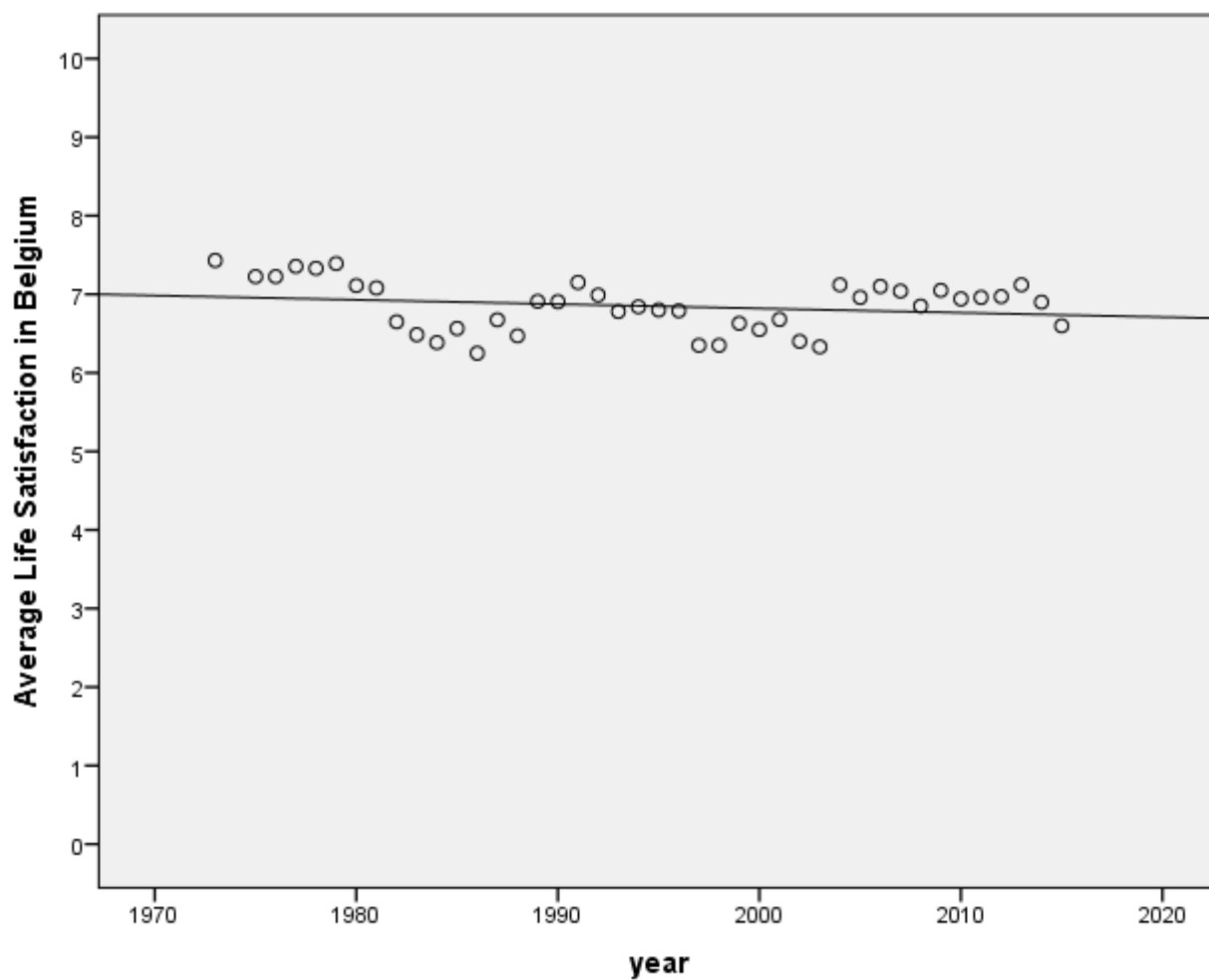
GRAPHS

Austria



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

Belgium



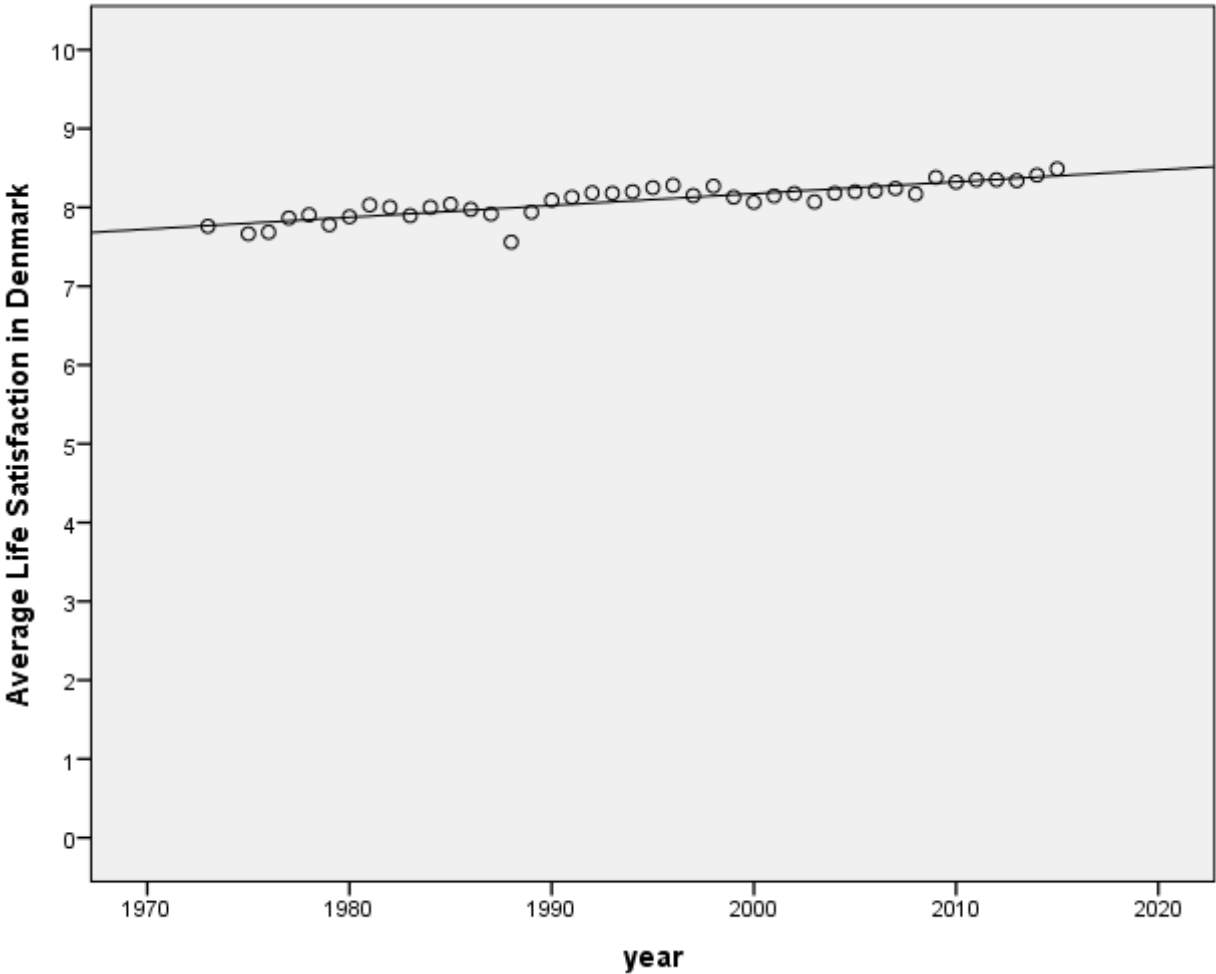
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Belgium](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

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

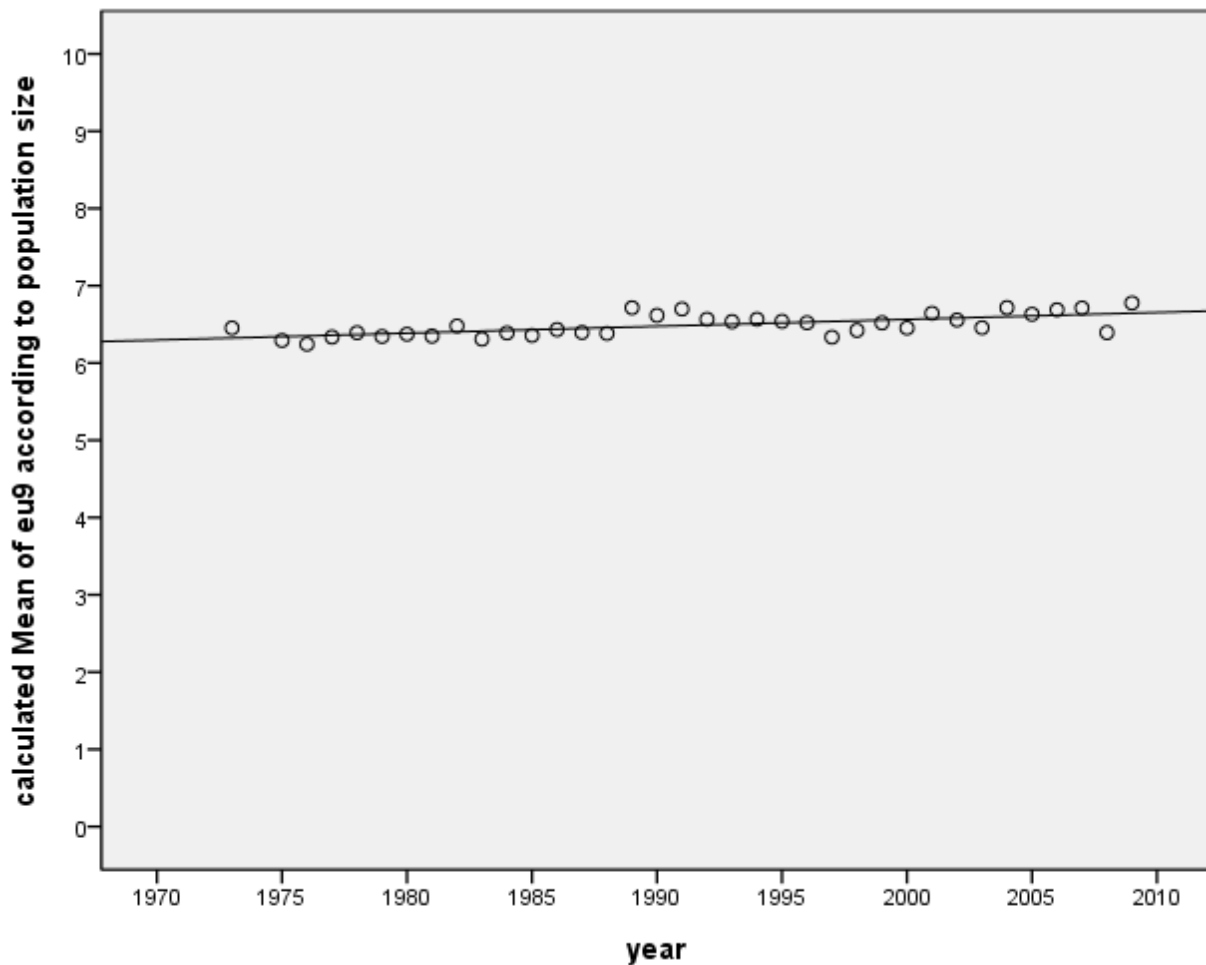
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_be

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://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/50/44612311.pdf).

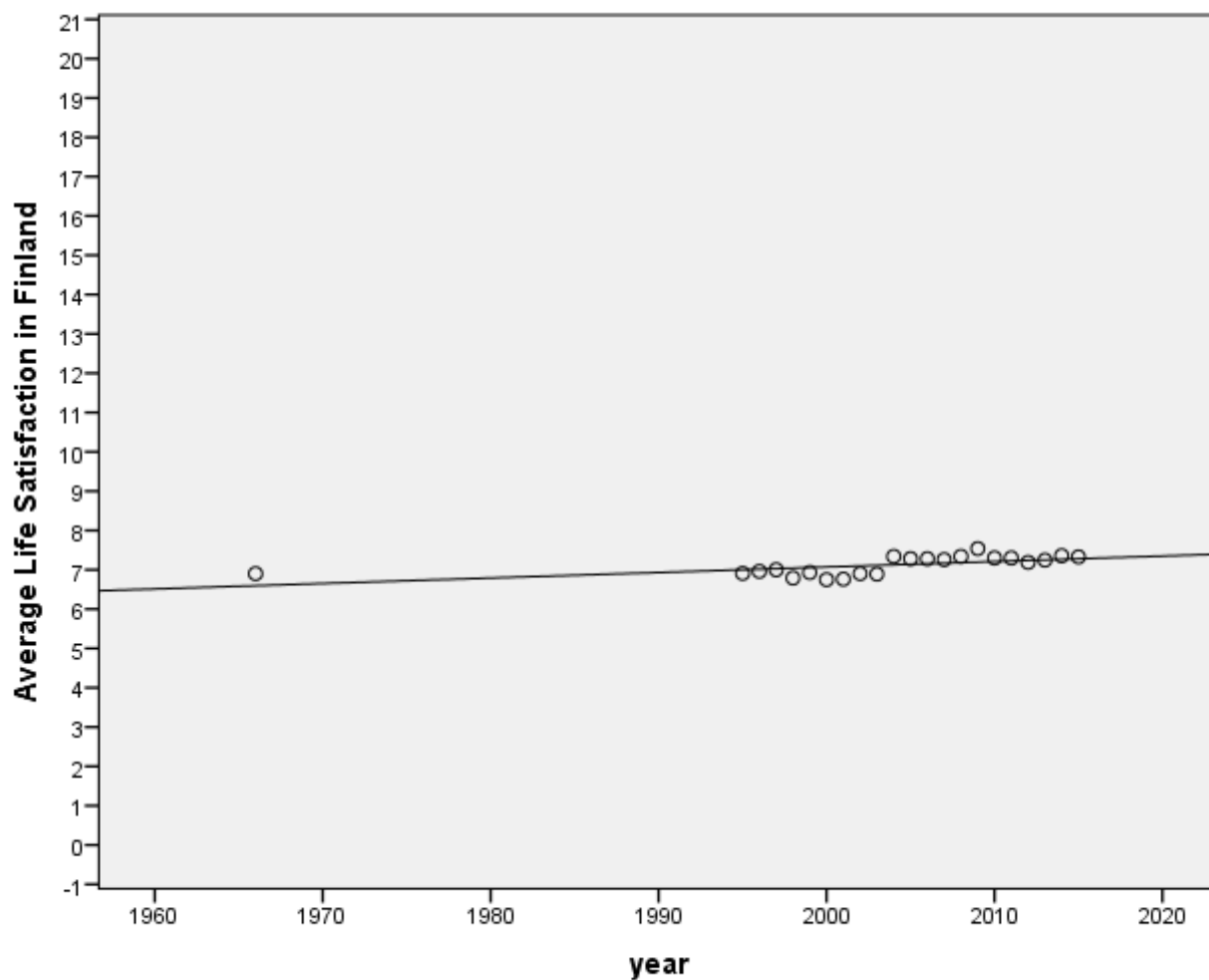
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_eu9

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 |

Finland



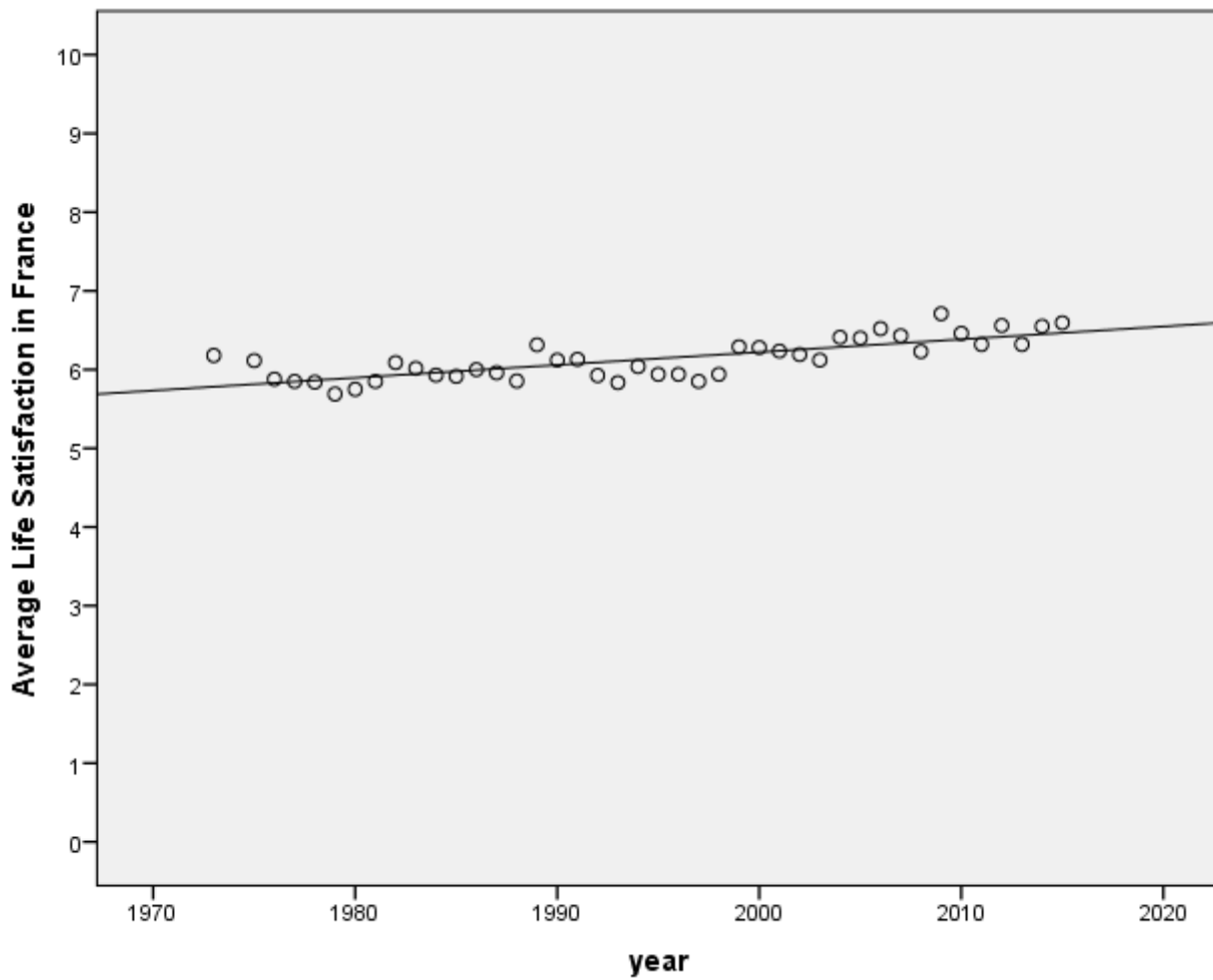
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Finland](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

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

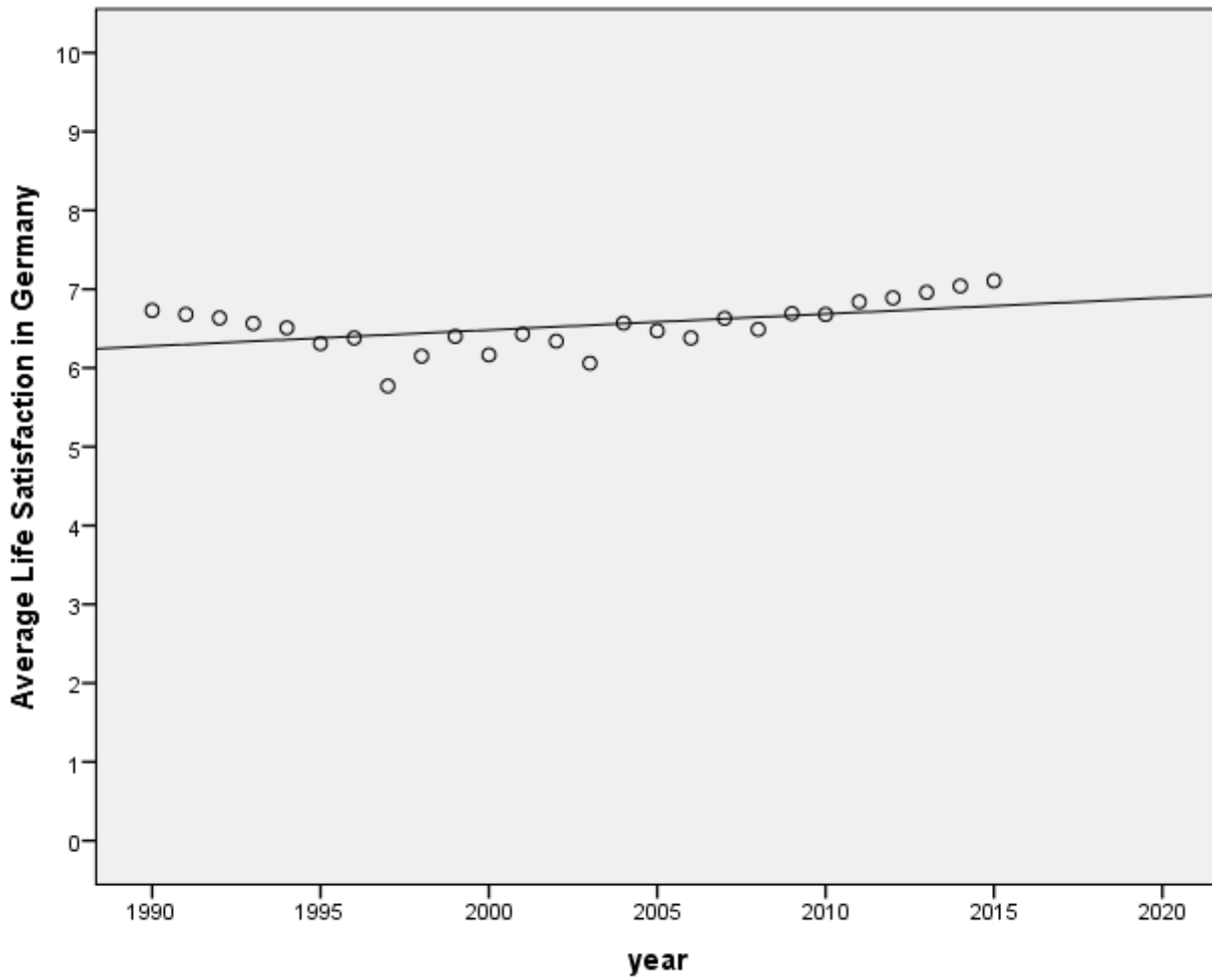
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_fi

France



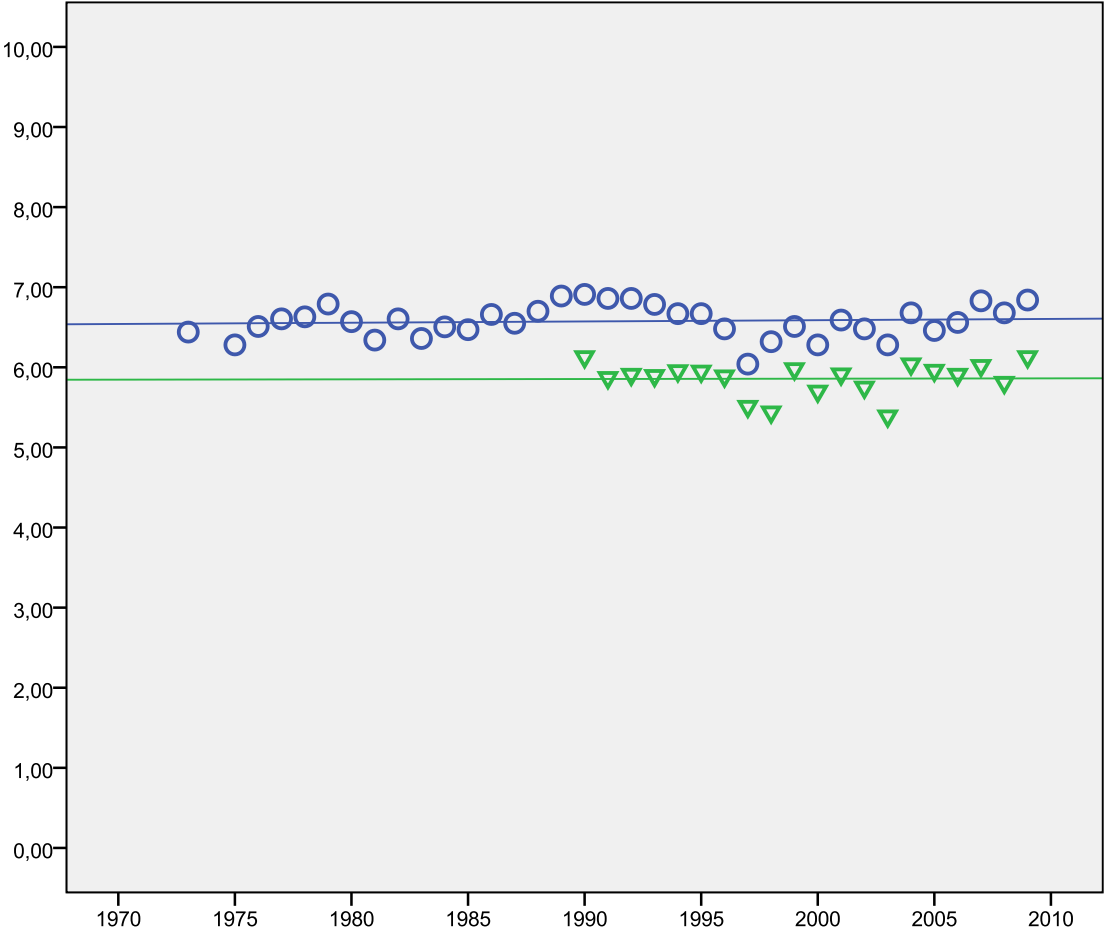
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report France](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b.](#)
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_fr

Germany: Re-united after 1990



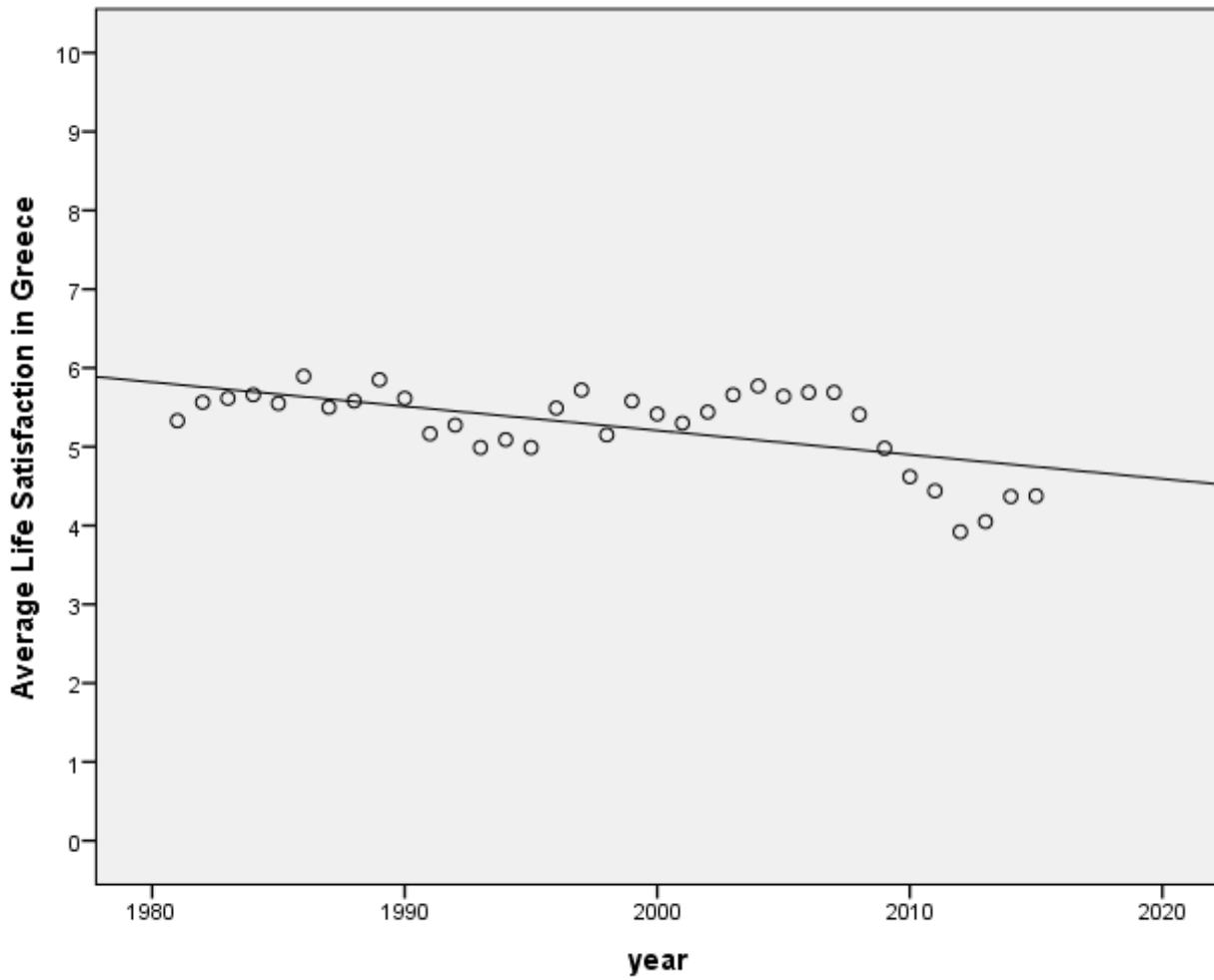
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Germany](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).
Variable codes in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_de

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



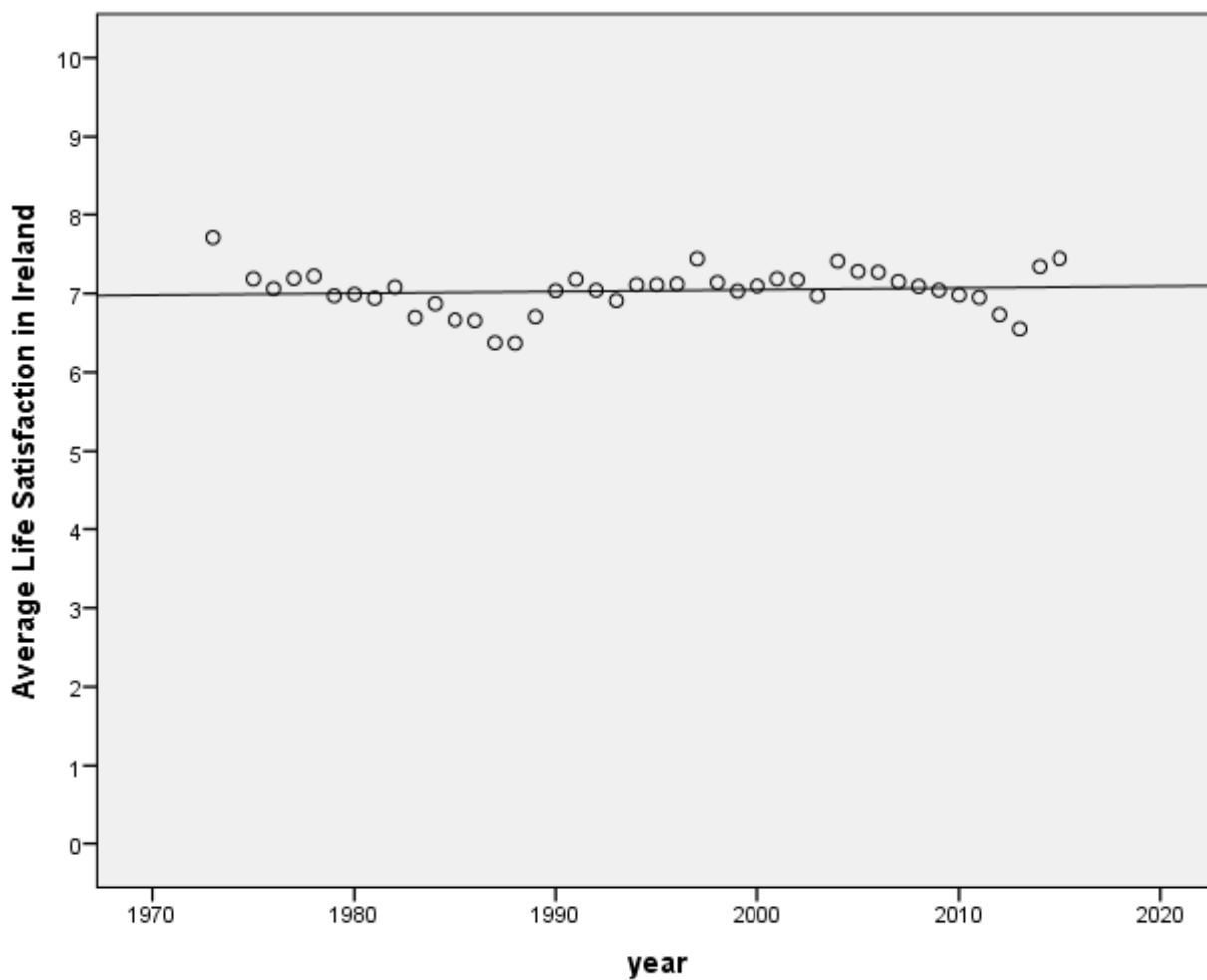
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Greece](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

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

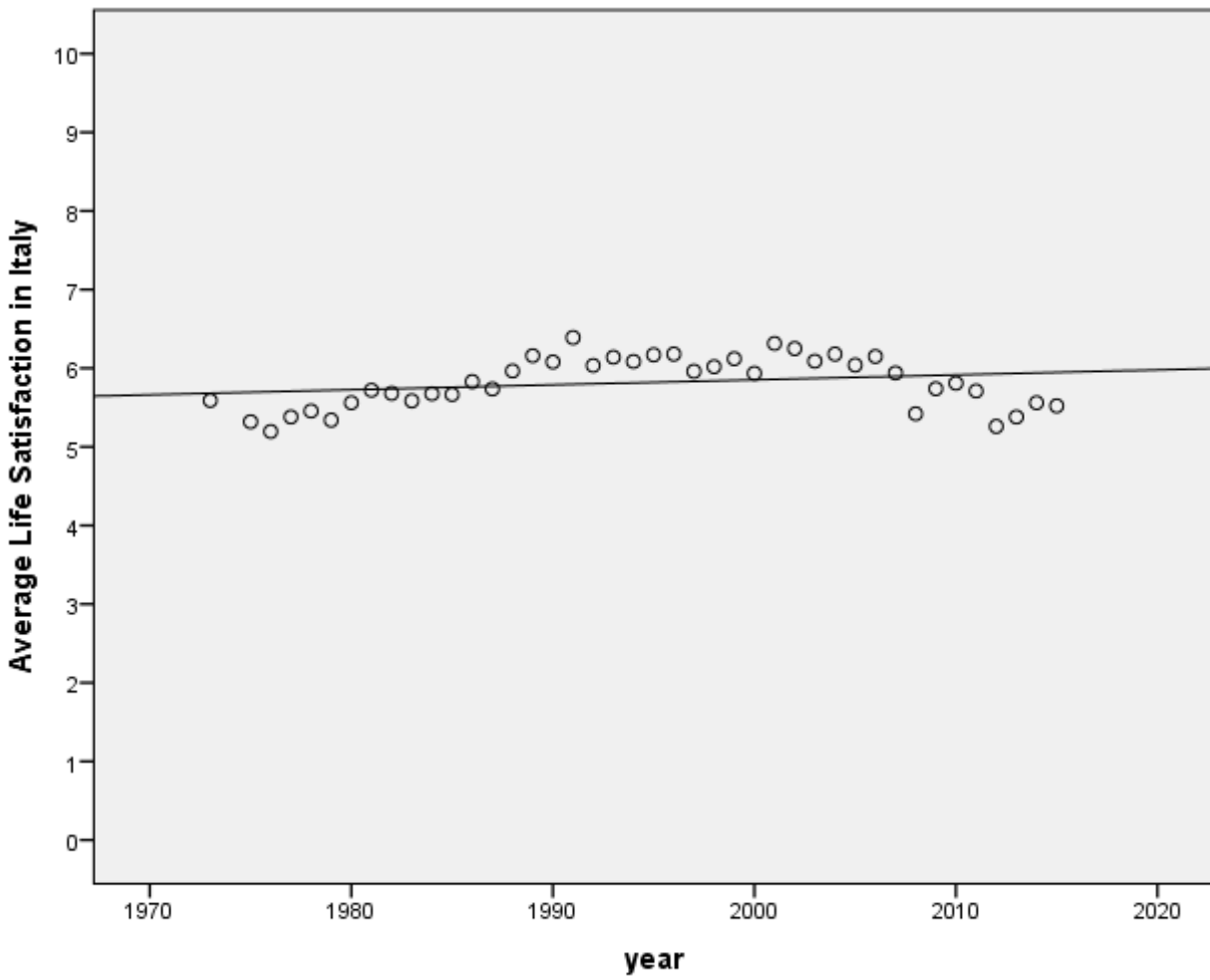
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_gr

Ireland



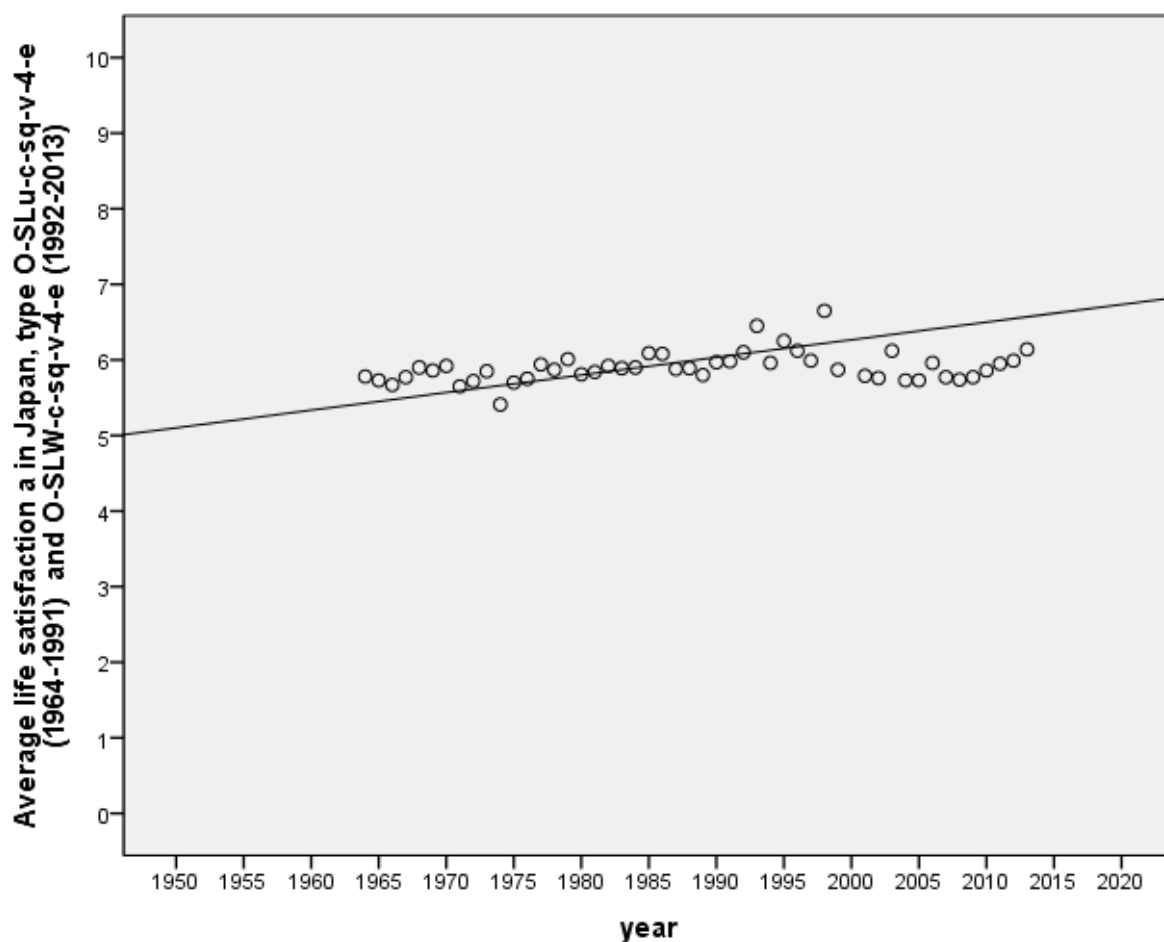
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Ireland](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_ie

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

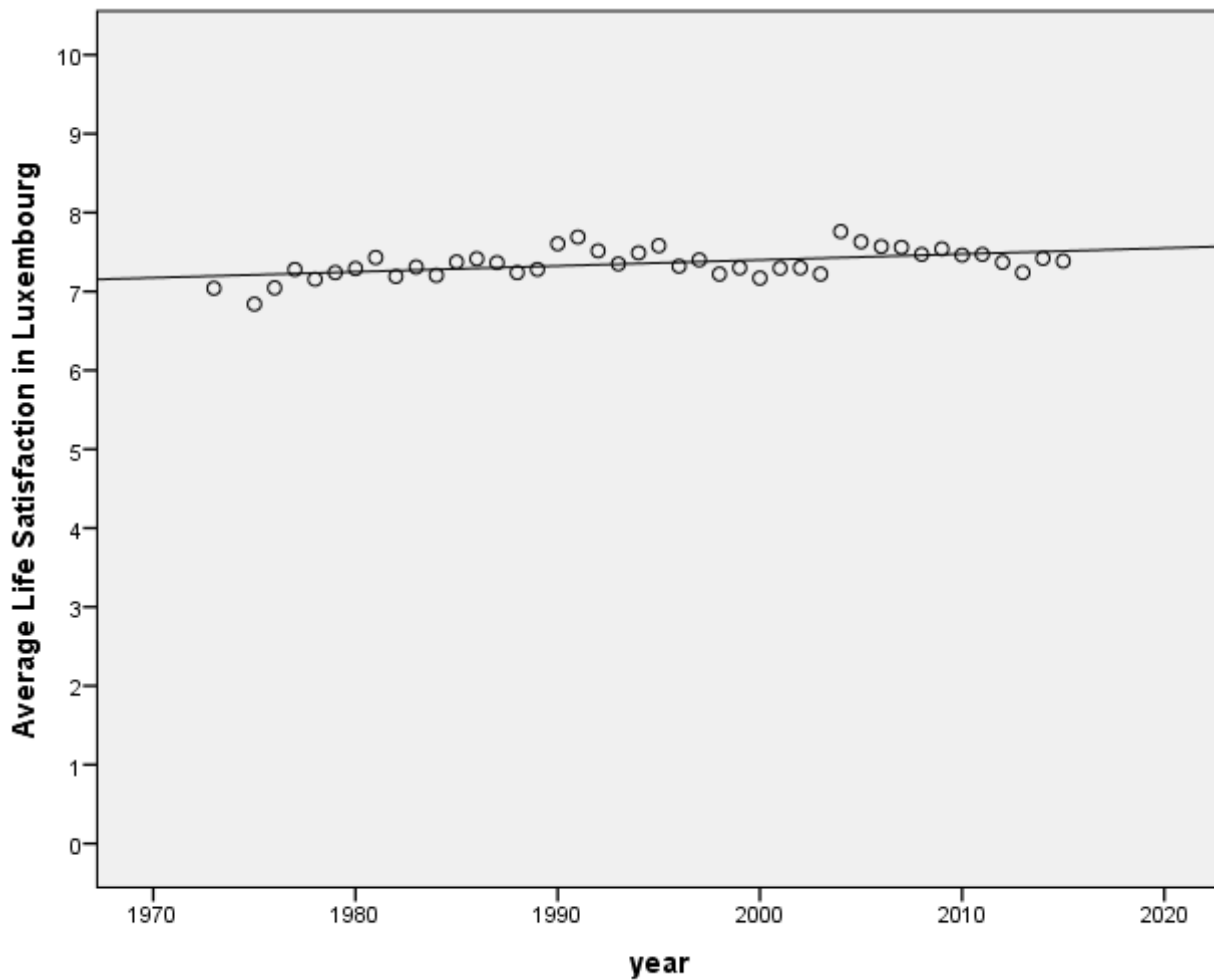


Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Japan](#)

| <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 e , O-SLu/c/sq/v/4/f | ls4a_jp | 1964-1991 | +0.003 | +0.001; +0.008 |
| 4-step life satisfaction type O-SLW/c/sq/v/4/e | ls4b_jp | 1992-2013 | -0.017 | -0.033; +0.001 |
| Average of 4-step life satisfaction type O-SLL/u/sq/v/4.. variants e , and 4-step life satisfaction type O-SLW/c/sq/v/4/e | ls4d_jp | 1964-2013 | +0.004 | .000; +0.008 |

* Variable code in datafile 'Trend in nations'

Luxembourg



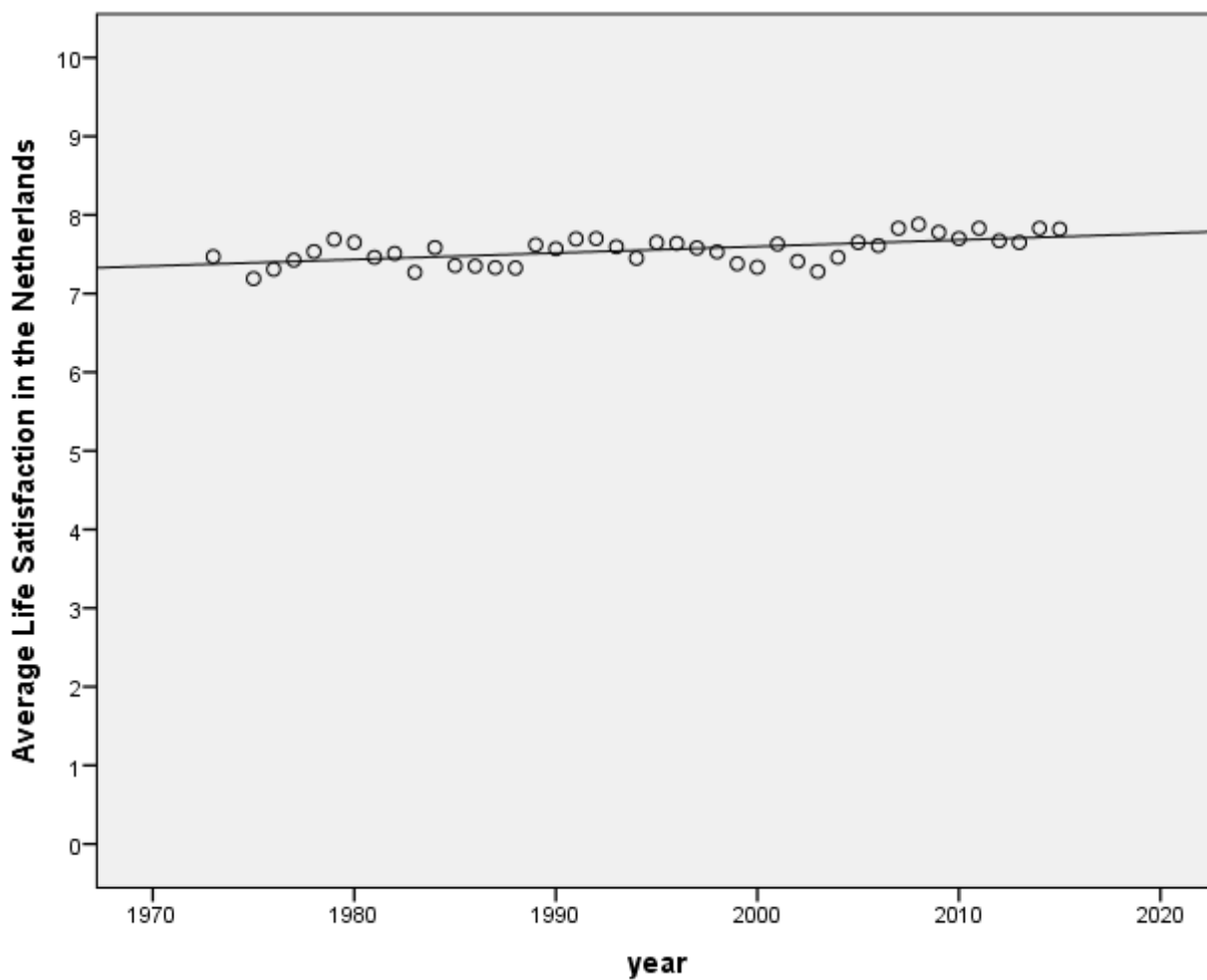
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Luxembourg](#)

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': ls4_lu

The Netherlands



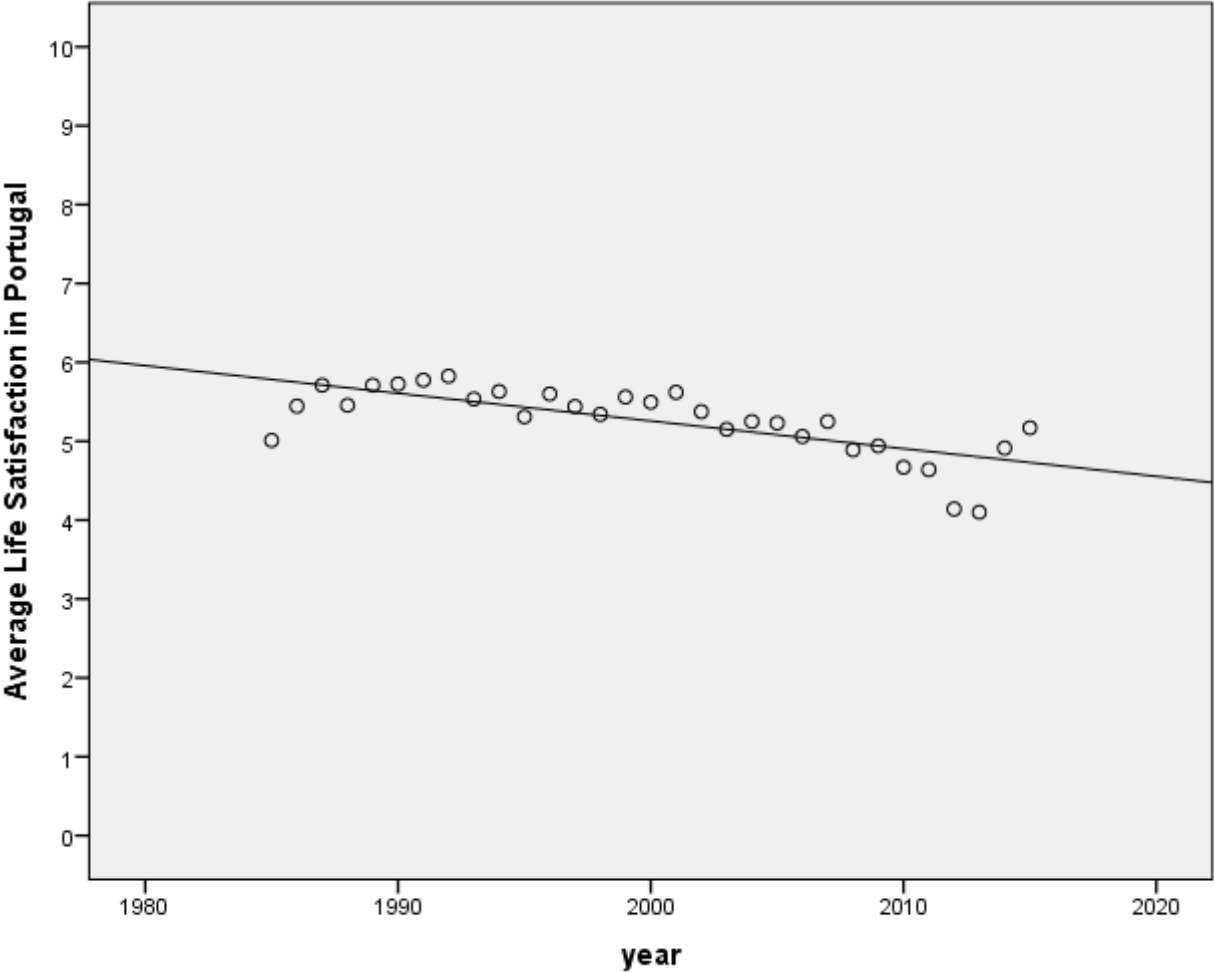
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Netherlands](#)

Question type: 4-step life satisfaction

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

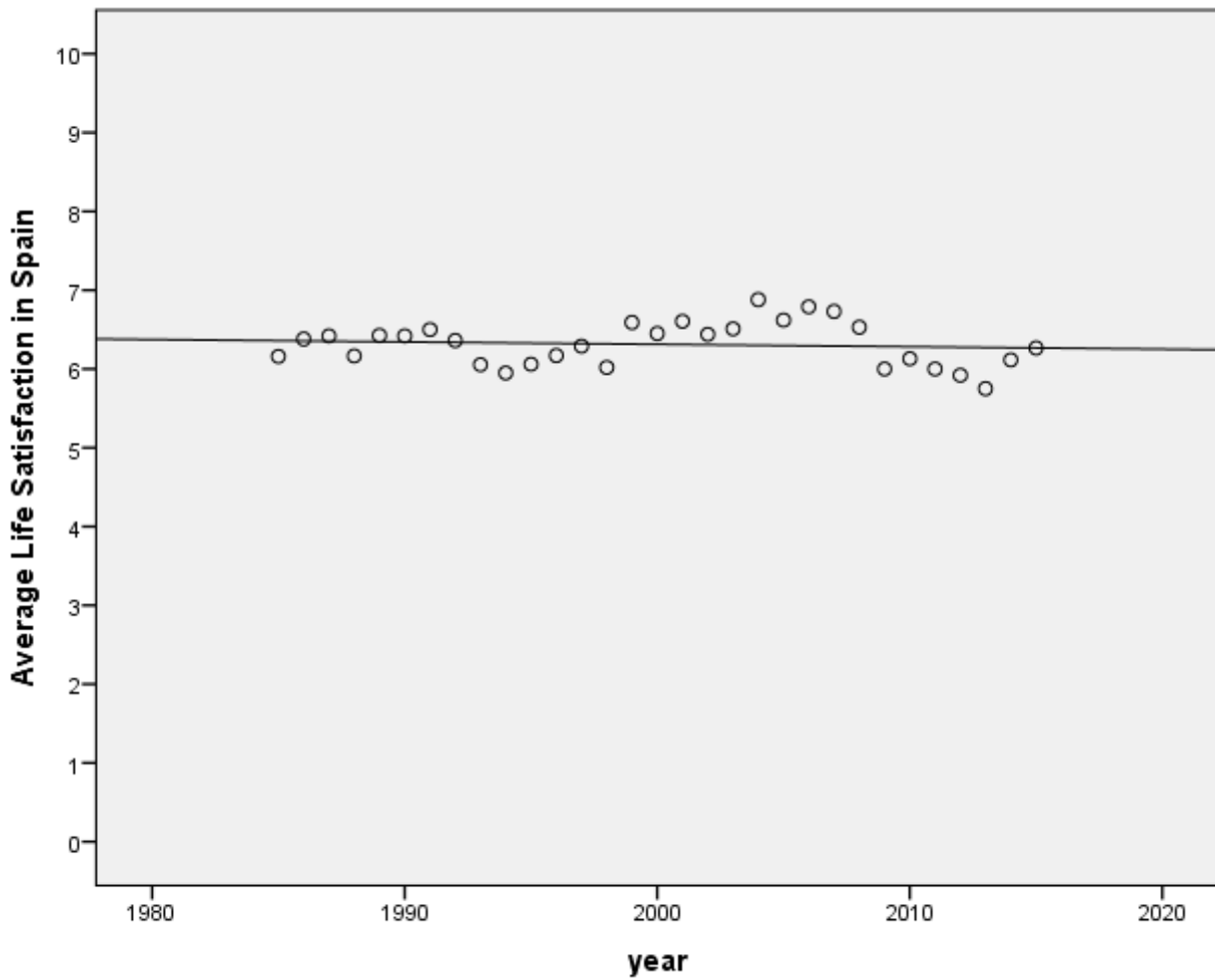
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_nl

Portugal



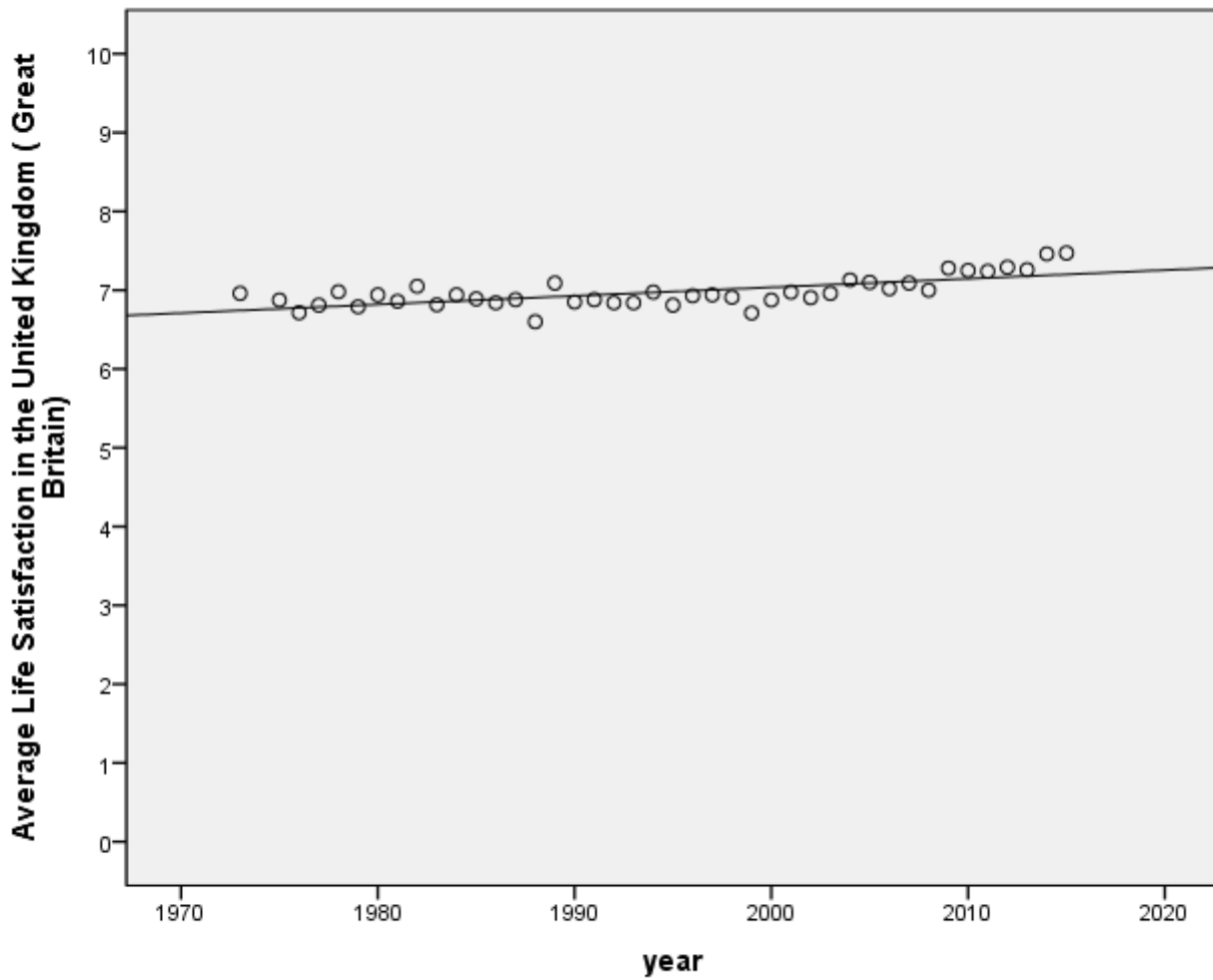
Data on happiness taken from [Nation report Portugal](#)
Question type: 4-step life satisfaction
Question code in item bank: [O-SLL/u/sq/v/4/b](#).
Variable code in data file 'Trends in nations': ls4_pt

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)



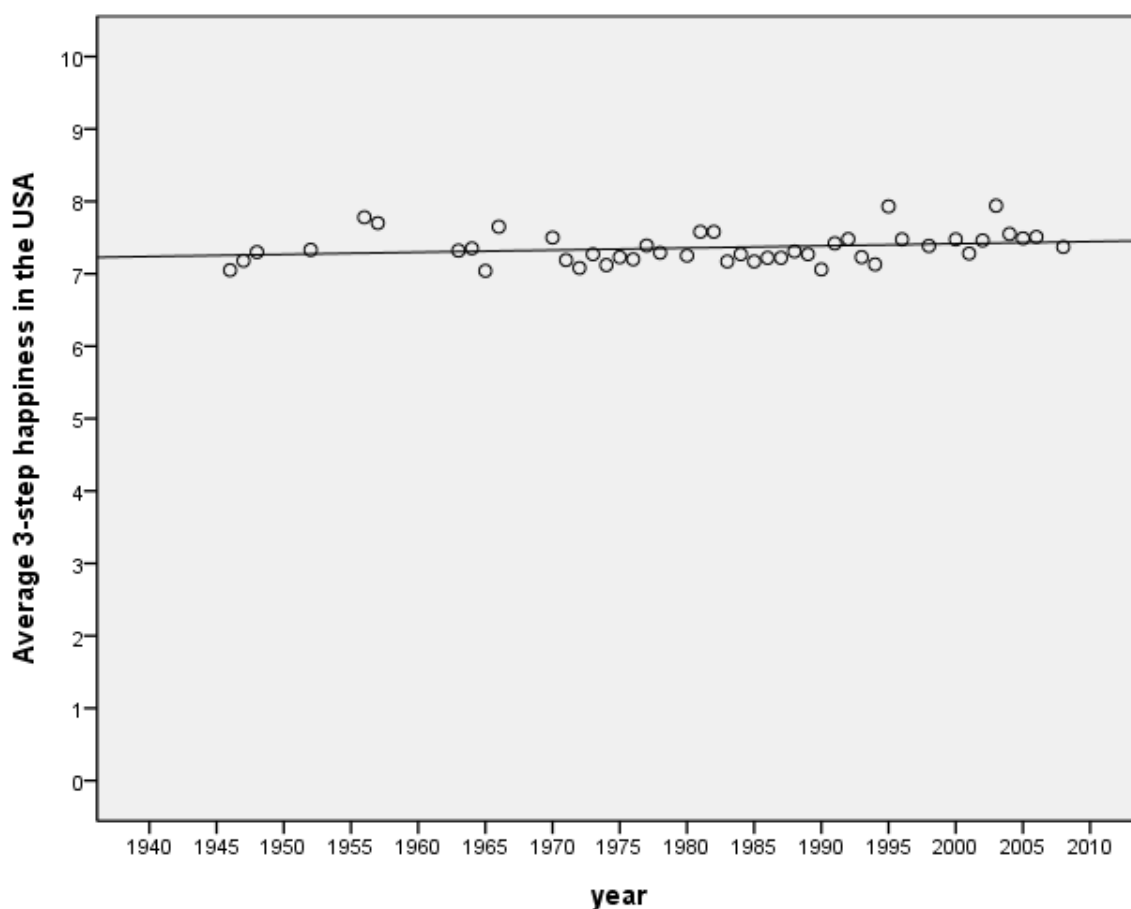
Data on happiness taken from Nation report [United Kingdom](#)

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 | +0.011 | +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 | +0.013 | +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
- http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_nat/findingreports/Archive/TrendReport_AverageHappiness_1946-2010.pdf

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