A study of subjective well-being of citizens in Beijing

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Abstract

Creating a harmonious society is the long-term objective of China government. Not only does it require the stable economy growth, but also it pays much importance to develop the economy, human individual, social welfare, environment, etc. as a whole.

The objective of this study is to find the characteristics of the subjective well-being (SWB) of both urban and rural citizens in Beijing, and to explore the influence factors on SWB as well. As we know, subjective well-being is a conception which hard to be measured because it varies in different culture background. Accordingly, we must be careful with the foreign measurement and instrument on SWB. As the researcher, Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics (BMBS) tries to design a questionnaire fit for the status quo of China and Beijing. Taking advantage of the strong ability of data mining, BMBS intends to provide supportive evidence for the policy making of local government.

Based on the Maslow’s hierarchy needs theory, we measured SWB with the major influence factors on happiness. The survey was conducted by BMBS in 2006 through computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI). 7118 samples are randomly selected,
which covered citizens who live in Beijing for more than half a year in 18 districts, aged from 18 to 70.

The results showed that: (1) The average score on SWB is 78.8 (the total score is 100). (2) It turns out a U-style distribution in terms of age. Young generation and elderly people are happier than middle-aged people. (3) Those who have stable jobs and harmonious family relationships are likely to feel happier than others. (4) In some extent, the score of SWB goes up as the family income increases. However, people’s satisfaction with family income, but not the family income level itself, influences the SWB results.

We can draw conclusion that SWB of citizens in Beijing are relative high. Family relationship, income satisfaction and social environment are three main factors which determine the sense of happiness.