

Gender differences in well-being: the impact of life-course events on individual definitions of quality of life

Anke Plagnol and Jacqueline Scott

University of Cambridge

September 26, 2008
GeNet Gender Equality Symposium

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Outline

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

1 Introduction

2 Data and methods

3 Results

- QoL definitions
- Life events
- Satisfaction

4 Conclusion

Introduction

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Increased use of subjective well-being measures

Introduction

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Increased use of subjective well-being measures
- Advantage: respondents evaluate themselves what is important for their well-being

Introduction

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Increased use of subjective well-being measures
- Advantage: respondents evaluate themselves what is important for their well-being
- Are there differences in how people define well-being?

Introduction

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Increased use of subjective well-being measures
- Advantage: respondents evaluate themselves what is important for their well-being
- Are there differences in how people define well-being?
 - Differences between persons
 - Differences within persons (over time)

Overview

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Individual definitions of quality of life (QoL)

Overview

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Individual definitions of quality of life (QoL)
- Gender differences in definitions of QoL

Overview

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Individual definitions of quality of life (QoL)
- Gender differences in definitions of QoL
- Do individual definitions change?

Overview

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Individual definitions of quality of life (QoL)
- Gender differences in definitions of QoL
- Do individual definitions change?
- Why do definitions change? → life events

Overview

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Individual definitions of quality of life (QoL)
- Gender differences in definitions of QoL
- Do individual definitions change?
- Why do definitions change? → life events
- Do changes in definitions matter for evaluations of well-being?

Overview

Introduction

Data and methods

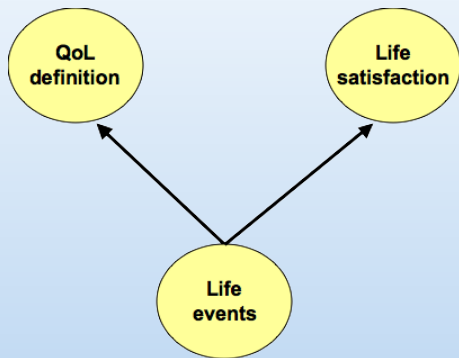
Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion



Overview

Introduction

Data and methods

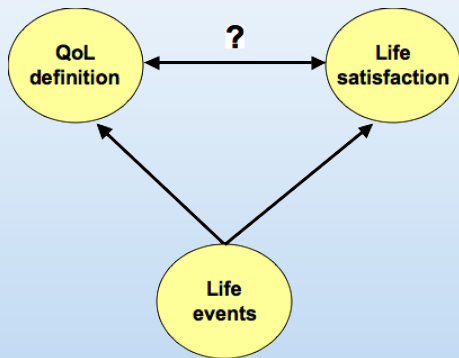
Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion



Outline

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

1 Introduction

2 Data and methods

3 Results

- QoL definitions
- Life events
- Satisfaction

4 Conclusion

Data and methods

Introduction

**Data and
methods**

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)

Data and methods

Introduction

**Data and
methods**

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
- open-ended question in 1997 and 2002

Data and methods

Introduction

**Data and
methods**

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
- open-ended question in 1997 and 2002
- *Would you take a moment to think about what 'quality of life' means to you, and tell me what things you consider are important for your own quality of life?*

Data and methods

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
- open-ended question in 1997 and 2002
- *Would you take a moment to think about what 'quality of life' means to you, and tell me what things you consider are important for your own quality of life?*
- Responses are quite heterogenous

Data and methods

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
- open-ended question in 1997 and 2002
- *Would you take a moment to think about what 'quality of life' means to you, and tell me what things you consider are important for your own quality of life?*
- Responses are quite heterogenous
- grouped in 16 categories

Data and methods

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- British Household Panel Survey (BHPS)
- open-ended question in 1997 and 2002
- *Would you take a moment to think about what 'quality of life' means to you, and tell me what things you consider are important for your own quality of life?*
- Responses are quite heterogenous
- grouped in 16 categories
- OLS regressions with clustered standard errors and fixed effects regressions

Outline

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

1 Introduction

2 Data and methods

3 Results

- QoL definitions
- Life events
- Satisfaction

4 Conclusion

Most frequent QoL mentions

Item	Women	Men
Health	57.41	50.29
Family	49.30	38.44
Finance	33.30	38.83
Happiness	29.71	24.96
Friends	19.14	15.29
Leisure	15.15	19.66
Home comforts	14.39	13.45
Employment	9.87	14.94
Misc other	7.93	7.16
Time self	7.82	9.75
Freedom	6.94	7.69
Other material	6.68	6.81
<i>n</i>	14,291	12,037

Data: BHPS 1997 and 2002

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Most frequent QoL mentions

Item	Women	Men
Health	57.41	50.29
Family	49.30	38.44
Finance	33.30	38.83
Happiness	29.71	24.96
Friends	19.14	15.29
Leisure	15.15	19.66
Home comforts	14.39	13.45
Employment	9.87	14.94
Misc other	7.93	7.16
Time self	7.82	9.75
Freedom	6.94	7.69
Other material	6.68	6.81
<i>n</i>	14,291	12,037

Data: BHPS 1997 and 2002

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Most frequent QoL mentions

Item	Women	Men
Health	57.41	50.29
Family	49.30	38.44
Finance	33.30	38.83
Happiness	29.71	24.96
Friends	19.14	15.29
Leisure	15.15	19.66
Home comforts	14.39	13.45
Employment	9.87	14.94
Misc other	7.93	7.16
Time self	7.82	9.75
Freedom	6.94	7.69
Other material	6.68	6.81
<i>n</i>	14,291	12,037

Data: BHPS 1997 and 2002

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

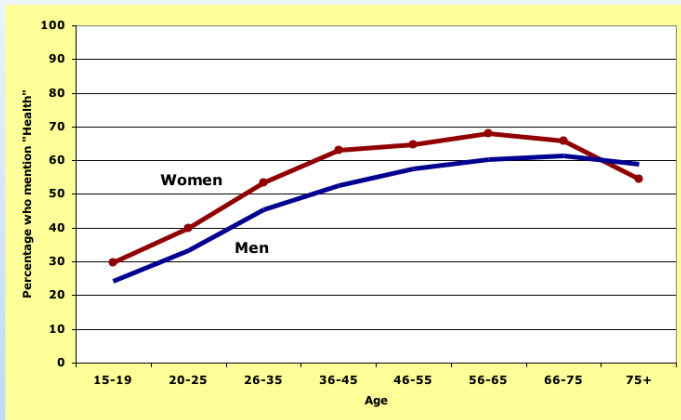
QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Health mentions by gender and age



Data: BHPS 1997 and 2002

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

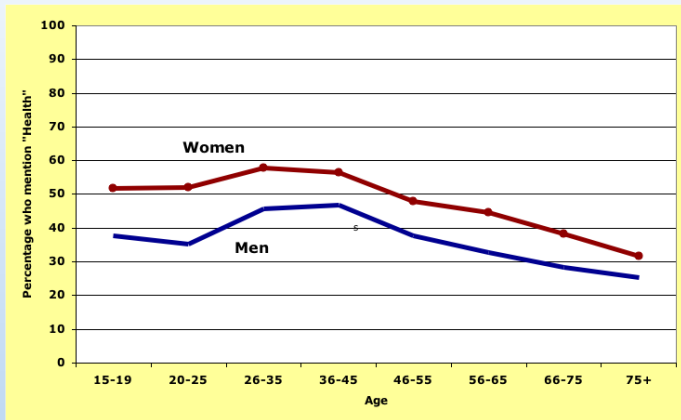
QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Family mentions by gender and age



Data: BHPS 1997 and 2002

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

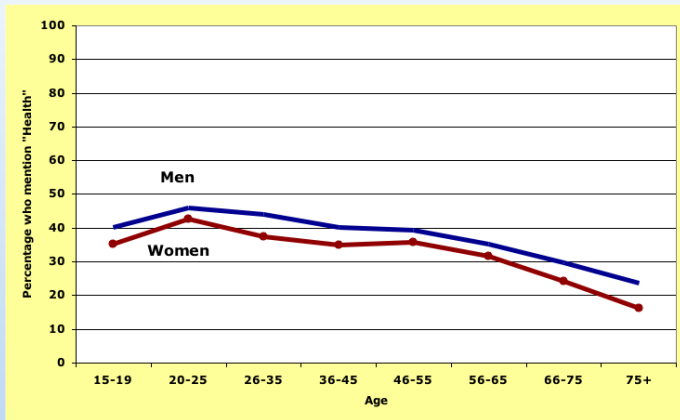
QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Finance mentions by gender and age



Data: BHPS 1997 and 2002

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Changes in QoL definitions

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Definitions differ between genders

Changes in QoL definitions

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Definitions differ between genders
- Definitions change over time

Changes in QoL definitions

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Definitions differ between genders
- Definitions change over time
- Why do definitions change?

Life events

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Hypothesis: through life experiences people change their perception of what is important for their quality of life

Life events

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Hypothesis: through life experiences people change their perception of what is important for their quality of life
- Four life events (5 year gap):

Life events

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Hypothesis: through life experiences people change their perception of what is important for their quality of life
- Four life events (5 year gap):
 - entering a partnership (marriage or cohabitation)
 - birth of a child
 - last child leaving home
 - retirement

Life events

Effects on definitions of QoL

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Event	+ More mentions	- Less mentions
Partnership		
Birth		
Last child		
Retirement		

Life events

Effects on definitions of QoL

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Event	+ More mentions	- Less mentions
Partnership	family, home comforts	
Birth		
Last child		
Retirement		

Life events

Effects on definitions of QoL

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Event	+ More mentions	- Less mentions
Partnership	family, home comforts	friends, employment
Birth		
Last child		
Retirement		

Life events

Effects on definitions of QoL

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Event	+ More mentions	- Less mentions
Partnership	family, home comforts	friends, employment
Birth	health, family	
Last child		
Retirement		

Life events

Effects on definitions of QoL

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Event	+ More mentions	- Less mentions
Partnership	family, home comforts	friends, employment
Birth	health, family	home comforts
Last child		
Retirement		

Life events

Effects on definitions of QoL

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Event	+ More mentions	- Less mentions
Partnership	family, home comforts	friends, employment
Birth	health, family	home comforts
Last child	-	employment
Retirement		

Life events

Effects on definitions of QoL

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Event	+ More mentions	- Less mentions
Partnership	family, home comforts	friends, employment
Birth	health, family	home comforts
Last child	-	employment
Retirement	health	-

Definitions of QoL, life events and satisfaction

Introduction

Data and methods

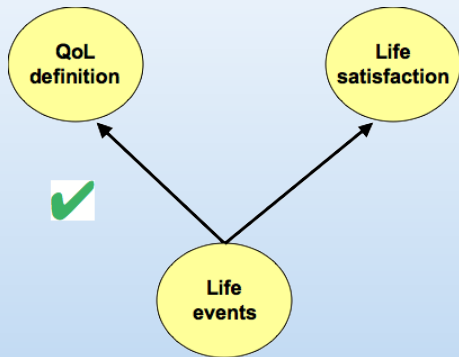
Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion



Life events and satisfaction

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Many studies, using the BHPS and other longitudinal data sets, have found that life events have effects on life satisfaction

Life events and satisfaction

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Many studies, using the BHPS and other longitudinal data sets, have found that life events have effects on life satisfaction

- Marriage (Lucas et al 2003, Zimmermann and Easterlin 2006)

Life events and satisfaction

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Many studies, using the BHPS and other longitudinal data sets, have found that life events have effects on life satisfaction

- Marriage (Lucas et al 2003, Zimmermann and Easterlin 2006)
- Unemployment (Clark and Oswald 1994, Winkelmann and Winkelmann 1998)

Life events and satisfaction

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

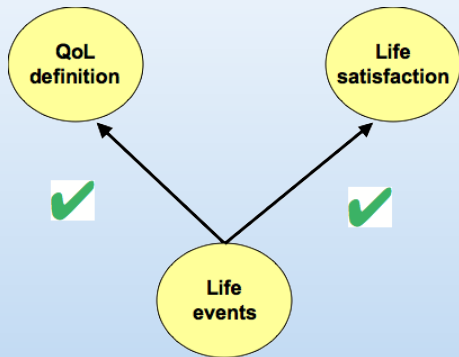
Satisfaction

Conclusion

Many studies, using the BHPS and other longitudinal data sets, have found that life events have effects on life satisfaction

- Marriage (Lucas et al 2003, Zimmermann and Easterlin 2006)
- Unemployment (Clark and Oswald 1994, Winkelmann and Winkelmann 1998)
- Disability (Brickman et al 1978)

Definitions of QoL, life events and satisfaction



Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Do QoL definitions matter for satisfaction?

Between people

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1 w/o controls	Model 2 with controls
Health		
Family		
Finance		
Happiness		
Friends		
Leisure		
Home comforts		
Employment		

Do QoL definitions matter for satisfaction?

Between people

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1 w/o controls	Model 2 with controls
Health	+	
Family	+	
Finance		
Happiness	+	
Friends	+	
Leisure	+	
Home comforts	+	
Employment		

Do QoL definitions matter for satisfaction?

Between people

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1 w/o controls	Model 2 with controls
Health	+	
Family	+	
Finance	-	
Happiness	+	
Friends	+	
Leisure	+	
Home comforts	+	
Employment	n.s.	

Do QoL definitions matter for satisfaction?

Between people

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1 w/o controls	Model 2 with controls
Health	+	+
Family	+	+
Finance	-	-
Happiness	+	+
Friends	+	+
Leisure	+	n.s.
Home comforts	+	+
Employment	n.s.	+

QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Fixed effects regressions

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Health	0.069**	0.073**	0.068*
Family	0.053*	0.052	0.048
Finance	0.000	-0.008	-0.013
Happiness	0.059*	0.051	0.060*
Friends	0.105**	0.103**	0.103**
Leisure	-0.021	-0.019	-0.021
Home comforts	0.056	0.042	0.058
Employment	0.139***	0.125**	0.109**
Age		-0.021***	-0.013*
Child born		0.012	-0.002
Last child		0.054	0.090
Retired		0.206**	0.231***
Enter couple		0.232***	-0.041
socio-demogr.	no	no	yes

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Fixed effects regressions

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Health	0.069**	0.073**	0.068*
Family	0.053*	0.052	0.048
Finance	0.000	-0.008	-0.013
Happiness	0.059*	0.051	0.060*
Friends	0.105**	0.103**	0.103**
Leisure	-0.021	-0.019	-0.021
Home comforts	0.056	0.042	0.058
Employment	0.139***	0.125**	0.109**
Age		-0.021***	-0.013*
Child born		0.012	-0.002
Last child		0.054	0.090
Retired		0.206**	0.231***
Enter couple		0.232***	-0.041
socio-demogr.	no	no	yes

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Fixed effects regressions

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Health	0.069**	0.073**	0.068*
Family	0.053*	0.052	0.048
Finance	0.000	-0.008	-0.013
Happiness	0.059*	0.051	0.060*
Friends	0.105**	0.103**	0.103**
Leisure	-0.021	-0.019	-0.021
Home comforts	0.056	0.042	0.058
Employment	0.139***	0.125**	0.109**
Age		-0.021***	-0.013*
Child born		0.012	-0.002
Last child		0.054	0.090
Retired		0.206**	0.231***
Enter couple		0.232***	-0.041
socio-demogr.	no	no	yes

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Fixed effects regressions

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Health	0.069**	0.073**	0.068*
Family	0.053*	0.052	0.048
Finance	0.000	-0.008	-0.013
Happiness	0.059*	0.051	0.060*
Friends	0.105**	0.103**	0.103**
Leisure	-0.021	-0.019	-0.021
Home comforts	0.056	0.042	0.058
Employment	0.139***	0.125**	0.109**
Age		-0.021***	-0.013*
Child born		0.012	-0.002
Last child		0.054	0.090
Retired		0.206**	0.231***
Enter couple		0.232***	-0.041
socio-demogr.	no	no	yes

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Fixed effects regressions

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Health	0.069**	0.073**	0.068*
Family	0.053*	0.052	0.048
Finance	0.000	-0.008	-0.013
Happiness	0.059*	0.051	0.060*
Friends	0.105**	0.103**	0.103**
Leisure	-0.021	-0.019	-0.021
Home comforts	0.056	0.042	0.058
Employment	0.139***	0.125**	0.109**
Age		-0.021***	-0.013*
Child born		0.012	-0.002
Last child		0.054	0.090
Retired		0.206**	0.231***
Enter couple		0.232***	-0.041
socio-demogr.	no	no	yes

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Fixed effects regressions

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Health	0.069**	0.073**	0.068*
Family	0.053*	0.052	0.048
Finance	0.000	-0.008	-0.013
Happiness	0.059*	0.051	0.060*
Friends	0.105**	0.103**	0.103**
Leisure	-0.021	-0.019	-0.021
Home comforts	0.056	0.042	0.058
Employment	0.139***	0.125**	0.109**
Age		-0.021***	-0.013*
Child born		0.012	-0.002
Last child		0.054	0.090
Retired		0.206**	0.231***
Enter couple		0.232***	-0.041
socio-demogr.	no	no	yes

Introduction

Data and methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Fixed effects regressions

Dependent variable: life satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Health	0.069**	0.073**	0.068*
Family	0.053*	0.052	0.048
Finance	0.000	-0.008	-0.013
Happiness	0.059*	0.051	0.060*
Friends	0.105**	0.103**	0.103**
Leisure	-0.021	-0.019	-0.021
Home comforts	0.056	0.042	0.058
Employment	0.139***	0.125**	0.109**
Age		-0.021***	-0.013*
Child born		0.012	-0.002
Last child		0.054	0.090
Retired		0.206**	0.231***
Enter couple		0.232***	-0.041
socio-demogr.	no	no	yes

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

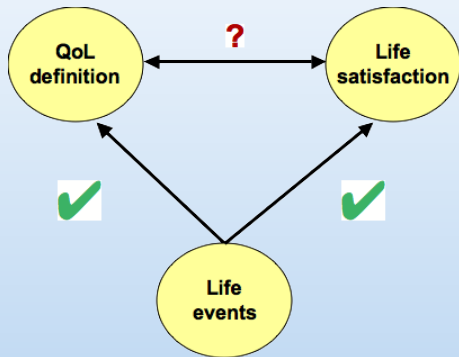
QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Definitions of QoL, life events and satisfaction



Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Outline

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

1 Introduction

2 Data and methods

3 Results

- QoL definitions
- Life events
- Satisfaction

4 Conclusion

Summary and conclusion

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Gender differences in definitions of quality of life

Summary and conclusion

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Gender differences in definitions of quality of life
- Definitions change over the life course

Summary and conclusion

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Gender differences in definitions of quality of life
- Definitions change over the life course
- Definitions seem to change after life events

Summary and conclusion

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Gender differences in definitions of quality of life
- Definitions change over the life course
- Definitions seem to change after life events
- Correlation between QoL definitions and life satisfaction, but some of this can be explained by life events

Summary and conclusion

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Gender differences in definitions of quality of life
- Definitions change over the life course
- Definitions seem to change after life events
- Correlation between QoL definitions and life satisfaction, but some of this can be explained by life events
- Probably spurious relationship between QoL definitions and life satisfaction

Summary and conclusion

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

- Gender differences in definitions of quality of life
- Definitions change over the life course
- Definitions seem to change after life events
- Correlation between QoL definitions and life satisfaction, but some of this can be explained by life events
- Probably spurious relationship between QoL definitions and life satisfaction
- We might not have included all relevant life events

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

Thank you

How to Give a Bad Talk

Ten commandments

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion

How to Give a Bad Talk

Ten commandments

- 1 Thou shalt not be neat
- 2 Thou shalt not waste space
- 3 Thou shalt not covet brevity
- 4 Thou shalt cover thy naked slide
- 5 Thou shalt not write large
- 6 Thou shalt not use color
- 7 Thou shalt not illustrate
- 8 Thou shalt not make eye contact
- 9 Thou shalt not skip slides in a long talk
- 10 Thou shalt not practice

Introduction

Data and
methods

Results

QoL definitions

Life events

Satisfaction

Conclusion