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Comparative analysis of Russian  
citizens' well-being Before and  
after the collapse of Soviet Union

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# Aim

To compare the happiness of the citizens between the Soviet Regime and current Capitalist Russia

# Questions asked as a determinant of happiness

1. In which regime the quality of consumption was/is higher?
2. In which regime the level of nutrition was/is higher?
3. In which regime saving was/is higher?
4. In which regime the kind, level and quality of education was/is better?
5. In which regime the career prospect of children was/is better?
6. In which regime entertainment was/is more?
7. In which regime the level of happiness was/is higher?

# Questions asked as a determinant of happiness

8. In which regime the living standard was/is higher?
9. Is the income in present capitalist Russia enough to maintain the same living standard as in Soviet period?
10. In which regime people were/are more capable to perform what they wanted/want to perform?
11. In which regime freedom and choice were/are more?
12. In which regime security of life, security of jobs, security of basic needs were/are more?
13. In which regime was/is family bondage stronger?

# Definitions

- Well-being : Condition of life in terms of goods individuals possess, services individuals have access to, achievements individuals attain, which makes life comfortable.
- Happiness: Subjective well-being, which comprises mental states such as life satisfaction and emotional well-being.
- Well-being is individual's pleasurable states of mind and fulfilment of desires (Griffin 1986).
- Goods and services, achievements, conditions that offer a life which stands at a higher rank in the ordering informed by the individual herself (Scanlon, 1991).



# Definitions...

- The goods that make people's lives valuable to them, constitute well-being while these values include values of personhood (autonomy, liberty, and capacities for action), accomplishment, understanding, deep personal relations, and aesthetic enjoyment (Griffin, 1986; Simpson, 1993).
- Capabilities to live a good life, is well-being (Sen 1977; Sen 1979; Sen 1999).
- Well-being may be defined as 'functionings' i.e. a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being (Sen 1993).
- Well-being is the freedom one enjoys to achieve as well as achievement itself (Sen 1993).

# Methodology

- A comparative design as suggested by Bryman (2015) has been used to compare the level of well-being and happiness (as a social phenomenon) between the two regimes. The comparative design here has been realized in the context of a combination of quantitative and qualitative research known as mixed method.
- Quantitative data have been analysed with various tools of Stata. For qualitative data, content analysis of the text of the qualitative information and perception collected through surveys and interviews, has been done. For content analysis, coding method has been applied and for this, we used NVivo.

# Data

- Data are collected conducting a survey using structured, semi-structured and open-ended questions. There are 16 quantitative questions, 7 qualitative questions and 18 indicator variables in the questionnaire. Besides the data collected through survey, in order to develop insight, in-depth interviews are taken from people of various professions who keenly observed the change in life in the member countries of the erstwhile USSR, who know what really happened and why happened.
- The respondents for the survey questionnaire are selected using convenience sampling method over Krasnoyarsk kray, Altayskiy kray, Irkutskaya oblast, Kemorovo, Republic of Tuva, Republic of Khakassia, Zabaykalskiy kray.



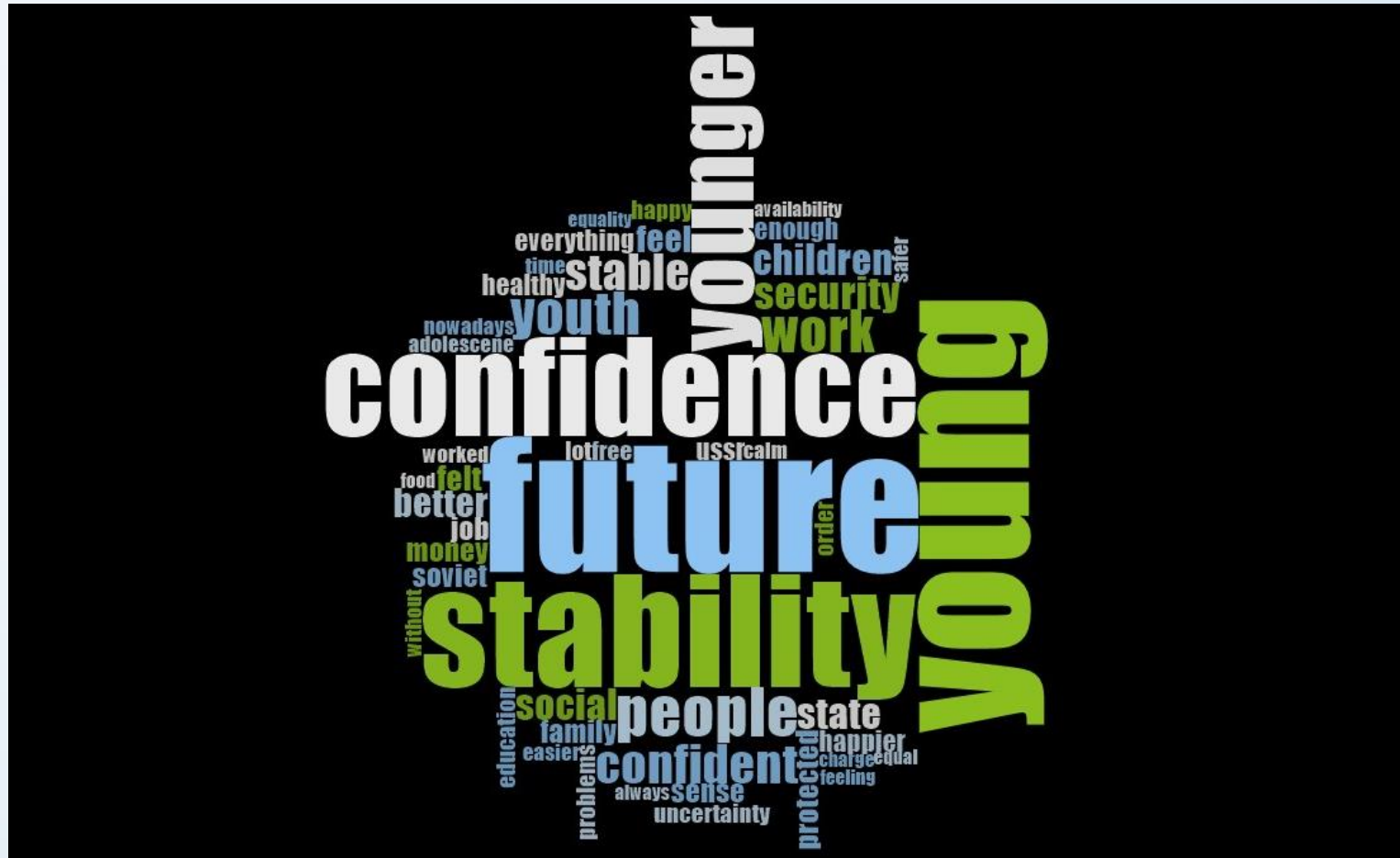


Figure 1. Elements of happiness in Soviet Russia (NVivo output from content analysis). *Source:* Authors' Survey

*Note:* The larger the number of the people mentioning the word as a factor of happiness, the larger the font of the word e.g. the word 'future' appears to be large meaning a large number of people mentioned it as an element/factor of their happiness. By 'future' they meant confidence that they had about living a better life for themselves in the days to come and for their children.



# Key Findings

- A larger number of people suggest that they were happier in Soviet period than in present capitalist Russia;
- Stability in their life, stability of the state, certainty of life they wanted to live, guarantee of livelihood and confidence in the ability to live a better life in the days to come, were the main reasons for their happiness in Soviet Russia;
- Those who think they were happier in Soviet period, do not want to go back to that system as they fear that such a shift might involve uncertainty while certainty was the main reason for their happiness in that period;
- Those who suggest that they are happier in the present capitalist Russia, put forward freedom, expansion of choices, expansion of opportunities as their arguments.
- Although freedom is considered a main element of happiness in present capitalist Russia, it can contribute to increasing happiness only after an individual is able to fulfil his or her necessities and has some excess money for investment or entertainment.

# Conclusion

- A greater number of respondents suggest that they were happier in the Soviet period. Stability, certainty of life, guarantee of livelihood, confidence in the ability to live a better life in future for themselves and their children are the causes of their happiness.
- The respondents who think they are happier now in the present capitalist Russia put freedom and expansion of choices and opportunities as the causes of their happiness— all of which can be put under one heading— freedom.
- Although freedom is an important element of happiness, to have well-being or happiness from freedom one needs to be able to fulfil her basic needs first.



# Conclusion...

- Those who considered Soviet period to be happier, do not want to go back to the Soviet system because they fear involvement of uncertainty in the transition because they considered Soviet period happier since there was certainty in that period. Now with the fear of uncertainty in the proposed transition, they do not want to take the risk of going back to the old system, which, with uncertainty in life, would make them unhappier than how they are now in present Russia.
- A representative sample consisting of all walks of people across all the regions of the erstwhile Soviet Union needs to be used in such an analysis. This study cannot make inference on the effectiveness of socialist and capitalist systems in ensuring well-being and happiness. Our study just gives a general impression about how Russian people now tend to compare the level of well-being and happiness between the two systems.