

Estimating the size of measurement errors of the Satisfaction With Democracy survey indicator for different scales, countries and languages

Abstract:

The Satisfaction With Democracy (SWD) indicator is often used in social research. However, while there is some debate about which concept it measures, the discussion about the size of its measurement errors (how well it measures the underlying concept) is scarce. Nonetheless, measurement errors can affect the results and threaten comparisons across studies, scales, countries and languages. Thus, we estimated the “measurement quality” of the SWD indicator for seven response scales across 38 country-language groups, using three multitrait-multimethod experiments from the European Social Survey. Measurement quality is a statistical measure of how well a question measures the underlying concept of interest and it is the complement of measurement errors. Results show that measurement errors explain, on average across countries, from 16% (11-point scale) to 54% (4-point scale) of the variance in the observed responses. We also provide insights to improve questionnaire design, and evaluate if standardized relationships of this indicator with other variables can be compared across scales, countries and languages.