

# Appendix T4. Public Comment 4

## BROOKINGS

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Michael Burke  
FNS/USDA  
By email

Dear Mike (if I may),

I was pleased to see the new survey on food security and well-being, being fielded by the USDA. I have spent much of my career looking at poverty and insecurity issues abroad and most recently in the U.S., so it is a welcome change to see this survey in the U.S.

In addition, I was one of the early and “crazy” pioneers in the field of happiness economics, and most recently have been involved in the study of widespread despair and deaths of despair in the U.S. Obviously issues such as food insecurity play a role (but certainly not the only one). More generally insecure lives and futures seem to be a growing problem for more and more Americans, presenting a major challenge to their wellbeing.

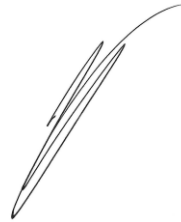
While I was enthusiastic about seeing the survey and reading the questionnaire, I was a bit disappointed in the limited depth and breadth of the treatment of wellbeing in the survey. It is not surprising that those who are food insecure report low levels of financial wellbeing. More novel and where the survey could tell us more about coping mechanisms and resilience (or lack there-of) is in broader and more general dimensions of wellbeing, such as life satisfaction and hope for the future, as well as more detailed questions on daily experienced wellbeing, such as daily frequency of stress, anxiety, and contentment and happiness. These often vary a great deal across races, gender, and location (as well as of course income) and at times in surprising ways that yield new insights to the problem.

The questions for these conditions are well known, track consistently, and are already included in many national surveys, such as the UK’s Annual Population survey, as well as in the Gallup World Poll. If you have any interest in adding some of them to the survey, I would be pleased to send you the standard wording for them. The so-called ONS four, for example, which are used in the APS in the UK, are four such questions which take a total of 2 minutes for

respondents to complete. The trade-off, in my view, which might entail shortening the (rather repetitive) list of food access and security questions, would result in much more informative results.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Graham', written in a cursive style.

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Cc: Andrew Reamer