

2nd Seniors Sentiment Index

A report by
**National Seniors Australia
and Challenger**

February 2014

National Seniors
Australia

challenger 

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Foreword

In December 2012 National Seniors Australia published, in partnership with Challenger, the findings from the inaugural Seniors Sentiment Index. The Index was developed to assess the wellbeing of senior Australians with respect to their social, financial and health wellbeing. The findings, from a survey of 2,000 Australians aged 50 years and over, revealed that seniors were broadly positive about their life, in particular their health, but satisfaction with their financial wellbeing was somewhat lower.

National Seniors, again in partnership with Challenger, is pleased to release the findings from the *2nd Seniors Sentiment Index*. The latest release of the Index allows us to track changes in the wellbeing of Australia's seniors in the previous 12 months; a period during which there was a change of Federal Government. Again, 2,000 Australians aged 50 years and over were surveyed for the Index, which included over 500 people who participated in the previous year's survey.

Many of the findings are positive, with seniors expressing better health, social wellbeing and financial wellbeing than for the previous survey. In particular, there was an increase in confidence in retirement income, reflecting improving returns in superannuation and consumer sentiment over the period. However, the overall outlook of seniors for their finances over the next five years fell slightly. Seniors' outlook for their future health and social wellbeing was also slightly lower.

A strength of the report is the significant detail it provides on seniors' sentiment across a wide range of issues affecting their lives. The Seniors Sentiment Index will again be conducted in 2014, to provide valuable insight into how seniors view their lives as the Australian economy and society changes.

Michael O'Neill
CEO
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February 2014

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Executive Summary

Introduction

- This report details findings from the second Seniors Sentiment Index.
- The Index is a summary measure of how senior Australians (aged 50 years and over) view different aspects of their lives, as well as Australian society as a whole.
- The Index is based on seniors' assessment of their financial, health and social wellbeing, both presently and how they foresee these areas will be in the future.
- This report presents findings from the Index and relevant measures of wellbeing of seniors for 2013, and assesses trends from 2012 to 2013.

Data and methodology

- The data in this report came from the National Seniors Social Survey Wave 3.
- The survey was conducted during September and October 2013 by approximately 2,000 members of National Seniors Australia aged 50 years and over.
- The data from the 2013 survey was compared with findings from the National Seniors Social Survey Wave 2, conducted in August 2012.
- Over 500 respondents in the 2013 survey have also answered the 2012 survey; the responses to this longitudinal sample will be tracked over time.
- The Domain Index for Social, Financial, and Health was calculated using the formula adapted from the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index. The Index was standardised to a distribution of 0% to 100%, where 0% is the lowest possible satisfaction and 100% is the highest possible satisfaction.
- The Sentiment Index is the average of the Social, Financial and Health Domain Indexes.
- The relative strength of the relationship of the three domains with overall life satisfaction was compared, as was the relative importance of components of each domain with the relevant Domain Index.
- A Prospective Sentiment Index was also computed to assess how seniors perceive their social, financial and health wellbeing five years from now.

Results

Seniors Sentiment Index and Domain Indexes

- The Seniors Sentiment Index increased from 65.9% in 2012 to 71.7% in 2013.
- The Social Domain Index had the largest rise in this period, from 68.1% to 77.4%, due to the proportion of seniors being very satisfied with their social wellbeing rising from 19% to 38%.
- The Financial Domain Index increased from 58.9% to 63.3% and the Health Domain Index increased from 70.7% to 74.3%.
- Using the longitudinal sample of the 2012 and 2013 surveys, the Seniors Sentiment Index and each Domain Index increased at a slower rate when compared with using the full sample of each survey.
- The Index of overall life satisfaction of seniors rose slightly from 76.6% to 78.6%.
- Although the Sentiment Index at present increased, the Prospective Sentiment Index decreased slightly from 44.9% to 44.4%; and likewise, each Prospective Domain Index also fell slightly.
- The increase in each Domain Index and the Seniors Sentiment Index was fairly uniform across different socio-economic groups. People with higher income, higher education and older cohorts have the highest levels of positive sentiment, as found in 2012.
- The social domain has the strongest relationship with overall life satisfaction, when compared with the financial and health domains.

Social domain

- Community satisfaction has the strongest relationship with social wellbeing, compared with personal relationships and satisfaction with Government. Feelings of safety in the community increased from 2012 to 2013 but confidence in neighbours to help in a time of need fell.
- The rating of the Australian political system improved from 2012 to 2013, with the proportion at least somewhat satisfied rising from 21% to 30%; however this remains at a low level.

Financial domain

- Confidence in retirement income has the strongest relationship with financial wellbeing, compared with the ability to cover basic and non-essential expenses, ability to save money and the impact of Government spending.
- Confidence in superannuation as an adequate income source in retirement increased from 44% in 2012 to 61% in 2013 for retired people and from 31% to 37% for non-retired people. Confidence in income from all sources as adequate for retirement rose from 45% to 55% for retired people and 34% to 42% for non-retired people.
- Ease in the ability to pay for basic household expenses fell from 71% to 66% while ease in the ability to pay for non-essential expenses rose from 36% to 53%.
- Very negative perceptions of Federal Government policies affecting financial wellbeing fell from 29% to 11% and for State Government policies fell from 19% to 13%; however, less than 15% of respondents thought positively of each level of Government's policies.

Health domain

- There were slight improvements in the proportion of seniors with a medical condition being able to get an appointment with a doctor or other health professionals when necessary.
- Satisfaction with Government spending in the health system also rose from 17% to 24%.
- Measures of physical exercise show that seniors engage in moderate physical activity on average 4.3 times in a typical week.

Discussion

- From 2012 to 2013, senior Australians became more positive about their lives in terms of their social, health and financial wellbeing.
- The increase in satisfaction with the political system may be attributed to the survey taking place within two months of the Federal Election which resulted in a change of Government; however overall satisfaction with politics remains low.
- Improving financial sentiment could be attributed to improving returns in superannuation and consumer confidence; the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Consumer Sentiment Index has also shown improvements over the same period of time.
- When interpreting the results of the Sentiment Index, it is worth bearing in mind that sentiment can fluctuate over the short-term.
- Overall, the findings from both the full sample were consistent with the longitudinal sample.
- Ongoing National Seniors Social Surveys will track the Seniors Sentiment Index and will contain a larger number of respondents in the longitudinal sample.

Introduction

Australia's seniors population (aged 50 years and over) is a large and growing demographic. It is therefore important to not only understand about their experiences and attitudes across a range of areas of their lives, but also how these transform over time as the Australian economy and society changes.

This report details findings from the second Seniors Sentiment Index. The Index is a summary measure of how senior Australians view different aspects of their lives, as well as Australian society as a whole. Specifically, the Index is based on seniors' assessment of their financial, health and social wellbeing, both presently and how they foresee these areas will be in the future. Financial wellbeing is important in order to afford necessities and instil confidence for the future, while health has a direct influence on quality of life, particularly during the oldest ages. Social wellbeing is a broader concept, and encompasses interaction with society, including relationships with family and friends, satisfaction with living in their community, and sentiment towards Government and other public institutions.

The Index, based on the National Seniors Social Survey Wave 3, which was completed by approximately 2,000 seniors during September and October 2013, follows on from the inaugural Seniors Sentiment Index which was based on National Seniors Social Survey Wave 2 conducted in August 2012.¹ The latest survey assesses changes in the sentiment of Australia's seniors during a period of just over one year; a period that included a change of Federal Government as well as numerous other factors that potentially affected different aspects of seniors' lives. Importantly, over one-quarter of the survey population also responded to the 2012 survey; this longitudinal component of the sample allows for analysis of how the sentiment of the same seniors has changed over time.

Before detailing the findings from the second Seniors Sentiment Index, the report summarises past measurements of wellbeing in Australia and provides an overview of results from the inaugural Index.

Measurement of wellbeing

A number of indexes measuring wellbeing across a wide range of domains have emerged in the past 10-15 years. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provided a valuable framework for measuring wellbeing, based on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research that includes a broad range of factors: family and community, health, education and training, work, economic resources, housing, crime and justice and culture and leisure.² The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, developed by the Australian Centre on Quality of Life at Deakin University, has monitored personal wellbeing and national wellbeing in Australia since 2001.³ The Personal Wellbeing Index is derived from answers to seven questions representing the domains of standard of living, health, achieving in life, personal relationships, personal safety, community-connectedness, future security, and the National Wellbeing Index is computed from responses to six questions – representing the domains of economic situation, environment, social conditions, Government, business and national security.⁴ In contrast, the Herald Age Lateral Economics (HALE) Index of Australia's wellbeing, has measured both economic and non-economic wellbeing (e.g., environment, health, political and social capital) using a national accounts approach.⁵

Internationally, indexes have been developed to allow for cross-country comparison of wellbeing. The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) is calculated based on a life expectancy index (i.e. life expectancy at birth), education index (i.e. adult literacy rate and gross enrolment ratio) and GDP index (i.e. decent standard of living based on GDP per capita in US\$).⁶ A measurement of economic wellbeing developed by Osberg and Sharpe is a broader measure than GDP, and accounts for not only consumption, but also health, inequality and risk of hardship.⁷ Somewhat surprisingly though, fewer studies have focussed specifically on people over the age of 50 years. The Stanford Center on Longevity and Population Reference Bureau's (SCL/PRB) Index of Wellbeing measures four domains of older people - material, physical, social and emotional wellbeing – using 12 subjective and objective measures of wellbeing across 12 countries.⁸

¹ National Seniors Australia and Challenger, 2013, Seniors Sentiment Index, National Seniors Australia: Brisbane.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) 'Measuring wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian social statistics' Cat. No. 4160.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra.

³ International Wellbeing Group (2006) 'Personal wellbeing index: 4th edition' Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University: Melbourne.

⁴ International Wellbeing Group (2006) *ibid*.

⁵ Lateral Economics (2011) 'The Herald/Age-Lateral Economics index of Australia's wellbeing: final report', www.lateraleconomics.com.au/outputs/Fairfax%20Lateral%20Economics%20Index%20of%20Australia's%20Wellbeing%20Final%20Report.pdf.

⁶ United National Development Program (2007) 'Fighting climate change: human solidarity in a divided world' in *Human Development Report 2007/2008*, Watkins: New York, USA.

⁷ Osberg, L., & Sharpe, A., (2002) 'An index of economic well-being for selected OECD countries' *Review of Income and Wealth* 48(3): 291-316.

⁸ Kaneda, T., Lee, M., & Pollard, K., (2011) 'SCL and PRB index of well-being in older populations' Washington DC: Population Reference Bureau.

Findings from the inaugural Seniors Sentiment Index

The inaugural Seniors Sentiment Index found that senior Australians were broadly positive about their life (Index of 65.9%). Personal ratings of health (70% report being of good or excellent health) and social wellbeing (over 60% are very or somewhat satisfied with their social wellbeing in terms of their personal relationships, satisfaction with community and sentiments towards Government institutions) were high. However, financial wellbeing was somewhat lower, with just over half being very or somewhat satisfied with their financial wellbeing. Of interest, social wellbeing had a larger effect on overall life satisfaction than health and financial wellbeing. However, the Seniors Sentiment Index differed significantly by certain socio-economic groups; high income earners and those with a high education rated higher wellbeing than their counterparts. Further, the outlook of many seniors in relation to their finances was of concern for many, and there was low satisfaction with the Australian political system.

Report outline

This report measures the Seniors Sentiment Index of Australians aged 50 years and above across three domains, as well as the sentiment in the following domains:

- Social (including personal relationships, satisfaction with their community and sentiment towards Government);
- Financial (including ability to save and confidence in retirement income); and
- Health (including personal health and experiences with health services).

The report utilises data from the National Seniors Social Survey Wave 3, which included questions covering sentiment and experiences on a range of issues. The data and methodology used to construct the Indexes is consistent with the Wave 2 questionnaire; these are detailed in the next section. The report assesses trends in the domain Indexes between the two surveys. The report also explores the socio-economic differences in sentiment across the diverse population of senior Australians, as well as analysing the questions relevant to each individual domain in greater detail. The report presents the trends between 2012 and 2013 using the full sample. These trends are compared with the longitudinal sample to assess whether the changes are present in the individuals who responded to both surveys. Finally, the key findings are discussed. Appendix tables are available at nationalseniors.com.au.

Data and methods

National Seniors Social Survey Wave 3: Sample selection, data collection, response rates and survey weighting

The data in this report is taken from the National Seniors Social Survey Wave 3. The survey was conducted from late September to late October 2013 by members of National Seniors Australia aged 50 years and over. A total of 10,000 members were invited to complete the survey. The selection of respondents was conducted two ways:

- Longitudinal sample: Invitation of 1,358 respondents who answered the National Seniors Social Survey Wave 2 in August 2012, who indicated in that survey that they would like to participate in future waves of the survey, and whose membership number was in the National Seniors membership database.
- Non-longitudinal sample⁹: Invitation of 8,642 respondents from the National Seniors Australia database (of approximately 200,000 members). The number of respondents allocated to each of the 48 strata (3 age groups x 2 sexes x 8 states/territories) was calculated proportionally to reflect the Estimated Resident Population in Australia aged 50 years and over in June 2012.¹⁰ The respondents within each stratum were selected randomly from the database. Selection was undertaken ensuring two members from the same family were not chosen.

A paper survey was mailed to each of the selected members in late September 2013. Respondents had the option to complete the paper survey and return by mail, or to complete the survey online. Surveys were completed and returned by 25 October 2013. Data entry was conducted at the Melbourne office of National Seniors Australia in October-November 2013. Results from a total of 2,062 surveys were entered. These comprised 534 respondents who had been invited after having answered the National Seniors Social Survey Wave 2 (longitudinal sample) and 1,528 respondents who had not answered the Wave 2 (non-longitudinal sample).

Wave 3 of the survey received approval from the Bellberry Human Research Ethics Committee on 16 September 2013. As required by ethical guidelines, all members invited to participate received a Participant Information Sheet explaining the nature and purpose of the study and outlined that participation in the study was voluntary; there was no obligation to participate; and by completing and returning/submitting the survey, the respondent was consenting to participate in the study.

Survey weights were applied to each combination of age, sex and State/Territory, to adjust for differences in response rates by these population groups and to make the results representative of the Australian population aged 50 years and over. Table A.1.1 shows the response rate for each combination of age, sex and State/Territory. There were 44 cases with no information on at least one of these characteristics, reducing the sample to 2,018 cases that could be used in the analysis. This compares with 1,976 cases in Wave 2. The overall response rate was 20%, the same as Wave 2. The highest response rate, according to age and sex, was 27% for males aged 80 years and above, and the lowest was 13% for males aged 50-64 years.

Table A.1.2 shows the response rates according to whether the respondent was part of the longitudinal or non-longitudinal sample. For the longitudinal sample, there were eight cases with no information on at least one of age, sex and State/Territory, reducing the sample to 526 cases that could be used in the analysis. As expected, the overall response rate was significantly higher for the longitudinal sample (39%) versus the non-longitudinal sample (17%). For the longitudinal sample, separate weights were applied according to each combination of age and sex to make the results from this sample representative of the Australian population aged 50 years and over (using the Estimated Resident Population in Australia aged 50 years and over in June 2012). These weights were used only for analysis of the longitudinal sample.

⁹ The sample for Wave 2 in 2012 was selected using the same approach as for the non-longitudinal sample, except that 10,000 respondents were invited.

¹⁰ ABS, 3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, Dec 2012, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012.

Comparison of 2012 full sample and 2013 full sample

In this report, trends from 2012 to 2013 in Sentiment Indexes and many variables are examined. The 2012 National Seniors Social Survey was conducted in August 2012; the 2013 Survey was conducted approximately 14 months after the 2012 Survey. Table 1 compares the distribution of the 2012 and 2013 survey populations. Age, sex and state are presented as unweighted results, because cases are weighted to the Australian population using the combination of these variables. The main difference between the two Waves is that 2013 has a lower proportion of respondents aged 50-64 years, compared with 2012. However these differences will be removed once weights are applied to make the findings representative of the Australian population aged 50 years and over.

Weighted results of other basic characteristics of the 2012 and 2013 full samples show that the characteristics are very similar. Therefore, the 2012 and 2013 full samples are comparable and variables can be analysed with confidence between the two surveys.

Table 1: Basic characteristics of NSSS sample (%), 2012 and 2013, full sample

	2012	2013		2012	2013
Age (unweighted)			Place of residence (weighted)		
50-64	48.0	42.2	Capital city	48.7	47.8
65-79	40.9	42.8	Not capital city	51.3	52.2
80+	11.2	15.0	Total	100.0	100.0
Sex (unweighted)			Country of birth (weighted)		
Male	45.7	44.1	Australia	77.6	80.9
Female	54.3	55.9	Other	18.9	19.1
State (unweighted)			Can't say	3.6	0.0
NSW	29.9	28.8	Total	100.0	100.0
VIC	25.8	25.8	Marital status (weighted)		
QLD	17.1	18.1	Married	58.1	58.3
SA	9.6	9.5	De facto	4.2	5.4
WA	10.3	11.1	Divorced/ Separated	14.2	15.1
TAS	4.1	4.1	Never married	7.4	7.3
ACT	2.2	2.0	Widowed	14.8	13.4
NT	1.0	0.6	Can't say	1.4	0.5
Education (weighted)			Total	100.0	100.0
Not finished high school & no other qualification	20.5	20.4			
Not finished high school & other qualification	31.6	29.7			
Finished high school	47.9	49.9			
Total	100.0	100.0			
Employment (weighted)					
Employed	43.2	41.5			
Not employed	55.1	58.4			
Can't say	1.7	0.1			
Total	100.0	100.0			

Comparison of full sample and longitudinal sample

Both the full sample and longitudinal sample are used to analyse trends from 2012 to 2013. To evaluate the comparability of the two samples, Table A.1.3 shows the distribution of each sample according to basic characteristics. There are differences between the age distributions of the two samples, with the longitudinal sample having a lower proportion of respondents aged 50-64 years but more aged 65-79 years than the full sample. However, the application of weights remove age differences in the respective samples. All other characteristics are similar, again demonstrating that the two samples allow reliable comparison of results between the two surveys.

National Seniors Social Survey Wave 3 survey

The National Seniors Social Survey Wave 3 again comprised a module for each of the three domains of financial, health and social, as well as a range of demographic and socio-economic measures.

Each module comprised a summary indicator relating to that particular domain. The indicators were as follows:

- Financial: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with your overall financial wellbeing at present
- Health: Please indicate your health status at present
- Social: Considering satisfaction with your community, relationships and your sentiment towards institutions, please indicate your level of satisfaction with your overall social wellbeing at present

Each of these indicators was used to construct a Domain Index, from which the Index of Senior Australians' Life Sentiment (referred to as the Sentiment Index) was computed (see below). The index indicators were the same as for the 2012 data.¹¹

The financial and social wellbeing indicators were asked following on from questions exploring a range of issues on that particular domain. The health question was asked at the beginning of the health module. A question regarding satisfaction with life as a whole was also included, to compare with the Sentiment Index.

For each summary domain indicator, respondents were asked how they believe their wellbeing will be five years from now compared with the present. The Prospective Sentiment Index was derived from this data to gain insights into how people believe their wellbeing will change over time. In the 2012 report, a Retrospective Sentiment Index was derived from data asking people how they thought their wellbeing was presently compared with five years ago. As there are now two Waves of data to compare, the Retrospective Sentiment Index is not included in this report.

Within each module, there were a number of questions on specific issues which could provide evidence on the factors related to the sentiments of seniors. These are presented in the Results section of this report.

Sentiment Indexes

The indexes produced in this report are the Sentiment Index and Prospective Sentiment Index. The Sentiment Indexes presented in the survey are the same as for the previous report, with the exception of the Retrospective Sentiment Index not being included because we have data from 2012 to track over time. A Domain Index was measured for each of the social, financial and health domains. The Sentiment Index is the average of the three Domain Indexes.

Each Domain Index was calculated from a variable on a five-point scale. For example, financial wellbeing was answered on a scale of (1) Very dissatisfied, (2) Somewhat dissatisfied, (3) Neutral, (4) Somewhat satisfied, and (5) Very satisfied. The following formula was used, adapting the approach from the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index:¹²

$$\frac{X - k^{\min}}{k^{\max} - k^{\min}} \times 100$$

where X is the mean score of all respondents, k^{\min} is the minimum score on the scale (i.e., 1 on a scale of 1 to 5), and k^{\max} is the maximum score on the scale (i.e., 5 on a scale of 1 to 5).¹³

The Index was standardised to a distribution of 0% to 100%, where 0% is the lowest possible satisfaction and 100% is the highest possible satisfaction. For example, a score of 100% is achieved if all respondents answered "very satisfied". If the mean score is 3.5, the Index is 62.5%.

The Prospective Sentiment Index was constructed using the same method as the Sentiment Index using questions of how respondents think their wellbeing in each domain will change over the next five years.

¹¹ With the exception of the ordering of words, e.g. in 2012 social wellbeing was asked as: *At present, how satisfied are you with your overall social wellbeing (considering satisfaction with your community, relationships and your sentiment towards institutions)?*

¹² International Wellbeing Group 2006, 'Personal wellbeing index: 4th edition' Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University: Melbourne.

¹³ Can't say responses are not included.

An Alternative Sentiment Index was also calculated as a comparison to the Sentiment Index. The Alternative Sentiment Index is based on the weighting of the relative importance of each domain in determining overall wellbeing. The relative importance of each domain was ascertained by conducting an ordinal regression analysis of overall life satisfaction, with covariates being the financial, health and social domain summary variables, as well as age and sex. Standardised coefficients produced from the regression demonstrate the effect on the outcome variable (overall life satisfaction) of a one standard deviation increase in the covariate. The weighting of each domain is the domain standardised coefficient expressed as the percentage of the sum of the three standardised coefficients. The 2012 and 2013 weights are averaged to produce each domain weight that is used to construct the Alternative Sentiment Index.¹⁴ The Alternative Sentiment Index is the weighted average of the three domain indexes.¹⁵

Index trends between 2012 and 2013

A statistical test was conducted to ascertain whether trends in the Domain Indexes, the Sentiment Index and Prospective Sentiment Index between 2012 and 2013 were statistically significant (i.e., * for $p < 0.05$ and ** for $p < 0.01$).

Domain components

The report also examines the relative importance of components of each domain. The relative importance of domain components was measured using weights based on the standardised coefficients from ordinal regression analysis, with the domain summary variables as the outcome variable and the domain components (i.e., specific variables), as well as age and sex, as the covariates. The weight of each domain is expressed as the percentage of the sum of the three standardised coefficients from the regression. The 2012 and 2013 weights are averaged to produce each component weight. Some of the questions used to construct domain components differed between the 2012 and 2013 survey, such differences are highlighted and described where relevant.

Longitudinal sample

The longitudinal sample was used to compare trends in the Domain Indexes, the Sentiment Index and Prospective Sentiment Index between 2012 and 2013, as well as trends in certain variables, with those derived from the full sample. It is noted in the text if these trends differ.

Tables

Only answers from people who completed that particular question were included in the denominator. Below each table, the percentage of eligible respondents answering each question is reported.

All analyses were conducted using Stata 11.1.¹⁶ The Appendix contains additional tables from data in the survey (using the full sample).

¹⁴ The weighting of each domain is compared with the 2012 weighting to ascertain if the relative importance of each domain has changed over time. This is presented in the Appendix tables.

¹⁵ The Alternative Sentiment Index produced in the 2012 report is different from the Alternative Sentiment Index produced in this report, because it used weightings based solely on the 2012 data.

¹⁶ StataCorp 2009, Stata/SE 11.1, StataCorp: College Station, Texas, USA.

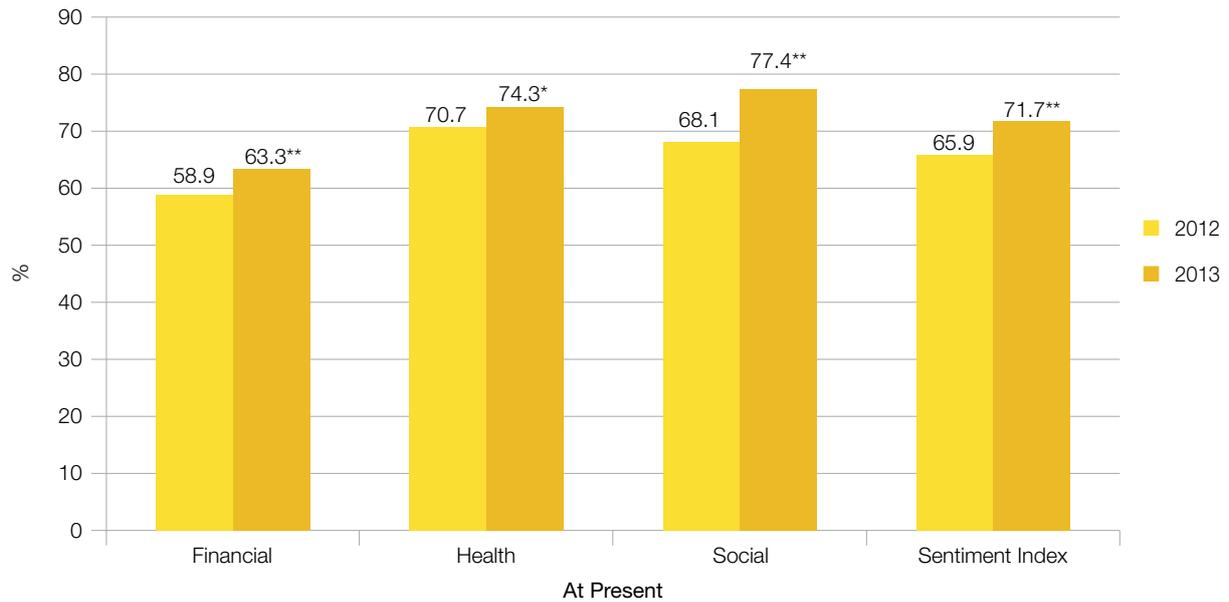
Results

Sentiment Index

The Sentiment Index increased from 65.9% in 2012 to 71.7% in 2013 (Figure 1). This increase is statistically significant¹⁷ and is due to rises in the indexes for health, financial, and social wellbeing. The largest increase was in the social domain, from 68.1% to 77.4%. This was due to a rise in the proportion of people reporting being very satisfied in social wellbeing from 19% to 38% (Figure 2).

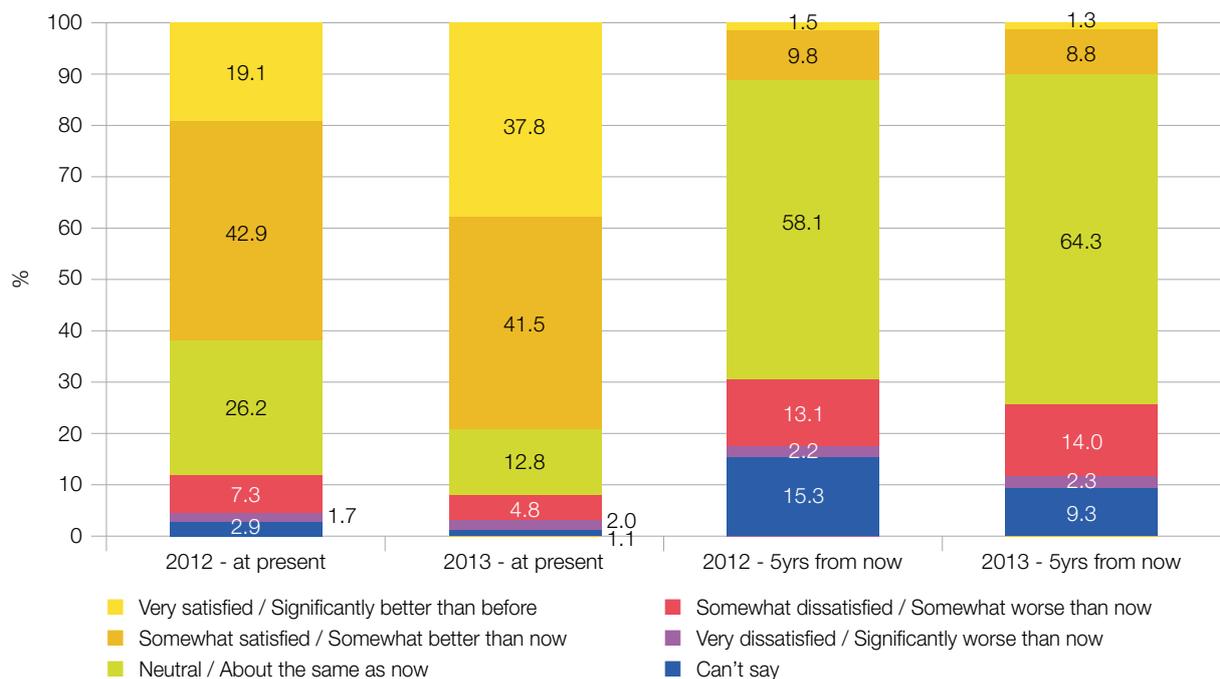
There were also increases in the Financial Domain Index and Health Domain Index. Sixty-three per cent of seniors reported being very or somewhat satisfied with their overall financial wellbeing, an increase of 11 percentage points from 2012 (Figure 3). Almost 80% of seniors rate their health to be excellent or good, an increase of eight percentage points (Figure 4). The proportion dissatisfied was again the highest for the financial domain (23% very or somewhat dissatisfied). The proportion with poor or very poor health was low, at less than five per cent.

Figure 1: Domain Indexes and Sentiment index, at present (%), 2012 and 2013



*p<0.05 **p<0.01. Note: Confidence intervals are shown in Table A.2.1

Figure 2: Satisfaction with overall social wellbeing, at present and 5 years from now (%), 2012 and 2013



¹⁷ The increase in the Index is significant at p<0.01. This means we are 99% confident that there has been an increase in the Index.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with overall financial wellbeing, at present and 5 years from now (%), 2012 and 2013

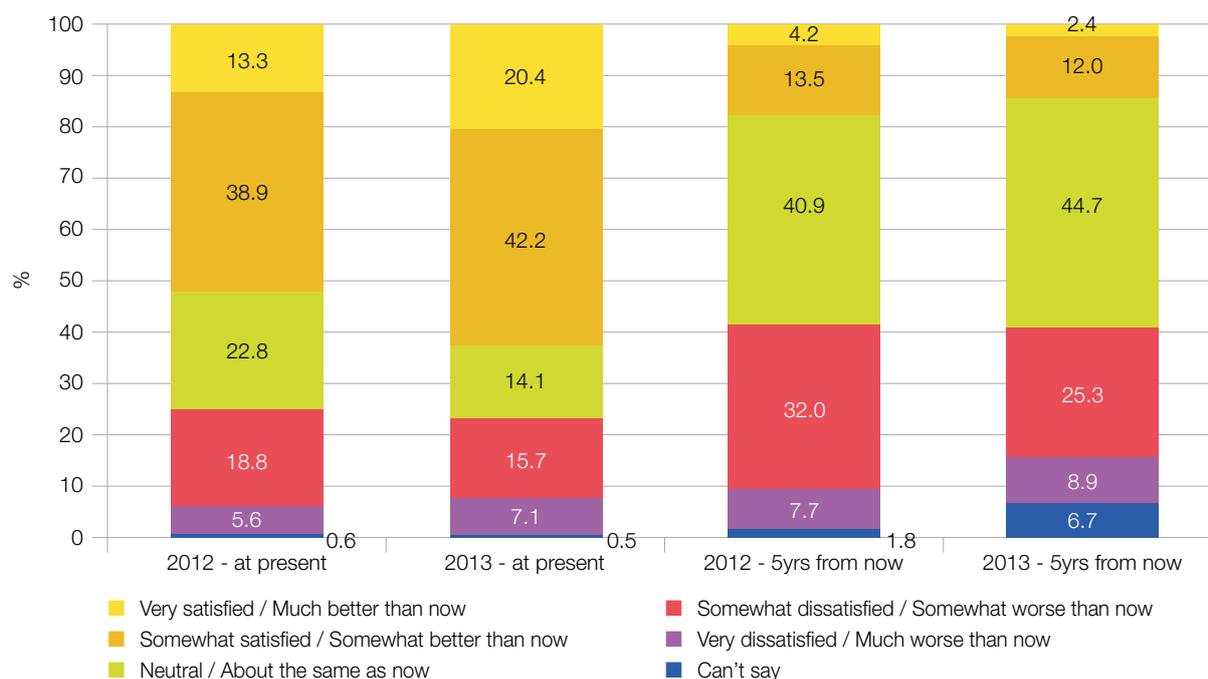
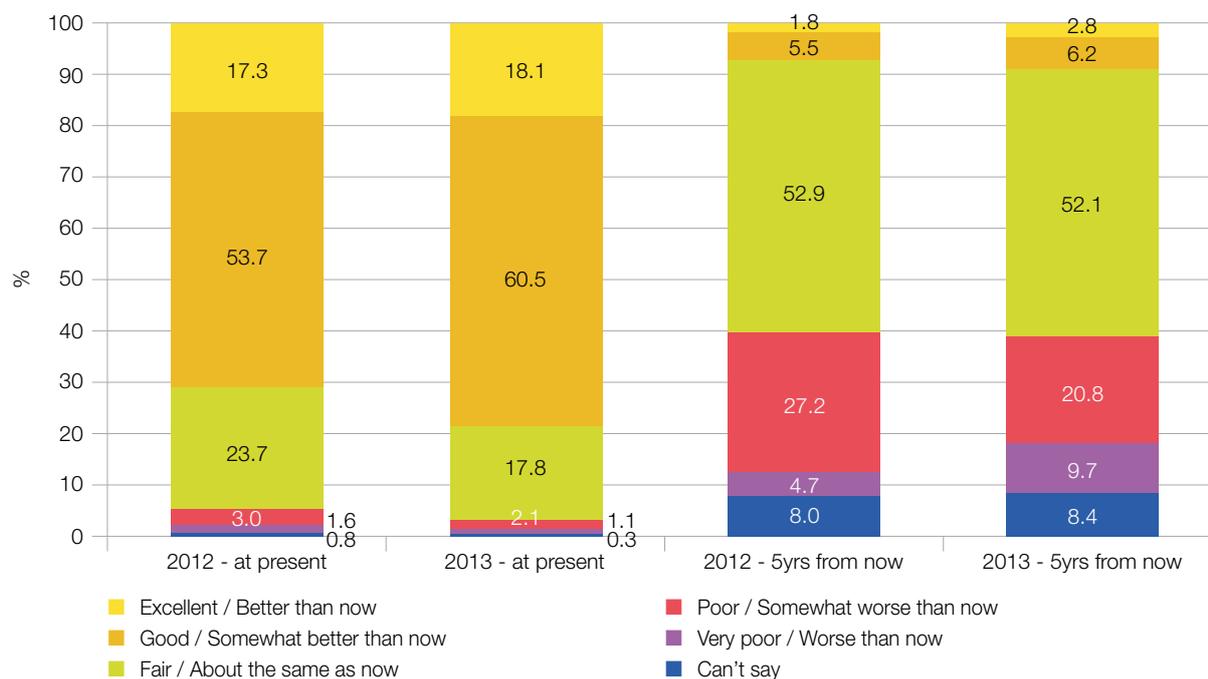


Figure 4: Rating of health status, at present and 5 years from now (%), 2012 and 2013



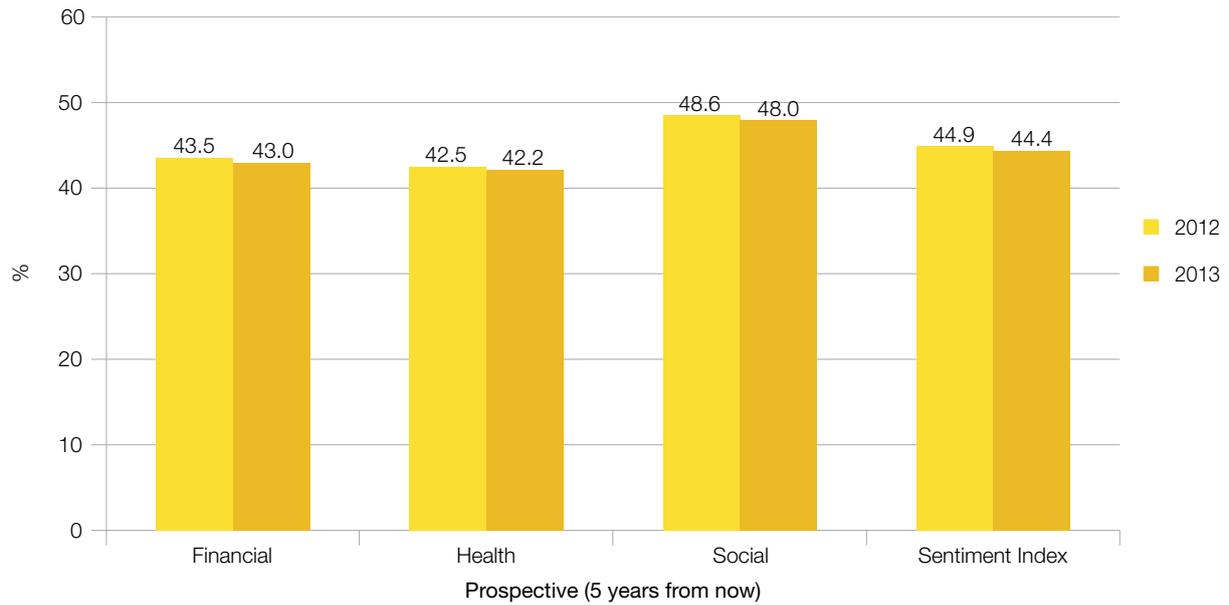
Prospective Sentiment Index

The Prospective Sentiment Index decreased slightly from 44.9% in 2012 to 44.4% in 2013; this finding was not statistically significant (Figure 5). This shows that, despite improvements in present wellbeing, senior Australians are no more optimistic or pessimistic about their lives in five years' time, when compared with 2013. A figure of 44% indicates that overall, seniors were slightly more pessimistic than optimistic about their future across the three domains.¹⁸ The Prospective Domain Index was very similar for each of the three domains.

The proportions of seniors who think their lives will get better five years from now across the domains remains low, at 14% for financial (compared with 34% who think it will worsen) (Figure 3), 10% for social (Figure 2), and 9% for health (compared with 31% who think it will get worse) (Figure 4).

¹⁸ A Prospective Index of 50% would indicate that equal proportions of people believe their wellbeing will improve over the next 5 years.

Figure 5: Prospective Domain Indexes and Sentiment Index, five years from now compared with the present (%), 2012 and 2013

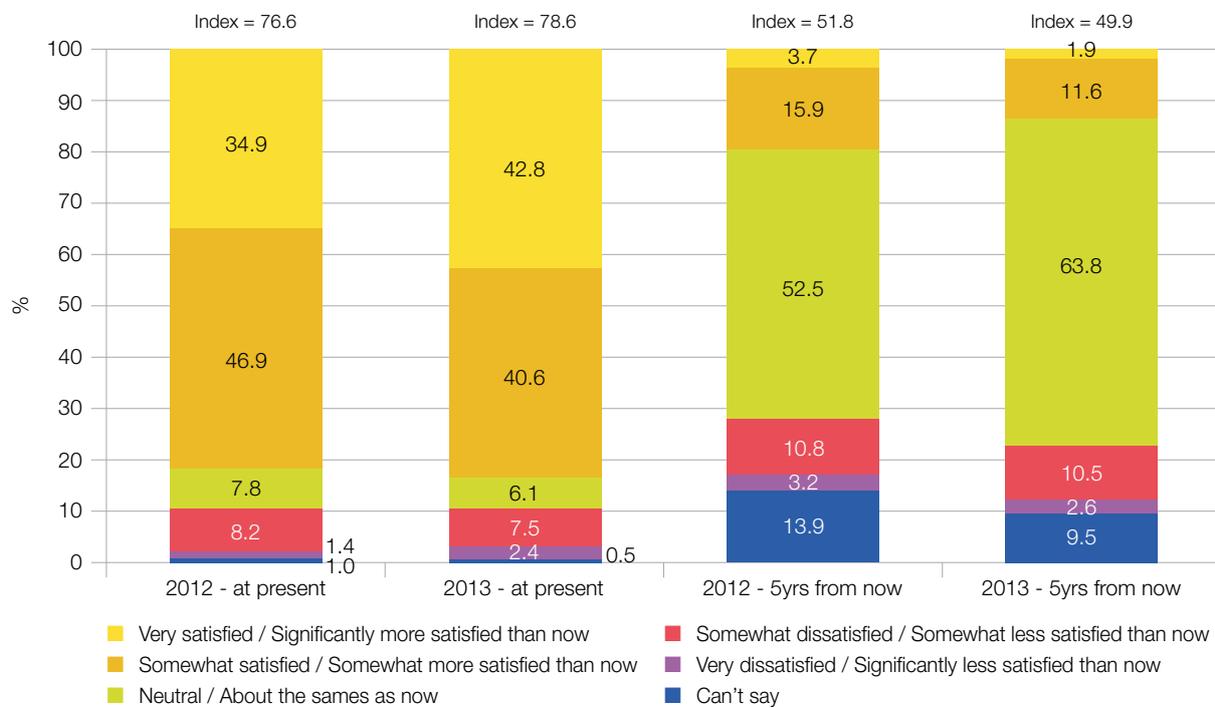


*p<0.05 **p<0.01

Overall life satisfaction

Present satisfaction with life as a whole was relatively high, with 83% of seniors reporting they were very or somewhat satisfied in 2013 (Figure 6). There was a slight increase in the Sentiment Index for life satisfaction from the last survey (76.6% in 2012 versus 78.6% in 2013). The Prospective Life Satisfaction Index remained steady at 49.9% for 2013.

Figure 6: Satisfaction with life as a whole, at present and 5 years from now (%), 2012 and 2013



99% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Note: No significant differences were found between 2012 and 2013 for life satisfaction, both at present and 5 years from now.

Socio-economic and demographic differences in the Sentiment Index

Many of the key differences in the Sentiment Index and Domain Indexes across socio-economic and demographic groups remained unchanged compared to 2012 (Table 2). The Sentiment Index remained highest for people earning the highest income (75.8%), those who have finished high school (73.2%), who are married or in a de facto relationship (72.1%), and those living in a capital city (72.4%). It increased with age, and was similar for males and females. It was still lowest for those earning less than \$20,000 per year, at 63.4%. Overall, the Sentiment Index and the Domain Indexes showed positive increases in percentage point across all socio-economic and demographic characteristics from 2012.

The Social Domain Index was similar for marital status, employment status, and residential location. It increases with age (80.4% for 75+ years versus 76.1% for 50-64 years) and income (79.1% for \$60,000+ versus 72.4% for <\$20,000), was higher for females than males (79.1% versus 75.6%), and also for those who completed high school (79.1% versus 75.4%). The increase in the Social Domain Index was far lower for the lowest income earners. As expected, financial wellbeing was highly correlated with income and was also higher for ages 75 years and above (70.9%) compared to 50-64 years (60.1%). As already presented in the previous survey, financial wellbeing remained higher for those not employed (65.1%) than employed (61.0%). Self-rated health declined with age, and increased with income. It was highest for those who are employed, for those who are married or in a de facto relationship, and those who finished high school.



Table 2: Socio-economic differences in 3 Domain Indexes and the Sentiment Index (%), 2012 and 2013

Socio-economic characteristics	2013				2012				Percentage point change from 2012			
	Social	Financial	Health	Sentiment Index	Social	Financial	Health	Sentiment Index	Social	Financial	Health	Sentiment Index
Age group (years)												
50-64	76.1	60.1	74.7	70.3	66.6	57.2	72.3	65.4	9.5	2.9	2.4	4.9
65-74	78.1	65.2	73.7	72.3	70.2	58.2	70.2	66.2	7.9	7.0	3.5	6.1
75+	80.4	70.9	68.1	73.1	70.2	66.0	66.0	67.4	10.2	4.9	2.1	5.7
Gender												
Male	75.6	64.6	72.8	71.0	66.9	60.4	69.8	65.7	8.7	4.2	3.0	5.3
Female	79.1	62.2	73.6	71.6	69.3	57.6	71.4	66.1	9.8	4.6	2.2	5.5
Personal income												
< \$20k	72.4	49.1	68.8	63.4	67.5	46.8	63.6	59.3	4.9	2.3	5.2	4.1
\$20k-\$39,999	77.7	63.3	71.1	70.7	67.7	58.5	70.2	65.5	10.0	4.8	0.9	5.2
\$40k-\$59,999	77.7	65.4	73.9	72.3	68.0	59.9	71.7	66.5	9.7	5.5	2.2	5.8
\$60k or more	79.1	70.5	77.8	75.8	70.0	66.4	76.4	70.9	9.1	4.1	1.4	4.9
Residential location												
Capital	78.1	64.8	74.2	72.4	69.6	60.9	72.3	67.6	8.5	3.9	1.9	4.8
Not capital	76.7	62.0	72.3	70.3	66.8	57.2	69.3	64.4	9.9	4.8	3.0	5.9
Employment status												
Not employed	76.9	65.1	70.7	70.9	69.1	61.0	67.9	66.0	7.8	4.1	2.8	4.9
Employed	78.1	61.0	76.8	71.9	67.0	56.9	74.4	66.1	11.1	4.1	2.4	5.8
Marital status												
Married/De facto	77.4	64.8	74.0	72.1	69.1	60.0	72.3	67.1	8.3	4.8	1.7	5.0
Divorced/Not married	77.4	60.9	71.8	70.0	66.5	57.5	67.9	64.0	10.9	3.4	3.9	6.0
Country of birth												
Australia	77.7	63.7	72.9	71.5	67.9	59.8	70.9	66.2	9.8	3.9	2.0	5.3
United Kingdom/New Zealand	76.1	62.4	73.7	70.8	70.5	59.0	71.6	67.0	5.6	3.4	2.1	3.8
Other	75.2	64.8	73.6	71.2	67.8	52.5	70.0	63.4	7.4	12.3	3.6	7.8
High school education												
Not finish HS & no other qualifications	75.4	60.6	72.0	69.3	65.0	57.4	68.2	63.5	10.4	3.2	3.8	5.8
Not finish HS & other qualifications	75.9	60.9	72.0	69.6	65.7	58.1	69.3	64.4	10.2	2.8	2.7	5.2
Finished High School	79.1	65.9	74.6	73.2	71.1	60.4	73.4	68.3	8.0	5.5	1.2	4.9

Sentiment Index - longitudinal analysis

Examination of the changes in the Sentiment Index and Domain Indexes from 2012 to 2013 can be compared with the findings from the longitudinal sample of the survey (Table 3). The increase in the Sentiment Index was lower than that found in the full sample. While the increase in the Social Domain Index was similar to the full sample, there was a much smaller and non-significant increase in the Financial Domain Index and Health Domain Index.

Table 3: Domain Indexes and Sentiment Index (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

	2012		2013	
	Index	95% CI	Index	95% CI
Social	69.2	65.2-73.2	79.0**	75.7-82.6
Financial	60.6	58.5-64.9	61.8	57.5-65.9
Health	72.3	68.5-76.1	73.5	69.8-77.3
Sentiment Index	67.3	65.0-69.6	71.4*	69.2-73.6
Overall life satisfaction	78.7	75.2-82.3	78.0	74.5-81.6

Note: Sentiment Index is the average of the three domain indexes. 95% CI: 95% confidence interval.
* p<0.05 **p<0.05; indicates significant difference between index in 2013 compared with index in 2012.

For each of the Prospective Indexes, there was no significant trend from 2012 to 2013, as found with the full sample (Table 4).

Table 4: Prospective Domain Indexes and Prospective Sentiment Index (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

	2012		2013	
	Index	95% CI	Index	95% CI
Social	51.5	46.9-55.9	47.7	43.3-52.2
Financial	38.0	33.9-42.2	41.8	37.4-46.1
Health	43.6	39.3-47.9	41.5	37.1-45.8
Prospective Sentiment Index	44.3	41.2-46.3	43.7	41.9-46.9
Overall life satisfaction	53.4	48.9-58.0	49.6	45.1-54.1

Note: Prospective Sentiment Index is the average of the three domain indexes. 95% CI: 95% confidence interval.
* p<0.05 **p<0.05; indicates significant difference between index in 2013 compared with index in 2012.

Alternative Sentiment Index

Table 5 presents the weights for each domain, which show the relative strength of their relationship with life satisfaction. These weights are derived from the average weights found from regression analyses of the 2012 and 2013 survey (see Table A.3.1). This shows that social wellbeing has the strongest relationship with life satisfaction (a weight of 47%), with financial and health domains having a similar strength (26% and 27% respectively). As a result, the Alternative Sentiment Index exhibits a stronger increase from 2012 to 2013 than the unweighted Sentiment Index, because the Social Index had the largest increase of all domains in the period. Table A.3.1 shows that the weights for Social Domain Index that were derived from the regression analysis increased from 2012 to 2013, and was offset by falls in the Financial and Health Domain Indexes.

Table 5: Alternative Sentiment Index (%), 2012 and 2013

	Present		5 years from now		Weight
	2012	2013	2012	2013	
Social	68.1	77.4	48.6	48.0	47%
Financial	58.9	63.3	43.5	43.0	26%
Health	70.7	74.3	42.5	42.2	27%
Alternative Sentiment Index (weighted)	66.4	72.9	45.7	45.2	
Sentiment Index (unweighted)	65.9	71.7	44.9	44.4	

Weights sum to 100%. Unweighted Sentiment Index refers to Sentiment Index in Figure 1. Full regression analyses are shown in Table A.3.1. Weights computed as the average of 2012 and 2013 weights.

Social domain

Analysis of the components of social wellbeing reveals that community satisfaction has the strongest relationship with social wellbeing (43%), while personal relationships (30%) and satisfaction with Government (27%) were lower (Table 6). Between 2012 and 2013 the relationship of community satisfaction with overall social wellbeing increased, while the other two components fell (Table A.3.2).

Table 6: Components of social domain (%)

	%
Community satisfaction	42.7
Personal relationships	30.4
Satisfaction with Government	26.9
Total	100.0

Note: Percentages are the average of weights derived from regressions using data from the 2012 and 2013 surveys. Full regression analyses are shown in Table A.3.2. Variable used for each component: Community satisfaction - Satisfaction with living in your community. Personal relationships - Frequency of feeling a lack of companionship or loneliness. Satisfaction with Government institutions (aggregated variable) - Accessibility of Government services (Federal, State, Local), quality of Government services (Federal, State, Local), satisfaction with local political representatives, satisfaction with Australian political system. Differences in the Accessibility of Government services and Quality of Government services between the 2012 and 2013 surveys are described in the text accompanying Figure 7.

The remainder of this section presents the findings for key variables in the social domain using the full sample of the 2012 and 2013 surveys. The same tables using the longitudinal sample are presented in Tables A.5.1-A.5.8; where there are notable differences from findings in the full sample, these are noted in the text. Other variables from the survey are shown in Tables A.4.1- A.4.7.

The overall level of satisfaction with living in the community has decreased slightly, from 91% in 2012 to 87% in 2013, due to a decline in those who were very satisfied (Table 7).

Table 7: Satisfaction with living in the community (%), 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Very dissatisfied	0.7	3.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	2.4	2.9
Neutral	4.9	6.3
Somewhat satisfied	25.5	33.4
Very satisfied	66.0	53.8
Can't say	0.6	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0

99% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Feelings of being very safe in the community increased from 22% in 2012 to 33% in 2013, due to declines in both very and somewhat unsafe (Table 8).

Table 8: Feeling of safety in the community (%), 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Very unsafe	9.6	6.5
Somewhat unsafe	19.4	14.5
Neutral	11.7	12.8
Somewhat safe	35.6	31.4
Very safe	21.9	32.8
Can't say	1.9	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0

99% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Feeling very confident that neighbours would help in time of need fell among senior Australians from 50% to 38%, although this did not lead to an increase in those who were not confident (Table 9).

Table 9: Confident that neighbours would help in a time of need (%), 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Not confident at all	3.4	4.8
Not very confident	7.1	7.6
Neutral	6.3	10.6
Somewhat confident	31.5	37.7
Very confident	50.1	37.5
Can't say	1.6	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0

99.5% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

The proportion of seniors who reported feeling a lack of companionship or loneliness often or daily decreased slightly from 11% in 2012 to 7% in 2013. Feeling this way occasionally increased from 19% in 2012 to 26% in 2013 (Table 10).

Table 10: How often feel a lack of companionship or loneliness (%), 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Never	27.8	32.4
Rarely	38.1	33.5
Occasionally	19.3	25.9
Often/Daily	10.8	7.4
Can't say	3.8	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0

99.5% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

There was a decrease in the proportion of people reporting the level of accessibility of Government services to be either very or somewhat difficult (from 32% in 2012 to 25% in 2013) and also a decrease in those who reported very or somewhat easy (33% to 27%) (Figure 7). This was due to an increase in the proportion of people choosing the "can't say" responses which has increased from 8% in 2012 to 21% in 2013. This increase is likely due to the way the rating of accessibility of Government services was calculated: by averaging the rating for each of the three levels of Government (Federal, State, and Local) in 2013, whereas in 2012 the measure was based on one question which asked respondents to rate accessibility for the three levels of Government. That is, in 2013 people were more likely to not know about the accessibility of services for a particular level of Government due to not knowing which services each level provided.

Figure 7: Access to services provided by Government (Federal, State, Local) (%), 2012 and 2013

98% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Note: 2013 figures are the average of the 3 levels of Government (Federal, State, Local).

In 2013, the rating of the quality of Government services was also obtained by averaging across the 3 levels of Government (Federal, State, and Local) (Figure 8). The proportion of respondents who rated the services as being of very or somewhat high quality dropped slightly from 18% in 2012 to 15% in 2013, but the proportion who rated the services as being of very or somewhat low quality increased slightly, from 21% to 23%. Again, the “can’t say” response increased.

Figure 8: Rating of quality of services provided by Government (Federal, State, Local) (%), 2012 and 2013



98% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.
 Note: 2013 figures are the average of the 3 levels of Government (Federal, State, Local).

The proportion of seniors reporting they were very or somewhat satisfied with their local political representatives remained approximately the same as in 2012, at 30% (Figure 9).

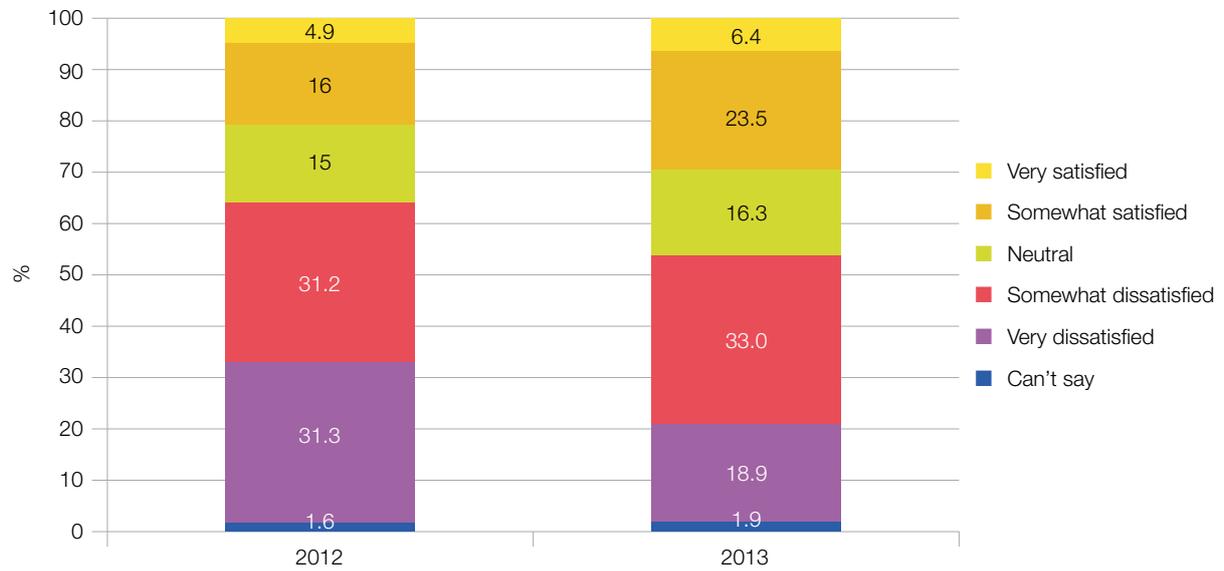
Figure 9: Rating of local political representatives (%), 2012 and 2013



99% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

There was a decrease in the proportion of senior Australians who were very dissatisfied with the political system in Australia, from 31% to 19% (Figure 10). There was a corresponding increase in those who were very or somewhat satisfied from 21% to 30%.

Figure 10: Rating of political system in Australia (%), 2012 and 2013



99% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.



Financial domain

Confidence in retirement income was the most important component related to financial wellbeing (33%) (Table 11). The ability to cover basic expenses had the next strongest relationship with financial wellbeing (23%), while Federal/State Government spending had the lowest importance. From 2012 to 2013 the relative importance of confidence in adequate retirement income as a component of financial wellbeing increased, while the importance of the ability to save fell (Table A.3.3).

Table 11: Components of finance domain (%)

	%
Ability to cover basic expenses	23.1
Ability to cover non-essential expenses	19.0
Ability to save money	19.5
Confidence in adequate retirement income	32.9
Impact of Federal/State Government spending	5.6
Total	100.0

Note: Percentages are the average of weights derived from regressions using data from the 2012 and 2013 surveys. Full regression analyses are shown in Table A.3.3. Variable used for each component: Ability to cover basic expenses - Ability to cover basic household expenses at present. Ability to cover non-essential expenses - Ability to cover non-essential household expenses at present. Ability to save - Ability to save for future needs at present. Confidence in adequate retirement income - Confidence in all income sources to provide adequate income in retirement. Impact of Federal/State Government spending (aggregated variable) - Impact of Federal and State Government policies on financial wellbeing presently. Differences in the Ability to pay for non-essential expenses and Ability to save questions between 2012 and 2013 are described in Tables 13 and 14.

The remainder of this section presents the findings for key variables in the financial domain using the full sample of the 2012 and 2013 surveys. The same tables using the longitudinal sample are presented in Tables A.7.1-A.7.8; where there are notable differences from findings in the full sample, these are noted in the text. Other variables from the survey are shown in Tables A.6.1-A.6.4.

There was an increase in the proportion of seniors reporting they had some difficulties in covering basic household expenses (Figure 11) which is a slightly contradictory finding to there being an increase in financial wellbeing index. This finding is confirmed by the longitudinal sample (increase from 10% to 18%) (Table A.7.1).

Figure 11: Ability to pay for basic household expenses at present (%), 2012 and 2013



96% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

In 2013, the most commonly cited items that senior Australians reported having difficulties paying for at least sometimes were house or auto repairs/maintenance (34%), followed by utility bills (such as electricity, gas, phone, water) (24%), health care/medications (19%), rates (19%), and food/groceries (at 13%) (Table 12).

Table 12: Frequency of experiencing difficulties paying for items (%), 2013

	Sometimes	Regularly	At least sometimes
Food/groceries	11.2	2.1	13.3
Utility bills (e.g. electricity, gas)	19.3	4.8	24.1
Mortgage/rent	6.7	1.7	8.4
Other loans	8.2	1.9	10.1
Health care/medications	15.9	3.0	18.9
House repairs/auto repairs/maintenance	26.8	7.0	33.8
Transport	9.7	2.2	11.9
Rates (e.g. council rates)	14.8	4.6	19.4
Other	10.8	2.7	13.5

Note: In 2012 this question was only asked of those who indicated that they experience difficulties cover basic household expenses. In 2013 all participants were asked this question, and 94-98% of eligible respondents answered the question.

The proportion of senior Australians who presently reported having difficulty paying for non-essential expenses remains similar to 2012 (Table 13). However there was a large increase in people reporting that their ability to cover non-essential expenses was “easy” (from 36% to 53%). There were changes in the categories from 2012 to 2013, whereby “somewhat easy” replaced “easy” and “somewhat difficult” replaced “difficult”. These changes may explain declines in the “neutral” response, however there is a clear trend towards more people citing at least some ease versus at least some difficulty with paying for non-essential expenses.

Table 13: Ability to pay for non-essential household expenses at present (%), 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Difficult (somewhat + very)	19.7	21.3
Neutral	43.1	25.1
Easy (somewhat + very)	36.1	52.9
Can't say	1.2	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0

99% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Note: The categories in 2012 were “Very difficult”, “Difficult”, “Neutral”, “Easy” and “Very easy”. The categories in 2013 were “Very difficult”, “Somewhat difficult”, “Neutral”, “Somewhat easy” and “Very easy”. In the table, “Difficult” includes “Very difficult” and “Somewhat difficult” responses, and “Easy” includes “Very easy” and “Somewhat easy” responses.

The ability to save for future spending needs almost doubled in 2013 compared to 2012 (29% versus 54%). Thus, the proportion who indicated they were unable to save for future spending needs decreased from 34% in 2012 to 26% in 2013. The changes to the categorisation of this question should be borne in mind when interpreting results, as being “able” to save for future spending needs may be a more common response than being “comfortable”, all things being equal. However, the magnitude of the increase suggests that the ability to save did improve from 2012 to 2013.

Table 14: Ability to save for future spending needs (%), 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013
Unable (somewhat unable + unable)	34.2	26.4
Neutral	35.9	18.4
Able (somewhat able + very able)	28.8	54.4
Can't say	1.1	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0

98% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

The categories in 2012 were “A lot of difficulty”, “Some difficulty”, “Neutral”, “Comfortably” and “Very comfortably”. The categories in 2013 were “Very unable”, “Somewhat unable”, “Neutral”, “Somewhat able” and “Very able”. In the table, “Unable” includes “Very unable” and “Somewhat unable” responses, and “Able” includes “Somewhat able” and “Very able” responses.

Confidence in superannuation to provide adequate income in retirement for non-retired people was higher amongst people for whom superannuation is their intended main source of income in retirement (Table 15). The proportion of respondents with confidence increased from 41% in 2012 to 48% in 2013 for those who reported it is their main source, and increased from 31% to 37% for those who said it is a source.

Table 15: Confidence in superannuation to be adequate for retirement (%), not retired, 2012 and 2013

	Super is a MAIN source of income		Super is a source of income	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Very confident	5.8	10.5	4.0	7.7
Somewhat confident	35.7	37.9	26.6	29.8
Neutral	14.2	13.3	12.2	13.1
Not very confident	24.9	22.6	25.6	27.5
Not at all confident	18.4	15.8	30.0	21.7
Can't say	0.9	0.0	1.7	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

99% of eligible non-retired respondents answered the question where superannuation is the main source in 2013.

97% of eligible non-retired respondents answered the question where superannuation is a source in 2013.

A similar trend was seen for those who had already retired (Table 16). Where superannuation is the main source of income, confidence increased from 56% to 71%, while it also increased for those where it is a source from 44% to 61%.

Table 16: Confidence in superannuation to be adequate for retirement (%), retired, 2012 and 2013

	Super is a MAIN source of income		Super is a source of income	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Very confident	16.5	26.6	11.3	20.9
Somewhat confident	39.5	44.4	32.6	40.1
Neutral	13.3	10.5	14.2	13.3
Not very confident	21.3	13.3	24.3	15.1
Not at all confident	7.1	4.6	13.2	9.9
Can't say	2.3	0.6	4.3	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

98% of eligible retired respondents answered the question where superannuation is the main source in 2013.

96% of eligible retired respondents answered the question where superannuation is a source in 2013.

The proportion of retired people feeling very or somewhat confident in the adequacy for retirement of their income from all sources increased from 45% in 2012 to 55% in 2013 (Table 17). Similarly, the proportion feeling very or somewhat confident also increased for non-retired respondents, from 34% to 42%. There were some small differences found with the longitudinal data shown in Table A.7.4; the proportion of non-retired people remained steady at 36%.

Table 17: Confidence in income from all sources to be adequate for retirement (%), 2012 and 2013

	Not retired		Retired	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Very confident	4.5	9.5	10.5	17.7
Somewhat confident	29.6	32.5	34.8	37.5
Neutral	12.8	13.9	16.7	15.4
Not very confident	31.0	24.6	24.1	14.9
Not at all confident	19.5	17.2	10.0	11.2
Can't say	2.7	2.2	3.9	3.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

89% of eligible respondents who are not retired answered the question in 2013.

88% of eligible respondents who are retired answered the question in 2013.

There has been a decrease in the proportion of people expressing negative sentiment towards both Federal and

State Government policies in terms of their effect on financial wellbeing at present; very negative sentiment declined from 29% to 11% at the Federal level and 19% to 13% at the State level (Table 18). However the proportion feeling positively towards Federal Government policies only increased slightly (from 12% in 2012 to 14% in 2013). Likewise, at the State level there was a small increase in positive sentiment, from 8% to 11%. This may be explained by more people choosing the “neutral” response with regard to the effect of government policies on their financial wellbeing.

Table 18: *Impact of Government policies on financial wellbeing at present (%), 2012 and 2013*

	Federal		State	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Very negatively	29.1	11.4	18.5	13.3
Somewhat negatively	33.0	30.6	36.5	31.0
Neutral	21.9	34.5	32.7	35.5
Somewhat positively	9.3	10.2	6.9	7.6
Very positively	2.9	4.1	0.9	2.6
Can't say	3.9	9.2	4.5	9.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

97% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Note: the wording in the categories differ slightly to 2012 (i.e. the word “somewhat” existed for 2013 but not 2012).

Negative sentiment decreased towards both Federal and State Government policies on the Australian economy, from 62% in 2012 to 46% in 2013 for Federal, and from 55% to 49% for State (Table 19). This reflects an increase in positive sentiment at both the Federal and State level of government (from 16% to 20% for the Federal, and 9% to 14% for the State).

Table 19: *Impact of Government policies on Australian economy at present (%), 2012 and 2013*

	Federal		State	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
Very negatively	29.0	11.3	18.5	12.9
Somewhat negatively	33.4	34.0	37.4	36.2
Neutral	16.6	25.6	29.0	27.3
Somewhat positively	13.2	15.7	8.3	11.3
Very positively	3.3	4.0	1.2	3.1
Can't say	4.5	9.3	5.6	9.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

97% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Note: the wording in the categories differ slightly to 2012 (i.e. the word “somewhat” existed for 2013 but not 2012).



Health domain

Analysis on the components of the health domain was not conducted in this report. This is due to self-rated health being influenced by a wide range of factors, both present and accumulated throughout the life course, including behavioural, environmental, and genetic factors etc. It is therefore very difficult to estimate the importance of such factors on self-rated health using data from this survey. This section presents the findings for key variables in the health domain using the full sample of the 2012 and 2013 surveys. The same tables using the longitudinal sample are presented in Tables A.8.1-A.8.3.

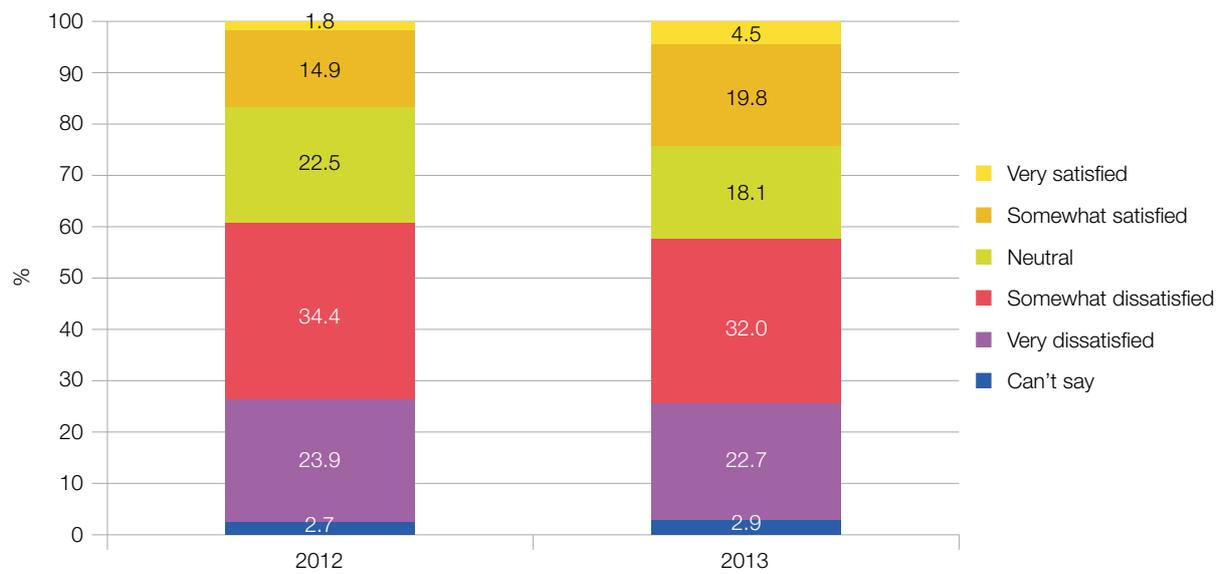
Almost 60% of respondents indicated that they do have a medical condition that requires them to visit a doctor or a specialist on a regular basis. Of those who have a medical condition, there was an increase in the proportion of people who could get an appointment with a doctor when necessary, from 55% in 2012 to 61% in 2013 (Table 20). More people stated that they could get an appointment with other health professionals when necessary (49% versus 42% in 2012). Slightly more than two-thirds (68%) of senior Australians stated that medical professionals take their concerns seriously, with 13% stating “sometimes” or “rarely”. This figure is not comparable to the 2012 figure because the wording in 2012 refers to “hospital staff”.

Table 20: Frequency of experiencing the following within the health system (% of people who indicated that they do have a medical condition and that it requires them to visit a doctor or a specialist on a regular basis), 2012 and 2013

Experiences with health system	Year	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Can't say
Can get an appointment with doctor when necessary	2012	54.6	29.3	12.5	2.7	0.6	0.4
	2013	61.3	23.0	13.1	2.2	0.3	0.1
Can get an appointment with other health professionals when necessary	2012	42.0	32.1	18.1	4.4	0.5	2.8
	2013	49.4	27.6	17.3	3.1	0.2	2.3
Feel hospital staff take medical concerns seriously	2012	46.2	18.6	14.9	2.3	0.9	17.1
	2013	67.8	18.0	11.4	1.7	0.2	0.9

More than half (54%) of senior Australians felt very or somewhat dissatisfied with the Government's level of spending in the health system, which is slightly less than in 2012 (58%) (Figure 12). Consequently, the proportion of respondents that felt very or somewhat satisfied increased from 17% in 2012 to 24% in 2013.

Figure 12: Present satisfaction with Government's spending in the health system (%), 2012 and 2013



98% of eligible respondents answered the question in 2013.

Senior Australians indicated that they engaged in walking continuously for at least 10 minutes on average six times in a typical week (Table 21). They also engaged in vigorous physical activity on average three times in a typical week, and four times in a typical week for moderate physical activity.

Table 21: How often undertook each of these activities last week, 2013

Activities	Mean number of times
Walking continuously for at least 10 minutes	6.1
Vigorous physical activity	3.4
Moderate physical activity	4.3



Discussion

The Seniors Sentiment Index increased from 66% in 2012 to 72% in 2013, which shows that senior Australians have become more positive about their lives in terms of their social, health and financial wellbeing. There has been an increase in each of the three Domain Indexes. Most notably the Social Domain Index increased sharply from 68% to 77%, while there were rises in both the Financial (59% to 63%) and Health Indexes (71% to 74%). However, the measure of overall life satisfaction increased at a slower rate (77% to 79%). From analysis of the longitudinal component of the sample only the Social Index had a similar increase; for all the other Indexes the increase was smaller, and in the case of the life satisfaction, it declined slightly. Also, despite sentiment at present improving, there was only minor change in how seniors see their lives across the three domains in five years from now; it is 44%, suggesting that overall seniors have a slightly more negative than positive outlook for the future.

Analysis of the strength of the relationship of each Domain Index with overall life satisfaction indicated that social wellbeing had relatively more importance than health and financial wellbeing, and a stronger relationship than in 2012. This finding re-emphasises the importance of these social factors in influencing seniors' wellbeing.

Closer examination of the social domain can provide some insight into the factors that were related with the social wellbeing increasing from 2012 to 2013. Although community satisfaction has a relatively closer association with social wellbeing than the other domain components, it declined slightly over the period. A notable increase was in satisfaction with the Australian political system, with those at least somewhat satisfied increasing from 21% to 30%. This may be attributed to the survey taking place within two months of the Federal Election which resulted in a change of Government; some people may have felt greater satisfaction with politics because the electorate had recently had the opportunity to cast their vote. However, overall it is noticeable that there remains considerable dissatisfaction with the Australian political system.

Financial wellbeing also increased over the period. Much of this appears attributable to an improvement in people's confidence in their income sources, especially superannuation, being adequate for their retirement. Such a finding is not surprising; in the year ended October 2013, the return for superannuation funds was 16.8%.¹⁹ It may also be that there has been sufficient time since the shocks of the Global Financial Crisis for seniors to become more confident with the adequacy of their retirement savings. These increases in financial wellbeing are consistent with measures of consumer sentiment; the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Consumer Sentiment Index in October 2013 was 108.3 compared with 99.8 one year earlier, a 9% increase.²⁰ However, this Consumer Sentiment Index had fallen to 103.3 in December 2013.²¹ This demonstrates that financial sentiment can be fluid from month-to-month.



¹⁹ SuperRatings, Funds on track for highest calendar year returns since GFC, Media release, 20 November 2013, <http://www.superratings.com.au/media/mediarelease/20112013>

²⁰ Westpac Bulletin, Consumer Sentiment shows modest retreat, 9 October 2013, <http://www.westpac.com.au/docs/pdf/aw/economics-research/er20131009BullConsumerSentiment.pdf>

²¹ Westpac Bulletin, Consumer Sentiment tumbles, 11 December 2013, <http://www.westpac.com.au/docs/pdf/aw/economics-research/er20131211BullConsumerSentiment.pdf>

As with the previous survey, some seniors have concerns with accessibility of doctors and other health professionals, despite most seniors rating themselves to be of good health. Further, over half of seniors are dissatisfied with government funding of the health system. For the first time, the survey included questions on people's health-related behaviours. It found that seniors engaged in moderate physical activity 4.3 times in a typical week. It is recommended by the National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians that, "*Older people should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensive physical activity on most, preferably all, days.*"²² Although the survey did not ask respondents specifically about how long they exercise for at a moderate intensity, there are clearly a significant proportion of people not meeting these recommended guidelines.

Socio-economic differences in the Sentiment Index and Domain Indexes still exist. The increases in these Indexes from 2012 to 2013 were largely uniform across these socio-economic groups. In particular, respondents with higher education and high income had the highest level of sentiment. The oldest cohort have the greatest financial wellbeing, while females, those who were employed, and who reported living in a capital city have the highest social wellbeing.

The 2013 National Seniors Social Survey consisted of just over one quarter of the sample of respondents who participated in the 2012 survey. Overall, the demographic characteristics and findings from the longitudinal component of the sample were highly consistent with the full sample. In addition to this, the similarity of the demographic characteristics between the 2012 and 2013 survey provides confidence that the trends identified between the two surveys are valid.

Conclusion

The second Seniors Sentiment Index has provided valuable insights into the experiences and attitudes of senior Australians. It was found that wellbeing in finances, health and social aspects of respondents' lives increased from 2012 to 2013. In general seniors are positive about their lives. However, it is worth bearing in mind some of these factors can change significantly within a year, for example sentiment towards Government and overall financial wellbeing due to external factors such as an Election of economic conditions. To enable closer analysis of trends, future surveys will seek to include more respondents as part of the longitudinal component.



²² Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Physical Activity Guidelines. <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines>. Accessed 27 August 2013.

Appendix

Appendix materials can be accessed from www.nationalseniors.com.au

Description of sample

Table A.1.1: Response rates by age, sex and state (%), 2013

Table A.1.2: Response rates by age, sex and longitudinal status (%), 2013

Table A.1.3: Basic demographic characteristics (%), full sample and longitudinal respondents, 2013

Sentiment indexes – full sample

Table A.2.1: Sentiment Index and Prospective Sentiment Index, 2012 and 2013

Domain regression analyses

Table A.3.1: Regression results for overall life satisfaction and domains, used for domain weights, 2013

Table A.3.2: Regression results for social domain and components, used for component weights, 2013

Table A.3.3: Regression results for finance domain and components, used for component weights, 2013

Social domain

Full sample - 2013

Table A.4.1: How often engage in activities that keep you socially and productively engaged (%), 2013

Table A.4.2: Involvement in group activities (formal or informal), community or religious organisations (%), 2013

Table A.4.3: How often see or hear from family and/or friends in a typical week (%), 2013

Table A.4.4: If have people you feel you can depend on (%), 2013

Table A.4.5: Closeness of relationships with the following people/groups (%), 2013

Table A.4.6: Level of trust in the following groups of people or organisations (%), 2013

Table A.4.7: Factors that contributed to overall satisfaction with life as a whole (%), 2013

Table A.4.8: How often experienced unfair treatment in the following situations because of age (%), 2013

Longitudinal respondents

Table A.5.1: Satisfaction with living in the community (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.5.2: Feelings of safety in the community (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.5.3: Confident that neighbours would help in a time of need (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.5.4: How often feel lack of companionship or feel lonely (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.5.5: Access to services provided by Government (Federal, State, Local) (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.5.6: Rating of quality of services provided by Government (Federal, State, Local) (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.5.7: Satisfaction with local political representatives (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.5.8: Satisfaction with political system in Australia (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Finance domain

Full sample – 2013

Table A.6.1: Factors that have contributed to improving financial wellbeing over the last five years (%), 2013

Table A.6.2: Factors that have contributed to worsening financial wellbeing over the last five years (%), 2013

Table A.6.3: How paid for item where respondent experienced affordability problems (%)

Table A.6.4: Level of priority each service should be as a spending area for Government (%), 2013

Longitudinal respondents

Table A.7.1: Ability to pay for basic household expenses at present (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.7.2: Ability to pay for non-essential expenses at present (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.7.3: Ability to save money for future spending needs (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.7.4: Confidence in income from all sources to be adequate for retirement (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.7.5: Impact of Federal Government policies on financial wellbeing at present (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.7.6: Impact of State Government policies on financial wellbeing at present (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.7.7: Impact of Federal Government policies on Australian economy at present (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.7.8: Impact of State Government policies on Australian economy at present (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Health domain

Longitudinal respondents

Table A.8.1: Ability to get appointment with doctor (% of population that need to visit a doctor or specialist on a regular basis), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.8.2: Ability to get appointment with other health professional (% of population that need to visit a doctor or specialist on a regular basis), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

Table A.8.3: Satisfaction with the Government's level of spending in the health system at present (%), longitudinal respondents, 2012 and 2013

ABOUT NATIONAL SENIORS AUSTRALIA

National Seniors Australia is the leading independent voice of the over 50s, with more than 200,000 members nationwide. As the country's largest not-for-profit organisation for the over 50s, we represent the views of older Australians and their families to governments of all levels, on issues such as age discrimination, mature age employment, superannuation, pension increases, health and aged care. Founded in 1976, we provide unrivalled access to policy makers, innovative and practical research and a raft of commercial benefits to our members. Every day, National Seniors Australia seeks to improve the quality of life for mature age Australians.

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