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A Public Health Approach to Measuring Wellbeing: Comparisons from the United Kingdom and South Australia

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The South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) Wellbeing and Resilience Centre is implementing Professor Martin Seligman's recommendation that South Australia (SA) could be positioned as the first ever democratic political unit to have a holistic approach to building wellbeing, by becoming *the* state of wellbeing.

Following Seligman's recommendations, SA Health strengthened its South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS), a high quality representative and continuous state-wide data collection, with the four wellbeing questions developed by the United Kingdom's (UK) Office for National Statistics (ONS4). Concurrently, the Wellbeing and Resilience Centre had been collecting data from its PERMA+ questionnaire from South Australian citizens involved in the Centre's extensive projects. PERMA+ is a measure designed to interrogate Seligman's five **PERMA** domains (**P**ositive Emotion, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning, and **A**ccomplishment) with the addition of elements that cover optimism, physical activity, nutrition, and sleep to reflect the multidimensional nature of wellbeing incorporating mind, body and brain.

These data sets have allowed for extensive comparisons between the South Australian population, and a matched population in the United Kingdom. It has also allowed an understanding of how the ONS4 matches to the PERMA framework. Comparing these data gives us a rich understanding of the elements driving subjective wellbeing in South Australia and the UK: housing security, social capital, unsafe neighbourhoods, self-reported health and single parent families as an example. These data provide us with an opportunity to investigate further what domains are low or high, for which groups, and in which settings.