



# Wellbeing Monitor

August 2009



## Australians more satisfied than ever with life in the lucky country

**New research has revealed that Australians are more satisfied than ever to live in Australia.**

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index has shown that satisfaction with life in Australia has risen to 85.3 on a 100 point scale—the highest level yet recorded in the Wellbeing Index's eight year history.

Professor Bob Cummins from Deakin University, author of the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, suggests that this could be because Australians are feeling fortunate in comparison to other nations.

"Relatively speaking, Australia has weathered the economic storm quite well, so people are contrasting Australia with other countries that have not been so lucky," Professor Cummins says.

Similarly, the Wellbeing Index has also shown that Australians' satisfaction with the economic situation has risen by a significant 1.4 points since October 2008. This is the first time it has risen since October 2007 when it fell by a dramatic 12.4 points over a 12 month period.

Australian Unity Managing Director Rohan Mead says that this was almost certainly tied to the major fall in the sharemarket over this period.

"Australians were experiencing a boom time before the financial crisis took hold, so it is no surprise that our satisfaction with the economy plummeted during that time," Mr Mead says.

"It is promising, however, that the latest Wellbeing Index has shown that satisfaction with the economic situation is on the rise, indicating that people believe that the worst is behind us and that they feel more positive about what lies ahead," Mr Mead says.

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index has also revealed that, despite the economic downturn, satisfaction with the standard of living has risen by a significant 1.5 points to reach the second highest level yet recorded.

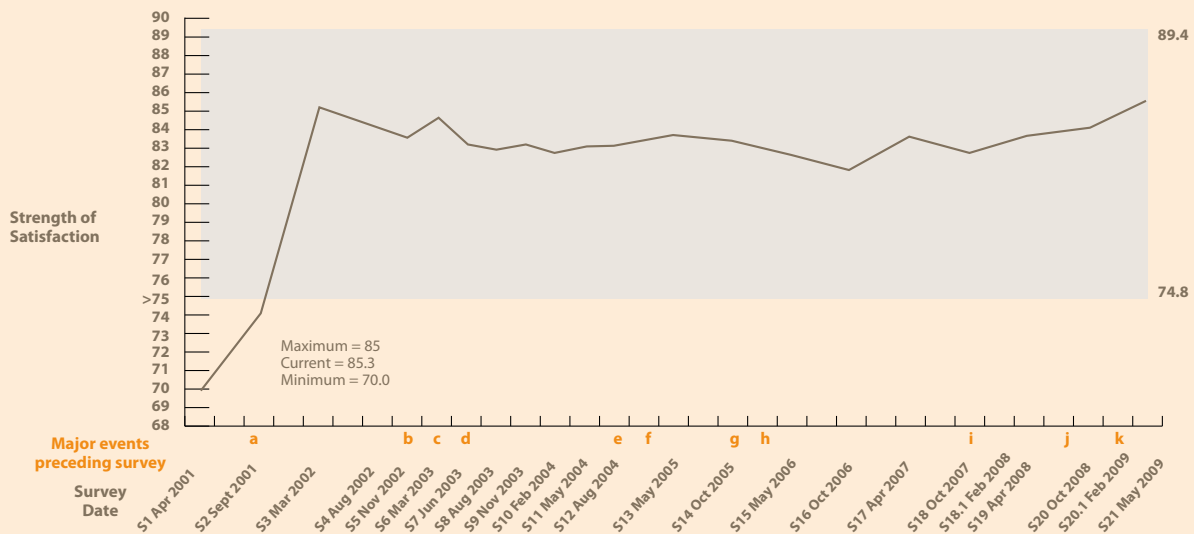
"This current rise has occurred in the face of a substantial economic downturn. One reason for this could be that the various economic stimulus packages released by the Government have provided households with additional discretionary income," Professor Cummins says.

Professor Cummins also suggests that cuts to interest rates have left many Australians better off and that generally people are confident that the economy will recover.

"While a majority of people have lost wealth with the economic downturn, for the most part their investments are intact and they feel confident that the economy will recover. In the meantime, as long as they haven't lost their job and their wage hasn't diminished, people who have a mortgage may be better off financially because of the decrease in their mortgage payments," Professor Cummins says.

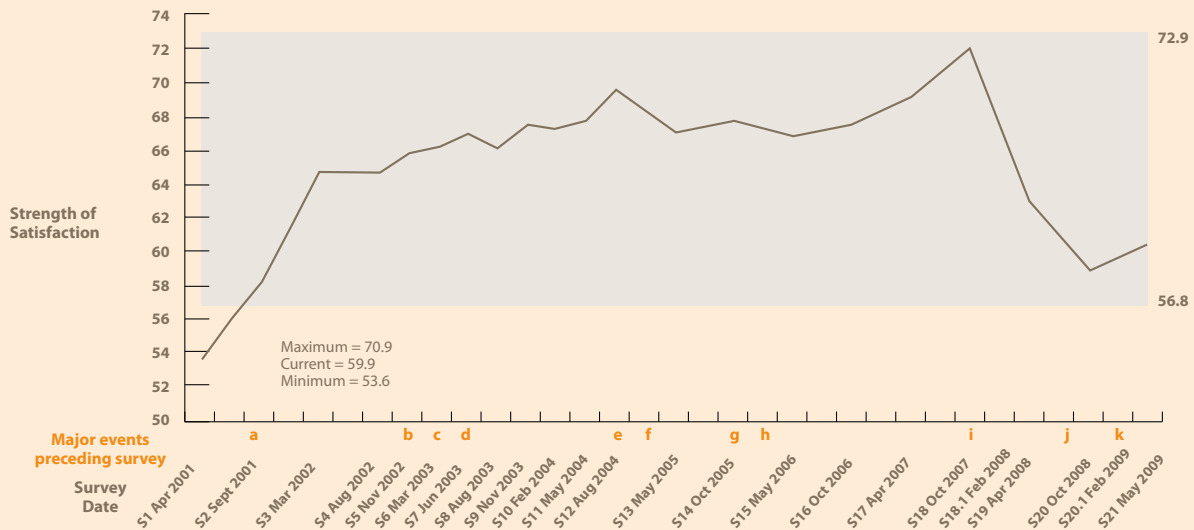
## Life in Australia

Satisfaction with life in Australia has risen by a significant 1.3 points since Survey 20 in October 2008. As shown in the graph below, it is now at 85.3 points—the highest level yet recorded. This may well be due to the fact that Australia has weathered the economic storm so well and people are contrasting Australia with other countries that have not been so lucky.



## Economic situation

Satisfaction with the economic situation has risen by a significant 1.4 points since Survey 20. As shown in the graph below, there was a precipitous 12.4 point fall between October 2007 and October 2008. The reason for this is almost certainly tied to a major fall in the sharemarket over this period. The current increase is the first time satisfaction with the economic situation has risen since October 2007.



KEY: a = September 11  
 b = Bali Bombing  
 c = Pre-Iraq War  
 d = Hussein Deposed  
 e = Athens Olympics  
 f = Asian Tsunami  
 g = Second Bali Bombing  
 h = New IR Laws  
 i = Labor Government Elected  
 j = Stock Market Collapse  
 k = Fires and Floods

## Background

The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index measures the happiness and wellbeing of the Australian population. These results are from the 21st survey conducted in May 2009. Each survey involves a geographically representative national sample of 2,000 people. Wellbeing is measured using the Personal Wellbeing Index. The Personal Wellbeing Index measures people's satisfaction with their health, personal relationships, personal safety, standard of living, what they are achieving in life, community connection, future security and spirituality or religion. Each survey also explores satisfaction with national aspects of life, such as government and the environment, and investigates a specific issue of social importance and its impact on wellbeing. Survey 21 revealed a significant increase in satisfaction with life in Australia and satisfaction with the economic situation.

