Report of Normality Survey

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We received 27 responses to the normality questionnaire which is not sufficient to justify a full scale analysis such as would have been done with a larger sample. However, what we do have is quite revealing and tells us that could we obtain a larger sample, it would almost certainly cast a lot of light on what the actual picture of 'normality' is in the population, how 'normality' as perceived is distributed and some of the features and consequences of this 'normality'.

Sample

Despite its small size, the sample is reasonable. The sample comes from 7 countries with Australia most represented with 55.6% and Norway with 18.5%.

53.3% are between 20 and 49 years, 37% is 50-59 and 29.6% is 60+ years.

Social status as measured by education is distributed: less than first degree 37.0%, first degree 29.6%, higher degree 33.3%

Social status as measured by job position is distributed: below the middle 40.7%, about the middle, 18.5%, above the middle 37.0%.

Potential Sources of Difference

Skin Colour: on a scale from 1 White to 7 Black the sample registered:

1 White %	2	3	4	5	6	7 Black
63.0	25.9	7.4	3.7	0	0	0

Indigenous: only 2 are Indigenous, one living in or close to a regional centre and the other on a remote community

Languages spoken: 51.9% speak only one, 18.5% speak 2, 7.4% speak 3, 14.8% speak 4, and 3.7% speak 5 and 6.

One language %	2	3	4	5	6 languages
51.9	18.5	7.4	14.8	3.7	3.7

Disabilities: 70.4% reported no disabilities. The 8 with disabilities were restricted:

Not at all restricted %	A little restricted	Quite restricted	Severely restricted
11.1	11.1	7.4	0

Migrants: 77.8% were born in the country in which they live today. The other 6 migrated at:

< 5 years %	6-10 years	11-20	21-30	31-60	41-50	51+ years
0	0	7.4	3.7	7.4	0	3.7

Religion: 40.7% received a religious education when they were a child. 7.4% still have a religion, others stopped believing at ages in table below.

< 15 years %	15-24 years	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+ years	Still have a religion
14.8	22.2	7.4	7.4	7.4	0	0	7.4

Biological and cultural sex/gender: Only 3.7% of the females saw themselves as totally feminine while 25.9% of the males saw themselves as totally masculine. This may indicate that some males are a little touchy about their masculinity but this can be established only with larger numbers.

The remaining 70.4% saw themselves with some degree of difference between their pure biological and cultural selves. This on its own is sufficient to rubbish the argument that sex and/or gender are binary entities.

1 Female/feminine 3.7%	2 0	3 0	4 0	5 0	6 0	Male 7 0
2 3.7	3.7	0	0	0	0	0
3 7.4	0	3.7	3.7	0	0	0
4 0	3.7	0	0	3.7	3.7	0
5 0	0	0	0	0	3.7	14.8
6 0	0	0	0	0	0	18.5
Masculine 7 0	0	0	0	0	0	25.9

Diagnosis of sexual/gender abnormality: Only 1 person had been so diagnosed and that was at age 25-34.

Sexual preference: Nobody classified themselves as purely gay but the number reporting some degree of bisexuality might surprise some people (37%). Globally, 8% are estimated to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or pansexual, 80% to be heterosexual with 12% refused. This varies with age with younger generations more willing to admit to non-hetero inclinations (World Population Review, 2023).

Asking for an answer along a scale such as used here is likely to be a better estimate of real preference than asking for a label which may seem daunting or may not be even understood.

1 Gay %	2	3	4	5	6	7 Straight
0	3.7	3.7	3.7	14.8	11.1	63.0

Mental illness: Nine people (29.6%) had been diagnosed with one mental illness and 1 (3.7%) had been diagnosed with 2. Eighteen or 66.7% had never been diagnosed.

Outcomes

Physical or sexual assaults: The highest percentage was for being assaulted a few time and with bigger numbers we would look in more detail at this. With hindsight we would also separate physical and sexual

No %	Once	A few times	Many times	Huge number of times
33.3	18.5	44.4	3.7	0

Verbal assaults: seem relatively common with only 5 people reporting none.

None %	Once	A few times	Many times	Huge number of times
18.5	3.7	25.9	33.3	18.5

Media through which assaults received: most came through face to face and very few people had not been verbally assaulted. Phone came in second. The low percentages for social media may be surprising but our sample may not be big users of that medium.

	Face to face	Phone	Letters	Emails	Social media
0%	18.5	63.00	96.3	74.1	77.8
10-20	3.7	37.0	3.7	25.9	18.5
30-40	7.4				
50+	70.3				3.7

Control and coordination in life: the majority seem healthfully getting on with their lives with a reasonably degree of control over their lives and able to coordinate activities with other people. 70.4% reported being in control and usually or all the time able to coordinate with others.

	Little to no control	Don't know, not sure	Control to much control
Never to rarely coordinate	0	0	0
Occasionally	1	2	2
Usually or all the time	2	1	19 (70.4%)

Psychological criteria for productive life

Scores generally were reasonable for the first set of criteria which pertain to the individual. These are the factors of variety, elbow room or autonomy to make your own decisions, room to set your own goals in life and getting accurate and timely feedback on how you are going. These factors need to be optimal for the individual. The mean score for this set is 37.1/44.0.

However, the picture for the second set which are factors that inhere in the social climate, in this case, their society or culture, is far less rosy. These factors are getting mutual support and respect from your peers, knowing that what you are doing in your life has social value, being able to see the end product of what you are aiming for in your life and being able to see a desirable future.

The means score for this set is 26.6/44.0. For scores of 8, 9 or 10 indicating a satisfactory and high level, only 44.4% score this for mutual support and respect, and social value, while 51.9% could see the end product. Unfortunately, only 37% believed they had a desirable future. These dismal figures indicate that our various cultures are far too high on privatization of life or degree of social isolation and far too low on community and feeling part of a whole.

These scores on their own are a potential cause of several personal and social ailments such as mental illness and bigotry which thrive on a less than cohesive society where suspicion and distrust can breed and diffuse.

Trust
This last point is illustrated by the answers to the question immediately following: 'How many people do you really trust?'

While perhaps we should be pleased that nobody said 'none', 14.8% said '1 or 2' while 59.3% said 'a handful'. Only 25.9% said more than a handful. This is a low level of trust and explains why this little survey describes a global picture which could be a lot healthier.

How time is spent

A set of 7 questions examined how people spend their time, ranging from 0 hours to 38+ per week. The answers are instructive.

In order of most hours with mean score:

	Mean/6	None %	1-5 hours	6-20	21-38+
Paid work	4.6	18.5	3.7	7.4	*70.4*
Internet or phone	4.2	0	18.5	*37.0*	*44.4*
Nothing much	3.3	0	33.3	*55.5*	11.1
Learning	3.2	3.7	33.3	*48.1*	14.8
Hobbies	3.0	3.7	*44.4*	*37.0*	14.8
Socializing	2.3	3.7	*74.1*	18.5	7.4
Volunteering	1.7	*48.1*	*40.7*	7.4	3.7

Figures for paid work are pretty much as expected but not doing anything much coming in in third place is a surprise, to me at least. Combine those figures with those for being on the internet or phone which could be just surfing without much purpose and over 50% the sample spend the equivalent of a full time job engaged in this. Doing not much is ahead of learning and hobbies and even further ahead of socializing and volunteering.

Again we see a profile of a sample which is far from a community oriented or highly social group such as would have been seen years ago. If the sample is in any ways representative, it is also extremely bad news for countries like Australia where volunteering has traditionally been a way of life and many essential services such as bushfire fighting and emergency services rely on volunteers.

Some may argue that the internet or phone use indicates connectedness or community but this technological form of connectedness makes people feel more lonely and/or depressed. It cannot in any way be equated to physically working or just being in a group or community of people which improves sense of wellbeing, and mental health.

Emotions/affects

The list of affects split into 4 clusters which were named Psych Safety, Positive Affect, Lone Depressed and No Power. The composition is provided below and scales were created for each cluster.

Positive affect	Joyful, interested, excited, respected, energetic, not anxious, not bored
Powerless	Powerless, frustrated, trapped
Not psychologically safe	Humiliated, not safe
Lonely depressed	Lonely, depressed

Personality

The questionnaire included the Emery personality test which measures personality along two bipolar scales Internalizing-Externalizing and Subjectivizing-Objectivizing.

In 1978 the Emerys devised and tested a test building on decades of work exploring personality as a measure of objective behavioural preferences. The test mirrors the mutual determination of open system and environment providing two dimensions each with two

poles. An individual at any point in time can register a point in a 2x2 personality space. Therefore, it follows the well established formula B=f(PxE). The dimension I-E (Internalizing-Externalizing) expresses whether person adapts their behaviour to the environment or changes environment to suit themself. S-O (Subjectivizing-Objectivizing) expresses whether person is responsive mainly to inner self, e.g. thoughts or responds to environment. Each individual occupies a point in the personality space and position in this space has a profound influence on the direction the individual takes in life.

The test has high validity and reliability and has proven itself through countless applications.

This sample showed a skewedness towards the Subjectivist pole which is not unusual in well educated populations and was roughly split between Internalizers and Externalizers.

Contributors to life as it is – how they clustered

The items fell into 5 clusters described below, satisfying life, early life, institutions, needing support, and religion.

	Not at all – a little %	Quite a lot – major factor %
Satisfying life		
Healthy lifestyle	29.6	70.4
Optimistic outlook	33.3	66.7
Close loving relationship	33.3	66.7
Active social life	59.2	40.7
Early life		
Family as a child	62.9	37.0
Your upbringing	59.3	40.7
Some aggressive *people*	85.2	14.8
Your culture	29.6	70.4
Institutions		
(-) Your work	22.2	77.8
The government	77.7	22.2
Police	96.3	3.7
some ignorant people	85.2	14.8
racism	85.2	14.8
Sexism	81.4	18.5
Need support		
Some characteristics e.g. disability	55.5	41.4
Some supporting people	51.8	48.1
Religion		
Your religion	88.9	11.1
Some religions	88.9	11.1
Had no correlations		
Financial circumstances	25.9	74.1
Your appearance	85.1	14.8

The only really powerful individual factors were being in a close loving relationship, having an optimistic outlook on life, a healthy lifestyle, financial circumstances (presumably good) and work, again presumably high quality work. With the exception of being in a great relationship, these are again most influenced by the individual, not particularly factors in the culture or environment more generally. It is when the factors group up that they gain power and see their effects.

Achieving in life

The majority are satisfied with how they are moving through their life and achieving what they want but 22.2% are not particularly doing well. We will return to all these raw numbers

after we have had a look at the correlations as undoubtedly, they will throw light on the reasons for these answers.

	Not at all – only a little %	Doing OK	Doing well – exceeding expectations
Extent to which achieving what you want in life	22.2	22.2	55.5

Normality

When it comes to a judgement of overall normality or not, it seems more of us see ourselves as somewhat off total normality while believing others see us as more normal than we see ourselves. This applies most at the lowest level of the scale as only 1 person or 3.7% saw themselves as 1, 'normal' while 18.5% believed others saw them as this. All points on the scale from 1-7 were used for both self and others, again demonstrating that there is no dichotomy here. People are very aware that normality exists as a continuum and are comfortable applying the scale to themselves. The test mirrors the mutual determination of open system and environment providing two dimensions each with two poles. An individual at any point in time can register a point in a 2x2 personality space.

This in itself is justification for the survey as both these measures as well as those for female/male, feminine/masculine and sexual preferences demonstrate that ***these characteristics exist on a continuum and people without axes to grind, know it.***

Causal path (systemic) analysis

As per normal practice, all scaled data was entered into a matrix and analyzed with causal path analysis (Emery F, 1976).

As would be expected with such small numbers, many variables dropped out but two small clusters emerged making very good sense of the discrete data.

The first cluster fits the majority of participants:
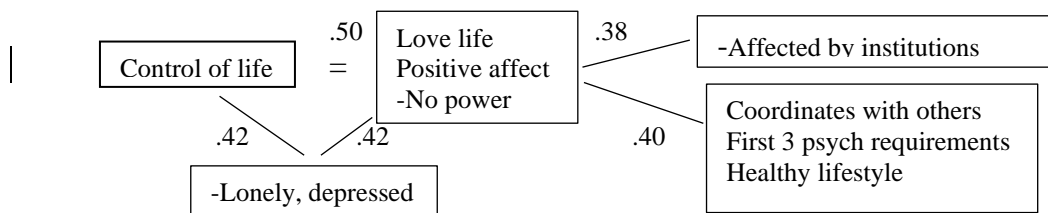
Here we see a cluster describing a pattern of life where the people feel powerful, in control of their lives which they love, going about them with predominantly positive emotions. They do not feel particularly lonely or depressed. They often work together with others, coordinating their activities which provide them with very satisfactory levels of the first set, those that pertain to the individual, of the psychological criteria, the intrinsic motivators. As part of this profile, they enjoy healthy lifestyles with optimistic outlooks. They are not influenced in any significant ways by institutions such as the police or government, nor by factors such as racism or sexism.
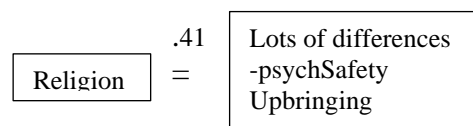
r=.38 @p<.05, r=.49 @p<.01, r=.60 @p<.001

The other cluster fits those in the sample who are not so fortunate and can be affected by the ways in which they appear to differ from others. This may cause them difficulties in life. This small cluster shows the most significant features of these difficulties for our sample.

All of the various ways in which people could appear different as discussed above were summed to give a simple measure and this clustered with that describing their upbringing as a child and their not feeling psychologically safe. This feeling of not being safe concerned being humiliated. The other causal factor that appeared was that of religion.

As a further quick check, the individual factors of difference were examined for correlation against major outcomes in life:

Factor	Mismatch bio and cultural	Diff. normal self and others	Psych requirements (first set)	Loving life	Physical assaults	Coordination with others
Age of migration		.43				
No. of mental illnesses	.39			-.44		-40
Length of religious belief			-.41			
Colour					.45	
Degree of disability restriction						-41

The results were scattered as the table shows but clearly the factor which caused most problems was the number of mental illnesses a person was diagnosed with. This was associated with a mismatch between biological and cultural aspects of ourselves as in female/male and feminine/ masculine. It is correlated with not frequently working together with others and not loving life. This confirms our societies have not really managed to get on top of mental illness and make it easy for the mentally ill to stay well connected in a satisfying life. Being restricted with disability also inhibits coordination so this continues to be a problem.

The age of migration was associated with a mismatch between how we and others saw us, the longer we held religious beliefs was correlated with low levels of obtaining the individually based intrinsic motivators such as having enough autonomy in decision making, and the colour of your skin was associated with more physical assaults.

Obviously with an adequate sample, we would be able to shine much more light on the interdependencies in this data and tease out more of the ways in which they act together to affect the quality of life. This will have to do for now but even this tiny snapshot is sufficient to assure us that this is a productive line of attack.

References

Emery F E, 1976. Causal path analysis. In Emery F (Ed) 1981. *Systems thinking*. Vol. I. Penguin. 293-298

World Population Review. (2023), *LGBTQ and population by country*. https://worldpopulationreview.com.