

# Treasury Guest Lecture:

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## Guest Lecturer Miles Kimball



### Using Happiness and Other Dimensions of Subjective Well-Being to Guide Policy

**Date:**

Friday 24 July 2015

**Venue:**

The Treasury  
Level 5  
1 The Terrace  
Wellington

**Time:**

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

**RSVP:**

[academic.linkages@treasury.govt.nz](mailto:academic.linkages@treasury.govt.nz)

by Wednesday 22 July

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**Abstract:**

The increasing importance of non-market goods has motivated a search for new measures to supplement traditional national income statistics such as GDP. It is seductive to think that widely available data on levels of happiness, life satisfaction or perceived position on the ladder of life by themselves could serve such a role. This presentation will make that case that a much more arduous effort is needed to realize the potential of subjective well-being measures to make policy intelligent about non-market goods. In particular, it is crucial to recognize, measure and understand the full range of things human beings care about—a range that goes far beyond happiness and life satisfaction. It is also crucial to recognize that policy actions affect different people in different ways. The reward for pursuing this major effort could be a new compass that indicates unexpected ways to enable more people to obtain more of what they are wishing, hoping and striving for.



**About Miles Kimball:**

Miles Kimball is a Professor of Economics and Survey Research at the University of Michigan. A central theme in his research is the effort to understand utility functions: the mathematical description of people's objectives, as those objectives show up in what people do—or should do—to achieve their goals in different situations. For the last ten years, he has focused a large share of his research on the relationship between utility in this sense and happiness and other

dimensions of subjective well-being measured in surveys. In addition to his more traditional academic work, Miles addressed public policy questions through his blog "Confessions of a Supply-Side Liberal" and as a columnist for the Atlantic Company's new online magazine Quartz.