

The Mexican Recipe for Life Satisfaction Gender Differences in the Role of Age and Education



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ABSTRACT

The project examines the effects of age and education on the wellbeing of Mexican adults. The study further explores the gender variations in patterns of self-reported life satisfaction focusing on differences between independent models for women and men. Among the few studies on life satisfaction in Mexico, this is the first to employ a sociological and demographic perspective. Using nationally representative data on urban-dwellers 18 years and older (Self-Reported Wellbeing Module of 2018; N = 4,860), bootstrapped ordered logistic regression analyses compare the odds of reporting higher life satisfaction among women and men from different age and education groups. Evidence indicates that women are consistently more likely to report lower levels of life satisfaction as they grow older compared to men, for whom adverse effects on life satisfaction appear until reaching 50 years of age. Multivariate analyses also reveal that women are generally more likely to report higher levels of life satisfaction as their educational attainment increases, while the modest effects for men disappear when controlling for other factors like income. Findings highlight the importance of discussing the gendered nature of wellbeing.

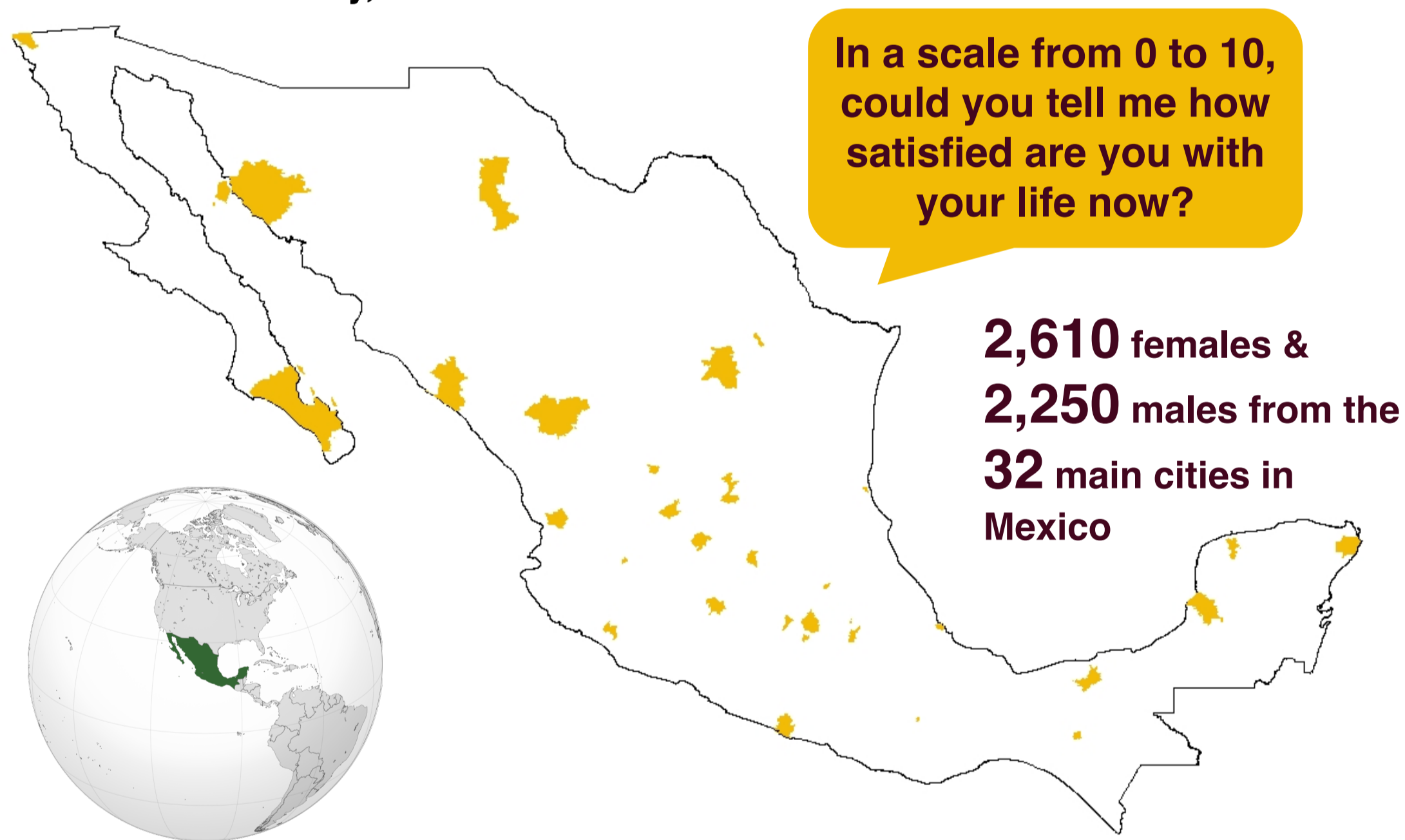
BACKGROUND

Most of the research on life satisfaction in Mexico comes from a psychological conceptual framework (Velasco Matus, Pedro Wolfgang Villanueva Orozco, Rivera Aragón, and Díaz Loving 2016; Velasco Arellanes, Vera Noriega, and Tirado Median 2019) or is concerned with survey methodology (Leyva, Bustos, and Romo 2016). The above highlights the presence of a hole in the sociological and demographic literature on wellbeing in Mexico; this is not a minor issue. Mexico in the home of over 129.2 million inhabitants who represent 1.72% of the world population. Moreover, it is ranked as the 23rd happiest country for the period 2016-2018 (Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs 2019) despite its poor performance in indicators such as education, GDP, and income inequality, which are usually linked with wellbeing measurements and assessments.

DATA & METHODS

Data comes from the survey Self-Reported Wellbeing Module (BIARE) designed and conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) of Mexico. With the purpose of generating internationally comparable data, INEGI's survey designs follow the framework proposed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2017). Since 2012, INEGI has employed BIARE to measure the current wellbeing of the Mexican adult population operationalized as self-reported life satisfaction.

Figure 1. Location of Mexico in the globe and sampled urban areas within the country, 2018



IN GENERAL, EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT INCREASES LIFE SATISFACTION FOR MEXICAN FEMALES, WHILE INCOME NEUTRALIZES THE EFFECTS OF EDUCATION FOR MALES

Findings highlight the importance of discussing the gendered nature of life satisfaction, especially in the Mexican context where machismo and class inequality prevail

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for female and male respondents, 2018

	Female	Male	p-value ^a
Age			
N	2610	2250	
Mean age	41.19	41.17	p < 0.004**
60+ years	11.80%	12.89%	
Education			p < 0.001***
Mean years of education	10.62	10.80	
Level attained			p < 0.187
High school grad or above	30.65%	29.51%	
Monthly income			p < 0.000***
Household			
Median	\$6,533.28	\$7,050.61	
Mean	\$9,448.48	\$10,043.06	
Household per person			p < 0.000***
Median	\$1,821.54	\$2,238.31	
Mean	\$2,945.71	\$3,690.80	
Occupation status			
Not a paid worker	40.80%	11.33%	p < 0.000***
Stay-at-home parent	32.22%	0.53%	p < 0.000***
Marital status			p < 0.000***
Married	40.77%	43.64%	
Single	25.98%	30.09%	
Other	33.25%	26.27%	
Household arrangement			
Head of household	31.23%	72.58%	p < 0.000***
Minors under their watch	50.00%	38.09%	p < 0.000***
Urban area			
Largest metropolis ^b	29.12%	33.29%	p < 0.002**

Notes: a) For nominal data, the p-value is for a Pearson's χ^2 statistic. For interval data, it refers to a t-statistic. b) It refers to the perceived degree of control over positive/negative outcomes in their life. c) It measures agreement to a statement about the importance of religion in their life. Source: Own elaboration with data from INEGI's (2019) "Self-Reported Wellbeing Module" (BIARE); nationally representative survey data for urban areas, collected in January, April, July, and October of 2018.

Table 2. Observed life satisfaction and selected scores by sex, 2018

	Female	Male	p-value ^a
Current life satisfaction			
Very satisfied (10/10)	19.31%	23.47%	p < 0.002**
8/10	32.76%	30.67%	
Autonomy^b			p < 0.106
Strongly agree	40.00%	42.67%	
Religion^c			p < 0.000***
Strongly agree	38.24%	25.64%	
Domains of satisfaction			
Health			p < 0.000***
Very satisfied (10/10)	26.21%	32.44%	
8/10	26.36%	24.00%	
Personal relationships			p < 0.187
Very satisfied (10/10)	31.07%	32.93%	
8/10	23.18%	25.29%	
Country			p < 0.042**
Very satisfied (10/10)	6.59%	8.62%	
7/10	21.38%	21.69%	

Notes: a) For nominal data, the p-value is for a Pearson's χ^2 statistic. For interval data, it refers to a t-statistic. b) It refers to the perceived degree of control over positive/negative outcomes in their life. c) It measures agreement to a statement about the importance of religion in their life. Source: Own elaboration with data from INEGI's (2019) "Self-Reported Wellbeing Module" (BIARE); nationally representative survey data for urban areas, collected in January, April, July, and October of 2018.

Considering the nature of the data, gender-stratified models were estimated using bootstrapped ordered logistic regression analyses to test the following hypotheses: H.i) age and life satisfaction are negatively associated, whereas H.ii) the association between educational attainment and life satisfaction is positive.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

H.i) ambiguous result;
H.ii) rejected for males, failed to reject for females

Table 3. Odds ratio estimates for life satisfaction by age and educational attainment (bootstrapped ordered logistic regression analyses, gender-stratified models), 2018

	Female		Male	
	Reduced model ^a	Full model ^b	Reduced model ^a	Full model ^b
	Odds ratio	Bootstrap SE	Odds ratio	Bootstrap SE
Age				
(ref. 18-29 years old)				
30-39 years	.59089***	.09272	.69664*	.12070
40-49 years	.51303***	.07346	.58562**	.10533
50-59 years	.51632***	.08737	.56223**	.11791
60+ years	.59518**	.10451	.91969	.22570
Education				
(ref. 8th grade or less)				
Some high school	1.45810**	.18319	1.2995*	.18357
High school diploma	2.82893***	.48979	2.37124***	.45895
Some college	2.28627***	.39874	1.75278**	.34954
College degree	3.05841***	.50740	1.88761**	.38414
Graduate/Professional ^c	5.86160	6.54665	3.28091	3.37181
N	2,610		2,610	
Replications	1,000		1,000	
Wald chi-square	120.58***		510.98***	
Pseudo R ²	0.0341		0.1634	
AIC	3650.784		3223.492	
BIC	3727.056		3469.91	

Notes: a) Reduced models consider age and education only. b) Full models add on demographic characteristics (marital status, and presence of minors under the respondent's watch), socioeconomic characteristics (log of per capita household income, and occupation status), as well as self-reported autonomy, importance of religion, and scores on three domains of satisfaction (i.e., health, personal relationships, and country). c) Given the relatively smaller sample of individuals with graduate or professional education (females: 56; males: 56), interpret estimates with caution. ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05, p < .10

Source: Own elaboration with data from INEGI's (2019) "Self-Reported Wellbeing Module" (BIARE); nationally representative survey data for urban areas, collected in January, April, July, and October of 2018.

Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of females reporting high levels of life satisfaction (8-10) by educational attainment and age group, 2018

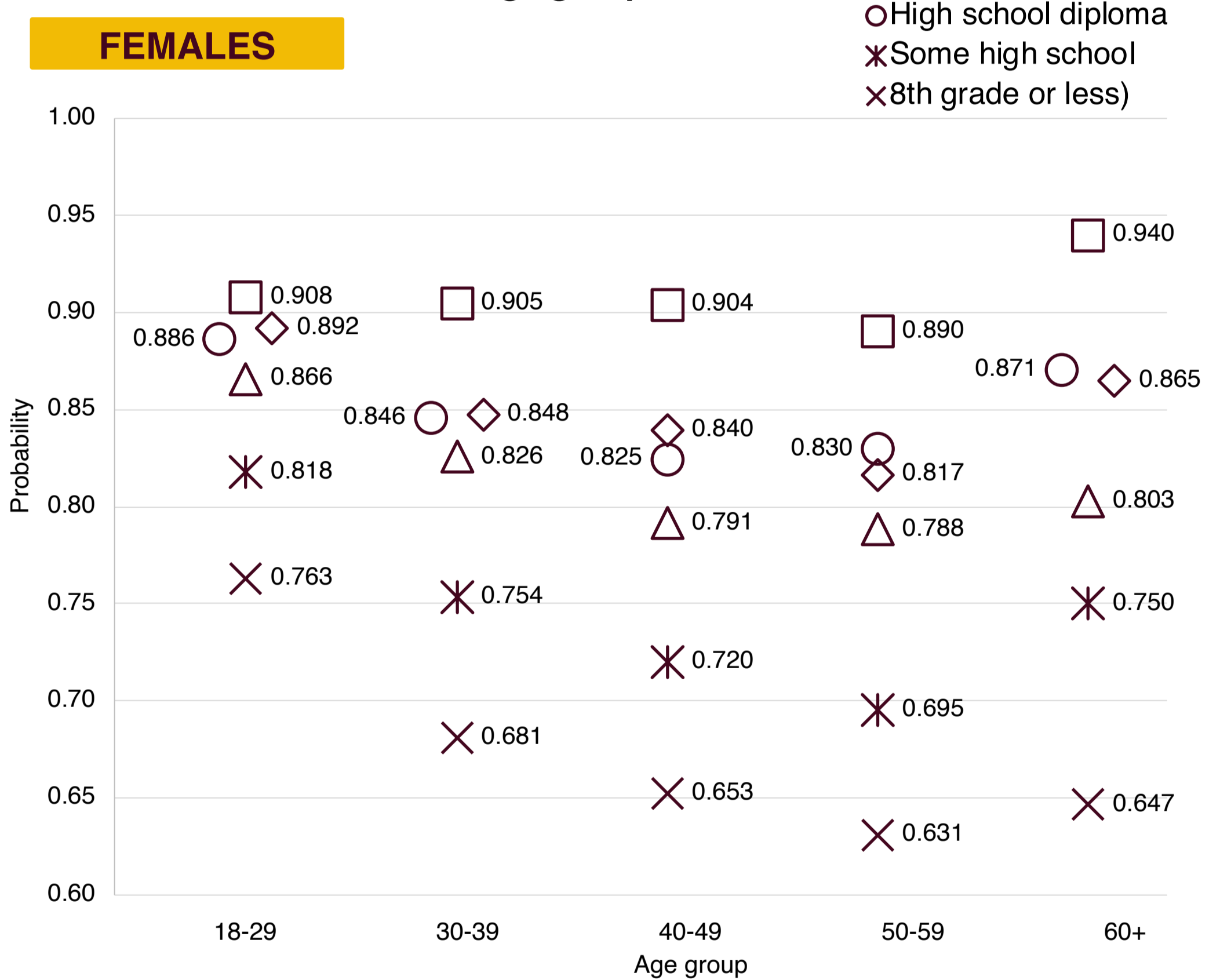
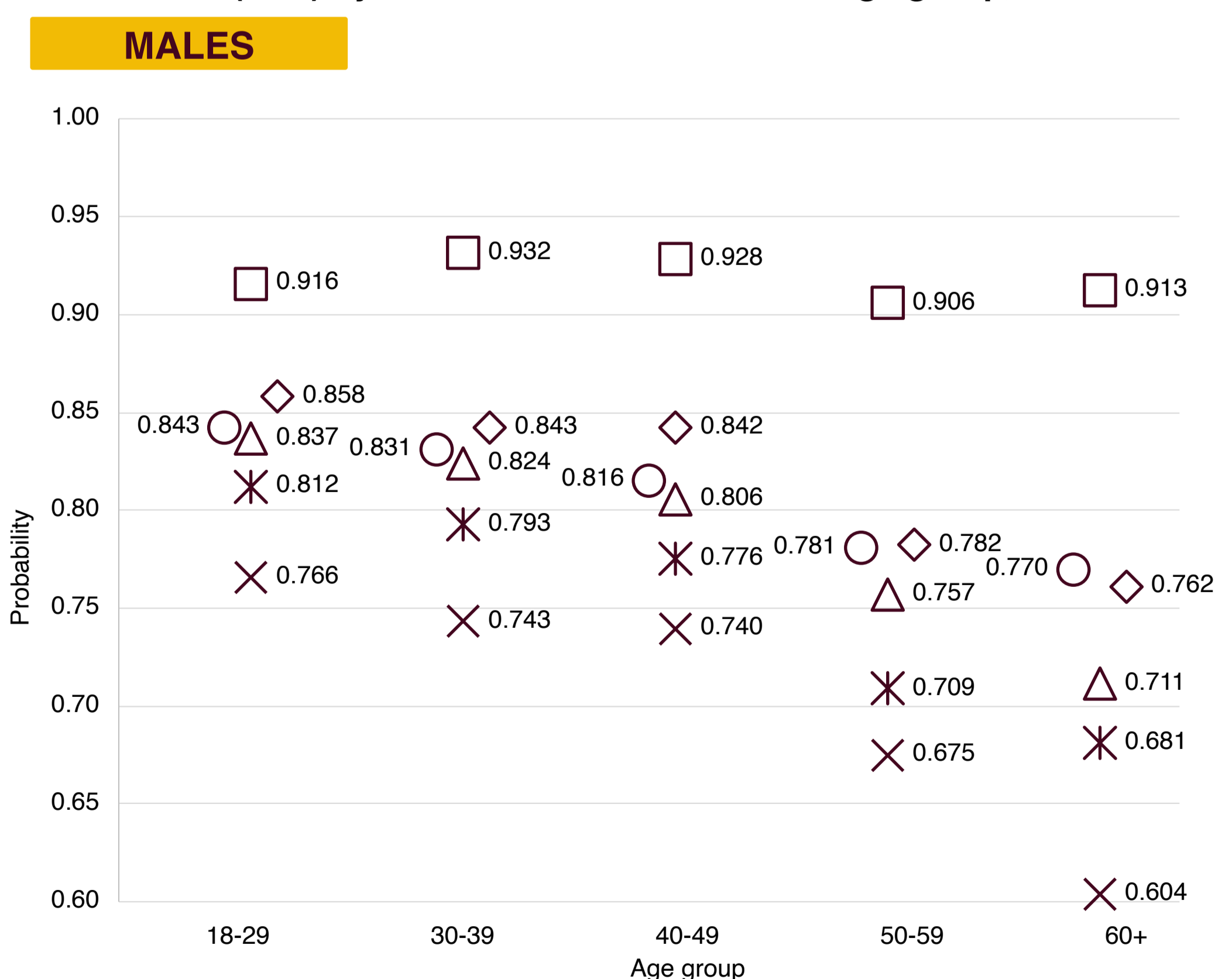


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of males reporting high levels of life satisfaction (8-10) by educational attainment and age group, 2018



LIMITATIONS

Data

- Few respondents reported having graduate or professional education (females: 56; males: 56) which compromises the reliability of the estimates associated with that category in both models.
- Participants might adjust their responses given the presence of an interviewer (e.g., they could lie about their income or even their life satisfaction score).

Methods

- The proportional odds assumption of the ordered logit models might be problematic.
- Additional analyses, as well as further guidance from previous studies, is needed and will be part of the next steps.

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