

Editorial processes in the *International Journal of Wellbeing*

Dan Weijers · Aaron Jarden

Abstract: In light of Blanchflower's (2026) critique of the papers published on the Global Flourishing Study, including those in a special issue in the *International Journal of Wellbeing*, we outline the editorial process for the special issue and our reasons for publishing it.

Keywords: Global Flourishing Study, wellbeing, special issue, International Journal of Wellbeing, publishing standards

1. Introduction

The *International Journal of Wellbeing* endeavours to follow the highest publishing and ethical standards. In particular, we strive to ensure research integrity, maintain transparency, and protect the scholarly record. The *International Journal of Wellbeing* is owned by the International Journal of Wellbeing Charitable Trust. The Trust has the goal of promoting high-quality open access interdisciplinary research on wellbeing. The rules of the Trust prevent the trustees (Dan Weijers and Aaron Jarden) from profiting in any way from the operations of the Trust or the *International Journal of Wellbeing*.

We are publishing this editorial at the same time as two invited articles about the Global Flourishing Study and the articles that have been published on it. David G. Blanchflower approached us with a paper critiquing the Global Flourishing Study and the articles published on it. We decided to publish Blanchflower's (2026) paper alongside a response from the team behind the Global Flourishing Study (VanderWeele et al., 2026). Our main aim in publishing the two papers together is to promote open discussion on the merits of different approaches to wellbeing research. When experts disagree, there is a reasonable chance we can all learn from an open and collegial dialogue about the disagreement. We also included this editorial to clarify why these two papers were invited and to be transparent about the International Journal of Wellbeing's role in all of this.

2. Our interest in the country-specific papers from the Global Flourishing Study data

In 2010, Dan Weijers and Aaron Jarden created the *International Journal of Wellbeing*. From the outset, the goal was to publish "scholarly research on wellbeing (broadly construed)" and "promote thought and discussion on this vital topic" (Weijers, Jarden, & Powdthavee, 2011, p. 1). The *International Journal of Wellbeing* has never dictated how wellbeing should be understood. We

understand that wellbeing is a highly contested concept and one that has been understood and operationalised in a huge number of ways. We believe that a variety of conceptualisations helps achieve our goal of promoting thought and discussion on wellbeing. Similarly, the *International Journal of Wellbeing* is not committed to a single approach to studying wellbeing, but rather is committed to providing a forum where diverse perspectives, methodologies, and disciplines can co-exist.

Since at least 2021, we have been discussing different ways to promote rich cross-cultural and culturally contextualised research on wellbeing with Tim Lomas (a co-editor of the *International Journal of Wellbeing*). In 2024, Lomas proposed that the IJW publish a special issue of 20 or so country-specific papers based on data from the Global Flourishing Study. Each paper would have co-authors with expertise in the relevant country to discuss cultural context and local research that could help paint a rich picture of flourishing there. Jarden was already involved as an author on one of the papers, and thus had a good idea of what to expect from the papers invited to the special issue. We thought this would be a useful resource for wellbeing researchers, and agreed to publish the special issue using the following editorial process. The final decision to publish the issues was made unanimously and solely by the founding editors: Dan Weijers and Aaron Jarden because we believed that it would promote scholarly research and informed thought and discussion on wellbeing. We still hold this view and stand by our decision to publish the special issue.

3. Editorial processes

3.1 Standard IJW review processes

Most of the items published by the *International Journal of Wellbeing* are labelled as ARTICLES. These are all subject to a rigorous double-blind peer review process documented in our internal journal management software. The vast majority of ARTICLE submissions (up to 98% in some years) are rejected.

INVITED ARTICLES are much less common, literally invited by the editors, and usually tackle bespoke issues related to wellbeing research. INVITED ARTICLES are editorially reviewed—meaning that non-blinded editors from the *International Journal of Wellbeing* or their delegates review the paper intending to improve it until it is suitable for publication. Quite the opposite to ARTICLE submissions, the vast majority of INVITED ARTICLES are published.

EDITORIALS operate in the same way as INVITED ARTICLES, with the *International Journal of Wellbeing* editors either writing them or inviting others to write them. Sometimes they are written by a team of *International Journal of Wellbeing* editors and special issue guest editors.

3.2 Review process for the special “living” issue: A Country-Specific All-Outcome Approach to the Global Flourishing Study

The editorial for the special issue “A Country-Specific All-Outcome Approach to the Global Flourishing Study” was written by members of the Global Flourishing Study Team, including Tim Lomas and Richard Cowden (who are also co-editors of the *International Journal of Wellbeing*). The editorial received editorial suggestions, as is usual with EDITORIALS.

The other papers in the special issue are all INVITED ARTICLES. This will be the case for all 20+ expected papers. Lomas manages the review process for these papers. Lomas recruited two

or more external reviews for each paper based on recommendations from the country-specific authors and his own knowledge (external meaning not from the Global Flourishing Study team or the *International Journal of Wellbeing* editorial team). These reviewers had expertise in wellbeing research in the relevant country. The papers were also reviewed by Lomas and sometimes other members of the Global Flourishing Study team or the *International Journal of Wellbeing* editorial team. All of the reviews had the goal of providing a standard peer critique and making the papers as strong as possible. To be clear, these papers went through a non-blinded review process.

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Conflict of Interest

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