ILYA NIKITIN · SELECTED INDEPENDENT WORK

A question worth testing.
A finding worth checking.
A story worth reading.

I develop original research questions, audit evidence and data, then turn what survives into clear, engaging editorial features. I do not sell a predetermined conclusion.

THREE PUBLISHED EXAMPLES / THE FINDING, NOT MERELY THE TOPIC

01 **A measurement paradox**

Finland: #1 on life evaluation, #114 in an exploratory smile model. The real story is construct validity.

02 **A precise claim, rechecked**

At the 8.8-hour caffeine cutoff, published rounded coefficients still imply ~12 minutes of predicted sleep loss.

03 **A model whose answer depends on assumptions**

Finland to Spain: +33.8% on purchasing power with portable income; -11.0% using a population-level local-income proxy.

Research design · Data analysis · Editorial storytelling

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CASE 01 · ORIGINAL SECONDARY ANALYSIS

When two rankings disagree, start with what they measure.

The World Happiness Report ranks life evaluations. Could existing observations of smiling produce a different ordering, and would that ordering mean anything about happiness?

FINLAND / TWO DIFFERENT CONSTRUCTS, TWO SEPARATE SCALES



Not a ranking disagreement about the same quantity. Samples, constructs and coverage differ.

24
source families in the inclusive registry

19
families yielding within-study country comparisons

10,740
constructed comparison rows, not people

THE FINDING BEHIND THE HEADLINE

The eye-catching rank was only the beginning. Across the main overlapping source comparisons, median agreement on which country smiled more was 59.1%. The model could be reproduced, but a country-level psychological trait could not be validated. The story became an audit of how an attractive ranking can outrun its evidence.

A LINE FROM THE PUBLISHED FEATURE

> The survey might be flawless. But satisfaction with one's running fitness is not the same as running speed.

Boundary: The 10,740 rows are derived within-study comparisons; country pairs can recur across source families. SOSI is exploratory, not a population-representative happiness or smile-frequency measure.

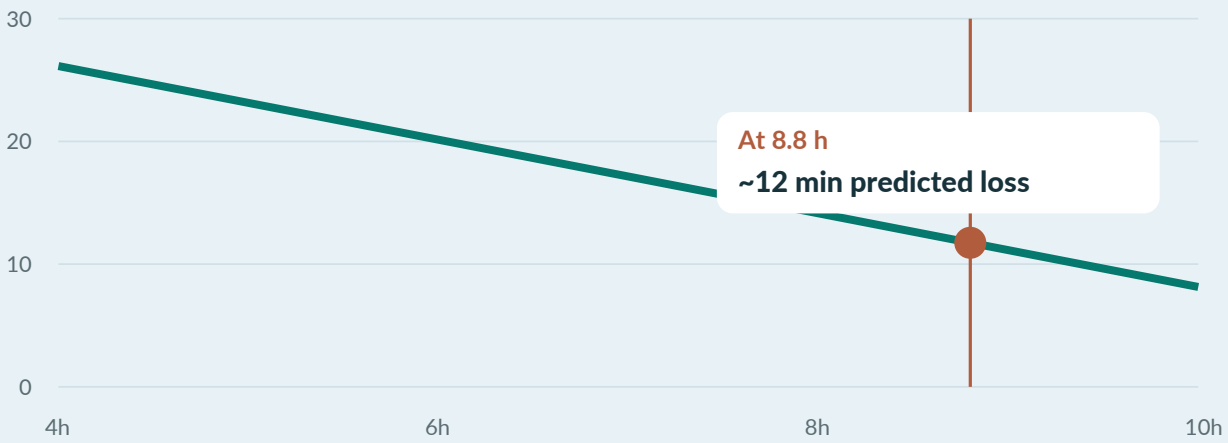
Published feature Full research report + data/code

CASE 02 · RECONSTRUCTING A PUBLISHED MODEL

A precise rule is not necessarily a safe boundary.

A meta-analysis yielded a widely repeated 8.8-hour cutoff for coffee. I checked the published regression and asked a narrower question: what does the central estimate say at that exact point?

CENTRAL MODEL ESTIMATE / 107 MG CAFFEINE / HOURS BEFORE SLEEP



Central estimate reconstructed from rounded published coefficients; the confidence band is not plotted.

WHERE THE INSIGHT IS

The cutoff is where the model's 95% confidence band meets zero, not where its central prediction disappears. Even at 8.8 hours, the rounded published coefficients imply a central estimate of about 12 minutes less sleep. The discovery is not the arithmetic: it is the difference between statistical uncertainty and a consumer-facing "safe time".

A LINE FROM THE PUBLISHED FEATURE

Falling asleep tells you how the night began, not what happened next.

Boundary: This reconstructs a published central estimate, not measured individual sleep loss or a universal safe time; it does not reconstruct the model's confidence interval.

Read the editorial feature Source calculation in article

CASE 03 · DATA MADE EXPLORABLE

Same move. Different income assumptions.

A national average is not a personal forecast. I built a 54-country, seven-dimension comparison tool that makes the assumptions visible instead of burying them in one overall score.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LIVE CALCULATOR

ORIGIN COUNTRY
Finland

→

DESTINATION COUNTRY
Spain

HOW WILL INCOME CHANGE?

Keep current income

+33.8%

Purchasing-power change
if spendable income remains portable.

Switch to local work

−11.0%

Local-income proxy
GNI per person, PPP-adjusted.

Different measures, not two estimates of personal wages. Figures use the feature's frozen 2024 dataset.

WHY THIS DESIGN MATTERS

Portable income and a population-level local-income benchmark tell different economic stories. That distinction matters: a remote worker may retain their salary while a new local hire faces another labour market. The tool separates environmental exposures from accumulated or adaptive outcomes instead of pretending a country-level average predicts the future of one person.

A LINE FROM THE PUBLISHED FEATURE

A Finn who moves to Spain does not become a statistical Spaniard at passport control.

Boundary: The income figures use different constructs and are not interchangeable forecasts. Other country-level indicators describe populations, not individual migrants.

Use the 54-country calculator Read methods and caveats

FOR EDITORS, AGENCIES AND RESEARCH-LED ORGANISATIONS

Bring a question. Get a defensible story.

I work from a focused brief, a dataset or a claim that deserves checking. The output is usable editorial work backed by traceable evidence, not a finding chosen in advance.

01 / ORIGINAL DATA INVESTIGATION

Find the story in the numbers.

Question design, public or client-supplied data, transparent modelling, robustness checks and an evidence-led feature.

Typical outputs: analysis note, chart, source ledger, finished article.

02 / SCIENTIFIC CLAIM AUDIT

Check what a confident claim really proves.

Trace the primary research, reproduce a key calculation, test alternate interpretations and write the result for readers.

Typical outputs: reproducibility memo, explanatory graphic, finished article.

THE PROCESS

01
Written brief

02
Scope + feasibility

03
Test and verify

04
Deliver the story

ABOUT

Ilya Nikitin is a Finland-based independent researcher and research-focused editor at Mike's Balance; he founded The Null Institute, a research initiative operated by IMT First Oy. Academic degree: Candidate of Technical Sciences in microelectronics (LETI). His editorial work centres on methodology, quantitative comparisons and communicating uncertainty, not clinical practice.

DISCUSS A SCOPED PROJECT

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Scope, sources, AI/tool use and deadlines are agreed in writing. A narrowly defined public-data pilot may be feasible in 3–5 working days; larger investigations vary.

Researcher bio The Null Institute SOSI methods + data