



Amid War and Disease, World Happiness Report Shows Bright Spot www.worldhappiness.report

NEW YORK, March 18--In this troubled time of war and pandemic, the World Happiness Report 2022 reports a bright light in dark times. The pandemic brought not only pain and suffering but also an increase in social support and benevolence. As we battle the ills of disease and war, it is especially important to remember the universal desire for happiness and the capacity of individuals to rally to each other's support in times of great need.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the World Happiness Report, which uses global survey data to report on how people evaluate their own lives in more than 150 countries around the world. The interest in happiness is, of course, global. The World Happiness Report reached more than 9 million people in 2021. Since it was first published, the World Happiness Report has been based on two key ideas: that happiness or life evaluation can be measured through opinion surveys, and that we can identify key determinants of well-being and thereby explain the patterns of life evaluation across countries. This information, in turn, can help countries to craft policies aimed at achieving happier societies.

Jeffrey Sachs explains the origin and purpose of the WHR in this way. "A decade ago, governments around the world expressed the desire to put happiness at the heart of the global development agenda, and they adopted a UN General Assembly resolution for that purpose. The World Happiness Report grew out of that worldwide determination to find the path to greater global well-being. Now, at a time of pandemic and war, we need such an effort more than ever. And the lesson of the World Happiness Report over the years is that social support, generosity to one another, and honesty in government are crucial for well-being. World leaders should take heed. Politics should be directed as the great sages long ago insisted: to the well-being of the people, not the power of the rulers."

Past reports have looked at the links between people's trust in government and institutions with happiness. The findings demonstrate that communities with high levels of trust are happier and more resilient in the face of a wide range of crises.

This year's report comes in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has upended lives around the world. "COVID-19 is the biggest health crisis we've seen in more than a century," said John Helliwell. "Now that we have two years of evidence, we are able to assess not just the importance of benevolence and trust, but to see how they have contributed to well-being during the pandemic."

"We found during 2021 remarkable worldwide growth in all three acts of kindness monitored in the Gallup World Poll. Helping strangers, volunteering, and donations in 2021

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were strongly up in every part of the world, reaching levels almost 25% above their pre-pandemic prevalence. This surge of benevolence, which was especially great for the helping of strangers, provides powerful evidence that people respond to help others in need, creating in the process more happiness for the beneficiaries, good examples for others to follow, and better lives for themselves.”

For the fifth year in a row Finland takes the top spot as the happiest in the world. This year its score was significantly ahead of other countries in the top ten. Denmark continues to occupy second place, with Iceland up from 4th place last year to 3rd this year. Switzerland is 4th, followed by the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The top ten are rounded out by Sweden, Norway, Israel and New Zealand. The next five are Austria, Australia, Ireland, Germany and Canada, in that order. This marks a substantial fall for Canada, which was 5th ten years ago. The rest of the top 20 include the United States at 16th (up from 19th last year), the UK and the Czechia still in 17th and 18th, followed by Belgium at 19th and France at 20th, its highest ranking yet.

1. Finland
2. Denmark
3. Iceland
4. Switzerland
5. Netherlands
6. Luxembourg
7. Sweden
8. Norway
9. Israel
10. New Zealand

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve noted that “At the very bottom of the ranking we find societies that suffer from conflict and extreme poverty, notably we find that people in Afghanistan evaluate the quality of their own lives as merely 2.4 out of 10. This presents a stark reminder of the material and immaterial damage that war does to its many victims and the fundamental importance of peace and stability for human wellbeing.”

Since the World Happiness Report was launched ten years ago, there has been a growing interest in measuring well-being and life satisfaction. This has been to a significant extent enabled by the data available in the Gallup World Poll since 2005-2006. Every year the World Happiness Report compiles data from the previous three years of surveys to increase the sample size and allow for more accuracy.

The availability of fifteen years of data covering more than 150 countries provides a unique stock-taking opportunity. The three biggest gains were in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania. The biggest losses were in Lebanon, Venezuela, and Afghanistan.

"Data considered in the World Happiness Report offers a snapshot of how people around the world evaluate their own happiness and some of the latest insights from the science of well-

being," said Lara Aknin. "This information is incredibly powerful for understanding the human condition and how to help people, communities, and countries work toward happier lives."

A breakdown of the chapters of the World Happiness Report:

Chapter 1: Overview on our tenth anniversary
Helliwell, Layard, Sachs, De Neve, Aknin, & Wang

Chapter 2: Happiness, benevolence, and trust during COVID-19 and beyond
Helliwell, Wang, Huang, & Norton

Chapter 3: Trends in conceptions of progress and well-being
Barrington-Leigh

Chapter 4: Using social media data to capture emotions before and during COVID-19
Metzler, Pellert, & Garcia

Chapter 5: Exploring the biological basis for happiness
Bartels, Nes, Armitage, Van de Weijer, de Vries, & Haworth

Chapter 6: Insights from the first global survey of balance and harmony
Lomas, Lai, Shiba, Diego-Rosell, Uchida, & VanderWeele

The World Happiness Report is a publication of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, powered by the Gallup World Poll data. The Report is supported by the Ernesto Illy Foundation; illycaffè; Davines Group; Unilever's largest ice cream brand Wall's; The Blue Chip Foundation; The William, Jeff, and Jennifer Gross Family Foundation; The Happier Way Foundation, and The Regenerative Society Foundation.

The report is edited by Professor John F. Helliwell of the University of British Columbia; Professor Richard Layard, co-director of the Wellbeing Programme at LSE's Centre for Economic Performance; University Professor Jeffrey Sachs, President of SDSN and Director of the Earth Institute's Center for Sustainable Development; Professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford; Professor Lara B. Aknin of Simon Fraser University, and Professor Shun Wang of the Korea Development Institute.

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