

Caring and Sharing: Secrets Behind the Happiness

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Abstract

Purpose: *World Happiness Report is released. The World Happiness Report, which provides comprehensive interdisciplinary data on people's happiness and well-being worldwide, reflects a global desire for a stronger focus on happiness and well-being as benchmarks for government policy. The report was published through a global partnership between Gallup, Oxford's Wellbeing Research Center, and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The Gallup World Poll data is used to calculate the happiness scores and rankings. The main objective of this article is to analyse the various aspects World Happiness Report 2025. The history world happiness report is also looked in to.*

Methodology: *Main objective of this paper to analyse the evolution of world happiness report and the structure, methodology, variables of world happiness report are also analysed. The position of India and its neighbouring countries also analysed. This is narrative review of world happiness report from 2012 to 2025. Source of data is the reports itself. Only secondary data is used for analysis.*

Findings: *Nordic nations continue to do well: Finland is at the top of the list, but Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway are also in the top 10. 2025's Happiest Nations in the World. Using dystopia as a benchmark, this study contrasts the contributions of each of the six components, finding notable decreases in Western industrialised nations that have previously held high ranks. The top 10 includes three from Southeast Asia, one from Africa, and six from Latin America. The lowest percentage of happy emotions is found in Afghanistan. It is also the most likely to sense negative emotions. The top 10 countries for negative sentiments include Armenia, three Middle Eastern countries, and five African countries. India's rank is 118 out of 147 countries. The Cantrill Ladder is used in the 2025 World Happiness Report to measure people's level of happiness. To explain the variation in life evaluations among nations, estimates of the relationships between the six factors and observed data were used.*

Conclusions: *World happiness report is a best indicator of people's well-being. It is a qualitative indicator rather than quantitative. This shows that happiness of human beings is more than money and wealth; it depends on caring and sharing. In conclusion, prosocial behaviour and sharing contribute to happiness in general. The most significant living circumstances are still GDP per capita, a healthy life expectancy, having a trustworthy person, feeling free to make significant life decisions, the average frequency of donations, and views on corruption in government and business. Since life evaluations are a more reliable indicator of people's life quality, happiness rankings are based on them. A comparative study of GNH Index and World Happiness Index could be conducted to find out the most suitable index of happiness with respect to countries in particular region.*

Keywords: **Life Evaluations, Happiness, Benevolence, Caring, Sharing, Generosity.**

One of the best sources for learning how to improve well-being worldwide is the World Happiness Report, which provides the key findings from well-being science and gives everyone the knowledge they need to improve their own and other people's happiness. After Bhutan chose Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a key measure of national progress in the 1970s, there was a global push to create a happiness index. It became popular to measure national happiness instead of just economic success. The UN General Assembly passed Resolution 65/309, "Happiness: Towards a Holistic Definition of Development," in July 2011. It urged member countries to measure happiness and utilise the findings to inform public policy. On April 1, 2012, during a

UN High-Level Meeting called “Wellbeing and Happiness: Establishing a New Economic Paradigm,” the inaugural World Happiness Report was published. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 20 March as the International Day of Happiness on 28 June 2012 after passing Resolution 66/281. Every year on or around March 20, the World Happiness Report is released. The World Happiness Report, which provides comprehensive, interdisciplinary data on people’s happiness and well-being around the world, reflects a global desire for a stronger focus on happiness and well-being as benchmarks for governmental policy. The report was published through a global partnership between Gallup, Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre, and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Gallup World Poll data were used to calculate happiness scores and rankings. Since 2012, the World Happiness Report has been published annually in March. The World Happiness Report was published in 2025. This article is to examine the World Happiness Report’s history, the theme for this year’s report, the methodology and the scores among the nations, with a focus on India and its neighbours.

Brief History of world Happiness report

The idea of measuring national happiness against economic progress gained traction after Bhutan embraced Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a key measure of national development in the 1970s. This report was released through a global partnership between Gallup, Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre, and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). Since the first edition in 2012, reports have addressed a wide range of subjects, including age, generation, gender, migration, sustainable development, compassion, and the COVID-19 pandemic’s effects on global well-being. The first report was published in 2012. It focused on creating a framework for measuring and understanding happiness globally. The argument that well-being ought to be a crucial factor in determining how the world assesses its economic and social progress is further supported by the second World Happiness Report, which was published on September 9, 2013. The third edition of the World

Happiness Report was published in 2015. It has been released annually on March 20th since 2016, which is also the UN’s International Day of Happiness. The 2015 World Happiness Report analysed trends in happiness across 158 nations and investigated the reasons behind the statistics. This most recent research delves even further into the data, including regional indicators, gender and age characteristics, country developments since the previous report, and the significance of the investment in social capital. The measurement and effects of inequality in the distribution of well-being across nations and regions were given particular attention in the 2016 World Happiness Report. The 2017 World Happiness Report focused on the importance of happiness as a measure of social progress and a goal for policy. investigated how happiness levels in 2018 were impacted by social media, migration, and differences in well-being. The 2019 study focused on happiness and the community by analysing how happiness has evolved over the past 12 years, with a particular emphasis on the technology, social norms, conflicts, and governmental policies that have propelled these changes.

The world Happiness report 2020 evaluated cities around the world based on their subjective well-being and examined social contexts for global happiness in order to gain a better understanding of how social, urban, and natural factors interact to promote happiness. The focus of 2021 was on the effects of COVID-19 and how people have fared around the world, including how governments have handled the pandemic and how it has changed the structure and quality of people’s lives. In 2022, the contentment of people at different periods of life—including the world’s youth, old, and everyone in between—was examined. In the 2023 reports, the primary focus was on the happiness of people of all ages, from young to old and everything in between. Disparate trends were seen worldwide when the World Happiness Report 2024 looked at happiness by age group and birth cohort. It also went on to show how the COVID-19 pandemic changed three types of altruistic behaviour: volunteering, giving, and helping strangers.

Bhutan in Happiness Index

The World Happiness Report of 2025, which include 147 nations, do not include Bhutan. Although Bhutan's GNH concept is well recognised and esteemed, Bhutan is not included in the World Happiness Report's rankings because it utilises a distinct set of measurements. The Gross National Happiness (GNH) is a development philosophy and measurement of Bhutan that place a higher priority on population well-being than economic expansion. In the 1970s, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the former King of Bhutan, introduced it as a substitute for GDP. Cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, psychological wellness, health, education, time management, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards are the nine dimensions that make up GNH. The general level of happiness and well-being among Bhutanese people is measured by the GNH Index, a metric that is developed from four dimensions. Bhutan's score has fluctuated throughout time, with the nation occasionally being hailed as the "happiest" or ranking well in Asia. Bhutan is not at the top of the World Happiness Report right now, despite its fluctuations. However, Bhutan's GNH goes beyond economic considerations to emphasise the growth and well-being of the entire society. GNH adhered to Buddhist values, especially the "Middle Way," which places an emphasis on moderation and balance, as well as the concepts of sustainable development, holistic thinking, and prioritising well-being. The GNH index is computed using information gathered from in-depth surveys that are carried out on a regular basis. Based on their answers to survey questions, each person receives a score that represents their degree of contentment and wellbeing in each area. Based on their total happiness scores, people are divided into four groups by the GNH index: deeply happy, widely happy, narrowly happy, and dissatisfied. The requirements of people who are deemed "not-yet-happy" are the main focus of development projects and policy decisions that are informed by the GNH index. The GNH framework values each of the domains equally, emphasizing their collective contribution to overall wellbeing and happiness. The Gross National Happiness (GNH) national surveys gather

data on the nine domains and 33 indicators of GNH. These surveys, undertaken every three to five years, are representative at the both national and regional (rural and urban) level. The GNH Index is calculated using the Alkire-Foster method, a multidimensional measurement method known for its comprehensive and robust assessment of poverty (Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index, 23 August 2024). GNH is a framework for socio-economic development in Bhutan by elucidating GNH principles that affect the way Bhutanese society and state interact. It dwells more on how Bhutan is actually, in practice, doing so by assessing policy intentions versus policy outcomes and declarations. This concludes that Bhutan's experiment with GNH remains dynamic and evolving, and suggests that this policy process may also be of interest to those in the international community who have been intrigued by the original idea of GNH. GNH offers a realistic alternative to higher well-being and lower unsustainability in Bhutan (Karma Ura, December 2015). The strategy, inspired above all by solid Tantric Buddhist belief, significantly differentiates itself from the mainstream GDP-driven, output-maximising paradigms by maintaining that truly sustainable development can only originate from acknowledging the equal dignity and crucial interdependence of various dimensions of both human and natural life. Factors such as the peculiar Buddhist culture that informs it, the relatively simple economic infrastructure at this early stage of development, and the limited size of the politically active, urbanised population, all make GNH a distinctively Bhutanese phenomenon. Nevertheless, the fundamental paradigm shift that GNH advocates has already resonated beyond the countries' borders, reinforcing a growing trend across international development actors towards a more comprehensive, qualitative definition and measurement of societal development. The GNH Index is a unique approach to measuring the wellbeing and happiness of the Bhutanese population, focusing on multiple indicators and domains that go beyond traditional economic metrics. GNH 2022, produced by the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies in the Royal Government of Bhutan, provides detailed insights into the measurements, analysis, and policy implications of the Gross National Happiness Index

for 2022 and covers changes in happiness from 2010 (Ura, K., Alkire, S., Wangdi, K. and Zangmo, T. (2023).

Literature Review

Studies on World happiness report gives more insights about report especially about the methodology, variables etc. For the vast majority of people and policymakers, happiness is the main goal. The concept of happiness has been the cornerstone of both Hindu and ancient Greek culture. The definition of happiness varies among individuals. Happiness is commonly described as an emotional state characterised by feelings of joy, contentment, fulfilment, and satisfaction. The Oxford Happiness Inventory, the PANAS scale, the subjective happiness scale, and Seligman's PERMA model are just a few of the measures of happiness that have been developed by various scholars using a variety of methodologies. Happiness is positively correlated with motivation, lifespan, and healthy behaviours, but negatively correlated with stress, anxiety, morbidity, and death. (Chaudhary, Shatdal, 2023). Conversely, generosity was the variable that had the least effect on happiness and the poorest association to ladder scores. Social Support had the biggest influence on the happiness index out of the six initial factors, with the strongest association to the ladder score. GDP per capita came in second. The happiness index also exhibits a positive correlation with the Gini coefficient and education level, two factors that are believed to be potential influencing factors. From a worldwide geographic perspective, the happiest countries are typically found in Europe, North America, and Oceania, however the happiest countries are mostly found in Africa. (Zong, Yizhi, 2024). The Cantril Ladder, which is collected yearly from over 140 countries for the Gallup World Poll and reported in the World Happiness Report, is one of the most widely used indicators of subjective well-being. A ladder is used to ask respondents to order their lives from worst (bottom) to best (top). Previous studies have shown that Cantril Ladder ratings reflect an individual's relative income distribution position and are susceptible to social comparison. (Nilsson, A.H., Eichstaedt, J.C., Lomas, T. et al., 2024) According to the World Happiness

Report 2025, our perception of how benevolent and kind our society is affects everyone's well-being. In each research, couples with one partner suffering from a mental disease had a significantly higher divorce risk than couples without such a condition. (Idstad, M., Torvik, F.A., Borren, I. et al., 2015). Patterns between the GDP, happiness index, and standard of living in the chosen countries were found in the World Happiness Report. The quality of life was considerably higher in countries with the highest and moderately high happiness indices than in those with the lowest. Compared to the countries with the greatest and lowest happiness indices, respectively, those with a moderate happiness index had a much better GDP ranking. The quality of a country's population significantly impacts its level of happiness. Happiness ratings are low in even the most prosperous nations. Therefore, in the interest of the country, it is prudent that the government devote more funds to the welfare of the populace (Valsal Kumar, Dr. Sridhar, Nagendra, 2024). In addition to measuring happiness and well-being, the Happiness Index evaluates resilience and sustainability. The Happiness Index was created by the Happiness Alliance to give researchers, community organisers, and others looking to use a subjective well-being index and data a survey tool. It is the only freely accessible tool of its sort in the world and has been translated into more than ten languages. This tool can be used to gauge one's level of happiness with life and its circumstances. It can also be used to define other dimensions of wellbeing within particular population demographics, such as sense of community, trust in the government, and income disparity. The Happiness Index was developed between 2011 and 2015, and implementation recommendations are included in this publication. (Journal of Social Change, 2017). Happiness measurement in quantitative terms has become a global phenomena in recent years. One such tool for analysing the subjective welfare of nations worldwide is the United Nations World Happiness Report (WHR). The Happiness Index is designed to establish a number of criteria that determine a nation's ranking among 156 nations. In 2019, India's ranking dropped to 140th place. This unequivocally demonstrates how India's standing has declined over time. The Happiness Index as a metric and examines

the several factors that led to India's decline in the World Happiness Report (Sarah Ahtesham School of Business Studies, Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, India). A comparative study of Finland and India, two nations with radically different socioeconomic origins and cultures, examined the idea of a happiness index and its importance in measuring a country's level of happiness and well-being. The Gross National Happiness (GNH) index, developed in Bhutan, is a growth perspective that measures a nation's general level of happiness. Explored the causes of India's recent decline in the happiness index, while Finland remains one of the happiest nations in the world through an analysis of data from the World Happiness Report (WHR). The significance of enhancing happiness and well-being as a primary objective for countries globally are covered (Kajal Sharma, Sakshi Arora). A thorough examination of world well-being is provided by the World Happiness Report 2025, which highlights the value of interpersonal relationships, kindness, and trust. The report's chapters explore the statistical methods and results, emphasising the intricate relationship between happiness and society behaviours. Notably, it tackles paradoxes such as the higher death rates from despair in societies with high meal-sharing rates and the lower happiness indices reported by war-torn nations like Israel and Ukraine. The report emphasises how important it is to look beyond economic metrics in order to comprehend and improve happiness around the world (Dana, Azeem, March 27, 2025). The World Happiness Report (WHR), includes measures of overall well-being and satisfaction among the global population. Using machine learning techniques like support vector machines (SVM), decision trees, and linear regression, uncovered the complexity of holistic happiness. The dataset used included the World Happiness Report by Gallup and the World Income Inequality Database (WIID). Two sets of machine learning models, A and B, were developed. Models set A is based on the traditional predictors, which use metrics like GDP per capita, life expectancy, generosity, perceptions of corruption, freedom to choose, and social support to forecast happiness. Model set B includes an additional attribute (income inequality) from WIID, which helps improve model

performance and better understand the patterns of happiness across different income levels and how income inequality affects overall happiness (Suhail Shakeel et Kumar, Logeswari P, 2025).

Research Gap

No comprehensive study has been conducted to understand the history of World Happiness Report, Bhutan's position in the report, the methodology and structure of the report, happiness rankings, benevolence ranking, components of the benevolence ranking, regional and overall variations in the ranking, and India's position in the happiness ranking among the world's countries and South Asian countries. No studies have been conducted to determine which index, the GNH Index or World Happiness Index, represents the real well-being or happiness of the chief features of world happiness report with reference to report of the 2025.

Methodology

Main objective of this paper to analyse the history of world happiness report and the structure, methodology, variables of world happiness report. Need of the study is derived from the literatures related to GNH and World Happiness Index. Data were collected and analysed based on the hints derived from the literature. This is narrative review of world happiness report of 2025. Source of data is the reports itself. Only secondary data is used for analysis. In this article first ten and bottom ten countries have been arranged on the basis of the rankings and scores in the report. Similarly, South Asian countries were arranged. India ranked third on the basis of the ranks among the South-Asian countries. Top 10 Countries also ranked in terms of six measures of benevolence. South Asian countries also ranked in terms of benevolence. Report of the study has been arranged in the order ranking at the international level to regional level. Same pattern followed in the benevolence rank analysis. This study is has been limited by the availability of the data available in the World Happiness Report.

World Happiness Report 2025

The World Happiness Report 2025, "The Impact of Caring and Sharing on People's Happiness,"

explores how prosocial behaviour and sharing contribute to happiness in general. The most significant living circumstances are still GDP per capita, a healthy life expectancy, having a trustworthy person, feeling free to make significant life decisions, the average frequency of donations, and views on corruption in government and business. Since life evaluations are a more reliable indicator of people's life quality, happiness rankings are based on them. The Gallup World Poll, which continues to be the primary source of data for this report, asks participants to rate their overall life satisfaction using a ladder graphic, where a 10 represents their ideal life and a 0 represents their worst. On this scale, known as the Cantril Ladder, each respondent provides a numerical response. Each country typically receives approximately 1,000 responses annually. Population-representative national averages were constructed using weights for every year in every nation. Because a bigger sample size allows for more accurate projections, we base our happiness ranking on a three-year average of these life assessments. The ranking of nations is based on the average of their self-reported life assessments from 2022 to 2024.

Log GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, independence, generosity, and corruption are six important factors that help explain life ratings. As previously said, none of these six characteristics are used to determine our happiness rankings. Instead, rankings are determined by how people evaluate their own lives. Life evaluations, positive emotions, and negative emotions—the latter two are frequently referred to as positive and negative affect—remain the three primary wellbeing indicators used to measure subjective wellbeing. Since life assessments are a more reliable indicator of people's quality of life, they serve as the foundation for our happiness rankings. The Gallup World Poll, which continues to be the primary source of data for this report, asks respondents to rate their overall life satisfaction using a ladder graphic, giving a 10 for the best life and a 0 for the worst. On this scale, known as the Cantril Ladder, each respondent offers a numerical response. Each country typically receives about 1,000 responses every year.

A three-year average of these life assessments is used to calculate the happiness rating since the bigger sample size allows for more accurate estimations. The average of each person's yes/no responses to three positive emotions—laughing, enjoyment, and interest—is used to calculate positive affect. Compared to emotional assessments based on everyday experiences, life evaluations capture quality of life in a more comprehensive and stable manner, making them the most informative metric for cross-border comparisons. The varied life experiences in various nations provide a better explanation for life evaluations, which range more between nations than emotions. While life assessments more accurately represent the conditions of life overall, emotions from the previous day can be adequately explained by the events of the day in question. Even in the years since the start of COVID-19, positive feelings are still more than twice as common as negative ones. The Cantrill Ladder is used in the 2025 World Happiness Report to gauge people's level of happiness. To explain the variation in life evaluations among nations, estimates of the relationships between the six factors and observed data were used.

This year, report show how living in a society that is perceived as being kind reduces the negative effects of adverse situations and, consequently, the wellbeing gap. Finally, talk about the extent of global caring and sharing as well as any possible links to national happiness. As in the past, Nordic nations continue to do well: Finland is at the top of the list, but Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway are also in the top 10. 2025's Happiest Nations in the World. The first objective that most people and policymakers look for is happiness. Happiness is a concept that predates human civilisation. Ancient Greek and Hindu cultures were centred on the idea of happiness. Everyone has a different definition of happiness, and happiness is a subjective experience. Happiness is typically defined as an emotional state marked by joy, contentment, satisfaction, and fulfilment.

Methodology and Structure of World Happiness Report 2025

The Cantril Ladder, a Gallup World Poll item that asks respondents to estimate their current life on

a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the best life and 0 representing the worst, is used to generate life ratings for the World Happiness Index. A nation's life evaluation score, which is a crucial component in establishing its ranking in the report, is calculated by averaging these individual responses. The Gallup World Poll provides the data used in the World Happiness Report. The Cantrill Ladder is the main question that asks respondents to visualise a ladder that represents their lives. Subsequently, they assigned a number between 0 and 10 to their current life. A single life evaluation score for each nation was calculated by averaging the responses from a nationally representative sample. The World Happiness Report states that in order to smooth out year-to-year variations and produce a more consistent estimate, the report usually takes a three-year average of these life assessments. The Gallup World Poll provides the data used in the World Happiness Report. The Cantrill Ladder is the main question that asks respondents to visualise a ladder that represents their life. After that, they assign a number between 0 and 10 to their current life. A single life evaluation score for each nation is calculated by averaging the responses from a nationally representative sample. The World Happiness Report states that in order to smooth out year-to-year variations and produce a more consistent estimate, the report usually takes a three-year average of these life assessments.

Three measures of subjective well-being are Life evaluations, positive emotions and negative emotions. Life evaluations are more informative than emotions. The report also considers other aspects, such as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and views on corruption. No index of these six elements is used to determine happiness rankings. Instead, rankings are based on how people evaluate their own lives, specifically how they respond to the Cantrill Ladder life evaluation question, which consists of just one item. This is according to the World Happiness Report 2025. The 2025 report features the happiness score averaged over the years 2022–2023. In general, the six variables provide a more comprehensive explanation of life assessments than emotional measurements, especially negative ones. Healthy life expectancy and GDP per capita have a big influence

on life assessments. Generosity and freedom significantly influenced positive affect, which in turn had a significant impact on life appraisals. In order to explain the variance in life ratings among nations, the paper makes use of observed data on the six variables as well as estimates of their connections with life evaluations.

Using dystopia as a benchmark, the study contrasts the contributions from each of the six components. In contrast to a hypothetical country called "Dystopia," which derives its name from the fact that its values for each of the six key variables are equal to the lowest national averages in the world for 2022–2024, the report shows the relative contributions of each of the six key variables to the ladder score of that country. Dystopia's 2022–2024 ladder score was 1.37 on a scale of 0–10. Finally, the prediction error for each nation quantifies how much life assessments deviate from the predictions of our equation. Both negative and positive residuals are possible.

Happiness Ranking

On a global level, compassion and pleasure are measured through giving and caring. The 2025 World Happiness Report looks at how household size and social connections impact happiness, how social connections increase the happiness of young adults, how prosocial behaviour reduces the number of people who die of despair, how social mistrust and unhappiness feed populism, and how wealth can be used to increase the happiness of others. In addition to the overall rankings, this year's World Happiness Report ranked countries in six other categories related to generosity and kindness. The first three were based on real acts of kindness, such as how many people helped a stranger, donated to organisations, or volunteered during the previous month. The other three were based on predictions made by people in 2019 regarding the generosity of others, such as whether a stranger, a neighbour, or a police officer would return a lost wallet.

Retentions in World Happiness Report

Two features from previous versions are still included in the World Happiness Report. First, people's opinions about their lives in different

countries remain constant from year to year. Because rankings are based on a three-year average, certain information is carried over from one year to the next. Depending on the timing of the poll, the three-year average lessens the effects of cataclysmic events. Second, the gap between the top and bottom countries remains substantial; on a scale of 0 to 10, Afghanistan is at the bottom and Finland is at the top, with a gap of more than six points.

Compared to those at the bottom, the top-ranked countries are grouped more closely. The spread for

the top twenty is less than one point on a scale of 0–10, whereas the spread for the lowest twenty is three times greater. The remaining 100 countries span the remaining 2.3 points of the full range. This suggests that very small changes in the national average can lead to a large shift in rank, as evidenced by 95% confidence zones of more than 25 positions for several countries in the middle of the global list. Happiness scores are determined by the people living in each country, not by their nationality or place of birth.

Table 1 Countries of Top and Bottom Ten Countries

TOP 10 COUNTRIES										
Country/ Rankings	Finland	Denmark	Iceland	Sweden	Netherland	Costa Rica	Norway	Israel	Luxemburg	Mexico
Ranking (top10 Countries)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Score	7.736	7.521	7.515	7.345	7.306	7.274	7.262	7.234	7.122	6.979
BOTTOM 10 COUNTRIES										
Country/ Rankings	Lesotho	Comoros	Yemen	DR Congo	Botswana	Zimbabwe	Malawi	Lebanon	Sierraleone	Afghanistan
Ranking (Bottom 10 countries)	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147
Score	3.757	3.754	3.561	3.469	3.438	3.396	3.260	3.188	2.998	1.346

Source: World Happiness Report 2025

Once again, Nordic countries rank highest on the happiness meter. Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and Finland were the top four nations. Finland is still in a group by itself, followed by Denmark and Iceland in a group of two, and Sweden in a range of four to eight, based on the confidence intervals of the rankings. Comparing this year's top-ranking countries to those in the 2013 survey reveals that 14 Western industrial nations were in the top 20 in both years.

Changes in Happiness Rankings over the Years

Three of the top 20 nations in 2025 are from Central and Eastern Europe, reflecting the long-term convergence of Eastern and Western Europe. They

are Czechia at number 20, Slovenia at number 19, and Lithuania at number 16. Two Latin American nations, Mexico at number ten and Costa Rica at number six, as well as one from the Middle East, Israel at number eight, are also among this year's top twenty. Only seven of the top ten nations in 2025 were industrialised Western nations, compared to all ten in 2013. The five Nordic countries have improved their position in the top 10, with an average score of 4.8 in 2013 and 3.4 in 2025. This increase is driven mainly by Finland from 7 to 1 and Iceland from 9 to 3 are the primary drivers of this growth.

Since there were 147 this year compared to 156 in 2013, it is more challenging to compare the rankings for the least happy countries. Togo was

the least happy country in 2013, but now its average life rating is more than 1.4 points higher. It has progressed twenty positions since then. However, Afghanistan has declined by approximately 2.7 points between 2013 and 2025. The average life evaluation score as of right now is 1.36, which is significantly lower than the average score from any of our earlier investigations. In addition, the average score for Afghan women is only 1.16 points, which makes their lives very difficult. It is more important to look at average life ratings in the middle and lower sections of the rankings because even a small adjustment in one of these factors can have a big impact on a country's standing.

Central and Eastern Europe is home to the top five gainers: Georgia, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia. European happiness has been convergent for more than a decade, with 12 of the 19 countries that have improved by one point or more on the 0–10 scale located in Central and Eastern Europe. The other big beneficiaries include China, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Vietnam in Asia, Togo and Congo in Africa, and Nicaragua in Latin America. Few countries have seen a decline in life ratings of more than one point on the 0–10 scale. The majority of these countries are located in or near hotspots of violence. In general, industrialised Western countries are less satisfied now than they were between 2005 and 2010. Fifteen of them have seen large decreases,

and four have seen significant increases. With drops of more than 0.5 on a scale of 0 to 10, three western countries—the US, Switzerland, and Canada—were in the top fifteen losers. 42 of the 136 countries included in the 2005–2010 and 2022–2024 figures saw significant drops in life evaluations, while 67 saw increases that were statistically significant.

Notable decreases are occurring in Western industrialised nations that have previously held high ranks. The top 10 includes three from Southeast Asia, one from Africa, and six from Latin America. The lowest percentage of happy emotions is found in Afghanistan. It is also the most likely to sense negative emotions. The top 10 countries for negative sentiments include Armenia, three Middle Eastern countries, and five African countries.

Ranking among South-Asian Countries

South-Asian World Happiness rankings reveal regional disparities (Mayank Chhaya,2025).Table 3 shows that ranks of the South-Asian countries varies from 92 to 147.Nepal is in the 92nd position, and Afghanistan is the country with the least happiness in the region and among the world countries. A look at the score of the South-Asian countries shows wide disparity among the countries. Nepal has the highest score of 5.301, and the score of Afghanistan is only 1.364, showing a difference of 3.937.

Table 2 Ranking and Score of India and Neighbouring Countries Happiness Ranking

Country	Nepal	Pakistan	India	Myanmar	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh	Afghanistan
Ranking	92	109	118	126	133	134	147
Ranking among South-Asian Countries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Score	5.301	4.768	4.389	4.321	3.891	3.851	1.364

Source: World Happiness Report 2025

Benevolence Ranking

Benevolence is a key factor in the World Happiness Report's overall happiness ranking as well as in the kindness and generosity metrics. According to the survey, nations with higher levels of benevolence—which include charitable contributions, volunteer work, and lending a hand to strangers—generally have happier populations. It is believed that benevolence plays a crucial role in

creating social bonds, trust, and a supportive social environment—all of which enhance life quality and happiness in general. A contributing factor to overall happiness is benevolence. A nation's GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to choose, generosity, and views of corruption are the six main characteristics that the World Happiness Report considers to rank happiness. Among these six factors, benevolence—more especially, helping

others and being generous—is notably mentioned. In the overall happiness rating, nations with higher levels of these altruistic deeds typically score higher.

Measuring Benevolence

The report uses a number of factors to gauge kindness, such as: The percentage of persons who have given money to a charity in the previous month is known as the “donating money” percentage. The proportion of persons who have given their time to an organisation is known as volunteering. The proportion of persons who have assisted a stranger in the previous month is known as “helping strangers.” Anticipated reappearance of misplaced wallets: The research, which is based on surveys, also evaluates people’s expectations regarding whether a neighbour, stranger, or police officer will return a misplaced wallet. This indicates how much they trust institutions and social norms.

The relationship between kindness and solid social ties is emphasised in the report. Acts of kindness promote a sense of community and enhance social ties, both of which improve the well-being of the person and the group. On the other hand, loneliness and a lack of social support can have a detrimental effect on happiness. Since, the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Happiness Report has noted a “benevolence bump”—a persistent rise in prosocial behaviour and assisting others. This implies that people are driven to help one another even during trying times, which emphasises the significance of kindness for happiness. The study also finds a favourable relationship between a nation’s level of happiness and international help, which is a larger-scale type of benevolence. Generally speaking, the happiest countries are also those who give more generously to international help.

Kindness has a major role in a nation’s overall happiness ranking according to the World Happiness Report, in addition to being a beneficial social attribute. The report highlights the significance of sharing and caring for both individuals and societies by demonstrating the relationships between kindness, social connections, and well-being.

The first three of the six benevolence metrics used to rank the nations reflect the average national frequencies of people who report having carried out

at least one of the three charitable acts during the past month. They are helping a stranger by volunteering, providing money, or offering assistance. The donation replies are used after national income variances are taken into consideration. There are notable differences between the first three indicators and the other three. Instead than recording respondents’ actual acts of kindness, they record their predictions of how others might behave when given the opportunity to show kindness. Specifically, the so-called “wallet questions” ask respondents to score how likely they are to have their lost wallet or other valuables returned by a neighbour, a stranger, or a police officer.

The good deeds are ranked differently, especially when compared to the expected wallet return rates. Both predicted and actual wallet returns are highest in the Nordic countries, which is a noteworthy gesture of generosity. The proportional frequency of the other charitable acts is determined by the function of human benevolence as a supplement or substitute for institutional social safety nets, as well as by regional social and religious customs. The demand for individual kindness to bridge the gap is greater in nations with poor social safety nets because more people fall Benevolence ranking

Benevolence is a key factor in the World Happiness Report’s overall happiness ranking as well as in the kindness and generosity metrics. According to the survey, nations with higher levels of benevolence, which includes charitable contributions, volunteer work, and lending a hand to strangers, generally have happier populations. It is believed that benevolence plays a crucial role in creating social bonds, trust, and a supportive social environment—all of which enhance life quality and happiness in general. Benevolence is a contributing factor to overall happiness. A nation’s GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to choose, generosity, and views of corruption are the six main characteristics that the World Happiness Report considers to rank happiness. Among these six factors, benevolence—more especially, helping others and being generous—is notably mentioned. In the overall happiness rating, nations with higher levels of altruistic deeds typically score higher.

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The relationship between kindness and solid social ties is emphasised in the report. Acts of kindness promote a sense of community and enhance social ties, both of which improve the well-being of the person and the group. On the other hand, loneliness and a lack of social support can have a detrimental effect on happiness. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Happiness Report has noted a “benevolence bump”—a persistent rise in prosocial behaviour and assisting others. This implies that people are driven to help one another even during trying times, which emphasises the significance of kindness for happiness. The study also found a favourable relationship between a nation’s level of happiness and international help, which is a larger-scale type of benevolence; generally, the happiest countries are those that give more generously to international help.

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Table 3 Ranking of Top 10 Countries in terms of Six Measures of Benevolence

Countries/ Variables	Cantril Ladder	Donated	Volunteered	Helped Stranger	Wallet returned by		
					Neighbour	Stranger	Police
Finland	1	39	75	96	3	5	2
Denmark	2	25	64	76	8	6	18
Iceland	3	5	77	1	2	5	

Sweeden4	4	15	87	90	4	32	11
Netherlands	5	9	42	134	1	44	6
Costa Rica	6	92	84	36	98	128	104
Norway	7	11	43	101	2	1	1
Israel	8	32	61	84	42	69	55
Luxemburg	9	31	41	135	24	43	8
Mexico	10	102	89	61	126	120	136

Source: World Happiness Report 2025

A propensity for broad rather than targeted social support may account for their relatively low scores for the three charity actions other than returning a lost wallet. When examining the frequency of helping strangers recover lost wallets, both in the real and expected cases, the disparity between the two sets of ranks in the Finnish case is quite apparent. According to all international wallet-dropping trials, Finland and Nordic countries are among the best places to lose your wallet. The low score for stranger assistance may suggest that fewer strangers in the region require assistance, as helping someone find their lost wallet is a reasonably successful approach to helping strangers.

A lost wallet indicates a pressing need, which is actually promptly satisfied in the Nordic countries. While some countries have extremely low ranks for charitable giving, others have very high rankings

for helping strangers. In terms of helping strangers, Jamaica, Liberia, and Sierra Leone score highly, yet they are at least 80 places below in terms of donations. Nigeria and Kenya, who are also in the top ten countries for helping strangers, rank far higher for helping strangers than for giving, albeit with a less noticeable difference. All five countries ranked close to the bottom in terms of the anticipated return of wallets by the police. Since people often want to help others, they are likely to use the best techniques available. In places with weak institutions, helping strangers in need is probably a far more effective way to help than donating to charities. Our analysis of published data below demonstrates that charities in these countries are becoming less and less likely to possess the trustworthy and efficient systems that characterise effective benevolence.

Table 4 South -Asian Country Rankings in Terms of Six Measures of Benevolence

Country/ Measures	South-Asian Countries and its Rankings						
	Cantrill Ladder	Nepal (92)	Pakistan (109)	India (118)	Myanmar (126)	Srilanka1 (33)	Bangladesh (134)
Donating	Myanmar (2)	India (57)	Nepal (59)	Sri Lanka (62)	Pakistan (71)	Bangladesh (80)	Afghanistan (142)
Volunteering Sri Lanka (7)	Sri Lanka (7)	India (10)	Nepal (26)	Myanmar (48)	Pakistan (109)	Bangladesh (111)	Afghanistan (133)
Helping Stranger	Bangladesh (11)	Sri Lanka (45)	India (74)	Myanmar (106)	Nepal (120)	Afghanistan (126)	Pakistan (133)
Expecting Neighbour to return wallet	Sri Lanka (68)	Pakistan (83)	Myanmar (105)	Nepal (112)	India (115)	Bangladesh (123)	Afghanistan (130)
Expecting stranger to return wallet	Sri Lanka (13)	Pakistan (36)	India (86)	Bangladesh (97)	Nepal (107)	Myanmar (125)	Afghanistan (133)
Expecting Policeman to return wallet	Sri Lanka (44)	Nepal (92)	India (93)	Myanmar (102)	Bangladesh (105)	Afghanistan (135)	

Source: World Happiness Report 2025, Values in brackets are ranking

Change in Global Benevolence Rank

Global trends in three categories of charitable deeds: giving, volunteering, and lending a hand to strangers. A variable in the report called “prosocial” has a value of 1 for any respondent who has performed one of the three charitable deeds in the previous month. The study cited the post-COVID gains in charitable deeds in all three of our previous reports, noting the persistence of the rises that initially surfaced in 2020. We observed a notable decrease in the frequency of charitable deeds since 2023 in the 2024 data. Even in 2024, four years after the start of COVID, the magnitude and durability of the post-COVID gains in charitable deeds. Between 2017 and 2019, all three charitable activities remained more than 10% higher than their pre-pandemic levels. All three of these good deeds were still more than 10% higher than their pre-pandemic levels in 2017–2019, even in 2024, four years after COVID started.

Regional Differences in Benevolence Ranking

The world has been split into ten regions to determine regional variations in kindness rating. Helping strangers is the most popular charitable deed in practically every region, but volunteering is typically the least prevalent. The modes of benevolence vary significantly by region. In three regions—Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and North America, Australia, and New Zealand (NANZ)—donations have been among the most popular acts of kindness; however, in recent years, assisting strangers has surpassed all other acts of kindness.

In Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, on the other hand, where assisting strangers is the main act of kindness, donations are the least popular kind of altruism. In the Commonwealth of Independent States, volunteering was more prevalent until 2014, when donations started to increase. Cultural variances that influence the standards for providing care for others may be reflected in regional discrepancies. Informal acts of kindness, like lending a helping hand to strangers, seem to be more prevalent than more formal ones, like volunteering and giving money, in places like Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa.

On the other hand, formal assisting behaviors tend to be more prevalent in Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and NANZ. Institutions and laws in each nation that promote donations through financial incentives like tax credits may also have an impact on this. The motivations behind charitable deeds, how they are planned and carried out, and the degree of cooperation and collaboration between donors and recipients all have a significant impact on the wellbeing gains they provide. When benevolent behaviours incorporate the three Cs—caring relationships, choice, and a definite beneficial impact—they have a larger positive influence on wellbeing. This chapter’s conclusion that giving practices are linked to and frequently directly cause greater wellbeing among donors worldwide is supported by a large body of research. Giving to others makes even two-year-old youngsters happy.

Suggestions

The above report details would help researchers identify the drawbacks of the present report. Rankings and scores are on qualitative parameters. Happiness itself is qualitative indicator. Therefore, in the calculation of the score, subjectivism would be reflected. A comparative study of the methodology of calculating GNH and world happiness must be conducted to determine which is the more reliable index. Efforts must be undertaken to calculate both the indices, GNH Index and World Happiness Index, for every country to find out the difference in materialising happiness among the countries. Actions in this direction would help the policy makers to formulate policies for improving the wellbeing of the people.

Conclusion

Each year’s World Happiness Report is based on a theme. Happiness Report has been published every year till the year 2025 except 2014. The theme of 2025 report is how caring and sharing is leading to happiness. Report 2025 contains ranks of 145 countries. Finland is the topper and Afghanistan is at the bottom. Score of Finland is 7.736 and of Afghanistan is 1.346. This years report has retained some characteristics of Previous years characteristics and at the same time have some changes also. Besides

happiness benevolence among the countries is also ranked. Benevolence is a key factor in increasing world happiness. According to report nations with higher benevolence have happier populations. The rank and scores among South-Asian countries shows India is at the 118th position among the world countries and among the South Asian countries India is at 3rd position. Understanding happiness and benevolence scores will help to understand the quality of living among countries finest measure of worldwide. This demonstrates that human happiness transcends material wealth. Human happiness depends on sharing and caring. In conclusion, prosocial sharing and caring increase happiness overall. GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, having a trustworthy person, feeling free to make important life decisions, average frequency of donations, and opinions on corruption in business and government continue to be the most important living conditions. Happiness rankings are based on life evaluations, as they are a more accurate measure of people's quality of life.

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