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# World Happiness Report 2025: People are much kinder than we expect, research shows

**Belief in the kindness of others is much more closely tied to happiness than previously thought, according to findings published today (20 March) in the World Happiness Report 2025.**

Global evidence on the perceived and actual return of lost wallets shows that people are much too pessimistic about the kindness of their communities compared to reality. Actual rates of wallet return are around twice as high as people expect.

Believing that others are willing to return your lost wallet is also shown to be a strong predictor of population happiness: Nordic nations once again top the ranking of the world's happiest countries, but they also rank among the top places for expected and actual return of lost wallets.

The findings are published today to mark the UN's International Day of Happiness. They are powered by Gallup World Poll data and other sources, including the Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll, and analysed by leading experts in wellbeing science.

Further results published in this 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Happiness Report, focused on the theme of "caring and sharing," include:

- Sharing meals with others is strongly linked with wellbeing across all global regions, but the number of people dining alone in the United States has increased 53% over the past two decades.<sup>1</sup>
- Household size is closely linked to happiness. Four to five people living together enjoy the highest levels of happiness in Mexico and Europe, but many people in Europe are living on their own.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2023, 19% of young adults across the world reported having no one they could count on for social support. This is a 39% increase compared to 2006.<sup>3</sup>
- Deaths of despair are less frequent in countries where benevolent acts are more frequent.<sup>4</sup>
- Declining happiness and social trust in the U.S. and parts of Europe combine to explain the rise and direction of political polarisation and anti-system votes.<sup>5</sup>
- The cost-effectiveness of charities varies dramatically. Some charities are hundreds of times better at increasing happiness per dollar than others.<sup>6</sup>

The World Happiness Report 2025 also contains a ranking of the world's happiest countries. Finland leads the world in happiness for the eighth year in a row, with Finns reporting an average score of 7.736 (out of 10) when asked to evaluate their lives.

Costa Rica (6<sup>th</sup>) and Mexico (10<sup>th</sup>) both enter the top 10 for the first time, while continued upward trends for countries such as Lithuania (16<sup>th</sup>), Slovenia (19<sup>th</sup>) and Czechia (20<sup>th</sup>) underline the convergence of happiness levels between Eastern, Central and Western Europe.

The United States (24<sup>th</sup>) falls to its lowest-ever position, with the United Kingdom (23<sup>rd</sup>) reporting its lowest average life evaluation since the 2017 report.

Country rankings are based on a three-year average of each population's average assessment of their quality of life.<sup>7</sup> Interdisciplinary experts from economics, psychology, sociology and beyond then seek to explain the variations across countries and over time using factors such as GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, having someone to count on, a sense of freedom, generosity and perceptions of corruption.

These factors help to explain the differences across nations, while the rankings themselves are based solely on the answers people give when asked to rate their own lives.

Lara B. Akinin, professor of social psychology at Simon Fraser University and an editor of the World Happiness Report, said: "Human happiness is driven by our relationships with others. Investing in positive social connections and engaging in benevolent actions are both matched by greater happiness."

John F. Helliwell, an economist at the University of British Columbia, a founding editor of the World Happiness Report and a long-time lost wallet researcher, said: "The wallet data are so convincing because they confirm that people are much happier living where they think people care about each other. The wallet dropping experiments confirm the reality of these perceptions, even if they are everywhere too pessimistic."

Jon Clifton, CEO of Gallup, said: "Happiness isn't just about wealth or growth — it's about trust, connection and knowing people have your back. This year's report proves we underestimate how kind the world really is. If we want stronger communities and economies, we must invest in what truly matters: each other."

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, professor of economics at the University of Oxford and an editor of the World Happiness Report, said: "This year's report quantifies the human elements of life that are often hard to measure. It turns out that sharing meals and trusting others are even stronger predictors of wellbeing than expected. These findings push us to look beyond traditional determinants like health and wealth and encourage people to get back around the table together."

The World Happiness Report is published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, in partnership with Gallup, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and an independent editorial board.

The editorial board consists of John F. Helliwell (University of British Columbia), Richard Layard (London School of Economics and Political Science), Jeffrey D. Sachs (Columbia University), Jan-Emmanuel De Neve (University of Oxford), Lara B. Akinin (Simon Fraser University), and Shun Wang (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University).

**Read the report in full at [worldhappiness.report](https://worldhappiness.report).**

## Ends

### Notes to Editors

1. Chapter 3: Sharing meals with others: How meal sharing promotes happiness and social support
2. Chapter 4: Living with others: How household size and family bonds relate to happiness
3. Chapter 5: Connecting with others: How social connections improve the happiness of young adults
4. Chapter 6: Supporting others: How prosocial behaviour reduces deaths of despair
5. Chapter 7: Trusting others: How unhappiness and social distrust explain populism
6. Chapter 8: Giving to others: How to convert your money into greater happiness for others
7. Nation rankings use data from the Gallup World Poll's nationally representative samples for the years 2022 to 2024 (inclusive). They are based on answers to the main life evaluation question asked in the poll. This is called the Cantril Ladder: It asks respondents to think of a ladder, with the best possible life for them being a 10 and the worst possible life being a 0. They are then asked to rate their own current lives on that 0 to 10 scale.

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### About the World Happiness Report

The World Happiness Report (WHR) is a partnership of Gallup, the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the WHR's Editorial Board. The report is published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford and produced under the editorial control of the WHR Editorial Board.

Powered by data from the Gallup World Poll, the World Happiness Report is the world's foremost publication on global happiness: an annual publication which provides valuable, interdisciplinary insights into the wellbeing and happiness of people across the globe.

In addition to the rankings of the world's happiest countries, the report includes curated submissions from experts at the forefront of wellbeing science.

For more information, visit [worldhappiness.report](http://worldhappiness.report).

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### About Gallup

**Gallup** delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organisations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviours of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organisation in the world.

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### **About the Wellbeing Research Centre**

The [Wellbeing Research Centre](#) at the University of Oxford is an interdisciplinary research group focussed on the empirical study of wellbeing. The Centre is a stimulating home for scholars engaged in world-class research on wellbeing across the life course and in the context of schools, businesses and public policy. The general aim of the Centre is to advance our collective understanding of human wellbeing and to help communities around the world put wellbeing at the heart of their decision-making in order to improve the quality of life of current and future generations.

From 2024, the Wellbeing Research Centre is the publisher of the annual World Happiness Report, the world's foremost publication on global happiness.

For more information visit [wellbeing.hmc.ox.ac.uk](https://wellbeing.hmc.ox.ac.uk).

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### **About the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) works under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General to mobilize the world's universities, think tanks, and national laboratories for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement; empower societies through free online education; and translate scientific evidence and ideas into solutions and accountability. Established in 2012 by the former UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, and world-renowned economist and professor, Jeffrey Sachs, the SDSN operates at the intersection between science, policy, and development practice to promote the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, through education, research, policy analysis, and global cooperation. For more information, visit [www.unsdsn.org](https://www.unsdsn.org).