

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Wellbeing Research Centre

Annual Report 26

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The **Wellbeing Research Centre**
is proud to be a part of

Harris Manchester College
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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About

The Wellbeing Research Centre is an interdisciplinary research group focused on the empirical study of wellbeing.

Our 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 Centre also functions as a platform for knowledge exchange for affiliated scholars at the University of Oxford and beyond.

We are proud to be the publishing hub of the world's foremost annual publication on wellbeing, the World Happiness Report, and a founding member and academic partner of the World Wellbeing Movement.

Through our work, we seek to advance our collective understanding of human wellbeing in order to help communities around the world improve quality of life for both current and future generations.

Research findings by the group have been published in the leading academic journals across multiple disciplines including *Nature*, *Science*, *The British Medical Journal*, *Psychological Science*, *PNAS*, and *Management Science* and have been reported on in the world's premier news outlets.

The main focus of our research is on measures that capture how people feel about their lives and what the causes and consequences are of differences in wellbeing between individuals as well as changes over time.





We seek to advance the research frontier using interdisciplinary and empirical approaches often leading us to collaborate with institutional partners that help enable and apply research insights.

Our research agenda tends to address questions along four research streams:

Measurement

We investigate how to define and measure wellbeing, harnessing big data to identify new ways to measure individual and community wellbeing.

Cause and Effect

We ask what the key drivers of wellbeing are across the life course, and how wellbeing impacts other outcomes like productivity, educational performance, and voting behaviour.

Policy and Interventions

We consider whether wellbeing should be a policy objective and how this can be operationalised in practice.

The Future of Wellbeing

We investigate how the future of work will impact wellbeing, and how to best code for optimising wellbeing in algorithms that enable human-centred Artificial Intelligence (AI).

02 //

From the Director

Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve reflects on 12 months of research at the cutting edge of wellbeing science.



Taking a pause to reflect on all activities over the past year it is clear that it has been an extraordinarily productive and eventful year for our Wellbeing Research Centre. I want to briefly highlight some of the research and impact activities that took place and are illustrated in this year's Annual Report and then also spend some time considering a vision for the future.

Looking back

First and foremost, I think we can be very proud of the fact that Centre researchers contributed to 25 peer reviewed research publications over the past year! Many of these publications appeared in top journals including *Nature Human Behaviour*, *The Lancet Planetary Health*, *The British Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *Nature Communications*, *Economics & Philosophy*, and *Journal of Public Economics*. The wide range of these academic publication outlets stands out here and is befitting for our Centre that focuses on a subject that is inherently interdisciplinary and has brought together scholars from various academic backgrounds.

In a way, Oxford (and Cambridge) colleges are uniquely positioned to foster interdisciplinary research and cut across the academic silos of universities that do not complement their academic departments with a college system that brings together diverse academic expertise.

Another important function of our Centre is to be a platform for knowledge exchange and to bring together the wider research community from across and beyond Oxford. A number of interesting seminars and workshops on the links between wellbeing and AI as well environmental sustainability did just that. A good example of this is the workshop that Dr. William Fleming (Unilever Research Fellow) organised at our home at Harris Manchester College for the British Sociological Society funded by The British Academy. He brought together around 20 early career scholars on the sociology of work and wellbeing.

Colleges are uniquely positioned to foster interdisciplinary research



Another highlight was being able to welcome Prof. Marc Schulz at our College as an academic visitor over the Spring. He inspired many within our community with his interesting talks on his longitudinal research studies.

We also continued our longstanding research collaboration with the International Baccalaureate Organization and hope to build on it for many more years to come under the able leadership of Dr. Laura Taylor and team. More recent partners such as the Nuffield Foundation and the S&P Global Foundation also awarded us with funding to develop our research exploring the links between wellbeing and the future of work.

The Wellbeing Research Centre sits at the heart of a synergistic constellation of impact activities that include the World Happiness Report, the World Wellbeing Movement and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics. The latest edition of our World Happiness Report delved into the global evidence for the relationship between wellbeing and social media use and helped bring some clarity to this hotly debated topic. I am very grateful to Barry Grimes who so ably brings structure to all we do on this front and supports the broader Editorial Board.

The World Wellbeing Movement continued to build on its positive contributions from the past. On the policy front, the focus was on stewarding the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics and producing another UK Wellbeing Report, while on the business front, the focus was on developing the Playbook on workplace wellbeing interventions as well as hosting the Expert Group on Workplace Wellbeing. Importantly, we achieved a smooth transition between Sarah Cunningham – who helped put the WWM on the rails – to Ben Wealthy who is now Acting Director. Equally important to note that across all of our activities, it is Jonathan Whitney who does a stellar job leading on communications. The long list of major news items compiled in this Annual Report speaks for itself in terms of how impactful and important his work is.

The Wellbeing Research Centre sits at the heart of a synergistic constellation of impact activities



Nurturing social connections is key for wellbeing and so we practice what we preach at the Wellbeing Research Centre. Our social life is anchored around the seminars, workshops, and both the Christmas party and the summer BBQ that closes out the academic year. Yet again, we were able to bring the wellbeing research community together at various points throughout the year to socialise and exchange ideas. This, more than anything, is what makes me happy and it has been gratifying to see that these social gatherings have led to myriad research collaborations over the years.

Looking forward

We are proud and grateful to be part of Harris Manchester College where I have been a Fellow for over a decade. Over the past months our College has set up an Academic Committee as well as built out its Development Office. This presents an opportunity to strengthen the governance of our operations and from now on we will work with the Academic Committee to review grants while donations will be reviewed by our College's new Development Director. To help with these processes we have now also recruited Eva Leusink who is an experienced research and operations facilitator. Eva will build on the operational work done so well by Leoni Boyle over the past years as Leoni transitions to become a Research Associate at our Centre.

Another year of generous funding from our partners and diligent budgeting on our end means that we have been able to maintain our financial reserves to sustain our activities in future years where we may not be as successful in fundraising. Allowing us to maintain operational resilience is critical and allows us to be prepared and ready in case a larger expense is required to enable us to meaningfully expand on our research and impact activities. These reserves also help build a foundation for our longer-term ambition to secure an endowment to cover core funding in the long run.

The agreement to establish the Wellbeing Research Centre that our College and our founding donors


Image © Copyright Fisher Studios

signed up to in early 2019 boldly noted that the Centre "aims to become the world's preeminent hub for research and teaching on the interdisciplinary subject of human wellbeing." Delightfully, a recent AI search by our founding donors suggests that we are already a long way towards reaching this goal. It is, therefore, an opportune moment to think ahead and lay out a renewed goal towards which we can work together. The strong foundations that have been put in place mean that the Wellbeing Research Centre is now in a position to seek a visionary donor to secure an endowment to become an Institute with funding for its core activities secured in perpetuity. This impactful donation would amplify the work we do and enable us to focus squarely on the research and impact aspects of our mission of raising the scientific understanding of human wellbeing and promote good life years for all.

As ever, we are hugely grateful for your interest in our work and look forward to working together over this next academic year.



It is, therefore, an opportune moment to think ahead and lay out a renewed goal towards which we can work together

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People

Our interdisciplinary group conduct academic research across our key themes, with support from a team of professional services staff.

The Centre also serves as publishing hub of the World Happiness Report, and proudly hosts registered charity the World Wellbeing Movement.

Research Group



Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Director



Dr. Laura Taylor
Deputy Director

● World Wellbeing Movement
● World Happiness Report



Prof. Paul Behrens
Reapra Senior Research Fellow



Prof. Andrew Oswald
Senior Research Fellow



Dr. William Fleming
Unilever Research Fellow



Dr. Caspar Kaiser
Research Fellow



Dr. Michael Plant
Research Fellow



Dr. Alberto Prati
Ajinomoto Research Fellow



Dr. Bouke Klein Teeselink
S&P Global Research Fellow



Dr. Wanying Zhou
Research Fellow



Leoni Boyle
Research Associate



Annegeke Jansen
Reapra Research Associate



Micah Kaats
Research Associate



Alexandra Kirienko
Research Associate



Dr. Jose Marquez
Research Associate



Isaac Parkes
Research Associate



Dr. Cherise Regier
Research Associate



Charlie Harrison
Research Assistant



Sarah Cunningham
Chair of Expert Group
on Work Wellbeing



Charlotte Day
Marketing and
Communications Manager



Harriet Goss
Executive Assistant,
World Wellbeing Movement



Barry Grimes
Production Editor,
World Happiness Report

Eva Leusink
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Ben Wealthy
Acting Director,
World Wellbeing Movement



Jonathan Whitney
Head of Communications

Research Affiliates

Prof. Sabina Alkire Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

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Dr. Clément Bellet Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Prof. Andrew Clark Paris School of Economics

Prof. David Clark Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford

Dr. Maria Cotofan King's College London

Dr. Mark Fabian Public Policy, University of Warwick

Dr. Michael Gill Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Dr. Marta Golin Economics, University of Oxford

Prof. Carol Graham Brookings Institution

Prof. John Helliwell Economics, University of British Columbia

Prof. Joshua Hordern Theology, University of Oxford

Dr. Christian Krekel Behavioural Science, LSE

Prof. Willem Kuyken Psychiatry, Oxford Mindfulness Centre

Prof. Lord Richard Layard Centre for Economic Performance, LSE

Dr. Lucía Macchia Psychology, City University of London

Dr. George Mackerron Economics, University of Sussex

Dr. Ekaterina (Katya) Oparina Economics, LSE

Dr. Edika Quispe-Torreblanca Behavioural Science, Leeds University Business School

Prof. Tali Sharot Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London

Prof. Andrew Stephen Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Prof. Tyler VanderWeele Human Flourishing Program, Harvard University

Dr. George Ward INSEAD



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Publications

Research undertaken by our team of interdisciplinary researchers has been published in some of the world's leading academic journals in the last 12 months.

Journal Publications



Ethnic inequalities in adolescent mental wellbeing: An interaction analysis of social identity markers, risk and protective factors

Stepanous, J., Irizar, P., Mills-Webb, K., Kapadia, D., Cheng, Q., Marquez, J., & Humphrey, N. (2025). Ethnic inequalities in adolescent mental wellbeing: An interaction analysis of social identity markers, risk and protective factors. *SSM - Mental Health, 8*, 100535. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2025.100535

- Minoritised ethnic young people show better mental wellbeing than White British peers.
- Discrimination and bullying harm wellbeing more for certain ethnicities.
- Own-ethnic density and parent support are more protective for some ethnic groups.
- Traditional gender gap and effects of peer support are uniform across ethnicities.



National Worry and the Psychological Value of Social Spending

Macchia, L., & Oswald, A. J. (2025). National Worry and the Psychological Value of Social Spending. *Review of Income and Wealth, 71*(4). https://doi.org/10.1111/roiw.70039

This paper studies "national worry." It finds that in the West European nations the intensity of worry seems to be inversely linked to the level of social spending in a country. We also demonstrate that the proportion of citizens in Western Europe who report extreme-worry levels has risen steadily over the last two decades. The United Kingdom experienced the fastest increase in worry. Our country-panel estimates point to a potentially central role for the little-discussed ex ante psychological value of the welfare state (i.e., the benefit to the whole population, and not just the mental-wellbeing

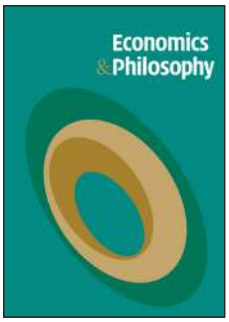
gains going ex post to the smaller number of citizens who actually draw upon welfare-state help). Worry levels move with other economic variables, including the unemployment rate, and we provide some of the first estimates of the patterns of worry across different kinds of individuals. Finally, the analysis is extended to the set of OECD countries. We believe that much needs to be understood about the troubling rise of worry in modern society.



Is motivated memory (just) a matter of mood?

Prati, A., & Saucet, C. (2025). Is motivated memory (just) a matter of mood? *Experimental Economics*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1017/eec.2025.10028

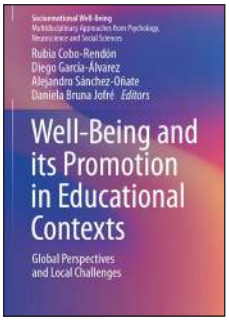
In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in motivated memory as a psychological determinant of economic outcomes. According to motivated memory, people tend to better recall pleasant information because it serves their psychological needs. Another phenomenon, however, predicts the same pattern: According to mood congruence, pleasant information is easier to recall for individuals in nonnegative mood, regardless of any psychological needs. Since most people tend to have some need for self-esteem and to experience more positive than negative feelings during the day, the two phenomena predict similar outcomes in most ordinary situations, but not all. To test the predictive power of these two phenomena, we collect data from a laboratory experiment and from a nationally representative survey. We study how individuals in a temporarily induced negative mood (via a video clip) or those who report a low baseline mood (relative to the population) recall negative feedback. Our results meet the predictions of motivated memory: Individuals better recall positive than negative feedback, even when they are in negative mood. Motivated memory is not just a matter of mood.



Can I get a little less life satisfaction, please?

Plant, M. (2025). Can I get a little less life satisfaction, please? *Economics and Philosophy*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1017/s026626712510045x

In the social sciences and policymaking, life satisfaction surveys are increasingly taken as the best measure of wellbeing. However, the life satisfaction theory of wellbeing (LST) barely features in philosophers' discussions of wellbeing. This prompts two questions. First, is LST distinct from the three standard accounts of wellbeing (hedonism, desire theories, the objective list)? I argue LST is a type of desire theory. Second, is LST a plausible theory of wellbeing? I raise two serious, underappreciated objections and argue it is not. Life satisfaction surveys are useful, but we should not conclude they are the ideal measure of wellbeing.



Adolescent Wellbeing: The Role of Schools

Khanna, D., Marquez, J., & Turner, A. (2025). Adolescent Wellbeing: The Role of Schools. *Socioemotional Well-Being*, 179–193. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-00025-5_9

Adolescence, spanning ages 10–24, is a period of significant transition marked by changes such as puberty, brain development, and shifts in social norms and relationships. As a malleable developmental context, adolescence presents an opportunity for early intervention for improving wellbeing over the life course. Taking a socioecological approach, this chapter outlines the integral role that schools can play in improving adolescent wellbeing as part of adolescents' environment. This chapter draws on empirical literature as well as case studies of existing health and education policies around the world. In doing so, it considers the role and responsibility of schools for improving wellbeing outcomes; how different aspects of school impact wellbeing differently; and provide policy-based recommendations for how schools can most effectively promote adolescent wellbeing.

THE LANCET
Planetary Health

Inclusion of wellbeing impacts of climate change: a review of literature and integrated environment–society–economy models

Schrijver, I., Behrens, P., Hoekstra, R., & Kleijn, R. (2025). Inclusion of wellbeing impacts of climate change: a review of literature and integrated environment–society–economy models. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 101375. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanplh.2025.101375

Climate change has broad and deep impacts on people's wellbeing; yet, these dynamics are largely excluded from integrated environment–society–economy (ESE) models. In this Review, we provide an overview of climate change–wellbeing impact pathways and explore which of these pathways have been quantified or modelled, or both. We assessed literature reviews and meta-analyses to describe how climate change affects specific wellbeing outcomes and which of these relationships are robust and amenable to parametrisation. We also conducted a review of 18 models that include one or more wellbeing impacts of climate change. Generally, more quantified pathways are available in the literature than those currently incorporated in ESE models. Temperature-related mortality, food security, and GDP are well represented in quantitative literature and to some extent in ESE models, whereas the impacts of climate change on infectious diseases; respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurological outcomes; mental health; adverse birth outcomes; occupational health and labour productivity; conflict; migration; poverty; air quality; and biodiversity loss have been quantified in the literature but are largely absent in ESE models. These relationships present promising steps towards a next generation of ESE models that could include more sophisticated interactions between environmental impacts and wellbeing.



Equality of opportunity and mortality around the world: implications for global public health

Gugushvili, A., Nosrati, E., & Kaiser, C. (2025). Equality of opportunity and mortality around the world: implications for global public health. *Global Health Action, 18*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2025.2540167

Background Educational mobility is considered a key driver of population health. While prior studies suggest that intergenerational equality of opportunity may be linked to mortality, most evidence comes from high-income countries. Little is known about whether these associations apply globally.

Objective This study assesses the relationship between intergenerational educational mobility and all-cause mortality across a global sample of countries.

Methods We combine country-level data from the WHO Mortality Database and the World Bank's Global Database on Intergenerational Mobility, covering five birth cohorts across 148 countries. Using multilevel random effects models, we estimate associations between four dimensions of educational mobility (upward, downward, stagnant, and correlation-based) and age- and sex-adjusted all-cause mortality, controlling for national indicators of education, income, inequality, health spending, unemployment, and political freedoms.

Results Higher upward educational mobility and lower stagnant mobility are significantly associated with reduced all-cause mortality. In fully adjusted models, a one standard deviation greater measure of upward mobility is associated with a reduction of 29.1 deaths per 100,000 population, while a one standard deviation lower stagnation measure is associated with a reduction of 27.3 deaths per 100,000 population. These patterns are consistent across high- and low-income countries.

Conclusions Our findings suggest that promoting educational equality of opportunity may reduce mortality and improve public health worldwide. Strengthening social mobility, especially in settings with persistent educational inequality, can be an effective policy lever for reducing health disparities and supporting healthier populations.



The Role of Hybrid Green Spaces in Secure Psychiatric Care

Wilhelm, K., Lomax, T., McCarthy, L., Boyle, J. S., Menon, S., Hall, J., J. Freebody, Hart, A., Fleming, W., Danziger, J., Coombes, M. A., & Singh, I. (2026). The Role of Hybrid Green Spaces in Secure Psychiatric Care. *Wellbeing Space and Society*, 100348–100348. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2026.100348

Hybrid Green Spaces in psychiatric intensive care units offer a transformative approach to mental healthcare environments, addressing tensions between therapeutic intent and institutional control. Drawing on our CAMHS PICU case, we demonstrate how (co)produced biodiverse outdoor spaces can actively mediate challenges across risk management, spatial production, and power dynamics.

These spaces foster relationships between human and ecological wellbeing, promoting what we call Ecological Collective Flourishing. By supporting staff wellbeing, creating moments of shared stewardship, and expanding therapeutic possibilities such interventions show that even highly controlled clinical settings can accommodate nature-based programmes safely and meaningfully.

We argue that these hybrid spaces hold significant potential for broader application across psychiatric services, supporting patient-centred care goals, institutional resilience, and environmental sustainability. Our case challenges assumptions about what is possible in secure mental health settings, offering a replicable model for integrating nature-based approaches into psychiatric care without compromising safety protocols.



Why single-item measures of wellbeing are best

Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., Sachs, J. D., De Neve, J.-E., Aknin, L. B., & Wang, S. (2026). Why single-item measures of wellbeing are best. *Nature Human Behaviour*. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-026-02401-y

We argue that individual wellbeing is best captured by single self-reports of one's overall quality of life. This approach is direct, efficient, globally comparable and distinguishes wellbeing from what might explain it.

We are writing, as the editors of the World Happiness Report 2025, in response to VanderWeele and Johnson, who argue that wellbeing cannot be effectively assessed using a single-outcome measure, and instead propose measuring multiple dimensions using a composite flourishing index. They have used such an index to compare the quality of life in different countries.

In our view, most of the individual factors that get combined in such an index are causes of wellbeing and not wellbeing itself. For example, self-ratings of health, finances, social relationships, religiosity and so on are critical to understanding why people feel the way they do. But, the resulting product is wellbeing — in other words, the quality of life as we experience it.

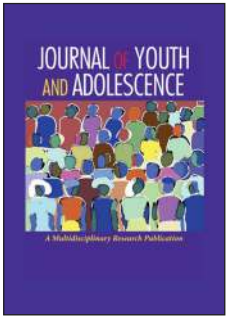


Who Benefits From Right-to-Disconnect Legislation in Europe? Cross-National and Gendered Effects on Employee Wellbeing

Regier, C. (2026). Who Benefits From Right-to-Disconnect Legislation in Europe? Cross-National and Gendered Effects on Employee Wellbeing. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 64*(2), 323–340. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.70048

The effectiveness of labour regulation depends not only on the formal articulation

of rights, but on the institutional arrangements through which those rights are enforced and distributed across workers. This is particularly salient for regulations governing working time and employee availability, where outcomes are shaped by power relations in the workplace and persistent gendered divisions of paid and unpaid labour. The introduction of right-to-disconnect (R2D) legislation in several European countries provides a valuable opportunity to examine how procedural labour rights operate across different industrial relations systems and how they generate gender-differentiated outcomes. Rather than constituting a single policy model, R2D provisions vary substantially in their reliance on collective bargaining, firm-level discretion and individual characteristics. Using data from the European Social Survey between 2010 and 2022 and exploiting the staggered introduction of R2D policies in France, Belgium, Spain, Ireland and Portugal, this study estimates effects on subjective wellbeing among employees in teleworkable occupations. Applying a dynamic difference-in-differences approach, the analysis identifies modest average improvements in wellbeing in countries where R2D provisions are embedded within stronger industrial relations systems. Gendered analyses show that these benefits accrue more consistently to men than to women, highlighting how digital labour regulation may interact with unequal distributions of paid and unpaid work.



Mapping Adolescent Wellbeing: Developmental Network Differences between Early To Middle Adolescence in 24 Countries

Zhou, W., Marquez, J., Boyle, L., & Taylor, L. (2026). Mapping Adolescent Wellbeing: Developmental Network Differences between Early To Middle Adolescence in 24 Countries. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 55*(6), 1489–1505. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-026-02330-z

Adolescent wellbeing is often assessed using composite scores, yet less is known about how specific components of wellbeing are structurally organized and how this organization shifts across development. Using psychometric network analysis, we examined interconnections among 49 wellbeing indicators spanning subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction, affect, and domain satisfaction) and psychological wellbeing (flourishing and positive mental functioning) in a large international sample of adolescents. Data were drawn from 6,445 students aged 11–18 years (M = 14.4, SD = 1.96; 51.7% girls; 3.1% preferred not to report gender) recruited from 38 schools across

24 countries. Networks were estimated for the full sample and separately for early adolescence (11–14 years; 51.9%) and middle adolescence (15–18 years; 48.1%). Across all analyses, overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with student life consistently emerged as the most central nodes, underscoring their integrative role in adolescents' wellbeing evaluations. Network density was similar across age groups, indicating comparable overall interconnectedness; however, network configuration differed developmentally. In middle adolescence, future-oriented optimism became more structurally prominent, whereas present-focused life evaluation (current life satisfaction) showed reduced centrality. Indicators reflecting negative affect and calmness also showed modest age-related increases in relative importance. Together, these findings suggest a developmental reorganization of adolescent wellbeing from present-oriented evaluations toward future-oriented expectations and regulatory resources, while reaffirming the central role of overall life satisfaction and student-life satisfaction. Mapping age-related differences in wellbeing structure across a large cross-national sample informs age-sensitive approaches to assessment, monitoring, and intervention.



Cantril Ladder or Overall Life Satisfaction? Comparing 0–10 Summary Indicators of Adolescent Wellbeing

Marquez, J., Zhou, W., Boyle, L., & Taylor, L. (2026). Cantril Ladder or Overall Life Satisfaction? Comparing 0–10 Summary Indicators of Adolescent Wellbeing. *Child Indicators Research*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-026-10338-x

Despite widespread use in wellbeing research, little is known about whether the Cantril Ladder (CL) and Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS) questions (both 0–10 single-item indicators) capture the same construct in adolescent populations. We analysed data from 6,445 students aged 11–18 in 38 International Baccalaureate schools across 24 countries. We compared CL and OLS using descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), regression models, and subgroup analyses. Mean CL and OLS scores were similar, but response distributions differed: OLS showed more extreme values and negative skew. In a CFA including other life evaluation measures, both OLS and CL items loaded on a shared life evaluation latent factor, but OLS showed higher loadings. OLS also showed stronger predictive validity than CL across measures of life evaluation, affect, and eudaimonic wellbeing. Subgroup analyses revealed interpretive differences across age, gender, and language groups (English, Spanish, and French).

Both CL and OLS are valid indicators of adolescent life evaluation, but they are not interchangeable. OLS may be preferable as a summary measure due to stronger predictive performance, while CL may offer more consistent subgroup comparability. Researchers should consider these trade-offs when selecting or interpreting single-item measures of adolescent wellbeing.

nature communications

Social status and the relationship between income rank and well-being in 109 nations

Quispe-Torreblanca, E., De Neve, J.-E., & Brown, G. D. A. (2026). Social status and the relationship between income rank and well-being in 109 nations. *Nature Communications, 17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-026-69729-x

Well-being is linked to income. However, lower well-being among lower-income individuals may reflect either economic relative deprivation or the lower social status associated with a lower income rank. Here, using Gallup World Poll data from 109 countries and over 90,000 individuals, we test a general model that includes both relative income deprivation and income rank as special cases. In 80% of countries, subjective well-being is more strongly associated with within-nation rank of income than with absolute income or relative income deprivation. Income rank coefficients are over three times larger in the most materialistic countries, but smaller in countries with higher social capital: In countries with the highest civic engagement, the association between income rank and well-being is about 80% smaller. Results replicated in multiple survey years and are consistent with a link between income-related social status and subjective well-being that is stronger when social capital is low.



Autism in Viet Nam: A systematic scoping review

Boyle, L., Perepa, P., Thalia, K., & Crane, L. (2026). Autism in Viet Nam: A systematic scoping review. *Autism, 30*(4), 1073–1087. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613261425838

Autism research has predominantly focused on Western contexts, with limited studies in Vietnamese cultural settings. Through conducting a systematic scoping review, we aimed to map (a) the landscape of autism research in Vietnamese cultural contexts, (b) the quality of the research, and (c) the extent of autism community involvement in the research. A total of 137 studies met our inclusion criteria. A growing body of literature pertained to autism in Vietnamese cultural contexts, largely conducted in Viet Nam (87%). Much of the literature focused on Services and Supports (39%), as well as Interventions (20%). Key themes identified from the research were the centrality of family, the importance of school and education, and identifying a cause of autism. Quality appraisals of the studies – using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool, a Westernised tool – indicated that the studies were largely of low quality. There was limited autism community involvement in the research, with studies often lacking an explicit description of the nature of community involvement. Priority areas for future research include better understanding how rigour is understood in a Vietnamese research context, improving the clarity of data reporting and actively involving the Vietnamese autism community in the research process.



Is it possible to raise national happiness?

Prati, A., & Senik, C. (2026). Is it possible to raise national happiness? *Journal of Public Economics, 257*, 105619. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2026.105619

We revisit the famous Easterlin paradox by considering that life evaluation scales refer to a changing context, hence they are regularly reinterpreted. We propose a simple model of rescaling based on both retrospective and current life evaluations, and apply it to unexploited archival data from the USA. When correcting for rescaling, we find that the well-being of Americans has substantially increased, on par with GDP,

health, education, and liberal democracy, from the 1950s to the early 2000s. Using several datasets, we shed light on other happiness puzzles, including the apparent stability of life evaluations during COVID-19, why Ukrainians report similar levels of life satisfaction today as before the war, and the absence of parental happiness.



Could This Have Been a Voice Note? An Experiment Comparing Voice Notes and Emails

Cunningham, S.-L., & Fleming, W. J. (2026). Could This Have Been a Voice Note? An Experiment Comparing Voice Notes and Emails. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 101020. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2026.101020

Asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) is vital for collaboration among distributed and virtual teams, with email the most common mode. Yet paradoxically email is a key source of work stress. Alternative modes of CMC ought to be evaluated as to whether they are more effective. This study contributes to this need by evaluating voice notes as a 'richer' CMC mode. In an online experiment (N=793) we test the causal effect of changing CMC mode from email to voice note for hypothetical manager communications. Measuring interpretation bias (IB), we find using voice notes conditionally reduces negative interpretations. Benefits are conditional on the capacity to reduce ambiguity in messages, providing heterogeneous results. When CMC mode is unable to reduce ambiguity, negative IB actually increases for certain groups (men and those with higher stress). However, for women and those with lower stress, voice notes have only positive or neutral effects.

nature

Investigating the analytical robustness of the social and behavioural sciences

Aczel, B., Szaszi, B., Clelland, H. T., Kovacs, M., Holzmeister, F., van Ravenzwaaij, D., Schulz-Kümpel, H., Hoffmann, S., Nilsonne, G., Kosa, L., Torma, Z. A., Abdelfatah, Y., Aberson, C. L., Acar, O. A., Acem, E., Adamkovic, M., Adamovich, T., Adiasto, K., Ahnström, L., … Nosek, B. A. (2026). Investigating the analytical robustness of the social and behavioural sciences. *Nature, 652*(8108), 135–142. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-025-09844-9

The same dataset can be analysed in different justifiable ways to answer the same research question, potentially challenging the robustness of empirical science. In this crowd initiative, we investigated the degree to which research findings in the social and behavioural sciences are contingent on analysts' choices. We examined a stratified random sample of 100 studies published between 2009 and 2018, in which, for one claim per study, at least five reanalysts independently reanalysed the original data. The statistical appropriateness of the reanalyses was assessed in peer evaluations, and the robustness indicators were inspected along a range of research characteristics and study designs. We found that 34% of the independent reanalyses yielded the same result (within a tolerance region of ±0.05 Cohen's d) as the original report; with a four times broader tolerance region, this indicator increased to 57%. Of the reanalyses conducted, 74% reached the same conclusion as the original investigation, 24% yielded no effects or inconclusive results and 2% reported the opposite effect. This exploratory study indicates that the common single-path analyses in social and behavioural research should not be simply assumed to be robust to alternative analyses. Therefore, we recommend the development and use of practices to explore and communicate this neglected source of uncertainty.

Why Companies That Choose AI Augmentation Over Automation May Win in the Long Run

Why Companies That Choose AI Augmentation Over Automation May Win in the Long Run. (2026, April 15). Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2026/04/why-companies-that-choose-ai-augmentation-over-automation-may-win-in-the-long-run

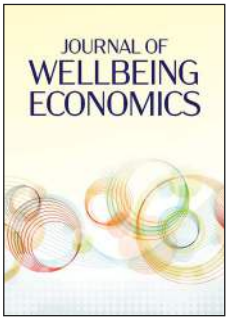
Leaders are making a choice with their AI strategy: Are they primarily seeking to improve the bottom line through automation and headcount reduction, or grow the top line in innovative ways through augmentation? As they make this decision, leaders are underestimating how employee perception—and the predictable behavioral dynamics that follow—will determine the success of their AI strategy. While automation strategies will likely show early gains relative to the deeper investment required for augmentation, but that augmentation will likely perform better in the long run. That's because while automation offers immediate cost-savings, a company's long-term success is determined by how people feel about their work, whether they meaningfully engage with new tools, and whether top talent stays.

Sharing meals is associated with greater wellbeing

De Neve, J-E., Dugan, A., Kaats, M., & Prati, A. (2026). Sharing meals is associated with greater wellbeing. *Scientific Reports*. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-46771-9

Although social connections are important drivers of wellbeing, and sharing meals is a nearly universal practice, the relationship between sharing meals and wellbeing remains underexplored. In Study 1, using novel data from Gallup surveys in 142 countries and territories (2022–2023), we use the frequency of meal sharing as a global measure of social connections, and investigate its relationship with subjective wellbeing. We find a significant, positive relationship in almost all world regions. The number of shared meals explains as much variation in wellbeing as some

key socioeconomic indicators, such as income or unemployment. In Study 2, we use data from the American Time Use Survey (2003–2023) to document changes in meal sharing in the United States over time. We find clear evidence that, with every passing year, Americans are dining alone more and more often, particularly the younger generations. Using Day Reconstruction Method data, we show that Americans who eat at least one meal with others report higher levels of happiness and lower levels of stress, pain and sadness on that day. Finally, we point to a number of promising avenues for future research and discuss implications for policy.



The First Conference on the Economics of Happiness

Oswald, A. J. (2026). The First Conference on the Economics of Happiness. *Journal of Wellbeing Economics*. https://doi.org/10.1177/29782244261442467

In this short article I try to provide a description of the first conference on the economics of happiness. It was held in 1993 at the London School of Economics. In the ensuing three decades, a huge literature has emerged in this field. I attempt to offer a view on why this has happened.



Wellbeing and Adolescents: Measurement, Development and Inclusion

Zhou, W. (2026). Wellbeing and Adolescents: Measurement, Development and Inclusion. *Wellbeing for Inclusive Schools and an Inclusive Society*, 113–139. https://doi.org/10.1108/s1479-363620260000025007

This chapter explores the multifaceted concept of adolescent wellbeing and its critical role in fostering inclusive schools and societies. Drawing from psychological, developmental and cross-cultural research, it examines how wellbeing is conceptualised and measured, highlighting both hedonic (life satisfaction and

affect) and eudaimonic (meaning, purpose and growth) frameworks. It reviews widely used tools and emerging adolescent-specific instruments, discussing their developmental and cultural relevance. This chapter also highlights adolescents' own perspectives, emphasising the importance of participatory and context-sensitive approaches. Key issues such as the ecological influences on wellbeing, the role of schools and families and the inclusion of marginalised youth are addressed. By integrating research, measurement and policy perspectives, this chapter argues for a holistic and inclusive approach to adolescent wellbeing which centres youth agency and cultural diversity in educational and societal settings.



Ecological-collective-flourishing (e-co-flourishing): a framework to guide innovation and research

Maloney, S., Moore, J., Wilhelm, K., Montero-Marin, J., Hinze, V., van der Velden, A. M., Lomax, T., Zhu, H., Reinecke, M., Awad, E., Boyle, J. S., Fleming, W., Taylor, L., Broome, M., Thorogood, C., Malhi, Y., Myall, K., Singh, I., & Kuyken, W. (2026). Ecological-collective-flourishing (e-co-flourishing): a framework to guide innovation and research. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 101490. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanplh.2026.101490

Converging ecological and social crises have exposed the limits of prevailing models of human progress, highlighting the need for more inclusive and interdisciplinary approaches to advancing wellbeing and flourishing across human and non-human life. In this Personal View, we propose an ecological-collective-flourishing (e-co-flourishing) approach, whereby one's own human flourishing is pursued along with that of natural ecosystems and their collective and individual constituents. We offer a heuristic translational framework that includes a methodological approach; guiding principles; and proposed programme theory in terms of hypothesised outcomes, pathways of change (mechanisms), key contextual factors (moderators), and intervention characteristics. This framework aims to bridge theory to real-world applications of e-co-flourishing interventions that are effective, scalable, and promote change through targeted mechanisms of action. We present Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy-Balanced Living for Us and the Earth's Ocean (MBCT-BLUE) as an illustrative application of this framework to outline how the framework can be used to identify, refine, develop, and evaluate interventions with e-co-flourishing

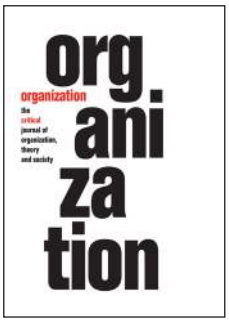
potential. We also provide definitions of key conceptual terms and proxy measurements. Practitioners, researchers, and decision makers working at the interface of mental health, public health, sustainability, and planetary health can use this framework and its resources to guide emerging research and innovation.

THE LANCET
Planetary Health

Mechanisms underpinning flourishing at the interface of humans and other natural entities: an umbrella review

Maloney, S., Henning, T., Zhu, H., Martin, B., Hinze, V., Montero-Marin, J., van der Velden, A. M., Moore, J., Wilhelm, K., Lomax, T., Reinecke, M. G., Awad, E., Boyle, J., Fleming, W., Taylor, L., Broome, M., Thorogood, C., Gaia Scerif, Malhi, Y., ... Willem Kuyken. (2026). Mechanisms underpinning flourishing at the interface of humans and other natural entities: an umbrella review. *The Lancet Planetary Health, 0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanplh.2026.101450

Ecological-collective-flourishing (e-co-flourishing) describes the interconnected flourishing of human and non-human natural entities. Despite existing conceptual frameworks, translation into practice remains inadequate owing to insufficient synthesis of empirically tested mechanisms driving change across human and ecological systems. We conducted an umbrella review of systematic reviews examining mechanisms at the e-co-flourishing interface. Searches of seven databases and four grey literature sources identified nine eligible reviews. Evidence supported several cross-domain mechanisms, including psychological (eg, attention restoration and reduced stress), social (eg, cohesion and contact), physical (eg, activity), and environmental pathways (eg, reduced stressors and enhanced environmental quality). Psychological mechanisms showed the most consistent support, whereas evidence for other mechanism domains was mixed. Evidence for causality was weak and largely derived from cross-sectional and qualitative studies, and no reviews examined reciprocal mechanisms influencing both human and non-human flourishing. Future research should prioritise rigorous designs, theory-driven testing, and replication to strengthen evidence for equitable and sustainable e-co-flourishing pathways.



Depoliticised labour reform: Policy discourse analysis of workplace wellbeing

Fleming, W. J. (2026). Depoliticised labour reform: Policy discourse analysis of workplace wellbeing. *Organization*. https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084261468188

Critical management scholars now frequently designate workplace wellbeing as a managerial technology of control. Among several points of criticism, organisational wellbeing solutions are viewed as ineffective, instrumental, discriminatory, individualistic, and coercive. Yet, increasingly, workers' wellbeing is an explicit public policy concern enacted prior to and alongside organisational settings. Identifying workplace wellbeing as such can expand extant critique to recognise it as a hegemonic project, and, specifically, a discourse of depoliticised labour reform. This argument is abductively developed through analysis of a resource hub backed by the UK government, using the What's the Problem Represented to Be approach as a guide, and combining both qualitative and computational methods. I show wellbeing is problematised in four ways: individual, economic, cultural, and voluntary. Each of these problematisations deploys depoliticising strategies which reproduce dominant employment relations. The workplace wellbeing policy discourse is a sincere, corporate-led attempt to improve workers' experiences of employment, but through strategies that are limited by an avoidance of contestation and regulation, as well as a mystification of both the harms of work, critiques of social justice, and more proactive solutions which would engage with working conditions. Therefore, workplace wellbeing discourse is both a product and continuation of the liberalisation and depoliticisation of employment relations.

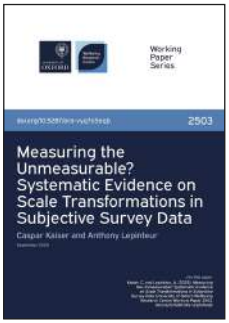


Does happiness spread within organizations? Evidence from a field experiment in Norway

Hanson, T., Johnsen, Å. A., Kotsadam, A., & Prati, A. (2026). Does happiness spread within organizations? Evidence from a field experiment in Norway. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 250*, 107723. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2026.107723

We report the results from a large field experiment that tests if happiness spreads within an organizational setting, as predicted by the emotional contagion hypothesis. Although some studies have supported this hypothesis, no well-powered randomized controlled trial has ever tested it in the field. In collaboration with the Norwegian Armed Forces, we randomly assign over 1500 recruits to rooms during eight-week boot camps. Some recruits live with relatively happier peers while others live with relatively unhappier ones. We find no evidence of happiness convergence at the room level and reject even small contagion effects. We show that the null result is not explained by excessive stability in happiness, and prior studies in the same setting show that peer effects emerge for some non-emotional attitudes. These results call for a reconsideration of the presumed ubiquity of happiness spillovers, with subsequent implications for well-being models and policies.

Working Paper Series

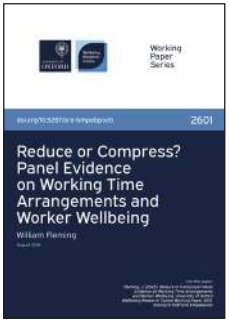


Measuring the unmeasurable? Systematic evidence on scale transformations in subjective survey data

Kaiser, C. and Lepinteur, A. (2026). *Measuring the Unmeasurable? Systematic Evidence on Scale Transformations in Subjective Survey Data*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2503. doi.org/10.5287/ora-vyq7o5eqb

Economists routinely use survey measures of, for example, risk preferences, trust, political attitudes, or wellbeing. The literature generally treats numerical response categories as if they represent equal psychological intervals. We provide the first systematic test of this linearity assumption, developing a general framework to quantify how easily results can be overturned when it is relaxed. Using original experimental data, we show that respondents interpret survey scales in ways that do deviate from linearity, but only mildly. Focusing on wellbeing research, we then replicate 30,000+ coefficient estimates across more than 80 papers published in top economics journals. Replicated coefficient signs are remarkably robust to mild departures from linear scale use. However, statistical inference and estimates of relative effect magnitudes become unreliable, even under modest departures from linearity. This is especially problematic for policy applications. We show that these results generalise to many other widely used survey-based constructs.

Note: This working paper was originally published on 28 July 2025 and updated on 1 September 2025 and 9 June 2026.



Reduce or Compress? Panel Evidence on Working Time Arrangements and Worker Wellbeing

Fleming, J. (2026). *Reduce or Compress? Panel Evidence on Working Time Arrangements and Worker Wellbeing*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2601. doi.org/10.5287/ora-bmpebpoeb

The 4-day work week (4DW) has garnered much attention following recent high-profile trials; whereas the compressed work week (CWW) has made a concurrent comeback. The rise of two comparable working time arrangements (WTA) raises the question: which is best for workers? To compare, this article uses representative panel data from the UK observing both WTAs. Results unsurprisingly corroborate the 4DW is good for workers. In sharp contrast, the CWW is associated with declines in women's wellbeing. These possible harms are alleviated when coinciding with 'a lot' of schedule control, demonstrating the importance of worker control for individuals utilising WTAs. Yet these differences signal significant gender trade-offs. Overall, theory should not be so ambivalent about wellbeing and working time: working less is better. For organisational and public policy, divergent results emphasise equivalating working time reduction and compression is unhelpful for guiding interventions which support worker wellbeing.

Special Publications



World Happiness Report 2026: Happiness and Social Media

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.

Any views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of any organisation, agency, or program of the United Nations.

Executive summary: happiness and social media

Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., Sachs, J. D., De Neve, J.-E., Aknin, L. B., & Wang, S. (Eds.). (2026). Executive summary: happiness and social media. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-ewft-vq17

In North America and Western Europe, young people are much less happy than 15 years ago. Over the same period, social media use has greatly increased. Many people blame social media for this fall in happiness, but does this hypothesis stand the test of rigorous scientific analysis?

International evidence on happiness and social media

Helliwell, J. F., Aknin, L. B., Huang, H., Rojas, M., Wang, S., Guerra, V., & Danyluk, A. (Eds.). (2026). International evidence on happiness and social media. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-db0f-2b39

Each year, Chapter 2 has two roles: first, to present and explain the latest global happiness rankings, and second, to present research on the current year's topic. Often these two roles are closely linked, since the report's focal topic may invite a range of alternative rankings. For example, we ranked the happiness of the native-born and

the foreign-born when our topic was immigration in WHR 2018, and we ranked the happiness gaps between the more and less happy parts of the population when our focus was happiness inequality in WHR 2023.

In WHR 2024, we focused on happiness across age groups and generations. We return to that topic this year, with a special focus on the links between social media use and youth wellbeing around the world. We find striking differences in how the young have fared. In 85 of 136 countries, the under-25s are happier now (2023–2025) than they were twenty years ago (2006–2010). By contrast, in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, life evaluations for under-25s have fallen by an average of 0.86 points on the 0 to 10 scale. Why has youth happiness dropped so fast and so far in those countries?

An invited chapter in WHR 2019 used US evidence to attribute the drops in youth happiness to increased use of digital media. We wondered if the timing and nature of social media use might help to explain the striking variations in youth happiness in different parts of the world, so we gathered an international team of expert authors whose contributions are in the seven chapters following this one.

To keep our own analysis consistent with that in other chapters, we consider three age categories: 15–19, 20–24, and 25 or older. We also consider the following generational splits: those born in or after 1997 (Gen Z), those born 1981–1996 (Millennials), and all those born earlier (Gen X and preceding generations). The Gallup World Poll data start at age 15, as is common with most population-based surveys, so we also analysed student data from the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey, which covers a sample of 15-year-olds in 47 countries.

We present the global rankings first, then proceed to our new research on social media.

Social media is harming adolescents at a scale large enough to cause changes at the population level

Haidt, J., & Rausch, Z. (2026). Social media is harming adolescents at a scale large enough to cause changes at the population level. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-g490-bg86

Is social media use reasonably safe for children and adolescents? We call this the "product safety question", and we present seven lines of evidence showing that the answer is no.

The evidence of harm is found in: 1) surveys of young people; 2) surveys of parents, teachers, and clinicians; 3) contents from corporate documents; 4) findings from cross-sectional studies; 5) findings from longitudinal studies; 6) findings from social media reduction experiments; and 7) findings from natural experiments.

We show there is now overwhelming evidence of severe and widespread direct harms (such as sextortion and cyberbullying), and compelling evidence of troubling indirect harms (such as depression and anxiety). Furthermore, we show that the harms and risks to individual users are so diverse and vast in scope that they justify the view that social media is causing harm at a population level.

We further argue that when these lines of evidence are considered alongside the timing, scope, and cross-national trends in adolescent wellbeing and mental health, they can help answer a second question: was the rapid adoption of always-available social media by adolescents in the early 2010s a substantial contributor to the population-level increases in mental illness that emerged by the mid 2010s in many Western nations? We call this the "historical trends question". We draw on our findings about the vast scale of harm uncovered while answering the product safety question to argue that the answer to the historical trends question is "yes".

Translating scientific evidence into effective policies for health and technology requires care

Lloyd-Hurwitz, S., & Przybylski, A. (2026). Translating scientific evidence into effective policies for health and technology requires care. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-zm8z-mg59

Professional science organisations that have examined social media and adolescent mental health have reached different conclusions and policy recommendations despite examining similar research. Given their substantial influence on policy and public understanding, it is important to investigate their evidence synthesis practices.

Our analysis of three high-profile reports on social media and adolescent mental health finds that they cited broadly similar types of research, yet showed little overlap (<1%) in their sources.

We also found considerable variation in how the reports synthesise, communicate, and simplify evidence, including differences in citation accuracy, contextual detail, limitation acknowledgement, and conclusion strength.

The stakes of getting these syntheses right are substantial. Poor synthesis quality risks developing policies which may be ineffective or cause unintended harm, and may contribute to the erosion of public trust in scientific institutions more broadly.

When communicating the state of a complex scientific field, it is crucial to be honest about shortcomings and uncertainties, and to maximise fidelity to the underlying research. As scientists committed to rigorous, transparent, and replicable approaches to understanding complex phenomena, we have a responsibility to consistently uphold standards that justify claims to scientific authority and to identify opportunities for improving practices within our community.

Adolescent life satisfaction and social media use: gender differences in an international dataset

Twenge, J. M., Diomino, A., & Rio, A. (2026). Adolescent life satisfaction and social media use: gender differences in an international dataset. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-31zj-es56

Although many studies have documented links between heavy social media use and poor mental health, fewer studies have explored associations with positive wellbeing, especially in international datasets.

In 2022, the OECD's PISA survey, conducted in 47 countries, asked over 270,000 15- to 16-year-olds how many hours a day they spent using social media and how satisfied they were with their lives.

Among girls, mean life satisfaction was highest among light users of social media (less than an hour a day) and declined with further hours of use. Among boys, this pattern held only in Western Europe and English-speaking countries.

The mean differences obscure a notable pattern, especially among boys. Compared to light users, a larger percentage of the heaviest users (7+ hours a day) had both the highest level of life satisfaction (10) and the lowest levels (0–4). The same was true for non-users of social media, with higher levels of both very high and low life satisfaction.

Thus, there is more variation in life satisfaction among non-users and heavy users of social media compared to light or moderate users. Among girls in most regions, non-users of social media were the most likely to report complete satisfaction with their lives, although in some regions, heavy users were also more likely to report complete satisfaction than moderate users.

Social media, wasting time, and product traps

Sunstein, C. (2026). Social media, wasting time, and product traps. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-4fk1-g247

Three empirical studies raise serious doubts about whether social media use makes people happy, with implications for valuation, choice, and wellbeing. The central conclusion is that many people use social media because other people use social media. If social media use were somehow reduced or even stopped, many people would be better off, and they are aware of that fact.

The first study finds that people are willing to pay far less to use social media platforms than they would demand to stop using them. The fact that people would pay little or nothing to use such platforms raises the possibility that many think they are wasting time when doing so.

The second study finds that people lose welfare from using Facebook. Even after experiencing a happier month without Facebook, however, they would demand a significant amount of money to stop using the platform for an additional month. The fact that people are more anxious and depressed when using Facebook provides strong cautionary notes about the idea that such use increases wellbeing.

The third (and, in important ways, the most revealing) study finds that while many young people would demand a significant amount of money to stop using Instagram and TikTok, they would also be willing to pay to eliminate those platforms from their community. Social media platforms impose a "negative non-user externality", i.e., they impose a cost on people who do not use them.

A reasonable conclusion is that if social media platforms did not exist, many users would be better off.

Problematic social media use and adolescent wellbeing: the role of family socioeconomic status across 43 countries

Gracia, P., Fernandez-Urbano, R., Rubio-Cabañez, M., Celik, S., & Cineli, B. (2026). Problematic social media use and adolescent wellbeing: the role of family socioeconomic status across 43 countries. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-z6ws-dp10

For adolescents, Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU) is associated with more psychological complaints and lower life evaluation in all 43 countries we examined. These associations are most pronounced in Anglo-Celtic countries and least problematic in the Caucasus-Black Sea region.

Globally, the relationship between PSMU and lower wellbeing is stronger among adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than among their higher-status peers.

Socioeconomic differences in the relationship between PSMU and adolescent wellbeing are stronger than for psychological complaints.

Socioeconomic gradients for life evaluation are consistent across Anglo-Celtic, Caucasus-Black Sea, Central-Eastern, Nordic, and Western European countries, but are weak in Mediterranean countries. For psychological complaints, only the Anglo-Celtic region shows socioeconomic gradients in the link between PSMU and wellbeing.

Between 2018 and 2022, the negative association between PSMU and adolescent wellbeing intensified. This increase occurred across all socioeconomic groups and in most of the regions examined.

Internet use, social media, and wellbeing: the role of trust, social connections, and emotional bonds

Ozkok, Z., Rosborough, J., & Malloy, B. (2026). Internet use, social media, and wellbeing: the role of trust, social connections, and emotional bonds. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-f6wk-qj35

Previous studies from the World Happiness Report highlight the importance of trust and social connections for wellbeing. This chapter explores how the rise of internet and social media use has affected wellbeing directly, and also indirectly by altering trust, social connections, and emotional bonds.

We use four rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS), covering 30 countries over the years 2016 to 2024, to investigate the impact of internet use upon wellbeing. In order to measure the total impact of internet use, we instrument it by M-Lab data on local internet speed. The instrumental variable results reveal a significant negative coefficient on internet use that is not visible in standard OLS estimations.

The estimated relationship between internet use and wellbeing varies sharply across generations, genders, and regions. It is strongly negative for Gen Z, moderately negative for Millennials, near zero for Gen X, and slightly positive for Baby Boomers. The generational gradient reflects both greater increases in internet use among younger cohorts (exposure) and more negative estimated coefficients for those same cohorts (susceptibility).

The social and emotional foundations of wellbeing have deteriorated most for younger Europeans, especially in Western Europe. Declines in interpersonal trust, institutional trust, perceived social activity, and social meeting frequency are largest for Gen Z and Millennial women. In contrast, older cohorts show more resilience, supported by rising attachment to country and, in many Central and Eastern European countries, improved feelings of safety.

Perceived social activity ("compared to others your age") has fallen everywhere and is among the strongest predictors of wellbeing losses.

Internet use is associated with several drivers of wellbeing, including trust, perceived social activity, and social connection. Interaction terms reveal that internet use can be positive for individuals with high interpersonal trust or strong attachments to their

countries. However, those who report being highly socially active experience more negative effects, consistent with substitution or displacement of offline connections.

The digital environment matters: the effect of internet use on wellbeing depends on how common social media use is within an individual's demographic peer group. Internet use is beneficial when peer-group exposure is low, but becomes increasingly harmful as social media use becomes more widespread among one's peers.

Generational differences in wellbeing are widening over time. Older adults benefit from stable trust, rising attachment, improved safety, and moderate digital use, while younger adults face the erosion of these foundations in highly saturated digital ecosystems.

Social media use and wellbeing in the Middle East and North Africa

Burger, M., Greyling, T., Rossouw, S., Sarracino, F., & Wu, F. (2026). Social media use and wellbeing in the Middle East and North Africa. *World Happiness Report 2026*. University of Oxford: Wellbeing Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.18724/whr-tv9w-9h41

Social media use in the Middle East and North Africa is among the highest in the world, although considerable differences appear among countries. Heavy use is more common than in other regions: between 20% and 40% of users reported more than five hours of use in 2023–2024.

Social media use is heavier among certain social groups. Gen Z, men, single individuals, less religious and more affluent respondents, as well as those with higher education, are much more likely to be heavy users.

On average, heavy social media use (more than five hours per day) is associated with lower wellbeing. Heavy users are significantly more likely to report higher stress and depressive symptoms, and believe they are worse off than their parents, compared with non- or moderate users.

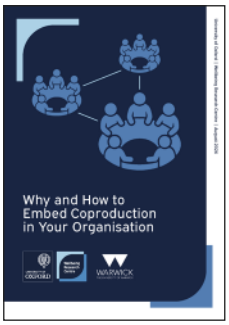
The impact of heavy social media use on wellbeing depends on how it is used. Engaging with multiple platforms, relying on social media as a primary news source, and following influencers are associated with higher stress, increased depressive symptoms, and more negative comparisons with parents' quality of life.



2026 UK Wellbeing Report

Cotofan, M., Layard, R., De Neve, J.-E., & Wealthy, B. (2026). UK Wellbeing Report 2026. World Wellbeing Movement.

After nearly a decade of steady-increases in national wellbeing, since 2020 the UK has experienced the largest drop in life satisfaction since records began. In 2025, life satisfaction across the country continues to stagnate in England, Wales and Scotland, but Northern Ireland experiences a stronger recovery. Across the country, 1 in 8 adults still live below the Happiness Poverty Line and only 1 in 4 adults live above the Flourishing Line – the same number as in our previous report. For the first time, we also show that these trends are also strongly related to whether people support the government, vote for the government, or participate in elections. When comparing UK regions over time, higher wellbeing relates to stronger support for the incumbent government, a higher vote share for the government, and higher election turnout. In a horse-race with household income and unemployment, wellbeing measures typically matter as much as – and in some cases more than – these key economic indicators.



Why and How to Embed Coproduction in Your Organisation

Fabian, M., Fleming, W., & Hawthorn, N. (2026). Why and how to embed coproduction in your organisation. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre. doi.org/10.5287/ora-9g6nmyanv

Critical management scholars now frequently designate workplace wellbeing as a managerial technology of control. Among several points of criticism, organisational wellbeing solutions are viewed as ineffective, instrumental, discriminatory, individualistic, and coercive. Yet, increasingly, workers' wellbeing is an explicit public policy concern enacted prior to and alongside organisational settings. Identifying workplace wellbeing as such can expand extant critique to recognise it as a hegemonic project, and, specifically, a discourse of depoliticised labour reform. This argument is abductively developed through analysis of a resource hub backed by the UK government, using the What's the Problem Represented to Be approach as a guide, and combining both qualitative and computational methods. I show wellbeing is problematised in four ways: individual, economic, cultural, and voluntary. Each of these problematisations deploys depoliticising strategies which reproduce dominant employment relations. The workplace wellbeing policy discourse is a sincere, corporate-led attempt to improve workers' experiences of employment, but through strategies that are limited by an avoidance of contestation and regulation, as well as a mystification of both the harms of work, critiques of social justice, and more proactive solutions which would engage with working conditions. Therefore, workplace wellbeing discourse is both a product and continuation of the liberalisation and depoliticisation of employment relations.

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Impact

Our objectives for high-end research are complemented by world-changing impact. The Centre's researchers contribute to reports, policy work, and interventions intended to improve lives for years to come.

The Centre is also frequently asked for commentary and feedback on our work in leading media platforms, such as the BBC, *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Financial Times*.







■ Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve featured on leading podcast *On Purpose with Jay Shetty*, discussing everything from the world's happiest countries to how we understand – and ultimately improve – wellbeing at work.



▲ Sarah Cunningham, Managing Director of the World Wellbeing Movement, highlighted insights from the Work Wellbeing Playbook on stage at WOHASU 2026.



▲ Dr. Wanying Zhou spoke at a retail conference in China on the value of workplace wellbeing.

▼ Dr. William Fleming and Dr. George Ward formed part of an expert panel on workplace wellbeing at the Academy of Management's Annual Meeting in 2026.

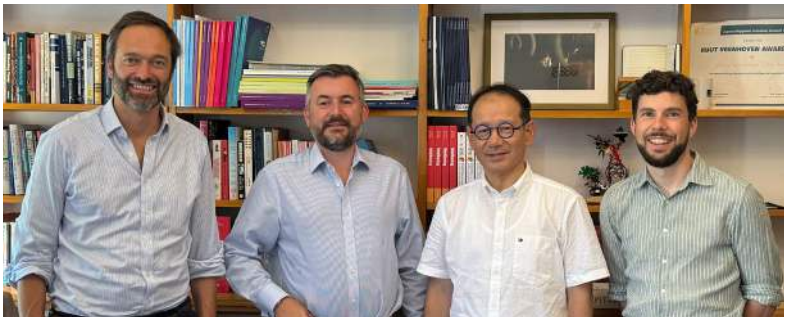


► Leoni Boyle shared childhood and adolescence findings in Mexico.









▲ Prof. Kan Suzuki of the University of Tokyo and Richard Heys of the Office for National Statistics visited the Wellbeing Research Centre to dicsuss national measures of wellbeing.



◀ The Wellbeing Research Centre hosted Dasho Karma Ura, President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies and Gross National Happiness Research in summer 2026, and facilitated a visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum to view special objects from the museum's Bhutan collection – with special thanks to Museum Director Prof. Laura Van Broekhoven.

■ Director Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve was again invited to speak at a number of events as part of the World Economic Forum's programme of events at Davos in 2026.





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Images © Copyright Mind Summit





■ More than 2,500 HR professionals heard Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve speak at the Mind Summit in Brazil, sharing research findings on how improved workplace wellbeing leads to a competitive advantage for organisations.



► The Wellbeing Research Centre was honoured to host Prof. Marc Schulz, Professor of Psychology and Director of Data Science at Bryn Mawr College as an academic visitor for two terms at Harris Manchester College. He is the Associate Director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, an eight-decade-old longitudinal study of thousands of individuals from 724 families.









A delegation from the Wellbeing Research Centre visited Japan in late 2025 to meet partners, and other members of the wellbeing science community, including representatives from Ajinomoto, Glico, Katsuiku Foundation and Nikkei. With grateful thanks to Yoshiki Ishikawa, Dr. Alden Lai, and the Wellbeing for Planet Earth Foundation.

















◀ Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve and Prof. Lord Richard Layard were invited to speak at the Novo Nordisk Foundation in early 2026, where they made the case for how wellbeing metrics can act as a common currency across policy, and therefore better link public health interventions to broader improvements in quality of life.

▼ The wider Wellbeing Research Centre team once again joined us for a festive celebration at Harris Manchester College.















We enjoyed the sunshine with members of the Wellbeing Research Centre plus friends and family from the wider wellbeing research community at our now traditional summer barbecue in June 2026.











■ The World Wellbeing Movement featured prominently at WOHASU 2026, with Board members LaFawn Davis and Lord Gus O'Donnell both appearing on stage to advocate for wellbeing at the heart of public policy, while outgoing Managing Director, Sarah Cunningham, delivered a keynote speech on the Work Wellbeing Playbook. WOHASU Founder (and WWM Board member) Karen Guggenheim also hosted a panel discussion with representatives from WWM partners Cisco, LEGO Group, Siemens, and Unilever.









The World Wellbeing Movement launched the 2026 UK Wellbeing Report at a special event in the Houses of Parliament. Guests included cross-party representatives from the APPG on Wellbeing Economics, of which the WWM serves as Secretariat.





Digital Channels

143,532
website visits
▲ 24% increase

89,883
website users
▲ 59% increase

185
countries reached
●71% outside of UK

22,669
social followers
▲ 27% increase

376,721
social impressions
▲ 9% increase

2,397
email subscribers
▲ 28% increase


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Media

Forget meditation; Oxford study reveals a smarter way to beat stress and it could supercharge your productivity

29 /09/25

A study from the University of Oxford challenges traditional stress management advice centered on self-care. Published in the Industrial Relations Journal, it analyzed over 46,000 UK workers and found that mindfulness training, stress management, and resilience coaching offered little to no improvement in well-being. Instead, volunteering and charity work stood out as effective, boosting purpose and belonging. The research suggests stress is best relieved through helping others, not isolated self-care.

Climate action saves lives. So why do climate models ignore wellbeing?

27/11/25

Climate change is already shaping our wellbeing. It affects mental health, spreads infectious diseases, disrupts work, damages food supplies and forces families to leave their homes because of conflict, hunger or flooding.

Wellbeing refers to everything that enables people to live healthy, safe and meaningful lives. It includes physical and mental health, access to food, clean water, hygiene and income, as well as work, leisure, culture and education.

It also involves personal safety, freedoms, trust in institutions and how people feel about their own lives. Environmental quality, biodiversity and the degree of inequality in society are part of wellbeing too. Climate change touches every one of these areas.



01/12/2025

How to Do the Most Good

Sam Harris speaks with Michael Plant about the philosophy of happiness and effective altruism. They discuss the nature of well-being, Nozick's "Experience Machine" thought experiment, the validity of self-reported happiness data, the conflict between the experiencing self and the remembering self, Derek Parfit's "Repugnant Conclusion," the disconnect between moral intentions and consequences, why treating depression is more impactful than cash, the massive disparities in charitable impact, the potential effects of AI on human flourishing, the meaning crisis in a post-work future, and other topics.



18/12/2025

The top global health stories from 2025

Investing in employee wellbeing could boost the global economy by $11.7 trillion, according to the Forum's Thriving Workplaces report.

The COVID-19 pandemic put the spotlight on mental health and wellbeing at work, but one expert says "the pendulum is swinging back" now.

Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science at Oxford University, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, spoke with Radio Davos to explain why workplace wellbeing matters.



31/12/2025

The perfect night out: how to ditch the telly – and have next-level fun

According to Dr Michael Plant, a research fellow at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, "One of the most interesting lessons from happiness research is that we're often wrong about what will make us happy, so we go after the wrong things – it's called 'miswanting'." It's why, he says, we've all had the experience of trying something new and being pleasantly surprised.

The Economist

15/01/2026

Falling wine sales reflect a lonelier and more atomised world

In 2023 almost 25% of American adults ate every meal alone on a given day, up from 17% in 2003; among under-30s the share has nearly doubled. That pattern probably holds across much of the rich world, says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, one of the editors of the World Happiness Report, an annual UN-backed study.

The consequences are measurable. Around one in six people worldwide is lonely, reckons the World Health Organisation. In 22 European countries the share of people who said they were "never lonely" fell from 59% in 2018 to 51% in 2022. The latest World Happiness Report found that across countries and ages, how often people share meals predicts life satisfaction almost as strongly as relative income or employment status.

The Telegraph

19/01/2026

Blue Monday: What happiness experts do when they feel down

"More broadly, I prioritise living a meaningful life where I am making a difference. Lots of self-help advice is very self-focused – such as the 'Let Them' theory – which flies in the face of the research that the best self-help is probably 'other-help' [from others]. Research shows people get joy from both altruistic activities and talking to strangers – and more enjoyment than they expect."

METRO

13/03/2026

What annual salary do you actually need to be happy?

The experts agreed that money makes less of a difference to a person's happiness as they become richer, revealing that an annual salary of £120,000 is the magic number when it comes to feeling happy and content.

However, during the episode, Professor De Neve stated that £120,000 is the ceiling, as we 'no longer detect a statistically significant relationship between further money and life satisfaction.'



19/03/2026

Social media makes people unhappy – World Happiness Report

The report said that heavy social media use is linked to declining well-being among young people, particularly teenage girls in English-speaking and Western European countries.

The findings come as governments increasingly consider restrictions on social media use by minors.

Researchers said extensive social media use, especially more than seven hours per day, is associated with lower well-being, with algorithm-driven, image-focused platforms and influencer content cited as key factors.



19/03/2026

Instagram worse for mental health than WhatsApp, global study finds

Social media apps such as Instagram and TikTok, which encourage algorithm-driven scrolling, are worse for mental health than platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, which prioritise social connection, according to an annual barometer of global happiness.

The World Happiness Report found excessive use of social media was causing unhappiness among young people across the world, although the impact was worse in English-speaking countries and western Europe.

Overall happiness levels in the UK were at the lowest level since the report was first published in 2012.



19/03/2026

The Anglosphere is increasingly miserable

Why so glum? The divergence is starkest among the young. In most other parts of the world young people are at least as satisfied with their lives as they were a decade ago, if not more so. But among under-25s in America, Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand, scores have fallen—placing all six among the biggest declines for this age group.



19/03/2026

The world's happiest countries revealed and what they get right

Researchers noted that in some parts of the world, such as the Middle East and South America, the links between social media use and well-being are more positive — and youth well-being has not fallen despite heavy social media use.

The report said this is due to many factors that differ between continents, but concluded that heavy social media use in some countries is an important contributing factor to the decline in youth well-being.

It said the most problematic platforms are those with algorithmic feeds, feature influencers and where the main material is visual, because they encourage social comparisons. Those who use platforms that mainly facilitate communication do better.



19/03/2026

The world's happiest countries for 2026 – and what they get right

While the Nordic countries have long dominated the World Happiness Report, 2026 brought one surprise. For the first time in the report's 14-year history, a Latin American country made its way into the top five as Costa Rica continued its multi-year rise to fourth place, jumping from 23rd in 2023.



19/03/2026

Social media making young people less happy, report finds

Social media has played a large role in declining happiness among young people in Western countries, a United Nations-backed report has found.

Heavy social media use partly explains a “worrying decline” in the wellbeing of young people in the West, the latest edition of the annual World Happiness Report said on Thursday.



19/03/2026

The 25 Happiest Countries In The World, According To The 2026 World Happiness Report

What’s striking is that this trend is not global. In most other parts of the world, young people are actually reporting higher levels of wellbeing than in the past.

“Most of the world’s young people are happier today than they were 20 years ago, and that’s a trend that deserves attention,” Jon Clifton, CEO of Gallup, said in a statement.

That divergence between English-speaking countries and the rest of the world is one of the most important findings in this year’s report—and may help explain why the U.S. continues to lag.



19/03/2026

A Nordic nation is the world’s happiest country for the ninth year in a row

If happiness were an Olympic event, the Nordic countries would be guaranteed a spot on the podium.

Actually, all three spots on the podium.

According to the latest edition of the World Happiness Report, the three happiest countries in the world are Finland, Iceland and Denmark.

The Washington Post

19/03/2026

World Happiness Report highlights social media's negative impact, ranks Finland as happiest country

Young people who use social media for less than one hour per day report the highest levels of well-being, researchers said, higher than those who do not use social media at all. But adolescents are spending an estimated average of 2.5 hours a day on social media.

"It is clear that we should look as much as possible to put the 'social' back into social media," De Neve said.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

19/03/2026

The world's happiest countries report calls attention to youth well-being

The report emphasized the role of social media use in happiness: adolescents living in 43 countries who ranked high on a measure of problematic social media use tended to have lower well-being scores. Importantly, the report cannot conclude that using social media causes well-being to decline, and experts say its effects on youth are complex. For example, other research suggests higher levels of social media use could boost empathy in some children.

Newsweek

19/03/2026

U.S. Moves Up In World Happiness Rankings

The United States has moved up in the World Happiness Report rankings for 2026, and now ranks 23rd globally after shifting up one place from last year's rankings.



19/03/2026

Heavy social media usage erodes young people's wellbeing, report finds

Heavy social media usage appears to contribute to a drop in wellbeing among young people, especially girls, in some English-speaking countries, the World Happiness Report published on Thursday found.

Already, a number of countries across the world are working on plans to curb children's social media access after Australia in December became the world's first country to ban social media for children under 16.



19/03/2026

What the World Happiness Report reveals about social media and the world's happiest country

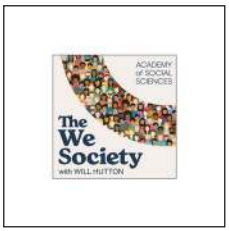
Heavy social media use contributes to a stark decline in well-being among young people, with the effects particularly worrying in teenage girls in English-speaking countries and Western Europe, according to the World Happiness Report 2026 published Thursday.



19/03/2026

These are the happiest countries in the world

Each year the World Happiness Report ranks countries based on the "life evaluations" of more than 100,000 global survey respondents. The report is partnership between the University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, Gallup, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and independent editorial board members, according to its website.



25/03/2026

How happy is the world in 2026? With Jan-Emmanuel De Neve

What can we learn from the happiest countries in the world? In this episode of the We Society podcast, Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, joins host Will Hutton to discuss the findings of the 2026 World Happiness Report and what we can learn for putting wellbeing at the heart of public policy.



15/04/2026

The Simple Secret of Being Happier...

We've been taught that success at work is what leads to happiness, but in reality, it's how work actually feels that shapes the rest of our lives.

Jay sits down with Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science at the University of Oxford and Director of the Wellbeing Research Centre, and almost immediately, they land on something most of us feel but rarely say out loud: work takes up the majority of our lives, yet very few of us actually feel good while doing it. Jan shares a striking reality – less than a quarter of people report high levels of wellbeing at work. More importantly, how you feel at work doesn't stay there, it follows you home. It shapes how you speak to your partner, how you show up for your kids, even how you engage with the world around you. This conversation isn't just about jobs or careers, it's about the emotional tone of our lives, and ultimately, our society.

Bloomberg

20/05/2026

Meta Begins 8,000 Global Job Cuts in AI Efficiency Push

"Automators like Meta risk no longer being an employer of choice as it's being revealed that they will cut out the human when the opportunity presents itself," said Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and behavioral science at University of Oxford. "Doing so might well lead to short-term cost savings but risks longer-term growth potential by undermining employee wellbeing and engagement."

Excessive social media ‘negatively impacts wellbeing’

23/05/2026

The World Happiness Report, published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, found that excessive use of social media negatively impacts our wellbeing.

“If you use social media for an hour a day, that’s great, you’re being connected,” says Michael Plant, Research Fellow at the Wellbeing Research Centre.

“But the report did show a correlation between, the more time you spend on social media the greater loss of wellbeing.”

CEO to staff: You’re not getting a raise. We’re spending on AI instead.

04/06/2026

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, an economist and director of Oxford University’s Wellbeing Research Centre, told Business Insider he expects more companies to make similar trade-offs as they pursue AI, saying it is indicative of a “short-term mindset.”

“When leaders openly cut human compensation to fund AI, they are trying to project decisive, tech-forward management. However, the actual message traveling to the workforce is that they do not have a secure future in the organization,” De Neve said.

The shrinking arguments for degrowth

26/06/2026

And earlier this year new research pushed back on the argument that once a country becomes rich enough, further economic growth doesn’t boost wellbeing. After adjusting for the way people change their frame of reference over time, focusing instead on whether they say they are doing better than in the past, the research found life satisfaction continued to climb alongside GDP per capita even in countries as rich as the US.

NewScientist

22/07/2026

What the world's happiest countries can teach us about joyful living

Finland is starting to sound like a nirvana. A few months ago, it was named the happiest country in the World Happiness Report, topping the chart alongside its Nordic neighbours, which occupy five of the top six spots. And this was no fluke – Finland has now come first for nine years in a row.

Ostensibly, there are plenty of factors that ought to make people in Nordic countries less than content, not least the dingy weather and high taxes. Then again, there is a sense that these taxes really go somewhere, with residents reaping the rewards of investment into healthcare, education and transport. Plus, the low population density, massive forest coverage and access to lakes and coastlines all mean that even city dwellers are never too far from nature.

But how much confidence should we place in these global rankings? After all, happiness is a slippery concept, and all sorts of factors – not least how different cultures understand what it means to be happy – could conceivably skew the results. To delve into these questions, New Scientist spoke to economist and behavioural scientist Jan-Emmanuel De Neve at the University of Oxford, the editor of the World Happiness Report. He explained how his work attempts to measure true happiness, why he believes Finland deserves its top spot and what the rest of us can do to bring a bit more joy to our everyday lives.

INDEPENDENT

25/07/2026

How to tell if you are living below the wellbeing poverty line

"Wellbeing and happiness are ultimately – there is no way around it – in the eye of the beholder," says De Neve, who is the co-founder of the World Wellbeing Movement; a charity which, for the past three years, has commissioned an annual UK Wellbeing Report which aims to assess the nation's level of wellbeing by collating key UK data.

And, while there are many objective factors – such as physical and mental health, education, and income – that contribute to an individual's wellbeing, the metric for assessing it couldn't be simpler: asking people, on a scale of zero to 10, how satisfied they are with their life these days.

Forbes

11/08/2026

The Companies Winning With AI Aren't Replacing Workers

In a difficult business environment, artificial intelligence can look like an obvious answer for executives seeking faster work, lower costs and new efficiencies. But as AI moves into everyday business use, the more important question is whether those gains will last.

New research led by Professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve of Saïd Business School, University of Oxford suggests companies may be making a strategic mistake if they treat AI mainly to cut headcount. The research argues that businesses focused too heavily on automation risk weakening the human capabilities they will need for growth, including creativity, judgment, institutional knowledge and leadership development.

"It's a classic manifestation of status quo bias," says De Neve. "It's far easier for an executive to look at a spreadsheet and imagine using AI to streamline what people already do than it is to do the heavy strategic lifting of reimagining how technology can produce entirely new value. Treating AI as a headcount-slashing tool might yield quick, visible cost savings, but it is ultimately a path of organisational contraction that trades away a company's long-term capacity to innovate."

BBC TRAVEL

25/08/2026

There's something unique about eating together that's good for us

Arguably the strongest evidence comes from the World Happiness Report – a yearly analysis of wellbeing based on a global survey from the opinion polling company Gallup. In 2024, the company was sponsored by the Japanese food manufacturer Ajinomoto to add a section on people's eating habits, which included the following questions:

Thinking about the last 7 days ...
(1) On how many days did you eat lunch with someone you know?
(2) On how many days did you eat dinner with someone you know?"

"My eyes lit up when I saw," De Neve says, who co-authored a chapter on the importance of commensality in the latest World Happiness Report. "We're looking at about 150,000 individuals around the world who responded to that question."

De Neve's team found that the more meals that people shared with others, the higher they scored on standard measures of emotional wellbeing, with quite astonishing consistency. "It was as predictive of someone's life satisfaction as their employment status and your relative income," he says – two factors that are known to be enormously important for wellbeing.


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06 //

Events

The Centre once again hosted some of the world's leading wellbeing researchers as part of our Seminar Series, providing an international hub to advance our understanding of empirical wellbeing science.

We are grateful to each of our speakers during the past 12 months, and wish to place on record our thanks to all those who made expert contributions, provided original ideas, or otherwise took part in lively discussions.

Seminars

On sustainable wellbeing

Beyond GDP: A review and conceptual framework for measuring sustainable and inclusive wellbeing
Annegeke Jansen
Leiden University

The implications of climate change impacts on wellbeing
Prof. Paul Behrens
University of Oxford

Unemployment and climate worries
Sachintha Fernando
Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg

On Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Understanding and shaping the impact of LLMs on well-being and society
Dr. Johannes Eichstaedt
Stanford University

Generative AI and workplace wellbeing
Micah Kaats and Dr. George Ward
Harvard University and INSEAD

AI sentience and wellbeing
Dr. Caspar Kaiser
University of Warwick

Are we measuring happiness on a changing scale?
Charlie Harrison
University of Oxford

The association between quality of life, subjective well-being, and menstrual health among adolescent girls in secondary schools in Uganda
Rebecca Prah and Dr. Giulia Greco
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Hope and the life course
Prof. Carol Graham and Dr. Redzo Mujcic
Brookings Institution and University of Warwick

Special Events





▲ Wellbeing Research Centre Unilever Research Fellow, Dr. William Fleming, facilitated a British Sociological Association Early Career Researcher Forum event at Harris Manchester College on the sociology of work and wellbeing. The paper workshop brought together early-career researchers from a variety of disciplines and also featured guests from the journals *Sociology*, the *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, and *Work, Employment & Sociology*.

◀ Prof. Marc Schulz, Professor of Psychology and Director of Data Science at Bryn Mawr College and academic visitor to the Wellbeing Research Centre, delivered Harris Manchester College's prestigious Upton Lecture in 2026. He shared longitudinal findings from the Harvard Study of Adult Development, of which he is the Associate Director.

07 //

Partners

We remain extremely grateful to our partners for their support in enabling innovative and impactful research.

The Centre's work would not be possible without these contributions and relationships. Our thanks go to all who continue to contribute to our development.


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Foundation


NIHR
Oxford Health Biomedical
Research Centre


REAPRA


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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
SOLUTIONS NETWORK
A GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS


清華大學
Tsinghua University


Unilever


WELLBEING
FOR PLANET EARTH
FOUNDATION


World Happiness Report


World Wellbeing
Movement

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