

Annual Report

2020-2021

Wellbeing Research Centre
A year in interdisciplinary wellbeing research



Wellbeing Research Centre, Harris Manchester College, The University of Oxford

Annual Report 2020-2021

Wellbeing Research Centre
Harris Manchester College
The University of Oxford

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Contents

04	ABOUT THE WELLBEING RESEARCH CENTRE
07	LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR
10	OUR TEAM
11	RESEARCH AFFILIATES
14	ADVISORY BOARD
18	PUBLICATIONS
30	PARTNERS & PROJECTS
32	SEMINAR SERIES
36	WORKSHOP
40	TEXTBOOK DISCUSSION WORKSHOP
42	IMPACT
50	SOCIAL MEDIA
52	COMMUNITY
54	WHAT'S NEXT



About us

The Wellbeing Research Centre is an interdisciplinary research centre at the University of Oxford, focused on the advancement of the science of wellbeing.

The Centre brings together expertise from the University and beyond to develop our understanding of wellbeing, how we might measure it, and how and why wellbeing should be considered in policy interventions.

Despite the challenges of the last year, this community has continued to expand, with scholars, policymakers, and stakeholders from across the world joining our seminars and events.

Through the development of high-end research and public engagement, the Centre's aim is to help communities and organizations around the world to put wellbeing at the heart of their decision-making.



“

Another year of living through the Covid-19 pandemic has not stopped our Centre from continuing its activities and expanding its reach in terms of both research and societal impact. In fact, the pandemic has raised a sense of urgency to our work and has clearly raised interest in it by policy and business leaders.

”

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Director

From the Director



Another year of living through the Covid-19 pandemic has not stopped our Centre from continuing its activities and expanding its reach in terms of both research and societal impact. In fact, we feel that the pandemic has raised a sense of urgency to our work and has clearly raised interest in it by policy and business leaders.

Over the past year the research group has grown with the addition of stellar junior researchers working on the cutting-edge of the research frontier. The quality and quantity of the group's research publications summarized later in this annual report speaks for itself.

Our seminars and workshops were held online over the past year and they have gradually become a platform for the global academic community on the empirical science of wellbeing to come together and stay in touch with the latest research and thinking.

The ease of recording presentations held online also means that we now keep video records of these important discussions on YouTube and that turns out to be a real public good. All of this represents a silver lining to having to work remotely and is an aspect that we hope to maintain as we gradually move into a hybrid world.

What sets this year most apart from the previous one is the scale of the impact projects that have come about. Our Centre won the tender to develop a wellbeing framework for the programmes run by the International Baccalaureate Organization and this is the start of a longer-term partnership to improve the wellbeing of K-12 students.

Another major project is run in collaboration with the National League of Cities in the US where we are managing a pilot in the city of Atlanta to explore ways in which self-reported wellbeing data can be made most useful for local policy and community leaders.

One aim for this past year was to professionalize our operations and that has succeeded tremendously thanks to the entrepreneurial talents of our Centre Manager and Communications Officer. It puts us in a situation to consolidate our rapid progress and set the foundations for future growth.

This is only the beginning of our story, and the excitement for the future is palpable. Looking forward to the next academic year we have some exciting developments in the pipeline. Preparations have begun on the organization of the inaugural Wellbeing Research Conference to be held 6-8 July 2022 which we intend to become a bi-annual event that will bring together the latest empirical research on wellbeing and will also link with the world of policy-makers.

“ This is only the beginning of our story, and the excitement for the future is palpable. ”

Another major development is that we are preparing the launch of the World Wellbeing Movement! This will bring together a coalition of companies and foundations that will fund a team based in Oxford to lead the charge to advocate for wellbeing metrics in policy and business. Here we have identified a specific opportunity for impact which is to leverage the comparable employee wellbeing data that are being crowdsourced at large scale by the jobs site Indeed and feed those data into the Social impact metrics of ESG standards.

A number of important academic projects are ongoing and should be seeing the light of day over the next academic year. Of particular note will be the book that Richard Layard and I are currently putting together with the invaluable help of many colleagues. This piece of work will function as the first comprehensive textbook for wellbeing science and will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2022.

None of this would be possible without our generous donors and partners. First and foremost, there is our Founding Partner KSI Education who have been unwavering in their commitment to advancing the science of wellbeing so that it can help improve lives and generate positive impact in education and other domains of life.



Andrew and Charlotte Barnes continue their energetic push for making the future of work a more appealing one and their research support to us is invaluable. We also welcome the support of our institutional partners in the IB Organization, NLC, and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. While we worked remotely and did not get to benefit as much as usual from the collegial environment, we could not be more appreciative of everyone working hard to keep the lights on at our home that is Harris Manchester College.

Finally, what remains dear to my heart is that we have maintained a supportive and

cheerful community spirit. Whether at work or in life more generally, our analyses regularly point to the importance of social capital and a sense of belonging as critical to our wellbeing, and so we want to practice what we preach at our Centre.

With heartfelt gratitude for your interest and support of our work.

Sincerely,

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Director

Meet our Team

Research Group



Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Director



Dr. Laura Taylor
Centre Manager &
KSI Research Fellow



Dr. Laura M. Giurge Barnes
Research Fellow



Dr. Hannah Lucas
Communications Officer



Dr. Michael Plant
Research Fellow



Dr. Alberto Prati
Research Fellow



Micah Kaats
Research Associate



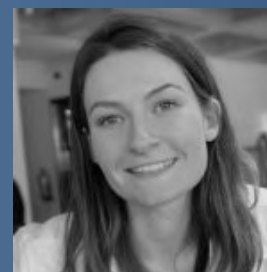
Caspar Kaiser
Research Fellow



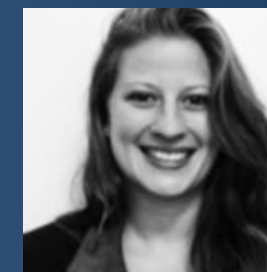
Karl Overdick
D.Phil Student



Devi Khanna
Research Assistant



Hedda Roberts
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Luana DeBorst
Research Assistant



Lhachi Selden
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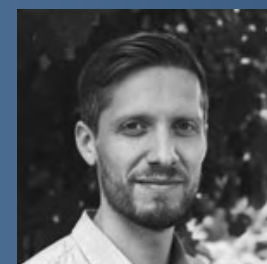
Research Affiliates



Prof. Sabina Alkire
Oxford Poverty and
Human Development
Initiative



Dr. Lucía Macchia
Harvard Kennedy
School



Dr. Christopher Burr
Philosophy, Oxford
Internet Institute



Dr. Clement Bellet
Economics, Erasmus
University Rotterdam



Prof. Andrew Clark
Paris School of
Economics



Dr. Katy Chapman
Education, University
of Oxford



Dr. Maria Cotofan
Economics, LSE



Prof. David Clark
Experimental
Psychology,
University of Oxford



Jessica Milligan
Economics,
University of Oxford



Prof. Willem Kuyken
Psychiatry,
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Prof. Elaine Fox
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Psychology,
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Dr. Mark Fabian
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Julia Ruiz Pozuelo
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University of Oxford



Prof. Andrew Oswald
Economics,
Warwick University



Marta Golin
Economics,
University of Oxford



Dr. Michael Gill
Saïd Business School,
University of Oxford



Prof. Tali Sharot
Cognitive
Neuroscience,
University College
London



Dr. Edika
Quispe-Torreblanca
Saïd Business School,
University of Oxford



Prof. John Helliwell
Economics, University
of British Columbia



Prof. Carol Graham
Brookings Institution



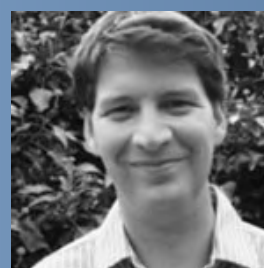
Prof. Andrew Stephen
Saïd Business School,
University of Oxford



Dr. Adam Shriver
Philosophy,
University of Oxford



Dr. Christian Krekel
Economics, LSE



Prof. Joshua Horden
Theology,
University of Oxford



Prof. Tyler
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Human Flourishing
Program,
Harvard University



Dr. Eileen Tipoe
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University of Oxford



Jakob Zeitler
Computer Science,
University College London



George Ward
Behavioural Science,
MIT



Andrew Barnes
Chairman, Coulthard
Barnes, New Zealand



Charlotte Lockhart
Partner, Coulthard
Barnes, New Zealand

Advisory Board



Prof. Lord Layard
London School of
Economics



Dr. Wilson Sea
Chairman, China First
Capital Group, China



Dasho Karma Ura
President, Centre for
Bhutan and GNH
Studies



Prof. Jane Shaw
Principal, Harris
Manchester College
and Pro-Vice-
Chancellor,
University of Oxford



Dr. Sabrina Cheung
Chairman, KSI
Education
UK and China



Prof. Jeffrey Sachs
Columbia University
and Special Advisor
to the UN Secretary-
General



Jim Clifton
Chairman, The Gallup
Organization, USA



HE Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance,
New Zealand



Andrea Illy
Chairman, Illy Coffee
and Ernesto Illy
Foundation,
Italy

The Wellbeing
Research
Centre's work
has been
published in
some of the
world's leading
academic
journals.

Nature Human
Behaviour.

British Medical
Journal.

Science Advances.

Harvard Business
Review.

The Journal of
Economic Behavior
& Organization.

Publications

A Local Community Course That Raises Wellbeing and Pro-sociality: Evidence from a Randomised Controlled Trial

C. Krekel, J.-E. De Neve, D. Fancourt, & R. Layard
Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, vol. 188 (2021), pp. 322-336

Despite a wealth of research on its correlates, relatively little is known about how to effectively raise wellbeing in local communities by means of intervention. Can we teach people to live happier lives, cost-effectively and at scale?

We conducted a randomised controlled trial of a scalable social-psychological intervention rooted in self-determination theory and aimed at raising the wellbeing and pro-sociality of the general adult population. The manualised course ("Exploring What Matters") is run by non-expert volunteers (laypeople) in their local communities and to date has been conducted in more than 26 countries around the world.

We found that it has strong, positive causal effects on participants' subjective wellbeing and pro-sociality (compassion and social trust) while lowering measures of mental ill health. The impacts of the course are sustained for at least two months post-treatment. We compare treatment to other wellbeing interventions and discuss limitations and implications for intervention design, as well as implications for the use of wellbeing as an outcome for public policy more generally.

Mental Health During the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review and Recommendations for Moving Forward

L. Aknin, J.-E. De Neve, E. Dunn, D. Fancourt, E. Goldberg, J. Helliwell, S. P. Jones, E. Karam, R. Layard, S. Lyubomirsky, A. Rzepa, S. Saxena, E. Thornton, T. VanderWeele, A. Whillans, J. Zaki, O. Karadag Caman, & Y. B. Amour
Perspectives on Psychological Science (2021)

COVID-19 has infected millions of people and upended the lives of most humans on the planet. Researchers from across the psychological sciences have sought to document and investigate the impact of COVID-19 in myriad ways, causing an explosion of research that is broad in scope, varied in methods, and challenging to consolidate. Because policy and practice aimed at helping people live healthier and happier lives requires insight from robust patterns of evidence, this paper provides a rapid and thorough summary of high-quality studies available through early 2021 examining the mental health consequences of living through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our review of the evidence indicates that anxiety, depression, and distress increased in the early months of the pandemic. Meanwhile, suicide rates, life satisfaction, and loneliness remained largely stable throughout the first year of the pandemic. In response to these insights, we present seven recommendations (one urgent, two short-term, and four ongoing) to support mental health during the pandemic and beyond.

Positional, mobility and reference effects: How does social class affect life satisfaction in Europe?

C. Kaiser, N.A. Trinh
European Sociological Review, 1-18 (2021)

In this study, we analyse the effects of social class on life satisfaction. We develop a theoretical framework that shows how social class affects life satisfaction through five different pathways. Informed by this framework, we estimate the direct effects of class destination and class origin, the effect of own intergenerational class mobility, as well as the effects of others' class position and mobility. To do so, we utilize European Social Survey waves 1 to 5 (2002–2010) and obtain information on life satisfaction as well as destination and origin class for about 80,000 respondents in 32 European countries. We find (i) class destination consistently and strongly structures life satisfaction across Europe, (ii) own class mobility has a significant impact on life satisfaction in Eastern Europe, as does (iii) the class mobility of others. The last finding points to the hitherto neglected importance of reference effects when considering the impact of social class on life satisfaction.

Moral credentials and the 2020 democratic presidential primary: No evidence that endorsing female candidates licenses people to favor men

L. M. Giurge, E. Hsin-Lian Lin, D. A. Effron
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, vol. 95 (2021)

Endorsing Obama in 2008 licensed some Americans to favor Whites over Blacks—an example of moral self-licensing (Effron, Cameron, & Monin, 2009). Could endorsing a female presidential candidate in 2020–21 similarly license Americans to favor men at the expense of women? Two high-powered, pre-registered experiments found no evidence for this possibility.

We manipulated whether Democrat participants had an opportunity to endorse a female Democratic candidate if she ran against a male candidate (i.e., Trump in Study 1, N = 2143; an anti-Trump Republican or independent candidate in Study 2, N = 2228). Then, participants read about a stereotypically masculine job and indicated whether they thought a man should fill it.

Contrary to predictions, we found that endorsing a female Democrat did not increase participants' tendency to favor men over women for the job. We discuss implications for the robustness and generalizability of moral self-licensing.

A multicountry perspective on gender differences in time use during COVID-19

L. M. Giurge, A. V. Whillans, and A. Yemiscigil
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered how people spend time, with possible consequences for subjective wellbeing. Using diverse samples from the United States, Canada, Denmark, Brazil, and Spain (n = 31,141), following a preregistered analytic plan, and employing both mega- and meta-analyses, we find consistent gender differences in time spent on necessities.

During the pandemic, women—especially mothers—spent more time on tasks such as childcare and household chores. To the extent that women spent more time on chores than men, they reported lower happiness.

These data represent one of the most rigorous investigations of gender differences in time use during the forced lockdowns created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and point toward individual differences that should be considered when designing policies now and post-COVID-19.

The Role of Schools in Early Adolescents' Mental Health: Findings From the MYRIAD Study

T. Ford, M. Degli Espoti, C. Crane, L. Taylor, J. Montero-Marín, S.-J. Blakemore et al.
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2021)

Recent studies suggest mental health in youths is deteriorating. The current policy in the United Kingdom emphasizes the role of schools for mental health promotion and prevention, but little data exist on what aspects of schools influence mental health in pupils. This study explored school-level influences on the mental health of young people in a large school-based sample from the United Kingdom.

A longer shortlist increases the consideration of female candidates in male-dominant domains

B. J. Lucas, Z. Berry, L. M. Giurge & D. Chugh
Nature Human Behaviour (2021)

Making it onto the shortlist is often a crucial early step toward professional advancement. For under-represented candidates, one barrier to making the shortlist is the prevalence of informal recruitment practices (for example, colleague recommendations).

The current research investigates informal shortlists generated in male-dominant domains (for example, technology executives) and tests a theory-driven intervention to increase the consideration of female candidates. Across ten studies (N = 5,741) we asked individuals to generate an informal shortlist of candidates for a male-dominant role and then asked them to extend the list.

We consistently found more female candidates in the extended (versus initial) list. This longer shortlist effect occurs because continued response generation promotes divergence from the category prototype (for example, male technology executives). Studies 3 and 4 supported this mechanism, and study 5 tested

the effect of shortlist length on selection decisions. This longer shortlist intervention is a low-cost and simple way to support gender equity efforts.

Frequency of Self-reported Unpleasant Events and Harm in a Mindfulness-Based Program in Two General Population Samples

R. Baer, C. Crane, J. Montero-Marín, A. Phillips, L. Taylor, A. Tickell, W. Kuyken & The MYRIAD Team
Mindfulness (2021), Vol. 12, pp. 763-774

Evidence-based mindfulness programs have well-established benefits, but the potential for harmful effects is understudied. We explored the frequency and severity of unpleasant experiences and harm in two nonclinical samples participating in an adaptation of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) for the general population. Study 1 included 84 schoolteachers; study 2 included 74 university students. Both studies were uncontrolled. Participants completed self-report questionnaires about psychological symptoms before and after the 8-week mindfulness course. After the course, they responded to a survey designed for this study that included Likert ratings and free-text questions about unpleasant experiences and harm. All data were collected online.

In both samples, about two-thirds of participants reported unpleasant experiences associated with mindfulness practice during the course. Most participants (85-92%) rated these experiences as not at all or somewhat upsetting; some indicated that difficult experiences led to important learning or were beneficial in some way. The proportion of participants reporting harm from the mindfulness course ranged from 3 to 7%. The proportion showing reliable deterioration on symptom questionnaires ranged from 2 to 7%. Those reporting harm and those showing reliable deterioration on questionnaires were largely separate

subgroups; only one participant fell in both.

Findings highlight the need for mindfulness teachers to manage expectations about benefits and difficulties that may occur in mindfulness-based programs and to work skilfully with participants experiencing difficulties. Experiences of harm may not be captured by symptom questionnaires and should be explicitly assessed in other ways.

Taking a Wellbeing Years Approach to Policy Choice

J.-E. De Neve, A. E. Clark, C. Krekel, R. Layard, & G. O'Donnell
British Medical Journal (2020)

Every day, policy makers must decide whether a policy is desirable. They do so by examining its impact on a range of outcomes. But the problem is how to aggregate these disparate outcomes. For example, as covid-19 cases rise again, some lockdown measures are gradually being reintroduced across the UK. These policy choices will lead to outcomes that are good (such as fewer deaths from covid-19, less commuting, better air quality) and some that are bad (unemployment, income losses, loneliness, domestic abuse).

How can policy makers aggregate these disparate effects in order to arrive at an overall assessment? To do so requires a "common currency" with which to measure all the effects. The currency we propose is the change in years of human wellbeing resulting from the policy.

Memories as Anchors: Novel Analyses on the Intrapersonal Comparability of Wellbeing Reports

C. Kaiser
SocArXiv (2020)

Research on subjective wellbeing typically assumes that responses to survey questions

are comparable across respondents and across time. Unfortunately, if this assumption is violated, standard methods in empirical research may mislead. I address this concern with three contributions. First, I give a theoretical analysis of the extent and direction of bias that may result from violations of this assumption. Second, I propose to use respondents' memories of changes in life satisfaction to estimate and thereby to correct for differentials in scale use. Third, using the proposed approach, I test whether wellbeing reports are intrapersonally comparable across time.

Using British panel data, I find that the direction in which explanatory variables affect latent satisfaction is typically the same as the direction in which scale use is affected. Unemployment and widowhood appear to have particularly strong effects on scale use. Although discussed in the context of life satisfaction scales, the proposed approach for anchoring response scales is applicable to a wide range of other subjectively reported constructs.

A Happy Possibility About Happiness (And Other Subjective) Scales: An Investigation and Tentative Defence of the Cardinality Thesis

M. Plant
Happier Lives Institute, Working Paper (2020)

There are long-standing doubts about whether data from subjective scales—for instance, self-reports of happiness—are cardinally comparable. It is unclear how to assess whether these doubts are justified without first addressing two unresolved theoretical questions: how do people interpret subjective scales? Which assumptions are required for cardinal comparability? This paper offers answers to both. It proposes an explanation for scale interpretation derived from philosophy of language and game theory. In short:

conversation is a cooperative endeavour governed by various maxims (Grice 1989); because subjective scales are vague and individuals want to make themselves understood, scale adaptation is a search for a focal point (Schelling 1960).

A specific focal point is hypothesised; if this hypothesis is correct, subjective data will be cardinally comparable. Four individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for cardinal comparability are specified. The paper then argues this hypothesis can be empirically tested, makes an initial attempt to do so using subjective well-being data, and concludes it is supported.

Numerous areas for further research are identified including, at the end of the paper, how certain tests could be used to 'correct' subjective data if they are not cardinal.

The SDGs and Human Well-Being: a Global Analysis of Synergies, Trade-offs, and Regional Differences

J.-E. De Neve & J. D. Sachs
Nature Scientific Reports (2020)

This paper explores the empirical links between achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and subjective well-being. Globally, we find that in terms of well-being, there are increasing marginal returns to sustainable development. Unpacking the SDGs by looking at how each SDG relates to well-being shows, in most cases, a strong positive correlation. However, SDG12 (responsible production and consumption) and SDG13 (climate action) are negatively correlated with well-being.

This suggests that in the short run there may be certain trade-offs to sustainable development, and further heterogeneity is revealed through an analysis of how these relationships play out by region. Variance decomposition methods also suggest large differences in how each SDG contributes to explaining the variance in well-being between countries.

These and other empirical insights highlight that more complex and contextualized policy efforts are needed in order to achieve sustainable development while optimising for well-being.

Beyond material poverty: Why time poverty matters for individuals, organisations, and nations

L. M. Giurge & A. V. Whillans
Harvard Business School, Working Paper (2020)

Over the last two decades, global wealth has risen. Yet, material affluence has not translated into time affluence. Instead, most people today report feeling persistently "time poor"—like they have too many things to do and not enough time to do them. This is critical because time poverty is linked to lower well-being, physical health, and productivity. For example, in our analysis of 2.5 million Americans, subjective feelings of time poverty had a stronger negative effect on well-being than being unemployed. However, individuals, organisations, and policymakers often overlook the pernicious effects of time poverty. Billions of dollars are spent each year to alleviate material poverty, while time poverty is often ignored or exacerbated.

In this Perspective, we discuss the organisational, institutional, and psychological factors that explain why time poverty is often under appreciated. We argue that scientists, policymakers, and organisational leaders need to devote more attention and resources toward understanding and reducing time poverty to promote psychological and economic well-being.



Publications

The World Happiness Report

The World Happiness Report is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness, published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

The 2021 Report focuses on the effects of COVID-19 and how people all over the world have fared. In particular, the Report tries to explain why some countries have done so much better than others.

The aim was two-fold: first, to focus on the effects of COVID-19 on the structure and quality of people's lives; and second, to describe and evaluate how governments all over the world have dealt with the pandemic.

The Wellbeing Research Centre is proud to act as an academic partner and contributor to this year's Report.

Social support protects against the negative imp

First lockdown



Second lockdown

Work and Well-being during COVID-19: Impact, Inequalities, Resilience, and the Future of Work

M. Cotofan, J.-E. De Neve, M. Golin, M. Kaats, & G. Ward, WHR (2021)

Abstract

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic activity, employment, and our way of working have been far-reaching. In turn, all of these shocks have the potential to substantially impact subjective well-being. Our goal in this chapter is to outline the various ways in which the pandemic has affected the global labour market and the world of work and investigate the downstream impacts on workers' well-being around the world.

We structure the chapter around five broad issues. In Section I, we begin by surveying global changes in employment and working hours, and highlight some key inequalities of impact by country, income, gender, age, and type of work. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the well-being implications of these changes.

In Section II, we consider the well-being impacts of unemployment and labour market inactivity throughout the pandemic. In Section III, we turn to the well-being of employees who have retained their jobs, using a novel dataset of more than four million individuals collected on an ongoing basis since November 2019. In Section IV, we build on this analysis by investigating the key drivers of worker resilience during the crisis. In the final section, we speculate on how the changes to the global labour market brought on by COVID-19 may influence the future of work. In doing so, we offer a tentative account of how workers' expectations may begin to change in the aftermath of the pandemic and how these changes could influence the drivers of workplace well-being in the years to come.

“ We offer an account of how workers' expectations may begin to change in the aftermath of the pandemic and how these changes could influence the drivers of workplace well-being in the years to come. ”

Key Findings

- 1 **Links between unemployment and wellbeing were very clear**, with employment status one of the most important predictors of subjective wellbeing during the COVID-19 crisis across multiple countries.
- 2 **The ability to work from home was an important predictor of job loss**, the impacts of which varied by sector, with accommodation and food service workers particularly hard hit.
- 3 **The global economic impacts of the crisis have been so far highly unequal, with disproportionate effects in developing countries.** Since March 2020, workers in lower-middle-income countries have experienced a 43% larger reduction in working hours and labour income than in high-income countries.
- 4 **The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a particularly dramatic toll on young people's well-being**, in addition to delays in education and training programs, obstacles to finding work, and increases in loneliness and social isolation,
- 5 **Having children alleviated some of the negative effects of employment last year**, where people with children experienced less reductions in wellbeing than those without. This was especially true for men: men without children experience a sharper uptick in negative affect.
- 6 **Eudaimonic drivers of workplace happiness appear to have declined in importance**, with achievement, purpose, and learning at work possibly superseded by more fundamental reasons for workplace satisfaction, like a reliable source of income.
- 7 **The effects of unemployment on life satisfaction have differed depending on gender**, with women's life satisfaction falling more severely upon job loss.
- 8 **Social support networks can help buffer against the effects of hard times**, while loneliness exacerbates the negative affect associated with stopping work.
- 9 **Job retention schemes help wellbeing, but being at work helps more**, even for workers who suffered no income losses—whose life satisfaction declined by 0.39 points relative to those who could continue working.
- 10 **Flexible working will remain crucial after the pandemic**, in order to maintain the benefits of working from home, while enabling employees to build and sustain social and intellectual capital from office working.

“The relationship between work and wellbeing extends beyond financial benefits alone.”

COVID-19 and the Global Labour Market

Figure 7.8a: Life satisfaction over time (0-10)

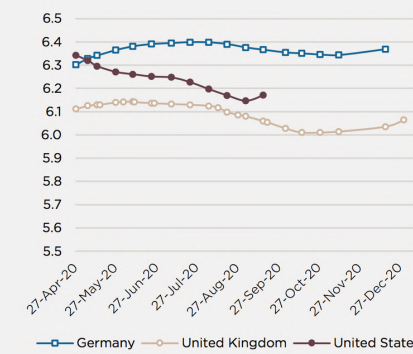
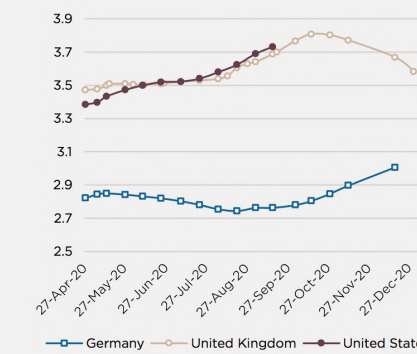


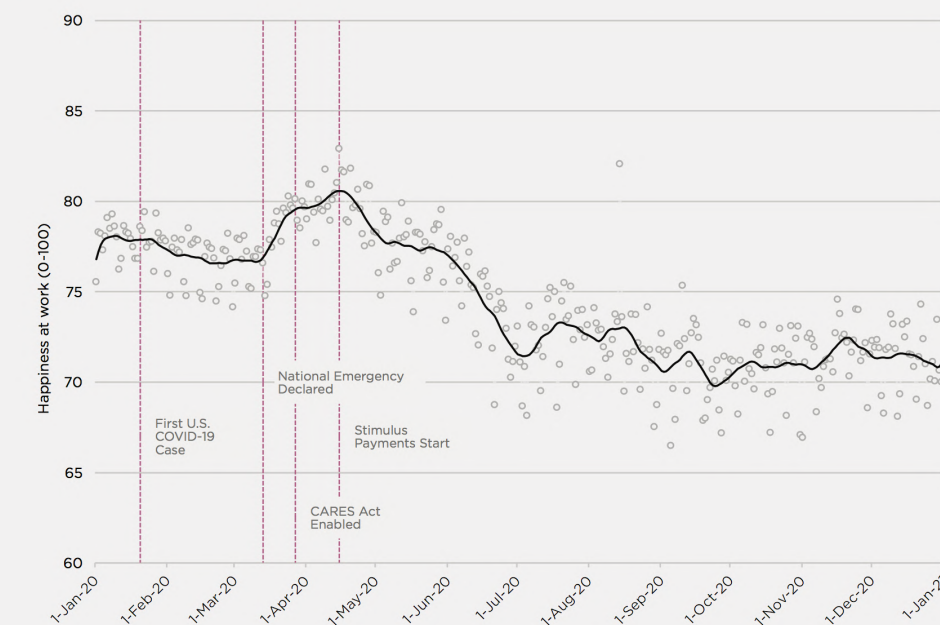
Figure 7.8b: Negative affect over time (0-12)



Note: Lowest lines of best fit plotted from national averages and displayed using a bandwidth of 0.8.

Source: YouGov, Imperial College

Figure 7.9: Happiness at work in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic



Note: Lowest line of best fit displayed using a bandwidth of 0.05. Currently employed workers only. See text for further details.

Source: Indeed.com



Partners and Projects

We remain extremely grateful for the ongoing support of KSI Education, which has facilitated the growth of the Centre this year in new and exciting directions.



Partners

Partnerships with the National League of Cities and International Baccalaureate have also supported the Centre in pursuing innovative and impactful research.



The Centre's work would be impossible without these contributions and relationships. Our thanks go to all who have contributed, and continue to contribute to our development.



WELLBEING IN IB PROGRAMMES

Kick-off meeting, 26 March 2021



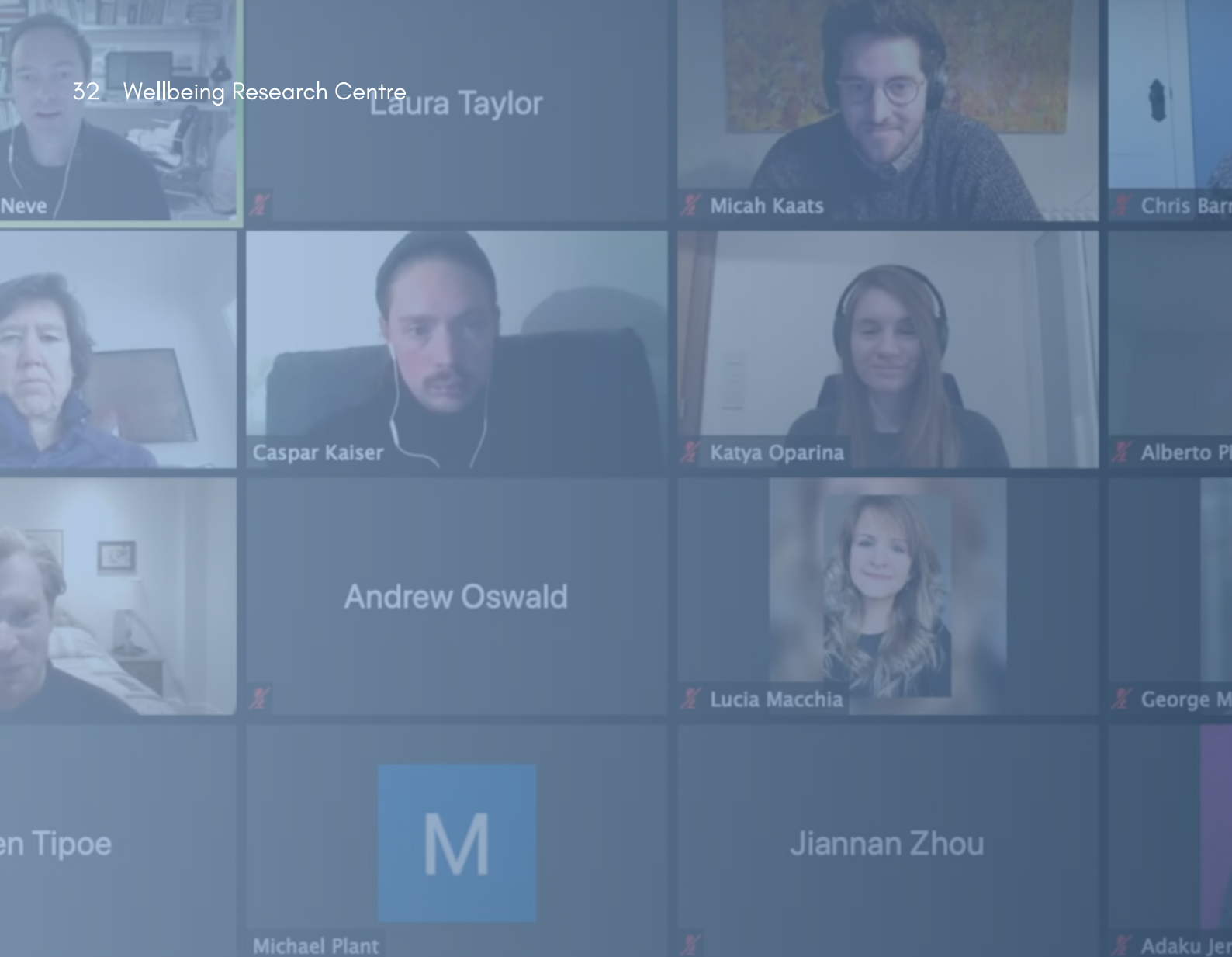
A New Wellbeing Framework for Education

in partnership with
the International Baccalaureate Organisation



Measuring and Improving Wellbeing Across American Cities

in partnership with
the National League of Cities,
the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation,
and The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation



Seminar Series

The Centre's Wellbeing Research Seminars have continued this year in hybrid form, adapting to the changing landscape of knowledge exchange during COVID-19.

Transitioning to an online format has facilitated a global forum for discussion, with participating scholars from the academic community all over the world.

We remain thoroughly inspired and uplifted by the expert contributions, original ideas, and lively discussions for which the seminars have become known.

All digital seminars have been recorded, and made available on demand via our YouTube channel.

Autumn 2020

Lucía Macchia (with Andrew Oswald) (Oxford)
 "Physical Pain, Gender, and the Business Cycle in 146 Nations"

Maria Cotofan (with Stephan Meier and Robert Dur) (LSE)
 "Growing Up in a Recession Increases Compassion? The Case of Attitudes Towards Immigration"

Giorgia Menta (with Andrew Clark) (Luxembourg)
 "Maternal Depression and Child Human Capital: A Genetic Instrumental Variables Approach"

Fengyu Wu (with Robert Rudolf and Shun Wang) (Wake Forest)
 "The Arab Spring, A Setback for Gender Equality? Evidence from the Gallup World Poll"

John Helliwell (UBC)
 "Life Satisfaction Prior to, and During, the COVID-19 Pandemic"

Laura Giurge (LBS & Oxford)
 "Using time-based behavioural interventions to improve wellbeing"

Sabina Alkire (Oxford)
 "A Bird's Eye View of Well-Being: Exploring a Multidimensional Measure for the UK"

Carol Graham (Brookings)
 "Differences in Racial Resilience During COVID-19"

Jose Marquez (Cambridge)
 "Can Schools Make Our Children Happier? Exploring Adolescents' Wellbeing and Mental Health in PISA Studies"

Spring 2021

Michael Plant (Oxford)

"Back to Bentham? A Discussion on the Optimal Distribution of Wellbeing"

Mark Fabian (Cambridge)

"COVID-19 and Subjective Well-Being: Separating the Effects of Lockdowns from the Pandemic"

Adam Nowakowski (Università Bocconi)

"Do Unhappy Citizens Vote for Populism?"

Caspar Kaiser (Oxford)

"Using Memories to Assess the Intrapersonal Comparability of Wellbeing Reports"

Nick Netzer (Zurich)

"Happy Times: Identification from Ordered Response Data"

George Ward (MIT)

"Workplace Happiness: Evidence from a Large Internet Job Site"

Hannah Metzler (Vienna)

"Collective Emotions During the COVID-19 Outbreak"

Maria Cotofan (LSE)

"The True Returns to the Choice of Occupation and Education"

Eugenio Proto (Glasgow)

"COVID-19 and Mental Health of Individuals with Different Personalities"





Workshop

FEBRUARY 2021

Fundamental Issues in the Measurement of Subjective Wellbeing

An online workshop of presentations and roundtable discussions concerning the key issues in subjective wellbeing measurement.

Topics covered ranged from methodological concerns, to data use, to policy and intervention.

Programme

Caspar Kaiser (Oxford)

"Standard Assumptions in Subjective Wellbeing Research"

Mark Fabian (Cambridge)

"Scale Norming"

Michael Plant (Oxford)

"Happiness Scales"

Carolyn Schwartz (Tufts)

"Response-Shift Effects"

Véronique Sébille (Nantes)

"Response Shift - New Methods"

Grischa Perino (Hamburg)

"The Ranking Measure of Life Satisfaction"

Dan Benjamin (UCLA)

"Adjusting for Scale Use Heterogeneity"

Christopher Barrington-Leigh (McGill)

"Response Scales, Focal Values, and the Mis-Measurement of Subjective Wellbeing"

Mark Fabian (Cambridge)

"Using Self-Reported Data"

Eileen Tipoe (Oxford)

"Making the Reporting Function Explicit"

Alberto Prati (Oxford)

"Using Memory to Create Consistent Scales"

Jose Marquez (Glasgow)

"Can Schools Make Our Children Happier? Exploring Adolescents' Wellbeing and Mental Health in PISA Studies"





Textbook Discussion Workshop

JULY 2021

The Science of Wellbeing: Causes, Consequences and Policies (CUP)

This hybrid workshop was held over two days at the University of Oxford, to discuss topics covered in *The Science of Wellbeing*, the first textbook to be published on the subject. The textbook is co-authored by our Director, Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, and Prof Lord Richard

Layard, and will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2022. The workshop brought together leading economists and scientists to discuss aspects influencing wellbeing including genetics, behaviour, family and schooling, work and income, and more.

Programme

Andrew Oswald (Warwick)

"The Overall Treatment of Wellbeing in the Book"

Philip Good (CUP)

"How to Teach Wellbeing"

Michael Plant (Oxford)

"Wellbeing as the Goal"

Christopher Barrington-Leigh (McGill) and Christian Krekel (LSE)

"Inequality of Wellbeing and Its Causes"

Laurie Santos (Yale)

"Our Thoughts and Our Health"

Claire Haworth (Bristol) and Meike Bartels (VU Amsterdam)

"Genes"

John Helliwell (UBC)

"Community"

Paul Dolan (LSE)

"Behaviour"

Sarah Fleche (Marseille)

"Family and Schooling"

Steve Machin (LSE)

"Work"

Andrew Clark (LSE)

"Income"

George MacKerron (Sussex)

"Environment"

Alan Manning (LSE) and Tim Besley (LSE)

"Government"

Carol Graham (Brookings)

"How to Make Good Policy"



Impact.

The Centre's objectives for high-end research are complemented by high-end impact. Our research team contributes to reports, policy, 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, Forbes, The Economist, HuffPost, and The New York Times.

Bloomberg CityLab

Bloomberg Philanthropies Global Mayors Challenge Bloomberg Philanthropies

Bloomberg Philanthropies announced the launch of the 2021 Global Mayors Challenge, an innovation competition that will identify and accelerate the most ambitious ideas developed by cities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, has been nominated as a member of the selection panel.

parliamentlive.tv

COVID-19 Committee on Measuring Wellbeing ParliamentLive.tv

Our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, spoke to the COVID-19 committee about measuring wellbeing. He highlighted the potential uses of a wellbeing years (WELLBYs) approach to policy, and why social infrastructure may be just as, if not more, significant in building back after the pandemic.

Media Impact

WIRED

The Perfect Number of Hours to Work Every Day? Five. *WIRED Magazine*

As employers grapple with how to manage the return to the workplace in the wake of Covid-19, the concept of compressed working is making a comeback. As left-of-centre politicians continue to make the case for four-day weeks, they are often forgetting evidence that shows five-hour days may be the better option.

The Centre's Director, Prof. Jan-Emmanuel de Neve, is featured in this article discussing his research on five-hour working days, employee wellbeing, and productivity. Despite shorter working days offering an increase in productivity, he warns that productivity gains mean everyone is doing more work, which can have the knock-on impact of reversing wellbeing gains.

The New York Times

What Makes a Happy Country? *The New York Times*

For four consecutive years, Finland has been named the happiest country in the world by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which publishes the annual Happiness Report, evaluating the happiness of people around the world.

This article is one of many publications featuring the Happiness Report, one of our major research outputs this year.

TRTWORLD

'An Idea Whose Time Has Come': Why the Four-Day Week is the Future *TRT World*

Studies show that a shorter workweek increases productivity and has a positive impact on wellbeing and the environment. What's not to like about it? With the global pandemic turning the working world on its head and triggering an unprecedented wave of unemployment, a mindset shift around what counts as 'work' and work-life balance has begun to take centre stage.

"For me, productivity is interesting but secondary. I'm more interested in how you can improve quality of life," says our Director, Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve. *TRT World* reports that the Centre has the largest group of scholars working on the empirical side of wellbeing, with the workplace one of our four research themes.

In this feature, Prof. De Neve tells *TRT World* about the Centre's first large-scale causal evidence in the field for the link between employee wellbeing and work performance.

Psychology Today

Happier At Work. The Lessons Business Leaders Must Learn From the Pandemic *Psychology Today*

From our previous research, we know that workers are about 13% more productive in weeks when they are in a positive, happy mood. In this year's World Happiness Report,

we have uncovered just how vital the workplace itself is for people's wellbeing, especially for those without strong social connections outside of it.

If we are to build back better following the pandemic—which colleagues at the IFS have shown reduced the countries mental health by up to 8%—it is vital that business leaders understand and act upon these findings by monitoring their employees' wellbeing.

Forbes

3 Hidden Insights From This Year's World Happiness Report *Forbes*

Further reporting on actionable insights from this year's World Happiness Report, to which the Centre's researchers contributed.

In this feature, *Forbes* cites three major insights from the Report: that benevolence matters more to happiness than salary; that employment is paramount, even during a pandemic; and that a pandemic may change the way we work, but it doesn't change what makes us happy in our jobs.

enorm

World Happiness Report: Wie lässt sich Glück messen? *Enorm Magazin*

What is a good life? Researchers try to measure this statistically—and get entire nations to question their systems. What does the World Happiness Report say?

In this feature, our Research Fellow Caspar Kaiser speaks to *Enorm Magazine* about the findings of the World Happiness Report, and what they mean for social and economic prosperity worldwide.

the Atlantic

The Pandemic Did Not Affect Mental Health the Way You Think *The Atlantic*

This article is written by the mental-health task force, commissioned by *The Lancet*, in order to quantify the pandemic's psychological effects. This team includes members of the Wellbeing Research Centre.

When we reviewed the best available data, we saw that some groups—including people facing financial stress—have experienced substantial, life-changing suffering. However, looking at the global population on the whole, we were surprised not to find the prolonged misery we had expected.

As spring turned to summer, average levels of depression, anxiety, and distress began to fall. Some data sets even suggested that overall psychological distress returned to near-pre-pandemic levels by early summer 2020.

We share what we learned in our recent paper published in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.

BBC NEWS

Finland Ranked Happiest Country in the World - Again *BBC News*

Finland has been named the happiest place in the world for a fourth year running, according to The World Happiness Report. This article covers the key findings from the Report, including which countries rank highest and lowest on the happiness scale.



Finland Remains World's Happiest Country For The 4th Year In A Row – Even During A Pandemic
CBS News

Finland has once again defended its coveted title as the world's happiest country. It marks the fourth year in a row the Nordic nation has claimed the top spot, even amid a pandemic that has shaken the world.

This article covers the findings from the World Happiness Report. The report focuses primarily on the relationship between well-being and the pandemic, which made collecting responses from around the world particularly challenging. Many of the highest-ranked countries in terms of overall happiness have remained at the top of the list, *CBS* reports.



In The Year of The Pandemic, Finland is The Happiest Country in The World, Italy Rises to 25th Place
La Repubblica

In the year of the pandemic, Finland is the happiest country in the world. And Italy climbs from 28th to 25th place in this year's World Happiness Report ranking, according to data collected by the Gallup World Poll.

This article quotes our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, who says, "In my previous research, it was shown that satisfied workers are 13% more productive. This research shows that happiness does not depend on paychecks. and that social relationships and a sense of identity are much more important factors. These conclusions make us think of a future of 'hybrid' work, with a greater balance between office and remote activities."



The 20 Happiest Countries In The World In 2021 (Guess Where The U.S. Ranked?)
Forbes

Who doesn't need some happy news these days? Just in time for the United Nation's annual International Day of Happiness on March 20, the results of the 2021 World Happiness Report have been released—and the results will put a smile on your face, despite the ongoing pandemic that has killed more than 2.6 million people around the globe.

This article reports that for the fourth year in a row, Finland has been named the happiest country in the world, with Iceland coming in second, followed by Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands. And during a challenging time for the United States, things improved, too. The U.S. shot up to number 14—up four spots from last year when it ranked 18, even beating out Canada (who slipped to number 15 this year). In the 2019 World Happiness Report, the United States was even lower, at number 19.



The Pandemic Has Changed The Shape Of Global Happiness
The Economist

The COVID-19 pandemic has done nothing good for the mood of Park Ha-young, an undergraduate at Seoul National University. She spent much of last year worrying about the disease, and her chances of spreading it: "I was terrified of becoming the person to cause a huge outbreak." Her freedom has been drastically curtailed. The government determines whether she can see friends or attend classes, leaving her

frustrated and unable to make plans. She is beginning to worry about finding a job after she graduates.

Politicians and officials frequently talk about how covid-19 affects public health and the economy. But for most people those are abstract considerations. What they experience each day are moods—the sense of being anxious and sad, or, if they are lucky, cheerful and optimistic.

To mark World Happiness Day on March 20th, researchers linked to the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network have tried to pin down these moods and examine how the pandemic has changed them.



This Country Has Just Been Named The Happiest In The World
CNN

To say the past year has been a difficult one for people across the globe is something of an understatement. But despite the devastating events of the last 12 months and the resulting decline in mental health in a number of destinations, there's been no change at the top spot when it comes to ranking the happiest country in the world.

This article quotes our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, who comments on the findings in the World Happiness Report about employment and wellbeing.



UK Falls in Global Happiness Ranking, With Mental Health a Covid 'Casualty'
Daily Mail

The UK has fallen five places on a global list ranking countries by happiness, as it grapples

with the mental health ramifications of the coronavirus pandemic. The annual World Happiness Report found no overall global decline in people's perceptions of their wellbeing in a survey of 156 countries.

However, the UK fell to 18th place in the global list and experienced one of the larger drops in happiness compared to before the pandemic. Researchers said the measure for "life evaluation" in the UK fell from 7.16 in 2019 to 6.80 in 2020 – a statistically significant change.



Beyond GDP: How Sustainable Development Improves Human Wellbeing
Business of Fashion

Our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, discusses the power of measuring wellbeing and how this data can further considerations of GDP to include environmental and social elements.



Mental Health Is A Matter of Public Health, Too
Bloomberg CityLab

Globally, over the past decade, the percentage of people who experience worry on a daily basis has risen from 30% to 40% percent, said Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, the director of the Wellbeing Research Centre and the co-author of the World Happiness Report.

"From one country to another there's differences," said De Neve. "If you zoom in on the U.S., you just see the increase [in worry] is off the charts." But people have also exhibited "an incredible amount of resilience."



Positive Thinking: Searching for Lasting Happiness *BBC Radio 4*

Sangita Myska goes in search of the innovators who think they hold the key to improving the way we live. Each week hosts a different innovator trying to solve a different problem. This episode tackles nothing less than the secret to lasting happiness.

The innovator is former Chief Business Officer for Google X, Mo Gawdat who says he has come up with a mathematical solution to happiness.

Contributors include our Research Fellow, Dr. Michael Plant, a moral philosopher who researches how to make people happier. He's also the Founder-Director of the Happier Lives Institute.



Business Leaders Need to Remember: You Are Still Mortal *Yahoo! News*

This article cites a study authored by our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, which suggests that happy workers are 13% more productive. It may be that the advantage is in fact even greater, *Yahoo!* reports.

Contentment makes you work not just harder but better, something we all instinctively know.

Yet we know perfectly well what the danger is here. Google "burnout," and you will find 100 million results. As august an institution as the Mayo Clinic discusses burnout at some length, noting that, while it is not a medical diagnosis, it contributes significantly to mental health.



How to build back happier in the post COVID-19 era *Psychology Today*

An article written by our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment and — for those lucky enough to have kept their jobs — on changes in the workplace which have substantially influenced well-being. An analysis of these channels through the lens of well-being science offers insight into how we can shape policies to build back better.



Xi Upstages Trump With Carbon Neutral Pledge *The Financial Times*

The case for sustainability seems to be growing by the day. On top of evidence that it pays off for companies and investors, a new study has found a more sustainable society may be a happier one, according to our researchers. Our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, says there was evidence to suggest that cleaner air quality and exposure to nature improves mental health, a theme intertwined with numerous SDG pillars.



Why It's Too Soon To Scrap The Office *City A.M.*

Productivity seems to have remained largely stable since the great shift to remote work. And it has proved popular with many workers, who have seen immediate benefits

such as greater autonomy and avoiding the dreaded commute — and the expenses associated with it.

Sensing a workplace revolution, companies are increasingly signalling that remote working could be the norm even after the pandemic. Some have already decided to get rid of their offices entirely.

In this opinion piece, our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, offers his perspective on the negative impacts of homeworking full-time: "there is a real risk that this trend will undermine social and intellectual capital, which will harm both companies and their employees in the long term," he writes.



Hijacking Anxiety: How Trump Weaponised Social Alienation Into 'Racialised Economics' *The Conversation*

Trump's success depended on personal economic concerns being pipped by "racialised economics," argue politics professors John Sides, Michael Tesler and Lynn Vavreck in their influential 2018 book *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*. By racialised economics they mean the important sentiment underlying Trump's support was "people in my group are losing jobs to that other group." Individualised economic anxiety was replaced by group fears and perceived grievances.

This article, co-authored by our Director, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, describes more recent research he and his co-authors have conducted, which largely supports this contention. It also suggests that behind the appeal of this ethnic identity politics hide deeper issues of social disconnectedness.



Taking a Well-Being-Years Approach to Policy Choice *Psychology Today*

In this article, our Director Jan-Emmanuel De Neve argues that measuring the effect of a policy on human well-being could provide a promising approach to inform public policy priorities (as outlined in a recent article in *The BMJ* by Cylus and Smith). He outlines a way to assess policy options in terms of their net effect on years of human well-being, or well-being-years (WELLBYs).

By well-being, De Neve writes, we mean how people feel about their lives—"subjective well-being." The most commonly used measure of this is life satisfaction. People are asked "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life these days?" on a scale of 0-10 (0 = 'not at all satisfied,' 10 = 'extremely satisfied'). Such a measure is well-correlated with biomarkers and third-party reports, and it has strong predictive powers—it is, for example, one of the best predictors of life-expectancy. It is also reliable—people give consistent answers when retested.

Social Media.

The Wellbeing Research Centre continues to grow its online presence, with numerous social media platforms driving increasing user traffic and engagement.

Across all our digital channels, we offer followers updates about our research, current news in wellbeing studies, and other topical insights.

We are pleased to have garnered a wide-ranging following of scholars, intellectuals, policymakers, and interested members of the public.

Our aims for next year include the continued expansion of our audience, to drive public engagement, and to foster collaborations and knowledge exchange with other organizations and institutions.

450+

newsletter subscribers.

1600+

Twitter followers.

34,000+

website page views.

42,000+

Twitter profile visits.

2,000,000+

downloads of the
World Happiness Report.

Community.

Community is a vital part of the Research Centre's ethos and approach. In a challenging year for joining together, we have appreciated all the more the times our team and friends have been able to meet, whether online or in person.

At the start of summer, we embarked our sixth annual Wellbeing Walk, which brought our community together for inspiring conversations and exchanges, all against the backdrop of the University's flourishing green spaces.



What's next?

Looking ahead, the Centre is anticipating a number of events, movements, and partnerships which will help us continue the work of translating our research into effective and actionable change.

Among these is the Inaugural Wellbeing Research Conference 2022, a new opportunity for our wider community to share and develop ideas and research in wellbeing science; the World Wellbeing Movement, a creative coalition of thought leaders between academia, business, and civil society to share knowledge and improve wellbeing policy; and a partnership with Tsinghua University, home of the Happiness Technology Laboratory (H+Lab).

THE INAUGURAL WELLBEING RESEARCH CONFERENCE

6-8 July 2022

University of Oxford

This conference, the first of its kind, will bring together expert scholars, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss the latest research in the field of wellbeing science.



How's life? Measure what you treasure and join the World Wellbeing Movement.



The Wellbeing Research Centre is proud to be a founding member of the forthcoming World Wellbeing Movement, a coalition of thought leaders intended to share best practices and promote insights into how to improve wellbeing.



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