

Annual Report 2022

Wellbeing Research Centre

A year in interdisciplinary wellbeing research



Wellbeing Research Centre, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford



Wellbeing Research Centre
Harris Manchester College
University of Oxford

@OxWellResearch
wellbeing.hmc.ox.ac.uk

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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 to measure it, and how and why wellbeing might be considered in policy interventions.

Our research group is based at Harris Manchester College and functions as a platform for knowledge exchange for a large network of scholars and other stakeholders from around the globe.

Through the development of high-end research and public engagement, the Centre aims to help communities and organisations across the world put wellbeing at the heart of their decision-making.



Research undertaken by the Centre’s multi-disciplined team falls into four primary categories:

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 Intervention

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-centre artificial intelligence.

From the Director

The academic year 2021-22 has been a hugely impactful year for us at the Wellbeing Research Centre! It was a year with some extraordinary achievements that exceeded our highest hopes and was only achievable thanks to a herculean effort from our team and partners...

The twin events that dominated much of the impact agenda were the organisation of the inaugural Wellbeing Research & Policy Conference and the launch of the World Wellbeing Movement. Our Conference was held across some of the most awe-inspiring venues that the University has to offer, from the medieval Divinity School built around 1450, to the modern, architecturally stunning, Nazrin Shah Centre at Worcester College. The Conference attracted all the major stakeholders from across academia, policy, business, and civil society. It was an extraordinary set of events and, according to Lord Gus O'Donnell, was a 'coming of age' for all things wellbeing. In addition to Gus, we heard from the CEO of Unilever, Prime Minister of Iceland, and so many more interesting and relevant voices. My interview with Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman revealed important insights relating to his thoughts on whether experience or memory-driven measures of wellbeing should be used to optimize policy on. We are delighted that this important material has been preserved on our YouTube channel to inform scientists and policymakers for years to come.

The other major highlight was the launch of the World Wellbeing Movement, which brought together an extraordinary coalition of exemplary organisations to help put their substantial influence and expertise behind our mission to put wellbeing at the heart of decision-making in business and policy. It has taken countless hours of meetings and preparation over the past year or so to build this foundational team of organisations, but the resulting group is nothing short of brilliant. Founding members include HSBC, BT, McKinsey Health Institute, Indeed, Snam and S&P Global. While the company names are impressive, it is really the wonderful, engaged leaders behind each company that will help us achieve impact at scale. Our first port of call is to help inform the "S" in ESG standards because the way social impact is being measured currently leaves a lot of room for improvement. A critically important part of the establishment of the WWM was to recruit its managing director. We were so fortunate that we got a strong field of candidates considering the position and that we were ultimately able to recruit the awesome Sarah Cunningham to join us in Oxford from a very senior position at Mastercard. We know that Sarah ►



will use her incredible depth and breadth of experience to make the WWM an impactful and long-lasting success.

In addition to the extra efforts this year on the Conference and the WWM, we maintained our globally impactful academic research activities. Again, the quantity and quality of our research publications speaks for itself. To name but a few of the top-notch academic outlets that published work by our research group: *Social Science & Medicine*, *Journal of Economic Behaviour & Organization*, *Nature Human Behaviour*, *PNAS*, and *The Lancet Public Health*. See our 'Publications' pages for more on the particular contributions made by our research group. I am also very pleased to say that much more exciting work is brewing which should advance the research frontier in years to come. For example, there is an important new working paper on whether machine learning approaches can teach us something about human wellbeing, among many other ongoing research projects.

A new research agenda is now also starting to take shape around the important topic of childhood and adolescent wellbeing. This agenda grew out of our partnership with the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) and the growing urgency to improve lives for young people across the world. The first output was a major report published

“Exciting work is brewing which should advance the research frontier in years to come”

earlier this year that reviews all the evidence on what helps advance wellbeing in schools and introduces a simple yet powerful model to understand and measure it.

We are so pleased that the IBO also thought the report was a quantum leap forward in our understanding and we have now embarked on a multi-year research partnership that will take the conceptual work into the field. None of this would have been possible without Dr Laura Taylor, who leads this research stream. The major role she plays at the Centre across operations, research and impact has led to Laura becoming Deputy Director of the Centre. I am truly blessed to be able to rely on her in running the Centre.

Another blessing is that Professor Andrew Oswald has joined the Centre as a Senior Research Fellow. Andrew is the foremost pioneer of wellbeing economics and has been a mentor to me over the years and now also to the research fellows at our Centre, so it is just wonderful to be able to

give Andrew this more formal association with our Centre. My money is on Andrew winning the Nobel prize one day and recent indications are that he ranks highly among the pool of potential nominees.

Besides Andrew, we also have new members joining the Centre in research and operations roles. Dr George Ward joins us from MIT Sloan as the Persol Research Fellow to advance his stellar research portfolio on workplace wellbeing. Will Fleming, who also works on the topic of workplace wellbeing, joins us from Cambridge while Sabina Funk has joined as a research associate on the education stream. Jonathan Whitney takes on the all-important role of Communications Manager to help leverage all that happens at the Centre and beyond, and we will all benefit greatly from Leoni Boyle's administrative expertise across all we do at the Centre.

None of the aforementioned would have been possible without the generous support of our funders and partners. This year this also very much revolved around the support for our Conference, and we are so very grateful to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Wellbeing for Planet

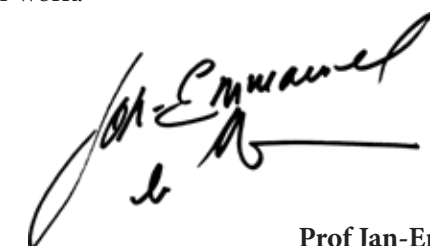
Earth Foundation, and the Victor Pinchuk Foundation. On the research front we continued to be able to rely on Andrew Barnes and Charlotte Lockhart, and now also received support from Mike Nolet, the Forethought Foundation for

“The Centre is once again going full speed ahead in pursuing high-end research and developing high-end impact”

Global Priorities Research, and the Persol Group of Japan. We remain hugely appreciative for the unwavering support of Harris Manchester College in giving the Centre such a wonderful home.

Thanks to the wonderful team we have built, and the enthusiasm of all our existing and new members, the Centre is once again going full speed ahead in pursuing high-end research and developing high-end impact opportunities in the 2022-23 academic year. We can't seem to help ourselves! Our success over the past years, as well as the growing interest in wellbeing science, means that we are seeing much inbound interest and opportunities coming along. We will use this academic year to take stock, appreciate the achievements that our group has delivered so far, while putting in place the right foundations to potentially take our Centre to yet another level in terms of advancing wellbeing science and impact.

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



Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve



Hosting Nobel laureate Prof Daniel Kahneman at our inaugural Wellbeing Research & Policy Conference was a particular highlight

Our Team

Research Group

We have bolstered the Centre’s core research group in the last 12 months across our key research themes, as well as support for our day-to-day operations.



Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Director



Dr Laura Taylor
Deputy Director



Dr Caspar Kaiser
Research Fellow



Dr Michael Plant
Research Fellow



Dr Alberto Prati
Research Fellow



William Fleming
Research Fellow



Sarah Cunningham
Managing Director,
World Wellbeing
Movement



Jonathan Whitney
Communications
Manager



Sabina Funk
Research Associate



Leoni Boyle
Executive Assistant



Hannah Lucas
Communications Officer



Prof Andrew Oswald
Senior Research Fellow



Karl Overdick
DPhil Candidate



Luana DeBorst
Research Assistant



Dr Laura Giurge
Barnes Research Fellow



Dr George Ward
Persol Research Fellow



Devi Khanna
Research Assistant

Research Affiliates

The Centre is proud to continue to work alongside, and in partnership with, many of the world's leading minds in wellbeing science. We were privileged to be joined by many of those on the following pages at our inaugural Wellbeing Research & Policy Conference.



Prof Andrew Clark
Paris School of
Economics



Prof Andrew Stephen
Saïd Business School,
University of Oxford



Prof Carol Graham
Brookings Institution



Prof David Clark
Experimental Psychology,
University of Oxford



Prof Elaine Fox
Experimental Psychology,
University of Oxford



Prof John Helliwell
Economics, University of
British Columbia



Prof Joshua Hordern
Theology, University of
Oxford



Prof Sabina Alkire
Oxford Poverty and
Human Development
Initiative



Prof Tali Sharot
Cognitive Neuroscience,
University College
London



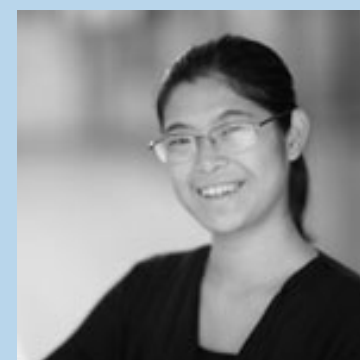
Prof Willem Kuyken
Psychiatry, Oxford
Mindfulness Centre



Dr Christian Krekel
Economics, LSE



Dr Clement Bellet
Economics, Erasmus
University Rotterdam



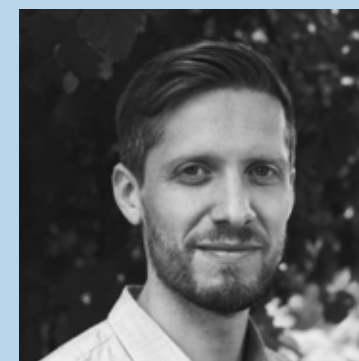
Dr Eileen Tipoe
Economics, University of
Oxford



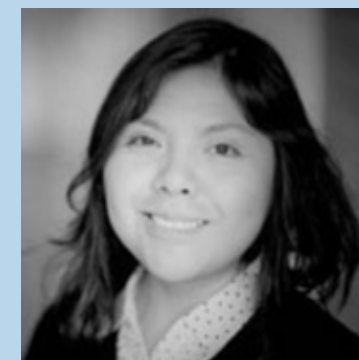
Prof Tyler VanderWeele
Human Flourishing
Program, Harvard
University



Prof Mark Fabian
University of Warwick



Dr Christopher Burr
Philosophy, Oxford
Internet Institute



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



**Dr Ekaterina (Katya)
Oparina**
Economics, LSE



Dr George Mackerron
Economics, University of
Sussex Business School



Dr Katy Chapman
Education, University of
Oxford



Dr Lucía Macchia
Harvard Kennedy School



Dr Maria Cotofan
Economics, LSE



Dr Adam Shriver
Philosophy, University of
Oxford



Dr Michael Gill
Saïd Business School,
University of Oxford



Jakob Zeitler
Computer Science,
University College
London



Jessica Milligan
Economics, University of
Oxford



Julia Ruiz Pozuelo
Psychiatry, University of
Oxford



Marta Golin
Economics, University of
Oxford

Advisory Board

We are grateful to the members of the Wellbeing Research Centre's Advisory Board – from business, academia and policy – for their continued support of our work.



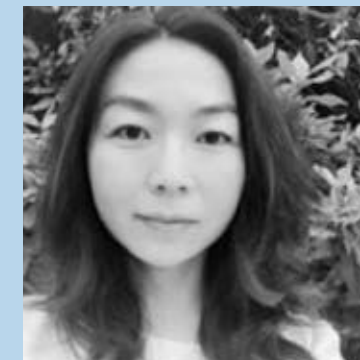
Prof Lord Richard Layard
London School of
Economics



Dr Wilson Sea
Chairman, China First
Capital Group, China



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



Dr Sabrina Cheung
Chairman, KSI
Education, UK & 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



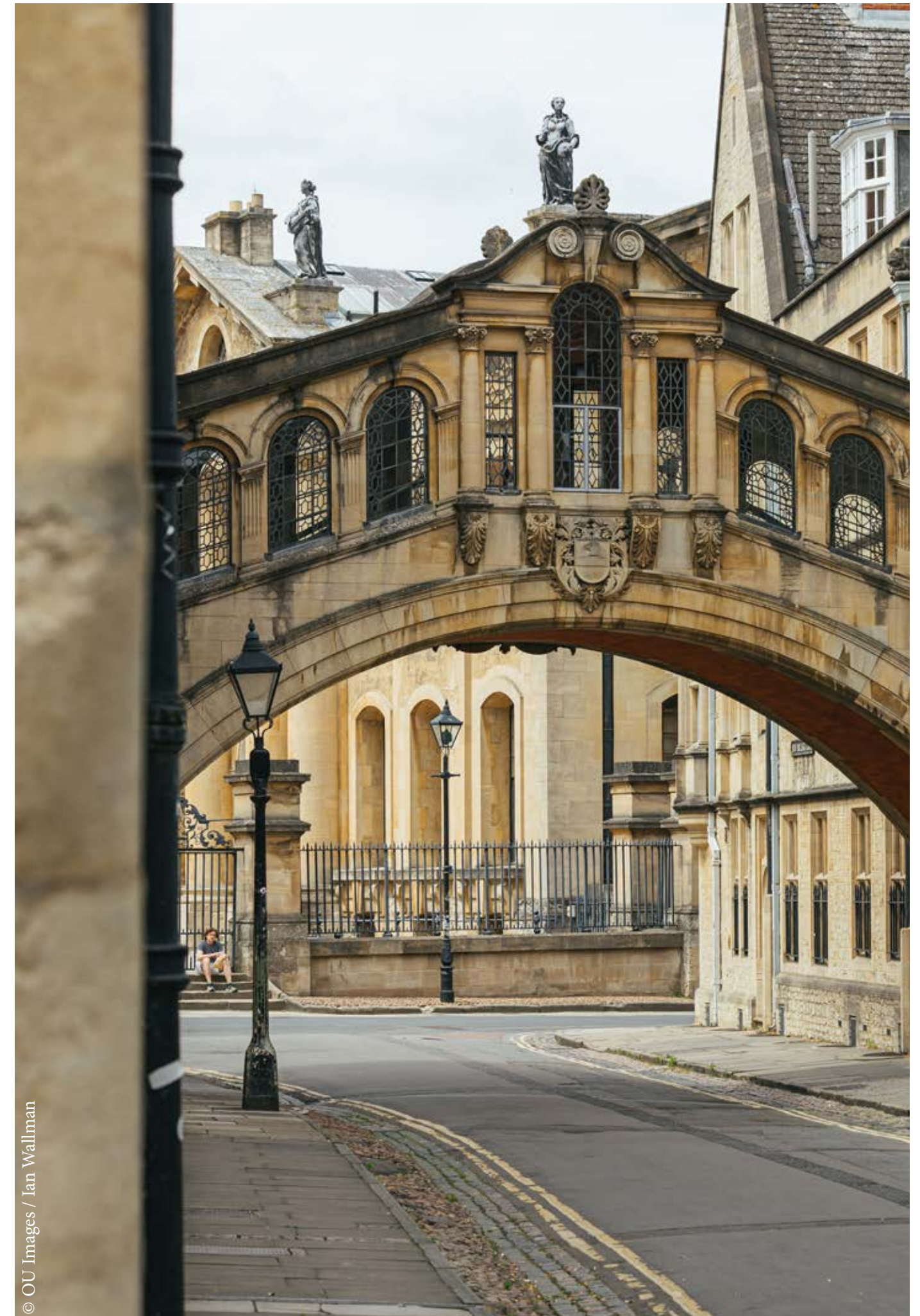
Andrew Barnes
Chairman, Coulthard
Barnes, New Zealand



Charlotte Lockhart
Partner, Coulthard
Barnes, New Zealand



Dasho Karma Ura
President, Centre for
Bhutan and GNH Studies



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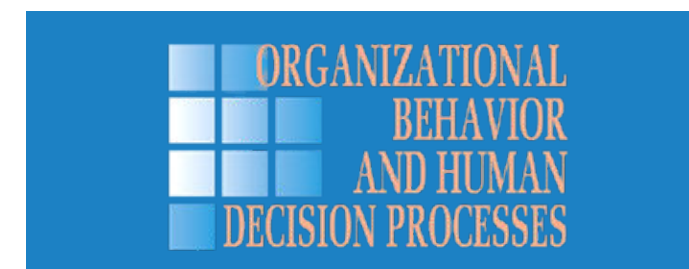
Publications



Human Wellbeing and Machine Learning *arXiv preprint arXiv:2206.00574*

Oparina, E., Kaiser, C., Gentile, N., Tkatchenko, A., Clark, A. E., De Neve, J. E., & D'Ambrosio, C.

There is a vast literature on the determinants of subjective wellbeing. International organisations and statistical offices are now collecting such survey data at scale. However, standard regression models explain surprisingly little of the variation in wellbeing, limiting our ability to predict it. In response, we here assess the potential of Machine Learning (ML) to help us better understand wellbeing. We analyse wellbeing data on over a million respondents from Germany, the UK, and the United States. In terms of predictive power, our ML approaches do perform better than traditional models. Although the size of the improvement is small in absolute terms, it turns out to be substantial when compared to that of key variables like health. We moreover find that drastically expanding the set of explanatory variables doubles the predictive power of both OLS and the ML approaches on unseen data. The variables identified as important by our ML algorithms – i.e. material conditions, health, and meaningful social relations – are similar to those that have already been identified in the literature. In that sense, our data-driven ML results validate the findings from conventional approaches.



Working During Non-Standard Work Time Undermines Intrinsic Motivation *doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2022.104134*

Giurge, L. M., & Woolley, K. (2022). *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*

How do people's perceptions about when they work affect their intrinsic motivation? We find that working during non-standard work time (weekends/holidays) versus standard work time (Monday-Friday, 9-to-5) undermines people's intrinsic motivation for their professional and academic pursuits. Working during non-standard work time decreases intrinsic motivation by causing people to consider better uses of their time. That is, people generate more upward counterfactual thoughts, which mediates the effect of work time on reduced intrinsic motivation. As a causal test of this process, increasing consideration of upward counterfactuals during standard work time reduces intrinsic motivation, whereas decreasing consideration of upward counterfactuals during non-standard work time helps employees and students maintain intrinsic motivation for their professional and academic pursuits. Overall, we identify a novel determinant of intrinsic motivation and address a real challenge many people face: How changing

work schedules affect interest and enjoyment of work, with important consequences for work outcomes.

THE LANCET Public Health

Policy stringency and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: a longitudinal analysis of data from 15 countries

[doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(22\)00060-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(22)00060-3)

Aknin, L. B., Andretti, B., Goldszmidt, R., Helliwell, J. F., Petherick, A., De Neve, J. E., Dunn, E. W., Fancourt, D., Goldberg, E., Jones, S. P., Karadag, O., Karam, E., Layard, R., Saxena, S., Thornton, E., Whillans, A., & Zaki, J. (2022). *The Lancet Public Health*

Background. To date, public health policies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic have been evaluated on the basis of their ability to reduce transmission and minimise economic harm. We aimed to assess the association between COVID-19 policy restrictions and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Methods.** In this longitudinal analysis, we combined daily policy stringency data from the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker with psychological distress scores and life evaluations captured in the Imperial College London-YouGov COVID-19 Behaviour Tracker Global Survey in fortnightly cross-sections from samples of 15 countries between April 27, 2020, and June 28, 2021. The mental health questions provided a sample size of 432 642 valid responses, with an average of 14 918 responses every 2 weeks. To investigate how policy stringency was associated with mental health, we considered two potential mediators: observed physical distancing and perceptions of the government's handling of the pandemic. Countries were grouped on the basis of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic as those pursuing an elimination strategy (countries that aimed to eliminate community transmission of SARS-CoV-2 within their borders) or those pursuing a mitigation strategy (countries that aimed to control SARS-CoV-2 transmission). Using a combined dataset of country-level and individual-level data, we estimated linear regression models with country-fixed effects (ie, dummy variables representing the countries in our sample) and with individual and contextual covariates. Additionally, we analysed data from a sample of Nordic countries, to compare Sweden (that pursued a mitigation strategy) to other Nordic countries (that adopted a near-elimination strategy). **Findings.** Controlling for individual and contextual variables, higher policy stringency was associated with higher mean psychological distress scores and lower life evaluations (standardised coefficients $\beta=0.014$ [95% CI 0.005 to 0.023] for psychological distress; $\beta=-0.010$ [-0.015 to -0.004] for life evaluation). Pandemic intensity (number of deaths per 100 000 inhabitants) was also associated with higher mean psychological distress scores and lower life evaluations (standardised coefficients $\beta=0.016$ [0.008 to 0.025] for psychological distress; $\beta=-0.010$ [-0.017 to -0.004] for life evaluation).

nature human behaviour

The negative association between policy stringency and mental health was mediated by observed physical distancing and perceptions of the government's handling of the pandemic. We observed that countries pursuing an elimination strategy used different policy timings and intensities compared with countries pursuing a mitigation strategy. The containment policies of countries pursuing elimination strategies were on average less stringent, and fewer deaths were observed. **Interpretation.** Changes in mental health measures during the first 15 months of the COVID-19 pandemic were small. More stringent COVID-19 policies were associated with poorer mental health. Elimination strategies minimised transmission and deaths, while restricting mental health effects.

A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Cash Transfers on Subjective Well-being and Mental Health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01252-z

McGuire, J., Kaiser, C., & Bach-Mortensen, A. M. (2022). *Nature Human Behaviour*

Cash transfers (CTs) are increasingly recognized as a scalable intervention to alleviate financial hardship. A large body of evidence evaluates the impact of CTs on subjective well-being (SWB) and mental health (MH) in low- and middle-income countries. We undertook a systematic review, quality appraisal and meta-analysis of 45 studies examining the impact of CTs on self-reported SWB and MH outcomes, covering a sample of 116,999 individuals. After an average follow-up time of two years, we find that CTs have a small but statistically significant positive effect on both SWB (Cohen's $d=0.13$, 95% confidence interval (CI) 0.09, 0.18) and MH ($d=0.07$, 95% CI 0.05, 0.09) among recipients. CT value, both relative to previous income and in absolute terms, is a strong predictor of the effect size. Based on this review and the large body of existing research demonstrating a positive impact of CTs on other outcomes (for example, health and income), there is evidence to suggest that CTs improve lives. To enable comparisons of the relative efficacy of CTs to improve MH and SWB, future research should meta-analyse the effects of alternative interventions in similar contexts.

Perspectives on Psychological SCIENCE

Mental health during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic: A review and recommendations for moving forward

doi.org/10.1177/1745691621102996

Aknin, L. B., De Neve, J. E., Dunn, E. W., Fancourt, D. E., Goldberg, E., Helliwell, J. F., Jones, S. P., Karam, E., Layard, R., Lyubomirsky, S., Rzepa, A., Saxena, S., Thornton, E. M., VanderWeele, T. J., Whillans, A. V., Zaki, J., Karadag, O., & Ben Amor, Y. (2022). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*

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 article 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.

JOURNAL OF Economic Behavior & Organization

Using Memories to Assess the Intrapersonal Comparability of Wellbeing Reports
doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2021.11.009

Kaiser, C. (2021). *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*

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 results from violations of this assumption. Second, I propose to use respondents' memories of past 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 have particularly strong effects on scale use. Nevertheless, scale shifts are generally not large enough to affect the sign or statistical significance of estimates compared to models that do not account for scale shifts. Finally, although discussed in the context of life satisfaction scales, the proposed approach is applicable to a wide range of other subjectively reported constructs.

Linking Sustainability and Happiness

Theoretical and Applied Perspectives

Linking Subjective Wellbeing and Pro-environmental Behaviour: A Multidimensional Approach
doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-89559-4_11

Krekel, C., & Prati, A. (2022). *Linking Sustainability and Happiness*

In recent years, policy-makers have taken steps towards acknowledging the importance of mental states when appraising citizens' wellbeing on the one side and the urgent challenge of shifting towards a more ecological society on the other. Previous work has established an encouraging positive link between these two seemingly unrelated notions, subjective wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour. This chapter offers an overview of the progress made to date and underlines that both subjective wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour can be structured according to different dimensions that interact in various ways. In this chapter, we empirically investigate some dimensions of both subjective wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour that have been overlooked so far. To do so, we use newly available data collected by the French National Statistical Institute and study seven dimensions of subjective wellbeing as well as attributions of political responsibility and prioritisation about green policies. In doing so, we move beyond the often unidimensional paradigm which associates subjective wellbeing with life satisfaction and pro-environmental behaviour with consumption. Our multidimensional approach offers new insights into which dimension of subjective wellbeing is most predictive of which pro-environmental behaviour and how happy and unhappy citizens have different attitudes about environmental policies.

Journal of Educational Psychology

Teachers "finding peace in a frantic world": An experimental study of self-taught and instructor-led mindfulness program formats on acceptability, effectiveness, and mechanisms
doi.org/10.1037/edu0000542

Montero-Marin, J., Taylor, L., Crane, C., Greenberg, M. T., Ford, T. J., Williams, J. M. G., García-Campayo, J., Sonley, A., Lord, L., Dalgleish, T., Blakemore, S.-J., MYRIAD team, & Kuyken, W. (2021). *Journal of Educational Psychology*

Mindfulness training (MT) is considered appropriate for school teachers and enhances well-being. However, little is known about the benefits of using self-taught formats, nor what the key mechanisms of change are that contribute to enhanced teacher well-being. This study compared instructor-led and self-taught MT based on a book (Williams & Penman, 2011) in a sample of secondary school teachers. We assessed expectancy, the degree to which participants believed the intervention was effective, their program engagement, well-being and psychological distress, and evaluated whether mindfulness and self-compassion skills acted as mediators of outcomes. In total,

206 teachers from 43 schools were randomized by school to an instructor-led or self-taught course—77% female, mean age 39 years (SD = 9.0). Both MT formats showed similar rates of participant expectancy and engagement, but the instructor-led arm was perceived as more credible. Using linear mixed-effects models, we found the self-taught arm showed significant pre-post improvements in self-compassion and well-being, while the instructor-led arm showed such improvements in mindfulness, self-compassion, well-being, perceived stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. Changes over time significantly differed between the groups in all these outcomes, favoring the instructor-led arm. The instructor-led arm, compared with the self-taught, indirectly improved teacher outcomes by enhancing mindfulness and self-compassion as mediating factors. Mindfulness practice frequency had indirect effects on teacher outcomes through mindfulness in both self-taught and instructor-led arms. Our results suggest both formats are considered reasonable, but the instructor-led is more effective than the self-taught.

**SOCIAL
SCIENCE
&
MEDICINE**
an international journal

Physical Pain, Gender, and the State of the Economy in 146 Nations

doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114332

Macchia, L., & Oswald, A. J. (2021). *Social Science & Medicine*

This paper reports the first cross-country study of the links between physical pain and the state of the economy. A key issue examined is how the level of pain in a society is influenced by the unemployment rate. The study uses pooled cross-sectional Gallup data from 146 countries (total N > 1.3 million). It estimates fixed-effects regression equations that control for personal characteristics. More than a quarter of the world's citizens are in physical pain. Physical pain is lower in an economic boom and greater in an economic downturn. Estimated effect sizes are substantial. Remarkably, increases in pain are borne almost exclusively by women and found principally in rich nations. These findings have paradoxical aspects. The counter-cyclical of physical pain is not what would be predicted by conventional economic analysis: during an expansion, people typically work harder and longer, and accidents and injuries increase. Nor are the study results due to unemployed citizens experiencing more pain (although they do). Instead, the study's findings are consistent with an important hypothesis proposed recently, using different kinds of evidence, by brain and behavioural-science researchers (e.g., Wiech and Tracey, 2009; Chou et al.; 2016). The hypothesis is that economic worry can create physical pain. This study provides the first cross-country evidence that the level of physical pain in a nation depends on the state of the economy. Pain is high when the unemployment rate is high. That is not because of greater pain among people who lose their jobs — it extends far beyond that into wider society. The increase in physical pain is experienced disproportionately by women.



World Happiness Report 2022

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

The 2022 edition, published in March, marked the 10th anniversary of the World Happiness Report and represents a bright light in dark times. It reports how the COVID-19 pandemic brought not only pain and suffering but also an increase in social support and benevolence.

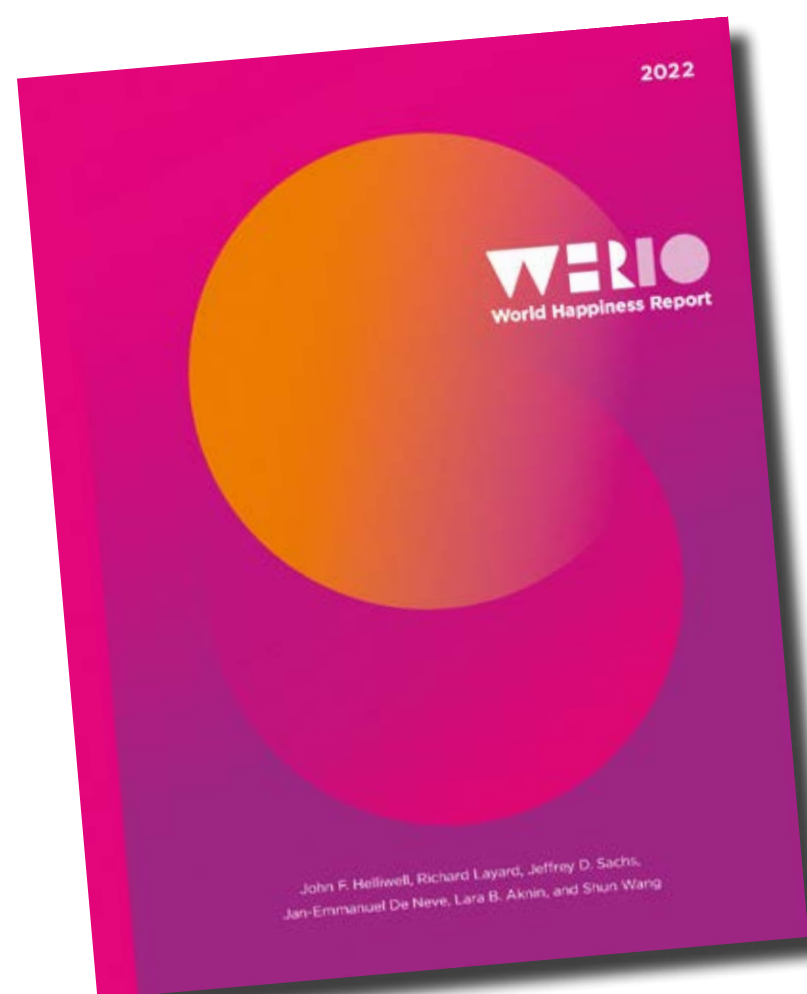
Our Centre is proud to act as an academic partner and contributor to this year's Report, with our Director Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve serving as a co-editor alongside: Prof John Helliwell, Prof Lord Richard Layard, Prof Jeffrey

D. Sachs, Prof Lara B. Aknin and Prof Shun Wang.

The Report is a publication of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, powered by the Gallup World Poll data.

The Report is supported by The Ernesto Illy Foundation, illycaffè, Davines Group, Unilever's largest ice cream brand Wall's, The Blue Chip Foundation, The William, Jeff, and Jennifer Gross Family Foundation, The Happier Way Foundation, and The Regenerative Society Foundation.

A copy of the 2022 edition's first chapter is reproduced on the following pages, with the full report available for download at worldhappiness.report.



Chapter 1

Overview on Our Tenth Anniversary

John F. Helliwell

Vancouver School of Economics, University of British Columbia

Richard Layard

Wellbeing Programme, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science

Jeffrey D. Sachs

University Professor and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve

Director, Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Oxford

Lara B. Aknin

Distinguished Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University

Shun Wang

Professor, KDI School of Public Policy and Management

Research on happiness



This is the tenth anniversary of the World Happiness Report. From its first year, the report has had a large and growing readership — reaching over 9 million in 2021. It has been widely cited. But more important has been the message the Report has carried. The true measure of progress is the happiness of the people; that happiness can be measured; and that we know a lot about what causes it. Given this knowledge, it is now possible for policy-makers to make people's happiness the goal of their policies. And each of us can live a wiser life.

We take the tenth anniversary as an opportunity to consider how far happiness research has come, where it stands, and the promising opportunities that lie ahead.

Looking back

Over the last ten years, there has been a transformation of public interest in happiness (see Chapter 3). Policy-makers worldwide increasingly see it as an important and overarching objective of public policy. With encouragement from the OECD, nearly all its member countries now measure the happiness of their people annually. The European Union asks its member countries to put well-being at the heart of policy design.

While interest in happiness has mushroomed over the ten years of World Happiness Reports, the global average of national life evaluations has been relatively stable. This average stability masks a great variety of national and regional experiences. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, life evaluations have risen by one full point or more in some countries (led by three Balkan countries, Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia) and fallen this much or more in other countries in deep trouble, with Venezuela, Afghanistan, and Lebanon dropping the most. There has, on average, been a long-term moderate upward trend in stress, worry, and sadness in most countries and a slight long-term decline in the enjoyment of life.

Happiness, benevolence, and trust during COVID-19 and beyond (Chapter 2)

Chapter 2 contains the national happiness rankings, explores trends over the past ten years, and provides a deeper examination of emotions, behaviour, and life in general during 2020 and 2021. The 2021 data confirm the 2020 finding that average life evaluations, reflecting the net effects of offsetting negative and positive influences, have remained remarkably resilient during COVID-19. For the young, life satisfaction has fallen, while for those over 60, it has risen — with little overall change. Worry and stress have risen — by 8% in 2020 and 4% in 2021 compared with pre-pandemic levels.

On the positive side, the most remarkable change seen during COVID-19 has been the global upsurge in benevolence in 2021. This benevolence has provided notable support for the life evaluations of givers, receivers, and observers, who have been gratified to see their community's readiness to reach out to help each other in times of need. In every global region, there have been large increases in the proportion of people who give money to charity, help strangers, and do voluntary work in every global region. Altogether the global average of these three measures was up by a quarter in 2021, compared with before the pandemic.

COVID-19 has also demonstrated the crucial importance of trust for human well-being. Deaths from COVID-19 during 2020 and 2021 have been markedly lower in those countries with higher trust in public institutions and where inequality is lower.

Looking forward

For the future, the prospects for happiness will depend on a whole range of factors, including the future course of the pandemic and the scale of military conflict. But an important contribution will come from improvements in the science of happiness. In this tenth anniversary issue, we celebrate three major promising developments in our ability to measure and explain happiness.

The first is our new ability to measure the happiness content of printed text, be it in books or social media. This can be done mechanically by counting the frequency of different types of words or by machine learning which also analyses content.

These methods show that references to happiness have increased sharply over the last ten years (see Chapter 3). Meanwhile, references to income and GDP have fallen, and they have become less common than references to happiness. These are encouraging long-term trends.

Automated text analysis can also be used to measure changes in emotion over weeks or even days — at least among those who tweet (see Chapter 4). It turns out that measures of emotion on Twitter move closely in line with the replies about emotion given in social surveys — which reinforces one's confidence in both methods of measuring emotion.

A second major area of progress concerns the relationship between biology and happiness. We now have many 'biomarkers' of happiness. In addition, the genes we inherit provide important clues as to why some people are happier than others (see Chapter 5).

The third area of advance is the range of emotions covered in happiness research. Happiness research in the West has tended to ignore important positive emotions which involve low arousal — such as calm, peace, and harmony. Recent research shows how significant these emotions contribute to overall life satisfaction (see Chapter 6).

As the science of happiness develops further, the World Happiness Report will continue to search for even deeper insights into the secrets of human happiness. This search will be aided by new data and research tools like those described in Chapters 3 to 6, as summarised below.

Trends in conceptions of progress and well-being (Chapter 3)

- Interest in happiness and subjective well-being has risen sharply, whether measured by the frequency of those words in books in multiple global languages, or by the scale of published research, or by the number of government measurement initiatives.
- By contrast, attention to income and GDP is decreasing, and in books published since 2013, the words GDP (or the like) have appeared less frequently than the word 'happiness'.
- The World Happiness Report is referred to widely, and it is now mentioned twice as often (in books) as the phrase 'Beyond GDP', which itself has also been on a rapidly rising trajectory.
- Academic research on happiness has exploded and now involves authors from all over the world.
- When organisations, academics, or governments try to define progress through creating a new set of indicators, they increasingly include measures of happiness. This reflects the strong public appetite for this conception of progress and the growing availability of data on happiness.
- Thus, the science of happiness has much to offer governments devising better policies. But it can never tell them how to handle inequality or questions of long-run sustainability.

Using social media data to capture emotions before and during COVID-19 (Chapter 4)

- Millions of people share their thoughts and feelings online via social media each day. Automated analysis of social media data offers exciting promise for measuring trends in emotions. The methods used include counts of emotional words listed in emotion dictionaries and machine learning methods which also take into account the structure and meaning of sentences.

- Two case studies of tweets on Twitter examined the daily and weekly movements of positive and negative emotions, including sadness and anxiety, before and during COVID-19 in the U.K. and Austria. These were then compared with the measurements of these emotions as recorded in standard social surveys of the population. The two measures of emotion (social-media-based and survey-based) tracked each other extraordinarily well, although clear differences between text analysis methods and emotions exist. The Twitter measures of emotion were less closely related to survey-based questions on life satisfaction.
- As regards the impact of COVID-19, Twitter data in 18 countries showed strong increases in anxiety and sadness during COVID-19 (together with decreases in anger). These changes in anxiety and sadness were positively related to the incidence of COVID-19 itself and the stringency of anti-COVID measures.
- How to best analyze social media data to achieve valid measures of emotions of the population is still an important research topic. Nonetheless, it is becoming increasingly clear that measures of emotion from social media can effectively complement measures based on social surveys when robust methods are applied — a big step forward for happiness research.

Exploring the biological basis for happiness (Chapter 5)

- Genetic studies involving twin or family designs reveal that about 30-40% of the differences in happiness between people within a country are accounted for by genetic differences among individuals. The other 60-70% of differences between people result from the effect of environmental influences that are independent of the genes.
- Genome-Wide Association Studies show that the genetic influence comes from the cumulative effects of numerous genetic variants, each with small effects. The next step is to use the outcome of these large-scale studies to create a so-called Polygenic Score; a number

that summarises the estimated effect of the many genetic variants on an individual's phenotype. It reflects an individual's estimated genetic predisposition for a given trait and can be used as a predictor for that trait.

- Some people are born with a set of genetic variants that makes it easier to feel happy, while others are less fortunate. But genes and environment are generally correlated: genes can affect people's choice of environment and how others react to them. At the same time, genes can influence how people are affected by the world around them — there is 'gene-environment interaction'.
- The most consistent finding with respect to the brain areas involved in well-being is that a more active default mode network (DMN) is related to lower well-being. (The DMN is a large brain network primarily composed of the medial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate cortex/precuneus, and angular gyrus). This network is most active when a person is not focused on the outside world, and the brain is at wakeful rest, such as during daydreaming and mind-wandering.
- Many other processes in the human body are important for explaining individual differences in happiness and well-being among individuals. For example, based on the limited number of available studies, higher positive emotion is probably associated with higher levels of serotonin and lower levels of cortisol, whereas chronic activity of the immune system is linked to lower well-being.
- We should use findings from genetically informative research to create happiness-enhancing interventions, social policies, activities, and environments that make possible the flourishing of genetic potential and simultaneously offset vulnerability and risk.



Photo by Abhishek Kishan on Unsplash

Balance and Harmony (Chapter 6)

- Among positive experiences, Eastern culture gives special value to experiences of balance and harmony. These are important, low-arousal positive emotions, but they have been relatively neglected in happiness research, which has stronger roots in Western cultures.
- In 2020 for the first time, the Gallup World Poll asked questions on the experience of
 - Your life being in balance
 - Feeling at peace with your life
 - Experiencing calm for a lot of the day
 - Preferring a calm life to an exciting life
 - Focus on caring for others or self.
- The experiences of balance, peace, and calm are more prevalent in Western countries, which also experience the highest levels of satisfaction — and they are less prevalent in poorer countries, including those in East Asia.
- The majority of people in almost every country prefer a calmer life to an exciting one. But that preference is no higher in Eastern countries than elsewhere. However, it is particularly high in the poorer countries, especially in Africa, where actual calm is low.
- Both balance and peace contribute strongly to a satisfying life in all regions of the world.

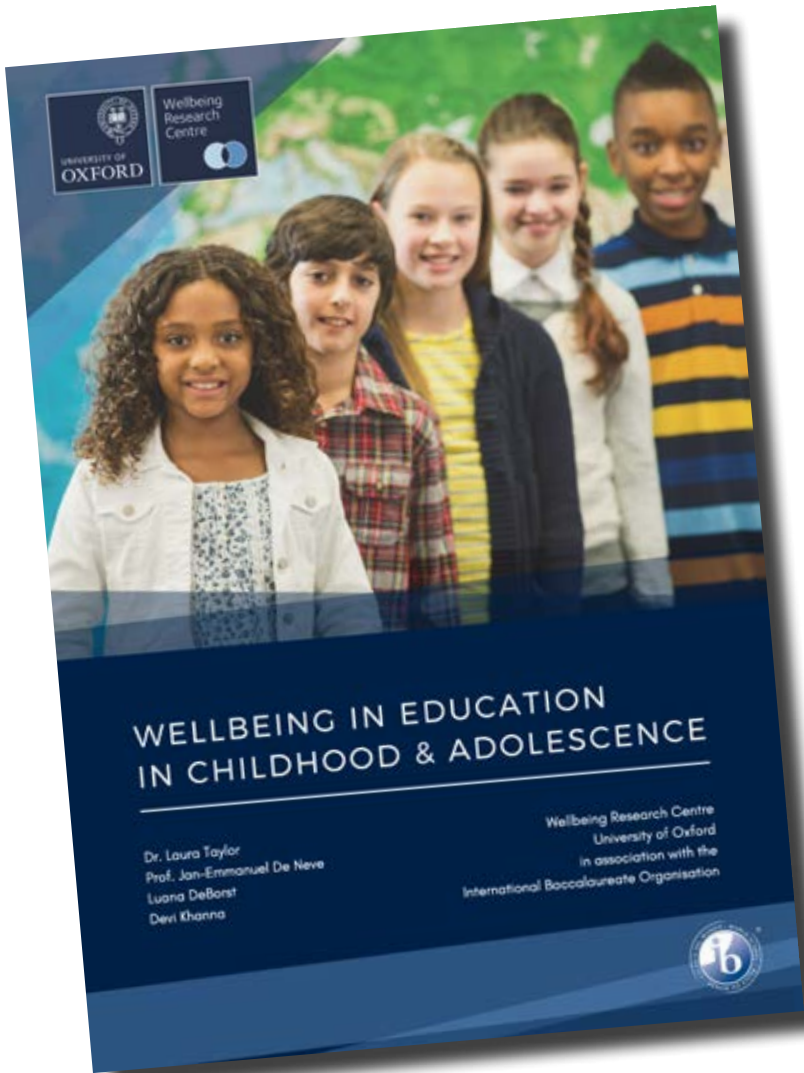


Wellbeing in Education in Childhood & Adolescence

We were pleased to publish the first output from our multi-year research partnership with the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) in 2022.

The Wellbeing in Education in Childhood & Adolescence scoping report, co-authored by Dr Laura Taylor, Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Luana DeBorst and Devi Khanna, reviews the current evidence for helping to advance wellbeing in schools and, significantly, introduces a simple yet powerful model to understand and measure it.

A snapshot of the report's Executive Summary is reproduced on the following page, with the full report available for download on the Centre's website.



WELLBEING IN EDUCATION IN CHILDHOOD & ADOLESCENCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This scoping report was conducted by the Wellbeing Research Centre (University of Oxford) in collaboration with the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO). **The aim of the report was to investigate how wellbeing could be programmed across the IB curricula with a view to a new approach to wellbeing across the IBO by 2030.**

The IBO have an opportunity to be pioneers in this area, and the report gives a detailed overview of routes to progress that could be pursued and what effective action can be taken. This report gives IBO stakeholders a foundation in the wellbeing science of childhood and adolescence to build on across their programs and educational settings.

The report is structured in three parts: a literature review, the wellbeing framework, and feedback from school stakeholders.

The Literature Review

The **literature review** gives an overview of the leading international scientific research and programs which have been established to define, measure, and enhance student wellbeing (ages 3–19) in school settings. For this report we conducted a non-systematic review of reviews on wellbeing of children and adolescents in educational settings. This literature search was intended to be an initial scoping activity to inform the literature review, and identify articles of interest, rather than be the focus of it.

The Wellbeing Framework

The **Wellbeing Framework** and a corresponding set of principles are proposed, based on evidence from the literature review, which can be used across ages and stages in all school contexts. **The key performance indicator is school life satisfaction**, as this gives schools the power to 'move the needle' on pupil wellbeing. The framework incorporates the areas that show the most potential in the literature to impact on school life satisfaction and pupil wellbeing.

The School Stakeholder Questionnaire

The **school stakeholder questionnaire** was sent to a small subset of international IBO schools to gain first impressions on the framework and get feedback on the strengths and challenges of implementing such a framework in the school setting.

DEFINITIONS

Wellbeing is often used as a catch-all term for anything that sits outside academic attainment. This makes it difficult for schools to measure and implement changes, because the parameters are so broad and intangible.

When we discuss wellbeing in school settings, there is often a misunderstanding that this is just the opposite of mental ill health, or just happiness. In the report, we explain the differences between these concepts and how schools can use these definitions to decide which aspects of wellbeing to measure and impact.

The definitions we recommend in the report remove the drivers of wellbeing (like resilience, mental health, family, peers, teachers, etc.) from the definition and focus on the three key areas of subjective wellbeing: life satisfaction; affect; and eudaimonia (meaning or purpose).

We suggest that a school specific definition, including all three areas, is most appropriate:

“*This school promotes the wellbeing of all pupils. We define wellbeing as our pupils being satisfied with their school lives, having positive experiences at, and feelings about, school, and believing that what they do at school gives them some purpose and meaning.*”



KEY FINDINGS

- **Childhood and adolescence are key developmental windows for psychological interventions in areas like wellbeing.** This is not only to improve the life of the child during this period, but also to influence the processes of neural reconfiguration and structural remodelling to prepare the young person for adulthood.
- **There is value in using school time, money, and resources to improve pupil wellbeing.** These improvements will likely not only have immediate benefits for students but will have a driving effect on other positive outcomes (individually, socially, and academically) and have a positive impact on the future lives of the young people as they mature into adulthood.
- **Wellbeing is multi-dimensional, affected by many variables, both within the individual themselves, and external elements that either support or pose risks to wellbeing.** The complex bidirectional interplay between these variables should be considered when implementing interventions in educational settings.
- **Psychological functioning is a complicated predictor of wellbeing,** and more research evidence is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn about which of these elements influence wellbeing. **Areas that show promise are resilience, self-esteem, optimism, growth mindset, self-control, emotion regulation, and finding meaning or purpose.**

- **Family interactions are very impactful on the wellbeing of young people and, for children in particular, they are the most significant driver.** While schools and programs have very little control over the home environment, they can provide guidance and information to caregivers about how they can support their child's wellbeing and what factors at home influence it.
- **Schools are very influential on young people's wellbeing, especially the interactions that they have there.** It is important that young people feel safe and supported in their educational environment, and as children get older the influence of peers becomes more prominent. **It is important for pupils to feel connected to their school and feel that it is a good fit for them.**
- **Cooperative learning in the classroom is very important for wellbeing.** Young people benefit from seeing themselves as part of a team and they can benefit from competition when it is team-based rather than focused on individuals.
- **School climate is important for both pupils and staff, and impacts on many other drivers of wellbeing.** It is particularly important for the school environment to feel safe and that the teachers respect and have a good relationship with pupils.
- **The literature is clear that there is a place for both Whole-School Approaches (WSAs) and targeted interventions** and that, if implemented properly, WSAs can be effective. However targeted interventions are still needed, and are effective for those young people who are struggling. It is again clear from the literature that there is no one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Community consultation and ownership is recommended for wellbeing strategies to be adopted and promoted by the school community** (parents and caregivers, pupils, staff, wider community, and other school stakeholders such as school governors). This should crucially include pupil voices and a child-focused approach.
- **Wellbeing policies and strategies should be formalised,** any program implemented should have clear guidelines (or be manualised), and **staff should know which areas they are individually responsible for.**
- **Interventions should have a sound theoretical base** and when interventions are delivered, school stakeholders should ensure that these essential theoretical elements are taught during the intervention and not lost through adaptation. These interventions should also aim to be direct and specific for the desired outcome.
- External experts can be useful for the initial set up of an intervention, but **for the intervention to thrive, in-house staff must take over to ensure that the intervention becomes embedded and is successful in the longer-term.**

“*It is important for pupils to feel connected to their school and feel that it is a good fit for them.*”





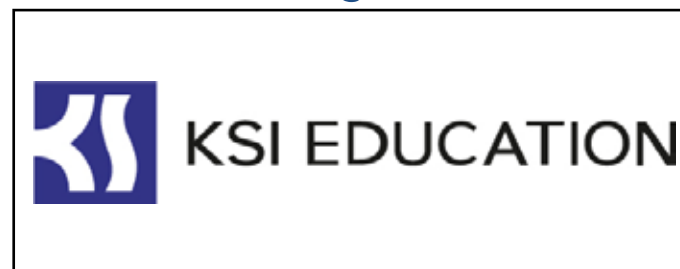
Partners and Projects

We remain extremely grateful for the support of founding partner KSI Education.

Partnerships with the National League of Cities and International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) have also supported the Wellbeing Research Centre in pursuing innovative and impactful research.

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

Founding Partner



Partners



Wellbeing Research & Policy Conference 2022



The inaugural Wellbeing Research and Policy Conference was held over three days in July 2022, bringing together scholars and policymakers to discuss the latest research, insights, and developments in the field of wellbeing science.

Plenary speakers, panel discussions, breakout sessions and policy roundtables covered a number of key themes including:

- Fundamental issues in wellbeing measurement
- Economics of wellbeing
- Wellbeing policy and interventions
- Wellbeing in education
- The future of work and wellbeing
- Global perspectives on wellbeing



The Centre was pleased to host a number of key speakers to offer their thoughts on wellbeing, mechanisms for its measurement, and how robust research can inform policy interventions.

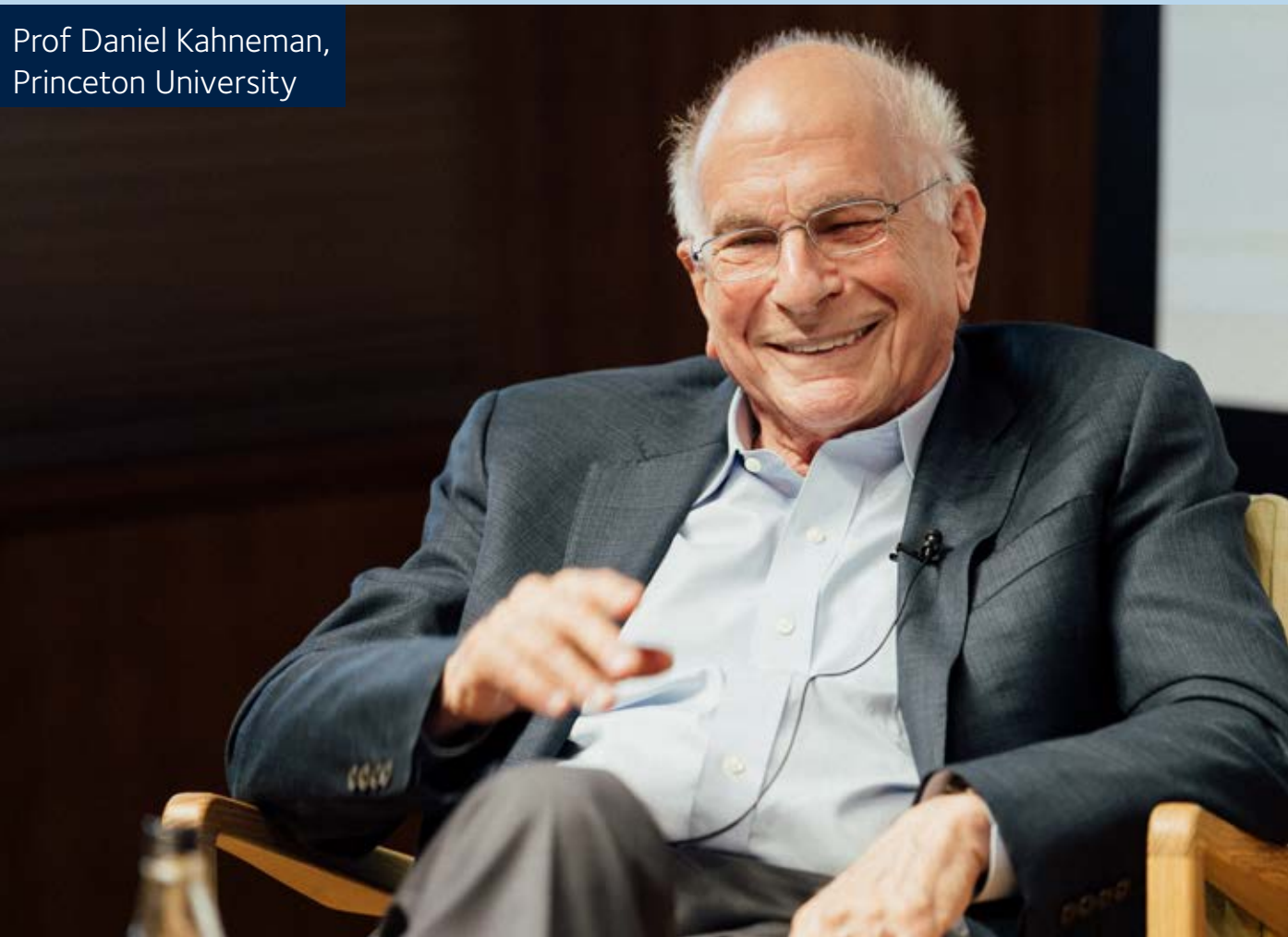
Research Speakers



Prof Andrew Clark, Paris School of Economics



Prof John Helliwell, University of British Columbia



Prof Daniel Kahneman, Princeton University



Prof Cassie Mogilner Holmes, UCLA



Prof Claire Haworth, University of Bristol



Prof Andrew Oswald, University of Warwick



Prof Carol Graham, Brookings Institution

Policy Speakers



Katrín Jakobsdóttir,
PM of Iceland



Prof Lord Richard Layard,
London School of Economics



Lord Gus O'Donnell, Former Cabinet
Secretary and Head of the Civil Service



▲ **Roundtable #5:** Business policy and the role wellbeing metrics can play in measuring the social impact in ESG standards (L-R):

- Joumana Bercetche, Anchor, CNBC
- Alan Jope, CEO, Unilever
- Josh Krichefski, EMEA CEO and Global COO, Mediacom
- Sofia Maroudia, Director of ESG, Snam
- LaFawn Davis, Senior VP of ESG, Indeed
- Martin Dewhurst, Senior Partner, McKinsey & Company
- Manjit Jus, Global Head of ESG Research and Data, S&P Global

▼ **Roundtable #1:** How to best operationalise wellbeing in policy (L-R):

- Nancy Hey, Director, What Works Wellbeing
- Sara MacLennan, Economic Advisor, UK Government Economic Service, DEFRA
- Amanda Rowlatt CBE, Chair, Social Impacts Task Force
- Liz McKeown, Director of Public Policy Analysis, Office for National Statistics
- Jo Swinson, Director, Partners for a New Economy





▲ **Roundtable #3:** Wellbeing and Philanthropy (L-R):

- Dr Michael Plant, Director, Happier Lives Institute
- Dr Alonzo Plough, VP, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Prof Anna Vignoles, Director, The Leverhulme Trust
- Prof Miranda Wolper MBE, Director of Mental Health, Wellcome Trust
- Sarah Davidson, CEO, Carnegie UK
- Dr John Bare, VP, John Templeton Foundation



Andy Rzepa,
Gallup



Marco Alverà, Co-founder,
Zhero, and CEO, TES-H2



Prof Paul Dolan, London
School of Economics



Prof Diane Coyle,
University of Cambridge

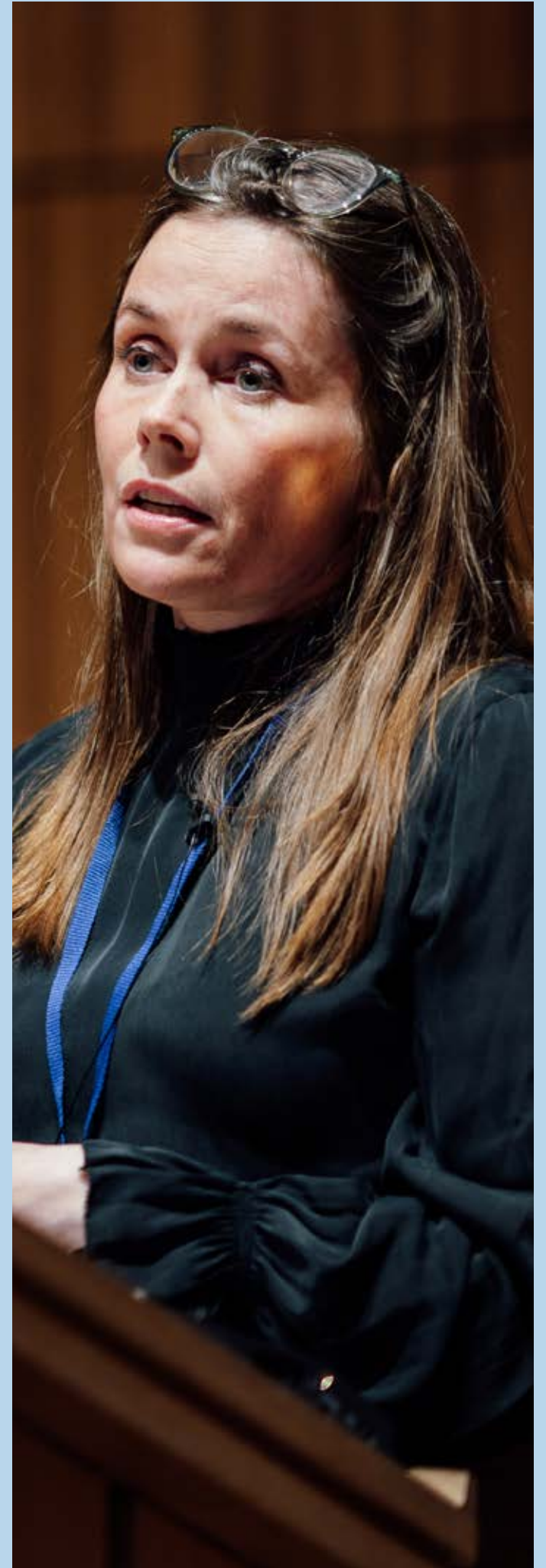


Dr Alden Lai, Global
Wellbeing Initiative

▼ **Roundtable #4:** Local policy and community interventions to raise wellbeing (L-R):

- Karen Guggenheim, CEO, World Happiness Summit
- Jonathan Rose, Author, *The Well-Tempered City*
- Dr Dexter Shurney, President, Blue Zones Institute
- Sue Polis, National League of Cities
- Dr Mark Williamson, Director, Action for Happiness







Prizes

Three prizes were presented to recognise the contribution of exceptional individuals to the field of wellbeing science. These included:

Distinguished Career Award, Prof Daniel Kahneman

Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve: “When we found out Danny was able to come to our Conference, it was decided pretty soon who we would want to award the Distinguished Career Award in wellbeing science to. We were joking that, needless to say, it doesn’t quite figure next to a Nobel Prize, but Danny: please consider this a heartfelt ‘thank you’ from everybody in the wellbeing science community.”



Best Paper Award, Dr George Ward

Prof Andrew Oswald: “Research is best thought of as a group activity, although all humans have a degree of ego. For the sake of science I believe it is valuable to try to downplay that somewhat, and to think of it as a collaborative process where we all contribute different ideas, but it does seem to me there’s a place to congratulate, in this case, a young scholar from the community for his work. I have great pleasure on behalf of the committee in awarding for a very fine paper on workplace happiness, this prize to George Ward.”



Student Research Prize, Sophie Westhorpe

Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve: “A lot of undergraduate students came forward with really wonderful ideas, but we ultimately decided that Sophie Westhorpe would win the Student Research Prize for her wonderful proposal to work on the impact of the menopause on women and their wellbeing in the workplace. Well done Sophie.”



Partners

The Wellbeing Research Centre is hugely grateful to these partners, whose generosity and confidence in the power of wellbeing science made the inaugural Wellbeing Research and Policy Conference possible.





Seminar Series

Our seminars are a hub for scholars to come together and share their work in progress to advance our understanding of empirical wellbeing science.

Held in a hybrid format, the Centre has welcomed a number of international colleagues over the past 12 months, and facilitated a global forum for discussion across the academic community.

The Centre wishes to place on record its thanks to all those who have attended seminars in 2021-22 for their expert contributions, original ideas, and lively discussions.

Recordings of each seminar sessions are made available on demand via the Centre's YouTube channel.

Autumn 2021

Hope, Despair, and Divided Futures in post-COVID America: Lessons from Surveys of Low-Income Adolescents of Different Races and Places
Prof Carol Graham (Brookings Institution)

The Economics of Happiness: A Conversation with Richard Easterlin
Prof Richard Easterlin (University of Southern California) and Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve (University of Oxford)

Feelings and Actions
Dr Caspar Kaiser (University of Oxford)

The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Wellbeing in the UK: An Analysis of the Moderating Role of Social Capital
Giulia Slater (University of Siena)

A Computational and Neural Model for Happiness
Dr Robb Rutledge (Yale University)

Spring 2022

Exploring The Relationship Between Violence and Subjective Wellbeing: Evidence from Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Tanzania
Dr Giulia Greco and Caroline Chesang (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine)

The Anna Karenina Income Effect: Wellbeing Inequality Decreases with Income
Dr Bouke Klein Teeselink (Yale University)

Accounting for life's Ups and Downs: Using High-Frequency Experience Sampling Data to Explain Within-Person Variability and Asymmetry in Happiness
Prof Nattavudh (Nick) Powdthavee (University of Warwick)

The Quality of Society and Happiness
Prof John Knight (University of Oxford)

Back to Edgeworth? Estimating the Value of Time Using Hedonic Experiences
Dr Christian Krekel (London School of Economics)

Do Different Reasons for Migration Lead to Differences in Subjective Wellbeing?
Prof Carlos Vargas-Silva and Daily Pollenne (University of Oxford)

Social Capital Reduces the Impact of Social Comparisons on Subjective Wellbeing: Evidence from International Datasets
Prof Stefano Bartolini (University of Siena)



How's **life?**

Measure what you treasure and join the World Wellbeing Movement.

The World Wellbeing Movement was launched at the inaugural Wellbeing Research & Policy Conference.

The Movement is formed of global leaders from business, civil society, and academia that have come together to put wellbeing at the heart of decision-making in business and public policy.

Doing so starts with measuring what we treasure most by ensuring that wellbeing metrics are part of global standards to evaluate societal progress and, in particular, to help measure the social impact of organisations in ESG reporting.

The Wellbeing Research Centre serves as academic partner to the World Wellbeing Movement, which is led by managing director, Sarah Cunningham.



Effectively measuring wellbeing has far-reaching potential for the three Ps: Purpose in business, People and the Planet.

Wellbeing & Purpose



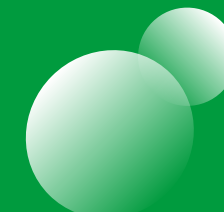
Purpose-led organisations positively impact the communities they serve, from customer satisfaction to employee wellbeing and beyond. This is the cornerstone for superior long-run performance.

Wellbeing & People



Unlike GDP and income, a bottom-up measure of wellbeing empowers citizens and puts their interests at the heart of evidence-based policy-making to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Wellbeing & Planet



Sustainable development is intertwined with the wellbeing of current and future generations. Applying a wellbeing lens to environmental policies helps transition to a greener and happier economy.

Our **Objectives**

- 1** To adopt a **simple and universally acceptable measure of wellbeing** as a key ESG indicator for social impact.
- 2** To **share best practices** and provide insights into how to improve wellbeing.
- 3** To **build a community** that influences policy-makers across the globe to adopt wellbeing as their goal.

Founding Members

 	 fondazione
 HSBC UK	
	V I C T O R P I N C H U K F O U N D A T I O N
	
 	 FONDAZIONE SVILUPPO E CRESCITA CRT
	 THE ENERGY AND RESOURCES INSTITUTE <i>Creating Innovative Solutions for a Sustainable Future</i>
 DAY WEEK GLOBAL	McKinsey Health Institute





Q&A with the **Managing Director**

What is the World Wellbeing Movement?

The WWM is a coalition of global leaders from business, civil society, and academia that have come together to help put wellbeing at the heart of decision-making in both business and public policy. Our approach to achieving this critical mission is quite unique, as we sit at the intersection between these groups to inform real-world change to people's wellbeing.

How does the Movement work with the Wellbeing Research Centre?

Our approach is strongly evidence-based, and this is why our academic partnership with the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford is so key. By co-locating alongside the Centre at Harris Manchester College, we are perfectly positioned to translate their ground-breaking research into real-world impact.

Tell us more about the WWM founding members – what do they bring to the table?

While our academic partner at Oxford is core to our evidence-based approach, all of our founding members are pivotal to achieving our ambitious mission. After all, how can we translate academic learnings into real-world impact, and further our research without the collaboration and input of

leading experts from a range of industries and sectors, and without access to real-world environments in which to run field trials?

We are privileged in this regard to be partnered with leading global corporations and foundations among our founding members.

As the old adage goes, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Through collaboration, we can achieve so much more.

What are the plans for the World Wellbeing Movement in your first year of operation?

We believe that all employers have a duty of care to ensure the wellbeing of their employees. And that starts with assessing or measuring employee wellbeing, because you can't manage what you don't measure.

At the heart of the World Wellbeing Movement's mission is the goal of filling in the 'S', or the social component in ESG reporting. Just as 'emissions' is the flagbearer of the environmental component in ESG reporting, we would argue that 'wellbeing' could

become the single most important measurement of the social component, and could become a much-needed standardised metric.

But, of course, effective measurement is just the first step. In partnership with the Wellbeing Research Centre, we are also compiling a repository of evidence-informed workplace wellbeing interventions.

Let's hear more about you – why did you want to join the WWM?

The WWM's approach strongly aligns with my own expertise, which bridges both the corporate and academic worlds.

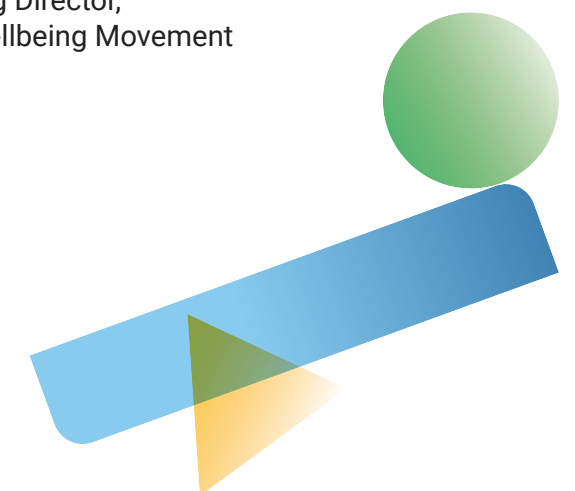
I have over 25 years' experience, gained in companies including Mastercard, Google, BT, and Accenture. Most recently, I led Mastercard's European Technology Hub in Dublin, where I was focused on creating a great place to work with employee wellbeing as the cornerstone. Under my leadership, Mastercard's Dublin operation grew from 450 employees to over 1,000, with employee engagement scores improving year-on-year.

I also recently completed an Executive Master's degree in Psychological and Behavioural Science at LSE, where I was honoured to be awarded the prizes for Best Overall Performance and Best Dissertation in my cohort.

Over the years, I have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of corporate culture, so I came to LSE with many hypotheses for interventions focused on workplace wellbeing interventions that I wanted test. Indeed, for my dissertation, I ran a Randomised Controlled Trial which tested a simple intervention aimed at reducing workplace stress.

Now, with the World Wellbeing Movement, we are part of an important community of changemakers providing evidence-based insights to support governments and policy-makers in applying a wellbeing lens to policy decisions.

Sarah Cunningham
Managing Director,
World Wellbeing Movement



Our Impact

Our 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*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Financial Times*.

Media

Work undertaken by members of the Wellbeing Research Centre has been published in some of the world’s most prestigious media outlets over the past 12 months. By using these vital channels of public engagement we have expanded international interaction with wellbeing science.



The ‘Great Realization’ Has Inspired People To Seek Happiness In Their Jobs And Careers
Forbes, September 1, 2021

Jack Kelly

“Compensation, job titles, the status of working at a particular company, stock options and growth opportunities are seen as important metrics in a job. They are, but there’s more to it, according to the survey. Indeed’s work happiness study and consultation from leading happiness experts Lyubomirsky and Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of Oxford University’s Wellbeing Research Centre, identified the following key drivers of work happiness:

- Belonging – *I feel a sense of belonging in my company*
- Energy – *In most of my work tasks, I feel energized*
- Appreciation – *There are people at work who appreciate me as a person*
- Purpose – *My work has a clear sense of purpose*
- Achievement – *I am achieving most of my goals at work*
- Compensation – *I am paid fairly for my work*
- Support – *There are people at work who give me support and encouragement*
- Learning – *I often learn something at work*
- Inclusion – *My work environment feels inclusive and respectful of all people*
- Flexibility – *My work has the time and location flexibility I need*
- Trust – *I can trust people in my company*
- Management – *My manager helps me succeed”*



Worker well-being is pivotal in increasing business productivity, says economist De Neve
The Economic Times, September 17, 2021

Srijana Mitra Das

“Economist Jan-Emmanuel De Neve teaches at Oxford University’s Saïd Business School. Speaking to Srijana Mitra Das, he discusses what composes employee well-being — and why this matters to businesses:

What is the core of your research?
I work on the economics of human well-being. This school of economics explores how people feel regarding how their lives are going. The research leads into the workplace and studies what aspects of work contribute to our sense of

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

well-being and what effect such employee well-being then has on work.”

The Curse of Off-Hours Email
The Wall Street Journal, October 2, 2021

Laura Giurge, Vanessa Bohns

“Imagine it’s the end of the workday and you have a non-urgent work question to ask a colleague. You know this colleague has already gone home for the day, but you send off an email to them anyway.

Now ask yourself this: Do you expect a response from your colleague right away?

Probably not. But does your colleague understand that?

Research that we’ve just published in the journal Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes suggests that the answer is “no.” Worse, our inability to recognize this fact when we shoot off an email often makes us complicit in an “always on” work culture that contributes to burnout.”

Your Colleagues Make You Happy At Work
La Presse, November 9, 2021

Isabelle Dubé

“More than half of workers say that relationships with co-workers and their manager have a major impact on their happiness at work. This is according to a global survey conducted by Forrester at the request of Indeed. The job search platform now lists on its site the “happiness at work score” of recruiting companies, developed in collaboration with the University of Oxford and the University of California.”



Be Intentional About How You Spend Your Time Off
Harvard Business Review, December 1, 2021

Laura Giurge, Vanessa Bohns

“The evidence is clear: Burnout is on the rise. A common suggestion for preventing burnout is to take regular breaks away from work. But what should those breaks look like if we want to maximize rejuvenation and protect our well-being? It may be surprising to learn, but passive “rest and relaxation” isn’t as effective for recovering from the daily grind as using breaks to accomplish your goals — not your work goals, but your personal goals. Examples include spending time with friends and family, pursuing your hobbies, or even organizing your closet. Whatever your own personal goals are, the important thing is that you lay out a plan for how

you envision spending your time during the break. We call this proactive recovery, and we find that it makes people feel happier than passive forms of recovery.



If You Thought Hybrid Working Was Hard, Wait Until 2022

The Financial Times, December 19, 2021

Pilita Clark

“It is a bleak fact of 21st century life that the main stage of a business conference is where bold disagreements go to die. I speak as a serial offender, having been far too polite and seemly myself at such events, which have grown worse thanks to the stilted distance of virtual conferences. So it was mildly shocking the other day to watch an online business panel discussion riddled with unflinching dissent. Tellingly, the debate centred on a divide over worker autonomy that I suspect will widen as the trend for more flexible working gathers pace. It happened at an FT conference, during a session on whether hybrid working between home and the office can really work. Three of the four speakers were part of an emerging — and persuasive — consensus that pre-pandemic, too much of white collar working life was inflexible, inhuman and unproductive. Now, Covid has stuck a welcome dagger in the heart of mindless, nine-to-five office presenteeism from which there is no going back.”

The environmental burden of the international job market for economists

VoxEU, January 16, 2022

Olivier Chanel, Alberto Prati, Morgan Raux

“Each year, the ‘international job market for economists’ involves over 1,000 junior candidates and several hundred recruiters from all over the world meeting for short pre-screening interviews at annual congresses in Europe and in the US, thus generating a momentous and avoidable global hypermobility. This column argues it is time to reassess this unsustainable recruitment system and estimates the carbon footprint of alternative systems. The ongoing edition of the job market is taking place online, thus offering a good opportunity to reconsider the previous unsustainable recruitment system in economics. It is a pressing responsibility for our profession to do more in fighting climate change (Oswald and Stern 2019, Pestel and Oswald 2021). A good start is to look at the plank in our own eye.”



Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve Discusses Indeed's Work Happiness Score on BBC World Business Report

BBC World News, January 26, 2022

“Job site Indeed's Work Happiness Score has launched in the UK. Developed with guidance by Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve (Director, Wellbeing Research Centre), the score measures how people feel at work—and why. With nearly 6 million surveys, this study is the largest study of work happiness ever undertaken. Unfortunately, the research shows that more than a third (36%) of UK workers are unhappy in their job. Meanwhile, just over a quarter (27%) of respondents report they feel happy at work most of the time. Feeling energised, a sense of belonging, and purpose are bigger drivers of happiness than fair pay and flexibility. Education was found to be the happiest sector, while real estate, management, consulting, and automotive are the least happy sectors. These data also give us more information about the so-called ‘Great Realisation’: half of all workers now feel more motivated to make changes in their career and find more happiness at work. And since we know happiness at work can lead to a myriad of benefits, including improved mental and physical health, and higher productivity at work, we're excited to see how these survey results will change how people choose jobs, and how employers build workplace cultures.”



More than one third of UK employees are unhappy in their jobs

The Independent, January 26, 2022

Richard Jenkins

“The UK's largest study of work happiness found 36 per cent of people are unhappy in their jobs.

Real estate is the industry which scored the lowest—followed by management, consulting and automotive.

At the other end of the scale, education was deemed the happiest sector – with workers scoring high on having a clear sense of purpose.”



The New Zealander trying to revolutionise the working week: 'It's a rational business decision'

The Guardian, March 11, 2022

Tess McClure

“Any fundamental change to the way we arrange working time can be hard to get one's head around, says Dr Laura Giurge, an assistant professor at London School of Economics, who studies time, wellbeing and the future of work. “The long-term benefits of just trying it can really outweigh any potential cost. So I think [the barrier] primarily could be psychological. It's just the inertia: ‘Oh, I'm not gonna try because what I have now is doing OK.’”

For some managers, maintaining the status quo seems easier than having to establish new ways of measuring what a productive worker really is. “We’ve seen leaders staying a little bit in the past,” she says. “Because it’s really hard to measure performance nowadays. They continue to rely on old metrics of performance, such as valuing long work hours or instant responsiveness – as opposed to really focusing on what people actually do, and what’s the quality of the work that they do.” Giurge is a research affiliate of Oxford University’s wellbeing centre, where she works as part of the academic board for 4 Day Week Global, to assess the effects of their trials on productivity and worker wellbeing. She says there’s still more research to be done on increasing productivity in fewer hours. But broadly, the indications are positive. “Being able to disconnect from work and disengage from work and recharge is really beneficial not just for our wellbeing but also for productivity,” Giurge says. “We come back more engaged, we come back with more energy at work, and we’re less likely to make mistakes and we’re more motivated to put effort into the things that we care about.””

Finland Named World’s Happiest Country for Fifth Year Running

The Guardian, March 19, 2022

Agence France-Presse

“Finland has been named the world’s happiest country for the fifth year in a row, in an annual UN-sponsored index that ranked Afghanistan as the unhappiest, closely followed by Lebanon.

The latest list was completed before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia recorded the biggest boosts in wellbeing. The largest falls in the world happiness table, released on Friday, came in Lebanon, Venezuela and Afghanistan. “This [index] presents a stark reminder of the material and immaterial damage that war does to its many victims,” co-author Jan-Emmanuel De Neve said.”

Europe Dominated the Happiest Countries in the World List. What About the United States?

USA Today, March 19, 2022

Jordan Mendoza

“The unhappiest country, according to the rankings, was Afghanistan, with a score of 2.404. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford in England, said recent conflict in the country played a vital role in its ranking. In August, the Taliban took over the country after the U.S. military withdrawal.

“At the very bottom of the ranking we find societies

that suffer from conflict and extreme poverty,” De Neve said. “This presents a stark reminder of the material and immaterial damage that war does to its many victims and the fundamental importance of peace and stability for human well-being.” John Helliwell, researcher and professor at the University of British Columbia, said the data showed globally, people were volunteering, helping and donating 25% more than they were before the pandemic.

“This surge of benevolence, which was especially great for the helping of strangers, provides powerful evidence that people respond to help others in need, creating in the process more happiness for the beneficiaries, good examples for others to follow, and better lives for themselves,” Helliwell said.”

It’s wellbeing, stupid

Trends, March 21, 2022

“Economists and policymakers suffer from a GDP fetishism that does more harm than good in advanced economies. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, welfare economist at Oxford University, has been arguing for a broader view of economic growth for years. “In the ideal world, well-being is the ultimate measure.” Jan-Emmanuel De Neve “Growth for the sake of growth should no longer be the goal.””

The Case for Managerial Decency

The Economist, April 2, 2022

“Management entails some unpleasant conversations, none worse than telling employees that they have lost their jobs. There is nothing enjoyable about giving people this kind of news. But it can be done well or it can be done badly—or it can be done in the style of Peter Hebblethwaite. Mr Hebblethwaite is the chief executive of P&O Ferries, a ferry operator that carries passengers and freight between Britain and continental Europe. On March 17th the company told almost 800 of its workers on a video call that they were being replaced with immediate effect by cheaper foreign contractors. Security guards were on hand to escort the dismissed workers from the ships.”

Why You Should Think Twice About Wanting to Work on Weekends

The Wall Street Journal, May 3, 2022

Anne Kadet

“‘Flexibility’ has become the mantra of the hybrid workplace: Employees will be happier if they are allowed to set their own hours. But a new study suggests that may not necessarily be true.

The study found that people working weekends and holidays enjoy their work less and experience decreased motivation – even when they choose the schedule themselves.

Trends

The Economist

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The Guardian

USA TODAY

Prompted first by the pandemic, and then by the current worker shortage, more companies are offering employees the ability to set their own hours—a perk that was expected to improve the work experience because it gives people more autonomy and control. “And yet we see again and again and again that people don’t experience the benefits that we’re supposed to be experiencing,” says Laura Giurge, an assistant professor of behavioral science at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a co-author of the study.

Overall, researchers found that working outside of the traditional 9-to-5 puts a damper on intrinsic motivation—a measure of how much people work simply because they enjoy the task at hand and find it meaningful—for a simple reason: Even if you’re choosing to work on a Saturday, you can’t help ruminating about how everyone else is having more fun at the pool, or relaxing on the couch.”

[Workforce happiness is a strategy, not an endpoint](#)
The Globe and Mail, June 1, 2022

Michelle Slater

““The pandemic has forced people to work in different ways,” Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford says. “And that has activated an assessment of what matters most, how they work, and where they work.” Prof De Neve was one of the experts who worked closely with Indeed to develop its Work Happiness Score. This score leverages data from more than six million surveys of workers and job seekers on Indeed, the global jobs site and enterprise hiring platform, to uncover the forces that help people thrive at work. Indeed’s latest Work Happiness report reveals that unhappiness at work is the second-leading cause of quitting, just behind unfair compensation.

“Working from home all the time does, in the long run, undermine your social and intellectual capital,” Prof De Neve says. Social capital comes from having work friends and connections, while intellectual capital comes from impromptu conversations, collaboration sessions, or chance meetings.

“Oftentimes, serendipitously, that’s how you build and come across new ideas,” Prof De Neve says.

For some types of work there’s a best of both worlds. Prof De Neve suggests teams co-ordinate in-office days for brainstorming and creativity-related tasks.

Working from home can be reserved for asynchronous and heads-down tasks best done without the distractions of an office, such as writing reports or responding to e-mails.

“We will have gains in productivity and gains from flexible

working, which will help in the work-life balance, which makes people happier,” Prof De Neve says.”

[Four-day week? It’s a revolution for men](#)
The Times, June 22, 2022

Helen Rumbelow

“It wasn’t what they said that made the most impression, more the can’t-stop-grinning faces of those given the kind of gift they never dreamt was possible. When I visited the offices of Charity Bank — one of the 70 British companies taking part in a pioneering nationwide experiment that started this month, compressing the five-day week into four — I expected this story to be about time. In fact it was about men. Leaving that office on a sunny afternoon in Tonbridge, Kent, I realised something odd. Rarely had I seen so many middle-aged males in grey suits, grey hair and grey meeting rooms looking so radiant. The women I spoke to were interesting too, but their sex is more conditioned to juggle flexible working.”

[Why Billionaires Like MacKenzie Scott And Jack Dorsey Are Donating Millions To This Nonprofit That Gives Cash To The Poor](#)
Forbes, July 22, 2022

Rachel Sandler

“Sitting on a wooden bench in a remote village in Rwanda, a 47-year-old woman named Esther, a mother of three, explains how she’ll spend more than 850,000 Rwandan francs. It’s a life-changing sum—roughly \$850, equivalent to more than a year’s wages—in the form of a grant paid out over two months from New York-based nonprofit GiveDirectly.

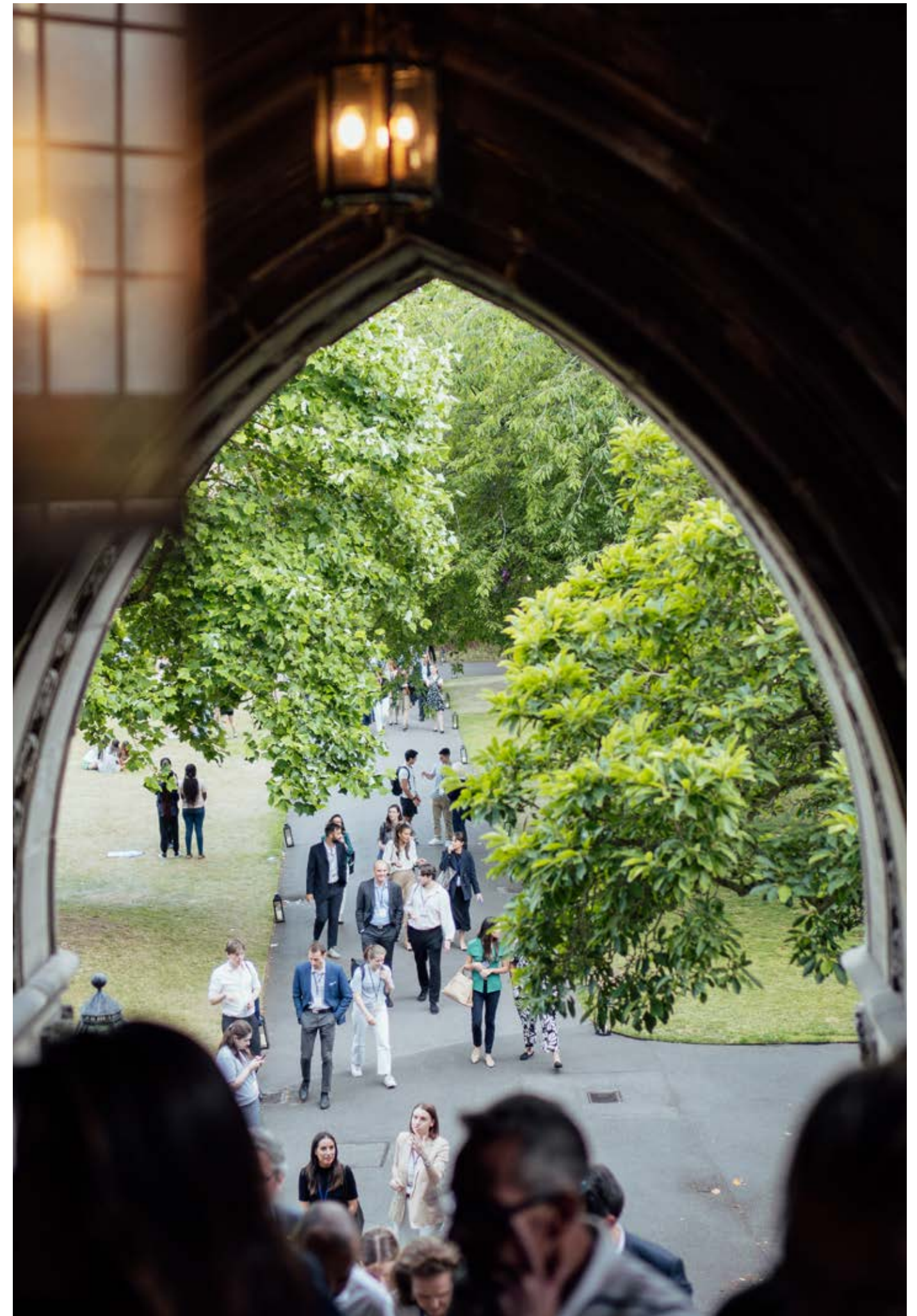
“She is going to buy a farm,” a translator tells a small group of donors and journalists on a video call in early June to showcase GiveDirectly’s operations in the East African country. With it, Esther intends to grow enough food for herself and her family. Like the vast majority of the roughly 100 people in her village, she survives on subsistence farming. A GiveDirectly worker hands Esther a packet with instructions on how to receive her payments by mobile phone.

GiveDirectly, which was founded in 2009, aims to enroll every household in Esther’s village into its direct cash-transfer program, showering people who typically live on less than \$2 per day with more money than they’ve likely ever seen before. The cash grants are most often doled out in two monthly installments.”

Tim Harford

“A recent study by Federica Liberini, Andrew Oswald, Eugenio Proto and Michela Redoano looked at the impact of how people feel about their finances. Liberini and her colleagues looked at a question from a long-running academic survey, Understanding Society: “How well would you say you yourself are managing financially these days?”. Answers varied from 1 (living comfortably) to 5 (finding it very difficult).

The researchers found that people who said they were living comfortably were more likely to support the Remain campaign in the UK. Those who found their finances very difficult tended to sympathise with Vote Leave. Indeed, write the researchers, “UK citizens’ feelings about their incomes were a substantially better predictor of pro-Brexit views than their actual incomes.””





Social Media

The Wellbeing Research Centre continues to grow our 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 gained a wide-ranging following of scholars, intellectuals, policymakers, and interested members of the public.

Over the next 12 months we aim to continue to expand our audience in order to drive public engagement and to foster further collaborations and knowledge exchange opportunities with other organisations and institutions.

700+ newsletter subscribers
▲ 55.6%



2,700+ Twitter followers
▲ 68.8%



1,500+ LinkedIn followers
▲ 54.6%



13,600+ YouTube impressions
▲ 750%



68,000+ website visits
▲ 100%





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The Wellbeing Research Centre is proud to be a part of



