

Annual Report 2024



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD


Wellbeing
Research
Centre



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About the Centre

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

Our Centre aims to be a stimulating home for scholars engaged in world-class research on wellbeing across the life course and in the context of schools, businesses and public policy.

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

The general aim of our Centre is to advance our collective understanding of human wellbeing and to help communities around the world put wellbeing at the heart of their decision-making and to effectively improve the quality of life for current and future generations.

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

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

We seek to advance the research frontier using interdisciplinary and empirical approaches often leading us to collaborate with institutional partners that help enable and apply research insights. Our research agenda tends to address questions along four research streams:

Measurement

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

Cause and Effect

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

Policy and Interventions

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

The Future of Wellbeing

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



From the Director

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



It's that time of the year again to review the achievements of our Centre over the past academic year and look forward to the next. We certainly do have a lot to positively look back on over 2023-24!

On the research front, there were a number of excellent papers accepted for publication and we hosted a number of interesting research seminars. But what stood out over the past year, of course, was the publication of the World Happiness Report including our own important contribution on child and adolescent wellbeing. It brought all the available data to bear on how this understudied part of the population is faring around the world and, as we expected, the empirical findings raised corroborated much of the negative trends that have been apparent in small-scale studies. This was the first year that the Wellbeing Research Centre was in charge of publishing the World Happiness Report and it was a herculean task. I'm forever grateful to Laura, Leoni, and Jonathan for pulling it off with me and the Editorial Board. From this year onwards, the production of the World Happiness Report will be managed by Barry Grimes and we know that means it's in good hands. I'm pleased to say that we're taking

“ We're taking the World Happiness Report to the next level on a number of fronts

the Report to the next level on a number of fronts and will do so in close collaboration with our partners at Gallup, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and, of course, the other members of the Editorial Board.

On the impact front, we also made strides with the World Wellbeing Movement which is so ably led by Sarah Cunningham. The WWM has now been approved as a charitable organisation by the Charities Commission and that speaks for itself. We also inherited the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics and hope to be able to revive it so it can become a central element in our advocacy work to put wellbeing metrics at the heart of business and public policy. Sarah's team is expanding including with the addition of an excellent Head of Policy (thanks to a grant from the Bloom Wellbeing Fund) and there's genuine excitement for what the future brings.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the generous support of so many partners. We are so proud to benefit from the support of the likes of HSBC, Unilever, Ajinomoto, Nuffield Foundation, International Baccalaureate Organization and many others. We



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“ Sustainable wellbeing is likely the start of a new research agenda for the Centre

also remain very much part and parcel of Harris Manchester College and are so grateful to the entire team running College who help us get organised and provide for such an excellent home to work from.

As we look forward to the new academic year we are hoping that it will be a year of 'consolidation' following the integration of the World Happiness Report and expansion of the World Wellbeing Movement over the past months. But there's never a dull moment at the Centre and there are some exciting new initiatives under way already, not in the least the publication of a book on workplace wellbeing with George Ward that is forthcoming in March 2025. Moreover, I will be running the first course on wellbeing science at the University and will do so for the MBAs in the latter half of 2024-25. And, we have also been invited to join the UN Expert Group on Wellbeing Measures which will have to deliver a major report to the UN General Assembly. In sum, it's shaping up to be another impactful and busy academic year.

On the research front, an important new

development is the establishment of the Reapra Research Fellowship in Sustainable Wellbeing – a position for which we will be on the academic job market shortly and hope to find a stellar researcher who can generate new insights on the dynamic relationship between human wellbeing and environmental sustainability. Sustainable wellbeing is likely the start of a new research agenda for the Centre in addition to our current focus areas of workplace wellbeing and child/adolescent wellbeing.

On a more personal note, earlier this year we were all touched by the sudden loss of Daniel Kahneman. Danny's contribution to our first-ever conference in 2022, and his glowing endorsement that lives on the cover of our wellbeing textbook, are constant reminders of the great loss.

As we enter our sixth year since founding the Centre, it certainly does feel like we have put in place a solid foundation for the future and it is exciting to think where this synergistic constellation of the Wellbeing Research Centre, World Happiness Report, and World Wellbeing Movement can lead us in the future.

“ In sum, it's shaping up to be another impactful and busy academic year

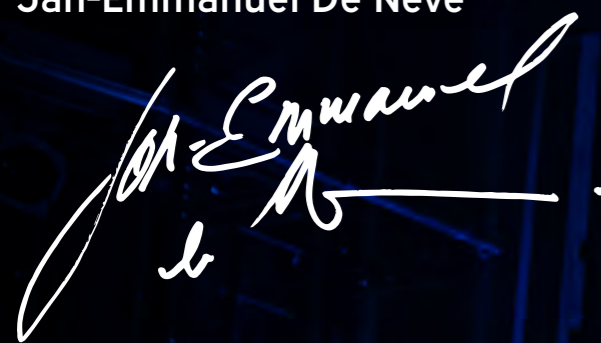


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With grateful thanks for your interest and support of our work,

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve



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2024 World Happiness Report European Panel

PROF. JAN-EMMANUEL DE NEVE
PROF. LORD RICHARD LAYARD
LEONI BOYLE
DR. JOSE MARQUEZ
MODERATED BY KAREN GUGGENHEIM



Research Group

In addition to our usual research activities and day-to-day operations, this year also saw the Centre take on publication responsibility for the World Happiness Report, plus further staffing support for our not-for-profit social impact organisation, the World Wellbeing Movement.



Dr George Ward
Persol Research Fellow



Dr Wanying Zhou
Research Fellow



Jonathan Whitney
Head of Communications



Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Director



Dr Laura Taylor
Deputy Director



Sarah Cunningham
Managing Director
World Wellbeing Movement



Barry Grimes
Production Editor
World Happiness Report



Leoni Boyle
Executive Assistant and
Office Manager



Charlotte Day
Marketing Officer
World Wellbeing Movement



Prof Andrew Oswald
Senior Research Fellow



Dr William Fleming
Unilever Research Fellow



Dr Laura Giurge
Barnes Research Fellow



Micah Kaats
Research Associate



Dr Jose Marquez
Research Associate



Cherise Regier
Research Associate



Dr Caspar Kaiser
HSBC Research Fellow



Dr Michael Plant
Research Fellow



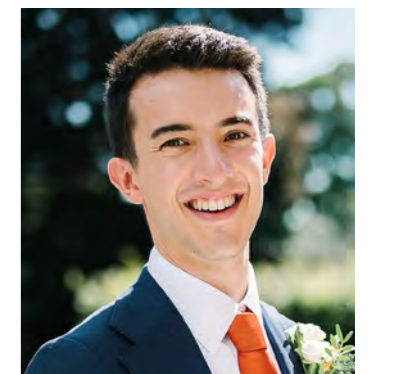
Dr Alberto Prati
Ajinomoto Research Fellow



Isaac Parkes
Research Assistant



Annette Riziki
Research Assistant



Yoel Sevi
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.

Prof Sabina Alkire
Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

Prof Chris Barrington-Leigh
McGill University

Dr Clément Bellet
Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Prof Andrew Clark
Paris School of Economics

Prof David Clark
Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford

Dr Maria Cotofan
King's College London

Dr Mark Fabian
Public Policy, University of Warwick

Dr Michael Gill
Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Dr Marta Golin
Economics, University of Oxford

Prof Carol Graham
Brookings Institution

Prof John Helliwell
Economics, University of British Columbia

Prof Joshua Hordern
Theology, University of Oxford

Dr Christian Krekel
Behavioural Science, LSE

Prof Willem Kuyken
Psychiatry, Oxford Mindfulness Centre

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Dr Lucía Macchia
Psychology, City University of London

Dr George Mackerron
Economics, University of Sussex

Dr Ekaterina (Katya) Oparina
Economics, LSE

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

Prof Tali Sharot
Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London

Prof Andrew Stephen
Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Prof Tyler VanderWeele
Human Flourishing Program, Harvard University





Publications

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



Variation in global network properties across risk factors for adolescent internalizing symptoms: evidence of cumulative effects on structure and connectivity

Black, L., Farzinnia, R., Humphrey, N., & Marquez, J. (2023). Variation in global network properties across risk factors for adolescent internalizing symptoms: evidence of cumulative effects on structure and connectivity. *Psychological Medicine*, 54(4), 687-697. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291723002362>

Background Identifying adolescents at risk of internalizing problems is a key priority. However, studies have tended to consider such problems in simple ways using diagnoses, or item summaries. Network theory and methods instead allow for more complex interaction between symptoms. Two key hypotheses predict differences in global network properties for those at risk: altered structure and increased connectivity.

Methods The current study evaluated these hypotheses for nine risk factors (e.g. income deprivation and low parent/carer support) individually and cumulatively in a large sample of 12-15 year-olds (N = 34 564). Recursive partitioning and bootstrapped networks were used to evaluate structural and connectivity differences.

Results The pattern of network interactions was shown to be significantly different via recursive partitioning for all comparisons across risk-present/absent groups and levels of cumulative risk, except for income deprivation. However, the magnitude of differences appeared small. Most individual risk factors also showed relatively small effects for connectivity. Exceptions were noted for

gender and sexual minority risk groups, as well as low parent/carer support, where larger effects were evident. A strong linear trend was observed between increasing cumulative risk exposure and connectivity.

Conclusions A robust approach to considering the effect of risk exposure on global network properties was demonstrated. Results are consistent with the ideas that pathological states are associated with higher connectivity, and that the number of risks, regardless of their nature, is important. Gender/sexual minority status and low parent/carer support had the biggest individual impacts on connectivity, suggesting these are particularly important for identification and prevention.



Developing a Global Approach for Measurement of Adolescent Well-Being

Guthold, R., Newby, H., Keogh, S., Afifi, R. A., Austrian, K., Baird, S., Blum, R. W., Bundy, D. A. P., Deardorff, J., Engel, D., Klein, J. D., Kostelecky, S. M., Mackworth-Young, C., Marquez, J., NicGabhainn, S., Requejo, J., Ross, D. A., Saewyc, E., & Mohan, A. (2023). Developing a Global Approach for Measurement of Adolescent Well-Being. *The Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 73(6), 972–974. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.08.029>

Recognizing the multiple and intergenerational benefits of investing in adolescent well-being, a Call to Action for Adolescent Well-being was launched in 2020 and endorsed by an unprecedented coalition of governments, UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and academic institutions. Signatories to the Call committed to engage adolescents in all legal, policy, and program processes that affect them; develop multisectoral, whole-of-government policy approaches that address adolescent well-being; and strengthen political commitment and funding for adolescents. To further support these efforts, the 1.8 Billion Young People for Change Campaign was launched in 2022.



Labour Law, Employees' Capability for Voice, and Wellbeing: A Framework for Evaluation

Regier, C. (2023). Labour Law, Employees' Capability for Voice, and Wellbeing: A Framework for Evaluation. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 25(1), 87–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2023.2266691>

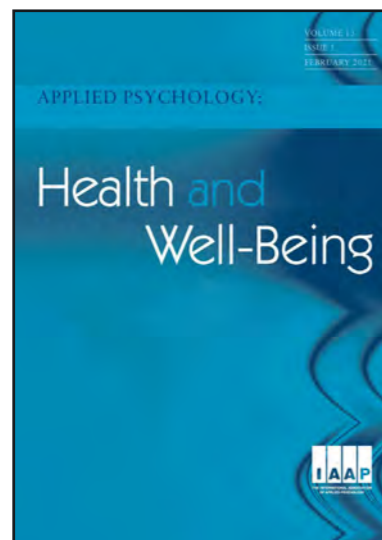
Labour power has significantly declined across affluent democracies in recent decades, resulting in a widening scale of power inequality within the contemporary employment relationship. Employee voice is a key component of labour power that represents a human capability according to Amartya Sen's conceptualisation: a real freedom to achieve states of being that one has reason to value. Employees deficient in the capability for voice lack sufficient bargaining power to influence workplace decision-making, which threatens their wellbeing by increasing their risk of exposure to work-related stressors and limiting their opportunities to improve their welfare. In this article, employee voice legislation is argued to be a necessary social conversion factor of employees' capability for voice that can promote further advantage. However, research assessing its effectiveness at enhancing wellbeing is greatly limited due to an over reliance on neoliberal and new institutional forms of economic analysis that reveal little about the quality of employees' lives. A comprehensive framework for evaluation based on Sen's capability approach is proposed that when operationalised for empirical analysis, can advance our understanding of employee wellbeing in the twenty-first century.



Moral Uncertainty, Proportionality and Bargaining

Kaczmarek, P., Lloyd, H R., & Plant, M. (forthcoming). Moral Uncertainty, Proportionality and Bargaining. *Ergo: An Open Access Journal of Philosophy*.

As well as disagreeing about how much one should donate to charity, moral theories also disagree about where one should donate. In light of this disagreement, how should the morally uncertain philanthropist allocate her donations? In many cases, one intuitively attractive option is for the philanthropist to split her donations across all of the charities that are recommended by moral views in which she has positive credence, with each charity's share being proportional to her credence in the moral theories that recommend that particular charity. Despite the fact that something like this approach is already being used by real-world philanthropists to distribute billions of dollars of donations, it is not supported by any of the approaches to moral uncertainty that have been proposed thus far in the philosophical literature. In this paper, we will develop a bargaining-based approach to moral uncertainty that honors the proportionality intuition in favor of splitting one's donations. We also show how this bargaining-based approach has several further advantages over the best alternative proposals.



The effectiveness of taught, self-help mindfulness-based interventions on Chinese adolescents' well-being, mental health, prosocial and difficult behavior, and coping strategy

Zhou, W., & McLellan, R. (2023). The effectiveness of taught, self-help mindfulness-based interventions

on Chinese adolescents' well-being, mental health, prosocial and difficult behavior, and coping strategy. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-being*. 10.1111/aphw.12517. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12517>

Despite China's enduring historical connection with mindfulness and the growing recognition of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in Western education, mindfulness remains relatively underexplored in the Chinese education system. This study addresses the scarcity of resources and certified instructors in China by assessing the effectiveness of MBIs in both taught and self-help forms in improving well-being and prosocial behavior and regulating negative emotions and behaviors among Chinese adolescents. The analysis included 362 Chinese students (mean age=13.03, SD=0.50, 47.5% girls) from 12 classes, assigned to the taught MBI group (N=129, post), self-help MBI group (N=116, post), or control group (N=117, post). Paired-sample t-tests and multi-level modeling were used, accounting for data nesting and incorporating gender, whether students live in school, and age as covariates. Results revealed a significantly greater improvement in well-being in the taught group compared with the control, with both MBI groups demonstrating increased prosocial behavior. While the taught group showed a significant decrease in loneliness, it was accompanied by an increase in internalizing problems. Coping strategies varied across the groups, with no significant changes in depression, anxiety, and stress levels. These findings imply the potential value of integrating MBIs into the Chinese educational system, especially given the self-help approach's favorable outcomes.



Protective factors for resilience in adolescence: analysis of a longitudinal dataset using the residuals approach

Marquez, J., Francis-Hew, L., & Humphrey, N. (2023). Protective factors for resilience in adolescence: Analysis of a longitudinal dataset using the residuals approach. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 17(1), 140. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-023-00687-8>

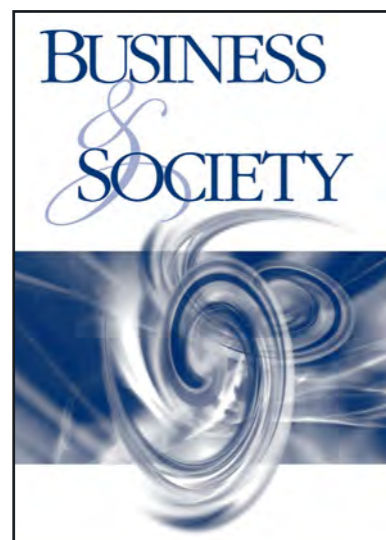
Introduction The residuals approach, in which residual

scores from regression models are used as a proxy for resilient functioning, offers great potential to increase understanding of resilience processes. However, its application in child and adolescent wellbeing research is limited to date. We use this approach to examine how adversity exposure impacts later wellbeing (life satisfaction, and internalising mental health difficulties) in the early-to-middle adolescence transition; whether gender and ethnic differences in resilience exist; which internal and external factors confer protective effects for resilience; and, whether the protective effect of these factors differs by gender and level of adversity exposure.

Method Secondary analysis of the #BeeWell longitudinal data set (N=12,130 adolescents, aged 12/13 at T1 and 13/14 at T2, representative of Greater Manchester, England) was undertaken, using a series of linear regressions to establish adversity indices for later wellbeing, before assessing the protective effects of internal and external factors on resilience.

Results Multiple adversity factors (e.g., home material deprivation, sexuality discrimination, bullying) were found to impact later wellbeing. Girls and white adolescents presented lower levels of resilience than their peers. Internal psychological factors (self-esteem, emotional regulation, optimism) consistently conferred the strongest protective effects, but behavioural/activity factors (physical activity, sleep) also contributed to resilience. Among external factors, friendships and peer support were the most salient. Physical activity yielded stronger protective effects among boys (compared to girls). Effects of protective factors were stronger among those at lower (compared to higher) levels of adversity exposure.

Conclusion The residuals approach can make a considerable contribution to our understanding of the interplay between adversity exposure and access to protective factors in determining adolescent wellbeing outcomes. Moreover, its application provides clear implications for policy and practice in terms of prevention (of adversity exposure) and intervention (to facilitate resilience).



Time Theft: Exposing a Subtle Yet Serious Driver of Socioeconomic Inequality

Pierce, J. R., Giurge, L. M., & Aeon, B. (2024). Time Theft: Exposing a Subtle Yet Serious Driver of Socioeconomic Inequality. *Business & Society*, 00076503231224710. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00076503231224710>

Socioeconomic inequality is perpetuated and exacerbated by an overlooked yet serious epidemic of time theft: the act of causing others to lose their time without adequate cause, compensation, or consent. We explain why time theft goes unnoticed, how it drives socioeconomic inequality, and what businesses and policymakers can do to address it.



Employee well-being outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the United Kingdom

Fleming, W. J. (2024). Employee well-being outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the United Kingdom. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 55(2), 162–182. <https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12418>

Initiatives that promote mental well-being are formally recommended for all British workers, with many practices targeting change in individual workers' resources. While the existing evidence is generally positive about these interventions, disagreement is increasing because of concerns that individual-level interventions do not engage with working conditions. Contributing to the debate, this article uses survey data (N=46,336 workers in 233 organisations) to compare participants and nonparticipants in a range of common individual-level well-being interventions, including resilience training, mindfulness and well-being apps. Across multiple subjective well-being indicators, participants appear no better off. Results are interpreted through the job demands-resources theory and selection bias in cross-sectional results is interrogated. Overall, results suggest interventions are not providing additional or appropriate resources in response to job demands.



Time use and happiness: US evidence across three decades

Han, J., Kaiser, C. (2024). Time use and happiness: US evidence across three decades. *Journal of Population Economics* 37, 15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-024-00982-4>

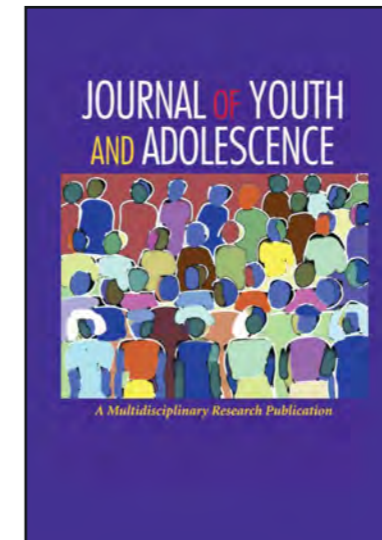
We use diary data from representative samples from the USA to examine determinants and historical trends in time-weighted happiness. To do so, we combine fine-grained information on self-reported happiness at the activity level with data on individuals' time use. We conceptually distinguish time-weighted happiness from evaluative measures of wellbeing and provide evidence of the validity and distinctiveness of this measure. Although time-weighted happiness is largely uncorrelated with economic variables like unemployment and income, it is predictive of several health outcomes and shares many other determinants with evaluative wellbeing. We illustrate the potential use of time-weighted happiness by assessing historical trends in the gender wellbeing gap. For the largest part of the period between 1985 and 2021, women's time-weighted happiness improved significantly relative to men's. This is in stark contrast to prominent findings from previous work. However, our recent data from 2021 indicates that about half of women's gains since the 1980s were lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, as previously shown for several other outcomes, women appear to have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Our results are replicable in UK data and robust to alternative assumptions about respondents' scale use.



The causal effect of a health treatment on beliefs, stated preferences and memories

Prati, A., & Saucet, C. (2024). The causal effect of a health treatment on beliefs, stated preferences and memories. *Journal of Health Economics*, 94, 102864. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2024.102864>

The paper estimates the causal effect of a health treatment on patients' beliefs, preferences and memories about the treatment. It exploits a natural experiment which occurred in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. UK residents could choose to opt into the vaccination program, but not which vaccine they received. The assignment to a vaccine offered little objective information for learning about its qualities, but triggered strong psychological demand for reassuring beliefs. We surveyed a sample of UK residents about their beliefs on the different COVID-19 vaccines before and after receiving their jab. Before vaccination, individuals exhibit similar prior beliefs and stated preferences about the different vaccines. After vaccination, however, they update their beliefs overly optimistically about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine they received, state that they would have chosen it if they could, and have distorted memories about their past beliefs. These results cannot be explained by conventional experience effects. At the aggregated level, they show that random assignment to a health treatment predicts a polarization of opinions about its quality. At the individual level, these findings provide evidence in line with the predictions of motivated beliefs and over-inference from weak signals in a real-world health setting.



Do Patterns of Adolescent Participation in Arts, Culture and Entertainment Activities Predict Later Wellbeing? A Latent Class Analysis

Thornton, E., Petersen, K., Marquez, J., & Humphrey, N. (2024). Do Patterns of Adolescent Participation in Arts, Culture and Entertainment Activities Predict Later Wellbeing? A Latent Class Analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 53(6), 1396–1414. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-024-01950-7>

Participation in arts, culture, and entertainment (PACE) activities may promote adolescent wellbeing. However, little is known about how such activities cluster together, and previous research has used small samples, cross-sectional designs, focused on single activities, and/or has not considered the influence of

socio-demographic factors on participation. Using latent class analysis, the aims of this study were to establish: (i) classes of adolescent PACE activities; (ii) associations between socio-demographic characteristics and PACE classification; and, (iii) whether PACE classification predicts later wellbeing. Longitudinal data from the #BeeWell study (N=18,224 adolescents; mean age at T1=12 years 7 months (± 3.56 months); 50.54% female) were analyzed. Four latent classes were established: the 'Dynamic Doers' (high, wide-ranging participation; 11.87%); the 'Mind and Body Crew' (reading, arts, videogames, sports/exercise; 39.81%); the 'Game and Gain Squad' (videogames and sports/exercise; 29.05%); and the 'Activity Free Adolescents' (uniformly low participation; 19.27%). Associations between socio-demographic characteristics and PACE classification were observed (e.g., socio-economic disadvantage increased the likelihood of Activity Free Adolescents classification, compared to Game and Gain Squad classification). Finally, PACE classification predicted later wellbeing (e.g., Dynamic Doers reported significantly higher wellbeing than Activity Free Adolescents). These findings are discussed in relation to the need to improve accessibility and appeal of arts, culture, and entertainment provision for adolescents as a means to optimize their wellbeing.



CEOs Showing Humanity: Human Care Statements in Conference Calls and Stock Market Performance During Crisis

Howe, L., Giurge, L. M., Wagner, A., & Menges, J. (2024). CEOs Showing Humanity: Human Care Statements in Conference Calls and Stock Market Performance During Crisis. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, amd.2021.0225. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amd.2021.0225>

Conference calls provide opportunities for CEOs to inform market participants (i.e., financial analysts and investors) about their companies' prospects. Much research has focused on how CEOs speak about business-related topics in these calls, yet surprisingly the literature has not considered how statements that go beyond financial information affect market participants. When we explored archival data of how CEOs of publicly traded U.S.-based companies from the Russell 3000 Index spoke about COVID-19 in conference calls as the

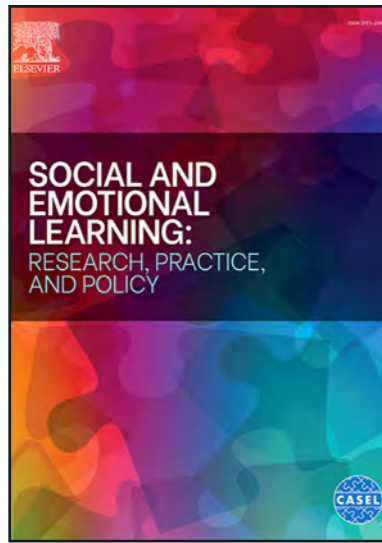
pandemic began in 2020, we noticed that about half of CEOs made human care statements that expressed a concern for people, with seemingly little direct financial relevance. However, although these statements were largely generic, vague expressions rather than clear plans, we discovered that the more such statements CEOs made, the better their companies fared on the stock market when stock prices tumbled globally. Follow-up explorations unveiled a negative association between CEO human care statements and stock volatility, meaning that market participants discounted these companies' future earnings less. Our explorations suggest that it pays off for CEOs to go beyond mere financial information and show some humanity, with implications for downstream theorizing about CEO impression management.



Are environmental concerns deterring people from having children? Longitudinal evidence on births in the UK

Powdthavee, N., Oswald, A. J., & Lockwood, B. (2024). Are environmental concerns deterring people from having children? Longitudinal evidence on births in the UK. *Ecological Economics*, 220, 108184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108184>

Do 'green' environmental concerns – such as about biodiversity, climate change, pollution – deter citizens from having children? This paper reports the first longitudinal evidence consistent with that increasingly discussed hypothesis. It follows through time a random sample of thousands of initially childless men and women in the UK. The paper shows that those individuals who are committed to a green lifestyle are found to be substantially less likely to go on later to have offspring. Probit and Weibull survival models are estimated. The results are robust to controlling for people's age, education, income, marital status, mental health, life satisfaction, optimism, and physical health. The paper's key estimated effect-size is substantial. A person entirely unconcerned about environmental behaviour is estimated to be just over 50% more likely to go on to have a child than a deeply committed environmentalist.



“No changes, but I become more positive mentally”: A mixed-methods study of the impact of a combined SEL and MBP on behavior change and academic achievement among Chinese adolescents

Zhou, W., & McLellan, R. (2024). “No changes, but I become more positive mentally”: A mixed-methods study of the impact of a combined SEL and MBP on behavior change and academic achievement among Chinese adolescents. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy*, 3, 100038. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2024.100038>

This mixed-methods study aimed to investigate students’ perspectives regarding their behavioral and academic changes following an 8-week combined intervention of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mindfulness-Based Program (MBP). A total of 552 teenagers (mean age = 13.03, SD = 0.50, 47.5% females) from an urban Chinese private school participated, with 184 participants randomly assigned to each condition (taught, self-help, and active control groups). Paired-sample t-tests were employed to examine changes within groups, while General Linear Models compared academic achievement changes among the three groups. Despite finding no significant improvement statistically on academic achievement, some students attributed their improved academic performance to the course. Thematic analysis was conducted on 115 written responses and 4 focus group interviews from the taught group. The analysis revealed several key themes among the Chinese population, including no changes, state change, attitude change, and behavior change. These themes were consistent with the theoretical foundations of Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and aligned with previous qualitative research on Western adolescents. The study highlights the benefits of techniques and cognitive change in facilitating behavioral change and offers practical suggestions for supporting students in behaviour regulation. It also underscores qualitative research’s role in detailing these practices’ effects on behavior and academic



Economic Development and Adolescent Wellbeing in 139 Countries

Marquez, J., Casas, F., Taylor, L. & De Neve, J-E. (2024). Economic Development and Adolescent Wellbeing in 139 Countries. *Child Indicators Research* 17, 1405–1442. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-024-10131-8>

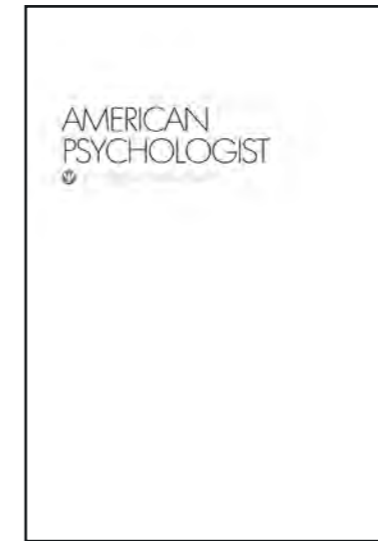
There is a positive association between the level of economic development and national levels of overall life satisfaction (OLS) in the adult population, with decreasing marginal returns. However, research shows no association in early adolescence and a negative association in middle adolescence. We hypothesize that this is due to the exclusion of low-income countries, where adolescent wellbeing is rarely collected. 2015–2019 Gallup World Poll data from 139 countries in middle adolescence (age 15–17; n 36,907) were analysed using linear regression to study the association between country levels of economic development and OLS, positive emotions (PE), and negative emotions (NE), and how this varies across economic development levels, and gender. Variations across economic development levels were compared with those observed in the adult population. Log per-capita GDP is positively associated with OLS and PE, although in high-income countries no association is observed for PE, and among females for OLS. For NE, a negative association is observed in lower-income countries and a positive association in higher-income countries. In this age group (age 15–17), the log per-capita GDP – OLS association is stronger in lower-income countries than in higher-income countries, but this pattern reverses with age in adulthood. A nuanced relationship exists between economic development and adolescent wellbeing, which varies across measures, levels of economic development, gender, and age –including notable differences compared to adults. Our study highlights the need for improving child and adolescent wellbeing data worldwide, especially in lower-income countries, to better understand how best to support wellbeing globally.



Assessing data quality in a Big convenience sample of work wellbeing

De Neve, J.-E., Fleming, W., & Ward, G. (2024). *Assessing data quality in a Big convenience sample of work wellbeing*. Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.5287/ORA-J5PB5QGEM>

Survey research is facing a multitude of challenges to its validity, especially for the study of labour and organisations. Online surveys with non-probability, convenience samples are simultaneously seen as part of the problem and a promising solution. Methodological literature argues that researchers should not think of data quality of online surveys in terms of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ but in degrees, with a series of recommendations scattered across disciplines for assessing and managing data limitations. We present a case study of a Big, multi-level, online, convenience sample of subjective work wellbeing, the Indeed Work Wellbeing Score survey (IWWS). IWWS is an ongoing international survey of subjective work wellbeing, with over 20,000,000 responses and growing. In this study we evaluate the UK subsample collected by October 2023 (N = 1,463,503). While a prima facie valuable source of data, the data generation process raises concerns of selection bias and inattentive responses. We evaluate the extent of bias, variation in bias, response rates, internal consistency and employer cluster-level reliability. We then turn to considering what types of research questions a researcher may want to answer with the data, especially unit comparisons at different survey units and inter-item relationships. Overall, we suggest that at the individual, employee level, the survey suffers from selection and binary bias in responses, but that at the employer-level IWWS offers a valuable resource to supplement existing random probability surveys of work and wellbeing. In our conclusions we offer practical methodological recommendations for others using Big, online convenience samples. Finally, we provide commentary on the strengths and limitations of the IWWS for ongoing and future research, as well as the value for businesses, jobseekers and policy-makers.



The Role of Negative Affect in Shaping Populist Support: Converging Field Evidence From Across the Globe

Ward, G., Schwartz, H. A., Giorgi, S., Menges, J. I., & Matz, S. C. (2024). The role of negative affect in shaping populist support: Converging field evidence from across the globe. *American Psychologist*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001326>

Support for populism has grown substantially during the past 2 decades, a development that has coincided with a marked increase in the experience of negative affect around the world. We use a multimodal, multimethod empirical approach, with data from a diverse set of geographical and political contexts, to investigate the extent to which the rising electoral demand for populism can be explained by negative affect. We demonstrate that negative affect—measured via (a) self-reported emotions in surveys as well as (b) automated text analyses of Twitter data—predicts individual-level populist attitudes in two global surveys (Studies 1a and 1b), longitudinal changes in populist party vote shares at general elections in Europe (Study 2), district-level Brexit voting in the 2016 U.K. referendum (Study 3), and county-level vote shares for Donald Trump in the 2016 and 2020 U.S. presidential elections (Studies 4a and 4b). We find that negative emotions—such as fear and anger as well as more often overlooked low-arousal negative emotions like depression and sadness—are predictive of populist beliefs as well as voting and election results at scale.

Working Paper Series

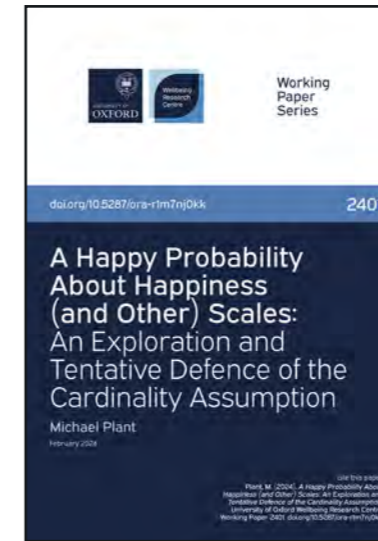
The Centre's own Working Paper Series is designed to serve as a hub for the latest developments in the field of wellbeing science. Working papers are published by the Wellbeing Research Centre via the University of Oxford's Bodleian Libraries system.



Can I Get A Little Less Life Satisfaction, Please?

Plant, M. (2023). *Can I Get A Little Less Life Satisfaction, Please?* University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2306. doi.org/10.5287/ora-koazqnr6

Since Parfit (1984), philosophers have standardly held there are three theories of wellbeing: hedonism, desire theories, and the objective list. Some have argued this classification omits a distinct, plausible theory of wellbeing based on life satisfaction. The life satisfaction theory (LST) is notably prominent outside philosophy, with a growing chorus advocating for self-reported life satisfaction to be a, or the, outcome measure for policymaking. In this paper, I investigate the nature and plausibility of LST. I argue that while happiness and life satisfaction are often conflated, LST is best understood as a type of desire theory and not as a distinct account of wellbeing. To evaluate LST, I initially consider two current objections and argue they are little threat. I then present two seriously troubling objections. One is whimsicality: LST implies subjects can determine how well or badly their lives are going for any reason and at any time. The other that it leaves us with too few subjects: it means that, for entities who cannot make whole-life evaluations, such as infants and many animals, nothing can go better or worse for them. I conclude (1) the life satisfaction theory is implausible (but do not argue for an alternative here) and (2) life satisfaction surveys are a useful, but non-ideal measure of wellbeing; we should remain open to, and explore the implications of, other metrics.



A Happy Probability About Happiness (and Other) Scales: An Exploration and Tentative Defence of the Cardinality Assumption

Plant, M. (2024). *A Happy Probability About Happiness (and Other) Scales: An Exploration and Tentative Defence of the Cardinality Assumption*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2401. doi.org/10.5287/ora-r1m7nj0kk

Numerical surveys of feelings, such as “How happy are you, on a scale of 0-10?”, are now ubiquitous and increasingly taken seriously by researchers, governments, companies, and others. The data are often treated as cardinal – that is, a difference between a 2 and a 3 for one person is the same as that of a 5 to a 6 of another. There is long-running scepticism about assuming cardinality; if we have been wrong to assume it, the existing conclusions in the literature may be in doubt. This paper investigates how reasonable it is for researchers to assume scale cardinality. It makes four contributions. First, I observe that cardinality is a matter of degree, so we must ask if plausible deviations from it are big enough to make a difference. Second, I offer a novel argument for why it is rational for respondents to interpret the scales as cardinal if they want to accurately convey their feelings. Third, I argue that uncertainty about how people interpret surveys does not push us away from assuming cardinality; if anything, the opposite is true. Fourth, I conduct what is, as far as I am aware, the first review of the evidence of the conditions underlying cardinality (linearity and comparability); from this, I conclude the deviations, if they exist, are small enough that few, if any, practical conclusions would need to be revised. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume cardinality for now, but further exploration should be done. I close by noting that detours from cardinality can, in theory, be corrected statistically, so worries about how people answer surveys need not prevent us from ever using survey data.



Health Lifestyles at Work

Fleming, W. (2024). *Health Lifestyles at Work*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2402. doi.org/10.5287/ora-noxz001d4

The workplace is an ever more popular site for health promotion, but remains an underexplored factor in health lifestyles theory; whereas, sociological accounts of workplace wellness view it critically as managerial control. These perspectives both miss that participation in workplace wellness may represent socially structured health lifestyles. Addressing this gap, I extend a theoretical model for bringing together health lifestyles theory and critical wellbeing studies. Supporting this model, I provide an empirical account of the availability of, participation in and barriers to workplace wellness. I analyse a multi-organisation sample of British workers (N = 27,919 individuals; 143 organisations) to reveal that engagement with wellness has distinct associations with multiple social factors (class, race and gender), job factors (level, contract, working hours and commute) and organisational context. Theories of health lifestyles ought to include work characteristics and managerial regimes, and critiques of wellness must analyse how social position affects workers' experiences of wellness.



Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance

De Neve, J-E., Kaats, M., Ward, G. (2024). *Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2304. doi.org/10.5287/ora-bpkbjayvk

We use novel large-scale data crowdsourced by Indeed, a major jobs website, to assess the relationship between workplace wellbeing and firm performance. Our measures of employee wellbeing include self-reported job satisfaction, purpose, happiness, and stress, which we aggregate to 1,782 publicly listed companies in the United States using data from around 1 million employee surveys across these organizations. Using company-level employee wellbeing measures to predict firm performance, we show that wellbeing is associated with firm profitability and firm value. We find that an investment portfolio of companies with high levels of workplace wellbeing also outperforms standard benchmarks in the stock market. Overall, these descriptive results show a strong positive relationship between employee wellbeing and firm performance. We discuss how these analyses contribute to this growing area of research, highlight a number of limitations, and point to future directions for further research.

Note: A version of this working paper was first published in May 2023.



Special Publications

In addition to formal journal publications and the new Working Paper Series, the Centre's researchers also contribute to a number of high-impact publications in a variety of formats.

From 2024, the Centre became the publisher of major international publication, the World Happiness Report.



World Happiness Report 2024

World Happiness Report 2024 was the first to be published by the Wellbeing Research Centre, in a new partnership alongside Gallup and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Considered the world's foremost publication on global happiness, each edition features curated submissions from leading researchers in the field of wellbeing science, focused on a particular theme.

The 2024 edition explored the relationship between happiness and age, featuring the latest findings on the happiness of the world's young, the old – and everyone in between.

World Happiness Report 2024

In this issue of the *World Happiness Report* we focus on the happiness of people at different stages of life. In the seven ages of man in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the later stages of life are portrayed as deeply depressing. But happiness research shows a more nuanced picture, and one that is changing over time.

In the West, the received wisdom was that the young are the happiest and that happiness thereafter declines until middle age, followed by substantial recovery. But since 2006-10, as we shall see, happiness among the young (aged 15-24) has fallen sharply in North America – to a point where the young are less happy than the old. Youth happiness has also fallen (but less sharply) in Western Europe.

By contrast, happiness at every age has risen sharply in Central and Eastern Europe, so that young people are now equally happy in both parts of Europe. In the former Soviet Union and East Asia too there have been large increases in happiness at every age, while in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa happiness has fallen at every age.

It is of course an issue to what extent these changes reflect generational changes that can be expected to persist as each generation gets older. In pioneering work, Chapter 2 disentangles the effect of which cohort you are in from that of age. At the global level, it reveals a lower level of happiness among people born since 1980.

One thing is the average level of happiness, another is its dispersion. Since 2006-10, the inequality of happiness has increased in every region except Europe – another worrying trend. As usual, all these trends are discussed in Chapter 2, together with the country rankings.

The position of the young is discussed in finer detail in Chapter 3. This draws on a wide range of data sources and also includes data for young people aged 10-15. The rest of the report focuses on the old. As Chapter 4 stresses, the greatest plague in old age is dementia. Fortunately, new and accumulating research demonstrates that higher well-being is a protective factor against future dementia. In addition, there are significant

environmental and behavioral strategies that improve the lives of those living with dementia. Finally, Chapter 5 focuses on India, the first such chapter in the *World Happiness Report*. It stresses that in India, the world's most populous country, with a rapidly growing elder share, happiness rises into old age, more so for men than women.

In what follows, we give summaries of each chapter, which will hopefully tempt readers to read further.

Chapter 2 Happiness of the Younger, the Older, and Those In Between

Overall rankings

- The top 10 countries have remained much the same since before COVID. Finland is still top, with Denmark now very close, and all five Nordic countries in the top 10. But in the next 10, there is more change, with the transition countries of Eastern Europe rising in happiness (especially Czechia, Lithuania and Slovenia). Partly for this reason the United States and Germany have fallen to 23 and 24 in the rankings.

Happiness by age group

- In many but not all regions, the young are happier than the old. But in North America happiness has fallen so sharply for the young that they are now less happy than the old. By contrast, in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the young are much happier than the old. In Western Europe as a whole happiness is similar at all ages, while elsewhere it tends to decline over the life cycle (with an occasional upturn for the old).
- For these reasons, the ranking of countries by happiness is very different for the young and for the old. As between generations, after taking into account age and life circumstances, those born before 1965 have life evaluations about one-quarter of a point higher than those born after 1980.

Changes in happiness since 2006-2010: by age group

- The countries of Central and Eastern Europe have had the largest increase in happiness – by similar amounts in all age groups. The gains in the former Soviet Union were half as large. In East Asia too there were large increases, especially among the old.
- By contrast, happiness fell in South Asia in all age groups. It also fell in North America, especially among the young. And it fell in the Middle East and North Africa in all age groups.
- In Central and Eastern Europe, the young are now as happy as in Western Europe, and among the old the gap between East and West is one half of what it was in 2006-10, though still large (one whole point on the scale of 0 to 10).

Inequality of happiness

- Since 2006-10 there has been a large increase in the inequality of happiness in every region except Europe. And it has increased especially for the old. The biggest increase is in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Negative emotions

- Negative emotions are more frequent now than in 2006-2010 everywhere except in East Asia and in Europe. In fact in Central and Eastern Europe, negative emotions are now less frequent in all age groups than they were in 2006-2010.
- In 2021-2023 negative emotions were in every region more prevalent for females than males. Almost everywhere the gender gap is larger at older ages.

Positive emotions

- In all regions the frequency of positive emotions has changed since 2006-2010 in the same direction as life evaluations. But the age patterns differ. The frequency of positive emotions in every region is highest for those under 30, thereafter steadily declining with age in every region except North America, where positive emotions are least frequent for those in the middle age groups.

Benevolence by generation

- The COVID crisis led to a worldwide increase in the proportion of people who have helped others in need. This increase in benevolence has been large for all generations, but especially so for those born since 1980, who are even more likely than earlier generations to help others in need.

Social support, loneliness and social interactions

- In almost every global region comparably measured feelings of social support are more than twice as prevalent as loneliness. Both social support and loneliness affect happiness, with social support usually having the larger effect. Social interactions of all kinds also add to happiness, in addition to their effects flowing through increases in social support and reductions in loneliness.

Chapter 3

Child and Adolescent Well-being: Global Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

- In most countries life satisfaction drops gradually from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Globally, young people aged 15-24 still report higher life satisfaction than older adults. But this gap is narrowing in Western Europe and recently reversed in North America due to falling life satisfaction among the young. Conversely, in Sub-Saharan Africa life satisfaction has increased among the young.
- Overall, globally, young people aged 15-24 experienced improved life-satisfaction between 2006 and 2019, and stable life satisfaction since then. But the picture varied by region. Youth wellbeing fell in North America, Western Europe, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia. In the rest of the world it rose.
- Turning to younger ages (10-15), evidence is limited. In high income countries, life satisfaction has declined since 2019, especially for girls. For East Asian countries, life satisfaction increased in 2019. Before 2019, the evidence on trends is mixed.

- Girls report lower life satisfaction than boys by around the age of 12. This gap widens at ages 13 and 15, and the pandemic has amplified the difference. These points apply only to high-income countries since data on these young ages is rarely gathered elsewhere. For ages 15-24, global data shows no global gender differences from 2006 until 2013. But from 2014, females began reporting higher life satisfaction than males, although the gap has narrowed after the pandemic. This global gender gap masks regional differences, and is more pronounced in lower-income countries. There are no gender differences in high-income countries.

Chapter 4

Supporting the Well-being of an Aging Global Population: Associations between Well-being and Dementia

- As the global population of older adults increases, the number of worldwide dementia cases is also expected to increase. Dementia is associated with reduced quality of life and well-being, and thus dementia prevention is critical to maintaining the well-being of an aging global population.
- Higher levels of prior well-being have been robustly associated with lower risk for future dementia, suggesting that increasing well-being may be a promising non-pharmacological approach to dementia prevention. Among individuals living with dementia, there are environmental changes and well-being enhancing activities which have been shown to improve well-being.

Chapter 5

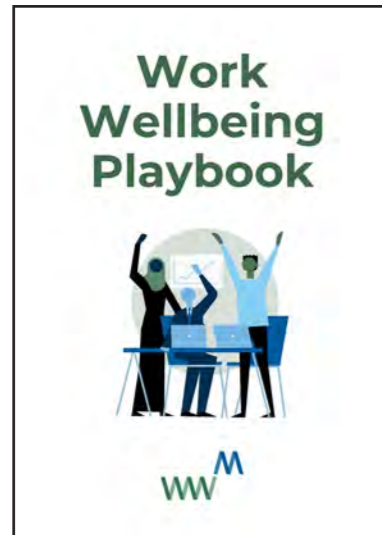
Differences in Life Satisfaction among Older Adults in India

- Older age is associated with higher life satisfaction in India, refuting some claims that the positive association between age and life satisfaction only exists in high-income nations. However, older women in India report lower life satisfaction than older men.
- Older adults with secondary or higher education and those of higher social castes report higher life satisfaction than counterparts without formal education and those from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
- Satisfaction with living arrangements, perceived discrimination, and self-rated health emerged as the top three predictors of life satisfaction.

Acknowledgments

We have had a remarkable range of contributing authors and expert reviewers to whom we are deeply grateful for their willingness to share their knowledge with our readers. Although the editors and authors of the *World Happiness Report* are volunteers, there are administrative and research support costs covered by our partners: Glico, the Katsui Foundation, Blue Zones, illycaffè, and Fondazione Ernesto Illy. We greatly value our special relationship with Gallup who enable the early access to the World Poll data that underpins so much of the report. We very much appreciate the continued work by Ryan Swaney and Stislow Design for their skills in design and web development. New this year, we are deeply grateful to Jonathan Whitney and Leoni Boyle for their extraordinary efforts on the production of the report and media engagement. All of these contributions together are what makes the *World Happiness Report* the go-to source for so many around the world wanting to find out the latest evidence on the global state of happiness.

John Helliwell, Richard Layard, Jeffrey D. Sachs, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Lara B. Akinin, and Shun Wang.



Work Wellbeing Playbook

The Work Wellbeing Playbook is a concise guide that distils insights from a large-scale systematic literature review of workplace wellbeing interventions. It presents high level insights in an accessible, and plain English format for ease-of use.

With support from Indeed, and in collaboration with our academic partner at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, the World Wellbeing Movement has curated this Playbook of evidence-based interventions categorised by 12 key drivers of workplace wellbeing.

The researchers reviewed more than 3,000 academic studies of workplace wellbeing interventions to identify strategies proven to increase the wellbeing of employees across diverse work environments. Recognising that business leaders often face time constraints, we have condensed the key insights into this open-access resource and distilled them into an accessible, high-level summary to support busy professionals.

This playbook builds upon the World Wellbeing Movement's science-based recommendations for how to measure both *how* employees are feeling at work, and *why* they are feeling that way – just like the Indeed Work Wellbeing Score, also created alongside experts from the Wellbeing Research Centre, does. Once you have collected the data, you can use this Playbook to address the areas for improvement within your organisation.

Business leaders are recommended to keep diversity top of mind when leveraging the playbook to craft a holistic employee wellbeing strategy for their organisation. When choosing interventions, employers should consider factors such as their workplace environment, industry, geographical location, and the unique needs of their employees.

Although there is no magic formula, and all interventions have their limitations, many companies start to affect positive change when they combine multiple interventions (organisational-level interventions, group-level interventions and individual-level interventions) across multiple drivers of employee wellbeing.



Cite this resource:
Cunningham, S., Fleming, W., Regier, C., Kaats, M., & De Neve, J. (2024). *Work Wellbeing Playbook: A Systematic Review of Evidence-Based Interventions to Improve Employee Wellbeing*. World Wellbeing Movement.

The remainder of this resource summarises evidence-based interventions categorised by these 12 drivers of workplace wellbeing:

<p>Achievement</p> <p>Employee wellbeing is linked to the achievement of work-related goals through use of skill, effort and dedication.</p>	<p>Appreciation</p> <p>Expressions and actions of genuine appreciation can have a profound impact on wellbeing.</p>	<p>Compensation</p> <p>Fair pay and other forms of compensation are foundational to building workplace wellbeing.</p>	<p>Energy</p> <p>Energised employees are more engaged, productive, and happy at work.</p>	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Granting your employees with more freedom over where and when they work can improve their wellbeing and productivity.</p>	<p>Inclusion & Belonging</p> <p>Diversity shapes the workforce while Inclusion and Belonging enable employees to thrive.</p>
<p>Learning</p> <p>Empowering employees with autonomy and access to learning and development opportunities has multiple benefits for wellbeing.</p>	<p>Management</p> <p>Supportive management is fundamental to how people feel at work and to ensuring the job gets done.</p>	<p>Purpose</p> <p>Purpose can serve as a powerful motivator in the workplace that drives both performance and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Stress</p> <p>Employee stress can pose serious risks to workplace wellbeing if left unaddressed. Identify and mitigate the root causes.</p>	<p>Support</p> <p>Employees who feel <i>truly</i> supported are less stressed, more satisfied at work and perform better.</p>	<p>Trust</p> <p>Trust fosters a safe work environment where employees feel supported and valued, enabling greater creativity, innovation and collaboration.</p>



Achievement

is a key driver of workplace wellbeing

Achievement results from overcoming challenge through skill, effort, and dedication. Employee wellbeing is linked to the achievement of work-related goals that that employees themselves consider valuable. Organisations that support employees in achieving goals that are meaningful to them will see improvements in both their wellbeing and productivity.



Achievement Interventions

Set goals as a team to drive performance

Determining what goals to tackle as a team and then basing individual goals on these targets is an effective approach to optimising group performance.¹ However, it is important to consider the personality traits and preferences of team members, since evidence suggests some employees are more satisfied with jobs that involve goal-setting than others.²



Specific and challenging goals yield higher group performance compared to nonspecific or easy goals.¹ Individual goals aimed at maximising the individual's contribution to the group have a positive impact on group outcomes. In contrast, individual goals aimed at maximising individual performance can spur competition and erode trust, thereby undermining group performance.

Sources:
1. Kleingeld et al. (2011)
2. Bipp and Kleingeld (2011)



Achievement Interventions

Co-develop the performance review process

Enlisting employees to help design an effective, fair, and supportive performance review process and/or performance measures promotes greater transparency, generates higher quality feedback, and can lead to better performance outcomes.^{1,2}

Involving employees in the selection of performance measurements for evaluative purposes, and the weighting of how those measures should be considered in evaluation, clarifies performance expectations for both employees and managers, thereby improving the integrity of the system.³ However, organisations should be cautious if using co-developed performance measures as a basis for monetary compensation or non-monetary rewards since evidence for this remains mixed.³



Sources:
1. Kleingard et al. (2004)
2. Lam and Schaubroeck (1999)
3. Groen et al. (2017)



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Wellbeing for Schoolteachers

While the field of teacher wellbeing may not have received the same depth of exploration as adolescent wellbeing, a consensus among researchers underscores its paramount importance for schools.

The unequivocal impact of teacher wellbeing on both their professional performance and the wellbeing of students highlights an area that demands closer attention.

Despite being a less studied aspect, the findings presented here offer valuable insights for schools aiming to enhance their understanding of wellbeing within their educational ecosystems.

The implications drawn from these findings provide practical avenues for schools to develop targeted initiatives that not only support teacher wellbeing but also contribute to a positive and thriving learning environment for students.

In this landscape, the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) stands at a unique vantage point. With the opportunity to delve into the forefront of wellbeing in educational settings, the IBO has the potential to emerge as a thought leader in the field.

By championing and fostering initiatives that prioritise and support teacher wellbeing, the IBO can play a pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of education, enriching the lives of both educators and students alike.

Key Findings in Teacher Wellbeing

1 Across countries and school grade levels, high levels of teacher stress, depression, anxiety, and poor physical health have been observed.

Research also shows that teachers report one of the highest levels of occupational stress and burnout on the job, compared with other professions.

Workload is one of the most prominent factors leading teachers to leave the profession.

2 The physical, organisational, and social aspects of the workplace are important for staff wellbeing.

When teachers feel positive about the school in which they work, research has found they suffer from less burnout, establish stronger parent-school bonds, and have lower rates of attrition.

Teachers' negative perceptions of schools have been tied to lower rates of teacher job satisfaction and working efficacy.

3 Subjective wellbeing (SWB) within workplaces is cyclical in nature, with organisations influencing the wellbeing- and performance-related outcomes of their employees, who in turn affect the performance and effective running of organisations in which they work.

Teacher wellbeing is also an important element for schools to consider as **this highly relates to the performance of schools.**

4 An increasing body of research evidence indicates that teacher-related factors are the most essential elements impacting learning in schools.

Importantly, teacher wellbeing has a significant impact on the wellbeing and academic success of students.

Teachers have been shown to have "the largest impact on student learning out of all school reform initiatives".

Teachers not only have an effect on their pupils' test scores and academic achievement, but also on their non-cognitive skills which further impact students' higher education attendance, employment, and earnings.



5 The stress felt by teachers, particularly in relation to high workloads and feeling unable to cope with disruptive students, has been **negatively associated with teaching efficacy such as classroom and pupil management and productive teaching methods.**

High rates of stress and other mental health issues reported by teachers, as a consequence of the demands of their professional role, prevent them from engaging adequately in their work or with their students.

This, in turn, has been found to have a negative impact on pupils' feelings of belongingness and connectedness to their school, their wellbeing, and the quality of education received.

6 **Workload is a crucial element of teacher wellbeing and should be explored as a factor for improvement.**

When teachers do not have sufficient resources to meet the demands of the job, exhaustion and high levels of stress result, potentially leading to negative emotions and ill-health.

These resources include 'personal' ones relating to motivation and self-efficacy, 'contextual' ones relating to supportive relationships between colleagues, students, and leadership, and 'strategies' relating to problem-solving abilities, continuous learning and development opportunities, and work-life balance.

7 **School climate is important for teacher wellbeing.**

In some research focusing on teacher wellbeing, it has been divided into the following areas:

- a) participation in school decision making and work autonomy;
- b) good teacher-student relationships;
- c) feelings of belonging and affiliation with the school;
- d) how open the school is to change, development and innovation;
- e) and having sufficient resources to carry out teaching duties.

All of these aspects interact to support teachers in carrying out their role sufficiently, and in so doing, have been found to lead to enhanced teacher wellbeing.

8 **Emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and resilience, have all been associated with higher teacher wellbeing.**

School stakeholders should consider exploring these drivers with their school staff as they could be effective pathways to impact for improving teacher wellbeing.

9 **Research has found that leaders create a positive environment through aspects such as:**

- prioritising wellbeing policies;
- encouraging positive relationships amongst pupils and staff;
- applying discipline fairly and consistently;
- implementing school safety measures;
- and taking active steps to involve parents and the larger community.

These factors have pronounced effects on students' and teachers' wellbeing, work achievements, and behaviour.

10 **Employee voice is an important aspect of employee wellbeing.**

Involving employees in the decision-making process regarding their work environment and how their work is performed in terms of their wellbeing, job satisfaction, and work performance, has been shown to have positive outcomes.

Research has found that these types of interventions can be counterproductive when governed solely by top-down leadership, eliminating employee voice and control in their jobs.

11 **Any interventions which focus on employee performance should be conducted through a supportive wellbeing lens; focusing on increasing self-efficacy and self-empowerment.**

However, this is an under-researched area and there is a lack of strong research evidence on improvements in wellbeing for this type of workplace wellbeing intervention.

12 **Research shows that relationships and feeling socially supported are the most important drivers of workplace wellbeing and job satisfaction.**

Workplaces that instil health behaviour norms and a positive workplace culture that has a sense of support, common purpose, and trust have been found to be especially important for mental wellbeing at work through influencing employees' feelings of belonging and meaning, although more evidence from high quality research is needed.

13 **Research has found that strategies to ensure clear understanding of, and adherence to, intervention guidelines, ensuring adequate funds and resources before commencing the intervention, making enough room for the intervention so that it does not compete with employees' work priorities (such as time pressures and workload), garnering employee participation and support, and providing leaders with support in implementing the intervention are all powerful methods for ensuring intervention effectiveness.**



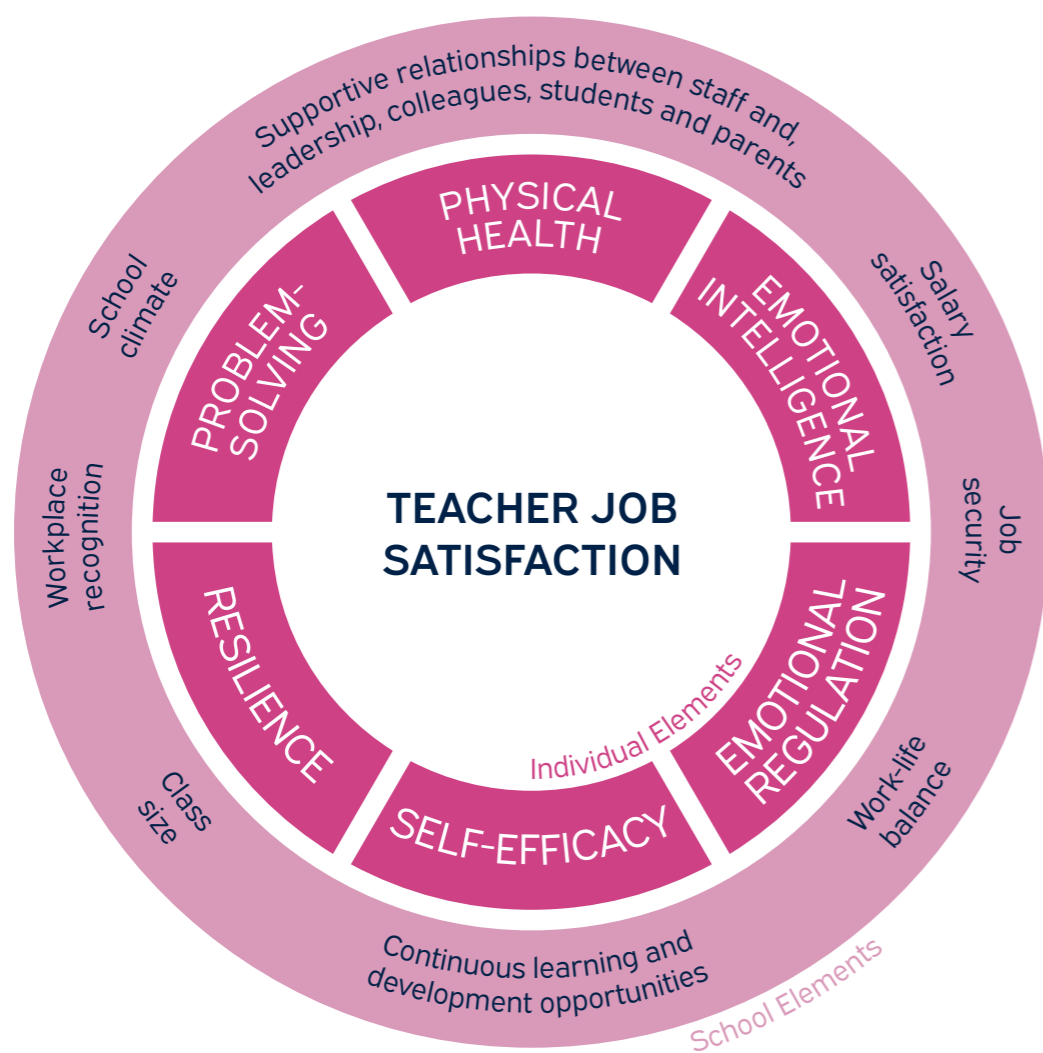
Teacher Wellbeing Framework

This Teacher Wellbeing Framework shows the areas that show promise for being drivers of teacher wellbeing.

The framework is not definitive and should be used primarily as a discussion point amongst school stakeholders and its contents will change over time as the literature progresses.

Each school is a unique ecosystem and some of the drives will be more relevant to your context than others.

It is important to use staff voice to identify drivers of wellbeing in your setting and to take measurements that can give school stakeholders further insights into what factors are important in their context.





Read all about it!

Our news highlights from the past 12 months

From major research studies to release of the world's foremost publication on global happiness, the Wellbeing Research Centre has generated plenty of headlines in the last 12 months. Here are some of the best bits...

“More ambition” needed to improve workplace wellbeing, research suggests

UK employers need to show “more ambition” if workplace wellbeing initiatives are to make a lasting improvement to workers’ mental health, according to new research from the Wellbeing Research Centre.

A large-scale study of more than 46,000 UK workers, now published in the *Industrial Relations Journal*, found no evidence that individual-level mental health interventions like mindfulness, resilience and stress management, relaxation classes, and wellbeing apps benefit employees.

But deeper organisational changes – such as flexibility of scheduling, management practices, staff resources,

“I hope these results can spur on further [...] employer action

performance review, or job design – are likely to play a greater role in improving wellbeing at work.

Dr William Fleming, Research Fellow at the Wellbeing Research Centre and author of the study, said: “There’s growing consensus that organisations have to change the workplace and not just the worker.

“This research investigates wellbeing interventions across hundreds of workplaces, supplementing trials that often take place in single organisations, and the lack of any benefit suggests we need more ambition when it comes to improving employee wellbeing.

“I hope these results can spur on further research and employer action.”

Dr Fleming used survey data from 46,336 workers in 233 UK organisations to compare those who participated in work wellbeing interventions with those who did not.

Employees anonymously reported on various key indicators of workplace wellbeing such as job satisfaction and stress levels, as well as giving accounts of factors like a sense of belonging, organisational support and training opportunities.

It is thought to be the largest study of its kind to date, and the first to differentiate between multiple wellbeing interventions within the same sample by focusing on 11 popular practices that seek change in individuals’ behaviour and psychological resources.

Some interventions even showed a small but measurable *negative* impact on measures of employees’ wellbeing, though this is thought to be the result of selection effects, where those with lower mental health levels participate in programmes but do not receive the intended boost.

The study also offers additional insights because of the wide scope of the survey and diversity of participants, with the key findings holding true across different job levels, organisations, and even different industries.

Overall, the findings suggest that strategies focused on individuals do not provide the right support for workers.

‘Employee wellbeing outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the UK’ is published in the *Industrial Relations Journal*.

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Images © Copyright World Economic Forum

Ukraine insights shared at World Economic Forum

Wellbeing insights from Ukraine fed into the conversation of ‘living with war’ at the World Economic Forum in 2024.

Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Director of the Wellbeing Research Centre and an Editor of the World Happiness Report, discussed findings around the impact of war on the Ukrainian people’s life satisfaction, feelings of worry, sense of belonging, and more.

He was part of a panel assembled by the Victor Pinchuk Foundation, in collaboration with the Office of the President of Ukraine and the PinchukArtCentre, contributing to a programme of events under the title ‘Deciding Your Tomorrow’.

Prof De Neve delivered remarks as part of the ‘living with war’ panel, alongside stories of people experiencing the conflict first-hand.



New partnership to publish World Happiness Report

The World Happiness Report is to be published under a new global partnership between Gallup, Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre, and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

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

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

Each edition of the World Happiness Report serves as a significant resource for governments, policymakers, researchers, and individuals interested in understanding the complex factors that contribute to human wellbeing.

At its core, it seeks to quantify and measure happiness as a fundamental indicator of societal progress. It goes beyond traditional economic measures, like GDP, and provides in-depth analyses into wellbeing and its drivers across the globe.

From 2024 the World Happiness Report will be a publication of the Wellbeing Research Centre.

The editorial team is formed of John F. Helliwell, Lord Richard Layard, Jeffrey D. Sachs, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Lara B. Aknin, and Shun Wang.



Vaccine views distorted by what people would like to be true, research finds

- Opinions on scientific knowledge are influenced by what people would like to be true, according to a study of UK attitudes to vaccinations
- Individuals were found to view 'their' vaccine as safer and more effective than alternatives – even despite what they may have previously stated

A study of the UK population's attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccines has revealed how psychological factors can distort opinions about scientific facts.

New research, published in the *Journal of Health Economics*, tracked how a sample of 856 UK residents viewed the Pfizer and Moderna jabs both before and after their vaccination.

The vaccination policy in the UK, which did not allow patients to choose the type of their vaccine, provided researchers with a rare real-world opportunity for a natural experiment to study the dynamics of memory and beliefs in a personal health context.

Individuals were asked their opinions of both the safety and effectiveness of both vaccines, and – if given the choice – whether they would choose Pfizer or Moderna.

They found that, on average, individuals viewed 'their' vaccine as far better than they used to think, both in terms of its safety and its effectiveness.

There was also a trend for people to misremember their previously-stated beliefs, tending to believe that they thought well of their own vaccine all along, and would have chosen it if they could: even if they had previously stated a different preference.

Researchers believe that this uptick in optimism can be explained by a combination of motivated reasoning (where the desire to achieve a certain conclusion impacts our support of evidence), and humans' tendency to overvalue events which are poorly informative (like one's own experience with vaccination).

The findings shows that people tend to display retrospective optimism. Revising one's own memories and opinions can protect individuals' wellbeing by

“ We helped uncover the roots of why people disagree

reducing fear and anxiety, especially given the irreversible nature of vaccine injection.

Dr Alberto Prati, Ajinomoto Research Fellow at the Wellbeing Research Centre and co-author, said: "We helped uncover the roots of why people disagree. When people developed different hopes for what the scientific truth is, they ended up disagreeing about it.

"This shows that disagreement is more than a simple matter of different amounts of knowledge."

'The causal effect of a health treatment on beliefs, stated preferences and memories' is published in the *Journal of Health Economics*.

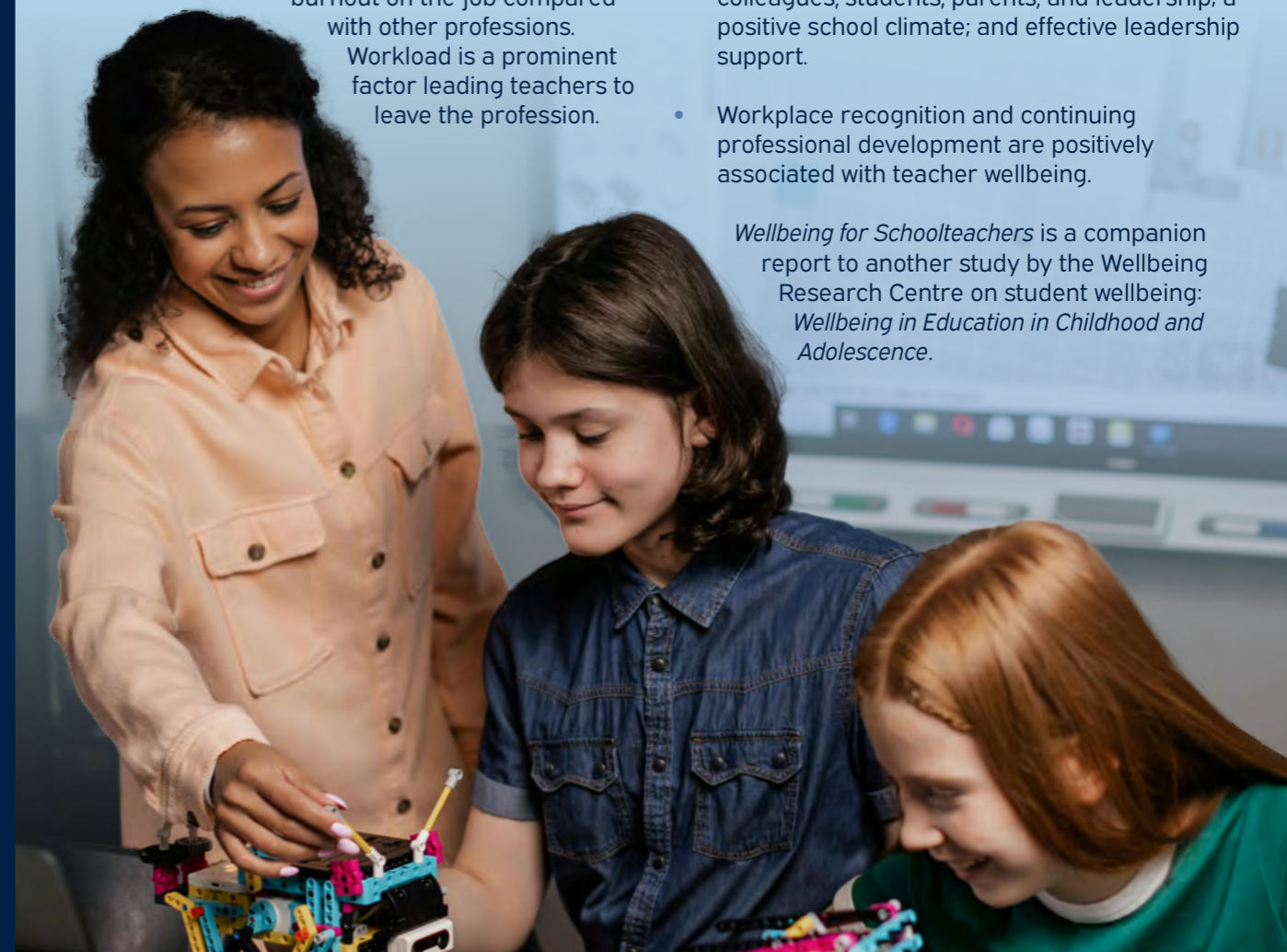
New report highlights "critical importance" of teacher wellbeing to schools and pupils

The International Baccalaureate (IB) commissioned the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford to produce a report on the latest research on teacher wellbeing.

The report, *Wellbeing for Schoolteachers*, provides the IB, policymakers and educational leaders an understanding of teacher wellbeing, what influences teacher wellbeing, and what evidence-based interventions might be used to improve teacher wellbeing.

One of the most comprehensive reviews of existing research, the findings allowed researchers to develop an evidence-based framework that indicates the drivers of teacher wellbeing. This framework serves as a discussion point for schools to identify drivers that will be most relevant to their school context.

International data shows that teachers report one of the highest levels of occupational stress and burnout on the job compared with other professions. Workload is a prominent factor leading teachers to leave the profession.



This report reveals an increasing body of research indicating that teacher-related factors are some of the most essential elements impacting learning in schools. Importantly, teacher wellbeing has a significant impact on the wellbeing and academic success of students.

Research suggests that teacher wellbeing should be one of the first factors schools consider when looking to improve wellbeing across the school community.

Based on the study, some of the key factors that positively impact teacher wellbeing include the following:

- Teacher voice is crucial in designing any intervention to support wellbeing in a particular school context.
- Higher levels of teacher wellbeing are associated with positive relationships among colleagues, students, parents, and leadership; a positive school climate; and effective leadership support.
- Workplace recognition and continuing professional development are positively associated with teacher wellbeing.

Wellbeing for Schoolteachers is a companion report to another study by the Wellbeing Research Centre on student wellbeing: *Wellbeing in Education in Childhood and Adolescence*.



Image © Copyright Maxim Hopman via Unsplash

World Happiness Report 2024: Most comprehensive picture yet of happiness across generations

Fresh insights from the World Happiness Report 2024 paint the richest picture yet of happiness trends across different ages and generations.

The findings, announced on March 20 to mark the UN's International Day of Happiness, are powered by data from the Gallup World Poll and analysed by some of the world's leading wellbeing scientists.

Experts use responses from people in more than 140 nations to rank the world's 'happiest' countries. Finland tops the overall list for the seventh successive year, though there is considerable movement elsewhere:

- Serbia (37th) and Bulgaria (81st) have had the biggest increases in average life evaluation scores since they were first measured by the Gallup World Poll in 2013, and this is reflected in climbs up the rankings between World Happiness Report 2013 and this 2024 edition of 69 places for Serbia and 63 places for Bulgaria.
- The next two countries showing the largest increases in life evaluations are Latvia (46th) and Congo (Brazzaville) (89th), with rank increases of 44 and 40 places, respectively, between 2013 and 2024.

Significantly, the United States of America (23rd) has fallen out of the top 20 for the first time since the report was first published in 2012, driven by a large drop in the wellbeing of Americans under 30.

Afghanistan remains bottom of the overall rankings as the world's 'unhappiest' nation.



For the first time, the report gives separate rankings by age group, in many cases varying widely from the overall rankings. Lithuania tops the list for children and young people under 30, while Denmark is the world's happiest nation for those 60 and older.

In comparing generations, those born before 1965 are, on average, happier than those born since 1980. Among Millennials, evaluation of one's own life drops with each year of age, while among Boomers life satisfaction increases with age.

Rankings are based on a three-year average of each population's average assessment of their quality of life. Interdisciplinary experts from the fields of economics, psychology, sociology and beyond then attempt to explain the variations across countries and over time using factors such as GDP, life expectancy, having someone to count on, a sense of freedom, generosity and perceptions of corruption.

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

World Happiness Report 2024 also features curated submissions on the theme of happiness and age from experts at the forefront of wellbeing science.

Observing the state of happiness among the world's children and adolescent population, researchers found that, globally, young people report higher life satisfaction than adults, but this gap is narrowing in Europe and recently reversed in North America.

Findings also suggest that the wellbeing of 15- to 24-year-olds has fallen in North America, Western Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia since 2019 – but in the rest of world it has risen. Overall, though, there is a notable global scarcity of wellbeing data available for children under 15.

Further work examines the relationship between wellbeing and dementia, identified as a significant area of research in a globally aging population.

Researchers highlight not only the impact of dementia on the wellbeing of individuals but also the reverse association: the demonstrable predictive power of higher wellbeing to reduce the risk of developing the disease in later life.

Finally, a team of researchers used a large survey of life satisfaction of older adults in the world's most populous nation: India. They found that increasing age is associated with higher life satisfaction, matching the findings of the global analyses.

They also analysed the complex impact of India's caste system on wellbeing among older adults, though satisfaction with living arrangements, perceived discrimination and self-rated health emerged as the top three predictors of life satisfaction in this study.

“The broad country coverage and annual surveys of the Gallup World Poll provide an unmatched source of data about the quality of lives all over the globe.

“There are now enough years of data, going back to 2006, to enable us this year to plausibly separate age and generational patterns for happiness.

“We found some pretty striking results. There is a great variety among countries in the relative happiness of the younger, older, and in-between populations. Hence the global happiness rankings are quite different for the young and the old, to an extent that has changed a lot over the last dozen years.”

Prof John F. Helliwell
Editor, World Happiness Report

“Effective policymaking relies on solid data, yet there remains a significant lack of it in various parts of the world.

“Today's World Happiness Report attempts to bridge some of these gaps by offering insights into people's perceptions of life.

“It offers more than just national rankings; it provides analytics and advice for evidence-based planning and policymaking.”

Jon Clifton
CEO, Gallup

“Once again, the World Happiness Report uncovers some special empirical insights at the cutting edge of the wellbeing research frontier.

“Piecing together the available data on the wellbeing of children and adolescents around the world, we documented disconcerting drops especially in North America and Western Europe.

“To think that, in some parts of the world, children are already experiencing the equivalent of a mid-life crisis demands immediate policy action.”

Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Editor, World Happiness Report

Voters' feelings matter: large-scale study highlights predictive power of negative emotions on election results

- Study of more than 150 countries and analysis of over 2 billion tweets highlights link between negative emotions and populist vote shares at general elections
- Researchers examined 'negative affect' including feelings of fear, anger, sadness and depression among members of the voting public

Politicians and pollsters alike should pay greater attention to sadness and despair among voters, after a large-scale study highlighted the power of negative emotions in predicting election results.

Research published in the journal *American Psychologist* uses data from more than 150 countries and analysis of over 2 billion tweets to not only demonstrate a link between populist vote share and feelings such as fear and anger, but also with the "often overlooked" feelings of sadness and depression.

The findings highlight what Gallup CEO, Jon Clifton, has described elsewhere as a "blind spot" for politicians and election pollsters, who have missed the global rise of negative emotions over the past two decades.

Indeed, none of the prominent forecasting models currently deployed to predict election outcomes include these emotions – referred to by researchers as 'negative affect' – as a predictor.

An interdisciplinary team of researchers – spanning economics, psychology, and computer science – collaborated on the study.

They combined self-reported data on negative emotions from across the globe with analysis of

“ Populist[s] thrive on tapping into negative emotions

sentiment within public posts on Twitter (now X), and compared trends in negative affect with data on populist beliefs and attitudes as well as, importantly, actual election results at scale.

Research found that negative affect is a strong predictor of both populist beliefs and higher populist vote shares. The data also suggest, however, that once they are in power, incumbent populists no longer gain from negative affect among discontented voters.

The researchers found that negative affect – not only 'high-activation' negative emotions such as anger and anxiety, but also 'low-activation' emotions such as depression and sadness – significantly predicted populist outcomes in the case of:

- Beliefs and attitudes in surveys using data from more than 150 countries globally;
- General election results within European countries between 2005 and 2018;
- Vote shares for Donald Trump in the USA at both the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections;
- Area-level vote shares in the 2016 Brexit vote as well as vote shares for the Brexit Party and subsequent European parliamentary elections.

Dr George Ward, Persol Research Fellow at Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, and lead author of the study, said: "It has become political lore that the state of the main economic indicators is what determines elections. But a growing body of evidence shows that how people are feeling matters just as much, if not more.

"Even if the economy is doing well from an objective standpoint, if voters are regularly experiencing large amounts of negative emotions – like sadness, anger, and fear – then the data suggests that there is fertile ground for populists to make electoral gains."

"Negative emotions such as anger, fear and sadness are a fertile ground for populists."

“ Anger, fear and sadness are a fertile ground for populists

Dr Andrew Schwartz, Associate Professor in Computer Science and Director of Human Language Analysis Beings at Stony Brook University and a co-author of the study, said: "Analyzing digital language has come a long way. It can supplement traditional surveys with measurements of life, as lived online, and recent methods are making such measurement accurate by, for example, producing more representative statistics from biased samples. All of this makes it possible to measure emotion at scales never before possible."

"Populist leaders thrive on tapping into negative emotions to gain power at the ballot box."

'The Role of Negative Affect in Shaping Populist Support: Converging Field Evidence from Across the Globe' is published in *American Psychologist*.

Global research team assembled for WHR 2025

An international team of interdisciplinary researchers will contribute to *World Happiness Report 2025*, focused on the theme of 'caring and sharing.'

Authors from a diverse mix of locations and disciplines will collaborate on the report, due to be released on 20 March 2025 to mark the UN's International Day of Happiness.

Powered by data from the Gallup World Poll, the *World Happiness Report* is the world's foremost publication on global happiness. Released annually since 2012, the report provides valuable, interdisciplinary insights into the wellbeing and happiness of people across the globe.

In addition to the ranking of the world's happiest countries, the report includes curated chapters from wellbeing experts to showcase some of the emergent ideas and trends on the annual theme.

In May, the editors issued the first-ever call for research proposals for the 2025 report, receiving 39 expressions of interest from 18 different countries.

Lara B. Akin, Professor of Social Psychology at Simon Fraser University and an editor of the *World Happiness Report*, said: "We've assembled an impressive team of talented researchers to explore the theme of 'caring and sharing' in *World Happiness Report 2025*.

"Established work shows that benevolence, empathy, and trust are all significant drivers of both individual and national happiness. Alongside this diverse group, we will explore these complex and consequential themes in more depth than ever before."

Chapter 2 will once again feature a ranking of countries by their average levels of life satisfaction, as well as a global assessment of prosocial behaviour and related factors.

This will be followed by six guest chapters examining the theme of 'caring and sharing' from a number of different angles.

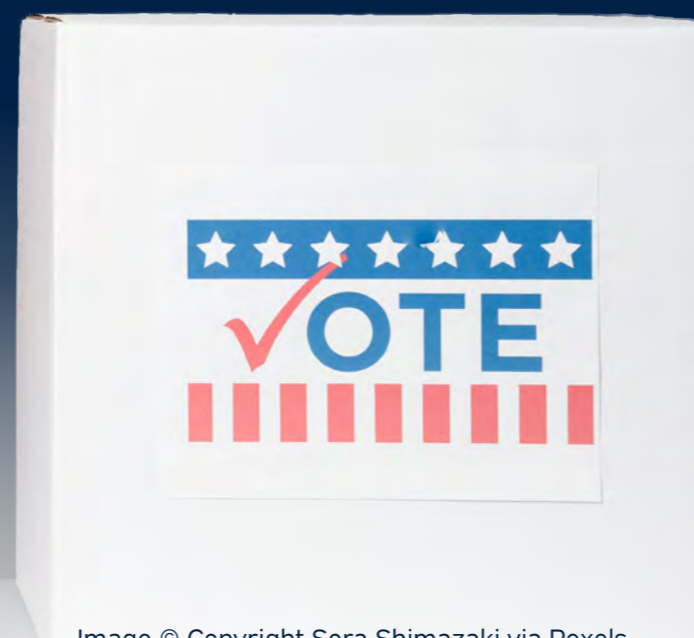


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Sharing evidence with California's State Assembly

Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve appeared before California State Assembly's Select Committee on Happiness & Public Policy Outcomes in May.

He shared data on the state of wellbeing in California, including a county-by-county breakdown of the 'happiest' areas in the state, and answered policymakers' questions on wellbeing outcomes and the practicalities of creating a wellbeing-first policy approach.



Open access Work Wellbeing Playbook published by WWM

Experts in the study of workplace wellbeing have published a playbook of proven strategies to make work better for employees and employers alike.

The Work Wellbeing Playbook was created in collaboration between not-for-profit social impact organisation the World Wellbeing Movement and recruitment company Indeed.

Researchers from the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre reviewed more than 3,000 academic studies of workplace wellbeing interventions to identify strategies proven to increase the wellbeing of employees across diverse work environments.

They then distilled the key insights into an accessible, high-level summary to support busy business leaders.

The summary resource is available as open access: meaning business leaders can view resources collated by the research team free-of-charge, and select interventions best suited to improving the drivers of wellbeing in their organisation.

The Work Wellbeing Playbook categorises and concisely summarises interventions proven to improve one or more of 12 'drivers' of workplace wellbeing identified by the research team.

A comprehensive list of academic citations is provided for readers seeking further detail.

The Playbook builds upon previous World Wellbeing Movement guidance on measuring wellbeing at work.



Image © Copyright University of Oxford Images / John Cairns Photography

Seminar Series

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

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

Held in a hybrid format, recordings of each event are made available on demand via the Centre's YouTube channel.

Michaelmas 2023

Emotions and Demotions
Dr Redzo Mujcic (Warwick)

The Economics of Hope
Prof Carol Graham (Brookings Institution)

The Gender Wellbeing Gap
Prof Alex Bryson (UCL)

Creating Strategic Wellbeing at Work
Prof Sir Cary Cooper CBE (Manchester)

Hilary 2024

Healthcare workers and life satisfaction during the pandemic
Prof Andrew Clark (Paris School of Economics)

Setting Wellbeing Priorities in the Real World
Samuel Dupret (Happier Lives Institute)

Digital well-being in the Global South
Dr Sakshi Ghai (Oxford Internet Institute)

Trinity 2024

Assessing data quality in a Big convenience sample of work wellbeing
Dr William Fleming (Oxford)

Valuing the Human; Psychosocial Safety Climate as the 'Cause of the Causes' of Work Stress
Prof Maureen Dollard (University of South Australia)



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is the
PURPOSE

LONDON 2024

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Let's put **wellbeing** first.

Putting wellbeing
at the heart of
decision-making
both in business
and public policy



Experts in the study of workplace wellbeing have published a playbook of proven strategies to make work better for employees and employers alike.

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They then distilled the key insights into an accessible, high-level summary resource to support busy business leaders.

A comprehensive list of academic citations is provided for readers seeking further detail.

The Playbook builds upon previous World Wellbeing Movement guidance on measuring wellbeing at work.

Work Wellbeing Playbook: A Systematic Review of Evidence-Based Interventions to Improve Employee Wellbeing is available at worldwellbeingmovement.org/playbook.

Achievement
Employee wellbeing is linked to the achievement of work-related goals through use of skill, effort and dedication.

Appreciation
Expressions and actions of *genuine* appreciation can have a profound impact on wellbeing.

Compensation
Fair pay and other forms of compensation are foundational to building workplace wellbeing.

Energy
Energised employees are more engaged, productive, and happy at work.

Flexibility
Granting your employees with more freedom over *where* and *when* they work can improve their wellbeing and productivity.

Inclusion & Belonging
Diversity shapes the workforce while Inclusion and Belonging enable employees to thrive.

Learning
Empowering employees with autonomy and access to learning and development opportunities has multiple benefits for wellbeing.

Management
Supportive management is fundamental to how people feel at work and to ensuring the job gets done.

Purpose
Purpose can serve as a powerful motivator in the workplace that drives both performance and wellbeing.

Stress
Employee stress can pose serious risks to workplace wellbeing if left unaddressed. Identify and mitigate the root causes.

Support
Employees who feel *truly* supported are less stressed, more satisfied at work and perform better.

Trust
Trust fosters a safe work space where employees feel supported and valued, enabling greater creativity, innovation and collaboration.

Cite this resource

Cunningham, S., Fleming, W., Regier, C., Kaats, M., & De Neve, J. (2024) *Work Wellbeing Playbook: A Systematic Review of Evidence-Based Interventions to Improve Employee Wellbeing*. World Wellbeing Movement.

The *Work Wellbeing Playbook* © 2024 by the *World Wellbeing Movement* is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0





The first-ever World Wellbeing Policy Forum took place in March, organised by WOHASU in collaboration with the World Wellbeing Movement.

A diverse group of experts joined the event in LSE's historic Shaw Library to explore wellbeing and the cost of unhappiness in society, including:

- **Dr Vivek Murthy**, main image, right, 19th and 21st US Surgeon General;
- **Prof Lord Richard Layard**, main image, left, co-founder, World Wellbeing Movement;
- **Karen Guggenheim**, inset left, CEO and founder, WOHASU;
- **Dame Tracey Crouch MP**, inset right, then Conservative MP for Chatham and Aylesford;
- **Kim Leadbeater MP**, inset centre, Labour MP for Spen Valley
- **Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve**, Director, Wellbeing Research Centre;
- **Sir Anthony Seldon**, President, International Positive Education Network;
- **Dr Diana Han**, Chief Health and Wellbeing Officer, Unilever;
- **Lucy Bailey**, CEO and founder, Bounce Forward;
- **Alberto Nobis**, CEO, VTC GmbH;
- **Pilar Saborío de Rocafort**, Former Ambassador to Costa Rica;
- and **Sarah Cunningham**, Managing Director, World Wellbeing Movement.



Ahead of the General Election in June, the World Wellbeing Movement led a call for policymakers to ensure the wellbeing of people is considered at the heart of the UK's policy agenda.

The WWM led a thought leadership campaign around the importance of a wellbeing approach to policy creation, and the steps necessary to make it happen.

Expert opinion from Managing Director, Sarah Cunningham, was featured in both *The Big Issue* and by Tortoise Media in the run-up to polling day, while co-founder Lord Richard Layard featured on BBC Radio 4 to discuss moving beyond GDP.

Esteemed WWM Board member Lord Gus O'Donnell gave an extended interview for *Leading* podcast with Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart, including discussion of the need for an overarching goal for Government.

The campaign culminated in a team visit to the Palace of Westminster (inset) in August.

The World Wellbeing Movement published the inaugural UK Wellbeing Report in March.

The report, authored by Dr Maria Cotofan, with contributions from Prof Lord Richard Layard, Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, and Sarah Cunningham, shows that 1 in 8 people in the UK are living below the newly-coined 'Happiness Poverty Line'.

Researchers also highlighted steep wellbeing inequalities across the UK, with as few as 1 in 20 people living below the Happiness Poverty Line in Watford, Woking, and High Wycombe, and as many as 1 in 4 in Birkenhead and Redditch.

The accompanying PR and media campaign to support the publication of this report gained coverage on local and regional BBC radio.

The *2024 UK Wellbeing Report* is available from worldwellbeingmovement.org/uk-wellbeing-report-2024





The World Wellbeing Movement continued to host some of the world's brightest wellbeing minds with the second season of the Working on Wellbeing podcast series, hosted by Sarah Cunningham.

Guests from the worlds of business, policy, and academia who shared their insights into how to put wellbeing at the heart of decision-making included:

- **Prof Ethan Kross**, inset centre, on *Chatter: the voice in our head and how to harness it*;
- **Dr Diana Han**, main image, on employee wellbeing in large organisations;
- **Lord Gus O'Donnell**, inset left, on the wellbeing policy landscape;
- **Kim Leadbeater MP**, on early intervention wellbeing policies;
- **Prof Robert Waldinger**, inset right, on the world's longest study on happiness;
- **Dame Tracey Crouch MP**, on her role as the world's first Minister for Loneliness;
- **Rachel Fellowes**, on sustainable performance in the workplace;
- **Dimitra Manis**, on leading with purpose; and **Karen Guggenheim**, on cultivating happiness.

■ Our Mission

The World Wellbeing Movement is a social impact organisation and registered charity working at the intersection between academic experts and decision-makers in both business and policy to translate evidence-informed wellbeing insights into real-world impact.

From our home within the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, we have formed a coalition 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.

■ Our Objectives

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

■ Founding and Premium Members



■ Associate Members



If your organisation is interested in becoming a member of the World Wellbeing Movement, please email info@worldwellbeingmovement.org for more information.



Our Impact

World-class research
enables real-world impact

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

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

In the Media

Our research, and expert comment from our researchers, has once again been featured by some of the world's largest media outlets in the past 12 months.



20/09/23

Indeed Announces Inaugural Better Work Awards, Honoring the Top Companies for Work Wellbeing in the U.S., U.K. and Canada

"Research consistently shows that how we feel at work matters. It deeply impacts our general wellbeing, our productivity and benefits society," said Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Professor of Economics at Saïd Business School and Director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at Oxford University.

"For employers, the wellbeing of their workforce cannot be underestimated as Oxford research shows that those who prioritize wellbeing reap the rewards of higher productivity and improved employee retention and attraction. In turn, this leads to greater business performance. This is something we've now shown to be the case in both hard financial metrics as well as stock market performance."



22/09/23

Indeed lists top 10 employers for work wellbeing in the UK

[Jan-Emmanuel] De Neve added: "Indeed's 2023 Better Work Awards are determined by data from the world's largest study on employee wellbeing with a majority of this year's top-performing UK companies either in healthcare and retail.

"Given the war for talent over the last year it may not be surprising that these organisations have been at the forefront of creating work environments that seek to give workers the best possible experience."



23/09/23

The creator of Yale's viral happiness class offers tips for boosting employee satisfaction

The day I spoke with happiness expert Laurie Santos, PhD, she could hardly contain her excitement sharing Jan-Emmanuel De Neve's workplace happiness study. In partnership with Indeed, his team at Oxford surveyed 15 million people about everything from their stress levels at work to their overall life satisfaction.

"I start with this study because it reveals our utter misconceptions," Santos tells me.



04/10/23

Can tracking happiness improve your wellbeing?

Plant ("an old-fashioned utilitarian") is pragmatic in his approach. He argues that improving lives can be as important as saving them. Research by the Institute has concluded that spending \$1,000 on group therapy in low-income countries—the Institute advocates for a charity called StrongMinds—is a more cost-effective way to improve wellbeing than investing in mosquito nets.



18/10/23

Make people happier – not just wealthier and healthier

"Basically, economists wanted to be more scientific," explained Michael Plant, who leads the Happier Lives Institute. "They thought something only counts as science if it's objectively measurable. Feelings aren't objectively measurable, therefore they are not science."

So economists turned away from squishy concepts like happiness and toward objective proxies for well-being, like GDP. In the postwar period, GDP became the go-to way for measuring well-being, even though the concept's inventor, Simon Kuznets, warned that "the welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income."



06/11/23

Don't Make Friends Where You Make Your Money?

"Their top pick – as you might guess – was compensation. The people he surveyed said salary was the most important thing for their happiness at work. So far, so unsurprising. But Jan wanted to test what really mattered for happiness at work. So he partnered with the job website Indeed, which just so happened to have surveyed actual work happiness in the over 15 million workers who use their site. And this is where Jan's findings get kinda shocking."



08/11/23

Merit-based flexibility could be the future of work as return-to-office mandates fail to prop up productivity

Additionally, hybrid work is the equivalent of an 8% salary increase in terms of employee satisfaction, as Bloom's findings suggest. An Oxford-Saïd Business School and BT study takes this further, quantifying happiness and its impact on productivity among content workers: a 13% increase in performance.



15/11/23

When purpose meets beauty: the power of art in the post-pandemic office

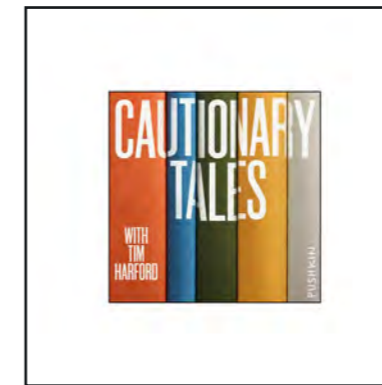
The Wellbeing Research Centre of the University of Oxford conducted a study in 2019 that analysed data from 230 independent organisations across 49 industries. The findings suggest that employees' satisfaction with their company strongly correlated with employee productivity.



20/12/23

Behavioral Scientist's Notable Books of 2023

From the back cover: "What produces a happy society and a happy life? ... We can now answer this question using state-of-the-art empirical evidence. This transforms our ability to base our decisions on the outcomes that matter most, namely the wellbeing of us all including future generations. Written by two of the world's leading experts on the economics of wellbeing, this book shows how wellbeing can be measured, what causes it and how it can be improved."



22/12/23

When Stalin killed the weekend

"There's this lovely paper that came out of the University of Oxford from Jan-Emmanuel De Neve's group that shows that happier workers wind up not just being more productive, but companies that have happier workers wind up earning more.

"Their very bottom line – how much they are giving back in the stock market – winds up being determined, at least in part, by how happy workers are."



22/12/23

Even Support for the Government Can Be Predicted

Gross domestic product (GDP) has many limitations. It is an excellent measure of economic output but inadequate for anything else. Its strengths are that it is a single key performance indicator (KPI) and that it has an established credibility. Any indicator for parameters beyond GDP needs to have similar strengths. I believe that subjective well-being is a useful complement to GDP.



28/12/23

Who was the best CEO of 2023?

However, hard-headed executives will be won round only by hard facts. A convincing case can be found in a recent study by Christian Krekel, George Ward and Jan-Emmanuel de Neve. The study, based on data compiled by Gallup, a polling organisation, covers nearly 1.9m employees across 230 separate organisations in 73 countries.

The authors studied four potential measures of corporate performance: customer loyalty, employee productivity, profitability and staff turnover. They found that employee satisfaction had a negative link with staff turnover and a substantial positive correlation with customer loyalty. It was correlated with higher productivity and, less strongly, with profitability.



10/01/24

Why workforce sustainability has become a board-level financial metric

In Spring 2023, Oxford University's Jan-Emmanuel De Neve and colleagues demonstrated that companies whose employees have strong well-being have higher financial and stock performance. More importantly, they showed that employee well-being levels predict financial and stock performance six and 12 months ahead. This study spanned 1,600 publicly traded companies and data from 15 million employees. For the first time, we can say with scientific confidence that workforce sustainability predicts financial performance and the stock market's willingness to value that performance highly.



10/01/24

No benefit from employer wellbeing programs, study finds

Businesses offering wellbeing support like mindfulness training, stress management and relaxation classes may be wasting their money and their workers' time, new research suggests.

The study of more than 46,000 workers in the UK concluded firms were better off spending their time working on organisational interventions like staff resources, management practices and better job design if they wanted to support greater wellbeing at work.



10/01/24

Bhutan election: What should be the goal of Government?

Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, an Editor of the World Happiness Report, spoke to the BBC World Service's Newsday programme on the history of happiness in Bhutan and, as its citizens head to the polls, whether Thimphu's focus should be on the wellbeing of the population or plainly on GDP.



10/01/24

Workplace well-being initiatives don't boost employee mental health

Instead of offering these initiatives, [Dr William] Fleming suggests that employers focus on bettering the work environment. For example, they could assess whether someone's workload is too taxing, if they are putting in too many hours or if management strategies could be improved, he says.



11/01/24

No evidence mindfulness and wellbeing apps improve employee wellbeing

[Dr William] Fleming said HR should focus on addressing the root causes of stress and poor mental health to avoid 'wellbeing washing'.

He said: "If these initiatives are offered with the intent of appearing to try and improve wellbeing or just taking the easy route, rather than actually and sincerely trying to improve employees, then it would qualify as wellbeing washing.

"To not fall foul of wellbeing washing, employers have to take seriously the root causes of stress or poor wellbeing, understand the jobs of their employees and recognise work and personal life conflicts."



11/01/24

The employee wellbeing perks that are a waste of bosses' money

Employers who are serious about improving the wellbeing of staff must tackle the root causes of stress instead of relying on "easy actions" such as offering free access to health apps and mindfulness workshops.



13/01/24

The Unexpected Ways a Big Raise Affects Your Happiness

But moving up the income scale, it takes more money to generate the same good feelings, said Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, an economics professor at Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford who studies well-being. The proportion of the increase matters.

"If an employer moves somebody from \$15,000 to \$30,000, that will have an impact on people's life satisfaction that is the equivalent of them moving somebody from, say, \$60,000 to \$120,000," De Neve said.



13/01/24

Workplace Well-Being Programs Didn't Improve Employee Mental Health, Study Says

How well did participation in all those employee well-being programs correlate with actual employee well-being? How about not well at all? In fact, Fleming found that none of these classes, coachings, trainings and apps had any association with any improvement in employee well-being with one exception.



15/01/24

Workplace Wellness Programs Have Little Benefit, Study Finds

Dr. Fleming's analysis suggests that employers concerned about workers' mental health would do better to focus on "core organizational practices" like schedules, pay and performance reviews.

"If employees do want access to mindfulness apps and sleep programs and well-being apps, there is not anything wrong with that," he said. "But if you're seriously trying to drive employees well-being, then it has to be about working practices."



17/01/24

Wellbeing: Focusing on the work, not just the worker

"This is problematic for a number of reasons. First, individual-level interventions overlook systemic issues. Instead, they assume that well-being problems are employees' personal problems. But if the workload is heavy, the work culture is toxic, the organization is understaffed, what can a training program on mindfulness do for the employees?"



17/01/24

Workplace health benefits don't move the needle on employee happiness and well-being. With one exception

"Across multiple subjective well-being indicators, participants appear no better off," Fleming concludes in his paper published in the Industrial Relations Journal this month.

[...] The study, which analyzed data from 46,336 workers across over 230 companies, found nearly all interventions, including resilience training, access to sleep apps, and online coaching, did not benefit employee well-being. There was one notable exception, however: Volunteering did positively correlate with improved workplace well-being.



17/01/24

Work 'wellness' programmes don't make employees happier – but I know what does

A new study by Oxford University's William Fleming examines the impact of a wide range of workplace wellbeing interventions such as stress management and mindfulness classes, and wellbeing apps. It found that almost none of these interventions had any statistically significant impact on worker wellbeing or job satisfaction.

They did not improve employees' sense of belonging at work or reduce perceived time pressures. Nor did they make employees feel supported or improve workplace relationships. In some cases, wellbeing interventions seemed to make matters worse, the study suggested. For instance, workplace resilience and mindfulness training had a slightly negative impact on employees' self-rated mental health.



22/01/24

Do office wellness programs actually work?

Companies spend big money to help their employees feel good at work, from lunchtime yoga to mindfulness seminars. But a new study suggests these workplace wellness programs aren't actually doing much to help. We dive into office wellness in the first instalment of Well Founded, our new series about making sense of all the pitches on how to be a better you.



23/01/24

UK employee health has barely improved since pandemic

Recent research by William Fleming at the University of Oxford even suggests that individual interventions targeting employees – such as resilience training or wellbeing apps – are of little value on their own.

Such findings are in line with longstanding arguments that improving structural factors – such as quality of management, job design, organisational culture and pay – are more important for improving workplace wellbeing.



14/02/24

Why mindfulness training at work doesn't reduce stress

Recently, Dr William Fleming, a Unilever research fellow at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, analysed survey responses of more than 46,000 people to find out whether workplace wellbeing and mindfulness interventions actually worked.

He found that there was no difference in the self-reported mental health of those who participated in these programmes, compared with those who did not. Overall, the schemes didn't improve workers' sense of belonging or reduce how pressured they felt.



15/02/24

I'd rather be happier at work than get a pay rise – would you?

But once you do reach a tipping point, the bottom line might not be as important as you think. The relationship between income and happiness is "logarithmic", according to research – it means that if you doubled your salary from £20k to £40k, to experience the same uptick in happiness again, you'd have to double it to £80k. As well as diminishing returns, there's also a ceiling: past £120k (this, in itself, only ever achieved by the top 1 per cent of Brits), we "no longer detect a statistically significant relationship between further money and life satisfaction", Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and behavioural science at the University of Oxford, told BBC Radio 4's Money Box.



21/02/24

How to build a workplace wellbeing program that actually works

Wellbeing is having a moment.

Mental health, resilience, and burnout alleviation are among today's top healthcare HR focuses, according to sweeping research that professional services firm AON released in December, which pulses benefits trends across 160 U.S. health systems and more than 3.3 million employees.

But it's no small feat to cultivate a shared sense of wellness and engagement in the hundreds to thousands

to hundreds of thousands of people who make up a modern workforce. In fact, a new study out of the U.K. has cast some doubt—and kicked up a LinkedIn debate—on whether individual-level interventions even work.



26/02/24

Measuring What Matters: Assessing Workplace Mental Health and Well-being

A group of researchers at the University of Oxford have developed a body of applied research based on the principle that workplace well-being is driven by how people feel at work and about their work.

Accordingly, measures of job satisfaction, happiness and the degree to which work is found to be meaningful are measured and correlated with an overall sense of well-being. The group's well-being index – which combines the measure of work happiness, purpose, job satisfaction and stress – not only correlated company performance (measured using return on assets as well as correlated with market value, but also predicted future performance and returns on investment. In its most recent study, the group analysed 15 million well-being surveys by employees at over 1,600 publicly listed companies into a well-being index.



26/02/24

How to save HR from itself

This may all sound dangerously like common sense. But the continuing bad-mouthing of HR stems partly from the perception that its contribution in the workplace too often lacks this sort of basic practicality.

A new paper in the Industrial Relations Journal has found that many wellbeing and resilience initiatives at work – training, or apps, for example – have failed to leave employees feeling any healthier. What might work? Better job design and work organisation. But interventions are too rarely based on multiple sources of good evidence.



05/03/24

How to create a great volunteering program

Employee volunteer programs have a positive correlation with worker retention, wellbeing, and engagement, according to a study published earlier this year by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford. And workers who participated in volunteering and purpose programs were 52% less likely to leave their companies, according to a 2022 talent retention study from Benevity, a donation, volunteer, and grant management platform.



06/03/24

Volunteering: A Proven Way To Improve Employee Well-Being

However, it's important to note that the Oxford research concluded volunteering has an impact on well-being because it provides a sense of purpose and belonging. Other research confirms a strong connection between volunteering and mental health and even demonstrates that it can lead to a longer life.



13/03/24

Working nine to thrive: How to improve employee health and productivity

Previously, researchers at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre analyzed data from more than 15 million employees on their well-being and the underlying workplace factors driving it. The researchers identified and tested 11 factors, including compensation, flexibility, purpose, inclusion, achievement, support, trust, belonging, management, and learning. The three top factors for the companies that scored best on well-being were feeling energized, belonging, and trust. Interestingly, they are different from the top drivers that employees think will make them happy and drive well-being at work: pay and flexibility.



19/03/24

Ranked: The 20 Happiest Countries In The World In 2024, According To A New Report

Finland has done it again. The 2024 World Happiness Report is out, and for the seventh year in a row, Finland has been named the happiest country in the world. But the news isn't as good for the United States—which has hit a new low. The U.S. didn't even make the top 20 list—the first time it has ranked so poorly since the World Happiness Report was created in 2012.



19/03/24

U.S. Falls Out of Top 20 Happiest Countries for the First Time Ever

For the first time in the World Happiness Report's dozen-year history, the U.S. did not rank in the top 20 of the world's happiest countries. Out of the more than 140 nations surveyed, the U.S. landed in 23rd place, compared to 15th place in 2023. While the U.S. is still in the top 10 happiest countries for those 60 years old and above, its overall ranking fell due to a significant decline in the reported well-being of Americans under 30.



19/03/24

These are the world's happiest countries in 2024

The survey asks each participant to score their life as a whole, considering what they value, said John Helliwell, emeritus professor of economics at the Vancouver School of Economics, University of British Columbia, and a founding editor of the World Happiness Report. "And you find out Finland's pretty rich in all of those things, like wallets being returned if they're dropped in the street, people helping each other day in and day out, very high quality and universally distributed health and education opportunities — so everyone more or less comes out of the starting gate the same," he said. He also noted that Finland has happy immigrants, "so they're prepared to share with newcomers."



19/03/24

U.S. No Longer Ranks Among World's 20 Happiest Countries

In the U.S., self-reported happiness has decreased in all age groups, but especially for young adults. Americans 30 years and younger ranked 62nd globally in terms of well-being, trailing the Dominican Republic, Brazil and Guatemala. Older Americans ranked 10th. That is a change from a decade ago, when young Americans considered themselves happier than those in the midlife groups, and about as happy as those ages 60 and over, says economist John Helliwell, a founding editor of the World Happiness Report, first published in 2012. Now, those 30 and under are the country's least happy age group, a decline attributed partly to their feeling worse about their lives.



20/03/24

The U.S. is no longer one of the 20 happiest countries. If you're young, you probably know why.

"We had picked up in recent years from scattered sources of data that child and youth well-being, particularly so in the United States, had seen a drop," said Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and behavioral science at Oxford, who is one of the editors of the report. "That has pushed us for the first time to really slice and dice the data by these age categories, which we normally don't do."



20/03/24

US no longer in top 20 of world's happiest countries and is now behind Kuwait, Lithuania, UAE

"In the top ten countries only the Netherlands and Australia have populations over 15 million," according to the report. "In the whole of the top 20, only Canada and the United Kingdom have populations over 30 million."



20/03/24

Finland Is Happiest Nation Again, But US Slides Down the Ranking

Among specific age groups, Lithuania topped the ranking for children and people under 30, while Denmark is the world's happiest nation for those 60 and older.

"In comparing generations, those born before 1965 are, on average, happier than those born since 1980," the report said. "Among Millennials, evaluation of one's own life drops with each year of age, while among Boomers life satisfaction increases with age."



20/03/24

Led by Its Youth, U.S. Sinks in World Happiness Report

Americans have long been an unhappy bunch. They have never ranked in the Top 10 of the World Happiness Report, which is based on how respondents in different countries rate their own happiness.

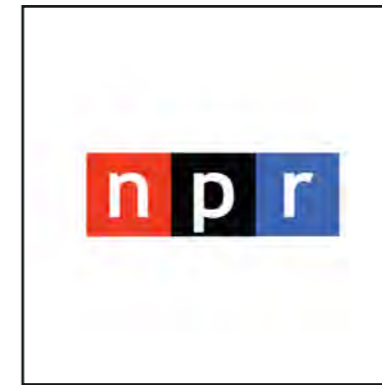
But this was the first time that the consortium separated results by age, finding disparities in the views of younger and older Americans. Among the 143 countries surveyed, the United States ranked 10th for people 60 and older, but 62nd for people under 30. The happiest young people are in Lithuania, while the unhappiest are in Afghanistan.



20/03/24

America's happiness score drops amid a youth 'midlife crisis'

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Center and an editor of the report, said in an interview Wednesday that the findings are concerning "because youth well-being and mental health is highly predictive of a whole host of subjective and objective indicators of quality of life as people age and go through the course of life."



20/03/24

U.S. drops in new global happiness ranking. One age group bucks the trend

How happy are you? The Gallup World Poll has a simple way to gauge well-being around the globe.

Imagine a ladder, and think about your current life. The top rung, 10, represents the best possible life and the bottom rung, 0, represents the worst. Pick your number.

Researchers use the responses to rank happiness in countries around the globe, and the 2024 results have just been released.



20/03/24

U.S. drops from top 20 happiest countries list in 2024 World Happiness Report

Unhappy news for Americans: The United States is no longer among the 20 happiest countries in the world, according to new data from Gallup and its partners.

In the newly released 2024 World Happiness Report, the U.S. dropped out of the top 20 on the list for the first time in the report's 12-year history. The U.S. now ranks at No. 23, compared to No. 15 last year.

The researchers say this is driven in part by a decline in how Americans under 30 feel about their lives.



20/03/24

One age group in particular reports 'feeling worse about their lives'

Across the globe, younger people (between ages 15 and 24) were typically happier than older people, except for in North America.

"There is a great variety among countries in the relative happiness of the younger, older, and in-between populations," says John F. Helliwell, founding editor of the World Happiness Report, in a press release. "Hence the global happiness rankings are quite different for the young and the old, to an extent that has changed a lot over the last dozen years."



20/03/24

Lithuania has been ranked the happiest country in the world for young people

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, a professor and editor of the World Happiness Report, said the US falling out of the top 20 happiest countries was "quite astonishing."

"The young are the ones that have fallen off a cliff in terms of their well-being, and that's feeding through into the overall ranking score for the United States," he said.



20/03/24

Young people becoming less happy than older generations, research shows

Young people are becoming less happy than older generations as they suffer "the equivalent of a midlife crisis", global research has revealed as America's top doctor warned that "young people are really struggling".



20/03/24

Pushkin Hosts Celebrate World Happiness Day

The Happiness Lab's Dr. Laurie Santos brings together other Pushkin hosts to mark the International Day of Happiness. Revisionist History's Malcolm Gladwell talks about the benefits of the misery of running in a Canadian winter. Dr. Maya Shankar from A Slight Change of Plans talks about quieting her mental chatter. And Cautionary Tales host Tim Harford surprises everyone with the happiness lessons to be learned from a colonoscopy.



20/03/24

US falls out of world's top 20 happiest countries list for the first time ever

The report, created via a partnership involving Gallup, the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and the World Happiness Report's editorial board, pointed to happiness decreasing in all age groups for the US. It also found a significant decline among young people, who are now the least happy age group.

"This is a big change from 2006-10, when the young were happier than those in the midlife groups, and about as happy as those aged 60 and over. For the young, the happiness drop was about three-quarters of a point, and greater for females than males," the report said.



20/03/24

Scandi happy people laughing: Northern Europeans are the most joyful folk in the world

Generally, people around the world are experiencing more negative emotions than they did 15 years ago, with two regional exceptions: in Europe and East Asia.

The most significant increases in happiness since the last report were observed in Central and Eastern European countries, specifically in the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Slovenia. Life evaluations have also risen considerably in former Soviet countries and East Asia.

The countries at the bottom of the list were Lesotho, Lebanon and, in last place, Afghanistan.



20/03/24

Britain falls in world happiness rankings – with young people more miserable than older generations

"Youth, especially in North America, are experiencing a mid-life crisis today," said Dr Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, a University of Oxford economics professor and one of the report's editors.

But Dr De Neve said a range of factors was likely to be lowering young peoples' happiness, including increased

polarisation over social issues, negative aspects of social media, and economic inequality that made it harder for young people to afford their own homes than in the past.



20/03/24

World's happiest countries for 2024 revealed – as UK slips to 20th place

For the first time, experts analysed rankings by age group, which often found a marked difference in how happy young and older people are.

In many European countries, such as the UK, Norway, Sweden, Germany, France, and Spain, the old were found to be significantly happier than the young.

The drop in wellbeing for under-30s also caused the US to fall out of the top 20 for the first time since the World Happiness Report was first published in 2012.



20/03/24

World Happiness Report sounds alarm about the welfare of young people

The latest World Happiness Report is a warning sign to governments that have put the welfare of older people above that of younger generations. If young people cannot establish themselves in the workplace with a decent home and time and money to visit friends and family, the ramifications will boomerang on the old.

There will be slower economic growth and fewer funds to support the retired.



20/03/24

Finland tops world happiness ranking, with Ireland 17th

"In the top ten countries only the Netherlands and Australia have populations over 15 million. In the whole of the top 20, only Canada and the UK have populations over 30 million."



20/03/24

Why Germany has fallen behind on happiness

Despite stable levels of well-being, Germany has fallen to 24th place in the World Happiness Report, with youth ranking even lower. Factors such as the pandemic and geopolitical tensions have contributed to this shift.



20/03/24

Finland ranked world's happiest country for seventh year

Finland remained the world's happiest country for a seventh straight year in an annual UN sponsored World Happiness Report published on Wednesday (March 20).



21/03/24

Gloomy youth pull US and western Europe down global happiness ranking

Rising unhappiness among younger people has caused the United States and some large western European countries to fall down a global wellbeing index, while Nordic nations retain their grip on the top spots.



21/03/24

World's happiest countries for 2024 revealed – as US drops out of top 20

Israel is surprisingly at 5, amid its ongoing war on Hamas in Gaza. However, the authors do point out that the three-year average of the rankings often mutes the effect of "cataclysmic events happening during a particular year".

The survey, which was conducted in the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank before the events of 7 October, ranks Palestinian happiness at 103.



21/03/24

Young people are the least happy age group in the UK

Professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, the director of Oxford University's Wellbeing Research Centre and an editor of the report, said the findings on youth unhappiness were worrying.

He said: "Piecing together the available data on the wellbeing of children and adolescents around the world, we documented disconcerting drops especially in North America and western Europe.

"To think that, in some parts of the world, children are already experiencing the equivalent of a mid-life crisis demands immediate policy action."



21/03/24

World Happiness Report: Young people in the West becoming unhappier

People under the age of 30 are experiencing the equivalent of a mid-life crisis in some parts of the world, a new report has found.

The World Happiness Report gives an annual ranking of mood across the world, and for the first time has divided the data by age group.

Average happiness of young people is on the decline across the West, it found.



22/03/24

A TikTok ban won't fix social media's collective trap

This week, the World Happiness Report revealed that in the US, the happiness of the under-thirties has slumped. Since the inception of the World Happiness Report in 2012, the US has always placed in the top 20 happiest countries in the world, but has been dragged out of that club by the misery of young Americans: rated by the wellbeing of the under-thirties, the US now ranks 62nd in the world. (Looking at the over-sixties, the US is in the top 10. OK, boomer? The boomers are indeed OK.)



22/03/24

The pursuit of happiness

But, understanding what contributes to happiness is valuable. The WHR shows that life evaluations can be largely explained by six factors: GDP per capita, levels of social support, health, freedom, generosity and perceptions of corruption. These drivers of fulfilment are a far better basis for policy. An equivalent approach is to see the role of government as reducing the causes of unhappiness. This focuses on giving citizens the capability to improve their own lives, by providing basic public services, supporting freedoms and protecting them from harm.



24/03/24

Gen Z already facing 'midlife crisis' in their 20s

One of the key findings from the report is that happiness rankings differ between age groups with Americans under the age of 30 coming in 62nd out of 143 countries.

Editor of the report and director of the Wellbeing Research Centre, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, highlighted the 'disconcerting drops in youth happiness, especially in North America and Western Europe' as though it had 'fallen off a cliff'.

"To think in some parts of the world children are already experiencing the equivalent of a midlife crisis demands immediate policy action," he added.



25/03/24

What Can We Learn From the Happiest Country on Earth?

There are certain nations which always top the rankings in the World Happiness Report. What are they doing right, that other countries are getting wrong? And what can you do to make your home country happier?

John Helliwell of the World Happiness Report explains how things like wealth, freedom and friendship combine to make a happy society – and how tiny changes in your home, neighborhood or workplace can have a huge national impact.



01/04/24

Why are so many young Americans suffering from mental distress?

The cost of living, university fees and even gun crime are contributing to an alarming rise in depression and anxiety among young adults.



01/04/24

Can Happiness Ward Off Dementia?

Age is the main risk factor for cognitive decline. So with more people around the world living longer, cases of dementia are set to rise. There's currently no cure – but research suggests that happiness can reduce the impact of this awful illness.

Psychologist Emily Willroth helped write a chapter on this topic for the 2024 World Happiness Report – and explains how making friends, helping others and engaging in fun physical activities can slow cognitive decline, even when the disease has taken hold.



03/04/24

Mirror Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Happiest of All?

The World Happiness Report of 2024 points to childhood and adolescence as periods of considerable importance and a unique window of opportunity for intervention to make strong and positive impacts worldwide to ensure higher global well-being.



04/04/24

The secret behind the world's happiest country

While Scandinavian countries as usual occupied the top spots, both America and Germany fell out of the top 20. War- and revolution-racked Afghanistan held the bottom spot in the ranking of 143 countries, with a score of only 1.7 compared with Finland's 7.7 and Denmark's 7.6.



05/04/24

A generation adrift: Why young people are less happy and what we can do about it

In the "seven ages of man" depicted in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare painted later life stages as melancholic, but the latest World Happiness Report unveils a concerning reality: young people worldwide now report lower happiness levels than their elders. Since 2006, levels of reported youth happiness have declined in North America, South America, Europe, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.



08/04/24

The 'sandwich generation' faces pressure as the world ages – here are 3 tips to prevent burnout

Not only will there be new challenges for the world's current systems and economies, it will also largely impact future generations.

"There's this tendency in the welfare state to sort of outsource the elderly care," Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at Oxford University told CNBC Make It.

"That tends to lead to issues of isolation, elderly people feeling useless, whereas there's so much to offer the society and the younger generations."



08/04/24

Why are workers so sad? These researchers offer clues – and recommendations

Layard cites his research, along with studies by George Ward, an economics research fellow at Oxford University, and Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, a professor of economics and behavioral science at Oxford's Saïd Business School,

which demonstrates the impact of worker well-being on individual- and firm-level performance.

While more conservative economists prioritize quantifiable measures like income, rather than subjective emotions like happiness, Layard says “we should be measuring the benefit of a policy not by its effect on income, but by its overall effect on well-being.”



08/04/24

How to Make America's Young People Happier Again

The US is sliding down the world happiness rankings – but it's the unhappiness of young people that's really dragging down the average. What has happened to make Gen Z so sad? And what can be done to turn the situation around?

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve (director of Oxford University's Wellbeing Research Centre) has been analyzing the figures for the World Happiness Report. He offers advice to young people and parents, and looks at what happy young Lithuanians can teach the rest of the world.

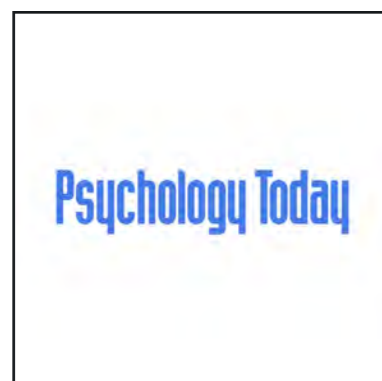


11/04/24

Global study highlights critical importance of teacher wellbeing

“As we navigate the crucial intersection of education and wellbeing, the research evidence highlights the profound importance of prioritising teacher wellbeing,” Dr Laura Taylor, Deputy Director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford and Lead Researcher for the project, said.

“By investing in the health and happiness of educators, we not only empower them to thrive but also lay the foundation for a positive ripple effect on students, schools, and the broader education system.”



17/04/24

Why Aren't Today's Youth Happy?

In many parts of the world, younger folks are happier than the old. But in the U.S. the opposite is true. Happiness has plummeted so much for the young over the recent past that they are now much less happy than the older generations.

The U.S. ranked number 10 in happiness for folks 60 or older but a startling number 62 for those under 30.



17/04/24

The chart that shows how happy you are, just as long as you're old enough

Now for the bad news: despite all our advantages, Australia's average life satisfaction score has declined over the past decade, and the trend started before the pandemic. On the report's measure, happiness in Australia last peaked in 2013.

The downward trend has been driven by gloomier young people. Between 2010 and 2023 the decline in average life satisfaction scores among Australians aged under-30 was nearly double that of older age groups. While over-60s in Australia were ranked 9th in the world for happiness this year, that fell to 19th for under-30s.

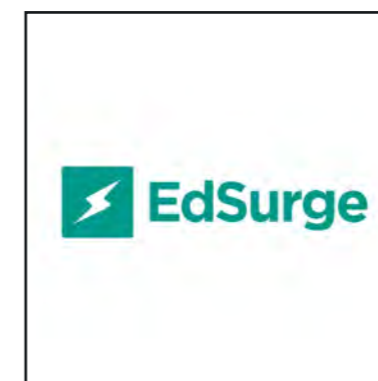


30/04/24

Europeans have more time, Americans more money. Which is better?

But few Americans win the big prizes. Many others end up overworked and unhappy, albeit in big houses and cars. In the latest World Happiness Report – a partnership between Gallup, the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre and the UN – the US finished 23rd for self-reported happiness. Nordic countries took the top spots.

As the Swedish political scientist Bo Rothstein observed: “It is now clear that, from the many societal models that have been tried since the breakthrough of industrialism, social research can point to a winner in terms of human wellbeing and this is the Nordic model.”



09/05/24

Teacher Well-Being Depends on Workload, School Climate and Feeling Supported

Researchers from the University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre developed a framework that divides teacher well-being into three main factors: job satisfaction, individual elements like physical health, and school-level drivers like work-life balance and class size.



21/05/24

In a special wellbeing-themed supplement published in May 2024, the Financial Times cited the Centre's work in four separate articles.

Discord over use of happiness metrics to steer policy

"The internal and external validity of subjective or self-reported wellbeing measures has been studied for over three decades and found to be pretty convincing," says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and behavioural science at Oxford's Saïd Business School.

Link between wellbeing and productivity 'clear'

The good news, says William Fleming, is that there is a "clear link between subjective wellbeing and productivity".

He points to two recent studies that show happier workers make more sales, and wellbeing at work can boost financial performance. They support the business case for tending to staff happiness, he argues. "This is without considering absence rates because of mental health and costs of employee turnover."

Firms reap dividends from happier staff

It is no surprise, then, that the company's share price has performed so strongly: their recent study provides the clearest link yet between staff wellbeing and financial performance in quoted US companies.

"We find that higher levels of wellbeing generally predict higher firm valuations, higher return on assets, higher gross profits, and better stock market performance."

Employers re-examine wellbeing strategies

Positive effects observed in pilot schemes often evaporate when a programme is released into "real-world settings", cautions William Fleming. In a study of survey responses from 46,000 UK workers, he found no difference in the self-reported mental health of those who participated in wellbeing programmes and those who did not.



22/05/24

Individual-level wellbeing strategies aren't working

The headline finding is that individual-level mental health interventions don't work. Across several indicators of work wellbeing and mental health, participants appeared no better off than their colleagues who didn't participate. There wasn't improvement in evaluations of the job either.



28/05/24

How Much Happiness Can Your Salary Buy? Researchers Can't Agree

Other researchers say that beyond a certain level of pay, happiness effectively plateaus.

Even if there continued to be a subtle boost in happiness, "it'd be so tiny it'd be meaningless," said Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, an economics professor at Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford who studies well-being.

Still, the idea of a salary for maximum happiness is appealing.



30/05/24

Move over, Disneyland

It turns out Alpine County is the happiest place on earth. Well, at least the happiest place in California.

That's according to data presented in former Speaker Anthony Rendon's Select Committee on Happiness and Public Policy Outcomes on Wednesday. The data, explained by Oxford Professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve and derived from the World Happiness Report, found the sparsely-populated county along the state's Nevada border boasted the highest levels of happiness of any county in the state.



31/05/24

Workplace wellbeing interventions: what works, what doesn't and why?

This year, a research paper went pretty viral on TikTok. It was seen by nearly a quarter of a million people and it was based on the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre work into mental health interventions in the workplace.

The key finding of the research was not too surprising: there is no evidence that individual interventions, like wellbeing apps and relaxation classes, improves employee's mental health. It is organisational change which makes the difference.



02/06/24

Why are America's youth so deeply unhappy?

With the world's largest economy and its highest GDP, you might think the United States would have the world's happiest citizens. But you'd be wrong. This year, when the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network released its annual World Happiness Report, the U.S. had dropped out of the top 20, landing at 23rd on the list. The reason? America's youth are deeply unhappy. What societal and cultural factors are at play here? Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of Oxford University's Wellbeing Research Centre and a professor of economics and behavioral science, joins The Excerpt to share his insights into what truly makes people happy.



04/06/24

Lithuania is the happiest place in the world for under-30s

The World Happiness Report ranks countries based on a happiness measurement survey conducted by Gallup, where respondents evaluate the quality of their lives.

Lithuania was ranked 19th on the overall happiness list, but secured the top spot in the under-30 rankings.

Lithuania's under-30s rated themselves 7.76 out of 10 on the happiness scale. In comparison, those in the same age group in the US rated themselves 6.392 out of 10, placing it 62nd globally.



04/06/24

'You can do anything here!' Why Lithuania is the best place in the world to be young

"This is a great place," she says, gesturing around the manicured square where we're sitting, on the edge of the city's new town. "It's pretty awesome that you can get these kinds of opportunities here."

So good are the opportunities and so high is the level of optimism that Lithuania topped this year's World Happiness Report rankings for the under-30s. The country's gen-Zers and millennials rated themselves 7.76 out of 10 on the happiness scale, miles ahead of the UK and the US, at 32nd and 62nd respectively. While the report sounded alarm bells about young people's welfare in the west, Lithuania's twentysomethings could set to work meme-ifying and TikTokking about the confirmation that they had it pretty good.



05/06/24

Four Leadership Lessons From The World's Happiest Countries

Given that work takes up a major part of many adults' lives prior to retirement, we can assume that management approaches in these nations contribute to their citizens' happiness.

So, what can leaders learn from the world's happiest countries?



03/07/24

Sarah Cunningham: I hope the next government prioritises people's wellbeing over GDP growth

Every area of policy has implications for our wellbeing, so it's vital that whoever ends up in No10 considers every single policy decision through a wellbeing lens to ensure a healthier, happier, fairer society.

After all, wellbeing is a science: it can be measured,

and improved.

But although the ONS (Office for National Statistics) has been tracking life satisfaction – the most reliable measure of population wellbeing – since 2011, these efforts have not been matched by effective actions to address declining trends.



03/07/24

Wellbeing is not a luxury. It's a basic human right which the next government must protect

With the general election just a few days away and the past few couple of weeks' news being dominated by the launch of the party manifestos, I've been keeping a keen eye on the content of the manifestos but I've been disappointed. There has been a notable absence in the priorities of those vying for Number 10: wellbeing.

Wellbeing is a bit of a misunderstood term, often overlooked in discussions about what truly matters to people's everyday lives. But let's get one thing straight: wellbeing is not a luxury. It's a basic human right that permeates every single issue at this general election and our politicians must sit up and take notice.



16/07/24

Leaders don't really care about employee engagement. Here's why

The moment has come when leaders must stop pretending we care about engagement. Let's quit asking workers to fill out surveys that everyone knows are insincere, "check-the-box" activities. Instead, leaders should start dedicating resources to not only measuring employee well-being, but actually committing to improving employee well-being.

Research suggests that employee well-being matters more to the success of a business than employee engagement. For instance, Oxford University researchers have determined that how people feel at work is the biggest driver of employee productivity. Consequently, focusing on improving employee well-being will lead to a massive win for employers and employees alike.



17/07/24

I live in Lithuania, the happiest place on earth for under 30s. Here's what it's like.

Recently, Lithuania topped the World Happiness Report ranking for under 30s, with the country's young people rating themselves 7.76 out of 10 on the happiness scale. I completely understand why, especially as a 28-year-old person living in Vilnius.



18/07/24

To Anthony Rendon, happiness is serious business

A new California Assembly committee is exploring the reasons why some people are happier with their lives than others. Headed by former Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood), the Select Committee on Happiness and Public Policy Outcomes has had two hearings this year.

"We don't take happiness seriously," Rendon said. "We think of happiness as some frivolous, silly thing but it's really the only thing that matters."

[...] "This is an area where California and the United States are very, very far behind the rest of the world at looking at this issue."



19/08/24

'Netflix of volunteering' eases burden of corporate charity work

In the US almost half of employers offer or plan to offer volunteer leave, allowing employees to spend a few days annually working for a good cause on company time, according to the consultants WTW. In the UK 70 per cent do. Yet only around 15 per cent of workers are thought to use their volunteering leave, according to William Fleming, research fellow at the University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre.



Digital Channels

The Wellbeing Research Centre continues to grow our digital outreach, using multiple channels to drive engagement with our research.

Across all of our digital channels, we offer followers updates about our work, current news and trends in wellbeing science, and other topical insights.

We are pleased to have gained a wide-ranging following of scholars, intellectuals, policymakers and interested members of the public, and have expanded our social following – particularly on YouTube – a great deal over the past 12 months.

The Centre looks forward to continuing to expand our highly-engaged audience in order to foster further collaborations and knowledge-exchange opportunities.

14,000+ social audience

▲68%

68,000+ YouTube views

▲123%

105,000+ website visits

▲9%

Partners

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

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



The Wellbeing Research Centre is proud to be a founding member of the World Wellbeing Movement.





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