

Annual Report 2025



Wellbeing
Research
Centre



Wellbeing Research Centre
University of Oxford
Harris Manchester College
Mansfield Road, Oxford
OX1 3TD

wellbeing.hmc.ox.ac.uk

About the Centre.....4

From the Director.....6

People.....12
 [Research Group.....12](#)
 [Research Affiliates.....16](#)

Research Publications.....18

Working Paper Series.....29

Special Publications.....33
 [World Happiness Report.....33](#)
 [Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters.....37](#)
 [2025 UK Wellbeing Report.....38](#)
 [International Baccalaureate.....39](#)

Seminar Series.....42

Feature: Our 24/25 Highlights.....44

World Wellbeing Movement.....58

Our Impact.....72
 [In the Media.....74](#)
 [Digital Communications.....107](#)

Partners.....108



About the Centre

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Measurement

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

Cause and Effect

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

Policy and Interventions

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

The Future of Wellbeing

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



From the Director

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



It's hard to believe that we're 'only' six years on from launching the Wellbeing Research Centre back in September 2019 – that truly feels like ages ago because so much has happened since!

The academic year 2024-25 has been another one packed with research and impact activities. But this past year has also felt more settled as the teams behind the Wellbeing Research Centre, the World Wellbeing Movement, and the World Happiness Report all hit their stride, and all did exceedingly well in their respective endeavours. All of our efforts are tightly linked together around the overarching mission of producing world-class research and achieving impact at scale by putting wellbeing metrics at the heart of all we do.

There is lots to highlight on the research front, including a set of new academic publications and working papers that I invite you to scan through both in this Annual Report and online. Notably, as a sign of the times, we have now published findings on whether machine learning algorithms can do better at predicting human wellbeing as compared to traditional statistical approaches and find that there is some potential there while also validating all the great work done to date.

The quality of the research produced by scholars affiliated with our Centre was on full display at the annual gathering of the International Society of

“ All of our efforts are tightly linked together around ... putting wellbeing metrics at the heart of all we do.

Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) where Alberto Prati (Ajinomoto Research Fellow), Lucia Macchia (former KSI Research Fellow), and Mark Fabian (Centre Affiliate) took the top three spots for the Young Scholar Awards!

We're so very pleased, as well, that Professor Paul Behrens and PhD candidate Annegeke Janssen have joined us as, respectively, the Reapra Senior Research Fellow and Reapra Research Associate. It is clear already that they will contribute to bringing more of an environmental sustainability angle to the research discussions at our Centre and beyond and, in turn, we hope this will infuse their research on sustainability with more of an empirical wellbeing angle as well.

Personally, the highlight on the research front would obviously have to be the publication of *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters* which brings together well over a decade of joint research with my longstanding collaborator George Ward. Following his three-year



Image © Copyright University of Oxford / Mollie Footitt

stint as a Research Fellow in Oxford, George has now moved on to become an Assistant Professor at INSEAD in France and we all wish him the very best as he embarks on this next step in a very promising academic career.

Literally combining the research and impact spheres is, of course, the World Happiness Report. The second edition of the Report with our Centre as its production hub came out as usual on 20 March and achieved much resonance and rightly so – with the topic this year being around the importance of our social lives in shaping population wellbeing.

Our chapter contribution analysed how the number of shared meals acts as an empirical proxy for our social lives and it turns out to have much predictive power over how people evaluate the quality of their lives around the world. We are all very grateful to Barry Grimes who led the production of the Report and to our many partners that enable the Report in the first place.

Considering the impact side of our work, it has been brilliant to see the World Wellbeing Movement team be successful in reviving the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Wellbeing Economics. It is no mean feat to convince busy Parliamentarians to put their shoulders behind this initiative and kudos to Ben Wealthy in particular for getting us there. Team WWM, so ably led by Sarah Cunningham, continued a series of impact-oriented activities and I would recommend all to download the 'Working on Wellbeing' podcast

for important insights on all that is going on in our world. On the impact front, it is also important to note our continued involvement with the UN Expert Group on Wellbeing Measurement for which we chair the Task Team on Subjective Wellbeing and produced a briefing that feeds into the deliberations and final report.

A personal highlight of the past year was, of course, having set up a new MBA elective entitled

“ It is no mean feat to convince busy Parliamentarians to put their shoulders behind this initiative.

'The Science of Wellbeing in Business, Policy, and Life' and, to my positive surprise, the class was oversubscribed from the start. This, I think, speaks to the latent demand among students to learn



Image © Copyright Chris Barrington-Leigh

more about this interdisciplinary science that seeks to better understand what makes for a good life. It is quite something to think that this may well be the first time that a course dedicated to human wellbeing as such has been taught at our University.

As we have learned many times over from wellbeing science, what drives our wellbeing is strongly related to the community of people we live and work with. In this regard it has been most fulfilling to see all of us working together in a way that is respectful and caring for each other—and with quite some laughter and joy thrown in to the mix from time to time as well. Here, it's been such a privilege and pleasure to get to work so closely with Laura Taylor who helps manage the Centre with me, as well as Jonathan Whitney and Leoni Boyle who provide invaluable support on so many fronts. It was also wonderful to be able to pick up the longstanding tradition of organising a wellbeing walk and garden party for all affiliated scholars at the end of Trinity Term and to see so many smiling faces on this unusually sunny day in Oxford.

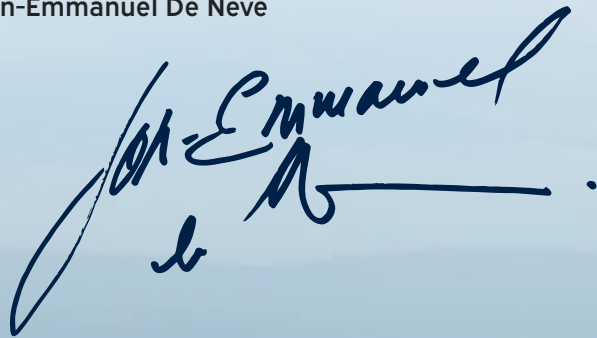
Finally, it's obvious that none of our activities would be possible without the generous support from so many partners and, of course, our home institution of Harris Manchester College on which we rely for so much. Building on this wonderful support there is much to look forward to over the next academic year, including a whole programme of activities

for the new APPG on Wellbeing Economics, an expanding research partnership with the International Baccalaureate Organization, another edition of the World Happiness Report this time focused on the role of social media, and an exciting randomised-controlled field trial that has just launched in order to assess the impact that AI tools can have on wellbeing and performance at work.

In order to be able to maintain this wonderful momentum in terms of world-class research and impact, we will of course have to ensure that we fundraise to sustain and expand on our activities – as such, this coming year will also see a renewed focus on developing partnerships with visionary individuals and organisations keen to support us.

With much gratitude for your interest and support of our work,

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve



Research Group

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

The Centre also serves as publishing hub of the World Happiness Report, and proudly hosts not-for-profit social impact organisation the World Wellbeing Movement.



Dr Wanying Zhou
Research Fellow



Jonathan Whitney
Head of Communications



Barry Grimes
Production Editor
World Happiness Report



Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Director



Dr Laura Taylor
Deputy Director



Sarah Cunningham
Managing Director
World Wellbeing Movement



Ben Wealthy
Head of Policy & Public Affairs
World Wellbeing Movement



Leoni Boyle
Office Manager / Research Associate



Charlotte Day
Marketing Officer
World Wellbeing Movement



Prof Andrew Oswald
Senior Research Fellow



Prof Paul Behrens
Unilever Research Fellow



Dr William Fleming
Unilever Research Fellow



Harriet Goss
Executive Assistant
World Wellbeing Movement



Annegeke Jansen
Reapra Research Associate



Micah Kaats
Research Associate



Dr Caspar Kaiser
HSBC Research Fellow



Dr Michael Plant
Research Fellow



Dr Alberto Prati
Ajinomoto Research Fellow



Alexandra Kirienko
Research Associate



Dr Jose Marquez
Research Associate



Isaac Parkes
Research Associate



Dr Cherise Regier
Research Associate



Grace Cheong
Research Assistant



Charlie Harrison
Research Assistant



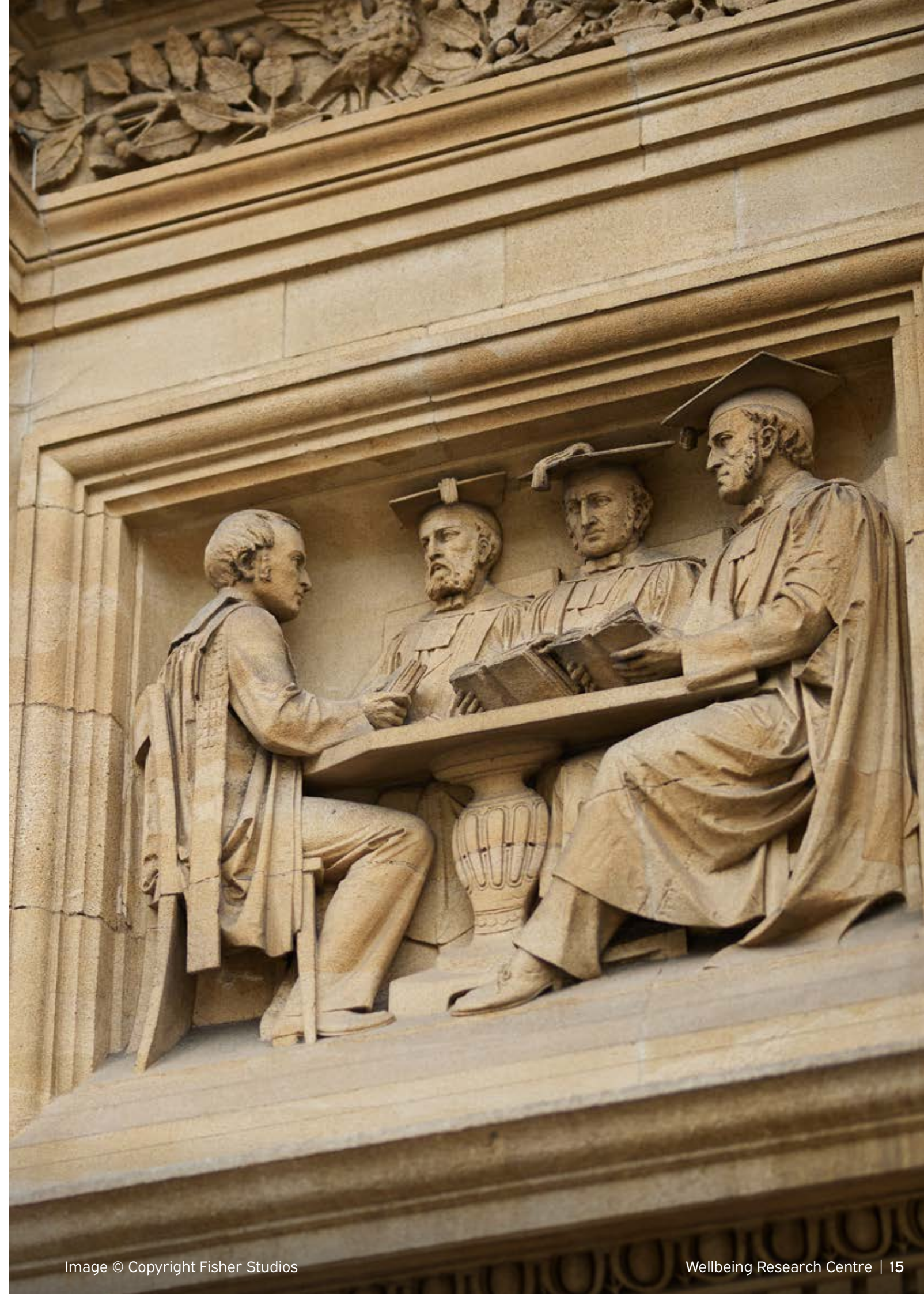
Annette Riziki
Research Assistant



Yoel Sevi
Research Assistant



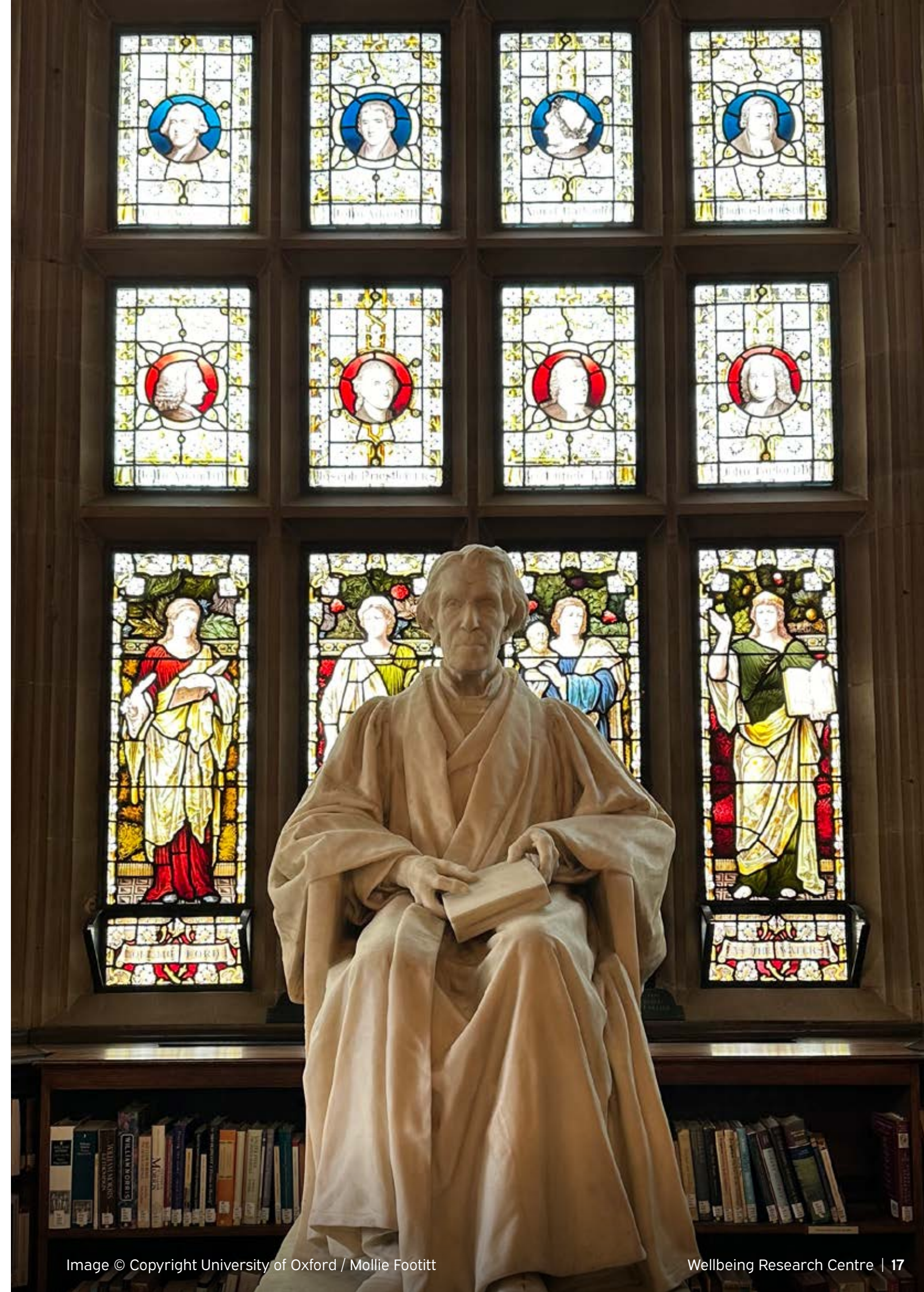
Rebecca Shames
Research Assistant



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
- Prof Lord Richard Layard**
Centre for Economic Performance, LSE
- Dr Lucía Macchia**
Psychology, City University of London
- Dr George Mackerron**
Economics, University of Sussex
- Dr Ekaterina (Katya) Oparina**
Economics, LSE
- Dr Edika Quispe-Torreblanca**
Behavioural Science, Leeds University Business School
- Prof Tali Sharot**
Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London
- Prof Andrew Stephen**
Saïd Business School, University of Oxford
- Prof Tyler VanderWeele**
Human Flourishing Program, Harvard University
- Dr George Ward**
INSEAD



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.

Value for Money: How to improve wellbeing and reduce misery



Frayman, D., Krekel, C., Layard, R., MacLennan, S., & Parkes, I. (2024, September 3). *Value for money: How to improve wellbeing and reduce misery* (CEP Special Report No. 44). Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science.

The government spends billions on our behalf. How do we want this money to be spent? This report reviews a range of policies and asks the fundamental question which should be asked of every policy: Does it deliver value for money? In other words, what benefit does it deliver to people relative to its net cost to the government.

This benefit/cost ratio is the key single number the government should be looking at when it makes its spending decisions. In each case the benefits are measured in terms of the monetary equivalent of the impact of the policy in improving wellbeing. And the costs include an allowance for savings in subsequent years.

Book Review: Sarah Waters, Suicide Voices: Labour Trauma in France



Fleming, W. (2024). Book Review: Sarah Waters, *Suicide Voices: Labour Trauma in France*. *Work, Employment and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170241297516>

Sociologists have long been concerned with the harm wage labour inflicts on workers. The causes of this harm are various: through working conditions set by law and managers, or bullying and exclusion from colleagues and coworkers. Its effects can be severe, even fatal. *Suicide Voices: Labour Trauma in France* details the epidemic of work suicide across French workplaces in recent decades, examining its causes, cultural depictions and contested narratives.

Work suicide is a highly controversial topic, often receiving significant mainstream media attention when it occurs. Readers may recall dark rumours of safety netting around Apple–Foxconn facilities in China, or in

the UK more recently the Post Office Horizon scandal or Ofsted's acknowledged contribution to Ruth Perry's death. In France, where workplace suicide is legally classed as a workplace accident, rates are estimated to be far higher than elsewhere. Waters' aim is to explain why, contextualising the deaths of hundreds of workers in a story of marketisation, work intensification and the erosion of labour resistance. For Waters, workplace suicide is, simultaneously, the most extreme instance of work-based harm caused by brutal marketisation of former public service companies, and a final act of resistance left to workers amid the decline of collective labour. *Suicide Voices* narrates the hopelessness of work exploitation in neoliberal corporations through suicide notes, written testimonies of deceased workers, as well as documentation from the legal and media fallout.

The Rise of Mental Vulnerability at Work: A Socio-Historical and Cultural Analysis



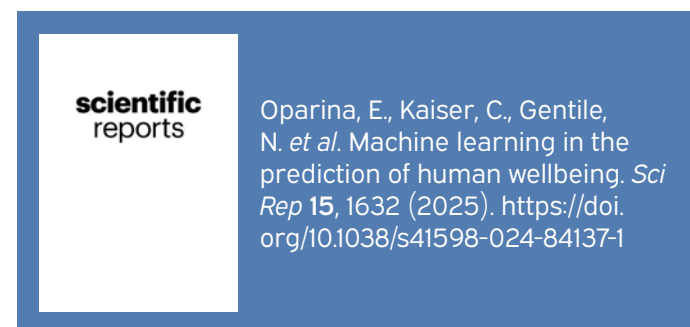
Fleming, W. J. (2024). The Rise of Mental Vulnerability at Work: A Socio-Historical and Cultural Analysis. *Community Development Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bxae070>

In recent decades, mental health has grown into a fraught and explicit public issue with considerable public and corporate policy attention. Mental health problems are reported to be both very prevalent and increasing, no more so than in the rising rates of work-related mental illness like burnout. What explains the ubiquity of mental health discourse and the growth of work-related mental illness in contemporary society? There is a vast scholarship in the social and health sciences seeking to explain these trends with national and international datasets, but the full answer remains elusive. For Ari Väänänen in *The Rise of Mental Vulnerability at Work: A Socio-Historical and Cultural Analysis* (TRoMVaW), we must look to transformations in the dominant modes of production and employment, especially the changes in the subjective experiences of work and life.

Väänänen comprehensively reviews the currently dominant theories why work-related mental well-being is such a growing problem (Chapters 3 and 4). The first explanation comes from positivist research in labour sociology, economics and psychology, claiming work is just more cognitively demanding and intense than it used to be (e.g. Green, 2006). The second explanation, in a similar paradigm, suggests the standard employment relationship developed in the Fordist, post-war era has degraded to produce new forms of 'precarity' (e.g. Standing, 2011). The other group of dominant theories are from critical and constructivist sociologists, both generally developed from Foucauldian ideas of governmentality, that argue society and subjectivity has been psychologized (e.g. Rose, 1999) and medicalized (e.g. Armstrong, 1995). For Väänänen,

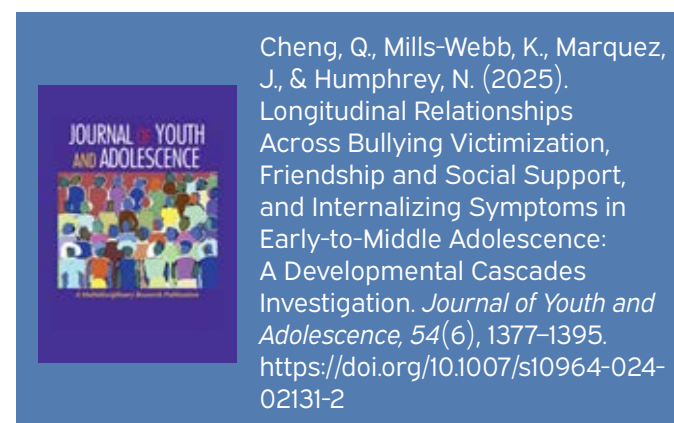
all four positions have strengths, but omit personal, cultural and political explanations, while also relying on a ubiquity and universalism that is neither sufficiently substantiated, nor provides a complete explanation. Väänänen's summaries of these research streams on the relationships between work and mental health are excellent; any reader, regardless of familiarity with the topic, will benefit from engagement. Yet Väänänen's criticisms of these research approaches are the real theoretical hook for TRoMVaW, opening the door to proceed.

Machine learning in the prediction of human wellbeing



Subjective wellbeing data are increasingly used across the social sciences. Yet, despite the widespread use of such data, the predictive power of approaches commonly used to model wellbeing is only limited. In response, we here use tree-based Machine Learning (ML) algorithms to provide a better understanding of respondents' self-reported wellbeing. We analyse representative samples of more than one million respondents from Germany, the UK, and the United States, using data from 2010 to 2018. We make three contributions. First, we show that ML algorithms can indeed yield better predictive performance than standard approaches, and establish an upper bound on the predictability of wellbeing scores with survey data. Second, we use ML to identify the key drivers of evaluative wellbeing. We show that the variables emphasised in the earlier intuition- and theory-based literature also appear in ML analyses. Third, we illustrate how ML can be used to make a judgement about functional forms, including the existence of satiation points in the effects of income and the U-shaped relationship between age and wellbeing.

Longitudinal Relationships Across Bullying Victimization, Friendship and Social Support, and Internalizing Symptoms in Early-to-Middle Adolescence: A Developmental Cascades Investigation



Current understanding of the longitudinal relationships between different aspects of peer relationships and mental health problems in early- to mid-adolescence is limited. In particular, the role played by gender in these developmental cascades processes is unclear, little is known about within-person effects between bullying victimization and internalizing symptoms, and the theorized benefits of friendship and social support are largely untested. Addressing these important research gaps, this study tested a number of theory-driven hypotheses (e.g., interpersonal risk model, transactional model) regarding longitudinal relationships between bullying victimization, friendship and social support, and internalizing symptoms. The study sample was N=26,458 adolescents (50.6% girls, average age 12 years 8 months (SD=3.58 months) at baseline) attending k=176 schools in Greater Manchester, England. Separating within-person effects from between-person effects, a random-intercept cross-lagged panel model (RI-CLPM) was applied to three annual waves of data. Analyses revealed that developmental cascade pathways varied across gender, as follows: higher rates of bullying victimization led to increased internalizing symptoms (partially for girls, fully for boys) and lower levels of friendship and social support (for girls only); higher levels of friendship and social support did not confer any protection against future bullying victimization (for girls or boys) but did lead to reduced internalizing symptoms (partially for girls, but not for boys); and, higher levels of internalizing symptoms led to increased rates of bullying victimization (for boys only) and lower levels of friendship and social support (partially for girls, fully for boys). Evidence of reciprocal relationships between bullying victimization and internalizing symptoms (for boys only) and between internalizing symptoms and friendship and social support (for girls only) was also found. Effect sizes of developmental cascade pathways varied but were mostly in the moderate-to-large range relative to the empirical distribution of cross-lagged effects in existing studies (i.e., 50th to 75th percentile). Sensitivity analyses indicated that findings were largely robust to a number of researcher-led analytic choices. The current study indicates that approaches to prevent or reduce the effects of bullying victimization should be prioritized, given the consistent evidence of its substantial role in increasing internalizing symptoms for both genders, in addition to its deleterious

Longitudinal relationships across sleep, physical activity, and mental wellbeing in early-to-mid-adolescence: a developmental cascades investigation

impact on girls' friendship and social support. Preregistration: This study was preregistered at <https://osf.io/xrwfq>. The study design, hypotheses, and target analyses were registered.



Marquez, J., Panayiotou, M., Farzinnia, R. *et al.* Longitudinal relationships across sleep, physical activity, and mental wellbeing in early-to-mid-adolescence: a developmental cascades investigation. *Qual Life Res* **34**, 1233–1250 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-025-03894-2>

Purpose Sleep (SL), physical activity (PA), and wellbeing (WB) are three factors linked to positive development in adolescence. Despite theoretical support and some empirical evidence of developmental associations between these factors, few studies have rigorously investigated reciprocal associations over time separating between-person and within-person effects, and none have investigated all three in concert. Thus, it remains unclear how the interplay between SL, PA and WB unfolds across time within individuals. This study examines this question in the crucial early-to-mid-adolescence developmental transition.

Method Separating between- and within-person effects, a random-intercept cross-lagged panel model was fitted to a dataset of N=27,949 adolescents (age 12/13 at first timepoint) from Greater Manchester, England, using a three-by-three design (three annual timepoints: T1, T2, T3; three variables: SL, PA, WB).

Results Analyses revealed gender-specific developmental cascade pathways. Specifically, we found positive reciprocal associations between SL and WB for girls (at T1→T2), whereas for boys, SL positively predicted WB (at both T1→T2 and T2→T3) but WB did not predict SL. We also found that WB predicted PA for boys (at T2→T3) but this finding was sensitive to model specification and yielded a smaller effect than other cross-lagged pathways.

Conclusion Our results highlight the importance of sleep as a driver of adolescent wellbeing, and the role of gender in developmental cascade processes. Study strengths, limitations, and implications are discussed.

Two paradoxes in women's well-being



Kaiser, C., Muggleton, N., Quispe-Torreblanca, E., & De Neve, J.-E. (2025). Two paradoxes in women's well-being. *Science Advances*, *11*(10). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adt1646>

We review the literature on the gender gap in well-being, identifying two key paradoxes. First, although women today report higher levels of life satisfaction and overall happiness than men, they experience worse outcomes in mental health and negative affect. Second, despite substantial advances in women's social and economic status over the past 50 years, their well-being relative to men has declined. We explore the evidence supporting these paradoxes, considering potential explanations related to differential expectations, biology, and scale use. Using global data from 2006 to 2023 and long-term data from Europe and the US since the 1970s, we provide empirical illustrations. These findings reveal a diverse and seemingly inconsistent pattern of gender well-being gaps between countries, suggesting that the first paradox is not universally applicable. However, there is clear global evidence of a relative decline in women's well-being, particularly in terms of negative affect.


The C-WELLBY: Towards a Universal Measure of Children's Wellbeing for Policy Analysis



Parkes, I. (2025, April 15). *The C-WELLBY: Towards a universal measure of children's wellbeing for policy analysis* (CEP Occasional Paper No. 69). Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science.

There is a pressing need for a universal measure of children's wellbeing, parallel to the WELLBY, for use in cost-benefit analysis. Currently, there is no consensus on how to value the wellbeing of children, raising concerns that their welfare is being undervalued in policy decisions. In this report, we discuss the issues inherent in measuring children's wellbeing and investigate a policy-oriented solution: the C-WELLBY. Children aged 10 and above generally demonstrate stable, valid responses to evaluative life satisfaction questions, as evidenced by analyses of both Understanding Society and the Active Lives of Children and Young People Survey. Consequently, we recommend the use of WELLBYs, valued at the usual £15,920 in 2024 prices (HMT, 2021), for cost-benefit analyses of policy affecting this age group. For children aged below 10, we recommend estimating a C-WELLBY, also valued at £15,920.


Physical pain as a component of subjective wellbeing



Macchia, L., Kaats, M., Johnson, B. *et al.* Physical pain as a component of subjective wellbeing. *Sci Rep* **15**, 14355 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-98421-1>

Subjective wellbeing (SWB) is a self-reported construct of wellbeing including components like life satisfaction, and positive and negative affect. We explore the role of physical pain in the construct of SWB using data from the Global Flourishing Study (22 countries, N=187,160) and the Gallup World Poll (163 countries, N=2,048,494). Consistent with the existing understanding of physical pain, we document that people can experience negative affect-related pain in the absence of physical health problems, and with near perfect physical health. We also find that the current components of SWB are not perfect proxies for pain and that physical pain and other components of negative affect like stress, worry, anxiety, anger, and sadness load on the same factor in principal component factor analysis. Based on this empirical evidence, we suggest that physical pain can be included in the construct of SWB as a component of negative affect. This proposition has the potential to advance the field in the coming decades by providing a better understanding of people’s wellbeing, presenting alternative methods to measure SWB, and informing the design of wellbeing interventions.

Wellbeing profiles and their relationships to gender, homeownership, income, marriage, and education: Exploring hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing in the East




Zhou, W., Jiang, D., McLellan, R., Qian, H., & Wu, H. (2025). Wellbeing profiles and their relationships to gender, homeownership, income, marriage, and education: Exploring hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing in the East. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *15*(2), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v15i2.4649>

Prior research has not yet to establish a clear understanding of the relationship between hedonic wellbeing (HWB) and eudaimonic wellbeing (EWB), particularly how they manifest within individuals. Moreover, it remains unclear whether HWB and EWB operate similarly across different cultural contexts. This study applies Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) to identify distinct wellbeing profiles among 1,283 residents (51.1% male) in a major coastal and capital city in China, spanning all ten districts. Five wellbeing profiles emerged: extremely low EWB, extremely low HWB, slightly low WB, slightly high WB, and extremely high WB. Notably, unlike findings from Western studies, no divergent wellbeing profiles—such as high HWB combined with low EWB, or vice versa—were observed in the Chinese sample. Multinomial logistic regression

Work and Wellbeing: Maximising the wellbeing of tomorrow’s workforce


further revealed that homeownership was one of the strongest predictors of wellbeing, even after controlling for income. These findings contribute to the ongoing debate on the HWB-EWB relationship and suggest that cultural, cognitive, and linguistic differences may shape how individuals conceptualize and internalize wellbeing. This study offers valuable insights for policymakers and researchers seeking to promote wellbeing in a holistic manner, emphasizing the need to consider social and cultural contexts when evaluating wellbeing frameworks.



Kirienko, A., Laffan, K., & Giurge, L. M. (2025). Work and Wellbeing. In M. Briguglio, N. Czap, & K. Laffan, *Wellbeing and Policy* (1st ed., pp. 21–29). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003382447-4>

People spend between 21% and 40% of their waking hours at work, making it an important domain of life to consider when trying to improve wellbeing (Kantak et al., 1992; Thompson, 2016). In addition to its inherent value to workers themselves, wellbeing is key to organisational success (Nielsen et al., 2017), with research showing that happier employees are more productive (Oswald et al., 2015) and less likely to quit (Pelly, 2023). Employee wellbeing is also positively associated with company profitability and stock market performance (De Neve et al., 2023).

The growth and collapse of autonomy at work

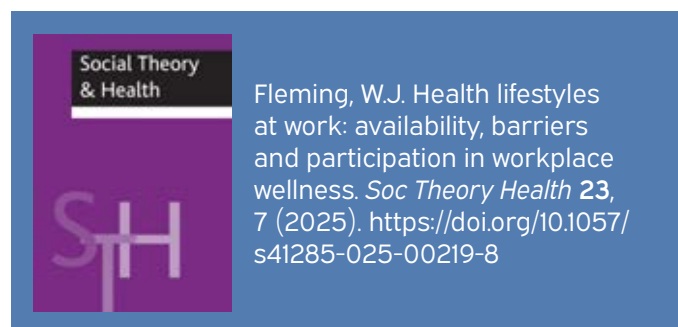


Mujcic, R., & Oswald, A. J. (2025). The growth and collapse of autonomy at work. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *122*(27). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2504419122>

Humans hate being monitored. Autonomy is prized—including by research scientists. Yet little is known about a fundamental issue in the modern world: What is happening to job autonomy in today’s workplaces as people move from youth on to middle age and then on to older ages? It would be natural to believe that individuals in the second half of their careers would be the senior ones with high autonomy. We provide evidence that such a belief is wrong. This study uses longitudinal data on hundreds of thousands of randomly sampled individuals, in three rich countries, who are followed through their working lives (n > 400,000). Workers’ feelings of job autonomy trace out a smooth concave parabola, increasing up to midlife, until

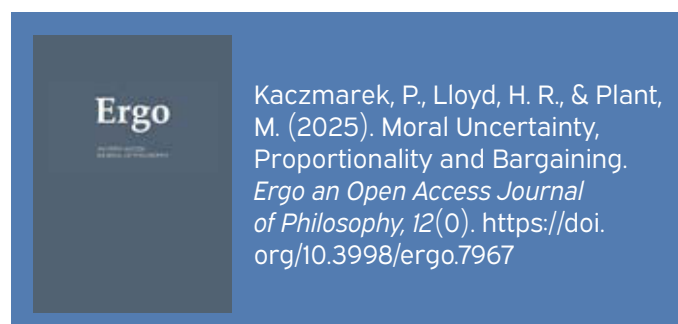
approximately the surprisingly early age of 40, and then collapsing over the ensuing twenty to 30 y of a person's working life. This is apparently not an illusion. We show that objective measures of autonomy—signified by managerial and supervisory job titles, for example—behave in a matching, hump-shaped way. As a further check, consistent qualitative evidence is given: a survey we ran asking managers about their experiences. We believe this paper's results represent a foundational, essentially unknown, and intrinsically cross-disciplinary puzzle.

Health lifestyles at work: availability, barriers and participation in workplace wellness



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 typically view it critically as managerial control. These perspectives both miss that participation in workplace wellness may constitute socially structured health lifestyles. Addressing this gap, I extend a theoretical model to bring together health lifestyles theory and critical wellbeing studies. To support the 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.

Moral Uncertainty, Proportionality and Bargaining



Besides disagreeing about how much one should donate to charity, moral theories also disagree about where one should donate. In many cases, one intuitively

attractive option is to split your donations across all of the charities that are recommended by theories in which you have positive credence, with each charity's share being proportional to your credence in the theories that recommend it. Despite the fact that something like this approach is already widely used by real-world philanthropists to distribute billions of dollars, it is not supported by any account of handling decisions under moral uncertainty that has been proposed thus far in the literature. This paper develops a new bargaining-based approach that honors the proportionality intuition. We also show how this approach has several advantages over the best alternative proposals.

Human-Centered Design and Digital Transformation of Mental Health Services



Mental health services face a multitude of challenges, such as increasing demand, underfunding, and limited workforce capacity. The accelerated digital transformation of public services is positioned by government, the private sector, and some academic researchers as the solution. Alongside this, human-centered design has emerged as a guiding paradigm for this transformation to ensure user needs are met. We define what digital transformation and human-centered design are, how they are implemented in the UK policy context, and their role within the evolving delivery of mental health services. The involvement of one of our coauthors (DP) in the design and delivery of these policies over the past 5 years provides unique insights into the decision-making process and policy story. We review the promises, pitfalls, and ongoing challenges identified across a multidisciplinary literature. Finally, we propose future research questions and policy options to ensure that services are designed and delivered to meet the mental health needs of the population.

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.

Why you should measure subjective changes



Kaiser, C. and Prati, A. (2025). *Why you should measure subjective changes*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2501. <https://doi.org/10.5287/ora-ga4zreqpy>

Satisfaction data are widely used in psychology and the social sciences. Those data normally seek to measure satisfaction levels. Yet, for many applications we are primarily interested in the change in satisfaction following an intervention or life event. We here show that, compared to inferences from longitudinal data on levels, cross sectional interviews that ask about changes in satisfaction yield data that (i) are more sensitive to life events, (ii) more accurately track changes in objective benefits, (iii) display comparable psychometric properties, and (iv) are less affected by respondents' day-to-day mood. The results hold across several domains of life. Primary data from two studies (N=2,012; N=1,734) are supplemented by large-scale secondary data from the British Household Panel Survey (N≈150,000). Our findings provide robust evidence that repeated cross-sectional surveys are sufficient to track satisfaction changes reliably, without the need of longitudinal panel data.

Scaling the Easterlin Paradox: measuring life events on stretching happiness measures

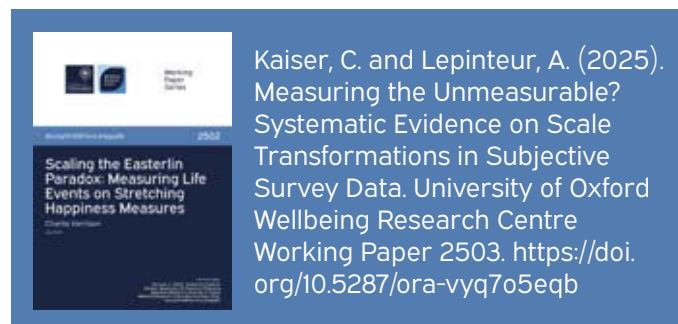


Harrison, C. (2025). *Scaling the Easterlin Paradox: Measuring Life Events on Stretching Happiness Measures*. University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre Working Paper 2502. <https://doi.org/10.5287/ora-ora-jInpjyq9b>

Are people any happier than in the past? Despite rapid rises to GDP, average life satisfaction in various countries has not changed. Yet, richer people are happier than poorer people, and richer countries are happier than poorer countries. This is the Easterlin Paradox. Researchers typically explain the paradox by suggesting that these higher levels of wealth raise our expectations,

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

preventing us from getting any happier (the hedonic treadmill). The alternative explanation is that our wellbeing is increasing, but any improvements are being hidden by stricter reporting (the rescaling hypothesis). This second explanation has received little attention and researchers typically assume that no rescaling occurs. This paper proposes a new method to quantify rescaling effects. It analyses the short-run effects of five life major events on self-reported happiness, and how these effects have changed over time: a stretched reporting scale would result in falling absolute effect sizes. I test this idea using German panel data with ~650,000 observations (1991–2022). As the rescaling hypothesis predicts, the average effect of life events has fallen by ~35%. Due to scale expansion, self-reported happiness may be underreported by up to 50%. In other words, people may be living happier lives than in the past.



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

Mapping Adolescent Wellbeing: Developmental Network Shifts from Early to Middle Adolescence in 24 Countries



This study applied psychometric network analysis to examine the structure of adolescent wellbeing across 49 indicators of subjective and psychological wellbeing in a large international sample (N = 6,445; ages 11–18) from 38 schools across 24 countries. We estimated networks separately for early (11–14) and middle (15–18) adolescents to assess developmental change. The overall network was moderately dense and highly stable. Overall life satisfaction, satisfaction with student life, and optimism about the future emerged as central nodes. While the global network structure was similar across age groups, older adolescents showed increased centrality for negative affect (“bad”), relaxed mood, and future optimism, and decreased centrality for current life evaluation. These findings underscore the integrated and developmentally shifting nature of adolescent wellbeing, and offer practical insights for monitoring, intervention, and policy. Results highlight the value of developmentally sensitive strategies that support both present experience and future-oriented resilience across diverse youth populations.

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.

In this section, we highlight the World Wellbeing Movement's 2025 UK Wellbeing Report, a series of intervention reports produced in collaboration with the International Baccalaureate Organization, the HBR Press-published *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters*, and *World Happiness Report 2025*, of which the Centre is proud to serve as publishing hub.

World Happiness Report 2025: Executive summary



Helliwell, J., Layard, R., Sachs, J., De Neve, J.-E., Akinin, L., & Wang, S. (2025). *Executive Summary*. World Happiness Report 2025. University of Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.18724/WHR-NKM9-5M31>

In this year's issue, we focus on the impact of caring and sharing on people's happiness. Like 'mercy' in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, caring is "twice-blessed" – it blesses those who give and those who receive. In this report, we investigate both of these effects: the benefits to the recipients of caring behaviour and the benefits to those who care for others.

There is a wealth of evidence about the extent of caring behaviour around the world. In the Gallup World Poll, people are asked if, in the last month, they gave money to charity, if they volunteered, and if they helped a stranger. They were also asked, in 2019, if they think other people would help them by returning their lost wallet.

Some key findings jump out of the data.

Caring and sharing: Global analysis of happiness and kindness



Helliwell, J., Akinin, L., Huang, H., Norton, M., Wang, S., Cheung, F., Archer Lee, Y., & Konrath, S. (2025). *Caring and sharing: Global analysis of happiness and kindness*. World Happiness Report 2025. University of Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.18724/WHR-31ZP-GA37>

This year, we present several strands of evidence on our theme of caring and sharing. First, we deliver our

usual rankings of nations in terms of the average life evaluations of their residents, along with our modelling of how differences across countries and over time are connected to a variety of life circumstances and the prevalence of positive and negative emotions. The main life circumstances we consider continue to be GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, having someone to count on, having a sense of freedom to make key life decisions, average frequency of donations, and perceptions of corruption in government and business.

Next, we present rankings (using 2022–2024 data) for the three benevolent acts covered in every Gallup World Poll plus national perceptions, from the 2019 Lloyd’s Register Foundation World Risk Poll, of the likelihood of the return of a lost wallet if found by: (a) a neighbour, (b) a stranger, or (c) a police officer. As we shall see, each of these three wallet questions captures different aspects of society. The benevolence of neighbours represents the local social context, while expected wallet return by strangers reflects the broader social fabric. The expectation of wallet return by a police officer captures the perceived honesty and benevolence of an important public institution. We later track time trends of the three Gallup World Poll benevolence measures from 2006 through 2024.

We then survey the large literature that considers the conditions under which benevolent acts are likely to be of more benefit to givers and receivers. In doing so, we present evidence on the link between individual benevolent actions, wellbeing, and the social context.

Sharing meals with others: How sharing meals supports happiness and social connections



In this chapter, we explore links between sharing meals, social connections, and wellbeing. Although the topic of sharing meals has remained relatively understudied in the academic literature, the connection between food and social relationships is far from new. In French, *copain* (friend) and in Italian *compagno* (mate) come from the Latin *cum+pānis*, literally “with-bread”. The Chinese term for companion/partner, 伙伴, stems from a similar term (火伴) which literally translates to “fire mate”, a reference to sharing meals over a campfire.

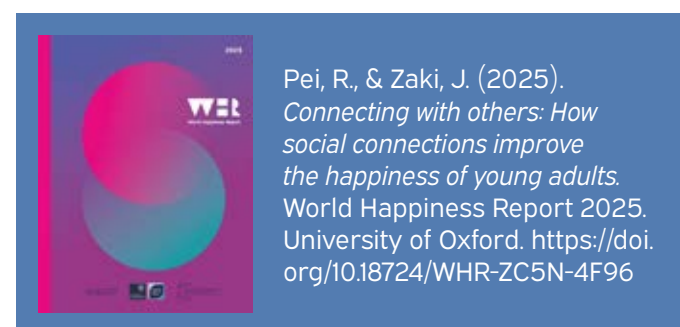
Living with others: How household size and family bonds relate to happiness



Caring and sharing – sustained by warm, close, and enduring relational bonds – are crucial to human happiness. In particular, family bonds promote lasting relationships, and households provide a context where these bonds develop and, in many cases, thrive. Thus, the field of wellbeing science should pay more attention to household configurations and intra-household relationships.

This chapter examines the relationship between happiness, household size, and family configuration. We make extensive use of the rich data provided by INEGI, the National Statistical Office of Mexico, through its ENBIARE 2021 survey, as well as additional information from Colombia. Our analyses contrast the situation in Mexico with that of European countries, drawing on data from the European Social Survey 2020.

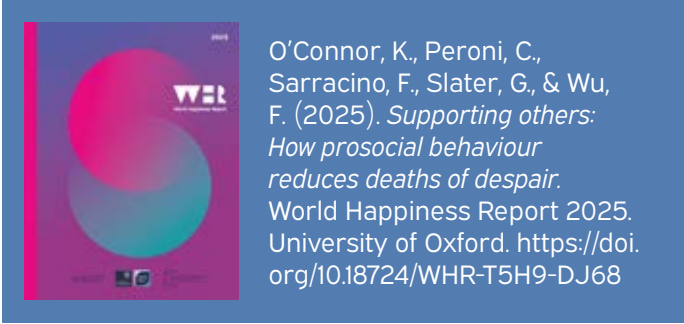
Connecting with others: How social connections improve the happiness of young adults



Caring and sharing – sustained by warm, close, and enduring relational bonds – are crucial to human happiness. In particular, family bonds promote lasting relationships, and households provide a context where these bonds develop and, in many cases, thrive. Thus, the field of wellbeing science should pay more attention to household configurations and intra-household relationships.

This chapter examines the relationship between happiness, household size, and family configuration. We make extensive use of the rich data provided by INEGI, the National Statistical Office of Mexico, through its ENBIARE 2021 survey, as well as additional information from Colombia. Our analyses contrast the situation in Mexico with that of European countries, drawing on data from the European Social Survey 2020.

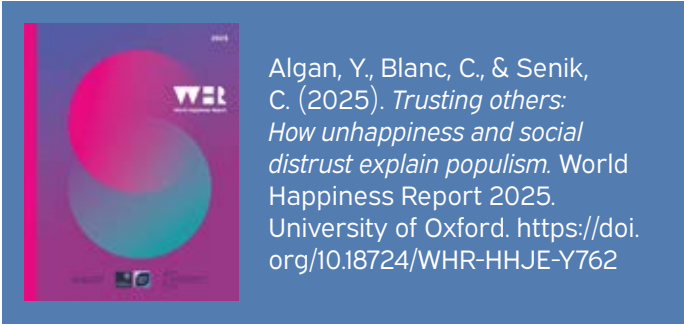
Supporting others: How prosocial behaviour reduces deaths of despair



Deaths of despair are preventable deaths due to suicide, alcohol abuse, and drug overdose. Together, they represent a form of ill-being akin to extreme unhappiness. The term was introduced to describe troubling trends in the United States, while little was known about global patterns. However, rising feelings of distress around the world suggested this trend was not confined to the US. Indeed, our data show that Slovenia, not the US, had the highest rate of deaths of despair in 2019, although the US did experience the greatest increase over the period 2000 to 2019.

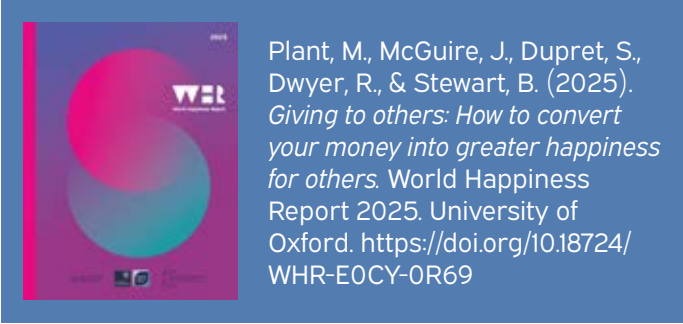
In this chapter, we document the levels of deaths of despair around the world using the latest available data, show how these levels have changed over time, and provide an initial analysis of the factors that explain the rise or fall of deaths of despair within countries over time. We focus particularly on prosocial behaviour – donating, volunteering, and helping strangers – as a factor that could reduce deaths of despair.

Trusting others: How unhappiness and social distrust explain populism



In this chapter, we propose such a framework, where subjective attitudes such as life satisfaction and interpersonal trust play a crucial role. In the context of post-industrial societies that have become increasingly individualistic, subjective attitudes play a much greater role in shaping values and voting behaviour than traditional ideologies or class struggle. In line with previous findings, we show that (low) life satisfaction is highly related to distrust in institutions and voting preferences for anti-system candidates, both in the United States (US) and in Europe, using various international databases.

Giving to others: How to convert your money into greater happiness for others

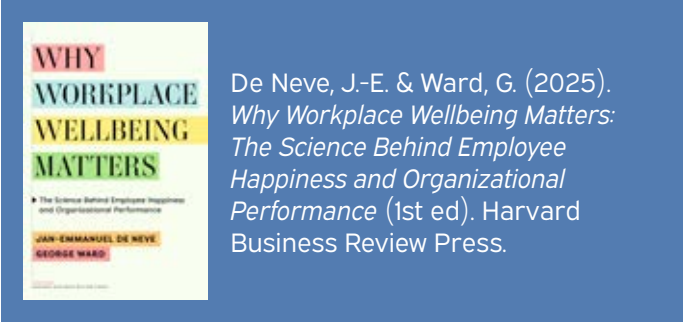


We hope that if you're reading this, you're not just interested in world happiness, you want to do something about it. But, what can you do? This chapter focuses on something many of us already do and nearly all of us can do: give to charity. Each year, over a billion people donate more than \$500 billion to charity, driven in large part by a desire to help others.

However, there are many worthy problems in the world, our resources are limited, and we don't want to waste our money. So, how can you get real change for your dollar? More specifically, how can you make the biggest difference to world happiness with what you have to spare?

People say "money can't buy happiness". At the Happier Lives Institute, we reject that claim but with a twist. We show that money can buy happiness for other people and we highlight the 'best buys' that have been identified so far. To do this, we compare the impact of charities using wellbeing-years (WELLBYs) per dollar, a method we will explain in due course.

Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters



Most of us spend a third of our waking lives at work. Work shapes our schedules, relationships, identities, and economies – but is it actually making us happy?

This crucial question is explored in depth by leading Oxford researchers George Ward and Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, who provide the richest, most comprehensive picture of workplace wellbeing yet.

In *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters*, the authors clarify what workplace wellbeing is (and is not) and offer a framework for how businesses can approach and improve it. Drawing on extensive, large-scale data – including the world's largest dataset on employee wellbeing, gathered in partnership with the jobs platform Indeed – the book reveals the remarkable ways in

which wellbeing at work varies across workers, occupations, companies, and industries.

The authors present new, evidence-based insights into the origins of workplace wellbeing and how businesses can enhance the employee experience. Drawing on work from multiple academic disciplines, they show that workplace wellbeing encompasses both how we think about our work as a whole and how we feel while doing it. Their research demonstrates that improving wellbeing can boost productivity, aid in talent retention and recruitment, and ultimately improve financial performance.

With in-depth analysis and keen insight, Ward and De Neve debunk myths and test assumptions amidst an often-confusing cacophony of voices on wellbeing at work. *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters* provides a firm foundation and indispensable resource for leaders seeking to shape the future of work.

2025 UK Wellbeing Report



Cotofan, M., Layard, R., De Neve, J.-E., Cunningham, S., and Wealthy, B. (2025). *The 2025 UK Wellbeing Report* (World Wellbeing Movement). Retrieved from <https://worldwellbeingmovement.org/uk-wellbeing-report/>

Using new data and building on last year's report we investigate how three measures of wellbeing, namely (1) average life satisfaction, the (2) share of people living with low levels of wellbeing, and the (3) share of people living with high levels of wellbeing, have evolved across UK areas and over the past decade. Using 11 waves of data from the Annual Population Survey we show how these trends have changed across the four countries, across Local Authority Districts, in major cities, and in rural and urban areas. We find that while wellbeing has broadly stagnated at the national level, there is substantial inequality across places and the communities that live there, with some areas flourishing while others increasingly lag behind. The implications for policymakers are substantial.

Wellbeing in a Digital World: online facilitated interventions to support wellbeing in Childhood and Adolescence



Zhou, W., Taylor, L., Boyle, L., DeBorst, L., & De Neve, J.-E. (2025). *Wellbeing in a Digital World: online-facilitated interventions to support wellbeing in Childhood and Adolescence: Literature Review*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

We examine the impact of online-facilitated interventions on youth wellbeing, noting both benefits and risks. We highlight scalable, engaging programmes, especially when supported by educators and face-to-face elements. Effectiveness depends on content, context, and student needs. Schools must critically evaluate and tailor digital strategies as research in this area evolves.

Peer Relations: Interventions to prevent and reduce bullying behaviour in Childhood and Adolescence



Boyle, L., Taylor, L., Zhou, W., Riziki, A., & De Neve, J.-E. (2025). *Peer Relations: Interventions to prevent and reduce bullying behaviour: Literature Review*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

This report identifies bullying as a major threat to wellbeing, with lasting effects. We examine school-based interventions that reduce bullying and its potential downstream effects, like anxiety and depression. Strategies include engaging stakeholders, improving school climate, education, and tailored support with a focus on specific, long-term, and inclusive approaches.


Physical Activity and Wellbeing in Childhood and Adolescence



Zhou, W., Taylor, L., Boyle, L., DeBorst, L., & De Neve, J.-E. (2025). *Physical Activity and Wellbeing in Childhood and Adolescence: Literature Review*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

Research shows a persistent lack of physical activity among young people, particularly adolescents, affecting health and development. We review activity interventions and recommend adopting a whole-school approach while increasing accessibility with fun, social activities. Support from friends and families is also key to encouraging active lifestyles.

Wellbeing Interventions for Schoolteachers



Boyle, L., Taylor, L., Zhou, W., & De Neve, J-E. (2025). *Wellbeing Interventions for Schoolteachers Working in Childhood and Adolescence: Literature Review*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

We explore teacher wellbeing research, noting its limited development compared to student wellbeing. We highlight proven interventions and the need to adapt them to your context. Key recommendations include staff input, leadership support, and system change. Sustainable progress requires long-term investment and more comprehensive, large-scale research.

Whole School Approach to Wellbeing in Childhood and Adolescence



Zhou, W., Taylor, L., Boyle, L., Funk, S., DeBorst, L., & De Neve, J-E. (2025). *Whole School Approach to Wellbeing in Childhood and Adolescence: Literature Review*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

This report reviews the Whole School Approach as a framework to boost school-wide wellbeing. We emphasise its impact on health, behaviour, and learning, and highlight key factors like community involvement and policy support. Challenges include limited resources and gaps in leadership. Success relies on adaptable, evidence-based strategies and stakeholder engagement.



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.

Michaelmas 2024

Sustaining workplace health and wellbeing programmes
Prof Kevin Daniels (UEA)

Wellbeing and Climate Change
Prof Andrew Oswald (Warwick)

Decomposing variance in job quality: the role of the workplace
Prof Alex Bryson (UCL) and Prof Francis Green (UCL)

Why you should measure subjective changes
Dr Alberto Prati (UCL) and Dr Caspar Kaiser (Warwick)

Hilary 2025

Childhood Origins of Social Mobility: Findings from a report for the Social Mobility Commission
Dr Lindsay Richards (Oxford)

Friendship and School Belonging: The lower hanging fruit for adolescent well-being
Prof Mina Fazel (Oxford)

A Triadic Lens into Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work: The interplay between workers' ethnoracial background, tasks, and expertise
Dr Sandra Portocarrero (LSE)

Trinity 2025

Adjusting for scale-use heterogeneity on subjective scales
Prof Daniel J. Benjamin (UCLA)

Subjective well-being among small-scale societies
Prof Victoria Reyes García (Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies)

The effects of employee exposure to community impact activities on their emotions and subsequent engagement in volunteering: evidence from a field experiment
Dr Florencio Portocarrero (LSE)

Back to basics with the econometrics of happiness: Interpersonal and intercultural comparability using ordinal response scales
Professor Chris Barrington-Leigh (McGill)





Our 24/25 Highlights

From major new research findings to educating the business leaders of tomorrow, here are some of our favourite stories from 2024/2025



Image © Copyright University of Oxford

Oxford MBA students explore the science behind wellbeing in pioneering new elective

A new elective at Oxford University's Saïd Business School (SBS) is placing wellbeing at the heart of business education.

Titled *The Science of Wellbeing in Business, Policy and Life*, it forms part of the Business School's Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and marks the first

“This approach is crucial for our leaders of today and tomorrow.”

time that the University has formally introduced the science of wellbeing into its teaching curriculum.

The course is led by Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Director of the Wellbeing Research Centre, Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science at the Saïd Business School and Vice-Principal of Harris Manchester College. He is also an editor of the World Happiness Report, the foremost publication on global wellbeing, which ranks the world's 'happiest' countries.

In 2024/25 Oxford's MBA brings together 348 students from 59 countries and industries ranging from finance to healthcare. The one-year course aims to prepare students for real-world leadership by providing a foundation in core business principles covering topics such as accounting, marketing, strategy, and organisational behaviour, and relating

teaching to the key challenges shaping today's business environment.

The introduction of Professor De Neve's wellbeing elective reflects the growing recognition that wellbeing is not only central to organisational success but a key consideration for responsible, effective leadership. Amy Major, MBA Programme Director, said: "The wellbeing of our teams and as individuals is essential to being able to perform in business, so this research-led approach to wellbeing is crucial for our leaders of today and tomorrow."

Interest among the MBA cohort was high with demand outstripping the available 85 places – an unusually impressive uptake for a completely new elective course. "This is a generation that wants to be more conscious of self, how we live, and our impact on others," says Professor De Neve. He is clear, however,



Image © Copyright University of Oxford

that this is not about self-help: "Here we are taking a data-driven approach to explore the science of wellbeing and how to best put wellbeing metrics at the heart of business and public policy."

Over four weeks and eight intensive three-hour sessions, students explore wellbeing concepts, data, and research, and are challenged to think like policymakers. In one scenario, Professor De Neve asks: would you invest £1 million in extending life by five years with average satisfaction of five out of 10, or three years with a life satisfaction of nine out of 10? The result is a lively and thought-provoking debate.

Other sessions dig deeper into evidence for drivers of wellbeing such as the role income or social connection play in our individual and collective wellbeing, as well as the behavioural effects of how we

“People perform better when wellbeing is taken into account.”

feel in terms of health, productivity, and even voting behaviour. Research by De Neve and colleagues has already shown a causal link between wellbeing and productivity, and highlighted impact on recruitment, retention, and measures of firm performance.

The importance of wellbeing in relation to the workplace resonates with many of the MBA students. Kira Vilanek (inset, right), a management consultant from Berlin, is keen to take away practical insights from the course. "It's a crucial time in our lives," she says. "We're making big decisions, both professionally and personally, and wanting to get that balance right."

David Catalano (inset, left) has moved from the USA with his young family and, having struggled in the past to maintain a healthy work-life balance, has made an effort to support those facing similar challenges.

"Most people spend 40 years working and you need to be able to have that balance," he says. "The science and research that Jan has shared shows that people perform better when wellbeing is taken into account."

"We can play a big part in how people experience their professional lives. Everyone needs to earn a living, but people also need to be able to come to work and feel like they're contributing to something meaningful."

For De Neve there is a sense of relief that the course has been so well-received. "I hope it will help inspire students to improve their lives and that of others in evidence-based ways."

Initial findings from landmark happiness study

Researchers at Harvard and Oxford universities have shared early results from the Health and Happiness Study – the first large-scale study of its kind, which seeks to identify predictors of happiness and wellbeing using data from smartphones and Garmin smartwatches.

Surveys are sent to respondents' phones three times per day, asking them about their moods, emotions, and activities directly preceding the survey.

Reports are combined with data from Garmin wearables and smartphones to provide a nuanced, qualitative and quantitative representation of how wellbeing is impacted by variables like physical activity, sleep, socialisation and stress. Key findings include:

- Participants consistently report more frequent positive emotions than negative emotions, suggesting that people generally do feel more happy than unhappy on a day-to-day basis.
- Ideal times of day for happiness and wellbeing varied considerably, with some individuals showing greater signs of emotional wellbeing in the mornings, and others in the afternoon or evenings.
- Daily physical activity and adequate sleep measured by Garmin devices were strongly correlated with higher levels of happiness and lower levels of stress.
- Emotional stability varied by age, with older adults showing more stability than younger adults.
- The study showed high retention rates, suggesting participants found value in self-monitoring emotions during the day.
- People were happiest when involved in cultural and social activities, eating, or spending time with friends and family.

The study will now expand to include more than 10,000 participants across the globe.

Human-centred approach essential in digital transformation of strained NHS mental health provision, say researchers

Adopting a human-centred approach pioneered in computer science and engineering can support the expansion of mental health provision in the UK, according to new research published in the journal *JMIR Human Factors*.

Researchers from the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration East of England at the University of Cambridge, University of East Anglia, and the

The concept of human-centred design originated in the fields of computer science, engineering and ergonomics and is defined in this context by the authors as:

“a practical, iterative approach to the design, development and reform of mental health systems, services and products that is achieved through communication, interaction and empathy with users’ needs, desires and experiences”

Adopting such principles is designed to guide value and wellbeing creation in the delivery of products, systems, and services.

Using a human-centred approach in the design of new and existing digital mental health services could, according to the authors, enable greater responsiveness to patient needs and therefore improve patient outcomes.

The authors also highlight four specific UK policy recommendations:

- Replace the digital transformation directorate currently within NHS England with an independent, cross-departmental digital transformation commission;
- Further development of standardised processes and impact evaluation methods;
- Creation of new national-level standards to better connect NHS mental health services with other government departments;
- And explore the possibility of expanding human-centred design principles in further policy settings at both local and national levels.

Dr William Fleming, a Research Fellow at the Wellbeing Research Centre and corresponding author of the paper, said: “The digital transformation of our health services is already happening in a race to meet demand.

“But we can’t just assume the right answer is digital.

“We need any change to include the individuals who rely on these services as well as those who provide them.”

‘Human-Centered Design and Digital Transformation of Mental Health Services’ is published in the journal *JMIR Human Factors*.

“ We can’t just assume the right answer is digital.

University of Hertfordshire, reviewed existing evidence of human-centred design and digital transformation in the context of the National Health Service (NHS)’s strained mental health provision.

The UK is not alone in facing growing demands for assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions. Increased waiting lists and prolonged referral times suggest funding and infrastructure are struggling to keep up with demand.

Digital transformation of the NHS and other linked services (both public and private sector) has long been touted as a solution to many of these problems.



Image © Copyright Tima Miroshnichenko via Pexels



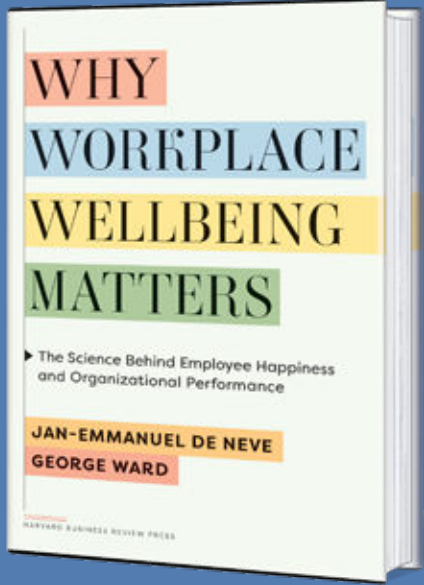
Image © Copyright Wellbeing Research Centre

Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters published by HBR

Most of us spend a third of our waking lives at work. Work shapes our schedules, relationships, identities, and economies – but is it actually making us happy?

Harvard Business Review Press published *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters* in March 2025, highlighting a decade-and-a-half of research into the science behind employee happiness and organisational performance.

The book has been endorsed by some of the biggest names in wellbeing science.



Leading experts to examine social media for WHR 2026

A global team of leading researchers will examine the association between social media and wellbeing for *World Happiness Report 2026*.

Powered by data from the Gallup World Poll and published annually by the Wellbeing Research Centre, the *World Happiness Report* is the world’s foremost publication on global happiness. The report provides valuable interdisciplinary insights into the wellbeing of people across the globe.

Experts from the fields of economics, psychology, and beyond will collaborate on the 2026 edition, due to be released on 20 March 2026 to mark the UN’s International Day of Happiness.

As well as ranking the world’s happiest countries, each edition includes detailed analysis from researchers working at the forefront of wellbeing science.

The editors of the *World Happiness Report* have closely followed the ongoing debate around social media usage – particularly among children and young people – and have assembled a range of expert researchers to help better understand the wellbeing consequences of social media use across age groups and cultures.

Following a global call for chapter proposals, *World Happiness Report 2026* will bring all sides of the debate together to establish the facts, clarify disagreements, and provide a balanced assessment of what we know, what we don’t know, and what should be done.

Machine learning a better predictor of human wellbeing than existing models

Machine learning (ML) algorithms can predict human wellbeing better than traditional econometric models, according to new research.

The significant findings, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, are the first of their kind and could dramatically change the way we measure, study, and consider human wellbeing.

Researchers from the Wellbeing Research Centre formed part of an interdisciplinary team which pitted two different 'tree-based' ML algorithms against a variety of standard econometric models, using nationally representative samples from Germany, the UK, and the United States.

Traditionally, researchers have relied on conventional linear models to attempt to model the variables – or 'drivers' – which positively or negatively impact individuals' self-reported subjective wellbeing. These drivers include measures such as age, income, and household size.

Such techniques only allow a limited number of variables to be tested together at one time and, since the test variables must be selected by a human researcher, may be subject to unintentional bias like any other human-run experiment.

Instead, each machine learning algorithm was fed data across hundreds of different variables, and tasked with assessing the relative importance of each variable to self-reported wellbeing scores, at a population level.

This novel approach, when compared to conventional human-run linear models, allowed researchers to better identify trends across time and – in particular – explore interactions *between* different variables in their impact upon wellbeing.

Dr Caspar Kaiser, Assistant Professor in the Behavioural Science Group at Warwick Business School, Research Fellow at the Wellbeing Research Centre, and joint first author for the study, said: "Perhaps counterintuitively, the thing I am most excited about is our finding that when using all available data in surveys, and when using the most flexible algorithms available, we can explain about 30% of people's wellbeing.

"This means that a large share of people's wellbeing remains unexplored. What is this wellbeing 'dark matter'? Presumably, only moving beyond traditional surveys will allow us to uncover this – and that's something I really look forward to."

"While some literature applying large language models to tabular data is slowly emerging, at the time of writing, no LLM-related technique has been found to consistently outperform the types of 'traditional' machine learning techniques we used in this study. Considering that tabular data still represents a large chunk of what researchers and companies work with, it remains crucial not to underestimate any solution just because it's 'old'."

'Machine learning in the prediction of human wellbeing' is published in *Scientific Reports*.



Image © Copyright Jopwell via Pexels



Top employers revealed by new Work Wellbeing 100

A new index of the top 100 publicly-traded companies in the US, powered by Oxford research, has been published by Indeed.

The 2024 Work Wellbeing 100 draws upon insights from the world's largest study of workplace wellbeing, undertaken by global job matching and hiring platform Indeed alongside the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford.




Work wellbeing – or how employees feel at work – is a critical factor for job seekers when deciding where to work, and plays a significant role for employers hoping to attract, hire and retain top talent.

Oxford researchers previously found that Indeed's work wellbeing data shows a compelling correlation: higher work wellbeing leads to improved valuation, higher return on assets, and greater profits underscoring that employee satisfaction can serve as a predictor of a company's business and financial success.

"The employers on Indeed's Work Wellbeing 100 list are setting an example and leading the way in creating thriving work environments," said LaFawn Davis, Indeed's Chief People and Sustainability Officer. "While work wellbeing has faced challenges in recent years, it's more important than ever for companies to create environments where employees can truly thrive. By prioritizing work wellbeing, companies cultivate a more resilient, effective and happier workforce which ultimately drives business growth."

The recognised companies represent a variety of industries across the US, ranging from healthcare to retail, to manufacturing, hospitality and tech. The retail

Work Wellbeing 100

1.  H&R Block
2.  Delta Air Lines
3.  L3Harris
4. Accenture, 5. NIKE, 6. Tradesmen Int., 7. Disney Parks, 8. Addus HomeCare, 9. IBM, 10. Amazon Flex

and transportation industries are well represented on this list, with 23 and 14 companies respectively, showcasing the commitment to wellbeing. Regardless of their industry, employers on this list stand out for offering robust career growth opportunities and a commitment to flexible work options.

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

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

Mind The Gap: Research identifies worrying wellbeing disparities between men and women on a global scale

- Relative to men, women’s wellbeing has been declining globally.
- Researchers reviewed two decades of global data, long-run trends since the 1970s, and existing analyses.
- Study further reveals vast differences in the size of this gender wellbeing gap between countries.

Women’s wellbeing relative to men has declined in the past two decades despite substantial social and economic progress, new research shows.

Researchers from the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, Warwick Business School, and Leeds University Business School studied trends of wellbeing and health outcomes using global data for the period 2006 to 2023, and reviewed existing research on the so-called ‘gender wellbeing gap’.

The findings, published in a special edition of *Science Advances*, challenge long-held assumptions about women’s wellbeing on a global scale.

While women, on average, report higher levels of life satisfaction and overall happiness than men, women experience worse outcomes in both mental health and reports of negative ‘affect’, or negative emotions.

This trend, which has been described as a paradox, has widened over the same period – meaning women’s wellbeing, particularly in the affective domain, has dropped relative to men.

But while there is clear evidence of a relative decline in women’s

wellbeing on a global scale, the findings show vast differences in the size of the gender wellbeing gap across different countries.

In addition to two decades of global data, the research team also looked at long-run trends in Europe and the USA since the 1970s, and reviewed existing literature in search of explanations for the relative decline in women’s wellbeing.

Their findings underscore the need for broader-reaching gender-sensitive policies in order to reduce and subsequently eliminate the observed gender wellbeing gaps, and further research into gender

“This seems puzzling and paradoxical.”

disparities between reported life satisfaction, and both positive and negative emotions.

Dr Caspar Kaiser, Assistant Professor in the Behavioural Science Group at Warwick Business School, Research Fellow at the Wellbeing Research Centre, and co-lead author of the paper, said: “In my view, the most striking finding – both in the literature and in our own analyses – is that despite global improvements in women’s economic standing, gender gaps in wellbeing have not trended in the same direction.

“To the contrary: for several indicators, and on a global scale, women now fare worse relative to men than twenty years ago. This seems puzzling and paradoxical.”

‘Two Paradoxes in Women’s Wellbeing’ is published in *Science Advances*.

Wellbeing Research Centre welcomes leading sustainable wellbeing scholars

In partnership with Reapra, the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford has welcomed a pair of world-class researchers to spearhead its emerging research stream in sustainable wellbeing.

Paul Behrens (Reapra Senior Research Fellow) and Annegeke Jansen (Reapra Research Associate) join the Centre’s team of interdisciplinary researchers to examine long-term questions around human wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Their appointments are supported by Asia-based venture builder and investment group Reapra, whose mission is to co-create industries for the betterment of society through research and practice.

Paul Behrens is the British Academy Global Professor at the Oxford Martin School, whose research focuses on the environmental and social impacts of large-scale food system transformation. He is also the author of the popular science book,

The Best of Times, The Worst of Times: Futures from the Frontiers of Climate Science and winner of the inaugural Frontiers Planet Prize.

Annegeke Jansen is currently a PhD candidate at Leiden University, focusing on the measurement of sustainable and inclusive wellbeing as part of the WISE Horizons project. In addition, she investigates determinants and historical developments related to wellbeing.

The pair have previously collaborated on major contributions to the Beyond GDP movement, published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* and *Nature Scientific Data*.

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science at Saïd Business School and Director of the Wellbeing Research Centre, said: “We are tremendously grateful to our like-minded colleagues at Reapra who have made these fellowships possible and we look forward to our partnership generating tangible insights that will hopefully underpin policy action in due course.”



The Wellbeing Research Centre hosted the first-ever workshop for authors of the World Happiness Report in Rome in November 2024. Contributors from across the globe met and discussed their findings on the topic of ‘Caring and Sharing’, alongside members of the World Happiness Report’s Editorial Board.



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

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

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

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

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

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

- Sharing meals with others is strongly linked with wellbeing across all global regions, but the number of people dining alone in the United States has increased 53% over the past two decades.
- Household size is closely linked to happiness. Four to five people living together enjoy the

Happiest Nations, 2025



World Happiness Report 2025 and its findings attracted notable interest from world leaders.

Mexican President, **Claudia Sheinbaum** (below left), discussed the nation's first-ever top 10 appearance in her daily TV address and on social media.

Her Finnish counterpart, **Alexander Stubb** (below right), also posted about Finland's record-extending top ranking.



Images © Copyright (left) EneasMX and (right) Estonian Foreign Ministry, both via Wikimedia Commons

highest levels of happiness in Mexico and Europe, but many people in Europe live on their own.

- In 2023, 19% of young adults across the world reported having no one they could count on for social support: a 39% increase compared to 2006.
- Deaths of despair are less frequent in countries where benevolent acts are more frequent.
- Declining happiness and social trust in the US and parts of Europe combine to explain the rise of political polarisation and anti-system votes.
- The cost-effectiveness of charities varies dramatically. Some charities are hundreds of times better at increasing happiness per dollar than others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Human happiness is driven by our relationships with others.

“Investing in positive social connections and engaging in benevolent actions are both matched by greater happiness.”

Prof Lara B. Aknin
Editor, World Happiness Report

“The wallet data are so convincing because they confirm that people are much happier living where they think people care about each other.

“Our wallet dropping experiments confirm the reality of these perceptions, even if they are everywhere too pessimistic.”

Prof John F. Helliwell
Editor, World Happiness Report

“Happiness isn't just about wealth or growth – it's about trust, connection and knowing people have your back.

“This year's report proves we underestimate how kind the world really is.

“If we want stronger communities and economies, we must invest in what truly matters: each other.”

Jon Clifton
CEO, Gallup

“This year's report pushes us to look beyond traditional determinants like health and wealth.

“It turns out that sharing meals and trusting others are even stronger predictors of wellbeing than expected. In this era of social isolation and political polarisation we need to find ways to bring people around the table again – doing so is critical for our individual and collective wellbeing.”

Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve
Editor, World Happiness Report



Nearly 7 million UK people estimated to be living below the Happiness Poverty Line

- Nearly 7 million UK people – around 13% of the population aged 16 and above – are estimated to be living below the Happiness Poverty Line.
- Happiness in the UK continues to remain below pre-pandemic levels: average life satisfaction is lower, more people live below the Happiness Poverty Line, and fewer people are flourishing.
- An additional 650,000 UK people are estimated to have fallen below the Happiness Poverty Line since the first UK Wellbeing Report.

The number of UK people living below the Happiness Poverty Line is rising, according to alarming new findings published by the World Wellbeing Movement.

Using the latest annual life satisfaction data made available by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the 2025 UK Wellbeing Report estimates that an additional 650,000 UK adults – enough to fill Wembley Stadium more than seven times – have fallen below the Happiness Poverty Line compared to the previous 12 months.

The World Wellbeing Movement defines the Happiness Poverty Line as those who rate their satisfaction with life at 5 or below on the 0-10 scale reported by the ONS.

Around 7 million adults across the UK are now estimated to be living in happiness poverty: equivalent to more than the entire population of Scotland, and around 13% of the UK population aged 16 and older.

This proportion is roughly equivalent to those who live

in absolute income poverty in the UK, a parallel that led us to coin the term ‘living below the Happiness Poverty Line’ in our inaugural March 2024 report.

Of the home nations, Wales has the highest proportion of residents living below the Happiness Poverty Line (15%) and Northern Ireland has the lowest (12%).

Worryingly, the gradual improvements in average UK wellbeing levels observed before the Covid-19 pandemic have been erased. Prior to 2020, the proportion of people living below the Happiness Poverty Line was falling year on year – despite an initial recovery in 2022, that trend has since reversed.

And the latest quarterly figures released by the ONS in May confirm that this stagnation extends into at least the last quarter of 2024.

For the first time, the UK Wellbeing Report this year also reports the number of people living above the ‘Flourishing Line’ – those who rate their lives as a 9 or 10 out of 10.

The gap between the proportion of people living below the Happiness Poverty Line and those living above this Flourishing Line has also grown slightly over the same period, suggesting a widening gap between the best-off and worst-off in society.

The World Wellbeing Movement is working alongside a cross-party group of Parliamentarians and other policy experts to better understand and address the conditions required to build better lives, and is calling for the UK Government to put the wellbeing of people at the heart of decision-making.

Newly-revived cross-party Parliamentary group to put wellbeing at heart of UK policy

A cross-party collective of Parliamentarians have thrown their support behind a newly-revived All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) focused on the wellbeing of UK people.

The APPG on Wellbeing Economics is run by, and for, Members of the Commons and Lords, and will draw upon academic experts as well as leaders in business and civil society to develop evidence-based strategies and policies to improve wellbeing across the UK.

The group is chaired by Labour MP, Peter Lamb, with former UK Cabinet Secretary, Lord Gus O'Donnell (crossbench) serving as co-chair. Baroness Claire Tyler (Liberal Democrat), and former Health Secretary and Chancellor, Sir Jeremy Hunt (Conservative) will occupy the vice-chair roles. A full list of members is available on the APPG's website, including Parliamentarians from the Green Party and the Scottish National Party.

A predecessor to the APPG on Wellbeing Economics was originally formed in 2009 under the leadership of former Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson, and has been reconstituted in 2025 with the support of the World Wellbeing Movement, a registered charity. Secretariat duties for the forerunner group were previously fulfilled by the New Economics Foundation and latterly the What Works Centre for Wellbeing.

The new group will undertake a range of activities in Parliament to advance wellbeing economics, including producing submissions

to Government consultations and select committee inquiries and proposing new approaches and solutions to putting wellbeing first.

Drawing on expertise from a range of diverse backgrounds, the group will explore a range of topics such as the role of wellbeing in promoting economic growth, mental health support, social media, and the value for money of wellbeing interventions at a national scale.

The APPG on Wellbeing Economics is committed to promoting the concept of a wellbeing economy which emphasises the importance of human and environmental wellbeing. The wellbeing economy involves measuring societal progress based on quality of life and subjective wellbeing, rather than solely relying on economic indicators like GDP.

Ultimately, the APPG believes wellbeing should be at the heart of public policy.

Sarah Cunningham, Managing Director of the World Wellbeing Movement, said: “The Office for National Statistics has published data on measures of wellbeing since 2011, but since then the UK has been slow to take action, and use the insights from that data to *actually improve* population wellbeing.

“Our 2025 UK Wellbeing Report found that nearly 7 million UK people are estimated to be living below what we have termed the ‘Happiness Poverty Line’ – yet the revival of this APPG is a significant step towards building better lives for people across the UK.”





Let's put **wellbeing** first.

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



The number of UK people living below the Happiness Poverty Line is rising, according to findings published in the 2025 UK Wellbeing Report by the World Wellbeing Movement.

Nearly 7 million UK people – around 13% of the population aged 16 and above – are estimated to be living below the Happiness Poverty Line.

Happiness in the UK continues to remain below pre-pandemic levels: average life satisfaction is lower, more people live below the Happiness Poverty Line, and fewer people are flourishing.

An additional 650,000 UK people are estimated to have fallen below the Happiness Poverty Line since the first UK Wellbeing Report was published in 2024.

The updated 2025 report was launched at a special event hosted at the House of Lords in June.





The World Wellbeing Movement has successfully revived an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) focused on the wellbeing of UK people.

The APPG on Wellbeing Economics is run by, and for, Members of the Commons and Lords, and will draw upon academic experts as well as leaders in business and civil society to develop evidence-based strategies and policies to improve wellbeing across the UK.

The group is chaired by Labour MP, Peter Lamb, with former UK Cabinet Secretary, Lord Gus O'Donnell (crossbench) serving as co-chair. Baroness Claire Tyler (Liberal Democrat), and former Health Secretary and Chancellor, Sir Jeremy Hunt (Conservative) will occupy the vice-chair roles.

A full list of members is available on the APPG's website, including Parliamentarians from the Green Party and the Scottish National Party.

Work Wellbeing Playbook

Manuel sur le bien-être au travail

Draaiboek voor welzijn op het werk

Leitfaden zum Wohlbefinden am Arbeitsplatz

The Work Wellbeing Playbook is now available to more people than ever before.

The Playbook of proven workplace wellbeing strategies was first published (in English) by the World Wellbeing Movement in 2024.

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

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

The Playbook has now been localised in French, Dutch, and German, with further languages to follow. Researchers are also working on an expanded version of the Playbook incorporating the best and latest academic evidence from wellbeing science.

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 <i>genuine</i> 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 <i>where</i> and <i>when</i> 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 <i>truly</i> 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 World Wellbeing Movement continued to host some of the world's brightest wellbeing minds with the third 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:

- **Lucy Bailey** and **Leoni Boyle** on fostering wellbeing in schools;
- **Dan Buettner**, on what the world's Blue Zones can teach us about longevity;
- **Alastair Campbell** (inset, centre) on first-hand reflections of embedding wellbeing into Government.
- **Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve** and **George Ward** (main image) on *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters*;
- **Jen Fisher** (inset, left) and **KeyAnna Schmiedl** on shifting from burnout to belonging;
- **Kayla Jeter** and **Anne Wintroub** on movement for a lifetime;
- **Prof Amanda Kirby** (inset, right) on building neuroinclusive workplaces;
- **Prof Michael F Steger** on finding meaning in everyday life;
- and **Jess Thom** on her experience of mentally preparing Team GB for the Olympics.

The World Wellbeing Movement was recognised with the Social Impact Award at the 2025 InsideOut Awards for its work in putting wellbeing at the heart of decision-making in both business and public policy.

The InsideOut Awards® are an annual celebration that recognises organisations, initiatives, and individuals who champion mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Congratulations also to Charlotte Day for receiving the Behind the Scenes Champion award, and to Jonathan Whitney who was highly commended in the Future Leader category.



■ Founding, Premium and Standard 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.



04/09/24

Map Shows Happiest Age Group in America

Professor De Neve added that while the report itself does not hypothesize on why youth life satisfaction is declining so rapidly in the U.S, there are many theories as to why this is occurring.

He said youth life satisfaction is usually linked to life expectations. Countries such as Lithuania and Serbia which have some of the highest youth happiness in the world, also have a youth population experiencing more optimism for the future than their parents.

American youth, on the other hand, are experiencing an increase in the cost of education, fears around the labor market, and a rise in isolation and loneliness.



09/09/24

Volunteering holds the key to tackling workplace sickness

But how should business go about this? Mindfulness training? Stress management? No, says Dr William Fleming from Oxford University: volunteering.

Fleming’s research, based on nearly 50,000 workers, found that volunteering is the only workplace intervention that improves wellbeing at an individual level.



11/09/24

Workplace well-being takes more than apps and stress management

Imagine a workplace that has various mental well-being programmes. Now imagine being an employee, giving those programmes a try – and realising that your well-being has hardly changed.

That’s apparently the reality for many in the UK, according to a study published by the University



13/09/24

of Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre in 2024. It is believed to be the largest of its kind, involving more than 46,000 workers from over 200 organisations there.

IIM Ahmedabad, Ranchi, Harvard and others offer courses on happiness: Do you know why?

Happiness plays a vital role in enhancing productivity. Research consistently shows that when individuals are happier, they are more engaged, energized, and effective in their work. Research conducted by Oxford University has underscored the critical connection between happiness and productivity in the workplace.

The findings indicate that happy workers are more efficient during their working hours, though they do not necessarily work longer hours.



17/09/24

Beyond the obvious, here are the business benefits of investing in employee wellbeing

Oxford recently analyzed Indeed’s work wellbeing dataset and highlighted a strong correlation between company wellbeing and business performance. The findings featured in the 2024 Global Work Wellbeing Report reveal that higher levels of employee wellbeing are associated with improved firm valuation, return on assets, and gross profits. Moreover, companies with higher levels of employee wellbeing collectively outperformed the stock market.

The Indeed-Oxford research also looked into whether happier employees today means better business results later. Based on data from before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings show that companies with happier workers before COVID-19 performed better afterward in all three performance indicators (valuation, return on assets, and gross profits).

Moreover, the Indeed-Oxford research reveals the long-term business benefits of prioritizing employee wellbeing. Indeed further strengthened the business case for work wellbeing with the launch of the Work Wellbeing 100, an index ranking the top 100 publicly traded companies by their Indeed Work Wellbeing Score.



17/09/24

Indeed Introduces the 2024 Work Wellbeing 100, Ranking the Top Publicly-Traded Companies for Work Wellbeing in the U.S.

“Research consistently shows that how we feel at work matters. It deeply impacts our general wellbeing as well as company financial performance,” 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 our research shows that those who prioritize wellbeing reap the rewards of higher productivity and improved employee retention and attraction. This is something we’ve now shown to be the case in both hard financial metrics as well as stock market performance.”



17/09/24

Indeed Introduces the 2024 Work Wellbeing 100, Ranking the Top Publicly-Traded Companies for Work Wellbeing in the U.S.

Fueled by the world’s largest study of work wellbeing and in partnership with the University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, Indeed’s Work Wellbeing 100 reveals that public companies with higher work wellbeing outperform the market. These recognized companies prove wellbeing is not just better for people, but better for business.



17/09/24

Companies that ‘prioritize work flexibility’ have the happiest workers, new ranking shows

H&R Block can now claim it offers the happiest and most stress-free workplace around.

The tax preparation company came in No. 1 for employee wellbeing, according to the 2024 Work Wellbeing 100 from Indeed and the University of Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre.

The index ranks the top 100 publicly traded U.S. companies where employees reported high levels of happiness, purpose, satisfaction, and low stress when prompted to take a survey while leaving a review of their employer on Indeed. And those high marks could be driving better business performance.



01/10/24

What does work wellbeing have to do with business success? Everything, pretty much.

Since 2019, Indeed has partnered with leading experts at the University of Oxford to collect data on how employees feel at work, resulting in defined criteria for measuring work wellbeing: happiness, purpose, stress, and satisfaction.

Additionally, Indeed measures what influences wellbeing, including foundational, social, and growth needs. Wellbeing data collection spans 19 countries and is publicly available on company pages in the US, Canada, and the UK, where Indeed’s Work Wellbeing Score has launched.

Building upon this massive dataset — the world’s largest study of work wellbeing — Indeed has collaborated with the University of Oxford to create The Work Wellbeing 100, an index of the top 100 publicly traded companies ranked by the Work Wellbeing Score. These companies consistently outperformed leading stock indices, including the S&P 500, Nasdaq Composite, and Russell 3000, showing that prioritizing wellbeing benefits people and business.



10/10/24

Work-related stress tops employers' health and wellbeing concerns

Additionally, HR should involve leaders in reforming their organisation's approach to stress, explained William Fleming, Unilever research fellow at the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford.

Speaking to HR magazine, he said: "There might be some systems that HR can influence, like performance review or learning and development. But unfortunately, structural change can be beyond the reach for most HR personnel.

"They need to be empowered to help reform the major stressors at work, or have serious buy-in from senior leaders to make big changes happen. There are reactive systems like EAPs, with variable quality, but it's important we're moving towards a preventative approach by identifying and solving the big problems."



18/10/24

Why Workplace Well-Being Programs Don't Achieve Better Outcomes

An Oxford University study of 46,336 workers in 233 organizations compared employees who did and did not engage in a range of common individual-level well-being interventions, including resilience training, mindfulness, and well-being apps. Across multiple subjective well-being indicators, intervention participants were no better off after engaging in these interventions.



29/10/24

Habits that kill productivity

Incorporating additional insights from a study by Clement Bellet, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, and George Ward, it is evident that happiness substantially increases productivity within workplaces.

Conducted within a large telecommunications company, the study leverages natural variations in employee mood influenced by weather exposure at work, revealing that happier employees show significantly higher sales performance.



30/10/24

What happened to Bhutan's 'kingdom of happiness'?

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and behavioural science at Oxford and one of the authors of the annual World Happiness Report, says that without a certain level of economic development, people don't tend to rate themselves as happy. Bhutan's own figures show this – those its surveys find happiest are those who are wealthiest, according to the Asia Development Bank.

"We can't get around economic development," says De Neve. It is an important part of people's wellbeing, and Bhutan is "quite right" to focus more on per capita GDP, he says.



11/11/24

Productive Doesn't Always Mean Present, But It Helps

Research from the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford found that the most productive employees are happy ones. Its study of workers at a contact center over a six-month period found that when workers were happier, they made more calls per hour, and converted more of those calls into sales. The researchers also found that happy workers do not work more hours than their discontented colleagues – they are simply more productive during their time at work.



25/11/24

Workplace wellbeing: Stop focusing on individual 'fixes' and address the elephant in the room

Before employers throw their hands up in the air and cancel their subscriptions to digital wellbeing apps and mental health platforms, let's be clear on one thing: wellbeing is a crucial investment in the workplace.

According to a recent study by the Wellbeing Research Centre, organisations with higher subjective wellbeing outperform the stock market. And not just by a small margin. They saw an 11% greater return than the S&P 500 in the first half of 2024.



26/11/24

Given that investing in wellbeing is a business and people imperative, that still leaves us with the question of how to make workplace wellbeing work for your organisation. Earlier this year, a new study by Oxford University's William Fleming examined the impact of various wellbeing interventions such as mindfulness classes and wellbeing apps. It found that almost none of these solutions had any statistically significant impact on employee wellbeing.

How volunteering boosts employee morale and productivity

A recent large-scale systematic review, in fact, found that a range of workplace wellness offerings had no positive effect on employees' well-being. But there was one clear exception: volunteering.

"My study analyzed data from about 50,000 employees over 250 companies in the U.K. Volunteering was the only one of these interventions which showed...improved well-being," says study author William Fleming, a sociologist and research fellow at the University of Oxford. "It instills a bit more social meaning...into people's jobs, especially if you're working for a big corporate global organization [where] it can feel like you're just making money for the man and spinning paper sheets around."



05/12/24

What Does Happiness Have To Do With Business Productivity?

Even before the pandemic, our nonprofit offered staff flexibility around work hours and the ability to attend to family obligations. The goal is to create an environment where employees work when they are most productive, meeting their work objectives in a way that works best for them.

The ethos of this principle was reflected in research conducted by Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, in partnership with British telecommunications giant BT. They found a direct correlation between happiness and productivity. The study indicates that people are 13% more productive when happy.

The study also found something interesting: Happy workers do not work more hours than their discontented colleagues. Instead, they are simply more productive during their work hours. This suggests businesses can increase productivity and outcomes by fostering a



06/12/24

positive work environment and prioritizing happiness and well-being.

Teacher Wellbeing Framework and Key Considerations To Enhance Teacher Wellbeing

Are you ready to take teacher wellbeing to the next level?

In this episode, Dr Wanying Zhou and Leoni Boyle, researchers from the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, discuss their foundational literature review produced in collaboration with the International Baccalaureate: "Wellbeing For School Teachers".

You'll learn about the latest research into teacher wellbeing and its importance for teachers themselves, students and the school community.

Listen now and discover practical strategies to create a healthier, more supportive environment for the educators in your school.



16/12/24

Global mental health crisis hits workplaces

A recent study by Oxford university researchers, using data from the recruitment website Indeed, illustrated the business case for investing in improving workplace mental health.

Analysing responses from 1mn workers at 1,782 publicly listed US companies, it found a "strong positive relationship between employee wellbeing and the firm's performance", said Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Oxford economics professor and the project's leader.

A simulated share portfolio of the 100 companies that scored highest in Indeed's wellbeing surveys consistently outperformed the main stock market indices.

"We have found that how people feel at work is consistently a good leading indicator of future market and financial performance," said De Neve. Since January 2021, the portfolio had performed 11 per cent better than the S&P 500, he added.



18/12/24

How Employee Wellbeing Became a Key Driver For Growth

While most managers Indeed surveyed stated they believe workplace wellbeing is important, they often fail to address it as an organizational goal. This disconnect is rooted in the fear of being viewed as someone who squanders resources on “fluffiness,” according to Prof. Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford and the lead author of the Workplace Wellbeing and Firm Performance study.

“In the C-suite, they don’t like softness. They only want to look at KPIs that they consider objective,” says Professor De Neve, who is a longtime partner of Indeed who helped guide the methodology for the Work Wellbeing Score and survey in the 2023 article “New Research: Work Wellbeing Is Good for People — and Profits.”



24/12/24

What is the ‘hedonic treadmill’ and why is it the foe of Christmas cheer?

Dr Michael Plant, founder and director of the Happier Lives Institute, a non-profit research institute, and a research fellow at the University of Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre, said that objects tend not to make people happier because we have adapted to them, something termed the hedonic treadmill.

“Think of some item you’d really like to buy and you think will make you happier,” he said. “Say it’s a new car or phone. Now, think about the car/phone you already have, and ask how much happiness it gives you now. Probably, you don’t think about it any more. It’s faded into the background.

“For what it’s worth, there’s a good evolutionary reason for adaptation. Mother Nature doesn’t want us to be happy – she wants us to survive and reproduce. Getting used to things – but not realising that we get used to things – is her trick to motivate us to acquire resources.”



10/01/25

In memoriam: Richard Easterlin, 1926-2024

Richard Easterlin, who passed away in December 2024, was a visionary economist whose pioneering research transformed how we think about economic growth, happiness and human wellbeing. This column, written by a friend and colleague, outlines some of the key contributions and impact of a long professional life mostly spent examining data on, and discussing the importance of, human feelings. The Easterlin Paradox, which demonstrated that rising income does not necessarily lead to increased happiness, challenged traditional economic assumptions and continues to shape global policy debates.



11/01/25

How to be happy in 2025

“Spend more time doing things you enjoy, and less doing what you won’t,” recommends Dr Michael Plant, the founder and director of the Happier Lives Institute and research fellow at the University of Oxford’s Wellbeing Research Centre.

It may sound obvious but many people are engaging in activities because they think they should enjoy them, when they, in fact, don’t, he says. “The trick is to pay attention to your experiences. Do you actually enjoy the opera?”

Apply the same principle to your work, where we spend around a third of our life, he says. “Find a job with tasks you enjoy, supportive colleagues and that does something you think is useful,” he says. “If you can’t find one with all three, look for one with two.”



12/01/25

Is January really the most miserable month?

In a nutshell, events — outside global pandemics — tend not to have much of an impact on our happiness for long, unless they directly affect us.

Human moods are surprisingly resilient to external factors. Or, more likely, says Michael Plant, Oxford philosopher and founder of the Happier Lives Institute, we tend to focus on our own lives and what we can control. In his words, “We register the global events, then go back to the problems in front of us.”



24/01/25

Do wellness interventions actually make employees feel better?

Yet, a question remains: Do wellness interventions make employees feel better?

William Fleming, a research fellow at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, attempted to answer this question in a study published last year.

His study looked at a wide range of wellbeing interventions and controversially concluded that almost none had a lasting impact on worker wellbeing or job satisfaction.

"While these findings do not entirely discount positive effects for some individual workers, any such effect may be averaged out by a negative effect elsewhere," he concluded.



28/01/25

3 Policies to Guide a Pro-Growth, Pro-Worker Economy Under Trump

There is a powerful business case to be made for increasing the economic status of the lowest paid workers. Lower levels of inequality are correlated with higher overall economic growth that benefits every member of society, including shareholders. Companies with the best employee practices create sustained long-term value for their shareholders, as shown by new research conducted by the global hiring platform Indeed and the University of Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre. This point is further demonstrated by funds that track companies with pro-worker policies, such as the Just 100 Index and the ETF Harbor Human Capital Factor (HAPI) that have consistently outperformed the Russell 1000 and S&P 500, respectively.



04/02/25

Top tips from a happiness expert

Dr Michael Plant, the founder and director of the Happier Lives Institute and research fellow at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, appeared on ITV's This Morning to offer research-backed advice on how to be happier.



17/02/25

The human resources reckoning

The area of wellbeing exposes some of HR's weaknesses. "Many HR teams pay for services from a variety of vendors that aren't bringing positive effects," says William Fleming, research fellow at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre. Last year, he found that programmes and apps to sooth stress and teach mindfulness made no difference.

The problem, he notes, is that many HR departments are stuck between having too little and too much influence. This may become more of an issue in the coming years, as AI begins to play a bigger role in the workplace, taking on more of the tasks people do.

"We recommend organisational change and improving job quality," Fleming says. "How many HR managers decide how many hours people work, how much autonomy people are given in their team, how many staff are assigned to tasks, how technology is introduced? These are the types of things that really drive wellbeing at work. Yet they can fall outside the remit of HR and instead [are] based on executive decisions or line manager discretion."



06/03/25

The paradox of women's well-being: Why they report higher happiness despite worse mental health

The bottom line: global evidence points to a decline in women's well-being, particularly in terms of emotional distress.

The research focused on subjective well-being, which

refers to how a person perceives and describes their quality of life. “Our study analyzes and explores gender disparities in well-being. There are two disconcerting contradictions that we aimed to investigate: why they exist, whether they persist in different countries, and what really drives them,” says Caspar Kaiser, a researcher at the University of Oxford and the study’s author, in an email response.



10/03/25

Healthcare salaries fail to keep up with workers’ commitment

More broadly, De Neve points out that structural aspects of the workplace tend to be more important drivers of wellbeing than interventions offered to individual staff. As he argues in his latest book (co-authored with colleague George Ward) *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters*, overall “the majority of people are not happy at work”.

“The main drivers of low or high wellbeing are the structural environment more than the individuals themselves,” De Neve adds. Based on detailed research primarily focused on employers in the US, he says the main drivers of satisfaction are job security; relationships and a feeling of belonging; and independence and flexibility. Less important overall are earnings and safety in the workplace.



17/03/25

Young Americans lose trust in the state

Young Americans’ confidence in the apparatus of government has dropped dramatically to one of the lowest levels in any prosperous country, a Financial Times analysis of Gallup data shows.

The Gallup polls, conducted by surveying 70,000 people globally over the course of 2023 and 2024, found that less than a third of under-30s in the US trust the government. The proportion of US young people who said they lack freedom to choose what to do with their lives also hit a record high at 31 per cent in 2024 — a level worse than all other rich economies, bar Greece and Italy.



18/03/25

Work Culture in an Era of Mass Layoffs

According to Jan-Emmanuel De Neve and George Ward, authors of a new book called *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters: The Science Behind Employee Happiness and Organizational Performance*, workplace wellbeing is not just about free lunchtime yoga classes and ping pong tables in the breakroom. And while flextime and remote work have a positive impact on employees’ ability to juggle professional and personal responsibilities, it is the way we view our work that has the most influence on our wellbeing.



20/03/25

Americans Are Unhappier Than Ever, Says World Happiness Report

Every year, the World Happiness Report researches and publishes data on global well-being, including information on how to improve it as a collective. Through the Gallup World Poll, the organization asks some 100,000 people in 140 different countries and territories about their own lives to gauge the overall contentment of each nation.



20/03/25

Finland ranked happiest country in the world. The U.S. falls to its lowest-ever position

Finland is the happiest country in the world for the eighth year in a row, according to the World Happiness Report 2025 published Thursday.

Other Nordic countries are also once again at the top of the happiness rankings in the annual report published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford. Besides Finland, Denmark, Iceland and Sweden remain the top four and in the same order.



20/03/25

Americans Are Unhappier Than Ever. Solo Dining May Be a Sign.

Americans are making too many solo dinner reservations.

That was one takeaway from the annual World Happiness Report, which was released on Thursday and showed that the United States had dipped to its lowest slot in the country rankings – 24th – after being ranked as high as 11th in 2012, the first year of the report.

Americans are increasingly miserable, the report says, and it explored a possible indicator: The number of Americans eating alone has risen exponentially this century.



20/03/25

Why Eating Alone is so Bad for You

It's the International Day of Happiness! It's a chance to talk about happiness and what we can all do to be happier. March 20th also sees the release of the World Happiness Report. A big finding of 2025's report is that more of us are dining alone – and that's bad news.

The report's editor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve talks us through the stark figures showing that shared meals are in decline – while Dr Anne Fishel of The Family Dinner Project gives us her tips on how to dine better with friends, families and colleagues.



20/03/25

The US dropped to its lowest-ever ranking in the global list of happiest countries to live

The US ranked 24th in the 2025 World Happiness Report, its lowest place since the list began.

The report said its decline is due to factors like eating alone and rising 'deaths of despair.'

Finland topped the list for the 8th year running, with a strong showing for other European nations.



20/03/25

Feeling bummed? You're not alone as the U.S. drops to a record low in the World Happiness Report

Despite sharing a border with an at-war Russia and receiving limited winter sunlight, the Nordic nation has been ranked the world's happiest country for the eighth year in a row. Americans, meanwhile, seem to get more unhappy with each passing year.



20/03/25

Nordic countries dominate world happiness rankings (again)

Nordic countries continue to lead in the ranking of the world's happiest nations, with Finland taking the top spot, followed by Denmark, Iceland and Sweden, according to the 2025 World Happiness Report published Thursday.

Finland has held the top rank for eight years in a row.

At the other end of the spectrum, Afghanistan ranks as the least happy among 147 countries, following Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lebanon and Sierra Leone.



20/03/25

Finland is world's 'happiest' for an eighth straight year: UN

Finland once again tops the World Happiness Report which was released on Thursday and measures social support, income, health, freedom, generosity and the absence of corruption to determine a country's national happiness.



20/03/25

Americans under 30 are so miserable that the U.S. just fell to a historic low ranking in the annual World Happiness Report

The United States has a happiness problem.

In the World Happiness Report's annual ranking of the happiest countries, the U.S. dropped to no.24, its lowest position in the list's 13-year history. Last year, the U.S. dropped out of the top 20 for the first time. The list is compiled from analysis of how a representative sample of residents from over 140 countries rate their quality of life.

"That gradual decline in well-being in the United States is, if you start digging into it, especially driven by people that are below 30," Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics at the University of Oxford, leader of the Wellbeing Research Center and editor of The World Happiness Report, tells Fortune. "Life satisfaction of young people in the U.S. has declined."



20/03/25

Americans' increasing antisocial habits, explained in one chart

"The extent to which one shares meals," says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, a professor of economics and behavioral science at the University of Oxford and co-editor of the World Happiness Report, "is an extraordinary proxy for measuring people's social connections and their social capital. It underpins people's social support. It drives prosocial behaviors, and all of that, in turn, leads it to be a very strong indicator — predictor — for people's life satisfaction."



20/03/25

US drops to record low in 2025 World Happiness Report

The United States is continuing its downward path on the global World Happiness Report, having dropped to a record low on the global rankings list.



20/03/25

2025 World Happiness Report shows U.S. in lowest-ever spot on list

The United States this year fell to its lowest-ever place on the World Happiness Report, which highlights the positive effects benevolence and social connections have on people's life satisfaction.

Finland remained the happiest nation for the eighth year in a row, while Mexico and Costa Rico ranked among the top 10 for the first time since the report was first published in 2012.

This year's report, which was released Wednesday by Gallup and its partners, ranks 147 countries by their happiness levels — based on a population's average assessment of their quality of life from 2022 to 2024.

Researchers found that the belief in the kindness of others, as well as actively caring about and sharing with others, has strong effects on happiness, according to the report.



20/03/25

These are the world's happiest countries in 2025

The world's happiest country has managed to keep its No. 1 ranking for eight years running. The picture in the United States isn't so rosy.

While Finland once again tops the World Happiness Report's rankings, the United States — at No. 24 — earned its lowest ranking yet in the 2025 report. The 13th edition of the annual report marks the United Nations International Day of Happiness on March 20.

In the United States and parts of Europe, declining happiness and social trust have contributed significantly to the rise of political polarization and votes against "the system," the report finds.

But in brighter news, global research shows that people are much kinder than we expect.



20/03/25

Where Does The UK Rank In Happiness? This Report Paints A Grim Picture

The report found that, despite the UK being the sixth richest nation in the world, we have fallen to 23rd place in global rankings. The US has also fallen to its lowest position, now sitting at 24th place.

Meanwhile, Finland is reportedly the happiest place in the world for the eighth year in a row.



20/03/25

New report shows Australia slide down rankings of the world's happiest nations – while one unassuming country takes the crown

Australia is no longer one of the top 10 happiest countries in the world according to a new global study.

The University of Oxford released its latest Global Happiness Ranking report on Thursday.

Finland clinched the top spot for the eighth year running, while Australia landed at number 11, slipping one spot from number 10 in 2024.



20/03/25

Finland again tops global happiness rankings, US falls to lowest position ever

Finland is ranked the happiest country in the world for the eighth year in a row, according to the World Happiness Report 2025 published Thursday.

Other Nordic countries are also once again at the top of the happiness rankings in the annual report published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford. Besides Finland, Denmark, Iceland and Sweden



20/03/25

remain the top four and in the same order.

Country rankings were based on answers people give when asked to rate their own lives. The study was done in partnership with the analytics firm Gallup and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Happiest country in the world revealed – and one where a stranger's most likely to return a lost wallet

Strangers are about twice as kind as people think, according to a UN-backed report on global happiness.

Researchers for the World Happiness Report used lost wallets as an experiment to measure people's expectations versus reality when it came to the kindness of strangers.

They found that people returned lost wallets at double the rate members of the public thought they would.

Believing in the kindness of strangers also had a much bigger impact on happiness than previously thought.

It even had a bigger impact on happiness than actual or expected harm.



20/03/25

Why happiness matters for democracy

Rising prices are just one of the reasons why young Americans like Joana are increasingly dissatisfied – alongside wars, political polarization, loneliness and unemployment.

According to this year's World Happiness Report, young adulthood – a phase once considered one of the happiest in life – has taken a "troubling turn." Young people in Western Europe and North America now report "the lowest well-being among all age groups," the report states.

Released yearly on March 20 to mark the United Nations' International Day of Happiness, the World Happiness Report is a worldwide survey that ranks countries according to the level of satisfaction of their population.



20/03/25

Lessons from the happiest countries in the world

For a country known for long winters and high taxes, Finland appears remarkably chipper. On March 20th it came top of the World Happiness Report, an annual UN-backed study, notching its eighth consecutive win ahead of 146 other countries. Not far behind it were Denmark, Iceland and Sweden. What makes the Nordics so happy?



20/03/25

Why sharing meals can make people happier – what evidence from 142 countries shows

But how important is eating together to our happiness? This is the question that I and my co-authors answer in the World Happiness Report 2025. In our new data and analysis we looked at the link between how often people share meals and whether they feel good about their lives and experience positive emotions. We also documented that there was a massive difference between countries and regions when it came to how often people shared meals.



20/03/25

These are the world's happiest countries in 2025

Finland is named the happiest country in the world for the eighth year in a row, according to the World Happiness Report 2025 published Thursday.

Other Nordic countries are also once again at the top of the happiness rankings in the annual report published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford. Besides Finland, Denmark, Iceland and Sweden remain the top four and in the same order.

Country rankings were based on answers people give when asked to rate their own lives. The study was done in partnership with the analytics firm Gallup and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.



20/03/25

Come dine with me – research suggests sharing meals linked to happiness

People who share meals with others have higher levels of life satisfaction than those who dine alone, according to research.

In the UK, people on average dine with others for seven of their meals each week – four dinners and three lunches, data suggested.

Researchers said the data on meal sharing had been “collected and analysed at a global scale” and remarked that their findings were surprising in the “strength of the connection of meal sharing with positive life evaluations and emotions”.

The research was carried out as part of the The World Happiness Report published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford.



20/03/25

Finland named as happiest country for eighth year

Strangers are about twice as kind as people think, a study looking at happiness across the globe suggests.

This year's World Happiness Report – released on Thursday – measured trust in strangers by deliberately losing wallets, seeing how many were returned and comparing that with how many people thought would be handed in.



20/03/25

Covid 'benevolence bump' endures as acts of kindness 10% higher than before 2020

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, the director of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre and an editor of the World Happiness Report, said: “This year's report pushes us to look beyond traditional determinants like health and wealth.

“It turns out that sharing meals and trusting others are even stronger predictors of wellbeing than expected. In this era of social isolation and political polarisation

we need to find ways to bring people around the table again – doing so is critical for our individual and collective wellbeing.”



21/03/25

Feeling a bit down under: Australia drops out of world's top 10 happiest countries

Australians are no longer happy little Vegemites, according to new research.

The latest World Happiness Report shows Australia has failed to make the top 10 world's happiest countries list.

After just scraping into the top tier in 2024, the report now ranks Australia at 11th, with New Zealand just behind in 12th spot.

Nordic countries continue to lead the rankings, with Finland, Denmark and Iceland listed as the top three happiest nations.



21/03/25

Business books: what to read this month

The growth and extent of workplace interventions claiming to improve employee health – from mindfulness to yoga – is enough to cause any manager a headache. But while the costs and the uptake of programmes have surged, the evidence for their effectiveness has not.

The authors, two Oxford-based academics, guide readers through confusion over definitions, data, causes and outcomes in a field that remains poorly researched, and overcrowded with assertions that are far from rigorous.

They have done some of the best analysis in the field seeking to understand the drivers of wellbeing, and its links to productivity. Pay and flexibility in employee location are important, according to this book. But the writers also suggest a sense of belonging, the ability to achieve goals, and genuine trust between colleagues, are even more effective in keeping us happy at work.



22/03/25

'Wellbeing' isn't a joke – it's a tool for tackling populism

Last week's International Day of Happiness lives on. Not so much in the US, where the chaotic uncertainty engineered by Donald Trump and his Project 2025 supporters is creating misery, and not just for the public servants fired or suspended from their jobs.

It might also be difficult to see how the goal of happiness is rated in Whitehall when the UK sits only one place above the US in the United Nations' annual world happiness index. The UK slipped from the 20th most happy country to 23rd in this year's index, while the US dropped one position to 24th, both well behind the Nordic countries, which lead the world, and many others including Mexico, Australia and Belgium.



23/03/25

'Wonderful teenagers helped my son on Halloween': Readers recall kindness of strangers

Readers have told the BBC about strangers' random acts of kindness, following research that found people underestimated the good intentions of others.

In an experiment by the University of British Columbia, researchers deliberately lost wallets to see how many would be returned. Almost twice as many were handed in than was predicted by people who had been surveyed for the World Happiness Report.



24/03/25

Have You Got Trust Issues?

Do you trust your government? Do you trust your neighbors or the strangers you meet on the street? Do you trust the media? Or your teachers? Who we trust is changing. And trust in our institutions and our fellow citizens is in steep decline. That's according to the World Happiness Report. Who we trust can have a huge impact on our behavior and our happiness.

So what's behind the dramatic changes in how we trust? And can we learn to trust in a smarter way?

The
New York
Times

31/03/25

Finland Says It Can Teach Tourists to Be Happy. Challenge Accepted.

I had come to Finland to see whether I could bring happiness back to America with me. Finland has topped the World Happiness Report for the past eight years, a merit largely attributed to the Nordic welfare state, trust in the government, and public policies like free education and universal health care. Under these criteria, living in the United States (No. 24 on the list) is practically a recipe for misery. But the Finns also find contentment in more attainable ways, such as their close relationship with nature (74 percent of the country is covered by forest) and visiting the sauna daily (there are three million saunas for a population of 5.5 million).

salon

14/04/25

America's happiness crisis is a generational divide

Jan-Emmanuel De Neve also provides some hope in this global era of crisis, great anxiety and dread. He explains that the 2025 World Happiness Survey shows that people across the world are generally much kinder and caring than is commonly believed.

FORTUNE

14/04/25

Volunteer days are vital to employees' wellbeing...and your business—this CEO explains why

And this isn't just anecdotal evidence. According to a University of Oxford study, volunteering is the only workplace wellness offering that has a positive effect on employees' well-being.

"My study analyzed data from about 50,000 employees from over 250 companies in the U.K. Volunteering was the only one of these interventions which showed...improved well-being," says study author William Fleming, a sociologist and research fellow at the University of Oxford.

BBC
TRAVEL

17/04/25

What it's like to live in the happiest country on Earth

Finns tend to accept the accolade of supreme happiness, bestowed on them by the World Happiness Report in March 2025 for the eighth time in a row, with a collective shrug and eye roll. But Finnish travel operators are celebrating as travellers increasingly make the connection between Finland and happiness, hoping to come and experience that Finnish brand of happiness for themselves.

GG Greater Good
SC Science Center

18/04/25

Why Is Social Connection So Hard for Young Adults?

Social connectedness is vital to well-being, but members of Gen Z are hesitant about interacting with one another in today's online and polarized world, says Stanford psychologist Jamil Zaki. That disconnection comes at a cost: Young adults increasingly report lower levels of happiness than middle-aged and older adults.

Zaki and Rui Pei, a postdoctoral scholar in his lab, recently coauthored a chapter on the importance of social connection to the mental health of young people in the 2025 World Happiness Report. Zaki is also the author of *Hope for Cynics: The Surprising Science of Human Goodness*.

The
Guardian

18/04/25

Trump is creating a selfish, miserable world. Here's what we can do

But what should you do if you don't like the way the world is going? Is there anything you can do?

The obvious answer is to rage, doomscroll and hope for the next election. But the obvious answer is no longer an option once we realize the antidote to Trump is to build a happier, higher trust society. Drawing on my

dual experience as a moral philosopher and happiness researcher, I'd like to suggest some alternative ways you can fight back.



27/04/25

Eating lunch and dinner with others brings an 'uptick in life satisfaction'—here's how many meals you should share each week

In Senegal, out of 14 lunches and dinners per week, people share 11.7 meals, according to the 2025 World Happiness Report. In Sweden, people share 9.5 meals per week, in the U.S. people share 7.9 meals per week and in Japan, people share 3.7 meals per week.

And it turns out the number of meals you eat with others has an effect on your overall wellbeing. In fact, "there's an optimal level of social eating," says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, editor of the report and director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford.



28/04/25

How companies can improve workplace wellbeing in the Intelligent Age – and why it matters

The world of work for many people in 2025 "isn't necessarily a positive place," says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve.

Five years after the COVID pandemic increased the focus on mental health and wellbeing at work, "the pendulum is swinging back" to a pre-COVID era, the Oxford Professor of Economics and Behavioural Science believes, with a shift away from the human case for investing in workplace wellbeing.



30/04/25

36-year-old happiness researcher shares what it means—and what it takes—to be happy: 'Don't just worry about yourself'

At just 16, Michael Plant became interested in what people could do to maximize happiness, so he started studying philosophy.

Two decades later, Plant, 36, is a global happiness researcher at the Happier Lives Institute. As the founder and research director of HLI and a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, which publishes the annual World Happiness Report, Plant knows a lot about what makes people happier.

Happiness, Plant says, is "the experience of feeling good overall. I think it's that simple."

Here's what he does every day to maximize his own happiness and overall wellbeing. Plus, his biggest takeaways from the research he's conducted about what it means to be happy — and what it takes.



03/05/25

Welcome to the 'antisocial century': Are we lonelier now than ever?

It's not a decision without consequences. For Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and well-being at the University of Oxford and one of the index's editors, "there is a very direct correlation between loneliness and unhappiness." Furthermore, self-imposed loneliness, no matter how much it may seem to respond to an individual or generational trend and, therefore, may seem "short-term satisfying," is a source of emotional imbalance and loss of well-being.

The happiest countries in the world, according to De Neve, continue to be Finland, Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden. That is, precisely those where, among many other factors, the loneliness epidemic seems to have progressed the least in recent years.



19/05/25

Money Can Buy Happiness – This Oxford Philosopher Says Charities Should Pay Attention

Foundations and nonprofits measure impact and effectiveness in various ways, but happiness per dollar isn't typically one of the metrics used.

Maybe it should be.

That's the argument being put forth by Michael Plant, founder and research director of Happier Lives Institute (HLI), a nonprofit that promises to help donors "convert your cash into a happiness multiplier." It does this by identifying the most cost effective charities – as measured by their ability to increase the happiness and wellbeing of those they reach.



20/05/25

Are young people today really the saddest generation of the modern era?

One of those studies is the World Happiness Report, produced by a team that includes Prof Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, the director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford. He agrees with Prof Duffy. Across the western world, the happiness benefit that comes with youth "has really disappeared in today's generation," he says. The extent of the change is the most obvious in children currently at school, where "that first leg of the U-curve where people report being happiest in their teens is literally gone". People in their 20s, meanwhile, are "living their midlife crises right now". Someone my age is about as happy as the average 45-year-old was in the year 2000, Prof De Neve estimates.



29/05/25

Author Talks: Are your employees happy at work?

In this edition of Author Talks, McKinsey's Vanessa Burke chats with Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, about *Why Workplace Wellbeing Matters: The Science Behind Employee Happiness and Organizational Performance* (Harvard Business Review Press, Spring 2025), coauthored with INSEAD assistant professor George Ward. De Neve shares data analysis on the feelings and motivations of millions of job seekers and identifies key drivers that influence their workplace well-being. He explains why workplace well-being varies across companies and provides evidence-based ideas for business leaders who seek to improve productivity, recruitment, and retention.

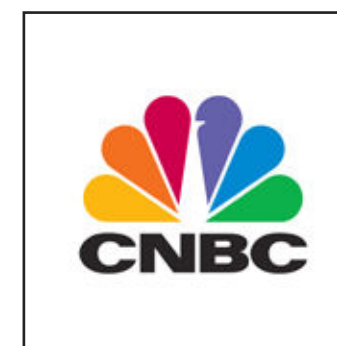


29/05/25

Acts of kindness can make you happier and healthier, researchers say

"People consistently and universally underestimate the kindness of others," says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, editor of the report and director of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford. But the truth is, it happens more often than people realize.

"In the United States, only 30% of people think the wallet will be returned when lost," says De Neve. "The reality is about 60% of wallets get returned when lost."



14/07/25

25% of young Americans aged 18 to 24 eat every meal alone

Americans are not eating enough meals together. According to the 2025 World Happiness Report, the optimal number of weekly lunches and dinners eaten with others is 13. And in the United States, people only share 7.9 of those meals together every week.

The picture is even more dire for young Americans. Researchers looked at data from the American Time

Use Survey, “which has a measure for the extent to which people shared meals the previous day,” says Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, professor of economics and behavioral science at the University of Oxford and editor of the report. They found that in 2023, 25% of 18-to 24-year-olds ate all three meals alone the previous day.



25/07/25

Why are young adults in the English-speaking world so unhappy?

One of the most striking but under-discussed insights from this year’s World Happiness Report was that the marked worsening in young adult mental health over the past decade is primarily, if not exclusively, an Anglosphere phenomenon.

The share of young adults regularly experiencing stress and anger has risen sharply over the past 15 years in the US, Canada, UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. But it has been largely stable elsewhere in the west, according to detailed data from the Gallup World Poll used in the report.



11/08/25

No one has office friends anymore. Why that’s bad news for employers

The impact of lost workplace friendships is often underestimated—especially in discussions about employee turnover. While it’s commonly believed that people mostly quit jobs in response to poor managers, Oxford professor Jan-Emmanuel De Neve has found that workers quit not because of leadership alone, but because they lack a sense of belonging with their teams. This reframes the issue: workplace friendships aren’t just about socializing—they’re critical for retention and sustainable business success.



27/08/25

The Happiest Place on Earth

Shortly after I got home, I took a cramped and overpriced train up to Oxford, where the data scientists behind the World Happiness Report work. There, I met Jan-Emmanuel de Neve, a professor at Oxford University’s Harris Manchester College and expert in what makes life worth living. I felt I had got to the bottom of why Finnish people were happy, but now I wanted to, bluntly, know whether we were all doomed never to be as happy as our friends in the Nordics.



12/09/25

How to keep humans at the centre of NHS digital transformation

For several years, digital transformation has been promised as a solution to the rising pressures on the UK’s health service. Digital as the default delivery method is believed to be the solution to speeding up access to care, freeing up physical access for those most in need, and meeting financial pressures. And it’s not just the UK; globally, health leaders are advocating and driving the digitisation of care.

Yet for digital transformation to be successful, research persistently shows that service users must be central to the development and roll-out of digital solutions. To include service users, novel techniques are required. That’s where Human-Centred Design comes in.



Digital Channels

The Wellbeing Research Centre continues to develop 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 grown a wide-ranging following of scholars, intellectuals, policymakers and interested members of the public, and have further expanded our social following over the past 12 months.

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

18,000+ social audience
▲30%

116,000+ website visits
▲10%

340,000+ social views
▲3.5%

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.

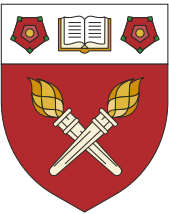
The Wellbeing Research Centre is proud to be a founding member of the World Wellbeing Movement.





Cover Image © Copyright Fisher Studios

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



**Harris
Manchester
College**
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

