

World Happiness Report

2015 to 2019

How do they measure happiness?

Cantril life ladder

Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.

On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?

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Source: **BRICOMARCHÉ**

Factors of happiness



Gross Domestic Product
per capita



Health



Freedom



Social Support



Corruption



Generosity

GDP per capita



GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) at constant international dollar prices

Source: World Development Indicators

Vargas Sepulveda M (2025). wbstats: Programmatic Access to the World Bank API. Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Vargas Sepulveda, Mauricio (2025). <https://doi.org/10.11578/dc.20171025.1827>

Health



Healthy life expectancies at birth.

Source: World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/gho-ghe-hale-healthy-life-expectancy-at-birth>



Freedom

Freedom to make life choices is the national average of responses to the Gallup World Poll question “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?”

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Generosity



Generosity is the residual of regressing national average of response to the GWP question “Have you donated money to a charity in the past month?” on GDP per capita.

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Social Support



Social support (or having someone to count on in times of trouble) is the national average of the binary responses (either 0 or 1) to the Gallup World Poll question “If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?”

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Corruption

Corruption Perception: The measure is the national average of the survey responses to two questions in the GWP: “Is corruption widespread throughout the government or not” and “Is corruption widespread within businesses or not?”

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OK, but where does our data come from?

“

What do the columns succeeding the Happiness Score (like Family, Generosity, etc.) describe?

kaggle

The following columns: GDP per Capita, Family, Life Expectancy, Freedom, Generosity, Trust Government Corruption describe the extent to which these factors contribute in evaluating the happiness in each country.

The Dystopia Residual metric actually is the Dystopia Happiness Score(1.85) + the Residual value or the unexplained value for each country as stated in the previous answer.

If you add all these factors up, you get the happiness score so it might be unreliable to model them to predict Happiness Scores.

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<https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/unsdsn/world-happiness/data>

The painfully difficult to obtain raw data

Factor	Source	Description
Corruption	World Bank	Control of Corruption captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests.
Freedom	World Bank	Voice and Accountability captures perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.
Social Support	World Values Survey	Answer to "Most people can be trusted."
Generosity	World Values Survey	Answer to "Member: Humanitarian or charitable organization."

<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSEVSjoint2017.jsp>

What is available for you to analyze

- happiness_long.csv
- happiness_wide.csv
- happiness_raw.csv

Happiness in long format

Variable name	Description
country	Name of country
region	Region
year	Year (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 ,or 2019)
happiness	Happiness score
gdp	GDP per capita in PPP (contribution to happiness)
health	Healthy life expectancy (contribution to happiness)
freedom	Freedom to take a decision (contribution to happiness)
generosity	Generosity (charitability ?) (contribution to happiness)
social	Social support (contribution to happiness)
corruption	Corruption (contribution to happiness)

Happiness in wide format

Variable name	Description
country	Name of country
region	Region
happiness_2015	Happiness score in 2015
...	
happiness_2019	Happiness score in 2019
gdp_2015	GDP in 2015
...	...
gdp_2019	GDP in 2019
health_2015	Healthy life expectancy in 2015
...	...
health_2019	Healthy life expectancy in 2019
...	...

Happiness in long format

Variable name	Description
country	Name of country
region	Region
happiness	Happiness score
gdp	GDP per capita in PPP
health	Healthy life expectancy
freedom	Freedom to take a decision
generosity	Generosity (charitability ?)
social	Social support
corruption	Corruption

Some references to better
understand the data

Article | [Open access](#) | Published: 01 February 2024

The Cantril Ladder elicits thoughts about power and wealth

[August Håkan Nilsson](#) [✉](#), [Johannes C. Eichstaedt](#), [Tim Lomas](#), [Andrew Schwartz](#) & [Oscar Kjell](#)

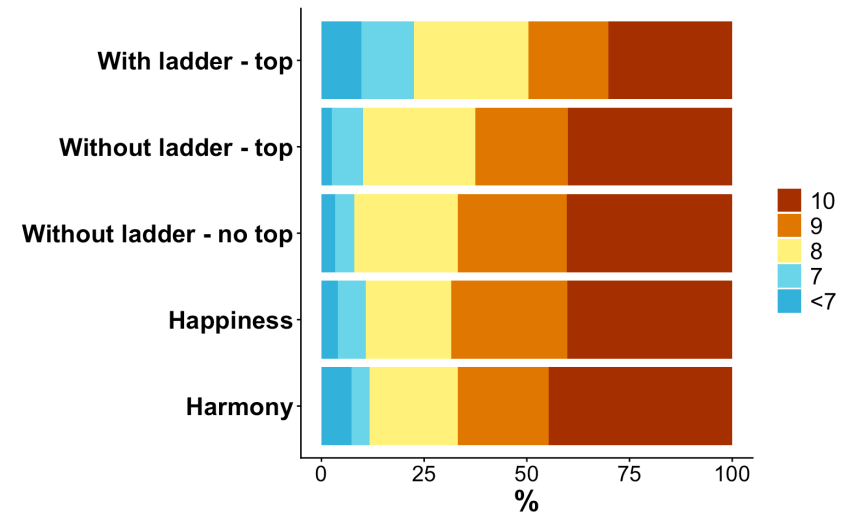
[Scientific Reports](#) **14**, Article number: 2642 (2024) | [Cite this article](#)

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“

The Cantril Ladder is arguably the most prominent measure of well-being, but the results suggest caution in its interpretation—the Cantril Ladder’s structure appears to influence participants to attend to a more power- and wealth-oriented view of well-being.

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<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-52939-y>

YASCHA MOUNK

The World Happiness Report Is a Sham

A case study in elite misinformation.



YASCHA MOUNK

MAR 20, 2025

<https://www.persuasion.community/p/the-world-happiness-report-is-a-sham>