Average happiness in 68 nations in the 1990s

How much people enjoy their life-as-a-whole

Top/bottom	Full list	Technical details	Cite as

Top/bottom 5

Top[6] > 7,7		Middle range ± 6,0		Bottom <4,0	
Switzerland	8,1	Bolivia	6,2	Russia	4,2
Denmark	8,0	Poland	6,2	Georgia	4,1
Iceland	7,8	Bangladesh	6,0	Armenia	3,7
Luxembourg	7,8	Turkey	5,9	Ukraine	3,3
Canada	7,7	South Africa	5,7	Moldavia	3,0

Full list, alphabetic

nation	Satisfaction with life[1] (scale 0 - 1)
Argentina[4]	6,8
Armenia	3,7
Australia	7,3
Austria	6,1
Azerbaijan	4,9
Bangladesh[4]	6,0
Belarus	4,4
Belgium	7,3
Bolivia	6,2
Brazil	7,0
Britain	7,2

Bulgaria	4,3
Canada	7,7
Chile[4]	6,9
China[4]	6,7
Colombia[5]	8,1
Costa Rica[5]	7,9
Croatia	5,5
Czecho-Slowakia	5,9
Denmark	8,0
Dominican Republic	6,8
Ecuador	6,4
El Salvador	7,4
Estonia	5,0
Finland	7,5
France	6,4
Georgia	4,1
Germany	6,7
Ghana[4]	7,7
Greece	5,3
Guatemala	7,2
Honduras	7,0
Hungary	5,6
Iceland	7,8
India[4]	6,2
Ireland	7,6
Italy	7,0
Japan	6,3
Kyrgyzstan	4,1
Latvia	4,8
Lithuania	5,0
Luxembourg	7,8
Macedonia	5,2
Mexico	7,3
Moldavia	3,0
Netherlands	7,5
Nicaragua	7,6
Nigeria	6,3[4]
Norway	7,4
Panama	7,1
Paraguay	6,8
Peru	6,0
Philippines	6,5
Poland	6,2
Portugal	6,7
Romania	5,4
Russia	4,2
South-Africa	5,7
South-Korea	6,3

Slovenia	6,0
Spain	6,5
Sweden	7,6
Switzerland	8,1
Turkey	5,9
Ukraine	3,3
Uruguay	6,7
USA	7,4
Venezuela	6,4

Technical details

1. Average enjoyment of life assessed by means of surveys in general public samples. This list is based on responses to questions on life-satisfaction.
   - Most scores are based on responses to the following question:
   "All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life-as-a-whole now? 1 dissatisfied …………………. 10 satisfied".
     - This question is categorized as query type 122C, sub-type O-SLW/c/sq/n/10/aa. This classification is explained in section 4/3 of the introductory text.
     - Scores on this 1-10 scale were transformed linearly to range 0-10. This transformation in explained in the introductory text, chapter 7.3.
   - Scores of most Latin American nations are based on responses to a somewhat different question.
   "In general, would you say that you are satisfied with your life? Would you say that you are…very satisfied (4), quite satisfied (3), satisfied (2) or not very satisfied (1)?"
     - This question is categorized as query type 121B, sub-type O-Slu/c/sq/v/4/b. This classification is explained in section 4/3 of the introductory text.
     - Scores on this 1-4 scale were transformed to range 0-10 by means of expert weighing of response options. This so-called 'Thurstone procedure' is explained in chapter 7 of the introductory text.
     - Since the above 1-10 questions have also been used in five of these Latin American nations, we could check whether this transformation yields comparable results. The transformed scores appeared to be slightly higher and were therefore corrected by subtracting 0,5 point.
   - In Kyrgyzstan life-satisfaction was assessed by a similar question scored on a 5-step scale; sub-type O-SLW/c/sq/v/5/h.
   - If the above questions had been used more than once in this era, the average score is used.

2. This combination of scores on two slightly different questions results in a list of 68 cases. The number of cases is smaller if one restricts to responses on identical questions. Restriction to a common question on 'happiness' (query type 111B) yields 60 cases and limitation to the above 1-10 life-satisfaction item (query type 1222C) 54 cases.

3. On this list the following cases are left out: Puerto Rico (7,9), East Germany (6,3) West Germany (6,9) and Northern Ireland (7,6). These cases are included in the Catalog of Happiness in Nations but are no real 'nations'.

4. Life-satisfaction scores may be inflated in some countries, due to under sampling of rural and illiterate population (Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, China, Ghana, India and Nigeria). This distortion is partly corrected by weighting afterwards, but may still affect the scores. This means that the real differences in life-satisfaction are probably somewhat greater than appears in these data.

5. The high score in Columbia does not correspond with the score on a question about happiness (type 111B). The score in Costa Rica is relatively high for that kind of country and is not yet corroborated in another study.

6. Uncertain cases left out from the top 5: Columbia (8,1) and Costa Rica (7,9) Cf. note 5.

7. The use for these data for estimating livability of nations is discussed in the Introductory Text to this Catalog, chapter 5: 'Validity of happiness as an indicator of livability'.

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