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SUBJECTIVE
WELL-BEING
TRENDS
2015

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TREND 1

HAPPINESS AS A POLITICAL GOAL

“Improving the quality of our lives should be the ultimate target of public policies.”

Angel Gurría, Secretary-General, OECD

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TREND 1 BACKGROUND

The subject of happiness has risen high up the international agenda in recent years. In 2011, the UN adopted a resolution calling for all countries to increase the happiness of their inhabitants and, the following year, the first UN conference on happiness was held, together with its first World Happiness Report.

Today, leaders from around the world are expressing an interest in why some societies are happier than others, and what we can learn from them about how to organise our societies better.

In the USA, the National Academy of Sciences established a panel to examine how happiness measurements can be used in the development of policy. Meanwhile, countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, France and Japan have also taken steps towards incorporating happiness as a parameter for the measurement of progress.

In fact, these ideas are nothing new. Since the beginning of the 1970s, happiness has been used as a measurement for Bhutan's development, and the concept is now enshrined in the country's constitution. The new thing is the attention it is getting around the world.

TREND 2

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

"We will start measuring our progress as a country, not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving. Not just by our standard of living, but by our quality of life."

David Cameron, Prime Minister, UK

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TREND 2 BACKGROUND

Organizations like the UN and the EU are looking for new ways of measuring progress in society, which traditionally has been determined by Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Whereas economically prosperous societies are generally happier than less affluent ones, GDP is not the only significant factor that influences peoples' overall happiness.

The European commission first measured satisfaction with life among Europeans as long ago as 1973. However, we see an explosion in surveys that are trying to capture life satisfaction and happiness. For instance, the OECD has begun to measure satisfaction with life among the populations of its member countries in the Better Life Index. The vast number of data means that, today, sociologists, economists, psychologists and other scientists can compare millions of responses from people all over the world, collected over several decades.

Mayors around the world are also increasingly concerned with measuring what matters. In Denmark the Happiness Research Institute, an independent think tank investigating why some societies are happier than others have mapped the happiness of the residents of the town of Dragør and exploring what the local council can do to increase it.



**Welcome to the world's
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That calls for a **Carlsberg**

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TREND 3

HAPPINESS AS NATION AND CITY BRANDING

TREND 3 BACKGROUND

Countries and cities which consistently rank in the top of the happiness lists now have reasons to be even happier.

There seems to be an additional prize from getting called the worlds happiest country time after time again. It is PR gold.

A small survey conducted among tourist in Copenhagen this summer shower that 7 out of 10 tourists had heard of Denmark's position as one of the happiest countries in the world – before they arrived in the country.

But more interestingly, in that group of tourists, 4 out of 10 said that it had played a part in them choosing Denmark as a destination.

Washington Post Why are the Danes so happy?

The Telegraph Denmark 'the world's happiest country'

The Guardian Copenhagen: The Happy Capital

Washington Times World Happiness Report - You should Live in Denmark

India Times: The Happiest Place in the World

New York Times ...About once a year some new study confirms Denmark's status as a happiness superpower



ABC News: Denmark The happiest place on earth

Huffington Post Denmark has taken the top spot on the United Nation's first ever World Happiness Report

TREND 4

EXPANDING THE NOTION OF HEALTH TO INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH

7 NEW NATIONAL GOALS FOR HEALTH IN DENMARK

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1. Inequality in health must be reduced
 2. More children must thrive and have good mental health
 3. More adults must thrive and have good mental health
 4. More people must choose a smoke-free life
 5. Less people shall have a harmful consumption of alcohol and the debut for alcohol consumption among youth must be later in life
 6. Less children shall suffer from overweight
 7. More people shall be more active on a daily basis

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TREND 4 BACKGROUND

The UN World Health Organization (WHO) considers health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and we are currently experiencing a greater focus on the importance of mental health. “Health” ought to be interpreted in a wider sense of the word, beyond mere “absence of disease” and more than just physical fitness.

This is due, in part, to staggering levels of depression and anxiety globally. According to the World Happiness Report 2013, 400 million people and nearly 300 million people suffer from depression and anxiety respectively, which roughly equates to 7 and 4 % of the world population.

It is obvious that these factors have an enormous toll on individuals and their families. At the same time, it leads to mental health problems and high amounts of public spending.

A public focus on happiness and quality-of-life is part of this widened concept of health. Instead of solely focusing on physical health, says the World Happiness Report, there is a need for "schools and workplaces to be more aware of mental health and to try and improve happiness levels.”

TREND 5

INCREASING FOCUS ON SOCIAL ISOLATION



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TREND 5 BACKGROUND

Social isolation has great personal and emotional costs, while the relationship between loneliness and physical and mental health is well known. Lonely elderly have a greatly increased mortality and studies indicate that loneliness can be a greater health risk than, for example, smoking and leads to increased risk of dementia and depression. It is among the reasons why the World Happiness Report 2013 concludes that the lack of human contact can have clear negative consequences for our health and a focus on job satisfaction could usefully be moving resources from physical to mental health and make use of "social" prescriptions.

At the same time, an individuals' degree of satisfaction with their social relationships is one of the best predictors of their happiness. The most important social relationships are the close relationships where one experiences to be heard, seen and understood where people share thoughts and feelings, and give and receive support.

Should the municipality or the state is now involved in that? No, but local and state government can provide a framework in which relationships can emerge and be strengthened and the quality of civil society are important for our happiness level.

THE HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

WHO WE ARE

The Happiness Research Institute is an independent think tank focusing on life satisfaction, happiness and quality of life.

Our mission is to inform decision makers of the causes and effects of human happiness, make subjective well-being part of the public policy debate, and improve the quality of life for citizens across the world.

WHAT WE DO

We explore why some communities, organizations and people are happier than others. We partner with cities, governments, and foundations to develop customized research, tools and recommendations needed to improve quality of life.

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