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Happiness Alliance  happycounts.org
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4 reasons why happiness matters
1. Happiness is the purpose of life.
2. Happiness is the purpose of government
3. Under every human action is a feeling and we can choose how we act, but not whether or not we have feelings.

4. Happy people (truly happy people) make decisions that harm no beings.
About this report

The Happiness Alliance is a nonprofit providing tools, resources and knowledge for a new economic paradigm – one where happiness matters more than consumption, wealth and financial growth.

Since 2011, the Happiness Alliance has been providing the Happiness Index to anyone who wants to take the survey and get their own personal assessment of their well-being along the domains of well-being at happycounts.org.

Why? Because we believe that change is possible. We believe in grassroots activism. We believe in activism.

The Happiness Index

You can take it.
You can share it.
You can use it.
You are the happiness movement.
About the Happiness Index

The Happiness Index data come from a convenience sampling. This means the data come from people who choose to take the survey and does not represent a random sampling.

Random samplings are important because they yield data that can be relied upon to represent a population. Nevertheless, data from a convenience sampling can point the direction for conversations, questions and research.

The Happiness Alliance provides data (without personal identification information) to researchers and analysts.

You can use the happiness index for your personal life.

You can use the Happiness Index for groups - at work, in class, for your city, and community.

Visit happycounts.org
What the Happiness Index Measures

A comprehensive survey—based measurement of well-being that embraces the complexity of what it means to be happy.
The Domains of Happiness

- Culture
- Education
- Economy
- Environment
- Government
- Health
- Psychological Well-being
- Social Support
- Time Balance
- Work
- Satisfaction with Life
- Affect
- Community
Urban Happiness
Rural Happiness
New Happiness Research: People in the Country are Happier than People in the City

New happiness research by John Helliwell and his colleagues look at the differences between people in the country and people in the city in Canada."

They found that in general, people in rural communities had higher life satisfaction than people in the cities even though incomes were higher and unemployment was lower in the cities.

What made the difference? Well, it's complicated but a few factors may be:

- Sense of belonging to a community
- Lower commute times
- Spending less than 30% of your income on housing
- Smaller population density
- Having a sense of spiritual identification.

Three of these factors have something in common: relationships. People who live in high density are often less likely to know their neighbors, and more likely to define community in terms of interest instead of neighborhood.

Spiritual identification often comes hand in hand with an affiliation with a group, like a church or synagogue, mountaineering or gardening group. Belong to a community is all about relationships with other people.
What does the Happiness Index data indicate for sense of belonging in community, satisfaction with personal relationship and satisfaction with life by zip codes for the USA?
Are people who took the Happiness Index survey in rural areas happier than people in cities?
The Happiness Index data for satisfaction with life by zip codes for the USA show that there are both higher and lower scores in both rural and urban areas. The same is true for satisfaction with personal relationships and sense of belonging.

What does this mean?

Well, for one, the data is gathered through a convenience sampling and often the sample size (number of people who took the survey) is quite small. Thus, we can’t say the data necessarily represents the populations in the zip codes.

However, the data can be used to spur conversations and expand our concept of happiness.

You can see the data maps yourself. Zoom into your area and click on the geographic area. For many areas there is no data. Our goal is to gather as much data as we can over time. You can help by spreading the word about the Happiness Index.
Darker means more satisfied with life

Darker means more satisfied with personal relationships
On satisfaction with personal relationships: A survey taker defines what personal relationships means to them - it can be a partner, pet, friend, child, colleague, neighbor...

How do you define personal relationships?
Four ways to define community are:

**Geography** based such as a neighborhood, city or region

**Interest** based such as hobby, sports, jazz musician...

**Activity** based such as work, team, members of an organization...

**Identity** based on how one defines themselves such as national identity, religion, work type (artist, biologist...)

On sense of belonging to community: A survey taker defines what community means to them.
What does comparing living in rural areas or cities mean to you?

You could interpret this data to say: Move to the Country! You will be happier. But is it realistic for all of us to move to the country? Will there be any habitat left for other animals if we build our houses in fields and hills, prairies and forests? And what about the other environmental impacts of building millions of single family homes in our farmland, our country side and our wilderness?
Isn’t there a better lesson to take away from all this?
What the Country Mouse is telling the City Mouse.*

*reference to an Aesop tale

Or, lessons we can put in play for happiness in urban environments.
Live close to home in all kinds of ways: work close to home, play close to home, relax close to home.

Learn to love and invite diversity into your life - even those whose opinions and values you do not like. Everybody has something about them to love.

Learn to love your neighbor – flip the page for a few ideas...
Happiness science tells us that relationships are key to happiness.* You can be happier, and you can make other people happier with…

50 ways to Love Your Neighbor

50 Ways to Love Your Neighbor is one of the Happiness Alliance’s tools for personal happiness, reprinted here.
Say hello!

When your neighbor walks by, look them in the eye and ask how they are doing.

Trade telephone numbers.

Next time you have a party, invite your neighbor. Invite your neighbor to coffee.

Take a walk in your neighborhood and say “hello neighbor!”

If your neighbor has children, compliment them on their children.

If your neighbor has pets, compliment them on their pets.

Coordinate a neighborhood potluck and…

at the neighborhood potluck, gather emails to share.

Coordinate a neighborhood BBQ.

Go door to door and collect phone numbers &share them.

Collect emails too, and share those.

Start a thread of conversation with your neighbors.

Invite your neighbor to breakfast or dinner.

Have a movie night or watch a game together.

Start a book club with one or two of your neighbors.

If you have children, invite your neighbor to a birthday party.

If you and a neighbor work at home, work together at a café, or work together at home (see how it goes).
If your neighbor talks to you, stop and listen.

Borrow a cup of sugar, then bring a piece of homemade cake.

If your neighbor has children offer to mentor.

Binge watch a shared favorite show.

Get together for a bike tune up day.

Buy yourself some flowers & give your neighbor half.

Bake your neighbors some cookies.

Offer to babysit while they do household chores.

Take a yoga class together.

Share Internet.

Offer to take your neighbor’s dog for a walk.

Offer to let your neighbor take your dog for a walk.

Plant a garden (inside or outside), and share your produce.

Send your neighbor a letter inviting them to coffee or tea.

Coordinate a neighborhood garage sale day

Coordinate a clothes and household items swap day.

For the rest of the 50 Ways to Love Your Neighbor, click here.

And remember: greeting your neighbors with a smile…

…each time you see them goes a long way.
Happiness & Having Children
Does Having Children Make You Happy?
& what is the relationship between the size of a family and satisfaction with life, happiness, sense of purpose, and relationship satisfaction?
Do children make you happy?

Happiness science* says

*See chapter four of the World Happiness Report 2016

NO
But when we ask people to state what makes them happy in one word, the most common answer is: **Family**

In January of 2017, 136 out of 771 people answered Family to the question “in one word, what makes you happy?” The word cloud above compiles the responses. The largest words are the most common answers.
Happiness research tells us having children does make you happier...once they have grown up and left home.
If you have children, you generally are happy that you had them, but raising them is hard on happiness.
First, does the number of children you have make a difference?

Our Data says the optimal number is one or two.

Happiness research* confirms this finding.

At first glance, the Happiness Index data indicates that maybe having more children makes you happier - up to a point.

There is a little dip between having one child and three on average, but averages can be deceiving (as we know too well with average income and GDP).

Married people and people in domestic partnerships are about as happy with one or two children, but their happiness goes down with more children.
Happiness Index data also indicates that people with children in domestic partnerships or marriages are happier than when parents are separated, divorced or never married.
Does this mean you **should** be in a domestic partnership or married if you have children?

**NO**
Why?

Because the Happiness Index data points the way for conversation and inquiry. It is from a convenience sampling, so represents the people who took it, not necessarily you or others.

Because happiness is complicated and as we change, our culture changes and our circumstances change, what some of the factors that make us happy changes.

Because not all domestic partnerships or marriages are good, and not all single, divorced or separated parents are suffering.
Does having more (or less) children give you a stronger sense of purpose? Our data showed relatively small differences except for single parents.

The Happiness Index data says that separated parents are suffering the most and divorced parents are having a hard time too.
What does all this mean?
If there are single parents in your life - a neighbor, a relation, or a colleague - give them a hand.
Offer to help in ways that make you happy.
If you love to cook, offer to bring a home cooked meal once a week.

If you love to read, or are a whiz at science, offer to help with homework or tutor.

Find other ways to do things that bring you joy as a gift of service to the single parent in your life.
Offer to do tasks that you are already doing.
Offer a ride to the grocery shop when you are going anyway, or to pick something up.

Offer to go together if you both use transit.

On garbage pick up day, bring their garbage can to the curb at the same time you bring yours, and put it back in place when you do yours.

If you are mowing the lawn, mow theirs too if its easy enough.

Find other tasks that you don't really enjoy (and most others don't either), but once you muster up the gumption to do them, you may as well do it for two.
If you have children as well, offer to give them a break with a playdate.
If you are on good terms, offer to babysit, and offer to be there for emergencies.
Happiness among Families with Children
What are the differences between work-life balance, feeling loved, access to nature, trust in local government and the ability to make ends meet financially in families with a child in the house ranging between two and six people?
Our purpose is to spark conversation and research into what makes for happiness within a family.

Data can point the way, and so can common sense.

What do you think makes for a happy or unhappy family?
What is the connection between family size and love?
Families are complicated.

This is a hard question, but one worth investigating at a personal and societal level.
With the Happiness Index, ask the question: **Do you feel loved?** A higher score means one feels more loved, a low score means they do not feel loved. Our data says that when a person lives in a family of three or four and six, they feel more loved. As with all the questions, satisfaction with life peaks at families of four.
Orange line for satisfaction with life. Red bars for feeling loved.
The Happiness Index data indicates there is little difference in sense of access to nature for people with large or small families. People in slightly larger families have slightly higher sense of access to nature.
Orange line for satisfaction with life.
Green bars for satisfaction with access to nature.
Why do people with slightly larger families have a bit more access to nature?

Our data sampling is quite small (only 337 people with families of 5 or 6 people), but it might be worth investigating the question of:
Does family size have an impact on people’s sense of access to nature?

If so, how? Moreover, does a family member's sense of their access to nature make them happier or not?
It seems like people with larger families would have less work-life balance than those without families, doesn't it?

Maybe not.

Our data does not point to this conclusion. It would be interesting to find out what other factors besides family size and work conditions are driving work-life balance in people's lives, and how to find a balance that leads to greater happiness.

Do you feel like you have a good work-life balance, and if so, what do you do to maintain it?
Orange line for satisfaction with life.
Purple bars for work life balance.
Do people with larger families have greater trust in government?

It appears there is little difference.
Orange line for satisfaction with life. Yellow bars for trust in local government.
One of the reasons researchers* think people in the northern European countries consistently come out on the top of happiness indices is because their governments provide strong safety nets (i.e. health care, education, job placement, housing...).

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If people trust their local government, do they become more engaged in their government?

If people are more engaged, does government do more to foster strong safety nets?

What is your experience?
The data for getting by financially and satisfaction with life fit closely.
Orange line for satisfaction with life.
Blue bars for getting by financially.
What are some ways to get by financially that do not involve increasing one's income.

This may be one of the crux conversations facing us today.
Eat beans!

Stay home and play games with friends!

Shop at thrift stores!

Share!
What are some ways that you manage to get by financially without increasing your income?
There are lots of challenges in life,

...and in families.
The Family Happiness Handbook is inspired by the difficulties we all face in families.
Download the Family Happiness Handbook (click here).
About the Data
The Happiness Index data comes from a convenience sampling, and not from a random sampling. Some of the data records for the populations are so small they should be considered only as food for thought, launching points for inquiry, and calls for more investigation.*

We only have one record for families of 6 with children where the survey taker is separated, but 61 for survey takes who are married. There are 606 survey takers with families of four, and 467 with families of three.
Convenience samplings represent the feelings of the people who took the survey. Convenience sampling may or may not represent the general population. One way to test is to compare to data for the same or very similar question to see if the scores are similar.
Data for happiness among families comes from households that have children and are between two and six in a household for all family types, from single parents to domestic partnerships and married people. You can see that 606 people who took the survey had children in a household of four people, but only 167 and 102 people who took the survey had children in a household of two and six people, respectively.
Sample size is important.

Random sampling as opposed to convenience sampling is important.

But it’s not everything.
The Happiness Index data does represent the happiness of the people who took the survey.

Many of our data findings are confirmed by happiness research findings based on random samples.

The Happiness Index data opens the door to important conversations.
Digging into data can be helpful to understand the directions it points to but also to reflect on and...
....see what feelings and thoughts come up for you.
Our mission is to awaken happiness in all beings.