

## Happy Me! Happy You?

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Happiness is a condition of the brain as opposed to being cold or hungry, those are conditions of the body. There is no such thing as objective happiness since all of us have different lives and various experiences and, as a result, a different outlook on life. However, the congregation of people who are happy or unhappy can impact a population's general outlook.

According to the Gallup World Poll for the World Happiness Report of 2024, the U.S. ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> among the top 25 countries measured by overall happiness. This is a decline from 15<sup>th</sup> place only one year ago! The top-ranked country in this study is Finland, while the 25<sup>th</sup>-ranked country is Mexico. Our other neighbor, Canada, is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> (Note that the rankings are based on a three-year average {2021-2023} of each population's average assessment of their quality of life).

The study also zeroes in on where the changes in happiness have taken place by age group. Specifically, the two groups in this study are individuals under the age of 30 or over the age of 60. Leaving out all those people between the ages of 30 and 60 makes these rankings questionable at best. However, the disparate results of these studies could have economic repercussions.

Looking at this same ranking sample for these two groups gives us a little more information about what might be happening. (The lower the number the higher the ranking.) In the U.S., the under-age-30 group's happiness ranking was 62<sup>nd</sup> while those over age 60 had a ranking of 10<sup>th</sup>. There is a myriad of reasons for this wide disparity, and we are the last observers to attempt to explain such a difference. The under 30 (Generation Z ages 12 to 27) is another way to dig a little deeper into why this age group is relatively unhappy.

Contrast this disparity with the country that has the #1 ranking for happiness for the under 30 group, Lithuania but gets a 44 ranking for those over age 60! One factor might be the impact of the pandemic on this group which could have been hard hit by the government's shutdown of the economy and the loss of jobs, requirements to wear masks, and other government mandates. The real challenge, especially for our government, is to ascertain how long this unhappiness will last.

Will these feelings play out in the determination of our upcoming election? According to a WSJ article about this study, one reason for this feeling of unhappiness is related to loneliness, a factor that has been accentuated by technology and changing social norms. Declining educational accomplishments and less pressure to be successful could be another couple of reasons. The folks over 60 are reflecting on the lives that they have led and the positive experiences over a lifetime. In the article, one over 60 couple looked back upon their life as a vacation. Now that's a positive attitude!