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Gallup Global Emotions 2016

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The Happiest People in the World?

March 20 is International Happiness Day, which means everyone will be talking about who the happiest people in the world are. Most will say citizens of Denmark or Switzerland are because of a famous *World Happiness Report* the United Nations releases. Others, perhaps citing our report, will conclude that Latin Americans are the happiest people in the world. Who is right?

This answer depends on how you define happiness. If you think happiness is how you see your life or, in survey speak, how you rate your life today on a scale of zero to 10 (with zero being the worst possible life and 10 being the best possible life), then the Danes and Swiss are the happiest people in the world. If you think happiness is how you experience your life through laughing, smiling and enjoyment, then Latin Americans are the happiest.

If the difference is that simple, why are there two measures in the first place? It's because the concepts measure two very different aspects of someone's life: how they *see* their life and how they *live* their life. For example, if you take two women in the U.S. — one with a child and one without a child -- who rates her life better? Statistically, the woman with a child does. But which one experiences more stress? Also the woman with the child. So the woman with the child may see her life better than the one without a child, but the woman with the child also lives with more stress.

The drivers of both elements are also very different. For example, the single biggest driver of life evaluation is money. In fact, the more money you make, the higher you rate your life. But money doesn't have the same effect on how you live your life. For example, in the U.S., after reaching an annual income of \$75,000, money makes almost no difference in how someone lives his or her life. Some of the biggest drivers of how you live your life include social support, generosity and freedom.

If on International Happiness Day you're wondering who the happiest people in the world are, ask yourself whether you think happiness is how people see their life or if it's how people live their life. If it's the former, the results are predictable — the wealthiest countries in the world top the list. If you think happiness is not so dependent on money and is based more on how much people report enjoyment, laughing and smiling — then look no further than this report.

This year's *Global Emotions Report* focuses on how people *live* their lives. Leaders know that wealth isn't everything — a great society has people who see their lives well and live their lives well. This report shows the countries in which people are living their lives to the fullest.

If you take away anything from the *Global Emotions Report*, it's this: Despite all of the negative things we read, see and hear in the news, the world isn't doing that badly. More than 70% of the world said they smiled or laughed a lot the previous day. Only seven countries had less than a majority of people say the same (including Ukraine, Iraq and Syria). So while we hear so much about the things that aren't going well, 70% of the world is still finding a way to have fun.

Global State of Emotions

GALLUP'S POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE INDEXES measure life's intangibles — feelings and emotions — that traditional economic indicators such as GDP were never intended to capture. Each index provides a real-time snapshot of people's daily experiences, offering leaders insights into the health of their societies that they cannot gather from GDP measures alone.

The Global Emotions 2016 report presents the results from Gallup's latest measurements of people's positive and negative daily experiences, based on nearly **147,000** interviews in 2015 with adults in **140** countries.

Positive Experience Index Questions

- *Did you feel well-rested yesterday?*
- *Were you treated with respect all day yesterday?*
- *Did you smile or laugh a lot yesterday?*
- *Did you learn or do something interesting yesterday?*
- *Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*
How about enjoyment?

The Positive Experience Index score is the mean of all valid affirmative responses to these items multiplied by 100. Country-level index scores range from zero to 100. Higher scores mean that positive emotions are more pervasive in a country. These scores strongly relate to people's perceptions about their living standards, personal freedoms and the presence of social networks.

Negative Experience Index Questions

- *Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*
How about physical pain?
- *Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*
How about worry?
- *Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*
How about sadness?
- *Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*
How about stress?
- *Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday?*
How about anger?

The Negative Experience Index score is the mean of all valid affirmative responses to these items multiplied by 100. Country-level index scores range from zero to 100. The higher the score, the more pervasive negative emotions are in a country. People's experiences with health problems and their ability to afford food are predictive of higher negative scores.

2015 Positive Experience Index Worldwide

Lowest Score, 36  Highest Score, 84

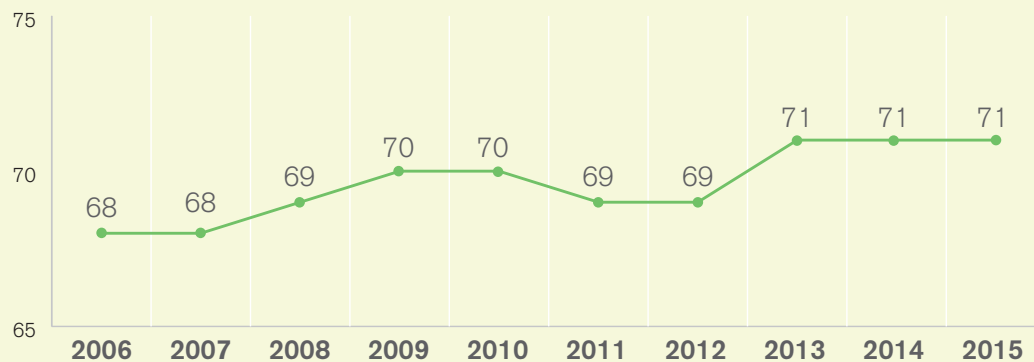


Positive Experience Index Stable Again Worldwide in 2015

Gallup asked adults in 140 countries in 2015 if they had five positive experiences on the day before the survey. More than 70% of people worldwide said they experienced a lot of enjoyment, smiled or laughed a lot, felt well-rested and felt treated with respect. Additionally, 51% of people said they learned or did something interesting the previous day.

Positive Experience Index

Worldwide



Gallup compiles the “yes” responses from these five questions to create a Positive Experience Index score for each country. The world’s index score in 2015 is 71, which has remained remarkably consistent through the years.

Scores worldwide range from a high of 84 in Paraguay to a low of 36 in Syria.

Latin American Countries Lead in Positive Experience Index

Highest Positive Experiences Worldwide, 2015

	Positive Experience Index
Paraguay	84
Guatemala	83
Honduras	83
Uzbekistan	83
Ecuador	83
El Salvador	82
Indonesia	82
Costa Rica	81
Uruguay	81
Colombia	81
Switzerland	81

Latin American countries — and many of the same countries that topped the list in 2014 — dominate the list of countries in 2015 where adults are experiencing a lot of positive emotions each day. The only countries outside this region that top this list are Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Switzerland.

That so many people report positive emotions in Latin America at least partly reflects the cultural tendency in the region to focus on the positives in life. In fact, the single variable that predicts results on both the Positive and Negative Experience Indexes is the country of origin, suggesting cultural bias exists in how people answer these questions.

Countries in Conflict Post Some of the Lowest Positive Experience Index Scores

Lowest Positive Experiences Worldwide, 2015

	Positive Experience Index
Syria	36
Turkey	51
Nepal	51
Georgia	54
Serbia	54
Iraq	54
Yemen	55
Bosnia and Herzegovina	55
Lithuania	55
Belarus	55
Ukraine	55

Personal freedom and the presence of social networks are also highly predictive of scores on the Positive Experience Index, the latter of which helps to explain why people from poor countries in Latin America still seem to live such positive lives.

This relationship also helps explain some of the countries at the bottom of the list. Syria — long mired in civil war — has occupied the bottom spot on this list every year it was measured since 2012. In fact, several of the countries at the bottom of the list — Ukraine, Iraq, Yemen, Turkey and Syria — have ongoing internal and external conflict in common. In Nepal's case, the devastating earthquake last year compounded the country's already fragile situation.

Most of the World Still Laughing, Smiling a Lot

Majorities in nearly all countries worldwide say they smiled or laughed a lot during the day before the interview in 2015. On average, 72% of people worldwide reported doing this the previous day. In only seven countries — Ukraine, Iraq, Turkmenistan, Nepal, Serbia, Syria and Turkey — did these numbers fall to 50% or lower.

Did you smile or laugh a lot yesterday?

Percentage “yes” among each country’s adult population

39% “Yes”  91% “Yes”



Regional Positive Index Scores Lowest in Middle East and North Africa Region

The region of the world that again reports the lowest positive emotions is the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with a score of 60. All countries in the region — with the exception of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Libya — had scores lower than the global mean. Syria’s score of 36 is half the global mean.

Negative Experience Index on Higher End Globally in 2015

In 2015, Gallup asked adults in 140 countries if they had five different negative experiences on the day before the survey. More than one in three people said they experienced a lot of worry (36%) or stress (35%), and nearly three in 10 experienced a lot of physical pain (28%). At least one in five experienced sadness (21%) or anger (20%). All percentages increased between 2014 and 2015.

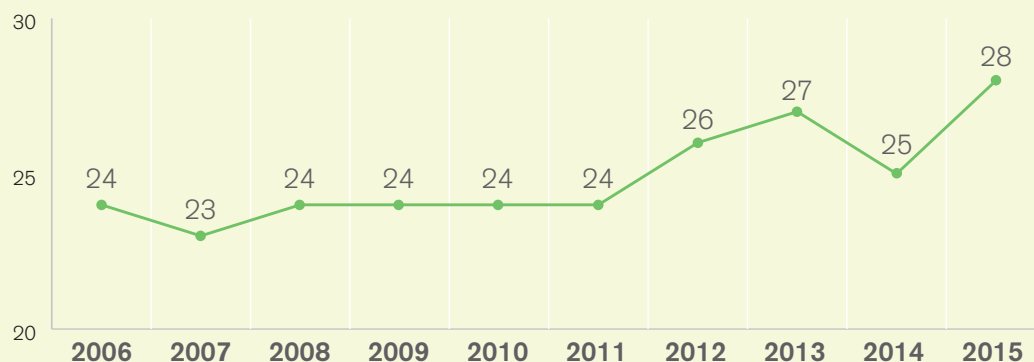
2015 Negative Experience Index Worldwide

Lowest Score, 12  Highest Score, 58



Negative Experience Index

Worldwide



Gallup compiles the “yes” responses from these five questions to create a Negative Experience Index score for each country. The world’s index score in 2015 is 28, up from 2014 and on the higher end of the trend since 2006.

Scores worldwide range from a high of 58 in Iraq to a low of 12 in Uzbekistan.

Iraq, Iran Top Negative Experience List

Highest Negative Experience Index Scores, 2015

	Negative Experience Index
Iraq	58
Iran	50
South Sudan	46
Syria	46
Cyprus	42
Liberia	41
Togo	40
Sierra Leone	40
Bolivia	40
Portugal	40
Palestinian Territories	40

Iraq and Iran have the highest Negative Experience Index scores in the world for the third year in a row. Iraq has been No. 1 on this index four times — in 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015 — and has been among the top five in all other years since 2008. Iran was No. 1 in 2012 and has made at least the top 15 countries in the years Gallup has conducted surveys there.

The continued presence of Iraq and Iran at the top of the list is not that surprising given how strongly related negative scores are to people's perceptions about their living standards and health problems. In fact, people in most of the countries with the highest negative scores in 2015 were contending with some disruption — economic or otherwise. Almost all countries at the top of the list in 2014 are at the top of the list again in 2015.

Mix of Countries at Bottom of the Negative Experience List

The Negative and Positive Experience Indexes are not inversely related. Countries with the lowest negative scores do not necessarily have the highest positive scores. Many of the countries with the lowest scores on the Negative Experience Index are countries with ties to Russia — which itself is at the bottom of the list — and the old former Soviet Union. It's also worth noting again that country of origin predicts results on this index, suggesting cultural bias exists in how people answer these questions.

Lowest Negative Experience Index, 2015

	Negative Experience Index
Uzbekistan	12
Russia	13
Kazakhstan	16
Kyrgyzstan	17
Taiwan	17
Belarus	18
Somalia	18
Singapore	18
Mongolia	19
Estonia	19

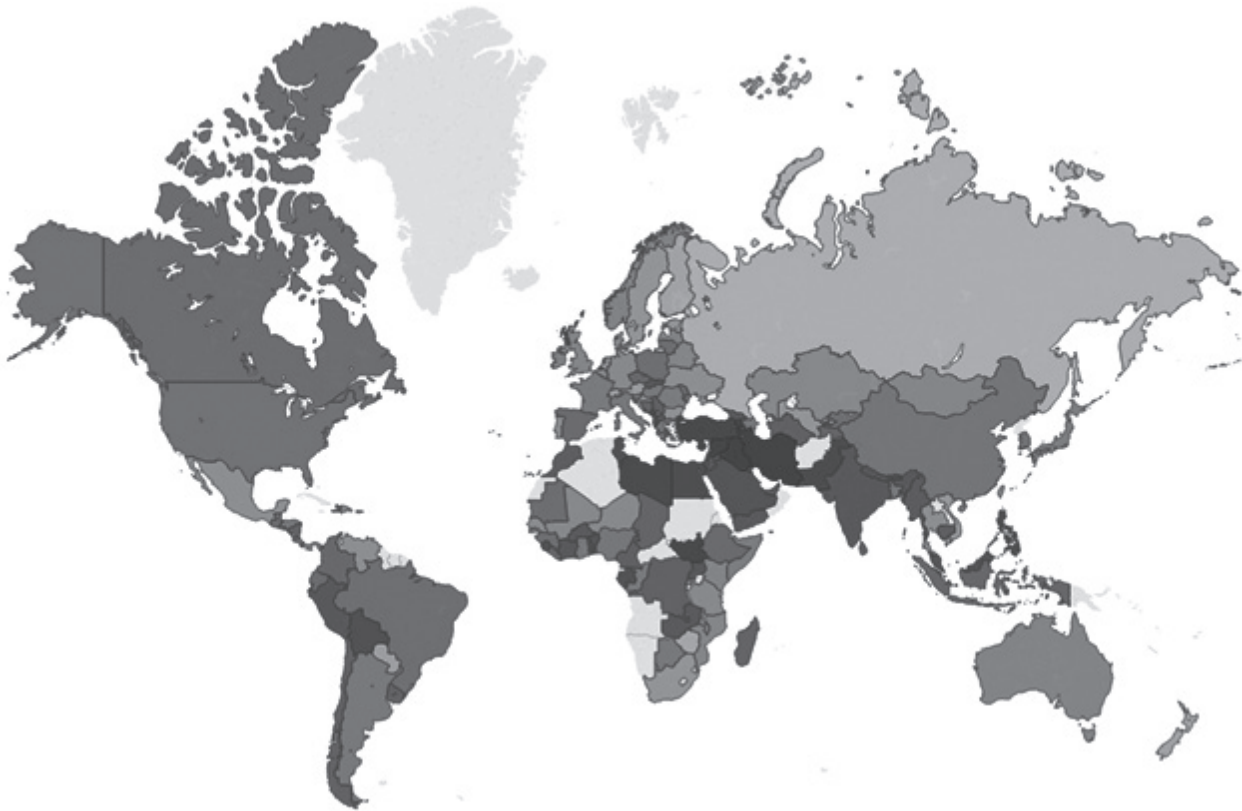
Iraqis Are Saddest and Most Likely to Be in Physical Pain

Iraq's high Negative Experience Index score is largely attributable to the relatively high percentages of Iraqis who reported experiencing each of the negative emotions. Majorities of Iraqis experienced worry (64%), sadness (61%), stress (61%) and physical pain (57%) the previous day, and half of Iraqis (49%) were angry. Iraqis alone led the world in sadness and physical pain. They statistically tied Iranians in anger (50%) and Cypriots (65%) in stress, and were as likely to worry as the Portuguese (62%), Togolese (62%) and Maltese (61%).

Did you experience anger during a lot of the day yesterday?

Percentage "yes" among each country's adult population

6% "Yes"  50% "Yes"



MENA Home to Highest Negative Regional Scores

People in the MENA region report both the lowest positive emotions in the world and some of the highest negative emotions in the world. Adults in this region report the highest negative emotions, with a score of 40. All countries in the region, without exception, have scores higher than the global mean of 28. Iraq's score of 58 is 30 points higher than the global mean.

2015 Total Emotions Worldwide

37% "Yes" average



59% "Yes" average



Latin America Leads in Emotion

Averaging the "yes" responses to the 10 questions that make up the Positive and Negative Experience Indexes provides a picture of the most emotional and least emotional societies worldwide.

Highest Emotions Worldwide, 2015

	Total Emotions
Ecuador	59%
El Salvador	59%
Guatemala	59%
Philippines	59%
Nicaragua	58%
Honduras	58%
Peru	58%
Bolivia	58%
Costa Rica	57%
Uruguay	57%
Colombia	57%

Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and the Philippines top the list of the most emotional countries in the world in 2015. On average, nearly six in 10 residents in each of these countries reported experiencing *positive or negative emotions* the previous day.

Countries with ties to Russia and the former Soviet Union largely dominate the list of countries at the other end of the spectrum, where fewer than four in 10 residents reported experiencing any of these feelings.

Percentages range from a high of **59%** in Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and the Philippines to a low of **37%** in Belarus.

Methodology

Results for surveys in 2015 are based on telephone and face-to-face interviews with approximately 1,000 adults, aged 15 and older, conducted throughout 2015 in 140 countries. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of sampling error ranged from ± 2.1 percentage points to ± 5.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting.

For the complete methodology and specific survey dates, please review

[Gallup's country data set details.](#)

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