

Finland is the happiest country in the world

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

1 Warmer

The article is about the happiest country in the world. Which six of these words do you think are in the text? Check your answers in the text.

education	fun	wealth	holidays	taxes
entertainment	money	healthcare	family	freedom

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

poverty	obesity	decline	sound	perception
wellbeing	abundance	ranking	corruption	coup

- A _____ is a reduction in the quality of something. (para 1)
- _____ is when someone is too fat in a way that is dangerous for their health. (para 1)
- A _____ is when a group of people takes control of a country, usually by means of military force. (para 2)
- A _____ is a position on a list that shows how good something is in comparison with other things. (para 4)
- _____ is the satisfactory state that someone should be in, involving being happy, healthy and safe. (para 5)
- A _____ is a particular way of understanding or thinking about something. (para 5)
- _____ is dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviour done in order to gain money or power. (para 5)
- If something is _____, it is reliable. (para 6)
- _____ is when people do not have enough money to pay for their basic needs. (para 12)
- If there is an _____ of something, there is a lot of it. (para 12)

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

- Which four countries hold the top four places in the happiness rankings?
- Which is the unhappiest country in the world, according to the happiness rankings?
- What is the population of Finland?
- What position does the USA hold in the happiness rankings?
- Which country experienced the biggest fall in happiness?
- Which country experienced the biggest improvement in the happiness rankings?

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Finland is the happiest country in the world, says UN report

Patrick Collinson

14 March, 2018

- 1 Finland has overtaken Norway to become the happiest nation on earth, according to a UN report. The 2018 World Happiness Report also shows the steady decline of the US, as the world's largest economy suffers a crisis of obesity, drug abuse and depression. The study shows the US has fallen to 18th place, five places lower than in 2016. The top four places are taken by Nordic nations, with Finland followed by Norway, Denmark and Iceland.
- 2 Burundi in east Africa, which has suffered ethnic cleansing, civil wars and coup attempts, is the unhappiest place in the world. Surprisingly, there are five other nations – Rwanda, Yemen, Tanzania, South Sudan and the Central African Republic – that report happiness levels below that of even Syria.
- 3 For the first time, the UN also examined the happiness levels of immigrants in each country and found Finland also scored highest.
- 4 “Finland has jumped from fifth place to the top of the rankings,” said the report's authors.
- 5 The report said all the Nordic countries scored highly on income, healthy life expectancy, social support, freedom, trust and generosity. The rankings are based on polls of self-reported wellbeing, as well as perceptions of corruption, generosity and freedom.
- 6 The UN placing is the latest award for Finland, a country of just 5.5 million people. The country has been ranked the most stable, the safest and the best governed country in the world. It is also among the least corrupt and the most socially progressive. Its police are the world's most trusted and its banks the soundest.
- 7 “It is remarkable that Finland is the top country,” said Meik Wiking of the Happiness Research Institute in Denmark. “GDP per capita in Finland is lower than its neighbouring Nordic countries and much lower than that of the US. The Finns are good at converting wealth into wellbeing.
- 8 “In the Nordic countries in general, we pay some of the highest taxes in the world but people generally support them because they see them as investments in quality of life for all. Free healthcare and university education go a long way when it comes to happiness,” he added.
- 9 In Britain, figures from the Office for National Statistics suggest people have become happier in recent years. But the UN ranking places the UK in only 19th place, the same as 2017 but behind Germany, Canada and Australia, although ahead of France and Spain.
- 10 The UN report has a special chapter on why the US has slipped down the league despite having among the highest income per capita. “America's wellbeing is being systematically undermined by three related epidemic diseases: obesity, drug abuse and depression,” said Jeffrey Sachs, one of the report's authors.
- 11 African countries have the worst happiness scores but one west African nation is different. Togo came bottom in 2015 but improved the most in the 2018 report, rising 18 places. Latvians and Bulgarians are also reporting higher levels of happiness. Venezuela had the biggest fall in happiness, bigger even than Syria, although it remains a mid-ranking country. The report notes that Latin American countries generally scored more highly than their GDP per capita suggests, especially in contrast to fast-growing east Asian countries.
- 12 Latin America is well known for corruption, high violence and crime rates, unequal distribution of income, and widespread poverty but has always scored quite highly in the happiness report. The authors say this is because of “the abundance of family warmth and other supportive social relationships”.
- 13 Meanwhile, the greatest human migration in history – the hundreds of millions of people who have moved from the Chinese countryside into cities – has not made people happier at all, the report found. “Even seven-and-a-half years after migrating to urban areas, migrants from rural areas are on average less happy than they might have been had they stayed at home,” according to John Knight, one of the contributors to the UN report.

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4 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. Five countries report happiness levels below those in Syria.
2. Finland is also ranked the safest country in the world.
3. People in Nordic countries do not support high taxes.
4. The USA has fallen down the rankings because of poverty.
5. Latin American countries have higher scores in general than east Asian countries.
6. People in China are happier after moving from the countryside to big cities.

5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a two-word noun phrase meaning *the removal or killing of one group of people by those of another group in a particular area* (para 2)
2. a two-word noun phrase meaning *the length of time that someone is likely to live* (para 5)
3. a noun meaning *an occasion when a lot of people are asked what they feel about something* (para 5)
4. a two-word adverb meaning *based on calculations that show the average amount for each person affected* (para 7)
5. a verb meaning *make something less effective or successful* (para 10)
6. a noun meaning *the process by which people move to another place or country* (para 13)
7. an adjective meaning *relating to towns and cities* (para 13)
8. an adjective meaning *relating to the countryside* (para 13)

6 Two-word phrases

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make phrases from the text.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. drug | a. rate |
| 2. civil | b. poverty |
| 3. crime | c. abuse |
| 4. social | d. healthcare |
| 5. widespread | e. support |
| 6. free | f. war |

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7 Word-building

Complete the table using words from the text.

	verb	noun
1.	depress	
2.	invest	
3.	distribute	
	adjective	noun
4.	generous	
5.	violent	
6.	corrupt	

8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- Money doesn't make you happy.
- Taxes should be higher to pay for better social support.
- My country is the best in the world.

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KEY

1 Warmer

education; freedom; wealth; taxes; healthcare; family

2 Key words

1. decline
2. obesity
3. coup
4. ranking
5. wellbeing
6. perception
7. corruption
8. sound
9. poverty
10. abundance

3 Find the information

1. Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland
2. Burundi
3. 5.5 million
4. 18th
5. Venezuela
6. Togo

4 Comprehension check

1. F
2. T
3. F
4. F
5. T
6. F

5 Find the word

1. ethnic cleansing
2. life expectancy
3. poll
4. per capita
5. undermine
6. migration
7. urban
8. rural

6 Two-word phrases

1. c
2. f
3. a
4. e
5. b
6. d

7 Word-building

1. depression
2. investment
3. distribution
4. generosity
5. violence
6. corruption