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Happiness Is Receding Across the World

New global Ipsos study confirms a long-term decline in the percentage of adults who consider themselves happy

Washington, DC, August 22, 2019 — Two thirds of adults globally (64%) across 28 countries consider themselves to be happy, according to a new Ipsos survey. Globally, the prevalence of happiness is down 6 points from 70% in 2018. It is still 3 points higher than in March 2017 (61%), but 13 points below its December 2011 level of 77%. Happiness is most widespread in Australia and Canada (both with 86% of adults describing themselves as “very” or “rather” happy), followed by China and Great Britain (both 83%), and France (80%). By contrast, only a minority of adults in Argentina (34%), Spain (46%) and Russia (47%) say they are happy.

Countries with the highest incidence of adults who consider themselves *very* happy are Canada (29%), Australia, Saudi Arabia and India (28% each), followed by Great Britain and the United States (27% each). Those with the highest share of adults saying they are not happy *at all* are Argentina (19%), Turkey (14%), and Japan (11%).

Regional Trends

Only two of the countries surveyed in the Americas show gains in reported happiness between 2018 and 2019: Canada (+5 points) and Peru (+4). Among the countries in the region tracked since 2011, Canada is the only one where happiness is as widespread today as it was then (85%). Over the past year, the percentage of adults who describe themselves as very or rather happy has dropped sharply in Argentina (-22), Chile (-21), and Brazil (-12) and to a lesser extent in the United States (-3).

Four of the seven Western European countries surveyed show a trend comparable to the global average: the percentage of adults who consider themselves very or rather happy in 2019 is lower than in 2013, a few points higher than in 2017, and lower than in 2018 (by 7 points in Belgium and Spain, 6 points in Sweden, and 3 points in Italy). In contrast, happiness levels are up compared to 2018 in Great Britain (+4), France (+3), and most of all in Germany, where happiness has increased by 10 points. Great Britain and Germany are the only Western European countries surveyed where happiness levels are higher in 2019 than they were in 2011.

Among Central/Eastern European countries surveyed, Poland and Hungary are the only two where the percentage of adults who consider themselves very or rather happy has been relatively steady since 2013, especially over the past year (no change and +2, respectively). While the level of happiness in Russia showed a great deal of stability between 2011 and 2018, it has dropped by 15 points to 47% in the past year. At the same time, Serbia’s level fell 21 points. In Turkey, the percentage of those who describe themselves as happy is down 7 points versus last year and a whopping 36 points versus 2011.



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Over the past year, the percentage of adults who consider themselves happy has increased in Australia (+4) and Saudi Arabia (+2), but it has decreased in Malaysia (-17), South Africa (-13), Japan (-8), India (-6), South Korea (-3), and China (also -3). Over the past six to eight years, happiness has receded in India, South Africa, South Korea, and Japan, while it has been fairly stable in China and Saudi Arabia. In Australia, it is now back to its 2011 level of 86%.

Sources of Happiness

Among 29 potential sources of happiness, the one people surveyed across the world most describe as a source of “greatest happiness” is their health and physical well-being (55%). It is followed by their children (48%), their relationship with their spouse or partner (48%), feeling their life has meaning (47%), and personal safety and security (45%). Each one of these top 5 sources of greatest happiness at the global level is among the top 10 sources of greatest happiness in almost every country.

Some of the sources of greatest happiness ranking #6-10 globally are so important in certain countries that they count in their top 3. It is the case of:

- Feeling in control of my life in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, and the United States;
- My living conditions in Chile;
- Having a meaningful job/employment in Brazil, China, Malaysia, and Peru;
- Having more money in China, France, Italy, and South Korea; and
- My personal financial situation in France, Italy, and Japan.

Among the sources of happiness that rate #11-20 globally, some count among the top 4 in one or two countries:

- The amount of free time I have in Japan;
- The well-being of my country in Argentina; and
- Finding someone to be with in Germany, Russia.

Latin Americans are especially prone to highlight satisfaction with the direction of their life, the well-being of their country (along with Turks), and the state of the economy.

While ranking among the nine lowest sources of greatest happiness globally, my religious/spiritual well-being is among the top 5 in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. It is also mentioned by more than 50% of adults in Brazil and South Africa.

Globally, the three lowest-ranking sources of greatest happiness among the 29 that were proposed in the survey are: time spent on social media (11%), moving to another country (17%) and my material possessions (21%).



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Happiness and Consumer Confidence

Happiness levels are highly correlated with consumer confidence, as measured and tracked monthly by Ipsos's [Consumer Confidence Index](#). By and large, the higher the prevalence of happiness, the higher consumer confidence. The only notable exceptions are France, where the happiness level is high despite weak consumer confidence, as well as China and India, where, while high, happiness levels are not commensurate to very strong consumer confidence.

About the Study

These are the findings of a 28-country Ipsos survey conducted via Ipsos's Global Advisor online survey platform between May 24th and June 7th, 2019.

The sample consists of 1000+ individuals in each of Australia, Brazil, Canada, China (mainland), France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, and the United States, and 500+ in each of Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and Turkey.

Online surveys can be taken as representative of the general adult population under the age of 75 in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. Online samples in Brazil, Chile, China (mainland), Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa and Turkey are more urban, more educated and/or more affluent than the general population and the results should be viewed as reflecting the views of a more "connected" population.

Sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. The precision of the Ipsos online polls is measured using a Bayesian Credibility Interval. The credibility interval around percentages based on single-month data is of +/- 3.5 percentage points for markets where the monthly sample is 1,000+ and +/-4.8 points for markets where the monthly sample is 500+. Click [here](#) for more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the 'difference' appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses or the exclusion of don't knows or not stated responses.

Prior fieldwork waves were also conducted on Ipsos's Global Advisor online survey platform. The February 2018 wave was conducted between January 26th and February 9th, 2018 and consisted of 19,428 interviews in 27 countries. The March 2017 wave was conducted between February 17th and March 3rd, 2017 and consisted of 18,523 interviews in 26 countries. The May 2013 wave was conducted between May 7th and May 21st, 2013 and consisted of 18,513 interviews in 25 countries. The December 2011 wave was conducted between December 6th and December 19th, 2011 and consisted of 21,245 interviews in 24 countries.



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About Ipsos

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Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. We serve more than 5000 clients across the world with 75 business solutions.

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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