

*Cloetta*

# Joy Report

**Exploring the True Power of Joy**

A Nordic perspective | Edition 1 | March 2025

# Cloetta

## Joy Report – Exploring the True Power of Joy

The Joy Report has been created in partnership between Cloetta and Ipsos Sweden.  
We thank Micael Dahlen from Stockholm School of Economics and Frank Martela  
from Aalto University for their valuable contribution to the report.



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# Researching joy

At Cloetta, we believe in the Power of True Joy and we're driven by our passion to make products we truly enjoy. Over decades, our brands have been invited by consumers to enhance precious joyful occasions. This is a true motivation to enhance and share the societal knowledge behind joy and how it can contribute to our everyday life.

In collaboration with Ipsos, a global leader in market research, and valuable academical input from Swedish professor Micael Dahlen and Finnish philosopher Frank Martela, we have extensively researched the topic of joy. Inspired and led by our purpose, the intention is that the research will contribute to the social discourse and be useful and insightful, both for the general population as well as in an academic context.

In this first edition of the Joy Report, we take a closer look at the nature of joy, how it manifests and which factors are at play. The focus is on Europe and more specifically the Nordics, where we have researched joy in Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway. These 4 countries, renowned for their high levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing, provided an ideal setting for this research.

I hope you enjoy the report and that it brings you many valuable insights and joyful moments!



Thomas Biesterfeldt,  
Chief Marketing Officer, Cloetta Group



# Summary of key findings

## Why joy?

Feelings of joy improve our mood, our health and our overall wellbeing. And joy, unlike happiness, is achievable for everyone, everyday!

## The nature of joy

Joy is multifaceted, it varies in intensity and can spark from a multitude of sources. It can manifest in a number of ways; emotionally, socially, physically or cognitively.

## The Nordics are recognised for being a hot spot for joy in Europe

Globally recognised high levels of life satisfaction, and quality of life, drive this perception. Nordic joy also has a few distinct and unique characteristics, setting it apart from the sun-drenched Mediterranean version of joy.

## Joy in the Nordics is simple and tranquil

Often, joyful moments take place at home and are shared with loved ones. It is simple things that bring most joy to people in the Nordics, like a nice chat with a friend, listening to a favourite song or enjoying a moment in nature.

**50%**

of Nordic citizens associate joy with relaxing at home.

**53%**

find joy in a nice chat with a family member/ close friend.

**2 in 5**

joyful moments are totally spontaneous.

**Mindfulness Connection Balance**

... are 3 things to prioritise to experience more joy.

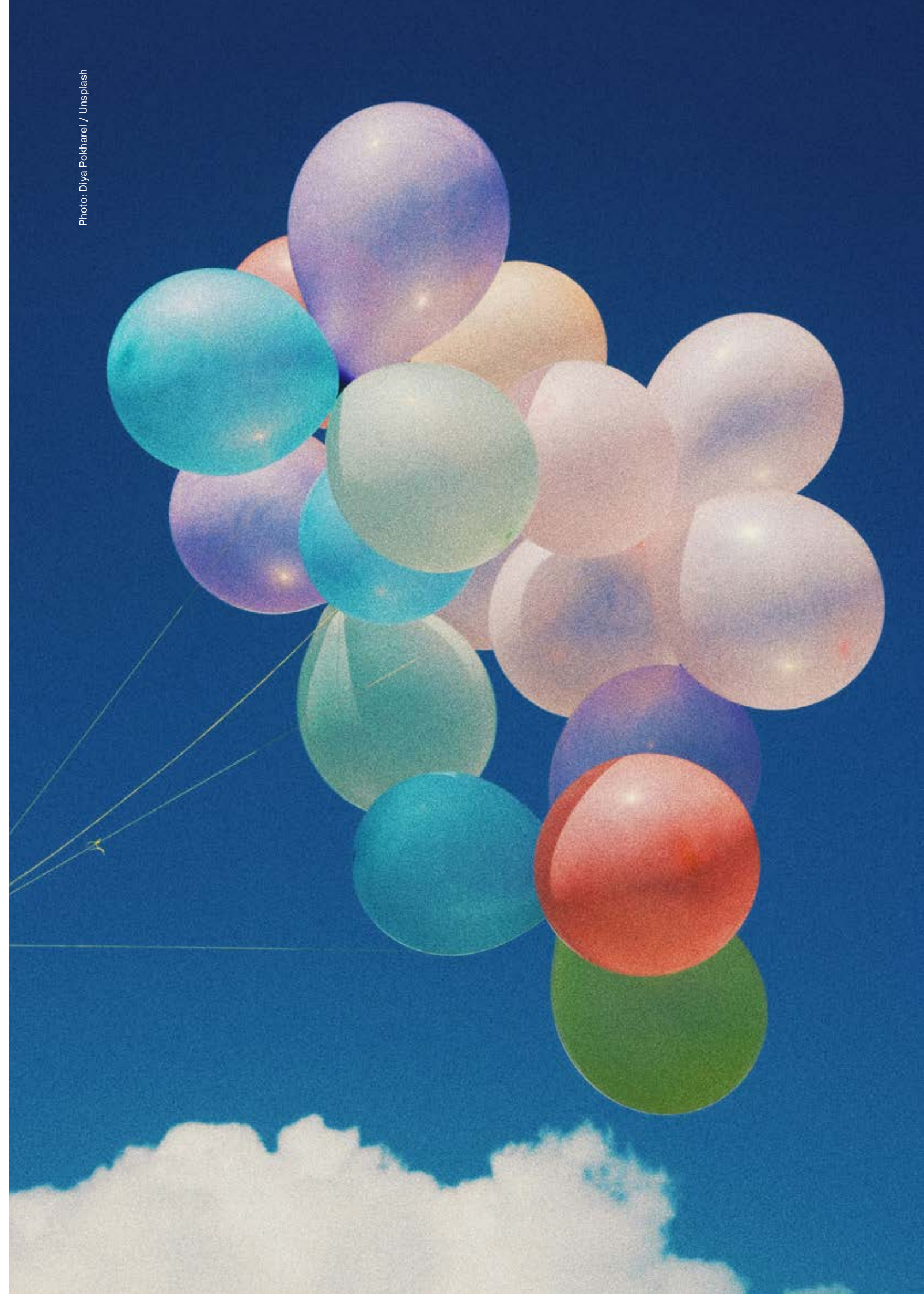
**13%**

Only for 13%, the most joyful moments are those that are filled with high energy (e.g. parties or sport events).

**78%**

found new sources of joy during the pandemic.

Photo: Diya Pokharel / Unsplash



# Introduction



# Joy is an antidote to today's uncertainty

**So far,** 2025 is a continuation of 2024, a year that was punctuated by many global and local crises – including political tensions, inflation, social polarisation, and climate change – and marked by chronic uncertainty.

**According to Ipsos** research, in this context, individuals struggle to envision the future, tend to feel more hopeless, and focus their efforts on the present moment and their personal sphere.

**For these reasons,** creating joyful moments and finding sources of joy are much needed.



## Carrying through with joy

In the book *Joyful*, designer Ingrid Fetell Lee shows that “joy is all around us,” in the form of “aesthetics of Joy:” objects and experiences that universally convey joy daily like hot air balloons, googly eyes or rainbows. Lee encourages us to actively embrace these everyday sources of joy, rather than relentlessly pursuing happiness. Joy, brief but intense, grounds us in the present moment and offers a refreshing boost of positive energy.

Joshua Hicks, professor in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Texas A&M University, points that it is “these smaller day-to-day experiences that bring us meaning.” And science writer and neuroscientist Richard Sima stresses the importance of being intentional each day to find joy: “By mindfully tuning into the

pleasant (...) experiences of every day, we can transform an otherwise mundane moment into something more meaningful and even joyful.”

## Embracing the positive effects of joy

Research suggests that feeling joy improves our mood, wellbeing and overall health, and promotes stronger social connections.

From a neuroscientific perspective, joy is deeply interconnected with neurological pathways particularly involving the release of neurotransmitters like dopamine (the “feel-good” hormone) and serotonin, which contribute to the sensation of pleasure and reward joy<sup>3</sup>. Joy also triggers the “Duchenne smile”, an involuntary and genuine smile that engages both the mouth and eye muscles. As it cannot be faked, it increases trust in relationships!

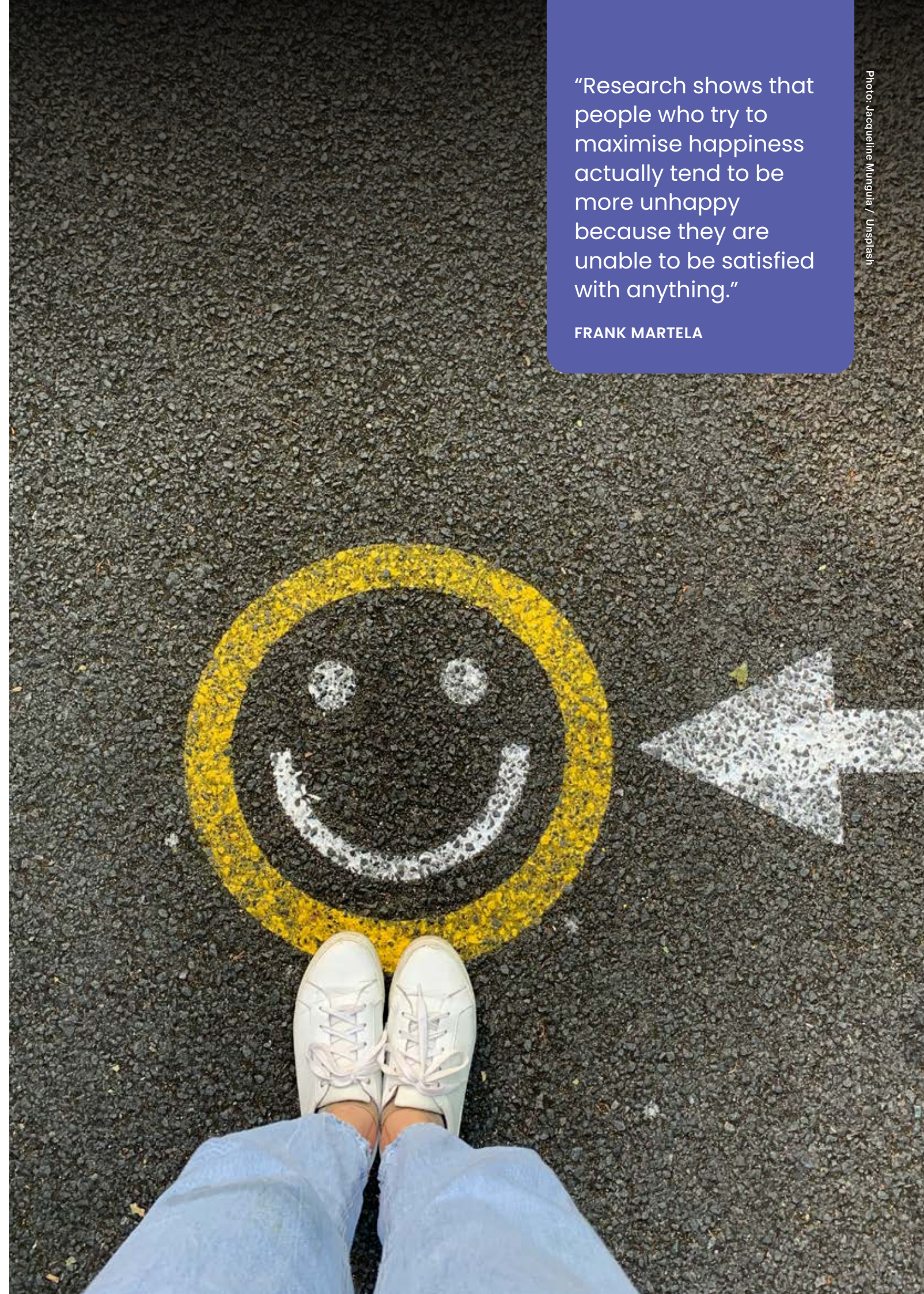
Globally, **64%** of people live for today because the future is uncertain<sup>1</sup>

**62%** feel things in their country is off on the wrong track<sup>2</sup>

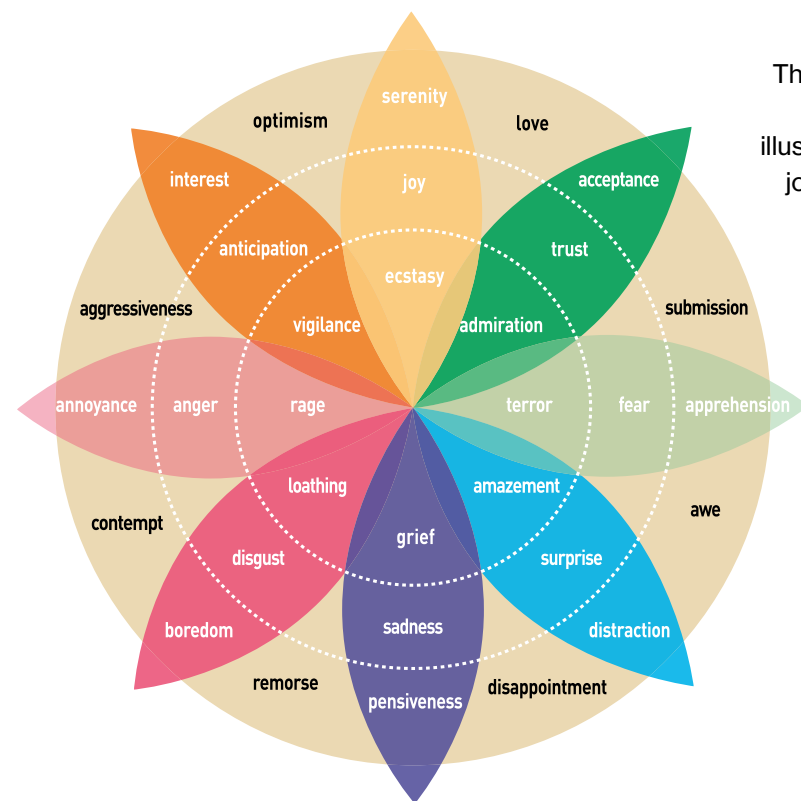
Sources: 1) Ipsos Global Trends 2024. 2) Ipsos *What Worries the World*, February 2025 edition. 3) Berridge & Kringelbach, 2015.

“Research shows that people who try to maximise happiness actually tend to be more unhappy because they are unable to be satisfied with anything.”

FRANK MARTELA







The Wheel of Emotions illustrates how joy interacts with other emotions

“Joyful moments might be short-lived but often have a greater impact on our wellbeing than we might think.”

MICAEL DAHLEN

## Are joy and happiness the same?

Often, joy is mistaken for happiness. While both are positive emotions, they vary in intensity and length.

Joy is like a sparkler. It is bright, intense and short-lived, and it can be found in small everyday things. Whereas happiness is like a warm fireplace – it is a comforting presence that provides continued warmth and is the result of prolonged efforts.

Without a doubt, joyful experiences contribute to building happiness in the long term!



## » HOW DO WE DEFINE JOY?

# Joy is the opposite of sadness, and shorter and more intense than happiness

Human emotions are intricate and difficult to decipher at an individual and collective level. Quite often, we lack emotional literacy to fully comprehend and navigate our emotional responses.

### Human emotions function as a system

The Wheel of Emotions is a tool that helps visualise emotional complexity and understand the relationships between emotions. Created by psychologist Robert Plutchik in the 1980s, it shows 8 primary bipolar emotions: joy versus sadness, anger

versus fear, surprise versus anticipation, trust versus disgust.

Let's focus on joy, our topic of interest. Well, the wheel illustrates how joy interacts with other emotions, such as trust (leading to love) or anticipation (leading to optimism), providing a comprehensive view of emotional interplay.

It also shows the varying intensities of emotions, with joy having a less intense form (serenity) and a more intense form (ecstasy), helping to understand the depth of joyful experiences.

## » IS IT JUST A SIMPLE EMOTION?

# Joy is multifaceted and multidimensional

Joy can spark in many ways but flourishes when we are aligned with the world.

Joy can be wrongfully perceived as a “simple” emotion because it is light, fun and arises in pleasant situations. While being universal and accessible, specific conditions are needed for joy to spark.

According to developmental psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, it arises when things feel “just right,” and from “a sense that there is an ideal fit between ourselves and the world around us at that moment.”

In *Joy: An Integrative Theory* (2022), he exposes the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of joy and explains that this feeling of alignment “can be experienced from many different sources in many different contexts.” Joy is not just emotional, it can be physical, social, cognitive, ideological, and communal.

Quite often these nuances are interconnected and overlap. Think

about a dinner with close friends who share your view on the world. You might experience social joy + physical joy + ideological joy altogether!

This understanding of joy expands our perspective to encompass a broader range of experiences. It also empowers us to embrace a broader spectrum of opportunities.

### Emotional joy

is experienced when we feel pleasure (cooking, relaxing...)



### Physical joy

rises through our 5 senses (dancing, tasting, listening to music...)



### Social joy

stems from connecting with loved ones



### Cognitive joy

is what we feel when we reflect on reaching a goal or achievement



### Ideological joy

comes from being connected with people who share the same ideas or beliefs as us



### Communal joy

happens in situations of collective effervescence (rituals, sports events, concerts)





» WHO IS THE MOST JOYFUL?

There is a “Joy split” between the North and the South

We surveyed individuals across eight European countries – the Netherlands, the UK, Germany, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland – on where in Europe they think people experience the most joy.

Two regions emerged with a clear geographical split: the Mediterranean and the Nordics. While the sun-drenched, warm climate of the Mediterranean is obvious in sparking joy, the sources of joy in the Nordic countries are more enigmatic.

The top 5 countries in Europe where people are perceived as the most joyful according to:

● The Mediterranean  
● The Nordics

<div><div>The UK</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Italy</div><div>2. Spain</div><div>3. Sweden</div><div>4. Denmark</div><div>5. Finland</div></div>	<div><div>The Netherlands</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Spain</div><div>2. Italy</div><div>3. Sweden</div><div>4. Denmark</div><div>5. Norway</div></div>	<div><div>Germany</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Denmark</div><div>2. Italy</div><div>3. Spain</div><div>4. Finland</div><div>5. Sweden</div></div>	<div><div>Spain</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Spain</div><div>2. Italy</div><div>3. Denmark</div><div>4. Switzerland</div><div>5. Sweden</div></div>
<div><div>Sweden</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Finland</div><div>2. Denmark</div><div>3. Spain</div><div>4. Italy</div><div>5. Norway</div></div>	<div><div>Denmark</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Denmark</div><div>2. Finland</div><div>3. Norway</div><div>4. Italy</div><div>5. Spain</div></div>	<div><div>Norway</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Finland</div><div>2. Denmark</div><div>3. Italy</div><div>4. Spain</div><div>5. Norway</div></div>	<div><div>Finland</div><div></div></div> <div><div>1. Italy</div><div>2. Spain</div><div>3. Finland</div><div>4. Sweden</div><div>5. Iceland</div></div>

Q: In which European country do you think people in general experience the most joy?  
Base: 6025 adults aged 18-75-years-old (500 in the Netherlands, 502 in the UK, 501 in Germany, 511 in Spain, 1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)

Photo: Tam Koppelaar / Unsplash





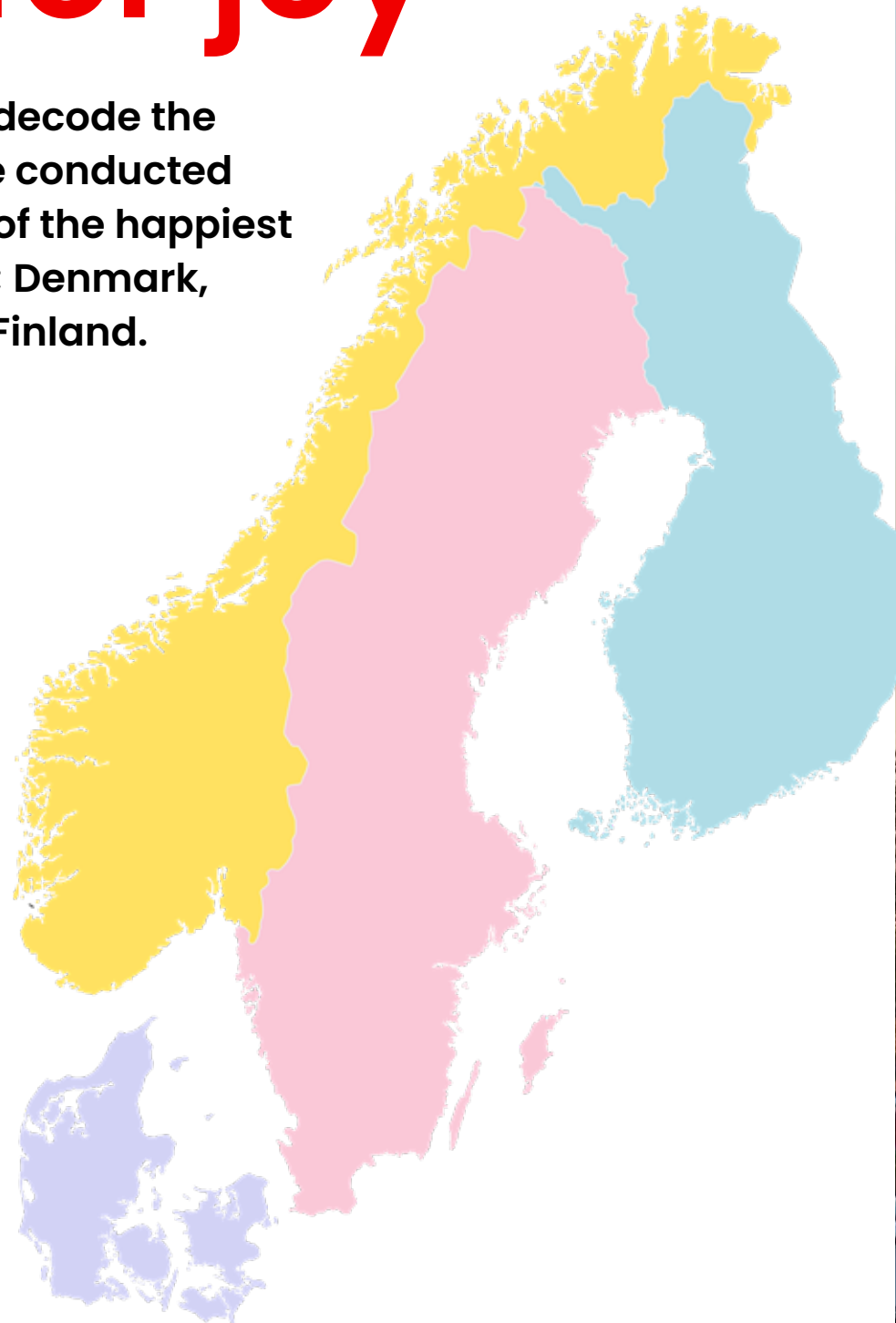
# The Nordics – a lab for joy

Curious and eager to decode the true nature of joy – we conducted our research in some of the happiest countries in the world; Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

With high levels of life satisfaction and quality of life, these four countries are globally renowned for their happiness. Indeed, they are consistently topping the *World Happiness Report* and celebrated for their robust economies, welfare systems, and democratic and liberal values, which are believed to foster individual independence and liberty.

Our aim was to explore how these elements, while shaping the conditions for happiness, also shape the Nordic perception of joy. Based on the assumption that when fundamental needs like food, shelter, and security are met, and people have autonomy, they have freedom to dedicate more time and energy to pursue positive emotions.

\*Please note that throughout this report, we refer to “The Nordics” as Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland and do not include Iceland as this country was not part of our quantitative research.



“My research shows that, in the Nordic countries, people are very aware that we are ranked as the happiest in the world. This affects how we see ourselves and our propensity to feel joy.”

MICAEL DAHLEN

Photo: Nikola Johnny Mirkovic / Unsplash



**Research findings**



## » WHAT IS THE TRUE NATURE OF JOY?

# The essence of Nordic Joy is about having the right balance



Photo: Toa Heftiba / Unsplash

When researching joy, we identified that togetherness is a common denominator for joy ...

The ideal joyful moment in this region is spent **at home with family or close friends.**

**52%** of joyful moments are **shared.**

**A nice chat with someone** adds joy to Swedes' lives.

... as well as alone time!

**#1**

In Finland, **relaxing at home alone** is the #1 moment associated with joy.

All countries consider **self-care** as a key way to increase joy.

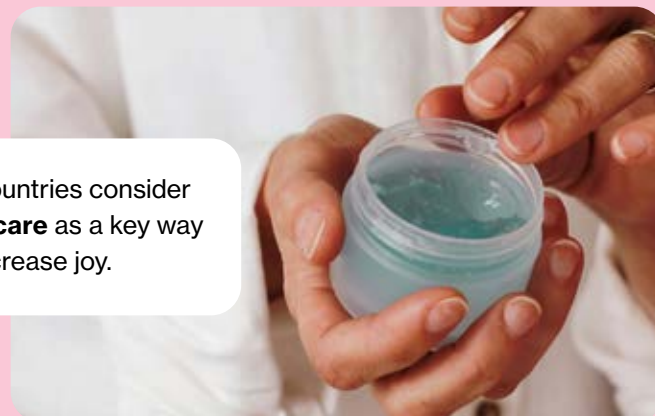


Photo: Nataliya Melnychuk / Unsplash

**A well-balanced life is a cornerstone of joy**

Norwegians think that **connecting with nature** brings more joy to life.

Danes cite **work-life balance** as a reason why their country scores high in joy.



Photo: Jonathan Kemper / Unsplash

**Qs:** At this ideal joyful moment, are you by yourself or together with someone?; Where are you at this ideal joyful moment?; Which of the following do you associate the most with joyful moments? Thinking about the joyful moments you experienced during the past 7 days, approximately how much were planned versus happened spontaneously? **Base:** 4 011 adults aged 18-75 years-old (1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)

## » WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF JOY?

# Togetherness, cosiness, tranquillity and spontaneity

Our research shows that across Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, the ideal joyful moment is:

### Spent at home

Home appears as a sanctuary, embodying the cherished Scandinavian philosophy of *hygge*—embracing cosiness, comfort, and contentment.

### Shared with family or close friends

The emphasis on shared experiences reflects the importance of relationships with loved ones in the Nordics. It also hints at how feeling joy in a context of trust sparks love¹.

### In peace and quiet or medium energy – as opposed to high energy (concerts, big events)

The preference for serene or moderately vibrant joyful moments mirrors the region's deep-seated appreciation for tranquillity and balance.

### Mostly spontaneous, rather than planned

The inclination towards spontaneous joy underscores the celebration of authenticity and living in the present moment.

Source: 1) Plutchik, 1980



Photo: Nathan Dumiao / Unsplash





Photo: Mariela Ferbo / Unsplash

## » DOES EVERYONE FEEL THE SAME LEVEL OF JOY?

**In the Nordics, women, the elderly, families, pet owners, and urbanites experience more joy**

**Joy is shaped** by several factors: social, environmental, cultural and more, including individual experiences. Despite being a universal emotion, joy is not experienced equally. Our survey of the Nordic population reveals these disparities, with certain groups reporting slightly higher levels of joy.

“One thing that families, elderly, women and pet owners probably have in common is the tendency to be more present, allowing themselves to appreciate and enjoy the small, joyful things in life. In terms of the urbanites, the experienced feeling of joy can come from having more opportunities.”

FRANK MARTELA

## » IS THERE A “JOYFUL ARCHETYPE”?

# Meet Hanna ...

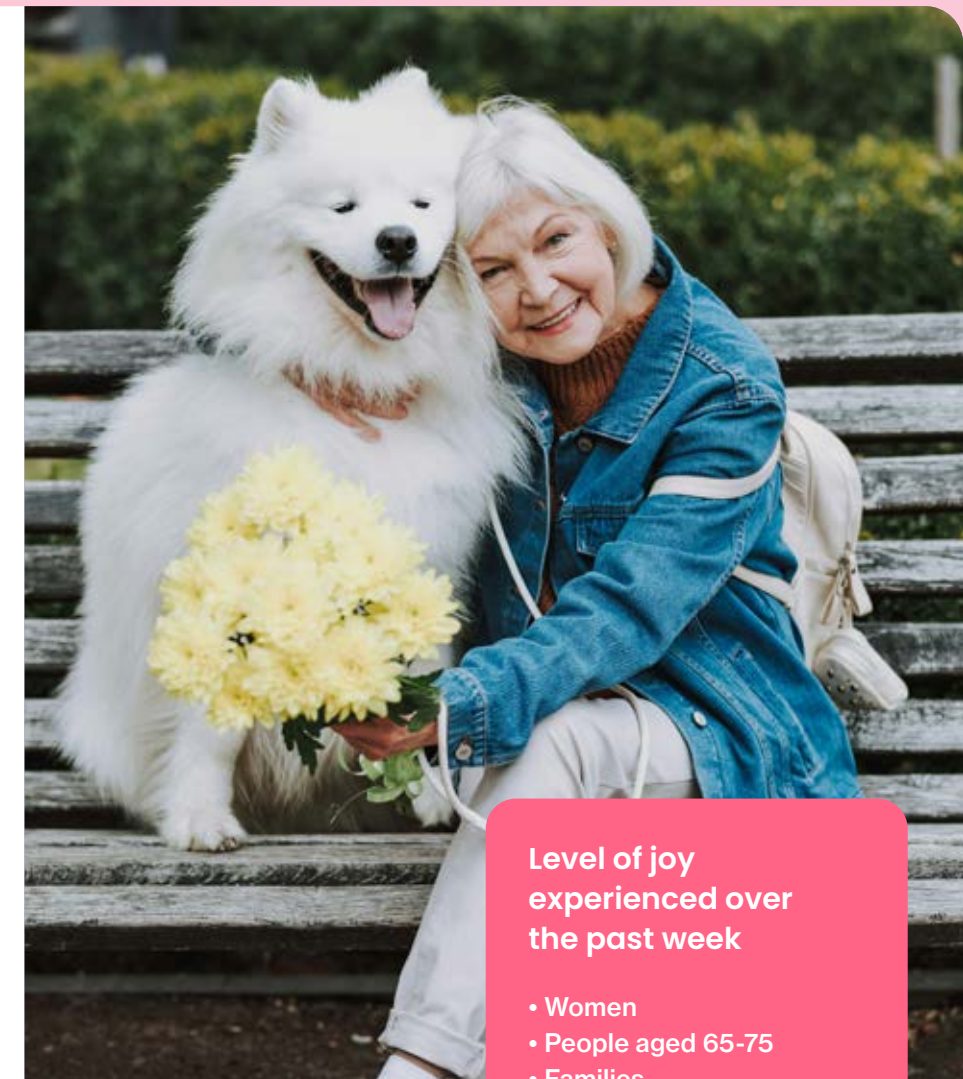
**Hanna is a** young-at-heart 68-year-old woman living a joyful life in the heart of Stockholm. As a retiree in her golden years, she now has the freedom to focus on the things that truly matter to her - family, friends, and her beloved Samoyed, Sven.

Hanna starts each morning with a walk through the city with Sven. She loves to stop and chat with the familiar faces she sees along the way. These daily interactions and sense of community fill Hanna with joy and make the big city feel like home.

**In the afternoon,** you will often find Hanna catching up with her female friends. They have been by each other's sides through life's ups and downs, and their gatherings are a cherished ritual. The emotional support and companionship of these friendships are central to Hanna's joy and wellbeing.

Family is everything to her, and she delights in time spent with her children and grandchildren. Sunday dinners are sacrosanct – a chance for all to squeeze around Hanna's dining table, share homemade meals and lively conversation. Being surrounded by the love and chaos of her family brings Hanna immense comfort and contentment.

**While retired life** comes with its own set of challenges and vulnerabilities, Hanna chooses to focus on the bright side. Owning a pet



**Level of joy experienced over the past week**

- Women
- People aged 65-75
- Families
- People living in big cities
- Pet owners

**... have experienced more joy over the past 7 days**

motivates her to stay active, provides unconditional affection, and infuses each day with playfulness and humour. Living in Stockholm offers plenty of activities to keep her mind and spirit active, like park concerts and community center classes.

**Q:** Approximately how much joy have you experienced in your life over the past 7 days?  
**Base:** 4011 adults aged 18-75 years old (1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)



# Joy, a multifaceted emotion





» WHAT ARE THE MULTIPLE FACETS OF JOY?

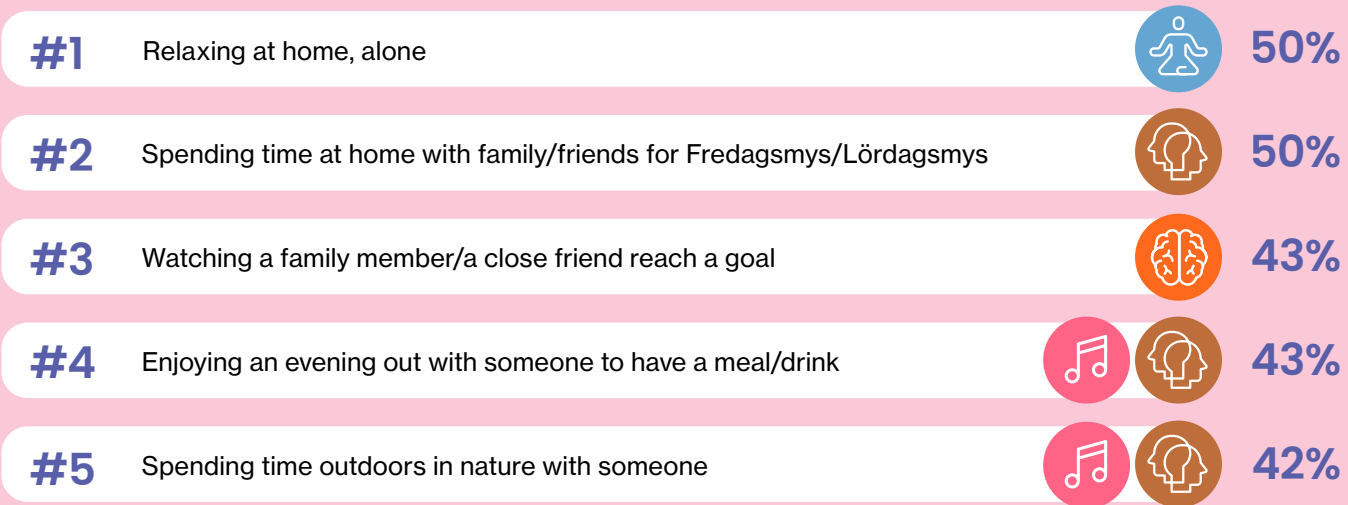
# Joy does not follow a single path

## ... and is mostly social and physical

**Our research shows** that half of the population associates joy mostly with relaxing alone at home, or engaging in social interactions, pointing how balancing time alone and with others is key to emotional wellbeing. On the other side, the pre-dominance of physical joy emphasises the importance of sensory experiences in Nordic societies. All in all, joy is an emotion accessible to everyone and that can be cultivated through mindful attention to the trivial situations and things in life.

### Joy is rooted in simple moments ...

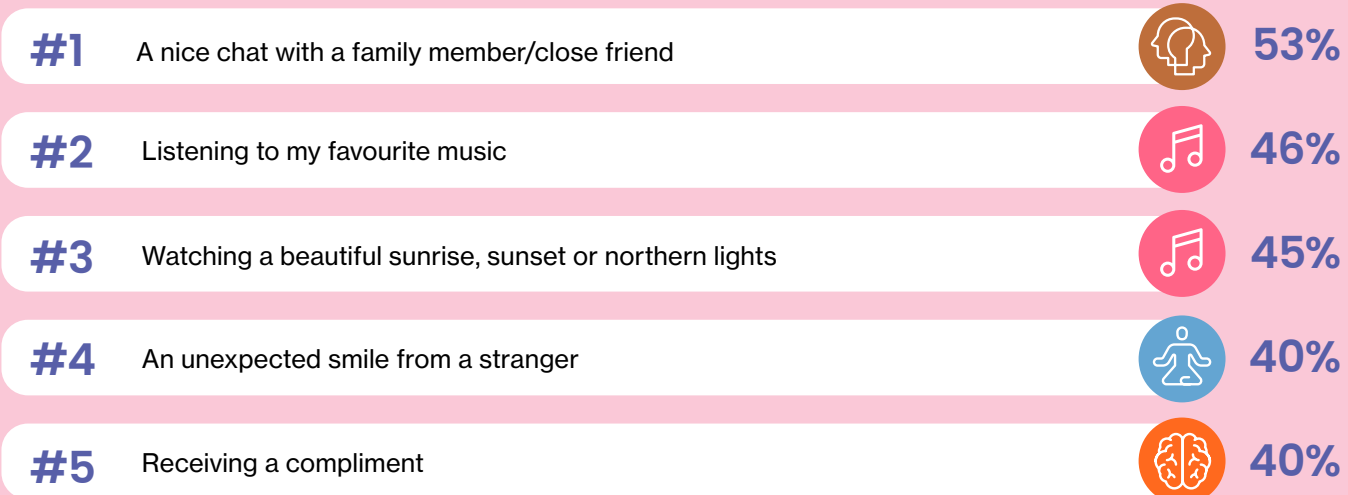
Top 5 moments associated with joy



Q: Which of the following situations and occasions, if any, do you associate with joy?

### ... and small things

Top 5 small things associated with joy

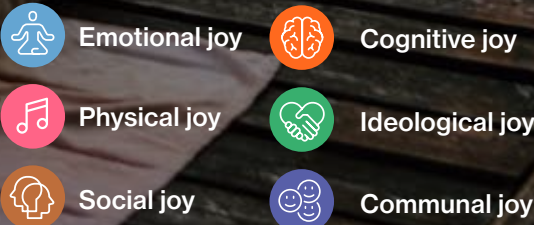


Q: Joy can also be about the small things in life, which of the following situations and occasions if any, do you associate with joy?  
Base: 4011 adults aged 18-75 years-old (1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)

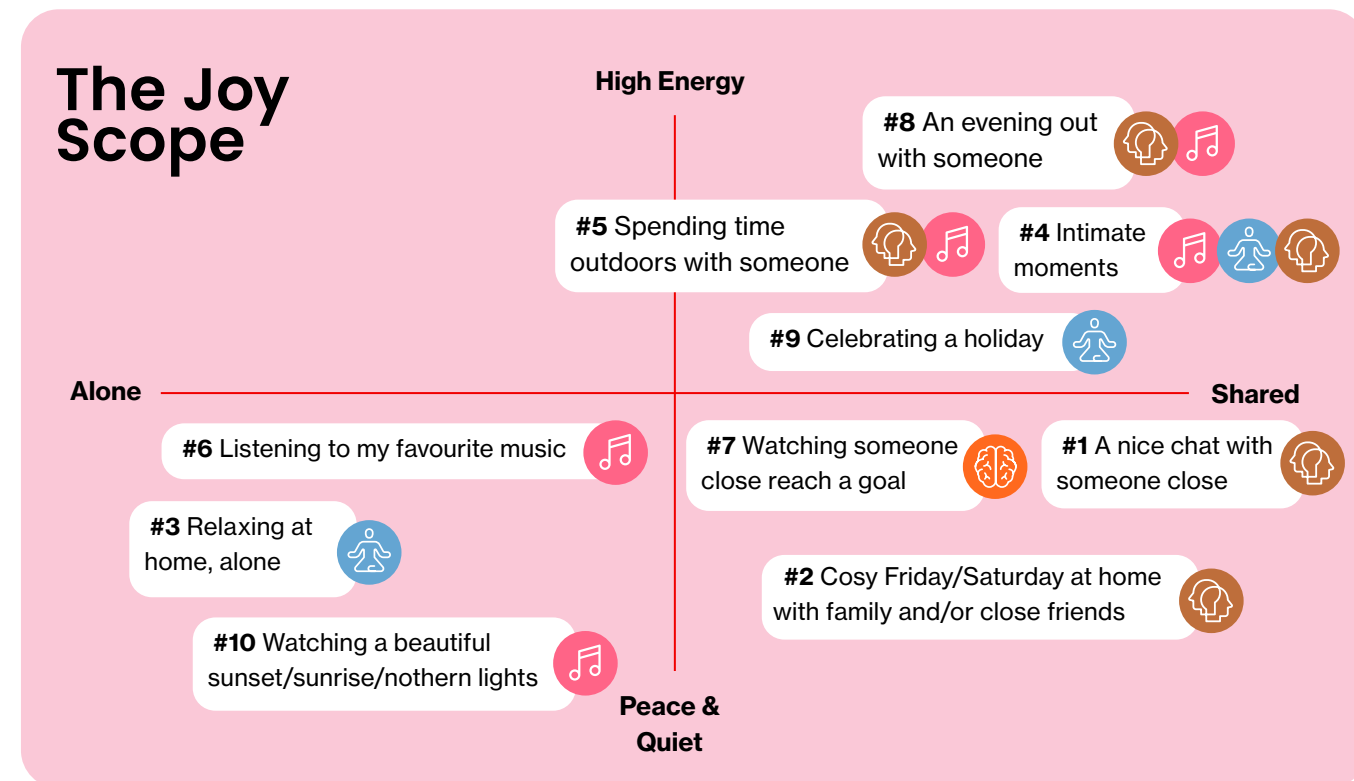
“We need to be more mindful of the small things in everyday life that bring joy. I would recommend to have a gratitude diary and write three things we are grateful for each day. When you start to do that regularly, you start developing awareness for these little joys.”

FRANK MARTELA

#### 6 types of joy



## » WHAT ARE THE MOST JOYFUL MOMENTS IN THE NORDICS?



# The most joyful moments are varied

... but typically shared and medium energy. The Joy Scope maps out the 10 moments Nordic people consider as the most joyful (taking all joyful moments and small things together).

### Balance stands out again, both in relationships and energy

As the scope shows, experiencing joy is significantly intertwined with togetherness and the presence of loved ones. This echoes the Swedish-Finnish proverb “*shared joy is a double joy*.” It also underlines the vital role of shared rituals in Nordic cultures – both celebratory occasions and quiet times. Indeed, solitary

moments of relaxation and contemplation are also a source of joy.

Common perceptions of joy are challenged as the scope reveals that joy is not solely about bursts of energy. It can be triggered by low key moments. In this top #10, joyful moments spent alone are exclusively in peace and quiet, while the ones shared range from medium to high energy. As illustrated by Plutchik’s

Wheel of Emotions, joy spans a spectrum from serenity to ecstasy.

### A reflection of Nordic cultures

These 10 occasions reflect some Nordic philosophies of life: cosy moments alone or shared tap into the “*Hygge*” and “*Kalsarikännit*”; while outdoor activities are linked to “*Friluftsliv*”.

\**Hygge* (Danish): creating cosy contentment and enjoying life’s simple pleasures; \*\* *Kalsarikännit* (Finnish): the feeling when you are going to get drunk home alone in your underwear – with no intention of going out; \*\*\* *Friluftsliv* (Norwegian, Danish): open-air living

## » WHAT CULTURAL FACTORS ARE AT PLAY?

# Nordic philosophies and rituals are a part of the most joyful moments

In crafting the Joy Scope, we decided to explore further to understand the reasons why (if any) these 10 moments are considered the most joyful by Nordic people. Our research pinpointed that the region’s rich cultural beliefs, habits and traditions play a significant role in sparking joy. Let’s delve into two moments.



Photo: Karl Hedin / Unsplash

### Spending time outdoors with someone

From fjords and glaciers in Norway to vast forests and lakes in Sweden and Finland, most of Nordic countries (except for Denmark) are natural lands with low density population. Traditionally, nature takes centre stage in this region and dictates different philosophies.

In Sweden, Norway and Finland, the “right of public access” grants everyone the freedom to roam across wilderness. *Vandring* (“hiking” in Swedish and Norwegian) and *Friluftsliv* (“open-air living” in Norwegian and Danish) also embody the tradition of outdoor exploration and living harmoniously with the natural world. In all weathers and all-year round, locals seek the physical and mental benefits nature has to offer.



Photo: Daniel Sessler / Unsplash

### Celebrating a holiday

In the Nordics, winter traditions aim to bring warmth and light to the darkest time of the year – such as hanging Advent stars in the windows. On December 13, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland celebrate *Lucia* (“Saint Lucy’s day”) and the return of light, with concerts and pastries like saffron buns. Christmas has its own staples like *Julmust* (in Sweden and Norway), a non-alcoholic malt beverage; and *J-Dag* in Denmark, “Christmas beer day”.

The Nordics also celebrate the longest day of the year, known as Midsummer (*Midsommar* in Sweden, *Juhannus* in Finland, *St Hans Aften* in Norway and Denmark). Celebrations include big outdoor dinners with loved ones, decorated poles, bonfires and making flower crowns.



**Home,  
a joyful place**







Photo: Nathan Dumlao / Unsplash

# Home – a central element of life

**Our research shows** that the ideal joyful moment is spent at home. For Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Finnish people, home is all about comfort, family, and wellbeing, and is intertwined with joy. The Nordic lifestyle emphasises creating a harmonious and inviting domestic atmosphere. It is reflected in the philosophies of *hygge* in Denmark and Norway, or *koselig* in Norway. Both concepts embody the essence of cosiness and warmth and

highlight the importance of home as a space for relaxation, social connection, and emotional experiences.

**Nordic traditions often** focus on gathering with loved ones at home, celebrating life's small moments, and creating memories that reinforce familial bonds and community ties.

The perception of home as a joyful place fostering peace and contentment, is also seen in home

design and functionality. Priority is given to natural light, simplicity, and sustainability, which contribute to a serene and balanced living environment.

**In the last** few years, Scandinavian interior design has gained popularity worldwide. People have grown more sensitive to its core principles of minimalism, calm and joy - an accessible way to rekindle stability in times of turbulence.

Photo: Priscilla du Preez / Unsplash



# Home is the ideal place to experience joy

Our research shows that half of the population in the Nordics associates joy mostly with being at home – whether enjoying solitude or the company of loved ones.

The two occasions most associated with joy take place at home.

**50%** #1 Relaxing at home, alone.

**50%** #2 Spending time at home with family/friends for fredagsmys/lördagsmys.

**Q:** Which of the following situations and occasions, if any, do you associate with joy?

**Base:** 4011 adults aged 18-75 years-old (1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)

It suggests that the domestic sphere is perceived as a pivotal space to create meaningful experiences. In an atmosphere of Trust, joy transforms into Love<sup>1</sup>.

As seen on the Joy Scope, having a cosy Friday/Saturday at home is the second most joyful occasion for people in the Nordics.

**Let's explore why and how home becomes a cosy bubble**  
Nordic countries have strong outdoor but also indoor cultures! *Fredagsmys* ("Friday cosiness" in Swedish) and *Lördagsmys* ("Saturday cosiness" in Swedish) are cultural practices where

families and friends get together at home to unwind and have quality time together. These moments act as a transition from the hustle of the week to weekend tranquillity, marked by cosiness and relaxation.

**Often, they include** "food rituals," making them extra special! Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Finns typically get candy to celebrate the weekend, either buying pre-made mixes or going to the pick and mix shelf at the supermarket. From a savoury perspective, Finns have *pizzaperjantai* ("Pizza Friday") and Swedes prefer *tacofredag* ("Taco Friday").

**50%**

of the Nordic population says their ideal joyful moment is at home



53%



48%



46%



55%

**Q:** Where are you in this ideal joyful moment?

**Base:** 4011 adults aged 18-75 years-old (1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)



# Home has become even more of a sanctuary

While the pandemic has had a strong impact on our mental health, some have found resources to shape a “joyful resilience.”

Our results show that Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Finns have found a great(er) fondness for home during the pandemic, which is also where they experienced their main new source of joy. Nordic people managed to reclaim their domestic space as an enjoyable place where one can retreat confidently from the world, and not “just” a place where one is forced to be locked down.

It finds an echo in the Finnish trend *kotoilu* (“homing”) – which focuses on “enjoying life at home, doing and

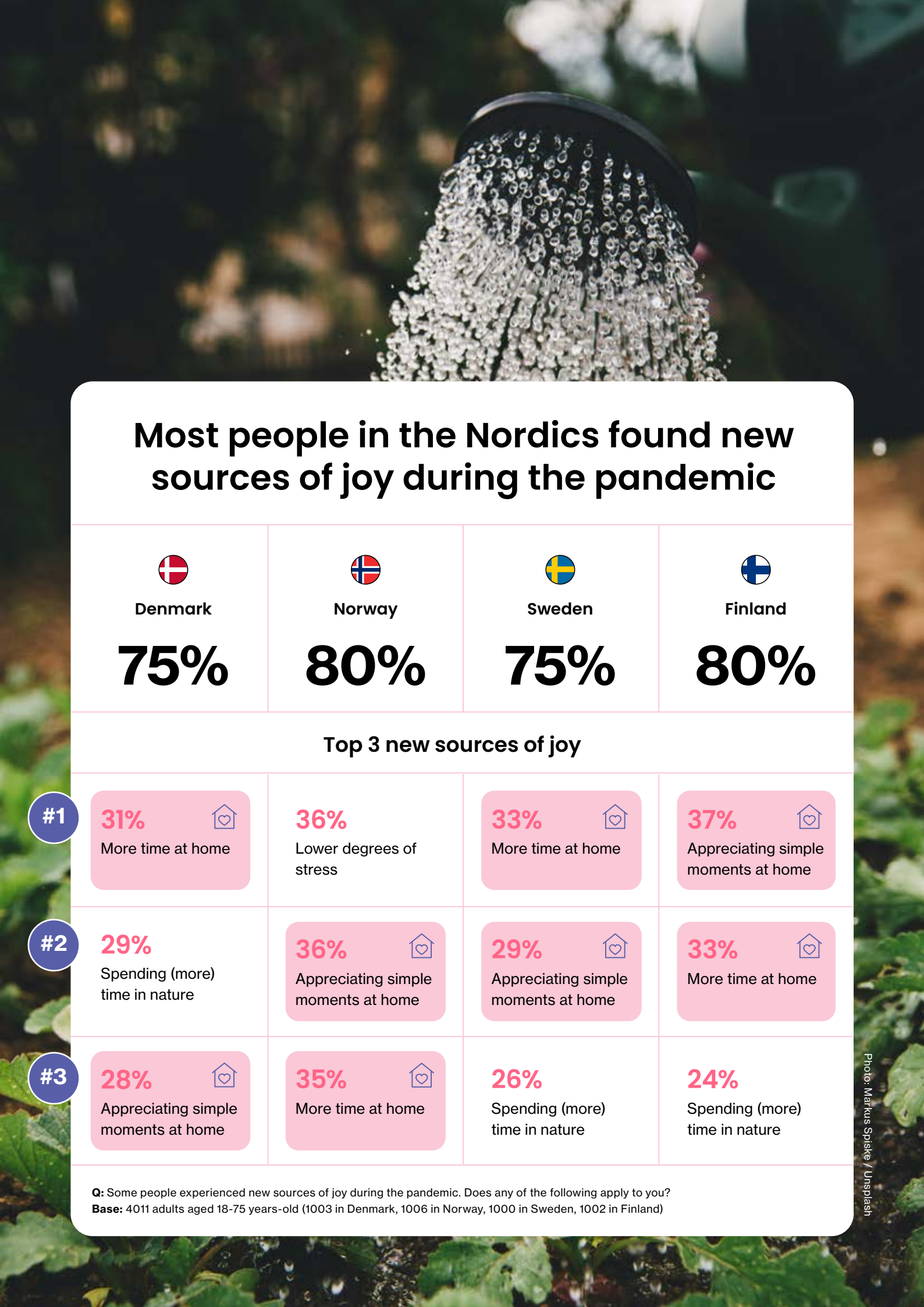
*making things yourself (...), ‘cocooning’, (...) creating one’s home as a safe place*”. Emerged in the 2010s, this trend gained momentum during the pandemic in the Nordics, as people embraced new rituals and habits such as crafts (knitting, pottery), baking, cooking and decorating.

Moreover, this new status quo for home resonates with the strong cosiness culture particular to this region. One could even argue that the harmonious relationship Nordic people entertain with their home might have participated in making time spent at home smoother and more pleasant during lockdowns. It also points to a greater appreciation of normalcy and simplicity.

“Wellbeing largely depends on how we spend our time, and more time at home also means that our homes affect our well-being more. During the pandemic, many people discovered and created new sources of joy at home.”

MICAEL DAHLEN

1) “Kotoilu: The Finnish Homing Trend of the 2010s”, Henni Hakala, 2013





# The recipe for joy





» ON A MACRO LEVEL, WHICH FORCES DRIVE JOY?

Photo: B&B / Unsplash

Egalitarian values and cultural concepts create

## Conditions of and for joy

**The Nordics foster** an ideal environment to cultivate joy. Aside from socio-economic factors mentioned in the introduction, social codes play an important role – particularly the concept of the Law of Jante (*janteloven* in Denmark and Norway, *jantelagen* in Sweden and *janten laki* in Finland), with its emphasis on humility, egalitarianism and social harmony.

Highlighting the central place of

joy in this region, are the different Nordic philosophies of wellbeing, such as the *hygge*, *lagom*, and *lykke*, which have gained global recognition in recent years. These concepts, each unique yet interconnected, offer pathways to experiencing everyday joy and contentment. All of them contribute to the overall high levels of life satisfaction observed in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

### The Law of Jante

The concept of the “Law of Jante” was originally coined by Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose in his 1933 satirical novel, *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* (A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks). This cultural code of conduct, common in Nordic countries, encapsulates 10 rules that collectively suggest that no one should think they are better than others. They mirror the deeply-ingrained habits and perspectives prevalent in Nordic cultures.

“How our Nordic societies are structured plays a significant role in our high life satisfaction. Specifically, regarding joy, one explanation is that we have a lot of free time and the opportunity to do what we want with it.”

MICAEL DAHLEN

» HOW DOES LANGUAGE REFLECT THE IMPORTANCE OF JOY?

## Nordic languages overflow with words celebrating joy

Joy is an essential aspect of Nordic cultures, shown by the multiple words each language has to describe joyful occasions, activities, philosophies, everyday habits and traditions.

### Hygge 🇩🇰 🇳🇴

*Creating cosy contentment and enjoying life's simple pleasures.*

### Glädje 🇸🇪

*Pure unbridled joy.*

### Talkoot 🇫🇮

*An event where neighbors, villagers or colleagues get together to accomplish communal work.*

### Lykke 🇩🇰 🇳🇴

*A general state of happiness with life – often based on making the most of life's simple pleasures.*

### Koselig 🇳🇴

*The warm feelings you get when you're surrounded by people you love in a cosy setting.*

### Friluftsliv 🇳🇴

*Open-air living.*

### Kalsarikännit 🇫🇮

*The feeling when you are going to get drunk home alone in your underwear – with no intention of going out.*

### Gökotta 🇸🇪

*Getting up early in the morning to listen to the birds.*

### Lagom 🇸🇪

*The philosophy of finding contentment in moderation and living a balanced life.*

### Sisu 🇫🇮

*A combination of determination, perseverance, grit, and stoicism – the key to life, love and success.*

### Fika 🇸🇪

*Taking a break from work to enjoy some quality time with friends or family.*

### Naerhet 🇩🇰 🇳🇴

*The emotional bond between people who care for one another deeply.*

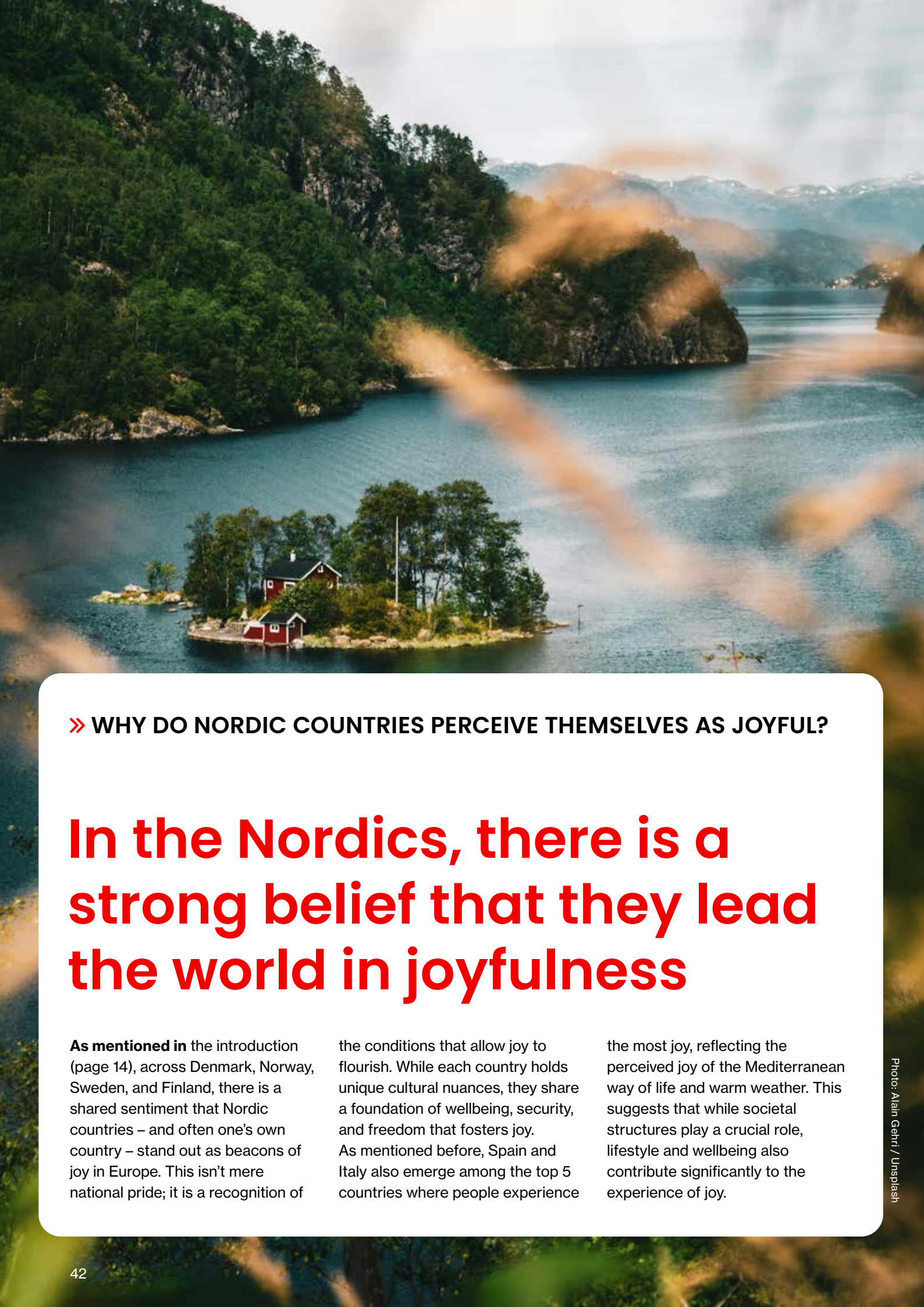
### Losji 🇳🇴

*Finding contentment and peace of mind in nature*

“Linguists believe that language is a mirror of culture. Nordic languages certainly reflect the cultural significance of joy in this region. Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish – each language has multiple terms to describe not just *joy* as an emotion but *joyful moments*, which is quite unusual and unique.”

ASHLEY ADÉ





## » WHY DO NORDIC COUNTRIES PERCEIVE THEMSELVES AS JOYFUL?

# In the Nordics, there is a strong belief that they lead the world in joyfulness

As mentioned in the introduction (page 14), across Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, there is a shared sentiment that Nordic countries – and often one's own country – stand out as beacons of joy in Europe. This isn't mere national pride; it is a recognition of

the conditions that allow joy to flourish. While each country holds unique cultural nuances, they share a foundation of wellbeing, security, and freedom that fosters joy. As mentioned before, Spain and Italy also emerge among the top 5 countries where people experience

the most joy, reflecting the perceived joy of the Mediterranean way of life and warm weather. This suggests that while societal structures play a crucial role, lifestyle and wellbeing also contribute significantly to the experience of joy.

Photo: Alain Gehrt / Unsplash

# The Nordic joy factors

**Nordic countries believe** the possibility to experience joy in their societies comes from a combination of factors. Key among these are security and trust, reinforced by a well-functioning welfare system that ensures stability and support for all citizens. This foundation fosters contentment and simplicity. Social connections are highly valued, promoting a sense of social harmony; while personal wellbeing is mentioned often, with freedom and autonomy allowing individuals to pursue their own paths and keep a positive outlook on life.

Reasons why Nordic countries rank high on joy, according to Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Finns:

### Security, trust & stability

- 🇩🇰 "Great security and trust in each other"
- 🇳🇴 "Stable democratic country"

### Financial & economic stability

- 🇳🇴 "Good wages afford to indulge ourselves a lot"
- 🇸🇪 "High standard of living"

### Social equality & harmony

- 🇸🇪 "Equality"
- 🇩🇰 "People think of people"

### Well-functioning welfare system

- 🇩🇰 "The opportunity for education, hospital care"
- 🇸🇪 "Good welfare system"

### Social connections & relationship

- 🇳🇴 "A good social life"
- 🇳🇴 "Family. Friends"

### Freedom & autonomy

- 🇸🇪 "Free society"
- 🇩🇰 "Our freedom"

Some countries slightly distinguish themselves, citing specific ingredients more at play in their country:

### Contentment & simplicity

### Personal wellbeing

### Positive mindset

- 🇫🇮 In Finland, joy is also found in life's simple pleasures: contentment in everyday moments, focusing on wellbeing and having a positive mindset

### Nature & the outdoors

- 🇳🇴 Finns and Norwegians mention a connection to nature as a factor for joy, embracing a more holistic vision

### Peace & stability

- 🇸🇪 For Swedes, peace is a key reason for joy

### Work-life balance & leisure

- 🇩🇰 In Denmark, balance between collective values and individual choices intertwine joy

**Q:** Your country is (together with the other Nordic countries) among the countries that rank with the highest scores for joy. What do you think is the reason behind this?

**Base:** 4011 adults aged 18-75 years-old (1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)



# Experience more joy – the Nordic way

There is a consensus among Danes, Norwegians, Swedes and Finns on how to make life more joyful ...

... **one should prioritise** mindfulness, nurturing meaningful connections with others, being positive and resilient. On top, focusing on personal health, purpose and balance remain at the forefront of ways to cultivate a more joyful and fulfilling life.

## Self-care & wellbeing

🇸🇪 “Adequate rest, meeting friends, crafts.”

🇩🇰 “Exercise and eat well.”

## Positive mindset & resilience

🇩🇰 “Look at things more brightly, even in difficult moments.”

🇳🇴 “Look at life positively and be content with what you have.”

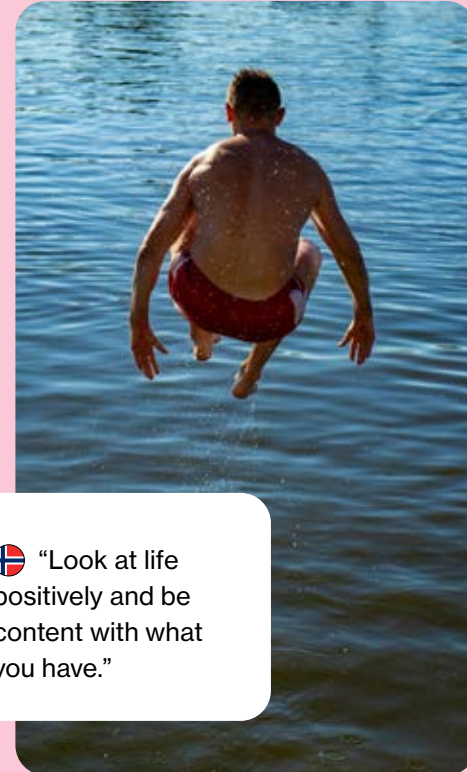


Photo: Eugene Chystakov / Unsplash

## Mindfulness & savouring the present moment

🇸🇪 “Live in the moment, that’s all we have.”

🇳🇴 “Enjoying the small moments of everyday life.”



Photo: Toa Heftiba / Unsplash

## Meaningful connections

🇸🇪 “Being close to family and friends who give energy.”

🇩🇰 “Arrange meetings with people you care about – set a date!”

## Purpose, meaningful activities and passions

🇫🇮 “Do things you like. Away from performance.”

🇸🇪 “Do what you are really passionate about.”

## Some local recommendations

**Some countries** promote unique ingredients! Norway is the only country to promote connecting with nature; only Denmark advocates for self-acceptance; and Finns are the only ones to put emphasis on exploration as a source for more joy.

### Authenticity & self-acceptance

“Follow your own ideas, dreams and goals for life without thinking too much about what others think.”

“Be true to yourself.”



Photo: Vadim Morozov / Unsplash

### Connecting with nature

“Enjoying the tranquillity of nature and getting some exercise.”

“Fresh air, nature and exercise.”



### Experiences & exploration

“Experiences, cultural events, good food and company.”

“Trying new things and having an open mind.”



# Did you know that?

Photo: Luke Stackpoole / Unsplash



In the Nordics, **red** is by far the colour most associated with joy.

**Finns have found new sources of joy during inflation:** for 33% it is getting their favourite items on sale or great deals; and for 30% it is exploring lower-cost or free activities (spending time in nature, game nights at home with friends).

Photo: Jarek Ceborski / Unsplash



**When listening to** their favourite music, Swedes like to eat chocolate or drink a hot beverage.

## 41,5%

**of people in** the Nordics experience more joy now than during the pandemic (47% of the 18-24 years old).



**Foods that elevate the moments of joy:**

- #1 Chocolate
- #2 Ice cream, candy
- #3 Savoury snacks, pastries

According to Frank Martela, "to lead a more joyful and meaningful life, we should connect with other people, connect with ourselves and connect with the present moment."



Photo: Nathan Dumlao / Unsplash

**Togetherness is a cornerstone of joy in Norway:** spending time with someone in nature brings as much joy as having a nice chat with a loved one or sharing an intimate moment.

## 38%

**of joyful moments in** the Nordics are totally spontaneous.

## 76%

**of Danes are** in Denmark in their ideal joyful moment. Danes have a deep fondness for their country, which they consider as Europe's most joyful nation.

**Base:** 4011 adults aged 18-75 years-old (1003 in Denmark, 1006 in Norway, 1000 in Sweden, 1002 in Finland)



Photo: HJUM / Unsplash

Overall, Nordic people perceive Finland as the most joyful country in Europe.

**Methodology**



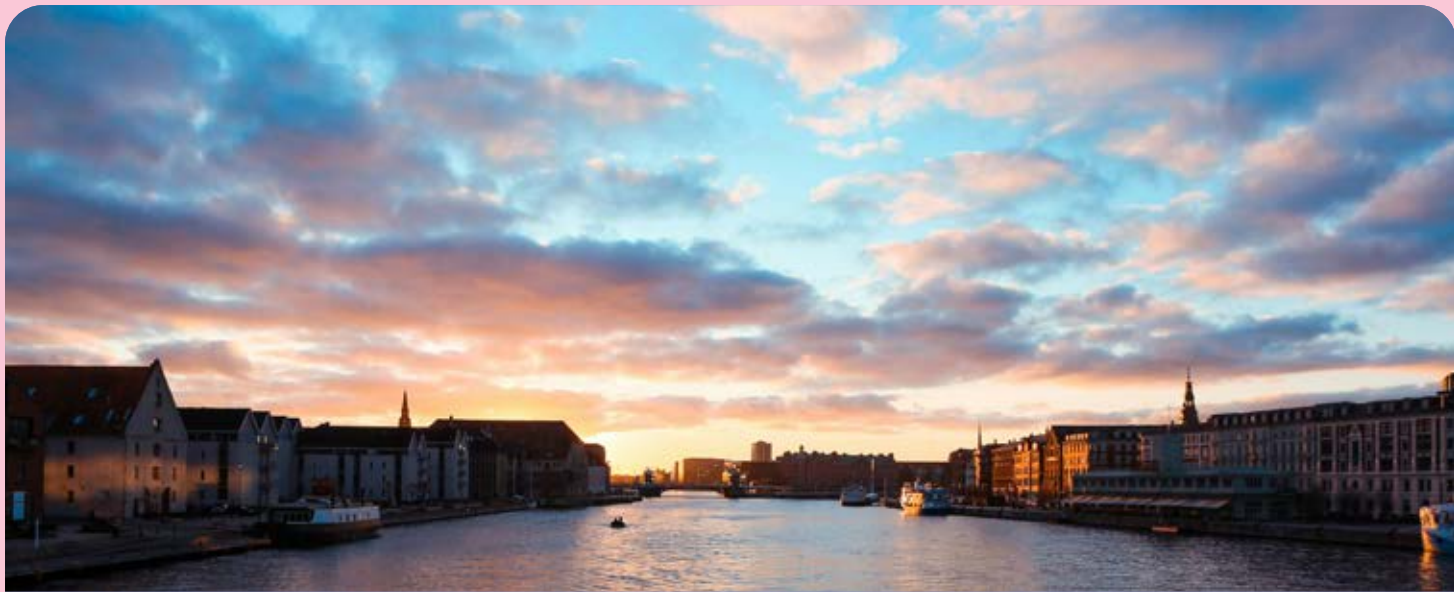


Photo: Nick Karvounis / Unsplash

# Methodology

Cloetta has partnered with Ipsos Sweden for this report to conduct a multidimensional research:

## Qualitative research

An online community running for 1 week in Sweden with 27 people aged 16-60 (October 17-23, 2024).

Participants were a mix of rural and urban people in different life stages; singles, families and empty nesters.

*To understand individuals' perceptions of joy and joyful moments.*

## Quantitative research

A survey in online panel with 1000 respondents (national representation, aged 18-75 years-old) in the following countries: Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland (November 25 - December 3, 2024).

A survey in online panel with 500 respondents (national representation, aged 18-75 years-old) in the following countries: UK, Germany, Netherlands, Spain (February 6-13, 2025).

*To quantify the components and moments of joy.*

## Desk research

A broad ad-hoc research on the topic of joy from a theoretical point of view (sociology, philosophy, articles, essays, etc).

*To decipher the true nature of joy, key shifts in recent years and the current drivers of joy.*

## Expert interviews

Interviews and discussions with globally-renowned experts from the Nordics, on the topic of happiness and joy.

*To gain relevant insights on joy in general and in the Nordics and support our findings.*



# Introduction of the Experts

## Academic experts



**Micael Dahlen**

Professor, speaker, and acclaimed

author Micael Dahlen holds the first professorship in Wellbeing, Welfare, and Happiness at the Stockholm School of Economics. With a strong understanding and engagement with the human condition, he has written books on topics such as happiness and long-term wellbeing, encouraging readers to embrace human nature, improve organisations, and live better lives by connecting to the small things in life.



**Frank Martela**

Frank Martela is a researcher

with PhDs in philosophy (University of Helsinki) and organisational research (Aalto University), as well as being a docent in wellbeing psychology (University of Tampere). His research focuses on happiness, meaningfulness, human needs, and the good life, providing insights to help people live better, more self-chosen lives. Frank is an expert on national happiness, particularly why Finland and other Nordic countries are so happy.

## Project lead



**Alexander Dedovets**

Alexander Dedovets is the Global

Insights and Media Director at Cloetta, with extensive experience in consumer and market research, business analytics, and marketing. With true empathy for the consumer and passion for research, he finds joy in transforming complex data into clear and actionable insights.

## Ipsos researchers



**Andreas Lindholm**  
Head of Ipsos Strategy3 Sweden

Andreas has over 15 years of experience working with insight led brand strategies and business development at some of Sweden's leading brand agencies.



**Ashley Adé**  
Senior Insight Consultant

Ashley has 10 years of experience in consumer insights, foresight, and consultancy. At Ipsos Strategy3, she uses trends and foresight to help clients anticipate current and future challenges.



**Katarina Slotte**  
Client Director

Katarina has over 20 years of experience in consumer insights and consultancy. She specialises in brand research and leads the market strategy consulting team at Ipsos.

The research conducted by Ipsos was made possible thanks to the valuable collaboration of Heléne Hedlund (Quantitative Senior Insight Consultant) and Ulf Boreus (Qualitative Senior Insight Consultant)



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