

World Happiness Report 2017

Why in news?

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World Happiness Report 2017 was released recently at the United Nations at an event celebrating International Day of Happiness.

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What are the criteria for the ranking?

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The happiness rankings are based on six factors.

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- GDP per capita
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- Healthy years of life expectancy,
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- Social Support,
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- Trust (measured by a perceived absence of corruption),
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- Perceived Freedom to make life decisions &
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- Generosity (measured by recent donations).
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- The 2017 report also included a chapter on ‘Happiness at Work’ as the numbers of hours spent at work are usually a big part of people’s lifetimes.

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What are the findings of the report?

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- Norway emerged at the top, displacing three-time topper Denmark.
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- Denmark dropped to second place, followed by Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand.
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- Australia and Sweden are tied for ninth place.
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- The US came in 14th place, dropping one place.
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- The report also points out that happiness is falling in the US, primarily due to social causes rather than economic.
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- Germany came in 16th place for the second time, UK moved up four spots to 19th place and Russia moved up seven spots to 49th place.
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- Japan moved up two spots to 51st place, while China moved up four spots to 79th place.
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- Five bottom-most countries on the 155 countries list are Burundi, Tanzania, Syria, Rwanda and the Central African Republic.
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- The report finds that the overwhelming importance of having a job helps in inducing happiness.
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- People with a job evaluate the quality of their lives much more favourably than those who are unemployed.
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- The data also shows that rising unemployment negatively affects everyone, even those still employed.
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Where does India stand?

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- India is among the world's least happy nations.
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- It always stood lower than Pakistan, China and Bangladesh.
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- Its ranking has been declining steadily from 111st in 2013 to 118th in 2016.
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- It is now ranked at 122 out of 155 countries, irrespective of the progress in per capita GDP over these years.

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What are the reasons for the poor ranking?

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- **Economy** - There is a huge disparity in the purchasing power of the Indian population.
- Nearly one-fourth of the population still lives below the poverty line.
- According to a 2016 World Bank report, India has the most number of people i.e about 224 million, in the world living below the international poverty line of \$1.90.
- Though, economics are not the only indicator of happiness, it is a necessary factor.
- Poverty also brings malnutrition and abysmal public health for a huge section of the population.

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- **Opportunities** - Opportunities for development and acquiring knowledge and skills for gainful employment are at the heart of happiness. India lags here too.

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- Access to education beyond higher secondary schooling is restricted to a mere 10% among the university-age population in India.
- The disparity exists across genders, socio-economic religious groups and geographical regions.
- There is a huge shortfall in public infrastructure for education.
- Fewer higher education institutions necessitate fierce competition among scores of contenders, inducing undue amounts of stress on young students.

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- This combined with social perception of success and pressure to keeps a majority of young individuals from reaching a place of satisfaction and stability.

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- **Women Safety - Lack of safety and security to women is also** a key factor to low societal happiness.

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- According to NCRB, crime against women grew by 34% between 2012-15.

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- **Liberty** - India also lacks in **perception of personal liberties**.

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- Events like Supreme Court's order about National anthem in cinemas, the politicisation of universities or violence against creative expression like movies contribute to this sense of insecurity.

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- **Mental Health** - While India has made significant strides in the public health sector since independence, mental health care continues to be grossly underfunded.

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- The government spends only 0.06% of its total health spending on mental care, while U.S. spends around 6%, UK 10% and Bangladesh 0.44 %.

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- But at least 7% of Indians suffer from mental health problems.

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- Also the psychiatrist to population ratio currently remains a grossly inadequate at 1/2-3 lakh people.

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Source: The Indian Express, Livemint

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