

## World's happiest countries

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Despite the global pandemic and other recent challenges, happiness abounds around the world.

Stacker

compiled a list of the world's happiest countries

World's happiest countries

Updated Jul 20, 2022

World's happiest countries

Considering what people are dealing with these days—the ongoing pandemic, worldwide inflation, rising economic uncertainty, and tension among countries—being happy may seem like it takes more effort than it used to. Although some people may think of happiness as living a luxurious lifestyle or achieving fame, research shows that happiness actually comes down to a few, much more basic things including clean drinking water, affordable health care, and a healthy work-life balance.

Every year since 2012, the United Nations has published its World Happiness Report, ranking over 150 countries from the happiest to least happy. The score is based on responses from adults representing all walks of life to the “Cantril Ladder” question, a prompt that asks participants to evaluate the quality of their lives on a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 representing the worst possible life (or bottom rung,) and 10 representing the best (or top rung).

Besides revealing the quality of lives of its participants, the report factors in six key variables including gross domestic product per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption; it also explores the connection between government and happiness, the effects of prosocial behavior, and how information technology has transformed how we communicate with each other and become informed.

Using data from the 2022 World Happiness Report, Stacker compiled the top 50 happiest countries across the globe, from least happy (#50) to happiest (#1). This research includes the impact the pandemic has had on each country. Read on to see which countries are home to some of the happiest people on the planet.

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Jacob Lund // Shutterstock

#50. Kuwait

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#50. Kuwait

- Happiness score: 6.106

Kuwait, an emirate country in the Middle East, is highly developed with a high-earning economy backed by one of the world's largest oil reserves. Aside from the country's thriving economy, religion plays a huge role in daily life. Most Kuwaitis are Muslim and pray multiple times a day due to Islamic practices.

There have been findings that suggest religion can have a positive effect on health and happiness. A 2009 study found that participants had lower levels of depression and anxiety and were happier after prayer sessions in which they prayed for one another. This was in comparison to the control group that did not participate in prayer sessions.

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#49. El Salvador

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#49. El Salvador

- Happiness score: 6.120

El Salvador sits below Guatemala in a region full of picturesque mountain ranges and sprawling coastlines. Though it has long suffered from gang violence that's left it with some of the highest murder rates in the world, the gang activity is concentrated in certain municipalities—with other parts of the country enjoying higher safety and security. In a 2017 Gallup poll of Central America, Salvadorans reported the highest increase in satisfaction in the past decade, with 44% saying they were happy.

Milosz Maslanka // Shutterstock

#48. Poland

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#48. Poland

- Happiness score: 6.123

Although Poland has been through its fair share of political turmoil, particularly after World War II, the Central European country has maintained relatively high levels of happiness. This may partly be attributed to its attitude of “Jakos to bedzie,” loosely translated as “things will work out in the end.”

itsmejust // Shutterstock

#47. Croatia

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#47. Croatia

- Happiness score: 6.125

Croatia, located in Southeastern Europe, sits along the Adriatic Sea across from Italy. Known for its relaxing vibe, the nation boasts an array of landscapes, from low mountains and highlands to a multitude of pristine beaches. There's something for everyone to enjoy when it comes to taking in the scenery. Additionally, Croatia has ranked high globally when it comes to safety. A November 2021 study published by Landgeist found that people feel safe walking around Croatia's streets at night.

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#46. Mexico

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#46. Mexico

- Happiness score: 6.128

Unfortunately, the pandemic took a major toll on Mexicans. When the country passed universal health care legislation in 2012, Mexico enjoyed one of the happiest societies in the world; unfortunately, the impact of COVID saw this Latin American nation drop 23 places on the World Happiness Index since 2019. Still, it remains in the top 50, and one of the main reasons is that Mexican society is a deeply social one.

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Kamira // Shutterstock

#45. Nicaragua

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#45. Nicaragua

- Happiness score: 6.165

This Central American nation sits directly above Costa Rica and boasts gorgeous beaches, lush green jungles, and a low ecological footprint. In the years following the region's brutal wars in the 1980s, it became recognized as one of the safest countries in Central America, causing tourism to grow exponentially. Since then, an uprising in early 2018 disrupted its appeal to travelers, and more recently a government crackdown on freedom of expression and religion, along with an olive branch extended to Russia, has further soured this nation's tourist appeal.

Canva

#44. Chile

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#44. Chile

- Happiness score: 6.172

Lining the western coastline of the southern half of South America, Chile is a stunning nation full of natural wonders—including rivers and valleys, lakes, forests, and famous mountain ranges. Although it suffered for decades under the horrific dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, Chile has been inching closer to full democracy in recent years. The United Nations' Human Development Index listed it as a “flawed democracy” in 2017, meaning it has free and fair elections but with limitations—such as media censorship, low participation, and an underdeveloped political culture. Furthermore, the World Bank classified Chile as one of the fastest growing economies in the world with a gross domestic product increase of just under 12% in 2021, pandemic notwithstanding.

Jose Luis Stephens // Shutterstock

#43. Serbia

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#43. Serbia

- Happiness score: 6.178

Despite current worldwide inflation and Russia's war on Ukraine, Serbia has remained economically stable. Serbia's central bank has predicted a 3.5% to 4.5% growth in the nation's gross domestic product for 2022, less than initially forecast but in line with accepted ratios. During a time when there's much reason for economic uncertainty, this Southern European country has made strides to remain financially consistent.

Slavica Stajic // Shutterstock  
#42. Latvia  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#42. Latvia  
- Happiness score: 6.180

Latvia, located in Southern Europe, declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Latvia scored 74.8 on the 2022 Index of Economic Freedom, making its economy among the 20 "free-est" in the world. The country is solid in monetary, trade, and investment freedom even after the impact of COVID, which is something to be happy about.

Alex Tihonovs // Shutterstock  
#41. Cyprus  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#41. Cyprus  
- Happiness score: 6.221

According to Greek mythology, this Mediterranean island country was the birthplace of Aphrodite, the ancient Greek goddess of love. With long life expectancies rivaling that of fellow first-world countries and a relatively high GDP, Cyprus—and all its breathtaking views—has a lot to offer its residents. The country finds itself toward the bottom of the list mainly for its history of corruption, and for the long-running separatist movement in Northern Cyprus, where ethnic Turks are concentrated and seek independence (or to officially become part of Turkey), while Greek-speaking residents keep to the south.

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#40. Kazakhstan  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#40. Kazakhstan  
- Happiness score: 6.234

Kazakhstan, a republic of Central Asia, may not be a household name in the U.S. when it comes to foreign countries, but this nation is rich in history. Nomadic tribes originally settled in Kazakhstan, and in the 13th century, the Mongol Empire invaded the territory.

Since declaring independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan has experienced rapid growth. Foreign direct investments coupled with copious amounts of fossil fuels (natural gas, oil, and coal) have placed the country in a position to have a thriving economy.

Jane Peimer // Shutterstock  
#39. Guatemala  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#39. Guatemala  
- Happiness score: 6.262

Guatemala has faced significant challenges over the years, including violent crime, rampant government corruption, and extreme poverty. Yet the people of this small Central American nation, which sits just south of Mexico, consistently remain some of the happiest folks on Earth. This can be attributed to a combination of strong community involvement, lots of physical activity, and the widespread presence of religion—the latter being a mix of Catholicism and Mayan spirituality.

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#38. Brazil  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#38. Brazil  
- Happiness score: 6.293

Brazil is South America's largest country, covering 3.28 million square miles of terrain. Poverty and corruption are major issues in Brazil, but its people are nevertheless determined to keep their chins up. In 2017, the Fundação Getúlio Vargas organization launched an initiative called the Well Being Brazil Index to begin quantifying and tracking happiness in various cities to improve its citizens' quality of life. The OECD's Better Life Index also finds that the nation's civic engagement is very high.

IrenaV  
#37. Panama  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#37. Panama  
- Happiness score: 6.309

Located south of Costa Rica and just north of the equator, Panama acts as a bridge between Central and South America. It is one of the poorest countries in the world yet scores high points on virtually every happiness survey in which it participates. In 2014, it was named the world's happiest country in a Gallup and Healthways Global poll, towering over all other nations by 17 percentage points. The 2022 World Happiness Report found that Panamanians have very little perception of systemic corruption, which is a solid contributor to their sense of national pride.

Canva  
#36. Estonia

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#36. Estonia

- Happiness score: 6.341

Situated in Northern Europe, Estonia is a country of greenery, composed mostly of forests and moraine hills. Family life plays a significant role for Estonians. Estonia's family-friendly policies for both men and women and affordable, quality child care seem to keep its residents happy. In fact, it's been said that Estonia is one of the most family-friendly countries in Europe.

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#35. Slovakia

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#35. Slovakia

- Happiness score: 6.391

Just below Poland, the nation of Slovakia sits amid the stunning Tatras mountains—the highest mountain range in the Carpathians. According to a 2021 Social Progress Index, the Eastern European country has dramatically improved its basic needs indicators, such as clean drinking water, nutrition, hygiene, personal safety, health care, and access to information.

Peter Hanzes // Shutterstock

#34. Lithuania

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#34. Lithuania

- Happiness score: 6.446

Located northeast of Poland on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, Lithuania enjoys low unemployment rates and healthy levels of work-life balance. Famous for its Cepelinai potato-meat-dumplings, the country is the happiest of all the Baltic nations on the World Happiness Report; it also has a Social Progress Index of over 85, meaning personal rights, access to health care and education, and water and sanitation are all highly ranked against the rest of the world average.

Canva

#33. Malta

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#33. Malta

- Happiness score: 6.447

This island nation sits south of Italy in the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded by a pool of beautiful blue-green waters. The country excels especially in the categories of "social support" and "freedom to make life choices."

Patryk Kosmider // Shutterstock

#32. Kosovo

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#32. Kosovo

- Happiness score: 6.455

This tiny, self-declared independent country tied with Japan, Canada, and several others as the world's 8th-safest country according to Gallup's 2021 Law and Order Poll. The country is also in the top 50 for conducting business and comes in at #13 among the best 190 countries for starting a business (the corporate tax rate is just 10%).

K.choktravel // Shutterstock

#31. Italy

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#31. Italy

- Happiness score: 6.467

Famed for its cobbled streets, delicious pasta dishes, and cultural landmarks, Italy never slumps far below many of its European neighbors in happiness rankings. The country offers reasonable rent prices (outside of big cities) and some of the best weather in the region. The city with the best quality of life is Trieste, according to a recent study that examined factors including crime, health services, job opportunities, and social distress.

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Kristi Blokhin // Shutterstock

#30. Uruguay

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#30. Uruguay

- Happiness score: 6.474

Uruguay is situated east of Argentina, north of the mouth of the surging Rio de La Plata. The small South American nation is famous for its socially progressive policies and, as of 2020, stood beside Costa Rica as the only other country in Latin America to be listed as a full democracy on The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index.

Canva

#29. Spain

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#29. Spain

- Happiness score: 6.476

Spain sits on Europe's Iberian Peninsula, just north of Algeria and Morocco. Although the job market has struggled in recent years, its high-quality, single-payer health care system, which was listed as the eighth best in the world by CEOWorld Magazine's 2021 Health Care Index, is affordable and universal to all citizens.

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#28. Romania

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#28. Romania

- Happiness score: 6.477

After a 20th century fraught with conflict—Soviet occupation in 1944, communist rule from 1948 to 1989—today's Romanians seem to grow happier by the moment. The country is up more than 20 spots from #52 on the 2018 Happiness Report, and #57 in 2017. Free elections, advances in industry, and improved relations with the rest of the world (including becoming part of NATO and the European Union) have only bolstered Romanians' resiliency. The country received a high score in Freedom House's 2020 rankings of freedom across the globe.

Canva

#27. Singapore

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#27. Singapore

- Happiness score: 6.480

Just off the southern coast of Malaysia sits Singapore, a vibrant island city-state with a cosmopolitan vibe. The city has been ranked #1 in Asia multiple times for quality of living, by Mercer. It also landed at #9 worldwide on the Institute for Economics & Peace's 2022 Global Peace Index.

lamDoctorEgg // Shutterstock

#26. Taiwan Province of China

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#26. Taiwan Province of China

- Happiness score: 6.512

Taiwan has experienced major economic growth over the years as well as increased life expectancy. The mid-1990s marked a period of growth where residents from mainland China who were highly educated migrated to Taiwan. This shift boosted economic growth and generated a demographic transition.

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Canva

#25. Saudi Arabia

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#25. Saudi Arabia

- Happiness score: 6.523

Located south of Iraq in the center of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is a mixture of mountainous regions and sprawling deserts between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Although the absolute monarchy has strict rules limiting personal freedoms—particularly those of women—and a poor track record with human rights, it offers an excellent road system, great health care, good salaries, reasonable working hours, and a lower cost of living than many of its neighboring Gulf countries.

Mohammed younos // Shutterstock

#24. United Arab Emirates

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#24. United Arab Emirates

- Happiness score: 6.576

Located south of Qatar on the Persian Gulf, this Middle Eastern country is most famous for its dazzling capital city of Dubai, world-renowned modern architecture, luxury hotels, and bustling nightlife. The nation reaps considerable economic benefits due to its sizable oil wealth, which figures into its happiness ranking.

Canva

#23. Costa Rica

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#23. Costa Rica

- Happiness score: 6.582

Things are good in this peaceful Central American country, which abolished its army in 1948 and offers universal health care to its citizens—earning it the nickname the “Switzerland of Central America.” It's filled with lush rainforests, mountainous volcanoes, and sunny tropical beaches, boasting 6% of the world's biodiversity. The “pura vida” nation received one of the highest scores on Freedom House's 2022 World Freedom Report, which cited the nation's democratic stability.

Canva

#22. Slovenia

Updated Jul 20, 2022

#22. Slovenia

- Happiness score: 6.630

Slovenias ski slopes, lakes, and culture are world-famous, and those attributes help to make it one of the happiest places in the world. In

addition, Slovenia ties with Singapore as the best country in the world for children, largely for its ability to educate its young and to prevent teen pregnancies.

RossHelen // Shutterstock  
#21. Bahrain  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#21. Bahrain  
- Happiness score: 6.647

With high salaries and a thriving ex-pat community, this Persian Gulf nation off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia enjoys widespread financial stability and a large degree of wealth. On top of that, a law passed in 2018 mandates a nationally provided health care insurance system for every resident.

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Canva  
#20. France  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#20. France  
- Happiness score: 6.687

With more tourists than any other country on Earth, the world is clearly drawn to this picturesque Western European country; yet, the French have a long history of being labeled as gloomy and morose, which is at odds with the celebratory nature of French society.

Marc Bruxelle // Shutterstock  
#19. Belgium  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#19. Belgium  
- Happiness score: 6.805

Just north of Luxembourg is Belgium, known for its world-class beer and delectable chocolate treats. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Belgium scores above average in numerous quality-of-life factors, including income, work-life balance, health, education, and civic engagement.

Anton\_Ivanov // Shutterstock  
#18. Czechia  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#18. Czechia  
- Happiness score: 6.920

Despite challenging times in recent years, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the war Russia forged in Ukraine, residents of Czechia have remained optimistic. Those who reside in Czechia can still enjoy an affordable lifestyle and an overall decent quality of life. In the 2019 Quality of Life Index, Czechia received high rankings in the Basic Human Needs category.

Canva  
#17. United Kingdom  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#17. United Kingdom  
- Happiness score: 6.943

The United Kingdom has struggled economically in recent years amid rising inflation and ongoing Brexit negotiations. Nevertheless, the Western European country has reported climbing happiness metrics every year since the Office for National Statistics began keeping track in 2011, with greater satisfaction levels in England than in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland.

Canva  
#16. United States  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#16. United States  
- Happiness score: 6.977

As Britons get happier, Americans have continued to struggle with their sense of national identity. A recent Gallup poll found that just 38% of Americans are "extremely proud" to be so. Still, when combined with the 27% who say they are "very proud" to be Americans, you have a society that is more positive than not—even if the most recent numbers can't hold a candle to the 91% of "extremely proud" folks the U.S. had in 2004.

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Canva  
#15. Canada  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#15. Canada  
- Happiness score: 7.025

The United States' neighbor to the north has quite a lot going for it in terms of social benefits. Freedom House's 2022 Freedom in the World Report gave the country a 98/100, reflecting its "strong history of respect for political rights and civil liberties." The 2021 Global Law and Order Report listed it among the top 10 safest countries. And Save the Children's 2021 Global Childhood Report placed Canadian society in the top 25 in terms of quality of life, safety, and available services for children.

Kiev.Victor // Shutterstock  
#14. Germany  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#14. Germany  
- Happiness score: 7.034

Germany performs well on many major happiness indicators. The people are healthy, with access to universal health care and an average life expectancy of 81 years. The country's 2014 decision to abolish tuition fees for undergraduate students at all public universities has led to increased engagement with higher education. U.S. News and World Report places the country #3 in the world for education. Germany is a social market economy, meaning its variation of capitalism also includes certain social services guarantees, which has been a significant benefit as the German population has begun to age.

Canva  
#13. Ireland  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#13. Ireland  
- Happiness score: 7.041

Nearly three decades after the IRA ceasefire of 1994, Ireland boasts a stable democracy. The 2020 Social Progress Index ranked the country as a Tier 1 nation, reflecting foundations of personal rights, access to food, clean water, and medical care, and overall health and wellness, among other qualities. Moreover, Ireland is one of the freest countries in the world.

Canva  
#12. Australia  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#12. Australia  
- Happiness score: 7.162

With its sunny beaches and sprawling outback that draws millions of tourists every year, Australia is often ranked highly for its citizens' quality of life. The country has high-quality drinking water, above-average voter turnout rates, and relatively low unemployment. While COVID did put a dent in this nation's overall sense of wellbeing, 77% of Australians still identify as happy.

Canva  
#11. Austria  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#11. Austria  
- Happiness score: 7.163

Nestled in a cluster of six European countries, Austria is known for its elegant castles, traditional cuisines, and bold wines. Vienna is considered the world's most livable city, with good infrastructure, a plethora of museums and historic sites, and an overall sense of safety and goodwill.

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#10. New Zealand  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#10. New Zealand  
- Happiness score: 7.200

Across the Tasman Sea from Australia sits New Zealand, a land made famous for its natural wonders, helped in part by the "Lord Of The Rings" trilogy, which was filmed there in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The laid-back country uses 40% renewable energy and was named the second-most peaceful country in the world on IEP's Global Peace Index, topped only by Iceland.

Stargrass // Shutterstock  
#9. Israel  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#9. Israel  
- Happiness score: 7.364

Tucked amid the cradle of civilization is Israel with its rich geography, including high mountain ranges, low fertile valleys, sprawling deserts, and coastal plains. The Middle Eastern nation has a high life expectancy that has increased nearly five years since the turn of the century and an exceptional universal health care system that's been running for over 20 years.

Canva  
#8. Norway  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#8. Norway  
- Happiness score: 7.365

Not only is Norway among the happiest places on Earth—it's one of the most beautiful, too. The country is covered in towering mountains, fjords, and sweeping coastal lookouts with scenic points that look like they came from postcards. Its citizens have access to free education, high-quality universal health care, and high living wages. Norway topped the Democracy Index in 2021, as well as the 2020 Social Progress Index.

Kiev.Victor // Shutterstock  
#7. Sweden  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#7. Sweden

- Happiness score: 7.384

The first of several Nordic countries in the top 10, Sweden is famous for its meatballs and lingonberry jam, as well as iconic superstore IKEA. Its freedom score is perfect, and it is one of the most democratic countries in the world as well, sustaining a multiparty system astride a parliamentary monarchy.

Lena Ivanova // Shutterstock  
#6. Luxembourg  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#6. Luxembourg  
- Happiness score: 7.404

Nestled in between Belgium, France, and Germany, the tiny country of Luxembourg enjoys lush green countryside and a charming mix of cultures. As one of the world's major financial centers, the country consistently ranks in the top-five richest countries in the world. While money can't buy happiness, as the saying goes, it doesn't exactly hurt either.

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#5. Netherlands  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#5. Netherlands  
- Happiness score: 7.415

Filled with some of the most progressive citizens on Earth, the Netherlands boasts a high-functioning universal health care system and an above-average life expectancy of 82 years. The forward-thinking European nation was ranked #15 worldwide on the Social Progress Imperative's Social Progress Index, scoring high points for exceptional drinking water, excellent nutrition, great medical care, easy access to information, and expansive civil liberties.

Yasonya // Shutterstock  
#4. Switzerland  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#4. Switzerland  
- Happiness score: 7.512

Known for its picturesque alpine meadows and ultra-low taxes, Switzerland has many reasons to be happy. Its infrastructure is fantastic, its economy is soaring, and the health care system is often called the best in the world. Moreover, its status as a neutral nation has kept it largely out of international conflicts. It is ranked fifth on the Social Progress Imperative's Social Progress Index

Canva  
#3. Iceland  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#3. Iceland  
- Happiness score: 7.557

With tax rates lower than the OECD average, Iceland ticks off many of the high quality-of-life boxes. Both health care and education are free, life expectancy at birth is 83 years, and it's been ranked the most peaceful country on Earth every year since 2008 on the IEP's Global Peace Index.

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Quizame  
#2. Denmark  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#2. Denmark  
- Happiness score: 7.636

Denmark is brimming with natural beauty, vast agricultural resources, and ranks as the fourth most peaceful country in the world. Its democracy and social progress rankings are also among the best in the world. High-quality education, free health care, and good old-fashioned Danish hygge are among the reasons this nation is so joyful.



Canva  
#1. Finland  
Updated Jul 20, 2022  
#1. Finland  
- Happiness score: 7.821

It seems that every social, political, and environmental marker comes together in keeping this Nordic nation at the top of the heap. Finland ranks second only to Norway on the Social Progress Index; the Global Peace Index sets it at #14; it is a top-three democracy; and it is among the freest countries in the world. It only stands to reason that Finlanders should get so much out of life.

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