



# **PRESSURE BUILDS ON WORLD'S POLICY-MAKERS TO PUT HAPPINESS AT CENTRE**

## **World Happiness Report Ranks Happiest Nations**

**MONTREAL** – As the United Nations prepares to choose its Sustainable Development Goals for post-2015, the second World Happiness Report adds to the case for including wellbeing among these goals. The report is sponsored by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), established by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and shows how measurements of wellbeing can be used effectively to judge the progress of nations.

On a scale running from 0 to 10, people in over 150 countries, surveyed by Gallup over the period 2010-12, reveal an average score of 5. National averages span a wide range from 2.9 in the bottom five countries (all in sub-Saharan Africa) to 7.5 in the top five countries (all in Northern Europe). Six key variables explain 75% of the variation in average happiness scores over time and among countries. These factors include real GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, having someone to count on, perceived freedom to make life choices, freedom from corruption, and generosity.

The Report shows significant happiness trends, with some countries rising and others falling over the past five years. There is some evidence of global convergence of happiness levels, with happiness gains more common in Sub-Saharan Africa, and losses more common among the industrial countries, including especially those countries most affected by the financial crises starting in 2007. Overall, gainers outnumber losers.

For policy-makers the key issue is what affects happiness. Some studies show mental health to be the single most important determinant of whether a person is happy or not. Yet, even in rich countries fewer than a third of mentally ill people are in treatment. Efficient, cost-effective treatments exist and the level of happiness in the world would be greatly increased if they were more available.

The report also shows the major beneficial side-effects of happiness. Happy people live longer. They are more productive and earn more. They are also better citizens. So wellbeing should be developed both for its own sake and for its side-effects.

Governments worldwide are now measuring subjective wellbeing or considering whether to do so. In this report, the OECD explains the thinking behind their new international standard guidelines for measuring wellbeing. We predict that governments around the world will increasingly take wellbeing as an objective of policy in the near future.

The World Happiness Report 2013 was launched at a major international conference and the OECD guidelines were explained in detail in parallel sessions.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Jerry Lee**



## Winter 2014 Internship

In 2014 the IHSP welcomed ten McGill students from across the University for a 14-week Internship. Training sessions focused on communicating research findings to the media or general public, and gaining insight into different disciplinary approaches. In addition to in-depth research projects carried out in collaboration with faculty and staff, interns devoted ten to fifteen hours to short policy projects on a topic of their choice. Students were asked to frame an issue, find at least two points of supporting evidence and develop rudimentary policy recommendations. The above document reflects the short timeframe given to students to complete this task, and may not be a polished product.

*Please note the opinions reflected in this document do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the IHSP.*