

To Be Happy and Economically Productive

Section: Economy

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Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the macroeconomic indicator that has traditionally been used to measure economic development. One of the criticisms of this way of measuring it is that it does not incorporate the dimension of people's well-being. The economist Amartya Sen ([1999](#)) already emphasized that true development should be centered on improving people's capabilities and freedoms, rather than simply increasing economic production.

Following this idea, the [World Happiness Report](#), which emerged in 2012 as a collaboration between various institutions such as Gallup, the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, the UN Sustainable Development Network, and the Editorial Committee of the WHR, responds to this global demand to place greater attention on happiness and well-being as criteria for government policy. This report reviews the current state of happiness in the world, ranking countries according to the well-being of their citizens. Beyond GDP per capita, it also considers other variables such as social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and corruption. Thus, we can see how countries with high levels of well-being, such as Finland or Denmark, not only have happier citizens but also have more stable and sustainable economies.

In this way, the relationship between happiness and economy is

stronger than it seems. [A scientific study on labor economics and happiness shows that happiness makes people more productive](#), with lower happiness being systematically associated with lower productivity. Therefore, happiness drives creativity, motivation, and willingness to collaborate, which can lead to economic improvements.

On the other hand, another scientific study shows how mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, which negatively affect happiness, not only impact individuals but also incur high economic costs due to lost productivity and healthcare expenses. The same study also suggests that [treating these mental health disorders, which have negative effects on happiness, can generate a positive return by reducing costs associated with lost productivity and healthcare spending](#).

Therefore, we see that development goes beyond pure economic and productive growth and must also take into account human happiness and well-being. In other words, it is urgent to follow an approach that considers both economic growth and people's happiness—an approach that allows people to be happy and economically productive.