OPEN ACCESS

Global Journal of Research in Business Management
ISSN: 2583-6218 (Online)
Volume 06 | Issue 03 | May-June | 2026
Journal homepage: https://gjrpublication.com/gjrbm/

Research Article

Analysis of Paradox of Wealth and Happiness in Contest of Global Richest and Happiest Countries

***Dr. Hossain K. A.**

Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Maritime University, Dhaka 1216, Bangladesh.
ORCID ID: 0009-0007-0892-6069

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20367541 **Submission Date: 02 April 2026 | Published Date: 25 May 2026**

Abstract

In today's world wealth provides a baseline for fulfillment of wish, security and comfort and the highest levels of happiness are driven by social factors, trust, and equitable distribution, rather than simply having the highest GDP per capita. However, the paradox of wealth, and happiness is frequently articulated through the 'Easterlin Paradox,' which posits that although higher income correlates with greater happiness among nations at a specific moment, sustained economic growth within a country does not inherently result in increased happiness over time. By 2026, this contradiction is manifest in the disparity between the highest-GDP countries, such as Qatar and Singapore, and the happiest nations, like Finland and Denmark, with the Gini Coefficient serving as a crucial mediator. Reduced inequality is strongly associated with increased national happiness. The wealthiest nations, such as Singapore, Qatar, and Ireland, based on GDP per capita in 2026, are frequently characterized by their abundance of energy resources or their status as financial centers. Only a select number of countries, such as Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, are effectively integrating high income with elevated levels of happiness. Conversely, affluent nations like as Singapore and Qatar are absent from the top 20 happiest countries. The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) have comparatively low Gini coefficients, robust social safety nets, elevated institutional trust, and high happiness indices. Conversely, significant inequality diminishes the general pleasure of a nation; for instance, Bangladesh has considerable income gaps, reflected in a high Gini coefficient of approximately 0.50. Inequality adversely affects happiness, especially when financial disparity is substantial, as it heightens social comparison and diminishes life satisfaction. This article will evaluate the relationship and paradox between wealth, and happiness in regard to the richest and happiest countries in the world giving emphasis of the Gini coefficient.

Keywords: *Wealth, happiness, GDP, Geni-coefficient, income inequality.*

Introduction

Economists have begun studying happiness instead of just GDP. While Western economies have grown since the 1950s, personal happiness has not increased. Individual wealth correlates with happiness, but overall societal wealth does not.[1] The general perception of the ranking of the world's wealthiest countries typically includes economic powerhouses such as the United States, China, Japan, and Germany. Nevertheless, no country is invariably deemed affluent just based on its land area, natural resources, geographical position, etc. Notably, several of the world's wealthiest nations are small yet highly developed economically, with income levels much surpassing worldwide norms. Consequently, while comparing the wealthiest nations globally, many wealth measurement systems are employed. Economists evaluate nations' total output through Gross Domestic Product (GDP), output per capita (GDP per capita), Purchasing Power Parity, or national net wealth. Each statistic elucidates a distinct aspect of a nation's economy. The wealthiest nations globally are assessed based on GDP, GDP per capita, purchasing power parity, and national net worth. Small, affluent nations typically excel owing to robust financial sectors and favorable tax regimes for investors. The United States, China, and Japan are presently the wealthiest countries based on GDP. The countries with the highest GDP per capita are Monaco, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Bermuda, and Ireland. Notably, countries such as Monaco and Luxembourg possess the highest wealth per capita globally. Nevertheless, total GDP quantifies the complete worth of all products and services generated inside a nation's borders. When assessed at prevailing market prices, it is referred to as nominal GDP.

That statistic is the most frequently referenced metric for evaluating the magnitude of national economies. The United States consistently ranks first globally in nominal GDP, rendering it the wealthiest nation in terms of overall output. Nonetheless, substantial population sizes might obscure this metric when evaluating wealth per capita. To gauge the average prosperity of citizens, economists calculate total GDP divided by the nation's population. This statistic indicates the economic production produced per capita and is frequently utilized as a benchmark for living standards. Smaller nations like Monaco, Liechtenstein, and Luxembourg consistently rank highly, demonstrating significant production and affluence despite their limited populations. Conversely, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) modifies GDP to reflect variations in the cost of living across nations. Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) offers a more accurate assessment of comparative economic power and living standards by analyzing the cost of a basket of commodities across different nations. In this regard, China frequently exceeds the United States, as its goods and services are more affordable in relation to income levels. Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is very advantageous for juxtaposing developing and advanced economies. Another method to assess a prosperous nation is by examining its national net worth. This is the aggregate value of a nation's assets, encompassing real estate, equities, and natural resources, subtracted by its liabilities, including debt obligations. This metric assesses enduring economic vitality, investment capacity, and fiscal robustness. The United States and China lead in global wealth in absolute terms, although nations such as Qatar and Norway derive advantages from sovereign wealth funds established through natural resource earnings. [2]

Easterlin demonstrates that US income per capita nearly doubled from 1974 to 2004, while the average happiness level exhibited no significant increasing trend. The perplexing discovery, termed the Easterlin Paradox, has been corroborated in analogous investigations by psychologists (Diener et al. 1995)[3] and political scientists (Inglehart 1990)[4], and has been validated for European nations (Easterlin 1995)[5]. Conversely, life happiness seems to exhibit a strictly monotonically growing relationship with income when analyzed cross-nationally at a specific point in time (Inglehart et al. 2008, Deaton 2008, Stevenson and Wolfers 2008) [6,7,8]. To align the cross-sectional evidence with the Easterlin Paradox, it has been proposed that the positive correlation between happiness and income dissipates above a certain income threshold (Layard 2005, Layard et al. 2008, McBride 2010, Di Tella et al. 2010) [9,10,11,12]. Deaton (2008) and Stevenson and Wolfers (2008) have challenged this interpretation, asserting that a positive correlation exists between GDP and life happiness in developed nations. Easterlin et al. (2010)[13] challenge this viewpoint, presenting research that suggests there is no long-term effect, especially in poor nations. Recently, Benjamin et al. (2012) demonstrate that optimizing an individual's utility may not necessarily align with enhancing life pleasure. This presents the theoretical potential that, at equilibrium, reduced income level may correlate with increased life satisfaction.[14] The Easterlin Paradox elucidates that individuals assess their income in relation to that of their peers. If all individuals see an increase in income, their relative standing stays unchanged, resulting in no impact on happiness.

Today's research indicates that the happiest countries frequently emphasize robust institutional trust and extensive access to public services rather than solely individual income creation. The 2026 research reveals that certain countries, like Costa Rica (ranked 4th), attain significant pleasure at a minimal expense, demonstrating that affluence is merely one factor. Furthermore, in some regions, wealth disparity is markedly more severe than income inequality, with a minuscule few possessing an excessive fraction of total assets.[15] Although revenue is crucial for fulfilling fundamental necessities, after a certain threshold, the incremental increase in enjoyment derived from riches diminishes. The most content nations are not always the wealthiest in GDP but are the most egalitarian, utilizing their resources to ensure high security, trust, and public services, so reconciling the dichotomy between financial richness and well-being. According to the World Inequality Report 2026, less than 60,000 individuals currently possess three times the wealth of the bottom half of the global population, reflecting a profound level of inequality. The Guardian claimed that a study, conducted by 200 experts, illustrates a world where financial power has concentrated to unprecedented levels, resulting in billions possessing merely a fraction of global income and wealth.[16] This article will analyze the global ranking of countries in terms of wealth, utilizing pertinent criteria to highlight top performers and the distinctions between these measures, with the objective of elucidating the rationale behind the ranking methodology. This study will also examine and analyze the relationship and paradox between wealth, income, and happiness in the context of the world's richest and happiest countries, utilizing the Gini coefficient. This paper will attempt to address the following questions.

a. What is the idea of GDP and related perspective?
b. What are the top rich countries in the world in respect of different GDP measure?
c. What is the measurement of national wealth and ranking of countries in the world?
d. What are the top happiest countries in the world?

e. What is the Paradox between wealth and happiness?
f. How Gini-coefficient and income inequality become corelated?

Literature Review and Perspective Global Data

Today's the country's wealth is quantified using a variety of economic indicators. Organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank employ a variety of economic indicators, including GDP, GDP per capita, and purchasing power, to compare national economies. These indicators emphasize distinct aspects of wealth. As a consequence, the status of the world's wealthiest nation is contingent upon the metric employed for comparison. At present, investment attractiveness is also used to evaluate economic resilience. Factors such as tax efficacy, market competitiveness, and GNI per capita are critical in determining the economic appeal of a country, as per the Investment Index by Global Citizen Solutions. This implies that the discussion of the wealthiest nations is not solely focused on their wealth, but also on the extent to which their environments are conducive to global mobility, economic opportunity, and investment. The total value of all products and services produced within a country's borders is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Nominal GDP is the term used to refer to GDP that is computed at current market prices. This figure is the most frequently referenced metric for comparing the magnitude of national economies. For instance, the United States is the wealthiest nation in terms of total production, as it consistently ranks first in the world in nominal GDP. Nevertheless, this metric may be diluted when wealth per individual is taken into account due to the large size of the population. The total monetary value of all products and services produced and sold within a country over a year is once again referred to as GDP. There are no adjustments for inflation or cost-of-living differences in GDP, which is a reflection of current prices and exchange rates. The table below displays the top 20 richest countries in the globe by gross domestic product (GDP) in 2026, as determined by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).[17]

Rank	Country	GDP
1	United States	$32.38 trillion
2	China	$20.85 trillion
3	Germany	$5.45 trillion
4	Japan	$4.38 trillion
5	United Kingdom	$4.26 trillion
6	India	$4.15 trillion
7	France	$3.6 trillion
8	Italy	$2.74 trillion
9	Russia	$2.66 trillion
10	Brazil	$2.64 trillion
11	Canada	$2.51 trillion
12	Australia	$2.12 trillion
13	Mexico	$2.12 trillion
14	Spain	$2.09 trillion
15	South Korea	$1.93 trillion
16	Turkey	$1.64 trillion
17	Indonesia	$1.54 trillion
18	Netherlands	$1.45 trillion
19	Saudi Arabia	$1.39 trillion
20	Switzerland	$1.15 trillion

Table 1: The 20 richest countries in the world by GDP in gross/total in 2026[18]

There is a significantly different perspective is obtained by quantifying the wealth per capita of the world's wealthiest nations. Nevertheless, Monaco is the most prosperous nation on the list, with a GDP per capita that exceeds $250,000. This is a result of its limited population, foreign investment, and thriving banking sector. Foreign nationals are permitted to reside in Monaco for a period exceeding three months annually through the Monaco Residence permit. The metric emphasizes that certain tiny nations outperform global giants. Illustrating that the distribution of wealth and the standard of living are equally significant as the total GDP. Table 2 below displays the top 20 wealthiest countries in the globe in terms of GDP per capita. Consequently, GDP per capita offers a more nuanced perspective by accounting for the population size. This metric facilitates the comparison of living standards across various nations by providing insight into the average wealth and income levels within a country. Figure 1 illustrates the identification of countries by their GDP per capita.

Rank	Country	GDP per Capita ($)
1	Monaco	256,581
2	Liechtenstein	231,713
3	Luxembourg	146,818
4	Bermuda	138,935
5	Ireland	129,132
6	Switzerland	111,047
7	Iceland	98,15
8	Cayman Islands	97,75
9	Singapore	94,481
10	Norway	91,884
11	United States	89,599
12	Isle of Man	88,329
13	Denmark	76,581
14	Macao	74,921
15	Netherlands	73,174
16	Faeroe Islands	71,774
17	Qatar	71,441
18	Australia	65,946
19	San Marino	65,269
20	Sweden	62,036

Table 2: The 20 richest countries in the world by GDP per capita

Again, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is a metric that adjusts GDP to reflect the relative cost of living. China is the leader in this regard, with a PPP-adjusted GDP of over $41 trillion. This is indicative of China's extensive domestic market and its reduced-price levels in comparison to economies such as the United States. Second is the United States, followed by India, whose PPP GDP has surpassed $17 trillion as a result of its accelerated growth. The top five is completed by Japan and Russia, which are supported by substantial industrial and energy sectors. The measurement of GDP in PPP terms offers a more comprehensive understanding of the economic strength of emerging markets, as countries with reduced living costs have a greater purchasing power in comparison to their nominal GDP. Table 3 beneath illustrates the world's twenty wealthiest nations in terms of GDP (PPP).

Rank	Country	PPP ($ trillion)
1	China	41.02
2	United States	30.62
3	India	17.71
4	Russia	7.14
5	Japan	6.76
6	Germany	6.15
7	Indonesia	05.02
8	Brazil	4.97
9	France	4.53
10	United Kingdom	4.45
11	Turkey	3.77
12	Italy	3.72
13	Mexico	3.44
14	South Korea	3.36
15	Spain	2.83
16	Canada	2.72
17	Saudi Arabia	2.69
18	Egypt	2.38
19	Nigeria	2.25
20	Poland	02.02

Table 3: The 20 Richest Countries in the World by GDP (PPP)

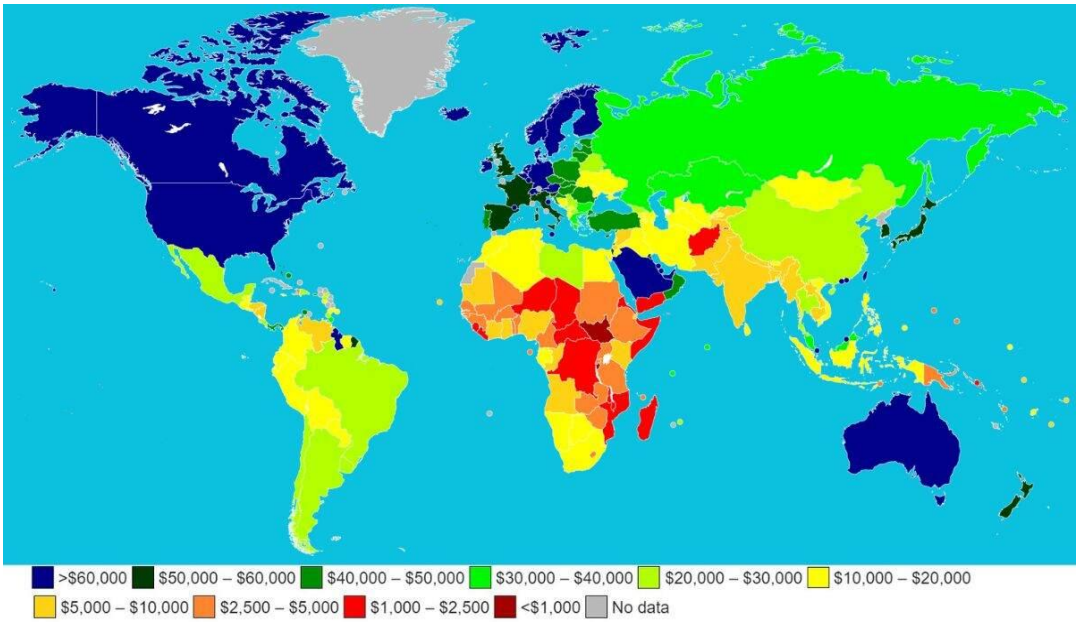

Figure 1: The countries of the world can be identified as GDP per capita[19]

On the other hand, the global wealthiest nations are depicted in a distinct light by GDP (PPP) per capita. Once more, the high-income levels of minor wealthy nations contribute to their successful performance. Furthermore, the cost of living is a significant factor, which is why countries such as Macao, Qatar, and Bermuda are ranked highly. The Cayman Islands are an excellent choice for individuals who are interested in optimizing their tax obligations, in addition to being one of the wealthiest countries in the world. In exchange for an economic contribution, the Cayman Islands Residency by Investment program enables international nationals to obtain residency in the country. Table 4 displays the top 20 wealthiest nations in the globe in terms of GDP (PPP) per capita.

Rank	Country	PPP per Capita ($)
1	Liechtenstein	201,112
2	Singapore	156,969
3	Luxembourg	152,395
4	Ireland	147,878
5	Macao	132,648
6	Qatar	122,283
7	Bermuda	119,719
8	Norway	106,694
9	Switzerland	97,659
10	Brunei	94,472
11	Guyana	94,189
12	United States	89,599
13	Cayman Islands	86,689
14	Taiwan	85,127
15	Denmark	84,763
16	United Arab Emirates	84,403
17	Netherlands	84,035
18	San Marino	82,886
19	Iceland	80,466
20	Hong Kong	78,919

Table 4: The top 10 countries

However, national net wealth is a measure of the value of a country's assets, such as real estate, financial markets, natural resources, and sovereign wealth funds, after subtracting its liabilities. The United States is the global leader in housing, corporate equity, and technological innovation, with unparalleled assets. Our Global Intelligence Unit has determined that national wealth, GDP, and human development indicators are not only indicators of prosperity, but also have an impact on

the global authority of a country's passport, as well as its appeal as a citizenship and residence. This indicator emphasizes the way in which stability and long-term assets contribute to the nation's recognition as one of the wealthiest in the world. Table 5 below displays the top 20 wealthiest nations in the globe measured by national net wealth.

Rank	Country	National Wealth ($ billion)
1	United States	139,866
2	China	84,485
3	Japan	22,582
4	Germany	17,426
5	France	15,989
6	United Kingdom	15,972
7	India	15,365
8	Canada	11,263
9	Italy	11,02
10	South Korea	9,89
11	Australia	9,72
12	Spain	8,487
13	Taiwan	5,422
14	Netherlands	4,869
15	Mexico	4,863
16	Switzerland	4,829
17	Brazil	4,628
18	Russia	4,386
19	Hong Kong	3,493
20	Indonesia	3,256

Table 5: The top 20 wealthiest nations in the globe in terms of GDP (PPP) per capita

National Wealth and Ranking of Countries

The total value of a country's assets minus its liabilities is referred to as national net wealth or national net worth. It is the aggregate value of net wealth that the residents of a state possess at a specific juncture in time.[20] The figures in this article exclusively pertain to domestic wealth and do not include government wealth, which may be substantial, as in China, or negative, as in the UK or US. Consequently, they do not represent the total wealth of the nation. National net wealth is a critical metric that indicates a country's capacity to incur debt and maintain expenditures.[21] It is influenced by a variety of factors, including real estate prices, equity market prices, exchange rates, liabilities, and the incidence of the population in a given country. Additionally, human resources, natural resources, capital, and technological advancements may either generate new assets or render others obsolete in the future. The domestic net wealth or worth, which is commonly reported and reflects infrastructure investment, is the most significant component in most developed nations. As evidenced by the United States' economic recovery following the Great Recession, national wealth can fluctuate. The relative national and per capita wealth of countries that are more exposed to these markets, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, tend to increase during periods of robust equity market growth. Conversely, when equity markets are weak, the relative wealth of countries where individuals invest more in bonds and real estate, such as France and Italy, tends to increase.

Income and purchasing power

In the majority of countries, earned capital is an annual figure that is calculated and reported. The gross domestic product is the aggregate of all income that is generated within the country. A value that is hardly comparable is obtained when the number of inhabitants is converted to this income. This is due to the fact that income is not comparable across countries if it cannot be spent on identical items. In order to compare an income, it is necessary to take into account the price structure of the respective countries. In numerous countries, it is common to rent an apartment for $500 per month. However, in an impoverished developing nation, one can acquire a half-palace for the same amount. In contrast, a sparsely furnished room is the most expensive option in a wealthy nation such as Singapore. By adjusting incomes for purchasing power, we can create a fictitious currency that is internationally comparable: the PPP dollar, which is named after the term "Purchasing Power Parity." The data from 2024 is the basis for the calculations in this table. Later-year evaluations are anticipated to be conducted in the initial months of the subsequent year, following the collection and publication of economic data. [22]

Wealth in small countries

It is not remarkable that a significant number of small countries are ranked in the top ten. 16 of the top 20 wealthiest nations have a population of less than 10 million. The majority of minor countries are not industrial nations that are internationally positioned; rather, they derive the majority of their revenue from financial products. For instance, the Arab Emirates and Qatar possess substantial petroleum deposits. Luxembourg and Ireland are recognized in Europe for their ability to offer secure and tax-efficient residences to global corporations, including Apple, Google, and Amazon. Numerous countries that are highly ranked in this list are also regarded as tax havens.[23] Simultaneously, the cost of supplying the population in numerous minor states is significantly lower due to the rapid installation of transport routes or cables. The provision of high-speed Internet throughout a country such as Luxembourg is fundamentally distinct from that of the United States or Australia. Germany (21st) and Australia (22nd) are also well-positioned, but the impressive rating of the United States (eleventh place) is unexpected from this perspective.[24] Africa and South Asia are the regions in which the majority of countries are experiencing destitution. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most severely afflicted region on Earth in terms of the number of individuals affected. This is the location where two-thirds of the population struggling with acute poverty resides. At present, Central Africa is the world's most impoverished nation, with an annual income of $1,248 when adjusted for purchasing power. However, there is a silver lining: the number of individuals residing in acute poverty, with an income of less than $1.90 per day, has declined considerably in recent years.[25]

The Human Development Index (HDI)

The HDI was established to underscore the importance of evaluating a country's development based on the capabilities of its people, rather than solely on economic growth. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of the average achievement in key dimensions of human development, including a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a reasonable standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of the normalized indices for each of the three dimensions. The Human Development Index was created by the United Nations Development Programme to facilitate more effective monitoring. It encompasses factors such as life expectancy and average years of education, in addition to income.[26] Consequently, the index more accurately reflects the functioning of medical care and education in a given country on a scale of 0 to 1. Greater the value, the more advanced the country's human development.

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

In this context, the multidimensional poverty index, which was published by the United Nations in collaboration with Oxford University, is even more significant. In this context, multidimensionality refers to the consideration of a variety of poverty manifestations. Access to water and electricity, as well as nutrition and shelter, are included in the index, in addition to the HDI's criteria. Consequently, poverty is no longer restricted to financial circumstances in this measurement method; it encompasses supplementary factors of living conditions.[27] The intensity of deprivation and the proportion of the population that is affected or at risk are the components of the index. The MPI is quantified on a scale of 0 to 1, with 0 representing the least deprivation and the most optimal value. The MPI data that is referenced in this document is from 2025.

Gross national income as the basis for the calculation

The greater a nation's wealth, the greater its expenditures on administration and statistics compilation. Nevertheless, this is not the case for the most impoverished countries. Many of them are unable to afford or desire the indulgence of a Federal Statistical Office, as they already have a significant amount of responsibility for their own budget management. Consequently, it is frequently impossible to acquire data that is meaningful. For instance, the World Bank accumulates a variety of assessments regarding poverty's severity.[28] The data sets have not included the impoverished countries in particular for years, and in some cases, decades, due to the lack of available data. Eritrea's poverty rate is 69%, as reported by the World Bank. Eritrea's most recent available figure is from 1993. Only figures that are more than a decade old are available for approximately 30 additional countries. Despite the fact that the United Nations MPI is published annually, it is derived from data that is available, some of which is several years ancient. Therefore, it is exceedingly difficult to quantify the genuine extent of poverty in accordance with more precise criteria. This would be effective in terms of prosperity, as all wealthy nations disclose their statistics. Consequently, the sole criterion that is applicable to all countries for the purpose of a current country comparison is Gross National Income (GNI).

The health dimension is evaluated based on the life expectancy at birth, while the education dimension is quantified by the average number of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and older and the anticipated number of years of schooling

for children of school-going age. Gross national income per capita is the metric used to assess the standard of living. The HDI employs the logarithm of income to illustrate the decreasing significance of income as the gross national income (GNI) increases. The geometric mean is employed to aggregate the scores of the three HDI dimension indices into a composite index. For additional information, consult the technical notes. The HDI can be employed to challenge national policy decisions by examining how two countries with identical levels of GNI per capita can achieve disparate human development outcomes. The following contrasts have the potential to incite a discussion regarding the priorities of government policy. The index, as per HelloSafe, a travel insurance comparison site, integrates GDP (global domestic product) and GNI (gross national income) with quality-of-life factors such as income equality, poverty rates, and the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI is a metric that considers life expectancy, education, and GNI per capita, providing a more comprehensive understanding of what it truly means to be wealthy in 2026. In conclusion, the countries at the top of the list are not merely financially prosperous; they are also experiencing prosperity. A nation with a well-off populace will surpass one in which wealth is concentrated in a few individuals.[29] Norway has secured the top position for the first time, achieving an impressive 77.65 out of 100.[30] The Nordic nation's economy is the most "balanced" in the ranking due to its robust social systems, low inequality, and high-income levels. Ireland is immediately following in second position.[31]

HelloSafe reports that the country's gross national income is ranked seventh in the world, despite the fact that its $150,865 GDP per capita is primarily due to companies such as Apple, Google, and Pfizer, rather than actual Irish residents. The first time in the history of this index that Luxembourg was displaced from the top position, it was ranked third. In fourth and fifth place, Switzerland and Iceland followed, forming a trio that is dominated by small, high-income European countries that consistently measure well in terms of both earnings and living standards.[32] Singapore is the sole non-European nation in the top 10, and it ranks highly in terms of income.[33],[34] However, it is penalized for its elevated inequality levels. Continue scrolling to access the complete list. Nevertheless, the world's wealthiest nation in 2025 was determined by Aviation A2Z based on gross domestic product per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity.[35] The country boasted an impressive $156,760 per person, narrowly surpassing Luxembourg at $152,920 and Macao at $134,040 in the closely contested rankings. The city-state's extraordinary wealth is the result of its strategic location at the intersection of major international shipping lanes, consistent pro-business policies, robust political stability, a sophisticated financial services sector, and world-class infrastructure. These factors continue to draw multinational corporations and high-net-worth individuals from around the world.[36] Table 6 below displays the world's wealthiest nations as determined by the 2026 HelloSafe Prosperity Index.

1.	Norway	(77.65)
2.	Ireland	(75.06)
3.	Luxembourg	(74.39)
4.	Switzerland	(72.46)
5.	Iceland	(72.23)
6.	Singapore	(66.43)
7.	Denmark	(65.43)
8.	Netherlands	(58.17)
9.	Belgium	(54.83)
10.	Sweden	(54.62)
11.	Qatar	(50.60)
12.	Germany	(50.41)
13.	United-Arab-Emirates	(50.22)
14.	Finland	(49.13)
15.	Australia	(46.24)
16.	Austria	(43.46)
17.	United-States	(43.39)
18.	Canada	(39.44)
19.	Czech-Republic	(38.49)
20.	France	(38.12)

Table 6: The world's richest countries, according to the HelloSafe Prosperity Index 2026[37]

Discussion and Analysis of Global Ranking of Richest/Wealthiest Countries

Global Richest Countries

The wealthiest countries in the world in 2026 are contingent upon the definition of "richest." The total monetary value of all products and services produced and sold within a country over a year, divided by its population, is denoted as GDP per Capita. Conversely, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the aggregate monetary value of all commodities and services that are produced and sold within a nation during a single year. There are no adjustments for inflation or cost-of-living differences in GDP, which is a reflection of current prices and exchange rates.[38] Nevertheless, Luxembourg is the leader in terms of GDP per capita (nominal), a critical metric that indicates the average economic output per person, with an estimated $154,000 per person. Ireland and Switzerland follow in that order. Many of the top positions are occupied by small, high-income economies, which are frequently financial centers or resource-rich states. On the other hand, the United States (approximately $31.8 trillion) and China (approximately $20.7 trillion) are the largest economies in terms of total GDP. The concept and narrative will be elucidated using the data for ranking the wealthiest nations behind them (IMF 2025 projections for 2026) and alternative metrics such as GDP (PPP) and GNI per capita. It is imperative that we understand the reasons why small countries dominate per-capita rankings and that we examine the constraints of GDP per capita as a metric of wealth.[39] The table 2 below displays the total GDP and per capita GDP of countries worldwide.

It is intriguing that Ireland's GDP per capita (approximately $135k in 2026) is exceedingly high, surpassing that of the United States and Switzerland. However, this is primarily attributable to the fact that numerous multinational corporations have established their European operations and profit reporting operations in Ireland. The low corporate tax rate in Ireland attracted tech titans and pharmaceutical companies, and the profits from their Irish-registered subsidiaries contribute to Ireland's GDP, thereby increasing the figure. Nevertheless, a significant portion of these revenues are not retained in the Irish economy; they may be distributed as dividends to foreign owners or recorded as royalties to parent companies. Consequently, Ireland's gross national income per capita is significantly lesser, at approximately $78k. The Irish central bank employs a unique metric known as "GNI"* (modified GNI) to eliminate these distortions. For instance, Ireland's GDP was approximately 143% of its GNI in 2015, indicating that GDP overstated the genuine national income by approximately 43%. Therefore, Ireland's GDP per capita overstates the wealth of the average Irish individual, despite the fact that it is a high-income country. A substantial portion of that GDP is essentially foreign corporate money that is traveling through. While the Irish economy has authentic strengths (e.g., a highly educated workforce and high-tech exports), it is important to exercise caution when interpreting the GDP figure. So, the epithet "richest" is found in Delima!

The per-capita rankings are dominated by small countries due to a simple ratio effect and their often-unique economic specializations. This is another remarkable phenomenon. GDP per capita is calculated by dividing GDP by the population. If the population is exceedingly small, even a modest GDP generates an enormous per capita figure. Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, and Singapore are global financial centers that attract outsized wealth. Norway and Brunei have oil wealth that is shared among relatively few people. Macao has a lucrative casino tourism industry. Additionally, many small nations have specific advantages. Smaller sizes can also result in more homogeneous, high-productivity activities (and occasionally, less economic diversity, which can be risky, but in peak times, it can mean a very high income per capita). In essence, a very high GDP per capita is the result of a limited population and one or two very high-income sectors. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that every citizen is affluent; it is still an average, and these regions frequently have high living costs or a portion of the GDP that is external (foreign laborers or capital).

Understanding of Richest Country

The expression "richest country" can be used to describe a variety of metrics. It may refer to the nation with the largest total economy (GDP) or the one with the highest income per capita (GDP per capita). The total GDP is a metric that gauges the total economic output of a nation. According to this metric, large economies such as the United States are the most productive, with output in the tens of trillions. Nevertheless, the average prosperity per individual is determined by dividing GDP by population, which results in GDP per capita. This often presents a different perspective; for instance, Luxembourg, a small country with a population of approximately 0.65 million, can surpass economic titans in terms of per-person wealth due to its economy's disproportionately large size in comparison to its small size. In essence, "richest" frequently equates to "small" when examining per-capita figures, as a modest GDP distributed among a small population result in a remarkably high average income per resident. GDP per capita can be expressed in nominal terms (utilizing current market exchange rates) or in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. Nominal GDP per capita (in USD) is a baseline figure that is useful for comparing countries' economic output at market exchange rates. It does not account for cost-of-living differences or

inflation. Conversely, the PPP GDP per capita accounts for inflation and local prices, thereby addressing the question of how much one can really purchase in each country with the same income. PPP is frequently regarded as a more accurate measure of the standard of living due to its ability to account for the cost differences between countries. For instance, a $50,000 income may enable one to maintain a higher standard of living in Portugal than in Switzerland as a result of price disparities. In this article, the term "richest" will predominantly refer to nominal GDP per capita (unless otherwise specified) as it is a common benchmark for financial wealth. However, we will also emphasize PPP and other measures for context.[40] Figure 2 illustrates the world's wealthiest nations in 2026.

Nevertheless, while the total GDP is indicative of economic power, it does not provide insight into the fortune of the average individual. This is the reason why GDP per capita is frequently employed to identify "rich" countries; it represents the average economic production (and, by extension, income) per individual. It is not an entirely accurate indicator of well-being; however, it is correlated with factors such as development and living standards. A high GDP per capita typically indicates a high-income economy, in which the majority of citizens (on average) produce and earn more. As we will observe in 2026, numerous countries with the highest GDP per capita are small, developed nations that possess sophisticated industries or an abundance of natural resources. The position/rankings and figures presented below are derived from the October 2025 edition of the World Economic Outlook (WEO) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which includes projections for 2026. This is one of the most reliable sources for global economic forecasts. The IMF's 2026 projected GDP and GDP per capita (nominal) for each country have been displayed. The GDP figures are expressed in U.S. dollars at current prices or nominal terms.

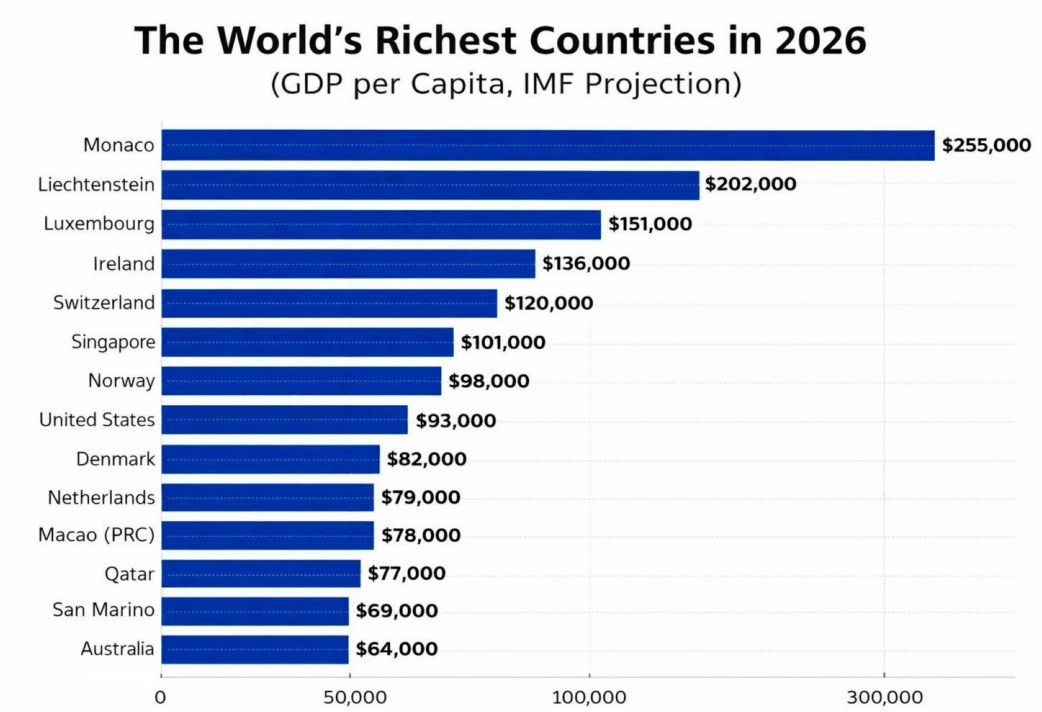

Figure 2: Richest countries in the world in 2026[41]

Richest Countries by GDP per capita (Nominal)

The small countries can dominate per capita rankings by concentrating wealth, whether through finance, resources, or specialized industries. Naturally, this prompts inquiries regarding sustainability and the extent to which the average resident genuinely benefits from this prosperity (issues that we will address in the context of limitations). Subsequently, we will examine alternative methods of defining "richest country" that extend beyond nominal GDP per capita. What distinguishes GDP from GNI? It is important to observe that GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is a metric that assesses the output within a country's borders, whereas GNI (Gross National Income) is a metric that assesses the income of a country's residents and businesses, including returns on investments abroad (but excluding profits that are sent offshore). GDP and GNI per capita are comparable in the majority of large economies. However, in certain minor economies where multinational companies assume a significant role (e.g., Ireland or Luxembourg), GNI per capita can be significantly lower than GDP per capita. This is due to the fact that a significant portion of the "product" in GDP is generated by foreign firms and ultimately exits

the country. Table 7 below displays the top 10 countries by nominal GDP per capita (in USD) in accordance with IMF projections for 2026. The estimated GDP per capita and a significant factor contributing to the wealth of each country are included in each entry. All sources are derived from the 'IMF WEO Oct 2025 projections for 2026.' [42]

Rank/Position	Country	GDP Per Capita (2026)	Key Driver of Wealth
1.	Liechtenstein	~$246,700	Finance & high-tech manufacturing
2.	Luxembourg	~$154,100	Global financial center (banking, investment funds)
3.	Ireland	~$135,200	Tech & pharma multinationals (FDI-driven growth)
4.	Switzerland	~$118,200	Banking, investment, and high-value industries
5.	Iceland	~$108,600	Small population, energy (renewables) & tourism
6.	Singapore	~$99,000	Finance and trade hub (global commerce)
7.	Norway	~$96,600	Oil & gas resources (energy wealth)
8.	United States	~$92,900	Diversified high-productivity economy (tech, finance, etc.)
9.	Denmark	~$82,700	High-tech industries and services, equitable economy
10.	Netherlands	~$77,900	Trade and finance (major logistics & commerce hub)

Table 7: The top 10 countries by nominal GDP per capita (in USD)[43]

The smallest countries dominate the summit of the list, as illustrated in figure 10. Liechtenstein, a microstate with a population of less than 40,000, is the highest-ranking nation, with an astounding per capita income of approximately $246,000. It accomplishes this by combining high-end manufacturing and wealth management (finance), all of which are generated by a very small population. Luxembourg (population approximately 645 thousand) is the second most expensive country, with a per capita income of approximately $154,000. This is due to its investment-friendly policies and substantial financial sector. Ireland is a larger country in the top 5 with a per capita income of approximately $135,000. Its high GDP per person is a result of the significant outputs produced by foreign multinationals, including tech, pharmaceutical, and finance companies, which have their European headquarters in Ireland. However, as we will discuss, not all of this income is retained in Ireland's economy. Switzerland (~$118k) and Iceland (~$109k) complete the top five, respectively. Switzerland capitalizes on its renowned financial industry and high-value manufacturing (pharmaceuticals, precision instruments), while Iceland generates substantial revenue from energy and tourism, despite its small population. Again, countries such as Singapore (~$99k), Norway (~$96.6k), the United States (~$92.9k), and Denmark and the Netherlands (about $80k) are among the most developed European economies. Despite their substantial economies, the United States has only recently entered the per-capita top 10 due to its large population. It is important to note that Monaco, Bermuda, and the Cayman Islands would also be included in the top ten if non-sovereign territories were included (Monaco's GDP per capita is estimated to be over $250k, and Bermuda and Cayman are roughly $130k-$140k respectively). Nevertheless, those are exceptional circumstances. Monaco's wealth is concentrated among a small aristocracy in a city-state that is renowned for its tax-free lifestyle, and Bermuda and Cayman are offshore financial centers. The list above concentrates on countries that have access to IMF data.

A common factor is a relatively significant GDP divided among a small population. Even a modest total GDP can result in a very high per-person figure when the population is reduced. For example, Luxembourg's economy (~$100 billion GDP) is negligible in absolute terms; however, it generates the highest per capita output globally among a population of only approximately 0.6 million. In summary, a country that is economically significant for its size is frequently considered "rich" in per-capita terms. Wealth and corporations are attracted to financial centers in numerous top-performing countries due to their favorable tax and regulatory regimes. Some examples of territories are Singapore, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Bermuda, which were previously known as Cayman. These countries frequently have disproportionately large banking sectors, investment funds, or corporate offices, which generate substantial GDP in comparison to their populations. Singapore is a banking and trade center for Asia, while Luxembourg manages trillions in investment funds. This drives up GDP per capita as these services generate money from global clients. Rich natural resources (such as oil and gas) in a country with a low population are an alternative path to the summit.

This is illustrated by Norway, which has a hydrocarbon wealth per capita of 5.5 million, and Qatar, which has natural gas wealth per capita of approximately 3 million. A very high per-person GDP is achieved by dividing the substantial revenue from hydrocarbons by a small citizenry. Niches are established in high-value industries by certain minor economies. For instance, Switzerland (population approximately 8.7 million) is not particularly diminutive; however, it excels in finance and high-end manufacturing (pharmaceuticals, luxury products). Ireland increased its output by utilizing foreign direct investment (FDI) in technology and pharmaceuticals. Iceland's economy is based on tourism and renewable energy, which generates a high average income for the approximately 380,000 residents. This includes the production of inexpensive electricity for aluminum smelting and crypto mining. Tourism or distinctive gaming industries are the primary sources of

prosperity for a limited number of jurisdictions. Macao SAR (population approximately 680,000) is one of the wealthiest regions in terms of GDP per capita, owing to its substantial casino tourism industry. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Macao continues to be extraordinarily prosperous. In the same vein, island financial-tourism hybrids such as Bermuda exhibit a high GDP per capita.

Richest Countries by GDP Per Capita (PPP)

Although GDP per capita (nominal) is a widely used metric, it is not the sole method of evaluating a nation's wealth. In this section, we offer a concise overview of three alternative measures and the countries that dominate those lists. By accounting for purchasing power parity (PPP), we can determine which countries' residents have the capacity to purchase the most products and services with their income, thereby equating disparities in the cost of living. Utilizing the IMF's 2026 projections for GDP per capita (PPP) in constant international currencies. Luxembourg and Singapore are currently in a virtual tie for the top position. In fact, the IMF data indicates that Singapore's PPP-adjusted GDP per capita is approximately $156,000, which is marginally higher than Luxembourg's approximately $153,000. These two countries, along with Ireland (in the ~$130k+ PPP range), are the world leaders in standardizing for local prices. PPP also ranks countries such as Macao and Qatar extremely high. Qatar's GDP per capita increases to approximately $121,000 in PPP terms (compared to approximately $76,000 in nominal terms). This increase is due to the fact that a significant number of products and services are more affordable in Qatar, which increases the domestic reach of its petrodollar income. Macao's PPP value remains above $130,000. Other Gulf states, such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, also experience an increase in their PPP per capita, which frequently surpasses $70,000, surpassing that of numerous Western nations. In PPP, the United States and Norway continue to rank in the top 10, which is comparable to nominal rankings. However, countries such as Brunei and Saudi Arabia are ranked higher in PPP than in nominal rankings due to their reduced living costs. So, resource-rich economies continue to gain ground, while affluent small countries continue to dominate PPP rankings. The purchasing power parity (PPP) per capita is a more accurate measure of the average living standard. For instance, an income in Switzerland (which is expensive) does not provide as much of a return as an income in Qatar or Singapore (which has reduced relative costs). Consequently, the purchasing power parity (PPP) "equalizes" this variance. For example, Switzerland's nominal GDP per capita is approximately $118,000, but its PPP per capita is approximately $91,000. Conversely, Ireland's nominal GDP per capita is $135,000, but its PPP per capita is approximately $100,000, which is slightly lower than the former due to Ireland's relatively high prices. Therefore, the PPP measurement takes into account both population size and economic output, and while it offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge that it may not provide absolute statistics for precisely ranking the wealthiest and impoverished countries.[44]

Richest Countries by Total GDP (Nominal)

The ranking is completely different if we define "richest" as the sheer economic size (total GDP). Countries with a large population are at the top. The United States is the world's wealthiest country in absolute terms, with a projected GDP of approximately $31.8 trillion, according to the IMF's projections for nominal GDP in 2026. Approximately one-quarter of the global GDP is accounted for by the U.S. economy. It is a multifaceted behemoth, encompassing finance, technology, and consumer markets. China's GDP is approximately $20.7 trillion, which places it in second place once more. Although China's GDP per capita is significantly lower than that of small, wealthy nations (as a result of its population of over 1.4 billion), its overall output is substantial and continues to expand. The United States and China collectively represent an excessive proportion of global output. Conversely, Germany is projected to be a distant third in 2026, with a value of approximately $5.3 trillion, far behind the first two. By this time, India is expected to surpass Japan (approximately $4.46 trillion) as the fourth-largest economy, with an estimated value of $4.5 trillion. India's rapid development is reducing the gap with Japan, but these rankings are subject to change based on growth rates and exchange rates. Completing the top ten by total GDP are Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Russia, and Canada. The range is closely followed by economies such as Brazil, South Korea, and Australia. So, the world's largest economies are the wealthiest countries in terms of total GDP, a correlation that is highly correlated with industrial output and population. These are the engines of global economic activity, despite the fact that their wealth per capita varies significantly. It serves as a reminder that countries such as China and India, despite their lesser per capita income, are essential when discussing global wealth due to their size.

Richest Countries by GNI Per Capita

The World Bank classified countries by income level using the Gross National Income per capita (GNI per capita) metric (Atlas Method). It is comparable to GDP per capita, but it accounts for income that is genuinely retained by residents. The Atlas method further smooths exchange rate fluctuations by averaging rates over three years. Norway is among the top

countries in terms of GNI per capita, with an average of $98,300 (Atlas method) per person, as indicated by the most recent World Bank Atlas GNI data (circa 2024, which we employ as a proxy for 2026 rankings). This is indicative of Norway's oil income, which is distributed among a population of 5.5 million. It is also significant that Norway's GNI is nearly equal to its GDP, as there is minimal foreign profit outflow and oil revenues primarily benefit the national economy. Nevertheless, Switzerland is next in terms of GNI per capita, with an estimated $95,900, and Luxembourg at approximately $91,500. These figures are marginally lower than their GDP per capita figures, suggesting a net income outflow (particularly in Luxembourg, where a significant number of cross-border workers contribute to the GDP but transfer their income abroad). According to the Atlas method, the United States has a gross national income (GNI) of approximately $83,600 per capita, which is indicative of its substantial national income. Iceland (~$78,500), Denmark (~$73,800), and the Netherlands (~$62,800) are among the other high-GNI countries. These values emphasize the fact that numerous sophisticated economies are clustered around GNI per capita in the tens of thousands.

Ireland is a notable exception: Its GNI per capita (Atlas) is approximately $77,900, which is significantly lower than the $100k+ GDP per capita of Ireland. This discrepancy is the result of a substantial portion of profits being repatriated or attributed to foreign shareholders, and a significant portion of Ireland's GDP is generated by foreign companies (tech, pharma). In recent years, Ireland's GDP has reached as high as 140–150% of its modified GNI (GNI*). In such instances, the gross national income per capita (GNI) provides a more accurate representation of Ireland's domestically accruing income, which is significantly less "rich" than its GDP figures. It is also important to mention that certain minor financial havens have a high GNI per capita. For instance, Bermuda (a UK territory) is the world's top-ranked country with approximately $140,000 in GNI per capita, a result of its wealth management sector. However, Bermuda is not a sovereign country. GNI is also high among sovereigns, including hydrocarbon nations such as Qatar (GNI ~$76.7k) and wealthy Asian city-states like Singapore (GNI ~$74.8k). In many countries, GNI per capita is generally in line with GDP per capita. However, in instances of distortions (such as tax havens and profit shifting), GNI is lower and arguably more indicative of the income available to the population. Thus, Norway, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and the United States are classified as genuinely high-income nations based on their gross national income (GNI), while countries such as Ireland and Luxembourg exhibit somewhat diminished figures after adjustment. GNI per capita is a valuable supplementary metric for determining whether a country's GDP has been artificially inflated by foreign enterprises.

Reason for Small Countries Domination in the Rankings

The population of numerous of the wealthiest countries per capita is, in fact, quite small. There are several primary reasons why these tiny countries dominate the GDP per capita rankings. A common factor is a relatively significant GDP divided among a small population. Even a modest total GDP can result in a very high per-person figure when the population is reduced. For example, Luxembourg's economy (~$100 billion GDP) is negligible in absolute terms; however, it generates the highest per capita output globally among a population of only approximately 0.6 million. In summary, a country that is economically significant for its size is frequently considered "rich" in per-capita terms. Once more, there are numerous financial hubs that are top-performing countries, and they are able to attract capital and corporations due to their favorable tax and regulatory regimes. Some examples of territories are Singapore, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Bermuda, which were previously known as Cayman. These countries frequently have disproportionately large banking sectors, investment funds, or corporate offices, which generate substantial GDP in comparison to their populations. Singapore is a banking and trade center for Asia, while Luxembourg manages trillions in investment funds. This drives up GDP per capita as these services generate money from global clients.

An additional factor contributing to the ascendance of these small, wealthy nations is the abundance of natural resources (such as oil and gas) in a country with a low population. This is illustrated by Norway, which has a hydrocarbon wealth per capita of 5.5 million, and Qatar, which has natural gas wealth per capita of approximately 3 million. A very high per-person GDP is achieved by dividing the substantial revenue from hydrocarbons by a small citizenry. Brunei, which is not among the top 10 but is frequently referenced, is another example. It has a hydrocarbon wealth that is shared among approximately 440,000 individuals. Nevertheless, certain minor economies establish footholds in high-value industries. For instance, Switzerland (population approximately 8.7 million) is not particularly diminutive; however, it excels in finance and high-end manufacturing (pharmaceuticals, luxury products). Ireland increased its output by utilizing foreign direct investment (FDI) in technology and pharmaceuticals. Iceland's economy is based on tourism and renewable energy, which generates a high average income for the approximately 380,000 residents. This includes the production of inexpensive electricity for aluminum smelting and crypto mining. Tourism and distinctive/unique facilities are additional

intriguing factors. Tourism or distinctive gaming industries are the primary sources of prosperity for a limited number of jurisdictions. Macao SAR (population approximately 680,000) is one of the wealthiest regions in terms of GDP per capita, owing to its substantial casino tourism industry. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Macao continues to be extraordinarily prosperous. In the same vein, island financial-tourism hybrids such as Bermuda exhibit a high GDP per capita. These instances demonstrate that the per capita figure for the local population is still increased, despite the fact that a significant portion of GDP is derived from foreign businesses or visitors.

Discussion and Analysis of Ranking of Happiest Countries and Paradox

The World Happiness Report's use of a single-item indicator of subjective well-being is different from more traditional Index approaches which use a range of indicators like the United Nations' Human Development Index, the OECD Better Life Index of 2011, or the Social Progress Index of 2013. Additionally, there is an ongoing debate regarding single-item and multi-item scales as measures of life satisfaction.[45] Again, the idea that individual well-being can be captured by a survey has also been contested by economists, who have identified that people's assessments of their happiness can be affected by how, for example, their country's education system grades exams, and that survey questions on subjective well-being are affected by response styles.[46] The notion that money can procure pleasure is a prevalent one. Possessing money entails the capacity to engage in activities that bring us joy, opportunities, and a comfortable lifestyle. Nevertheless, the notion that prosperity directly induces happiness is contested by research. After our fundamental requirements are satisfied, an increase in wealth does not necessarily translate into better satisfaction. Additionally, the pursuit of additional income may result in an insatiable desire for more, which can have an impact on other aspects of our lives, including our health, relationships, and self-esteem.[47] The term "happiness" is employed not only in the context of mental or affective states, but also in the context of subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Wealth is a complex concept in that the pleasure it provides does not increase as we accumulate more wealth.[48] The delight we experience does not increase in tandem with our income. This occurs as we become accustomed to having more and begin to desire even more. Additionally, the pursuit of prosperity can result in negative consequences, such as increased stress, reduced leisure time, and a diminished sense of control over one's life. Therefore, the relationship between great wealth and happiness is more intricate than we may initially believe.[49] In 1979, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the monarch of Bhutan, declared, "We do not subscribe to Gross National Product." Gross National Happiness is of greater significance. His statements are accurate. Money is not an end in itself. Now, the issue is, "Why do we require a substantial amount of money if we are not content?" Numerous endeavors have been undertaken to quantify contentment since that time. A World Happiness Report is an example of such an endeavor. The World contentment Report is a benchmark survey that ranks nations based on the level of contentment that their residents perceive.[50]

As of 2020, Finland has been recognized as the world's happiest nation. Maintaining the top position for the third consecutive year is the only remaining objective. Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, New Zealand, Austria, Luxembourg, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Israel, Costa Rica, Ireland, Germany, United States, Czech Republic, and Belgium were the top 20 happiest nations in 2020. Afghanistan is the most unhappy nation in the globe in 2020. War conflicts, political vulnerability, and economic disarray have been a nearly constant reality for the residents of Afghanistan. The poverty line is the point at which over 40% of the nation's population resides. Afghanistan, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Rwanda comprised the top 20 nations that experienced the most unhappiness in 2020. The Central African Republic, Tanzania, Botswana, Yemen, Malawi, India, Lesotho, Haiti, Zambia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Egypt, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Togo, and Comoros. UAE ranks 21st in the 2025 World Happiness Report, Saudi Arabia ranks 22nd, the United States ranks 23rd, the United Kingdom ranks 29, France ranks 35, Japan ranks 61st, China ranks 65th, Iran ranks 97th, Pakistan ranks 104th, Ukraine ranks 111st, India ranks 116th, Somalia ranks 117th, Bangladesh ranks 127th, Myanmar ranks 129th, Sri Lanka ranks 134th, and Afghanistan ranks 147th.[51] Finland is currently the world's happiest nation, with a score of 7.74, closely followed by Denmark and Iceland in 2026. Strengthened social safety nets, widespread access to public services, and a high level of trust in institutions are all indicators of Nordic countries' consistently strong performance. It is important to note that Costa Rica and Mexico are included in the top 10 despite having significantly lesser GDP per capita than many of their European counterparts. In the interim, Singapore and Qatar, two of the world's wealthiest economies, are not included in the top 20 happiest countries.[52] The table 8 below displays the top 20 happiest countries in the globe in 2026.[53] Nevertheless, the is the theoretical, qualitative, and quantitative examination of happiness and quality of life, which encompasses positive and negative effects, well-being, life satisfaction, and related concepts. This field typically involves a more intimate connection between economics and other social sciences, such as sociology and psychology, as well as physical health.[54] It generally prioritizes subjective happiness-related metrics and more objective quality of life indices over wealth, income, or profit.[55] The Happier Lives Institute figure is derived from the data presented in the 2025 World Happiness Report. The World Happiness Report, the world's most renowned publication on global wellbeing and its enhancement, has recently disclosed its 2025 rankings, which are determined by self-reported happiness. The Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford, in collaboration with Gallup and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, has published the report. Figure 3 illustrates the global happiness rankings, according to the World Happiness Report 2026 below.[56]

Sl No	Country Ranking	Score
1	Finland	7.764
2	Iceland	7.540
3	Denmark	7.539
4	Costa Rica	7.439
5	Sweden	7.255
6	Norway	7.242
7	Netherlands	7.223
8	Israel	7.187
9	Luxembourg	7.063
10	Switzerland	7.018
11	New Zealand	6.995
12	Mexico	6.972
13	Ireland	6.928
14	Belgium	6.926
15	Australia	6.916
16	Kosovo	6.910
17	Germany	6.882
18	Slovenia	6.868
19	Austria	6.845
20	Czechia	6.821

Table 8: The top 20 happiest country in the world in 2026 [57]

Paradox of Wealth and Happiness Overlap

The income per capita of the world's wealthiest nations is astronomical. However, some of the most prosperous nations are surprisingly deficient in terms of life satisfaction. This graphic compares GDP per capita (PPP) based on IMF data with happiness scores from the World Happiness Report, which asks individuals to rate their circumstances on a scale of 0 to 10, as illustrated in figure 3.[58],[59] Young individuals in North America and Western Europe are significantly less content than they were 15 years ago. During the same time frame, there has been a substantial rise in the use of social media.[60] Numerous individuals attribute this decline in contentment to a variety of factors, such as social media. In terms of GDP (PPP) per capita, Liechtenstein is the leader with a value of more than $206,000 per person, followed by Luxembourg and Singapore. The top 10 is dominated by a number of minors, globally connected economies, such as Ireland and Macao SAR. Nevertheless, money has been long associated with the pursuit of pleasure and is the age-old pursuit of wealth. However, the correlation between wealth and contentment is not straightforward. In reality, it is a paradox. Is it possible to purchase pleasure with money, or does it have an associated cost? The question that has captivated philosophers, economists, and psychologists for centuries is this. On the surface, it may appear straightforward that a higher income would result in more contentment. Ultimately, money can offer us security, comfort, and access to experiences and possessions that bring us pleasure. Nevertheless, research indicates that the correlation between money and happiness diminishes once our fundamental requirements are satisfied. The influence on our overall well-being diminishes as our income increases.

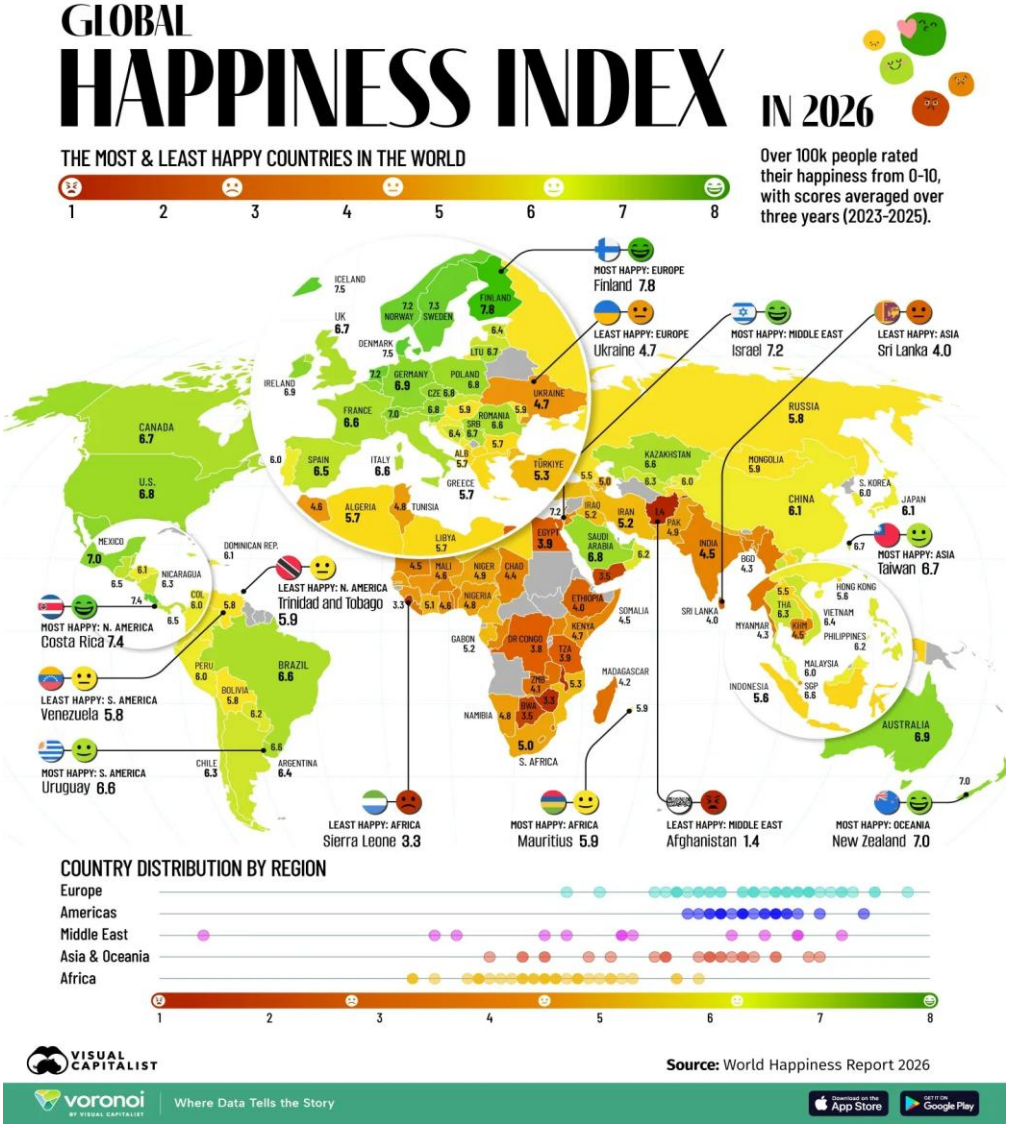

Figure 3: The global happiness rankings, according to the World Happiness Report 2026[61]

The Easterlin Paradox, which is frequently referred to as the paradox of prosperity and happiness. It asserts that, although individuals who are wealthier are generally happier than those who are poorer at any particular moment, an increase in national income does not necessarily result in greater happiness in the long term.[62] In general, contentment is only purchased to a certain extent by money; thereafter, the correlation diminishes and other factors take precedence. Rare global outliers are only a handful of countries that rank near the top in terms of both wealth and contentment. Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Ireland, and the Netherlands are exceptional examples of countries where high revenues are accompanied by high levels of life satisfaction. In Northern Europe, this overlap is particularly robust. These countries are known for their robust welfare systems, universal healthcare, and relatively low-income inequality, which are often accompanied by high productivity.[63] The data indicates that affluence is a significant factor, but it is not the sole factor. It appears that the level of satisfaction individuals experience with their lives is significantly influenced by trust, social support, and access to public services. Nevertheless, the Easterlin paradox is a discovery in happiness economics that Richard Easterlin, the first economist to analyze happiness data, formulated in 1974. Easterlin was a professor of economics at the University of Pennsylvania at the time.[64] Easterlin further refined his discovery during his extensive tenure at the University of Southern California.[65]

Figure 4: List and comparison of wealthiest and richest countries of the world[66]

According to the paradox, happiness is directly correlated with income at a given moment, both within and between nations. However, happiness does not increase as income increases over time. Although individuals with higher incomes are generally happier than their lower-income counterparts at a specific moment, they do not result in a longer-term increase in happiness. One explanation is that an individual's contentment is contingent upon their perceptions of the average standard of living and their income. If the income of all individuals increases, the contentment of the individual is temporarily enhanced, as they are unaware that the average standard of living has gone up. Eventually, they come to the realization that the average standard of living has also increased, which results in the disappearance of the happiness lift that was generated by the increased income. The paradox is rooted in the contradiction between the point-of-time and time series findings: a correlation exists at a single point, but no trend is observed across multiple points. That is, in the short term, all individuals perceive an increase in income as a direct correlation with contentment and make an effort to increase their incomes.[67] Nevertheless, this ultimately proves to be an illusion, as the collective endeavor to improve living standards results in a rise in the average, which leaves all individuals at the same level in terms of relative income. A variety of theories have been proposed to elucidate the paradox; however, the paradox is purely an empirical generalization. Other researchers have vigorously denied the paradox's existence. Easterlin, an economist, contends that an increase in income does not invariably result in an improvement in well-being. The evidence and description of the paradox have been revised by Richard Easterlin over time. His most recent contribution was made in 2022.[68]

Although wealth may not be a direct pathway to happiness, it can act as a catalyst for specific components of a fulfilled existence. Financial stability can provide a foundation for personal development, education, and enriching experiences, thereby alleviating stress. However, the critical factor is to regard money not as an end in itself, but as a means of investing in meaningful experiences, personal development, and relationships that surpass the superficial allure of material wealth. It presents an opportunity to reflect on the significant influence of prosperity on the narrative of our lives. Although wealth does not guarantee pleasure, it can be beneficial in certain respects.[69] Money can provide us with opportunities to expand our horizons, learn, and develop. It is also possible to reduce tension and achieve stability through financial security, which allows us to concentrate on other aspects of our lives. However, it is crucial to regard money as an instrument rather than the ultimate objective. Investing in personal growth, relationships, and experiences can increase the value of money in terms of promoting happiness. Therefore, the pursuit of wealth should be balanced with other activities that contribute to the overall quality of existence. It is imperative that we alter our perspective on money and adopt a more sophisticated perspective. We should strive for a well-rounded existence that encompasses various sources of happiness, rather than

solely concentrating on accumulating wealth.[70] This entails the development of strong relationships, personal growth, and the discovery of purpose and meaning in one's daily existence.

Nevertheless, by achieving a harmonious equilibrium between financial stability, personal well-being, and meaningful experiences, we can comprehend and address the obstacles that accompany prosperity, thereby leading more satisfying and happier lives. Regardless of our financial status, there are practical measures that can be taken to enhance our quality of life. Demonstrating gratitude and mindfulness can facilitate our enjoyment of the present. A sense of direction is provided by the establishment and pursuit of meaningful objectives.[71] Ensuring that our physical and mental health are maintained through self-care routines, nutritious eating, and exercise is crucial for achieving a sense of well-being. Our well-being is also influenced by the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships and the participation in a community. Not only does performing acts of kindness benefit others, but it also enhances our sense of well-being and satisfaction. It is essential to shift our attention from the pursuit of wealth to the pursuit of well-being in order to achieve lasting pleasure. This entails challenging the notion that success and contentment are exclusively derived from a substantial financial fortune. We can liberate ourselves from the perpetual pursuit of prosperity by establishing our own definition of success and considering well-being as a comprehensive concept.[72] It is crucial to maintain a positive outlook, be compassionate toward oneself, and have faith in one's ability to develop in order to effect this change. True happiness is the pursuit of contentment and fulfillment, regardless of one's financial status.[73]

Analysis of Gini-coefficient and Income Inequality Relationship

The Gini coefficient is a widely used metric for inequality that summarizes the distribution and conveys it in terms of a number ranging from 0 to 1. The Gini Coefficient is a standardized index of inequality that is reasonably comparable and can be used for our investigation.[74] We are aware that the Gini coefficient ranges from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 or 100 (complete inequality). When inequality is elevated, lower-income groups experience a substantial decline in their levels of satisfaction.[75] The Gini coefficient is a standardized metric that is frequently employed to measure within-country inequality in World Bank (WB) data.[76] It is typically calculated using income or consumption expenditure data from national household surveys.[77] Figure 11 illustrates this calculation.[78] The Human Development Indicators (HDI) reports are an additional valuable source of information.[79] For instance, the wealth Gini coefficient in 2022 is 0.83, while the US Gini coefficient for household income is approximately 0.49 between 2018 and 2024. This is due to the fact that the highest earners possess a substantial amount of assets.[80] In contrast, India has experienced a gradual decrease in inequality, with a Gini coefficient of 0.40 in 2023. However, wealth inequality in India is considerably greater than income inequality, and a 2017 study discovered that the richest 1% of the population possessed 73% of the wealth. However, the national income Gini coefficient has reached 0.499, as indicated by the 2022 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). As of 2026, reports suggest that wealth inequality is substantially higher, with a wealth Gini coefficient of 0.84. Nevertheless, Japan's Gini coefficient for disposable income was approximately 0.323 in 2020, and wealth inequality was below 0.6.[81]

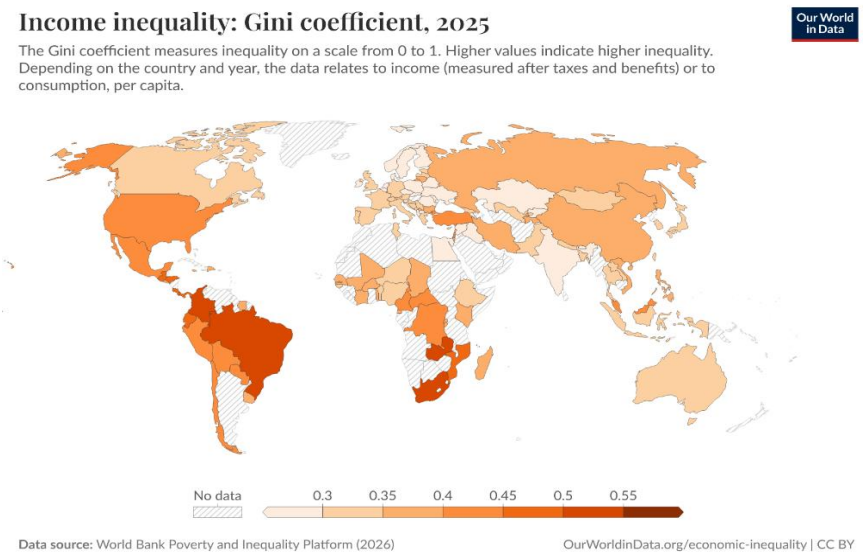

Figure 5: The Gini coefficient in World Bank (WB) data and Countries status[82]

So, the aforementioned example and figure 5 have demonstrated how the Gini coefficient reflects the inequality in the distribution of income/wealth within a country.[83] It serves as an indicator that explains the extent to which a country's wealth or income distribution deviates from an equal distribution. In economics, the Gini coefficient, also referred to as the Gini index or Gini ratio, is a statistical dispersion measure that is designed to characterize the income inequality, wealth inequality, or consumption inequality within a nation or social group. It was created by Corrado Gini, an Italian sociologist and statistician.[84] The Gini coefficient quantifies the degree of inequality among the values of a frequency distribution, such as income levels.[85],[86] Nevertheless, the Gini Index is a summary metric that quantifies income inequality. The Gini coefficient is a singular statistic that summarizes the dispersion of income across the entire income distribution by incorporating the detailed shares data. Therefore, the Gini coefficient has a range of 0 to 1, where 0 represents perfect equality, in which all individuals receive an equal proportion, and 1 represents perfect inequality, in which only one recipient or group of recipients receives all of the income. The Gini coefficient is determined by the disparity between the Lorenz curve, which represents the observed cumulative income distribution, and the concept of a perfectly equal income distribution.[87]

The Gini index quantifies the degree to which the distribution of income (or, in certain instances, consumption expenditure) among households or individuals within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. The cumulative percentages of total income received against the cumulative number of recipients are represented by a Lorenz curve, which commences with the most impoverished individual or household. The Gini index is a metric that quantifies the region between the Lorenz curve and a hypothetical line of absolute equality.[88] It is expressed as a percentage of the maximal area under the line. Consequently, a Gini index of 0 denotes perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality. Poverty and Inequality Platform, World Bank. The data are derived from primary household survey data that was obtained from government statistical agencies and World Bank country departments. The Luxembourg Income Study database is the primary source of data for high-income economies. The data are derived from primary household survey data that was obtained from government statistical agencies and World Bank country departments. The Luxembourg Income Study database is the primary source of data for high-income economies.[89]

The Gini coefficient is most commonly used in economics; however, it can theoretically be implemented in any scientific discipline that investigates distributions. For instance, the Gini coefficient has been employed in ecology as a biodiversity indicator, in which the cumulative proportion of species is compared to the cumulative proportion of individuals.[90] It has been employed as a metric for the disparity in health-related quality of life within a population in the field of health.[91] It has been employed as a metric for the inequality of universities in the field of education.[92] The selectivity of protein kinase inhibitors against a panel of kinases has been expressed using this term in the field of chemistry.[93] It has been employed in engineering to assess the impartiality of Internet routers in scheduling packet transmissions from various traffic flows.[94] In the field of machine learning (ML), it has been employed as a unified metric for assessing many-versus-many (all-to-all) similarity in vector spaces across a variety of data types, such as images and text.[95] This metric has been successful in guiding the selection of machine learning training samples, particularly in sparse information settings.[96] An analysis of inequality in dating applications has also been conducted using the Gini coefficient. In order to evaluate the extent of aging in non-repairable systems or the aging and rejuvenation of repairable systems, Kaminskiy and Krivtsov extended the Gini coefficient from economics to reliability theory and proposed a Gini-type coefficient.[97]

The Gini coefficient quantifies the degree of inequality among the values of a frequency distribution, such as income levels. As we are aware, a Gini coefficient of 0 indicates perfect equality, in which all income or wealth values are equivalent. Conversely, a Gini coefficient of 1 (or 100%) depicts the most severe inequality among values, in which a single individual possesses all of the income while all others have none.[98] The Gini coefficient was introduced by Corrado Gini as a metric for income or asset inequality.[99] The income Gini coefficient for OECD countries in the late 20th century was 0.24 to 0.49, with Slovakia having the lowest and Mexico having the highest value, taking into account the impact of taxes and transfer payments.[100] The pre-tax Gini coefficients of African countries were the greatest in 2008–2009, with South Africa having the world's highest, estimated to be 0.63 to 0.7.[101],[102] Nevertheless, this figure decreases to 0.52 when social assistance is accounted for, and it further decreases to 0.47 after taxation.[103] Slovakia has the lowest Gini coefficient, with a value of 0.232.[104] The Gini coefficient of the global income in 2005 has been estimated to be between 0.61 and 0.68 by a variety of sources.[105,106].

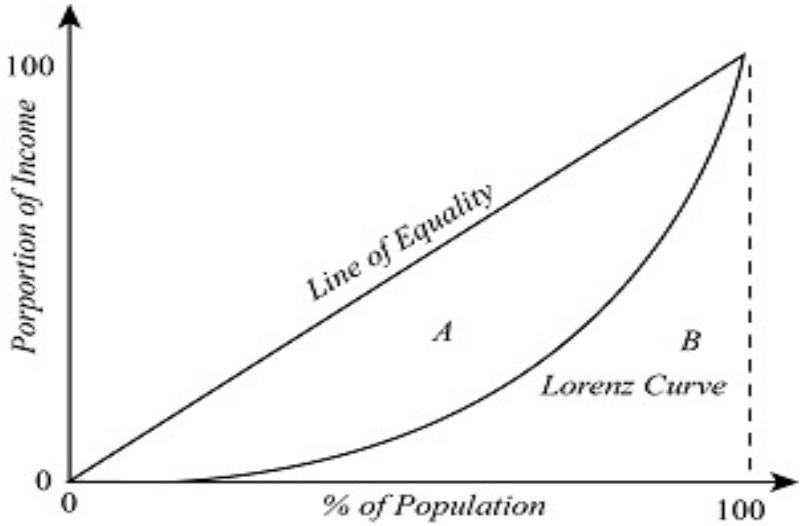

Figure 6: The Gini coefficient defined mathematically based on the Lorenz curve[107]

The Gini coefficient is typically mathematically defined using the Lorenz curve, which illustrates the percent of the total income of the population (y-axis) that is cumulatively earned by the bottom x percent of the population (as illustrated in figure/diagram 6 above).[108] The line at 45 degrees thus symbolizes complete income equality. The Gini coefficient can be conceptualized as the ratio of the area between the line of equality and the Lorenz curve (represented by A in the diagram) to the total area under the line of equality (represented by A and B in the diagram). In other words, G = A/(A + B). In the absence of negative incomes, it is also equivalent to 2A and 1 − 2B, as illustrated in figure 6 above, as A + B = 0.5.[109]. In the interpretation of a Gini coefficient, there are numerous challenges, as the same value can be obtained from a variety of distribution curves. In order to alleviate this, it is necessary to consider the demographic composition.[110] Even if the real income distribution for working adults remains constant, countries with an aging population or an increased birth rate experience an increasing pre-tax Gini coefficient. Numerous academics have developed more than a dozen variations of the Gini coefficient.[111] The Gini coefficient is extensively employed in a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, economics, health science, ecology, engineering, and agriculture.[112] For instance, researchers have published education Gini coefficients and opportunity Gini coefficients in addition to income Gini coefficients in the fields of social sciences and economics.[113]

The Education Gini index is a measure of the degree of inequality in education among a specific population. It is employed to identify trends in social development by examining educational attainment over time.[114] Three World Bank economists, Vinod Thomas, Yan Wang, and Xibo Fan, conducted a study in 1990 that examined 85 countries. The study estimated that Mali had the highest education Gini index of 0.92, which indicates a very high level of inequality in educational attainment among the population. Conversely, the United States had the lowest education inequality Gini index of 0.14. The education inequality Gini Index experienced the most rapid decline in China, India, and South Korea between 1960 and 1990. Additionally, they assert that the education Gini index for the United States experienced a minor increase during the 1980–1990 period. Although India's education Gini Index has decreased from 1960 to 1990, the majority of the population has yet to receive any form of education, while a mere 10% of the population has accumulated over 40% of the nation's total educational hours. This implies that a substantial number of capable children in the country are not obtaining the support they require to become positive contributors to society. This will result in a deadweight loss for the national society, as there are numerous individuals who are underdeveloped and underutilized.[115]

In a manner similar to the Gini income coefficient, the Gini opportunity coefficient quantifies inequality in opportunities.[116] The concept is based on Amartya Sen's suggestion that the inequality coefficients of social development should be based on the process of expanding people's choices and improving their capabilities, rather than on the process of reducing income inequality.[117] Kovacevic, in a review of the Gini opportunity coefficient, elucidated that the coefficient estimates the extent to which a society facilitates its citizens' success in life.[118] This success is contingent upon an individual's choices, efforts, and talents, rather than their background, which is determined by a set of predetermined circumstances at birth, such as gender, race, place of birth, parent's income, and circumstances beyond the individual's control.[119],[120] Roemer reported in 2003 that Italy and Spain had the highest opportunity inequality Gini index among advanced economies.[121] Anthony

Shorrocks introduced a measure in 1978 that was based on income Gini coefficients to estimate income mobility.[122] This measure, which was generalized by Maasoumi and Zandvakili, is now commonly referred to as the Shorrocks index, which is also known as the Shorrocks rigidity index or the Shorrocks mobility index. It endeavors to gauge the permanence or transience of the income inequality Gini coefficient and the degree to which a country or region facilitates economic mobility for its citizens, allowing them to transition from one income quantile (e.g., the bottom 20%) to another (e.g., the middle 20%) over time. In other words, the Shorrocks index contrasts the inequality of short-term earnings, such as the annual income of households, with the inequality of long-term earnings, such as the 5-year or 10-year total income of the same households. The Shorrocks index can be calculated in a variety of ways, but a common method is to compare the income Gini coefficients of the same region or country over the short and long term.[123]

The income mobility in the United States has had a complex history, predominantly due to the mass influx of women into the American labor force after World War II, according to a 2010 study that utilized social security income data for the United States since 1937 and Gini-based Shorrock's indices. Income inequality and income mobility trends have been distinct for male and female laborers between 1937 and the 2000s. The Shorrocks index trends, which are based on the Gini coefficient, suggest that long-term income inequality has been significantly reduced among all laborers in the United States in recent decades when men and women are considered together.[124] Other academics have reached different conclusions by utilizing data from the 1990s or other brief periods.[125] For instance, Sastre and Ayala's analysis of income Gini coefficient data from 1993 to 1998 for six developed economies reveals that France exhibited the lowest income mobility, Italy the highest, and the United States and Germany intermediate levels of income mobility during that period.[126] Absolute national or personal incomes are not included in a Gini index. Simultaneously, populations may exhibit Gini indices that are exceedingly low in income and extremely high in wealth. The Gini index disregards the differential efficacy of household income utilization by measuring income inequality. The Gini can produce the appearance of inequality when the individuals being compared are at different stages of life by disregarding wealth (except in so far as it contributes to income). Wealthy nations, such as Sweden, can exhibit a low Gini coefficient for disposable income of 0.31, which suggests an equal distribution of wealth. However, they have a very high Gini coefficient for wealth, ranging from 0.79 to 0.86, which indicates an exceedingly unequal distribution of wealth in their society.[127] Income-based Gini does not evaluate these variables.[128]

Analysis of the Relationship between Wealth and Happiness

We can start with the correlation between subjective well-being and affluence is a significant topic in social science research. Existing research has identified intricate connections between income and contentment. For instance, there is evidence that money does not always equate to contentment. Easterlin paradox, as previously described, is the phenomenon in which material prosperity ceases to generate happiness upon reaching a certain threshold upon further accumulation. According to Festinger's social comparison theory (1954), there are two distinct categories of social comparisons: upward comparison, which entails comparing oneself to those who are performing better, and downward comparison, which involves comparing oneself to those who are performing worse.[129] Importantly, the upward comparison proclivity is considerably greater than that of the downward comparison (Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005; Boyce et al., 2010).[130,131] Consequently, individuals would continue to be more inclined to compare themselves to those who are wealthier, which could potentially undermine their subjective well-being, regardless of whether their absolute income increases. Conversely, contentment is more accurately predicted by the income disparity between the wealthy and the impoverished. Certainly, empirical research has demonstrated a substantial correlation between happiness and the income disparity (as measured by the Gini coefficient) (Asadullah and Chaudhury, 2012; Brockmann et al., 2009; Oishi et al., 2011).[132,133,134] Nevertheless, the precise form of the income inequality-happiness function remains a topic of debate, as the empirical evidence has been inconsistent. Although some studies indicate a negative correlation between income inequality and happiness (Alesina et al., 2004; Verme, 2011),[135,136], others suggest a positive correlation (Clark, 2006; Caporale et al., 2009),[137,138], and others find them to be unrelated (Helliwell, 2003).[139]

Presently, the relationship between income inequality and happiness is primarily influenced by two competing psychological processes: the signal/proud effects and envy (Senik, 2004, 2008). The jealousy effect posits that when income inequality is high, individuals are more likely to experience feelings of unhappiness as a result of their envy of their wealthier counterparts (Senik, 2008).[140] In contrast, the signal/proud effect suggests that individuals may perceive income inequality as a sign of social mobility and anticipate upward mobility (Senik, 2004).[141] The consensus among numerous studies is that income inequality, rather than absolute income, is a significant predictor of satisfaction.

Nevertheless, its precise function has been the subject of debate. According to a study, the dynamic competing process between two effects, as described in the preceding paragraph, should result in an inverted U-shaped relationship between income inequality and happiness. When income inequality is relatively low, the signal effect will be the dominant factor, causing individuals to feel happy as they perceive income inequality as a signal of social mobility and anticipate upward mobility. However, if income inequality surpasses a critical threshold, the jealousy effect will become the dominant factor, causing individuals to be unhappy as they become disillusioned about the possibility of upward mobility and jealous of their wealthier peers. This hypothesis is examined in a longitudinal dataset on the United States and a cross-national dataset on numerous European countries. The Gini coefficient and its quadratic term were significant predictors of personal happiness in both datasets, which is a common index of a society's income inequality.[142]

However, the Easterlin paradox, a well-known phenomenon, demonstrates that the average level of happiness has remained consistent over time, despite significant increases in the gross national product per capita. Simultaneously, a micro literature has generally discovered positive correlations between individual income and individual measures of subjective well-being.[143] Income is measured in relation to others (social comparison) or to oneself in the past (habituation). Certain non-happiness factors (behavioral, experimental, neurological) are associated with income comparisons, and there is a correlation between happiness and utility. Economic behavior in the domains of consumption, investment, economic growth, savings, taxation, labor supply, wages, and migration can be influenced by the relative income in the utility function.[144] It has been determined that the average life satisfaction is significantly correlated with per capita national income. On a scale of 0 to 10, a doubling of income is associated with a nearly one-point increase in life satisfaction. The effect is consistent across the spectrum of international incomes, in contrast to the majority of previous findings. In fact, it is slightly more pronounced in wealthy countries. People are less contented with their lives as a result of recent economic growth, while they are more satisfied as a result of improvements in life expectancy, contingent upon national income. However, life expectancy itself has a minimal impact. The lives of elderly individuals are less satisfying in the majority of countries, with the exception of the wealthiest. The decline in health satisfaction with age is significantly more pronounced in poor countries than in wealthy countries, and the effects of aging on self-reported health are moderated by national income.[145] In accordance with previous research, the majority of Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union are notably dissatisfied with their health and lives. Older individuals in these countries are significantly less satisfied with their health and lives than their younger counterparts.[146]

Again, for an extended period, economic development has been regarded as a critical objective of economic policy. However, in recent years, there has been a growing concern that further efforts to elevate the material standard of living will have minimal impact on overall well-being. These arguments are predicated on a critical discovery in the emerging literature on subjective well-being, known as the "Easterlin paradox," which posits that there is no correlation between the economic development of a society and the overall contentment of its members.[147] Richard Easterlin has investigated the correlation between GDP and happiness in numerous publications, both within and between countries, over the course of time.[148] In neither form of analysis, he discovers any substantial evidence of a correlation between average happiness and aggregate income. Conversely, there is substantial evidence that individuals with higher incomes are more content within their respective countries. Researchers have been motivated to attempt to reconcile these two seemingly discordant findings by utilizing models that emphasize reference-dependent preferences and relative income comparisons.[149] These findings indicate that income is a significant predictor of individual happiness, but it appears to be immaterial for average happiness.[150] In a study, it was discovered that the well-being of over 600,000 individuals in a panel of European countries from 1975-2002, as well as individual German Panel Data from 1985-2000, exhibit distinct patterns of income adaptation across the wealthy and poor. There is evidence to suggest that for the wealthy Germans and the wealthy half of European nations, increased levels of per capita income do not necessarily lead to greater contentment. Adaptation seems to be the explanation. Nevertheless, the satisfaction gains that the affluent half of European nations experience may not be permanent, as it may take over five years to achieve this habituation. Nevertheless, they can be relatively long-lasting.[151] Today the happiest countries like Finland, Denmark, Sweden, etc. succeed by prioritizing quality of life over raw income accumulation. their high-quality public services in education, healthcare, transportation, etc. reduce fear of poverty, lowering anxiety.[152] Citizens of those countries have high confidence in their government, public institutions, and police, leading to a safer, more secure environment. Government give emphasis on shorter work weeks, ample vacation time, and low corruption allows for better personal well-being. Additionally, high levels of freedom to make citizen life choices, coupled with a supportive, trusting community or social support.[153]

Conclusion

As per hedonic treadmill, when people acquire more wealth, their expectations rise in tandem. A higher income quickly becomes the new normal, meaning happiness levels return to a stable baseline rather than increasing permanently. Whereas, as per social comparison, happiness is frequently measured not by absolute wealth, but by relative wealth—comparing oneself to neighbors or peers. However, as per the pursuit trap, the relentless pursuit of wealth can lead to lower happiness due to increased stress, decreased free time, and weakened social connections. On the other hand, life satisfaction is negatively correlated with a higher Gini coefficient, which indicates a wider gap between the wealthy and the poor. Higher values are indicative of greater inequality. In general, societies with higher Gini coefficients (which indicate greater income inequality) experience lower levels of overall contentment. Although happiness is positively influenced by wealth (GDP per capita), high inequality frequently undermines this benefit by diminishing trust and perceived equity. Again, although a higher GDP per capita frequently enhances life satisfaction, the contentment of the bottom 50% can be diminished by the substantial wealth concentration at the top (measured by the top 10% share). Furthermore, lower social trust and a diminished sense of equity are frequently the result of increased inequality, which are significant contributors to decreased well-being. Lower-income individuals are most affected by the detrimental consequences of high inequality, as their contentment is adversely affected.[154] Researchers have discovered that Americans were generally happier during periods of reduced national income inequality than during periods of increased national income inequality, as evidenced by General Social Survey data from 1972 to 2008.[155] Additionally, they demonstrated that the inverse relationship between income inequality and contentment was accounted for by perceived fairness and general trust.[156] Again, the fundamental reason for Easterlin's observation that economic development in nations does not guarantee an increase in happiness for the average citizen has remained a topic of controversy or paradox. Nevertheless, a study has shown that the upward wealth inequality aversion or jealously effect (defined above) is more potent than the downward wealth inequality inclination or signal/proud effect (defined above). It is the result of the psychological preference known as loss aversion. Once more, the confident effect is not as significant for rural residents as it is for urban residents. In the majority of the country, particularly in developing countries, there is a substantial wealth disparity between metropolitan and rural areas.

Interestingly, the people residing in rural areas have come to the realization that, despite their proximity to the wealthy, they are still classified as lower-class members of society as a result of the expansion of the social network. And it is difficult for rural residents to have a proud effect. Additionally, the family members exhibit the most pronounced upward inequality aversion during the middle stage of the life cycle. Family members have high expectations for the future and presume that their life has limitless possibilities at the beginning of the family life cycle. Additionally, they can be readily satisfied by accomplishing slightly more than their peers. In subsequent periods, the members will prioritize health over fortune as they age. The World Inequality Report 2026 indicates that wealth concentration remains elevated, with the top 1% of the global population possessing more than the bottom 90% in nearly every region. This report investigates the novel forms of inequality that characterize the 21st century, including climate, gender disparities, unequal access to human capital, asymmetries in the global financial system, and territorial divides that are reshaping democracies. Again, at the global level, approximately 1% of the global GDP is transferred annually from impoverished to affluent nations through net income transfers that are linked to persistent excess yields and reduced interest payments on liabilities held by the wealthy nations. This amount is nearly three times the amount of global development aid. Furthermore, the top 10% of the global population are responsible for 77% of emissions, while the impoverished half of the population represents only 3% of carbon emissions associated with private capital ownership.

Today’s the surprising discovery is that progressive taxation also enhances social cohesion and restricts the political influence of extreme wealth. However, tax progressivity is undermined at the highest echelons of society: billionaires and centimillionaires frequently pay a significantly lower tax rate than the majority of the populace. This not only undermines tax justice, but it also deprives societies of the resources necessary for climate action, healthcare, and education.[157] It is challenging to define happiness, despite the fact that it is a universal desire.[158] Happiness is fundamentally the experience of feeling happy about one's life. It encompasses a sense of fulfillment and pleasure, positive emotions, and satisfaction. However, it is not solely about experiencing happiness; it also encompasses the development of one's character, the maintenance of good health, the cultivation of good relationships, and the contribution to society.[159] By comprehending that happiness is composed of various components, they are able to comprehend the relationship between it and affluence. The complexity of the definition of pleasure is the root of this paradox. It is not entirely contingent upon financial affluence

or material possessions. Our overall well-being is significantly influenced by factors such as health, relationships, and a sense of purpose. In fact, research indicates that investing in personal development, relationships, and experiences can provide us with a greater sense of happiness than material affluence alone. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the constraints of money, despite the fact that it can undoubtedly contribute to our overall well-being. A more comprehensive and meaningful existence can be achieved by balancing the pursuit of wealth with other aspects of personal fulfillment. The correlation between prosperity and happiness is a conundrum that lacks a straightforward resolution.[160] Although money can provide solace and pleasure, it is not the sole method of achieving enduring happiness. Happiness is a composite of various aspects of our existence, including health, personal development, relationships, and purpose. The puzzle of happiness can be solved by comprehending the boundaries of prosperity and adopting a more comprehensive perspective on life. The true meaning of a fulfilled existence is revealed by achieving the appropriate balance between personal well-being, financial stability, and meaningful experiences. Ultimately, genuine happiness is the result of a combination of these factors, demonstrating that there is more to a happy existence than merely the amount in one's bank account. Economic policymaking is significantly influenced by the correlation between increased national income and increased national life satisfaction. So, we may say that, wealth is a necessary component for creating a baseline of happiness, but not a sufficient condition for maximizing it. The happiest countries are not necessarily the richest, but those that translate wealth into security, freedom, and strong community connections.

References:

[1] https://www.scribd.com/document/376156845/Advanced-Essay-Writing-Note-making, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[2] https://www.globalcitizensolutions.com/richest-countries-in-the-world/, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[3] Diener, E, M Diener, and C Diener (1995), "Factors Predicting the Subjective Well-Being of Nations", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69: 851–864, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[4] Inglehart, R (1990), Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Society, Princeton: Princeton University Press, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[5] Easterlin, R A (1995), "Will Raising the Incomes of All Increase the Happiness of All?", Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, 27: 35–47, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[6] Inglehart, R, R Foa, C Peterson, and C Welzel (2008), "Development, Freedom, and Rising Happiness: A Global Perspective (1981–2007)", Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3: 264–285, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[7] Deaton, A (2008), "Income, Health and Well-Being around the World: Evidence from the Gallup World Poll", Journal of Economic Perspectives, 22: 53–72, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[8] Stevenson, B and J Wolfers (2008), "Economic Growth and Subjective Well-Being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox", Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, 1: 1–87, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[9] Layard, R (2005), Happiness: Lessons from a New Science, London: Penguin, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[10] Layard, R, G Mayraz, and S Nickell (2008), "The Marginal Utility of Income", Journal of Public Economics, 92(8–9), 1846–1857, accessed on 09 Mar 2026
[11] McBride, M (2010), "Money, Happiness, and Aspiration Formation: An Experimental Study", Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, 74(3): 262–276, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[12] Di Tella, R and R MacCulloch (2010), "Happiness Adaptation to Income Beyond 'Basic Needs'", in E Diener, J Helliwell, and D Kahneman (eds), International Differences in Well-Being, Oxford: Oxford University Press, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[13]Easterlin, R A, L A McVey, M Switek, O Sawangfa, and J S Zweig (2010). "The Happiness-Income Paradox Revisited", Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 107(52): 22463–22468, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[14] Benjamin, D J, O Heffetz, M S Kimball, and A Rees-Jones (2012), "What Do You Think Would Make You Happier? What Do You Think You Would Choose?", American Economic Review, 102(5): 2083–2110, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[15] https://mieuxdonner.org/the-happiest-countries-and-findings-from-the-world-happiness-report/, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[16] https://bdnews24.com/economy/e05a9f73ebe2, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[17] https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gdp-by-country/, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[18] ibid
[19] https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/countries-by-gdp-capita-1707900285-1, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[20] https://eng.stat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=9357&ctNode=1641, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[21] https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealthmanagement/insights/global-wealth-report.html, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[22] worlddata.info/poorest-countries.php, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[23] https://www.worlddata.info/tax-havens.php, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[24] https://www.worlddata.info/richest-countries.php, accessed on 12 Mar 2026
[25] https://www.worlddata.info/poorest-countries.php, accessed on 15 Mar 2026

[26] https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[27] https://hdr.undp.org/content/2025-global-multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi#/indicies/MPI, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[28] https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/topic/poverty, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[29] https://www.timeout.com/news/these-are-the-worlds-richest-countries-in-2026-according-to-a-new-index-042426,
[30] https://www.timeout.com/norway/things-to-do/best-things-to-do-in-norway, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[31] https://www.timeout.com/news/an-irish-city-has-been-named-the-worlds-best-solo-travel-destination-for-2026-heres-why-011326, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[32] https://www.timeout.com/europe/things-to-do/best-things-to-do-in-luxembourg, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[33] https://www.timeout.com/switzerland/things-to-do/best-switzerland-hotels, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[34] https://www.timeout.com/iceland/travel/this-little-known-island-in-iceland-gives-reykjaviks-food-scene-a-run-for-its-money, accessed on 15 Mar 2026
[35] https://www.timeout.com/singapore/news/5-coolest-new-bars-in-singapore-you-need-to-visit-right-now-042026, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[36] https://www.instagram.com/p/DSHFokZiaJX/, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[37] https://www.timeout.com/news/these-are-the-worlds-richest-countries-in-2026-according-to-a-new-index-042426, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[38] https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gdp-per-capita/
[39] https://unioncitizenship.com/richest-countries-in-the-world/#modal
[40] https://unioncitizenship.com/richest-countries-in-the-world/
[41] Ibid,
[42] https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gdp-per-capita/
[43] Ibid
[44] https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/1145, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[45] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46467111_Measuring_and_Understanding_Subjective_Well-Being, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[46] https://ideas.repec.org/a/ebl/ecbull/eb-18-00325.html, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[47] DeNeve, J., D. Ward, G. Keulenaer, B. van Landeghem, G. Kavetsos, and M. Norton (2018). "The Asymmetric Experience of Positive and Negative Economic Growth: Global Evidence Using Subjective Well-Being Data," Review of Economic Statistics: 100 (2), 362-375, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[48] https://vividmaps.com/happiest-countries/, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[49] https://www.talismanwealthadvisors.com/the-paradox-of-wealth-can-money-truly-buy-happiness, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[50] https://www.worldhappiness.report, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[51] https://data.worldhappiness.report/table, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[52] Orekhov, V.D., Prichina, O.S., Loktionova, Y.N., Yanina, O.N., Gusareva, N.B., (2020), Scientific analysis of thehappiness index in regard to the human capital development. J. Adv. Res. Dyn. Control Syst. 12(4 Spe-cial Issue), 467–478, available from: https://doi.org/10.5373/JARDCS/V12SP4/20201512, accessed on 29 Apr 2026
[53] https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-countries-happiest-least-happy/, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[54]https://web.archive.org/web/20180404200745/http://www.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/researchImpact/caseStudies/layard-happiness-wellbeing-public-policy.aspx, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[55] Richard Layard, 2006. "Happiness and Public Policy: A Challenge to the Profession," Economic Journal, 116 (510), Conference Papers, pp. C24–C33, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[56] https://www.visualcapitalist.com/ranked-the-worlds-happiest-countries-in-2026/, accessed on 28 Apr 2026
[57] https://www.mappr.co/world-happiness-report-ranking/, accessed on 28 Apr 2026
[58] https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PPPPC@WEO/OEMDC, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[59] https://www.visualcapitalist.com/ranked-richest-countries-vs-happiest-countries/, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[60] https://www.worldhappiness.report, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[61] Ibid, accessed on 17 Mar 2026
[62] Monnot, Matthew (2017). "Marginal Utility and Economic Development: Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Aspirations and Subjective Well-Being Among Chinese Employees". Social Indicators Research. 132: 155–185. doi:10.1007/s11205-015-1153-9, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[63] https://www.voronoiapp.com/maps/The-Global-Cost-of-Living-Index-2026--7688, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[64] Easterlin (1974). "Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence" (PDF). In Paul A. David; Melvin W. Reder (eds.). Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz. New York: Academic Press, Inc, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[65] https://www.intelligenteconomist.com/easterlin-paradox/, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[66] Ibid
[67] Easterlin; O'Connor (2020). "The Easterlin Paradox" (PDF). IZA Discussion Paper Series (13923), accessed on 22 Mar 2026

[68] Easterlin; O'Connor (2022). "The Easterlin Paradox". In Klaus F. Zimmermann (ed.). Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics. Switzerland: Springer Nature. pp. 1–25. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6_184-2, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[69] Clark, Andrew E.; Frijters, Paul; Shields, Michael A. (2008). "Relative Income, Happiness, and Utility: An Explanation for the Easterlin Paradox and Other Puzzles". Journal of Economic Literature. 46 (1): 95–144. doi:10.1257/jel.46.1.95, accessed on 22 Mar 2026
[70] Diener, E., L. Tay, and S. Oishi (2013). "Rising Income and the Subjective Well-Being of Nations". Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 104 (2): 267–76. doi:10.1037/a0030487, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[71] Stevenson, B., and J. Wolfers (2008). "Economic Growth and Subjective Well-Being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox" (PDF). Brookings Papers on Economic Activity. 1: 1–87. doi:10.1353/eca.0.0001, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[72]Veenhoven, R. and F. Vergunst, (2014). "The Easterlin Illusion: Economic Growth Does Go with Greater Happiness" (PDF). International Journal of Happiness and Development. 1 (4): 311–343. doi:10.1504/IJHD.2014.066115, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[73] Easterlin, Richard (2017). "Paradox Lost?". Review of Behavioral Economics. 4 (4): 311–339. doi:10.1561/105.00000068, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[74] Rözer, J., & Kraaykamp, G. (2013). Income inequality and subjective well-being: A cross-national study on the conditional effects of individual and national characteristics. Social Indicators Research, 113(3), 1009–1023, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[75] https://crdcn.ca/publication/does-income-inequality-impact-individual-happiness-evidence-from-canada/, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[76] https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/economic-inequality-gini-index, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[77] http://hdr.undp.org/en/data, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[78] https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/us-wealth-inequality-2022-modest-reversal-top-persistent-challenges-below, accessed on 26 Mar 2026
[79] Naved Khan, (2025), The Gini Index's Dynamics as a Reflection of India's Income Inequality, May 2025, Asian Business Research Journal; 10(5):1-11; DOI: 10.55220/25766759.410, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[80] Naved Khan, (2025), The Gini Index's Dynamics as a Reflection of India's Income Inequality, May 2025, Asian Business Research Journal; 10(5):1-11; DOI: 10.55220/25766759.410, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[81] https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14987598, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[82] Opcit, Ourworldindata, on 26 Mar 2026
[83] Weisstein Eric W., (2022), "Gini Coefficient". mathworld.wolfram.com, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[84]Favero, Giovanni (3 July 2017). "A reciprocal legitimation: Corrado Gini and statistics in fascist Italy" (PDF). Management & Organizational History. 12 (3): 261–284. doi:10.1080/17449359.2017.1363509, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[85] Ventura, Luca (June 6, 2023). "World Wealth Distribution and Income Inequality 2022". Global Finance Magazine, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[86] Howitt, D. and Cramer, D. (2008) Statistics in Psychology. Prentice Hall, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[87] https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/income-inequality/about/metrics/gini-index.html, accessed on 28 Mar 2026
[88] Blomquist, N. (1981). "A comparison of distributions of annual and lifetime income: Sweden around 1970". Review of Income and Wealth. 27 (3): 243–264. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4991, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[89] https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/gender-statistics/series/SI.POV.GINI, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[90] Wittebolle, Lieven; Marzorati, Massimo; et al. (2009). "Initial community evenness favours functionality under selective stress". Nature. 458 (7238): 623–626, doi:10.1038/nature07840, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[91] Asada, Yukiko (2005). "Assessment of the health of Americans: the average health-related quality of life and its inequality across individuals and groups". Population Health Metrics. 3: 7. doi:10.1186/1478-7954-3-7, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[92] Halffman, Willem; Leydesdorff, Loet (2010). "Is Inequality Among Universities Increasing? Gini Coefficients and the Elusive Rise of Elite Universities". Minerva. 48 (1): 55–72, doi:10.1007/s11024-010-9141-3, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[93] Graczyk, Piotr (2007). "Gini Coefficient: A New Way to Express Selectivity of Kinase Inhibitors against a Family of Kinases". Journal of Medicinal Chemistry. 50 (23): 5773–5779. doi:10.1021/jm070562u, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[94] Shi, Hongyuan; Sethu, Harish (2003). "Greedy Fair Queueing: A Goal-Oriented Strategy for Fair Real-Time Packet Scheduling". Proceedings of the 24th IEEE Real-Time Systems Symposium. IEEE Computer Society. pp. 345–356. ISBN 978-0-7695-2044-5, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[95] Fauber, Ben (2024), Gini Coefficient as a Unified Metric for Evaluating Many-versus-Many Similarity in Vector Spaces., vol. abs/2411.07983, arXiv:2411.07983, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[96] Kopf, Dan (15 August 2017). "These statistics show why it's so hard to be an average man on dating apps". Quartz, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[97] Kaminskiy, M.P.; Krivtsov, V.V. (2011). "A Gini-Type Index for Aging/Rejuvenating Objects". Mathematical and Statistical Models and Methods in Reliability. Birkhäuser Boston: Springer. pp. 133–140. ISBN 978-0-8176-4970-8,

[98] https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/am352e, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[99] Gini, Corrado (1936). "On the Measure of Concentration with Special Reference to Income and Statistics", Colorado College Publication, General Series No. 208, 73–79, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[100]https://web.archive.org/web/20141109193609/http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=26068, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[101]https://web.archive.org/web/20160402034218/http://www.kpmg.com/Africa/en/KPMG-in-Africa/Documents/2013, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[102] "Gini Coefficient". United Nations Development Program. 2012. Archived from the original on 12 July 2014,
[103] Schüssler, Mike (16 July 2014). "The Gini is still in the bottle". Money Web, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[104] https://data.worldbank.org/, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[105] Hillebrand, Evan (June 2009). "Poverty, Growth, and Inequality over the Next 50 Years" (PDF). FAO, United Nations – Economic and Social Development Department. Archived from the original (PDF) on 20 October 2017, accessed on 03 Apr 2026
[106] United Nations (2011). The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development, 2010 (PDF). United Nations Development Program. pp. 72–74. ISBN 978-0-230-28445-6, accessed on 08 Apr 2026
[107]https://homework.study.com/explanation/using-a-lorenz-curve-diagram-explain-how-to-calculate-the-gini coefficient.html
[108]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242258189_Using_Lorenz_Curve_and_Gini_Coefficient_to_Reflect_the_Inequality_Degree_of_ST_Publications_An_Examination_of_the_Institutional_Distribution_of_Publications_in_China_and_other_Countries/figures?lo=1, accessed on 08 Apr 2026
[109] core-econ.org/doing-economics/book/text/05-02.html, accessed on 08 Apr 2026
[110] Yitzhaki, Shlomo (1998). "More than a Dozen Alternative Ways of Spelling Gini" (PDF). Economic Inequality. 8: 13–30. Archived (PDF) from the original on 3 August 2012, accessed on 08 Apr 2026
[111] Sung, Myung Jae (August 2010). "Population Aging, Mobility of Quarterly Incomes, and Annual Income Inequality: Theoretical Discussion and Empirical Findings". Korea Institute of Public Finance. CiteSeerX 10.1.1.365.4156, accessed on 08 Apr 2026
[112] Sadras, V. O.; Bongiovanni, R. (2004). "Use of Lorenz curves and Gini coefficients to assess yield inequality within paddocks". Field Crops Research. 90 (2–3): 303–310, doi:10.1016/j.fcr.2004.04.003, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[113] Sadras, V. O.; Bongiovanni, R. (2004). "Use of Lorenz curves and Gini coefficients to assess yield inequality within paddocks". Field Crops Research. 90 (2–3): 303–310, doi:10.1016/j.fcr.2004.04.003, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[114] Thomas, Vinod; Wang, Yan; Fan, Xibo (January 2001). Measuring Education Inequality: Gini Coefficients of Education (PDF). Policy Research Working Papers. The World Bank. CiteSeerX 10.1.1.608.6919, doi:10.1596/1813-9450-2525, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[115] Ibid
[116] Roemer, John E. (September 2006). Economic development as opportunity equalization (Report). Yale University. CiteSeerX 10.1.1.403.4725. SSRN 931479, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[117] Atkinson, Anthony B. (1999). "The contributions of Amartya Sen to Welfare Economics" (PDF). The Scandinavian Journal of Economics. 101 (2): 173–190. doi:10.1111/1467-9442.00151, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[118] Kovacevic, Milorad (November 2010). "Measurement of Inequality in Human Development – A Review" (PDF). United Nations Development Program. Archived from the original (PDF) on 23 September 2011, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[119]Weymark, John (2003). "Generalized Gini Indices of Equality of Opportunity". Journal of Economic Inequality. 1 (1): 5–24. doi:10.1023/A:1023923807503, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[120] Roemer, John E.; et al. (March 2003). "To what extent do fiscal regimes equalize opportunities for income acquisition among citizens?". Journal of Public Economics. 87 (3–4): 539–565, doi:10.1016/S0047-2727(01)00145-1, accessed on 13 Apr 2026
[121] Shorrocks, Anthony (December 1978). "Income inequality and income mobility". Journal of Economic Theory. 19 (2): 376–393. doi:10.1016/0022-0531(78)90101-1, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[122]Maasoumi, Esfandiar; Zandvakili, Sourushe (1986). "A class of generalized measures of mobility with applications". Economics Letters. 22 (1): 97–102. doi:10.1016/0165-1765(86)90150-3, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[123] Kopczuk, Wojciech; Saez, Emmanuel; Song, Jae (2010). "Earnings Inequality and Mobility in the United States: Evidence from Social Security Data Since 1937" (PDF). The Quarterly Journal of Economics. 125 (1): 91–128. doi:10.1162/qjec.2010.125.1.91, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[124] Kopczuk, Wojciech; Saez, Emmanuel; Song, Jae (2010). "Earnings Inequality and Mobility in the United States: Evidence from Social Security Data Since 1937" (PDF). The Quarterly Journal of Economics. 125 (1): 91–128. doi:10.1162/qjec.2010.125.1.91, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[125] Chen, Wen-Hao (March 2009). "Cross-national Differences in Income Mobility: Evidence from Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Germany". Review of Income and Wealth. 55 (1): 75–100. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4991.2008.00307, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[126] Sastre, Mercedes; Ayala, Luis (2002). "Europe vs. The United States: Is There a Trade-Off Between Mobility and Inequality?" (PDF). Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex. Archived (PDF) from the original

on 12 June 2006, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[127]Domeij, David; Flodén, Martin (2010). "Inequality Trends in Sweden 1978–2004". Review of Economic Dynamics. 13 (1): 179–208. CiteSeerX 10.1.1.629.9417. doi:10.1016/j.red.2009.10.005, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[128] Domeij, David; Klein, Paul (January 2000). "Accounting for Swedish wealth inequality" (PDF). Archived from the original (PDF) on 19 May 2003, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[129] Festinger L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. Hum. Relat.7117–140. 10.1177/001872675400700202, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[130] Ferrer-i-CarbonellA. (2005). Income and well-being: an empirical analysis of the comparison income effect.J. Public Econ.89997–1019. 10.1016/j.jpubeco.2004.06.003, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[131] Boyce C. J. Brown G. D. A. Moore S. C. (2010). Money and happiness: rank of income, not income, affects life satisfaction, Psychol. Sci.21471–475. 10.1177/0956797610362671, accessed on 22 Apr 2026
[132] Asadullah M. N., Chaudhury N., (2012). Subjective well-being and relative poverty in rural Bangladesh.J. Econ. Psychol.33940–950. 10.1016/j.joep.2012.05.003, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[133] Brockmann H. Delhey J. Welzel C. Yuan H. (2009). The China puzzle: falling happiness in a rising economy.J. Happiness Stud.10387–405. 10.1007/s10902-008-9095-4, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[134]Oishi S. Kesebir S. Diener E. (2011). Income inequality and happiness.Psychol. Sci.221095–1100. 10.1177/0956797611417262, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[135] Alesina A. Glaeser E. Sacerdote B, (2001). Why doesn't the United States have a European-style welfare state? Brookings Pap. Econ. Act.32187–277. 10.1353/eca.2001.0014, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[136] Verme P. (2011). Life satisfaction and income inequality Rev. Income Wealth57111–127. 10.1111/j.1475-4991.2010. 00420.x, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[137] Clark A. E. (2006). Inequality-aversion and Income Mobility: A Direct Test.Paris: Delta, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[138] Caporale G. M. Georgellis Y. Tsitsianis N. Yin Y. P., (2009). Income and happiness across Europe: do reference values matter? J. Econ. Psychol.3042–51. 10.1016/j.joep.2008.06.004, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[139] Helliwell J. F. (2003). How's life? Combining individual and national variables to explain subjective well-being, Econ. Model.20331–360. 10.1016/S0264-9993(02)00057-3, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[140] Senik C. (2008). Ambition and jealousy: income interactions in the "Old" Europe versus the "New" Europe and the United States.Economica75495–513. 10.1111/j.1468-0335.2007. 00629.x, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[141] Senik C. (2004). When information dominates comparison: a panel data analysis using Russian subjective data.J. Public Econ.882099–2133. 10.1016/S0047-2727(03)00066-5, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[142] https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02052/full, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[143]Clark, A E, P Frijters, and M A Shields, (2008), "Relative Income, Happiness, and Utility: An Explanation for the Easterlin Paradox and Other Puzzles", Journal of Economic Literature, 46(1): 95–144, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[144] Clark, Andrew E., Paul Frijters, and Michael A. Shields. 2008. "Relative Income, Happiness, and Utility: An Explanation for the Easterlin Paradox and Other Puzzles." Journal of Economic Literature 46 (1): 95–144, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[145]Deaton, A (2008), "Income, Health and Well-Being around the World: Evidence from the Gallup World Poll", Journal of Economic Perspectives, 22: 53–72, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[146] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19436768/, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[147] Stevenson, B and J Wolfers (2008), "Economic Growth and Subjective Well-Being: Reassessing the Easterlin Paradox", Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, 1: 1–87, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[148] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358580594_The_Easterlin_Paradox, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[149] https://docs.iza.org/dp4060.pdf, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[150]Di Tella, R and R MacCulloch (2010), "Happiness Adaptation to Income Beyond 'Basic Needs'", in E Diener, J Helliwell, and D Kahneman (eds), International Differences in Well-Being, Oxford: Oxford University Press, accessed on 01 May 2026
[151]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23573750_Happiness_Adaptation_to_Income_Beyond_Basic_Needs, accessed on 01 May 2026
[152] https://vacayou.com/magazine/happiest-countries-in-the-world/, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[153] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23322039.2023.2268804, accessed on 30 Apr 2026
[154] Abdel-Khalek, A. M. (2006). Measuring happiness with a single-item scale. Social Behavior and Personality, 34(2), 139–150, accessed on 01 May 2026
[155] Morgan, S. L. (2020). Response rates and representativeness: A benchmark comparison of the general social surveys to the American Community Surveys, 2012–2018, accessed on 01 May 2026
[156] https://www.academia.edu/2794564/Income_inequality_and_happiness, accessed on 01 May 2026
[157] https://wid.world/news-article/world-inequality-report-2026-inequality-persist-at-a-very-extreme-level, accessed on 01 May 2026
[158] Stucke, M.E. (2013), Should competition policy promote happiness? Fordham Law Review, 81(5), 2575–2645, accessed on 12 May 2026
[159] Brahmi, M., Aldieri, L., Dhayal, K.S., Agrawal, S.: Education 4.0, (2022), Can it be a component of the sustainablewell-

being of students? pp. 215–230, available from: https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-4981-3.ch014, accessed on 11 May 2026

[160] Wolfgramm, R., Spiller, C., Henry, E., Pouwhare, R., (2020), A culturally derived framework of values-driven transformation in Māori economies of well-being (Ngā Hono ōhanga oranga). AlterNative. 16(1), 18–28, available from: https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180119885663, accessed on 12 May 2026

CITATION
Hossain K. A. (2026). Analysis of Paradox of Wealth and Happiness in Contest of Global Richest and Happiest Countries. Global Journal of Research in Business Management, 6(3), 32–60. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20367541