

“Gross National Happiness” & “The Best Country in the World”

(1) Gross National Happiness

- * The concept of **Gross National Happiness (GNH)** was developed in an attempt to define an indicator that measures quality of life or social progress in more psychological terms than gross domestic product (GDP).
- * The term was invented in 1972 by Bhutan’s former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who has opened up Bhutan to the age of modernization. He used the phrase to signal his commitment to building an economy that would serve Bhutan’s unique culture based on Buddhist spiritual values.
- * **GNH** refers to the concept of a quantitative measurement of well-being and happiness. The two measures are both motivated by the notion that the true measure of prosperity should be based on a broader understanding of “happiness”.
- * GNH value is proposed, by Med Jones, the President of International Institute of Management, to be an index function of the total average per capita of the following measures:
 1. Economic Wellness
 2. Environmental Wellness
 3. Physical Wellness
 4. Mental Wellness
 5. Workplace Wellness
 6. Social Wellness
 7. Political Wellness
- * The International Conferences on Gross National Happiness were held several times during the last decade. The great variety of groups and talents were participated in the conference, and are still working.
- * In early 2008 French President Nicolas Sarkozy organized the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. Its report issued last year concluded “ the time is ready for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people’s well-being.”

(2) The Best Country in the World

* In NEWSWEEK's first-ever Best Countries special issue (Aug. 23, 2010), the following question was set up:

---If you were born today, which country would provide you the very best opportunity to live a healthy, safe, reasonably prosperous, and upwardly mobile life ?

* For this special survey, NEWSWEEK chose five categories of national well-being — education, health, quality of life, economic competitiveness, and political environment— and compiled metrics within these categories across 100 nations.

* Overall Ranking

1. Finland	11. United States	21. Spain
2. Switzerland	12. Germany	22. Israel
3. Sweden	13. New Zealand	23. Italy
4. Australia	14.. United Kingdom	====
5. Luxembourg	15. South Korea	51. Russia
6. Norway	16. France	====
7. Canada	17. Ireland	59. China
8. Netherlands	18. Austria	=====.....
9. Japan	19. Belgium	78. India
10. Denmark	20. Singapore

They show that statistics sometimes tell half-truth. The best countries tend to be small, rich, safe, and cold.

While there's no denying the vitality of emerging –market giants like China or Brazil or Turkey, they are often low-ranked because these countries take less effort to improve their overall levels of well-being.

* Economic Dynamism

(Overall)	(Among Populous nations)
1. Singapore	1. United States
2. United States	2. United Kingdom
3. South Korea	3. Japan
4. United Kingdom	4. China
5. Sweden	5. Germany
6. Australia	6. France
7. Switzerland	7. Russia
8. Finland	8. India
9. Luxembourg	9. Thailand
10. Japan	10. Italy

Singapore, the tiny city-state has transformed itself from a slum to one of the richest nation on earth. The government controls more than half the economy through state-run sovereign wealth funds and corporations, but it's extremely pro-free trade and pro-business. Education and infrastructure are first-rate.

Although personal freedoms are limited, unemployment is among the lowest in the world.

America still come up tops in this category, and not far behind is the United Kingdom. Both have large service sectors (particularly in finance), high productivity levels, and lot of inward and outward investment. The big question is whether the two will still top the list five years from now. Britain in particular suffers from a huge and growing debt load, worsened by the banking crisis and recession.

* **Quality of Life**

(Among populous nations)

1. Germany
2. United States
3. France
4. Japan
5. United Kingdom
6. Italy
7. Russia
8. Mexico
9. Thailand
10. Turkey

Quality of life is one of those “soft” metrics that are practically impossible to determine. Everyone has a different idea of what it is (poor nations may favor poverty reduction over less pollution , for example). This includes things like health, security, and a chance to make a decent living. One big surprise: America beat France. But please note: the deciding factor was wealth, not vacation time.

* **Education**

(Overall)

1. Finland
2. South Korea
3. Canada
4. Singapore
5. Japan
6. Switzerland
7. Estonia
8. United Kingdom
9. Ireland
10. Netherlands

Finland heads this category for good reason. In Finland, kids who start to struggle receive one-on-one support from their teachers. Roughly one in three Finnish students also get extra help from a tutor each year. But South Korea isn't far behind. The Asian nation is legendary for the quality of its schooling and the fever of its students, who are among the likeliest in the world not only to complete their secondary education but then to go on and acquire college degrees. (South Korean parents are notorious for spending huge

sums of money on test-preparation courses for their kids.) It's hard to image now, but back in the 1960's, South Korea's national wealth was on par with Afghanistan's. Today, it's one of the world's richest nations, in large part thanks to its focus on education.

* **Health**

(Overall)

1. Japan
2. Switzerland
3. Sweden
4. Spain
5. Italy
6. Australia
7. Singapore
8. Norway
9. New Zealand
10. Netherlands

Per capita income seems to be the biggest determining factor. European nations remain strong in this category, even though (unlike Japan) they have long relied on socialized medicine. Even countries like Spain, hard hit by the banking crisis and real-estate collapse, still manage to deliver consistently high levels of health care. In Spain, for example, universal coverage is a constitutionally guaranteed right, and there are no out-of-pocket expenses aside from some prescription drugs.

* **Overall Ranking Among Populous Nations**

1. Japan
2. United States
3. Germany
4. United Kingdom
5. France
6. Italy
7. Mexico
8. Brazil
9. Russia
10. Turkey

This sub-list of the Best Countries with large populations speaks volumes about the new global economic and political order that is currently taking shape.

While the United States and other developed-world heavyweights still lead the list, a new generation of emerging-market giants is catching up. Economists talk a lot about the BRICs – Brazil, Russia, India, and China, but the future may be even brighter for the next batch of emerging-market leaders, countries like Turkey and Mexico that are making big strides with the help of healthy birth rate, youthful labor pools, and hefty infusions of

foreign investment to improve their prospects.

Appendix

* **Best place to be old: Japan**

Japan's elders (who make up a fifth of the population) don't just enjoy generous pensions, the respect of society, and the world's longest life expectancy. They also get their own national holiday, Keiro No Hi.

* **Best place to have a baby: France**

Maman is sitting pretty, with as much as seven month's paid leave, low-cost health care, and a baby nurse who makes house calls. If she's sick, the government sends someone to do the family's laundry.

* **Best place to dine: Spain**

Sure, the paella is fabulous, but it's abnormal like foie-gras candy and ham "tapioca", created by gastronomists like Ferran Adria, that make Spain the foodie's mecca.

* **Best place to be a dog owner: Belgium**

Dogs are more than man's best friend here----they are truly part of the family. They are allowed in grocery stores, restaurants, sporting events, and music festivals.

* **Best place for sex: Czech Republic**

According to Durex condoms' global sex survey; "Czechs have sex as often as the French; they start their sexual life as early as the Dutch; and they fear venereal disease as little as the Italians."

* **Best weather: Malta**

It rarely rains between April and August in Malta, and the long, dry summers are matched by short, mild winters. Winds from northern Africa keep the place temperature in spring and fall.

(J.Y.)