

The Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies
Thimphu Bhutan

Launch of the 2022 GNH Index Results
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Thimphu
22nd May | 3:00 PM

Thimphu-Bhutan 22 May 2023

Today, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dr Lotay Tshering, launched the 2022 Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index, a measure of the population's overall wellbeing and happiness.

The book highlights that the period between 2015 and 2022 witnessed an increase in GNH, reflecting Bhutan's steadfast commitment to fostering an environment conducive to happiness and wellbeing. GNH increase was driven primarily by improvements in housing, income, schooling, services, and literacy, but also by positive emotions – which increased despite the pandemic. However, a number of indicators deteriorated, reflecting other impacts of the pandemic, including healthy days, cultural and political participation, mental health, and *Driglam Namzha*.

The Launch event also included video messages from senior world leaders: Achim Steiner (Administrator, UNDP), Mathias Cormann (Secretary-General, OECD), and Professor James Foster (George Washington University), who stressed the relevance of GNH 2022 internationally.

The 2022 GNH Index, with a value of 0.781, reflects a growth rate of 3.3% compared to the 2015 GNH Index of 0.756, faster than previous growth. The GNH Index in 2010 was 0.743. The GNH value ranges from 0 to 1 where higher value represents greater wellbeing and happiness.

The GNH Index is a holistic tool based on 33 indicators which measure nine domains: psychological wellbeing; health; education; time use; cultural diversity and resilience; good governance; community vitality; ecological diversity and resilience; and living standards. It is constructed using the Alkire-Foster Method – which is a rigorous yet easy-to-understand method.

Based on each person's level of sufficiency in the weighted indicators, the GNH Index classifies them into one of four groups: Deeply happy (77% to 100%), Extensively happy (66% to 76.9%), Narrowly happy (50% to 65.9%) and Unhappy (0% to 49.9%). In 2022, 9.5% of the population is deeply happy, 38.6% extensively happy, 45.5% narrowly happy, and 6.4% unhappy.

Deeply and extensively happy people are combined to identify the happy individuals, referring to those who have achieved sufficiency in at least 66% of the weighted indicators. Those under that threshold are considered not-yet-happy. The share of happy individuals increased by 7.2 percentage points from 2010 to 2022 (40.9% in 2010 to 48.1% in 2022).

Who is happiest? Although 57 percent of happy people (deeply happy and extensively happy) live in rural areas, urban populations experience significantly higher levels of (0.790 vs 0.726). By gender, although there has been a positive trend in the GNH index for both males and females since 2010, the rate of improvement among females has surpassed that of males, both in 2015 and in 2022, indicating equalising changes. But females still have lower GNH.

The findings also challenge the assumption of a strong association between income and happiness. If all Bhutanese are divided into five groups according to their income, 41% of richest group (quintile) are in the not-yet-happy group, and 44% of the ‘next richest’ group were also not-yet-happy. In the poorest income group, 29.2% of people were actually GNH happy, and in the next-poorest, it’s 42%. So clearly income and GNH are different measures.

Different people shape their own participation in the nine domains of GNH differently, depending on their possibilities and personal goals. Consider Karma Lhadon, a 70-year-old woman, enjoys sufficiency in 71% the 33 indicators. An illiterate farmer and widow, she is healthy, highly spiritual, and lives in vibrant community. She is income poor, and monkey and boar frequently destroy her crops – and cause her negative emotions! Yet her life is marked by a strong sense of positivity as well as pride in her six children.

Or consider a happy urbanite: Dorji Gyeltshen is Business Management graduate who works for the Bank of Bhutan. He has sufficiency in almost 80% of the 33 weighted indicators. He experiences anger and frustration, but is healthy and regularly recites prayers – though he finds it difficult to meditate. He is healthy but cannot often participate in cultural festivals due to a high workload. He is dissatisfied governmental delays and efficiencies, but enjoys strong family and community ties, has a good conservation attitude, and a good income. The book illustrates other typical personas of happiness, drawing on data and qualitative studies.

Simple policy initiatives could improve GNH for not-yet-happy people, as the book enumerates. For example, political participation has dropped strongly among urban residents, which suggests the need to make voting more accessible if they are living with a disability or working in a different *Dzongkhag*, as well as the need for advocating and initiating communication campaigns that revitalizes civic duty and commitment.

Achim Steiner, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNDP Administrator, observed that ‘The UN Secretary-General has elevated ‘Beyond GDP’ as one of the central reform agenda items for the Summit of the Future in 2024. Bhutan’s GNH approach serves as a key example of alternative approaches as the UN works to advance the global conversation in this vital area. Bhutan is also inspiring countries across the world to show much greater ambition when it comes to the rights of *future generations*...’

Mathias Cormann, the Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), mentioned that, ‘Just last week, G7 Finance Ministers agreed on the need to use multidimensional indicators to measure welfare and integrate those indicators into the policy making process, helping to deliver better policies for better lives.’ Cormann indicated that the OECD wishes to include Bhutan’s perspective and insight in a new knowledge exchange platform on well-being matrix and policy best practices.’

James Foster, the Oliver T. Carr Professor at George Washington University, stated, ‘There are times in history when concepts and tools which have been swirling around for some time in public discourse, come into focus and bring change. In my view, the 2022 Gross National Happiness Index of Bhutan is being launched at one such time... if a GNH Index were taken up outside Bhutan, then naturally many would come to learn more of its use in policy, and its final effects as well.’

The detailed findings of the 2022 GNH Index are published in the book *GNH 2022* by Ura *et al.* This comprehensive publication provides detailed insights into the measurement, analysis, and policy implications of the GNH Index for 2022 and also covers changes in happiness over time.

The 2022 GNH Index Survey was also supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Bhutan Office. **The book is available for download [here](#).**

Additional Quotations

Karma Wangdi, Chief, CBS stated, ‘The GNH 2022 survey interviewed 11,052 respondents aged 15 years or older who were randomly selected from randomly sampled households. A face-to-face in-person interview was conducted using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) methods. Each interview, on an average took little over an hour and a half to complete. The survey covered all 20 dzongkhags and almost all gewogs and towns; survey took place in 198 gewogs and 53 towns across the country. The field survey took about four months to complete – from 11 April 2022 – 9 August 2022.’

Tshoki Zangmo, CBS, mentioned, ‘... each of the 33 indicators have a sufficiency level that needs to be met for a person to achieve sufficiency. The average sufficiency score is then assessed to classify people into deeply happy, extensively happy, narrowly happy and unhappy. The GNH Index hence can be used to track and monitor progress across these four groups of people. In particular, GNH Index can be used to zoom into those who are narrowly happy and unhappy in order to draw more policy attention to their 33 GNH conditions...’

Sabina Alkire, OPHI at University of Oxford, shared that ‘the GNH index is unique in comparison to prominent measures – Human Development Index, Social Progress Index, Global Peace Index – because it presents results by area, *Dzongkhag*, age, occupation, gender. So its findings are clear and actionable. Equally important, it documents people’s creative, inventive and diverse paths to flourishing.’