



HAPPY  
PLANET  
INDEX



**EMBARGOED UNTIL MAY 2, 8am CEST**

## **New Happy Planet Index data shows good lives don't have to cost the earth**

*New report finds that after basic needs are met, higher levels of consumption do not translate to higher levels of wellbeing.*

**BERLIN, May 2:** The latest edition of the Happy Planet Index (HPI) launched by the Hot or Cool Institute in Berlin overwhelmingly finds that higher levels of consumption do not translate to higher levels of wellbeing. Overconsumption is not only harming the planet – it doesn't help people either. The report suggests that governments need to start measuring what matters – the health and wellbeing of people and the planet.

The HPI combines data on wellbeing, life expectancy and carbon footprint to provide a snapshot of how well countries are doing at providing their citizens a healthy, happy and dignified life without overtaxing the planet. In other words, the HPI looks at how efficiently countries are managing their resources to provide people with what really matters – health and wellbeing.

### **Who comes out on top?**

- This time around, Vanuatu, Sweden, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Nicaragua are the 5 countries with the highest HPI scores.
- Western Europe has overtaken Latin America as the highest scoring region.
- Croatia, China, Malaysia, Algeria and Lithuania are the countries that saw the greatest improvement in their HPI scores from 2019 to 2021.
- No country achieves a "good" score on all three components of the HPI.

The HPI leaders are countries that are able to provide a standard of health and wellbeing while limiting the average per capita carbon footprint.

Sometimes, countries that have the same levels of environmental impact can vary hugely in terms of the outcomes of long and happy lives. For example, Botswana and the Netherlands both have a carbon footprint of around 10.2 tonnes. However, the



Netherlands achieves an adjusted happy life years score of 79.2 years, whilst Botswana only achieves 39.1 years.

### **GDP doesn't measure what matters**

Of the 10 countries with the highest per capita GDP, 6 have below average HPI scores. Pursuing ever higher GDP does not lead to what really matters, wellbeing within environmental limits. In many wealthy nations, high levels of consumption and production are contributing to ecological collapse without providing health or happiness for their citizens.

Across the board, there is very little correlation between GDP and HPI, and neither should be the one indicator that countries use to determine their success.

*“HPI should not replace existing metrics, but instead encourage countries to democratically adopt alternative measures of progress,”* says Dr. Saamah Abdallah, Programme Lead Sustainable Wellbeing at the Hot or Cool Institute. *“Citizens should take the lead in defining what matters and what should be measured.”*

### **Inequality is a bad deal for people and the planet**

Clearly, countries with high average per capita carbon footprints generally do not score well on the HPI. We find that increased resource use does not equal increased health and wellbeing.

This year for the first time, the HPI has also looked at HPI scores across income brackets within select countries. These findings strongly confirm what we see across countries. Within most countries, the wealthiest citizens score the worst on the HPI. Their much higher carbon emissions do not translate into much higher wellbeing.

For example, in the USA, the richest 10% of the population has an average carbon footprint of 68.7 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per capita (which is four times higher than the average for the rest of the population), although wellbeing outcomes are only marginally better for that group.

*“We need to focus on wasteful consumption and inequality which is making the planetary crisis worse,”* says Dr. Lewis Akenji, Executive Director of the Hot or Cool Institute. *“We*



HAPPY  
PLANET  
INDEX



*must question the legitimacy of proposed technological and economic climate solutions that mainly transfer wealth to the already rich.”*

### Learn more

- Read the full report [here](#).
- Explore the data [here](#).
- View the methodology report [here](#).
- Watch the Happy Planet Index short film [here](#).
- Find out your personal HPI score [here](#).

-- ENDS --

### Contact

For media inquiries or any requests for further information, please contact:

***Dr. Saamah Abdallah***

***Sustainable Wellbeing Programme Lead at the Hot or Cool Institute***

[s.abdallah@hotorcool.org](mailto:s.abdallah@hotorcool.org)

or

***Anastasia Sukhoroslova***

***Public Relations Consultant***

[media@hotorcool.org](mailto:media@hotorcool.org)

### About the Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is a measure of sustainable wellbeing, calculated based on just three indicators: life expectancy, self-reported wellbeing and carbon footprint.



HAPPY  
PLANET  
INDEX



### **About the Hot or Cool Institute**

The Hot or Cool Institute is a public interest think tank that explores the intersection between society and sustainability. Our mission is to equip organisations, policymakers, and communities with the science to inform their decisions towards a sustainable and prosperous future, putting people and science at the centre of the sustainability transition.