**LifeStyle Newsletter |   
Did Happiness Survive the Pandemic?**

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Did Happiness Survive the Pandemic?

For years, the well-being of a nation and its people was measured by economic productivity. However, gains or losses in gross domestic product, which is the value of all goods and services produced in a country, didn’t provide much insight to the structure and quality of people’s lives.1

Nine years ago, the *World Happiness Report* was created to provide a more complete picture of the life satisfaction and emotional well-being around the world. The 2021 report considered a diversity of indicators to develop a subjective assessment of the pandemic’s effect on people in countries around the world.1

As it turns out, humans are surprisingly resilient. The pandemic’s toll on overall life satisfaction was negligible; however, its impact on emotion was significant. The number of people who said they were sad or worried the previous day increased by 10 percent, while laughter and enjoyment remained relatively constant.2, 3

It is interesting to note there were increases in the number of people who said they did something interesting the day before and the number who felt well-rested. In addition, there was a reduction in the frequency of health problems experienced by people age 60 and older.3

A key factor in happiness during the pandemic was trust, according to the report. “Societies with higher trust in public institutions and greater income equality were shown to be more successful in fighting COVID-19, as measured by 2020 rates of COVID-19 deaths.”3

**Where were people happiest?**

Nordic nations continued to claim the top spots among 95 countries included in 2020’s world-happiness ranking. Last year, the happiest countries were:3

* Finland
* Iceland
* Denmark

The least happy were Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and Jordan (down from #83 to #93).

A few countries, such as Jordan, saw their rank change significantly. Another example, Germany, rose from #15 to #7. The United States, which has never cracked the top 10 for happiness, moved up two slots from #16 to #14.3

It will be interesting to see how happiness and well-being change in 2021, as the world recovers from the pandemic and adjusts to life with COVID-19.

**Longevity Salad**

Blue Zones® are places in the world where people are extraordinarily long-lived. They include Ikaria in Greece and Sardinia in Italy.4 There are many reasons people in these regions live long lives, and one is healthy diets. Fattoush is a popular dish across the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Here’s a wonderful version based on a recipe from *Gimme Some Oven*.5

**Fattoush Salad**

*Salad ingredients:*

* 1 head Romaine lettuce, chopped into bite-sized pieces
* 1 English cucumber, thinly sliced
* 1 cup diced tomatoes
* 1/2 cup loosely packed chopped fresh mint leaves
* 4 radishes, thinly sliced
* 1 to 2 cups pita chips, homemade or store-bought

*Lemon Dressing ingredients:*

* 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
* 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
* 1 large clove garlic, pressed or minced
* 1 teaspoon sea salt
* 1 teaspoon ground sumac
* 2 teaspoons honey

*Pickled Onion ingredients:*

* 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
* 1/2 cup water
* 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
* 1 teaspoon sea salt
* 1 tablespoon sugar

*Directions*

*Make the pickled onions*: At least one hour before the meal, whisk together water, vinegar, sugar, and salt in a jar or bowl. Add the red onion and let it sit for one hour or longer.

*Make the lemon dressing*: Vigorously whisk all dressing ingredients together in a small bowl (or shake together in a mason jar) for 30 seconds. Set aside.

*Make the salad*: Combine the lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes, mint, radishes, and pickled onion in a large bowl. (Remove the onions from the pickling liquid before adding them to the salad.) Drizzle evenly with the lemon dressing, then toss. Once the salad has been dressed, add the pita chips and toss again. Serve immediately.

**What Do You Know About the Mediterranean?**

A lot of Americans retire overseas. In fact, *Forbes* reported the Social Security Administration sends about 700,000 checks a month to addresses outside the United States. Most of the checks go to people living in Canada, but some go to Americans living in countries that border the Mediterranean Sea.6

See what you know about the Mediterranean by taking this brief quiz.7

1. There are 22 countries that border the Mediterranean Sea. Which of these does not?
   1. Lebanon
   2. Croatia
   3. Greece
   4. Serbia
2. The Mediterranean Sea is almost completely landlocked. How does it connect to the Atlantic Ocean?
   1. The Straits of Gibraltar
   2. The Straits of Hormuz
   3. The Straits of Malacca
   4. The Black Sea
3. What is the Latin meaning of ‘Mediterranean’?
   1. Deep blue
   2. Inland
   3. Great green
   4. Western
4. What do historians think happened in the Mediterranean about 6 million years ago?
   1. The Roman Empire ruled the region
   2. The Mediterranean Sea evaporated
   3. The island of Atlantis sank into the Mediterranean Sea
   4. A flood created the Mediterranean Sea

The answers can be found below.

**Beware of Travel Scams**

Successful vaccine rollouts have made it possible for people to get out and about again. Whether you’re planning a long-delayed vacation or a reunion with family and friends, be wary of scams.

Americans’ excitement about being able to move freely again has attracted the notice of criminals who would like to take your personal information and your money. Here are three scams to watch out for:

* **Too-cheap vacation packages**. You may receive a text or robocall advertising a rock bottom price from a name brand company, reported *CNN Travel*. Some offer island getaways that include airfare and several nights in a hotel for a few hundred dollars. Don’t fall for it.8 You can find out whether the deal is real by calling the company directly or visiting its website.
* **Fake rental car companies**. There is a shortage of rental cars in the United States. Some scammers are taking advantage of the situation by setting up fake rental car company sites online. Sometimes, they make the sites look like well-known rental car companies. Whencustomers call a phony customer service number, the scammers take their personal information and credit card numbers, reported *AARP*.9

When booking online, make sure you’re on a real site for a real rental car company. Check the web address and make sure it begins with https:// and the payment page should have lock icon.8

* **Public Wi-Fi**. If you travel to national parks and other remote locations, you may be tempted to log into personal accounts using public Wi-Fi. Resist the temptation. Security for public Wi-Fi networks is often lax or non-existent, making it relatively easy for hackers to gather your data.10

One alternative is to use your smartphone’s personal hot spot to access the Internet.9

Some scams are hard to resist. If you discover you’ve become the victim of an unscrupulous criminal, you can fight back by reporting the incident. You can report the crime to your state’s consumer protection office, as well as the United States Federal Trade Commission.11

Quiz Answers:

1. D – Serbia
2. A – The Straits of Gibraltar
3. B – Inland
4. B – The Mediterranean Sea evaporated

Sources:

1 <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/>

2 <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/overview-life-under-covid-19/>

3 <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/happiness-trust-and-deaths-under-covid-19/>

4 <https://www.bluezones.com/live-longer-better/original-blue-zones/#section-2>

5 <https://www.gimmesomeoven.com/fattoush-salad/>

6 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/williampbarrett/2019/11/27/the-best-places-to-retire-abroad-in-2020/?sh=2376d010516c>

7 <https://15facts.com/about-the-mediterranean-sea/>

8 <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/travel-scams-pandemic-cmd/index.html>

9 <https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/info-2021/travel-scams-to-avoid.html?intcmp=AE-FRDSC-MOR-R2-POS3>

10 <https://us.norton.com/internetsecurity-privacy-risks-of-public-wi-fi.html>

11 <https://www.usa.gov/stop-scams-frauds>

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