

Press Release

Saturday 3 October 2020

NOT FOR BROADCAST OR PUBLICATION BEFORE 00:01 ON SATURDAY 3 OCTOBER 2020

HIGHLANDERS HAPPIER DESPITE PANDEMIC

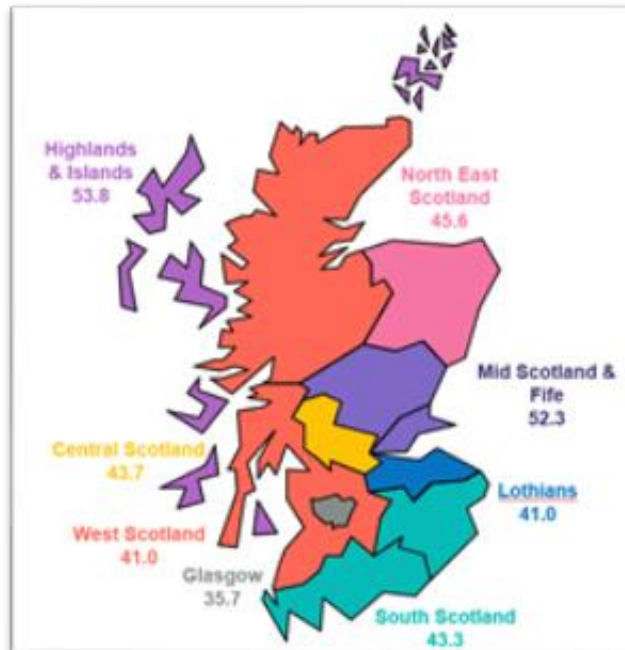
- Scotland's most remote residents happier than ever
- Lockdown wellbeing benefits also felt in Mid-Scotland and Fife, North East and Central Scotland
- Amount of green space the most important factor in making people happy
- Residents in South Scotland, West Scotland, and Lothians unhappiest

Residents of the Highlands and Islands, who were already the happiest in the country, have become even happier following the first country-wide lockdown earlier this year.

The Highlands and Islands, renowned for breathtaking scenery, came top of Bank of Scotland's Happiness Index with a score of 53.8 – the highest recorded to date. Residents are seemingly taking this year's events in their stride, with happiness levels increasing by 4.7, over the lockdown period. [Table 1]

The Index, a nationwide annual survey now in its sixth year, asks people how happy or unhappy they are in their local communities to create a barometer ranging between -100 (very unhappy) to +100 (very happy).

Graph 1: Happiness across the Scottish regions (Source: YouGov, 2020)



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People in Scotland rank the amount of green space as the number one factor influencing their personal happiness. Neighbours and the upkeep of the neighbourhood complete the top three.

The second happiest places to live are Mid-Scotland and Fife, home to the coastal beauty, tourist and golf hotspot, of St Andrews – which saw the biggest improvement over the lockdown period from 40.7 to 52.3 (+11.6). This is followed by North East Scotland (45.6), which includes Aberdeenshire and Central Scotland, inclusive of Stirlingshire (43.7). Both areas saw their scores improve compared to pre-pandemic levels, suggesting the restrictions of lockdown may have had a positive impact on happiness, for many.

However, those living in the South and West of Scotland, and the Lothians, paint a more solemn picture, with happiness scores falling since March to the lowest they have been for a number of years. Glasgow is bottom of the pack, with a score of just 35.7, a fall of 6.1 since beginning of 2020.

Before the introduction of the first set of measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, on average, happiness levels across Scotland had shown an annual decrease for the first time in six years, from 44.6 in 2019 to 42.9, but then recovered to 44.2.

Ricky Diggins, Director, Bank of Scotland, said: “2020 has been a year of immense change for everyone, and we expected to see the impact of this in the results of our latest Happiness Index, which Bank of Scotland has been running for the past 6 years.

“The results show that the collective mood can be quite different, depending on where you live. Following the national lockdown earlier in the year, the Highlands and Islands recorded its highest happiness score to date, and other areas also showed improvements. However, happiness levels dropped below those we’ve seen in previous years, in Glasgow and Edinburgh, suggesting the pandemic has had a different impact on Scottish city dwellers.”

All age groups report an improvement in happiness levels over the lockdown period with the exception of those aged 35 to 44. [Table 2] However, despite their happiness score improving the most, those aged 18 to 24 are least happy, for the third year in a row.

Women continue to be happier than men but, following lockdown, men showed a greater improvement in their score than women (+2.1 compared to +0.6). [Table 3] Households of two remain the happiest, although families of six or more are now closing the gap, sitting just behind in second place, with those who live alone bringing up the rear. [Table 4]

According to the Index, any of the following make Scots the happiest: homeownership, being aged

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65 or over, living in a rural location, having children and/or grandchildren, or having income or savings of £100,000 or more.

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Notes to editors:

Table 1: Happiness score 2014-2020, by region:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	March 2020	June 2020
Scotland	39	40.4	43.7	44.9	44.6	42.9	44.2
Highlands and Islands	47.7	50.6	47.6	47.6	49.9	49.1	53.8
Mid-Scotland and Fife	39	51.7	49.3	45.1	48.6	40.7	52.3
North East	38.7	33.9	44.2	42.7	41.1	37.5	45.6
Central	35.6	33.2	49.5	49.8	39.6	41.2	43.7
South	36.5	43.4	42.2	46	47.3	47.2	43.3
West	41.9	39.1	41.2	40.1	41	42.3	41.0
Lothians	38.6	40.3	43.6	46.2	45.1	44.9	41.0
Glasgow	38	35.7	30.9	40.3	34.1	41.8	35.7

Table 2: Happiness score 2014-2020, by age:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	March 2020	June 2020
18 - 24	30.4	30.2	34.2	40.5	33.5	30.5	35.9
25 -34	31.1	30.8	35.7	37.2	38.2	37.6	39.6
35 - 44	30.5	34.5	34.2	35.1	39.7	44.2	39.0
45 - 54	36.0	39.1	42.4	41.4	40.8	39.4	39.7
55+	50.7	51.6	55.2	56.0	55.3	50.4	53.8

Table 3: Happiness score 2014-2020, by gender:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	March 2020	June 2020
Women	41.6	43.1	45.9	47.6	47.2	45.5	46.1
Men	36.2	37.5	41.3	41.9	41.8	40.0	42.1

Table 4: Happiness score 2014-2020, by household size:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	March 2020	June 2020
1	39.6	35.2	35.1	38.8	36.6	35.1	38.4
2	42.5	45.9	50.1	49.9	51.7	48.0	48.8
3	33.6	37.9	40.9	46.4	41.6	43.1	40.6
4	42.7	38.4	45.5	38.2	40.7	43.0	43.5
5	19.4	42.4	44.0	48.2	41.3	42.2	45.8
6+	32.4	31.5	35.3	44.6	47.3	30.4	48.3

Methodology

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YouGov fielded a quantitative survey to a nationally representative sample of the Scotland population, interviewing 3,048 Scottish panellists who agreed to take part in research in March 2020 and then conducted a follow up quantitative survey in June 2020 amongst a similar sample profile in the Scotland, interviewing 3,038 Scottish panellists .

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