

## Denmark is the world's happiest country – official

By Jerome Taylor

For those who think a tropical island paradise or a Beverly Hills mansion is the ultimate key to contentment, think again. The happiest place in the world is, according to sociologists, far closer to home.

In a new study aimed at charting each country's levels of happiness, Denmark has scored top marks, followed closely by Switzerland, Austria and Ireland. Britain came 41st, 18 places behind the United States.

The study, conducted by the University of Leicester, compiled data from 178 countries and 100 global studies to map happiness across the world and found that countries with good access to healthcare and education came out on top.

The report's author, Adrian White, said the results showed that people in the West should realise how lucky they were. "The current obsession in the West about how unhappy we are really needs a reality check," he said. "I think one of the most destructive myths is that people in intense poverty are actually happy. Because if you believe that, why should you do anything?"

Most of Africa and the former Soviet republics scored worst. Burundi, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo were the world's least happy places.



However the report did 5. The tiny Himalayan nation of Bhutan, ruled by an authoritarian monarch, unexpectedly came eighth, while well-off nations such as Japan and France languished at 90th and 62nd respectively. Benjamin Holst, a Danish journalist, said that Denmark's high suicide rate – the second worst in Europe – and a recent rise in xenophobia<sup>1</sup>) should make people question just how content Danes were.

"I'm not sure about these studies and I really wonder about the suicide rates in Denmark," he said. "I mean is it that we're so happy we kill ourselves? I really wonder about that."

### On top of the world

1	Denmark	6	Finland
2	Switzerland	7	Sweden
3	Austria	8	Bhutan
4	Ireland	9	Brunei
5	Bahamas	10	Canada

noot 1 xenophobia: angst voor vreemdelingen