

Generous spending leads to increased happiness: SFU psychologist Lara Aknin in World Happiness Report

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Generous spending leads to increased well-being, while volunteering shows no clear causal link to happiness, says Lara Aknin, social psychologist and associate professor in the Department of Psychology at Simon Fraser University.

Aknin, along with researchers from Harvard Business School and the University of British Columbia, contributed a chapter to this year's [World Happiness Report](#) where she explored the evidence surrounding prosocial behaviours and happiness.

The World Happiness Report, released annually by the [United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#), is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness. It ranks 156 countries by how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be.

In 2019, Canada came in ninth out of the 156 countries included in the report. Finland found itself at the top of the list for the second year in a row.

“It was an honour to contribute a chapter to the *World Happiness Report* because the contents of the report reach a wide readership and may be used to impact policy,” says Aknin.

“Knowing that, my co-authors and I tried to provide a clear and critical summary of the existing evidence on the relationship between generosity and happiness. In doing so, we laid out the strengths and limitations of the existing literature.”

One of the topics discussed in the chapter is the question of whether there is a causal link between volunteerism and happiness.