

What Americans Can Learn About Happiness From Denmark

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Research shows “hygge,” or intentional intimacy, is the driving force behind the Danes’ generally positive attitude, something largely absent in the U.S.

The new [World Happiness Report](#) again ranks Denmark among the top three happiest of 155 countries surveyed—a distinction that the country has earned for seven consecutive years.

The United States, on the other hand, ranked 18th in this year’s World Happiness Report, a four-spot drop from last year’s report.

Denmark’s place among the world’s happiest countries is consistent with many other [national surveys of happiness](#) (or, as psychologists call it, “subjective well-being”).

Scientists like to study and argue about how to measure things. But when it comes to happiness, a general consensus seems to have emerged.

Depending on the scope and purpose of the research, happiness is often measured using objective indicators (data on crime, income, civic engagement, and health) and [subjective methods](#), such as asking people how frequently they experience positive and negative emotions.

Why might Danes evaluate their lives more positively? As a psychologist and native of Denmark, I’ve looked into this question.