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## Happiness

Thailand comes seventh out of 24 Asian countries for levels of happiness.

Prepared by The Thai Health Team

Circumstances affect whether Thai people are happy or not, but the variables that most effect the happiness of Thais are the existence of savings, the level of income compared with other people, community solidarity, income sufficiency, and living together with the father, mother, and children in the same house.

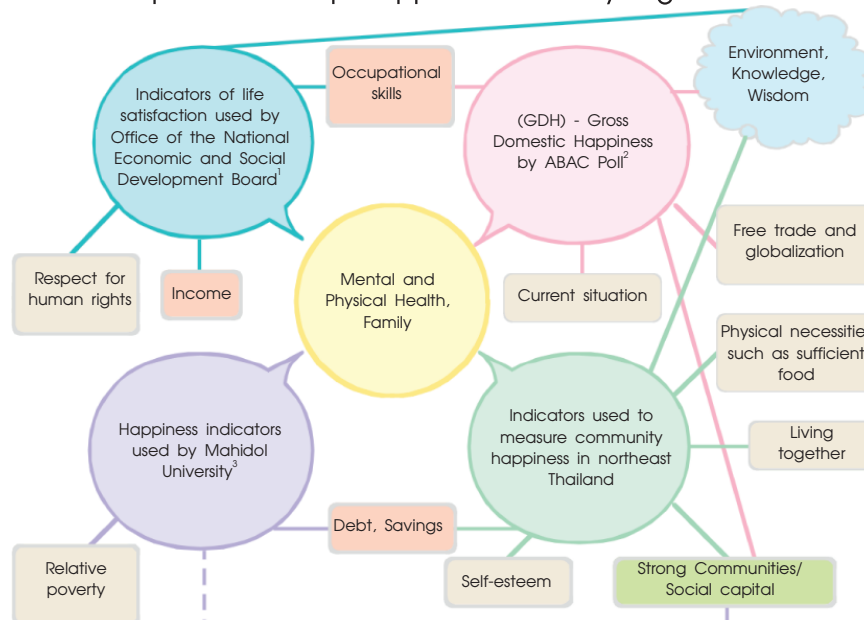
Around the world, the measurement of happiness is receiving increasing attention. Examples include the index of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan, and the Happy Planet Index (HPI), developed by the New Economics Foundation. Both indexes incorporate ethics and consumption of natural resources. However, the Happy Planet Index also uses life expectancy and life satisfaction to measure happiness, while the index of Gross National Happiness uses economic self-sufficiency, preservation of culture, and good governance. When the Happy Planet Index was calculated for 178 countries in 2006, Thailand came thirty-second.

In Thailand there have been many proposals for measuring happiness at the local and national level. However, most authorities agree on the importance of physical and mental health and of loving families. Indicators that are widely accepted include: income, debt, savings, employment, environment, and community solidarity. Different groups have added other items to this list.

ABAC Poll has measured happiness levels on a monthly basis. They have found that Thais are moderately happy: neither very happy nor very unhappy. However, unusual circumstances can raise or lower general levels of happiness. For instance, during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the King's accession to the throne (in May 2006), levels of happiness increased to almost 10 out of 10. During the major floods of October, which caused widespread economic difficulties, happiness levels dropped dramatically.

A survey in two provinces found similar levels of happiness in the two places. Most people were moderately happy. However, if a household had savings, if it felt that it was no poorer than other households, if the community was strong, if household income was higher than 50,000 baht per year, and if the parents and children lived together, then household members were more likely to be happy.

### Attempts to develop happiness index by organizations in Thailand



- Source:
1. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board
  2. ABAC Poll, Assumption University, Monthly Report on the Happiness Indexes in Thailand, October 2006
  3. Rossarin Gray and colleagues, 2006, Happiness Indexes in Chainat and Kanchanaburi Provinces: Part of a Local Participatory Research Program for Addressing Poverty in Western Thailand
  4. Aphisit Thamrongworrakun, 2006, Sustainable Community Development for Quality of Life and a Healthy Environment, Khon Kaen

### Rank in Asia for the Happy Planet Index, 2006

Rank	Country	Score out of 100
12	Vietnam	61.2
13	Bhutan	61.1
15	Sri Lanka	60.3
17	Philippines	59.2
23	Indonesia	57.9
31	China	56.0
32	Thailand	55.4
39	Maldives	53.5
41	Bangladesh	53.2
44	Malaysia	52.7
48	Timor Leste	52.0
54	Nepal	50.0
56	Mongolia	49.6
62	India	48.7
77	Burma	44.6
84	Taiwan	43.4
88	Hongkong	42.9
91	Cambodia	42.2
95	Japan	41.7
100	Brunei Darussalem	41.2
102	Korea	41.1
109	Laos	40.3
112	Pakistan	39.4
131	Singapore	36.1

### The countries with the highest and lowest happiness scores

#### 10 highest scores

Country	Score out of 100
Vanuatu	68.2
Colombia	67.2
Costa Rica	66.0
Dominica	64.6
Panama	63.5
Cuba	61.9
Honduras	61.8
Guatemala	61.7
El Salvador	61.7
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	61.4

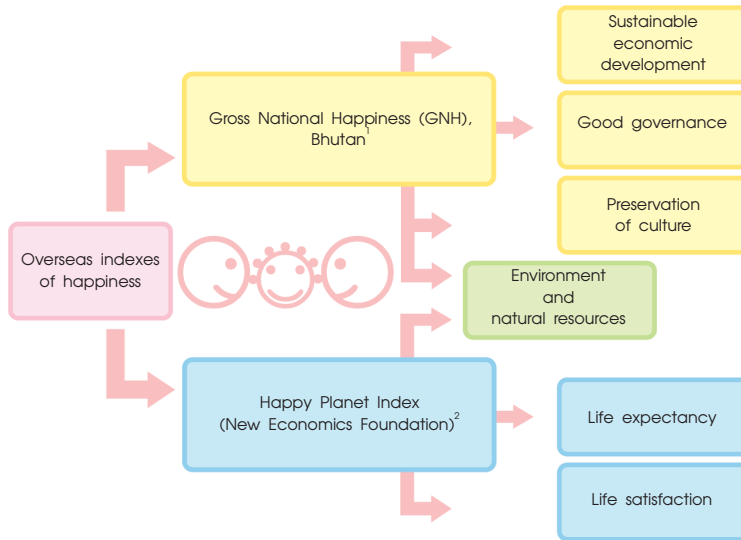
#### 10 lowest scores

Country	Score out of 100
Zimbabwe	16.6
Swaziland	18.4
Burundi	19.0
Democratic Republic of the Congo	20.7
Ukraine	22.2
Estonia	22.7
Russia	22.8
Lesotho	23.1
Equatorial Guinea	23.8
Turkmenistan	24.0

Source: The New Economics Foundation, 2006.

[www.happyplanetindex.org/survey.htm](http://www.happyplanetindex.org/survey.htm)

Note: Thailand is in 32<sup>nd</sup> place with a score of 55.4. Happiness is measured using the Happy Planet Index.

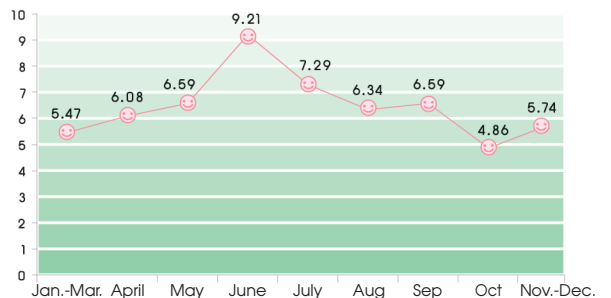


Sources:

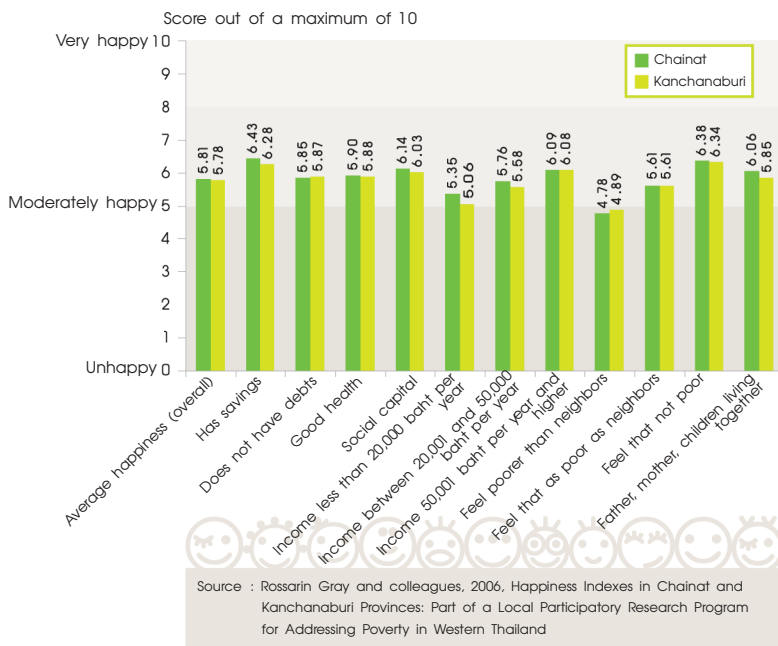
1. Gross National Happiness: A New Development Strategy, prepared by the Center for Bhutanese Studies, translated by Jaesani Sukhumchitikan 2004
2. Conceptual Framework for the Development of a Happiness Index for Thai Society Conference Proceedings, Thai Health Council, 2006

### Average happiness of Thais, monthly, 2006

Average happiness score (out of 10)



### Average happiness of Thais in Western Thailand, 2005



### Indicators for measuring happiness

1. Physical health
2. Mental health
3. Culture, unique Thai identity
4. Family, children, and community
5. Education
6. Following the self-sufficient economy model
7. Work satisfaction
8. Atmosphere in community
9. Environment
10. Natural resources and ethical management
11. Equity and morality in society
12. Good governance
13. Free trade area in globalization
14. Monthly situation

Source : ABAC Poll, Assumption University, Monthly Report on the Happiness Indexes in Thailand, December 2006