

## **Bhutan Happiness Index**

6<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Manasi Tatke



GreenEarth Social Development Consulting Pvt. Ltd.

[contactus.greeneearth@gmail.com](mailto:contactus.greeneearth@gmail.com)

(Prepared as an input for the Urban Development Blueprint)

# Note on Bhutan Happiness Index

---

The Bhutan Happiness Index<sup>1</sup> by the Center for Bhutan Studies<sup>2</sup> stands out among all the indices because of its depth and holistic coverage. There are Happiness Indices like the “Happy Planet Index” by the New Economic Foundation which measures the happiness index of 143 countries. But, the Bhutan Happiness Index stands out because it is one of the first such projects taken up by a country.

The initially targeted sample was 8700 and covered all 20 dzongkhags (administrative and judicial district of Bhutan) and almost all the gewogs (a group of villages in Bhutan forming a geographic administrative unit below dzongkhag districts). The sampling framework has been adopted from the Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey (BMIS survey) developed by the National Statistics Bureau (NSB)<sup>3</sup>, which employed multi-stage sampling method. The final survey contains 7142 respondents with fully completed questionnaires. The 2010 GNH survey is nationally representative and representative at a district level as well as by rural and urban areas.

The key areas of Gross National Happiness (GNH) were measured on the basis of sex, area, dzongkhags, age, educational attainment, occupation, stress level, mental well-being, religion, household size, health status, marital status and livelihood and fall within the domains of<sup>4</sup> –

## **1. Psychological wellbeing**

(Happiness, Quality of Life, Satisfaction with Livelihood, Mental Well Being, Stress level, Experience of Anger, Selfishness, Jealousy, Calmness, Contentment and Generosity)

## **2. Health**

(Self-rated health status, mean healthy days, long-term disability, body mass index, alcohol consumption, smoking, chewing doma (paan), satisfaction with medicine / treatment prescribed, difficulty in accessing healthcare services due to waiting time, mean walking time to the nearest healthcare center, suicidal ideation in the past 12 months, and attempt of suicide in the past 12 months.)

## **3. Time use**

(24 hours in the life of rural people, 24 hours in the life of urban people, 24 hours in the life of farmers, 24 hours in the life of civil servants, 24 hours in the life of housewives, time spent on

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nsb.gov.bt/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/9-domains/>

work, non-work and sleep, mean wake-up and sleep time, time spent on socio-cultural activities, time spent watching television, time spent praying)

#### **4. Education**

(Literacy rate, educational qualifications, knowledge of names of great-grandparents, knowledge in number of arts and crafts (13), knowledge on voting age, knowledge on exclusive breastfeeding, knowledge of how HIV/AIDS is transmitted, knowledge and understanding of local festivals, knowledge and understanding of masked and other dances, knowledge and understanding of traditional Bhutanese songs, knowledge and understanding of Tsangmo [short verse or poem, usually sung to convey a message to someone, who would then reply with a suitable verse or poem. 'Tsangmo' is one of the rich oral traditions of Bhutan.], ability to understand Lozey (a rich oral poetic composition prevalent in the Dzongkha speaking communities), knowledge and understanding of the Constitution, knowledge and understanding of difference between National Council [NC] and National Assembly [NA], knowledge and understanding of roles and responsibilities of MPs, knowledge of names of plants and wild animals, opinion about eating excessive amounts of fat foods is bad for health)

#### **5. Culture**

(How well can one speak their mother tongue, importance of Bhutanese traditions, do you think children - respect elders, parents, practice discipline, tolerance, honesty, work hard, help others, playing modern and traditional games, participation in local festivals, etiquette [is it important,], level of spirituality and tolerance)

#### **6. Good governance**

(attending elections [zomdues], ability to understand the performance of the MPs, voter turnout by gender)

#### **7. Ecology**

(Responsibility towards conserving the natural environment, views on pollution, environmental problems like landslides, floods, waste management, land issues of farmers, access to water supply, mode of transportation, type of fuel used for cooking, awareness about climate change, agricultural constraints and threat of wild animals)

#### **8. Community vitality**

(Duration of stay in the community, providing unpaid voluntary help, donations, sense of belonging to local community, trust in bhutanese people, fair treatment of community towards individuals, help from neighbours, frequency of socializing, enmity in the community, sense of belonging toward family and safety in the village)

#### **9. Living standards**

(Mean household income, per capita income, belief about improvement of financial situation, household income, food in/security, housing affordability, land holding and persons by room per area)

Happiness: The distribution of people by Happiness on a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is least happy, and 10 is most happy) was as follows: 29% of the respondents were at 5, 21% at 6 and 20% were at 7. Happiness levels were measured by sex and area, dzongkhags, age, educational attainment,

occupation, stress level, mental well-being, religion, household size, health status, even the *number of people one can count on if one is sick and the number of people one can count on if one has financial problems* and livelihood.

Health: The people were self-rated on the Health index – 20.3% said they had “excellent” health, 53.4% said they had “very good” health, 18.4% had “good” health, 6.6% said they had “fair” health and only 1.4% said they had “poor” health. The rural male has 26 mean healthy days in a month and the rural female 25. The urban male has 28 mean healthy days in a month and the urban female 27.

Time-Use balance: One of the most striking features of this survey is the measurement of Time-Use balance of Bhutanese people. The Index shows the breakup of 24 hours among the rural people, urban people, farmers, civil servants, housewives into work, non-work and sleep again divided into smaller activities like personal care, education, travelling, waiting time, socio-cultural activities, crafts, household duties just to name a few. The mean wake up and sleep time was measured on sex and area on urban and rural males and females. The time spent on watching television, praying, was also measured on marital status, district, occupation, and household income. For example: urban people spend 8 hours 9 minutes on sleeping and rural people spend 8 hours 44 minutes on sleeping. Waiting time for urban people is 3 minutes and for rural people is 1 minute.

Education: 51% are illiterate and 49% are literate in Bhutan. 95% can speak their mother tongues very well. 63% feel that women are more suited for domestic work, 27% disagree, and 9% neither agree nor disagree. 73% feel education is more important for a boy, and 54% feel men make better leaders than women do.

Governance: 97% feel that the election process is free and fair. 39% believe that the media is free from government influences. 59% feel corruption is common, 25% believe it is not common.

Culture: Family and social knowledge like knowing the names of one’s great grand parents, knowing the age of voting, knowledge of some crafts, knowledge about the importance of breastfeeding, understanding of local festivals was also measured. Community vitality, trust among neighbours, giving voluntary service, social habits inculcated among children were measured too. 68% feel that their community treats them fairly.

Community Vitality: Happiness Index by Voluntary Help is the same for those who volunteered and those who didn’t in the past 12 months – is the same- 6.1 on a scale of 10. 90% of the respondents donated money or goods in the past 12 months. 31% trust Bhutanese people.

Ecological Diversity: 89% feel that they are responsible for conserving the natural environment.

Living standards: In the financial index, a record 65% of Bhutanese believed that their financial situation will improve in the next 2 years. 96% of the people do not face food insecurity and 95% can afford a house.