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What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies

Family is preeminent for most publics but work, material well-being and health also play a key role

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How we did this

For this report, we conducted nationally representative Pew Research Center surveys of 16,254 adults from March 12 to May 26, 2021, in 16 advanced economies. All surveys were conducted over the phone with adults in Canada, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Responses are weighted to be representative of the adult population in each public. Respondents in these publics were asked the following open-ended question: “We’re interested in exploring what it means to live a satisfying life. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying?” Responses were transcribed by interviewers in the language in which the interviews were conducted.

In the United States, we surveyed 2,596 adults from Feb. 1 to 7, 2021. Everyone who took part in the U.S. survey is a member of the Center’s American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. In the U.S., respondents were asked a slightly longer version of the same question: “We’re interested in exploring what it means to live a satisfying life. Please take a moment to reflect on your life and what makes it feel worthwhile – then answer the question below as thoughtfully as you can. What about your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? What keeps you going and why?”

Researchers examined random samples of English responses, machine-translated non-English responses and responses translated by a professional translation firm to inductively develop a codebook for the main sources of meaning mentioned across the 17 publics. The codebook was iteratively improved via practice coding and calculations of intercoder reliability until a final selection of 20 codes was formally adopted (see [Appendix C](#)).

To apply the codebook to the full collection of 18,850 responses, a team of Pew Research Center coders and professional translators were trained to code English and non-English responses, respectively. Coders in both groups coded random samples and were evaluated for consistency and accuracy. They were asked to independently code responses only after reaching an acceptable threshold for intercoder reliability. (For more on this, see [Appendix A](#).)

Here is the [question](#) used for the report, along with the coded responses for each public. Open-ended responses have been lightly edited for clarity (and, in some cases, translated into English by a professional firm). More details about our international survey methodology and country-

specific sample designs are [available here](#). For respondents in the U.S., read more about the ATP's methodology [here](#).

What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies

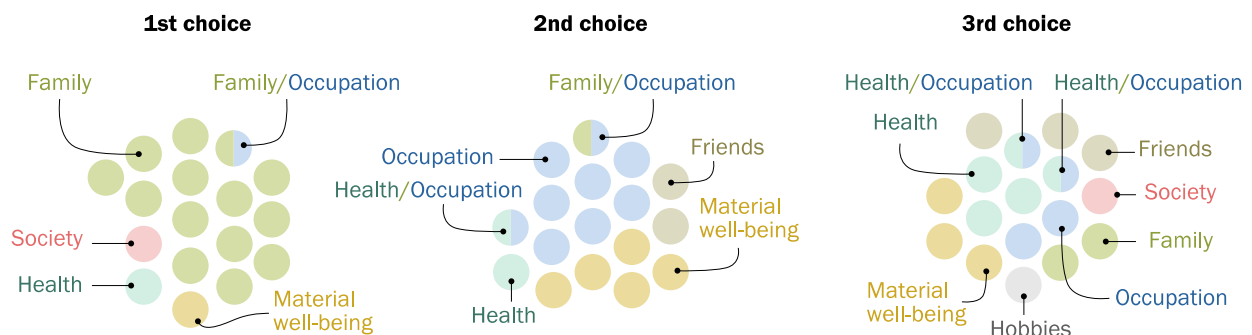
Family is preeminent for most publics but work, material well-being and health also play a key role

What do people value in life? How much of what gives people satisfaction in their lives is fundamental and shared across cultures, and how much is unique to a given society? To understand these and other issues, Pew Research Center posed an open-ended question about the meaning of life to nearly 19,000 adults across 17 advanced economies.

From analyzing people's answers, it is clear that one source of meaning is predominant: family. In 14 of the 17 advanced economies surveyed, more mention their family as a source of meaning in their lives than any other factor. Highlighting their relationships with parents, siblings, children and grandchildren, people frequently mention quality time spent with their kinfolk, the pride they get from the accomplishments of their relatives and even the desire to live a life that leaves an improved world for their offspring. In Australia, New Zealand, Greece and the United States, around half or more say their family is something that makes their lives fulfilling.

Family is the top source of meaning in life in most of the publics surveyed

Ranked choice among 17 topics coded as part of what gives people meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

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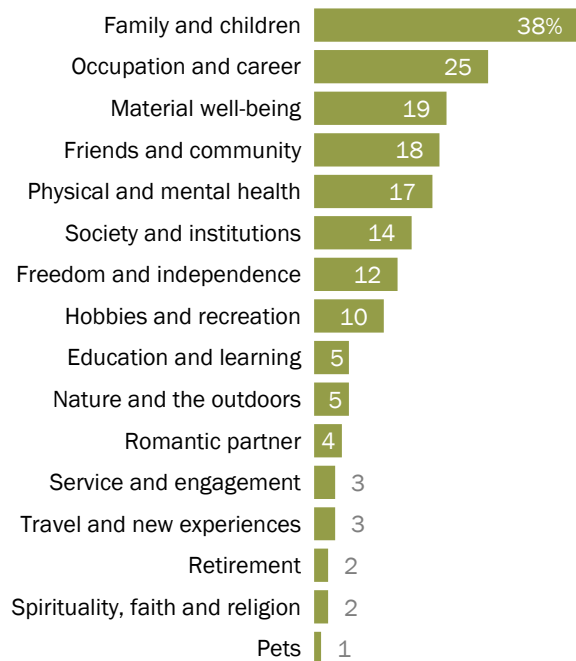
Publics are also largely united in the relative emphasis placed on careers and occupations. Jobs are one of the top three sources of meaning for people in most places surveyed. Still, the emphasis placed on them can vary widely, from a high of 43% in Italy to a low of 6% in South Korea. And although in Italy as many cite their occupation as cite their family as a source of meaning, in places like the U.S., only around a third as many cite their careers. While some specifically describe their careers and what is meaningful about them – e.g., a cybersecurity worker who enjoys seeing his contributions in practice or a teacher who enjoys helping to inform children about history – others more generically mention enjoying their work or their colleagues or feeling intellectually challenged.

“The most important thing for me is work. I think it is very important to build my career, to build my life, so that I’m doing better and better. And the way to do that is to take a lot of personal responsibility and work hard.”

–Man, 25, Netherlands

Family, careers and material well-being are among the most cited factors for what makes life meaningful

Median % who mention ___ when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Percentages are medians based on 17 publics. Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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Many also highlight the importance of having one's basic financial needs met – or even having some level of luxury – in order to lead a meaningful life. In nine of the 17 publics surveyed, material well-being is one of the top three factors people cited and, in most places, around one-in-five or more mention it. In South Korea, it even emerges as the *top* source of meaning. Still, the lifestyle elements respondents cite run the gamut from “food on the table” and “a roof over my head” to “a decent income to support my family” and “no debt” to “enough money” to enjoy riding motorcycles or other activities like travel.

“Being comfortable and stable with basic needs (food, shelter, health care and public education for my child) and a little extra (maybe going out to dinner or a vacation).”

–Woman, 51, U.S.

Health, too, is relatively top of mind, coming up as one of the top three sources of meaning for people in around a third of the places surveyed. Still, the relative emphasis on health can vary widely, from 48% who mention it in Spain – making it the top source of meaning for Spaniards – to only 6% who say the same in Taiwan. For some, specific health problems cause them to value their health – such as one American woman who noted, “God gave me life, He pulled me through cancer. Life is precious and we only have one chance at it.” Others more generally note health as a prerequisite for other sources of meaning, emphasizing “being healthy” or “still breathing” as part of a list of things they value. Exercise and a healthy lifestyle are also touted as sources of meaning.

Notably, for most, this emphasis on health is not tied directly to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Although there is a widespread sense in most publics surveyed that the global pandemic has [changed people's lives](#), in most places, people who mention health as something that gives them meaning are no more likely to mention COVID-19 than those who do not prioritize health. Some people who mention both do so because they have health problems that have been compounded by the disease, causing additional difficulty. One American described her situation in the following way: “Currently, being self-quarantined due to health issues and to keep away from COVID, God is what keeps me going,” while another described their predicament as “years of personal work to overcome anxiety and depression [that] took a hit with social distancing.”

Still, others who mention both health and COVID-19 in their responses are largely appreciative of their health *because* of the global pandemic. One American woman summarized her experience as: “I had COVID and it was the scariest thing and it really changed my outlook on life.” A Dutch man also emphasized the importance of healthy living even in a pandemic context: “What I find important for a fulfilling life are things like: to do sports, meaning active exercise 2 to 3 times a week; to eat a varied diet ... now in this pandemic, you still have to make sure that you get enough exercise and try to bring structure into your life by making day or week schedules.”

While family, careers, material well-being, friends and health are all top sources of meaning, they vary in importance across publics surveyed

Ranked choice among 17 topics coded as part of what gives people meaning in life

	1st choice	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Australia	Family	Occupation	Friends	Material well-being	Society
New Zealand	Family	Occupation	Friends	Material well-being	Society
Sweden	Family	Occupation	Friends	Material well-being/Health	
France	Family	Occupation	Health	Material well-being	Friends
Greece	Family	Occupation	Health	Friends	Hobbies
Germany	Family	Occupation/Health		Material well-being/General Positive	
Canada	Family	Occupation	Material well-being	Friends	Society
Singapore	Family	Occupation	Society	Material well-being	Friends
Italy	Family/Occupation		Material well-being	Health	Friends
Netherlands	Family	Material well-being	Health	Friends	Occupation
Belgium	Family	Material well-being	Occupation	Health	Friends
Japan	Family	Material well-being	Occupation/Health		Hobbies
UK	Family	Friends	Hobbies	Occupation	Health
U.S.	Family	Friends	Material well-being	Occupation	Faith
Spain	Health	Material well-being	Occupation	Family	Society
South Korea	Material well-being	Health	Family	General Positive	Society/Freedom
Taiwan	Society	Material well-being	Family	Freedom	Hobbies

Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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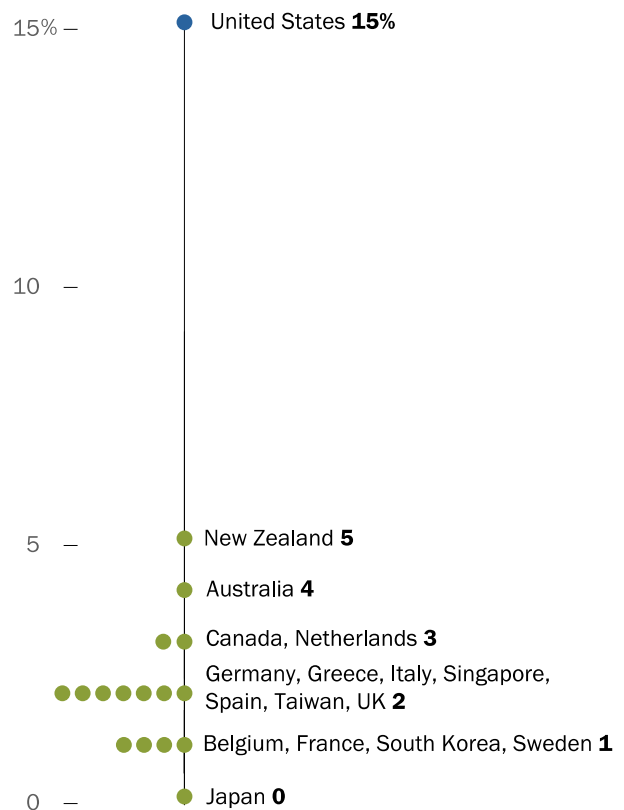
In fact, how a topic like COVID-19 comes up – or doesn’t – highlights where the commonalities end and the differences between these 17 advanced economies emerge. Take Taiwan as an example. In Taiwan, society – or the institutions and attributes of where people live – is the *top* source of meaning, above family, occupation and material well-being. Two women in Taiwan emphasize ease of living on the island: “Food, clothing, housing, and transportation are all convenient. Life is safe and tranquil,” and “There are many convenient stores in Taiwan ... The public health insurance system is good; medical service is convenient.” Others note their satisfaction with Taiwan’s political system. One woman claimed she is “fortunate to live in Taiwan, especially in the aspect of public health, democracy, and the rule of law and human rights, because it is very free.” A young man simply noted, “Living in Taiwan is very free, freer than China and Hong Kong.” Some specifically mentioned their government’s response to the COVID-19

pandemic, like a woman who listed the island's "stable economy, well-controlled new COVID-19 pandemic, [and] easy access to medical care" as meaningful. Taiwan is one of the few societies – the others are also largely in the Asia-Pacific region – where references to COVID-19 do not tend to coincide with negativity; instead, most praise how well their government has handled things.

The topic of faith, religion and spirituality is also one where some societies notably differ. Outside of the U.S., religion is never one of the top 10 sources of meaning cited – and no more than 5% of any non-American public mention it. In the U.S., however, 15% mention religion or God as a source of meaning, making it the fifth most mentioned topic. For some, the emphasis on religion is about their personal relationship with Jesus: "I follow Jesus so my faith and hope is based on how he plays a role in my life. I don't rely on any human to benefit my life." Others note the benefits that come from being part of organized religion, such as camaraderie in a tough time: "My husband just died, so life is not very fulfilling right now. The support of family and friends, church, and his coworkers have helped me find meaning, as well as thinking about the good things we shared." Evangelical Protestants in the U.S. are much more likely than mainline Protestants to mention faith as a source of meaning – 34% vs. 13%, respectively. Across all U.S. religious groups, those who attend religious services more often are much more likely to cite their religion in their answer than those who are less frequent attendees.

Americans are much more likely to mention religion as a source of meaning in life than other publics

% who mention *spirituality, faith and religion* when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.
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The United Kingdom, Australia, France, New Zealand and Sweden also stand apart for the relative emphasis they place on nature compared to many other places surveyed. In each of these countries, nature is one of the top eight sources of meaning. In the UK, too, hobbies and activities are revered by many: Around one-in-five mention their hobbies as something that gives them satisfaction in life, ranking only behind family and friends. *(To explore more about how each society is similar – or different – and to read about where people get meaning in their own words, please see “What people around the world say about the meaning of life.”)*

“I find [living] within [New Zealand] satisfying. We live in a country which has natural beauty and has a great deal of respect for nature which in turn helps us get a better connection to the country. I like going outside, going for a run every day, and seeing blue skies, forests and the wonderful people and it has a positive impact on my mental health, and especially compared to other countries I’ve been to.”

–Man, 18, New Zealand

When discussing what makes life meaningful and fulfilling, a median of 10% across the 17 publics surveyed also mention challenges or difficulties that have interfered with their search for happiness. Once again, this varies substantially across the publics surveyed, with around one-in-five mentioning hardships in Italy, but only 5% or fewer saying the same in New Zealand and the UK. In some places surveyed – including Italy, the U.S. and Spain – those who mention their society, places and institutions are also more likely to mention challenges or difficulties. In South Korea and Taiwan, the opposite is true: In both of these publics, those who mention their society are *less* likely to mention negative things. People who find meaning in their family or their friends also tend to be less likely to mention difficulties or challenges, and the same is true of those who mention education and learning or their hobbies.

Why this report focuses on topic rankings in addition to percentages

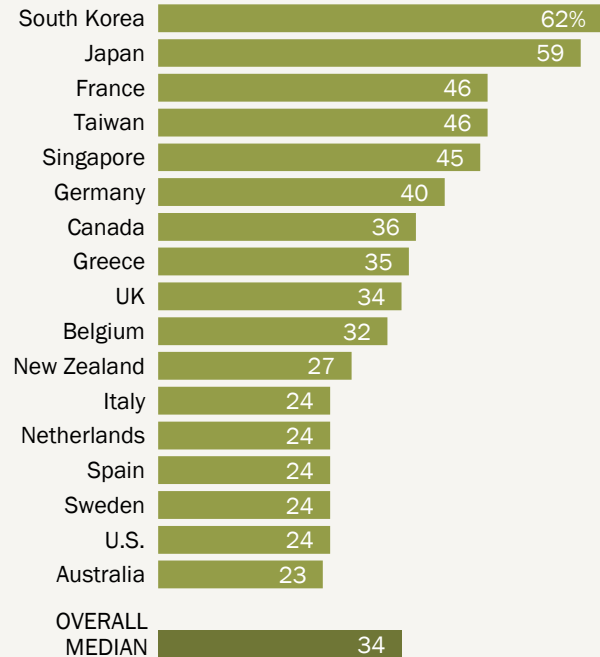
There is some variation in whether and how people respond to the open-ended question. In each public surveyed, some respondents said that they did not understand the question, did not know how to answer or did not want to answer. The share of adults that did so ranged from 23% in the U.S. to 1% in Spain.

In some publics, people also tended to mention fewer things that make life meaningful in their response than did people surveyed elsewhere. For example, across the 17 publics surveyed, a median of 34% responded to the question about what gives them meaning in life by mentioning only one of the topics researchers coded (e.g., family). The shares in South Korea and Japan are much higher, with at least half only bringing up one source of meaning when providing a response.

These differences help explain why the share giving a particular answer in certain publics may appear much lower than others, even if the topic is the top mentioned source of meaning for that given public. To give a specific example, 19% of South Koreans mention material well-being while 42% say the same in Spain, but the topic is ranked first in South Korea and second in Spain. Given this, researchers have chosen to highlight not only the share of the public who mention a given topic but also its relative ranking among the topics coded, both in the text and in graphics.

South Koreans, Japanese especially likely to provide only one source of meaning in life

% who mention only one topic when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more details on coding. References to only COVID-19 or to challenges are not included.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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These are among the findings of a new analysis of an open-ended question about meaning in life, which was part of a Pew Research Center survey conducted Feb. 1 to May 26, 2021, among 18,850 adults in 17 advanced economies.

In addition to similarities and differences between the publics surveyed, the analysis also reveals broader patterns in where people find meaning based on their age, gender, income and political ideology, among other factors. Some of these additional key findings include:

- **Younger people** tend to emphasize their friends, education and hobbies as sources of meaning more so than older people. For their part, older people are more likely to discuss retirement and health than younger ones. Older people are also somewhat more likely to discuss challenges and negative things when discussing what gives them meaning than younger ones.

Those under 30 often more likely to find meaning in friends, jobs, education and hobbies than older people

Topics associated with **ages 18-29**:



Friends and community



Occupation and career



Education and learning



Hobbies and recreation

Topics associated with **ages 65+**:



Health



Retirement

- In most respects, **men and women** are quite similar with regard to what gives them meaning. But women are somewhat more likely to mention family as a source of satisfaction in their lives than are men in most places surveyed. Women are also somewhat more likely to emphasize their health than are men.

Note: Topics are shown as associated with younger or older respondents when there are statistically significant differences between those age groups with regard to mentions of that topic in at least five surveyed publics. Older people are also more likely to mention something negative and to give generally positive – rather than specific – responses. Topics are coded as part of an open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information. Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36. “What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies”

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- People with higher levels of **education** and higher **incomes** tend to be more likely to mention their family and career as things that give them meaning than are people with lower

levels of education or lower incomes, respectively.^{1, 2} Mentions of service and civic engagement tend to be higher among those with more education. Those with lower incomes are also somewhat more likely to cite challenges in their lives when discussing what gives them meaning than those with higher incomes.

- Those who place themselves on the **left of the ideological spectrum** are more likely to cite nature as a source of meaning than those who place themselves on the right. They are also more likely to mention their friends and hobbies, whereas those on the **ideological right** mention religion more often.

Those on the ideological left more likely to find meaning in nature, hobbies, education and friends; less likely to find meaning in religion

Topics associated with those on the **ideological left:**



Nature



Hobbies



Education



Friends

Topics associated with those on the **ideological right:**



Religion

Note: Topics are shown as associated with the ideological left or right when there are statistically significant differences in mentions of that topic in at least five surveyed publics. Topics are coded as part of an open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information. Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.

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- In the U.S., partisanship also sometimes plays a role. For example, Republicans and

Republican-leaning independents are about twice as likely than their Democratic counterparts to bring up freedom and independence. Americans today – and especially Republicans – have also become more likely to mention freedom and independence as a source of meaning in life since 2017. For more on this and other changes over time, see “Where Americans find meaning in life has changed over the past four years.”

1 For the purpose of comparing educational groups across countries, education levels are standardized based on the UN's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The “less education” category is secondary education or below and the “more education” category is postsecondary or above in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, UK and U.S.

2 Respondents with a household income below the approximate country median are considered lower income. Those with an income at or above the approximate country median are considered higher income.

1. Finding meaning in others

In almost every public surveyed, substantial shares identify others in their life as a source of meaning. Family is most frequently mentioned in almost all survey publics and appears within the top five sources of meaning in every place surveyed. Some people also cite romantic partners and their friends and community. When mentioning finding meaning in others, not everyone limits themselves to the humans in their lives – some also make a point to cite their pets, too.

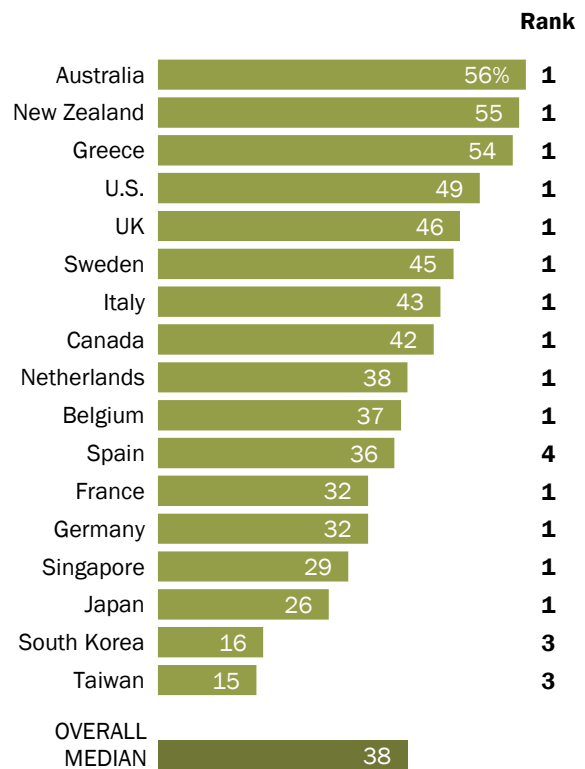
Family and children

With few exceptions, family is by far the most frequently mentioned source of fulfillment in life for people in these 17 publics. A median of nearly four-in-ten adults (38%) mention finding meaning in their immediate or extended family, children or grandchildren, parenthood or other aspects of their familial relationships. In places like Australia, Greece, New Zealand and the U.S., roughly half or more mention family when discussing what gives them meaning.

While many people offer more than one thing that gives them meaning in life, in responses where people mention just *one* source of meaning, family appears more commonly than any other topic. For example, in Greece, 20% of responses are *only* about family and nothing else. As one older man in France observed, “My family is something that satisfies me, family is everything.” A young person in New Zealand echoed a similar sentiment: “For myself I believe that family is a very important part of my life. If anything else changes I wouldn’t mind as long as family is around.”

Many point to family and children as sources of meaning in life

% who mention family and children when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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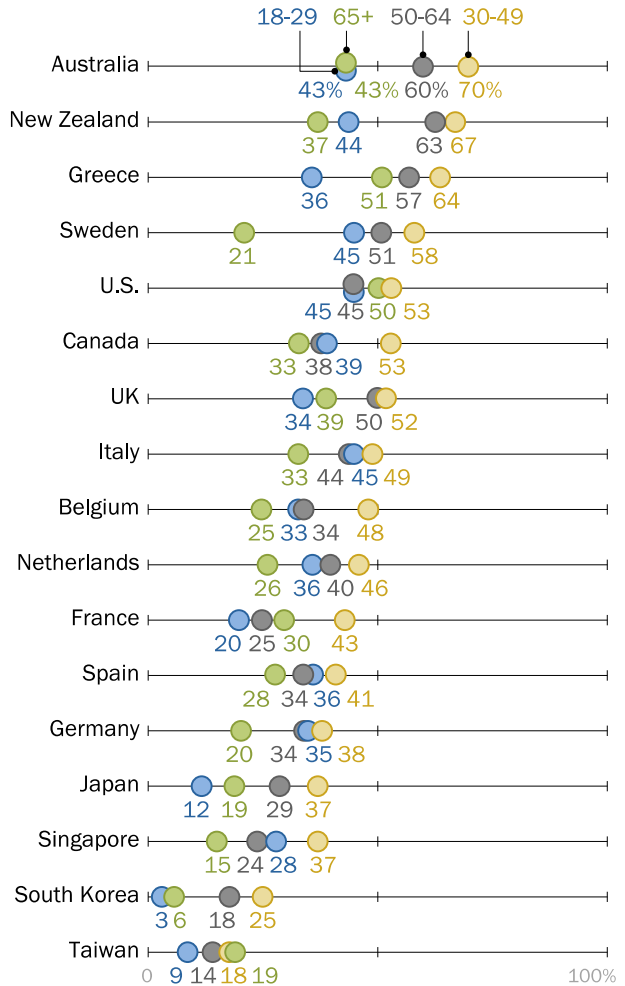
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While family is the top source of meaning across most publics – the notable exceptions being South Korea, Spain and Taiwan – it is considerably more important for those ages 30 to 49 in most places surveyed – an age group that is especially likely to have children at home. For example, in Australia, 70% of those ages 30 to 49 mention their family as a source of meaning, compared with 60% of those ages 50 to 64 – and fewer than half of those either under 30 or ages 65 and older.

More affluent people are also somewhat more likely to mention family as a source of meaning in many of the publics surveyed. In New Zealand, for example, around two-thirds of those who have incomes at or above the median cite family in their answers, whereas fewer than half of those who are less well-off say the same. To a lesser extent, mentions of family were also higher among more educated people in most places.

Family is more of a source of meaning for the middle-aged

% who mention **family and children** when describing what gives them meaning in life, among those ages ...



Note: Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
 Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.
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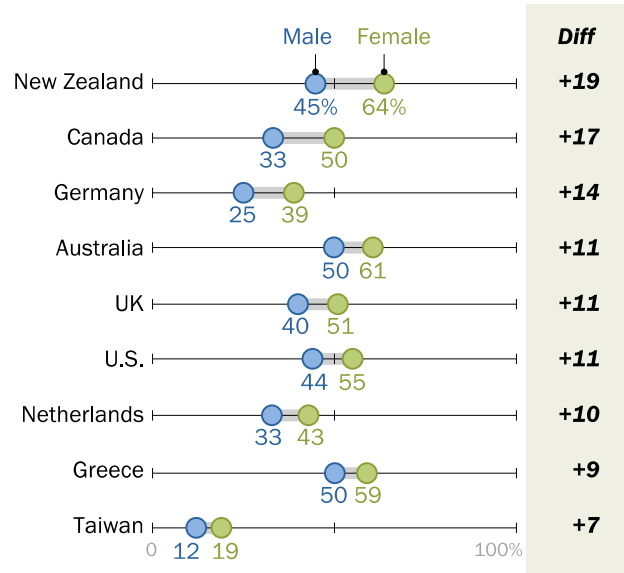
Women are also often more likely than men to mention their families or children. In New Zealand, for example, around two-thirds (64%) of women mention their families, while fewer than half (45%) of men say the same. Notably, this gender gap is not as prominent in Spain and Italy or in Asian publics where family is mentioned less frequently overall (South Korea, Singapore, Japan).

“I think family is very important in my life. You practice what you preach. And contributing to society and instilling strong values and a sense of respect in my children to treat others as they want to be treated.”

–Woman, 52, Australia

Women tend to cite family as meaningful at higher rates than men

% who mention **family and children** when describing what gives them meaning in life among ...



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
 Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.
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Spouses and romantic partners

Though references to the family or children are far more common, some people specifically mention their spouse or romantic partner as an important source of meaning, or make some sort of reference to marriage, dating or romantic love in general. Many emphasize companionship with their partners, like one French woman who enjoys “playing Scrabble and other board games with my husband every night.” Laughter and humor are also a theme. As one Japanese man mused, “I laugh together with my wife at least once a day.” A Dutch woman similarly reflected, “I am not alone, [I] have my husband, and I am very happy about that, especially in these times.”

“My wife gives me a reason, not just to survive but to thrive ... Her questions and views make me think (and laugh).”

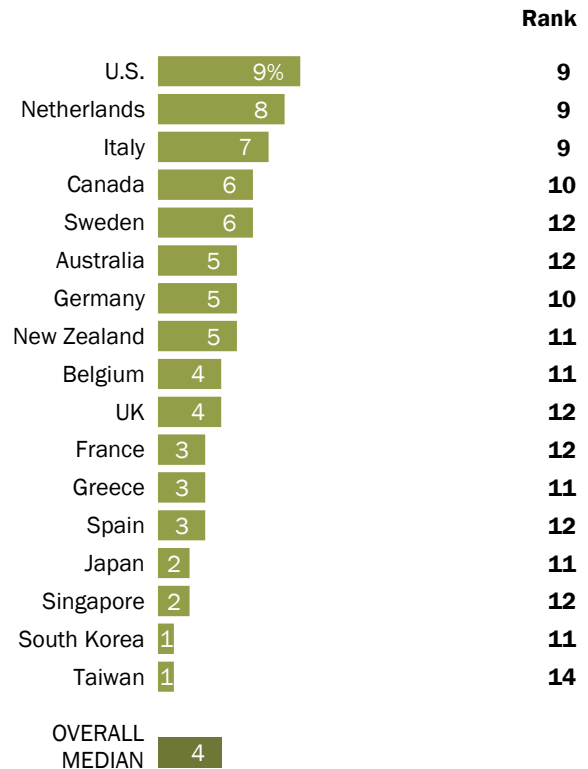
—Man, 67, United States

Others describe how their relationships help them overcome difficulties and inspire them to be better. As one American man explained, “I recently became a husband and I derive meaning every day from trying to be a better partner to my spouse – to learn how we can grow together as a couple and how we can try and make the world around us a better place.” Another woman, also in the U.S., said of her husband, “He is thoughtful and supportive and gives me ground to stand on when everything else falls apart.”

Relatively few (4%) mention their spouse or partner in the median public, but the U.S. and Taiwan stand out as notable exceptions. Nearly one-in-ten U.S. adults (9%) mention their spouse or partner, and it is the ninth most commonly mentioned source of meaning there. By contrast, it is

Relatively few mention their romantic partners as a source of meaning in life

% who mention **spouses and romantic partners** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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among the least-mentioned topics in Taiwan, where fewer than 1% of the public mention their spouse or partner.

Friends, community and other relationships

Substantial shares also mention relationships with friends and community when identifying sources of meaning in their life. For instance, one Italian woman said, “[M]y family, being together with my loved ones, my wife, my son, being at peace with myself and my friends, acquaintances, and all those I can spend time with,” and another woman in Greece said she finds meaning from her “personal life and social life with friends and people we are close to.” Some mention these connections in the context of COVID-19, such as a German man who said, “I find it remarkable how the COVID crisis affected our behaviors. I, for one, appreciate very much personal contact with those around me.”

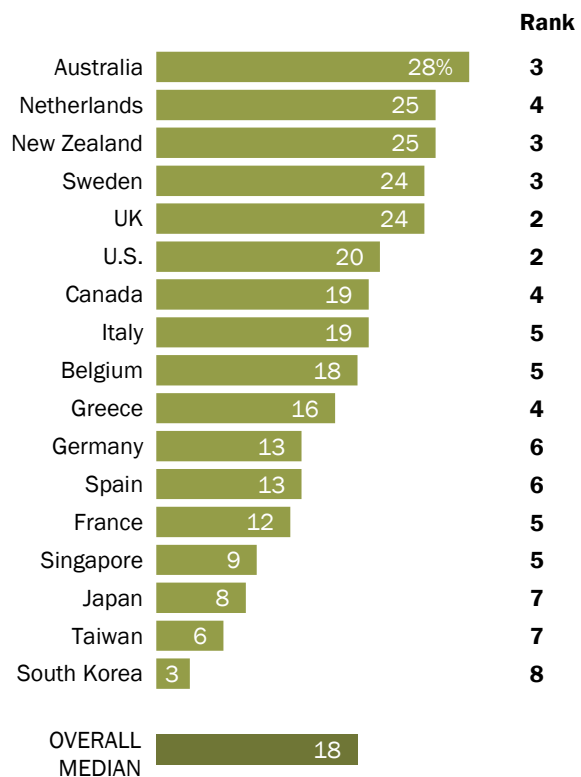
“Having a rapport with others. Even if my friends have a different way of thinking than I do, we talk about it and communicate, and foster an understanding.”

—Man, 18, Japan

Australians are the most likely to bring up ties to friends or community (28%). About a quarter also mention relationships with people outside the family in the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK. In each of these countries, too, community and friends are one of the top four factors mentioned.

Connections to friends and community members offer meaning in life

% who mention **friends, community and other relationships** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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East Asian publics, on the other hand, are the least likely to mention friends or community; no more than one-in-ten bring up these relationships in these places. In Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, community is not mentioned as a top source of meaning.

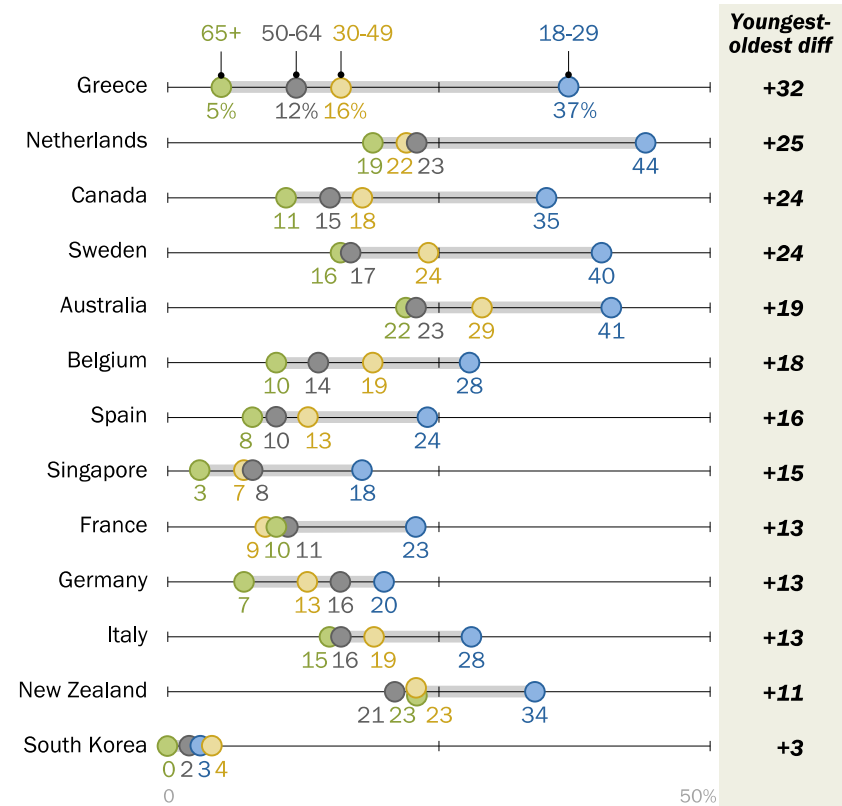
In many surveyed publics, younger adults – those ages 18 to 29 – bring up their friends and community more frequently than older counterparts. The age difference is greatest in Greece: 37% of young adults talk about their friends or other relationships outside of their family, compared with just 5% of those 65 and older.

Friends and community are also mentioned more frequently by those with more education in five of the surveyed publics. In the U.S., for example, 31% of those with a postsecondary education or more speak about their friends or community when discussing what brings meaning to their lives, while 13% of those with less than a postsecondary education say the same, a difference of 18 percentage points.

Those on the ideological left also tend to be more likely to mention friends or community than those on the right. For example, 29% of left-leaning Canadians mention finding meaning in their friendships or community relationships, while just 11% of right-leaning adults in Canada say they do so. Similar differences also appear in six of the other surveyed publics.

Younger adults more likely to bring up friends and community

% who mention **friends, community and other relationships** when describing what gives them meaning in life, among those ages ...



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. Open ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
 Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.
 "What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies"

Pets

Although not commonly mentioned in any of the surveyed publics, pets are a source of meaning for 4% of adults in New Zealand and for 3% of Americans, Australians and Britons. Outside of these particular countries, very few in most places – and none at all in both South Korea and Taiwan – mention their animals as a source of meaning.

“I find being around my family and animals, especially my dog, my cat and my horse, very fulfilling, and they give me peace of mind. They make my day feel good. If I did not have them around, I would be bored out of my tree.”

–Woman, 60, New Zealand

Responses mentioning pets sometimes occur alongside responses that mention hobbies and recreation. For example, one Briton said: “I like country walks, communing with nature and pets.” In New Zealand, 12% of those who mention hobbies and recreation also mention their pets, compared with the 2% of those who do not bring up hobbies. And in the U.S., 14% of respondents who identify hobbies as something that give their lives meaning also point to their pets, compared with the 3% of those who do not mention hobbies. One such respondent in the U.S. said what they found meaningful was “taking time to play with my dog and explore nature parks with her.”

In most places, few cite pets as part of a meaningful life

% who mention ***pets*** when describing what gives them meaning in life

		Rank
New Zealand	4%	14
Australia	3	16
UK	3	13
U.S.	3	14
Canada	2	17
Netherlands	2	14
Sweden	2	15
Belgium	1	16
France	1	15
Germany	1	16
Greece	1	14
Italy	1	17
Japan	1	12
Spain	1	16
Taiwan	0	17
Singapore	0	17
South Korea	0	16
OVERALL MEDIAN	1	

Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

“What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies”

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2. Finding meaning in the bigger picture

Outside of their personal relationships (and pets), many people in the 17 publics surveyed find meaning in their surroundings and the broader world around them, including society, the natural environment and spirituality. People’s own society, places and institutions – ranging from the specific area where they live to their government at large – appear within the top 10 most commonly mentioned topics in every public surveyed. Others describe finding a deep sense of meaning in their relationship with nature. And spirituality and faith also serve as a key pillar for some – though this is particularly the case in the U.S. relative to the other publics.

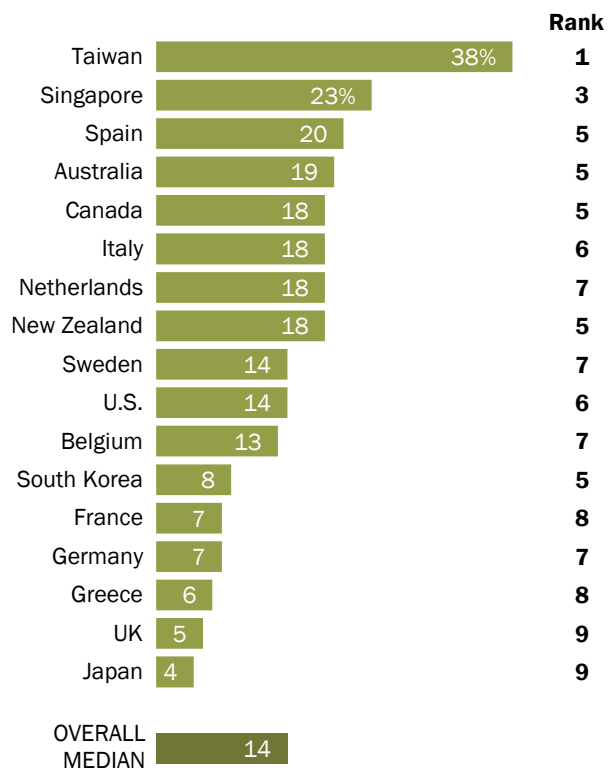
Society, places and institutions

When asked about where they find meaning in life, some people bring up the area where they live or their broader society and public institutions. These references include mentions of their country, the social services available, the state of their country’s economy and any patriotic or nationalistic sentiments. For some, this includes expressions of appreciation for their country’s health care system, such as one German woman who said, “I am grateful for our health care system. I am grateful that I can travel the globe and that we have the euro. Overall, I am content,” and a woman in Taiwan who stated, “The public health insurance system is good; medical service is convenient.”

Others speak more generally about the opportunities available where they live. This is the case for a French man, who said: “We’re happy to live in France, where you can achieve anything you want. French people are lucky to live in a country where people are happy. Even

Those in Taiwan especially likely to find meaning in where they live

% who mention **society, places and institutions** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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those who have difficulties are able to get the right help.”

Some in Europe refer more specifically to the European Union. For instance, one Belgian woman explained, “Despite the coronavirus pandemic, we can still travel in the Schengen area. The European Union is advantageous for working and studying abroad.” A Spanish man similarly mentioned his “freedom to travel the world, ease of movement between countries, not only between European Union countries but also others.”

“The fact that we live in paradise. If you want to have a go in this country, you’re given a go. We’re lucky, if we want work, we can get work, if we want to go to a beach we can go to a beach. We can do whatever we want. We’re very lucky.”

–Man, 39, Australia

Of all respondents, adults in Taiwan bring up where they live most frequently; 38% of responses mention the respondent’s surroundings, making it the top factor mentioned. Many people in Taiwan expressed appreciation of the convenience afforded to them by their local infrastructure, such as one woman who said “food, clothing, housing and transportation are all convenient.”

About a quarter in Singapore also mention society and place in their discussions of meaning in life, which makes it a top-three factor there. In Singapore, some specifically reference public safety, including one man who explained, “I have job security in Singapore ... and Singapore is a safe place,” and another woman who reflected, “I think is the daily life, the security, in Singapore, like I mean there’s no wars, is like the security in Singapore, is like the safe environment you don’t need to worry about going home late.”

In the U.S., 14% mention society and place when talking about meaning in their life. For some, these references were tied directly to the U.S. president or 2020 presidential election. Describing where she finds meaning, one U.S. woman responded: “Not too much because Revelations [is] playing out in front of my eyes. We are in scary times with Biden as President.” By contrast, another woman said she was “relieved at the outcome of the last presidential election,” expressing her support for President Joe Biden’s victory. Notably, Americans who mention something negative in their response are nearly 30 points more likely to bring up American society or where they live. Nearly half (41%) of those who bring up something negative in the U.S. mention society, compared with just 12% of those who do not mention anything negative.

Nature and the outdoors

Whether it be personally getting outside for activities, admiring natural beauty in the form of “a beautiful sunset [or the] first bloom of flowers,” or concerns related to the environment and preservation, nature is a key source of meaning for some people. One German respondent even highlighted how nature helps her cope with frustrations with humanity: “It is good to be alive. I am woken up by birdsong which makes me so happy and glad. I am, however, horrified by all the people in the world.” A man in France similarly noted that even if other parts of life are bleak, nature can hold promise: “No particular aspect of my life is significant but I’m lucky to be able to get around and enjoy nature. It’s fulfilling to look at nature and cross the road.”

The degree to which people value nature, though, varies quite a bit across the publics surveyed, from a low of 1% in Japan to a high of 14% in New Zealand. And, while it factors into the top 10 most common sources of meaning cited by publics in Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Sweden, Taiwan and the UK, nature ranks relatively low in Japan, Singapore and the U.S.

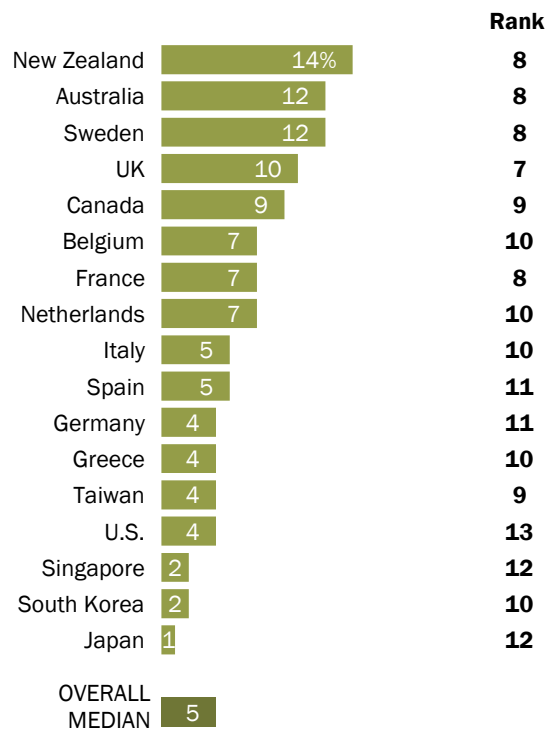
One Australian tied together the personal meaning she gets from being outside with more general concerns about the environment and climate change, citing the following as what gives her meaning: “Climate, being able to enjoy my lifestyle outdoors, security that comes with having a relatively stable climate and resources, having clean air and clean water, which will be effective at increasing climate impact, and being able to enjoy the high biodiversity of plants and animals because that’s an overlap of my

“I may not have much economically, but I’m blessed by the abundance of Mother Nature.”

–Man, 79, Japan

Fewer in East Asia derive meaning from nature than in other places surveyed

% who mention **nature and the outdoors** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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job and my life.” Similarly, after describing a variety of things that make her happy, one New Zealander concluded her response on a note of concern: “Really one of my main concerns is that people aren’t taking climate change seriously.”

Those on the ideological left are more likely to reference nature than those on the ideological right in five survey publics.

Spirituality, faith and religion

For some, religion plays a significant role in giving their life meaning. Mentions of religion include direct references to God, as is the case for a German man who said, “My faith in God and Jesus gives my life meaning – I am content,” and references to religious communities, church attendance, and more general notions of spirituality and connectedness to a higher power. For example, one American woman identifies her “strong faith in God (with a church family to lean on when needed)” as part of what gives her life meaning. In other instances, responses also reference the impact of the pandemic on religious practices. As one American woman explained, “Attending church is important to me and I haven’t been able to attend since the virus.”

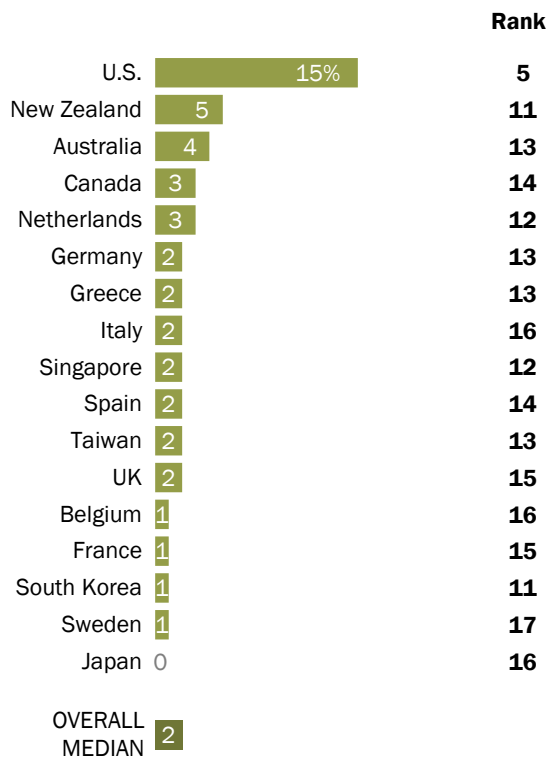
“I have religious belief[s] and moral values, so I have the wisdom to solve the difficulties in life.”

–Woman, 70, Taiwan

With 15% of all U.S. adults bringing up religion, Americans stand out for mentioning religion most frequently, and it is the fifth most frequently mentioned topic there.

U.S. adults particularly likely to find meaning in religion

% who mention *spirituality, faith and religion* when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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In comparison, New Zealanders, who mention religion with the second highest frequency, only bring up religion 5% of the time. No more than 1% in France, Sweden, Belgium, South Korea and Japan reference religion when defining meaning in life. For Swedes, this makes faith the least mentioned topic, while for South Koreans, faith is the 11th most mentioned topic.

People generally mention religion with the same frequency regardless of age, income, education or gender. In the U.S., however, older adults ages 65 and older and Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are more likely than their younger and Democratic counterparts to bring up religion. Mentions of faith are also slightly more common among those on the ideological right in five other publics, but nowhere are the differences as large as in the U.S.

3. Finding meaning in what one does

From work to travel to personal hobbies, people across the 17 publics surveyed draw meaning and fulfillment from the activities that make up their daily lives. This is particularly the case when it comes to people’s occupations and careers, which are a top-three source of meaning in many publics. People mention finding meaning in myriad aspects of their work, such as the mission of their own profession, their coworkers, or the sense of personal growth it provides them. On the other hand, some people – particularly older adults – find meaning in the *absence* of work: retirement. People also rely on their personal hobbies, education, volunteer work and travel for a sense of purpose, referencing everything from listening to music to international trips.

Occupation and career

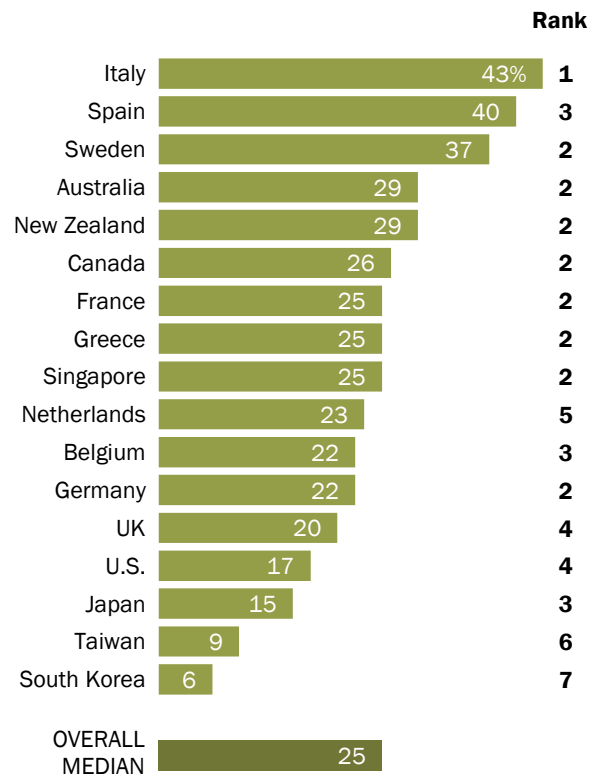
Work is one of the most common sources of meaning for adults around the world: A median of 25% across the 17 publics mention their job, career or profession. In 12 of the 17 publics surveyed, work is among the top three most mentioned topics – and in Spain, it ranks even higher than family and children.

As one Italian man put it, “In accordance with the Italian Constitution, to have a job and dignity. Most of all to have a job, because without a job it is difficult to have dignity.” “I have a job I like and that is fundamental for a person,” explained one Spanish woman.

Many emphasize how work provides them with a sense of accomplishment and personal growth. As one man in the Netherlands explained, “The most important thing for me is work. I think it is very important to build my career, to build my life, so that I’m doing better and better. And the way to do that is to take a

Work is commonly cited as a source of meaning in life

% who mention ***their occupation and career*** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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lot of personal responsibility and work hard.” Another man in Japan remarked, “I got the job that I wanted, so being able to keep doing that. I’ll have left my mark when I look back on my life.”

On the other hand, some people mention difficulties or challenges in their professional life. “In my job I don’t feel satisfied because they don’t give me personal days,” explained one Italian woman.

“I run two companies and work as a salesperson. I work with producing and selling groceries. Work is what is most satisfying right now. I find it very fun and work about 100 hours per week.”

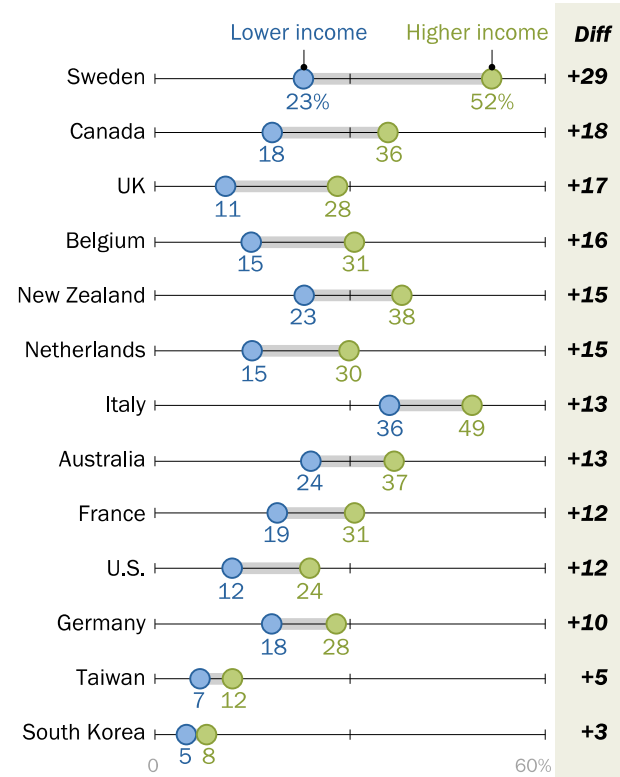
—Man, 21, Sweden

Like with finding meaning in family, people between the ages of 30 and 49 are typically the most likely to find meaning in their job or career. For example, in Italy, 59% of those ages 30 to 49 say work gives them meaning, while roughly half or fewer of any other age group agree. Still, mentions of work are quite prominent among most other age groups, though notably lower among those 65 and older.

Wealthier and more educated adults are also more likely to mention finding meaning in their work. In many cases, higher earners are twice as likely or more to mention their jobs as lower earners. For example, 28% of those earning above the median income in the UK mention their job or career, compared with 11% of those with incomes at or below the median. Similar differences also appear between those with and without postsecondary degrees. In

Those with higher incomes more likely to draw meaning from work

% who mention **their occupation and career** when describing what gives them meaning in life, among those with a ...



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
 Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.
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the U.S., work was brought up by roughly a quarter (26%) of those with college degrees, but just 11% of less educated adults mentioned work.

Retirement

When describing what gives them meaning and satisfaction in life, some mention enjoying – or looking forward to – their retirement years, though in no public surveyed do more than 4% mention it. Those who do focus on retirement tend to emphasize how it affords them the freedom to do more of what they enjoy. “I have more time for me. I’m exploring new options, new things, and I’m enjoying the next chapter in my life,” explained one Australian woman. “[I] don’t have financial stress. I can go traveling and visit around. Life is very convenient,” said another woman in Taiwan. Others enjoyed the slower pace in life, like a man in New Zealand who explained, “My lifestyle is very slow these days so I am satisfied.” And some responses were more succinct, like the man in the UK whose entire response was simply the remark, “The fact that I no longer work.”

Unsurprisingly, retirement is more commonly mentioned by older adults in nearly all of the publics surveyed. In Germany, for example, 9% of those ages 65 and older mention their retirement, while almost no one ages 64 and under brings it up.

Few mention retirement as source of meaning in life

% who mention **retirement** when describing what gives them meaning in life

		Rank
Australia	4%	13
Canada	4	13
France	4	11
Italy	4	12
Belgium	3	13
New Zealand	3	17
Sweden	3	13
U.S.	3	14
Germany	2	13
Netherlands	2	14
Singapore	2	12
Greece	1	14
South Korea	1	11
Spain	1	16
Taiwan	1	14
UK	1	17
Japan	0	16
OVERALL MEDIAN	2	

Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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“I’m retired so I don’t have to get up early, I’m free and can do whatever I want. There’s nobody to tell me what to do.”

–Man, 62, Belgium

Hobbies and recreation

Across the 17 publics surveyed, a median of 10% mention finding meaning in personal hobbies and recreational activities, ranging from a high of 22% in the UK to a low of 3% in South Korea. In the UK, hobbies are the third most commonly cited source of meaning, following only family and friends. In Greece, Japan and Taiwan, hobbies rank in the top five sources of meaning.

“Creating books, writing, I do particularly enjoy capturing what I see and it’s quite [fulfilling] for me. Having something to collect as well. I collect cameras and electronics, I find that an [interesting] hobby.”

—Man, 23, Singapore

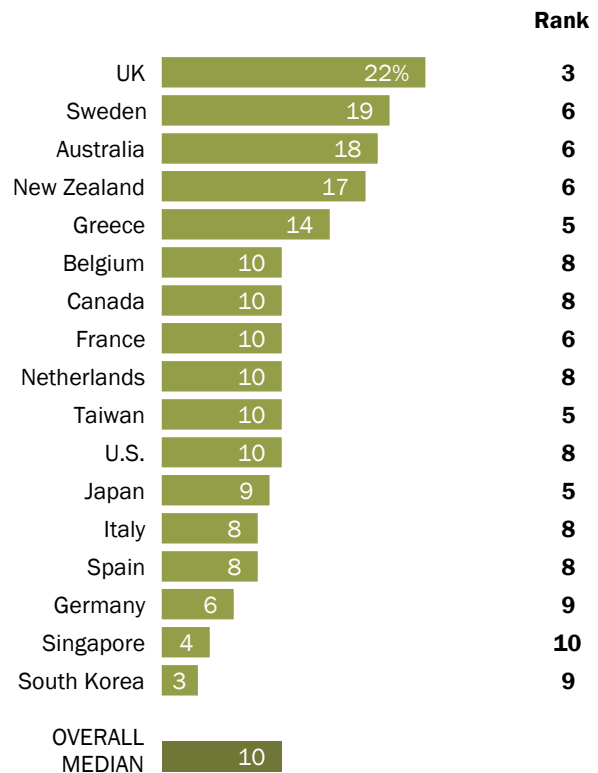
Respondents highlight myriad types of recreational activities. One Briton, for example, explained that he enjoys “watching movies and having access to internet, football, music, entertainment and museums.” Others reference things like reading, playing music, attending cultural events or simply relaxing and spending time at home.

Many people cite pastimes that allow them to spend time outdoors, often connecting their hobbies with an appreciation of nature. One Canadian, for example, replied that she gets meaning from “... being able to go outside [and] going on walks” while others highlight the benefits of being able to surf, ski or bicycle in the beautiful surroundings.

In eight publics surveyed, young people are significantly more likely to cite personal hobbies as meaningful parts of their lives. This difference is greatest in Greece, where roughly three-in-ten

Britons most likely to find meaning in personal hobbies

% who mention **hobbies and recreation** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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18- to 29-year-olds reference recreational activities, compared with 7% of those ages 65 and older. In five publics, men are more likely to mention their hobbies than are women, including Australia, where 14% of women do so compared with 23% of men. In some places, those on the ideological left and those who are more educated are also more likely to mention hobbies than those on the right and those with less education, respectively.

Travel and new experiences

Occasionally, people mention traveling and having new experiences as part of what gives their life meaning. One French man, for example, explained, “I have a full and meaningful life, and I have traveled a lot and had lots of experiences, so compared to others I think I have a wonderful life.” Likewise, a Japanese woman explained that “I think I have a pretty good life traveling to many countries with my husband, kids and grandkids.”

In all publics surveyed, travel is mentioned infrequently. These mentions show up most often in Australia and New Zealand, with 4% in these places bringing up traveling and having new experiences. Only 1% in Japan, Singapore and Taiwan do the same, and virtually no one in South Korea brings up travel. This makes travel the least frequently mentioned source of meaning in South Korea (along with pets). For other publics, travel does not make it into the top 10.

Some people indicate they find meaning from travel within their own country, and others specify international travel and encountering different cultures as something they find satisfying. One man in Spain said that he finds it meaningful “to have more freedom to travel the world, [with] ease of movement between countries, not only between European Union countries but also others.”

For some, meaning in life comes from traveling and new experiences

% who mention *travel and new experiences* when describing what gives them meaning in life

		Rank
Australia	4%	13
New Zealand	4	14
Belgium	3	13
Canada	3	14
France	3	12
Greece	3	11
Italy	3	14
Spain	3	12
UK	3	13
U.S.	3	14
Germany	2	13
Netherlands	2	14
Sweden	2	15
Japan	1	12
Singapore	1	16
Taiwan	1	14
South Korea	0	16
OVERALL MEDIAN	3	

Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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In four countries, including the U.S., those with higher incomes are somewhat more likely to mention travel as a source of meaning than those with lower incomes. For example, in the U.S., 6% of people with incomes at or above the national median mention travel as something meaningful, compared with 2% of those with lower incomes.

Some respondents also mention travel in the context of COVID-19, bemoaning the inability to travel given current restrictions. One woman in the U.S. declared, “It’s been more stressful at work because of the pandemic. What keeps me going is hope, hope that one day I will be able to get on a plane again for vacation and leave this country.”

“... I travel around the world and have been to a lot of places. I can see different things in different countries.”

—Man, 24, New Zealand

Education and learning

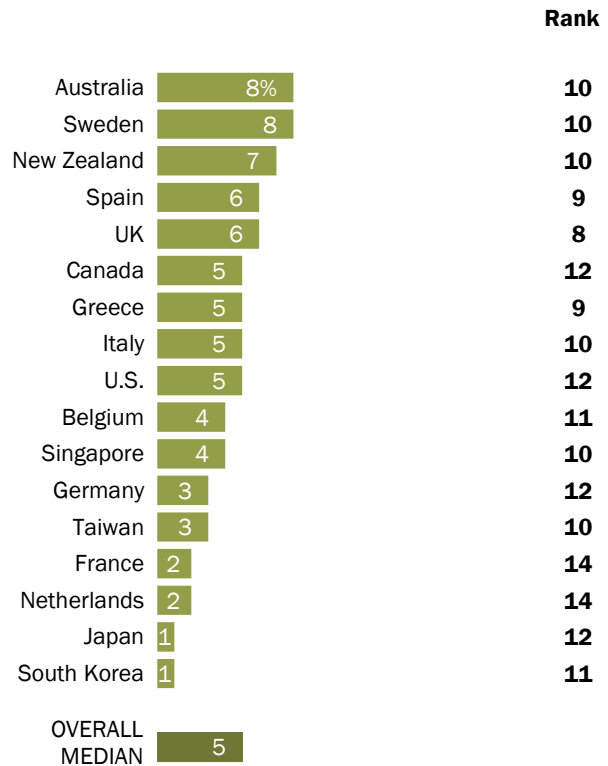
Some respondents also mention education and learning when discussing what provides meaning in their lives. In these cases, people mention attending university, staying informed and the pursuit of knowledge more generally. For one German woman, meaning in life comes from continuous learning: “Life is about learning new things, about progress, and staying curious.” Another Dutch man instead referenced his formal education: “I started university in the Netherlands. I am very happy about that. Because I am a refugee, I didn’t think I could go to university, but it turned out to be possible. It’s great that it’s possible.” In a handful of places, those on the ideological left are also somewhat more likely to mention learning than those on the right.

“I view life as an endless opportunity to learn and be informed. Self-discovery. We can do little for the world, so we should start by working on ourselves first. I find this journey of discovery fulfilling.”

—Man, 54, Italy

Learning provides some with satisfaction in life

% who mention **education and learning** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.

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Fewer than one-in-ten bring up education in all publics surveyed. Education comes up most frequently in Australia and Sweden, where 8% refer to learning in the context of meaning in their lives. Similar shares also bring up learning in New Zealand. In most places, education is roughly the 10th most mentioned source of meaning.

Across all places surveyed, younger adults ages 18 to 29 are more likely than older adults 65 and older to bring up education. For instance, 31% of Swedish adults under 30 bring up learning while only 1% of Swedes 65 and older do the same.

Service and civic engagement

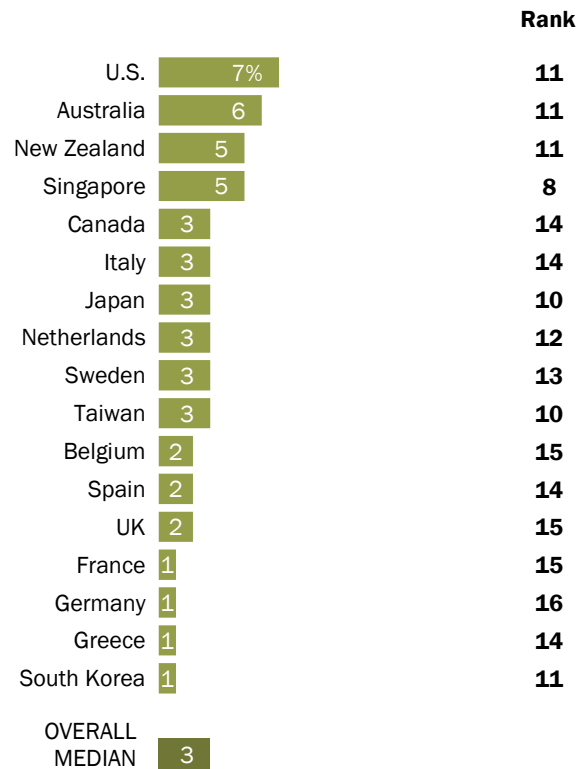
Service to the community and civic engagement are part of a meaningful life for some people, ranging from a high of 7% who say this in the U.S. to a low of 1% in France, Germany, Greece and South Korea. Only in Singapore, Italy and Taiwan did service rank as a top 10 source of meaning.

Some people speak in general terms about the benefits of service and trying to make the world a better place. For example, one American man stated, “I feel it is important to treat people with kindness and respect, to work to correct injustices, to encourage people to use their talents in a positive way, and to bring good cheer into people’s lives. In short, to have a positive impact on the world.”

Others explicitly focus on the types of service that they do, like specific volunteer activities or work with particular causes. One Australian woman shared that she “started off doing a lot of volunteer jobs looking after the farms during the drought, so giving the farmers respite and at no charge whatsoever.” A man from France said, “Volunteering during the pandemic brings me a lot of satisfaction, it’s my way to contribute.”

Americans, some in Asia-Pacific especially likely to find meaning in service

% who mention **service and civic engagement** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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In some countries, people with more education tend to be more likely to say they draw meaning from some type of community engagement or service. In Australia, 8% of people with at least a postsecondary degree include community service in their answer about what gives them meaning, compared with 4% of those with less education.

“I raise my grandkids to be aware of how to avoid wasting food, and to recycle. I volunteer, giving mothers guidance about buying local and cooking their own meals, instead of buying industrial products.”

–Woman, 70, Belgium

4. The conditions that enable meaning

Certain conditions allow people to lead fulfilling lives. Most notably, in nearly all of the 17 publics surveyed, material well-being, stability and quality of life collectively rank as one of the top five sources of meaning – with people noting the importance of everything from basic necessities (food, a roof) to luxury (good food or wine) as part of what enables them to find meaning. People also cite the importance of physical and mental health as well as freedom and independence.

Material well-being, stability and quality of life

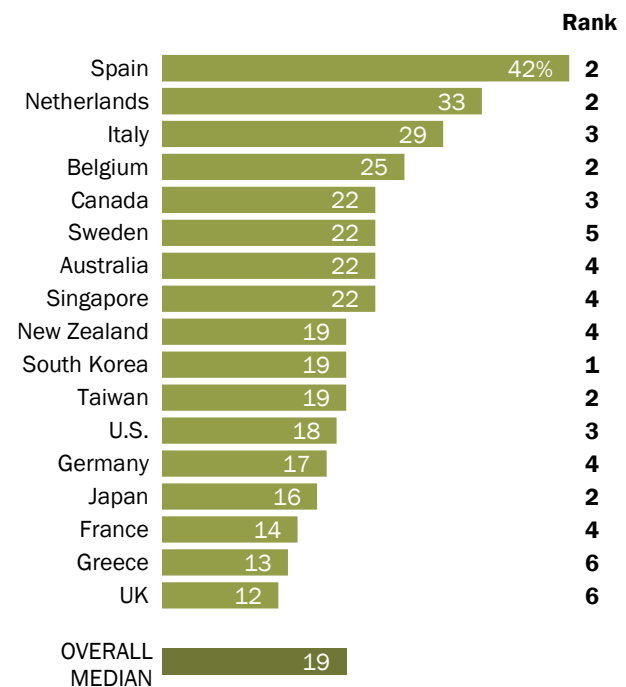
When describing their sense of meaning and fulfillment in life, many in these advanced economies mention their material well-being, stability or quality of life – including whether they have enough money to live comfortably, their ability to afford necessities, their standard of living and whether they feel safe and secure. Quality of life is among the three most common topics in just over half of the publics surveyed, including Spain – where it outranks family – and South Korea, where it is the most mentioned topic overall.

Respondents often express appreciation for their economic circumstances and their ability to live comfortably. “I work and lead a comfortable life in these hard times without any major worries,” explained one South Korean woman. “I’m living comfortably, well-fed, I’ve got a roof over my head, food in my cupboard, I’ve got everything I need to survive,” said a man in New Zealand.

Others are thankful to have enough to afford what they consider a modest, normal life. “Living a life without luxury, a normal life.

Financial considerations, quality of life are top of mind for many publics

% who say **material well-being, stability and quality of life** gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.

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Being able to pay for a home, food, the basics. Being able to go out for a beer and having the right to a home, to a job and to food, rights that should be the same for everyone in the world. Living with dignity,” explained a woman in Spain. “Although I don’t have that much money, it’s enough to live decently. I don’t need to be rich to be happy. I know that one needs money to live, but should not live for money,” offered a woman in Belgium. Others do not consider themselves so lucky: “I would like to feel that food and other necessities will not take over half of my income. The cost of utilities are on the rise and it’s harder for me to pay my bills because I’m on a fixed income,” explained one man in the U.S.

“I’m married, have a house and a garden, a good car. I am content, what more could I ask for? As long as I can live without having to worry about money.”

—Man, 40, Germany

In most publics, less affluent and more affluent people are about equally likely to mention their material well-being when talking about what makes their lives meaningful.

Physical and mental health

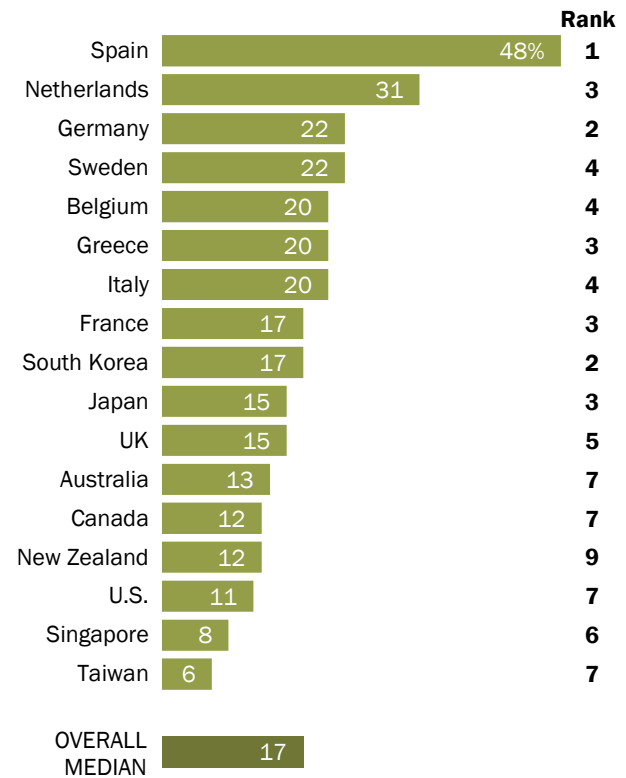
Some people point to health as a source of meaning in their lives. These mentions of health include references to both mental and physical health, as well as the respondent's own health and the health of their loved ones. Also included are references to practices of wellness, such as meditation, working out and various forms of exercise. Typically, people express appreciation for good health, such as one woman in Germany who declared, "I am glad my health is good; for background: I am disabled," or enjoyment of a wellness practice, like this Belgian woman: "I also work out and enjoy food."

References to health as a source of meaning in life are generally most prevalent among the European adults surveyed, ranging from 15% of responses in the UK to 48% in Spain. Uniquely, in Spain, health is the *top* source of meaning among all those coded. Roughly a fifth (17%) of South Koreans also see health as part of what gives life meaning – though this makes it the second most referenced topic there, behind only material well-being. In Germany, too, health is the second most cited source of meaning, and in the Netherlands, Greece, France and Japan, the topic ranks third.

In eight of the 17 publics surveyed, older respondents are more likely to bring up health in the context of what gives life meaning. The difference is starkest in the Netherlands: While just 17% of Dutch adults ages 18 to 29 reference health, 38% of those 65 and older bring up the subject, a difference of 21 percentage points.

About half in Spain look to health for fulfillment in life

% who mention **physical and mental health** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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"Mainly to be healthy and then to have a job to be able to live, and logically to live in as healthy a place as possible, which is the most important thing."

–Man, 47, Spain

Women also more frequently mention health in six publics. In Spain, for example, 39% of men mention health compared with 56% of women, a 17-point difference.

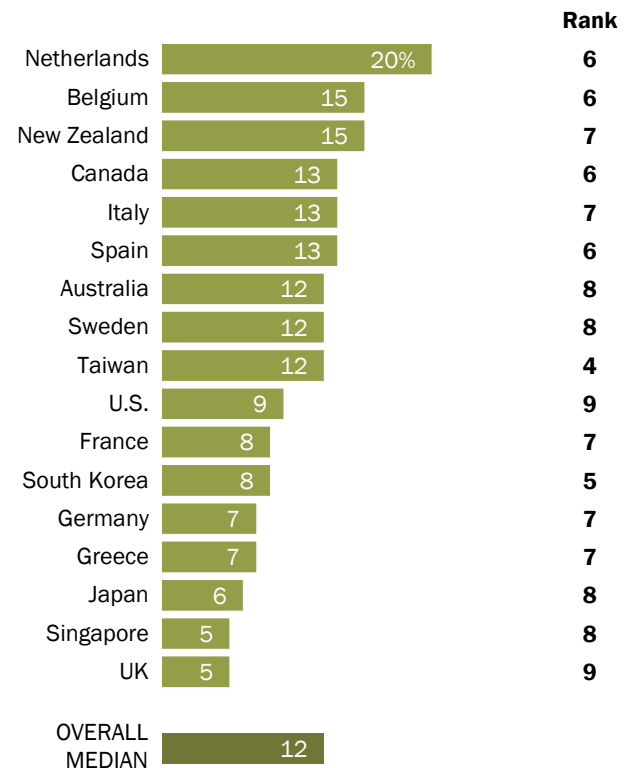
Freedom and independence

Freedom and independence is commonly mentioned as an important source of meaning. In many cases, people mention freedom in a personal sense, referring to their ability to live the way they want, their work-life balance, or having or wanting free time. For example, one Italian man noted, “A satisfying life is one where there is a good balance between the hours spent on work and free time. At the same time, compensation should be adequate. The last lockdown taught us to relate to ourselves better and to cherish restoring our own minds and bodies.” Another man in Germany expressed satisfaction: “I have more time for my hobbies since working from home. I have more time for my family and even more time for self-care during this crisis.” Freedom of choice stands out for others, like this Dutch man who said, “At present, I find it important that I have the choice to decide what I want to do. I like having the freedom to decide what I want to do.”

In other cases, freedom is brought up in a more general, political sense – highlighting things like freedom of speech and religion. Explained one man in the U.S., meaning comes from “freedom of religion and freedom of the free exchange of ideas, [though] the Democratic Party is systematically dismantling both of these.”

Some look to personal freedoms for meaning in life

*% who mention **freedom and independence** when describing what gives them meaning in life*



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.

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Freedom and independence is mentioned most frequently in the Netherlands, with one-in-five bringing up the topic. At least one-in-ten also bring up freedom in Belgium, New Zealand, Canada, Italy, Spain, Australia, Taiwan and Sweden.

For Taiwan, this makes freedom the fourth most mentioned topic, and freedom makes the top five factors in South Korea. In the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada and Spain, freedom is the sixth mentioned factor for meaning.

In six publics, those with higher incomes are more likely to bring up freedom when discussing the meaning of life. The difference is greatest in New Zealand, where those with incomes at or above the median are twice as likely as those with lower incomes to refer to freedom (22% vs. 10%). Similar differences also emerge between the more and less educated in four publics. In Germany, 11% of those with postsecondary educations mentioned freedom and independence, compared with 5% of less educated adults.

In the U.S., Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are about twice as likely as their Democratic counterparts to bring up freedom. One Republican man, for example, pithily explained his sources of meaning as “one word ... FREEDOM!!! To be able to live a life with the freedom to choose and to take care of family.” Outside of the U.S., however, there are no differences with regard to how often freedom comes up as a source of meaning between those who support and those who do not support the governing party – except in Taiwan (for more on how the governing party is defined, see [Appendix D](#)). And while those who identify with the ideological right are more likely to cite freedom than those on the left in the U.S., the opposite is true in Italy and Spain.

“Freedom, that is the most important thing. Freedom to be able to do what you want without hurting others. People have to be free to do what they want without hurting anyone.”

–Man, 61, Sweden

5. The pandemic and other difficulties

Not all sources of meaning are unambiguously positive. Rather, many people in the 17 publics surveyed also mention challenges they have faced – whether they be health concerns, lost jobs, insufficient income or difficult relationships. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic is referenced in each of the publics surveyed, sometimes as the reason for little to no fulfillment and other times as the source of personal reflection and growth.

COVID-19

The timing of the survey – around a year after many places began lockdowns but before vaccines were widely available – meant that COVID-19 was top of mind for some respondents. And, indeed, when asked where they find meaning in life, some made references to the global pandemic as part of their answers. This included any mentions of the coronavirus itself, as well as pandemic-related lifestyle changes such as travel restrictions, mask-wearing or quarantining.

For some, the pandemic has provided an opportunity for reflection on meaning in life, such as for a French woman who said, “Lockdown helped me settle down and reflect, and appreciate my life.” Others referenced their society’s pandemic response; for example, one woman in Taiwan said that “Taiwanese people are very united during serious incidents, such as pandemics or earthquakes.” In some instances, respondents said that what gives them meaning in life has also helped sustain them through the pandemic or referred to experiences related to COVID-19 to illustrate what they find meaningful. One such response came from an American woman who said, “Spending time with loved ones. With COVID,

The COVID-19 pandemic affects how some see meaning in life

% who mention the **COVID-19 pandemic** when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.
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that generally means phone calls and Zoom sessions.” Still others – like a Greek woman who said, “Nothing satisfies us. We go nowhere, we do not go outside. We have been locked up for more than a year” – said they are unable to find meaning due to the pandemic.

No more than one-in-ten mentioned the pandemic in any of the 17 publics surveyed. Those in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden are tied for most frequent mentions of COVID-19, with 8% of their respondents bringing up the pandemic. France follows closely at 7%, and the U.S. and Taiwan are next at 6%.

“In the face of recommended COVID restrictions, I have found a new love of nature, outdoor activities and ranch animals; especially horses.”

–Woman, 59, U.S.

For the most part, people were equally likely to mention the coronavirus in their response regardless of age, gender, income level, political ideology or educational attainment. In some places, those who mentioned any dissatisfaction in life were more likely to mention the pandemic. For example, 46% of Swedes who mentioned something negative also mentioned COVID-19. In contrast, only 6% of those who did not mention something negative also brought up the pandemic. In most other places surveyed, too, those who mentioned something negative were significantly more likely to reference COVID-19 than those who did not say something negative. The notable exceptions were all in the Asia-Pacific region. In Taiwan, South Korea, New Zealand, Japan and Australia, while few mentioned negative things at all, almost none of these references were about the pandemic. Outside of Japan, each of these other publics stands out for their [relative satisfaction](#) with how their governments have handled the pandemic.

Despite the context of the global pandemic, in most places surveyed those who mentioned health in their answer were no more likely to mention COVID-19. The U.S., however, is a strong exception: 20% of those who mentioned health also mentioned COVID-19, compared with only 7% of those who did *not* mention health but mentioned the global pandemic.

In six publics, those who say their life changed at least a fair amount because of the pandemic were also more likely to bring up the pandemic. The difference is greatest in Italy and France, where those who feel at least somewhat affected by the pandemic were 6 percentage points more likely than those who feel not too or not at all affected to bring up the pandemic. The same relationship appears in the U.S., Germany, the Netherlands and Taiwan.

Challenges faced as people search for meaning

Despite being asked about what makes life meaningful and fulfilling in a positive sense, some people nevertheless mention challenges or difficulties that have interfered with their search for happiness.

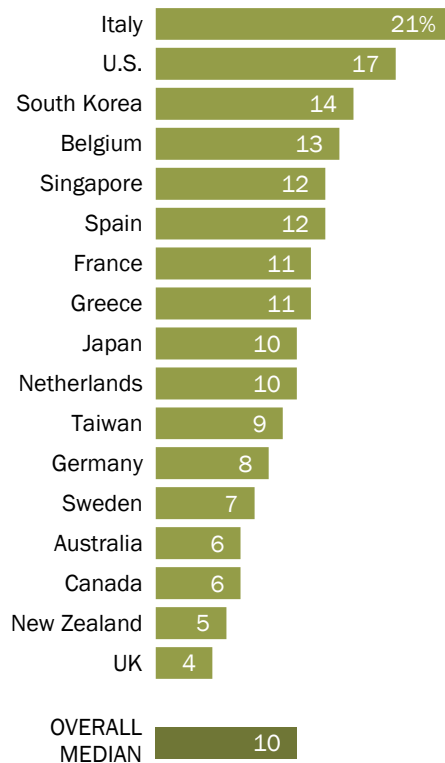
Some struggle to think of anything meaningful in their lives. “To be honest, it’s hard to find meaning because the things that used to bring joy feel more hollow as I’ve gotten older. Everything seems either frivolous or like drudgery. I try to skateboard when the weather is nice and that’s okay, but still not as fun as it used to be,” remarked one American man. Others are more particular, describing difficulties with their living situation, finances, health, career or relationships. “Once I’ve paid all the bills I don’t have anything left. There should be more support for single-parent families,” complained a woman in Belgium. “I lack basic health care. I can’t find health benefits,” said one man in Greece.

In many cases, respondents’ negative remarks focus not on personal difficulties but rather ongoing social and political turmoil, including the global pandemic. “Between coronavirus, politics and climate change, there is a lot of pressure and it’s hard to see a future ... we’re all under pressure, exhausted, stressed and waiting for something [to] happen to make things better,” explained a man in Spain. As a woman in the U.S. put it, “I think our world has gotten more and more troubling and [is a] harder place to live. I don’t think it will ever get better.”

People also describe challenges related to the inability to afford things or find jobs, frustrations with their political system, concerns about climate change, worries about the next generation’s

Challenges and difficulties most commonly cited in Italy and U.S. when discussing meaning of life

*% who mention something generally **negative** when describing what gives them meaning in life*



Note: Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.
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ability to succeed, personal loss such as widowhood and more. In some cases, people mention personal difficulties they have faced in the past and describe finding meaning in the process of overcoming them. (While respondents might highlight more than one thing that negatively affected them in a given response, each response was only coded for the presence or absence of a complaint or challenge.)

Mentions of negative situations are not particularly common overall – a median of 10% of people cite them – but there is wide variation across the publics surveyed. In the UK, just 4% of adults mention difficulties or challenges. On the other hand, such responses are notably more common in Italy (21%), the U.S. (17%) and South Korea (14%).

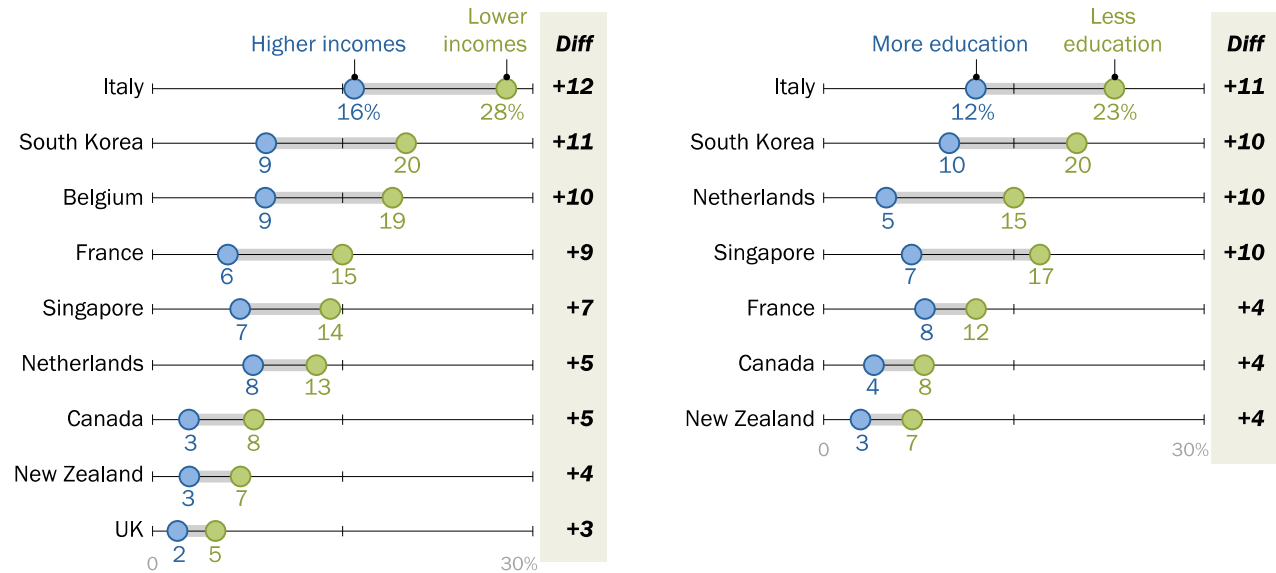
Those with lower levels of education and income tend to cite more challenges in many places. In South Korea, for example, those with less than a postsecondary education are twice as likely as those with a postsecondary degree or more to cite a challenge – and the same is true among South Koreans who have less than the country’s median income relative to those who are at or above the median income.

“Almost nothing, I have no job, there is no justice and I am weak because I live with two [people] with disabilities. Nothing is satisfying and fulfilling unfortunately because of the little [economic] aid that I receive for care workers.”

–Woman, 59, Italy

Those with lower incomes and less education often cite more challenges to finding meaning in life

% who mentioned something generally **negative** when describing what gives them meaning in life, among those with ...



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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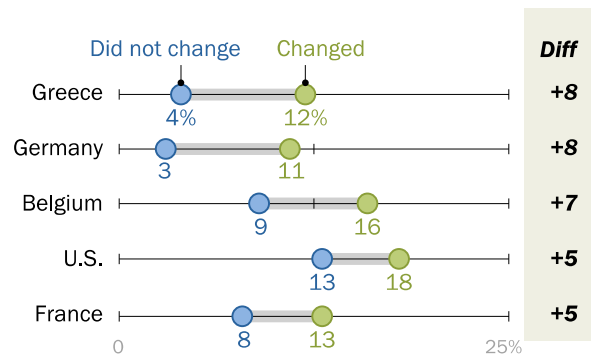
Similarly, in around half the places surveyed, those who think their country's economy is doing poorly are more likely to mention a hardship than those who think it is doing well. Once again taking South Korea as an example, 17% of those who think the South Korean economy is in bad shape mention something negative when asked about their sources of meaning, compared with 8% among those who think it's in good shape.

In five of the publics surveyed, those who say COVID-19 changed their lives a great deal or a fair amount are more likely to say something negative when asked about meaning in their life.

Responses that discuss society, places and institutions also coincide with greater negativity in the U.S., Italy and Spain. For example, in the U.S., difficulties or challenges are brought up by nearly half (49%) of those who mention society, institutions, politics or something about where they live, compared with 15% of those who discuss other topics but not society. South Korea and Taiwan, however, stand out for the opposite relationship: In both of these publics, those who mention society are *less* likely to mention negative things than those who do not mention this topic.

Negative responses more common in those who experienced some change due to COVID-19

% who mentioned something generally *negative* when describing what gives them meaning in life, among those whose lives ___ due to COVID-19



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.
Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.
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On the other hand, a variety of other topics are associated with *fewer* mentions of negative circumstances in the majority of the publics surveyed. One such topic is family, which appears to provide a buffer against personal challenges and difficulties. In 16 of the 17 publics, those who mention their family are substantially less likely to mention something negative in their responses. For example, 23% of Greeks who do not discuss family or children say something negative, compared with just 2% of those who do mention their family or children. Even in the context of the global pandemic, one Greek woman reflected on how the hardship had actually strengthened her family’s relationship: “The good thing at this time is that because of the pandemic, my family has bonded more, and our relationship and also our state of mind as family members has evolved. As parents, we listen to our children more and our children reach adulthood more quickly.”

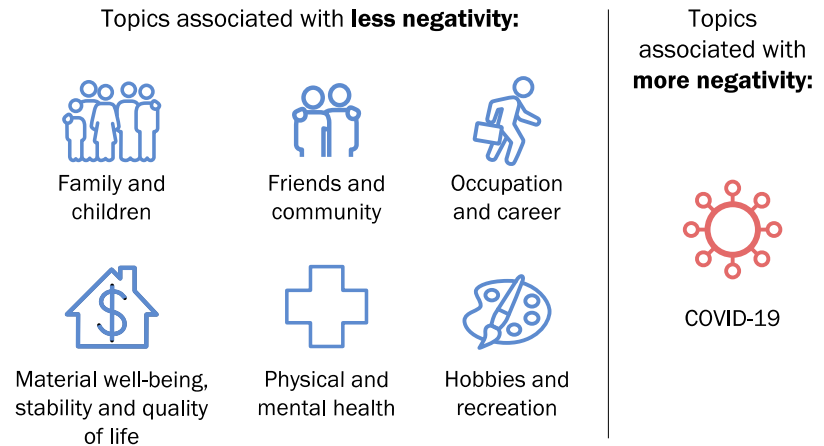
To a lesser extent, friends, community and other relationships are also associated with fewer mentions of something negative. In 13 publics, those who mention their friends are less likely to mention something negative as are those who don't mention friends.

People who mention their occupation or career are also less likely to mention personal difficulties or challenges in nine of the 17 publics surveyed. In Japan, just 1% of those who discuss their job or career mention any difficulties or challenges, compared with 12% of those who do not mention anything about work.

Recreation is also associated with fewer mentions of challenges or difficulties in several publics surveyed. In Japan, for example, just 1% of those who mention hobbies or recreation report something negative in their lives, compared with 12% of those who do not mention any hobbies or pastimes.

In four of the Asia-Pacific publics surveyed (South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Singapore), as well as France, those who mention their material well-being, stability and quality of life are less likely to mention difficulties or challenges in their lives. In South Korea, just 2% of those who bring up the topic say something negative, compared with 19% of those who do not mention their standard of living. In the U.S., the pattern is reversed.

People who mention their family and friends are less likely to mention challenges when discussing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Topics are shown as more or less associated with negative responses when there are statistically significant differences between mentioning a topic more or less and mentioning something negative in the same response. Statistical significance is present in at least five of the publics surveyed. Topics are coded as part of an open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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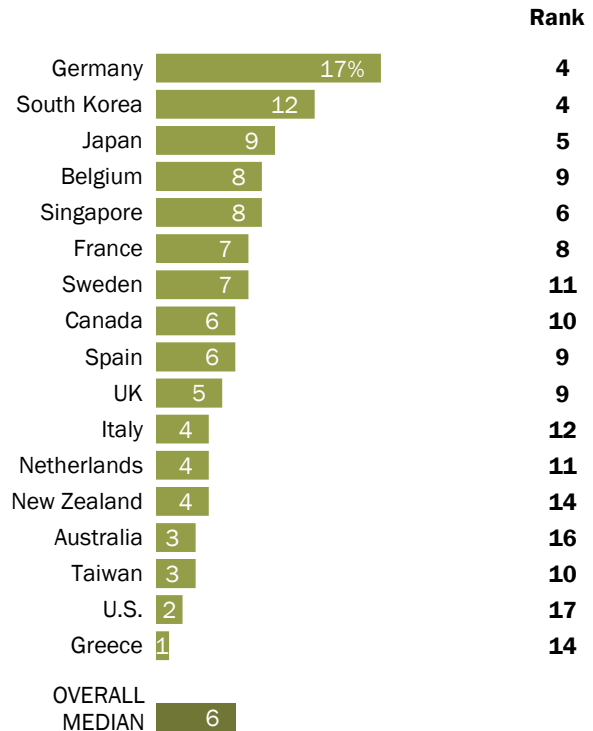
6. General – rather than specific – satisfaction

The majority of people in most places surveyed identify specific things – or people or activities – that make them satisfied with their lives. But some people refrain from offering detailed responses, responding instead that they *are* satisfied with life, that they feel fulfilled, or something else broadly general but still positive.³ One typical response of this ilk comes from a woman in Australia, who responded: “I find all aspects of my life meaningful, fulfilling and satisfying. I am very happy.”

The share of the public who offer these broad but positive assessments varies widely, from a low of 1% in Greece to a high of 17% in Germany. In Germany, this makes it the fourth most proffered response, tied with material well-being and behind only family, occupation and health. But in most places, it is significantly less common, as is the case in Australia, where this topic is tied with mentions of pets (3%).

Germans more likely than those in other publics to say they are satisfied while offering few specifics

*% who mention something generally **positive** when describing what gives them meaning in life*



Note: Open-ended question. Rank reflects where the topic fell in a list of 17 sources of meaning that were coded. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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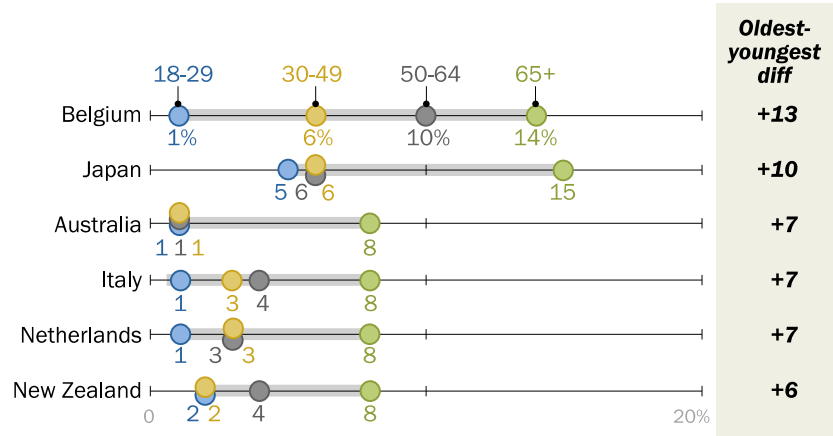
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³ Responses which were substantive but did not have a clearer code in the codebook were also sometimes captured in this category. For example, amorphous phrases like “living peacefully” were coded here because without additional information, it was impossible to know whether the respondent meant world peace, familial peace or something else. Similarly, “goals” or “personal growth” were considered too abstract to properly assign to a category without further contextual details.

In some places surveyed, older people are more likely to respond in this general manner. In Belgium, for example, 14% of those ages 65 and older report satisfaction without details, compared with just 1% of those under 30. These age-related patterns sometimes emerge explicitly in the responses, such as with one Spanish man who noted, “I am content with what I have, I don’t aspire to further achievements at age 72.” Similarly, one Dutch man stated, “I live my life in a meaningful way, I find that’s very important. I am 70 years old and I’m still doing meaningful things.”

Older people are more likely to report general life satisfaction without offering details than younger ones

% who mention something generally **positive** when describing what gives them meaning in life, among those ages ...



Note: Only statistically significant differences shown. Open-ended question. See Appendix A for more information.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.

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People with lower levels of education are also sometimes more likely to declare their general satisfaction than those with higher levels of education in several publics surveyed. In Canada, for example, 9% of those with less than a postsecondary degree offer this type of broadly positive response, while 3% of those with a postsecondary degree or more say the same. Individuals with lower incomes, too, are often more likely to give this type of answer than those with higher incomes in most of the Asia-Pacific publics surveyed.

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Appendix A: Coding methodology

For this report, we conducted nationally representative Pew Research Center surveys of 16,254 adults from March 12 to May 26, 2021, in 16 advanced economies. All surveys were conducted over the phone with adults in Canada, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Responses are weighted to be representative of the adult population in each public. Respondents in these publics were asked the following open-ended question: “We’re interested in exploring what it means to live a satisfying life. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying?” Responses were transcribed by interviewers in the language in which the interviews were conducted.

In the United States, we surveyed 2,596 adults from Feb. 1 to 7, 2021. Everyone who took part in the U.S. survey is a member of the Center’s American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. In the U.S., respondents were asked a slightly longer version of the same question: “We’re interested in exploring what it means to live a satisfying life. Please take a moment to reflect on your life and what makes it feel worthwhile – then answer the question below as thoughtfully as you can. What about your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? What keeps you going and why?”

On each of these surveys, the open-ended question was the last substantive question given to respondents. In the U.S., as the survey was self-administered, this late placement may have led to greater nonresponse than on the phone surveys where respondents were still in contact with the interviewer and asked to verbally give their answer, rather than type. In the U.S., item nonresponse was nearly twice as high as the public with the next highest nonresponse rate, Taiwan, and in most places surveyed, fewer than 10% said they did not have a response or refused to answer the question.

Codebook development

To develop a codebook for the main sources of meaning mentioned across the 17 advanced economies, Center researchers iteratively reviewed random samples of native English and non-English responses translated by Google Translate. Researchers mapped out the key concepts that commonly appeared in the responses using a process called “open coding.” After developing an initial set of categories that seemed comprehensive and well-defined, researchers tested the codebook on a random sample of 150 native English responses to evaluate the codebook’s conceptual validity. They then reviewed their disagreements and refined the codebook before testing it again on another sample.

After three iterations of this process, researchers were able to determine that the codebook was clear enough that other coders could independently apply it in a consistent manner. The codebook’s overall Krippendorff’s alpha, measured using [Measuring Agreement on Set-Valued Items \(MASI\) distance](#) as a similarity measure, was 0.72 across the 20 codes in the codebook. Krippendorff’s alpha, measured traditionally using a binary measure, was also above 0.7 for each individual code except for the “Don’t know/refused” category, which appeared only once in the final sample used for codebook development. Using these intercoder reliability scores as a benchmark of acceptable performance, Center researchers then trained a larger group of in-house coders and professional translators to apply the codebook at scale to the full set of English and non-English responses, respectively.

Item nonresponse varies substantially across publics and is particularly high in the U.S.

% who offered no response to the open-ended question

	%
U.S.	23
Taiwan	12
Germany	11
Belgium	9
Japan	8
UK	8
South Korea	7
Singapore	6
Sweden	6
Australia	5
Canada	5
France	5
Netherlands	5
Greece	4
Italy	2
New Zealand	2
Spain	1

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey, Q36.

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Coding non-English responses

To code the 11,025 non-English responses that were collected in 11 different languages across 14 separate publics, the Center partnered with a professional translation firm, cApStAn. After thoroughly studying the codebook and participating in training sessions, professional translators from cApStAn coded a random sample of 10% of non-English responses (1,103 responses), stratified by language and public. They also translated the responses into English, took care to record any questions and comments they had during the coding process and provided the Center with extensive notes alongside the coded and translated responses. To evaluate intercoder reliability, the translated responses were divided up and coded by the same

Center researchers that developed the codebook and established its conceptual validity.

After coding the English translations, Center researchers carefully reviewed the translators' notes and corresponding disagreements, and further refined the codebook with clarifying guidelines and decision rules. Center researchers also looked for possible systematic misunderstandings of the codebook within each language and public subset in the sample. For each subset (e.g., Mandarin in

Number of respondents and responses by public and language

	Language	Number of respondents	Number of coded responses
Australia	English	1,000	969
Belgium	Dutch	389	366
Belgium	French	617	575
Canada	English	805	773
Canada	French	206	195
France	French	985	947
Germany	German	1,027	939
Greece	Greek	1,032	999
Italy	Italian	1,003	997
Japan	Japanese	1,014	942
Netherlands	Dutch	1,005	955
New Zealand	English	1,000	979
Singapore	English	894	880
Singapore	Malay	62	62
Singapore	Mandarin	168	168
South Korea	Korean	1,006	936
Spain	Spanish	1,000	992
Sweden	Swedish	1,029	971
Taiwan	Mandarin	1,000	899
UK	English	1,012	953
U.S.	English	2,489	2,024
U.S.	Spanish	107	82

Note: Coded responses include those that contain any text. The number of coded responses is equivalent to the number of respondents minus those who did not provide a response. Some of these responses were later reclassified as a nonresponse during coding (e.g., "I have no comment").

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

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Singapore), the Center identified specific codes where the Krippendorff's alpha (binary) was under 0.7 with at least five disagreements, two-thirds of which were either false positives or false negatives. Researchers then reviewed these disagreements and developed further guidelines to help resolve these apparent misunderstandings. For these specific cases – where the professional translators seemed to be interpreting the codebook differently than the Center's in-house coders – the Center provided them with codebook revisions and asked them to recode all of their responses in their public/language subset for the specific code on which they had performed poorly. The translators were not provided any specifics on how they had disagreed with the Center and were simply given a new version of the codebook and instructed to take a second look at their coding decisions.

The Center calculated intercoder reliability after receiving revised codes and determined that the professional translators had achieved an understanding of the codebook acceptable enough that they could apply it independently. The overall agreement between Center researchers and the professional translators was 0.7 (measured using MASI-distance Krippendorff's alpha) and code-level agreement (using standard binary Krippendorff's alphas) was above 0.7 for each of the 20 codes independently.

Before the professional translators independently coded the remaining 90% of non-English responses, the Center provided a final round of extensive feedback, including personalized reports for each translator detailing their disagreements along with notes explaining the Center's decision-making process. As the professional translators further improved their understanding of the codebook after reviewing this feedback, it is likely that the intercoder reliability scores reported above represent a lower-bound estimate of their actual coding performance on the remaining non-English responses.

Coding English responses

To code the responses that were collected natively in English from six different publics and not already coded in the prior samples described above, Center researchers trained a larger group of nine coders to apply the codebook independently. Each coder was given a random sample of 150 English responses and evaluated for intercoder reliability. To do so, the original researchers involved in the codebook's development independently coded the sample and resolved their disagreements to arrive at a consensus. Coders were then evaluated against this baseline and given feedback similar to that provided to the professional translators, including notes on the cases where they disagreed with the baseline. Those whose overall MASI-distance Krippendorff's alpha was at or above 0.7 began independently coding the full queue of native English responses, drawing responses randomly and proceeding at their own pace. Those below 0.7 were given additional random responses until they improved.

Intercoder reliability scores for in-house and professional coders, overall

Sample	Krippendorff's alpha (MASI distance)
In-house reliability, conceptual validity sample (n=150)	0.72
Professional coder reliability, 10% non-English sample (n=1,103)	0.70
In-house effective reliability, all native English responses (n=6,770)	0.77

Note: Table contains Krippendorff's alpha for three separate samples of responses, calculated using MASI distance based on a codebook of 20 codes. The first sample of 150 responses was coded by two Pew Research Center researchers during codebook development and was used to establish the codebook's conceptual validity. The second sample of 1,103 responses was compared to the native-language coding performance of an external professional translation firm against a benchmark of Pew Research Center coding of the English translations of the same responses. The third sample was used to determine the intercoder reliability of Pew Research Center coders on native English responses, using coders' individual reliability scores (calculated against a benchmark sample of 150-200 responses) weighted by the proportion of responses they coded in the final sample.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

"What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies"

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Intercoder reliability scores for in-house and professional coders, by individual code

Krippendorff's alpha (MASI distance)

Topic	In-house reliability, conceptual validity sample (n=150)	Professional coder reliability, 10% non-English sample (n=1,103)	In-house effective reliability, all native English responses (n=6,770)
General positive	0.85	0.78	0.66
Don't know/refused	0.0*	0.77	0.79
Family and children	0.99	0.97	0.98
Spouses and romantic partners	0.92	0.86	0.95
Friends, community and other relationships	0.90	0.84	0.96
Service and civic engagement	0.88	0.73	0.79
Society, places and institutions	0.79	0.78	0.89
Material well-being, stability and quality of life	0.78	0.80	0.84
Retirement	0.91	0.87	0.96
Freedom and independence	0.90	0.81	0.90
Occupation and career	0.97	0.93	0.92
Education and learning	0.83	0.80	0.77
Nature and the outdoors	0.92	0.85	0.91
Pets	0.89	1.0	1.0
Spirituality, faith and religion	0.92	0.92	0.95
Physical and mental health	0.86	0.87	0.95
Hobbies and recreation	0.82	0.79	0.93
Travel and new experiences	0.85	0.80	0.98
Difficulties or challenges	0.86	0.85	0.81
COVID-19	0.81	0.92	0.99

Note: Table contains Krippendorff's alpha for three separate samples of responses, calculated using MASI distance based on a codebook of 20 codes. The first sample of 150 responses was coded by two Pew Research Center researchers during codebook development and was used to establish the codebook's conceptual validity. The second sample of 1,103 responses was compared to the native-language coding performance of an external professional translation firm against a benchmark of Pew Research Center coding of the English translations of the same responses. The third sample was used to determine the intercoder reliability of Pew Research Center coders on native English responses, using coders' individual reliability scores (calculated against a benchmark sample of 150-200 responses) weighted by the proportion of responses they coded in the final sample.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36.

"What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies"

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Each in-house coder coded between 265 and 2,280 of the 6,770 native English responses. Weighted proportionally by their contribution to the total, the in-house coders achieved an overall effective intercoder reliability MASI-distance Krippendorff's alpha of 0.77. Their collective reliability (measured by standard binary Krippendorff's alphas) was also at or above 0.7 for each code independently, with the exception of the "General positive" code, where it was 0.66.

Characteristics of responses and codes

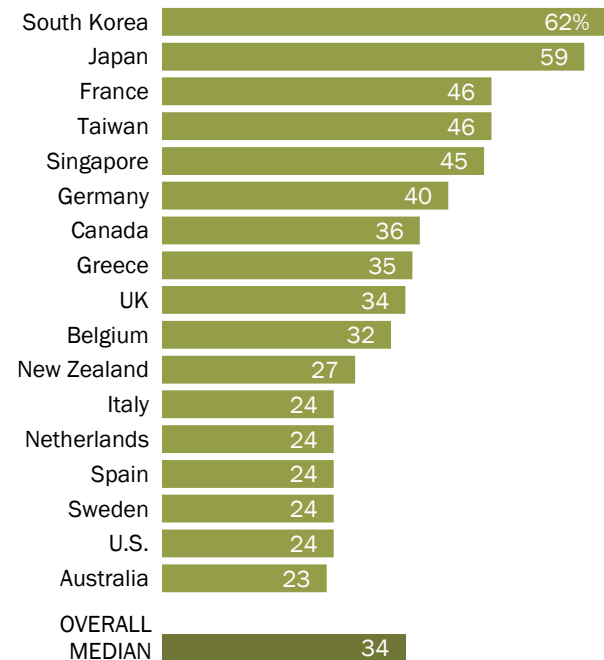
Beyond the variation in item nonresponse discussed above, publics also vary in how much detail the average respondent provided. For example, English responses in the U.S. average 31 words, nearly twice as long as the 18 words provided by the average respondent in Australia and New Zealand. While this particular gap is likely attributable to mode differences – responses in the U.S. were collected over the web instead of phone – response length also varies between the publics that were surveyed by phone. In the UK, respondents provided an average of eight words – less than half that of Australia and New Zealand.

Whether due to mode, cultural, demographic or other factors, variation in response length ultimately manifests as variation in the number of topics mentioned in a given response. For example, across the 17 publics surveyed, a median of 34% responded to the question about what gives them meaning in life by mentioning only one of the topics researchers coded (e.g., family). But the share is particularly high in South Korea and Japan.

These differences help explain why the share giving a particular answer in certain publics may appear much lower than others, even if it is the top mentioned source of meaning for that given public. To give a specific example, 19% in South Korea mention material well-being while

South Koreans, Japanese especially likely to provide only one source of meaning in life

% who mention only one topic when describing what gives them meaning in life



Note: Open-ended question. See Methodology for more details on coding. References to only COVID-19 or to challenges are not included.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q36. "What Makes Life Meaningful? Views From 17 Advanced Economies"

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42% say the same in Spain, but the topic is ranked first in South Korea and second in Spain. Given this, researchers have chosen to highlight not only the share of the public that mentions a given topic but also the topic's relative ranking among all topics coded.

Controlling for topic salience in demographic differences

Across all publics, certain topics are more likely to be mentioned than others. For example, family is consistently mentioned more frequently than pets. This is partly due to the fact that family [brings more meaning and fulfillment](#) than pets do for some people. However, it is also partly attributable to the fact that pets are simply a less *salient* source of meaning than family – that is, all else equal, people are more likely to think of their family off the top of their head than they are their pets. In other words, whether or not someone mentions finding meaning in pets is not just a function of whether they have pets or care about them, but also a function of how much thought they gave to the question and how much detail they provided in their answer. Across all publics, the average respondent tended to mention the first one or two sources of meaning that they could think of, which often included family. Pets, on the other hand, tended to be mentioned by those who reference multiple sources of meaning; generally, mentions of pets occurred alongside mentions of one to four other topics.

As described above, response length varies between the publics surveyed – but it also varies substantially within each public as well. In any given public, certain demographic groups – often more affluent and more educated people – are more likely to answer the question and provide more detailed responses. Because of this, these groups may appear to be uniquely more likely to mention rarer topics like pets, when these demographic differences are simply being driven by a topic's overall salience and likelihood of appearing in longer responses.

Accordingly, all significant demographic differences reported in this analysis are verified using regressions that control for the total number of topics mentioned in a given response, normalized using a base-10 logarithmic scale. This measure roughly approximates the amount of detail provided in each response, and controls for each topic's overall tendency to be brought up in more detailed responses. The reported differences therefore represent a particular demographic group's likelihood of mentioning a given topic beyond the group's tendency to simply provided longer (or shorter) responses.

Selection of quotes

Open-ended responses included in the report and in the interactive [\[add hyperlink\]](#) have been lightly edited for clarity (and, in some cases, translated into English by a professional firm). They

have been purposefully – not randomly – selected to illustrate key points, and selected responses may not be representative of all responses for a given public.

More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are [available here](#). For respondents in the U.S., read more about the ATP's methodology [here](#).

Appendix B: Survey methodology

Pew Research Center's Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Gallup and Langer Research Associates. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are [available here](#). Results for the U.S. survey are based on data from the American Trends Panel.

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted Feb. 1 to Feb. 7, 2021. A total of 2,596 panelists responded out of 2,943 who were sampled, for a response rate of 88%. This does not include one panelist who was removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 4%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 2%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 2,596 respondents is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points.

Panel recruitment

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in

2019 and 2020, respectively. Across these three address-based recruitments, a total of 17,161 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 15,134 (88%) agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. Of the 25,076 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,553 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,184
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,243
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	621
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	5,903
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS/web	5,900	4,720	2,330
June 1 to July 19, 2020	ABS/web	1,865	1,636	1,272
	Total	36,879	25,076	13,553

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.⁴ The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was non-institutionalized persons ages 18 and older, living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii.

This study featured a stratified random sample from the ATP. The sample was allocated according to the following strata, in order: tablet households, U.S.-born Hispanics, foreign-born Hispanics, high school education or less, foreign-born Asians, not registered to vote, people ages 18 to 34, uses internet weekly or less, non-Hispanic Black adults, nonvolunteers and all other categories not already falling into any of the above.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management

⁴ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."

team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data which was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Feb. 1 to Feb. 7, 2021. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on Feb. 1, 2021.

On Feb. 1 and Feb. 2, invitations were sent out in two separate launches: Soft Launch and Full Launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Feb. 1, 2021. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Feb. 2, 2021.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists that consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to two SMS reminders.

Invitation and reminder dates

	Soft Launch	Full Launch
Initial invitation	Feb. 1, 2021	Feb. 2, 2021
First reminder	Feb. 4, 2021	Feb 4, 2021
Final reminder	Feb. 6, 2021	Feb. 6, 2021

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center's researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for very high rates of

leaving questions blank, as well as always selecting the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, one ATP respondent was removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey

(and the probability of being invited to participate in the panel in cases where only a subsample of

respondents were invited). The base weights for panelists recruited in different years are scaled to be proportionate to the effective sample size for all active panelists in their cohort. To correct for nonresponse to the initial recruitment surveys and gradual panel attrition, the base weights for all active panelists are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table to create a full-panel weight.

For ATP waves in which only a subsample of panelists are invited to participate, a wave-specific base weight is created by adjusting the full-panel weights for subsampled panelists to account for any differential probabilities of selection for the particular panel wave. For waves in which all active panelists are invited to participate, the wave-specific base weight is identical to the full-panel weight.

In the final weighting step, the wave-specific base weights for panelists who completed the survey are again calibrated to match the population benchmarks specified above. These weights are trimmed (typically at about the 1st and 99th percentiles) to reduce the loss in precision stemming

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age x Gender	2019 American Community Survey
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metro/Non-metro	2019 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	2020 National Public Opinion Reference Survey
Frequency of internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. The 2016 CPS was used for voter registration targets for this wave in order to obtain voter registration numbers from a presidential election year. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population. The 2020 National Public Opinion Reference Survey featured 1,862 online completions and 2,247 mail survey completions.

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from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and test of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Group	Unweighted sample size	Weighted %	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	2,596		2.7 percentage points
Half sample	At least 1,287		3.7 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	1,106	44	3.9 percentage points
Half sample	At least 549		5.6 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	1,410	49	3.7 percentage points
Half sample	At least 688		5.2 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	2,596
Logged onto survey; broke off	2.12	41
Logged onto survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	23
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	282
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality		1
Screened out		N/A
Total panelists in the survey		2,943
Completed interviews	I	2,596
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	346
Non-contact	NC	1
Other	O	0
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		2,943
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		88%

Cumulative response rate	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	12%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	72%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 82	57%
Response rate to Wave 82 survey	88%
Cumulative response rate	4%

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Appendix C: Codebook

Below are the instructions given to researchers who coded the responses to the open-ended question.

We are trying to assess what people care about and how they seek meaning in their lives. In these responses, people will mention many different aspects of life. Mark all that apply. Include both positive and negative mentions (e.g., treat “I don’t have enough money” the same as “I have enough money”; treat “I’m glad I’m healthy” the same as “I’m dealing with health problems”) – we are trying to categorize what people *care about and focus on*.

First, determine if the response actually answered the question. If you encounter a response that cannot be interpreted as actually answering the question in any way (e.g., “I don’t know” or “I don’t want to answer”) then mark it as (1) and move on to the next response. For all other responses – those that make *any* attempt to provide a substantive answer to the question, even if they’re vague or lacking in specifics – you should proceed to assess Categories 2 through 17 normally. Finally, check Categories 18 and 19 and assess whether the response mentioned any difficulties or challenges (18) or anything related to COVID-19 (19) *regardless of how you coded Categories 2 through 17*. You may occasionally encounter responses that do not match to any categories (responses like “living in the moment” that answered the question but don’t mention anything in Categories 2-17) – simply leave these responses blank and move on. These will be captured as code 0, or “general positive.”

Generally speaking, you should think about responses as being composed of “units of information” – words or short phrases or statements that tell you something. Each word or phrase you encounter should belong to only one category (excluding Categories 18 and 19), but responses will contain multiple phrases, so most responses will mention multiple categories. As you’re working through a response, try to break it into discrete statements and take them one at a time. If you are unsure how to categorize a particular statement, focus on its emphasis (i.e., what is the *most important or unique* element of information it’s telling you?)

(o) General positive

Some responses consist entirely of vague or general statements that cannot be clearly marked as pertaining to any of the below categories. For example, “being happy”, “achieving my personal goals”, “live with love”, “be grateful”, etc. If no other category can be marked, you should flag the response as Don’t know/refused.

(1) Don’t know / refused

I don’t know, I don’t understand the question, what do you mean, I don’t want to answer, this question doesn’t make sense

Mark if a response is equivalent to a refusal or “don’t know” – where the respondent simply chose not to offer any opinions or thoughts at all. Only mark if no other codes are applicable (i.e., they did not answer the question.) Do NOT mark if there’s any way to interpret the response as an answer to the question (e.g., “none” or “nothing” or “my life isn’t meaningful” count as legitimate answers, even they do not mention any specifics outside of Difficulties or challenges.)

If (1) does not apply:

(2) Family and children

Family, children, kids, being a parent, grandchildren, being a grandparent, my children’s future/upbringing, my siblings, raising good kids, leaving a legacy, extended family, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, wanting to have kids or a family, not close with family, relationship difficulties with family/kids

Does NOT include references to “children” if it’s absolutely clear that they are not talking about their own (e.g., “I enjoy my job teaching children”). However, if it is ambiguous (e.g., “giving children a better future”) then include it. When in doubt, count it.

(3) Spouse and romantic partners

Spouse, partner, girl/boyfriend, romance, being in love, being married, being in a relationship, marriage, dating, sex, relationship difficulties with spouse/partner, “my relationship” (singular)

Includes “being in love” but does NOT include generic references to “love”.

(4) Friends, community and other relationships

Friends, loved ones, relationships, other people, others, socializing, social engagements, social life, spending time with others, meeting new people, relationship difficulties with friends, community, group, being part of a group/club, belonging to a group, attending group events, membership in a group, (non-work) organizations, online community, not being able to attend group events

Any mention of friends, generic references to relationships, being part of a community or group, “other people”. Coworkers and colleagues should be coded as Occupation and career instead. “Helping others” in a general sense, volunteering with or being a part of a charity or service group, and community involvement that’s focused on service (like “giving back to the community” or “community service”) should be marked as Service and civic engagement instead. Church and religious groups should be coded as Spirituality, faith and religion instead, unless they specifically mention the community aspect of church (in which case, mark both categories). Includes membership in online communities, social media groups, etc. Do not include abstract identity groups (it must be a tangible group of people they engage with personally.)

(5) Service and civic engagement

Making a difference, service to others, volunteering, fighting for a cause, helping other people, contributing to society, making the world a better place, having an impact, activism, being politically engaged or involved, being a productive member of society, helping a charity/service group

Helping others (*above and beyond* personal responsibilities like work and taking care of relationships like family and friends). Must refer to personal activities, contributions or involvement; general political opinions do not count. Being a good citizen or serving your country should be coded as Society, places and institutions instead. Staying politically informed should be coded as Education and learning instead.

(6) Society, places and institutions

Where I live, my town/neighborhood/city/state/country, patriotism, I appreciate my country or government, glad to live in my country, thankful for government services (transit, transportation, education system, healthcare system, the NHS specifically), national economy, unemployment is low, land of opportunity, glad I don't live somewhere else, living somewhere with conveniences, political stability, democracy, tax system, social security, pension system, government benefits, healthcare system, education system, GDP growth, country has handled COVID well, living in a land of freedom, well-funded public services, being a good citizen, serving my country, glad to live in my neighborhood/town/city/country, my government/leaders make me proud

How they relate to where they live at any level beyond their immediate residence; includes “where I live” when no additional context is provided. Includes appreciation of their neighborhood, town, city, state or country, and social amenities and services that they have access to, public or private (public transport, infrastructure, schools, etc.) Includes political frustrations and complaints about government, laws, etc. Includes any mention of their country or nationality (e.g., “I live in Canada”, “as an American...”) Appreciation of their own property or their “living environment” or “place of residence” should be marked as Material well-being, stability and quality of life instead.

Appreciating their country’s natural beauty, “rural living” or “living in the country” should be marked as Nature and the outdoors instead. General mentions of freedoms (e.g., “freedom of speech”) that aren’t specifically linked to their country or government should be marked as Freedom and independence instead. If they mention a political or social cause that they are directly involved in themselves and the emphasis is on service or personal action, mark it as Service and civic engagement instead. Includes “the education system” but if it is not absolutely clear that they are referring to the system itself (e.g., access to good schools, etc.) then it should be marked Education and learning instead. References to “economic level”, “economical”, etc. should be assumed to pertain to personal finances and be marked as Material well-being, stability and quality of life unless it is clear they are talking about the economy in general. Includes all mentions of “health care”; if they specifically mention the cost or affordability of health care, then mark Material well-being, stability and quality of life as well.

(7) Material well-being, stability and quality of life

Standard of living, quality of life, “home,” finances, money, costs, living comfortably, comfort, being comfortable, safety, security, stability, basic needs, feeling safe, feeling secure, expenses, being happy with what we have, being well-off, my living environment, prosperity, wealth, luxury, creature comforts, “roof over my head,” “food on the table,” steady income and employment, having food/housing, owning a house, having nice things, feeling unsafe, financial uncertainty, making ends meet, can(’t) afford things, being unemployed, not having work, lack of income, wanting to own a house, wish I could afford more, enjoying my home and garden, living an ordinary/normal/simple life, living frugally or economically

Any mention – positive or negative – about what they have or don’t have, or material things they need or want. Anything pertaining to finances, housing, basic needs, safety, security, material comfort, etc. Includes references to “home,” “being at home”, “homelife”, “my living environment” or “place of residence” if there’s no additional context to suggest that they are talking about their broader geographic/societal surroundings. Includes safety and security (financial or otherwise), making ends meet, covering basic necessities, being able to live comfortably or afford living the way they want, etc. Includes unemployment or lack of income. “Economic freedom” and work-life balance issues should be marked as Freedom and independence instead. Appreciating where they live outside of what they themselves own (e.g., “glad to live in a safe country”, “public security”) and mentions of “where I live” (without any additional context) should be marked as Society, places and institutions instead. Anything related to health care should be marked as Society, places and institutions, unless they specifically mention costs or affordability (in which case, mark both). Includes ambiguous references to “economic level”, “economical”, etc. unless it is clear that they are talking about the economy in general rather than their own personal finances (i.e., obvious references to “the economy” in general should be marked as Society, places and institutions instead.) Includes references to “living simply” or living an “ordinary”, “normal” or “simple” life (which suggest a sense of stability and living within one’s means). Does NOT include generic references to “well-being,” “peace,” “peaceful life,” or “living peacefully”.

(8) Retirement

Retirement, retiring, saving for retirement, (not) being able to retire

Any mention – positive or negative – about retirement, in the present or future. If they are retired but mention their former career (e.g., “I am a retired teacher”, “I used to be a lawyer”) then you should *also* mark Occupation and career. Mentions of the pension system or social security programs should be marked Society, places and institutions instead.

(9) Freedom and independence

Freedom, having free time, economic freedom, independence, sense of control, freedom of movement, freedom of choice, freedom of speech, freedom of thought, political freedom, religious freedom, freedom of travel, COVID travel restrictions, freedom about how to spend time, work-life balance and freedom from work, working from home, not having enough time to do what I want, no control, feeling restricted, lack of independence/freedom/control, freedoms are being threatened, wish I could spend more time at home

Any mention – positive or negative – related to their ability to do what they want with their lives, above and beyond their material well-being and comfort. Includes poor work-life balance or having to work too much. Feeling constrained by finances should be marked as Material well-being, stability and quality of life instead. When freedoms are linked to their country (e.g., “living in a land of freedom”, “living in a country where I have freedom of speech”) mark as Society, places and institutions instead. Spending free time with the emphasis on doing something with it (e.g., “spending my free time gardening”) should be marked as Hobbies and recreation.

(10) Occupation and career

Work, career, job, professional success, colleagues, coworkers, enjoys their job, being good at their job, work is worthwhile, being successful, earning (not just having) money, difficulties with coworkers, work-related stress

Includes mentions of their former occupation or career. Work-life balance, working from home, having to work too much, and freedom from work should be coded as Freedom and independence instead. Being unemployed, job loss or not having enough work should be marked as Material well-being, stability and quality of life instead. Going to school so they can get a job or advance in their career should *also* be marked as Education and learning.

(11) Education and learning

University, school, independent research, learning, learning new things, staying informed, curiosity, appreciating philosophy, pursuit of knowledge, staying politically informed

Going to school so they can get a job or advance in their career should *also* be marked as Occupation and career. Activities like reading, going to libraries or visiting museums should be marked as Hobbies and recreation instead. Includes references to the education of their family/children. Does NOT include general references to “personal growth”. References that are clearly describing the education *system* (e.g., access to good schools, etc.) should be marked as Society, places and institutions instead.

(12) Nature and the outdoors

Nature, outdoors, the environment, climate, fresh air, mountains, the beach, high biodiversity, green open spaces, countryside, appreciating nature, being with nature, spending time outside, spending time in the country, rural living, protecting the environment, enjoying good weather, access to the outdoors, natural beauty, living near nature, climate change, pollution

Does NOT include outdoor activities like gardening, hiking, camping, fishing, etc. (which should always be marked as Hobbies and recreation) unless they explicitly emphasize the environment (e.g., “spending time *outside*”, “hiking *in the mountains*”). Includes responses that express concern about negative environmental situations, such as climate change, pollution, etc.

(13) Pets

Pets, dogs, cats, taking care of my animals

Intended specifically for the ownership of or relationship with animals. Animal-oriented activities like birdwatching or horseback riding should be marked as Hobbies and recreation instead.

(14) Spirituality, faith and religion

God, religion, faith, spirituality, worship, prayer, feeling connected or “at one” with the universe, church, parish, not being able to attend church

Religious freedom should be marked Freedom and independence instead.

(15) Physical and mental health

Health, “being well”, wellness, still alive, still kicking, staying healthy, eating healthy food, trying to lose weight, mindfulness, meditation, exercise, fitness, working out, illness, sickness, medical problems, health concerns, wish I was healthier, depression, mental health problems, stress, anxiety, worrying about getting sick, fears of dying, glad I’m not sick

Any mention – positive or negative – of their own health, mental or physical health practices, health conditions (good or bad), or concerns about health. Includes references to the health of family or loved ones. Does NOT include references to the health of “other people” in general – i.e., talking about health and health care at a social level – which should be coded as Society, places and institutions instead. Includes general references to “exercise,” “fitness” or “working out” but mentions of specific physical activities like biking, running, hiking, “sports”, etc. should be coded as Hobbies and recreation instead. Access to health care or remarks about the cost/affordability of healthcare should be marked as Material well-being, stability and quality of life instead.

Appreciation of government health care programs should be coded as Society, places and institutions instead. Includes “being well” but not “well-being” or “being well off” in American English; similar phrases in other languages should be included only if the predominant interpretation tends to unambiguously refer to health and wellness. Includes descriptions of mental health conditions like stress, worrying, depression and anxiety – or the lack thereof – *if the focus is on the condition itself* (e.g. “I am worried all the time”, “I never worry about anything”, “living without stress”, “I struggle with depression”). However, if the emphasis is on something specific (e.g., “I’m worried about the bills”) then the response should be marked for whatever is being emphasized.

(16) Hobbies and recreation

Hobbies, relaxing, relaxation, leisure time, having fun, cultural events, TV, movies, “activities”, personal projects, crafts, video games, eating, drinking, cooking, sports, pastimes, reading, listening to music, playing music, internet, spending time online, painting, drawing, hiking, camping, hunting, surfing, skiing, birdwatching, fishing, cycling, biking, swimming, horseback riding, dancing, running, jogging, weight-lifting, spending my free time on things I enjoy, gardening, working on my house/car/garden, housework, going out, visiting museums, opera, going to the movies, restaurants, the arts, enjoying good food

Includes any personal activities they enjoy doing that are not explicitly covered by other categories (i.e., work and school activities, travel, spending time with friends, etc. do *not* belong here) Includes general references to “activities,” “going out,” “having fun” and “relaxing”. Includes “leisure time,” but “free time” (which emphasizes having time itself) should be marked as Freedom and independence instead. Includes “sports” and specific physical activities like biking, running and hiking, but general references to “exercise,” “fitness” or “working out” (which emphasize health rather than specific activities themselves) should be coded as Physical and mental health instead. Mentions of travel, exploration, adventure or doing new things should be marked as Travel and new experiences instead.

(17) Travel and new experiences

Travel, being able to travel, adventure, doing new things, visiting or exploring new places, exploration, trying new things, new experiences

Freedom of travel/movement should be coded as Freedom and independence instead. Learning about new things should be marked as Education and learning instead. Meeting new people should be marked as Friends, community and other personal relationships instead. Does NOT include references to “vacation” or “holiday” unless it implies travel (e.g., “going on vacation”).

(18) Difficulties or challenges

“Nothing”, “Nothing is meaningful”, “I don’t feel satisfied”, health difficulties, illness, depression, life sucks right now, nothing gives me meaning, everything is bad, life is difficult, can’t cover basic needs, not enough money, stress, no job, too much work, not enough free time, worrying about the news, apathy, past trauma, medical conditions, loss of a loved one, complaining, being frustrated, political complaints

Mark if they mention negative circumstances, difficulties, frustrations or challenges; complain about something; mention an aspect of their lives that they do not like; express general dissatisfaction with life; or describe frustration with some aspect of life (e.g., living situation, financial circumstances, relationships, job, etc.) Includes responses that indicate “nothing is satisfying/meaningful”. Includes negative experiences or setbacks in the past or present, or concerns about the future. Includes responses that state that they find nothing meaningful in their lives (e.g., “none”, “nothing”, “not too much”, “my life is not meaningful”). Do not make assumptions if it is ambiguous. It is not uncommon for someone to respond as though they are offering advice, which can sound very similar to someone complaining. If a response lists off meaningful things (e.g., “to find a job, buy a house”, “to have more money”) and it is unclear whether they are describing things they have, versus things they *wish* they had, versus giving general advice – do NOT mark it as negative. Such responses should only be included if you are fairly certain that respondents are describing aspects of their life that they wish were better. Similarly, mentions of social problems should only be marked as negative if it is implied that they view it as a negative thing (e.g., include references to “climate change” and “illegal immigration”, but NOT references to “climate” and “immigration” unless the phrase is unambiguously negative in its particular linguistic/cultural context.) Code this regardless of whether they mention anything in categories 2-17.

(19) Any COVID-19

COVID, vaccines, lockdowns, masks, safety precautions, quarantining, travel restrictions

Any explicit mention of the pandemic/COVID situation, including restrictions, safety precautions, etc. Responses that require you to “read between the lines” DO NOT count. A good rule of thumb is: Ask yourself whether a respondent would have been likely to mention something prior to the pandemic. Mentions of “restrictions” and “masks” probably wouldn’t have come up had we asked this question in prior years, so we include these as obvious references to the pandemic. On the other hand, phrases that could have previously shown up as references to something else, like politics or personal circumstances (e.g. “after such a crazy year”, “I wish we could travel right now”) should NOT be included. Code this regardless of whether they mention anything in categories 2-17.

Appendix D: Political categorization

For this report, we grouped people into two political categories: those who support the governing political party (or parties) and those who do not. These categories were coded based on the party or parties in power at the time the survey was fielded, and on respondents' answers to a question asking them which political party, if any, they identified with in their survey public.⁵

In publics where multiple political parties govern in coalition (as in many European countries), survey respondents who indicated support for any parties in the coalition were grouped together. In Germany, for example, where the center-right CDU/CSU governed with the center-left SPD at the time of the survey, supporters of all three parties were grouped together. In publics where different political parties occupy the executive and legislative branches of government, the party holding the executive branch was considered the governing party.

Survey respondents who did not indicate support for any political party, or who refused to identify with one, were considered to be *not* supporting the government in power.

Below is a table that outlines the governing political parties in each survey public.

⁵ Governing parties were not updated to account for elections that occurred after the survey was fielded and resulted in a new party (or parties) serving in government. Language used to measure party identification varied public by public.

Appendix D: Political categorization

Public	Governing political party(ies)
Australia	Liberal-National Party/Country Liberal Party/Liberal, National
Belgium	Ecologists (Ecolo), Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V), Green (Groen), Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD), Reformist Movement (MR), Socialist Party (PS), Vooruit (Socialist Party Different)
Canada	Liberal Party
France	En Marche
Germany	Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD)
Greece	New Democracy (ND)
Italy	Democratic Party (PD), Five Star Movement (M5S), Forza Italia (FI), Free and Equal (LEU), Lega
Japan	Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Komeito (NKP)
Netherlands	ChristianUnion*, Democrats 66 (D66), People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), The Christian Democratic Appeal
New Zealand	Labour Party, Green Party
Singapore	People's Action Party (PAP)
Spain	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), United Left (IU), We can / Podemos
Sweden	Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), Green Party
Taiwan	Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
UK	Conservative Party
U.S.	Democratic Party

* ChristianUnion (ChristenUnie) left the governing coalition in the Netherlands on April 3, 2021. It is not considered part of the governing coalition after this date.

Note: South Korea was excluded from this analysis because party favorability is not asked. Only parties represented in the federal government are shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Topline questionnaire

**Pew Research Center
Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey
November 18, 2021 Release**

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see [Appendix B](#) and our [international survey methods database](#).
- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- The U.S. survey was conducted on Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel while all other surveys were conducted via telephone. For more on how this may affect comparability, see [Appendix A](#).
- Not all questions included in the Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey are presented in this topline. Omitted questions have either been previously released or will be released in future reports.
- Data presented in this topline are the share of a given public who mention a topic in an open-ended response. Each topic is part of a Pew Research Center generated codebook. For more on how responses were coded or the codes themselves, see [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix C](#), respectively.

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Family and children			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	29	49	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	53	42	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	55	37	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	63	32	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	57	32	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	42	54	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	55	43	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	57	38	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	63	36	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	49	45	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	47	46	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	40	56	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	66	26	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	43	55	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	65	29	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	77	16	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	73	15	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Spouses and romantic partners			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	68	9	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	89	6	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	87	4	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	92	3	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	84	5	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	93	3	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	91	7	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	87	8	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	96	3	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	88	6	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	88	4	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	91	5	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	90	2	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	92	5	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	92	2	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	92	1	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	88	1	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Friends, community and other relationships			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	57	20	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	76	19	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	74	18	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	82	12	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	76	13	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	80	16	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	79	19	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	69	25	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	85	13	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	70	24	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	68	24	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	68	28	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	84	8	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	73	25	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	85	9	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	90	3	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	82	6	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Service and civic engagement			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	70	7	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	91	3	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	89	2	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	93	1	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	88	1	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	96	1	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	96	3	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	92	3	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	96	2	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	91	3	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	90	2	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	90	6	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	89	3	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	93	5	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	89	5	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	92	1	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	85	3	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Society, places and institutions			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	63	14	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	76	18	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	78	13	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	88	7	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	81	7	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	90	6	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	80	18	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	77	18	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	79	20	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	80	14	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	87	5	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	76	19	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	89	4	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	80	18	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	71	23	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	84	8	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	50	38	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Material well-being, stability and quality of life			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	59	18	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	72	22	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	66	25	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	81	14	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	72	17	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	83	13	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	69	29	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	62	33	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	57	42	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	71	22	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	80	12	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	74	22	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	76	16	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	79	19	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	71	22	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	74	19	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	69	19	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Retirement			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	74	3	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	91	4	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	89	3	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	91	4	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	86	2	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	96	1	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	94	4	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	93	2	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	98	1	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	90	3	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	91	1	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	92	4	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	92	0	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	95	3	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	91	2	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	92	1	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	87	1	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Freedom and independence			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	69	9	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	82	13	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	76	15	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	87	8	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	82	7	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	90	7	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	85	13	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	75	20	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	85	13	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	82	12	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	87	5	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	83	12	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	86	6	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	83	15	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	88	5	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	85	8	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	76	12	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Occupation and career			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	60	17	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	68	26	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	69	22	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	70	25	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	67	22	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	72	25	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	55	43	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	72	23	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	58	40	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	57	37	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	73	20	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	66	29	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	77	15	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	69	29	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	69	25	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	86	6	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	79	9	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Education and learning			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	72	5	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	89	5	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	87	4	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	92	2	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	86	3	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	91	5	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	93	5	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	92	2	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	93	6	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	85	8	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	86	6	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	87	8	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	91	1	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	91	7	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	90	4	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	92	1	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	85	3	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Nature and the outdoors			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	74	4	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	85	9	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	84	7	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	87	7	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	85	4	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	92	4	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	93	5	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	88	7	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	94	5	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	82	12	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	82	10	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	84	12	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	91	1	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	84	14	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	92	2	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	91	2	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	85	4	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Pets			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	74	3	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	92	2	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	90	1	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	94	1	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	88	1	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	95	1	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	97	1	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	93	2	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	98	1	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	92	2	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	89	3	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	93	3	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	92	1	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	94	4	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	94	0	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	93	0	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	88	0	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Spirituality, faith and religion			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	62	15	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	91	3	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	90	1	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	93	1	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	87	2	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	95	2	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	97	2	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	92	3	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	97	2	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	93	1	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	90	2	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	91	4	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	92	0	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	93	5	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	92	2	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	92	1	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	87	2	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Physical and mental health			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	67	11	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	83	12	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	71	20	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	78	17	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	67	22	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	76	20	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	78	20	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	64	31	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	51	48	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	71	22	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	77	15	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	82	13	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	77	15	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	86	12	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	85	8	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	76	17	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	83	6	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Hobbies and recreation			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	68	10	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	84	10	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	82	10	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	85	10	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	82	6	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	82	14	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	90	8	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	85	10	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	91	8	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	75	19	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	70	22	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	77	18	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	83	9	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	81	17	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	90	4	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	90	3	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	79	10	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Travel and new experiences			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	74	3	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	92	3	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	89	3	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	92	3	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	87	2	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	94	3	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	95	3	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	93	2	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	96	3	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	92	2	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	89	3	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	91	4	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	91	1	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	94	4	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	93	1	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	92	0	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	88	1	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Difficulties or challenges			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	61	17	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	89	6	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	78	13	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	84	11	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	81	8	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	86	11	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	77	21	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	85	10	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	86	12	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	87	7	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	88	4	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	89	6	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	82	10	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	93	5	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	82	12	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	79	14	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	79	9	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? COVID-19			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	71	6	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	90	4	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	83	8	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	88	7	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	83	5	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	94	3	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	90	8	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	86	8	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	95	3	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	85	8	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	90	2	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	93	2	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	91	1	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	95	3	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	90	4	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	91	1	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	83	6	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying? Something generally positive			
		Not mentioned	Mentioned	DK/Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	75	2	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	89	6	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	83	8	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	88	7	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	72	17	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	95	1	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	94	4	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	91	4	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	93	6	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	86	7	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	88	5	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	93	3	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	83	9	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	94	4	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	86	8	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	81	12	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	85	3	12	100

		Q36. What aspects of your life do you currently find meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying?		
		Provided response	Don't know/ Refused	Total
United States	Spring, 2021	77	23	100
Canada	Spring, 2021	95	5	100
Belgium	Spring, 2021	91	9	100
France	Spring, 2021	95	5	100
Germany	Spring, 2021	89	11	100
Greece	Spring, 2021	96	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2021	98	2	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2021	95	5	100
Spain	Spring, 2021	99	1	100
Sweden	Spring, 2021	94	6	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2021	92	8	100
Australia	Spring, 2021	95	5	100
Japan	Spring, 2021	92	8	100
New Zealand	Spring, 2021	98	2	100
Singapore	Spring, 2021	94	6	100
South Korea	Spring, 2021	93	7	100
Taiwan	Spring, 2021	88	12	100