



## Bhutan's 2015 Gross National Happiness Index

“How are you?” We ask that question of one another often. But how are we doing – as a country, a society? To answer that question, Bhutan uses its Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index. The GNH Index this year is 0.756, improving on the 2010 value of 0.743.

In 2015, a total of 91.2% of Bhutanese were narrowly, extensively, or deeply happy. 43.4% were extensively or deeply happy. The aim is for all Bhutanese to be extensively or deeply happy. Bhutan is closer to achieving that aim in 2015 than it was in 2010.



*His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck.  
Author of Gross National Happiness*

2015 GNH	Score Range:	Percentage of people who are:
<b>Deeply Happy</b>	77%-100%	<b>8.4%</b>
<b>Extensively Happy</b>	66%-76%	<b>35.0%</b>
<b>Narrowly Happy</b>	50%-65%	<b>47.9%</b>
<b>Unhappy</b>	0-49%	<b>8.8%</b>





## **Main Findings At-A-Glance**

GNH is a much richer objective than GDP or economic growth. In GNH, material well-being is important but it is also important to enjoy sufficient well-being in things like community, culture, governance, knowledge and wisdom, health, spirituality and psychological welfare, a balanced use of time, and harmony with the environment.

The 2015 GNH Index on a purpose-built survey of 7153 Bhutanese in every Dzongkhag of Bhutan. From that, analysts create a GNH profile for each person, showing their well-being across in the 9 domains mentioned above. The national GNH Index draws on every person's portrait to give the national measure.

### **The 2015 GNH Index At-A-Glance**

- 91.2% of Bhutanese are narrowly, extensively, or deeply happy.
- 43.4% of Bhutanese are extensively or deeply happy, up from 40.9% in 2010.
- Across groups:
  - Men are happier than women
  - People living in urban areas are happier than rural residents
  - Single and married people are happier than widowed divorced, or separated
  - More educated people are happier
  - Farmers are less happy than other occupational groups.
- Across districts, GNH was highest in Gasa, Bumthang, Thimphu, and Paro, and lowest in Dagana, Mongar, Tashi Yangtse, and Trongsa.

### **How GNH changed 2010-2015**

- GNH increased significantly from 2010-2015 by 1.8%
- The percentage of extensively/deeply happy people increased from 40.9% to 43.4%.
- Increases were broadly equalizing, in that GNH increases among women, elders, those with no formal education, and farmers improved faster than others.
- GNH growth in urban areas outstripped rural improvements.
- Increases in GNH were driven by improved living standards and service delivery, better health, and participation in cultural festivals.
- However in some of the indicators there was a significant reduction in sufficiency. These were particularly noticeable in psychological well-being (anger, frustration, spirituality), community vitality (belonging), and cultural diversity (*Driglam Namzha*).

The GNH Index findings paint an intricate and textured picture of the lives of Bhutanese, tracing them with much greater care and curiosity than GDP or any other existing index. Dasho Karma Ura, Director of the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research, said: "The 2015 GNH Index provides a self-portrait of a society in flux, and offers Bhutanese the opportunity to reflect on the directions society is moving, and make wise and determined adjustments."

## The 4 pillars and 9 domains of GNH

### The Four Pillars of GNH

Bhutan's development progress has four pillars: political, economic, cultural, and environmental.

### The Nine Domains of GNH

The GNH Index views well-being in a holistic way, and looks at each person's profile of GNH, using key indicators of well-being that are grouped under nine domains.



The Nine Domains are:

- i. **Psychological well-being:** Explores how people experience the quality of their lives. It includes spirituality, evaluations of life satisfaction, and affective reactions to life events such as positive and negative emotions.
- ii. **Health:** Includes conditions of the human body and mind including physical and mental states. A healthy quality of life allows us to get through our daily activities without undue fatigue or physical stress.
- iii. **Time use:** Analyses the nature of time spent on activities like work, leisure, care and sleep, and highlights the importance of maintaining a harmonious work life balance.
- iv. **Education:** Includes formal and informal education, and assesses each person's wider knowledge, values, and skills.
- v. **Cultural diversity and resilience:** Shows the diversity and strength of traditions including festivals, norms, and the creative arts.
- vi. **Community vitality:** Studies relationships and interaction within communities, and among family and friends. It also covers practices like volunteering.
- vii. **Good Governance:** Evaluates how people perceive governmental functions and evaluate public service delivery. It explores people's level of participation in elections and government decisions, and their assessment of various rights and freedoms.
- viii. **Ecological diversity and resilience:** Tracks people's perceptions and evaluations of environmental conditions in their neighbourhood, and their eco-friendly behaviours. It also covers hazards like fires or earthquakes.
- ix. **Living standards:** This domain refers to the level of material comfort as measured by income, conditions of financial security, housing and asset ownership.

Each domain is equally weighted. Within domains, indicator weights, are shown in the table below. To measure GNH we create a profile showing in which of the key indicators each person has achieved sufficiency. Adding up the weights of the sufficient indicators gives each person a GNH score showing the share of indicators in which they have achieved sufficiency. If a person has sufficiency in at least two-thirds, they are considered 'happy' in terms of the GNH index.

Domain	Indicators	Indicator weight
<b>Psychological wellbeing</b>	Life satisfaction	1/3
	Positive emotion	1/6
	Negative emotion	1/6
	Spirituality	1/3
<b>Health</b>	Self-reported health status	1/10
	Number of healthy days	3/10
	Disability	3/10
	Mental health	3/10
<b>Time use</b>	Work	1/2
	Sleep	1/2
<b>Education</b>	Literacy	3/10
	Schooling	3/10
	Knowledge	1/5
	Value	1/5
<b>Cultural diversity &amp; resilience</b>	<i>Zorig chusum skills</i> (Artisan skills)	3/10
	Cultural participation	3/10
	Speak native language	1/5
	<i>Driglam Namzha</i> (code of conduct)	1/5
<b>Good Governance</b>	Political participation	2/5
	Services	2/5
	Governance performance	1/10
	Fundamental rights	1/10
<b>Community vitality</b>	Donation (time and money)	3/10
	Safety	3/10
	Community relationship	1/5
<b>Ecological diversity &amp; resilience</b>	Family	1/5
	Wildlife damage	2/5
	Urban issues	2/5
	Responsibility to environment	1/10
<b>Living Standard</b>	Ecological issues	1/10
	Income	1/3
	Assets	1/3
	Housing	1/3

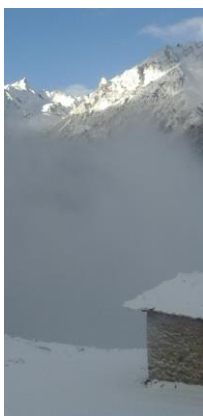


## The 2015 GNH Survey

In 2015, as in 2010, the Centre for Bhutan Studies implemented a GNH survey. The 2015 GNH survey contains 148 questions, covering each of the nine domains. Most interviews took about an hour and a half to complete.

To carry out the survey, 66 university graduates were trained to conduct the interviews. Between January and May 2015, under the supervision of CBS, six survey teams travelled all over the country. They knocked on the homes of 8,871 Bhutanese people living in all 20 districts of Bhutan. Bhutan's 2015 GNH survey covers 7153 people aged 15 to 96 – 81% of the people visited.

This was a strenuous exercise! One team had to walk two days to do interviews in remote Laya.



The interviews were conducted in 10 dialects, in urban and rural areas of all districts or Dzongkhags. They interviewed people with no formal schooling and with postgraduate degrees, students and farmers, grandparents and traders, corporate workers and government employees.

The 2015 GNH survey sought to create a microcosm of the country, from which the experiences of all glisten in their diversity.

## Memorable Moments – from the GNH survey team:

*I met with a 26-year-old woman, and she was fully dedicated to her village. She was very happy and she even knew the core values of her village, and the culture and traditions they hold till now. She's from Laya. After leaving her job in Thimphu and returning to Laya she really came to appreciate her culture and traditions. She told me that she's really happy she's back in her village.*

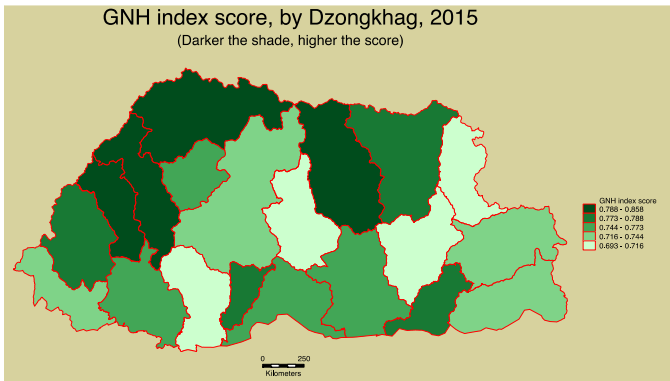
*“Our survey team shared everything under the same roof, like food, cooking, clothing, shelter. We even got to share our inner emotions. We got to know each other very well. And the most memorable moment for me was when my team mates prepared a surprise birthday party for me. At that time I was missing my parents and my home, so it was such an exciting moment. I am very happy I came to know them.”*

*“My sad moment is that we ended up interviewing lots of people who shared loss or sadness, like some divorce cases, some with less farmland, some with financial problems. They tend to share their problems. We end up feeling helpless, because we care, but can't do much. It's quite sad and emotional.”*

*“The one interview I always remember is the time we were in Trashigang. Three of us went and interviewed one very old lady. That lady sang three songs for us. The interview went great!”*

*During one of the last interviews I did, monkeys were attacking my respondent's crops while we were talking. So I had to help her chase away monkeys! I had to do the GNH interview, and again at the same time I also had to chase the monkeys!”*





## GNH within Bhutanese Groups

### ***Dzongkhag***

As the map above shows, there are small variations across Dzongkhags. GNH was highest in Gasa, Bumthang, Thimphu, and Paro but lowest in Dagana, Mongar, Tashi Yangtse, and Trongsa. The biggest increases in GNH were in Samdrup Jongkhar and Bumthang.

### ***Men and Women:***

51% of men are happy, as compared with only 39% of women. But women's GNH increased faster than men's 2010-2015, reducing gender inequality

### ***Rural and Urban:***

55% of people living in urban areas are happy, but only 38% in rural areas. The happiness of urban areas increased more 2010-2015 than it did in rural areas, so rural-urban disparity increased.

### ***Education:***

GNH increases with education. Only 32% of those without formal schooling were happy, but over 60% of those with high school or more. Happiness among those lacking formal schooling increased faster, reducing inequality.

### ***Age:***

Happiness was highest for those under 30 years of age, and lowest for those over 70. But it increased more for older persons, 2010-2015, so an equalizing trend.

### ***Marital Status:***

Happiness was highest for the never married persons (single people and monks), and lowest among widows.

### ***Occupation:***

Farmers had the lowest levels of GNH – lower than the unemployed. Low GNH was also found among stay-at-home spouses. GNH had increased somewhat among farmers and the unemployed since 2010.



## History of GNH in Bhutan

Bhutan belongs to a stream of civilizations where the purpose of the government is to create happiness among its citizens.

The Founder of Bhutan, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel taught that government and politics could not be separated from spirituality, broadly understood.

Spirituality entails compassion, a genuine consideration for the well-being of all sentient beings. Including spirituality rules out policies, laws, or programs that are inconsistent with concern for others.

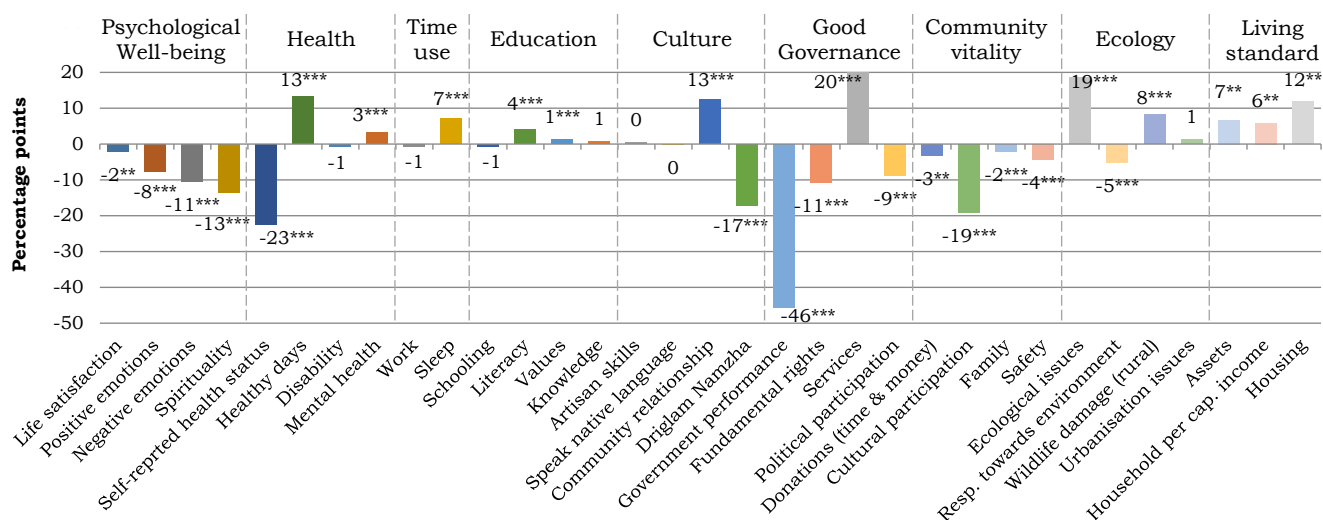
Building on Zhabdrung's legacy, Bhutan's legal code of 1729 states that if the government cannot create happiness and peace for its people, then there is no purpose for government to exist.

The idea of Gross National Happiness took modern shape in the 1970s under His Majesty the 4th King. His dictum that became a catchphrase was: 'GNH is more important than GDP'.

During the Fourth King's reign, GNH was not institutionalized. It depended on people who had intuitively internalized GNH and worked from their values to build it.

In the Fifth King's reign and as a new democracy, GNH emerged as a development philosophy that shapes government policies and programmes. A keystone of that philosophy is the GNH Index, which gives visibility and form to this aim of Bhutan. institutions and civil servants.

## Change in percentage points of people enjoying sufficiency (2010-2015)



### How has GNH Changed?

Note: \*\*\* statistically significant at 1%, \*\* statistically significant at 5%, \* statistically significant at 10%.

#### I. How is our Work-Life Balance?

It is about the same as in 2010. But time use indicators significantly worsened in seven Dzongkhags, and one of them significantly improved in eight.

#### II. Are people more knowledgeable?

It is about the same. Literacy and values increased slightly. Schooling did not change; nor did knowledge of legends and traditions. Ethical values regarding killing, stealing, lying and so on improved a tiny bit.

#### III. Is our culture more vibrant?

It is stable. Of the four indicators in the cultural domain, two were stable, namely artisan skills and speaking a native language. The percentage of people who had participated in at least six days of cultural activities in the past year increased for 14% of the population. But the percentage that said that *Driglam Namzha* was important and getting stronger decreased by 17%. These changes counterbalanced each other.

#### IV. Has governance improved?

No. But recall that Bhutan moved to democracy only in 2008, so in 2010, satisfaction with government performance was euphoric.

By 2015, satisfaction with government performance in employment, equality, education, health, anti-corruption, environment and culture had decreased in all 20 Dzongkhags, in rural and urban areas, and among men and women. However, it was recognized in 2010 that satisfaction could change as people's aspirations of government under a democratic

system evolved, so this indicator carries a light weight. But two other governance indicators also worsened: perception of rights, and people's participation in meetings and intention to vote.

But in the fourth indicator, Bhutanese reported improvements in service delivery: health care, waste disposal method, access to electricity, water supply and water quality. Improvements were visible in 12 Dzongkhags and negative in zero. Still, overall the contribution of governance to GNH declined.

#### V. Are our communities more cohesive?

No. There were decreases in all four indicators, and an overall decrease in the contribution of community to overall wellbeing. The donations of time and money fell by 3%, but the percentage of people having sufficient trust in their neighbours and sense of belonging to their communities plummeted by 11%, making a noticeable reduction in the contribution of community vitality to GNH. Family relationships and perceptions of safety from crime and violence also deteriorated, although the degree of change was much smaller.

#### VI. Is our ecology still vibrant?

There were favourable increases in sufficiency in two indicators: environmental issues and avoiding harm from wildlife, and a decrease in felt responsibility to the environment, with no changes in urbanization.

#### VII. Has the standard of living improved?

Yes. There were significant increases in the sufficiency levels of housing, assets and income. Thus, the contribution of living standards to GNH increased.

## How am I GNH Happy?

This is the exactly question with which we begin to construct the GNH Index! For each of the 7153 respondents to the 2015 GNH Survey, we first construct a profile of their GNH, using the GNH indicators in the nine domains.



For example, consider Pema. Her profile is to the right. She does not enjoy sufficiency in the indicators that have a white colour.

Second, we create a GNH score for each person, which gives the percentage of the domains in which they enjoy sufficiency. The height of the bars show the weight of each indicator. Pema enjoys sufficiency in 77% of the weighted indicators.

Next, we compare her score with the Happiness Gradient.

<b>Deeply Happy</b>	77%-100%
<b>Extensively Happy</b>	66%-76%
<b>Narrowly Happy</b>	50%-65%
<b>Unhappy</b>	0-49%

Pema's score is 77%, so she is deeply happy.

Third for the GNH index, we divide people into two groups:

- 1) People whose GNH score is **66% and higher** (they are extensively or deeply happy). This includes Pema.
- 2) People whose GNH score is **0-65%**. A total of 56.6% of people are in this group.

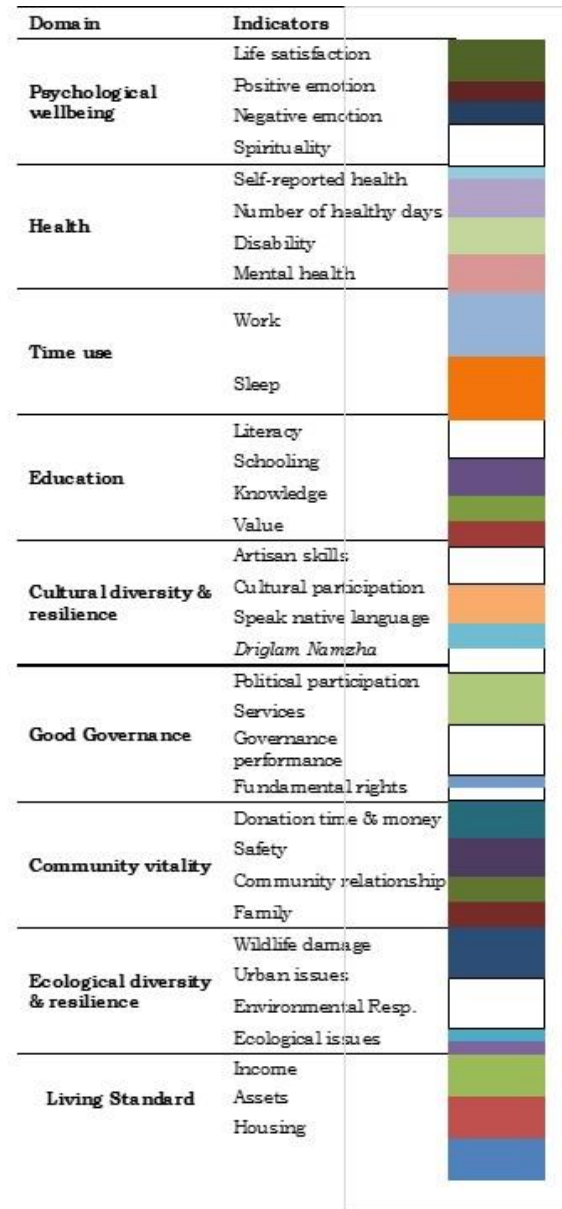
For the people who are happy, we just want to know what percentage it is.

In 2015, **43.4% of Bhutanese are deeply or extensively happy.**

For the people who are happy in 0-65% of domains, we average their GNH scores, to come up with their average GNH or sufficiency score.

Their average sufficiency score is **57%**, and 56.6% of the population of scores 0-65%.

Then the GNH index is:  $43.4\% + (57\% \times 56.6\%) = \mathbf{0.756}$





# GNH: For Youth and By Youth



*His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan*

His Majesty the 4<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan was just a teenager when he took the throne. He changed history by imagining that Bhutan's should pursue the path to Gross National Happiness, not a high GDP.

Bhutan needs such imagination, such courage, and such creativity again. It is most likely to come from you, the youth of Bhutan.

You have the capacity to renew our dreams.

Bhutan as a country is at a crossroads. The 2015 GNH Index findings show us that very clearly. Tourists come and drink in our culture and traditions with delight and admiration. Yet youth are on Facebook, are unemployed; youth travel and think about their own identity.

Bhutan needs our youth to ponder where you want to go, personally, and in our families, as a community member, a work colleague, and a citizen. Bhutan needs your wisdom and your idealism. Even, we need your innocence and ability to dream things others think are impossible. Please feel invited to our common project of building GNH. And please feel invited to share your dreams so we might all be renewed and live them out together.

*Words of an 18 year old respondent to the GNH survey:*



*“For me, GNH is everything like respecting old, keeping the campus clean, talking to students and teachers - is all GNH. Like for example helping each other in the community. An NGO that works here improves GNH because it helps people and surrounding area and villages. Preserving culture is also a part of GNH, like we have a GNH club in school and do culture shows to preserve culture and tradition. We have exhibitions, and, during exhibitions we show things related to culture as well as science and technology – all this we show in club exhibition. In my village, most of what we do is related to GNH because all cooperative work is under GNH, and every time we do it, GNH should be there.”*