



The Enlightenment



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World's Happiest Countries – 2018

Each year the United Nations publishes a report ranking the happiness of 156 countries. The top ten countries are listed below along with the criteria that are used in determining the rankings. Over the years the countries in the top ten basically remain the same, although their place in the ranking will change.

<u>Overall Rank</u>	<u>Country/Region</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>GDP per capita</u>	<u>Social support</u>	<u>Healthy life expectancy</u>	<u>Freedom to make life choices</u>	<u>Generosity</u>	<u>Perceptions of corruption</u>
1	 Finland	7.632	1.305	1.592	0.874	0.681	0.192	0.393
2	 Norway	7.594	1.456	1.582	0.861	0.686	0.286	0.340
3	 Denmark	7.555	1.351	1.590	0.868	0.683	0.284	0.408
4	 Iceland	7.495	1.343	1.644	0.914	0.677	0.353	0.138
5	 Switzerland	7.487	1.420	1.549	0.927	0.660	0.256	0.357
6	 Netherlands	7.441	1.361	1.488	0.878	0.638	0.333	0.295
7	 Canada	7.328	1.330	1.532	0.896	0.653	0.321	0.291
8	 New Zealand	7.324	1.268	1.601	0.876	0.669	0.365	0.389
9	 Sweden	7.314	1.355	1.501	0.913	0.659	0.285	0.383
10	 Australia	7.272	1.340	1.573	0.910	0.647	0.361	0.302

Observing the above list prompts one to ponder: what do they all have in common? Here are a few similarities.

1. They are all functioning democracies.
2. All have social safety nets including free health care. Citizens are willing to pay the necessary taxes.
3. All have firm separation of church and state.
4. Protestantism is or was the dominate religion, although they are all now highly secular.
5. None have nuclear weapons
6. Most have cold winters. None are in the tropics.
7. Populations are relatively low as the following statistics demonstrate.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Population of Largest City</u>
Finland	5.5 Million	Helsinki 1.2 Million*
Norway	5.3 Million	Oslo 1.0 Million*
Denmark	5.8 Million	Copenhagen 1.3 Million*
Iceland	0.35 Million	Reykjavik 0.32 Million*
Switzerland	8.6 Million	Zurich 0.37 Million
Netherlands	17.0 Million	Amsterdam 0.82 Million*
Canada	37.3 Million	Toronto 2.9 million GTA 5.9 Million
New Zealand	4.7 Million	Auckland 1.5 Million
Sweden	10.0 Million	Stockholm 1.0 million*
Australia	25.0 Million	Sydney 5.0 Million

*Capital

Yes, population does seem to be a factor. It would appear that lower-populated countries, as opposed to highly populated countries, provide an environment for happiness to flourish. See the rankings of the 10 most populous countries in the list below and note that of the 10 largest countries, only the U.S. and Brazil rank below 50 on the UN happiness list.

The 10 Most Populated Countries in 2018

Ranking on Happiness List

1. China. 1,384,688,986.	86
2. India. 1,296,834,042.	133
3. United States. 329,256,465.	18
4. Indonesia. 262,787,403.	96
5. Brazil. 208,846,892.	28
6. Pakistan. 207,862,518.	75
7. Nigeria. 195,300,343.	91
8. Bangladesh. 159,453,001.	Not listed
9. Russia. 142,122,776	59
10. Japan. 126,168,156	54

The size of cities also seems to be a factor in happiness ranking. None of the ten most populous cities are in countries ranking below 50 on the happiness scale. Also note that of the ten most populous cities, only Tokyo and Mumbai are in countries considered to be democracies.

The 10 Largest Cities in the World in 2018

Country Ranking on Happiness List

1. Shanghai China - 24.1 million.	86
2. Beijing China - 18.5 million.	86
3. Karachi Pakistan - 18 million.	75
4. Istanbul Turkey - 14.6 million.	74
5. Dhaka - Bangladesh -14.5 million.	Not listed
6. Tokyo Japan - 13.6 million.	54
7. Moscow Russia- 13.1 million.	59
8. Manila Philippines - 12.8 million.	71
9. Tianjin China - 12.7 million.	86
10. Mumbai India - 12.4 million.	133

Democracies

“No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.” So said Winston Churchill. Yes, democracy has proven to be better than all the other systems of government that have been tried. But, with the current rise in populism in numerous countries, democracy is being threatened in various places including the United States, Great Britain, Hungary, Poland and even in Ontario, Canada, with the election of the Doug Ford Government.

It is plainly evident that democratic countries face a huge challenge in the years ahead in insuring that they maintain the essential advantages of democracy that have worked well in the past for their citizens. A warning of the pitfalls lying ahead is the subject of an editorial in the Monday May 20th edition of the *Globe and Mail* and is entitled “Beware those who flirt with populism.” A few excerpts are printed below.

“Democracy is under threat from within its own ranks, as a recent report by the Samara Centre for Democracy demonstrates. Samara’s analysis of Canadian parliamentary transcripts found that federal politicians are more apt than ever to complain about the “elites” – the put-down used by populists to describe anyone not on their side. This coincides with the rise of Canadian politicians who are outright populists, such as premier Doug Ford in Ontario.”

“That’s poor company to keep. Canadian politicians are not going to always live up to the ideals demanded by constitutional democracy, but it is a very different and more disturbing thing when populist rhetoric is invoked to cast doubt on Canada’s institutions, divide people, and, worst of all, weaken this country’s greatest asset: Its flawed but priceless democracy.”

Yes indeed. We in Canada must not ever allow the election of a prevaricating blow-hard like Donald Trump, posing as a populist fighting for the good of working Americans, but who really is a capitalist conniving to benefit his own businesses by lowering taxes and weakening regulations. The recently published *Mueller Report* describes some of Trump’s dubious activities, but the Special Counsel Robert Mueller was limited in the extent of his recommendations because Mueller believed a sitting President could not be indicted. Nevertheless, there is enough in the heavily redacted report to cast a lot of suspicion on the President of the world’s largest economy. Comments on *The Mueller Report* are offered below. (DAH)

The Mueller Report

The Mueller Report is now available to the general public, in redacted form, by at least three different publishers. One of these publications contains an introduction by well known lawyer and professor Alan Dershowitz. Another is by the office of the Special Council, and the one I have contains related materials by Washington Post reporters Rosalind Helderman and Matt Zapotosky. The report itself consists of two volumes, I and II, each with an Introduction and an Executive Summary. At the end of Volume II are four appendixes A, B, C and D.

I have not read the full report, but have read the Introductions, the Executive Summaries and the comments by the Washington Post reporters. I found this was enough information to get the gist of Mueller’s findings. Phrases and sentences in quotation marks are taken directly from the Report.

Volume I confirms that the Russian government interfered in a “sweeping and systematic fashion,” in the 2016 presidential elections. It was also established that “a Russian entity carried out a social media campaign that favoured presidential candidate Donald J. Trump and disparaged presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.” Also, “a Russian intelligence service conducted computer-intrusion operations against entities, employees, and volunteers working on the Clinton Campaign and then released the documents.” Although there were contacts between Russian individuals and certain members of the Trump campaign, “the investigation did not establish that members of the Campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities.” Nevertheless, the report goes on to say, “a statement that the investigation did not establish particular facts, does not mean there was no evidence of those facts.”

Volume II of the *Mueller Report* describes the investigation into the possibility of “obstruction-of-justice,” by President Trump. In the introduction it states – “while the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) concludes that a sitting President may not be prosecuted, it recognizes that a criminal investigation during the president’s term is permissible. The OLC opinion also recognizes that a President does not have immunity after he leaves office. And if individuals other than the President committed an obstruction offence, they may be prosecuted at this time. Given those considerations, the facts known to us, and the strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of the criminal justice system, we conducted a thorough factual investigation in order to preserve the evidence when memories were fresh and documentary materials were available.”

Near the end of the introduction we read – “if we had confidence after a thorough investigation of the facts that the President did not commit obstruction of justice, we would so state. Based on the facts and the applicable legal standards, however, we were unable to reach that judgement. The evidence we obtained about the President’s actions and intent presents difficult issues that prevent us from conclusively determining that no criminal conduct occurred. Accordingly, while this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, *it also does not exonerate him.*”

The Executive Summary to Volume II details attempts of the President to convince James Comey to go easy on Michael Flynn as well as Trump’s attempts to derail the investigation by the Special Counsel. These include telling White House Counsel Donald McGahn to stop the Mueller investigation, even calling him at home. McGahn did not carry out the instruction, stating that “he would resign rather than trigger what he regarded as a Saturday Night Massacre.”

In the Executive Summary there are a number of paragraphs with headings in bold italics that deal with obstruction. These include:

- ***The appointment of the Special Counsel and efforts to remove him***
- ***Efforts to curtail the Special Counsel’s investigation.***
- ***Efforts to prevent public disclosure of evidence.***
- ***Efforts to have Attorney General take control of the investigation.***
- ***Efforts to have McGahn deny that the President had ordered him to have the Special Counsel removed.***

There are other similar paragraph headings in the Report, but those above are a sample of Trump’s involvement in attempting to obstruct justice, a criminal and impeachable offence. And the attempts went on even after the completion and issuing of the redacted Mueller Report.

An early indication that there was skulduggery afoot was when Trump first heard that a Special Counsel had been appointed to look into Russian meddling in the 2016 election, he is reported to have said, "this is the end of my Presidency. I'm fucked." What more do we need to know in order to conclude that something was amiss? Although Trump tried hard to prevent the report from seeing the light of day, he was not successful in preventing Special Counsel Robert Mueller from presenting the finished Report to Attorney General William Barr on March 22, 2019. On March 24, 2019, Barr submitted a four-page summary to Congress. Barr emphasized that the Report stated there was no evidence that Trump, nor anyone involved with his campaign conspired with Russia to influence the 2017 election. Almost as an afterthought, Barr mentioned that while the report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him. It was reported that Robert Mueller sent two letters to Barr informing him that the four-page letter does not accurately represent all the findings stated in the Report.

The Justice Department's redaction of the Report took considerable time and was not presented to Congress until April 18, 2019. Before the Report was released to Congress, Barr took the unprecedented step of going on the air to comment on the report and emphasize that no evidence of collusion by Trump with the Russians was found. This action and others by Barr caused various commentators to suggest that Barr was acting as Trump's attorney rather than as the people's attorney as is expected of Attorneys General. On May 29, 2019, upon his resignation as Special Counsel, Robert Mueller made a short statement about his findings and stated that the Constitution requires a process other than the criminal justice system to formally accuse a sitting president of wrongdoing. He ended by issuing a stern warning that the American public needs to be very concerned about Russian involvement in influencing the outcome of American elections.

Ever since the release of the Report to Congress, the House Judiciary Committee, chaired by Jerry Nadler, has been unsuccessfully attempting to get the fully unredacted version of the Mueller Report issued to Congress. The Committee has also subpoenaed people including William Barr and Donald McGahn to appear and testify, but the White House has told these individuals, and others, to ignore the subpoenas. Consequently, none have appeared before the Committee.

Observing all these shenanigans, House leader Nancy Pelosi accused Trump of engaging in a cover-up. What else could any sane questioning person conclude? There is just so much evidence that a cover-up has occurred and it is hard to believe that it is not continuing to take place. To date, however, Trump has successfully stonewalled any attempt to expose the details of any cover-up.

For many people the Mueller Report has been a disappointment. This is because although the Report stated the President's conduct merited inquiry, it was impossible to convict him for any crimes. But all may not be lost. On June 25th it was announced that House Judicial and Intel Committees have subpoenaed Mueller to appear before these Committees on July 17th. Mueller has reluctantly agreed but says he will only answer questions about what is in his Report. What is unknown, however, is whether he is referring to the redacted or unredacted Report.

If, a few years ago, anyone had suggested that real estate developer and reality TV host Donald J. Trump would someday be elected President of the United States, they would have been laughed out of town. But here he is, President of the world's largest economy. Just who is this man and how did he get to be President? Let's take a brief look. (DAH).

Teflon Trump and King Trump

If you Google “adjectives to describe Donald Trump,” you will come up with a long list, some good and some bad. The good adjectives include:

- Leader, President, strong, businessman, successful, great, good, American, money, and smart.

The bad ones include:

- Idiot, incompetent, liar, unqualified, ignorant, egotistical, stupid, arrogant, bully, narcissist, disgusting, clown, dishonest, racist, bigot, reprobate, misogynist, hypocrite, and even rapist.

It will be noted that the number of bad descriptions is double the number of good ones. Nevertheless, because he was able to convince what he calls his base, that the complementary adjectives describe who he really is, he was elected. Of course, he was helped by being wealthy, owning a private jet, making unrealistic promises (Mexico paying for the wall is an example) as well as by the outdated electoral college system. He knew exactly which swing states to stump just before the election. He was also helped by James Comey questioning Hillary Clinton’s emails near the last minute and by Russian interference.

How did this happen? Was it just luck, or did he cleverly engineer the outcome? Whatever the reason, he continues to flourish despite there being so many criticisms of his actions. Whenever he seems to be boxed in, he simply changes the subject and moves on. Despite the fact that a number of Democrats are certain he has committed impeachable offences, he just keeps being Trump and moves on. This has resulted in the creation of another adjectival description, namely, Teflon Trump.

But there is a more disturbing criticism, coming again from certain Democrats. This serious criticism is that Trump is thwarting democracy and acting like an autocrat or a king – the very thing the Founding Fathers went out of their way to guard against. For example, he is using the ruse of national security to obtain money allocated to aid the families of service personnel to build his promised wall on the Mexican border. He also used this ruse to slap tariffs on Canadian aluminum and steel. This is not Abraham Lincoln’s definition of democracy, “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” It is autocracy.

To be factual, the United States has not been a democracy for some time. In her book *Dark Money* (2016), Jane Mayer documents how billionaires, not American citizens, have controlled Congress through financial donations for well over a decade. It is encouraging that many of the Democratic candidates hoping to run for President in 2020 are elucidating on these realities and promise to restore democracy to the American people. It will not be easy. Challenging big money is daunting to say the least. (DAH).

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