

A country-specific all-outcome approach to the Global Flourishing Study: The origin, aims, and process of the country-specific special issue

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Abstract: The Global Flourishing Study (GFS) is a unique longitudinal panel study investigating the distribution and determinants of human flourishing across 22 diverse countries. Given such a comprehensive dataset, there are many ways of approaching, analysing, and discussing the data. The core GFS team is conducting an extensive series of studies, each focusing on a specific flourishing outcome indicator across all GFS countries. Another valuable and complementary approach is to concentrate on specific *countries* across all outcomes, which is precisely the nature of this special issue, which features separate papers for each GFS country. The papers are all led by scholars in or from the different countries, in partnership with researchers on the core GFS team. Given the unique nature of this collaborative endeavour, this introductory paper sets out the process through which this special issue came into being. Besides highlighting the value of this kind of research partnership, this paper thus also offers a foundation and guide for similar initiatives in the future.

Keywords: cross-cultural; wellbeing; flourishing; Global Flourishing Study

1. Introduction

The Global Flourishing Study (GFS) is a unique longitudinal panel study investigating the predictors of human flourishing across a comprehensive selection of 22 geographically and culturally diverse countries. It is the longitudinal aspect that makes the GFS particularly special. For instance, while the Gallup World Poll has excelled in collecting annual data across myriad aspects of life for two decades in up to 160 countries, its cross-sectional design limits understanding of causal dynamics. Hence the value of the GFS, with an anticipated five years of annual data collection, centred on an expansive questionnaire featuring 109 items covering multiple domains of flourishing, involving a one-off intake survey of 43 items and an annual survey of 71, with five items shared by both (Lomas, Bradshaw, Case, Cowden, et al., 2025).

The GFS is based on a framework developed by VanderWeele (2017), co-PI of the GFS, who has defined flourishing as “the relative attainment of a state in which all aspects of a person’s life are good, including the contexts in which that person lives” (VanderWeele, 2017; Lomas & VanderWeele, 2022; VanderWeele & Lomas, 2023). This is differentiated from the narrower notion of wellbeing, which has the same definition except after the comma is “as they pertain to that individual.” Per these usages, a person may experience wellbeing even amidst challenging

circumstances. Flourishing, however, implies etymologically that the environment facilitates one's wellbeing (just as plants need healthy soil to grow). It means moreover that one's context is *itself* doing well, including one's community and wider society (VanderWeele, 2019), and, more broadly, the natural world on which human flourishing and indeed life itself is intrinsically dependent (Lomas, Pawelski, et al., 2025).

Within this broad vision of flourishing, VanderWeele's framework itself focuses on individual aspects of flourishing (which effectively constitute wellbeing), identifying five key domains: happiness and life satisfaction; mental and physical health; meaning and purpose; character and virtue; and close social relationships. To these, a sixth domain, financial and material stability, is added as an important means for "secure flourishing" over time. While not exhaustive of flourishing, VanderWeele posits that all six are "arguably at least a part of what we mean by flourishing." Thus, the GFS questionnaire includes questions covering all six domains, together with other relevant demographic, social, economic, political, religious, personality, childhood, community, health, and wellbeing variables.

The first wave of data collection was mainly in 2023 (with some countries starting in 2022, and with mainland China in early 2024), involving 207,919 participants in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China (including both Hong Kong [S.A.R of China] in 2023 and the mainland in 2024), Egypt, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkey, UK, and US (see Padgett et al., 2025). The second wave of data collection occurred in 2024, and involved 128,868 participants (a retention rate of 62 percent). (Regarding mainland China, although data were not in the first data release in March 2024 due to fieldwork delays, a first wave of data collection was carried out in February 2024, with a second wave in November-December 2024, with all resulting mainland China wave 1 and 2 data part of the second dataset released in early April 2025.) At the time of writing (April 2025), the third wave of data collection is now underway across these same 22 countries.

Given such a comprehensive dataset, there are many different ways of approaching the data. So far, the main approach of the core GFS team has been to focus on specific flourishing outcomes. This core team involves around 50 scholars connected to the programs led by the two co-PIs of the GFS, VanderWeele and Johnson, at their respective institutions (the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard and the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University). Since early-2024 this team has been working on an extensive series of studies involving the wave 1 data, each focused on a specific flourishing indicator across all countries. For nearly all outcomes, two related papers have been written, one analysing childhood predictors (based on retrospective assessments of 13 aspects of childhood, such as details about family relationships), and one analysing associations with nine demographic factors (e.g., employment and marital status). The present lead author, for example, has led papers focusing on inner peace (Lomas, Padgett, Ritchie-Dunham, Lee, et al., 2025a, 2025b) and balance in life (Lomas, Padgett, Ritchie-Dunham, Pawelski, et al., 2025a, 2025b), with other researchers likewise writing demographic and childhood predictor papers on myriad other outcomes. Furthermore, a flagship paper has summarized the results and reports also on flourishing overall (VanderWeele et al., 2025).

However, another important way of exploring the data is to focus on specific countries. Whereas the strategy above involved examining participants across all 22 countries in relation to a single outcome variable, one can also assess participants in just one country across all outcome variables. This is precisely the approach taken in this special issue, which features a paper for each country, led by scholars from and/or in that country, across the whole gamut of flourishing indicators in the GFS. In this introductory paper, we set out the rationale and process of putting together the special issue, broken into three main sections. We begin by outlining why this kind

of country-specific approach is valuable and necessary. Next, we elucidate how the seeds of the special issue were planted in the formation of country-specific “satellite” research groups in 2022. Finally, we outline in detail how the process of developing this special issue unfolded from early 2024 onwards.

2. Background to the special issue

The place to begin articulating the motivations for this special issue, and indeed the GFS as a whole, is the critique that scholarship on flourishing, and moreover academia in general, has historically been largely Western-centric. While long a concern in some quarters (Pickren, 2009), the issue was influentially brought to attention by Henrich et al. (2010), who argued in their *Nature* article that most research in top social science journals has been conducted by and on people in societies that are relatively “WEIRD” (i.e., Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, Democratic). Although one cannot simplistically classify places in a binary way as WEIRD versus non-WEIRD – since each element of the acronym is a spectrum upon which countries may be variously situated (Ghai, 2021) – most of the world is not *as* WEIRD as the US, from where the majority of research in prestigious journals has tended to be published.

This cultural bias has numerous implications, particularly given that psychology and related fields tend to aim for universality, presenting its theories and findings as universally applicable. If research is mostly from comparatively WEIRD societies, one might question the extent to which empirical research findings are generalizable to people living elsewhere. Some theorists argue they *are* generalizable, on the basis that humans are relatively similar across cultures and share a common human nature. However, a wealth of research shows people *do* meaningfully differ across myriad aspects of life related to their cultural and geographical location. As a result, one cannot simplistically draw conclusions based on people mainly from relatively WEIRD contexts.

There are some exceptions to this Western-centric trend. As noted above, for example, the Gallup World Poll has collected data internationally on some indicators of flourishing for over two decades. These include items such as Cantril’s (1965) life evaluation “ladder,” which is often used to assess the evaluative/cognitive dimension of subjective wellbeing (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999). This item in the World Poll alone has generated an extensive literature (e.g., a search on Google Scholar in March 2025 for the combined phrases “Gallup World Poll” and “subjective well-being” returned 5,700 results). Most influentially, the World Poll data is the basis for the annual World Happiness Report, founded and edited by eminent economists, which since 2012 has ranked nations on this item, achieving considerable impact and influence (Helliwell et al., 2025).

Moreover, with academia ever-more cognizant of the need to address this charge of Western-centricity, there are increasing efforts to remedy this shortcoming (Thalmayer et al., 2021). For example, Hendriks et al. (2019) conducted a bibliometric analysis of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) on positive psychology interventions. Although 78.2 percent of the 188 studies identified were conducted in Western countries, there was “a strong and steady increase in publications from non-Western countries since 2012,” indicating an encouraging “trend towards globalization” of wellbeing research (p. 489). As a result, Lomas (2022) suggested that we are seeing an emerging new wave of global scholarship, of which the GFS is a prominent exemplar.

There are two fundamental issues that such global scholarship aims to redress, namely the Western-centrism of (a) participants and contexts, and (b) ideas and scholars. First, it is important to study people and places across the world, not merely in relatively WEIRD places, as noted above. This is a guiding ethos of the GFS, covering as it does 22 diverse countries, the majority of which might be regarded as non-Western. However, even if research is conducted globally, the

ideas through which it is operationalized and assessed might still be Western-centric, shaped by the values and traditions of Western countries. As such, it is also increasingly acknowledged that scholarship must also be more globally inclusive in terms of how topics and ideas are conceptualized and interpreted.

With flourishing, an example of this inclusivity is the Global Wellbeing Initiative, a recent collaboration between Gallup and a Japanese foundation called Wellbeing for Planet Earth (Lomas, Ishikawa, et al., 2022). This has involved developing a module of items for the Gallup World Poll that reflects ideas and priorities around wellbeing associated with Eastern cultures, and which has focused in particular on balance and harmony (Lomas, Lai, et al., 2022), together with the related phenomenon of low-arousal positive states, such as calmness (Lomas et al., 2023). To an extent, the GFS has also embraced this second point of greater inclusivity with respect to ideas, including adapting items on balance, harmony, and inner peace from the Global Wellbeing Initiative.

For the most part, however, the prerogative of the GFS has been with (a), namely being more globally inclusive with respect to participants and contexts, rather than ideas per se. As such, it relies on a framework of flourishing developed in a Western context. A critic might thus reasonably suggest it still reflects Western values and perspectives. Yet, even if the conception of flourishing underpinning the questionnaire is not necessarily as globally inclusive as an idealist might wish for, the GFS is at least on a par with other comparable endeavours, such as the Gallup World Poll, in trying to be conceptually open and inclusive. Moreover, the GFS did make notable efforts to include some of what had already emerged with regard to aspects of wellbeing that had been neglected within Western scholarship, such as adapting items from the Global Wellbeing Initiative (Lomas, Lai et al., 2022). With any large-scale global study, resource constraints inevitably mean that important trade-offs have to be made between assessing concepts that are more universal and concepts that are more culturally specific. In developing the GFS survey, steps were taken to try and ensure a reasonable balance between these trade-offs (see Lomas, Bradshaw, Case, Cowden, et al., 2025).

Additionally, throughout the various phases of its development and analysis, the GFS has sought to involve scholars from across the world, and especially in the 22 countries in the study itself, as detailed in a paper on the questionnaire construction process (Lomas, Bradshaw, Case, Cowden, et al., 2025). This included, for example, extensive involvement from translators and other cultural experts as the questionnaire was developed for use across the different countries. Moreover, this process itself informed the construction of the questionnaire. It was not simply that an English-language questionnaire was produced which was then rendered as accurately as possible in other languages. Rather, considerations of translation and cultural sensitivity informed the final version of the questionnaire itself in all languages, including English.

This process of inclusivity has also extended into the analysis of the data. For a start, a sizeable minority of the core GFS team are themselves from various GFS countries outside of the US (even if these scholars are now affiliated with institutions in the US), including Argentina, China, India, Japan, Nigeria, Poland, South Africa, Spain, and the UK. But beyond the core team, a key strategy has been to cultivate a wider international community of scholars in and/or from all 22 countries to help work on the GFS studies. The point of this community is not “just” the creation of an international network of researchers (though that itself is a valuable and worthwhile goal), but to actually collaborate with these in exploring and maximizing the potential of the GFS data. This collaboration has involved these scholars being invited to lead a paper focused on their specific country (assisted by a group from the core GFS team, i.e., the authors in this introductory article), bringing all their unique country-specific knowledge and insights to bear on the paper.

Besides providing in-depth insights into the countries in the GFS, such country-specific perspectives are vital in helping better understand the emerging GFS analyses more generally. As noted above, the projects which the core GFS team has focused on up to this point deal with a specific flourishing indicator across all 22 countries. Aggregating findings across international populations can be difficult, given issues like the difficulty of achieving equivalent translations of items in different languages (Cowden et al., 2025). The primary goal of the GFS therefore is not cross-cultural comparison per se but separate within-country analyses of 22 closely related cohort studies. Nevertheless, the GFS team have developed a coordinated analytic plan that is constant across all papers, allowing for identification of trends across the GFS as a whole (and not those potentially attributable to differences in analytic decisions). While there is much to gain from identifying overarching trends, a key theme across all the analyses is that when considering the countries individually, the general trends are not universal or inevitable but contingent on local socio-cultural factors.

Take balance in life, for example, where the demographic analysis showed that the factor associated with the greatest variation in balance was employment status, with the percentage of people with balance ranging from 57 for those unemployed and looking for a job, through 67 for students and homemakers, 71 for the self-employed and those employed for an employer, culminating in 76 for retirees (Lomas, Padgett, Ritchie-Dunham, Pawelski, et al., 2025b). Yet when considering countries individually one finds numerous exceptions. Retirees in India, Israel, and Kenya for example fare worse than people who are employed, and in Nigeria and the Philippines do even worse than those unemployed. Thus, retirement is not universally linked to more favourable balance, and is most likely affected by factors like the retirement and health care systems in different countries. Other variation concerns the range of values: some countries had only a narrow difference between the unemployed, employed, and retirees (e.g., just a 4 percent difference in Egypt and the Philippines), whereas others by contrast have a much larger range (e.g., to 44 percent difference in Sweden).

While the papers by the core GFS team on the various flourishing indicators have sought to highlight this national variation, it is beyond their scope to delve in detail into *why* these country-specific nuances exist. As such, there is great value in having a series of papers devoted to the countries themselves, both in terms of elucidating the nature of flourishing in each country, as well as helping explain country-specific differences observed across the other indicator-specific papers arising from the GFS. This is the contribution of this special issue. With that in mind, the next section elucidates the origins of this special issue, namely in the creation of “satellite” research groups in each country.

3. Satellite research groups

The seeds for the special issue were planted in early 2022, when VanderWeele and Johnson, co-PIs of the GFS, invited two of the core GFS team members (Lomas and Case) to establish a cross-cultural working group (CCWG). The idea for the CCWG was a forum in which scholars involved with the GFS could discuss opportunities and issues relating to the cross-cultural dimension of the GFS. These ranged from considerations around factors such as translation, as raised above, to the possibility of conducting targeted analyses and deepening understanding of such topics. In May 2022, an email was sent to the 50 or so scholars on the GFS core team inviting them to join the CCWG if interested, and eight did so. The CCWG then began meeting monthly from October 2022 onwards. The meetings usually had a fairly open agenda, and mostly centred on generating and discussing ideas for further exploring the cross-cultural dynamics of the GFS and the data that would soon be generated.

At the first October 2022 meeting, the team identified and discussed the value of liaising and collaborating with scholars in/from the various GFS countries. While the CCWG members are all highly interested in cross-cultural dynamics and have devoted considerable attention to this topic in their research, we are also aware of our own biases and limitations, and particularly that (with some exceptions) we do not have extensive expertise in the GFS countries themselves. It became clear that to *truly* understand the data and patterns of flourishing in the various countries would require scholars with deep understanding of and insight into these places, which especially means academics who are from and/or work in them (and ideally both).

In that respect, soon after the meeting, Lomas had the idea of establishing a “satellite” working group in each country. Rather than aiming simply to gradually develop a vague and diffuse network of scholars in different countries, the satellite idea was for a more formal and targeted process, in which we would seek to explicitly identify relevant researchers in all 22 countries and invite them to form such a group. The idea was embraced by the GFS leadership, and in December 2022 a spreadsheet was created for the purpose of listing potential scholars. The CCWG started populating the spreadsheet with suitable candidates, which were usually people we had previously worked with in some capacity or at least knew personally in some way. The CCWG also reached out to the wider core GFS team, explaining the idea of satellite groups, and inviting people to also add suggestions to the spreadsheet. By Spring 2023, the spreadsheet was provisionally “complete,” in that it had at least two people to approach/invite for each country.

Before reaching out to invite those who had been earmarked for the satellite groups, the CCWG needed to decide what the groups would actually be invited to do, and to hone the invite accordingly. Over the summer of 2023, these matters were debated, and by October a relatively detailed letter, which introduced the GFS in general and the satellite group idea specifically, had been finalized. The message was crafted carefully, above all to avoid any sense that we were looking to burden the invitees or draw unfairly or exploitatively on their expertise. From the very start the spirit was always one of dialogue, collaboration, and partnership, with the hope that invitees would get as much out of being involved with the GFS as we would from their involvement.

In that respect, although the special issue hadn’t been conceived at that point, the invite suggested that the groups might like to consider working on a paper focusing on their country. If they were indeed interested in such an idea, we would provide them with the relevant data. In this way, we hoped invitees would see it as an opportunity they would be excited to pursue, rather than an onerous obligation. Even so, the invite was designed to put as much agency as possible in the hands of the satellites: while we hoped for a potential collaboration, we did not want to impose any expectation upon them, and emphasized that researchers could do as much or as little in relation to the GFS as they wanted. We began to send formal invitations to the scholars to join the satellite groups from November 2023 onwards. The response was generally very positive, with only one person declining (and even then only due to lack of time), and by Spring 2024 satellite teams were in place for all countries.

Around this same time, the CCWG also had the idea of doing a special issue with papers from all countries. Before this point, the idea of country-specific papers was something we had merely suggested to the satellite teams as something they might like to do (with our support/assistance). However, we had become increasingly convinced of (and excited about) the value of such endeavours, so decided to take a more focused and active approach, with a specific plan of how to encourage and facilitate such studies. Moreover, with the lead author being an editor of the *International Journal of Wellbeing*, we realized we had an ideal forum to showcase

country-specific papers together as a special issue. Thereafter, from Spring 2024 onwards, the process of creating the special issue unfolded, as outlined in the final section.

4. Creating the special issue

The essence of the special issue is a unique collaboration between all the satellite teams and the CCWG, with a relatively simple sharing of duties. Basically, the idea was that the CCWG would take care of the Methods and Results tables, leveraging their access to and familiarity with the data. The GFS data are publicly available on the Open Science Framework (with wave 1 data available from February 2024 - March 2026 via preregistration and publicly accessible from then onwards, and with subsequent waves to similarly be made available; see www.cos.io/gfs-access-data for more information about data access). Nevertheless, we thought it would save the satellite teams considerable effort if we took a coordinated approach and provided results tables for them which they could selectively use and comment upon as they saw fit. The contribution of the teams would then mainly be in writing the Introduction, Results, and Discussion sections, bringing all their expertise and insights about their country to bear on interpreting and explaining the data.

Our “pitch” to the satellites was that the CCWG (specifically, Padgett) would provide a basic descriptive analysis, reporting on the 68 main flourishing indicators in the GFS (see the appendix below), as well as differentiating all these indicators by nine demographic categories (age, gender, marital status, employment, education, religious service attendance, immigration status, religious affiliation, and race/ethnicity when available). Each team would receive 12 tables: (1) nationally representative descriptive statistics for their specific country; (2) estimated means and proportions across outcome variables for the GFS as a whole (i.e., as a reference point to contextualize the data for their specific country); (3) estimated means and proportions across outcome variables for their country; and (4-12) estimated means and proportions across outcome variables for their country differentiated by the demographic categories listed above. Additionally, we would write a common Methods section for all teams to use and adapt based on the extensively peer-reviewed methods for the coordinated GFS core team papers, which underwent a joint evaluation by editors from 20 Nature-Springer-BMC journals and formal peer review from three independent reviewers. The methods for the demographic analyses conducted are published (Padgett et al., 2025), and the reviews and code are openly available in an OSF repository containing the statistical analysis code (Padgett et al., 2024)

In July 2024, we reached out to all the satellite teams to invite them to participate. The response to this suggestion was unanimously positive, and so the CCWG team set about creating the various documents needed for the teams to start working on their papers. We also created a common preregistration (<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/TRCF3>) for the collection so that the teams did not need to create separate preregistrations and could just cite the common one. The documents were ready by November 2024, and so then each team was sent an email including: (1) the 12 tables described above; (2) a letter outlining the process in general (i.e., the nature of the paper and the plan for the special issue); (3) a variable coding document (which the teams wouldn't actually need but might find useful); and (4) a prior paper from the *International Journal of Wellbeing* to use as a formatting template.

In terms of the letter, it contained various suggestions/advice regarding the data and how to approach it. For a start, given the data provided to the teams was very extensive, comprising estimated means/proportions for 68 indicators of flourishing in the population and also differentiated by nine demographic categories, we wanted to give the teams flexibility in deciding which results to prioritize and what “story” to tell about their country. We therefore

suggested that while all the tables provided should be addressed in some way (even if just within the appendices), the paper itself (i.e., Results and Discussion) need not focus on all results. Instead, we encouraged the teams to “focus on whichever outcomes seem particularly salient or interesting.” We additionally provided guidance for interpreting the tables, with Padgett noting for example that the demographic tables provide the means/proportions within group for each demographic variable, with the p-value indicating whether there are any significant differences in the mean/proportion across categories, but that the p-value should be interpreted similarly to the overall significance test from an ANOVA and should not be relied upon as the sole indicator of differences between demographic groups on each outcome.

Additionally, throughout the writing process, Padgett and colleagues provided consultation where desired for additional insight into how to interpret the results. The back-and-forth was invaluable in helping identify potential irregularities in the results, such as oddities with respect to how personality (Big 5) scores were calculated, or in finding new ways of “slicing” the data within country that were relevant (e.g., the importance of disaggregating the Judean religious population in Israel).

We asked the teams to ideally have a finished draft ready by the end of January 2025 (although this was not a hard and fast deadline), and at that point we began to receive some drafts. Before that point though, we contacted the teams a couple more times with updates to the analysis as well as other documents we thought might be useful. For example, in early November a coding error was identified for the depression and anxiety variables, and so Padgett generated updated tables which were sent out to the teams. At the same time, we had now written a common Methods section, and this was also sent out for the teams to use/adapt. A couple of other coding errors were subsequently also picked up and rectified, again with updated tables sent out to all teams.

Another update came in January 2025, when the idea occurred to the CCWG team that it would be helpful to provide teams with an excel file showing country means/proportions and rankings across all outcomes. Previously, we had advised teams to contextualize the performance of their country by comparing it to the GFS average. However, we realized that providing means/proportions and rankings for all countries would allow a more informed assessment. However, we also realized we needed to be careful in talking about country comparisons, and if teams were using phrases like “above-average” to qualify the language appropriately, given that these are not global averages, but only for the 22 GFS countries, and even then, these are meta-analytic means/proportions (rather than e.g., raw averages across all individual or all countries). As such, we encouraged authors to refer to “GFS means” rather than “averages,” and use “comparatively high/low” or “relatively higher/lower” rather than “above/below average.”

Along with this update, the CCWG also compiled and sent out a document featuring interesting country-specific findings, featuring instances in which each country “stood out” in some way, either because it did especially well or poorly on a given outcome, or because it went against some more general trend in some way (e.g., in terms of childhood or demographic factors associated with the outcome across the GFS as a whole). This document was generated with input from the core GFS team, who by that point had finished the myriad item-specific papers they had been working on. The team was invited to provide any instances of interesting country-specific findings that were particularly striking from their analysis. The document then simply listed all these notable findings, ordered by country. Regarding the childhood factors associated with inner peace, for example, Argentina was an exception with respect to parental marital status (Lomas, Padgett, Ritchie-Dunham, Lee, et al., 2025a): in the GFS overall,

compared to having parents who were married, the effect of parents being single or never married was negative, yet in Argentina it was positive. The document was thus sent to the teams, with the suggestion that although it doesn't feature all items, it “does include some notable findings that you may find it worth mentioning in your specific paper.”

Then, as noted above, by the end of January we started to receive drafts from a few teams. At that point, we initiated a three-phase review process, in which different sets of co-authors from among the GFS core team would offer their input. First, Lomas and Case offered a relatively high-level review, with a particular focus on the general structure and flow of the paper. For example, several papers had quite a long initial section on flourishing, but did not go into great detail about their specific country. As such, Lomas encouraged teams to reverse this prioritization, especially given that this present introductory paper would introduce flourishing and the GFS in a little more depth. It was thus suggested that the Introduction in each paper might just need to include two paragraphs on flourishing (just for people who might be reading the paper as a stand-alone article): one presenting flourishing and mentioning VanderWeele's framework specifically, and one on the GFS. The particular value of each paper is then what it can say about that country specifically, and so we encouraged teams to focus almost all of the introduction on their country specifically, in two main parts. The first part could offer a general introduction to the country (e.g., its history, geography, politics, population, etc.), and then the second part could focus on research that has concentrated on (or just included) flourishing in that country specifically.

We sent the review back to the teams, inviting a second draft, updated in response to the comments/suggestions from Lomas and Case. Once we received a second draft, this was reviewed by Ying and Cowden, who focused more on the specific details and content presented in the paper, including data analyses/interpretation and language. This feedback included, for example, the need to be careful in presenting data selectively (as we had in fact encouraged the teams to do). Thus, one comment (offered to several teams) was the need to be cautious around emphasizing just some of the demographic categories and not others (e.g., two age groups vs. addressing all of them in some way), since some of the picture is left incomplete.

After sending this feedback to the teams, they were invited to submit a third draft which would ideally be close to being suitable for submission. When this third draft was received, at this point the paper would be sent to the co-PIs of the GFS, VanderWeele and Johnson, for their review, with the aim of identifying any final issues that may need addressing and then otherwise giving the green light for the paper to be considered ready for submission. Having received this “sign-off,” we would then send the paper for peer review. We asked all satellite teams to provide details of four or five scholars in their particular country who had expertise to provide a thorough review. After submission, these reviewers would be contacted to provide a review, with the aim of at least two reviews per paper. Having then received the reviews, the authors would be invited to make appropriate revisions before being suitable for publication.

Moreover, with the special issue being a “live” edition, rather than wait for all papers to be finalized, we are able to release them as and when they are suitable for publication. Indeed, as implied by us shifting here from the past tense into conditional and future tenses, at the time of writing this introductory article in April 2025, none of the papers are actually finalized at this point. The plan therefore is for papers to be added to the special issue page of the *International Journal of Wellbeing* over coming year as the special issue unfolds in all its wonderful potential.

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Ethical approval

Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Review Boards at Baylor University (IRB Reference #: 1841317) and Gallup Inc. (IRB Reference #: 2021-11-02). Gallup is a multi-national corporation and its IRB covers all countries included in the GFS. All participants provided informed consent to Gallup and IRB approval for all data collection activities was obtained by Gallup (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10654-024-01167-9>). IRB approval for data analysis was granted by Baylor University. All personally identifiable information

(PII) was removed from the data used in this study by Gallup, and was not accessible to the authors. This research conformed to the principles of the Helsinki Declaration. No further IRB approval was needed for our secondary analyses.

Data availability statement

The GFS data are publicly available on the Open Science Framework (with wave 1 data available from February 2024 - March 2026 via preregistration and publicly accessible from then onwards, and with subsequent waves to similarly be made available; see www.cos.io/gfs-access-data for more information about data access).

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Appendix

Below are 68 flourishing related outcomes included in the analysis. Note: there are actually 67 distinct outcomes, but marital status was analysed as a dichotomous variable in two separate ways (ever married vs. not; and currently divorced vs. not), leading to 68 total outcomes. Of these, most have one or more associated preregistration from one of the core GFS team, as indicated by the hyperlink below (see <https://osf.io/registries/gfs/> for the total list of preregistrations). These outcomes have been used as part of a global analyses across all 22 GFS countries. Moreover, many of these have now been accepted as peer reviewed papers, but at the time of writing have not yet been published and or have citation details. The outcomes are arranged into four main categories (with the first category subdivided into seven subcategories).

1. Multidimensional wellbeing

1.1. Psychological wellbeing

1.1.1. Happiness

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/46vr3>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/shnp6>

1.1.2. Life satisfaction

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/b8z59>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/8nvw6>

1.1.3. Life evaluation today

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/b8z59>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/8nvw6>

1.1.4. Life evaluation in five years

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/b8z59>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/8nvw6>

1.1.5. Optimism

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/wdsx2>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/fb254>

1.1.6. Freedom

1.1.7. Inner Peace

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/yf6s3>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/ztm7r>

1.1.8. Balance in life

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/zt84x>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/5uzke>

1.1.9. Mastery

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/wtxsk>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/mxk9e>

1.1.10. Meaning

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/u3pfz>

- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/jc2mr>
- 1.1.11. Purpose
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/u3pfz>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/jc2mr>
- 1.1.12. Self-rated mental health
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/6wb2u>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/g5sz7>
- 1.2. *Social wellbeing*
 - 1.2.1. Subjective social connectedness
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/wvzns>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/wke9f>
 - 1.2.2. Social support
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/93rqp>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/7xadn>
 - 1.2.3. Intimate friendship
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/93rqp>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/7xadn>
 - 1.2.4. Government approval
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/nrc52>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/n8by4>
 - 1.2.5. Political voice
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/kwa9n>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/n9cfm>
 - 1.2.6. Belonging
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/x6qgf>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/9mj7y>
 - 1.2.7. City satisfaction
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/7v64f>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/r5ju6>
 - 1.2.8. Trust
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/546q9>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/9yd7x>
 - 1.2.9. Community participation
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/kx369>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/vm7w9>
- 1.3. *Psychological distress*
 - 1.3.1. Traumatic distress
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/s7naf>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/94s2n>

1.3.2. Depression

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/rjyqm>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/3qayn>

1.3.3. Anxiety

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/rjyqm>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/3qayn>

1.3.4. Suffering

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/8rxpg>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/z3tgr>

1.4. Social distress

1.4.1. Loneliness

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/4rcnu>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/qbc73>

1.4.2. Discrimination

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/ua6gs>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/abwcu>

1.5. Character and prosocial behaviours

1.5.1. Promoting good

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/cyqxh>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/y4u6w>

1.5.2. Delayed Gratification

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/927bn>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/7b9n5>

1.5.3. Hope

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/wc98k>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/62543>

1.5.4. Gratitude

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/mnx4s>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/strwz>

1.5.5. Love

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/r7dha>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/xpe96>

1.5.6. Forgiveness

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/zugyn>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/gvau3>

1.5.7. Charitable giving

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/e9urj>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/xnka9>

1.5.8. Helping strangers

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/e9urj>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/xnka9>

1.5.9. Volunteering

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/6nds5>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/5f46a>

1.6. Physical health and health behaviours

1.6.1. Self-rated physical health

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/2z356>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/7wqp3>

1.6.2. Health limitations

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/uk9ay>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/8qs6v>

1.6.3. Pain

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/ewyr5>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/zshpy>

1.6.4. Smoking

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/9d85z>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/6umhp>

1.6.5. Drinking

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/hkb92>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/x92v6>

1.6.6. Exercise

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/zvx2q>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/pyed5>

1.7. Socioeconomic factors

1.7.1. Financial and material worry

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/g64qs>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/uqx5n>

1.7.2. Education

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/p479h>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/pt7yk>

1.7.3. Employment

1.7.4. Subjective financial wellbeing

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/9m4d6>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/b5gn3>
- Outcome-wide preregistration: <https://osf.io/nbq4c>

1.7.5. Housing (owning vs. renting)

2. Religion/spirituality

2.1. Self-reported religion/spirituality

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/taey8>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/fkg7n>

2.2. Religious service attendance

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/35xfv>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/6w392>

2.3. Life after death belief

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/6qyzh>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/qczrb>

2.4. Religious experience

- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/59zvw>

2.5. Religious reading

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/zf6hg>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/637hg>

2.6. Prayer/meditation

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/jdq35>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/cvg4e>

2.7. Belief in God

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/9486t>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/mgv6k>

2.8. Intrinsic religiosity

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/ck6uy>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/q43hr>

2.9. Religious comfort

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/b3kg8>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/p8yrh>

2.10. Loved by God

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/djxyr>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/2cmj5>

2.11. Spiritual punishment

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/djxyr>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/2cmj5>

2.12. Religious criticism

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/rje6c>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/82npc>

2.13. Evangelism

- Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/8edcx>
- Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/qtgdc>

3. Personality traits

- 3.1. *Extraversion*
- 3.2. *Openness to experience*
- 3.3. *Agreeableness*
- 3.4. *Conscientiousness*
- 3.5. *Neuroticism*

4. Family factors

- 4.1. *Marital status*
 - Demographic preregistration: <https://osf.io/wterx>
 - Childhood preregistration: <https://osf.io/4ht5d>
- 4.2. *Number of Children*