

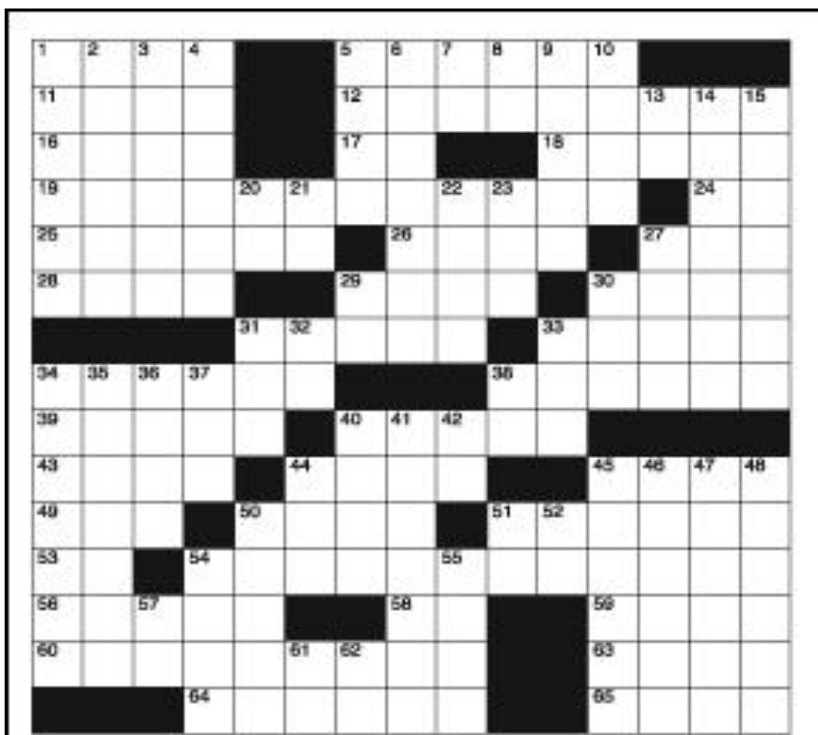
Editorial / Opinion

OMINOUS DROP IN "HAPPINESS" AMONG AMERICAN YOUNG CANNOT STAND

By Bill Connor

The 2024 Gallup Poll of "happiness" by country portends an ominous downward trend in the United States. Until recent years, the United States consistently ranked in the top ten "happiest" countries in the world. In the last couple of years, that ranking dipped below ten but not by much. Last year, for example, Gallup ranked the U.S. at number 15. Astonishingly, this year that number came all the way down to 23. Even more concerning was the burgeoning and ahistoric "age" gap shown in the survey. According to Gallup, Americans 60 and over still rank in the top ten in the world, while those under 30 ranked all the way down at a dismal 62. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/612125/happiest-country-earth.aspx> Based on the trends, we can expect the numbers to continue to plummet unless we discover the reason for such youth unhappiness and find a way to turn it around.

First, we should consider other data, beyond this survey, proving the steep drop in the happiness of American young. According to a report by Mental Health America, the suicide rate for males and females aged 15-24 has tripled since 1960 and "Adolescent depression is increasing at an alarming rate. Recent surveys indicate that as many as one in five teens suffers from clinical depression" <https://www.mhanational.org/depression-teens-0#:~:text=Recognizing%20Adolescent%20Depression,calls%20for%20prompt%2C%20appro->



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Database management system
- 5. Medical procedures
- 11. ___ Clapton, musician
- 12. Defender
- 16. Exert oneself
- 17. Indicates position
- 18. Quay
- 19. Atrocities
- 24. A way to address an adult man
- 25. Ends
- 26. Unable
- 27. Taxi
- 28. Gratuities
- 29. A famous train station
- 30. Japanese persimmon
- 31. Sours
- 33. Beneficiary
- 34. Baseball official
- 38. Confused situation
- 39. Unworldly
- 40. Yemen capital
- 43. Type of soil
- 44. Beloved beverage ___ Cola
- 45. Lying down
- 49. ___ Angeles
- 50. Fail to amuse
- 51. Collapsible shelter
- 53. Commercial
- 54. Taste property
- 56. Lordship's jurisdictions
- 58. It cools your home
- 59. Dismounted
- 60. Charge in a court of law
- 63. One less than one
- 64. Spoke
- 65. Famed garden

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Show a picture of
- 2. Small sultanate
- 3. Unfortunate incident
- 4. A way to ski
- 5. Abba __, Israeli politician
- 6. Observed
- 7. "Westworld" actor Harris
- 8. Belonging to me
- 9. Shoelace tube
- 10. Takes to civil court
- 13. Early multimedia
- 14. Produces anew
- 15. Horse races
- 20. Of I
- 21. Equally
- 22. Changes color
- 23. A place to stay
- 27. Town in Galilee
- 29. Mathematical figure
- 30. Klingon character
- 31. They ___
- 32. Atomic #58
- 33. Showed up extinct
- 34. Loosen grip
- 35. Unpleasant smell
- 36. Innermost membranes enveloping the brain
- 37. Esteemed college "league"
- 38. Partner to Pa
- 40. Small American rail
- 41. A salt or ester of acetic acid
- 42. Sodium
- 44. Military figure (abbr.)
- 45. Lighted
- 46. Paid to get out of jail
- 47. All of something
- 48. Ohio city
- 50. More abject
- 51. A radio band
- 52. Scientific development (abbr.)
- 54. Monetary unit
- 55. Scored perfectly
- 57. A punch to end a fight
- 61. The Golden State (abbr.)
- 62. The Beehive State (abbr.)

PUZZLE SOLUTION

D	B	M	S	E	N	E	M	A	S		
E	R	I	C	B	O	D	Y	G	U	A	R
P	U	S	H	A	T	L	E	V	E	E	
I	N	H	U	M	A	N	I	T	I	E	S
C	E	A	S	E	S	C	A	N	T	C	A
T	I	P	S	P	E	N	N	K	A	K	I
				A	C	I	D	S	D	O	N
U	M	P	I	R	E			M	O	R	A
N	A	I	V	E	S	A	N	A	A		
C	L	A	Y	C	O	C	A	A	B	E	D
L	O	S	B	O	R	E	C	A	B	A	N
A	D	P	A	L	A	T	A	B	I	L	I
S	O	K	E	S	A	C			A	L	I
P	R	O	S	E	C	U	T	E		Z	E
				O	R	A	T	E	D		E

appropriate%20treatment. According to the CDC, over the past decade there has been a 60% increase in girls who have seriously considered suicide <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/cdc-data-shows-u-s-teen-girls-in-crisis-with-unprecedented-rise-in-suicidal-behavior> Other surveys have shown that in the past decade adolescent depression has doubled. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8868033/> Bottom line is young Americans are quickly becoming more depressed, anxious and reaching a hopelessness that is spiking rates of suicide.

From a recent article in Fortune magazine, it is clear that perceptions of American decline have dampened hope in the future and correspond to such great youth unhappiness: "recent surveys suggest that many Americans are losing faith in the future of the nation. A 2023 survey by the Pew Research Center found at least two-thirds of Americans believe that by 2050, America will become economically weaker, less important in the world, and more politically divided. A 2023 Wall Street Journal-NORC survey found that nearly 80% of Americans do not expect life for their children's generation to be better than it has been for their own generation.... Only 56% of Americans are hopeful for the future of the U.S." <https://fortune.com/2024/03/04/america-hopelessness-crisis-economy-gen-z-mental-health-survey/> One answer to why the young are so unhappy is their perceived bleak future in a diminished America.

What doesn't seem clear is why older Americans would remain so much happier than young Americans despite the widespread perceptions of American decline. An answer to older Americans remaining so much happier is their stronger religious faith. According to the Survey Center on American Life: "In terms of identity, Generation Z is the least religious generation yet. More than one-third (34 percent) of Generation Z are religiously unaffiliated, a significantly larger proportion than among millennials (29 percent) and Generation X (25 percent). Fewer than one in five (18 percent) baby boomers and only 9 percent of the silent generation are religiously unaffiliated. (Gen Z) are also far more likely to identify as atheist or agnostic. Eighteen percent of Gen Z affirmatively identify as either atheist (9 percent) or agnostic (9 percent). In contrast, fewer than one in 10 (9 percent) baby boomers and 4 percent of the silent generation identifies as atheist or agnostic." <https://www.american-surveycenter.org/research/generation-z-future-of-faith/> Both the old and young are feeling the bad economy and apparent hopeless national future, yet the group with more faith in God remains happier.

Along with happiness that accompanies faith in God is the corresponding hope that comes with that faith. The more religious Americans of prior generations went through much tougher "apparent" hopelessness in the national future. During the Great Depression unemployment ran to 24.9%. With little social welfare, a substantial portion of the U.S. population was homeless and living in fear of starvation. After the decade of that horrific ordeal, those Americans had to fight World War II in an existen-

Family & Marriage

He Has Risen

"We live and die; Christ died and lived." - John Stott

"He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay." - Bible (Matthew 28:6)

The Discovery is a 2017 Netflix film in which Robert Redford plays a scientist who proves (he thinks) that the afterlife is real. "Once the body dies, some part of our consciousness leaves us and travels to a new plane," the scientist explains.

"A Groundbreaking Scientific Discovery Shows That We Can Reverse Death' New experiments raise important questions on what it means to die." (Dec 12, 2022, Popular Mechanics)

"Those who've had NDEs [Near-Death Experiences] overwhelmingly agree that the afterlife is real, in fact more real than ordinary life." (April 29, 2022, Psychology Today)

Thanatologists are those who study life after death, along with death, dying, and bereavement. There many theories about death: is it real or not, is there something after death or not, can death be delayed or even eliminated?

Closely connected with the study of life and death are the questions about existence and the meaning of life in general. Atheists don't believe in the existence of a god or divine being. An agnostic, on the other hand, neither believes nor disbelieves in a god or religious doctrine. Agnostics assert that it's impossible to know how the universe was created and whether or not divine beings exist.

Then there is "existentialism,"

which "examines mortal man's search for meaning in a meaningless universe." "Human beings, through their own consciousness, create their own values and determine a meaning to their life. This view is in contradiction to Aristotle and Aquinas, who taught that essence precedes individual existence." (Wikipedia, Existentialism)

It's amazing how many theories exist about whether or not there is a God, and if there is, what His role is. If there isn't a God, then the "replacement theories" abound.

Easter is a persuasive reminder that there is a God, and that He has done great things for us. If we accept the truth, we will find that indeed "the truth will set [us] free." (John 8:32) We will be free from the constant search for what's real in our lives. We will be free from the pressures of trying to determine what's right and what's wrong (God tells us in His Bible.) We will also be free from trying to achieve the good life, and ultimately eternal life, on our own.

It's kind of like working in a company where the boss is perfect. He never makes a mistake. I can carry out the work assignments my boss gives me in the joy of knowing that it will turn out OK. There may be challenges along the way, but I know my boss is with me. That is much more freeing than being told that I'm on my own, with no guidance or assistance, and no assurance that I'm headed in the right direction.

Our behavior depends on whether or not we believe there is a God. The disciples in the Bible all denied Jesus as He was on the way to the cross. After Jesus was res-



Roger Rollins, Family and Marriage Coalition

urrected and appeared to the disciples, they were willing to die for Him - and they did.

As we enter into our later years, we may ask whether or not we have wasted our live. When we were young we probably didn't think about it. But now some of us do. Perhaps the most important concern would be how our life has been spent. Was it focused on me or others? If the focus was on self then my survival comes first. When we are in a war (and by the way, we are), is our survival all that matters, or are we concerned for others?

Some people think that Jesus' death on the cross was a horrible mistake. I know, and hopefully you do, as well, that Jesus' death on the cross was a triumphal victory over death, for Him and us, if we will accept it.

The Family & Marriage Coalition of Aiken, Inc. (FAMCO) was created to provide resources for you to succeed in your marriage and families. Roger Rollins, Executive Director, FAMCO, 803-640-4689, rogerrollins@gmail.com, <http://www.aikenfamco.com>. Let us know how we can help.



tial battle to the death. Despite these much tougher conditions and reason for hopelessness, Americans kept faith in God and remained a generally happy and grateful people. Religion encourages thankfulness despite trials and hope in God's blessings over future bleakness. History shows that happiness and hope through belief in God brings a better future. Franklin Roosevelt rightly told America at the darkest point of the Great Depression: "all we have to fear is fear itself". The same can be said of hopelessness and unhappiness.

It's time for America to pull together as the "One Nation Under God" of our national motto. The younger need to follow the older in putting faith in God first and encouraging gratefulness for the smallest of life's blessings. Happiness is not only something we should seek individually, but as a nation. As the Apostle Paul put it in Romans 5 "we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint". Let's seek that kind of hope and happiness for the future of our young.

SUDOKU

4			9	5				
9								
	5			1				8
8			1					2
	7		6			8		3
2							6	
				3				
	4			5		3		
		3		7		2	9	

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

5	2	2	6	7	6	4	7	1
8	3	1	9	8	5	8	9	7
4	6	9	8	7	3	8	7	4
2	1	4	7	3	8	7	6	9
9	6	9	8	7	3	8	7	4
3	5	7	9	6	4	2	1	8
8	3	6	7	1	9	4	5	2
3	5	7	9	6	4	2	1	8
4	8	1	9	4	5	2	7	3
7	9	6	1	8	5	4	3	2
1	6	8	3	9	7	5	1	6

ANSWER: