

Balance and harmony in the Gallup World Poll: The development of the Global Wellbeing Initiative module

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Abstract: Over recent decades, scholarship on wellbeing has flourished. However, this has been critiqued as Western-centric, firstly in terms of the location of research participants and scholars, and moreover in terms of the very ideas and values through which wellbeing is understood. In response to such issues, the Global Wellbeing Initiative – a partnership between Gallup and the Wellbeing for Planet Earth foundation – was created to look at wellbeing from a more global perspective. The centrepiece of this initiative is a survey module in the Gallup World Poll. This paper charts the evolution of this module to date, from its initial incarnation in the 2020 poll (featuring items on various aspects of wellbeing) to a finalized 2022 iteration (which focuses specifically on balance and harmony). With the 2022 version now intended to stay consistent longitudinally, this paper establishes a valuable baseline for this important project which will contribute to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of wellbeing.

Keywords: wellbeing, global, cross-cultural, survey, Gallup, Gallup Word Poll, Global Wellbeing Initiative

1. Introduction

The Western-centric nature of wellbeing research, and psychology more broadly, has been increasingly recognized as a problem. This issue was influentially highlighted by Henrich et al. (2010), who pointed out that the vast majority of research in psychology is conducted by and on people in societies described as ‘WEIRD’ (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic). Crucially, most of the world is not comparably WEIRD, which raises questions around the validity and universality of such work. Fortunately, the field is becoming attuned to this problem, and is making efforts to redress it. One example is the Global Wellbeing Initiative (GWI), a partnership between Gallup and the Japan-based Wellbeing for Planet Earth foundation, launched in 2019. Its aim is to explore wellbeing from a global perspective, primarily through a module in the Gallup World Poll (GWP). This was first included in the 2020 GWP and featured nine items considered to be (a) lacking from common conceptualizations and assessments of wellbeing, and (b) particularly emphasized in non-Western cultures. It was intended that the module would evolve through various iterations before arriving at a format which could stay consistent over several years to allow longitudinal analysis. In that respect, by the 2022 poll, the module had evolved to focus specifically on balance and harmony (B/H), with this new 12-item iteration envisaged as the finalized version. This paper charts how this finalized module was developed over five sections. We begin by elucidating the context for this project, as well as

introducing the GWI itself. Then follows a consideration of the module's central topics of B/H. Finally, we explore its iteration over the 2020, 2021, and 2022 waves of the GWP.

2. The Global Wellbeing Initiative

The context for the formation of the GWI is the twin recognition of, (a) the Western-centric nature of wellbeing scholarship, and relatedly, (b) the need for a more globally inclusive approach. This issue is not confined to wellbeing research; as noted above, Henrich et al. (2010) influentially argued that most research in psychology is conducted by and on people in societies deemed 'WEIRD.' They cite for instance an analysis by Arnett (2008) showing that 96% of participants in studies in top psychology journals were from Western industrialized countries, even though these are home to only 12% of the world's population. 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), it is fair to say that most of the world is not *as* WEIRD as places like the USA, from where most research in top journals originates. This cultural bias has numerous issues and implications, particularly as psychology tends to aim for universality (i.e., presenting its theories and findings as universally applicable). First, there is the issue of representation in terms of participants. If these are mostly from WEIRD societies, one can question how generalizable the results are. Some theorists would argue that these findings *are* generalizable, on the basis that humans are relatively similar across cultures and share a common human nature. However, a wealth of research shows that people *do* have meaningful differences across myriad aspects of life related to their cultural and geographical location (as discussed next). As a result, one cannot simplistically draw conclusions about human nature or life based on participants mainly from WEIRD contexts.

These points are illustrated and exemplified by the GWP, which since 2005 has annually surveyed people globally – in up to 160 countries – in relation to all aspects of life, showing considerable variation based on people's cultural location. For instance, its main metric for assessing wellbeing is Cantril's (1965) Self-Anchoring Striving Scale, a measure of life evaluation which asks respondents to envisage where they stand on a 10-rung ladder whose base and top respectively represent the worst and best possible life imaginable. This item has generated a wealth of influential analyses, most notably the annual World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2022), which ranks nations based on their participants' responses. Citizens in countries in the top ten rate their life as nearly 8 out of 10 on average, whereas those in nations ranked lowest have scores around 3, showing striking global variation. Moreover, scholars have also explored the factors that *influence* wellbeing, and find meaningful differences in that respect too. One prominent and consistent finding, for instance, is that increases in income/wealth can improve wellbeing – both at an individual and a societal level – for people who are relatively poor (Sacks et al., 2012). However, as people become richer, the impact of increased money appears to wear off, a phenomenon known as 'income satiation.' Significantly, there seems to be considerable cultural variation in that regard. Analyzing the GWP, Jebb et al. (2018) found that while the overall mean was around \$95,000 (or the equivalent purchasing power in people's respective currencies), this ranged from \$35,000 (in Latin America and the Caribbean) to \$125,000 (in Australia and New Zealand). So, any generalizations about wellbeing or its factors based only on people in WEIRD contexts is liable to be inaccurate and misleading.

Moreover, the issue with the Western-centric nature of wellbeing scholarship goes beyond the need to conduct research globally. It extends to how we conceptualize wellbeing itself. Since scholars are themselves mostly situated in WEIRD societies, the values and traditions in these places are liable to influence their ideas and theories. Western cultures are regarded as relatively

individualistic, for instance, compared to Eastern cultures which lean more towards collectivism, a trend consistently observed across studies, even if the data is more nuanced than this simple generalization implies (Lomas et al., 2022a). Crucially, this individualism in the West has been interpreted as shaping the very constructs used in psychology to understand the person, as evinced by the myriad constructs prefixed by ‘self,’ from self-determination to self-esteem, and all related discourses of self, from authenticity to autonomy. More relevantly still, this has impacted how scholars understand and assess wellbeing. One example is that wellbeing tends to be viewed primarily as an individual personal phenomenon, downplaying its social and contextual dimensions (Lomas & VanderWeele, 2021). This individualist bias even impacts areas like emotions, such as the difference between high and low arousal positive emotions. A wealth of work, especially by Tsai (2007), has identified cultural variation in their valorization, with Western cultures placing greater emphasis on high arousal (e.g., excitement) and Eastern cultures on low arousal (e.g., calmness). These preferences moreover are linked to the respective tendencies towards individualism and collectivism; it is suggested that high arousal states are liable to be interpreted in the East as self-aggrandizing and therefore disruptive of social harmony, while low arousal states are more conducive to such harmony (Uchida & Kitayama, 2009). However, the Western-centricity of wellbeing scholarship means its focus has tended to be on high arousal forms, with a relative inattention to low arousal forms (McManus et al., 2019).

This tendency even includes the GWP, which shows that despite it excelling in researching wellbeing globally, it has still been subject to the Western-centric influences that characterize wellbeing research more broadly. To that point though, the new GWI was designed to redress precisely these issues. Its impetus was the establishment of the Wellbeing for Planet Earth foundation in Japan in 2018. Its overarching aim was and is to support research, practice, and policy advances to reflect a more global view of wellbeing. Acknowledging that doing so required a global platform, the foundation approached Gallup in 2019 to establish a research partnership. This would centre on – though would not only be restricted to – designing a new wellbeing module for the GWP. This would seek to incorporate ideas around wellbeing associated with non-Western cultures which had hitherto been (a) not included within the GWP, and (b) overlooked or under-researched by scholarship more broadly. Given the Japanese location of the foundation, the initial focus was on Eastern cultures in particular. It was envisaged that there would be several years of exploratory testing of topics and items, before ideally arriving at a configuration that could stay in place for several more years at least to allow for longitudinal analysis. This process unfolded as anticipated, and by late 2021 a finalized module – for inclusion in the 2022 GWP – had been agreed upon, centring on B/H, as articulated below. First though, we shall briefly elucidate the nature and significance of B/H, drawing on a chapter in the 2022 World Happiness Report exploring the 2021 GWI data on these topics (Lomas et al., 2022b), as well as a review by Lomas (2021) identifying B/H as a ‘golden thread’ across all aspects of wellbeing.

3. Balance and harmony

Like many concepts, the meanings of B/H are contested and debated. Moreover, their conceptualizations are usually tied to specific domains of life, rather than defined in the abstract. In physiology, for instance, a review of the literature by Ragnarsdóttir (1996) suggested balance has been operationalized in two main ways, as a physical state (e.g., “in which the body is in equilibrium”) and as a function (e.g., “demanding continuous adjustments of muscle activity and joint position to keep the body weight above the base of support”). Nevertheless, having reviewed the application and conceptualization of B/H across disciplines, Lomas et al. (2022b)

were able to formulate some *generic* orienting definitions – applicable across diverse contexts – to guide the analysis and discussion in the World Happiness Report chapter.

Beginning with balance, the common thread identified was this: balance means the various elements which constitute a phenomenon, and/or the various forces acting upon it, are in proportionality and/or equilibrium, often with an implication of stability, evenness, and poise. These dynamics frequently – but not only – apply to binary or dyadic phenomena. Its etymology reflects this usage, deriving from the Latin *bilanx*, denoting two (*bi*) scale pans (*lanx*). Substantively, these pairs may either be poles of a spectrum (e.g., hot-cold), or discrete categories that are frequently linked (e.g., work-life). Then, temporally, such connections can be synchronic (e.g., neither too hot nor cold) or diachronic (e.g., averaging good work-life balance over a career). In such cases, balance usually does not mean a crude calculation of averages, nor finding a simple mid-point on a spectrum, but skillfully finding the *right* point or amount, an ideal also known as the Goldilocks principle (Dunne, 2017). However, balance does not only pertain to dyads, and can also be applied to relationships among multiple phenomena, as per a ‘balanced diet’ for example.

Although harmony is sometimes used synonymously with balance, there are subtle differences. In the literature, a common distinguishing theme seems to be this: harmony means the various elements which constitute a phenomenon, and/or the various forces acting upon it, cohere and complement one another, leading to an overall configuration which is appraised positively. To appreciate this definition, it helps again to begin with an etymological perspective, with the term deriving from the Latin *harmonia*, meaning joining or concord. This ‘concord’ can then obtain with respect to all manner of phenomena involving multiple elements. In classical Chinese and Greek philosophy, for instance, harmony was often elucidated with reference to music, where it denotes a pleasing overall configuration, an ordered arrangement of numerous notes which complement each other tonally and aesthetically (Li, 2008). In this concord one can appreciate a subtle yet meaningful point of distinction between balance and harmony. While both are invariably interpreted as a desirable good, balance is more neutral and detached, while harmony is often ‘warmer’ and even more positively valenced, with a more definite sense of flourishing. While describing a work team, for instance, as ‘balanced’ could imply a good mix of people and skills, it would not necessarily mean the colleagues got on well or thrived as a unit. But these latter qualities may well be evoked if the team were deemed ‘harmonious.’

Significantly, B/H are important principles across myriad aspects of life, and indeed may be ‘golden thread’ across all aspects of wellbeing (Lomas, 2021). Take any dimension or aspect of life, and one usually cannot say categorically – with the sole but important exception of illness – whether simple its presence or absence is conducive to wellbeing. Rather, such dimensions usually must be understood in terms of an *optimal* amount or level, generally involving attaining B/H between poles of a spectrum (e.g., cold-hot) or related categories (e.g., work-life). With the various aspects of physical health for instance – from exercise to sleep to eating – it is important to strike a balance between too little and too much, and moreover to attain B/H *among* the components of these aspects (e.g., a ‘balanced diet’) (Kremers, 2010). Similarly, in terms of lifestyle, the salience of B/H is reflected in the vast literature on work-life balance (Kelliher et al., 2019), as well as considerations like Vallerand’s (2010) work on the need for ‘passions’ (e.g., hobbies) to be harmonious (integrated with other aspects of life) rather than obsessive (all consuming). In the realm of character, Aristotle’s principle of the ‘golden mean’ holds that virtue lies in judiciously treading a middle line between opposing vices of excess and deficiency (e.g., courage is avoiding both cowardice and recklessness); his ideas have been embraced by modern researchers, like Rashid (2015) and Niemiec (2017), who have pioneered an approach to mental

illness and health based on under- and over-use of character strengths. As seen in Lomas (2021), such examples could be multiplied at length, in areas of life ranging from cognition (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006) and emotion (Sansó et al., 2017) to relations with other people (Visserman et al., 2016) and with the natural world (Kjell, 2011).

Our understanding of B/H is deepened by considering a nexus of psychological phenomena which are closely related, namely low arousal positive states (LAPS), such as peace and calmness. Although we've seen that B/H apply across most life domains, they are nevertheless often regarded or treated as intrinsically connected to – perhaps even coterminous with – such states. Surveying lay perceptions of happiness across 12 countries, for example, Delle Fave et al. (2016) found the most prominent definition was 'inner harmony,' which featured themes of inner peace, contentment, and balance. It is not currently self-evident or well-understood *why* there is this affinity between B/H and LAPS. One interpretation advanced by Lomas et al. (2022b), drawing on work by Kjell and Diener (2021), is that experiences of B/H could be regarded as a form of low arousal subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing, as developed by Diener and colleagues (Diener et al., 1999), is usually regarded as having two main dimensions: cognitive (i.e., life evaluation/satisfaction), and affective (i.e., positive affect). Life evaluation tends to not imply any specific arousal level, while assessments of positive emotions usually focus on high arousal forms (McManus et al., 2019), as noted above. By contrast, experiences of B/H may generally constitute low arousal forms of *cognitive evaluation* (and so augment the process of life evaluation), while states like calmness and tranquility constitute low arousal *emotional* states (with peace having both cognitive and affective dimensions). However, the connection between B/H and LAPS is under-researched and not well understood, as indeed are both B/H and LAPS in themselves, and more work is needed to explore both the individual topics as well as their interrelationships. For now though, we shall treat LAPS as a constellation of phenomena that are somehow just associated or bound up with B/H. Thus, although by the 2022 GWP we came to conceive and present the GWI module as pertaining specifically to B/H, it *also* includes items pertaining to LAPS. So, whenever we mention B/H in the text below, this should also be taken as including LAPS as a constituent element or theme.

The inattention to B/H in the literature may sound surprising, given the various scholarship cited above concerning its importance to wellbeing. However, although B/H have received considerable attention across different contexts (e.g., work-life balance), this literature is fragmented and scattered. There have been few attempts to bring these disparate threads together, or to center B/H as foundational and important across all aspects of human life. One explanation is the Western-centric nature of academia. We have already suggested this bias has led to LAPS being overlooked within wellbeing research. Similar dynamics apply to B/H. Although ideas and practices around B/H have been developed across cultures – including in the West, as per Aristotle's golden mean – it nevertheless appears that Eastern cultures have historically been *particularly* attentive and receptive to B/H. This interest is exemplified by traditions like Confucianism and Taoism, as reflected in the latter's *yin-yang* motif. In that respect, Li (2012) described "yin-yang balance" as "a unique frame of thinking in East Asia that originated in China but is shared by most Asian countries" (p.845). To that point, scholars have suggested that Eastern and Western cultures have developed a preference for different cognitive styles, with East favoring holistic and dialectical forms, and the West embracing linear and analytical modes, such as Aristotle's formal either/or logic (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Whatever the dynamics and reasons though, Eastern cultures are widely regarded as having an especially strong affinity and preference for ideas and practices relating to both to B/H and LAPS. As a result, these have been

not received the academic attention they merit, hence the decision by the GWI to include these in its GWP module, as we consider next.

4. 2020 Wave

The first iteration of the GWI module was included in the 2020 GWP, which went into the field in March 2020. Development of the module began one year before, in Spring 2019, as the GWI was being formed. In consultation with their key scientific advisor, Ed Diener, the GWI decided the first step in the creation of the module would be convening a summit of wellbeing scholars from across the world who were conducting promising research into new perspectives on wellbeing. Following identification and invitation of a suitable group of scholars, a three-day summit was held in Kyoto, Japan, in August 2019. This featured 12 scholars who attended the whole event – five from Japan, the remainder from overseas – together with other stakeholders and interested parties who were present for select parts. The overarching goal was to develop potential GWP items that are: (1) capable of augmenting existing measures to create a comprehensive conceptualization of wellbeing; (2) most pressing to capture, since global data does not yet exist for these; (3) inclusive of a wider, richer, range of worldviews (not currently captured by the poll); (4) useful items from which policy makers and other decision makers could take action; and (5) demonstrative of the complexity of wellbeing, highlighting cultural differences, and allowing for examination of factors that contribute to wellbeing across and within societies.

Over the first two days, participants presented their own research, with a focus on findings pertaining to the summit's aims. The third day then centered on proposing new topics and items for the GWP. Over three hours, topics were discussed, debated, and voted upon (ranked in order of importance). As a result, nine topics were identified. Then followed another three-hour session in which topics were formulated as possible GWP items; different permutations for each topic were similarly discussed, debated, and voted upon (i.e., in terms of preferred phrasing). The topics selected were (ranked in order of priority): (1) LAPS; (2) B/H; (3) relationship to group; (4) meaning in life; (5) relationship to nature; (6) mastery; (7) relationship with government; (8) leisure; and (9) resilience. Given budgetary constraints, it was only possible to include a limited set of 9-10 items in the GWI module (with the potential for other items to be included in subsequent years). Of this list, as determined by the ranking procedure, topics 1-4 were deemed most important and for definite inclusion (and moreover with each potentially having multiple items assessing them). Topics 5-6 were also put to Gallup after the summit for consideration, but did not get included in the 2020 wave. Finally, topics 7-9 were not put forward to Gallup for this first wave, but were retained for consideration in future waves. These deliberations and outcomes were subsequently published as a white paper (Lambert et al., 2020). After the summit, following input from the GWI funders, it was deemed important to also include a focus on wellbeing at work. Thus, in addition to the four topics prioritized at the summit, wellbeing at work was also prioritized for inclusion in the 2020 GWP.

From November 2019 onwards, the GWI team held weekly online meetings, with discussions of all topics and items under consideration. Once the five main topics had been identified, with suitable item phrasings agreed (based on formulations reached at the summit, and refined through subsequent discussion), these items were tested in the field through cognitive interviews. Participants were interviewed in seven countries, covering six different languages: Columbia (Spanish); Ethiopia (Afan Oromo); Italy (Italian); Japan (Japanese); Kosovo (Albanian); Lebanon (Arabic); and Tunisia (Arabic). In each country approximately 10 people were interviewed, selected as differing on a range of key demographics, including: geography (five

rural, five urban); gender (five female, five male); income (four low-, three middle-, and three upper-); age (three 18-29 years old, four 30-44, and three 45+); and employment status (five employed full time, two self-employed full time, and three out of the workforce). Following analysis of the cognitive interviews, some items were reformulated, as outlined below. This reformulation took place in the weekly meetings in which refined item phrasings were discussed and agreed upon. Once items had been reformulated, further pre-test interviews took place (in the same countries as the cognitive interviews, using the same demographic spread). Then, following analysis of the pre-test interview, final item phrasings were agreed in the weekly meetings, as shown in Table 1 below.

It is beyond our scope here to discuss the development of *all* these items. However, we can briefly consider the items relating specifically what would become, by the 2022 GWP, the main focus of the module, namely B/H, and relatedly also LAPS (which, to reiterate a point above, should be treated as an aspect or theme of B/H). As one can see, there is one item on B/H, and three pertaining to LAPS. Regarding B/H, the item suggested at the summit was from Kjell et al.'s (2016) Harmony in Life Scale: *"Most aspects of my life are in balance."* In post-summit discussions, three versions were considered and explored in cognitive testing. In the first, the wording was amended slightly to: *"Do you feel the various aspects of your life are in balance, or not?"* In cognitive interviews, respondents generally understood it, though interpreted "in balance" differently. About half of interviewees understood it to mean having enough time to spend on all things in life that are most important to them (including work, social relations, family, health, economy, food, and emotional aspects). Some respondents in Italy specifically said balance means "Everything is in its place and having enough time for oneself and for others," with one person saying balance means "having moments to relax from work." However, several respondents mentioned that "in balance" referred to a balance of good things and bad things in a person's life. Others spoke of resilience and achieving goals as being "in balance." Somewhat differently, a Japanese respondent said, "I think "in balance" means no bias. There is no bias in thinking or in daily life." The broad nature of the phrase "various aspects of your life" was also difficult for some respondents. For instance, for some respondents in Lebanon, issues such as violence, strikes, civil unrest, and instability in their country were considered to be among the "various aspects" of their lives, and thus their answers were influenced strongly by the present situation there.

Eventually, the item was kept with a minor change (adding *"In general"*), together with the understanding that respondents may have a broad interpretation of "various aspects of your life," and that societal disruptions may impact responses. Thus, version selected was: *"In general, do you feel the various aspects of your life are in balance, or not?"* In addition to this selected framing, two other versions of the item were trialled (and ultimately rejected). In the first of these, harmony was substituted for balance: *"Do you feel your life is in harmony, or not?"* However, the conclusion from cognitive interviews was that balance was generally better understood than harmony. The latter was related to balance for many respondents, but some associated harmony with lack of conflict, having a good family, and more sentimental aspects of life, whereas balance was more likely to be associated with how one spends time and resources. In Japan, for instance, the interviewer noted, "It is difficult to answer this question for most of the respondents. This question is unclear about what my life is in harmony with." Thus, this version was cut in favour of the first version above. A third version was also explored: *"Do you feel things in your life are as they should be?"* In cognitive interviews, this was interpreted to be more about expectations respondents have for their life and whether they've been met (and is not understood to mean the

same thing as balance or harmony). Thus, again, this version was cut in favour of the first version outlined above.

Table 1. The 2020 GWI module.

Topic	Question	Response format
1 LAPS	Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? ... Calmness?	Yes No (Don't Know) (Refused)
2 LAPS	In general, do you feel at peace with your life, or not?	Yes No (Don't Know) (Refused)
3 LAPS	Would you rather live an exciting life or a calm life?	An exciting life A calm life (Both) (Neither) (Don't Know) (Refused)
4 B/H	In general, do you feel the various aspects of your life are in balance, or not?	Yes No (Don't Know) (Refused)
5 Meaning in Life	Which of the following is closest to your MAIN purpose in life? (Read Items)	Being good at what you do in your daily life Caring for family and close friends Helping other people who need help (None of these) (I do not know my purpose in life) (Don't Know) (Refused)
6 Relationship to group	Do you think people should focus more on taking care of themselves or on taking care of others?	Taking care of themselves Taking care of others (Both) (Neither) (Don't Know) (Refused)
(If respondent is employed by an employer or is self-employed, Continue; Otherwise, Skip to end)		
7 Work (enjoyment)	Do you enjoy the work you do in your job every day, or not? (Interviewer: If the respondent says they don't work every day, ask them to think about the days when they work.)	Yes No (Don't Know) (Refused)
8 Work (relationship to group)	Do you think the work you do in your job significantly improves the lives of other people outside of your own household, or not?	Yes No (Don't Know) (Refused)
9 Work (mastery/ resilience)	Do you, personally, have many choices in regard to the type of work you can do in your life?	Yes No (Don't Know) (Refused)

In terms of LAPS, at the summit the following phrasing was selected: *“Did you feel calm and at peace yesterday?”* Through subsequent discussions, *three* separate items pertaining to this topic were included in the 2020 GWP. The first reflected the fact that the GWP already had a separate block of items asking if people experienced particular feelings *“a lot of the day yesterday.”* This block did not include LAPS, so it seemed prudent and cost-effective to add a LAPS item to this. In that respect, cognitive interviews enquired whether *“contentment”* or *“calmness”* would be better. There were a mix of responses across countries (e.g., in Lebanon and Tunisia were most negative in their responses to both). The biggest observation was the difficulty of translation, particularly *“contentment.”* Gallup received many questions from translators about its meaning, and respondents often had trouble understanding it. Several other words were tested in probing, including *“satisfaction,” “tranquility,” “at peace,” “serenity,”* and *“calmness.”* Many respondents felt the words were either synonymous or noted only small differences between them. Ultimately, Gallup’s recommendation was to use *“calm,”* so the first LAPS item included in the module was whether people felt calm during *“a lot of the day yesterday.”*

In addition to using *“calm”* in this format, Gallup recommended also asking *“Did you feel at peace most of the day yesterday, or not?”* This item was thus included in the module as the second item pertaining to LAPS. This was suggested because being *“at peace”* was a concept of interest to begin with, and in cognitive interviews it worked well in many countries. It was noted though that translation notes should be developed to make sure this meaning is captured, while avoiding an affiliation with *“war”* or *“violence”*. It is further interesting to reflect on – and moreover to measure – possible differences between being *“calm”* and *“at peace.”* The former is often conceptualized as an affective state (Yik & Russell, 2003), whereas the latter is more suggestive of a cognitive, evaluative state (Steinhauser et al., 2006). However, both constructs are relatively under-researched and poorly understood, and will benefit from exploration in the GWP analysis. Third, post-summit discussions identified the utility of investigating cross-cultural differences in preference for low versus high arousal positive emotions, as discussed above. The initial attempt at an item on this issue was: *“Would you rather feel contentment or excitement most days of your life?”* However, in cognitive interviews, the question was not well understood and difficult to answer. Not only did *“contentment”* pose issues as noted above, but *“excitement”* was also challenging (e.g., in some languages this was interpreted as sexual in nature). Upon probing, several respondents also noted the words were difficult to compare since they were not opposites. People in most countries tended toward selecting *“contentment”*; however, there were mixed results in Japan and in Ethiopia (where all respondents selected *“excitement”*), while in Tunisia nearly half of respondents could not provide an answer. Given these difficulties, a new version was proposed by Gallup: *“Would you rather live an exciting life or a calm life?”* This was therefore the third item pertaining to LAPS included in the 2020 module.

5. 2021 Wave

With the 2020 module successfully in the field, the GWI set about reflecting on and developing it further. As noted above, from the outset it was envisaged that the first few years of the project would involve an iterative process of exploring potential items and module permutations before ideally arriving at a stable configuration that could remain in place longitudinally. Thus, in October 2020 the GWI held a second annual, this time focused on scrutinizing the items in the 2020 module with an eye on revising it for the 2021 poll. The summit featured the scholars invited to the 2019 summit, together with 15 new invitees who had, in the interim, been identified as likewise having valuable contributions to make. Given the travel restrictions imposed by Covid-

19, the summit was convened online, and featured an intensive two-hour roundtable session in which participants debated the items, as well as considered topics missing from the module.

Table 2. The 2021 GWI module.

Topic	Question	Response format			
1 LAPS	Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? ... Calmness?	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)
In general, how often do you feel each of the following ...?					
2 B/H	... the various aspects of your life are in balance?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
3 LAPS	... content?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
4 LAPS and mindfulness	... you are at peace with your thoughts and feelings?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
5 Vitality	... enthusiastic?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
6 Connection to nature	... emotionally connected to nature?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
7 Religion/spirituality	... connected to a religion or a form of spirituality?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
8 Relationship to group	... you have a good relationship with your loved ones?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
9 Resilience	... you are able to deal with life's challenges?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
(If respondent is employed by an employer or is self-employed, Continue; Otherwise, Skip to end)					
10 Work (enjoyment)	Do you enjoy the work you do in your job every day, or not? (Interviewer: If the respondent says they don't work every day, ask them to think about the days when they work.)	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)
11 Work (relationship to group)	Do you think the work you do in your job significantly improves the lives of other people outside of your own household, or not?	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)
12 Work (mastery/Resilience)	Do you, personally, have many choices in regard to the type of work you can do in your life?	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)

Regarding current items, one main critique was the variability in item formatting, and the desirability of having a common format in terms of better facilitating comparison among items (e.g., using factor analysis). Regarding other potential items, discussion centered on five topics deemed particularly worth including: connection to nature; resilience; religion/spirituality; vitality; and mindfulness. At the conclusion of the roundtable session, that same day the lead author developed – based on the roundtable discussion – alternative item phrasings for the existing four topics, and possible item phrasings for the newly identified topics, with each item having 10 different phrasings. The next day attendees were invited to vote on their preferred phrasings. These votes then informed the revision of items in the post-summit discussion phase.

Following the summit, further meetings about topics and items were held. It was established that having a common response framework would enable the inclusion of a greater number of items, increasing from 9 to 12 items (now spanning nine topics). This is because the size of the module is determined principally by *time* – with the module allocated a total of two minutes – and a common framework cuts down the time taken per item. Thus, the 2021 module contained the five main topics from the 2020 GWP, plus five other topics identified at the 2020 roundtable (with one of these, mindfulness, combined with the existing topic of LAPS, as elucidated below), creating nine topics in total (across 12 items). Based primarily on the post-roundtable vote, phrasings were agreed upon for the new items. Unlike the previous year, these items were not subjected to cognitive or pre-test interviews, partly because many of the topics and items had already been through this process the previous year, and partly because scheduling requirements would not permit this. However, to compensate, the new items were extensively checked with Gallup’s regional experts and translators (and other experts in the GWI community). Following this feedback, final item phrasings were agreed in the GWI meetings, as detailed in Table 2 below, in time for inclusion in the 2021 GWP.

As one can see, there are both continuities and discontinuities with the previous 2020 iteration. The main change overall was to have most items conform to a common format in terms of, (a) their opening stem, and (b) response options. This was partly driven by feedback at the summit around the desirability of a common format from an analytic perspective (e.g., in terms of better facilitating comparison among items). Moreover, it was also beneficial from a practical perspective, since having a common format allowed the GWI to increase the number of items in the module, as noted above. We shall discuss this format shortly. First, we should just mention the *exceptions* to this. In particular, the first LAPS item from 2020 on calmness was kept exactly the same. This is because this had become added to the set of items on daily emotional experiences in the GWP, as noted above, and so its formatting needed to be consistent with this set. For similar reasons, the three workplace items retained the same format as the 2020 wave.

However, the remainder of the items were redesigned to be consistent in two main ways. First, they all had the same prompt, namely, “*In general, how often do you feel each of the following ...?*” This would only need to be asked once (i.e., across all items), thus making the module more time-efficient and allowing more items. Second, they were also designed to have the same response format. In that respect, there was a decision to move from a predominantly binary yes/no response format in 2020 to a four-response Likert format (always, often, rarely, never). The discussions around this move were interesting. In psychology it is common for psychometric scales to use a Likert framework, as a greater number of options allows for richer data analysis. However, from Gallup’s extensive experience in conducting cross-cultural surveys, they have found a *binary* response format works better in the GWP, since Likert scales can suffer from various issues in the field (e.g., they can be harder for some participants to understand and are less easily standardized across cultures). As a result, there was ongoing debate between Gallup

personnel (accustomed to the binary format) and academics connected to the GWI (accustomed to a Likert format) about which is preferable. Eventually, in a spirit of openness and experimentation, Gallup agreed to explore a Likert framework in the GWI module. First, we decided to frame the item in terms of time/frequency (i.e., how often people experience a given state) rather than size/amount (i.e., how *much* do they experience), as the latter might be somewhat abstract and harder for participants to envision. We then opted for *four* options (always, often, rarely, never) in response to Gallup's reservations about Likert scales in general. That is, out of concern with not making the framework too complicated, we sought to minimize the number of items. However, having only three options was also not desirable, since in Gallup's experience people often choose the middle term. As such, four was settled upon as an ideal number, taking four common responses often found in Likert scales as the options.

Having established a common item format, we then sought to update the topics and items themselves. First, we were keen to retain the item on B/H, and just updated it per the new response format, from "*In general, do you feel the various aspects of your life are in balance, or not?*" to "*[In general, how often do you feel] the various aspects of your life are in balance?*" Then, with LAPS, besides the experienced calmness item discussed above, as in 2020 there were two other items pertaining to LAPS. The 2020 item on preference for calmness or excitement was dropped completely, as it could not be adapted to the new response format. Instead, the 2020 item on peace ("*In general, do you feel at peace with your life, or not?*") became modified into *two* new items. On reflection, we had come to feel this original phrasing pertained more to acceptance and even resignation than LAPS per se. As such, we were keen to ascertain whether people *felt* peaceful or at peace. However, in discussions, when trying these adjectives with the new format (*In general, how often do you feel] peaceful / at peace*), "peaceful" seemed to imply non-aggression/violence, while "at peace" still invoked acceptance/resignation. Eventually, we opted to ask if people felt "content," as this seemed closest in spirit to the kind of LAPS we had in mind. However, we were also able to retain the notion of being "at peace" in a second new item. Following discussions at the 2020 summit we were keen to include an item on mindfulness. Although mindfulness is a complex, multifaceted construct, it can include being aware and accepting of one's thoughts and feelings (Shapiro et al., 2006) which could be phrased as being "at peace" with them. As such, in considering how to formulate an item pertaining to mindfulness, we realized we could design one that also pertained to LAPS, namely "*[In general, how often do you feel] you are at peace with your thoughts and feelings?*"

It is beyond our scope here to dwell on the other changes. We can just briefly note that of the remaining two 2020 items, the one on meaning in life was dropped, and the one on relationship to group was modified. The meaning item was dropped because, on reflection, we felt it did not really fit within the GWI remit of focusing on wellbeing perspectives emphasized in non-Western cultures – and hence missing from standard Western-centric wellbeing research – since meaning in life is a staple of contemporary scholarship and indeed Western discourse more generally (Steger et al., 2008). With the relationship to group, we felt this *did* have cross-cultural relevance and value, given the apparent Western tendency towards individualism discussed above. Intriguingly though, an analysis of this item – in conjunction with the purpose item – indicated that the West may be less individualistic in certain ways than is often assumed (Lomas et al., 2022a). In the revised module, to fit the new format, this item was changed from "*Do you think people should focus more on taking care of themselves or on taking care of others?*" to "*[In general, how often do you feel] you have a good relationship with your loved ones?*" Then, besides this, four new items were added, namely on vitality, connection to nature, religion/spirituality, and resilience. These were all likewise deemed to have, (a) notable cross-cultural dynamics (e.g., emphasized more in

some cultures than others), (b) been relatively overlooked in cross-cultural research, and (c) not featured in the GWP. These points particularly apply to vitality and connection to nature; as per B/H and LAPS, these phenomena and concepts have arguably been given less attention in Western cultures compared to others, so are relatively absent from wellbeing scholarship. One could perhaps argue that (a) and (b) apply less to religion/spirituality and resilience, though (c) is indeed the case, and so the GWI – and its network of scholars – were keen to explore their inclusion.

6. 2022 Wave

By the time it came to revise the module for the 2022 GWP, the GWI team had decided the module should focus entirely on B/H and the associated phenomena of LAPS (though the three workplace items would also continue as before, being the prerogative of the GWI funders). B/H and LAPS had always been a prominent aspect of the module, collectively constituting four of nine items in 2020 and four of 12 in 2021. However, in the intervening year between finalizing the 2021 and 2022 modules (in November 2020 and 2021 respectively), the team became convinced the module ought to center wholly on B/H and LAPS. Before considering why these topics *specifically* were chosen, there were also good general reasons to make the module more focused *per se*. Recall that the original scope for the module was to include perspectives on wellbeing associated with non-Western cultures. Obviously, this is a huge remit, covering a *vast* range of potential topics. Across 2020 and 2021, besides B/H and LAPS 11 other topics had been covered. Thus, one option for 2022 would be to retain the four items on B/H and LAPS, and to pick five *new* topics deemed worth including. However, in raising this possibility, the module began to seem too scattergun and disparate, lacking a common core or identity. There is certainly value in trialing new stand-alone items in the GWP on a yearly basis. However, this comes at the expense of other methodological desiderata, including having, (a) a coherent set of items that might function as a psychometric scale, and (b) a stable set of items in place over several years to allow for longitudinal analyses.

Motivated by these concerns, the GWI team decided to orient the module around B/H and LAPS. This choice of focus was easy, for numerous reasons. First, these topics had been ranked number one and two in importance at the initial 2019 summit. Second, they were already the most populous topics in the module, collectively comprising four items in both 2020 and 2021. Third, the team – and other scholars and stakeholders – had become increasingly appreciative of their importance. Indeed, from the outset their value had been recognized, guided for example by Delle Fave et al.'s (2016) study on lay perceptions of happiness, in which the most prominent definition was “inner harmony,” featuring themes of inner peace, contentment, and balance. This impression was only reinforced as the team analyzed and shared the data from 2020 and 2021. A pivotal point was being invited to write a chapter on these topics – focusing on the 2021 data – in the 2022 World Happiness Report, published in March 2022. In preparing this chapter, our sense of the importance of these topics was further enhanced through the feedback from the report editors, as well as the fact that the chapter was being included at all. Similar impressions were gained in other fora, such as when discussing the GWI at public events. Together, these experiences reinforced our initial guiding sense that B/H and LAPS were indeed, (a) of considerable relevance to wellbeing, and (b) generally overlooked and underappreciated by the field. As such, we felt it would be a real service if we could harness the GWP platform to construct a module completely focused on these topics. To that end, the 2022 module was constructed to entirely feature nine items relating to B/H and LAPS (while also retaining the three workplace items), as shown in Table 3 below. As per 2021, it was not possible to subject these items to cognitive or pre-test interviews. However, they were all developed through extensive internal

discussions, informed by thorough checking processes with Gallup’s translators and regional experts (and other experts in the GWI community).

Table 3. The 2022 GWI module.

Topic	Question	Response format			
1 LAPS	Did you experience the following feelings during a lot of the day yesterday? ... Calmness?	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)
- In general, how often ...					
2 B/H	... are the various aspects of your life in balance?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
3 B/H	... do you feel that the amount of things happening in your life is just right - not too much or too little? Do you feel that way always, often, rarely, or never?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
4 B/H	... are you in harmony with those around you?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
5 B/H	... are your thoughts and feelings in harmony?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
6 LAPS	... do you feel stable and secure in your life?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
7 LAPS	... are you content?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
8 LAPS	... is your mind at ease?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
9 LAPS	... can you find inner peace during difficult times?	Always Never	Often (Don't know)	Rarely (Refused)	
(If respondent is employed by an employer or is self-employed, Continue; Otherwise, Skip to end)					
10 Work (enjoyment)	Do you enjoy the work you do in your job every day, or not? (Interviewer: If the respondent says they don't work every day, ask them to think about the days when they work.)	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)
11 Work (relationship to group)	Do you think the work you do in your job significantly improves the lives of other people outside of your own household, or not?	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)
12 Work (mastery/ Resilience)	Do you, personally, have many choices in regard to the type of work you can do in your life?	Yes	No	(Don't know)	(Refused)

Once again, there are both continuities and discontinuities with the 2021 iteration. Let's begin by noting that the first item on experiencing calmness has again been retained unchanged, for the reasons explained above. We can then observe that for the remainder of the items, the response format from 2021 has also been retained. However, the stem was subtly amended. In 2021, the common prompt was *"In general, how often do you feel ..."*, but in 2022 this became simply *"In general, how often..."* Essentially, it was recognized that the 2021 version anchored the items unnecessarily around feelings specifically, while also creating some double ambiguity in the item. Consider the 2021 B/H item: *"[In general, how often do you feel] the various aspects of your life are in balance?"* It is potentially unclear whether this is asking if the various aspects actually *are* in balance, or whether the person *feels* these aspects are in balance, which is not the same thing (e.g., a person could intellectually acknowledge that they do have balance in their life and yet not emotionally feel that sense of balance). As such, it was realized we could simply ask *"[In general, how often] are the various aspects of your life in balance?"* This would retain the sense of personal judgment/appraisal in the 2021 item, but get to this more directly. We therefore implemented this more direct format for all the items (though in two cases it was deemed appropriate to still include the phrase "do you feel"). Of these other eight items, one (no. 7) is a modified version of the 2021 item on contentment, now rephrased to be more direct, switching from *"[In general, how often do you feel] content?"* to *"[In general, how often] are you content?"* The other seven items were new formulations, although they do share overlaps and affinities with previous items relating to B/H and LAPS.

With respect to B/H, having already developed an item on balance in previous waves of the GWP – and retained in modified form in 2022 – it was deemed important to also ask about *harmony* specifically. After all, although closely related to balance, it has distinct nuances and meanings, as discussed above. As also noted, it can apply to different aspects of life. Thus, we decided to have two harmony items: one pertaining to the individual themselves, focusing on mental dynamics (*"[In general, how often] are your thoughts and feelings in harmony?"*); and one pertaining to their social context, focusing on interpersonal dynamics (*"[In general, how often] are you in harmony with those around you?"*). Then, still on the topic of B/H, we sought to also add a second item pertaining to balance. In that respect, rather than specifically asking about balance per se, we were keen to develop an item relating to the notion, articulated above, that balance often involves finding the optimal point between two extremes or categories, as captured in the idea of something being "just right." After much deliberation, we landed on the idea of asking how busy or full a person's life is, articulated as: *"[In general, how often] do you feel that the amount of things happening in your life is just right – not too much or too little? Do you feel that way always, often, rarely, or never?"* The item allows for the fact that people will have their own preferences for how busy/full they would like their life to be. It simply recognizes that, *whatever* a person's ideal, it is possible – relative to that standard – for their life to be either too empty and slow or too crowded and fast-paced. Thus, the item taps into how often one feels they get the balance between these alternatives "just right."

Then, in addition to these four items on B/H, there were five items relating to LAPS. We have already noted the ones on experiencing calmness and contentment above. Besides these, we sought to once again develop an item pertaining to a sense of peacefulness. Although we did have items referring to peace in 2020 and 2021, it was now felt that these did not quite hit the mark. In retrospect, we realized that in using the phrase "at peace" it was difficult to escape the connotation of acceptance or resignation. Eventually, after much debate, we arrived at: *"[In general, how often] can you find inner peace during difficult times?"* To begin with, "inner peace" captured the desired notion of a low arousal positive state. The verb construction "can you find"

then added an interesting element of intentionality, activity, and skill, in that rather than simply *happening* to experience such peace the person had some agency in bringing it about. Finally, asking whether people found such peace “during difficult times” also meant the item retained something of the spirit of topics the GWI was interested in and previously created items for, such as resilience and mindfulness. A somewhat different type or dimension of LAPS was then captured by item no. 8: “[In general, how often] is your mind at ease?” Finally, we wanted an item to index the idea that LAPS are not simply “inner” psychological states, but are shaped by people’s context, as reflected in the way that concepts like peace and calm can refer both to states of mind and to people’s environment. In that respect, we eventually arrived at item no. 6: “[In general, how often] do you feel stable and secure in your life?”

7. Conclusion

Initiatives such as the GWP have already provided a great service in generating global assessments of wellbeing. However, given the Western-centric nature of the concepts and metrics used in such assessments, scholars are increasingly appreciative of the need for a more comprehensive global understanding of wellbeing. The GWI collaboration outlined above is intended to help make progress towards that goal, centred around the creation of a new GWP module on wellbeing incorporating non-Western perspectives (which have hitherto been relatively overlooked by the field). This paper traced the evolution of this module to date, from its initial incarnation in the 2020 poll (featuring items on numerous aspects of wellbeing) to a finalized iteration in the 2022 GWP (which focuses specifically on B/H together with LAPS). With the 2022 version now intended to stay consistent longitudinally, this paper establishes a valuable baseline for an endeavour which will hopefully contribute to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of wellbeing, and provide a foundation for further similar initiatives in future.

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