

Pollution makes Europeans unhappy

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Researchers in Canada have found a correlation between air pollution and people's happiness. Their deep analysis, reported in the latest issue of the *International Journal of Green Economics*, suggests that air pollution may lead to unhappiness while the converse is also true, the unhappier the citizens of a country the more air pollution.

Economists at Trent University in Ontario, Canada, have taken an outside view of fourteen European countries to see whether or not there is a causal link between levels of air pollution and the happiness of citizens of those countries. Byron Lew and Mak Arvin explain that their research is not about the determinants of [life satisfaction](#) or air pollution but the primary goal is to focus on the causal relationships between these two factors.

The researchers looked at recorded data on pollution levels in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain and the UK. They analysed per capita [carbon dioxide emissions](#) as a proxy for overall pollution given that its main source is the burning of fossil fuels and looked for causality using a [statistical formula](#), the Granger causality test, with citizen happiness as determined from [survey data](#).

The findings do not offer a mechanism by which [air pollution levels](#) cause [unhappiness](#) and vice versa. However, they do suggest that policy changes that encourage less pollution will have a positive effect. "A stronger case can be made for further regulation of the state of the environment in general and air quality in particular," the team says.

"Cleaner air will elevate the level of happiness of citizens in Europe and we suspect in other regions around the globe." The researchers add that measures ought to be taken by policy makers to improve their citizens degree of life satisfaction, such as improved healthcare and education, social safety nets for those in the poverty trap and efforts to reduce workplace stress might in turn lead to a reduction in air pollution.

More information: Full bibliographic information: "Happiness and air pollution: evidence from 14 European countries" in *Int. J. Green Economics*, vol 6, 331-345

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