THE FACEBOOK EXPERIMENT

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECT THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES?
THIS EXPERIMENT WAS CONDUCTED ON 1095 PEOPLE IN DENMARK

WE RANDOMLY ASSIGNED HALF OF THEM TO THE FOLLOWING TASK:

DO NOT USE FACEBOOK FOR ONE WEEK.

THE HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
THE PARTICIPANTS’ USUAL FACEBOOK BEHAVIOUR

94% visit Facebook as part of a daily routine

86% browse the news feed often or very often

78% use Facebook 30 minutes or more daily

61% prefer to post their good sides on Facebook

69% prefer to post pictures of the great things they experience
“SOCIAL MEDIA IS A NON STOP GREAT NEWS CHANNEL.

A CONSTANT FLOW OF EDITED LIVES WHICH DISTORTS OUR PERCEPTION OF REALITY.”

THE HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
WHAT WE DID

In this experimental study we wanted to test if Facebook use affects our subjective well-being. 1095 people participated in the experiment. We asked them to evaluate their lives on different dimensions. Then we randomly allocated the participants to either:

- The control group (continue to use Facebook as usual)
- The treatment group (no Facebook use for an entire week)

After one week we asked all of them to evaluate their lives again.

1095 people

Pre-test

Control group  ->  Control group

Treatment group  ->  Treatment group

Post-test
WHAT WE FOUND

AFTER ONE WEEK WITHOUT FACEBOOK THE TREATMENT GROUP REPORTED A SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER LEVEL OF LIFE SATISFACTION.

Life Satisfaction among participants

In general, how satisfied are you with your life today? [1-10]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Treatment group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>7.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
MOOD REPORT

ON THE LAST DAY OF THE EXPERIMENT WE ASKED BOTH GROUPS WHAT MOODS THEY HAD EXPERIENCED THAT DAY. PEOPLE WHO HAD TAKEN A BREAK FROM FACEBOOK FELT HAPPIER AND WERE LESS SAD AND LONELY.

Treatment group (those who took a break from Facebook)
Control group (those who kept using Facebook)

81% 88% are happy

34% 22% are sad

75% 84% enjoy life

49% 61% are enthusiastic

56% 64% are decisive

54% 41% are worried

20% 12% are angry

33% 22% feel depressed

25% 16% feel lonely
SOCIAL LIFE

AFTER ONE WEEK WITHOUT FACEBOOK THE TREATMENT GROUP EXPERIENCED AN **INCREASE IN THEIR SOCIAL ACTIVITY** – AND AN **INCREASE IN THEIR SATISFACTION WITH THEIR SOCIAL LIFE.**

**Social activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Treatment group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Satisfaction with social life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Treatment group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This question refers to your social life in ‘the real world’ – not on Facebook: How socially active have you been during the last week? [1-5]*

*This question refers to your social life in ‘the real world’ – not on Facebook: How satisfied are you with your social life as it has been during the last week? [1-5]*
CONCENTRATION

AFTER ONE WEEK WITHOUT FACEBOOK THE TREATMENT GROUP EXPERIENCED LESS CONCENTRATION DIFFICULTIES

Concentration among participants
I find it hard to concentrate. [1-5]

Concentration is easy
Concentration is hard
PEOPLE ON FACEBOOK ARE **55% MORE LIKELY TO FEEL STRESSED.**

PEOPLE TAKING A BREAK FROM FACEBOOK ARE **18% MORE LIKELY TO FEEL PRESENT IN THE MOMENT.**
WASTE OF TIME

AFTER ONE WEEK WITHOUT FACEBOOK THE TREATMENT GROUP FELT THEY WASTED THEIR TIME LESS.

Feeling of wasting time among participants
I often feel that I waste my time. [1-5]
FACEBOOK ENVY

5 OUT OF 10 ENVY THE #AMAZING EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS POSTED ON FACEBOOK

1 OUT OF 3 ENVY HOW #HAPPY OTHER PEOPLE SEEM ON FACEBOOK

4 OUT OF 10 ENVY THE APPARENT #SUCCESS OF OTHERS ON FACEBOOK

THE HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL COMPARISONS

PEOPLE ON FACEBOOK ARE 39% MORE LIKELY TO FEEL LESS HAPPY THAN THEIR FRIENDS.
INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON WHAT WE ACTUALLY NEED, WE HAVE AN UNFORTUNATE TENDENCY TO FOCUS ON WHAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE.
THE HAPPY DANES
Denmark is often named the world’s happiest country. But what are the reasons for the high levels of happiness in Denmark? For the first time, the reasons are explained in this comprehensive report. “The Happy Danes – Exploring the reasons behind the high levels of happiness in Denmark” explains how a strong civil society, a good work-life balance, and a high level of social security drives happiness.

SUSTAINABLE HAPPINESS
The tools of happiness research have the potential to recast the debate between economic growth and environmental protection. This report explores how sustainable behaviours influence our level of happiness, why there a link between sustainable behaviours and well-being, and how happiness research may contribute to better societies, a more sustainable future, and an improvement of our lives?

REPORTS ARE FREE FOR DOWNLOAD.
THE HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

WHO WE ARE
The Happiness Research Institute is an independent think tank focusing on well-being, happiness and quality of life.

Our mission is to inform decision makers of the causes and effects of human happiness, make subjective well-being part of the public policy debate, and improve the quality of life for citizens across the world.

WHAT WE DO
We explore why some countries, cities, and people are happier than others and what drives well-being and quality of life.

We partner with cities, governments, organizations and foundations to develop customized research, tools and recommendations needed to measure and improve quality of life.

Want to learn more? Go to www.happinessresearchinstitute.com