



HAPPINESS AND THE ANTICIPATION OF THE ELECTION

This is the fifth note in our series about South Africa's happiness. The previous notes can be found here.

As explained in the previous notes, Prof Talita Greyling and Dr Stephanié Rossouw developed the "Happiness Index (GNH)" based on sentiment analysis of the daily Tweets of South Africans, which they then apply to a sentiment balance algorithm to get a happiness score. Dawie Roodt, one of the leading economists in the country, interprets this data daily to understand the "mood" of the country and how it relates to the economy and the lead up to the election.

Election day is tomorrow and there is "election energy" in the air, with a wide variety of sentiment. It is clear that the nation is holding its breath as a collective, awaiting the outcome of the elections.

What do we know about happiness, voter turnout and electoral success?

We know that governments and policies affect an individual's happiness and wellbeing, and in fact, our constitution states that the main aim of the government is to increase the wellbeing (happiness) of the people in the country. However, we are curious about the reversed relationship between societal happiness and political behaviour.

In the US, UK and China, research has shown a strong positive relationship between the level of happiness and voter turnout. The happier people are, the more likely they are to vote, and the opposite is also true — depressed people are less likely to vote. What will the scenario be in South Africa? Will people be happier and therefore a higher voter turnout, or will it be the opposite? Well, the answer lies in watching the movement in the GNH score over the next few days.

What did our GNH score reveal over the last few days?

Since 30 April we have seen a continuous upward movement in the index, with the highest score of 6.68 on Friday (3 May). On Saturday (4 May) and Sunday (5 May), the scores decreased slightly to around 6.4. Is this slight decrease in the GNH score due to sports teams not performing as expected over the weekend? Is it due to sympathy towards Malema, with his grandmother passing away? Or is it the first signs of a slightly negative sentiment as election day approaches?

Looking at the Tweets, it is interesting to see that people's feelings are closely reflected in their Tweets and the time at which they Tweet. There is a clear correlation between the time of day and the Tweet content. During night-time, many Tweets relate to sleeping disorders, alcohol (too much and too little), fear, burglaries, and being sick. These all contribute to a more negative sentiment. While from 5:00 in the morning the topics are more related to the weather (bad weather linked to negative sentiment and good weather to positive), breakfast and traffic concerns. During the day Tweets are more topical, as on the elections with the names Ramaphosa, Maimane, Malema and Zuma often appearing. On Sunday evening we saw Tweets on TV programmes, sports and then the dreaded Monday...

Monitoring the GNH score per hour on Sunday, we found a different trend to what we saw on previous days. As on the other days happiness peaked early morning, but different from the previous days, there was no second peak later in the afternoon. Is this due to "Sunday Blues" or is this an indication of something bigger, seeing that there is only one day to go to the elections?

Stay tuned for the next note and remember to follow the GNH score during election day as we will be reporting it regularly on the day on our Efficient Group Facebook page...

Important to note that all opinions given in the above-mentioned note is that of the author. Prof Talita Greyling (talitag@uj.ac.za) and Dr Stephanié Rossouw (stephanie.rossouw@aut.ac.nz) are the developers of the happiness index. On any technical queries related to the GNH, please contact Prof Talita Greyling.

Disclaimer:

Information and sources in this document are from sources believed to be reliable, but cannot be guaranteed due to the nature thereof. The information in this report should not be construed as financial advice. Professional financial advice should be sought before any course of action is pursued. Efficient Group Limited, shall not be responsible and disclaims all liability for any loss, damage (whether direct or consequential) or expense of any nature whatsoever, which may be suffered as a result of, or which may be attributable, directly or indirectly, to the use of or reliance upon any information contained in this report. The company, directors and staff may from time to time have interests in shares mentioned in this report.

