

# Gallup: Central America is the world's happiest region, despite sky-high homicide rates in some countries

By Corey Kane

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Despite high crime, murder rates, persistent poverty and income inequality, Latin America and one of its most troubled regions, Central America, reported the highest levels of satisfaction in the world.

The results came in an annual poll of 138 countries published by [Gallup](#) on Wednesday. Costa Rica reported the sixth highest level of happiness in the world, with 82 percent of respondents saying they were happy. Paraguay led the world with a score of 87 percent. All surveyed Central American countries ranked in the top 11 worldwide, with Panama being second. Belize was not included in the survey.

The overwhelming majority of Latin American and Caribbean countries ranked high, with Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela also in the top 10. The lowest countries in the region were Jamaica and Haiti at 64th and 121st respectively. The United States ranked 24th, with 78 percent saying they were happy.

Central Americans saying they are happy comes in contrast to a number of recent studies stating the region is wrecked by high murder rates and misery. [The United Nations](#) reported that Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala remained among the world's leaders in murder rates in April. A researcher at the World Bank noted that [30 percent of the world's](#) murders happen in Latin America despite having only 9 percent of the world's population.

A study by the libertarian think tank the [Cato Institute](#) also ranked a number of Latin American countries as miserable, according to economic factors such as unemployment, inflation and gross domestic product growth. The study, published in May, ranked Venezuela as the worst out of a group of 89 countries. Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica all ranked highly on the misery index at 19th, 20th and 21st, respectively.

Other economic studies, from the [United Nations](#) and the [World Bank](#), have shown that poverty and income inequality continue to persist in the region, though progress has been made.

This year's poll from Gallup continued a trend, where Latin America and Central America remains at the top. [In 2013](#), Paraguay was also the happiest country. The six Central American countries polled all ranked in the top 13.