

# THE FACEBOOK EXPERIMENT

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECT  
THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES?

THE HAPPINESS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A top-down view of a wooden desk. In the upper left, there is a white cup of dark coffee on a white saucer with a green rim. To the right of the cup is a spiral-bound notebook with a red cover and a black pen with gold accents. In the center of the desk is a white tablet displaying text on a dark blue background.

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.

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# 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.”**

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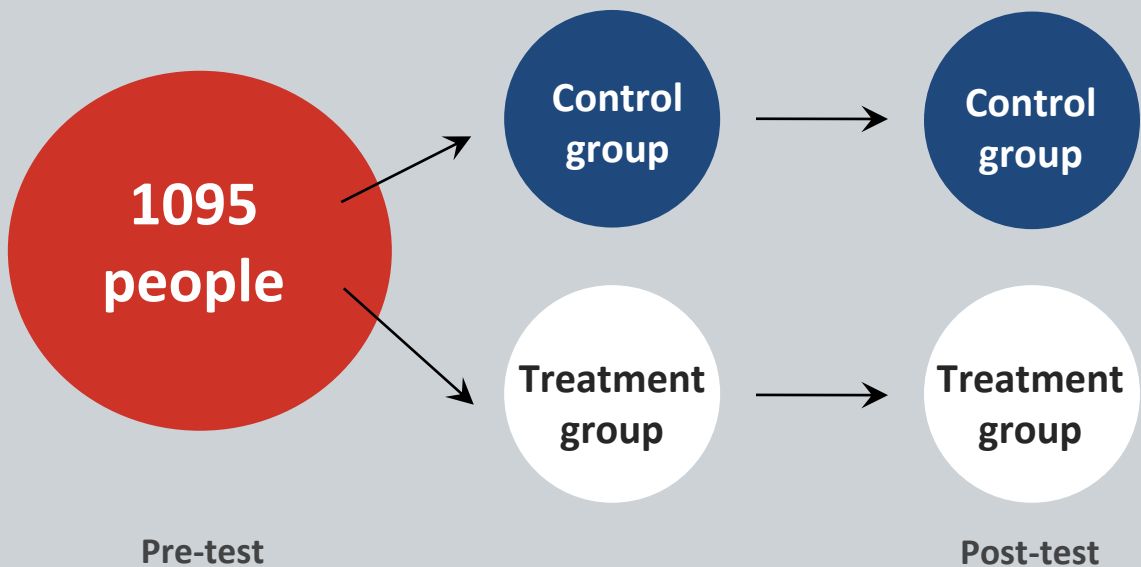
# WHAT WE DID

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.



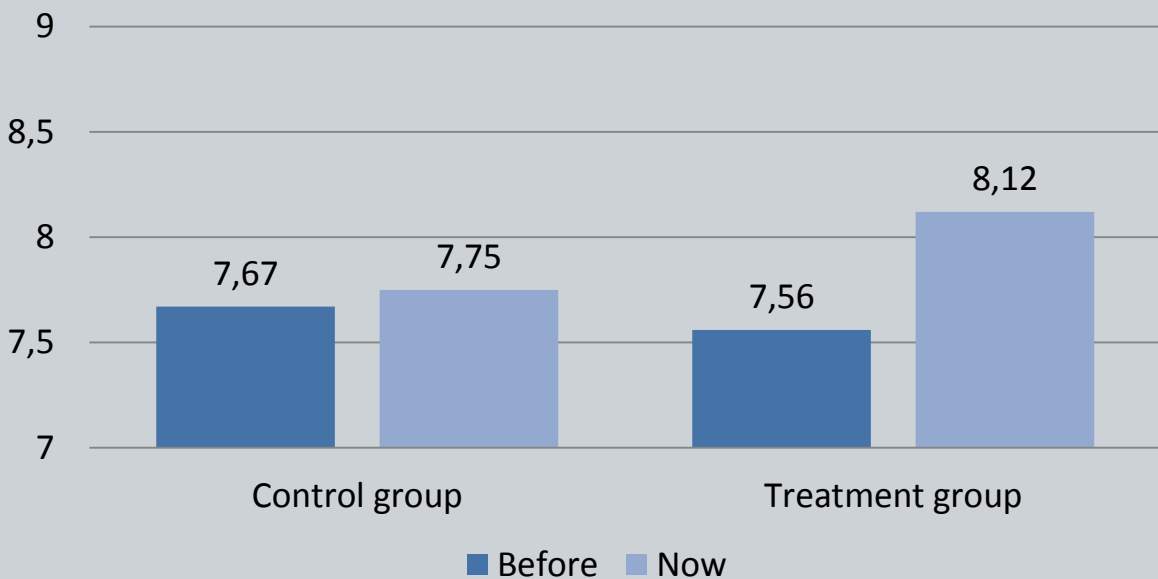


## WHAT WE FOUND

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 you life today? [1-10]*



# 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

54%41%  
are worried

20%12%  
are angry

75%84%  
enjoy life

49%61%  
are enthusiastic

33%22%  
feel depressed

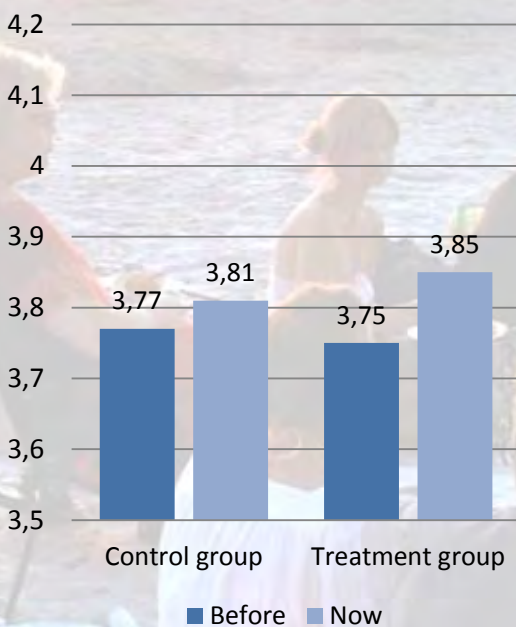
25%16%  
feel lonely

56%64%  
are decisive

# SOCIAL LIFE

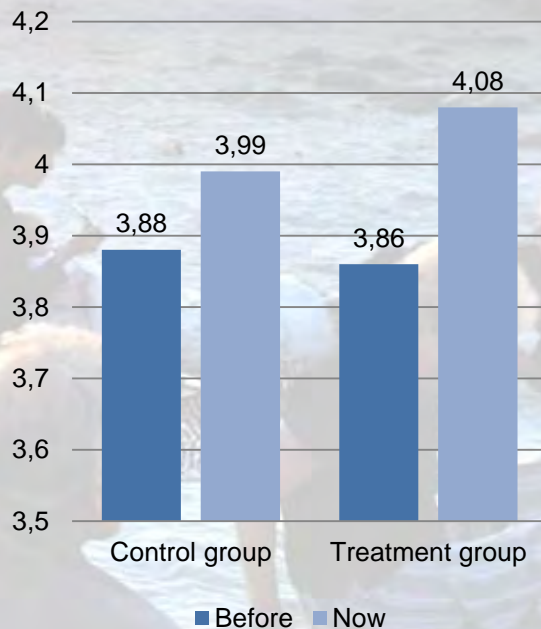
AFTER ONE WEEK WITHOUT FACEBOOK THE TREATMENT GROUP EXPERIENCED AN **INCREASE IN THEIR SOCIAL ACTIVITY** – AND AN **INCREASE IN THEIR SATISFACTION WITH THEIR SOCIAL LIFE**.

Social activity



*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]*

Satisfaction with social life



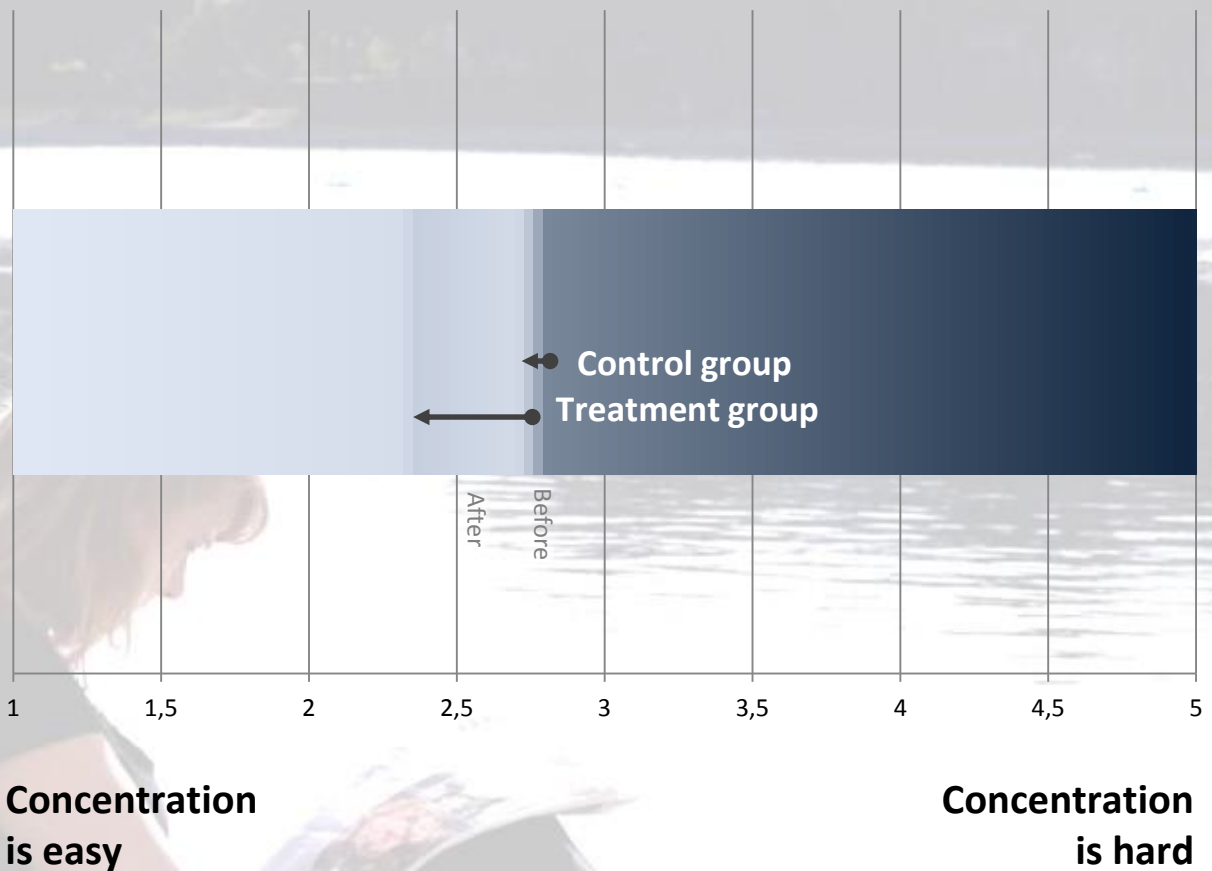
*This question refers to your social life in 'the real world' – not on Facebook: How satisfied are you with your social life as it has been during the last week? [1-5]*



# CONCENTRATION

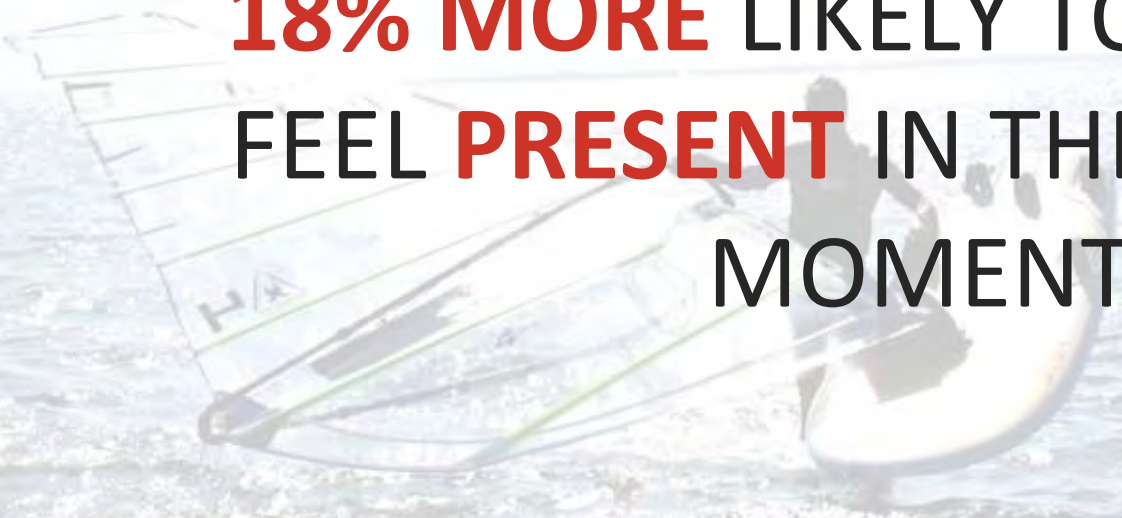
AFTER ONE WEEK WITHOUT FACEBOOK THE TREATMENT GROUP EXPERIENCED **LESS CONCENTRATION DIFFICULTIES**

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



PEOPLE ON FACEBOOK  
ARE **55% MORE** LIKELY  
TO FEEL **STRESSED**.

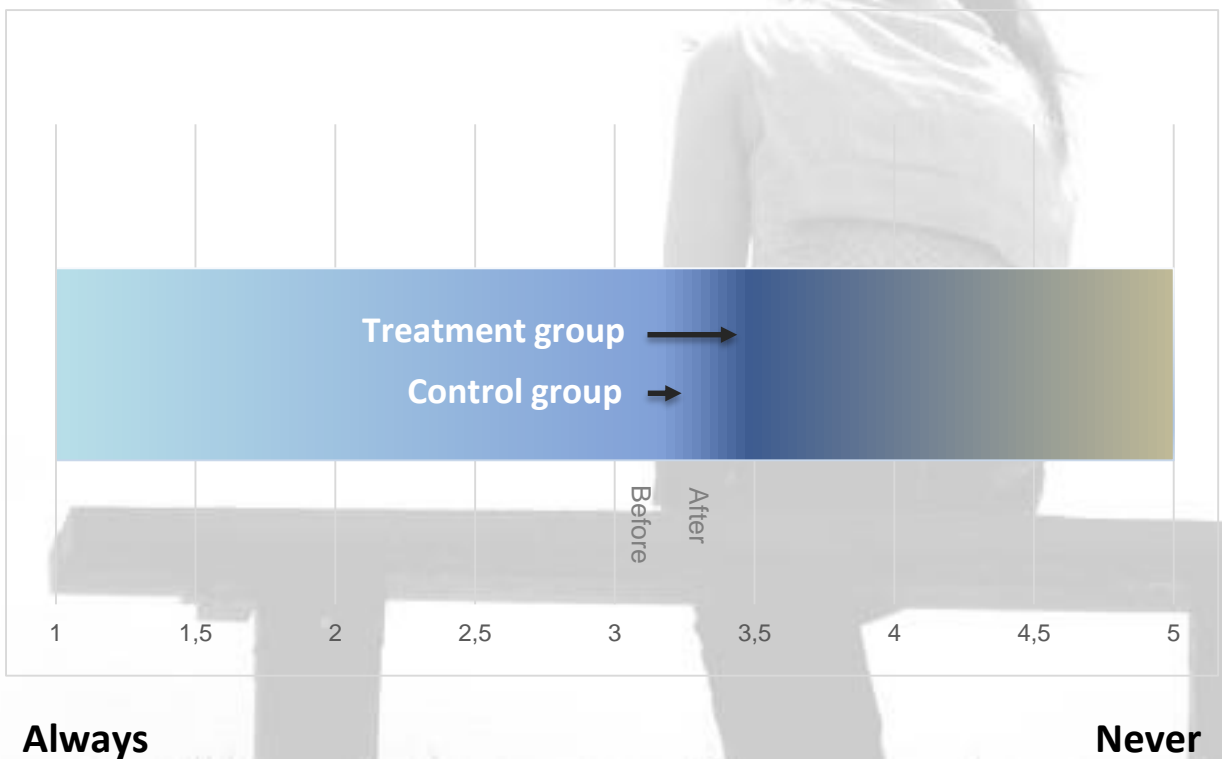
PEOPLE TAKING A BREAK  
FROM FACEBOOK ARE  
**18% MORE** LIKELY TO  
FEEL **PRESENT** IN THE  
MOMENT.



# 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 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.**



# IF YOU LIKED THIS PUBLICATION YOU MIGHT ALSO ENJOY

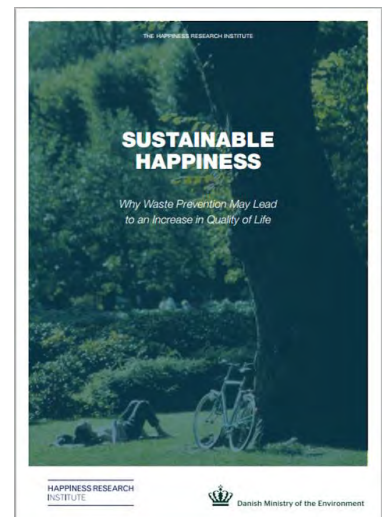
## THE HAPPY DANES

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 is 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](http://www.happinessresearchinstitute.com)





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