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Income and boredom: Evidence from 30 countries

For decades, researchers, governments, and policymakers have sought to understand how financial scarcity affects people's well-being and quality of life. In this paper, we show that past studies have overlooked a fundamental psychological aspect of being poor: boredom. Using data from over 60,000 individuals across 30 countries, we find a robust negative association between income and daily experiences of boredom. In fact, compared with high-income earners, low-income individuals not only feel bored more often, but their experience of boredom is more closely linked to other negative states such as loneliness, worry, and anxiety. Our results pave the way for future research and policies that take boredom into account and address the full extent of the psychological tax exerted by financial hardship.