# UK ranks near bottom for human flourishing as universal snake antivenom edges closer



## Surviving 200 Snake Bites and Other Science Triumphs: A Deep Dive into Human Flourishing and Ancient Mysteries

In a captivating exploration of contemporary scientific stories, recent discussions have highlighted the complexities of human flourishing, groundbreaking advances in medical treatment for snakebites, and significant archaeological findings. A global study placing the UK alarmingly low on the human flourishing index reveals deeper concerns about the nation's overall well-being, while extraordinary personal sacrifice by a snake collector sheds light on the potential for a universal antivenom. Meanwhile, advancements in imaging technology are unveiling the literary treasures of the past, specifically in relation to the Herculaneum scrolls, which were preserved during the catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Recent research has placed the UK third from bottom in a ranking that measures human flourishing, a concept that encompasses emotional well-being, quality of life, and social connections. According to the report, this low ranking raises serious questions about the adequacy of mental health support and community structures within the nation. The study indicates that many individuals in the UK struggle with a sense of purpose and belonging, suggesting that policy changes may be necessary to improve these critical areas of life.

On a markedly different front, Tim Friede, a snake collector, has attracted attention for his audacious pursuit of developing a universal antivenom by intentionally enduring over 200 snake bites. This remarkable undertaking could revolutionise treatment for snakebites, a serious health issue claiming thousands of lives annually, particularly in developing countries. Friede's research is complemented by findings from multiple laboratories exploring alternative approaches to snakebite management. For instance, researchers at the University of Sydney, along with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, have identified heparin, a common blood thinner, as a potential antidote for cobra venom, which could significantly alter the landscape of snakebite treatment.

In an unexpected intersection of the ancient and the modern, scientists using advanced X-ray imaging techniques have been able to unveil the identity of the author behind the Herculaneum scrolls, which date back to the first century BC. This archaeological breakthrough not only enhances our understanding of ancient Greek literature but also provides insight into the cultural milieu of the time. Such discoveries underscore the challenges of preserving knowledge through time, especially in instances like the Herculaneum scrolls, which were severely damaged by the volcanic eruption, yet remain a window into the past.

Collectively, these stories represent a tapestry of human endeavour—whether it is the quest for understanding well-being in contemporary society, the pursuit of medical advancements to save lives, or the unearthing of historical texts. They highlight the resilience and curiosity that characterise both individuals and cultures throughout history. As we strive to improve our collective flourishing, the intersections of science, medicine, and history remind us of our ongoing journey towards knowledge and well-being.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2025/may/08/surviving-200-snake-bites-decoding-ancient-scrolls-and-the-countries-flourishing-podcast), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2025/may/08/surviving-200-snake-bites-decoding-ancient-scrolls-and-the-countries-flourishing-podcast)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/may/08/uk-among-lowest-ranked-countries-for-human-flourishing-in-wellbeing-study)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/may/08/snake-collectors-immunity-quest-opens-path-towards-universal-antivenom), [[6]](https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2024/07/19/new-antidote-cobra-bites-necrosis-discovered-crispr.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/may/08/x-ray-reveals-ancient-greek-author-of-charred-first-century-bc-vesuvius-scroll), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2025/may/08/surviving-200-snake-bites-decoding-ancient-scrolls-and-the-countries-flourishing-podcast)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2025/may/08/surviving-200-snake-bites-decoding-ancient-scrolls-and-the-countries-flourishing-podcast> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2025/may/08/surviving-200-snake-bites-decoding-ancient-scrolls-and-the-countries-flourishing-podcast> - In this podcast, The Guardian's science correspondent Hannah Devlin discusses three intriguing science stories: a global study ranking the UK third from bottom in human flourishing, a man intentionally enduring over 200 snake bites in search of a universal antivenom, and a breakthrough in understanding the charred Herculaneum scrolls buried by Mount Vesuvius.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/may/08/uk-among-lowest-ranked-countries-for-human-flourishing-in-wellbeing-study> - A recent global study has placed the UK third from bottom in terms of human flourishing, highlighting concerns about the nation's overall well-being and quality of life.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/may/08/snake-collectors-immunity-quest-opens-path-towards-universal-antivenom> - Tim Friede, a snake collector, has intentionally endured over 200 snake bites in his quest to develop a universal antivenom, potentially revolutionizing snakebite treatment worldwide.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/may/08/x-ray-reveals-ancient-greek-author-of-charred-first-century-bc-vesuvius-scroll> - X-ray imaging has uncovered the identity of the ancient Greek author of the charred first-century BC Herculaneum scrolls, offering new insights into ancient literature.
6. <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2024/07/19/new-antidote-cobra-bites-necrosis-discovered-crispr.html> - Researchers at the University of Sydney and Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine have discovered that heparin, a common blood thinner, can be repurposed as an inexpensive antidote for cobra venom, potentially reducing the impact of snakebites worldwide.
7. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2024/07/240717162410.htm> - Scientists have identified heparin as a potential antidote for cobra venom, using CRISPR technology to understand the human genes targeted by the venom, offering a new approach to treating snakebite-induced necrosis.