

Study indicates people by nature are universally optimistic

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Despite calamities from economic recessions, wars and famine to a flu epidemic afflicting the Earth, a new study from the University of Kansas and Gallup indicates that humans are by nature optimistic.

The study, to be presented Sunday, May 24, 2009, at the annual meeting of the Association for Psychological Science in San Francisco, found optimism to be universal and borderless.

Data from the Gallup World Poll drove the findings, with adults in more

than 140 countries providing a representative sample of 95 percent of the world's population. The sample included more than 150,000 adults.

Eighty-nine percent of individuals worldwide expect the next five years to be as good or better than their current life, and 95 percent of individuals expected their life in five years to be as good or better than their life was five years ago.

"These results provide compelling evidence that optimism is a universal phenomenon," said Matthew Gallagher, a psychology doctoral candidate at the University of Kansas and lead researcher of the study.

At the country level, optimism is highest in Ireland, Brazil, Denmark, and New Zealand and lowest in Zimbabwe, Egypt, Haiti and Bulgaria. The United States ranks number 10 on the list of optimistic countries.

Demographic factors (age and household income) appear to have only modest effects on individual levels of optimism.

Source: University of Kansas

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