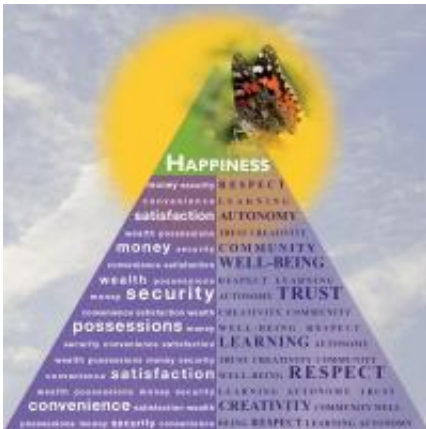


Can money buy happiness? Gallup poll asks, and the world answers

July 1 2010



Life satisfaction and enjoyment of life are two components of happiness. Life satisfaction is more closely associated with income, while positive feelings also depend on other factors, such as feeling respected and connected to others, researchers report. Credit: Debra Bolgla

A worldwide survey of more than 136,000 people in 132 countries included questions about happiness and income, and the results reveal that while life satisfaction usually rises with income, positive feelings don't necessarily follow, researchers report.

The findings, from an analysis of data gathered in the first Gallup World Poll, appear this month in the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#).

"The public always wonders: Does money make you happy?" said University of Illinois professor emeritus of psychology Ed Diener, a senior scientist with the Gallup Organization. "This study shows that it all depends on how you define [happiness](#), because if you look at life satisfaction, how you evaluate your life as a whole, you see a pretty strong correlation around the world between income and happiness," he said. "On the other hand it's pretty shocking how small the correlation is with positive feelings and enjoying yourself."

The Gallup World Poll conducted surveys on a wide range of subjects in a representative sample of people from 132 countries from 2005 to 2006. The poll used telephone surveys in more affluent areas, and door-to-door interviews in rural or less-developed regions.

The countries surveyed represent about 96 percent of the world's population, the researchers report, and reflect the diversity of cultural, economic and political realities around the globe.

This "first representative sample of planet earth," the authors wrote, "was used to explore the reasons why 'happiness' is associated with higher income." The researchers were able to look at a long list of attributes of respondents, including their income and standard of living, whether their basic needs for food and shelter were met, what kinds of conveniences they owned and whether they felt their psychological needs were satisfied.

The surveys included a global life evaluation, which asked respondents to rate their lives on a scale that ranged from zero (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life). Participants also answered questions about positive or negative emotions experienced the previous day. And the poll asked respondents whether they felt respected, whether they had family and friends they could count on in an emergency, and how free they felt to choose their daily activities, learn new things or do "what one does

best."

Like previous studies, the new analysis found that life evaluation, or life satisfaction, rises with personal and national income. But [positive feelings](#), which also increase somewhat as income rises, are much more strongly associated with other factors, such as feeling respected, having autonomy and social support, and working at a fulfilling job.

This is the first "happiness" study of the world to differentiate between life satisfaction, the philosophical belief that your life is going well, and the day-to-day positive or negative feelings that one experiences, Diener said.

"Everybody has been looking at just [life satisfaction](#) and [income](#)," he said. "And while it is true that getting richer will make you more satisfied with your life, it may not have the big impact we thought on enjoying life."

More information: "Wealth and Happiness Across the World: Material Prosperity Predicts Life Evaluation, Whereas Psychosocial Prosperity Predicts Positive Feeling," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Provided by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Citation: Can money buy happiness? Gallup poll asks, and the world answers (2010, July 1) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-07-money-happiness-gallup-poll-world.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.
