

Economists say beautiful people are happier

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Good-looking people are generally happier than their plain looking or unattractive counterparts, largely because of the higher salaries, other economic benefits and more successful spouses that come with beauty, according to new research from economists at The University of Texas at Austin.

This holds true for both men and women and across different cultures, authors Daniel Hamermesh and Jason Abrevaya report in their paper "[Beauty is the Promise of Happiness'?](#)," [PDF] which they are releasing to economists this week. The paper is posted at <ftp.iza.org/dp5600.pdf> [PDF], the Web site for the German-based Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA).

"Personal beauty raises [happiness](#)," says Hamermesh. "The majority of beauty's effect on happiness works through its impact on economic outcomes."

In previous research, Hamermesh has established that better-looking people generally earn more money and marry better-looking and higher earning spouses than others. His upcoming work, *Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People are More Successful*, will be released this summer by Princeton University Press.

The current study suggests these indirect, [economic benefits](#) account for at least half of the additional happiness that good-looking people report. Beauty affects women's happiness more directly than men's.

The findings come as some [political leaders](#) and economists advocate for countries to begin measuring national happiness alongside their economic productivity. The authors suggest that may not be a worthwhile measurement.

"While there are many good reasons to avoid combining [gross domestic product](#) measures with measures of subjective well being," they write, "our discussion showing the importance of this one, essentially immutable determinant of happiness (beauty) suggests that focusing on creating a happier society may not be fruitful."

The economists analyzed data from five surveys conducted by [social scientists](#) in the U.S., Canada, Germany and Britain. These surveys asked more than 25,000 thousand participants about their levels of happiness and also either required an interviewer to rate participants' attractiveness or evaluate their beauty from their pictures.

The top 15 percent of people ranked by looks are over 10 percent happier than people ranked in the bottom 10 percent of looks, researchers say.

Provided by News from The University of Texas at Austin

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