

# What makes Americans and Europeans happy?

April 19 2011, by Deborah Braconnier

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(PhysOrg.com) -- According to a new research study, Europeans are happier when they have a day off and work less, while their American counterparts would rather be working those extra hours. Published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, the research, led by Adam Okulicz-Kozaryn from the University of Texas, looks at survey results of Europeans and Americans and how they identified being happy.

Based on the study results, [Europeans](#) who described themselves as being "very happy" went from 28 percent down to 23 percent as their work hours increased. [Americans](#), on the other hand, remained at 43 percent regardless of how many hours they worked.

The researchers say that due to a lack of research in this field, they cannot completely say that working more hours makes people happier, though they do have a few explanations.

Their thoughts on the reasoning behind the results point toward the different aspirations and self-worth people have. Europeans tend to be more concerned with enjoying and living life to the fullest, while Americans are busy following the “American Dream” and traveling a road toward financial success.

Previous research shows that [happiness](#) can come from wealth and as a person’s income and employment status increase, so does their satisfaction with life. Americans believe that their hard [work](#) is what will move them up the ladder, so they appear happier while working more hours. They believe that by working these hours, they are achieving more and reaching more.

The researchers would like to conduct more studies, perhaps comparing the different European countries with America instead of all of Europe as a whole. They believe [happiness](#) is tied to what people’s goals are, and comparing the different goals of the people in the different countries would need to be considered as well.

**More information:** Europeans Work to Live and Americans Live to Work (Who is Happy to Work More: Americans or Europeans?), by Adam Okulicz-Kozaryn, *JOURNAL OF HAPPINESS STUDIES*, Volume 12, Number 2, 225-243, [DOI:10.1007/s10902-010-9188-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-010-9188-8)

### **Abstract**

This paper compares the working hours and life satisfaction of Americans and Europeans using the World Values Survey, Eurobarometer and General Social Survey. The purpose is to explore the relationship between working hours and happiness in Europe and America. Previous research on the topic does not test the premise that

working more makes Americans happier than Europeans. The findings suggest that Americans may be happier working more because they believe more than Europeans do that hard work is associated with success.

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