

Study explores the roots of happiness

May 15 2015, by Julie Hail Flory



If you have a spring in your step and a smile on your face, you're in good

company. Americans are generally a pretty happy bunch, according to a new study that aims to further our collective understanding of happiness and its root causes.

Conducted by polling and consumer insights company CivicScience, the study, titled "Profiling Happy," explores reported levels of happiness from more than 262,000 Americans, linking them to thousands of attributes including demographics, lifestyle, media consumption and other characteristics. Lamar Pierce, PhD, associate professor of organization and strategy in the Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis, helped lead the research.

"One of the project's goals is to harness the collective expertise of the many researchers and thought leaders who study the roots of happiness," Pierce said. "These data represent the tremendous potential to facilitate expanding our knowledge on consumers, health, beliefs and broader public welfare."

Among the study's findings:

- Happiness is all around you. The [general population](#) is six times more likely to say they are happy vs. unhappy.
- Money can't buy happiness, but it does seem to help. Many higher income traits are closely associated with greater happiness, especially when considering the ways we splurge on ourselves. For example, people who buy jewelry for themselves are 23 times more likely to be happy, and those who eat at upscale restaurants and make purchases on their tablet computers also report more overall happiness.
- When it comes to employment, it's better to be unemployed than to have a job you hate. Being unsatisfied in a job is more greatly associated with unhappiness than being out of work.
- Good health goes a long way toward happiness. Those who say

they are healthy are 11 times more likely to be happy, while those who report being unhealthy are 133-percent more likely to be unhappy.

- With age comes [happiness](#). Beginning with 30- to 34-year-olds, every age group gets progressively happier than the general population, peaking among those aged 65 and older.

Pierce, who also serves as chief academic adviser to CivicScience, focuses his research on business strategy and public policy, fraud and corruption, and ethics and incentives in organizations. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles, including a forthcoming paper he co-authored titled "[Losing Hurts: The Happiness Impact of Partisan Electoral Loss](#)," which incorporates the "Profiling Happy" data.

CivicScience is making the study's large set of aggregate data available to researchers, journalists and others who may wish to analyze the findings.

More information: The full results of the study are available for download here: info.civicscience.com/profilinghappy/

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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