

Higher income predicts feelings such as pride and confidence

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People with higher incomes tend to feel prouder, more confident and less afraid than people with lower incomes, but not necessarily more compassionate or loving, according to research published by the American Psychological Association.

In a study of data from 162 countries, researchers found consistent evidence that higher income predicts whether people feel more positive "self-regard emotions," including confidence, pride and determination. Lower income had the opposite effect, and predicted negative self-regard emotions, such as sadness, fear and shame. The research was published online in the journal *Emotion*.

The findings were similar in both high-income countries and developing countries, said lead researcher Eddie M.W. Tong, Ph.D., an associate professor of psychology at the National University of Singapore.

"The effects of income on our [emotional](#) well-being should not be underestimated," he said. "Having more money can inspire confidence and determination while earning less is associated with gloom and anxiety."

In what they called the most comprehensive analyses to date, the researchers conducted an independent analysis and a meta-analysis of five previous studies that included a survey of more than 1.6 million people in 162 countries. The analyses also included a category of emotions people feel about others, such as love, anger or compassion. Unlike self-regard emotions, the studies didn't find a consistent link between [income level](#) and how people feel about others.

"Having more money doesn't necessarily make a person more compassionate and grateful, and greater wealth may not contribute to building a more caring and tolerant society," Tong said.

The findings from the study are correlational, so the study can't prove if higher income causes these emotions or if there is just a link between them.

Levels of income also may have long-term effects. In an analysis of a

longitudinal survey including more than 4,000 participants in the United States, the researchers found that higher income predicted higher levels of self-regard emotions about 10 years after the initial survey of participants, while low income predicted greater levels of negative self-regard emotions, such as fear and shame.

"Policies aimed at raising the [income](#) of the average person and boosting the economy may contribute to emotional well-being for individuals," Tong said. "However, it may not necessarily contribute to emotional experiences that are important for communal harmony."

More information: "Income Robustly Predicts Self-Regard Emotions," by Eddie M.W. Tong, PhD, Paul Reddish, PhD, Vincent Y.S. Oh, BSoc.Sci, Erin Sasaki, MA, and Elizabeth D.A. Chin, BSoc.Sci, National University of Singapore; Weiting Ng, PhD, Singapore University of Social Sciences; and Ed Diener, PhD, University of Utah and University of Virginia. *Emotion*, published online March 4, 2021. doi.org/10.1037/emo0000933

Provided by American Psychological Association

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