

HAPPINESS PERCEPTION IN DIFFERENT NATIONS

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It is well known that the level of happiness feeling is extremely subjective and even as to one person during the day, not to mention a year or during all life, that feeling can change radically. However, general trends have not only explanations for individual, demographic but also geographical and systemic explanations (we mean the system of states governing).

For example, a considerable amount of research on the dependence of life satisfaction on age in different countries points to certain patterns. It is claimed that the least happy people feel middle-aged, and maximum life satisfaction comes at a later age, closer to retirement. The overall dependence of "happiness level" on age has a U-shaped schedule – the highest level of happiness people feel at the beginning and end of life, and the most unhappy they are, as mentioned – in middle age. Country differences were only found at the bottom of the chart. For example, in the UK, the peak of depression is 44 years. In the US, these data differ: the peak of depression for women is 40 years, and for men - 50 years [1].

Some researchers argue that the above relationship is predominantly characteristic of developed Anglo-Saxon countries (USA, Canada, UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand). In the countries of the former USSR, Eastern Europe, Latin America, life satisfaction is decreasing with age. And in the poorest countries in the world – for example, in central Africa, satisfaction is consistently low throughout life (figure 1). Like the majority of other studies, the source of information was the results of the Gallup World Poll (representative sample of more than 1,000 people in 160 countries) [1].

The mentioned study analyzed three main aspects of subjective well-being: life satisfaction (subjective quality of life as a whole), hedonistic well-being (everyday emotions and mood, such as happiness, sadness, anger, stress), eudemonistic (well-being goals in life). The graphs below illustrate the authors' conclusions.

The stereotypes of happiness in different countries are also interesting. If concise, you may notice the following. Speaking of differences between countries, not only languages and currencies, but also culture will come to mind first. And it is exactly the thing that defines the values of a nation and the picture of the world, which in turn influences what people need for a harmonious and happy life.

For example, the French used to live on the principle of "less and slower" [3]. They like to spend time watching and do not want to catch up all at once. If you are close to romantic France, you may be able to find happiness in a carefree pastime. Put aside all the chores, order a croissant and a cup of coffee at the cafe and study the landscape outside the window. Go to hypermarkets less often and do not load yourself with heavy bags. It is best to buy the essentials in small shops.

Interestingly, the phrase "No problem!" underpins the philosophy of happiness of Ugandans [4]. In this African country, the desire to "forget the worry and keep the tail pipe" is a kind of motto. To approach this positive feeling, it is necessary to laugh at least once every 2 hours and to "scare off" negative thoughts with fun dancing.

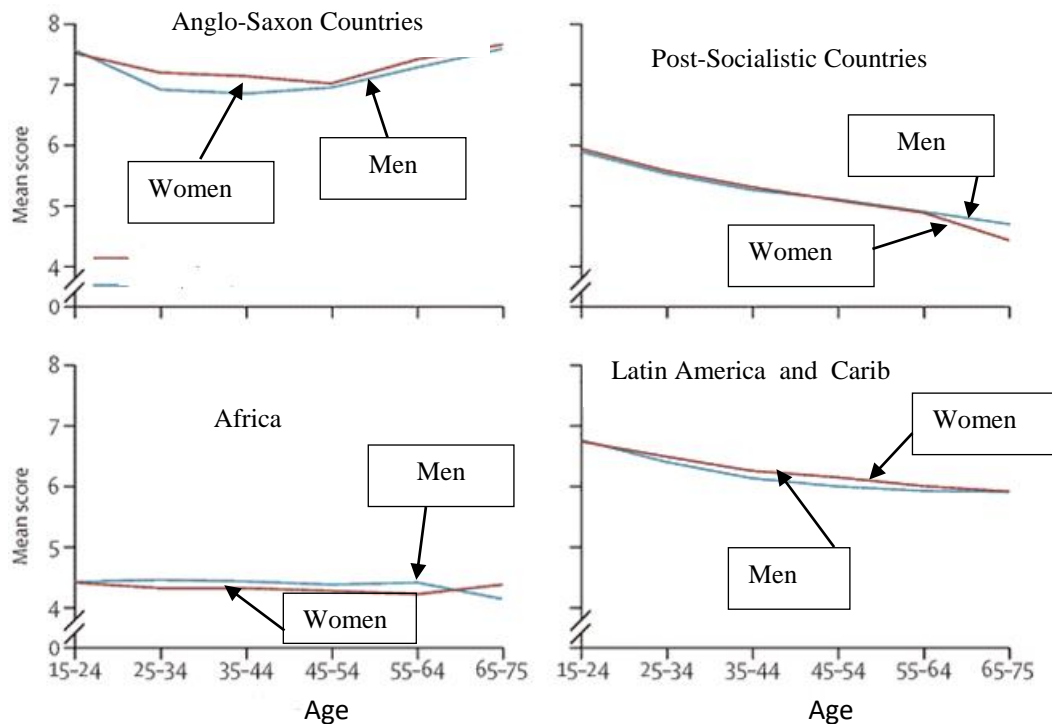


Fig. 1. Influence of age on happiness perception in different countries [1]

Norwegians value comfort and warmth very much. For them, a party is unthinkable without woolen plaids and knitted socks. And to warm up from the inside, the inhabitants of the country of fjords and Vikings drink cocoa. The desire for such a comfortable holiday is indicated by the word "goat" [5]. As you can guess, it is not difficult to achieve Norwegian happiness: it is worth stocking up with the attributes that create a homey atmosphere and make a holiday for family and friends.

In Hawaii, long ago, it was customary to live together, respecting one another and treating oneself with the closest surroundings. For the locals to be happy is, first of all, to give. To experience the feelings they know, do what will bring joy not only to you but also to your friends and loved ones.

Although you will not call the inhabitants of Denmark desperate workaholics, they have a special attitude to work. In Danish, there is even a special word - "arbajdslyst", which can describe the happiness and joy of work, as well as the awareness of yourself as a good worker. To test these feelings, you should not treat your work as a routine and consider yourself a valuable employee whose contribution to the development of the company is really important.

The Swiss have a whole ideology associated with a sense of happiness, and it is named after tennis player Roger Federer. This philosophy is called "Federerism" [2]. In

this country, precision, order and enterprise are the most important. According to the people of Switzerland, to be happy, one must succeed. If the goals in your work and hobby are satisfying, you can proudly call yourself a “federerist”.

Scots value their culture. They enjoy walking through medieval castles and trying out food prepared according to folk recipes, passed down from generation to generation. If you want to experience happiness in Scottish, you should travel to your home country more, getting acquainted with its traditions and customs in detail.

The love of the Japanese for the natural origin of the philosophy of happiness called "wabi-sabi". Residents of the Land of the Rising Sun are very anxious about old furniture and cracked utensils and do not recognize artificially obsolete objects of utensils and interiors. And the idea that perfection lies in imperfection, expressed in the endgame – the art of restoration: as scars emphasize the individuality of the person, and the cracks in the dishes make it unique and special. To feel involved in Japanese happiness, it is enough to glue a broken vase and stop masking scratches and peeling paint on an old wooden table.

Swedes strive for minimalism and conscious consumption. The best idea of a happy life is described by the phrase "not too much, not too little, but just enough". It is not so difficult to achieve Swedish happiness: it is enough to have a modest wardrobe and not part with the same clothes for several seasons; equipping the apartment to buy only the most necessary and functional interior items; and eat simple and healthy food.

Turkey values slowness and carelessness [7]. “Caife” is the word used here to describe happiness, and can be translated as "easy passion for nausea". In order to get closer to the Turkish feeling of harmony, you can, in no hurry, take a walk along the seafront or sit on the balcony with a cup of coffee.

In India, such qualities as flexibility and ingenuity are appreciated. The locals are able to look at old things at an unusual angle, so it is no problem for them to make something absolutely terrific from improvised materials, and to "cook porridge from an ax" for Indians is always a feasible task. Of course, this is partly because of life in a confined space, but such know-how will be useful to anyone. To be happy in Indian, try to look for custom solutions, facing difficult tasks at work or in creativity.

The Irish are a company people, a sense of community and involvement is important to them. The feeling that you are not alone in the country of the Celts is called the short word "crack". If you want to feel happy Irish, go out with your friends to a football game or arrange a sit-down with a guitar song.

The desire of the Italians to dress stylishly, to make a good impression and to take everything from life all formed the basis of their national philosophy of happiness called “bella figura” [8]. Literally, this phrase can be translated as "beautiful". To experience happiness in Italian, enjoy the moments of life: exploring the world around you for a walk; enjoy every bit of food; When choosing what to wear, slowly think through the details down to the smallest detail. So, what is true happiness? And how do you think?

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