

Money and Happiness Really May Not Be Tied Together

Like last year, just over one-third of Americans are very happy according to "Happiness" Index

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – May 15, 2009 – In these days with worries over economic issues and job stability, one would expect Americans to be a lot less happy than they were last year at this time. As they say, money can't buy happiness and maybe worries over money can't change happiness. This year, once again, 35% of Americans are very happy according to The Harris Poll Happiness Index.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,401 U.S. adults surveyed online between April 13 and 21, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

How happy are different groups?

Women are slightly happier than men are (36% vs. 34%) and among women, 38% of married women are very happy compared to 34% of single women.

The more education one has the happier one is as 33% of those who have a high school or less education are happy, 36% of both those with some college and college graduates are happy and 39% of those with a post graduate education are happy. Income, however, is not the same, as the happiest income group is the group making between \$50,000 and \$74,999 (39%) followed by those with incomes of \$75,000 and up (36%).

When looking at happiness by age, just under one-third of those between 18 and 49 are very happy. But 37% of those aged 50-64 are very happy and almost half of those 65 and older are very happy (45%).

One of the only real changes in happiness from last year is among African Americans and Hispanics. Last year, 35% of African Americans were happy as were 32% of Hispanics. This year, those numbers go up to 41% and 36% respectively. Whites, however, are unchanged at 35% for both last year and this year. The number of Democrats who were happy also ticked up this year (from 33% to 36%) and the Republican number ticked down a little (39% to 37%). These changes probably have something to do with the election of President Obama.

Taking a look at the statements that make up the Happiness Index

The Happiness Index is comprised of nine statements and, depending on whether people agree or disagree with them, those responses are averaged together to create the index number. Some of the index statements are almost unchanged from last year. Nine in ten Americans still agree that their relationships with friends brings them happiness (91% this year, 93% last year) and they have positive relationships with family members (90% this year, 92% last year) while eight in ten agree that, at this time, they are generally happy with their lives (81% this year, 83% last year). Also unchanged is that two-thirds of Americans still say that they frequently worry about their financial situation (67% this year, 65% last year).

There are two statements that have shown some changes – for the positive. Last year, almost three-quarters of Americans (73%) said they felt their voice is not heard in national decisions that affect them. This year that number drops to 67%. Just under half of Americans (49%) last year said they rarely worried about their health while this year over half (54%) now agree with that statement.

So What?

What makes people happy? It seems it isn't just money or jobs or even economic stability. But rather it is having a close network of friends and positive relationships with family members. It is also having spiritual beliefs that are important to people. When all of these are examined in total, it is clear that Americans are not unhappy. They may be frustrated with certain aspects of their lives. They may watch the economic news and wish their 401(k)s or stock portfolios were doing better. They may worry that they or a loved one will lose their job, but the important parts that make up the rest of their lives seem to be going well and that most importantly, makes Americans happy.

**TABLE 1
HAPPINESS INDEX**

The Harris Interactive Happiness Index is calculated by taking an average (mean) of those who strongly agree with statements 1- 4 and 7 and strongly disagree with statements 5, 6,8,9 (see Table 2)

Base: All Adults

	2008	2009
All Adults	35	35
Gender		
Men	33	34
Women	36	36
Gender/Marital status		
Single women	34	34
Married Women	39	38
Race/Ethnicity		
White	35	35
African-American	35	41
Hispanic	32	36
Income		
\$34,999 or less	32	31
\$35,000 – \$49,999	33	34
\$50,000 – \$74,999	36	39
\$75,000+	38	36
Age		
18-24	29	32
25-29	31	31
30-39	29	31
40-49	33	32
50-64	36	37
65+	47	45
Disabilities		
People with disabilities	36	33
People without disabilities	35	36
Political Party		
Republican	39	37
Democrat	33	36
Independent	34	33
Education		
High School or less	35	33
Some College	35	36
College Graduate	34	36
Post Graduate	36	39

**TABLE 2
HAPPINESS INDEX STATEMENTS**

“Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements?”

Base: All adults

		AGREE (NET)	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	DISAGREE (NET)	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
My relationships with friends brings me happiness	%	91	60	31	5	3	2	4
I have positive relationships with my family members	%	90	67	23	6	4	2	4
At this time I'm generally happy with my life	%	81	45	36	16	12	5	3
My spiritual beliefs are a positive guiding force to me	%	74	48	25	19	8	11	7
I feel my voice is not heard in national decisions that affect me	%	67	35	32	25	18	6	9
I frequently worry about my financial situation	%	67	33	34	29	20	9	4
I rarely worry about my health	%	54	18	36	44	30	13	2
My work is frustrating	%	36	13	23	54	26	28	10
I rarely engage in hobbies and pastimes I enjoy	%	33	11	21	66	33	33	2

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 percent due to rounding

**TABLE 2
HAPPINESS INDEX STATEMENTS – TREND**

“Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements?”

Percent saying “Strongly/Somewhat Agree”

Base: All adults

	2008	2009
	%	%
My relationships with friends brings me happiness	93	91
I have positive relationships with my family members	92	90
At this time I'm generally happy with my life	83	81
My spiritual beliefs are a positive guiding force to me	77	74
I feel my voice is not heard in national decisions that affect me	73	67
I frequently worry about my financial situation	65	67
I rarely worry about my health	49	54
My work is frustrating	37	36
I rarely engage in hobbies and pastimes I enjoy	32	33

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100 percent due to rounding

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States April 13 and 21, 2009, among 2,401 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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Q905

The Harris Poll® #49, May 15, 2009

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