



# *The* HAPPINESS *of* PURSUIT

*AMERICANS ARE FREE TO PURSUE HAPPINESS, BUT THERE'S NO GUARANTEE WE'LL ACHIEVE IT. THE SECRET IS KNOWING HOW—AND WHERE—TO LOOK* BY JEFFREY KLUGER



Photograph by Hannah Whitaker for TIME

# IF

YOU'RE AN AMERICAN AND YOU'RE NOT HAVING FUN, it just might be your own fault. Our long national expedition is entering its 238th year, and from the start, it was clear that this would be a bracing place to live. There would be plenty of food, plenty of land, plenty of minerals in the mountains and timber in the wilderness. You might have to work hard, but you'd have a grand time doing it.

That promise, for the most part, has been kept. There would be land rushes and gold rushes and wagon trains and riverboats and cities built hard against cities until there was no place to build but up, so we went in that direction too. We created outrageous things just because we could—the Hoover Dam, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Empire State Building, which started to rise the year after the stock market crashed, because what better way to respond to a global economic crisis than to build the world's tallest skyscraper? We got to the moon 40 years later and, true to our hot-rodding spirit, soon contrived to get a car up there as well. The tire tracks left on the lunar surface (tracks that are still there) are the real American graffiti.

All human beings may come equipped with the pursuit-of-happiness impulse—the urge to find lusher land just over the hill, fatter buffalo in the next valley—but it's Americans who have codified the idea, written it into the Declaration of Independence and made it a central mandate of the national character. American happiness would never be about savor-the-moment contentment. That way lay the reflective café culture of the Old World—fine for Europe, not for Jamestown. Our happiness would be bred, instead, of an almost adolescent restlessness, an itch to do the Next Big Thing. The terms of the deal the founders offered are not easy: there's no guarantee that we'll actually achieve happiness, but we can go after it in almost any way we choose. All by itself, that freedom ought to bring us joy, but the more cramped, distracted, maddeningly kinetic nature of the modern world has made it harder than ever. Somehow there must be a way to thread that needle, to reconcile the contradictions between our pioneer impulses and our contemporary selves.

KINSHIP

Marriage does contribute to bliss; it's a better predictor of happiness than having money or children.

About 80% of young people who say they have a good relationship with their parents are also happier with life in general.

Those impulses are very deeply rooted: pilgrims to the New World were a self-selected group. Not every person suffering under the whip of tyranny or the crush of poverty had the temperamental wherewithal to pick up, pack up and travel to the other side of the globe and start over. Those who did were looking for something—pursuing something—and happiness is as good a way of defining that goal as any. Once that migrant population started raising babies on a new continent, the odds were that the same questing spirit would be bred into or at least taught to the new generations as well.

And it has been. It took us 100 years to settle the continent and less than 200 to become the world's dominant power. We snatched and grabbed and extracted, yes, but we gave back too. Happy people don't just accumulate fortune; they invent things—the lightbulb, the telegraph, the movie camera, the airplane, the mass-produced automobile, the polio vaccine, the personal computer, social media, the iPhone. And happy people are also generous people, rebuilding other nations (hello, Marshall Plan) and donating to charities; the U.S. still ranks No. 1 among all nations in per capita charitable giving.

But what happens to a breed of people hardwired by genes or culture or both to build, build, build when most of the building is done? What happens when the sprinting dog actually catches the car? That first moon landing—Apollo 11—was a very big deal, something we had pursued like nothing else. But Apollo 12? Sort of a letdown.

It's not as if we don't have the financial means to keep ourselves stimulated. We spent $118 billion on travel abroad in 2012; we spend close to $25 billion per year to attend sporting events and, combined with Canada, nearly $11 billion on movie tickets. We buy ourselves an annual $140 billion worth of recreational equipment and $200 billion of electronics.

But that's consumptive happiness, the happiness that comes not from sowing but from reaping, not from building the house but from watching TV in your new living room. That may be the goal of the work, but it's a goal that, once achieved, can leave us feeling bored.

Since 1972, only about one-third of Americans have described themselves as "very happy," according to surveys funded by the National Science Foundation. Just since 2004, the share of Americans who identify themselves as optimists has plummeted from 79% to 50%, according to a new TIME poll. Meanwhile, more than 20% of us will suffer from a mood disorder at some point in our lifetimes and more than 30% from an anxiety disorder. By the time we're 18 years old, 11% of us have been diagnosed with depression.

PEOPLE WHO DWELL ON THE PAST AND FUTURE ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE HAPPY THAN PEOPLE WHO CONCENTRATE ON THE PRESENT.

1/4 of single people believe married people have more boring social lives.

A 2013 study found that homosexual men experience less depression than heterosexual men, as long as they had come out.

SOURCES: PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE; JOURNAL OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY; MTV RESEARCH AND STRATEGIC INSIGHTS; SINGLES IN AMERICA; BRITISH OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS

The gap between our optimistic expectations and the reality that a significant portion of the population is, of late, cranky and dissatisfied may be what has spawned the vast happiness industry. We tap that industry in a lot of ways—with pills (the TIME poll found that 25% of American women and 5% of men say they are taking antidepressants), with food (48% of women and 44% of men admit to eating to improve their mood, contributing to the U.S. obesity epidemic), with self-improvement products and services (including books, audiobooks and seminars, self-improvement is a $10 billion-a-year industry, about the same as Hollywood), with borrowed wisdom (there are 5,000 motivational speakers in the U.S., earning a collective $1 billion per year). The pursuit of happiness, once an ideal, has become a big business but not an especially effective one; plenty of other countries are doing a lot better than we are without trying so hard. According to the 2012 World Happiness Report, published by the Earth Institute of Columbia University, the U.S. ranks 23rd on a 50-country happiness index, far behind No. 1 Iceland, No. 2 New Zealand and No. 3 Denmark and trailing Singapore, Malaysia, Tanzania and Vietnam.

If you're part of the demographic pursuing joy or just trying to quell some psychic angst, none of this is a surprise to you, nor is the way happiness is now being merchandised, since you may have spent more than your share of disposable income on meditation or yoga classes, life coaching or happiness apps. Part of the solution, however, may lie not in a product or a program but simply in a better understanding of the particular way Americans define happiness in the first place. There are answers to be found in our genes, in our collective psyche, in the workings of our brain. If it was possible for our ancestors to be happy on the prairie, it ought to be possible for us to be happy in our jobs, our families, our communities. We've got all the toys; now we need to relocate the joy, to tap into the propensities that allow us to take pleasure in striving—in, if you will, the pursuit.

## The Biology of Happy

THE FAMILIAR NOTION THAT THE DESCENDANTS OF immigrants, whether they arrived from old Europe 300 years ago or Asia last year, are heirs to a genetically optimistic temperament makes intuitive sense. But it also makes us uneasy, and it should. That way lies a belief in a sort of breedable, biological specialness—an exceptionalism we accept when it's preceded by the word *American* but that spooks us when the word is *Russian* or *Chinese* or *Japanese.*

That said, simple biology—evident since Gregor Mendel started breeding his pea plants in the 19th century—dictates that the random mix



Photograph by Hannah Whitaker for TIME

of genetic traits within any one population will be amplified when that population starts breeding. That ought to be true for so-called immigrant genes too, and in 2011, that idea got a big boost when investigators at Harvard and Boston University analyzed a gene dubbed DRD4, which is associated with activity in the brain's dopamine receptors. The gene comes in several forms, or alleles. Of the three most common, one codes for even-temperedness and reflection, while the other two code for exploratory and impulsive behavior, as well as a taste for risk taking and a tolerance of novelty.

When the investigators looked at the frequency of the different alleles in people around the world, they found that the farther along the migration route from Africa, the cradle of us all, through central Asia, Europe and the New World, the likelier people were to carry the two novelty-seeking alleles. Studies of another gene called 5-HTTLPR, related to serotonin transport, have yielded similar findings. The allele of that gene that codes for anxiety and risk avoidance is less common in individualistic cultures like that of the U.S.

If genes play a role in shaping immigrant temperament, they do so in a subtle way. Serotonin and dopamine are often, simplistically, thought of as feel-good neurotransmitters. The more you have of them, the happier you are. But in the case of immigrants at least, the power of the chemicals is that they regulate what researchers straightforwardly call search activity—forward-looking behavior that often occurs in pursuit of a specific goal. Search activity simply feels good—a fact that helps explain why shopping for something is often more fun than buying it, hunting can be more enjoyable than actually bagging your prey, and so many politicians appear to have a better time running for office than holding it.

What's more, explains Dr. Vadim Rotenberg, a psychiatrist and psychophysiologist at Tel Aviv University, the feel-good search experience can stimulate people to continue pursuing a goal even when they're having trouble achieving it. That's as good an explanation for immigrant persistence as there ever was. So how does a brain bred for the joy of pursuit react to stress and a climate of near constant distractions—both grindingly consistent features of the postindustrial world?

At the neurological level, happiness is a very complex thing, and lots can go wrong. Studies of the brain conducted with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) show varying levels of happiness-related activity in the left prefrontal cortex and the more primitive basal ganglia, which form part of the reward loop; the amygdala, which processes a range of basic emotions; the septal area, which is involved in the experience of empathy; and the anterior insula, which helps focus our attention on the things that are making us happy in the first place.

Earlier this year, neuroscientist Sylvia Morelli of

## HAPPY THOUGHTS

**WISE WORDS ON FINDING FULFILLMENT**

'Happiness is not a goal, it is a by-product. Paradoxically, the one sure way not to be happy is deliberately to map out a way of life in which one would please oneself completely and exclusively.'

**ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**
**First Lady of the United States, 1933–45**
*You Learn by Living (1960)*

'The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle.'

**STEVE JOBS**
**Co-founder and former CEO of Apple Inc.**
*Stanford University commencement speech (2005)*

'Happiness in this world, when it comes, comes incidentally. Make it the object of pursuit, and it leads us a wild-goose chase, and is never attained. Follow some other object, and very possibly we may find that we have caught happiness without dreaming of it.'

**NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE**
**American novelist and essayist**
*The American Notebooks (1851)*

'Happiness is not to be achieved at the command of emotional whims.'

**AYN RAND**
**Russian-American novelist and philosopher**
*Atlas Shrugged (1957)*

'It is strange to see with what feverish ardor the Americans pursue their own welfare, and to watch the vague dread that constantly torments them lest they should not have chosen the shortest path which may lead to it.'

**ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE**
**French political theorist and historian**
*Democracy in America (1835)*

'Every man is a suffering-machine and a happiness-machine combined. The two functions work together harmoniously, with a fine and delicate precision, on the give-and-take principle.'

**MARK TWAIN**
**American novelist and humorist**
*The Mysterious Stranger (1908)*

RAND, TWAIN: AP; TOCQUEVILLE, HAWTHORNE, ROOSEVELT: GETTY IMAGES; JOBS: REUTERS

Stanford University and psychologist Matt Lieberman of UCLA used fMRIs to study how empathically people responded when they were looking at happy or sad images of other people. Empathic experiences are good proxies for personal ones because there's a lot of overlap in the regions of the brain in which they're processed; this is why sympathetic pain can make you squirm even though you haven't been injured and joy at a loved one's success can make you feel as if you succeeded too.

In Morelli and Lieberman's study, the volunteers looked at the pictures either when they were free to focus on them completely or when they were trying to memorize an eight-digit number the researchers had assigned them. Consistently, the people operating under that so-called cognitive load showed reduced empathy reactions, with neural activity down across four different brain regions. People with uncluttered brains processed—and felt—things more deeply. "Being distracted reduces our empathy for others and blunts responses in the brain," says Morelli. "So it's possible that being distracted may also reduce our own happiness." Memorizing an eight-digit number is hardly something you do every day, but juggling e-mails, meeting deadlines and worrying about the next round of layoffs is, and that takes its toll.

## Get Rich, Get Happy

IF TENSION IS MAKING US MISERABLE, SNUFFING out all the good work our happy genes do, we've learned that one balm can fix it all: money. Never mind what you've been taught to the contrary, money can indeed buy happiness, at least in certain circumstances. It was in 1974 that University of Southern California economist Richard Easterlin first formulated his eponymous (and soon ubiquitous) Easterlin Paradox, which held that there is a threshold beyond which increases in income produce no commensurate increase in subjective well-being. Once basic needs (food, clothing, shelter) are met, we simply reach a satiation point. For a lot of people, this never met the plausibility test, and for Americans in particular, who have always been unembarrassedly O.K. with the goal of getting rich, who delighted in a movie in which a character flatly announced that greed is good, the satiation idea was especially troubling.

Turns out we were right. The Easterlin Paradox held sway only until other researchers began poking at it, using longer-term data sets, testing them across multiple cultures and finding that while happiness may not rise as quickly as income (doubling your salary from $75,000 to $150,000 will not make you twice as happy) there is no such thing as growing numb to money. Indeed, just this April, a study by the Brookings Institution and the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan analyzed data from 155 countries and found that not only does subjective well-being rise along with income but in wealthy countries the slope is actually sharper than it is in poorer countries. A 10% bump in a $50,000 income, for example, produces a greater happiness boost than a similar percentage increase in a $10,000 income, even though a little extra money at the lower end of the scale ought to have a more life-improving effect. Rich isn't just better; it's much better.

That, at least, is how things shake out at the national and global level. At the individual and community level, it can be much different. If you're rich, your experiences are not the same as every other rich person's, and the same is true if you're poor. "A reporter once asked me, 'Yes or no, does money make people happy? No scientific waffling, just yes or no,'" says psychologist Edward Diener of the University of Illinois. "I hit Delete."

A massive study Diener led that was published last December analyzed the responses of 806,526 people in 135 countries collected over the course of six years. It found that income corresponds more or less directly to happiness but only if a person's wealth and aspirations keep pace. Earning $170,000 per year might put you in the top 5% of American households, but if you're dreaming of a one-percenter's lifestyle, you'll be disappointed. "Money can boost happiness if it allows people to obtain more of the things they need and desire," says Diener. "But when their desires outpace what they can afford, even rising income can be accompanied by falling feelings of well-being."

This is particularly problematic in the modern era. A century ago, everybody knew the names of the country's richest families—the Carnegies, the Vanderbilts, the Astors—but they were little more than icons. You never really saw how they lived, which was just fine, since if you did, your little split-level house or sole-proprietor business would start to look pretty shabby. In an era of paparazzi and reality shows, everyone sees everything and almost all of us suffer by comparison with someone.

"Bertrand Russell used to say, 'Beggars do not envy millionaires, though of course they will envy other beggars who are more successful,'" says psychologist Cameron Anderson of the University of California, Berkeley. Anderson studies the difference between socioeconomic status—a purely arithmetical measure of how much money you make—and sociometric status, which is a measure of how well you compare with the people around you. Before the beggar could see the millionaire, those distinctions were easier to draw. Now the silos have been blown up or at least made transparent, a process that has accelerated dramatically in the era of social media.

WORK & MONEY

A bad job is better than no job: previously out-of-work people are happier even if a new job has poor pay and hours.

Workers making **$150,000** are twice as likely to say they're very happy as people making **$20,000** or less.

**PEOPLE ARE HAPPIER WHEN THEY'RE ABLE TO BUY NONNECESSITIES. AMERICANS ARE SPENDING MORE ON NEW CARS, EATING OUT AND SPORTS TICKETS THAN IN 2012.**

When people lose a job, their sense of well-being plummets, more from the loss of social status and self-esteem than from the lack of income.

People who care about other people's incomes are typically less happy with their lives.

SOURCES: JOURNAL OF LABOR RESEARCH; JOURNAL OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY; BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS; WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT

SOCIETY

If you're on Facebook, there are more than 1.1 billion other people who can mainline their good times—their new car, their big house, their vacation that you'd have to save 10 years to take—straight into your brain. Half a billion people on Twitter can do the same, a punchy 140 characters at a time. The very setup of social media provides another way to keep score. You've got 50 Twitter followers? Great, but your best friend has 500, and Lady Gaga, in case you're counting, has 38 million. In the TIME poll, 60% of respondents said they do not feel better about themselves after spending time on social media, and 76% believe other people make themselves look happier, more attractive and more successful than they actually are on their Facebook page.

"When it comes to hierarchies, people sort themselves into higher or lower positions," says Anderson. "There's a line of research in which you make people feel high or low by imagining themselves with someone above them or below them." If most of the people in your virtual circle seem better off than you, there's no imagination necessary.

The irony is that those high-status folks may not feel much better than you, and not only because they too are always being exposed to someone who's better off than they are. Rather, their sense of well-being may hinge on why they're buying so many goodies and doing so much posting at all.

In 2012 psychologist Ryan Howell of San Francisco State University conducted a study of nearly 1,000 participants, administering a series of questionnaires about the things they buy, the reasons they buy them and what their level of happiness is. The more a purchase was motivated by an effort to impress other people, the study found, the less of a happiness boost it conferred. While most of us flatter ourselves that we're above that kind of crassness, consider that every vacation photo you ever posted, every new article of clothing you imagined wearing into the office even as you were paying for it, every new car you bought and parked conspicuously in your driveway instead of invisibly in your garage was motivated by the same look-at-me impulse. In a wealthy culture like ours, there's a lot of opportunity for that kind of exhibitionistic spending, as well as for the letdown that follows when the happiness never comes.

In those cases, Howell says, "it's as if your values and what you're interested in don't matter. You can think of it as a litmus test: Would you still engage in this experience if you could tell no one about it?"

Howell is expanding his database with the help of an interactive website, BeyondthePurchase.org, which allows users to take surveys about their buying practices. Their responses are lending support to the idea that another mistake we make is choosing to buy things instead of experiences. Your shoes are not unique; your TV's not unique. Your vacation to Rome or your family camping trip, however, are much more particularly yours since nobody else in the world did exactly the same things or shared them with exactly the same people you did. And far from wearing out, the memories of the experience grow richer over time. "Money can make you happy," Howell says. "But it's about how you spend it."

Republicans are happier than Democrats; Republicans are also more likely to be married and religious.

Black Americans are less likely to say they're "very happy" than white or Hispanic Americans; they're also most likely to make $10,000 or less.

THOUGH STUDIES HAVE FOUND THAT WOMEN REPORT BEING HAPPIER THAN MEN, THAT EFFECT FADES OUTSIDE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND IN PLACES WITH POOR GENDER EQUALITY.

11% of Americans have experienced depression by the age of 18.

Homeowners aren't any happier than renters. They are more likely to experience stress and pack on extra pounds, perhaps as a result.

SOURCES: PEW RESEARCH CENTER; GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY; U.S. CENSUS BUREAU; WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT; NATIONAL COMORBIDITY SURVEY, ADOLESCENT SUPPLEMENT; WHARTON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

## The Stubbornness of Happiness

IF THERE'S AN UPSIDE TO AMERICA'S DOWN MOOD, it's that happiness and the ways we pursue it are so wonderfully adaptive. The country has been at this kind of societal inflection point before—many times before, really—and we've come through it with our spirit intact. Think we're in psychic crisis now? Try the existential crisis of the Civil War, which eventually led to rebuilding and reconciliation, peace and prosperity. Think overleveraged homes and lack of mobility spell the end today? Try the Great Depression. The rise of industrial America, which we usually think of as a good thing, probably felt a lot like our era does now to the workers back then, as people who really wanted to make money left the frontiers and poured into manufacturing centers. It was the end of homesteading and the beginning of clock punching, which seemed terrible, except that clock punching eventually made a lot of people rich or at least richer than they had been.

We're adapting in similar ways now. Steel mills close and tech start-ups open; old media falters and new media emerges. None of it is easy; it's called disruption for a reason. But if the settler gazing out over 1,000 pristine acres felt that delicious frisson of neurotransmitters churning a century or two ago, why shouldn't the entrepreneur drafting a business plan or the Web designer preparing to launch a site experience the same thing?

No American simply inherits happiness by dint of genes or birthplace or a brain set to sunny. Happiness, for a culture, is more like a vital sign, the temperature and heart rate of a nation. Like all vital signs, it can fluctuate. But like all vital signs, it has a set point, a level to which it strives to return. America's happiness set point has long been high and healthy—a simple gift of biology, history and environment maybe but a gift all the same. In our own loud and messy way, we've always worked to make the most of it, and we probably always will.

—WITH REPORTING BY ALEX ACIMAN/NEW YORK AND KATY STEINMETZ/WASHINGTON

FOR AN INSTAGRAM GALLERY OF WHAT JOY LOOKS LIKE AROUND THE WORLD AND MORE, VISIT **time.com/happiness**

FOOD STYLING: VICTORIA GRANOF—STOCKLAND MARTEL

Photograph by Hannah Whitaker for TIME

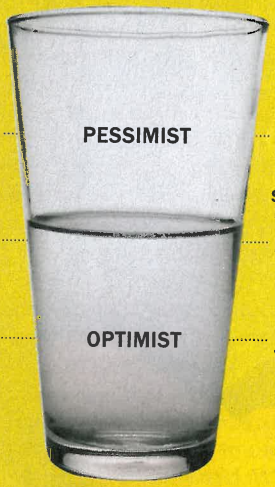
PART 2

# GOT JOY?

*THE TIME POLL ASKED AMERICANS WHAT MAKES THEM HAPPY. HERE'S HOW THEY ANSWERED*

## 1. THEN AND NOW

Do you consider yourself an optimist or a pessimist?



| 2004 | | 2013 |
|---|---|---|
| 15% | PESSIMIST | 4% |
| IT DEPENDS 2% | | SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN 43% |
| 79% | OPTIMIST | 50% |
| 1% | DON'T KNOW/REFUSED | 3% |

Fewer people are doing these things to improve their mood


But people are spending time on social media

56%

## 2. HOW HAPPY ARE YOU?

Are you now as happy as you expected to be at this stage of life?

41% AS HAPPY AS EXPECTED

28% HAPPIER THAN EXPECTED

27% NOT AS HAPPY

Which makes you happier?

35% WORKING TOWARD A GOAL

59% ACHIEVING A GOAL

Science says savoring the journey brings joy, even if we don't realize it

## 3. SOCIAL MEDIA

Do you believe that on their social-media profiles, other people make themselves look happier, more attractive and more successful than they really are?


Do you believe your social-media profile reflects what you're really like?


Have you ever felt **BETTER** about your life after spending time on a social-media site?

38% YES

60% NO

Democrats felt better after spending time on social media because they felt more connected to others

53% DEMOCRATS 26% REPUBLICANS

Republicans felt better after spending time on social media because they felt happier for others

23% DEMOCRATS 34% REPUBLICANS

Have you ever felt **WORSE** about your life after spending time on a social-media site?

23% YES

77% NO

More women felt worse after comparing themselves with others on social media

21% MEN 37% WOMEN

More women felt more isolated from others after spending time on social media

8% MEN 16% WOMEN

When asked whether the number of likes on one of their social-media posts had ever changed their mood or self-esteem, more Democrats answered yes

64% DEMOCRATS 29% REPUBLICANS

GLASS: ANDREW UNANGST—GETTY IMAGES; EMOJI: APPLE

THIS *TIME*/ABT SRBI POLL WAS CONDUCTED BY TELEPHONE ON JUNE 20 AMONG A NATIONAL RANDOM SAMPLE OF 801 AMERICANS AGES 18 AND OLDER. THE SAMPLE INCLUDED BOTH LANDLINE AND CELL PHONES. THE MARGIN OF ERROR FOR THE ENTIRE SAMPLE IS APPROXIMATELY 3.5 PERCENTAGE POINTS.

# The STATES of HAPPINESS

*ACHIEVING BLISS IS COMPLICATED, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE IN THE WORLD*

BY MEGAN GIBSON AND KHARUNYA PARAMAGURU

In a 2012 study in war-torn **Afghanistan,** three times as many people said they were happy as said they were unhappy

**Singapore** has one of the highest per capita GDPs in the world, a low unemployment rate and an enviable education system yet is home to the world's least positive-minded population

Debt-laden **Ireland** faces a gloomy economic future, yet its population is among the cheeriest on the planet, reporting high levels of well-being and contentedness

Once the suicide capital of the world, **Finland** is now a significantly happier place; suicides have drastically decreased, and in 2012, nearly 7 out of 10 Finns said they considered themselves happy

**China**'s economic boom in recent decades has corresponded with a decline in its citizens' life-satisfaction rate

ASIA

EUROPE

They may have suffered through a near crippling economic downturn and regularly face long, hard winters, but people in **Iceland** have the strongest sense of community and the closest social networks in the world—big factors in leading a happy life

NORTH AMERICA

Decades of civil war and poverty in **Guatemala** have led to a proliferation of violent crime, yet its people are among the sunniest in the world

CENTRAL/ SOUTH AMERICA

**Mexicans** boast higher-than-average levels of happiness despite enduring a long-running drug war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives

AUSTRALASIA

**Panama** reports the highest levels of happiness, although almost a third of the population lives below the poverty line

AFRICA

When it comes to work-life balance and life satisfaction, **Canadians** score significantly higher than Americans while making considerably less money

Nearly 9 out of 10 **New Zealanders** are content with their lives, but only a third are happy at work

Despite growing up in a country ravaged by war, 80% of **Somali** youth say they are happy

Despite facing high levels of violence, women in **Brazil** are among the happiest in the world, reflecting the country's progress in female literacy and employment

By some measures, **Botswana** is the saddest country in the world, with low levels of well-being and life expectancy, yet it's one of the highest-ranking sub-Saharan countries in terms of economic progress

**South Africans** are happy at work, but that's for the lucky few who have a job; their nation has one of the world's highest unemployment rates

The gap between rich and poor is widening, yet **Australians** enjoy a higher-than-average sense of community

SOURCES: AFP; GALLUP; GETULIO VARGAS FOUNDATION; NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION; OECD; RIGHT MANAGEMENT; STATISTICS NEW ZEALAND; UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA; WORLD BANK