

## The impact of social connections on happiness and well-being

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### **Introduction:**

Living socially connected specifically in an increasingly isolated world has now become more important than ever with the advancement in technology, urbanization, and individualism. According to one theory — people have an innate need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships (1-3). Our innate tendency is to establish deep connections with others and create lasting bonds. In fact, it has been seen that individuals who were cut off from their tribe frequently experienced significant mental and physical effects, which ultimately resulted in a general decrease in their standard of living.

In addition to giving us a significant portion of our identity, social groupings impart on us a set of abilities that enable us to thrive in a challenging environment. It appears that social ties are essential for overall wellbeing, regardless of cultural differences. Socializing is one of the most vital activities; happy people, for instance, are extremely gregarious and typically have close relationships; children who have a wider social network as children grow up to be happier adults.

### **Reasons why humans are social animals:**

- Evolutionary reasons: To survive, our ancestors lived in groups we have evolved to require social connection to survive.
- Biological reasons: Social connection is hardwired into our brains. Our social networks provide us with a feeling of purpose and belonging.
- Psychological reasons: To feel appreciated, loved, and accepted



### Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs>

### **How important is it to be happy?**

hap·py

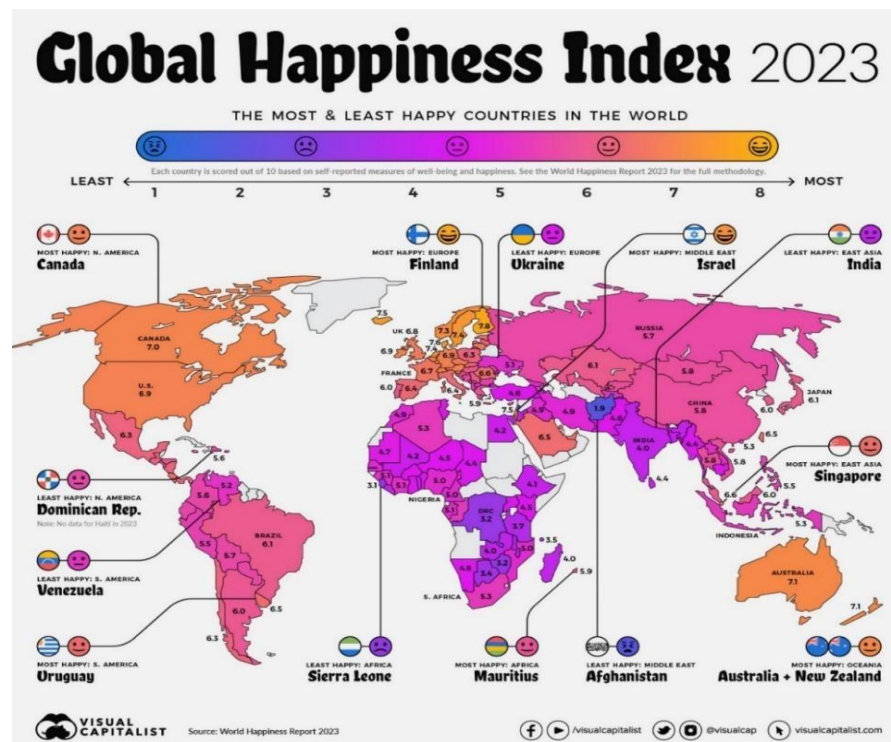
/ˈhæpē/

adjective

1. feeling or showing pleasure or contentment.  
"Melissa came in looking happy and excited."  
synonyms: cheerful, merry, joyful, jovial, good mood

A happy life is essential to a well-being and fulfilled existence. Although there isn't a universally accepted definition of happiness, it's widely accepted to be a positive emotional state. It can be brought on by outside factors like seeing loved ones, accomplishing a goal, or going through something novel and exciting. Happiness, though, can also originate internally, from a feeling of thankfulness, purpose, and significance. A happy life is essential to a well-being and fulfilled existence. It has been connected to several advantages, such as mentioned below (5)

- Improved physical health.
- Better mental health
- Stronger relationships Greater success at work
- Higher income
- Longer life expectancy



Source: [twitterhttps://www.indiatvnews.com/trending/news/harsh-goenka-concerned-about-india-low-ranking-on-world-happiness-index-2023-report-twitter-2023-03-22-856568](https://www.indiatvnews.com/trending/news/harsh-goenka-concerned-about-india-low-ranking-on-world-happiness-index-2023-report-twitter-2023-03-22-856568)

### Countries performance Top

#### **Performers:**

- Finland has been named the happiest country for the past six years; Denmark comes in second, and Iceland comes in third.
- Unlike previous years, where the same countries tend to appear in the top 20, there's a new entrant this year — Lithuania (at the 20<sup>th</sup> spot).(9)

#### **Worst Performers:**

- Afghanistan was ranked as the unhappiest nation, followed by Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, respectively. (9)

#### **India's Performance:**

- India ranks at 126<sup>th</sup> position out of 136 countries, making it one of the least happy countries in the

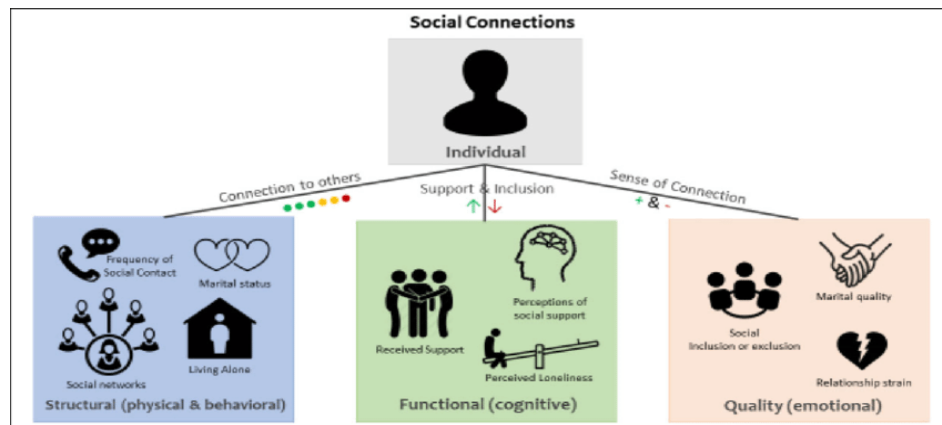
world.

- It even lags behind its neighboring nations like Nepal, China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. (9)

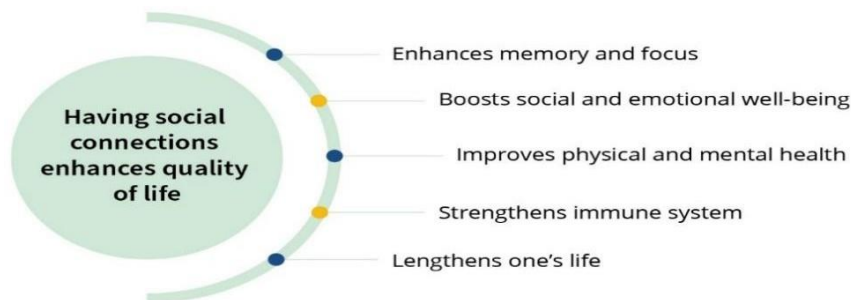
This year's report features many interesting insights, but one that is particularly interesting and heartening has to do with *pro-sociality*. (9)

### **Happiness and Social connection:**

**Happiness and connection** are inextricably linked. There are a number of reasons why social connections are so important for happiness. First, the love and support we receive from our social relationships. Second, social connections help us to cope with stress and overcome challenges. Third, social connections help us to experience positive emotions. (7)



Source: Components of social connection (7)



Source:<https://connectioninaction.ca/about-social-connections/what-are-social-connections/>(8)

### **Social connectedness and belonging:**

A critical component of social connectedness is belonging. We understand *belonging* as having four branches, all equally important, and rooted in approaching the work intersectional:

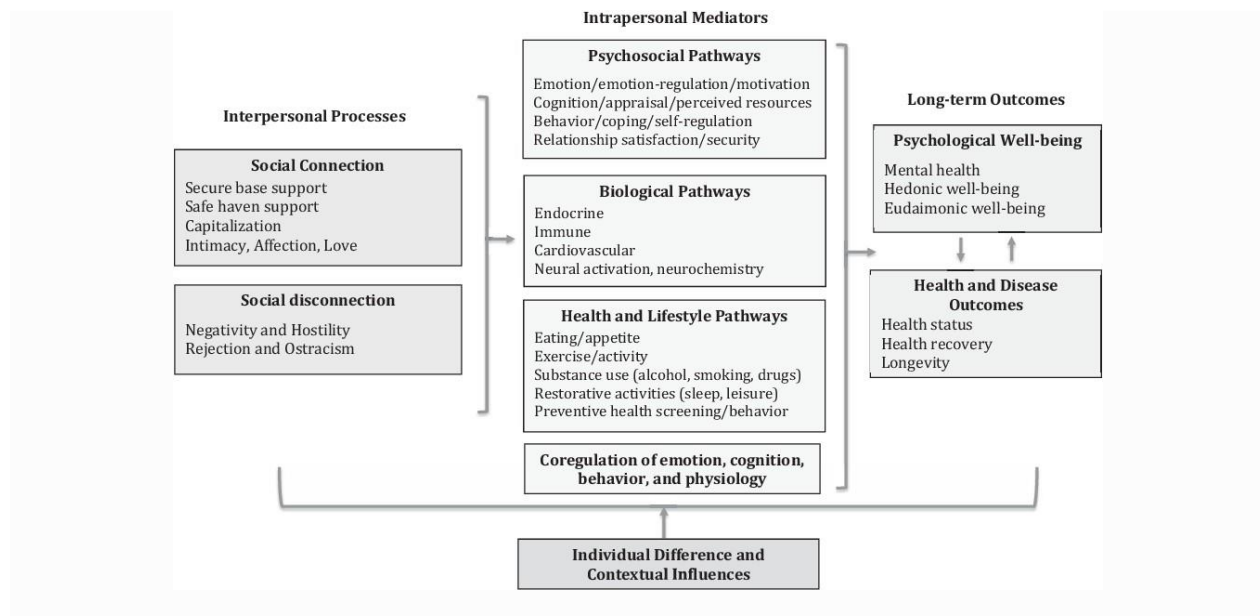
- **People** – being able to form meaningful relationships and engage in authentic self-expression. (3-4)
- **Place** – being connected to the physical places and lands upon which we reside or both, we cultivate a relationship to the land built on reciprocity and respect. (3-4)

- **Power** – the ability to make change in your community and to have your voice heard in decision-making spaces. (3-4)
- **Purpose** – the opportunity to create and enact meaning in our lives and communities. (3-4)

**Mechanisms through which social connections promotes happiness.**

Social connections play a crucial role in promoting happiness and well-being, and various mechanisms contribute to this positive impact. The three primary categories of these mechanisms are behavioral, emotional, and psychological.

- **Psychological Mechanisms(5)**
- **.Emotional Mechanism(5)**
- **Behavioral Mechanisms(5)**



Source: Pietromonaco, P.R., & Collins, N.L. (2017). Interpersonal Mechanisms Linking Close Relationships to Health. *American Psychologist*, 72, 531–542.(6)

### **Different types of social connection contributing to happiness**

Research has identified three distinct dimensions of social connectedness: *Intimate*, *Relational*, and *Collective* (7,10)

#### **Intimate connection**

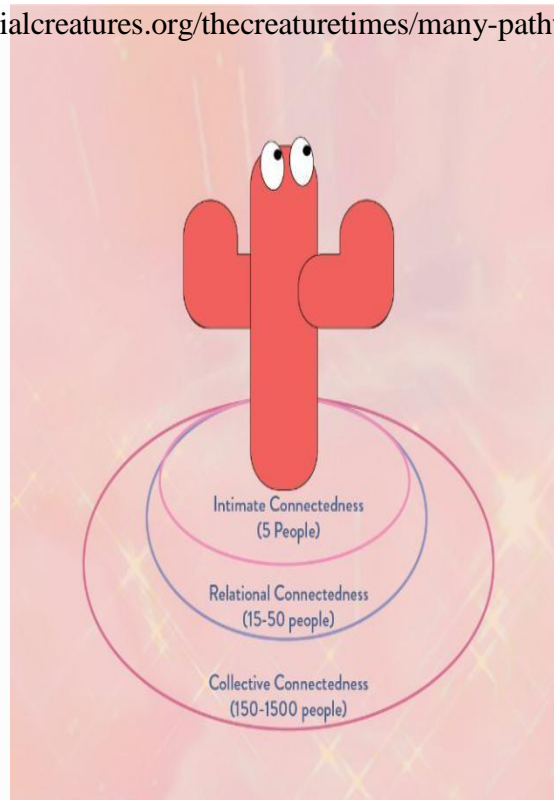
The feeling of being close to a nurturing companion who upholds our personal beliefs is known as intimate social connectivity. A spouse, a romantic partner, or anybody else with whom we have a

strong, mutual tie of affection and trust can all be considered such buddies. These inner circle relationships are critical to our capacity to provide each other with practical and emotional support during difficult times. (11,12)

### **Relational social connectedness**

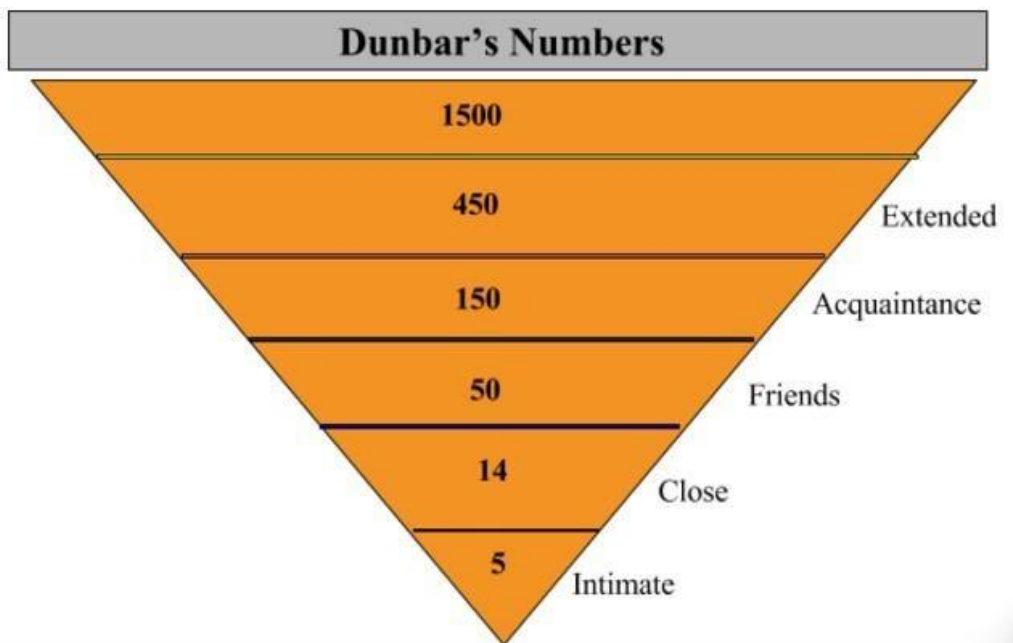
The concept of relational social connectedness describes the perceived existence of family ties or friendships that offer mutual assistance and support. The interpersonal links in our intermediate circle, which typically range from 15 to 50 persons [12, 13], are less formal than those in our inner, more intimate circle, but they nonetheless offer us a sense of intimacy and can be relied upon to provide important support (loans, childcare, etc.). Studies have demonstrated that being in touch with close friends and/or family members at least twice a week is linked to higher levels of relational social connection [10].

Source:<https://www.thesocialcreatures.org/thecreaturetimes/many-pathways-to-social-connection>



### **Collective social connectedness**

Perceived meaningful connections with a group of people are known as collective social connectedness. [13]. Studies indicate that we are more likely to report higher degrees of collective social connectivity when we willingly join to more groups [12]. Our outermost social circle, which can contain anywhere from 150 to 1,500 people, is typically mapped onto by this social connection dimension [13].



Source: <https://www.visiontemenos.com/blog/all-you-want-to-know-about-dunbars-number-from-prehistory-to-21st-century-enterprise>

These three dimensions—collective, relational, and intimate—are all significant. Though we tend to focus on those closest to us, even the people we have the loosest associations with contribute to our sense of social connectedness. In fact, research indicates that social relationships within our social networks, whether strong or weak, influence our sense of overall social connectedness and can positively or negatively predict outcomes pertaining to our health and well-being.

In the end, there are a variety of ways to connect. Social encounters, whether they take place in person or virtually, improve our general well-being and sense of social connectedness.

#### **Correlation between happiness and work environment**

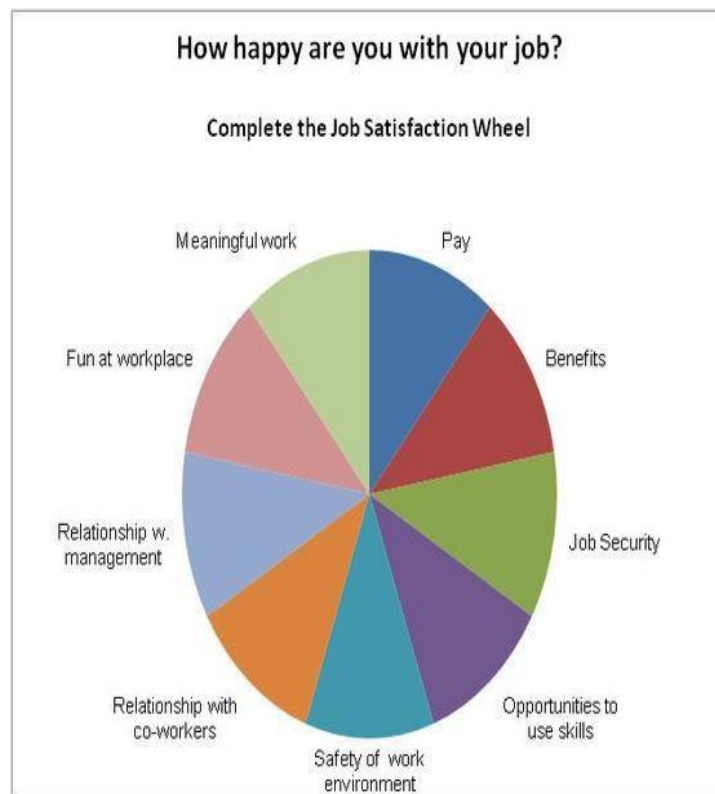
The topic of workplace happiness has been more and more popular in recent years. These days, a lot of businesses are attempting to put employee happiness methods into practice. One of the primary causes is the favorable effects that contented workers have on group production, creativity, and income. Additionally, it lowers staff turnover, burnout, stress, and sick leave. Another reason is that in order to keep their talent and engagement within the company, employers in today's business environment must work closely with their staff and understand their demands.

An average worker works 81,396 hours a year, or more than nine years, at their job (14). It is important to remember that team members are naturally more productive when they feel valued and respected at work. They are more inclined to exchange ideas and become more creative when they can express their viewpoints. They are more driven and focused on finishing tasks when they feel appreciated and believe they are having an impact. (15) but despite claiming “people are our greatest asset; employers are still asking employees to leave their personal lives at the door when they come to work. Data shows that having a best friend at work is strongly linked to business outcomes, including improvements in profitability, safety, inventory control, and employee retention. In fact studies have shown that people are now more likely to make friends at work than anywhere else, even though current friends or at school, the neighborhood, or their place of religion.

Another finding indicates that people's happiness is particularly well-predicted by work-life balance. Other factors include job variety and the need to learn new things, as well as the level of individual autonomy enjoyed by the



employee.



Company culture matters. This is something most employees recognize intuitively, yet company owners, executives, and office managers sometimes lose sight of this detail. (16)

Organizational culture represents the work environment created for operating the organization. It also represents how employees are treated by their bosses and peers. Industry working on such transformation of work culture to keep their people Happy (17,18)

**Components of great cooperate culture (19)**

- Vision
- Values
- Practices
- People People
- Narrative
- Place

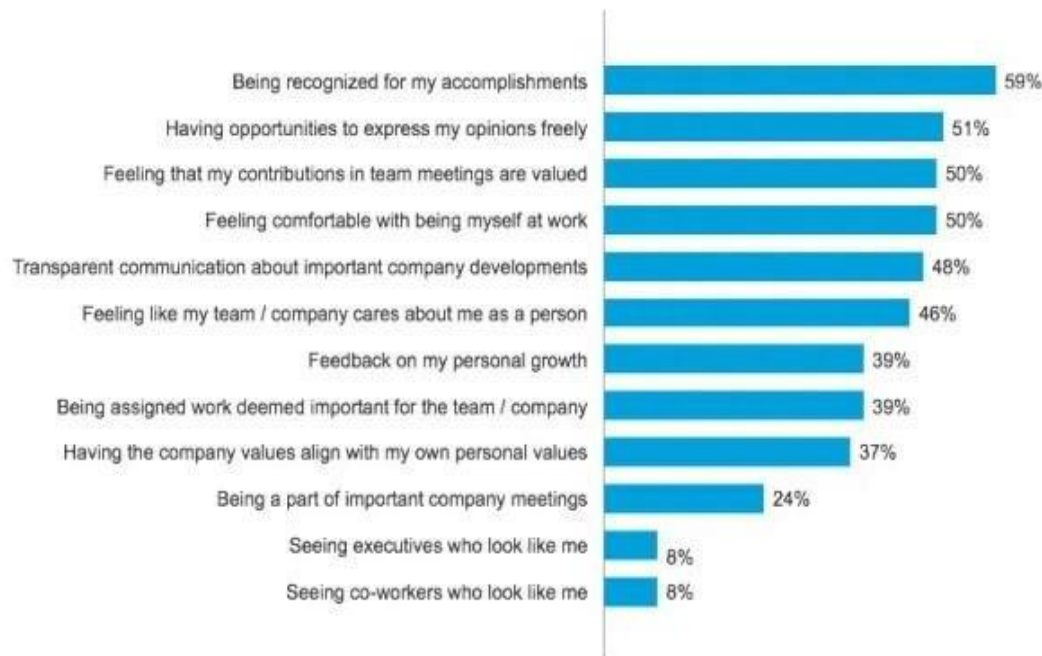
Thus, if an organization target enhancing its employee's happiness index it will create a wonderful work culture.

**Why is it Important to Measure Employee Happiness?**

It's important to measure employee engagement in order to see where your workplace happiness stands at present, identify patterns, and learn how to make improvements.



### What would make you feel like you belong at the company where you work?



Source;[www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-engagement/employees-share-what-gives-them-sense-of-belonging-at-work](http://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-engagement/employees-share-what-gives-them-sense-of-belonging-at-work)

Here are just a few ways that employee happiness can boost your business success (22)

- Greater employee retention
- Improved productivity
- Stronger company culture
- Increased customer satisfaction

To be honest, it might be difficult to gauge satisfaction at work. However, it is imperative that you continue to work hard (19) because there is no one metric that can truly reflect job satisfaction.. What you need is a combination of four measurements including: job satisfaction levels, engagement, organizational commitment as well as emotions and affect. (20)

1. **Job satisfaction** is the emotional state resulting from one's job or aspects of the job, such as growth, freedom, salary & benefits (20)
2. **Engagement** is the extent to which an employee devotes cognitive, emotional and physical attention to their profession. (20)
3. **Organizational commitment** is the extent to which an employee personally connects with the organization they work for. (20)
4. **Emotions and affect** indicate the general attitude or mood at work basically overall happiness at work. (20)

Among the most well-known IT companies in the world is, Google and despite the current layoffs in Google, it still remains in the top 10 organizations to work at globally given their distinctive corporate culture and generous employee compensation.



It's an inventive business there are many options for professional advancement, and employees find themselves surrounded by exceptionally talented coworkers creating a sense pride in their employees towards their work.

Google's focus on talent acquisition rather than employee retention is a strong argument for the value of people at the company. Positive people are frequently hired by Google, and their abilities are valued above experience. There are other intangible qualities listed below that keep Googlers happy, productive, and dedicated to the company. (21)

- True Flexibility
- Freedom to be Creative.
- A fun Environment
- People and their expertise
- Share values across the organization
- Constant innovation
- Radical Candor
- A clear Purpose

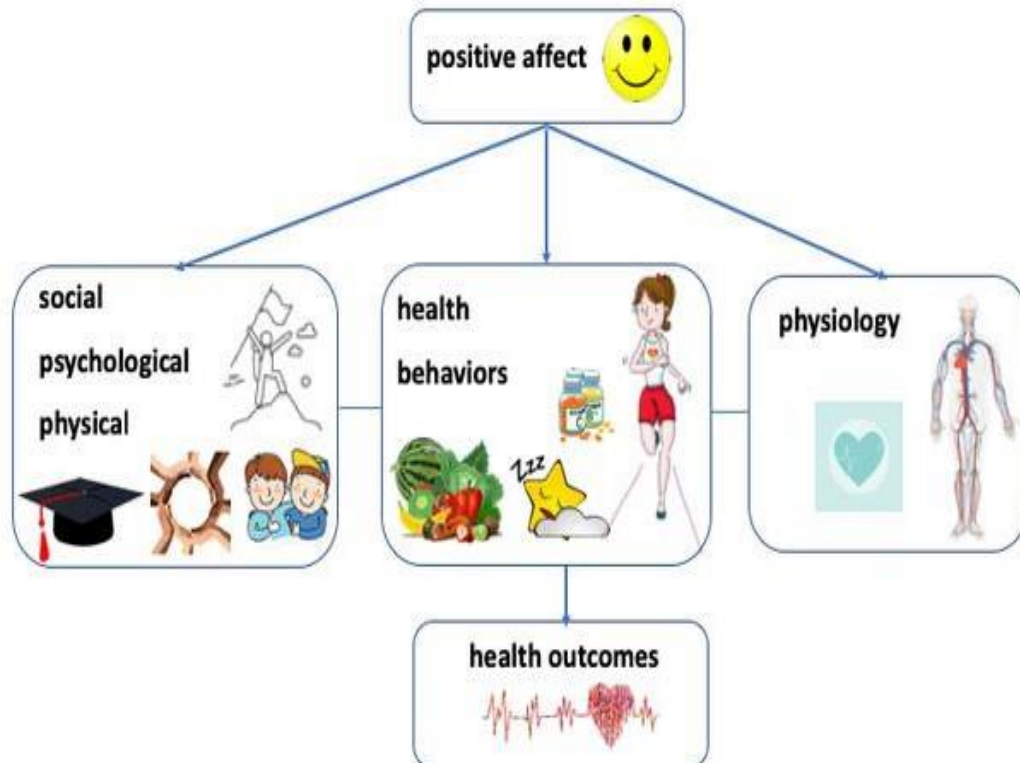
So, in conclusion, although we've focused here on the role of work and employment in shaping people's happiness, it is worth noting that the relationship between happiness and employment is a complex and dynamic interaction that runs in both directions. Being happy at work isn't just a personal matter; it's also an economic one.

### **Happier =Healthier**

Does a person with a more optimistic view on life have a better chance of avoiding serious illnesses? That is the question scientists and a study conducted by Harvard University have been trying to answer. (24)

Happiness and health have a solid scientific relationship. Research data says that happy people have better health. Happier people engage in health habits therefore are less likely to have a variety of health issues, such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and even some forms of cancer, according to studies. In addition, they typically report better levels of life satisfaction and longer lifespans.

The evidence shows that, regardless of age, happier people generally have better health outcomes than less happy people across a wide range of demographics. (25,26)



Source:<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/between-cultures/201910/the-health-benefits-happiness>

Numerous scientific studies have described the physical effects of negative emotions. Severe, ongoing stress or worry can change biological processes in a way that eventually leads to "wear and tear" and diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Prolonged hostility and anxiety can alter the electrical stability of the heart, accelerate atherosclerosis, and raise systemic inflammation, all of which can impair cardiac function. Positive feelings, however, are only half of the story, according to Laura Kubzansky, an associate professor of society, human development,

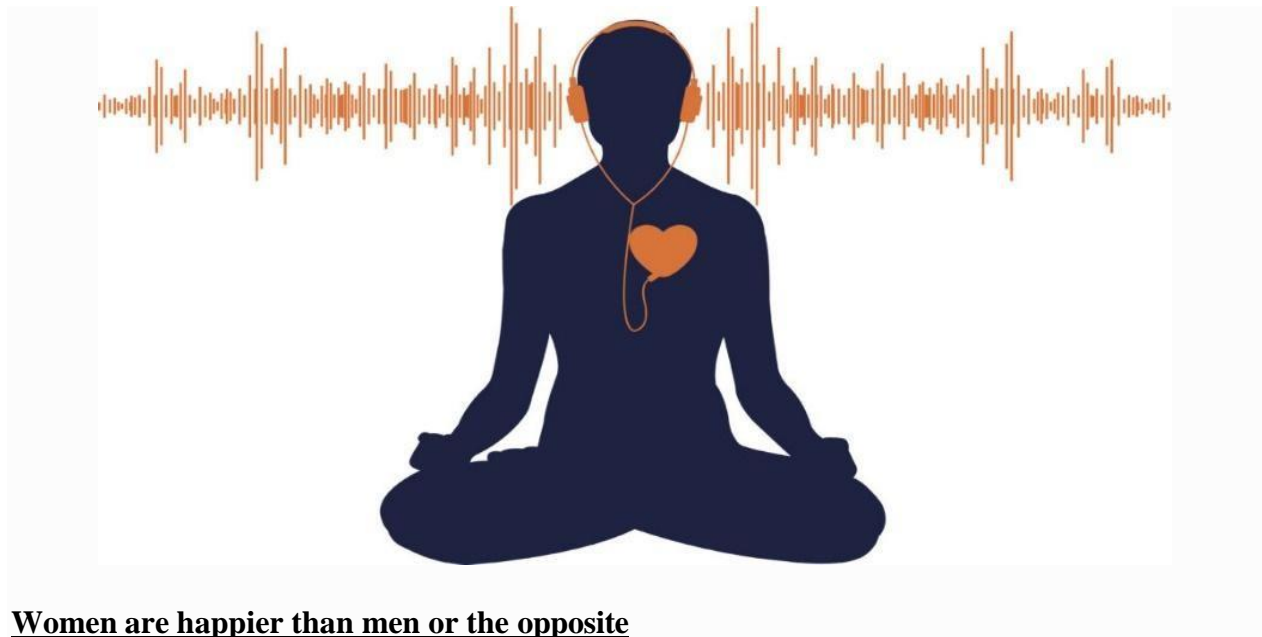
and health at HSPH. It seems that being in good mental health has benefits beyond merely avoiding depression. That's still a mystery to me. However, we will get far more understanding when we comprehend the collection of processes involved.

### **Effects of happiness on Health(25)**

A feeling of purpose and well-being is what most people define as happiness. A person's physical and mental health can benefit from this optimistic outlook in a number of ways, including:

- Opening a person's mind to positivity
- Improving a person's problem-solving ability
- Building physical, intellectual and social resources
- Happy people have strong immunity, live longer and have healthier lives.

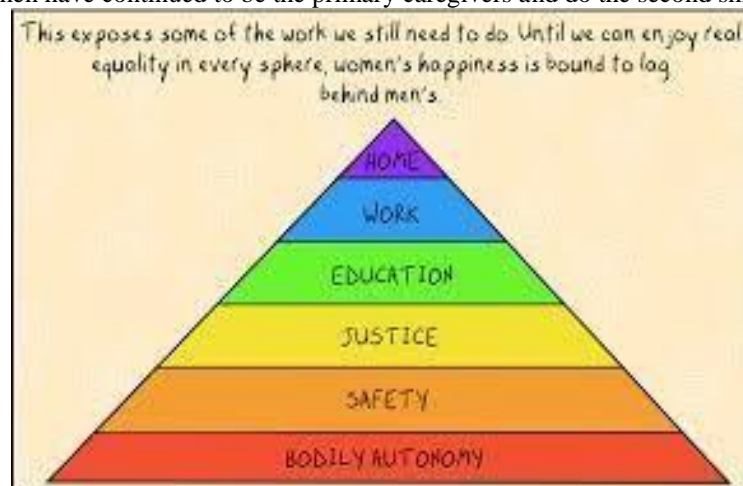
In summary, happiness and health are related to one another and can be used as a roadmap for leading a longer, more contented life.



### **Women are happier than men or the opposite**

Who's happier men or women research shows its complicated question and that asking whether males or females are happier isn't really that helpful, because essentially happiness is different for men and women. The answer to this question probably varies depending on several variables, such as relationships, age, education, health, and socioeconomic situation. (26)

Research indicates that although women's lives have improved significantly in the last ten years—the gender wage gap has partially closed yet women's subjective wellbeing has decreased both completely and in comparison, to men's. Women's welfare has increased due to social changes, opportunities lead to an increase in the total amount of work that women do, but regrettably, the women's movement was not accompanied by a shift from household production, meaning that women have continued to be the primary caregivers and do the second shift at home. (26)



The happiest people (both men and women) live in Canada and the United States among the countries Pew surveyed. The people least satisfied with their lives live in Eastern Europe and parts of Africa (27)

Numerous factors contribute to an individual's overall happiness, including gender, age, socioeconomic status, education, health, and relationships. It is important to consider these factors when examining the potential differences in happiness between men and women.

#### Gender-Related Factors (26,27,28)

- Emotional Expression
- Social Support
- Coping Mechanisms

#### Socioeconomic Factors

- Income and Education:
- Work-Life Balance:
- Gender Roles and Expectations

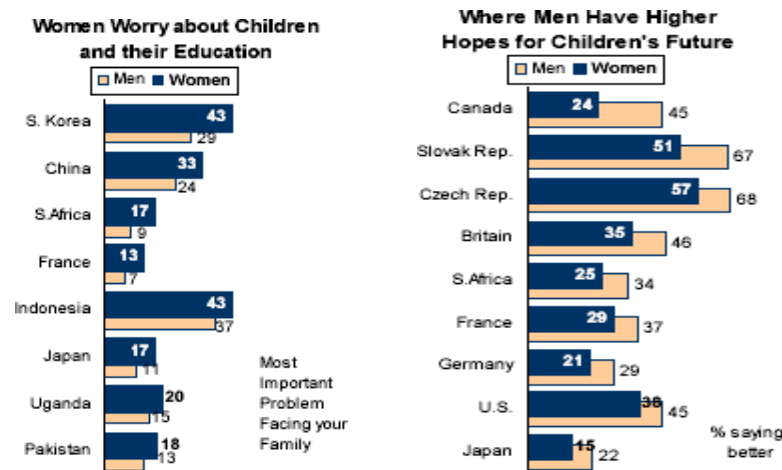
#### Health Factors

- Different Physical Health Challenges.
- Mental Health Challenges
- Self-Perception and Body Image

#### Relationship Factors

- Marital Status and Satisfaction
- Social Support Systems
- Gender Dynamics in partnerships

We can also note that women show greater concern about issues that directly affect the family and home life. Men tend to be more upbeat about the future and more concerned about problems outside the house.



Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2003/10/29/global-gender-gaps/>

In terms of physical self-concept, automatic (positive) thoughts, constructive thinking, cognitive flexibility, overall self-concept, and fortitude, men performed better than women. On the expression of affect, physical symptoms, and religious well-being scales, women performed better. (27)

Thus, in conclusion there is no easy way to answer the complicated question of whether women or men are generally happy. A person's happiness is influenced by a number of variables, such as relationships, education, health, gender, age, and socioeconomic status.

#### **Facts of Social support and Happiness**

- The results of a Harvard study titled "Very Happy People," which involved 1400 students, indicated a 0.7 association between happiness and social support higher than the connection between smoking and cancer



(22)

- Marriage is a cause of happiness when you get support from your partner. (22)
- Compared to people with greater social links, those with fewer social ties are two to three times more likely to experience depression. (22)

Positive Outcomes	Description of Some of the Benefits
Health and Longevity	Happy and optimistic people have stronger immune systems and fewer cardiovascular diseases. Happy people are more likely to perform healthy behaviors, such as wearing seat belts and adhere to medical regimens. They also seem on average to live longer.
Social Relationships	Happy people are more popular, and their relationships are more stable and rewarding. For example, they get divorced less and are fired from work less. They support others more, and receive more support from others in return.
Productivity	Organizations in which people are positive and satisfied seem to be more successful. Work units with greater subjective well-being are more productive, and companies with happy workers tend to earn more money and develop higher stock prices.
Citizenship	Happy people are more likely to donate their time and money to charitable causes and to help others at work.

Source: <https://nobaproject.com/modules/happiness-the-science-of-subjective-well-being>

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the impact of social connections on happiness and well-being is profound and multifaceted. Numerous studies and research findings consistently highlight the positive correlation between strong social ties and an individual's overall sense of well-being. Emotional resilience, mental health, and even physical health are significantly influenced by the breadth and caliber of one's social network.

Humans are inherently social beings, and the need for connection is deeply ingrained in our nature. Emotional support, a sense of community, and chances for shared experiences are all provided by meaningful connections. These elements contribute significantly to an individual's overall happiness and life satisfaction.

In summary, the significance of social connections in influencing happiness and well-being cannot be overstated. A key component of living a happy and fulfilled life should be establishing and preserving meaningful relationships. However, we also would like to have a psychological approach (25) on happiness and well-being which completely test the view mentioned in the paper.

*Is it really possible to be happier? Also, if you want to be happier, you can be happier, no matter what your circumstances. Do happiness interventions really work?*

It also says that *focusing too much on your happiness, can make you less happy, as reality always shortfall of your expectations.*

Going further with these thoughts we will be working on the psychological approach towards happiness and well-being in our connected paper on this topic.

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