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Australians happiest people in the world

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6 October, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Australians happiest people in the world

BNE: Australians are the happiest people in the world according to a survey undertaken by market researchers GfK NOP. The marketers conducted door-to-door surveys and interviews with 30,000 people in 30 countries. They asked respondents how satisfied they were with their overall quality of life. Forty-six percent of Australians proclaimed to be “very happy” and expressed optimism about their future. Following them in the “very happy” stakes was the USA (40 percent), Egypt (36 percent), India (34 percent) and the UK and Canada (32 percent). Hungary got the wooden spoon, finishing bottom of the happiness chart. Thirty-five percent of its citizens said they were either “disappointed” or “very unhappy”, followed by Russians at 30 percent.

The research demonstrated that money and age were key determinants in how happy people are. Although the study could not prove money could buy happiness, it did reveal a link between a lack of money and unhappiness. Less happy populations were found among lower income groups or the unemployed. The study suggested the older we become, the less happy we are. Globally, teenagers are the happiest people. The age group with the lowest levels of happiness was 50-59 – only 16 percent of those in their fifties said they were very happy. The things that make us happy include good health, financial security and a happy marriage. Material comforts such as cars, clothes and gadgets ranked comparatively low.

WARM-UPS

1. HAPPY ME: Are you happy today? Have you been happy recently? Walk around the classroom and talk with other students about how happy they are. When you have finished, sit with your partner(s) and talk about who was happy and who was not so happy.

2. HAPPINESS: What makes you happy? What affects your quality of life most? Look at the items below and rank them in order of what makes you most happy.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ___ Hiking | ___ Things (cars, clothes, gadgets, etc.) |
| ___ Good health | ___ A stable marriage / relationship |
| ___ Money | ___ Children |
| ___ Owning your own home | ___ Watching television |
| ___ Sunshine | ___ Exercise |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Australians / happy people / market research / quality of life / optimism / disappointment / money / teenagers / financial security / happy marriages / cars

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. HAPPY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "happy". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. HAPPY PEOPLE: In pairs / groups, talk about the happiest and most miserable people you know from the following:

baby child teenager adult student co-worker old person

6. HAPPY OPINIONS: How far do you agree with these opinions on happiness? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- Money makes you happy.
- The older you become, the happier you are.
- You can take lessons on how to be happy.
- Men are happier than women.
- Married people are happier than single people.
- People in warmer climates are happier than people in colder climates.
- It's hard to be happy in today's world.
- Every country should have a Minister of Happiness.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. A new study says Australians are the world's happiest people. T / F
- b. Interviewers conducted 30,000 telephone interviews. T / F
- c. Egyptians and Indians were among the top five happiest populations. T / F
- d. Hungary got the wooden spoon. T / F
- e. The survey showed that money can buy happiness. T / F
- f. Unemployed people were shown to be surprisingly happy. T / F
- g. The survey found that the older we become, the happier we are. T / F
- h. Material comforts such as cars and clothes do not make us so happy. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| a. undertaken | factors |
| b. door-to-door | confidence |
| c. respondents | carried out |
| d. optimism | appliances |
| e. wooden spoon | indicated |
| f. demonstrated | verify |
| g. determinants | house-to house |
| h. prove | relatively |
| i. gadgets | award for finishing last |
| j. comparatively | interviewees |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| a. according to a survey | finishing bottom of the happiness chart |
| b. The marketers conducted | stakes was the USA |
| c. overall | door-to-door surveys |
| d. Following them in the "very happy" | fifties said they were very happy |
| e. Hungary got the wooden spoon, | as cars, clothes and gadgets |
| f. money and age were | quality of life |
| g. the study could not prove | key determinants |
| h. reveal a link between a lack of | undertaken by market researchers |
| i. 16 percent of those in their | money and unhappiness |
| j. Material comforts such | money could buy happiness |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Australians happiest people in the world

BNE: Australians are the happiest people in the world _____ to a survey undertaken by market researchers GfK NOP. The _____ conducted door-to-door surveys and interviews with 30,000 people in 30 countries. They asked respondents how _____ they were with their _____ quality of life. Forty-six percent of Australians proclaimed to be "very happy" and _____ optimism about their future. Following them in the "very happy" _____ was the USA (40 percent), Egypt (36 percent), India (34 percent) and the UK and Canada (32 percent). Hungary got the _____ spoon, finishing bottom of the happiness chart. Thirty-five percent of its citizens said they were either "disappointed" or "very unhappy", _____ by Russians at 30 percent.

The _____ demonstrated that money and age were _____ determinants in how happy people are. Although the study could not prove money could buy happiness, it did _____ a link between a lack of money and unhappiness. Less happy populations were found _____ lower income groups or the unemployed. The study _____ the older we become, the less happy we are. Globally, teenagers are the happiest people. The age group with the lowest levels of happiness was 50-59 – only 16 percent of those in their _____ said they were very happy. The things that make us happy include good health, financial security and a happy marriage. Material _____ such as cars, clothes and gadgets ranked comparatively _____.

wooden
expressed
marketers
overall
followed
according
stakes
satisfied

fifties
low
among
key
comforts
research
suggested
reveal

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'wooden'** and **'spoon'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "HAPPINESS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about happiness and how we get it.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| • according to | • determinants |
| • conducted | • prove |
| • overall | • lower |
| • optimism | • older |
| • spoon | • fifties |
| • disappointed | • gadgets |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Do you agree with the headline?
- c. Are the people in your country generally very happy?
- d. Are you very happy most of the time?
- e. What makes you unhappy?
- f. What's the most miserable you've been?
- g. How happy are you compared with your friends?
- h. Do you wake up happy every morning or do you sometimes get out of bed on the wrong side?
- i. Do you agree with the survey that older people are less happy?
- j. What is there to be happy about in the world today?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What affects your levels of happiness?
- d. Does your happiness change during different times of the day, week, month or year?
- e. What is or was the happiest time of your life?
- f. Do you need money to be happy?
- g. What do you think of the idea of a top government official who is responsible for the overall happiness of the population?
- h. Do you think any particular nations are happier than any others?
- i. What is lacking in your life that would make you incredibly happy?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

HAPPY DAYS: In pairs / groups, talk about your level of happiness throughout the day. What kinds of things make you happy or unhappy during the times written in the left hand column? What increases or decreases your happiness?

TIME	% OF TIME HAPPY	THINGS THAT INCREASE HAPPINESS	THINGS THAT DECREASE HAPPINESS
Waking up			
Breakfast			
Going to work / school			
Morning			
Lunchtime			
Afternoon			
Going home			
Evening			
Bedtime			

- Change partners and tell each other about what you talked about earlier.
- Are there any things affecting happiness that people have in common?
- Repeat the activity by focusing on different times of the week, month or year.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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The research _____ that money and age were key _____ in how happy people are. Although the study could not prove money could buy happiness, it did _____ between a lack of money and unhappiness. Less happy populations were found among lower income groups or the unemployed. The study suggested _____, the less happy we are. Globally, teenagers are the happiest people. The age group with the lowest levels of happiness was 50-59 – only 16 percent of those _____ said they were very happy. The things that make us happy include good health, financial security and a happy marriage. _____ such as cars, clothes and _____ ranked comparatively low.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on happiness. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. SECRETARY FOR HAPPINESS: You are the newly appointed Happiness Secretary for your country. It is your job to improve the overall quality of life and level of happiness for the people in your country. You have one year to achieve this. Write a plan demonstrating how you will do this. Show your plans to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. HAPPIEST MOMENT: Write an essay on the happiest moment in your life. Read your essay to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. undertaken	carried out
b. door-to-door	house-to house
c. respondents	interviewees
d. optimism	confidence
e. wooden spoon	award for finishing last
f. demonstrated	indicated
g. determinants	factors
h. prove	verify
i. gadgets	appliances
j. comparatively	relatively

PHRASE MATCH:

a. according to a survey	undertaken by market researchers
b. The marketers conducted	door-to-door surveys
c. overall	quality of life
d. Following them in the "very happy"	stakes was the USA
e. Hungary got the wooden spoon,	finishing bottom of the happiness chart
f. money and age were	key determinants
g. the study could not prove	money could buy happiness
h. reveal a link between a lack of	money and unhappiness
i. 16 percent of those in their	fifties said they were very happy
j. Material comforts such	as cars, clothes and gadgets

GAP FILL:

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The **research** demonstrated that money and age were **key** determinants in how happy people are. Although the study could not prove money could buy happiness, it did **reveal** a link between a lack of money and unhappiness. Less happy populations were found **among** lower income groups or the unemployed. The study **suggested** the older we become, the less happy we are. Globally, teenagers are the happiest people. The age group with the lowest levels of happiness was 50-59 – only 16 percent of those in their **fifties** said they were very happy. The things that make us happy include good health, financial security and a happy marriage. Material **comforts** such as cars, clothes and gadgets ranked comparatively **low**.