

Sources of happiness

The study looks into sources of happiness. We used data from the 2018 wave of the General Social Survey (Smith et al. 1972-2018) to find out whether selected variables correlated with Satisfaction with Life. Satisfaction with Life was measured on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 meaning completely satisfied and 7 standing for completely dissatisfied. A total of 1169 people answered this question.

We first tested the hypothesis that loneliness is a source of unhappiness. Respondents' loneliness was measured on a scale of 1 (Never felt lonely) to 5 (Very often felt lonely). Of the 1169 people who answered the question about life satisfaction, 1166 also answered the question about loneliness. A Spearman correlation analysis revealed a fairly strong and significant correlation between the two variables $\rho = 0.43[0.38, 0.47]$, $p < .001$, i.e., the less frequently someone felt lonely, the more satisfied they were with their lives (see Figure 1).

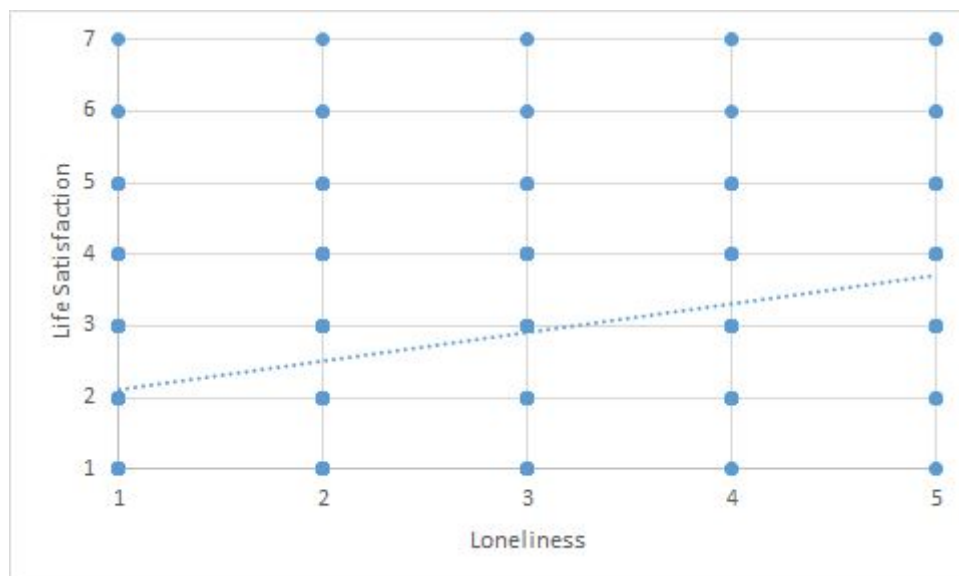


Figure 1. Correlation between Loneliness (1 = Never, 5 = Very often) and Life Satisfaction (1 = Completely Satisfied, 7 = Completely Dissatisfied).

We next looked at the relationship between self-perceived Attractiveness and Life Satisfaction expecting better self-perceived looks to be accompanied by more satisfaction with life. Attractiveness was measured on a scale of 1 (Very unattractive) to 5 (Very attractive). Of the people who answered the question about life satisfaction, 1028 also answered the question about self-perceived attractiveness. Men ($N = 499$) and women ($N = 529$) were analysed separately. For men, the Spearman correlation test found no significant correlation between Attractiveness and Life Satisfaction ($\rho = 0.05$, $p = 0.26$). For women, however, there was a very weak but significant correlation in the expected direction ($\rho = -0.07$, $p = .05$ one-tailed), that is, women who thought themselves to be more attractive reported greater satisfaction with their lives. We should note, however, that the correlation was very weak and the data do not allow us to draw conclusions as to a cause and effect relationship between the two variables. While it could be the case that women's looks contribute to their happiness to a

slight extent, it is also possible that happiness has an effect on how women perceive their own looks.

References

Smith, Tom W., Davern, Michael, Freese, Jeremy, and Morgan, Stephen L., General Social Surveys, 1972-2018 [machine-readable data file] /Principal Investigator, Smith, Tom W.; Co-Principal Investigators, Michael Davern, Jeremy Freese and Stephen L. Morgan; Sponsored by National Science Foundation. --NORC ed.-- Chicago: NORC, 2019.