

## A happiness survey

### 1 Reading

What makes you happy? Make a list of the things you think are important to people's happiness.

Compare your list in small groups of two or three. Can you agree on a list of five things?

Now read the first paragraph of a text about a world happiness survey and compare your ideas. Are they the same?

- 1 A recent survey revealed the happiest nations in the world, following research in 155 countries with over 136,000 people over the age of 15. The survey asked people to rate their answers on a scale of 0 (worst possible) to 10 (best possible). People were asked to rate things in relation to the previous day or month including: smiling or laughing, being proud of something, learning or doing something interesting, eating tasty food, feeling free to choose how to spend their time, satisfaction with where they lived, having enough money to buy and do the things they wanted to, having friends or relatives they could rely on for help, and being treated with respect and helping a stranger or somebody they didn't know.

Which countries do you think ranked in the top ten of the happiness survey? Make a list and read the rest of the text to see if you guessed correctly.

- 1 Some of the results are more surprising than others. According to the survey, the world's happiest country is Denmark. Finland and Norway are second and third, with Sweden and the Netherlands joint fourth. Sixth are New Zealand and Costa Rica; while Canada, Israel, Switzerland, and Australia are all in eighth position. The United States shares 14th place with Austria and the United Kingdom is ranked 17th. Despite a generally strong European performance, Germany and France are far down in the table in 33rd and 44th places. The top African nation is Malawi, in 63rd position.
- So what does this tell us about our happiness levels, and maybe more importantly, what does it tell us about the way we measure them?
- Firstly, the survey considered two different aspects of happiness: people's immediate day-to-day feelings, and an evaluation of their overall happiness in their lives. So people scoring high in both categories helped improve their country's ranking. It is hard to ignore the fact that most of the "happiest" nations are ones with generally high standards of living.
- However, before jumping to the conclusion that money equals happiness, it's worth considering that Costa Rica's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is only 90th in the world, compared to the USA's, which is first, and Germany and France's, which are 6th and 10th. This suggests that wealth might give you a general sense of wellbeing, but it won't necessarily bring you day-to-day feelings of happiness.
- In fact, scientists from the American Psychological Association have suggested that it is the little things in life which make us happy. Things like receiving gifts, compliments, or words of praise.



## 2 Comprehension

Read the whole text again and answer the questions.

1 How many countries were involved in the survey?

155

2 How old were the participants?

3 What period did the questions relate to?

4 In which continent are the top five countries located?

5 In what position was the top African nation?

6 Which two different aspects of happiness did the survey consider?

7 What connection does the article make between high standards of living and happiness?

8 What does the article suggest about the relationship between money and happiness?

## 3 Vocabulary

Find words in the text which mean:

1 when a lot of people are asked what they think about something survey

2 to give something a particular standard or level \_\_\_\_\_

3 a range of measurements in a particular system \_\_\_\_\_

4 to trust someone to do something for you \_\_\_\_\_

5 involving two or more people or things \_\_\_\_\_

6 something or someone put into a position according to their success, importance, size etc. \_\_\_\_\_

7 the standard to which someone does something like a job or an examination \_\_\_\_\_

8 the total value of goods and services a country produces in a year \_\_\_\_\_

## 4 Writing

Work in small groups and write your own happiness survey questions. Think about the things you agreed made people happy in exercise 1 and what you have learnt from the survey. Write ten questions.

## 5 Speaking

Do your survey, asking other students in your class the questions. Write down their answers, but you don't have to write down their names. Share your survey results with the class.