

# Family life makes Nordic men happy

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But this is not necessarily true for men elsewhere in Europe, a new study shows.

How does our satisfaction with our family life affect our overall happiness? How do where you come from and your gender affect your happiness when it comes to family life and job satisfaction? The Swedish researcher Michael Nordenmark has examined data from the 2012 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) to find out.

The ISSP is conducted annually in 40 industrialized countries. Nordenmark, a sociologist at Mittuniversity in Sweden, concentrated on the section of the survey that focused on family and gender roles in 22 countries.

The survey includes questions about people's general experience of happiness. Participants were also asked how satisfied they were with their family life as compared to their working lives and what both mean for their happiness.

## **Nordic countries generally happier**

In general, Nordic men were more likely than their southern or eastern European counterparts to report that they are happy.

Nordenmark found a somewhat weaker link between job satisfaction and happiness among men in the Nordic region as compared to other countries.

In countries where the differences in gender roles are large, such as Spain, France and Eastern European countries, men report a weaker connection between family life and happiness.

Nordenmark says in a press release that this may be because men in the Nordic region are much more involved in family life.

In general, he finds, people report a strong connection between happiness and satisfaction in countries where gender equality has come a long way. This is true for both women and men.

## **Important with close relationships - and money**

Ottar Hellevik, a Norwegian professor of political science, has also studied happiness as part of Norsk Monitor, a comprehensive socio-cultural study that has been conducted every other year since 1985. The goal of the study is to describe Norwegian society, values, attitudes and behaviour over time.

In his 2008 book "Jakten på den norsk lykken" (The Hunt for Norwegian Happiness), Hellevik concluded that people who are satisfied with their close relationships, live with their family, feel that they are in good health and are happy with their community are those who feel most happy.

Hellevik also found that money does play a role in happiness. However, this may be less of an issue in the Nordic countries, where it is less common for people to struggle with low incomes and problems with family finances than in other places in Europe.

#### **Weaknesses with the analysis**

Nordenmark notes that his analysis has its weaknesses.

There are, for example, major differences in living standards and social policies between the 22 countries included in his study.

He also did not study factors such as the labour market and health status, which can affect the findings.

#### **Childless 20-year-olds are most happy**

Researchers generally agree, however, that family and close relationships are good for happiness.

Nevertheless, while family is important, other research has shown that parents of young children are not particularly happy, even if they really wanted children.

Joar Vittersø, who has studied happiness for many years, believes that people are happiest when they are 20. Once people have children, happiness declines, he says.

Happiness also declines with age, according to Hellevik. But he notes our satisfaction with our lives increases the older we become.

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[Nordenmark, Mikael: The importance of job and family satisfaction for happiness among women and men in different gender regimes, Societies, December 2017](#) [10]

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