

1

# Secondary School Happiness Survey 2012

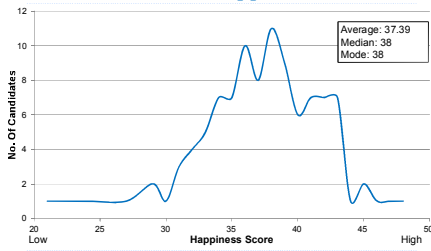
By Robert Cronin and Denis Kelleher

The objective of this survey was to try and uncover, among other things, what it is that makes some students happier than others.

The idea of Gross National Happiness, which originated from Bhutan, is what inspired us to undertake our investigation into the lives of our peers.

4

## Distribution of Happiness Scores



7

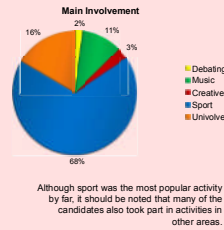
## Non-involvement in School Activities

The overall frequency of non-involvement among candidates was about 15.5%.

However, we noticed that candidates with the lowest happiness scores\*, the frequency of non-involvement was an astounding 2.47 times higher, at 38.5%.

From this we may deduce that students who partake in extra curricular activities in school are likely to be happier.

\* with a happiness score of 32 or lower, of which there were 13



Although sport was the most popular activity by far, it should be noted that many of the candidates also took part in activities in other areas.

10

## Exercise and Happiness

The vast majority of candidates partook in some form of exercise at least 3 times a week.

Incidence of low exercise levels\* was about 11.6%, however the incidence among the least happy portion of the sample was as high as 30.7%.

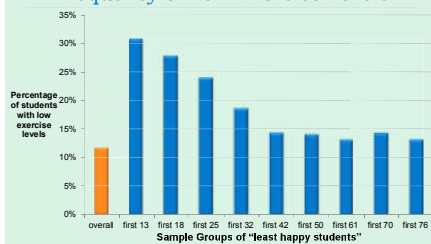
This may be because endorphins released during exercise can produce feelings of euphoria and a general state of wellbeing.

\* A few times a month, rarely/never.



11

## Frequency of Low Exercise Levels



The bars refer to the percentage of each sample size who exercise a few times a month, rarely or never. eg. For the 13 least happy students 30.8% had low exercise levels

2

## Survey Approach

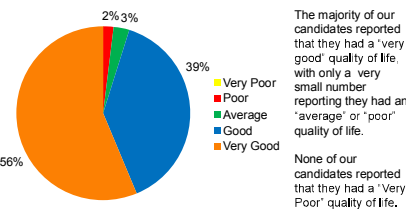
**What we did:** We administered a survey based on a number of hypotheses to 103 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year students.

The questions asked them to rate different aspects of their overall wellbeing/happiness and also requested information on many other things.

We input all the data into a Microsoft excel spread sheet, and used the data to build a series of charts and graphs, representing the different hypotheses we aimed to test. We then analysed the results

5

## Self-Reported Quality of Life



The majority of our candidates reported that they had a 'very good' quality of life, with only a very small number reporting they had an 'average' or 'poor' quality of life.

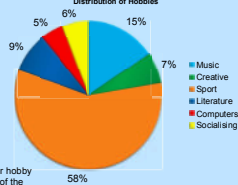
None of our candidates reported that they had a 'Very Poor' quality of life.

8

## Happiness based on Hobbies and Favourite Subjects

Interestingly, Music had the lowest average happiness score based on both Hobbies and Favourite Subjects.

Although sport was the most popular hobby by far, it should be noted that many of the candidates also took part in activities in other areas.

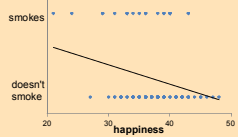


11

## Smokers Vs. Non-Smokers

We also correlated a candidates happiness score with whether or not they smoke.

It became clear that a happier candidate was less likely to smoke.

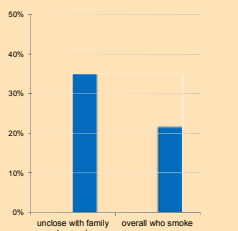


12

## Closeness with Family Vs. Smoking

The candidates who reported that they were averagely close or not really close with their family had a remarkably higher incidence of smoking (34.8%) than that of the overall sample (21.4%).

It is difficult to pinpoint any particular reason for this, but perhaps a teenager who smokes is the cause of more arguments in a household.



3

## Happiness Scores

The first 10 questions of the survey asked the candidate to rate their quality of life, stress levels, closeness with family and friends, how often they experienced a range of emotions most commonly associated with being (or not being) happy, including: Anger, Selfishness, Jealousy, Calmness, Contentment, and Generosity.

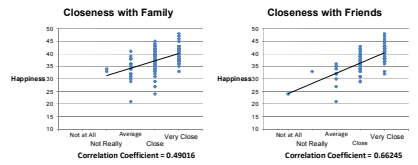
Each of these ten questions was marked out of 5, 5 representing the answer a candidate who was most happy was likely to give, and vice versa.

From this we were able to give all the candidates a total score out of 50.

Interestingly, when we represented all the happiness scores on a graph, it resembled a bell shaped curve.

6

## Family Vs. Friends



A candidate's happiness score with his closeness with family and his closeness with friends, we noticed that the link was 35% stronger with friends.

From this, one could infer that it is more important to a 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> years happiness that he has close relationships with his peers, than with his family.

9

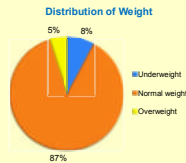
## Weight and Happiness

13% of the candidates reported that they were either under or overweight.

When we measured the frequency of being under/over weight among the candidates with the lowest happiness scores, we found that just over 30% reported that they were under/over weight.

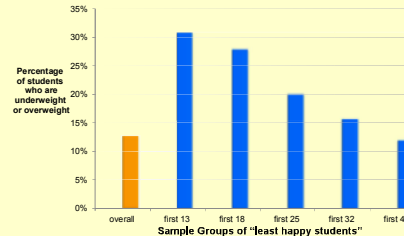
This was well over twice as high as the frequency among all the candidates together.

Undoubtedly being under or overweight impacted negatively on a person's happiness score.



12

## Frequency of being underweight or overweight



The bars refer to the percentage of each sample size who are under or overweight. eg. For the 13 least happy students 30.8% were under or overweight.

12

## Conclusion

- We feel that some very interesting and important information has been revealed about what it is that makes some students comparatively happier than others.
- Interestingly, the 13 least happy students in all situations are 2.5-3 times more likely not to partake in school activities, are either over or underweight and exercise less than the overall sample.
- The correlation or link between having close relationships with friends and the happiness score is much stronger than that between having close relationships with family and the happiness score.

12

## Evaluation

We think that the data we used is far from complete, and that this project is just the beginning of what could become the standard procedure of all schools across the country.

Our survey took roughly ten minutes to fill out, and consisted of questions that did not demand very detailed information. We think the addition of information pertaining to Junior Cert Results, satisfaction with academic performance to date, satisfaction with achievements in areas other than academics, preferred career path, and other questions of this nature may produce even more interesting results.

A school or parent body may be able to use these results to aim their activities at increasing the levels of happiness of the students. For example, they may aim to deal with issues of students who are under/overweight, or perhaps offer a wider range of extra-curricular activities so that there is something that appeals to almost all students.