

Optimism For The Future Keeps The Chinese Happy, Study

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<http://www.asianscientist.com/health-medicine/optimistic-expectations-keeping-chinese-happy-2012/>

AsianScientist (Apr. 23, 2012) - Imagining a rosy future is key to present-day happiness, new research conducted in China has found.

The study, published in the *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, surveyed over 17,000 Chinese people in 2002 on happiness and optimism for the future.

“It turns out that people's expected future health has about one sixth the effect on current happiness as their actual current health,” said Professor Frijters from The University of Queensland School of Economics.

“We found that the poorest group was the happiest. People in the countryside had incomes less than a third of that of people in the cities, but still 62 percent of the rural respondents said they were happy or very happy, while only 56 percent of the urban respondents were at least happy,” he said.

Interestingly, the most miserable group in China were the migrants who had come to the cities from the countryside. While they were earning more than double what those 'back home in the countryside' were earning, only 44 percent of them were happy, the study found.

Despite this, on average, the Chinese were about as happy as individuals from a European middle-income country like Croatia.

Frijters said the most important factor behind the high levels of happiness in China could be attributed to "extremely high" expectations of future incomes.

“Over 65 percent of all the respondents expected an improvement in their income in the coming years and those who expected an improvement were almost a full point happier (on a five-point scale) than those who expected a reduction in income,” he said.

Expectations of higher future incomes also turned out to be more important to the Chinese than either their actual income, their health, whether they were married, or whether they had a job, Frijters found.

“Given that growth-rates are still eight percent in 2012 and will probably keep up for quite a while yet, our research suggests there is no good reason to expect Chinese political instability in the near future,” he said.

The article can be found at: [Frijters P et al. \(2012\) Are optimistic expectations keeping the Chinese](#)

[happy?](#)

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