



Press Release September 25, 2012

Canadians Are Happy and Getting Happier

The Centre for the Study of Living Standards (CSLS) today released report entitled “Canadians Are Happy and Getting Happier: An Overview of Life Satisfaction in Canada, 2003-2011” The report is posted at <http://www.csls.ca/notes/Note2012-3.pdf>.

The objective of the report is to provide an update and overview of trends in self-reported life satisfaction in Canada, based on data from Statistics Canada’s Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). Key findings are found below.

- In 2011 more than 9 out of 10 Canadians aged 12 and over (92.3 per cent) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their lives.
- According to a Gallup World Poll taken in February 2012, Canada is the second happiest country in the world preceded only by Denmark. Our ranking has increased from 5th place (2007-8 Gallup World Poll), indicating that Canada is becoming happier relative to its international peers.
- Between 2003 and 2011, the percentage of the population reporting being satisfied or very satisfied with life in general increased a small but statistically significant 1.0 percentage points from 91.3 to 92.3.
- In general, younger Canadians were more likely to be satisfied with their life overall in 2011 than other age groups. Of the five age groups, persons aged 12 to 19 were the happiest, with 96.9 per cent reporting being satisfied or very satisfied with their lives. In contrast, those 65 and over were the least happy, with 89.1 per cent reporting being satisfied or very satisfied).
- A significant gap in life satisfaction has emerged between the very young and old. In 2003, the proportion of persons aged 12 to 19 who were satisfied or very satisfied was only 2 percentage points higher than for persons 65 and over (94.0 per cent versus 92.0 per cent). By 2011 the gap had jumped to 7.8 percentage points. With the growing importance of persons 65 and over in the population, the absolute decline in life satisfaction among seniors represents an important emerging public policy issue.

- Based on the 2003-2011 period average, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest average levels of life satisfaction, while British Columbia, Ontario and Nunavut had the lowest. Between 2003 and 2011, life satisfaction increased by a statistically significant amount in Quebec and the Yukon.
- Based on the 2003-2011 period average, four of the five CMAs with the highest life satisfaction were in Quebec – Québec City, Trois-Rivières, the Quebec side of the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, and Saguenay – while the bottom three CMAs were located in Ontario – Kitchener, Windsor, and Toronto

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The Centre for the Study of Living Standards (CSLS) is a national, independent, Ottawa-based not-for-profit research organization. Its primary objective is to contribute to a better understanding of trends and determinants of productivity, living standards, and economic wellbeing in Canada through research.