

Forget grumpy old men: Study discovers that age BRINGS happiness (but it matters when you were born)

- U.S. study found that people become more satisfied with life as they age
- While all people became happier as they aged, those who grew up through hardship such as the Great Depression reported slightly less happiness
- Experts say findings could have implications for today's younger generation who are born into recession and high unemployment

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PUBLISHED: 10:30 EST, 28 May 2013 | **UPDATED:** 11:47 EST, 28 May 2013

Contrary to the stereotype of the old curmudgeon, happiness increases with age, according to new research.

But while experts discovered that all people become happier with age, those who were born during periods of hardship reported a lesser sense of life satisfaction than those born in times of peace and prosperity.

In the past, good psychological health has been linked to many life factors including career, relationships and even health.

Until now, it was not clear how feelings of happiness change as we age.



The new study discovered that life satisfaction increases as people grow older. Scientists did however find the extent of this increase was affected by hardship you may have lived through as a young person

Psychological scientist Angelina Sutin, of Florida State University College of Medicine, conducted the study while at the National Institute on Aging (NIA) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

She and colleagues predicted that people in the same 'birth cohort' - born around the same time - may have had unique experiences that shape the way they evaluate happiness and optimism.

They predicted that the level of wellbeing a person reported would vary according to his or her birth year.

Using two large-scale studies - one from NIH's Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging and the other from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey - researchers looked at data from several thousand people over 30 years, including over 10,000 reports on happiness, health, and other factors.

When the researchers analysed the data, older adults had lower levels of wellbeing than younger and middle-aged adults.

But when researchers analysed the same data taking birth cohort into account, a different trend appeared: Life satisfaction increased over all the participants' lifetimes.

This trend remained even after factors like health, medication, sex, ethnicity, and education were taken into account.

But experts did find that people born between 1885 and 1925 started off with lower levels of happiness in comparison to people born more recently.

Sutin explained that looking at life satisfaction across all of the participants, regardless of when they were born, obscures the fact that each cohort actually shows the same underlying trend: that they became happier.

She also pointed out that the happiness of those born in the early 20th century, particularly those who lived through the Great Depression, was substantially lower than the level of happiness of cohorts who grew up during more prosperous times.



Don't believe it: The stereotype of old people being grumpy is inaccurate, according to the U.S. study



Tough times: Scientists said their findings could have implications for today's youth who are born into recession and high unemployment

The greater happiness of more recent cohorts could be the result of economic prosperity, increased educational opportunities, and social improvements over the latter half of the 20th century.

And according to the researchers, these findings may have important implications for today's younger generations.

'As young adults today enter a stagnant workforce, the challenges of high unemployment may have implications for their wellbeing that long outlast the period of joblessness.

'Economic turmoil may impede psychological, as well as financial, growth even decades after times get better.'

The study was published in Psychological Science, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2332142/Forget-grumpy-old-men-Study-discovers-age-BRINGS-happiness-matters-born.html#ixzz2UhfeTVIT>