What is Happiness? Perceptions of Bolton residents in 1938 and 2014

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BPS Annual Conference - 5th May 2015
What is Happiness?

Once more “Competitions” are trying to find out what Bolton thinks. What does HAPPINESS mean for you and yours?

Write down what you think—Never mind about style or grammar—It’s your own opinion that is wanted.

Entries to be sent to

“COMPETITIONS,”

85 DAVENPORT STREET, BOLTON.

For closing date and winners see Evening News.
Write down what you think—Never mind about style or grammar—it's your own opinion that is wanted.

Entries to be sent to

226 people sent in letters giving their view of happiness.

letter writers were posted a questionnaire to complete and return
1938 Questionnaire

Please return the filled in questionnaire not later than Monday to:-

COMPETITIONS
85 DAVENPORT STREET
BOLTON

so that we can announce the results in Wednesday’s Evening News.
There will be a special extra prize of a £1 for the best questionnaire.
Make the answers YOUR answers, Not the ones you might think we like.

1. The sort of job you have
2. Your age (approximately)
3. How often are you really happy?
4. Please number in order of importance, 1–10, which you think most important to true happiness of the following, put 1 for the one you think the most important, 2 for the next, 3 for the third and so on till 10

More equality       More politics
More beauty         More religion
More leadership and authority  More humour
More pleasure       More knowledge
More security       More action

Which is the easier place to be happy in: Blackpool or Bolton?
Is it easier to be happier weekends or mid-week or is it all the same to you?
Has luck anything to do with happiness – if so, what?

OK, FILL IN. SEND IN. THEN WAIT FOR THE NEWS
**Worktown Happiness Questionnaire – 10 aspects of happiness –**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>More security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>More knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>More equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>More religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>More humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>More leadership &amp; authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>More action</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>More beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>More pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>More politics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Mrs M. Milton, housewife
What is Happiness in Bolton 2014

We team up with University of Bolton to repeat 1938 experiment

- Web survey (305)
- Paper questionnaires (184)
### 1938–10 aspects of happiness adapted for 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More equality</th>
<th>More politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More beauty</td>
<td>More religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More <strong>leadership</strong> &amp; authority</td>
<td>More <strong>good</strong> humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More <strong>leisure</strong> pleasure</td>
<td>More knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More <strong>economic</strong> security</td>
<td>More action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More equality</td>
<td>More politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More equality in wealth</td>
<td>More say in political decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More beauty</td>
<td>More religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More attractive living &amp; working environment</td>
<td>More religious influence in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More leadership &amp; authority</td>
<td>More good humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More direction from local &amp; national decision makers</td>
<td>More smiling and laughter for myself &amp; those around me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More leisure pleasure</td>
<td>More knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time to do the things I enjoy</td>
<td>More access and opportunities to learn new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More economic security</td>
<td>More action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More certainty for maintaining &amp; maybe improving my living standards</td>
<td>More action to solve not shelve my problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Worktown Happiness Questionnaire 1938 & 2014

• To rank in order the 10 factors important for true happiness with guidance on meaning

• Asked to describe how often they were happy: Every day, several times a week, a few times a month, rarely ever.

• Asked if it was easier to be happy at home in Bolton or Blackpool (away).

• State if it easier to be happier at weekends, weekdays or the same.

• Asked if happiness was connected to “luck”
1938 Happiness respondents

• 58% female
• 22.5% employed in textile industries
• 6% Clerks & draughtsmen
• 28% Retired or not gainfully employed (includes housewives)

2014 Happiness respondents

• Females 65% (n484)

• 61% employed (with SE - 68%). Retired 12%. (n484)

• Age - Mean 44
  • Largest groups aged 35-44, 21% , 45-54, 24% (n455)
What affects happiness? External world? Internal consciousness?

BOLTON in 1930’s

• Population of 177,000.
• Unemployed - 17% of occupied male population and 12% of female population. 14,555 Boltonians out of work. (1931 census)
• Industry – 216 cotton mills (1929), engineering, mining.

• 300 pubs, six dance-halls and 47 cinemas within 5 miles of town hall. 200 churches and chapels.
What affects happiness?  External world?  Internal consciousness

BOLTON in the 21st Century

• Population 2014  279,000  (2009 88% white, 10% Asian)
• Unemployment in Bolton (JSA) 4% in 2014. Workless households 16.2%  (April 2015)

• Industry:  Services, data processing, call centres, hi-tech, electronics & IT. Traditional industries - paper manufacture, textiles retained on small scale. Warburtons bakery (1876). University town.

• 113 pubs. 10 night clubs. 81 places of worship. 2 cinemas. 7 public leisure centres. 11 libraries. Museum and art gallery. Octagon theatre.
What was happening in 1938? Effect on Happiness of External Events?
Top rate Income Tax raised to 5s 6d as Britain pledges to defend France and Belgium, and spend more on aerodromes.

Hitler drives into Vienna

What was happening in 2014?
British troops in Afghanistan
Syria......Ukraine ...

Franco wins
Crucial
Battle in Spain
British volunteers

Cost of living crisis.....

How much does this affect happiness?
Does material wealth = happiness?

BOLTON IN 1930’S

- No comprehensive welfare state in 1938, 1948 Welfare state “from cradle to grave” . NHS.
- 1930’s Bolton - Remnants of the Poor Law.
  Means tested assistance for people in dire poverty.
- Health Insurance for Workers
  National Insurance, Friendly Societies - panel doctors, voluntary hospitals. Little cover for non workers, children – payment for service.
- Elementary state education to 14.
Does material wealth = happiness?

BOLTON IN 21\textsuperscript{ST} CENTURY

• **Universal benefits.** Non-contributory/Contributory

• **NHS.** Free access to all.

• **Nursery/Primary/Secondary State provided education to age 18**

• **Access to Higher/University education via Bursaries/loans**
Comparison of rankings of Aspects of happiness 1938 and 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Happiness 1938</th>
<th>Aspects of Happiness 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1       More Economic Security</td>
<td>1       More Good Humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2       More Knowledge</td>
<td>2       More Economic Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3       More Religion</td>
<td>3       More Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4       More Good Humour</td>
<td>4       More Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5       More Equality</td>
<td>5       More Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6       More Beauty</td>
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<td>8       More Leadership</td>
</tr>
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<td>9       More Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10      More Politics</td>
<td>10      More Religion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean ranking of 10 aspects of happiness 2014

N 439

Humour    Security    Leisure    Know    Equality    Beauty    Action    Leadership    Politics    Religion
3 top aspects of happiness in Bolton 2014 (n409)
Comparison with average ranking from Worktown

2014
• Good Humour
  (30% ranked as 1st)
• More Security
  (1/5 ranked as 1st)
• More Leisure
  (1/6 ranked as 1st)

1938
• Security
  1st Security
  (1/3 ranked as 1st)
• Pleasure
  8th Pleasure
Place and happiness - 1938 Are you happiest in Blackpool or Bolton?

- Special Dance trains – inclusive rail/ballroom tickets at 2/6d from Bolton to Blackpool for worktowners to “let their hair down”. Clewlow, S.A., (2010)

![](chart.png)

2014 Are you happiest in Bolton or away from Bolton?

Do you find it easier to be happier when you at home in Bolton or on holiday or staying away from Bolton?

Place happiest (n = 385)

- 39% In Bolton
- 61% Away Bolton
### Time in week and happiness

Is it easier to be happier at weekends midweek or the same to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weekends</th>
<th>Weekdays</th>
<th>Same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 203)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 407)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1938 Happier weekdays, weekend, or all the same?

(n=203) 2% weekdays, 26% weekends, 72% same

2014 Happier weekdays, weekend, or all the same?

(n486) 4% weekdays, 39% weekends, 57% same
Is luck anything to do with happiness?

• 1938

• 2/5ths (40%) believed luck played a part in happiness.

(Gazeley & Langhamer (2012), p.176)

• 2014

• 40.6% yes it does (n = 456).

• Comments indicate life chances more than lottery?
Happiness and Luck 1938 and 2014

I think luck has a lot to do with happiness, because if we were lucky enough to win a little it would make us tremendously happy.

Cotton operative aged 25

The circumstances you are born into, your genetic inheritance, health

Employed male aged 40
Happiness Questionnaire 2014

• 2014 additional questions

• Do you think that happiness is linked to material possessions and wealth?

• How much in general (1-10) do you enjoy your daily life? (from ONS)

• What are the things in your life that make you the happiest and/or give you the most enjoyment?
Material Wealth and happiness

• “The Good Life fails to make Britain Happy”

“The Good Life fails to make Britain Happy”

• “Lord Layard argues that while wealth in Britain has increased, family relationships and sense of community have deteriorated.”

ST 8.1.2006

• There seems to be no correlation between increasing material wealth and happiness. The Easterlin Paradox (1974)
Material Wealth and happiness

International Happiness Day 20\textsuperscript{th} March from 2013
UN resolution June 2012

2010 Action for Happiness founded by Layard, Mulgan & Seldon.

Focus on General Well-Being, rather than GNP?
Happiness and material wealth

• Poverty – as well as adverse situations – has an undermining effect on happiness.

• “Wealth is related to happiness. “
Effect stronger at low income, than high income levels

What are the differences in Bolton culture 1938 and 2014? 1938 respondents less wealthy than in 2014. How much are perceptions affected by standard of living? Is it easier or harder to be happy in 2014?
Does material wealth = happiness 1938, 2014?

Although security ranked top (1938) for happiness, material wealth on its own was not generally seen to generate happiness.

“Enough money to meet everyday needs, and a little for pleasure”

“A little bit put by for a rainy day”. “Money can’t buy happiness”.
Does material wealth = happiness 1938, 2014?

2014 - 77% (n487) said NO to.

Do you think that your happiness is directly linked to the amount of material possessions and wealth that you have?

“…..and simple things like going out for a walk with the dog etc. you don’t need tons of material things to be happy”
1938 and 2014 importance of money/wealth to happiness

1. The sort of job you have. Bolton Beamer
2. Your age (approximately). 25
3. How often are you really happy? When we have just enough money to carry on with and our health

Having enough to live on. Home in pleasant location. Female retired 69

Knowledge that I have enough money for what I want to do. Male employed 49
Discussion Material Wealth and happiness

- Material wealth can increase perceptions of happiness


Shrum (2012) material aspirations can make people happier if motivated by intrinsic goals – affiliation, pride and self reward.
2014 How much in general do you enjoy your daily life? (n408)

- High enjoyment 67%
- Moderate enjoyment 25%
- Low enjoyment 8%

- ONS 2011 UK people rated life satisfaction 7 or more out of 10
  High enjoyment 71.8%
How did 1938 respondents define happiness?

• Gazeley & Langhamer used modified Cantril Scale for scoring Worktown letters.

• $\frac{3}{4}$ letters were about self – personal values, development, character.

• Just under $\frac{1}{2}$ family and friends, Values – moral, social, political.

• Less than 1 in 25 mentioned world events.
How did 2014 respondents define happiness?

- Preliminary coding. Early results from 128 comments on “What are the things that bring you happiness?”

- Personal relationships – family (48) – friends (39) pets & animals (25).

Discussion  What is happiness?

When basic needs are met – (Maslow’s hierarchy)

High rank Security top or second, but material wealth on its own was not generally perceived to generate happiness.

**Is happiness contentment?**

Is self fulfilment happiness?  Is Happiness Enjoyment?  Is a Meaningful life Happiness?

Do **social comparisons** affect happiness perceptions?  Does **inequality** of wealth, **inequality** of opportunity affect happiness?

What impact do **technological and economic changes** have on happiness?
What is Happiness? A state of mind?

1938 Frank’s description

Happiness is a satisfied and contented state of mind, usually personified in a smiling disposition and a cheery voice.

Happiness is a state of mind and attitude……..most of which are within your own control (2014)
Discussion  What is Happiness?

• Quote from Worktown - happiness from within?

“Happiness is something you must work for and is not got easily. Happiness is having the feel of life in your bones”
Thank you for Listening

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Professor Jerome Carson,
J.Carson@bolton.ac.uk
References


• Clewlow, S.A., *From Bolton to Blackpool*. (2010 unpublished paper, to obtain a copy contact the author - saclewlow@yahoo.com)


References