

QUALITY OF LIFE IN CANADA

ALBERTA THE VANGUARD OF CANADIAN HAPPINESS

[Ottawa – February 10, 2011] – Many policy experts are emphasising the importance of understanding subjective wellbeing and happiness. One longstanding method of measuring subjective wellbeing is to ask respondents to rate their perceived quality of life. We did just that recently with a large random sample of Canadians (n=2,053). The results provide a snapshot of Canadians' subjective wellbeing. Additional analysis also provides some hints as to the determinants of self-rated quality of life and the distribution of happiness in Canadian society.

First of all, Canadians are a relatively contented lot. Only single digit numbers consider their quality of life poor and the clear majority of Canadians are happy with their lives. Looking at the underlying patterns, there seems to be two crucial determinants of wellbeing – socioeconomic status and physical health. There is a very clear straight line relationship between income and quality of life. Money may not buy happiness, but it sure is linked to claimed wellbeing. Another key factor is educational attainment, with the university educated being the most happy. We also probed on self-rated health, which is a strong determinant of actual health. We found that those with the best health were the most happy. So the tickets to wellbeing appear to be health and wealth. There are other factors, but these are the clearest.

In looking at the regional patterns of quality of life, there are some interesting and mildly surprising findings. First of all, subjective wellbeing broadly declines from West to East but, more specifically, Alberta is the epicentre of happiness in Canada while Quebecers are least satisfied with their quality of life. Notwithstanding the stereotypical joie de vivre depiction of Quebec life, this finding is consistent with earlier research we have done suggesting greater levels of social disconnection in Quebec. The Alberta finding is quite notable and when looking within the Alberta only cases, we see that it is in fact Alberta males who are even more content with their quality of life (79%).

The Alberta happiness advantage is linked to health and wealth but there may be another hidden variable at work here as well. Generally speaking, a sense of control of one's life is a major source of happiness and security. Albertans enjoy relatively high levels of economic security but they also have high levels of political efficacy and have a government which closely reflects their political

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Quality of life:**
 - ▣ **67% good**
 - ▣ **28% average**
 - ▣ **5% poor**

- **Future expectations regarding quality of life:**
 - ▣ **39% better**
 - ▣ **40% same**
 - ▣ **19% worse**

- **Self-rated health:**
 - ▣ **61% good**
 - ▣ **30% average**
 - ▣ **9% poor**

Please note that the methodology is provided at the end of this document.

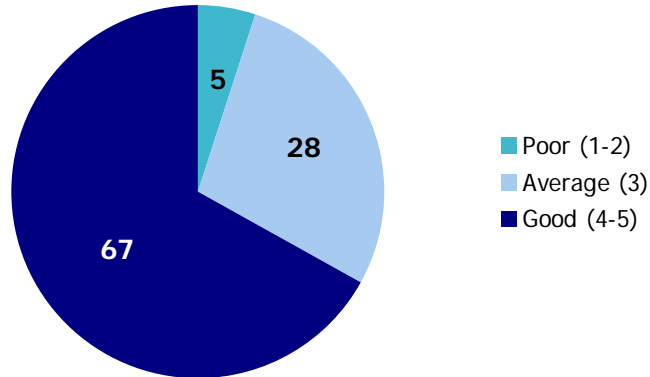
preferences. This is evident in the fact that Albertans are the most content with national and federal direction and links to other recent research showing that Albertans now having the highest sense of attachment to Canada.

One final perspective is the issue of future happiness. Who is relatively most optimistic about their future quality of life? Once again, the hub of Canadian optimism about future wellbeing is Alberta. Notably on this indicator, Quebeckers are much more optimistic about the future than their current lives.

Top Line Results:

Quality of life

Q. How would you rate your overall quality of life?

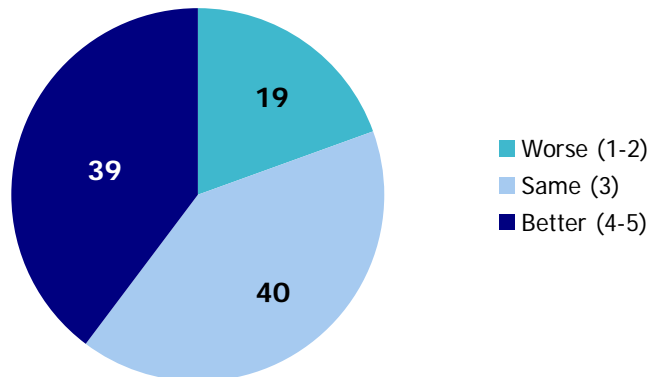


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BASE: Canadians; November 16 - December 7, 2010 (n=2,053)

Future expectations regarding quality of life

Q. Do you expect that your overall quality of life will get better or worse in the next 10 years?

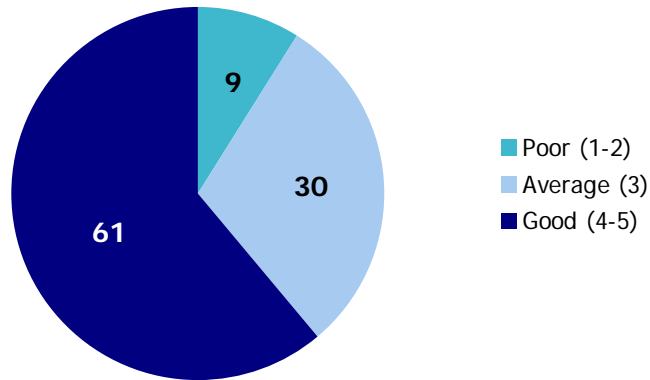


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Rated health

Q. How would you rate your health?

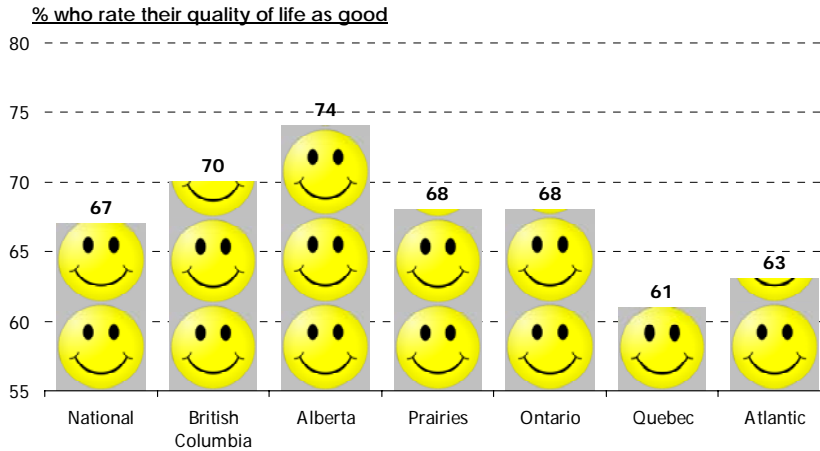


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Quality of life by province

Q. How would you rate your overall quality of life?

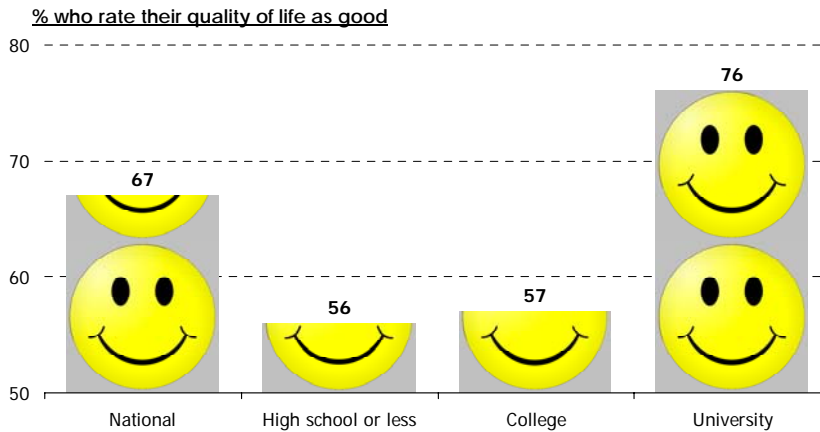


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Quality of life by education

Q. How would you rate your overall quality of life?

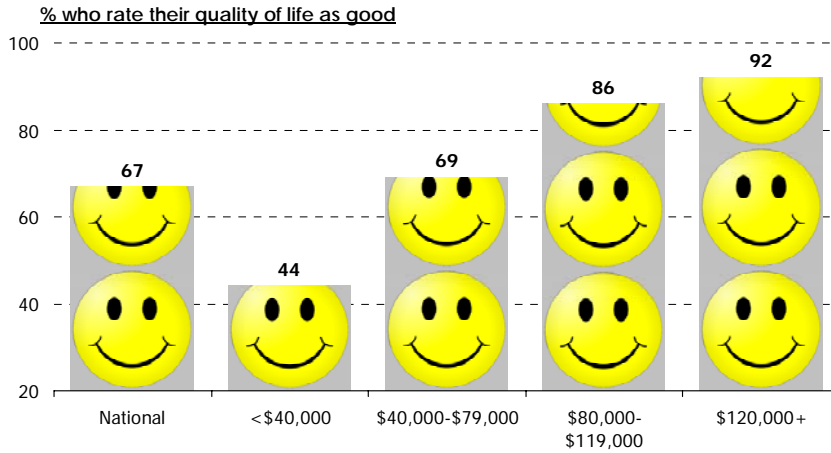


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Quality of life by income

Q. How would you rate your overall quality of life?

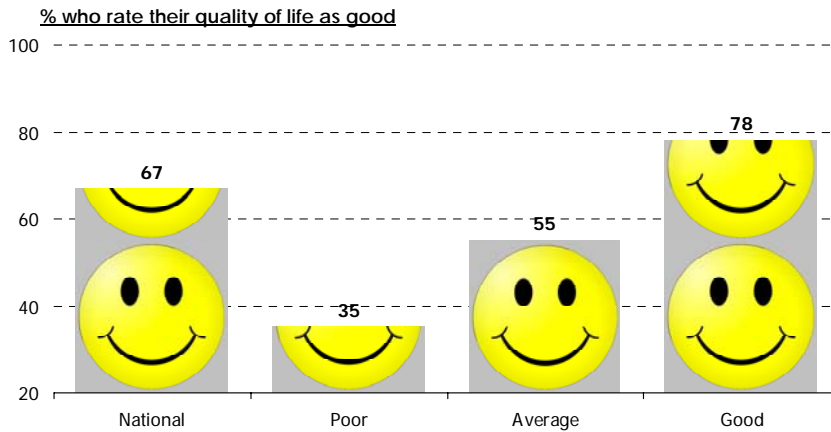


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Quality of life by self-rated health

Q. How would you rate your overall quality of life?



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BASE: Canadians: November 16 - December 7, 2010 (n=2,053)

Detailed Tables:

Quality of Life						
<i>Q. How would you rate your overall quality of life?</i>						
	Poor (1-2)	Average (3)	Good (4-5)	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	5%	28%	67%	0%	2053	2.2
REGION						
British Columbia	6%	23%	70%	1%	318	5.5
Alberta	4%	22%	74%	0%	222	6.6
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	7%	24%	68%	1%	168	7.6
Ontario	3%	28%	68%	0%	692	3.7
Quebec	6%	33%	61%	0%	491	4.4
Atlantic Canada	6%	31%	63%	0%	162	7.7
GENDER						
Male	5%	25%	69%	0%	1055	3.0
Female	5%	31%	65%	0%	998	3.1
AGE						
<25	7%	30%	63%	0%	121	8.9
25-44	4%	26%	69%	0%	526	4.3
45-64	7%	28%	65%	1%	914	3.2
65+	2%	28%	70%	0%	480	4.5
EDUCATION						
High school or less	6%	37%	56%	1%	407	4.9
College or CEGEP	7%	35%	57%	0%	556	4.2
University or higher	3%	20%	76%	0%	1074	3.0
HOUSEHOLD INCOME						
Less than \$40K	12%	44%	44%	0%	525	4.3
\$40-79K	3%	28%	69%	0%	565	4.1
\$80-199K	1%	14%	86%	0%	420	4.8
\$120K or more	1%	7%	92%	0%	269	6.0
SELF-RATED HEALTH						
Poor	24%	41%	35%	0%	183	7.2
Average	6%	39%	55%	0%	604	4.0
Good	1%	21%	78%	0%	1259	2.8

Expected Quality of Life

Q. Do you expect that your overall quality of life will get better or worse in the next 10 years?

	Poor (1-2)	Average (3)	Good (4-5)	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	19%	40%	39%	2%	2053	3.4
REGION						
British Columbia	21%	36%	39%	4%	318	3.3
Alberta	10%	40%	49%	2%	222	3.7
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	20%	42%	36%	2%	168	3.4
Ontario	20%	43%	36%	2%	692	3.3
Quebec	21%	35%	43%	1%	491	3.4
Atlantic Canada	20%	46%	32%	2%	162	3.3
GENDER						
Male	21%	37%	40%	2%	1055	3.4
Female	18%	42%	38%	2%	998	3.4
AGE						
<25	12%	15%	73%	1%	121	4.1
25-44	13%	29%	56%	3%	526	3.8
45-64	19%	43%	36%	2%	914	3.3
65+	27%	53%	19%	1%	480	2.9
EDUCATION						
High school or less	21%	44%	32%	2%	407	3.2
College or CEGEP	21%	36%	41%	2%	556	3.4
University or higher	17%	40%	41%	1%	1074	3.5
HOUSEHOLD INCOME						
Less than \$40K	24%	34%	40%	1%	525	3.3
\$40-79K	19%	43%	36%	2%	565	3.4
\$80-199K	15%	44%	40%	1%	420	3.5
\$120K or more	11%	41%	47%	1%	269	3.7

Self-Rated Health

Q. How would you rate your health?

	Poor (1-2)	Average (3)	Good (4-5)	DK/NR	Sample Size	Margin of Error (+/-)
NATIONALLY	9%	30%	61%	0%	2053	2.2
REGION						
British Columbia	10%	30%	60%	1%	318	5.5
Alberta	10%	26%	64%	0%	222	6.6
Saskatchewan/Manitoba	9%	31%	59%	1%	168	7.6
Ontario	8%	30%	62%	0%	692	3.7
Quebec	8%	30%	61%	1%	491	4.4
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\$40-79K	8%	33%	59%	0%	565	4.1
\$80-199K	3%	23%	74%	0%	420	4.8
\$120K or more	4%	21%	75%	0%	269	6.0

Methodology:

This survey was conducted using EKOS' unique hybrid online-telephone research panel, *Prob/i*. This panel is randomly recruited from the general population, meaning that the only way to be included in *Prob/i* is through random selection. Unlike opt-in internet-only research panels, *Prob/i* supports confidence intervals and error testing.

The field dates for this survey are November 16 – December 7, 2010¹. In total, a random sample of 2,053 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted to ensure the samples composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.

¹ Please note that these dates are not inclusive of weekends, as we do not survey on Saturday or Sunday.