

# **Happiness, Interpersonal Relations and Health in Latin America**

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Latin America is a happy region. Positive-affect scores in Latin America are substantially high, both in comparison to other countries in the world and to what income levels in the region would predict. Latin Americans' evaluation of life is also above what income levels would predict.

The happiness situation of Latin Americans can be considered as very favorable, especially when contrasted with commonly used socio-political and economic indicators. These indicators often portray a situation of weak political institutions, high corruption, high violence and crime rates, very unequal distribution of income, and high poverty rates in many Latin American countries.

What explains high happiness in Latin America? This paper argues in favor of the abundance and quality of interpersonal relations in the region. High happiness in Latin America is neither an anomaly nor an oddity. It is explained by the abundance of family warmth and other supportive social relationships frequently sidelined in favor of an emphasis on income measures in the development discourse. The patterns of interpersonal relations in Latin America differ significantly from those in other regions of the world. The specific pattern of interpersonal relations leads to Latin Americans enjoying high family satisfaction levels and experiencing many daily positive emotions. A more relational sense of purpose in life also contributes in explaining the favorable evaluation of life.

A final comment is made regarding the importance of interpersonal relations for the happiness of ill persons. It is not the same to be ill (a clinical condition) than to suffer from an illness (a subjective experience). It is shown that the abundance and warmth of interpersonal relations contributes to the well-being of ill people.