



December 18, 2009

## Happiest states in America? Tennessee ranks fourth

CDC poll says Louisiana is the happiest

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THE TENNESSEAN

A study released Thursday ranked Tennessee as the fourth-happiest state in America based on the answers of Tennesseans and what researchers called objective measures of good living.

Tennessee is home to country music, sour mash whiskey and Tennessee football. Is it any surprise it's among the happiest states in the nation?

The Centers for Disease Control polled more than 1.3 million people across the country, and only three states — Louisiana, Hawaii and Florida — ranked higher in happiness than the Volunteer State.

The places where people are most likely to report happiness also tend to rate high on studies comparing things like climate, crime rates, air quality and schools.

Tennessee has had its share of <http://www.tennessean.com/article/20091118/NEWS01/911180393>">sobering rankings this year. The fifth-highest death rate for <http://www.tennessean.com/article/20091114/NEWS07/911150325>">cancer patients. Forty-seventh in preventing <http://www.tennessean.com/article/20090729/NEWS01/112180001>">infant mortality. Fourth <http://www.tennessean.com/article/20090701/FEATURES04/112180002>">fattest in the nation.

But happiness is something that Vanderbilt University philosophy professor John Lachs says can't be scientifically measured as easily as those things.

People tend to think about happiness in the context of mood, Lachs said, not the direction of their lives and whether they're meeting their goals.

But if it were measured? He'd put Tennessee at No. 1.

"Go to the Eastern Seaboard and it's push, push and then you drop dead," Lachs said. "We have a more relaxed lifestyle. Something really important is that in Tennessee, people are civil."

A report in Thursday's edition of the journal *Science* found that the happiest people tend to live in the states that do well in quality-of-life studies. Researchers compared the survey's happiness rankings with studies that rated states on criteria ranging from availability of public land to commuting time to local taxes.

At the bottom were New York, Connecticut and Michigan.

The CDC ratings used data collected over four years that included a question asking people how satisfied they are with their lives.

### Additional Facts

## WHO'S HAPPY?

Here's what some Middle Tennesseans said on Thursday made them happy about the state:

**Whisperin' Bill Anderson,  
Grand Ole Opry performer and songwriter**

"I guess the politically correct answer would be, gee, it's the music! ... I hear all the time from my fans and my friends. That's the friendliest place I've ever been. I don't know if it's friendly because it's so happy, or so happy because it's friendly. But I know this: I wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

**Louella Buck, retiree**

"The first thing that comes to mind is, I moved here from Michigan and I fell in love with the weather. We're so blessed. It's a good place to raise your children and get a good education. It's so easy to get away from the concrete. And oh, the music!"

**Tom Crow, First Baptist Nashville pastor**

"I think part of it is that we are a state predominantly of believers, people of faith. There are a numbers of Scriptures that say, rejoice with joy inexpressible. We are a state of family values, Judeo-Christian values historically. Surely all that fits together in helping us see a bigger picture than the woes of the day."

**Gerry House, WSIX-FM radio personality**

"Of course we have Lynchburg. I think Lynchburg takes the average up. Nicole Kidman makes me happy. And oh, the Smokies. They are even smokier than they used to be. They've also coordinated the UT colors with the traffic barrels around Knoxville, which I think is pretty cool."