

Advanced Conversation

"An optimistic person sees the glass of water as half-full. The pessimistic person sees it as half-empty. The blessed person just drinks it."

Anon

Warm up

Imagine your spouse earns a significantly higher salary than you do. Think about what potential problems you may have in these areas:

Social status
Housework expectation
Sense of achievement
Issues with in-laws

Warm up questions

- Do you often compare your salary with friends or family members?
- Is it OK for a woman to make more money than her husband?
- Do you feel like your salary should be higher? If yes, why?
- What are some jobs which have a high salary but you would never want to do?

Happiness

Which of these things or places would make you most happy and for what reasons? What other things make you the happiest?



Comparing income with peers causes unhappiness

1. **Comparing your income with those of family and friends is a recipe for unhappiness, a study has suggested.**
2. Researchers analysing data from a Europe-wide survey found three-quarters of those asked thought it important to compare their incomes with others. But those who compared salaries seem less content, especially if they looked at those of friends and family rather than work colleagues. The paper in the Economic Journal also found the poor were most affected.
3. The researchers, from the Paris School of Economics, used data from the European Social Survey covering 19,000 participants in 24 countries. They found that those who compared their incomes with others tended to be less happy.
4. The responses showed that the greater the importance people attached to such comparisons, the lower they ranked themselves on measures of satisfaction with life and standard of living, as well as on feeling depressed.
5. There was no difference seen between men and women in how much they compare their income with those around them. But limiting comparisons to work colleagues seems to be the most innocuous - as comparisons with friends appeared to be twice as painful as comparisons with colleagues.

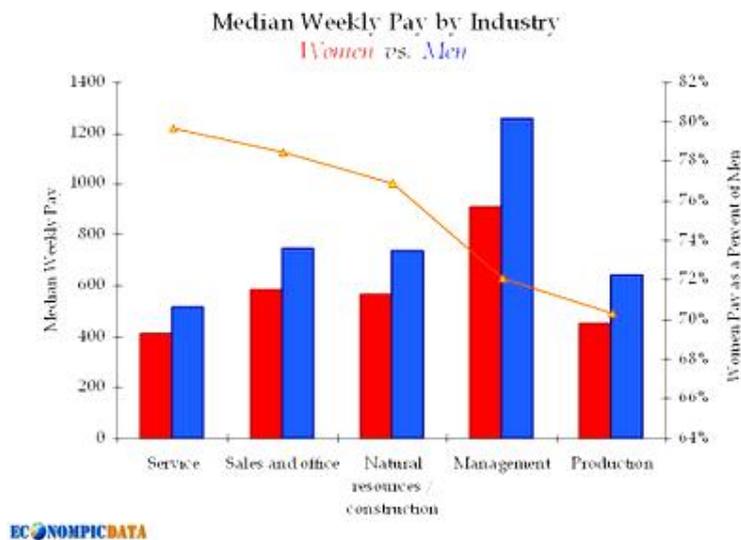
Glass half empty

6. The researchers suggest that when it comes to comparing your salary with colleagues' earnings, it may help boost feelings about the prospects for potential future income. They concluded: "Constantly looking over one's shoulder seems to make the world a less happy - and more unequal - place."
7. Study leader Professor Andrew Clark added that the larger effect seen in poorer groups was a surprise.
8. "I had thought that richer people would compare more because if you're down towards the bottom what really matters is just getting the minimum required, but it didn't come out that way. We need to know what comes first - is it those who are glass half empty types who do the comparisons as a consequence of that, or is it the comparison that makes them unhappy?"
9. He said comparisons with school and university friends were probably most damaging.
10. "With work colleagues it's a fairness issue, but with school friends who had the same opportunities as you, you might think 'They've done much better than me so I must be less competent'.

True or False

Decide whether these statements are true or false according to the article. Change the false statements to make them true.

- A. Rich people are more likely to compare salaries than poor people.
- B. The research leader was surprised by the larger effect seen in poor people.
- C. Comparing salaries with co-workers has a stronger effect than comparing with friends or families.
- D. Men compare salaries more often than women.
- E. The article does not tell us which country the study was carried out in.
- F. Comparing salaries with colleagues could lower your hopes regarding your potential earnings.



Privacy

In most places, a person's salary is their private information. Work in pairs and discuss what you would do in these situations.

- You accidentally find your mother's diary.
- You suspect your partner is cheating on you.
- Your neighbor in the building across from you always gets undressed by the window.
- You are using your boss's computer and you see a file called 'salaries.'
- You own a small shop and you suspect an employee has been stealing a little cash from you.
- You suspect your child may be using drugs.
- You catch a colleague passionately kissing your boss.
- You see a married colleague going into a hostess bar during lunch.

Happy times

Talk about your level of happiness throughout the day. How happy are you during the times written in the left hand column? What increases or decreases your happiness?

TIME	Happiness score out of 10	THINGS THAT INCREASE HAPPINESS	THINGS THAT DECREASE HAPPINESS
Waking up			
Breakfast			
Going to work / school			
Morning			
Lunchtime			
Afternoon			
Going home			
Evening			
Bedtime			

- Do those things really directly change your feelings or is it actually that your thoughts about those things created your own emotions?
- Is that also true regarding money? Does money really make people more happy?

If it were me

If you were super rich and influential, how would you use your power? Look at the chart below and discuss how you would use your power and influence in these different areas.

Influence on...	How I'd use my influence	Why
Movies		
My culture		
Politicians		
Education		
World Leaders		
My family		

Made by teacher Rob at Davids English. Amended by Luc.

Stored online at

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