

Scientists Say Higher Optimism Leads to Longer Lives

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. optimism /'äptə,mizəm/ (noun) the quality of being full of hope and emphasizing the good parts of a situation, or a belief that something good will happen
Example: There was a note of optimism in his voice as he spoke about the company's future.
2. ethnicity /eTH'nisədē/ (noun) a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins, or the state of belonging to such a group
Example: They don't place importance on ethnicity.
3. diverse /də'vərs,dī'vərs/ (adjective) showing a great deal of variety; very different.
Example: The notable writer can discuss subjects as diverse as architecture, language teaching, and the physical sciences.
4. deficit /'def.ə.sɪt/ (noun) the amount by which something, especially an amount of money, is smaller than it should be
Example: There is a deficit of trust between the customer and the banks, which yesterday's headline figure will do little to dispel.
5. mortality /mɔ:r'tæl.ə.ti/ (noun) the way that people do not live forever
Example: Her death made him more aware of his own mortality.



Higher levels of **optimism** were associated with longer lifespan and living beyond age 90 in women across racial and ethnic groups in a study led by researchers at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

“Although optimism itself may be affected by social structural factors, such as race and **ethnicity**, our research suggests that the benefits of optimism may hold across **diverse** groups,” said Hayami Koga, a PhD candidate in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Harvard Chan School and lead author of the study. “A lot of previous work has

focused on **deficits** or risk factors that increase the risks for diseases and premature death. Our findings suggest that there's value in focusing on positive psychological factors, like optimism, as possible new ways of promoting longevity and healthy aging across diverse groups."

In a previous study, the research group determined that optimism was linked to a longer lifespan and exceptional longevity, which was defined as living beyond 85 years of age. Because they had looked at mostly white populations in that previous study, Koga and her colleagues widened the current study by including women from across racial and ethnic groups.

According to Koga, including diverse populations in research is important to public health because these groups have higher **mortality** rates than white populations, and there is limited research about them to help inform health policy decisions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think optimism is good for your health? Why?
2. Are you optimistic about your own future? Why?
3. How do you deal with unpleasant or disastrous situations?
4. Who is the most optimistic person you have ever met?
5. Do you enjoy being with optimistic people? Why or why not?