

Researching Attitudes on Health & Hope

Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from Health & Hope, a study conducted by members of the Hope Research Advisory Committee, Hope Foundation of Alberta.

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It may be tempting to assume that people in poor health are less hopeful than those who enjoy good health. While being healthy and feeling hopeful seem to go hand in hand, the two are not always necessarily linked.

People have different views of hope. In this 2002 survey, researchers were interested in exploring those views of hope in relation to how people rated their health. People who took part in this survey were asked two questions:

Question #1 - In general, compared with other people your age, would you say your health is....

- excellent
- very good
- good
- fair
- poor

Most people (90.7%) described themselves as being in *excellent*, *very good* or *good* health. Seven percent described their health as *fair*. The remaining 2.3% said they were in *poor* health.

Summary #1

Regardless of their health, those who took part in this survey were quite hopeful. Those in *poor* health may have been more challenged than those who were healthier. This does not necessarily mean their level of hope was low. In the same way, some people who described their health as *excellent*, *very good* or *good* also reported having low levels of hope. Those who reported *excellent* health rated their hope as 8.3 on average. Individual ratings of hope levels ranged within this group from as low as 3 to as high as 10. Those who reported being in *very good* health rated their hope as 8.0 on average. Individual ratings of hope levels within this group ranged from as low as 1 to as high as 10. Those who reported being in *good* health rated their hope as 7.5 on average, with a range from 1 to 10. Those who reported being in *fair* health rated their hope as 7.4 on average, ranging from a level of 3 to 10. Finally, those who reported being in *poor* health rated their hope as 6.5 on average. People within this group rated their level of hope from as low as 1 to as high as 10.

Question #2 - Which one of the following items **best** describes what hope means to you?

- being open to possibilities
- having a good future
- having goals or plans
- finding meaning in life
- being connected to others
- having a deep inner faith
- having a positive outlook

“Having a positive outlook” was chosen most often by those in *excellent* (34.6%), *very good* (41.0%), *good* (40.4%), and *fair* (43.2%) health. For the people who reported being in *poor* health, “having a deep inner faith” was chosen most often (33.3%).

Summary #2

Persons reporting *excellent*, *very good*, *good* and *fair* states of health described hope, most often, as “having a positive outlook.” Those reporting *poor* health chose “having a deep inner faith” as the best description of hope.