

What makes people flourish?

Felicia A Huppert

Professor Emerita and Director of the Well-being Institute,
University of Cambridge

Professor, Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, ACU Sydney





Why well-being matters

The challenge of defining and measuring well-being



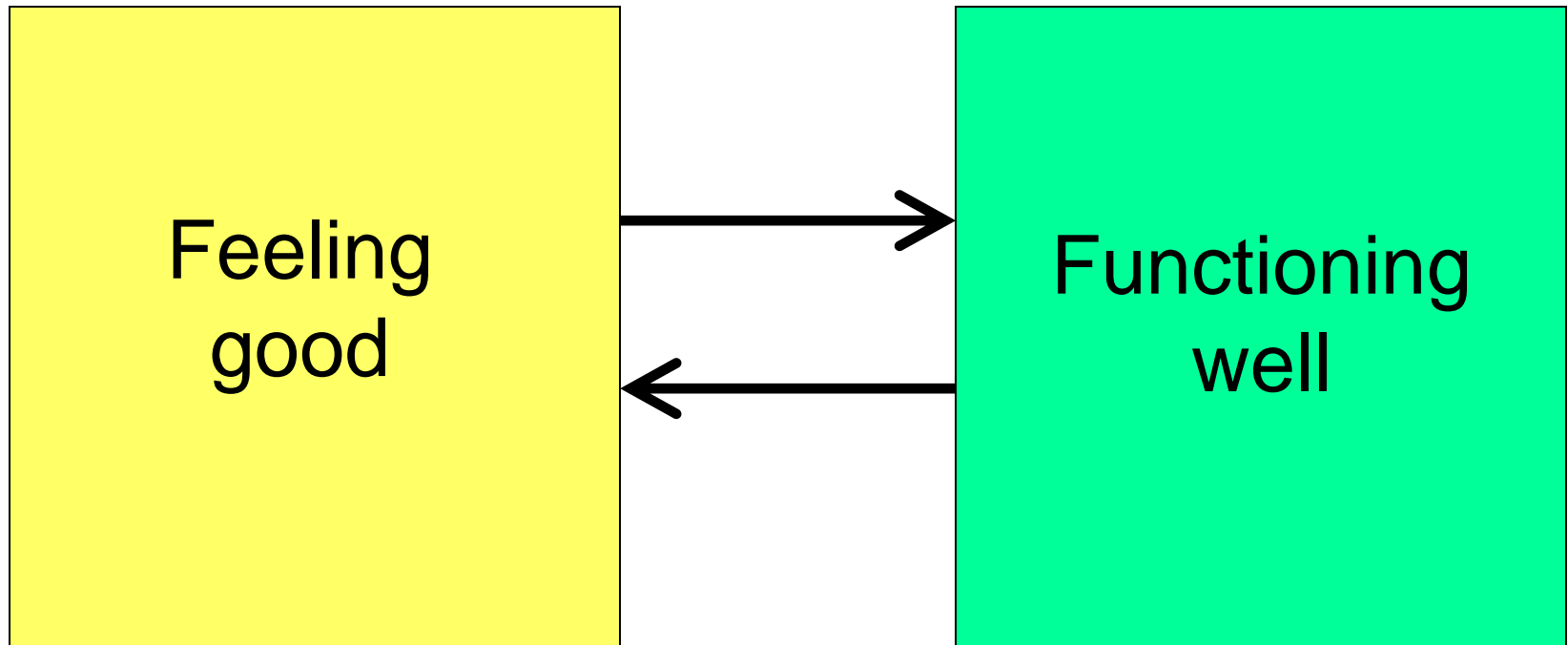
Well-being = happiness?



Well-being = life satisfaction?



Well-being =



Seligman – 5 Pillars of Flourishing

Seligman “Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being” 2011

Outcomes in life that people pursue for their own sake:

Positive emotion

Engagement

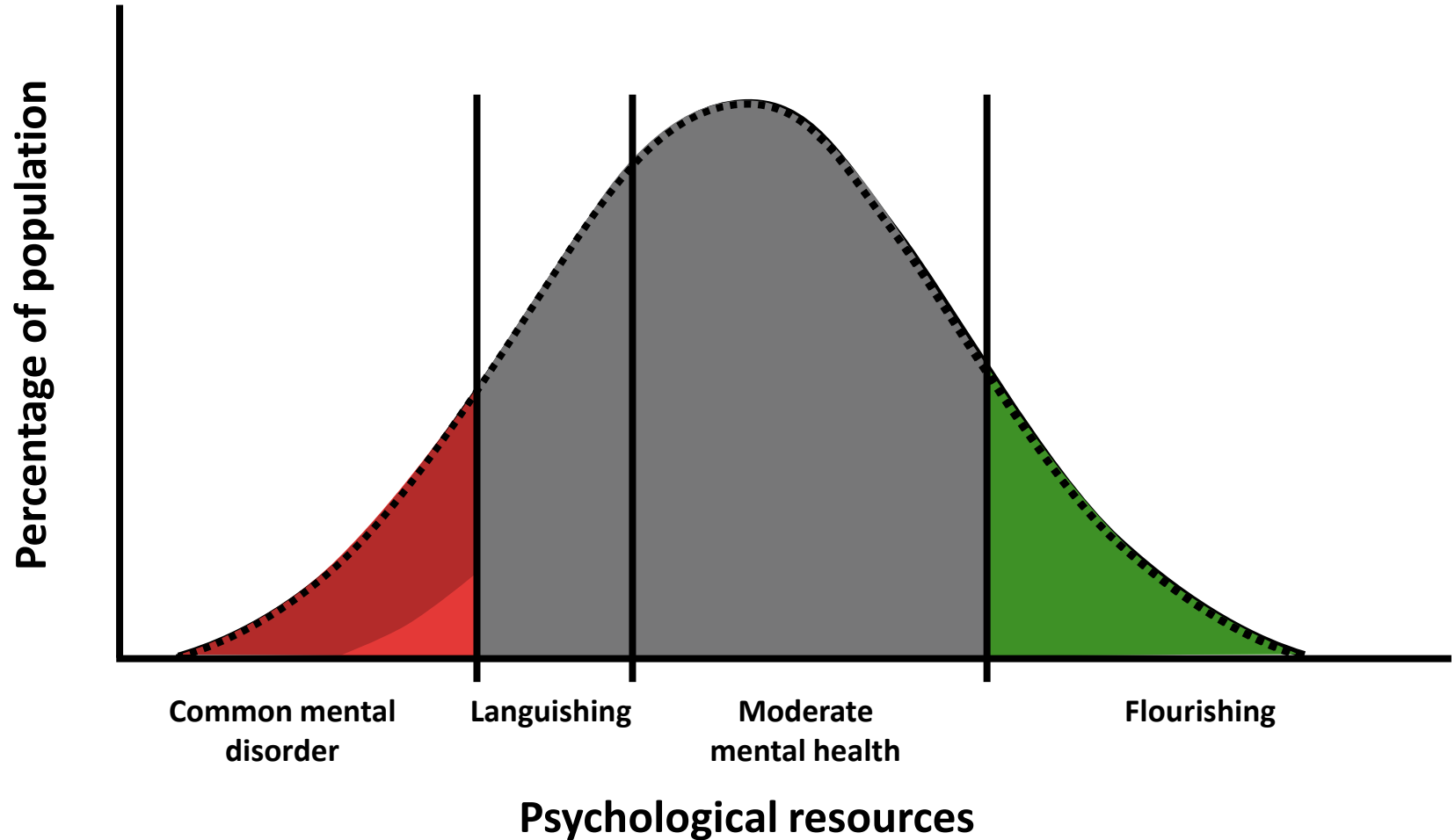
Relationships

Meaning

Accomplishment

**Systematic approach to identifying
the components of well-being**

The mental health spectrum



Operational definition of flourishing

Huppert & So, Soc. Indicators Research, 2011

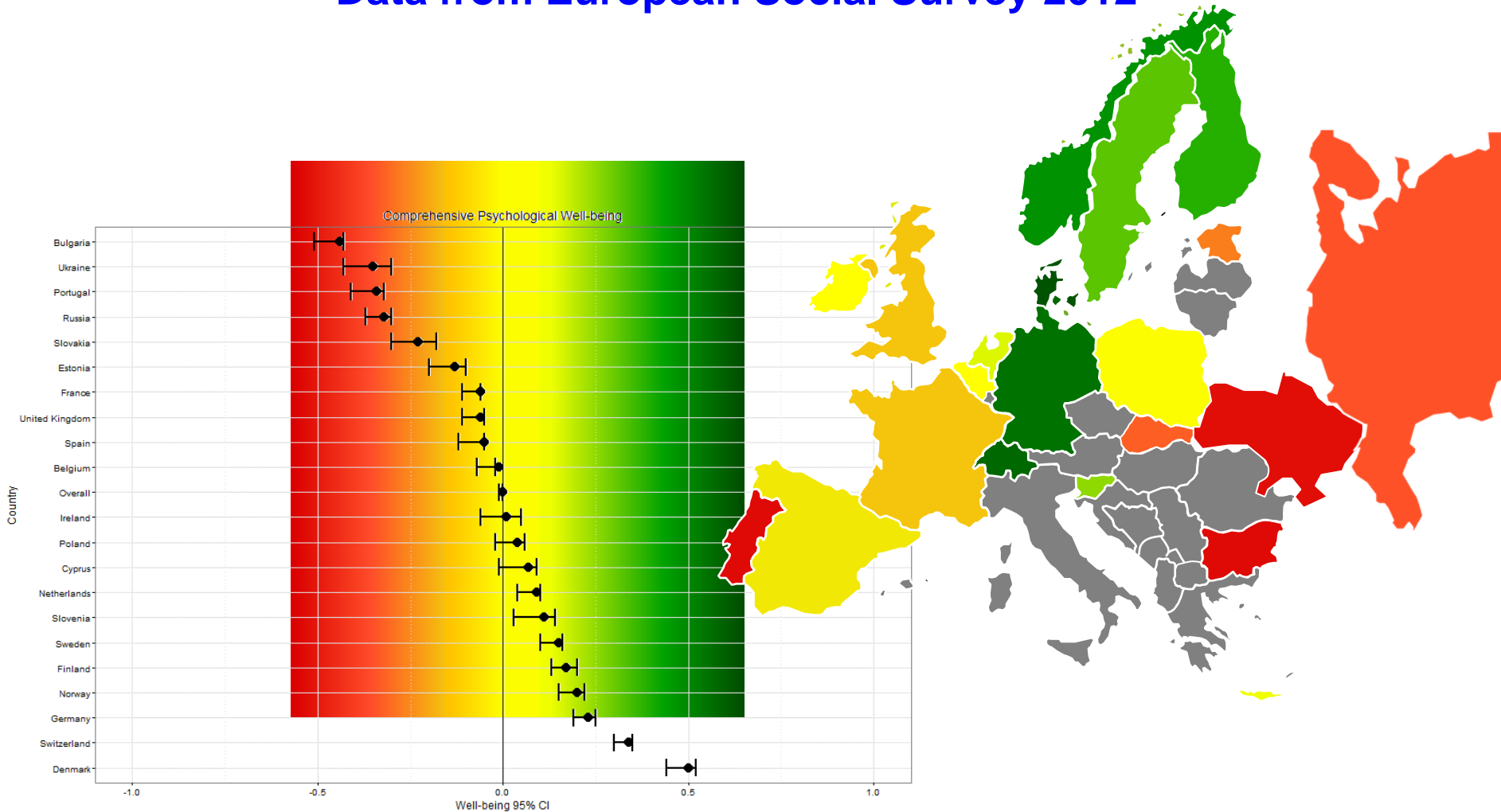
Flourishing is the positive end of the mental health spectrum, the opposite of the symptoms of the common mental disorders (depression and anxiety).

Ten features of flourishing

Positive emotion	Resilience
Engagement	Emotional stability
Relationships	Vitality
Meaning	Optimism
Competence	Self-esteem

Comprehensive Psychological Well-being (CPWB) means and confidence intervals for 21 countries

Data from European Social Survey 2012



Societal-level factors influencing flourishing across Europe

Flourishing **nations** are generally characterised by:

- relative wealth
- low income inequality
- high employment
- good healthcare system
- high welfare expenditure
- good governance
- high social trust

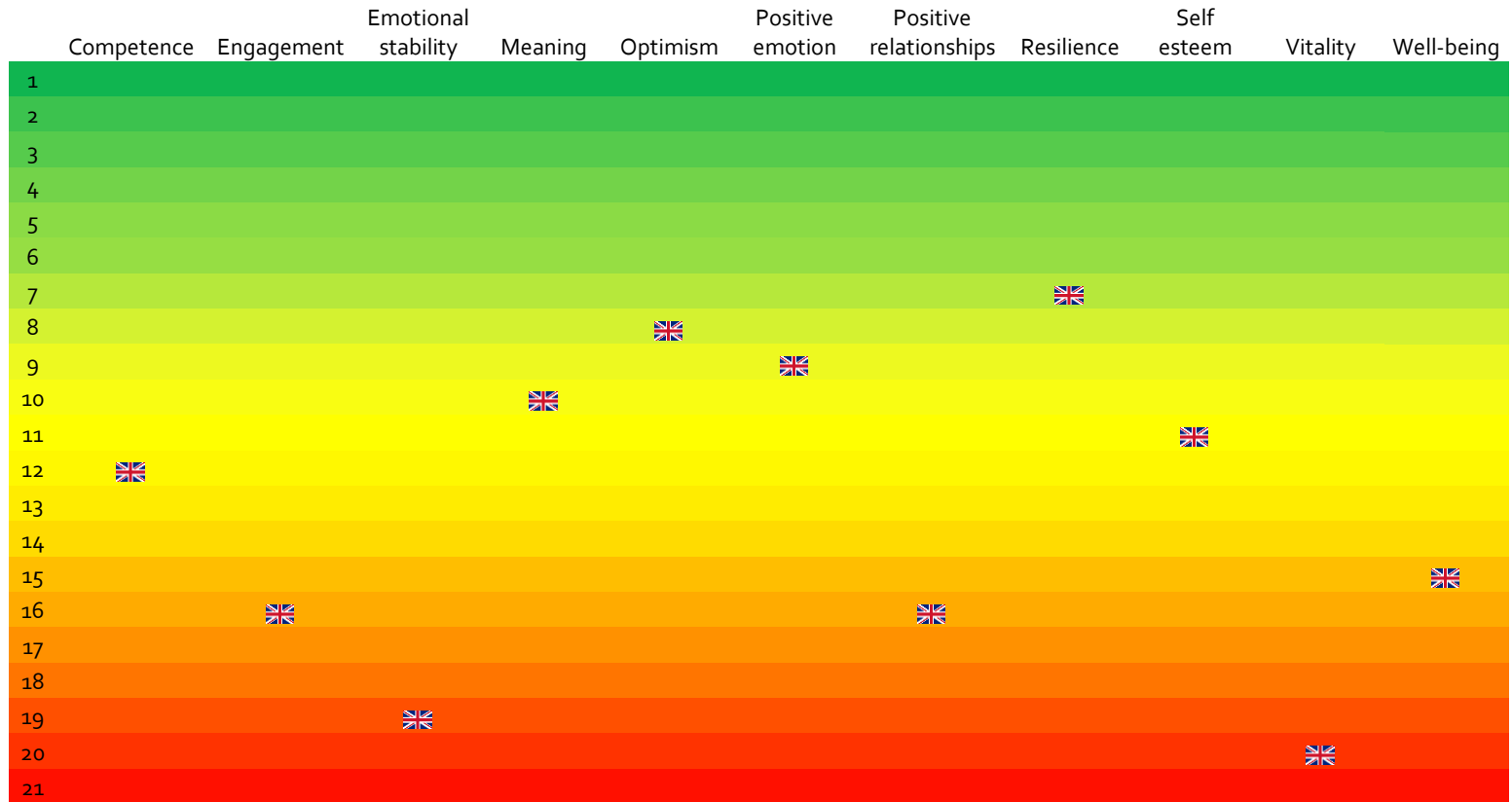
Well-being profiles

Data from European Social Survey 2012

	Competence	Engagement	Emotional stability	Meaning	Optimism	Positive emotion	Positive relationships	Resilience	Self esteem	Vitality	Well-being
1											
2											
3											
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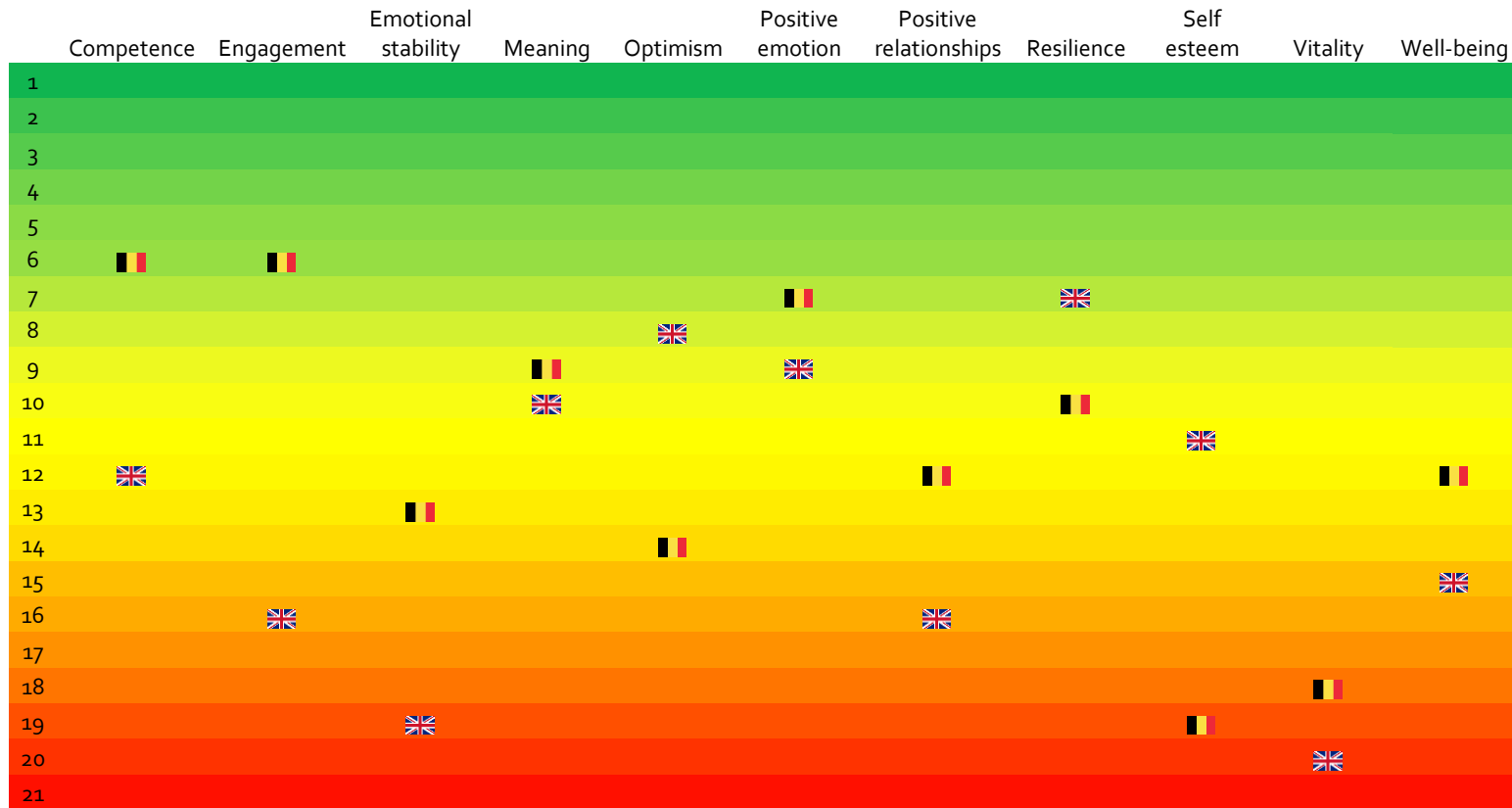
Well-being profile for the United Kingdom

Data from European Social Survey 2012



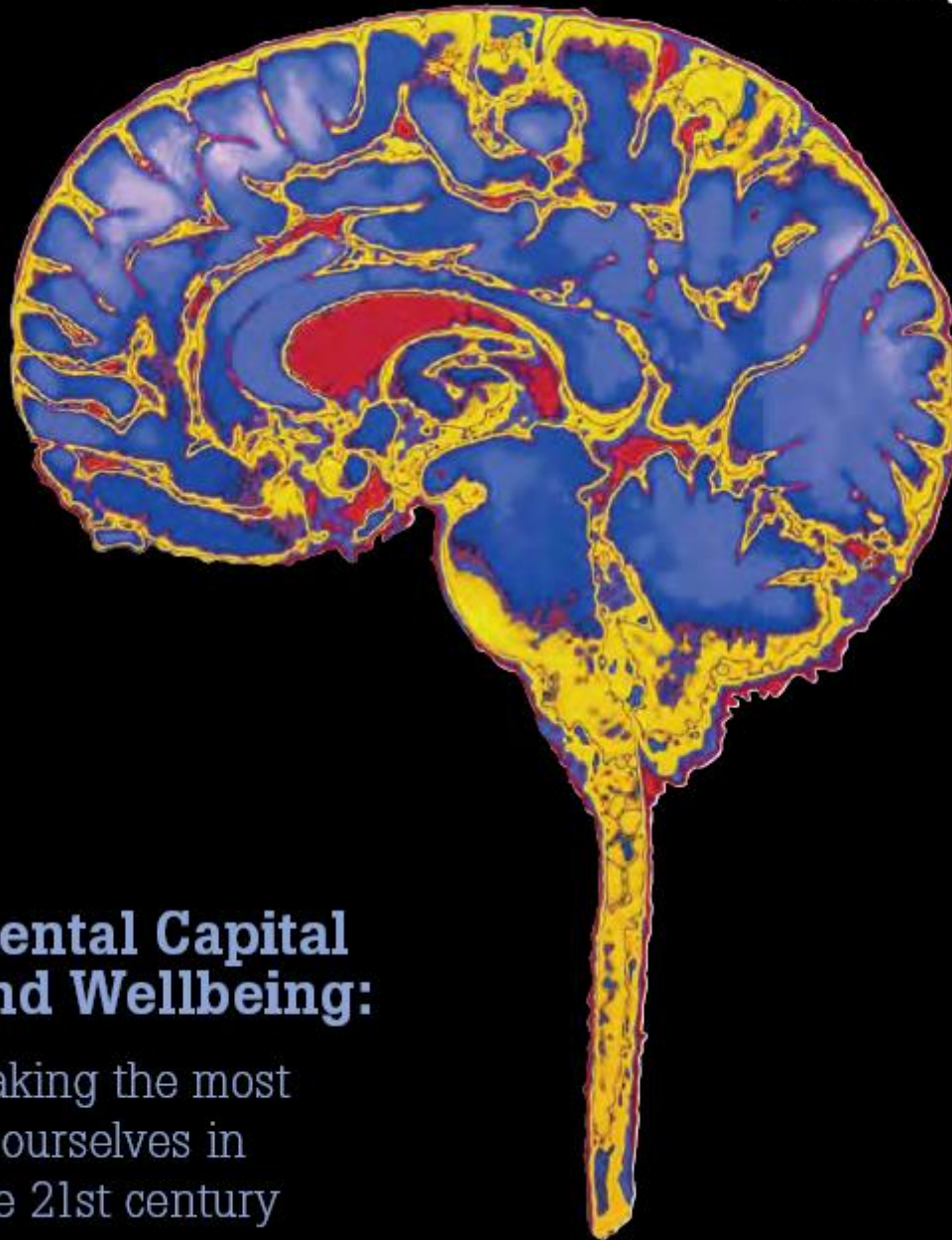
Well-being profile for the United Kingdom & Belgium

Data from European Social Survey 2012



Life satisfaction

UK: 7.3 **Belgium: 7.4**



Mental Capital and Wellbeing:

Making the most
of ourselves in
the 21st century

Applying the knowledge

Can well-being be improved?

Five ways to well-being

UK Government Office for Science



Mindfulness

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)

Mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT)

- A way of paying attention to what is going on right now in the mind, the body, and the world around us
- Kindly approach, not making judgements
- Not being on automatic pilot
- Quieting the mind, creating clarity
- Allowing better choices and decisions



Mindfulness research

systematic reviews, RCTs, meta-analysis

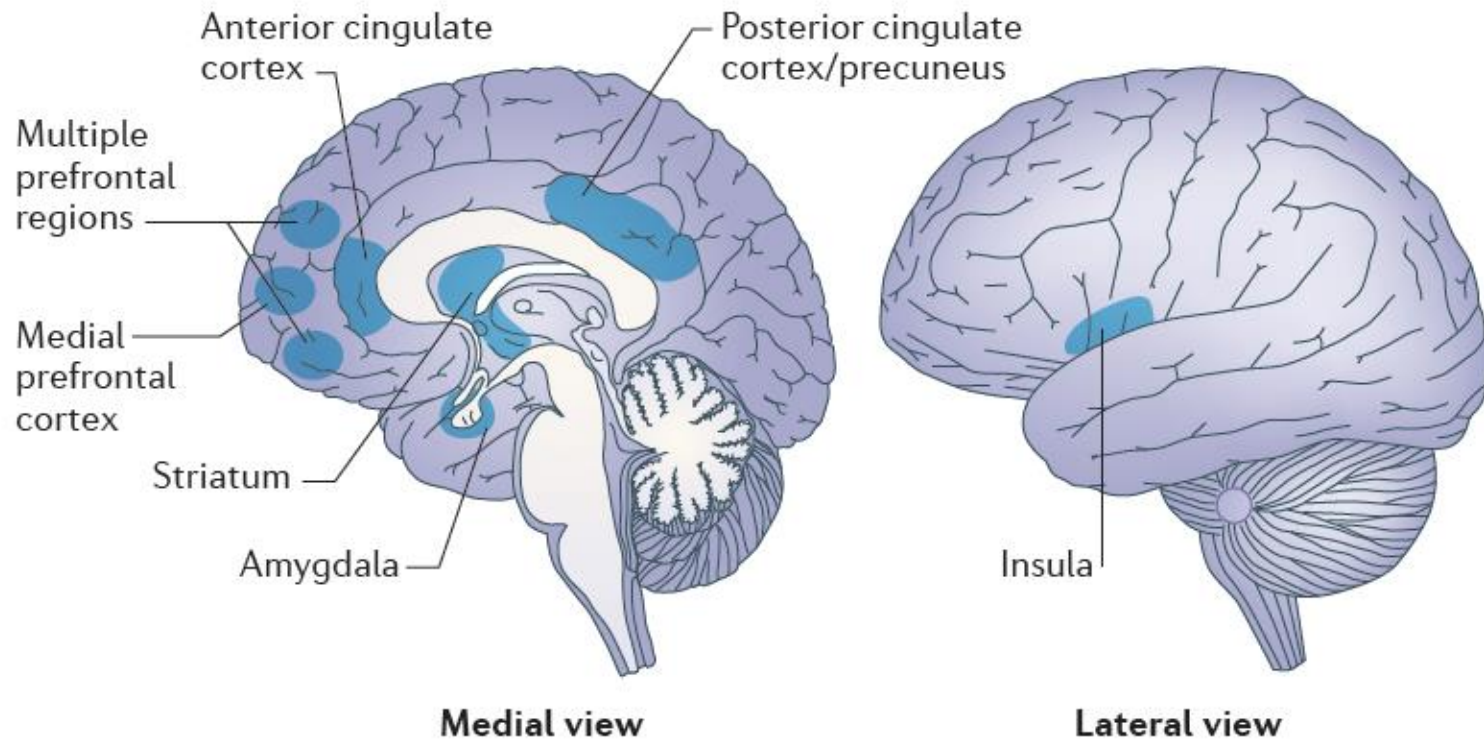
MBSR/MBCT is effective in a wide range of conditions:

- depression
- anxiety
- eating disorders
- chronic pain
- fibromyalgia

Benefits include:

- perceived reduction in stress and anxiety
- increased positive mood
- Improved sleep quality
- vitality
- empathy
- improved immune and endocrine function

Brain regions involved in the components of mindfulness meditation.



- attention control (the anterior cingulate cortex and the striatum)
- emotion regulation (multiple prefrontal regions, limbic regions and the striatum)
- self-awareness (the insula, medial prefrontal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex and precuneus)

Neuroscience of mindfulness



A standard 8 week MBSR course lead to increased grey matter density in brain regions associated with:

attention, learning and memory

emotion regulation

self-awareness

Compassion

interoception (bodily awareness)

Holzel et al, Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging, 2011

Mindfulness for politicians

<https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/>



Mindfulness and Education

Effects of mindfulness-based student training

Review by Meiklejohn et al, Mindfulness, 2012

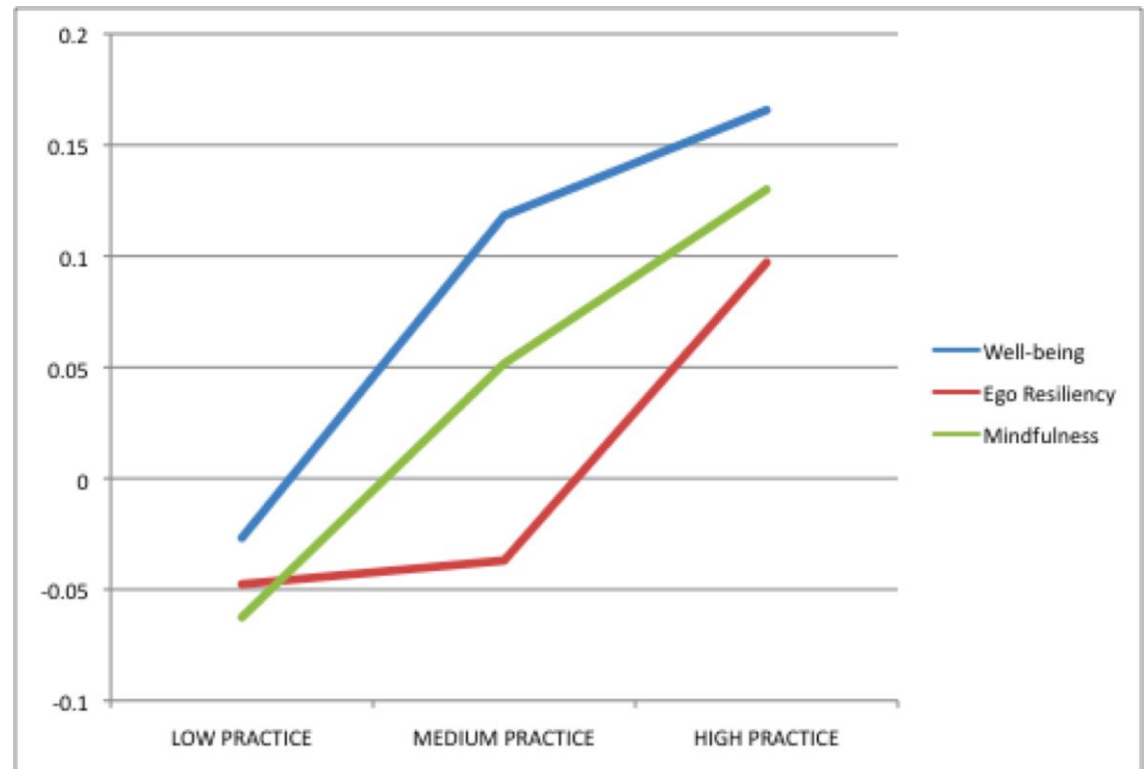
Training students in mindfulness has shown benefits in primary schools (6 studies) and secondary schools (8 studies), including:

- cognitive skills - attention and working memory
- academic skills
- social skills
- emotion regulation
- self-esteem
- improvements in mood
- decreases in anxiety, stress and fatigue

.b

School-based mindfulness training improves well-being

Huppert & Johnson, Journal of Positive Psychology, 2010



Mindfulness in Schools

Outcome comparisons in adolescents at post-intervention and 3-month follow-up (N=522)

Kuyken et al., Brit. J. Psychiatry, 2013

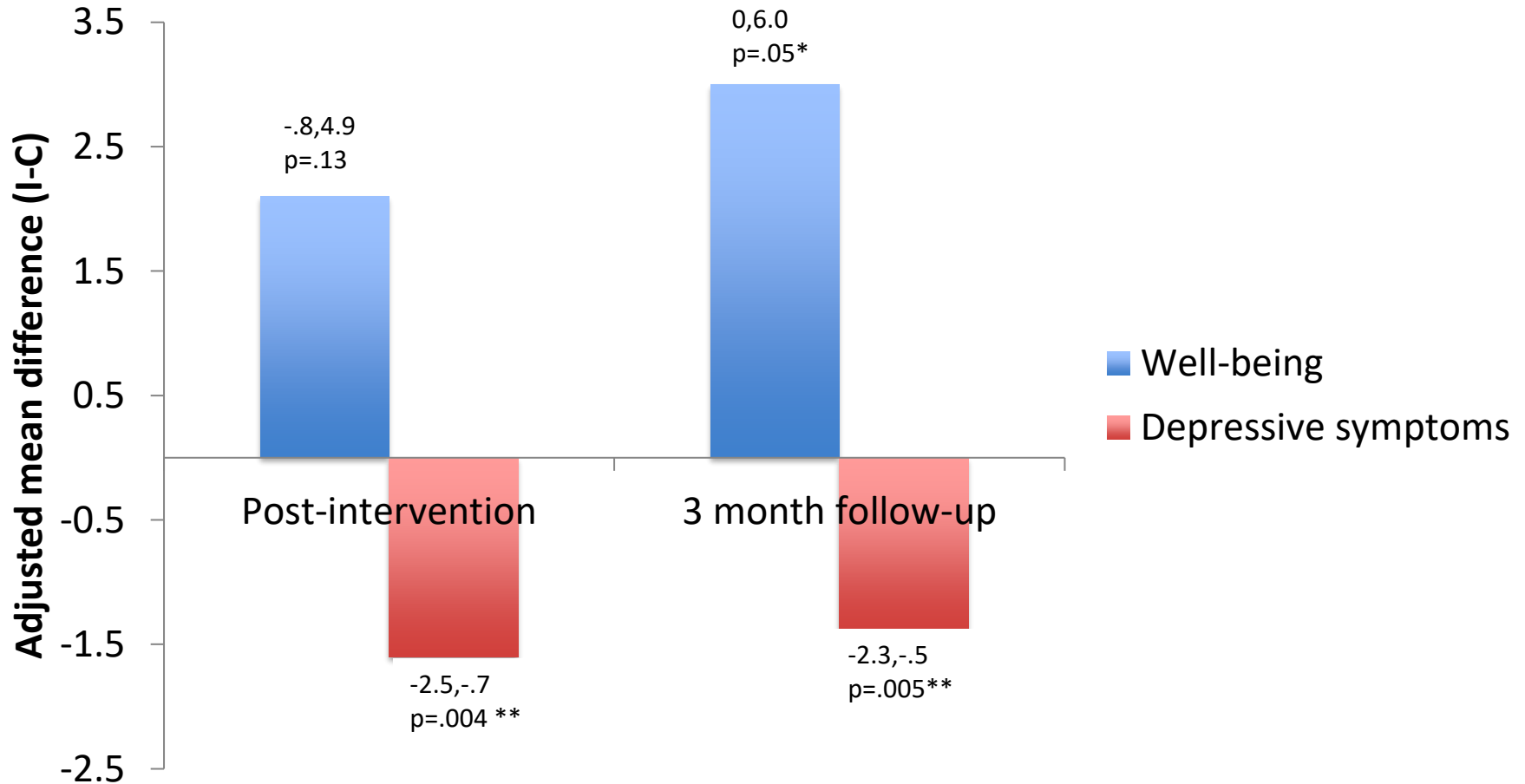


Figure. Outcome Comparisons at Post-intervention and 3-month follow-up (N=522); Kuyken et al., 2013

Effects of mindfulness-based teacher training

Review by Meiklejohn et al, Mindfulness, 2012

Personal training in mindfulness skills can increase:

- teachers' sense of well-being
- teaching self-efficacy
- ability to manage classroom behaviour
- ability to establish and maintain supportive relationships with students

Mindfulness as the foundation of flourishing



The role of self-compassion

Self-compassion

Kristin Neff – Three elements of self-compassion

self-kindness

mindfulness

common humanity

Effects of self-compassion training or induction

- Prevents depression relapse

Kuyken et al., Behaviour Research & Therapy, 2010

- Increased happiness

Shapiro & Mongrain, Journal of Positive Psychology, 2010

- Increased motivation to change for the better

Breins & Chen, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 2012

What is empathy?



**The Brain with
David Eagleman**

Empathy vs Compassion

- In contrast to empathy, compassion does not mean sharing the suffering of the other: rather, it is characterise by feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to help.
- Compassion is feeling *for* and not feeling *with* the other.

Findings from studies of social emotions

Empathy

Negative feelings eg stress

Self-oriented responses

Withdrawal

Poor health, burnout

Compassion

Positive feelings eg love

Other-orientated responses

Approach,
helping behaviour

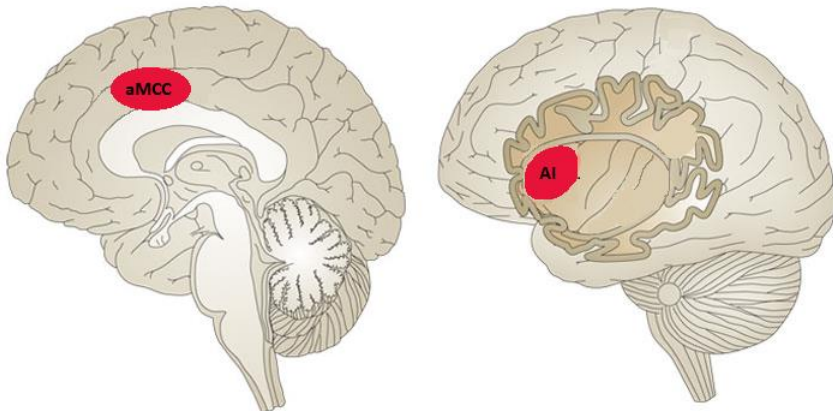
Good health

Neuroscience of social emotions

Empathy

Activation of:

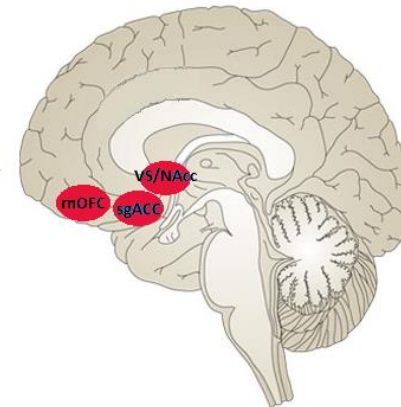
- mirror neurons and networks involved in theory of mind
- Areas associated with negative affect
- Areas associated with the integration of interoception, affect and cognition



Compassion

Activation of regions associated with:

- Affiliation
- positive affect
- reward processing



Effects of compassion training

Benefits of compassion training

Systematic review and meta-analysis

Significant improvements across 5 domains:

- positive and negative affect
- psychological distress
- positive thinking
- interpersonal relations
- empathic accuracy

Enhancing self-regulation and pro-social behaviour in young children

The Kindness Curriculum

RCT with 68 pre-school children

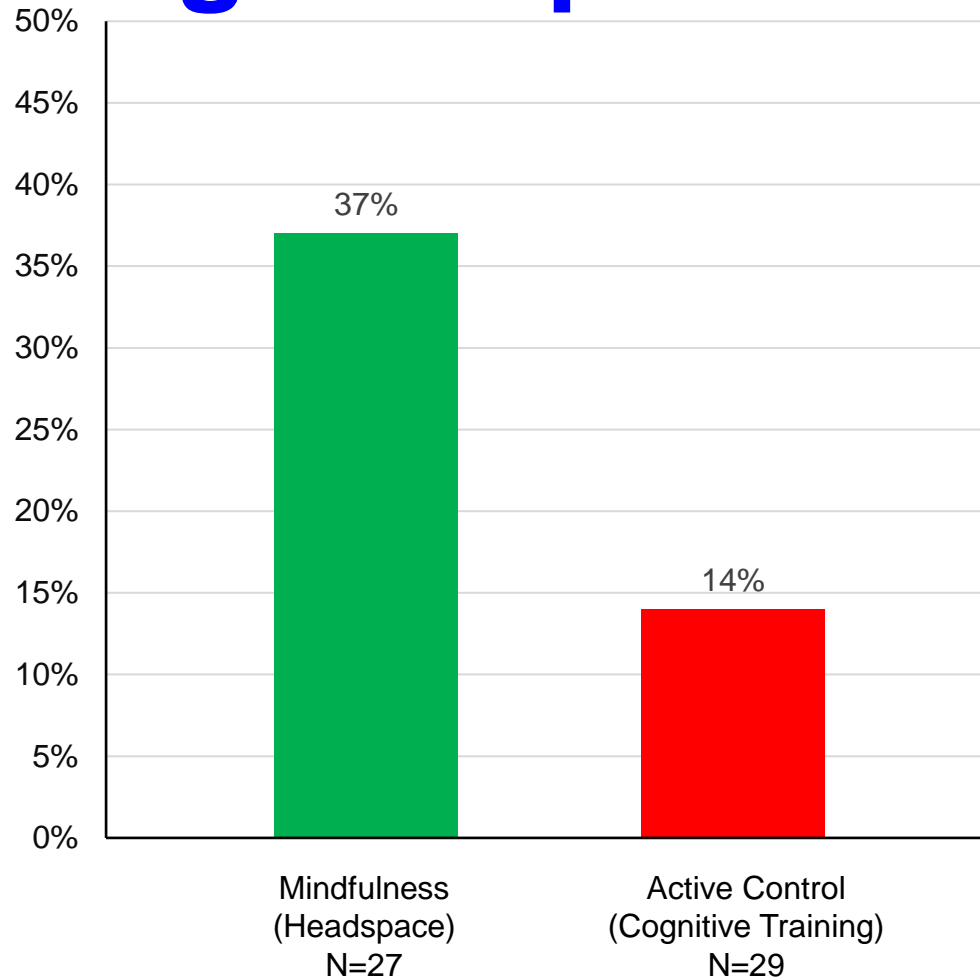
12 week mindfulness-based pro-social skills training versus waitlist control

Benefits of kindness curriculum:

- cognitive flexibility
- delayed gratification
- social competence

**Can mindfulness alone lead
to compassion?**

Percentage of participants who gave up their seat



INTERVENTION GROUP

The effect of shifting the mean of the mental health spectrum

