

Defining and measuring well-being as a multi-dimensional construct

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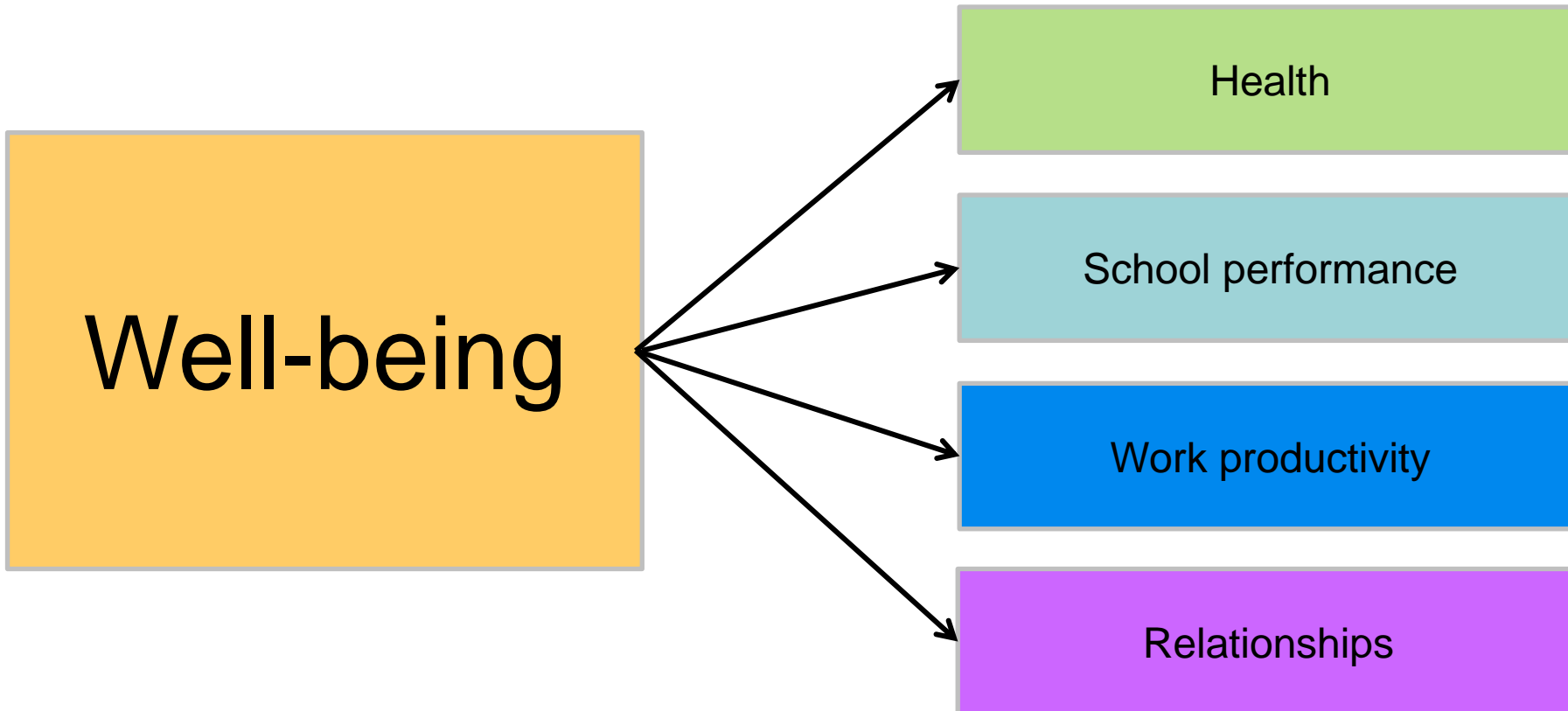
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and
Honorary Professor, Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, ACU Sydney

***Think about a time in your life when
you had a sense of well-being.***

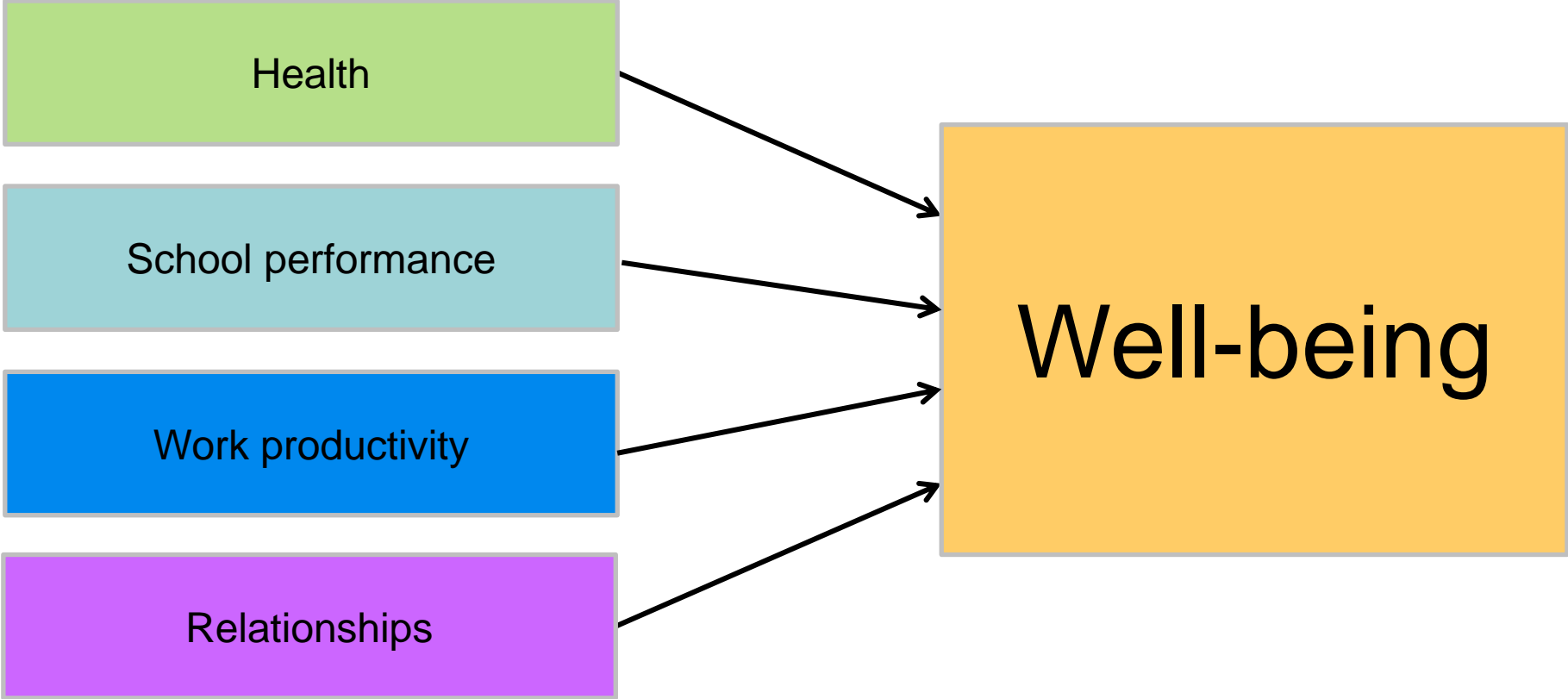
***Please take a minute to write down
what you were experiencing.***

Why subjective well-being matters

Instrumental benefits of subjective well-being



Subjective well-being as the ultimate aim

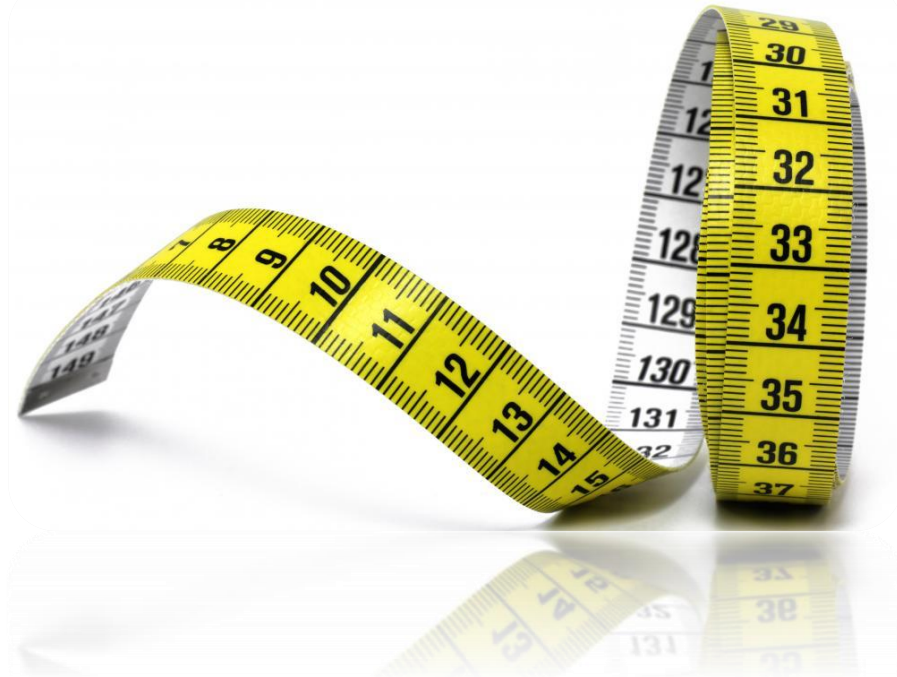


“If you treasure it, measure it.”

***Gus O'Donnell (now Baron O'Donnell),
former head of UK Treasury.***

November 2011

The challenge of measuring well-being



Well-being = happiness?



Well-being = life satisfaction?



Standard life satisfaction question

“All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?

Please select a number from 0 -10, where 0 =completely dissatisfied to 10 =completely satisfied.”

Gallup life satisfaction question

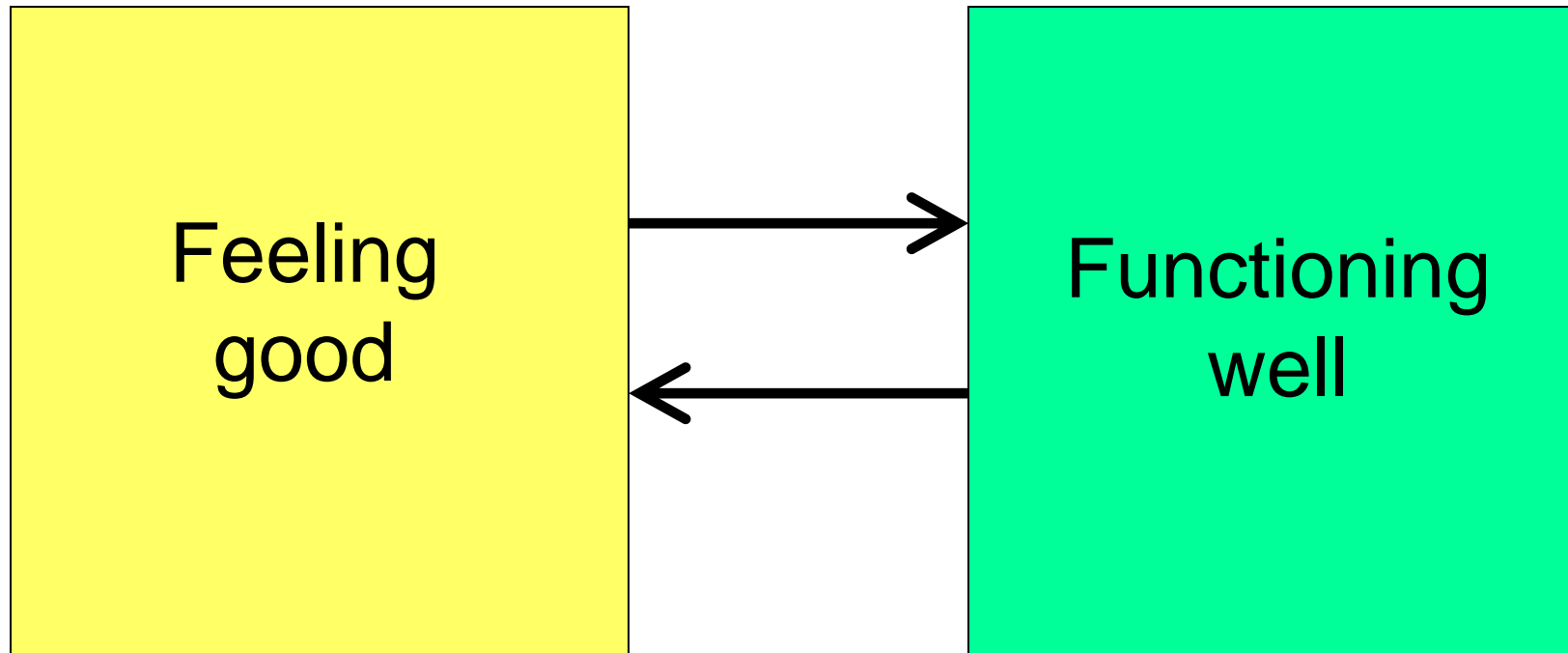
Cantrill Ladder of Life

“Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?”

New simpler life satisfaction question

“Overall, how well would you say your life is going?
Please select a number from 0 -10, where 0 =
extremely badly to 10 = extremely well.”

Subjective well-being = the experience that our life is going well



Ryan & Deci - Basic Psychological Needs

American Psychologist, 2000

Well-being consists in being fully functioning rather than simply attaining desires.

Well-being require the fulfilment of 3 basic psychological needs:

autonomy

competence

relatedness

Seligman – 5 Pillars of Flourishing

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

Outcomes in life that people pursue for their own sake:

Positive emotion

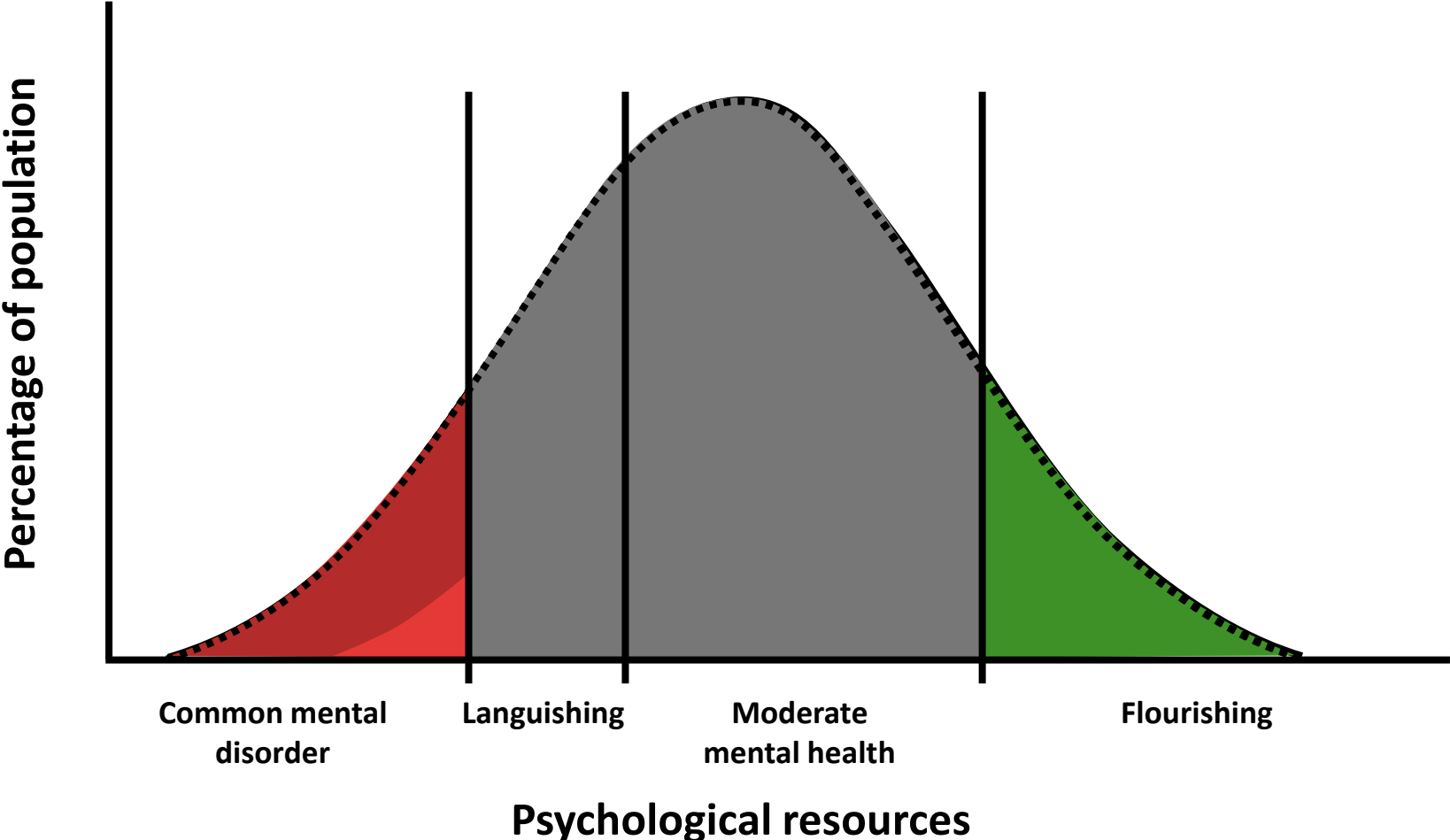
Engagement

Relationships

Meaning

Accomplishment

The well-being 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 (clear thinking)	Self-esteem

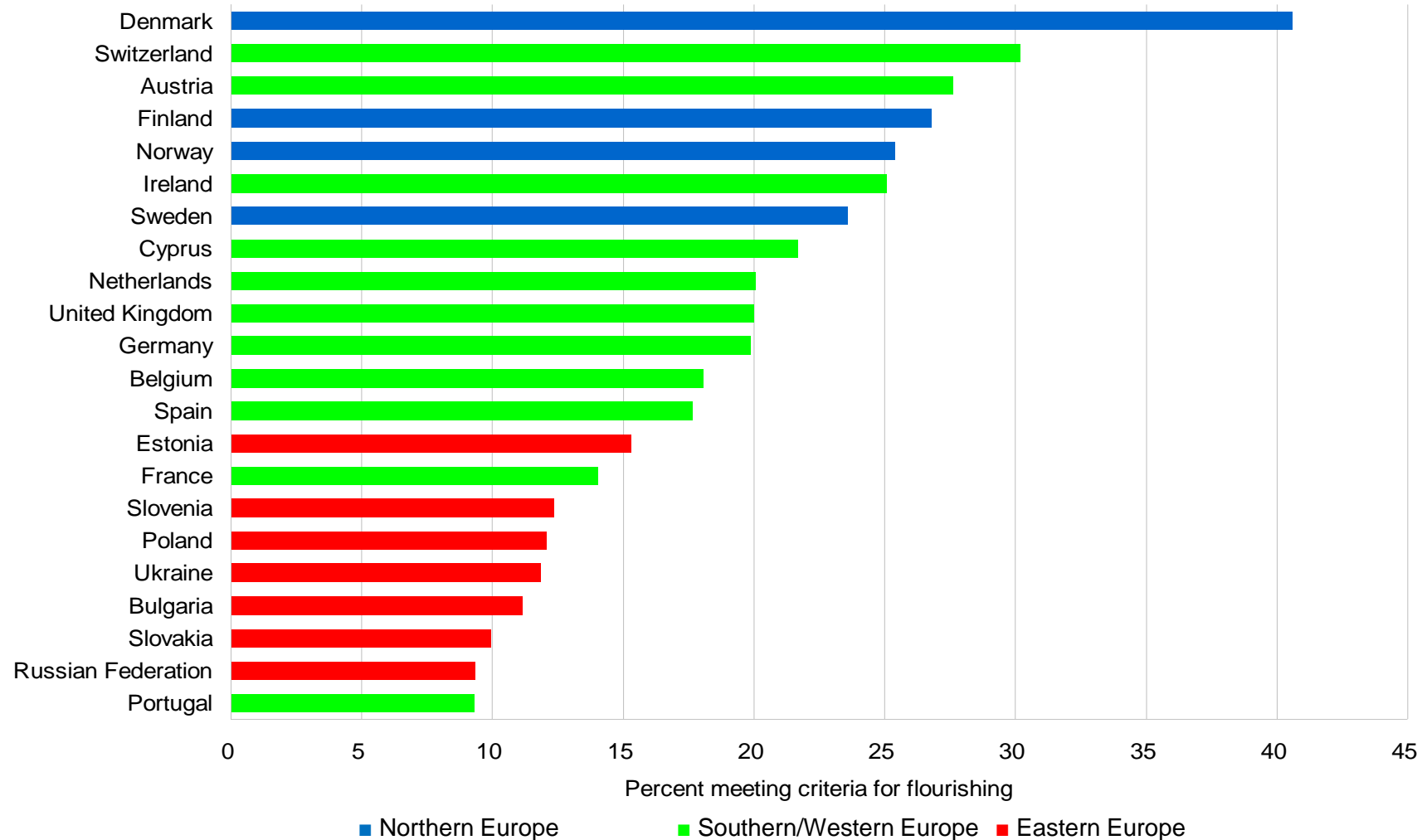
The European Social Survey

- ESS is a cross-national time-series survey, conducted every 2 years
- Round 1, 2002/2003 – 23 countries
Round 2, 2004/2005 – 26 countries
- Round 3, 2006/2007 – 23 countries
Included a well-being module; 43,000 respondents
- Round 6, 2012/2013 – 30 countries
Repeat of well-being module



Percentage of population meeting criteria for flourishing (n=43,000)

Huppert & So, Social Indicators Research, 2013



Factors influencing flourishing across Europe – individual level

Based on Schwartz Values Inventory

Controlling for socio-demographic variables:

- the people who are most likely to be flourishing are socially connected, have high social trust and value creativity, new ideas, loyalty, helping others, and enjoying life.
- the people who are least likely to be flourishing are those who value money, status, security, and traditional religious values.

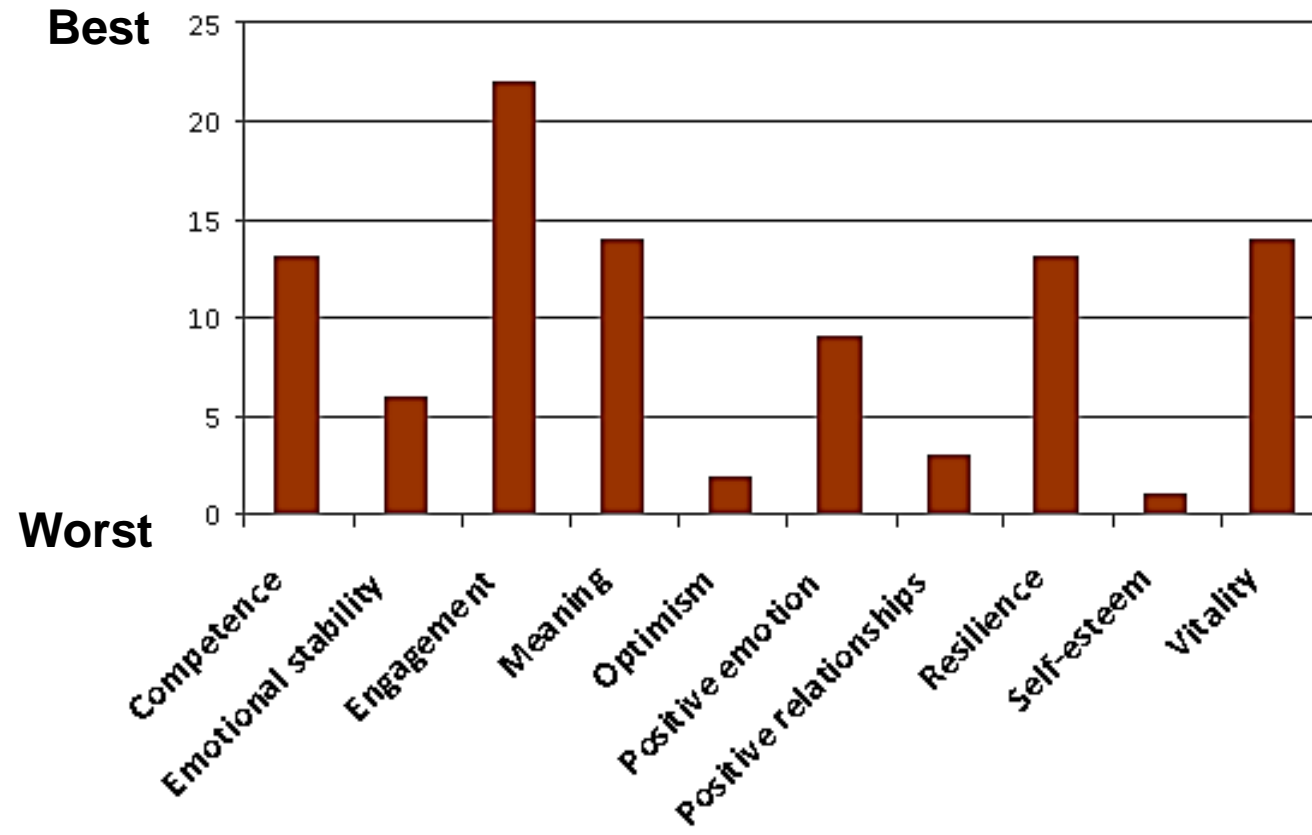
Factors influencing flourishing across Europe – national level

Flourishing **nations** in Europe are characterised by:

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

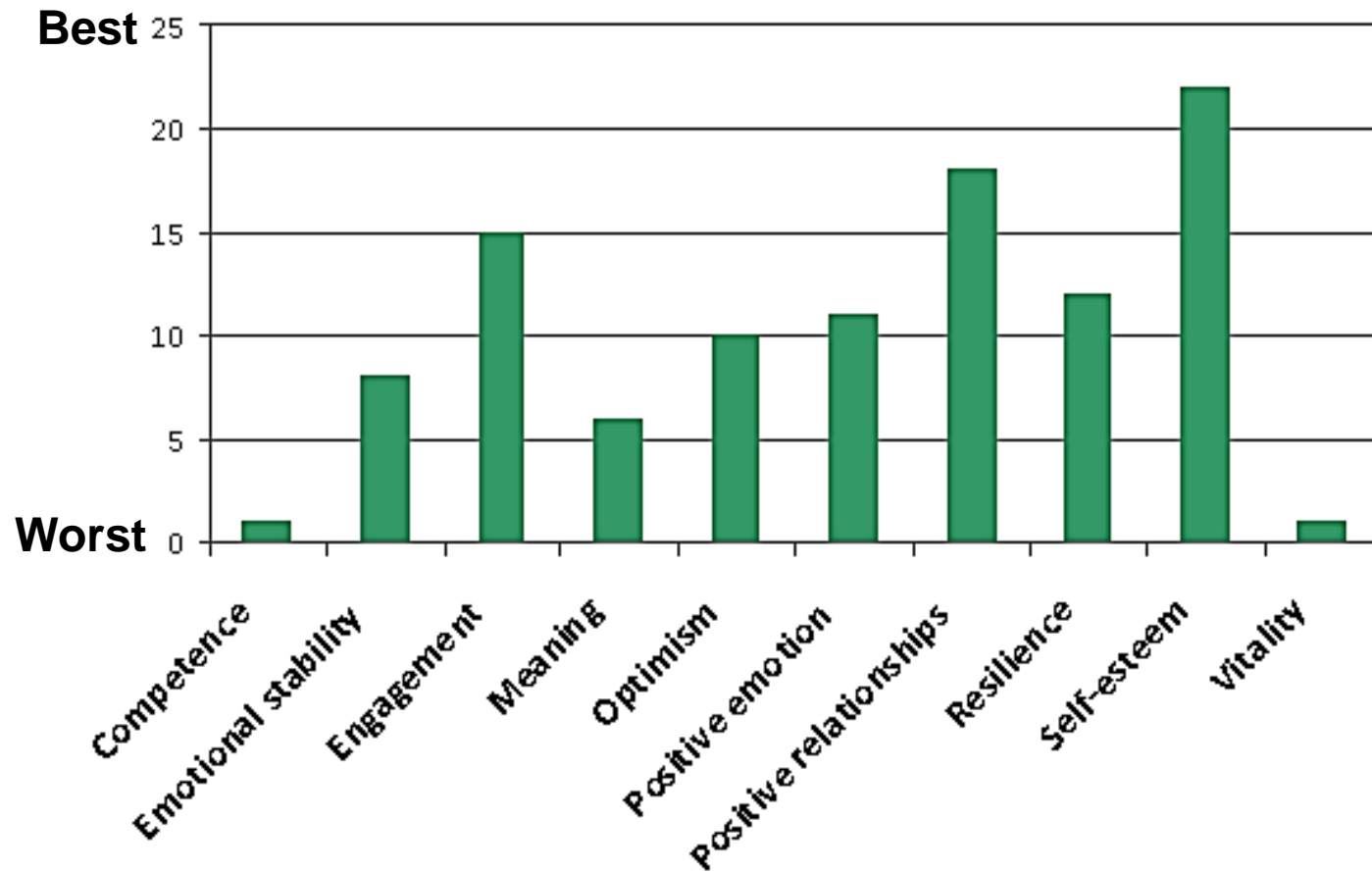
France

Life satisfaction 6.4



Spain

Life satisfaction 7.4



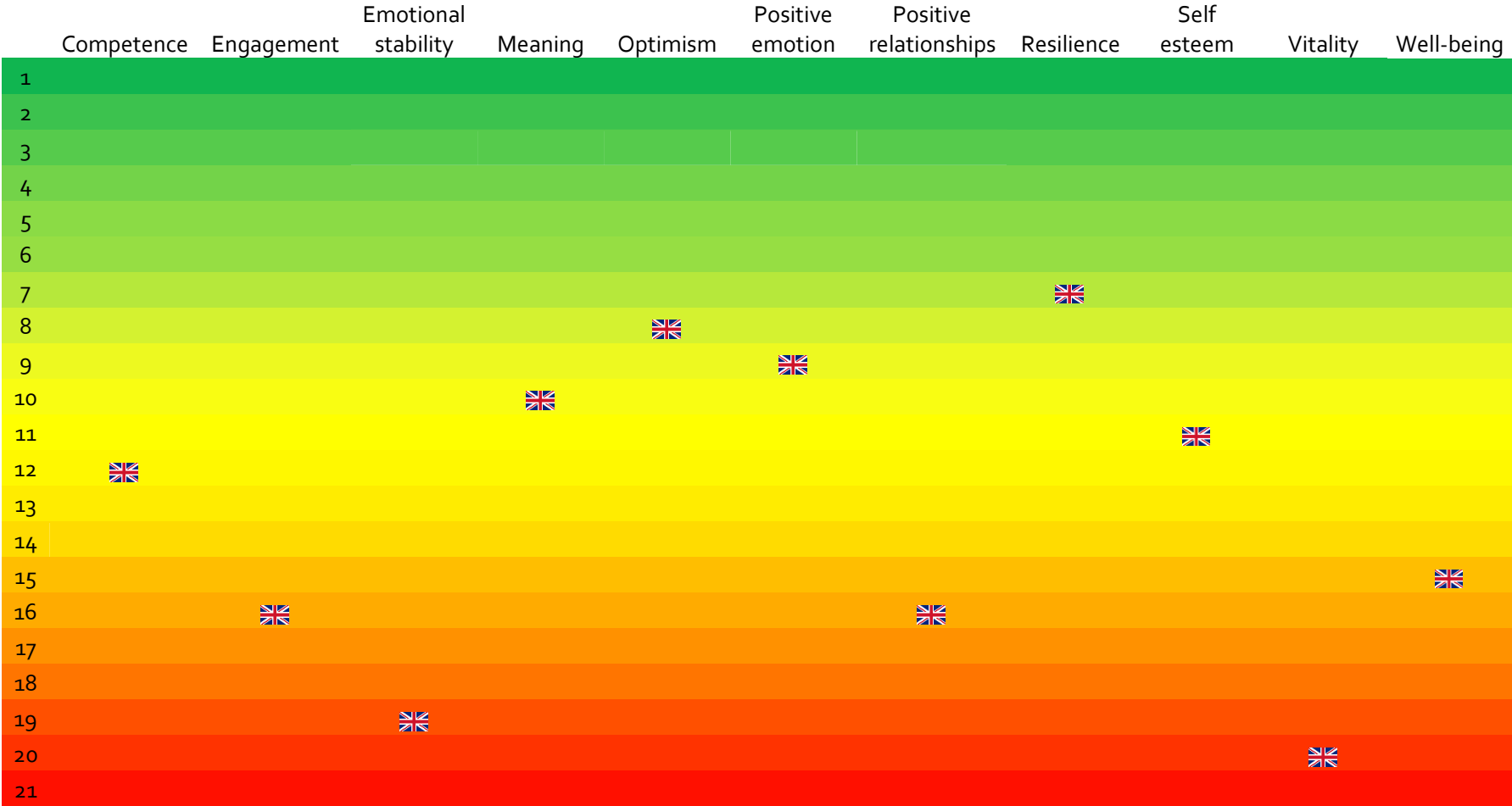
Well-being profiles

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											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
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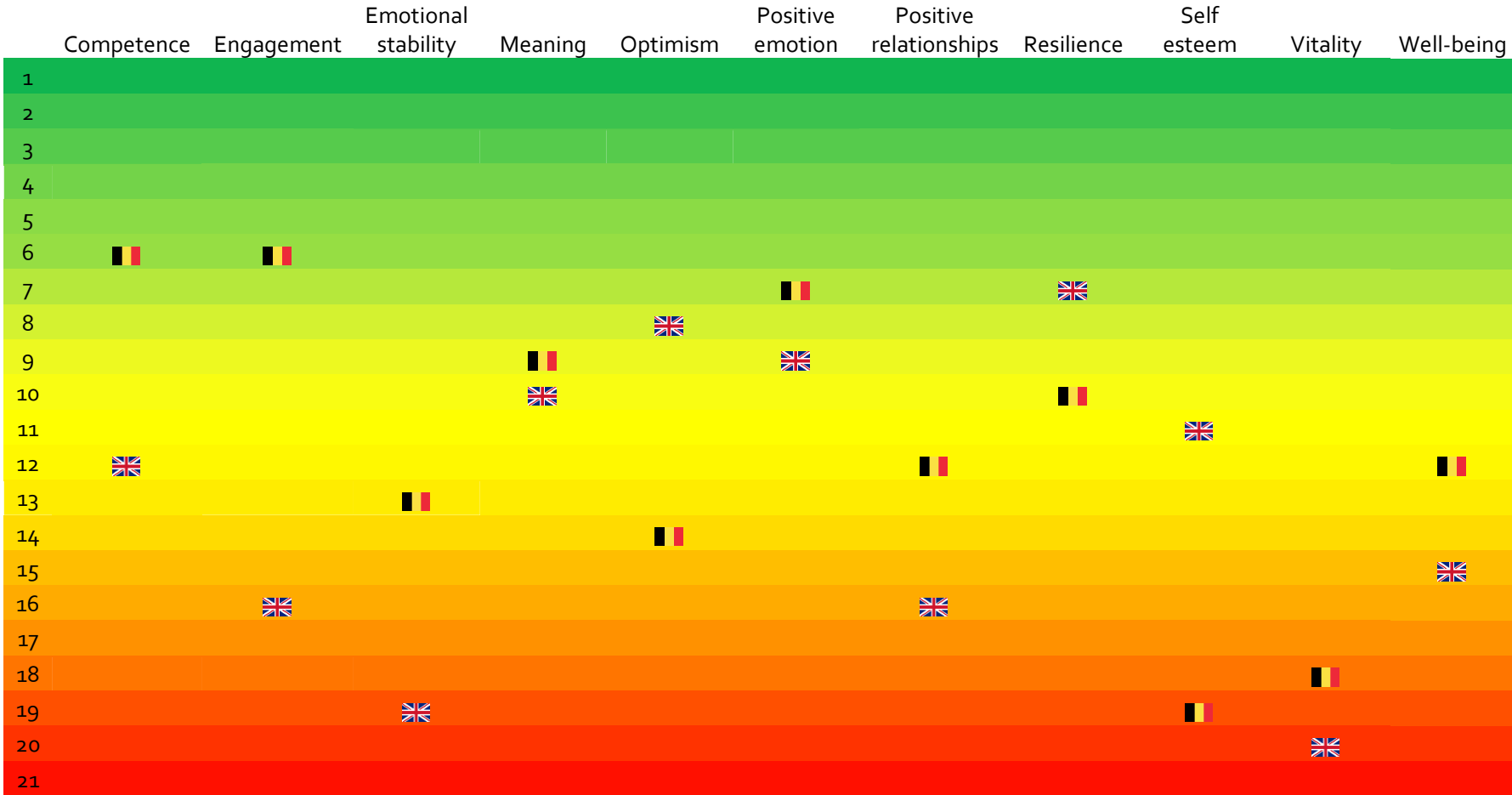
Well-being profile for the United Kingdom

Data from European Social Survey 2012



Well-being profile for the United Kingdom and Belgium

Data from European Social Survey 2012 (Life Satisfaction, UK: 7.3, Belgium: 7.4)



Limitations of the Huppert & So indicators

- **Only one item per construct**
- **Items were the best available in a large survey, but were not designed specifically to measure each construct.**

Development of a new multi-dimensional measure of well-being

The Well-being Profile (WB-Pro)

Stages in the development of the new multi-dimensional measure, WB-Pro

Stage 1

- Built on systematic approach of Huppert & So, 2013
- Consulted with experts to establish if any important dimensions had been missed
- Created a large item pool for each proposed dimension
- Critiqued and categorised all items using an expert panel
- Selected best 15 items for each dimension.

Stage 2

- Administered revised item pool to nationally representative US sample, using Qualtrics
- Used psychometric analysis to select best 4-5 items per dimension.

Stage 3

- New item list tested on fresh and repeat samples, using Qualtrics
- Final list of 48 items validated against existing measures.

High quality psychometric characteristics

The Well-being Profile (WB-Pro)

- Good reliability
- Good test-retest stability over one year
- A well-defined, replicable factor structure as shown by structural equation modelling
- A factor structure that is invariant over gender, age, level of education, and time
- Convergent and discriminant validity in relation to selected scales from other well-being instruments.

Dimensions of WB-Pro

10 original dimensions	Additional dimensions - Individual	Additional dimensions - Pro-social
Positive emotion	Autonomy	Empathy
Engagement	Self-acceptance	Helping behaviour
Relationships	Competence	
Meaning		
Clear thinking		
Resilience		
Emotional Stability		
Vitality		
Optimism		
Self-esteem		

Example of the value of a multi-dimensional approach in relation to a key socio-demographic variable

Significant relationship with education	No relationship with education
Emotional stability	Competence
Vitality	Autonomy
Clear thinking	Positive emotion
Optimism	Helping behaviour
Self-esteem	
Positive relations	
Engagement	
Resilience	
Meaning	
Empathy	
Self-acceptance	

Implications for policy

Goals of health policy



Health in all policies

No health without mental health

Goals of health policy



Health in all policies

No health without mental health

Well-being in all policies

Why multi-dimensional measures are valuable for policy

- Profiles of scores on different dimensions provide insight into high and low levels of feeling and functioning
- Low scores on a dimension represent **policy levers**
- High scores on a dimension represent **learning opportunities.**

Conclusions

- If something is worth measuring, it is worth measuring well.
- Subjective well-being is worth measuring.
- To measure it well, we need a multi-dimensional tool.
- Further research is required to ensure that the tool is appropriate across cultures and across nations.
- This work is essential if we want to understand well-being and maximise the potential for improving well-being across the population.

The effect of shifting the mean of the well-being spectrum

