

How do we create a society where our children can flourish?



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Children's Mental Health and Well-Being:
Policy and Future Directions in the Nordic Countries



**Embætti
landlæknis**
Directorate of Health



Overview

- I. Indicators for public policy
 - i. What indicators are mostly used for public policy
- II. Epidemiology of mental well-being
 - i. A conceptual framework of mental wellbeing
 - ii. Are the Nordic countries flourishing?
- III. The focus in public policy in Iceland after the collapse of the banks
- IV. Where do we need to focus to get a flourishing society?



What you measure affects what you do...

...if you don't measure the right thing,
you don't do the right thing." Joseph Stiglitz,
2009





GDP increases with

- Each sale of antidepressant medication
- Each divorce pronounced
- Each prison built
- Air pollution
- Cigarette advertising





But NOT with

„the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not get the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages.....it measures everything, in short except that which makes life worthwhile“

Robert Kennedy, 1968



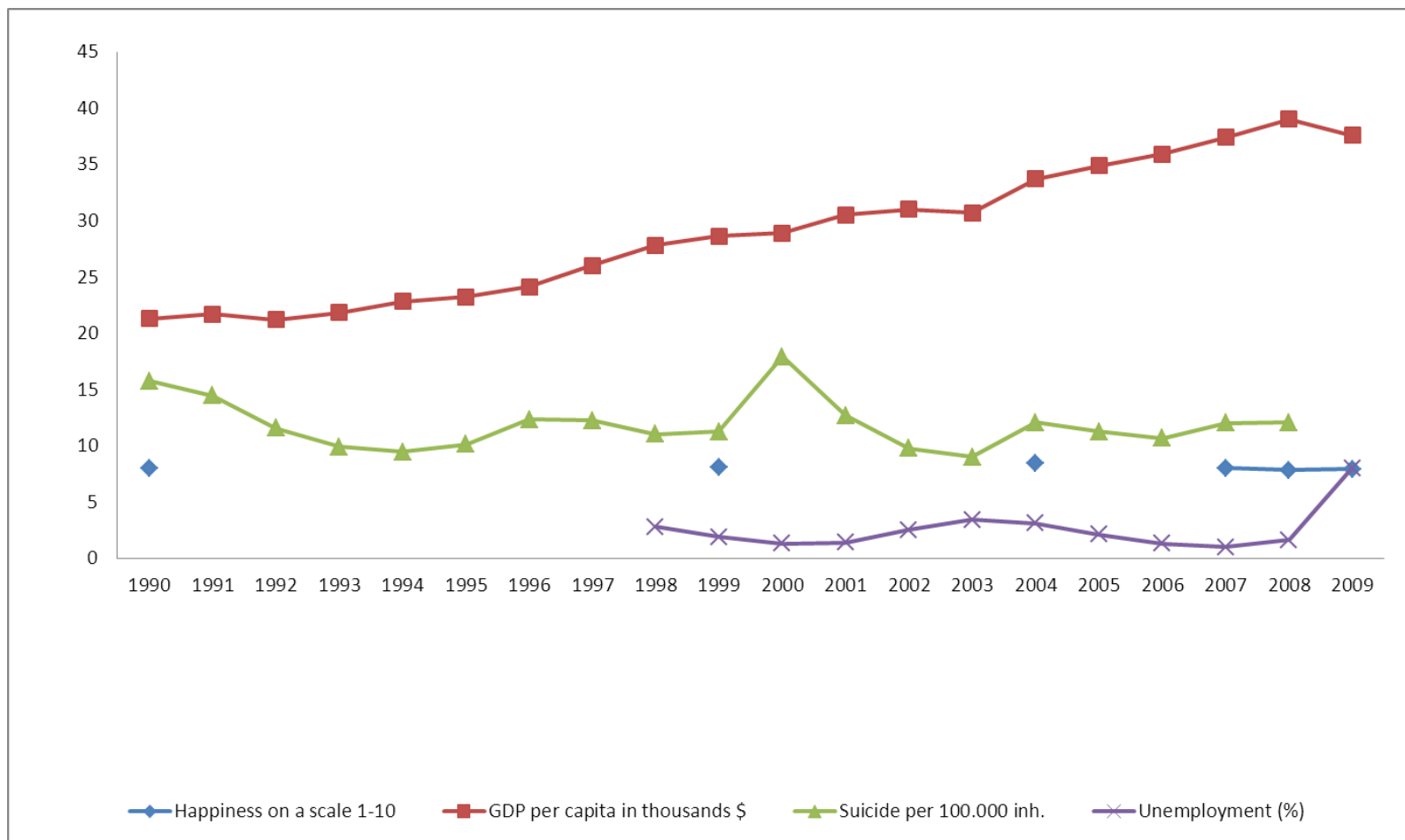


The focus in public policy

- **Economy growth and jobs**
- Health
 - How do we get health on the agenda: Health in all policies?
- Mental health
 - How do we get *mental* health on the agenda?
- Happiness
 - Economists are more interested than mental health specialist
- Well-being
 - Is it easier to get well-being on the agenda?



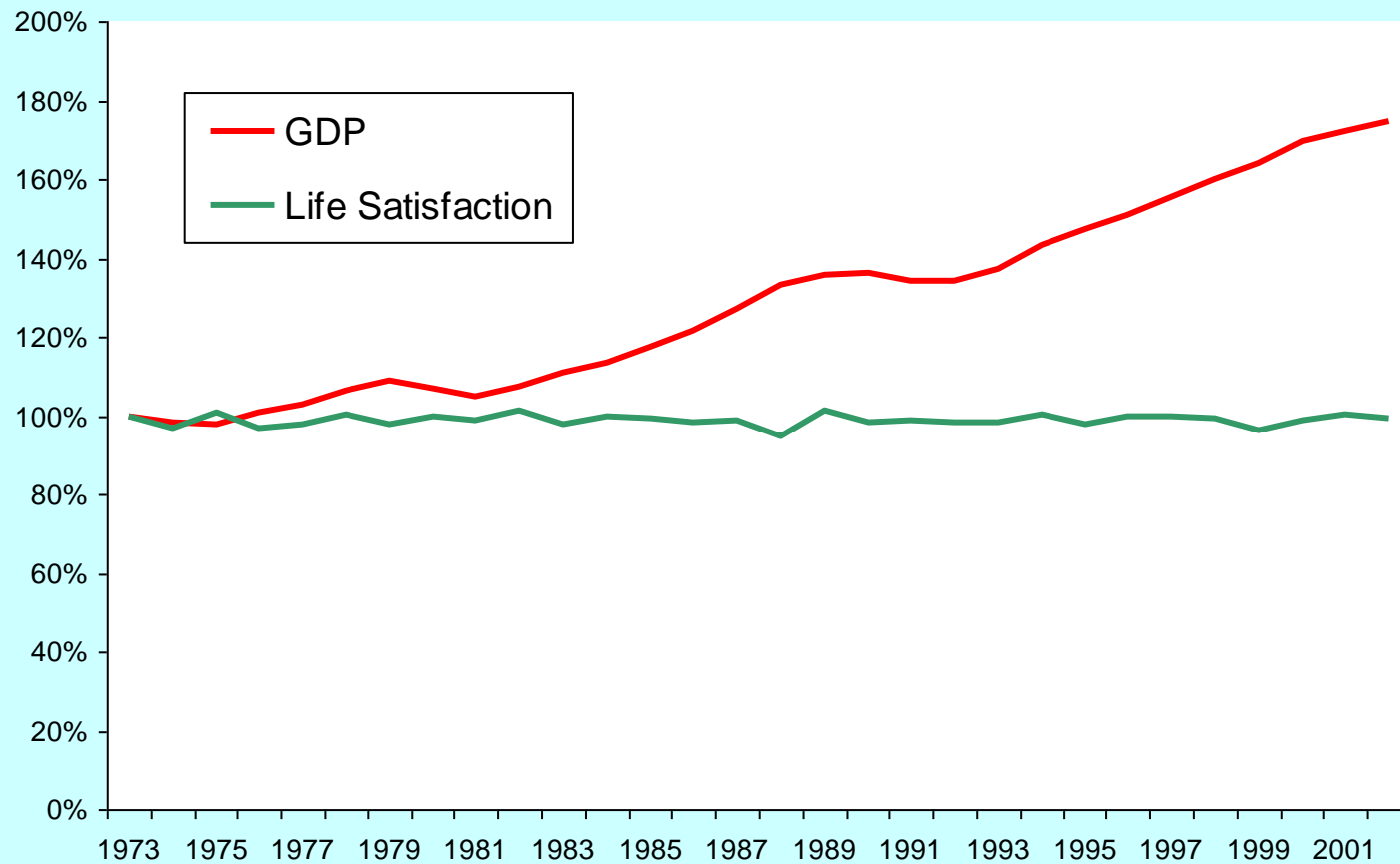
Happiness, GDP, suicide and unemployment rate in Iceland 1990-2010





Wealth and well-being

UK - GDP and Life Satisfaction 1973 - 2002

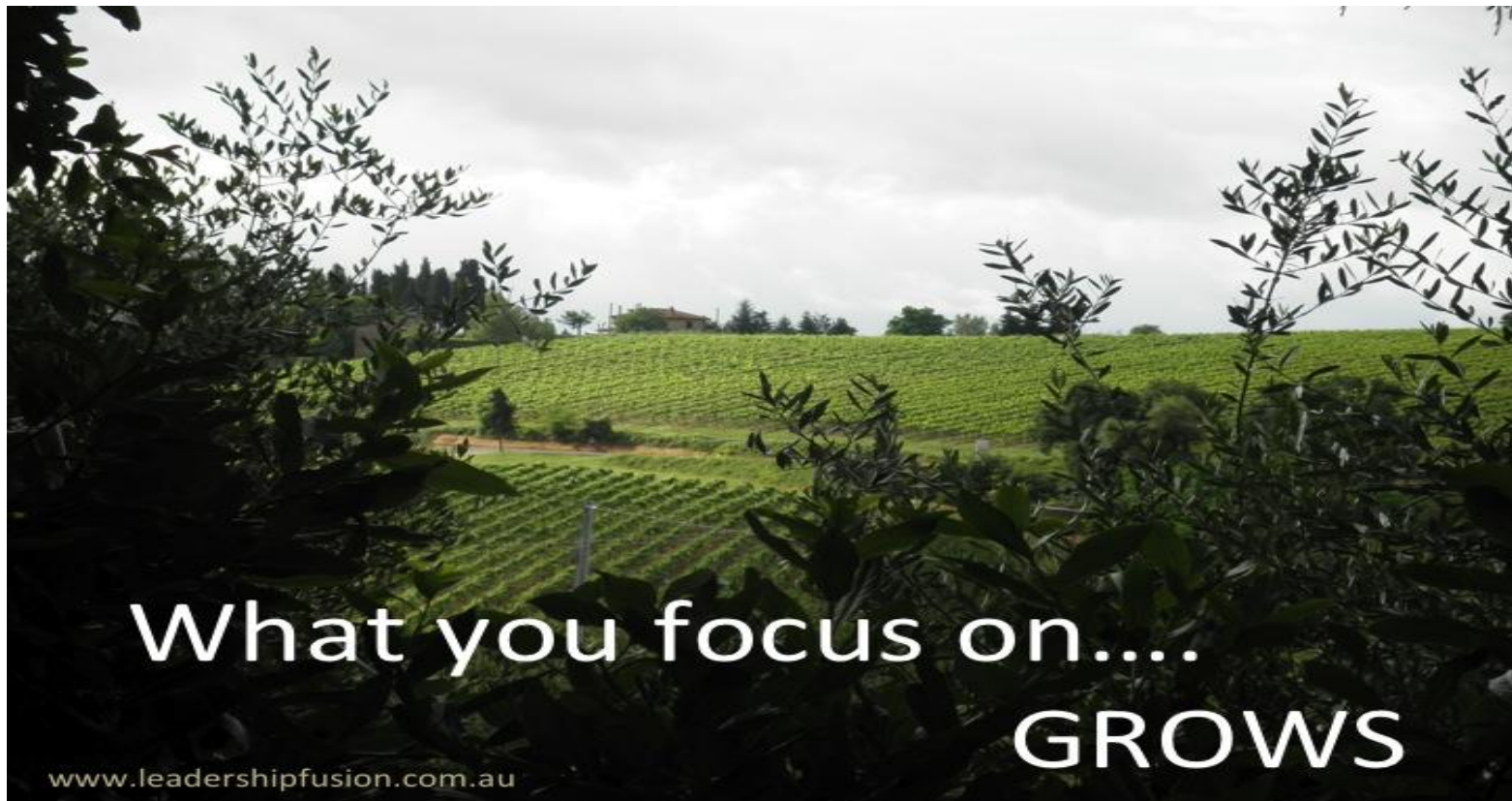


Source: Eurobarometer



What should we measure?

Where do we want to have our focus?



Health in the River of Life

PROMOTION 

HEALTH EDUCATION 

PREVENTIVE 

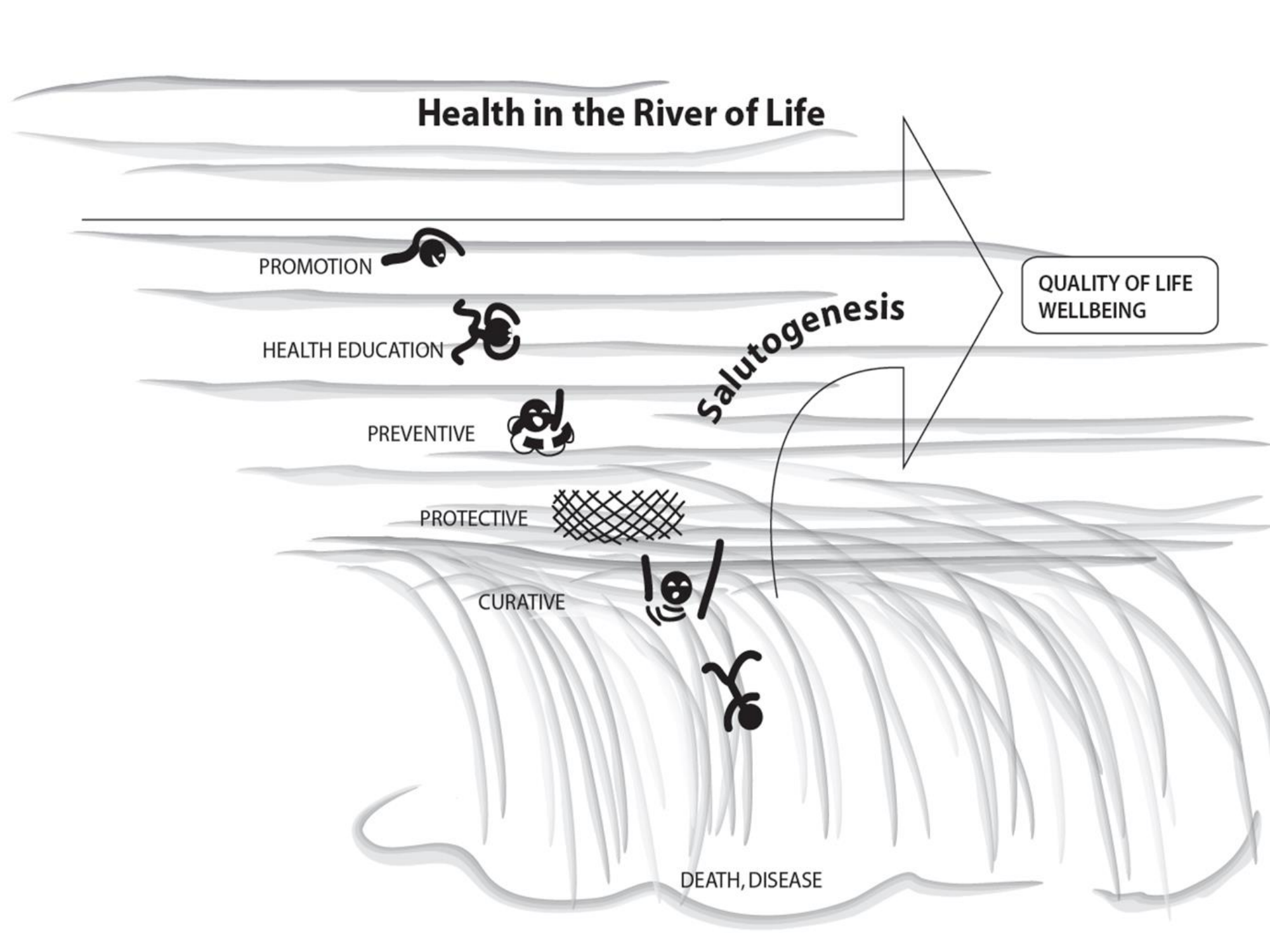
PROTECTIVE 

CURATIVE 

DEATH, DISEASE

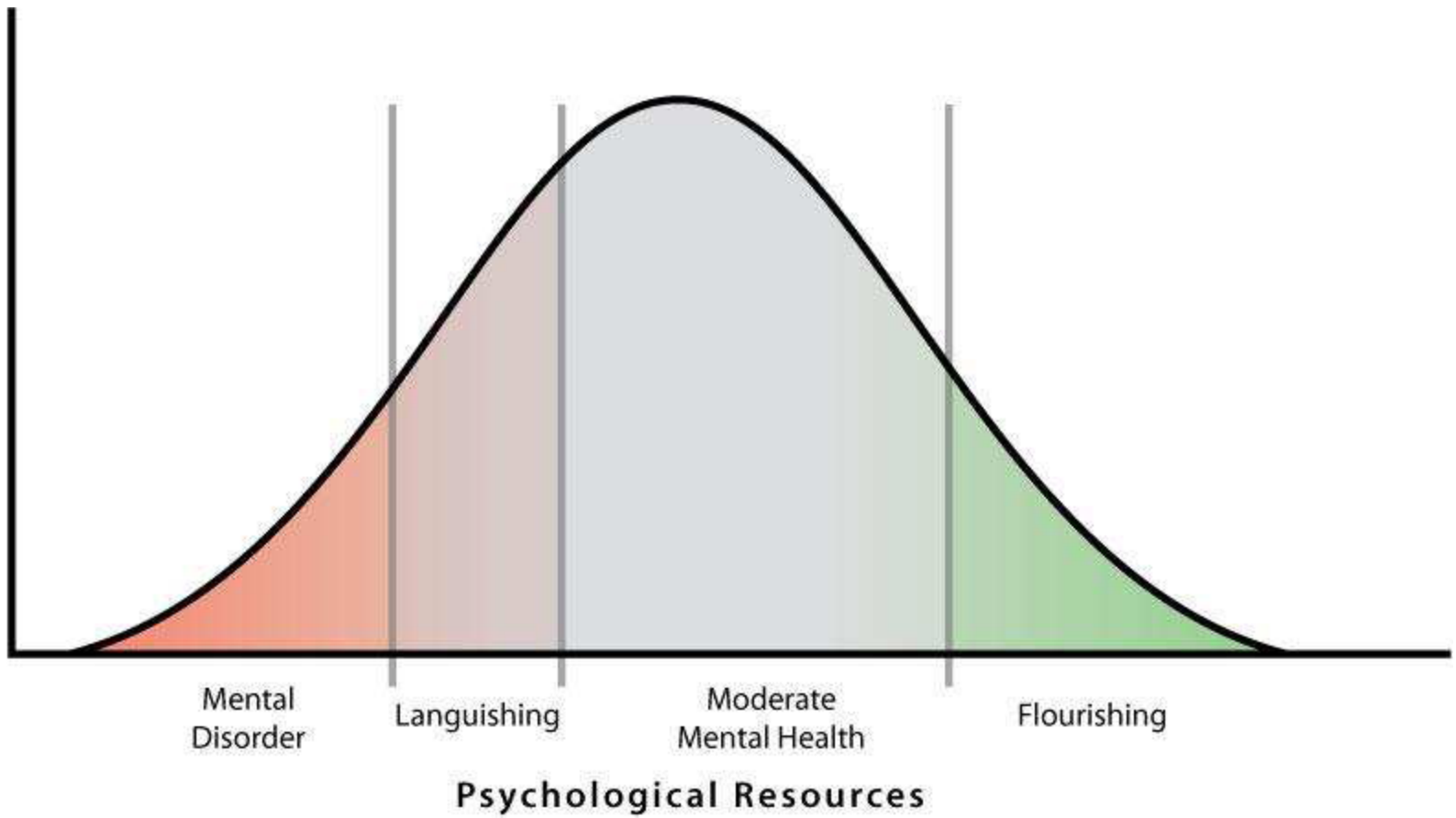
Salutogenesis

QUALITY OF LIFE
WELLBEING





Percentage
of
Population

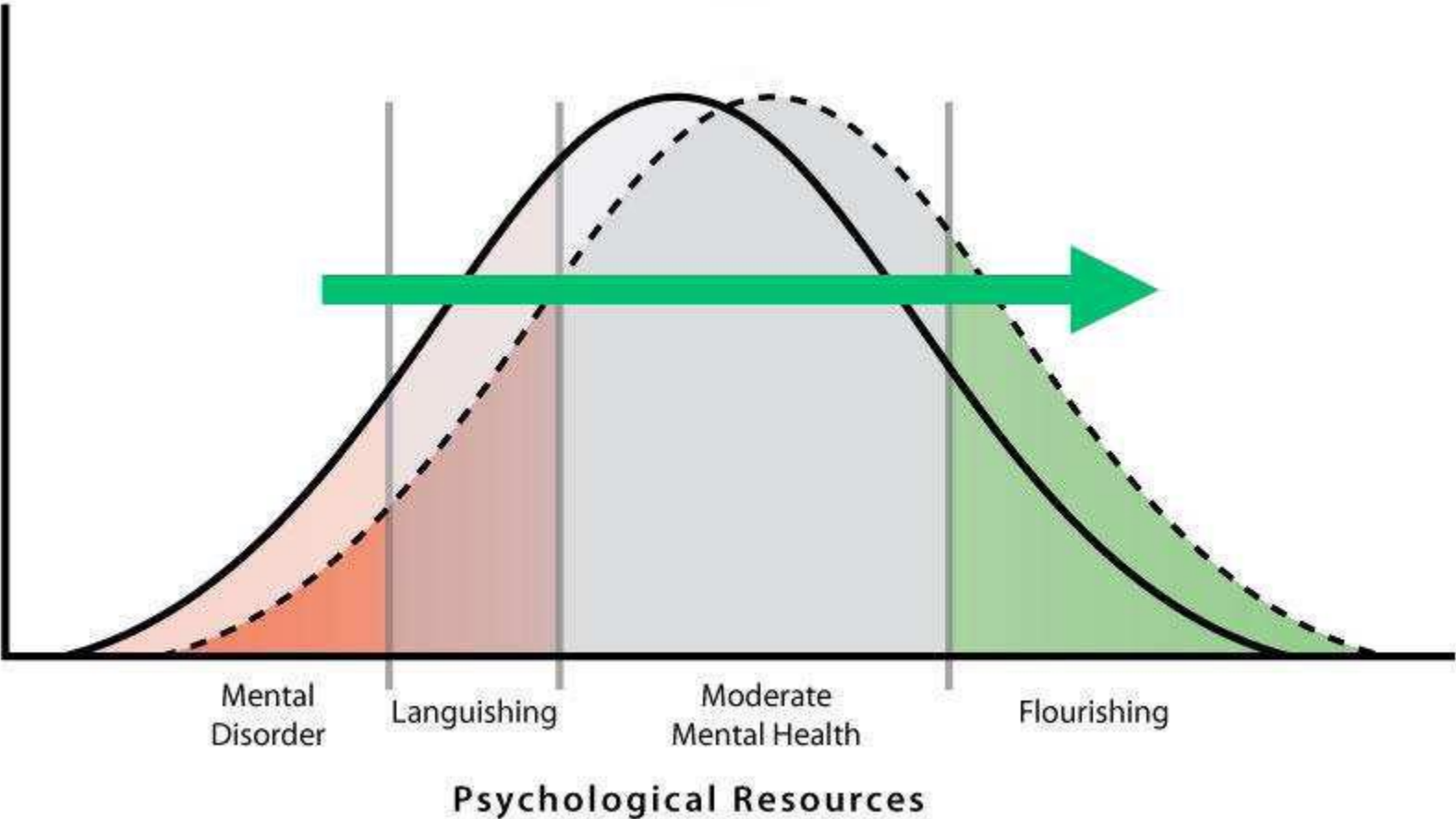




of a

Shifting the Wellbeing Bell Curve Population

Percentage
of
Population





Operational definition of flourishing

Huppert & So, Soc. Indicators Research, 2011

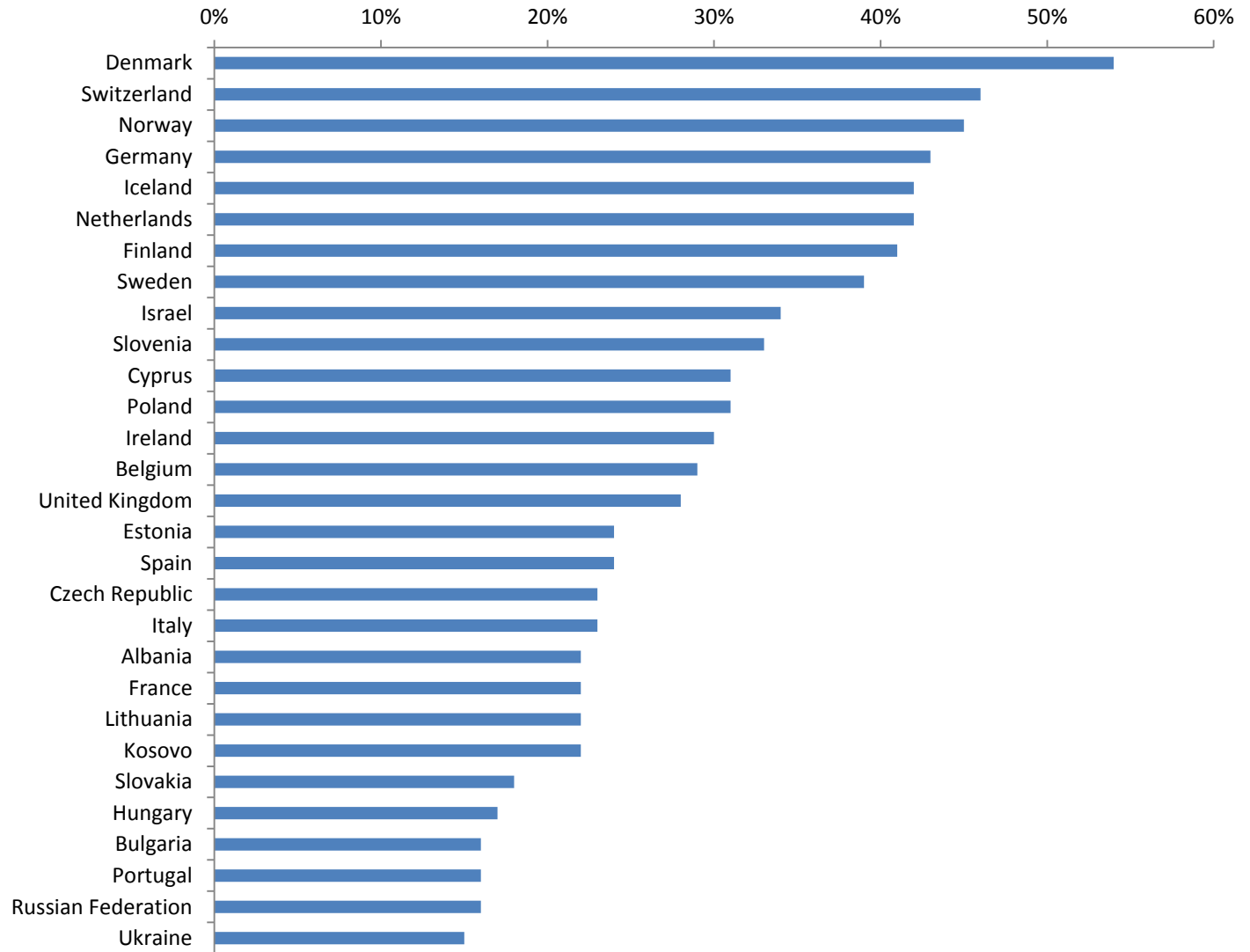
Flourishing is the positive end of the mental health spectrum, the opposite of the symptoms of the common mental disorders (depression and anxiety).

Ten features of flourishing

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

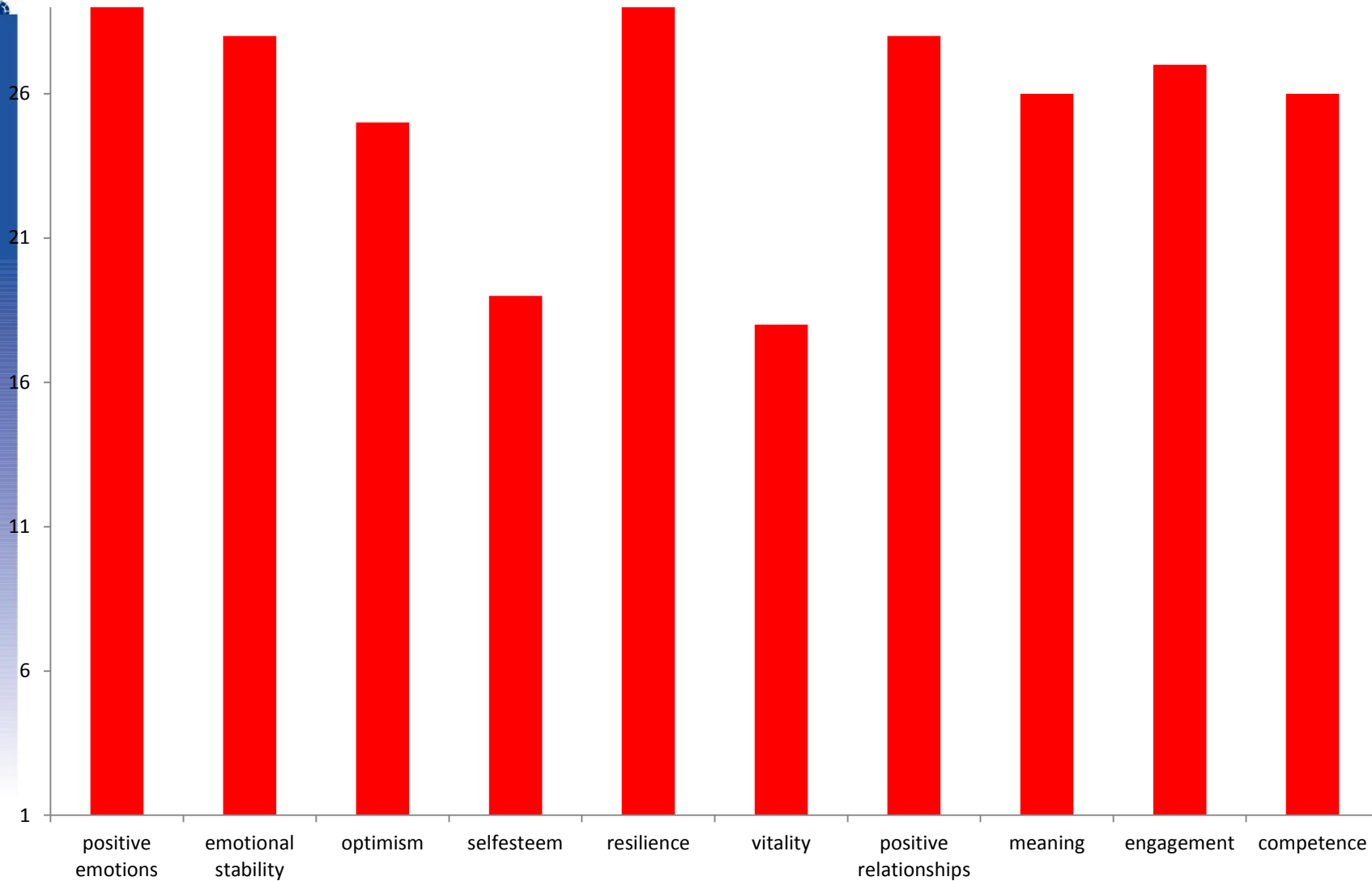


Percentages of Flourishing people in Europe by countries



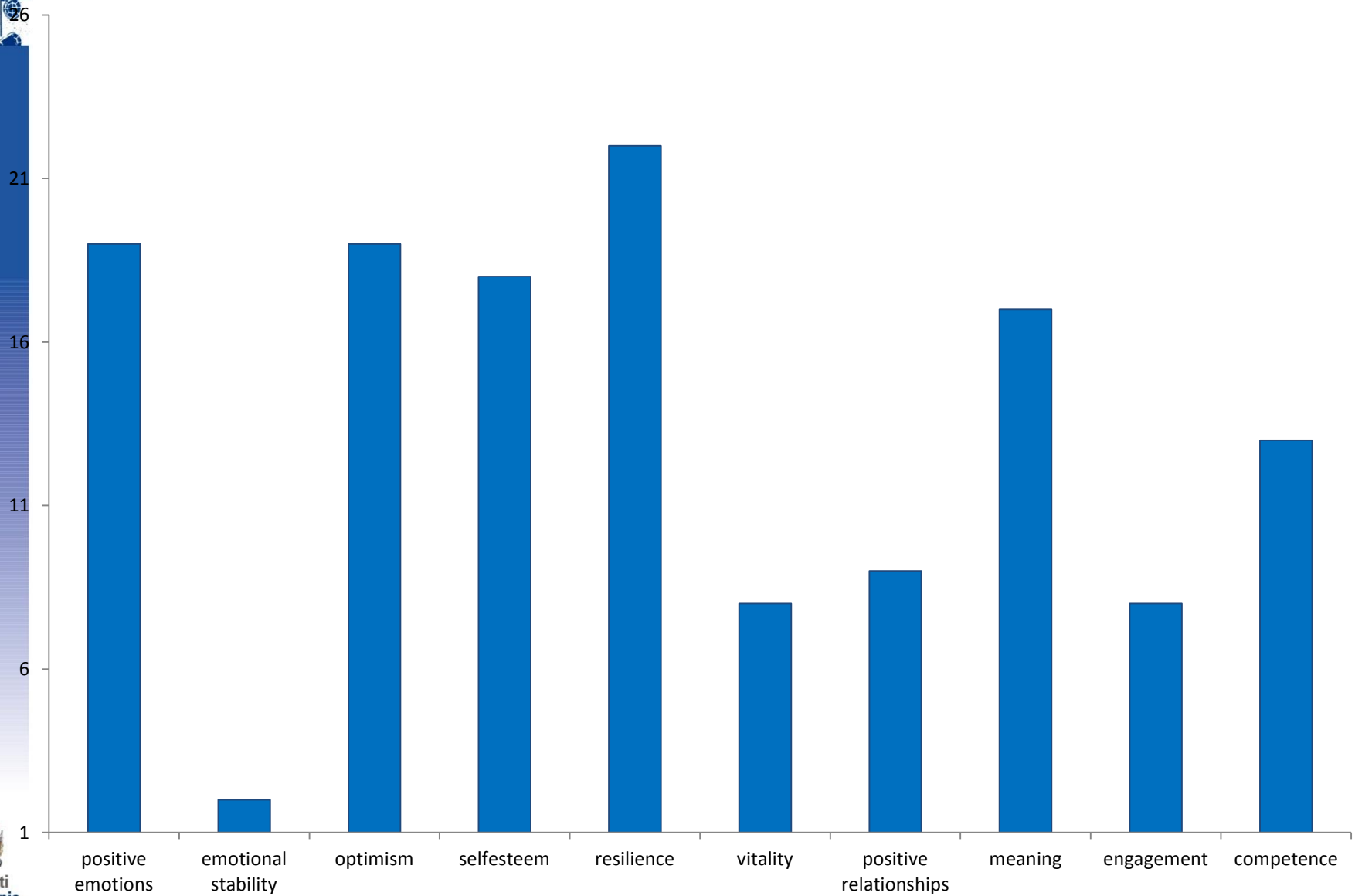


Denmark compared to the other European countries



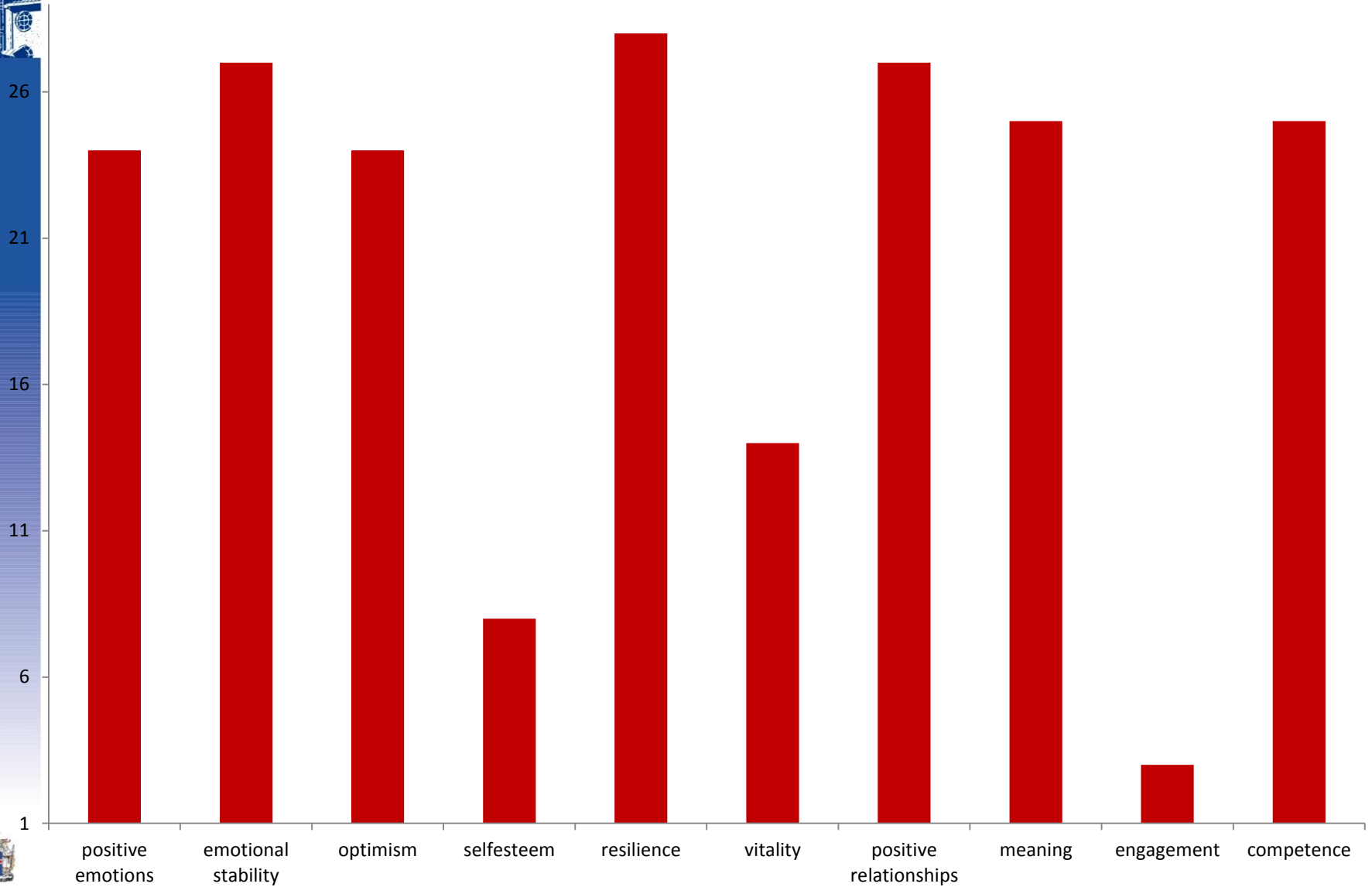


UK compared to the other European countries



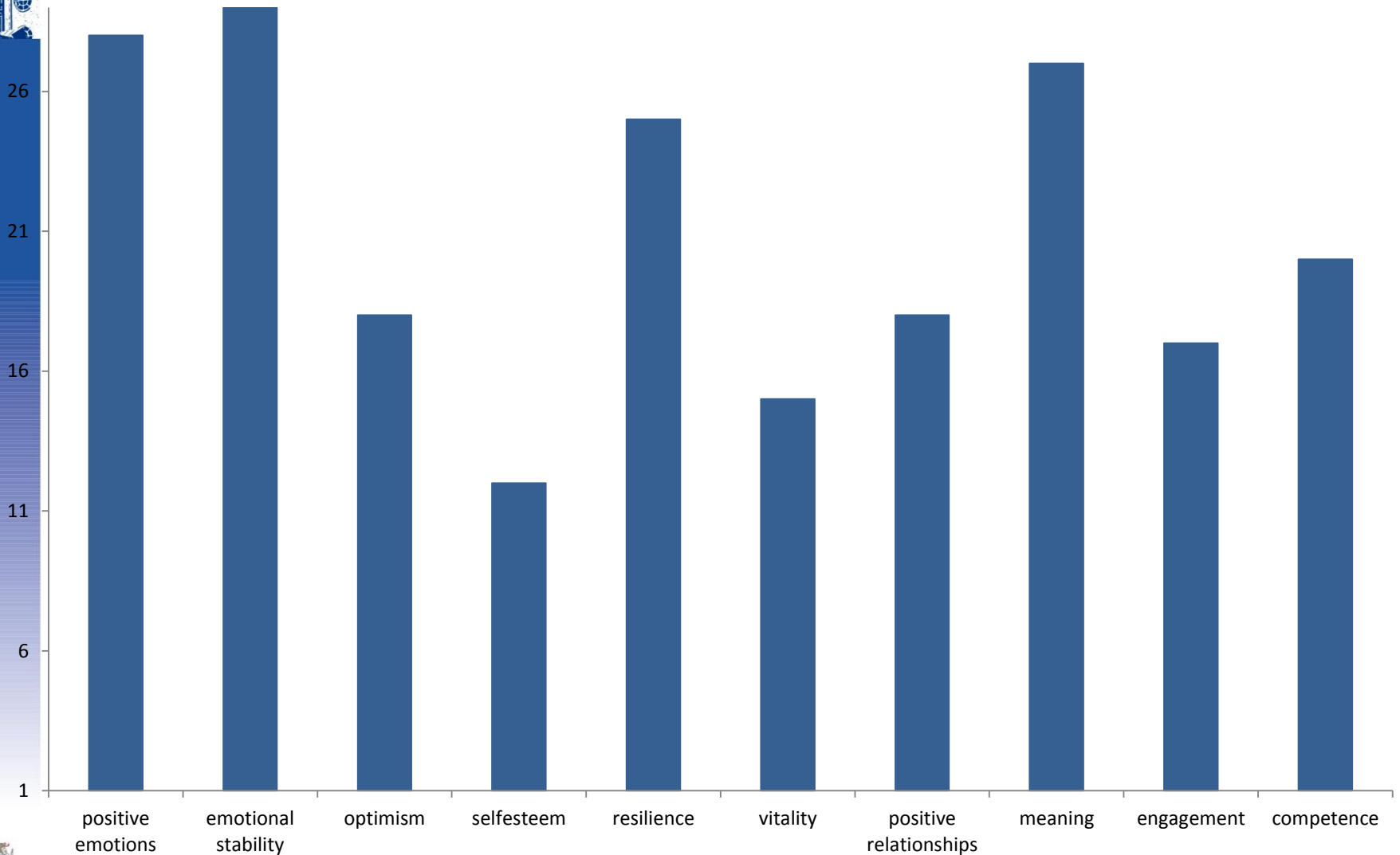


Norway compared to the other European countries



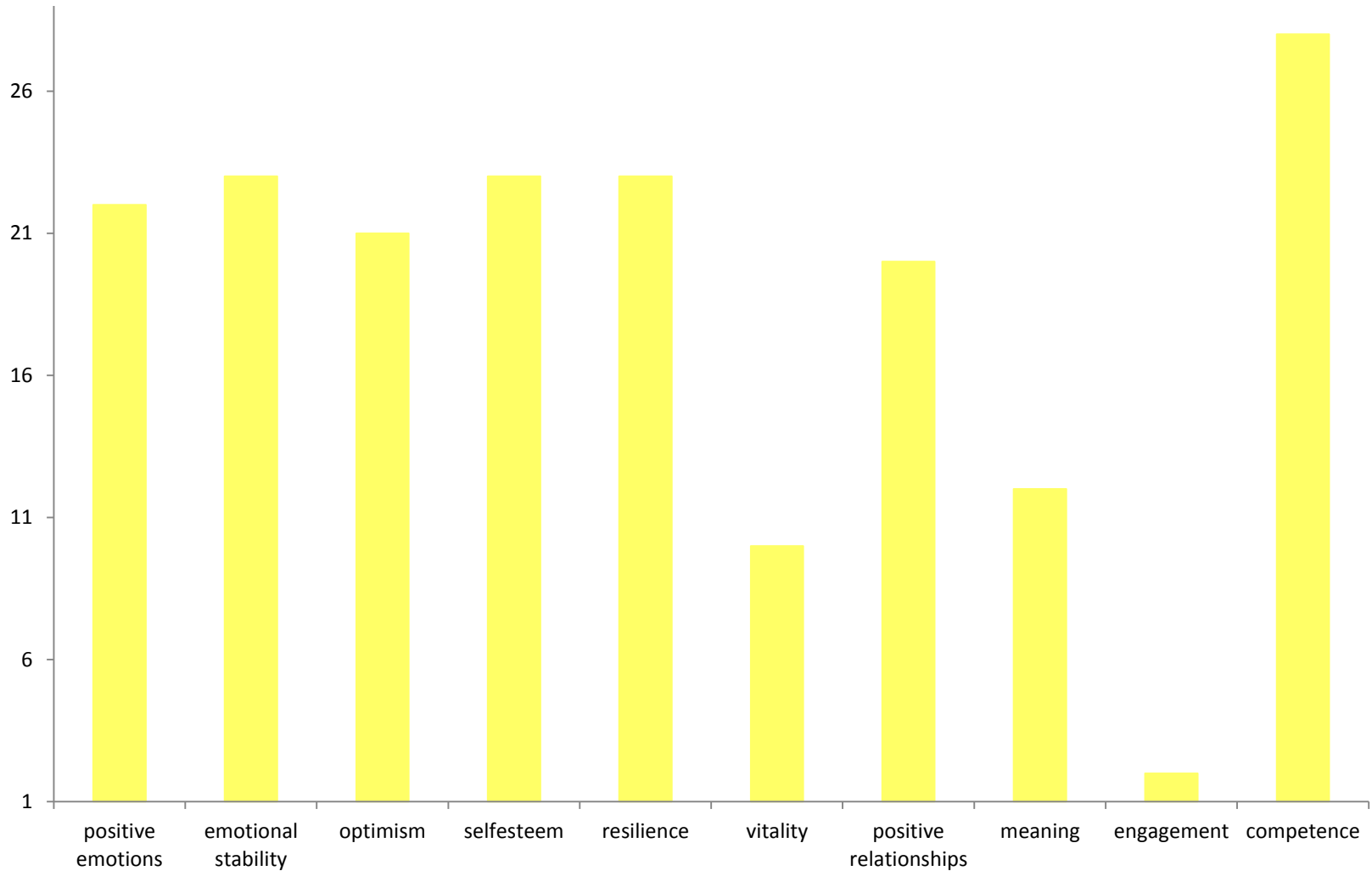


Iceland compared to the other European countries



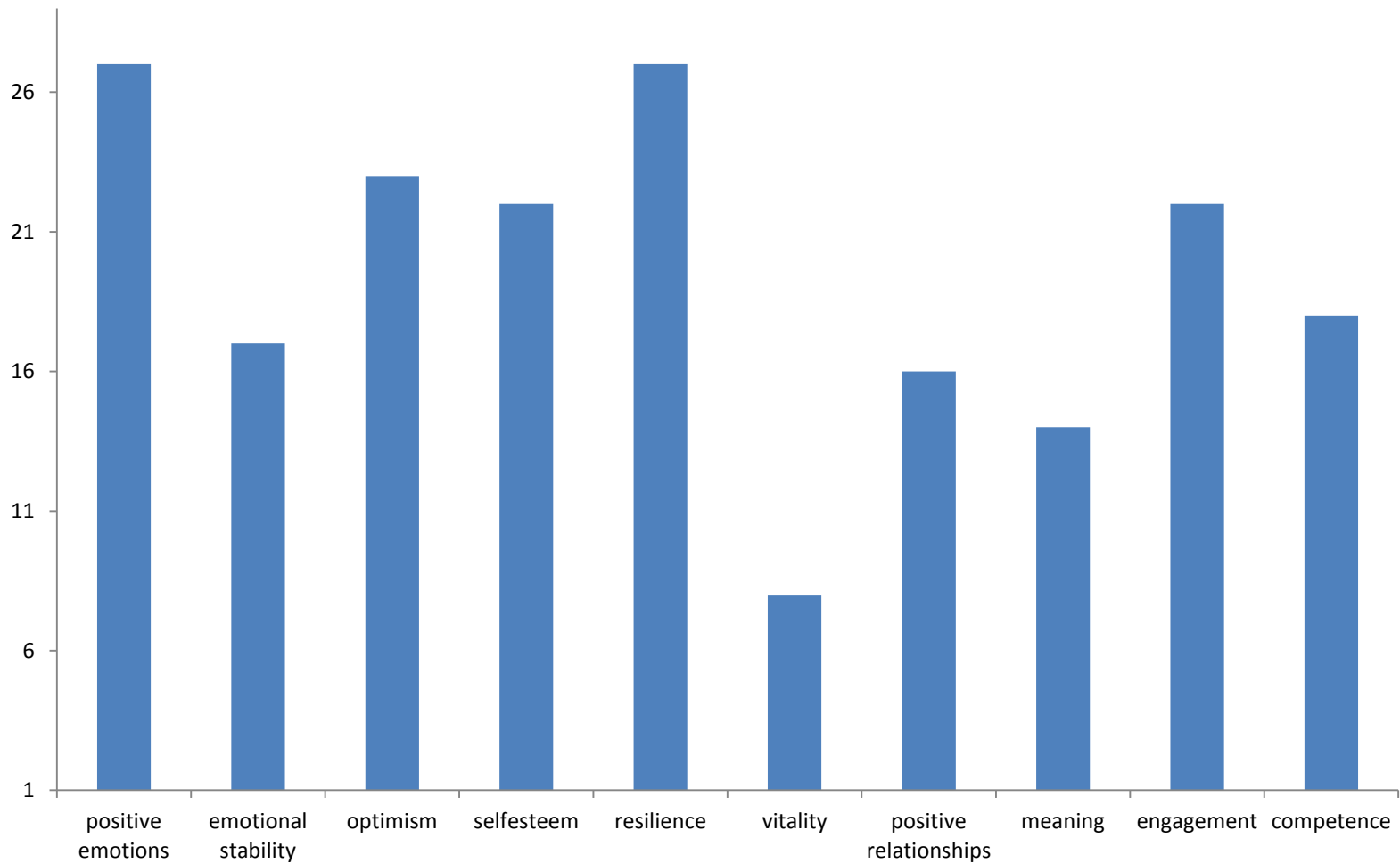


Sweden compared to other European countries





Finland compared to other European countries



The impact of the economic crisis in Iceland





What happens in a society where:

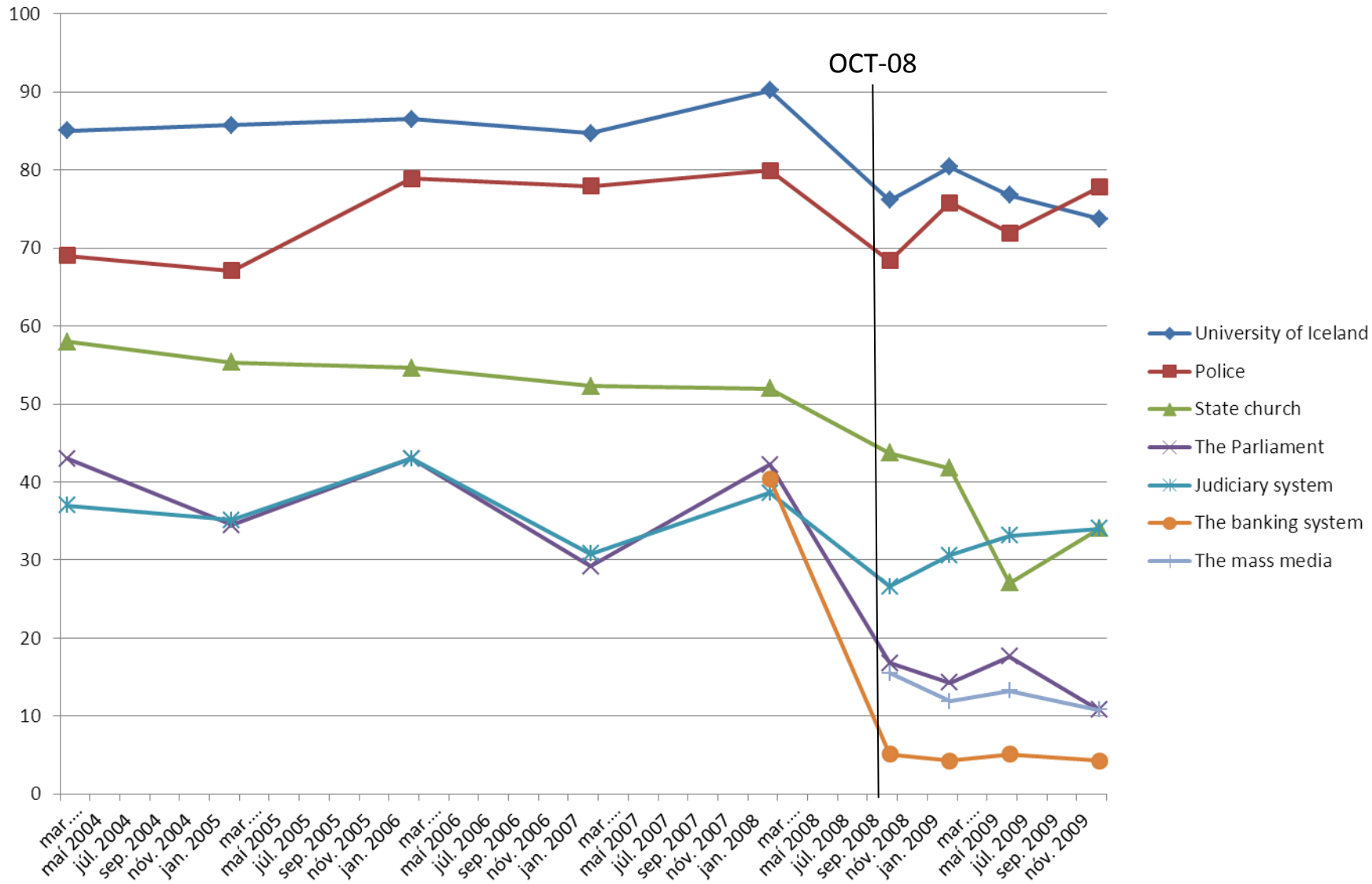
- Unemployment increases
- Exchange rate of the currency falls
- Income decreases
- Purchasing power decreases
- debt increases
 - All in a month?







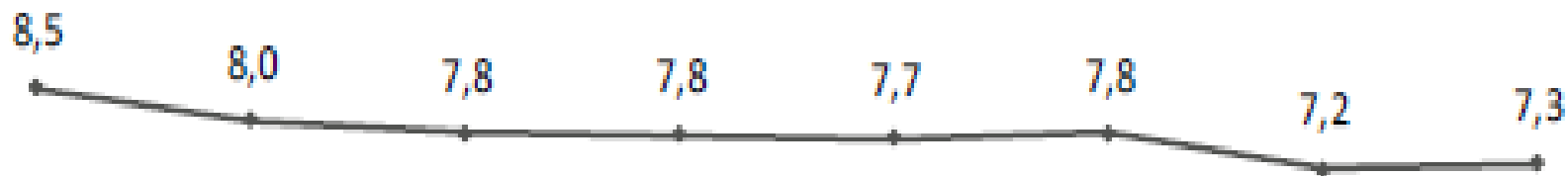
Trust in the society 2004-2009





Happiness in Iceland 2003-2012

Þróun



— Meðaltal (1-10)

ESS '03

Heilsa og líðan '07

Okt. - nóv. '08

Jan. - feb. '09

Maí-júní '09

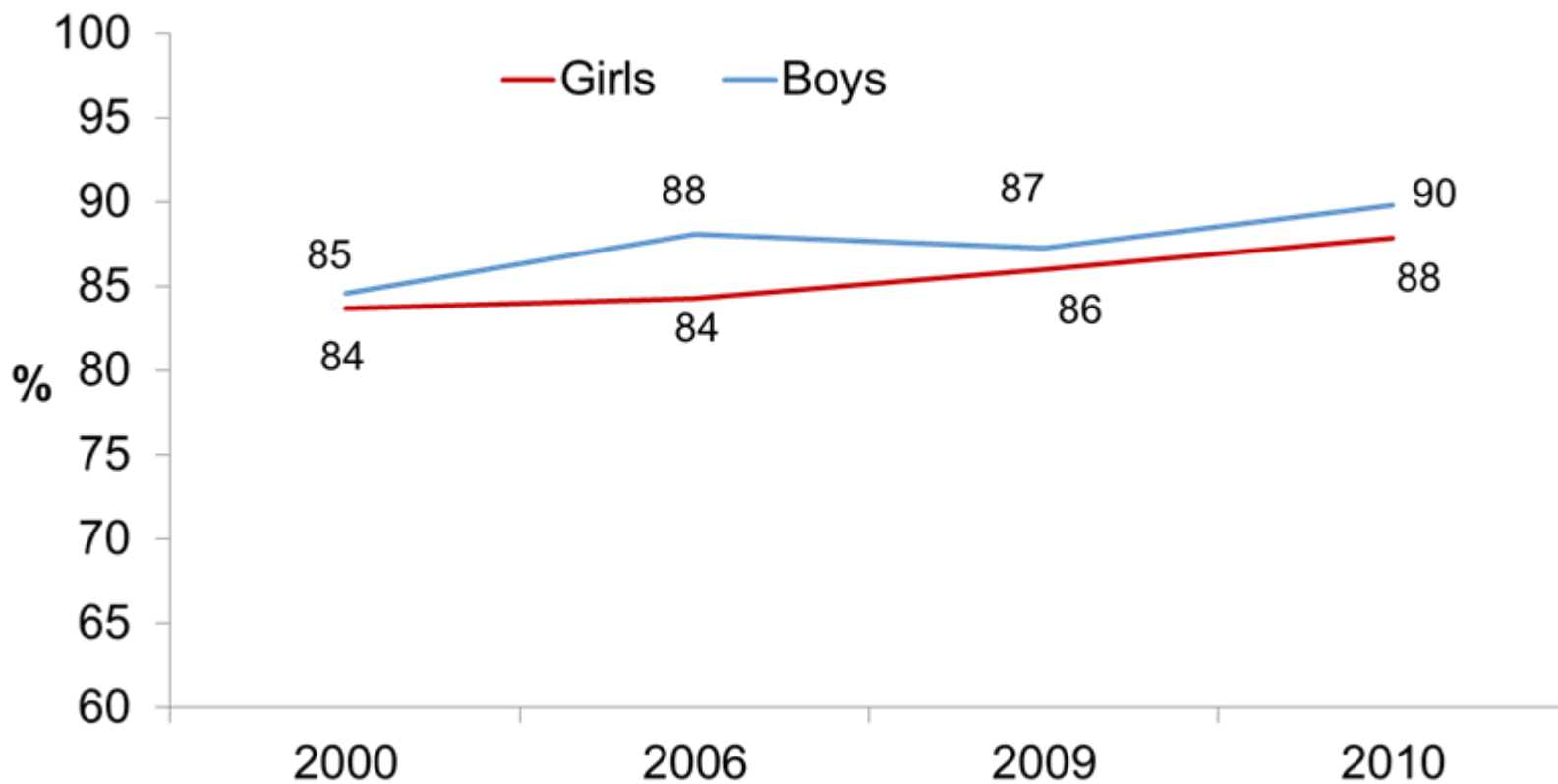
Des. '09

Okt. '11

Feb. '12

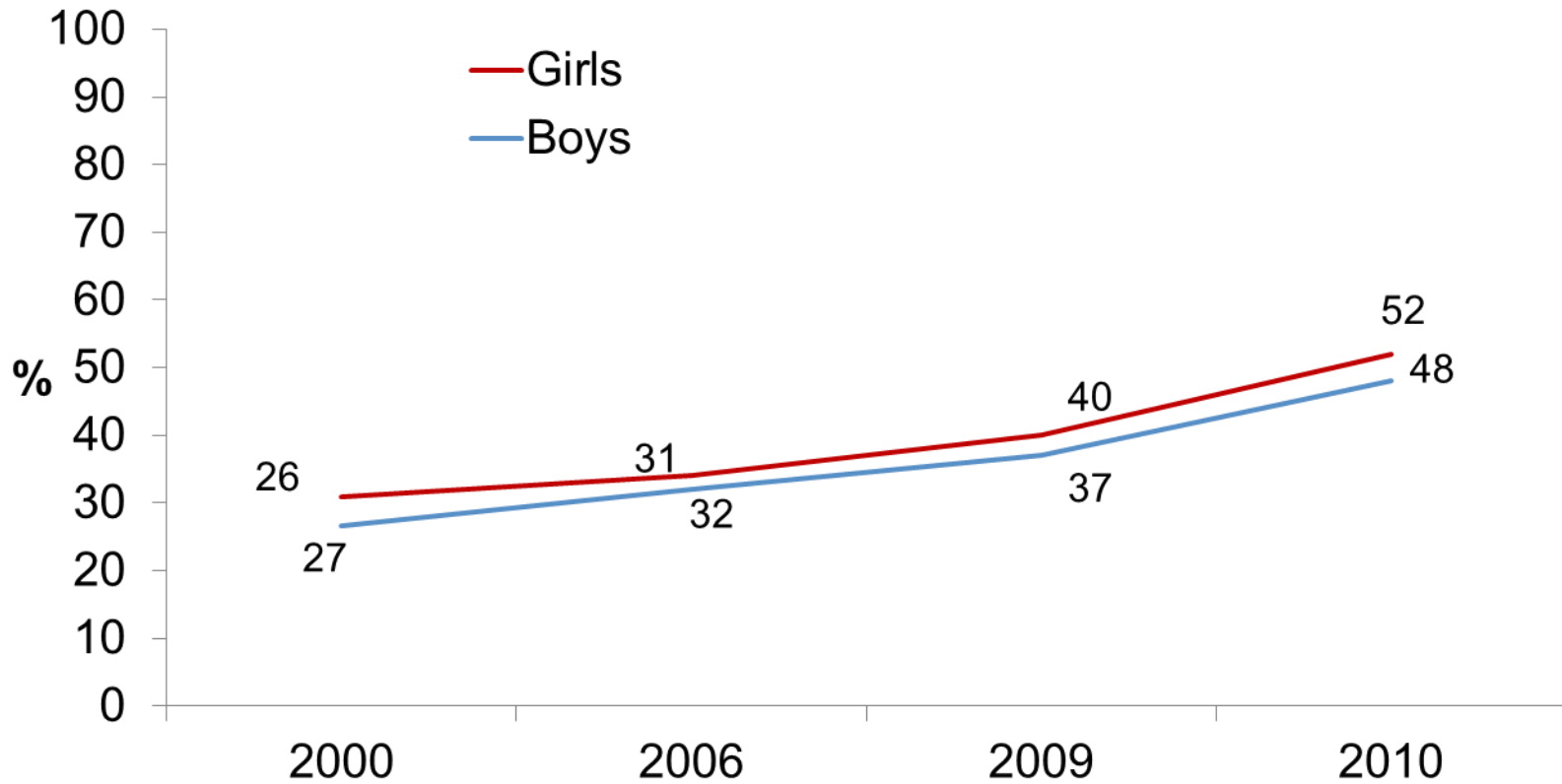


Adolescent's happiness





Time spent with parents





At that time

- There was an opportunity to shift the focus
- Welfare, Mental Wellbeing, Equity and Social Indicators did get more attention from policy makers



The Welfare Watch

- Watch out for the basic services provided by the state and local authorities
- Put special emphasis on assistance to vulnerable groups
- Developed **social indicators**
 - Demographics
 - Inequality
 - Sustainability
 - Health
 - Cohesion





Iceland 2020 – a governmental policy statement focusing on:

- **Knowledge, sustainability, welfare**
- those groups that risk long-term unemployment in the wake of the financial crisis.
- strengthening social participation and the active inclusion of all citizens
- **Mental wellbeing where the aim is:**
- **To improve wellbeing and sound mental health so that the average measurements on the mental wellbeing index rise from 26,6 in**



The European health report 2012

Charting the way
to well-being



Conclusion

- Good social relationships – the quality of relationships with family and friends, along with the amount of time spent with family – predict happiness and wellbeing.
- Despite the crises there was an increase in happiness among adolescents
- Adolescents were spending more time with their parents
- Average working hours for adults were fewer





Planning for the future

- We need to focus on positive outcomes
 - at home,
 - in schools,
 - in the local community and
 - on national level
- We need epidemiology of mental wellbeing!

...if we measure the right thing, we might end up doing the right thing



THANKS

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Good mental health

- is **not** simply the absence of diagnosable mental health problems, although good mental health is likely to help protect against development of many such problems.
- Good mental health is characterised by a person's ability to fulfil a number of key functions and activities, including:
 - The ability to learn
 - The ability to feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions
 - The ability to form and maintain good relationships with others
 - The ability to cope with and manage change and uncertainty