Who’s Happy Now?

Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute Summer Event

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Our Happiness

Ben Page

Chairman

Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute

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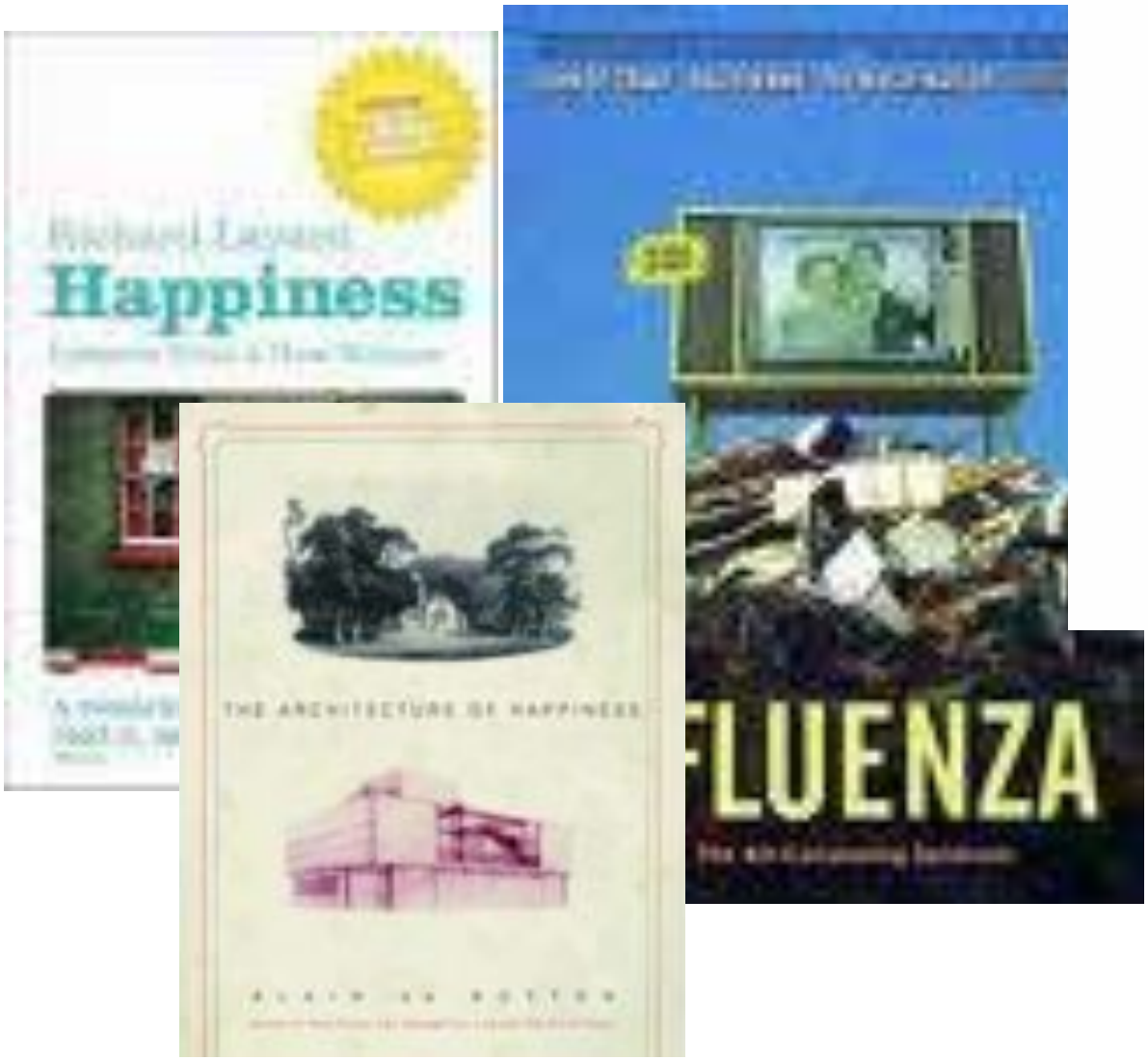
The rise of happiness



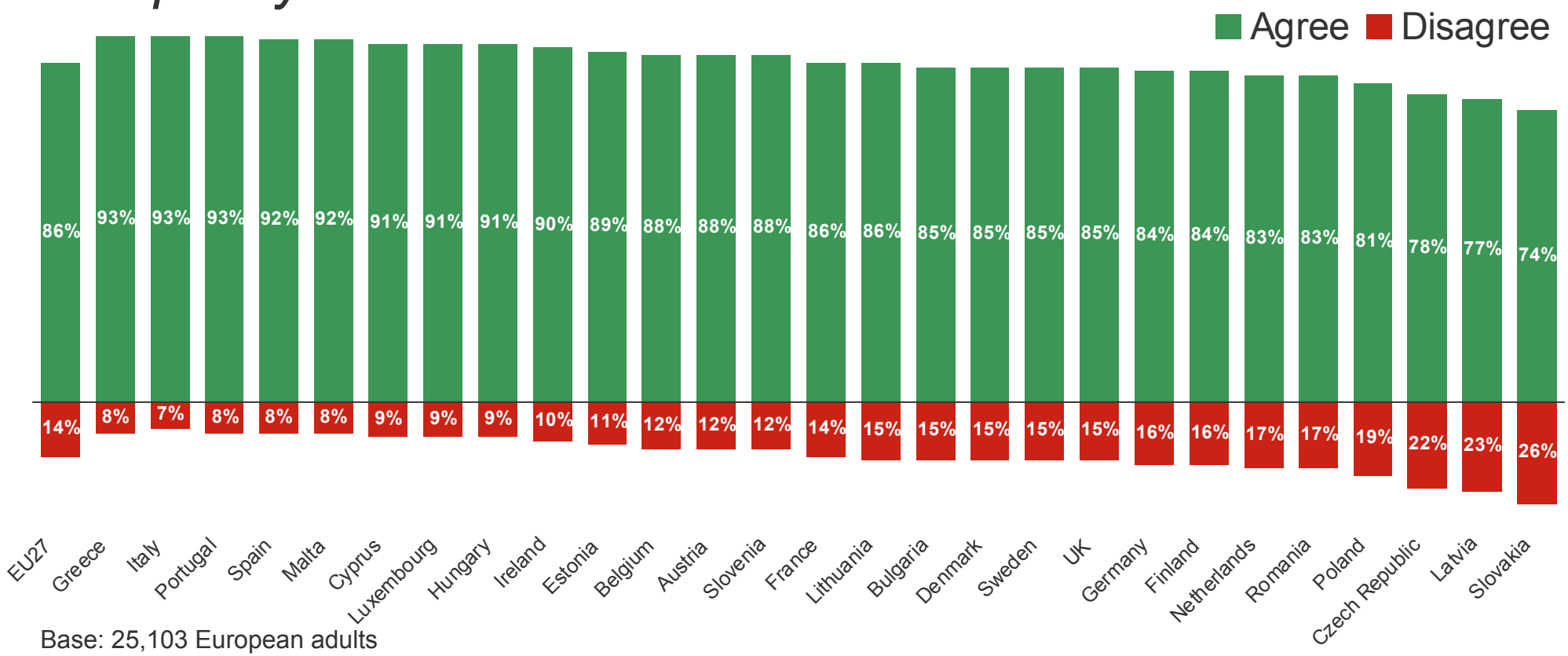
Even politicians are in on the act

"Well being can't be measured by money or traded in markets. It's about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture, and above all, the strength of our relationships. Improving our society's sense of well-being is, I believe, the central political challenge of our lives."

David Cameron, May 2006

... the public agree

"Policies should put less emphasis on individual consumption, and more emphasis on other aspects of the quality of life."



Base: 25,103 European adults

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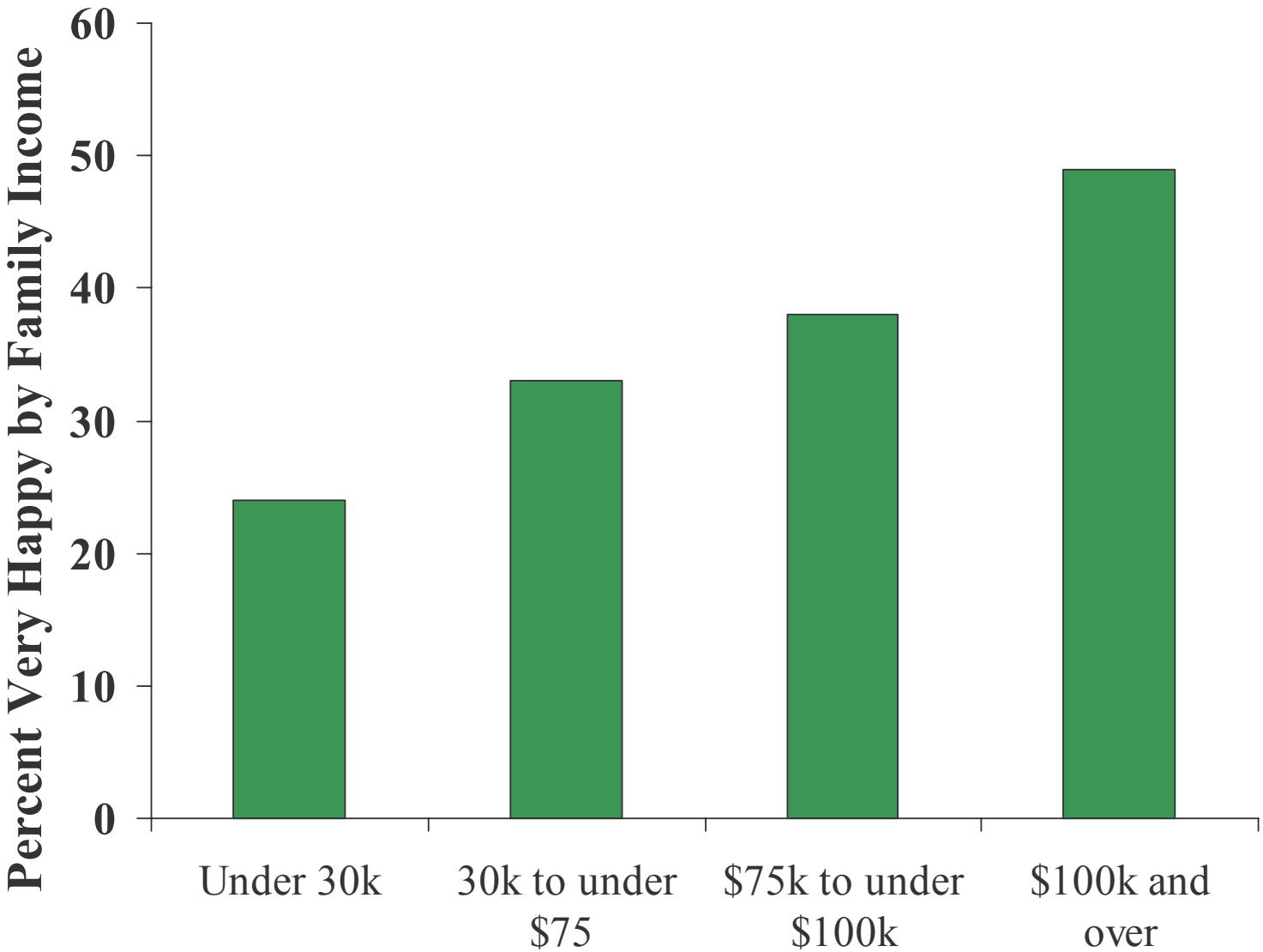
The economy, stupid?

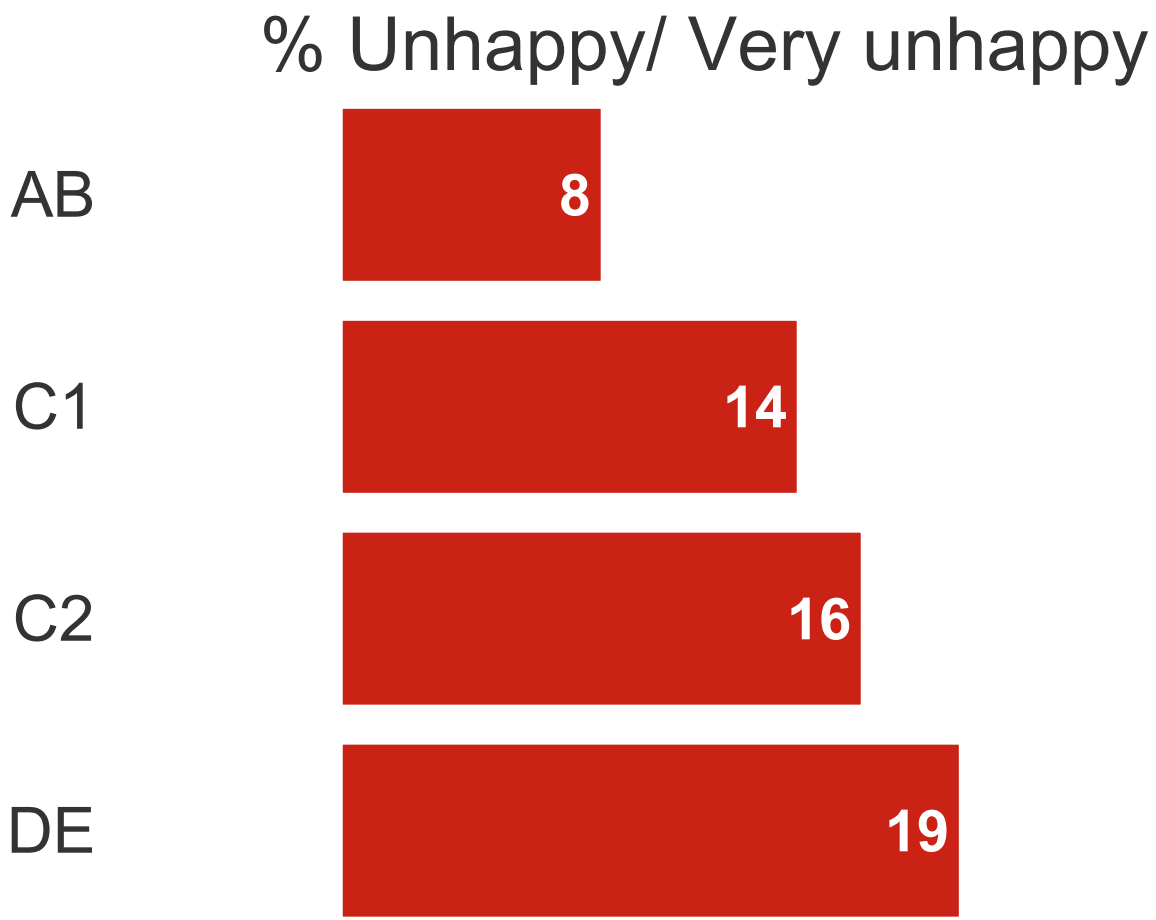
Does Money Buy Happiness in America?



Ipsos MORI Source: Are WE Happy Yet? PewResearchCenter, Feb 2006

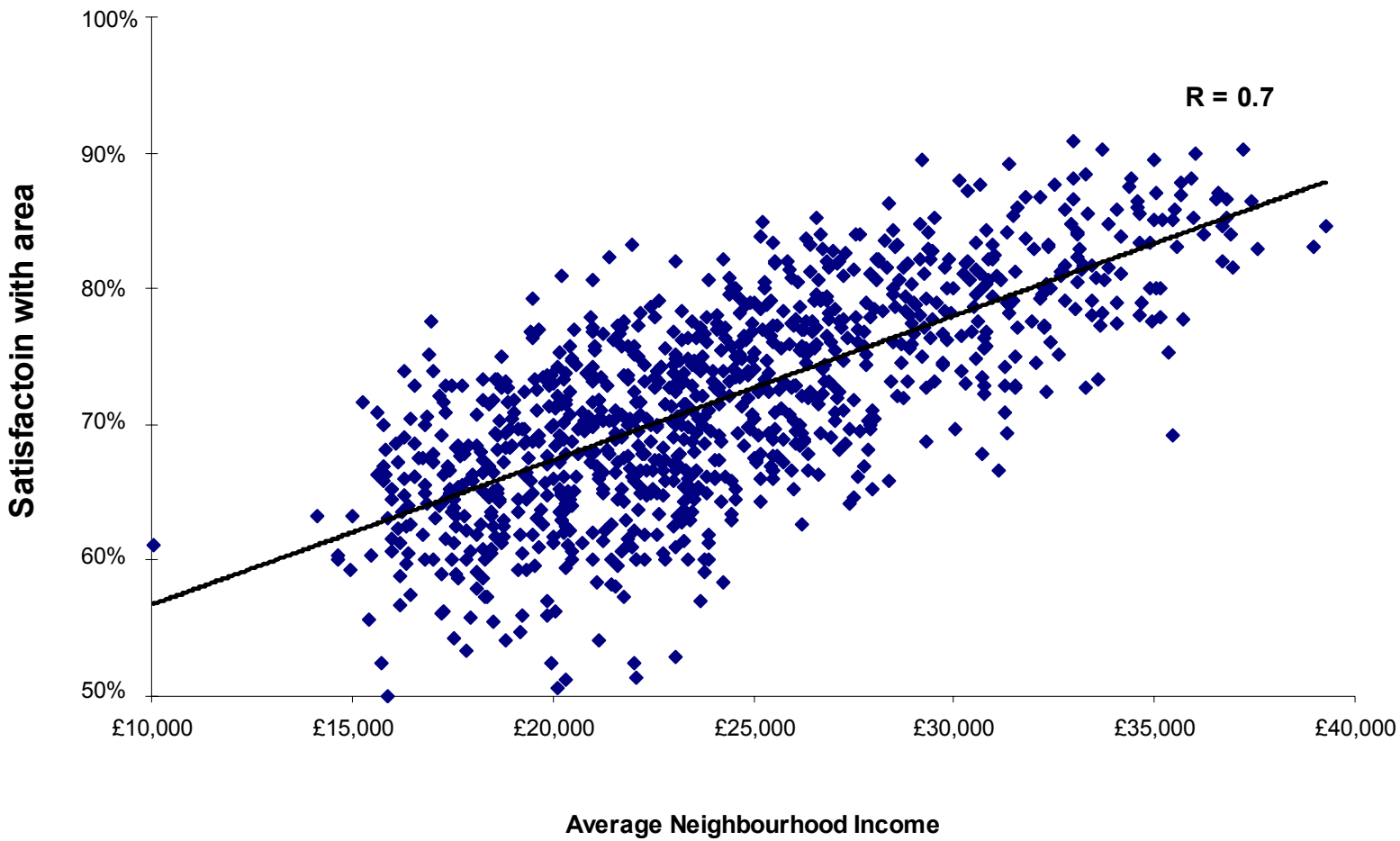
Similarly poorer people are more miserable in the UK

Taking all things together, would you say in general you are…



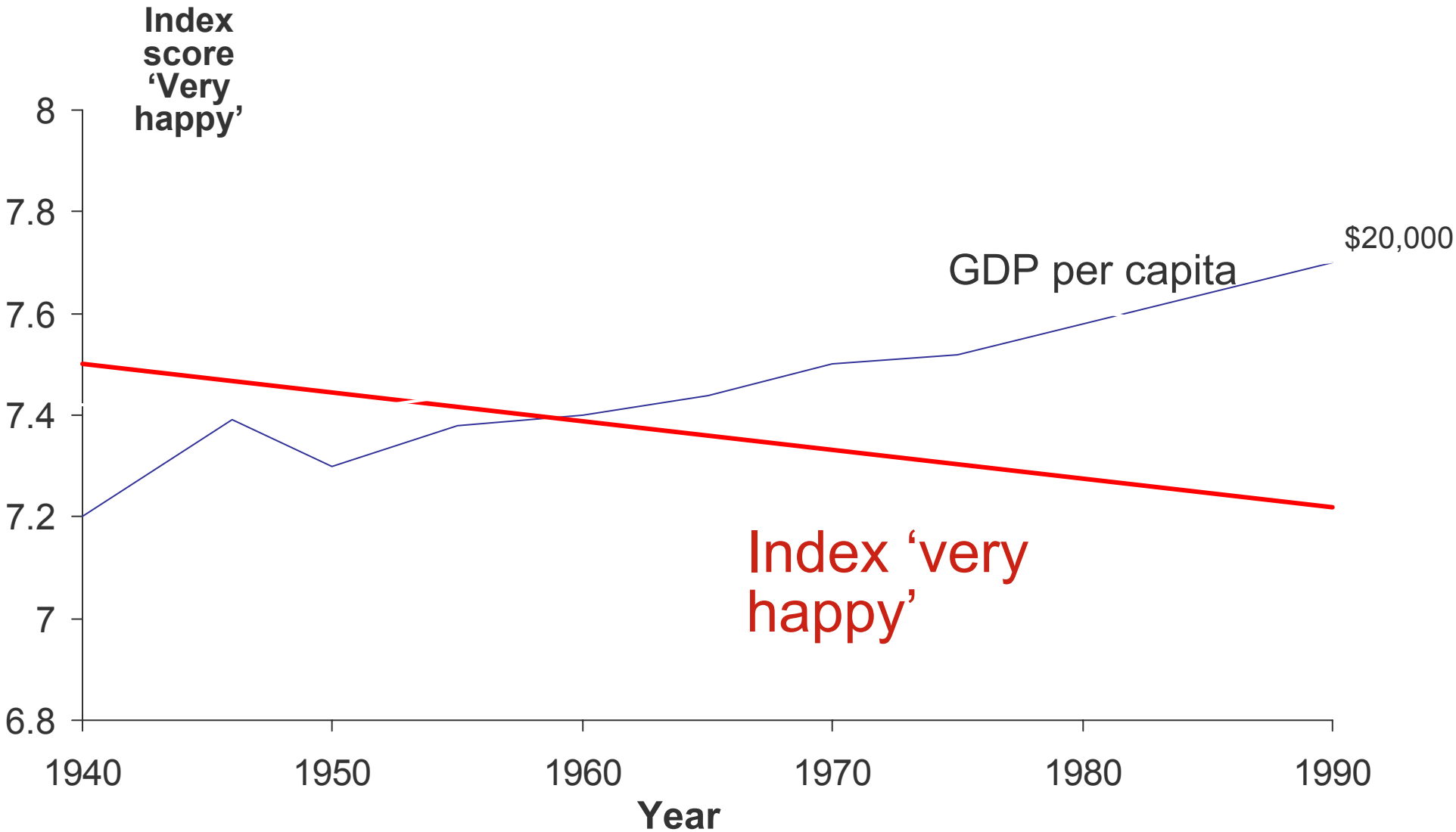
Base: 2013 British adults

The higher the average income in your neighbourhood, the happier you will be with your area…



But money isn’t everything…

Americans – GDP and Happiness……



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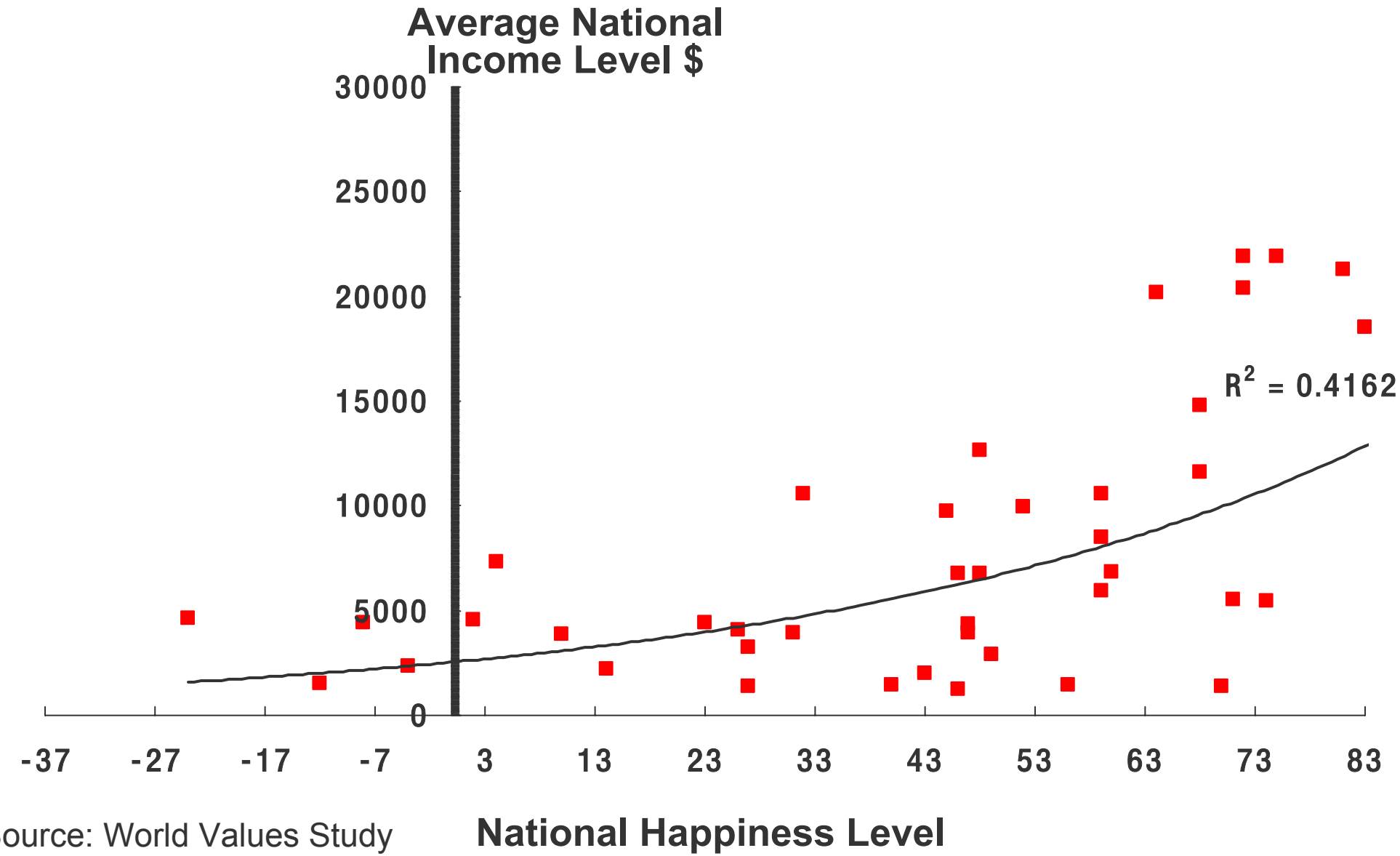
Source: GDP from *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1995,* 'very happy' scores from various surveys, courtesy of Ed Diener

Money and Happiness



Source: World Values Study

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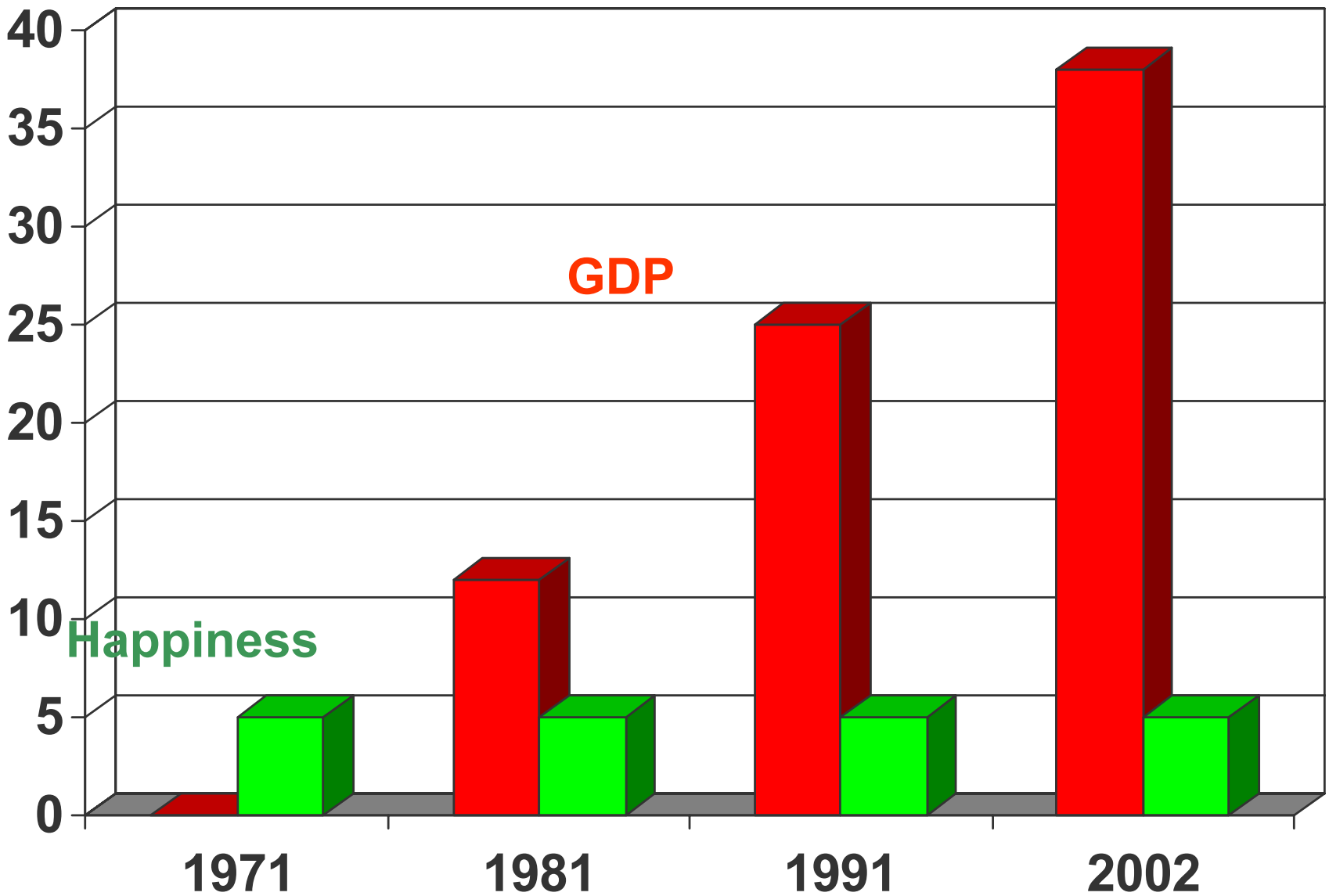
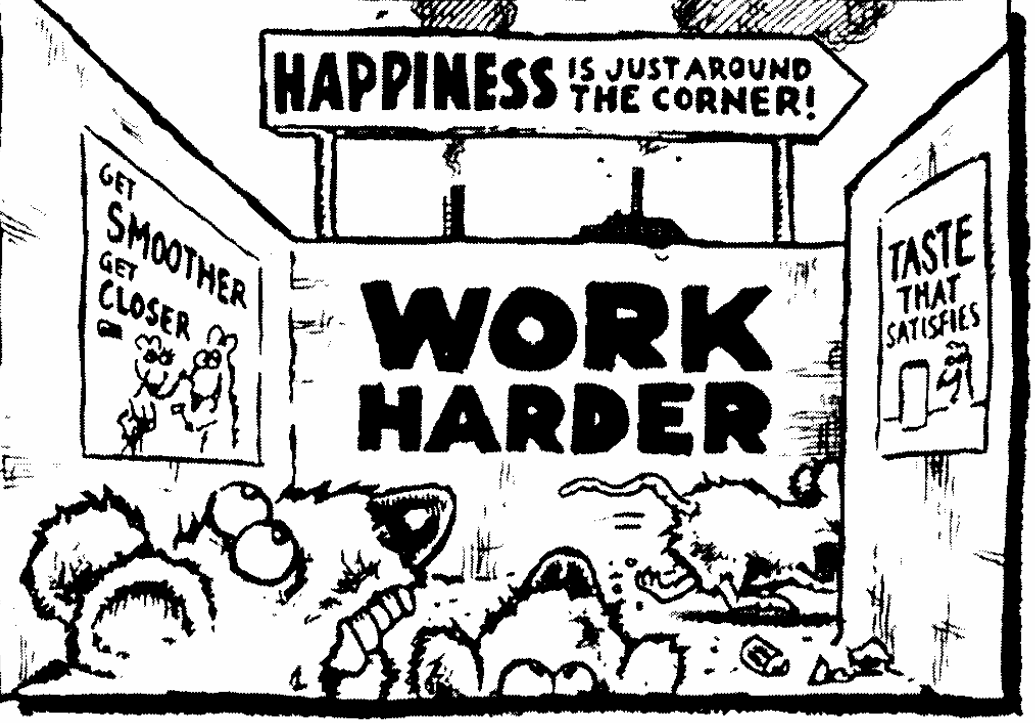
Money only buys so much happiness....




HAPPINESS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!
GET SMOOTHER GET CLOSER
WORK HARDER
TASTE THAT SATISFIES

HAPPINESS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!
STAY AHEAD OF THE RACE
EARN MORE MONEY
SOFT SILKY CREAMY

HAPPINESS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!
THE SEXIEST RATS ALL
BUY MORE THINGS
SPOIL YOURSEL
LUXURY

HAPPINESS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!
ESCAPE FROM IT ALL
KEEP GOING
Polyp

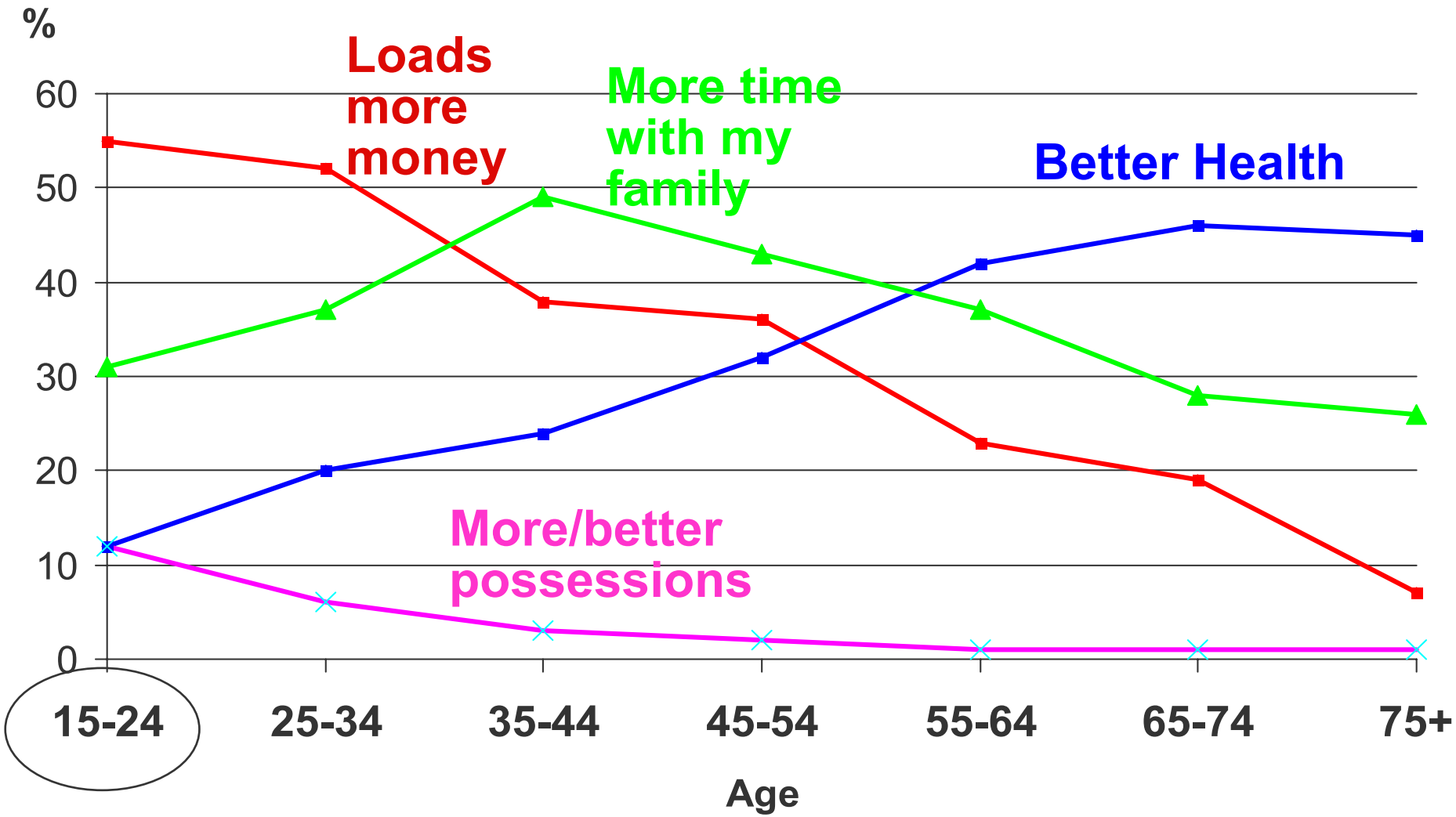
What do the British think?

What would make you happier?

Q Which four or five of the following things do you think would make you happier?

Ipsos MORI Base: 2,015 interviewed face to face in home in GB aged 15 +, 20-25 Sept 2007

What would make you happiest?



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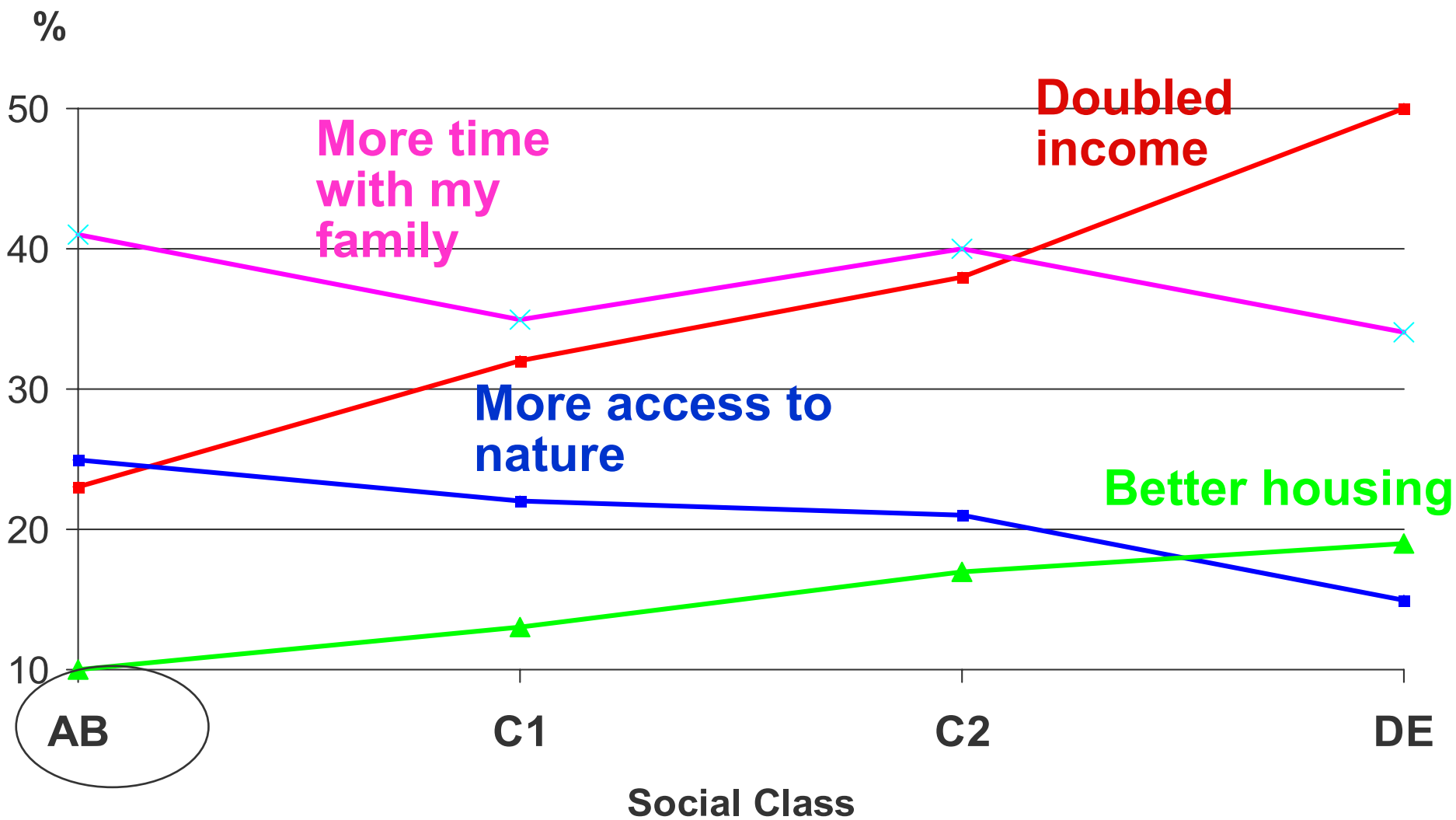
What would make you happiest?



Ipsos MORI Base: 2,015 interviewed face to face in home in GB aged 15 +, 20-25 Sept 2007

Money does matter to a very large proportion of the population's happiness...

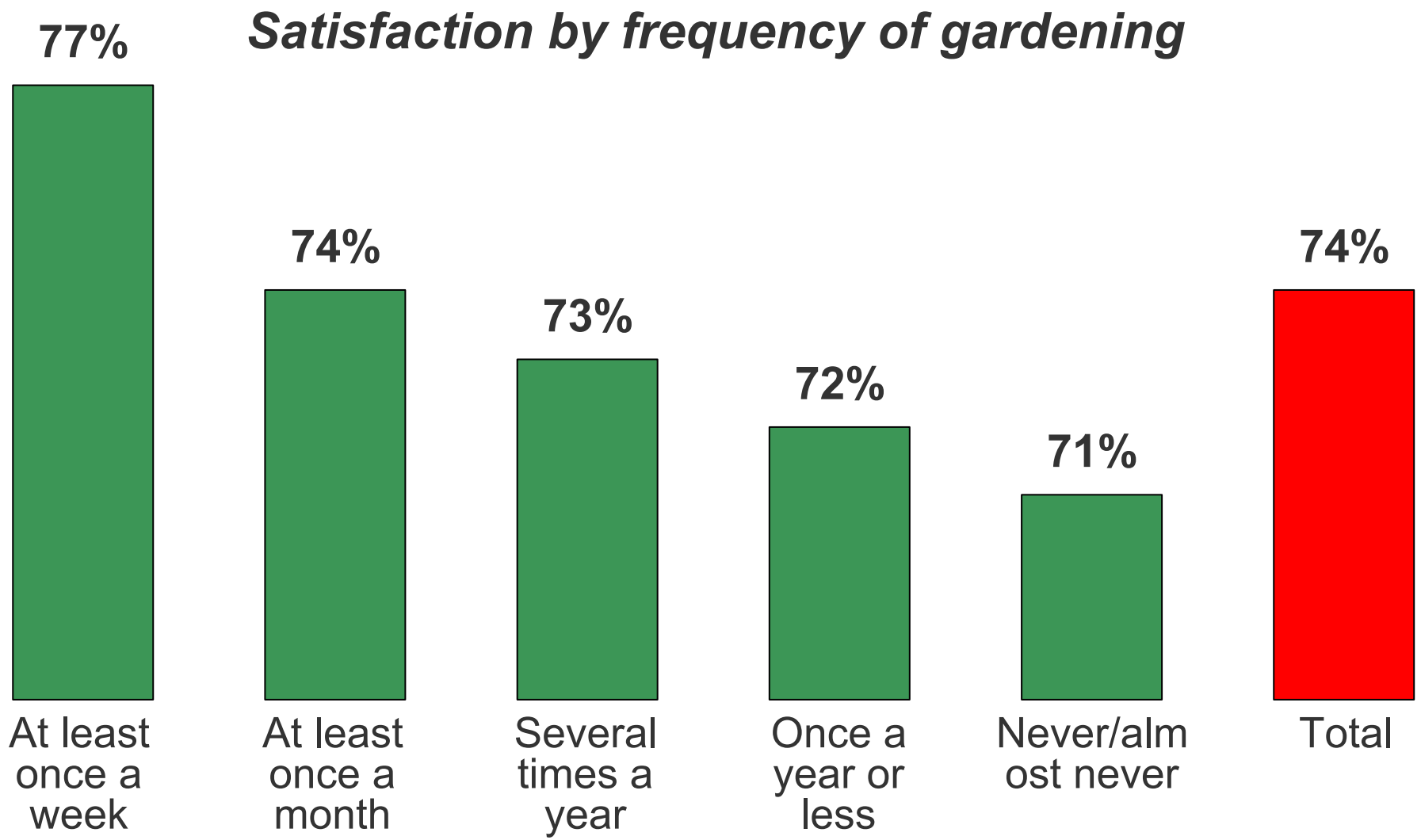
What else works?

Leisure and relationships……

"If you want to be happy for a few hours, get drunk. If you want to be happy for a few years, get a wife. If you want to be happy forever, get a garden"

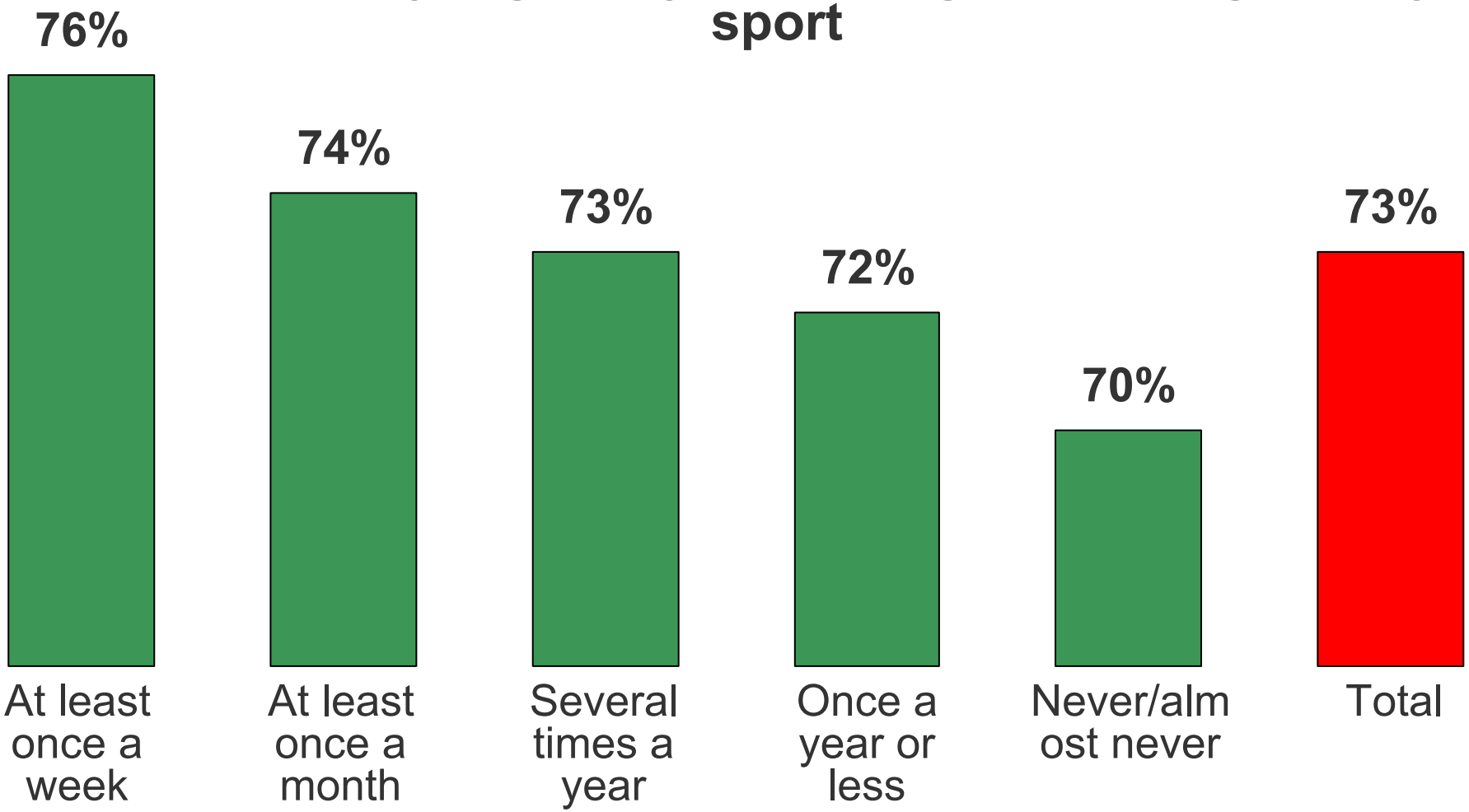
Traditional

Leisure and relationships

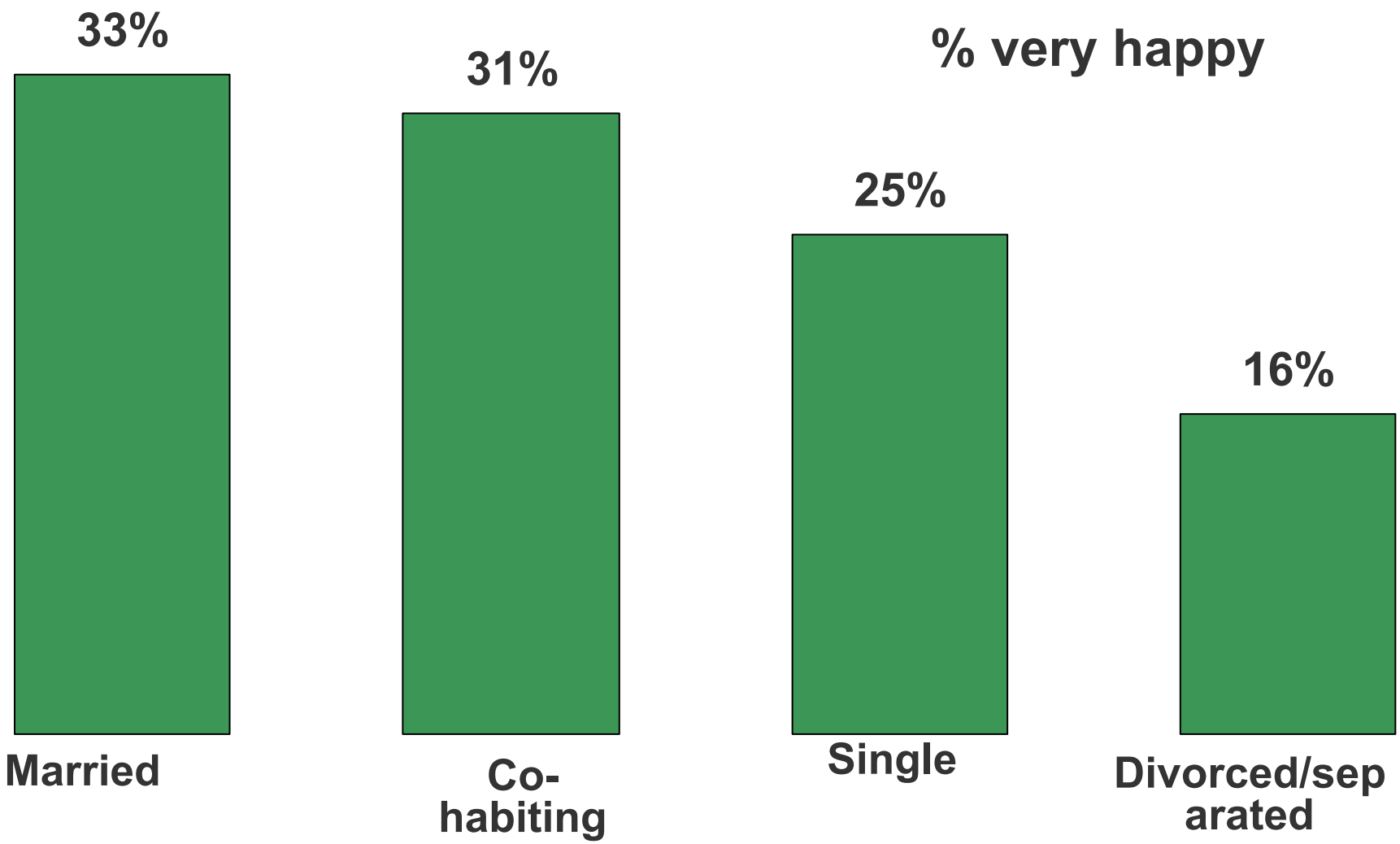


Do some sport.....

Life satisfaction by regularity of walking, swimming or playing sport

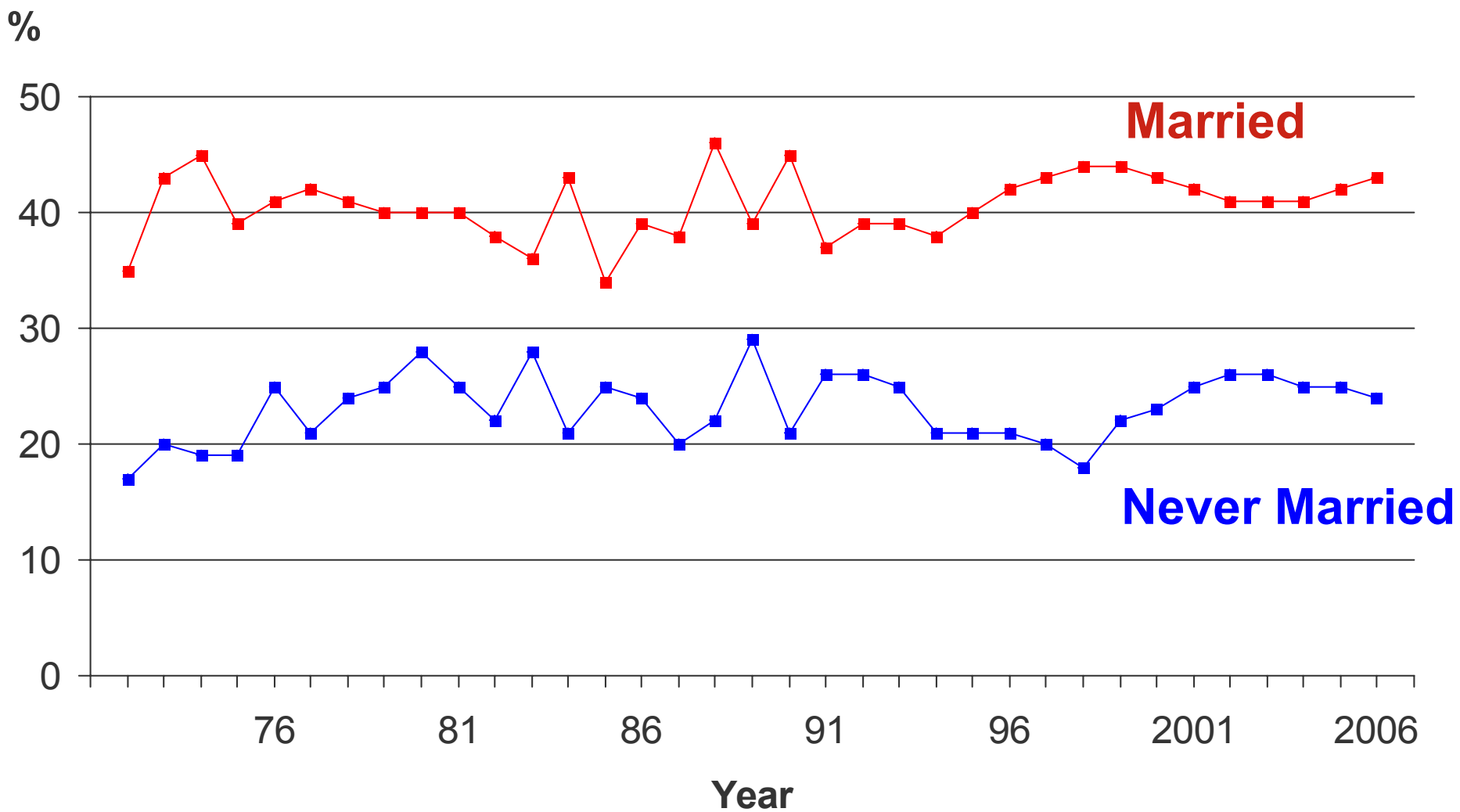


Get Married

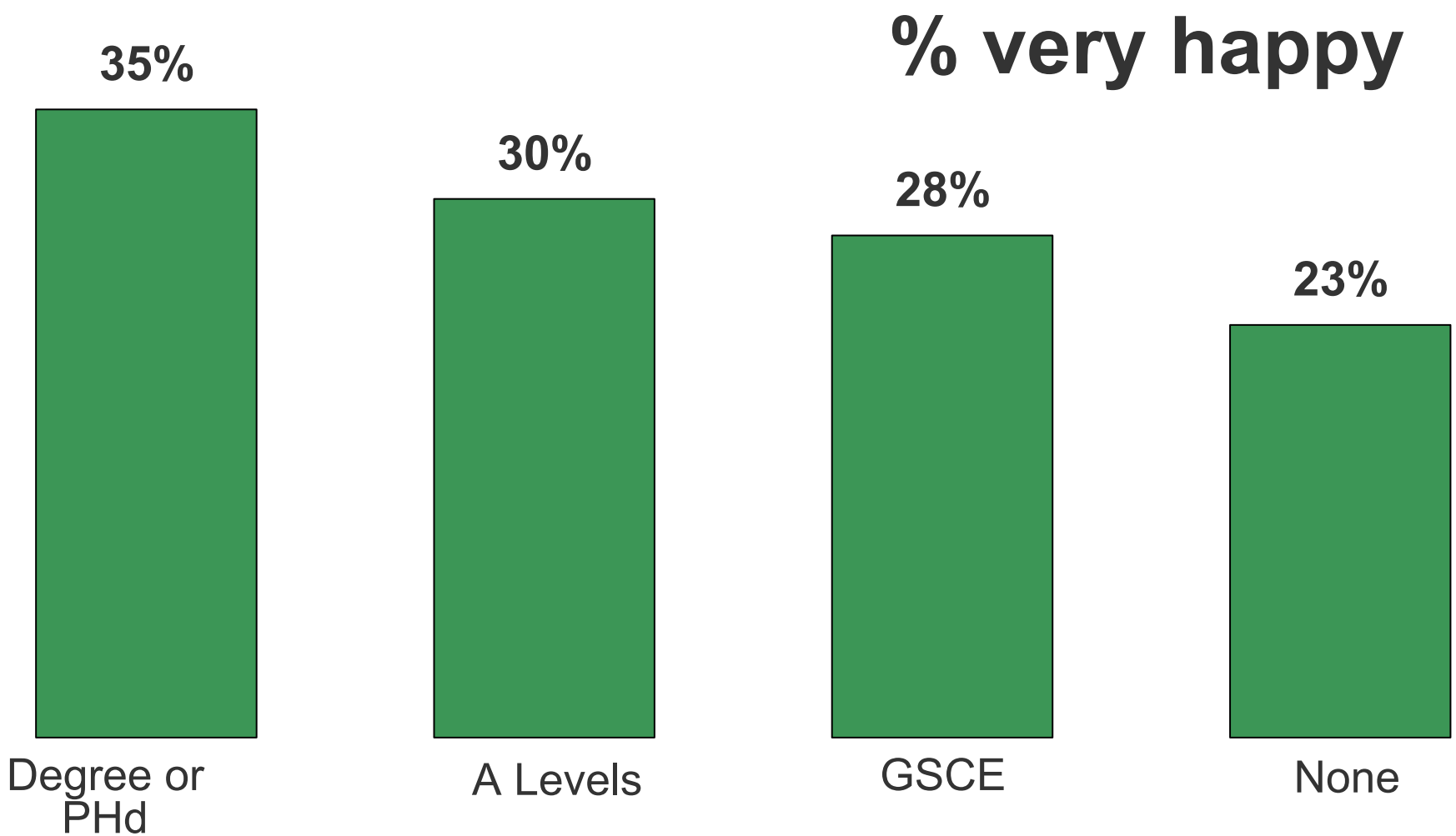


Ipsos MORI Base: 2,015 interviewed face to face in home in GB aged 15 +, 20-25 Sept 2007

Very Happy by Marital Status

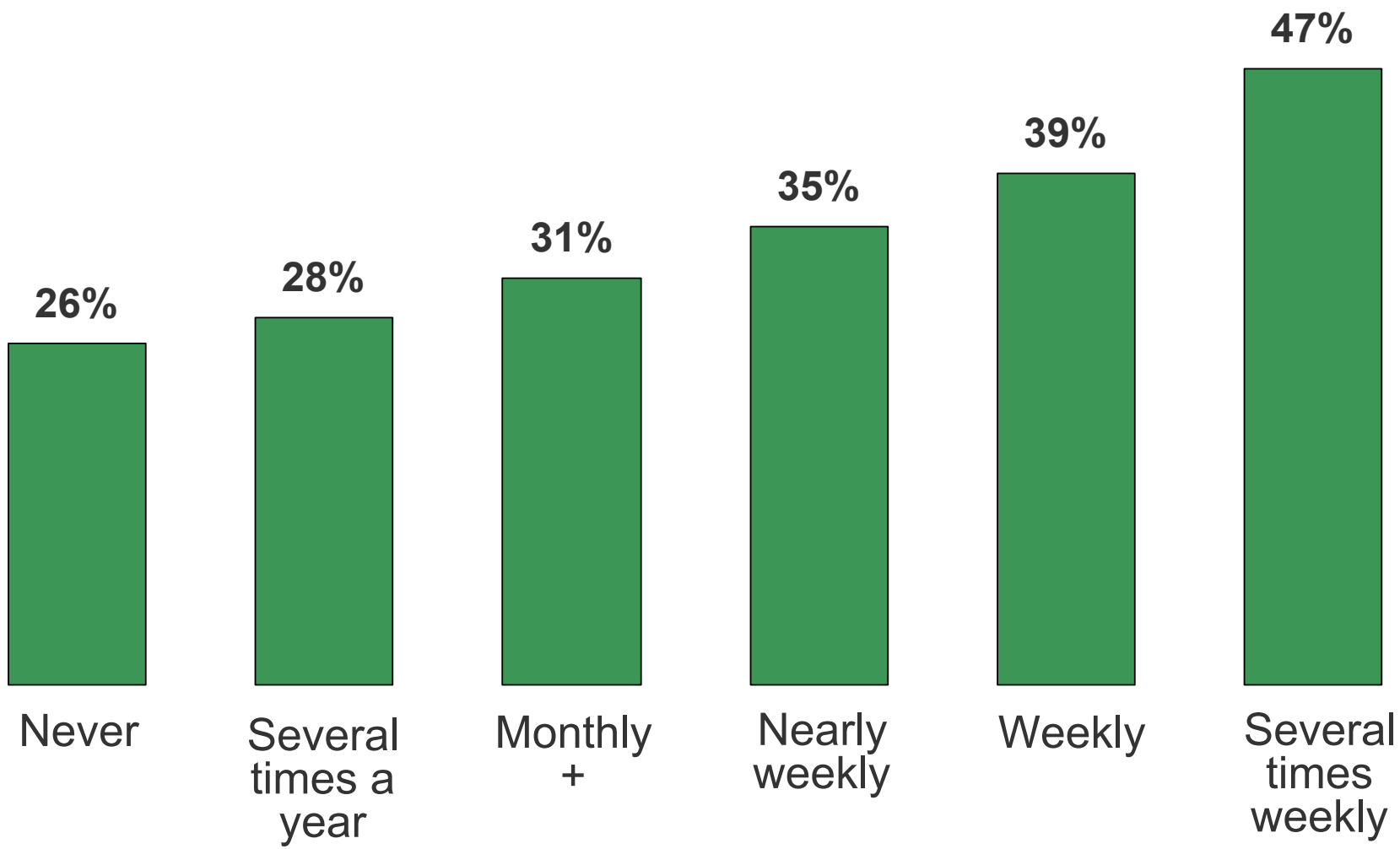


Get Qualified



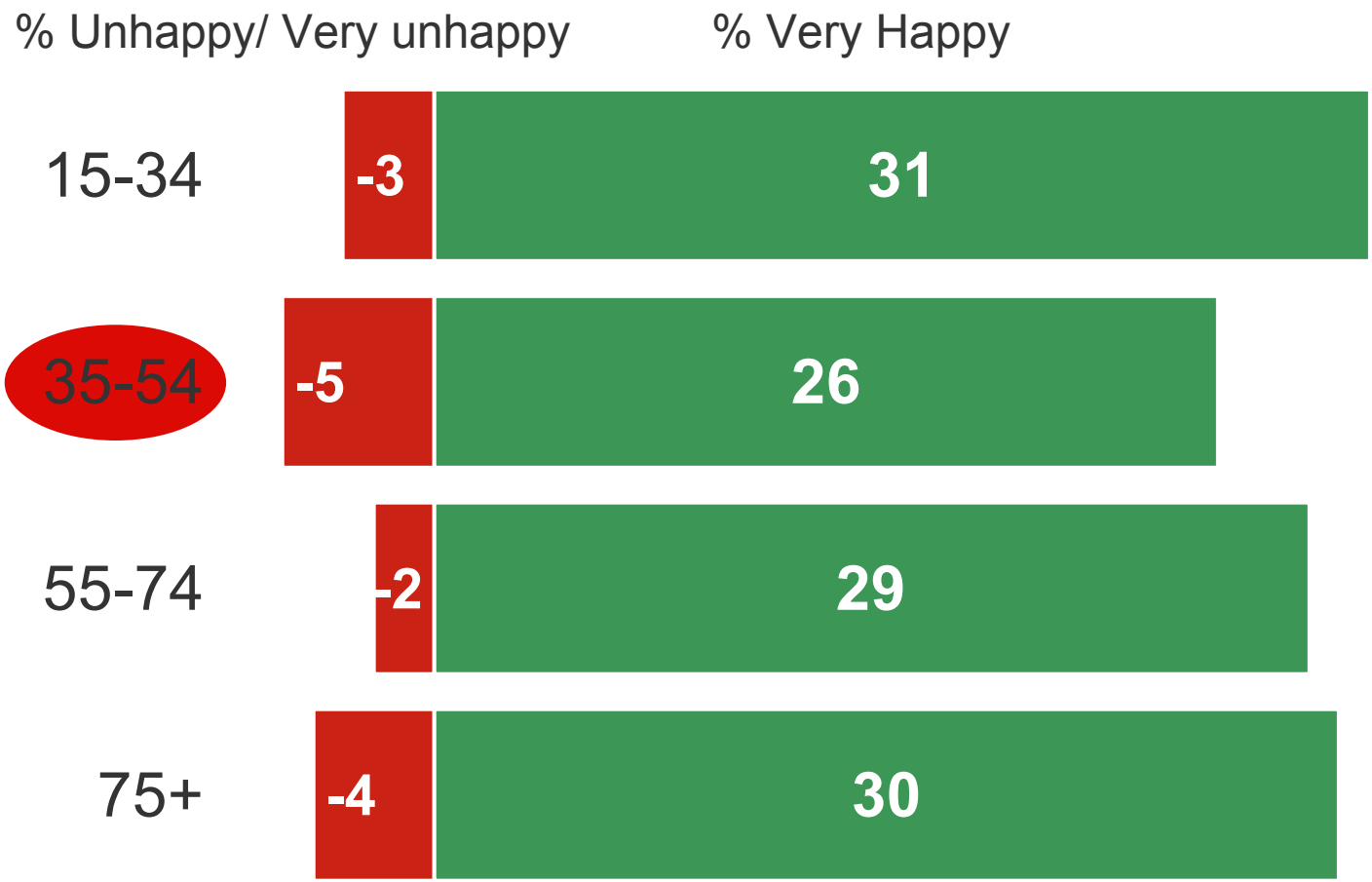
Base: 2,015 interviewed face to face in home in GB aged 15 +, 20-25 Sept 2007

Go to church


26%
28%
31%
35%
39%
47%
Never
Several times a year
Monthly +
Nearly weekly
Weekly
Several times weekly

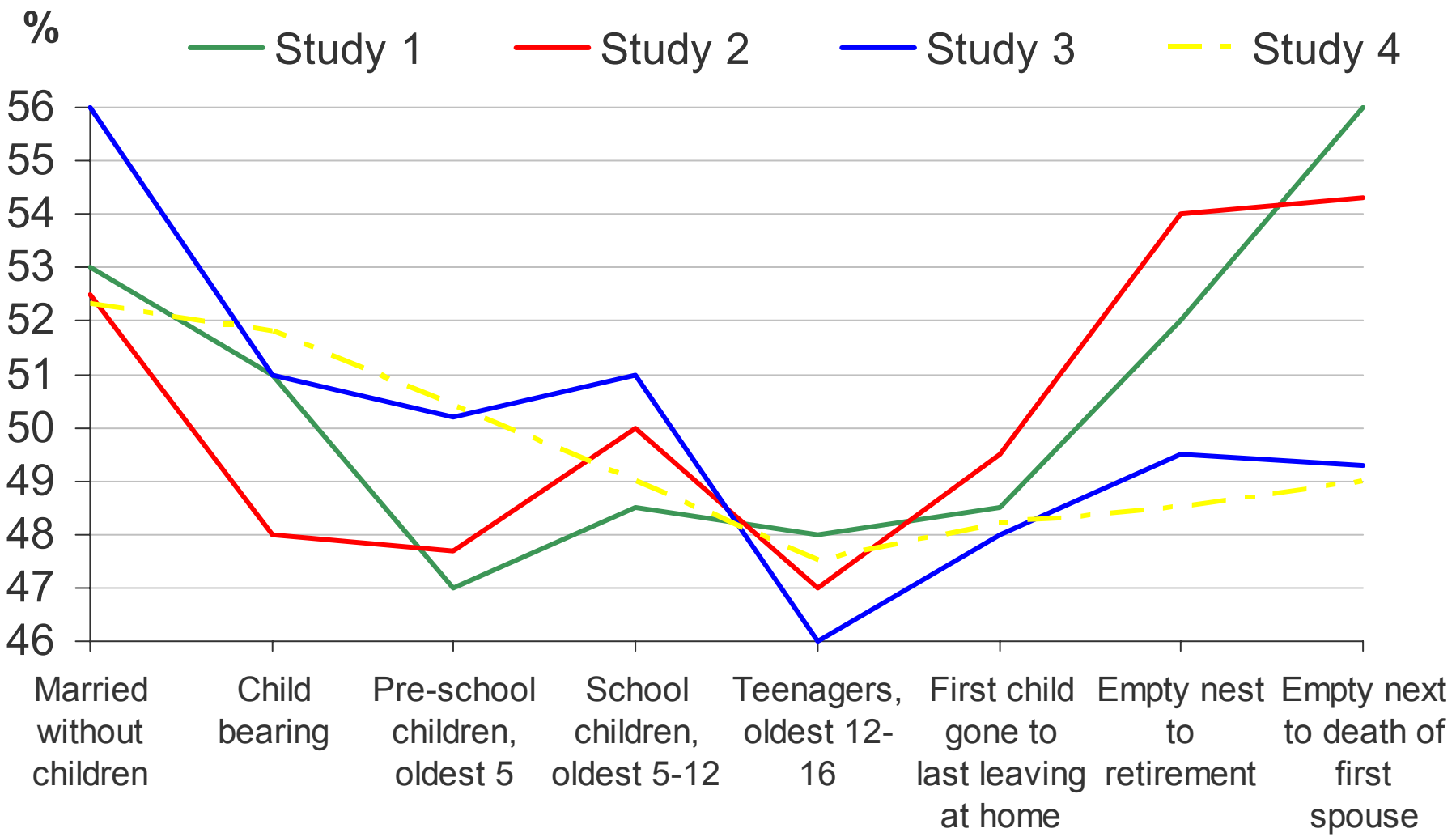
Avoid middle age and teenagers

Taking all things together, would you say in general you are…



Base: 2013 British adults

The terror of teenagers!



The problems of adaption, estimation bias and social comparison

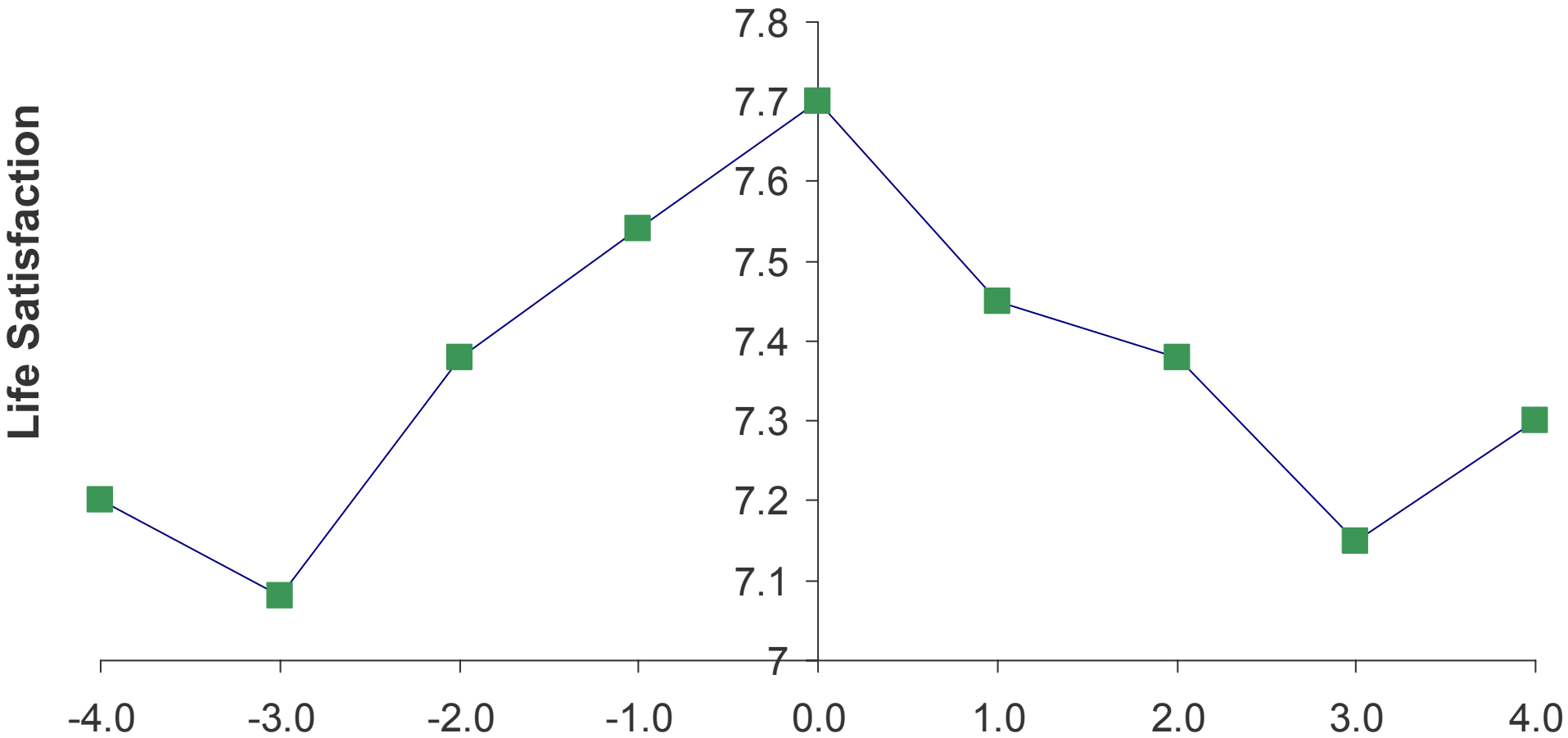
$$V(x_1, ..., x_T) = \sum_{t=1}^{T} \delta^{t-1} v(x_t - r_t),$$

$$r_t = \sigma s_t + (1 - \sigma) a_t, \; t = 1, ..., T,$$

$$a_t = \alpha x_{t-1} + (1 - \alpha) a_{t-1}, \; t = 2, ..., T,$$

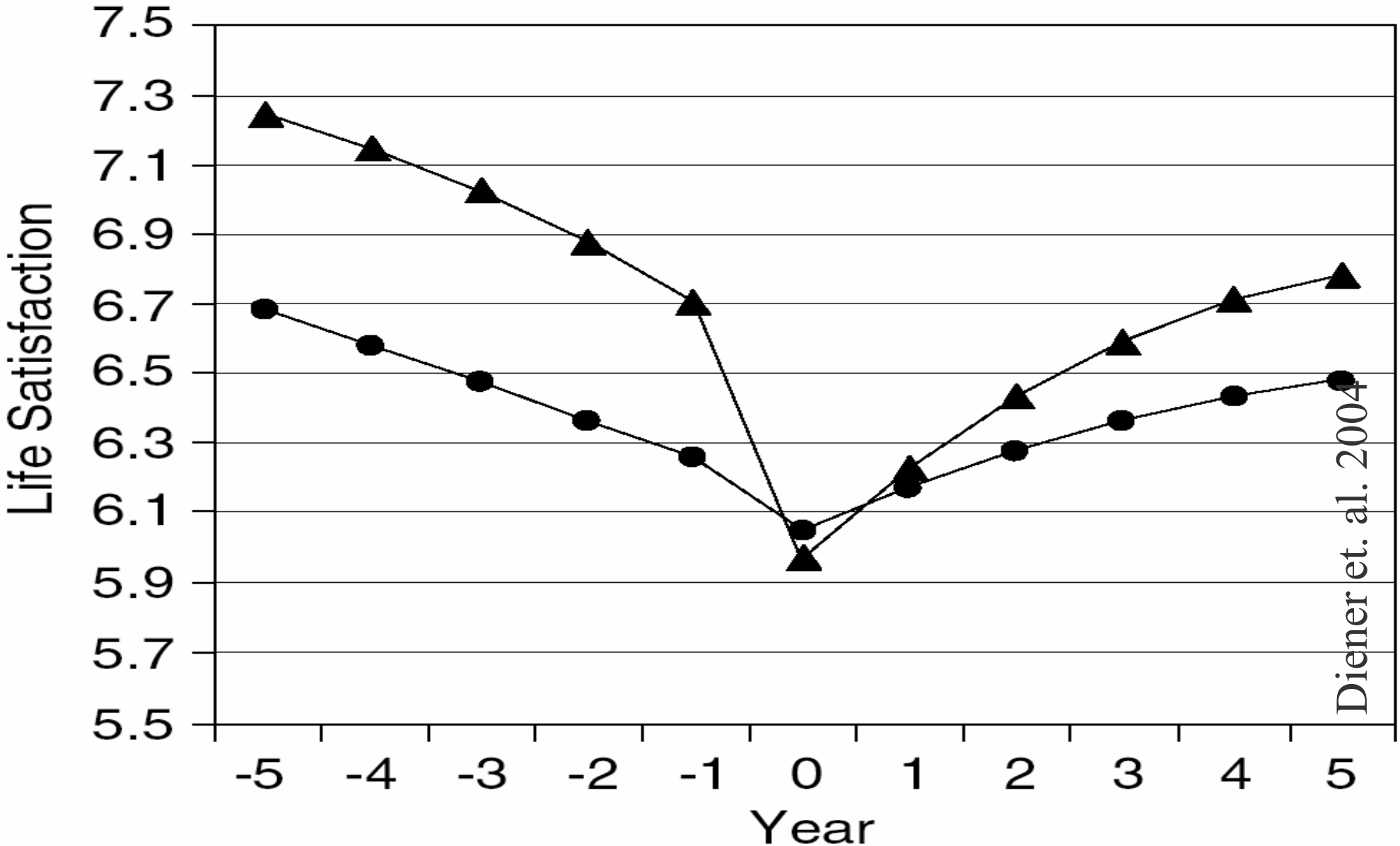
Impact of life events.....

Happiness and getting married…….



Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, and Diener (2003). N ~24,000

Happiness and getting divorced/widowed…….

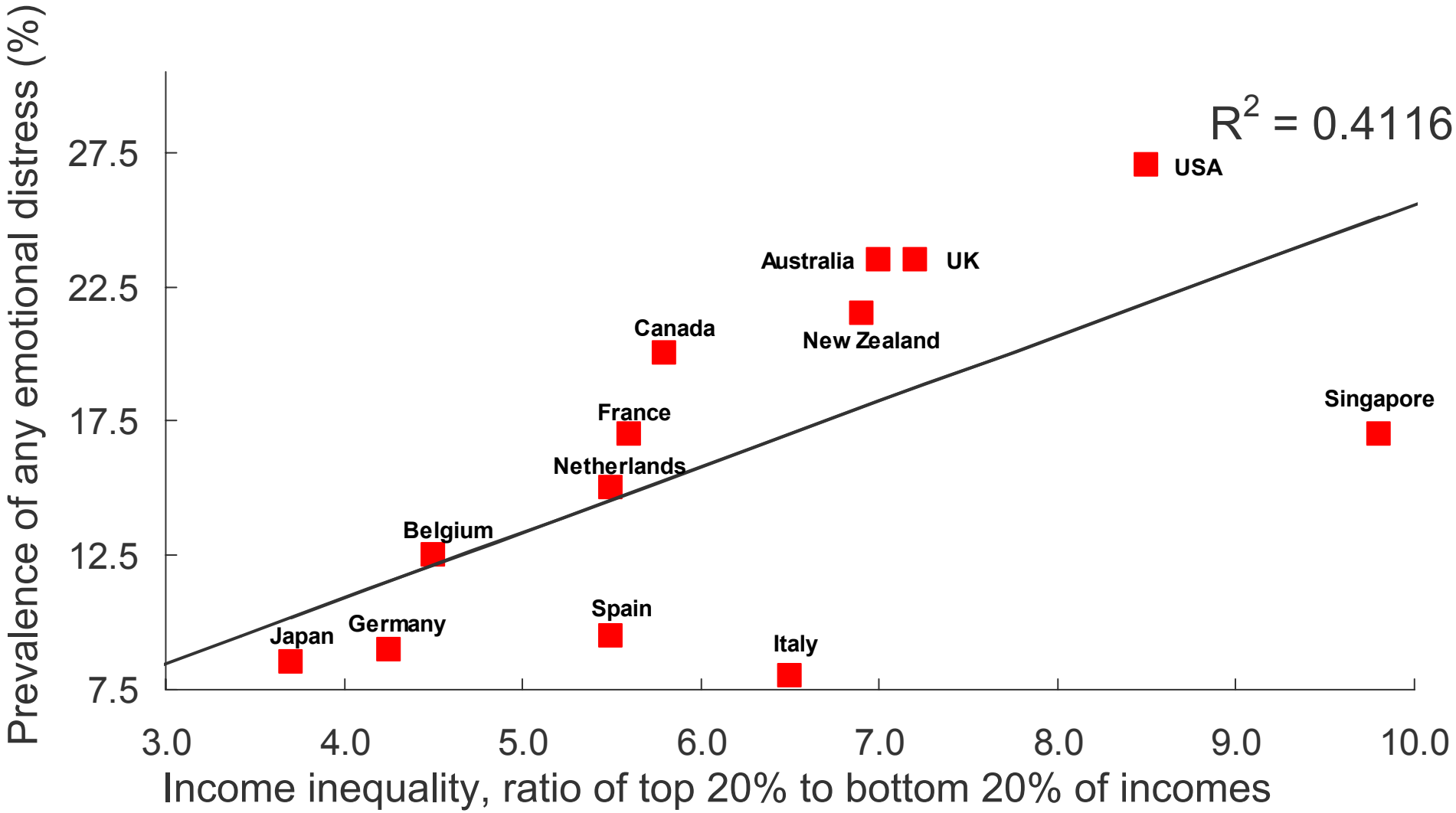


Social Justice, inequality and happiness

"A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But if a palace arises beside the little house, the little house shrinks to a hovel… [and]… the dweller will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied and cramped within its four walls."

(Marx, 1847)

Inequality of income and prevalence of emotional distress in English-speaking nations, Western Europe and Japan



Sources: Emotional distress prevalences: for New Zealand, Oakley-Browne et al. (2006); for all other nations, Demyttenaere et al. (2004). Income inequality ratios are from UNDP (2003).

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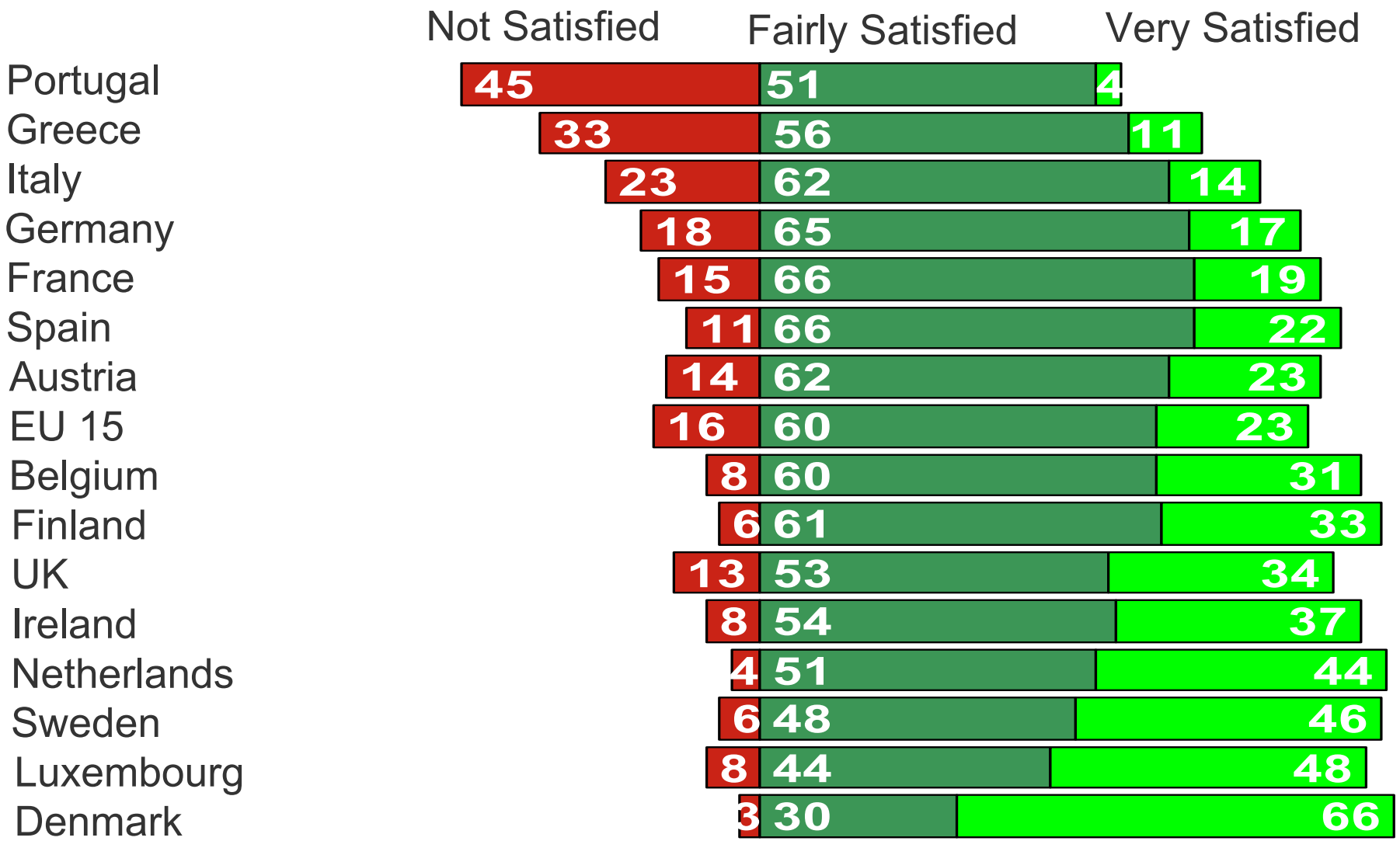
Some things that turn out to increase happiness

- Get married
- Become richer *than your peer group, but stay friends with them to beat the problem of social comparison*
- *As you earn more, try to constrain the growth in your spending to beat the problem of adaption*
- Find religion, and attend meetings at least monthly, if not weekly
- Find some extra leisure time and spend more time with friends and family
- Get a degree
- Visit your GP for a health test – the healthier, the happier
- Live to a ripe old age – being middle aged is just depressing

So should government get involved? And if so how?

Learn from the Danes and Swedes?



Source: Standard Eurvobarometer 65: Spring 2006

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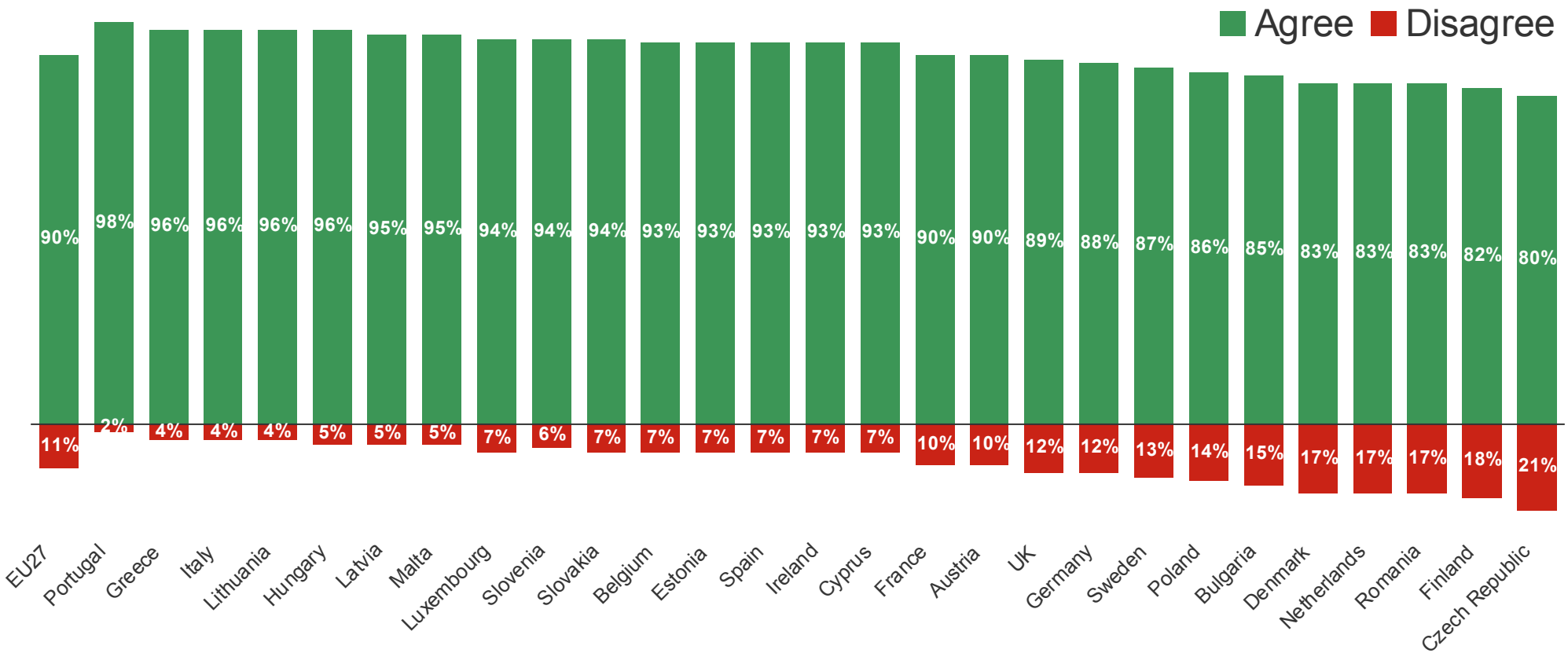
.... Introduce more redistribution?

"There should be policies ensuring that the gap between the rich and the poor is reduced significantly in [our country]."



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Base: 25,103 European adults, Eurobarometer Flash survey March 2008

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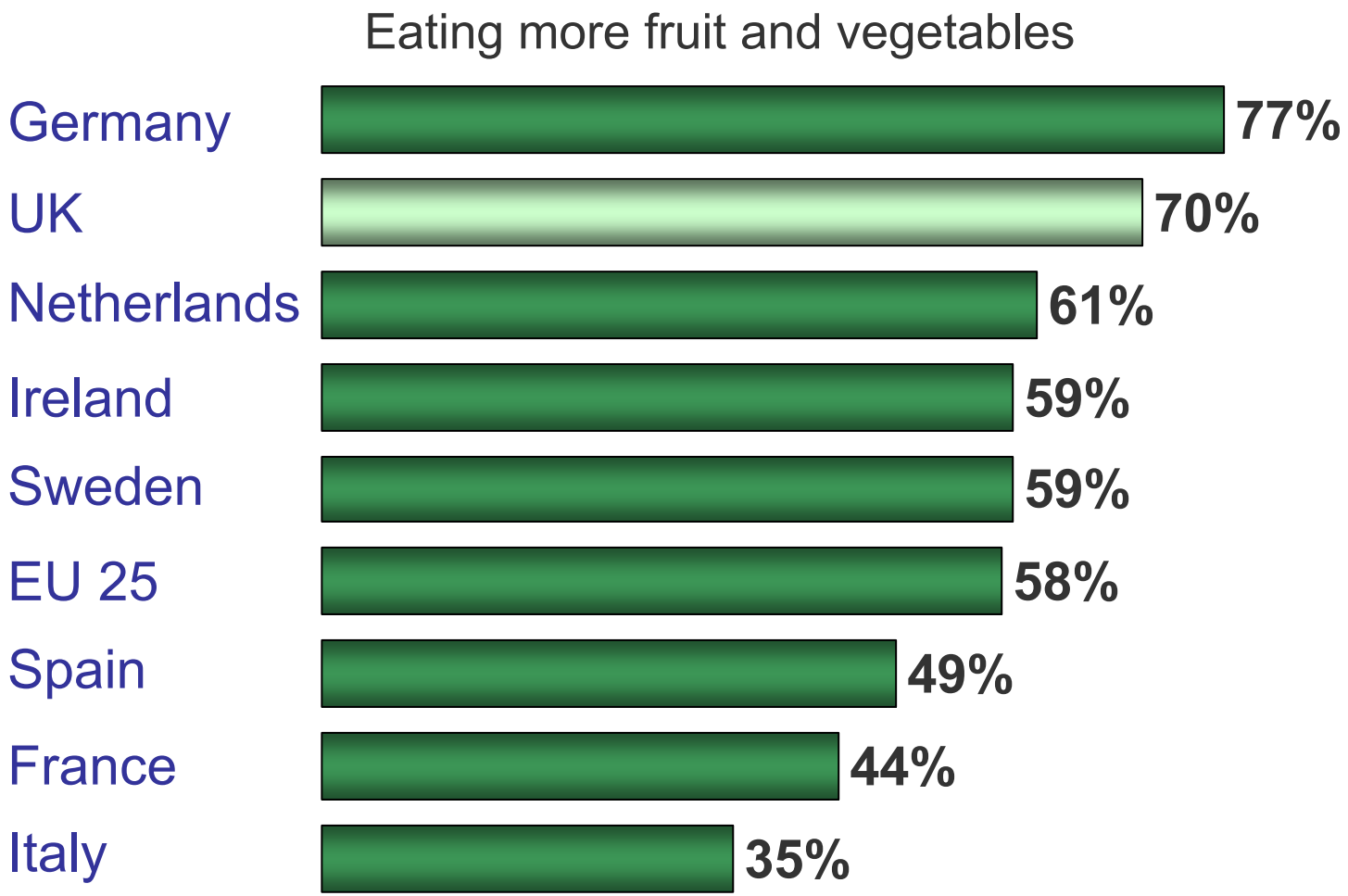
Although the British already feel government interferes too much in their lives – more so than any other European nation….

We say we now we need to eat more fruit & vegetables – more so than others

Q What do you think 'eating a healthy diet' involves?



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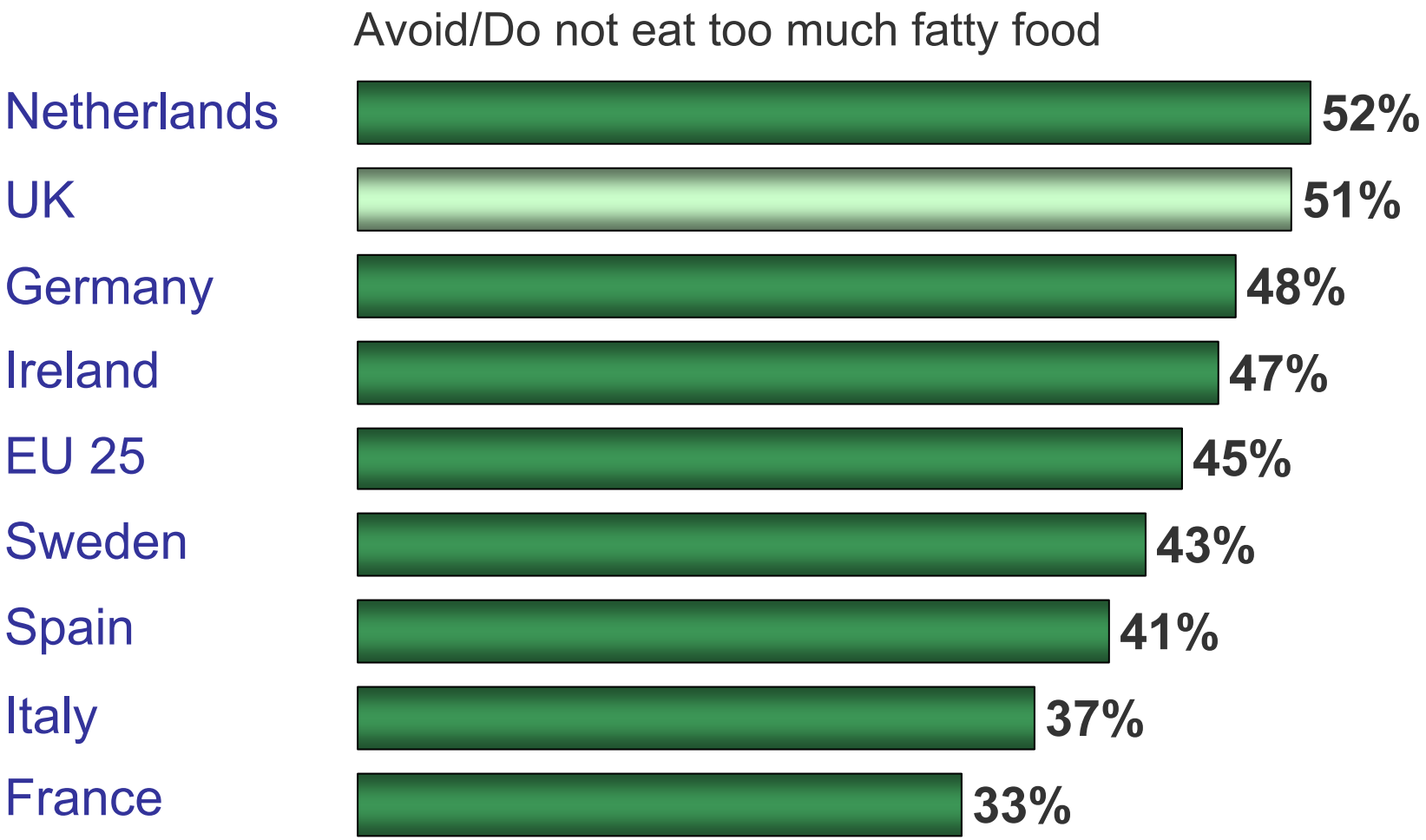
Source: Eurobarometer 64.3 2005. Base c1,000 interviews in each country

...and to avoid fatty food...

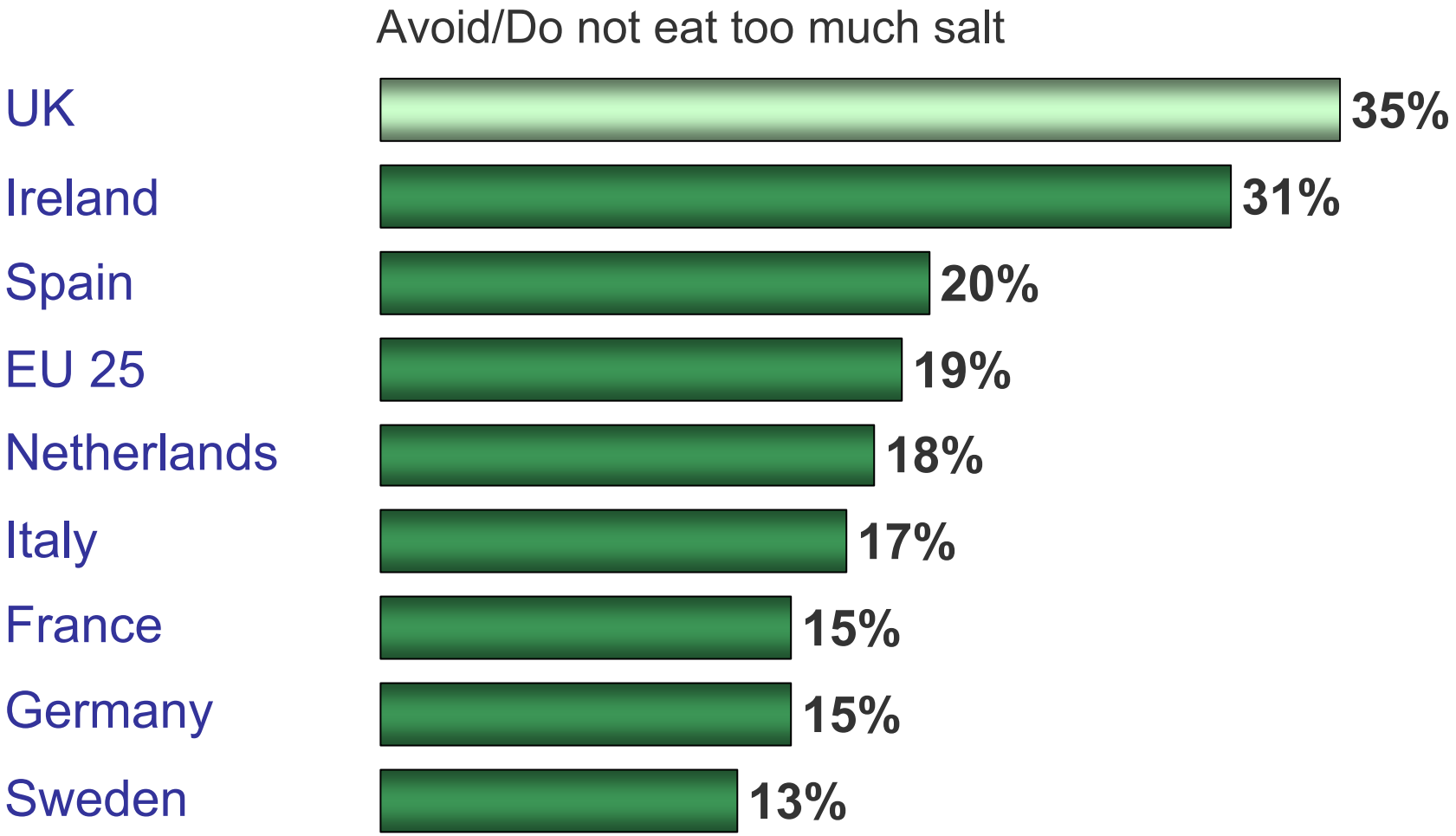
Q *What do you think 'eating a healthy diet' involves?*



Ipsos MORI Source: Eurobarometer 64.3 2005. Base c1,000 interviews in each country

...and salt...

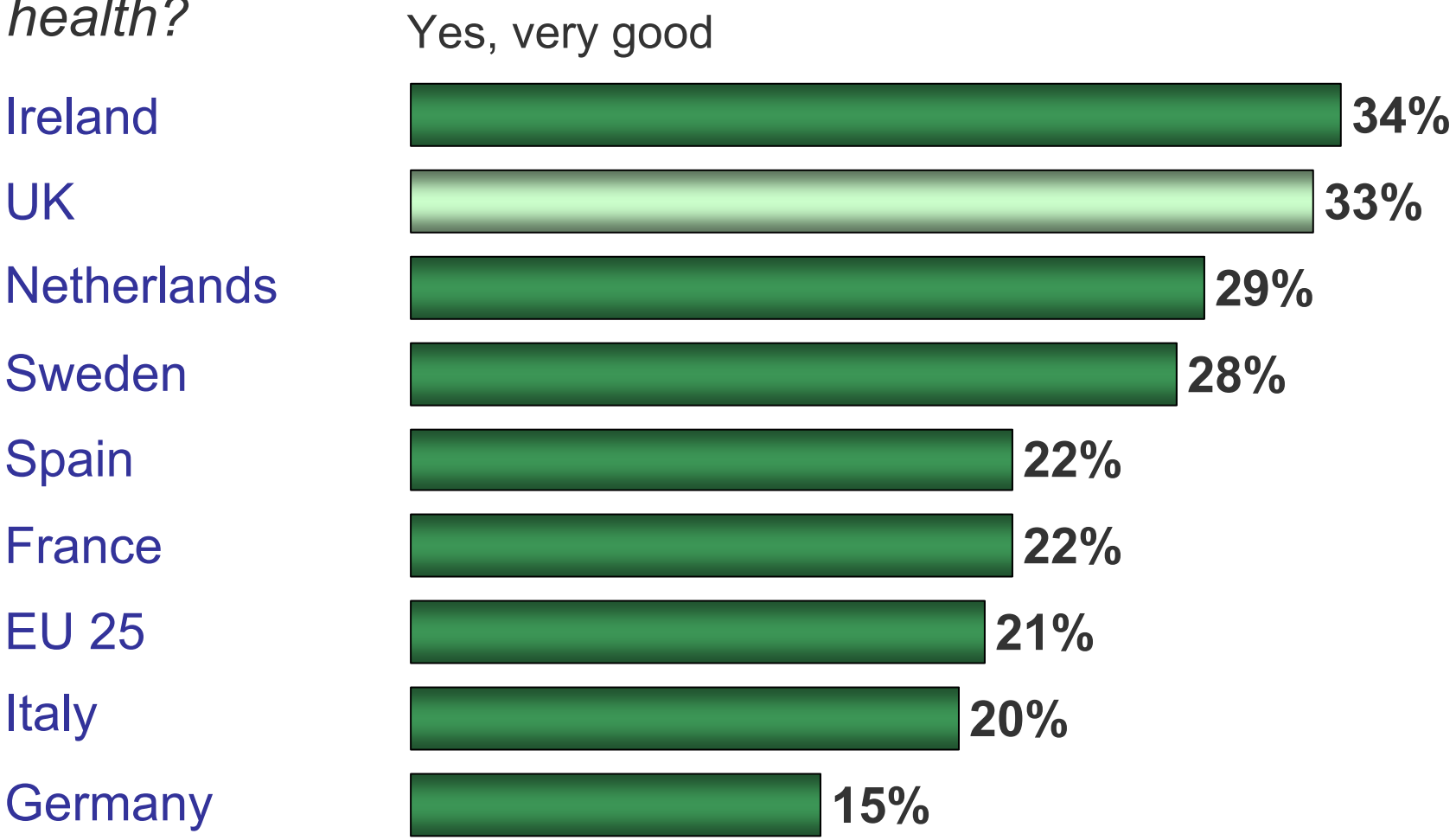
Q What do you think 'eating a healthy diet' involves?



Ipsos MORI Source: Eurobarometer 64.3 2005. Base c1,000 interviews in each country

And we think we have very good current eating habits…

Q *Would you say that what you normally eat is good for your health?*



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Source: Eurobarometer 64.3 2005. Base c1,000 interviews in each country

But…England is one of the most overweight European nations

Source: International Obesity Task Force

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Measures governments could take

- Encourage marriage and prepare people better for it (eg Catholic v C of E preparation!)
- Invest in early intervention in parenting and invest in young people generally (education, diversion)
- Support for people with families – middle aged!!!
- Focus on ASB – more impact than any other local factor
- Promote friendship and spirituality
- Promote simple pleasures…
- Over to you!

Thank you

+44 (0)207 347 3242

ben.page@ipsos.com