



The Netherlands Institute for Social
Research



Steering on Happiness in the Netherlands

Jeroen Boelhouwer



Policy focus on happiness in the Netherlands?

“Government is not a ‘happiness machine’ ”

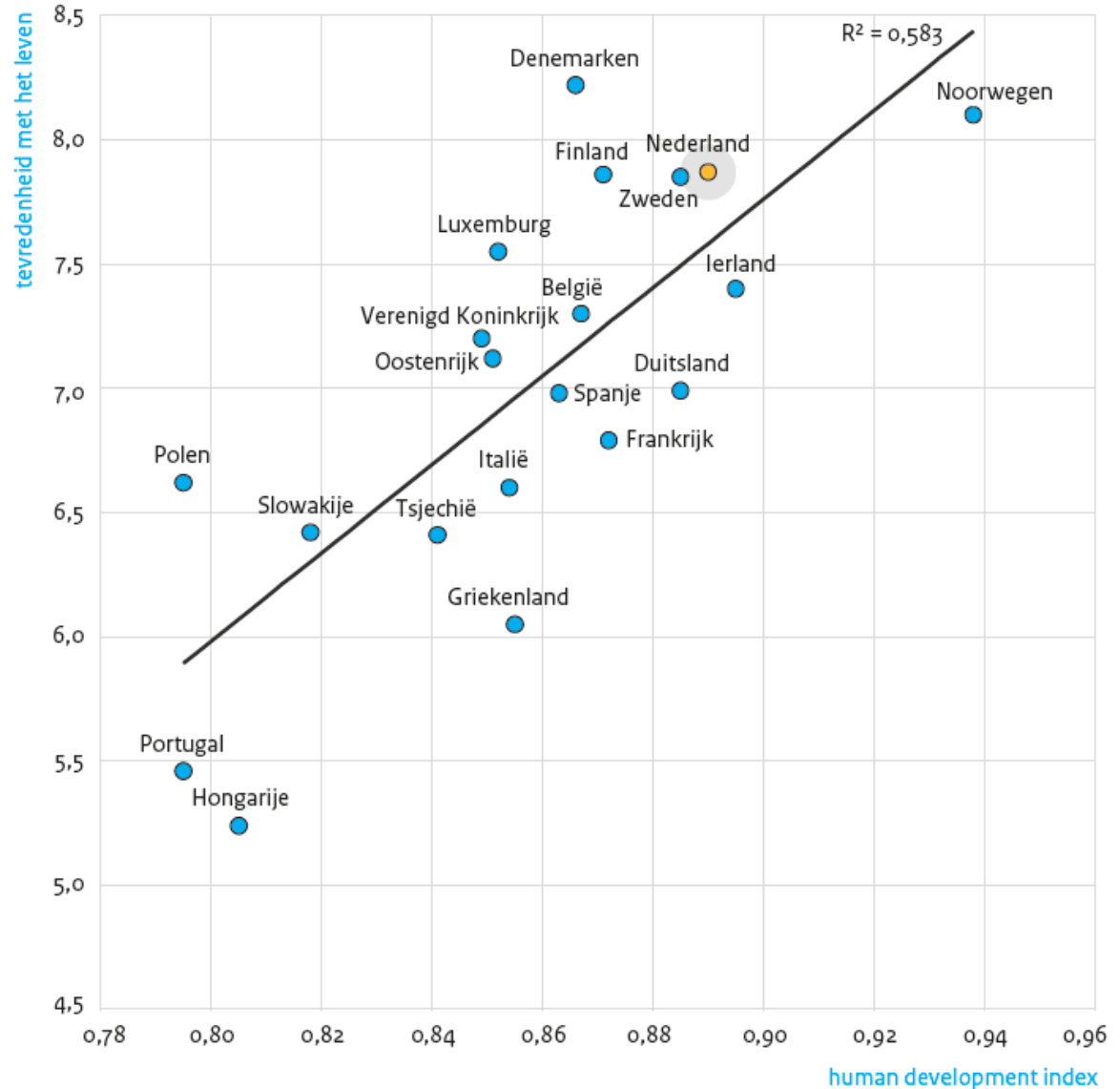


“Happy citizens means lower costs”

SCP conference on steering on happiness
(november 2011): enhancing happiness by
national and local governments,
and public organizations

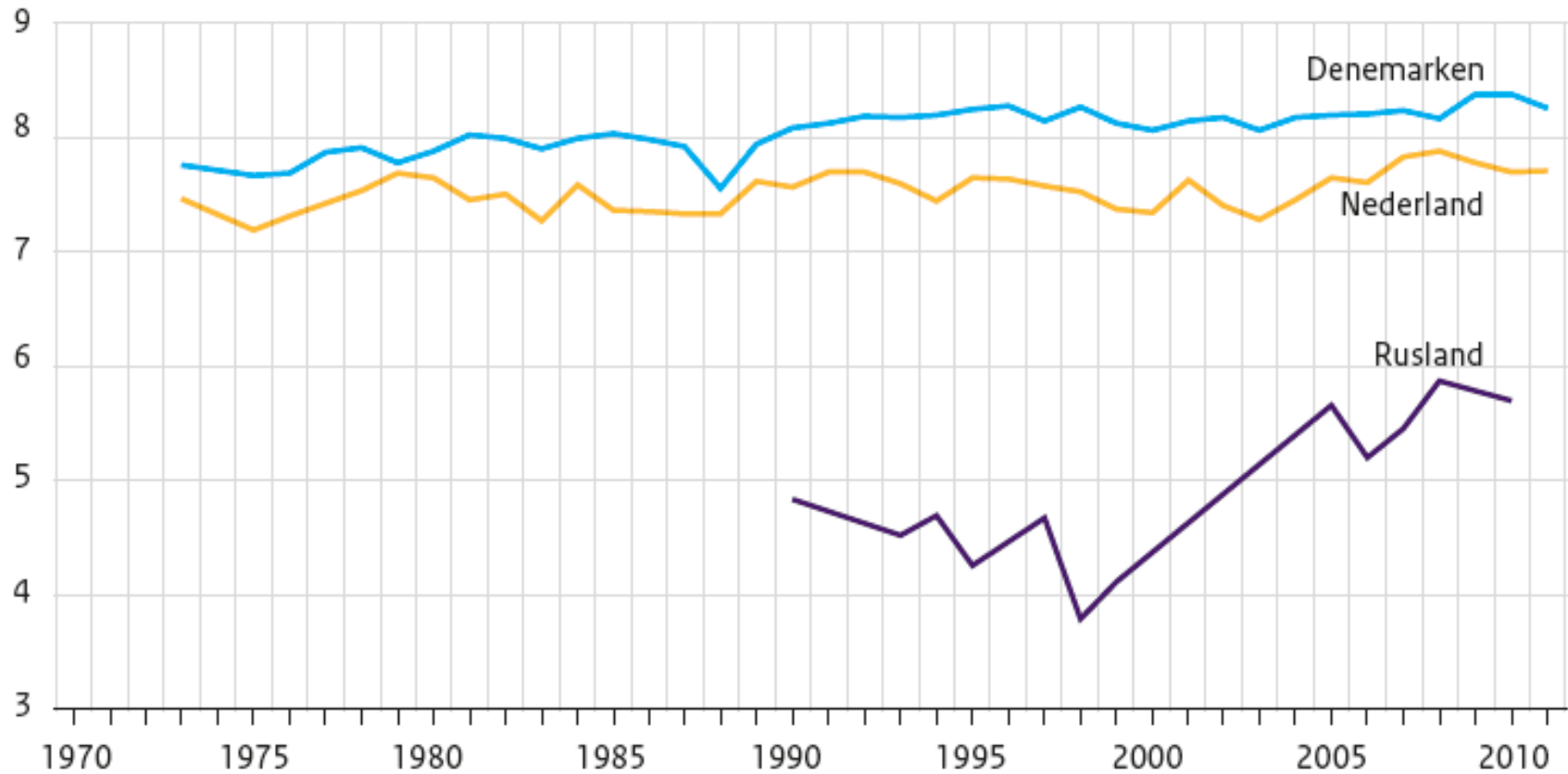


The Dutch are on average Happy People





Happiness in the Netherlands is rising (slowly)

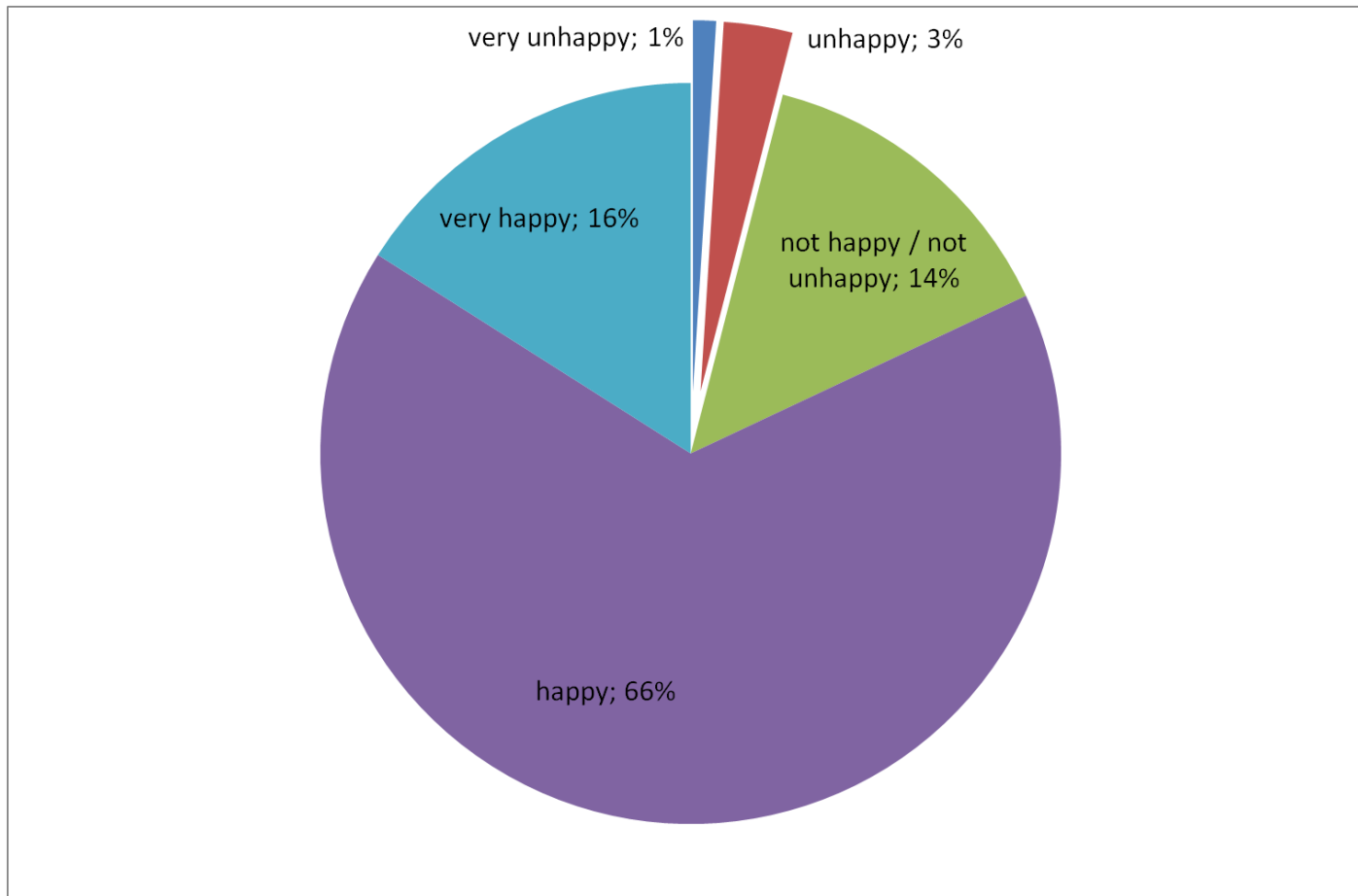




Characteristic of society	Corr. with average happiness
Purchasing power per capita	+.65
Deaths (accidents)	-.36
Social security	+.36
Economical freedom	+.40
Political freedom	+.50
Private freedom	+.46
Income inequality	-.10
Gender Inequality	+.55
Tolerance	+.50
Trust in other people	+.37
Volunteering	+.04
Law enforcement	+.58
Quality of government	+.63
Corruption	-.57
R ²	79%



But not everybody is happy





The 'Happiness Route' in the city Almelo



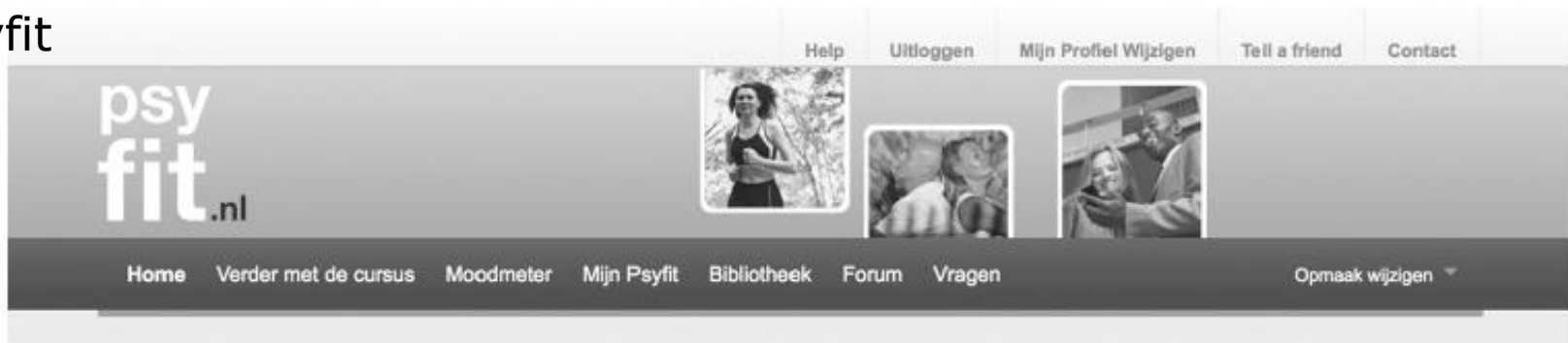


Mental Health (resilience?)

- About 15% of the Dutch suffer from depressive complaints
- Happiness as prevention
- Important role for resilience: the ability to cope with stress and adversity

-> wellbeing on recipe

-> psyfit



-> mental capital



Education (resilience?)



Have you Brushed Your Brain Today?
www.innovativebrains.com



Zippy's Friends



Happiness at work (resilience?)

- Can interventions help reduce stress, burnout and depression?
- Most interventions aim at enlarging 'psychological capital'
- Interventions have effect on positive characteristics – i.e. greater wellbeing and happiness
- Some effect found for reducing stress, burnout and depression
- Little known about effect in the long run



Discussion

- Measuring happiness on national level has been done for 40 years – so lack of data is not the problem, but no national policy on happiness
- Is it necessary to aim for greater happiness for all?
- Do we aim at happiness or resilience and self-esteem.

- Local policies provide good examples
- So do interventions based on 'positive psychology' and interventions aimed at enhancing resilience

Happiness directed policies and interventions are anchored deep in Dutch society.