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# **On the fifth anniversary of the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index: what have we learned about subjective wellbeing?**

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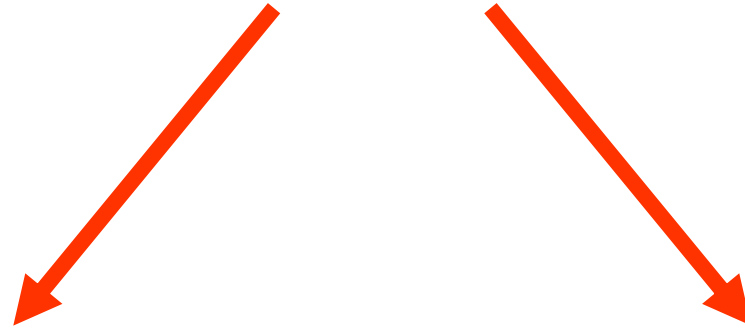
**Department of Rehabilitation Sciences**

**Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

**This manuscript contains notes below each slide. To view these notes, open in Powerpoint , go to 'View', and click on 'Notes Page'**

**Australian Centre on Quality of Life  
<http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol>**

# Quality of Life



**Objective Conditions**  
e.g. Physical health

**Subjective Perceptions**  
e.g. Satisfaction with health



**Objective QOL**

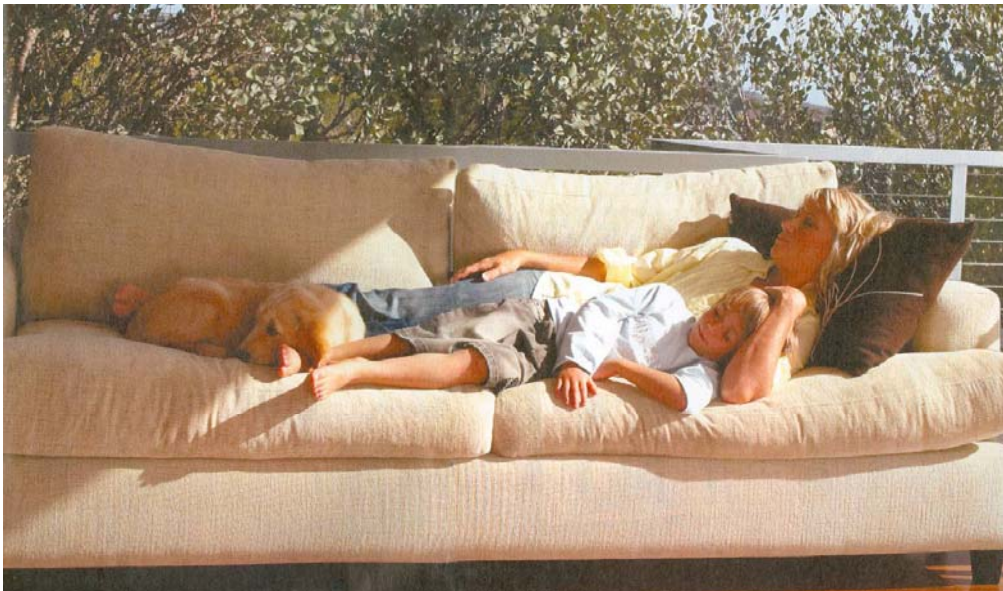


**Subjective Wellbeing**



## Two kinds of 'happiness'

**Short-term 'state' happiness**  
**An emotional response to something**



**Enduring 'trait'**  
**happiness/contentment**  
**A mood with a genetic basis**

**Subjective wellbeing**

**What is subjective wellbeing?**

**A normally positive state of mind that involves  
the whole life experience**

# Personal Wellbeing Index

International Wellbeing Group (2006)

<http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/acqol>

“How satisfied are you with your -----?”

- Standard of living
- Health
- Achieving in life
- Relationships
- Safety
- Community connectedness
- Future security

} ( SWB )

# The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index Surveys

**Geographically representative national  
sample**

**N = 2,000**

**Telephone interview**

#1: April 2001

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#16: Oct 2006



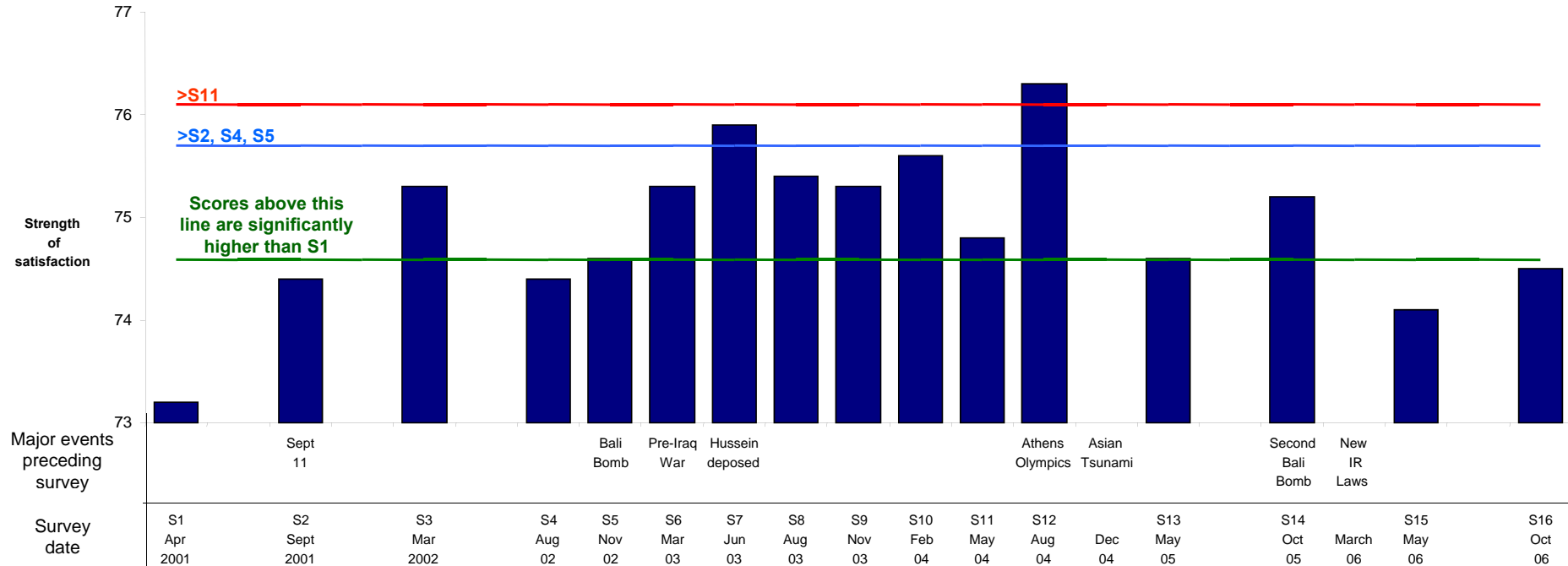
We code all data to lie on a range from

**Complete  
dissatisfaction**

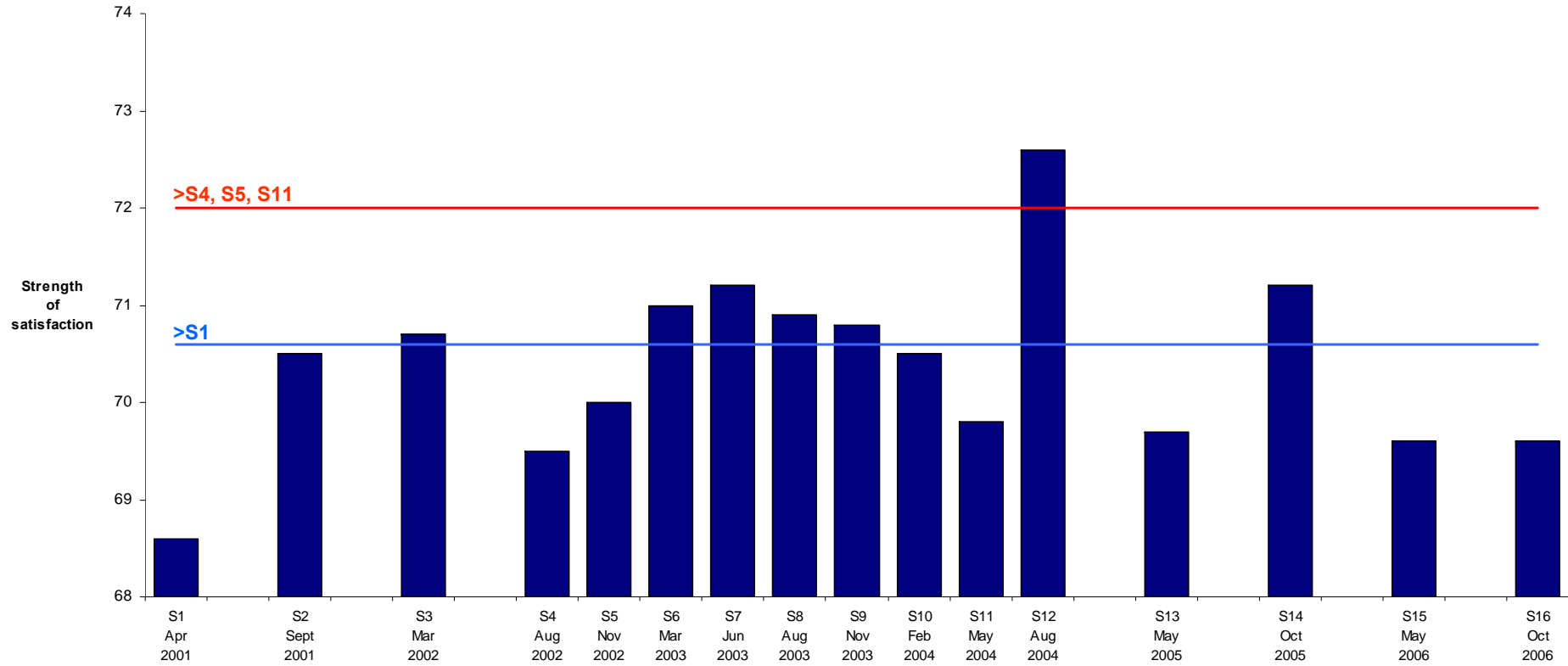
**Complete  
satisfaction**



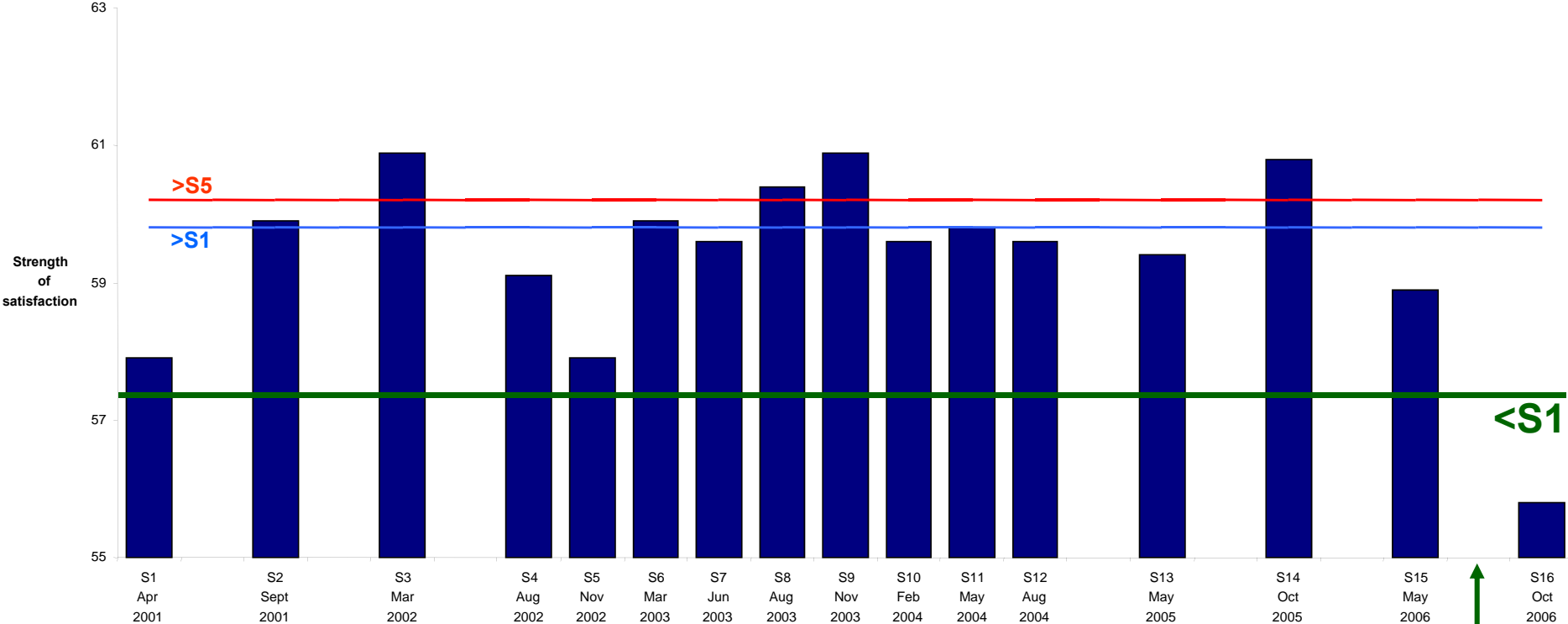
# Personal Wellbeing Index



# Satisfaction with feeling part of your Community

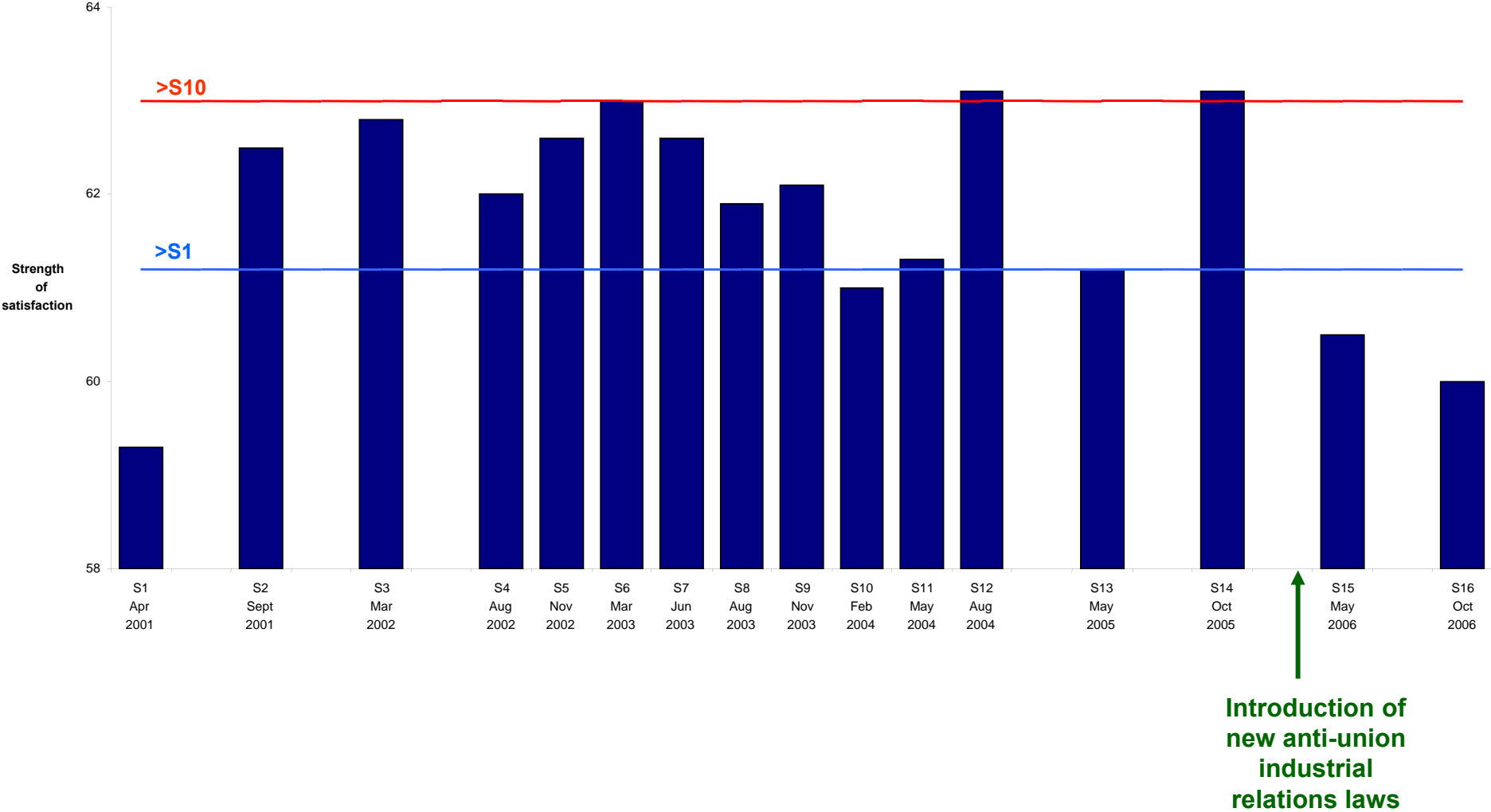


# Satisfaction with the State of the Natural Environment

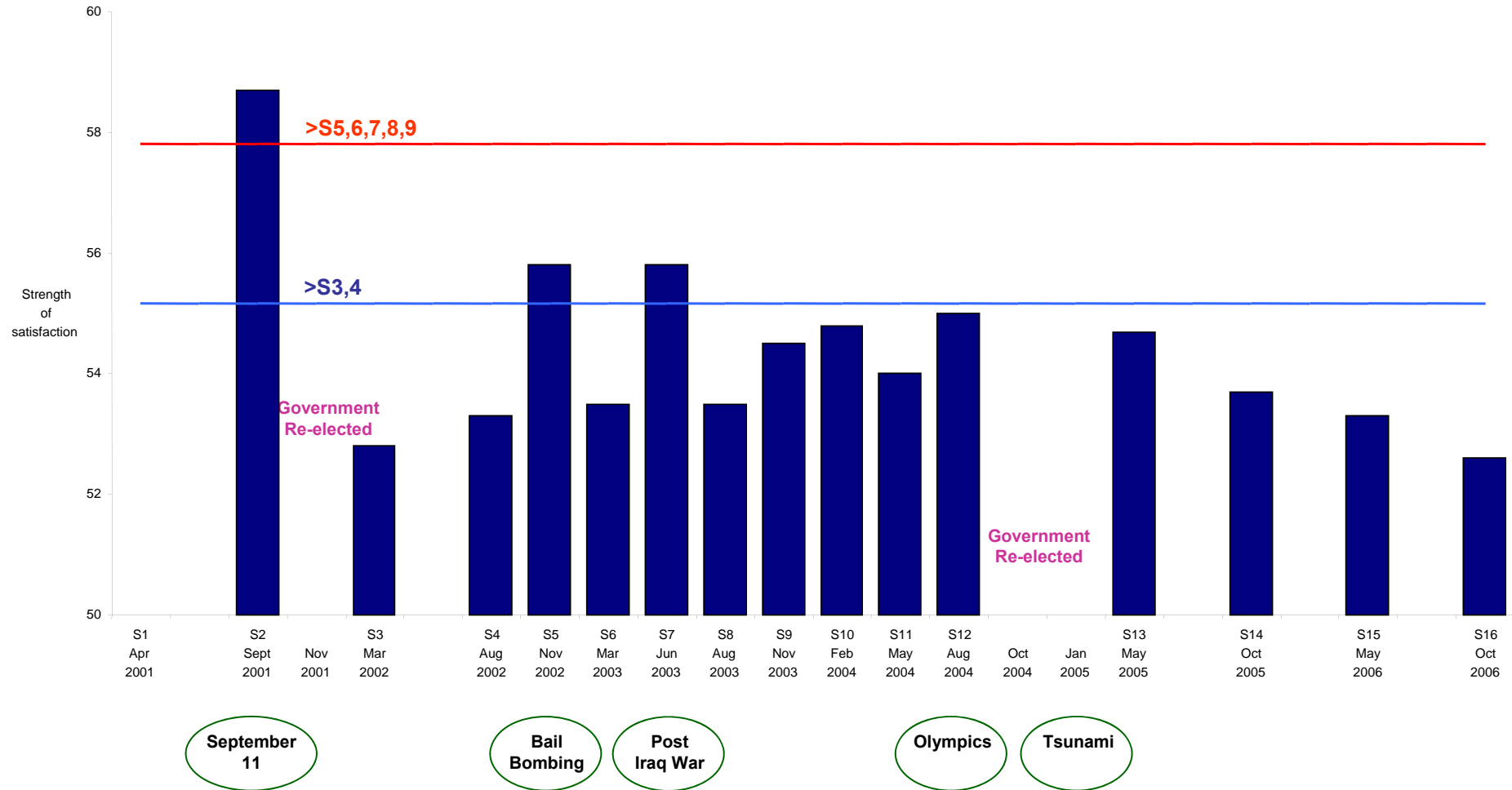


Intense media coverage of 'global warming'

# Satisfaction with the Social Conditions



# Satisfaction with Government

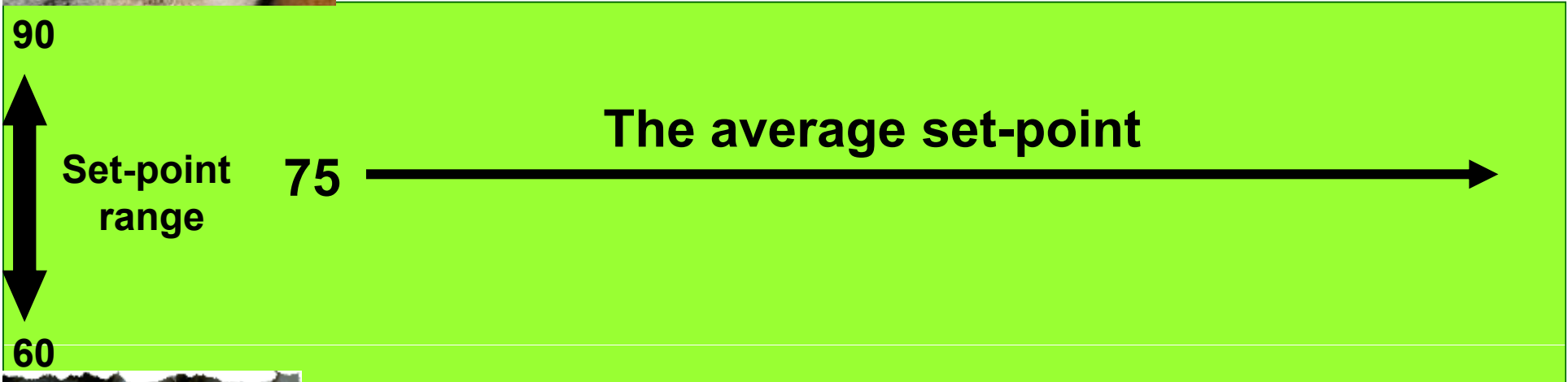


## **Subjective wellbeing homeostasis**

In a manner analogous to the homeostatic maintenance of body temperature, we propose a psychological/neurological homeostatic system that functions to hold subjective wellbeing steady.

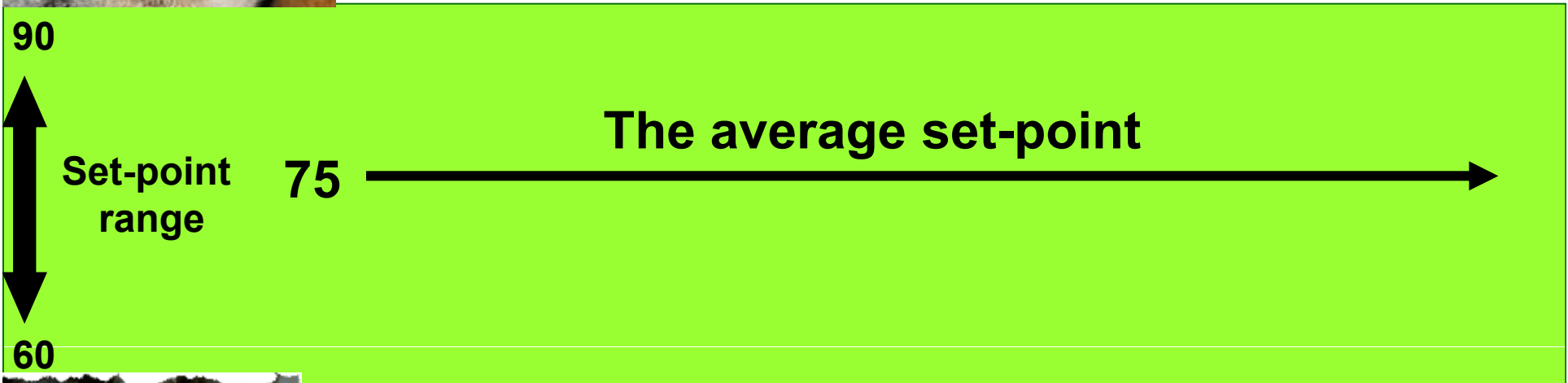


**Each person (cat) has a set-point for their subjective wellbeing.**





**Each person (cat) has a set-point for their subjective wellbeing.**

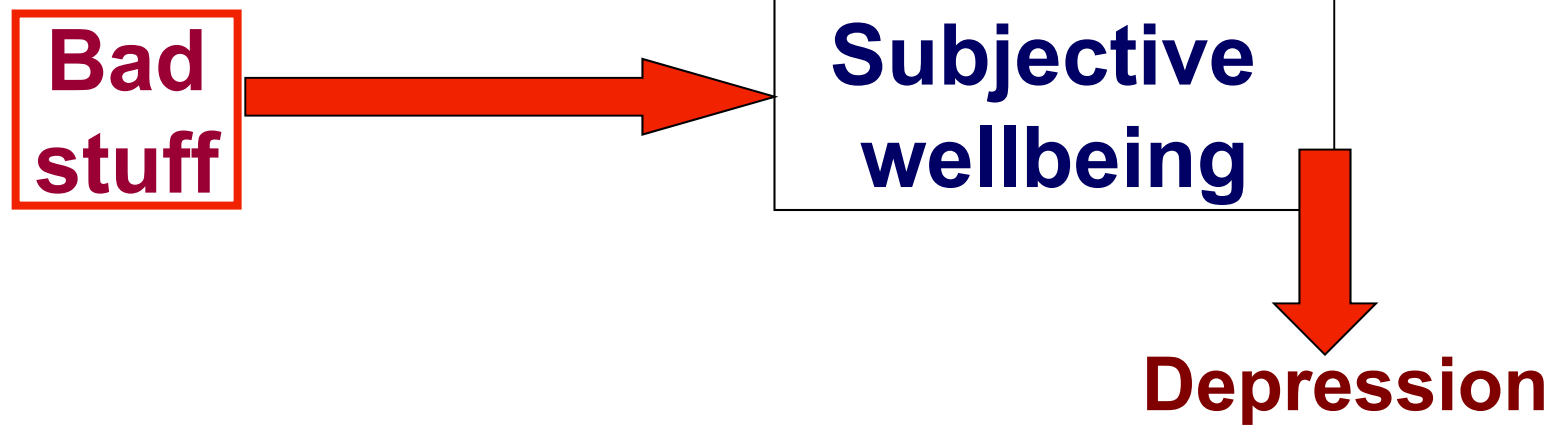


**When nothing much is happening to them, People (and cats?) rate how they feel about their life in terms of their set-point for SWB**

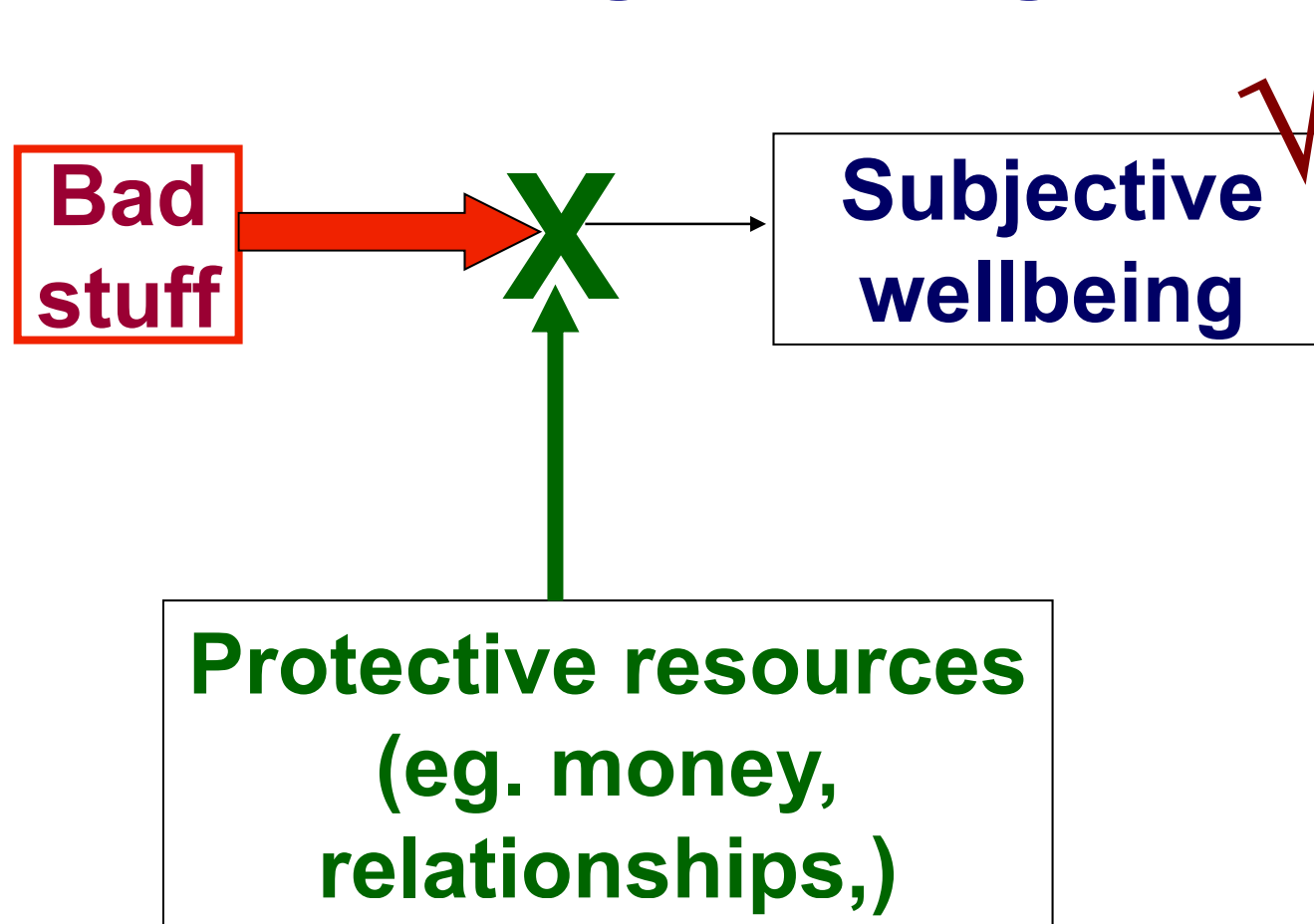


**Time**

# Challenging wellbeing



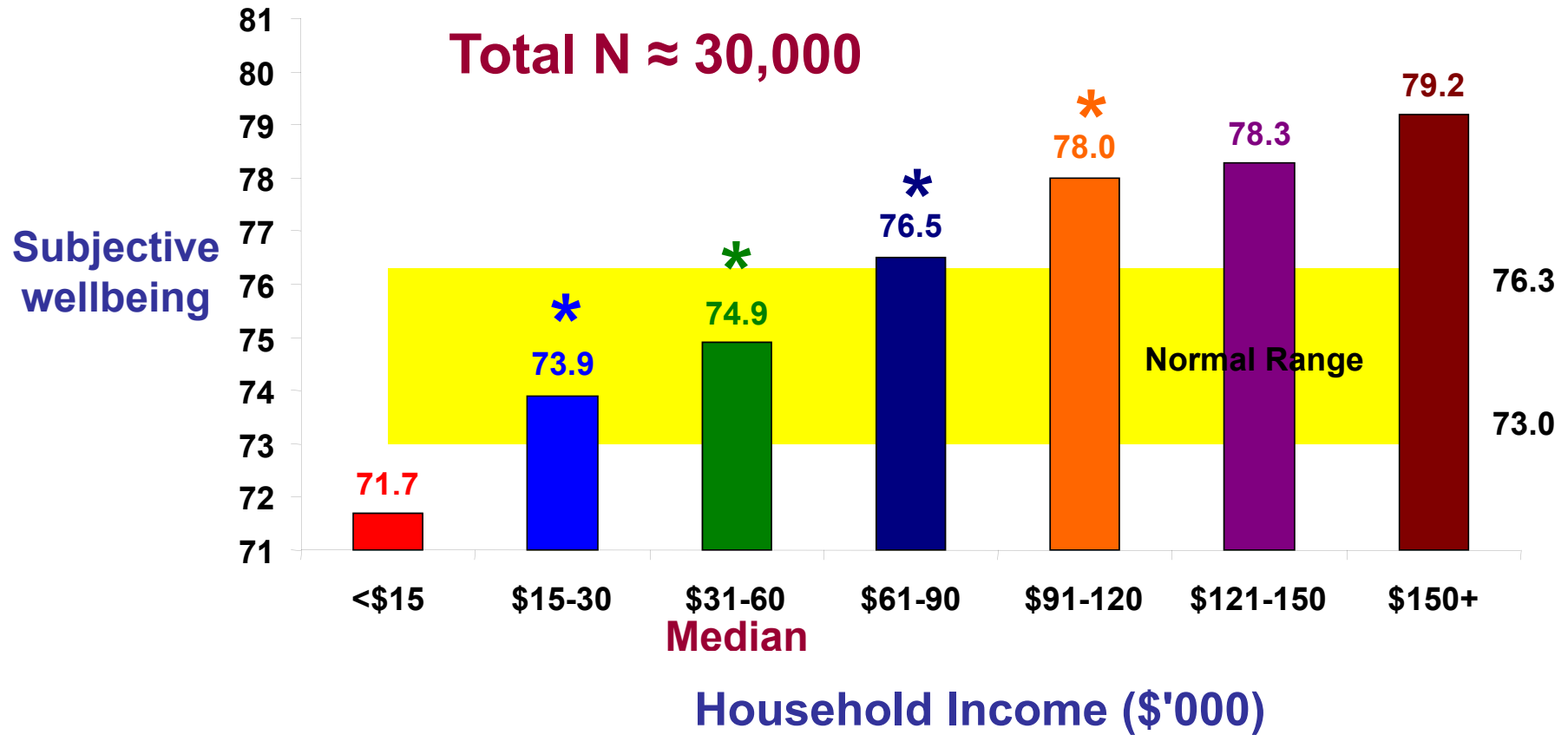
# Protecting wellbeing



**External resources help to protect wellbeing against negative challenges**

**Can money buy happiness?**

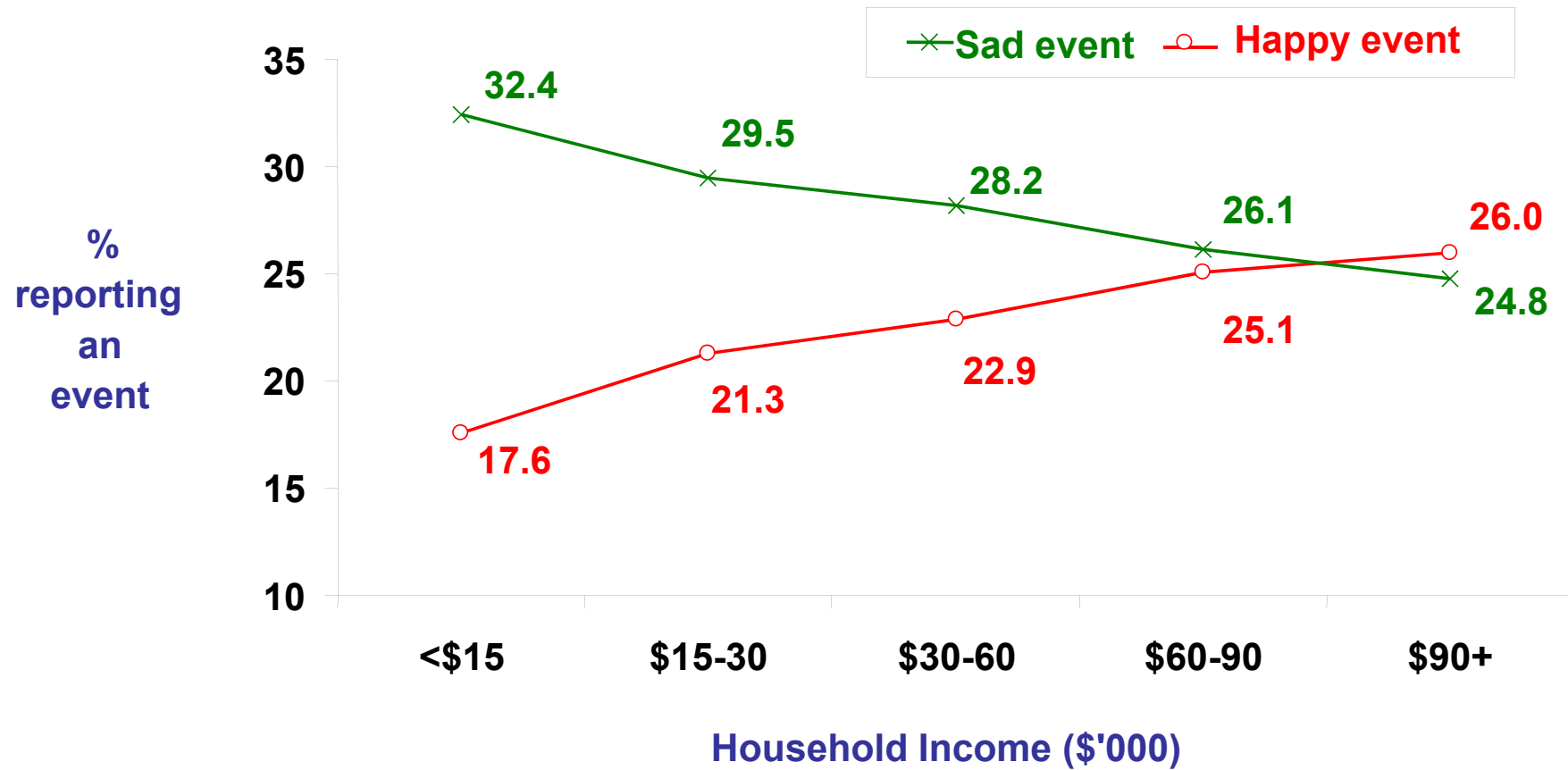
# Income and subjective wellbeing



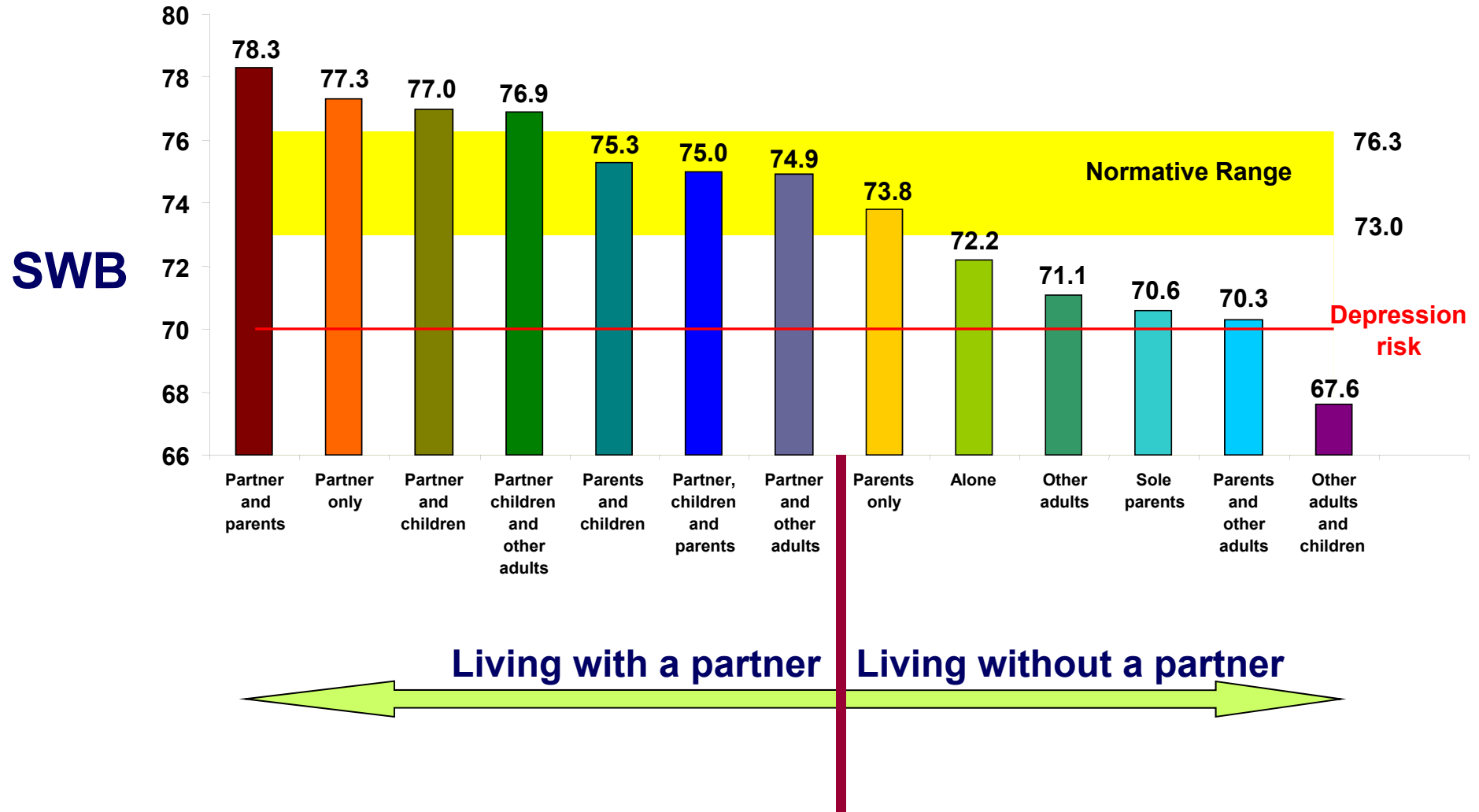
**Does money buy a better life?**

**“Has something happened to you recently causing you to feel happier or sadder than normal?”**

# Does money buy a better life?

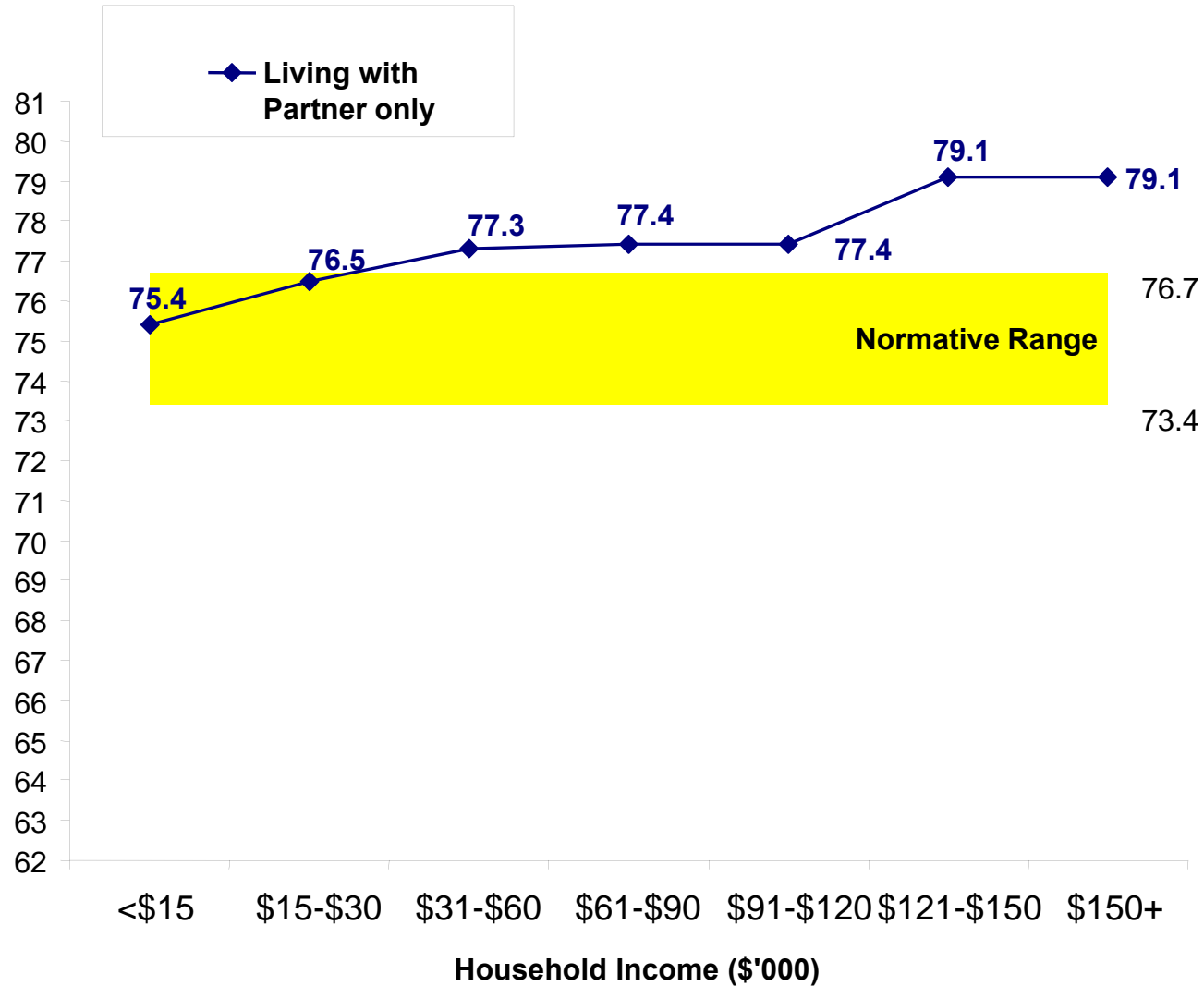


# Household Structure and SWB

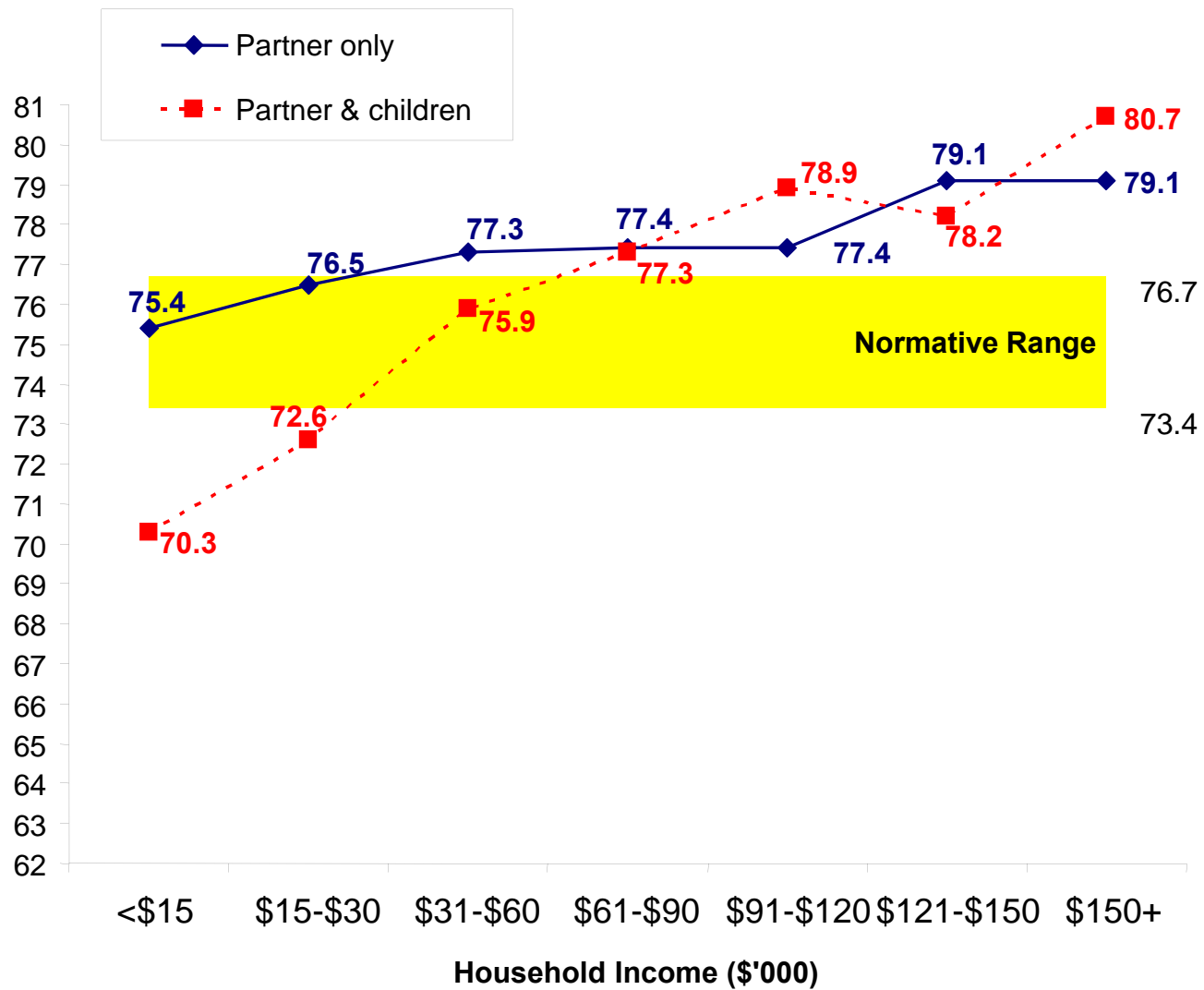


# Money and Relationships are additive external resources

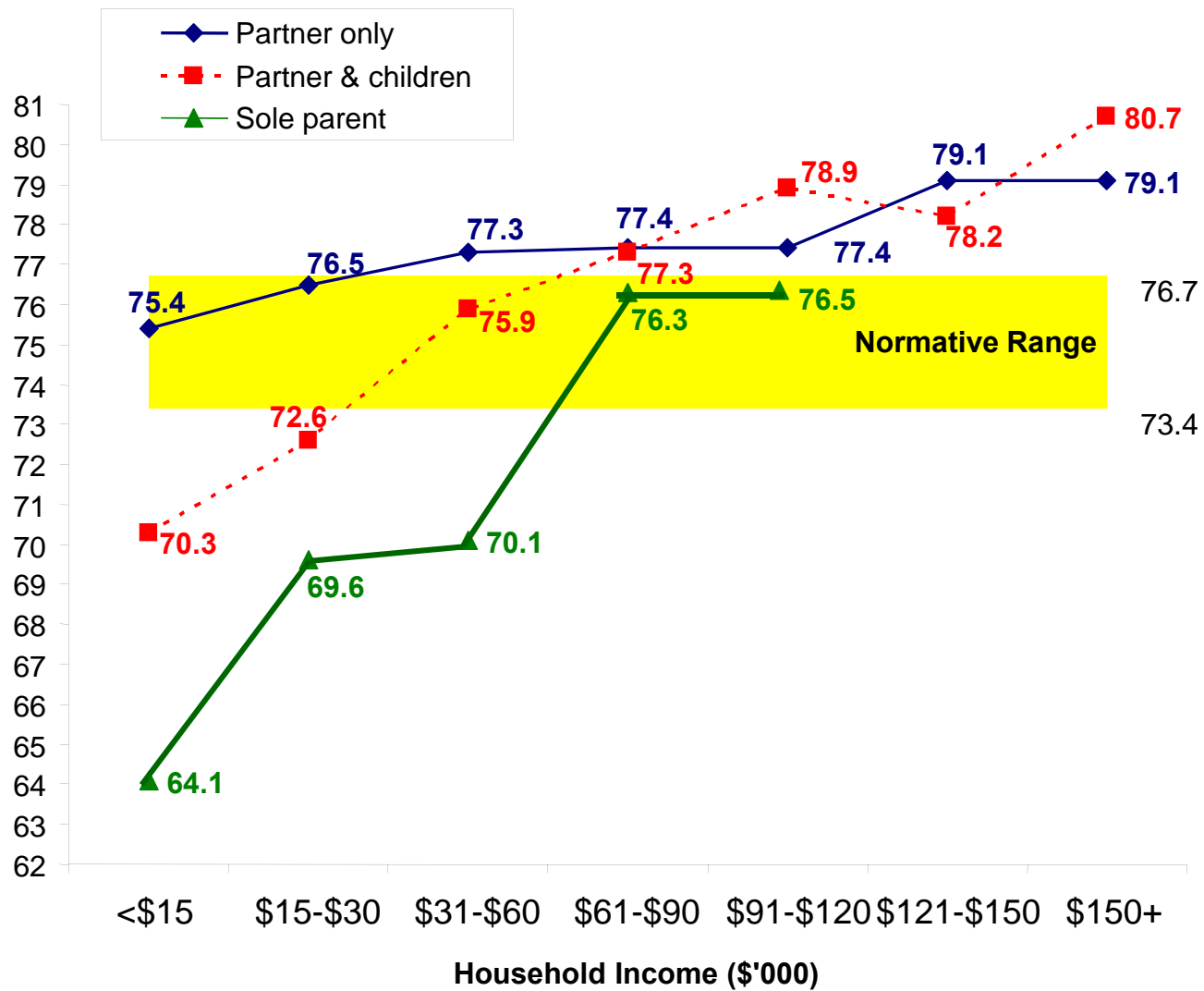
Subjective Wellbeing



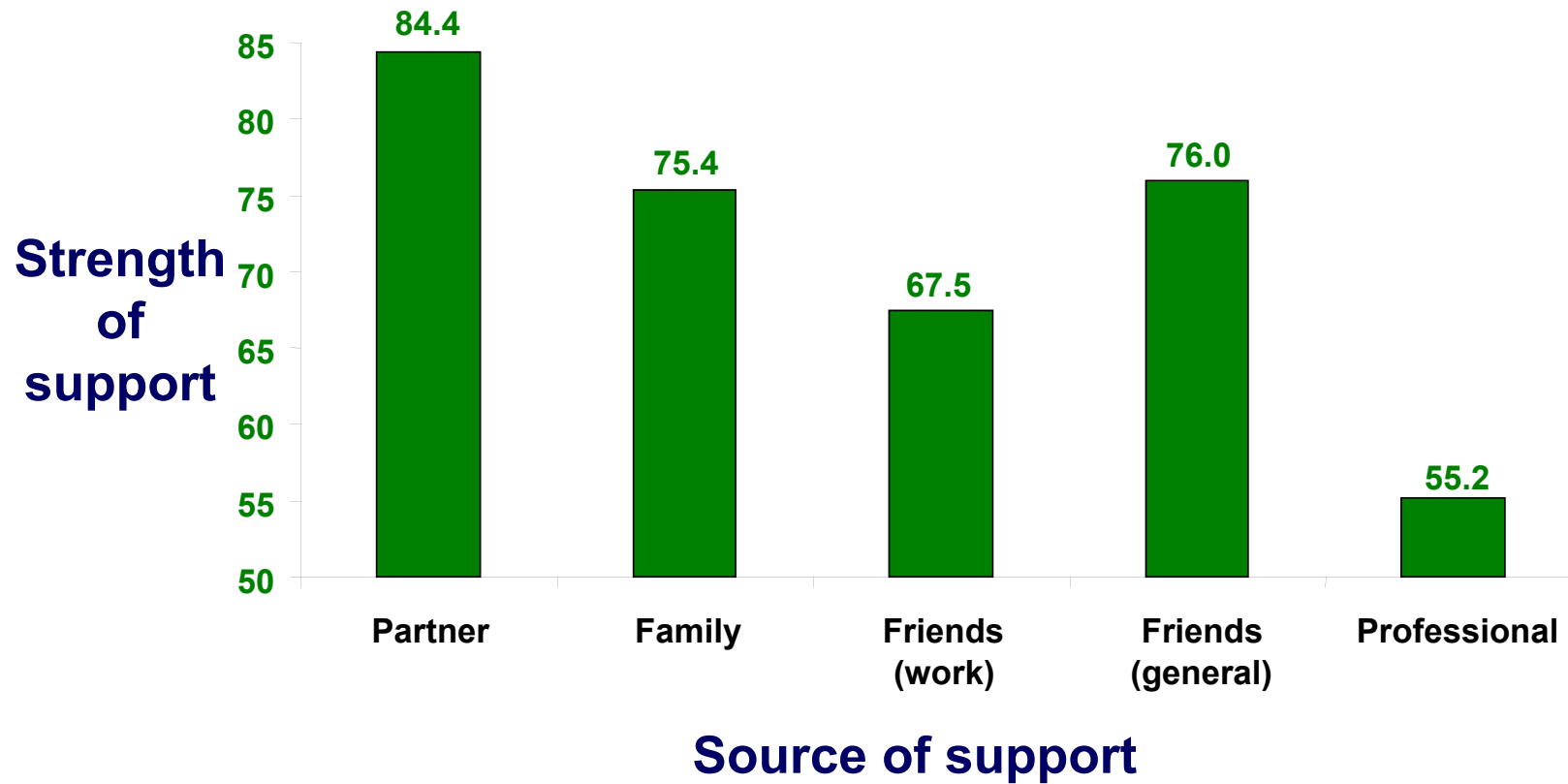
# Subjective Wellbeing



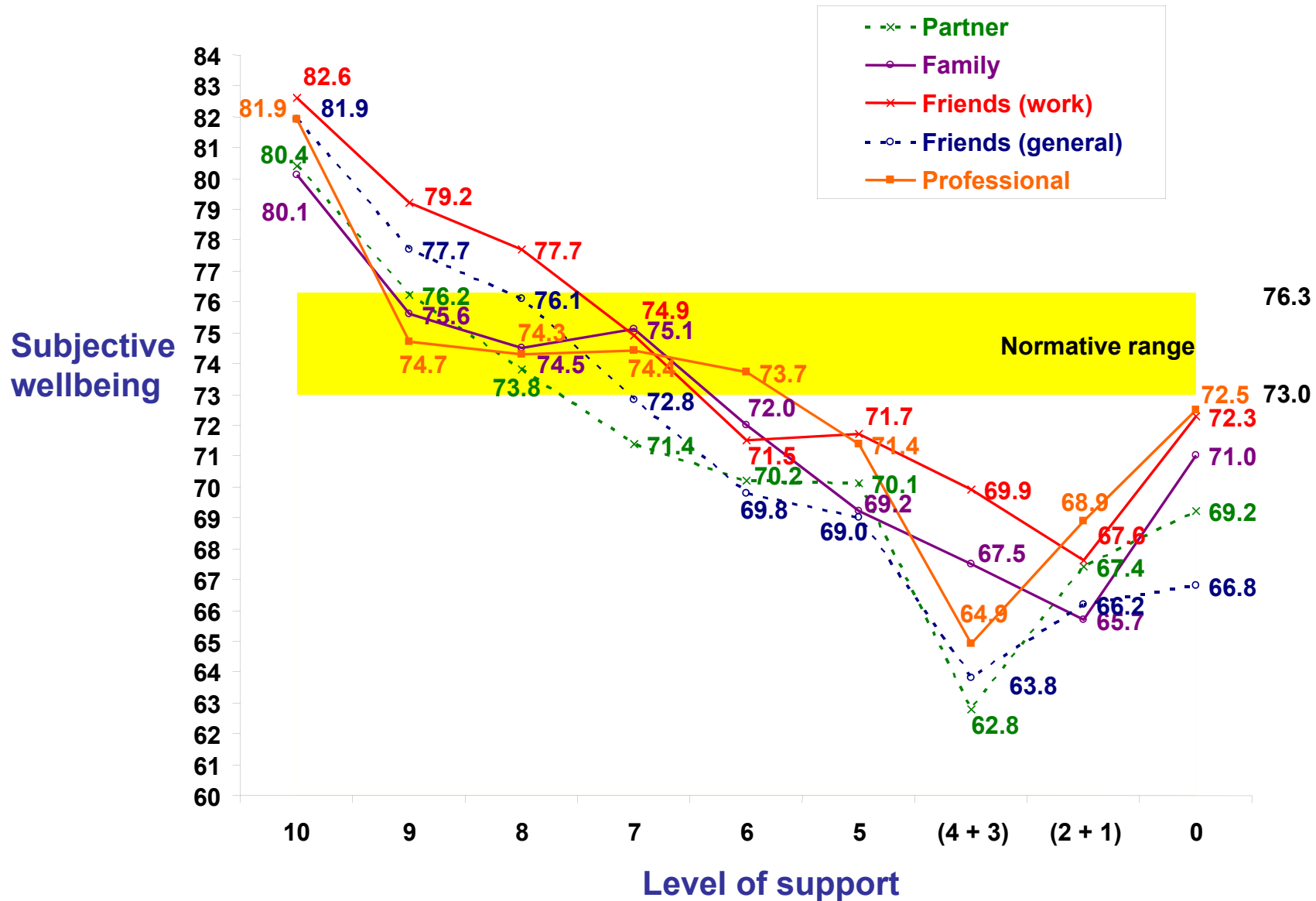
**Subjective Wellbeing**



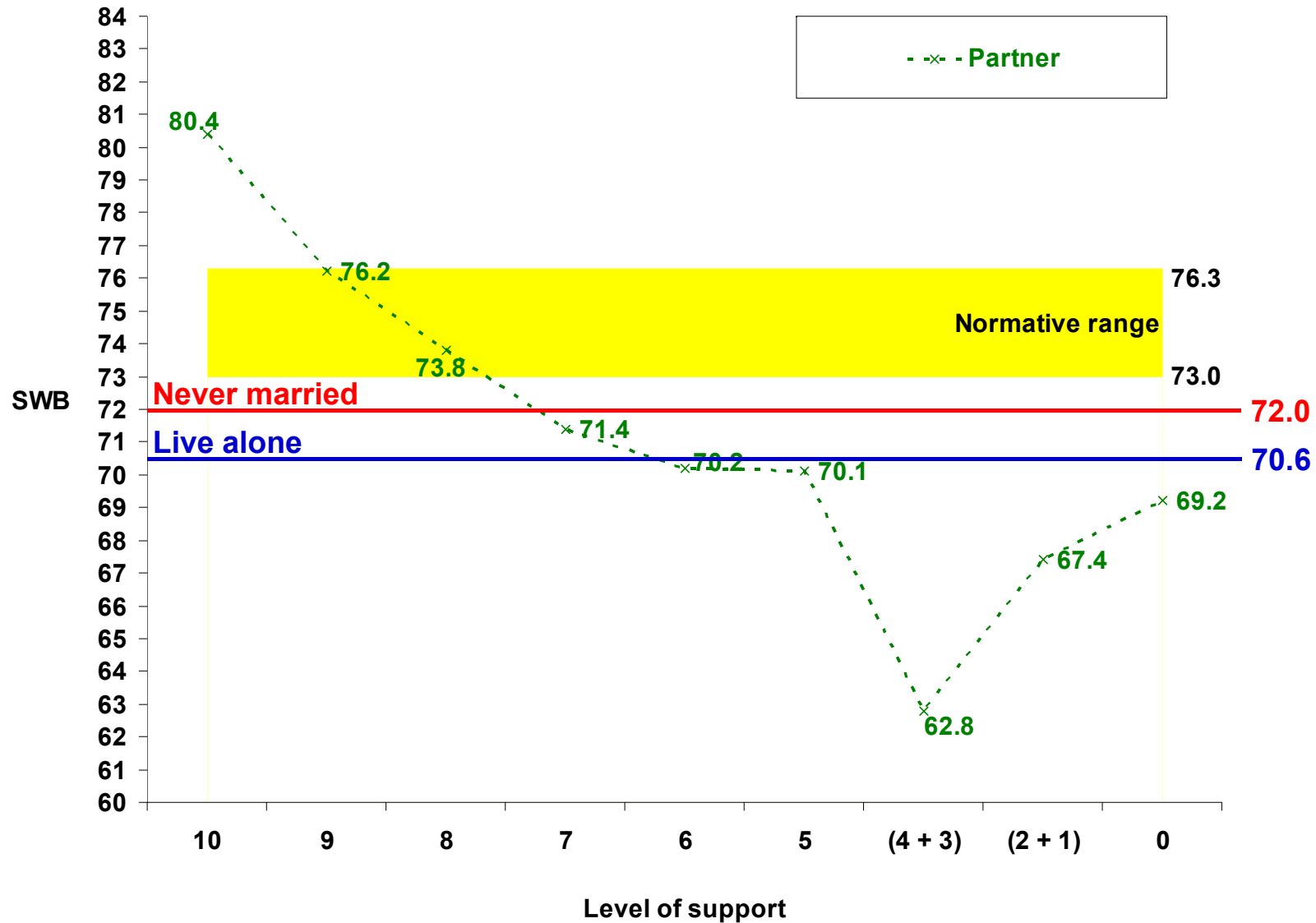
# How much support do you receive from----?



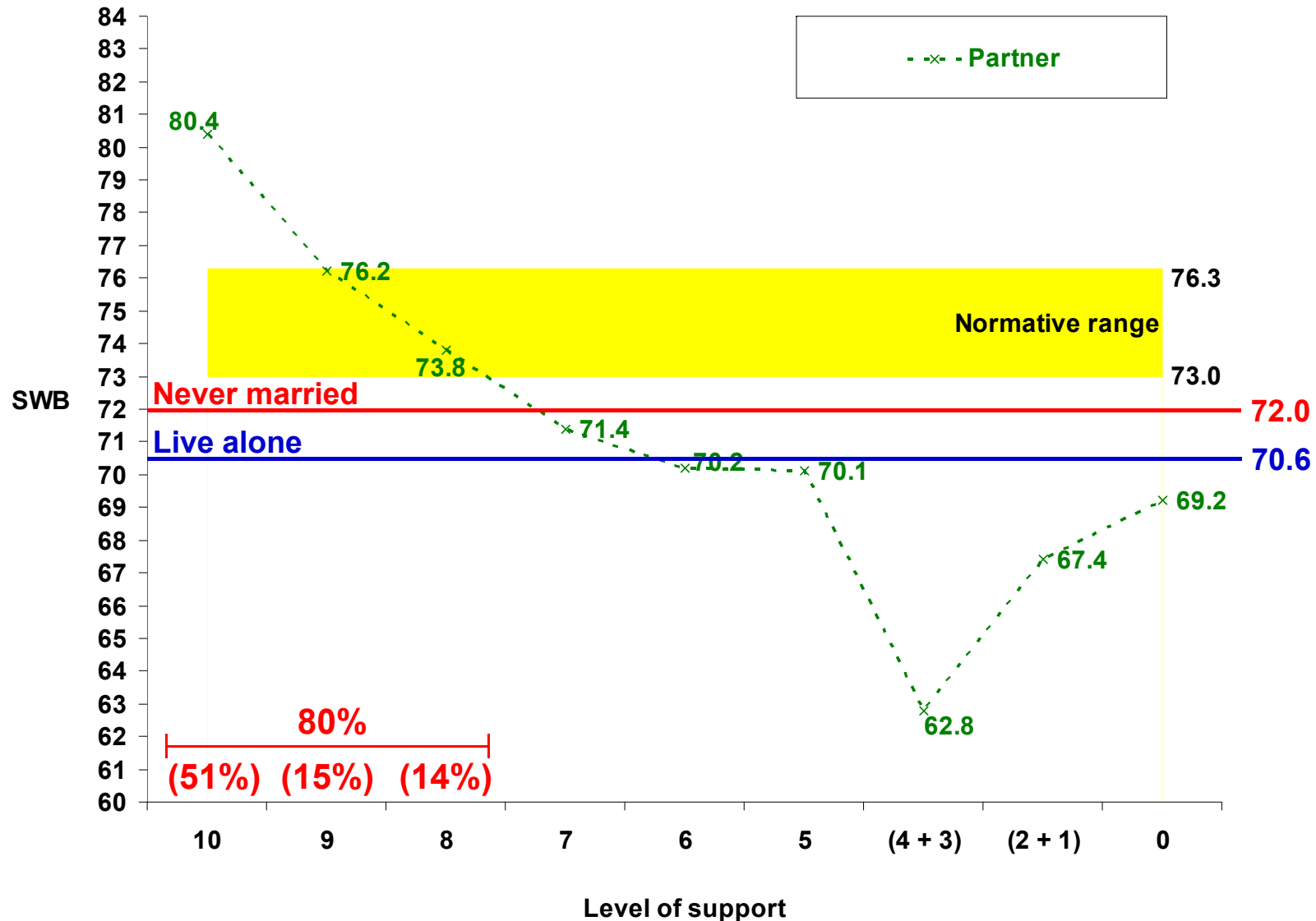
# Is receiving support always good for wellbeing?



# Level of Support from partner



# Level of support from partner



# Where is wellbeing higher?

In the city?



<http://www.topics-mag.com/edition21/images-life/city.jpg>

or in the country?



<http://www.gov.sk.ca/images/sask-photos/album/1121622170.19374.196546232.jpg>

# Australia

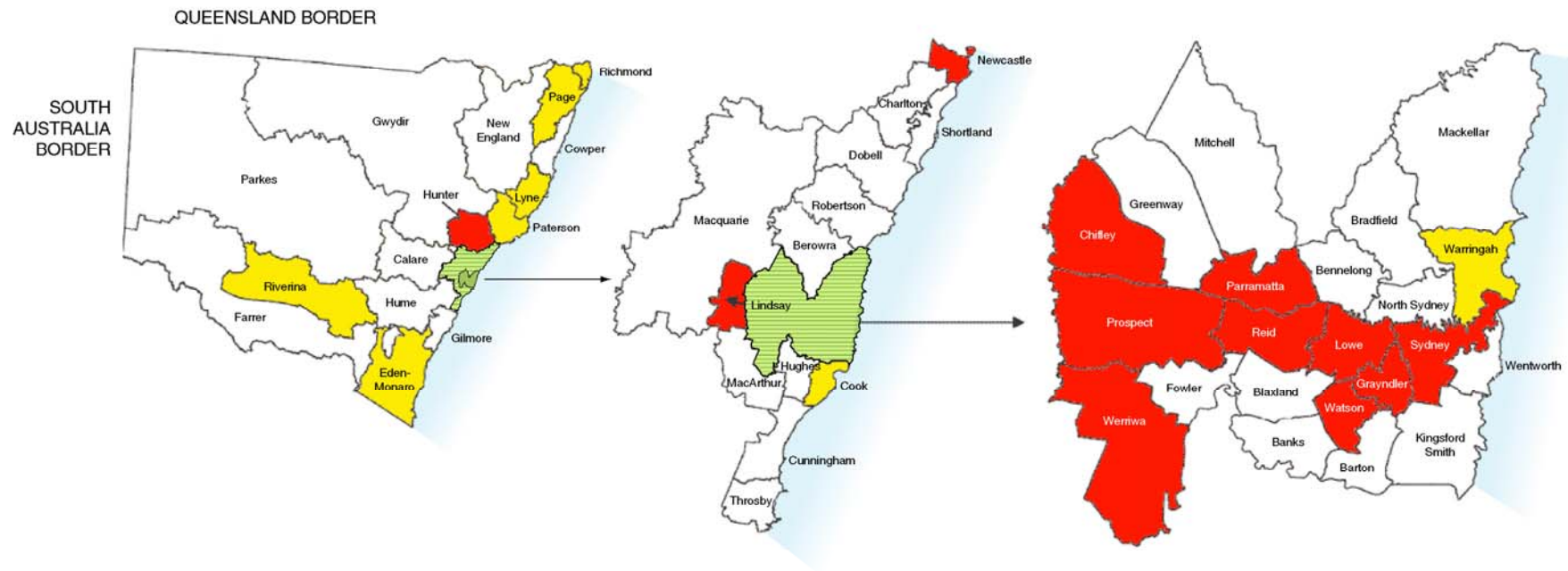


# New South Wales

Regional

Sydney Surrounds

Sydney Urban



**Above average**

**Average**

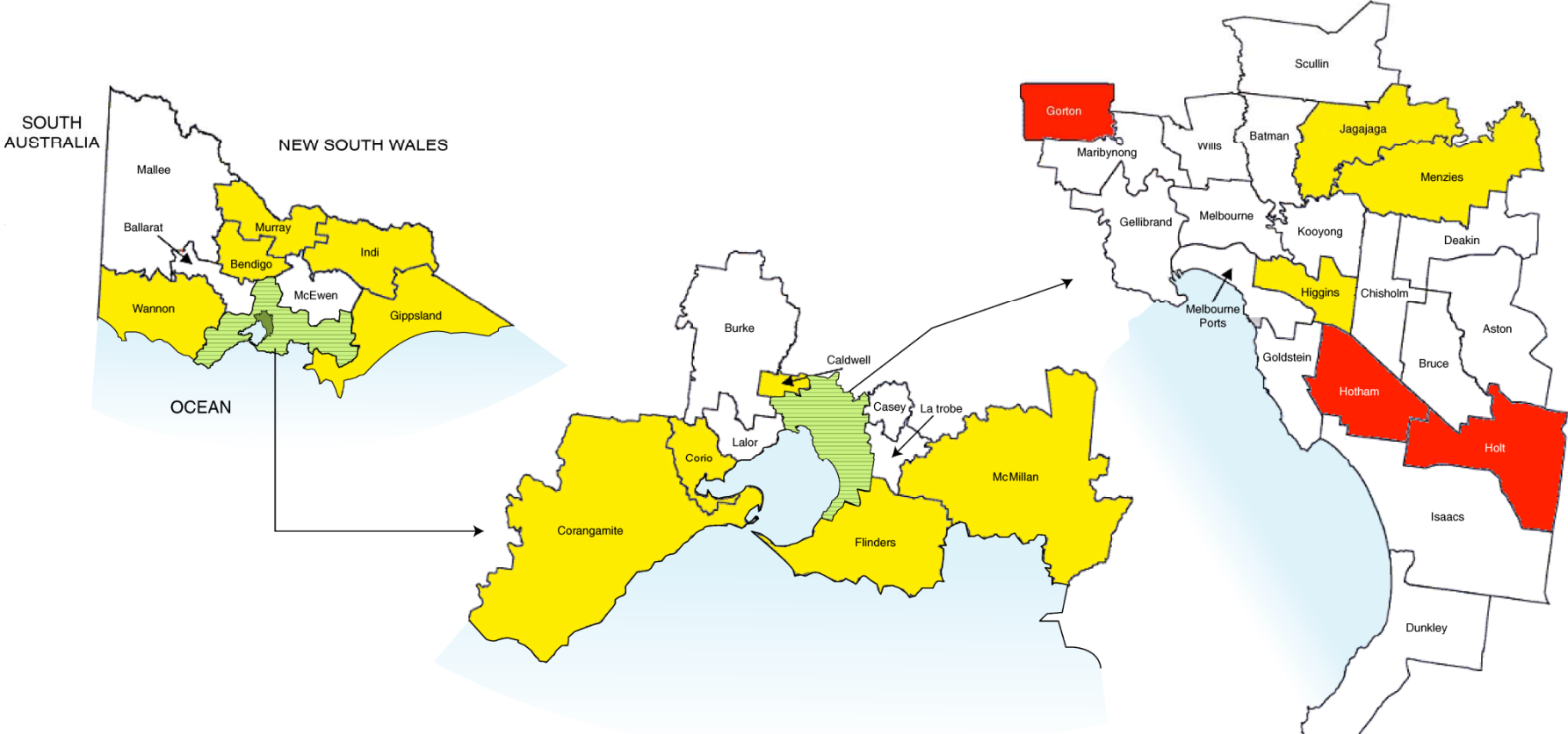
**Below average**

# Victoria

**Regional**

**Melbourne Surrounds**

**Melbourne Urban**



**Above average**

**Average**

**Below average**

# Conclusions

- The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index provides a unique view of the Australian population. It remains the only index in the world monitoring the subjective wellbeing of a population using a standardized instrument.
- The differences in subjective wellbeing can be interpreted in terms of Homeostatic Theory and point to the importance of wealth and relationships as buffers against challenging living conditions
- There are significant geographical difference in subjective wellbeing across Australia
- The results from the Index can be used to inform policy in relation to issues of national importance
- We anticipate that the Index will continue to develop and advance our understanding of how we might increase the life quality of all Australians

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