



my
RCSI Health

Mini Lecture Series presented by the
Centre for Positive Psychology and Health

The Science of Happiness

19 January 2021

For more information visit rcsi.com/MyHealth20

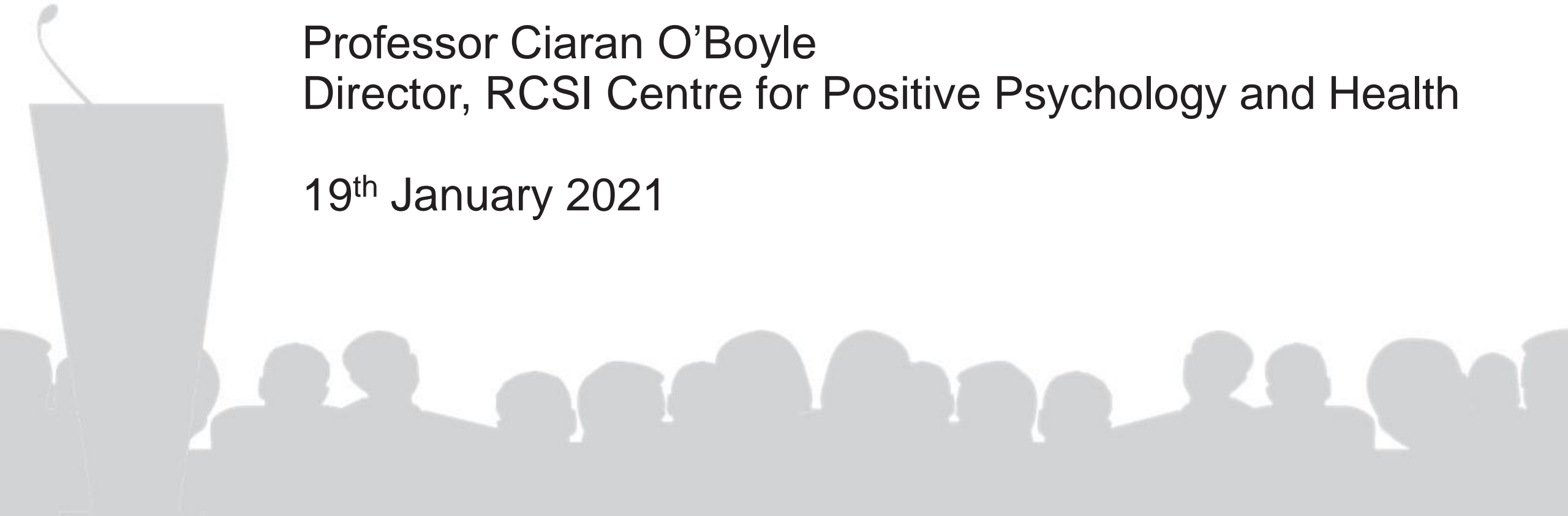
No. 1
for **GOOD**
HEALTH and
WELL-BEING

THE IMPACT
RANKINGS 2020

The Science of Happiness

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Director, RCSI Centre for Positive Psychology and Health

19th January 2021



The Science of Happiness

- What is happiness?
- Can we measure happiness?
- What influences our happiness?
- How does science say we can increase our happiness?



The Science of Happiness

- What is happiness?
- Can we measure happiness?
- What doesn't make us happy?
- What does make us happy?
- How does science say we can increase our happiness?



The PERMA Model of Happiness

Positive Emotion. How often do we experience positive emotions such as happiness, joy, excitement, contentment etc?

Engagement We need to feel fulfilment by engaging in activities (e.g. music, sport and hobbies) which are interesting and absorbing. Helps us to achieve a sense of 'flow' – a contented immersion in an activity where our sense of self and time is suspended.

Relationships: We thrive off of our relationships with other people; nurturing healthy and strong relationships is vital for happiness, providing us with experiences of attachment, support, being valued and being loved.

Meaning: Having meaning and purpose in our daily lives is crucial for happiness. This involves pursuing highly valued goals and often serving something bigger than ourselves

Accomplishment. Very important for our sense of happiness giving us feelings of mastery and achievement.

Seligman MEP (2011) Flourish. NY: Free Press



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What is Positive Psychology?

The science of happiness and well-being

Uses the **scientific method** to explore and enhance the positive aspects of life

Concerned not with getting people to transform from -8 to -2 but bringing them from +2 to +8

“The scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive”

Ince S. (2011). Positive Psychology: Harnessing the power of happiness, mindfulness, and personal growth. Harvard Medical School Special Health Report. Harvard, MA; Seligman MEP, Csikszentmihalyi M (2000). Positive Psychology: an introduction. American Psychologist, 55, 5-14.



How happy are you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree no disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal
2. The conditions of my life are excellent
3. I am satisfied with my life
4. So far I have got the important things I want in life
5. If I could have my life over, I would change almost nothing

Your total score should be between 5 and 35

5-14 Less than average

15-25 Average

26-35 Quite happy with your life

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Factors influencing happiness

Annual World Happiness Report provides detailed annual information on national and regional levels of happiness, the various trends in happiness and the factors that affect happiness

Large body of international surveys shows that most people have average happiness ratings of 6.75 on a 1 to 10 scale,

<https://worldhappiness.report>

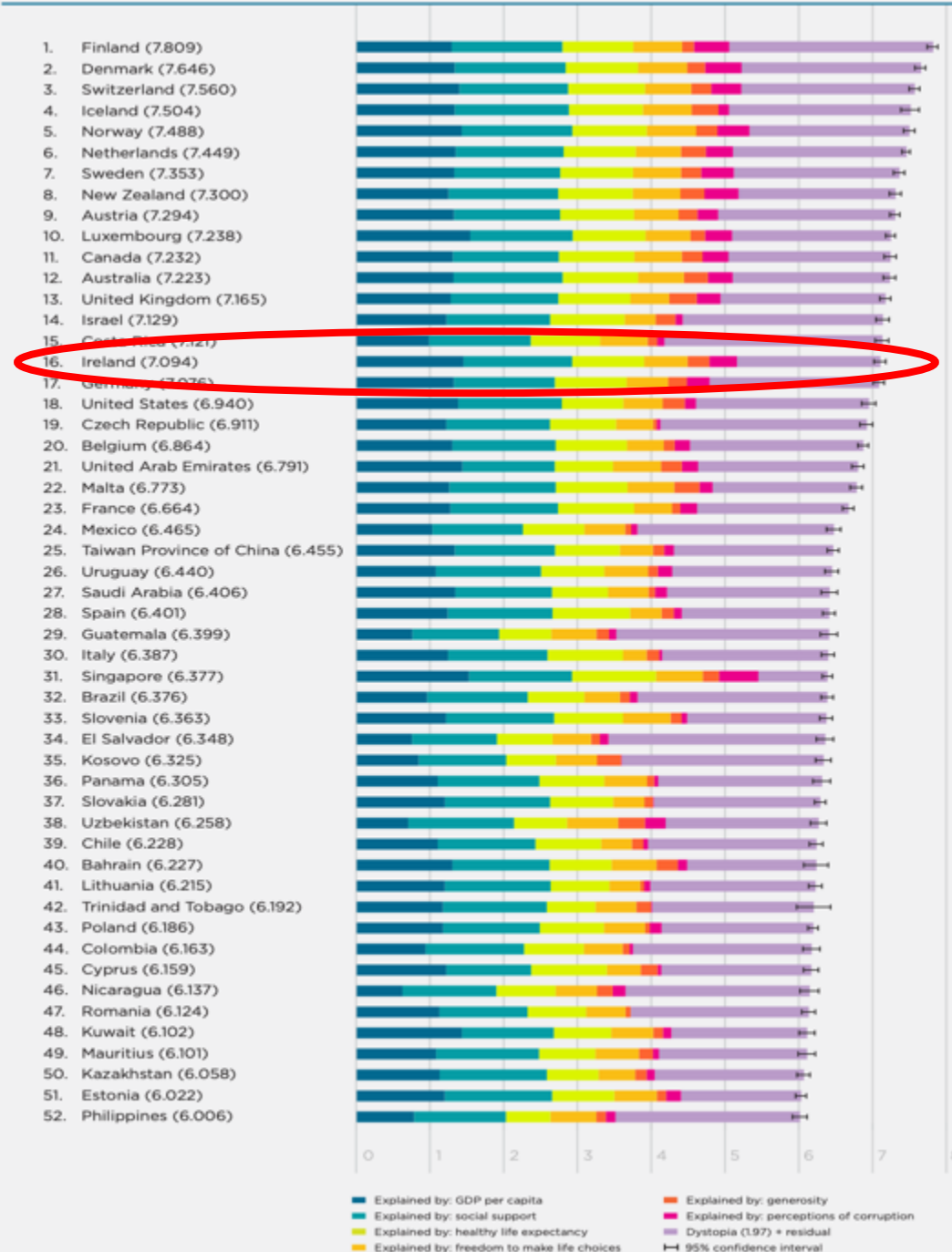
Where does Ireland rank?

16/153 countries

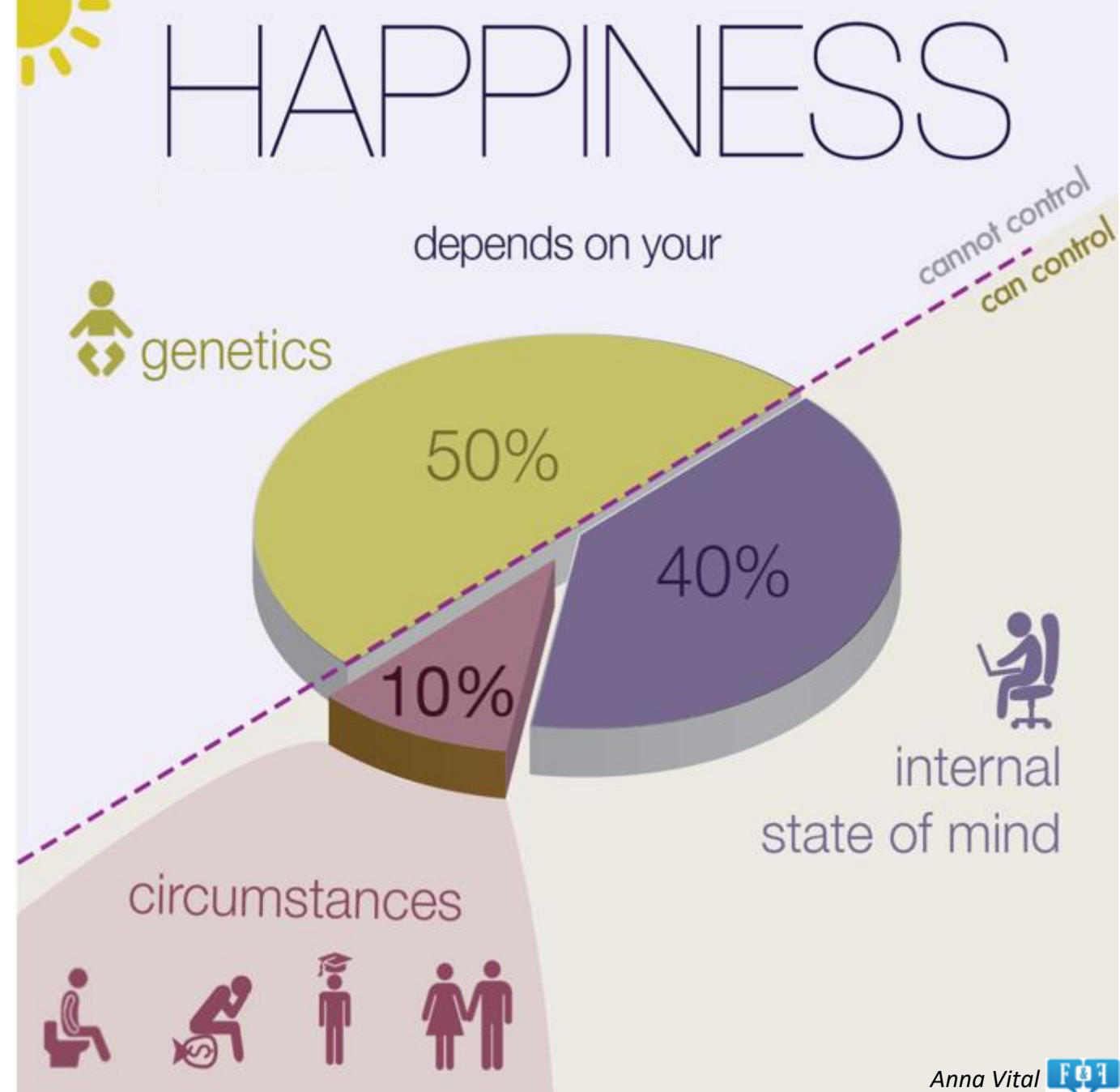
1. GDP
2. Healthy life expectancy
3. Social support
4. Freedom to make life choices
5. Generosity
6. Perceptions of corruption
7. Balance of positive feelings



Figure 2.1: Ranking of Happiness 2017–2019 (Part 1)



Factors influencing happiness in the population



- **Genetic set-point: personality traits**
- **Circumstances:**
 - Geographical location
 - Physical environment
 - Culture
 - Religion and spirituality
 - Wealth
 - Marriage
 - Social support, kinship, friendship
 - Education
 - Work
 - Recreation
 - Age and gender
 - Health



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Increasing Your Happiness I:

Scientifically proven strategies

1. Building relationships
2. Setting highly valued goals
3. Identifying and using personal strengths
4. Savouring pleasures
5. Finding flow
6. Being grateful
7. Developing an optimistic outlook
8. Strengthening couple relationships
9. Strengthening parent-child relationships
10. Practising forgiveness

Increasing Your Happiness II:

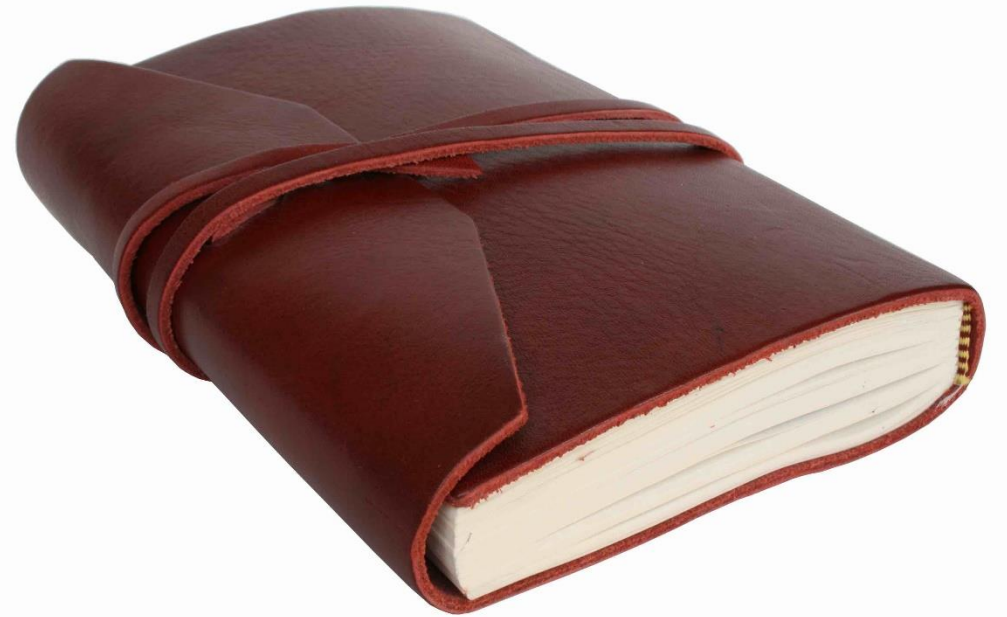
Scientifically proven strategies

1. Regular physical exercise
2. Mindfulness meditation
3. Progressive muscle relaxation
4. Problem solving and solution finding
5. Being courageous
6. Courageously managing anxiety
7. Assertively managing anger
8. Developing grit and resilience
9. Learning to live with trauma



Counting your blessings: 3 good things

Begin to keep a daily journal in which you write down, preferably before going to sleep, three things that went well today and reflect on why they went well. Do this for a week at least and best to continue the practice indefinitely.



New RCSI Public Course: February 2021

The Science of Health and Happiness

- Biology: mind-body connections in health and disease:
- Whole person health
- What are the routes to happiness I?
- What are the routes to happiness II?
- Meditation for health
- Your emotions and you
- Your Strongest Self
- Happiness through the life-cycle

<https://www.rcsi.com/positivepsychology>



**Happiness is not
something ready made;
it comes from your own
actions.**

- The 14th Dalai Lama

