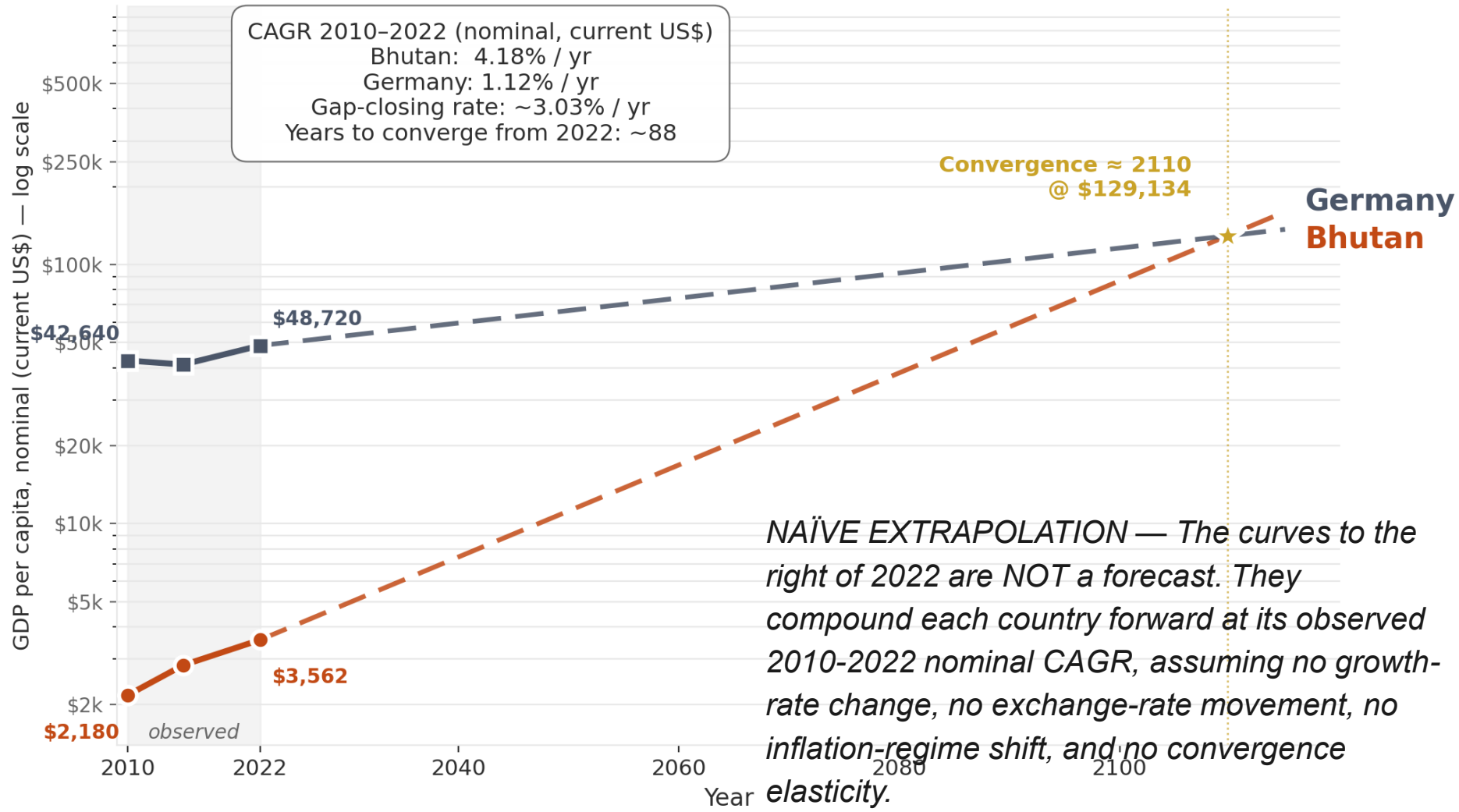


40TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF  
THE BHUTAN HIMALAYA SOCIETY

Saturday, 30 May 2026

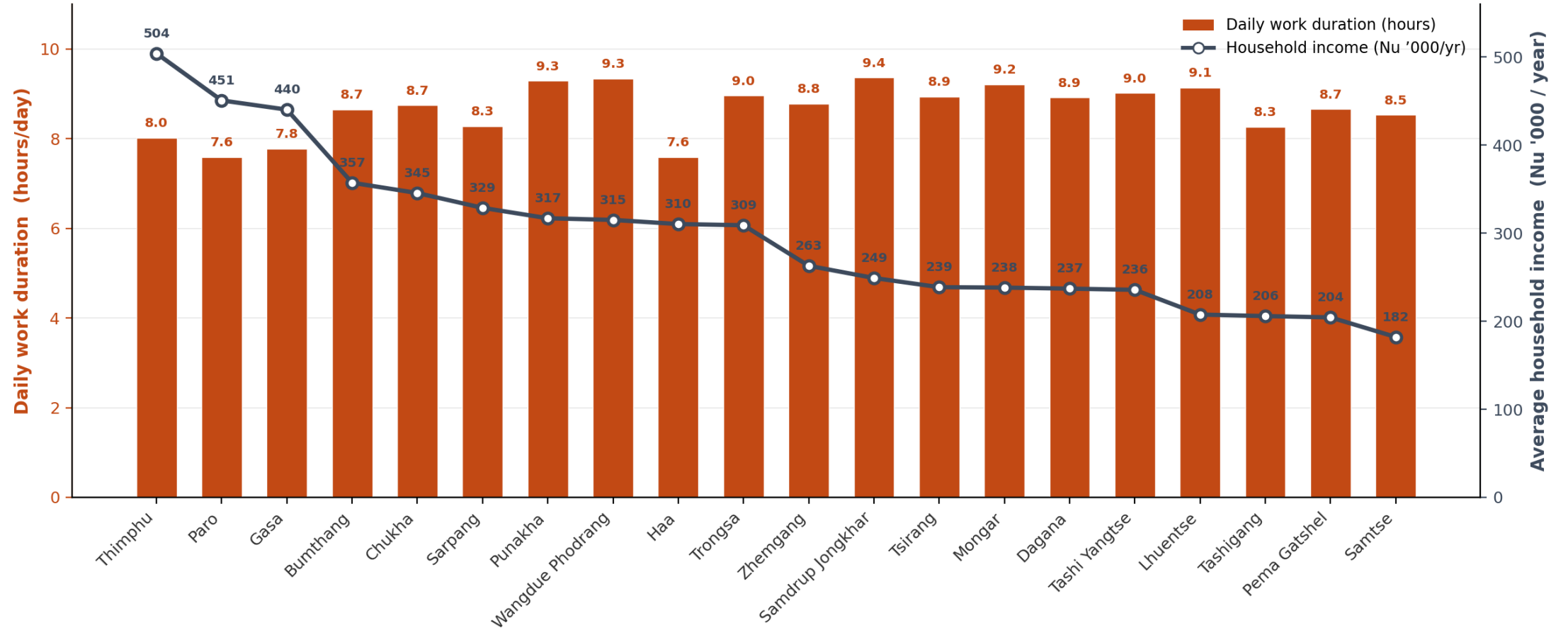
Gustav-Stresemann-Institut,  
Bonn

**SNAPSHOT OF BHUTAN  
FROM GNH DATA**, Karma  
Ura, Fellow,  
Wissenschaftskolleg zu  
Berlin



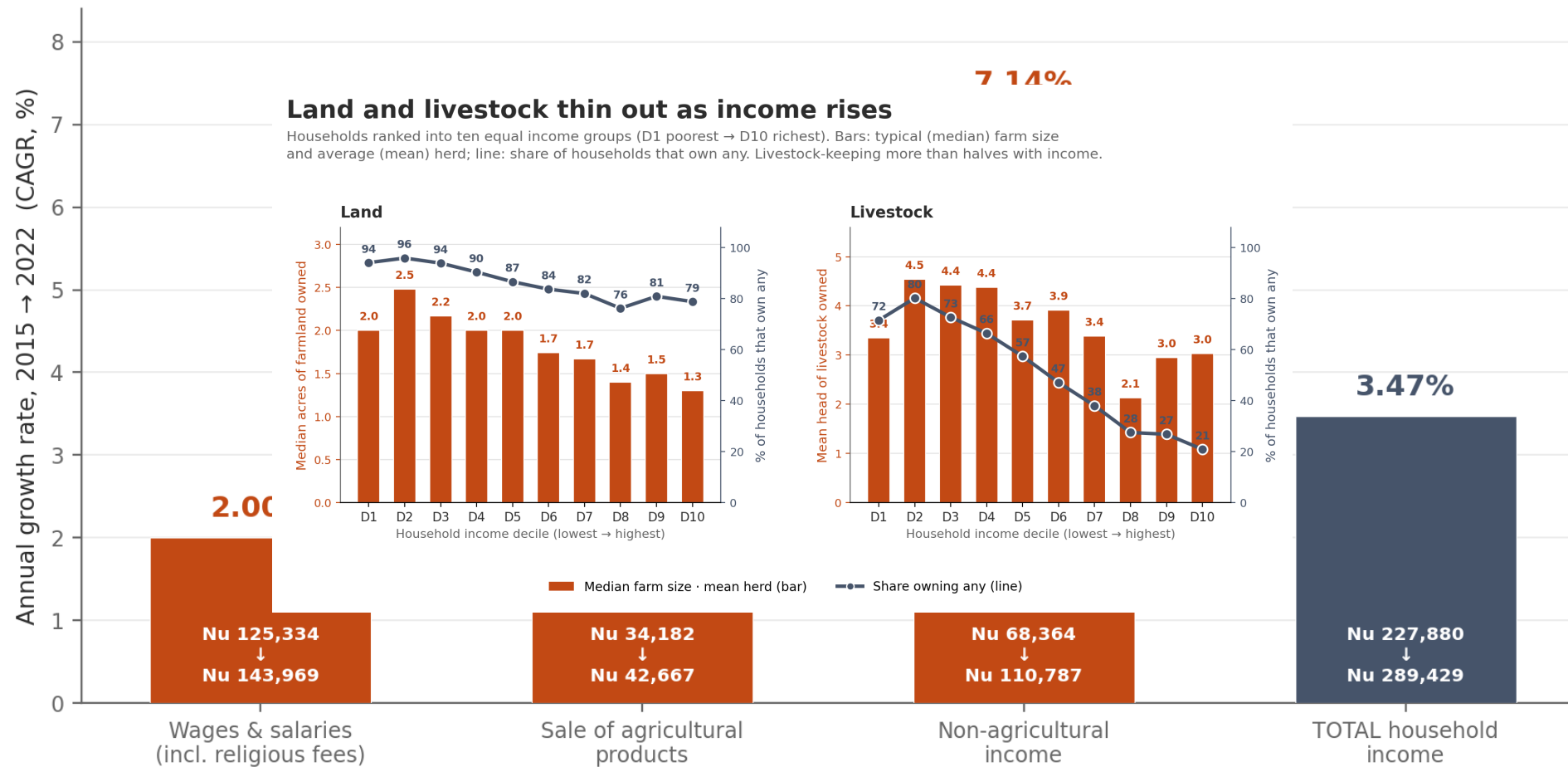
## Work duration vs household income by district — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Districts ordered by average household income (highest → lowest). Bars = daily work time; line = annual household income. Correlation  $r = -0.56$ .



# Growth rate of household income by source — Bhutan, 2015 → 2022

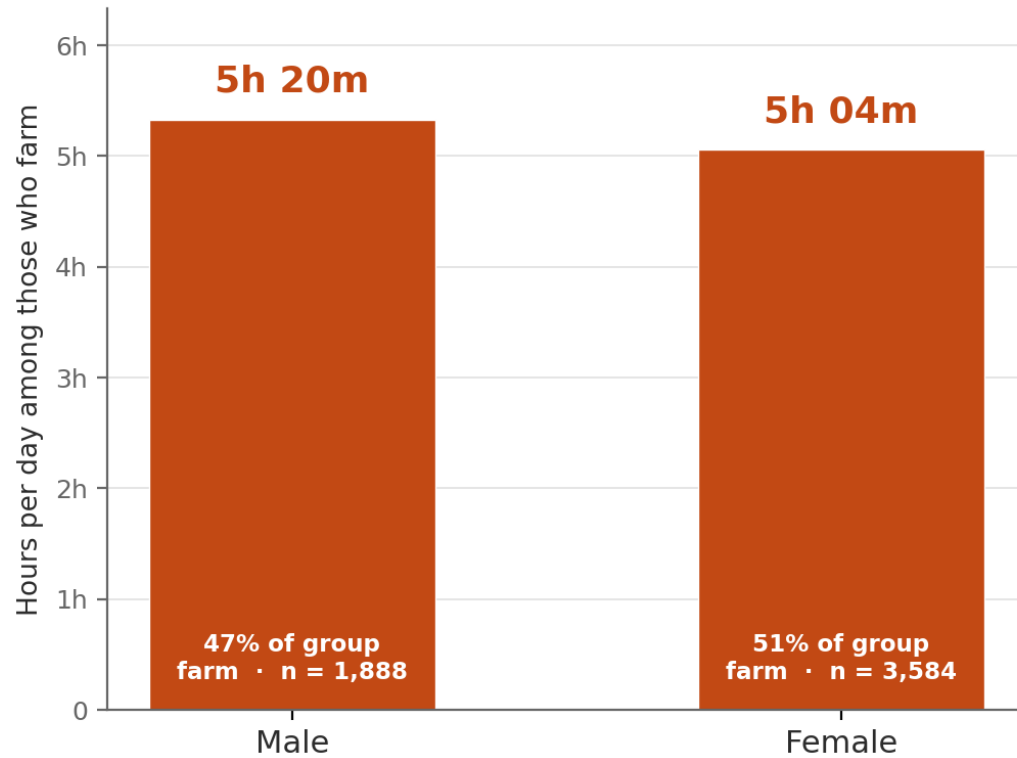
Compound annual growth rate of mean household income from each source over the seven years between the 2015 and 2022 GNH surveys.



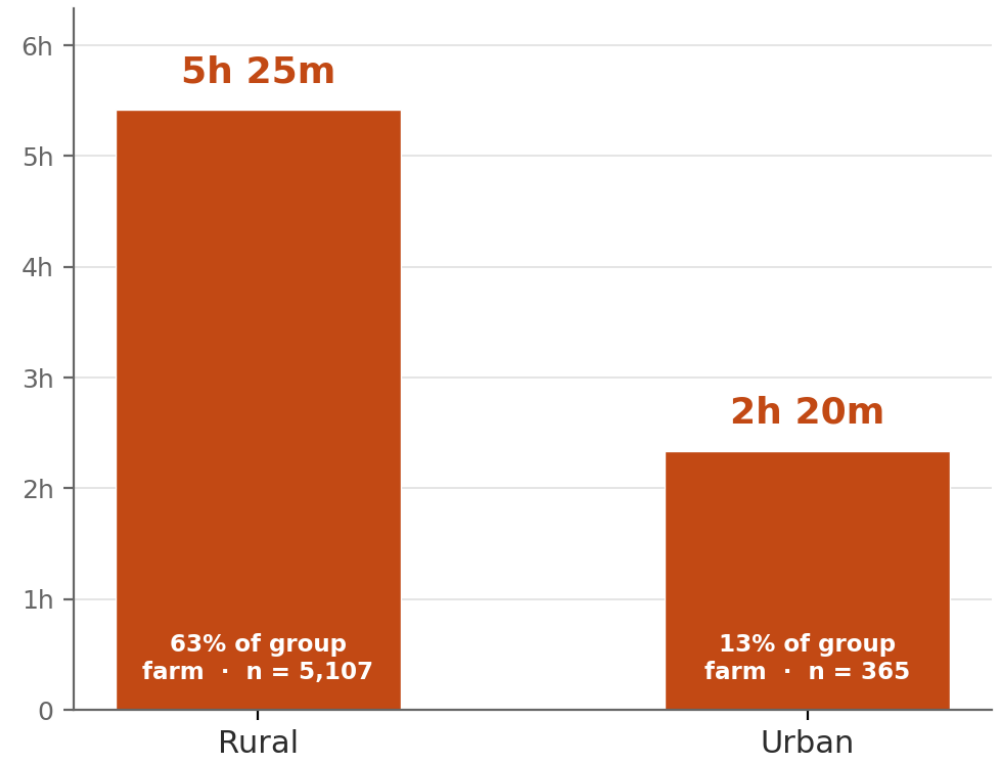
## Time spent on farming — participant mean (Bhutan, GNH 2022)

Participant mean = average among persons who did primary production activities (crop farming, livestock, forestry, fishing) on the diary day.

### By sex

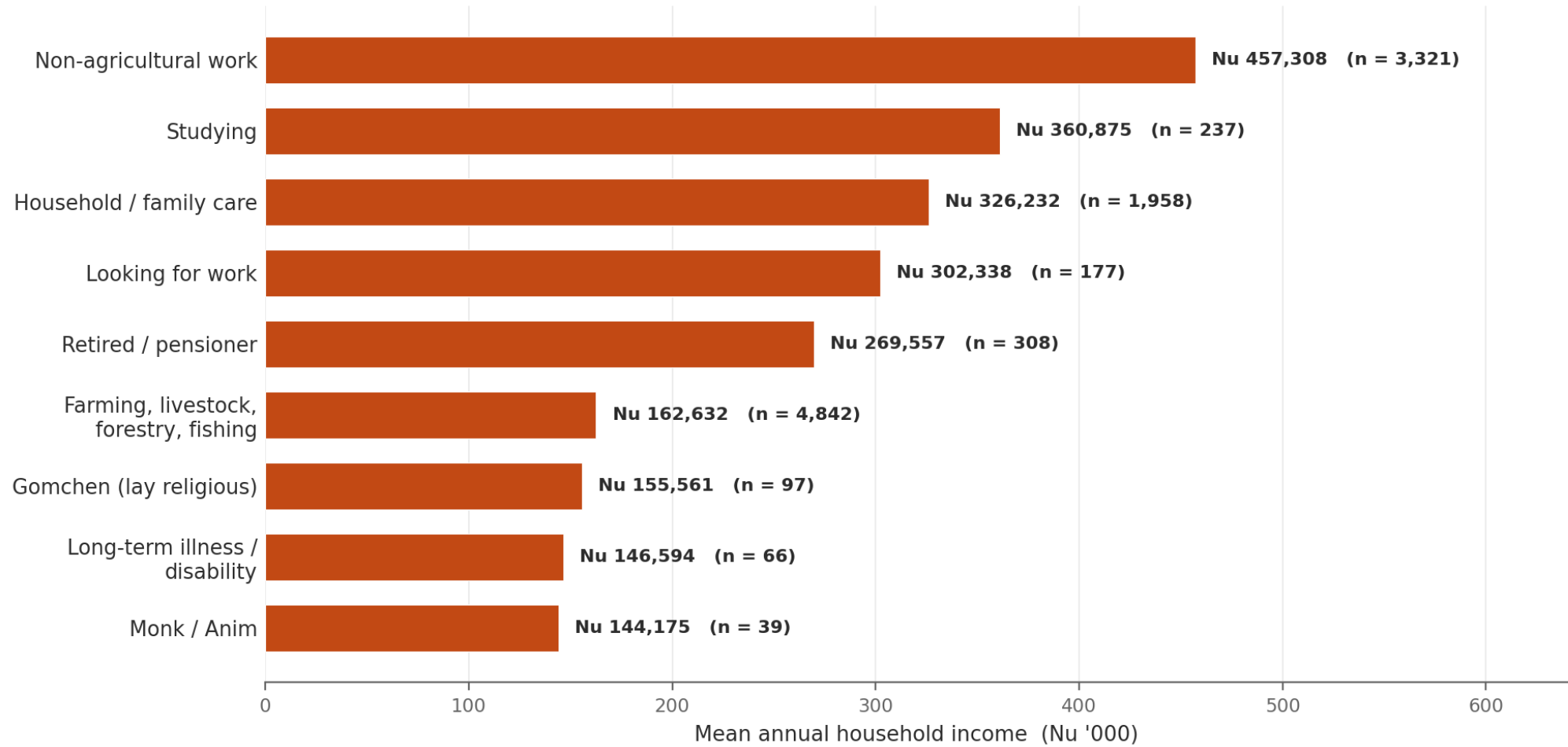


### By area of residence



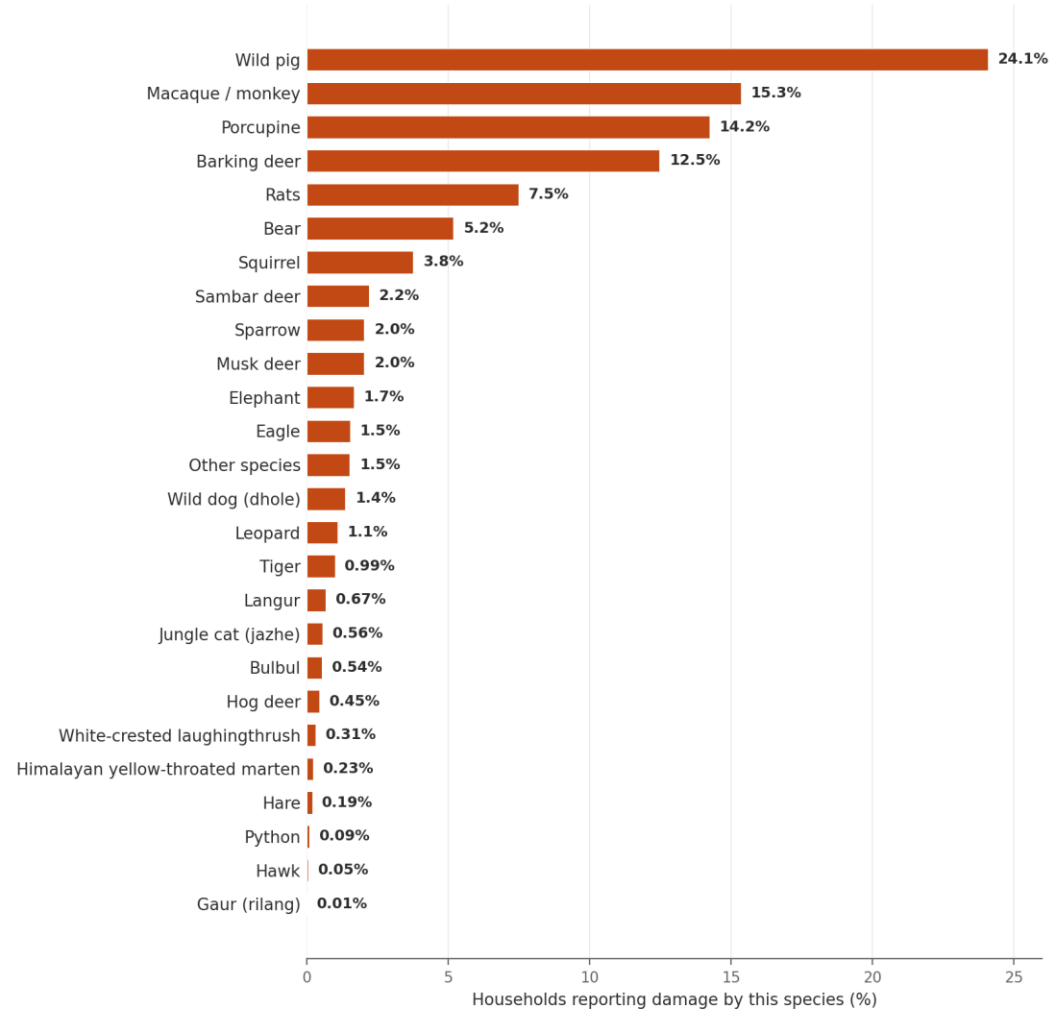
## Household income by occupation group — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Mean annual household income (total cash and in-kind), by the main activity of the surveyed household member.



## Which wild animals damage Bhutanese crops and livestock

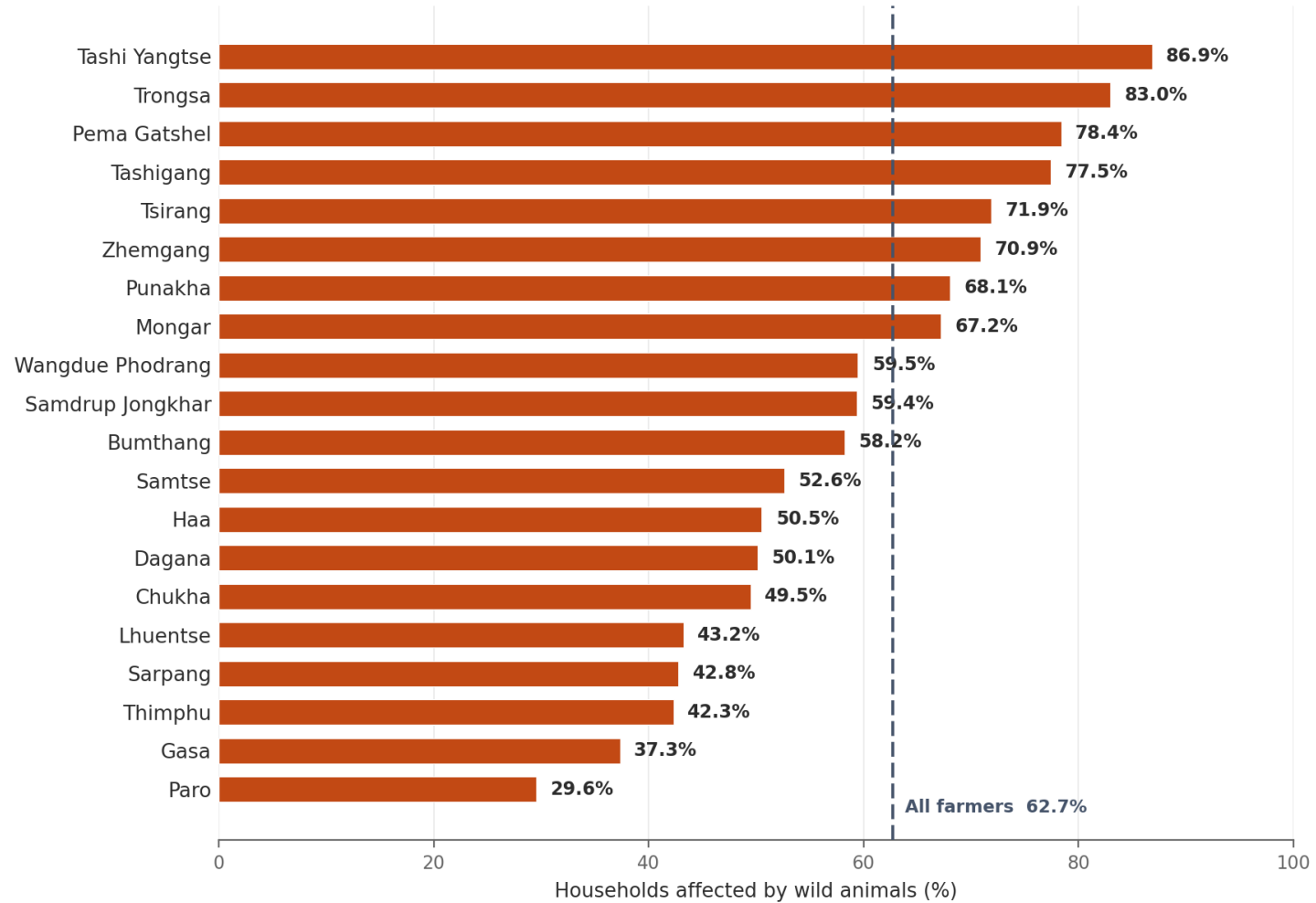
Share of households reporting that each wild species damaged their crops or livestock in the past 12 months, GNH 2022.



Households could report more than one species, so the shares do not sum to 100%.

## Farming households affected by wild animals, by district — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

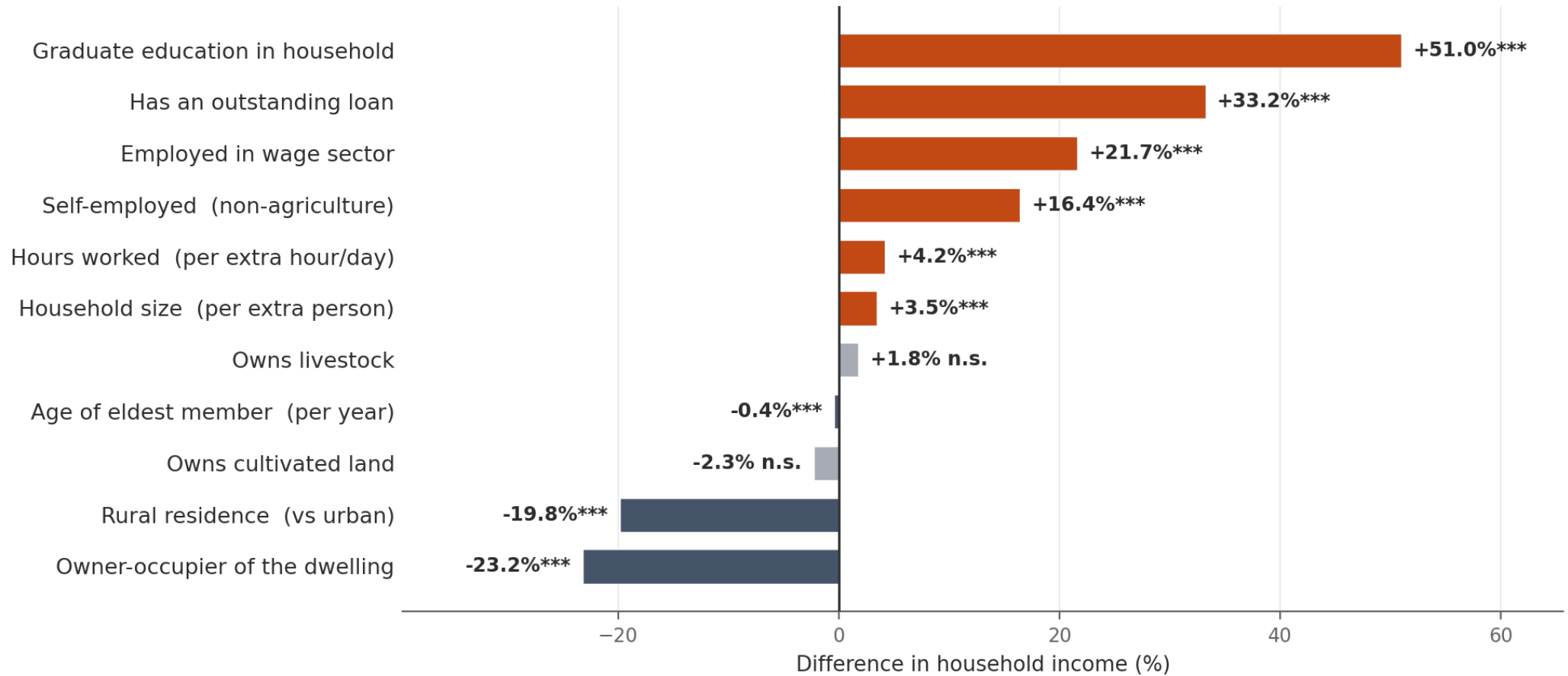
Share of farmers (respondent's main occupation is farming) reporting they were significantly affected by wild animals.



GNH 2022 Survey; 4,847 households whose respondent reports farming as main occupation. Thimphu (n = 26) and Paro (n = 115) have few farmers, so their rates are

## What predicts a Bhutanese household's income

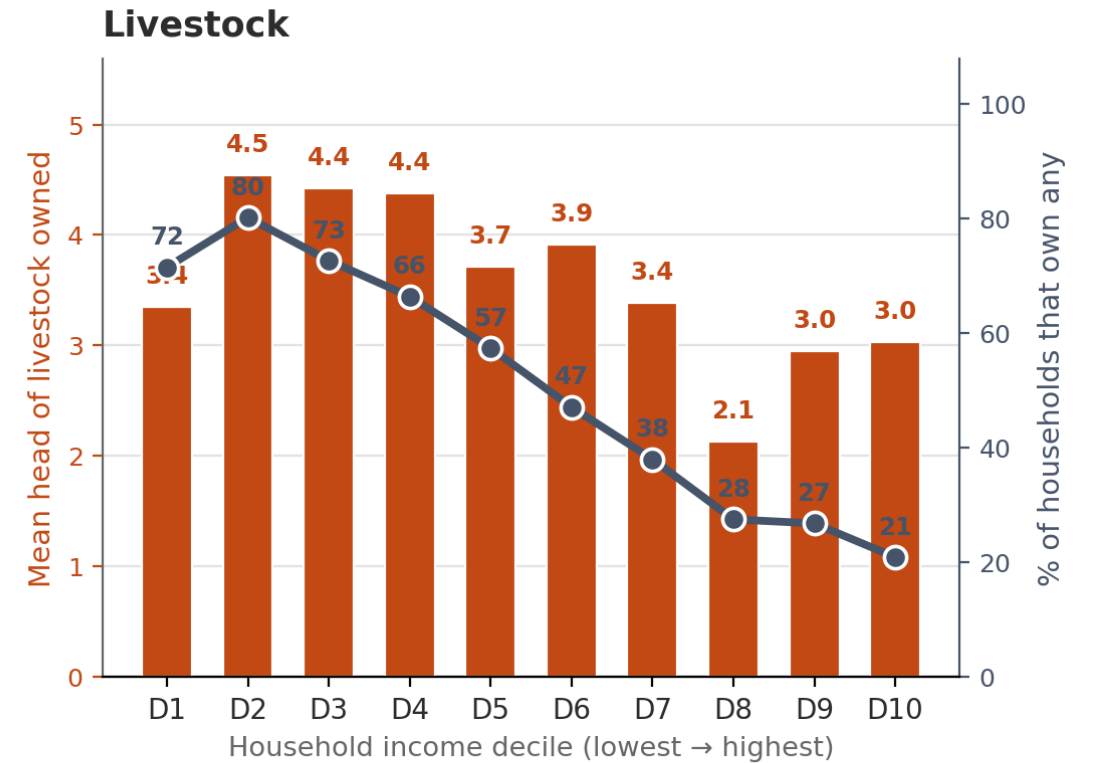
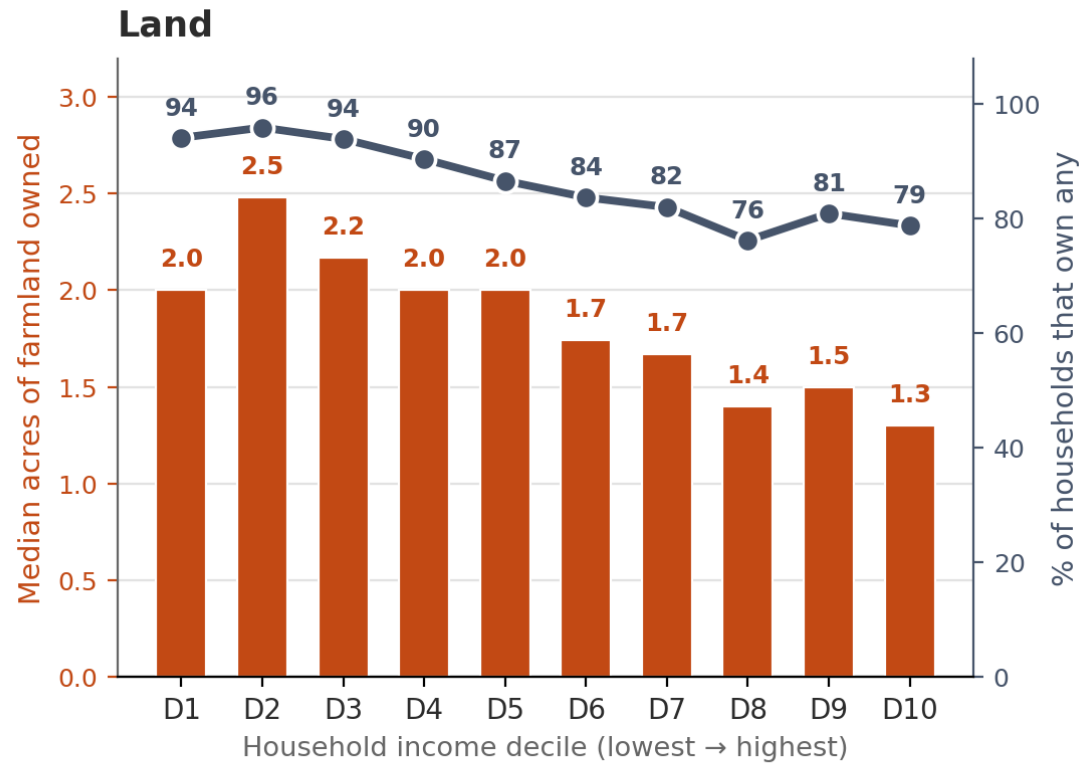
OLS regression on the log of total household income, GNH 2022. Each bar = the percentage difference in income associated with the predictor, holding the others constant.



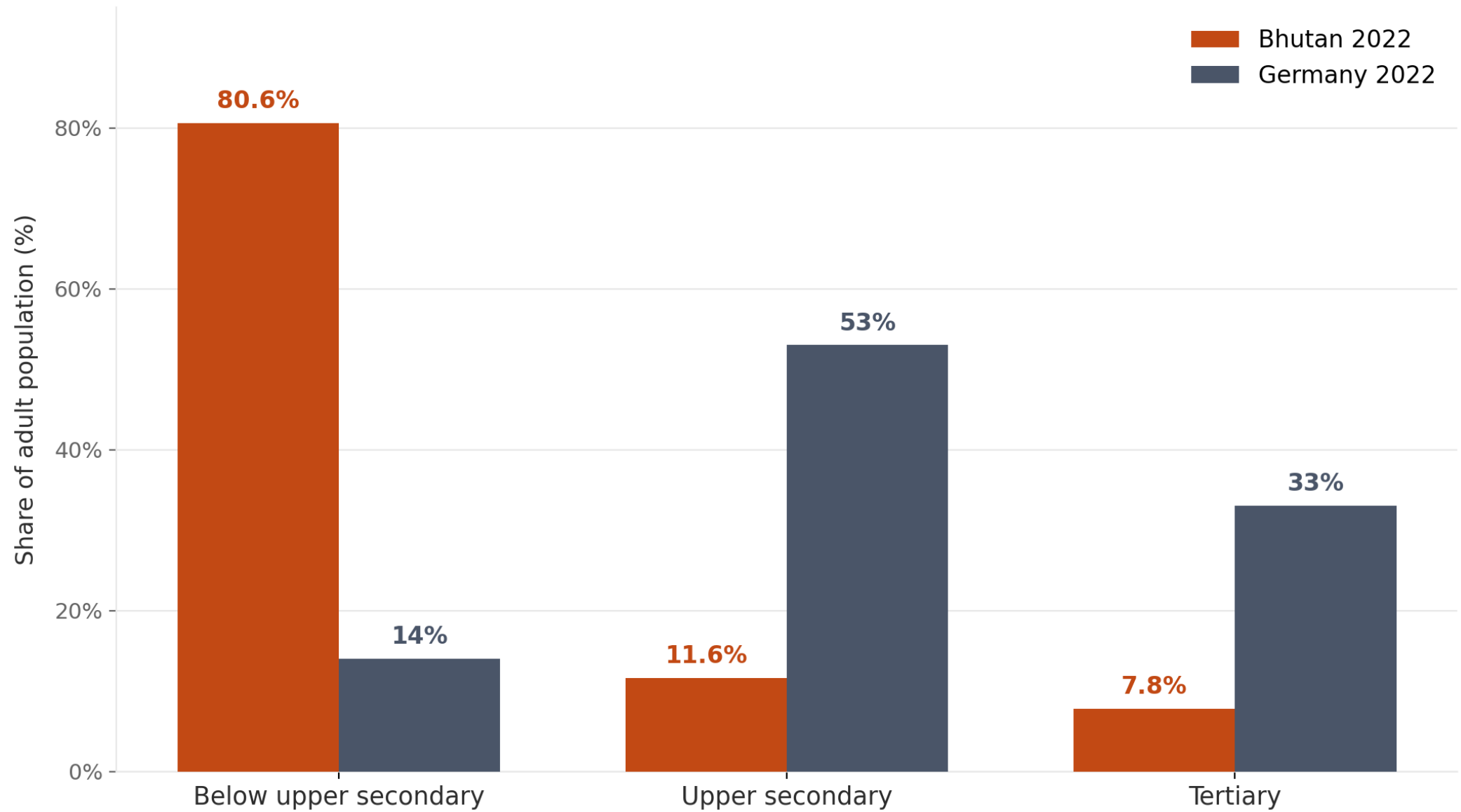
$N = 11,052$  ·  $R^2 = 0.316$  · \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; n.s. = not significant. Hours worked, household size and age are per-unit effects; the rest are 0/1 contrasts.

# Land and livestock thin out as income rises

Households ranked into ten equal income groups (D1 poorest → D10 richest). Bars: typical (median) farm size and average (mean) herd; line: share of households that own any. Livestock-keeping more than halves with income.



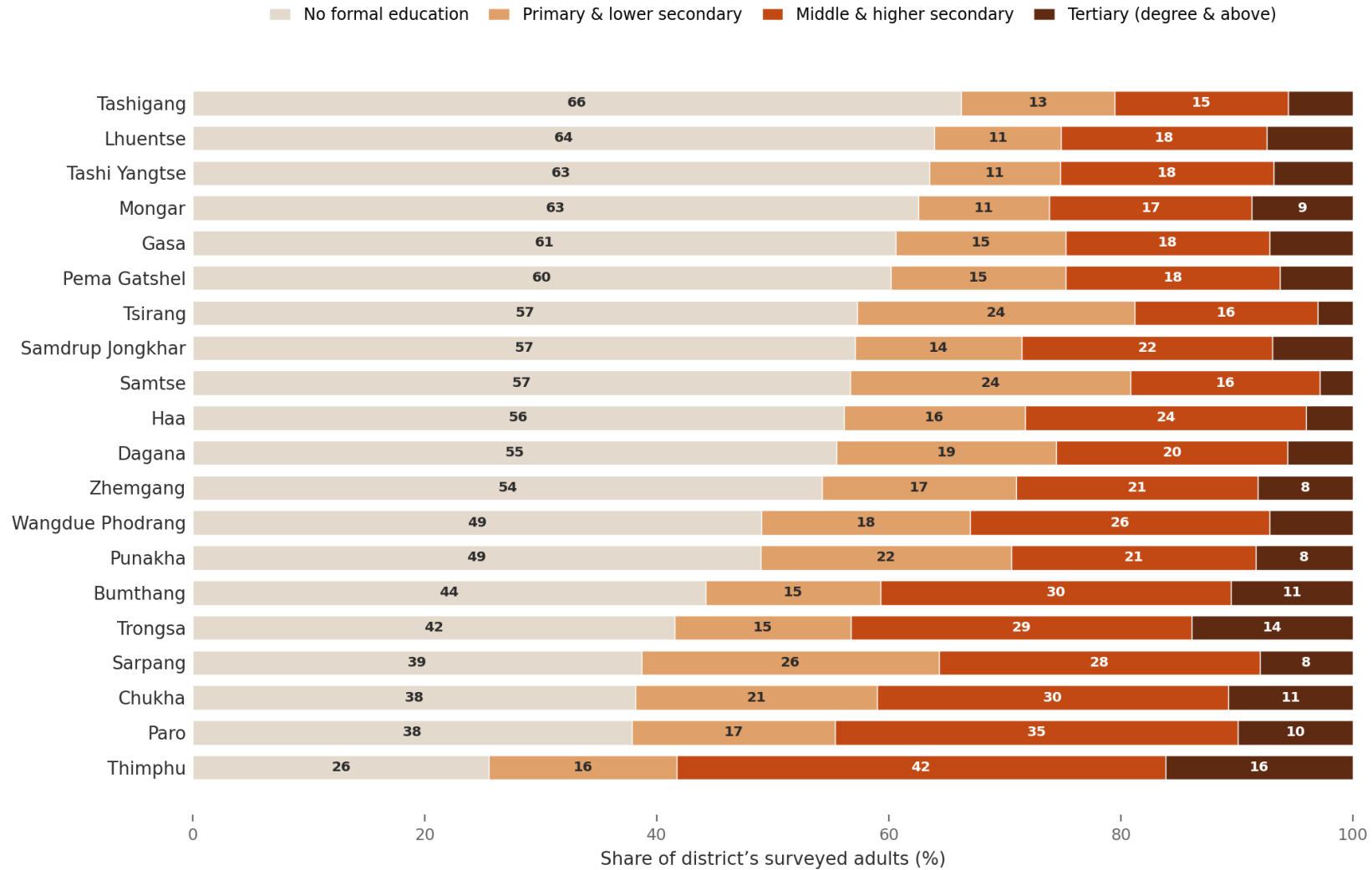
■ Median farm size · mean herd (bar)    ● Share owning any (line)



**Population by education level — Bhutan vs Germany**

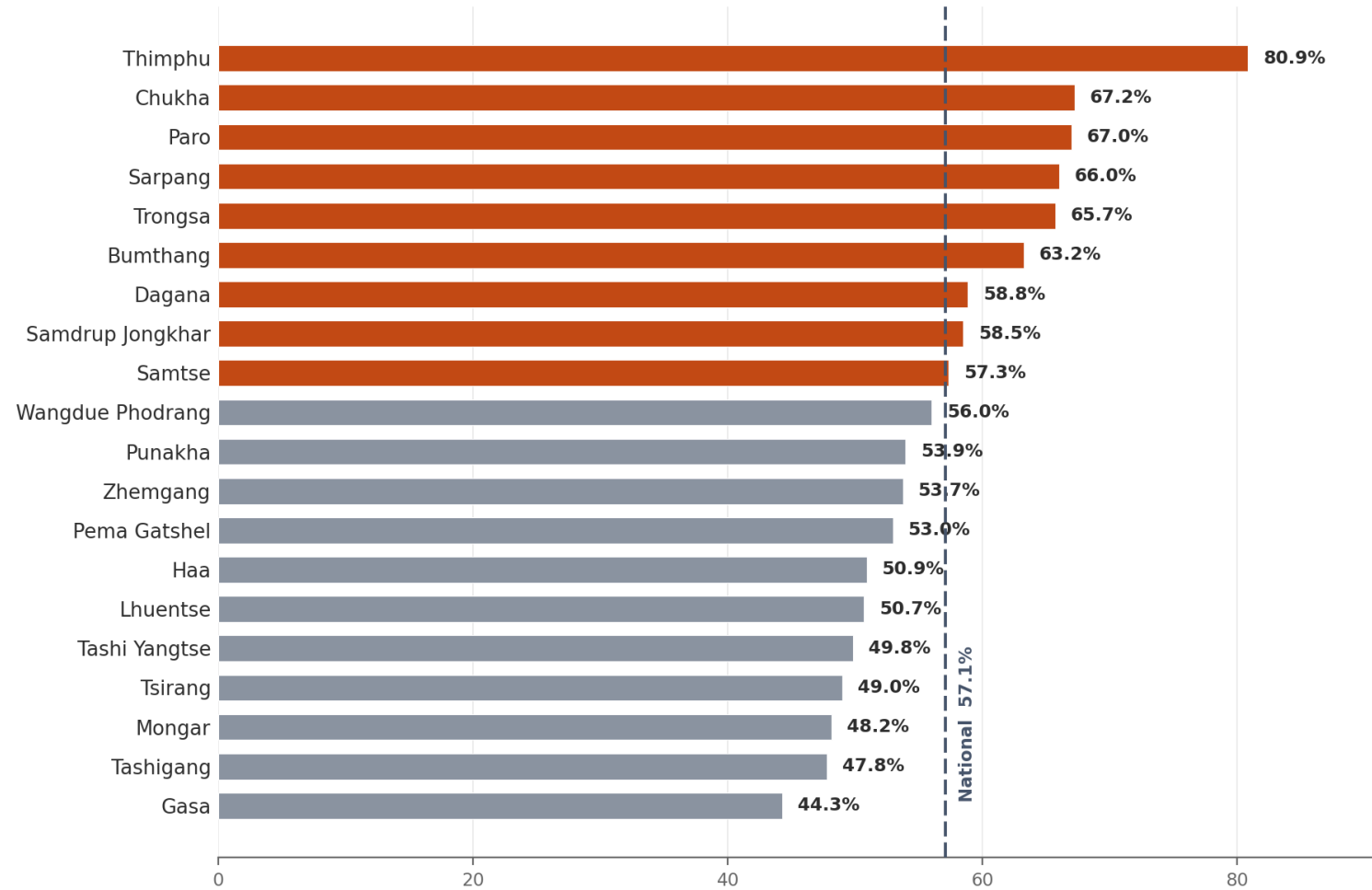
## Education level by district — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Highest education level attained by surveyed adults, as a share of each district. Districts ordered by the share with no formal education.



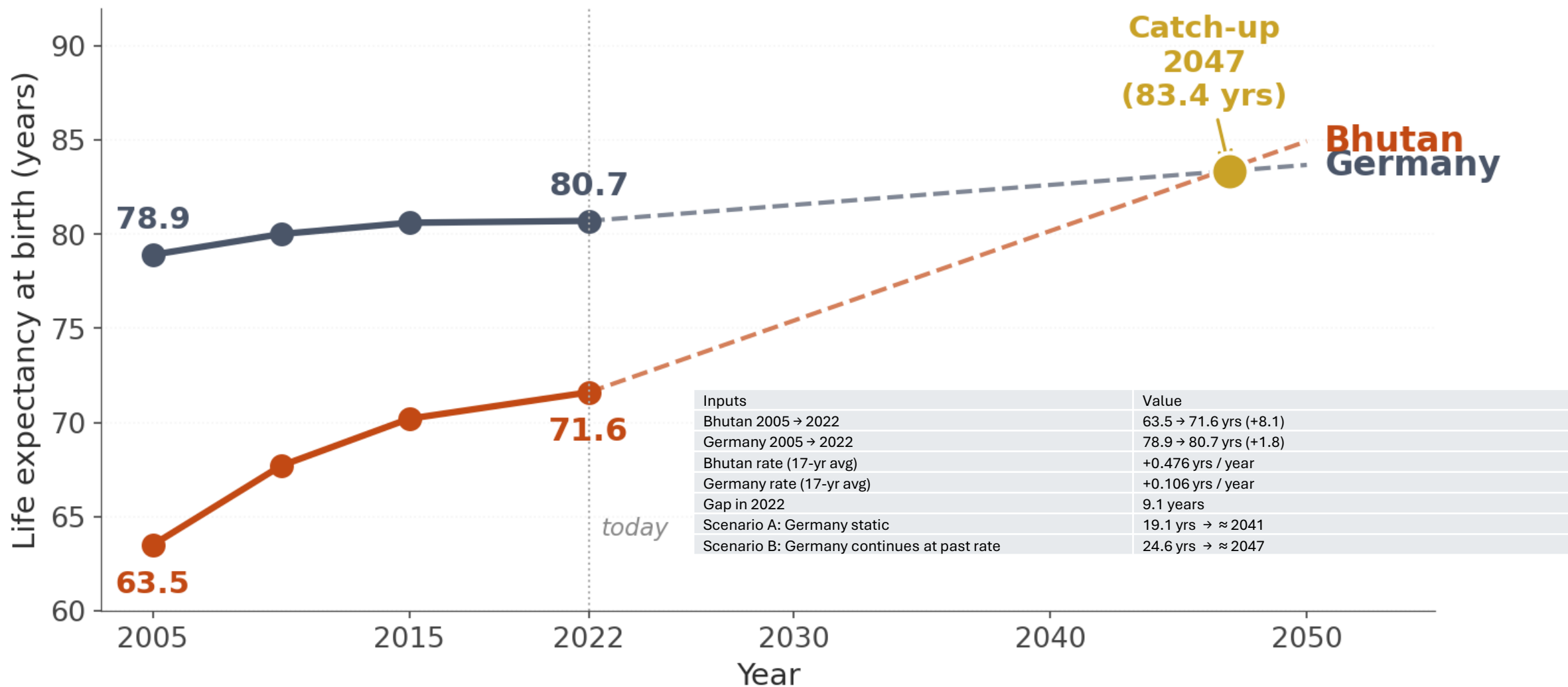
## Discrepancy in literacy by district — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Share of surveyed adults who are literate. The rate ranges from 80.9% in Thimphu to 44.3% in Gasa — a gap of 37 percentage points.



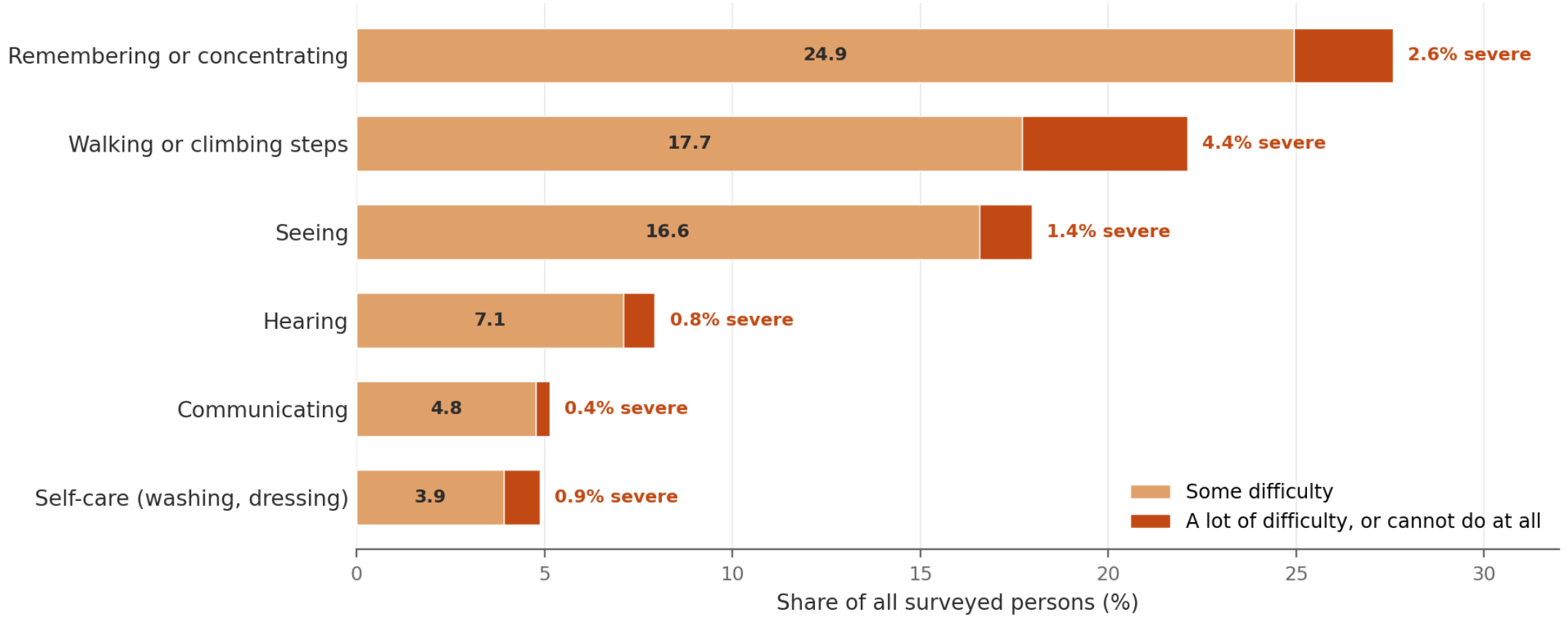
Adults who are literate (%)  
Bars above the national average of 57.1% shown in terracotta; districts below the average in grey.

# How long would it take Bhutan to catch up with Germany's lifespan?



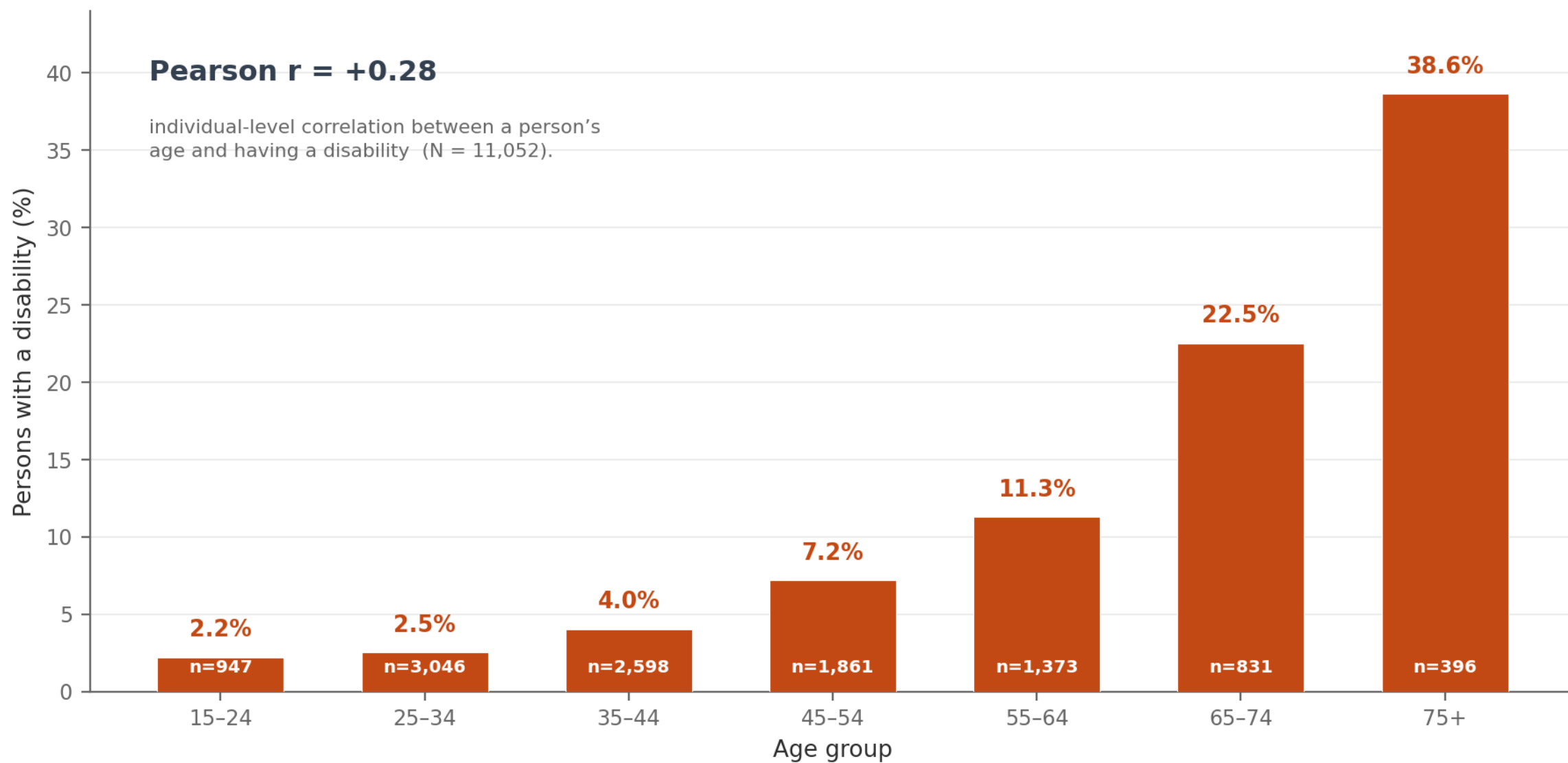
## Kinds of disability — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Share of surveyed persons reporting difficulty in each of the six functional domains of the Washington Group disability questions.



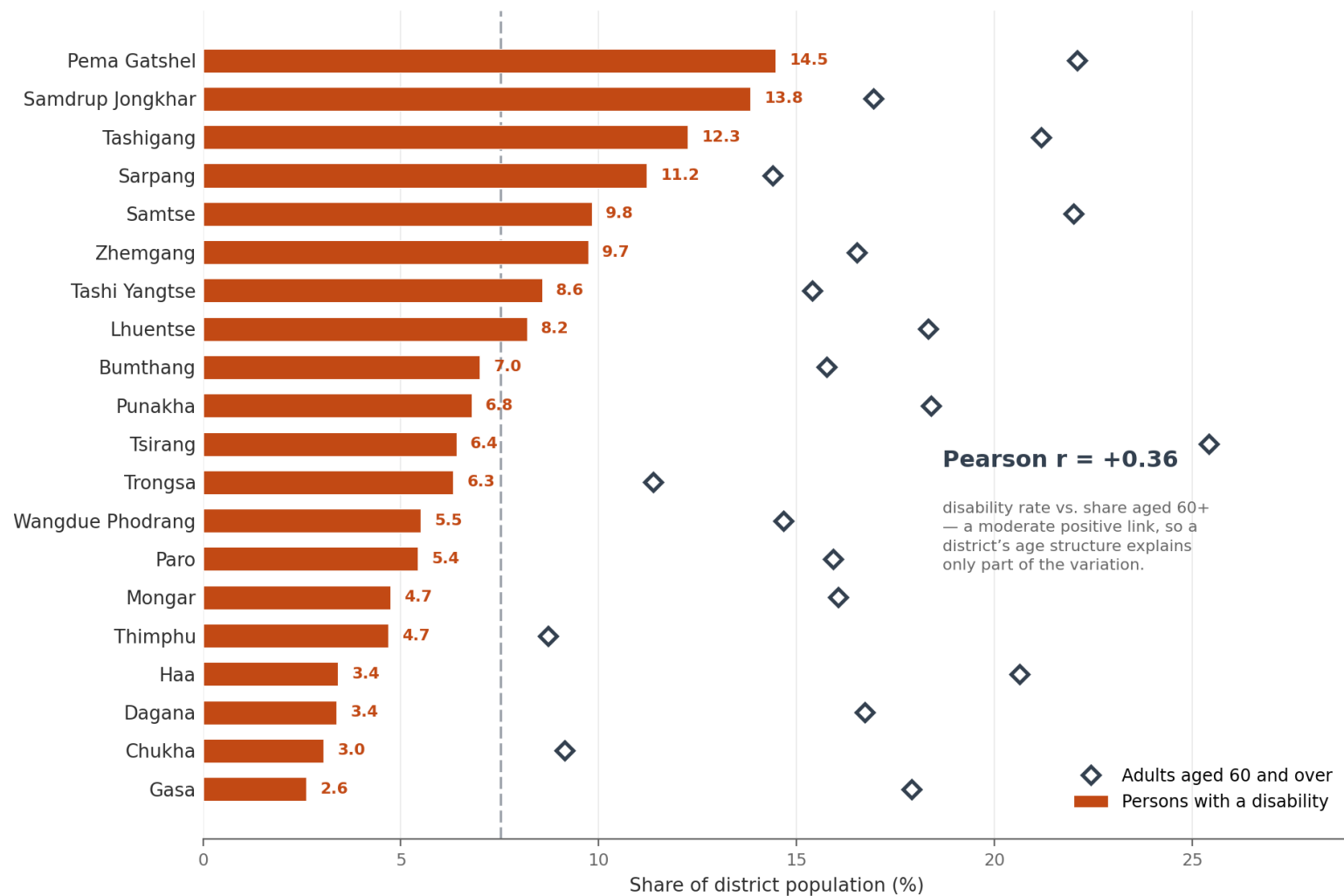
## Disability by age group — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Share of persons with a disability — a lot of difficulty, or unable, in at least one of six functional domains. The rate rises steeply with age.



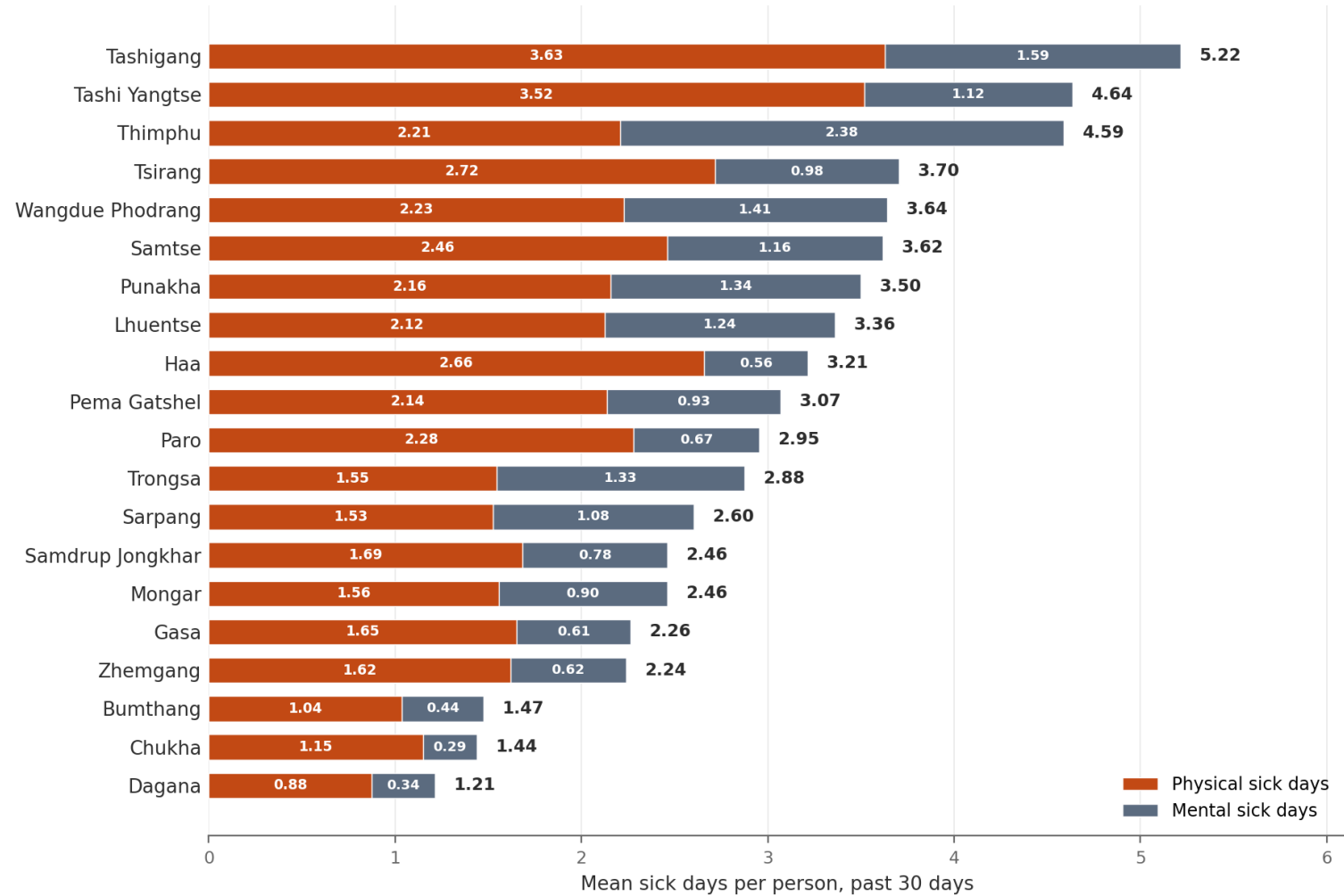
## Disability by district, with district elderly share — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Bars: share of persons with a disability. Diamonds: share of surveyed adults aged 60 and over. Dashed line marks the 7.5% national disability rate.



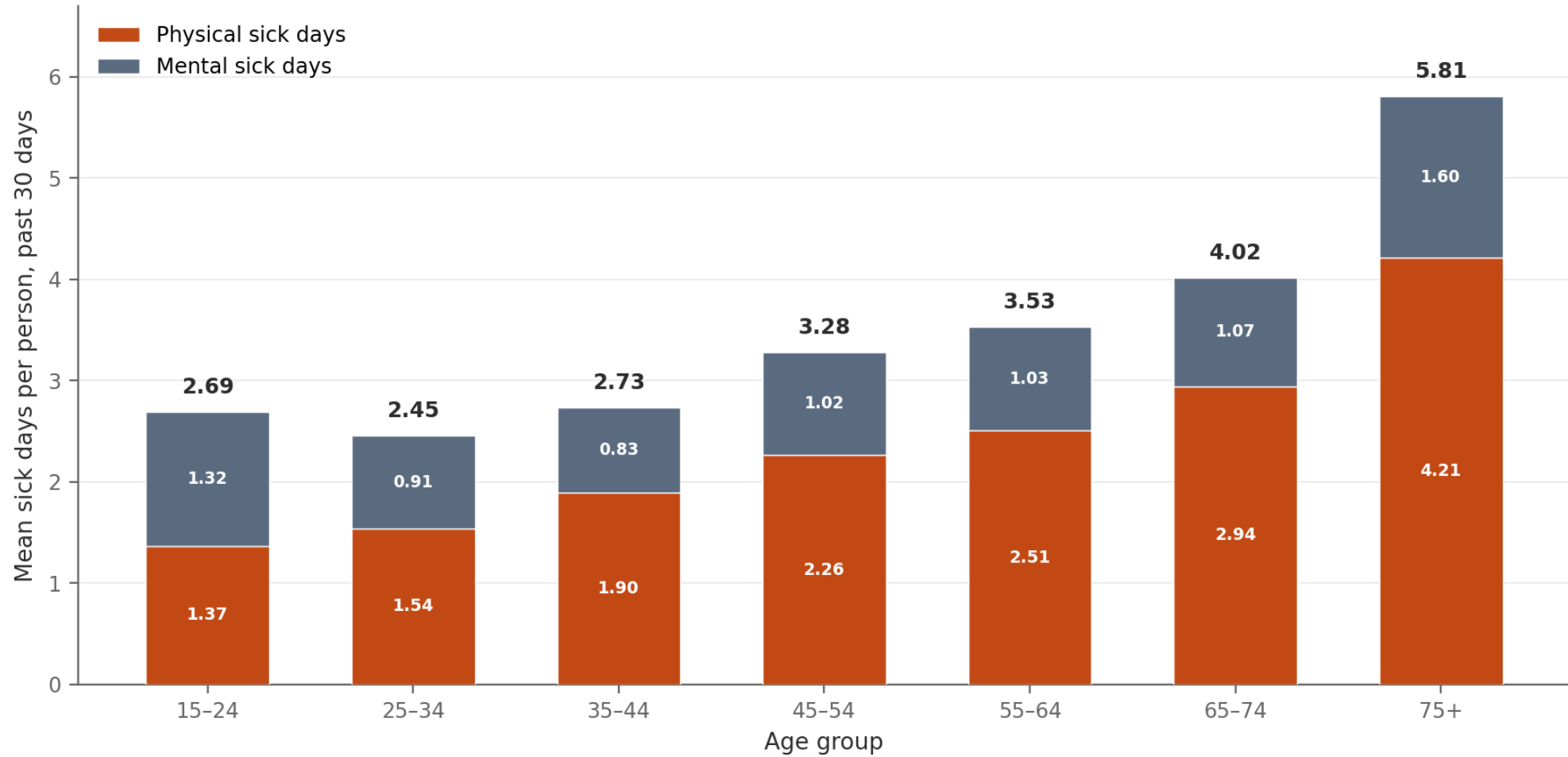
## Days lost to ill health by district — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Mean self-reported sick days in the past 30 days — physical and mental shown separately, with the total — by district.



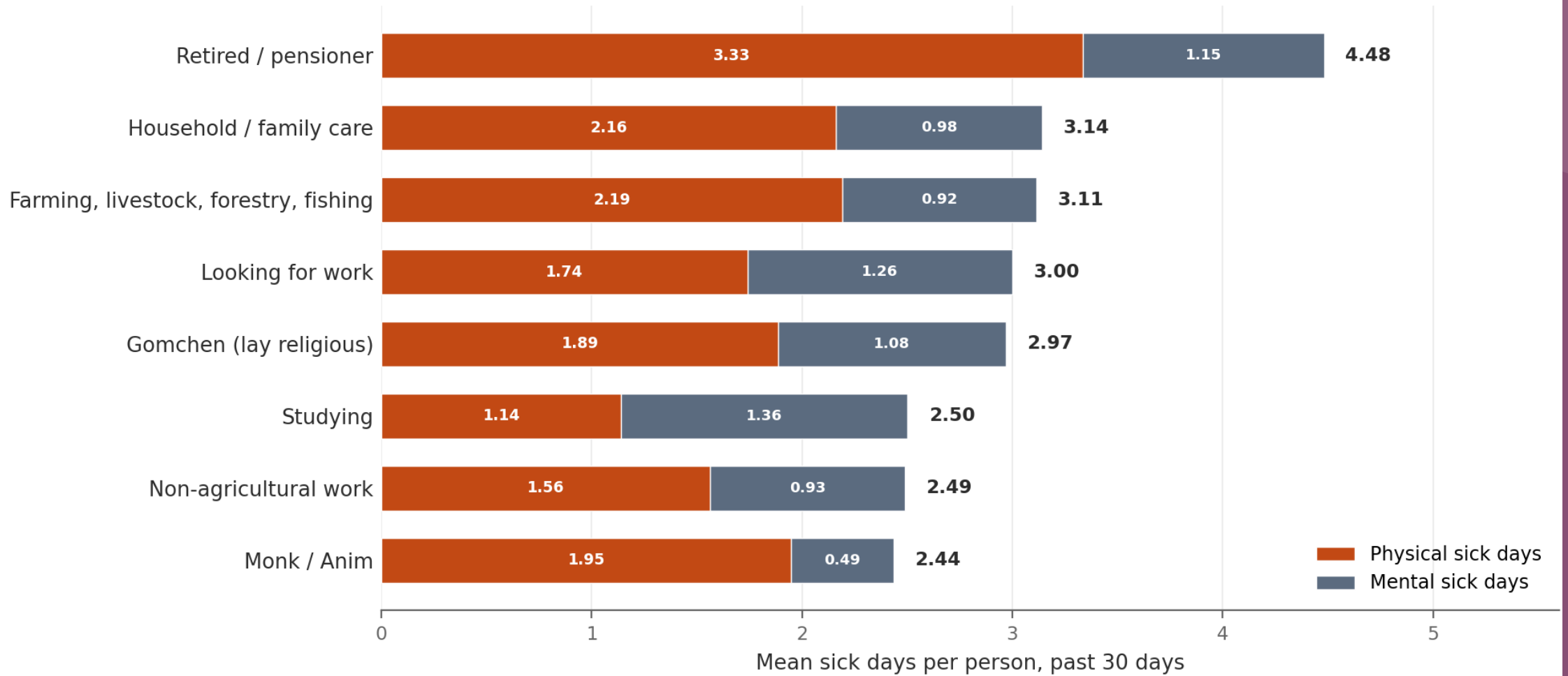
## Days lost to ill health by age group — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Mean self-reported sick days in the past 30 days — physical and mental shown separately, with the total — by age of the surveyed member.

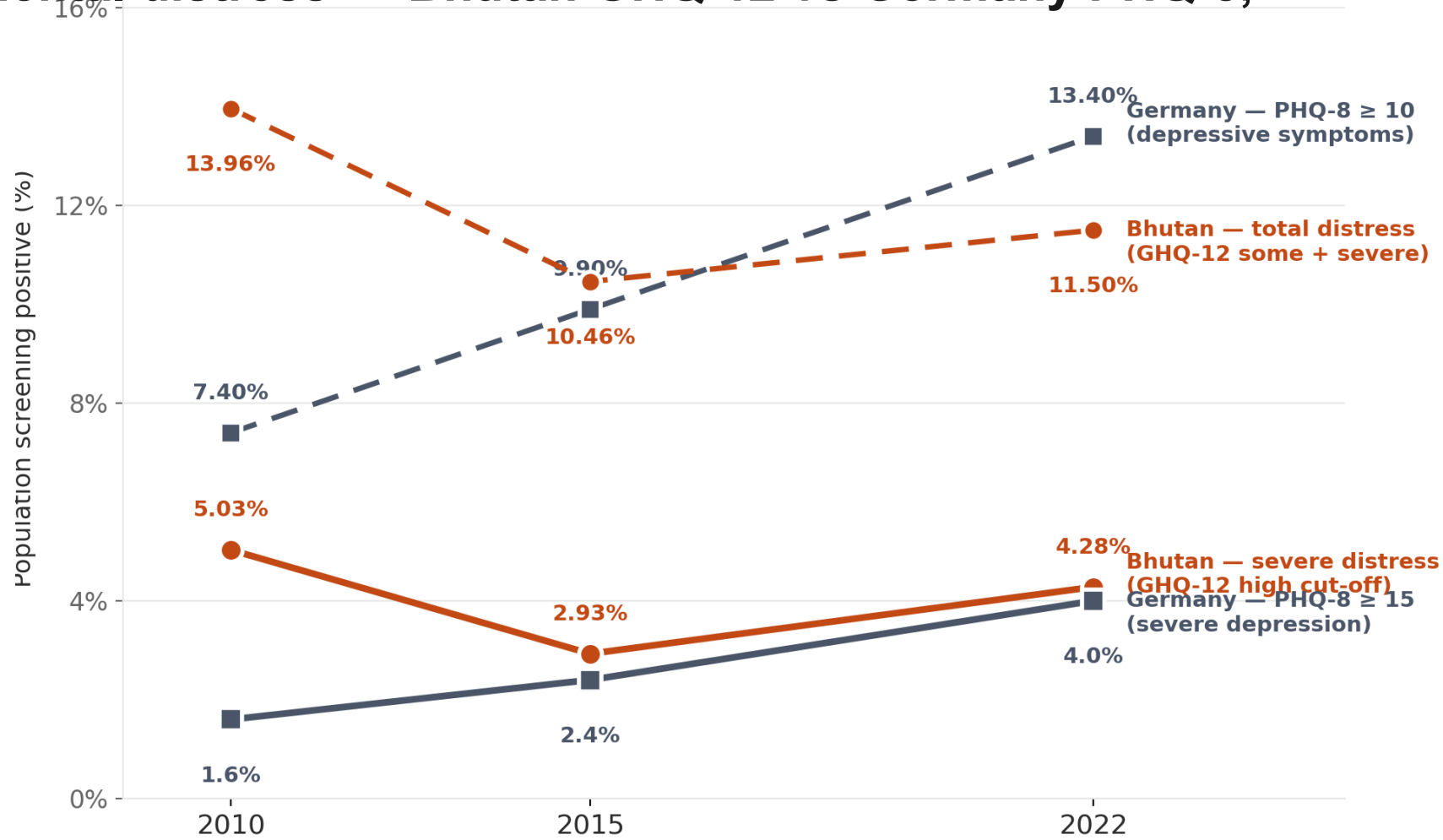


## Days lost to ill health by occupation group — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Mean self-reported sick days in the past 30 days — physical and mental shown separately, with the total — by main activity of the surveyed member.



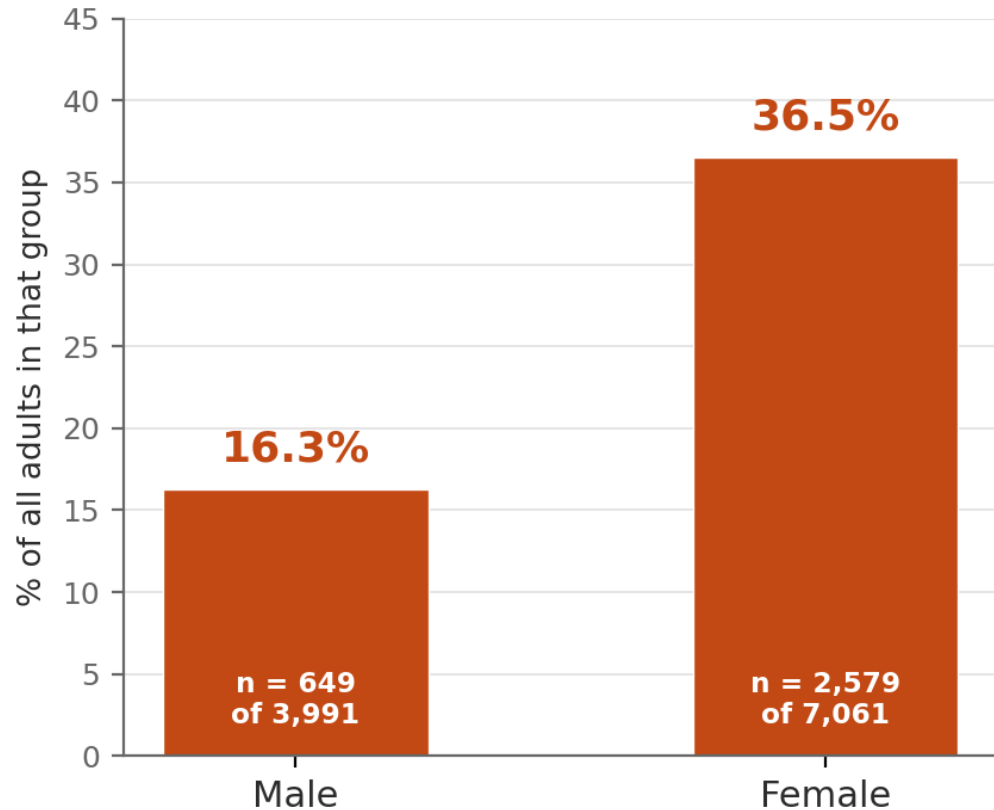
# Mental distress — Bhutan GHQ-12 vs Germany PHQ-8,



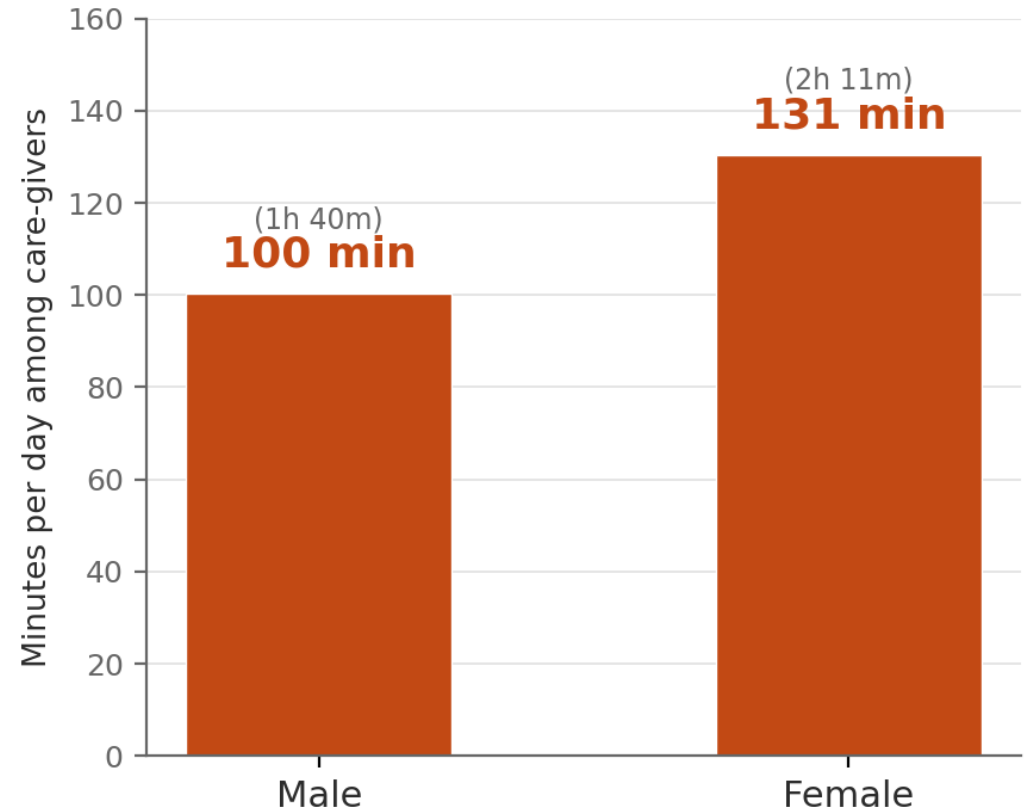
## Unpaid care-giving by gender — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Care-giving = providing unpaid care-giving services (children, elderly, sick household members).

### Share who are care-givers



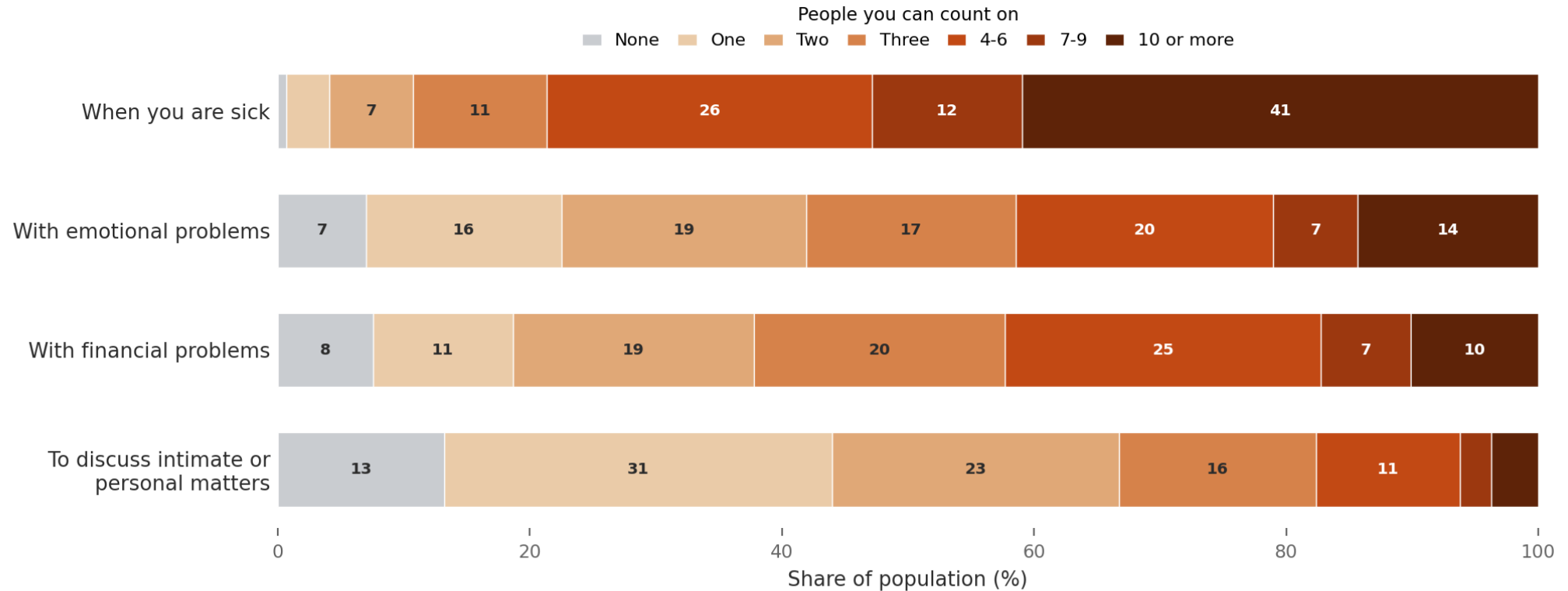
### Time among care-givers

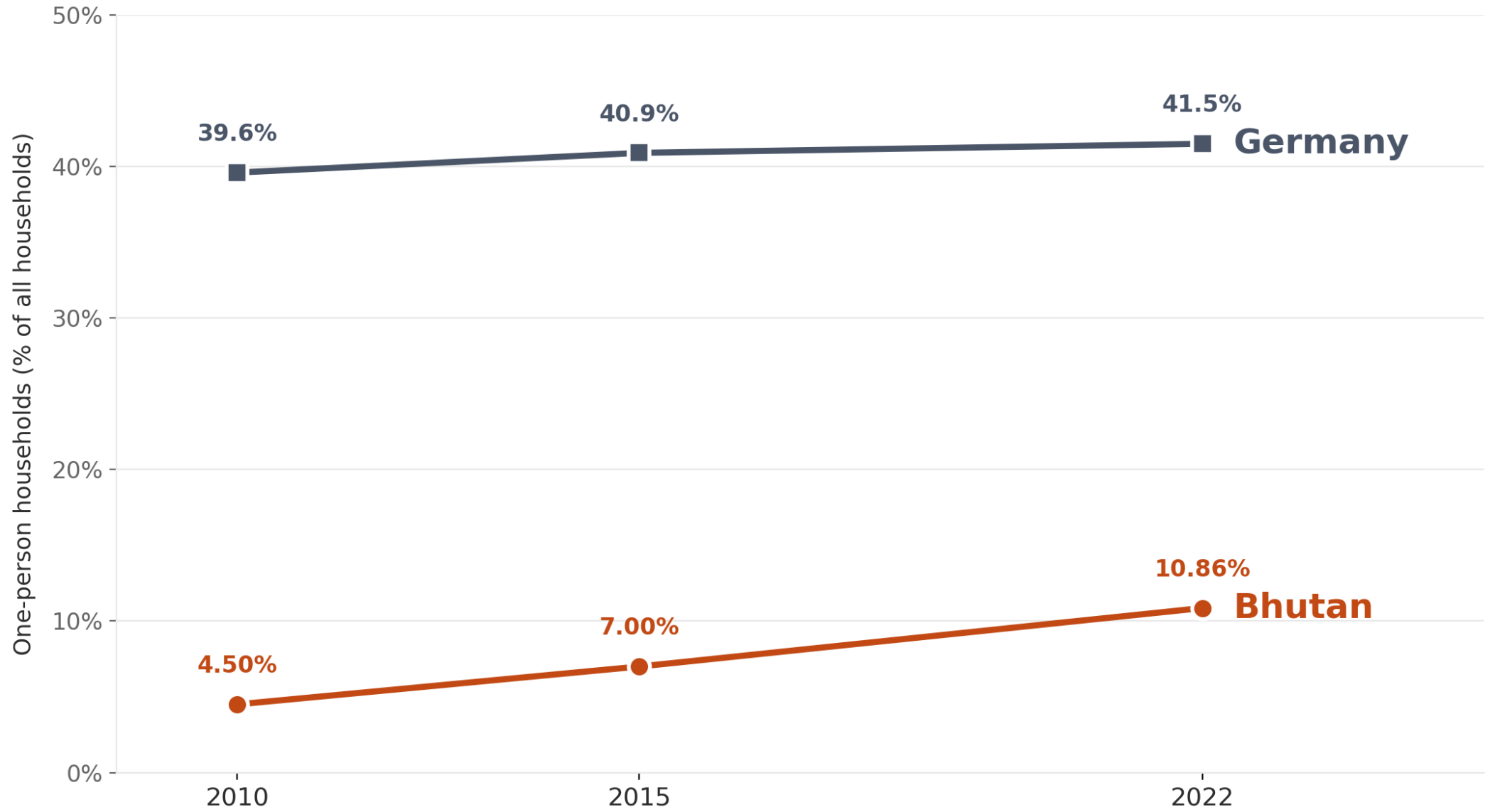


Women are 2.2x as likely to be care-givers as men (36.5% vs 16.3%) and also spend more time on it each day (131 vs 100 minutes).

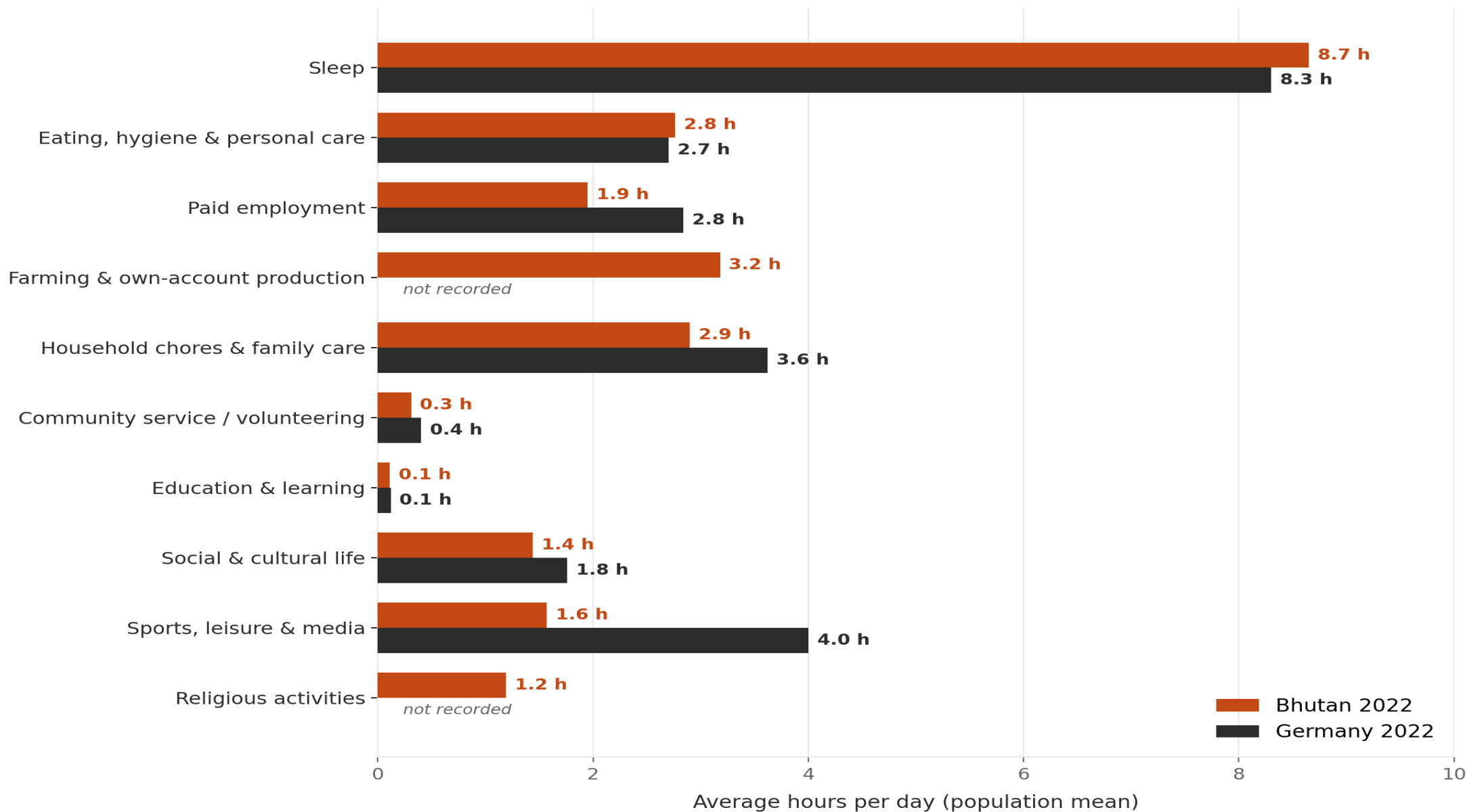
## How many people Bhutanese can count on in a crisis — by type of need (GNH 2022)

Number of people the respondent can rely on for each kind of difficulty. Support is widest for illness, narrowest for intimate personal matters.



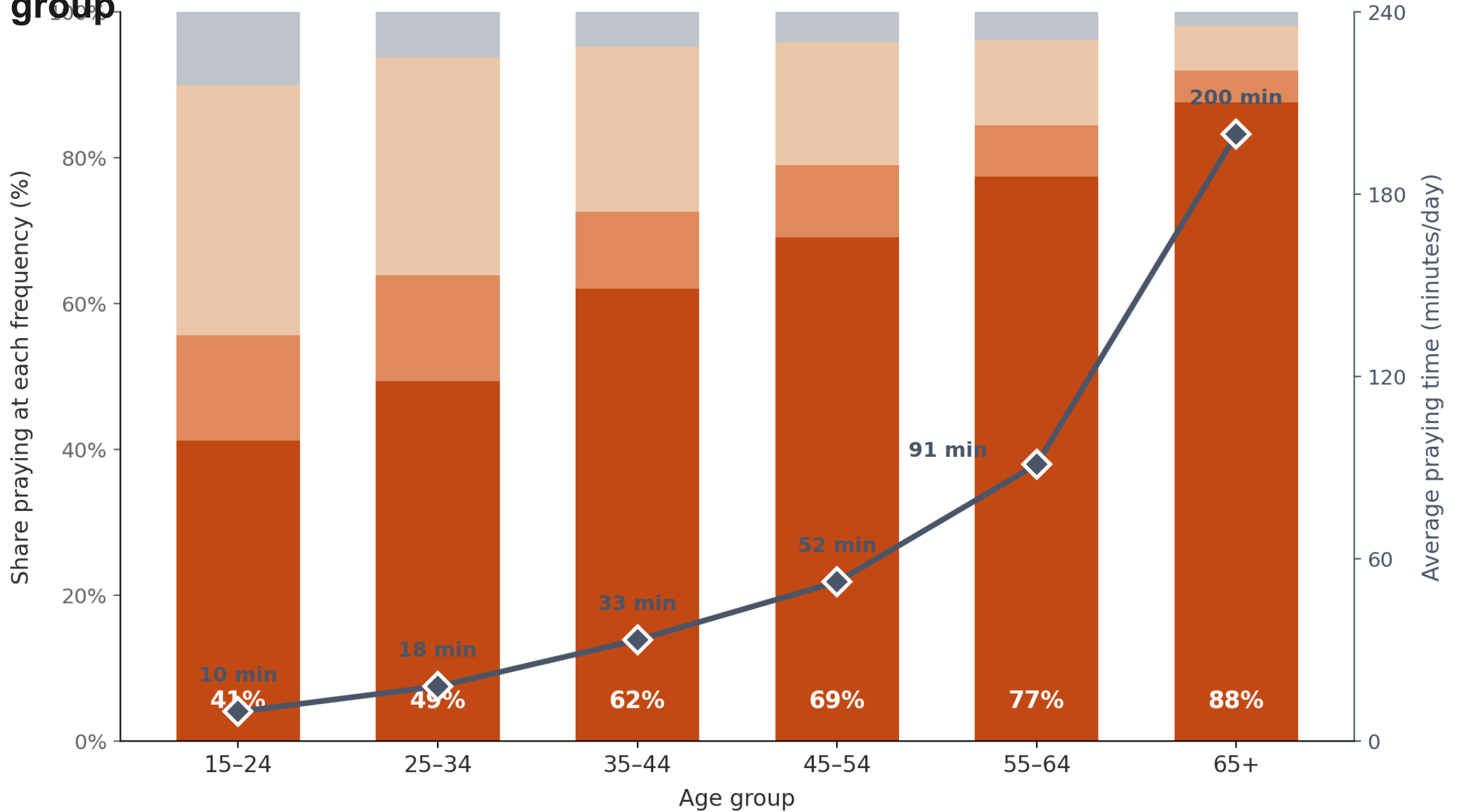


# Daily time use by category — Bhutan (GNH Survey) vs Germany (Destatis), 2022



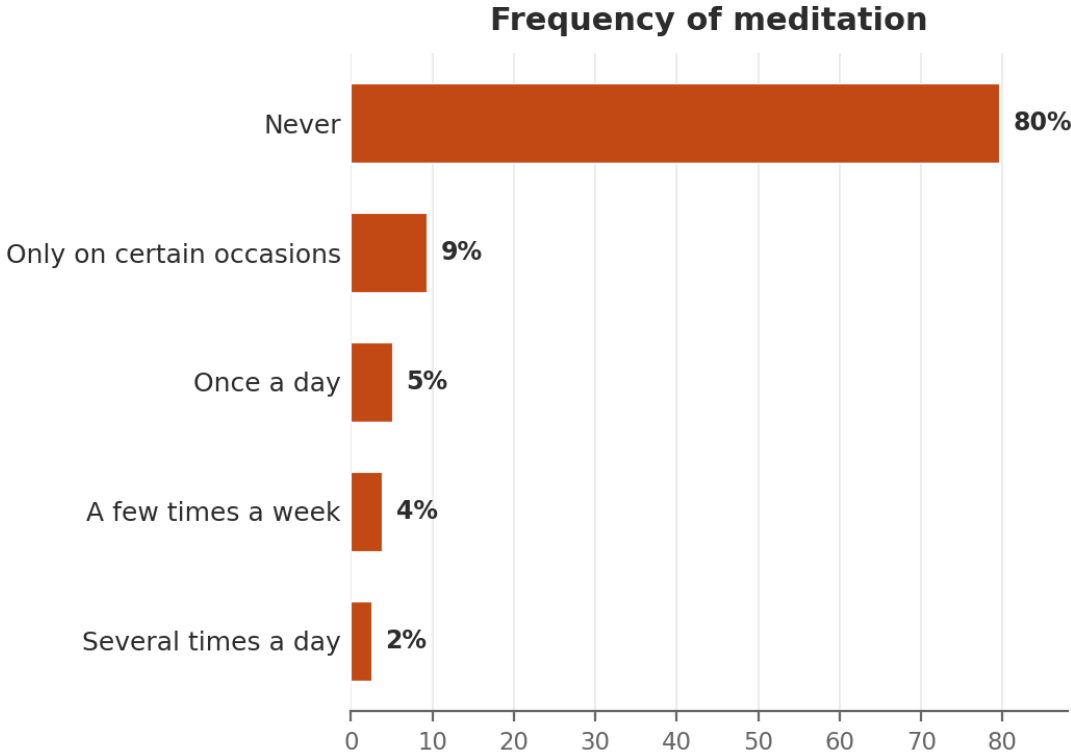
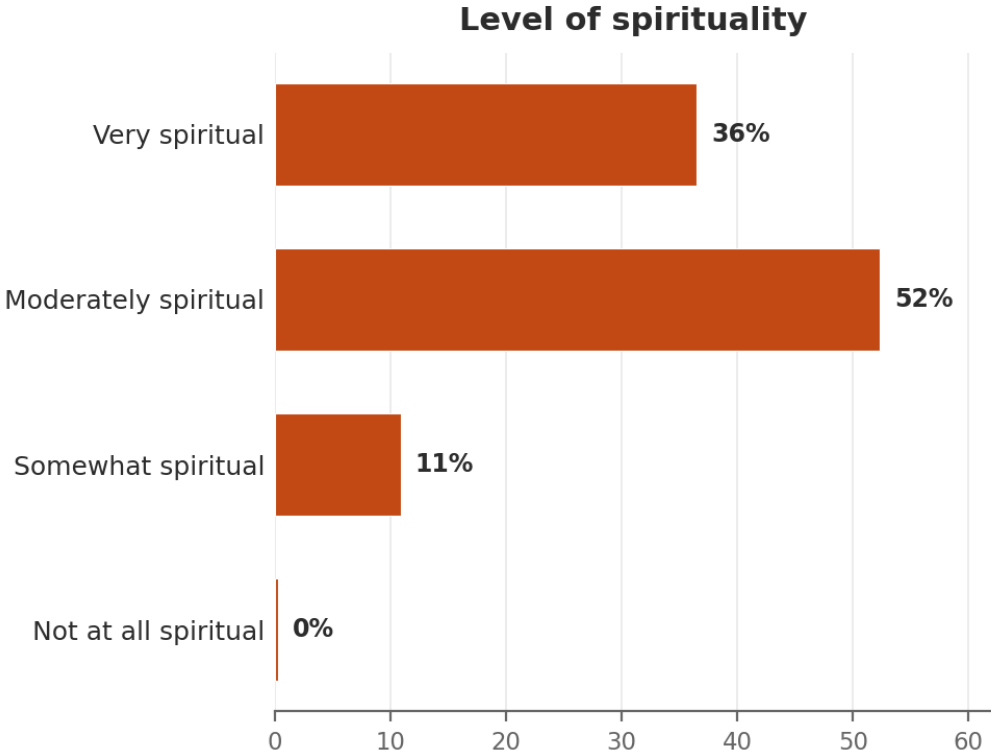
# Prayer by age group

Daily Weekly Occasionally Never



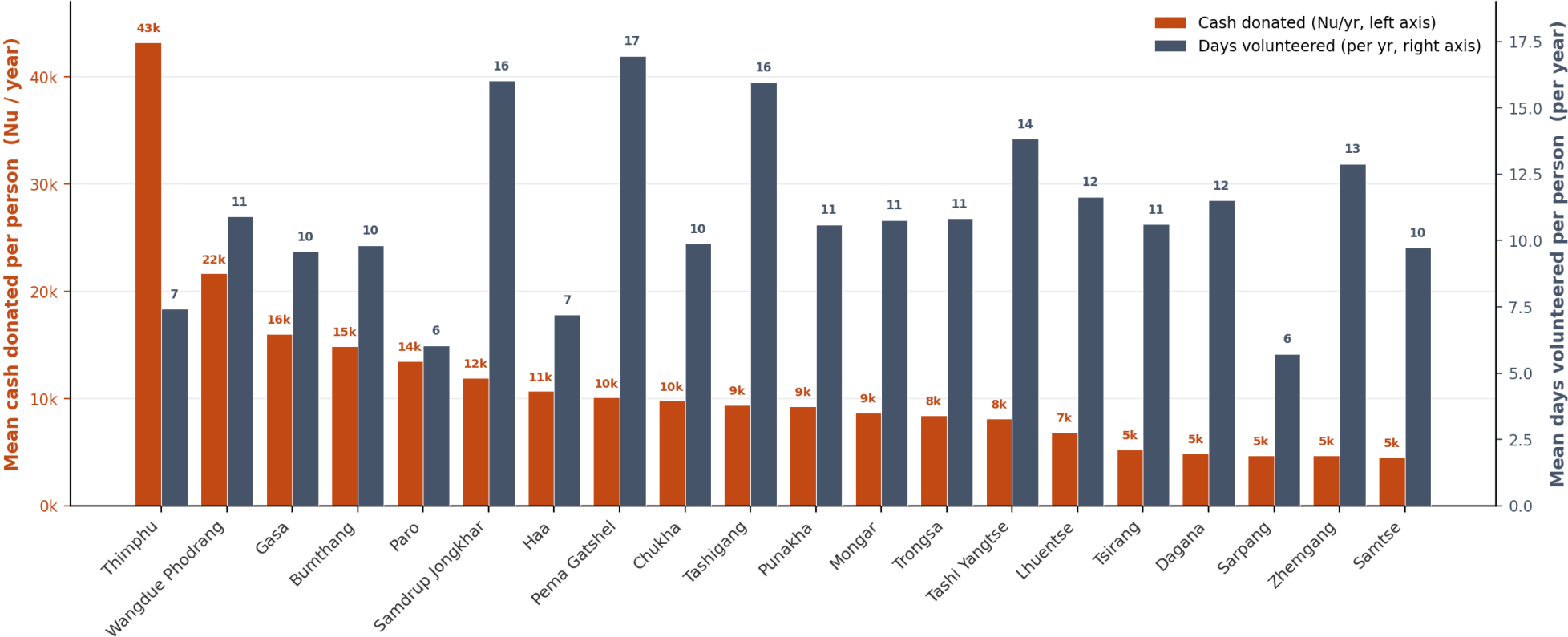
# Spirituality is near-universal — daily meditation is not (Bhutan, GNH 2022)

Left: self-rated level of spirituality. Right: how often the person meditates. 89% are moderately or very spiritual, yet 80% never meditate.



### Two forms of generosity by district — cash given and days volunteered (Bhutan, GNH 2022)

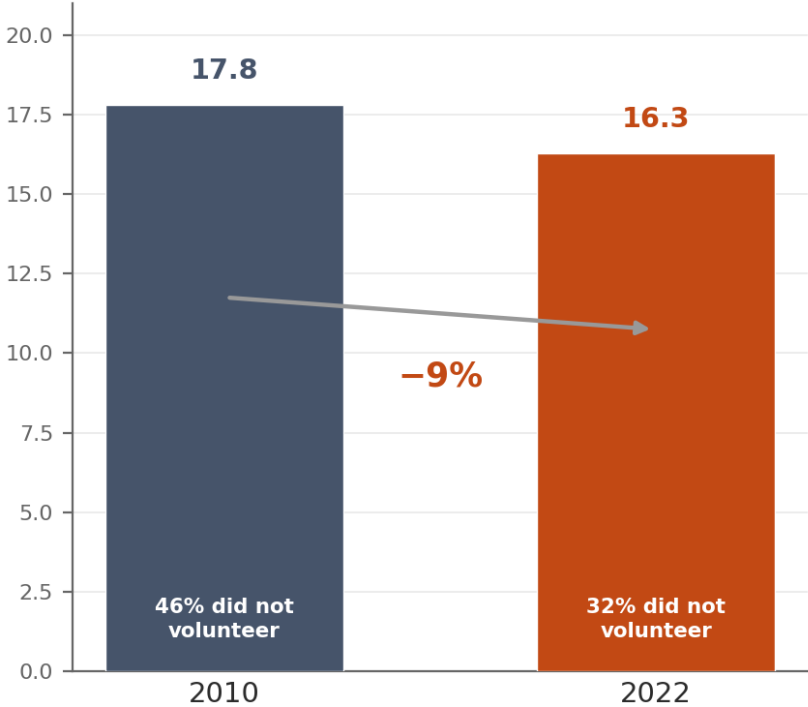
Districts ordered by cash donated. Terracotta bars (left axis) = mean cash donated; slate bars (right axis) = mean days volunteered. The two rarely move together.



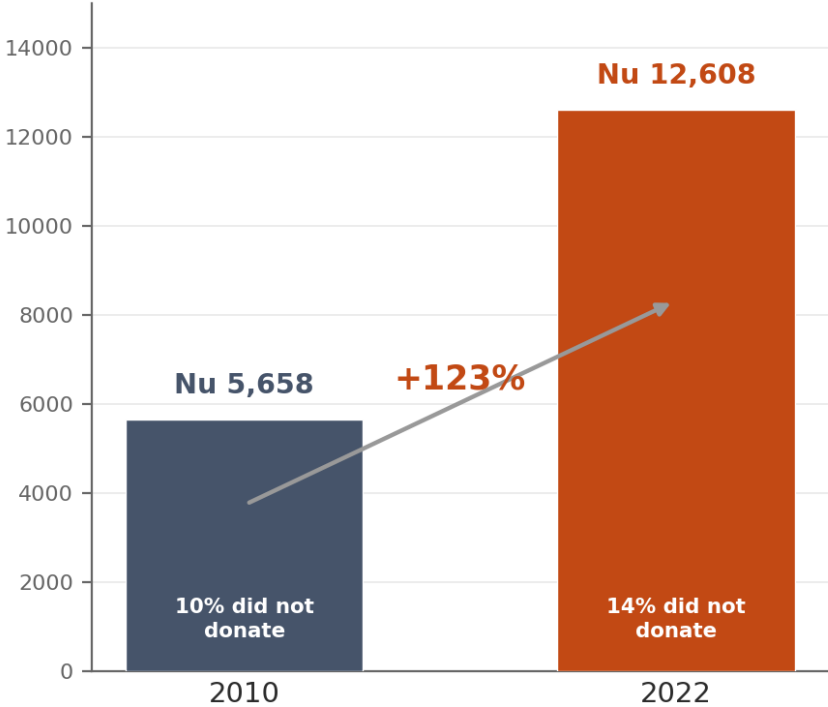
# Generosity in deed — volunteering and cash donated per participant, 2010 → 2022

Participant means — days per volunteer and cash per donor; the share who did NOT take part is marked on each bar.

### Days volunteered per volunteer, per year

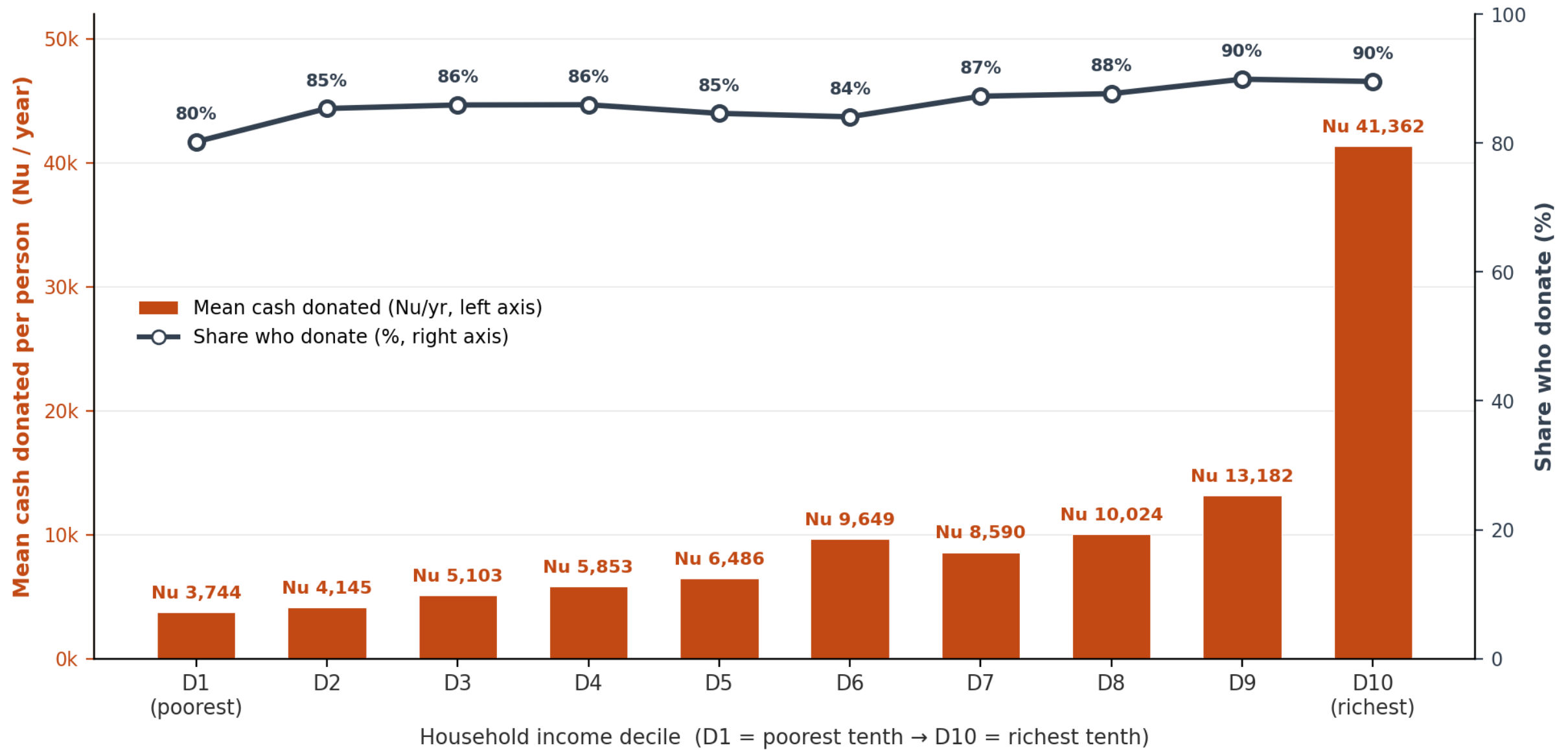


### Cash donated per donor, per year (Nu)



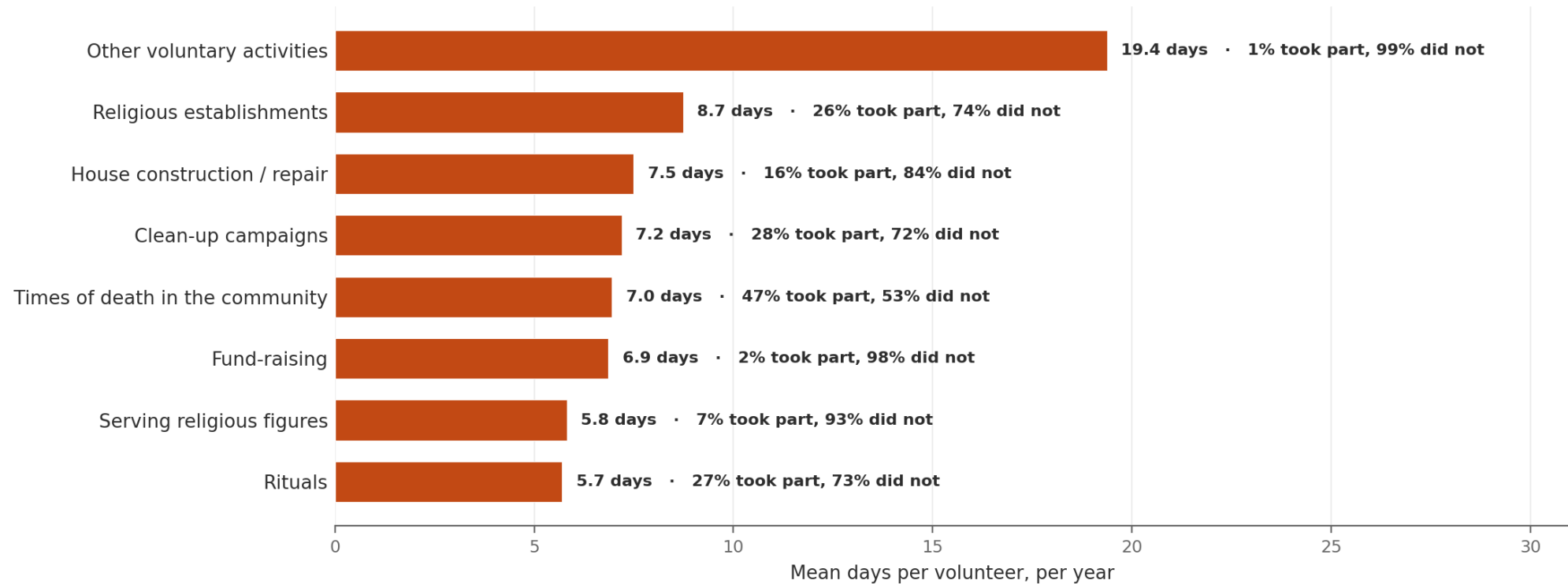
# Cash donated and the share who donate, by household income — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

Bars: mean cash donated per person per year. Line: share of the decile who made any cash donation. Roughly 80–90% donate at every income level — what soars with income

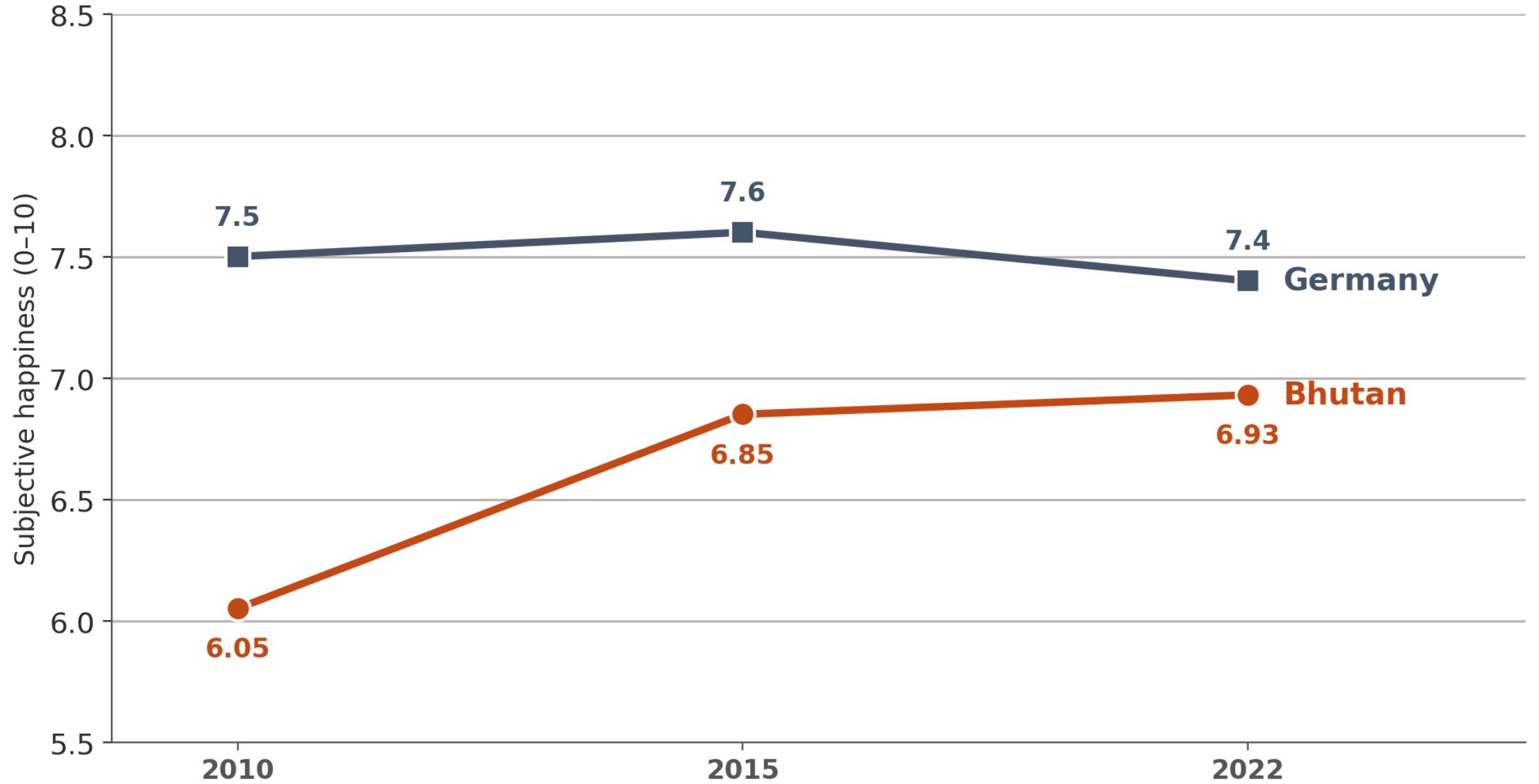


## Volunteering: days given per volunteer, by purpose — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

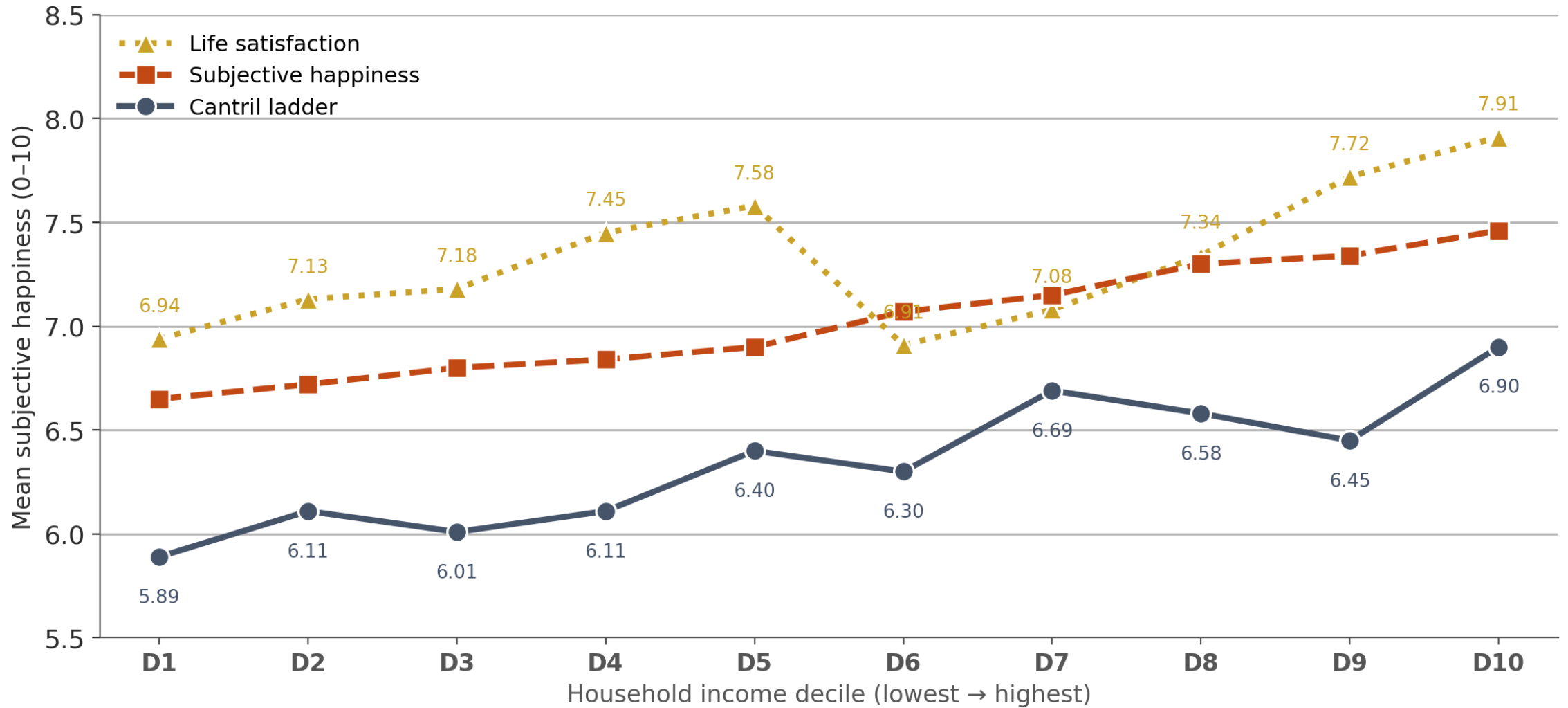
Participant mean: days volunteered per year among those who volunteered for that purpose. "% took part / did not" = share of all respondents who did, or did not, volunteer for it.



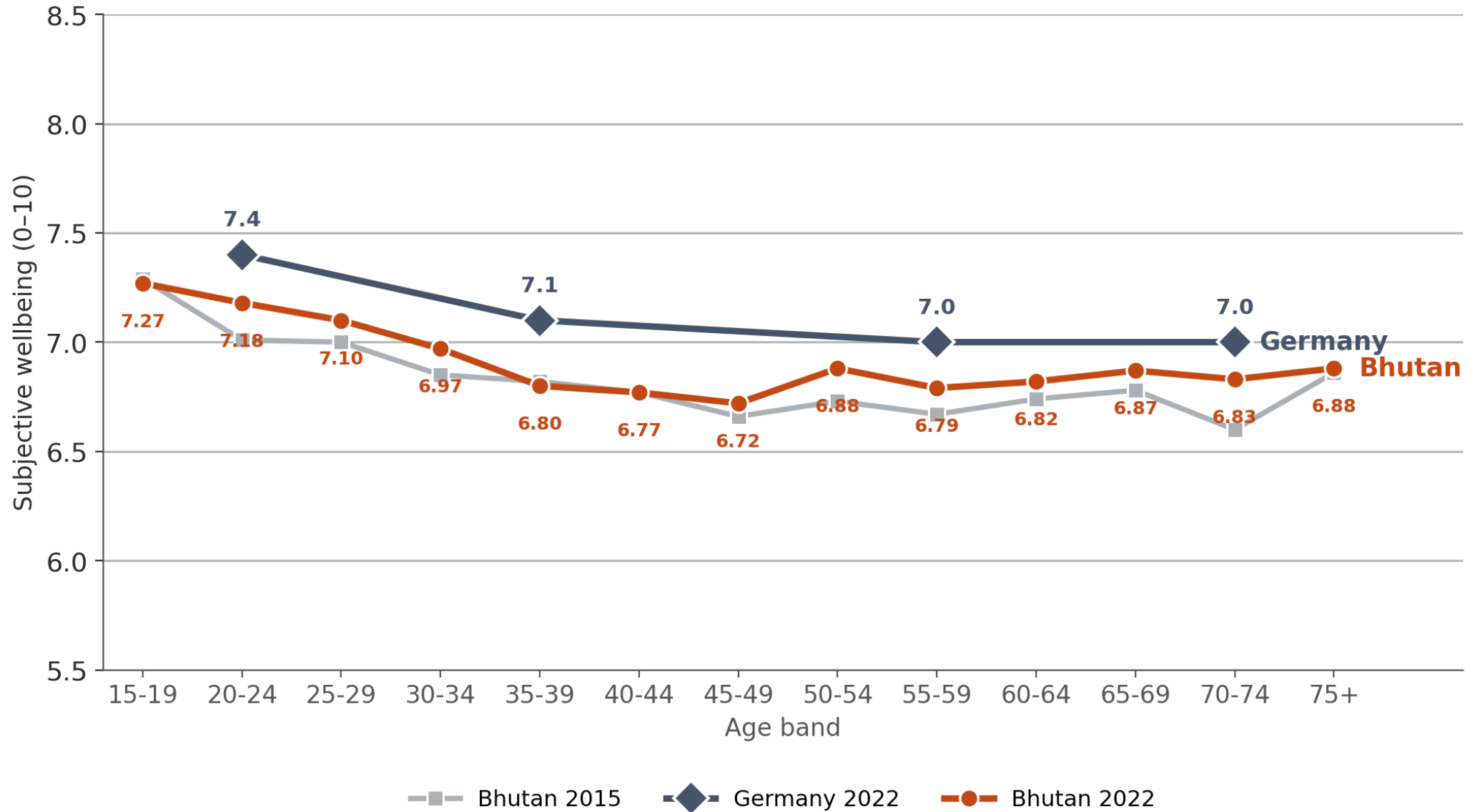
## Subjective wellbeing trend (0–10) — Bhutan vs Germany



# Subjective happiness by household income decile — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

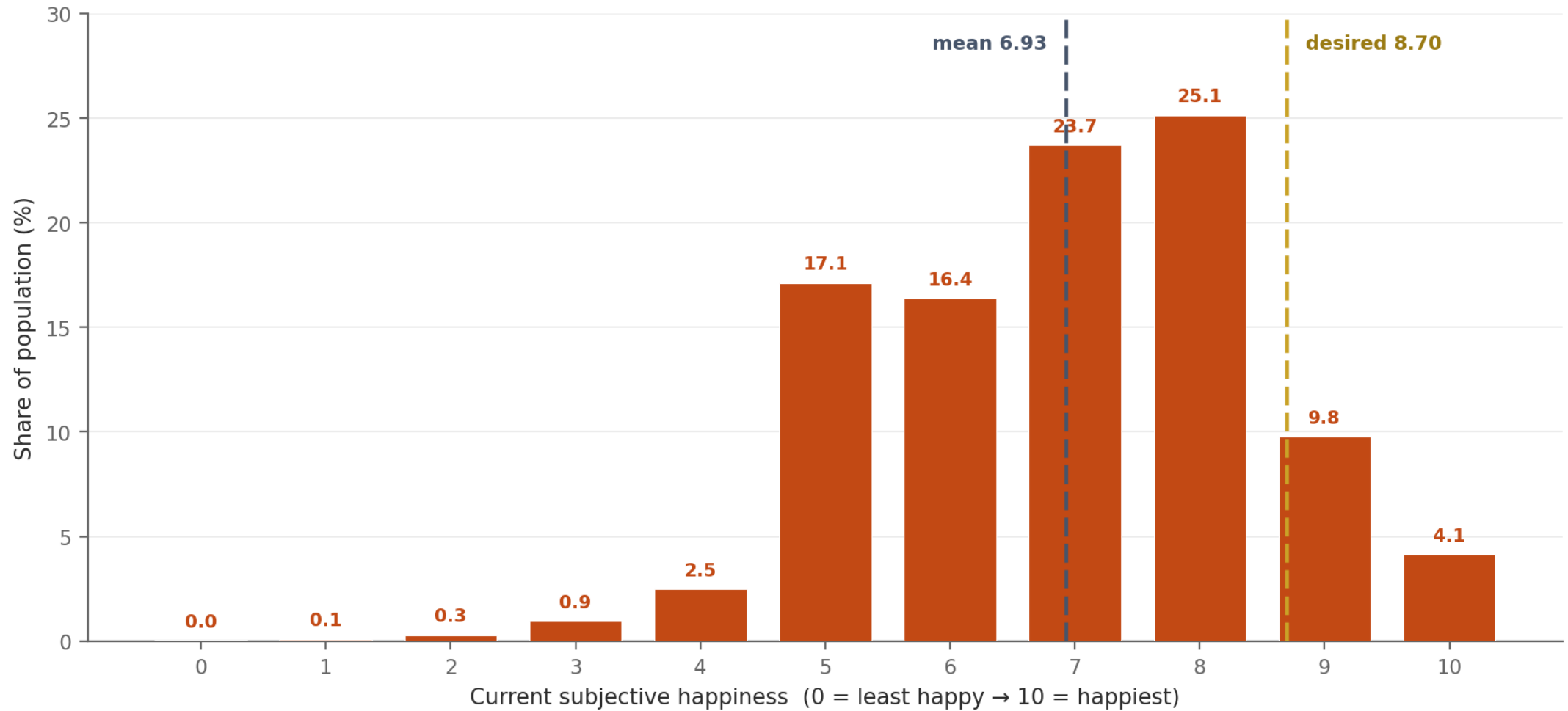


# Subjective wellbeing by age band — Bhutan vs Germany (SOEP life satisfaction)



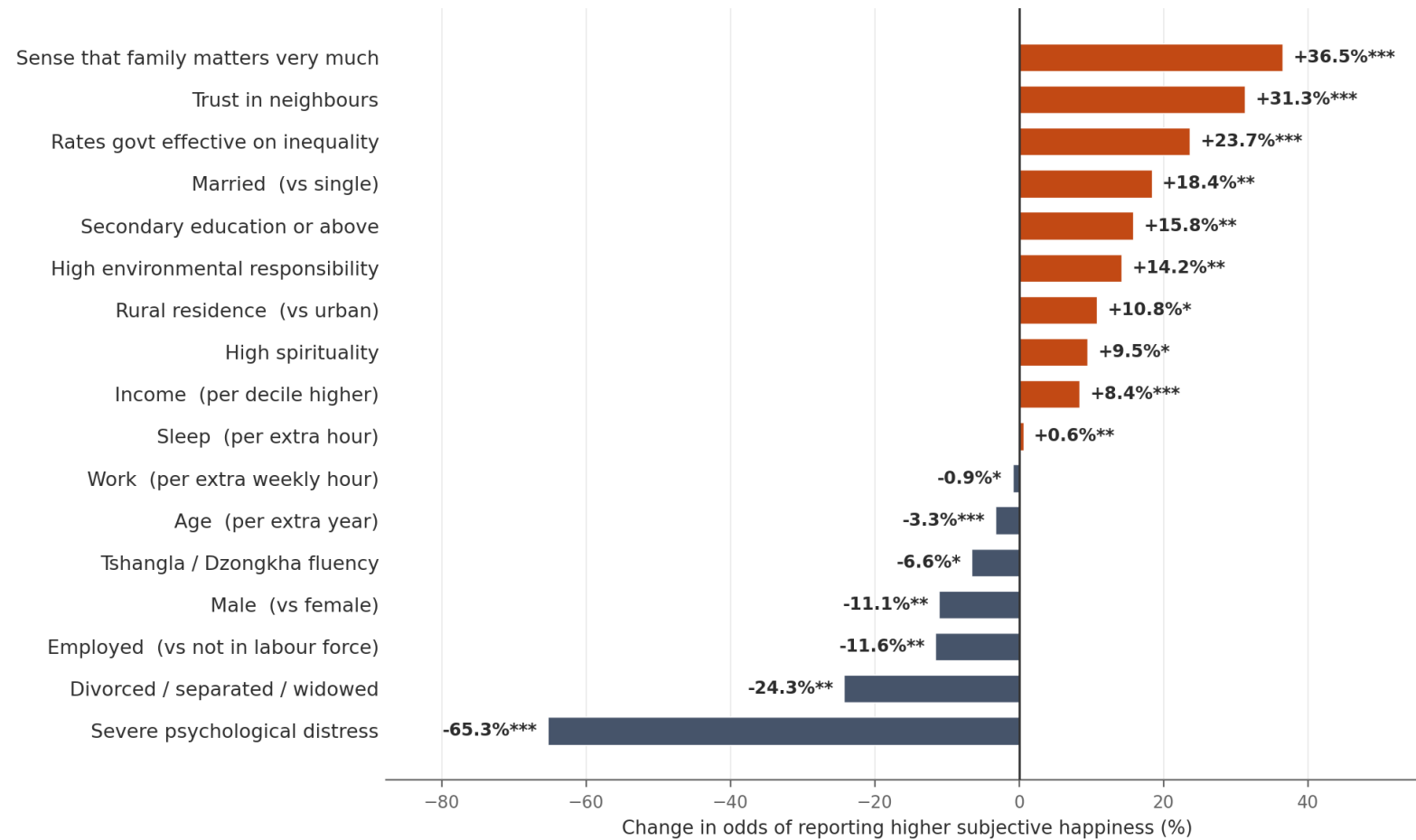
## Where Bhutanese place their own happiness (GNH 2022)

Distribution of current subjective happiness on a 0–10 scale. Two-thirds rate themselves 7 or above; the mean (6.93) sits well short of the happiness people say the



## What raises and lowers subjective happiness in Bhutan

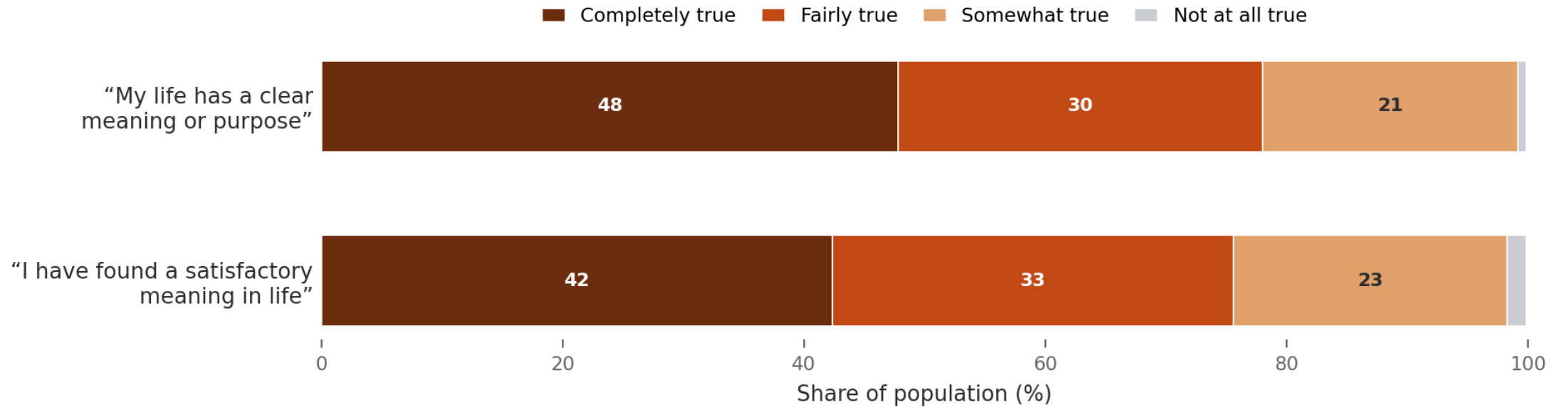
Ordered-logistic regression on subjective happiness (0-10), GNH 2022. Each bar = the change in the odds of reporting higher happiness when the predictor rises by one unit or shifts from 0 to 1.



*N* = 10,918 · Pseudo *R*<sup>2</sup> = 0.038 · \*\*\* *p* < 0.01 · \*\* *p* < 0.05 · \* *p* < 0.10. Income, sleep, work and age are per-unit effects; the rest are 0/1 contrasts.

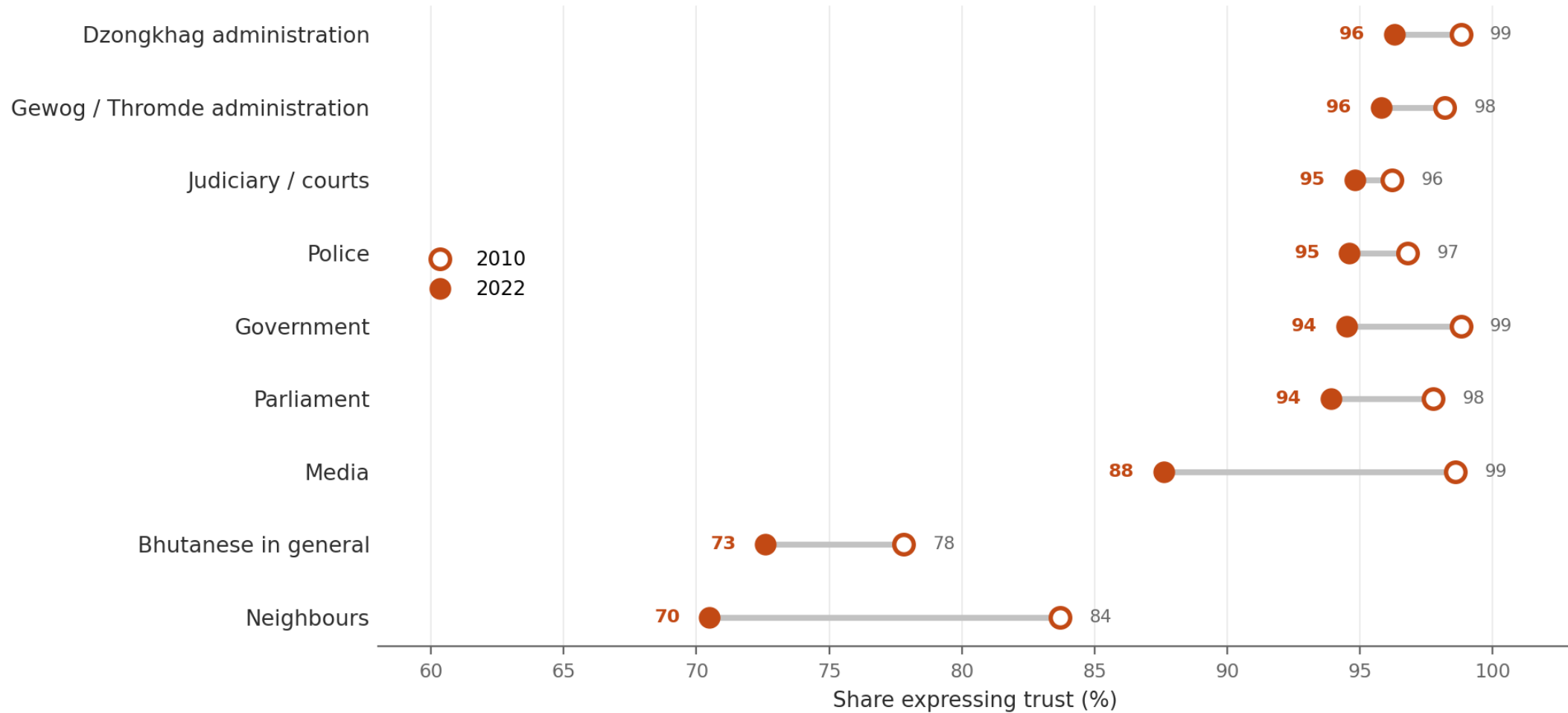
## A sense of meaning and purpose in life — Bhutan (GNH 2022)

How true each statement is of the respondent. Almost half say it is “completely true”.

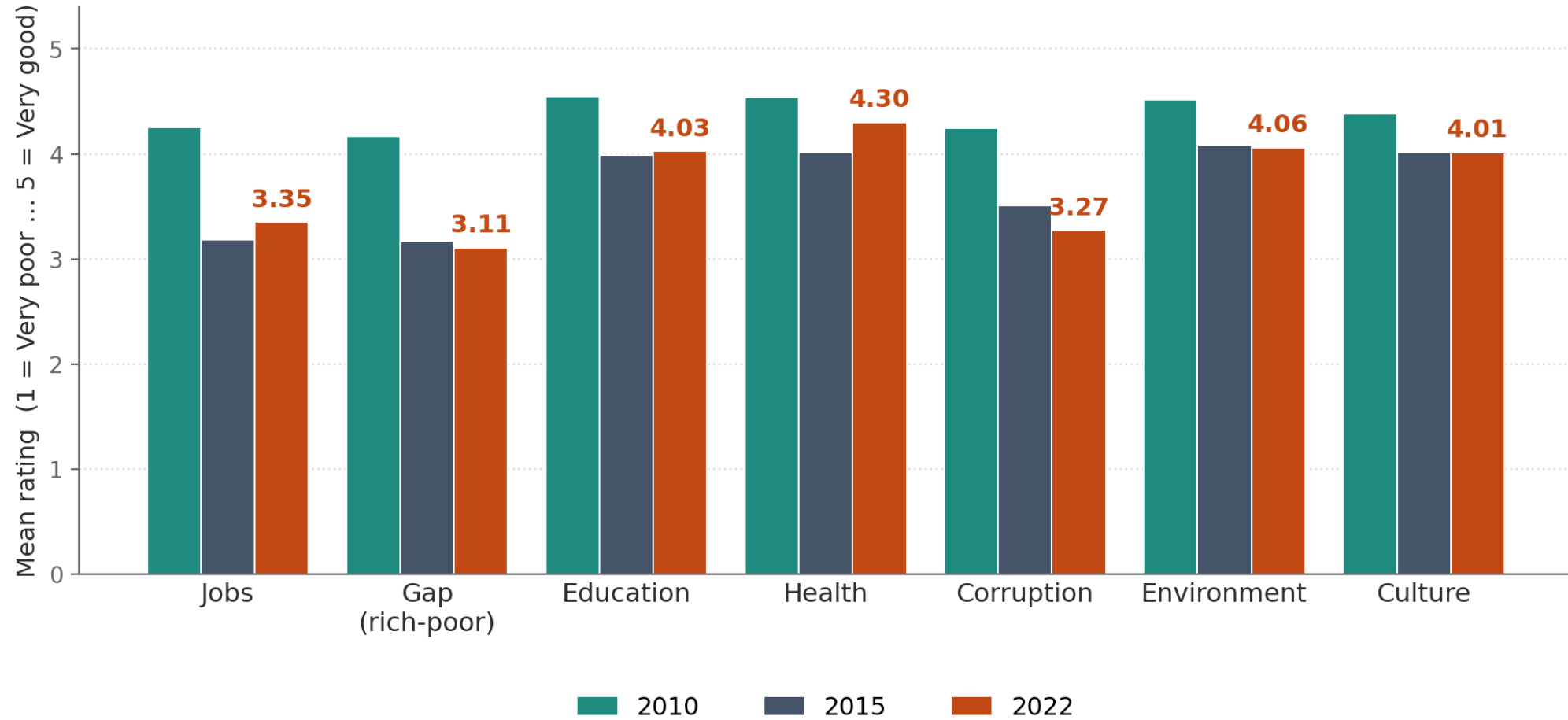


## Trust eroded between 2010 and 2022 – institutions and people

Share expressing trust in each institution or group. Empty circle = 2010, full red circle = 2022. Every form of trust fell; media and neighbours fell most.

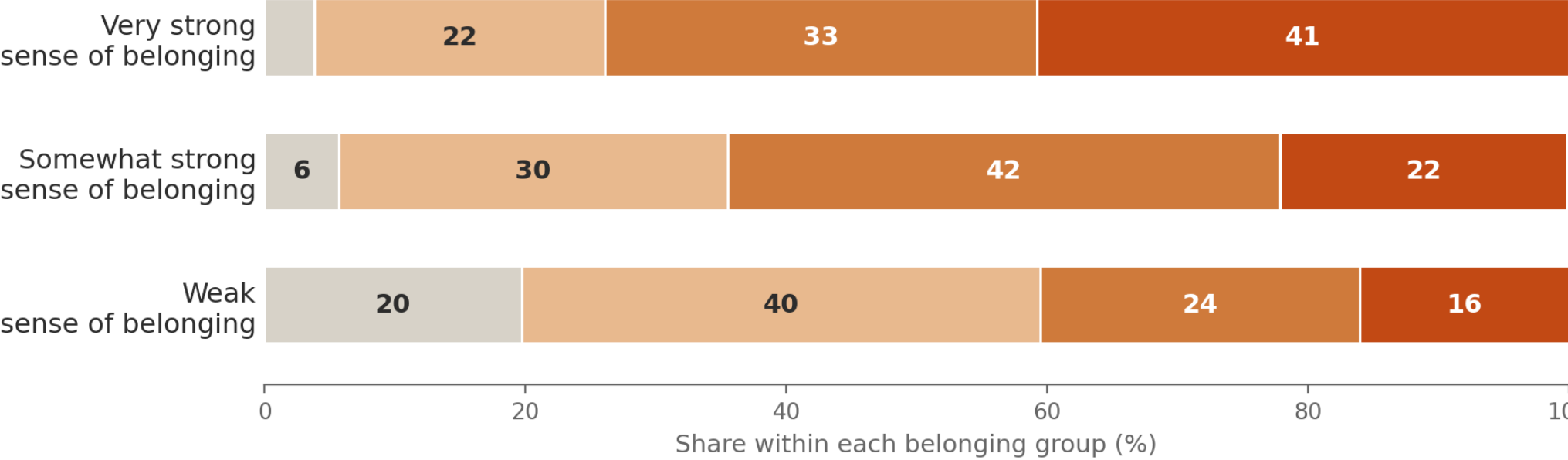


# Government performance ratings across 7 areas, 2010 / 2015 / 2022



# Belonging breeds trust in neighbours

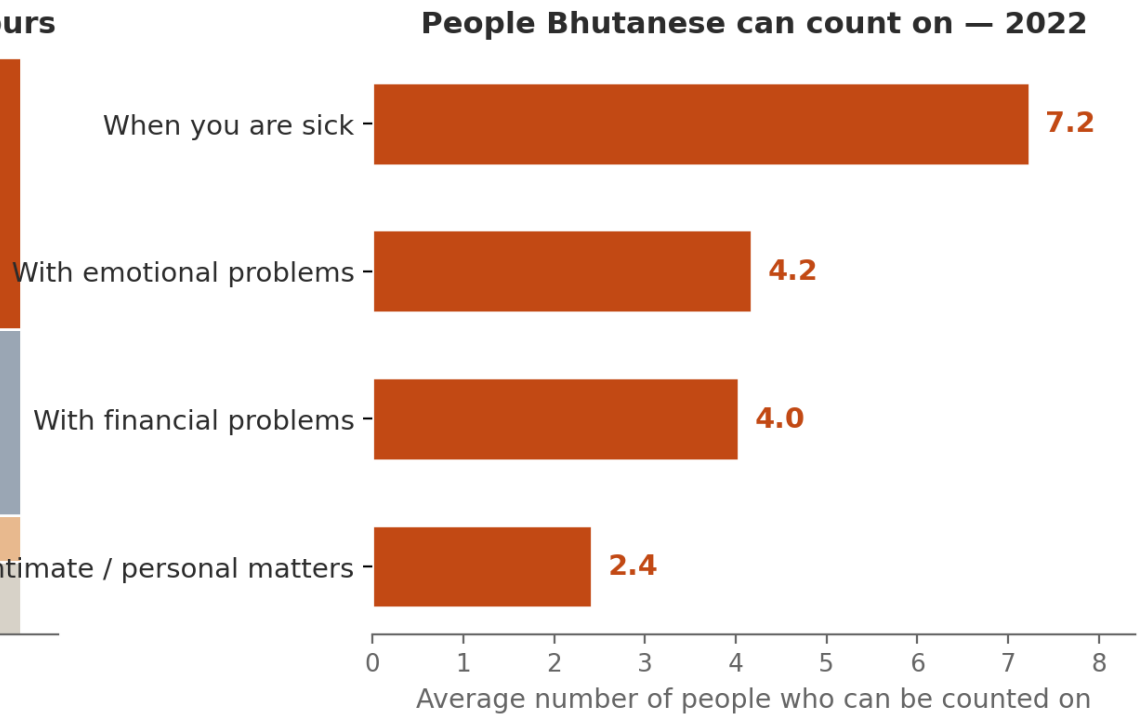
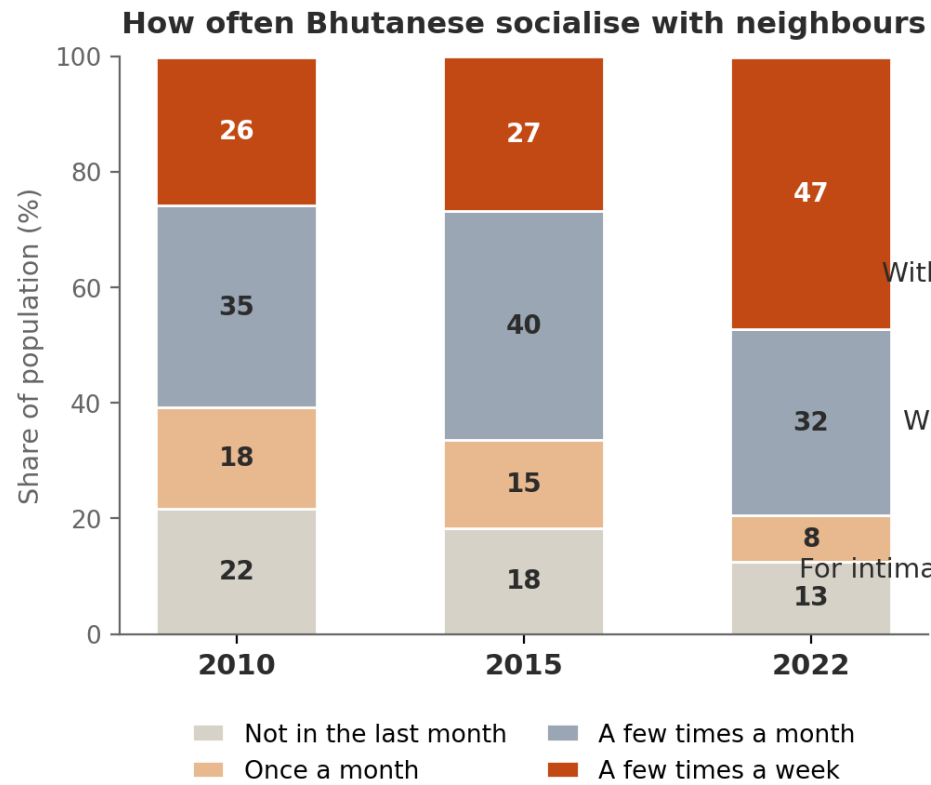
Among Bhutanese with a very strong sense of belonging, 41% trust most of their neighbours — against only 16% of those who feel they barely belong. Trust in neighbours rises steeply with attachment to place.



Trust none of them    Trust a few of them    Trust some of them    Trust most of them

# Bhutanese socialise more often — and rarely stand alone

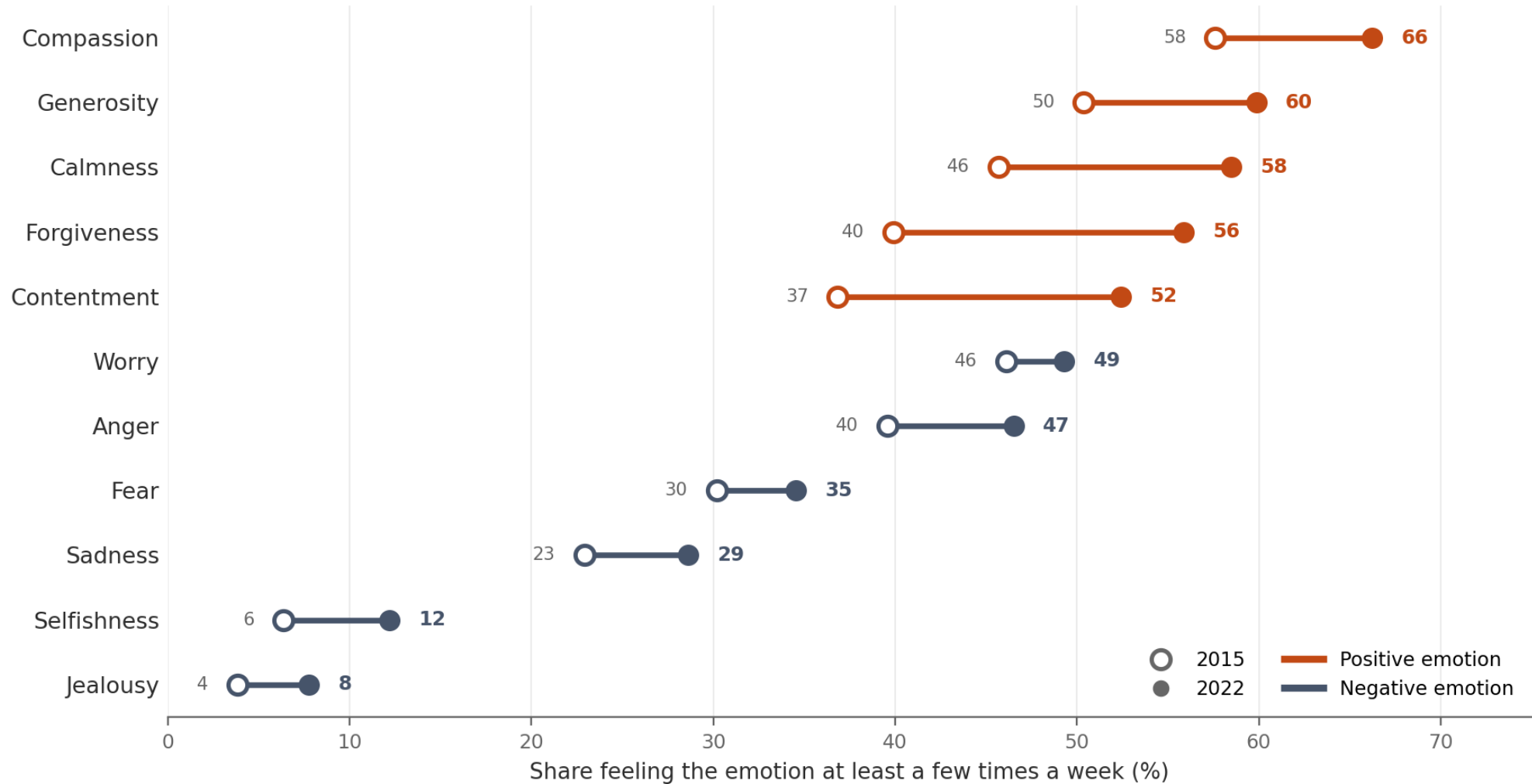
Left: the share socialising with neighbours a few times a week jumped from 26% in 2010 to 47% in 2022.  
 Right: in 2022 the average Bhutanese could name about seven people to count on when sick.



*Banded survey responses (None, One, Two, Three, 4-6, 7-9, 10 or more) converted to band mid-points.*

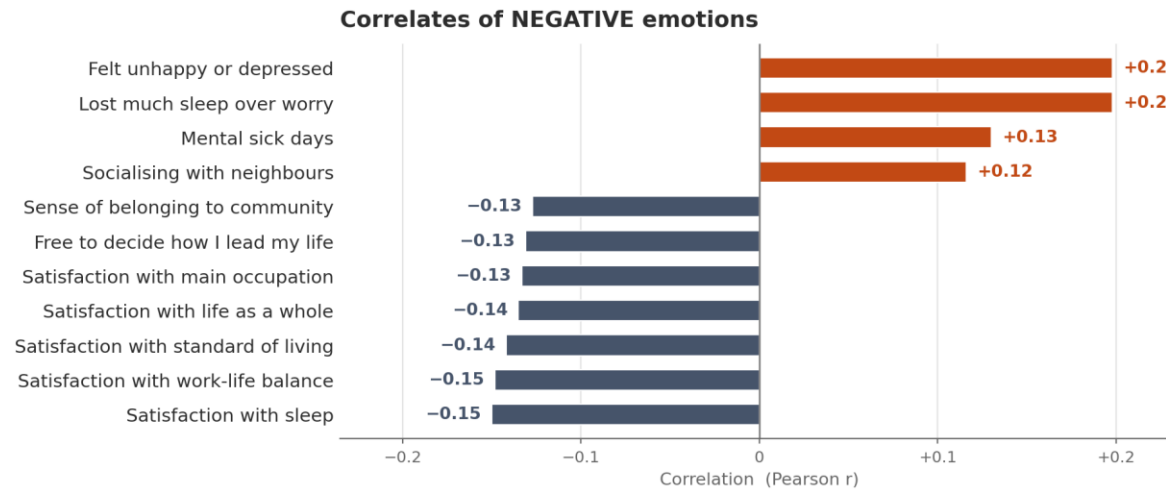
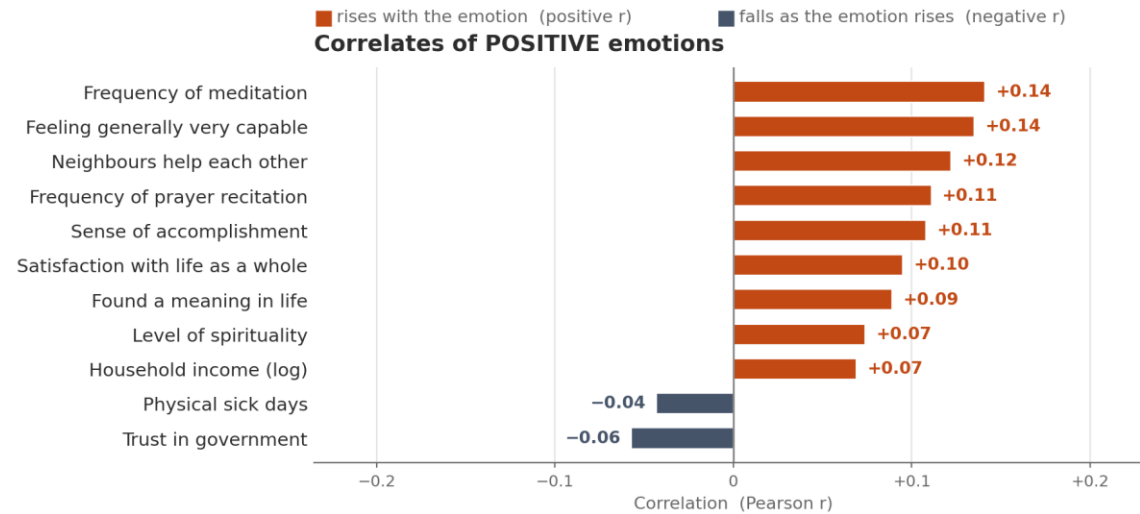
## Bhutan's emotional life is intensifying — emotions 2015 → 2022

Share feeling each emotion at least a few times a week. Positive emotions rose far more than negative ones, but both became more frequent.



## Emotions track only loosely with life circumstances

Pearson correlation of each emotion index with other GNH 2022 variables (N = 11,052). Even the strongest links are weak — no  $|r|$  above 0.20 — and positive and negative emotions behave as two near-independent dimensions.

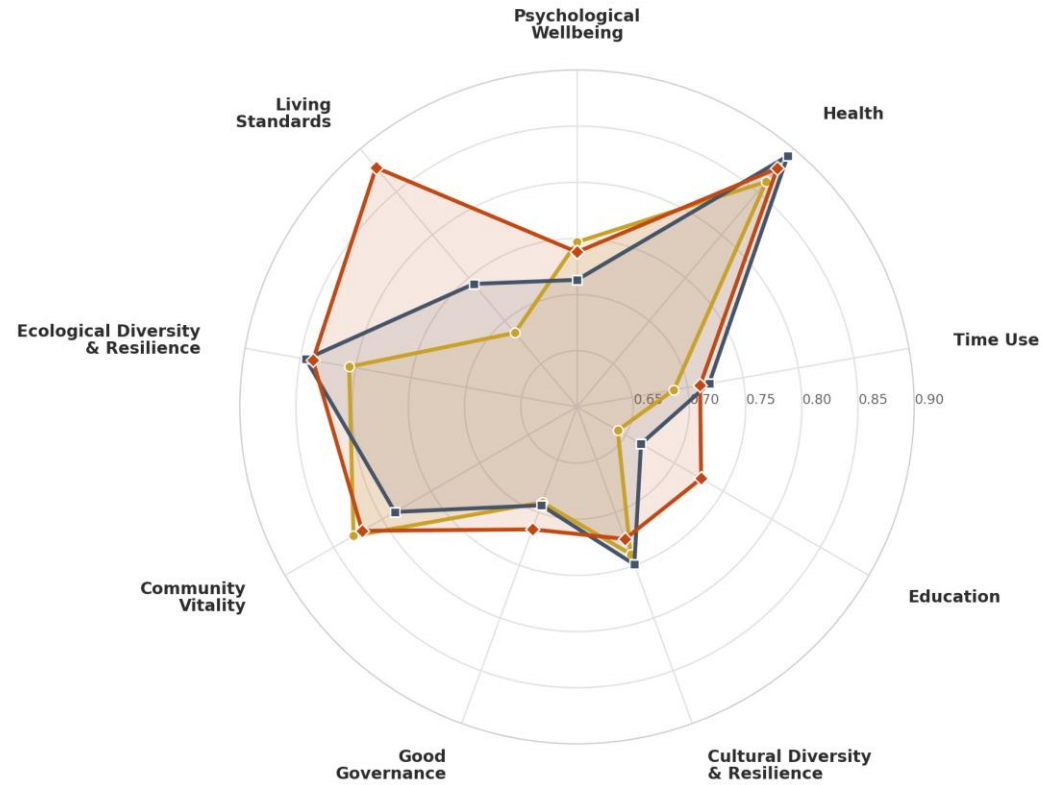


Positive emotions index: calmness, compassion, forgiveness, contentment, generosity. Negative emotions index: anger, selfishness, jealousy, fear, worry. Both measured as frequency of the feeling over the past month, GNH 2022 Survey microdata.

## Nine domains of Gross National Happiness, 2010 - 2022

Each axis is a GNH domain score on a 0 - 1 scale - the further out the line, the higher the achievement. Every wave gains ground on the one before, the 2022 ring lying almost wholly outside 2015, with the largest gains in living standards and education.

—●— 2010 · GNH Index 0.743    —■— 2015 · GNH Index 0.756    —◆— 2022 · GNH Index 0.781



Radial axis starts at 0.60 so wave-to-wave differences are legible. Domain score = GNH-Index domain contribution x 9.

**Vielen Dank**