

# Governance and Happiness

Global Survey Results

Research Initiated and  
Directed by Victor Pinchuk

# FOREWORD

We are at a crossroads. People all over the world have lost faith in the political, economic, and social systems. Populist sentiment is widespread. And in Western Europe and the USA - some of the richest and happiest countries of the world - there is a deep sense of gloom about the happiness of future generations. No surprise, then, that the political mainstream is scrambling for a new story.

We make a compelling argument, based on a unique and extensive global survey, that politicians should govern for happiness. This is the great new frontier of governance and public policy. Already a small number of countries have begun to revive an idea that is centuries-old, but is needed more than ever: that the key goal of government is to increase the happiness of the people.

Governments are right to move in this pioneering direction. The data show that people value happiness above all else in their lives. And when asked directly, an overwhelming majority of people across the world agree that governments should place happiness centre-stage. If that weren't enough, the numbers show clearly that happier people vote to re-elect incumbent governments. It is in their own electoral self-interest to embrace this enlightened new narrative.

Happiness offers a radical political story, one that focuses attention onto the real and concrete issues of people's lives. A focus on well-being is not an indulgence, nor is it a distraction from the major issues. Far from it. It is a compelling new narrative, one that can help to end some of the partisan divides in countries today. And the data show, populists strongly support the idea of governing for happiness.

The science of happiness has grown enormously in the past few decades, and the knowledge is there to make this happen. What is needed now is the political will.



**Victor Pinchuk**



# Research Team:

- Research initiated and directed by Victor Pinchuk.
- Fieldwork & tabulation by Schoen Consulting.
- Scientific advice, data analysis, and report by George Ward.

# Our Thanks:

- We are extremely grateful for helpful comments and suggestions by Niall Ferguson, Richard Layard, Steven Pinker, and Fareed Zakaria.
- We thank Stéphane Fouks and Gilles Finchelstein for advice on questions at the initial stage.
- We thank Katya Pinchuk for assistance with additional data analysis.

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# SELECTED MAIN FINDINGS

- ✓ Although the USA and Western European countries are among the happiest in the world, they are also the most pessimistic about future happiness. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ There is a consensus that the current political, social and economic system is not working for people's happiness. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ We estimate that around 22% of the population we study is strongly populist. The most populist nations are Brazil, South Africa and Ukraine. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ Across all countries, the majority of people feel their voice is not being heard. This feeling is strongest amongst the most unhappy survey respondents. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ A majority of people across the world consider happiness and health to be the most important factors in their lives, more so than more material factors like income and career success. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ An overwhelming majority of people express strong support for government playing a role in looking after people's happiness. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ Happiness is strongly related with political beliefs and behavior. Happier citizens are much more likely to approve of their national leader and, ultimately, vote to re-elect governing parties. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ Unhappy people are much more likely to hold strongly populist beliefs, suggesting that low well-being may play a role in the rise of populism. [\[slide\]](#)
- ✓ Support for governance for happiness is strongest among strongly populist respondents. Governance for happiness should be a key strategy for politicians seeking a new narrative in order to stem the populist electoral tide. [\[slide\]](#)

# GLOBAL HAPPINESS & POLITICAL ATTITUDES (GHPA) SURVEY

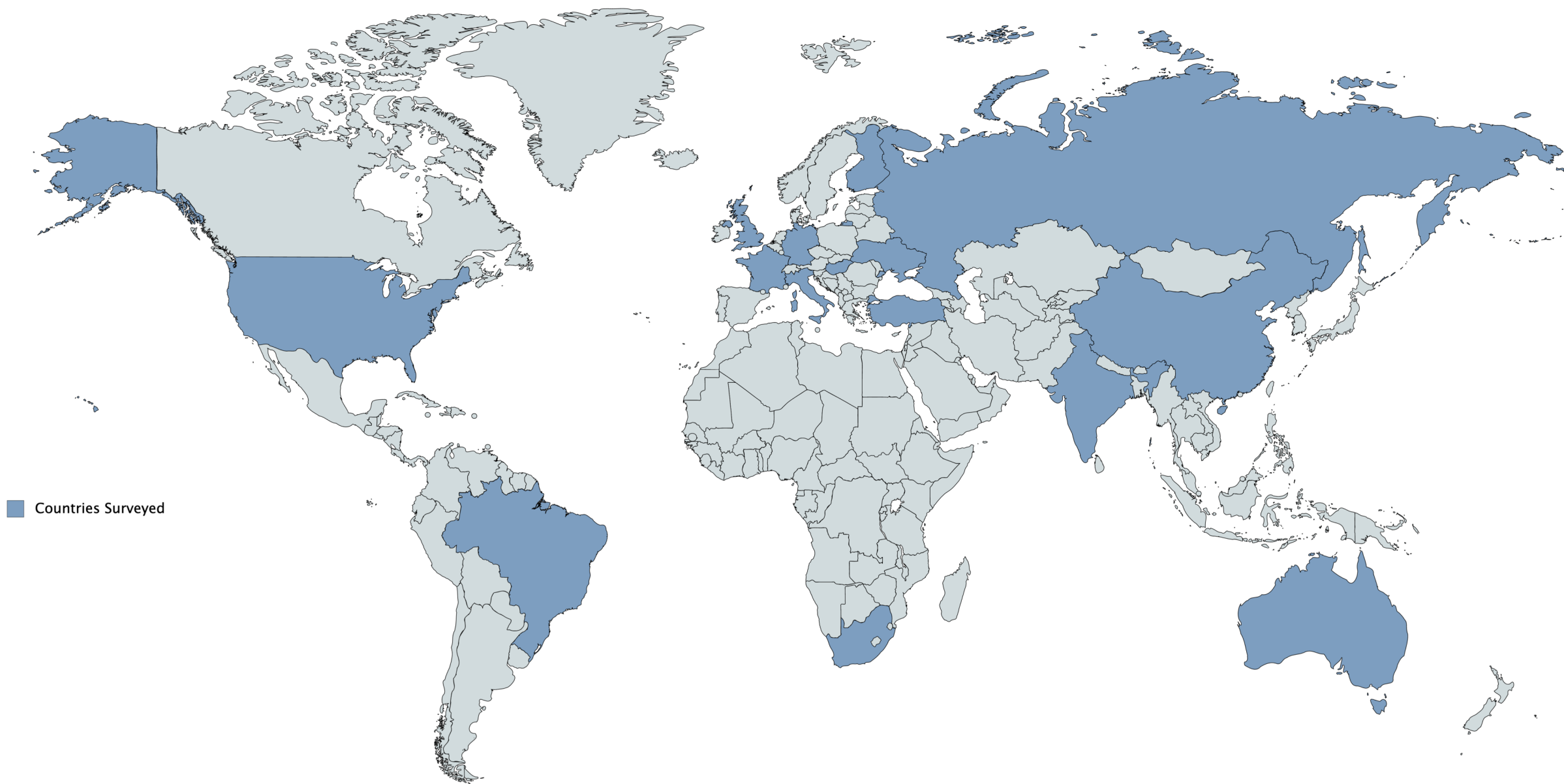
- 15 countries surveyed in May & June 2019
- Survey sample is representative of 51.9% of world's population
- Nationally representative samples of around 1,000 respondents per country
- Mixture of telephone, face-to-face, and online surveys
- Intention is to release the dataset as an open-access resource for academic researchers

Australia <sup>^</sup>	Italy
Brazil	Russia
China	South Africa*
Finland	Turkey
France	UK
Germany	USA
Hungary	Ukraine
India*	

\* Sample representative of online population

<sup>^</sup> Smaller sample (~500)





# INTRODUCTION: SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

- The past few decades have seen an explosion in research – mostly in economics and psychology – on subjective well-being (SWB), which is often referred to broadly as “happiness”
- Two broad dimensions of SWB are typically studied
  - **Evaluative Well-Being**
    - Overall assessments of how life is going
    - Our main question: *Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?*
      - We refer to this often simply as “life satisfaction” or “life evaluation”
      - We also look at the same question, asking where people feel they will stand in 5 years’ time
  - **Emotional/Hedonic Well-Being**
    - Experience of positive and negative emotions day-to-day
    - Our main question: *How happy did you feel yesterday on a scale from 0 to 10? Zero means you did not experience the feeling “at all” yesterday while 10 means you experienced the feeling “all the time” yesterday.*

# INTRODUCTION: HAPPINESS AND POLITICS

- The burgeoning academic literature on happiness focuses largely on the determinants of well-being
  - For example, are men happier than women? Are older people happier than younger? Does money buy happiness? And so on.
  - In the political sphere, this research includes questions like whether liberals are happier than conservatives, or whether partisans are happier when their chosen party is in power.
- But much less is known in general about the role of happiness as a causal force in its own right
- In this report, we largely focus on happiness as a *predictor* of subsequent beliefs and behaviors - particularly in regard to politics (see [Ward 2019](#)) . For example:
  - Are happier people more likely to vote?
  - Are happier people more likely to vote for incumbent parties?
  - Are unhappy people more likely to be populists?

# INTRODUCTION: GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS

## - **Measurement:** Beyond GDP

- Many national statistics offices are now collecting happiness data on a large-scale
- The OECD, which was itself influential in establishing GDP as a cross-national indicator, has published extensive [guidelines](#) on measurement
- Intention is to use this data as an alternative measure of national welfare/success
- For further background, see, e.g., [Durand and Exton \(2019\)](#)

## - **Governance:** Beyond measurement

- Governing for happiness means using happiness research and data to inform policy priorities and budget allocation, across all areas of government
- Allocate scarce public resources toward policies and programs that are most likely *ex ante* (based on prior research and pilot studies) to increase people's happiness (per \$ spent)
- Evaluate the (cost-)effectiveness of actual policies *ex post* using happiness data
- Create new institutions/posts with responsibility for well-being
- For further background, see, e.g., [O'Donnell et al \(2014\)](#)



# TIME DIMENSION OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

## What we do:

- Much of the current academic and policy discussion focuses on the current *level* of life evaluation and hedonic happiness, across individuals and countries
- We look at people's predictions about their own happiness, and the country's happiness, in five years' and a generation's time

## Key takeaways:

- While Western European countries are some of the happiest in the world, they are also the most pessimistic about the future
- There is a strong sense of gloom among people in these countries that the next generation will either be no happier, or perhaps even less happy, than today
- People in Western European countries more likely to perceive that happiness has not increased since their parents' generation
- Ukraine is the least happy country in our sample, but is also the most optimistic

# COUNTRY-LEVEL LIFE EVALUATION TODAY: COMPARISON WITH 2019 WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT

- Similar question on life evaluation / life satisfaction in both studies.
- For the WHR, Gallup World Poll data is pooled from all surveys between 2016-2018, increasing precision of estimates compared to our single-year sample in each country.
- Our estimates in India and South Africa are representative of the *online population*, not the population as a whole. These SWB estimates are significantly higher.
- Correlation between SWB in the two surveys:  
 $r = .65$
- Omitting South Africa and India, this rises to:

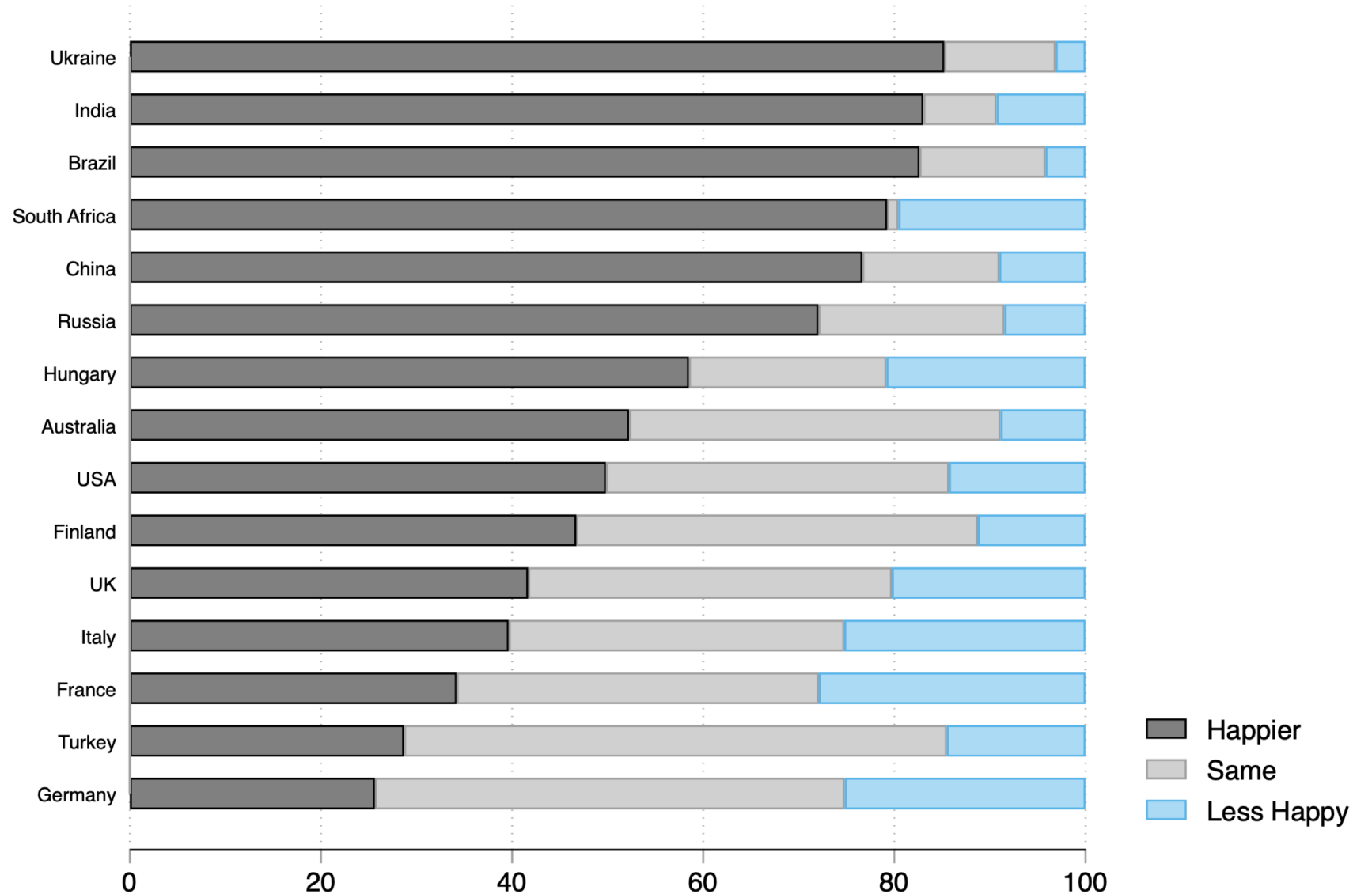
$$\underline{r = .87}$$

Country	WHR: Gallup World Poll 2016-18	GHPA Survey May-June 2019
Australia <sup>^</sup>	7.23	6.40
Brazil	6.30	6.58
China	5.19	5.69
Finland	7.77	6.59
France	6.59	6.38
Germany	6.99	6.37
Hungary	5.82	6.05
India*	4.02	6.33
Italy	6.22	6.45
Russia	5.65	5.60
South Africa*	4.72	6.17
Turkey	5.37	5.84
UK	7.05	6.44
Ukraine	4.33	5.26
USA	6.89	6.86

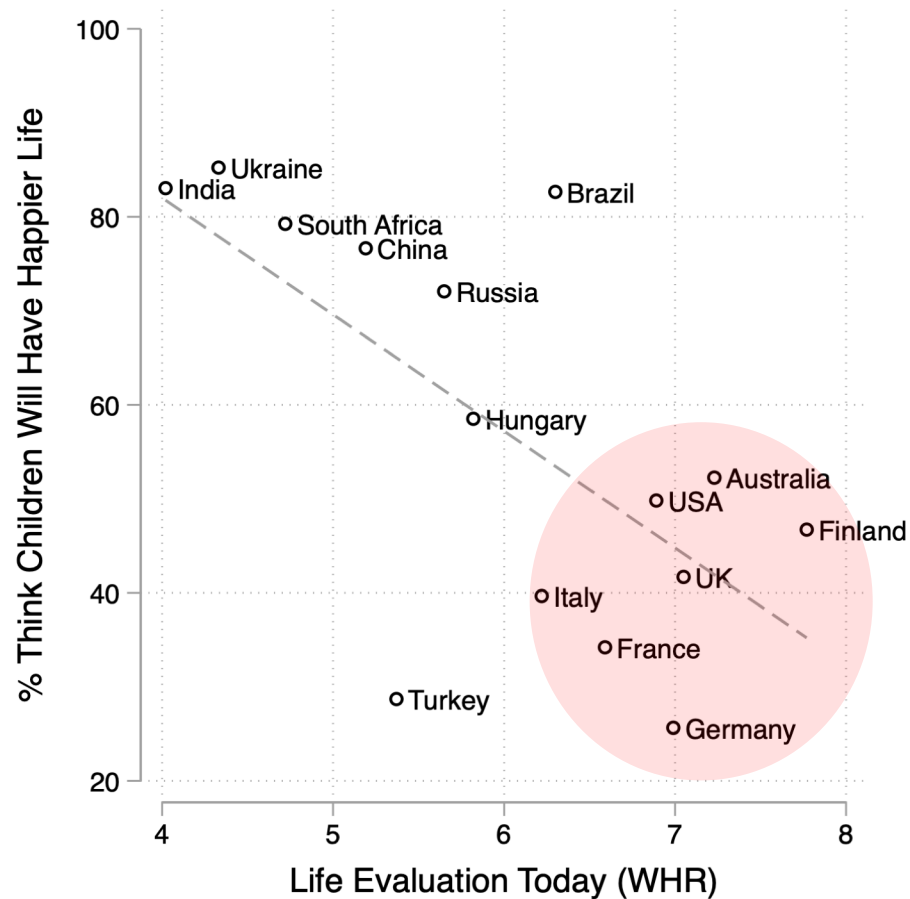
\* Sample representative of online population in GHPA Survey

<sup>^</sup> Small sample in GHPA Survey (~500)

“THINKING ABOUT  
YOUR CHILDREN OR  
FUTURE CHILDREN,  
DO YOU THINK THAT  
THEY WILL HAVE A  
HAPPIER LIFE THAN  
YOU, OR A LESS  
HAPPY LIFE?”



# HAPPINESS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

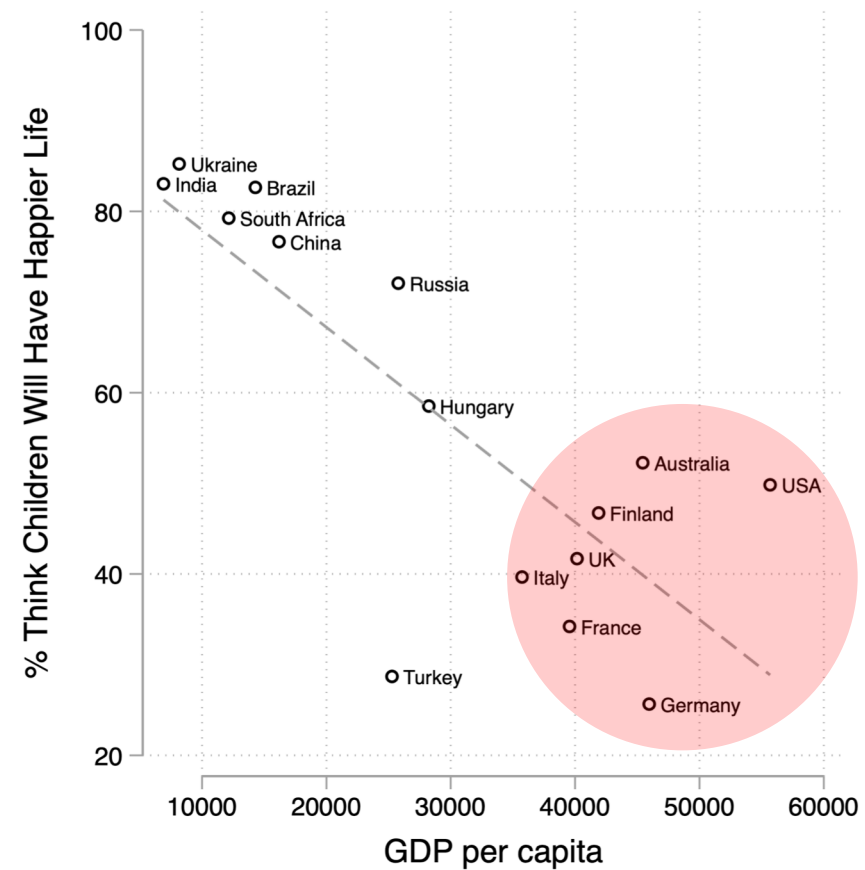
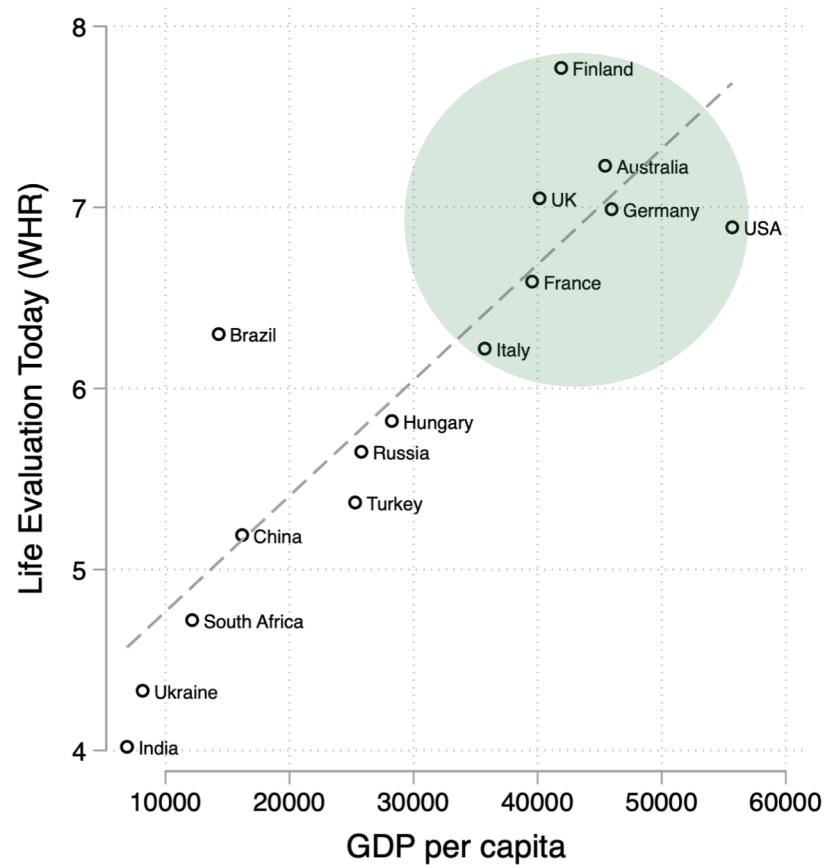


- The Western World is the happiest in terms of their evaluation of life.
- But these countries are the least optimistic about the happiness of future generations.

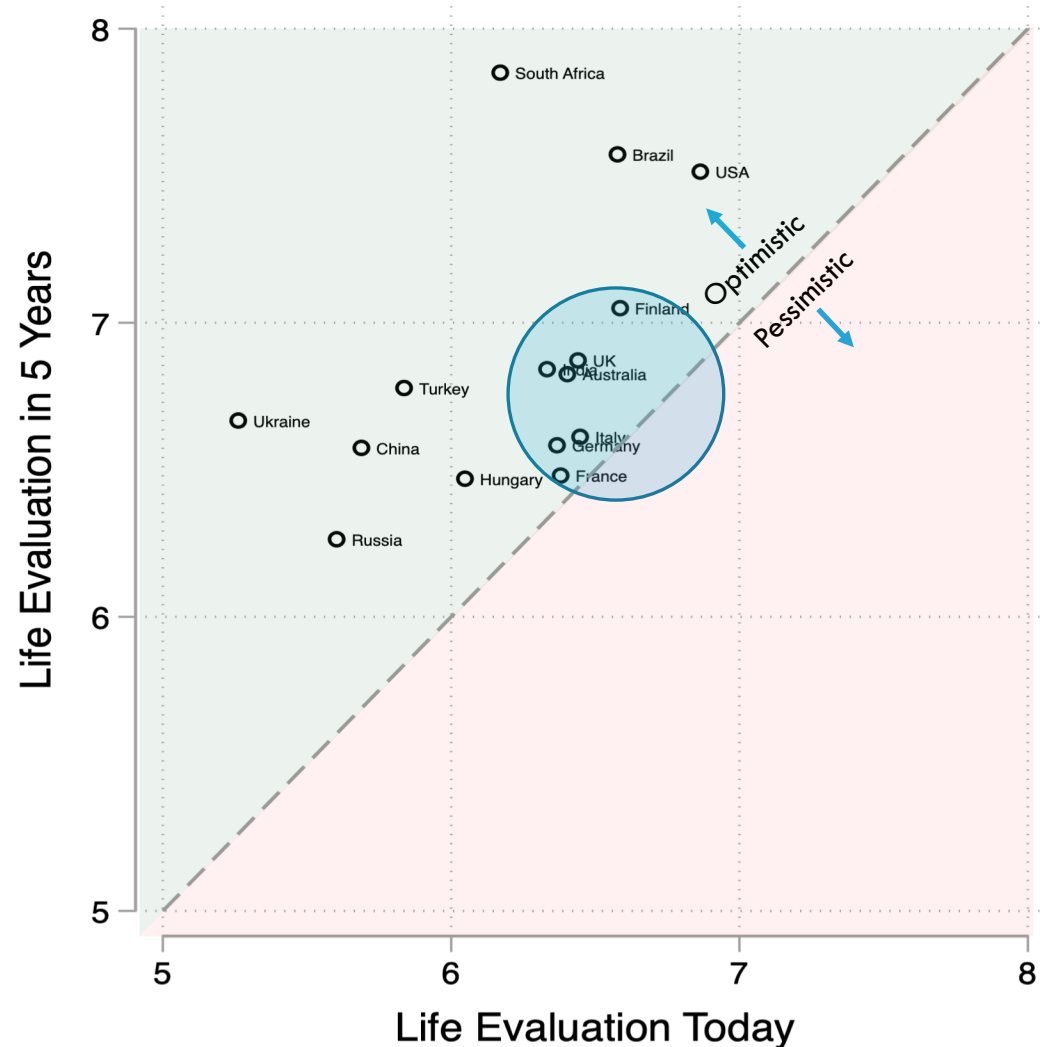
\* Graph shows predicted happiness of future generations in GHPA survey against national happiness today in the World Happiness Report. For similar graph using happiness today in the GHPS, see [here](#).



# PARADOX OF WEALTH: HIGHER GDP IS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGHER LIFE EVALUATION TODAY, BUT LOWER OPTIMISM ABOUT FUTURE GENERATIONS' HAPPINESS



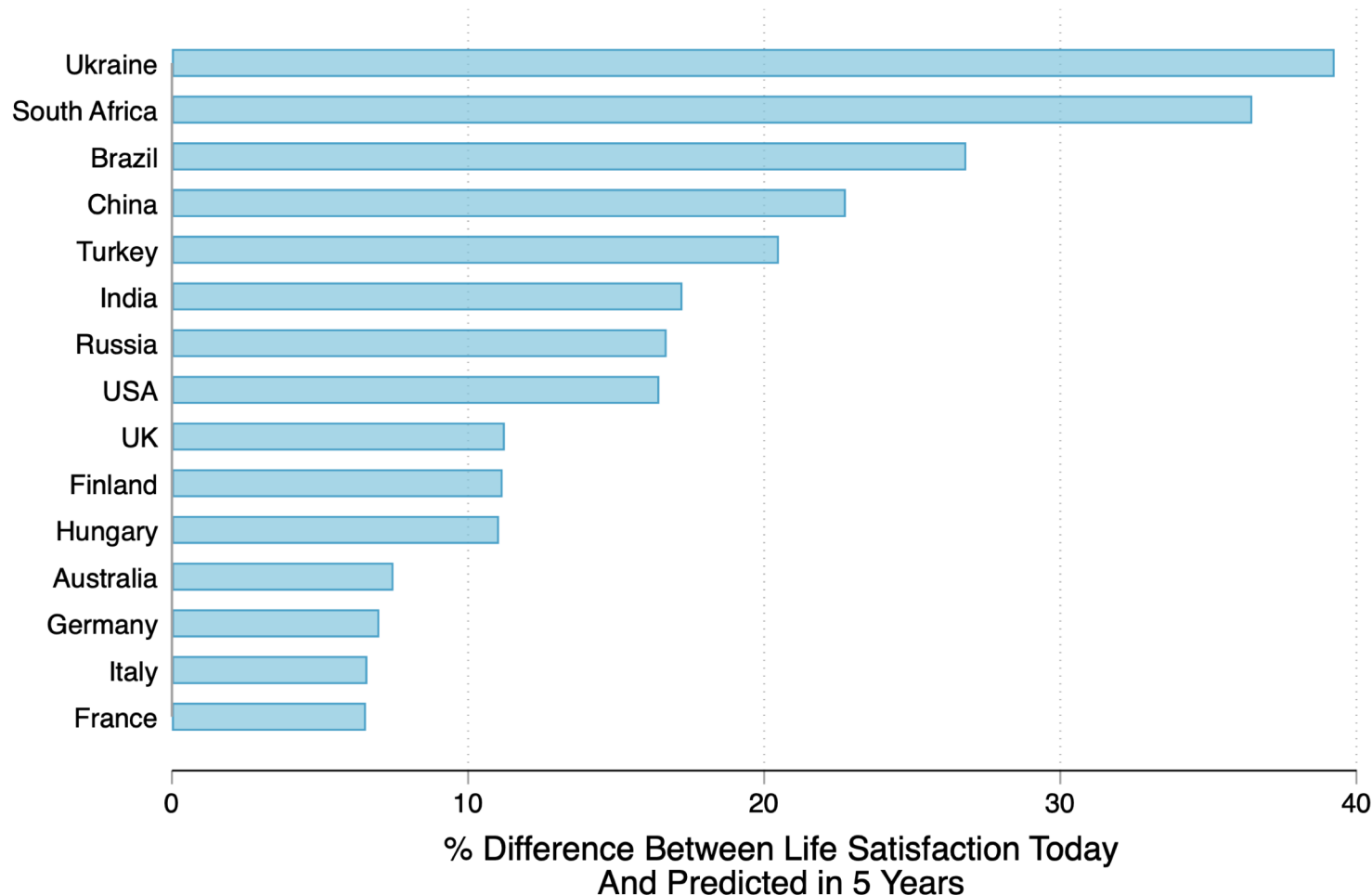
# LIFE TODAY VERSUS IN 5 YEARS' TIME



- 45 degree line added, to divide nations between pessimistic and optimistic
- All countries studied are at least moderately optimistic about happiness over the next 5 years
- Western European countries are least optimistic, and lie closest to the diagonal line

- \* For similar graph using happiness today in the WHR, see [here](#).

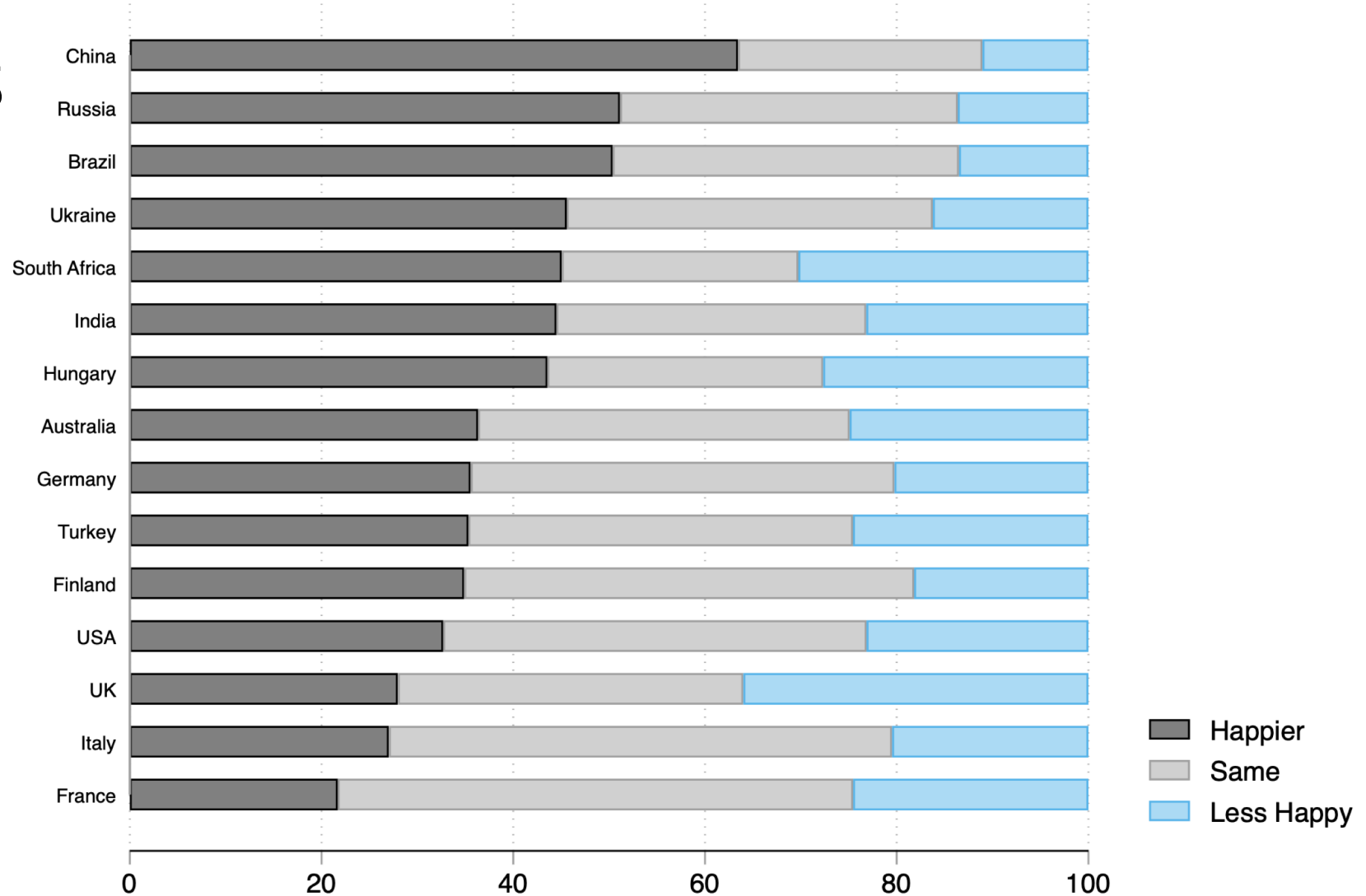
# CHANGE IN LIFE SATISFACTION IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS (PREDICTED % CHANGE)



- Ukraine scores an average of 5.26 in life satisfaction today in the GHPA survey, but respondents on average think they will be 6.67 in five years' time in the same survey.

“IN THINKING ABOUT YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS COMPARED TO YOUR PARENTS WHEN THEY WERE YOUR AGE, DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR LIFE IS HAPPIER OR LESS HAPPY THAN YOUR PARENTS?”

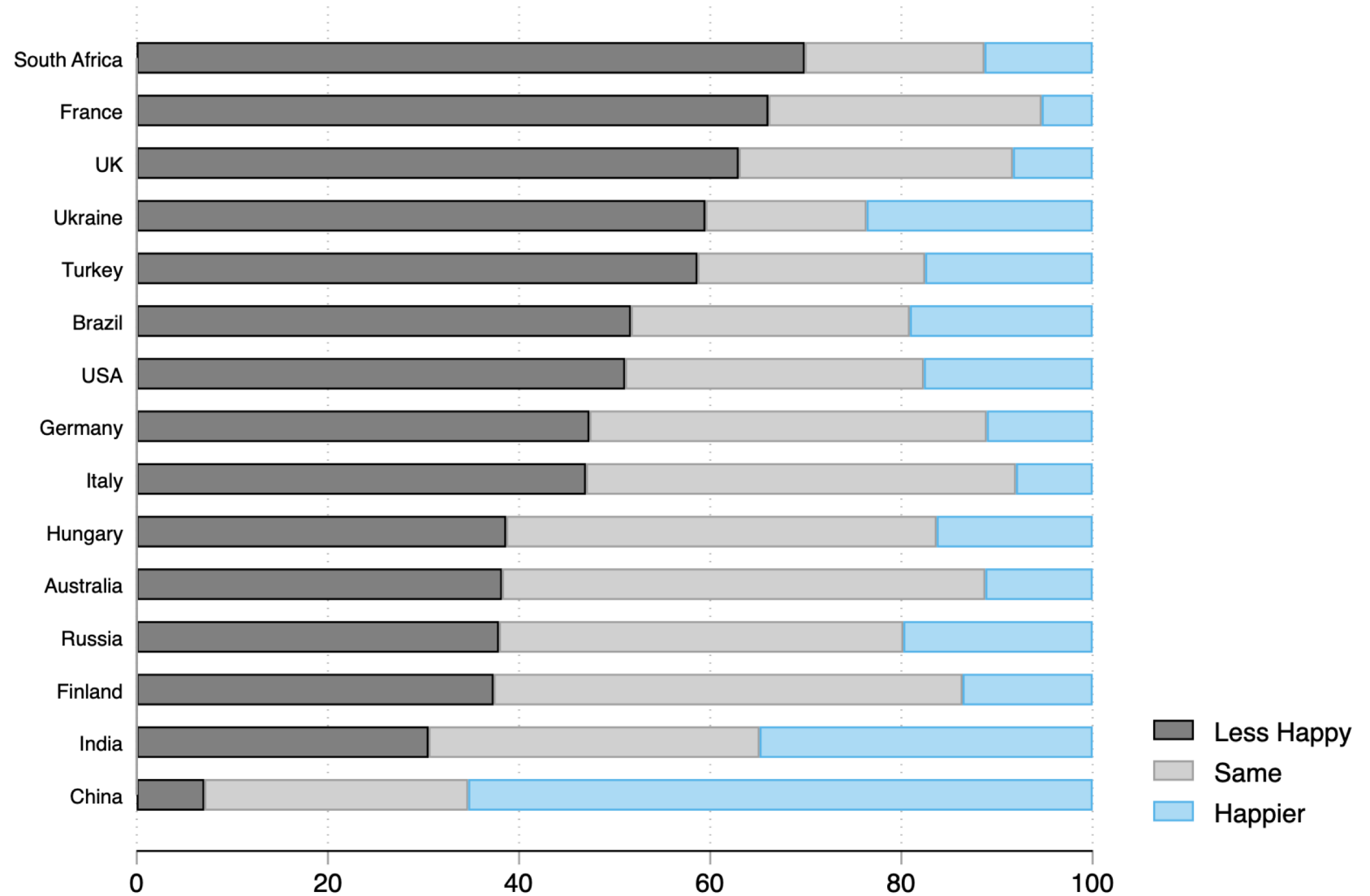
- Despite large increases in material living standards, Western Europe and USA are very downbeat about the state of their lives compared to previous generations.



■ Happier  
■ Same  
■ Less Happy

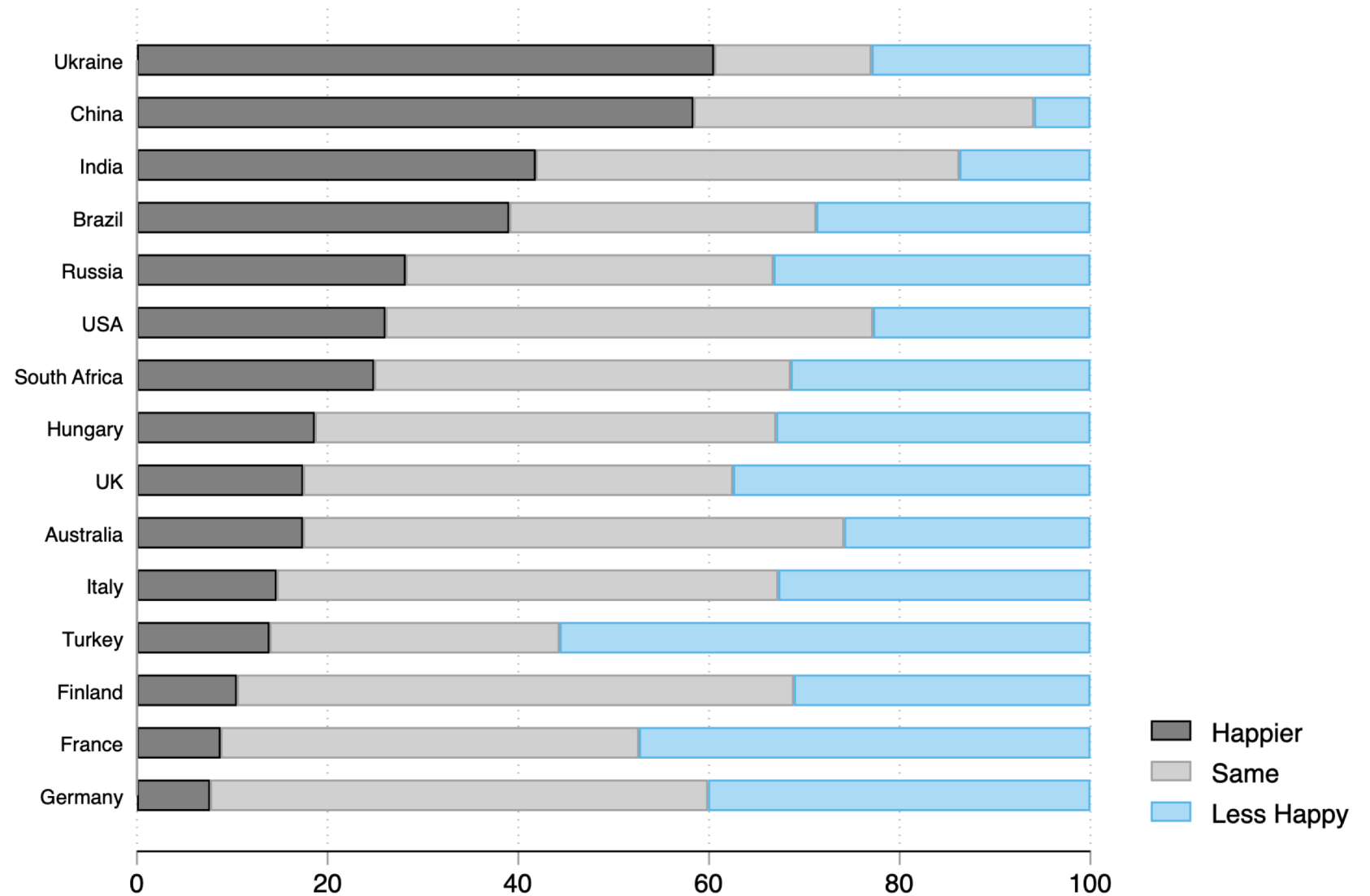


“COMPARED TO 5 YEARS  
AGO, DO YOU BELIEVE  
PEOPLE IN YOUR  
COUNTRY ARE...?”

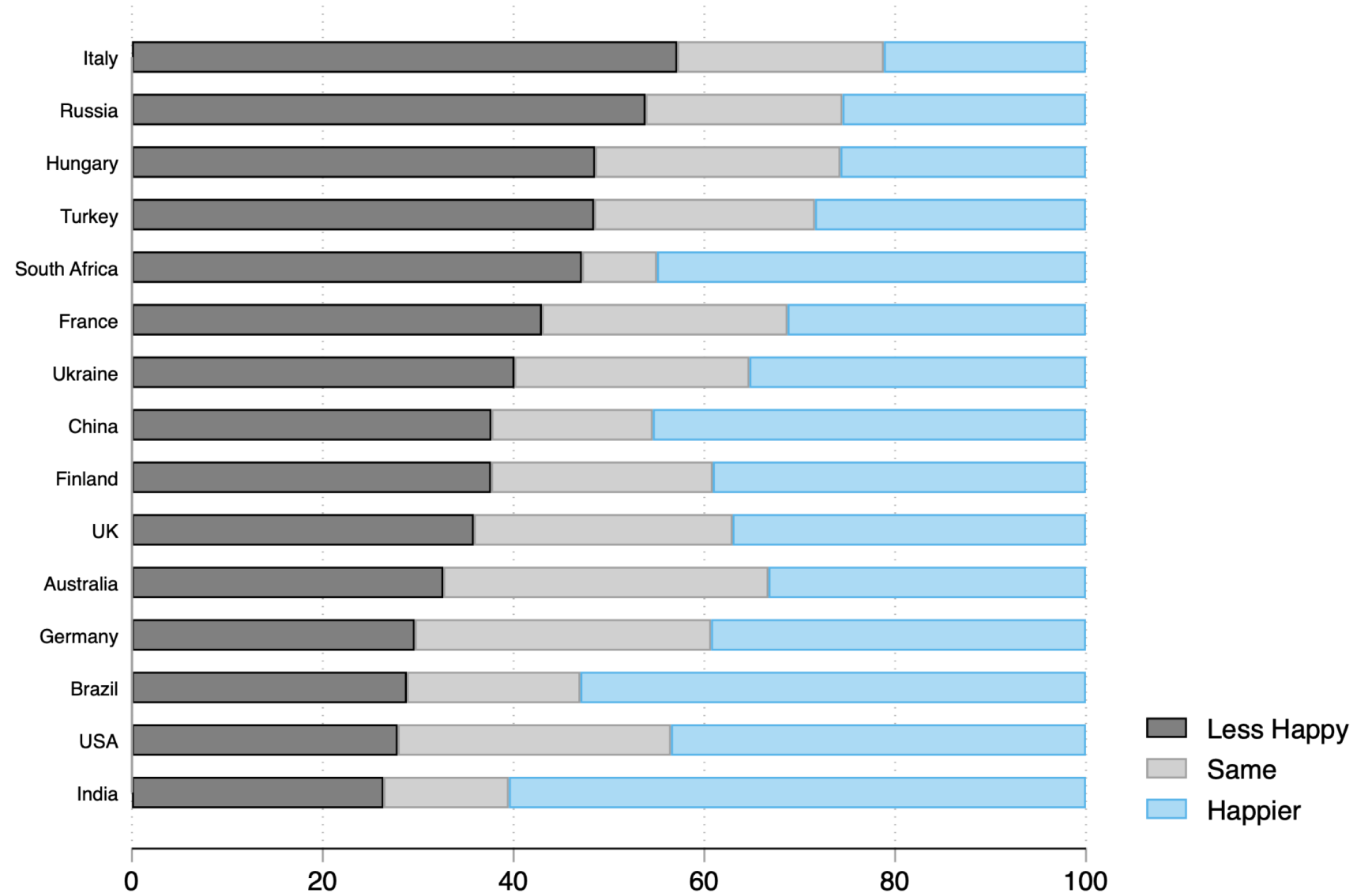


“IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, DO YOU BELIEVE PEOPLE IN YOUR COUNTRY WILL BE...?”

- Expectations are high in Ukraine. People are particularly optimistic about the next 5 years, following the recent 2019 election.



“GENERALLY  
SPEAKING, ARE YOU  
MORE OR LESS  
HAPPY THAN YOU  
WERE WHEN YOU  
WERE TWENTY  
YEARS OLD?”



\* Asked if over 30 years old

# SATISFACTION WITH THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL STATUS QUO

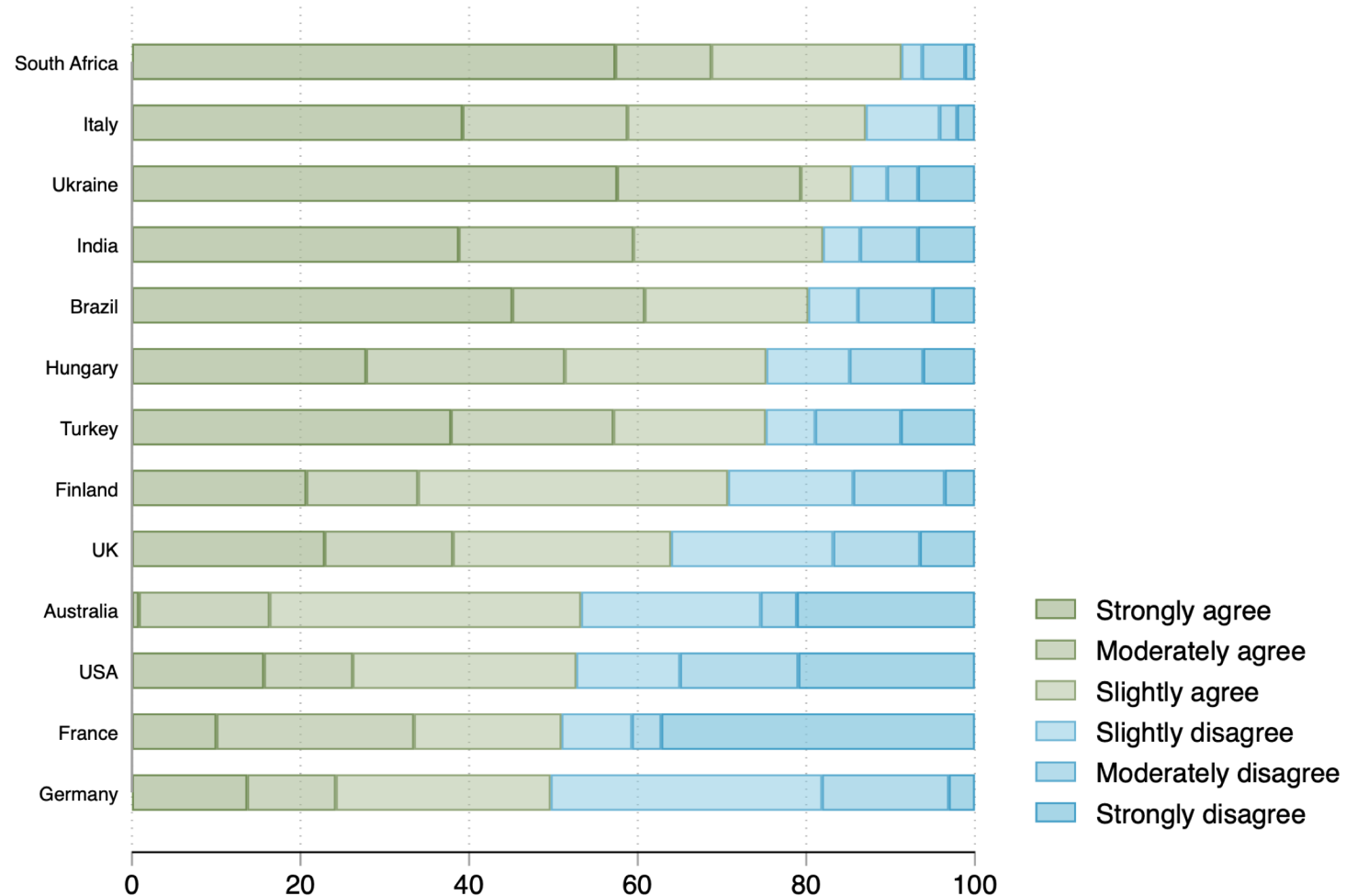
## **What we do:**

- In addition to asking about people's personal happiness, we ask them a series of questions about their impressions of various aspects of the status quo

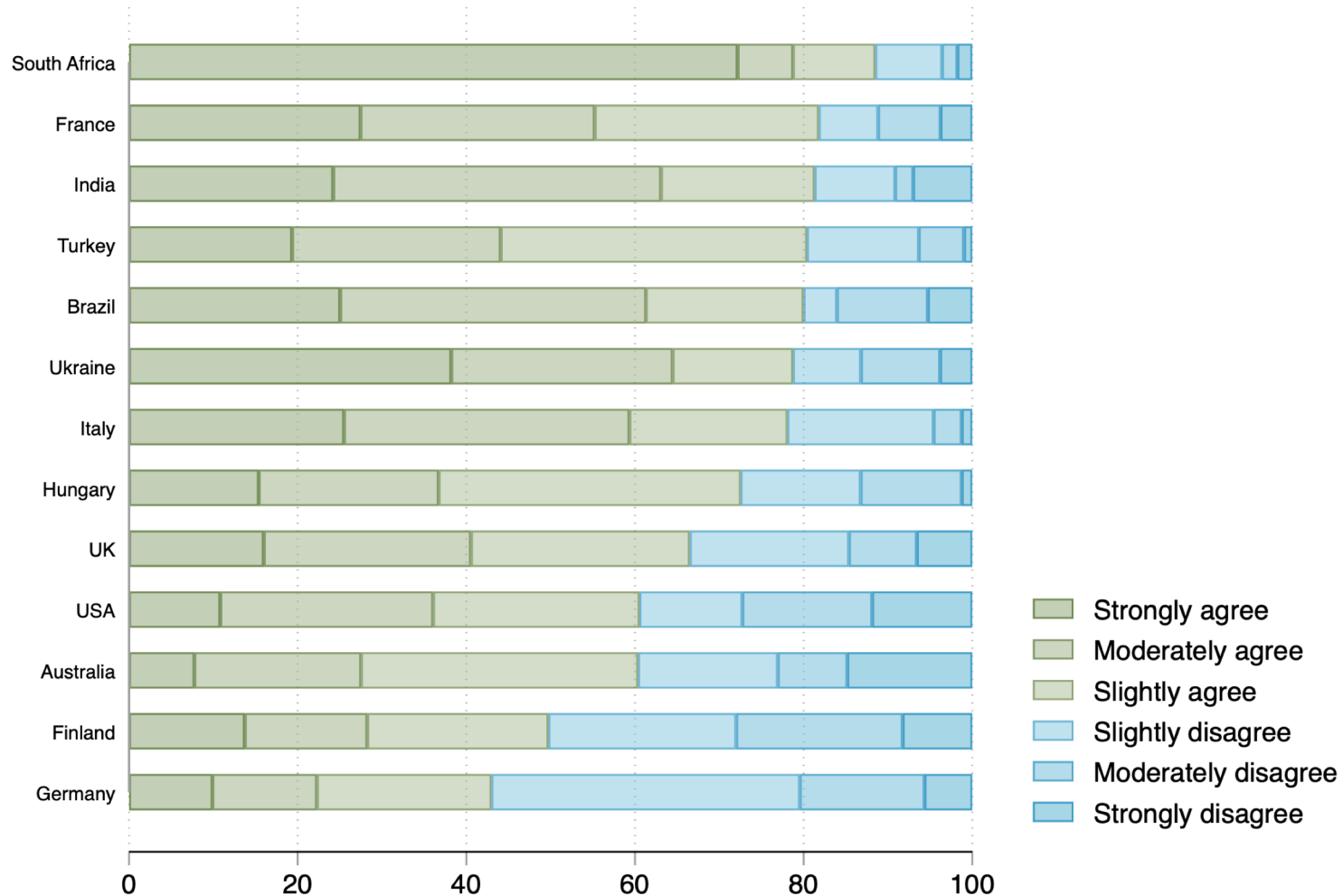
## **Key takeaways:**

- Strong sense across countries that things are not working
- Variation across countries as to which aspects of the system – political, social, economic – are more or less broken
- Ukrainians generally agree that all aspects of the system are broken

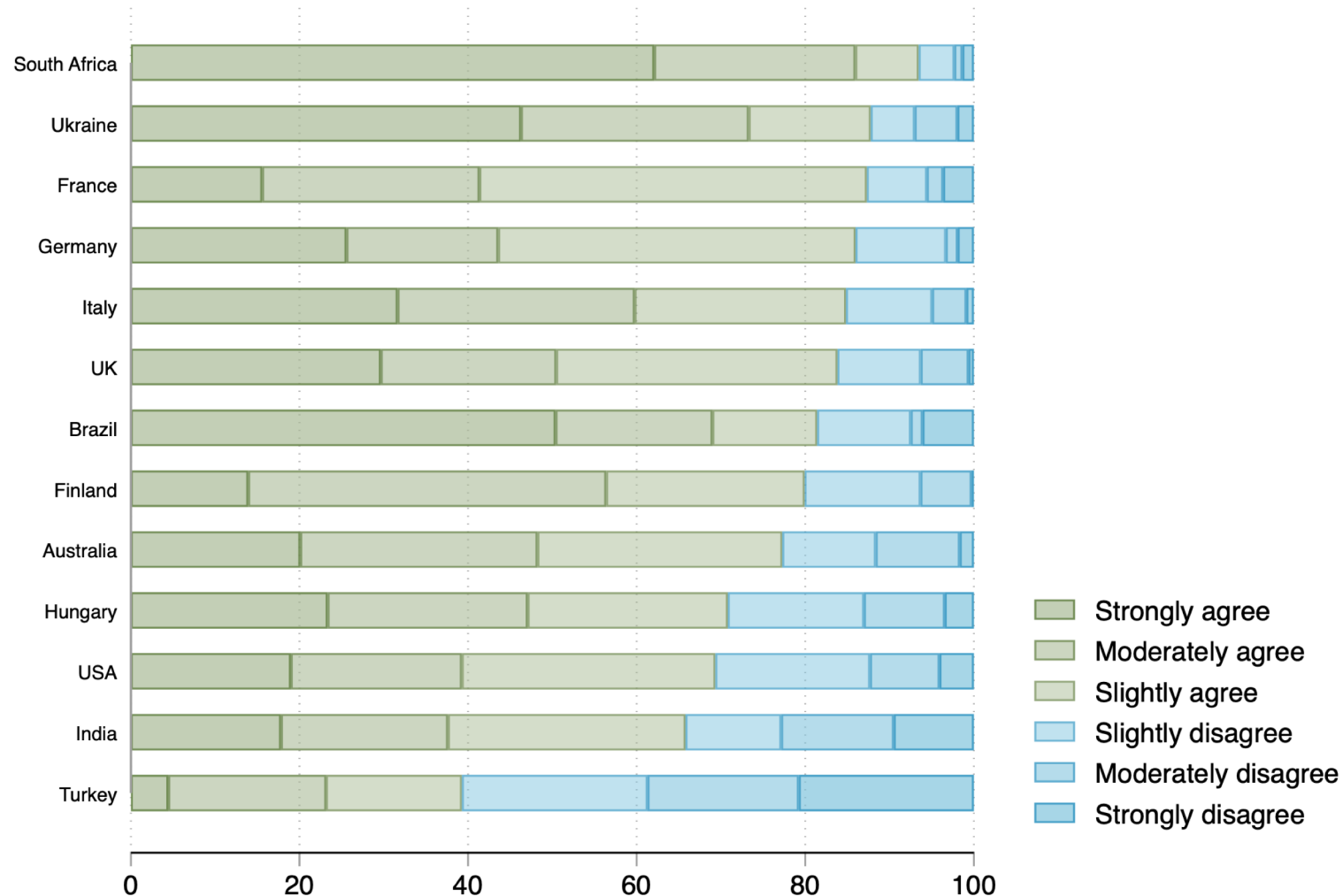
# “WE NEED A NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM TO MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY”



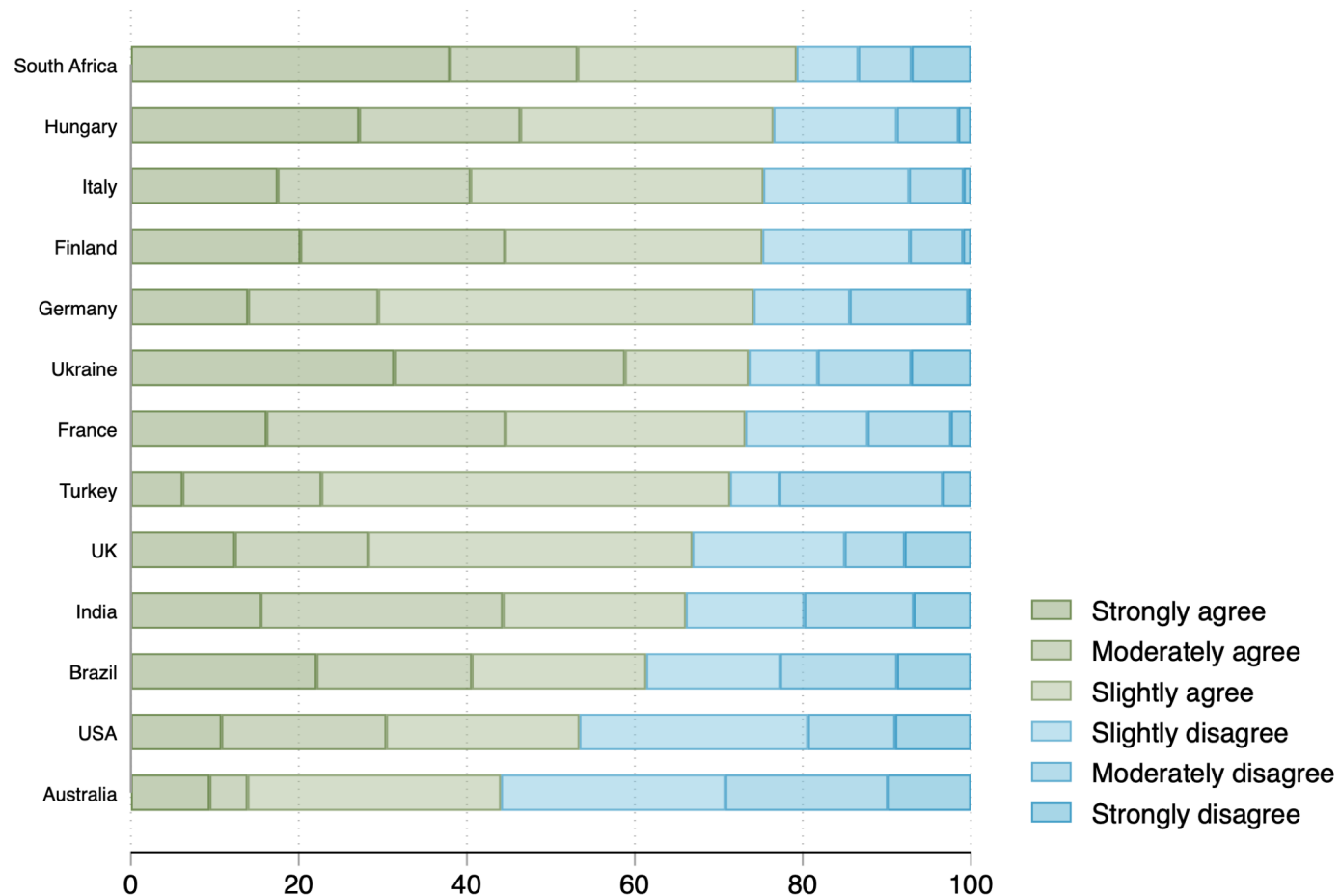
# “WE NEED A NEW ECONOMIC SYSTEM, THE MARKET ECONOMY IS NOT WORKING”



# “GOVERNMENT NEEDS NEW APPROACHES TO ADDRESS SOCIAL STABILITY BECAUSE SOCIETY IS NOT WORKING”



# “TRADITIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS, LIKE COMMUNISM, SOCIALISM, AND CAPITALISM, ARE NO LONGER EFFECTIVE”





# WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT FROM LIFE?

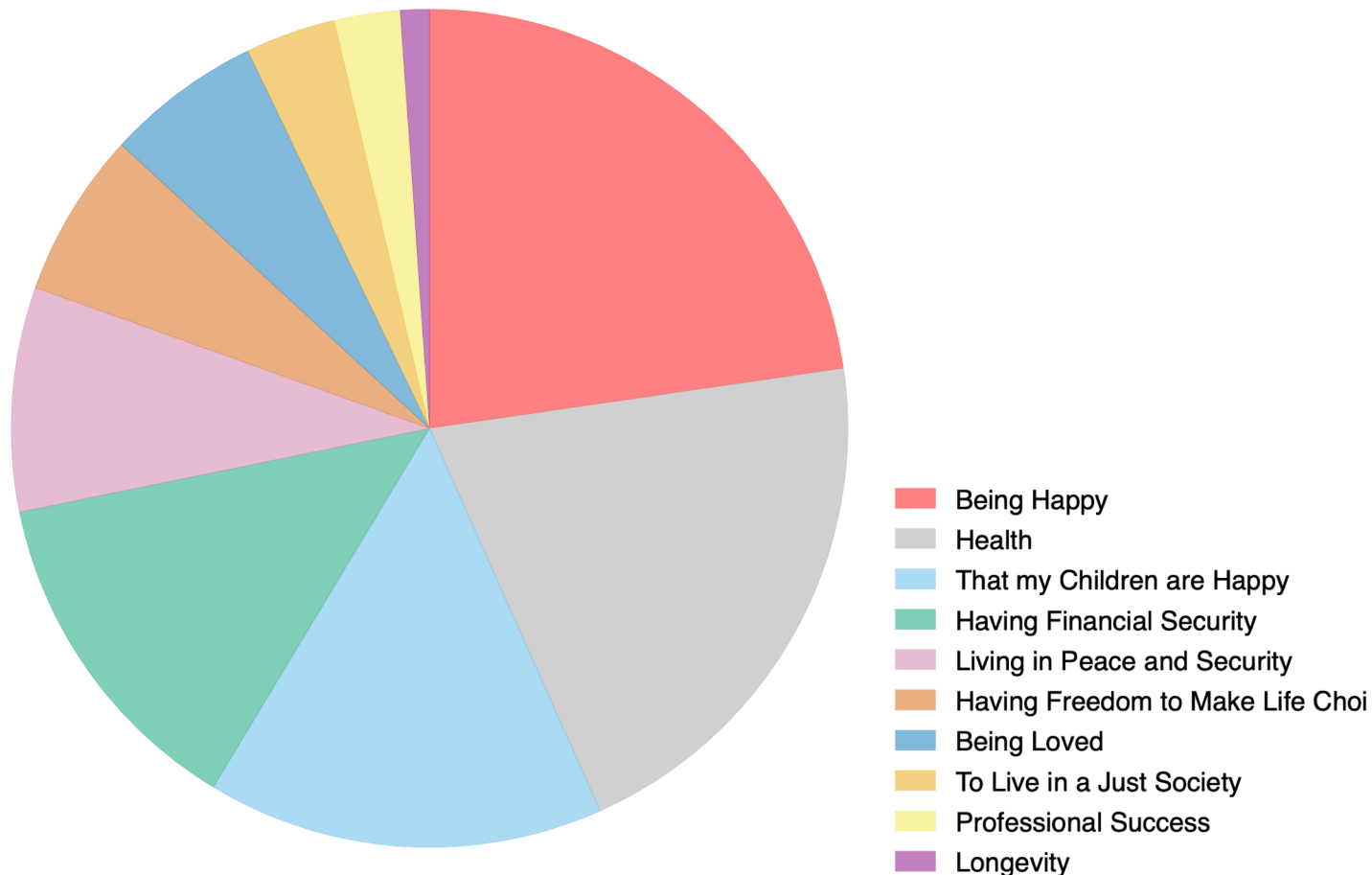
## **What we do:**

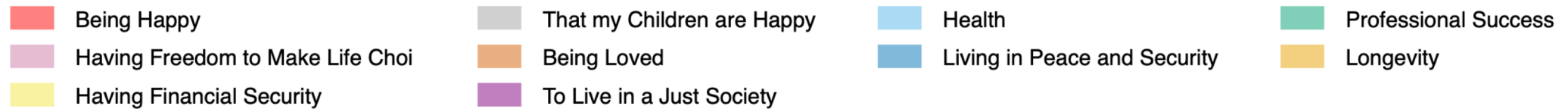
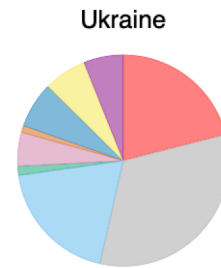
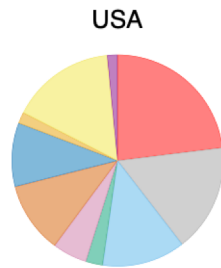
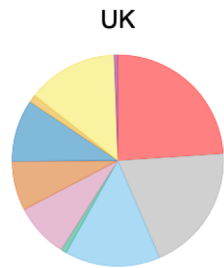
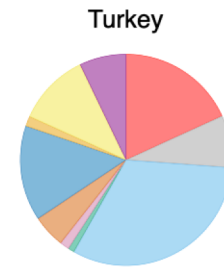
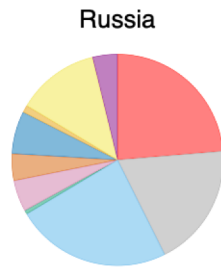
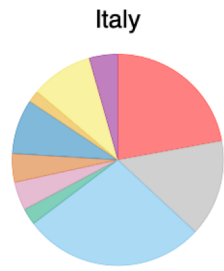
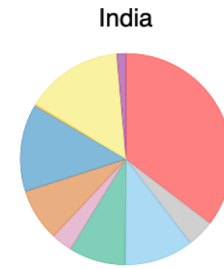
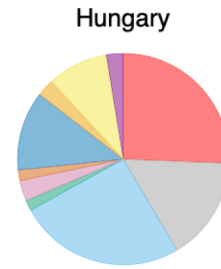
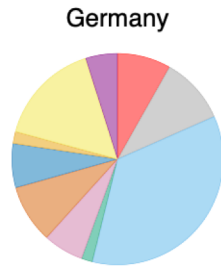
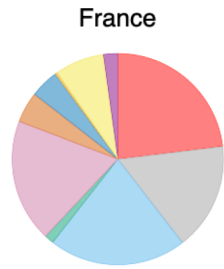
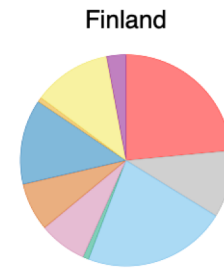
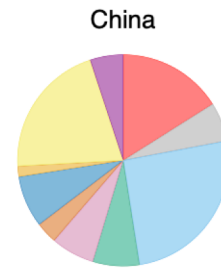
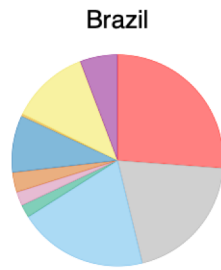
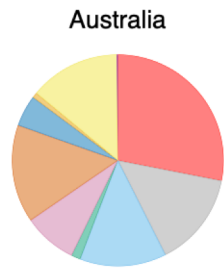
- While there has been a great interest in academia in who is happy and why, much less is known about what people want from life
- We ask people what is most important for them in life

## **Key takeaways:**

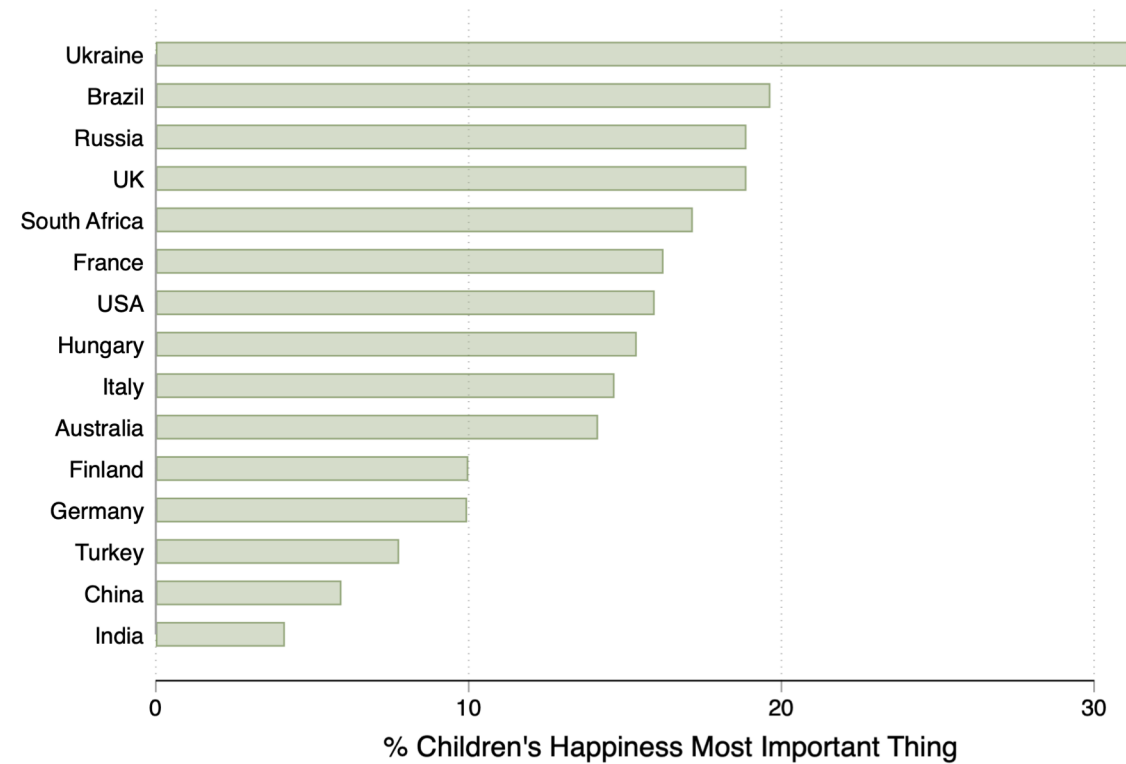
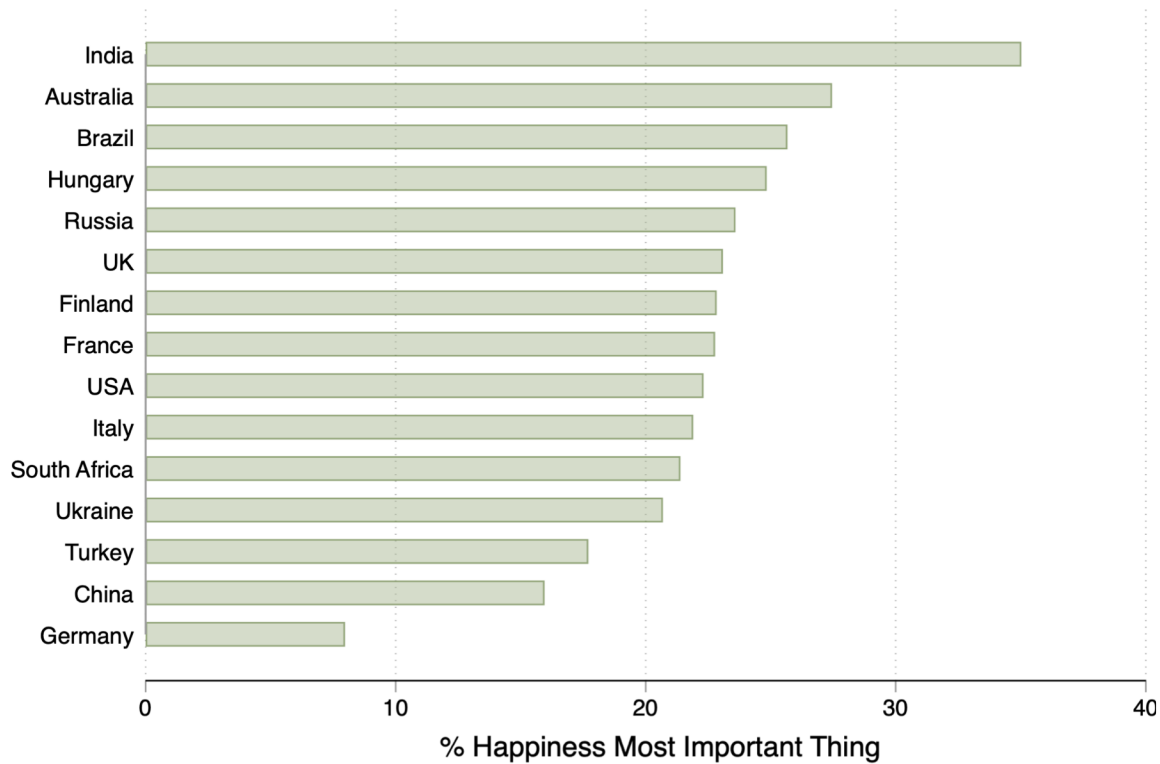
- Majority of people across countries value happiness and health above all else
- Happiness (both own and of children) is more important to people than external factors like income and career success
- Variation across countries in what is valued most by people
- Evidence that women and younger people value happiness most

# THINKING ABOUT THE FOLLOWING FACTORS, WHICH IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU IN YOUR LIFE?



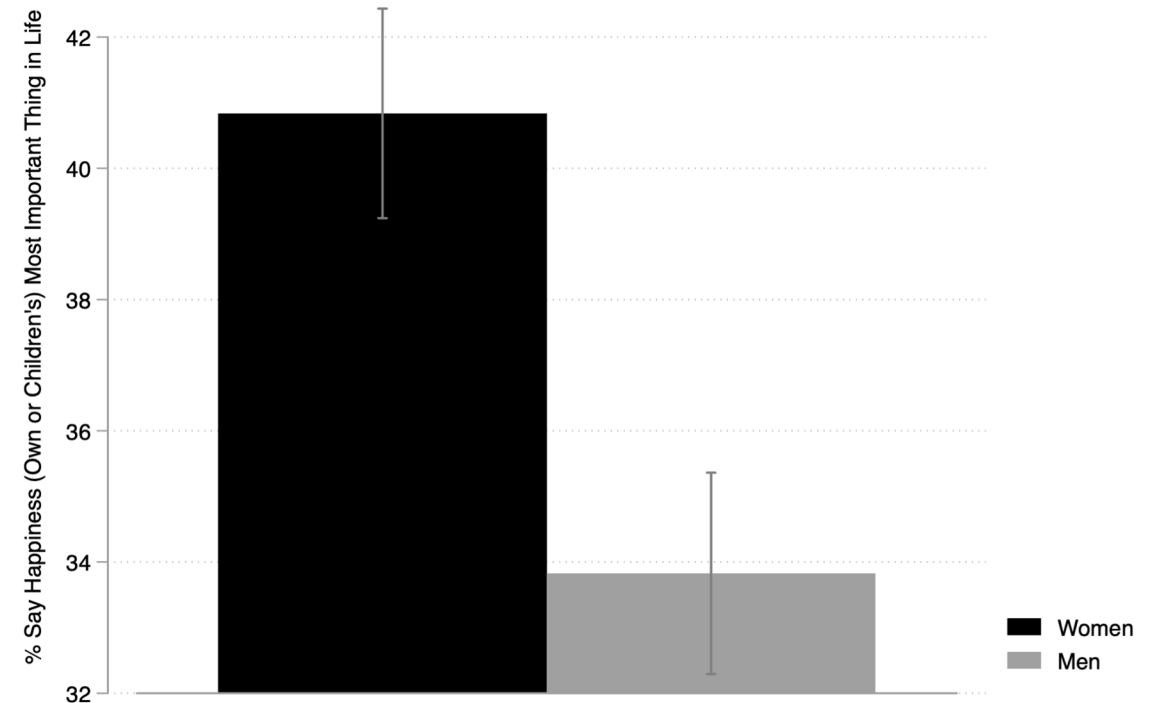
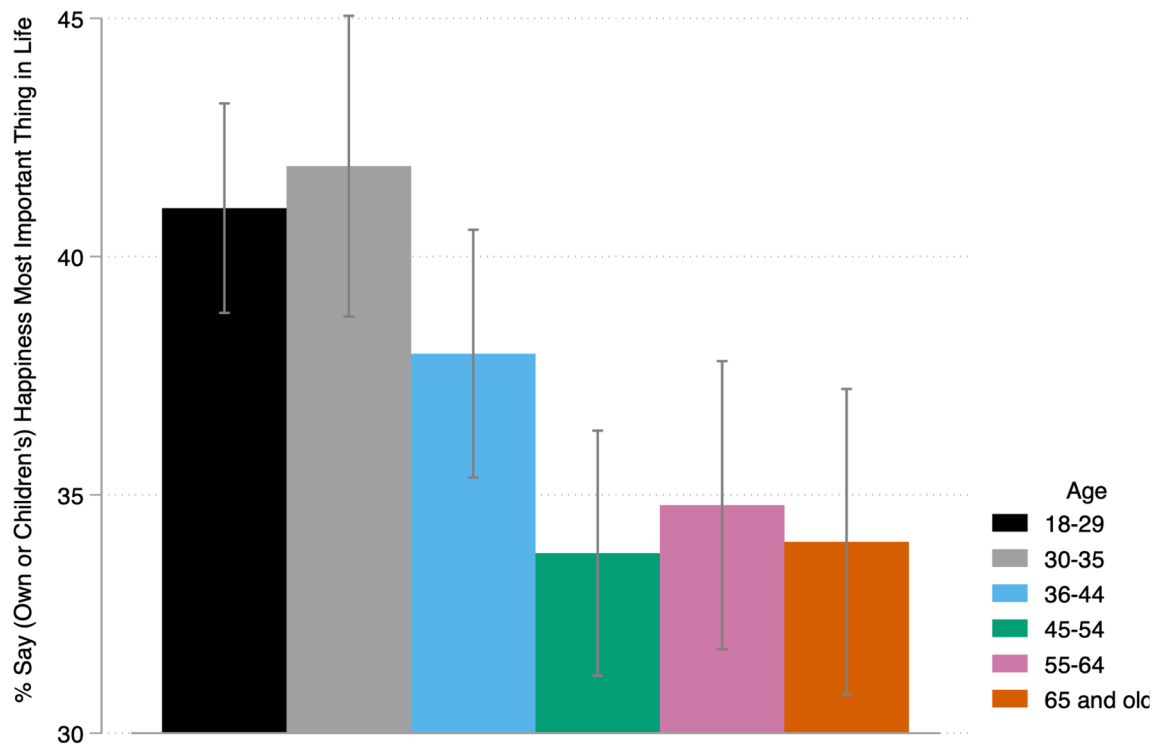


# THINKING ABOUT THE FOLLOWING FACTORS, WHICH IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU IN YOUR LIFE?

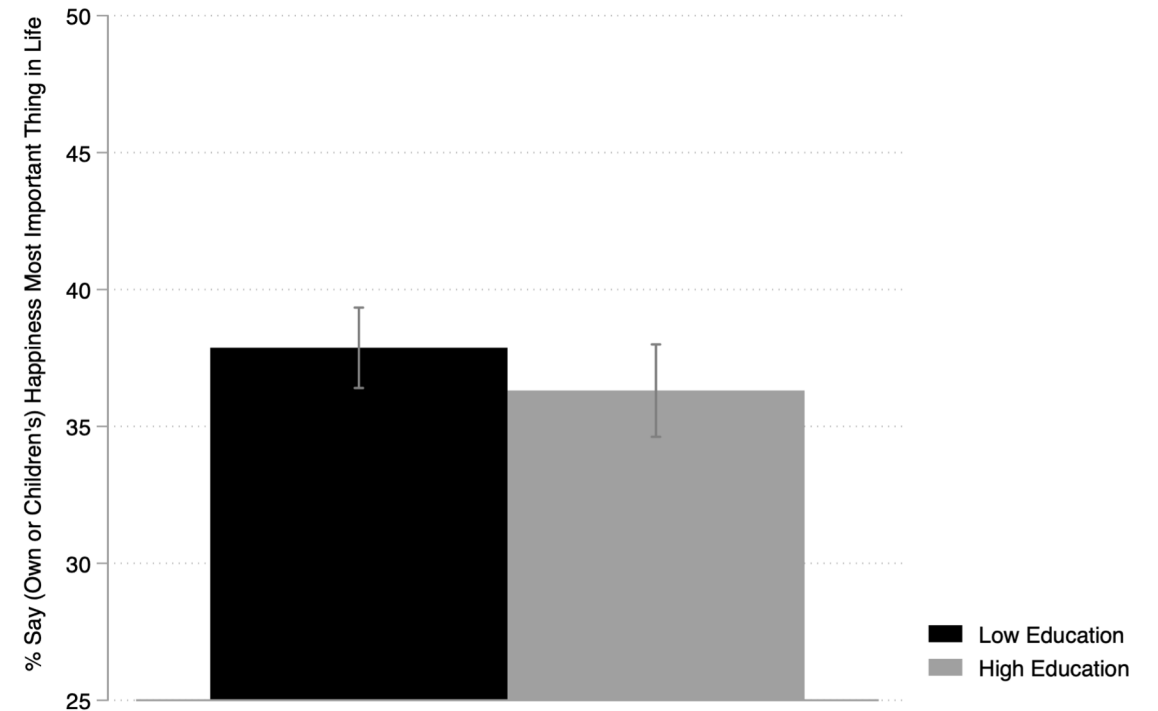
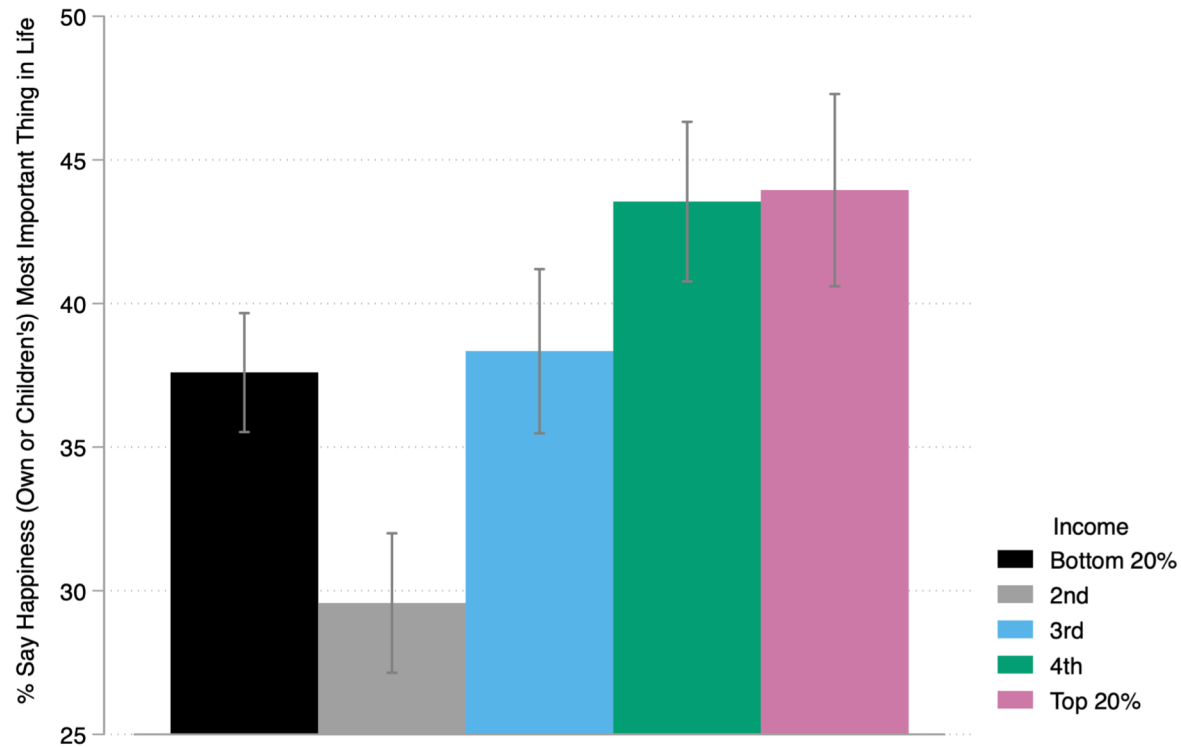


# IMPORTANCE OF HAPPINESS ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

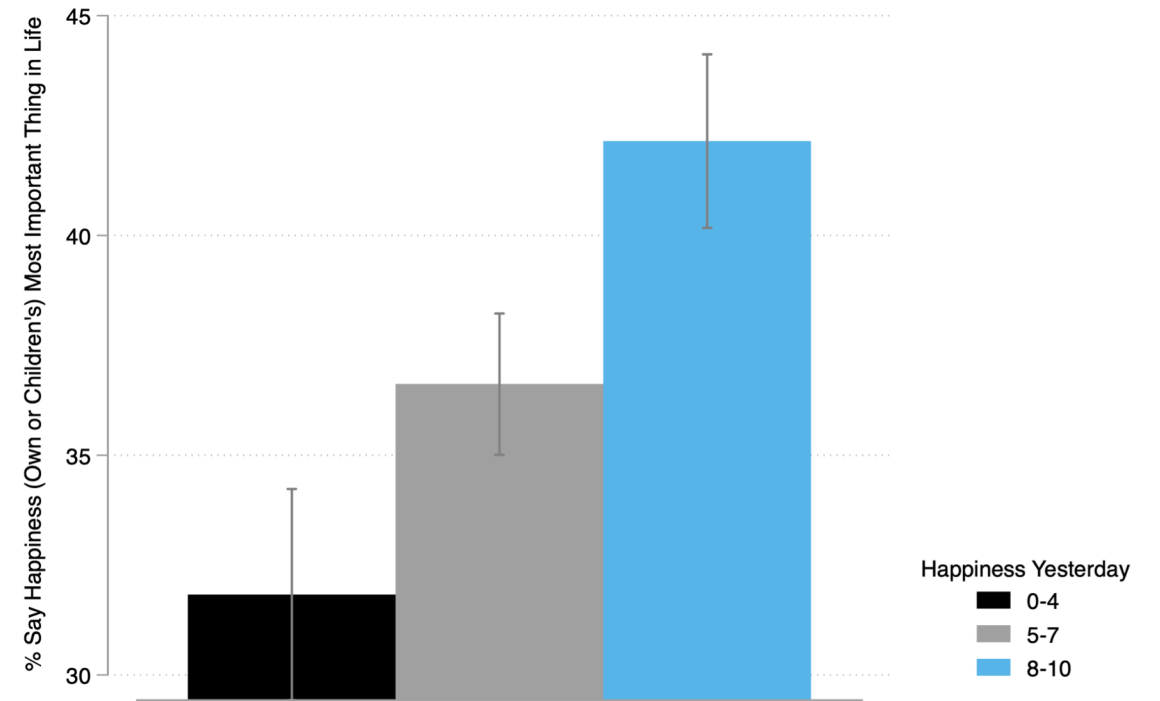
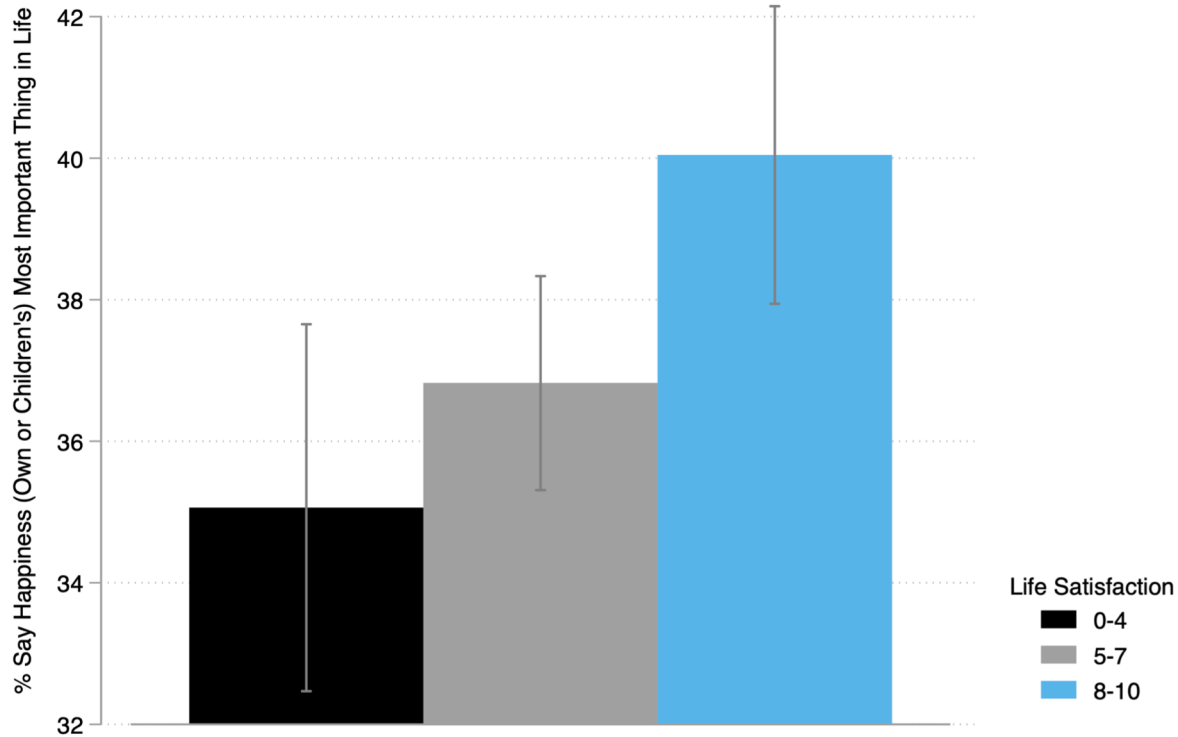
- Young people and women value happiness particularly highly in their lives.



# IMPORTANCE OF HAPPINESS ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS



# IMPORTANCE OF HAPPINESS IN LIFE ACROSS ACTUAL HAPPINESS LEVELS



# HAPPINESS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

## **What we do:**

- We ask whether or not respondents voted in the most recent general election\*
- We correlate this with measures of life evaluation and happiness
- Also ask to what extent people feel their voice is being heard

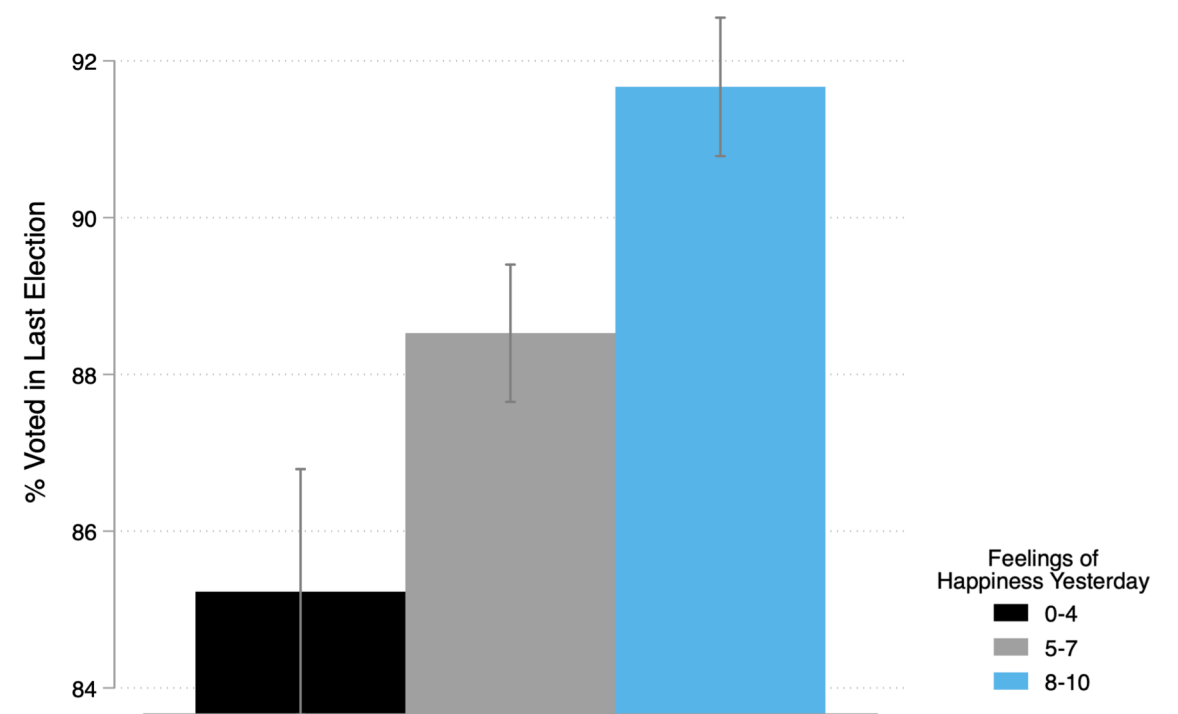
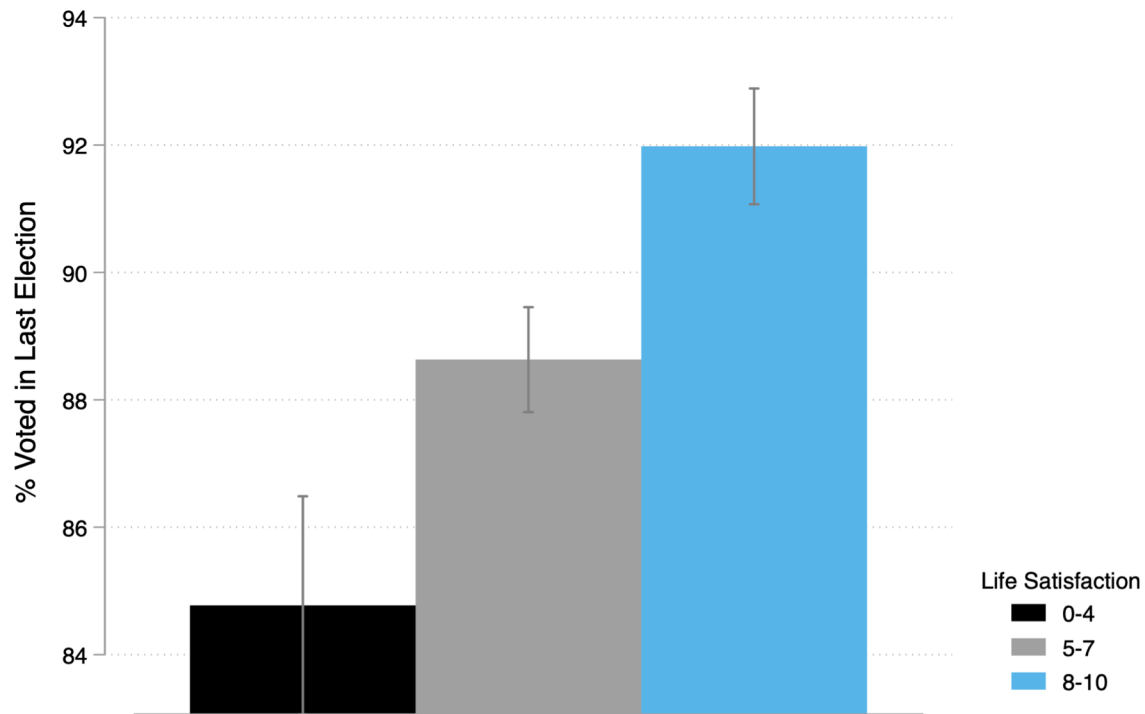
## **Key takeaways:**

- People with higher life satisfaction and feelings of happiness are much more likely to vote
- Unhappy people much more likely to feel disenfranchised, i.e. that their voice is not being heard

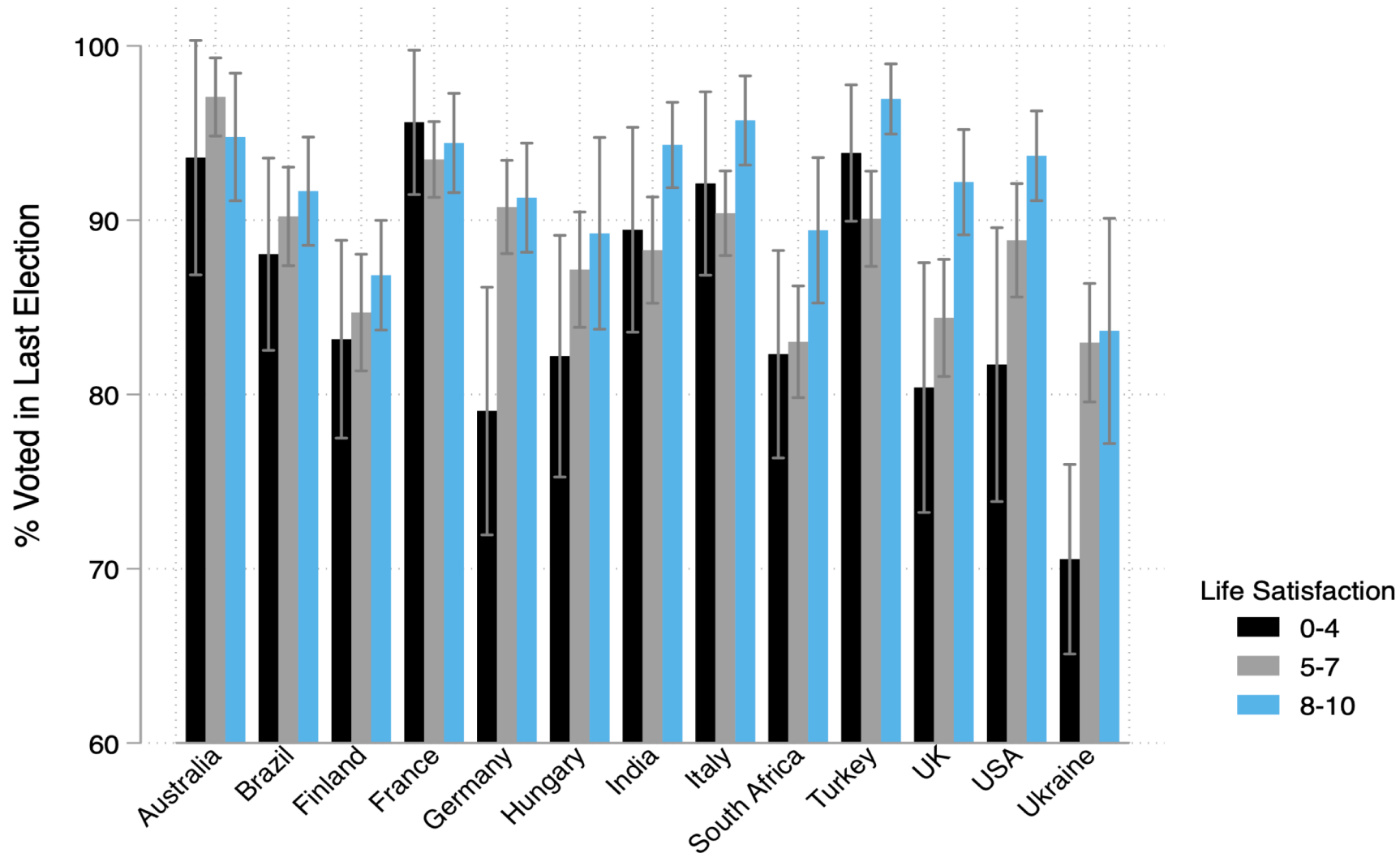
\* Voting questions were not asked in China or Russia, owing to surveying restrictions



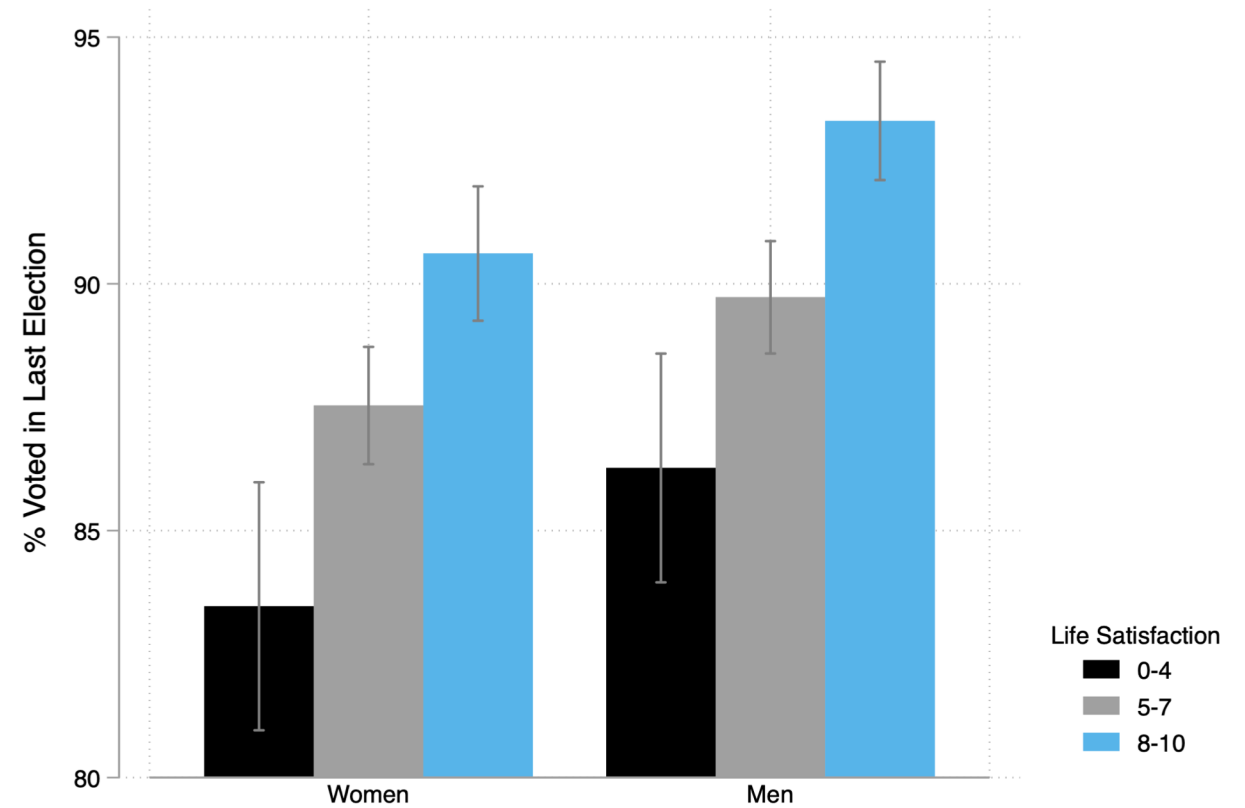
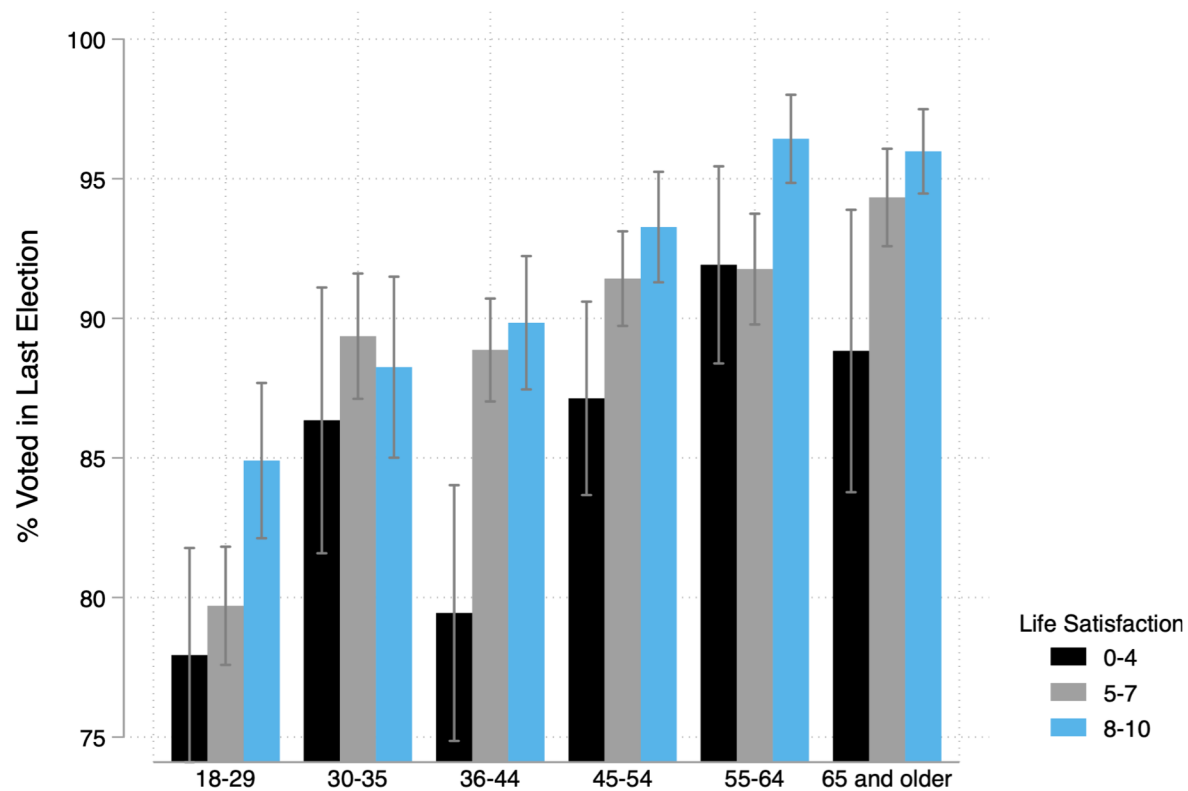
# WELL-BEING AND PARTICIPATION



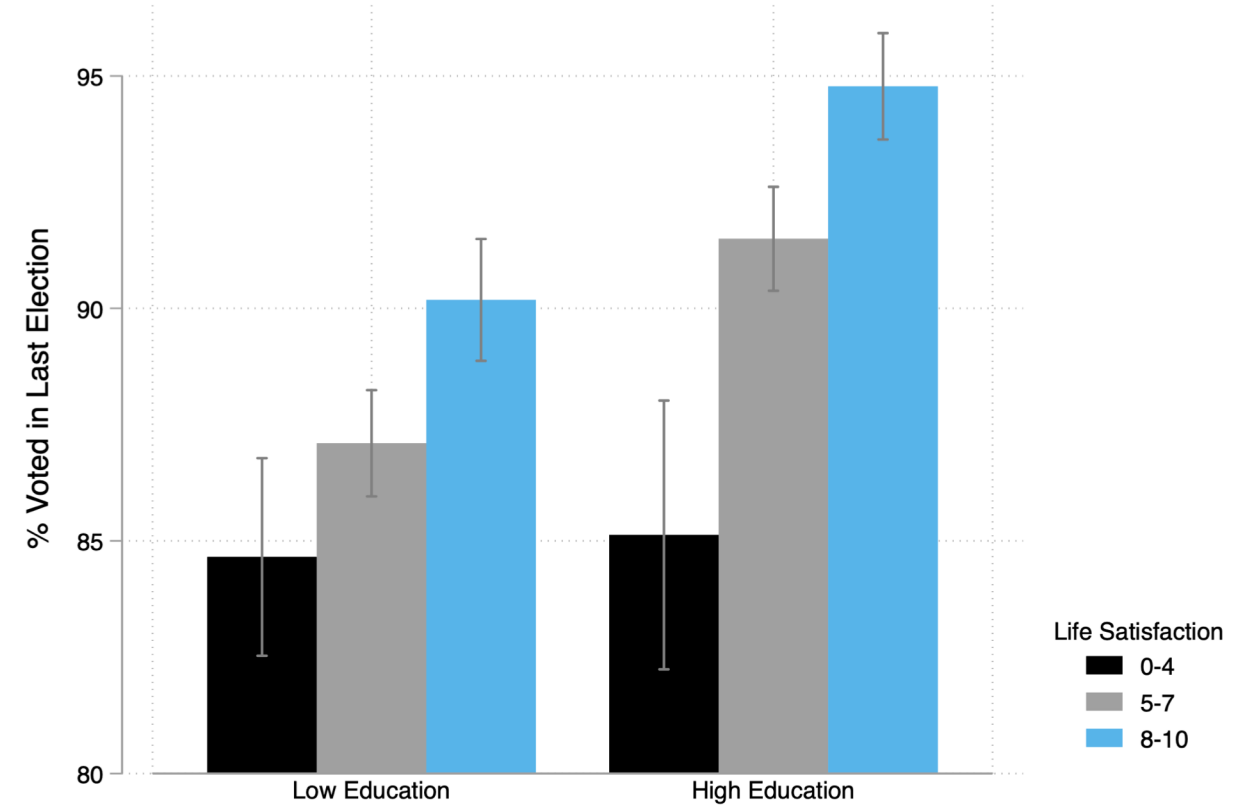
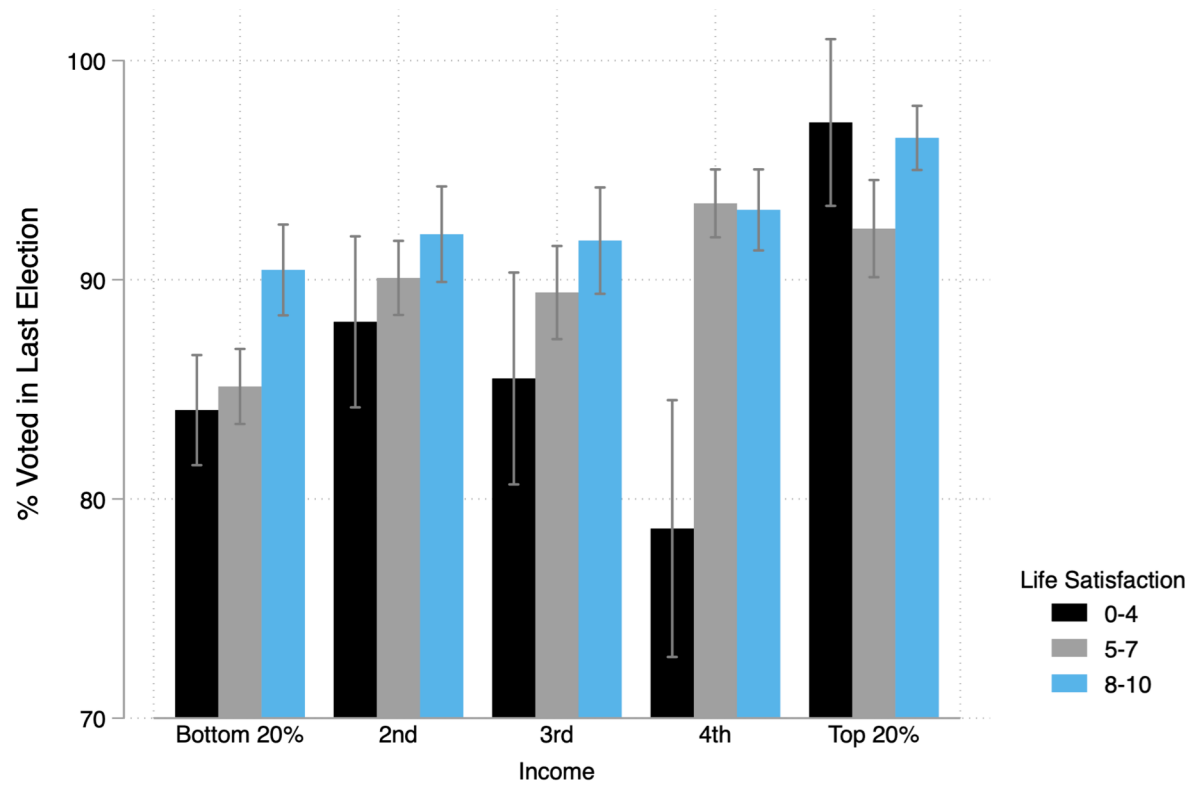
# LIFE EVALUATION AND PARTICIPATION ACROSS COUNTRIES



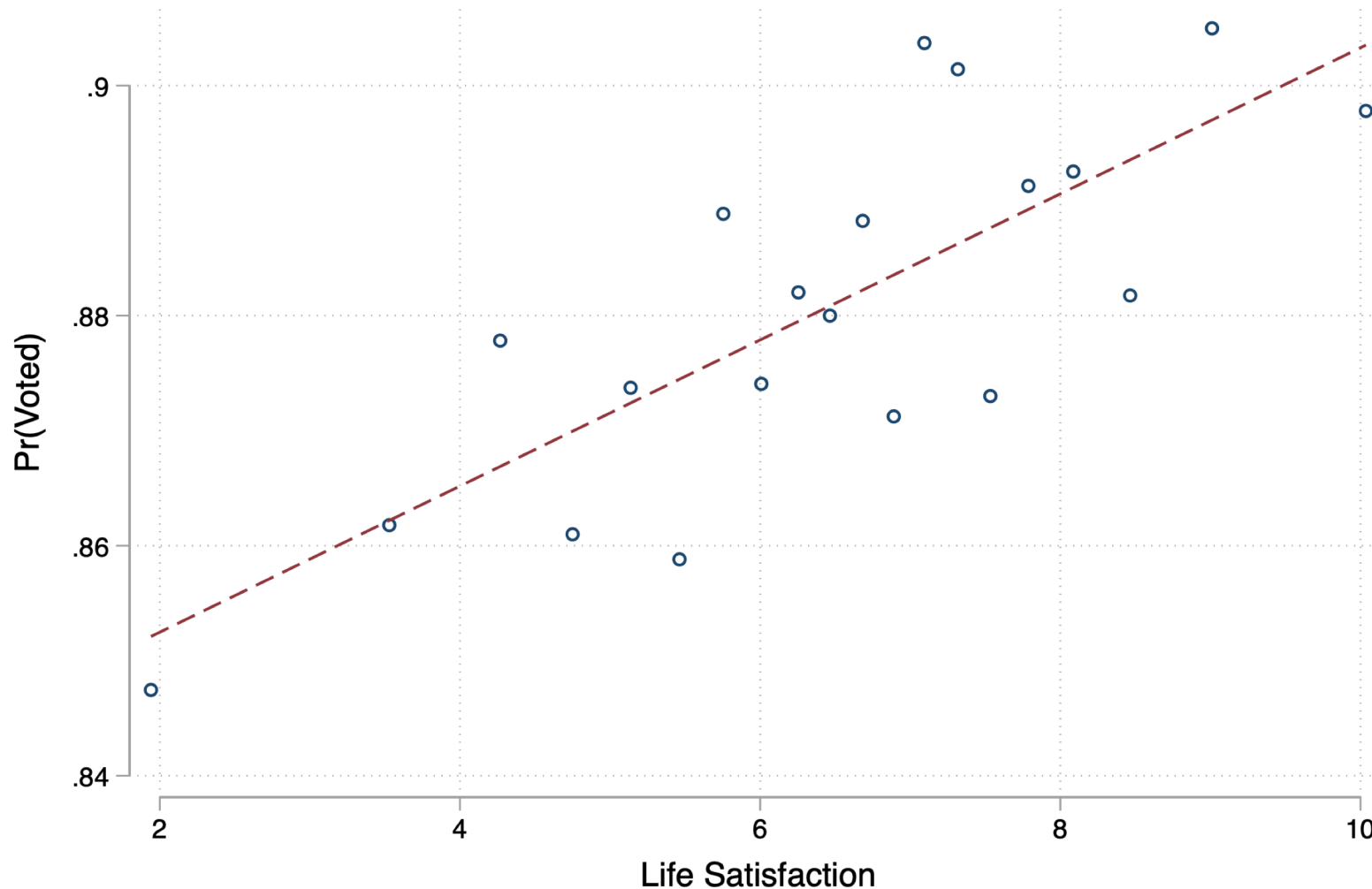
# LIFE EVALUATION AND PARTICIPATION ACROSS AGE AND GENDER



# LIFE EVALUATION AND PARTICIPATION ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



# WELL-BEING AND PARTICIPATION: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

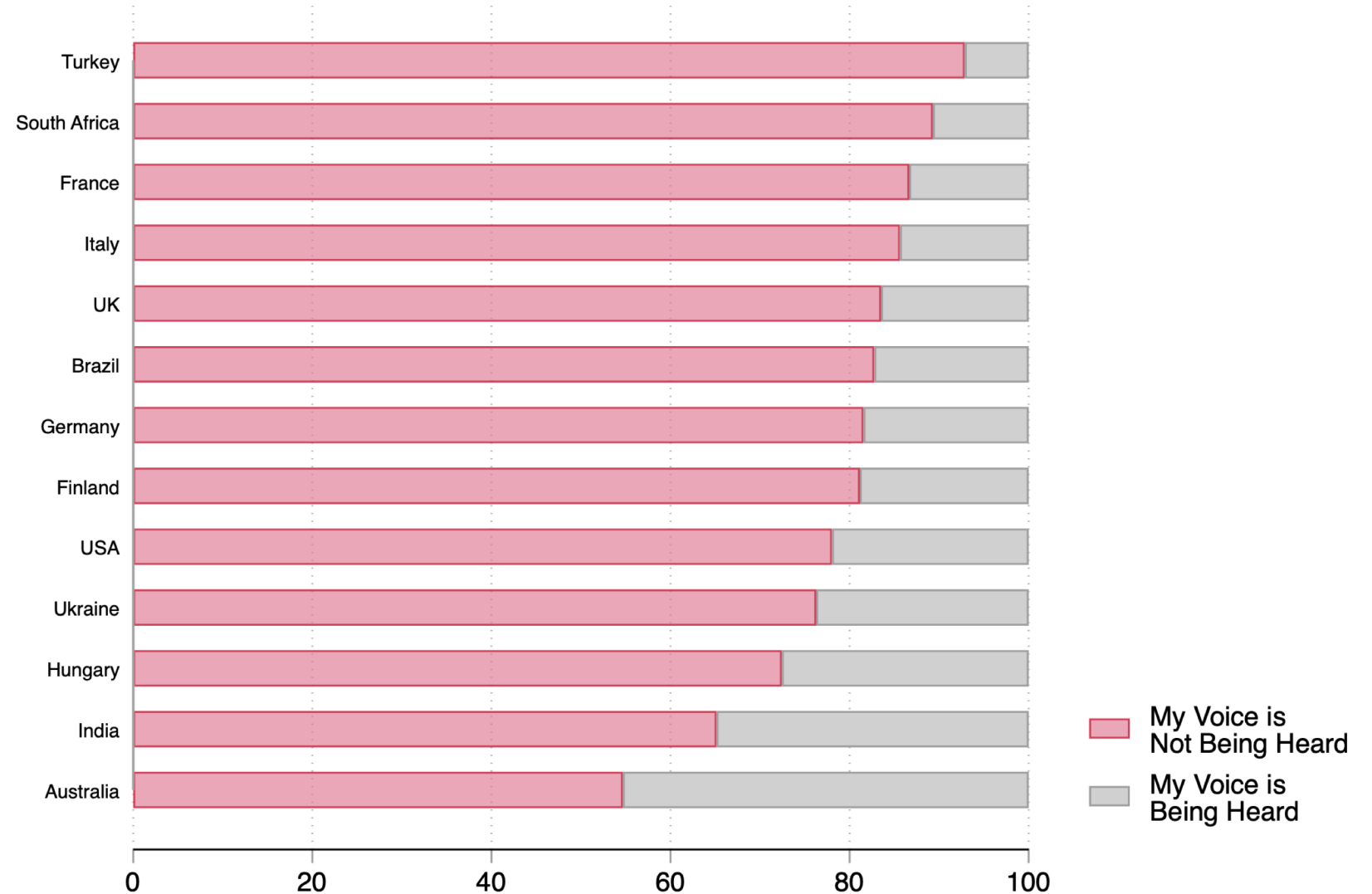


- Binned scatter-plot shown\*
- This is a visual representation of a multiple regression of voting on life satisfaction.
- Regression controls for country fixed effects, age, gender, marital status, income, employment status, education & number of children.
- Linear line of best-fit shown.
- $\beta_{LS} = .0064$ 
  - S.E. = .0020
  - $p = 0.007$

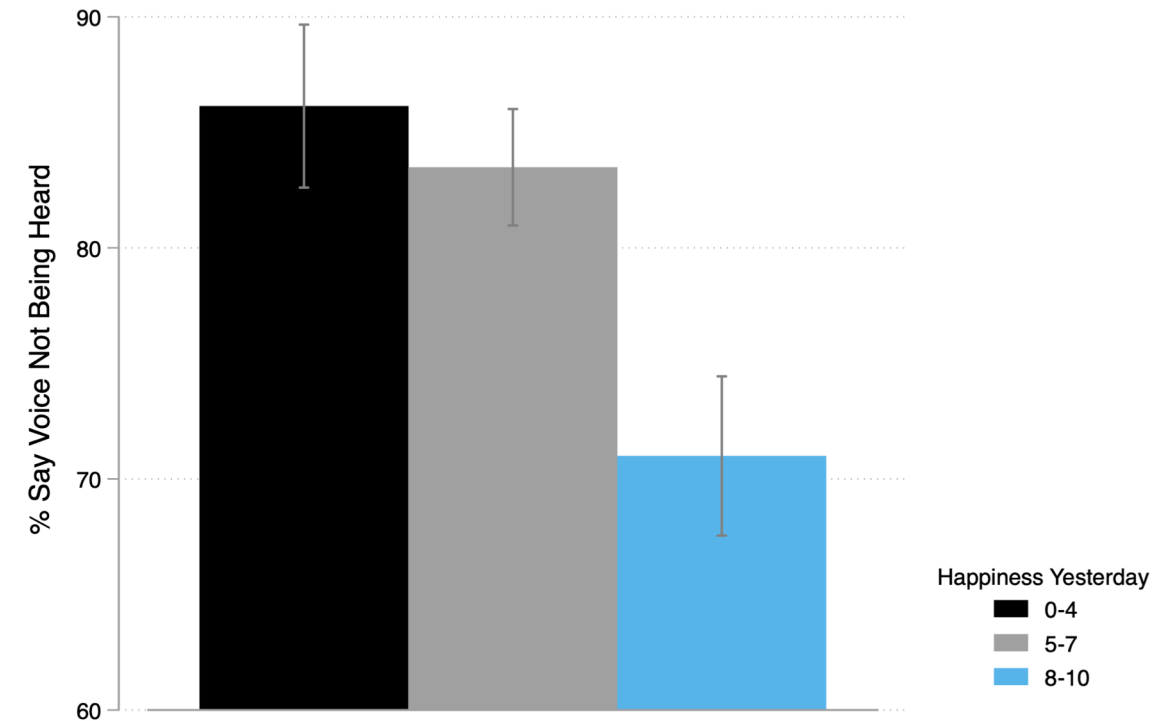
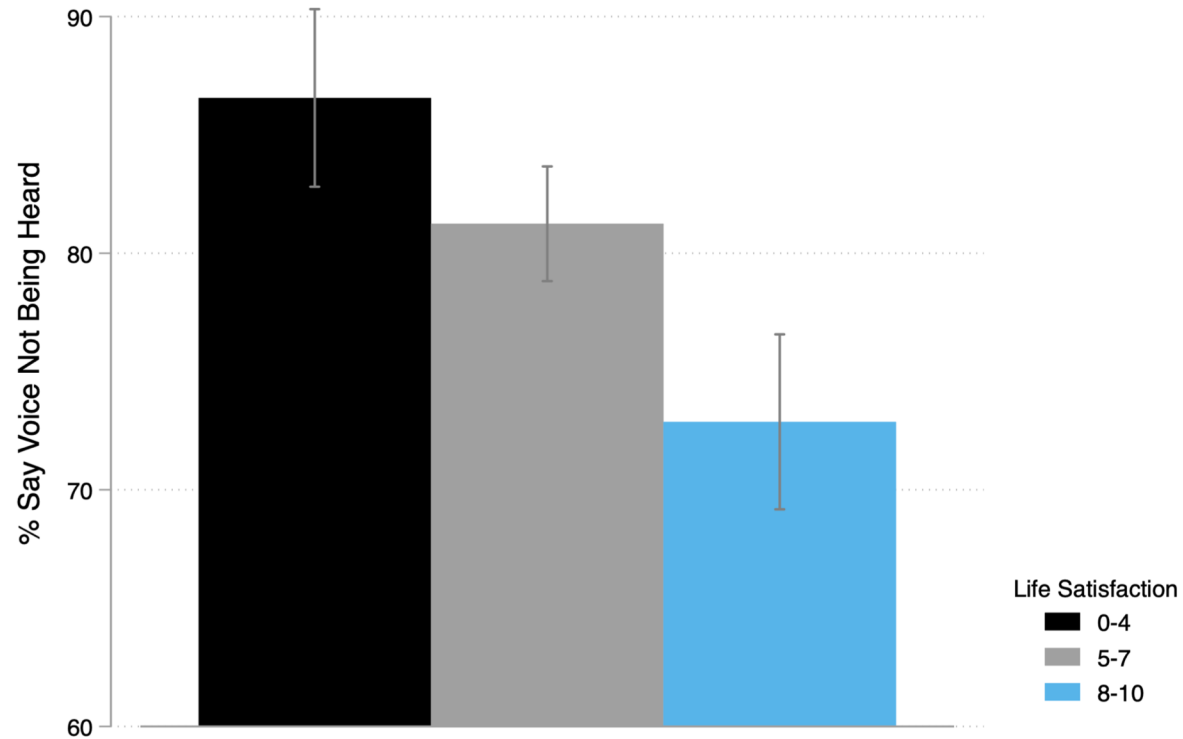
\* Both measures are regression-adjusted for full set of covariates and FEs, and then binned into quantiles, before plotting. Robust S.E. reported, adjusted for clustering on countries.

# PERCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL VOICE ACROSS COUNTRIES

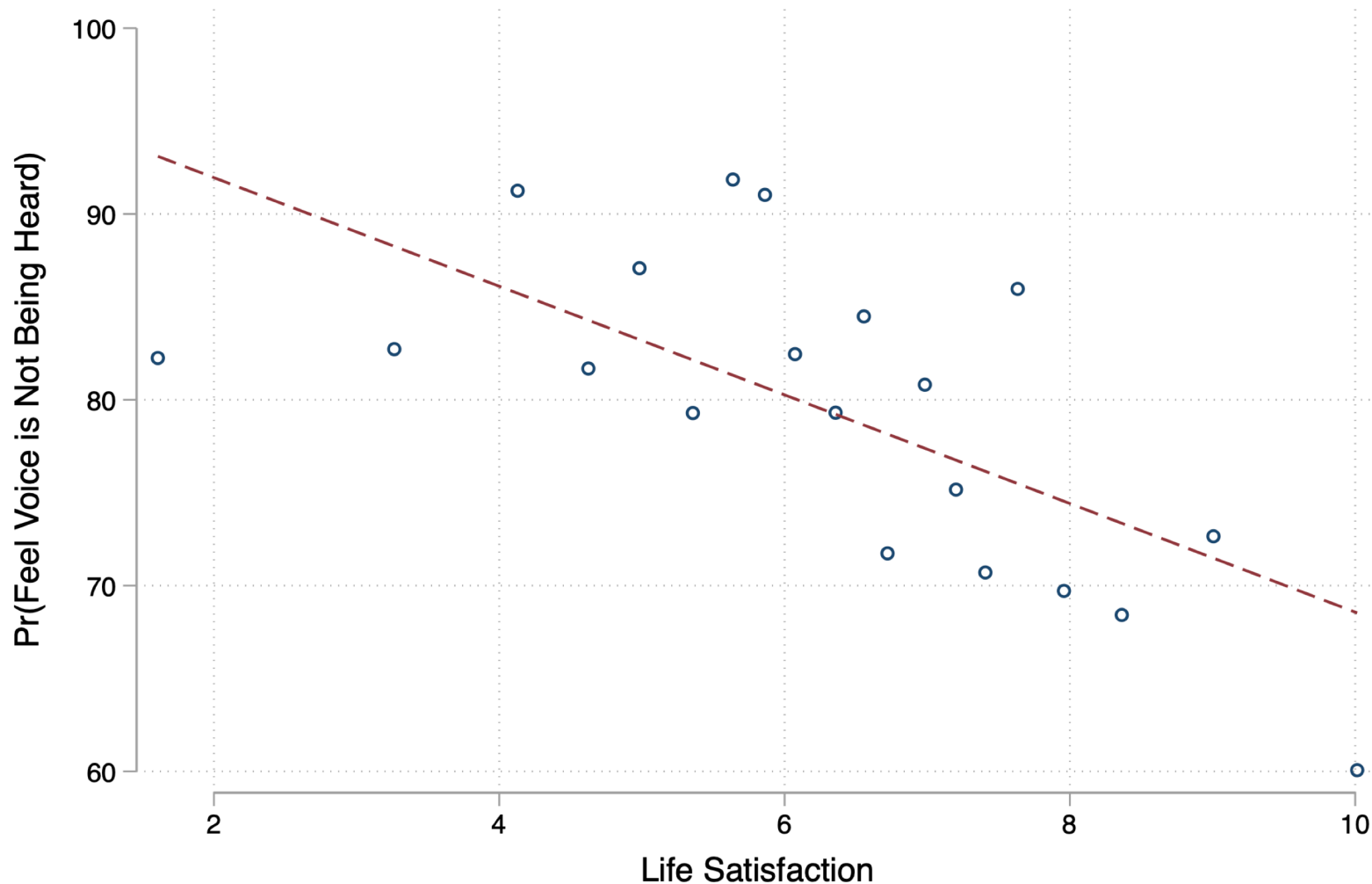
- There is a strong sense, across the world, that people's voices are not being heard.
- These feelings are most strong among the most unhappy in society.



# WELL-BEING AND PERCEPTIONS OF VOICE



# WELL-BEING AND VOICE: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

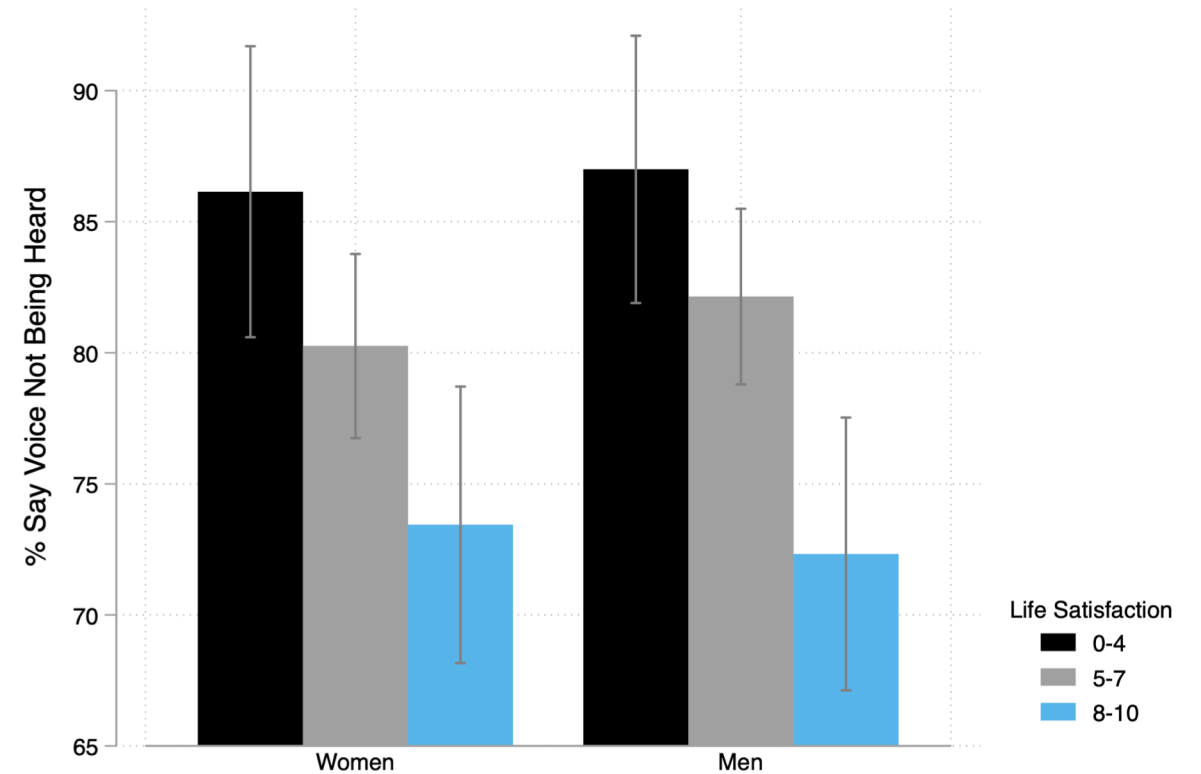
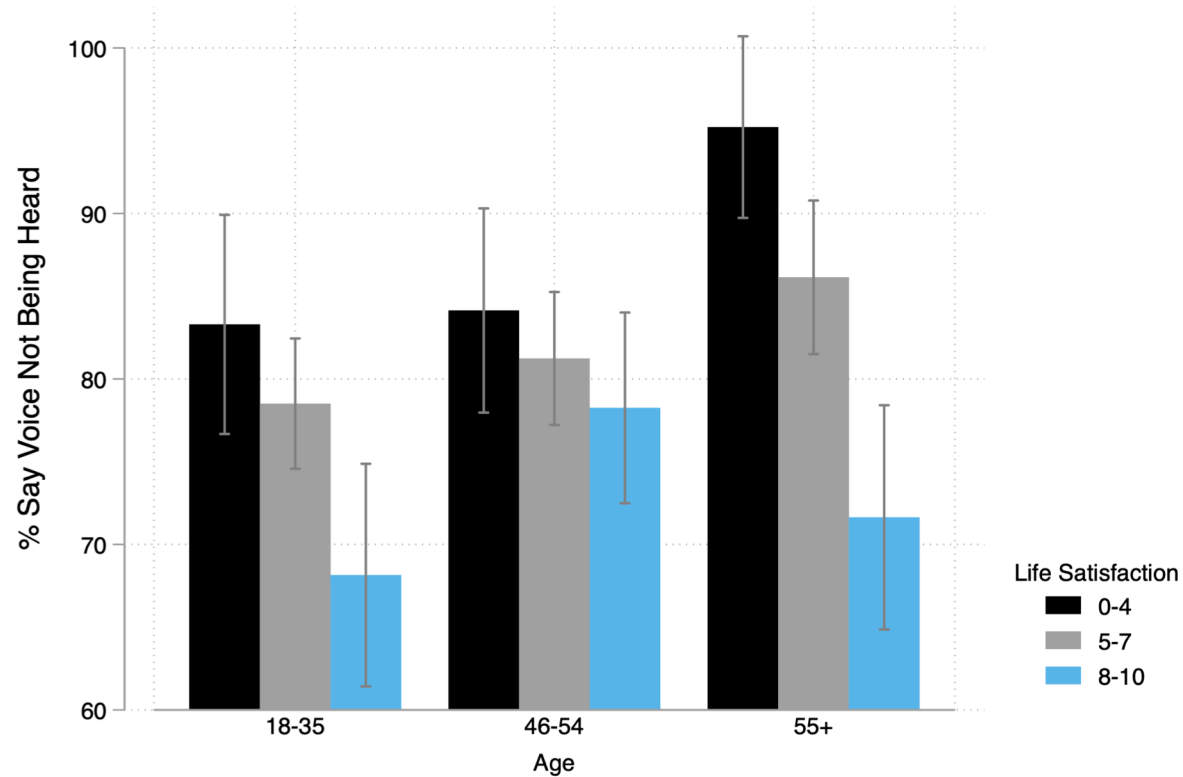


- Binned scatter-plot shown\*
- This is a visual representation of a multiple regression of voice on life satisfaction.
- Regression controls for country fixed effects, age, gender, marital status, income, employment status, education & number of children.
- Linear line of best-fit shown.
- $\beta_{LS} = -.0292$ 
  - S.E. = .0045
  - $p = <0.001$

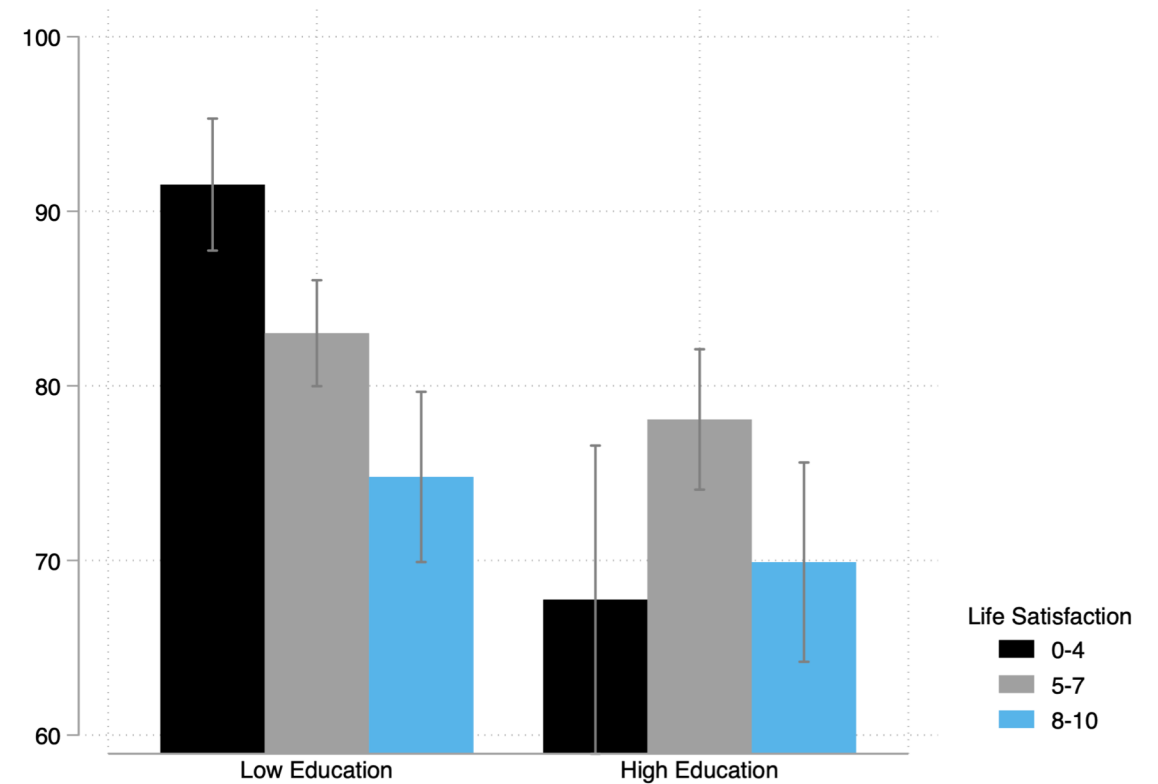
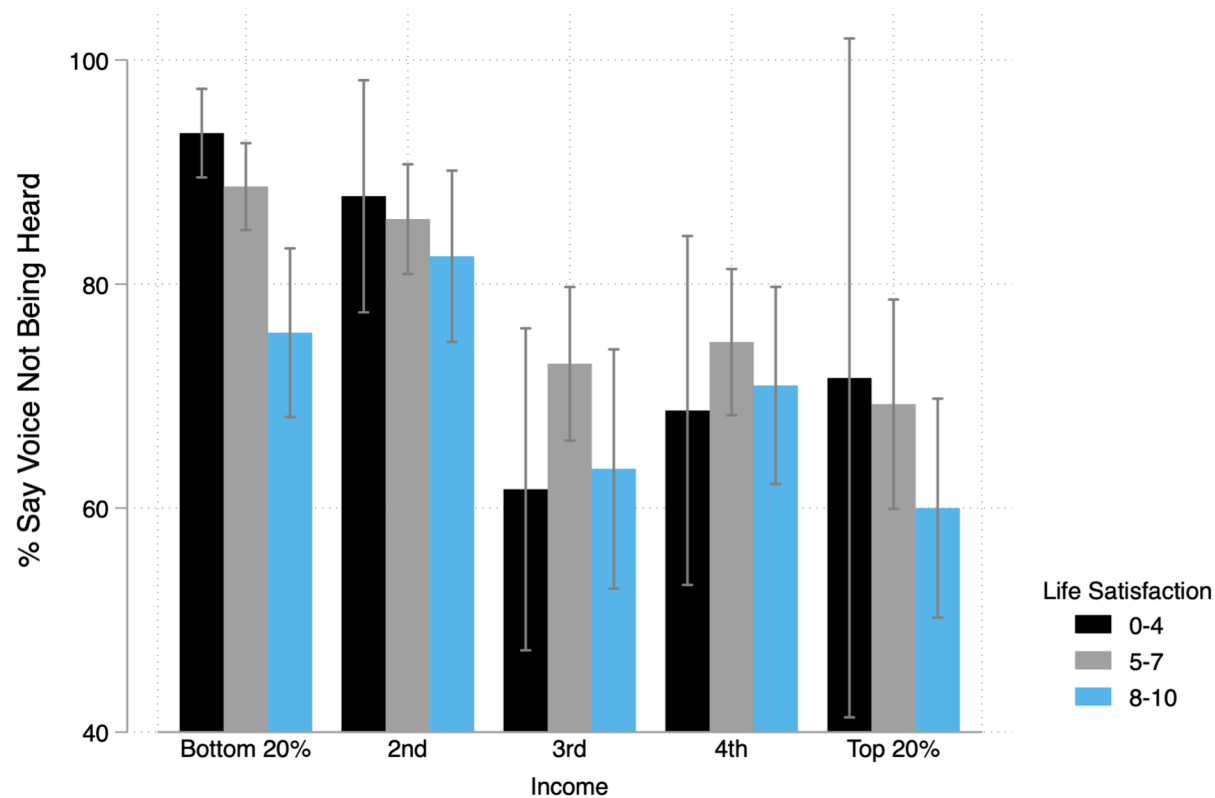
\* Both measures are regression-adjusted for full set of covariates and FEs, and then binned into quantiles, before plotting. Robust S.E. reported, adjusted for clustering on countries.



# WELL-BEING AND PERCEPTIONS OF VOICE ACROSS DEMOGRAPHICS



# WELL-BEING AND PERCEPTIONS OF VOICE ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



# HAPPINESS AND INCUMBENT VOTING

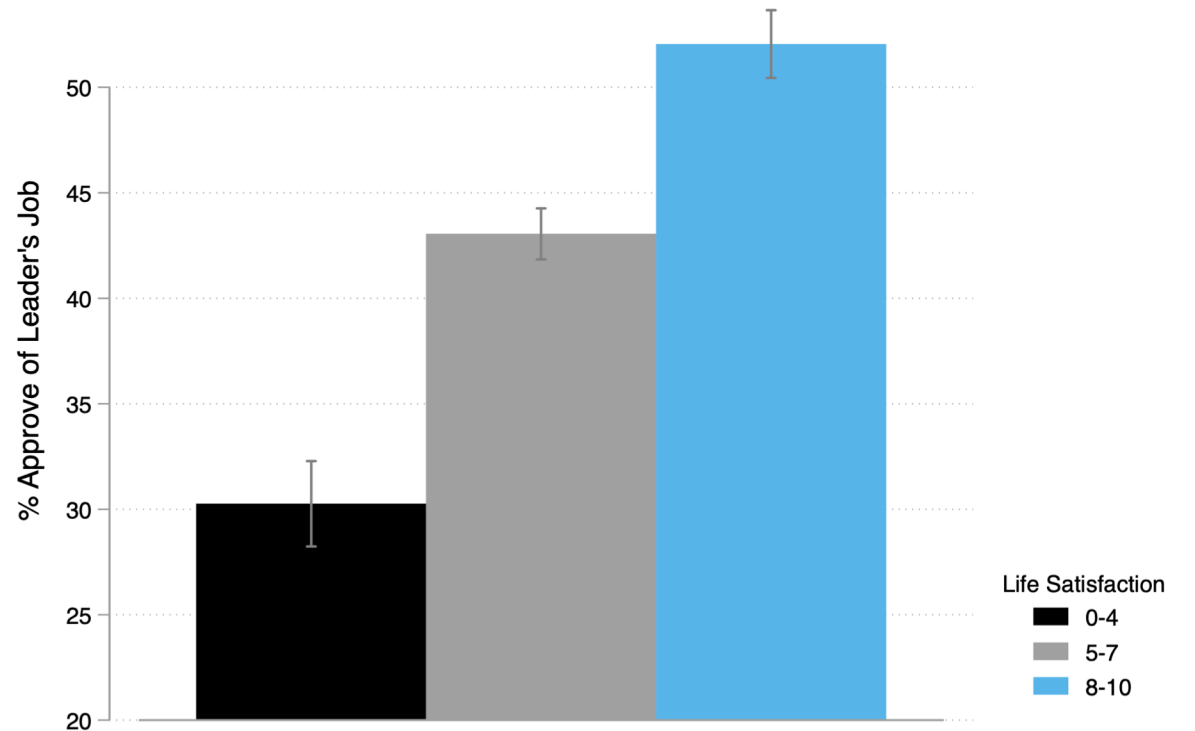
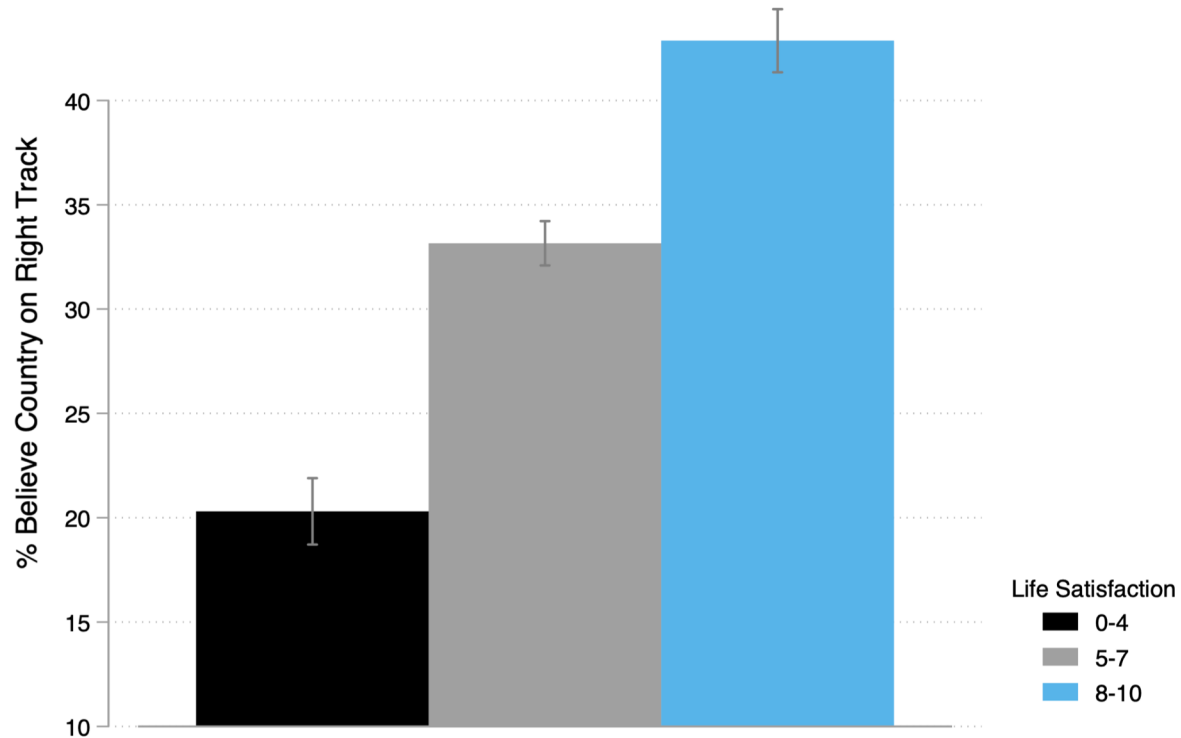
## **What we do:**

- We ask respondents who they would vote for if an election were held tomorrow (or, if an election had taken place very recently, whom they voted for)
- We assess whether subjective well-being is associated with voting for incumbent parties
- Also ask to what extent people approve of national leaders and think the country is on the right track

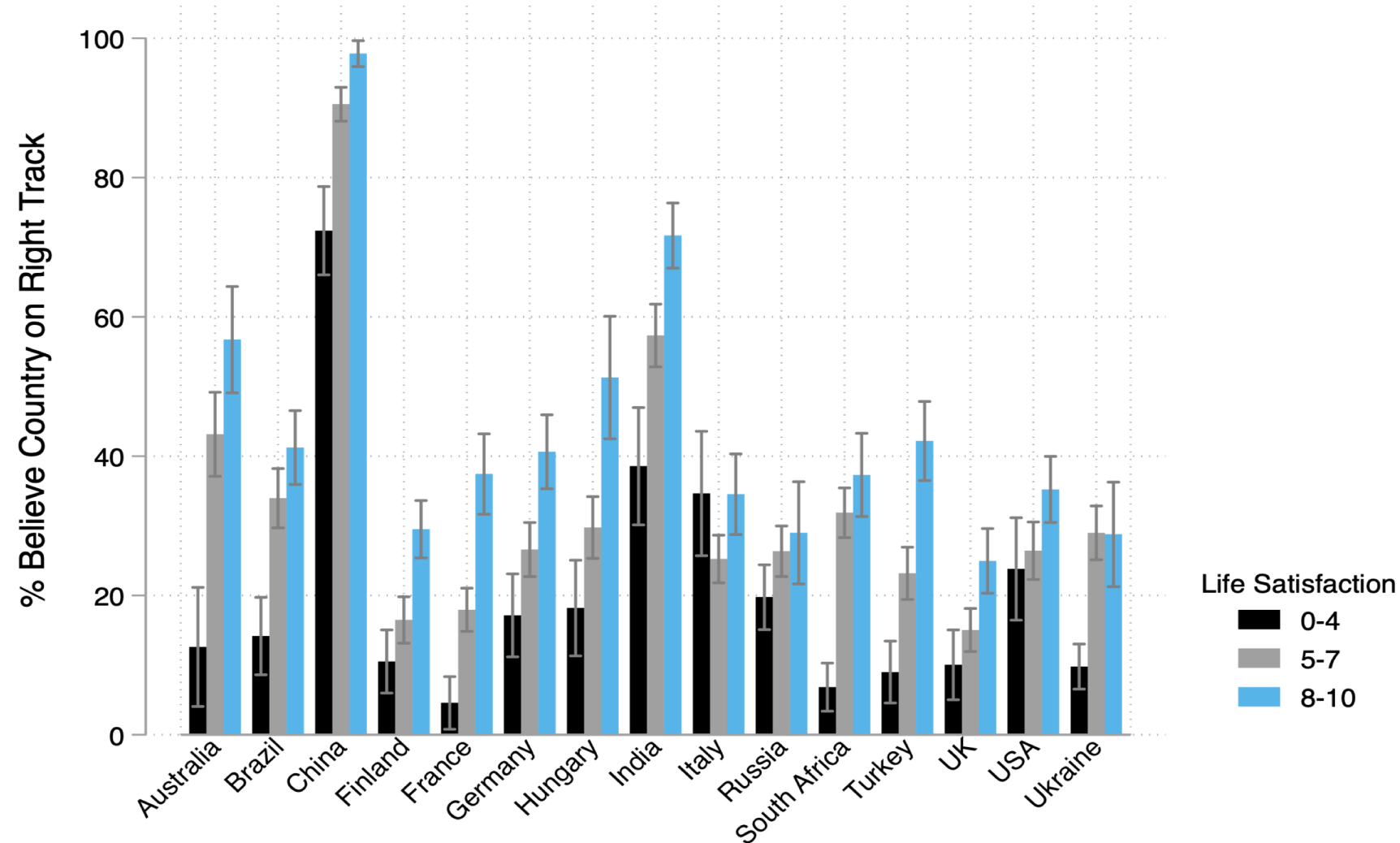
## **Key takeaways:**

- People with higher life satisfaction and feelings of happiness are much more likely to vote for incumbent parties
- People with higher life satisfaction and feelings of happiness are much more likely to think the country is going in the right direction and approve of the national leader

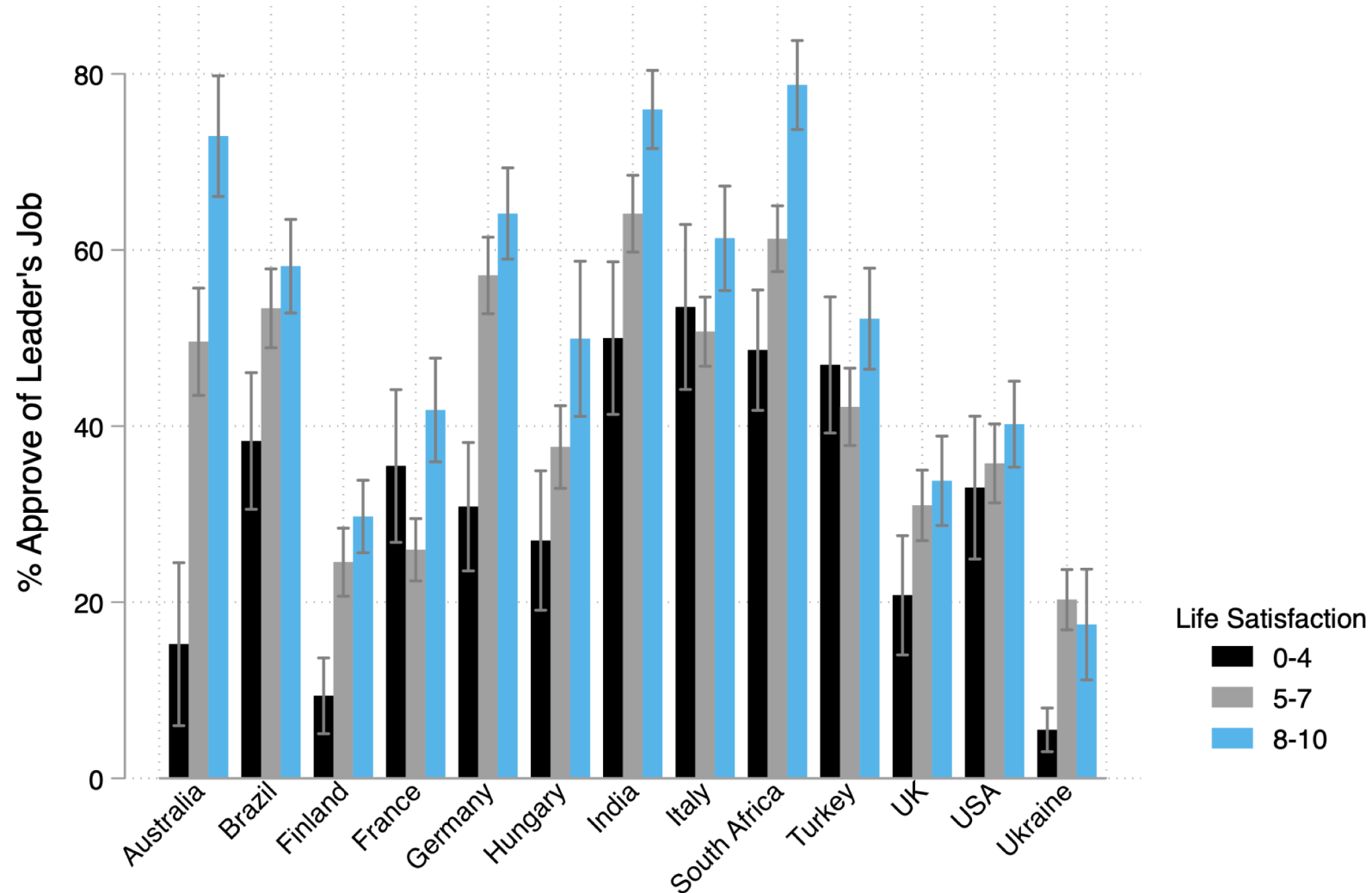
# WELL-BEING AND BELIEFS ABOUT INCUMBENT PERFORMANCE



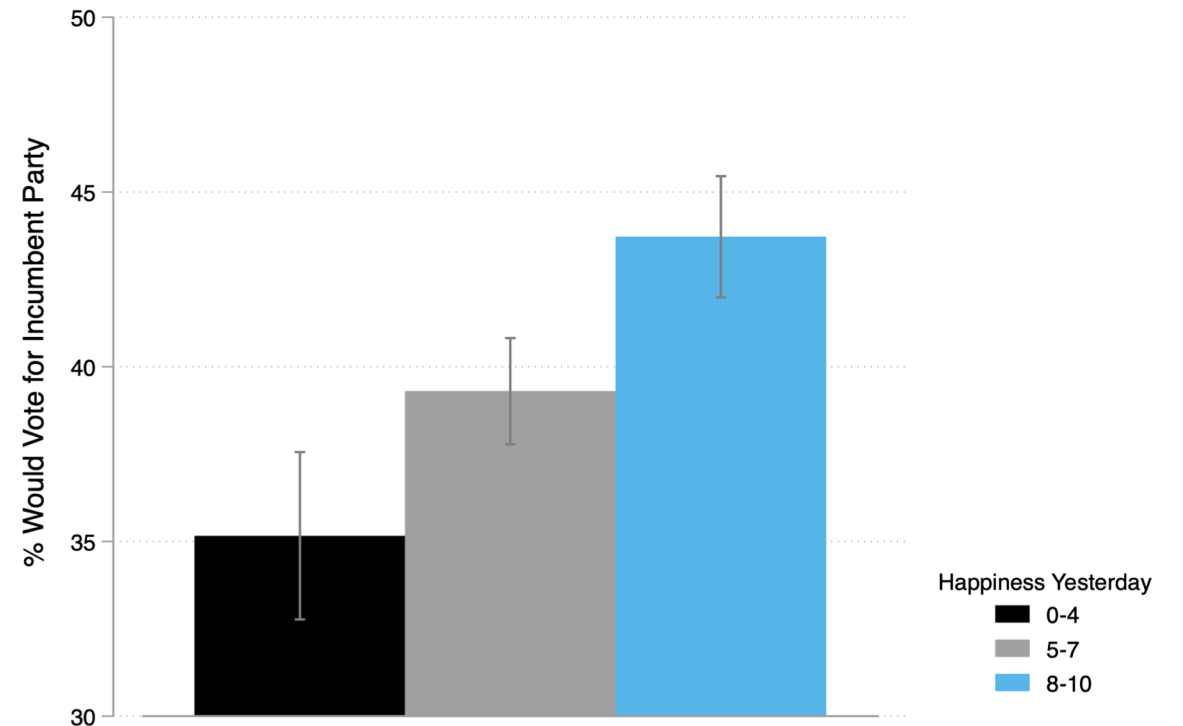
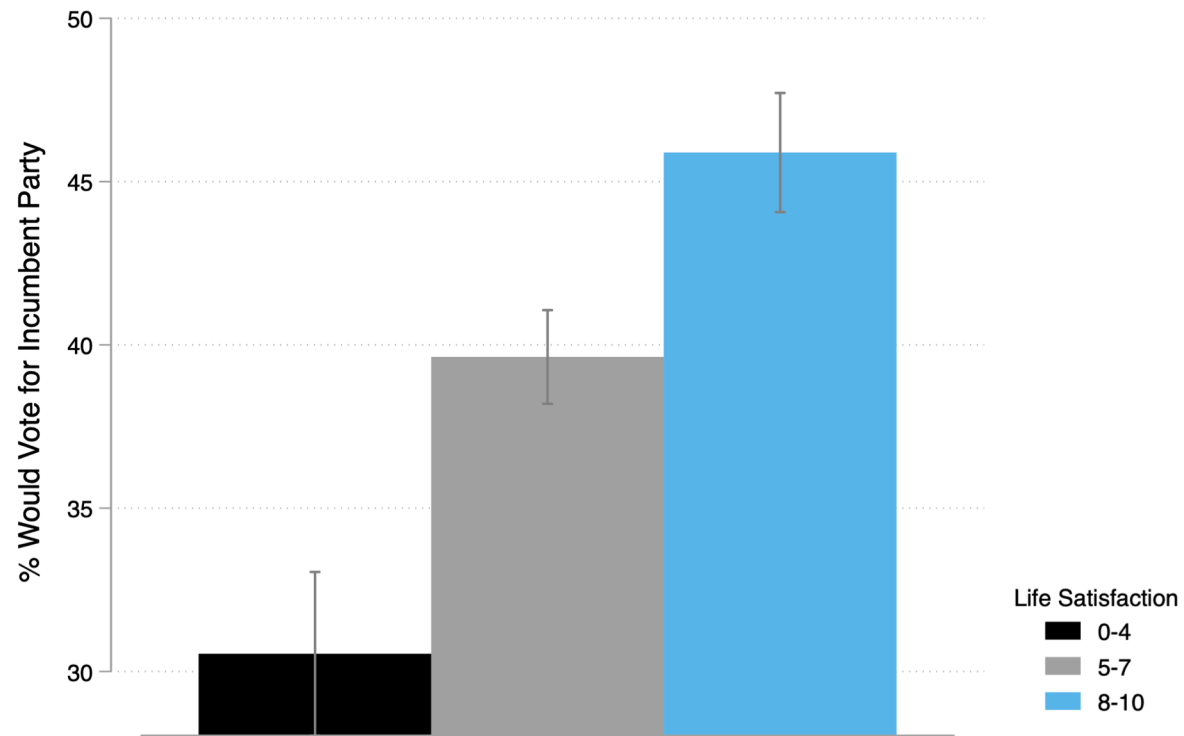
# HAPPINESS AND “RIGHT TRACK” ACROSS COUNTRIES



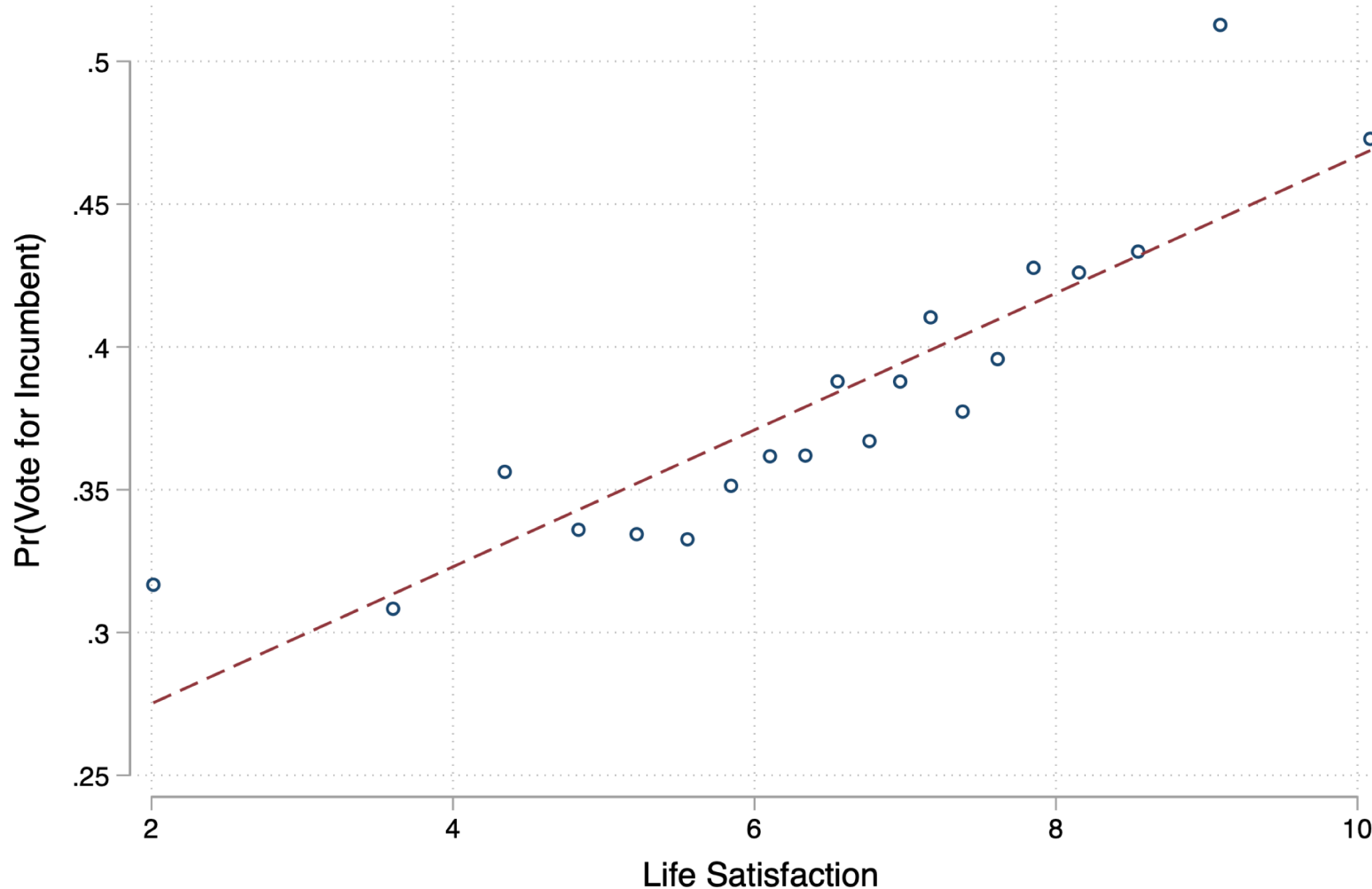
# HAPPINESS AND “LEADER APPROVAL” ACROSS COUNTRIES



# WELL-BEING AND INCUMBENT VOTING INTENTIONS



# WELL-BEING AND INCUMBENT VOTING: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS



- Binned scatter-plot shown\*
- This is a visual representation of a multiple regression of incumbent voting on life satisfaction.
- Regression controls for country fixed effects, age, gender, marital status, income, employment status, education & number of children.
- Linear line of best-fit shown.
- $\beta_{LS} = -.0292$ 
  - S.E. = .0069
  - $p = .005$

\* Both measures are regression-adjusted for full set of covariates and FEs, and then binned into quantiles, before plotting. Robust S.E. reported, adjusted for clustering on countries.

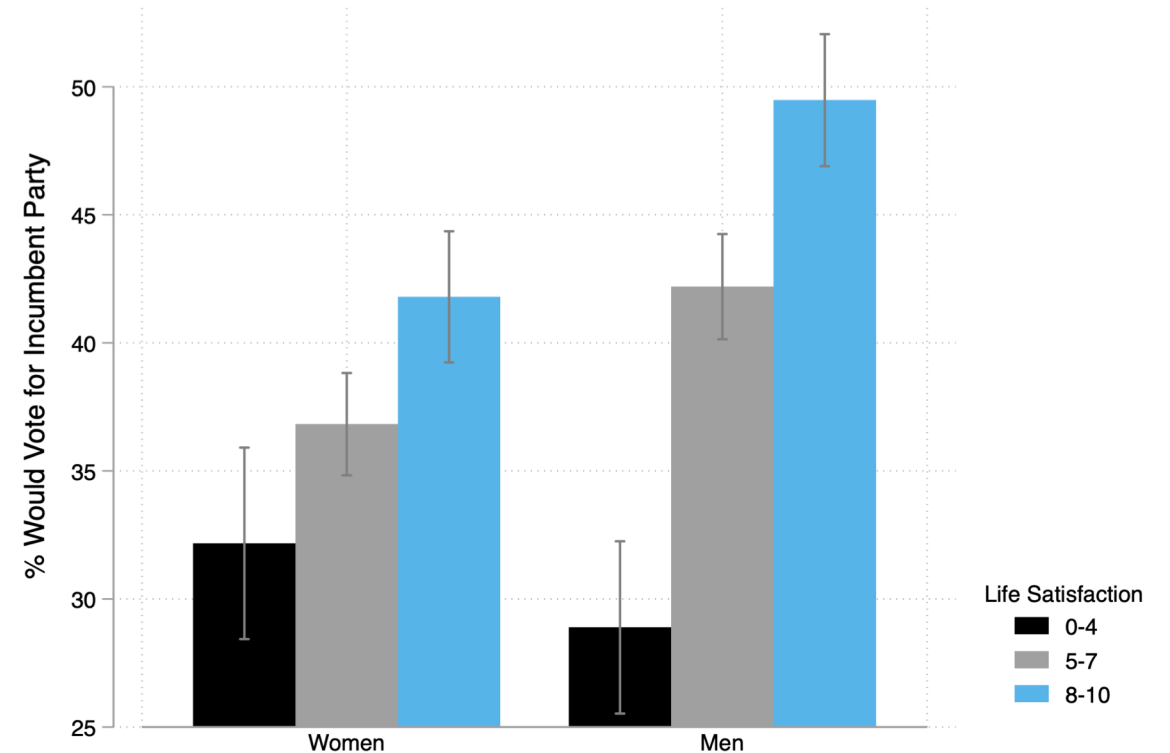
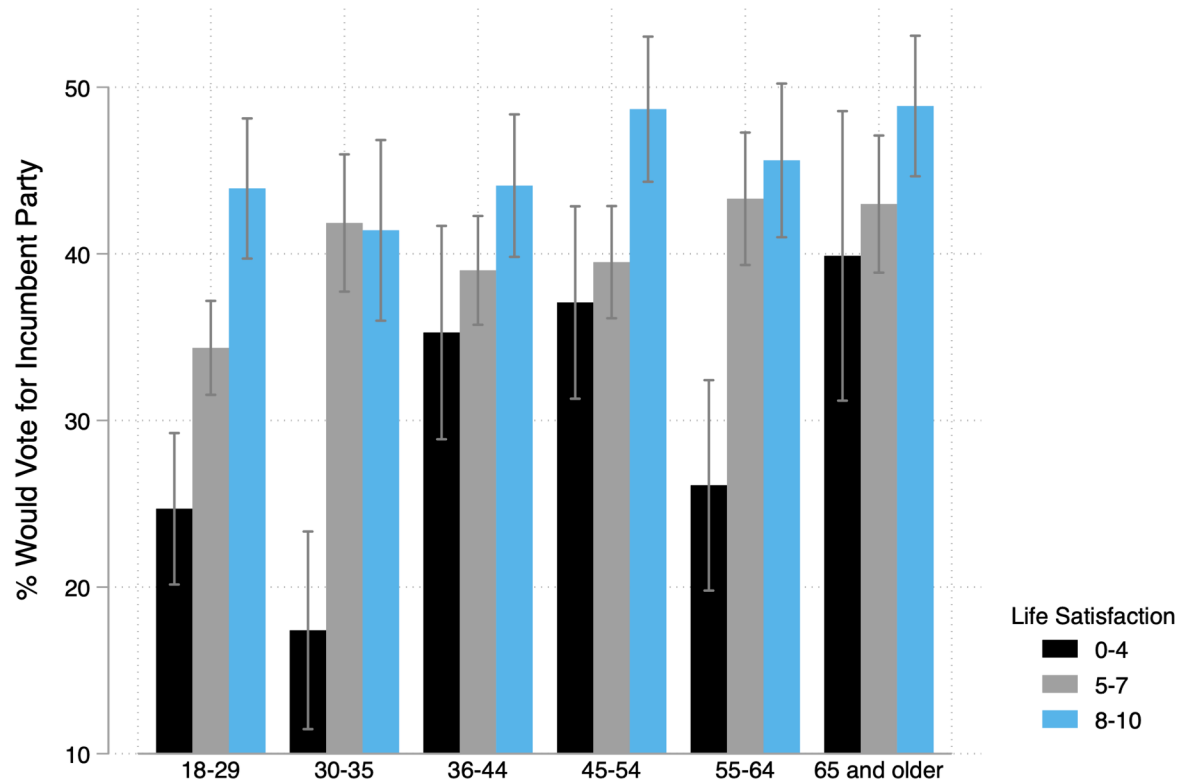


# WELL-BEING AND INCUMBENT VOTING: BACKGROUND

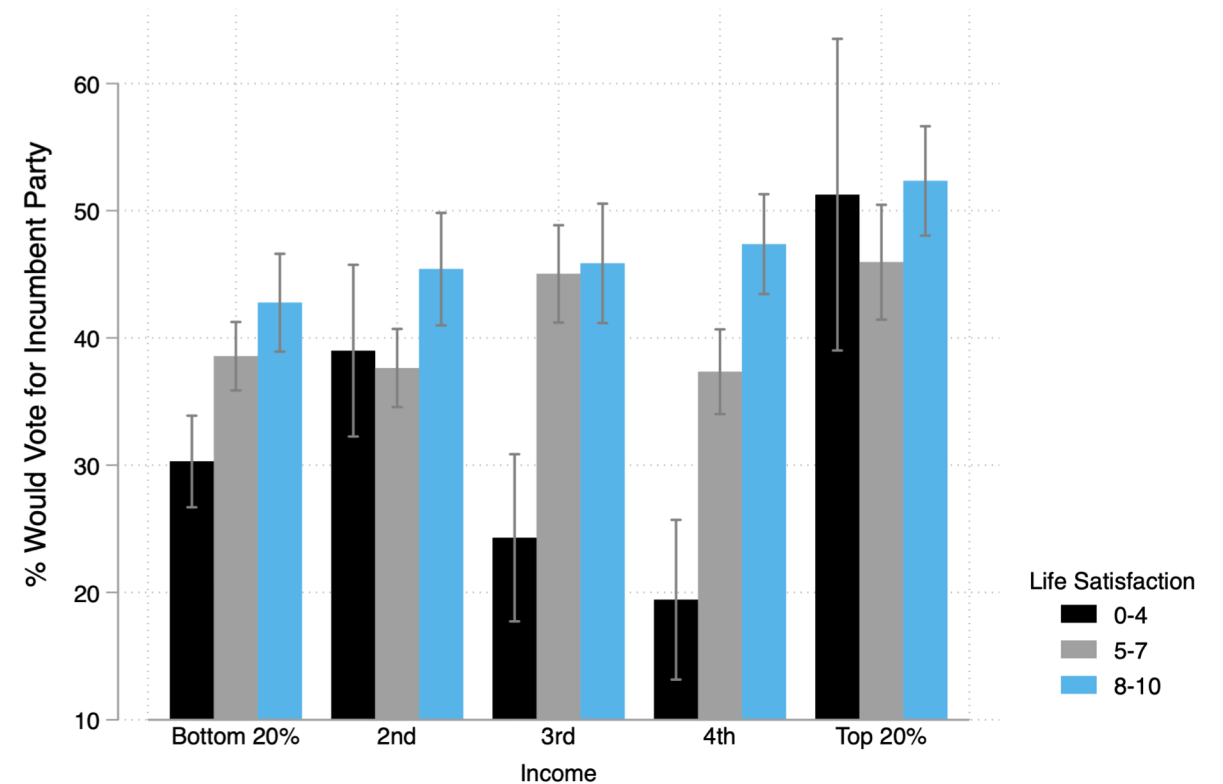
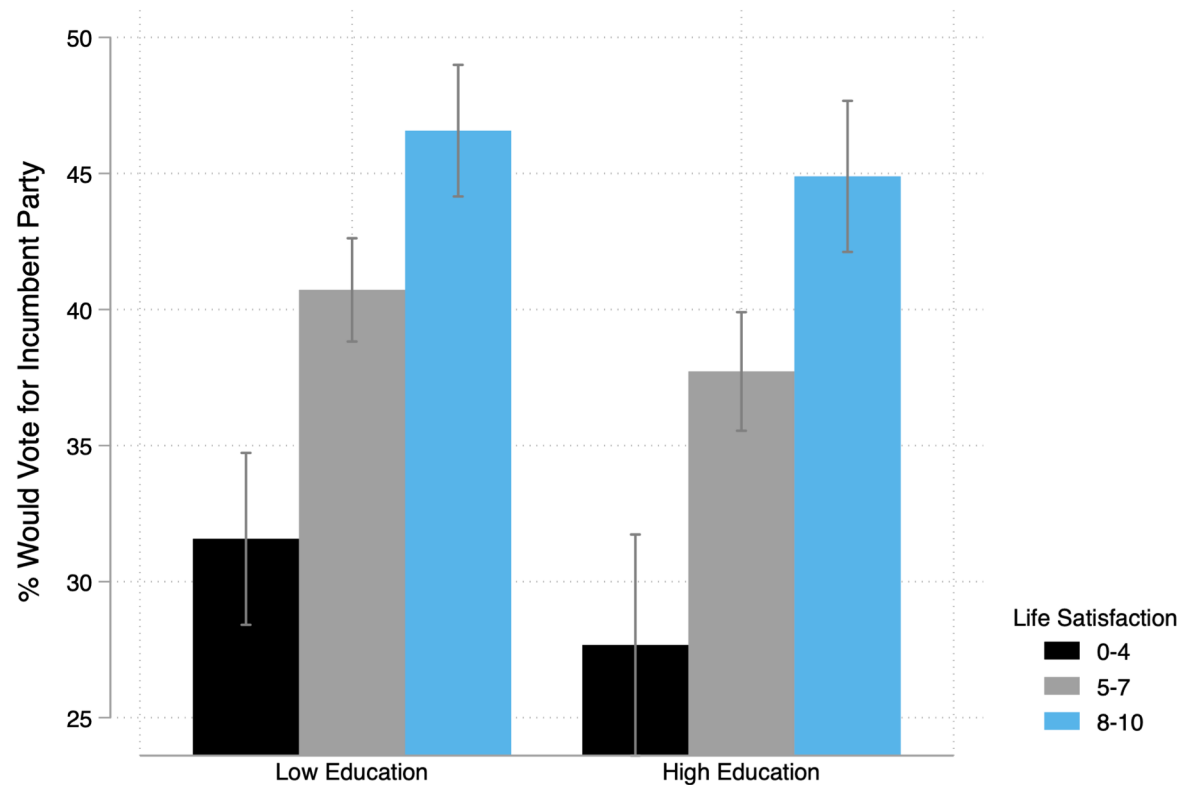
## Why is this so important?

- It has long been known that incumbent vote shares at general elections are empirically linked to the state of the national economy
- This “economic voting” suggests sitting governments have strong incentives to look after the economy in order to be re-elected
  - But is the same true of the population’s happiness?
  - The finding that happier people are more likely to vote for governing parties suggests that incumbent politicians have strong incentive to look toward “governance for happiness”
  - Governing for happiness is not only a good in itself, there appear to be electoral rewards to doing so

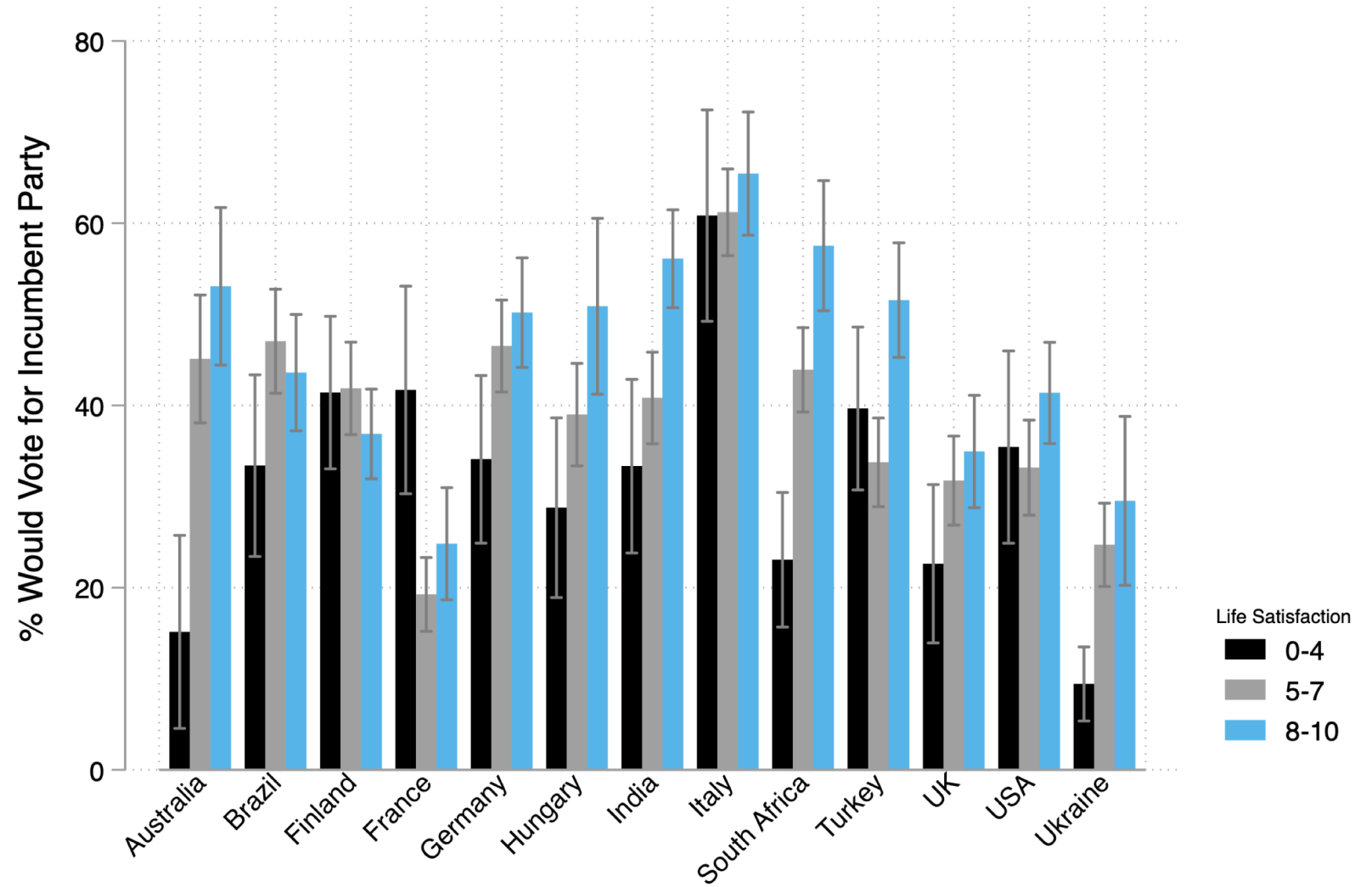
# LIFE SATISFACTION AND VOTING: AGE AND GENDER



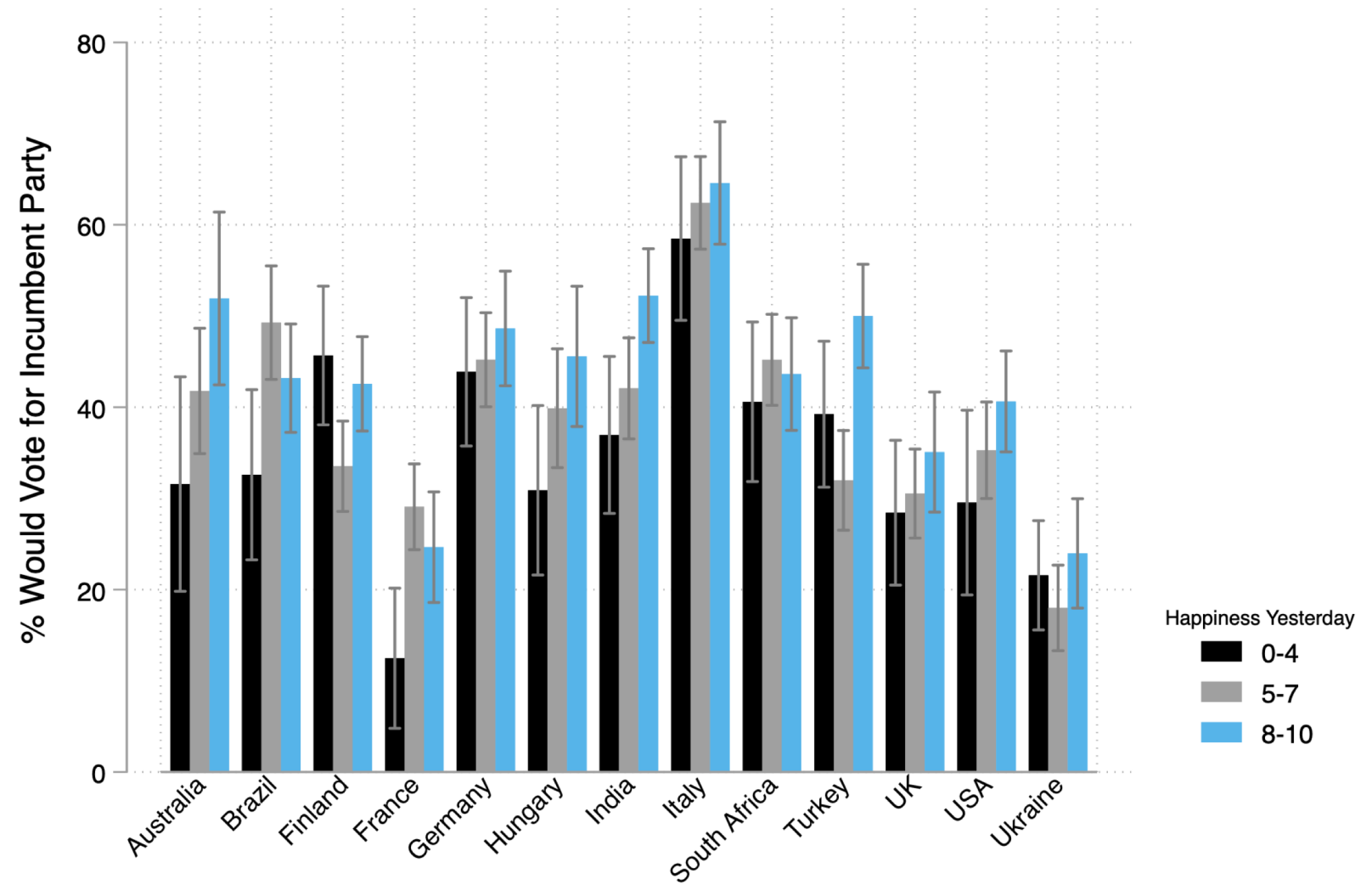
# LIFE SATISFACTION AND VOTING: SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



# LIFE SATISFACTION AND INCUMBENT VOTING ACROSS COUNTRIES



# HAPPINESS AND INCUMBENT VOTING ACROSS COUNTRIES



# HAPPINESS AND POPULISM

## What we do:

- We ask respondents a series of questions on populist beliefs
- We correlate these beliefs with different measures of subjective well-being
- We assess the extent to which (un)happiness is correlated with voting intentions for populist parties (as defined by the academic literature)

## Key takeaways:

- People with low life satisfaction are more likely to hold populist beliefs. No clear relationship between *hedonic* feelings of happiness yesterday and populist attitudes
- Unhappiness translates into populist voting intentions when a mainstream government is in power
- But once populists are already in power, the positive correlation between happiness and incumbent voting dominates. This suggests that although unhappy people elect populists, they cannot rely on unhappy people to get re-elected

# POPULISM: BACKGROUND

- Populism is not new, but has seen resurgence in the past few years
  - Support for populist parties at general elections has tripled in 20 years in Europe, with 1 in 4 now voting for such a party
- Concept of 'populism' is contested, and 'populist' often used in multiple ways
  - We follow the most conventional definition in the academic literature
  - A thin-centered ideology, defined by two core features:
    1. Anti-Elitism
      - A belief in there being a "pure" body of "ordinary people", who are in fundamentally in conflict with a "corrupt elite"
    2. People-centrism
      - Politics should be an expression purely of the "will of the people"

# POPULIST ATTITUDES IN SURVEY QUESTIONS

- We measure **people-centric** views using 3 questions, each on a 0-5 disagree-to-agree scale

- “Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people”
- “Politicians don’t have to spend time among ordinary people to do a good job” (reverse coded)
- “The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country’s politics”

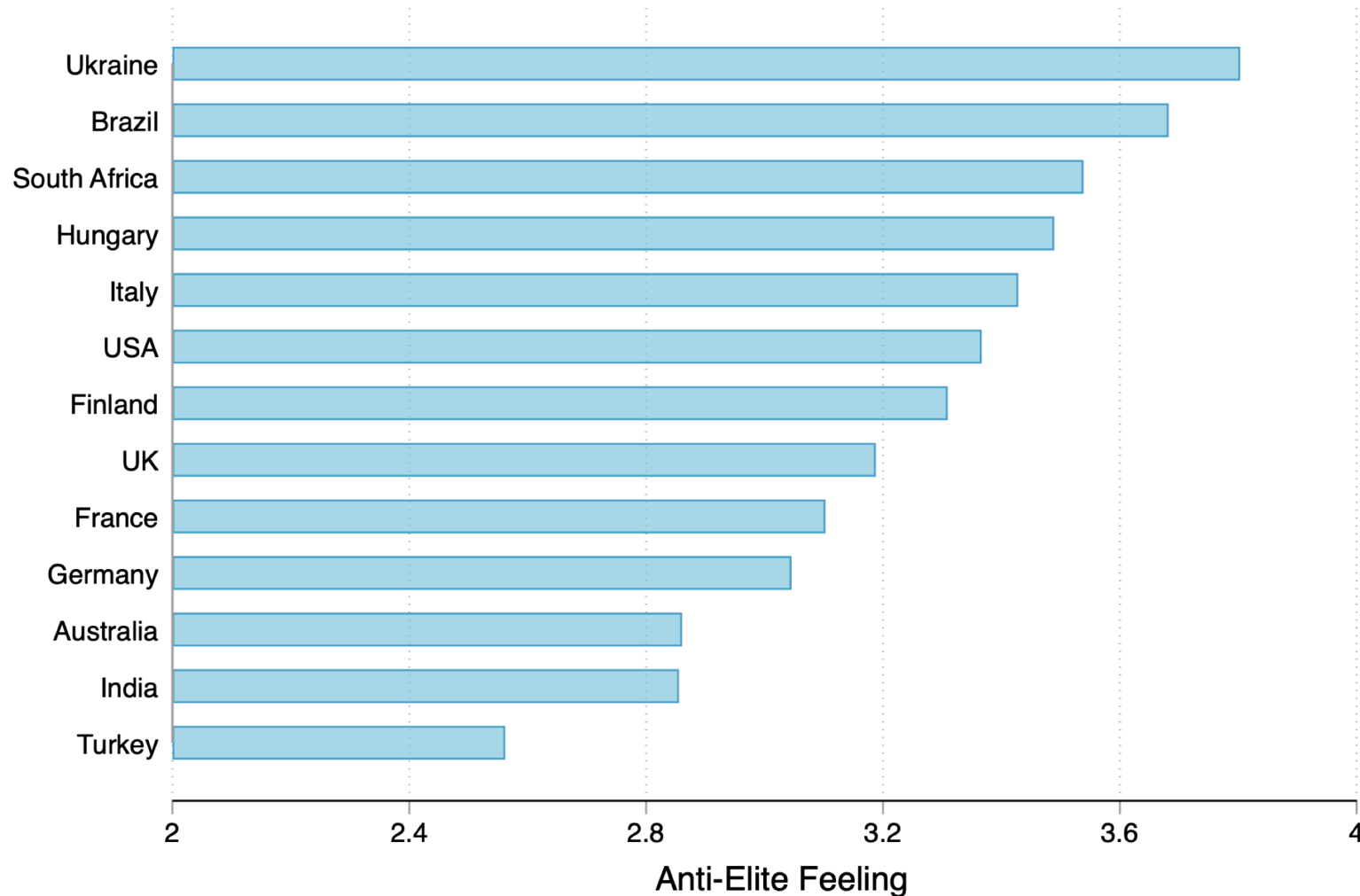
We measure **anti-elitist** views using 3 questions, each on a 0-5 disagree-to-agree scale

- “The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves”
- “Government officials use their power to try to improve people’s lives” (reverse coded)
- “Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked”

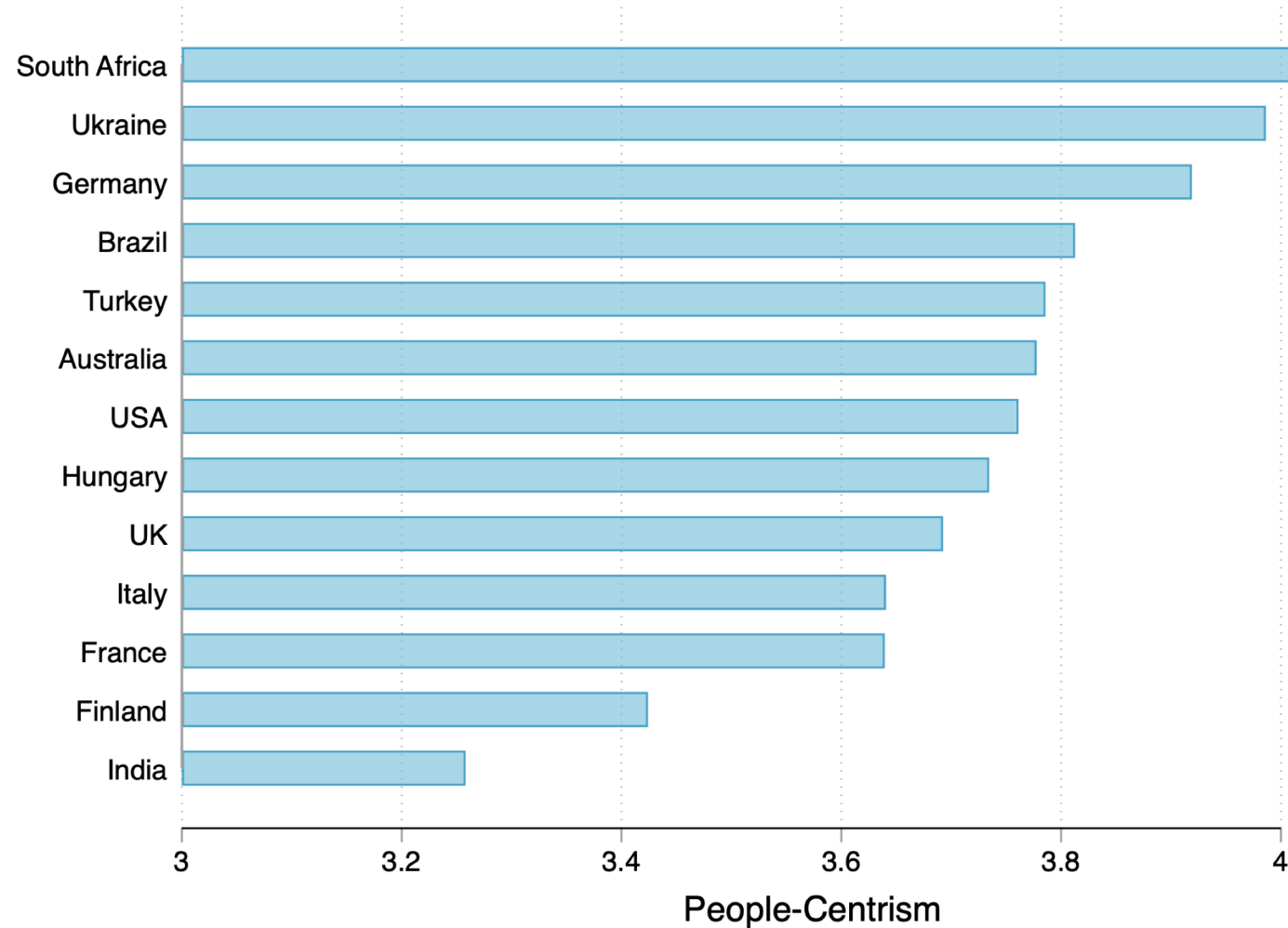
\*See [Silva et al 2019](#) for more details



# ANTI-ELITISM ACROSS COUNTRIES



# PEOPLE-CENTRISM ACROSS COUNTRIES



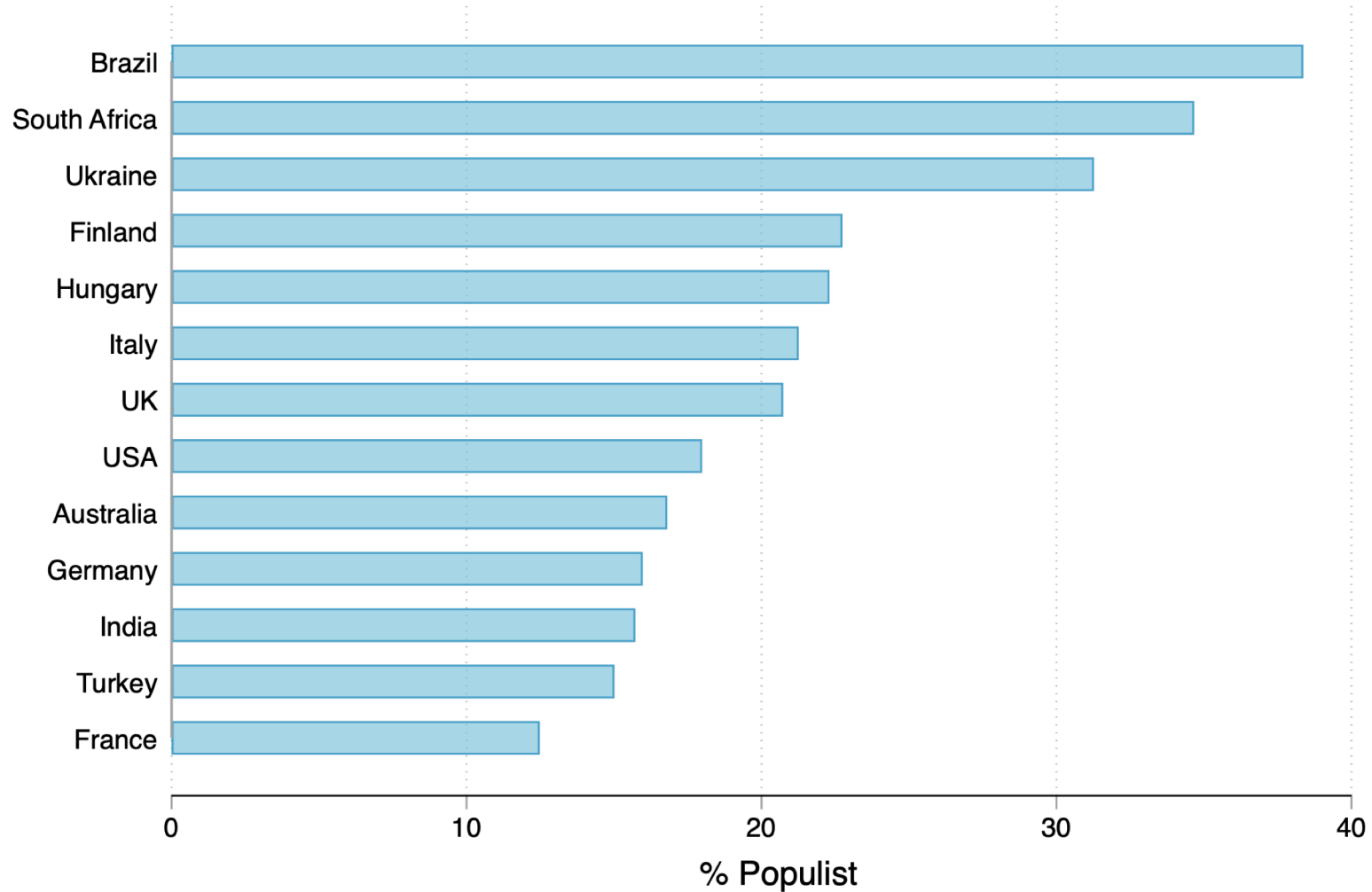
# THE “POPULIST COHORT”

We identify a core cohort of *strongly* populist people

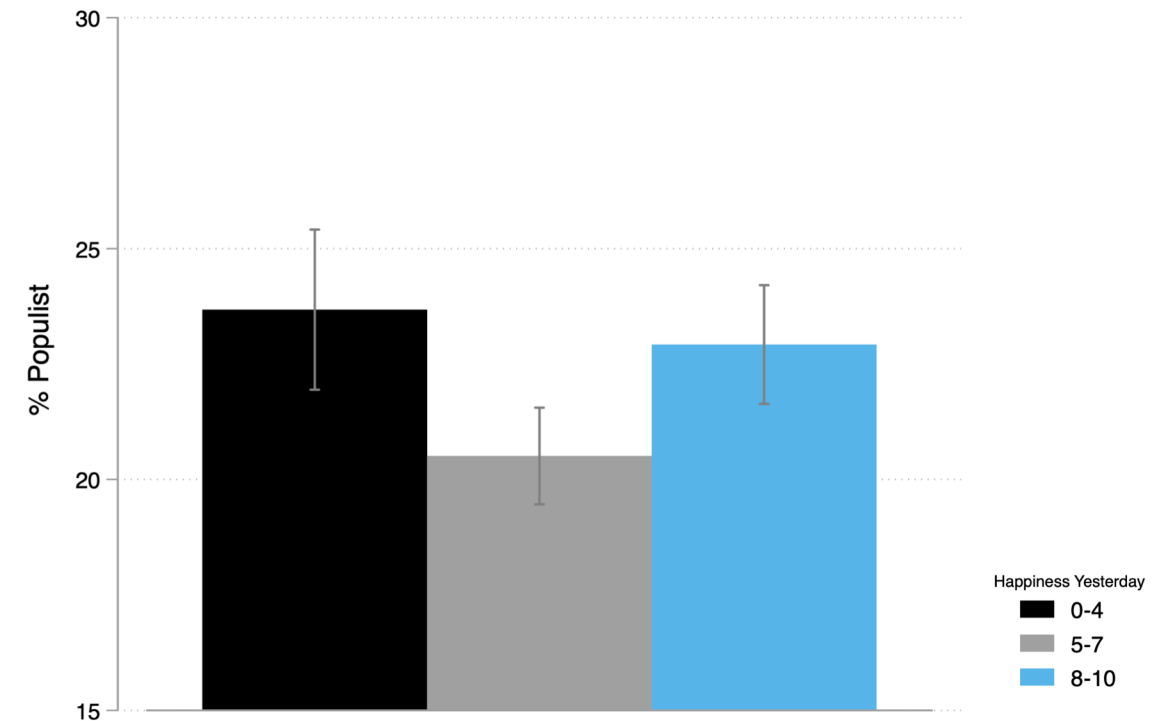
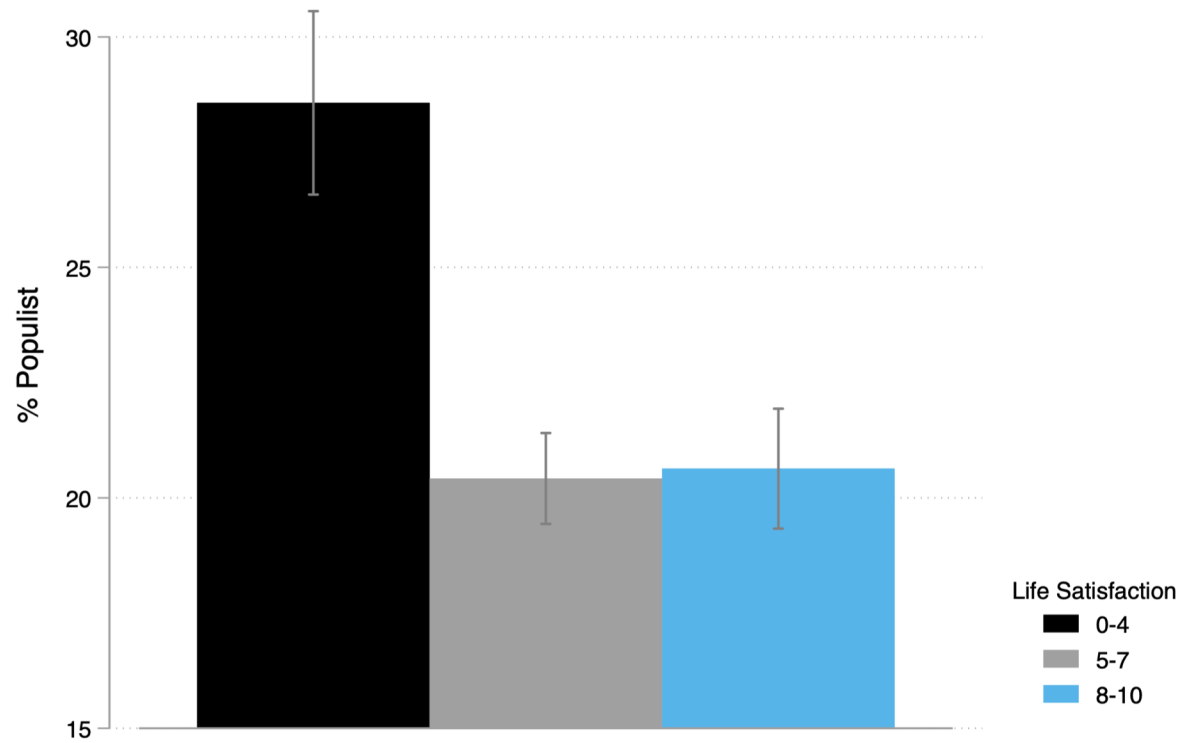
- Respondents who “Strongly agree” with both the following two statements:
  - The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country’s politics
  - The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves
- Overall, around **22% of the population are populists** according to this definition
  - Striking differences across countries in the extent to which the population is populist
  - Brazil, South Africa and Ukraine particularly populist in their voters’ attitudes

\* See also [Lewis and Duncan 2019](#) for a similar approach

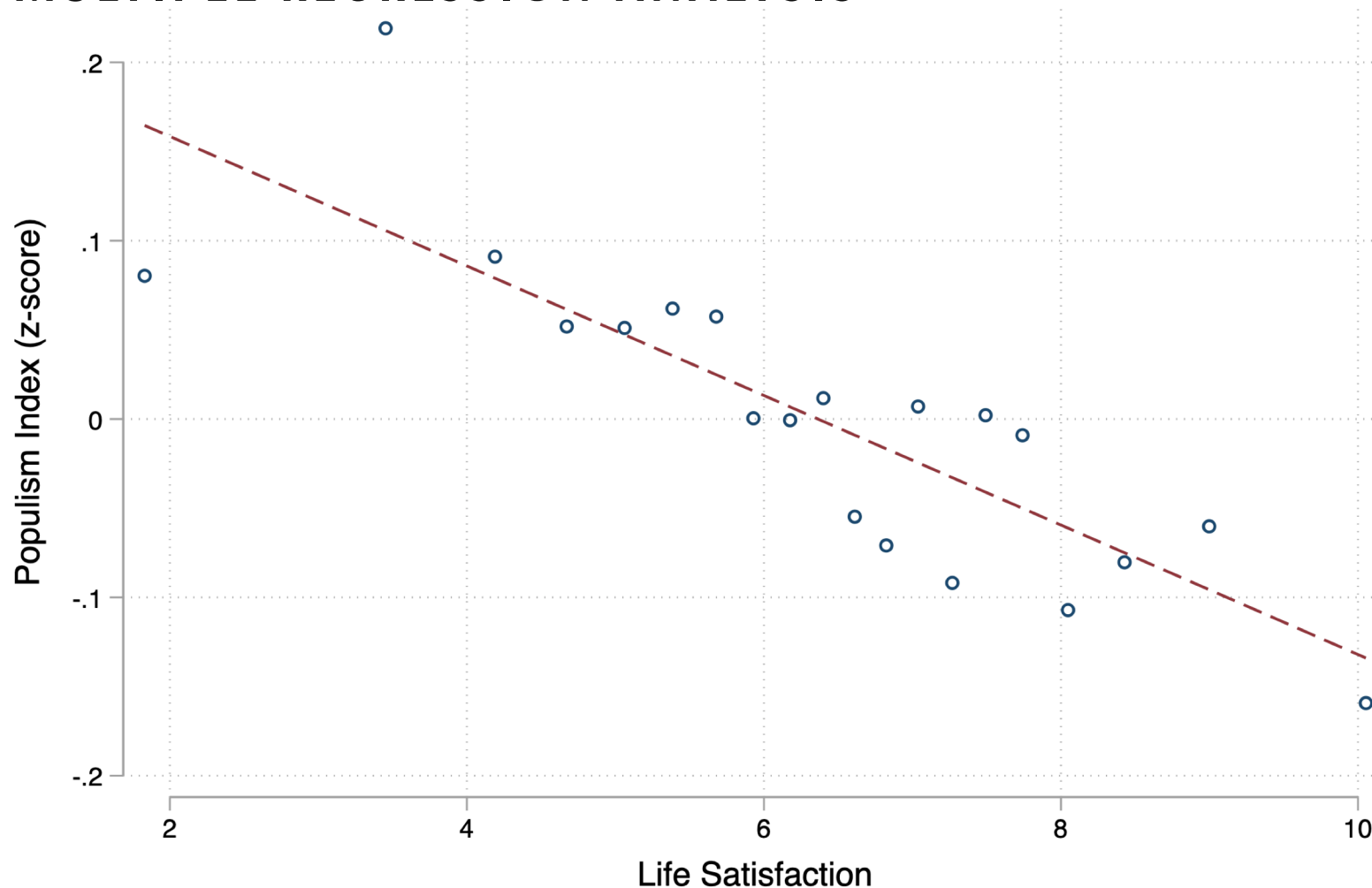
# THE “POPULIST COHORT” ACROSS COUNTRIES



# POPULISM AND WELL-BEING



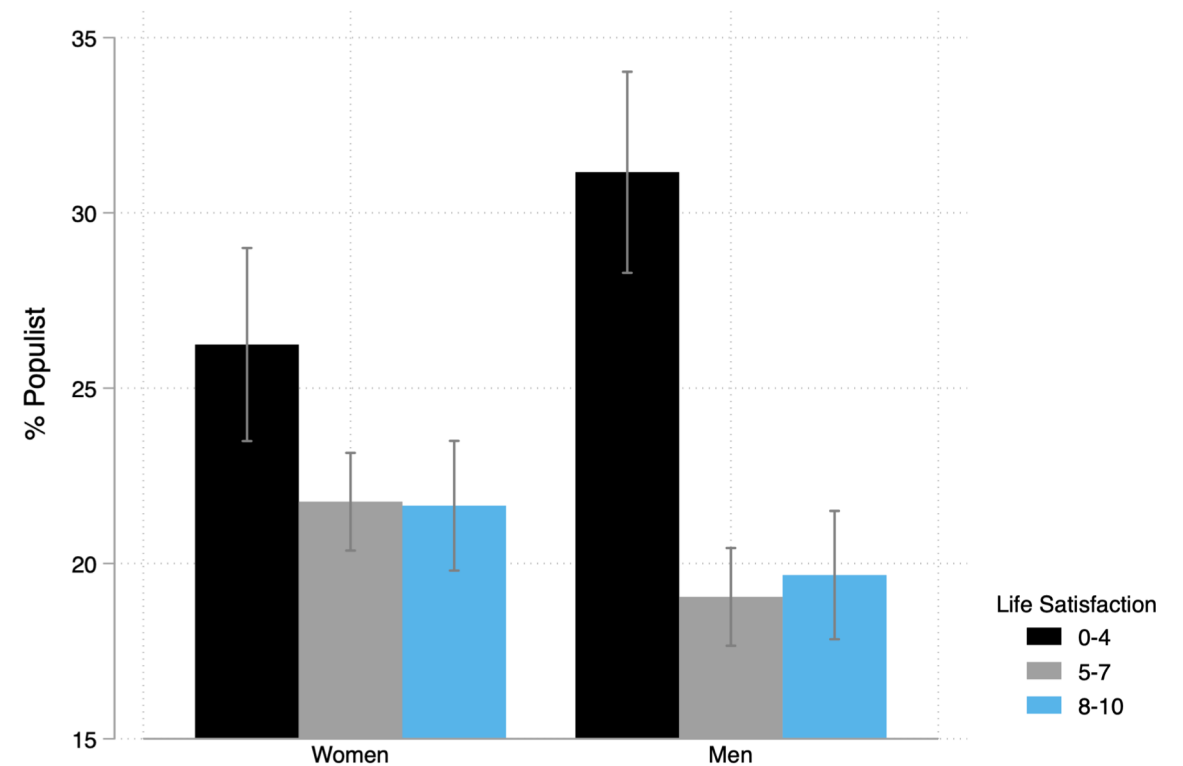
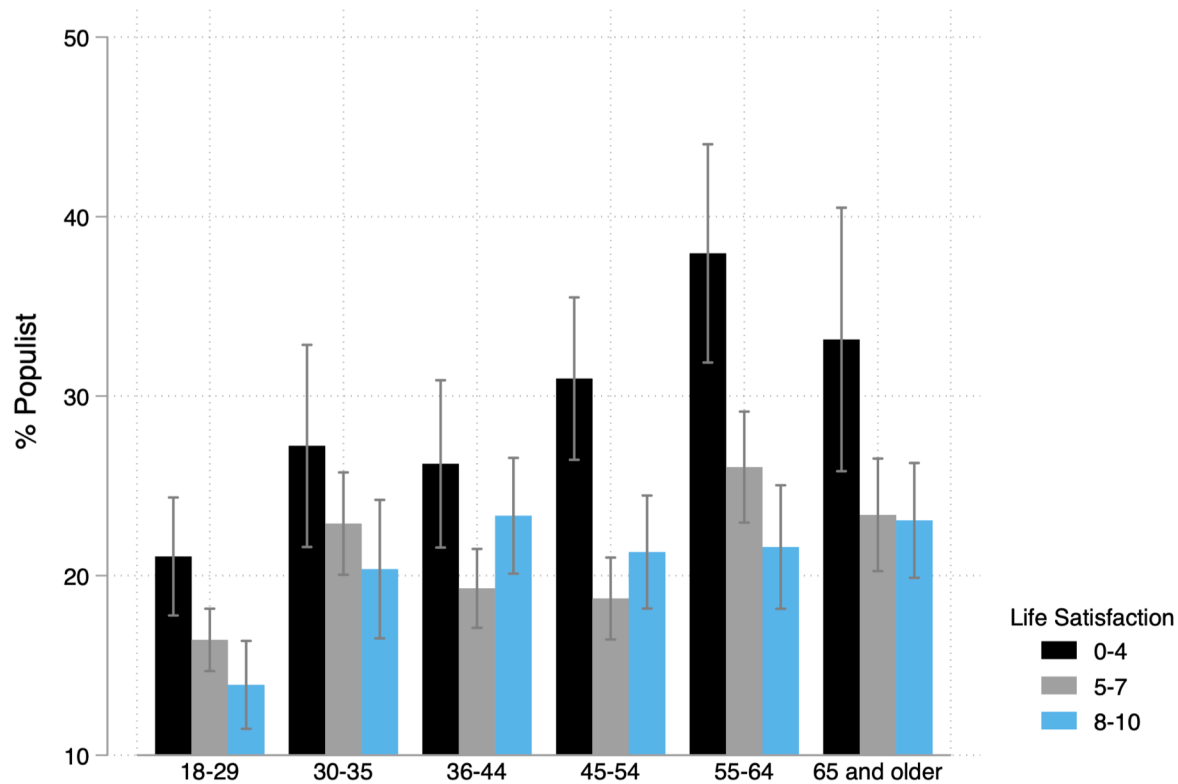
# WELL-BEING AND POPULIST BELIEFS: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS



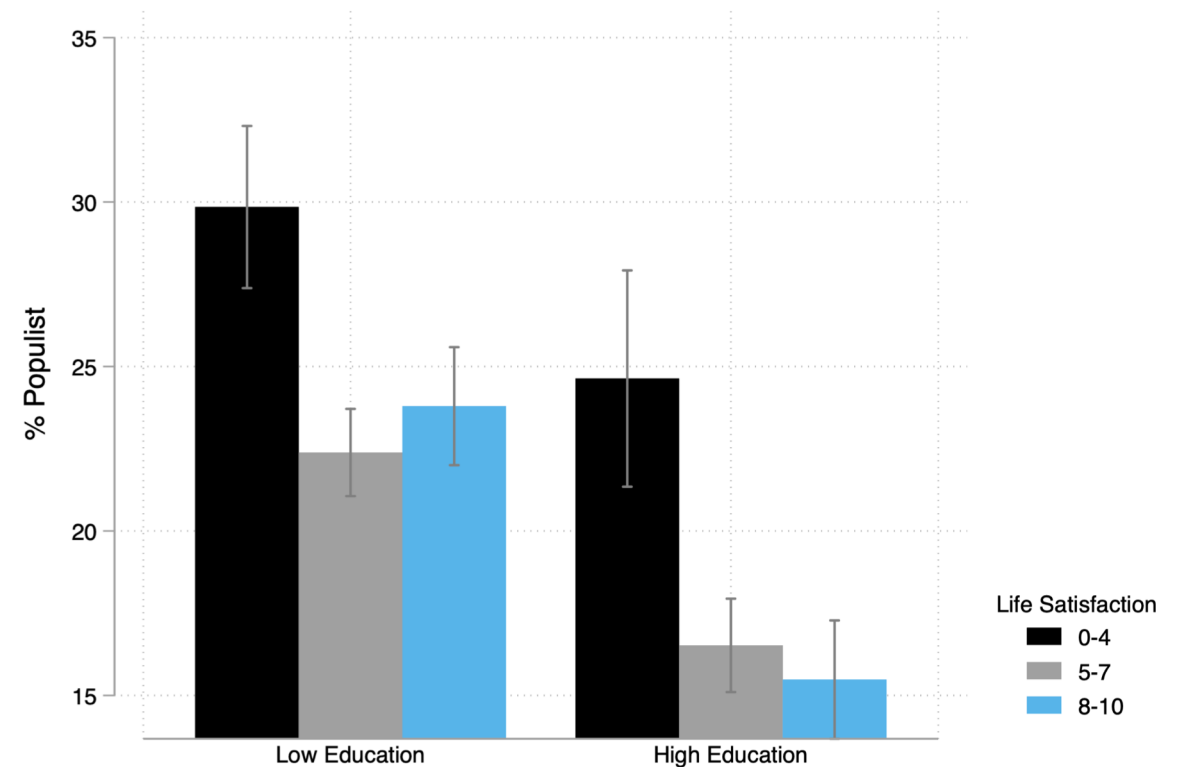
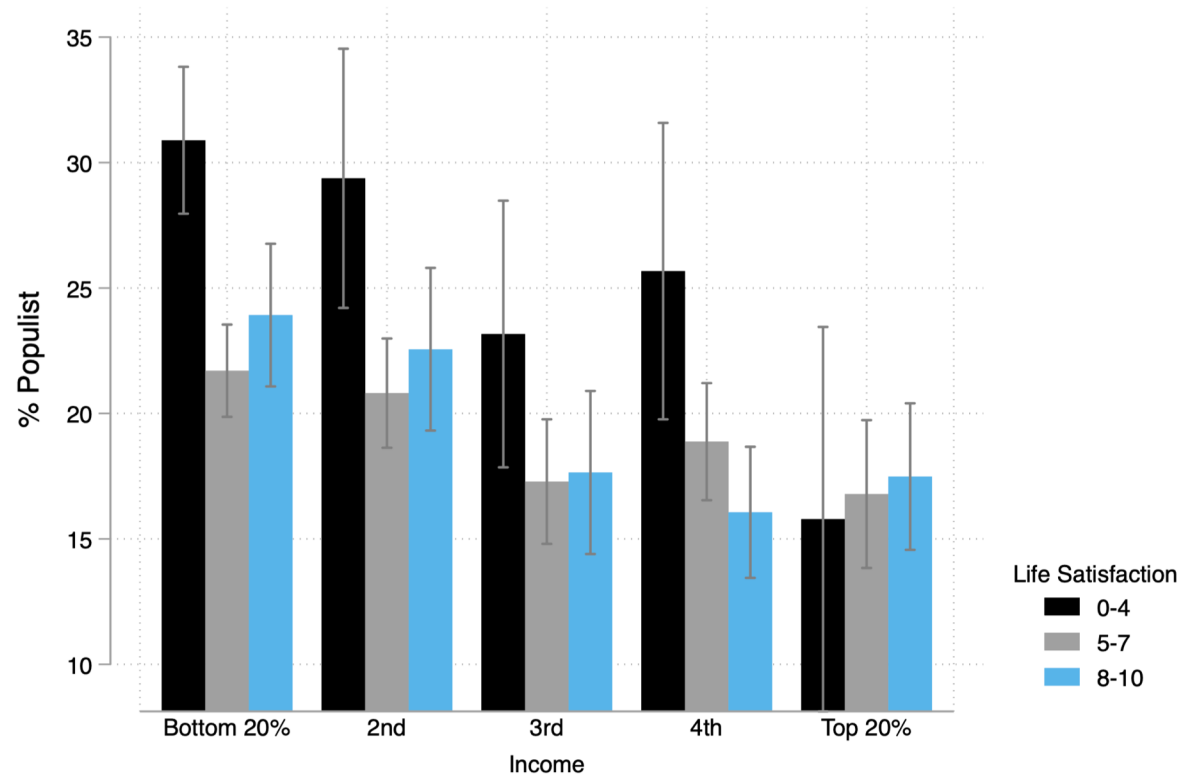
- Populism index is the mean of the 6 questions (each on a 0-5 scale) on people-centrism and anti-elitism. This index is z-scored, such that it has a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1.
- Binned scatter-plot shown\*
- This is a visual representation of a multiple regression of populism on life satisfaction.
- Regression controls for country fixed effects, age, gender, marital status, income, employment status, education & number of children.
- Linear line of best-fit shown.
- $\beta_{LS} = -.0363$ 
  - S.E. = .0099
  - $p = .003$

\* Both measures are regression-adjusted for full set of covariates and FEs, and then binned into quantiles, before plotting. Robust S.E. reported, adjusted for clustering on countries.

# DOES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFE SATISFACTION AND POPULISM VARY ACROSS PEOPLE?

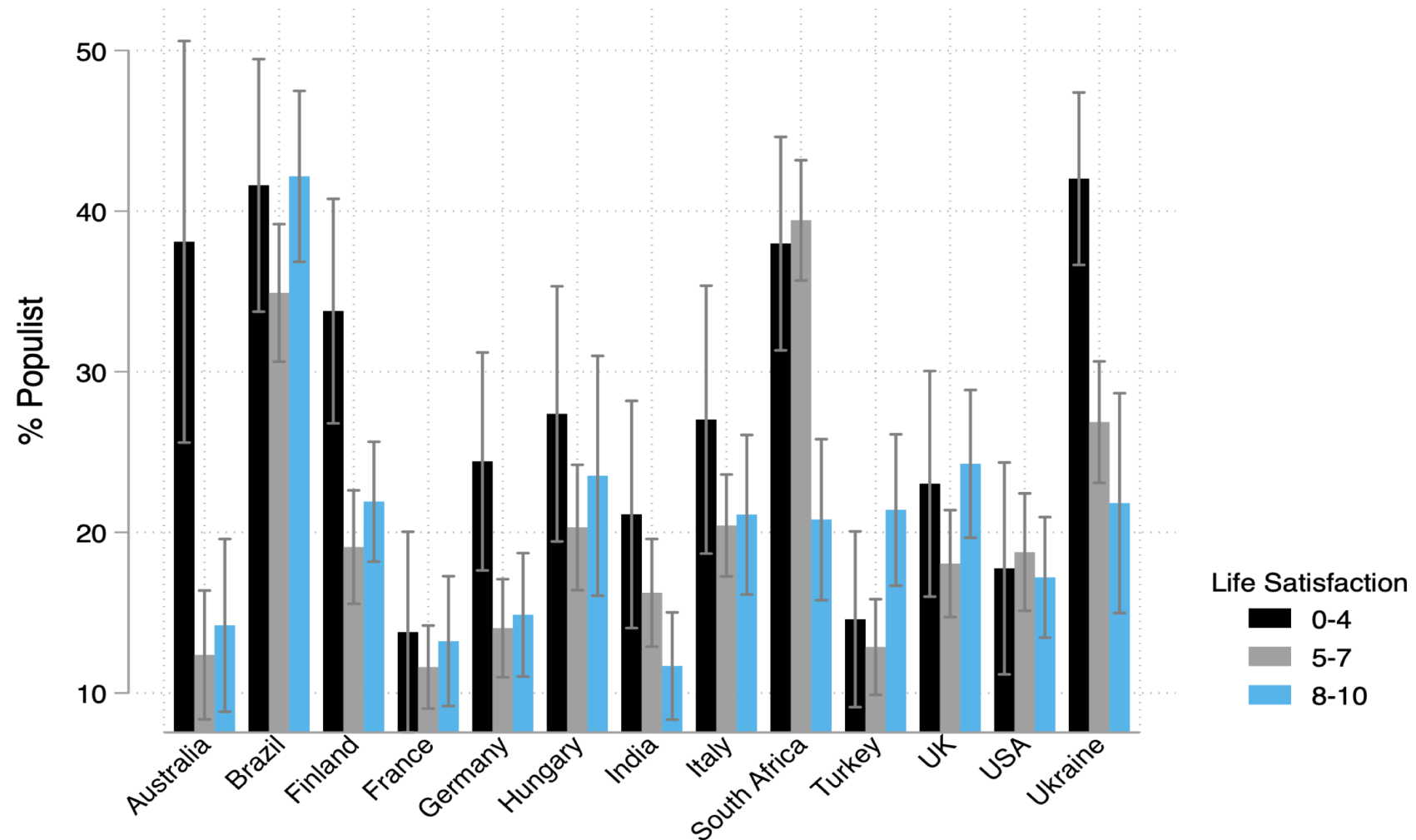


# DOES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFE SATISFACTION AND POPULISM VARY ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS?





# LIFE SATISFACTION AND POPULISM ACROSS COUNTRIES



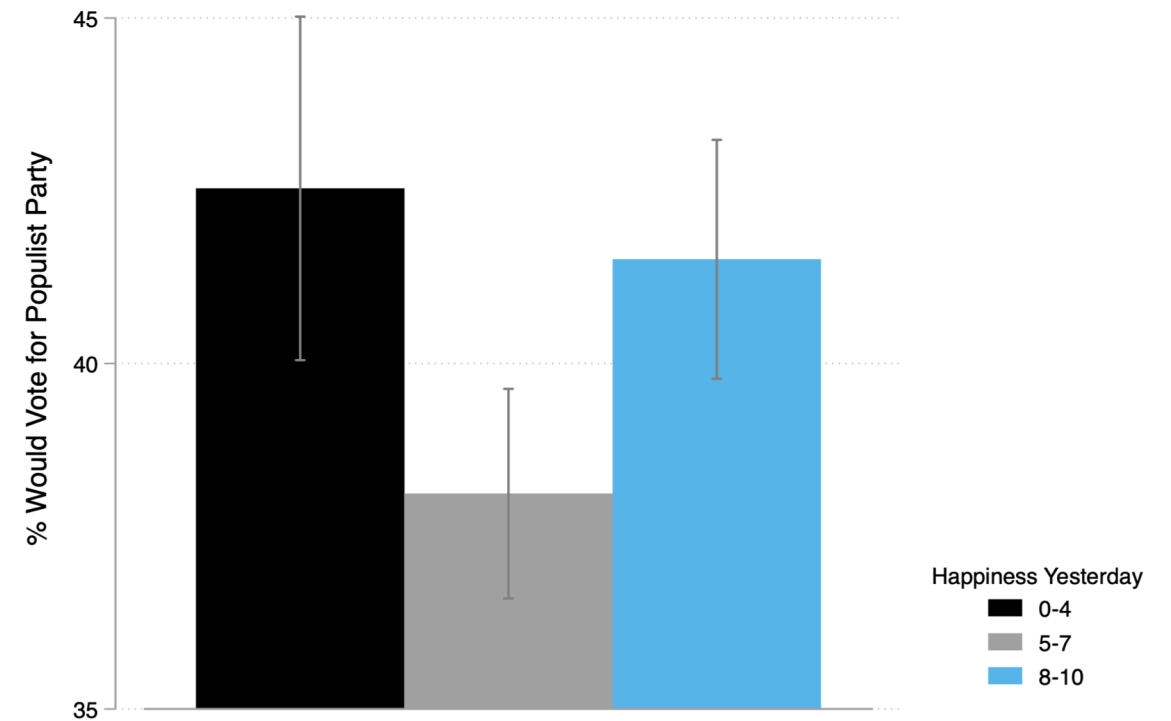
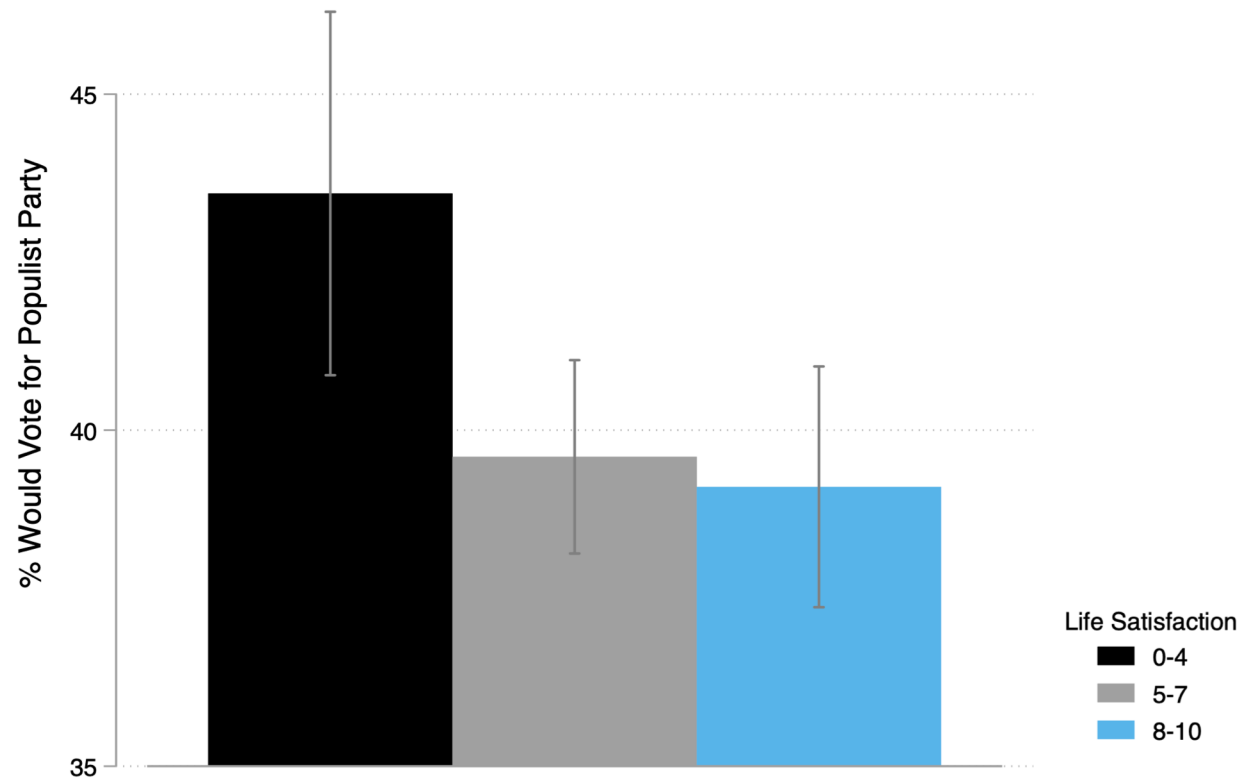
# POPULIST VOTING INTENTIONS

- Do these findings on SWB and populist *beliefs* translate into actual votes?
- We use a voting intentions question
  - “If a general election were held tomorrow, who would you vote for?”
  - We then link answers to populist parties, according to which parties are populist (anti-elite and people-centric) in their outlook
  - Look at who votes for populist parties

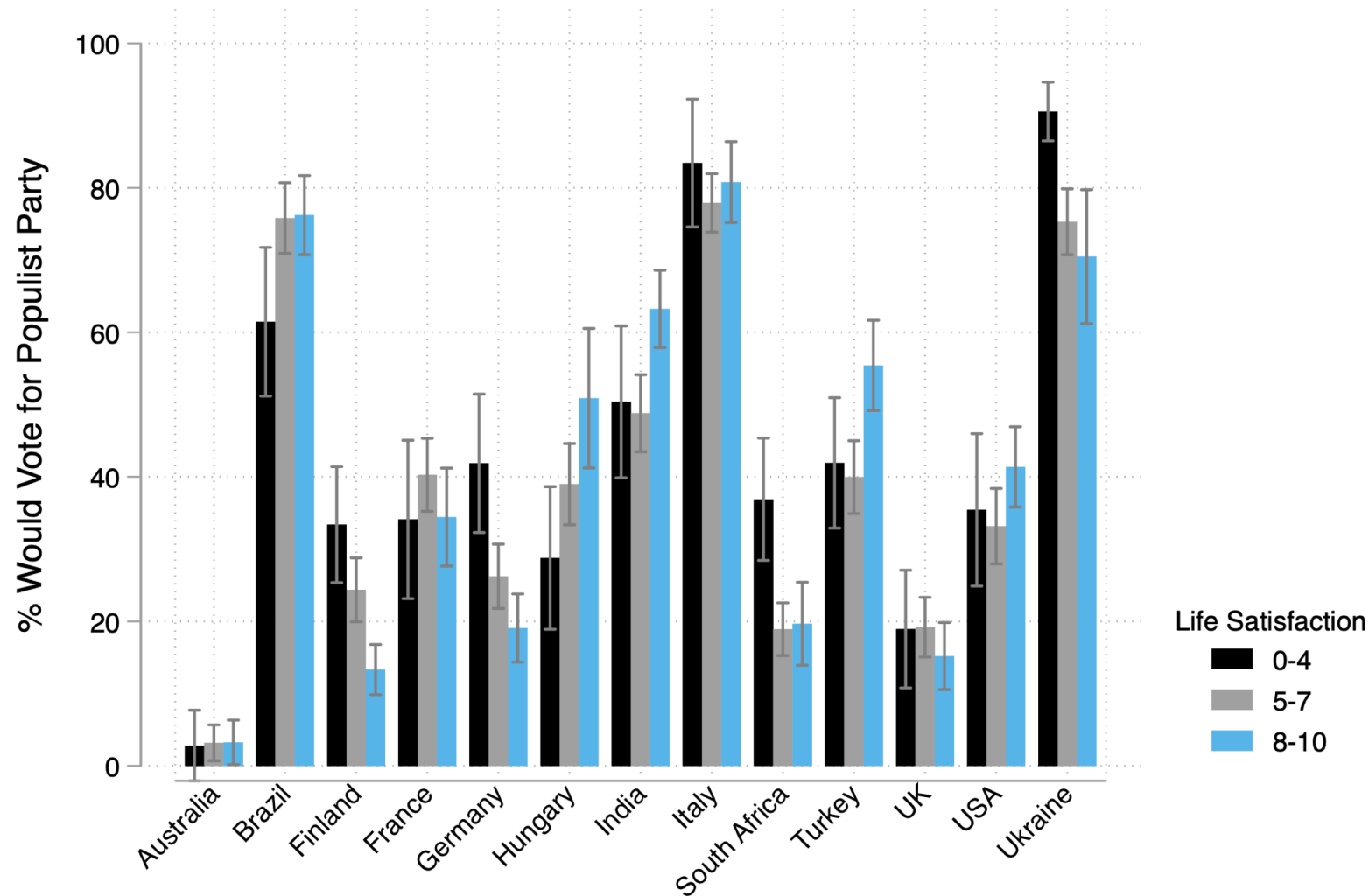
## **Key finding:**

- Populists have to deliver once they are in power
- They cannot rely on the unhappy and dissatisfied to re-elect them back into office

# WELL-BEING AND POPULIST VOTING



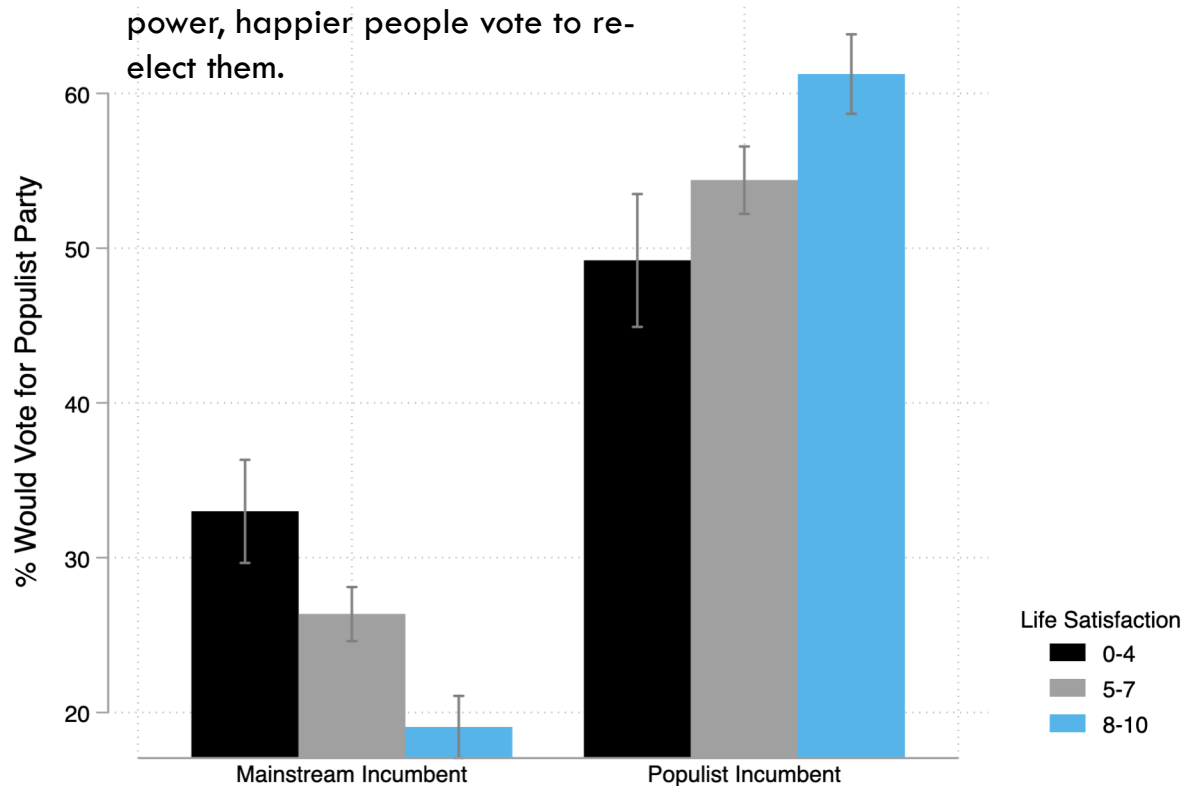
# LIFE SATISFACTION AND POPULIST VOTING



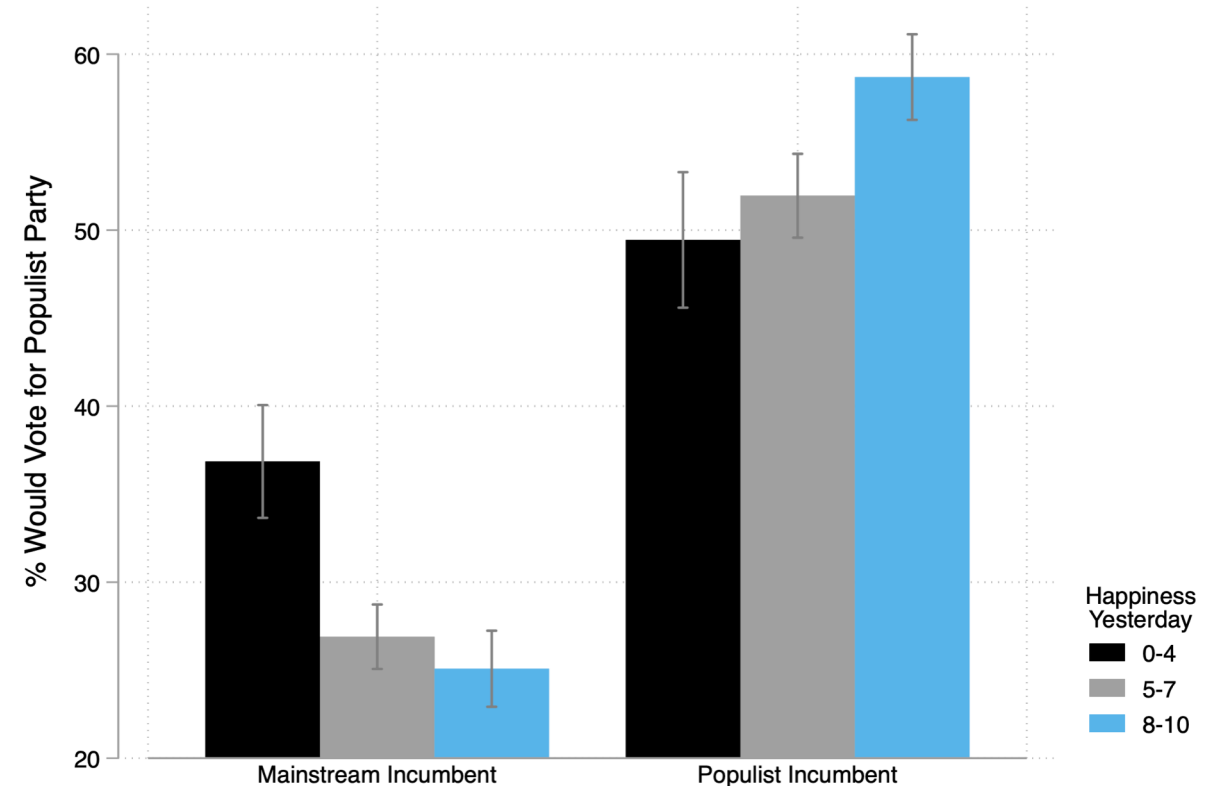
- In the aggregate, relationship not clear between well-being and populist voting
- Here we can see the relationship between life satisfaction and populist voting varies across countries
  - Positive in some, negative in others
  - What might explain this?

# LIFE SATISFACTION AND POPULIST VOTING ACROSS COUNTRIES WITH POPULIST AND MAINSTREAM GOVERNMENTS

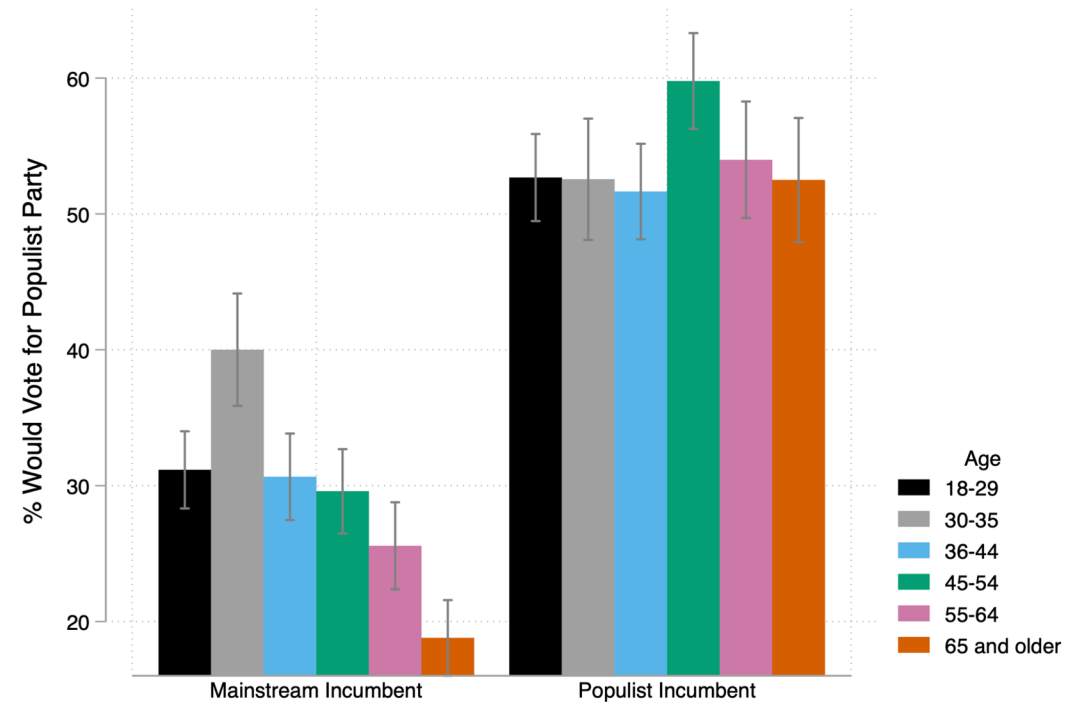
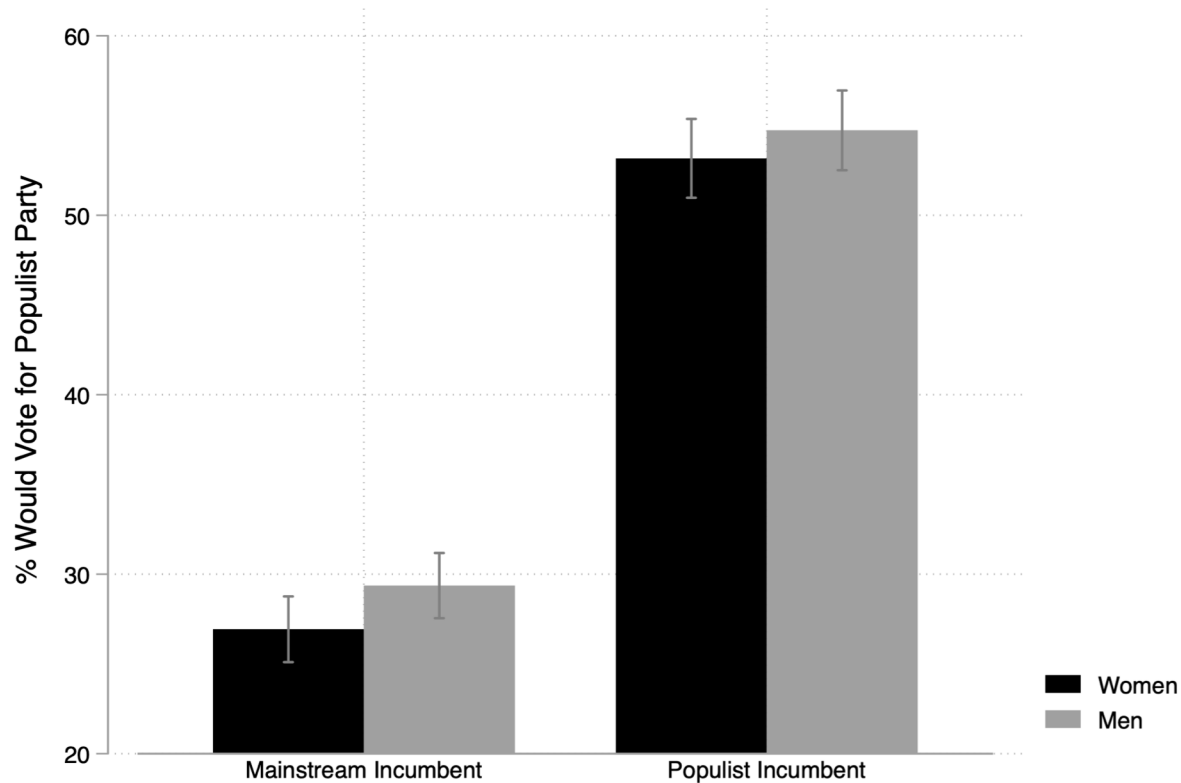
- Unhappy people vote populists into office. But once populists are in power, happier people vote to re-elect them.



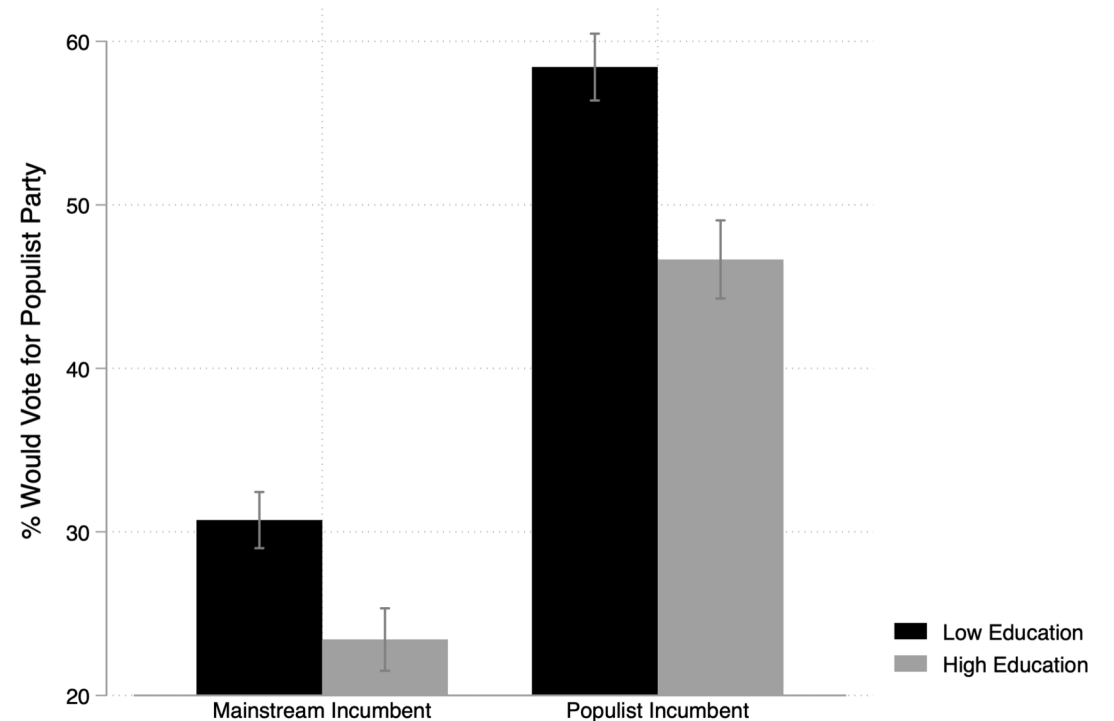
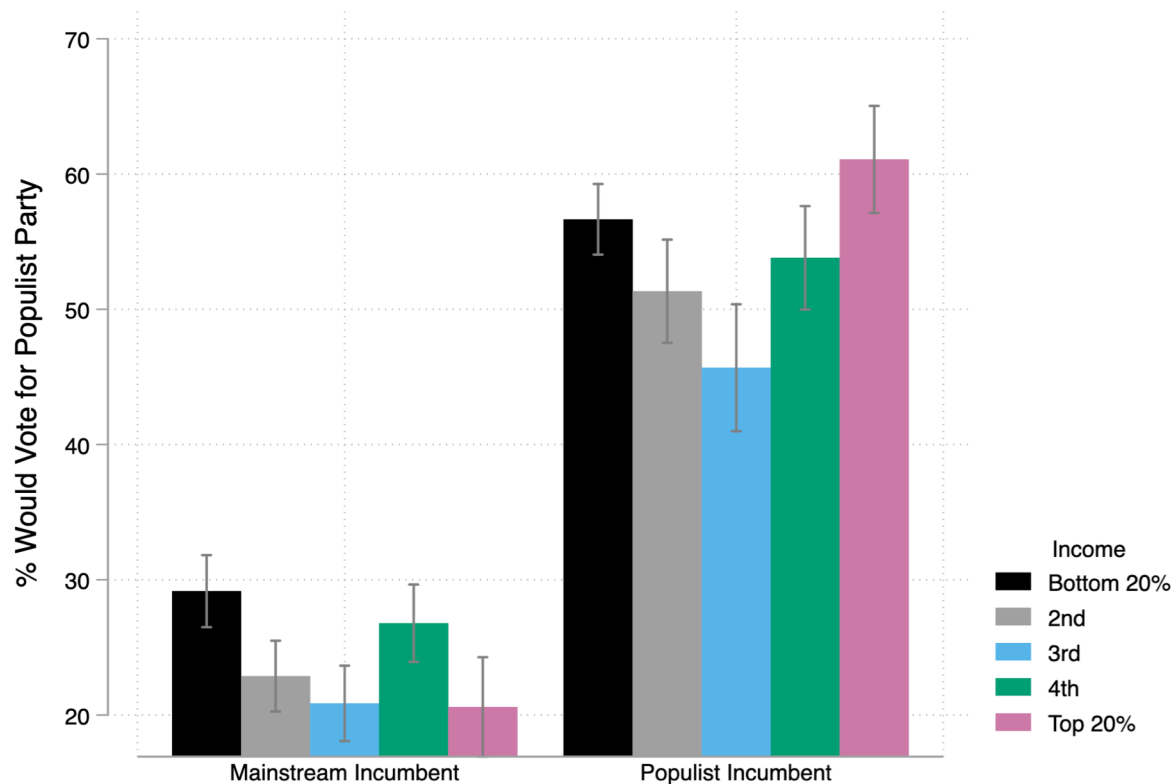
- Happiness and *incumbent* voting relationship seems to trump the unhappiness to *populist* voting one.



# POPULIST VOTING ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS



# POPULIST VOTING ACROSS SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS



# NATIVISM

## What we do:

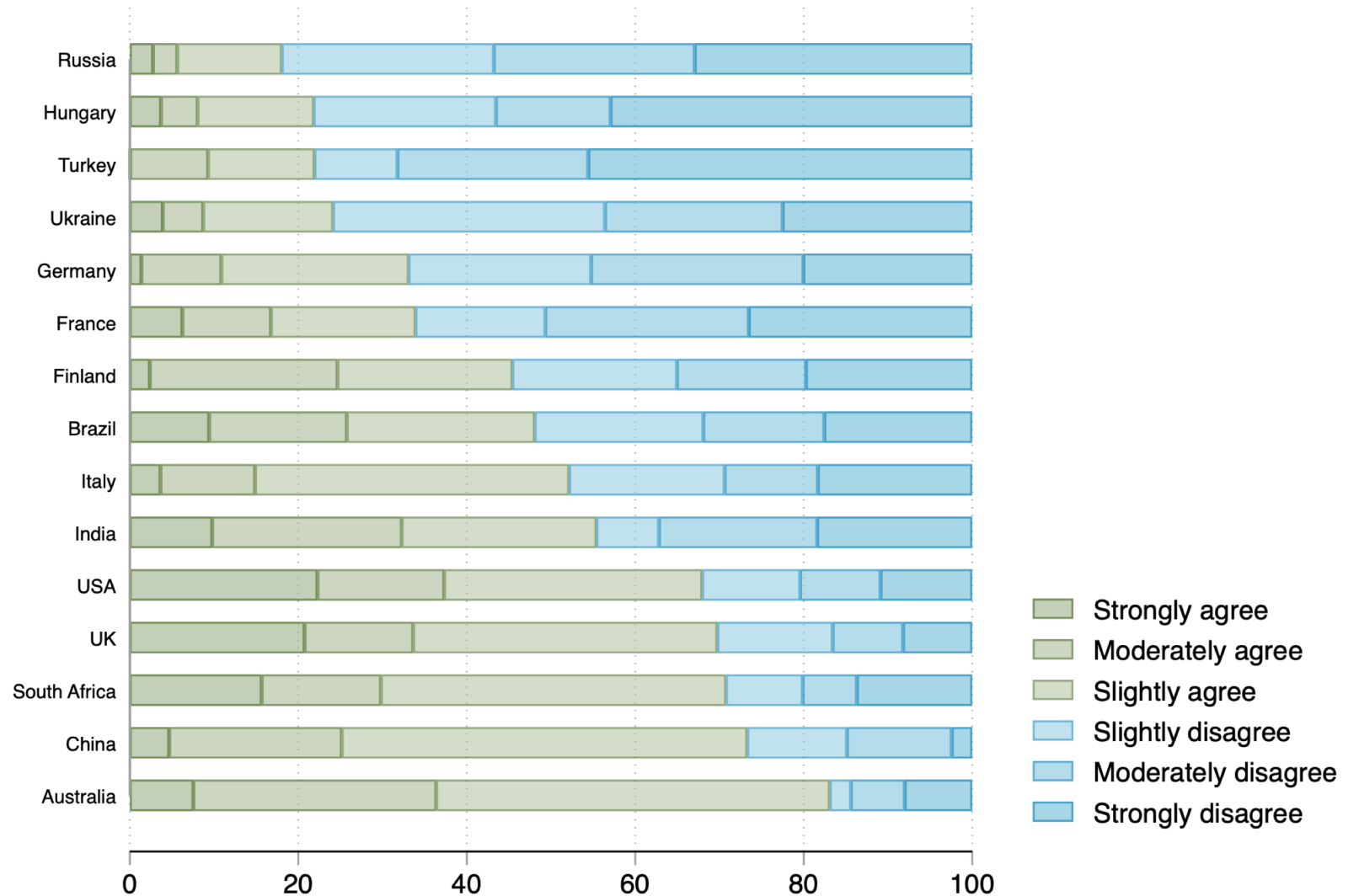
- Very much related to populism, we also ask questions on *nativist* beliefs
- We ask about preferences for immigration, and assess the extent to which these vary among happier and unhappier people

## Key takeaways:

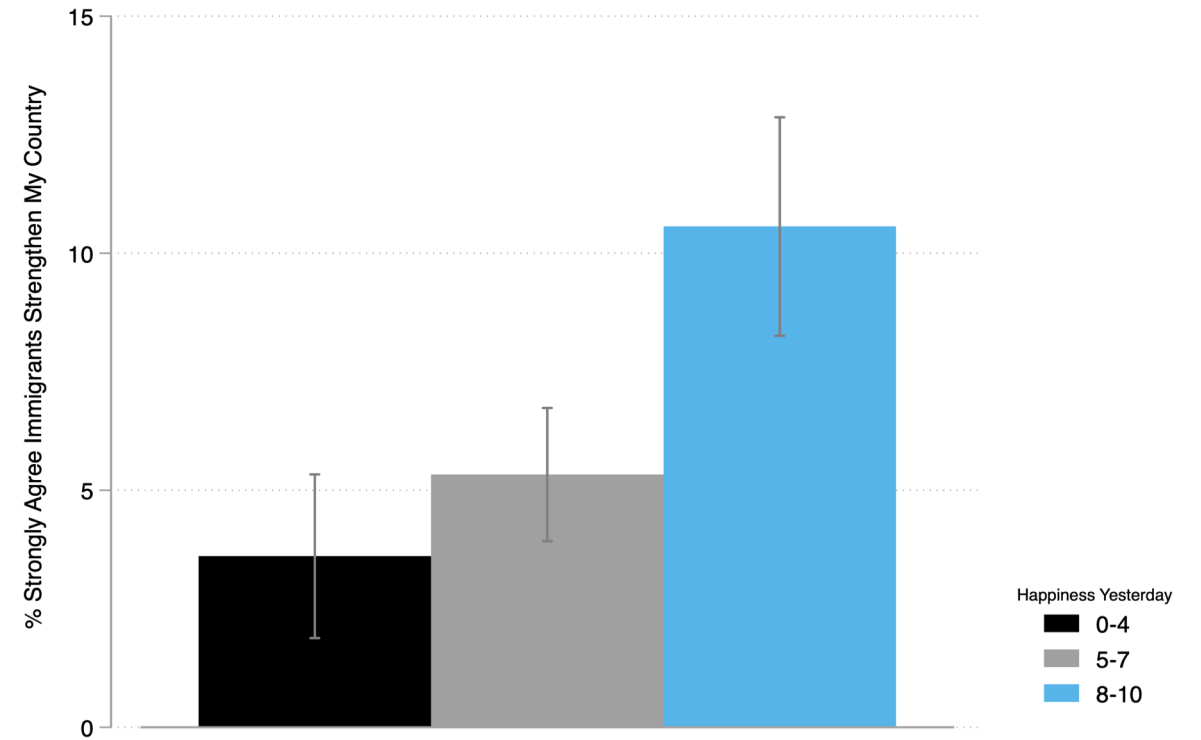
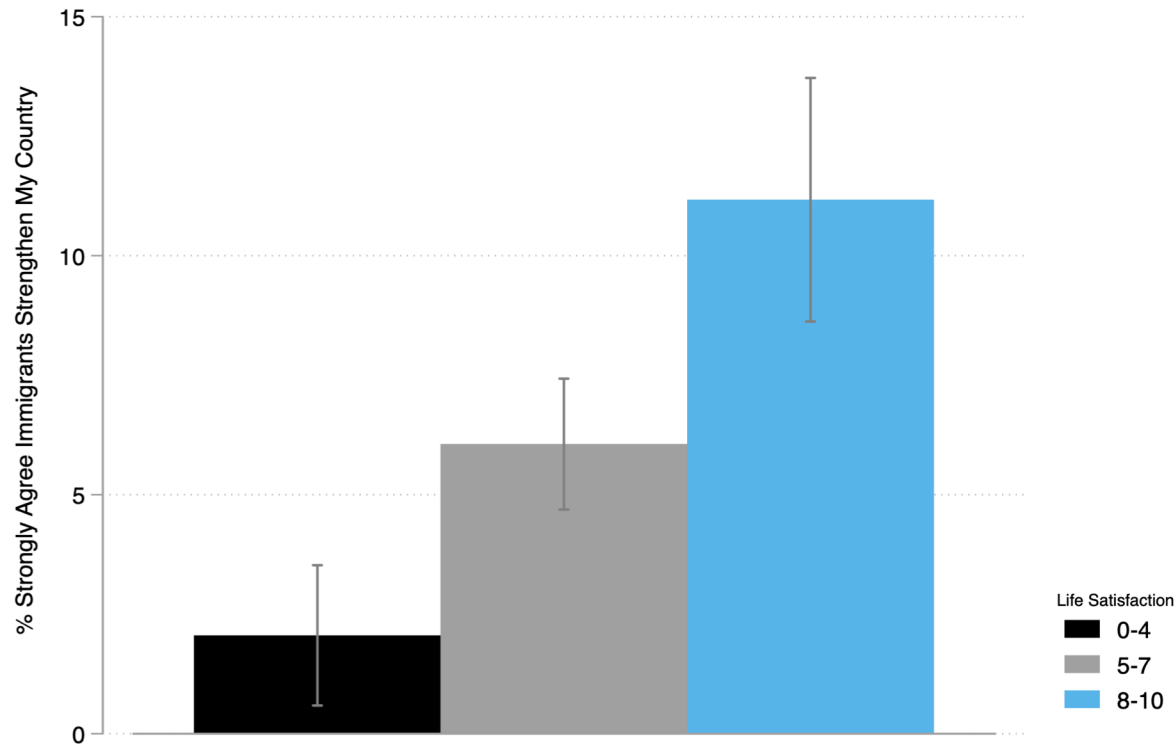
- Happier people are more likely to see immigrants as being a strength to their country
- Some evidence, though less clear, that levels of satisfaction and happiness are related to beliefs about immigrants being a burden on society



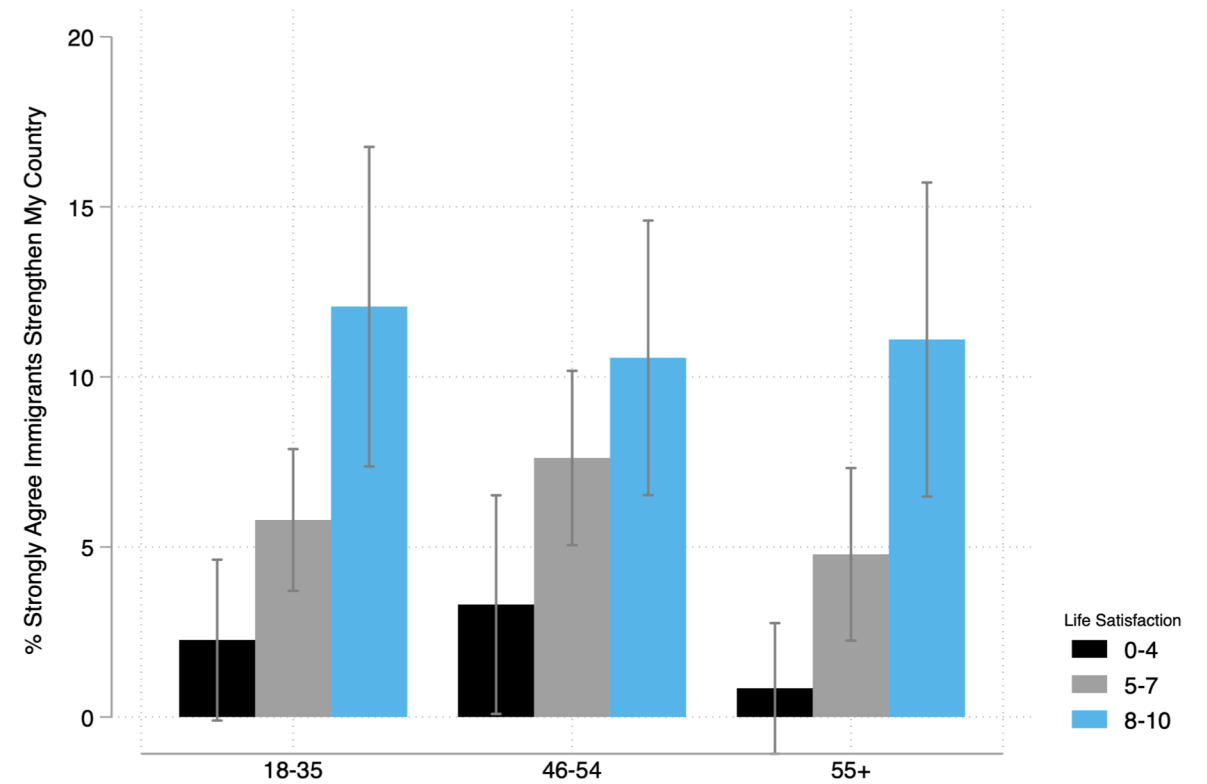
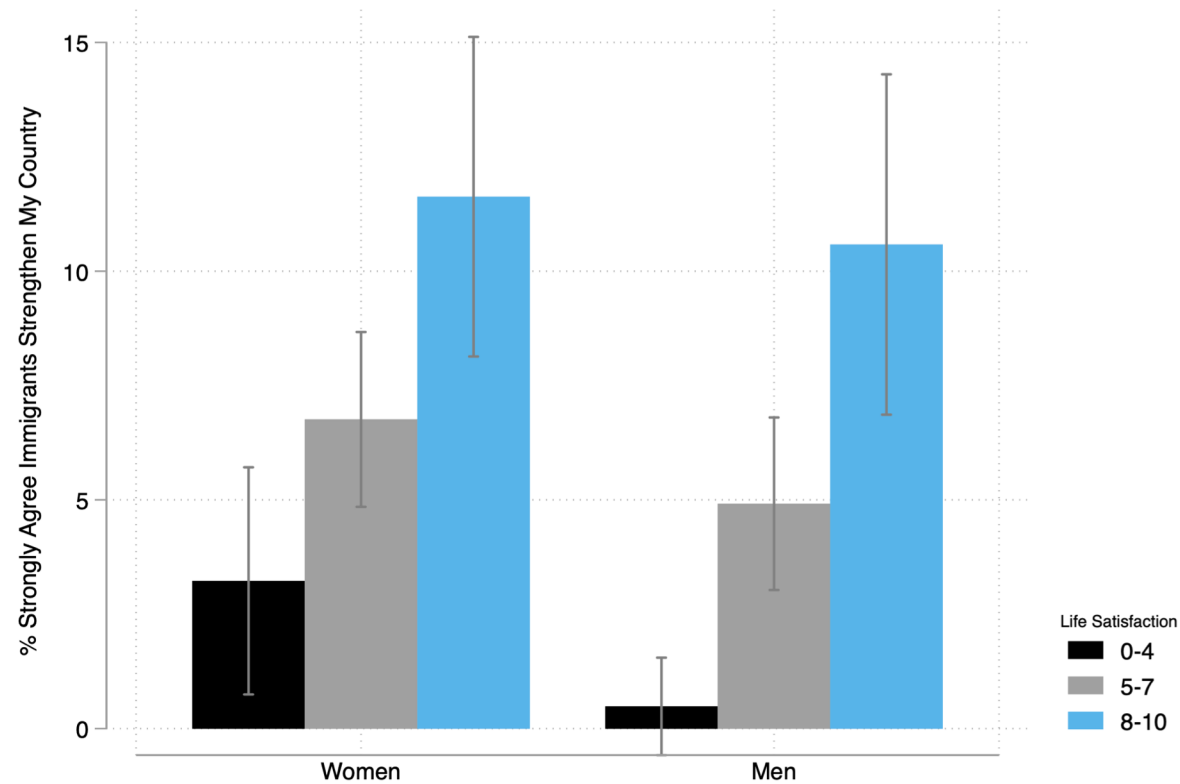
“IMMIGRANTS  
STRENGTHEN MY  
COUNTRY BECAUSE  
OF THEIR HARD  
WORK AND  
TALENTS”



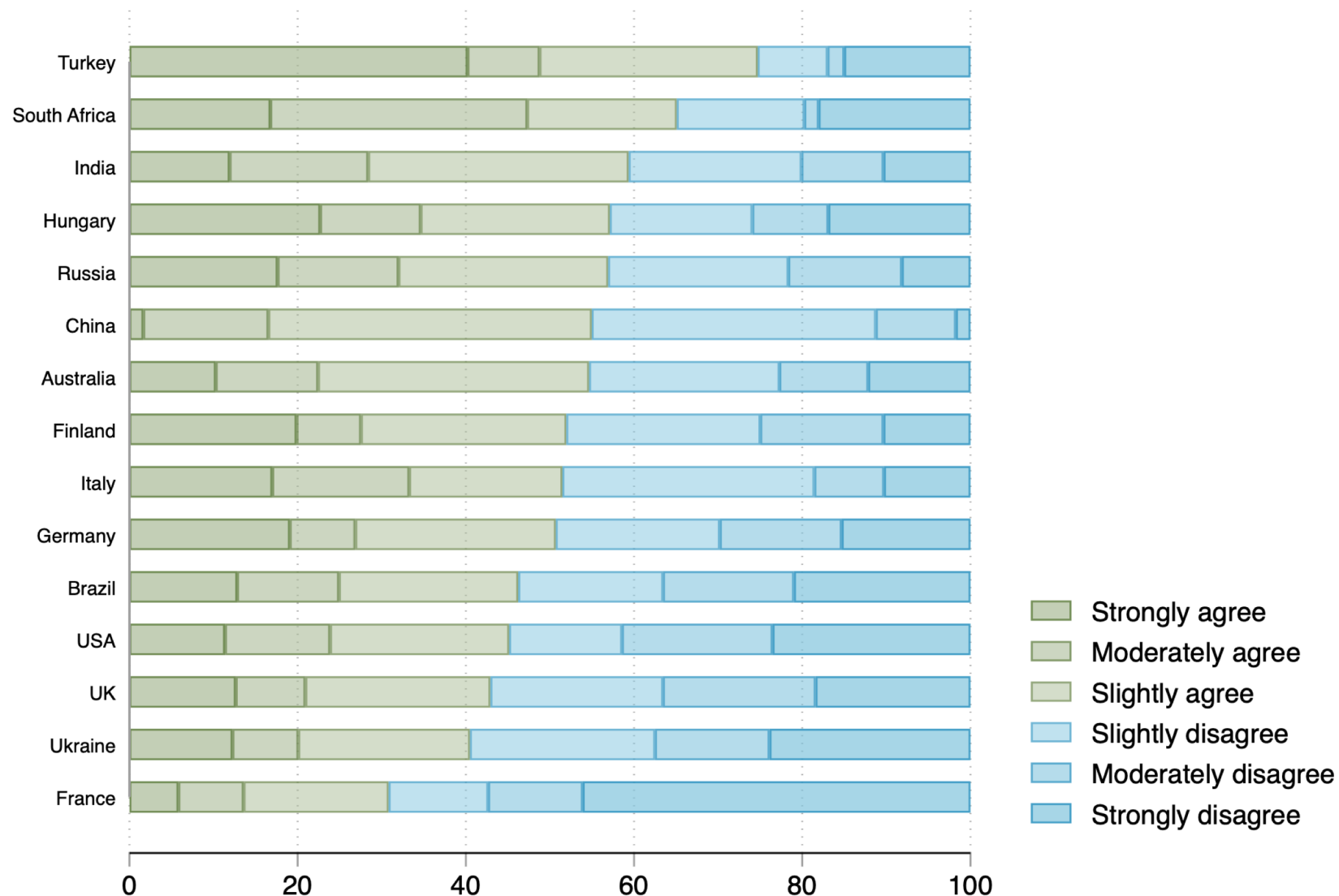
# WELL-BEING AND SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRATION



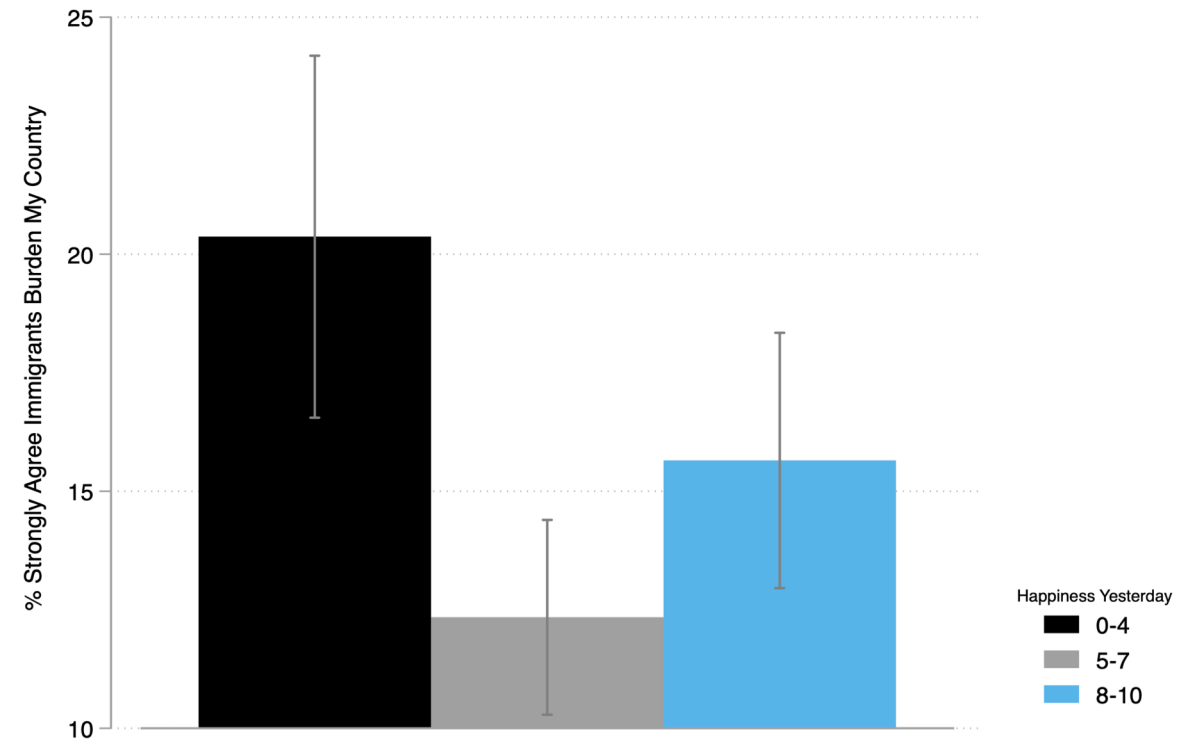
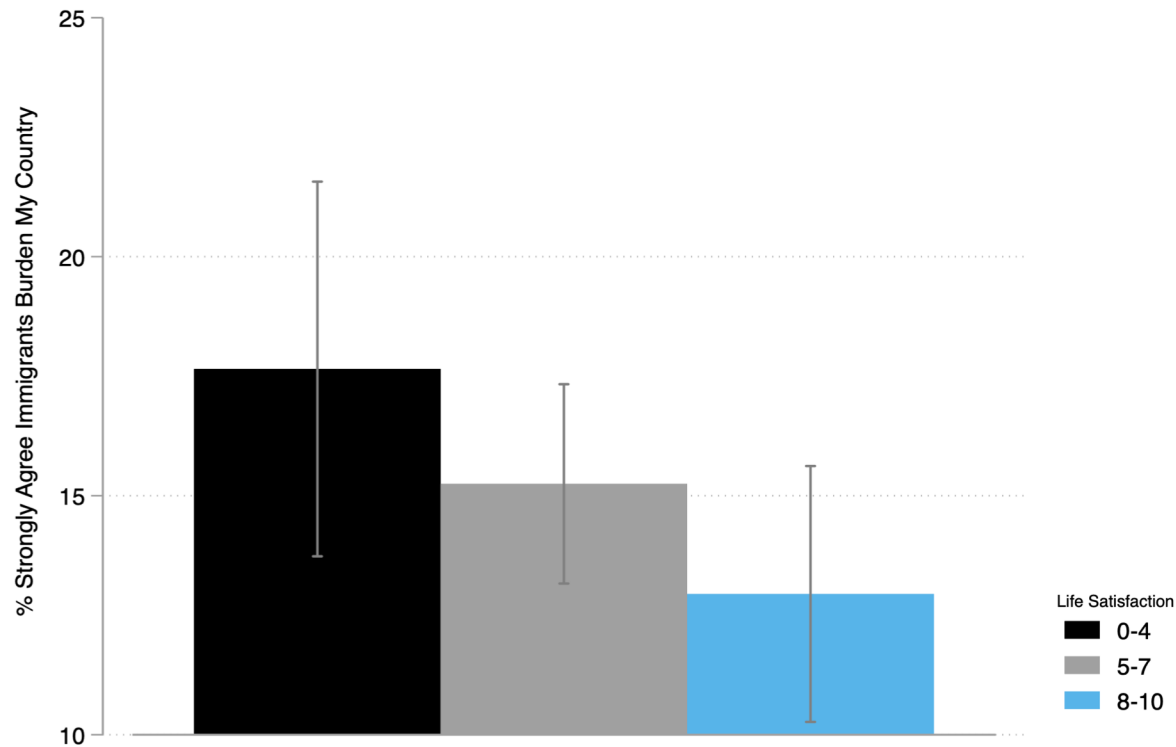
# LIFE SATISFACTION AND SUPPORT FOR IMMIGRATION ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS



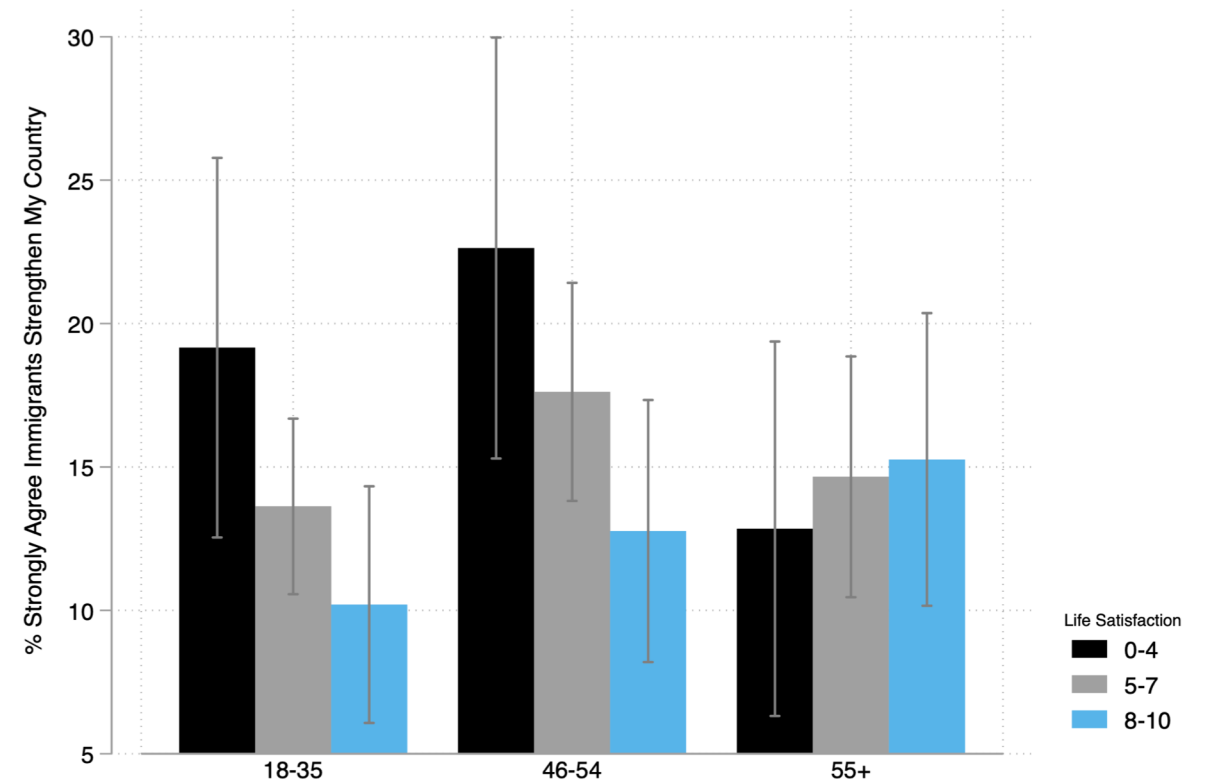
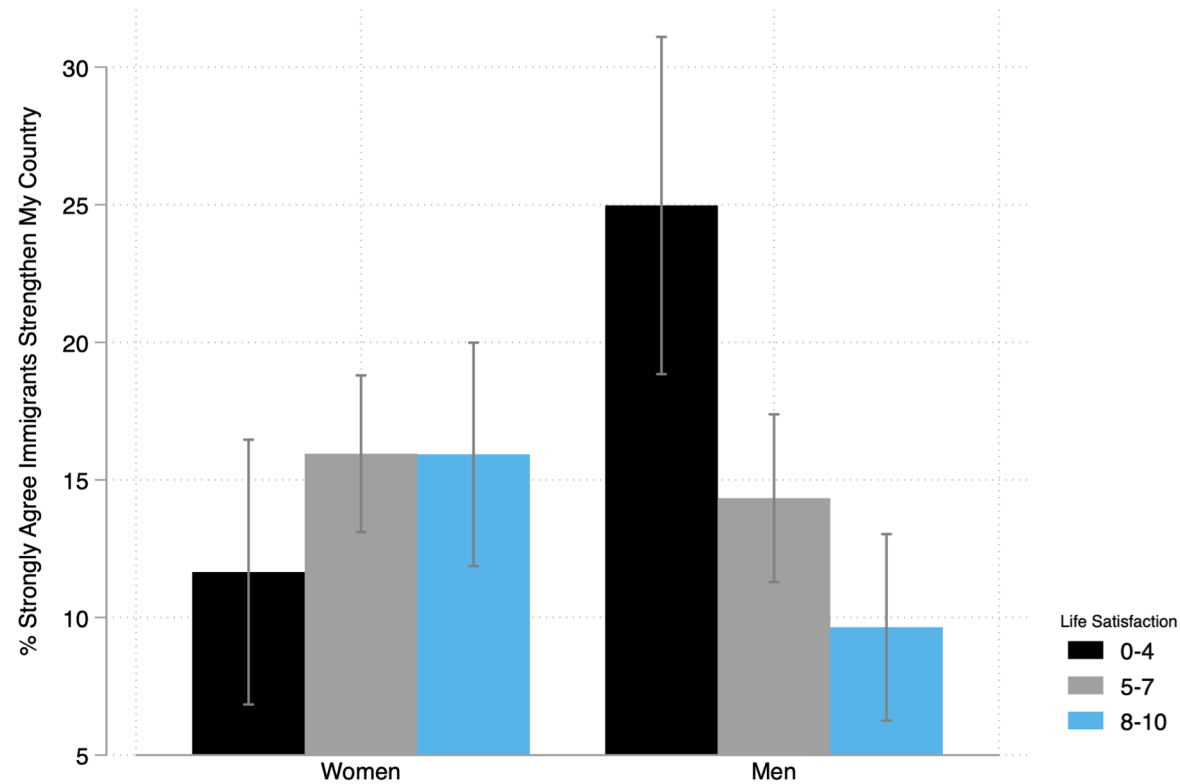
# “IMMIGRANTS BURDEN MY COUNTRY BY TAKING JOBS, HOUSING AND HEALTHCARE”



# WELL-BEING AND DISLIKE OF IMMIGRATION



# WELL-BEING AND DISLIKE OF IMMIGRATION



# POLITICAL TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM

## **What we do:**

- We ask respondents about their tolerance of political opponents
- We assess the extent to which this varies among happier and unhappier people, and different demographic groups

## **Key takeaways:**

- Unhappy people are more likely to hold trenchant views of people they disagree with politically
- Suggests that improving happiness and satisfaction may help to improve problems associated with increased political polarization

# POLITICAL TOLERANCE: BACKGROUND

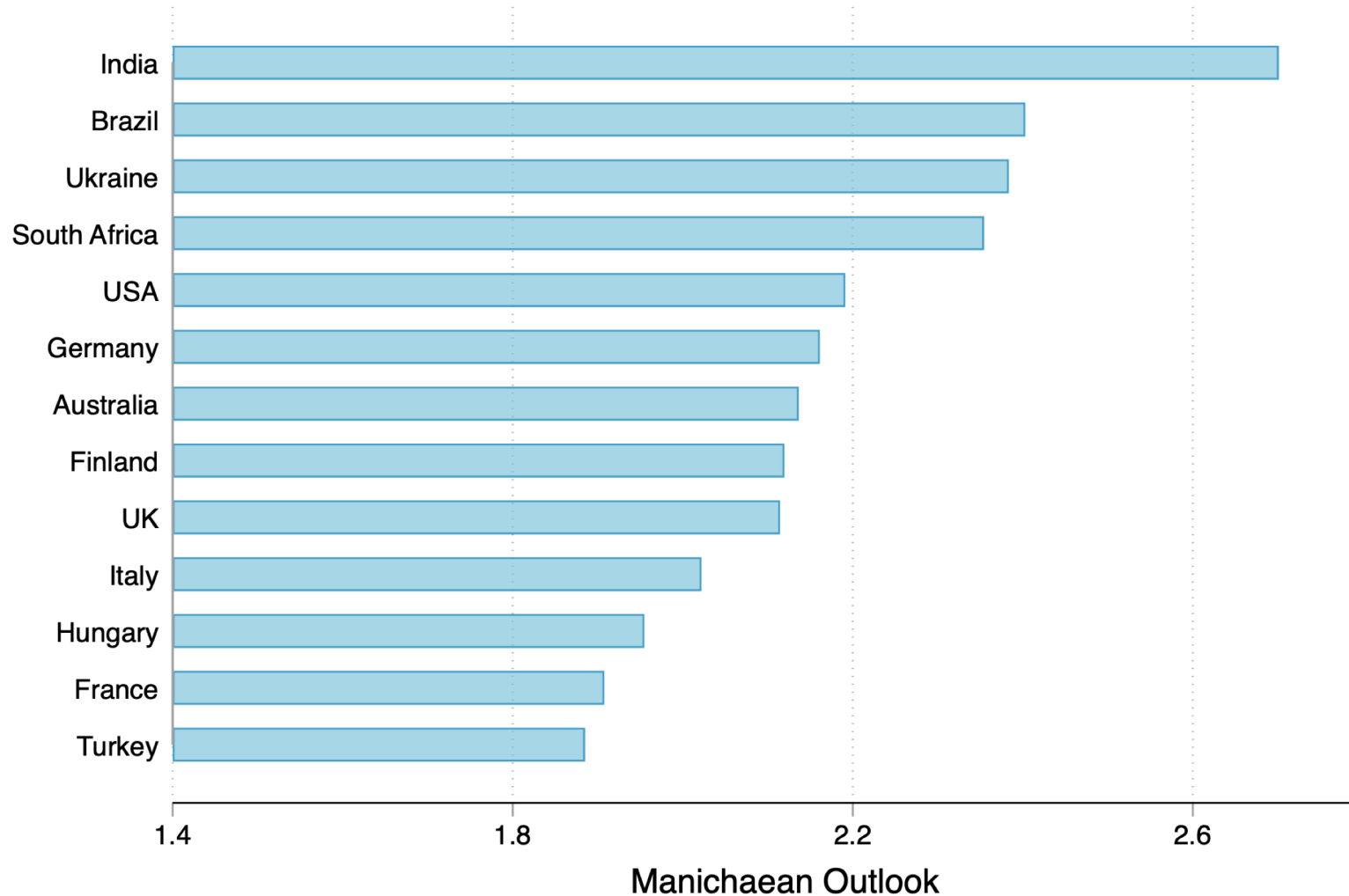
- A number of studies - as well as popular discussion - has shown an increase in political *polarization*
  - People becoming farther apart from each other in their beliefs
  - And less willing to *compromise* or see *the other sides' point of view*
  - More likely to see other side as “evil” (Manichean view of politics, as a fight between good and evil)

We measure **Manichean** views using 3 questions, each on a 0-5 disagree-to-agree scale

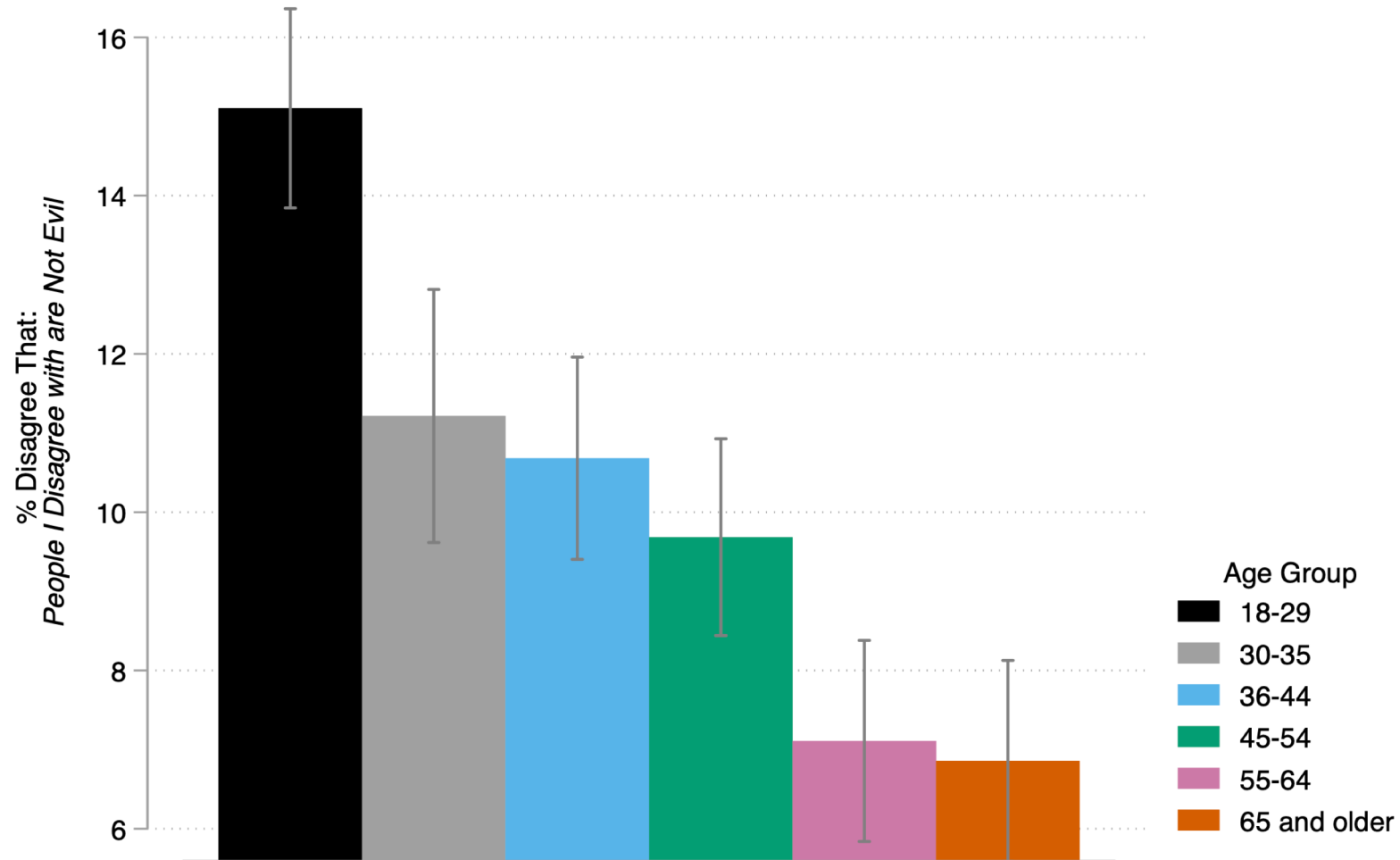
- “You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their politics ”
- “The people I disagree with politically are not evil” (reverse coded)
- “The people I disagree with politically are just misinformed”



# POLITICAL INTOLERANCE ACROSS COUNTRIES

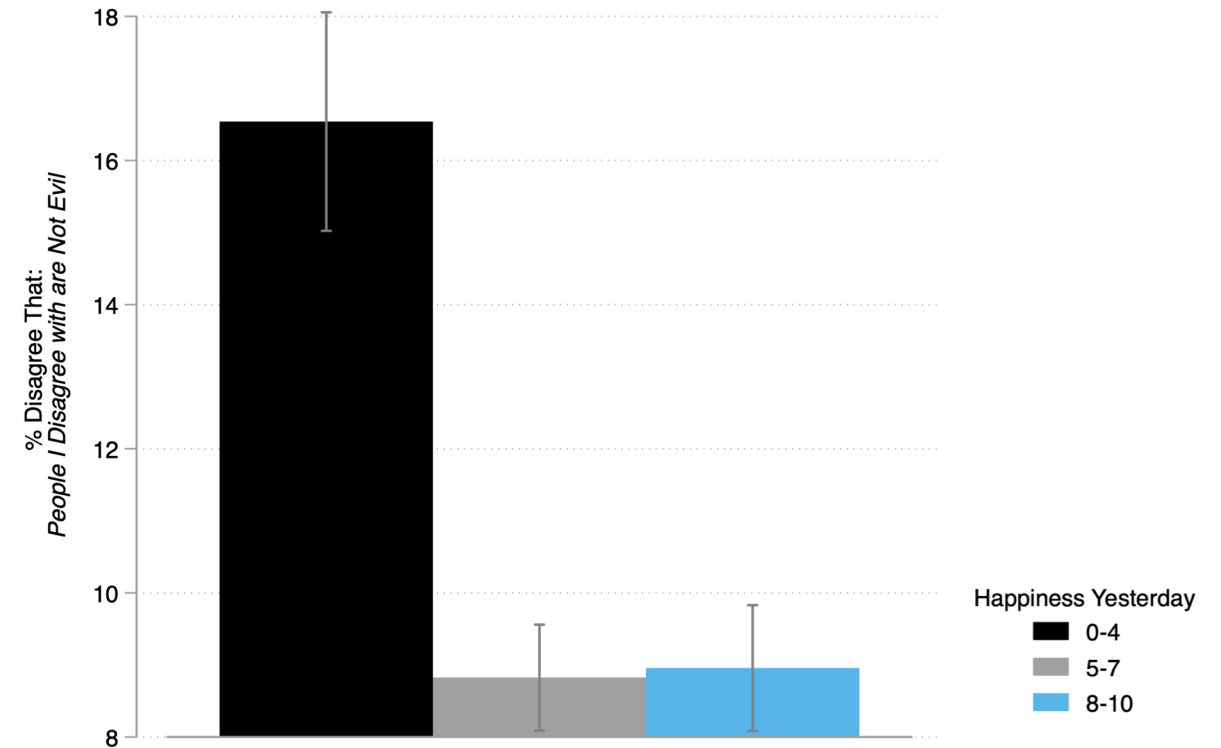
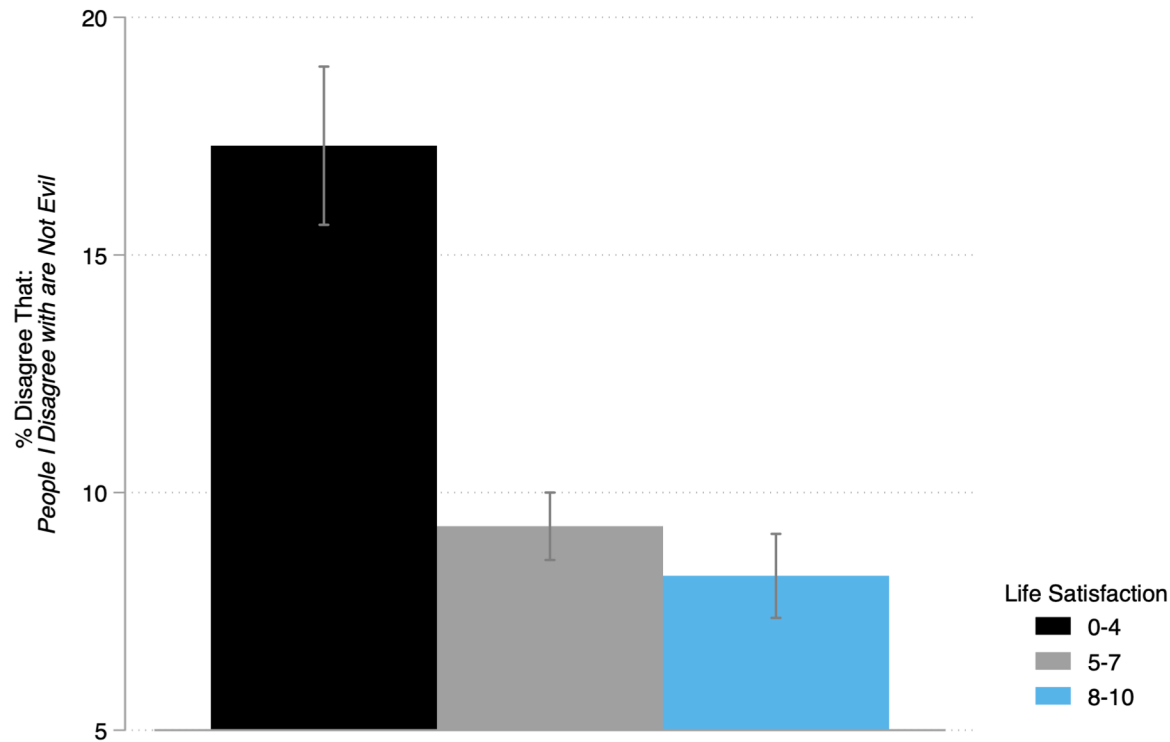


# YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MORE INTOLERANT OF THOSE THEY DISAGREE WITH POLITICALLY



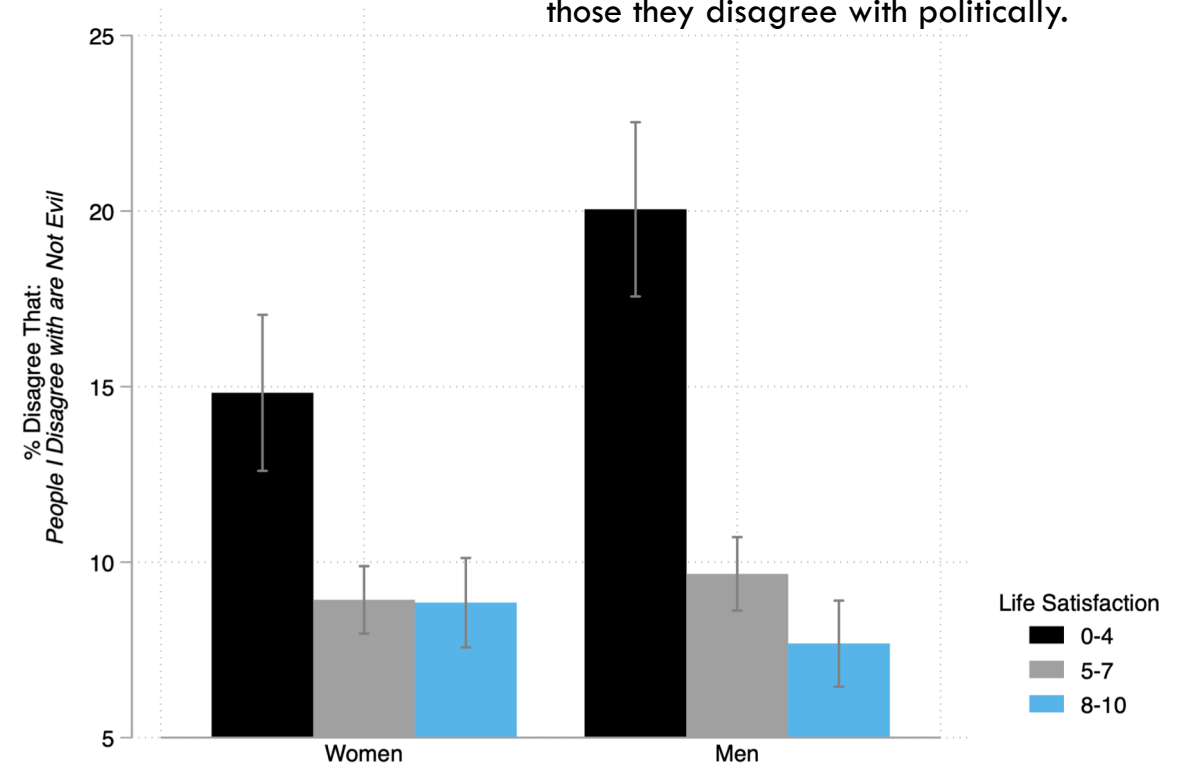
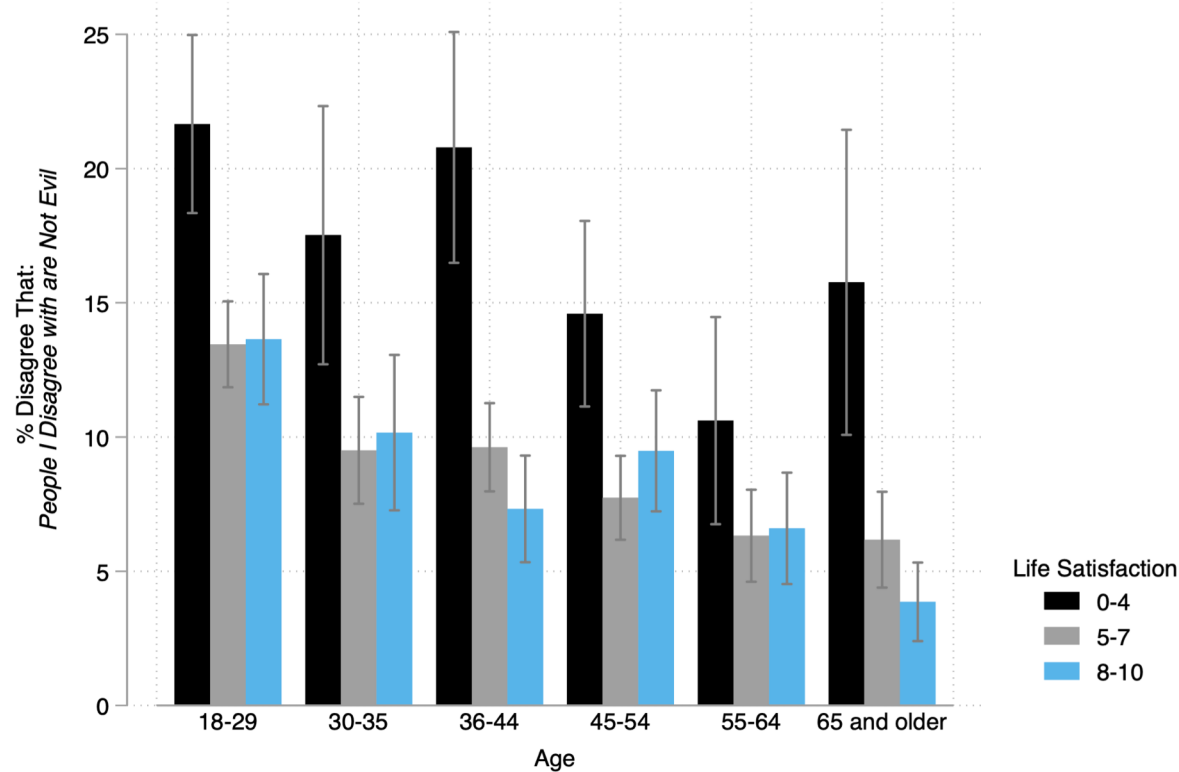
# WELL-BEING AND INTOLERANCE TO OPPOSING POLITICAL VIEWS

- Unhappy people more likely to have hardened beliefs about their political opponents

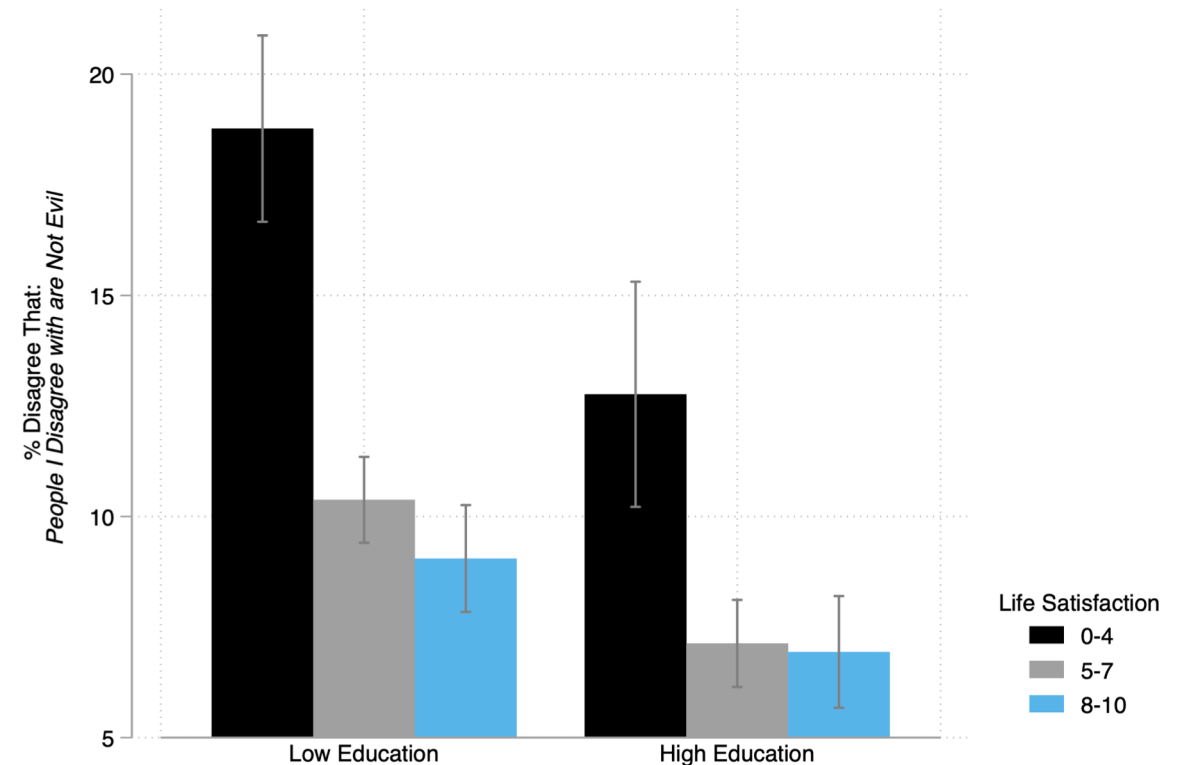
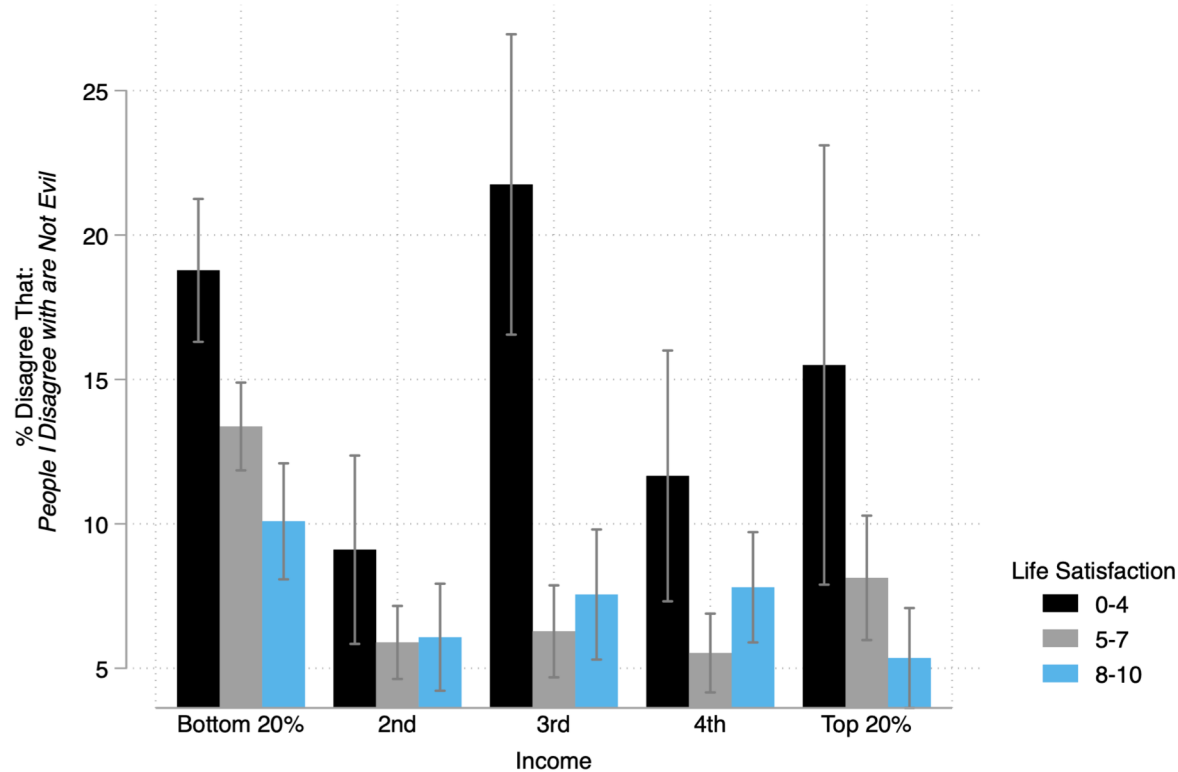


# LIFE SATISFACTION AND INTOLERANCE ACROSS DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

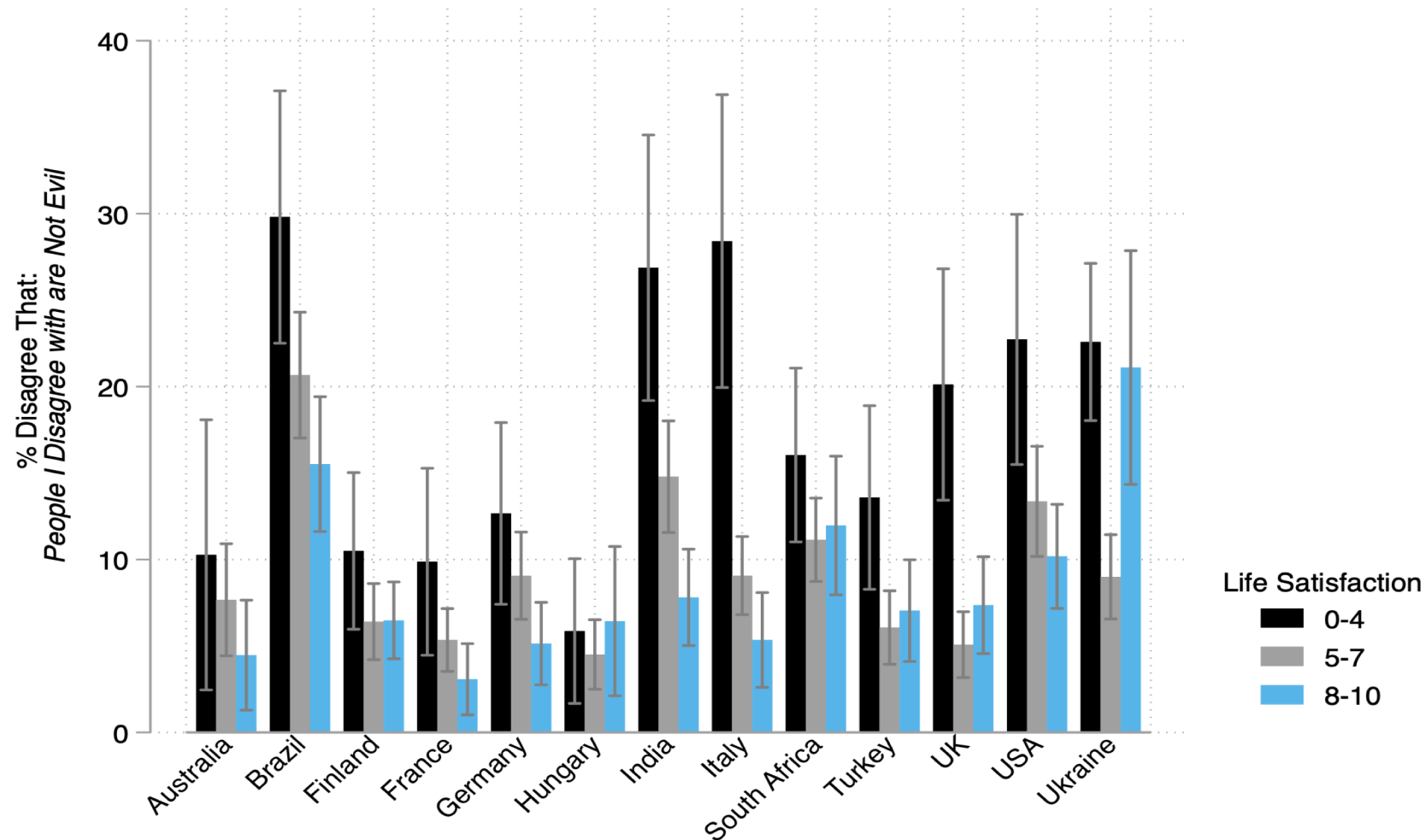
- Although young people, men, and lesser education people are more likely to hold Manichean views, the least happy even among these groups has most hardened views about those they disagree with politically.



# LIFE SATISFACTION AND INTOLERANCE ACROSS DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS



# LIFE SATISFACTION AND INTOLERANCE ACROSS COUNTRIES



# GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS

## **What we do:**

- We ask respondents about the extent to which they support governments taking an active interest in the happiness of citizens
- We assess the extent to which this varies across countries as well as different types of people

## **Key takeaways:**

- Overwhelming majority of people, across all countries studied, support the idea of government playing a role in happiness
- Populists are much more likely to strongly support governance for happiness. This suggests a key strategy for mainstream political actors may be to move in the direction of governing for happiness

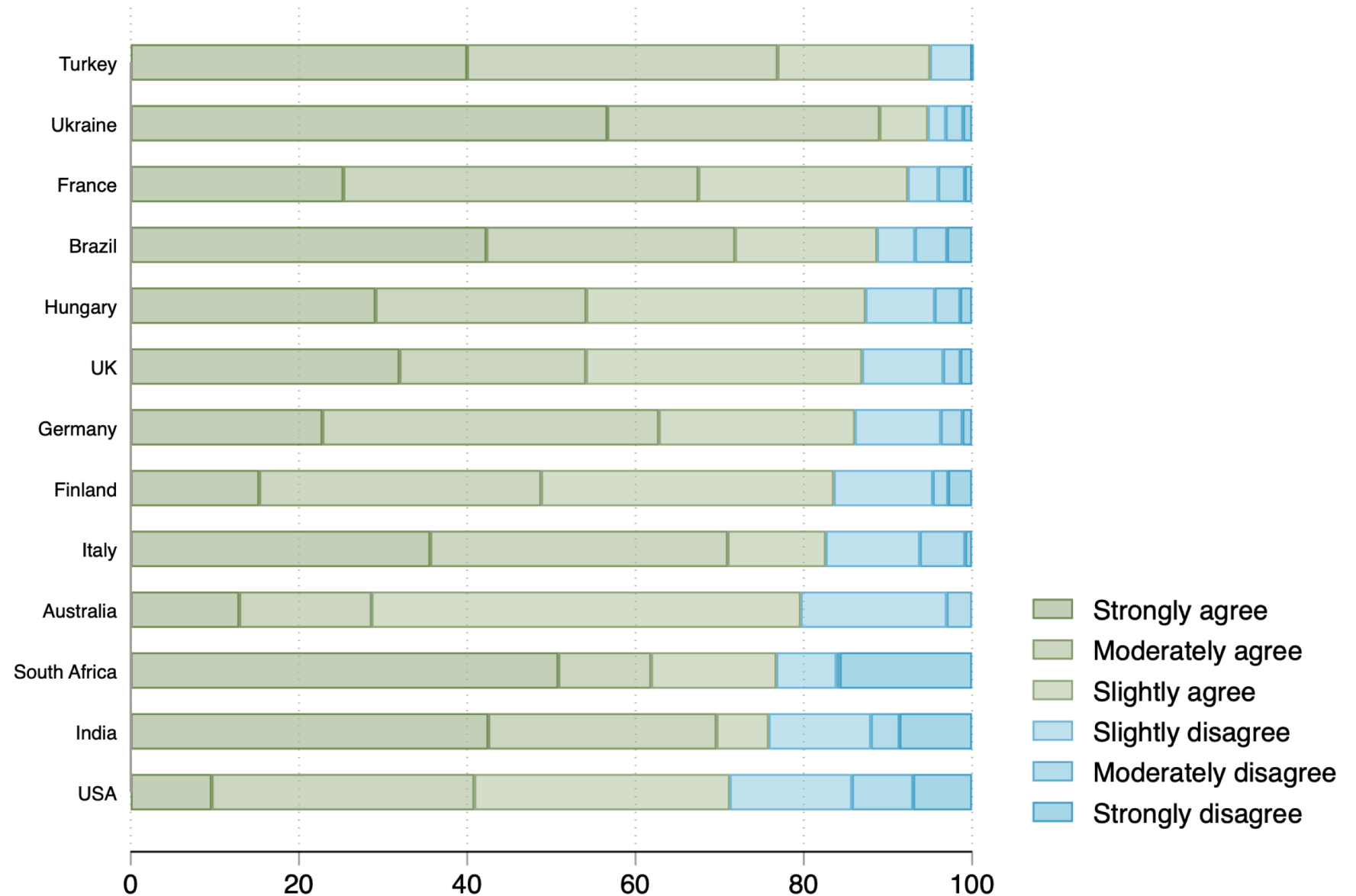
# GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS: BACKGROUND

- Small number of countries considering using happiness as a key policy goal
  - New Zealand has been a forerunner in producing a “Wellbeing Budget”
  - OECD now produces guidelines for national statistical offices on the measurement of population well-being
- We have seen that happier people are more likely to vote for governing parties, suggesting there are strong electoral incentives for governance for happiness
- More directly, what do people think about the idea of government aiming to look after people’s happiness?

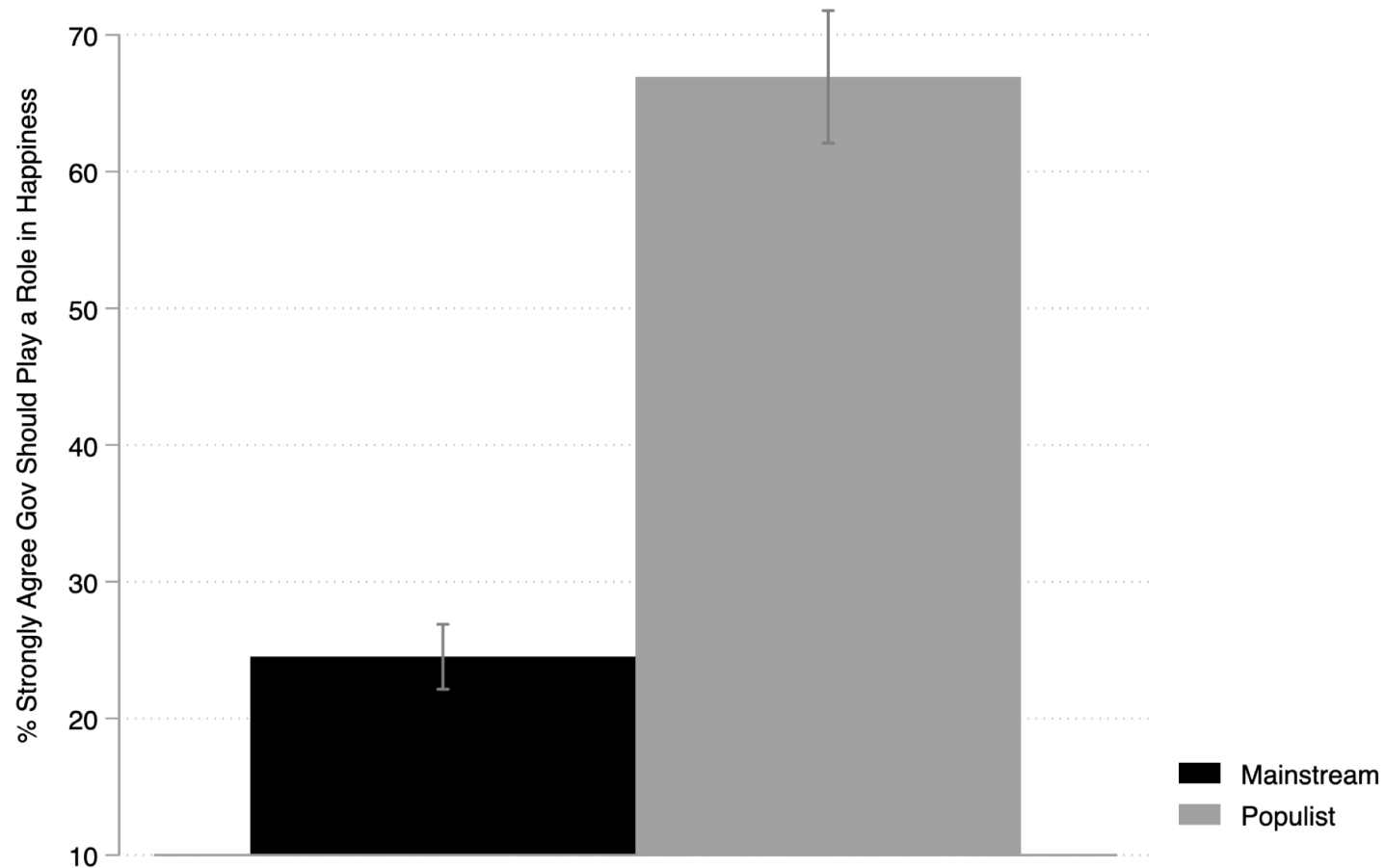


# “GOVERNMENT SHOULD PLAY A ROLE IN LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE’S HAPPINESS”

- Support for governance for happiness is widespread across the board.
- Support is particularly strong in Ukraine.
- Even in the USA, over 70% support government playing a key role.

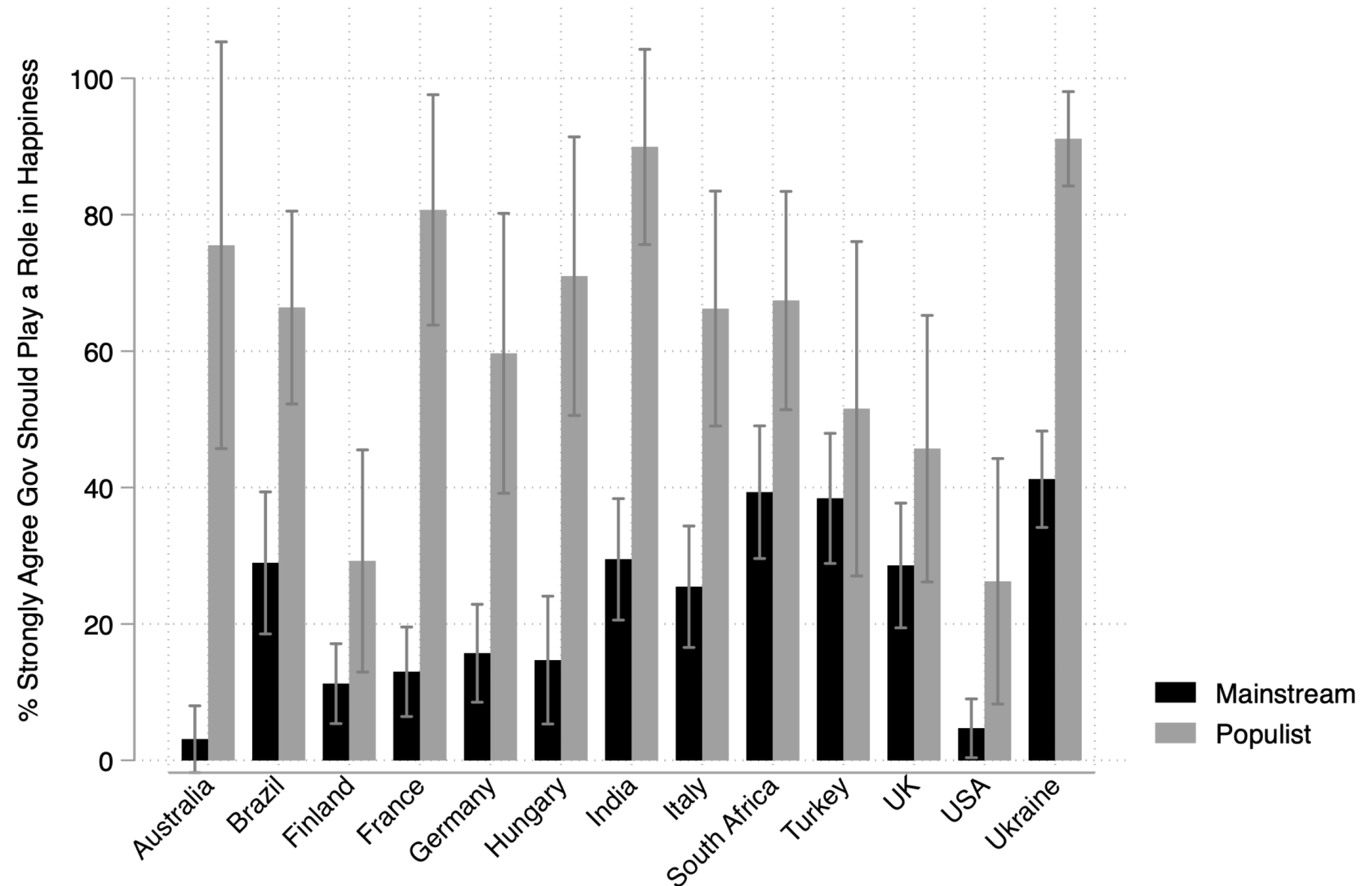


# POPULIST COHORT MUCH MORE LIKELY TO *STRONGLY AGREE* ON GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS

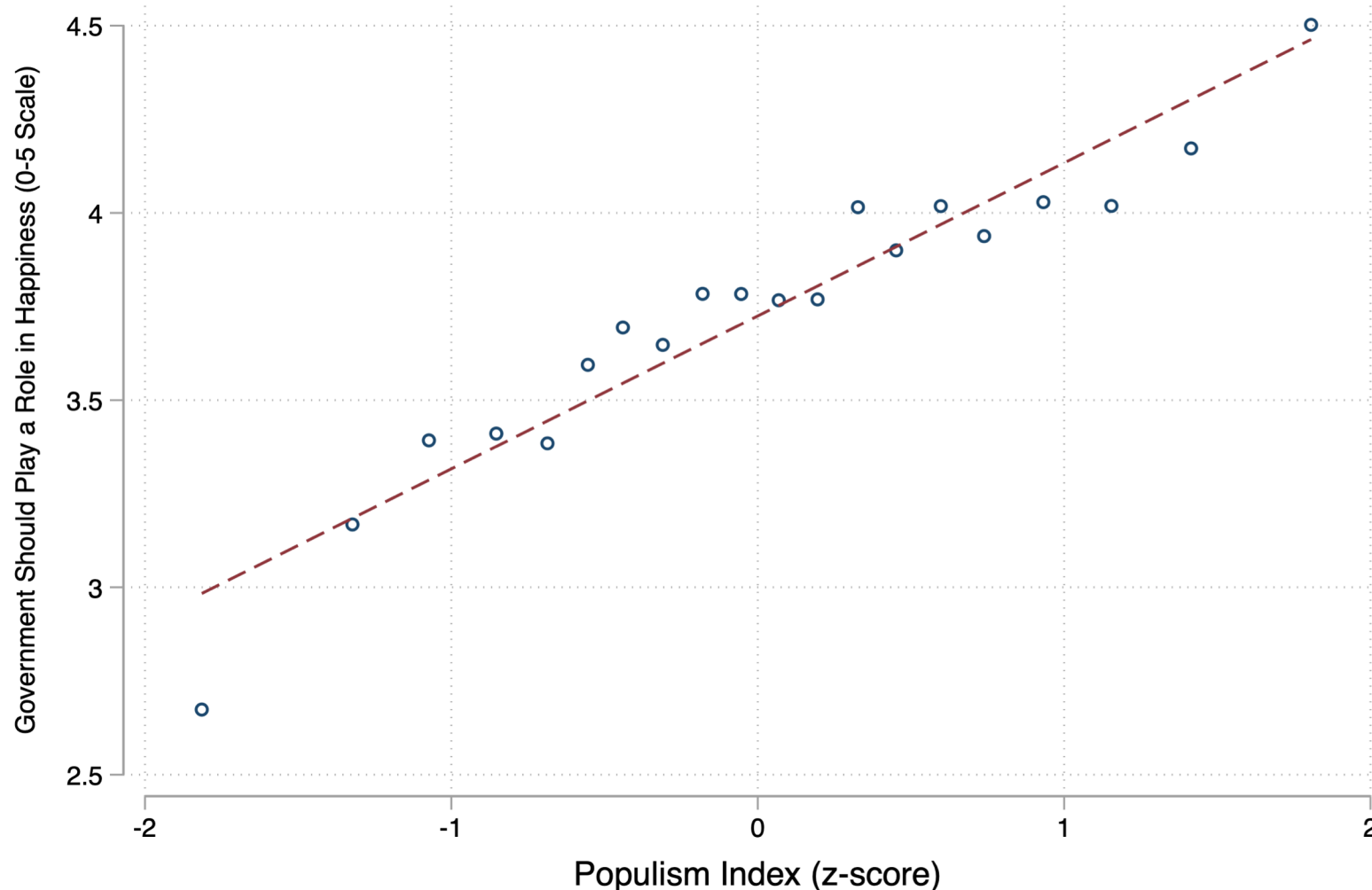


## POPULISTS SUPPORT GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS ACROSS THE WORLD

- People with strongly populist beliefs are more likely to support governance for happiness, across the world.
- Governance for happiness is not a distraction from populism, but may rather be a way to speak more clearly to the disenchanted.



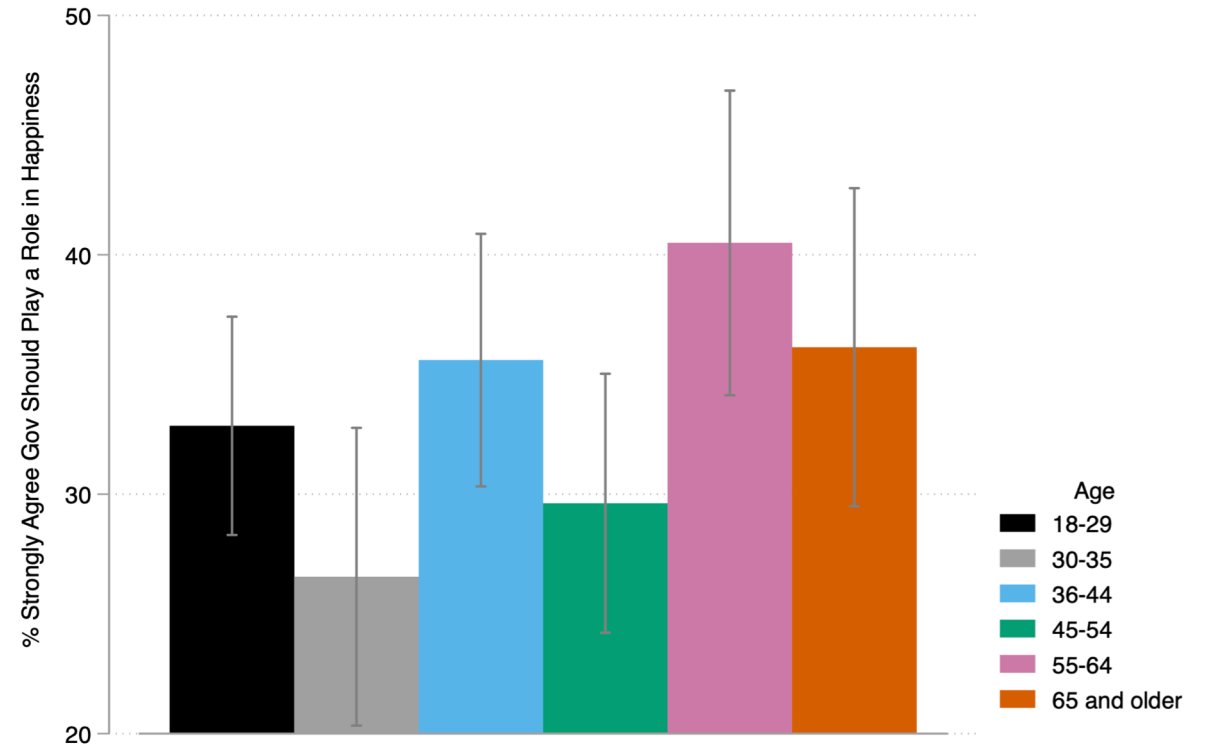
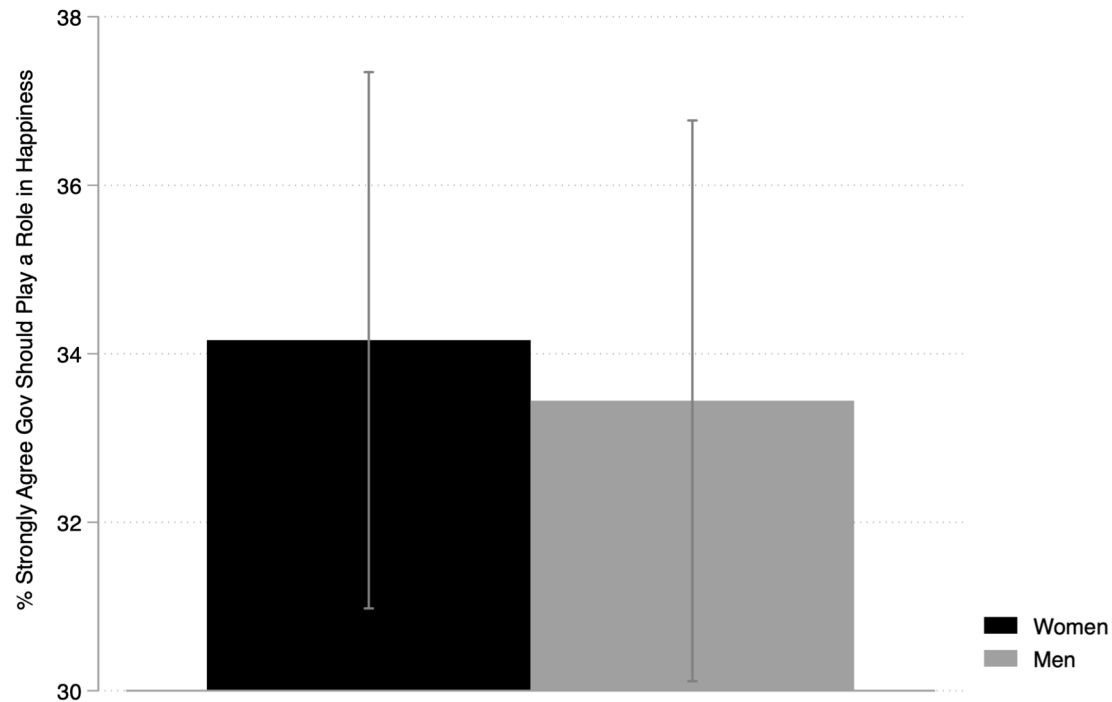
# POPULISM AND GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS



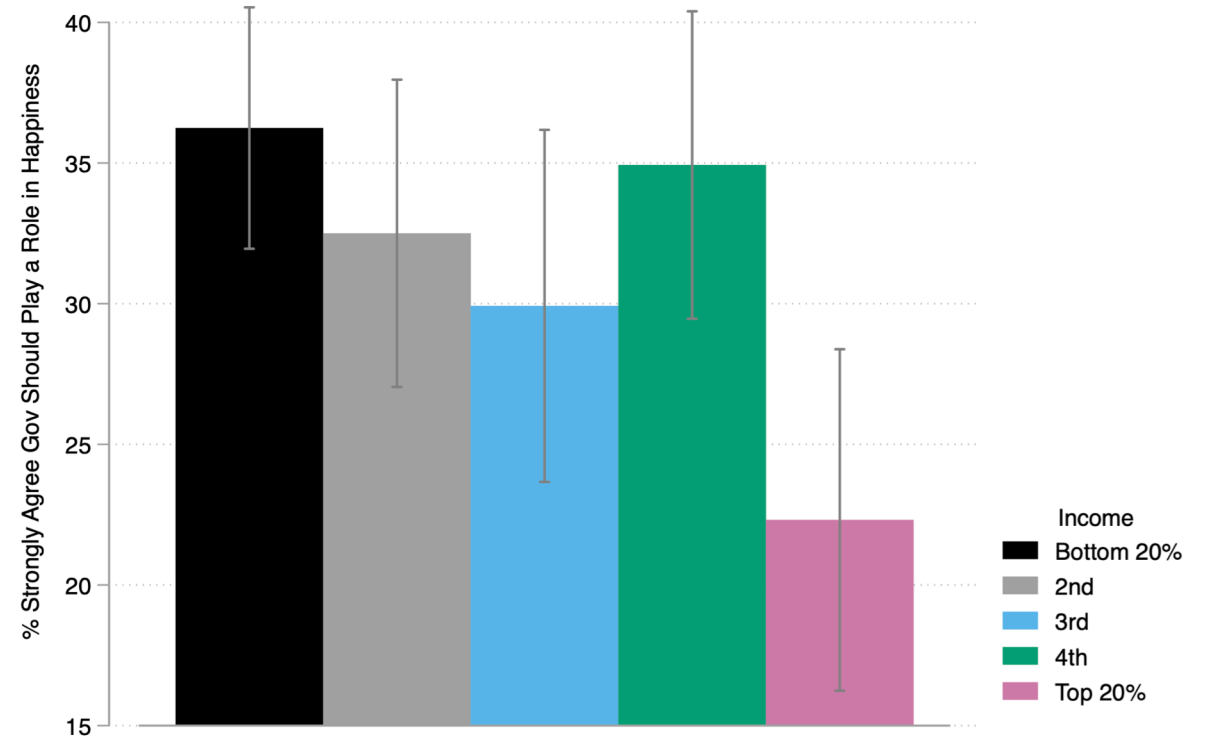
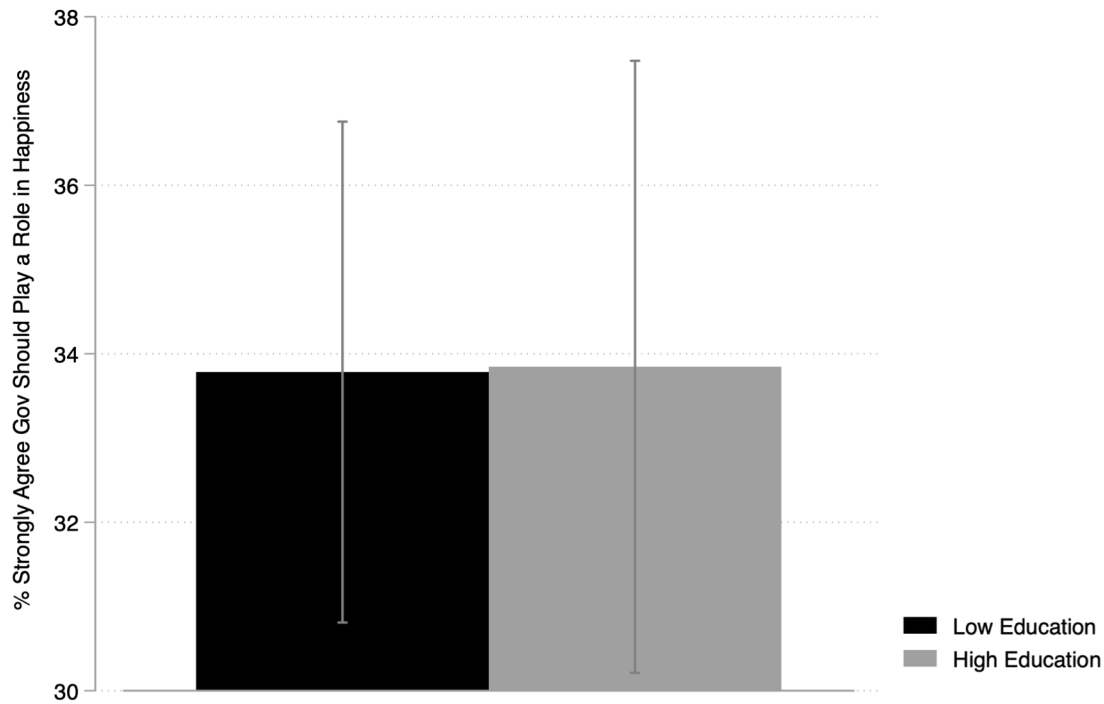
- Binned scatter-plot shown\*
- This is a visual representation of a multiple regression of opinions on government's role on populist beliefs.
- Regression controls for country fixed effects, age, gender, marital status, income, employment status, education & number of children.
- Linear line of best-fit shown.
- $\beta_{LS} = .4086$ 
  - S.E. = .0471
  - $p = <0.001$

\* Both measures are regression-adjusted for full set of covariates and FEs, and then binned into quantiles, before plotting. Robust S.E. reported, adjusted for clustering on countries.

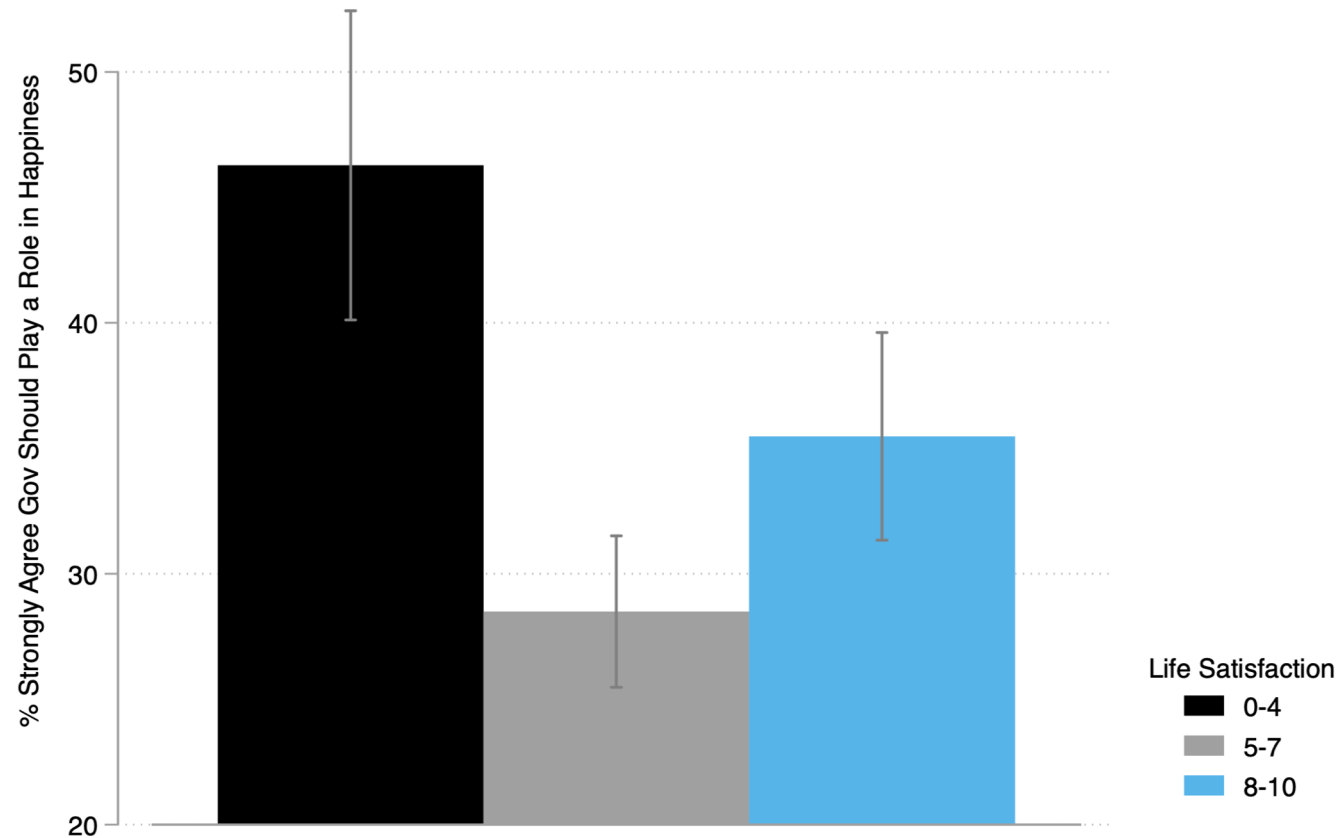
# BROAD SUPPORT FOR GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS



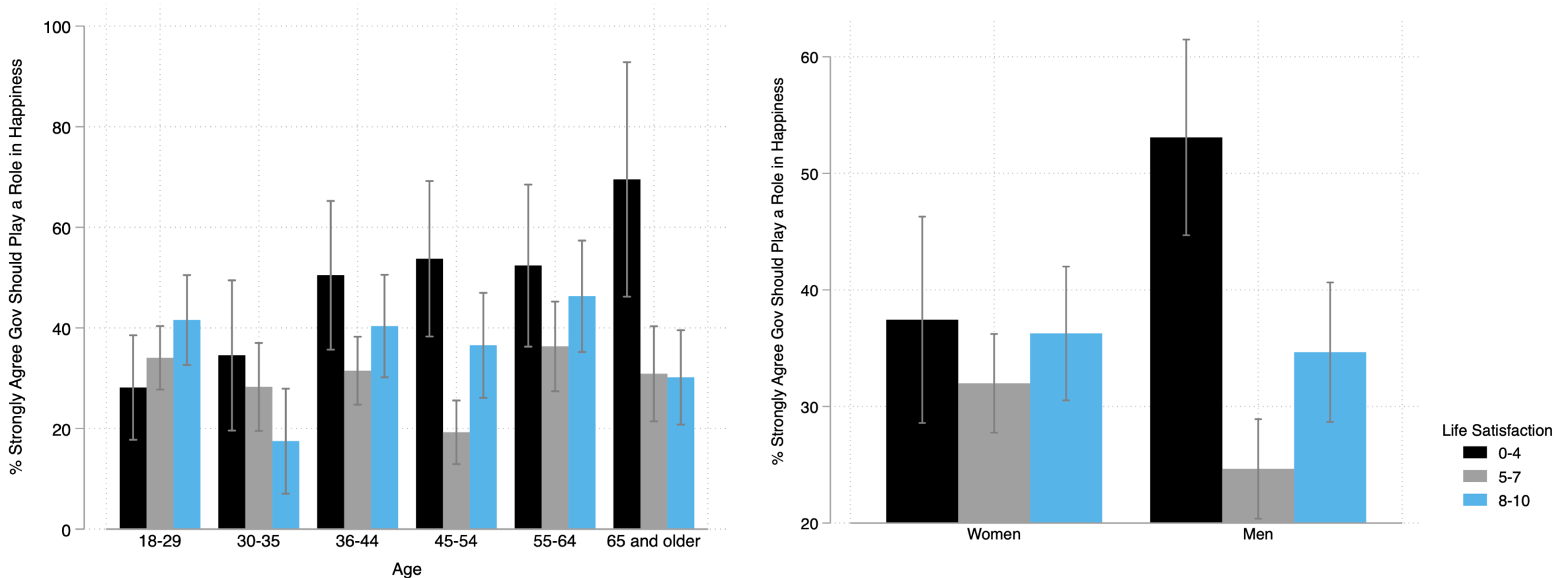
# GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS IS NOT A LUXURY DEMANDED BY THE RICH AND EDUCATED



# GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS IS NOT A LUXURY DEMANDED BY THE ALREADY HAPPY

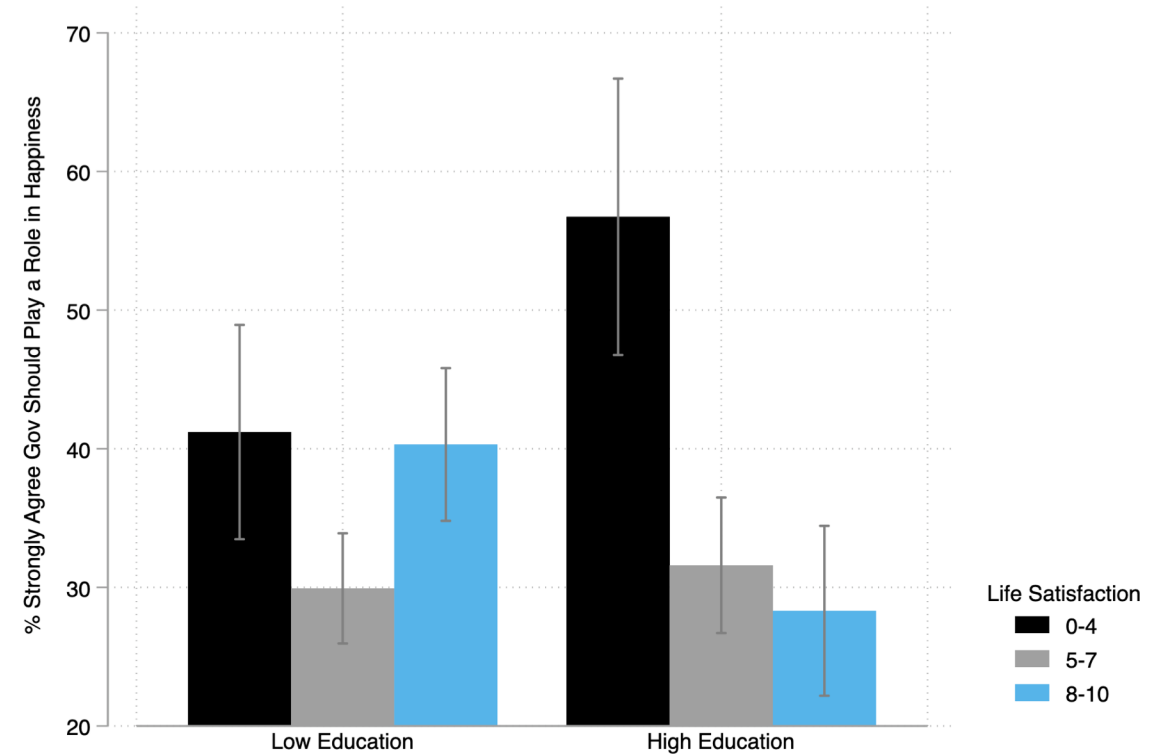
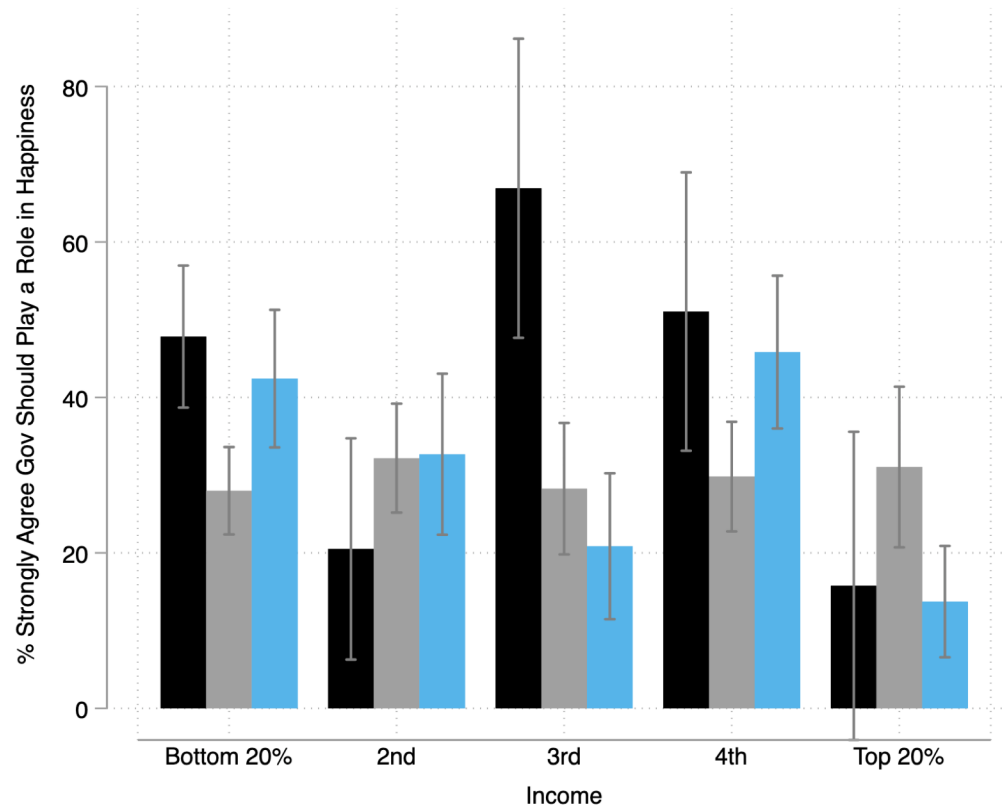


# LIFE SATISFACTION AND SUPPORT FOR GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS, BY DEMOGRAPHICS





# LIFE SATISFACTION AND SUPPORT FOR GOVERNANCE FOR HAPPINESS, BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



Life Satisfaction

- 0-4
- 5-7
- 8-10

# SOCIAL MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY, AND HAPPINESS

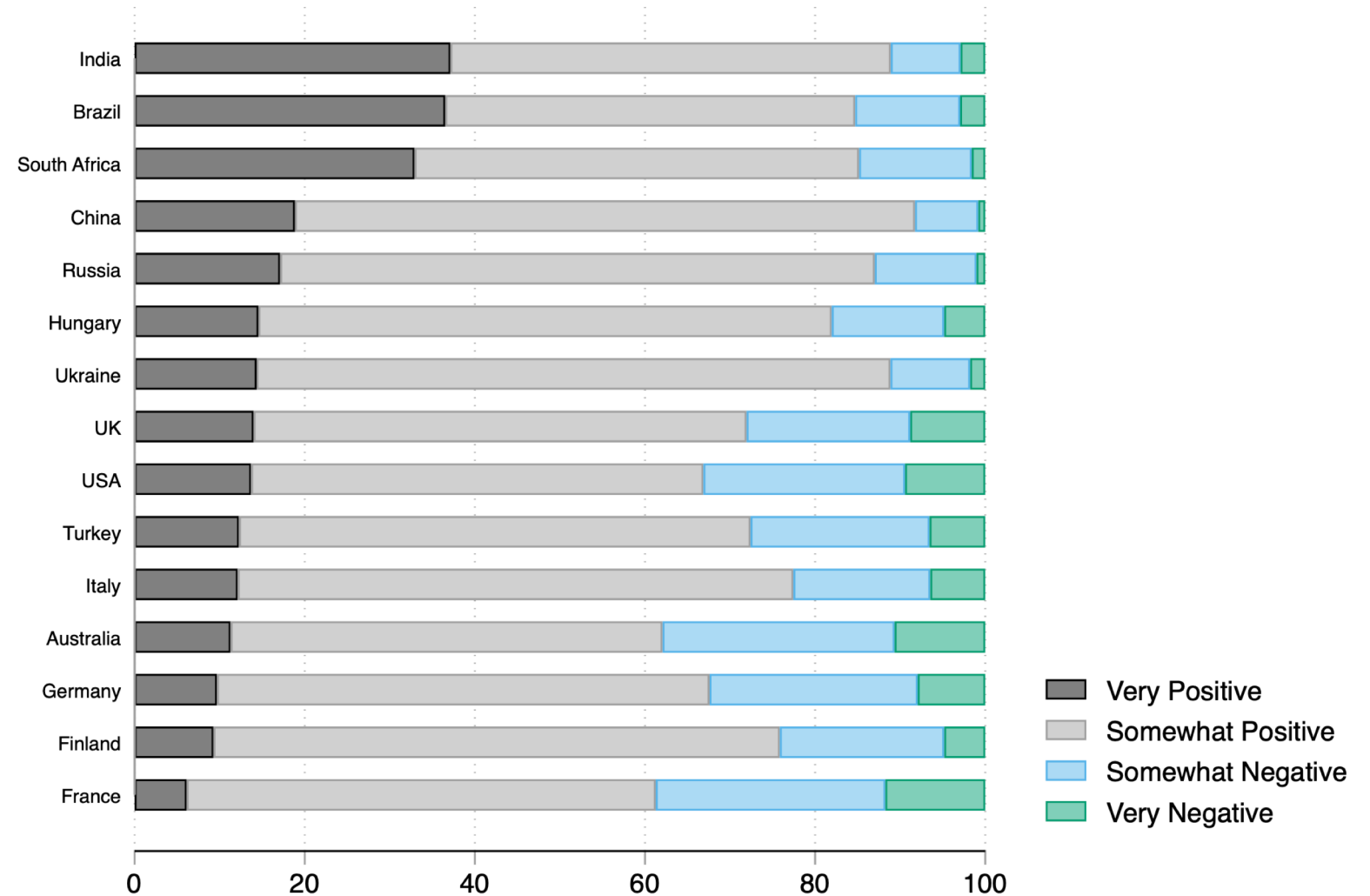
## **What we do:**

- We ask respondents how frequently they use social media, and correlate this with measures of subjective well-being
- We also ask directly whether people believe social media has affected people's happiness
- We assess the relationship between social media usage and populism

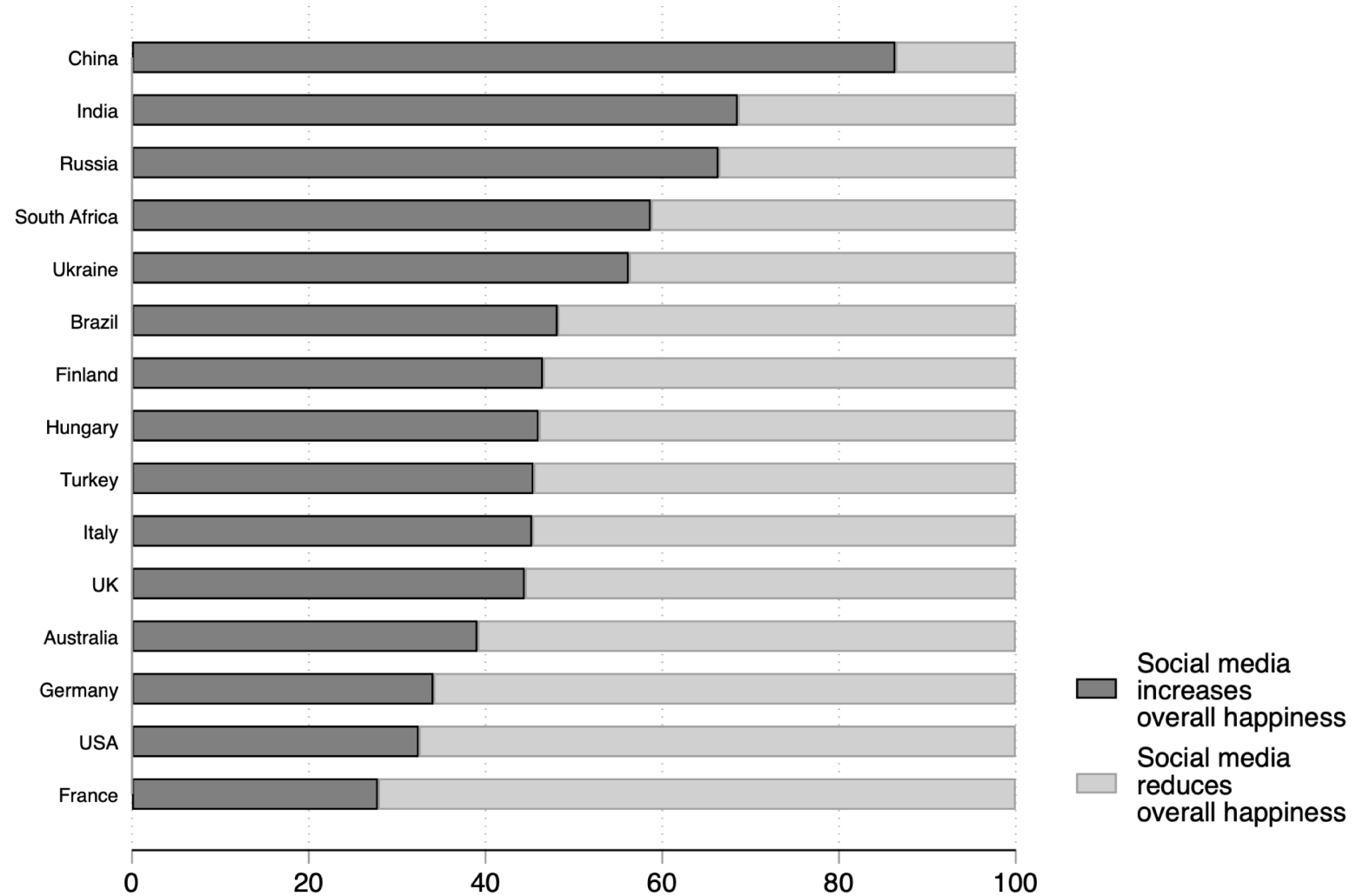
## **Key takeaways:**

- Overall, there are few differences in happiness among heavy and light users of social media
- Some evidence that female heavy social media users are less happy, but no such relationship evident for men
- Populists are much more likely to be heavy social media users

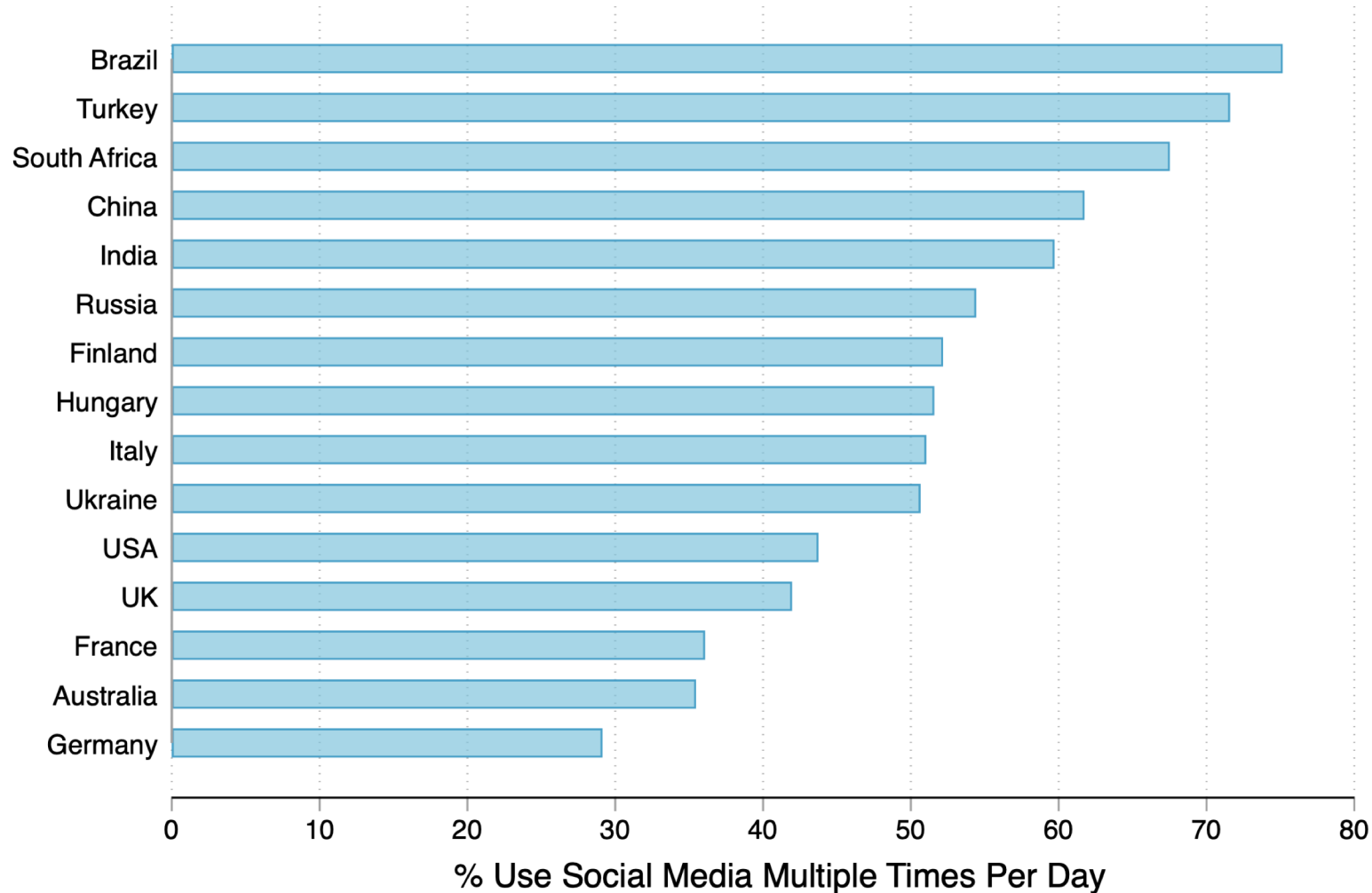
“DO YOU THINK  
THAT SOCIAL MEDIA  
AND THE INTERNET  
HAVE PLAYED A  
POSITIVE OR  
NEGATIVE ROLE IN  
YOUR  
INTERPERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIPS?”



“THINKING ABOUT PEOPLE IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO YOU THINK THAT SOCIAL MEDIA HELPS INCREASE THE OVERALL HAPPINESS, OR DOES SOCIAL MEDIA REDUCE OVERALL HAPPINESS?”



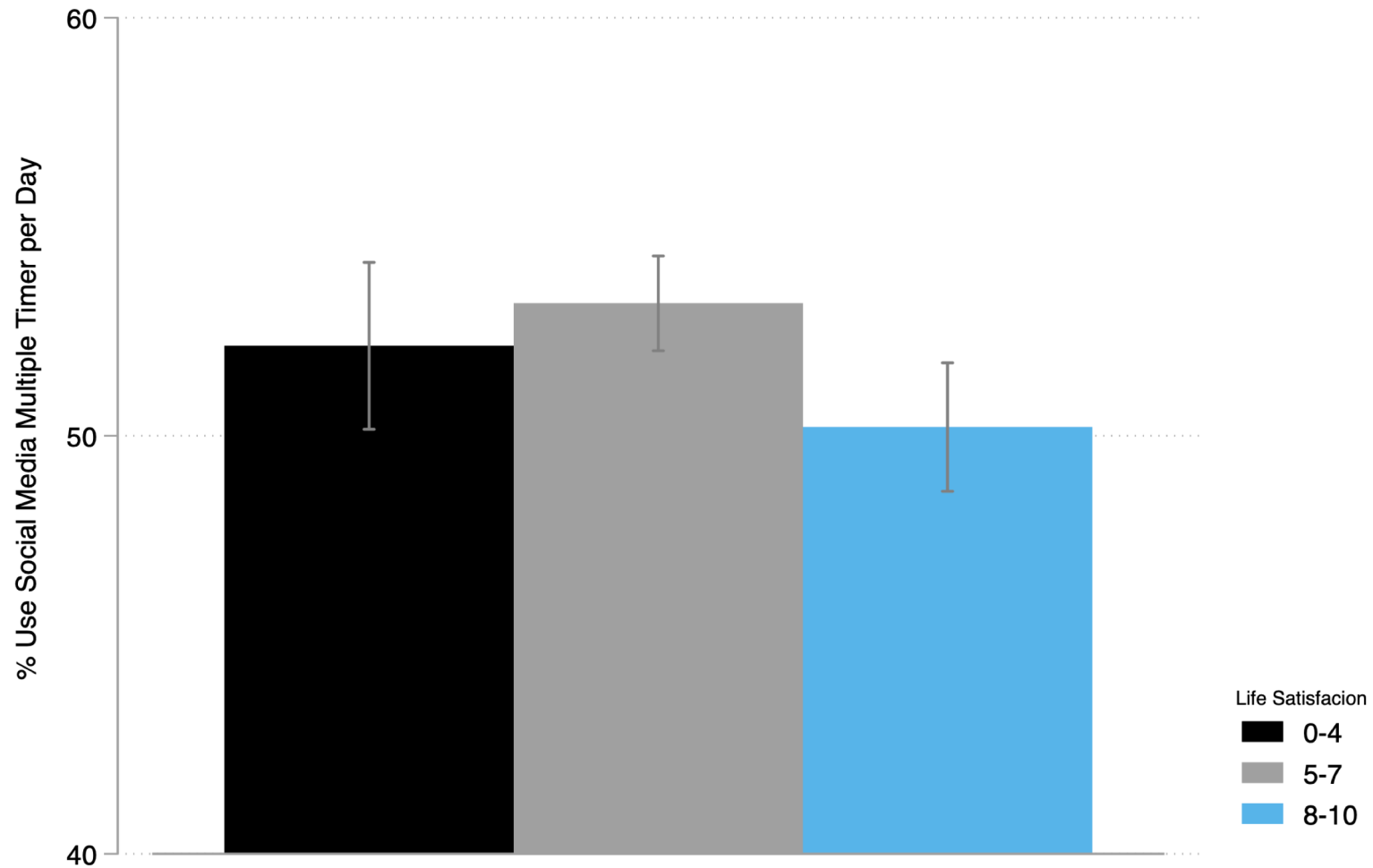
# SOCIAL MEDIA USE AROUND THE WORLD



## Note on survey modes:

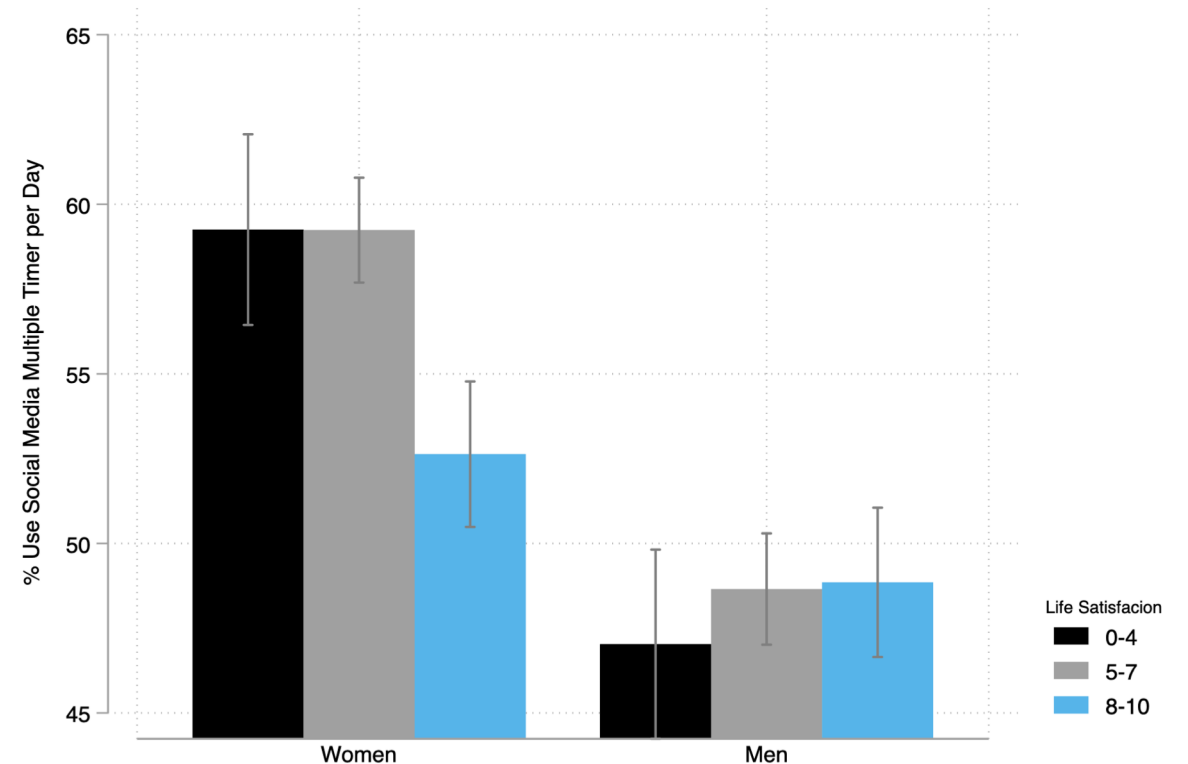
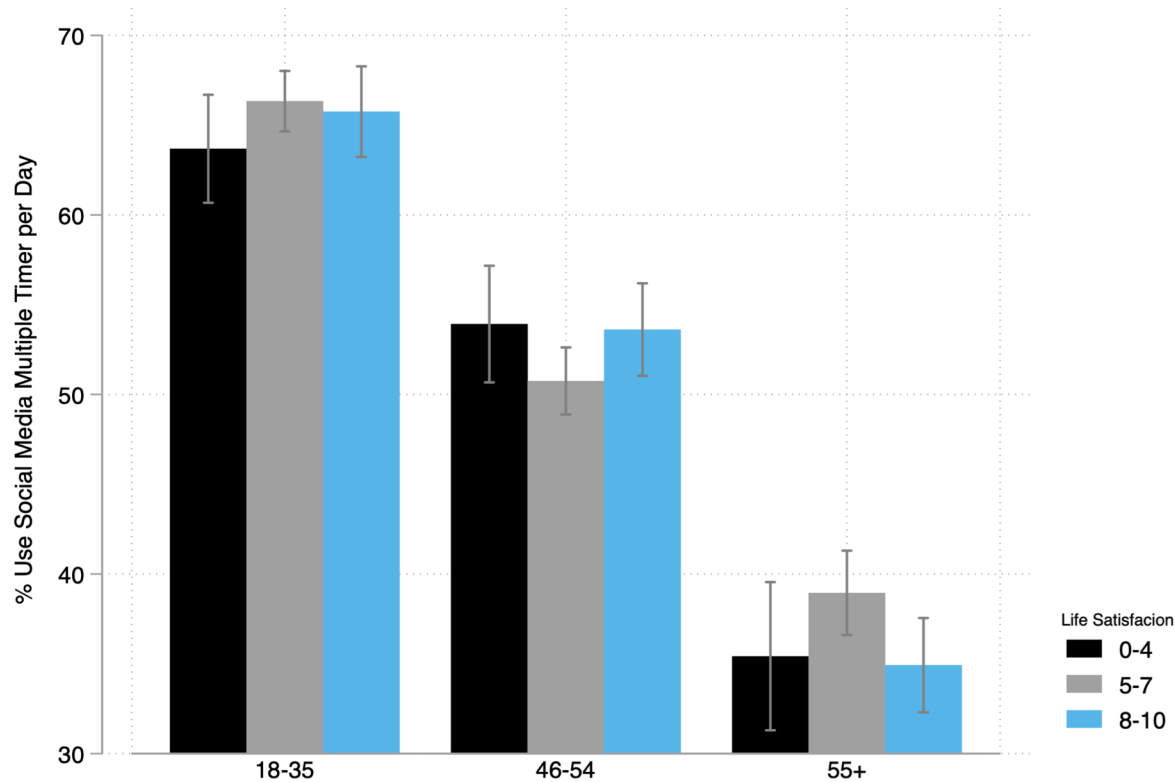
- Interviews in Hungary were face-to-face + online;
- Russia and Ukraine were telephone + online;
- Remaining countries were online only.
- This may affect national estimates of internet and social media use.

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND WELL-BEING

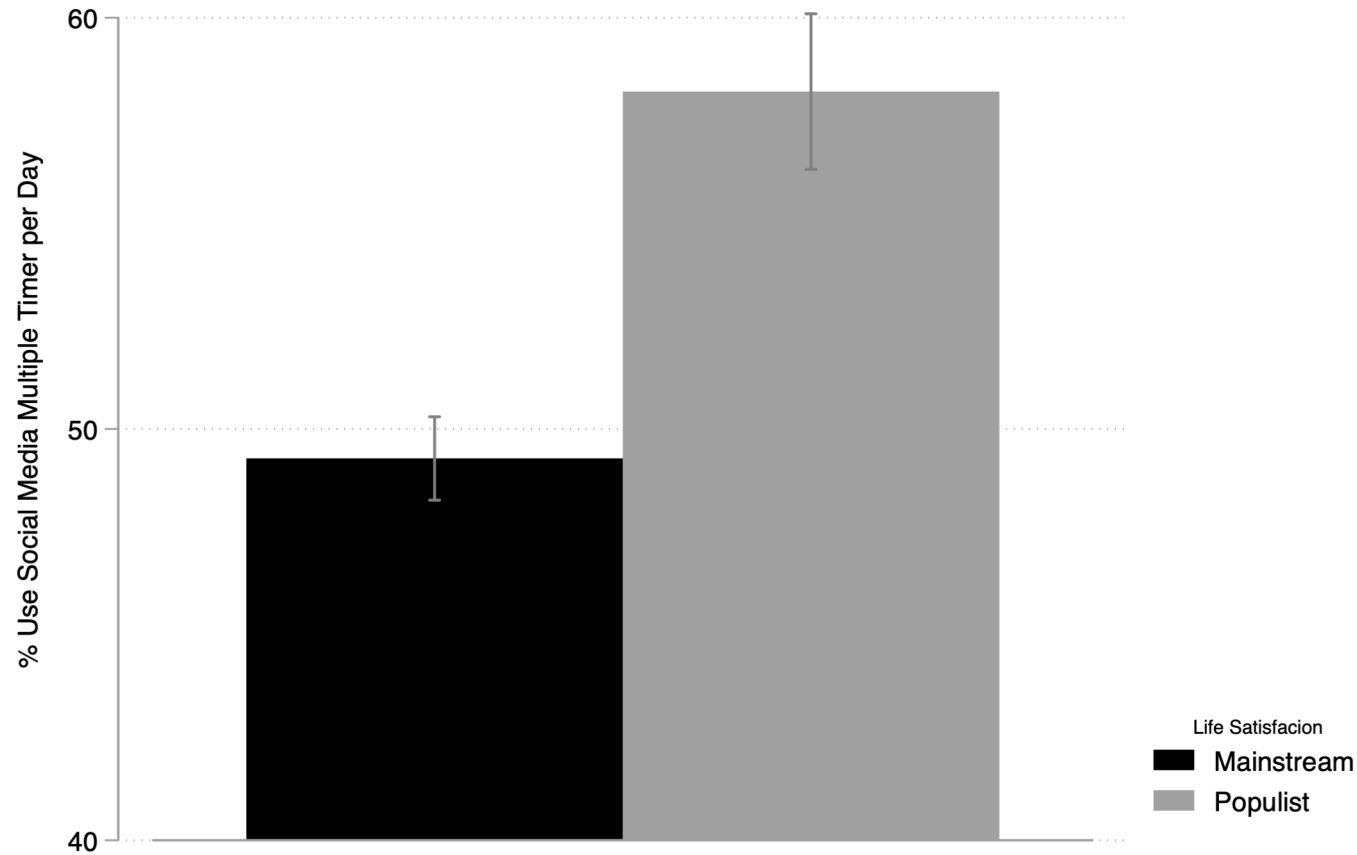


# SOCIAL MEDIA AND WELL-BEING ACROSS DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

- Younger people more likely to use social media
- But no difference in happiness across social media use among the young
- Relationship between social media use and unhappiness stronger among women

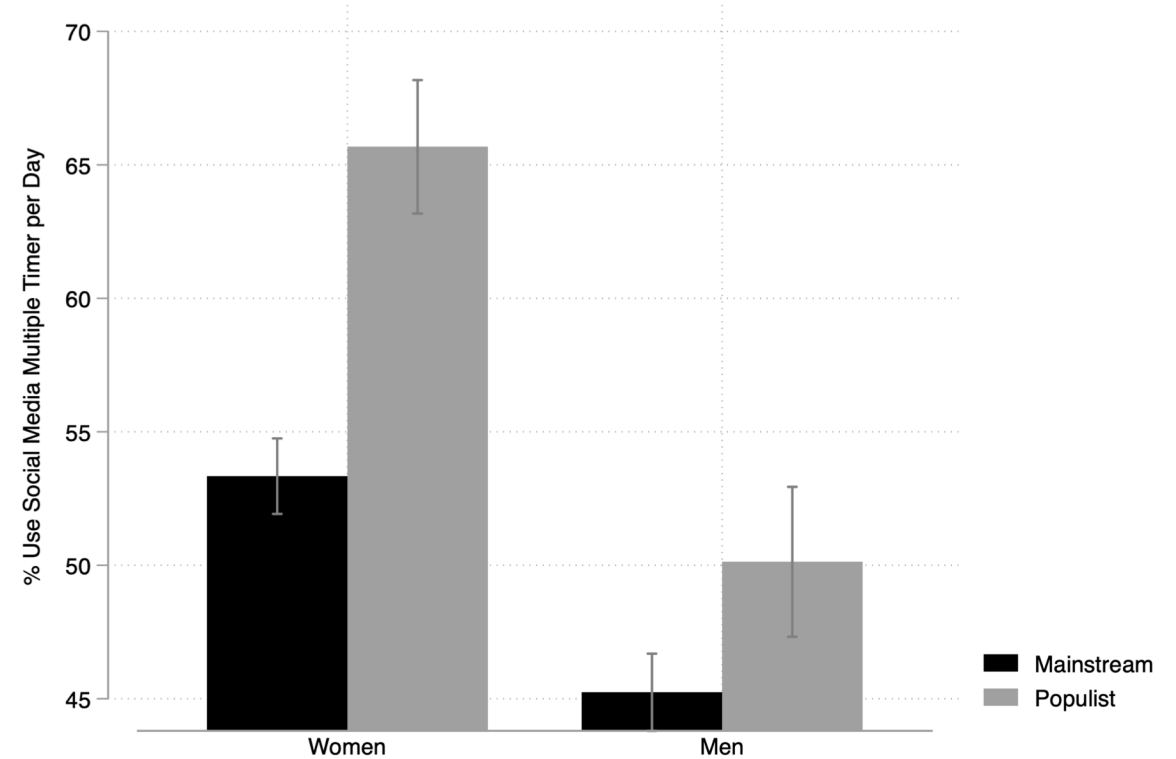
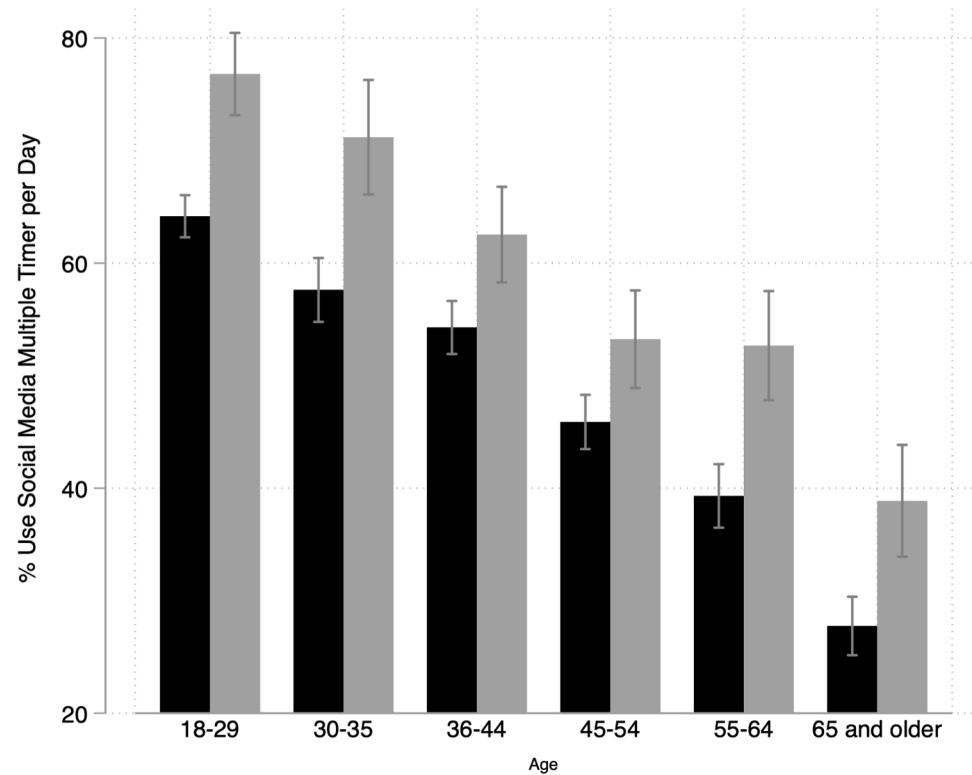


# THE “POPULIST COHORT” MUCH MORE LIKELY TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA MORE REGULARLY

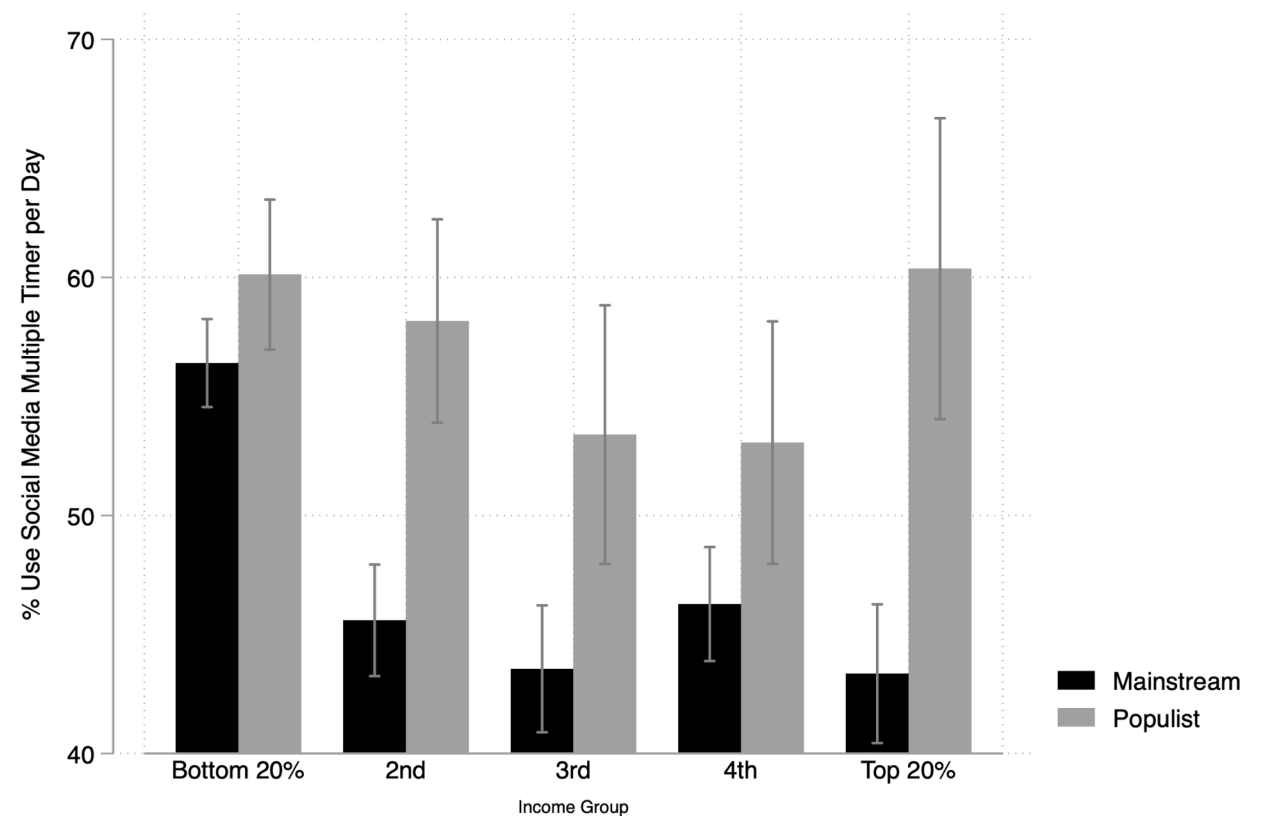
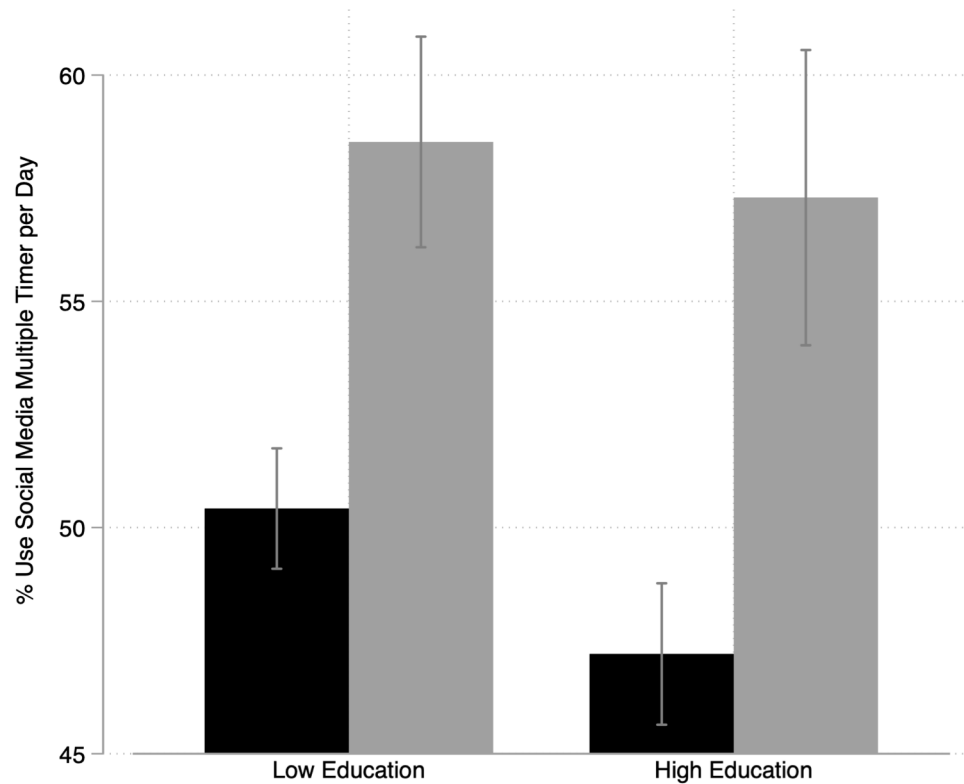




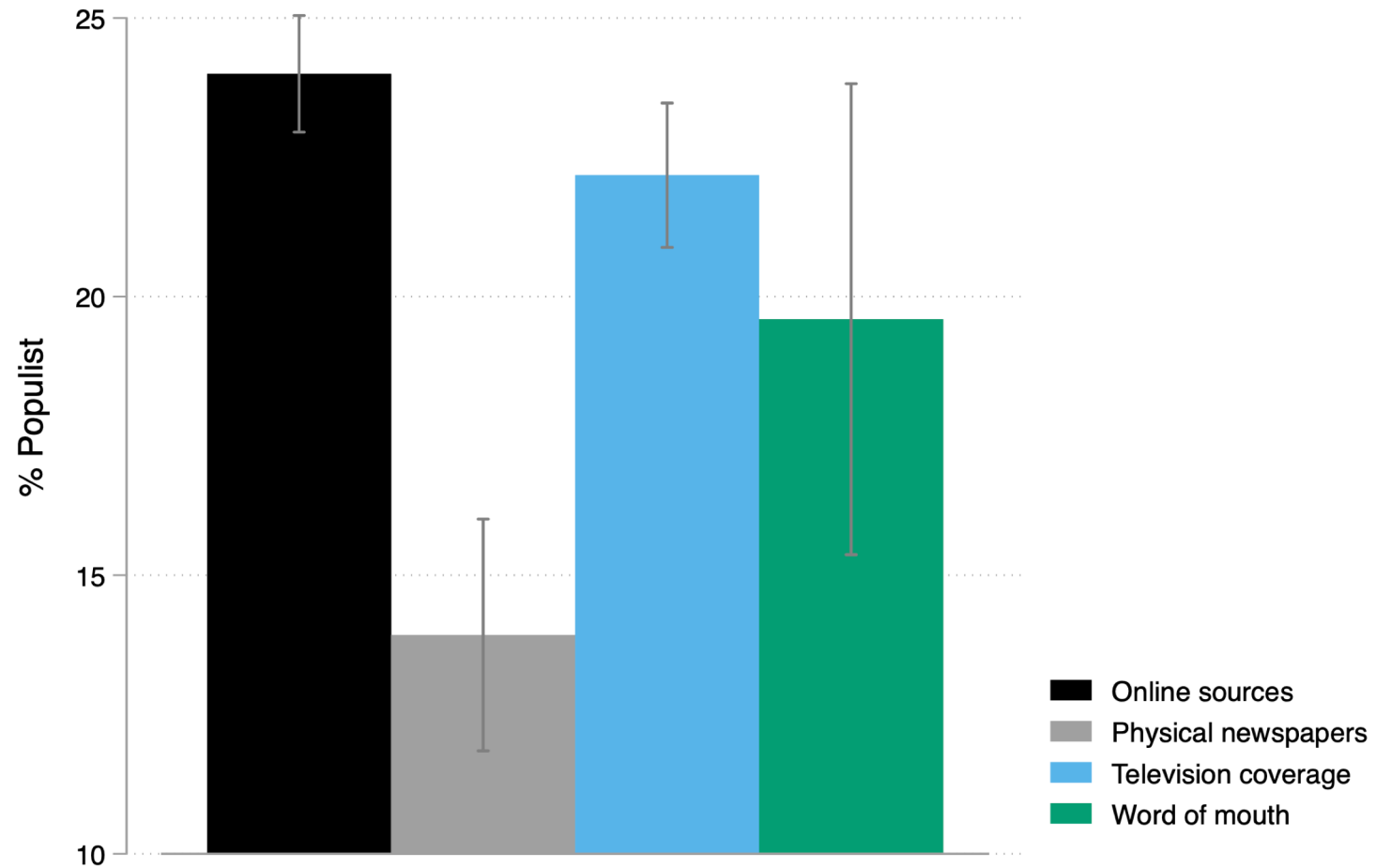
# SOCIAL MEDIA AND POPULISM: BY DEMOGRAPHICS



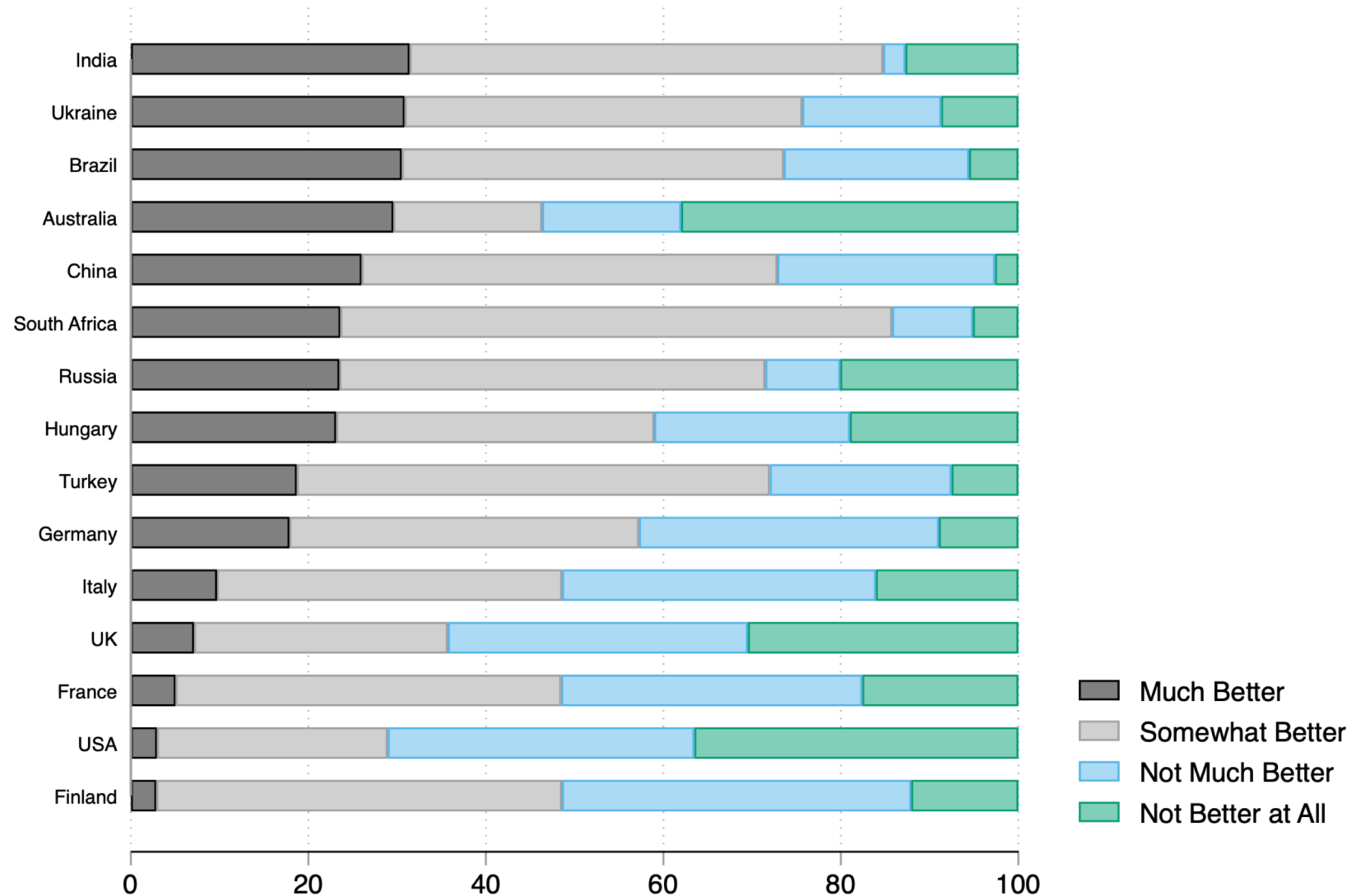
# SOCIAL MEDIA AND POPULISM: BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



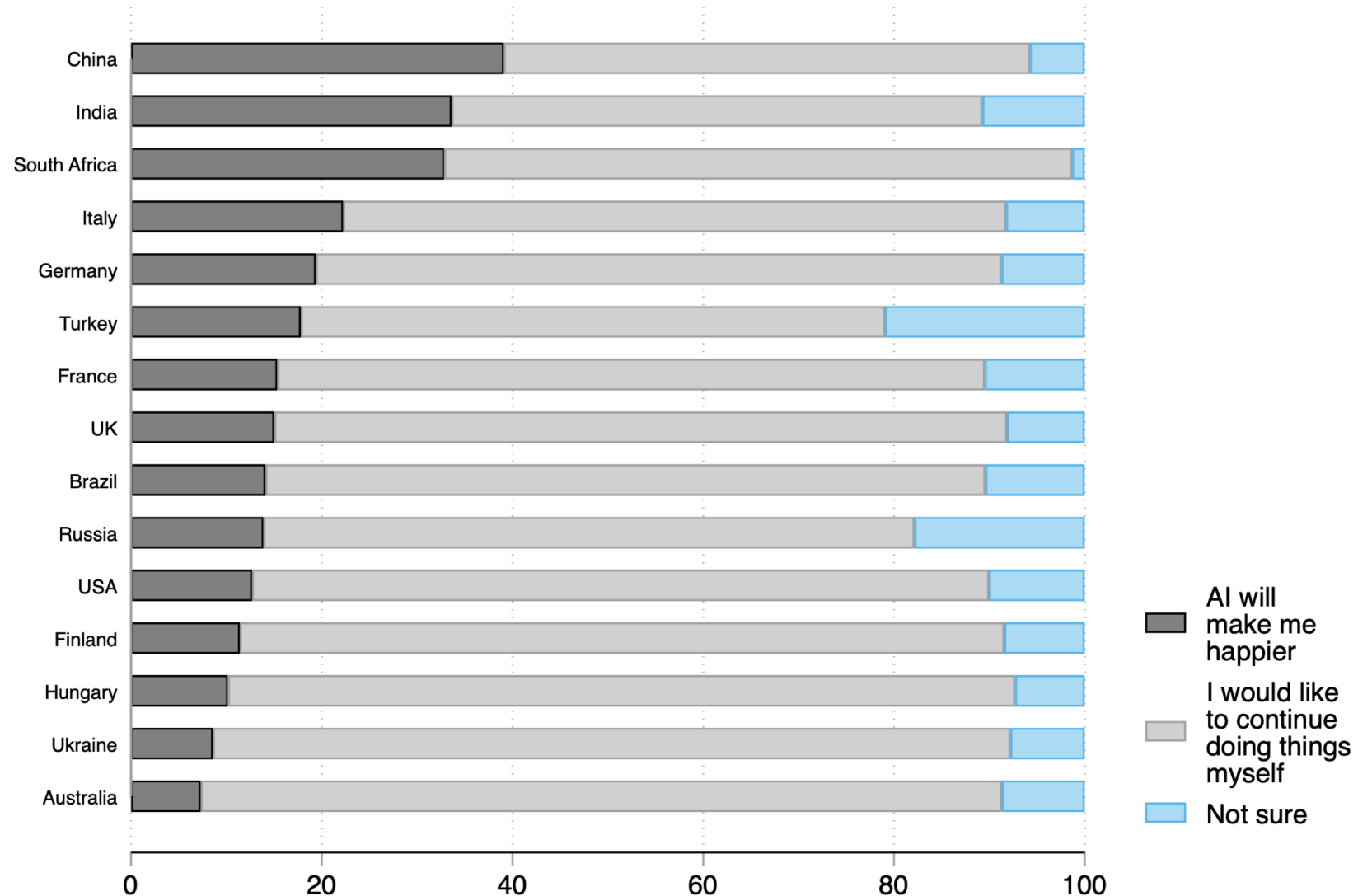
# SOURCE OF NEWS AND POPULIST BELIEFS



# “DO THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA MAKE DEMOCRACY FUNCTION BETTER? “



“IF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ROBOTS WILL DRIVE CARS, CARE FOR THE ELDER, CLEAN HOUSES, GARDEN, AND TAKE OVER ALL OTHER DAILY TASKS, WILL THAT MAKE YOU HAPPIER OR WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE DOING SOME THINGS YOURSELF? “



# EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

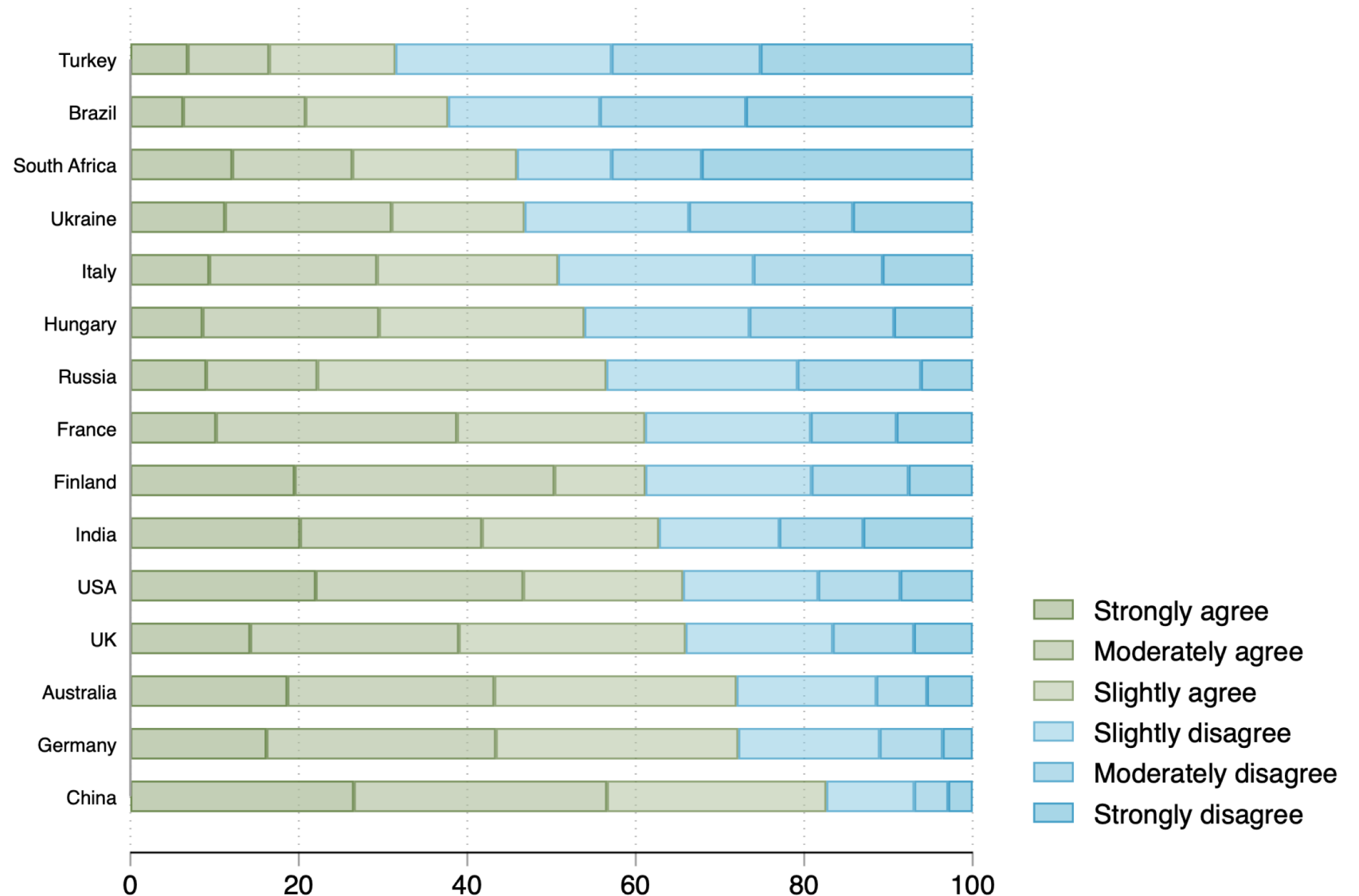
## **What we do:**

- Much of the discussion of equality of opportunity focuses on income
- But people believe they'd had a fair shot at being happy?
- We assess beliefs about this across countries and different types of people

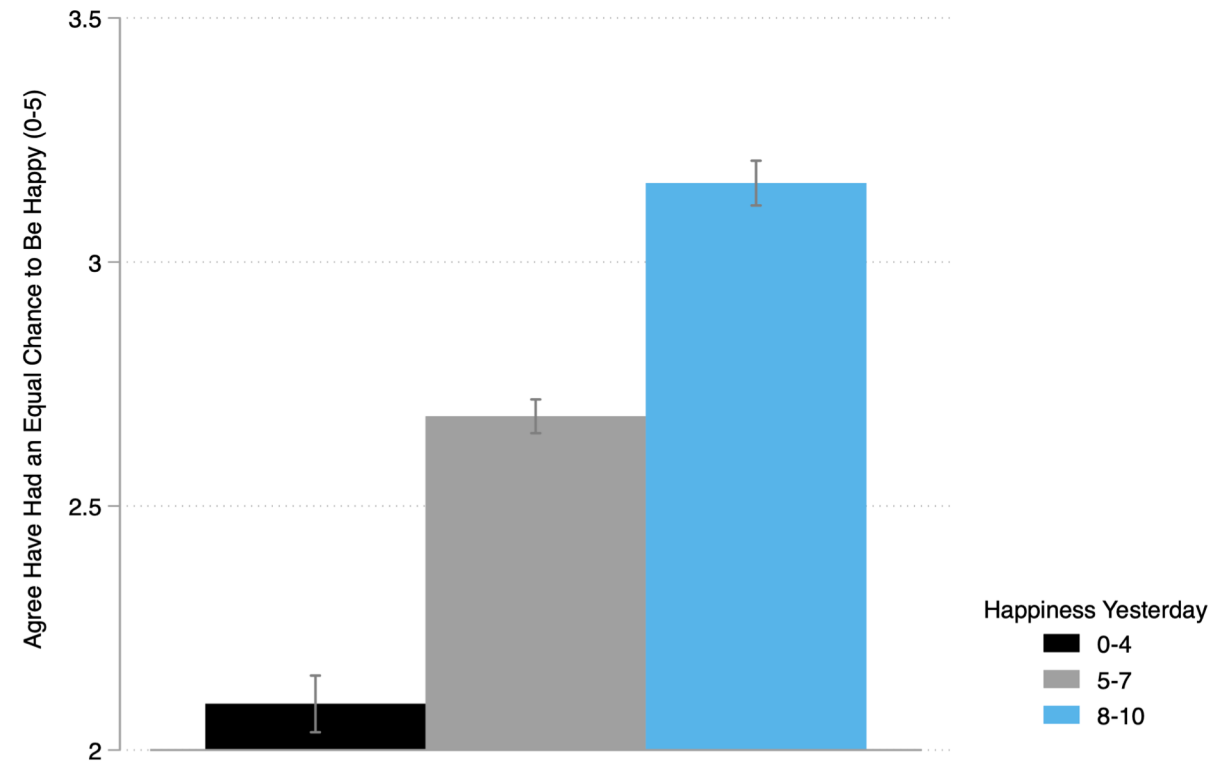
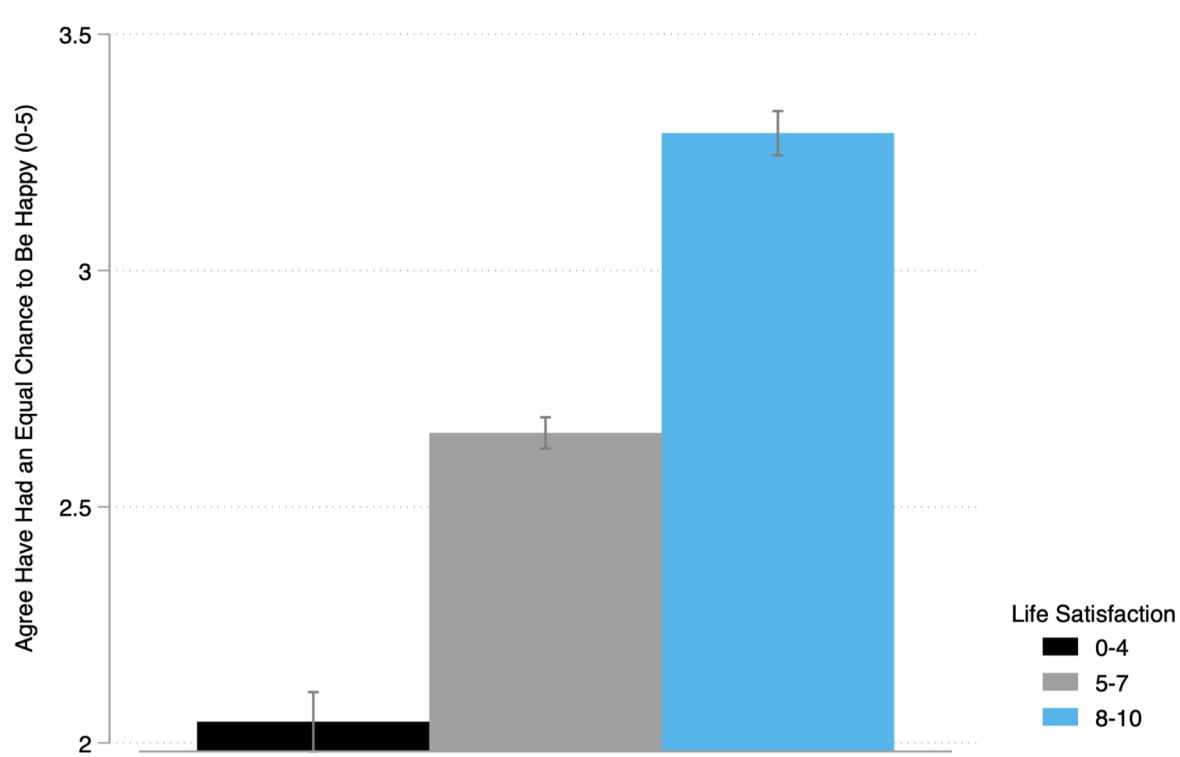
## **Key takeaways:**

- Unhappy people more likely to believe that did not get an equal opportunity to lead a happy life
- Populists more likely to believe they were not given a fair shot at being happy

“I HAVE HAD THE  
SAME OPPORTUNITIES  
AS EVERYONE ELSE IN  
MY COUNTRY TO LEAD  
A HAPPY LIFE”

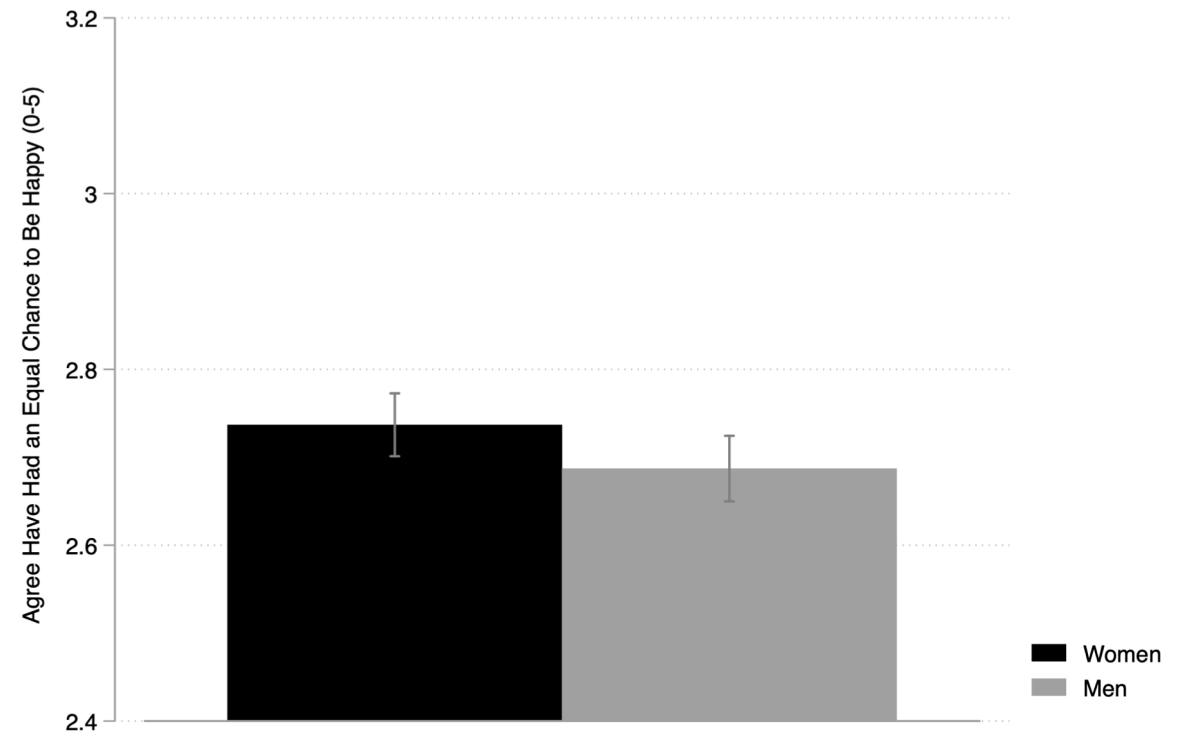
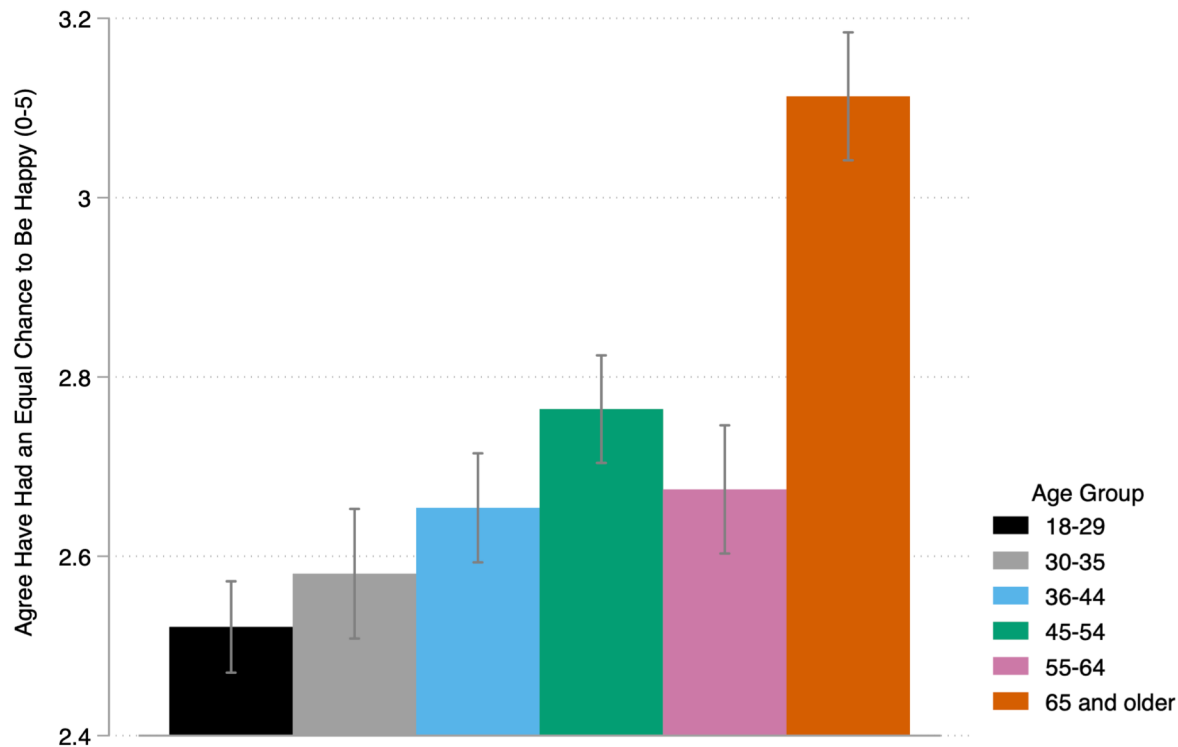


# DISSATISFIED AND UNHAPPY PEOPLE FEEL THEY WEREN'T GIVEN A FAIR SHOT

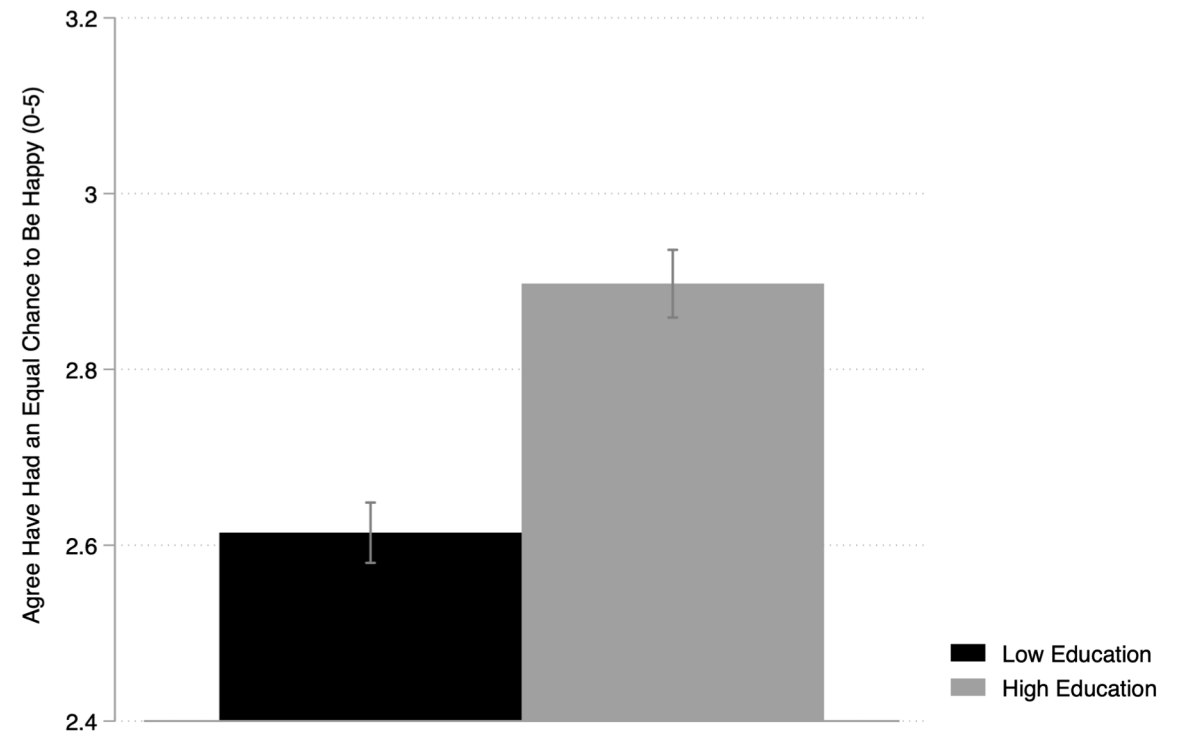
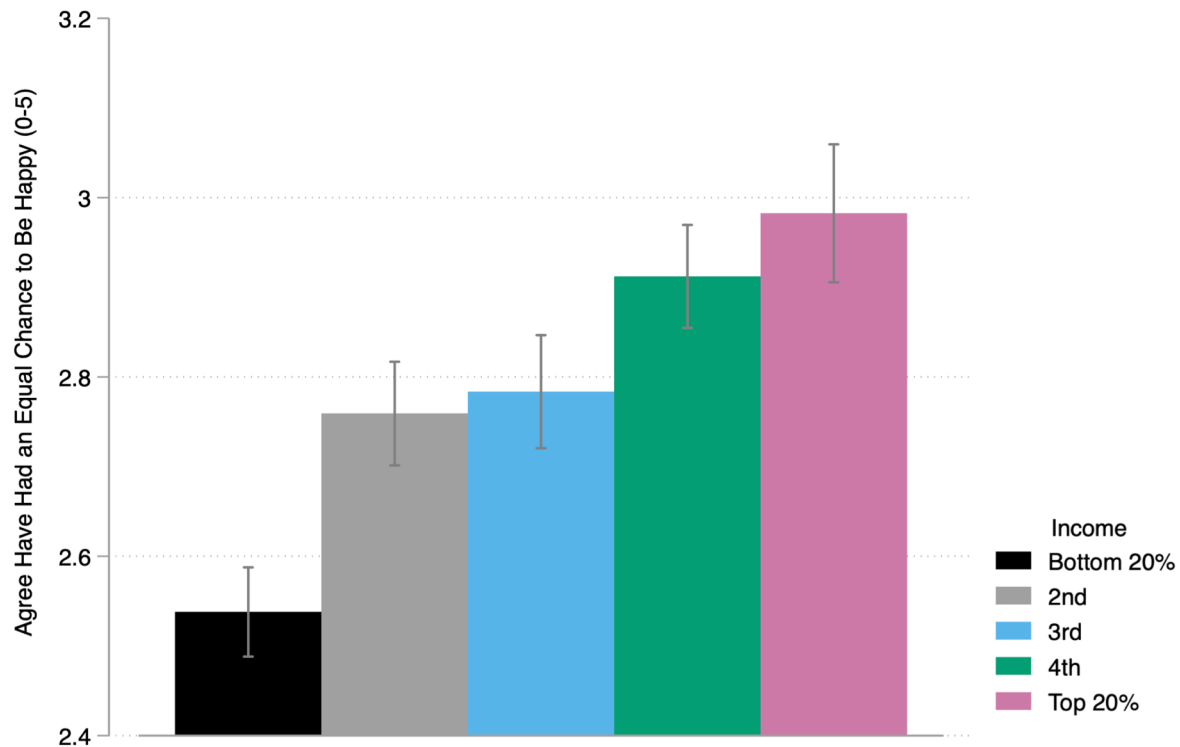




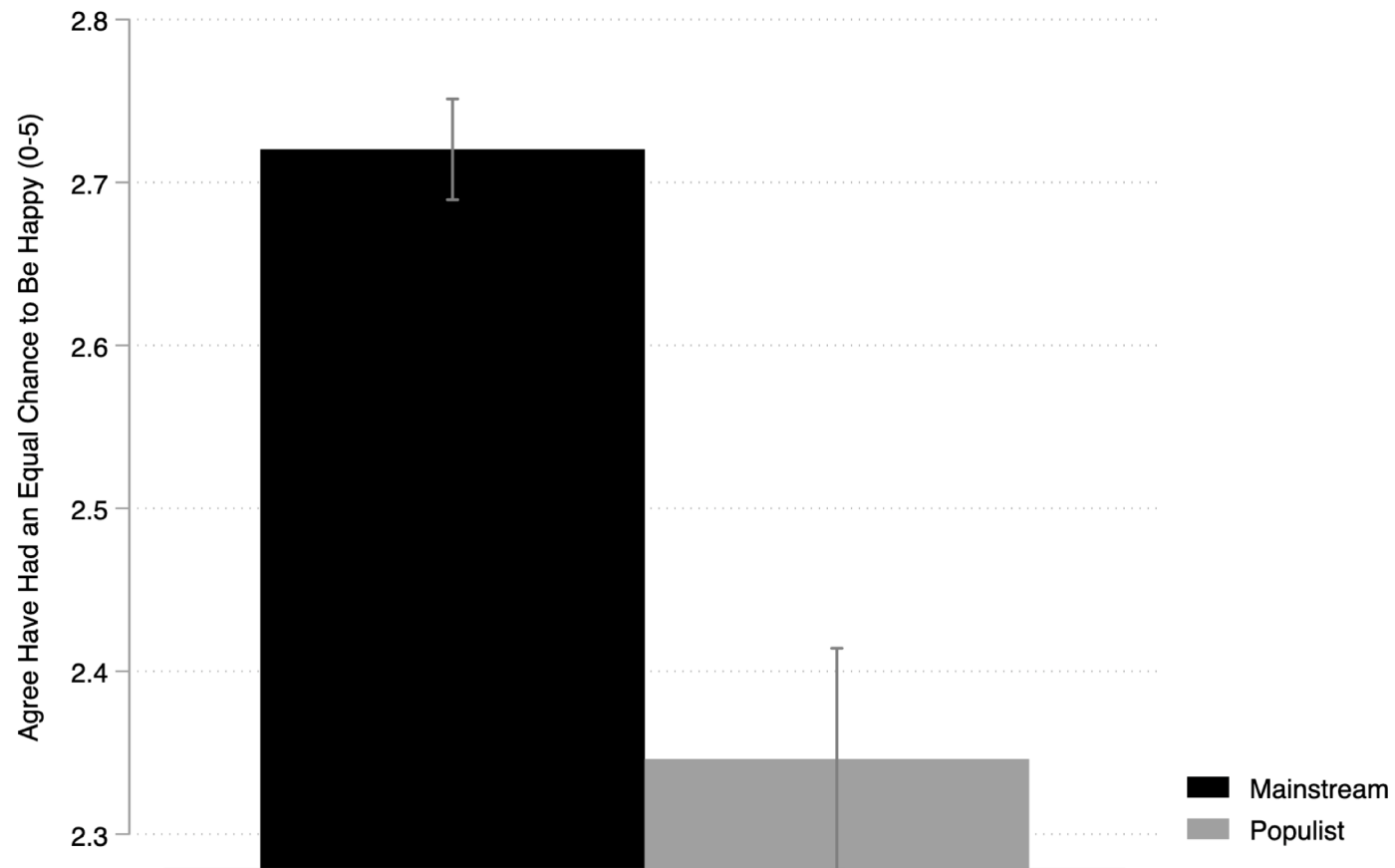
# YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO FEEL THEY HAVEN'T BEEN GIVEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO BE HAPPY



# LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS RESPONDENTS FEEL THEY HAVEN'T BEEN GIVEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO BE HAPPY



# POPULIST COHORT MUCH MORE LIKELY TO FEEL THEY WEREN'T GIVEN EQUAL CHANCE AT HAPPINESS



# FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS

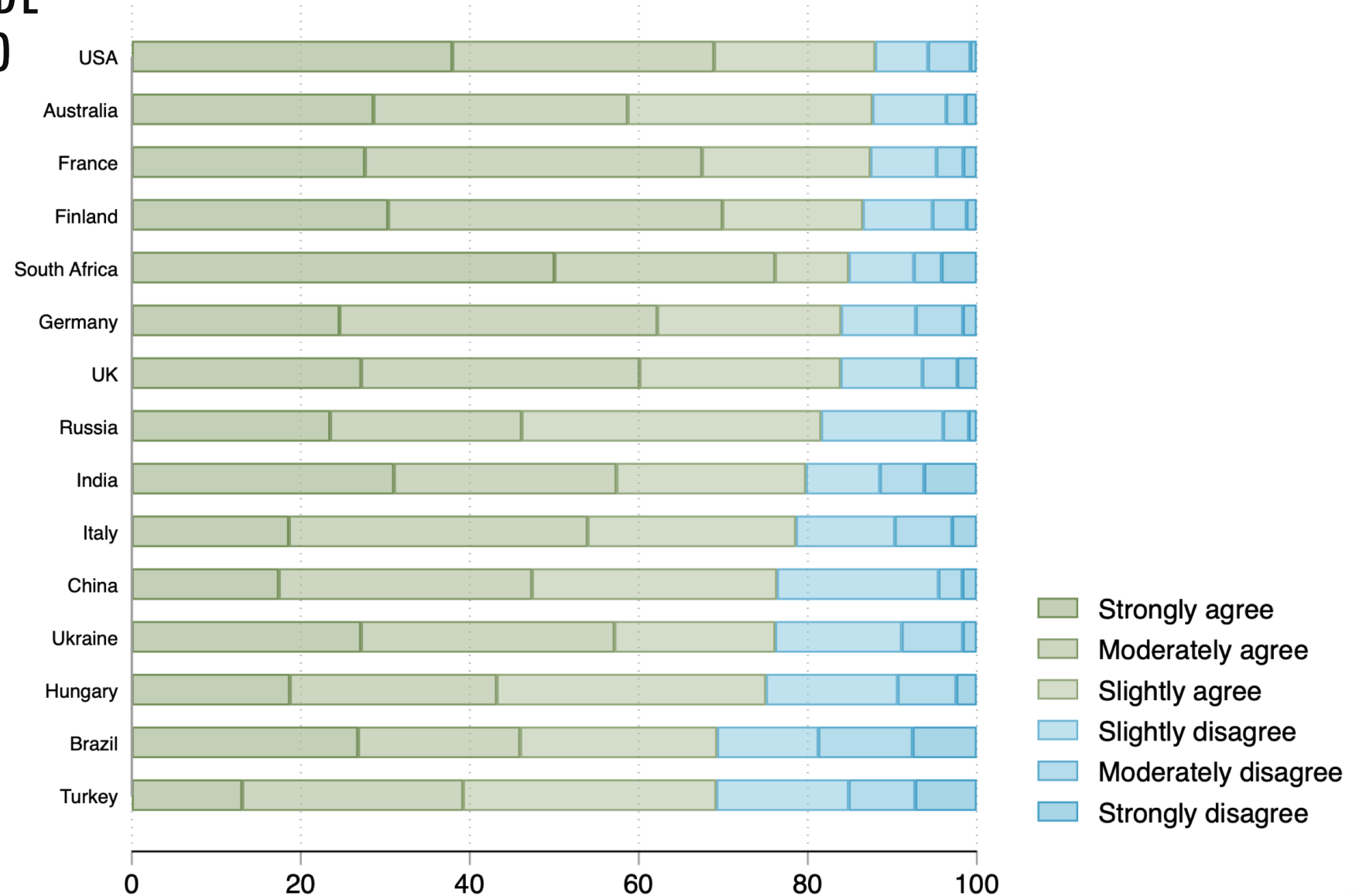
## **What we do:**

- Ask respondents the extent to which they feel free
- Assess the extent to which feeling free is associated with greater happiness and satisfaction

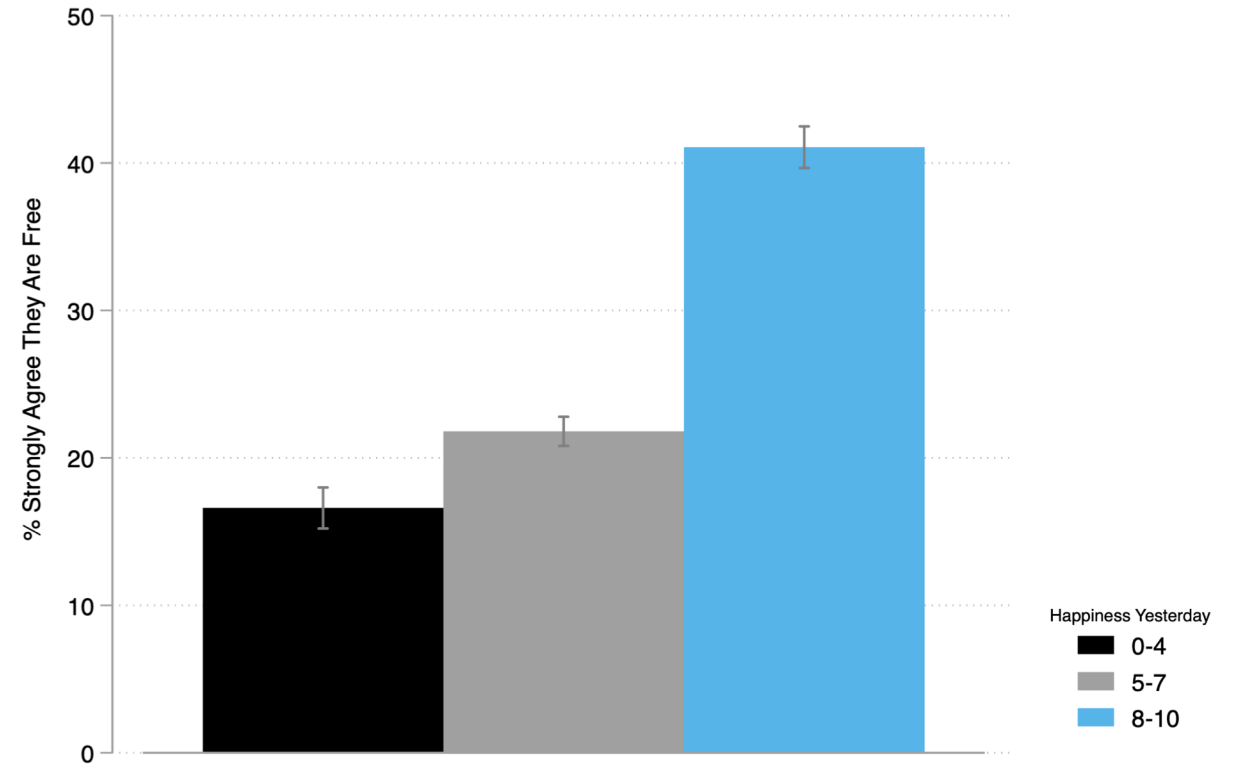
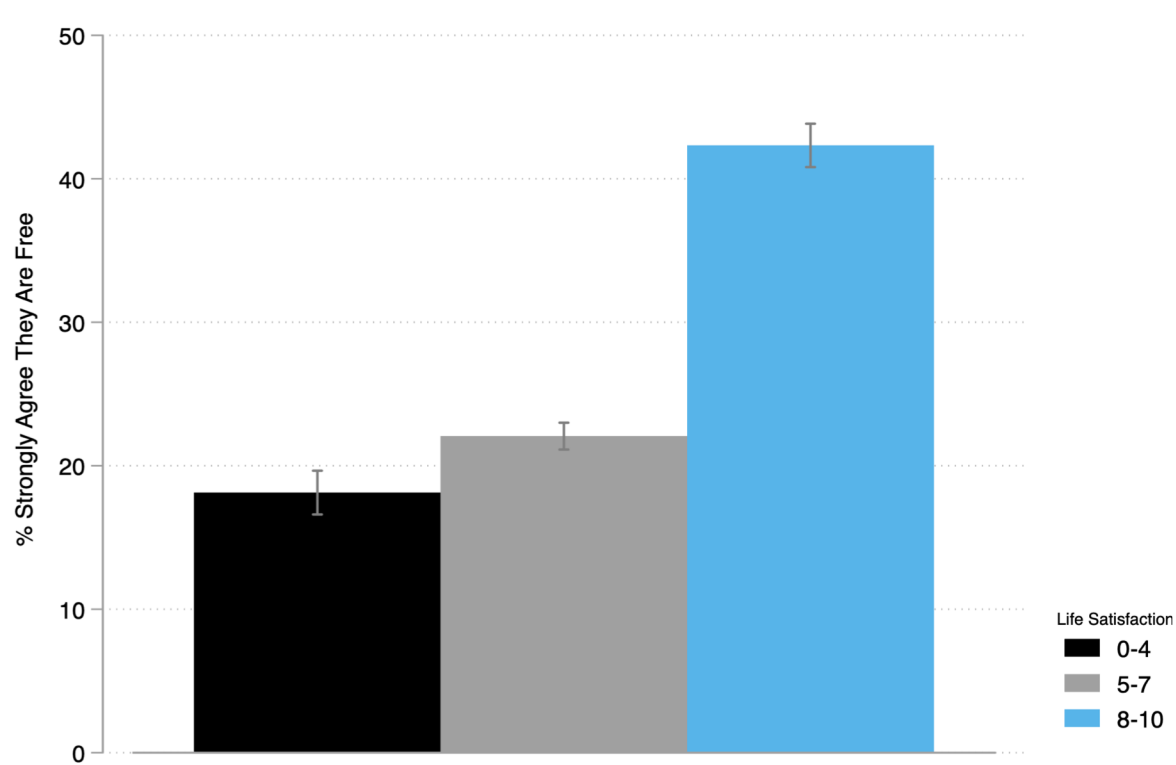
## **Key takeaways:**

- People who *feel* greater freedom in their lives are much happier

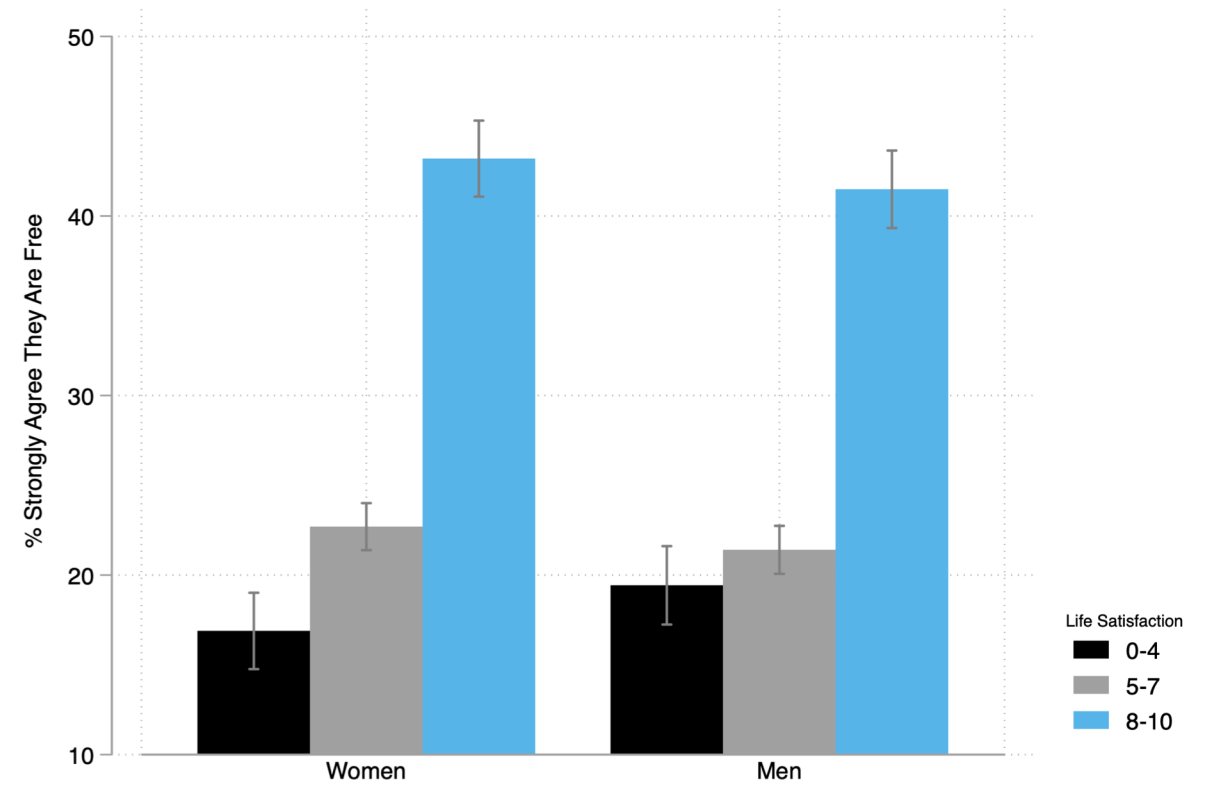
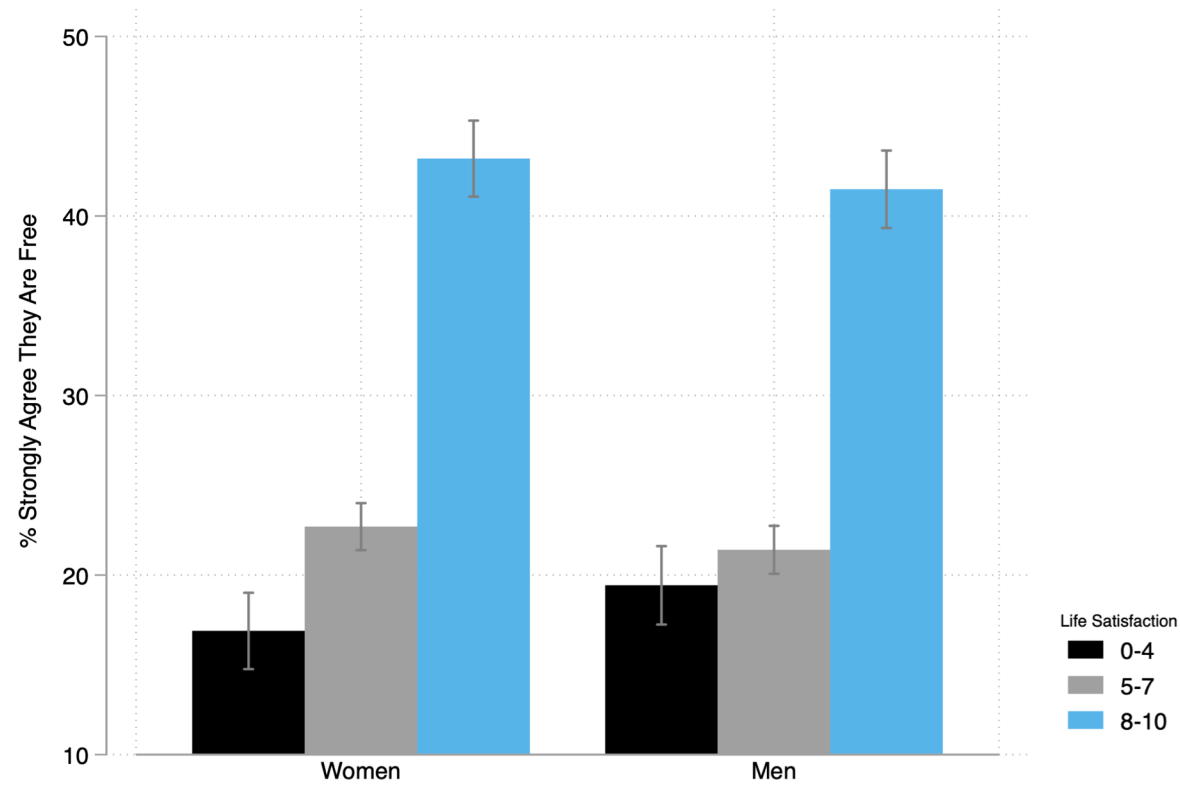
“I AM FREE TO DECIDE  
FOR MYSELF HOW TO  
LIVE MY LIFE “



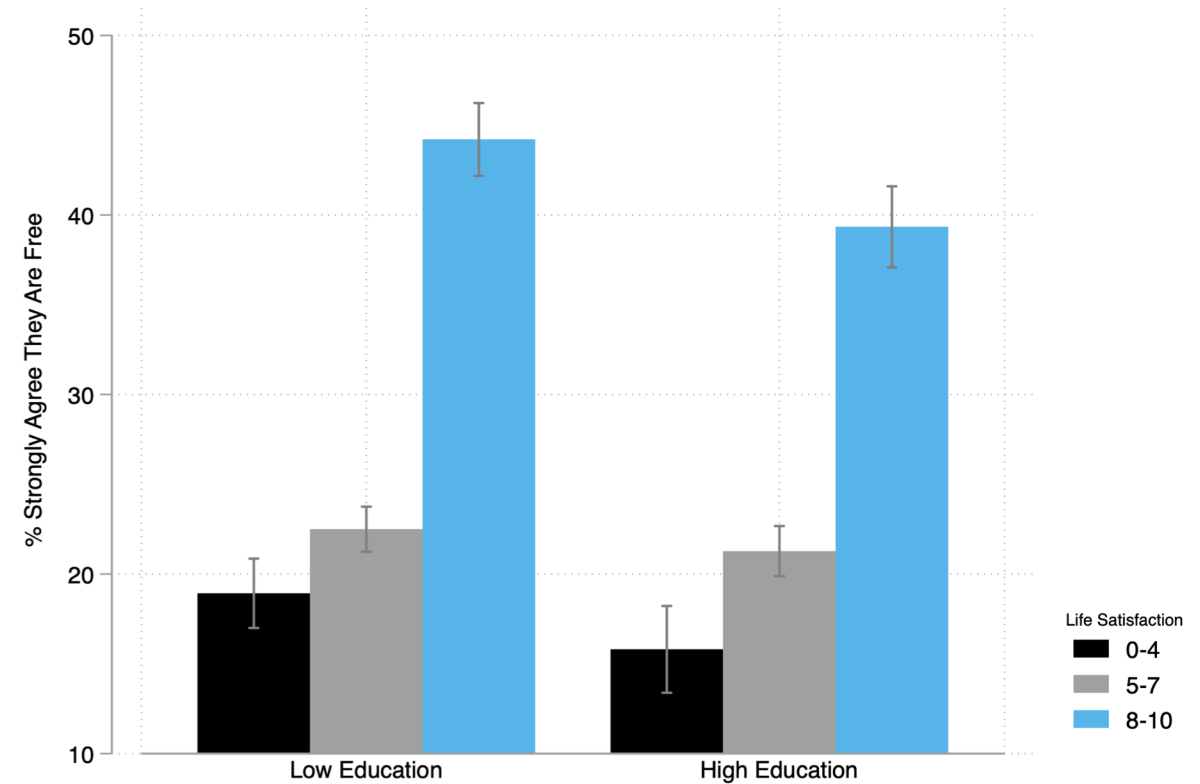
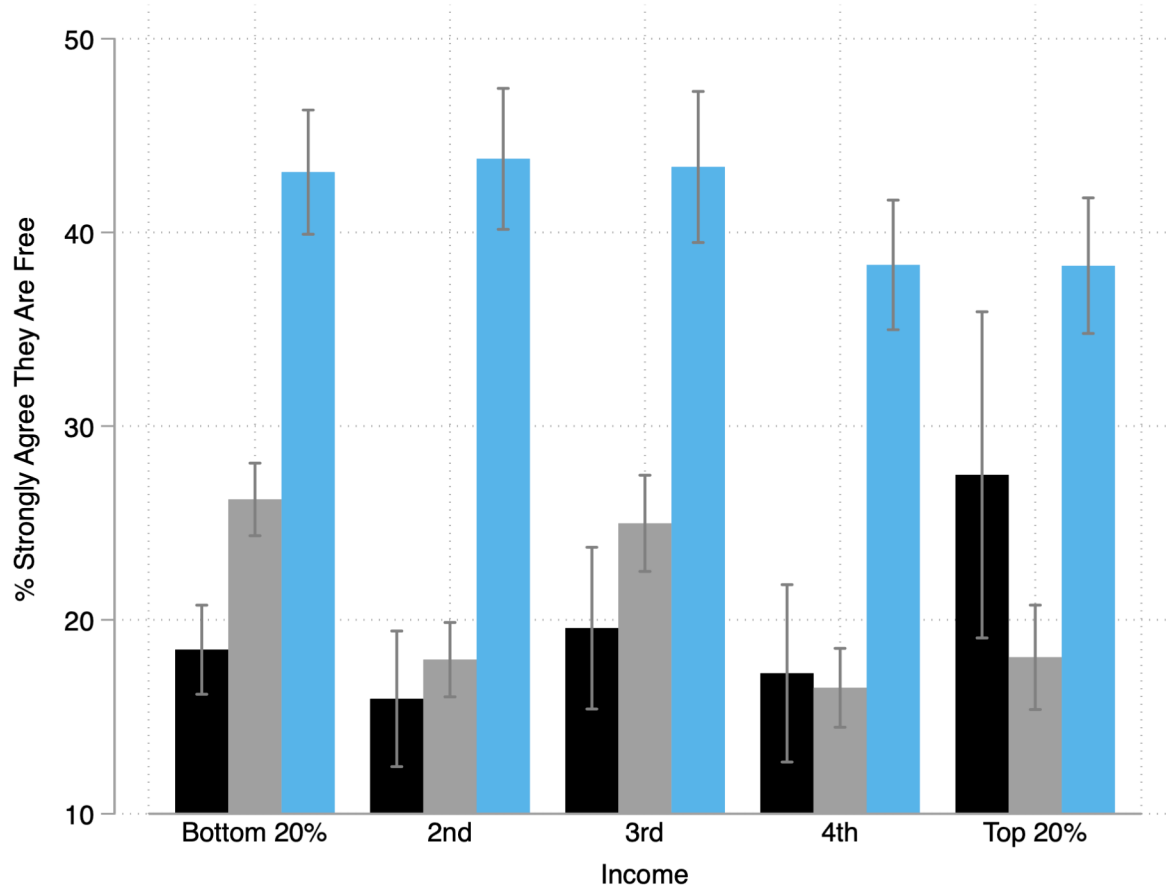
# FREEDOM AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING



# FREEDOM AND LIFE SATISFACTION, BY DEMOGRAPHICS



# FREEDOM AND LIFE SATISFACTION, BY SOCIO-ECONOMICS





# CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS

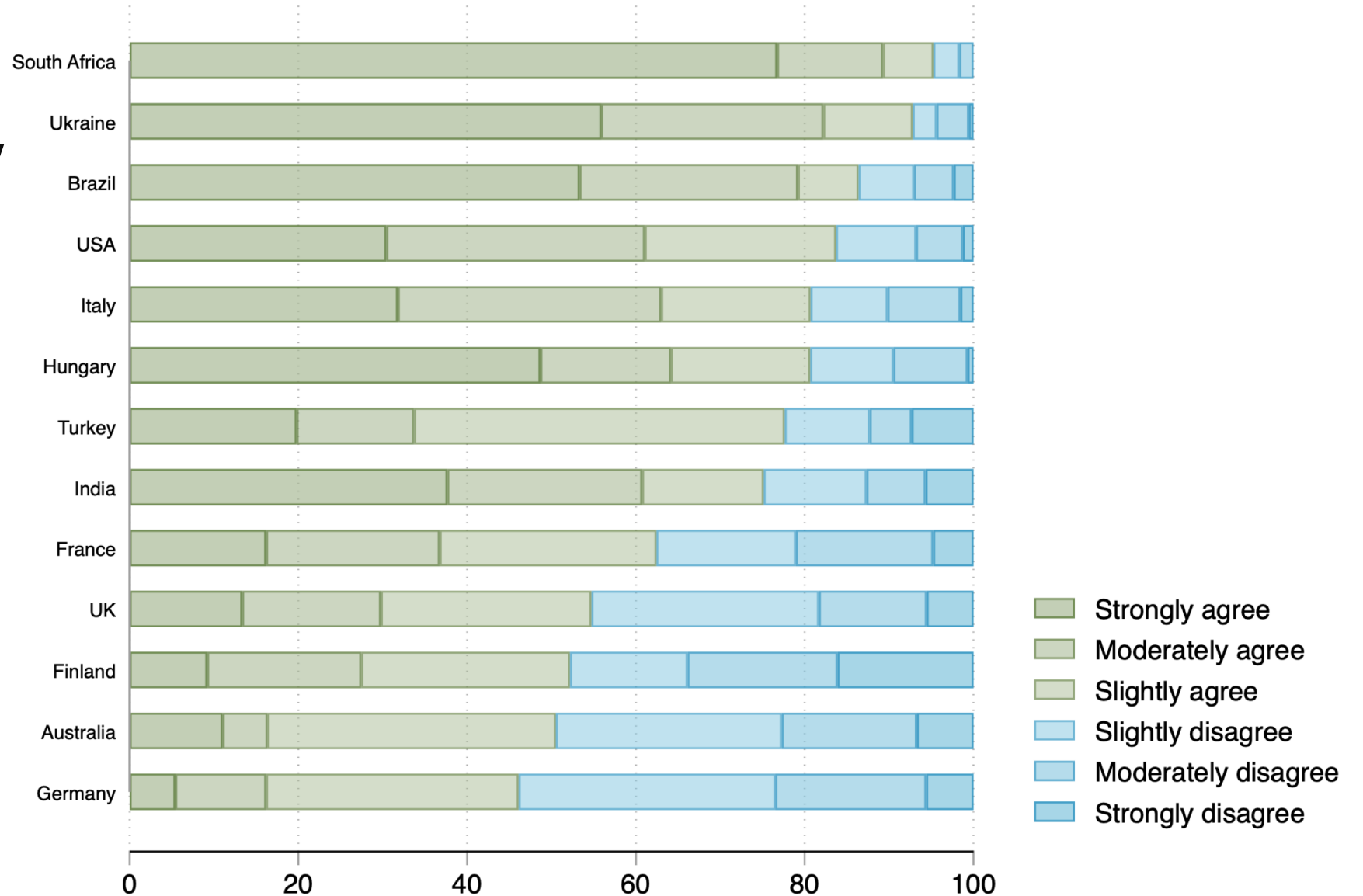
## What we do:

- We ask respondents the extent to which they feel government is corrupt
- We ask respondents the extent to which they feel business is corrupt

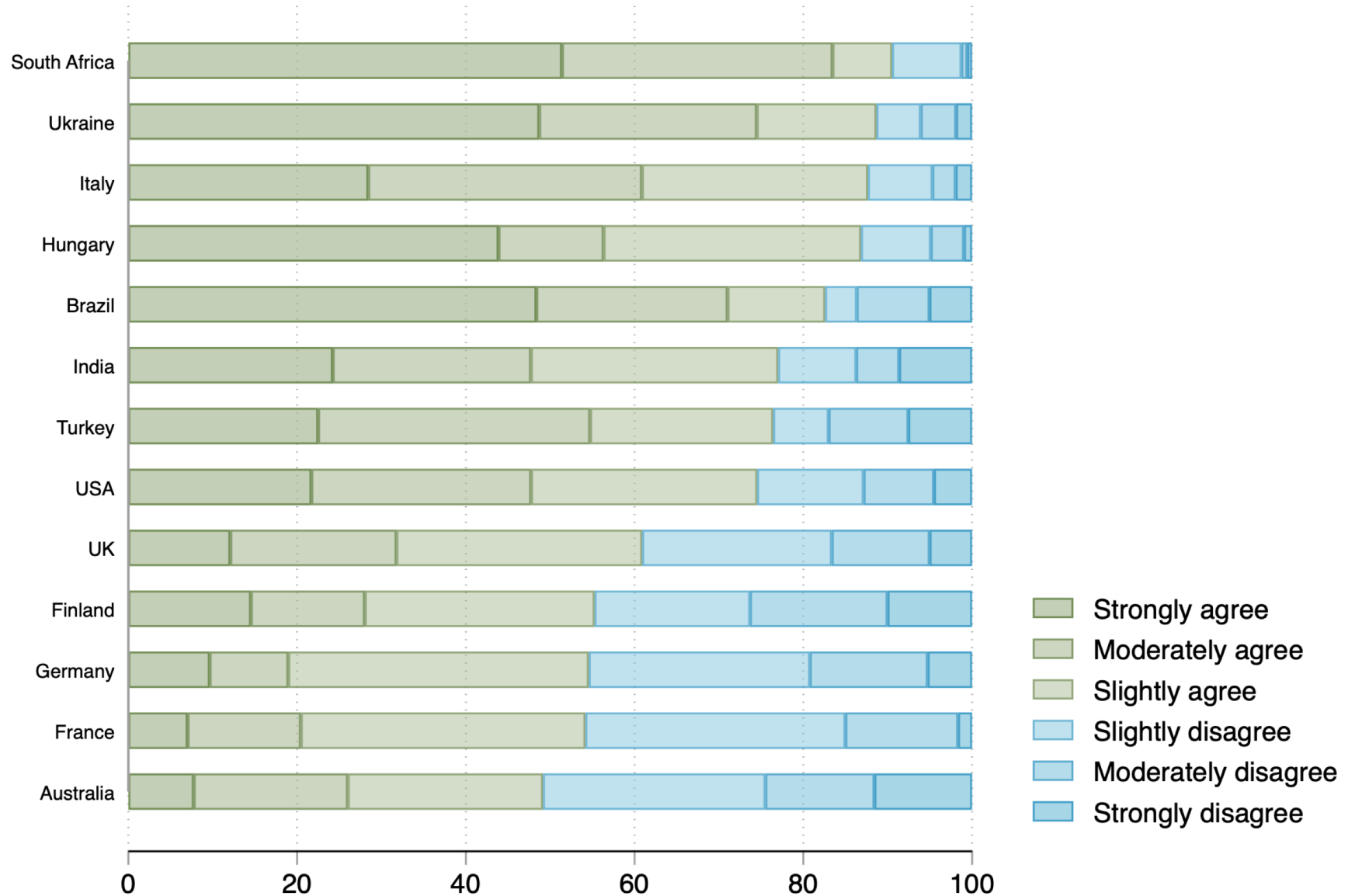
## Key takeaways:

- Majorities in *all* countries agree that corruption is widespread, in both government and business
- Majorities of people in Ukraine, Brazil, South Africa and Hungary *strongly* agree that corruption is widespread throughout both business and government
- Over 80% of people in the USA feel that corruption is widespread in government

# “CORRUPTION IS WIDESPREAD IN GOVERNMENT IN MY COUNTRY”



# “CORRUPTION IS WIDESPREAD IN BUSINESS IN MY COUNTRY”



# TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

## What we do:

- We ask respondents the extent to which they feel different groups and institutions are effective advocates of their interests
- And we ask which pose the greatest risk to their interests

## Key takeaways:

- In Ukraine, Hungary, UK, USA and South Africa, people rank their own national government as posing the greatest risk going forwards
- In these countries, where faith in the national government is low, people place most faith in the effectiveness of *international* institutions like the EU and the UN

# % Say one of institutions poses greatest risk

Australia

Brazil

China

Finland

France

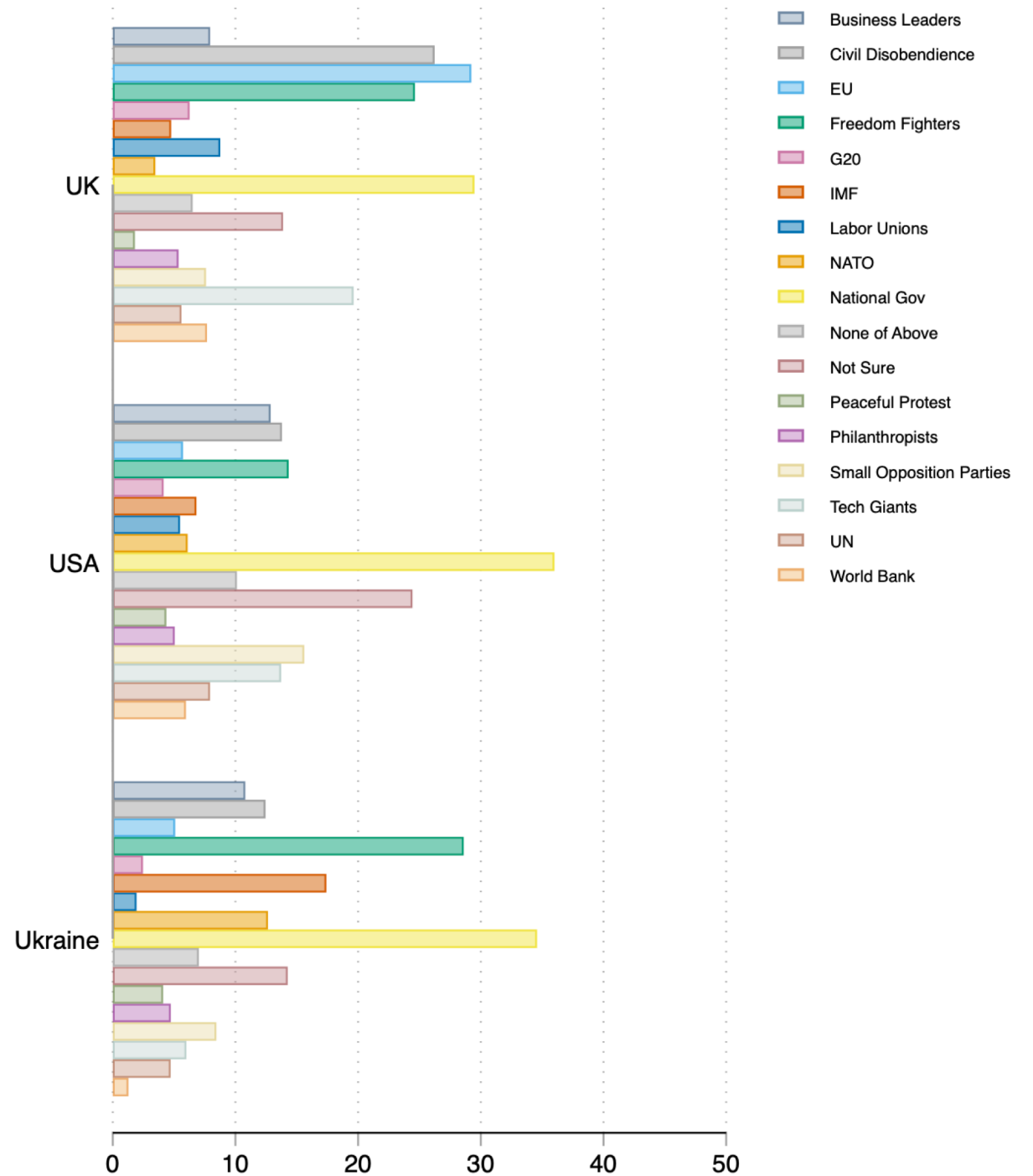
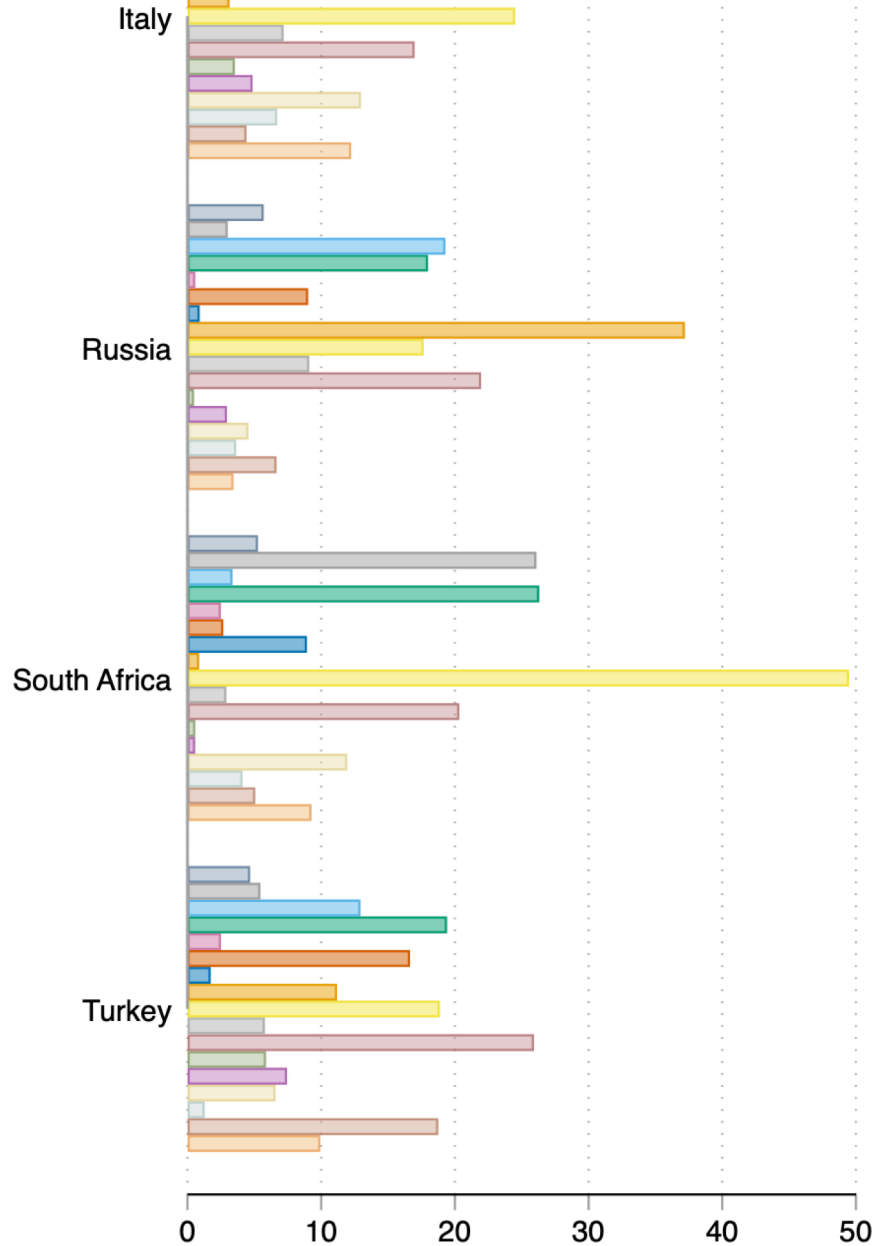
Germany

Hungary

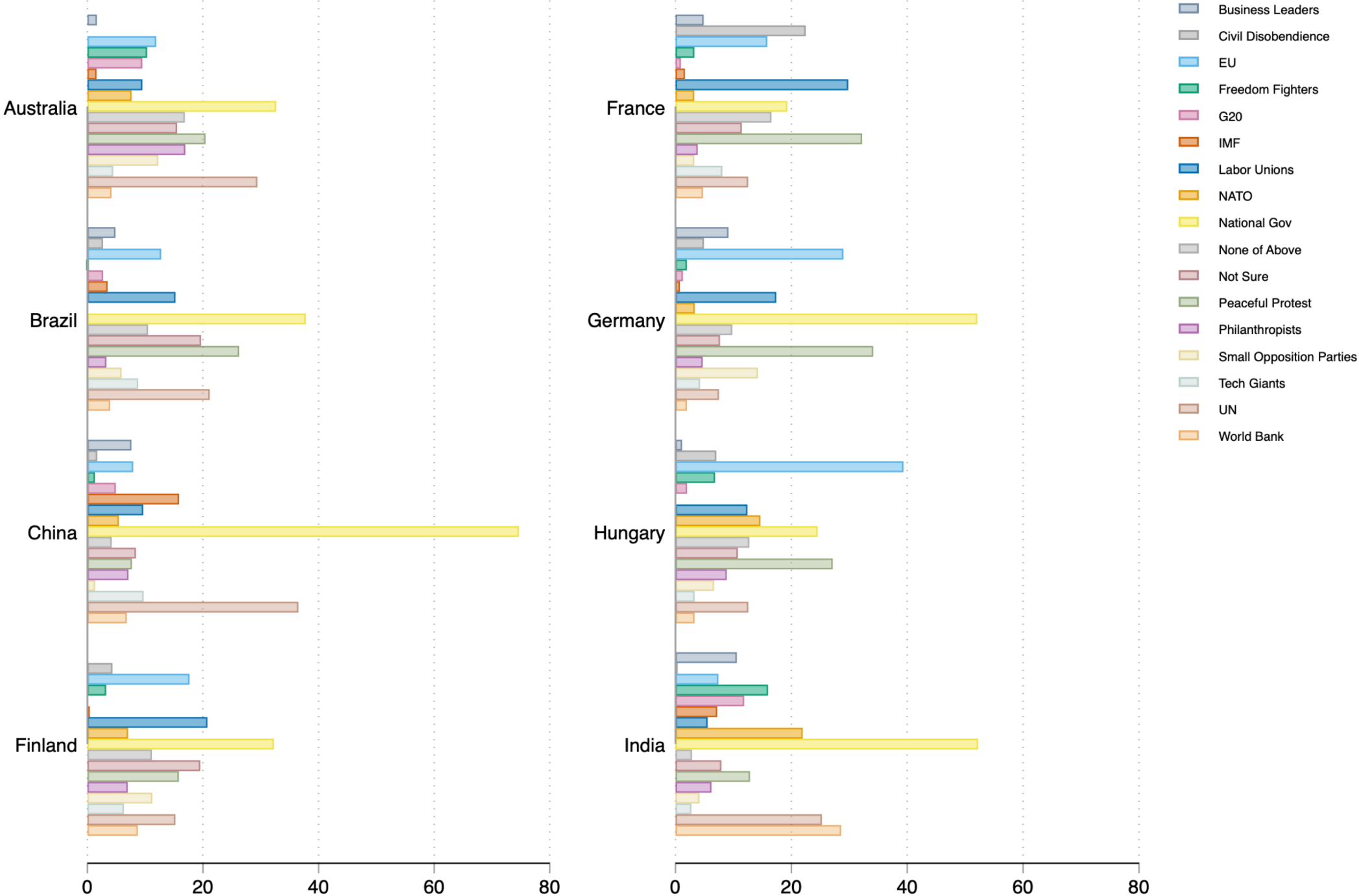
India

- Business Leaders
- Civil Disobedience
- EU
- Freedom Fighters
- G20
- IMF
- Labor Unions
- NATO
- National Gov
- None of Above
- Not Sure
- Peaceful Protest
- Philanthropists
- Small Opposition Parties
- Tech Giants
- UN
- World Bank

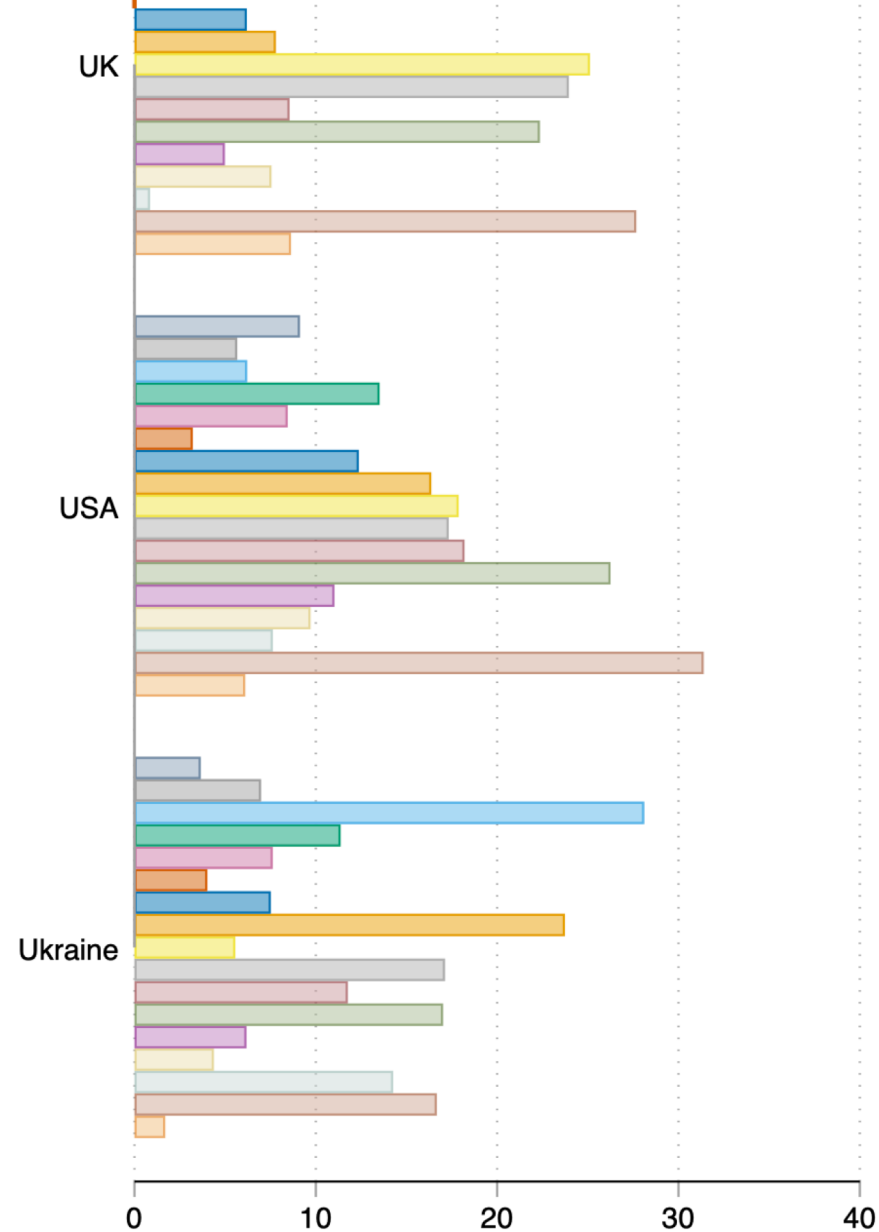
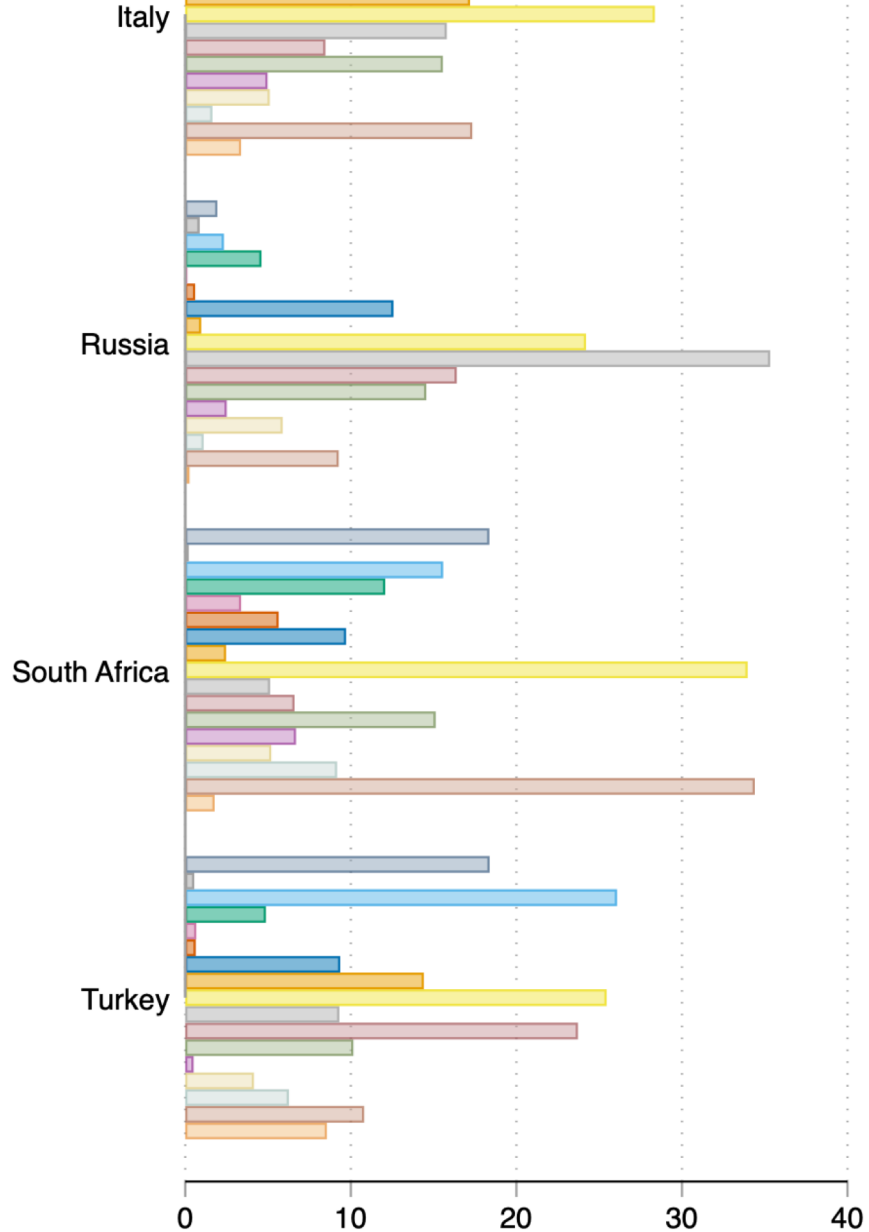
# % Say one of institutions poses greatest risk



% Say one of most effective institutions



# % Say one of most effective institutions



- Business Leaders
- Civil Disobedience
- EU
- Freedom Fighters
- G20
- IMF
- Labor Unions
- NATO
- National Gov
- None of Above
- Not Sure
- Peaceful Protest
- Philanthropists
- Small Opposition Parties
- Tech Giants
- UN
- World Bank



# INSTITUTIONS: SUMMARY

	<b>Greatest Risk</b>	<b>Most Effective</b>
<b>Australia</b>	Civil Disobedience	National Government
<b>Brazil</b>	National Government	National Government
<b>China</b>	IMF	National Government
<b>Finland</b>	Freedom Fighters	National Government
<b>France</b>	EU	Peaceful Protest
<b>Germany</b>	Freedom Fighters	National Government
<b>Hungary</b>	National Government	EU
<b>India</b>	National Government	National Government
<b>Italy</b>	EU	National Government
<b>Russia</b>	NATO	None of the Above
<b>South Africa</b>	National Government	UN
<b>Turkey</b>	Freedom Fighters	EU
<b>UK</b>	National Government	UN
<b>USA</b>	National Government	UN
<b>Ukraine</b>	National Government	EU

# BORN TO BE HAPPY?

## **What we do:**

- We ask respondents if they think they would have been happier had they been born abroad
- And, if yes, we ask where they think would have given them the best chance of being happy

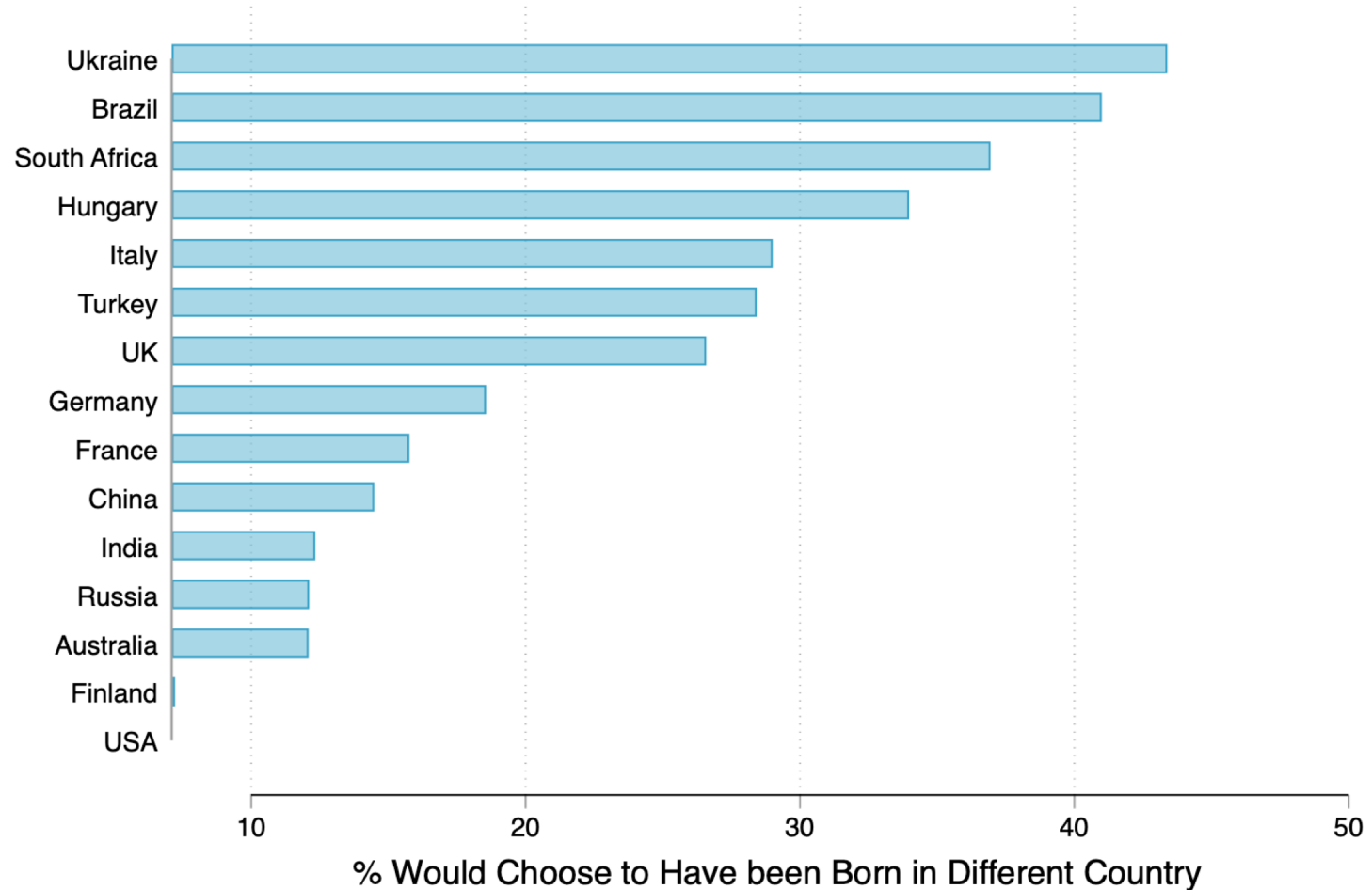
## **Key takeaways:**

- Large variation across countries in the extent to which people believe being born elsewhere would have lead to them being happier
- Anglo-Saxon countries most frequently cited as the countries where people believe they would have had a better chance to be happy

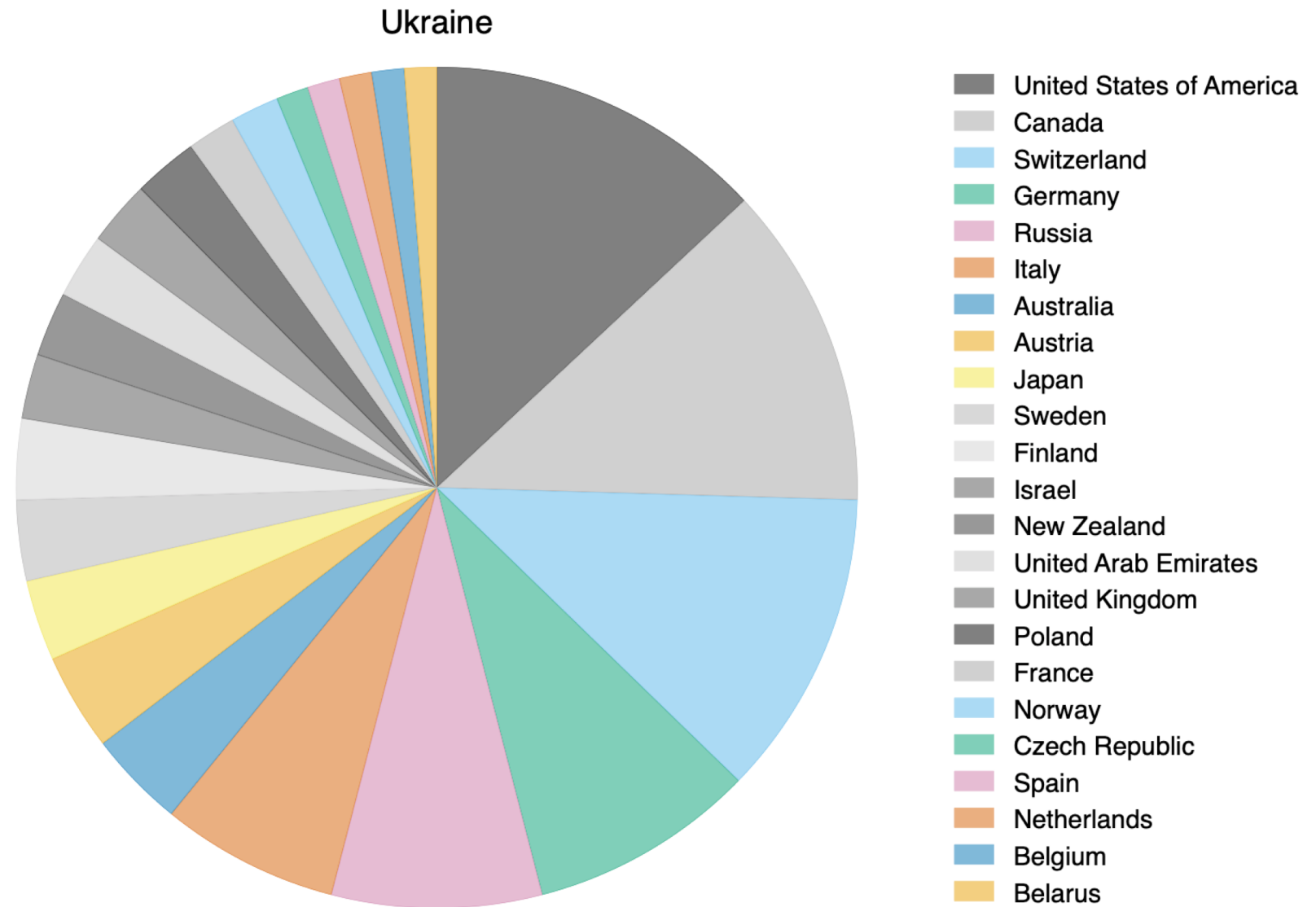
# DESIRE TO HAVE BEEN BORN ELSEWHERE

“IF YOU COULD HAVE CHOSEN ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD TO BE BORN, WHICH COUNTRY DO YOU BELIEVE WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU THE BEST CHANCE TO HAVE A HAPPY LIFE?”

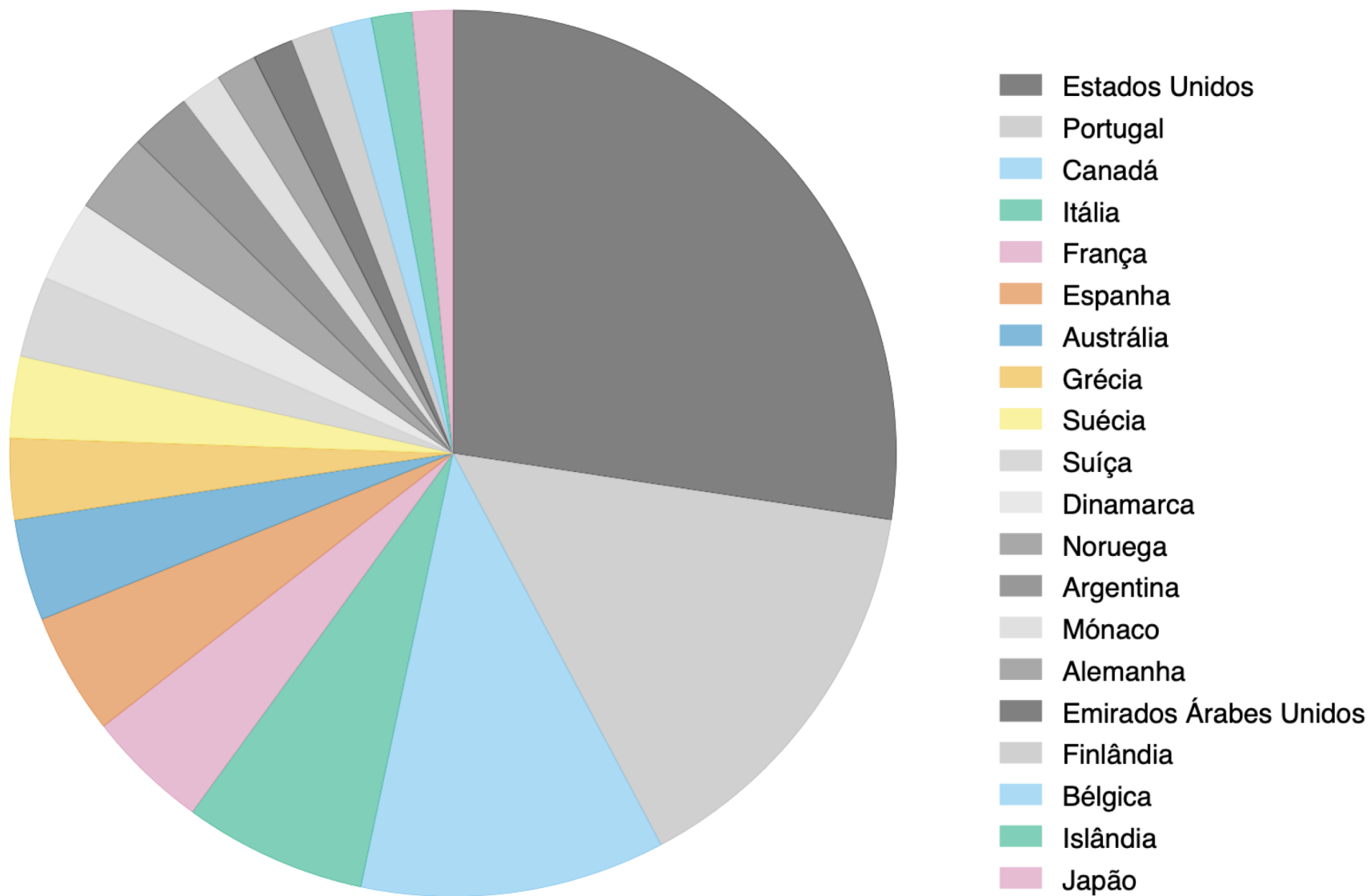
We show % of people who answer with a **country different to their own.**



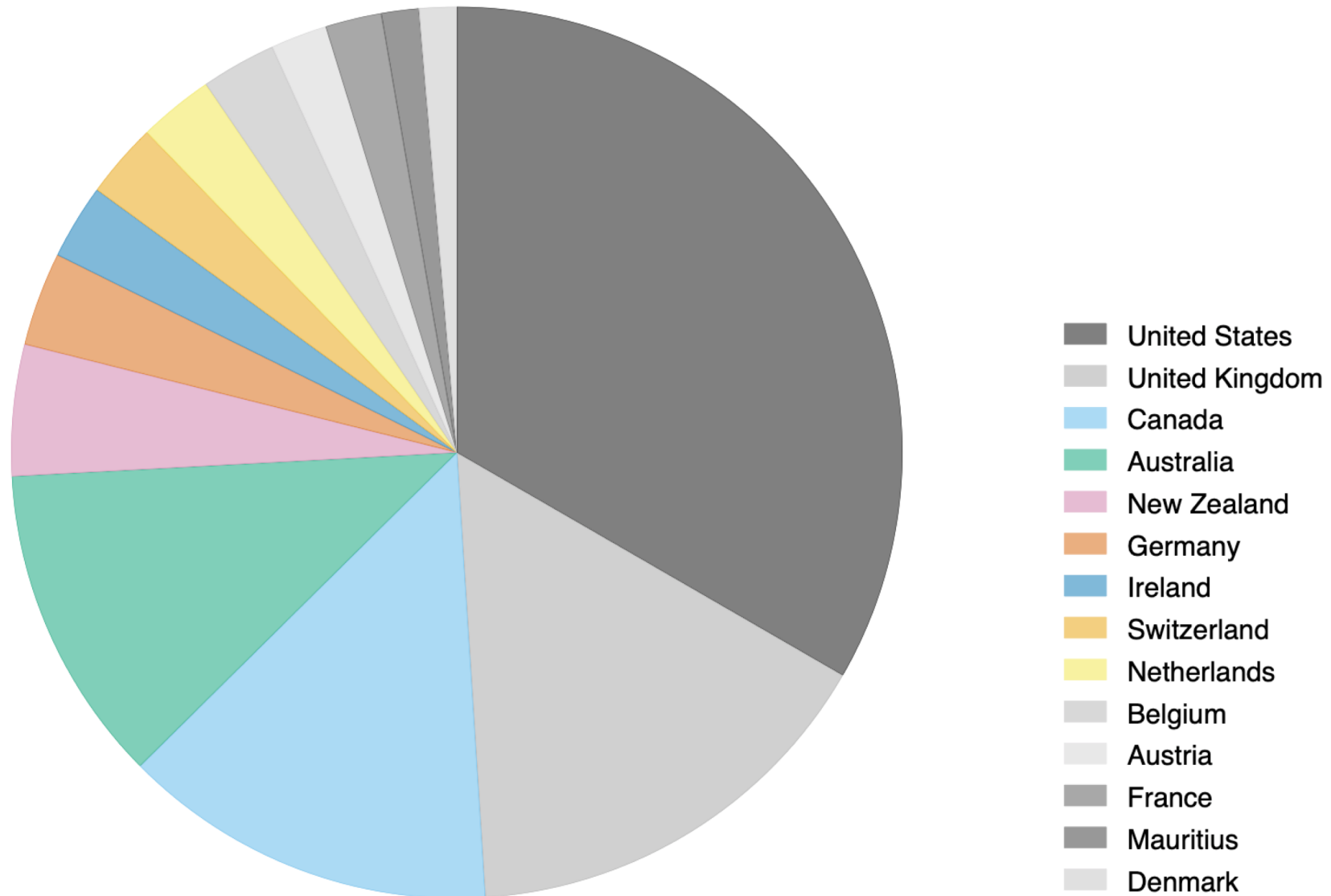
OF THOSE  
WHO SAID  
“*ANOTHER  
COUNTRY*”,  
WHICH  
COUNTRY?



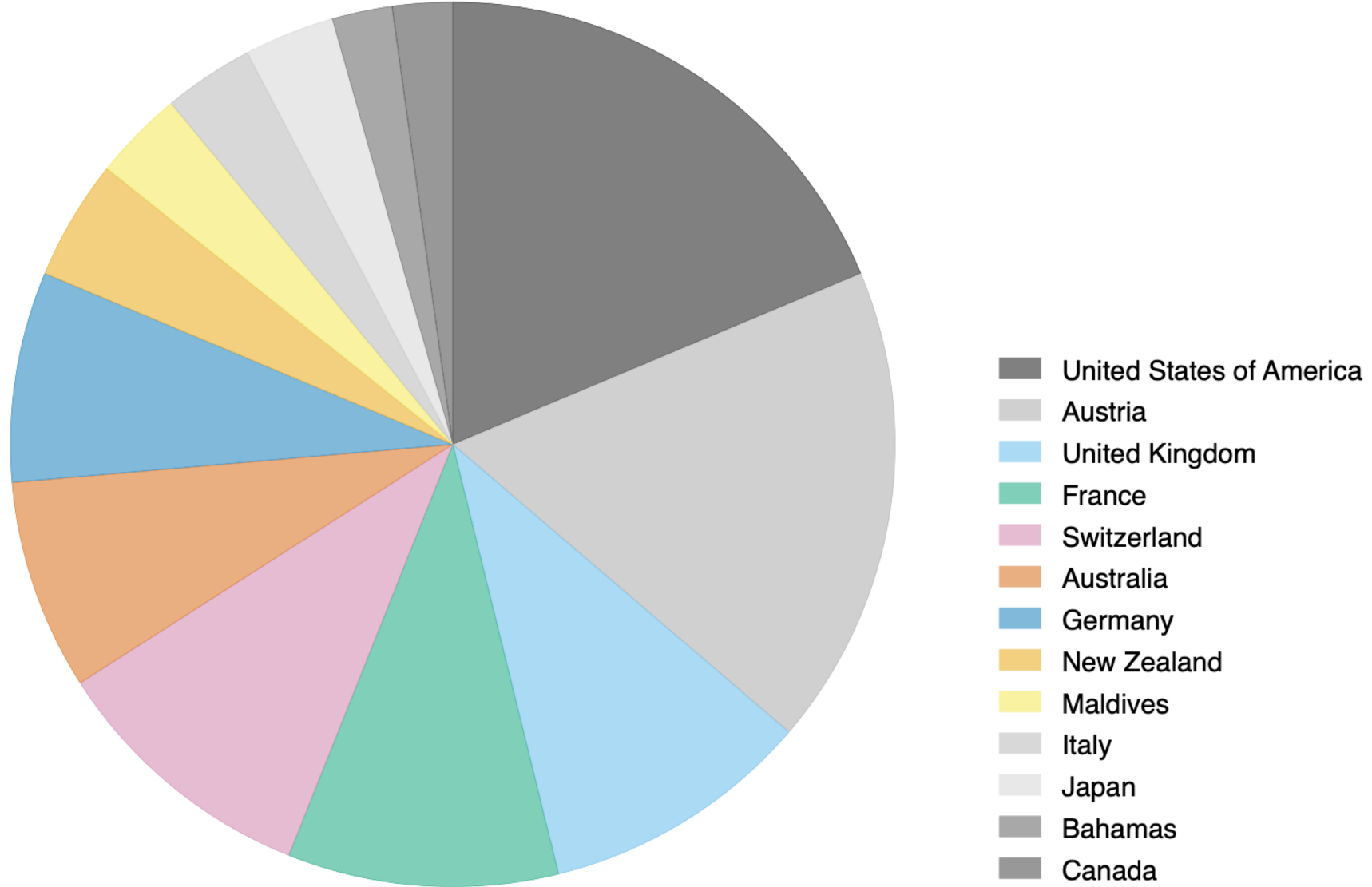
## Brazil



## South Africa



## Hungary



# CASE STUDY: UKRAINE ELECTION 2019

## What we do:

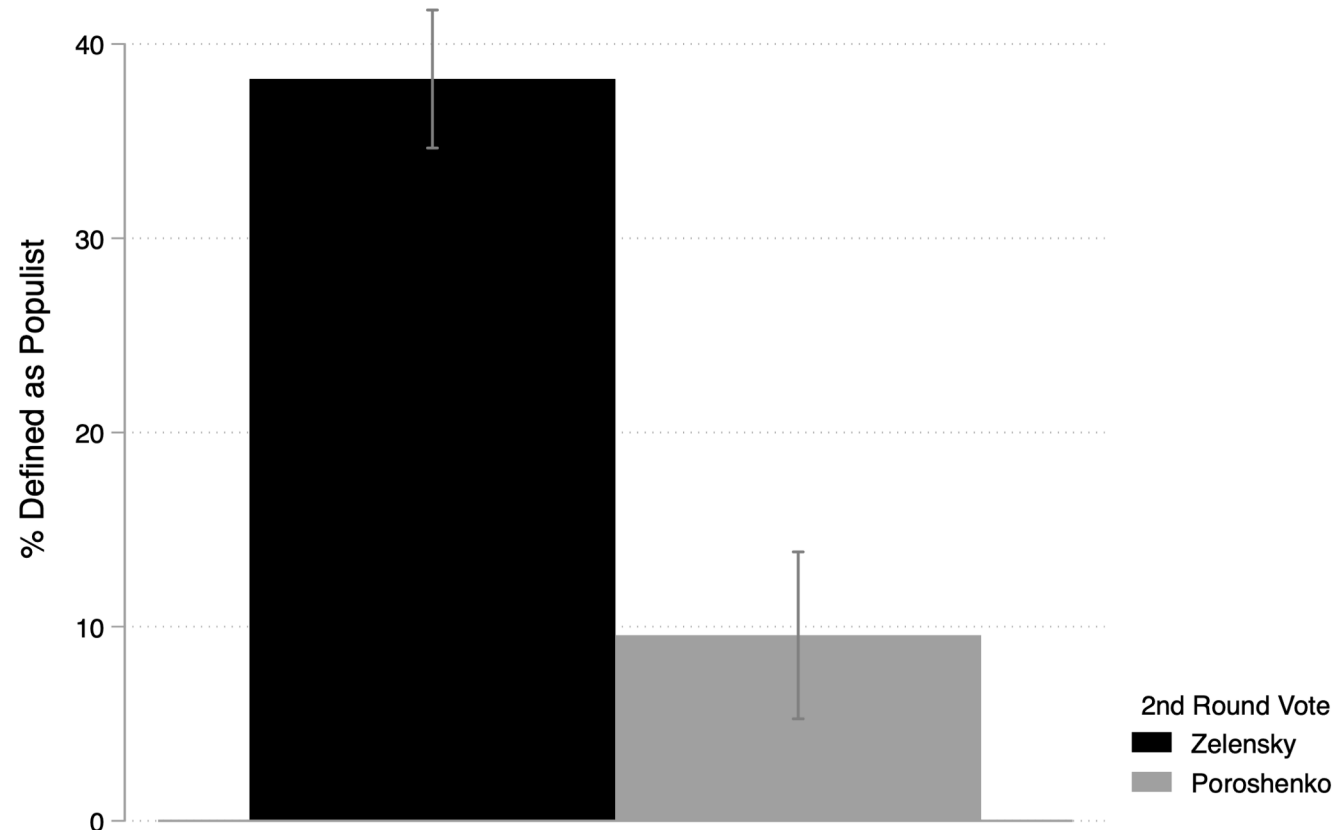
- We ask respondents whom they voted for in the second round of the 2019 presidential election
- Assess the extent to which well-being differs across Zelensky and Poroshenko voters

## Key takeaways:

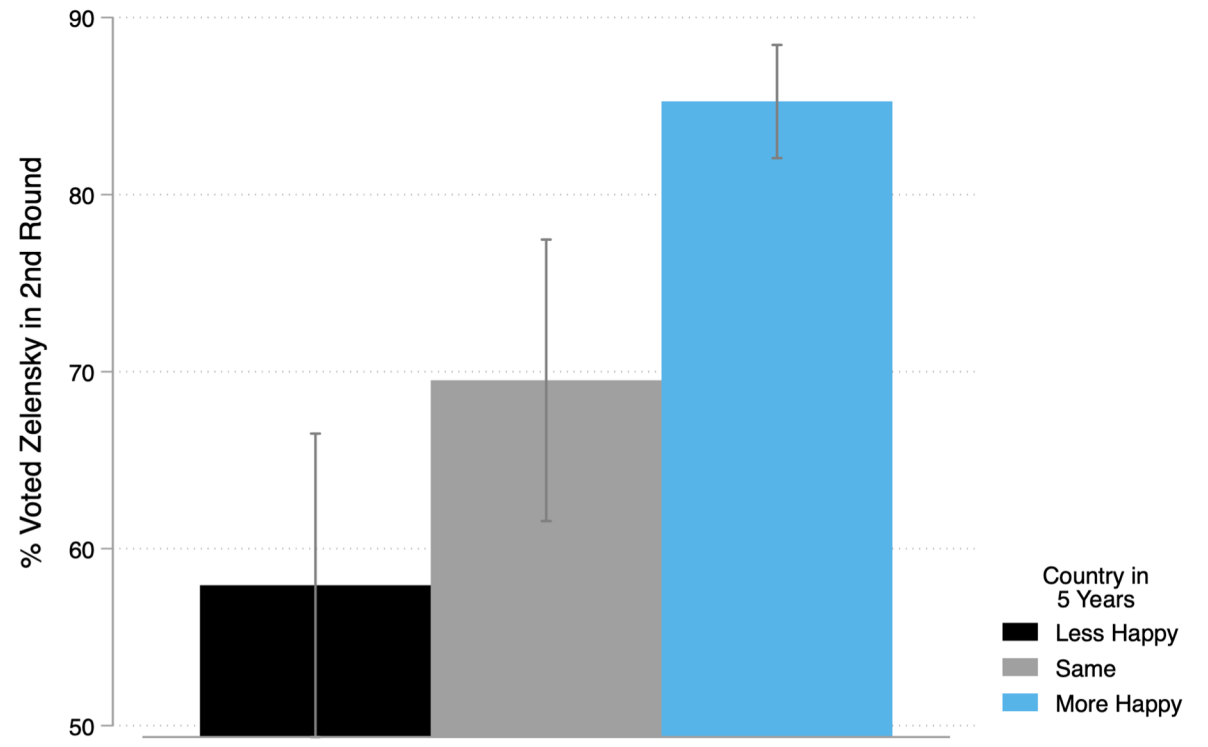
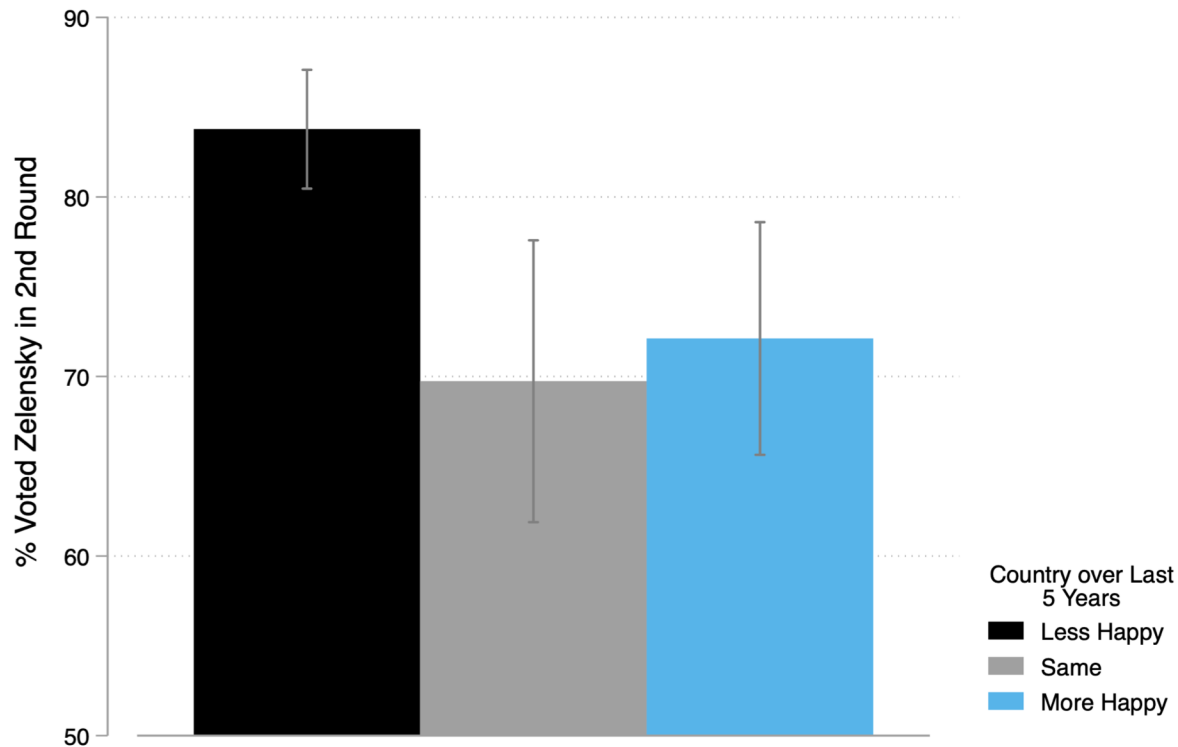
- Zelensky voters (and male ones in particular) are *less satisfied* with their lives overall
- Zelensky voters more likely to feel the country has become less happy over the past 5 years
- Expectations are very high: Zelensky voters are much more optimistic about the happiness of the country in the next 5 years



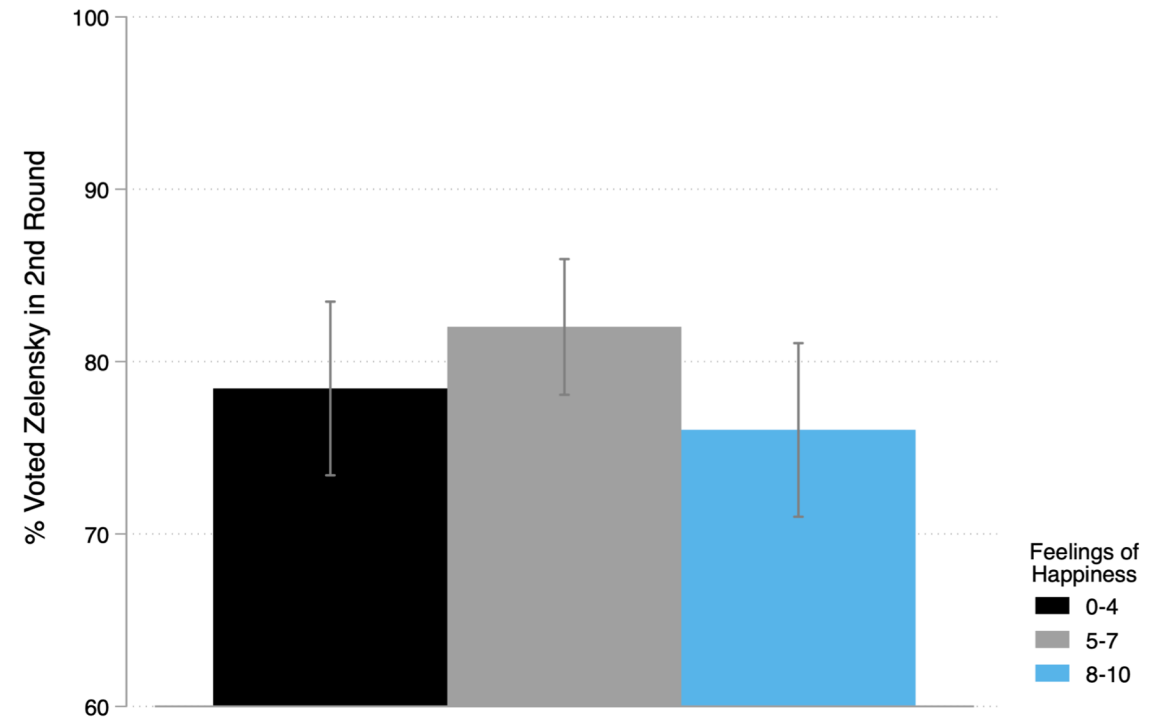
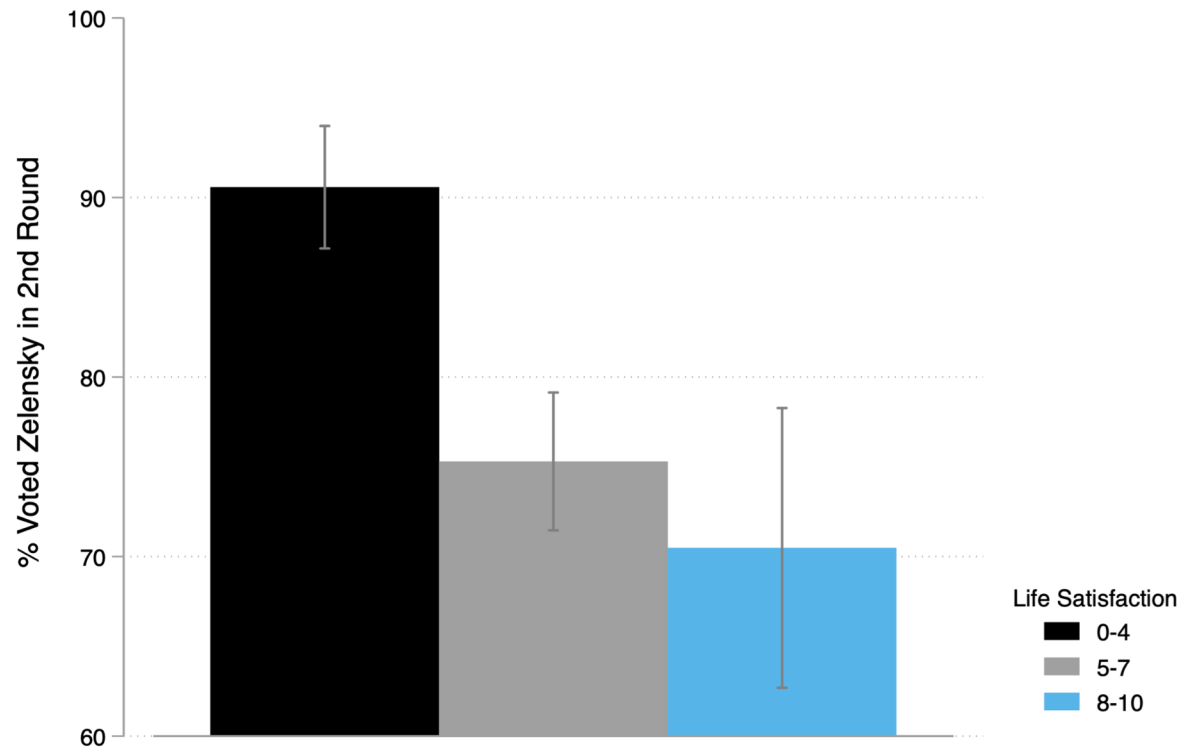
# ZELENSKY VOTERS MORE LIKELY TO BE IN THE POPULIST COHORT



# ZELENSKY WAS VOTED IN BY PEOPLE WHO FEEL THE COUNTRY HAS GOT LESS HAPPY, BUT WHO ARE *OPTIMISTIC* ABOUT THE FUTURE

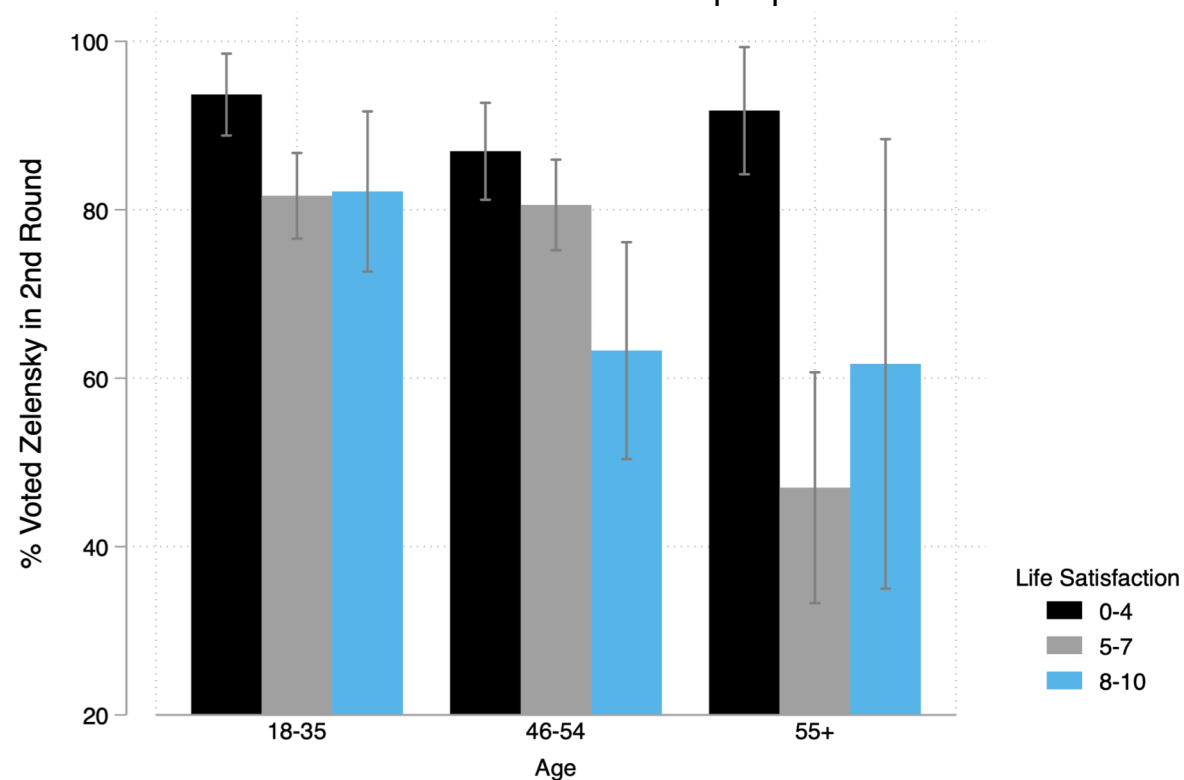
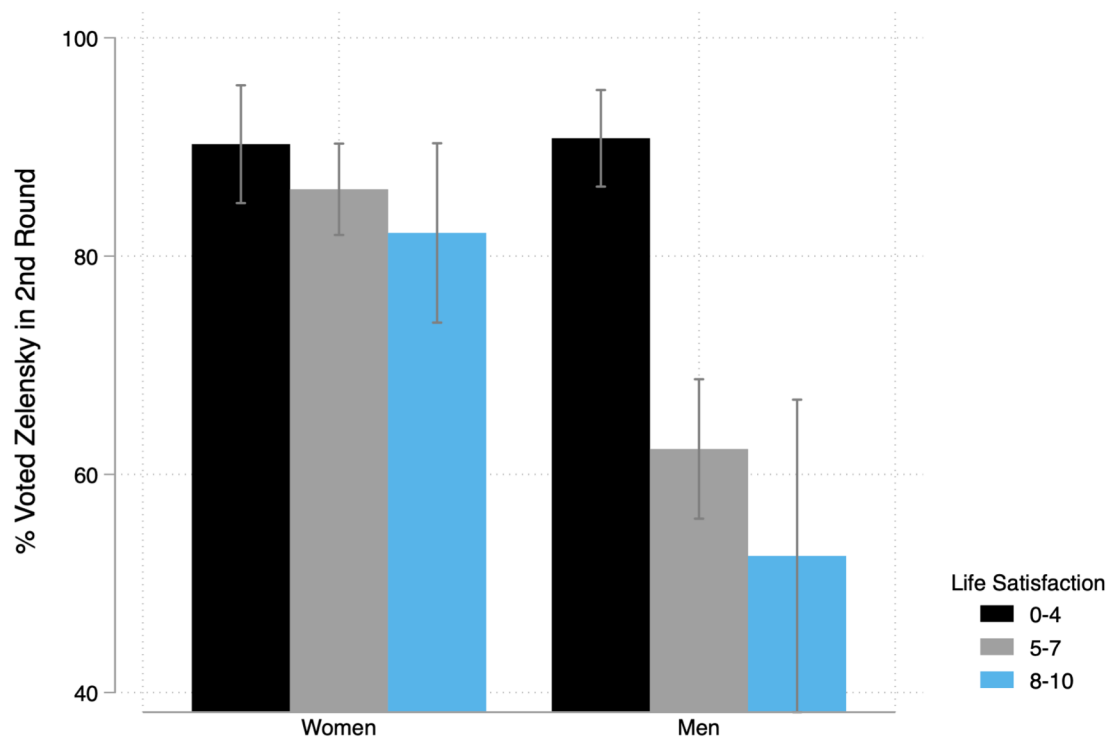


# ZELENSKY VOTERS ARE THEMSELVES *LESS SATISFIED*, BUT *EXPERIENCE* NO LESS HAPPINESS IN THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES

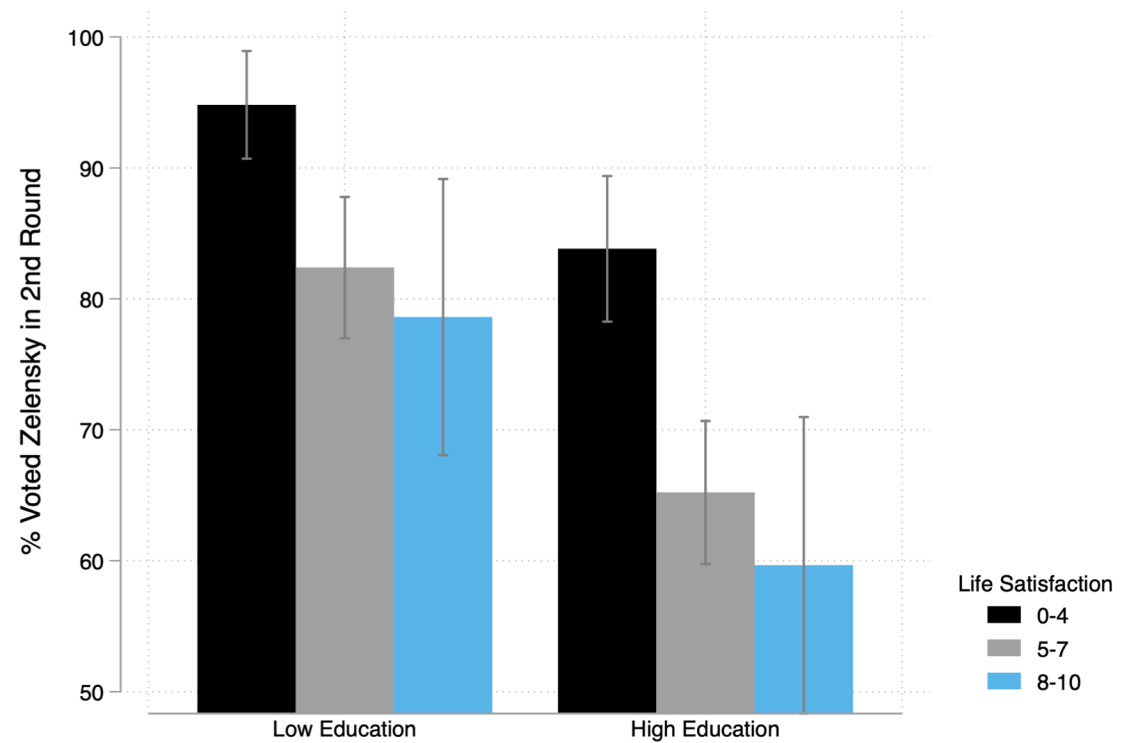
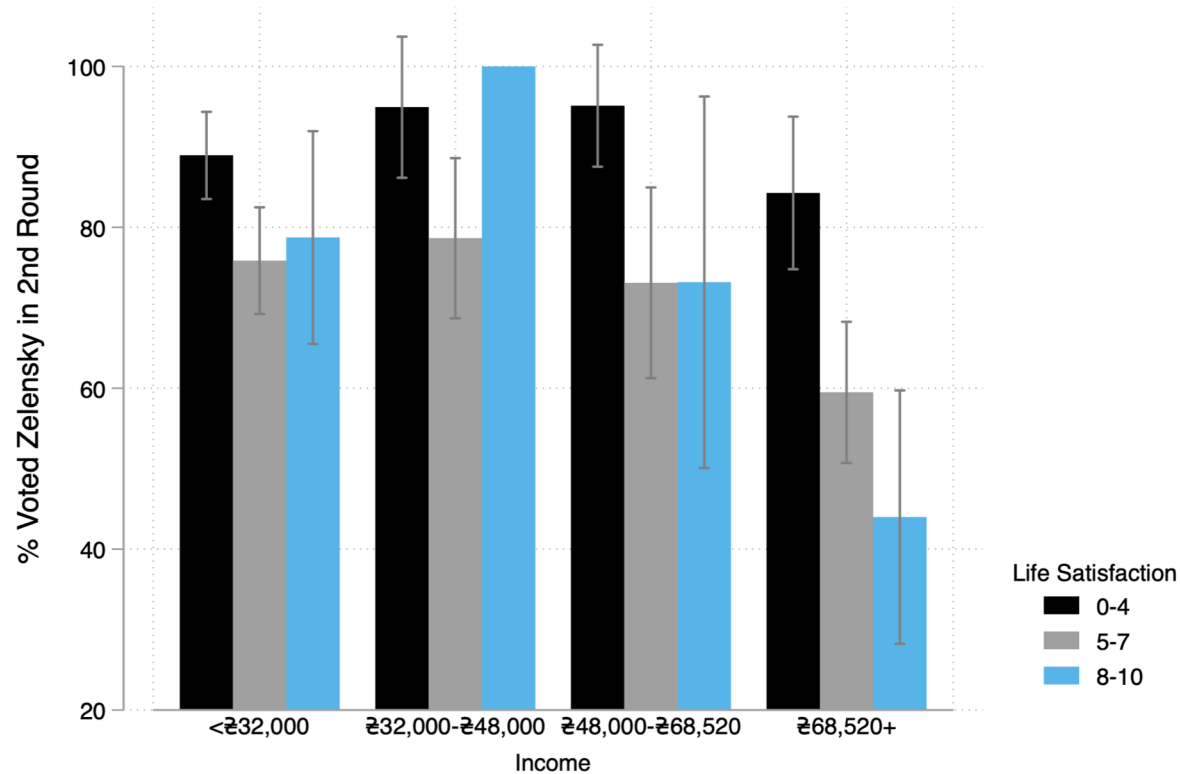


# SECOND ROUND VOTE, BY LIFE SATISFACTION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

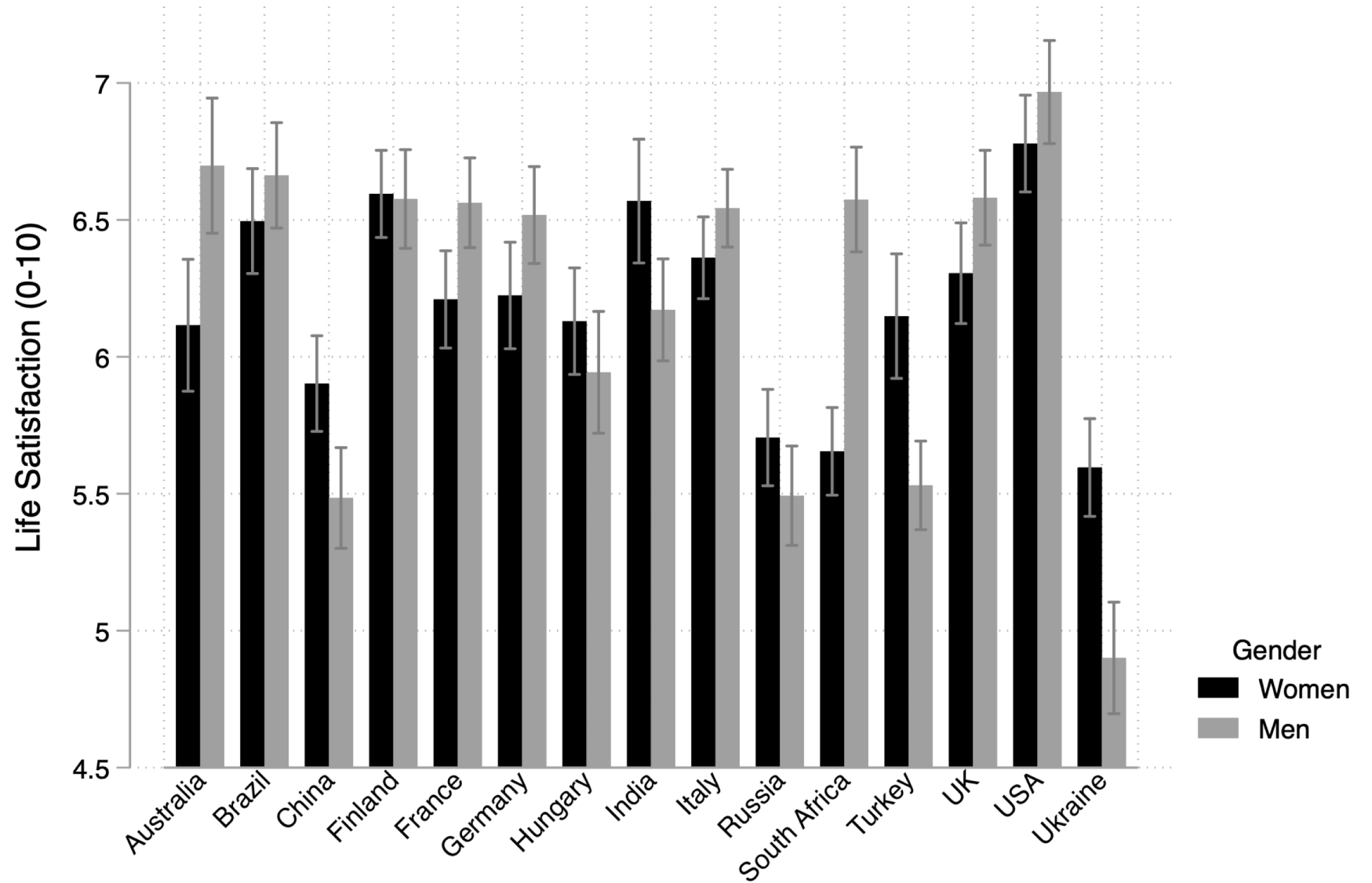
- Zelensky electoral coalition of women, the young, and less financially well off, together with with unhappy men, unhappy older people, and unhappy richer people.



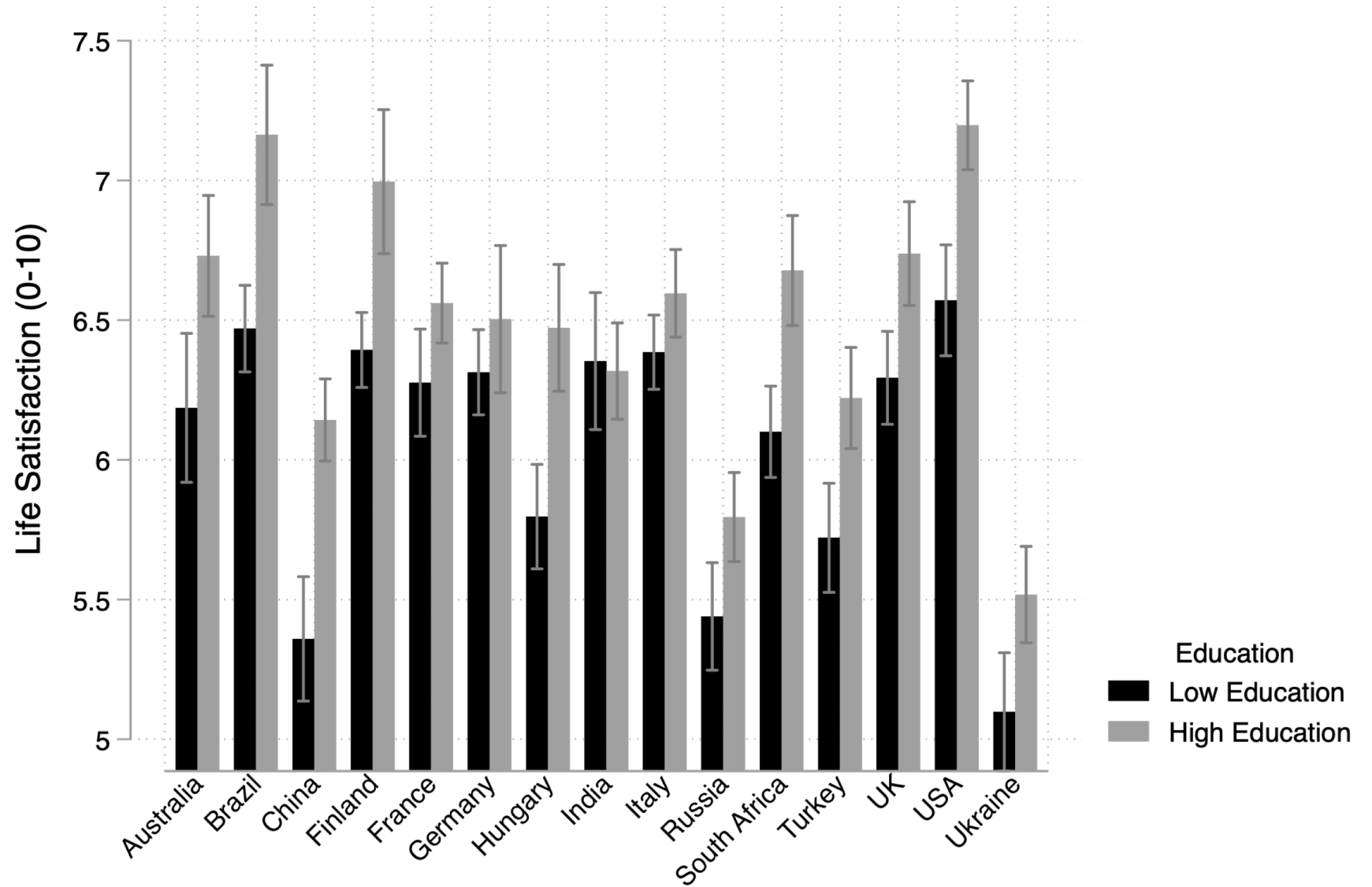
# SECOND ROUND VOTE, BY LIFE SATISFACTION AND SOCIO-ECONOMICS



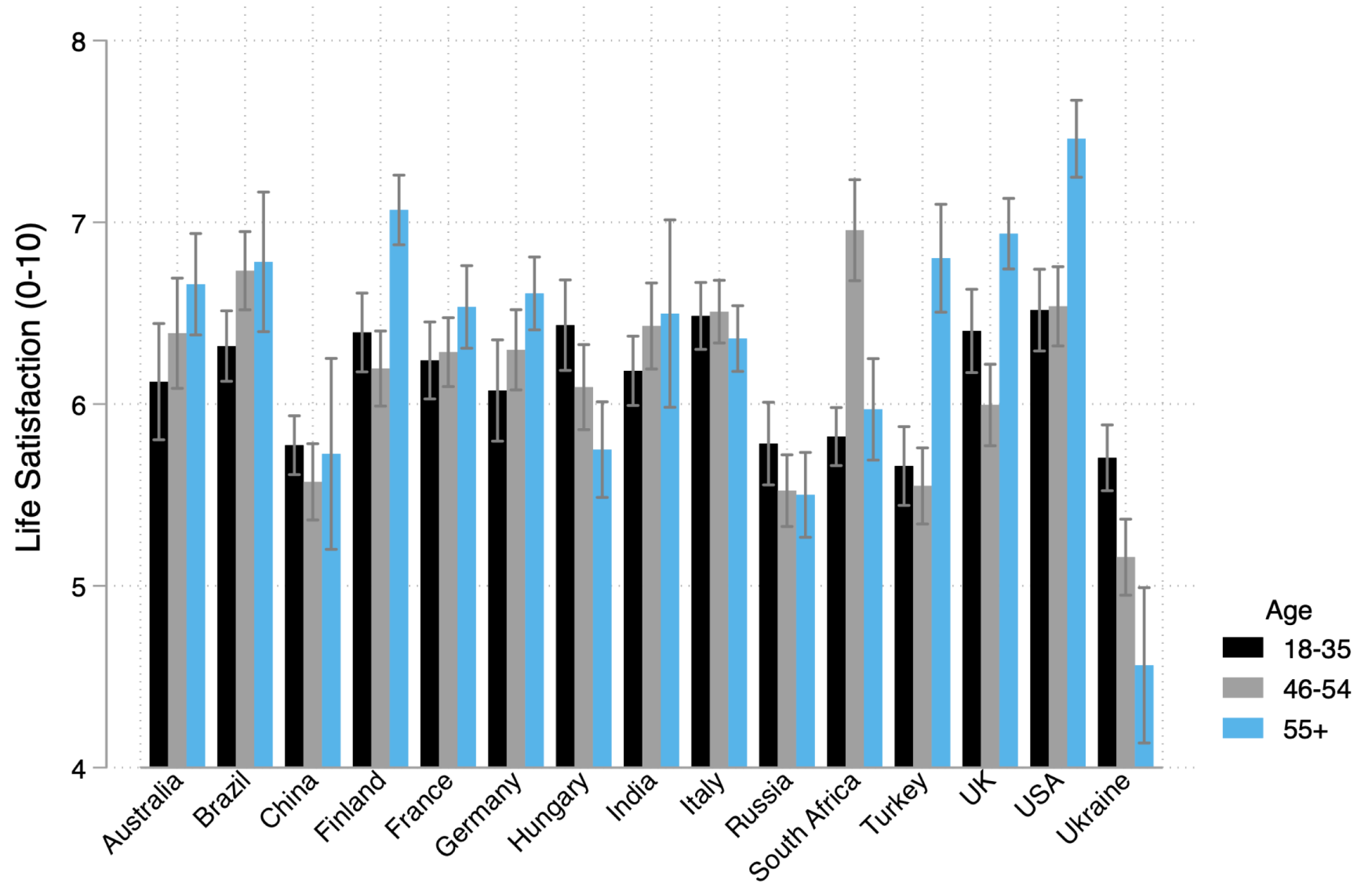
# GENDER AND LIFE SATISFACTION



# EDUCATION AND LIFE SATISFACTION

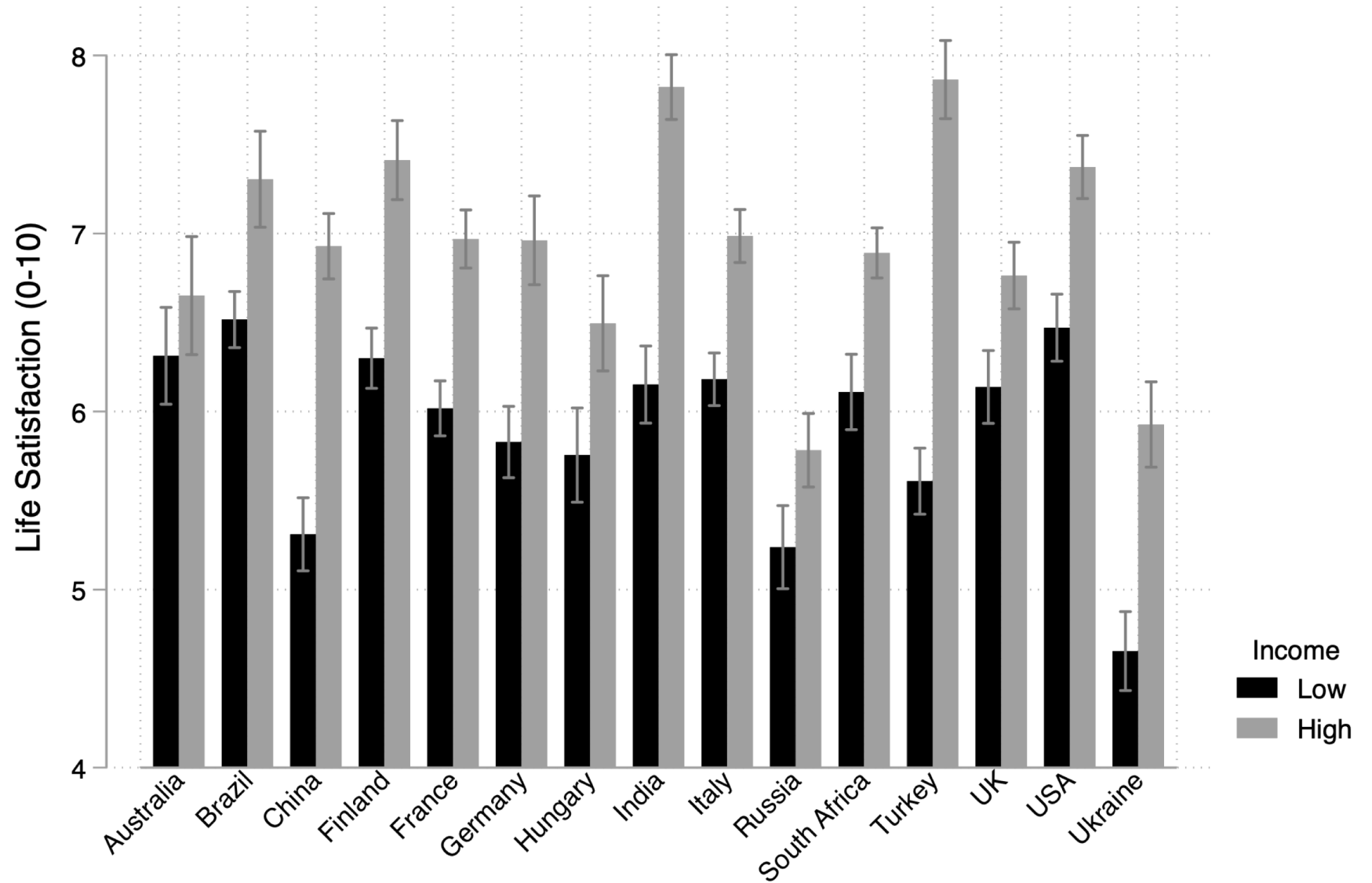


# AGE AND LIFE SATISFACTION

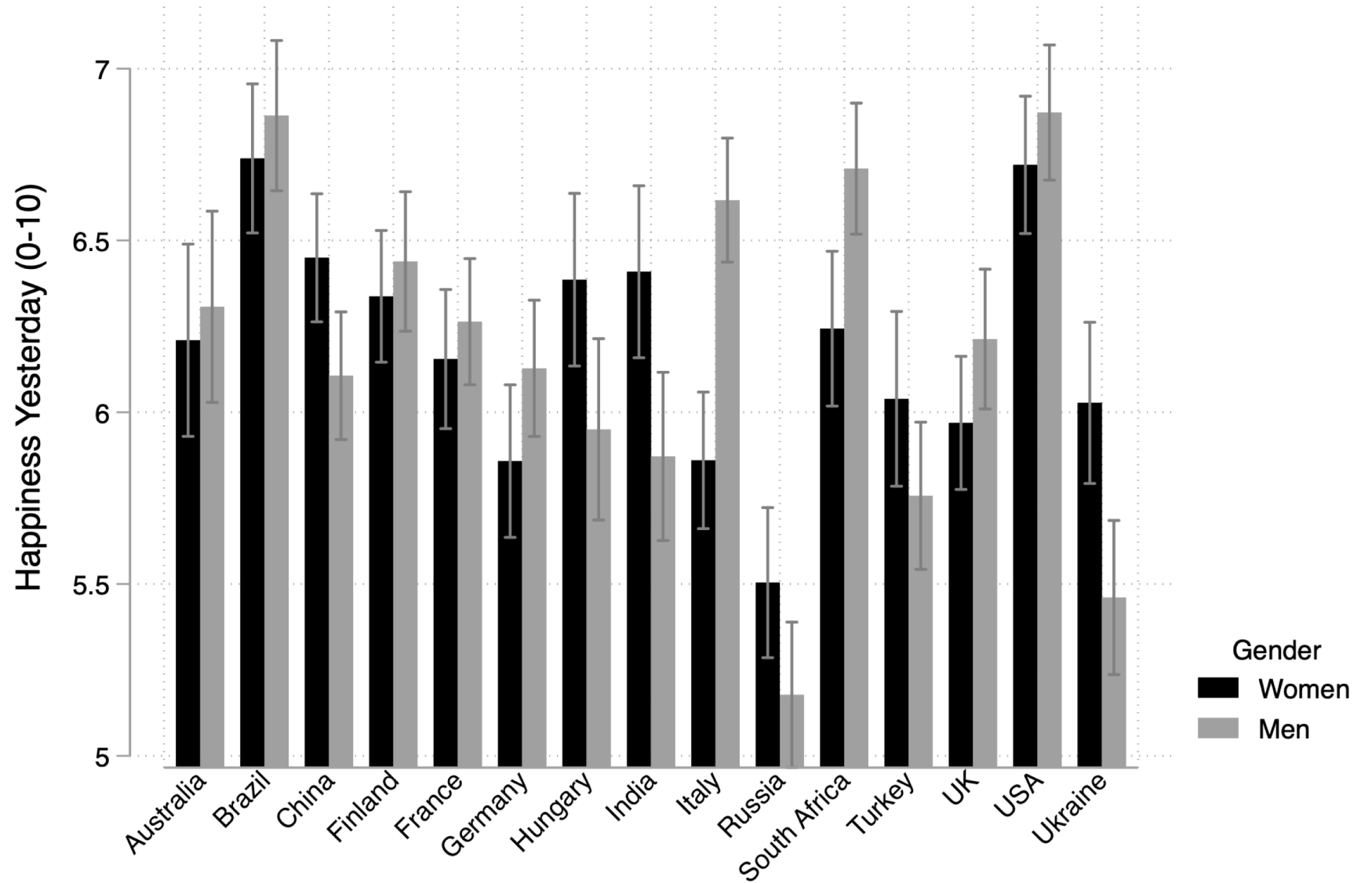




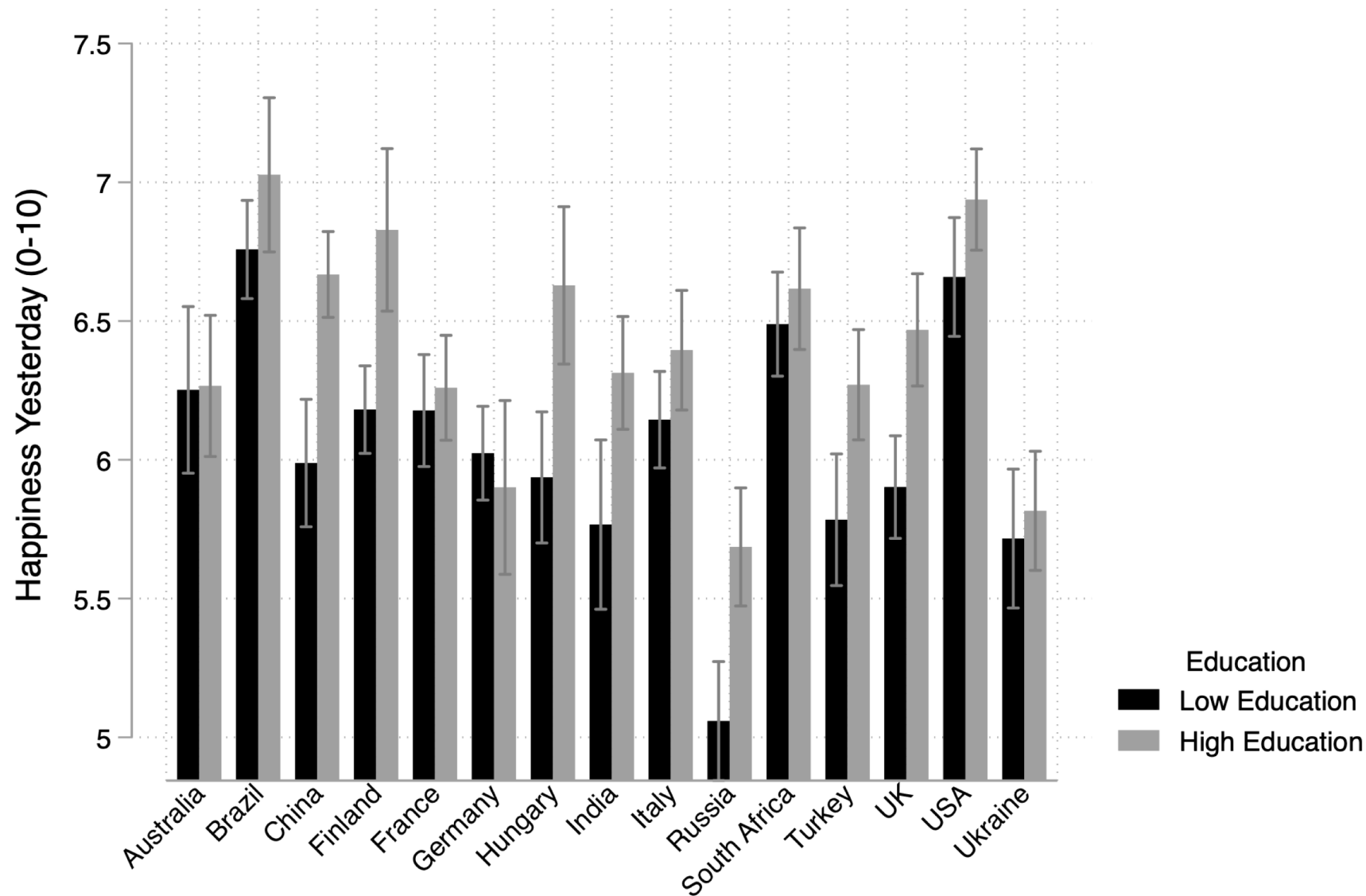
# INCOME AND LIFE SATISFACTION



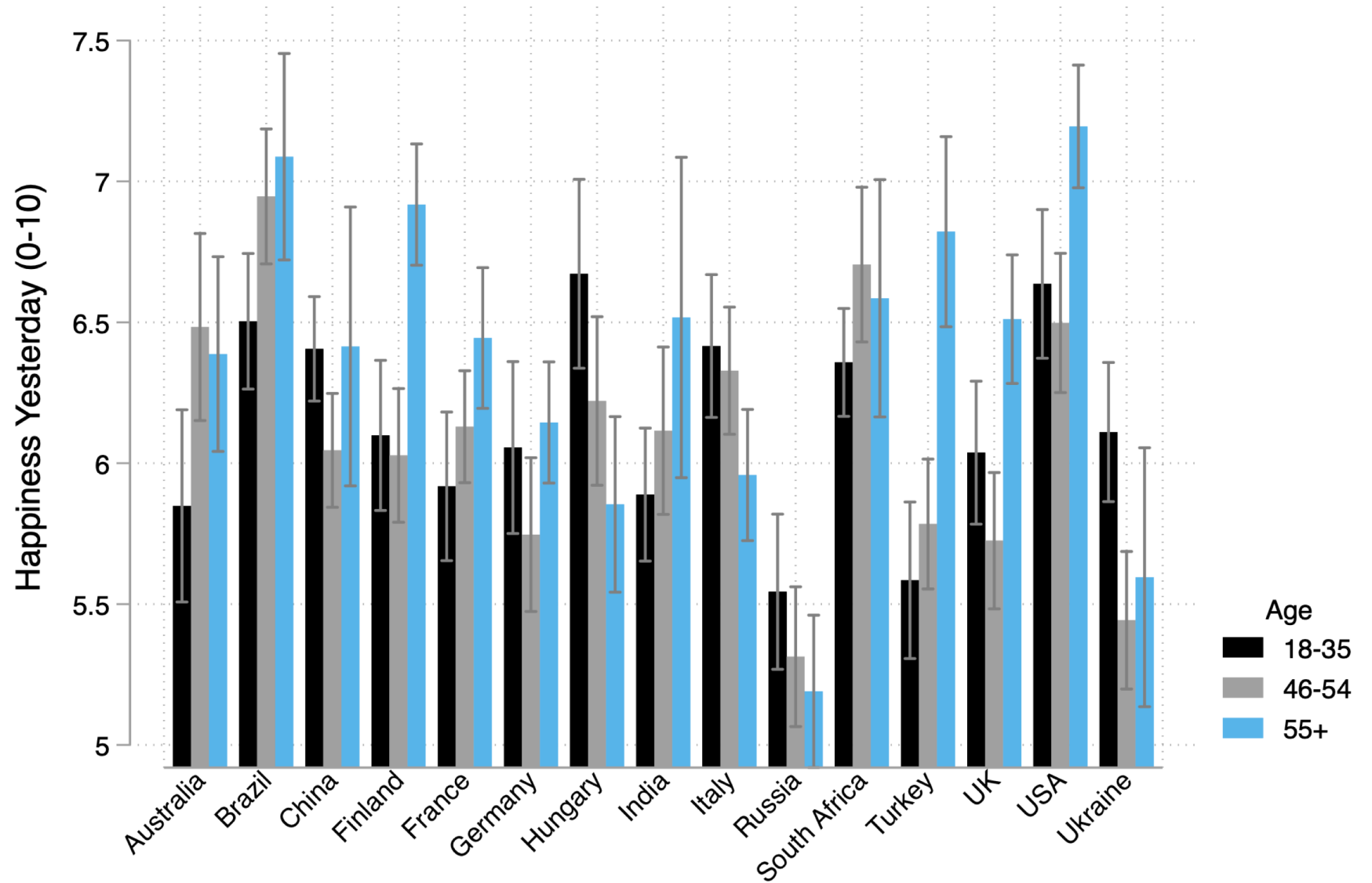
## GENDER AND HAPPINESS YESTERDAY



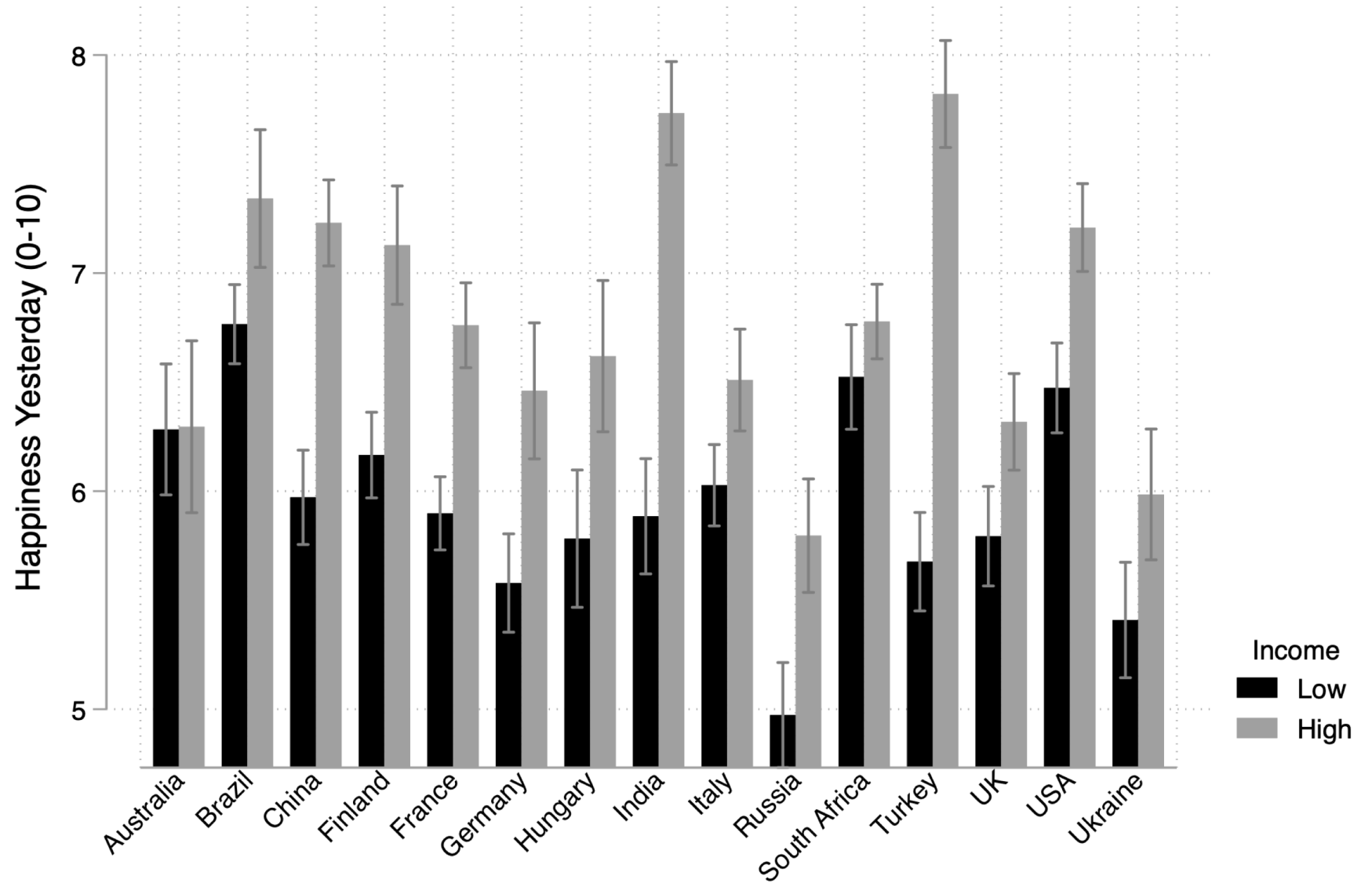
# EDUCATION AND HAPPINESS YESTERDAY



## AGE AND HAPPINESS YESTERDAY



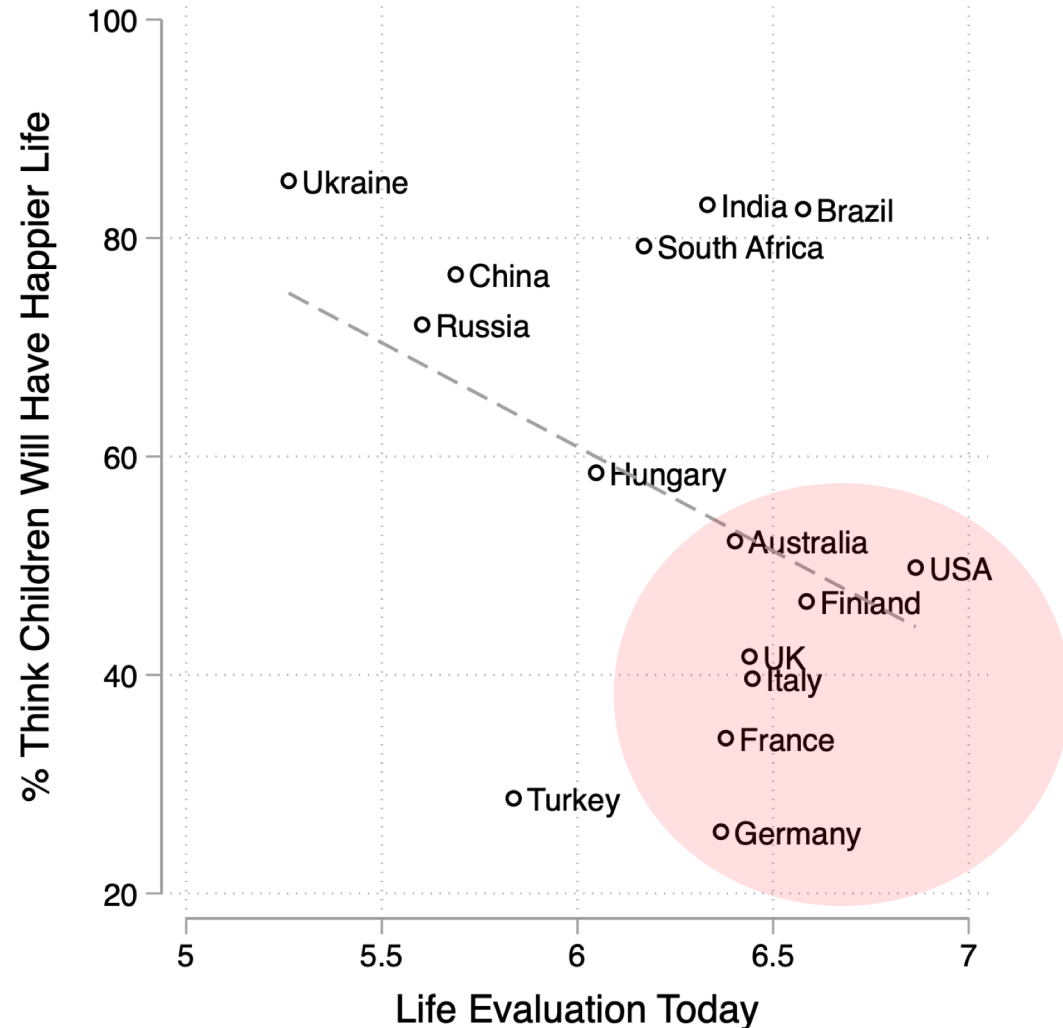
# INCOME AND HAPPINESS YESTERDAY





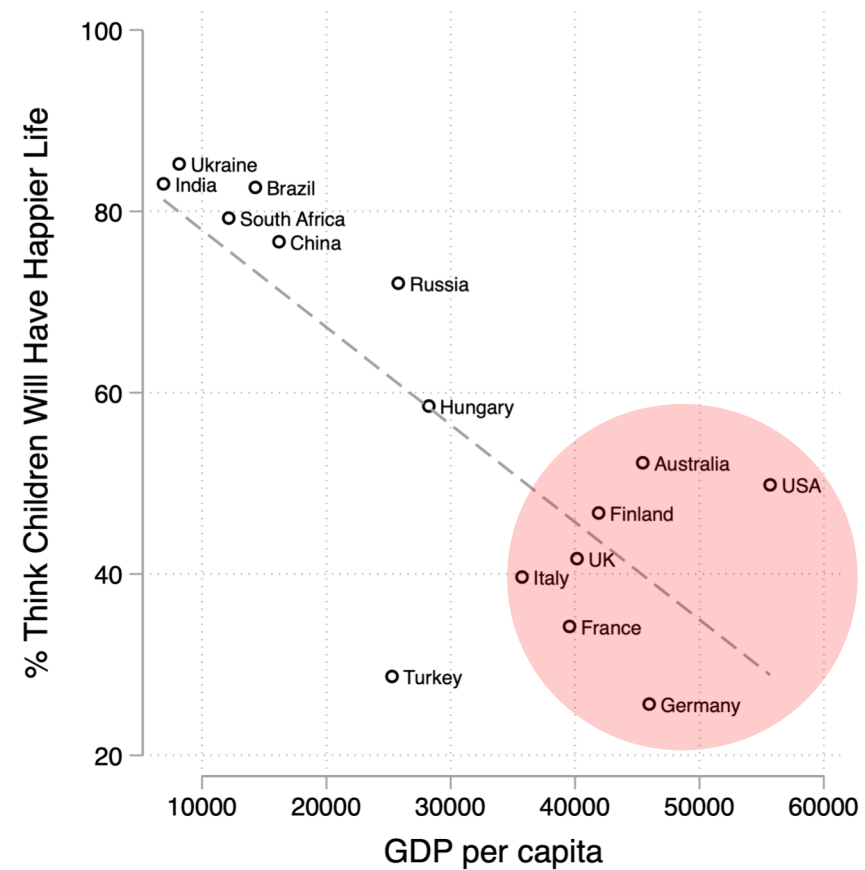
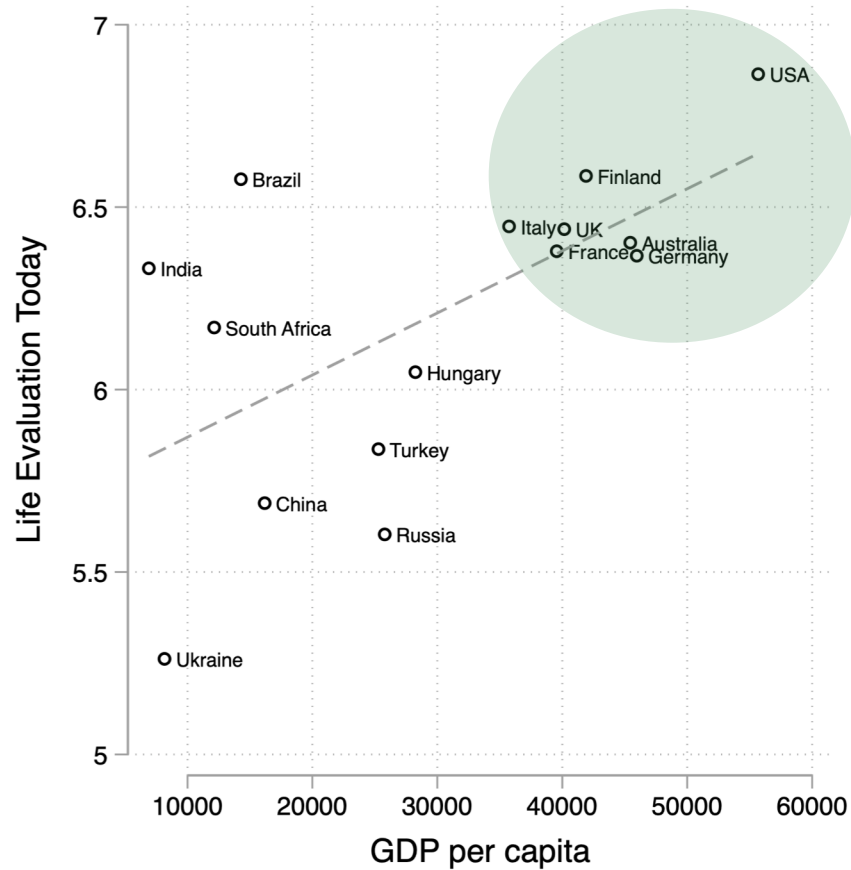
# APPENDIX

# HAPPINESS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS



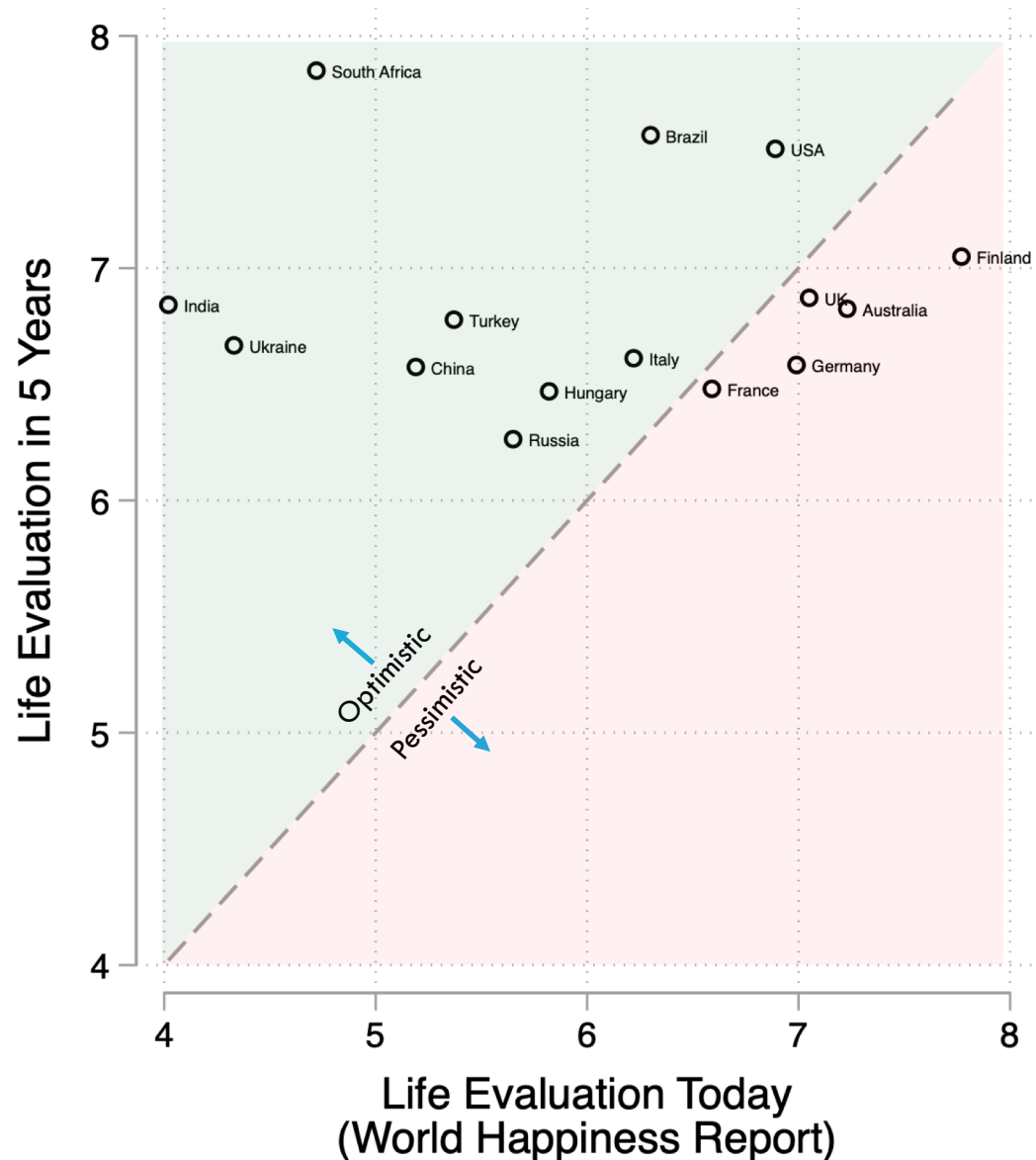
- Graph shows predicted happiness of future generations against national happiness today.
- The Western World is the happiest in terms of their evaluation of life today (as various studies have shown previously, e.g. World Happiness Report).
- But these countries are the least optimistic about the happiness of future generations.

# PARADOX OF WEALTH: HIGHER GDP IS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGHER LIFE EVALUATION TODAY, BUT LOWER OPTIMISM ABOUT FUTURE GENERATIONS' HAPPINESS





# LIFE TODAY VERSUS IN 5 YEARS' TIME

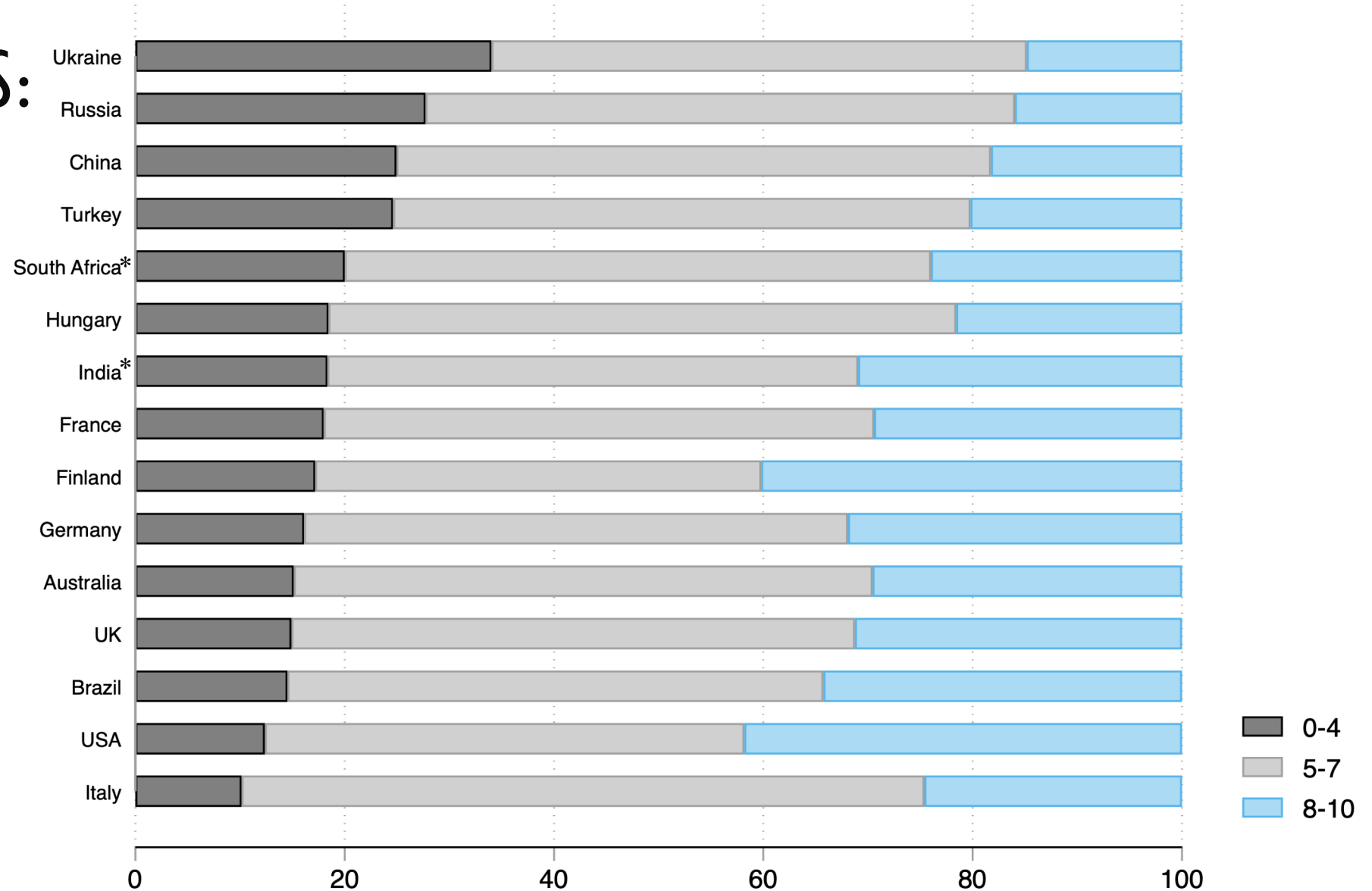


- Graph plots future life evaluation from the GHPA survey against life evaluation today from the World Happiness Report.
- 45 degree line added, to divide nations between pessimistic and optimistic
- Western European countries are least optimistic about life in 5 years' time

# (UN)HAPPINESS:

## UKRAINE IS THE UNHAPPIEST COUNTRY IN THE GHPA SURVEY

Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?



\* Sample representative of online population only