

What are the benefits of volunteering for volunteers?

5th SHARE User Conference
November 13, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg



The project

- Impact of the Third Sector as Social Innovation
- Funded by the European Commission
- Coordinated by Universität Heidelberg (Prof. Helmut Anheier)
- 9 countries

Our team

- Prof. René Bekkers
- Arjen de Wit
- Dave Verkaik
- Danique Karamat Ali

The questions

- Does volunteering keep you healthy?
 - (reviews by Brown & Brown 2015, Bekkers, Konrath & Smith, 2014, Jenkinson et al. 2013)
- Does volunteering keep you happy?
 - (Aknin et al. 2013, Meier & Stutzer 2008)
- Does volunteering prevent you from unemployment? And prevent you from retiring?
 - (Paine et al. 2013, Strauss 2009)

How to estimate the benefits of volunteering?

- Estimates on cross-sectional data includes both selection and causation
- We cannot randomly assign people to be a volunteer or not
- Changes in volunteering and changes in outcome variables

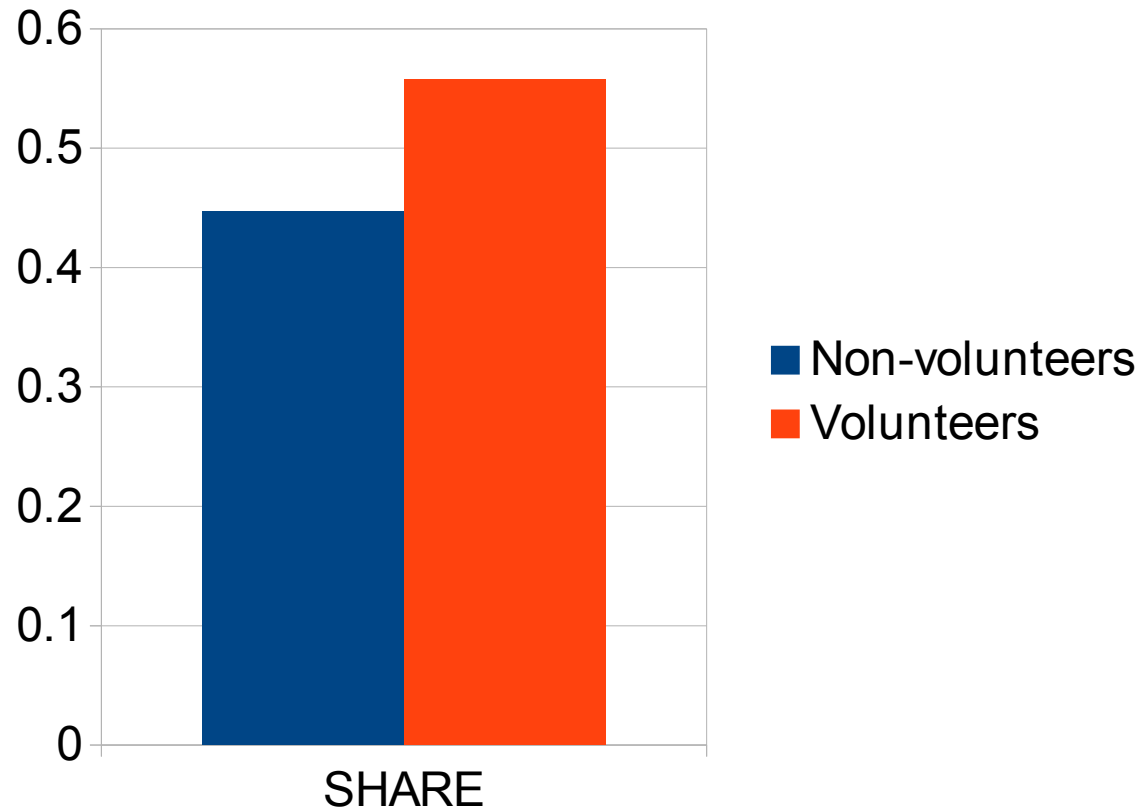
The data

- Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), 2004-2011
- German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), 1984-2011
- Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey (GINPS), 2002-2014
- Longitudinal Aging Survey Amsterdam (LASA), 1993-2006
- Swiss Household Panel (SHP), 1999-2013
- British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) / Understanding Society (US), 1996-2012

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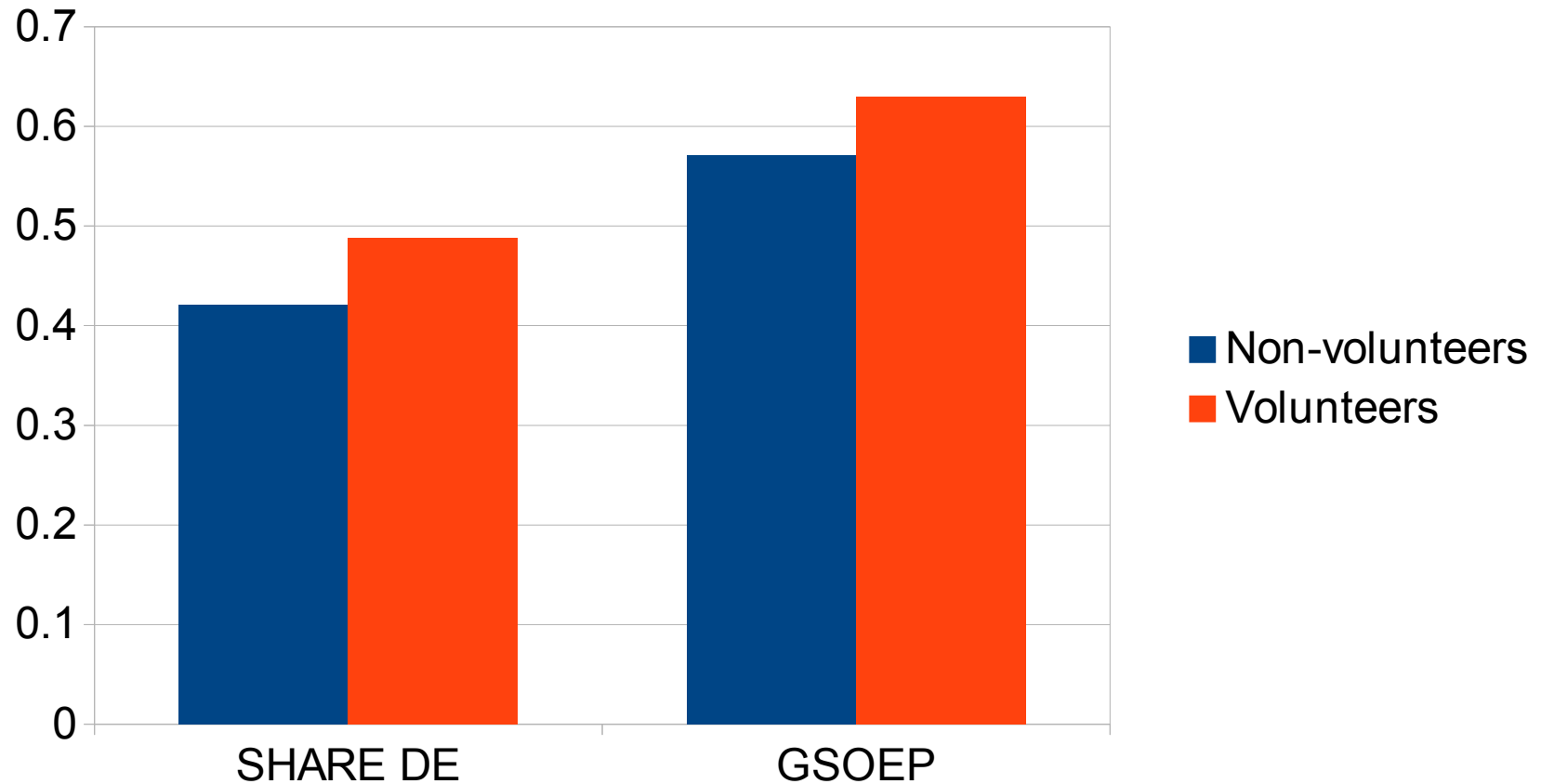
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- Today's special: only people aged 50+ in all datasets

Volunteers are healthier



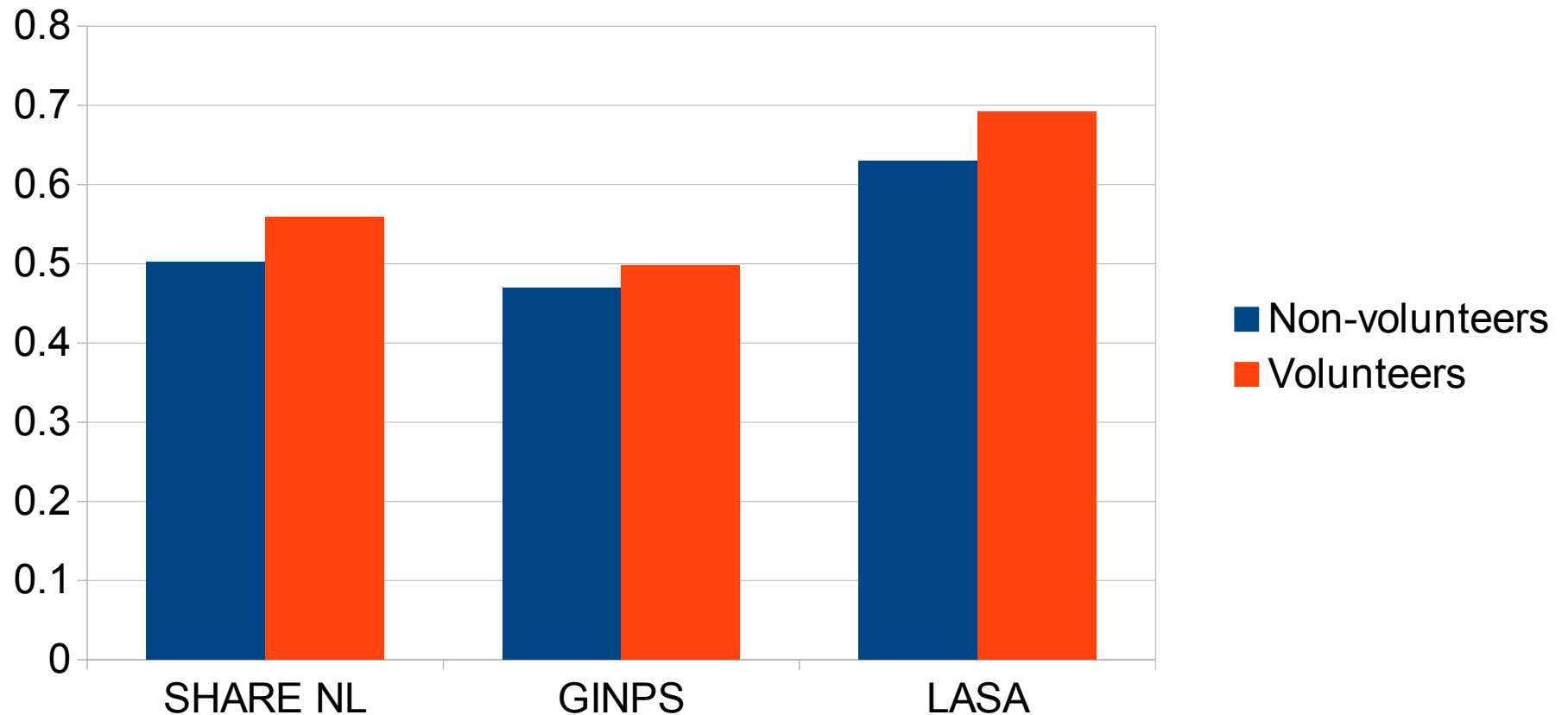
Across Europe...

Volunteers are healthier



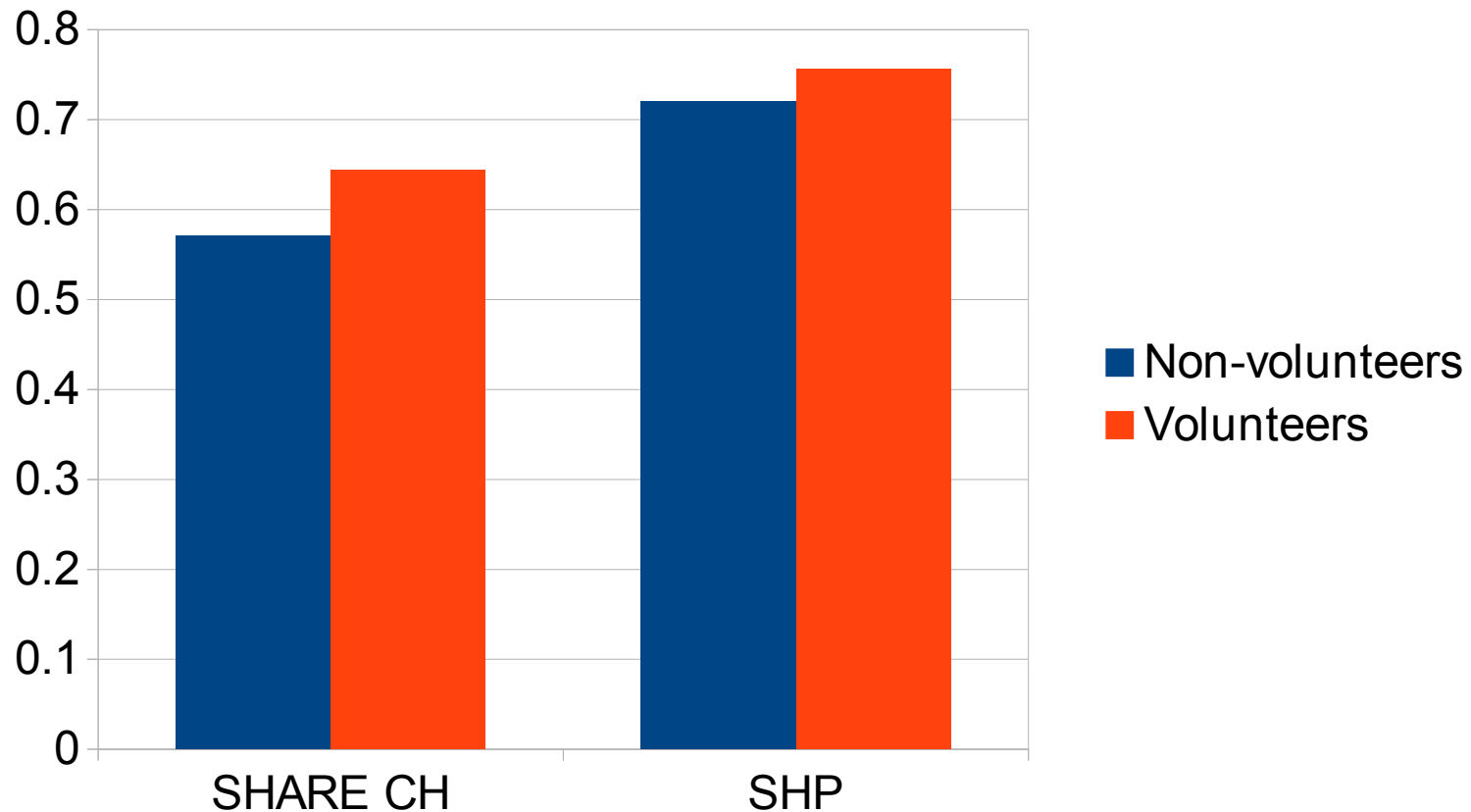
...in Germany...

Volunteers are healthier



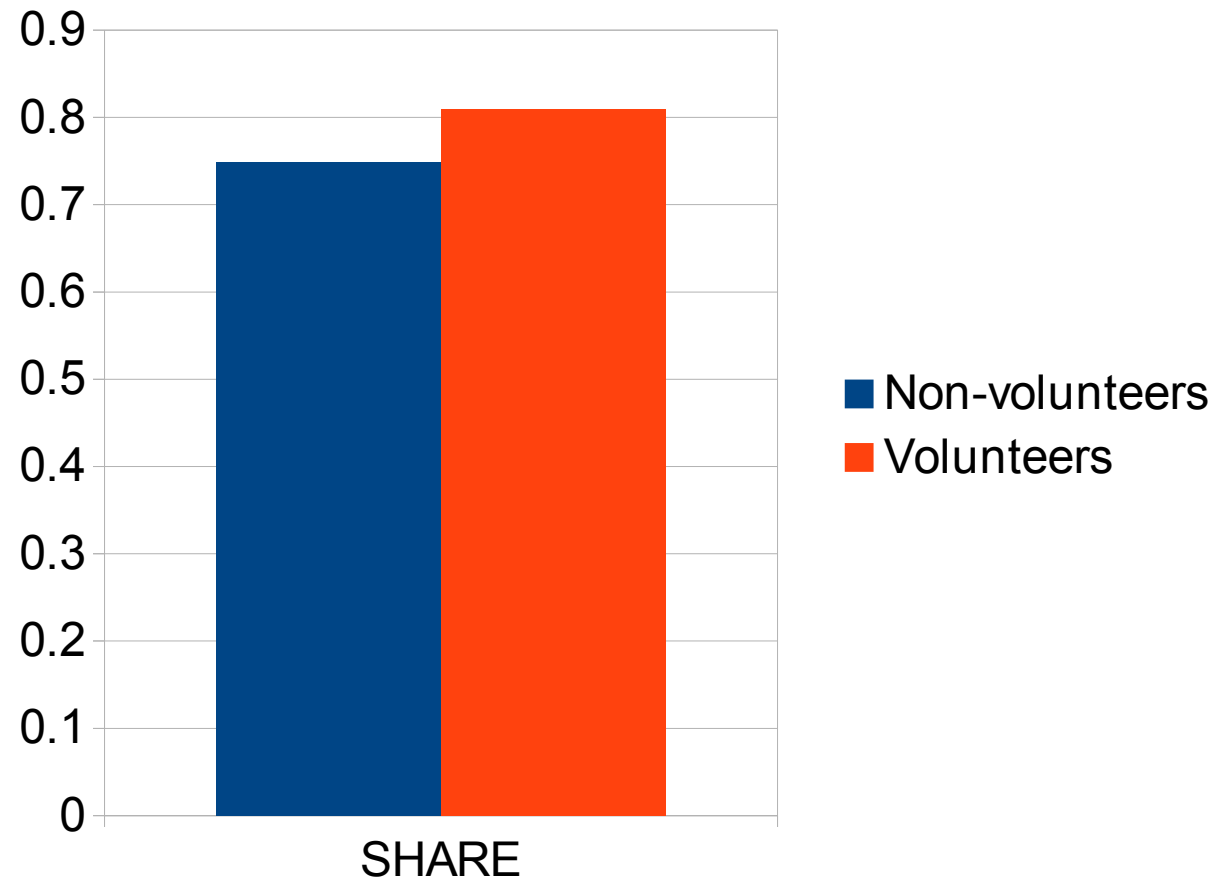
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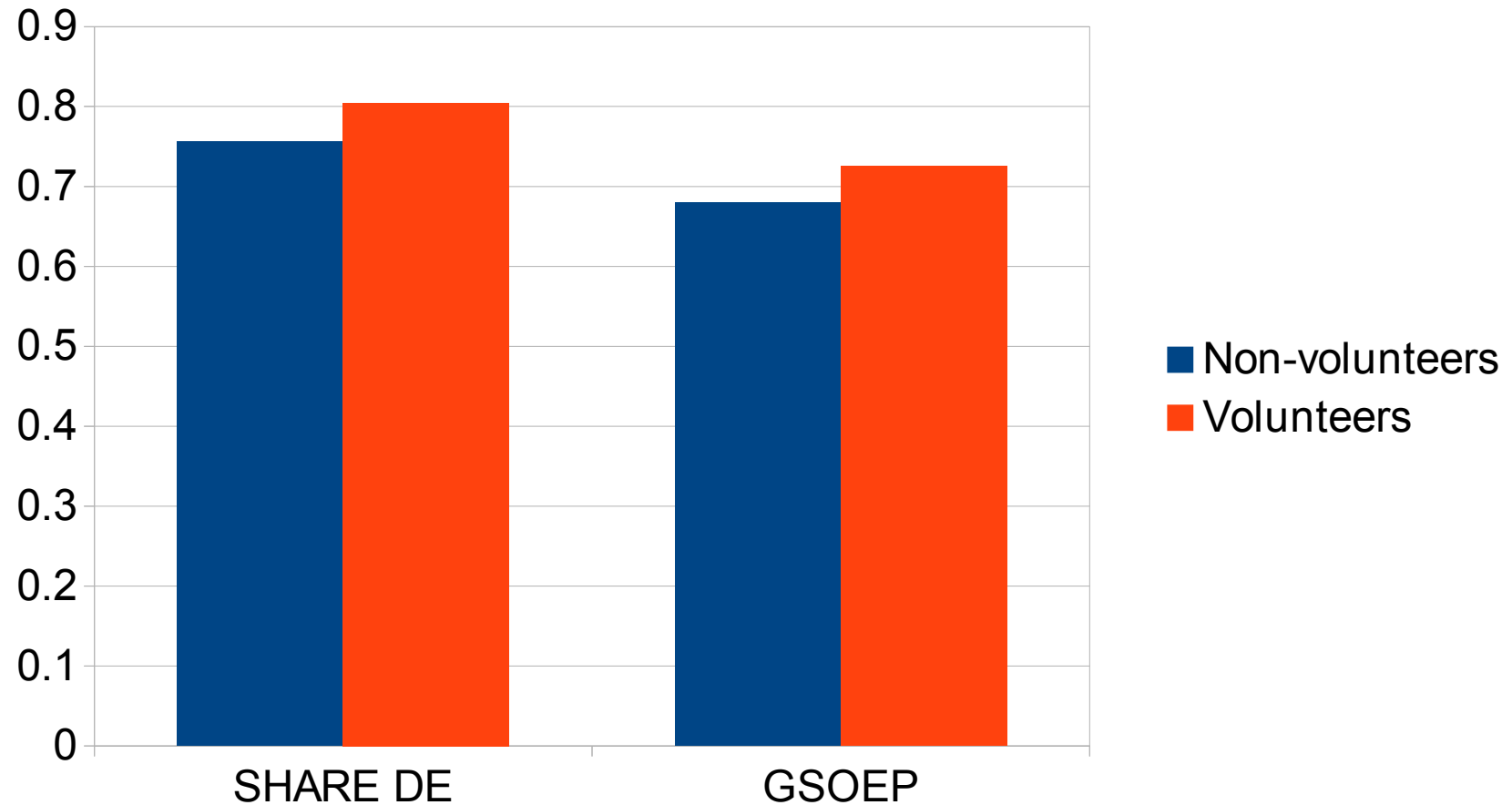
...and in Switzerland.

Volunteers are happier



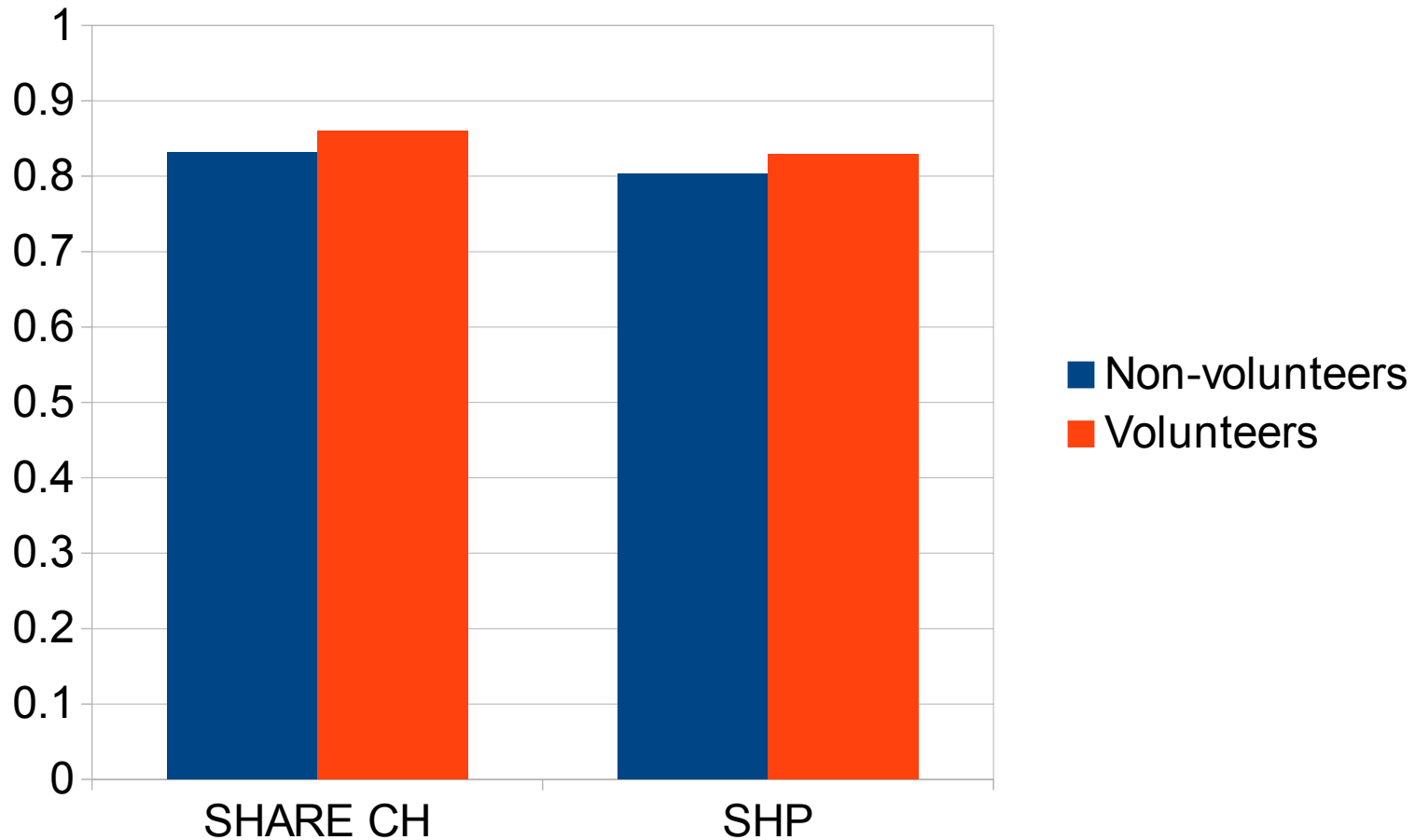
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Volunteers are happier



...in Germany...

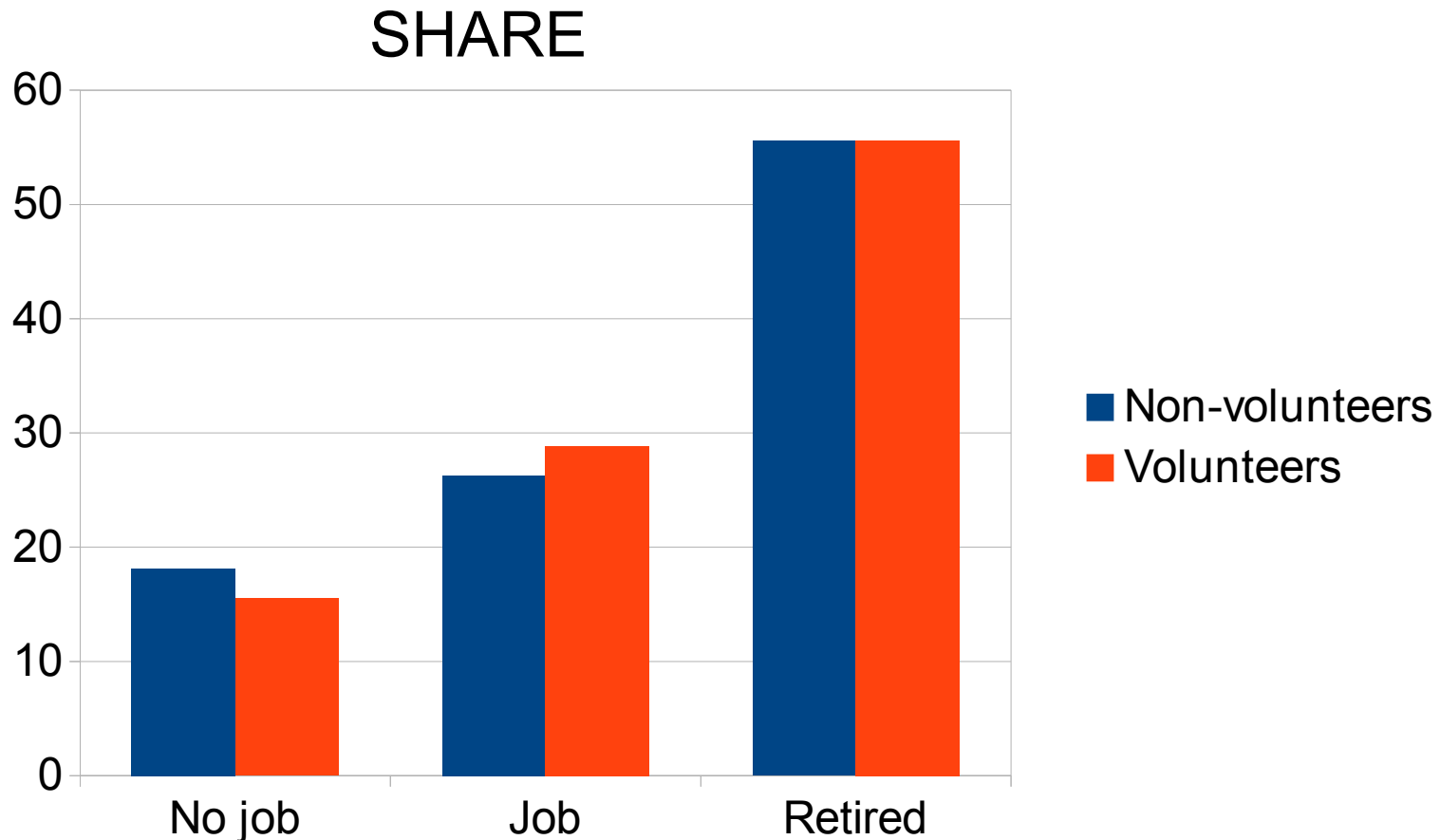
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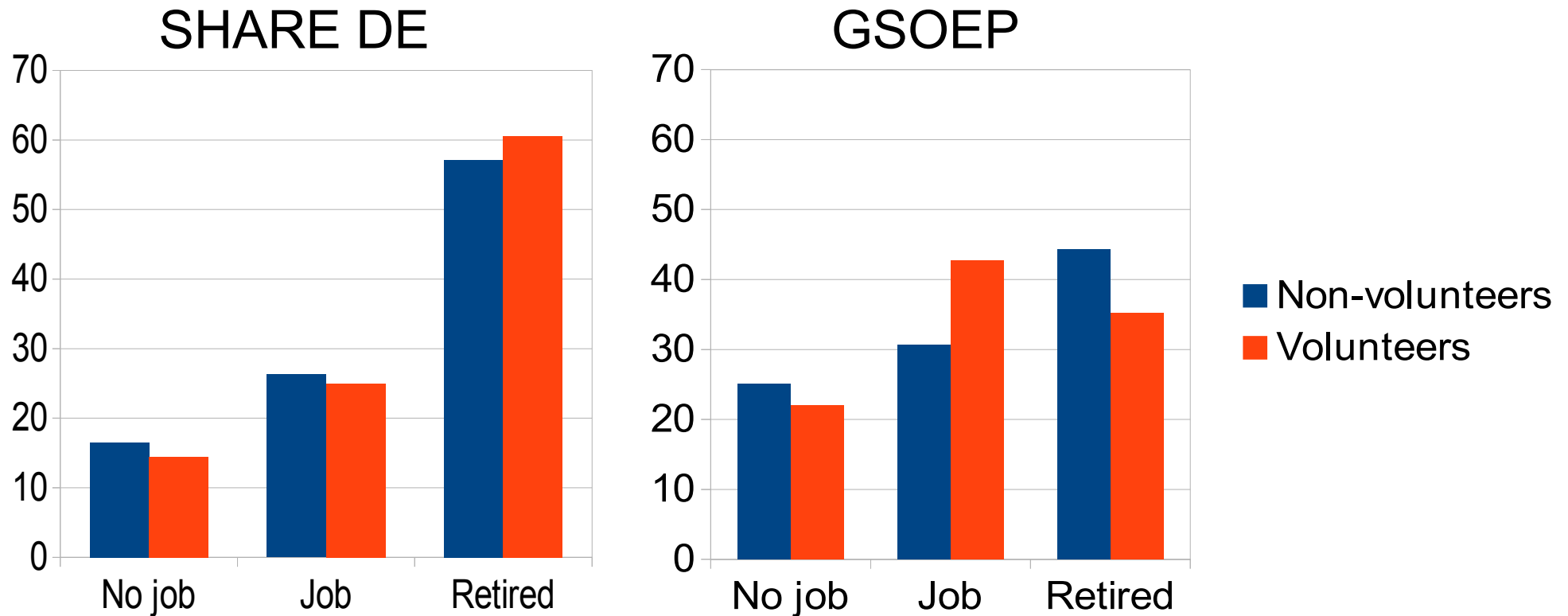
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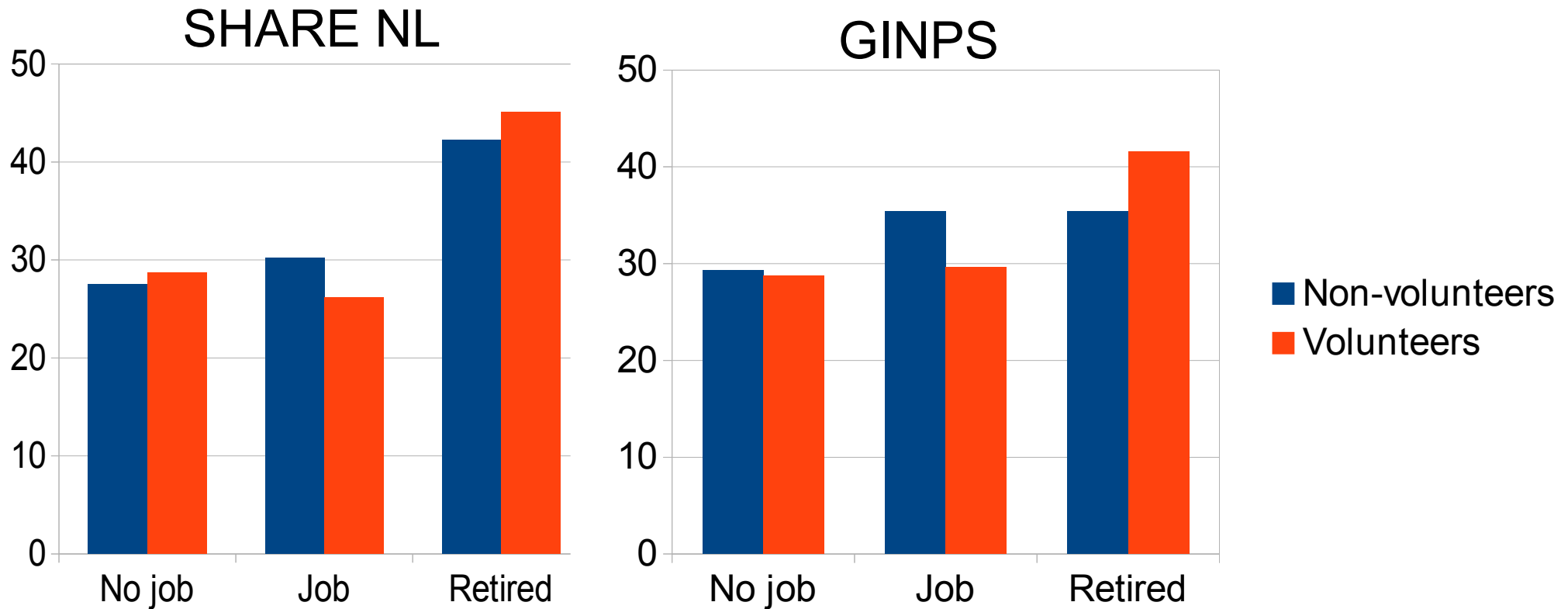
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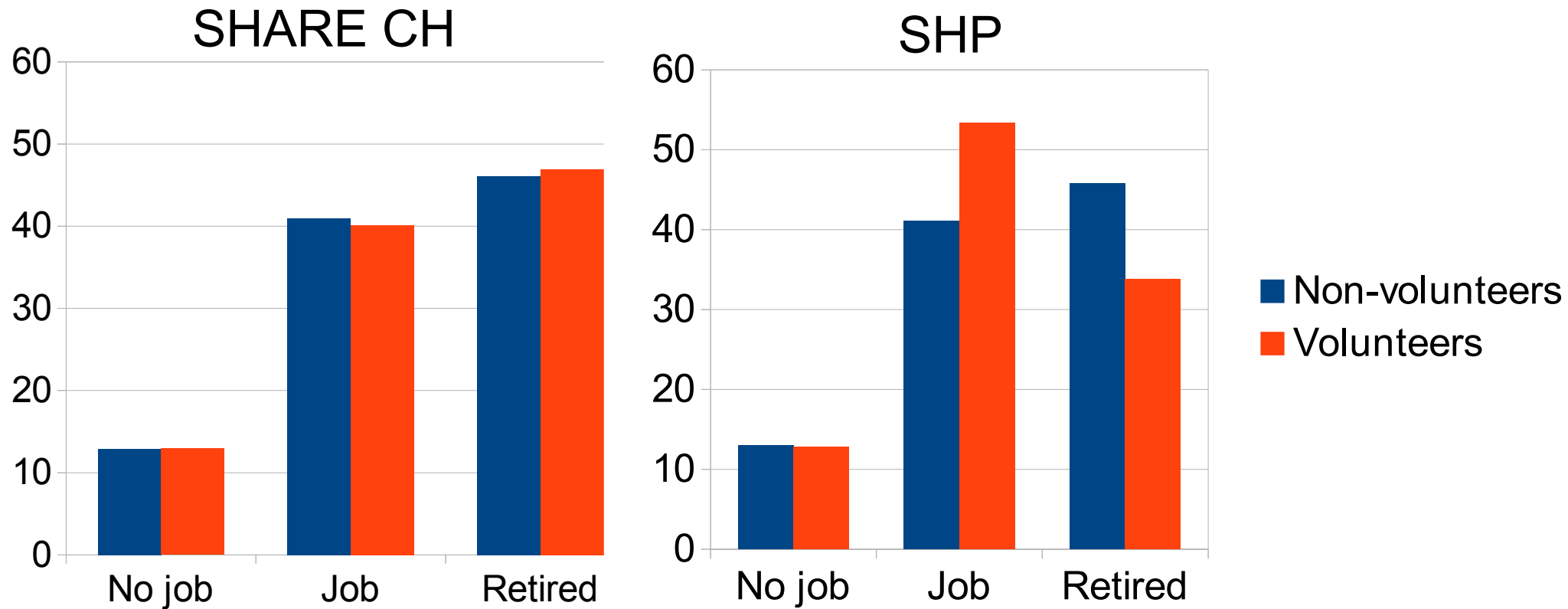
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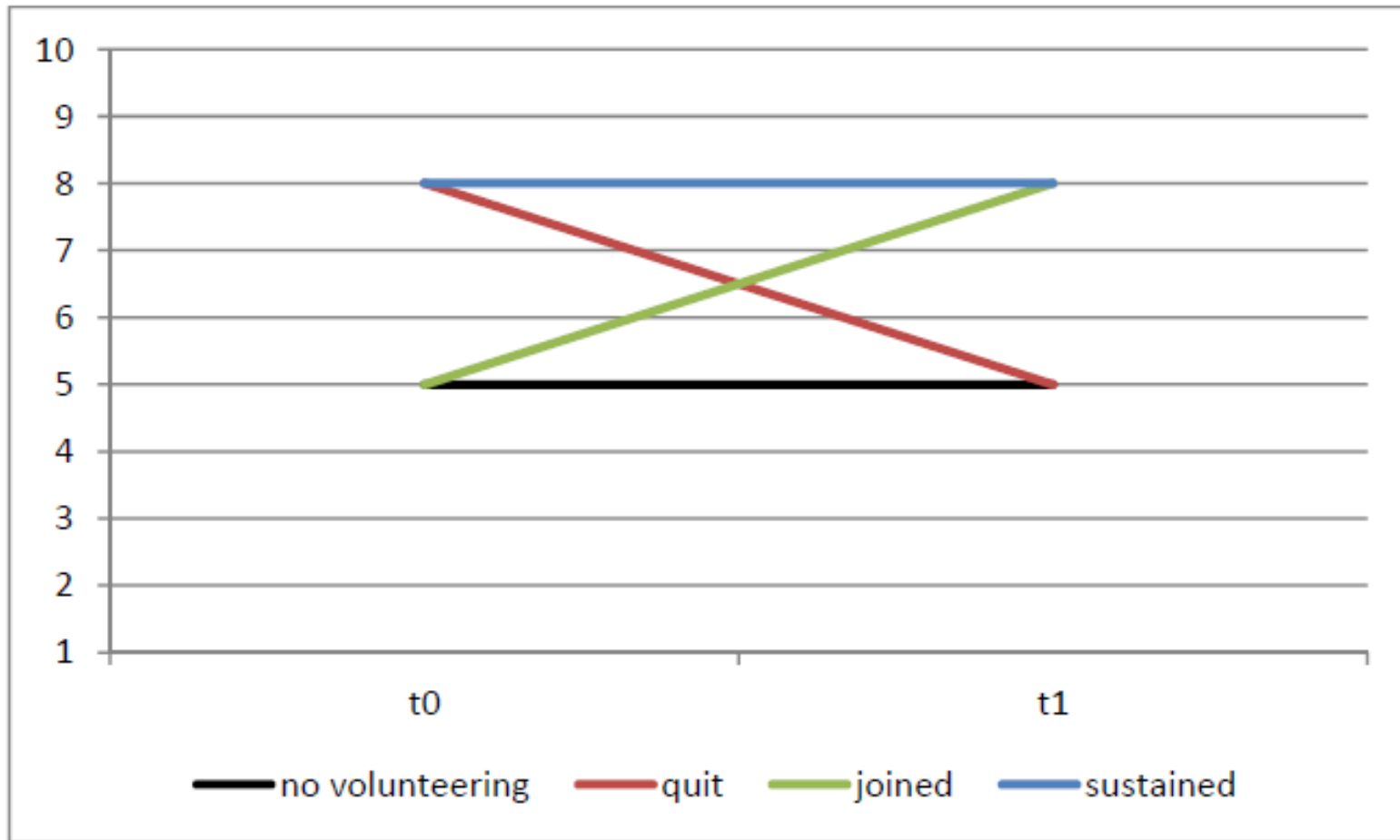
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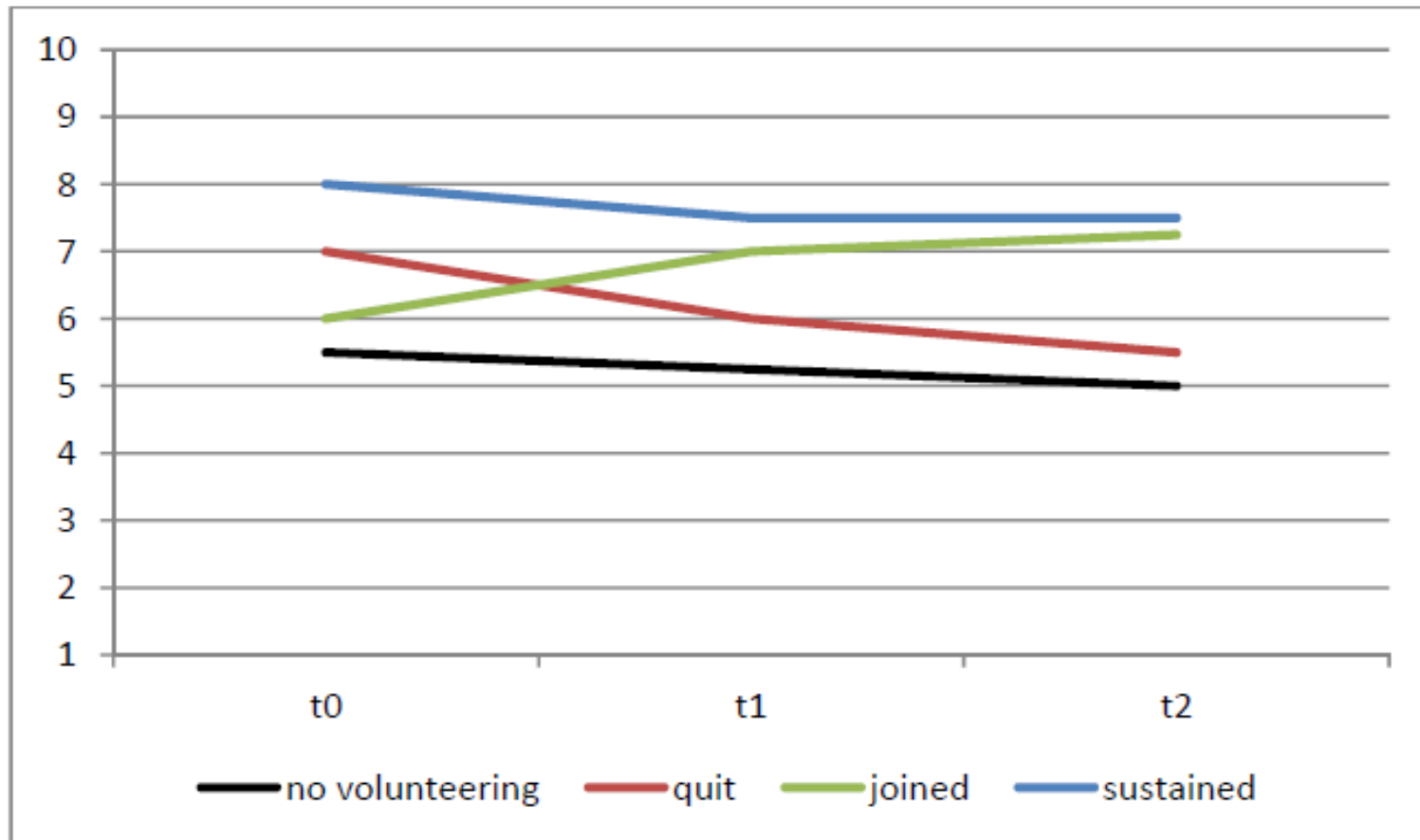
Selection or causation?

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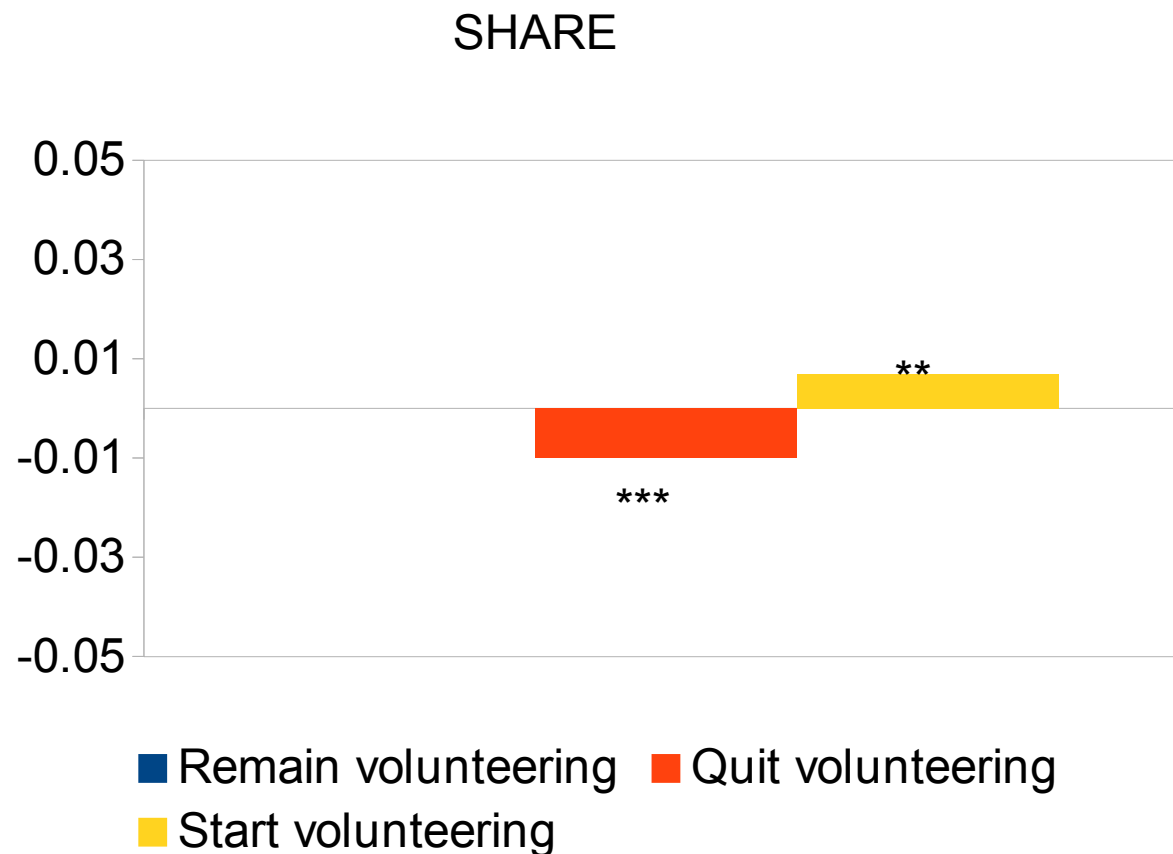
Hypothetical example of the development of well-being as a result of causal influences of volunteering

Selection or causation?



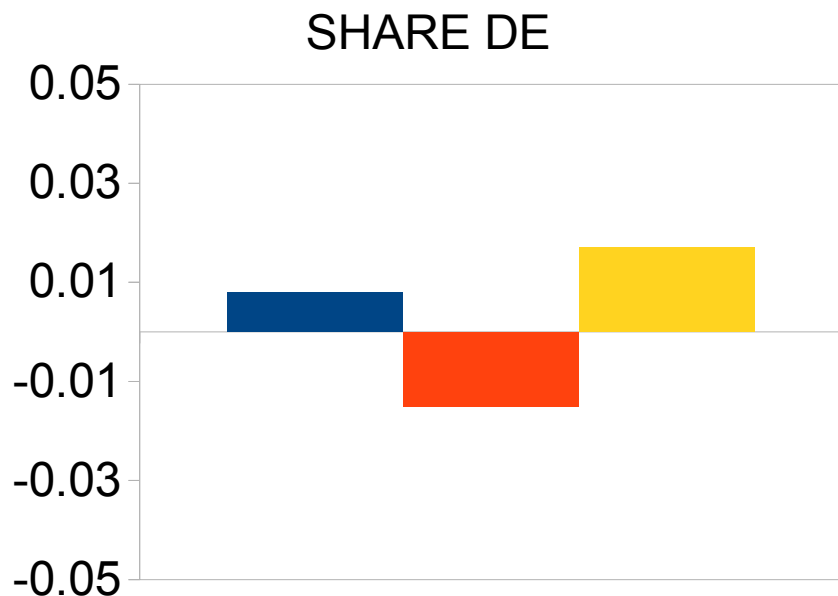
Hypothetical example of the development of well-being as a result of both causative influences of volunteering and selection processes

Changes in self-reported health status



Across Europe...

Changes in self-reported health status



■ Remain volunteering
■ Quit volunteering
■ Start volunteering

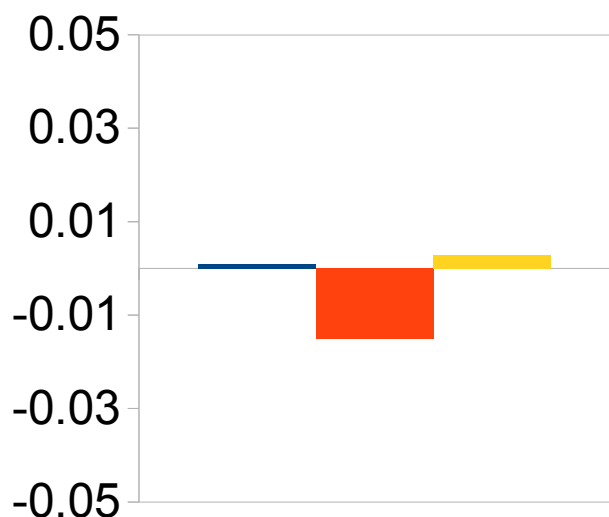


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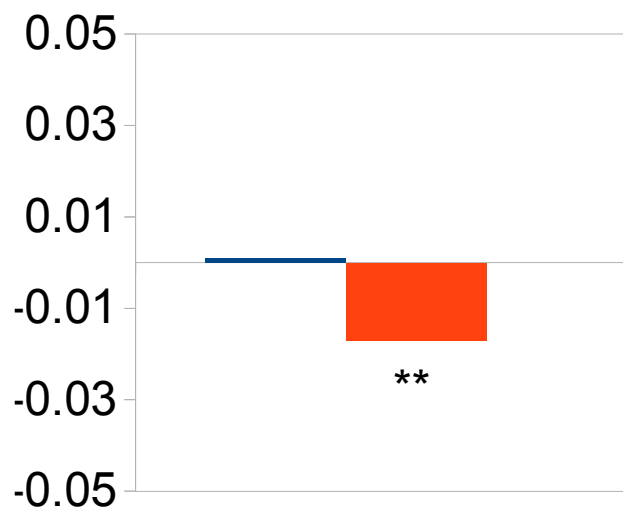
Changes in self-reported health status

SHARE NL



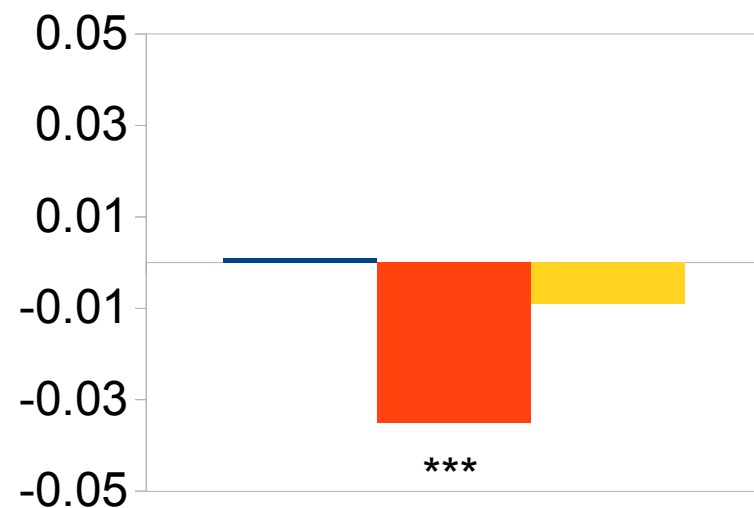
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LASA



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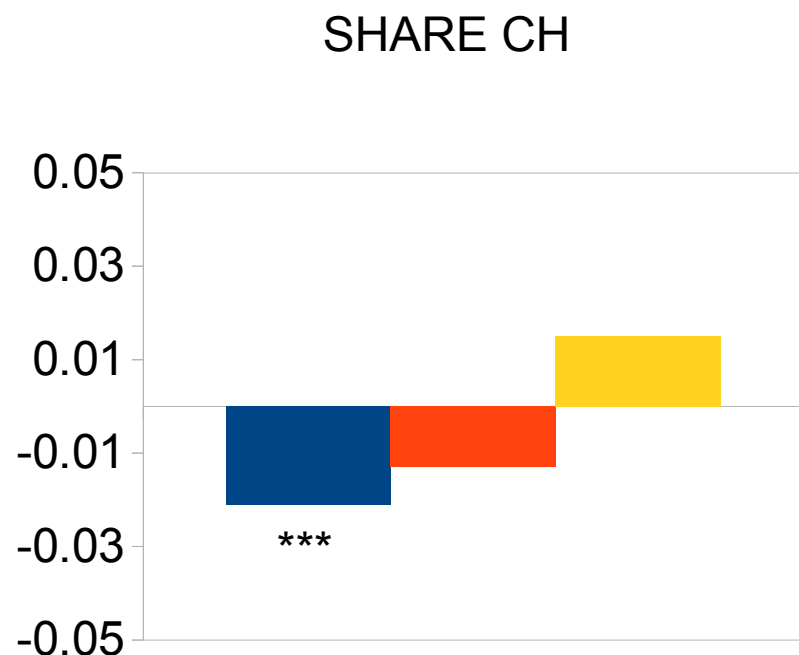
GINPS



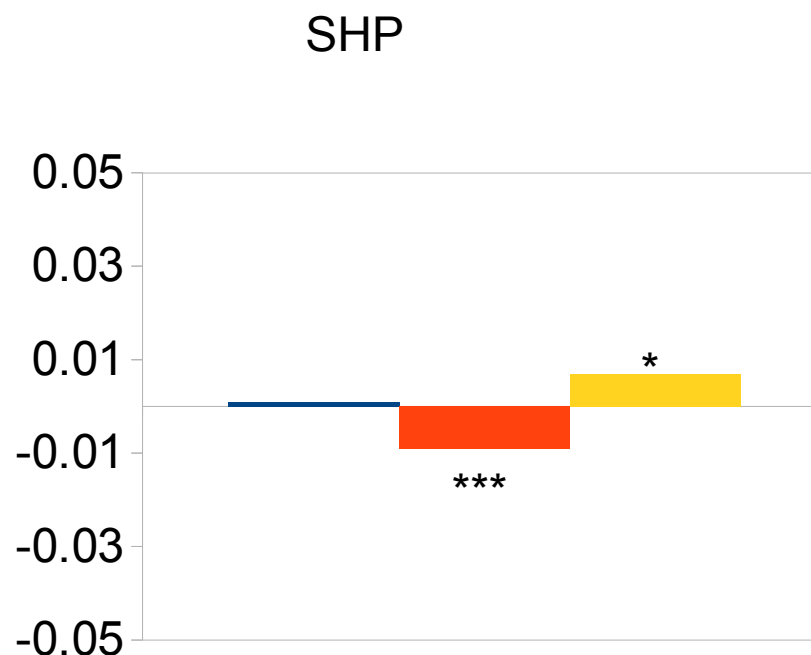
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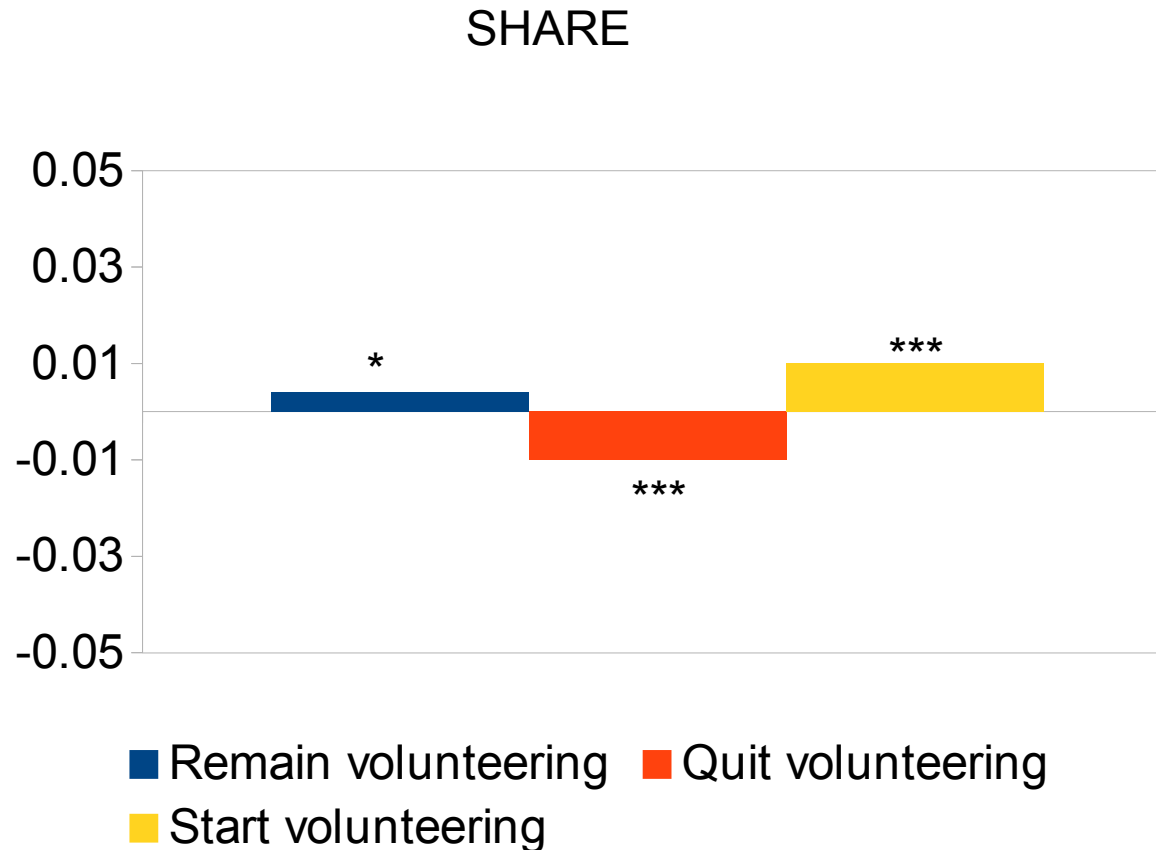
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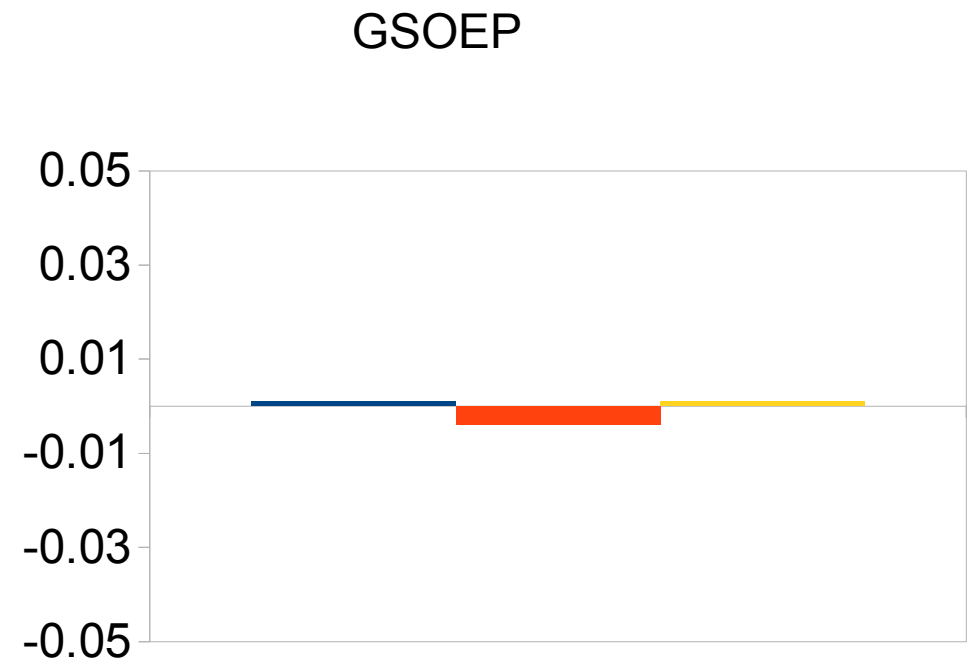
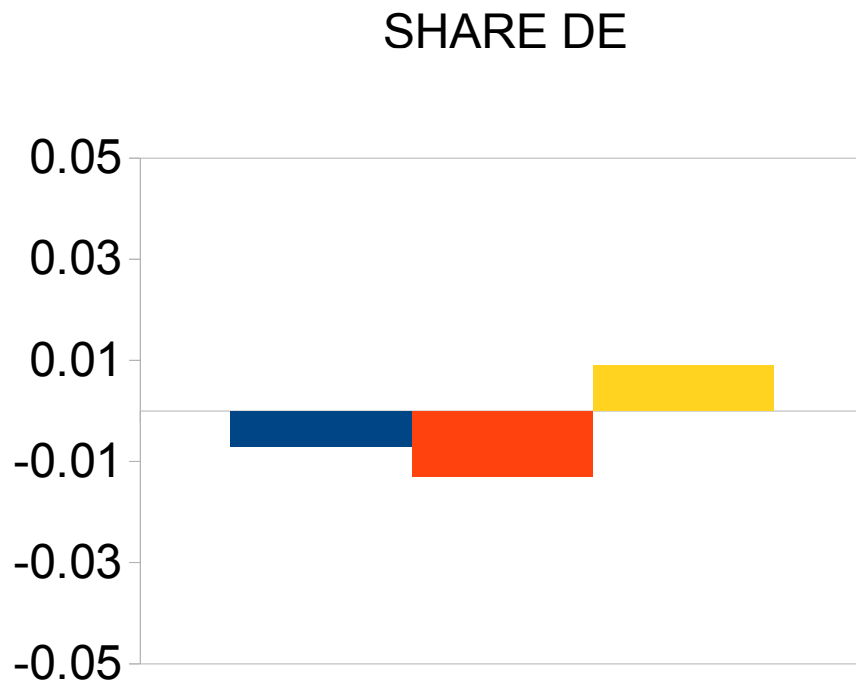
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Changes in subjective well-being



Across Europe...

Changes in subjective well-being



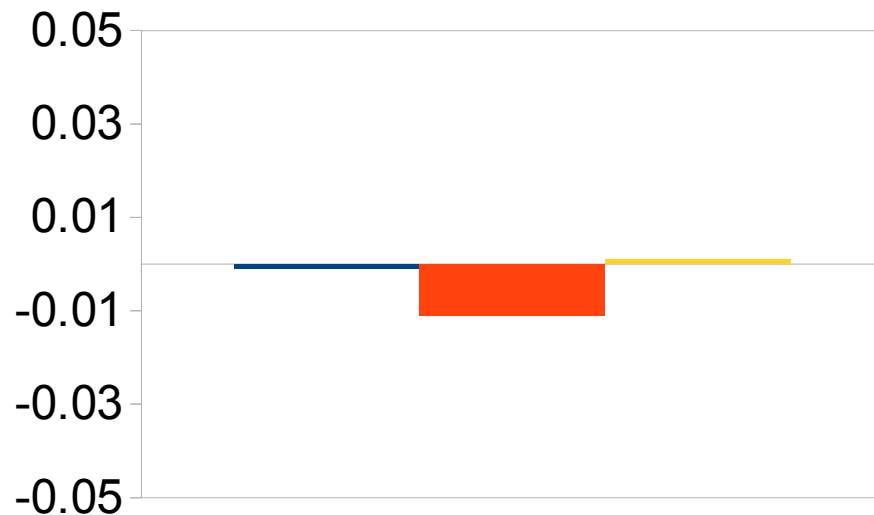
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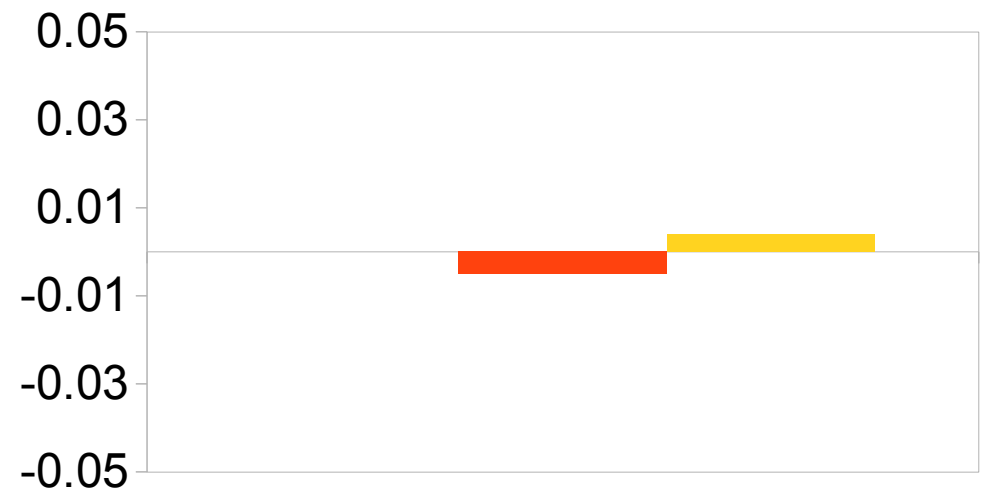
Changes in subjective well-being

SHARE CH



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SHP

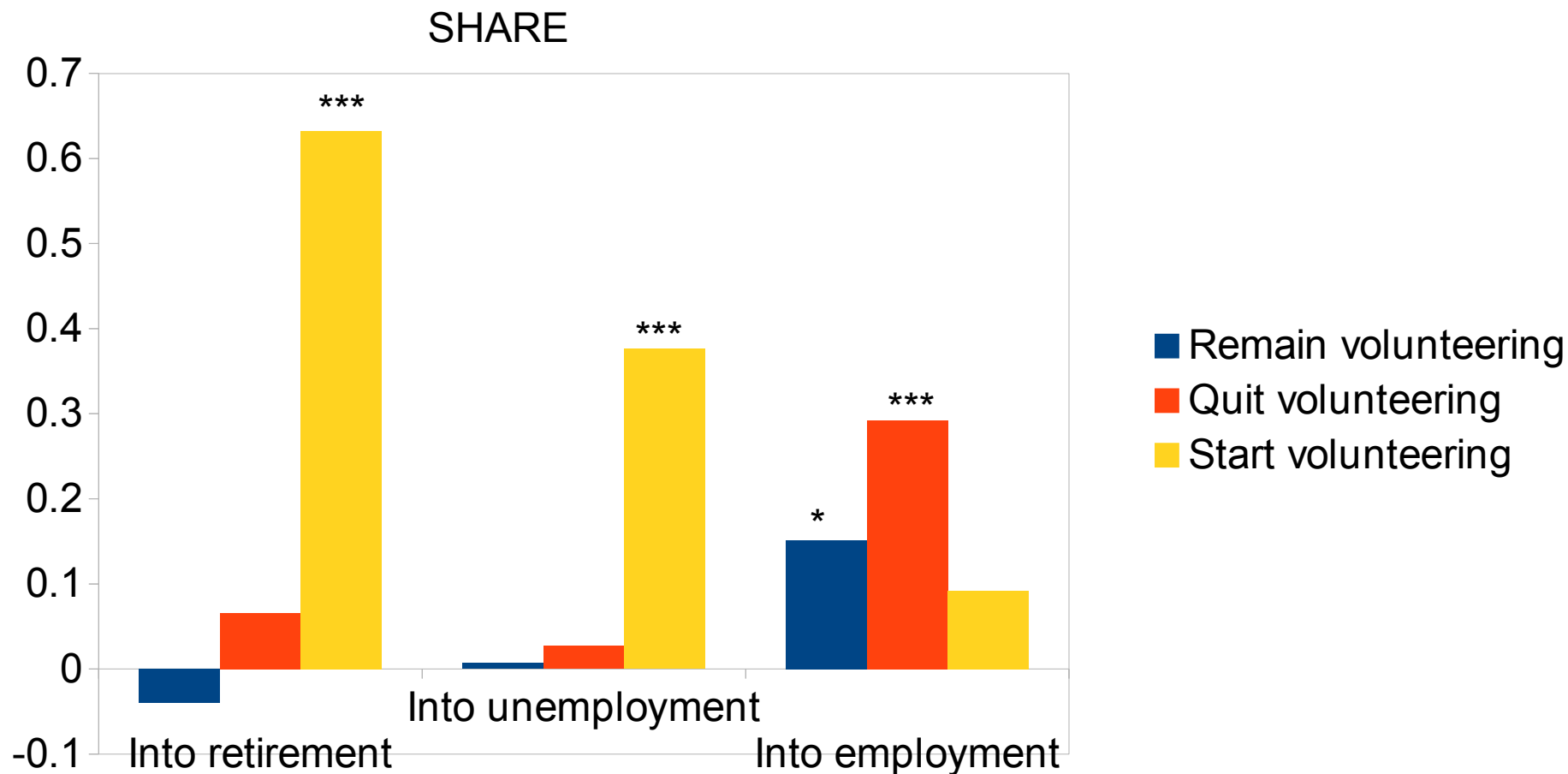


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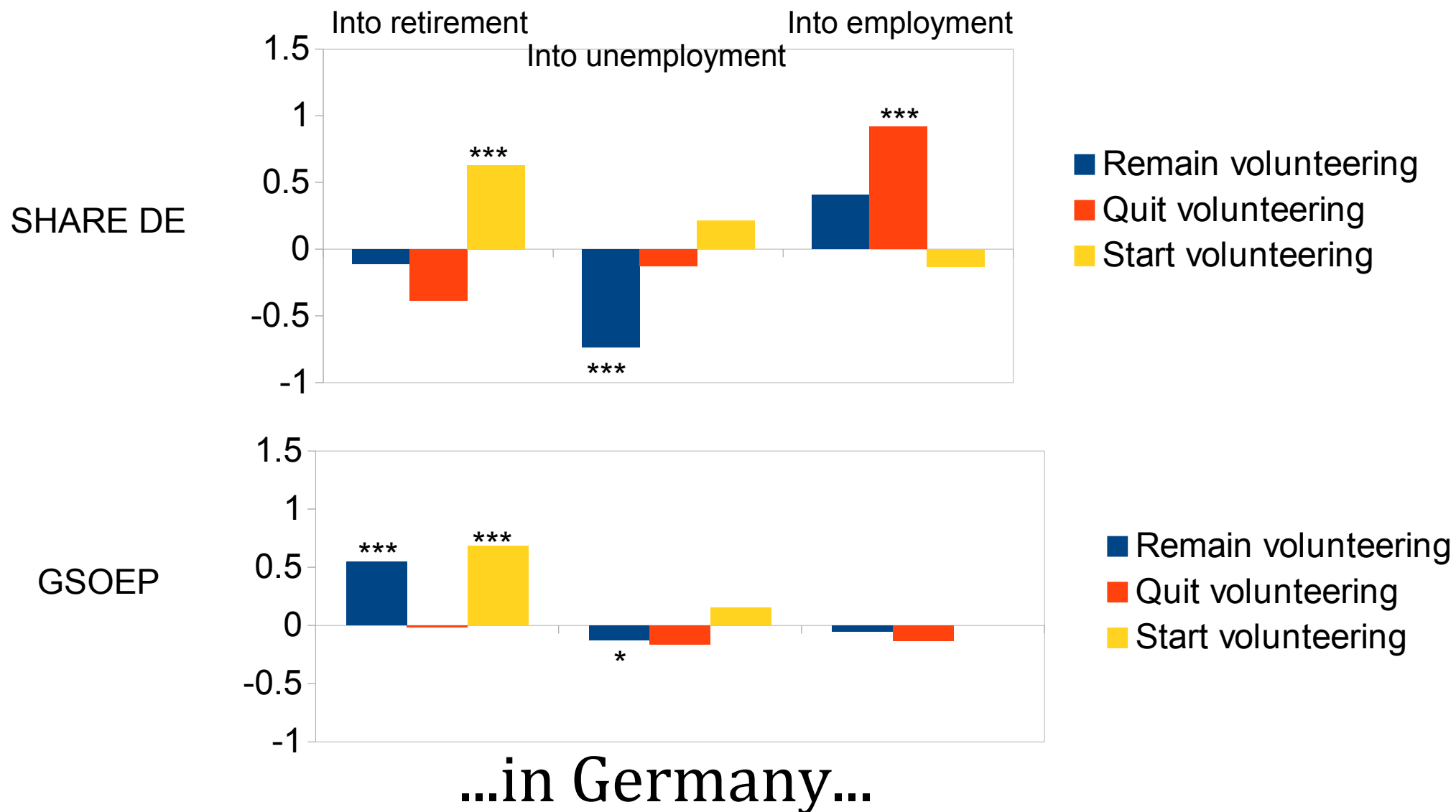
Changes in employment status

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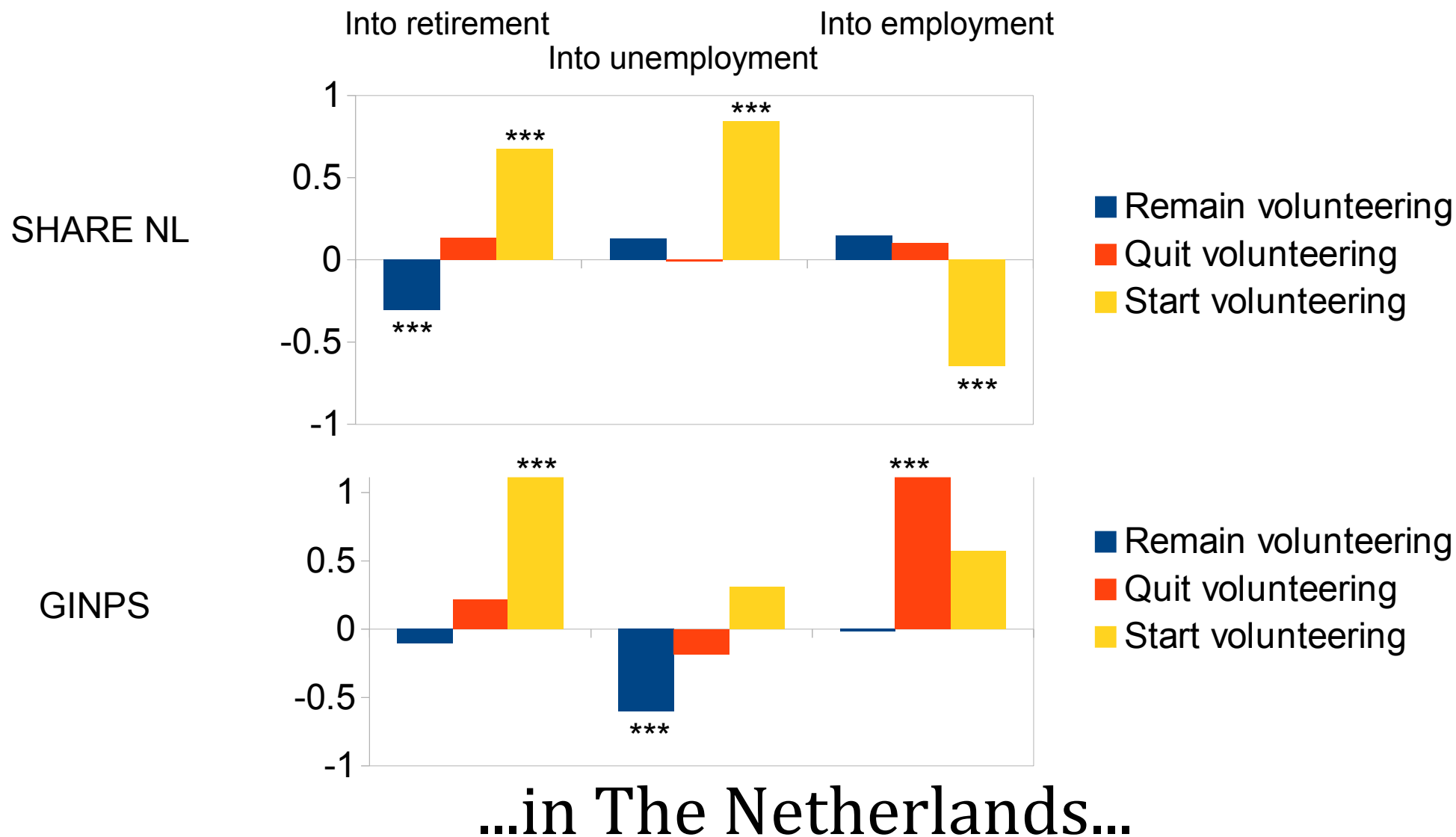


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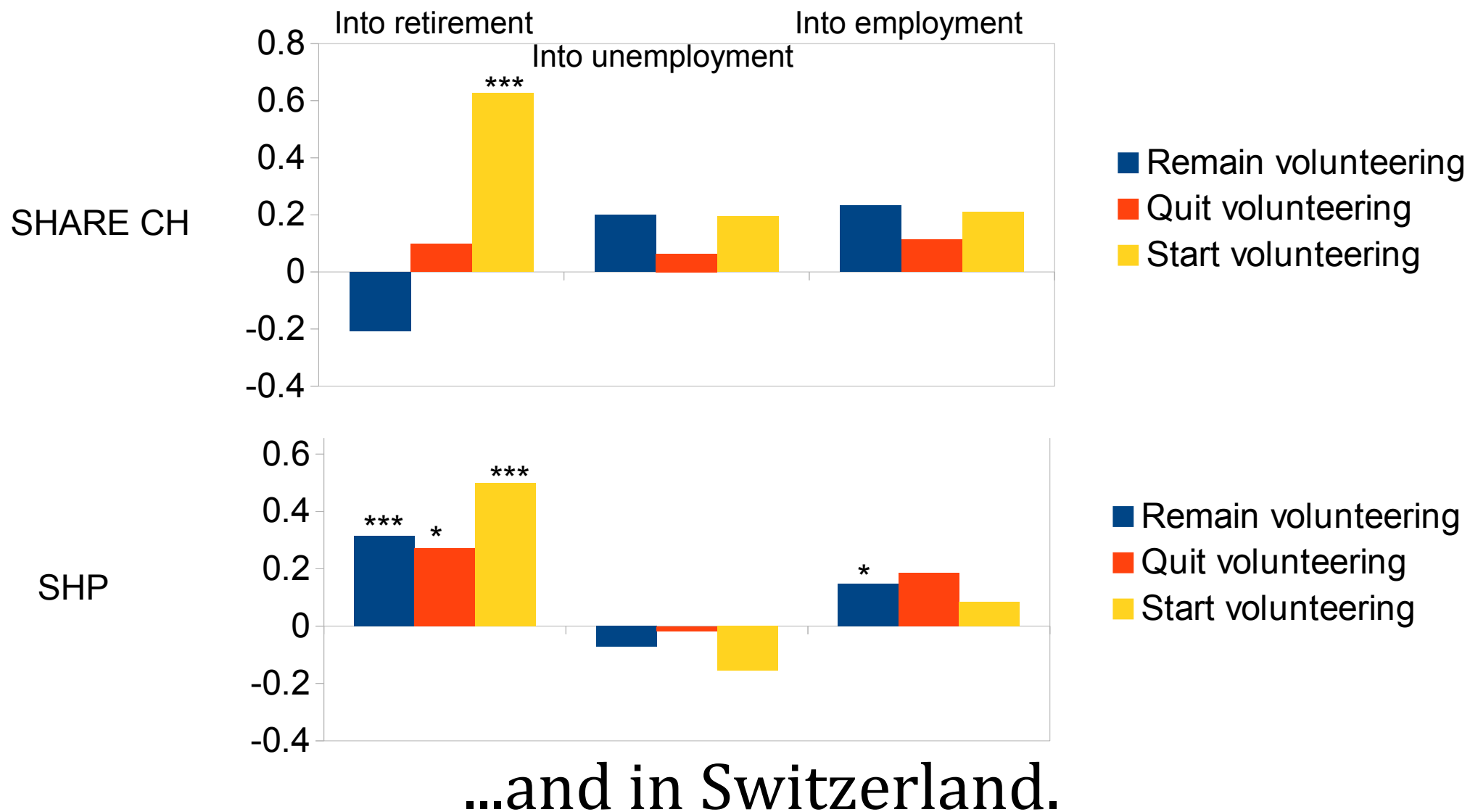
Changes in employment status



Changes in employment status



Changes in employment status



Conclusions

- Only moderate effects on self-reported health and subjective well-being
- Starting to volunteer goes together with retiring
- SHARE data generally show substitution between voluntary work and paid work
- Most variance can be attributed to selection

Limitations

- Different surveys have different questions, survey modes, sampling etc.
- Not a perfect measure of causality

Next steps

- Look at variation between volunteers
- Examine explanatory mechanisms
- Compare different estimation techniques (fixed-effects/first-difference, propensity score matching, instrumental variables)
- Pool all data

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→ **mega-analysis**

Thank you.

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Report “Welfare impacts of participation”
available at www.itssoin.eu

ITS SOIN.eu
Social Innovation & Civic Engagement