

The mental health and wellbeing of teachers and pupils

Prof. John Jerrim



Media coverage etc

Google “are teachers stressed”. You get:

- “Record levels of stress put teachers at breaking point” (Guardian)
- “Teachers experience more stress than other workers” (Independent)
- “Three-quarters of teachers stressed out, study finds” (Schools Week)
- “The epidemic of teacher stress” (The Grade Network)

But are things really that bad?

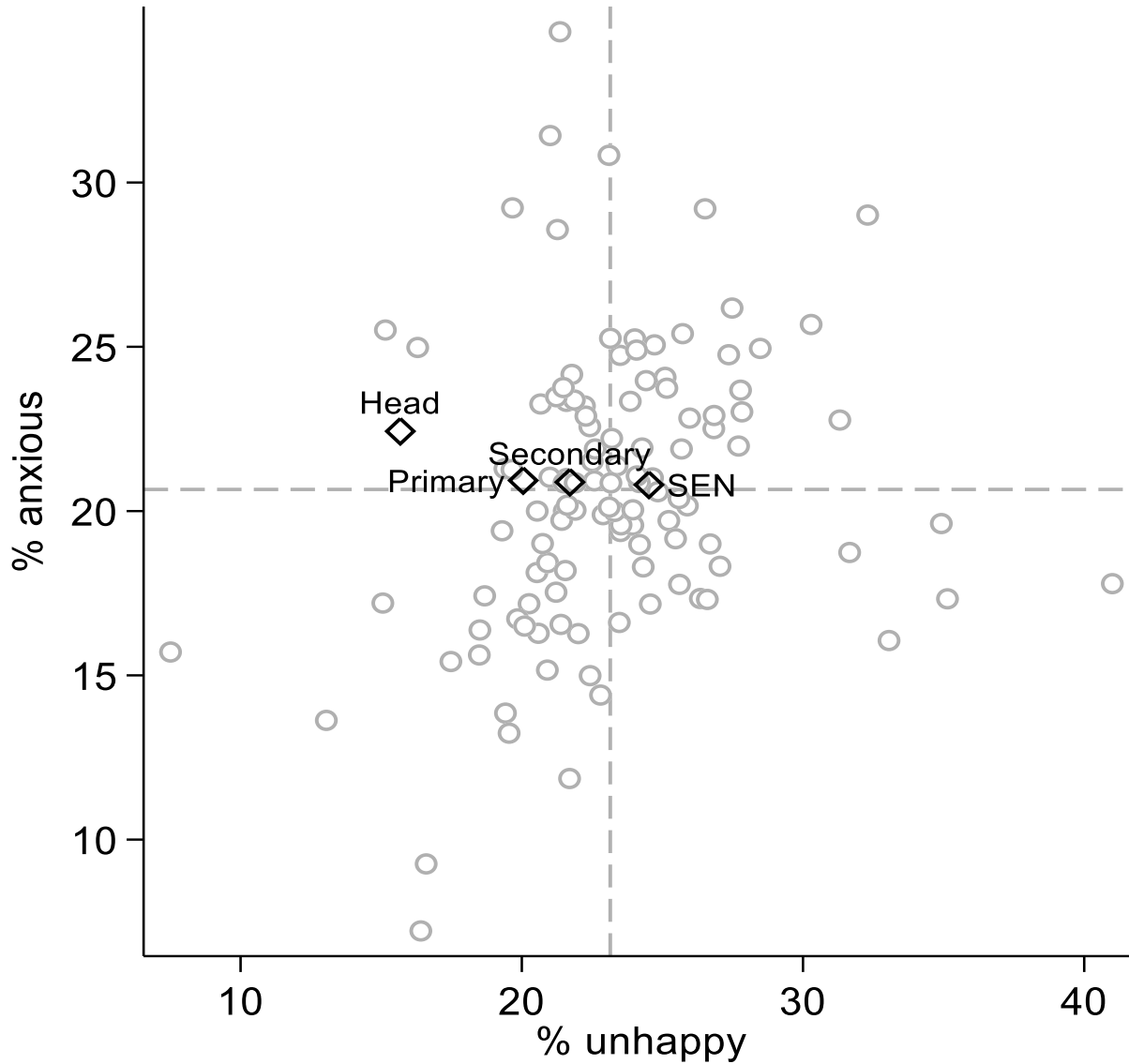
Is the wellbeing of teachers in England.....

1.worse than other professions?
2.lower now than previously?
3.get lower after entering teaching than before?
4.vary over the course of the pandemic?

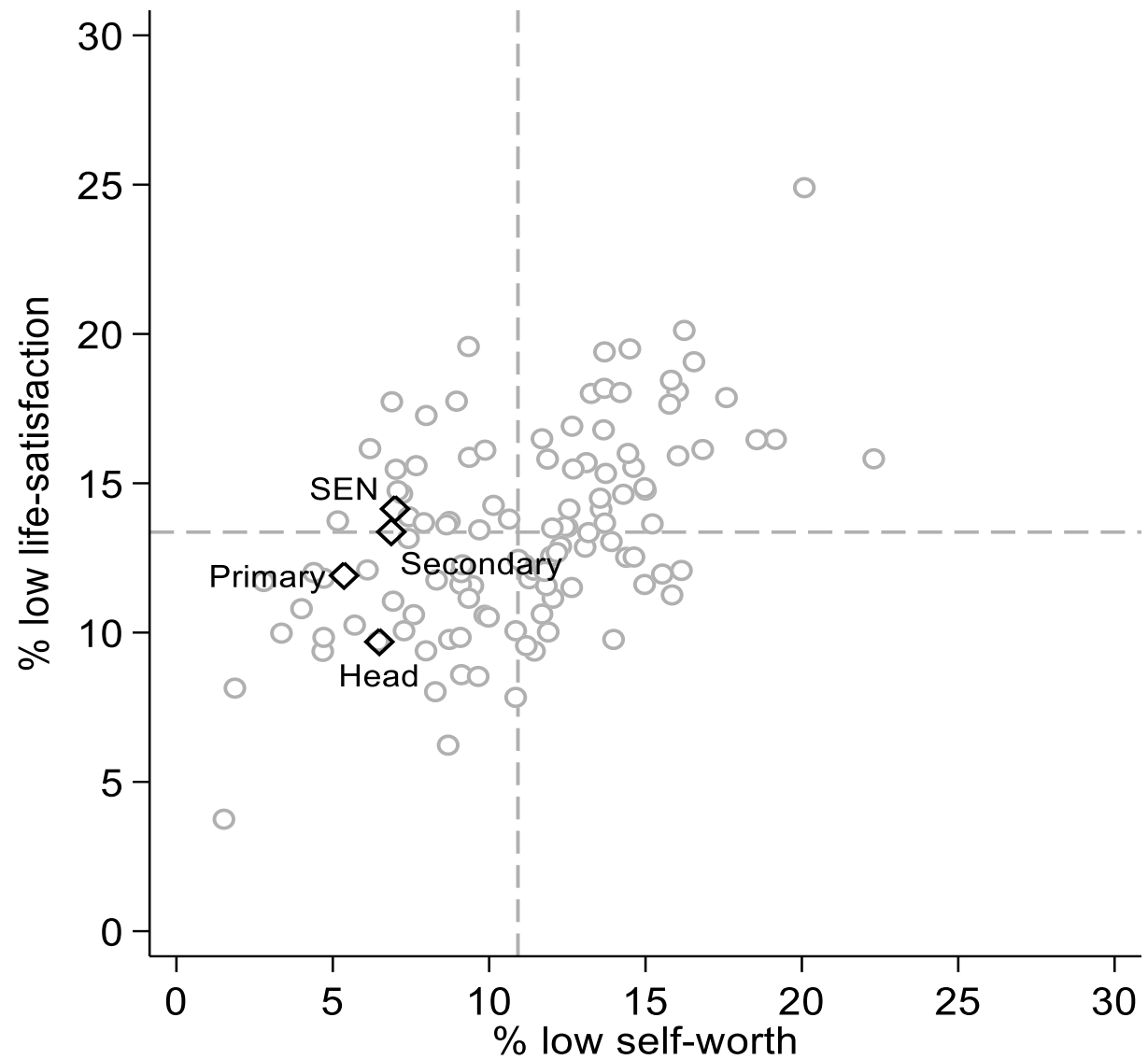
See here for the report(s): <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/the-health-of-teachers-in-england-over-the-past-25-years>

Work supported by the Nuffield Foundation

1. Do teachers have lower levels of wellbeing (and worse mental health) than comparable individuals working in other professions?

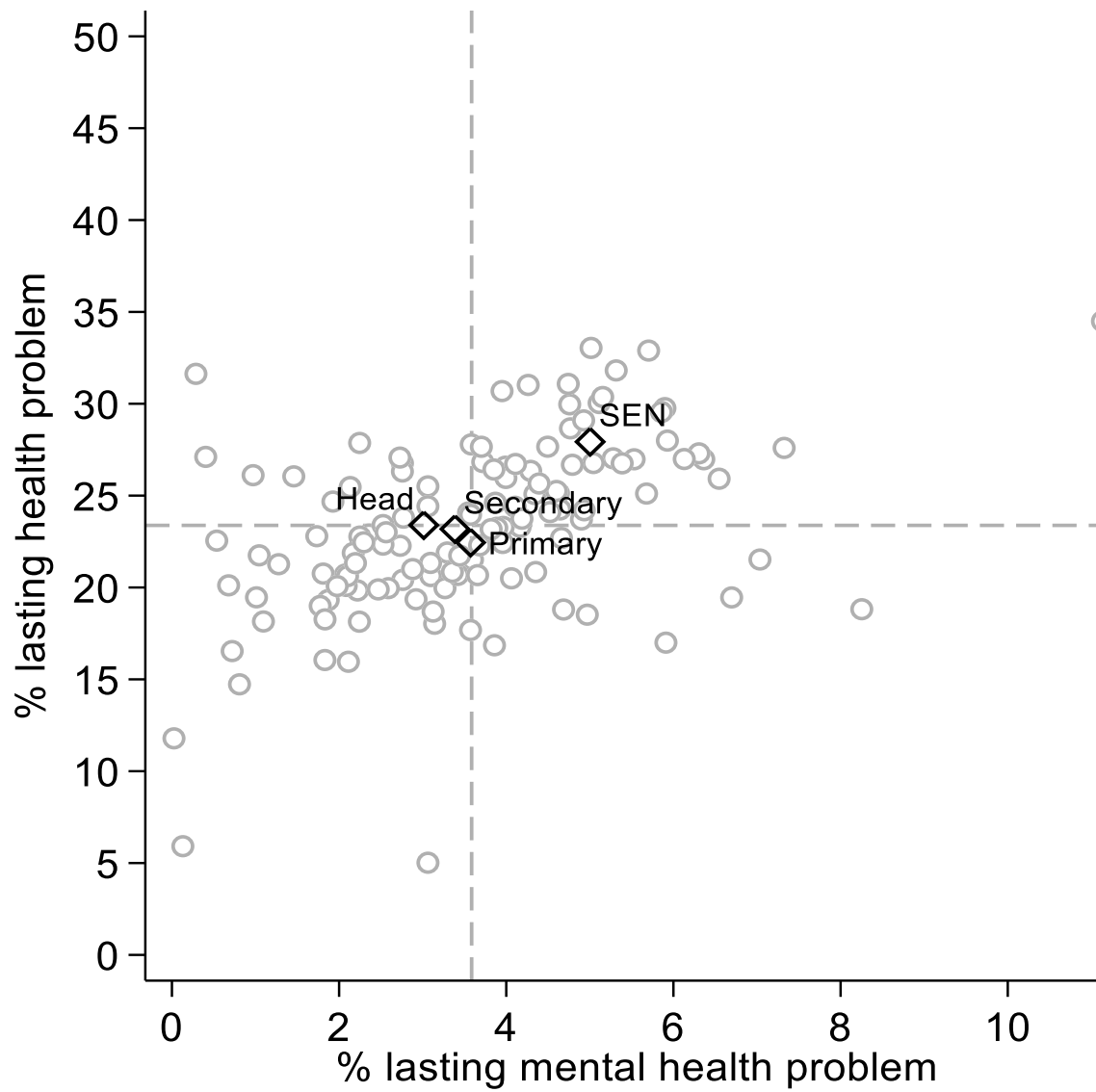


Levels of anxiety / unhappiness

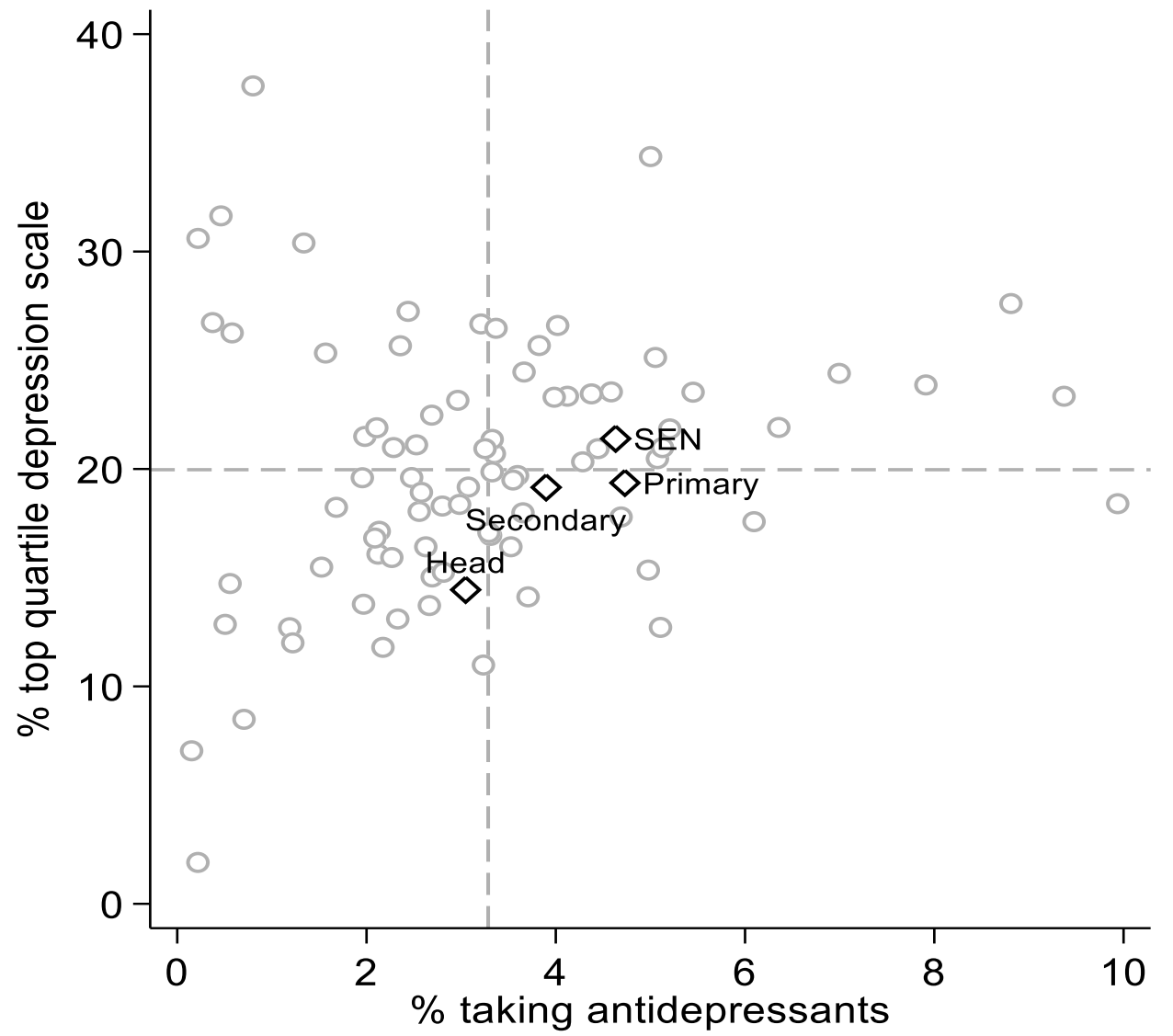


Low life-satisfaction / self-worth

APS ONS wellbeing questions. Teachers matched to other professionals based upon demographic characteristics.



LFS. % health problems.



Biobank. Depression.

We then did a “mega-analysis”

- Looked at evidence from across 11 large-scale surveys.....
-with a total of 57 wellbeing / mental health measures
-where we could compare teachers to other professionals
- Around 60,000 teacher observations in total

Overall, no evidence wellbeing/mental health of teachers worse than
for other professionals

1. Do teachers have lower levels of wellbeing (and worse mental health) than comparable individuals working in other professions?

No evidence that this is the case

2. Has the wellbeing of teachers declined over time?

Evidence from three surveys

Labour Force Survey (LFS)

- Covers 1997-2018
- % reporting Depression, bad nerves, anxiety or mental health problem

Annual Population Survey (APS).

- Covers 2011 – 2018
- Four ONS wellbeing questions (anxiety, happiness, self-worth, life-satisfaction)

Health Survey for England (HSE)

- Covers 1992 – 2018
- Depression (GHQ), prescribed anti-depressants, % lasting mental health issue

Labour Force Survey

15% % with a long-term mental health issue

12%

9%

6%

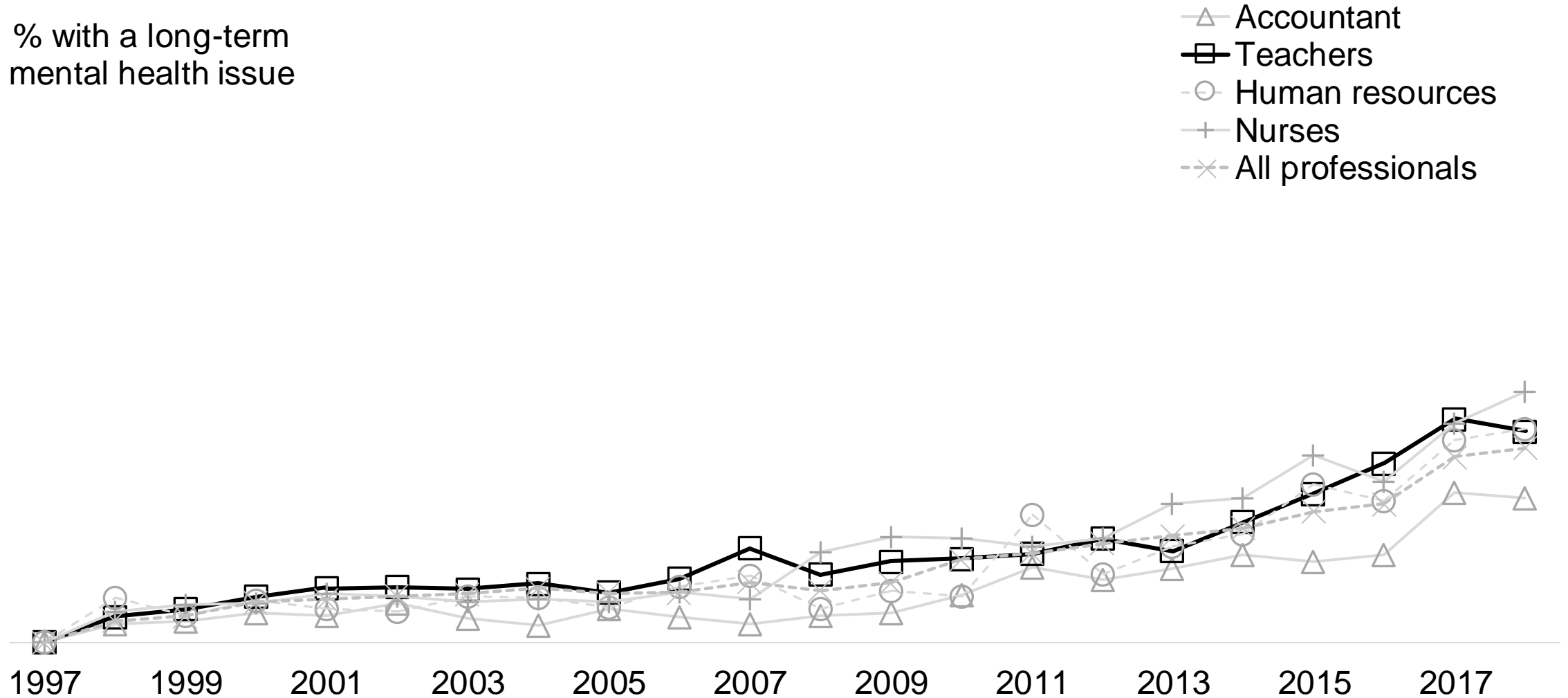
3%

0%

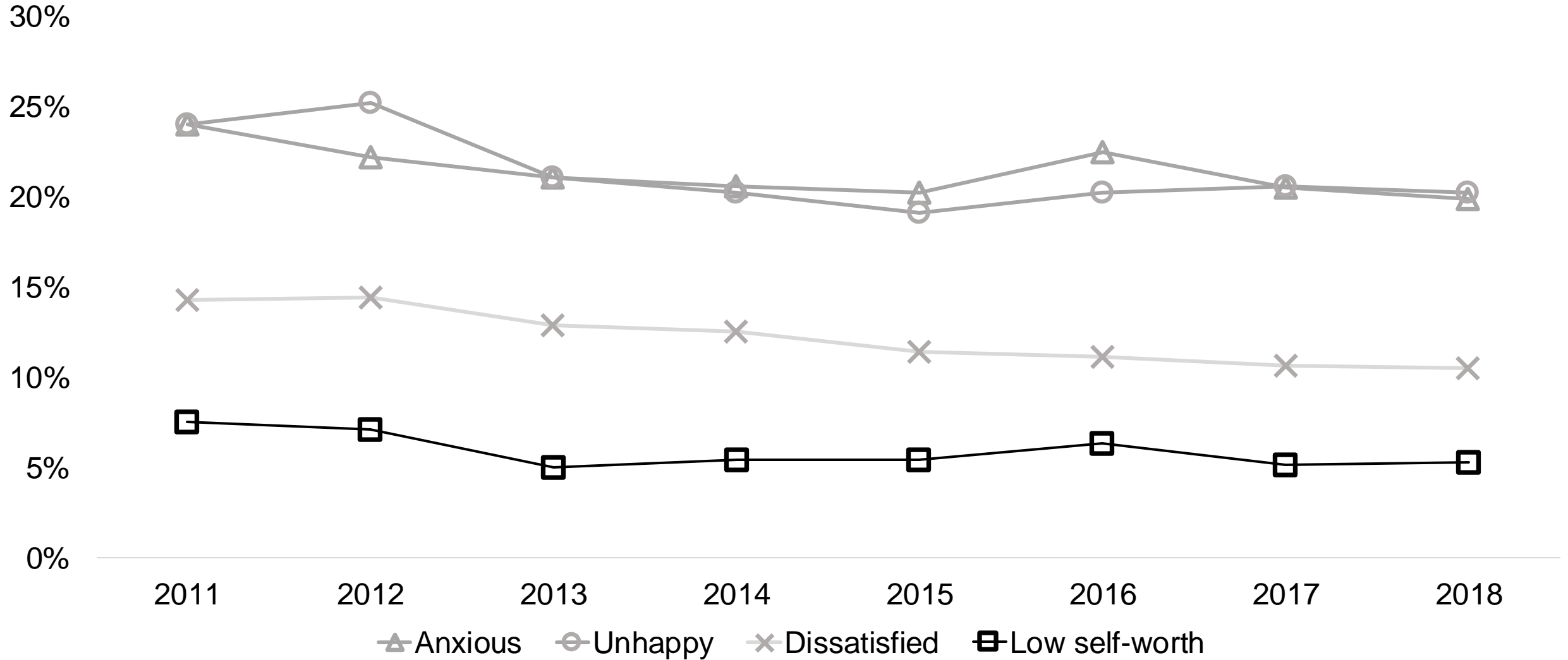
- △ Accountant
- Teachers
- Human resources
- + Nurses
- × All professionals

1997 1999 2001 2003 2005 2007 2009 2011 2013 2015 2017

↑ for teachers over time (particularly from 2012). But also seen amongst other professionals.....



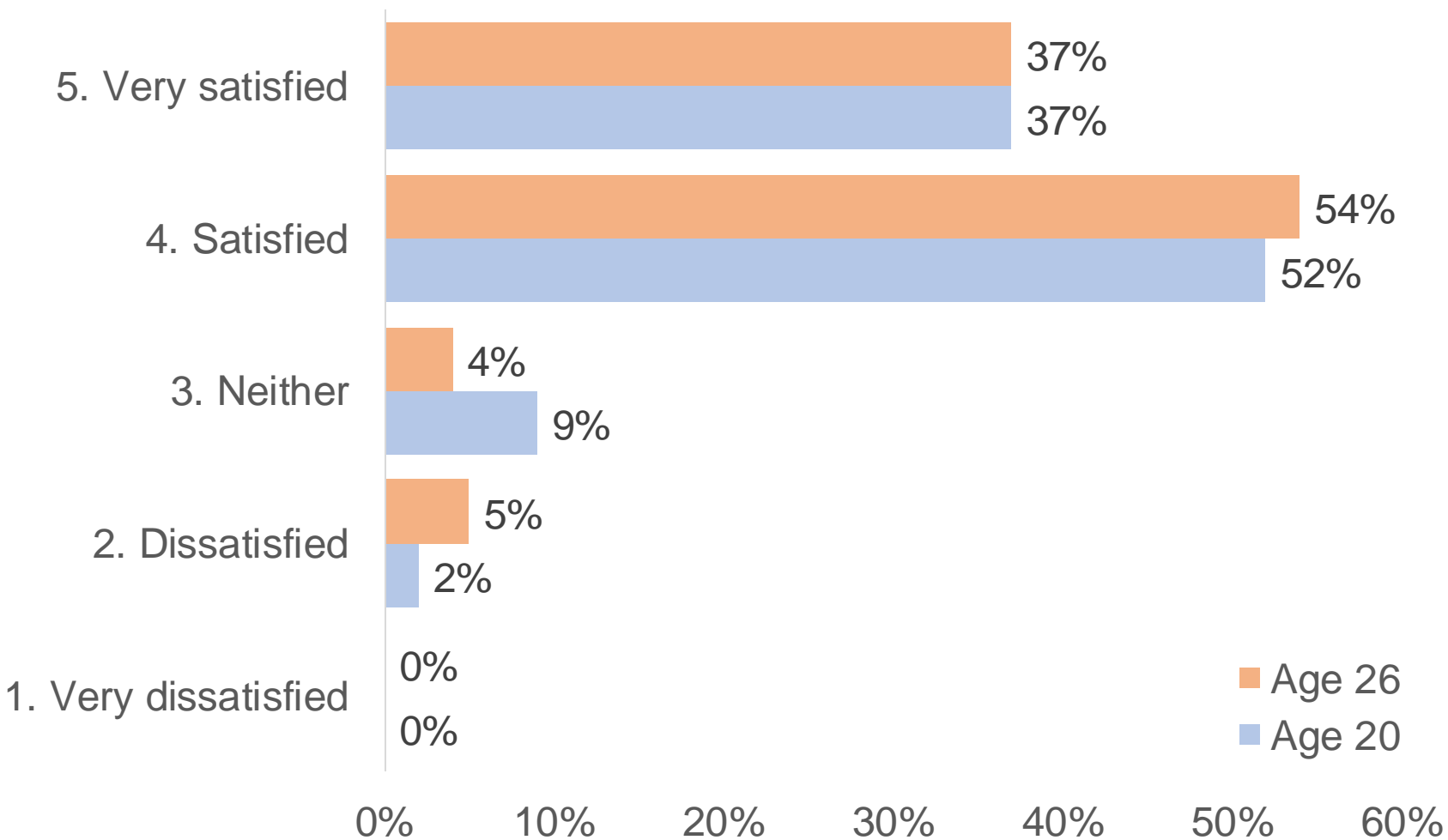
Annual Population Survey



No change over last decade in levels of anxiety, unhappiness, life-satisfaction or self-worth

3. Does wellbeing decline after entering teaching?

Becoming a teacher does not reduce life-satisfaction



Cohort of young people born in 1989/1990.....

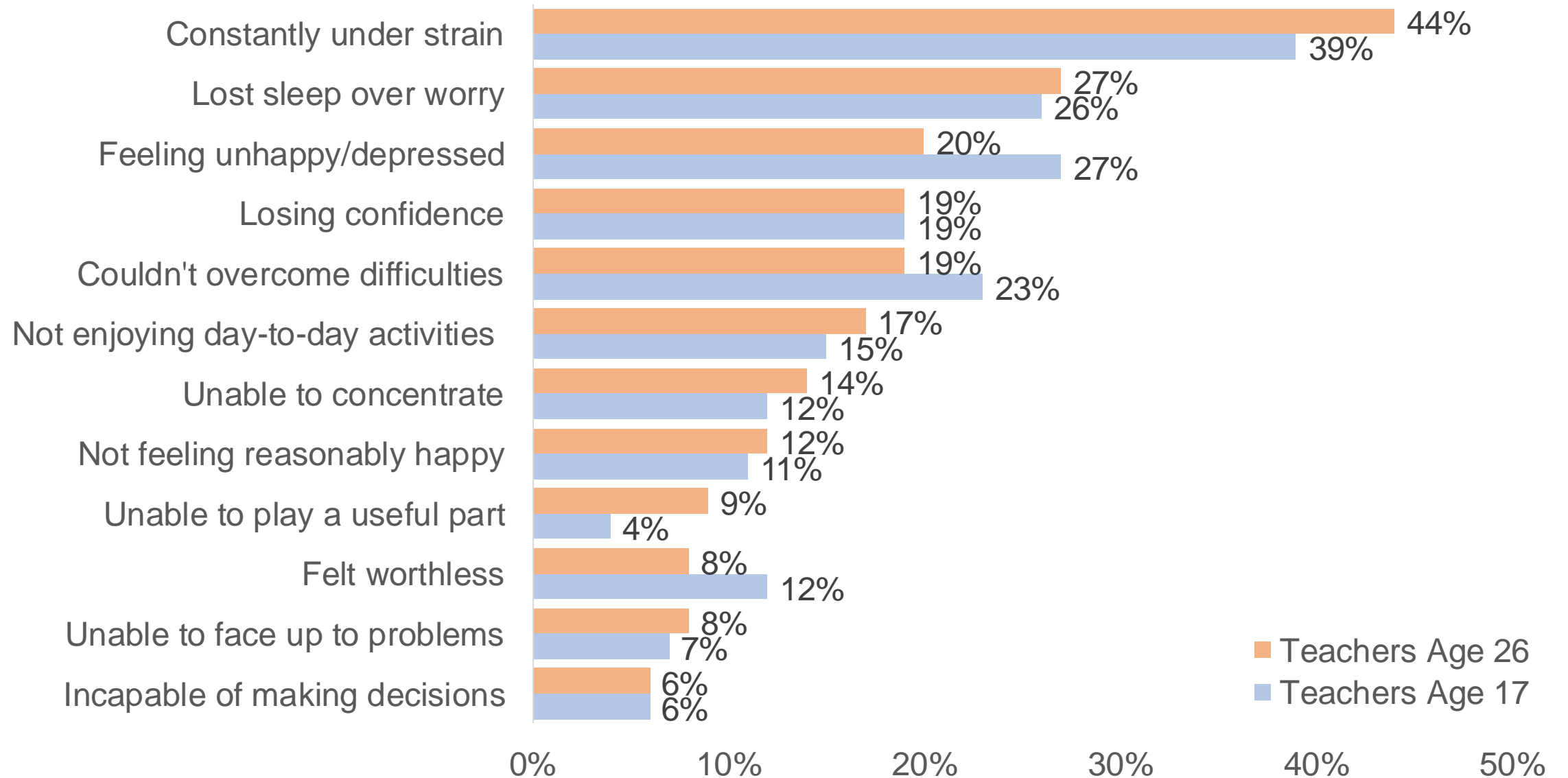
Surveyed annually between ages 14-20. Then again at age 26.....

Sample includes around 250 26-year-olds who were teachers at age 26.....

Had been teaching for, at most, around three-years.....

How has their life-satisfaction / mental health changed if we look before / after they became teachers?

Mental health unchanged from before they became teachers.....



4. How did the work-related anxiety of teachers vary during the pandemic?

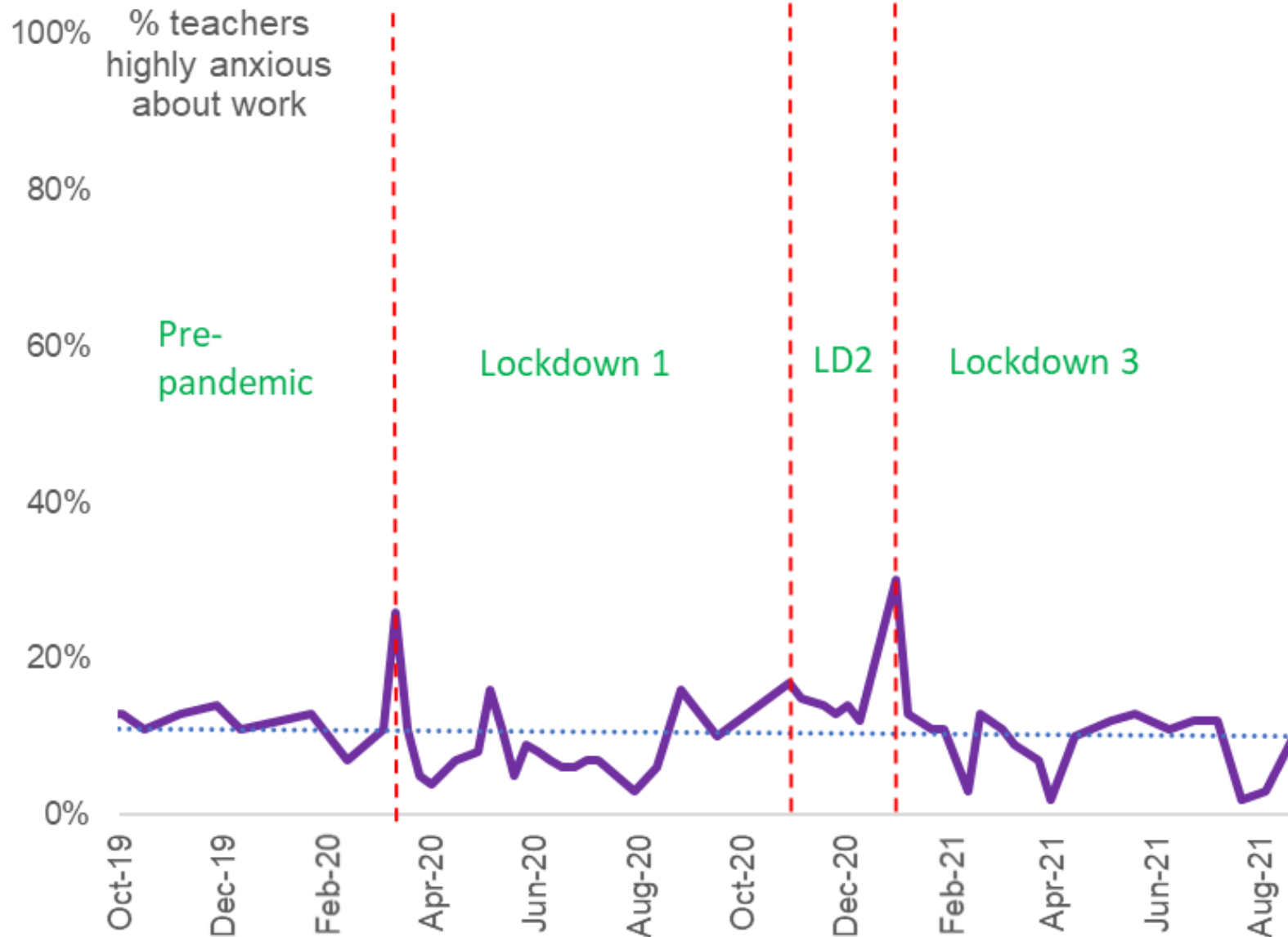
TeacherTapp.....

- Mobile-phone survey app for teachers.
- Asked 3 questions at 1530 each day.
- Around 7,000 daily respondents.
- Panel data, tracking the same teachers over time.
- Ask them a question similar to the APS anxiety question:

“On a scale where 0 is not at all anxious and 10 is completely anxious, overall, how anxious did you feel about work today?”

- Currently have data from Oct 2019 to August 2021.....

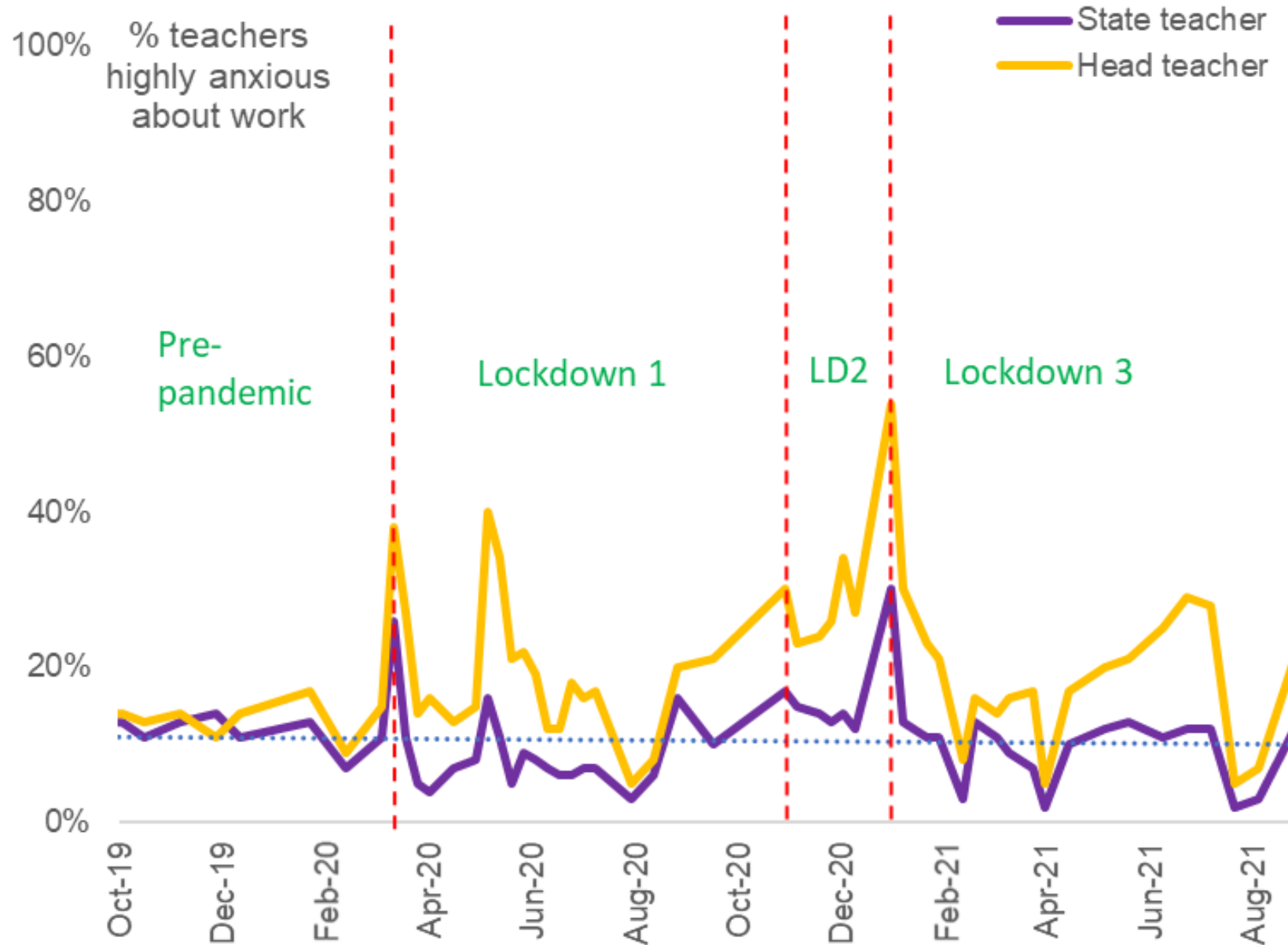
Teachers work-related anxiety has not notably increased during the pandemic....



% of teachers reporting high levels of work-related anxiety during pandemic

Outside of the weeks when lockdowns announced, teachers work-related anxiety similar to pre-pandemic levels

.....but headteachers have experienced a more difficult time



% of teachers reporting high levels of work-related anxiety during pandemic


Pre-pandemic
Work-related anxiety of teachers/heads similar

During pandemic
Work-related anxiety of headteachers greater than for teachers

4. How did the work-related anxiety of teachers vary during the pandemic?

Some spikes for teachers at certain time points. But generally not much change

More evidence of ↑ levels of anxiety amongst headteachers



The link between assessment and pupil wellbeing

Prof. John Jerrim



Does the wellbeing of pupils in England.....

1.decline in the build-up to the Key Stage 2 tests?
2.decline if they do not get into grammar school (in selective areas)?
3.vary across different school year group?
4.decline if they fail to achieve a C/4 in English or mathematics?
5.impact upon how they achieve in their GCSEs?

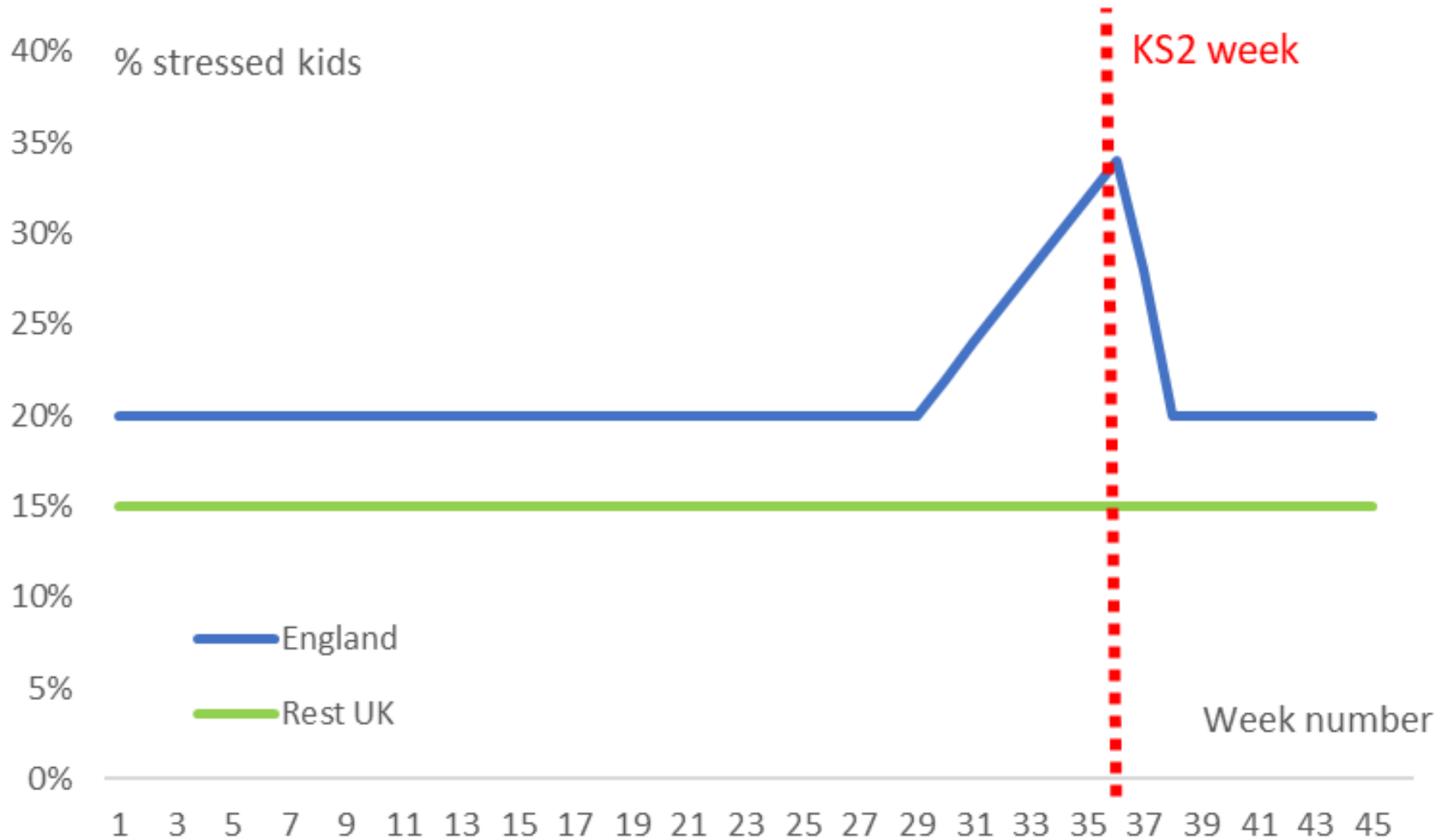
A whirlwind overview of the recent evidence.....

Work supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

1. Does pupil wellbeing decline in the build-up to the Key Stage 2 tests?

Compare England (which has KS2 tests) to Wales/NI/Scotland
(does not have KS2 tests)

A hypothetical example of we might see if KS2 tests are impacting kids wellbeing



1. One would expect line for England to be higher than the line for the rest of the UK.

2. One would expect there to be an uptick in unhappy/stressed pupil in England (but not elsewhere in UK) when the tests take place.

What shape does this “kink” in the data take around the KS2 test week in England? And how does that compare to elsewhere across the UK?

Key Stage 2 tests are not associated with a decline in wellbeing

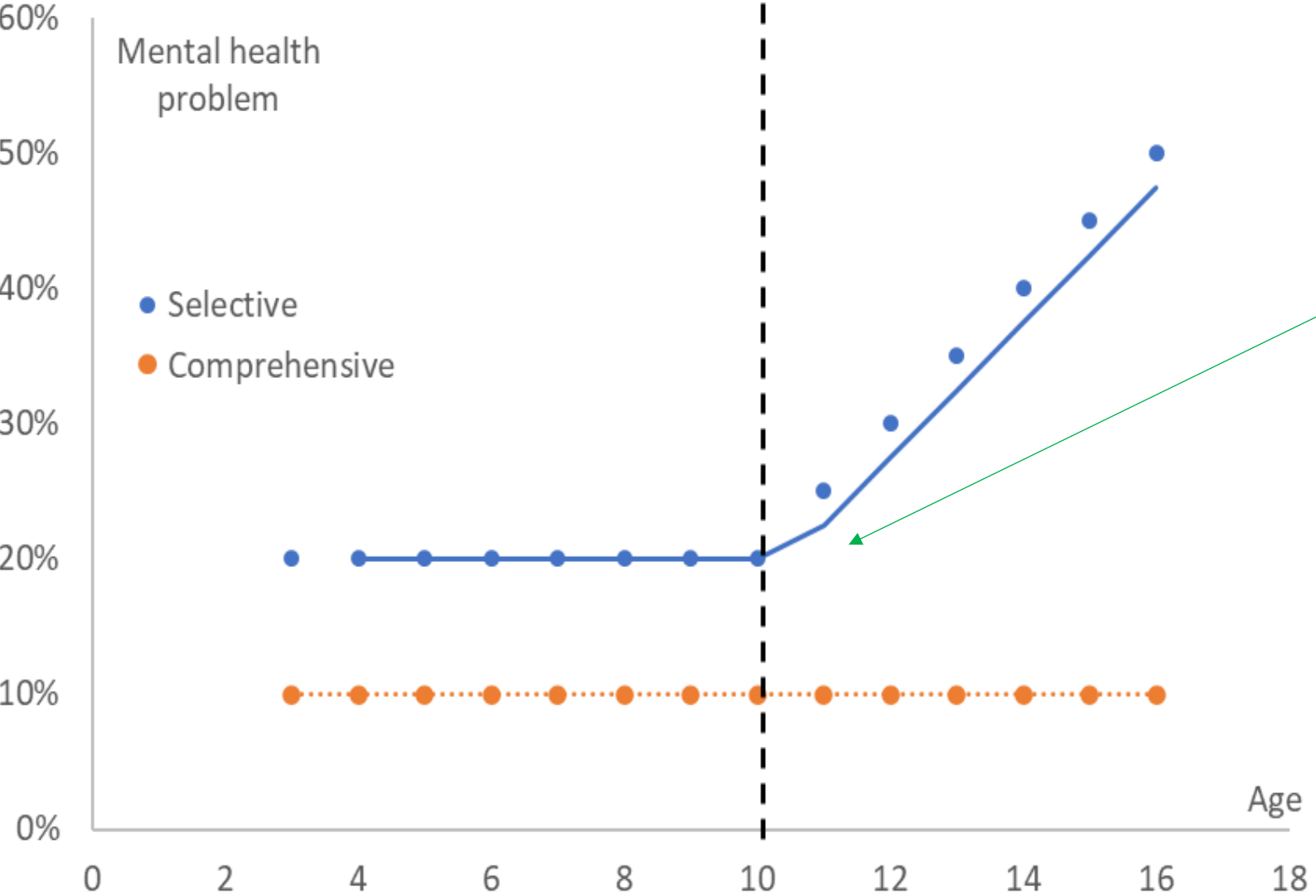


% of children who report being unhappy before/after the Key Stage 2 tests take place in England

Caveat
Data from 2012.....
....but little evidence to the contrary

2. Does academic selection (and not passing the 11+) lead to declines in wellbeing?

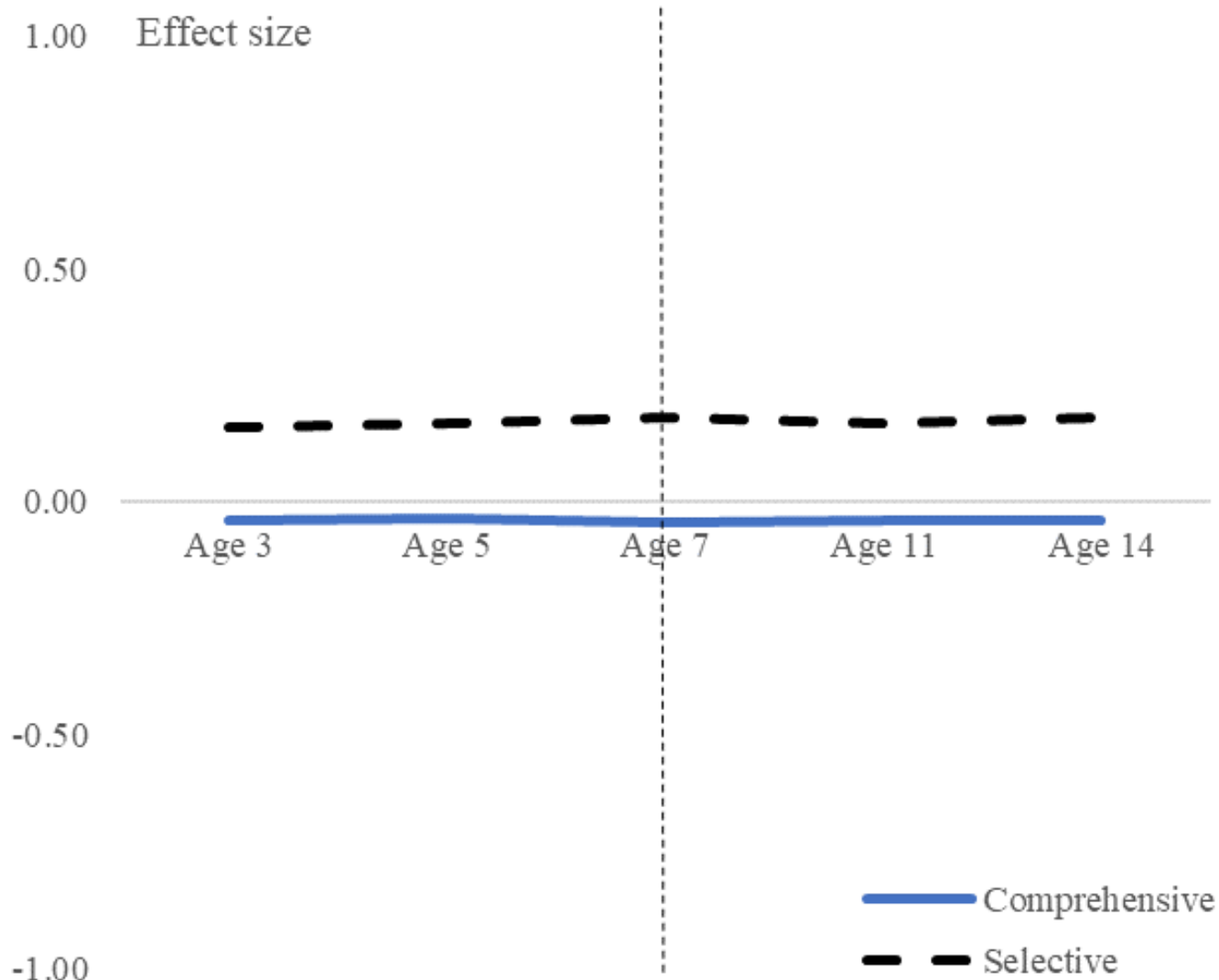
What would we expect to see if academic selection was linked to later wellbeing issues?



Approaching and after the point of selection (age 10/11).....

....should see difference in mental health outcomes across selective and comprehensive education areas increase

...but no evidence of different trajectories in socio-emotional outcomes across selective vs comp areas



- Children living in selective versus comprehensive education areas.....

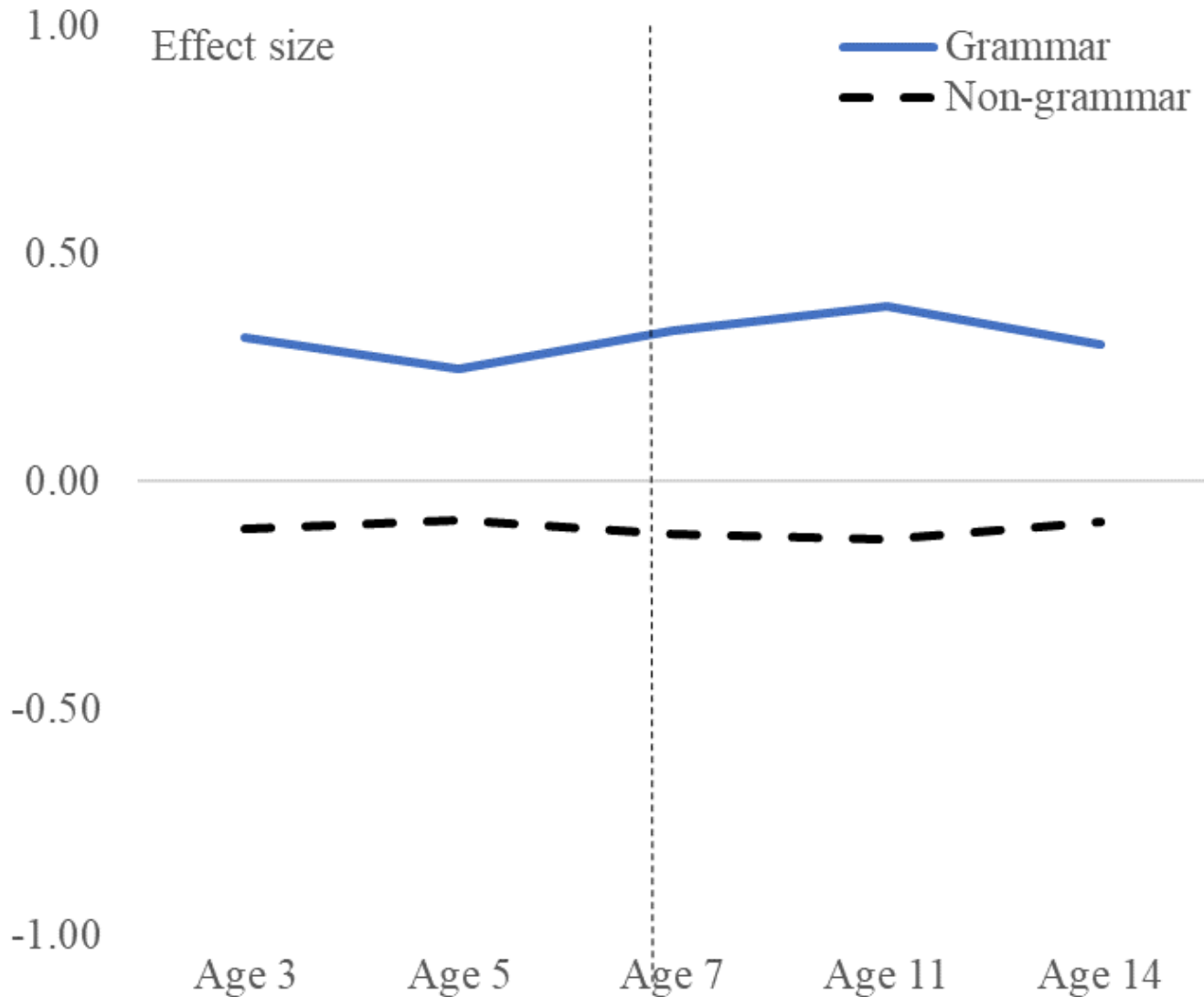
- Measure = SDQ scores

- Age 11 survey conducted *after* 11+ tests took place.....

- But no evidence of any lasting effect.....

Jerrim & Sims (2019)

....or between grammar / non-grammar pupils (within selective education areas)



- Grammar versus non-grammar pupils.....

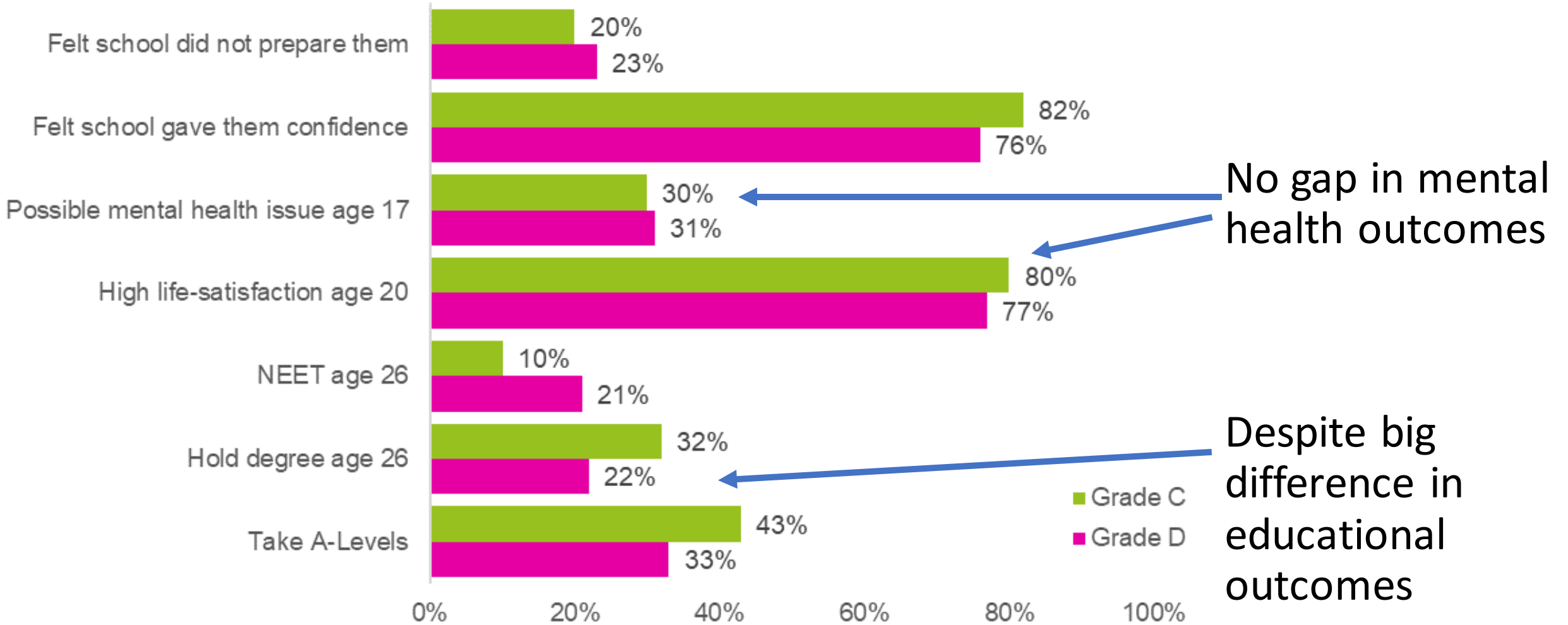
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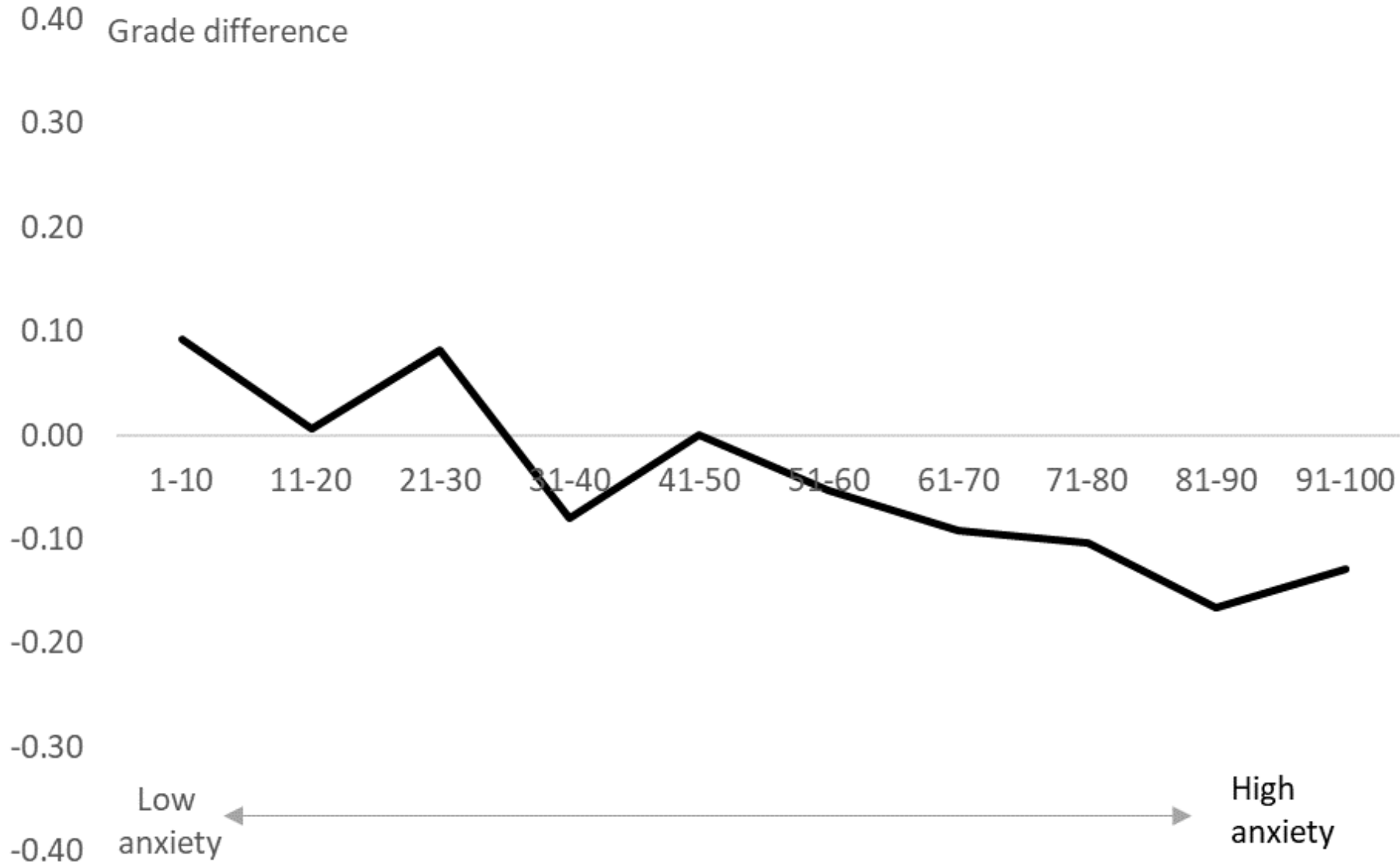
4. Does failing to get a C/4 in English or mathematics impact young people's wellbeing?

No evidence that failing to get a C/4 has any lasting impact on wellbeing or mental health



5. How does test anxiety in Year 11 impact young people's performance in their GCSEs?

Do highly anxious Year 11s do worse in their GCSEs?



Very little association.

Highly test anxious Year 11s essentially get same GCSE maths grade as those with low levels of anxiety....

....just a tenth of a grade less

Figures refer to differences in GCSE maths grade.