

Inequality in later life

The impact on health and wellbeing

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An ageing world

[Nothing] is more likely to shape economic, social, and political developments in the early twenty-first century than the simultaneous aging of Japan, Europe, and the United States ... The human life cycle is undergoing unprecedented change. To preserve economic security, we must adapt the social institutions built around it to these new realities.

The Commission on Global Aging (1999)

Politicians urged to face up to the Demographic timebomb (Guardian 2006)

Population ageing - Are we heading for a future of protest, destruction and the threat of financial meltdown? (BBC 2004)

“If you aren’t scared about the enormous generational storm we’re facing, you must be on a particularly high dose of Prozac” (Kotlikoff, 2004)

- Reduce the costs of health and social care and pensions – individualise risk.
- Promote active ageing – extended working lives, volunteering, grandparenting etc.

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Demographic aging brings with it a systematic transformation of all spheres of social life ... beneath even the daunting fiscal projections, lies a longer-term economic, social and cultural dynamic ... What will it be like to live in societies that are much older than any we have ever known or imagined?

The Commission on Global Aging (1999)

Images of ageing

The title means 'my mother, poor thing'

Contemporary critics found this image **shocking** at a time when it was thought that the elderly should be represented with respect or with sentiment.

Sickert instead treads a fine line between complete honesty and brutality applying the paint in small dabs and touches so that the face has the crumbling texture of great age.



Mamma Mia Poveretta (1901-04)
Walter Richard Sickert



Images of ageing

ERWIN OLAF (born in 1959 in Hilversum (the Netherlands))

Erwin Olaf's art implicitly visualises the unspoken, the overlooked, that which typically resists easy documentation.

Olaf's trademark is to address social issues, taboos and bourgeois conventions.

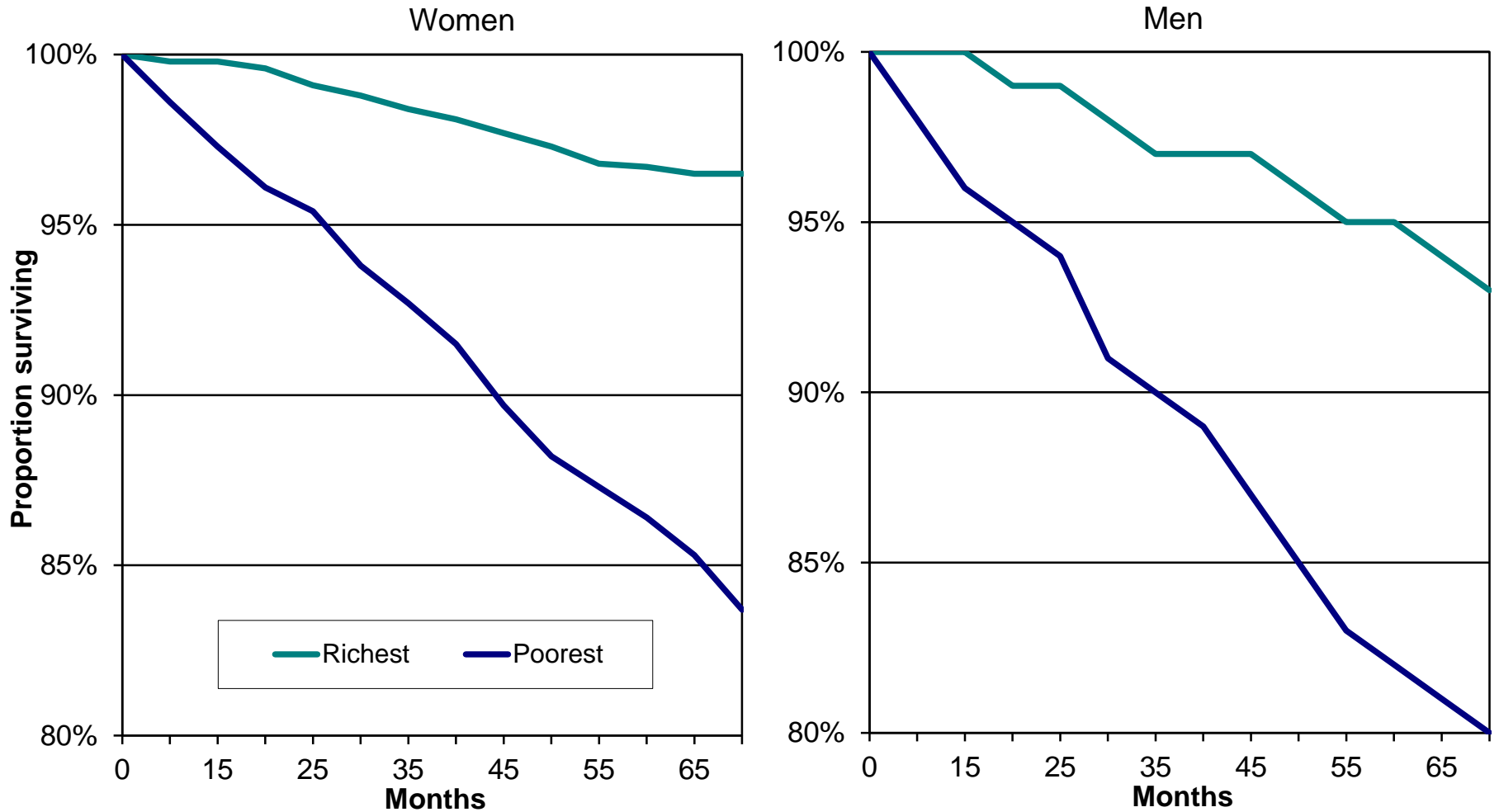
Olaf conceals his themes ... Yet in the end, his unconventional style delivers dramatic visual and emotional impact ... **he vividly captures the essence of contemporary life.**

Baby Boomers and The Third Age

- Post-retirement, post-parenting, but pre-dependency.
- Contributing to society through voluntary/community activities and political/civic engagement.
- Consuming and enjoying life, leisure and pleasure – cultural mainstream.
- Self-fulfilment, having a role, having fun and acknowledged status.
- A generation liberated from the standardised lives of previous cohorts.
- Or greedy, self-interested, baby boomers, who benefited from social welfare and are living individualised lives orientated to self-satisfaction, and giving rise to inter-generational conflict.
- But what about class and other dimensions of inequality? Is this generational experience/third age space open to all?

The significance of inequalities in health and wellbeing later life

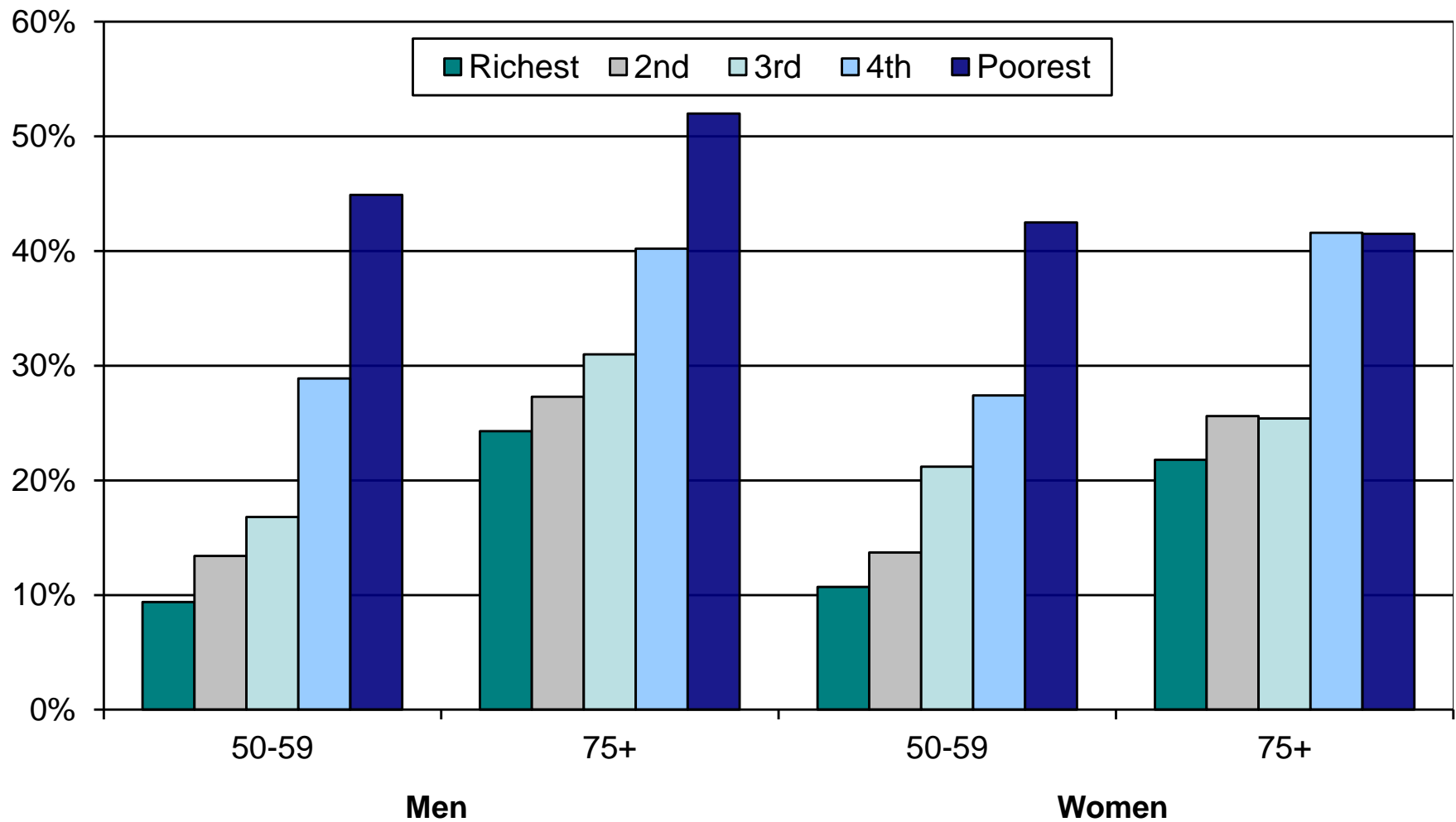
Survival rates by wealth, age 50+



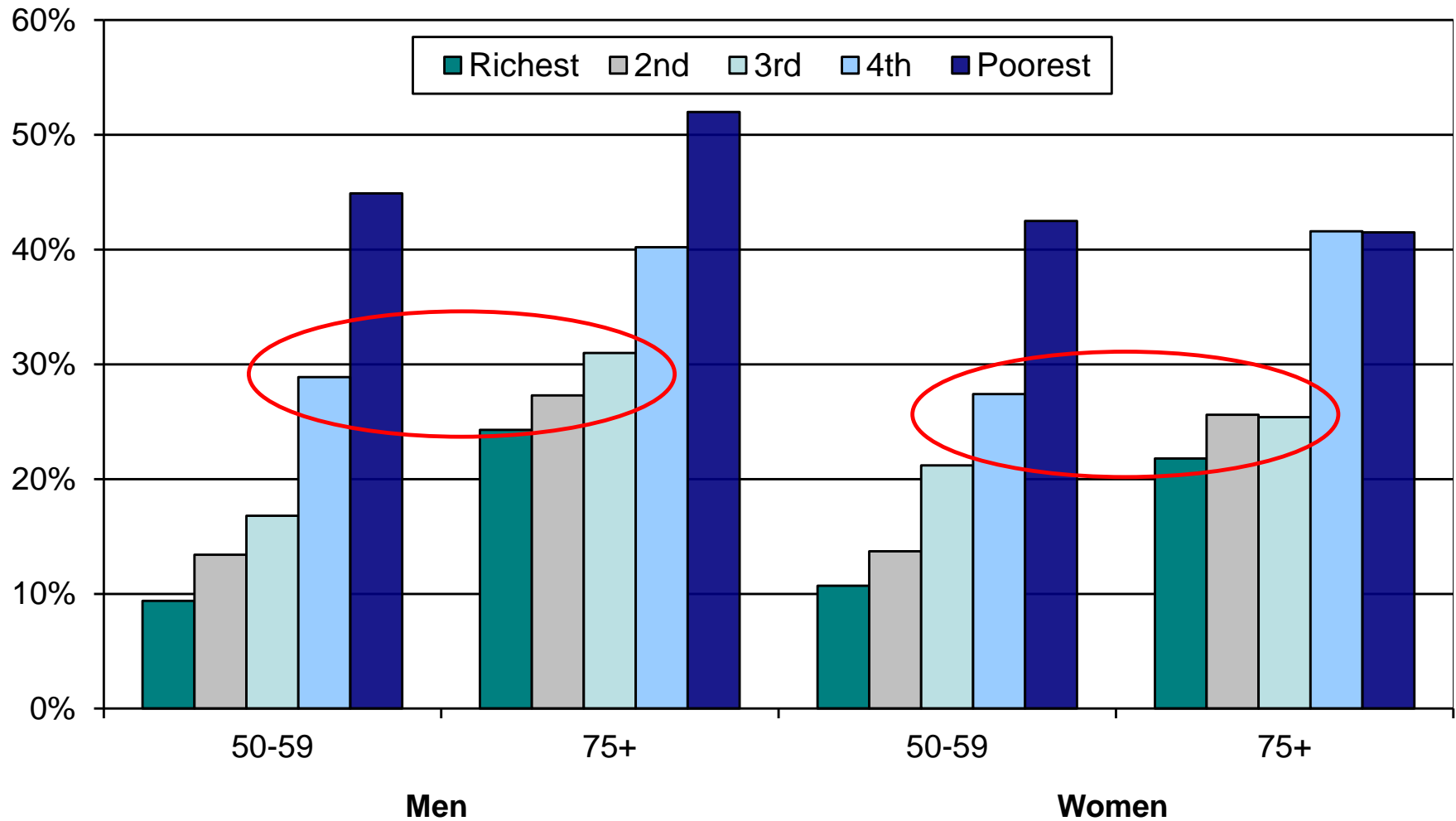
Fully adjusted hazard ratio poorest quintile compared with richest quintile = 1.7

(Nazroo *et al.* 2008)

Fair/poor self reported health and wealth

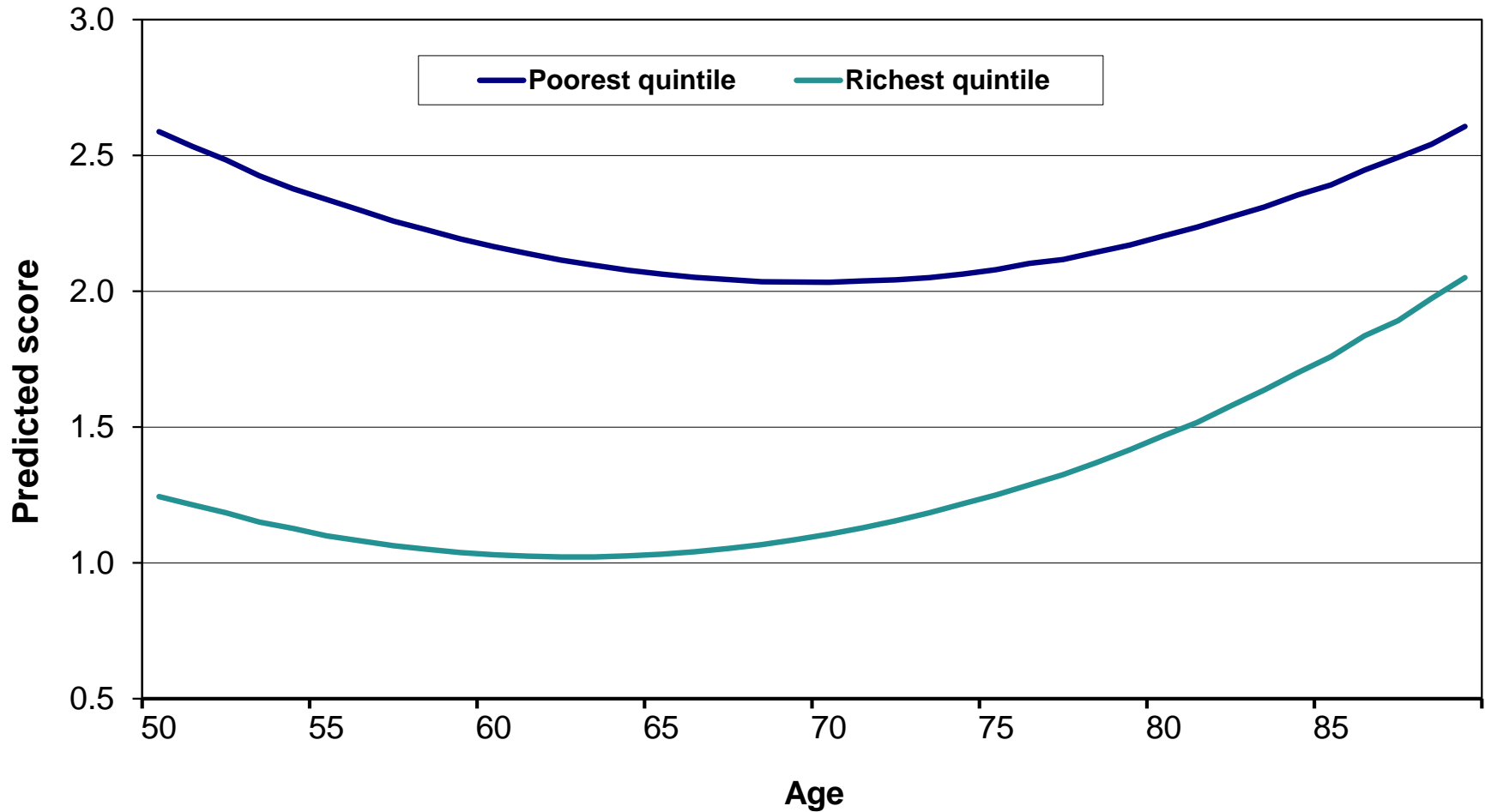


Fair/poor self reported health and wealth



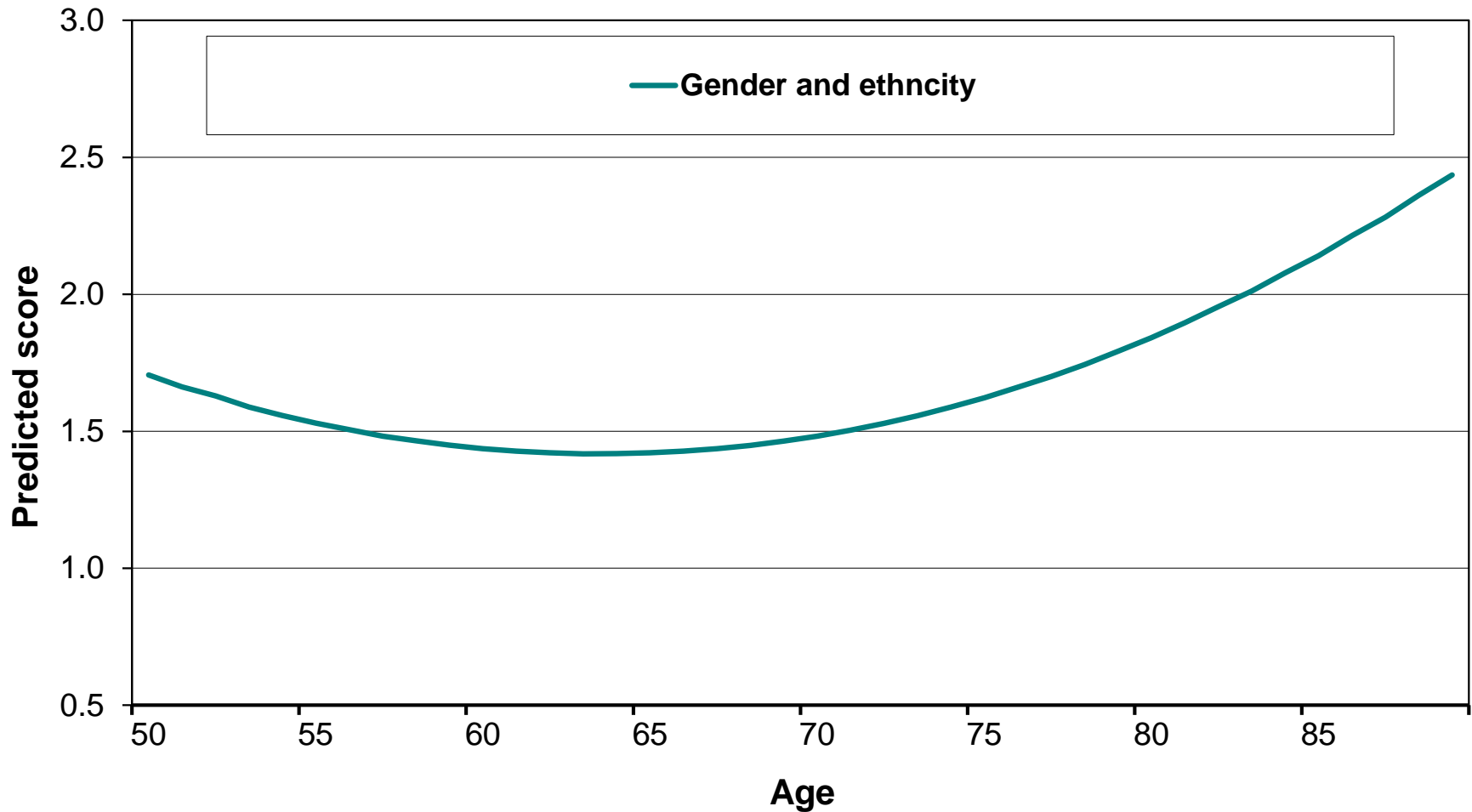
Age, wellbeing and wealth

(CES-D score (depressed mood) adjusted for gender and ethnicity)



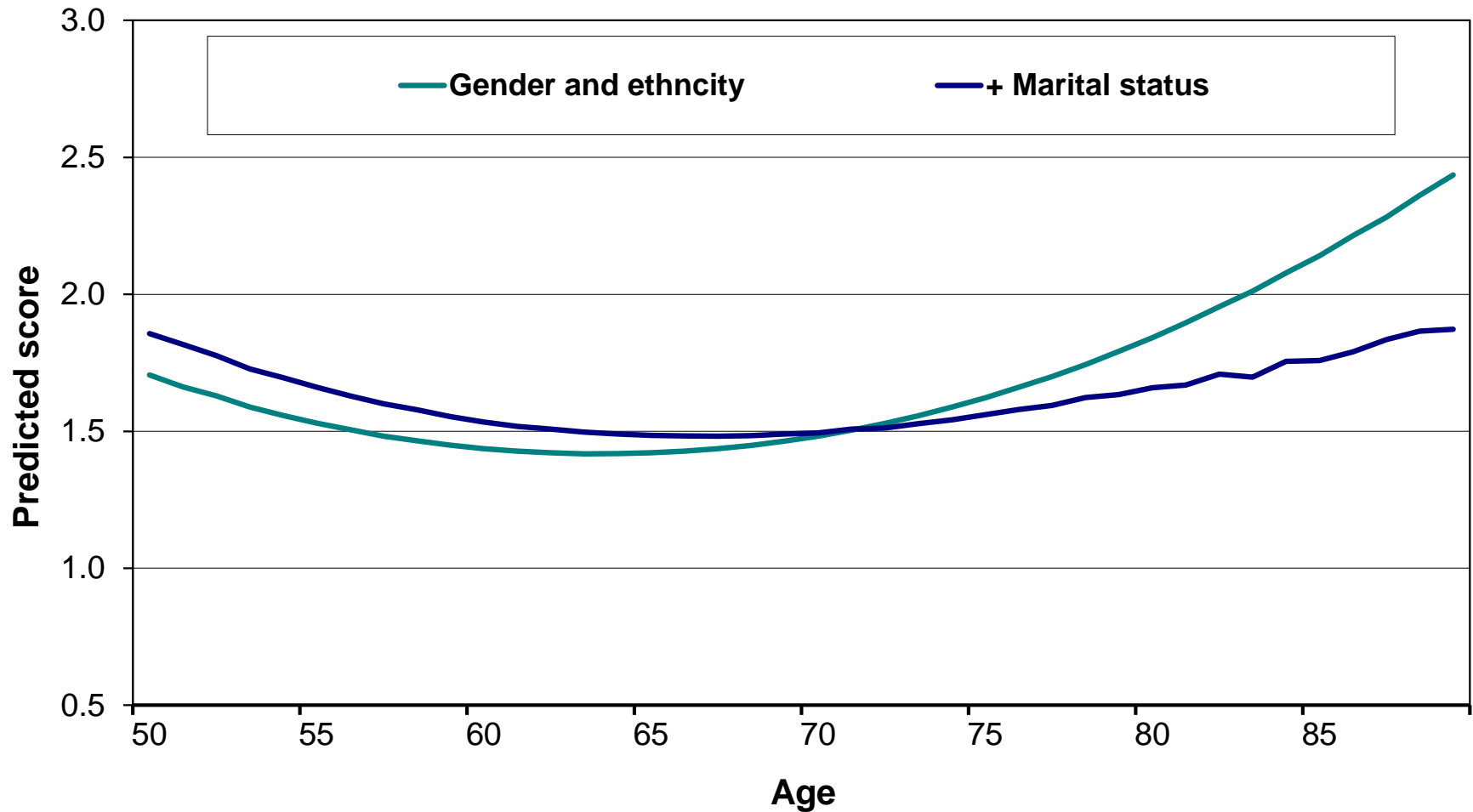
(Jivraj *et al.* 2014)

Age and depression: explaining the relationship



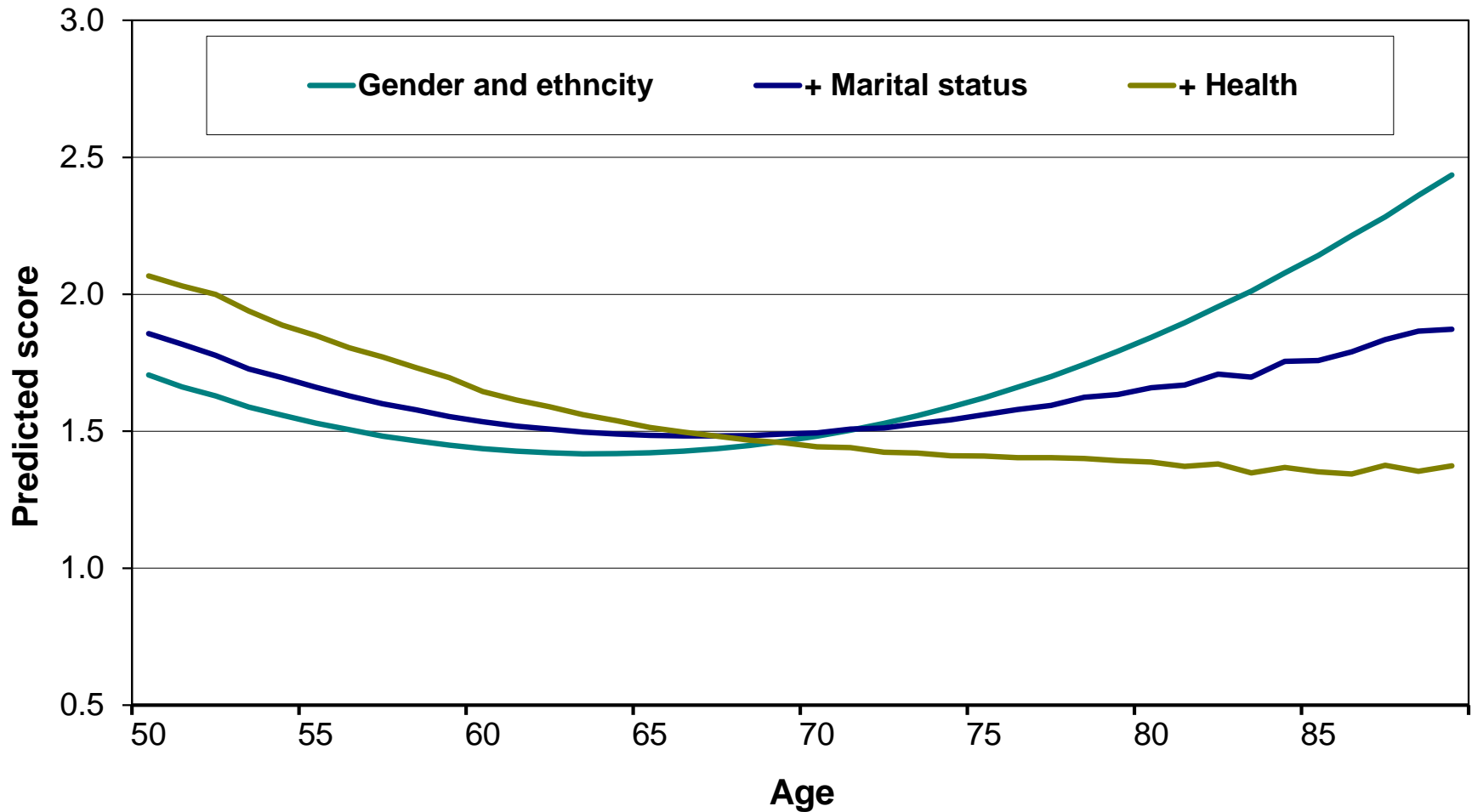
(Jivraj *et al.* 2014)

Age and depression: explaining the relationship



(Jivraj *et al.* 2014)

Age and depression: explaining the relationship

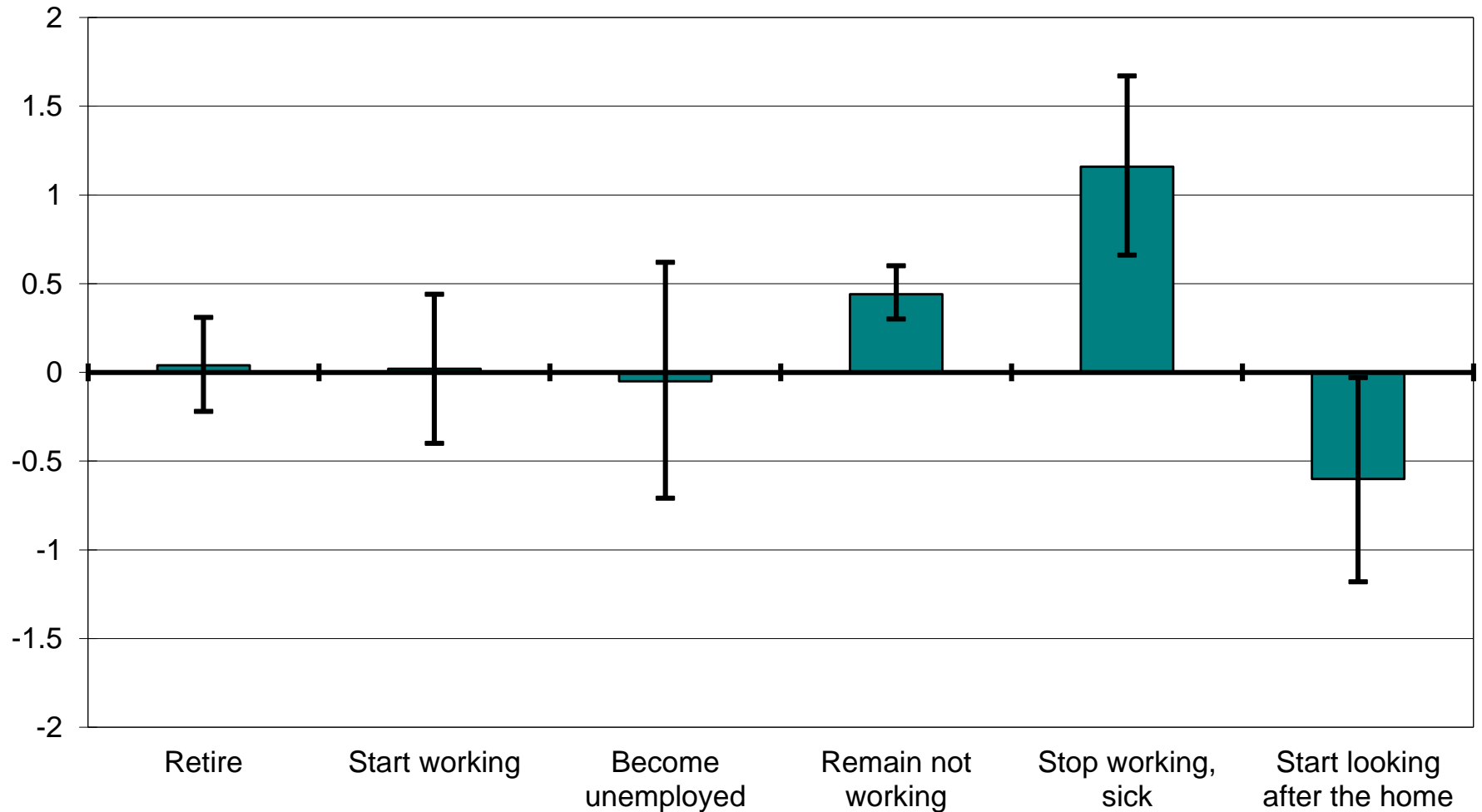


(Jivraj *et al.* 2014)

What is the role of paid work and retirement?

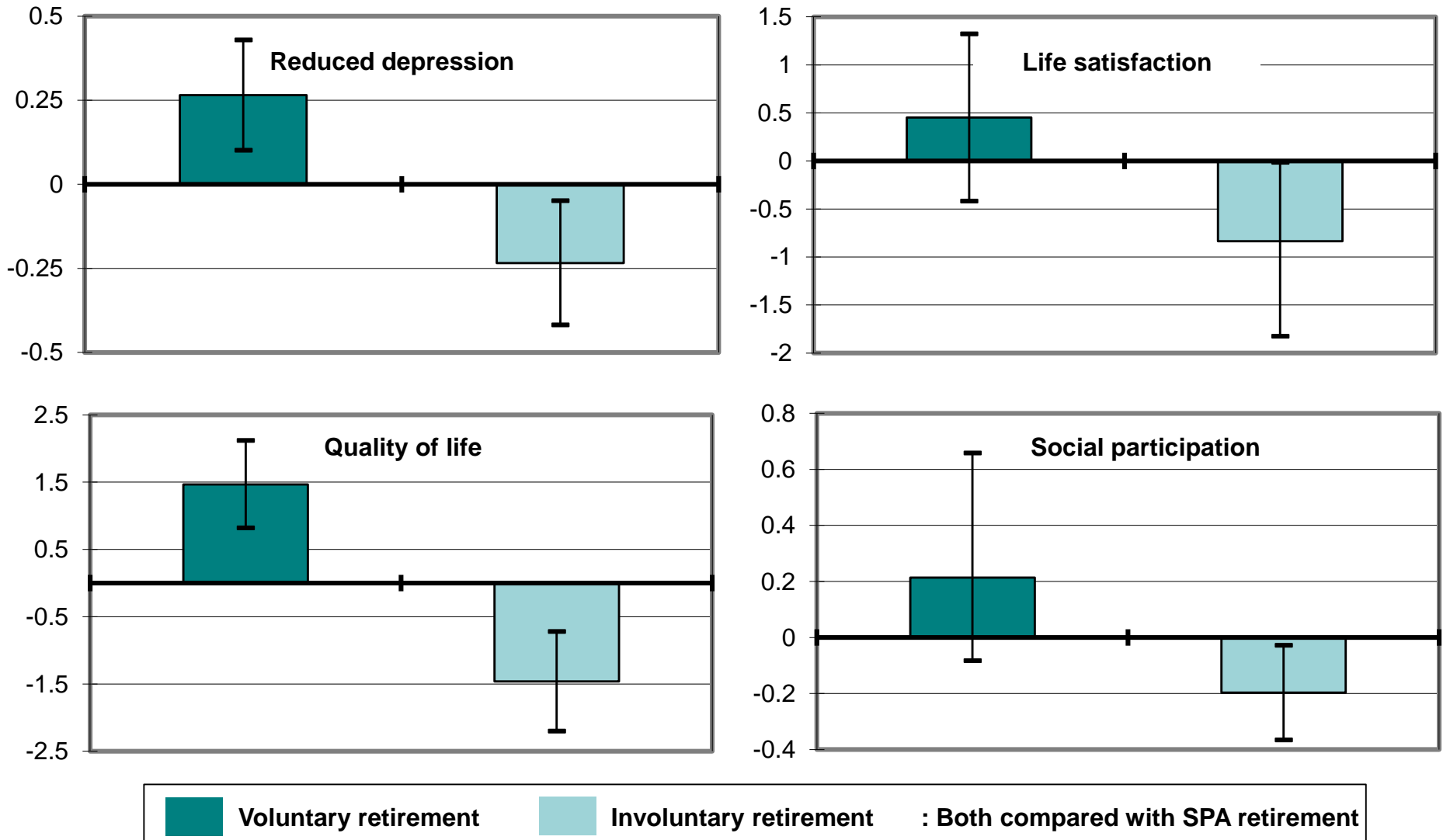
Impact of employment change on health

(Change in depression score compared with remaining in work)



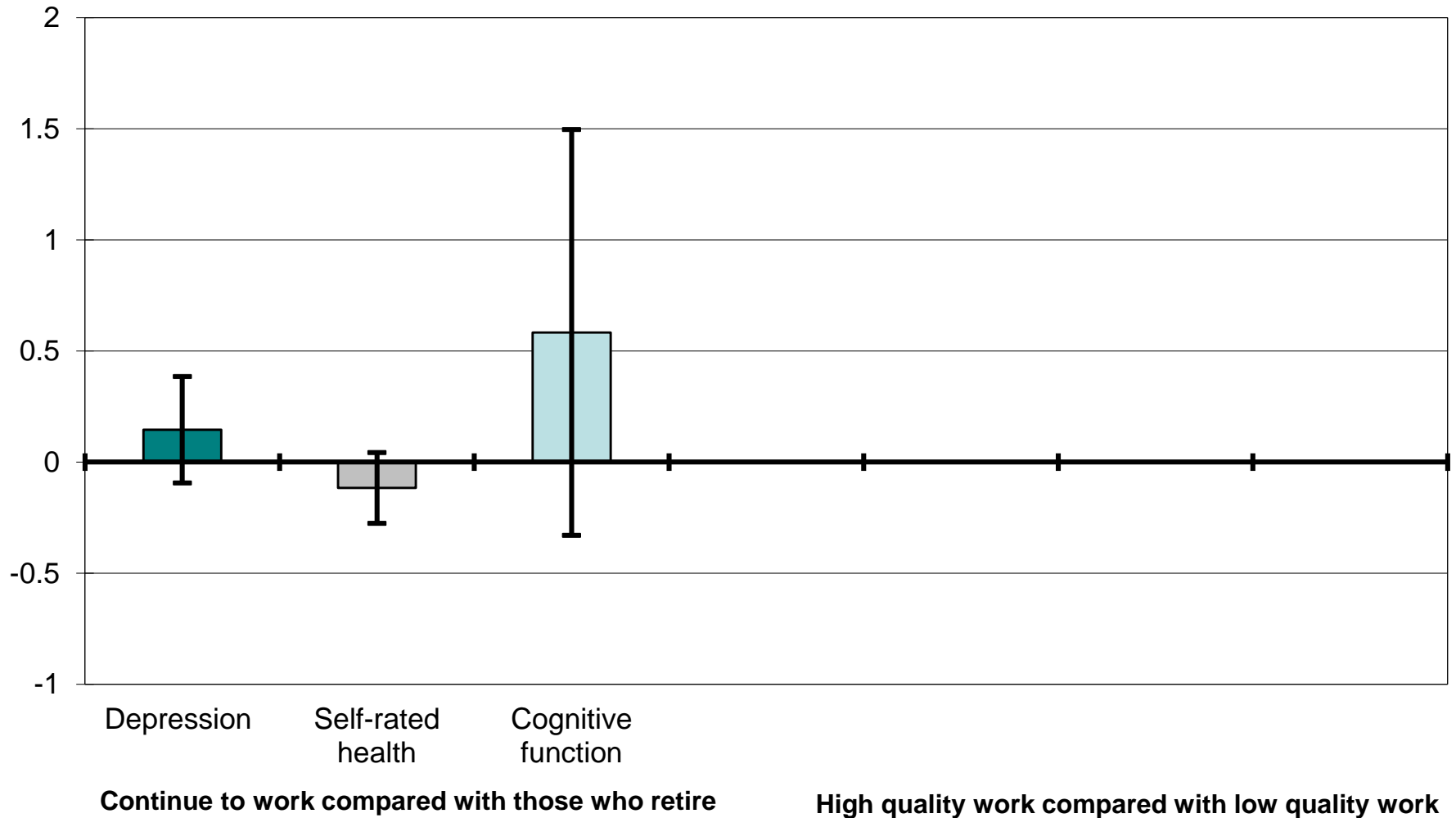
Those \leq state pension age
Models adjusted for gender, age and depression score at wave 1

Wellbeing and type of retirement transition



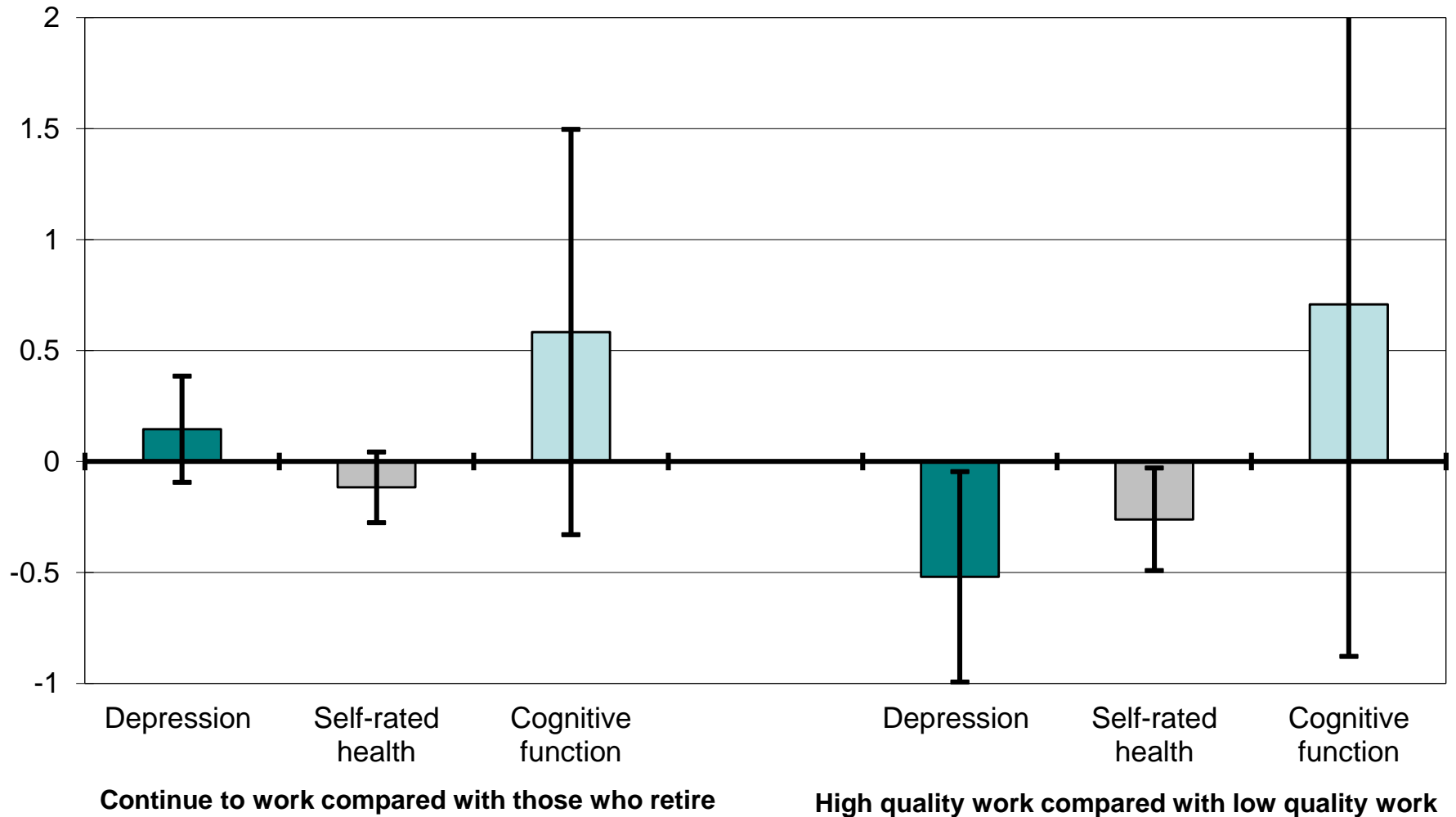
(Matthews and Nazroo 2016)

Impact of working post-retirement age on health



(Matthews and Nazroo 2015 – propensity score matching)

Impact of working post-retirement age on health



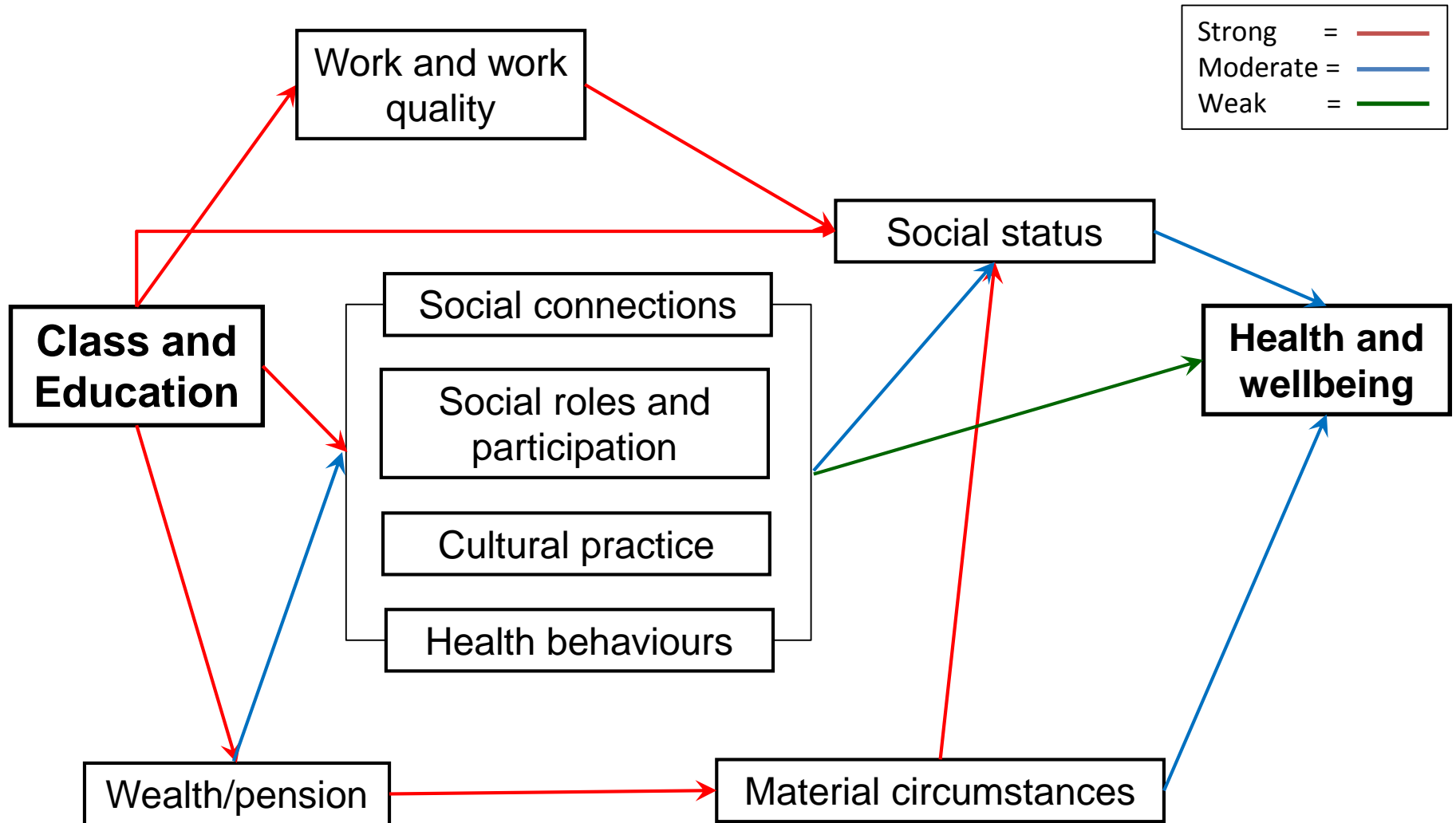
(Matthews and Nazroo 2015 – propensity score matching)

The importance of class in later life

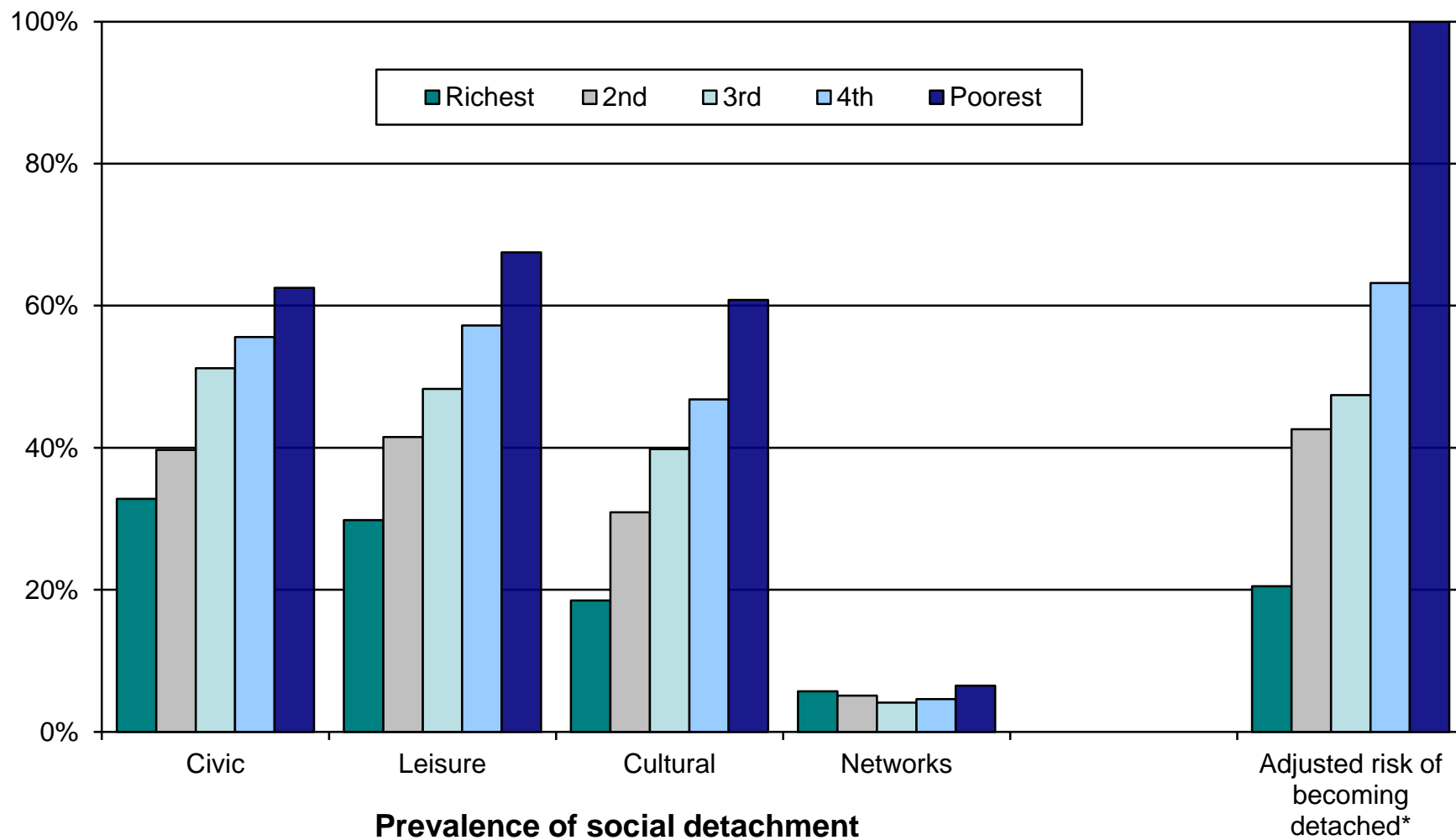
How can we understand class in later life?

- Inequalities research typically operationalises class with a measure of occupation (sometimes education), so those of working age have been the main focus.
- Class is largely theorised in terms of the impact of labour position on material and psychosocial factors, which in turn impact on relevant outcomes, such as health and wellbeing.
- But, occupational class (and education) may no longer adequately capture (processes of) stratification in societies where consumption and practice – reflecting social and cultural capital – have become significant markers of social status.
- This may be particularly pertinent to those post-retirement, for whom (former) occupation may have less direct salience, highlighting the need to consider processes of stratification beyond labour relations.

Class-related pathways in later life



Social detachment and wealth



* Percentage of risk of poorest, over a two year period, adjusted for education, health, car ownership, age, gender, etc.

(Jivraj *et al.* 2012)

Experiences of volunteering

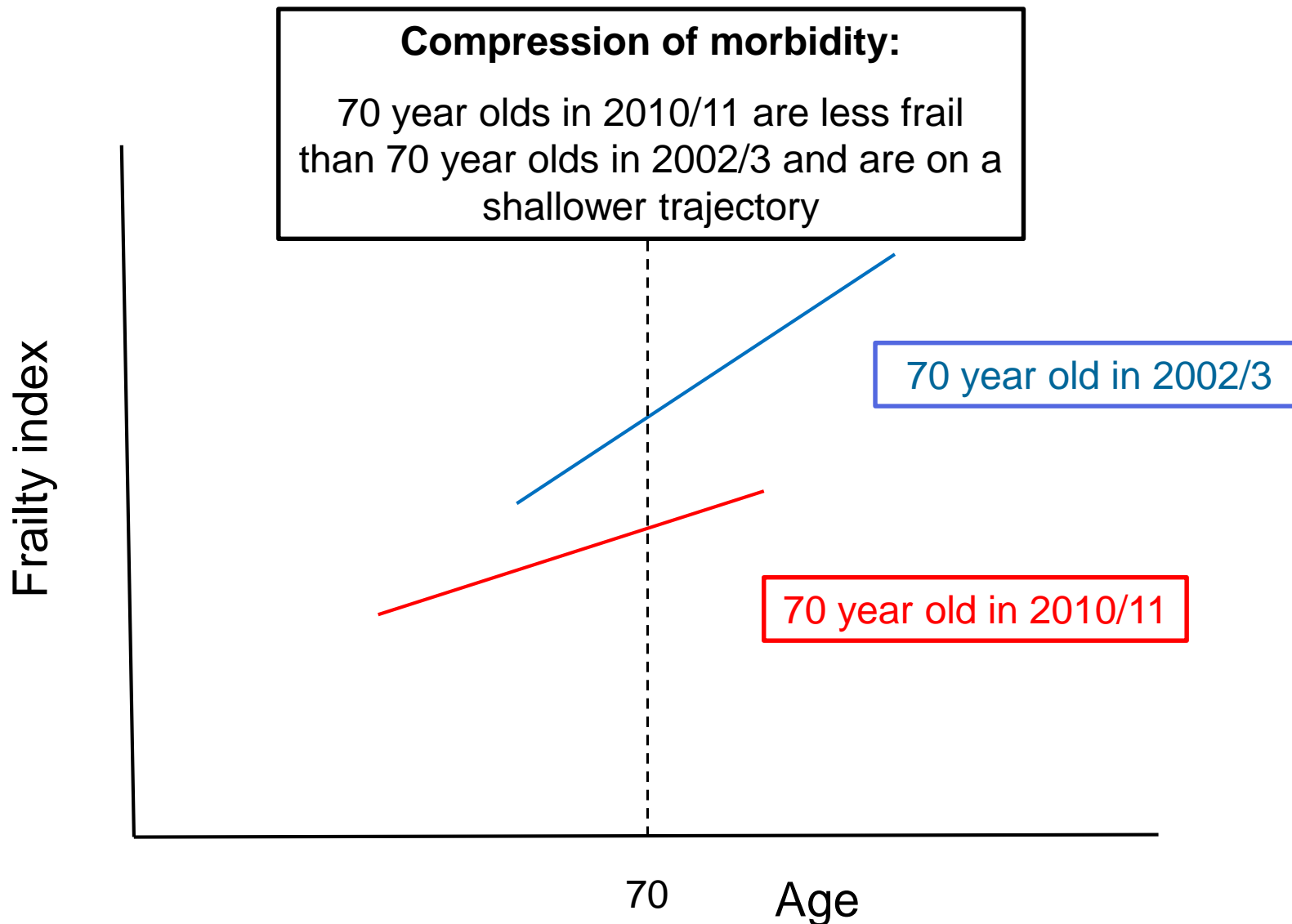
White man, age 66, retired aged 58

We travel a lot. That's the other thing I do in my spare time, I do travel talks for the local hospice for charity. I did two last week actually. People like ... retired businessman's association, and I talked to them about Japan where my daughter had lived for 4 years and we visited them quite a lot. So I do slide shows. And I did Peru on Friday ... I do those I suppose ... well once or twice a month I suppose. Have lunch and ... or evening sessions with different groups of people, talk to them about different places round the world that we've visited.

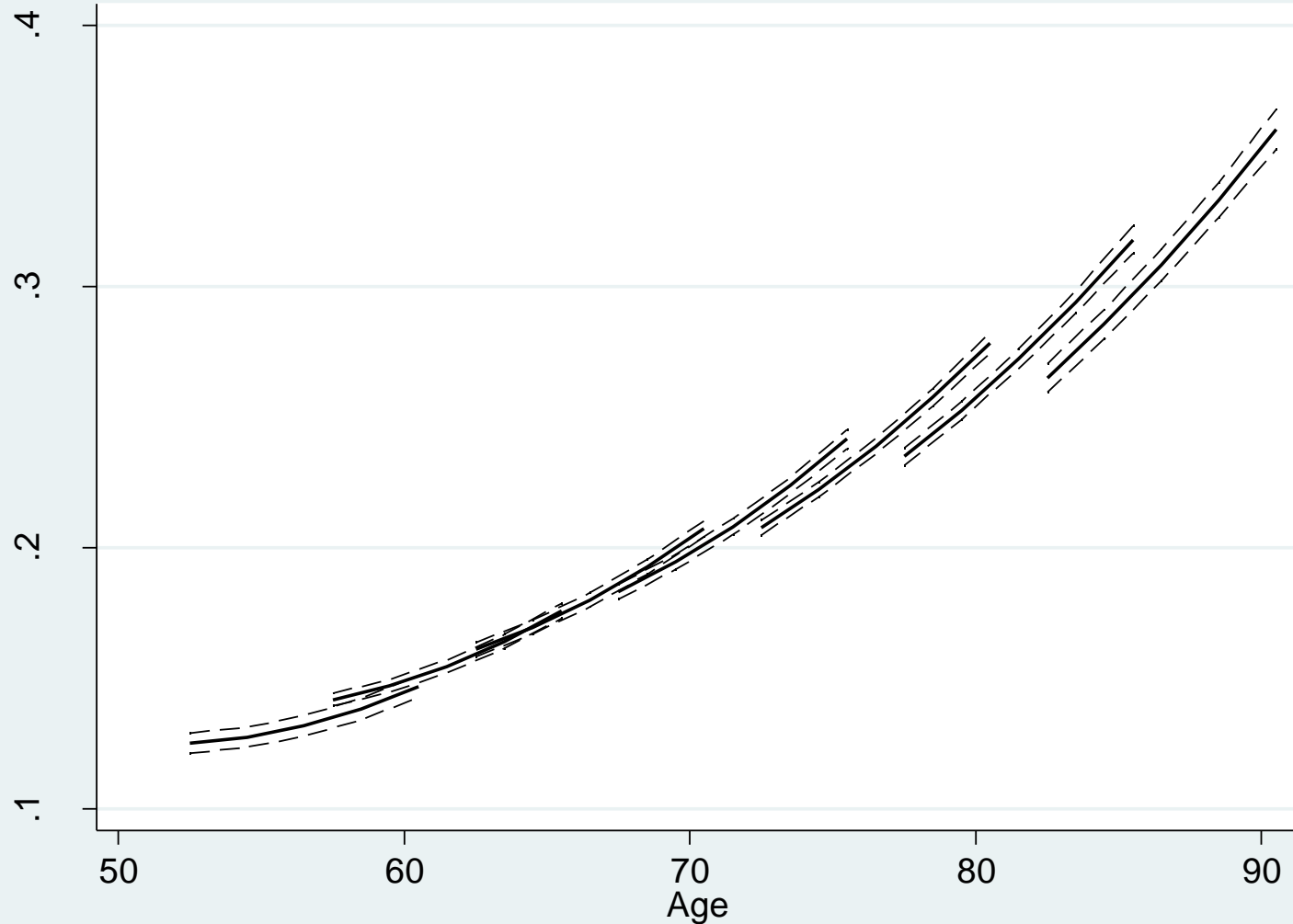
When I was at the county high school I looked after Modern Languages for a period of time as a governor. And so I had a talk about ... the area around Avignon. So I had some slides and did a talk in French ... we then set a test for the youngsters. And we tried to make the subject live rather than ... you know. So I could bring from something outside into the school. You know with my own knowledge of languages, which is reasonable, and with [the teacher's] expertise we could actually together make the language more interesting than just learning for the sake of learning.

Why are these inequalities important?

Modelling frailty trajectories by age cohort

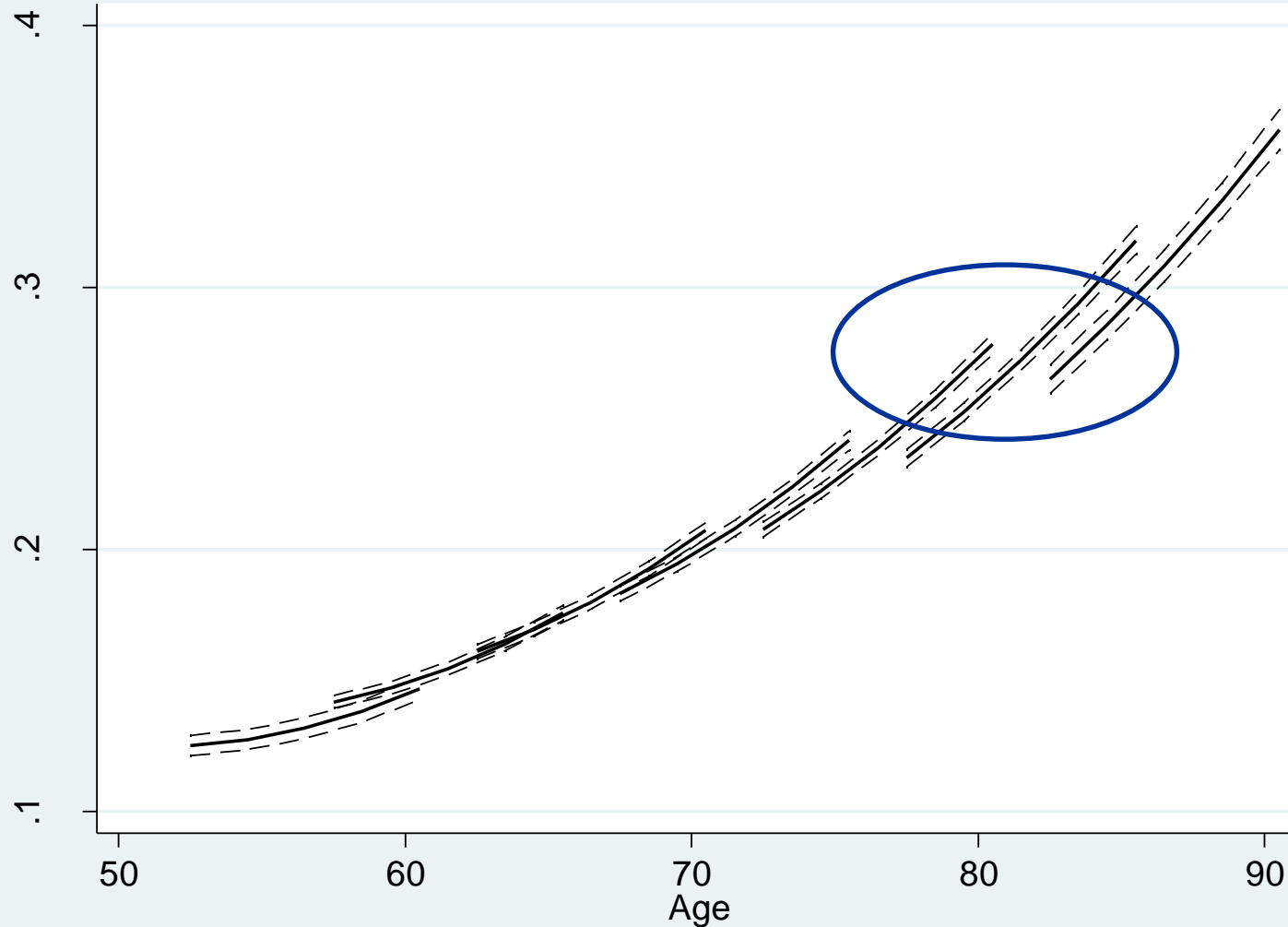


Frailty trajectories by cohort



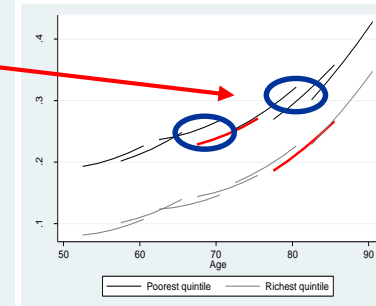
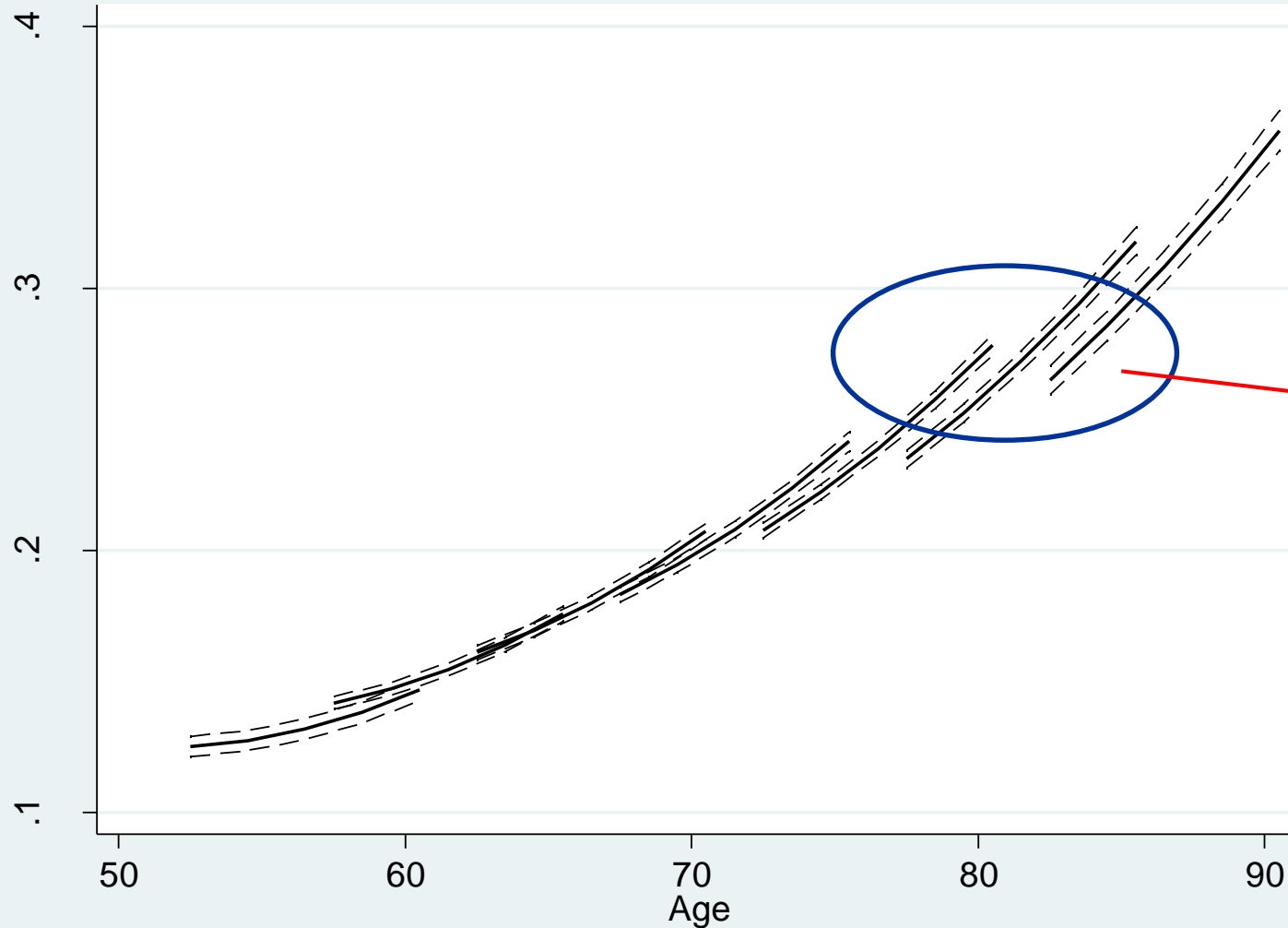
(Marshall *et al.* 2015)

Frailty trajectories by cohort



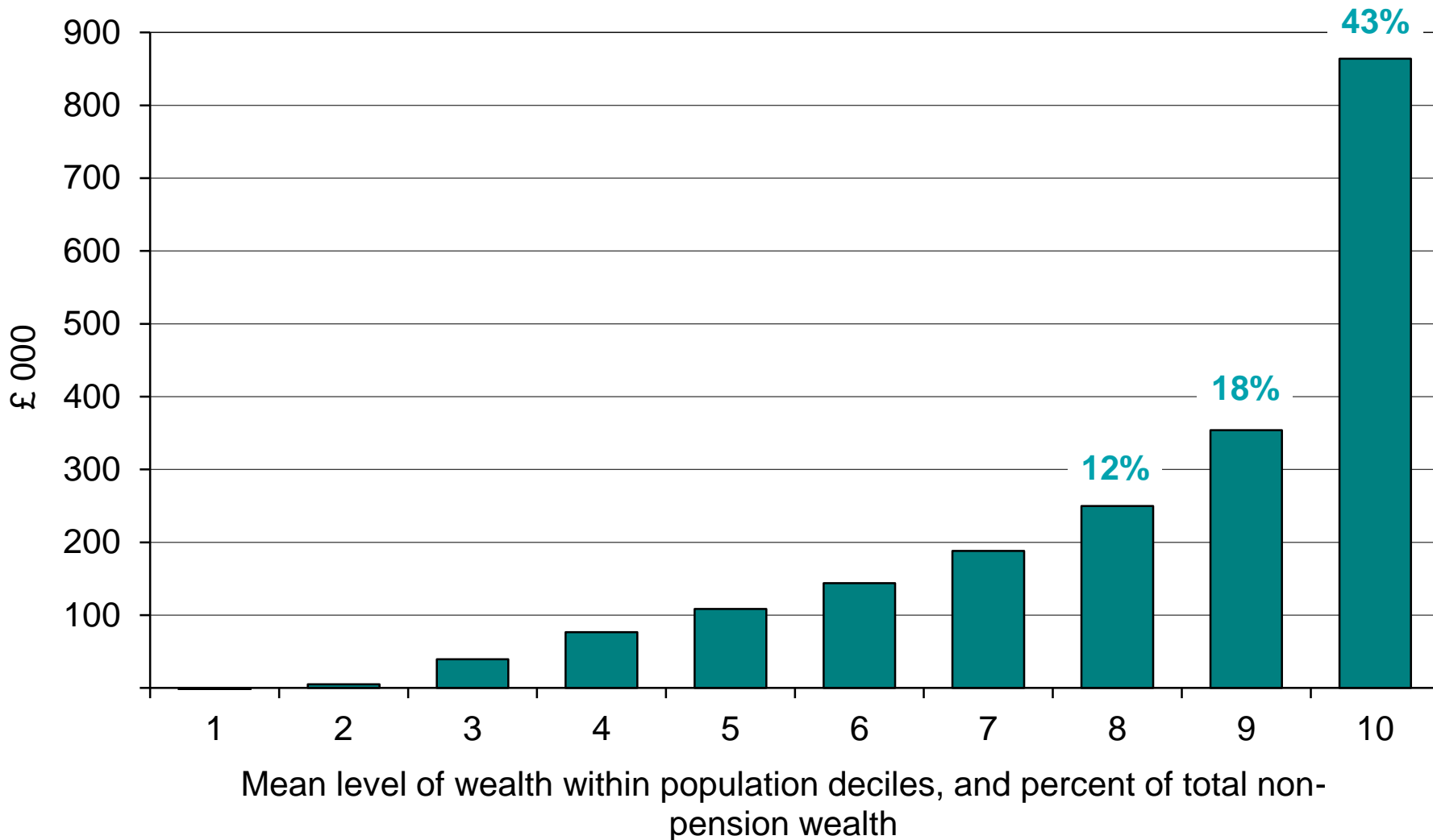
(Marshall *et al.* 2015)

Frailty trajectories by cohort

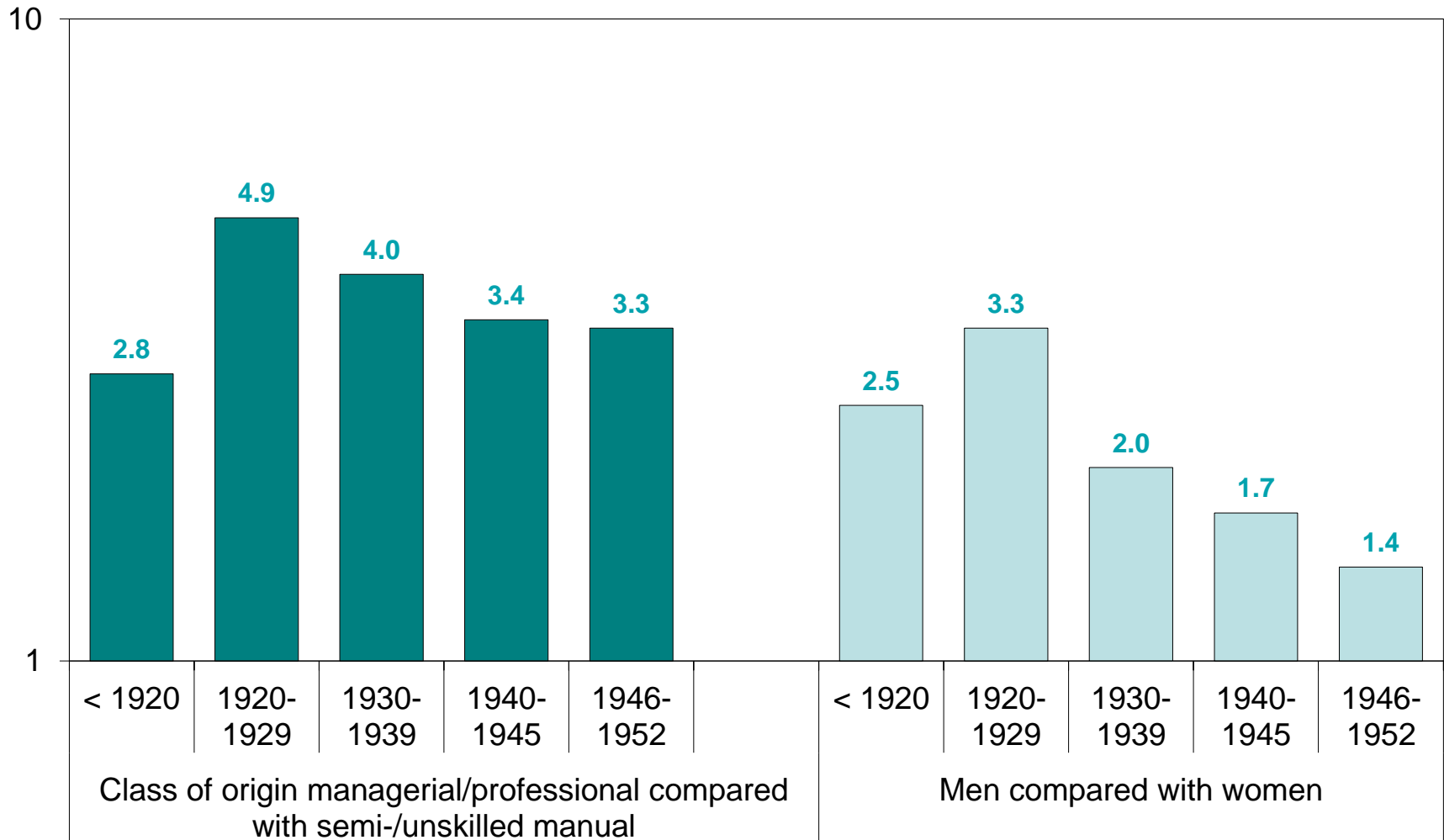


(Marshall *et al.* 2015)

The distribution of non-pension wealth in later life



Social mobility: odds to be in a professional or managerial class for five age cohorts



Concluding comments

- There are significant class (and ethnic and gender) inequalities that continue into later life.
- These inequalities are present for almost all relevant outcomes – health, psychological, social – and they are shaped by later life transitions and circumstances, such as those related to work and marital status.
- The mechanisms through which these inequalities operate are complex, inter-related processes, operating over time:
 - Material/economic;
 - Social and cultural capital;
 - Employment quality and retirement processes;
 - Social status and valued identities.
- There are important variations by cohort, with a suggestion of increases in levels of morbidity for the poorest and a widening of inequalities.
- There are also important period changes that are reshaping later life and have implications for inequalities (occupational structures, pensions, marriage and fertility patterns, digital technologies).

Policy interventions

- All of this has implications for policies to address ageing, however, socioeconomic inequalities in later life are an absent topic in policy discussion and development.
- Almost no consideration of inequalities in discussions around later life employment, active ageing, pensions, social care and welfare reform.
- Almost no interventions to address inequalities in health in later life.
- And for those interventions that are focussed on later life, there is no direct evaluation of their impact on inequalities.
- Policy discourse and focus is on empowerment, productivity, individualisation of risk and responsibility in the context of welfare retrenchment.
- In fact, there is a policy space for interventions targeted at reducing inequality and increasing social justice: pensions; job quality; housing; and social roles that provide valued identities, contribute to personal development and enhance social status.

Acknowledgements

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