Inequalities in well-being in later life

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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)

The perceived impact of an ageing world

- Vastly increase the cost of pension and health-benefit programs;
- Generate enormous pressure to reduce benefits, raise taxes, and reduce spending on other public services;
- Higher taxes for businesses;
- Reduced labour supply;
- Decreased consumption;
- Extended working lives;
- Increased family involvement in care provision;
- Reduced levels of publicly provided benefits and pensions.

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

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

Adapted from The Commission on Global Aging (1999)

"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)

- But what about compression of morbidity and improvements in living standards? How is the experience of ageing changing?

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ELSA English Longitudinal Study of Ageing

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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)

A Third Age?
Healthy, wealthy and engaged in society

- Post-retirement, post-parenting, but pre-dependency.
- Contributing to society:
  - Voluntary/community activities;
  - Political/civic engagement.
- Consuming and enjoying life, leisure and pleasure – cultural mainstream.
- Self-fulfilment:
  - Having a role;
  - Having status;
  - Having fun.
- Are they also greedy, self-interested baby-boomers, who benefited from no-longer sustainable social welfare, and ensuing intergenerational conflict?
- But the resources to enjoy a ‘third’ age, are strongly related to socio-economic position – how do class inequalities operate post-retirement?

Contrasting images of ageing:
reflections of class?

A political storm is brewing over proposals to raise the state pension age to 67

(BBC News 2005)

Research questions

- How does wellbeing evolve in later life?
- What are the effects of ageing (cross-sectional and longitudinal) on wellbeing?
- Does controlling for circumstances (health, social support, partnership, economic status, …) explain ageing effects?
- Is there evidence for a third age (Laslett 1989) and what role does retirement have in this?
- Do different measures show similar effects?
- What evidence is there for class inequalities and inequalities that persist across age cohorts?

The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (www.ifs.org.uk/elsa)

- A panel study of people aged 50 and older, six waves of data available, alongside baseline (wave 0) data, and seventh wave about to start.
- Sample at wave 1 (2002) was approximately 11,400 people born before 1st March 1952 who were in the private household sector. Drawn from Health Survey for England (wave 0). Periodic sample boosts.
- Face to face interview every two years since 2002, with a biomedical assessment carried out by a nurse every four years.
- Those incapable of doing the interview have a proxy interview.
- End of life interviews are carried out with the partners or carers of people who died after wave 1.
- Detailed content on: demographics, health, physical and cognitive performance, biomarkers, wellbeing, economics, housing, employment, social relationships, social civic and cultural participation, life history.
- Sister study to HRS, SHARE, KLOSA, CHARLS, etc.

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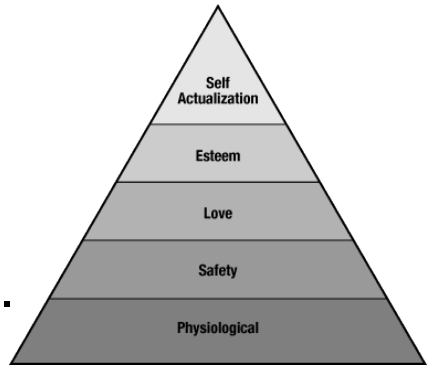
Approaches to measuring wellbeing

- How do we adequately capture different dimensions of wellbeing?
- Hedonic wellbeing:
  - Maximisation of pleasure, minimisation of suffering (Aristippus of Cyrene, Epicurus, Bentham, Mill);
  - Affective and cognitive dimensions;
    - Both positive and negative affect – **CES-D depression symptoms** in ELSA;
    - And evaluation of life – **Diener satisfaction with life** in ELSA.

- Eudaimonic wellbeing:
  - Personal development and realising one's potential (Aristotle, Erikson 1959, Maslow 1968);
  - Many measures – **CASP** (15 item version) in ELSA.



- Experienced wellbeing (**Day Reconstruction Method** in ELSA) alongside evaluative wellbeing.

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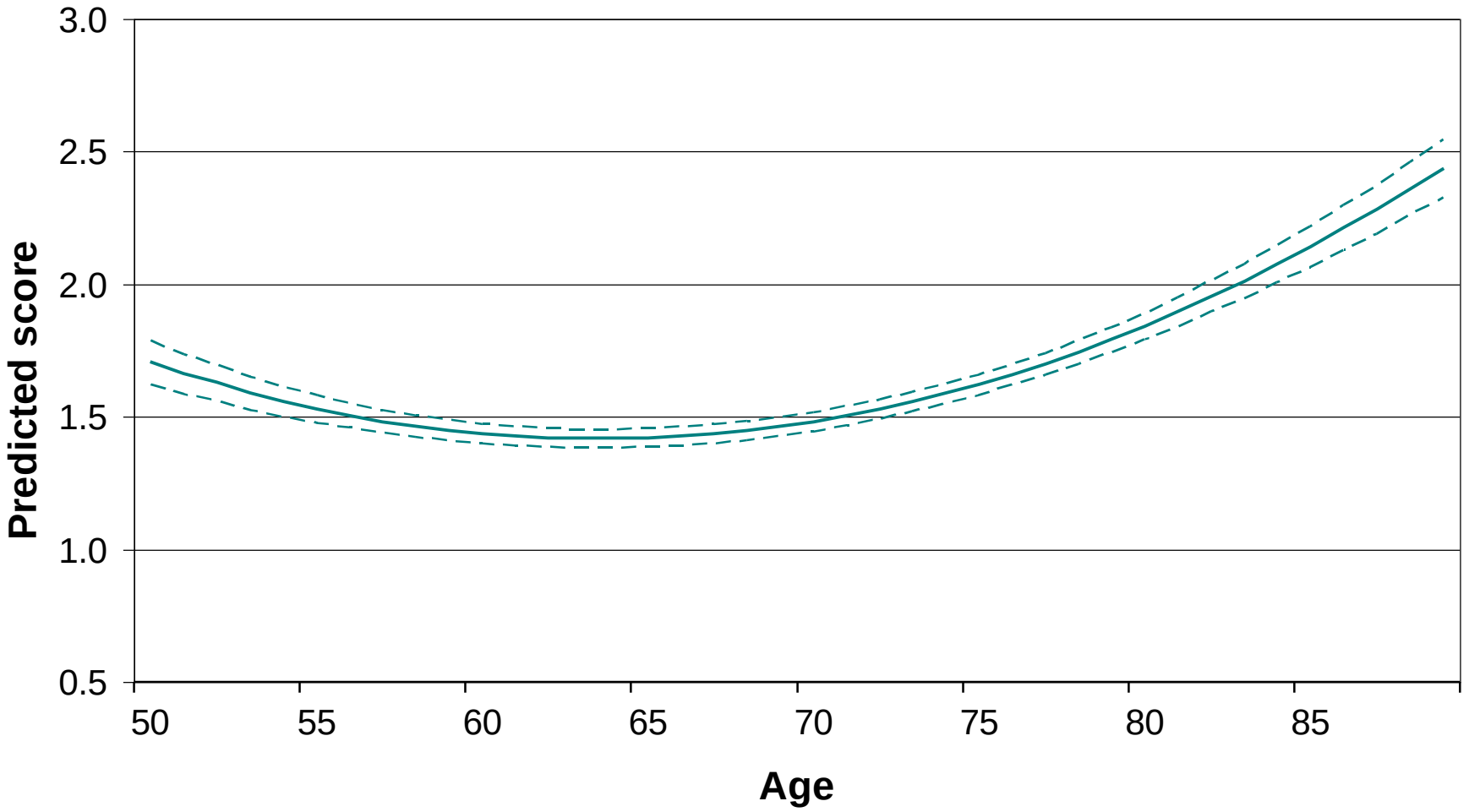
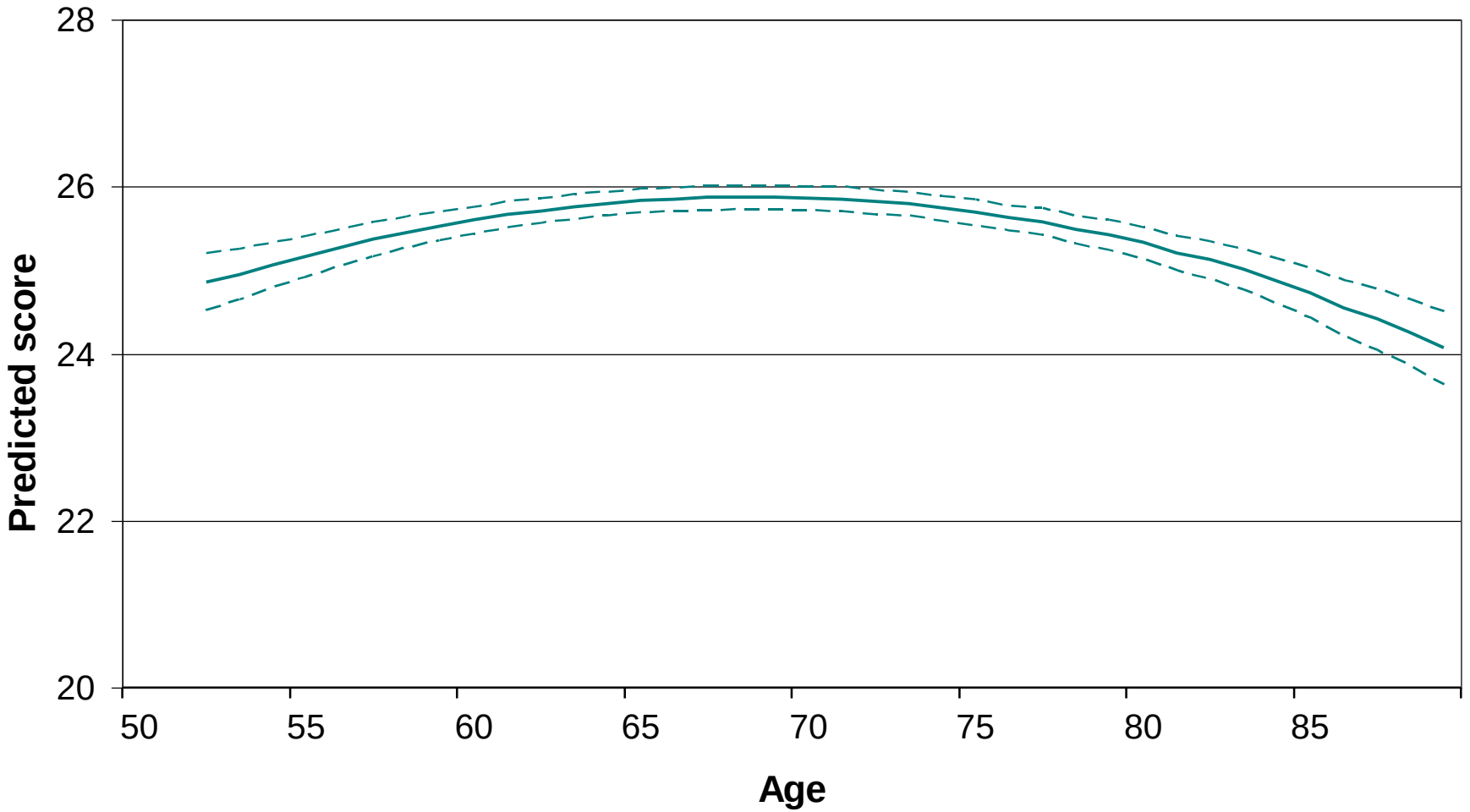
Main analytical methods

- Five waves of data covering eight years (2002 to 2010)
- Longitudinal multilevel growth models, observations (level 1) nested within individuals (level 2).
- Observation of sample over time allows cohorts with overlapping ages.
- Model age related trajectories with random intercept (age cohort) and wave (ageing) terms, with interactions to allow growth to vary by cohort.
- Model transitions by including a range of (time-varying) covariates:
  - Demographic (gender and ethnicity);
  - Marital status;
  - Socioeconomic factors (wealth, occupational class, economic activity and education);
  - Health (limiting longterm illness, ADLs, IADLs, chronic conditions);
  - Social support (close contacts, support from contacts, caring and volunteering activities).

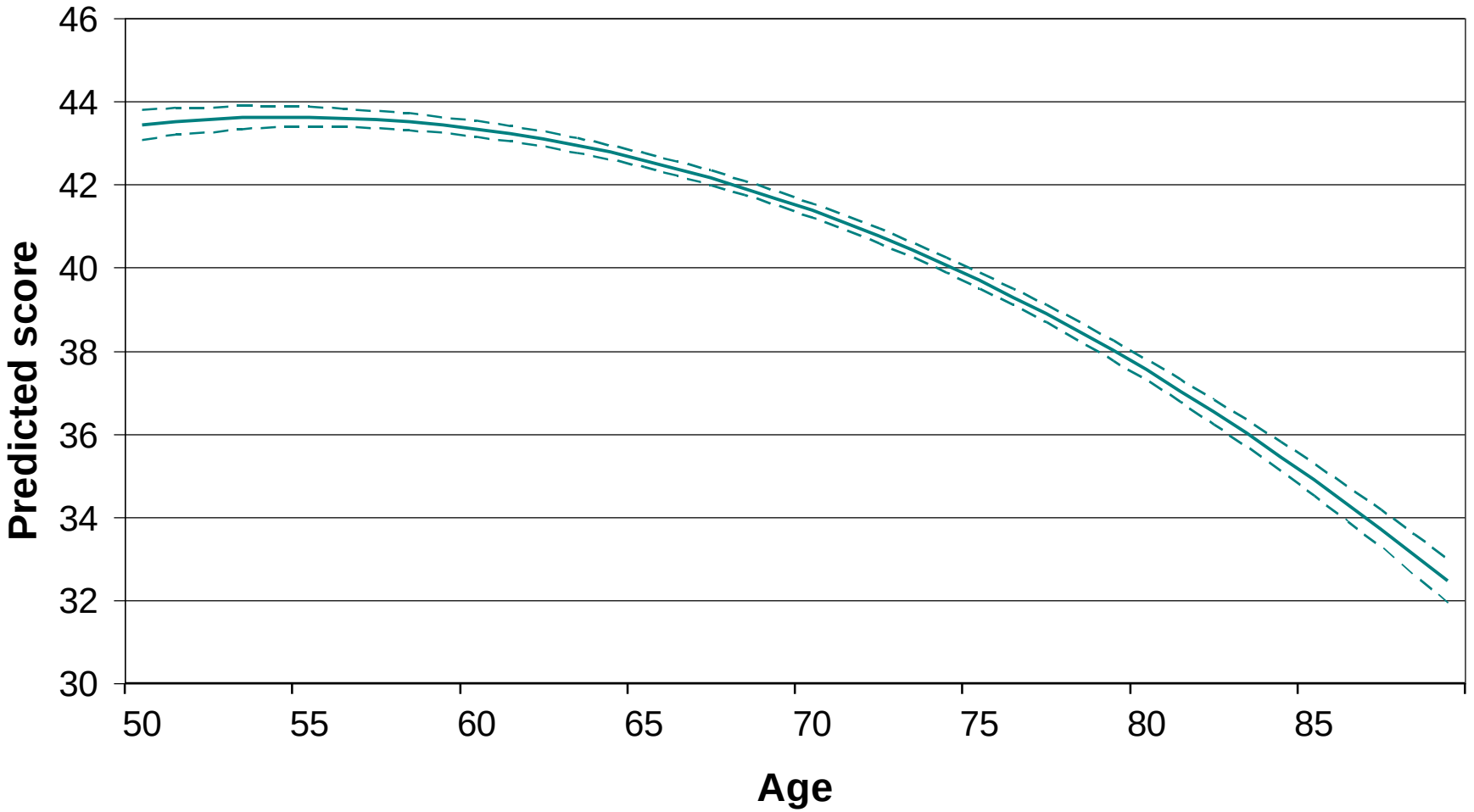
Age and negative affect
(CES-D score adjusted for gender and ethnicity)



Age and cognitive wellbeing
(Diener satisfaction with life score)



Age and eudaimonic wellbeing
(CASP quality of life score)



Retirement and depression
A transition model for those ≤ state pension age

Modelling depression score at wave 2: ordinal logistic regression coefficients

	Change in CES-D score
Remain working	0
Start working	0.02 (-0.40, 0.44)
Remain not working	0.44 (0.30, 0.60)
Become unemployed	-0.05 (-0.71, 0.62)
Stop working, sick	1.16 (0.66, 1.67)
Start looking after the home	-0.60 (-1.18, -0.03)
Retire	0.04 (-22, 0.31)

*Models adjusted for gender, age and depression score at wave 1

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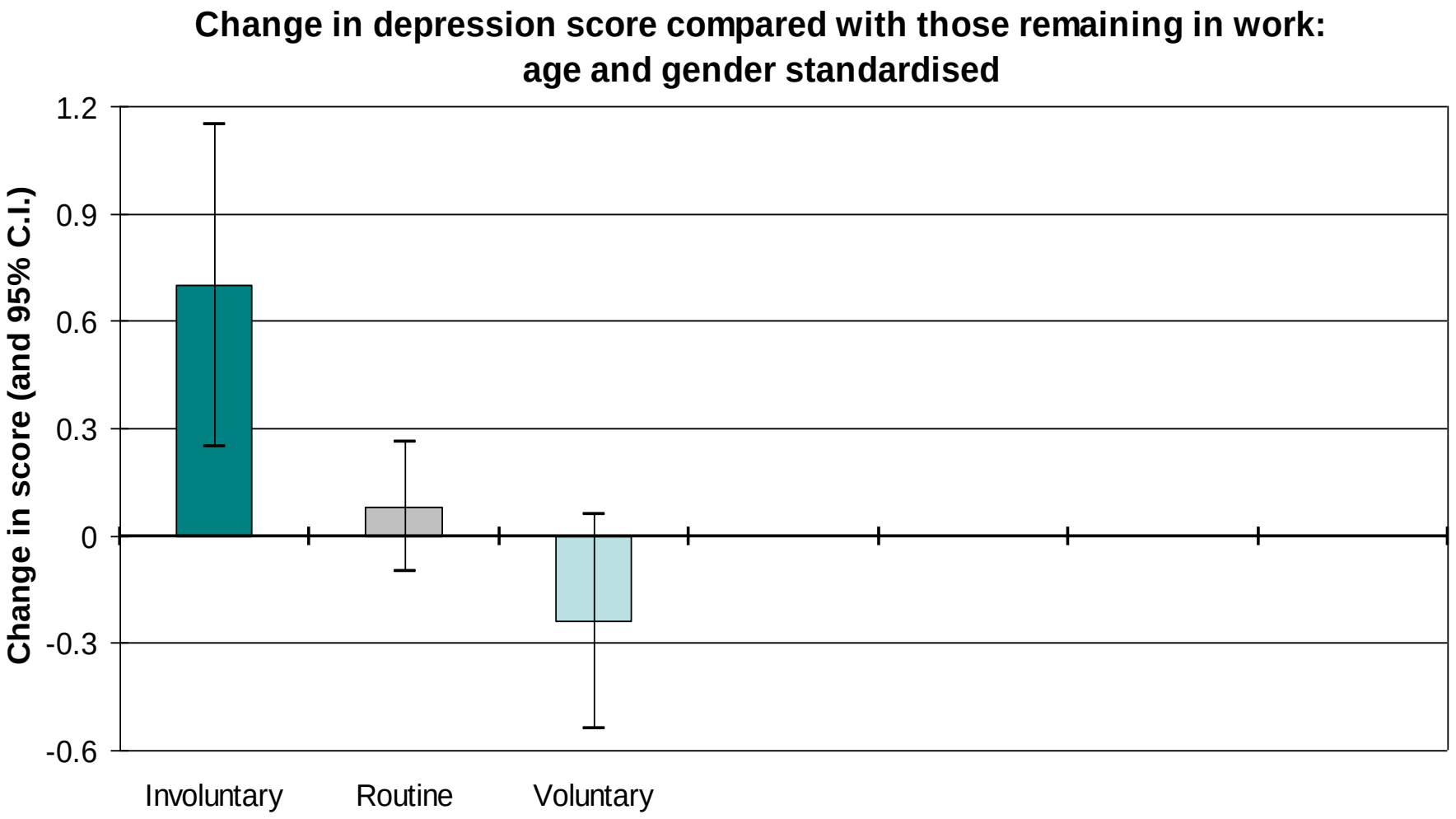
The impact of retirement on wellbeing

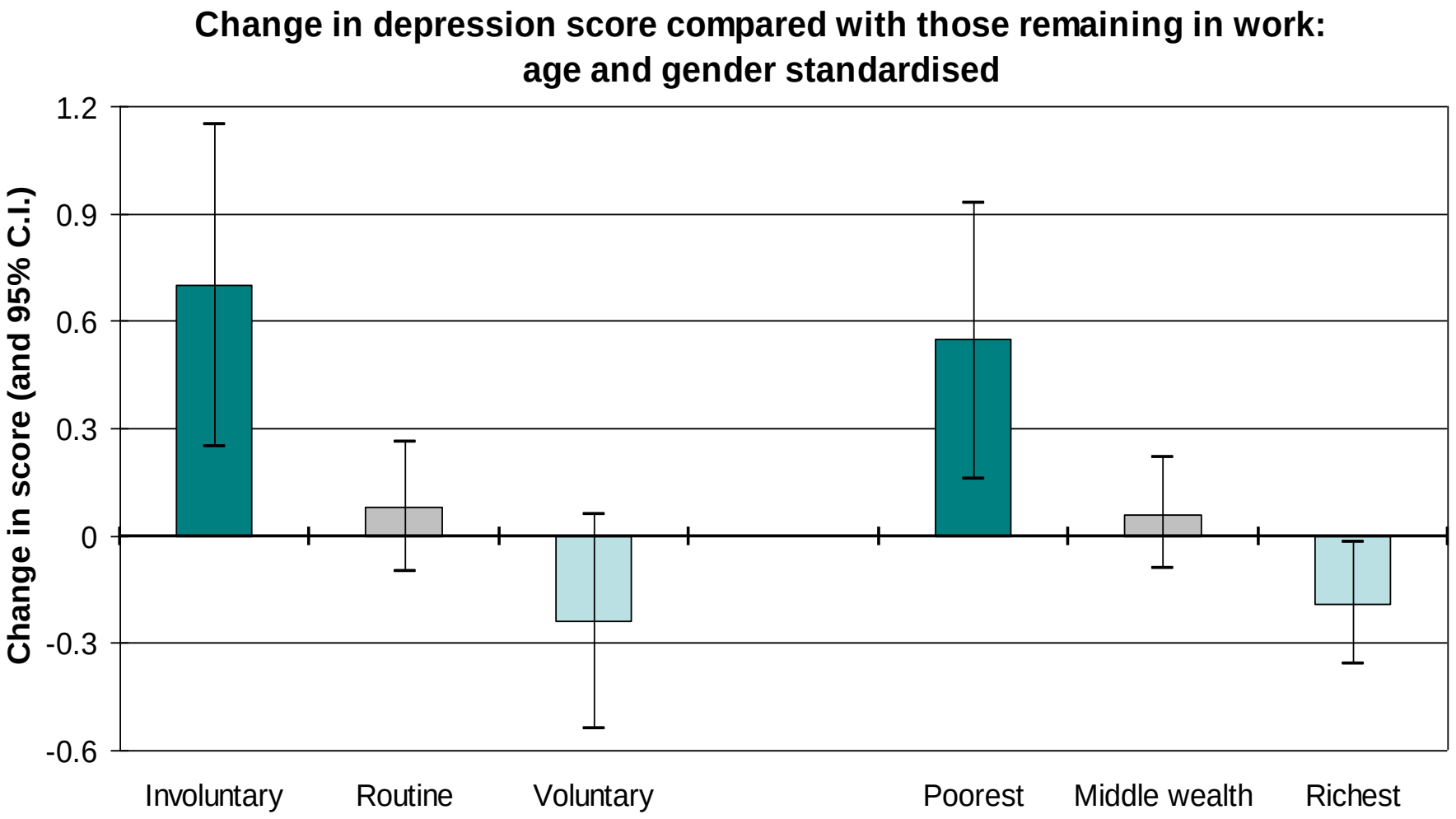
- Model transitions into retirement compared with those still working, for those aged 70 or younger and who are economically active.
- Examine effect of route into retirement (routine, voluntary, involuntary):
  - Routine retirement, because ‘reached retirement age’
  - Voluntary:
    - To enjoy life;
    - To spend time with partner or family;
    - Fed up with job and wanted a change;
    - To give the younger generation a chance;
    - Offered reasonable financial terms to retire early.
  - Involuntary:
    - Ill health (own, or of a relative/friend);
    - Made redundant;
    - Could not find another job.

Depression and type of retirement transition



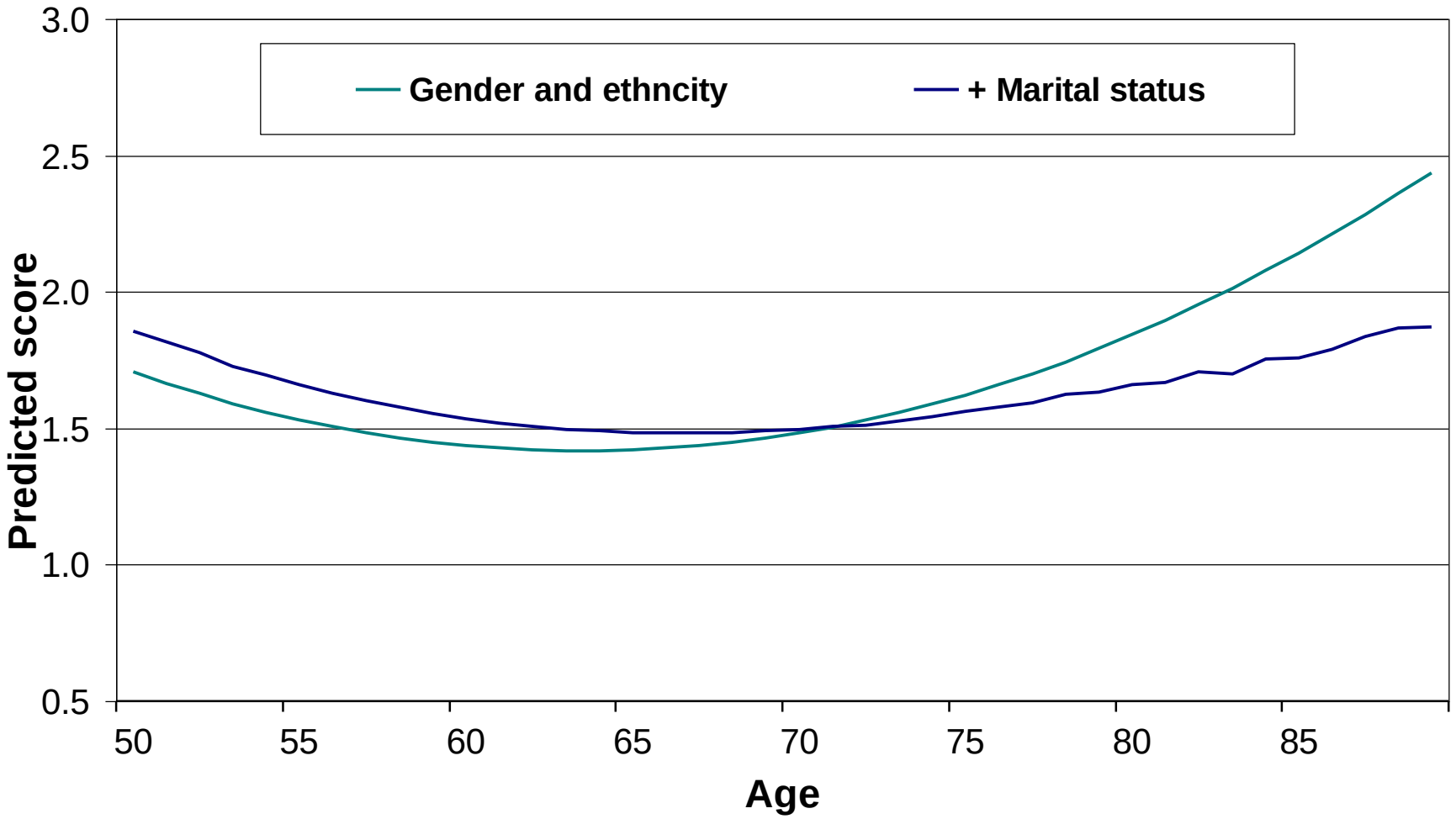
Regression model

Depression and type of retirement transition



Regression model

Age and negative affect: explaining the relationship



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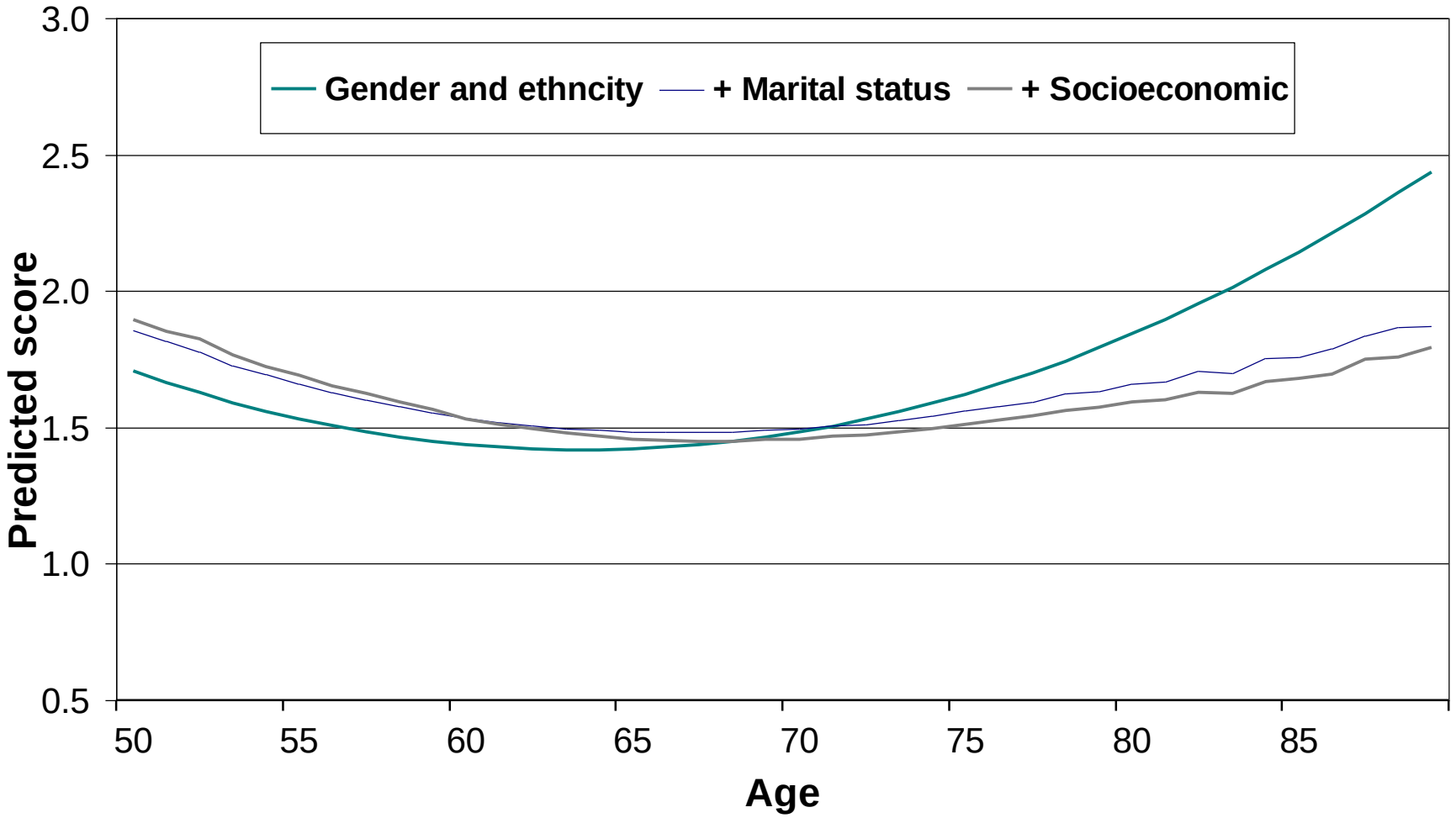

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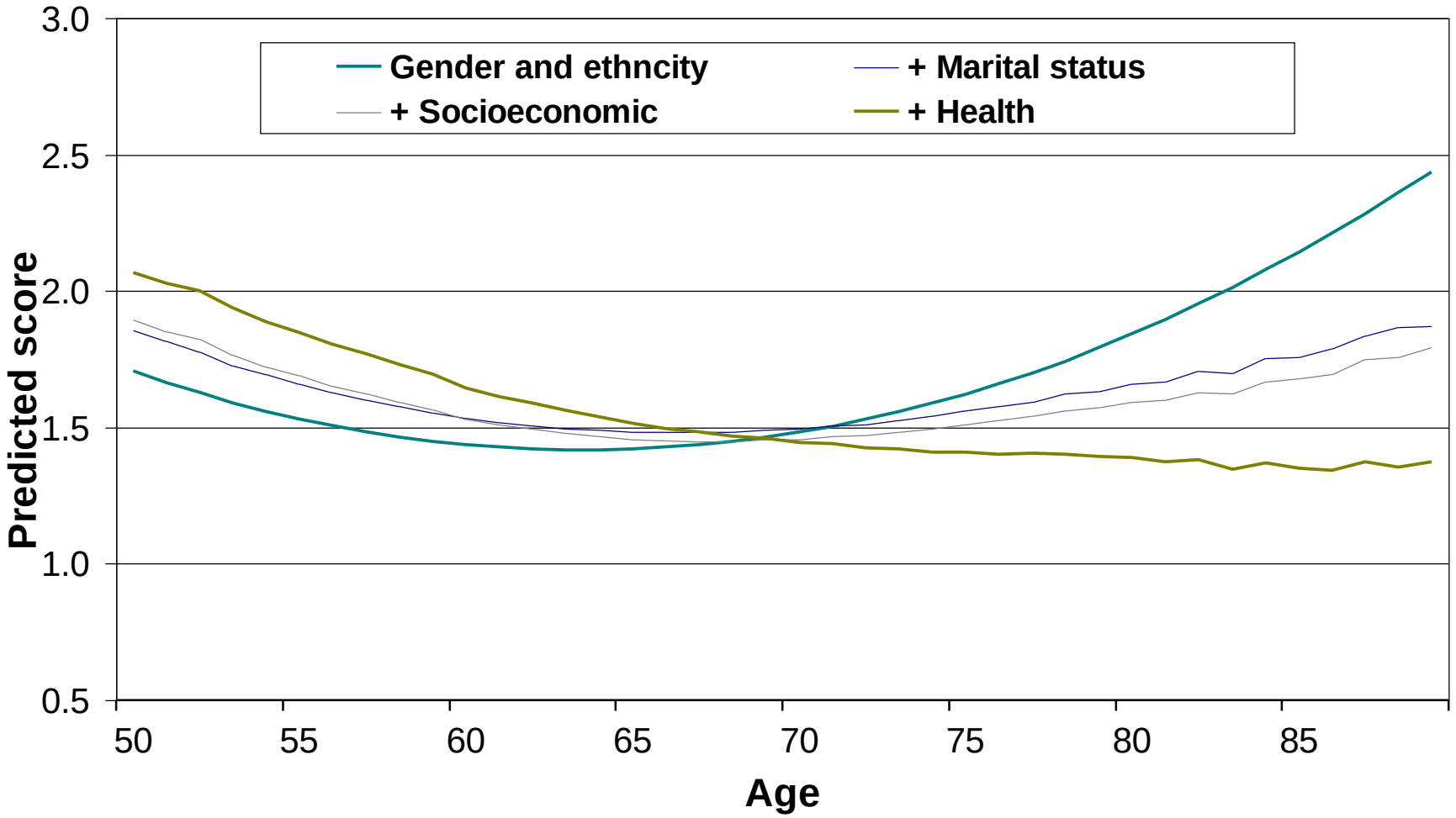

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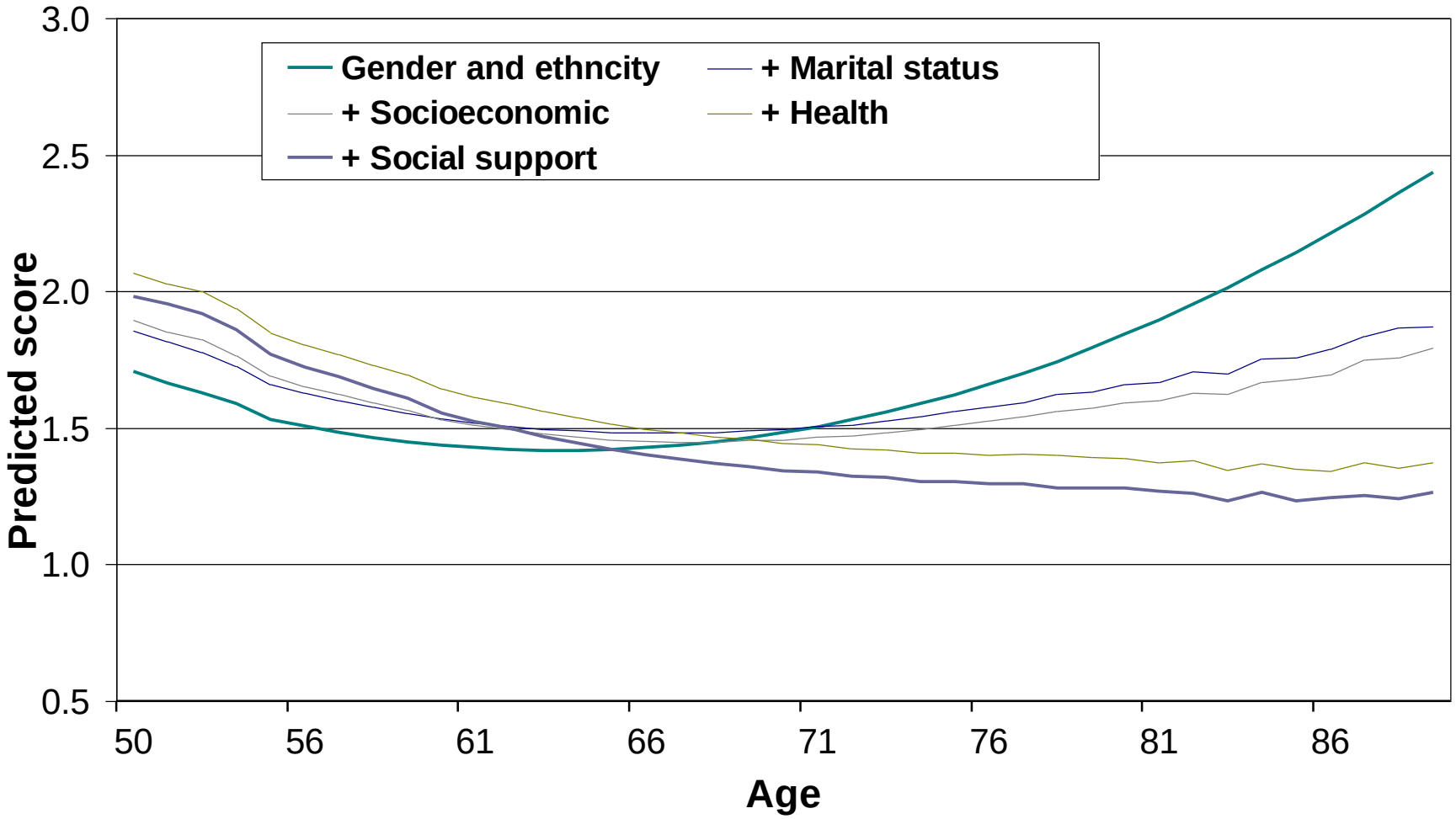
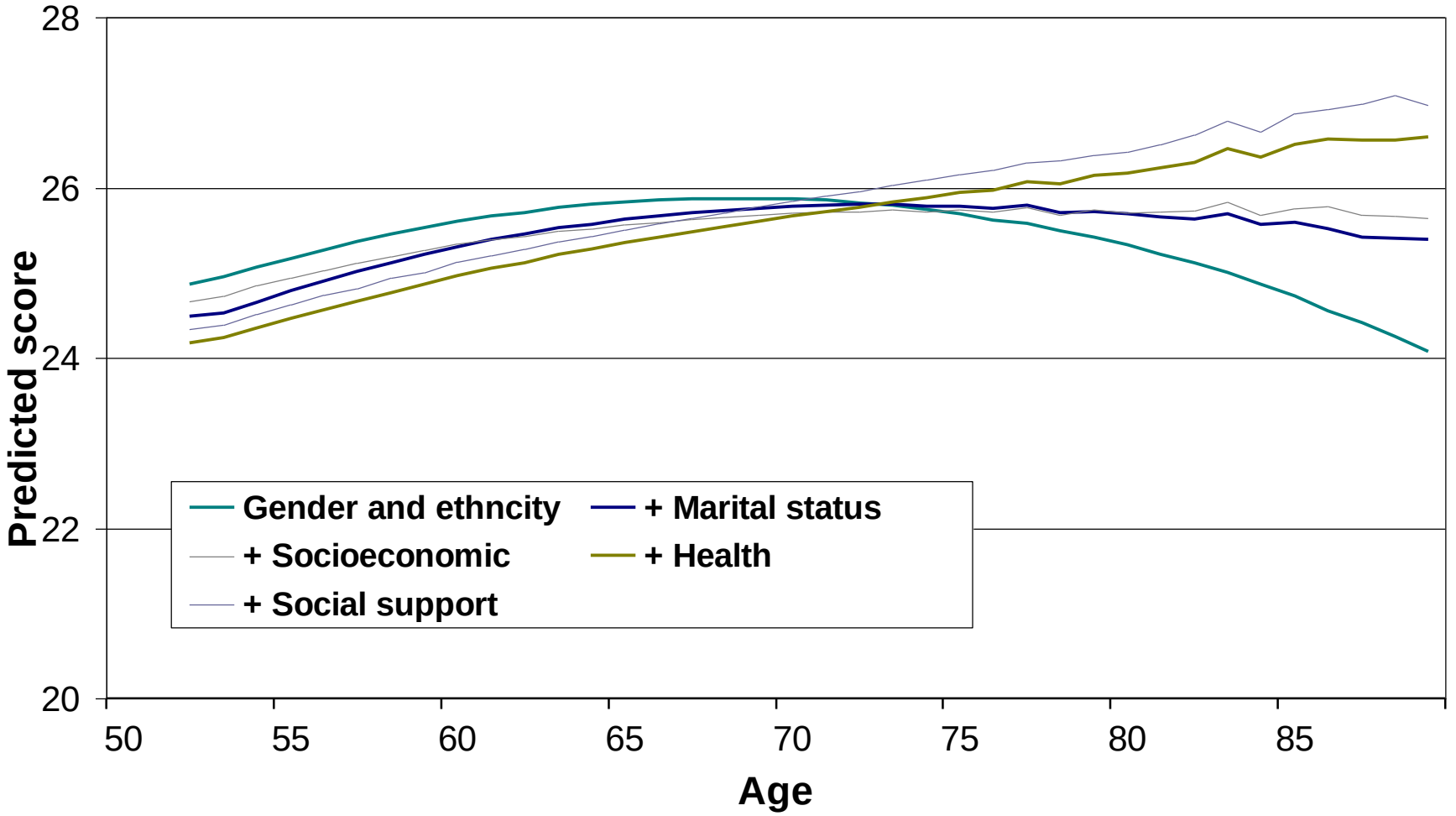
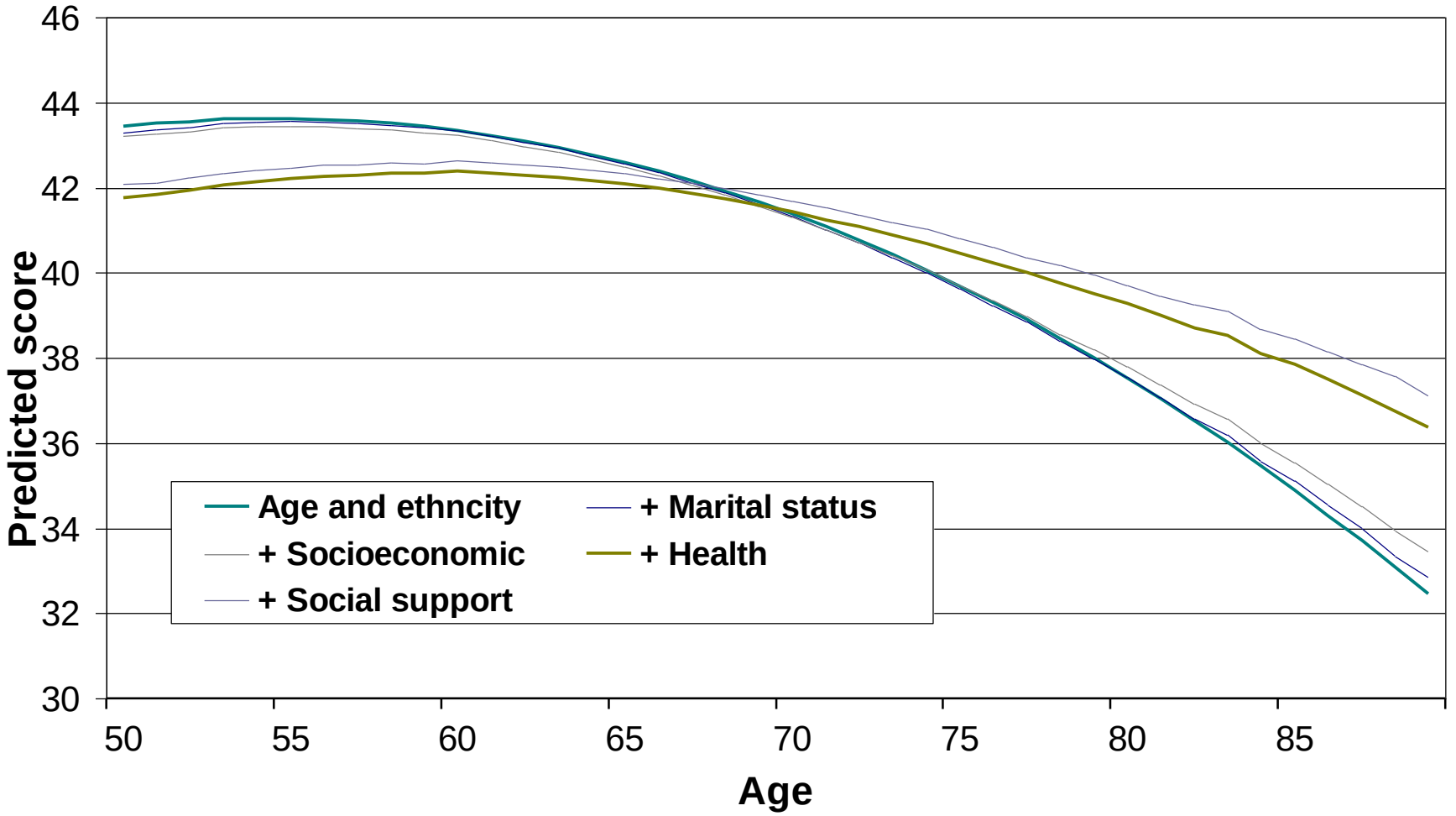


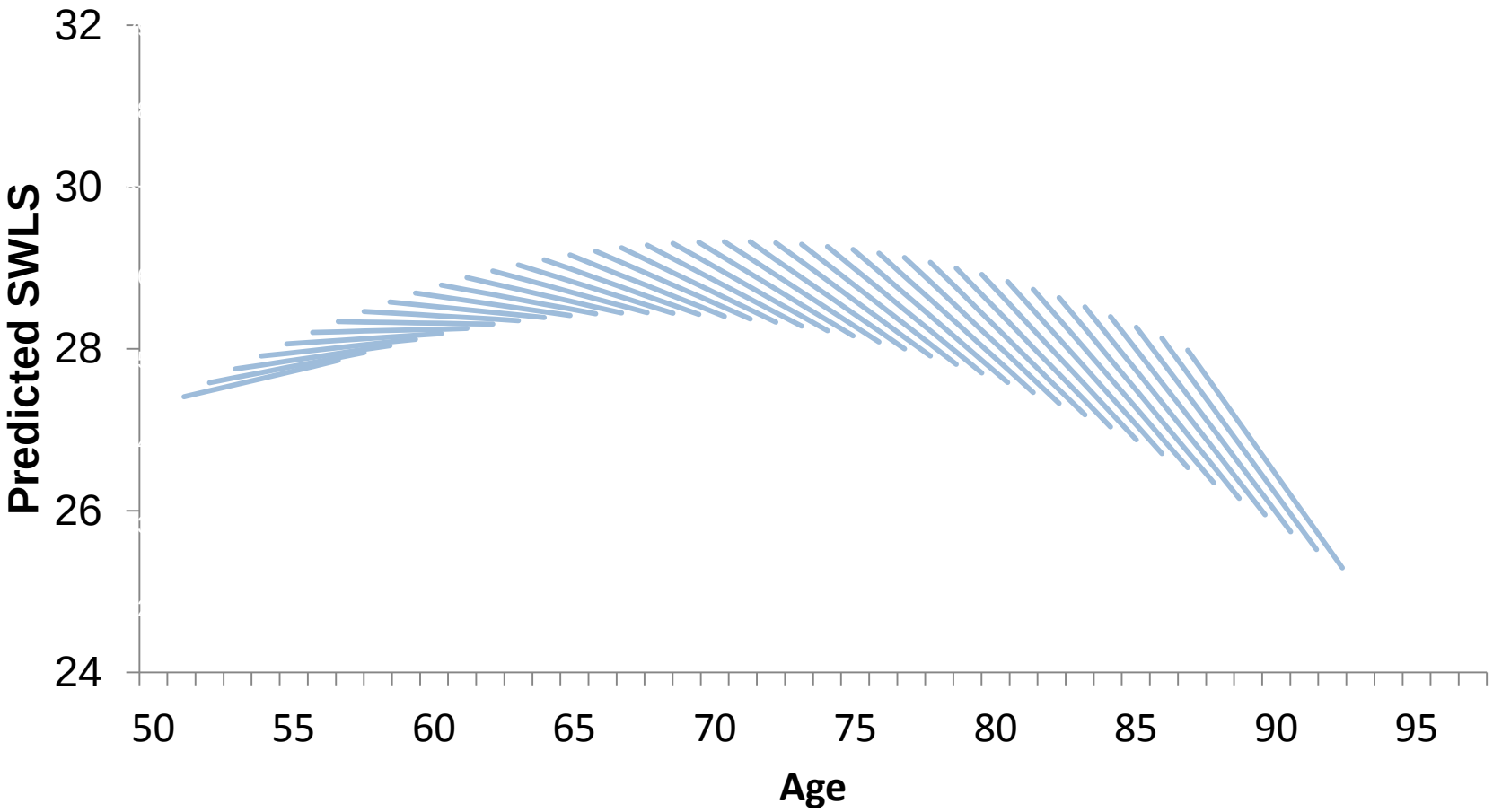
Age and cognitive wellbeing, full model
(Diener satisfaction with life score)



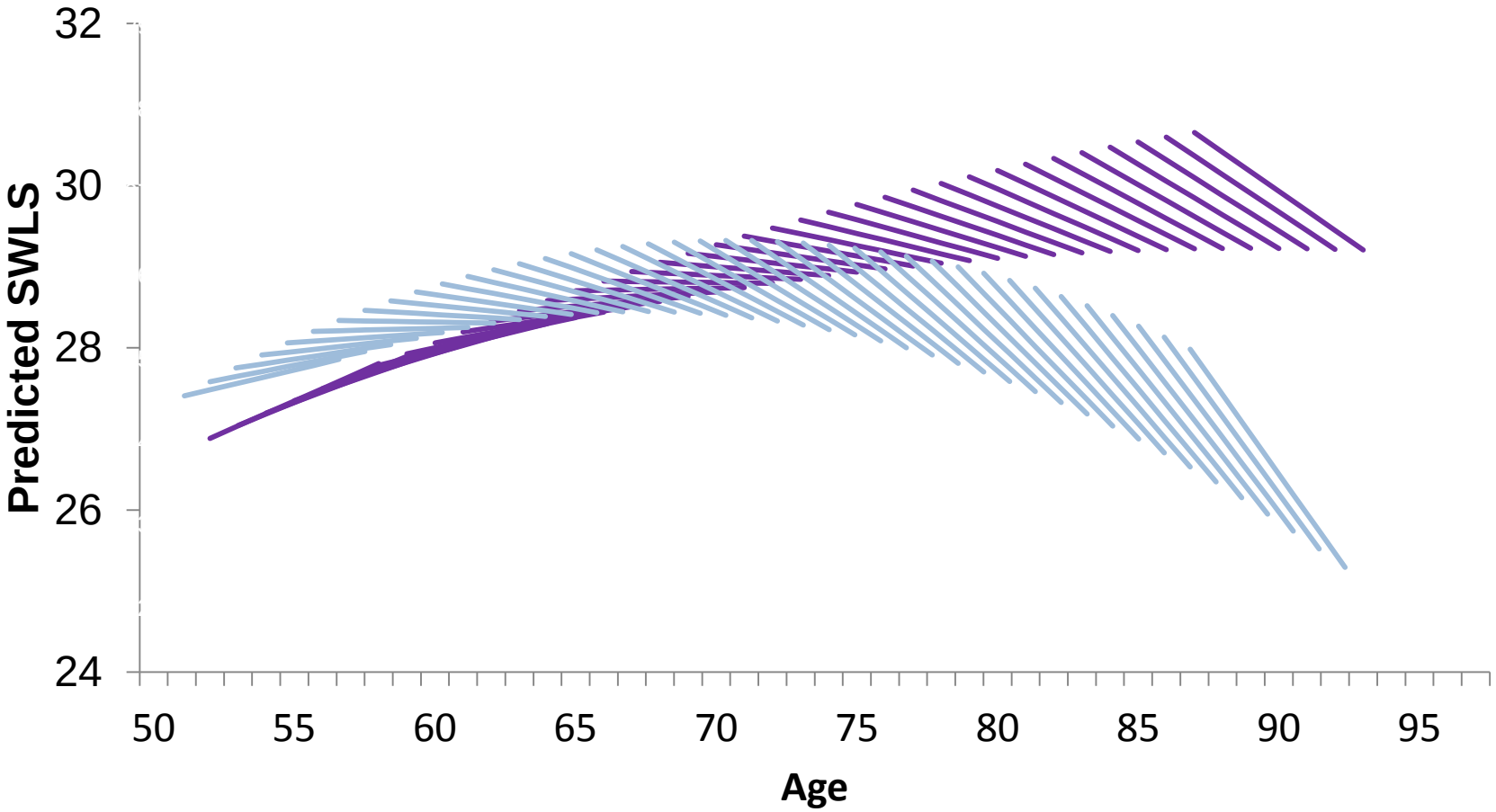
Age and eudaimonic wellbeing, full model
(CASP quality of life score)



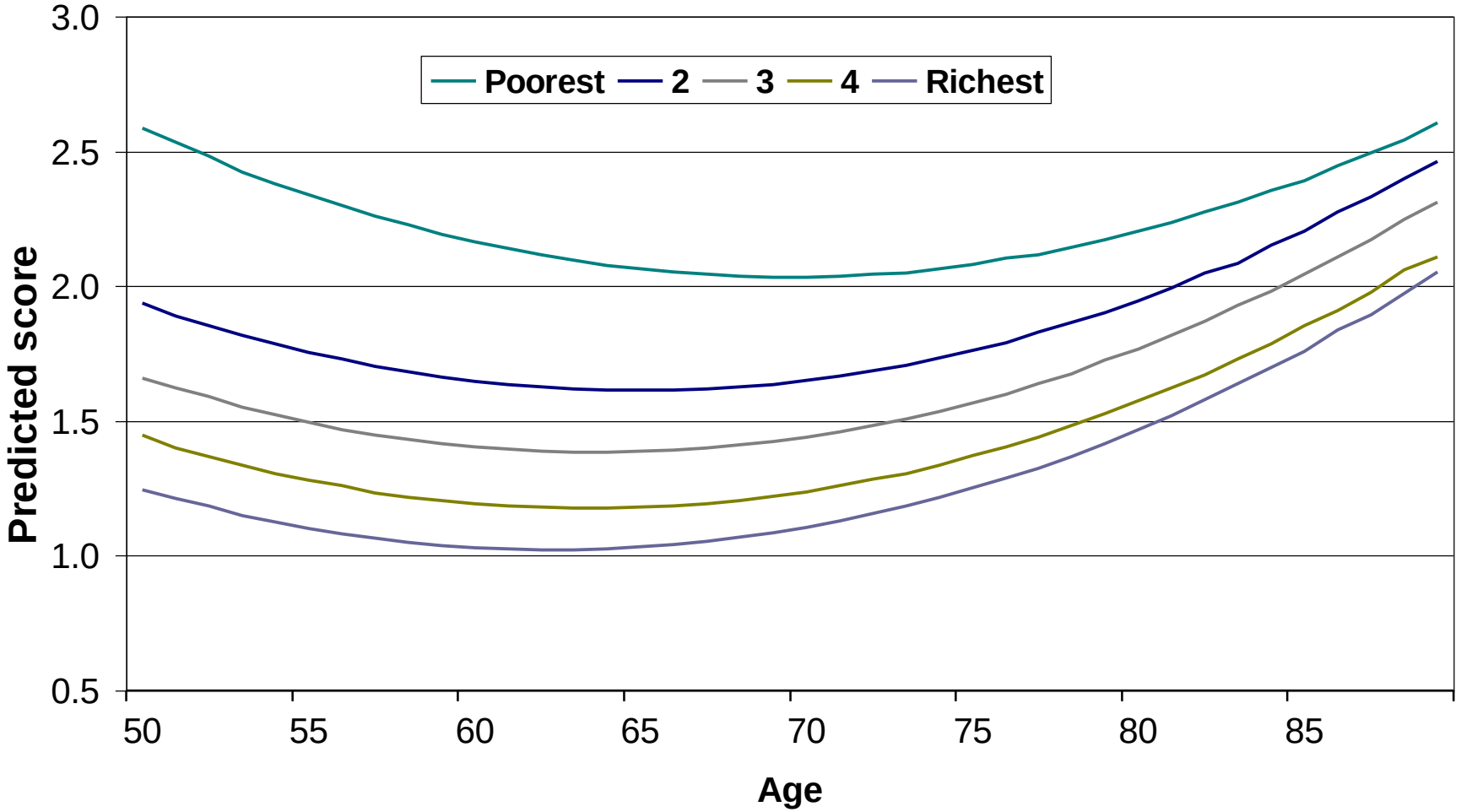
Age cohort, ageing and cognitive wellbeing: Partial model



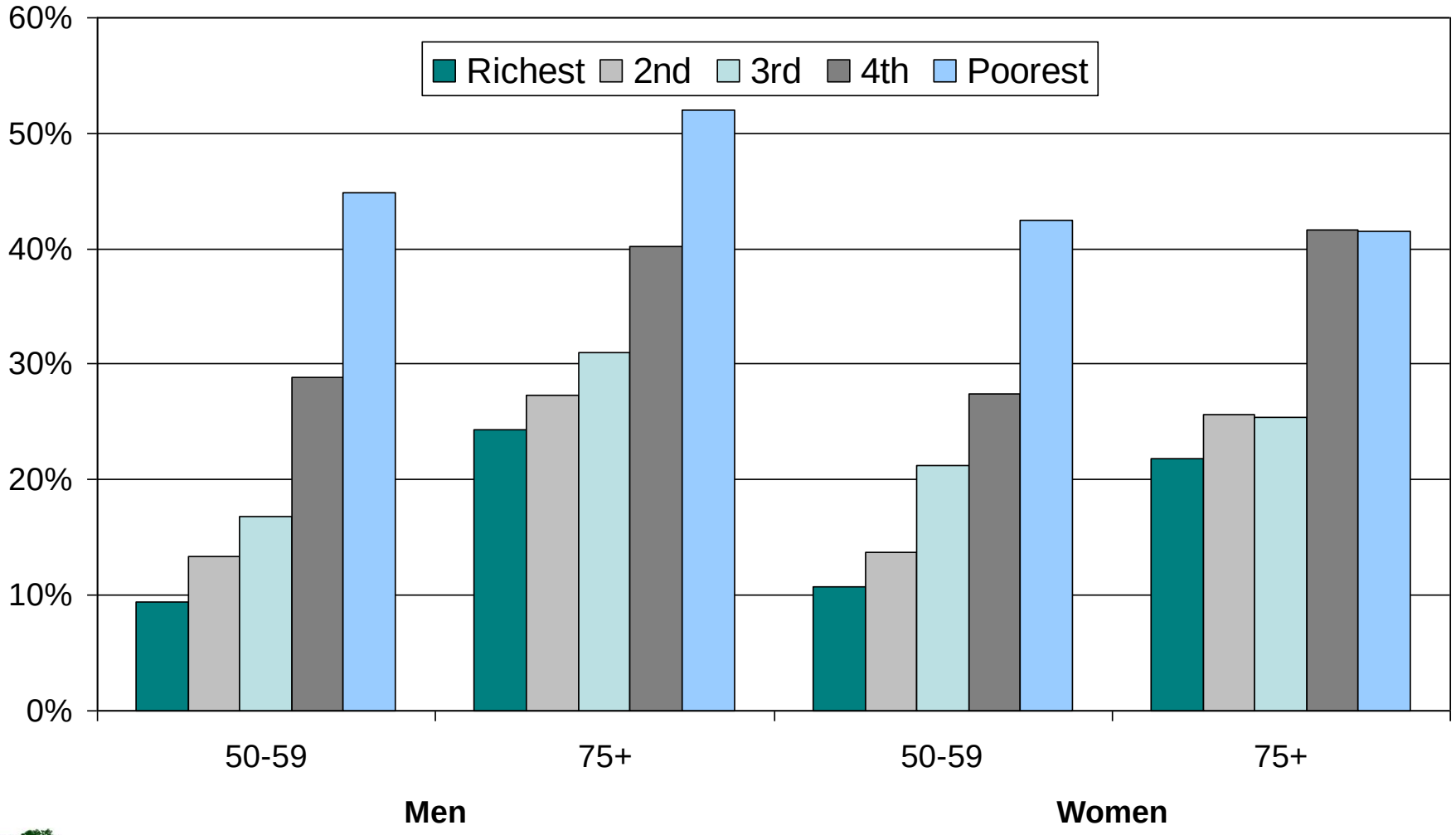
Age cohort, ageing and cognitive wellbeing: Partial and full model



Age, negative affect and wealth
(CES-D score adjusted for gender and ethnicity)

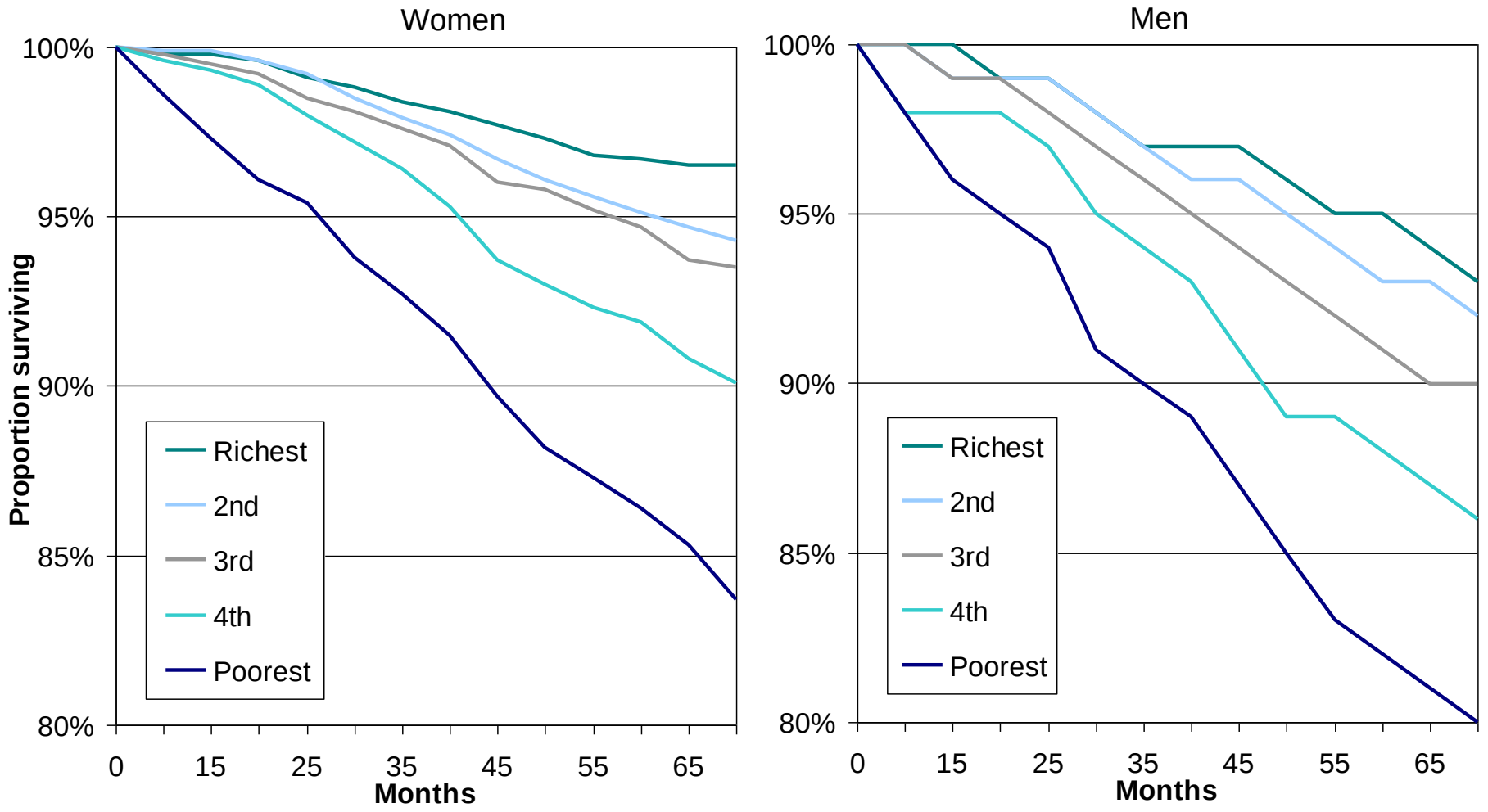


Fair/poor self reported health and wealth

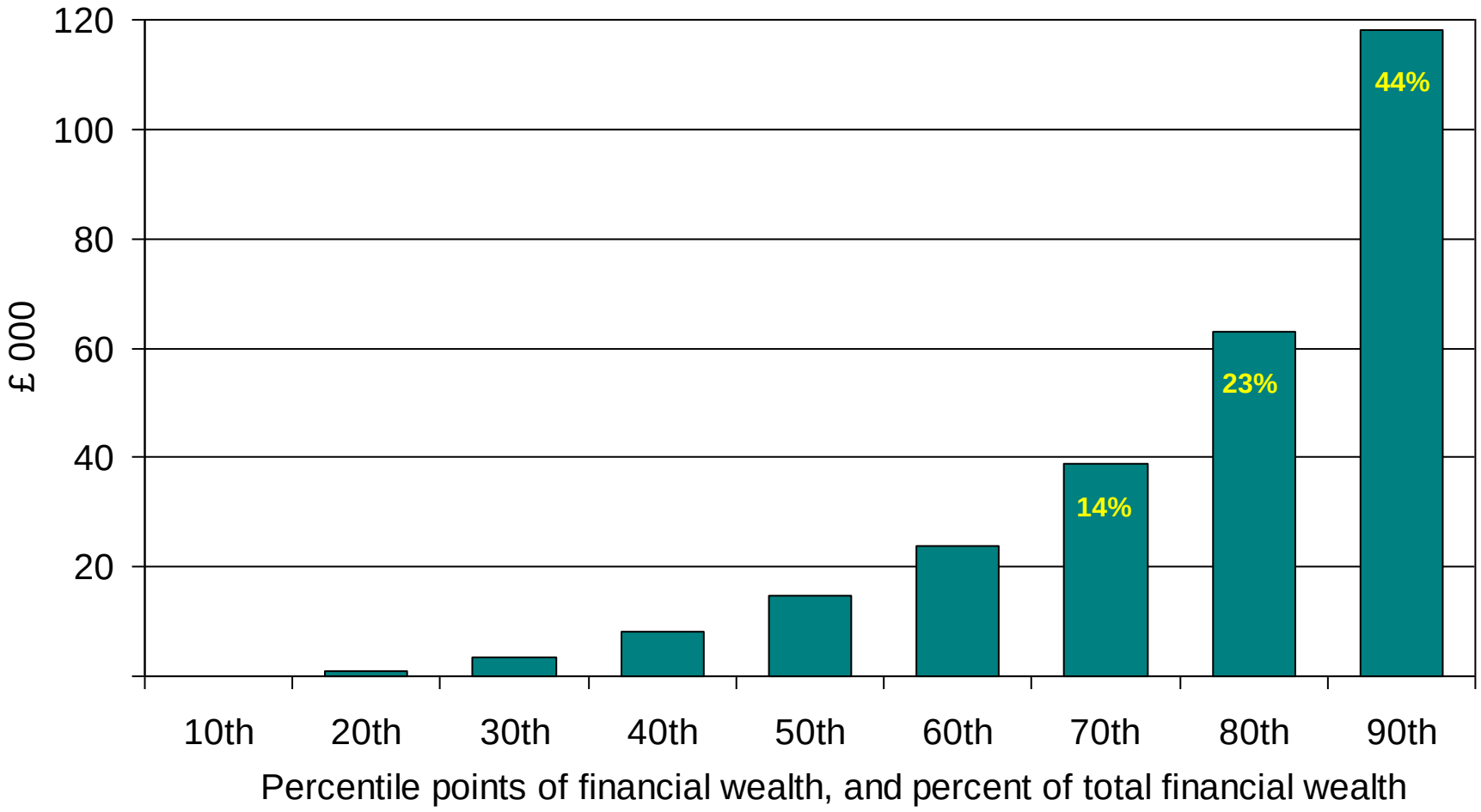


Fair/poor self reported health and wealth

Survival rates by wealth, age 50+



The distribution of financial wealth, age 60-74



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

	Year of birth				
	< 1920	**1920-29**	**1930-39**	**1940-45**	**1946-52**
Class of origin					
Semi/un-skilled manual	1	1	1	1	1
Skilled manual	1.46	1.39*	**1.35**	**1.51**	**1.26**
Administrative/Skilled non-manual	1.86*	**3.30**	**2.76**	**2.31**	**2.06**
Manager/professional	**2.76**	**4.94**	**4.02**	**3.40**	**3.32**
Female	**0.37**	**0.29**	**0.53**	**0.61**	**0.65**

Bold figures $p < 0.05$, $*p < 0.1$

Concluding comments

- Different measures different stories:
  - Negative affect: higher levels of depressive symptoms in older cohorts can almost entirely be explained by conditions;
  - Cognitive wellbeing: controlling for conditions, people evaluate their life (satisfaction with life) more positively in older cohorts;
  - Eudaimonic wellbeing: quality of life declines with older cohorts, although this effect is diminished in fully adjusted models.
- Ageing effects vary by cohort.
- And we are explaining age cohort more than ageing:
  - Measurement issues;
  - Period effects;
  - Aspects of ageing we are not measuring?
- And the conditions we adjust for are not randomly distributed across the population.

Concluding comments

- Age and transitions:
  - Marital status (divorce and widowhood);
  - Health/disability;
  - Wealth;
  - Retirement status/route (voluntary);
  - All class related.
- Cohort and generational change:
  - Occupational structures;
  - Pension arrangements, retirement choices/opportunities;
  - Marriage choices,
  - Health,
  - Socioeconomic status and consumption.
- But enduring, perhaps increasing, class based inequalities.
- Implications for social justice and policies to address ageing that currently neglect class inequalities; and the need to address proximal effects and inequalities within the post-retirement population.

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