

Health and social inequalities in later life: the enduring role of class

James Nazroo

Sociology, Cathie Marsh Institute and
Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing

james.nazroo@manchester.ac.uk

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)

An ageing world

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)

- But what about compression of morbidity and improvements in living standards? How is the experience of ageing changing?
- And the opening of a 'third age' space, post-retirement, post-parenting and pre-dependency.
- 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)



**Monday 29 September –
Friday 10 October 2008**



Manchester Full of Life Festival

**Living La Vida
Older!**

Manchester Full of Life Festival is back, bigger than ever, and bursting with things to do.

The country's biggest free celebration of older people returns to the city from Monday 29 September to Friday 10 October and we don't want you to miss a thing!

Inside this special issue of the VOP newsletter you'll find listings for the **FULL OF LIFE FESTIVAL**,



Methods



The English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (www.elsa-project.ac.uk)

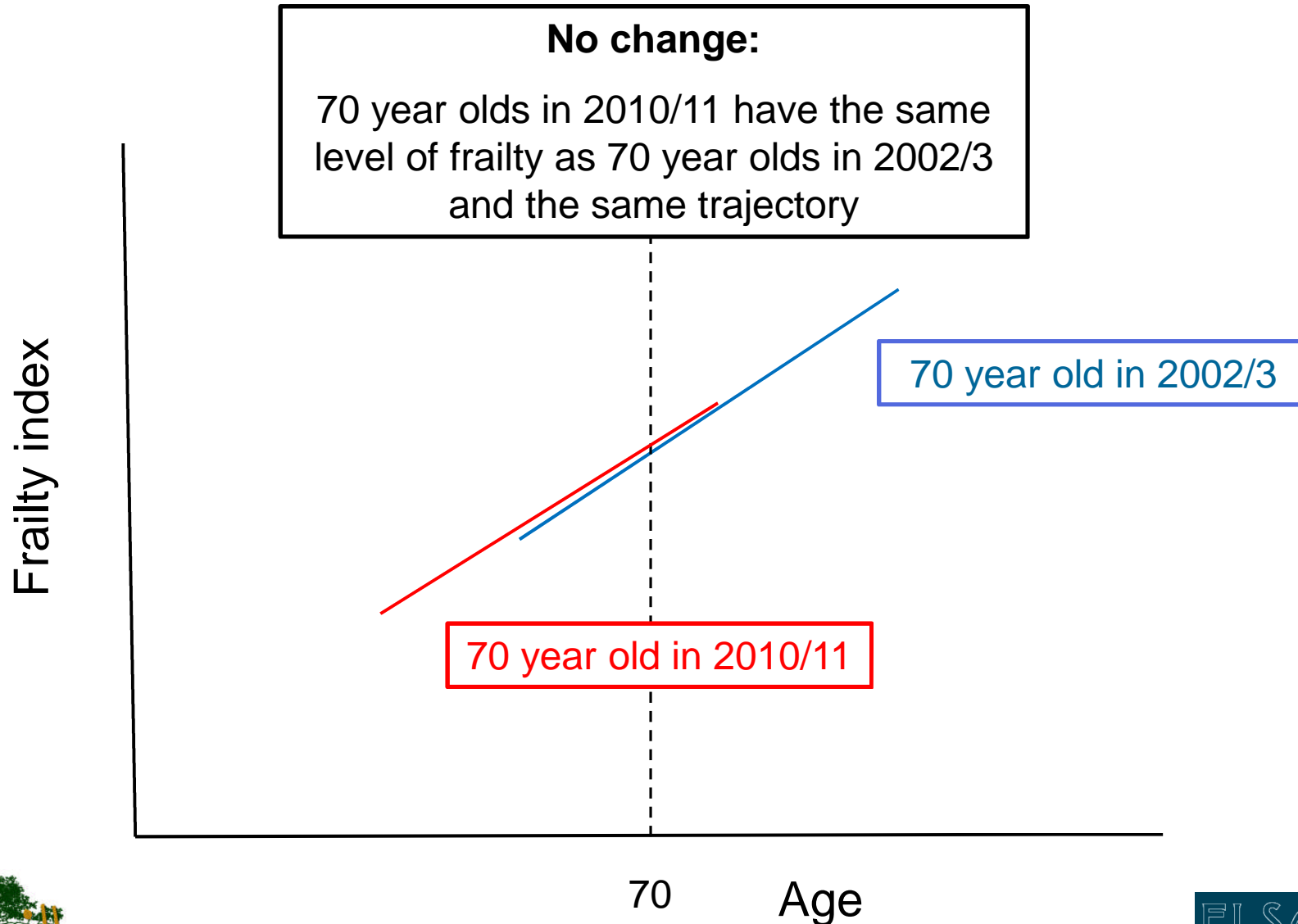
- A panel study of people aged 50 and older, six waves of data available, alongside baseline (wave 0) data, and seventh wave about to start.
- Sample drawn from Health Survey for England, living in the private household sector and with periodic sample boosts.
- Face to face interview every two years since 2002, with a biomedical assessment carried out by a nurse every four years.
- Detailed content on: demographics, health, physical and cognitive performance, biomarkers, wellbeing, economics, housing, employment, social relationships, social civic and cultural participation, life history.
- Here using five waves of data covering eight years (2002 to 2010).
- Longitudinal multilevel growth models, observations (level 1) nested within individuals (level 2).
- Sample divided into five year age groups, giving overlapping cohorts.
- Focus on frailty (Rockwood Index) and affect (CES-D).



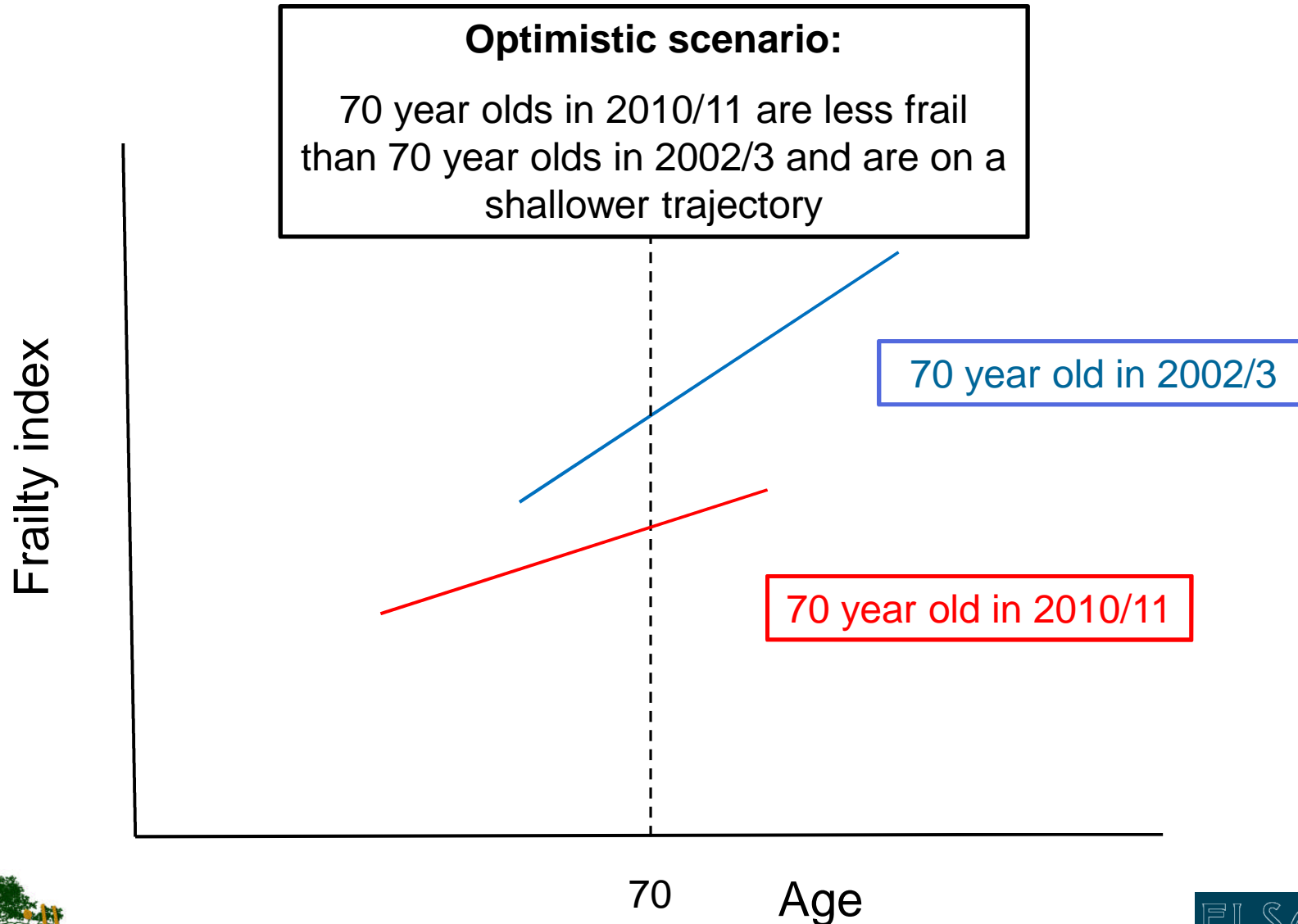
Frailty and compression of morbidity



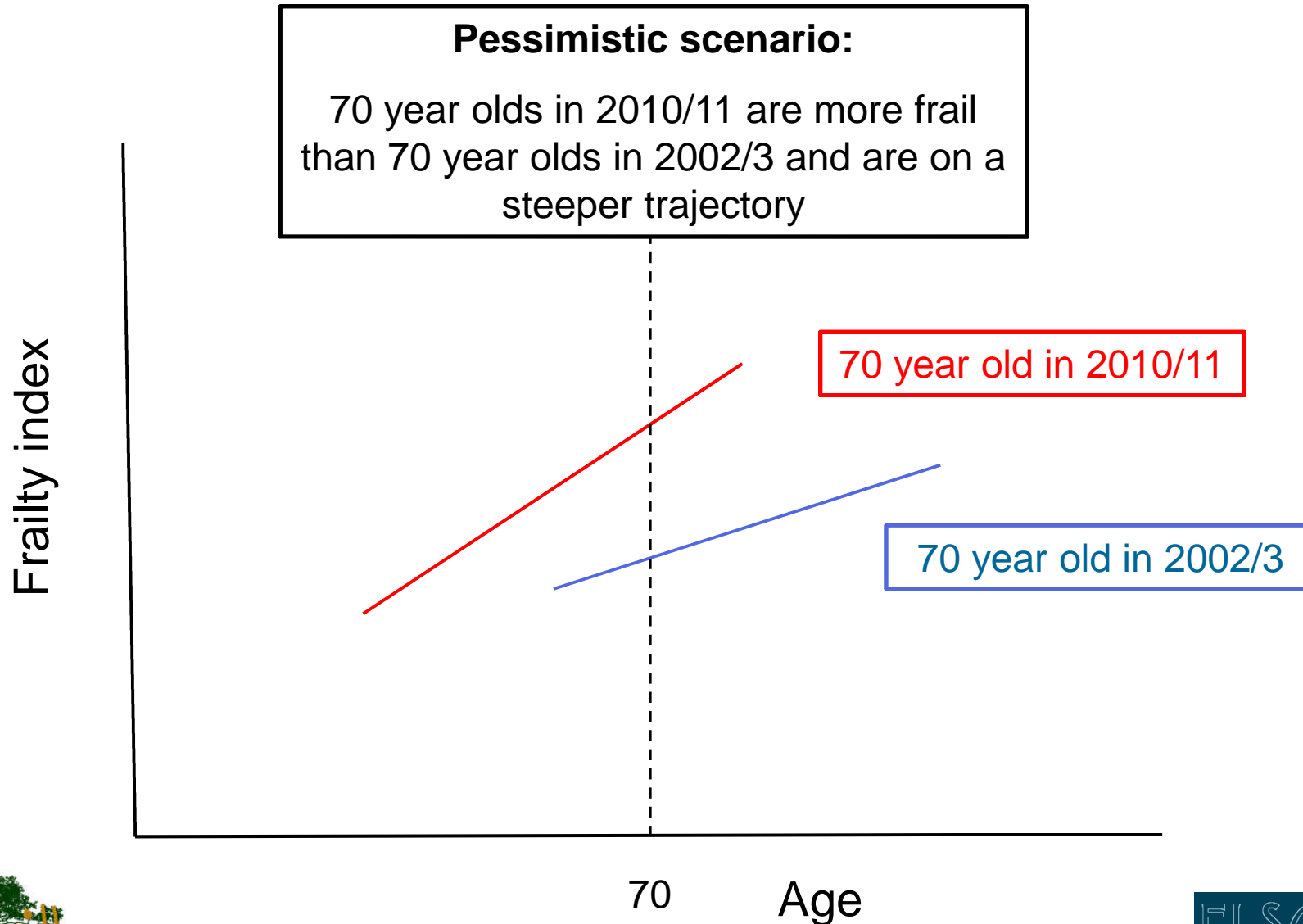
Modelling frailty trajectories by age cohort



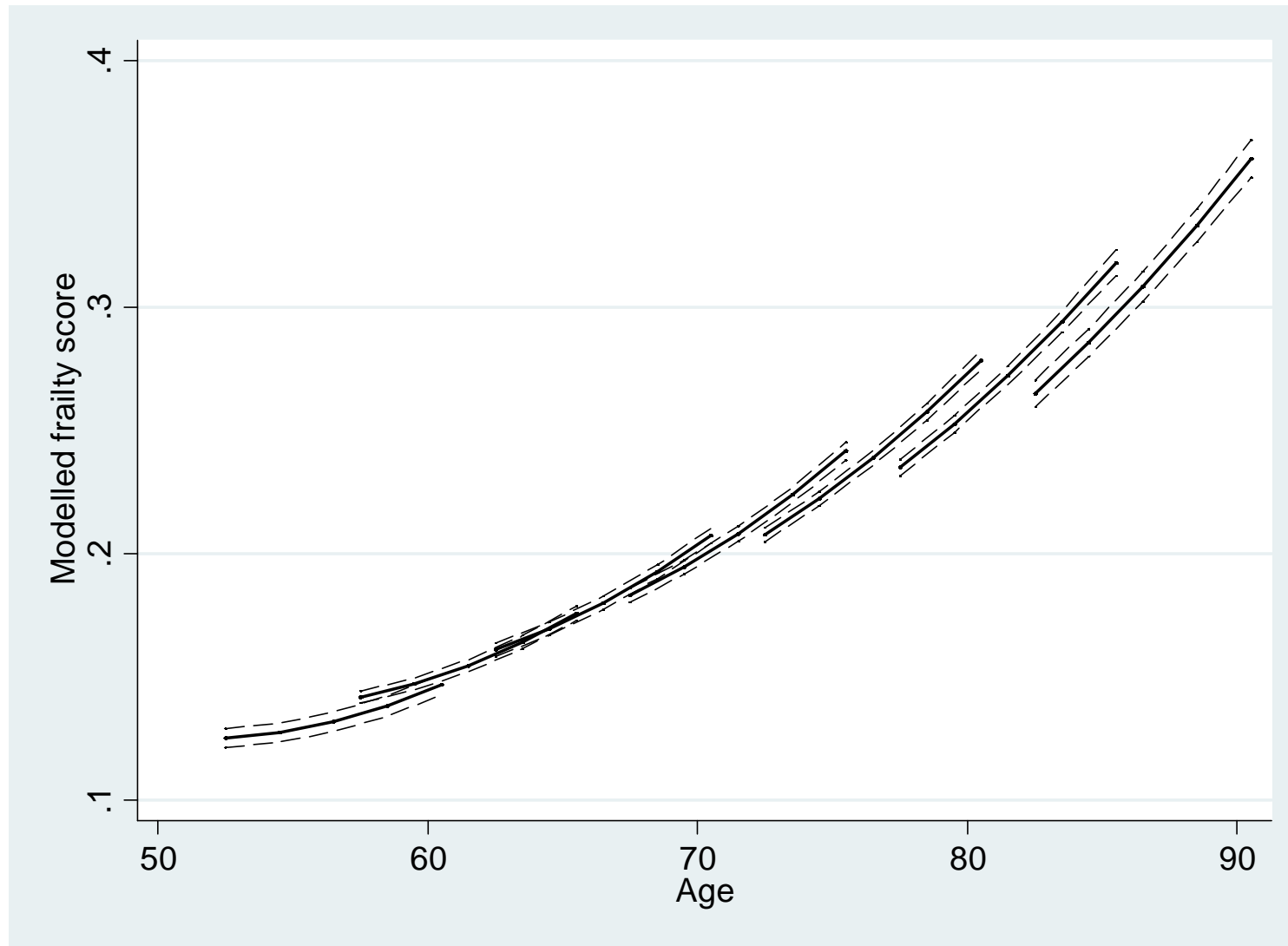
Modelling frailty trajectories by age cohort



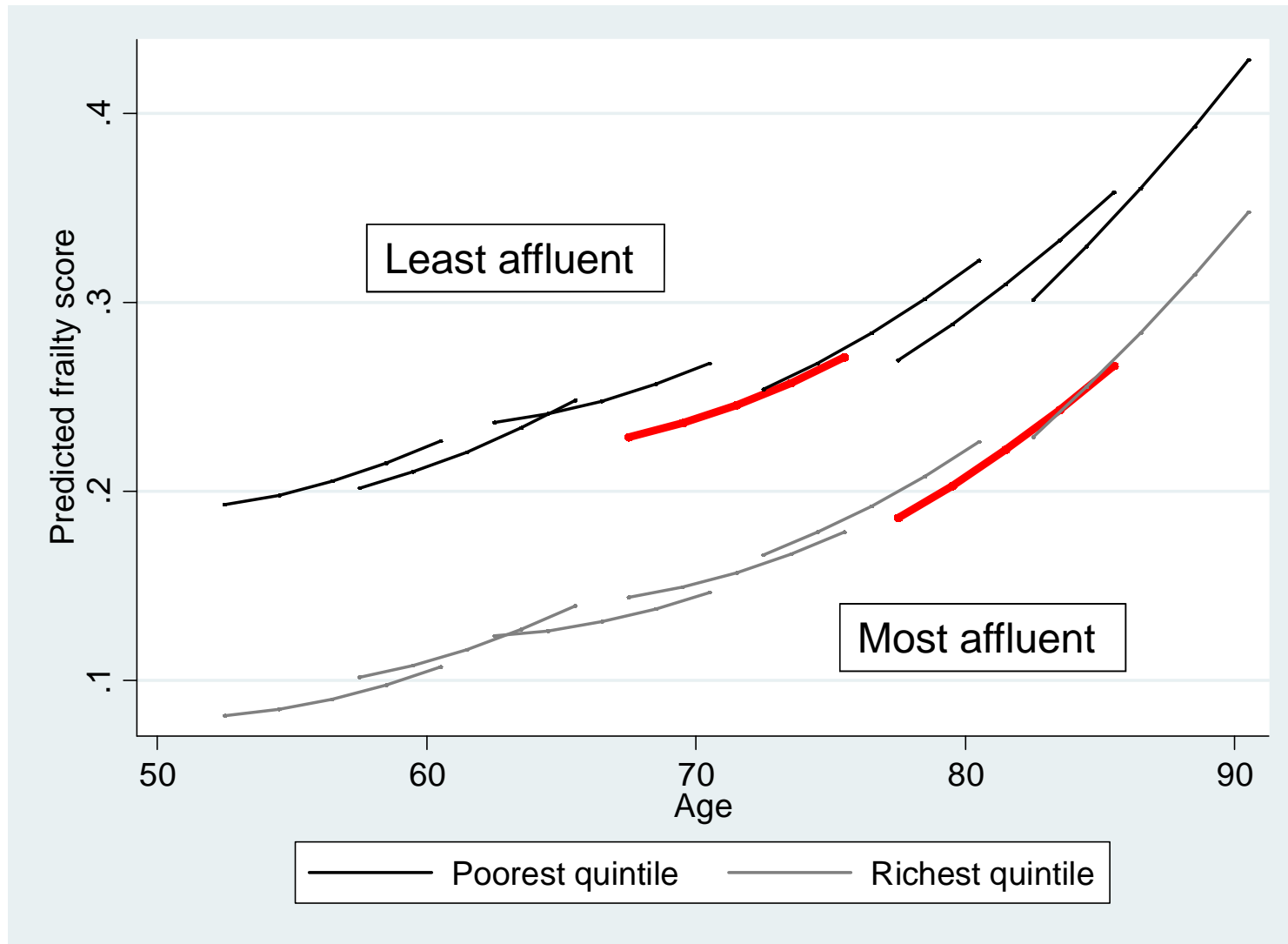
Modelling frailty trajectories by age cohort



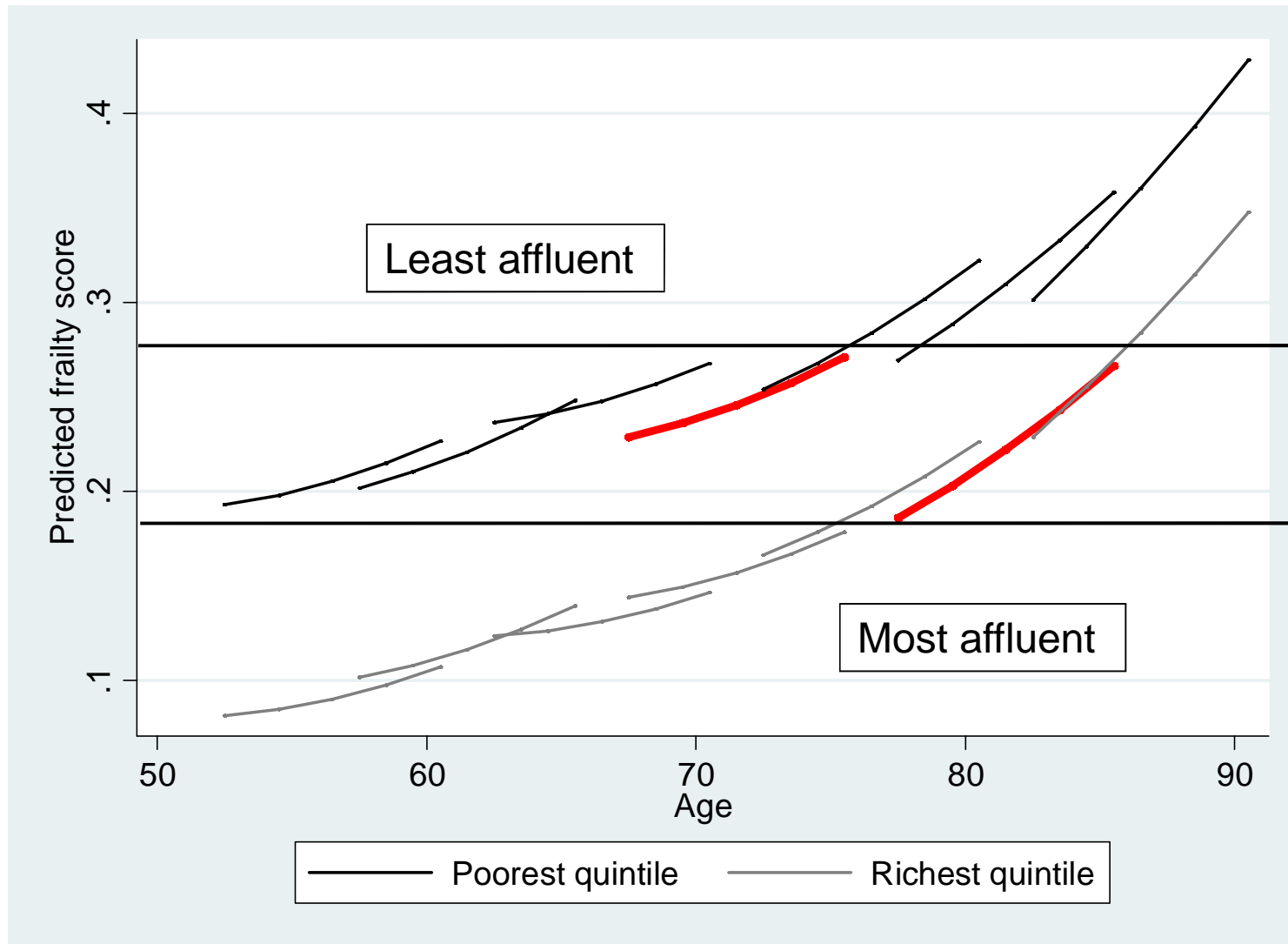
Frailty trajectories by cohort



Frailty trajectories by cohort and wealth



Frailty trajectories by cohort and wealth

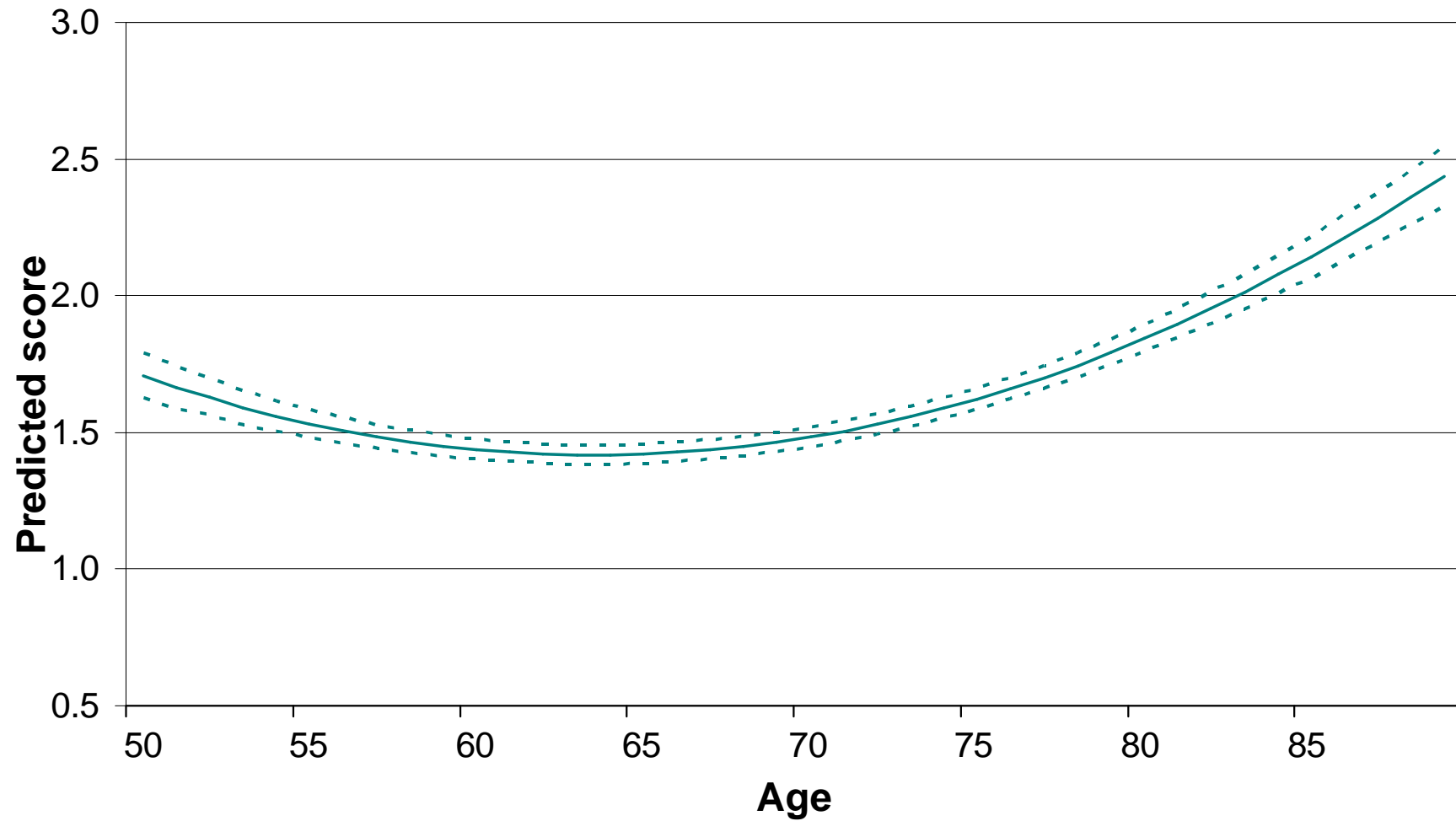


Wellbeing and age related transitions

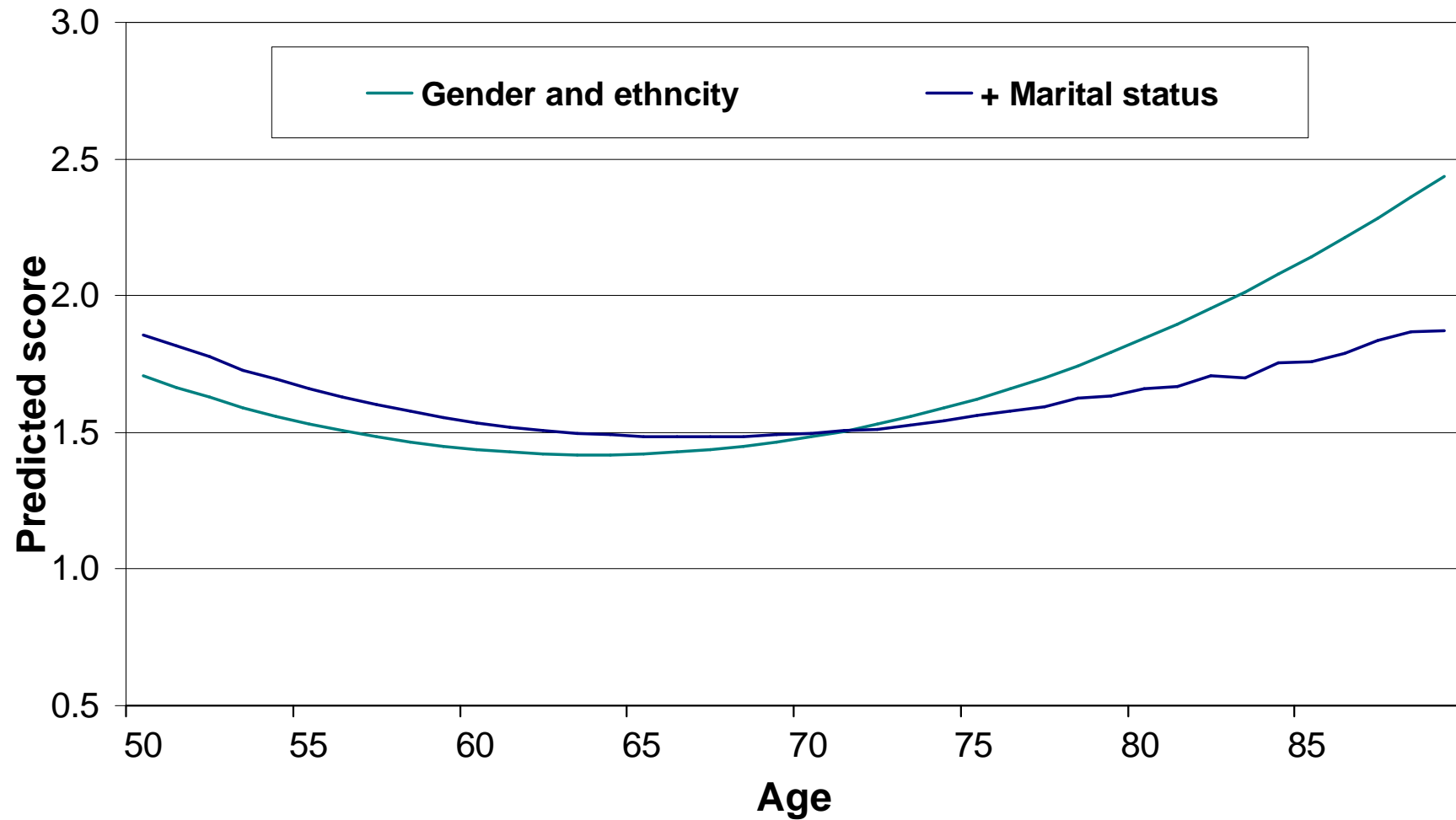


Age and negative affect

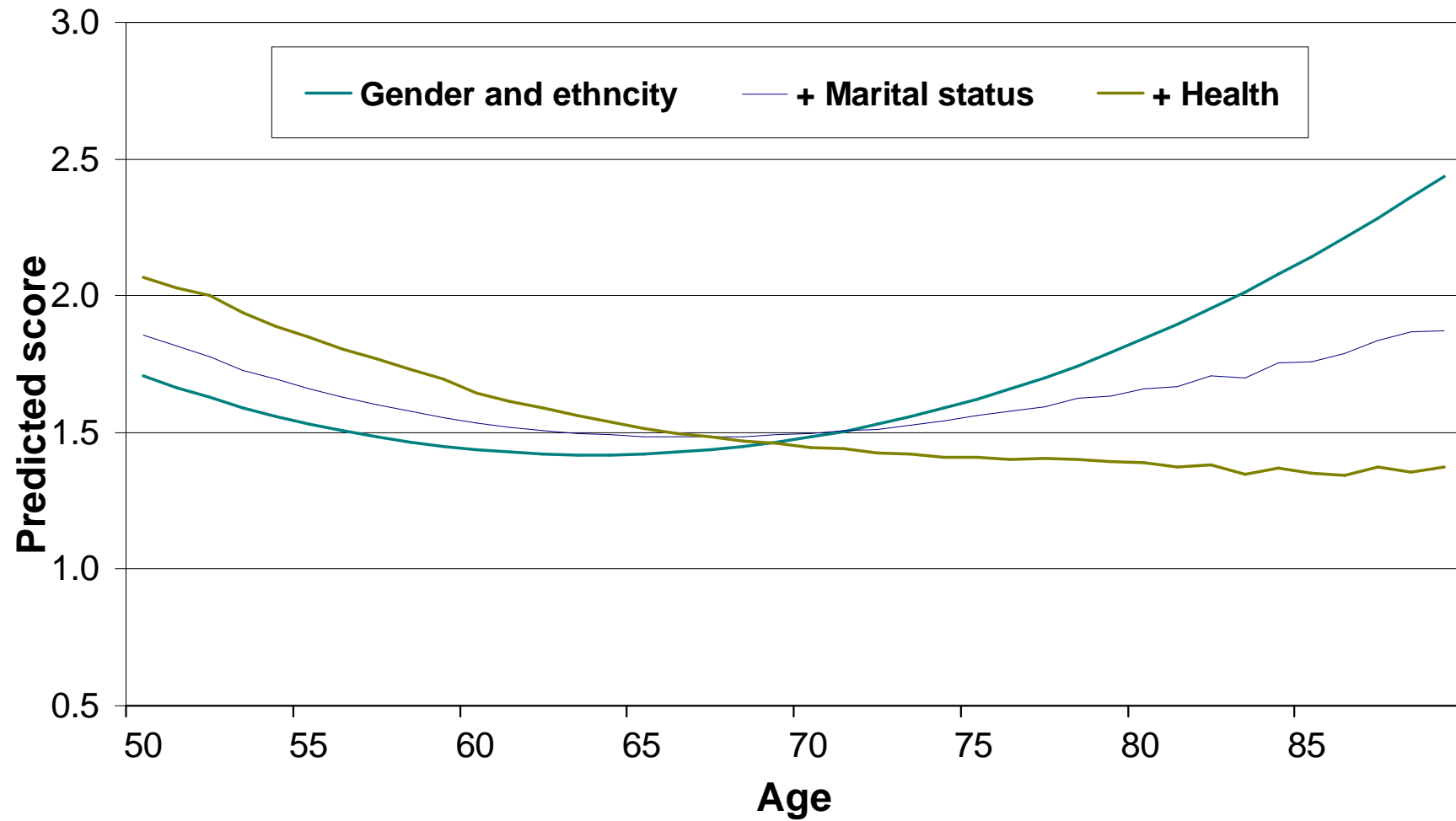
(CES-D score adjusted for gender and ethnicity)



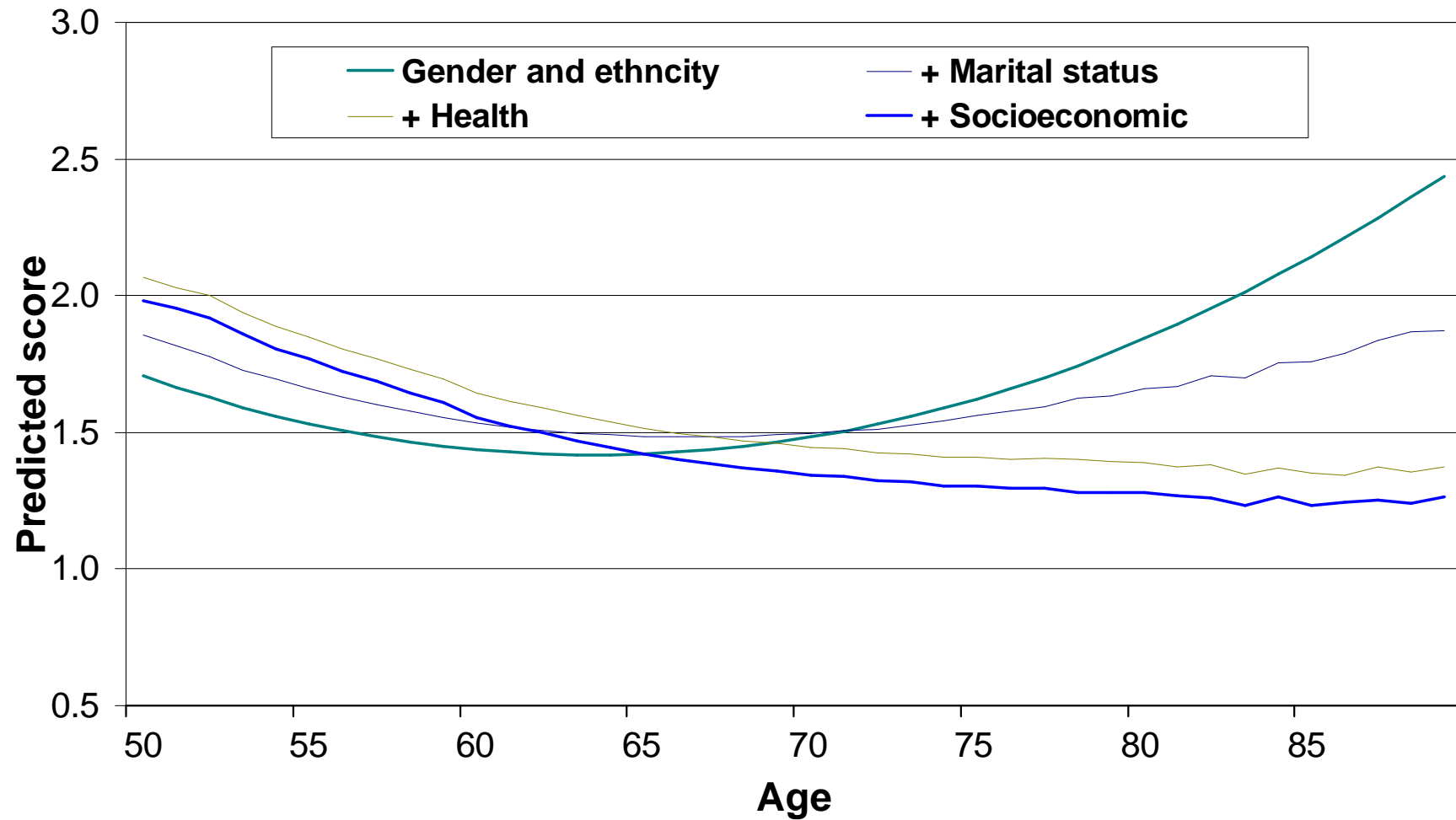
Age and negative affect: explaining the relationship



Age and negative affect: explaining the relationship

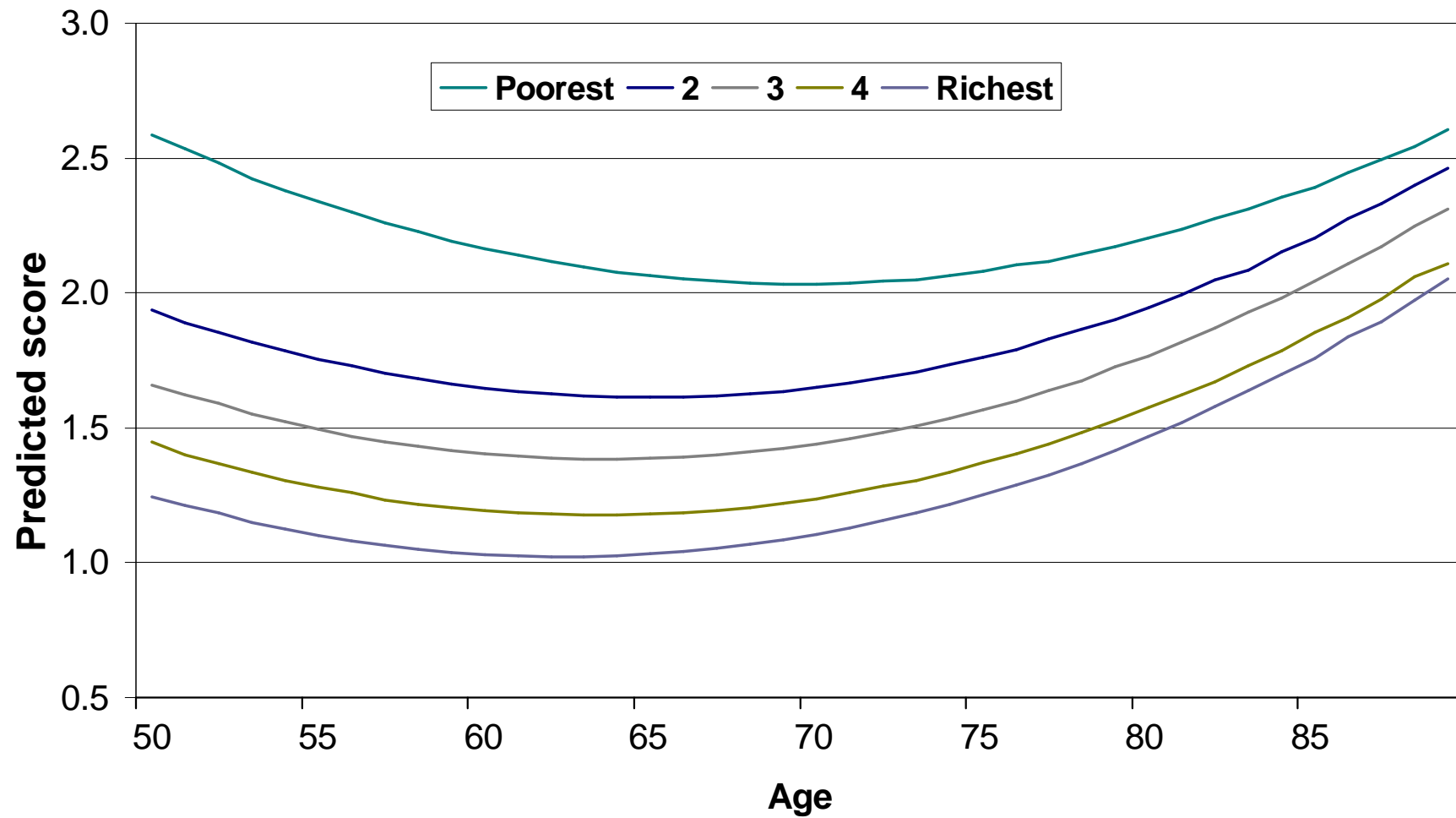


Age and negative affect: explaining the relationship



Age, negative affect and wealth

(CES-D score adjusted for gender and ethnicity)

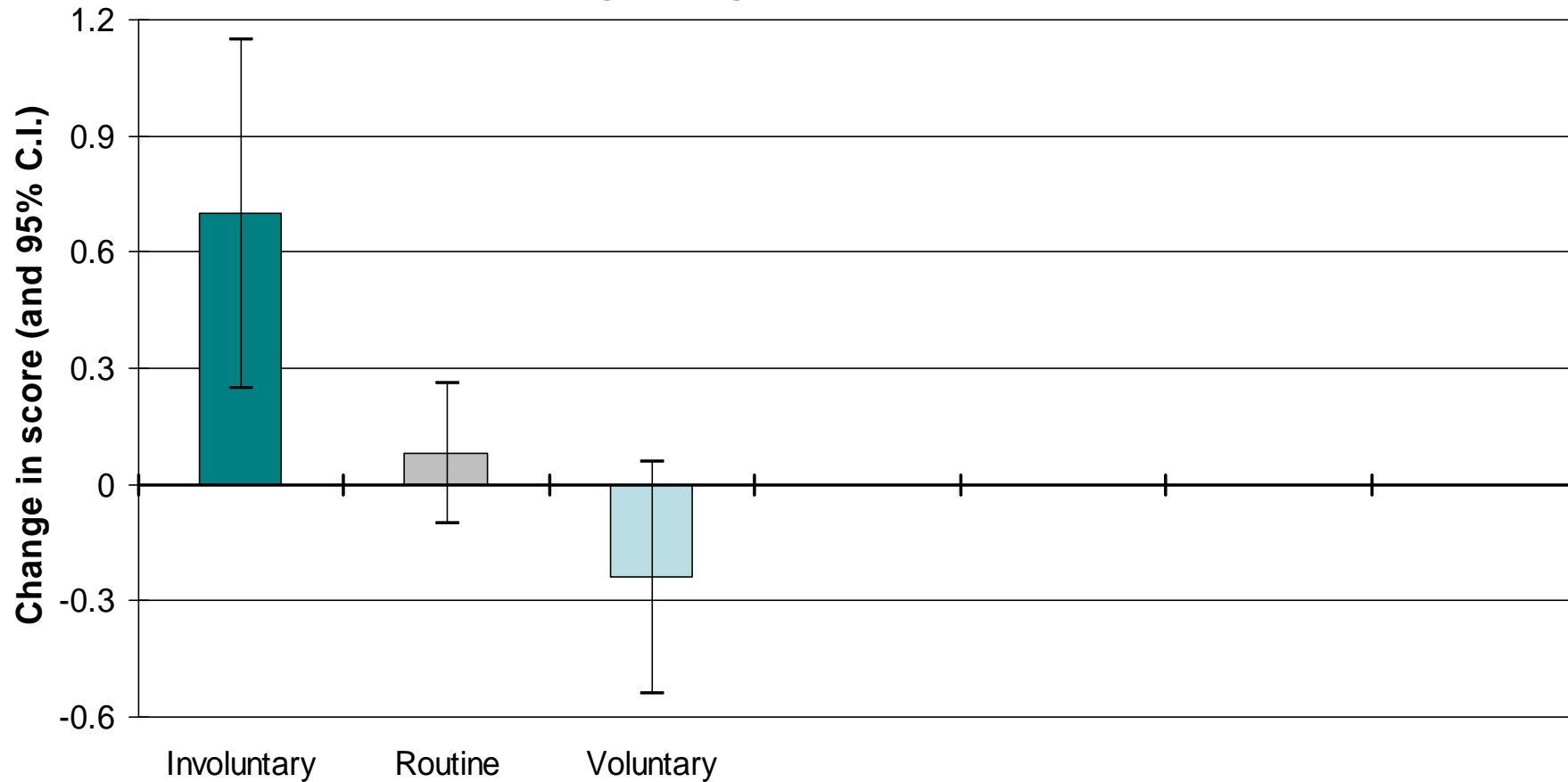


The impact of work and retirement on health and wellbeing

- 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).
 - Examine effects of wealth on retirement.
- Model continuing to work post state pension age compared with those who retire.
 - Use propensity score matching to deal with selection effects.
 - Examine whether work circumstances matter.

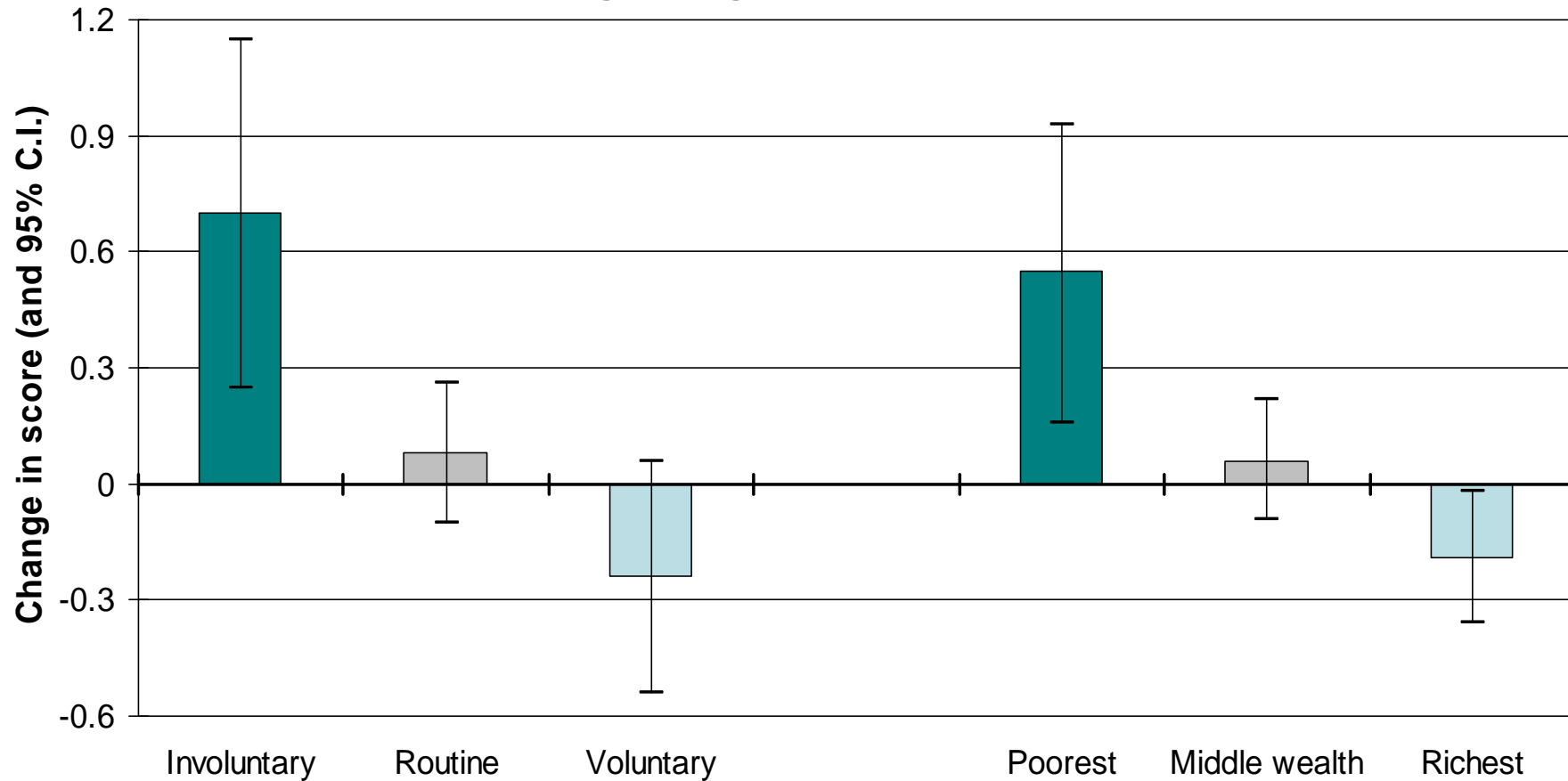
Depression and type of retirement transition

Change in depression score compared with those remaining in work:
age and gender standardised

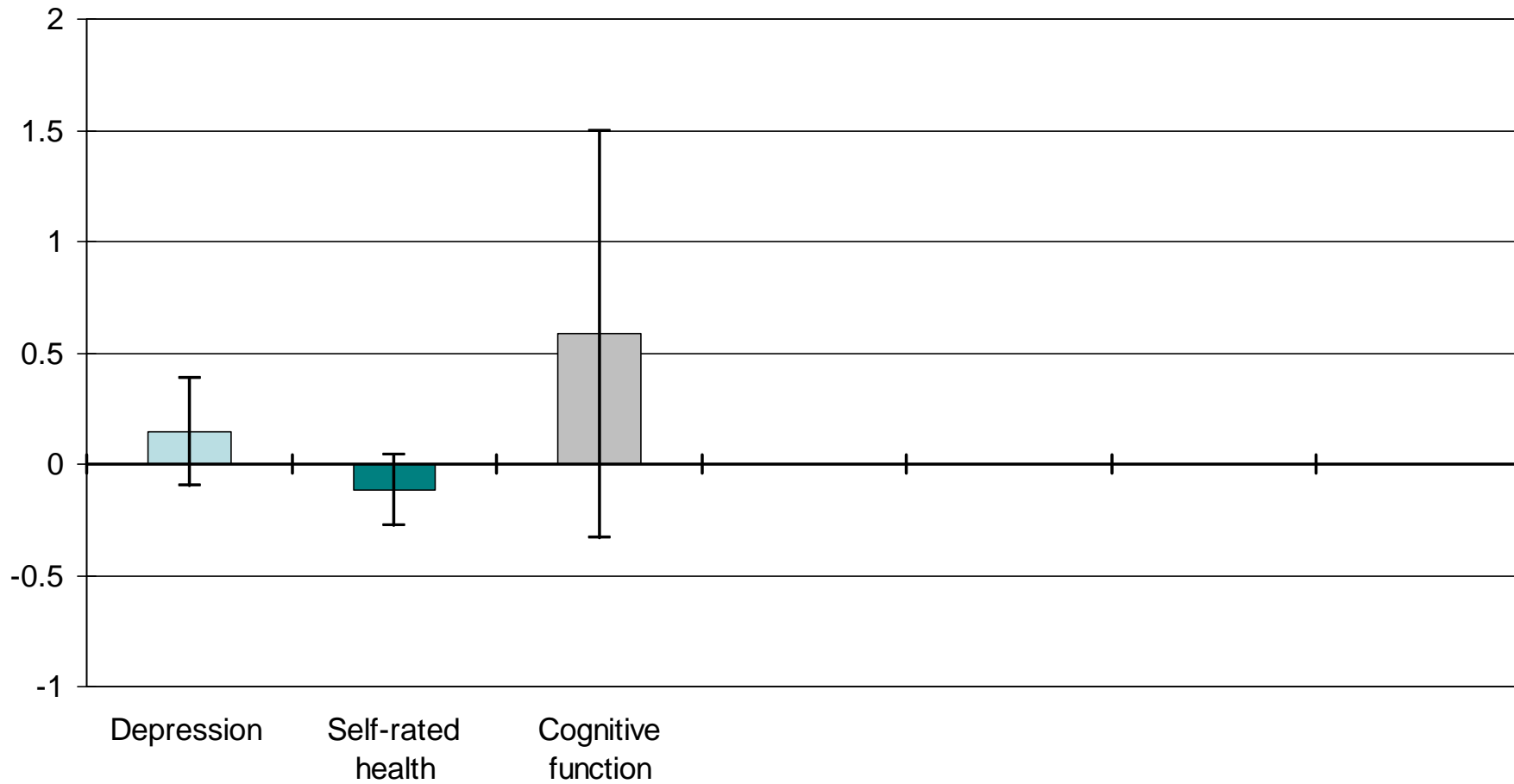


Depression and type of retirement transition

Change in depression score compared with those remaining in work:
age and gender standardised



Impact of working post-retirement age on health

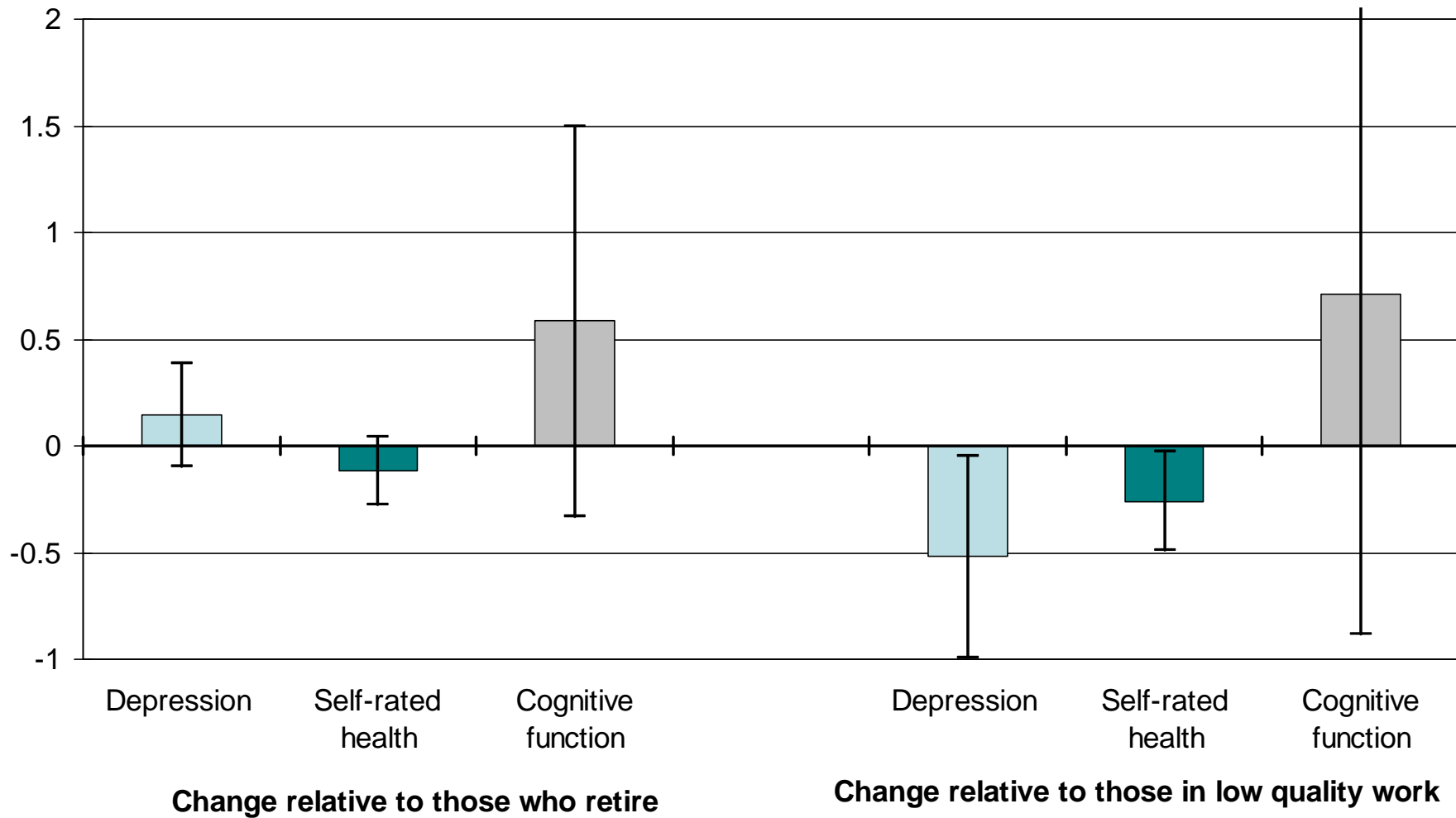


Change relative to those who retire

Propensity Score Matching



Impact of working post-retirement age on health



Propensity Score Matching

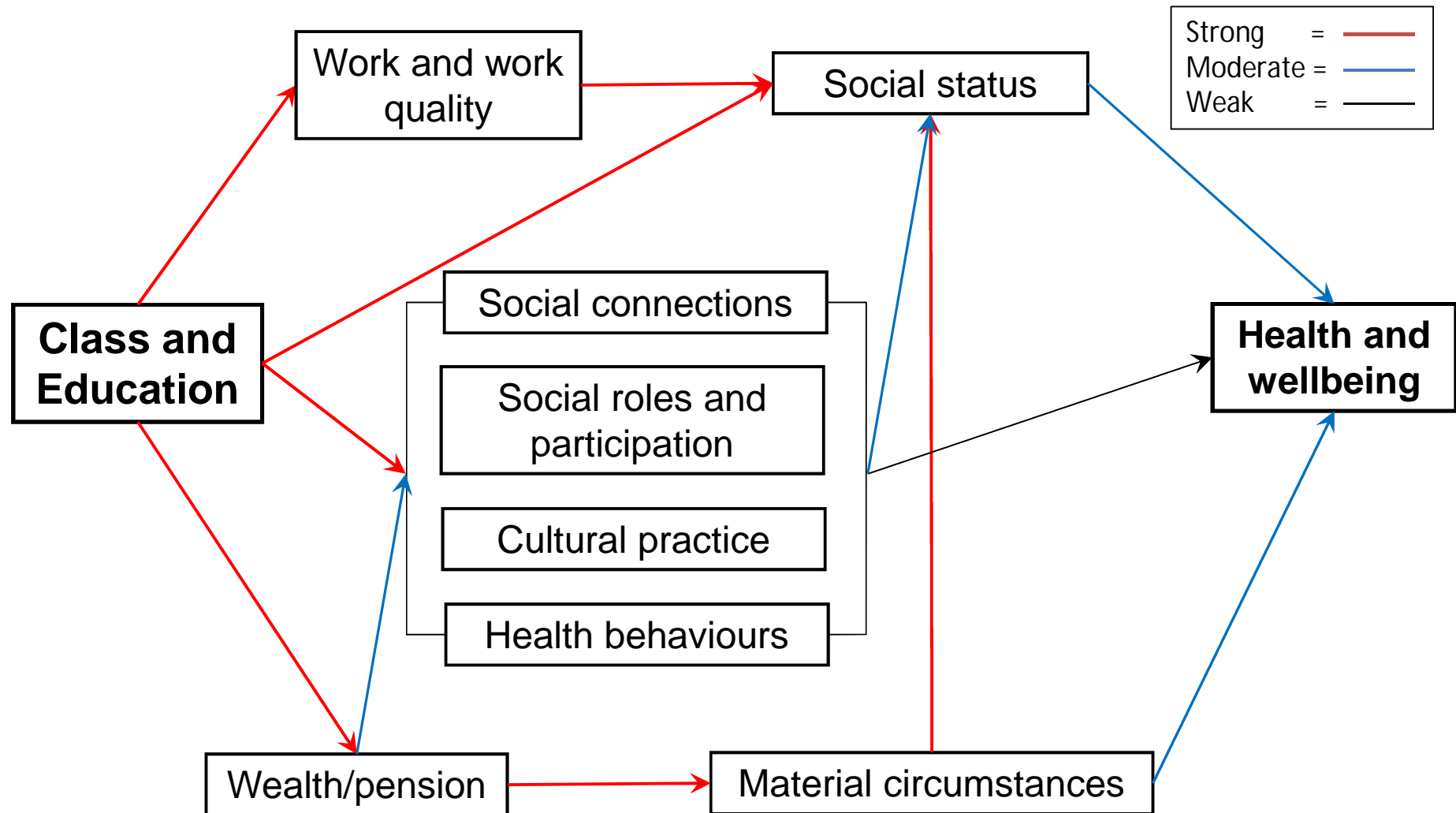


The operation of class in later life

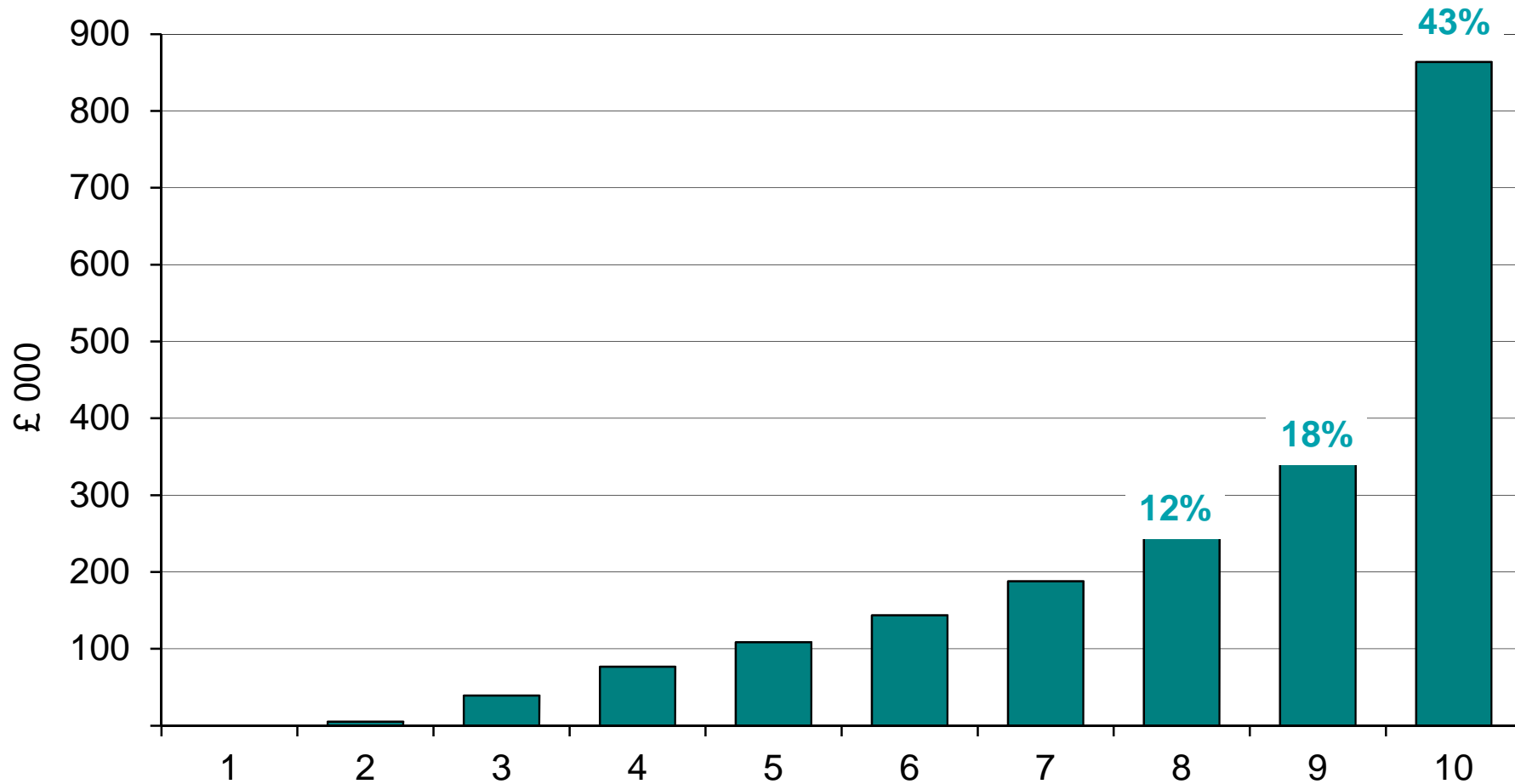
How can we understand class in later life?

- Inequalities research typically operationalises class with a measure of occupation, 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.
- Psychosocial explanations emphasise work conditions (control/autonomy and effort/reward) and relative social position.
- But, occupational class may no longer adequately capture (processes of) stratification in societies where consumption and practice – reflecting social and cultural capital – have become significant markers of 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.

An empirical investigation of theoretical pathways



The distribution of non-pension wealth



Mean level of wealth within population deciles, and percent of total non-pension wealth

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

	<u>Year of birth</u>				
	< 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

- Strong relationship between age and outcomes of interest.
- Some ageing effects vary by cohort.
- 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.

Concluding comments

- Significant class inequalities that continue into later life and persist (possibly grow) across age cohorts.
- Occur for almost all outcomes of interest, intermediate and distal.
- Evidence supportive of both material (wealth) and psychosocial (social status) pathways, and of connections between pathways.
- As paid work becomes a less ‘solid’ marker we need to rethink approaches to stratification– subjective social status:
 - A reflection of the outcomes of processes of stratification;
 - Influenced by each of occupational class, wealth, social participation, social roles, and culturally-informed practice;
 - Reflecting the operation of different forms of ‘capital’ in different ‘fields’ of social interaction (Bourdieu).
- Implications for policies to address ageing that currently neglect class inequalities; and the need to address proximal effects and inequalities within the post-retirement population.

References

- Jivraj, S., Nazroo, J., Vanhoutte, B. and Chandola, T. (in press) 'Aging and subjective well-being in later life', *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, doi:10.1093/geronb/gbu006
- Marshall, A., Nazroo, J., Tampubolon, G. and Vanhoutte, B. (2015) 'Cohort differences in the levels and trajectories of frailty among older people in England', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 69, 316-321 doi:10.1136/jech-2014-204655
- McGovern, P and Nazroo, J. (2015) 'Patterns and Causes of Health Inequalities in Later Life: a Bourdieusian Approach', *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 37, 1, 143-160 doi: 10.1111/1467-9566.12187
- Jivraj, S. and Nazroo, J. (2014) 'Determinants of socioeconomic inequalities in subjective well-being in later life: a cross-country comparison in England and the USA', *Quality of Life Research*, 23, 9, 2545-2558, doi: 10.1007/s11136-014-0694-8

Acknowledgements

- Funders



- A range of colleagues

- Stephen Jivraj
- Bram Vanhoutte
- Alan Marshall
- Katie Matthews
- Pauline McGovern
- Simone Scherger
- Amanda Connolly
- Nitin Purandare
- Tarani Chandola
- Neil Pendleton

