

Inequalities in later life: patterns, consequences and policy responses

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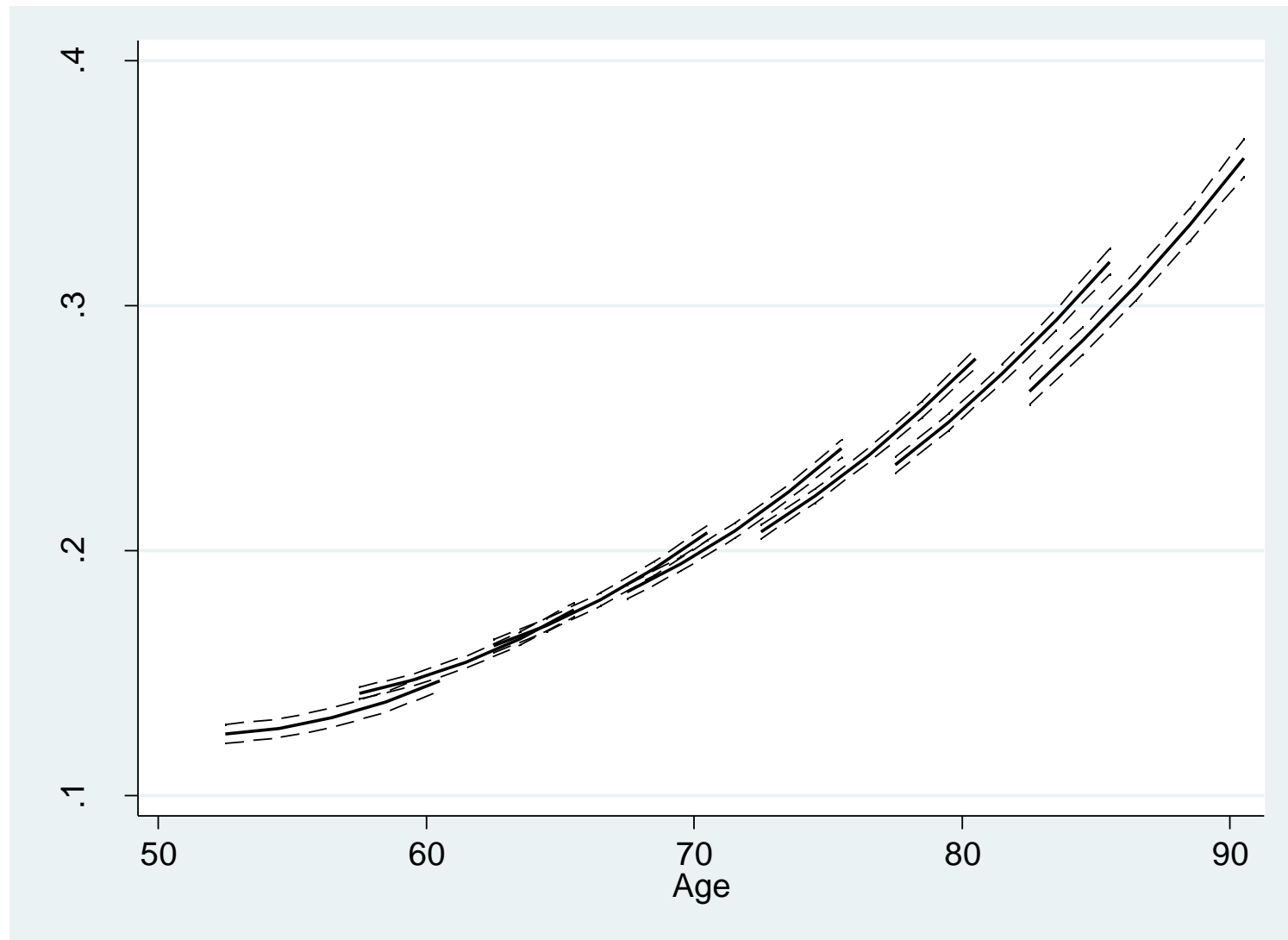
An ageing world

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?

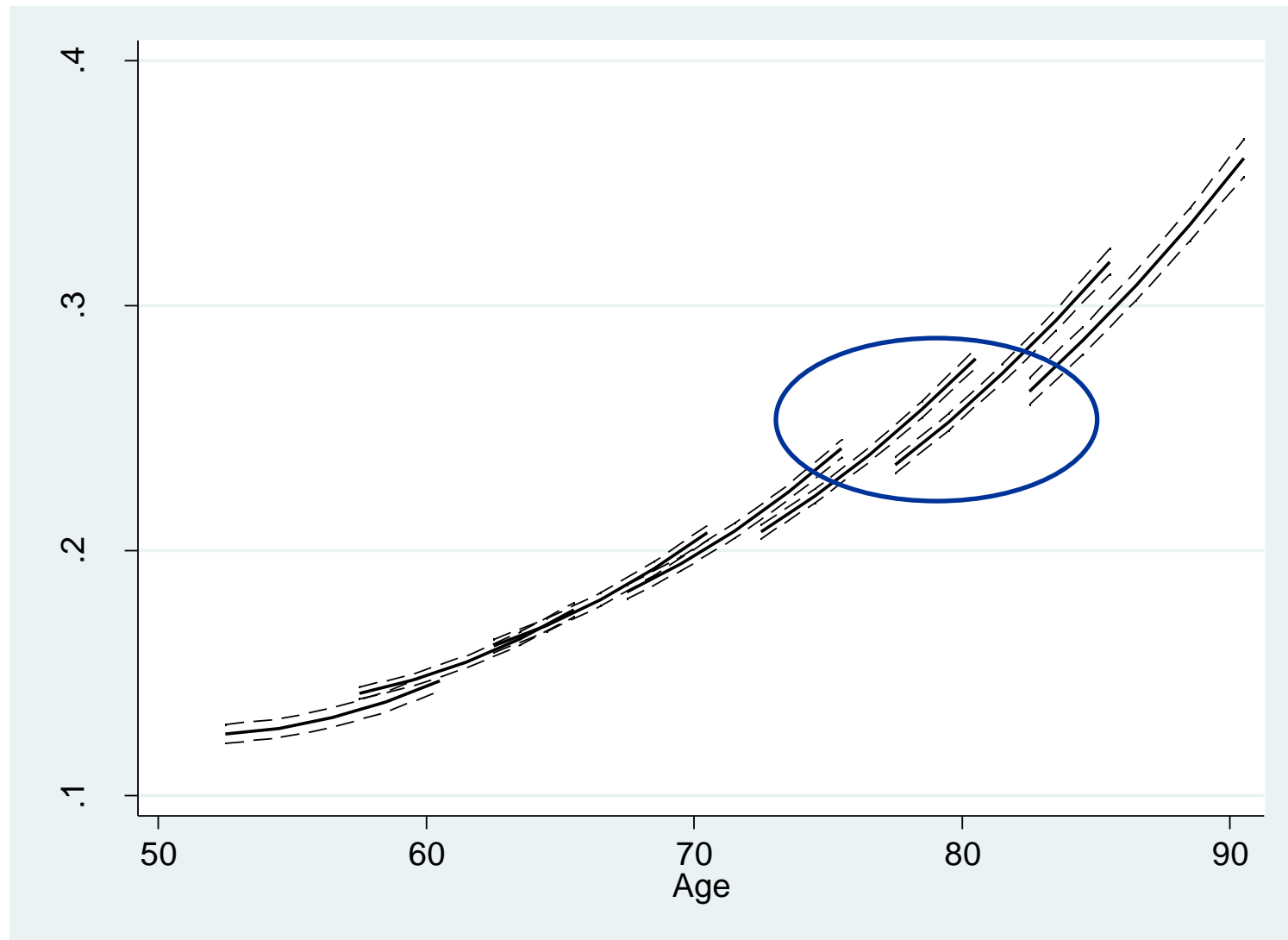
The Commission on Global Aging (1999)

- 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 important are class inequalities in later life?

Frailty trajectories by age and cohort

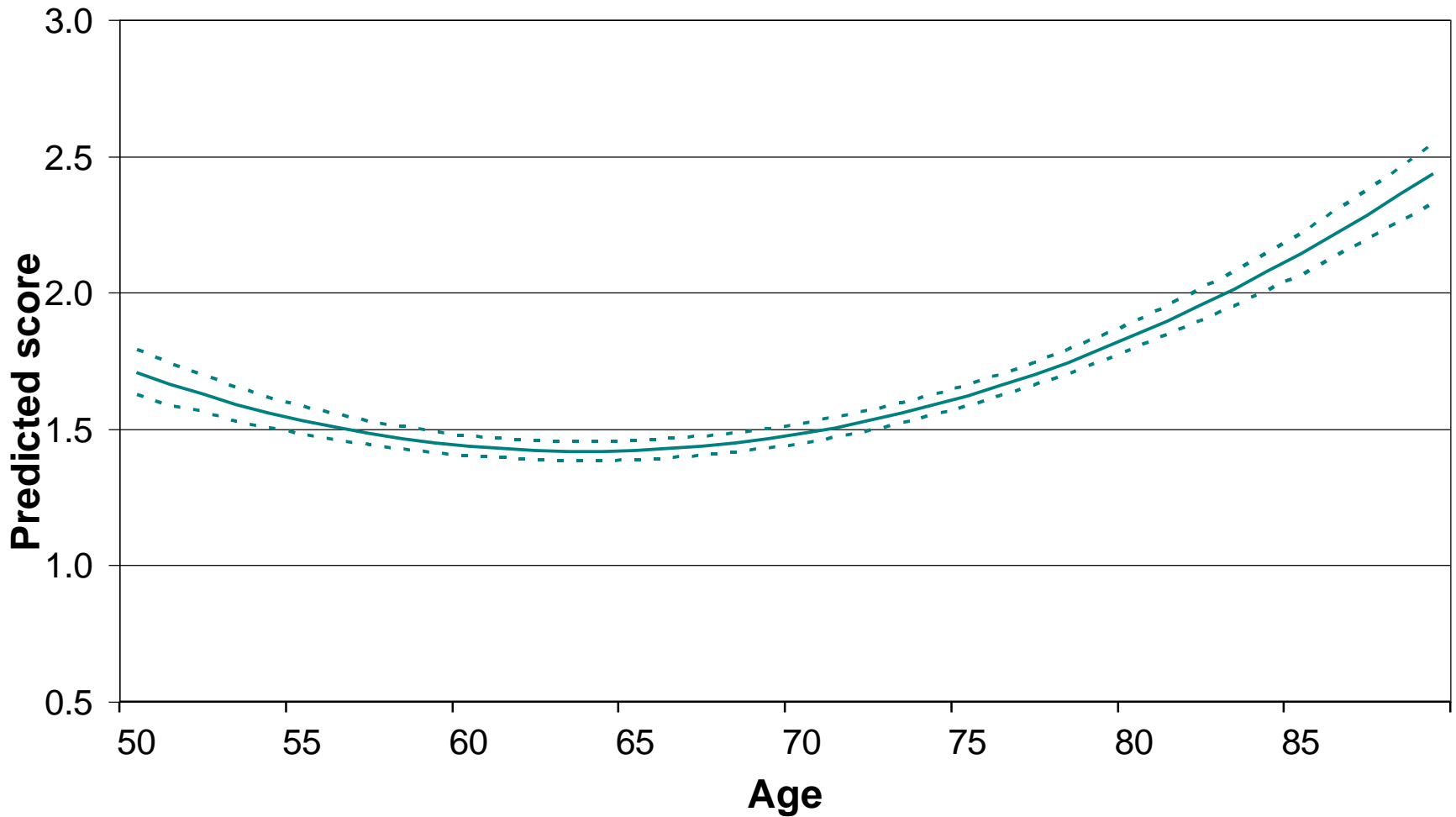


Frailty trajectories by age and cohort

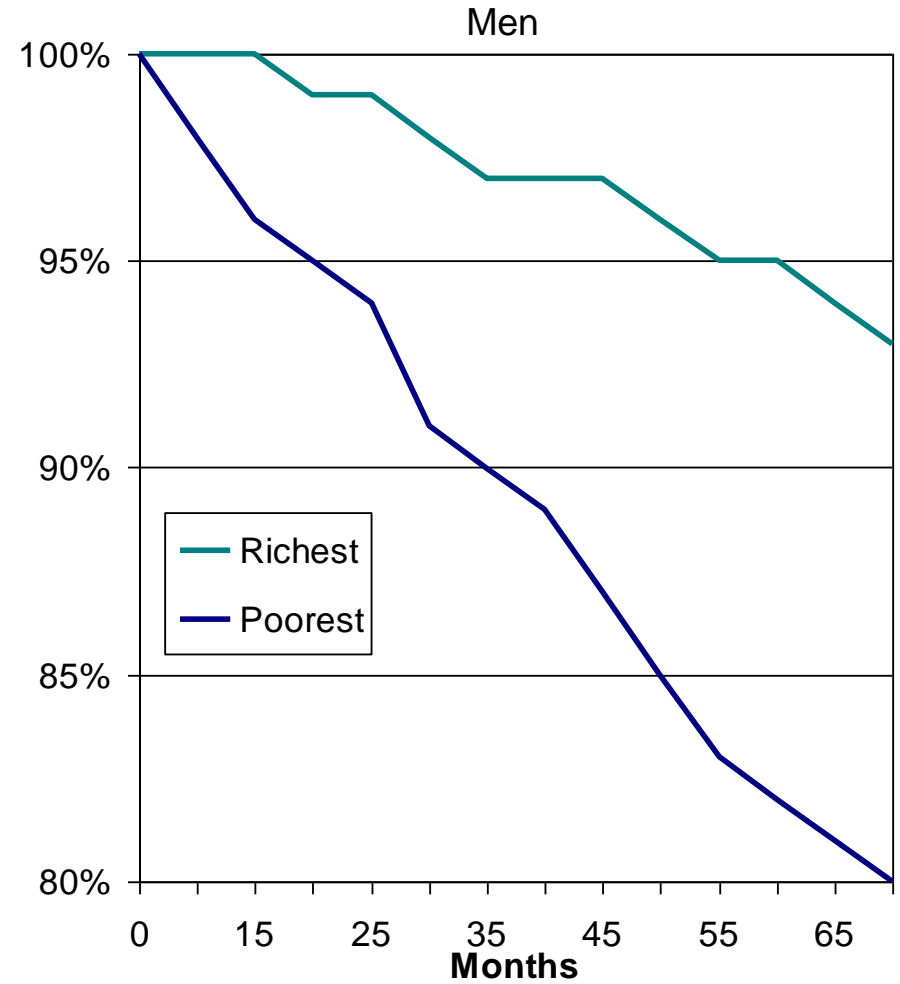
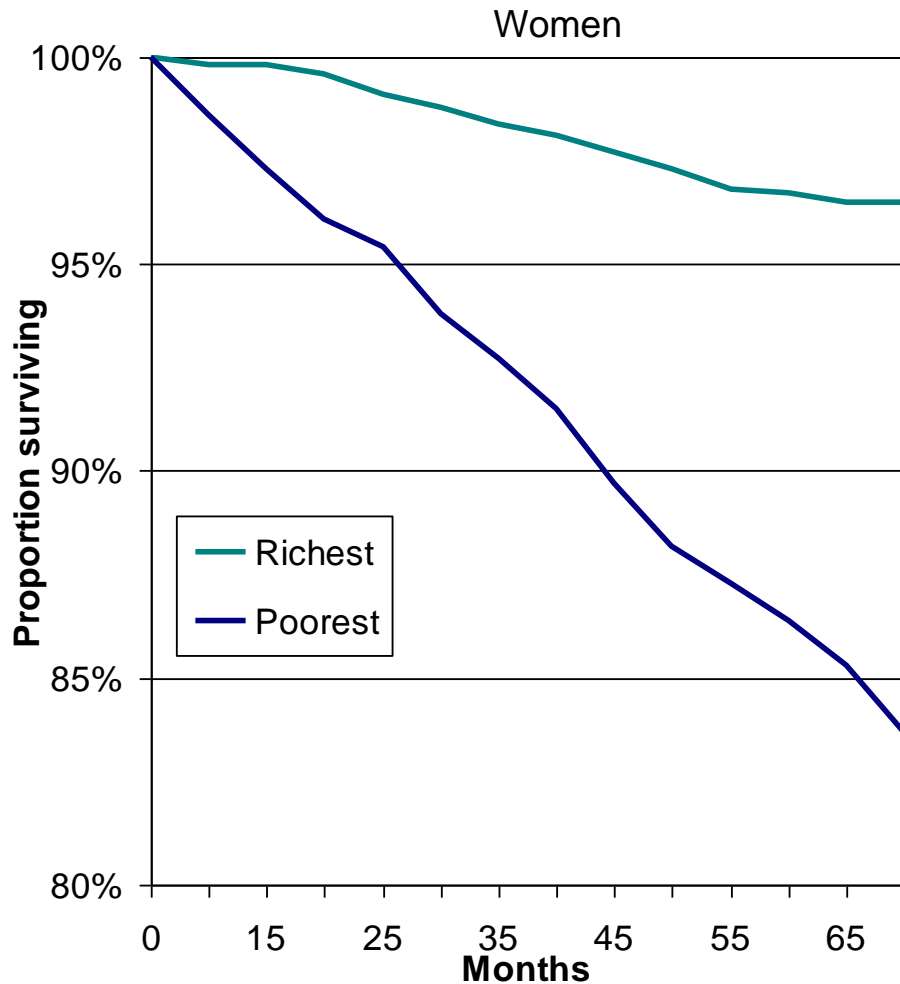


Age and depressed mood

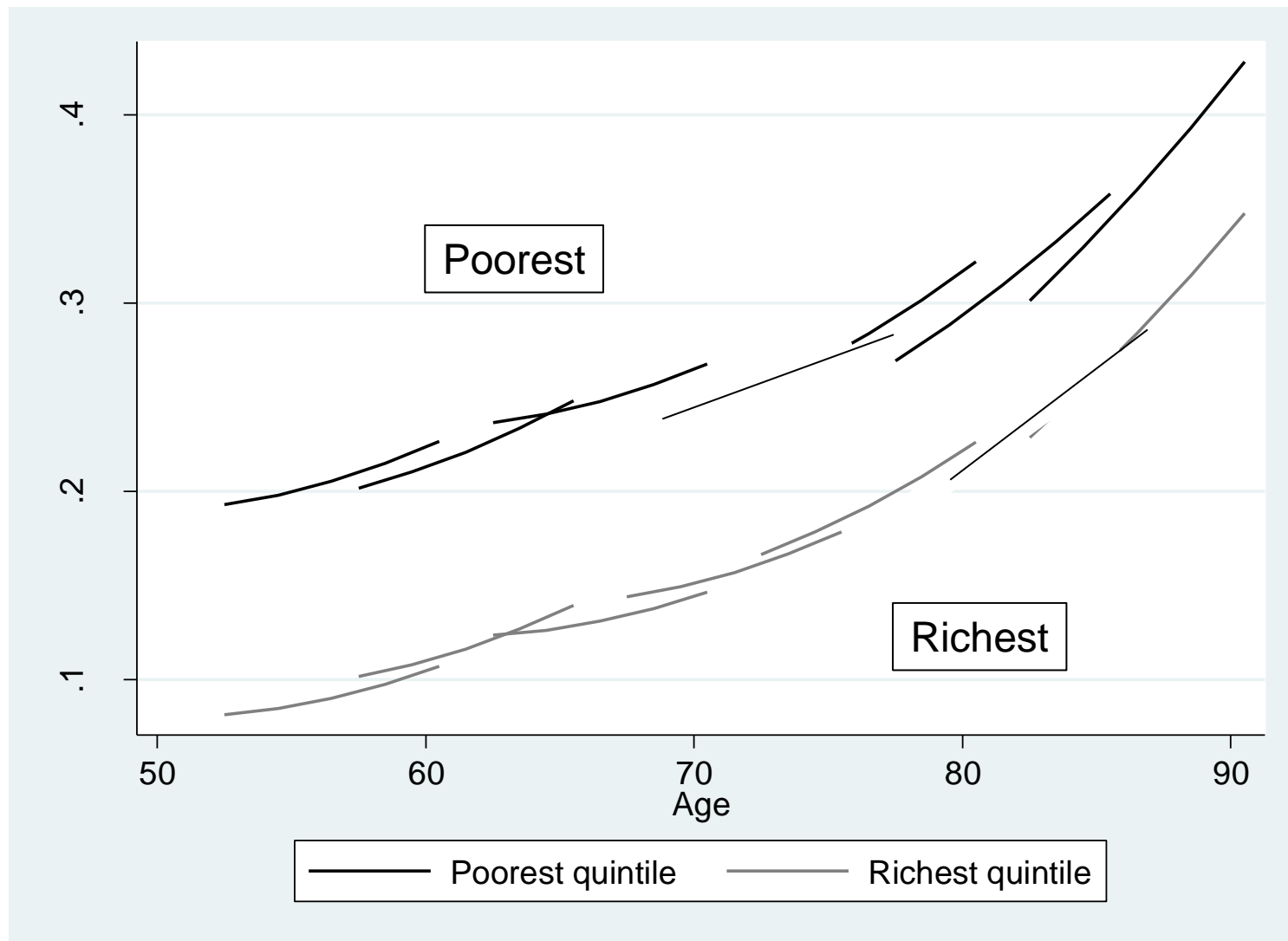
(CES-D score adjusted for gender and ethnicity)



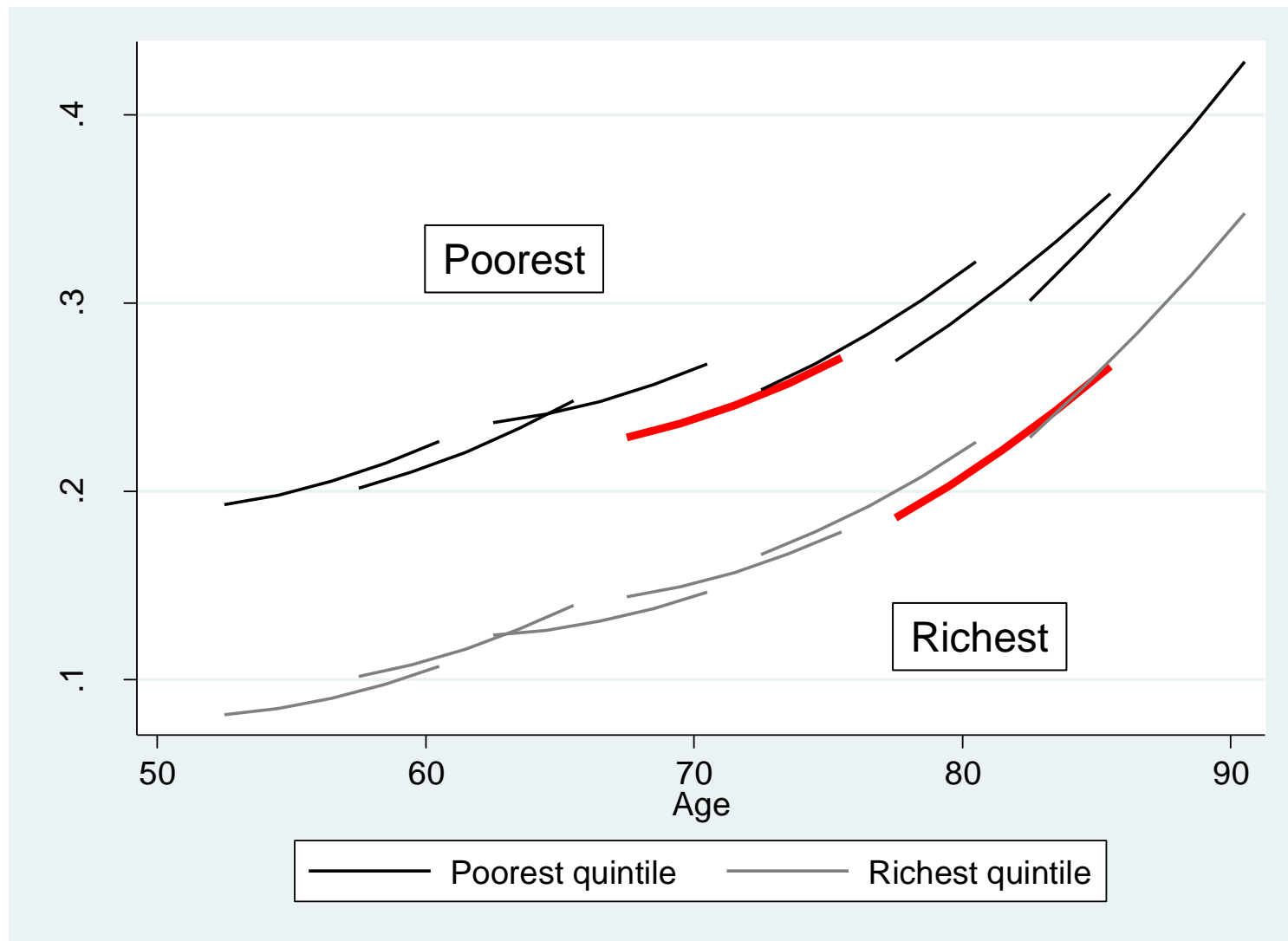
Survival rates by wealth, age 50+



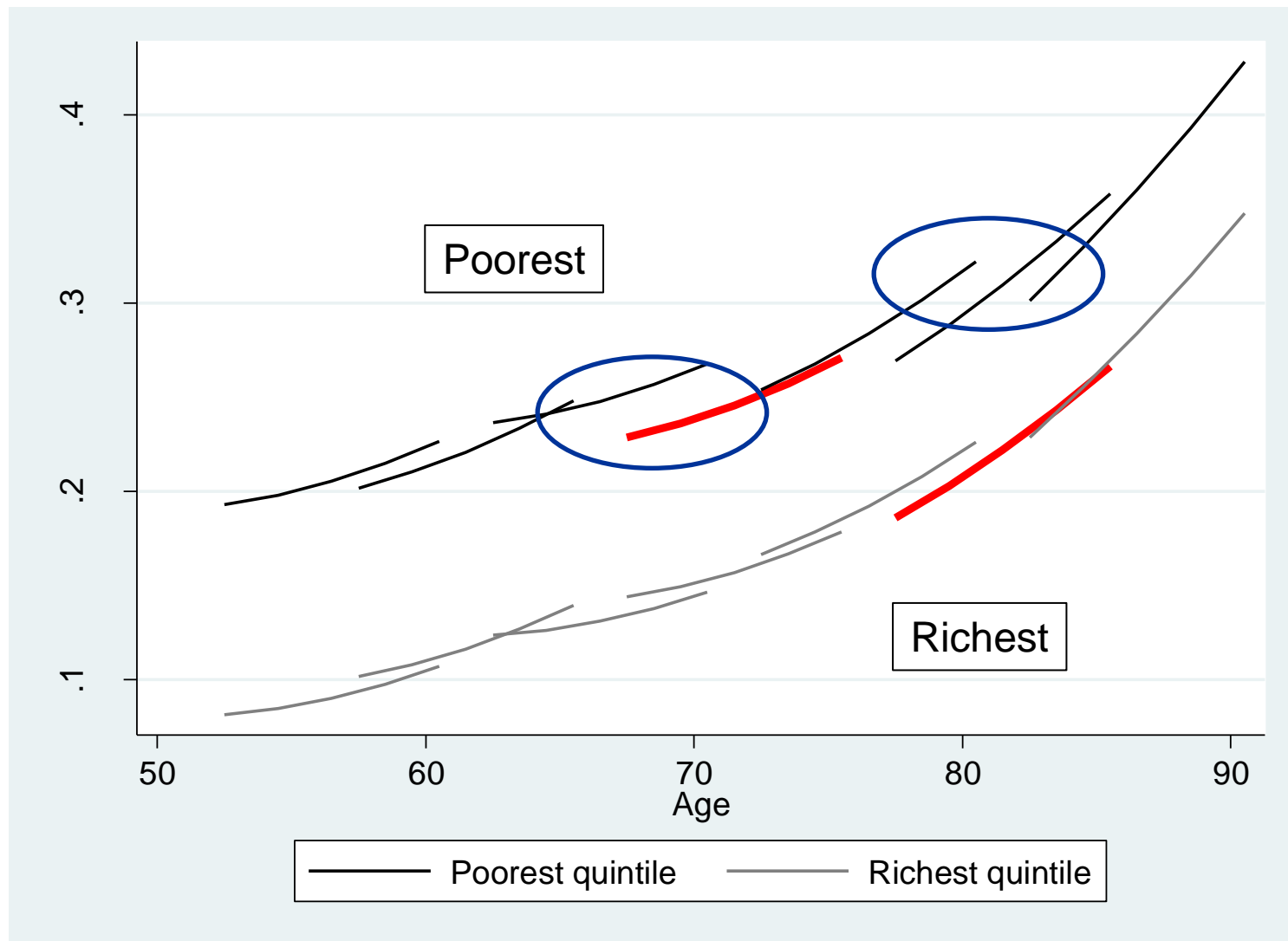
Frailty trajectories by cohort and wealth



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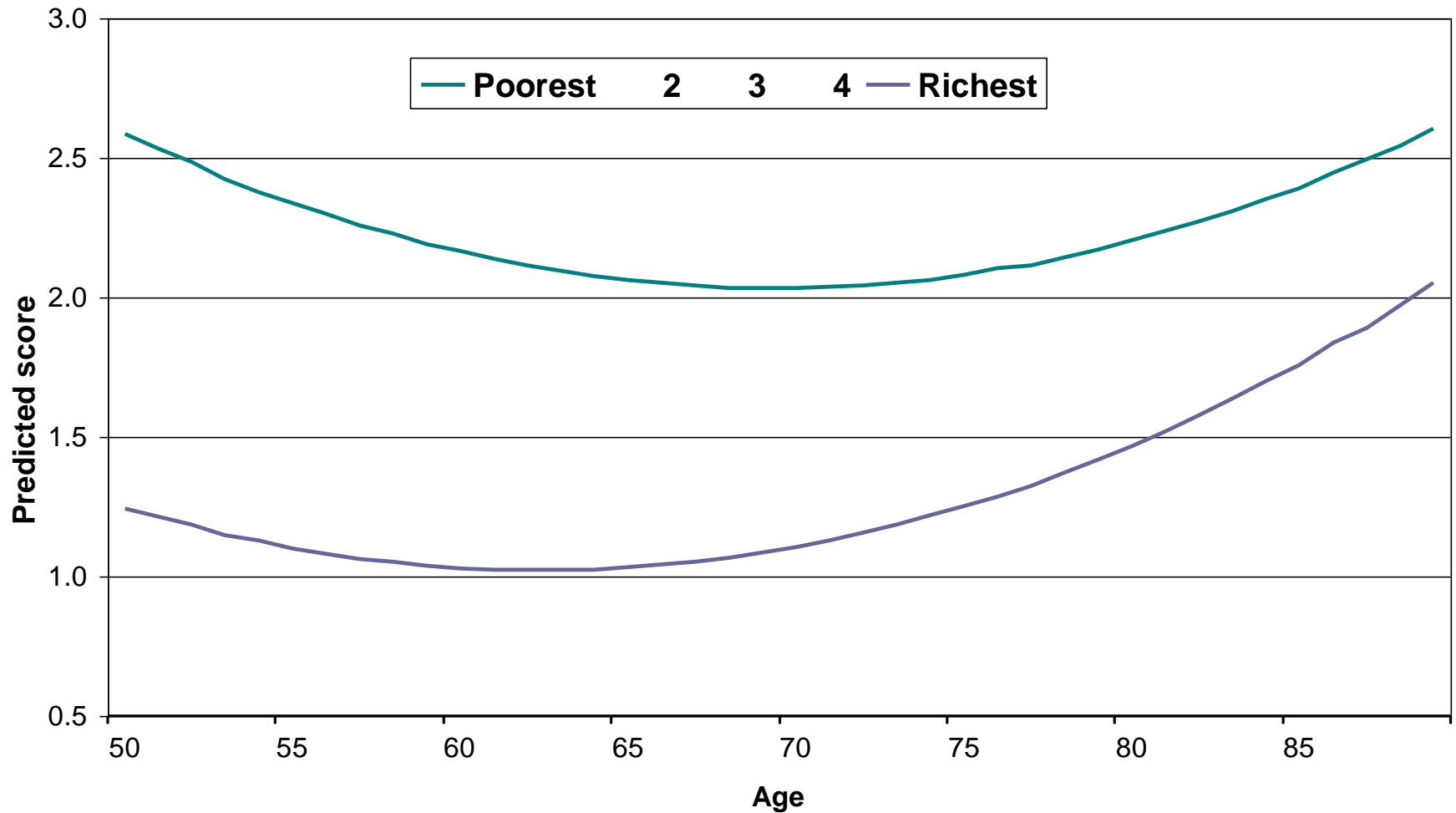


Frailty trajectories by cohort and wealth

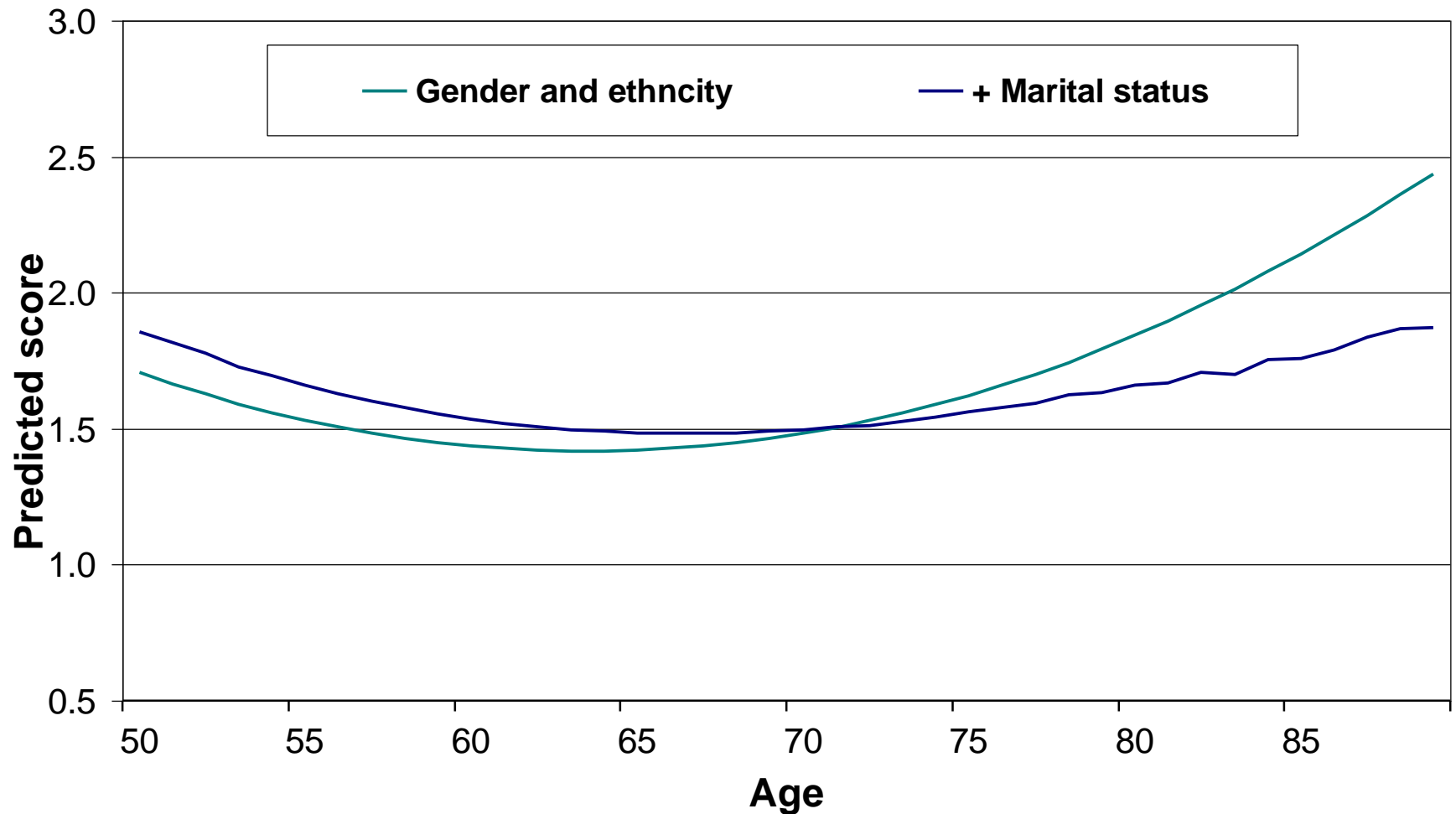


Age, depressed mood and wealth

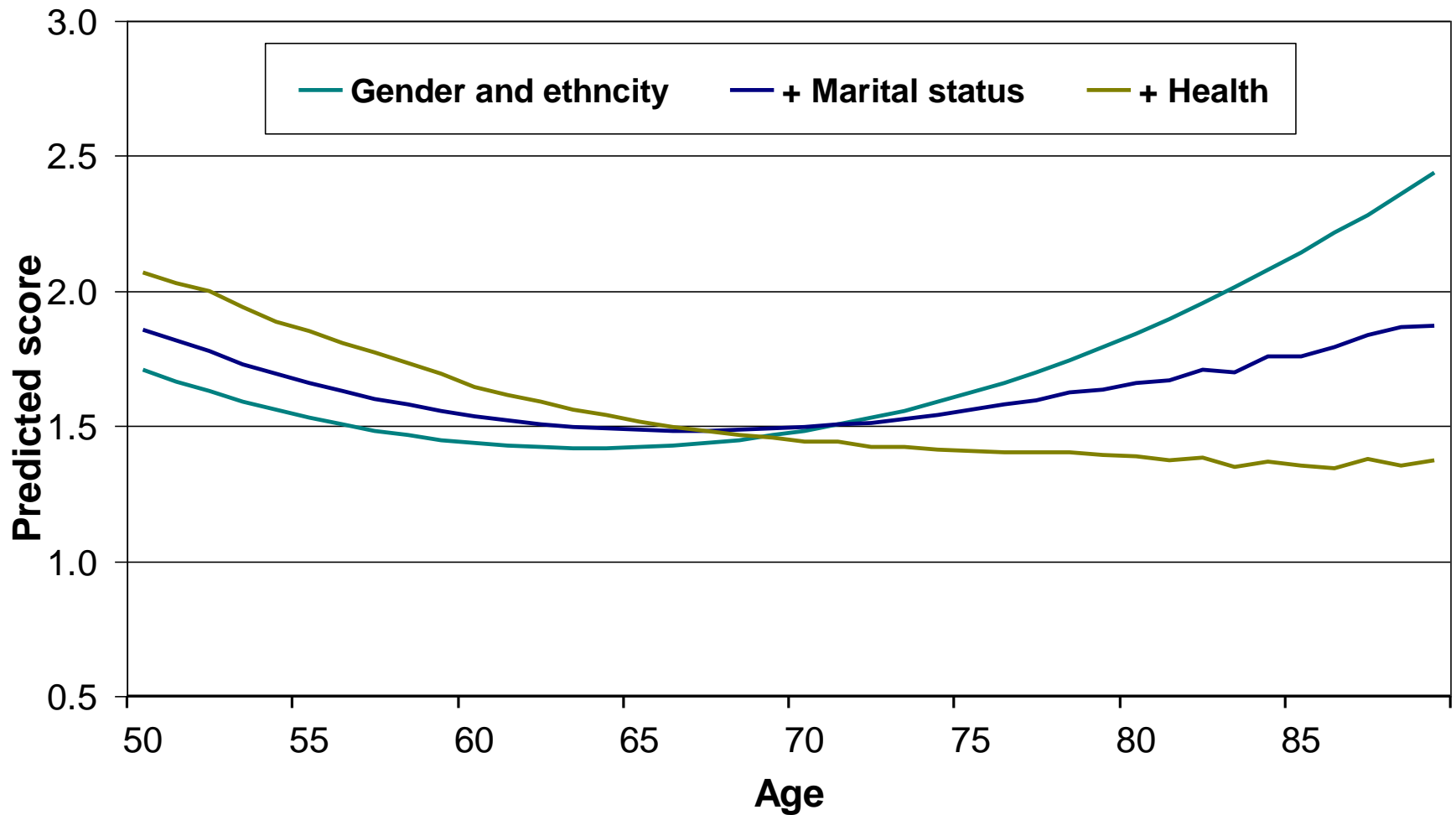
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Age and depression: explaining the relationship



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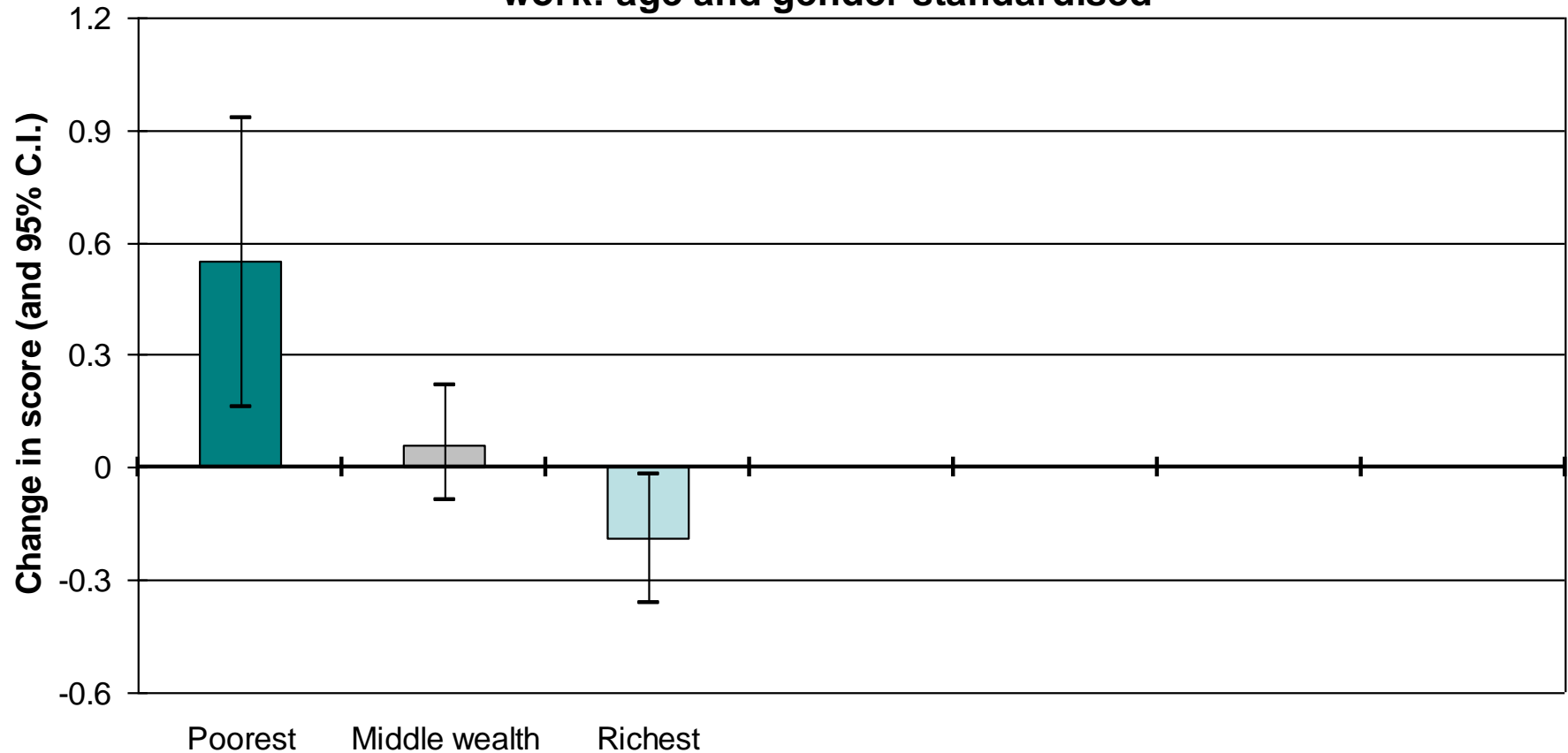
Mechanisms and policy responses

Where does resilience fit in?

- Thriving, or bouncing back, or at least not declining, despite challenging circumstances.
- A significant literature covering early life, with a focus on successful transitions into adulthood and outcomes in adult life.
- Increasing interest in resilience (and vulnerability) in later life and how such concepts might help us understand differences in the ageing process and associated outcomes.
- Not too late to make a difference ...
- Focus is typically on psychological resilience, or resilient communities, but socioeconomic resources are centrally important to resilience.
- These are often ignored in research and policy, which typically do not:
 - Deal with differences within a type of event (e.g. widowhood, or retirement);
 - Focus on which groups are more likely to experience challenges and how resources to respond to challenges are distributed.

Depression and type of retirement transition

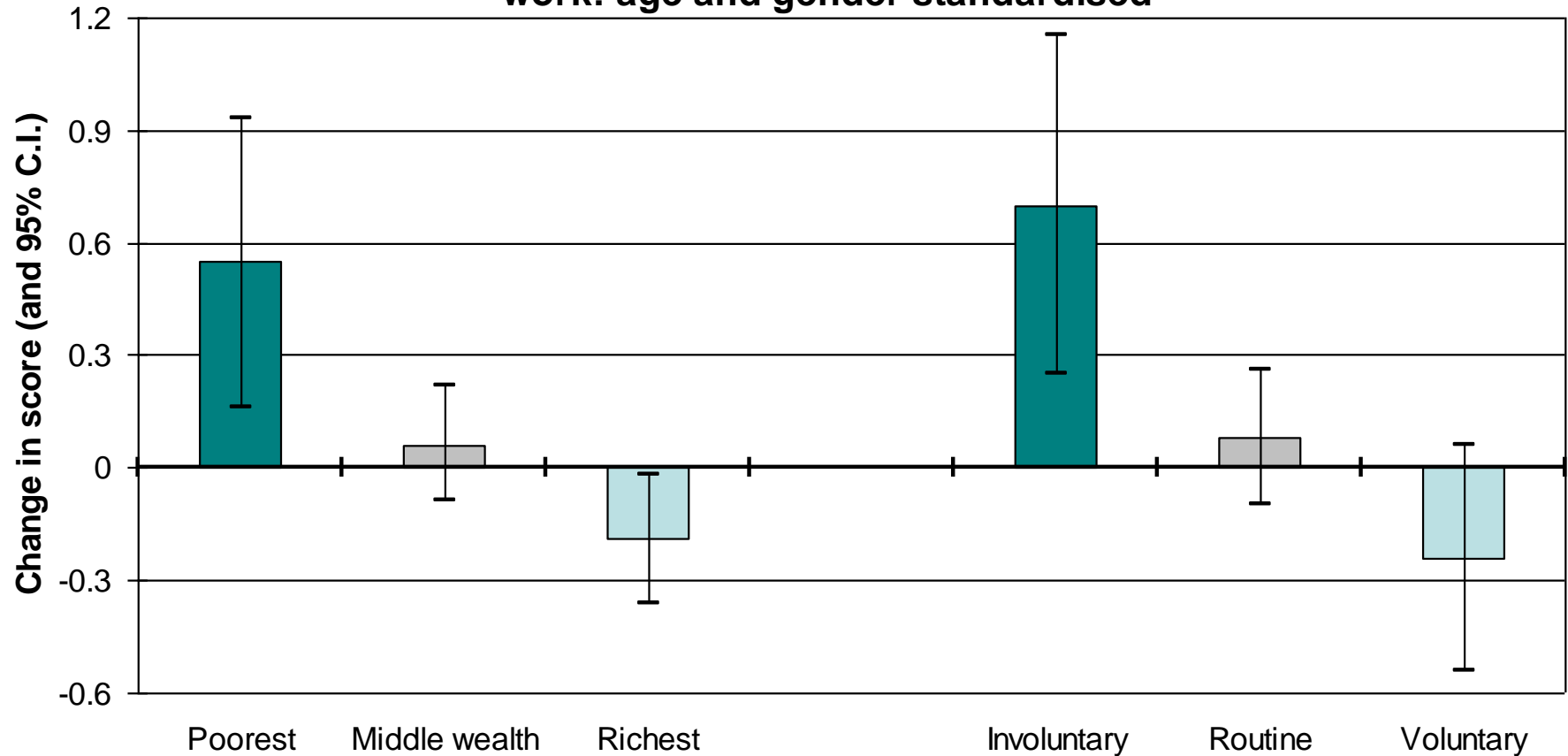
Change in depression score compared with those remaining in work: age and gender standardised



Regression model

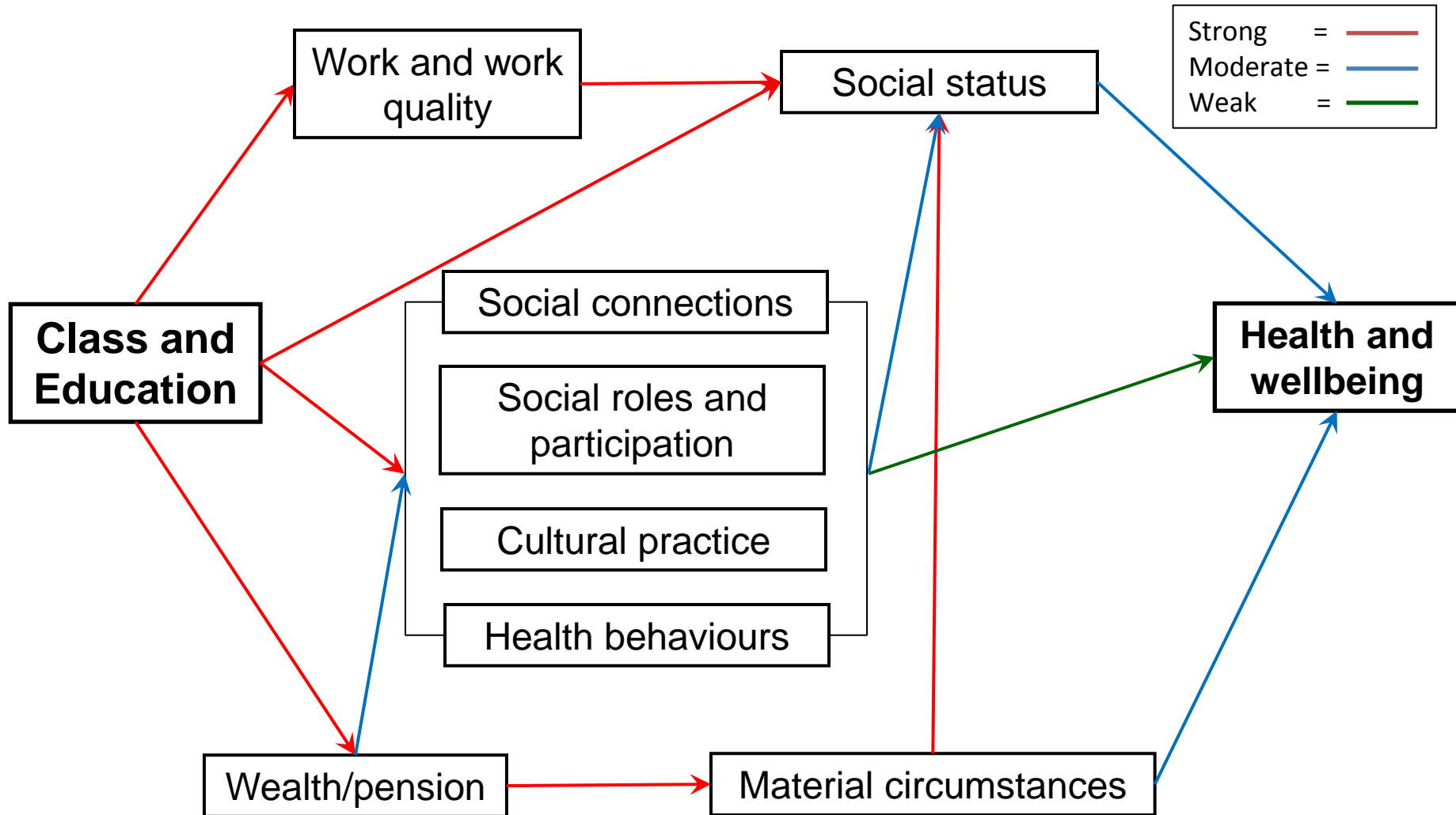
Depression and type of retirement transition

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Regression model

Class-related inequalities (resilience) pathways in later life



Concluding comments

- Significant class inequalities that continue into later life and persist (possibly grow) across age cohorts.
- And socioeconomic inequalities are crucial if we are to develop an appropriate understanding of resilience.
- But the mechanisms through which socioeconomic inequalities operate are complex:
 - Material/economic wellbeing;
 - Social and cultural capital;
 - Employment quality and retirement processes;
 - Social status.
- Almost no interventions around inequalities in later life. Could focus on:
 - Economic circumstances: pensions and housing quality
 - Key transitions: retirement; bereavement; onset of illness/frailty
 - Social roles that increase social connection, provide valued identities, contribute to personal development and enhance social status.