

# Comorbidity and the implications for welfare services: evidence from the international research project Tackling Health Inequalities and Extending Working Lives

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Margaret Whitehead, Finn Diderichsen, Bo Burström, Cameron Mustard



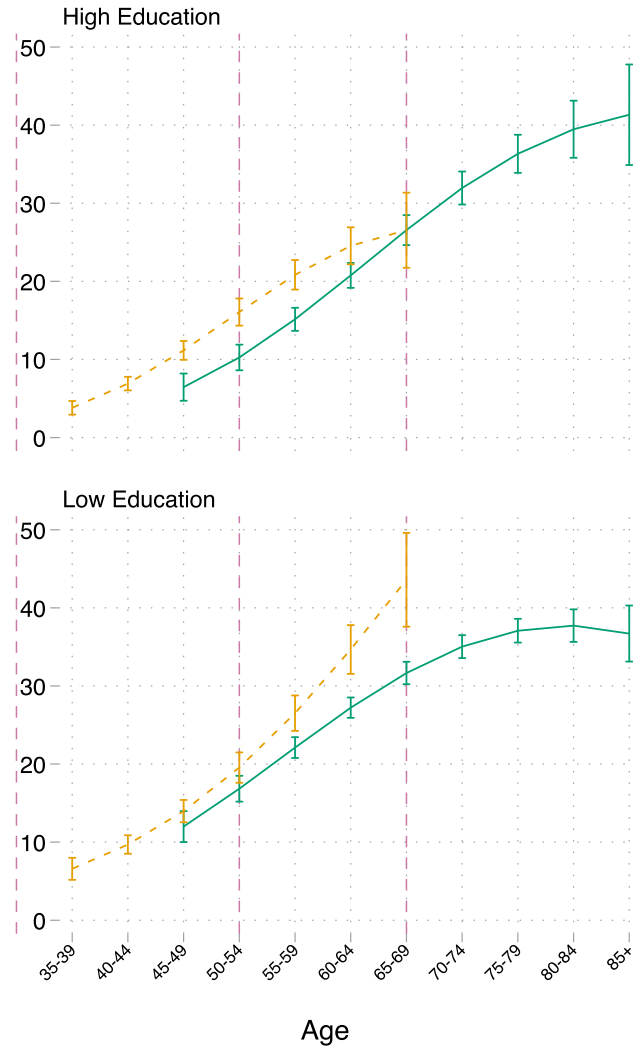
- How has multi-morbidity changed over time?
- What co-morbidities have increases in which groups?
- What are the consequences for employment later in life?
- What could mitigate these consequences – what might make it worse?



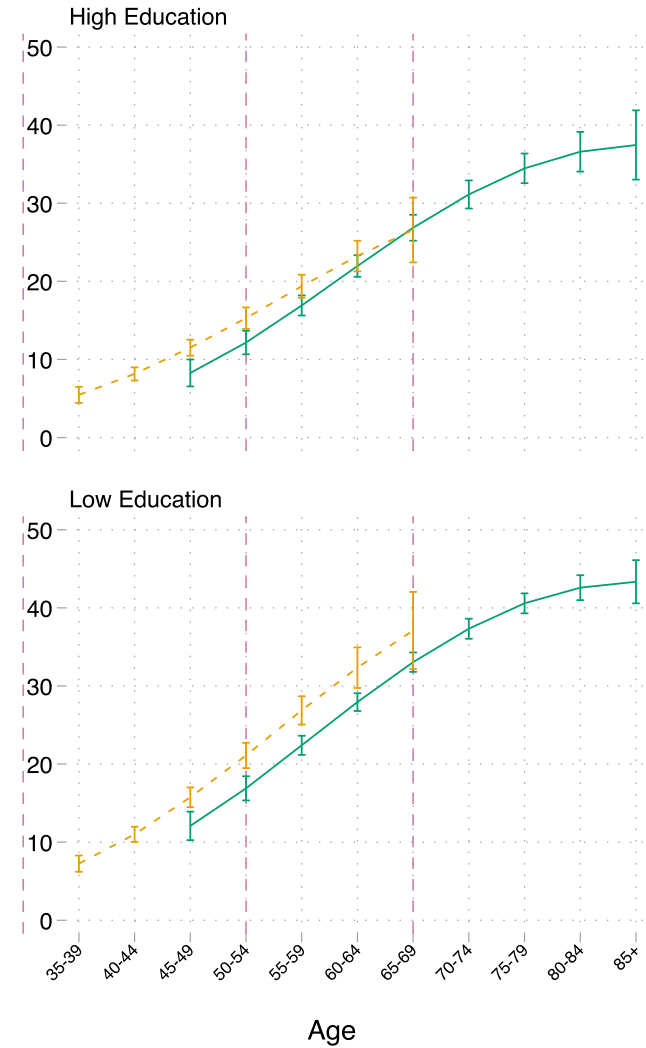


Figure 2. Prevalence of 2 or more conditions by age, gender and educational group

Men - 2 or more conditions



Women - 2 or more conditions



The Silent Generation (<1946)

Baby boomers (1946-1964)

The Silent Generation (<1946)

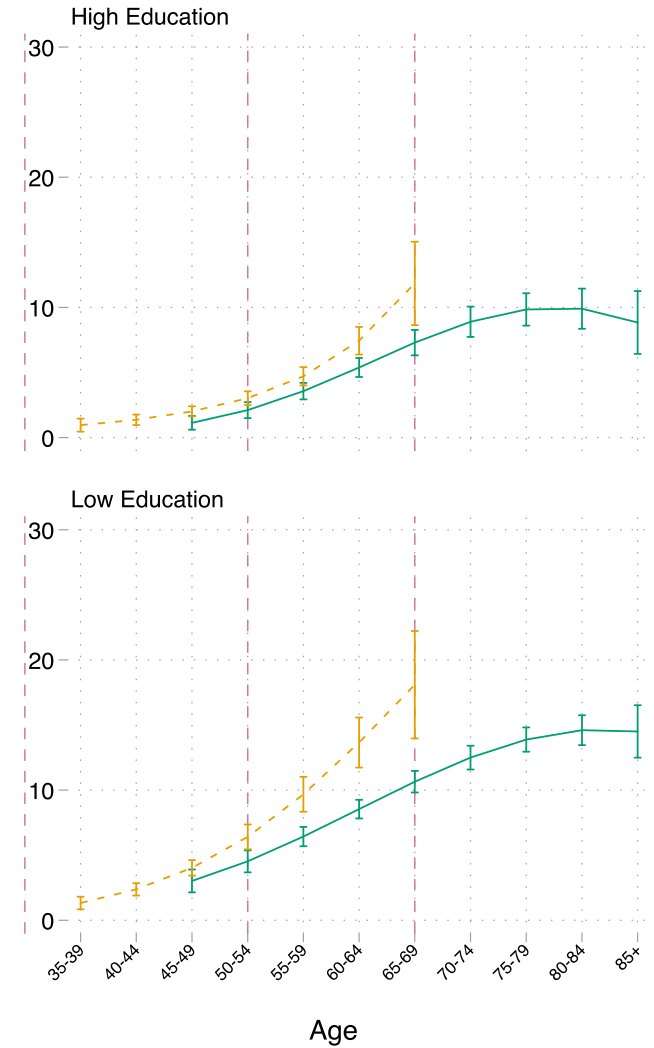
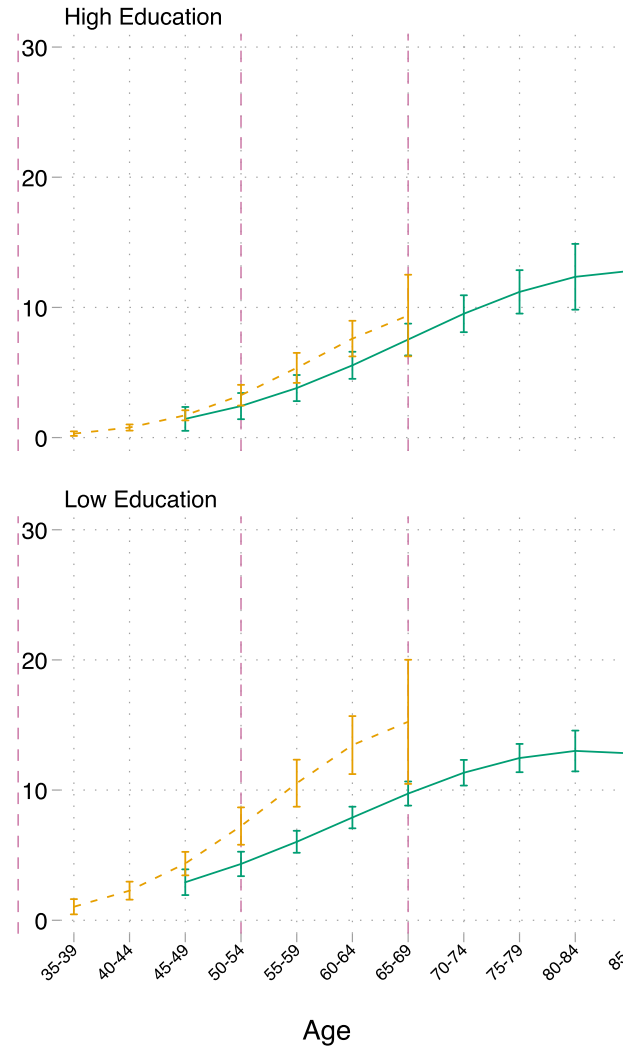
Baby boomers (1946-1964)



Figure 3. Prevalence of 3 or more conditions by age, gender and educational group

Men - 3 or more conditions

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The Silent Generation (<1946)

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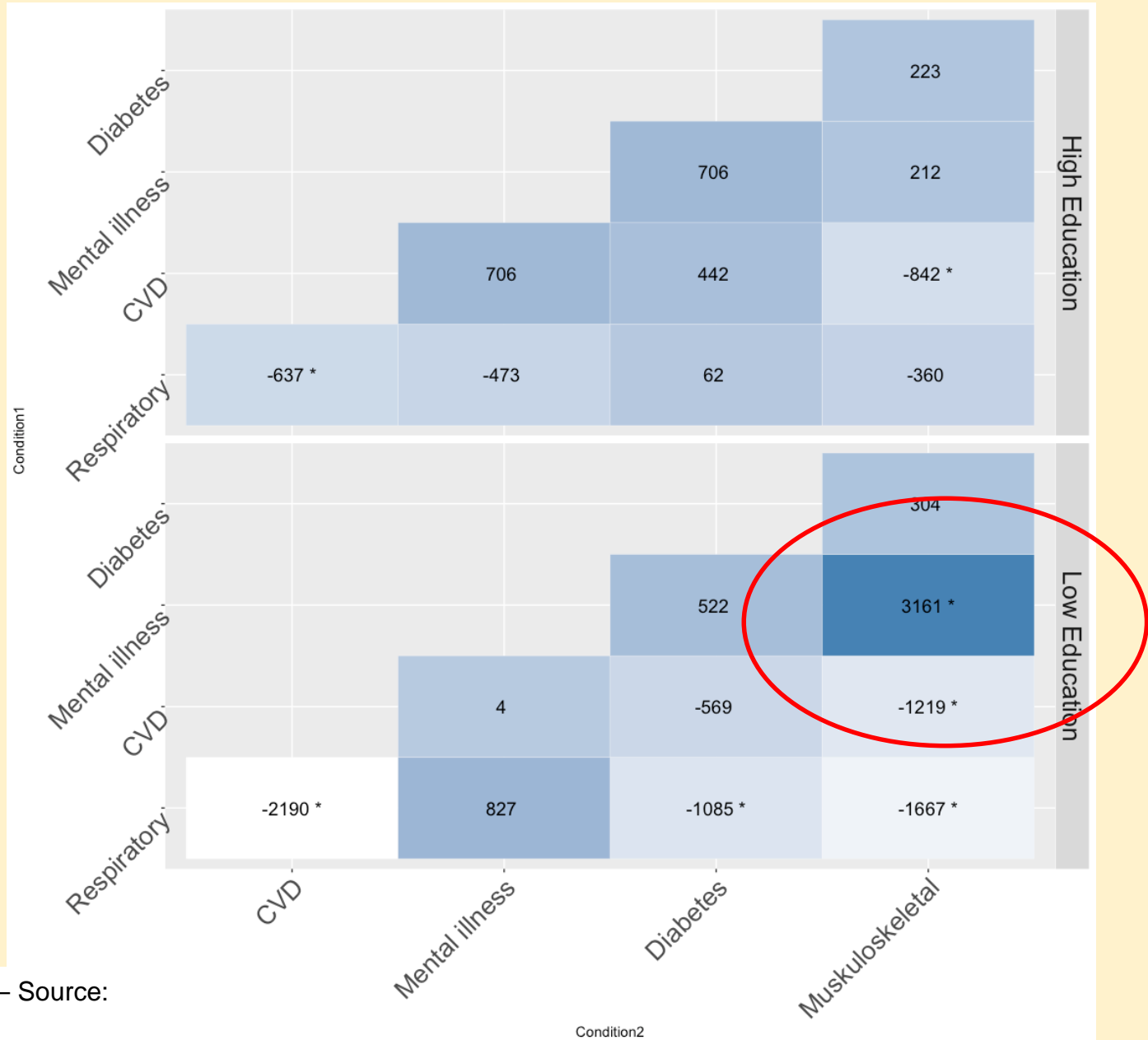
The Silent Generation (<1946)

Baby boomers (1946-1964)





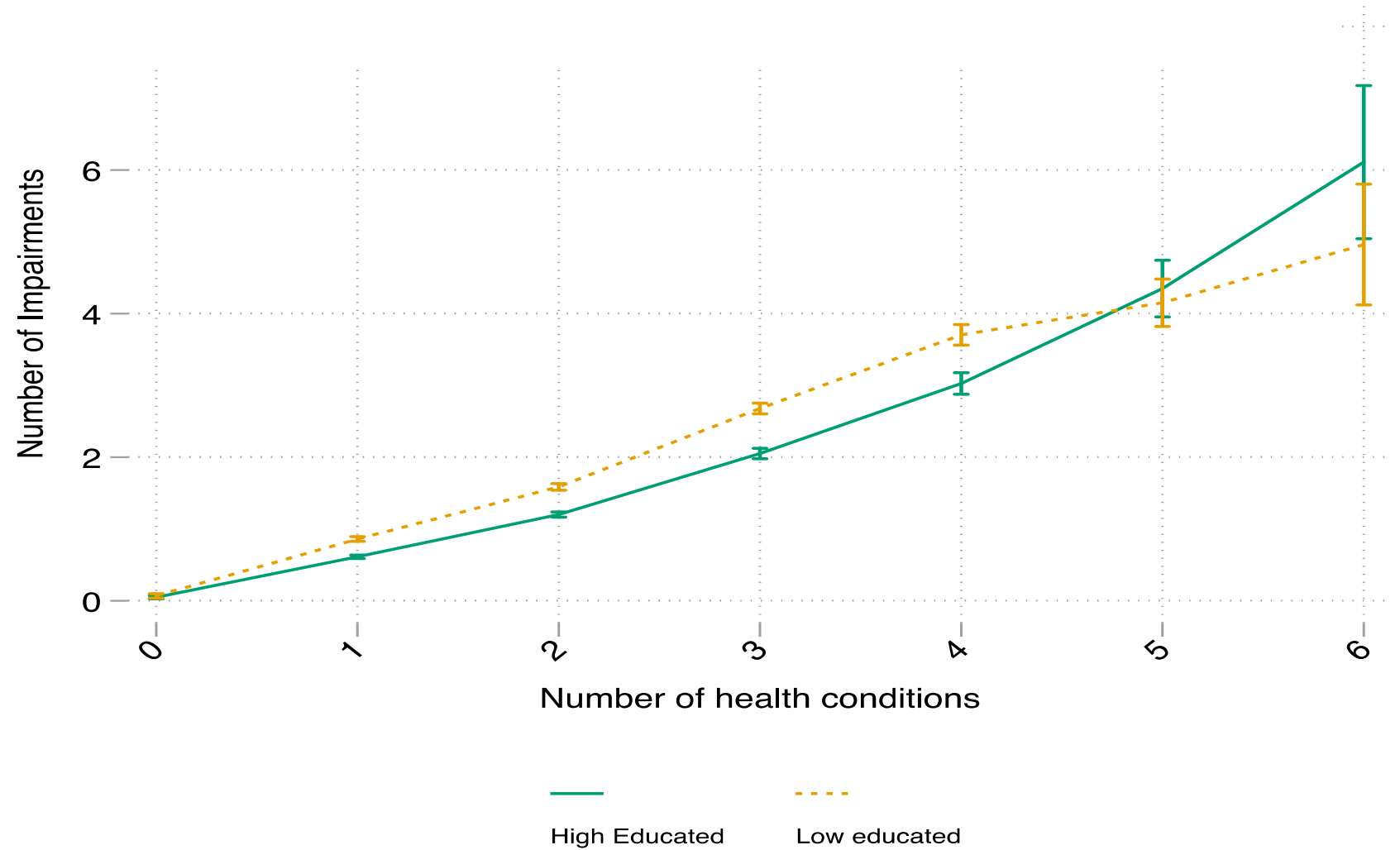
# Increase in multi- morbidity between generations



Age 50-64 – Source:  
ELSA



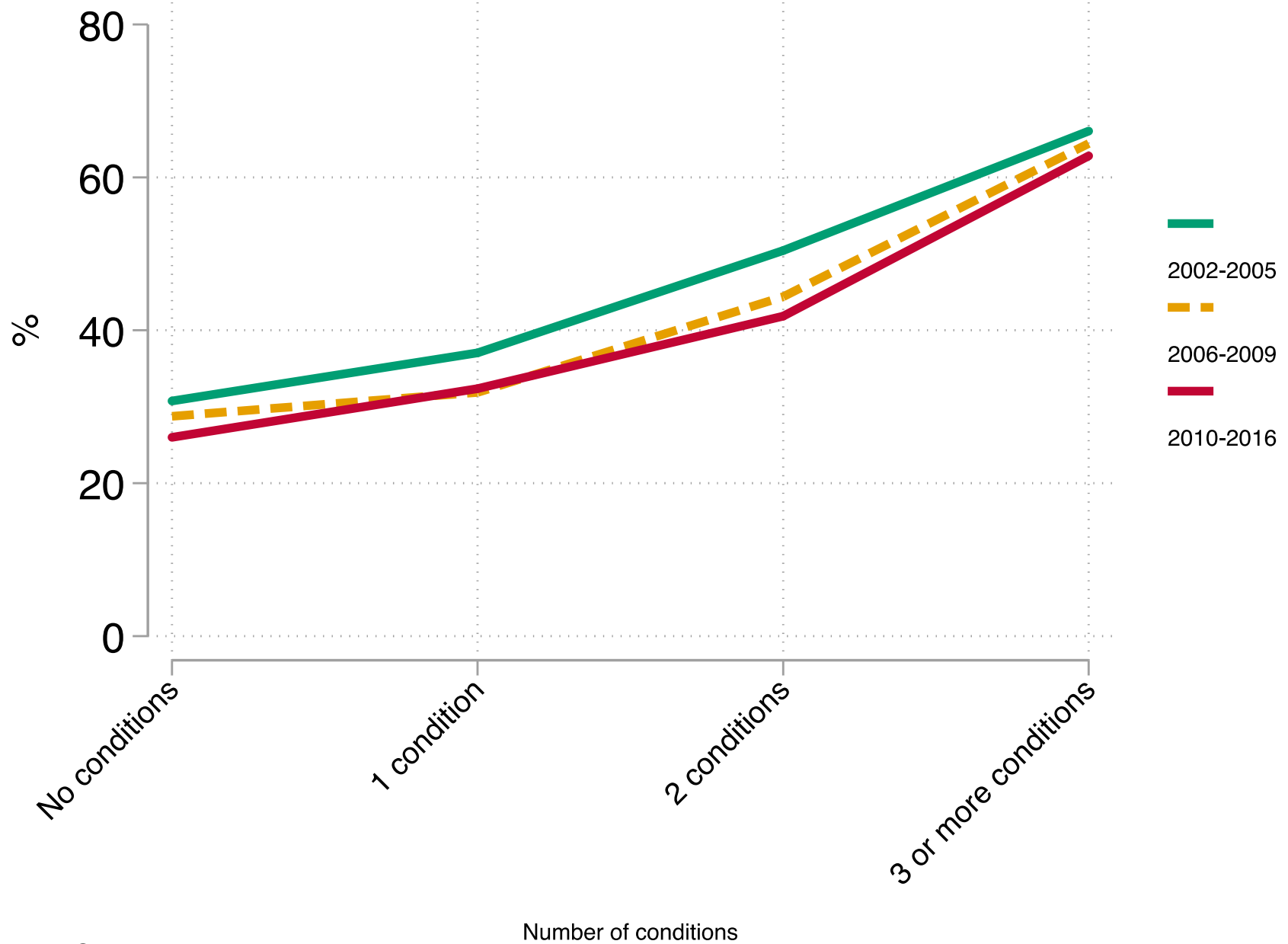
# Multi-morbidity and limitations.



Understanding Society - Aged 50-64



# % out of work by number of health conditions

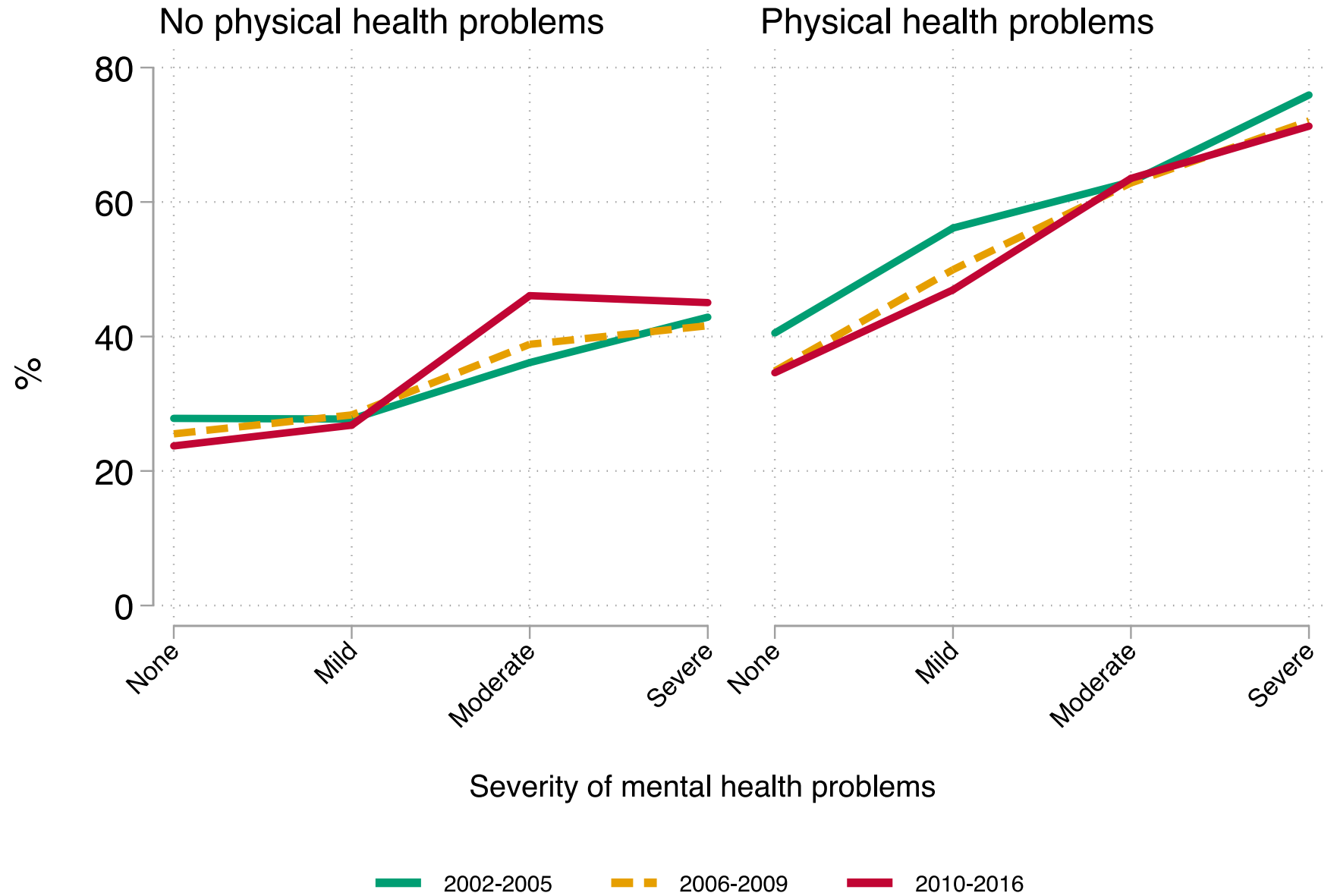


Age 50-64 – Source: ELSA





## % out of work by severity of mental health problems



Age 50-64 – Source:  
ELSA





## Trends in mental health inequalities in England during a period of recession, austerity and welfare reform 2004 to 2013

Ben Barr <sup>a,\*</sup>, Peter Kinderman <sup>b</sup>, Margaret Whitehead <sup>c</sup>

age, vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals.

## Recession is to blame for death toll of more than 1,000 suicides

PUBLISHED: 02:03, 15 August 2012 | UPDATED: 08:04, 15 August 2012

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The recession is to blame for more than 1,000 suicides, claim researchers.

They estimate that 846 more men and 155 extra women took their own lives between 2008 and 2010 than would have been expected if previous trends had continued.

Unemployment blackspots saw the biggest rise, said consultant psychiatrist Dr Ben Barr, of the University of Liverpool, who led the study, published on the British Medical Journal's website.

He added: 'We found a dramatic spike across England in the number of suicides in 2008 and 2009 after the recession arrived.

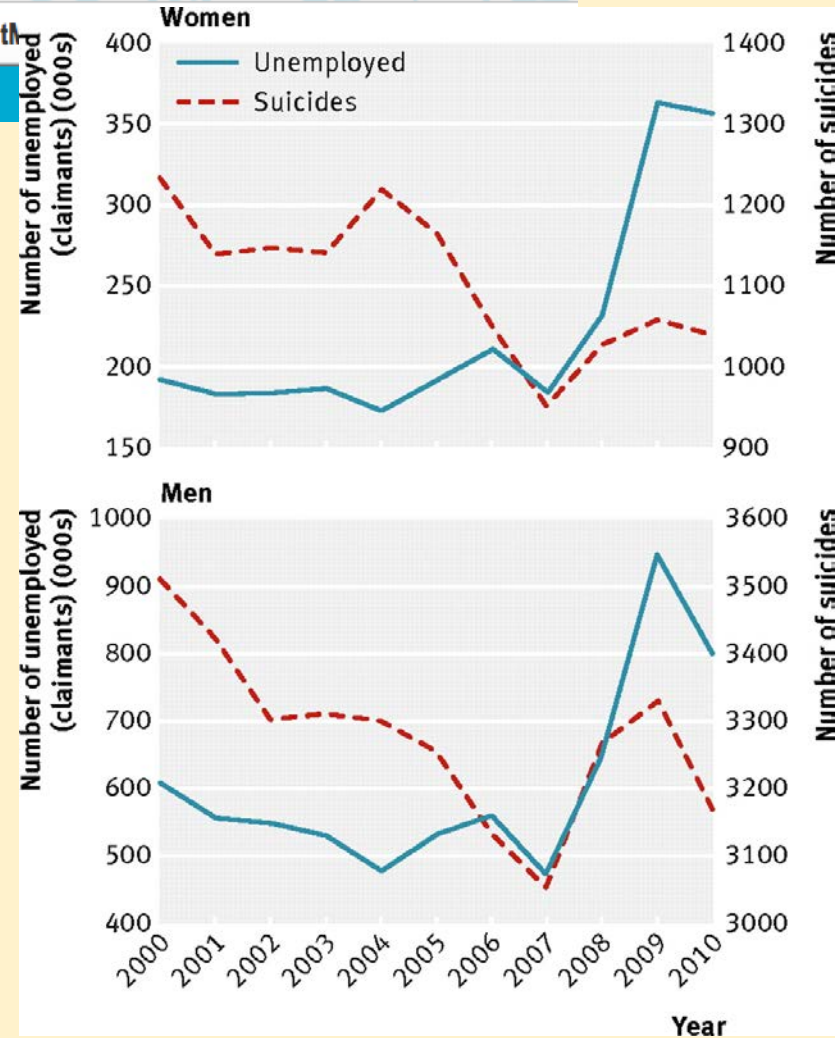
'Austerity measures resulting in job losses do have a human cost and policies that promote re-employment could reverse this trend

'The statistics are hugely alarming



© Getty Images

Common symptoms of depressive disorder are memory loss and blunted emotional responses



Barr B et al. BMJ 2012;345:bmj.e5142





# The Work Capability Assessment



deal for welfare:  
Empowering people  
to work

# 'First, do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? A longitudinal ecological study

B Barr<sup>1</sup>, D Taylor-Robinson<sup>1</sup>, D Stuckler<sup>2</sup>, R Loopstra<sup>2</sup>, A Reeves<sup>2</sup>, M Whitehead<sup>1</sup>

**Association between reassessment with the WCA between 2010 and 2013 and the increase in suicides, self-reported mental health problems and antidepressant items prescribed during the same period.**

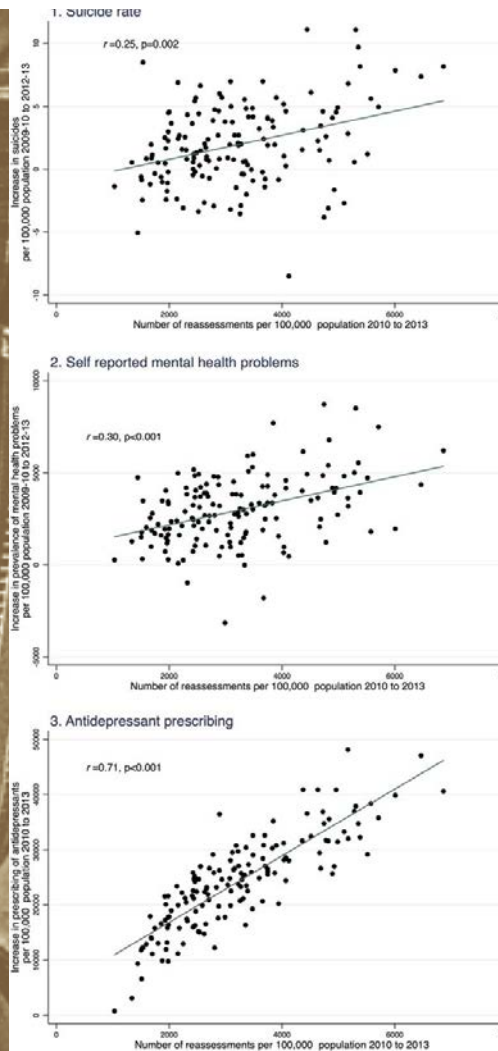


Table 1

Additional adverse mental health outcomes associated with each 10 000 people in an area experiencing reassessment

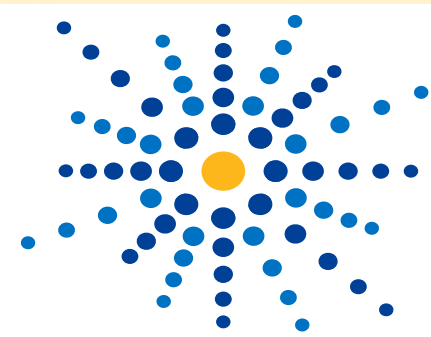
	Number	95% CI	p Value
Suicides	5.68	2.12 9.23	0.002
Cases of mental health problems	2700	548 4840	0.014
Items of antidepressants	7020	3930 10 100	<0.001





# Mental Health and Wellbeing in England

Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014



- 2007 – 21 % of incapacity benefit (IB) claimants reported they had attempted suicide.
- 2014 - 43 % of Employment Support Allowance claimants reported they had attempted suicide.

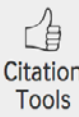
Source: Sally McManus, NatCen: <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/staggering-esa-suicide-figures-prompt-calls-for-inquiry-and-prosecution-of-ministers/>



Article  
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Research report

## Fit-for-work or fit-for-unemployment? Does the reassessment of disability benefit claimants using a tougher work capability assessment help people into work?

B Barr<sup>1</sup>, D Taylor-Robinson<sup>2</sup>, D Stuckler<sup>3</sup>, R Loopstra<sup>3</sup>, A Reeves<sup>4</sup>, S Wickham<sup>2</sup>, M Whitehead<sup>2</sup>

[Author affiliations +](#)

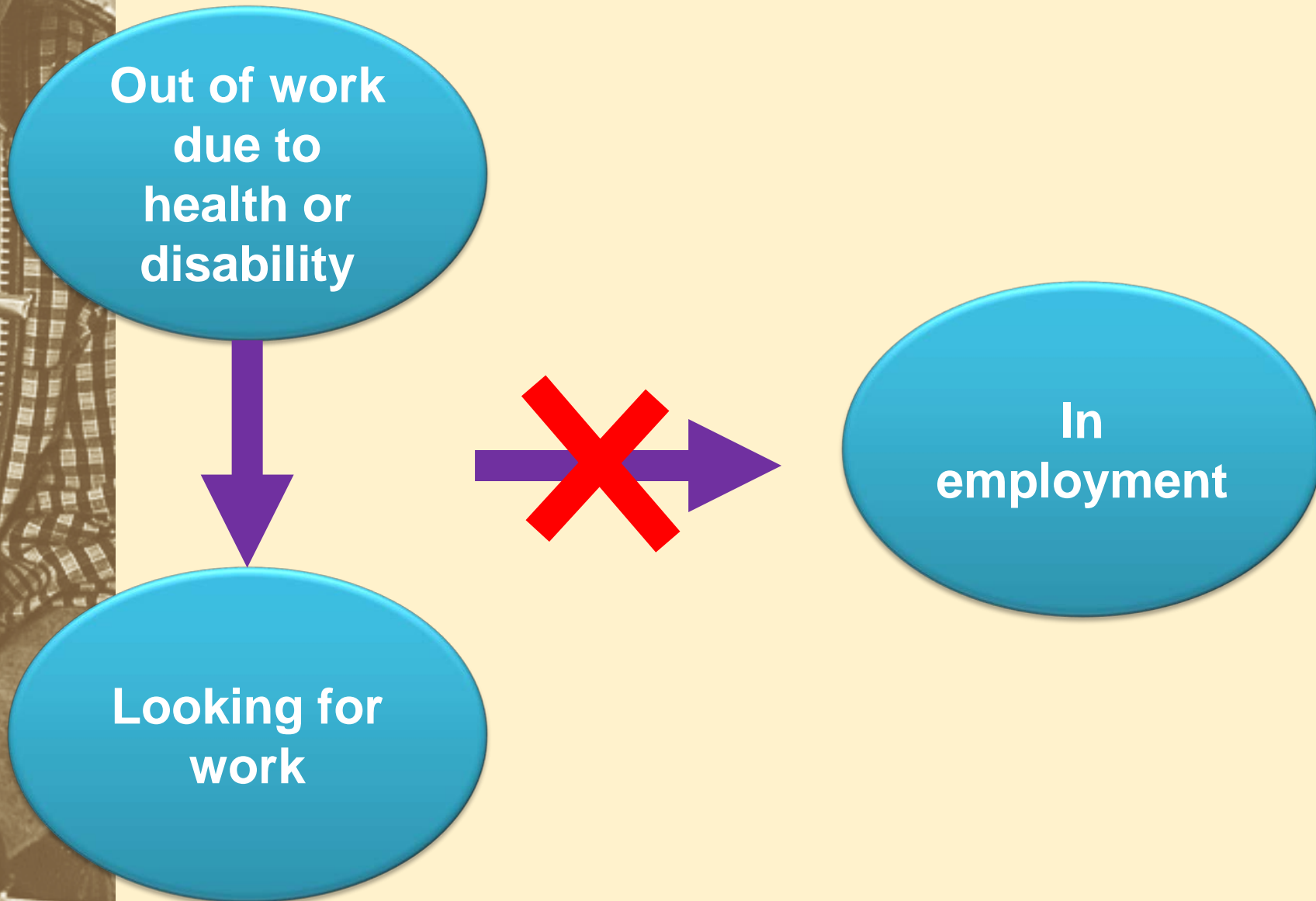


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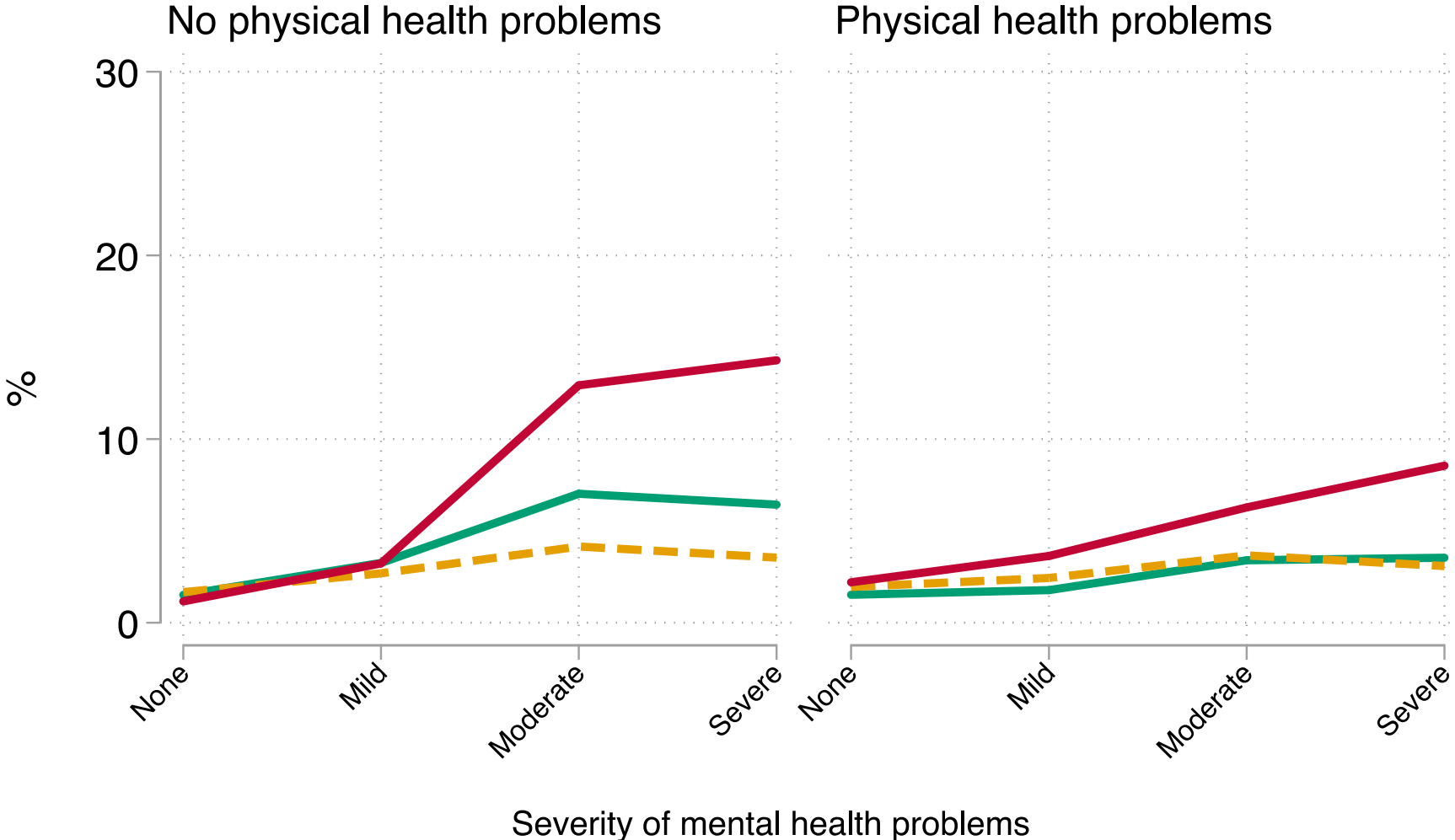


# It didn't get more people into work





# % out of work, but looking for work by severity of mental health problems



Age 50-64 – Source: ELSA

2002-2005    2006-2009    2010-2016



# What does work?



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doi:10.1093/eurpub/ckr101 Advance Access published on 4 August 2011

## Effectiveness of return-to-work interventions for disabled people: a systematic review of government initiatives focused on changing the behaviour of employers

Stephen Clayton<sup>1</sup>, Ben Barr<sup>1</sup>, Lotta Nylen<sup>2</sup>, Bo Burström<sup>2</sup>, Karsten Thielen<sup>3</sup>, Finn Diderichsen<sup>3</sup>, Espen Dahl<sup>4</sup>, Margaret Whitehead<sup>1</sup>

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## Mapping the literature on effectiveness of interventions to tackle the disability-employment gap

### Final Report

January 2018

Theo Lorenc<sup>1</sup>; Emily South<sup>1</sup>; Holly Dale<sup>1</sup>; Kath Wright<sup>1</sup>; Ben Barr<sup>2</sup>; Margaret Whitehead<sup>2</sup>; Amanda Sowden<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, University of York

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Psychology, Health and Society, University of Liverpool



# What does work?

- Interventions changing the work environment, rather than focusing solely on making individuals fit for work tended to be more effective.
- Interventions involving workplace and organisational adjustments return-to-work planning tend to be more effective.
- Good evidence for Individual Placement and Support (IPS) for people with severe mental health problems - less so in the UK than in North America.
- Interventions focused on solely on improving individuals employability less effective.
- There is little evidence that psychological therapies on their own improve employment chances.

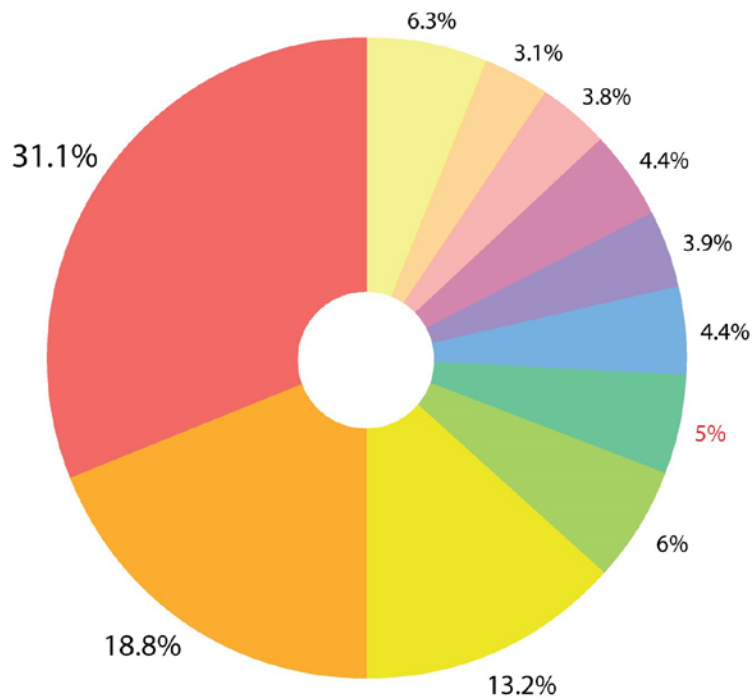




Source: Mark Gamsu 2017 - <https://localdemocracyandhealth.com/2017/06/25/the-welfare-benefit-system-is-a-public-health-system/>

# Welfare expenditure – nearly double health expenditure.

United Kingdom 2016-17 Government Expenditure



Expenditure figures taken from page 5, *Budget 2016*. 16 March 2016, HM Govt

**Total 2016-17 Government Expenditure: £772 billion**





# Conclusion

- Increasing problem of co-morbidities – particularly with mental and physical health problems amongst more disadvantaged groups.
- This is having particularly severe consequences for employment.
- The welfare system can adversely effect mental health –but should promote good mental health.
- Limited evidence of what works to support the employment of people with mental and physical conditions – but likely it involves changing work environments and return to work planning.