

The Differential Impacts of Social Contact vs. Social Engagement, Social Isolation vs. Loneliness and Living Alone on Parameters of Life Satisfaction and Physical and Mental Well-Being

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Introduction (1)

- Good quality social relationships are a major factor associated with life satisfaction and physical and mental well-being in older people.
- Our objective was to assess the differential impacts of social contact, engagement, isolation, loneliness and living alone on quality of life, happiness, self-rated health, anxiety and depression in a large sample of Irish community-dwelling older people.



Introduction (2)

- Secondary analysis of a dataset obtained using the Geriatric Mental State (GMS) – Automated Geriatric Examination for Computer Assisted Taxonomy (AGECAT) package.
- Observational cross-sectional study.



Subjects (1)

- Community-dwelling subjects of 65 years and over from seven general practices within the catchment area of St James's Hospital, Dublin.
- Of 1586 elderly individuals identified, 1334 (84%) consented to home interview (by doctor or nurse).
- Interviews commenced in 1993 and ended in 2002.
- LEC approved.

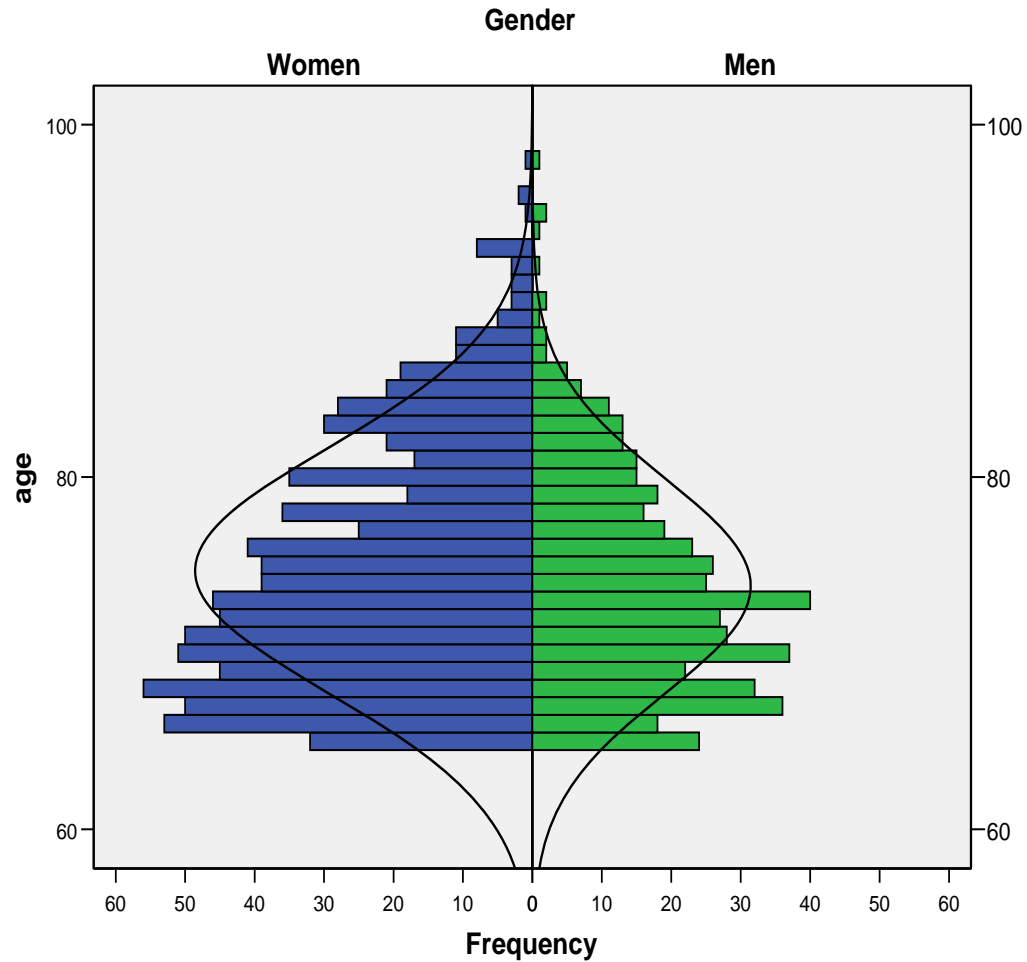


Subjects (2)

- In terms of gender distribution out of 1334 participants, 849 (63.6%) were female and 485 (36.4%) were male.
- The mean age of the population was 74.38 years (SD 6.66) with an age range of 65 to 98.
- Very homogeneous population in terms of ethnicity (97% white Irish), religion (97% Roman Catholic), educational attainment, socio-economic status.

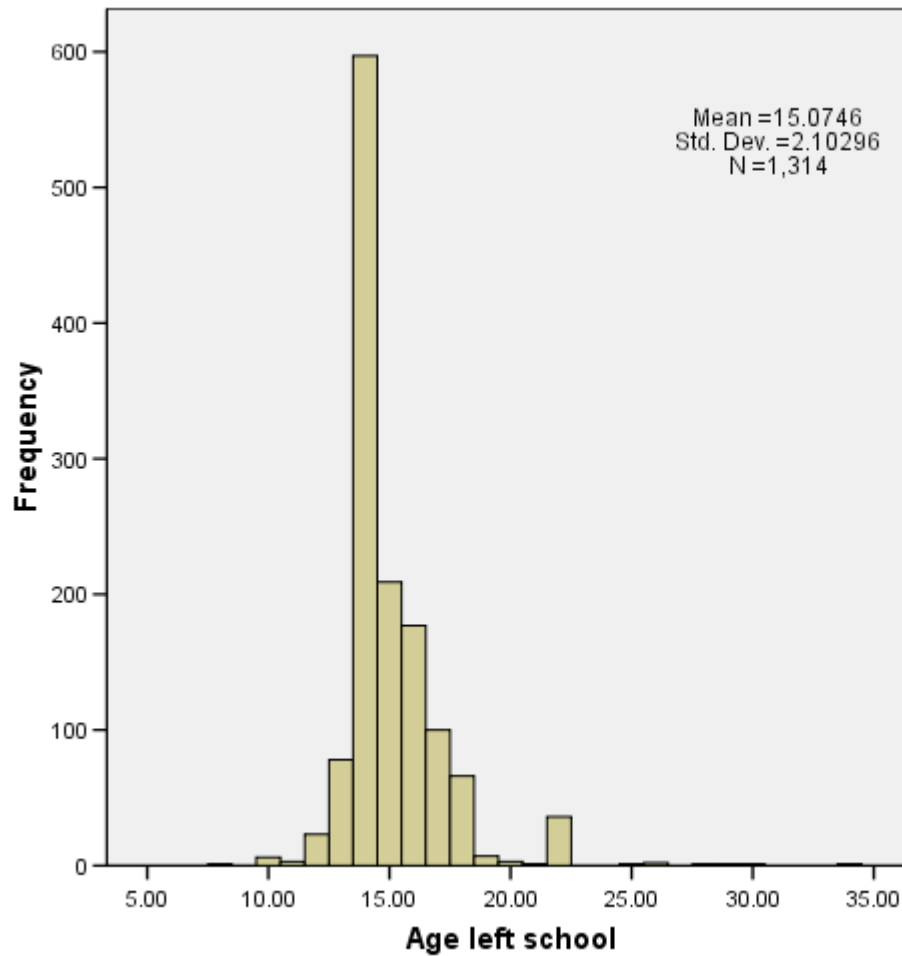


Subjects (3) N=1334



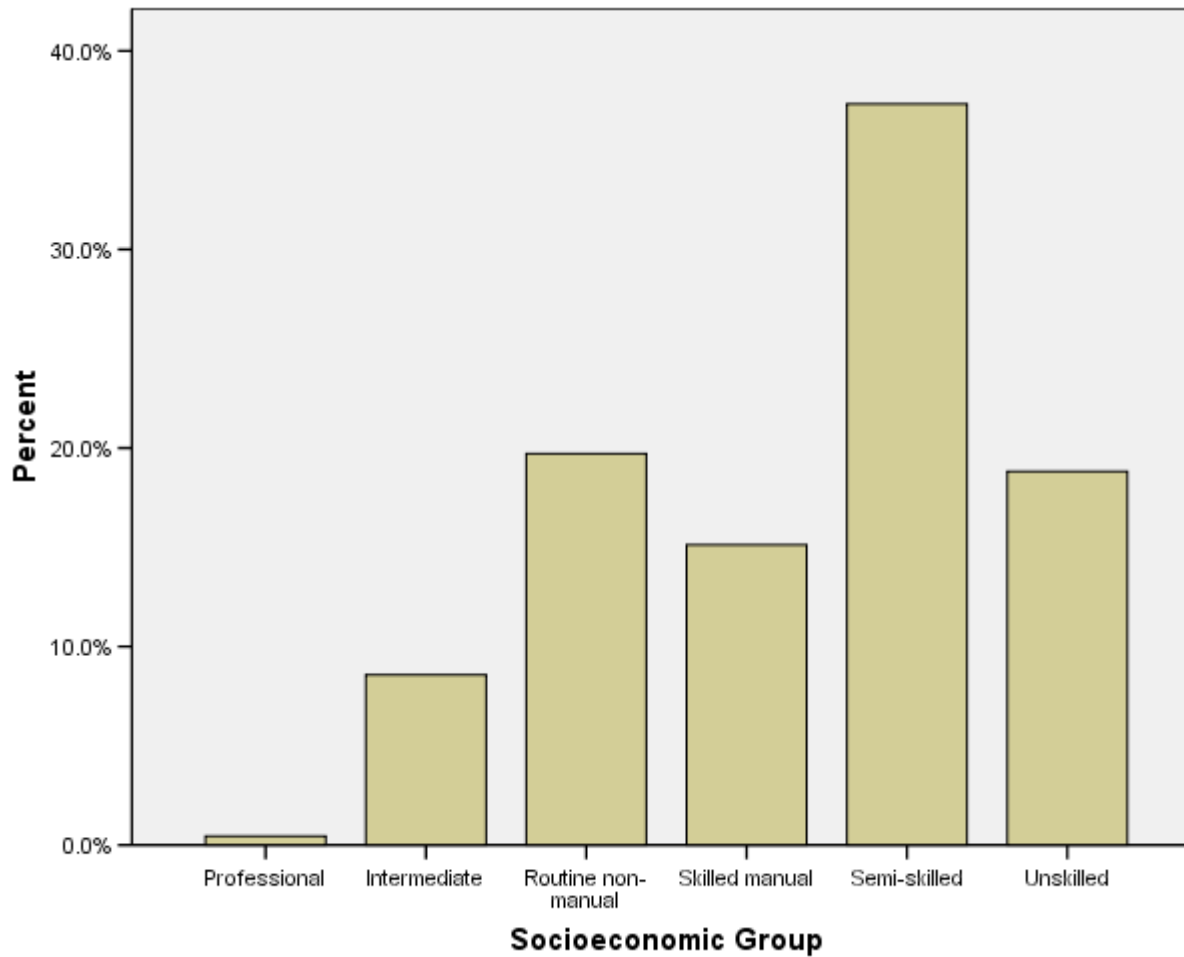


Subjects (4)





Subjects (4)



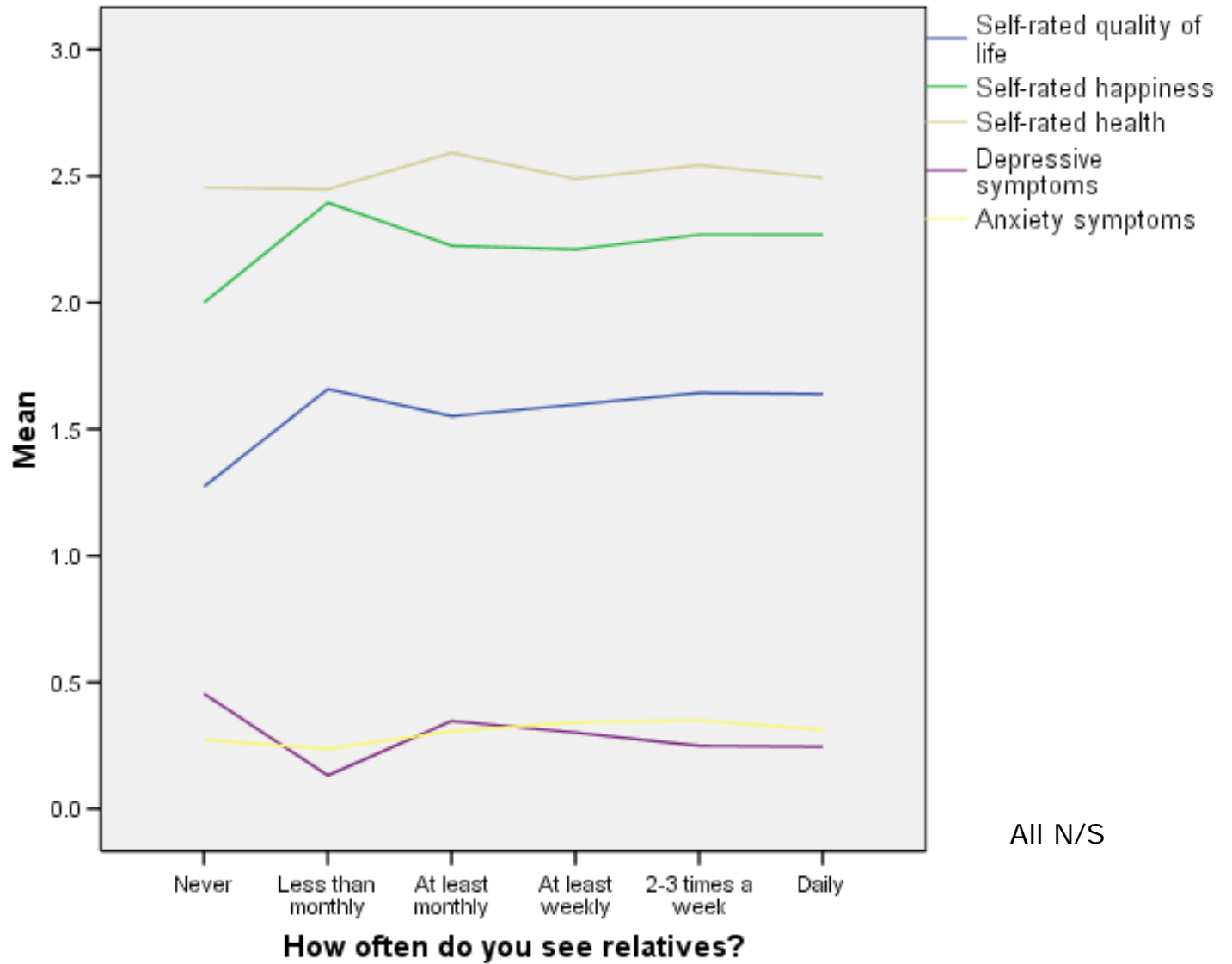


Methods

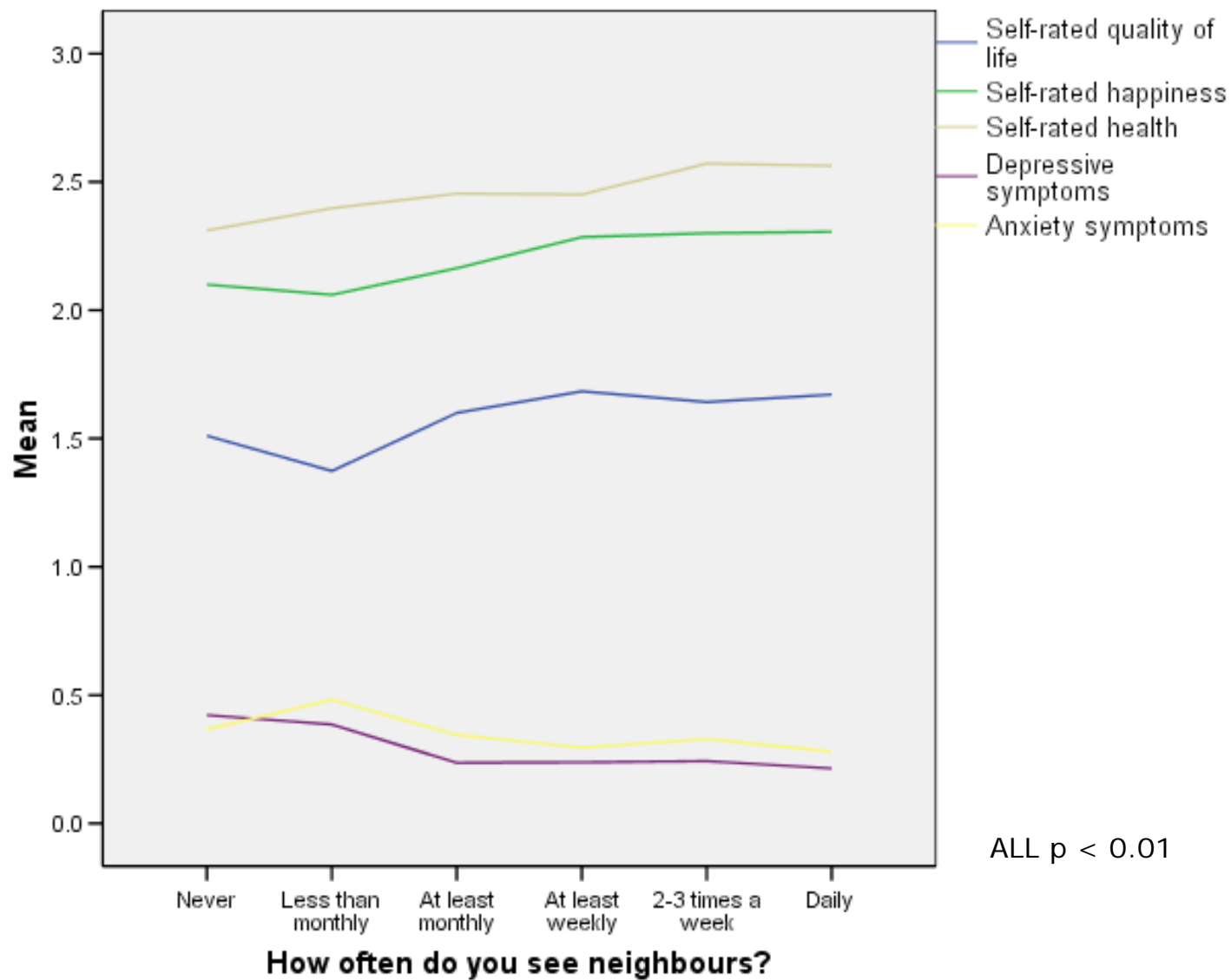
- Bivariate statistics for assessing an association between two variables (unpaired data).
- Multivariate statistics: Ordinal regression models for the five outcomes of interest.
- All analyses were done with SPSS 14.0.



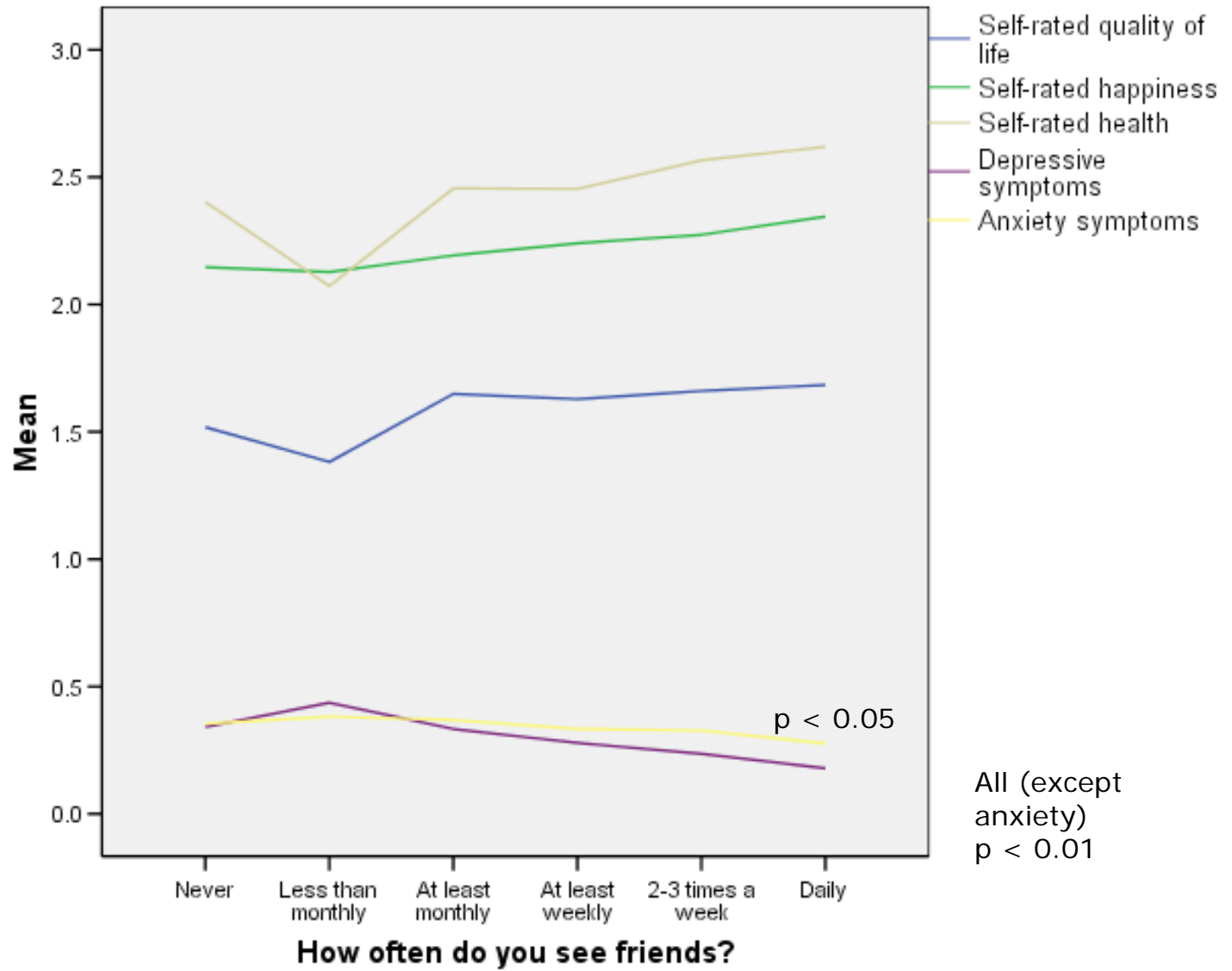
Trajectories of social contact



All N/S

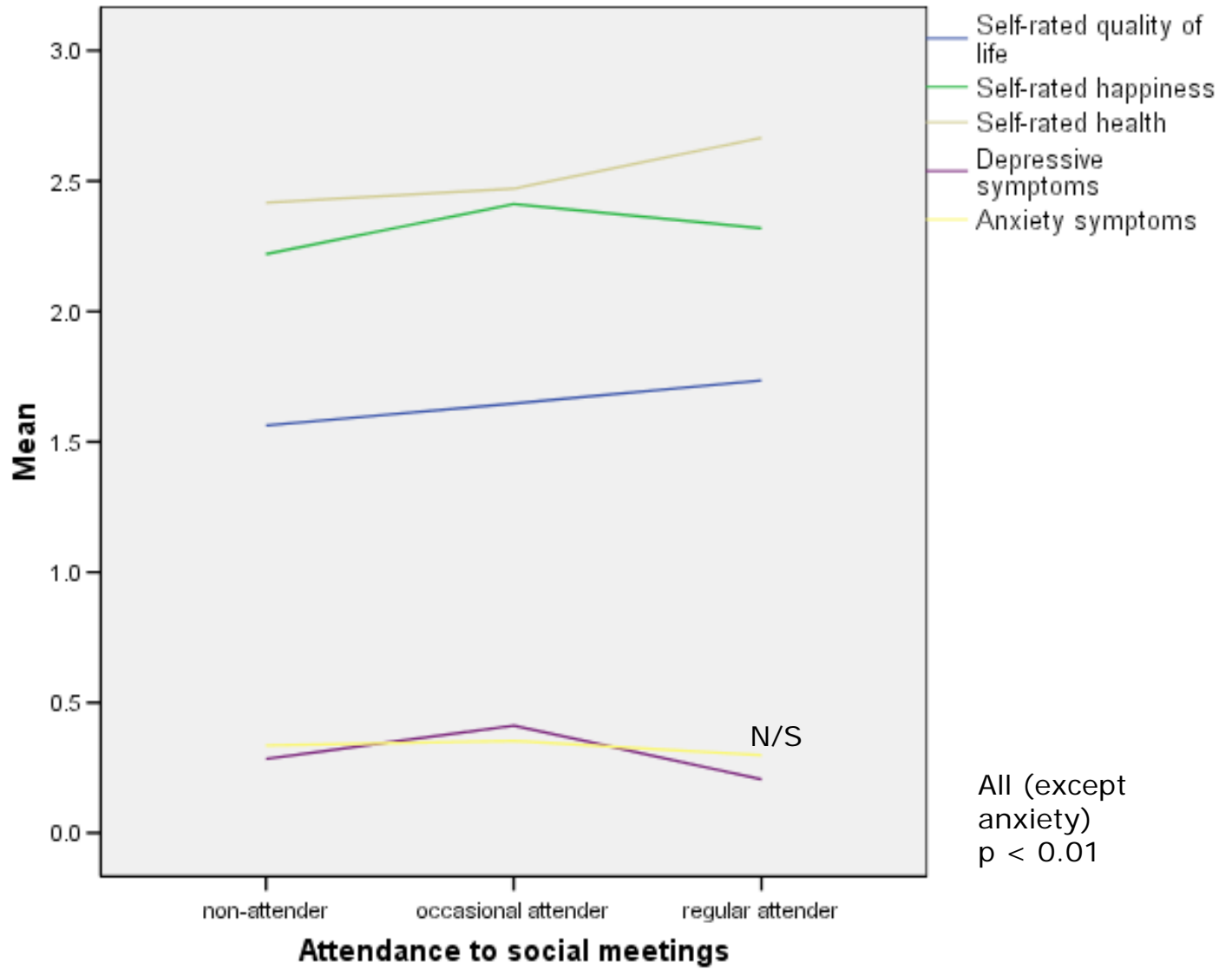


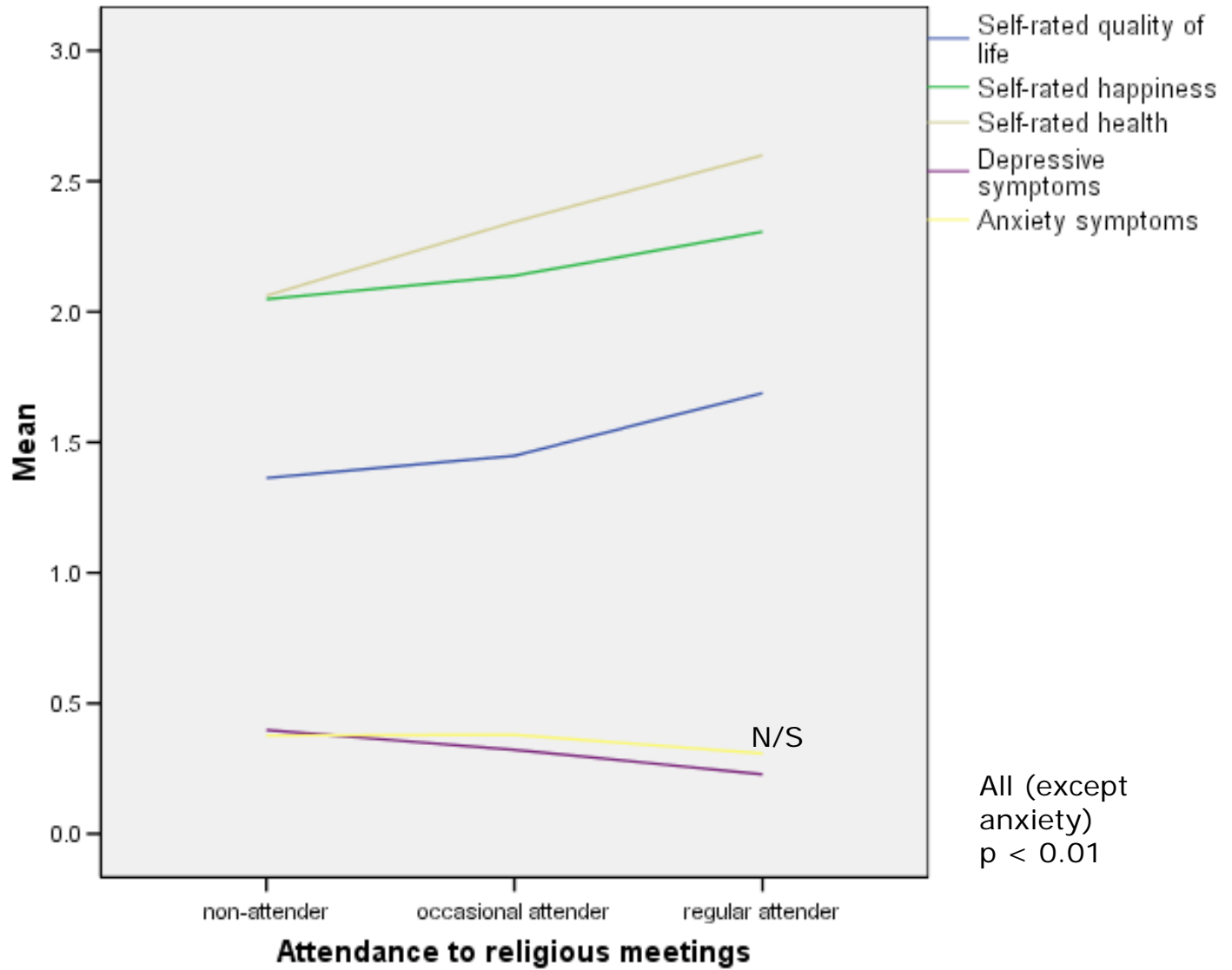
ALL p < 0.01





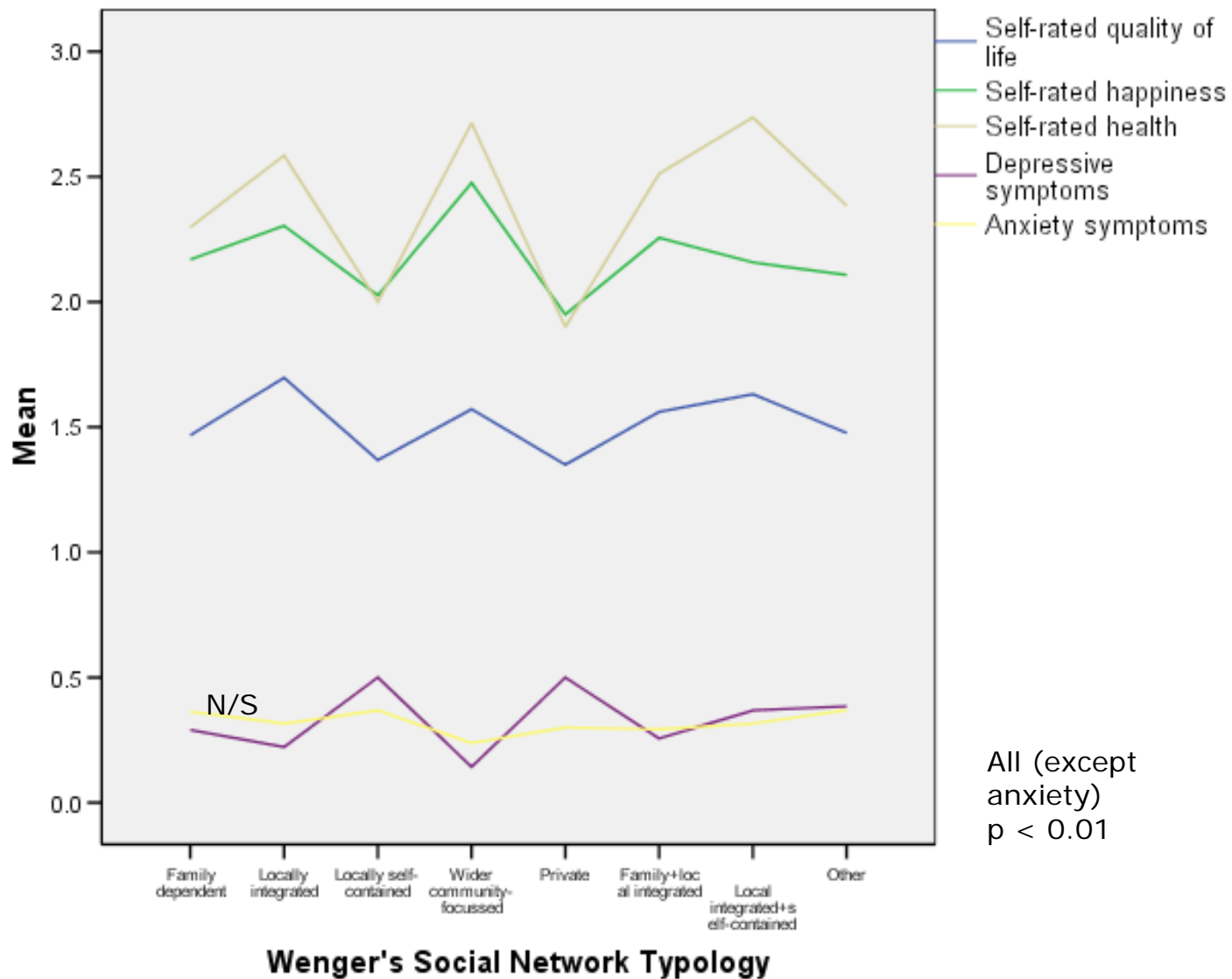
Trajectories of social engagement

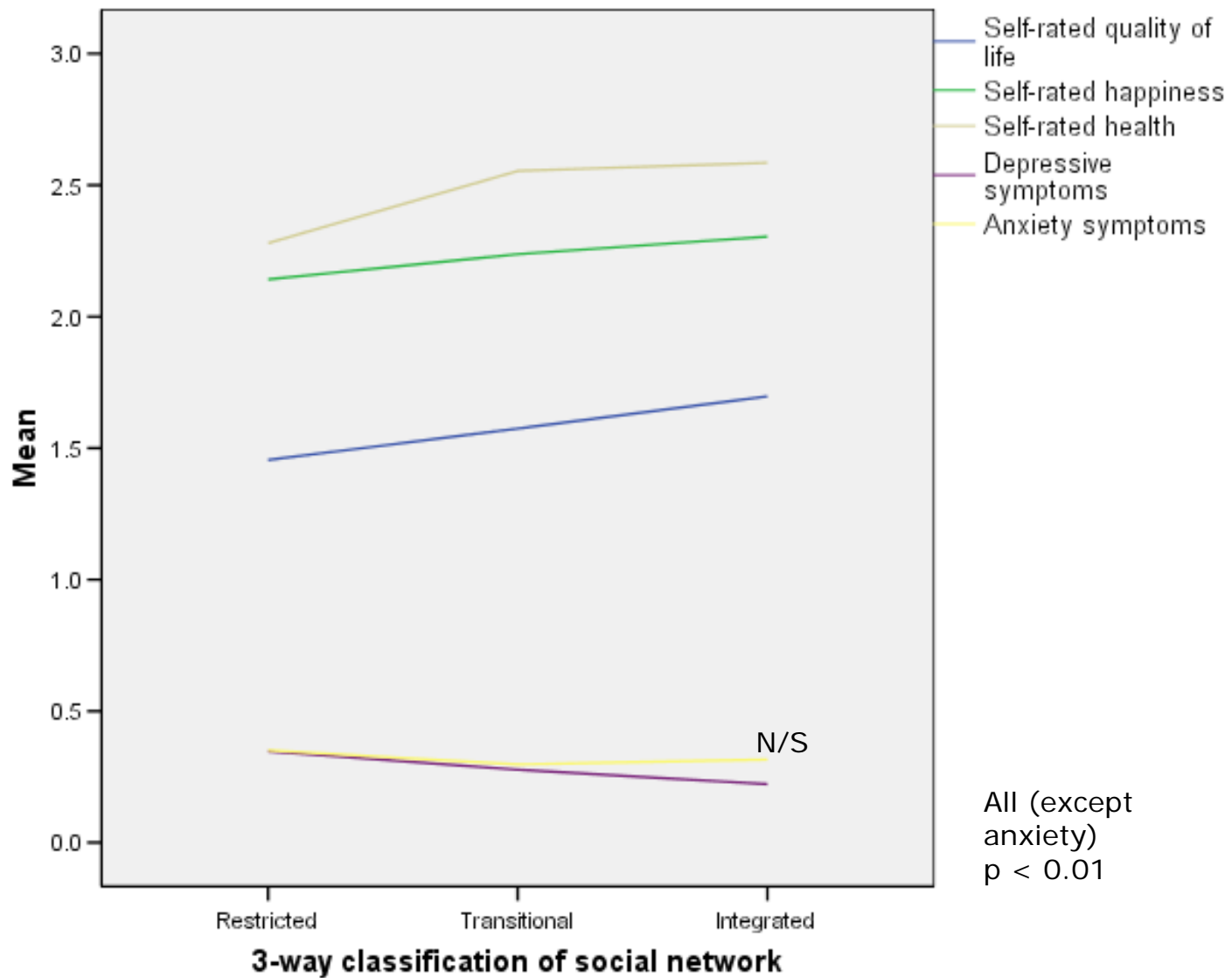






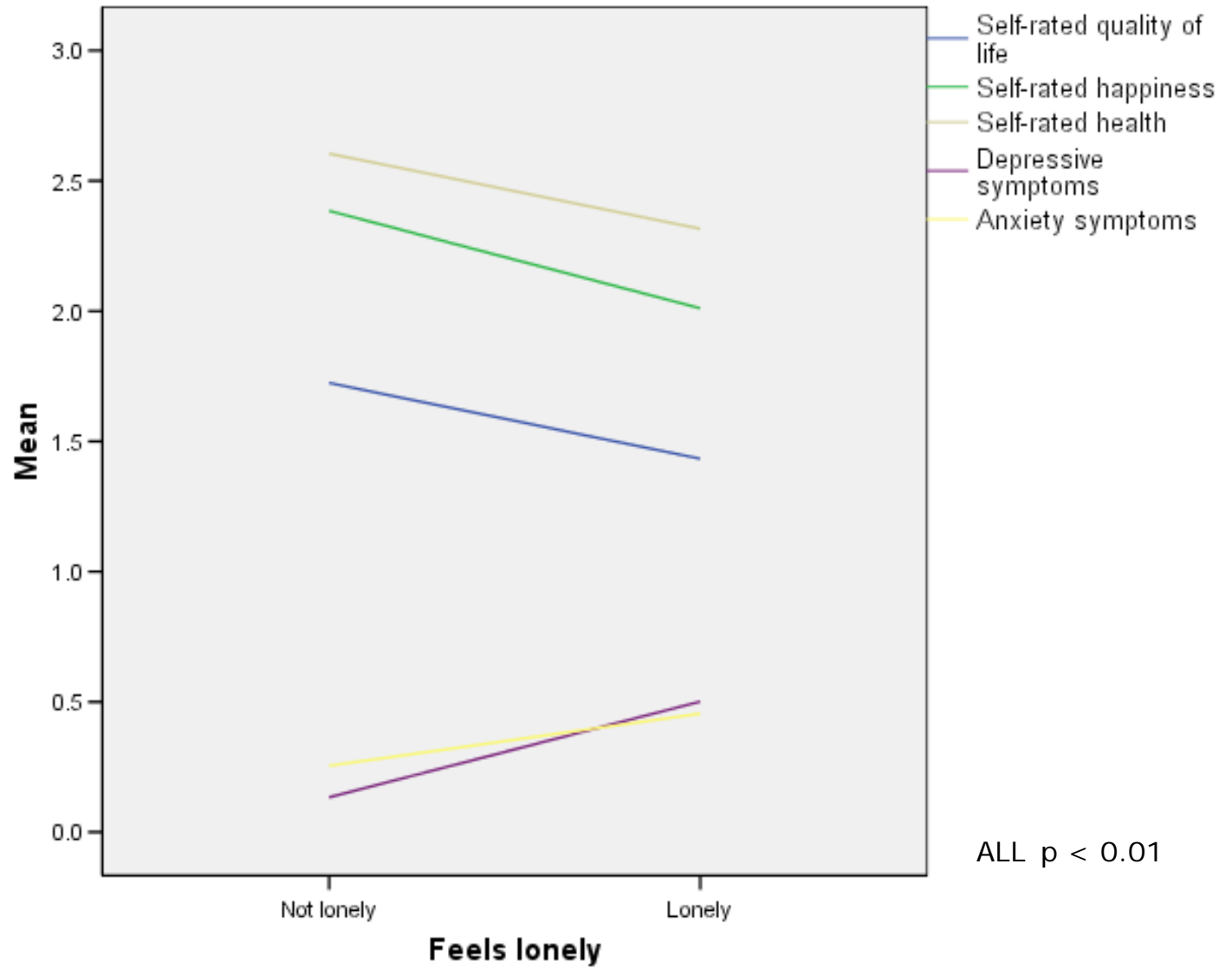
Social network trajectories







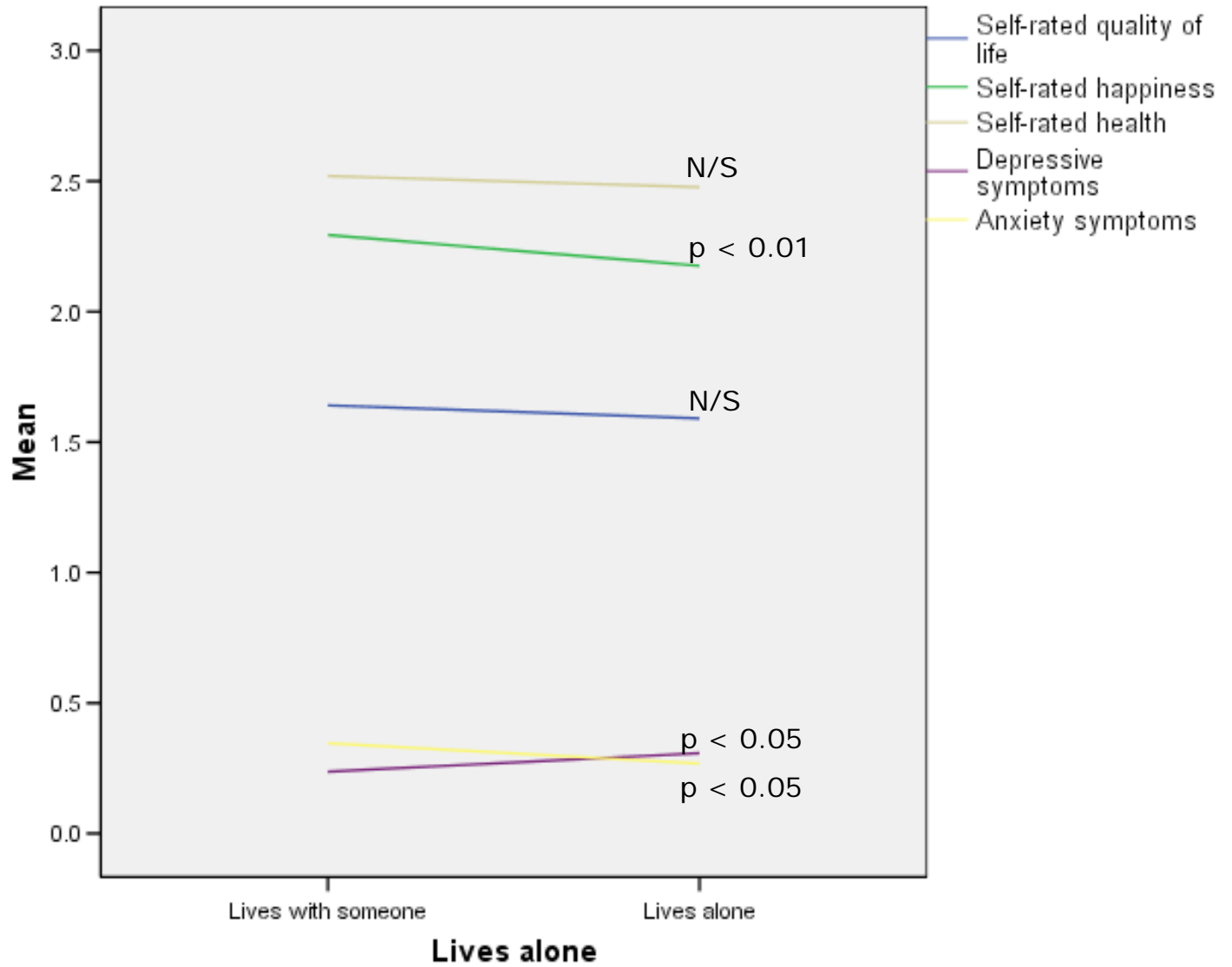
Trajectories of loneliness



ALL $p < 0.01$



Trajectories of living alone





Multivariate analyses

	QoL	Happiness	S/r Health	Depression	Anxiety
Relatives					
Neighbours					
Friends			✓	✓	
Social meetings	✓		✓		
Religious meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Social Network			✓		
Network 3-way					
Loneliness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Living alone					✓



Discussion (1)

- Loneliness and attendance to religious meetings were the two most important predictors of the outcomes under consideration.
- The only type of social contact of some relevance was that with friends.
- Contact with relatives was the least associated with the outcomes under consideration. However, some contact was better than no contact at all.



Discussion (2)

- Living alone is not necessarily a bad thing if that does not coexist with loneliness and/or social isolation.
- The study has cross-sectional limitations.
- Rapid socioeconomic change in Ireland over the last few years makes results not necessarily current.



Acknowledgements

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