

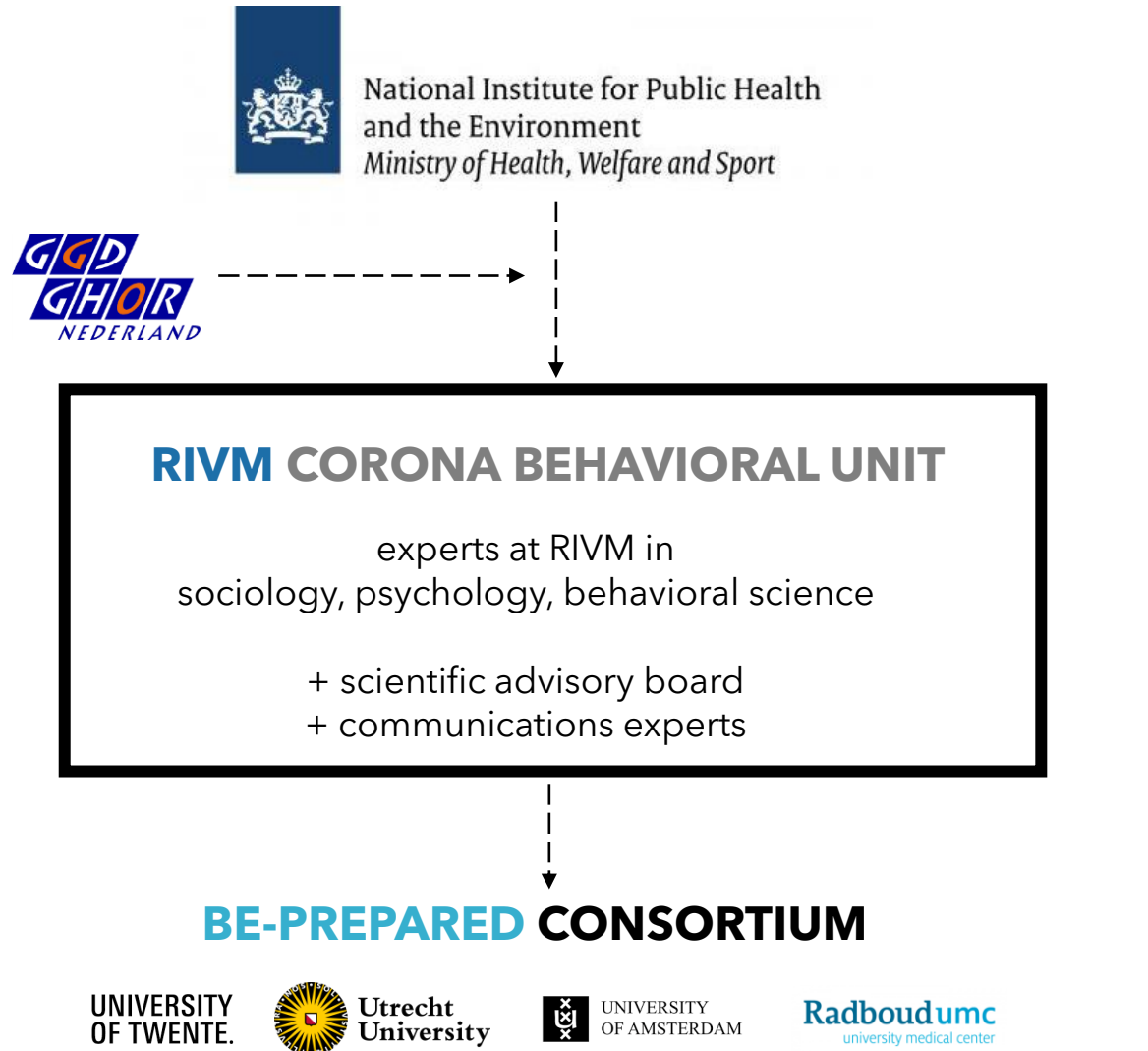
MENTAL HEALTH IN TIMES OF POLYCRISIS
MARCH 22, 2023

KEENAN A. RAMSEY, PHD
UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE
DEPT. OF HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGY & TECHNOLOGY

WELLBEING IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

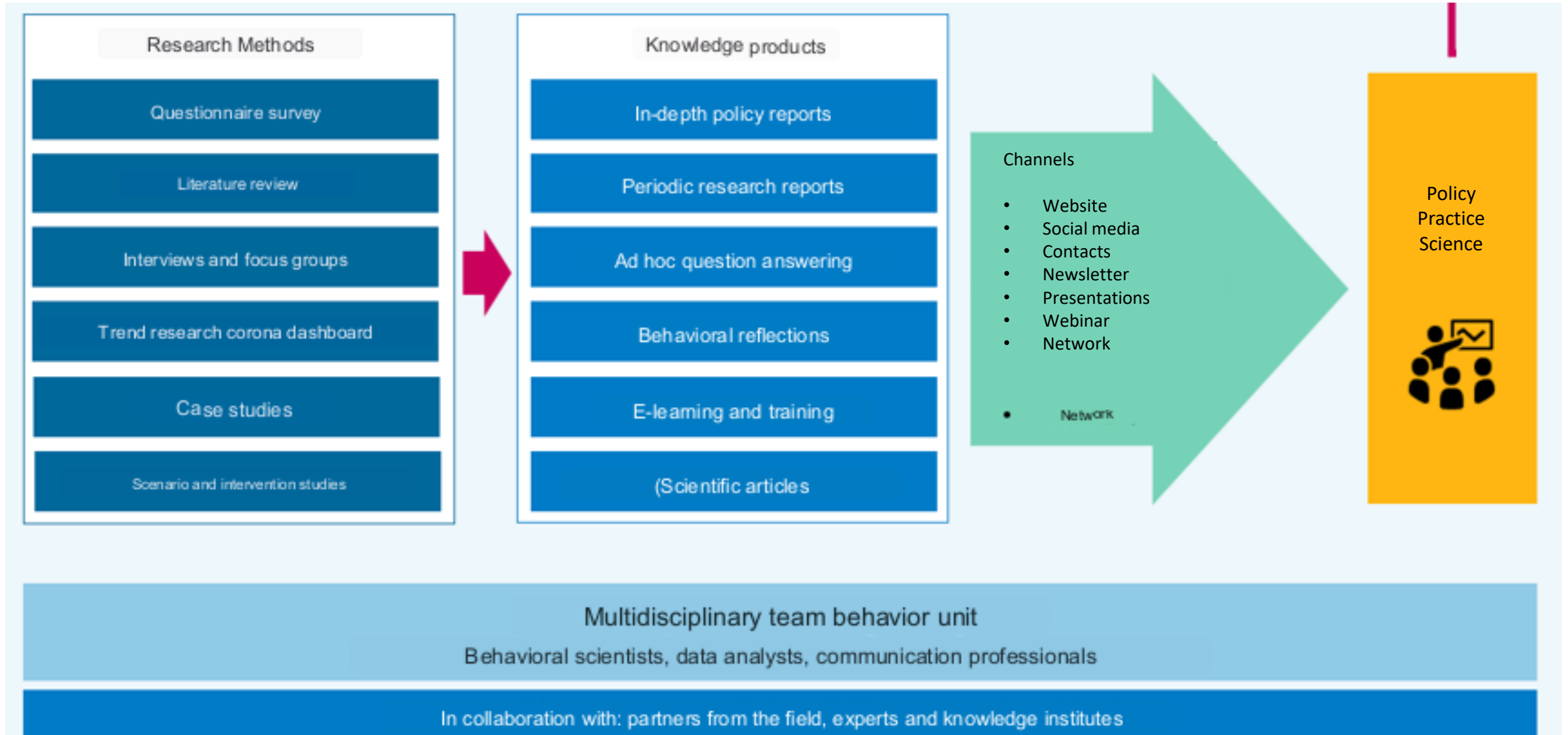
Insights on mental health from a Dutch consortium taking a behavioural science approach to address the COVID-19 pandemic

APPLYING BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE → COVID-19

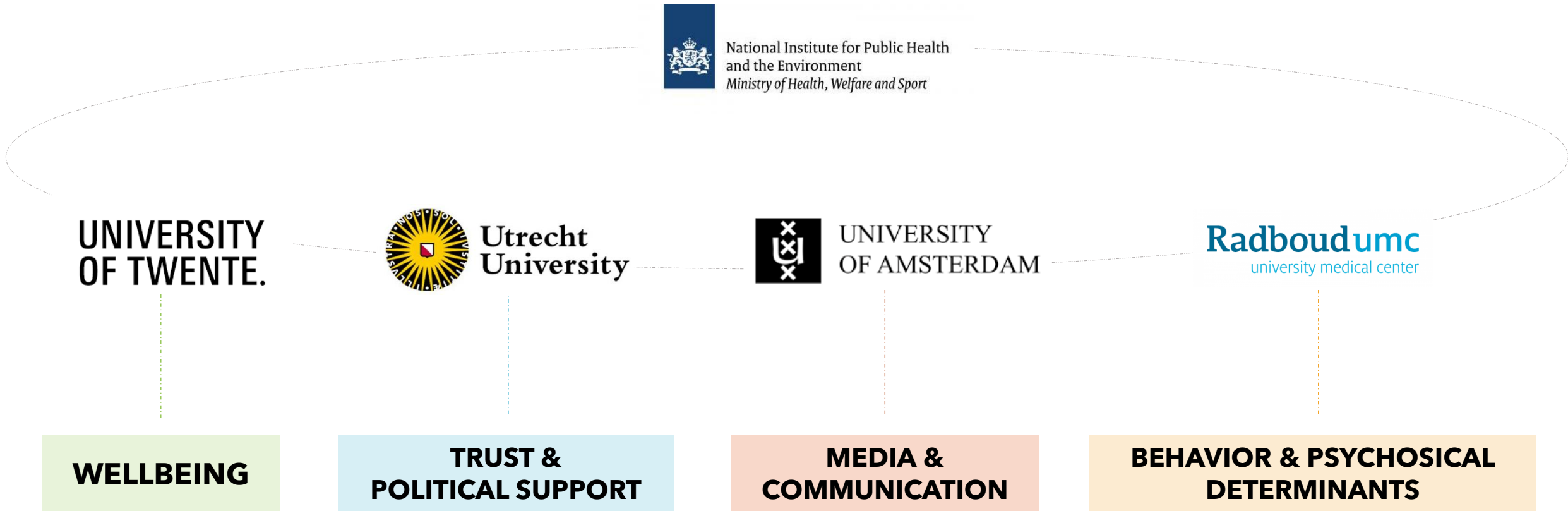


- Launched March 2020 by RIVM
- Harness multidisciplinary expertise
- Establish the role of behavioral sciences in crisis-response
- Obtain psychological insights on population impacts
- Inform and support government response strategy

CORONA BEHAVIORAL UNIT: WORKING METHOD



THE BE-PREPARED CONSORTIUM



GOALS OF THE **BE-PREPARED** CONSORTIUM

LEVERAGE

mixed-methods multidisciplinary longitudinal research to obtain insights through in-depth analyses

YIELD

high quality scientific publications

SYNTHESIZE

across themes and the dynamic societal impact

DEVELOP

a strong scientific basis of pandemic psychological effects and lessons learned → preparedness

WELLBEING TEAM IN BE-PREPARED CONSORTIUM



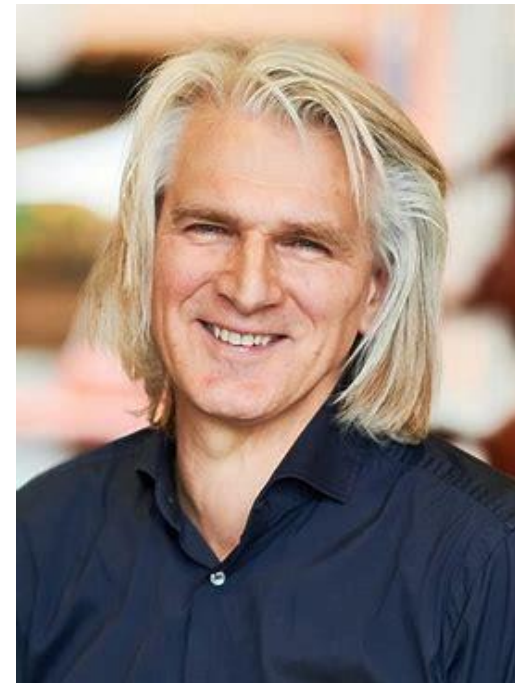
Dr. Keenan A. Ramsey

*Post-doctoral researcher
University of Twente*



Dr. Anne van Dongen

*Assistant professor
University of Twente*



Prof. dr. Robbert Sanderma

*Emeritus professor
University of Twente
University of Groningen*

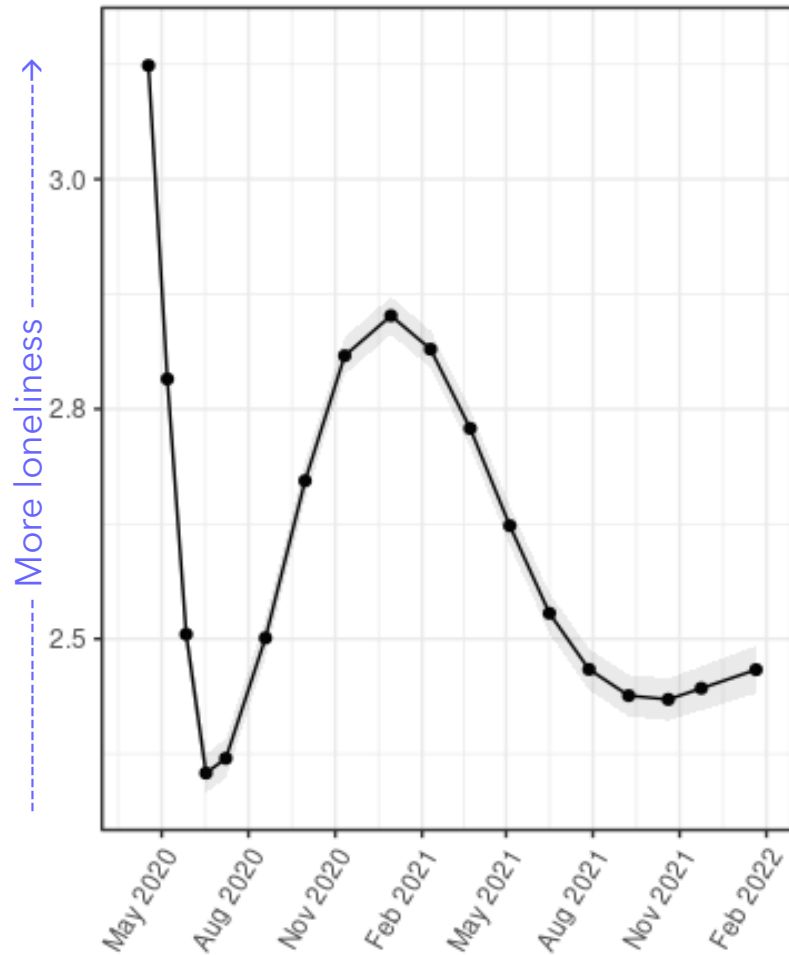


Prof. dr. Falko Sniehotta

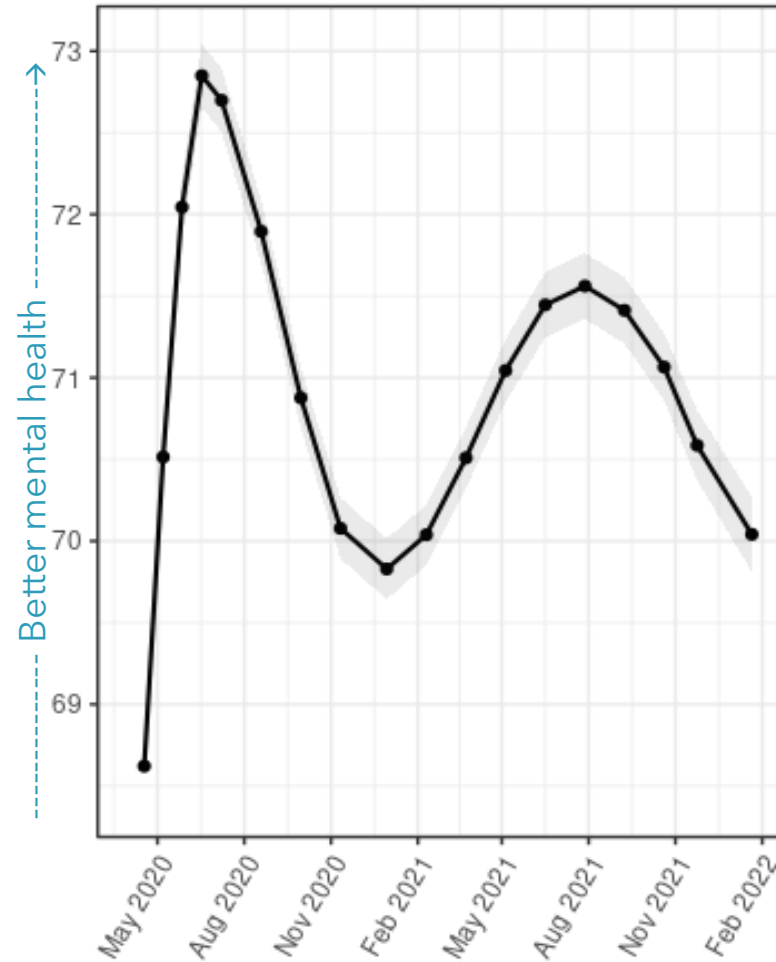
*Professor
University of Heidelberg
University of Newcastle*

LONGITUDINAL PATTERNS OF WELLBEING

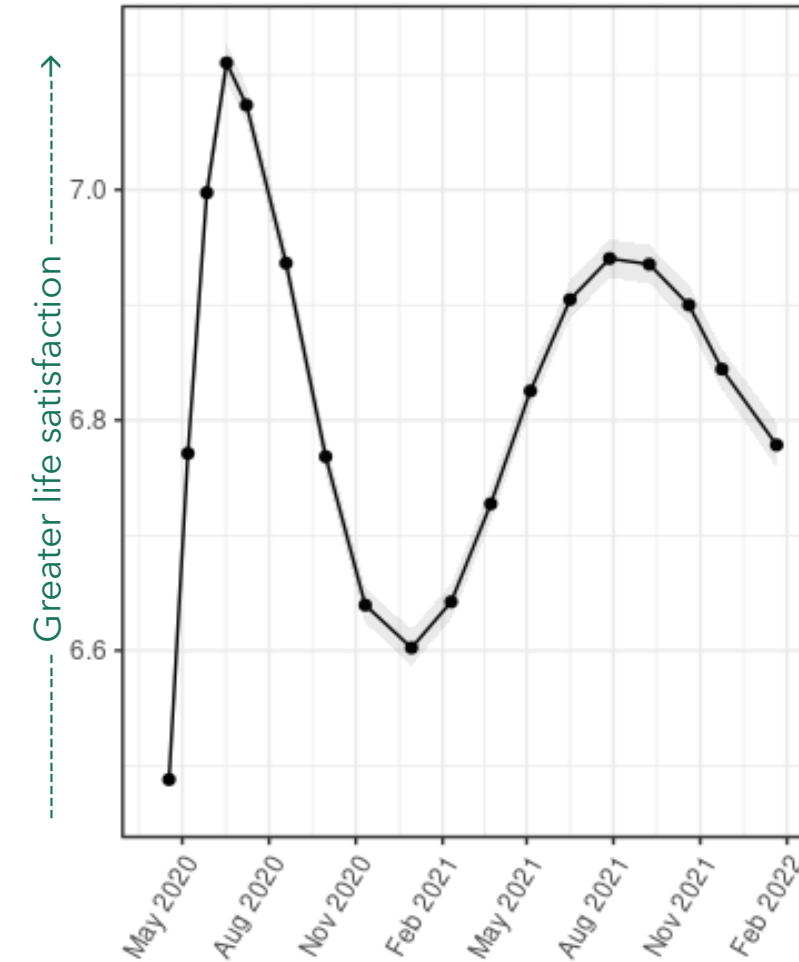
Loneliness



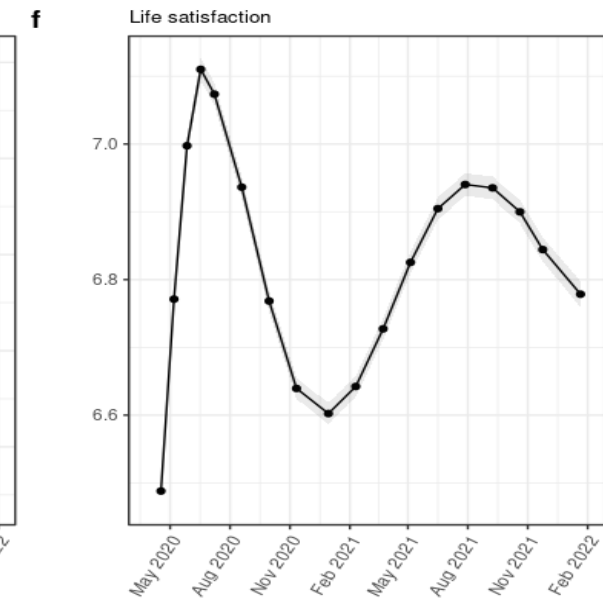
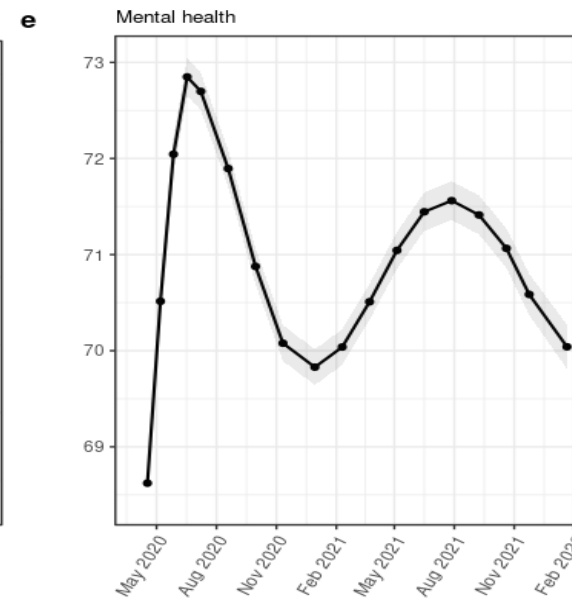
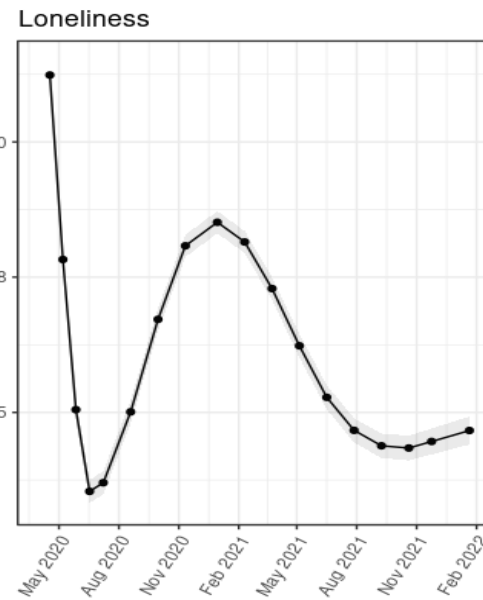
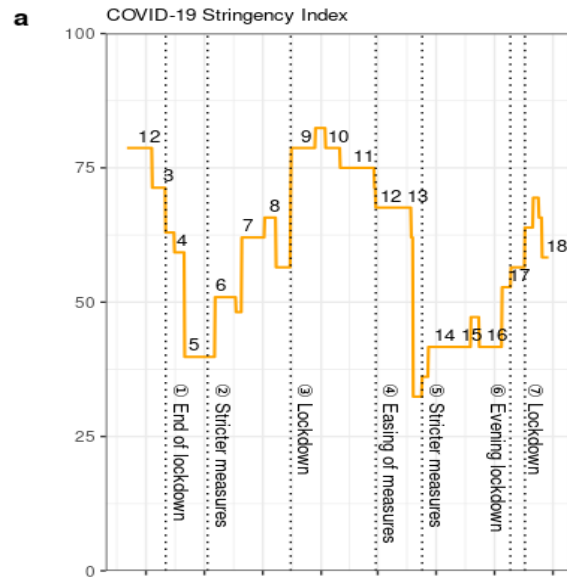
Mental Health



Life Satisfaction



IMPACTS OF POLICY STRINGENCY ON WELLBEING



Higher policy stringency
(*stricter measures*)

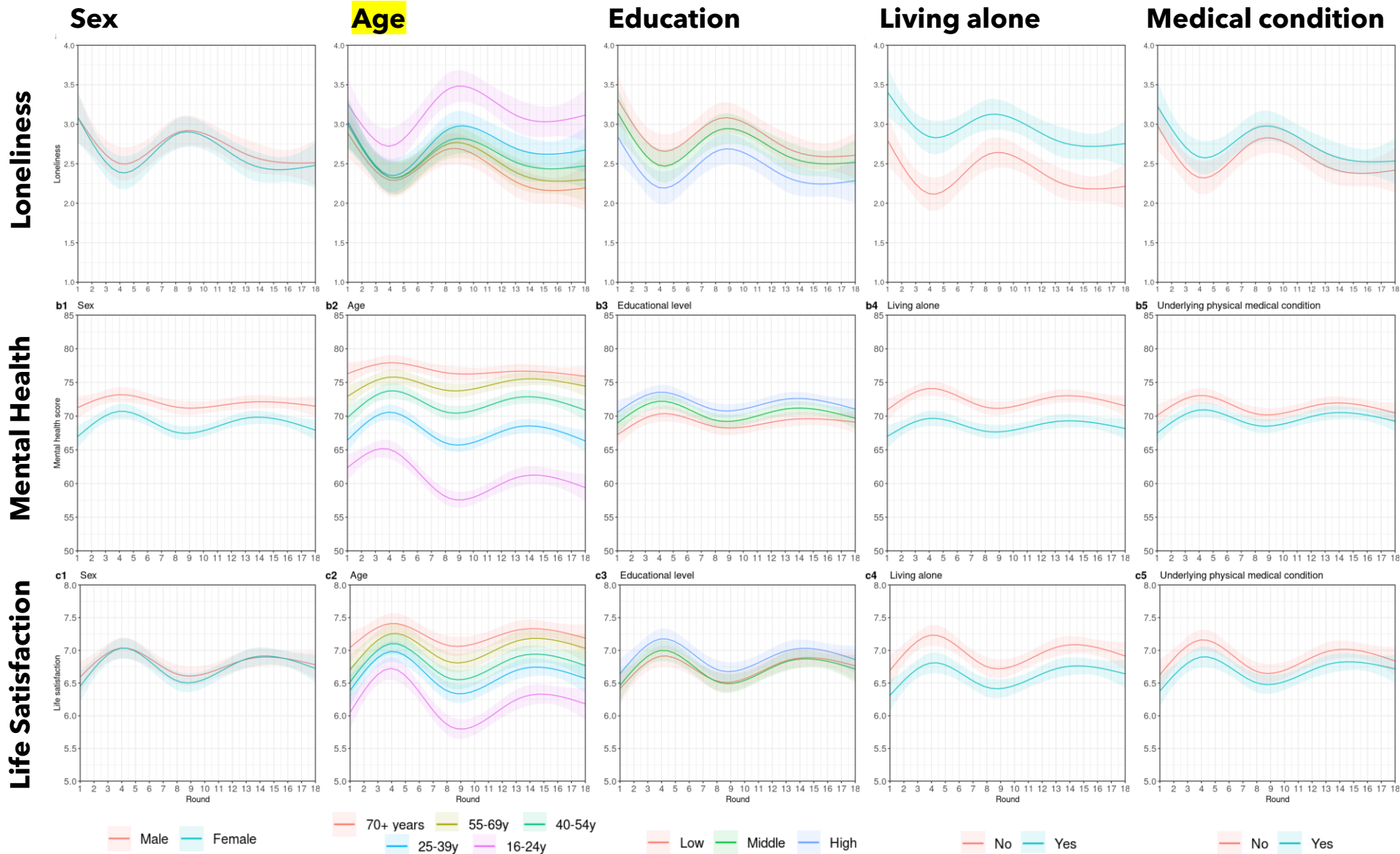


Higher loneliness

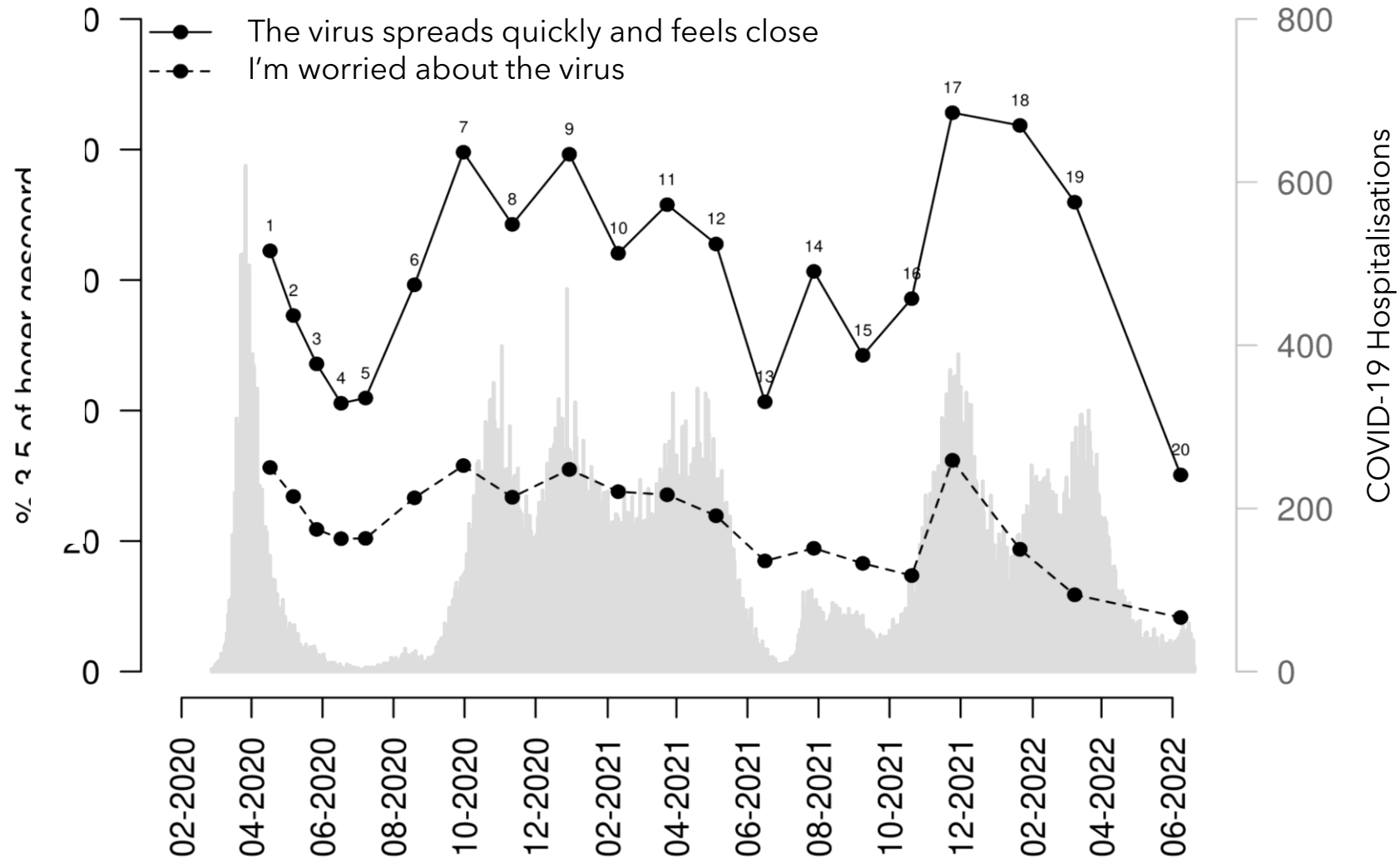
Lower mental health

Less life satisfaction

SUBGROUPS DIFFERENCES & RISK FACTORS



PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE & WORRY



POSITIVE & NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

Most
mentioned



Least
mentioned

Positive effects (n=5,003)

- General calmness
- Working from home
- Appreciation and gratitude
- Healthier lifestyle
- More time left (for loved ones)
- Personal or social development
- Side effects (saving money, digitization, environmental benefits)

Negative effects (n=5,772)

- Missing social contact
- Mental wellbeing
- Missing outings & activities
- Limited movement and spontaneity
- Less healthy lifestyle
- Burden of social and political turmoil
- Financial situation (less work or no work) or personal development (study, travel)

PERSISTANT SOCIAL ISOLATION

2% of study population living in social isolation after (most) measures were lifted (not only those with medical condition)

- More likely to:
 - Live alone
 - Worry about the virus
 - Higher risk perception
- Report feeling:
 - Trapped
 - Lonely
 - Misunderstood
 - Mental health suffering

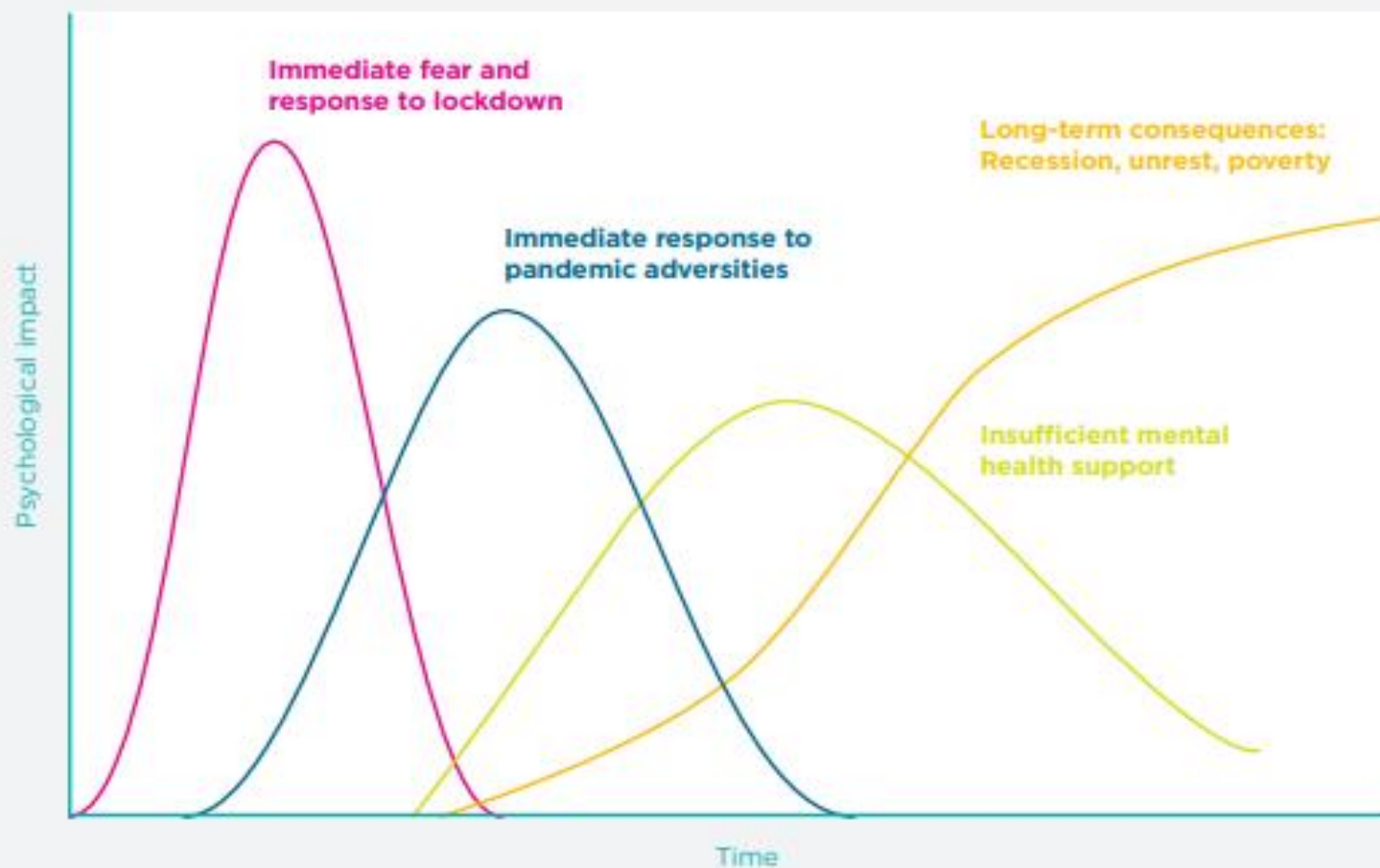
*“ I don't feel safe at all anymore. **I feel betrayed** by the government and by those who think that it's already over, or people who see it as a flu when it's not a flu at all. I **don't really trust anyone anymore**, except my own family of course. People are no longer careful, or laugh at me with my face mask.”*

MOVING FORWARD: (BE)PREPARED TO PROTECT MENTAL HEALTH

- In-depth analyses of data
 - Answer complex research questions
 - Disentangle mechanisms
 - Uncover hidden phenomena
- Synthesize findings to inform preparedness strategy
 - Cross-cutting research
 - Wellbeing, behavior & psychosocial determinants, trust & political support, media & communication
 - Lesson learned → extension preparedness

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF TRAJECTORIES: DISENTANGLING

Figure 5.1: Time horizons of key mental health effects of the pandemic



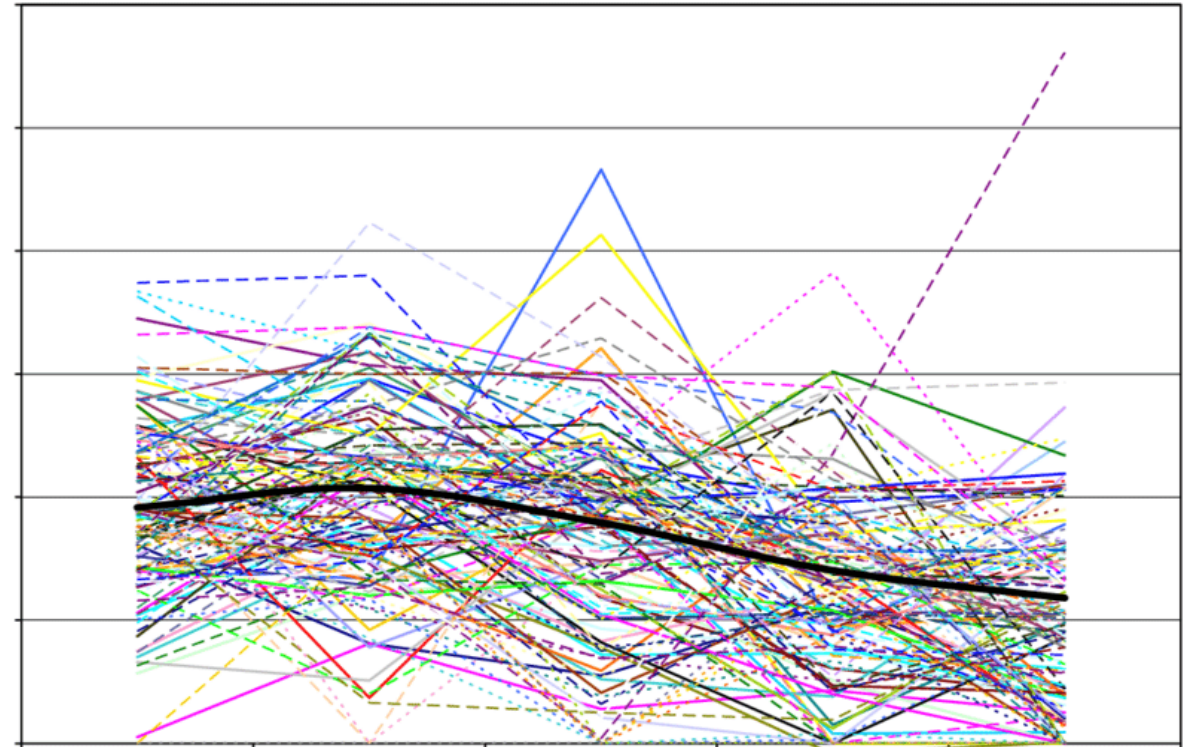
IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF TRAJECTORIES: DISENTANGLING

TYRANNY OF THE AVERAGE

- High heterogeneity
- Uniformity not to be expected
- Subgroup analysis only the beginning

DISENTANGLING TRAJECTORIES

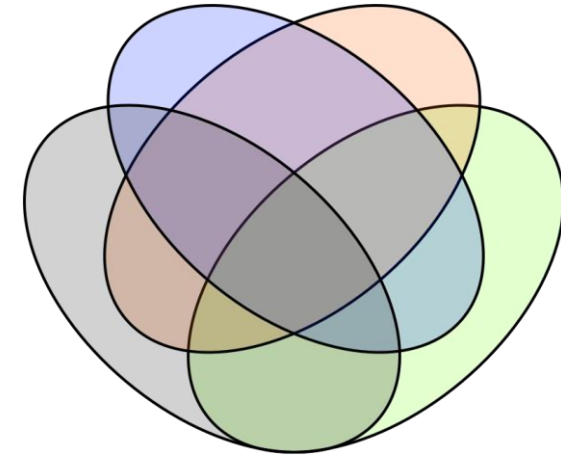
- Can we identify and group distinct patterns of like-trajectories?
- What factors determine pandemic responses and impacts?



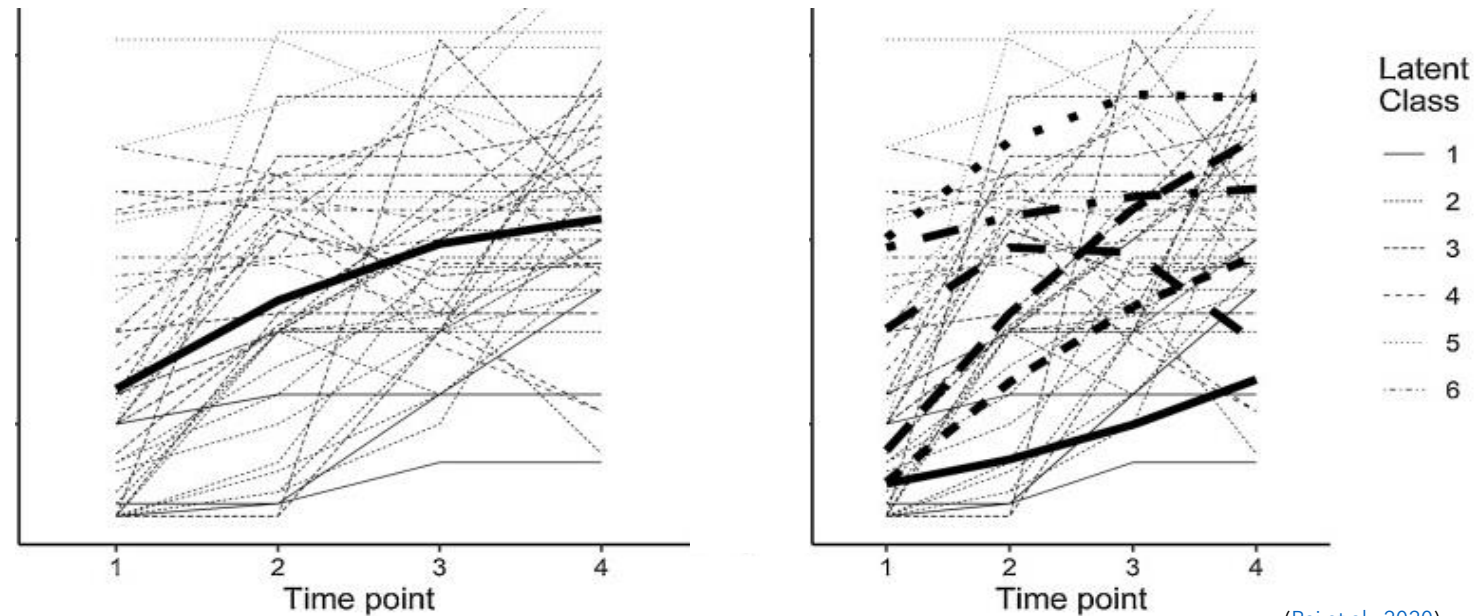
(hypothetical individual-level trajectories summarised by a mean)

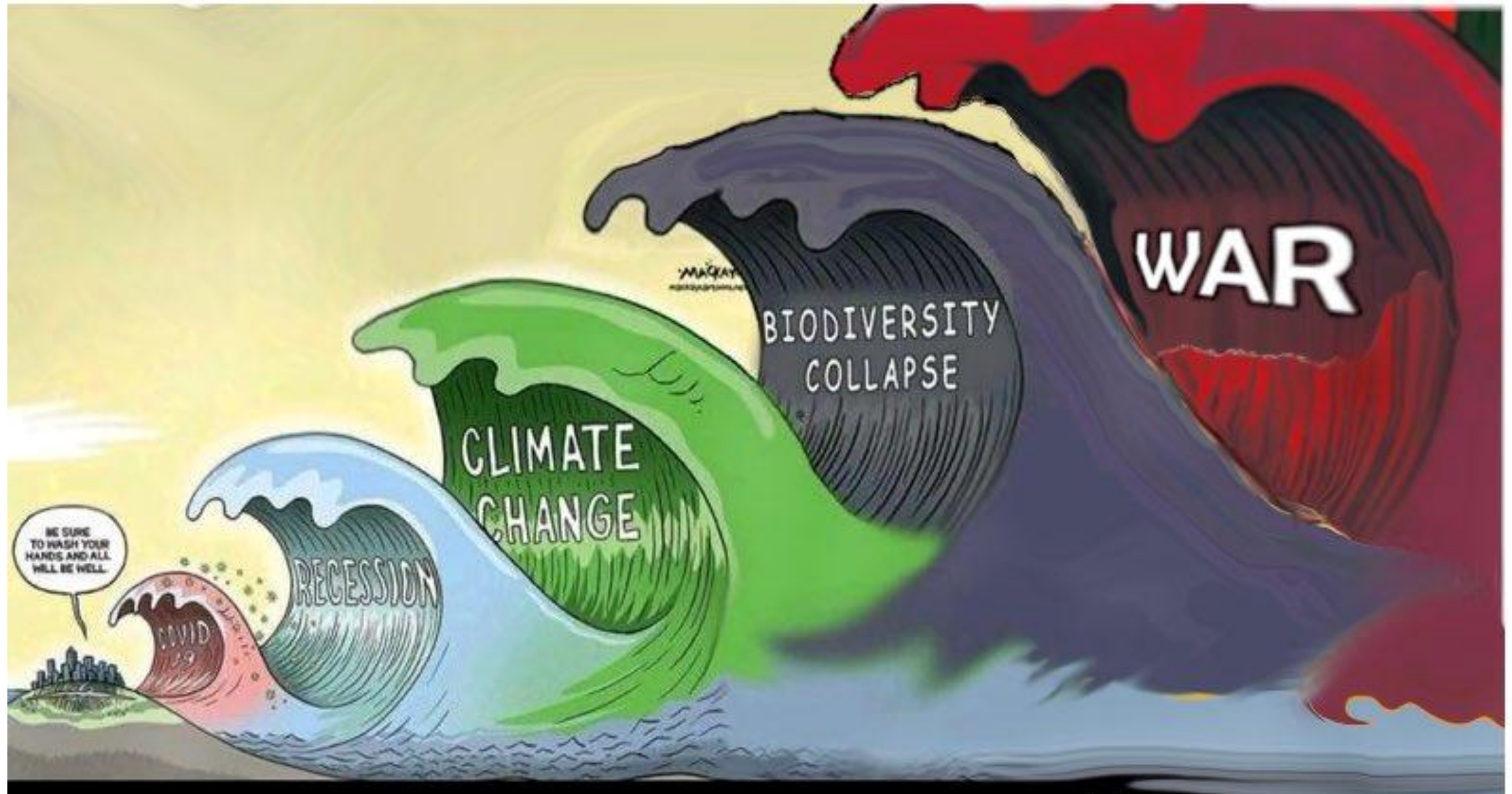
IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF TRAJECTORIES

Theory driven: Intersectional approach focusing on context-specific **vulnerabilities and societal disadvantages**



Data driven: Latent trajectory growth approach to identify **"hidden" trajectories**

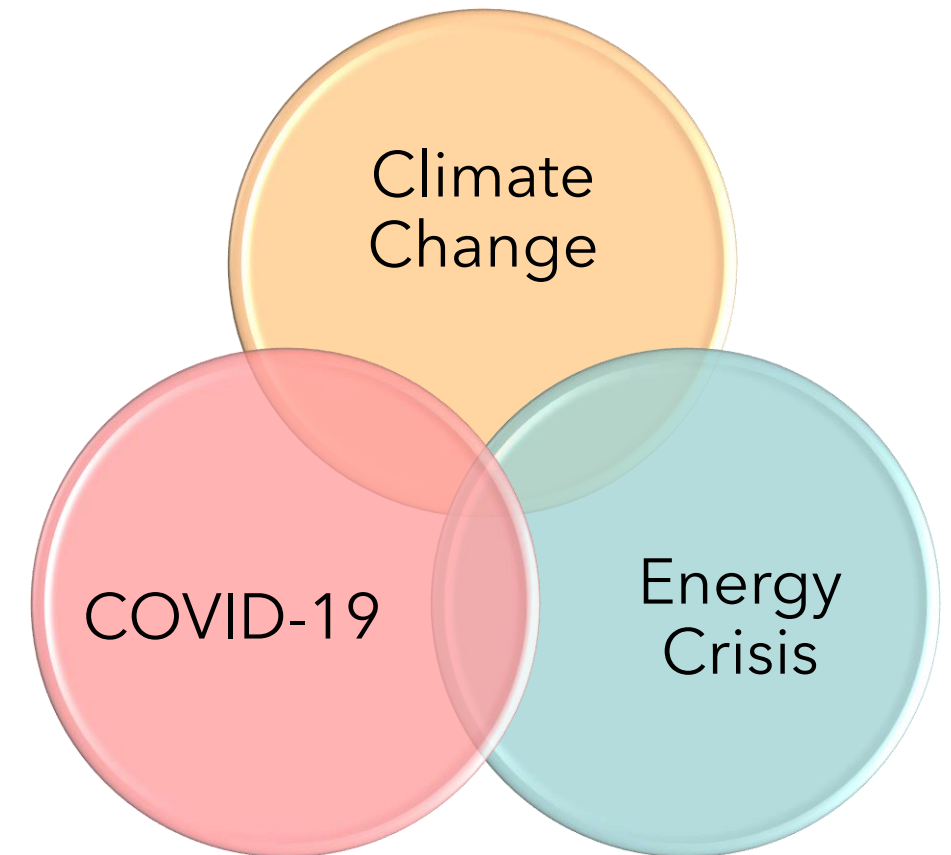
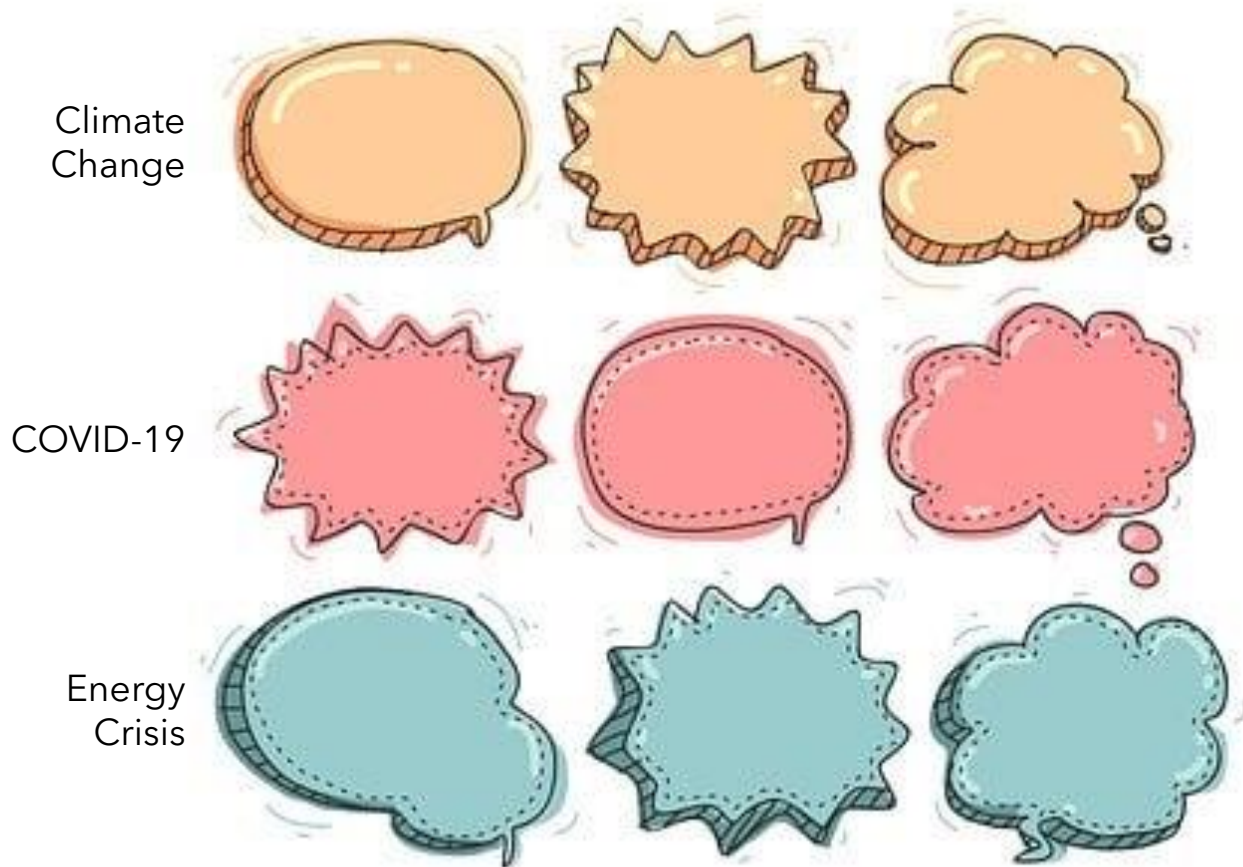




(Editorial Cartoon by Graeme MacKay, The Hamilton Spectator - Wednesday March 11, 2020)

EXTENSION OF KNOWLEDGE: POLYCRISIS PERCEPTIONS

Do people perceive, think about, and act different in different crisis situations?



CRISIS-SPECIFIC PERCEPTIONS: PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE

COVID-19

ENERGY CRISIS

CLIMATE CHANGE

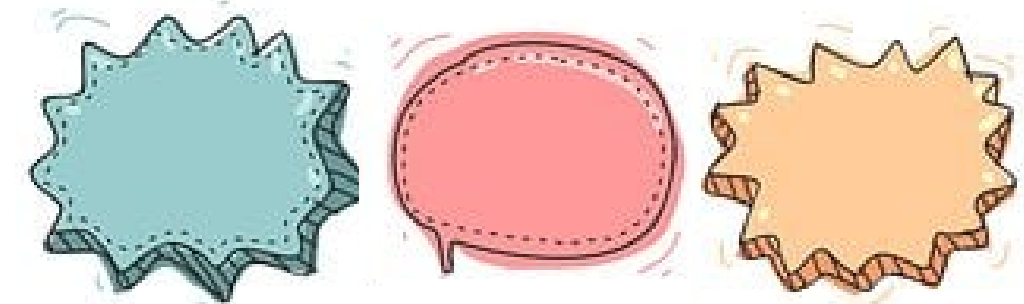
GEOGRAPHIC DISTANCE

- “It will mostly affect areas that are far away from here”



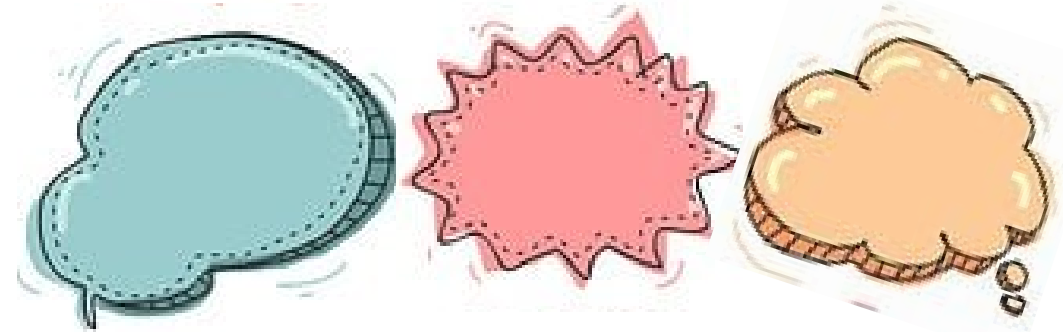
SOCIAL DISTANCE

- “It won’t affect people like me”

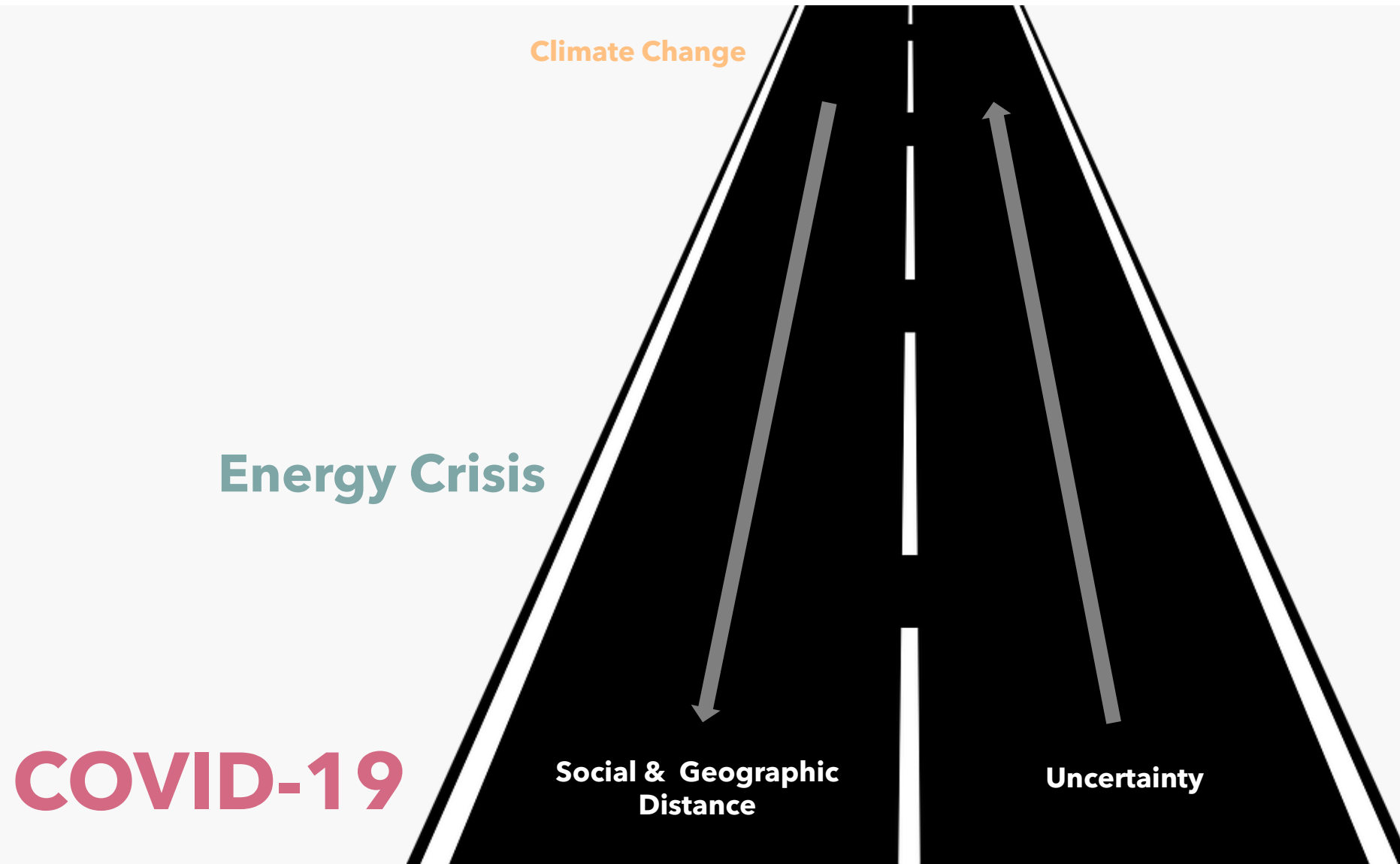


UNCERTAINTY (HYPOTHETICAL DISTANCE)

- “The seriousness is exaggerated”



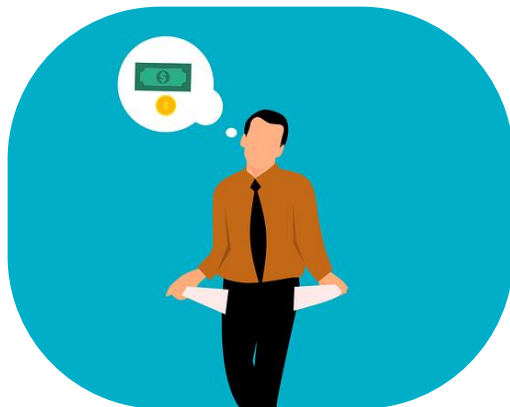
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE ACROSS CRISES



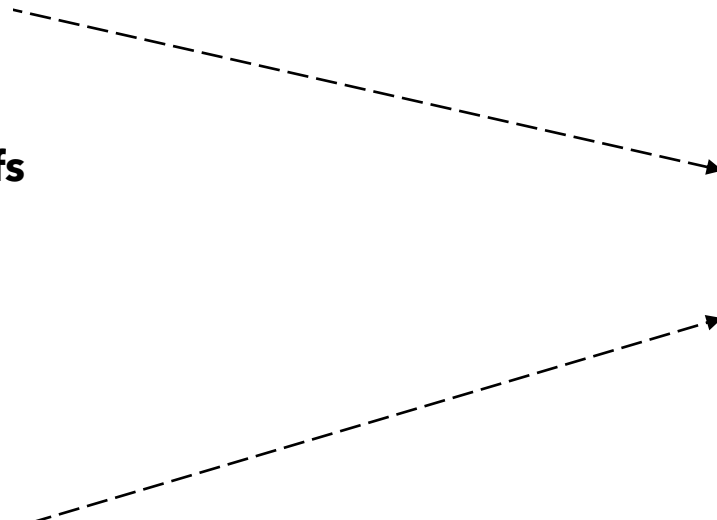
DETERMINANTS OF CRISIS- SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS



General Conspiracy Beliefs



Material Scarcity



**lower odds
of crisis mitigating
behaviors**



MOVING FORWARD COVID-19 → PREPAREDNESS

- Leveraging mixed methods data
- Contextualising results with a preparedness perspective
- Synthesising results to create a dynamic portrait of key psychological themes
- Collecting new data to broaden understanding and extend knowledge
 - Long term impacts
 - Meta-analyses
 - Other global crises
 - International comparisons

BE-PREPARED

Thank you for your time and attention.



CONTACT:

KEENAN A. RAMSEY, PHD

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE
DEPT. OF HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGY & TECHNOLOGY

email: k.a.ramsey@utwente.nl