

UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing

In-depth Policy Discussion on Ageing: Combating Inequalities in Older Age

Wednesday 22 November 2023



- **Philipp Hessel** (UNECE): Current and future trends in inequalities among older persons – an overview
- **James Bishop** (UK): The Mid-life MOT project
- **Kateřina Linkova** (Czech Republic): Action Plan for Implementation of Strategic Framework for Preparing for an Ageing Society 2023-2026
- **Vijeth Iyengar** (AARP): Achieving equitable healthy aging in low- and middle-income countries
- **Dorothea Schmidt-Klau** (ILO): Overcoming old-age inequalities through decent work for all

Session II



- **Miroslava Klemková** (Slovakia): The parental pension
- **Sandrine Boyals & Kévin van Houter** (Belgium): The Walloon Social Cohesion Plan
- **Nuno Marques** (Portugal): National Action Plan on Active and Healthy 2023-2026
- **Galina Poliakova** (Turbota pro Litnih v Ukraini, Ukraine): Support to people 70+ living in the zone of hostilities in Ukraine
- **Nataša Todorović & Milutin Vračević** (Red Cross of Serbia): Long-term care of older persons and older persons with disabilities in the Western Balkans

Recent work on the topic



Preventing Ageing Unequally

United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Leaving No One Behind In An Ageing World

World Social Report 2023

International Labour Organisation

Inequalities and the world of work

International Labour Conference
109th Session, 2021



POLICY BRIEF

Contents

- 1. Executive summary, their causes and mitigating factors
- 2. Policy strategies to support older persons in vulnerable situations
 - A. Increasing adequate income and access to housing
 - B. Promoting healthy, long-term care and community services
 - C. Provision of advice and services
 - D. Reducing loneliness and ensuring social participation
 - E. Empowered older persons and inclusion into decision-making
- 3. Recommendations
- 4. Checklist
- 5. References

Suggested strategies

- Promote adequate income and access to affordable housing
- Provide adequate, affordable quality health and long-term care services
- Increase opportunities for social participation and reduce loneliness and social exclusion
- Expand all forms of online advice and support
- Promote the inclusion of disadvantaged older persons in decision-making
- Involve older persons in decision-making

Policy Brief on Ageing

Older Persons in Vulnerable Situations

Policy challenge

At any age, interacting factors such as poverty, disability, social isolation and exposure to abuse can increase the risk of vulnerability and weaken resilience in the face of adverse events. One in five persons aged 65 and over is elderly or frail, defined as the European Union in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic, being isolation, health assistance, and also one example of adverse events that have disproportionately affected vulnerable persons, including many older persons. Often, the experience and vulnerability of older persons remain invisible as their voices are less heard and their needs less known due to a lack of data and research, and their significant involvement in decision-making. Key challenges, therefore, is to inform, design and implement comprehensive policies that protect vulnerable older persons from adverse outcomes, enhance resilience and allow them to fulfil their full potential in later life.

What this brief is about

This policy brief addresses older persons in vulnerable situations. It first discusses the types of vulnerable situations experienced by older persons, their causes and strategies for increasing coping resources and resilience across the life course. It presents policy examples from the UNECE region addressing the situation of vulnerable older persons, with a focus on income and housing, health and long-term care, prevention of violence, abuse and neglect, and social participation. The brief also highlights several ongoing issues affecting older persons at increased risk of vulnerability, including the costs of living, only the well-to-do, income and loneliness and social isolation. Finally, the brief draws attention to the importance of adequate data and research and the involvement of older persons in decision-making.

Achieving equitable healthy aging in low- and middle-income countries

The Aging Readiness & Competitiveness Report 4.0

Data and analysis by **ECONOMIST IMPACT**



1. Empirical overview of inequalities in some key dimensions:
 - Self-rated health, ADL, informal care, pensions & work
 - By education, gender and age-group

2. Key questions:
 - How large/small are inequalities in these dimensions?
 - How stable/dynamic are inequalities over time?
 - Have they changed since the pandemic?

Data sources



- **United States**
- Since 1992



- **England**
- Since 2002



- **Western Europe**
- Since 2004

- Longitudinal
- Representative for non-institutional. Pop. aged 50+
- Harmonized

Note on measurement

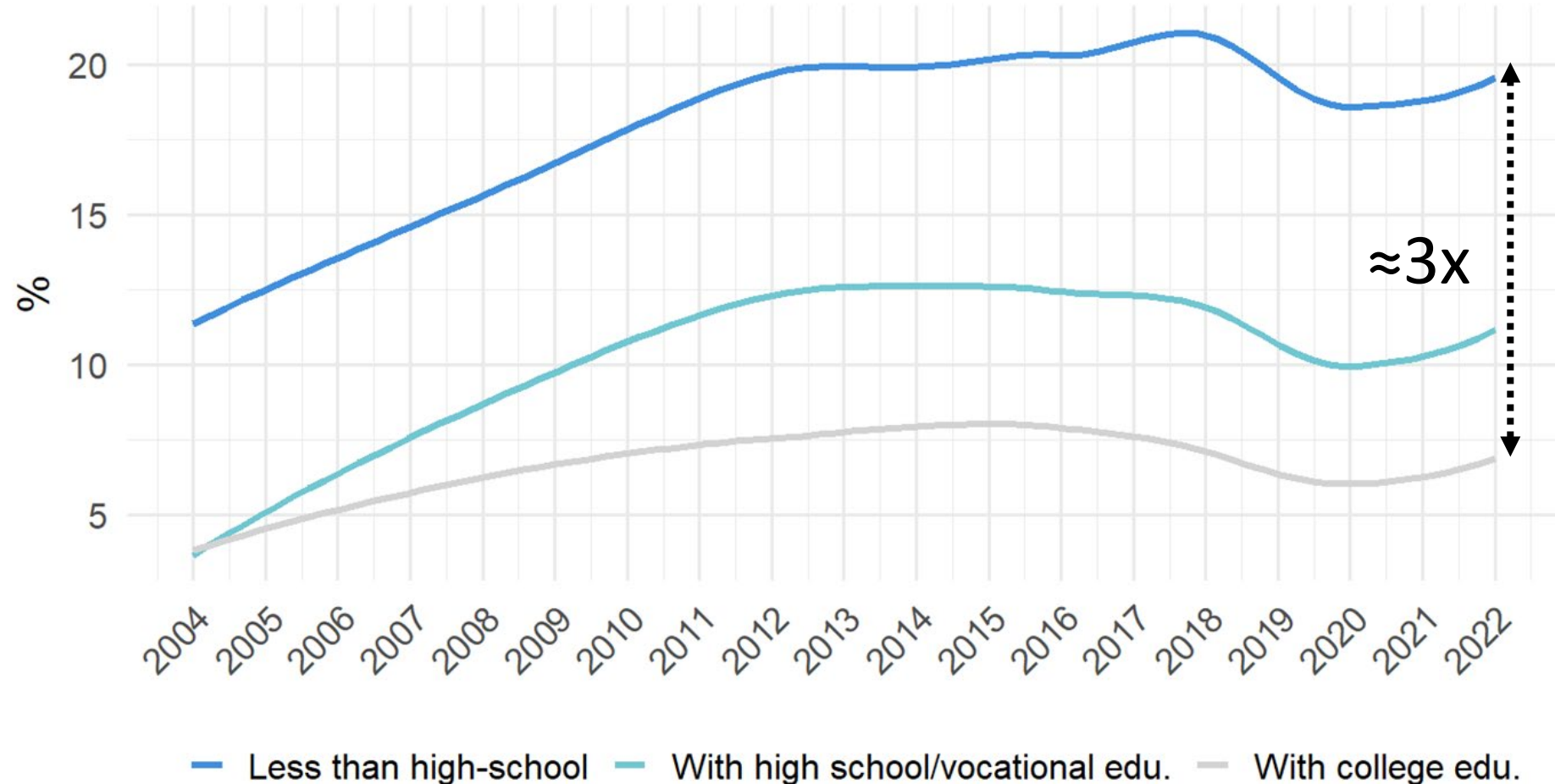


- **Socio-economic status – Education:**
 - Easier to measure than income
 - Strong association with income
- **Trends across countries:**
 - Countries equal weights
 - Averages do not capture heterogeneity

Poor self-rated health by education (ages 65+)



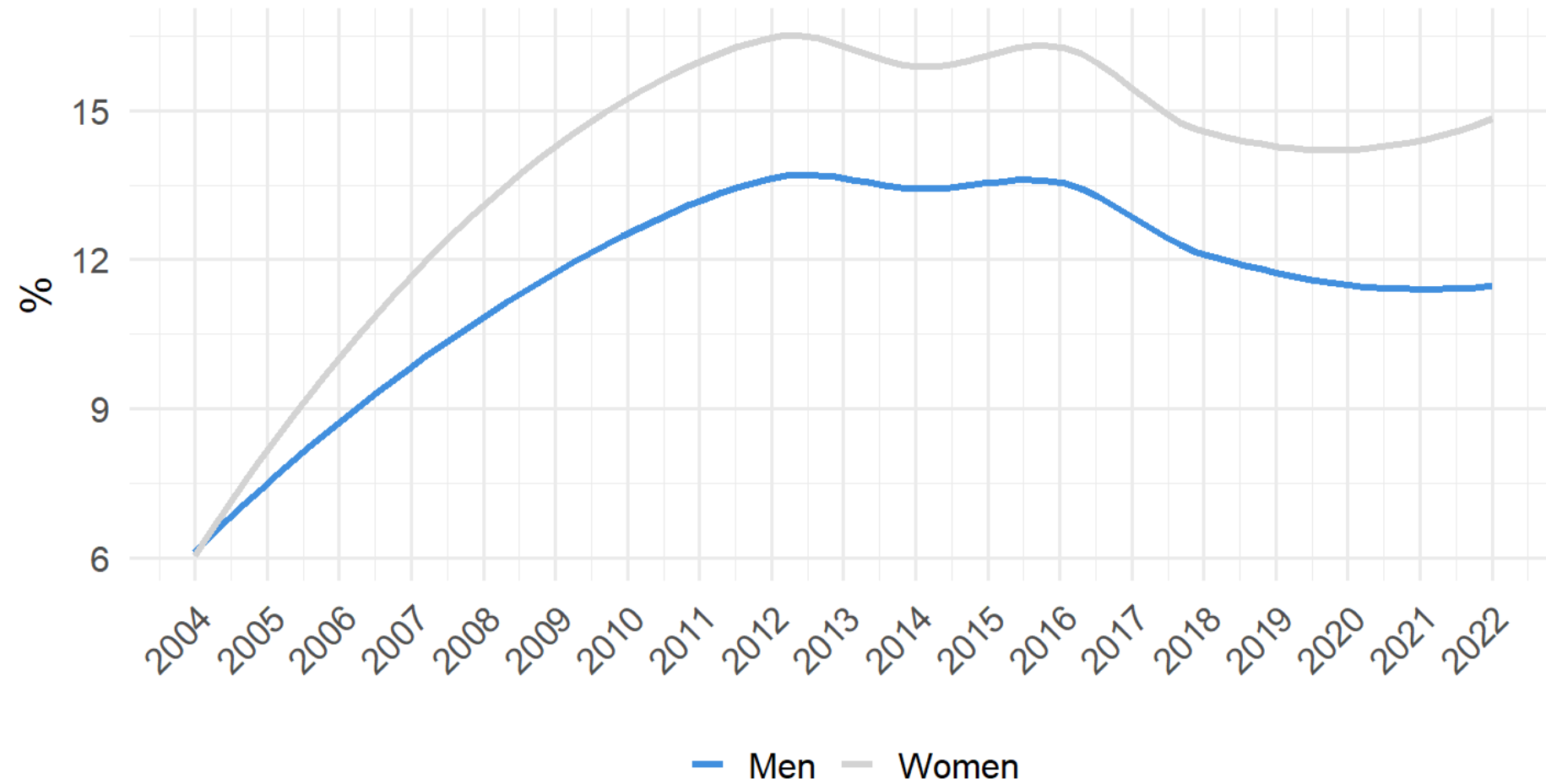
- Clear gradient
- Worsening of health status over time
- Widening of inequality over time



Poor self-rated health by gender (ages 65+)



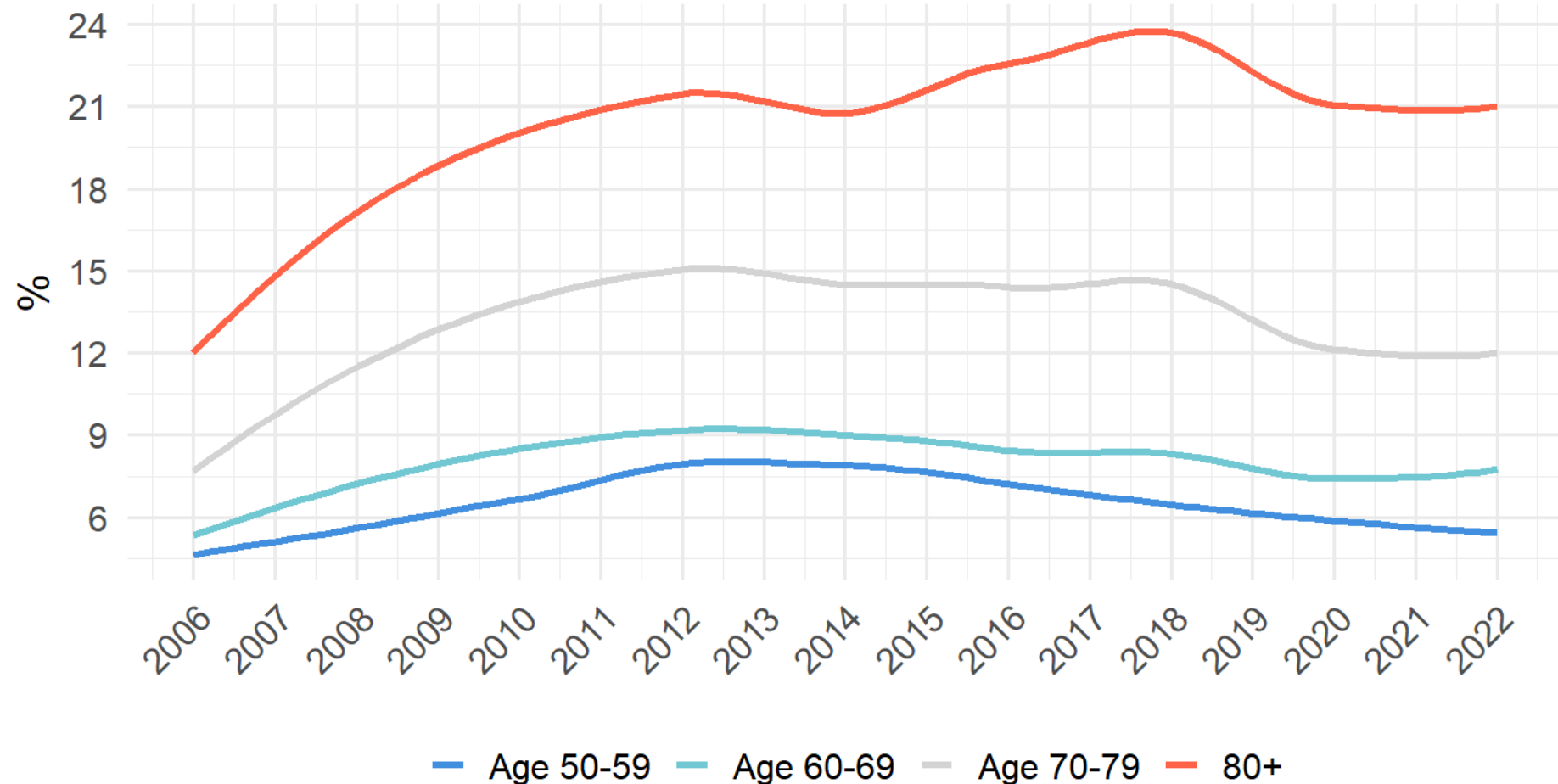
- Women report worse health than men
- Difference growing over time
- Also, since pandemic



Poor self-rated health by age-group



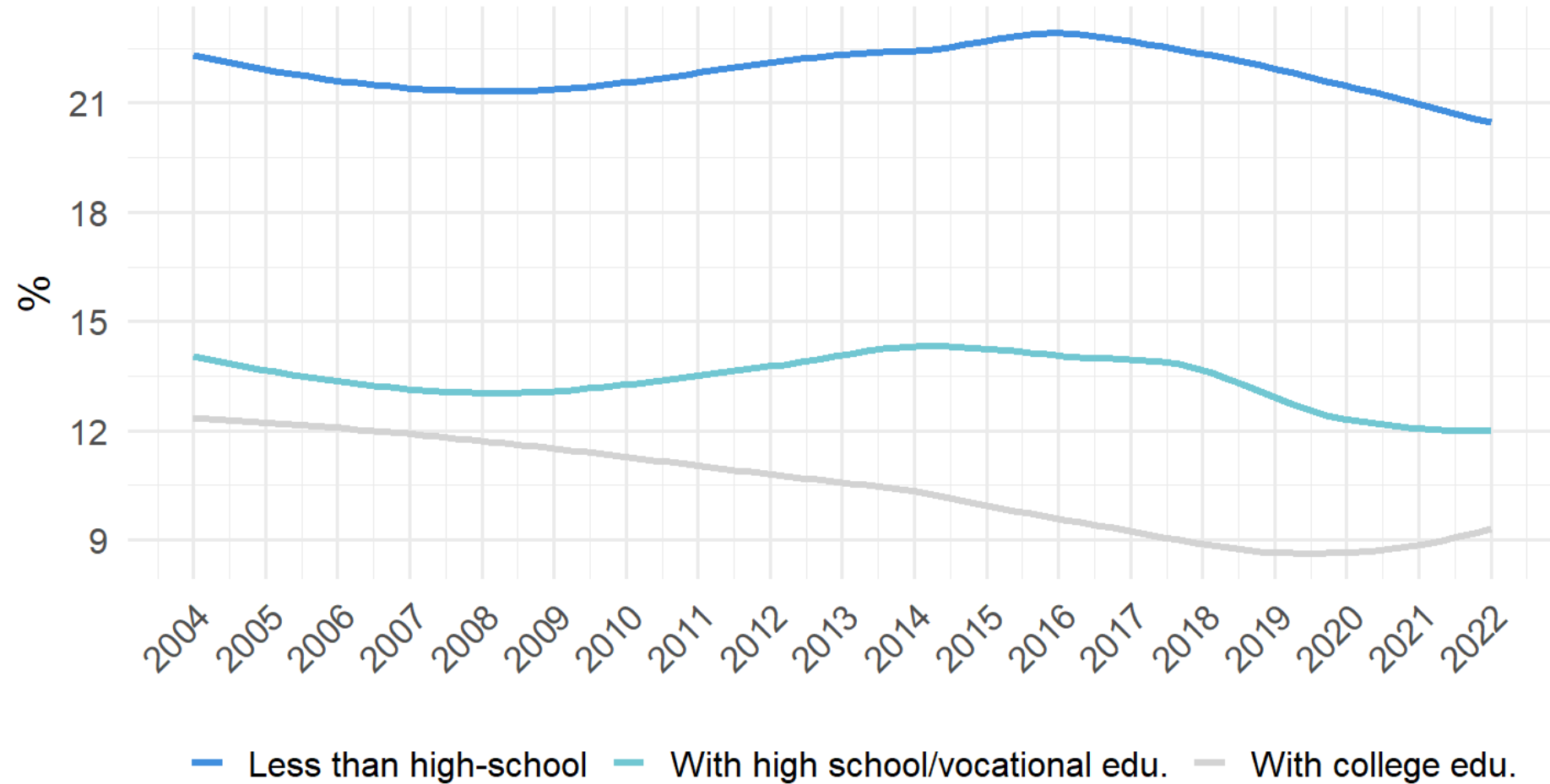
- Age-gradient increased over time
- Worsening of health among 80+ age group



Any limitations in Activities of Daily Living (ADL) by education (ages 65+)



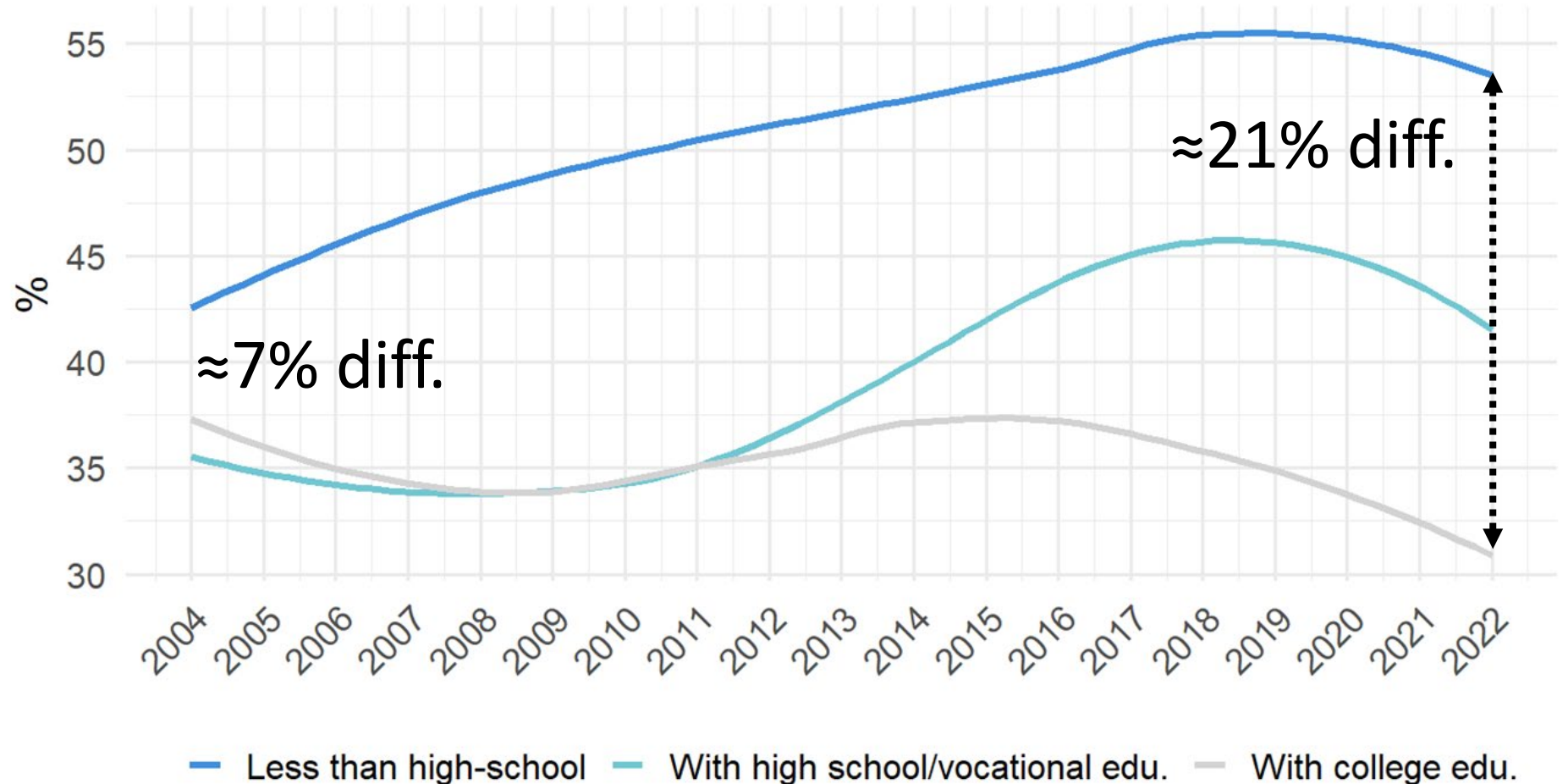
- Clear socio-economic gradient
- Reflect inequalities in need for long-term care



Receipt of informal care by education among those with at least one ADL (ages 65+)



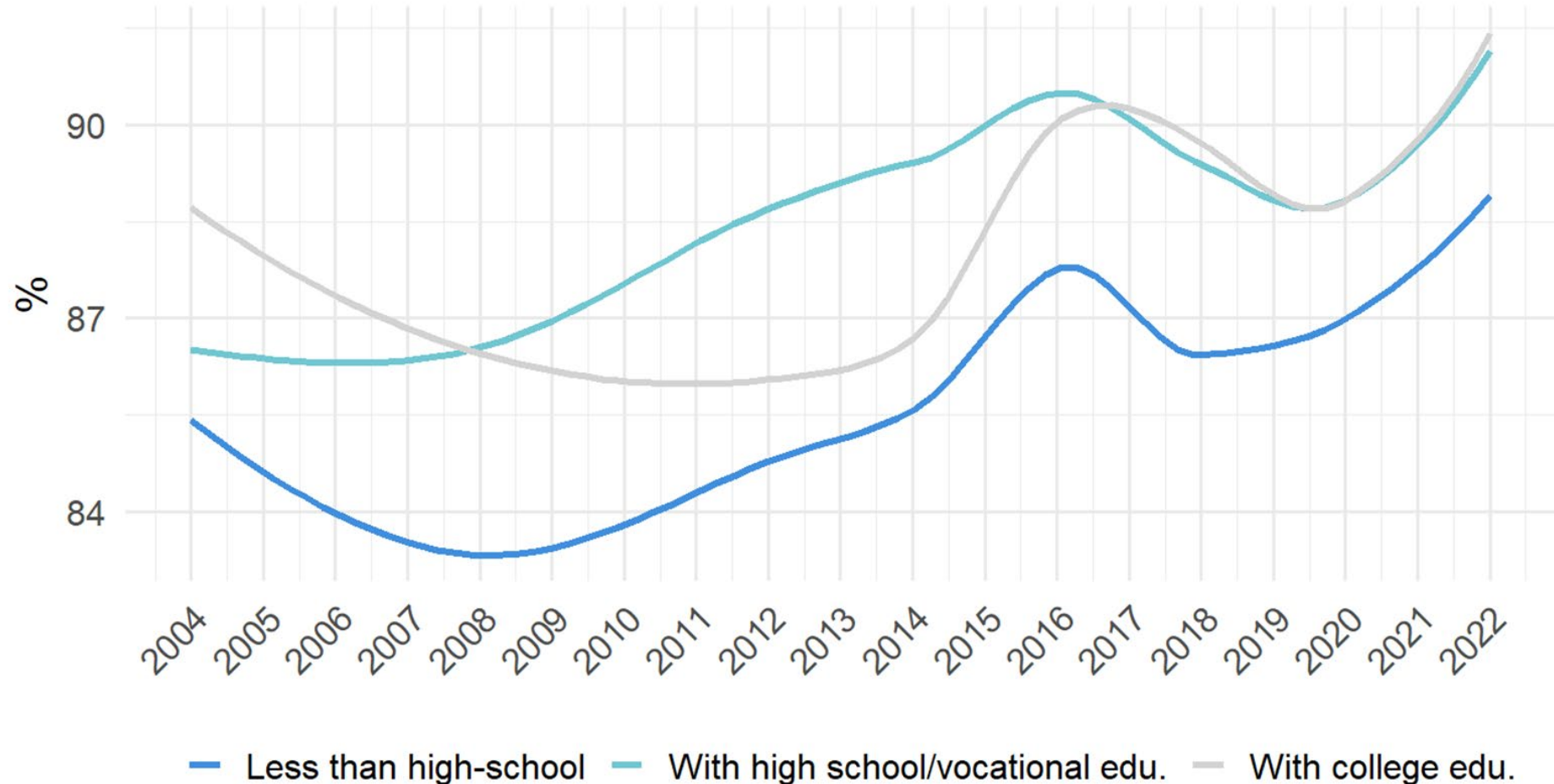
- Lower edu. rely more on informal care
- Absolute inequality increased over time



Receipt of any pension by education (ages 65+)



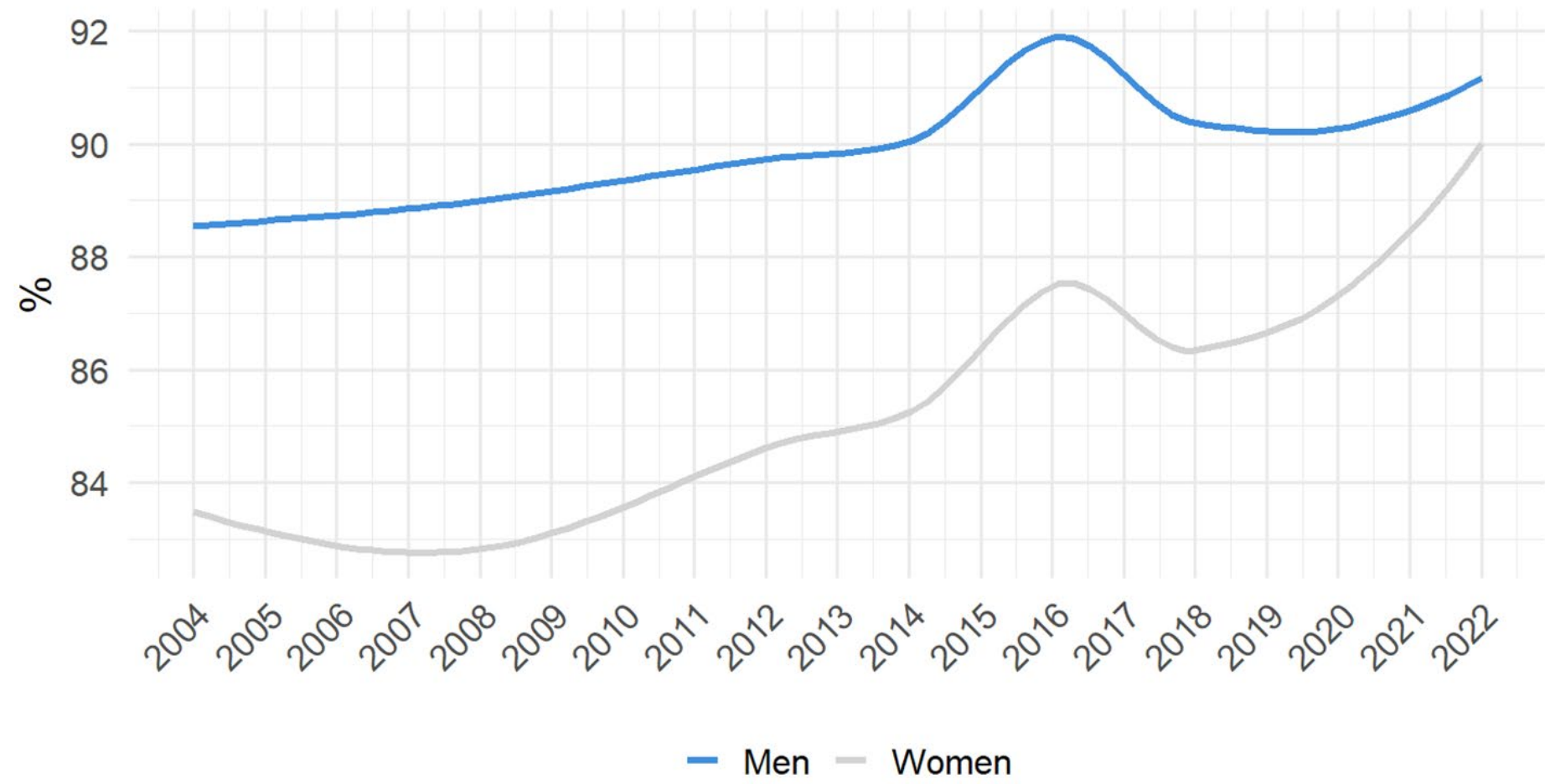
- Receipt of any pension is common
- Inequality has narrowed



Receipt of any pension by gender (ages 65+)



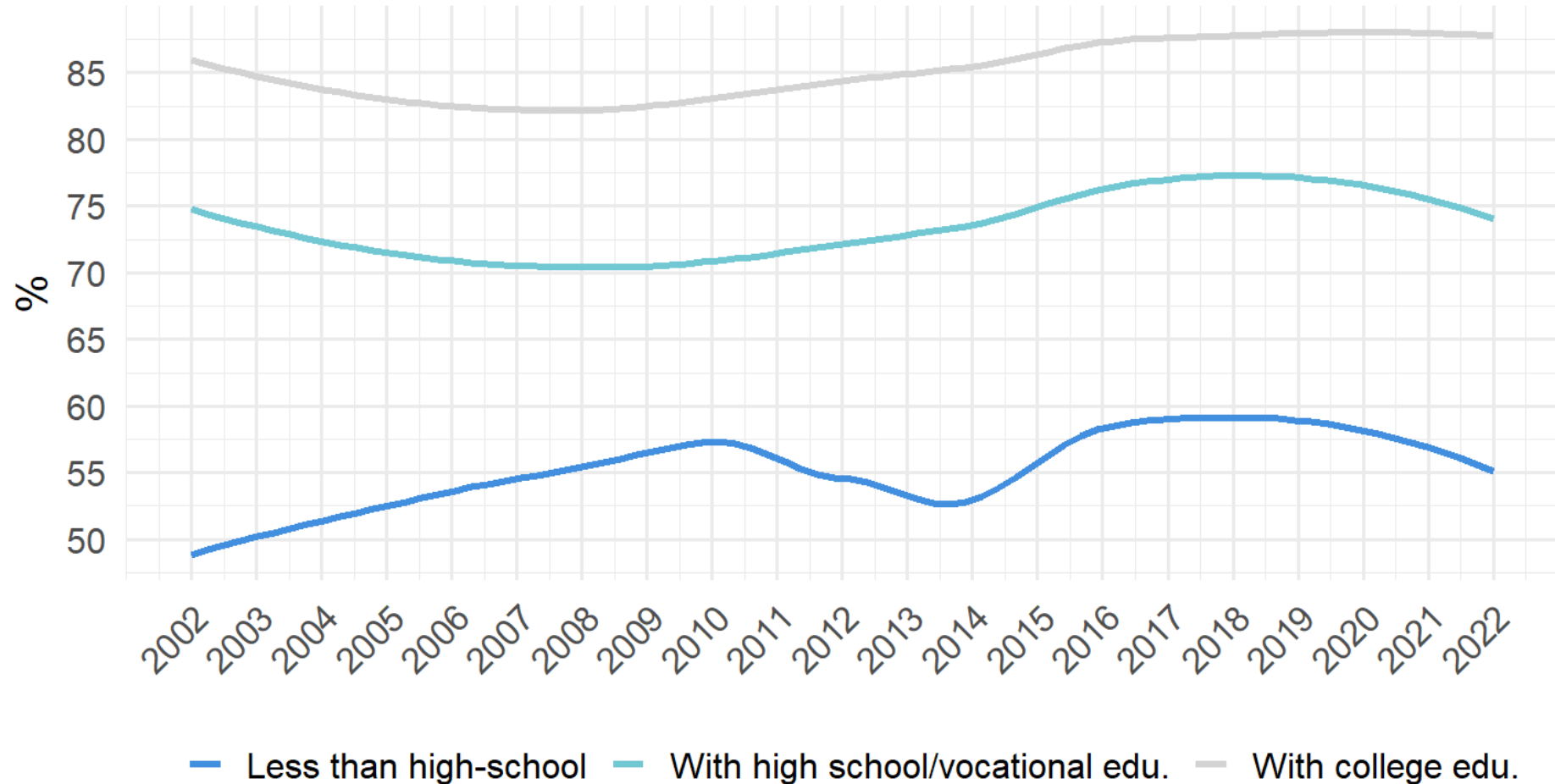
- Gender pension gap narrowing
- Strong cohort effect among women
- Pandemic



Any work for pay by education (ages 50-64)



- Large inequalities persist
- Likely continue into later-life



Conclusions



- Substantial inequalities according to edu., gender and age:
 - self-rated health, ADL & need of long-term care
- Widening inequalities over time
 - Though gender pension gap is narrowing
- Early signs that pandemic amplified inequalities
- **Inequalities often dynamic**
- **Opportunities for policy interventions**