



The Netherlands Institute
for Social Research

Quality of life and Covid in the Netherlands: new disadvantages?

Jeroen Boelhouwer

Debbie Verbeek-Oudijk

 @SCPonderzoek

The Netherlands
before the COVID19
pandamic

	2018-2020
1 Finland	7,8
2 Denmark	7,6
3 Switserland	7,6
4 Iceland	7,6
5 Netherlands	7,5
6 Norway	7,4
7 Sweden	7,4
46 Romania	6,1
58 Portugal	5,9
68 Greece	5,7
95 Bhutan (2019)	5,1
149 Afghanistan	2,5



The Netherlands **before** the Covid-19 pandemic:

Economic crisis in 2008

There-after: recovery economic resources

- > Recovery purchasing power for a lot of households, but differences in the extent of recovery
- > Fewer people unemployed, but still higher amongst the youth, lower educated and people with a migration background
- > Less poverty, but still relative high amongst people with a migration background and people with benefits





The Netherlands **before** the Covid-19 pandemic

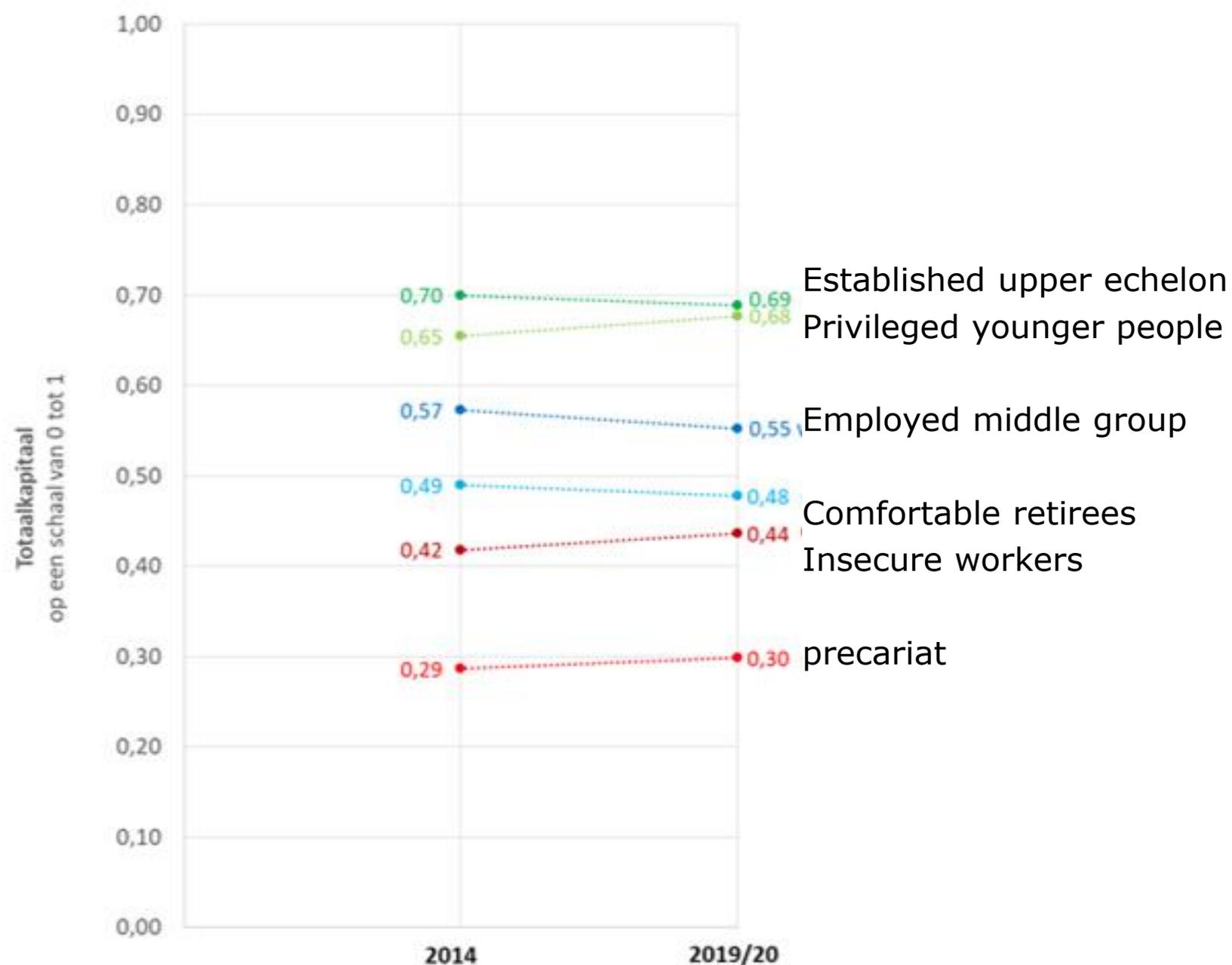
Before the pandemic already rather huge tasks (social and societal)

- › Increase of inequality between social groups
- › Huge differences in self-reliance (increase is an underlying policy goal)
- › This has effect on the quality of life and chances in life for people...
- › ... but has also societal effect: trust in policies, politics, other people and the future

Social groups in the Netherlands, before the Covid-19 pandemic

based on 'total capital' (resources)

- economic
- social
- cultural
- 'personal' (health)



Bron: Hoff et al. (verwacht juli 2021) *Vershil in Nederland 2014-2020: Zes sociale klassen, en hun visies op samenleving en politiek*



Social groups in the Netherlands, before covid-19

Position on societal ladder

	2014	2020
Established upper echelon	7,2	7,5
Privileged younger people	7,1	7,3
Employed middle group	6,4	6,5
Comfortable retirees	6,4	6,7
Insecure workers	5,6	5,0
precariat	5,1	4,8

Based on the question where people stand in society, viewing a ladder. At the top: people who are best off, at the bottom people who are worst off



And then... the Covid-19 pandemic

- › Clearly a multiple crisis, not only health crisis, but also a social and an economic one
- › Government reacts; follows the so-called Outbreak Management Team (OMT) at first
- › OMT: mostly scientists from infection-control perspective (
- › Other scientists (social and economic) react in the public debate, hardly heard in the political debate
- › Only at the end, social scientists were involved a bit more (f.i. SCP director joins meetings of the cabinet) -> now societal impact team!



What happened during Covid-19?

- > No general change in satisfaction with life
- > Increase in loneliness, especially among the elderly. More specific: no increase in social loneliness (having social contacts) but in emotional loneliness (having *meaningful* contacts)
- > Increase in people with low **mental health**
- > People are not so much worried for themselves, but for others (especially the vulnerable people) and about how society as whole is faring



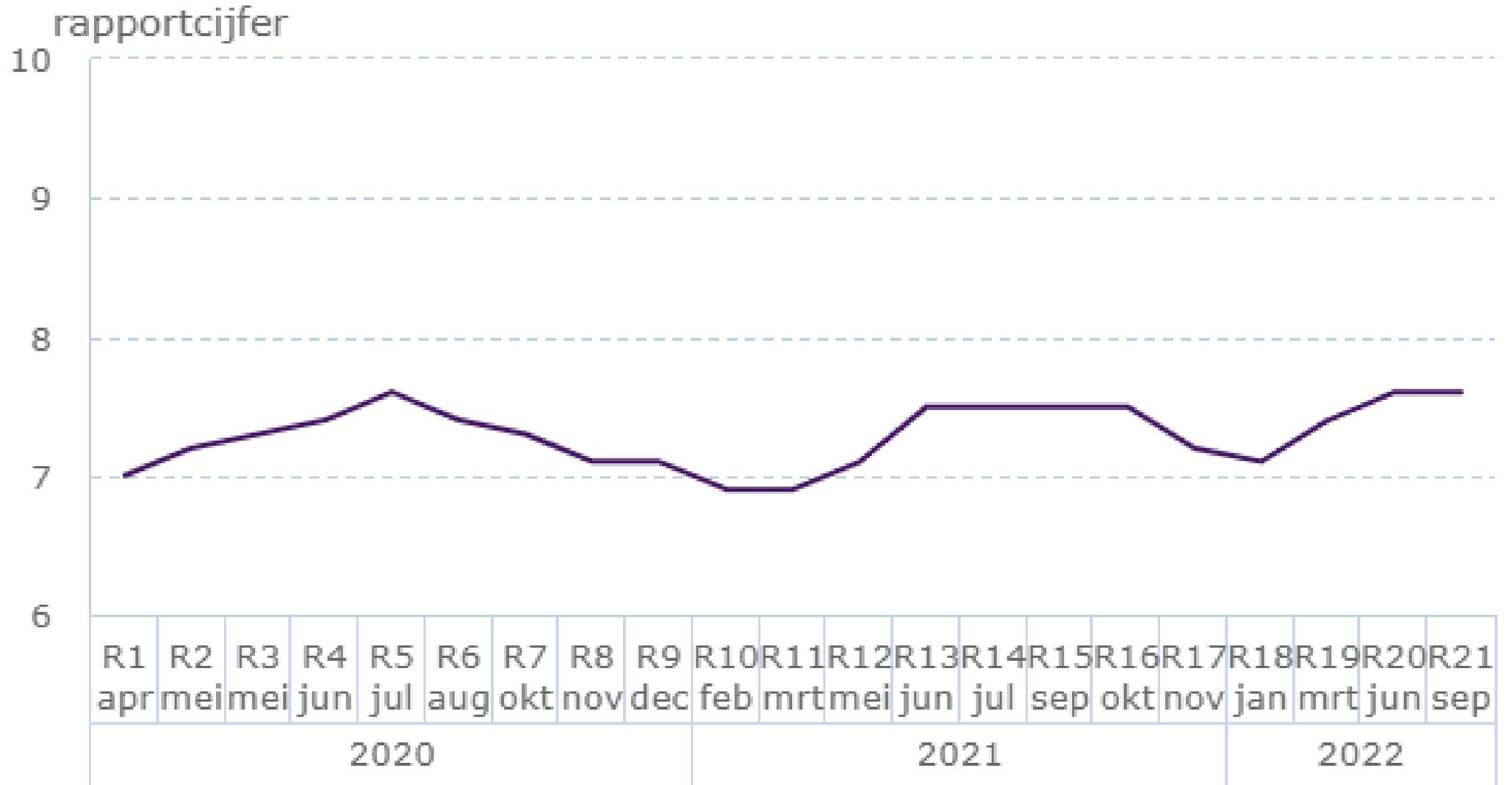
Research by RIVM

(National Institute for Public Health and the Environment)

- > 'Dynamic cohort' study. Based on a huge health survey.
- > Same people followed throughout time. Dynamic, because participation at a later moment is allowed. With extra promotion for the youth.
- > Not representative... but useful for comparing patterns through time.
- > At the start about 60.000 participants, at the end (last month) around 35.000



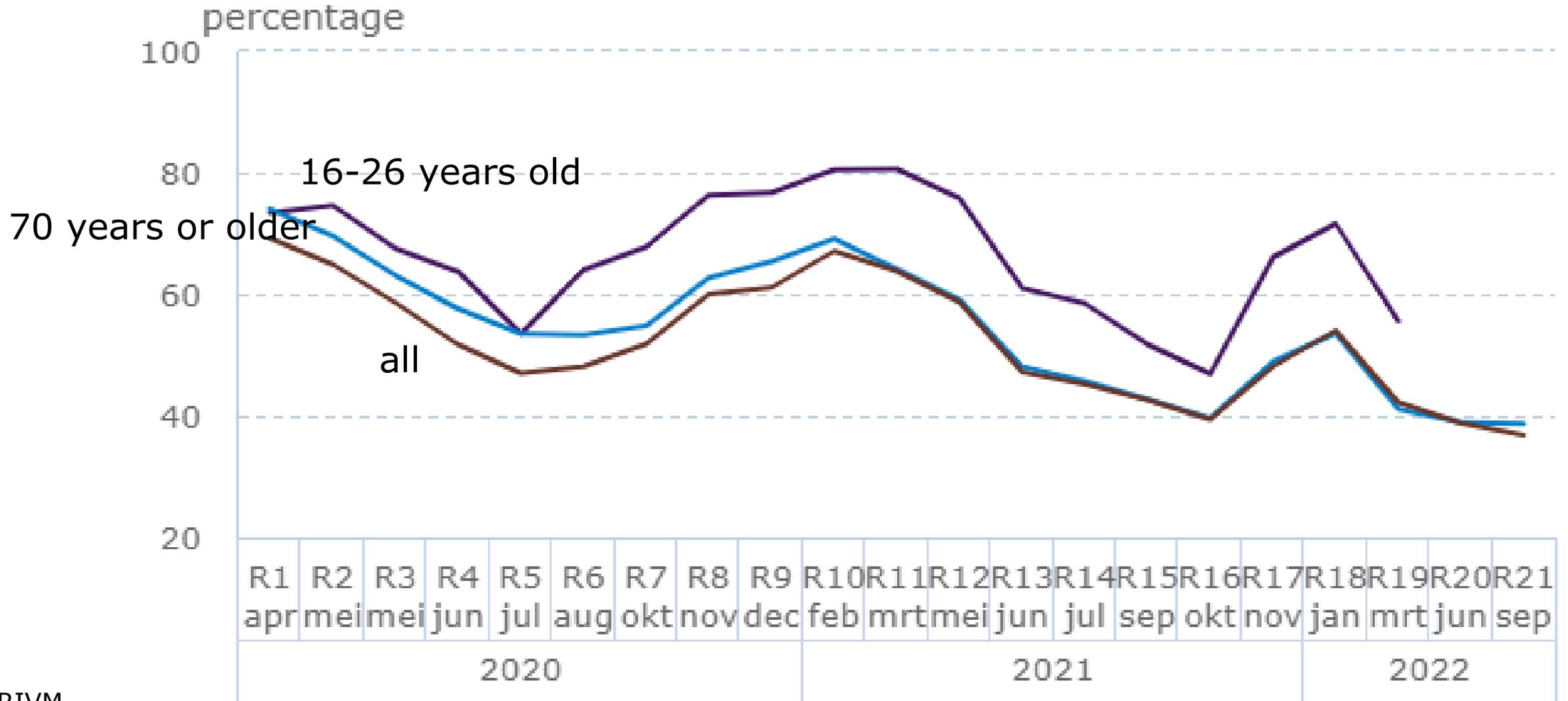
Satisfaction with life between april 2020 and sept. 2022



Loneliness between (somewhat or strong feelings of loneliness)



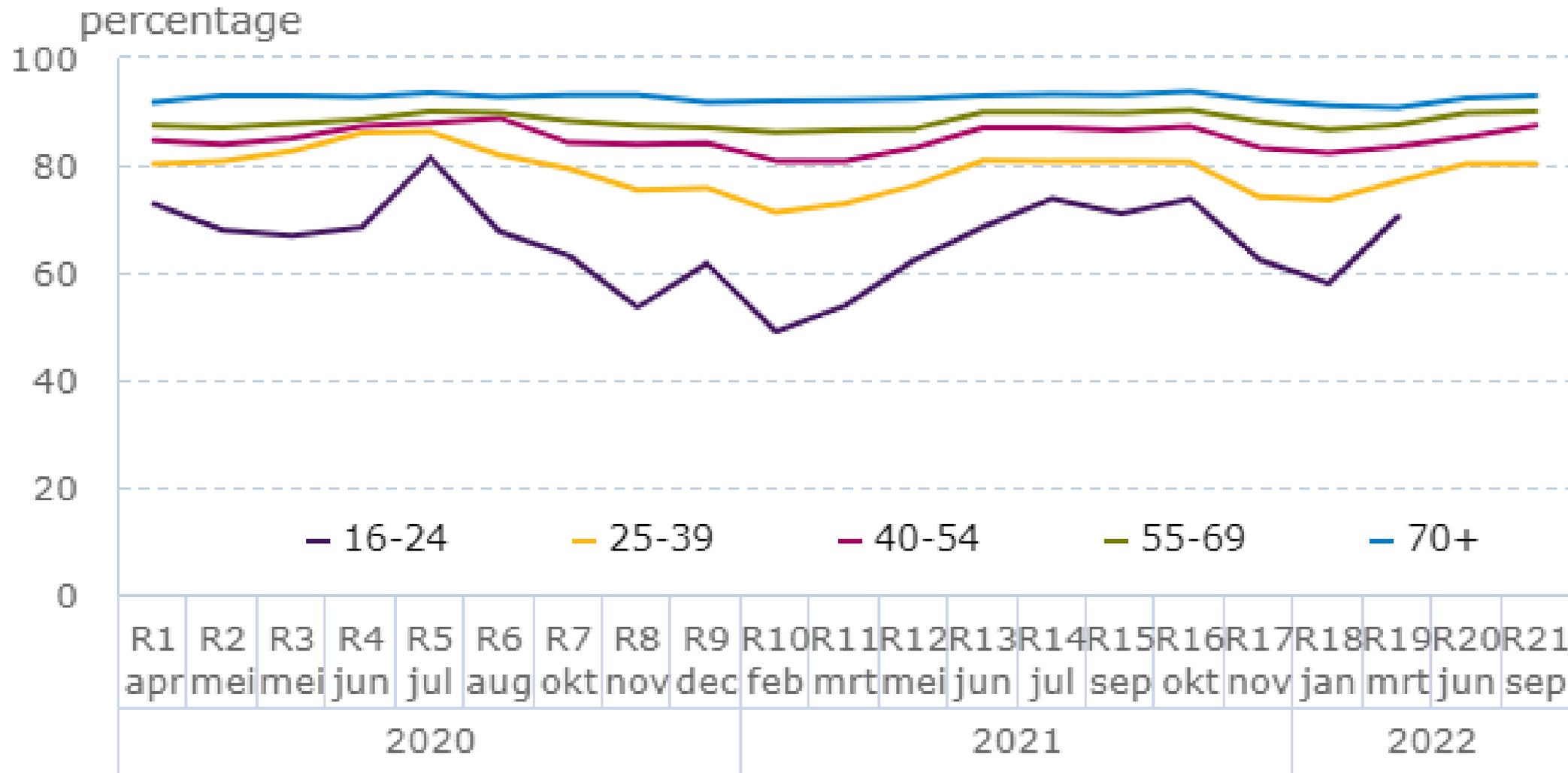
april 2020 and sept. 2022



Mental health between



april 2020 and sept. 2022



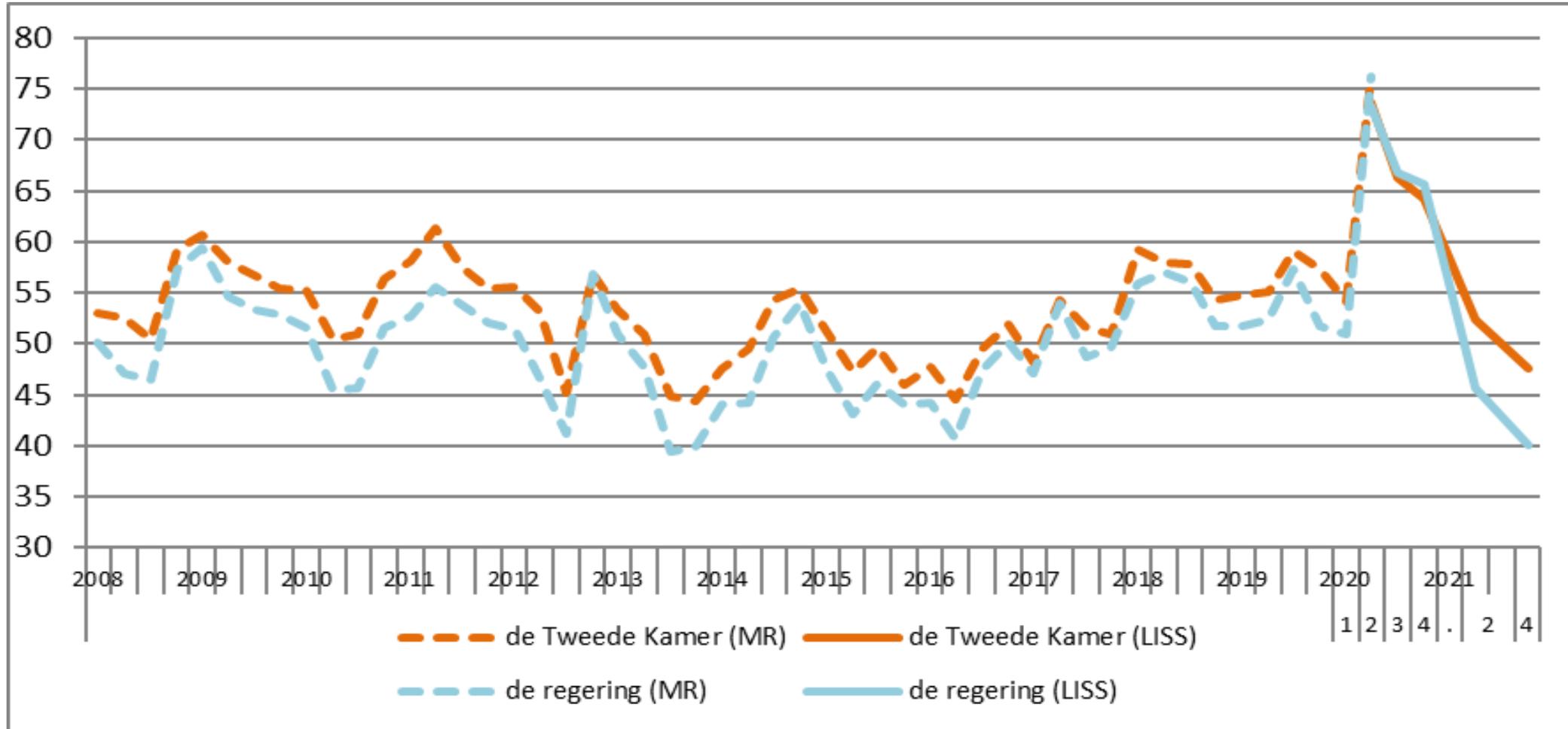


Employment, income and education

- > No rise in **unemployment**
- > No rise in **bankruptcy**
- > Government support was generous. Now being slowly scaled down. Uncertain what the effect will be on the longer run (especially with the inflation rates and gas-crisis we have now)
- > Rise in **school** drop-out and worse school-performance: widened discrepancies in school performance

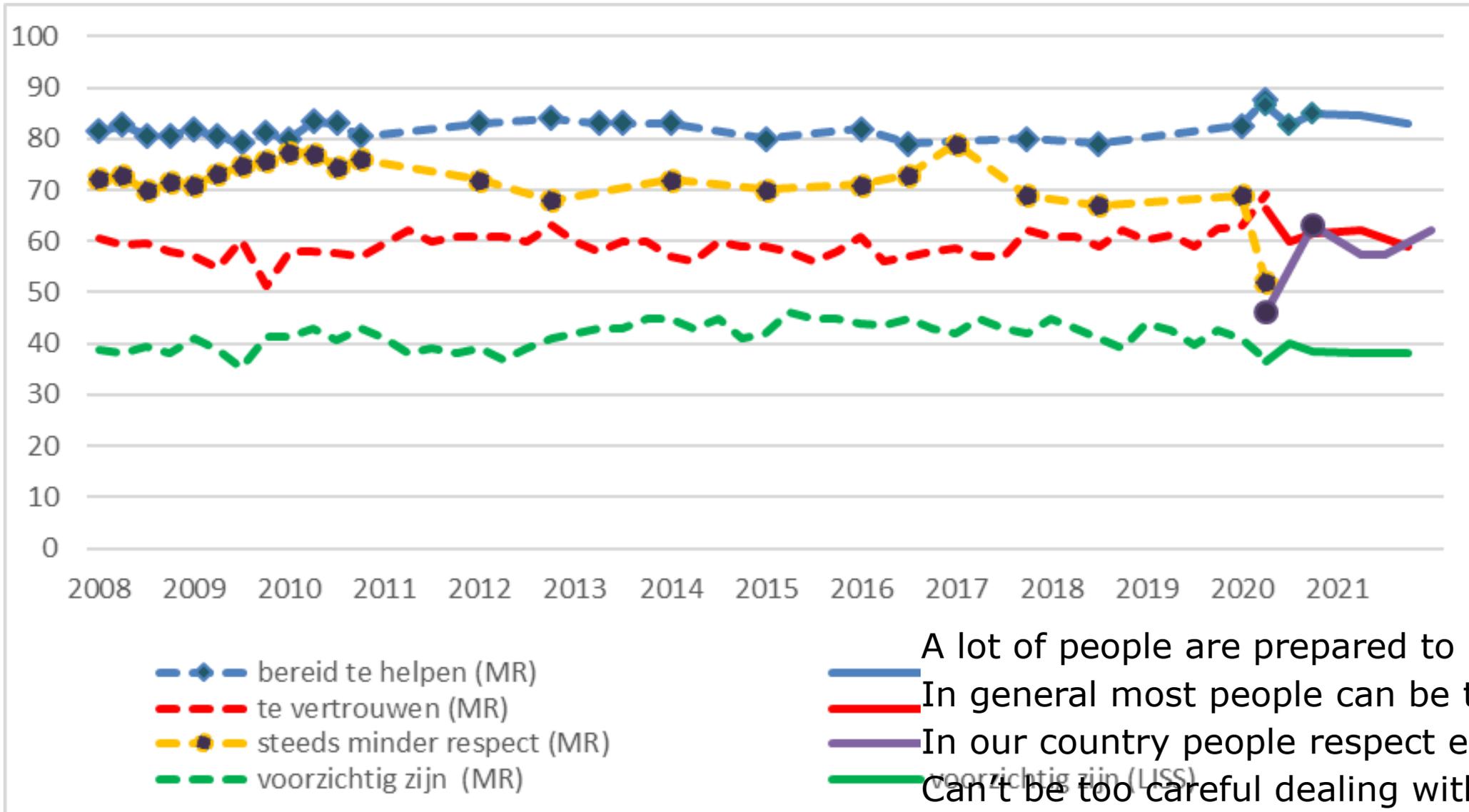


Political trust (SCP research)



Bron: Continue Onderzoek Burgerperspectieven 2021|4

Social trust (SCP research)



A lot of people are prepared to help others

In general most people can be trusted

In our country people respect each other

Can't be too careful dealing with other people



Conclusion: connect crisis and long(er) term perspective

1. Requires broad scope

- Combine quality of life with the economic perspective (well being approach).
- Most effected people already had a disadvantaged position. Covid therefore is connected with social and societal tasks: problems with healthcare, equal opportunities in education, reform of the labour market, etc
- Combine the support measures with existing problems and tasks: long(er) term scenario's.
- Be prepared for new forms of vulnerability (for now: entrepreneurs, people with long covid, effect of postponed healthcare)
- Be aware the every crisis has long term effects on both the economy and quality of life.



Conclusion: connect crisis and long(er) term perspective

2. Effect on decision making and support for xx

- Reliable and predictable government is important (scenario's can help).
- A structural, integral approach is better (to solve the biggest problems) than a temporary ones
- Anticipate on the effects of measures to avoid adjustments (ask the right questions, like under what conditions can schools be open? Instead of do or don't schools have to close?)
- More focus on prevention (mental health, resilience)
- Keep in mind also groups that we know less about (not always active in public or social media debates)



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Thank you

Jeroen Boelhouwer and Debbie Verbeek-Oudijk

j.boelhouwer@scp.nl

www.scp.nl

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