



The Netherlands Institute
for Social Research

Empowering older adults

An explanatory model of changes
in resources and participation on
well-being in an ageing society

Crétien van Campen, Jurjen Iedema, Jos de Haan

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Societal challenge

- How can we prolong the health and happiness of the ageing population?
- What resources and activities contribute to well-being?
- Computational model for ex ante policy evaluation



Objective

- Knowledge to power
- A computational model for ex ante policy evaluation
- Better policy decisions for well-being



Data

- Longitudinal Aging Study Amsterdam (LASA)
- More than 5.000 individual trajectories of well-being over 3 decades
- Within people's life courses (trajectories of well-being)
- E.g. life events

Conceptual model

RESOURCES

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Economic status
- Social network

PARTICIPATION

- (un)paid Work
- Social roles
- Cultural activities
- Sport activities

WELL-BEING

- Life satisfaction
- Positive emotions
- Negative emotions
- Social loneliness
- Emotional loneliness

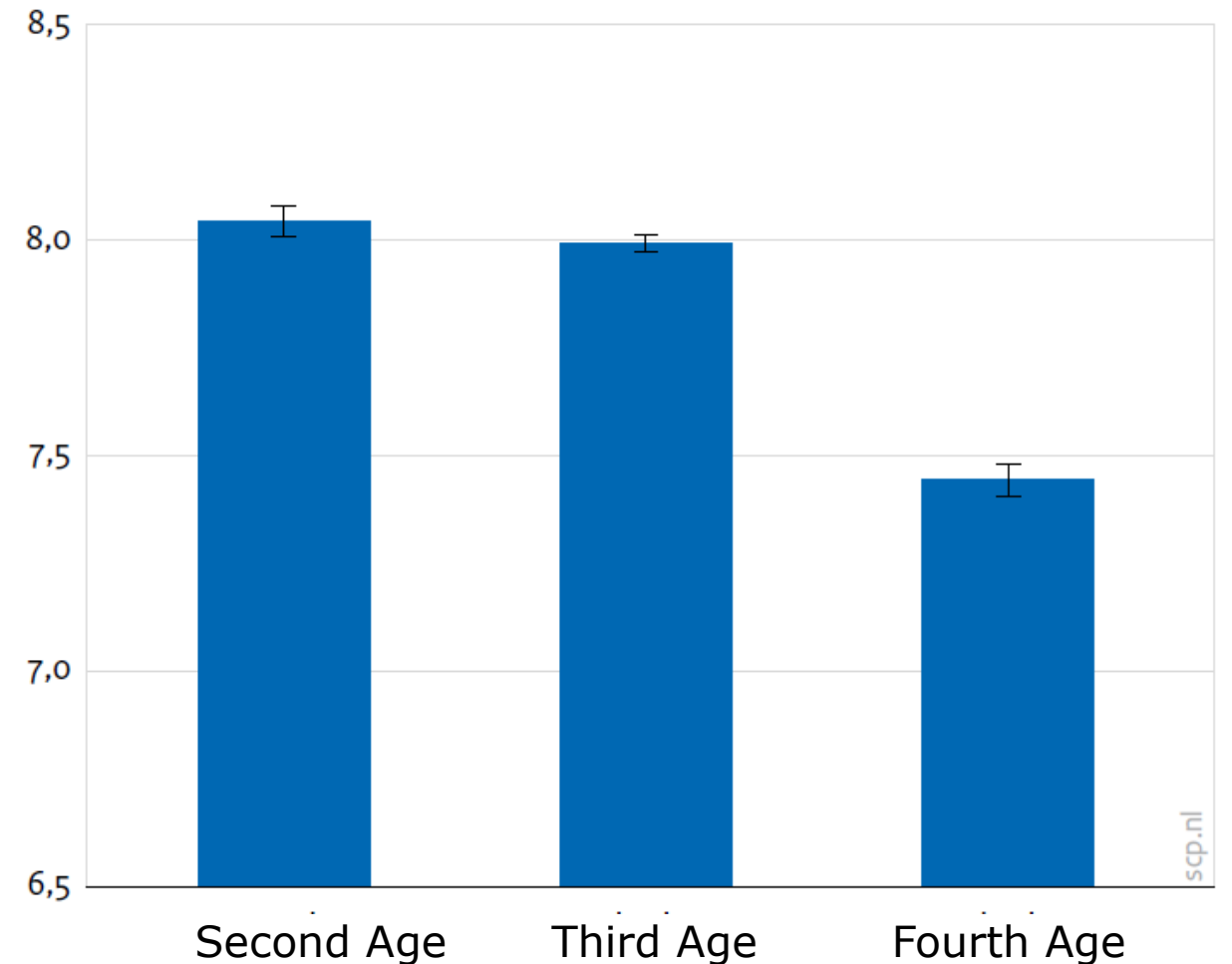
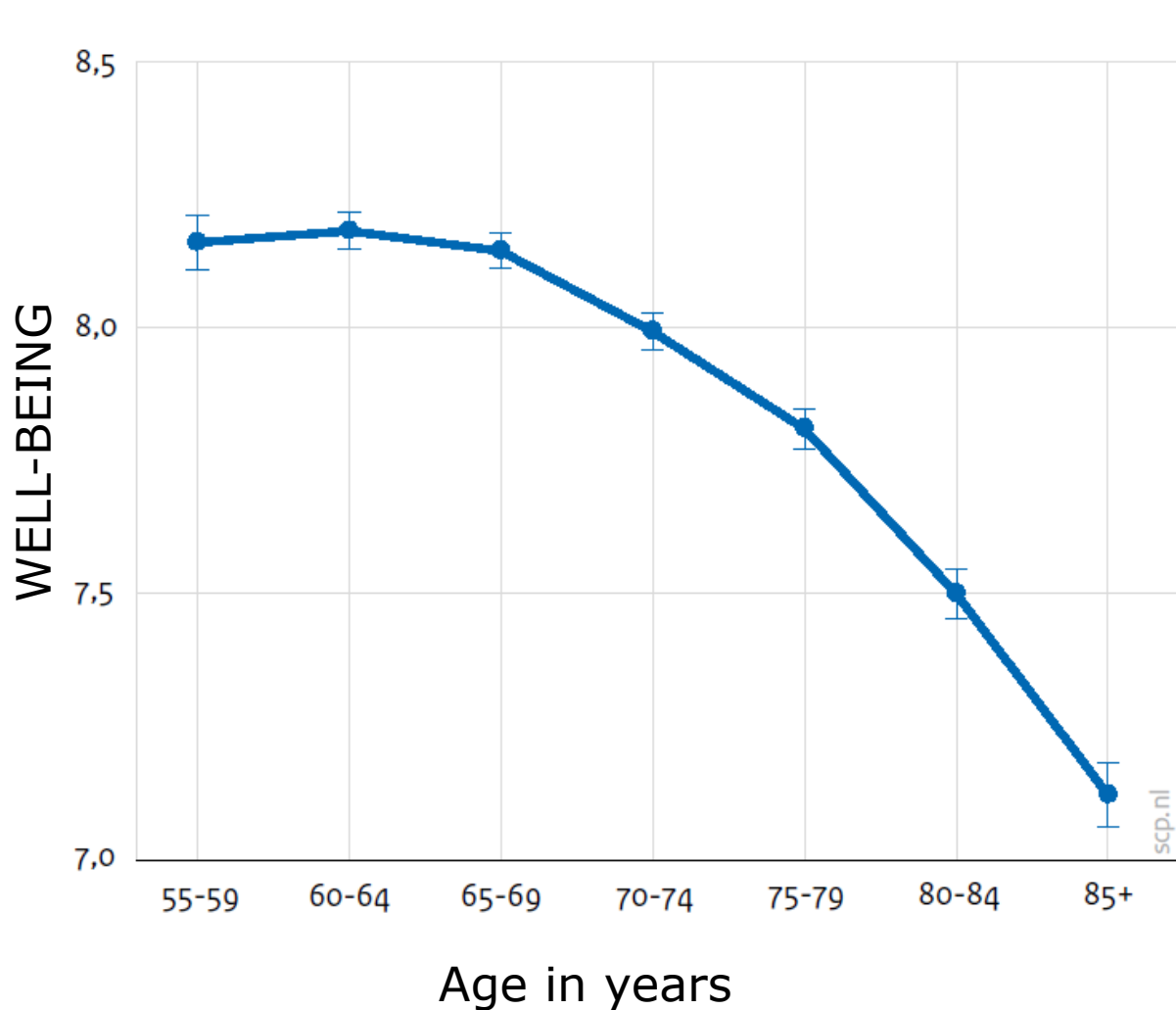


LIFE COURSE





Course of well-being in later life





Evaluating two policy intentions

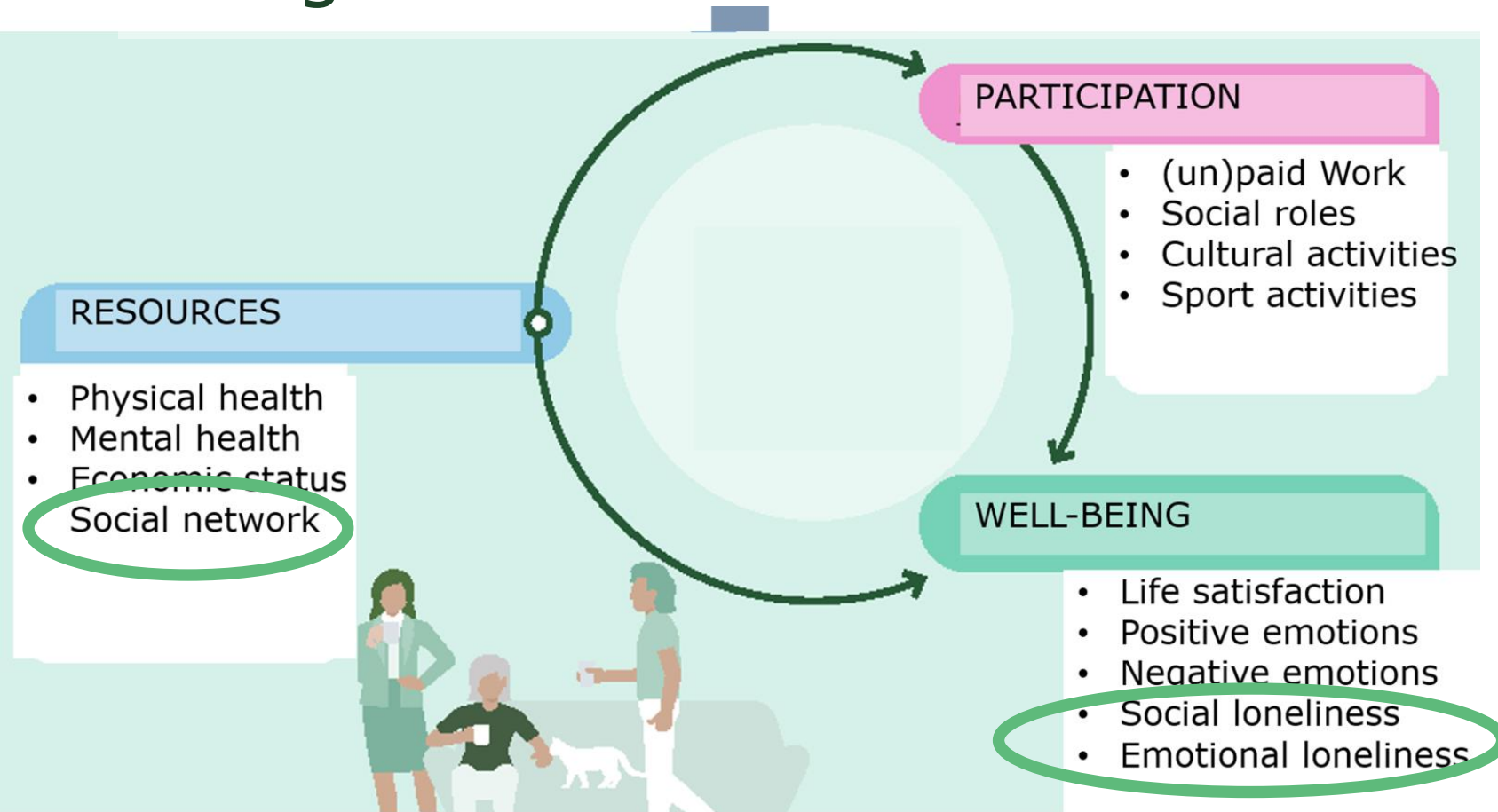
1. Enlarging social network size of older adults ('against loneliness')
2. Substitution of professional care by informal care by older adults ('care shortage')

Ex ante policy evaluation:

- What are long-term effects on well-being?
- What other factors mediate the effect?



Effects of changes in social network size on well-being



Positive effect! (especially on loneliness)

But ...

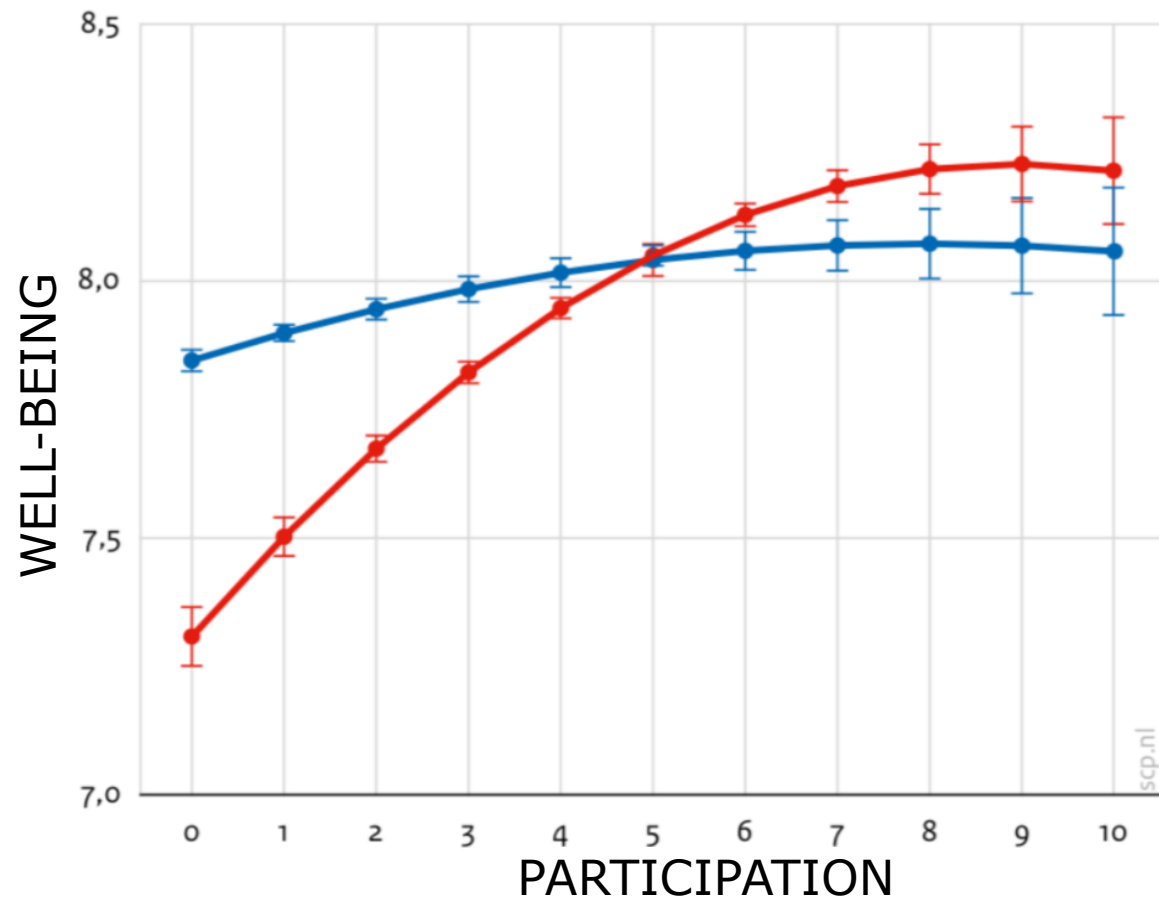
Less for persons with chronic diseases, widowers and people who moved houses

And...

Empowering mastery, self-efficacy and selfesteem gives a boost



Effects on well-being of changes in 'work participation' versus 'broad societal participation'



Work participation

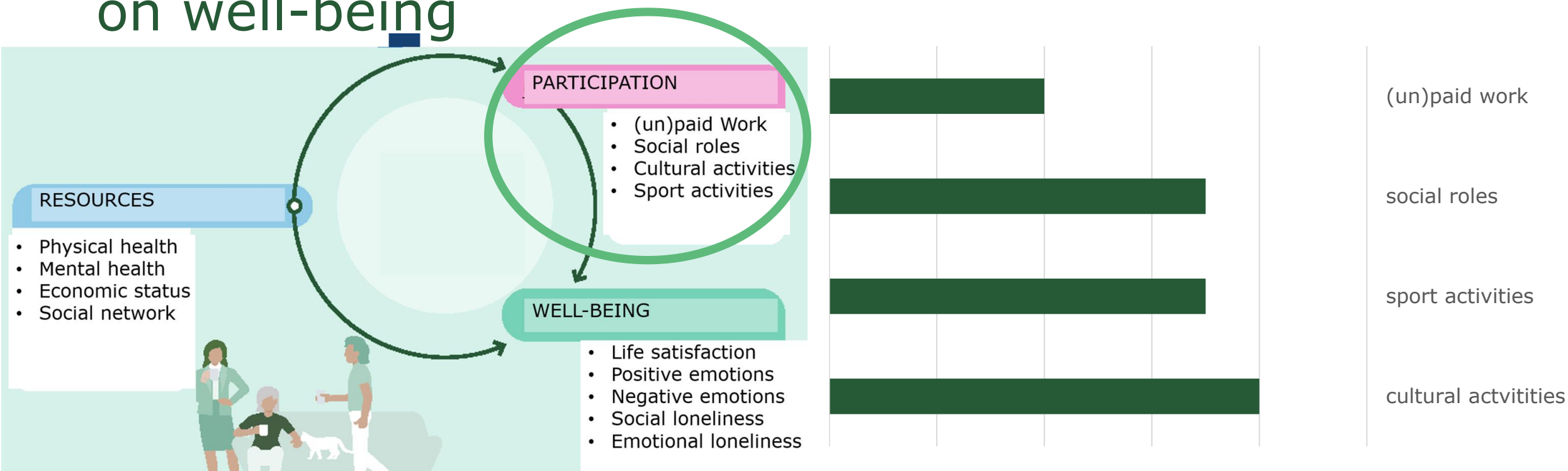
labour, voluntary work, informal care

Broad societal participation

idem + social, cultural and sport activities



Extra: Relative effects of changes in participation on well-being





General results

The two cases show to policy makers:

- Enlarging the social networks of older adults will improve well-being and diminish loneliness, but not perse for frail groups like people with chronic illnesses an widowers
- Facilitating cultural and sport activities for older adults will have a larger and sustainable impact on their well-being than forcing them to work and care for other older adults



Conclusions & Food for Thought

- Focusing policy on broadening participation (with a variety of activities like work, social interactions, participation in culture and sports) will result in substantially less decline in well-being for the ageing population than the current economic oriented policy of labour participation and informal care-giving by older adults
- Preventive actions that strengthen health, social and economic resources in the Third Age have a positive impact on a longer life in well-being
- This could mean that the benefits of ageing would increase (well-being, broad participation) and the costs (of care) would decrease of ageing societies



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Thanks for your attention

Crétien van Campen
c.van.campen@scp.nl



english.scp.nl



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