

# AGEING – A POLICY VACUUM

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**The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.**

**British Geriatrics Society Spring Meeting 2017,  
Newcastle, 27 April 2017**

# AGEING – A POLICY VACUUM

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## Agenda

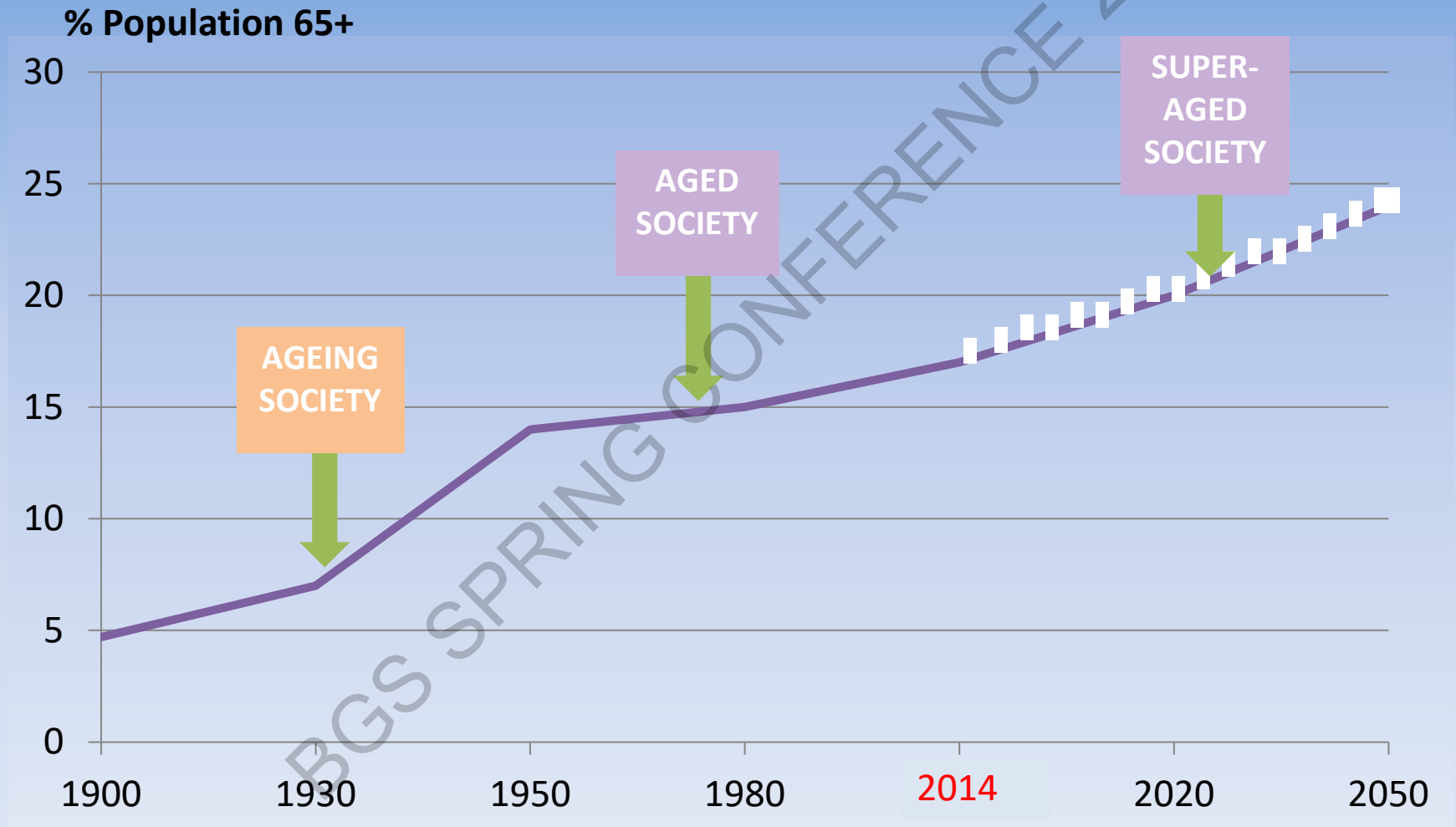
- The Burden of the Burden of Ageing
- The Changing Dynamics of Ageing
- Framing a Social Policy on Ageing

# AGEING – A POLICY VACUUM

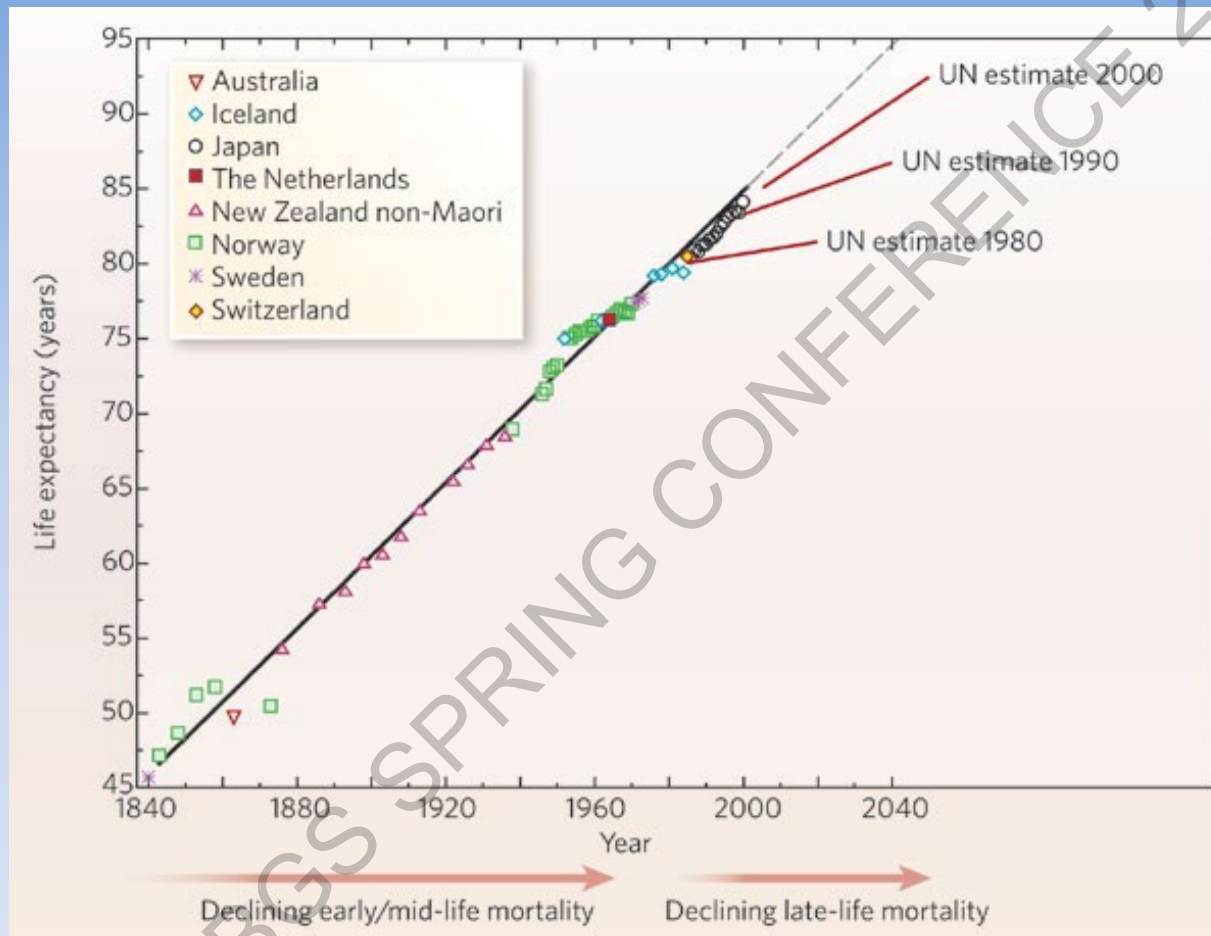
## Key Messages

- The burden of ageing is a common starting point for policy makers and this militates against alternative narratives
- It is not demography or the economy that determine policy responses to ageing, it is politics and political ideology
- The changing dynamics of ageing together with new scientific knowledge create the case for a different policy approach
- A social policy on ageing should focus on the whole life course, not just the end of it, and promote active ageing for everyone

# FROM AN AGEING TO A SUPER-AGED SOCIETY



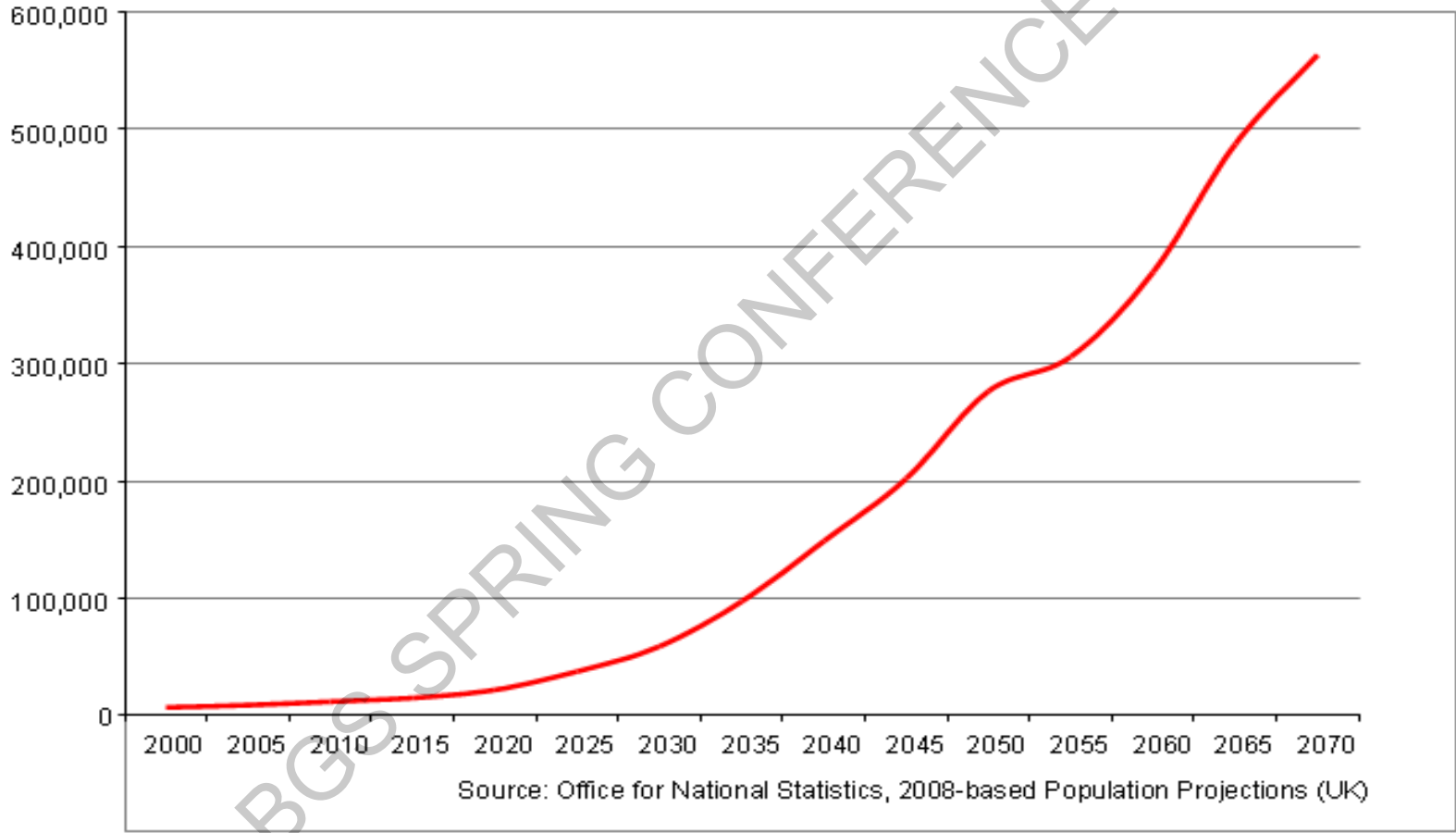
# STEADY INCREASE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY SINCE 1840



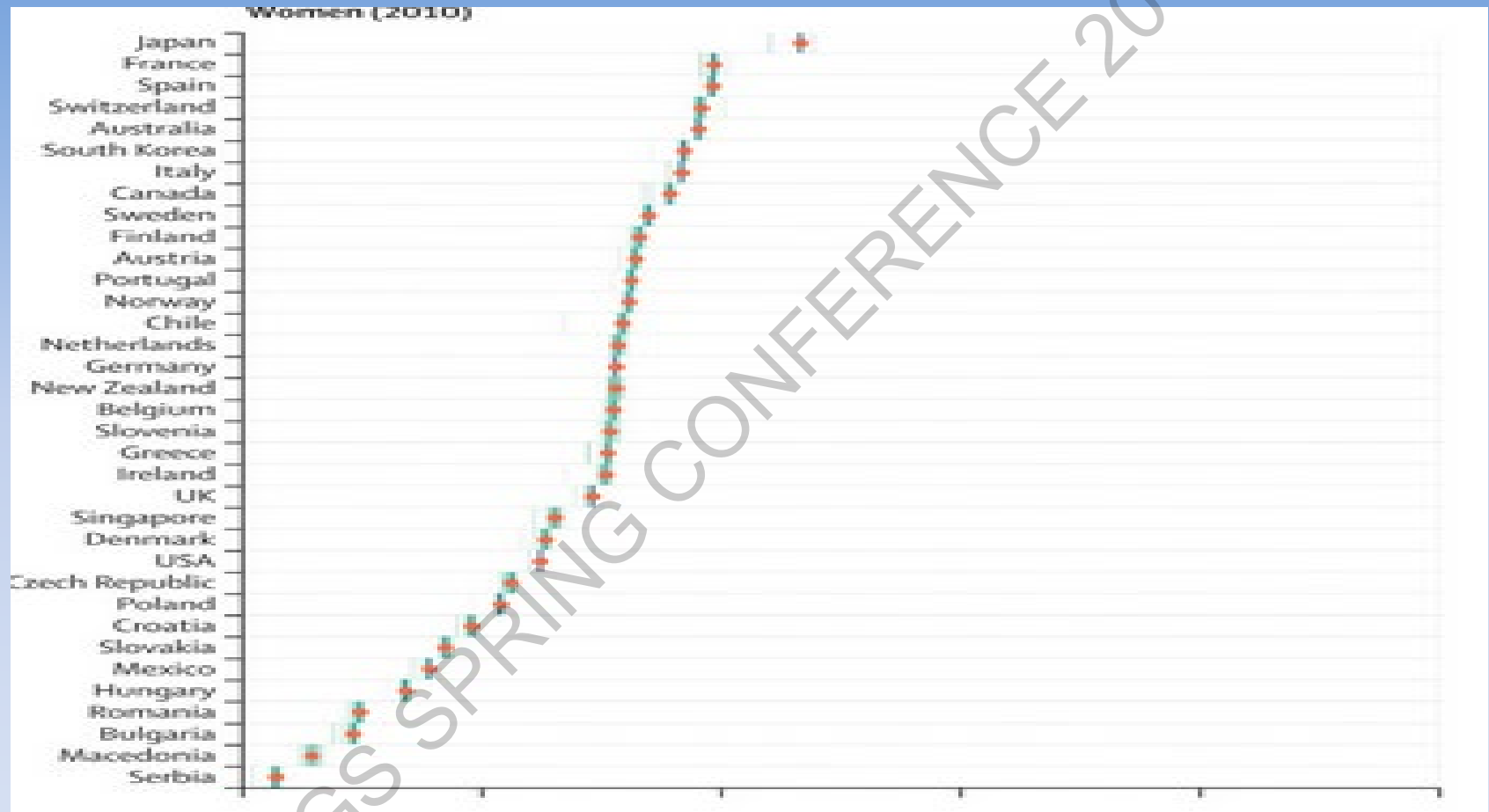
**Source:**

2008 American Association for the Advancement of Science Modified with permission from Oeppen, J. & Vaupel, J. W. Broken Limits to Life Expectancy *Science* 296, 1029 (2002).

# NUMBERS AND PROJECTIONS OF CENTENARIANS, UK 2000-2065

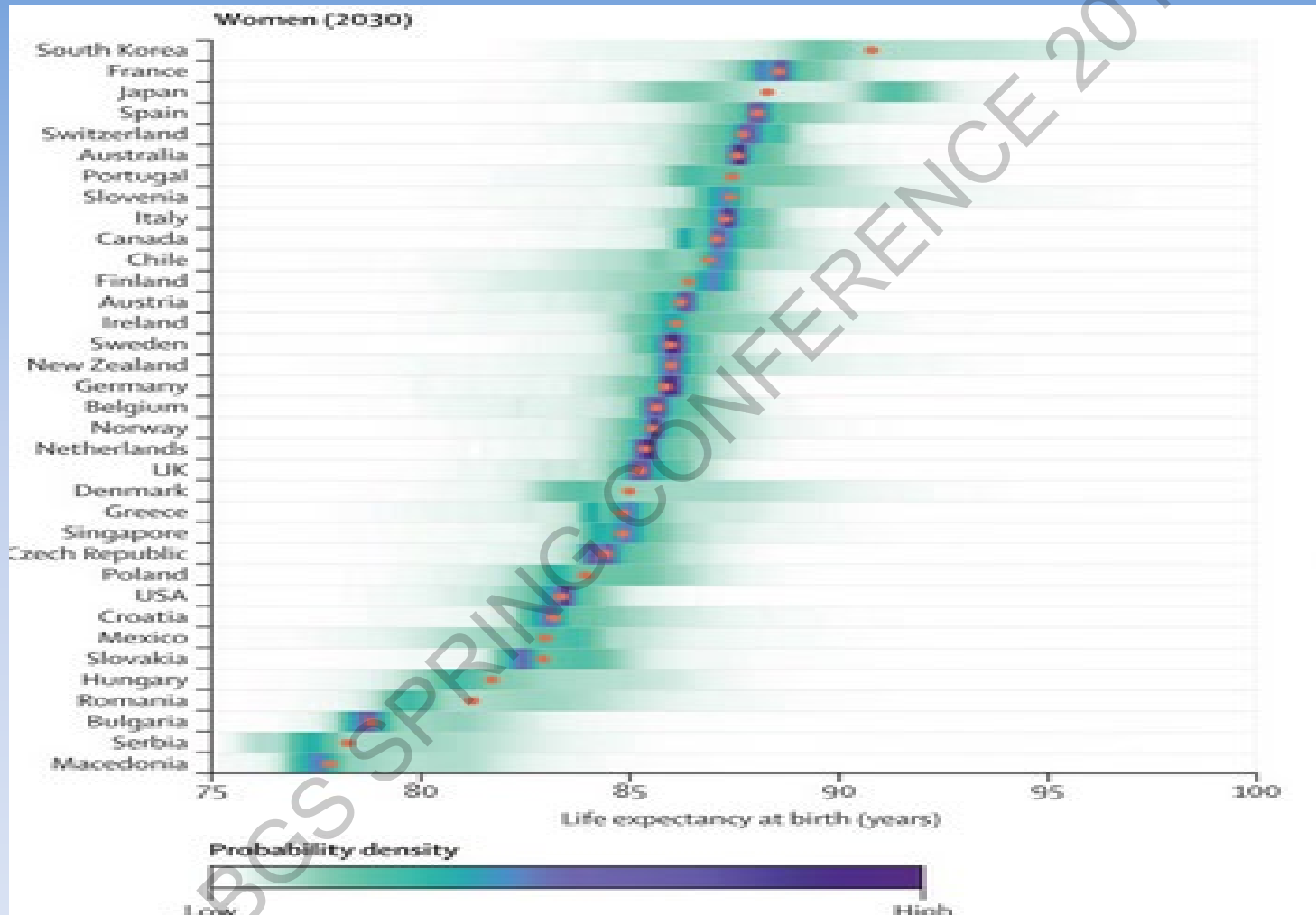


# LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH



Source: The Lancet, 2017

# LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH



Source: The Lancet, 2017

# PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO POPULATION AGEING

- **NEGATIVE**
  - **Despairing Demography**
  - **Burden of Dependency Rhetoric**
  - **Economic Doom**
- **POSITIVE**
  - **Social and Economic Progress**
  - **Decline in Causes of Premature Death**
  - **Emergence of Balanced Population**

# BAD NEWS STORY

Dependency  
time-bomb

The 'silver tsunami' that threatens to overwhelm US social security system

World faces age of dependency

over-65s outnumber young

After the credit crisis,  
the pensions crunch

The timebomb is ticking

Prepare now for the great pensions crash

The day-tripping pensioners who  
are costing local councils dear

Britain must urgently  
take steps to prepare for  
the seismic impact of a  
rapidly ageing population

# The Economist

APRIL 26TH–MAY 2ND 2014

Economist.com

Warren Buffett: time for a break-up?

Germany abandons reform

China's middle-class exodus

How to teach your child to code

Robot sex, batteries not included

## A billion shades of grey

*"Thanks to us oldies,  
the world economy is threatened  
with secular stagnation, China's  
prospects are deteriorating  
and inequality is rising"*

*"That's nice,  
dear"*



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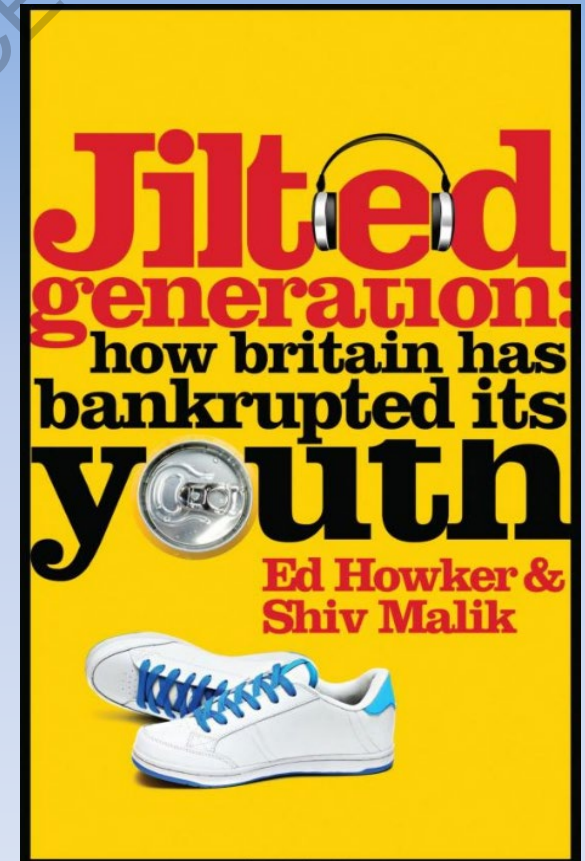
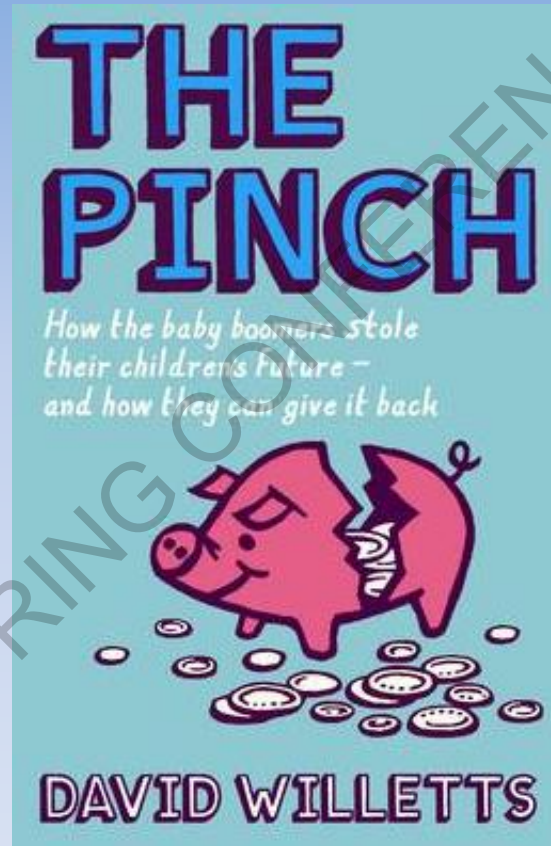
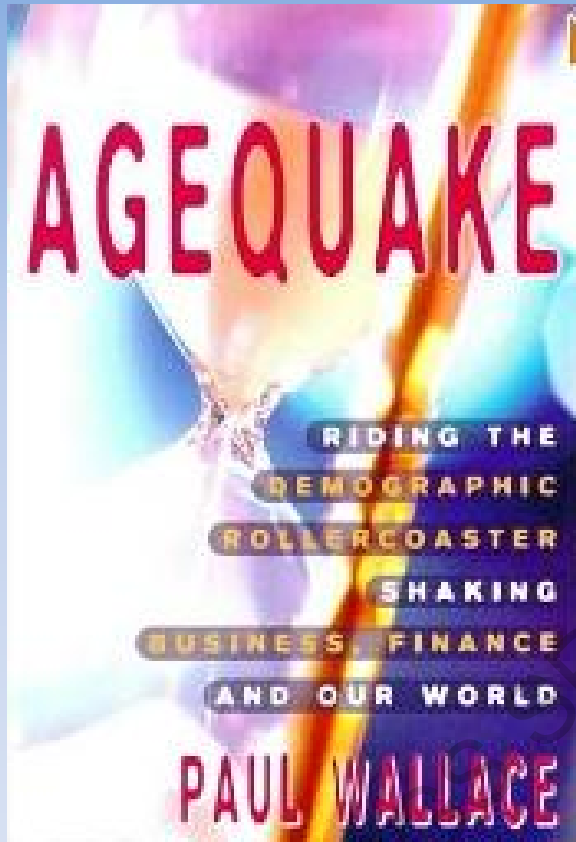
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# THE PROPHETS OF DOOM

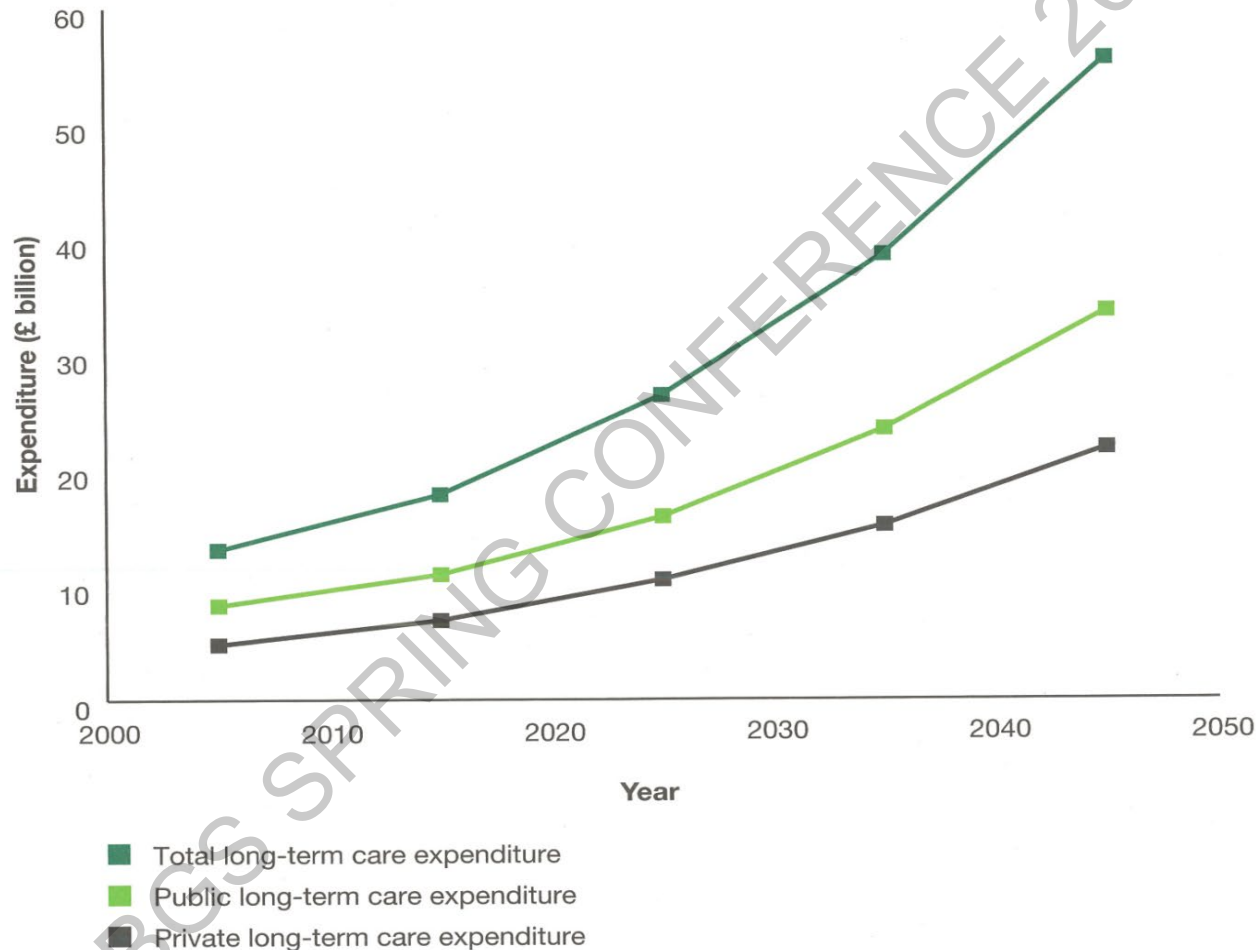


# GREEDY GEEZERS



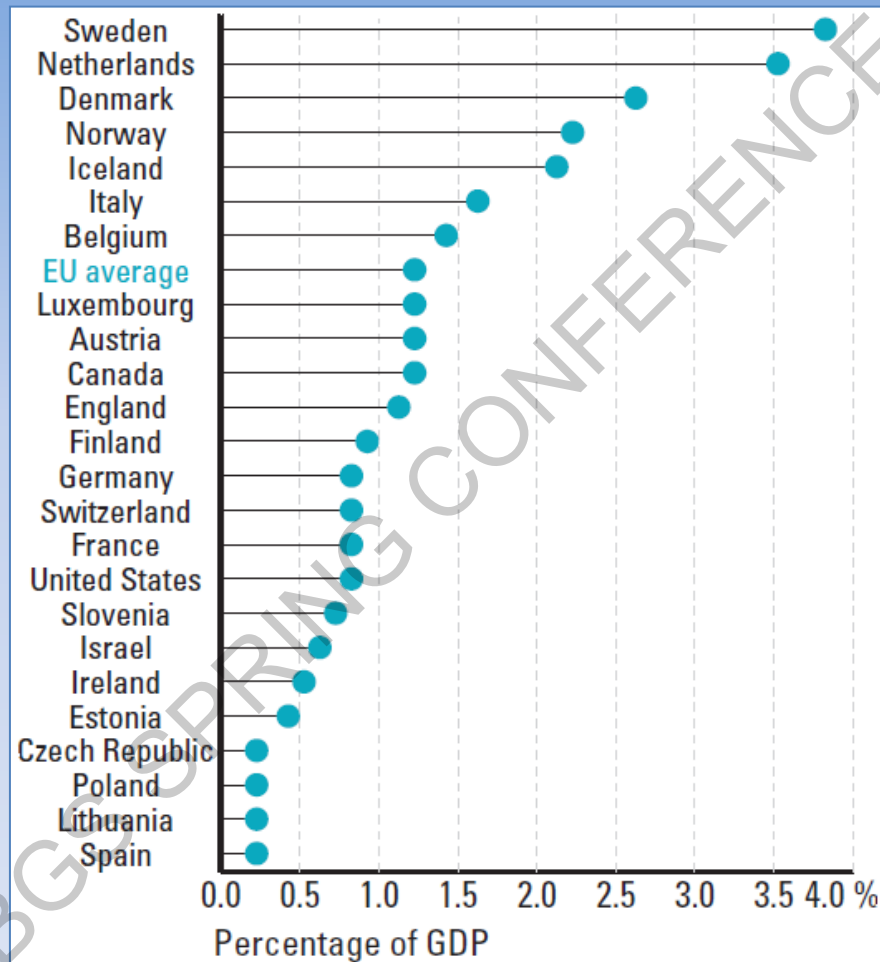
# PROJECTED CARE COSTS

Figure 2: **Projected care costs unless action is taken**



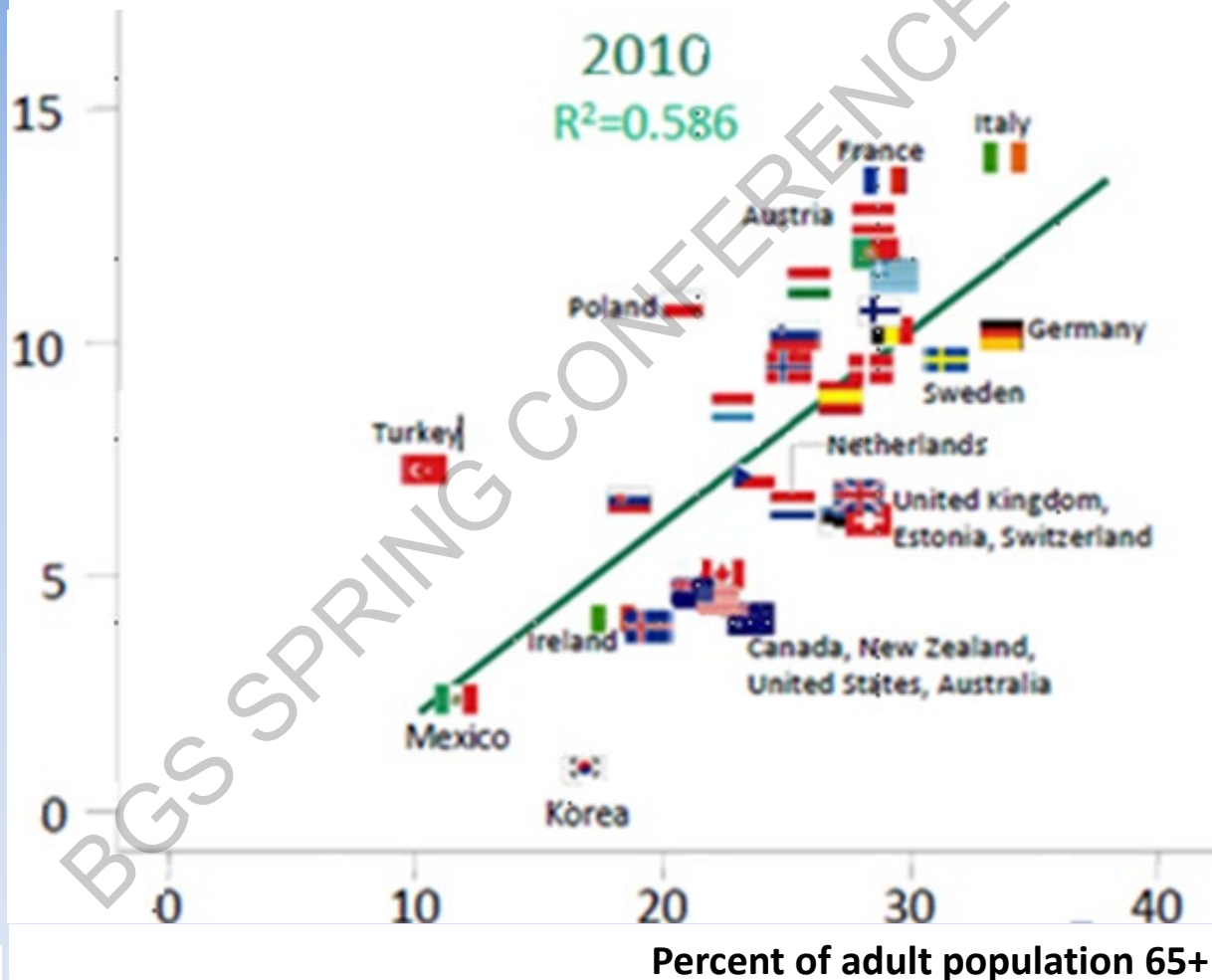
Source: Personal Social Services Research Unit

# PUBLIC SPENDING ON SOCIAL CARE



# NOT DEMOGRAPHY BUT POLITICS

Public expenditure on pensions, per cent of GDP



# CHANGING DYNAMICS OF AGEING – A SUMMARY

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- **Longevity Revolution**
- **Improved Health and Functioning**
- **Higher Average Incomes**
- **Extended Working Lives**
- **Cultural Shift**
- **New Science of Ageing**

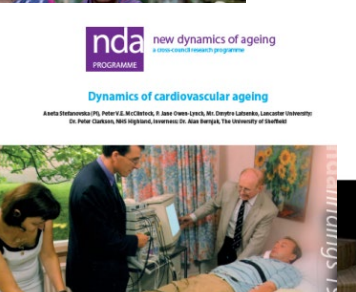
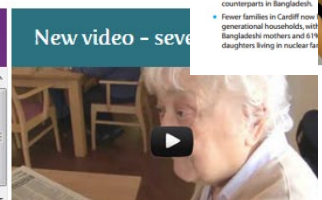
# THE NEW DYNAMICS OF AGEING RESEARCH PROGRAMME

**The NDA is a multidisciplinary research collaboration to both investigate the new dynamics of ageing and the various influences shaping them; and to show how their consequences can be managed to achieve the maximum benefits for older people and society**

- **ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC, AHRC**
- **Budget = £22 million**
- **2005 – 2015**
- **35 projects, 136 senior researchers, 42 post docs, 25 PhDs**
- **128 others e.g. Advisory, partners, admin teams**

# THE NEW DYNAMICS OF AGEING RESEARCH PROGRAMME

[www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk](http://www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk)



# RETHINKING AGEING: FRAMING A NEW SOCIAL POLICY

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- **Overcoming the ‘structural lag’**
- **Replace burden thinking and the deficit approach with active ageing**

# STRUCTURAL LAG: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL POLICY

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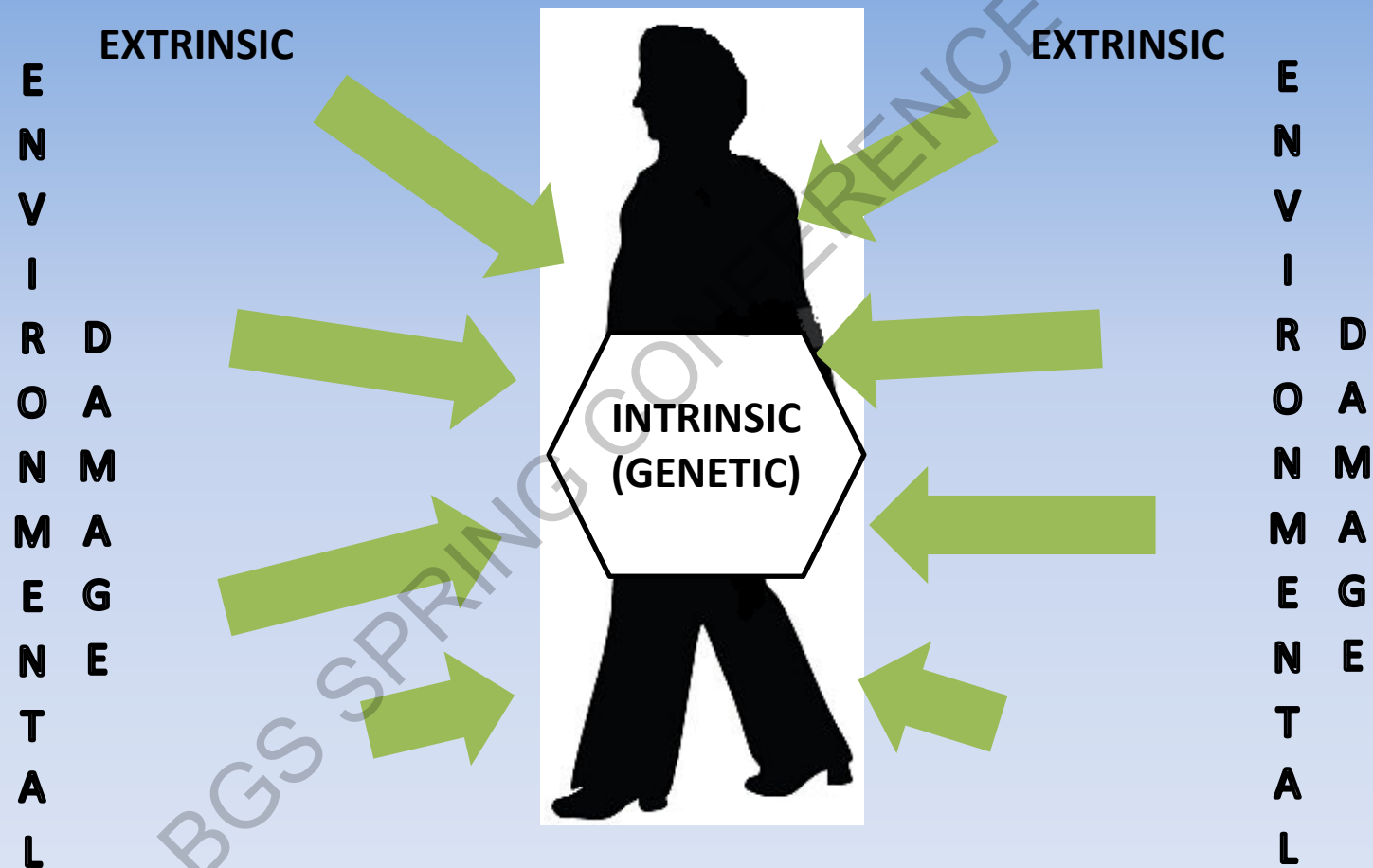
- **Common reliance on extrapolations, ceteris paribus**
- **Not enough multi-disciplinary research beyond the social sciences**
- **Tendency to follow age group specialisms**

# STRUCTURAL LAG: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL POLICY

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- **Common reliance on extrapolations, ceteris paribus**
- **Not enough multi-disciplinary research beyond the social sciences**
- **Tendency to follow age group specialisms**
- **Failure to provide lead role in confronting demographic change**
- **Absence of a social policy on ageing**

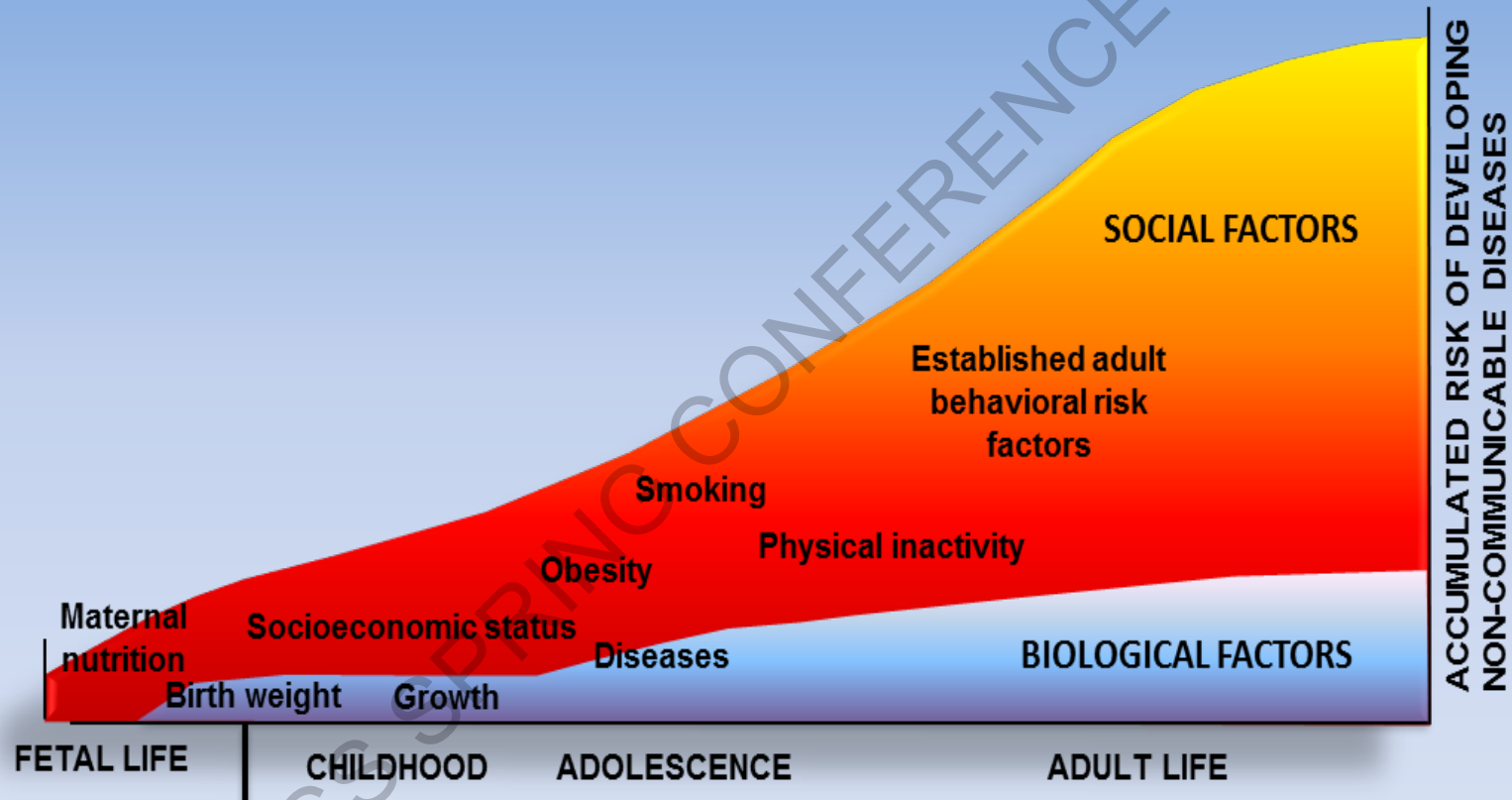
# AGEING IS INEVITABLE BUT VARIABLE AND MALLEABLE



AGEING ASSOCIATED WITH LOSS OF  
FUNCTION

Adapted from Grimley Evans (2004)

# CUMULATIVE RISK FACTORS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE



Source: Adapted by Carmen Giefing-Kroell  
from Darnton-Hill et al., 2004

# VARIABILITY IN AGEING



# LIVE LONGER AND HEALTHIER

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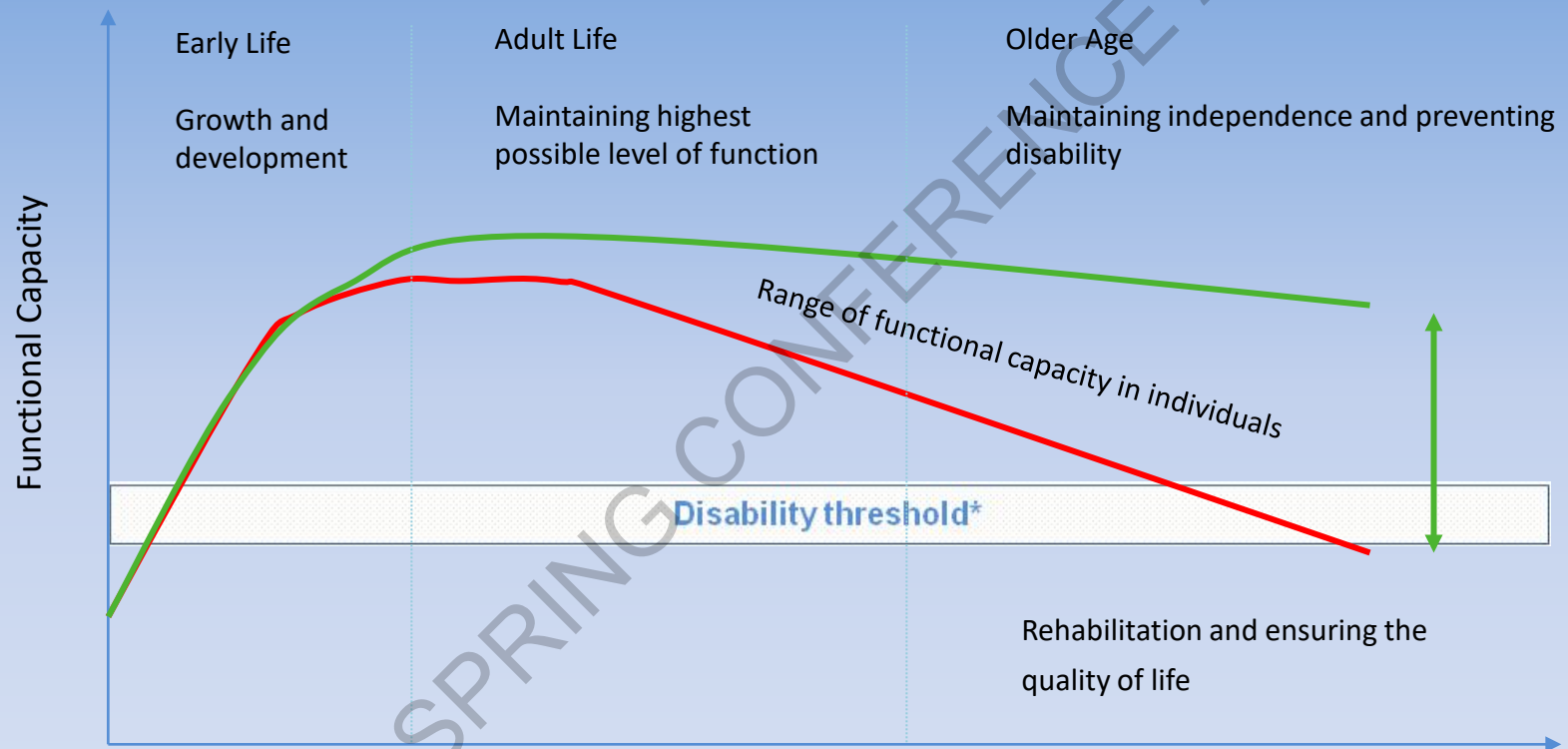
- **Prevention (postponement)**
  - **lifestyle: education, knowledge, opportunities, incentives**
  - **public health and medical care**
- **Enabling environments**
  - **architecture, transport, education, working conditions, culture and sport, safety**
  - **prosthetics: physical supports, ICTs**
- **Disability-reducing interventions**

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCES THE RISK OF COMMON DISEASES

Disease	Effect of physical activity
Coronary heart disease	Moving to moderate activity could reduce risk by 10%
Stroke	Moderately active individuals have a 20% lower risk of stroke incidence or mortality
Type 2 diabetes	Active individuals have a 33-50% lower risk
Colon cancer	The most active individuals have a 40-50% lower risk
Breast cancer	More active women have a 30% lower risk
Osteoporosis	Being physically active reduces the risk of later hip fracture by up to 50%

Sources: Chief Medical Officer's report on physical activity and a range of published studies

# MAINTAINING FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY OVER THE LIFE COURSE



\* Changes in the environment can lower the disability threshold, thus decreasing the number of disabled people in a given community.

Source: Kalache and kickbusch, 1997

# SCIENTIFIC CASE FOR A SOCIAL POLICY ON AGEING

- Only weak and inconsistent evidence of association between change in telomere length and physical capability in later life
- No consistent evidence of association between physical capability and common genetic markers (athletic status, growth hormone, bone & joint health)
- Clear influence of childhood socio-economic status and physical capability in old age
- Clear influence of early cognition and education on later life cognition

# SCIENTIFIC CASE FOR A SOCIAL POLICY ON AGEING

- **Active ageing in later life greatly influenced by childhood circumstances**
- **SOCIAL POLICY MORE IMPORTANT THAN GENETICS**



# ACTIVE AGEING

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**Active ageing should be a comprehensive strategy to maximise participation and well-being as people age. It should operate simultaneously at the individual (lifestyle), organisational (management) and societal (policy) levels and at all stages of the life course.**

# ESSENTIALS OF AN ACTIVE AGEING STRATEGY

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- **All Activities That Contribute to Well-being (Mental and Physical)**
- **A Life Course Perspective: Maintaining/Regaining Mental and Physical Capacity**
- **Emphasise Prevention (Primary and Secondary)**
- **Use All Policy Levers – Upstream and Downstream**
- **Include All Ages**
- **Empowerment Approach**
- **Respect for Cultural Diversity**

# ACTIVE AGEING ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

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## ➤ Antenatal (foetal health)

- Nutrition, antenatal care
- Maternity grants / leave

## ➤ Early Years (the best start in life)

- Nursery education on ageing and health
- Equal opportunities for all

## ➤ School Age (education for life)

- Maximising life chances
- Preparation for life long learning
- Understanding ageing and ageism

# ACTIVE AGEING ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE

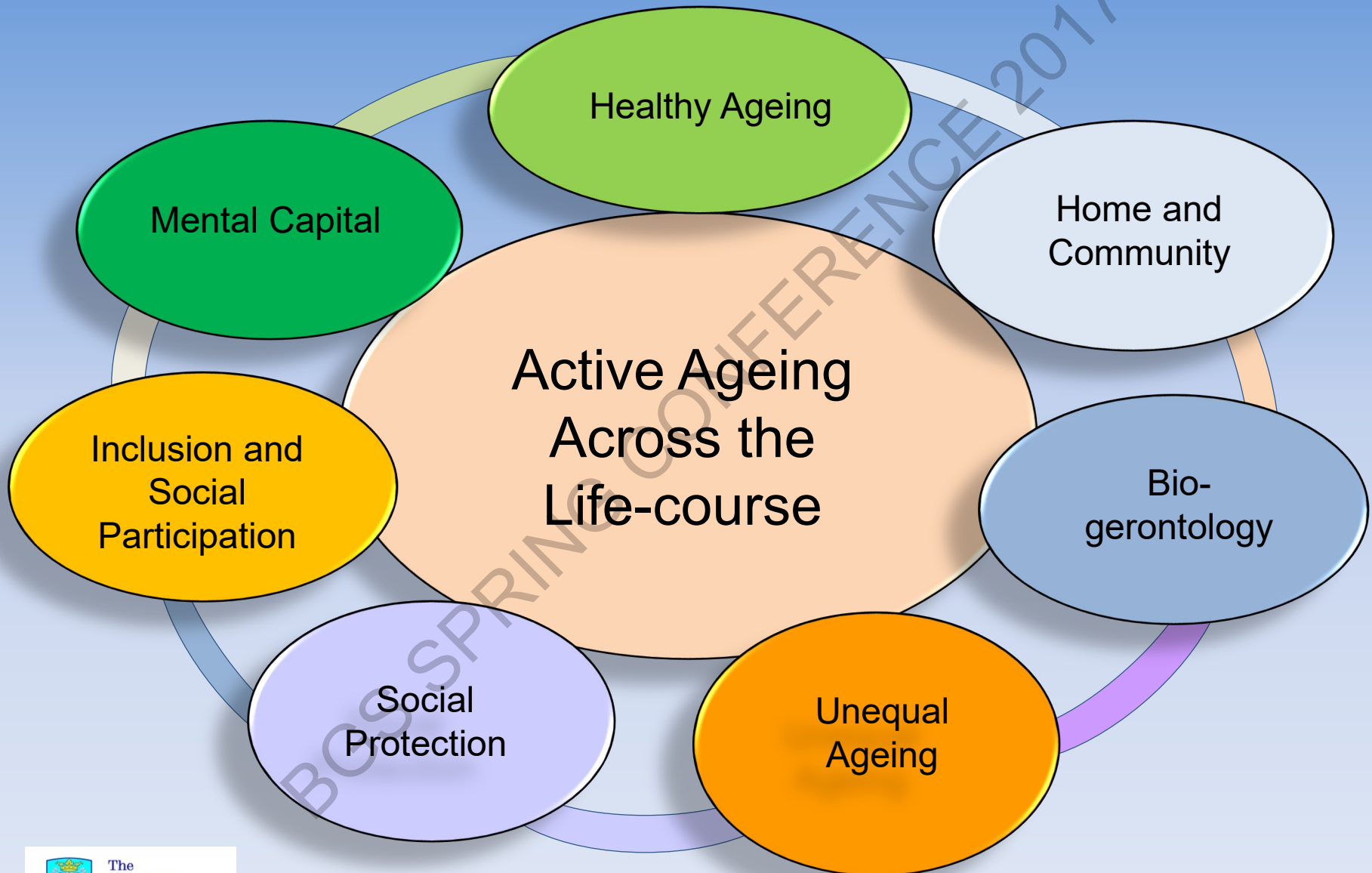
## ➤ **Working Age (age management)**

- Continuing education/ training
- Active engagement in community and city life
- Making the right health choices
- A structured, gradual approach to retirement

## ➤ **Late Life (maximising activity and new opportunities)**

- Maintaining health/ autonomy
- Engaging in new activities
- Continue Learning
- Taking opportunities to participate in community life
- Resisting dependency e.g. by using technology

# ACTIVE AGEING AND RESEARCH



# QUESTIONS ABOUT ACTIVE AGEING

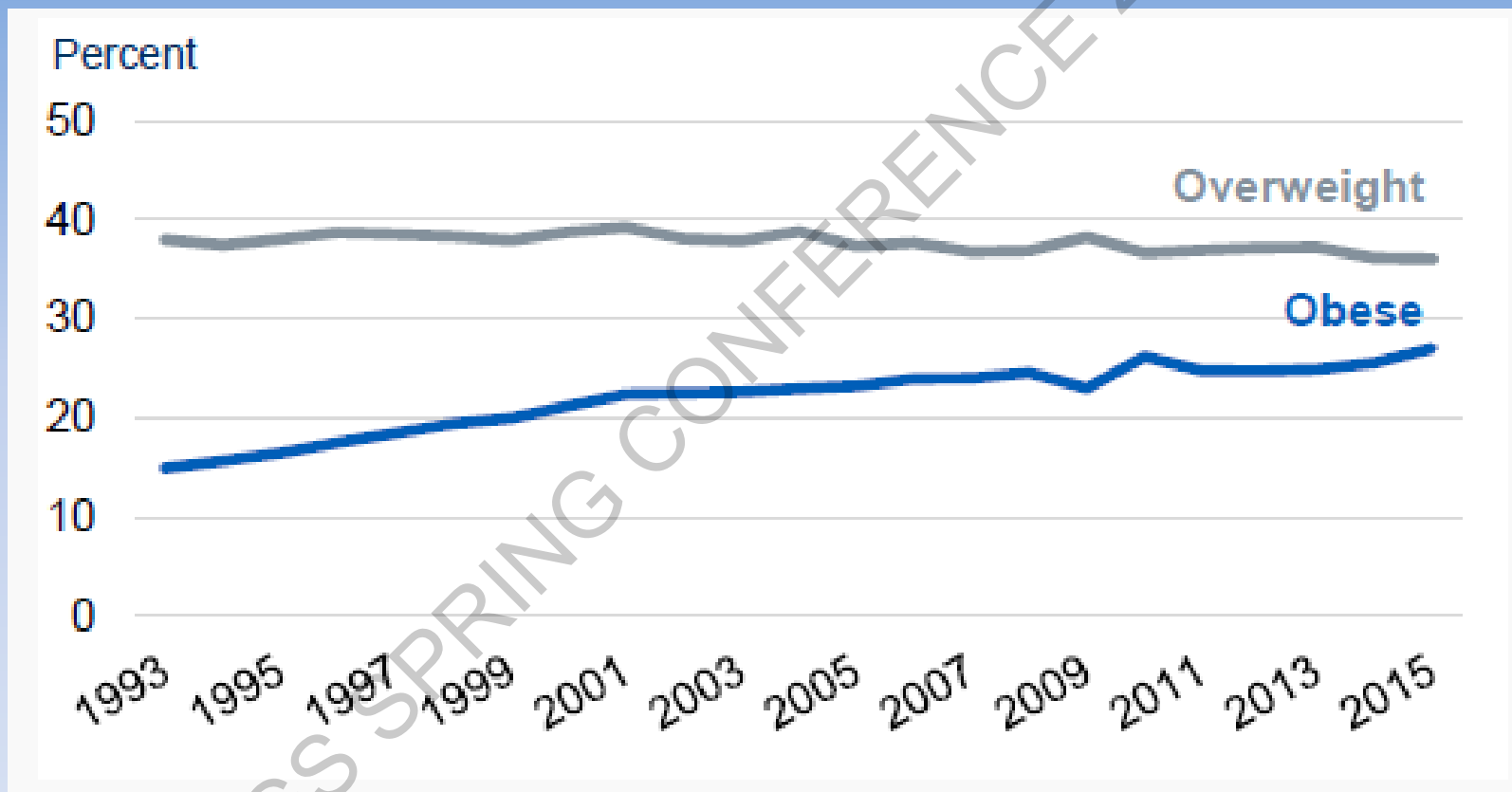
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- **‘Activity’**
- **Dangers of over-prescription / coercion**
- **Risk of stigma**
- **Equation of ageing with old age**

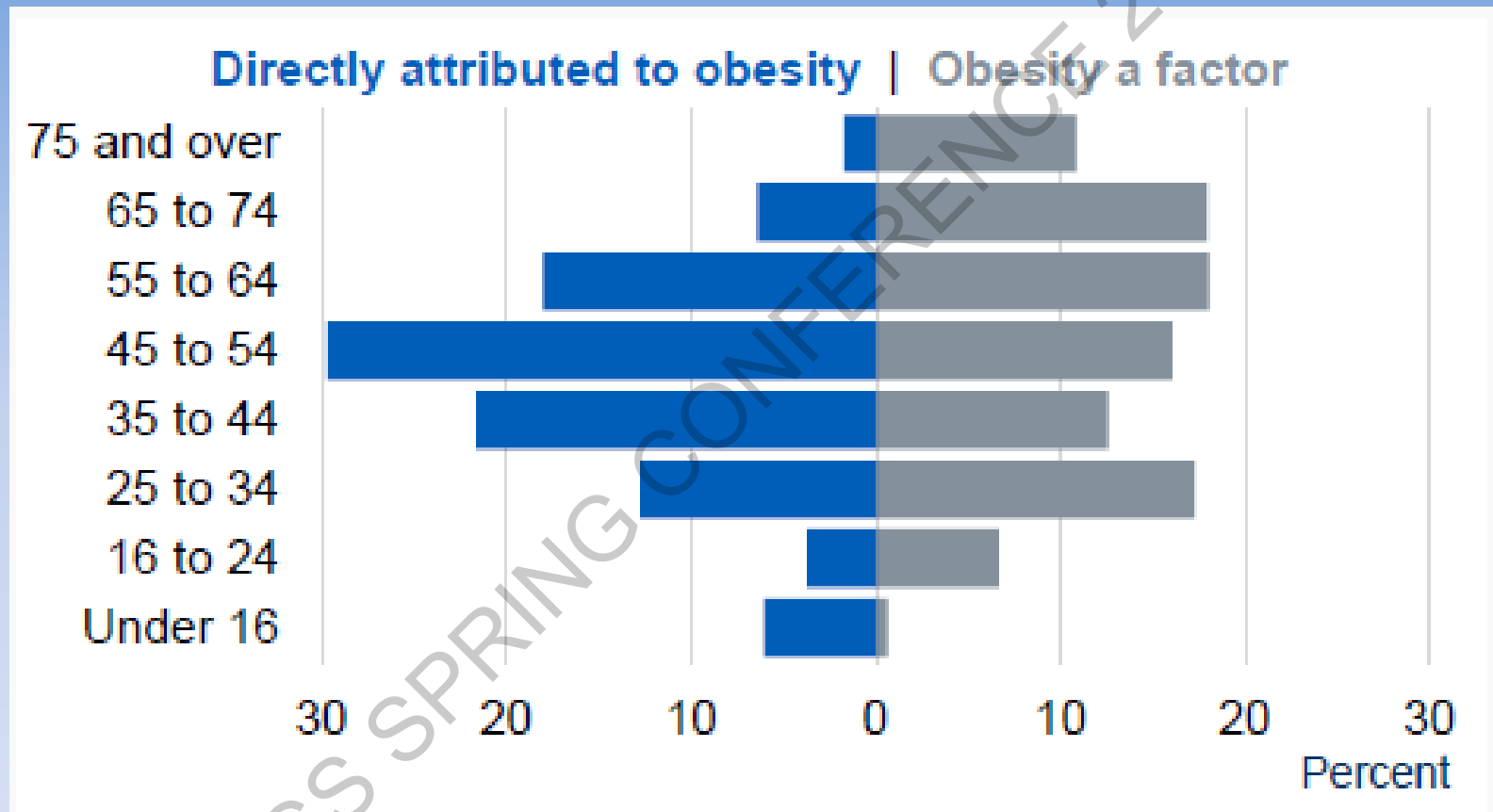
# CHALLENGES TO A SOCIAL POLICY ON AGEING

- **Changing behaviour**  
eg. Obesity
- **Unequal ageing**  
eg. Association between low physical activity and deprivation
- **Political rhetoric**  
eg. The Pinch
- **Dominance of individualism / neo-liberalism**  
eg. Consumption is a personal matter

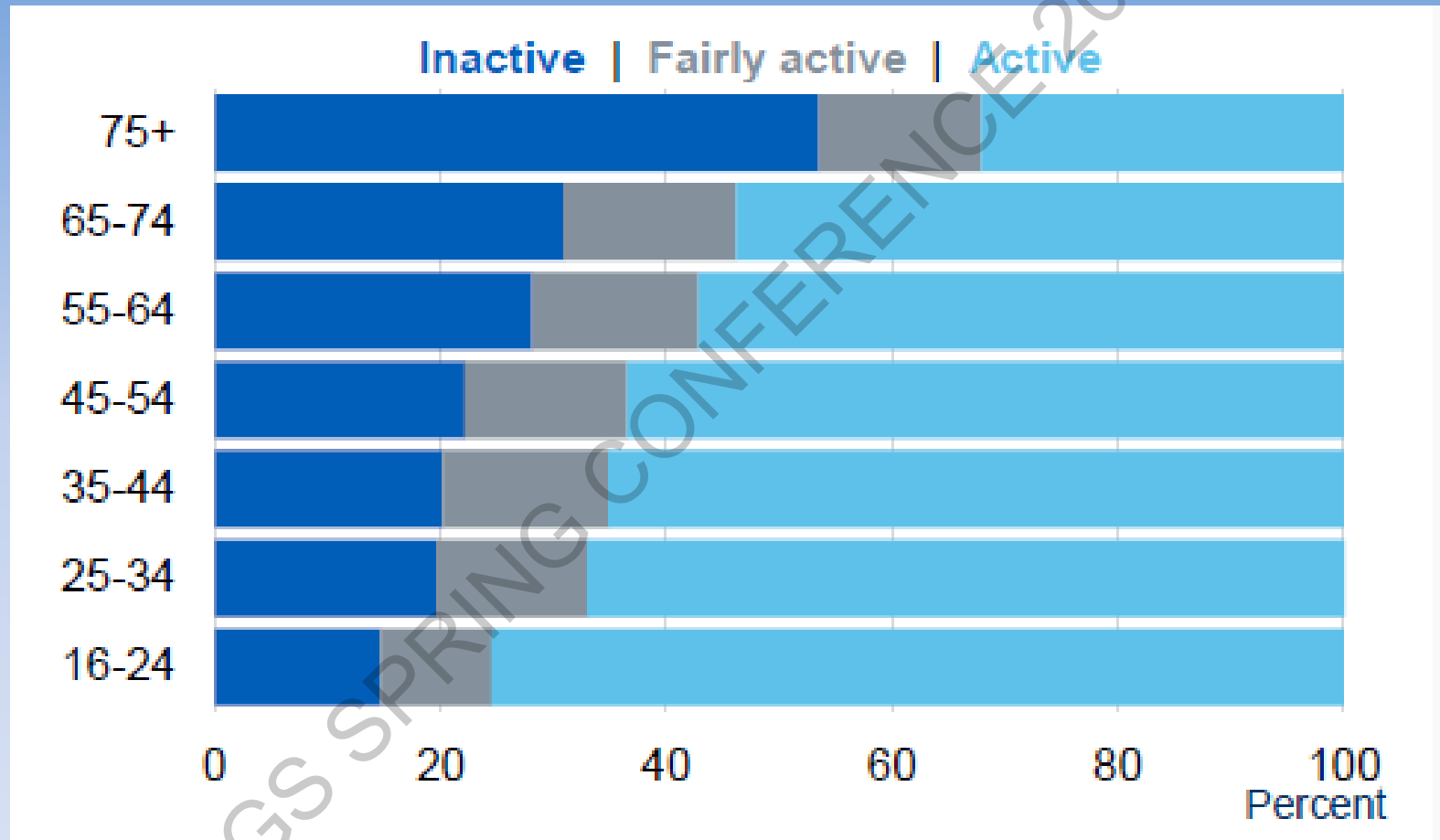
# PREVALENCE OF ADULT OBESITY



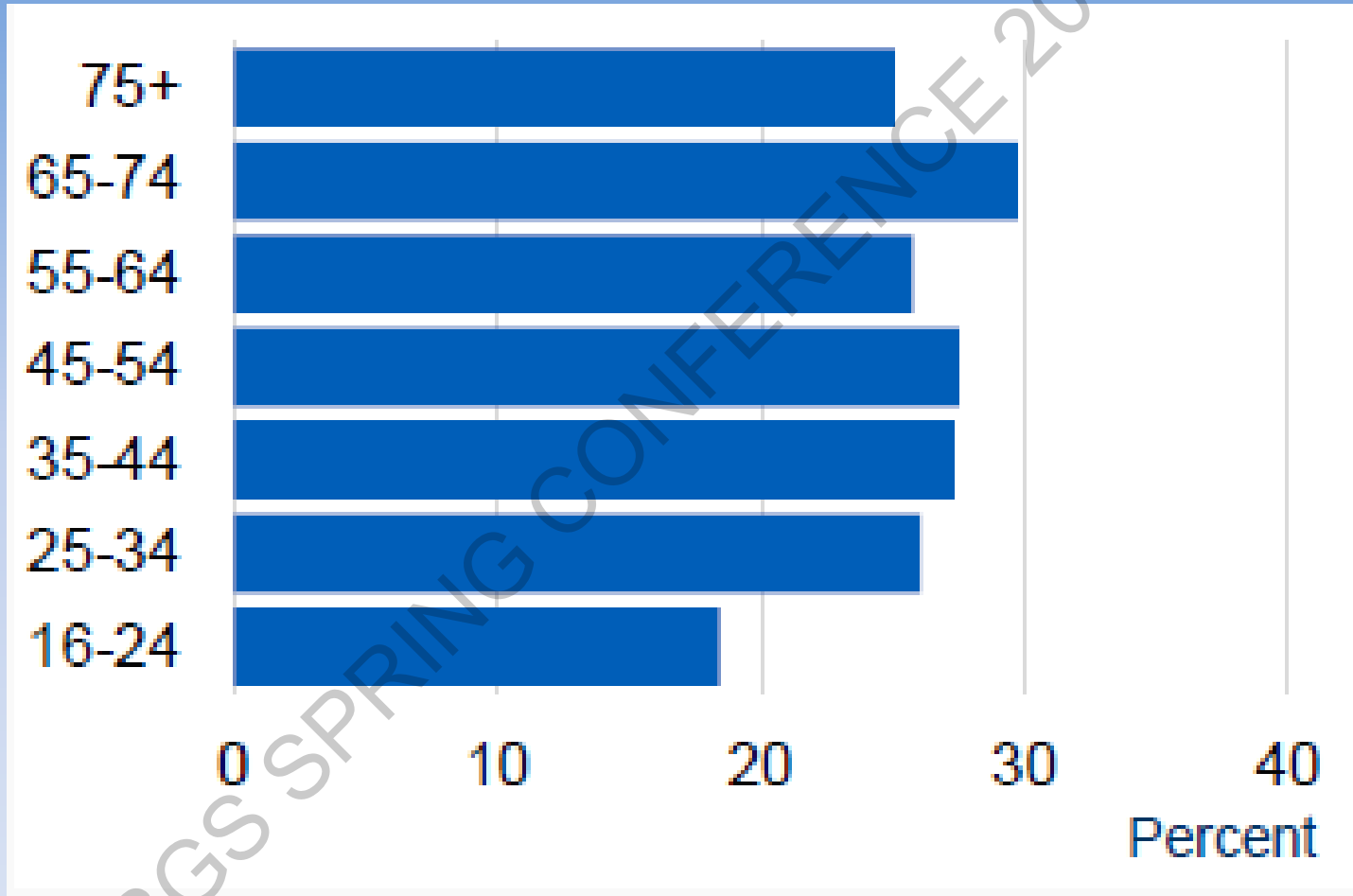
# OBESITY RELATED HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS



# ADULT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



# ADULT DIET: 5 A DAY



# AMSTERDAM – CHILDHOOD OBESITY REDUCTION PROGRAMME

- Schools only providing drinking water, no juice. City investment in water fountains
- Cooking classes for children and parents to teach healthy variations on staple dishes
- City refuses to sponsor events with fast food companies
- Emphasis on sleep as well as healthy food and exercise
- Pressure from city on food companies to reduce fat, salt and sugar
- Focus on first 1,000 days of a child's life – counselling for pregnant women and mothers
- Extra help for families of obese children who have problems eg. With debt, language difficulties and unemployment – coordinated by a health worker.

**TARGET: A healthy weight for all 0-5 year olds by 2018**

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## Agenda

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- **The Changing Dynamics of Ageing**
- **Framing a Social Policy on Ageing**

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## Key Messages

- The burden of ageing is a common starting point for policy makers and this militates against alternative narratives
- It is not demography or the economy that determine policy responses to ageing, it is politics and political ideology
- The changing dynamics of ageing together with new scientific knowledge create the case for a different policy approach
- A social policy on ageing should focus on the whole life course, not just the end of it, and promote active ageing for everyone

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*'If I'd known I was  
going to live this long,  
I would have taken  
better care of myself'*

Eubie Blake  
On his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday



# MOPACT

<http://mopact.group.shef.ac.uk/>

MOPACT

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## Mobilising the potential of active ageing in Europe

This is a unique collaboration which draws on 29 partners from 13 countries across Europe to study the interfaces between the changing demographic profile and its economic and social impact.



### About the project

Find out what we are doing and who is involved



### Research fields

Explore the nine key themes of our research



### Publications

Browse our reports, leaflets and newsletters



### Latest news

## Welcome

MOPACT

### About the project

