

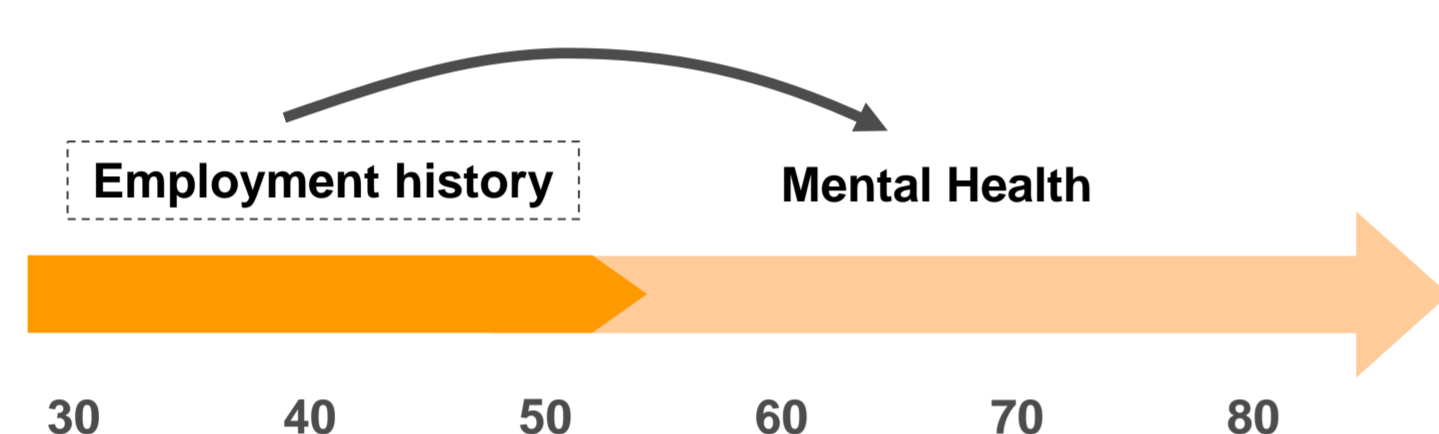
Linked Work Lives: The Influence of Own and Partner's Midlife Employment History on Mental Health in Older European Couples

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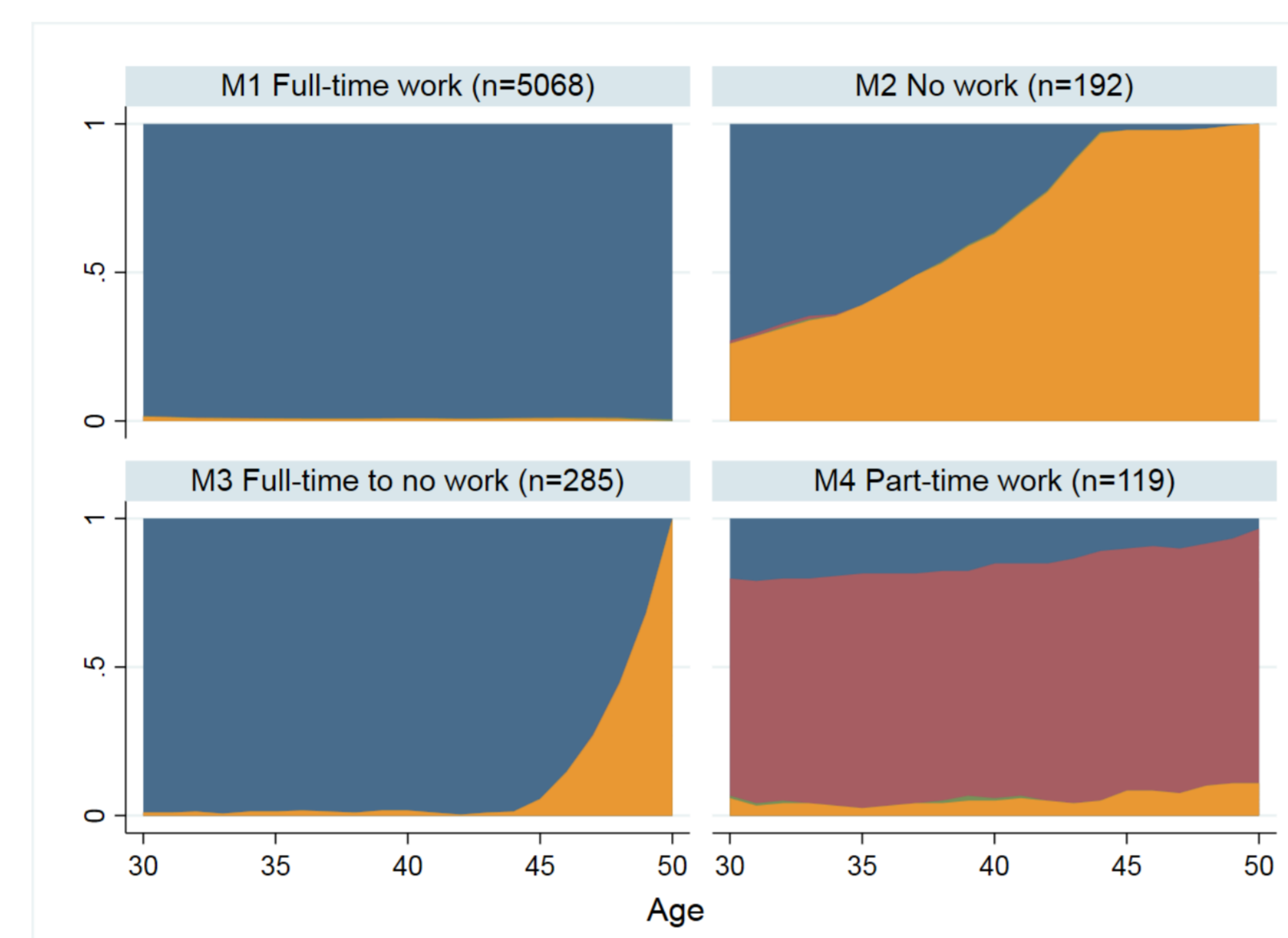
Introduction

There is increasing evidence for the importance of previous employment histories for mental health with prominent gender differences [1]. However, little is known about the role of partner's employment history in this context. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to test the interdependence of own and partner's employment history and their relationship with depressive symptoms at older age.



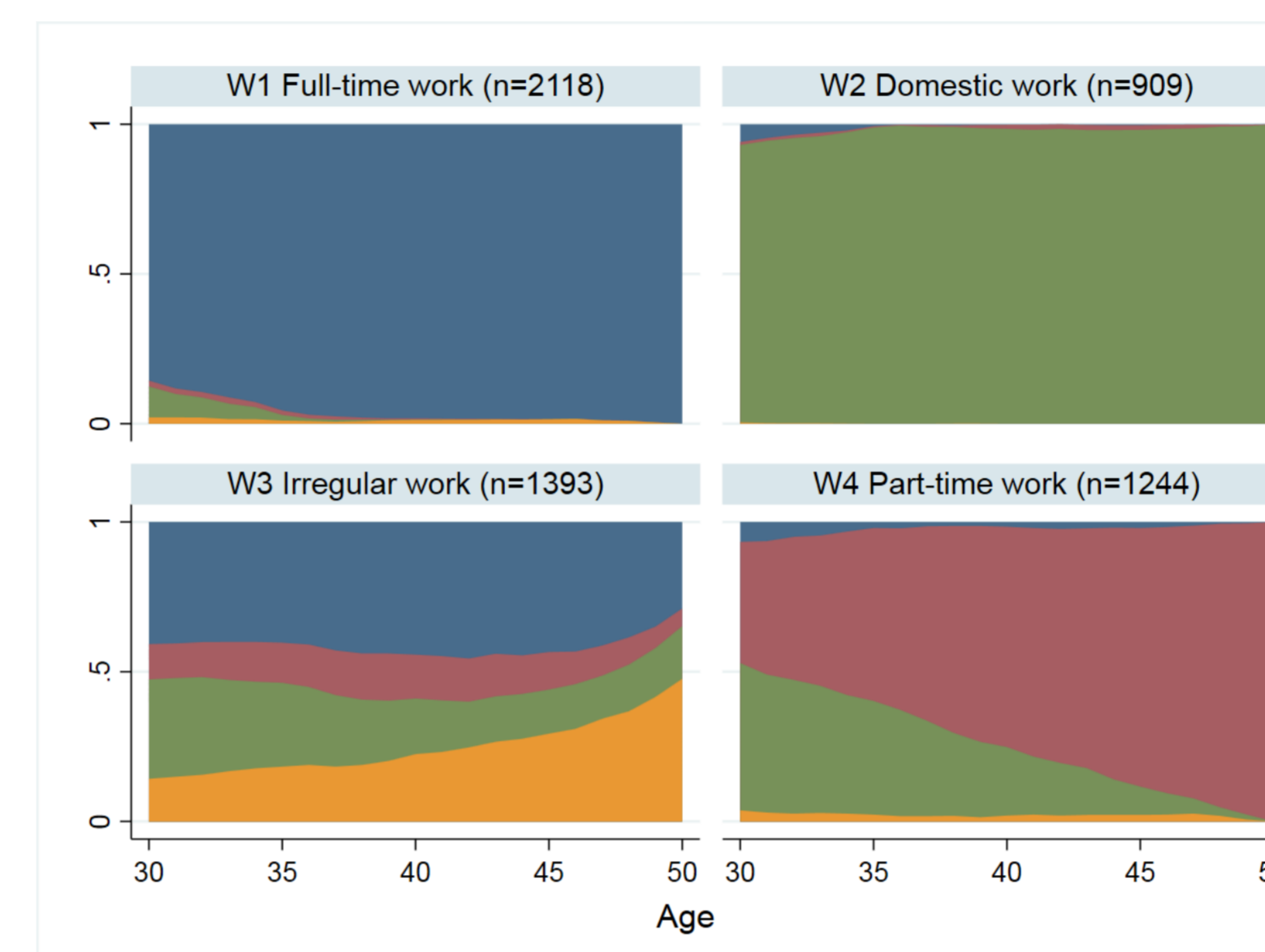
Chronograms by Types of Own Employment History

Figure 1: Men's clusters (n=5664)



Figures 1 and 2 show the distribution of work states for each year of age across gendered clusters of own employment history.

Figure 2: Women's clusters (n=5664)



Legend: full-time work (blue), domestic work (green), part-time work (red), no work (orange)

Main Results

For men, we find that longer periods of non-employment are associated with more depressive symptoms at older age, particularly when their wives spent most of midlife in part-time work. On the other hand, men in part-time work show lower depressive symptoms when their wives worked mostly part-time as well.

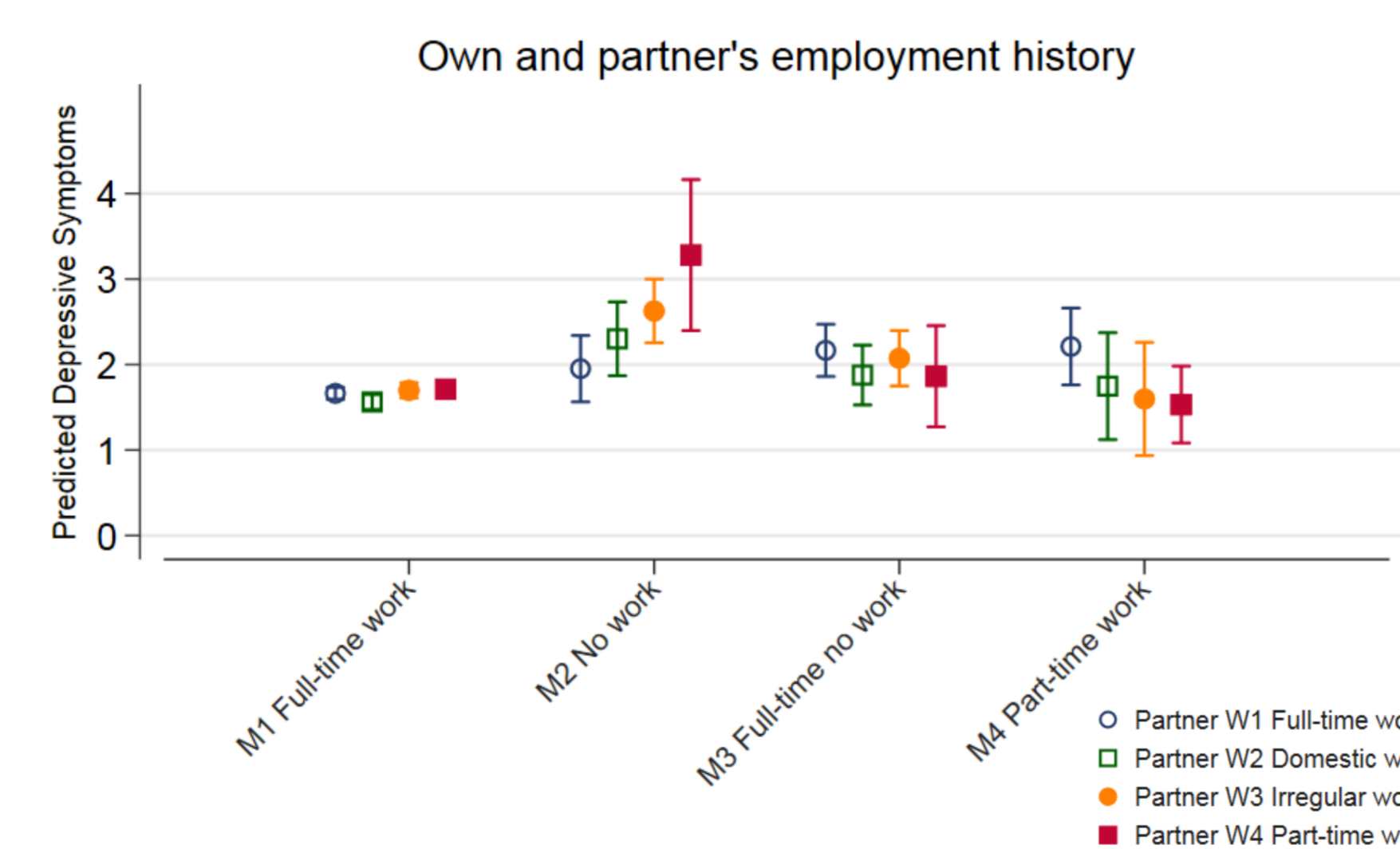
For women, we find no independent association between own employment history and depressive symptoms, but women in domestic work show higher depressive symptoms when their partner also had longer periods of non-employment.

Methods

Analyses are based on data from SHARE [2]. In total, we include 5664 long-term cohabiting couples from 14 European countries with available life history data. For both partners, we define work states for each age between 30 and 50 (full-time, part-time, domestic work or non-employed). We then apply methods of sequence analysis and cluster analysis and identify types of employment histories, resulting in four clusters for each gender. Finally, we use regression models to relate clusters of own and partner's employment history to mean number of depressive symptoms (measured with the EURO-D scale) after the age of 50.

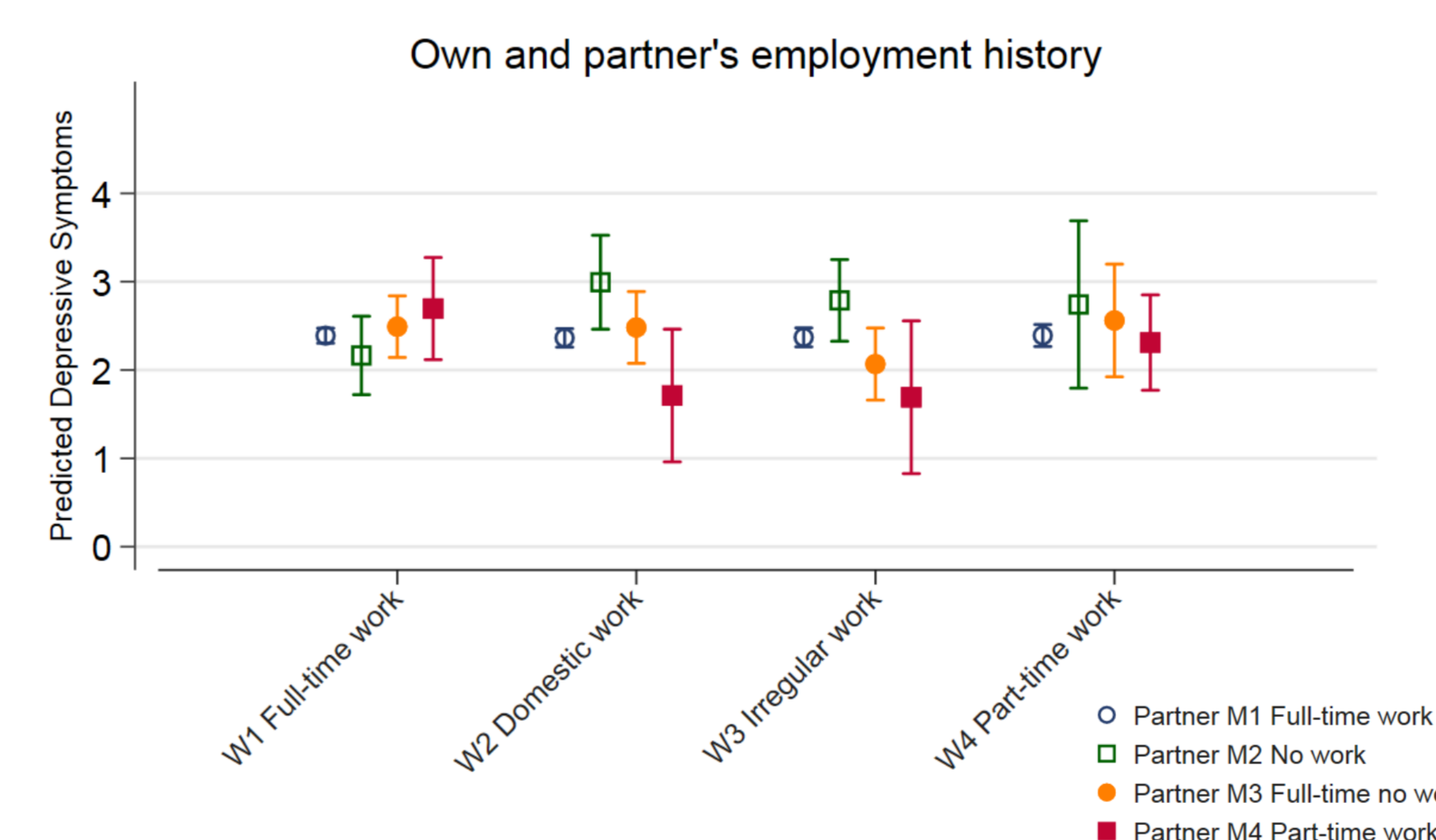
Depressive Symptoms by Couples' Combination of Clusters

Figure 3: Predicted depressive symptoms for men (n=4763)

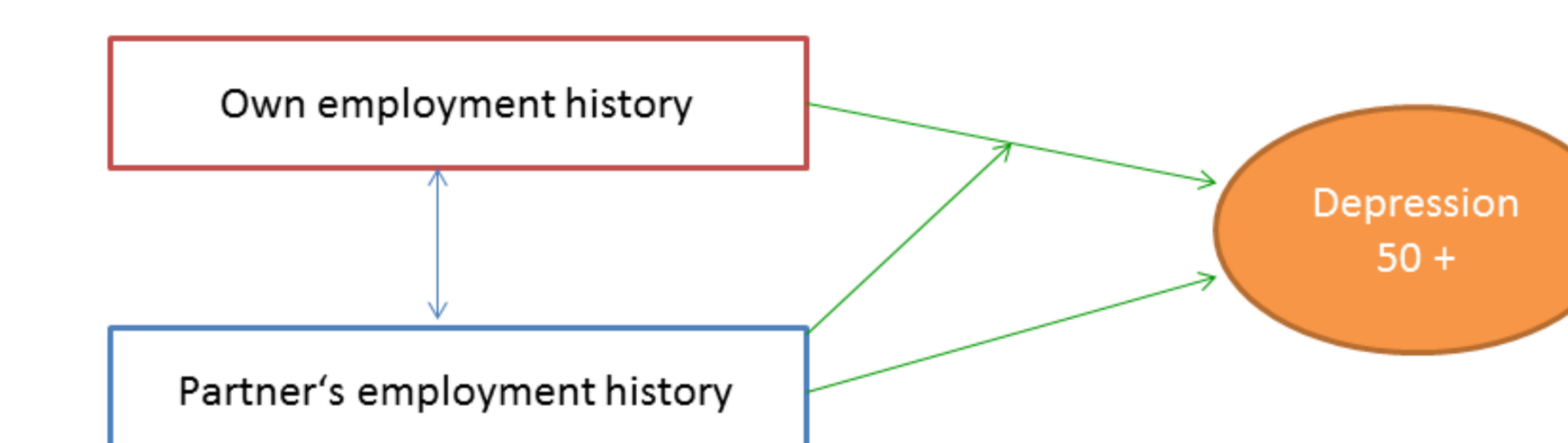


Figures 3 and 4 show predictive values of mean depressive symptoms for each combination of own and partner's employment history cluster. All values are adjusted for age, age², education, income, country, physical health and number of children.

Figure 4: Predicted depressive symptoms for women (n=4241)



Conclusion



The present study demonstrates that the relationship between own employment history and later depressive symptoms is partly moderated by partner's employment history. The results need to be interpreted against cultural and gender role norms at the time.

References:

- [1] Engels, Weyers, Moebus, Jöckel, Erbel, Pesch, Behrens, Dragano & Wahrendorf (2019). Gendered Work-Family Trajectories and Depression at Older Age. *Aging & Mental Health*
[2] Börsch-Supan et al. (2013). Data Resource Profile: The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (Share). *International Journal of Epidemiology* 42(4):992–1001.

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