INDICATORS

**The two Dimensions of Well-Being**

**Affective dimension:**
- Mean index of 8 items measuring frequency of positive and negative affects

**Cognitive dimension:**
- Perception of health: Mean index of 2 items: self-rated health and frequency of worries about one’s own health

**Social comparison**

If you compare your health to that of your peers, would you say it is...?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1994</th>
<th>2004</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equivalent</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

According to 2/3 of participants, their health is considered better than that of their peers in 1994.

**Direction of social comparison remains stable over time.**

**Health Status and Health Trajectories**

**ADL-dependent**
- one or more ADL incapacity

**Frail**
- no incapacity on the ADL, but two or more deficiencies on the dimensions of frailty (mobility, memory, energy, physical ailments, sensory capacities)

**Robust**
- no ADL incapacity and not more than one affected dimension of frailty

**The six most frequent individual health trajectories**

**Sample**

295 community-dwelling octogenarians aged 80-84 years were randomly selected at baseline in two contrasted regions of Switzerland (urban and semi-urban). The participants in the Swiss Interdisciplinary Longitudinal Study on the Oldest Old (SWILSO-O) were interviewed up to 9 times from 1994 to 2004. The information was gathered by means of face-to-face interviews (total N=1317) based on a closed-ended questionnaire.

**RESULTS: HEALTH TRAJECTORIES, SOCIAL COMPARISON AND WELL-BEING**

**Changes in well-being (Wilcoxon tests), unidirectional associations (η) with social comparison and analyses of variance with Duncan’s test (post hoc) (measured at T=1) by segment of health trajectories**

**Between 80 and 85 years of age**

- Social comparison is positively associated (+) with well-being stability even when health declines. Mean level of well-being remains high (+) even when frailty appears (R-F) and intensifies (F-F) at least on the affective well-being.

**Between 86 and 94 years of age**

- Well-being decreases when health starts to decline although social dimension as an adaptation mechanism is activated. Mean level of well-being is - on its cognitive dimension - significantly lower (-) than robusts’ level as soon as frailty appears (R-F).

**CONCLUSION**

- Downward social comparison is a functional and very efficient adaptation mechanism up to the age of 85.
- After 85 years of age its efficiency diminishes with the aging process since it fails to preserve well-being.
- The growing frailer process may explain why the oldest old can not activate efficiently downward social comparison.