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UCL-Penn Global COVID Study

Lessons from COVID-19: Reflections, Resilience and Recovery

How Do We Trust (Again)? Paranoia & Mental Health

16 JUNE 2021 | 5-6:30PM BST

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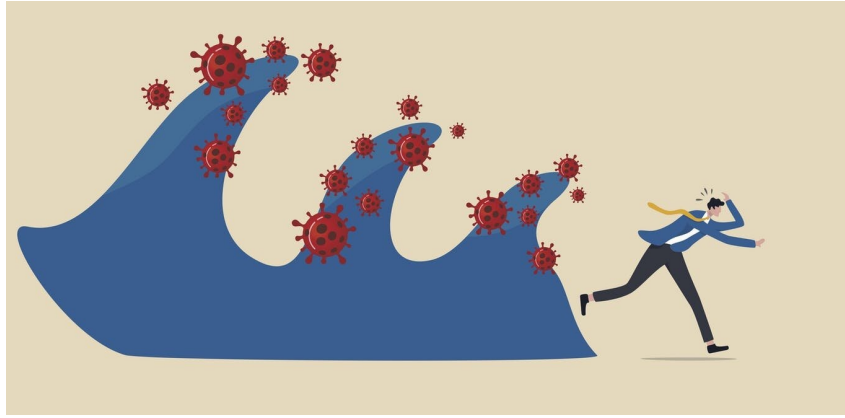
Why are we interested in trust?

- Trust is the **bedrock** of a successful relationship.

- During the global pandemic (and even before), **trust** has been continually challenged at various levels (e.g., individual, institutional, societal, global)

➢ **Paranoia**, excess **social mistrust, "is the unfounded fixed belief that others are out to cause intentional harm"** (Freeman & Garety, 2000)

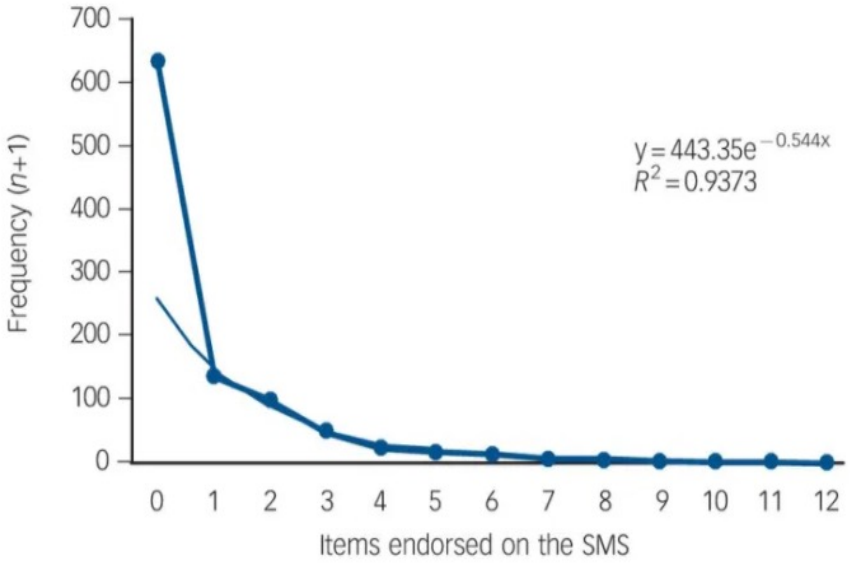
Rationale of the study



- The coronavirus as an 'invisible' killer may erode our trust in others.

- Paranoia impairs functioning and are implicated with poorer **mental health** and **physical health** (e.g., high blood pressure, heart problems, social withdrawal).

- Paranoia and mistrust lie on a **continuum** of severity and is a **key symptom** of schizophrenia.



Bebbington et al (BJP, 2013), Wong et al., 2014 (BJP, 2014)

Rationale of the study

Schizotypal personality (22-items)

1. Cognitive-perceptual anomalies
2. Interpersonal deficits
3. Disorganised thoughts

- Peculiar, eccentric or unusual thinking and perceptions;
- Suspicious or paranoid thoughts;
- Magical thinking, superstitious, belief in special powers;
- Blunted affect, odd mannerisms;

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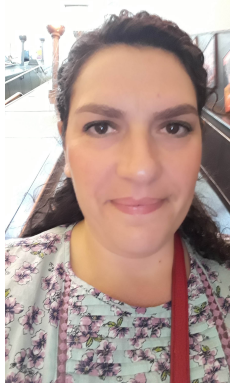

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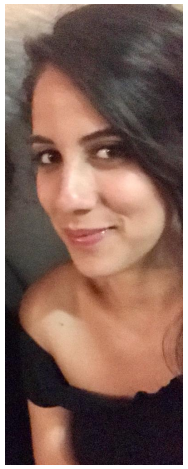

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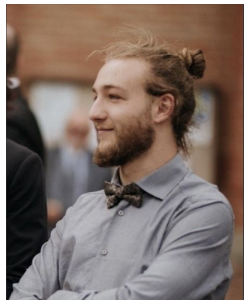

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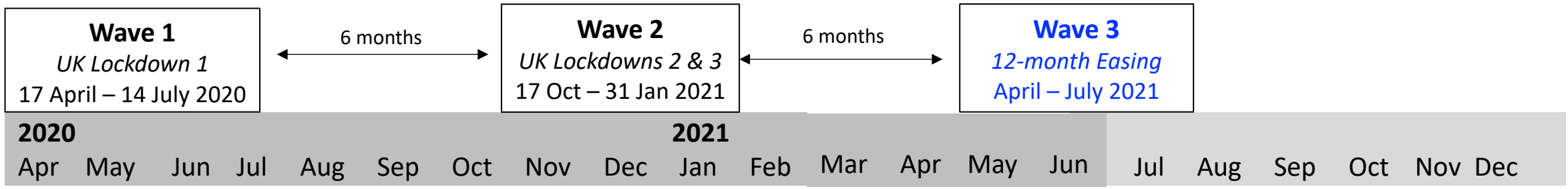
Three 30-minute online surveys in 8 languages.

Timeline



Asked about…

- ✓ Background, occupation, living/green space access, home environment
- ✓ Mental health: Anxiety, depression, aggression, sleep, stress
- ✓ Pre-/post-COVID: Exercise, alcohol consumption, substance use
- ✓ Relational conflict, trust/paranoia, empathy, parenting, loneliness, stress

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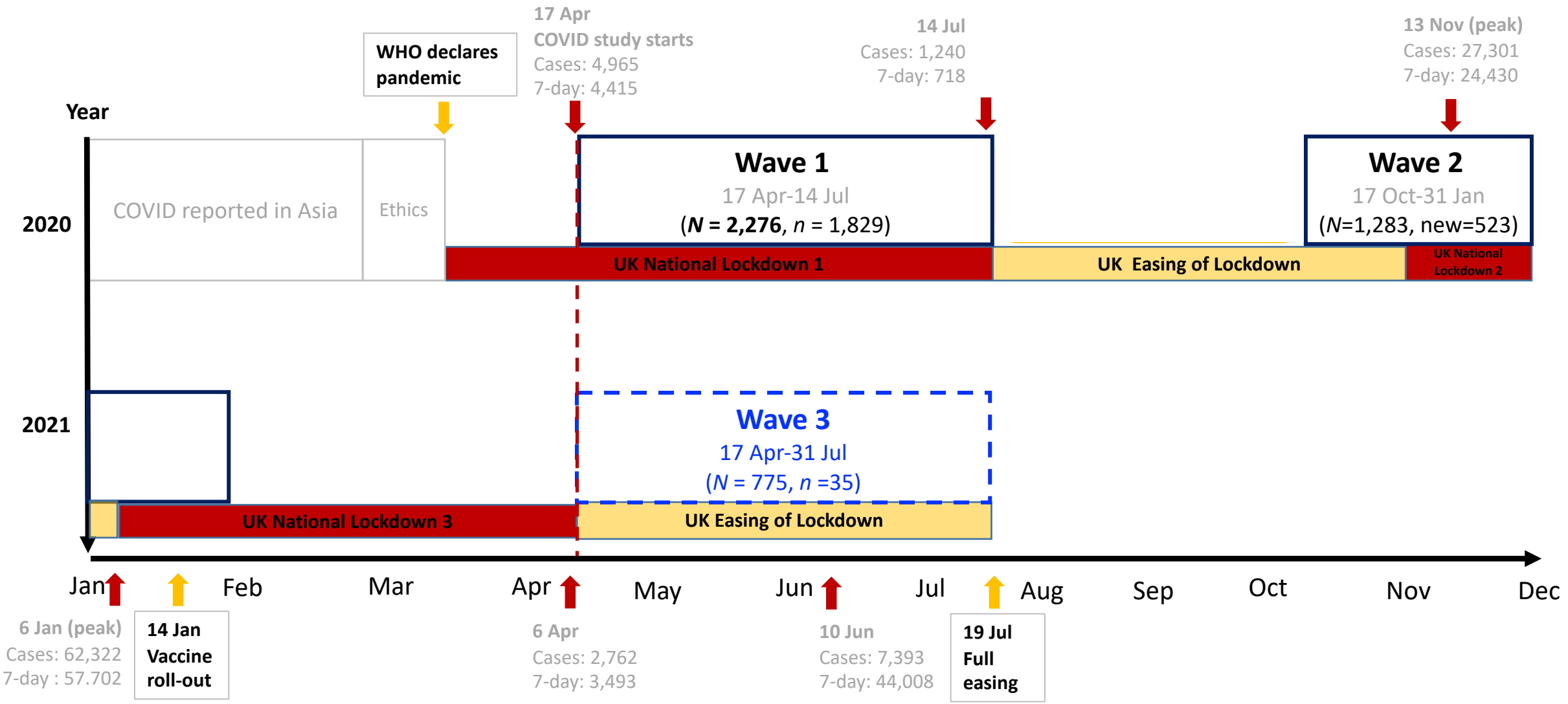

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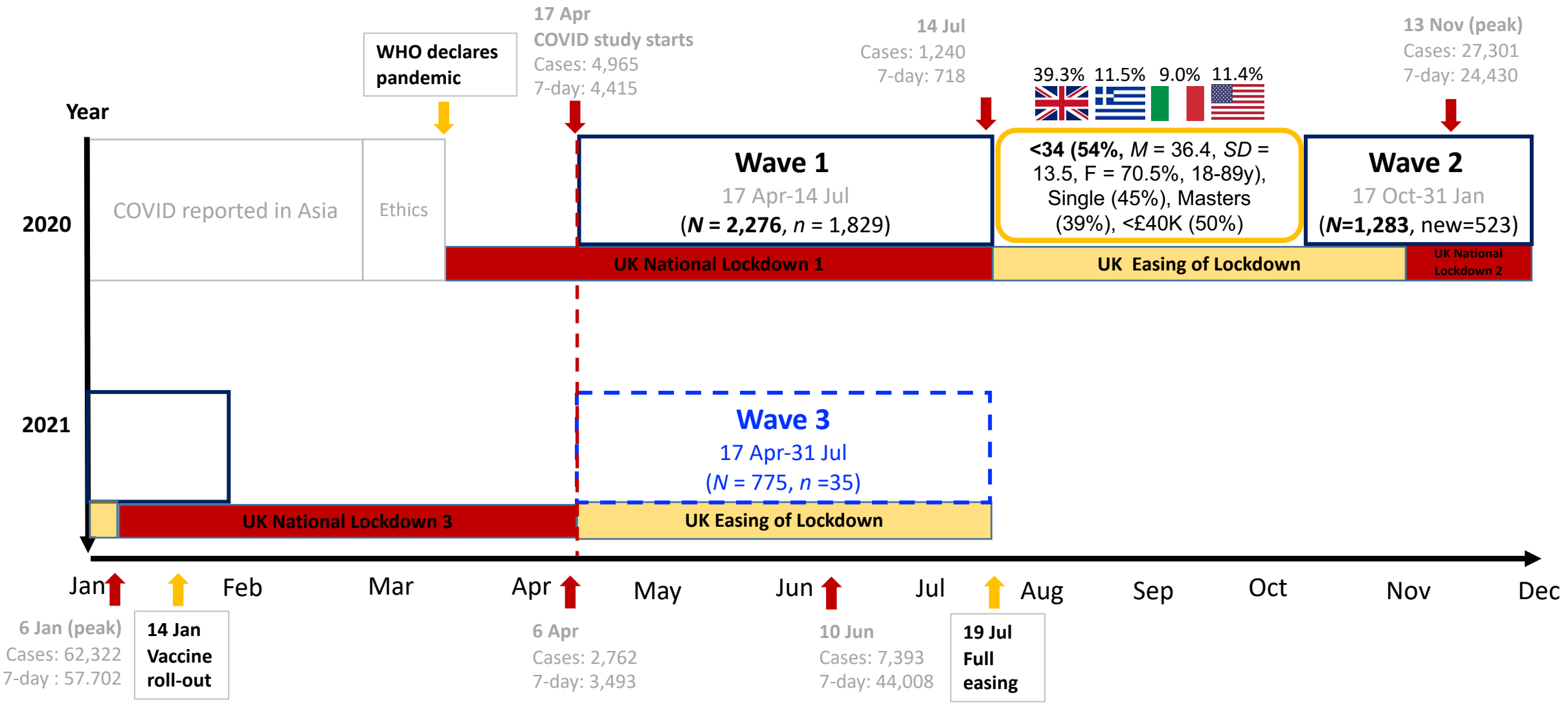

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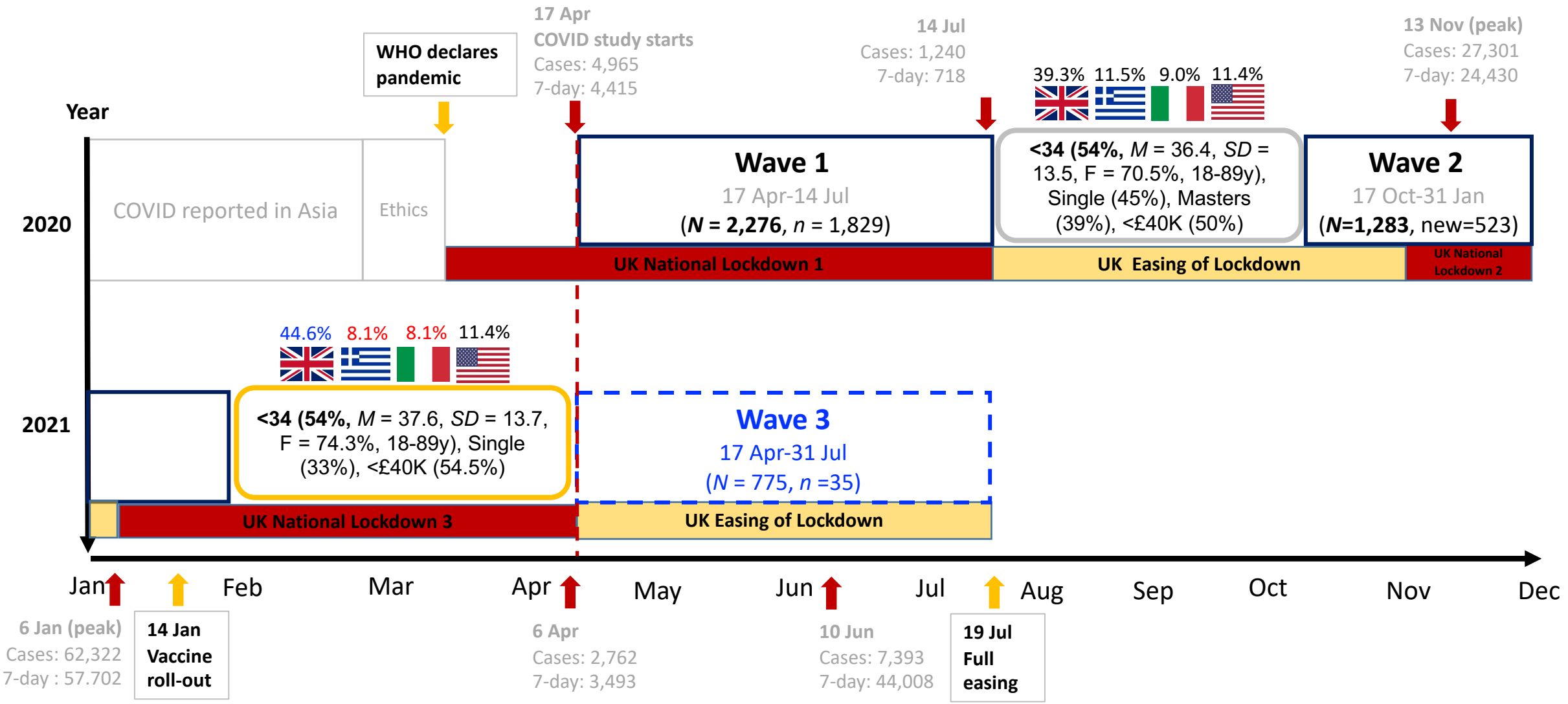

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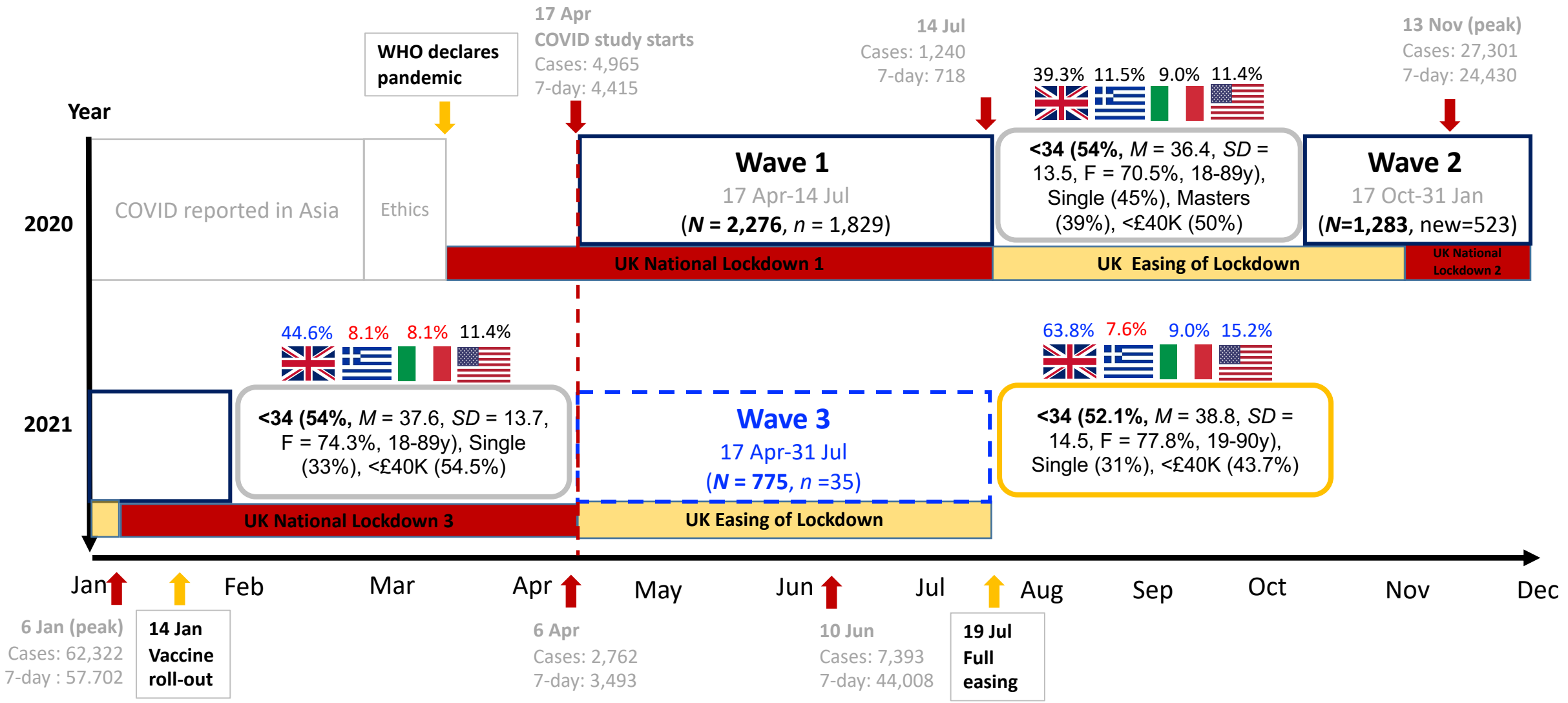

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What did we find?

Questions

Q1 Is social mistrust and/or schizotypy related to poorer mental health?

Q2 Are the relationships between variables the same across:

- Gender?
- Age (<35 vs 35y+)?
- Countries (UK vs Others)?
- Income (low vs. medium vs high)?
- UK Lockdowns?

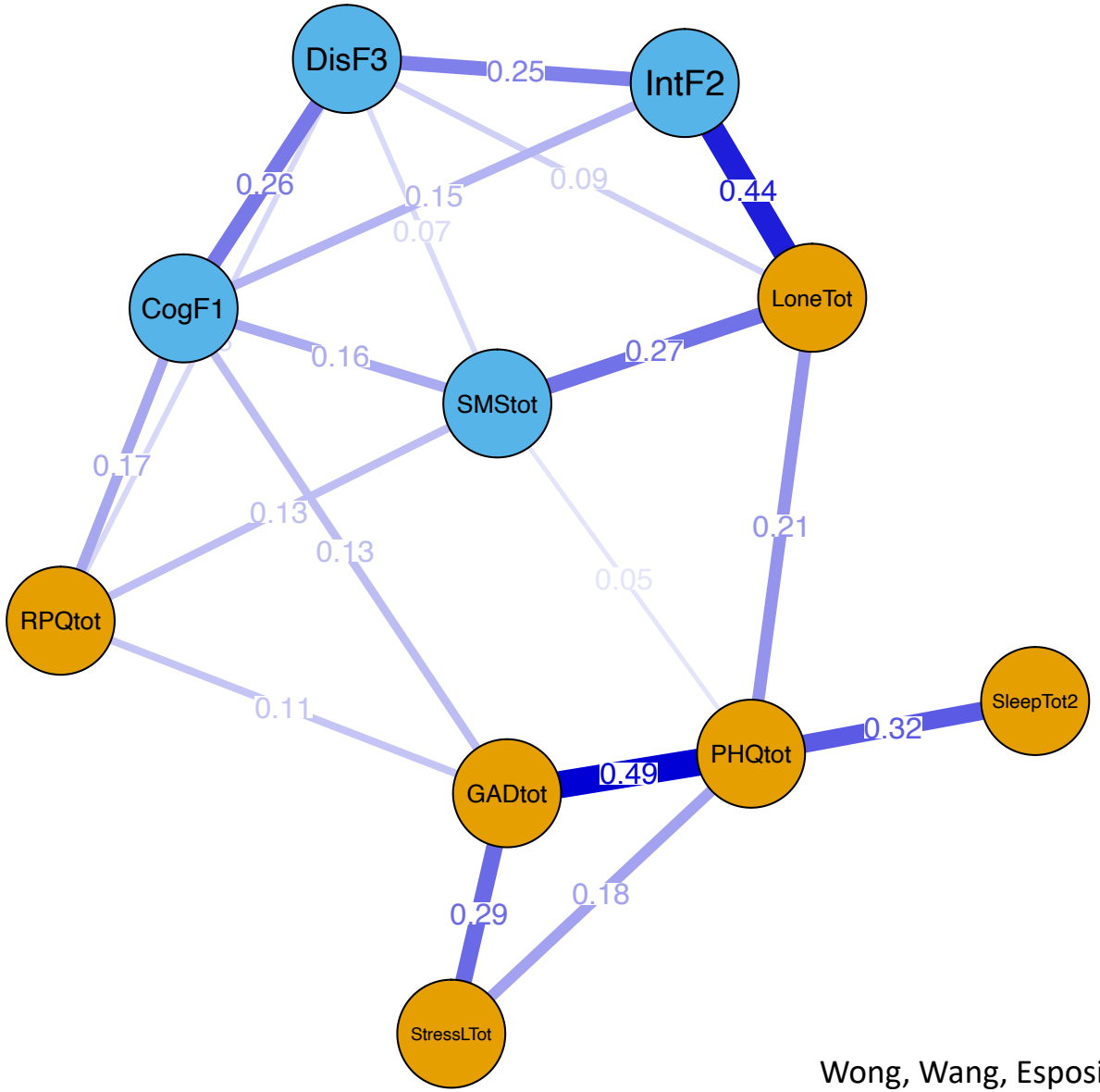
Q3 Is this network structure the same for **high and low paranoid/schizotypal individuals**?

Q1 Is social mistrust and/or schizotypy related to poorer mental health?

The answer is Yes.

Schizotypy/Paranoia
- SMStot: Social Mistrust
- CogF1: SPQ_cognitive perceptual
- IntF2: SPQ_interpersonal
- DisF3: SPQ_disorganized

Mental Health
- RPQtot: Aggression
- PHQtot: Depression
- GADtot: Anxiety
- LoneTot: Loneliness
- StressLTot: Stress from COVID
- SleepTot2: Sleep Quality



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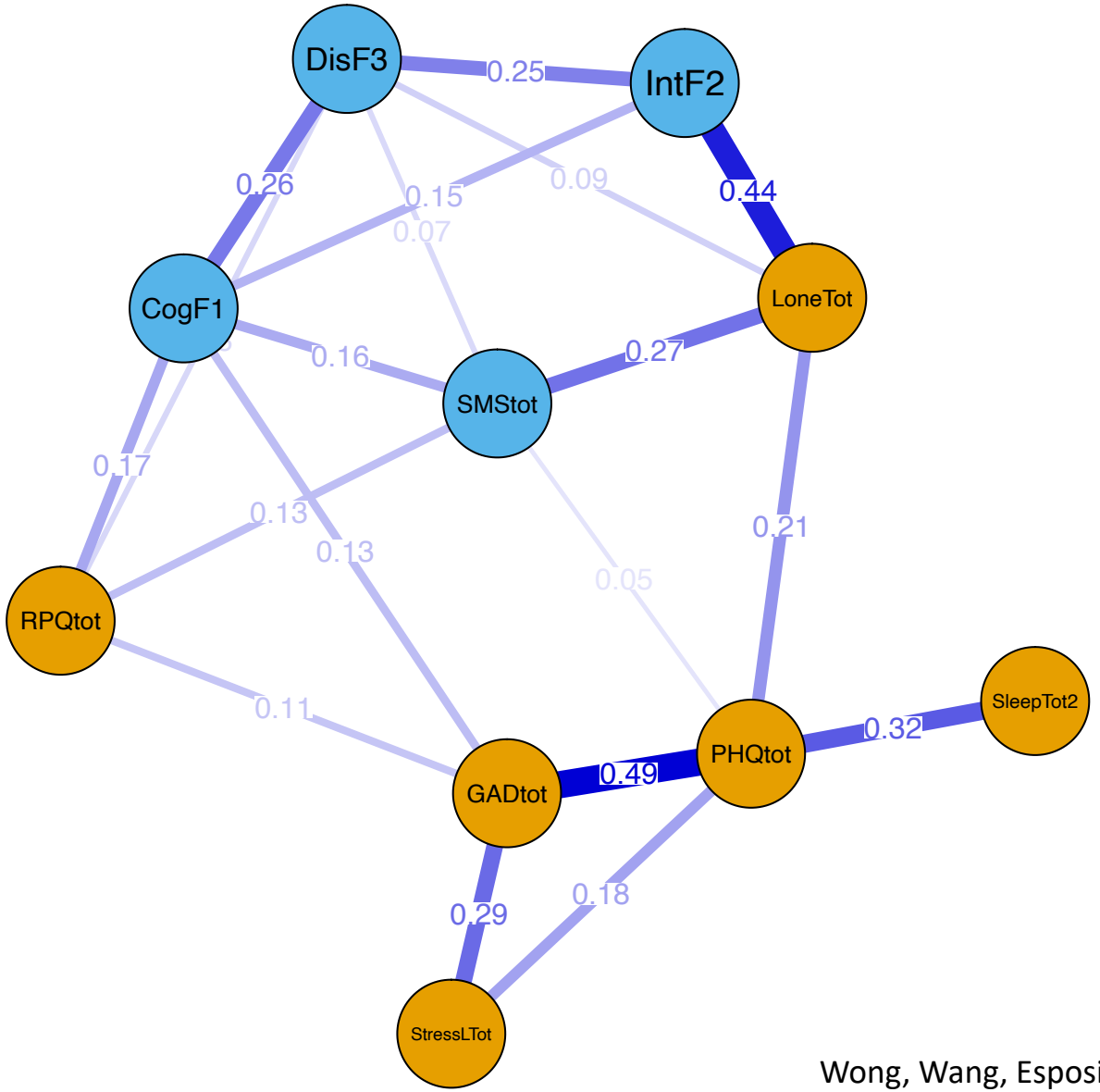
Wong, Wang, Esposito, & Raine (*in prep*)

Q2 Are the relationships between variables the same across…

Q2. **Gender?**
Age (<35 vs 35y+)?
Countries (UK vs Others)?
Income (low vs. medium vs high)?
UK Lockdowns?
Q3. High/Low trust?



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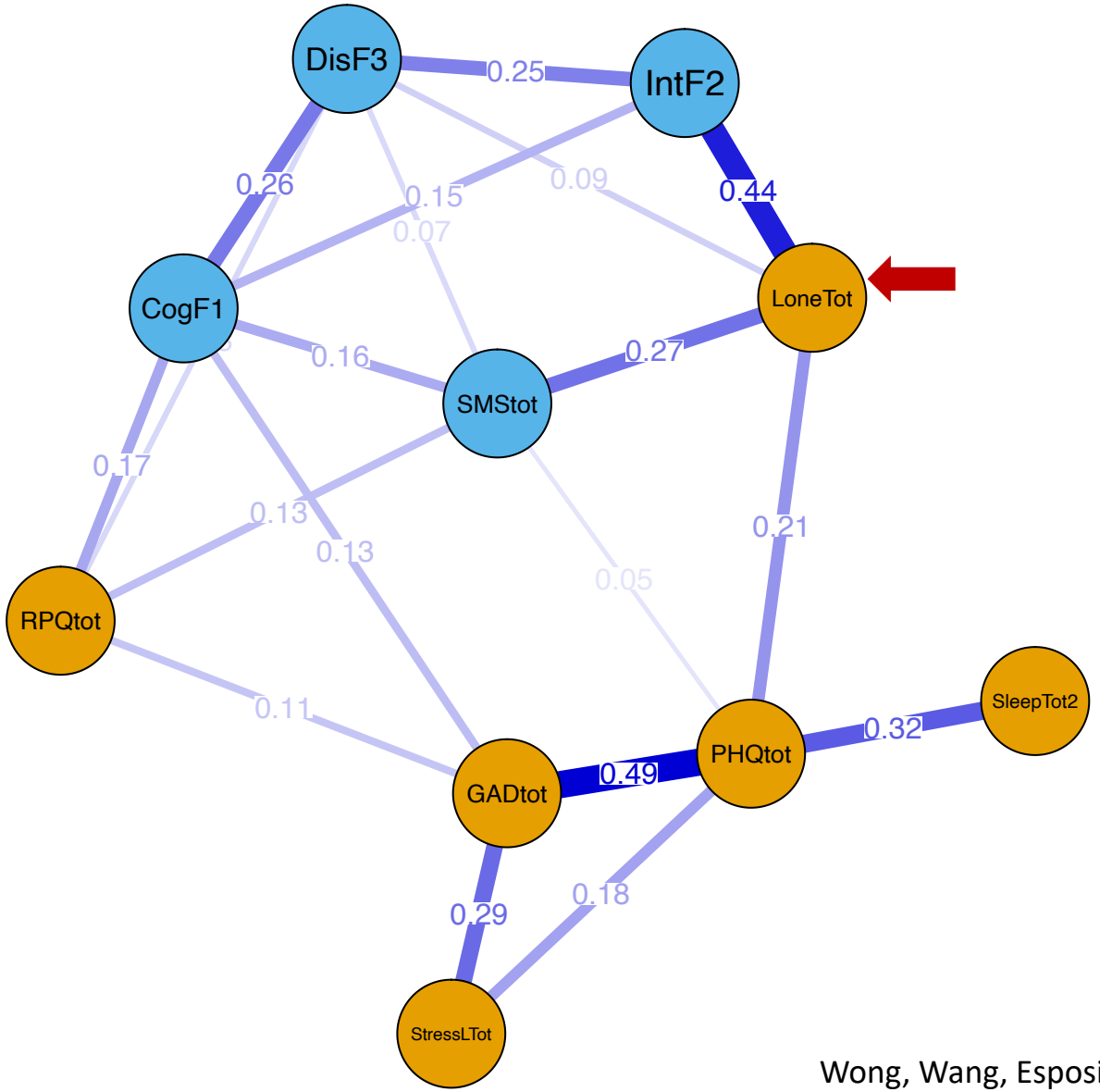
Q2 Are the relationships between variables the same across…

Q2. **Gender? n.s.**
Age (<35 vs 35y+)? n.s.
Countries (UK vs Others)? n.s.
Income (low vs. medium vs high)? n.s.
UK Lockdowns?
Q3. High/Low trust?



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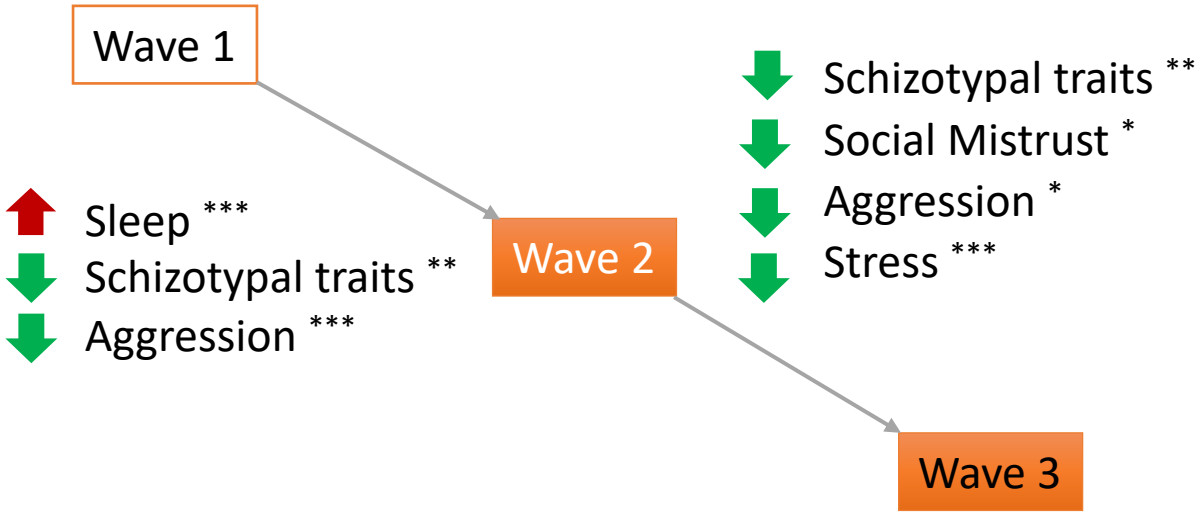
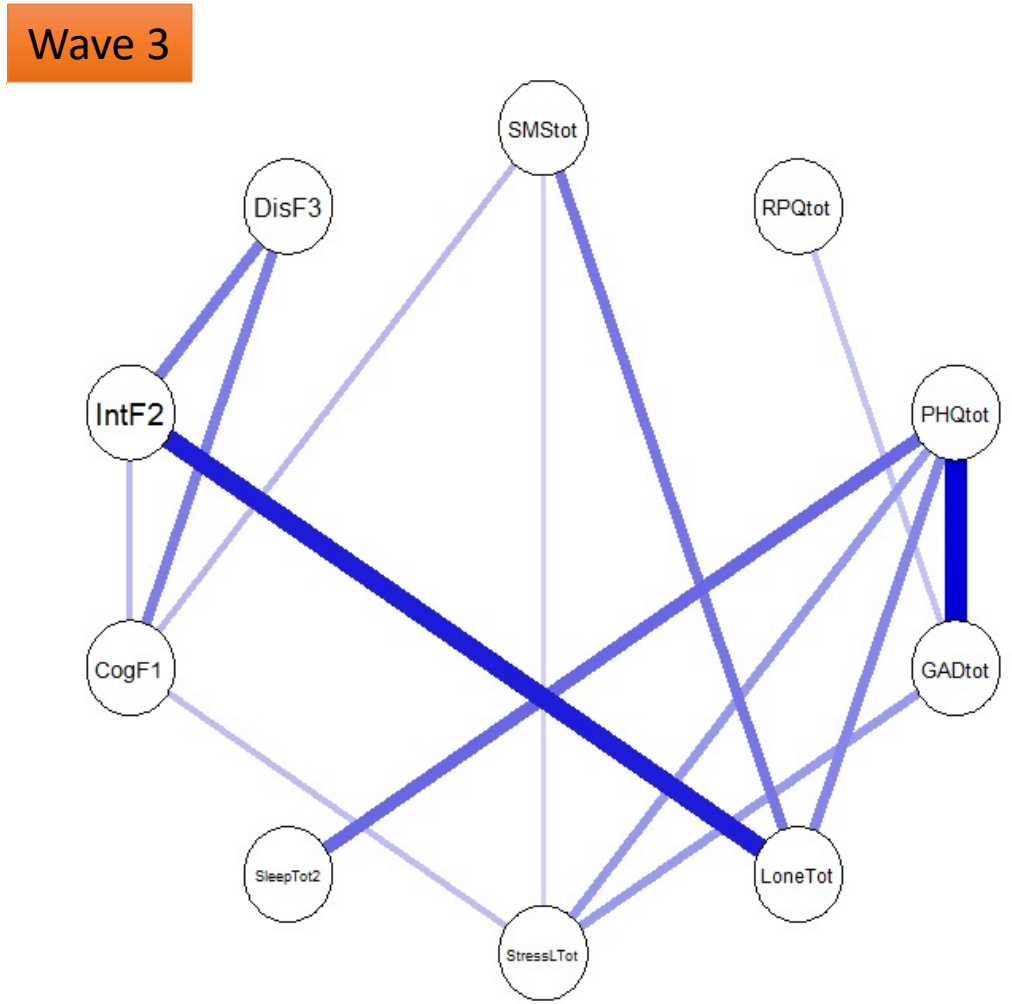
Q2 Are the relationships between variables the same across…

Q2. Gender? n.s.
Age (<35 vs 35y+)? n.s.
Countries (UK vs Others)? n.s.
Income (low vs. medium vs high)? n.s.
UK Lockdowns (Wave 1,2,3)? n.s.
Q3. High/Low trust?





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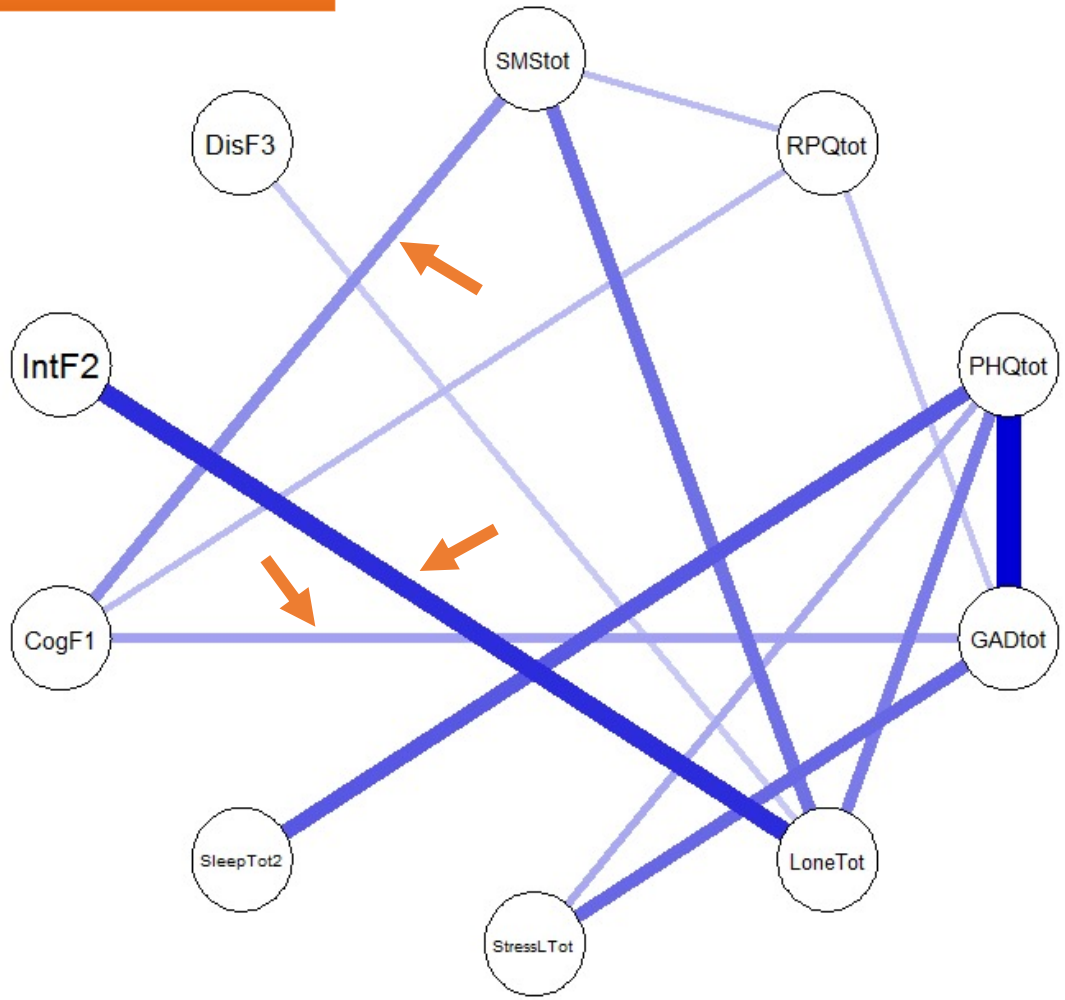
Q3 Is this network structure the same for **high and low schizotypal** individuals?

The answer is NO

High Schizotypy



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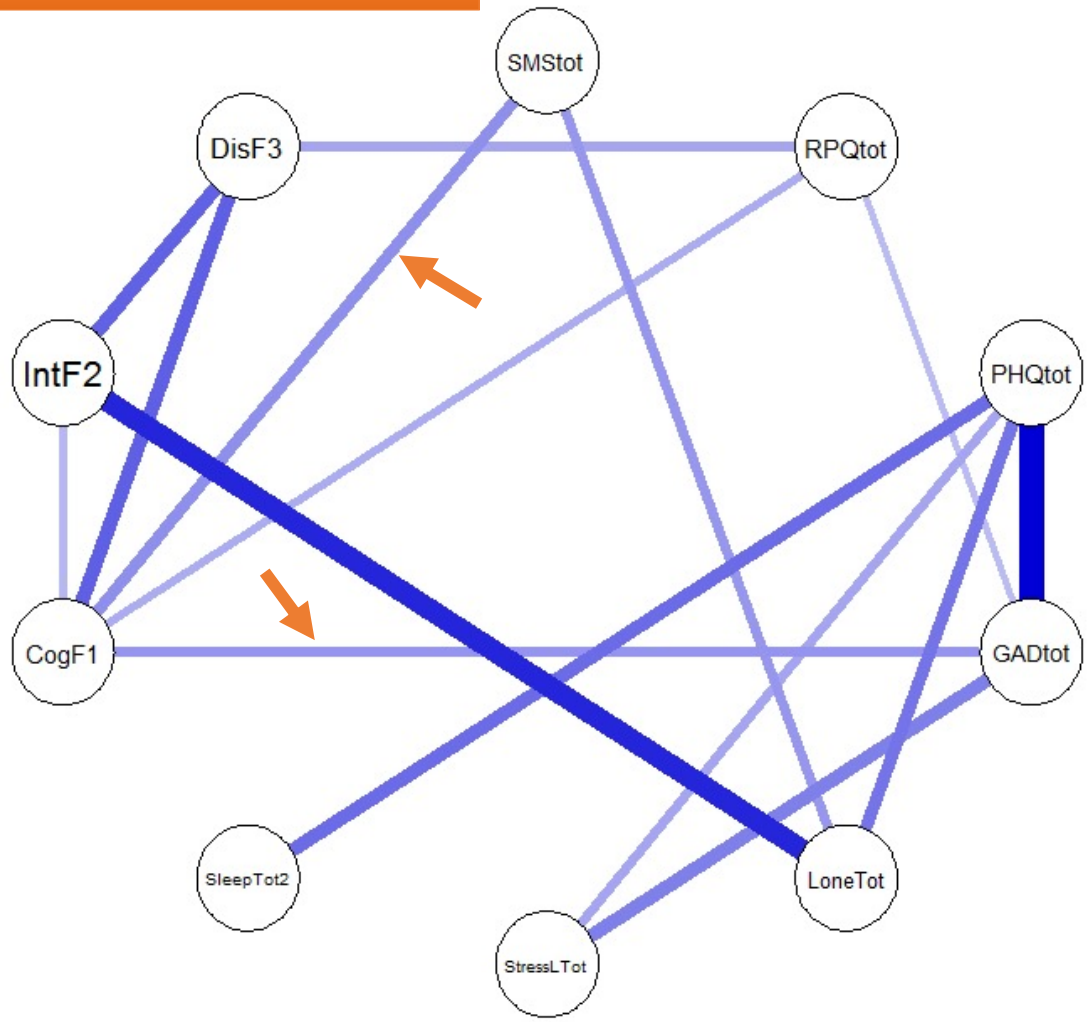
Q3: Is this network structure the same for **high and low mistrust** individuals?

The answer is NO

High Social Mistrust



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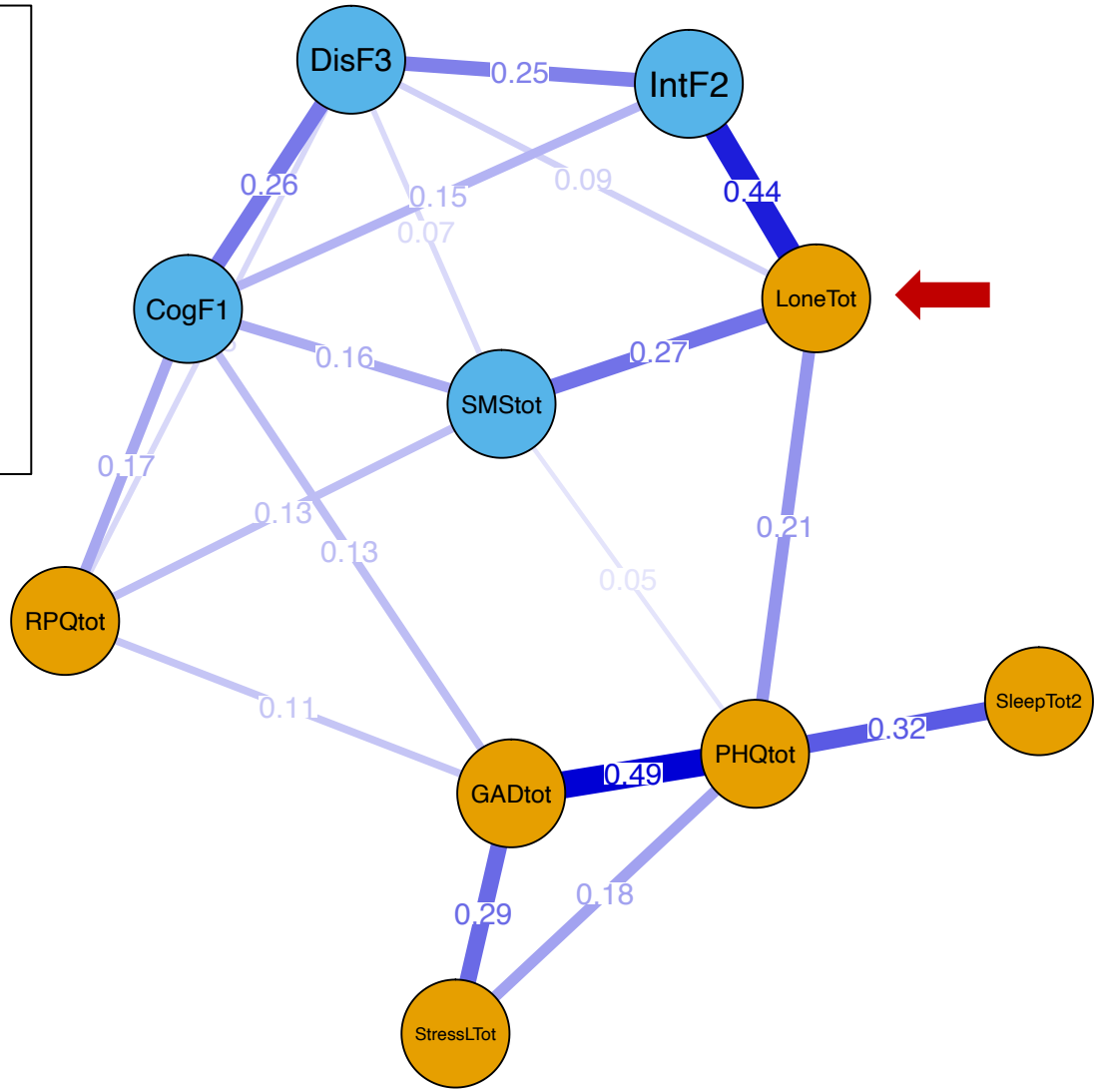
In summary...

Q1. Higher mistrust/schizotypy = poorer MH
Q2. Gender? n.s.
Age (<35 vs 35y+)? n.s.
Countries (UK vs Others)? n.s.
Income (low vs. medium vs high)? n.s.
UK Lockdowns? n.s.
Q3. High/Low trust? **Different**



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Summary

- **Network analysis** provides a **map** of how variables are related, which variable is most influential, but cannot identify network-specific differences for groups.

- **Loneliness** was an 'influential' variable connecting schizotypy/mistrust to poorer mental health → **interventions** that **reduce loneliness** may improve both social trust and mental health.
  - ✓Other UK studies have found **5% to 7.2%** increase from wave 1 to wave 2 (ONS, April 2021); though not of the same participants. Similarly, **5%** reported by Manchester Uni study of 3 countries.

- **Mistrustful and schizotypal individuals** reported **higher levels of anxiety, aggression, loneliness, and depression** compared with their more trusting/schizotypal peers.

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