

# Awareness of Age-Related Change, Future Time Perspective, and Implications for Goal Adjustment in Older Adulthood

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## Background

- How people adjust their goals is central to adaptation across the lifespan (Baltes, 1987; Brandtstädter & Renner, 1990), yet little is known about individual difference characteristics that predict how and why people use different goal adjustment strategies.
- In older adulthood, people often adapt to changing life circumstances (e.g. loss of social partners or declines in physical and cognitive health) by disengaging from certain goals. Re-engagement with achievable goals is also an important component in adaptation. We propose that flexibility in goal adjustment (endorsement of both goal disengagement and re-engagement strategies) is an important dynamic process involving effectively adapting goal-related behaviour in response to contextual demands and available resources.

## The Present Study

This study extended on recent work by Dutt et al. (2018), by focusing on associations of awareness of age-related **gains** and age-related **losses**, and their interaction as predictors of goal adjustment in older adulthood. Furthermore, we examined whether perceptions of time remaining in life mediated relationships between awareness of age-related change (AARC) and goal adjustment capacities.

## Method

408 adults aged 60-88 ( $M = 67.07$ ,  $SD = 4.57$ )

- Online survey (via Turkprime)
- measures included questionnaires assessing AARC, goal disengagement and re-engagement (a goal flexibility index was also calculated), and future time perspective.

## Results

Regression analyses showed that AARC-gains moderated the relationship between AARC-losses and goal adjustment. While AARC-losses was associated with *lower* reported goal flexibility and goal re-engagement, this association was *weaker* for those who also reported high AARC-gains (see Figures 1 & 2).

## Conclusions

Awareness of age-related losses may not inherently undermine self-regulatory behaviour, if this awareness is accompanied by an appreciation of developmental gains and enduring strengths.

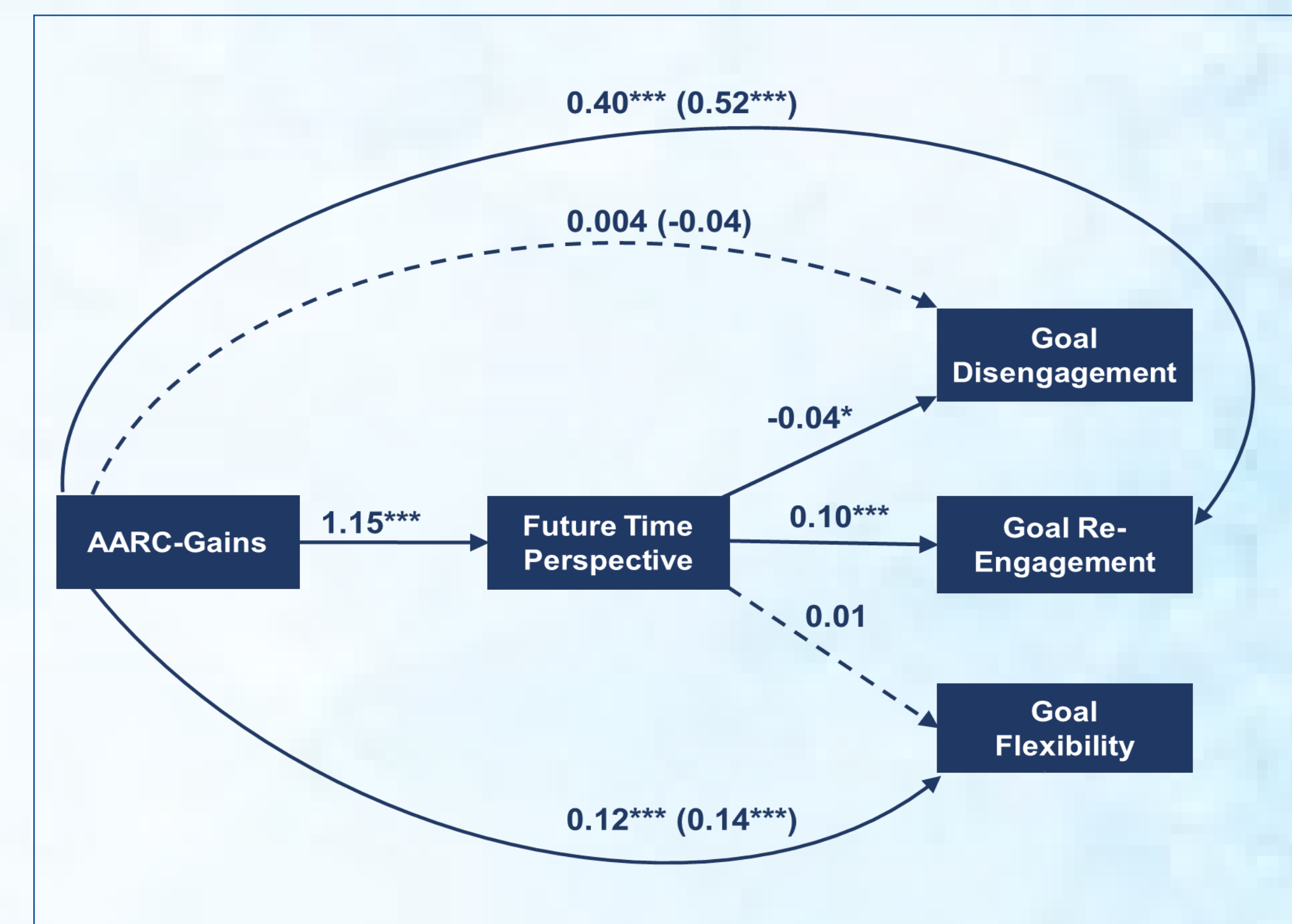


Figure 3. Unstandardized path coefficients for mediation models with AARC-gains as the predictor. Covariates include AARC-losses, age, gender, education, and physical functioning. Significant pathways are indicated by a solid line. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

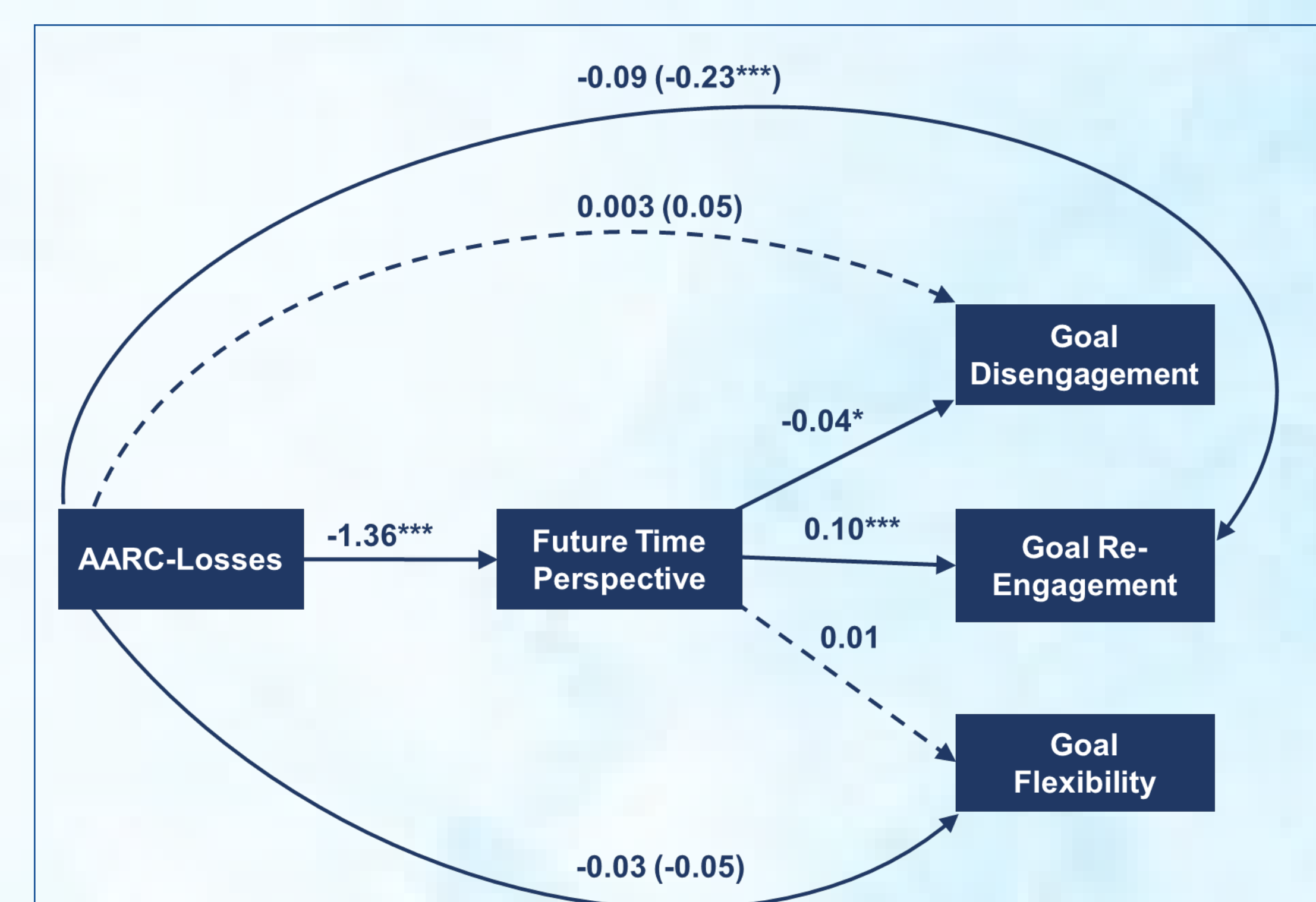


Figure 4. Unstandardized path coefficients for mediation models with AARC-losses as the predictor. Covariates include AARC-gains, age, gender, education, and physical functioning. Significant pathways are indicated by a solid line. \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

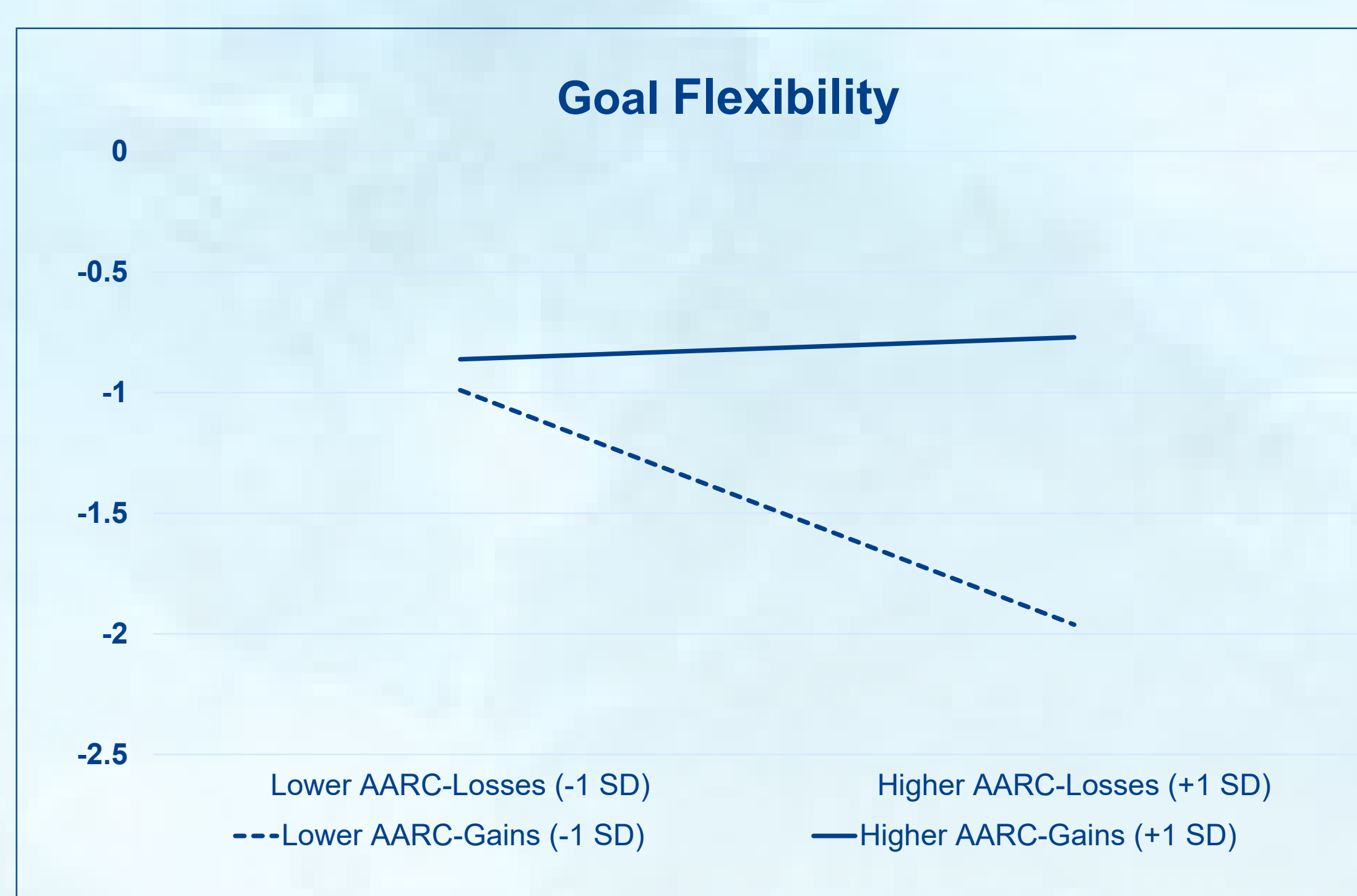


Figure 1. Interaction of AARC-losses and AARC-gains in the prediction of goal flexibility. Higher AARC-losses was associated with less flexible adjustment of goals. However, this association was less evident among those reporting higher AARC-gains.

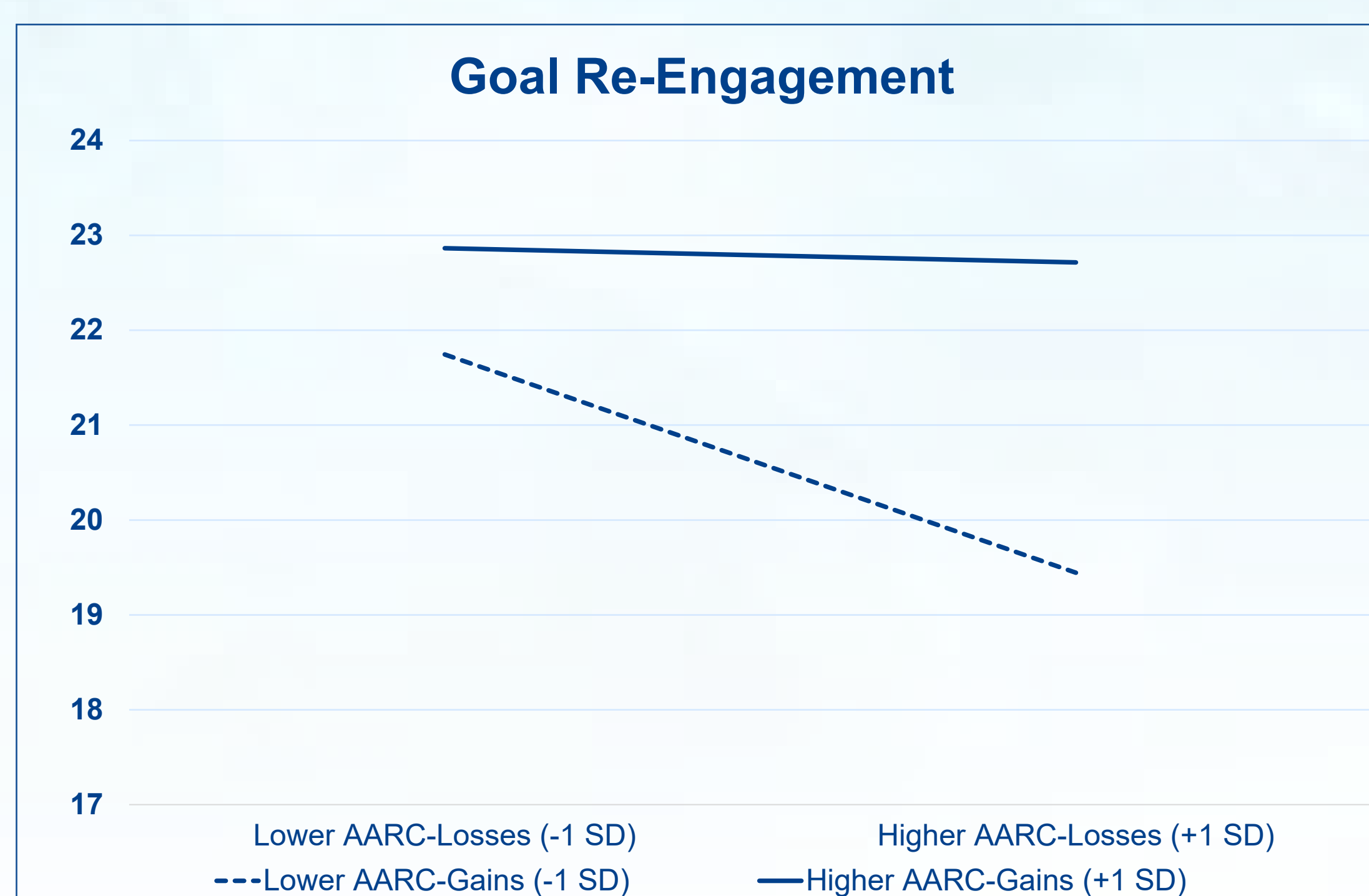


Figure 2. Interaction of AARC-losses and AARC-gains in the prediction of goal-re-engagement. Higher AARC-losses was associated with less use of goal re-engagement strategies. However, this association was less evident among those reporting higher AARC-gains.