Dynamics of Child Economic Vulnerability and Socio-Emotional Development

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Introduction

- Great Recession has increased poverty in Ireland
- Poverty has a range of negative effects on children
  - Including emotional, educational, and health outcomes
  - Especially persistent poverty, poverty in early childhood
- Much of the research from the US – a different context
- We draw on the first two waves of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study, for both the infant and child cohorts, to ask
  - How did the recession affect material circumstances of families?
  - Does the impact of poverty on child outcomes differ for younger and older children (socio-emotional development)?
  - Is persistent poverty more harmful than transient poverty?
  - Are there factors that protect children in context of poverty?

Outline

- **Data and fieldwork**
- **Economic Vulnerability (EV) as an indicator of poverty, broadly understood**
- **Risk of EV overall (i.e. in either wave)**
- **Risk of Persistent EV and of Becoming EV in Wave 2**
  - Profile of those who are EV in W1 and in W2
- **EV and Socio-Emotional Development**
- **Summary and Implications**

Data

- Draw on two waves of GUI for the two cohorts:

  - Infant ('08) cohort, most of whom born in 2008
  - Data collected at age 9 months and age 3 years
  - N=9,793 families in both waves

  - Child ('98) cohort, most of whom born in 1998
  - Data collected at age 9 years and 13 years
  - N=7,423 families in both waves

Economic Vulnerability (EV)

Increase in EV over time:
'08 cohort: from 19% to 25%
'98 cohort: from 15% to 25%
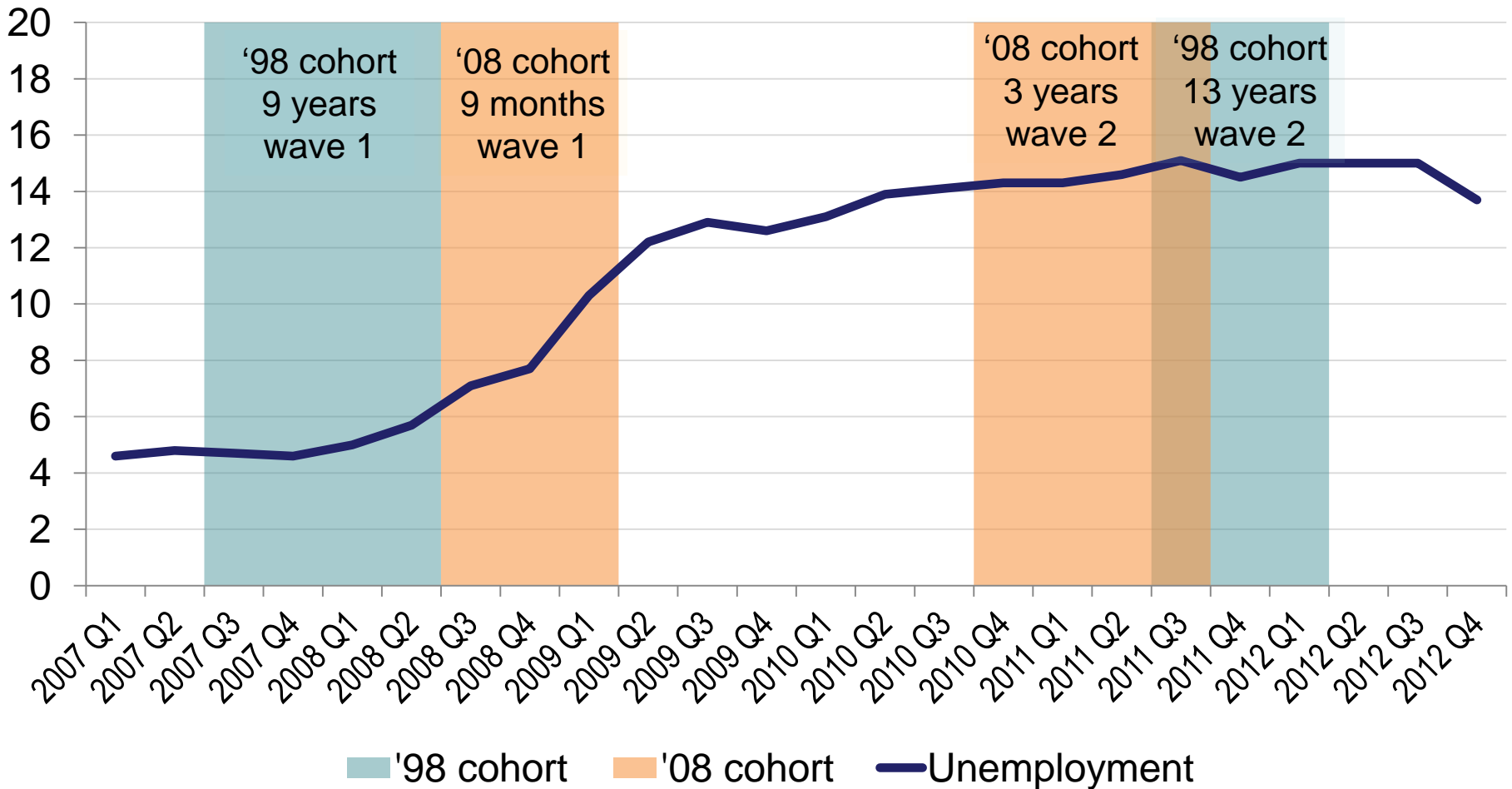
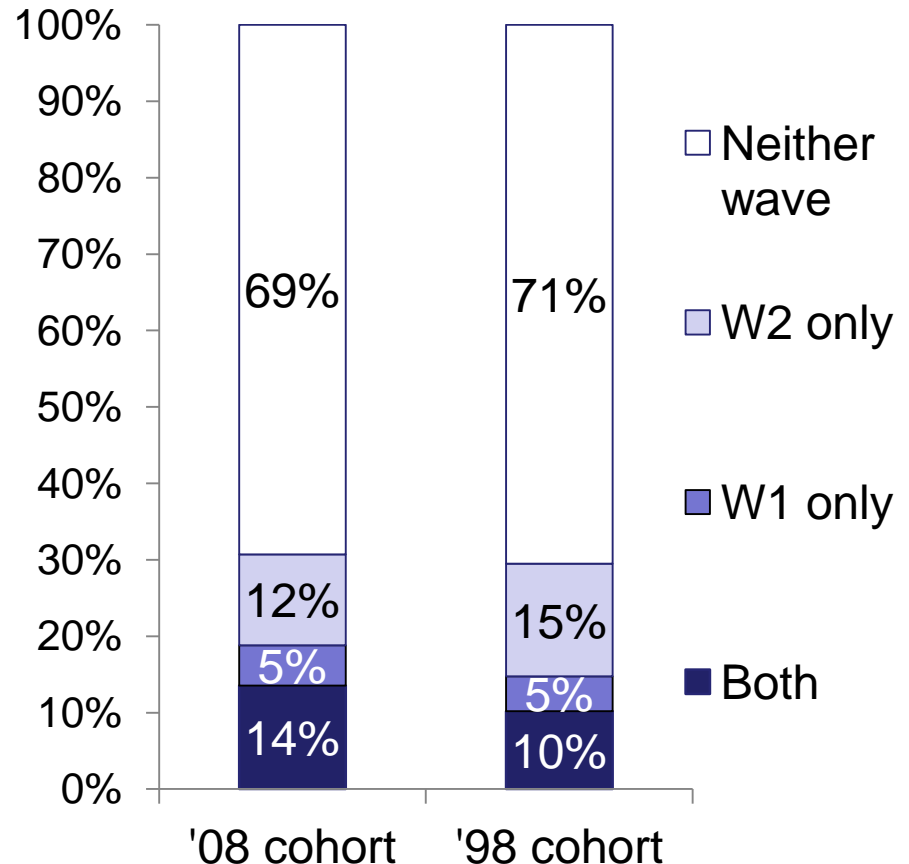- **Economic vulnerability (EV):** an increased risk of material disadvantage, as indicated by:

- low income,

- household joblessness &

- economic stress.

(Latent Class Analysis; EV group identified within each wave and cohort)

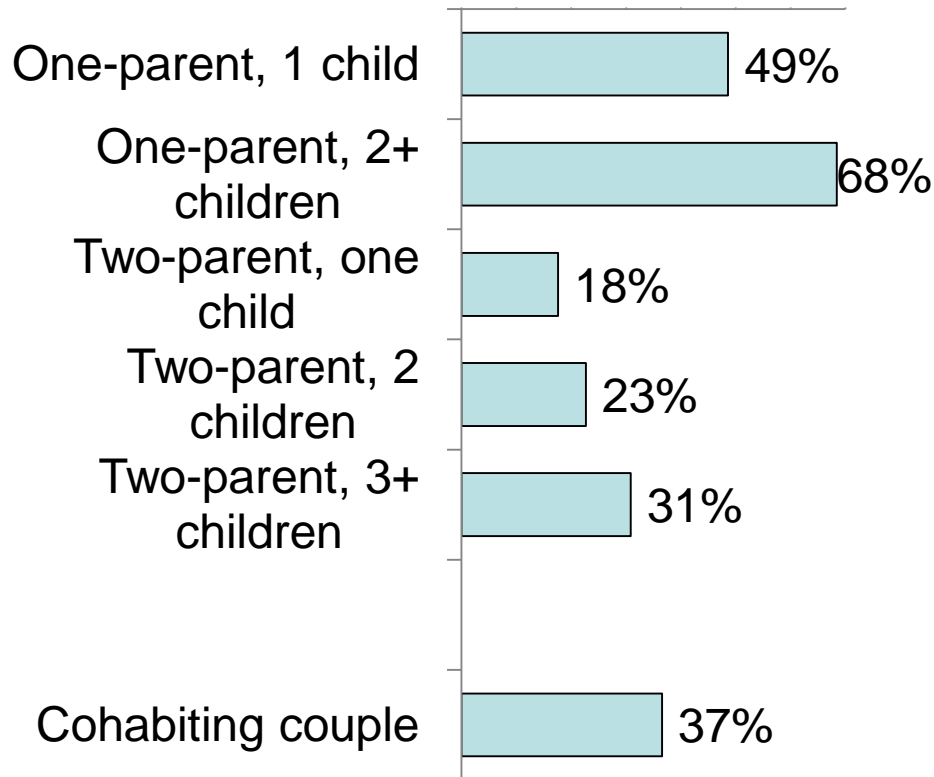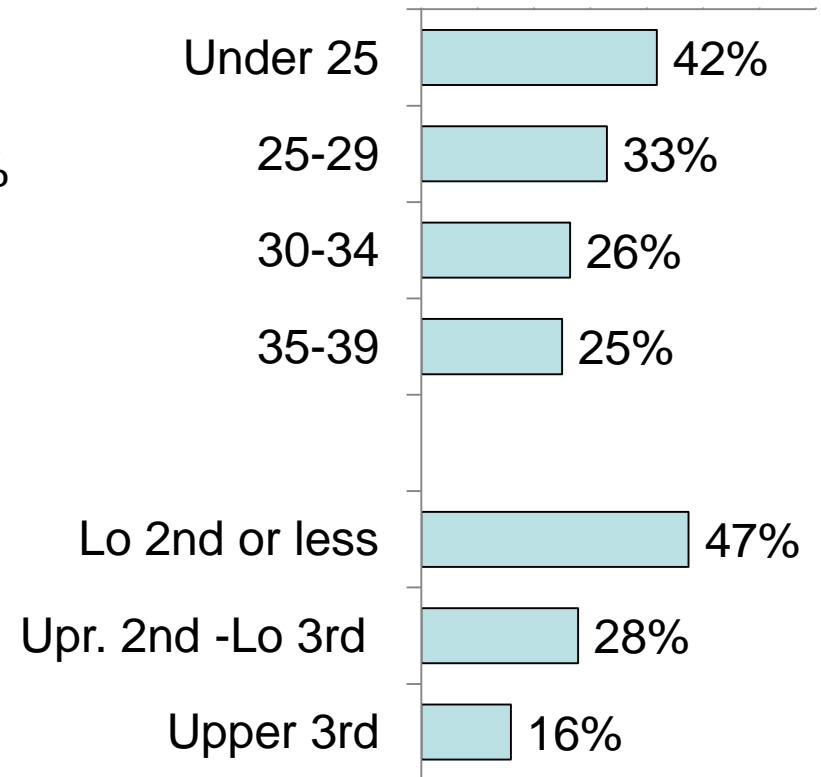|	'08 cohort	'98 cohort
Neither wave	69%	71%
W2 only	12%	15%
W1 only	5%	5%
Both	14%	10%

Models of Risk of EV

- **Logit Models, weighted data, robust standard errors**
- **Examine risk by family characteristics at first wave:**
  - Family type (one- or two-parent, cohabiting, number of children)
  - Education of primary care giver (PCG),
  - Age of PCG at birth of child
  - Cohort
- **Used to calculate expected % EV controlling for these characteristics**

Results: Model-Estimated Risk of EV, overall (in either wave)

Family Type

One-parent, 1 child	49%
One-parent, 2+ children	68%
Two-parent, one child	18%
Two-parent, 2 children	23%
Two-parent, 3+ children	31%
Cohabiting couple	37%

PCG age at birth & Education

Under 25	42%
25-29	33%
30-34	26%
35-39	25%
Lo 2nd or less	47%
Upr. 2nd -Lo 3rd	28%
Upper 3rd	16%

Did Risk of Economic Vulnerability differ by Cohort?

- **Higher risk of economic vulnerability for the '08 cohort because W1 fieldwork took place after start of recession**

- **Some characteristics had a weaker association with EV for the '98 cohort (older children):**
  - *PCG education (upper 2nd level vs. 3rd level)
  - *PCG younger at child's birth
  - Lone parenthood
  - *Larger family size (3+ children)

- *** More common in '98 cohort – weaker link to EV**
  - For instance, when parents of the '98 cohort were leaving school, fewer people went on to third level;
  - The '98 cohort families tend to be at a later stage of family formation so more of them have 3 or more children;

Risk of Persistent EV and Risk of Becoming EV in Recession

- **Risk of persistent economic vulnerability (i.e. EV in both waves)**
  - even *more* strongly associated with lone parenthood, and PCG lower levels of education than transient (one wave) vulnerability
- **Risk of becoming economically vulnerable in Wave 2 (vs. being vulnerable in wave 1)**
  - *less* strongly associated with lone parenthood, PCG lower level of education, and PCG age at child's birth.
  - Recession affected a broader group than those EV in wave one;
  - Implication for profile of EV families
    - More two-parent families and families where the PCG had higher levels of education were drawn into EV as a result of the recession
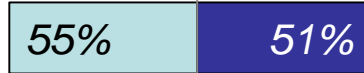
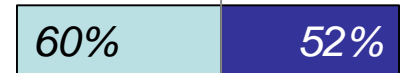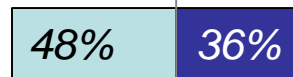# Profile of the Economically Vulnerable

'08 (Infant) Cohort

☐ W1 ■ W2

	W1	W2
PCG <30 at birth	55%	51%
One-parent family	48%	36%
2-parent family (all)	52%	64%
2-parent , 3+ children	22%	27%
PCG Educ 1	48%	42%

'98 (Child) Cohort

☐ W1 ■ W2
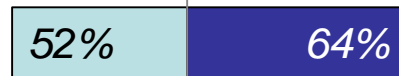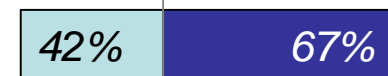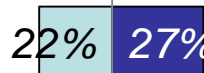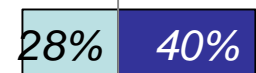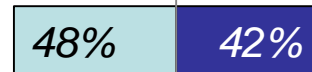
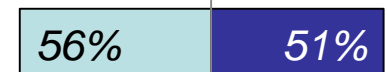|	W1	W2
PCG <30 at birth	60%	52%
One-parent family	58%	33%
2-parent family (all)	42%	67%
2-parent , 3+ children	28%	40%
PCG Educ 1	56%	51%

Measuring socio-emotional development (SDQ)

- **Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire** (Goodman et al. 1997)
  - Designed to assess emotional health & problem behaviours among children and young people.

- **Completed by primary care giver (PCG)**

- **Four sub-scales used here:**
  - emotional problems,
  - conduct problems,
  - hyperactivity/inattention and
  - peer relationship problems

- **Used to identify group at risk of socio-emotional problems (score of 17 or over out of 40)**
  - Results replicated with scale dichotomised at top 10%

EV & Socio-emotional development

Model-estimated Risk of Socio-emotional Problems by Economic Vulnerability

Neither wave	4%
Wave 1 only	6%
Wave 2 only	7%
Both waves	10%

Not significantly different
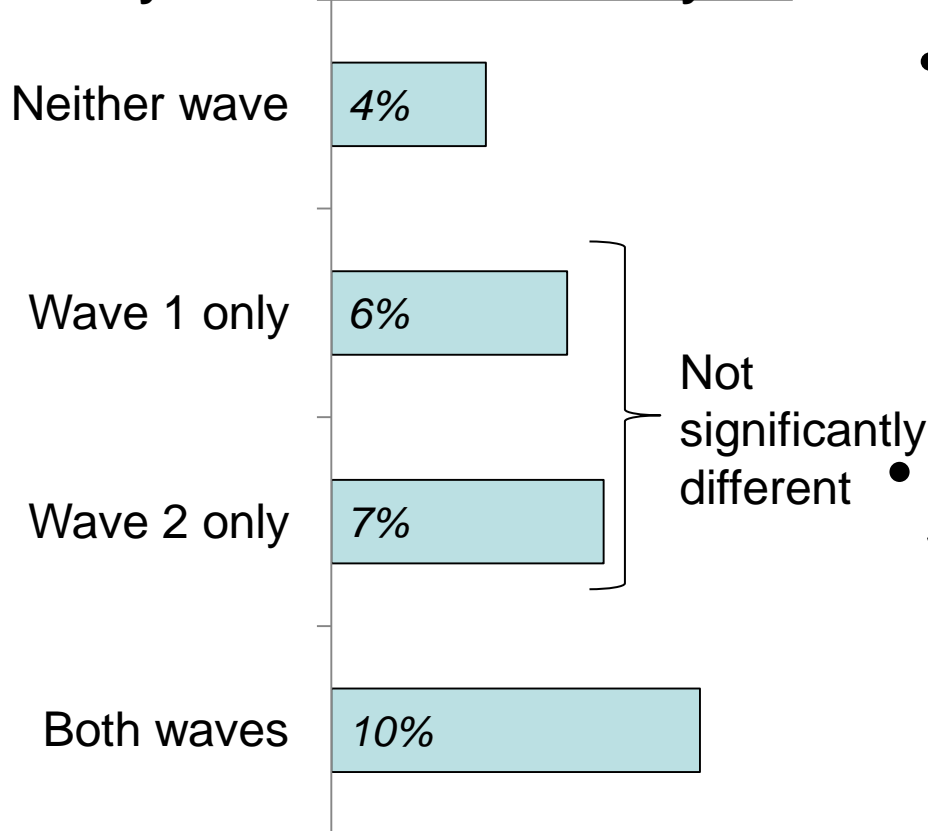
- **Other characteristics controlled:**
  - child gender, cohort, family type, PCG education, PCG age at child's birth, change in family composition (e.g. separation, additional children)

- **EV has similar association with socio-emotional problems for**
  - **the two cohorts and**
  - **for boys and girls.**

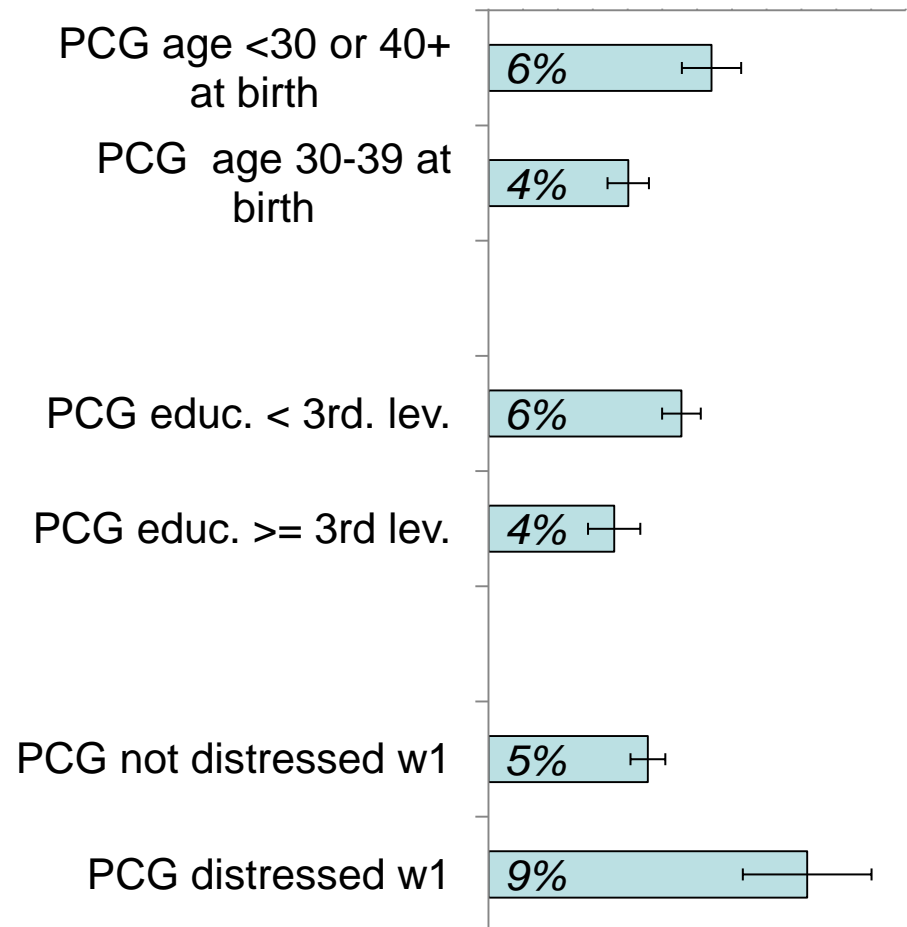# Intervening and Protective Factors

- **Factors intervening between EV & socio-emotional problems?**

- **Do children in EV families benefit from 'protective' factors**
  - (e.g. both parents present, PCG higher education)

- **Additional indicators:**
  - PCG emotional distress (measured by CESD scale)
  - Quality of relationship between parents, in 2-parent families (measured using Dyadic Adjustment Scale)

Protective and Intervening Factors (1)

Model-estimated Risk of Socio-emotional problems

- **Both EV and non-EV children are less likely to have socio-emotional problems where ...**
  - PCG in 30s at child's birth
  - PCG had third level education
  - PCG was not emotionally distressed in wave 1

	Risk
PCG age <30 or 40+ at birth	6%
PCG age 30-39 at birth	4%
PCG educ. < 3rd. lev.	6%
PCG educ. >= 3rd lev.	4%
PCG not distressed w1	5%
PCG distressed w1	9%

Protective and Intervening Factors that differ depending on whether or not EV (2)

- **Non-economically vulnerable:**
  - Lower risk of socio-emotional problems in 2-parent family with good relationship
  - No difference between 1-parent family and 2-parent family with problem relationship

- **Economically vulnerable:**
  - Differences by family type are not statistically significant
  - Protective effect of good relationship between parents is weak or absent in context of economic vulnerability

High SDQ %- Interactions with economic vulnerability (EV)

- ☐ 1-parent
- ☐ 2-parent, r'ship problems
- ☐ 2-parent, good r'ship

7%	5%	3%	9%	11%	7%

Not economically vulnerable | Economically vulnerable
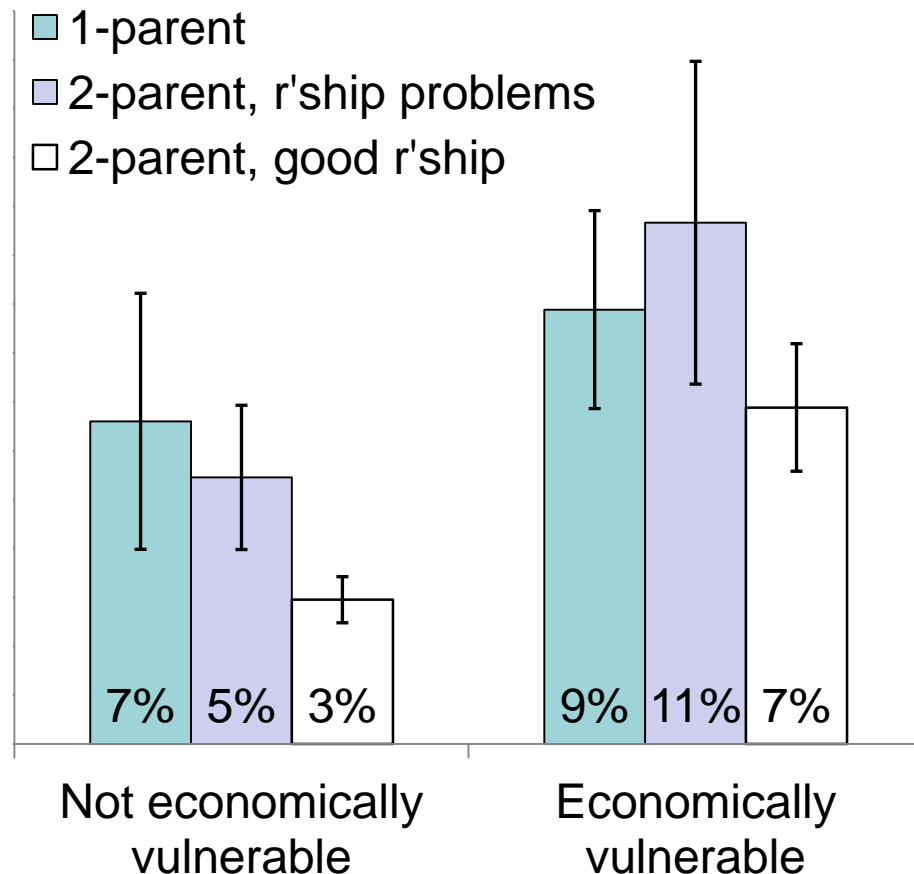
Summary

- **Economic Vulnerability (EV) increased for both cohorts**
  - Reaching 25% by W2
- **EV associated with lone parenthood, lower levels of education, PCG being younger at child's birth**
  - Risk factors more strongly related to persistent EV
  - Those becoming EV by W2 had less disadvantaged profile
- **EV increases risk of socio-emotional problems**
  - Persistent EV had a stronger impact than transient EV
  - Even in EV families, outcomes improved where PCG emotionally well, has higher level of education, in 30s at birth
  - Family type / relationship - different pattern for EV &non-EV families
  - Could see patterns in terms of 'protective factors' or 'risk factors'

Policy Implications

- **Attention to economic vulnerability of children warranted, especially persistent vulnerability**
- **High risk groups included lone parents, parents with lower levels of education, younger parents**
  - Core policy issues: income support, education and training, support for job search
  - Optimal mix of income support and support for employment
  - Child care likely to be a particular issue for lone parents
- **Those becoming vulnerable as result of recession were a broader group**
  - Need for policies to address wider issues – childcare and housing

Thank you!