



12th Annual
Research
Conference
2020

Socio-emotional wellbeing and school social mix

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Introduction

- Previous research has focused on the impact of school social mix on academic performance
- But has rarely considered other student outcomes
- Focus on socio-emotional wellbeing (measured using Strengths and Difficulties total difficulties score) and how it varies by school social mix
- Because of active school choice, the analyses take account of movement between schools of different compositions between primary and second-level

Data and methodology

- Waves 1, 2 and 3 of GUI Cohort '98
- 9 year olds were sampled through the primary school system – surveyed children and their parents, classroom teacher and school principal
- Followed up at 13 and 17/18 years of age – approx. 6,000 young people and their parents, school principal
- Active school choice, especially at second level, with half of junior cycle students not attending their nearest or most accessible school
- Cross-classified multilevel models are therefore used to allow for complexity of transfers between primary and second-level schools

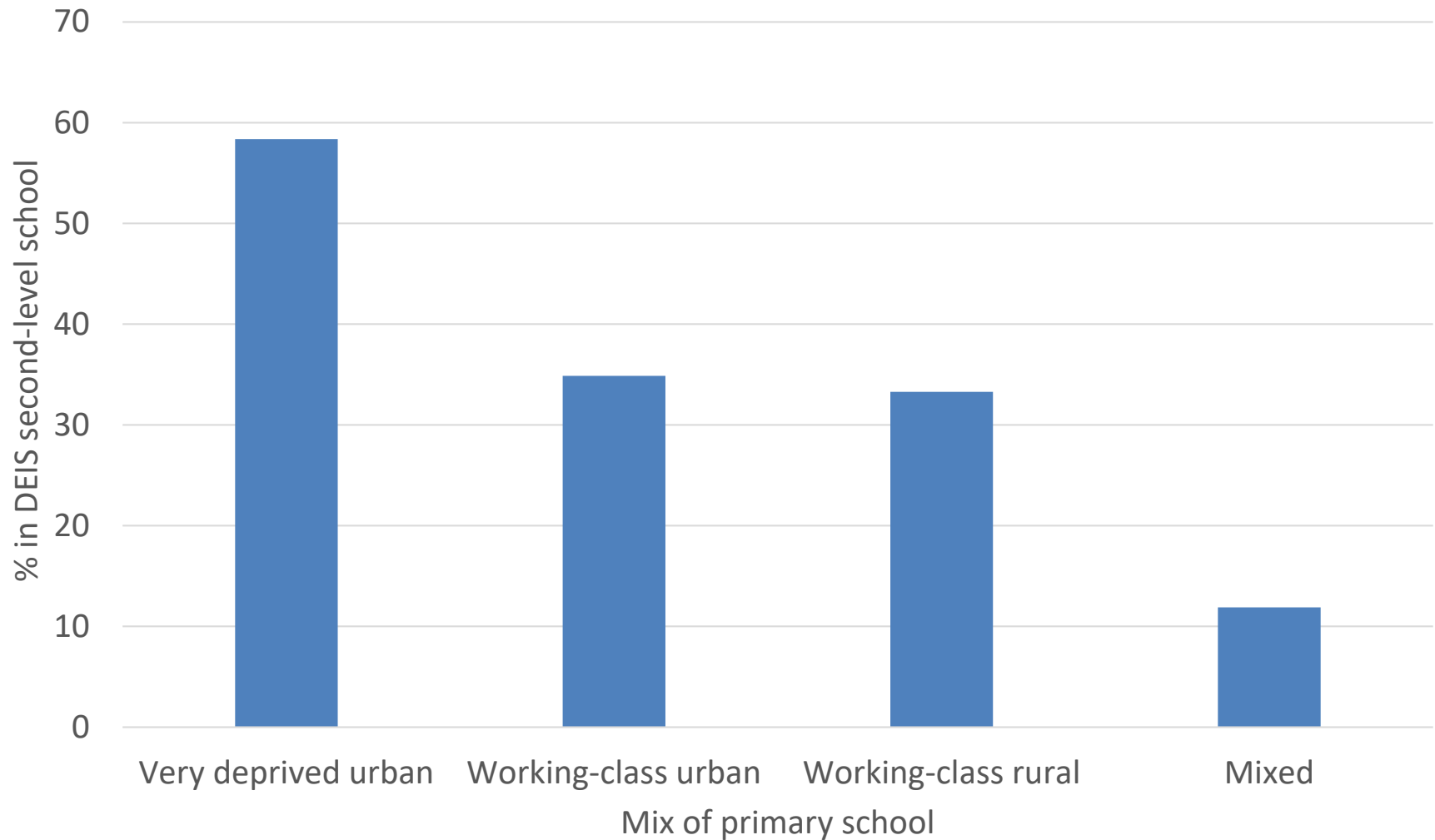
Social background variables

- Gender
- Social class (dominance; including non-employed)
- Mother's educational level
- Household income (equivalised; quintiles)
- Migrant family
- Lone parent (at age 9); at subsequent waves
- Urban/rural
- SEN

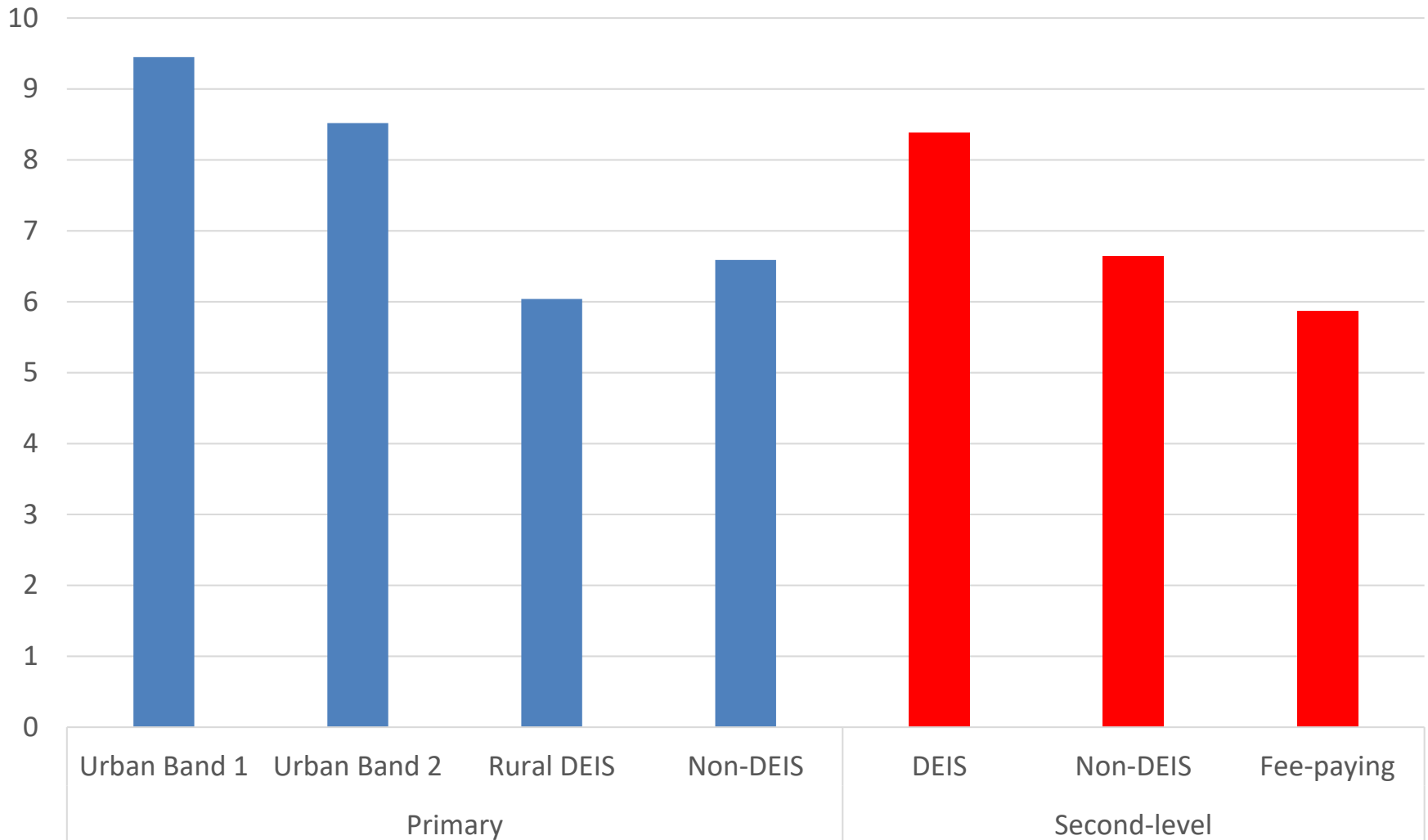
School social mix

- Use school type as a proxy for social mix
- Primary level:
 - Urban Band 1 DEIS (most deprived)
 - Urban Band 2 DEIS
 - Rural
 - Non-DEIS (socially mixed)
- Second-level
 - DEIS or non-DEIS
 - Fee-paying schools

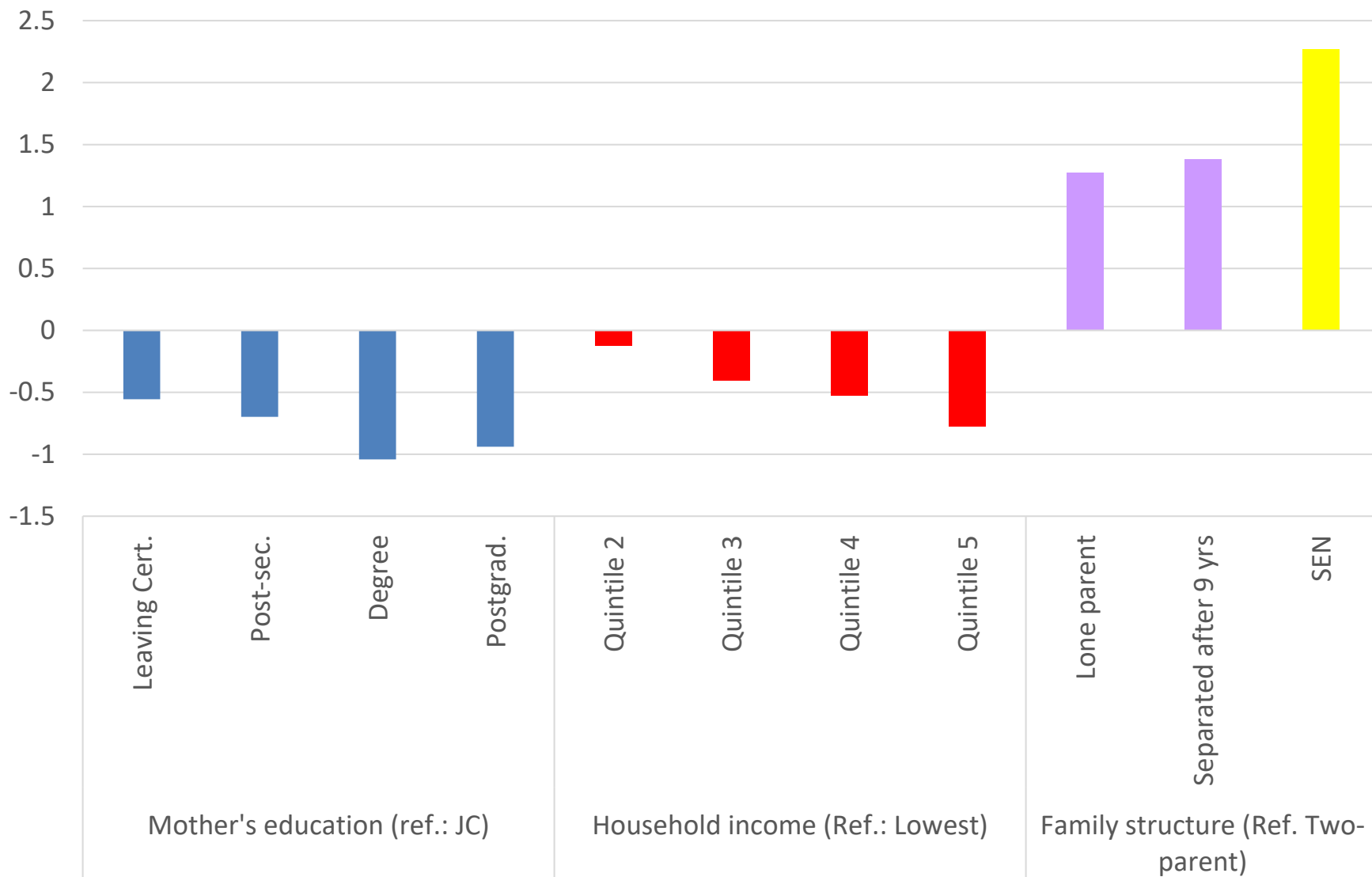
School dynamics: % attending a DEIS second-level school by social mix of primary school



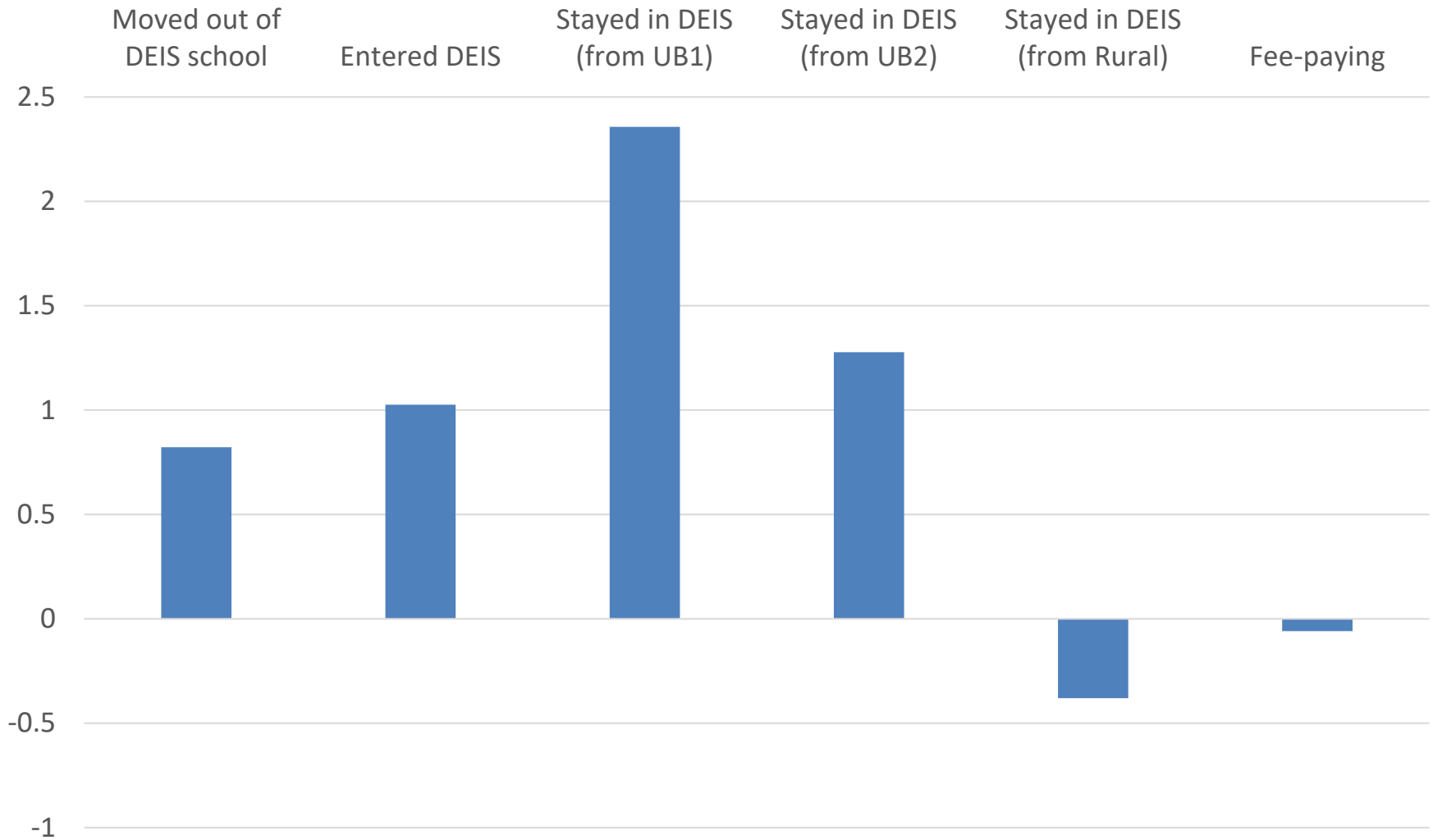
SDQ at 17/18 by school social mix



But is this due to the individual and socio-economic background of students?



Effect of school social mix (net of individual background) (relative to staying in a non-DEIS school)



What primary school factors and experiences matter?

School-level factors:

- Teacher turnover NS
- School-level absenteeism NS
- Complexity of need (concentration of SEN, migrants and Travellers among student body) NS

Student-level factors:

- Only sometimes or never liking school at age 9 +
- Performance in Maths at age 9 –

- But differences by school social mix remain, taking these factors into account

What second-level school factors and experiences matter?

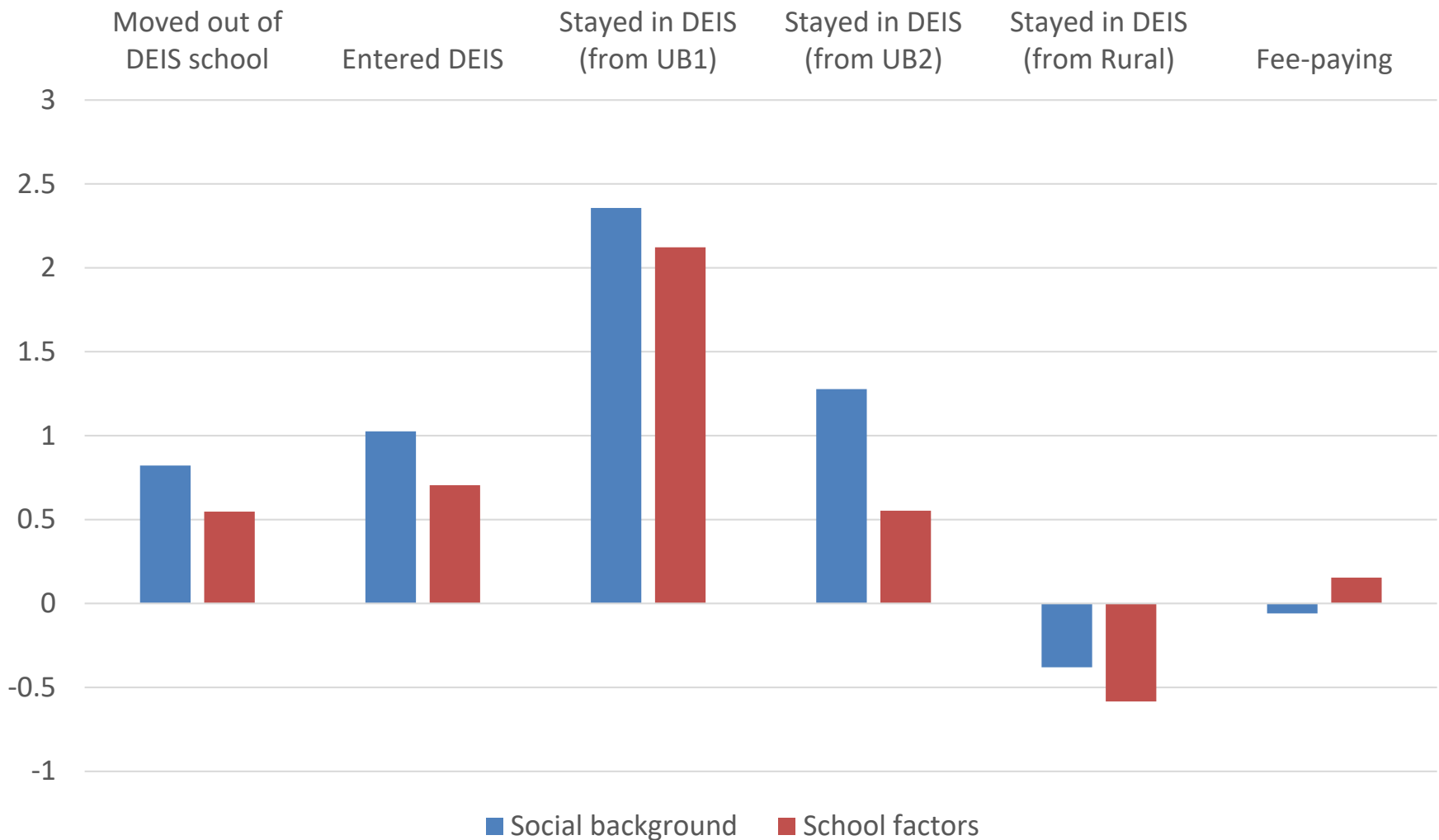
School-level factors:

- School-level absenteeism NS
- Complexity of need NS
- Use of rigid ability grouping (streaming) NS

Student-level factors:

- Not liking or hating school at age 13 +
- Positive interaction with teachers –
- Negative interaction with teachers +
- Performance in Junior Certificate –
- Educational stage (5th year –)
- Gender differences are even larger (worse for females) taking account of school factors

But differences by school social mix remain



Total difficulties or different types of difficulties?

Staying in a very disadvantaged setting (UB1-DEIS) is linked to:

- Greater emotional difficulties
- Greater conduct problems
- Greater hyperactivity
- More peer problems (also evident for UB2-DEIS)

Moving into a DEIS second-level school is associated with:

- Greater conduct problems
- Greater hyperactivity

Moving from a DEIS to a non-DEIS school is associated with:

- More peer problems

Conclusions

- School social mix has a significant impact on socio-emotional wellbeing but the scale of this effect reflects the complex dynamics of movement between primary and second-level schools
- Builds upon previous research showing that movement between schools of different composition matters for academic performance
- From a policy perspective, the findings highlight the role of school climate (teacher-student relationships) and school engagement in young people's wellbeing
- Further research – does the effect of primary school disadvantage reflect neighbourhood factors?