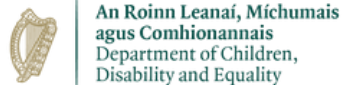


AFTERSCHOOL CARE FOR SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN IN IRELAND

Helen Russell

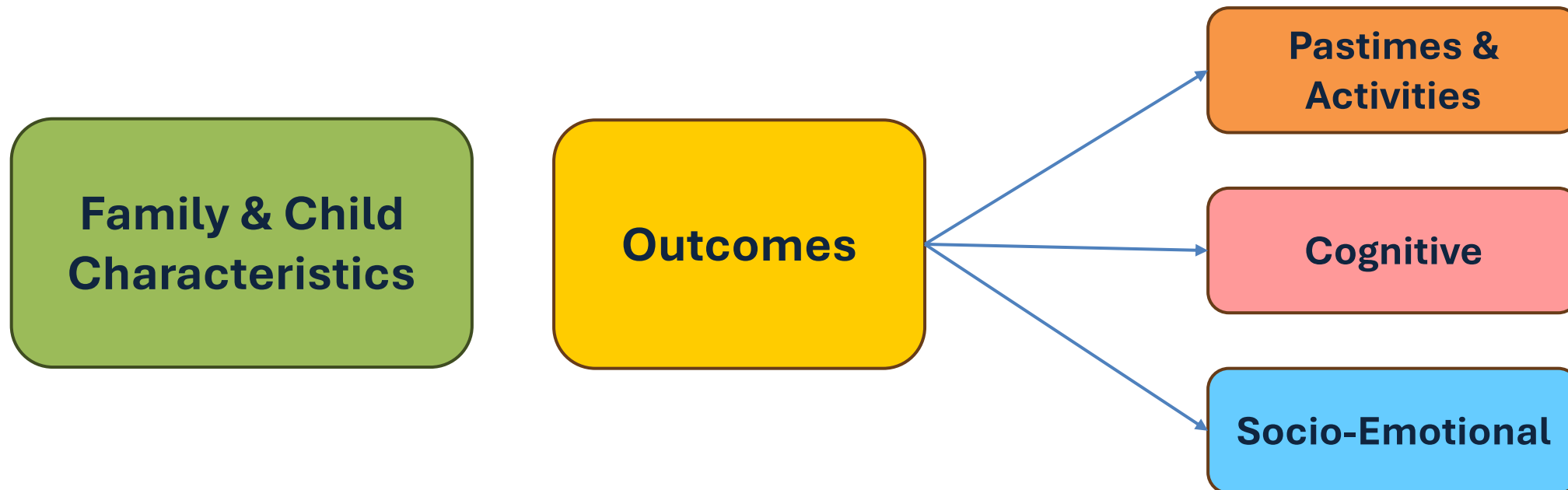
Emer Smyth

Eva Slevin



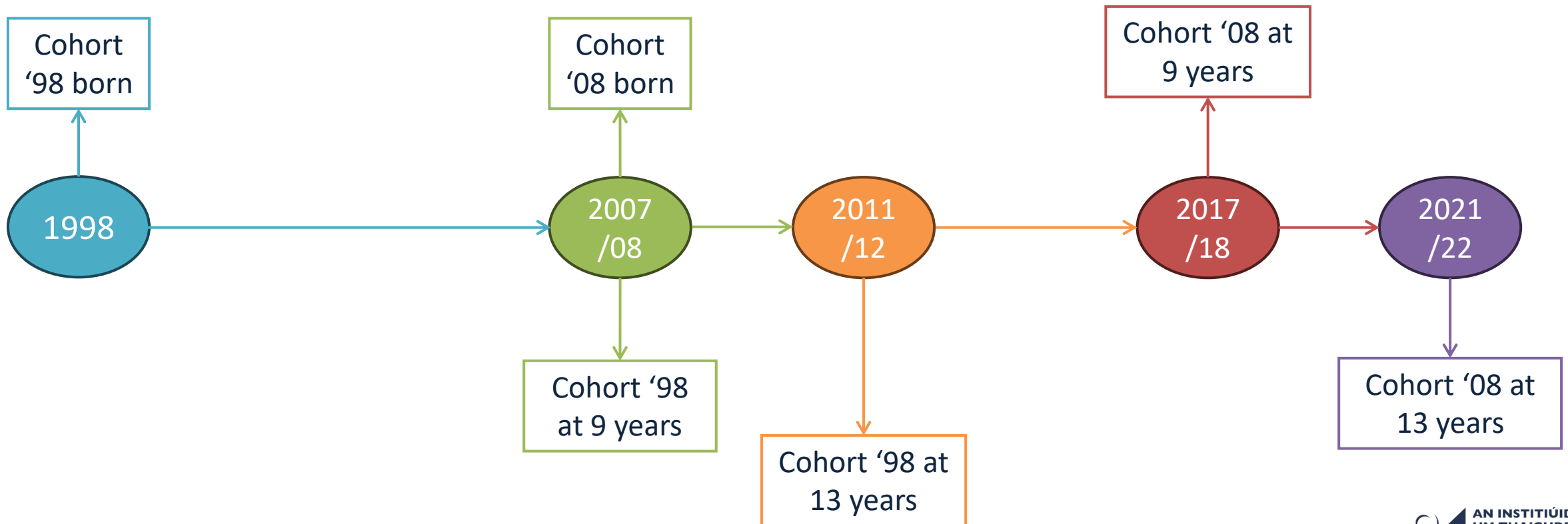
Overview

- **Afterschool Care:** *Term time care for school-age children, including afterschool clubs/centres, childminders and relative care**



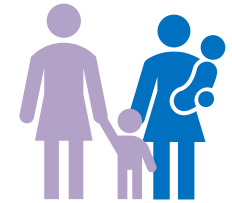
Background: Growing up in Ireland

- Longitudinal Survey



Background to this Research

- Afterschool care is a potentially important sphere for the child's **development and learning**
- Most school-aged children cared for by **parents**, but non-parental care increasing
- Literature dominantly focuses on early learning and care
 - Space for research specifically examining **school-age children**
- **School-age childcare policy** has developed substantially in recent years
 - *Action Plan on School-Age Childcare (SAC) (2017)*
 - *Guidelines on registration of SAC (2019)*
 - *National Childcare Scheme – NCS (2019)*
 - *National Quality Guidelines for School Age Childcare Services (2020)*
 - Launch of *public consultation on the regulation of SAC (Sept 2025)*



Afterschool Care Provision in Ireland

(Pobal Early Years Sector Profile 2023/2024)

- Open services contracted to deliver DCDE funding programmes & schemes
 - *No state-provided afterschool care*
- **1,728** services offering both School Age Care (SAC) and Early Learning & Care (ELC)
- **651** services offering only SAC
 - **64%** located on school premises
 - **51%** established since 2021
- High waiting list for SAC childcare places, though many vacant places suggesting mismatch between supply and demand

Patterns of Afterschool Care

Chapter 2

Definitions

- **Afterschool club/centre:** *formal afterschool care during term time that occurs in a group setting*
- **Childminder Care:** *paid care provided in child's own home or childminders' home*
- **Relative care:** *care by relatives or friends, in child's home or relative/friends' home (incl. paid & unpaid)*
- **Self/Sibling Care**
- **Parental Care**

Main Term Time Care

Cohort '98

Age 9 (2007/2008)

Age 13 (2011/2012)

Cohort '08

Age 9 (2017/2018)

Age 13 (2021/2022)

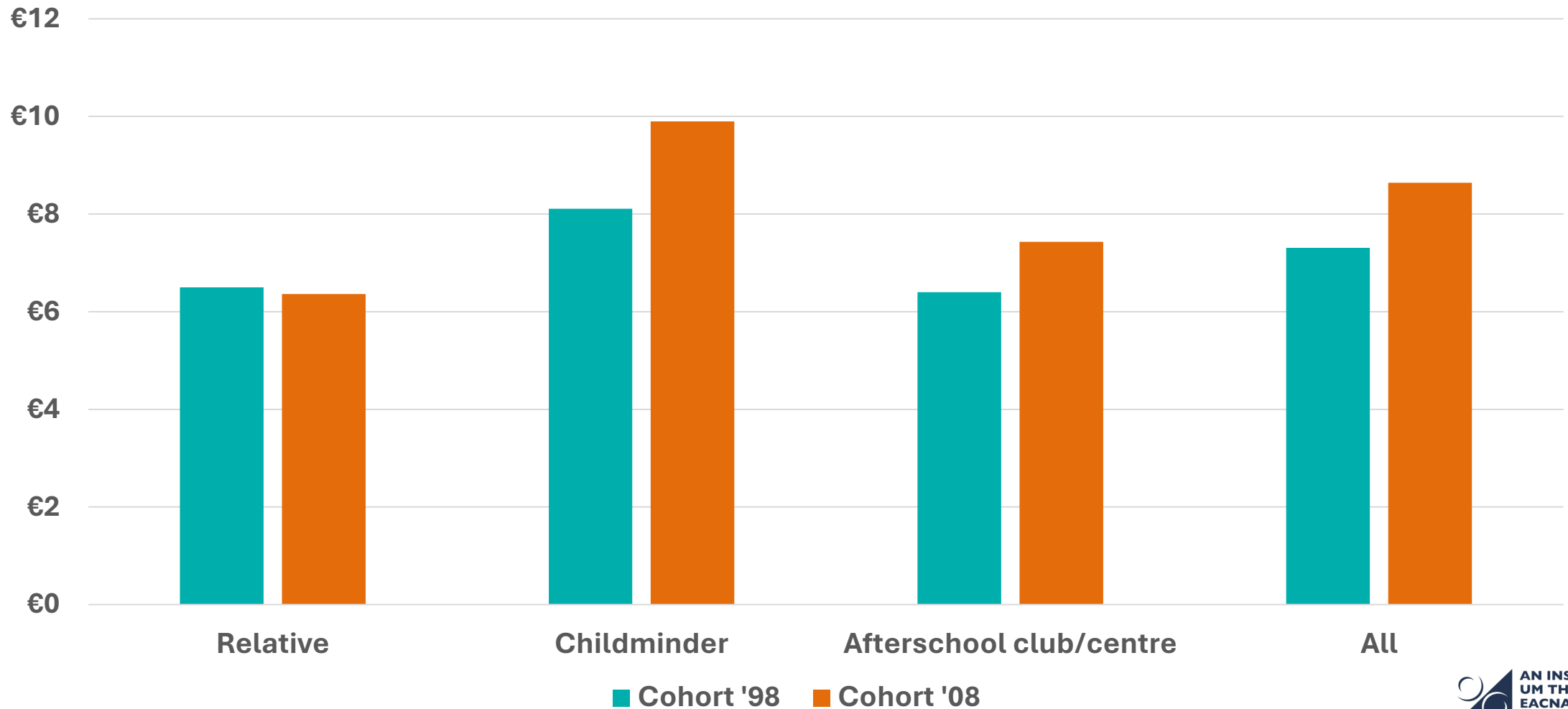
*Note pandemic
distortion*

*Care by parents is the
remainder*

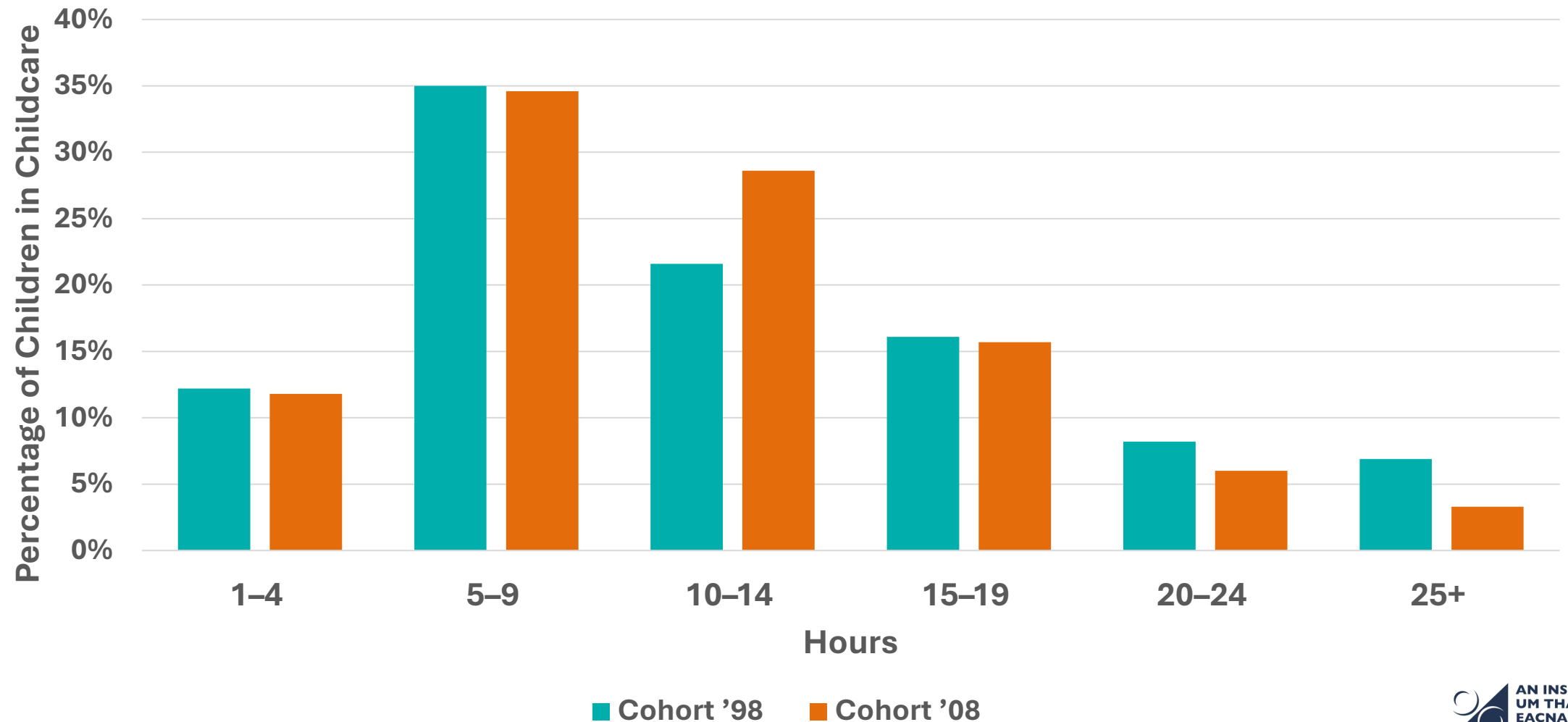
0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30%

Self/sibling Relative Childminder Afterschool club or centre

Average hourly cost of childcare at 9 years (€)

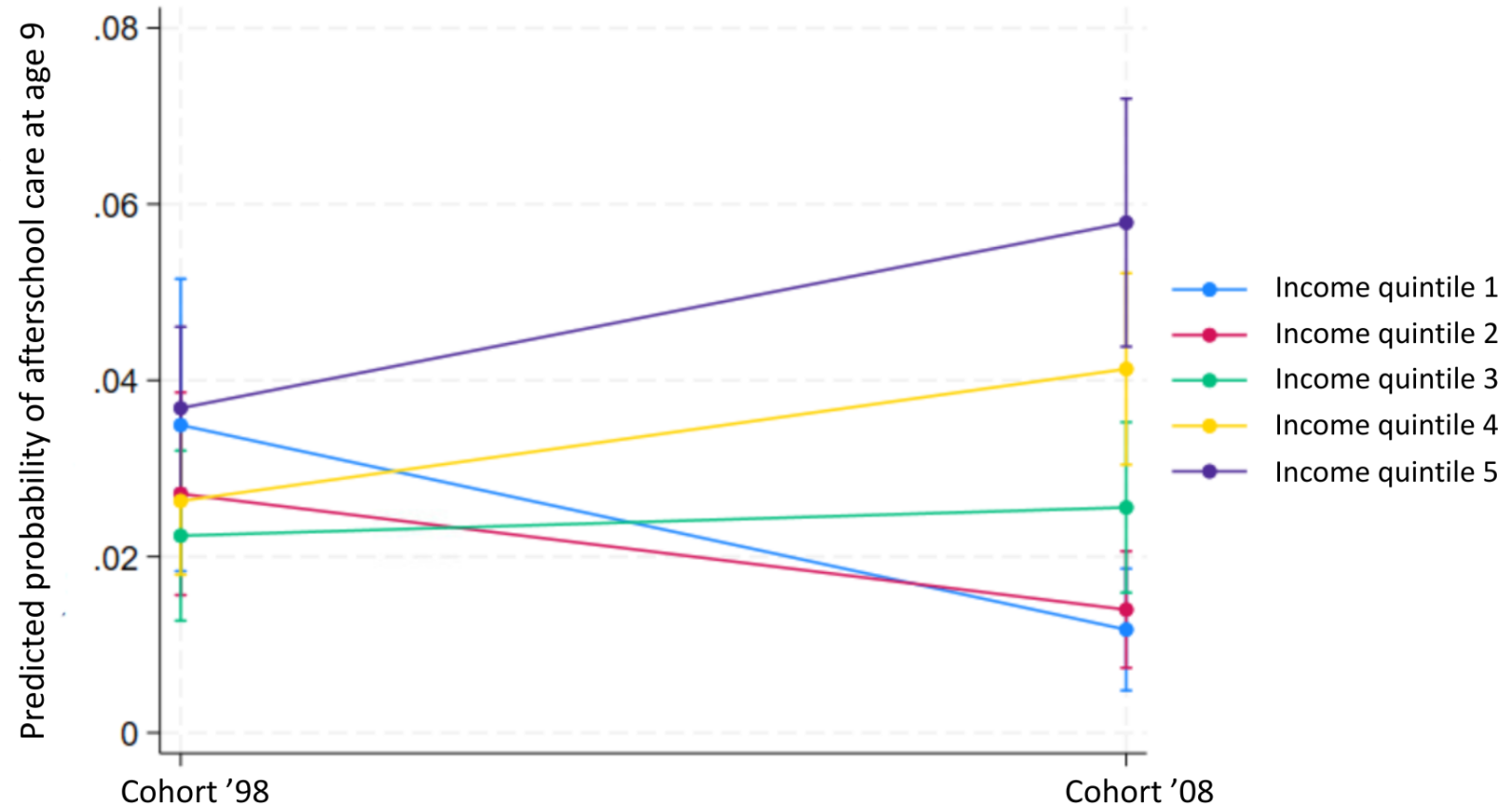


Hours in Childcare (at 9 years)



Factors influencing use of afterschool clubs/centres

- **Maternal employment** is strongest predictor of afterschool club/centre use
- **Income** important predictor of afterschool/centre participation → increasing in Cohort '08



Predictors of care type compared to parental care at 9 years (both cohorts)

Self/sibling	Relative	Childminder	Afterschool club/centre
	Cohort '08 +		
Lone Parent +	Lone parent +	Lone parent +	Lone parent +
Older sibling +	Older sibling -	Older sibling -	Older sibling -
		Younger sibling +	
	Child disability -		
Mothers paid work hours ++	Mothers paid work hours +++	Mothers paid work hours +++	Mothers paid work hours +++
	Income +	Income ++	Income +
Special class/schl --		4th class v 2nd -	
		Rural +	Urban +

Not significant for any care type – sex of child

Activities among 9 and 13 year olds

Chapter 3

Friendships and Peer Interaction

- At age 9, children had **2-3** close friends they saw **2-3** days/week
 - **Frequency** of seeing friends consistent across care types
- **Relative care** associated with **smaller friendship groups** at age 13



Organised Sports and Cultural Activities

- Majority of 9-year-olds in both cohorts involved in sports clubs
 - Higher for those cared for by **childminders**
- At 13, majority still involved in sports clubs, but less than at age 9
 - Being cared for by a **childminder or afterschool club/centre** is a positive predictor of sports involvement at 13.
- Reading for pleasure lower for children minded by **self/siblings**
- Involvement in cultural activities lower for those in **relative care** (for Cohort '98)



Screen-time & internet use

- More widespread phone ownership for Cohort '08
- Higher phone ownership for those in **relative care**
- 9-year-olds spent 1-3 hours watching TV daily
 - **Relative care** associated with more TV watching for Cohort '98.
- **Time online** increased significantly between cohorts.
 - Those in **childminder** care spent less time online
- Screentime varied less across care provision at **age 13**



Cognitive and Socio-Emotional Outcomes at Age 13

Chapter 3

Cognitive and Socio-Emotional Outcome Measures *(Outcomes measured at 13)*

COGNITIVE

- Measures differ between Cohorts (Covid-19)
 - **Cohort '98:** Drumcondra Verbal and Numerical Reasoning
 - **Cohort '08:** Verbal Fluency Measure

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL

- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**

- Conduct
- Hyperactivity

Externalising
Problems

- Emotional Problems
- Peer Problems

Internalising
Problems

Cognitive Outcomes

- **Cohort '98**
 - Higher reading scores associated with **childminder care**, mainly due to family type selection (class & maternal employment)
 - Positive relationship between maths scores at 13 and **childminder care**
 - **Afterschool club/centre care at 13** associated with higher reading scores at 13
- **Cohort '08**
 - Children in **relative care** had lower cognitive scores at age 13 compared to **parental care**, but other care types were not significant

Socio-Emotional Outcomes

- Overall (aggregate SDQ score), **no effect** between care types
- **Externalising** scores higher for children attending afterschool clubs/centres (small effect sizes)
- **Child characteristics** e.g. disability & **family characteristics** e.g. maternal education & income have more association with socio-emotional outcomes than care type
- *Overall small effects of care type on outcomes*
 - Short hours
 - Lack of information on quality

Conclusions

Implications for Policy

- Since Cohort '08 were aged 9 in (2017/2018) there have been **significant policy developments** in Ireland, e.g. NCS
 - Following these developments will be important for future research
- Continued growth in **provision** of group-based afterschool care, suggest higher proportion of children in future cohorts may use this care type, especially if **quality** improved and **costs** reduced.

Implications for Policy (cont.)

- Choice of care type is limited for **low-income parents** and those in **rural areas**
- **Costs** have increased beyond inflation, influencing care decisions and labour market choices of parents (particularly **mothers**)
- **National Childcare Scheme** and current **consultation** on the regulation of SAC will be crucial in supporting positive change in quality and access to school-age childcare services

Thank You

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Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

All questions marked as not true, somewhat true, certainly true

- Considerate of other people's feelings
- Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long
- Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness
- Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)
- Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers
- Rather solitary, tends to play alone
- Generally obedient, usually does what adults request
- Many worries, often seems worried
- Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill
- Constantly fidgeting or squirming
- Has at least one good friend
- Often fights with other children or bullies them
- Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful
- Generally liked by other children
- Easily distracted, concentration wanders
- Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence
- Kind to younger children
- Often lies or cheats
- Picked on or bullied by other children
- Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)
- Thinks things out before acting
- Steals from home, school or elsewhere
- Gets on better with adults than with other children
- Many fears, easily scared
- Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span