

Lone parents transitions, employment transitions and poverty outcomes

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Lone parents Context

- Much evidence of poverty risks, material deprivation, inadequate housing, persistent poverty & low pay (Roantree et al 2022; Laurence et al 2023; Maitre et al. 2021).
- Evidence in Ire is mostly cross-sectional. Life course approach allows us to look at factors that influence transitions
- Previous research - transition to lone parenthood (separation) leads to sig decline in income (Mortelmans 2020) and poverty entry (Vandecasteele 2011). Especially in Southern Europe and Liberal Regimes (UK, IRL) (Uunk, 2004)

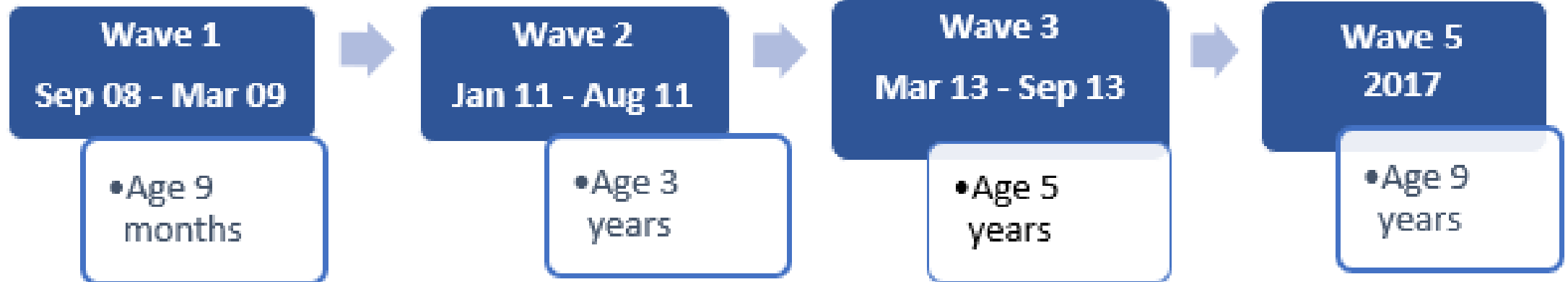


Research Questions

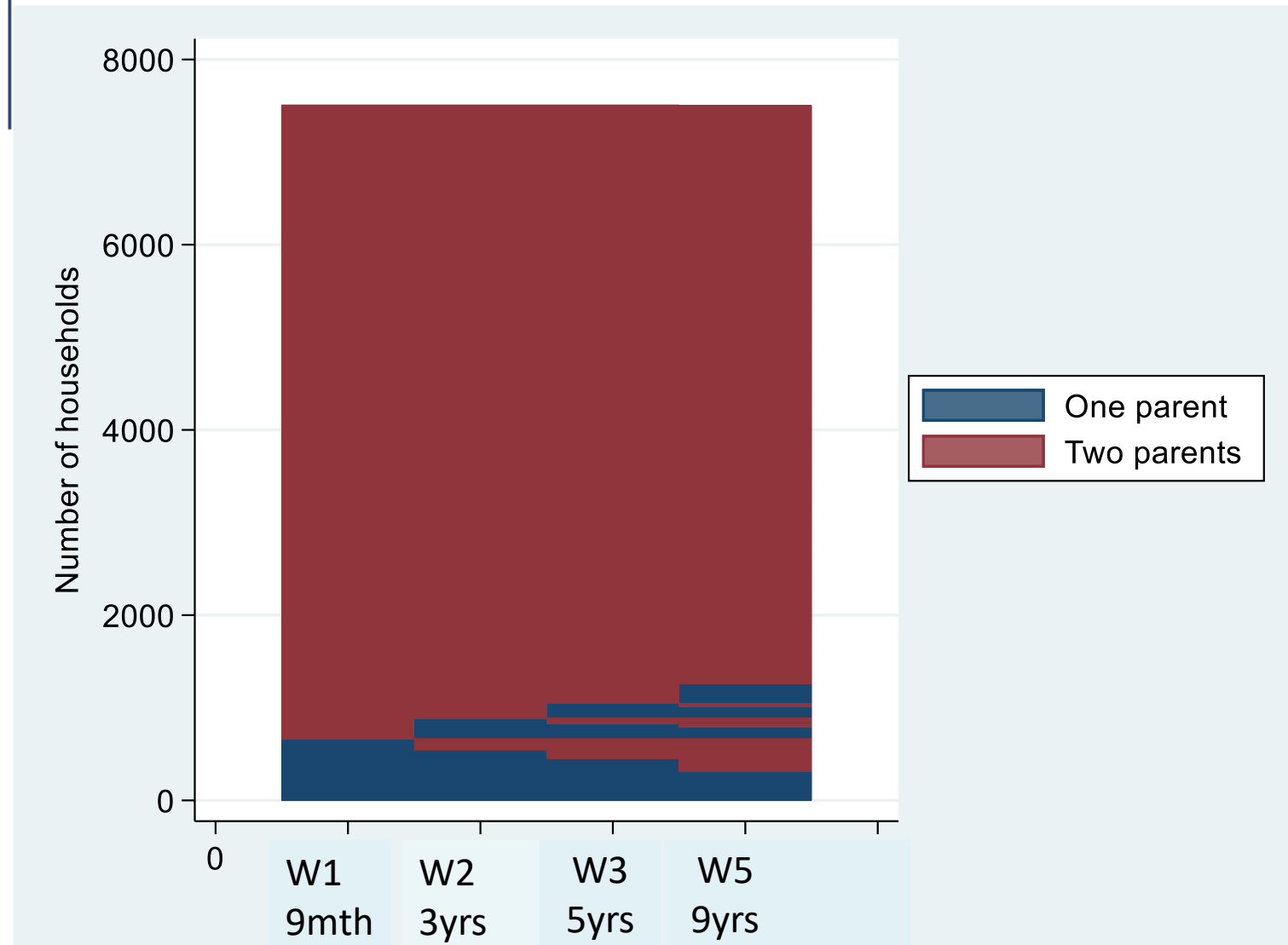
- Which lone families are most at risk of economic vulnerability?
- How do **transitions into lone parenthood** influence the household's economic vulnerability?
- Does the economic impact of becoming lone parent vary (eg by employment status, housing tenure, education)?
- What factors are associated with **exit from economic vulnerability** for lone parents ?



Growing Up in Ireland '08 Cohort



How does household composition change w1-w5

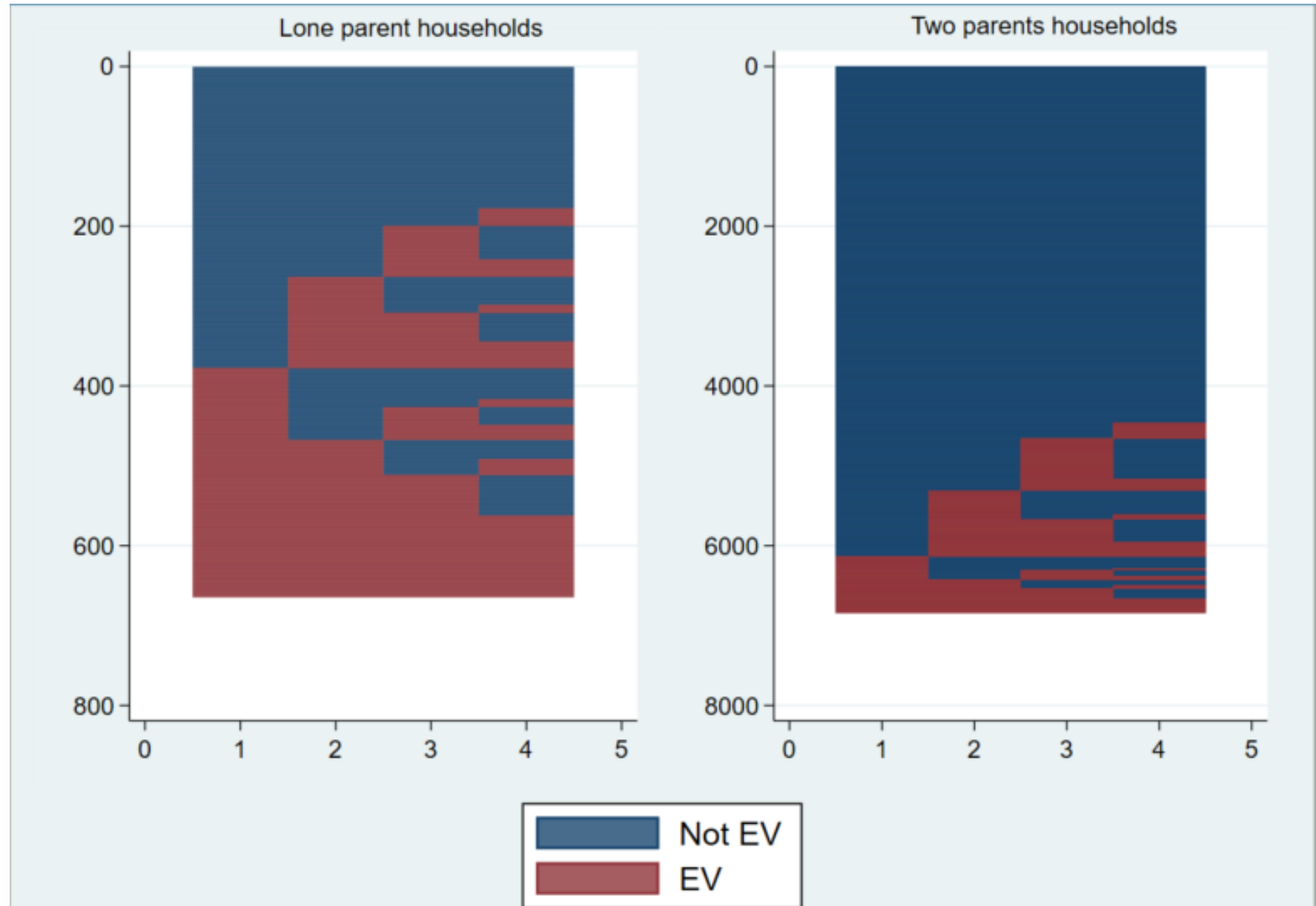


- 9 per cent of two-parent families split up over the course of w1-w5
- Half of lone parent families (re)partner

Economic Vulnerability (EV)

- Multidimensional approach to poverty with Latent Class Analysis
 - Watson et al. (2014) Bradshaw & Holmes (2016)
- Economic vulnerability measure:
 - **Economic stress:** great difficulty & difficulty making ends meet=1, some difficulty to very easily=0
 - **Low household income:** bottom quintile household equivalised income
 - **Material deprivation:** 11 items capturing enforced lack for essential items/activities. Mean deprivation.

EV Sequences for Lone and Two Parent HHs at w1



Which lone parents are most at risk of EV? (all waves)

Increased risk

- Disability (mother)
- Larger families
- Lower 2nd educ. (v degree)
- Working <16 hrs p/w
- No maintenance payments
 - Around 50% no payments 36-38% irregular and 11-17% receive regular payments
- Social housing (compared to owner-occupied)
- Year 2013/interview wave 3

Reduced risk

- Live with (grand)parents compared to owners

No Effect

- Age (of mother)
- Never married v previously married



**How do transitions
into lone parenthood
influence economic
vulnerability?**

Analytical strategy

- Examine pairs of waves/years:
 - 9 months to 3 years; 3 years to 5 years; 5 years to 9 years
- Model to test the effect of **entry into lone parenthood on EV**.
 - Lagged dep model (control for EV at T-1).
 - Restricted to those in **two parent households at T-1**
 - **Control for a range of other factors in T-1**
- Compares those who **become lone parents between waves** to those with same characteristics who **stayed in couple households**

How does separation affect economic vulnerability:

Two Parent HHs @ T-1 (N=19,900)

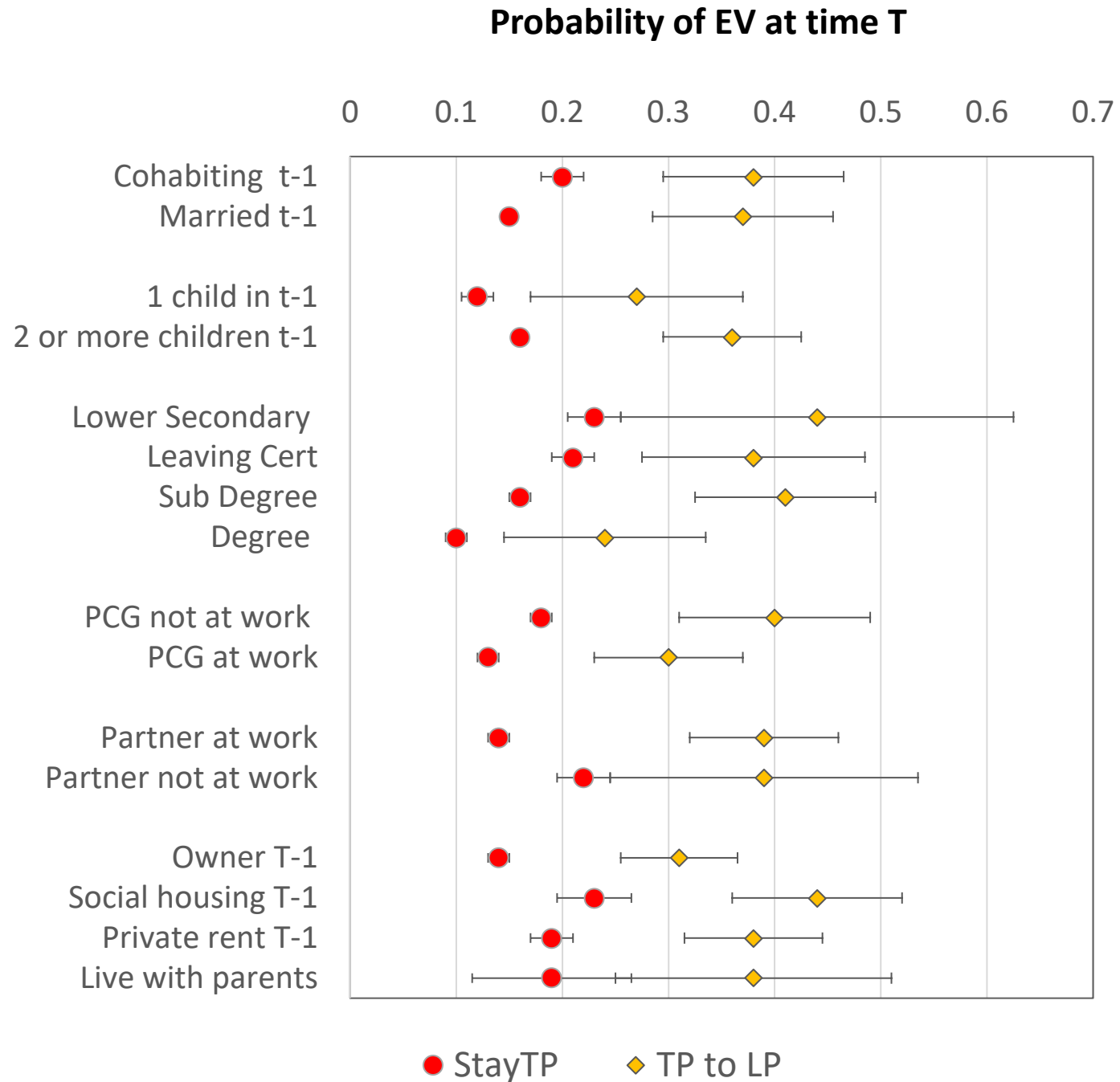
- Those EV at T-1 (previous wave) are 6 times more likely to be EV at time T (OR 6.2)
- **Becoming a lone parent more than doubles the risk of EV (OR 2.6)** compared to woman with similar characteristics that stay in couple

Control for:

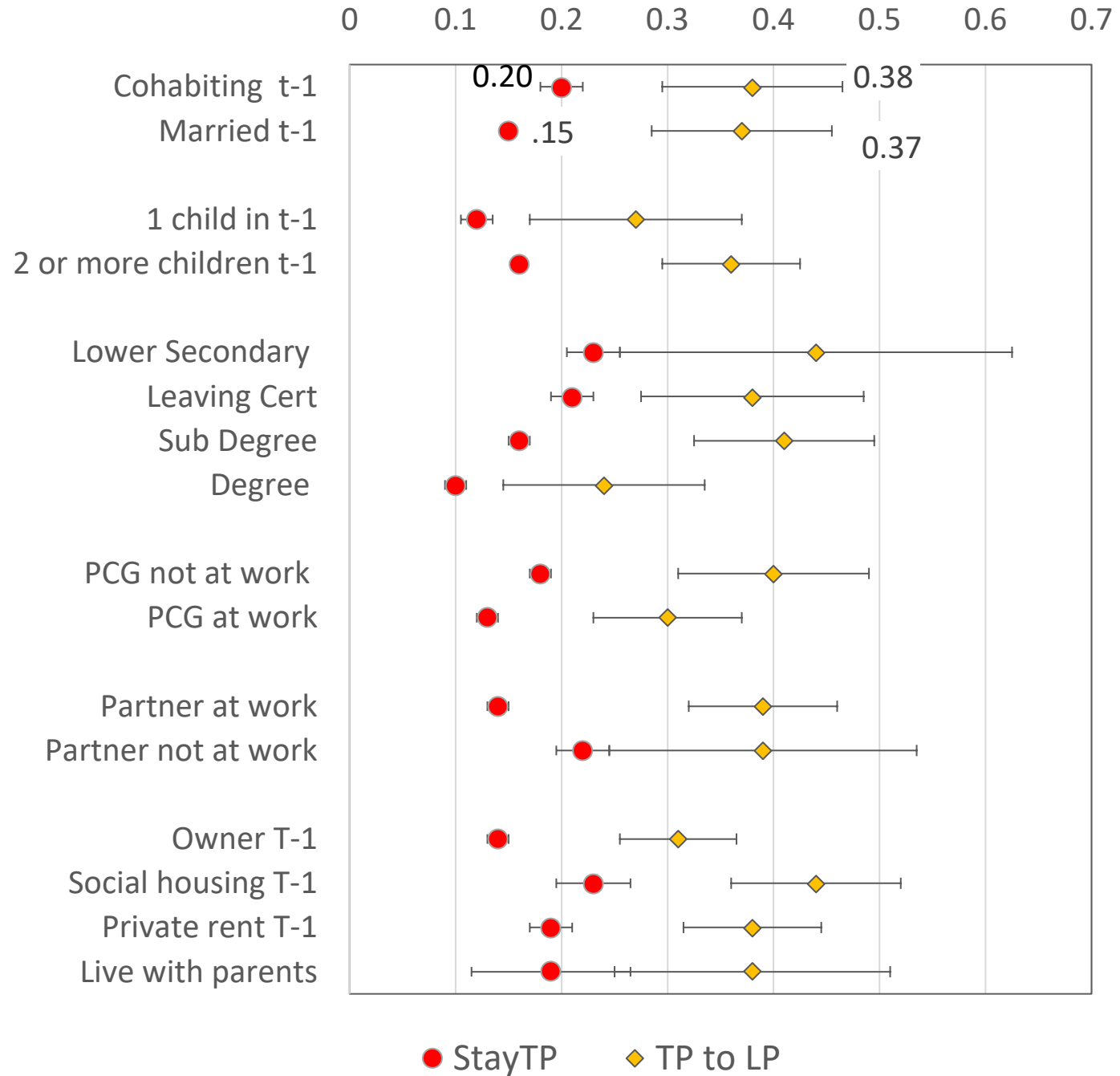
- Number of children at T-1
- Disability at T-1
- Mothers' employment at T-1 and changes in employment status
- Year (interview wave)
- Housing situation at T-1 (owner occupied, private tenant, social housing)

Does the impact of entry to lone parenthood on EV differ by characteristics before separation?

- Scale of increased risk similar across women/families with different characteristic
- But relative disadvantages remain



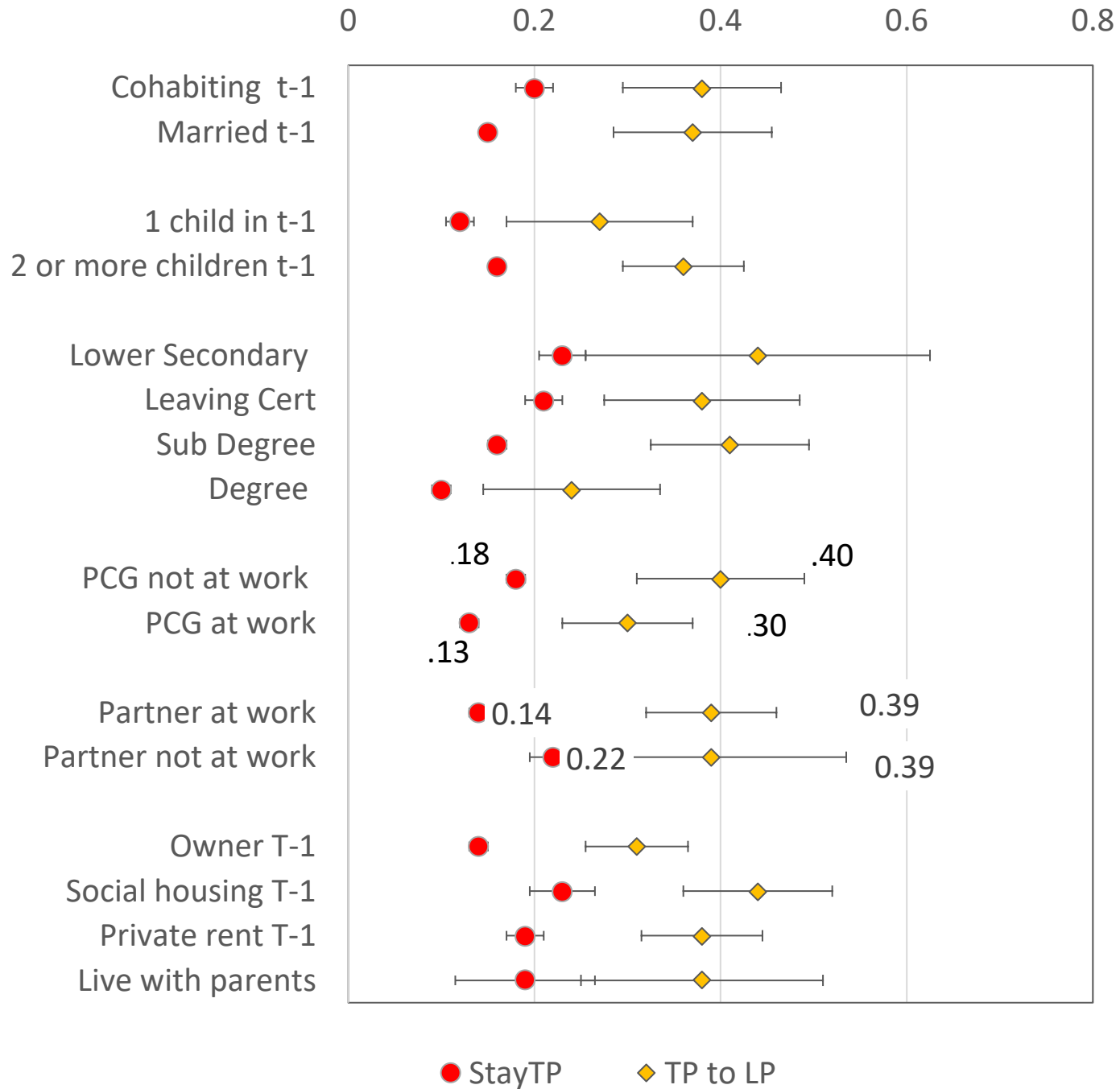
Marital status in previous wave



● StayTP ◆ TP to LP

Probability of EV

Employment status in previous wave





What factors influence
exit from economic
vulnerability
for lone parents?

Factors that influence Exit from Poverty: Lone Mothers that are EV @T-1 (n=896)

Increases probability of Exit

- Compared to stay not employed
 - Moves into 30+ hours work (OR 3.2)
 - Moves into 16-29 hrs (OR 2.5)
 - P-time to full-time (OR 2.63, p=.06)
 - Stay full-time (OR 2.4)
- Degree or sub-degree qualification (until control for employment transitions)
- (Re)partnering (OR 1.7)

Note: All characteristics measured at T-1

Reduces probability of Exit

- Higher number of children
- Don't get enough support from family/friends (until control for employment)

No Effect

- Move into work <16 hours
- Receipt of maintenance payment
- Never married v previously married
- Period (age of study child)
- PCG Disability

Conclusions

- Partnership breakdown with child(ren) < 10 years old has strong influence on entry to EV
- Increased prob of EV is **widespread**, even for advantaged groups. Though those disadvantaged before separation have highest EV risk
- High levels of EV highlight importance of income supports for families – two-tier child-ben.
- Employment sig reduces EV but not always (LP face sig barriers – low pay, constraints on hours due to care needs, importance of childcare and family supports)
- Education crucial pathway to better employment opportunities and financial independence
- Maintenance payments associated with lower risk of EV – but sig around half lone mothers were not receiving regular payments
 - Implement recommendations of Child Maintenance Review Group report 2022
- **Limitations**
 - only looking at immediate impact, not longer term.
 - Censoring (eg no info of poverty history prior to the first interview)

Thanks for listening
Full report available at
www.esri.ie/publications

Any questions?