

Putting children at the centre: Using our knowledge of child development to give NZ kids the best start to life

Motu Public Policy Seminar



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Income and children's behaviour

The influence of maternal stress and children's screens

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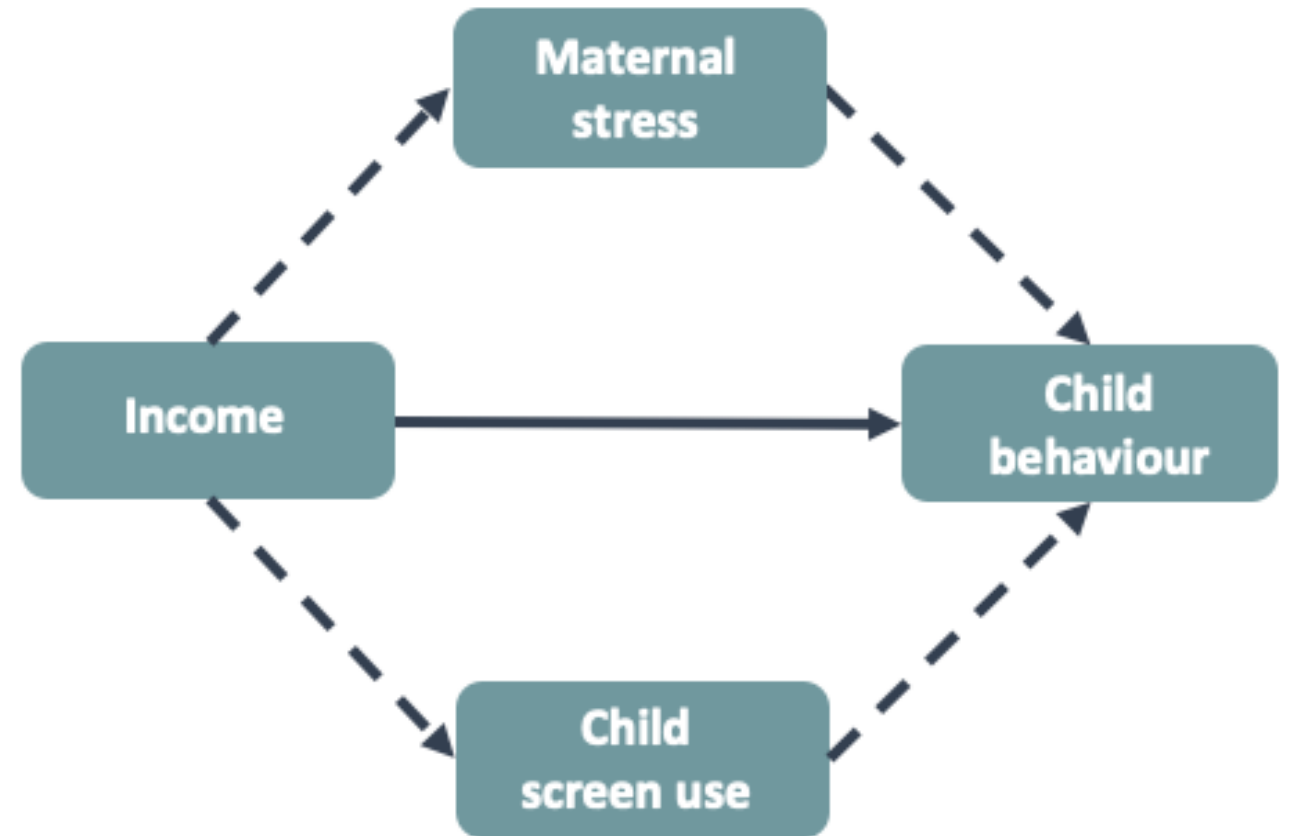
- Introduction and method
- Income and child behaviour
- Children's technology use
- Stress and housing
- Conclusions and policy implications



What were we interested in?

1. Does adequate household income help protect children from developing behaviour problems?
2. What roles do maternal stress and screen use play in the relationship between income and child behaviour problems?

Fig. 1: Conceptual model



Outcome variable

Child behaviour - Developed from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Strengths	Prosocial behaviour
Difficulties	Conduct problems Hyperactivity Peer relationship problems Emotional problems

Growing up in New Zealand



- A contemporary child-focused longitudinal study following **6,852 children** in the Auckland and Waikato regions, starting in 2009/10.
- Broadly generalisable to the New Zealand population in terms of ethnicity and socio-demographic variables (at the beginning).
- Our research focuses on mother and child data (mother-reported) from the **pregnancy to 8-year-old** waves.



Method

Two approaches to longitudinal data

1. Differences *between* groups

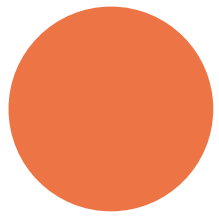
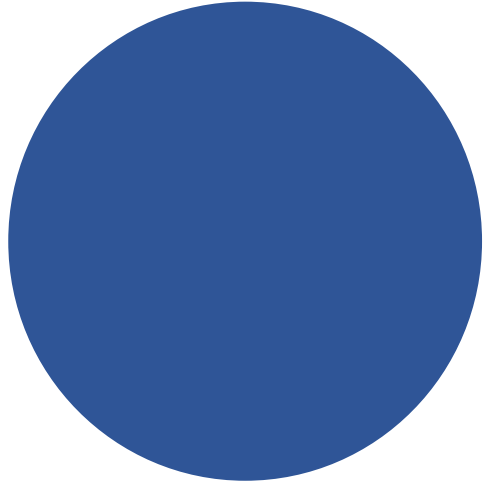
Compares the outcomes for different income groups, while controlling for things that can be measured in the data.

We have used ***multivariate OLS regression*** with a ***Gelbach decomposition***.

2. Differences *within* the same individual/family (over time)

Looks at the same people over time (e.g. compares periods when income is higher or lower). Factors that don't change over time but can't be measured, such as a mother's upbringing can be controlled for.

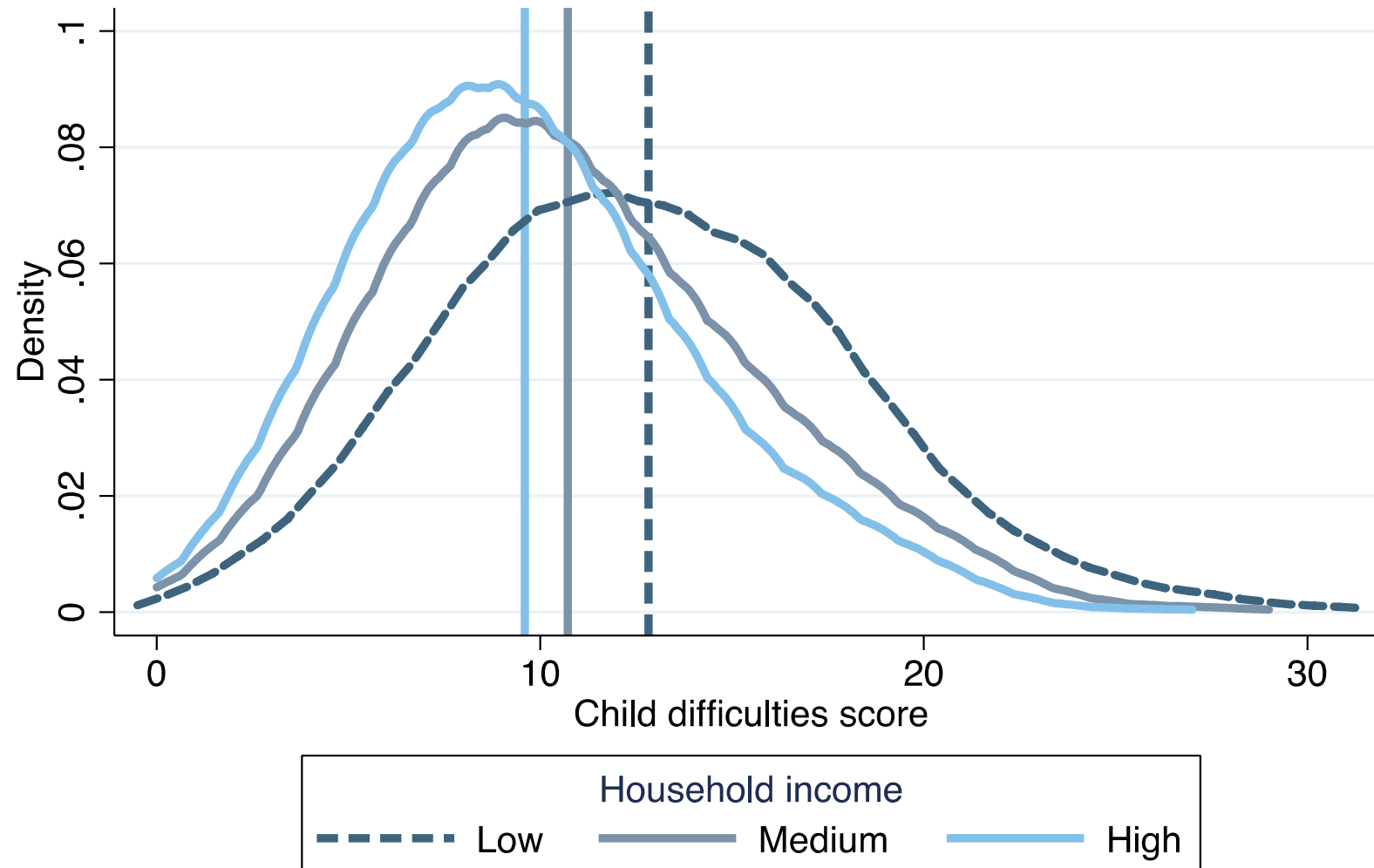
We have used a ***fixed effects*** approach.



Income and child behaviour

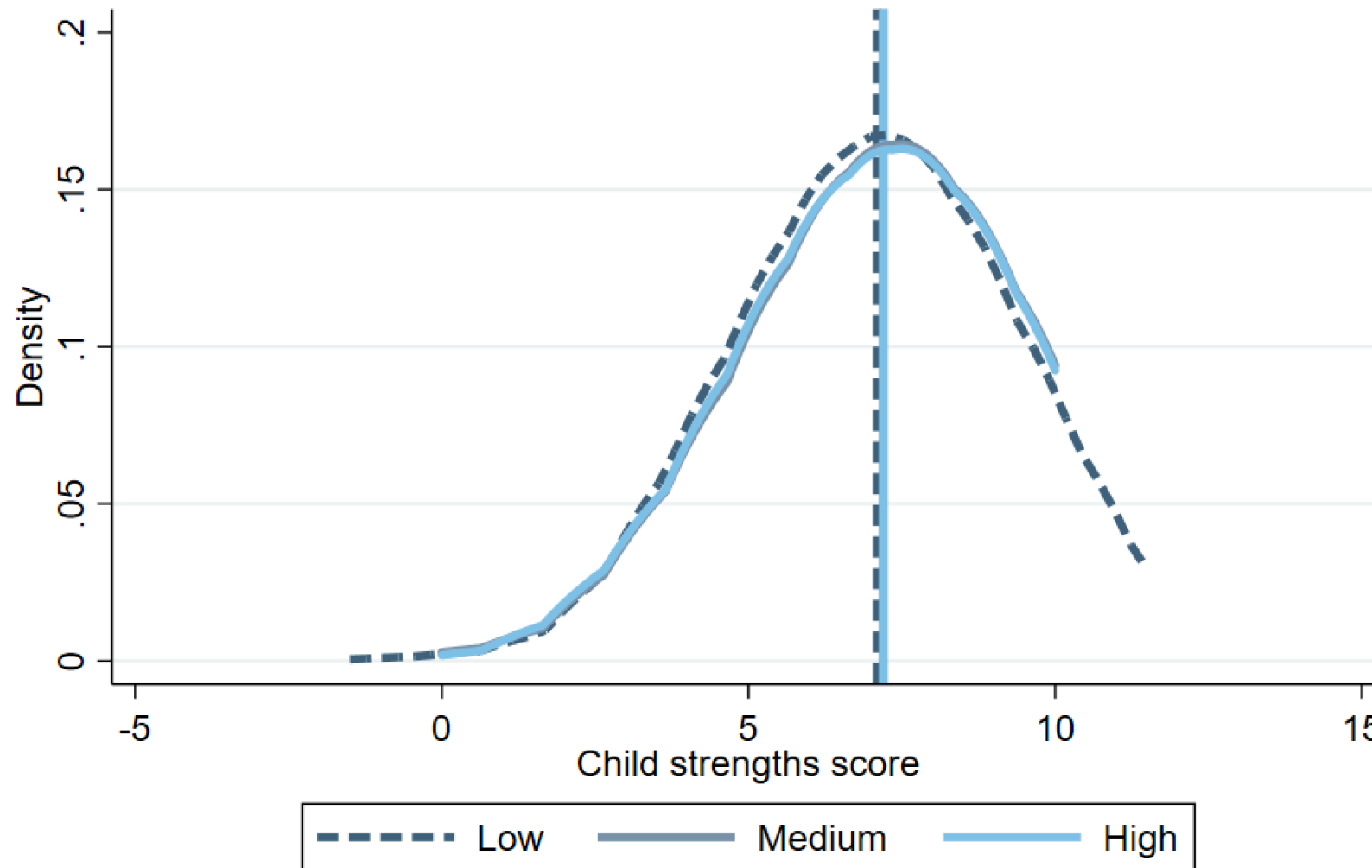
2 years – 8 years

Fig. 2 - Distribution of difficulties scores by household income group – 2 years



Source: Growing Up in New Zealand, DCW2

Fig. 3 - Distribution of strengths scores by household income group – 2 years

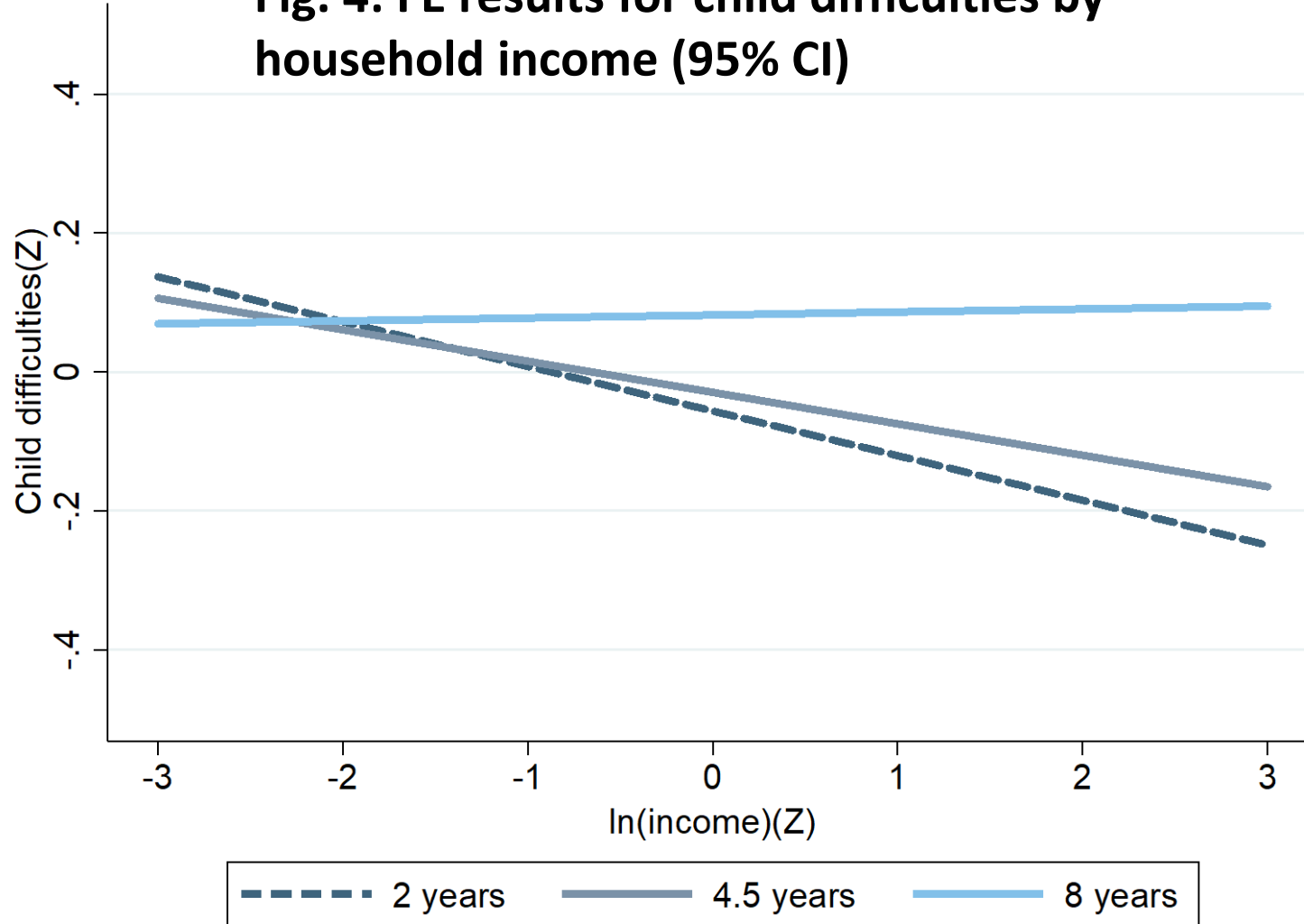


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Source: Growing Up in New Zealand, DCW2

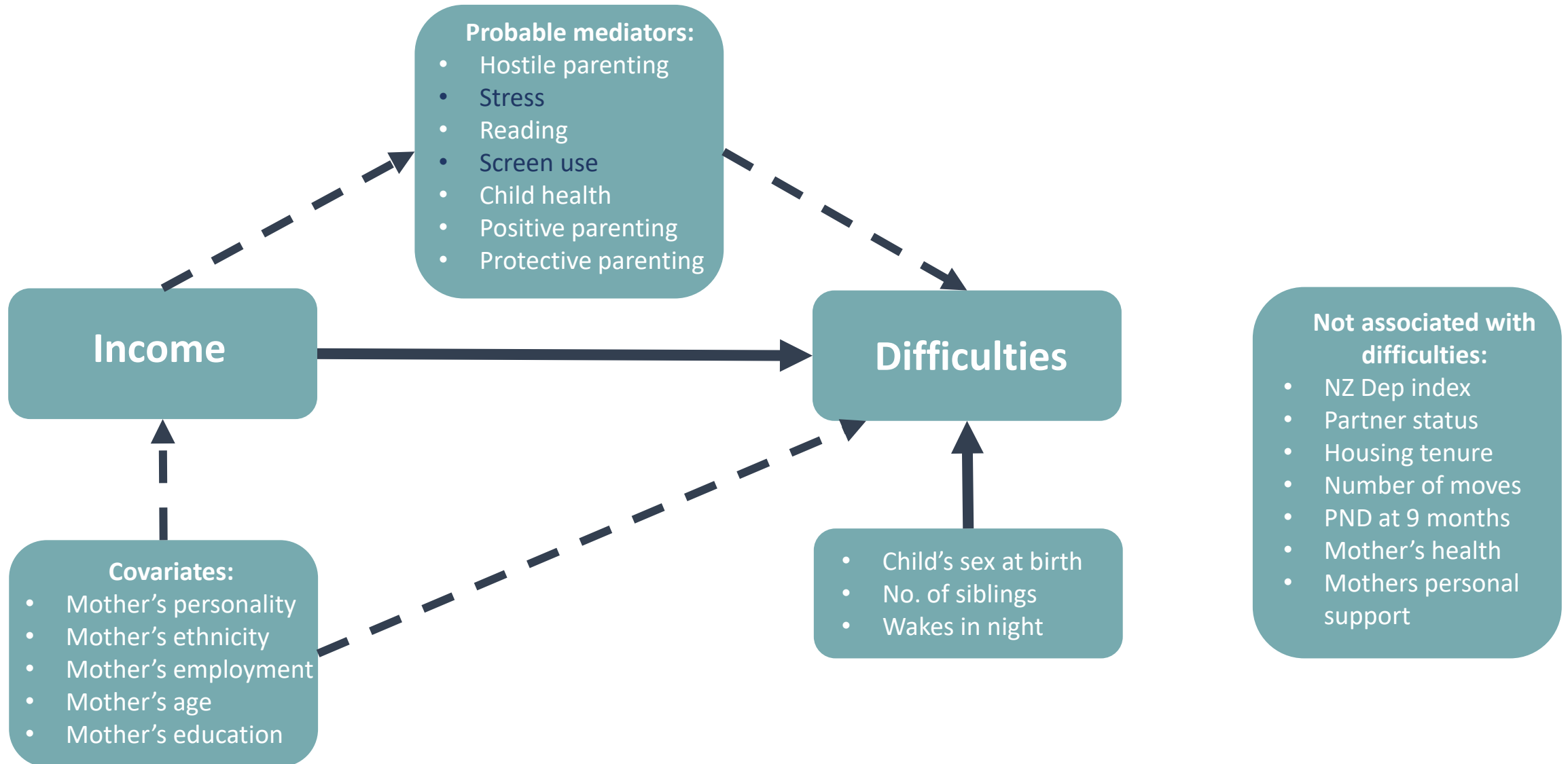
Income and child behaviour

Fig. 4: FE results for child difficulties by household income (95% CI)

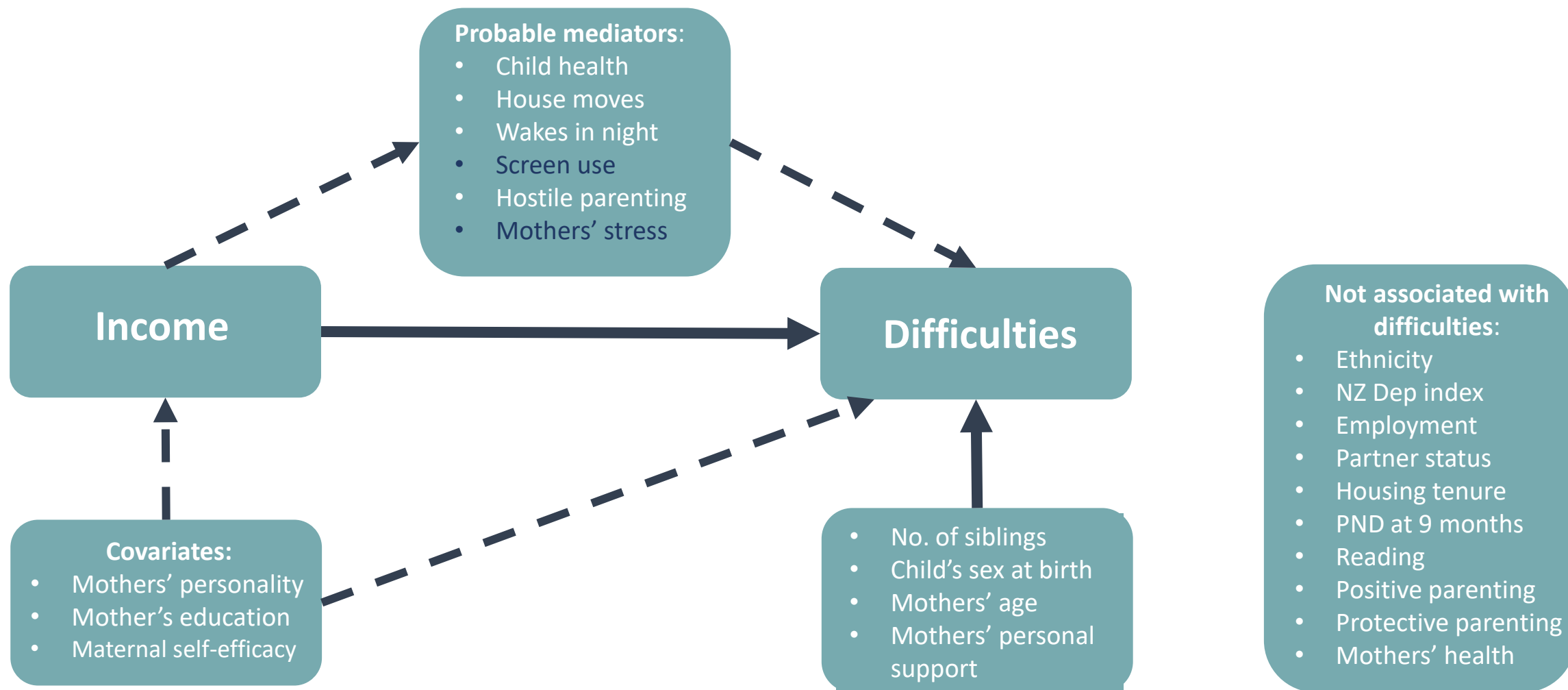


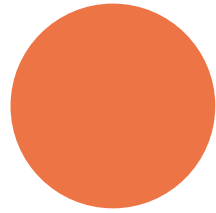
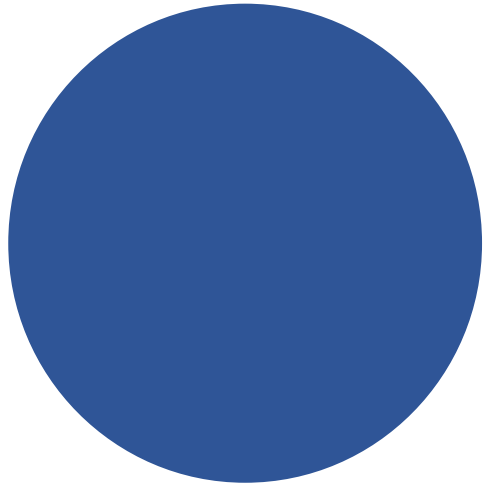
During the preschool years, in periods where income is higher, child behaviour problems are lower.

Gelbach decomposition results - 2 years



Gelbach decomposition results – 8 years



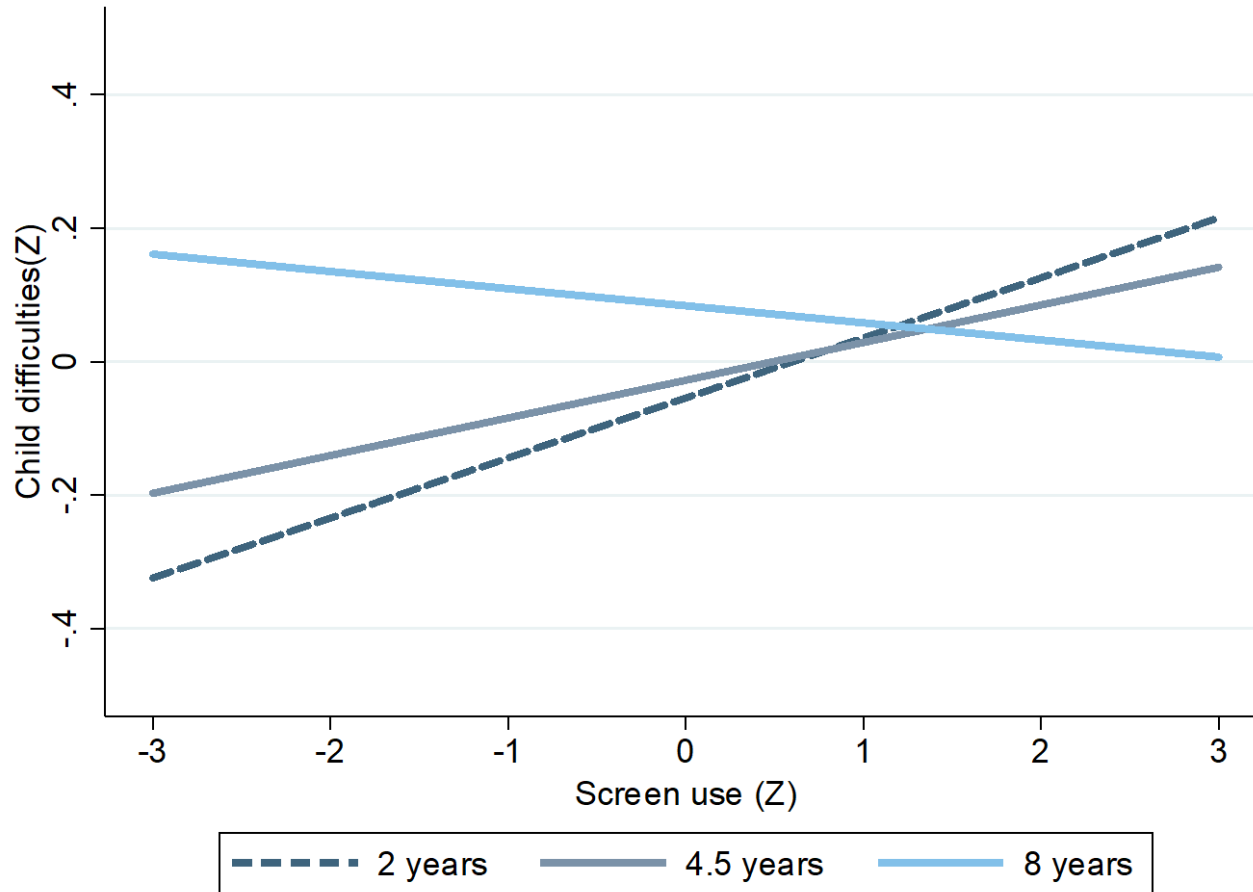


Children's technology

2 years – 8 years old

Screen use and child behaviour

Figure 5: FE results for child difficulties by screen use (95% CI)



- During the preschool years, when screen use is lower child behaviour problems are lower (when comparing the same child over time).

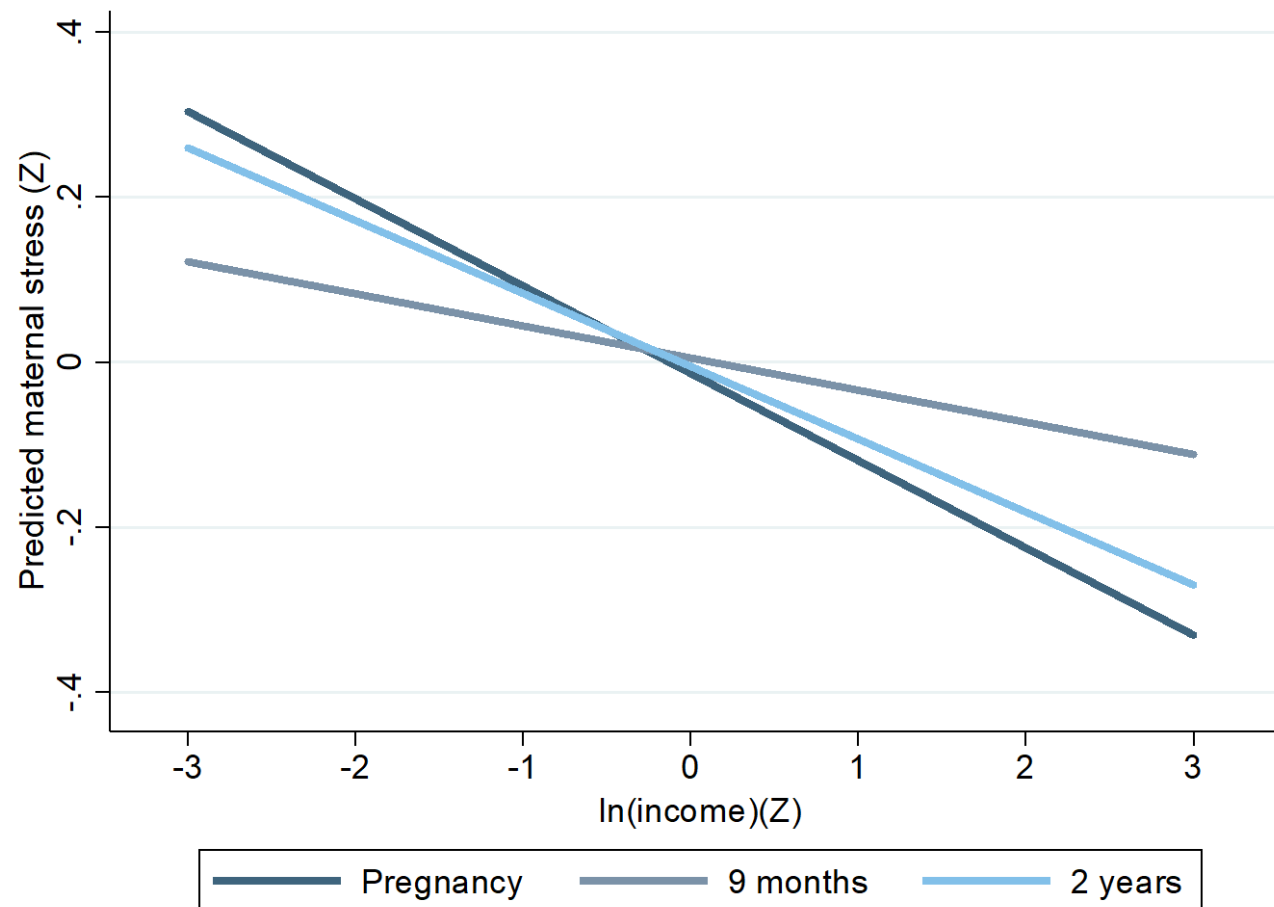


Stress and housing

Pregnancy – 8 years old

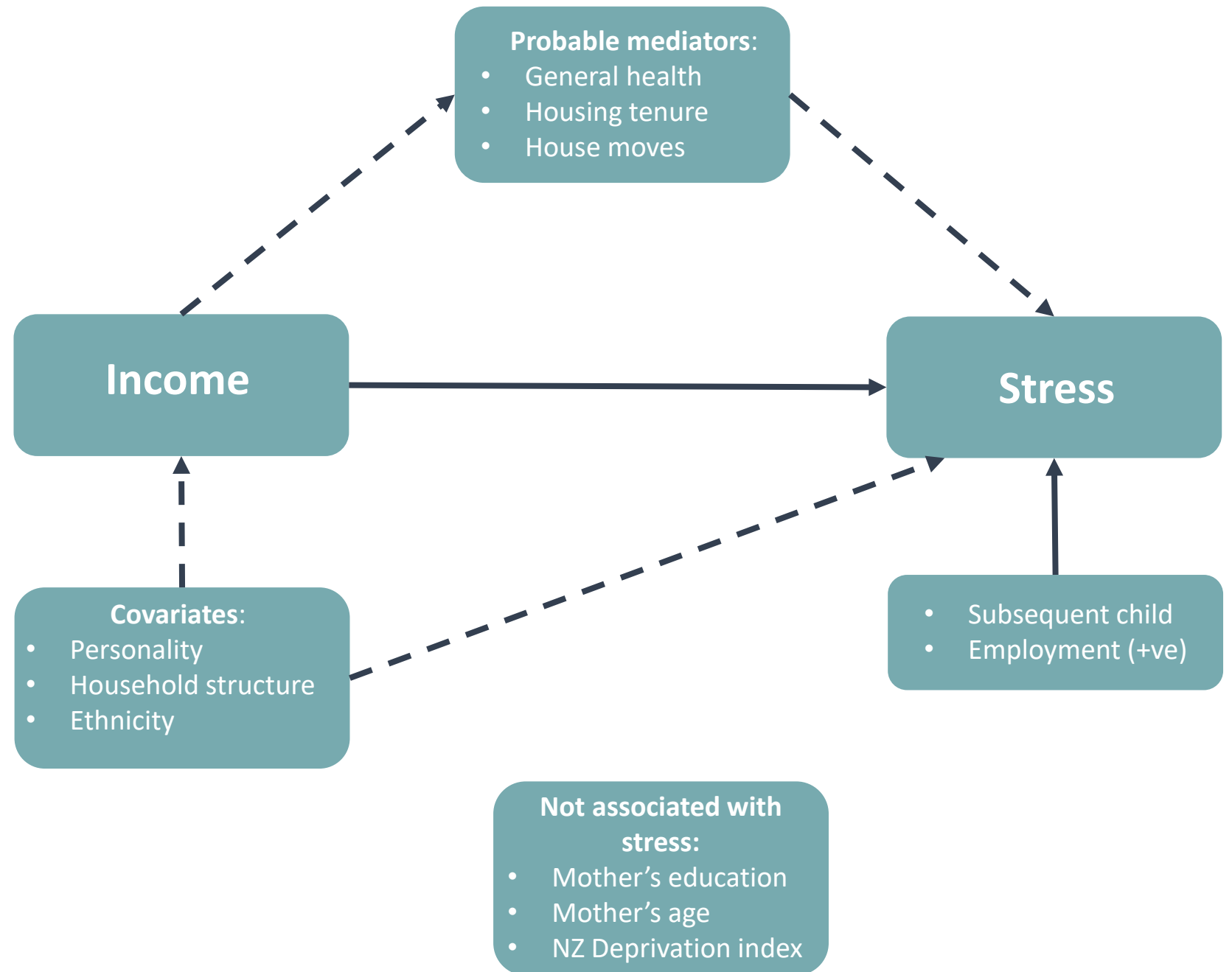
Income and maternal stress

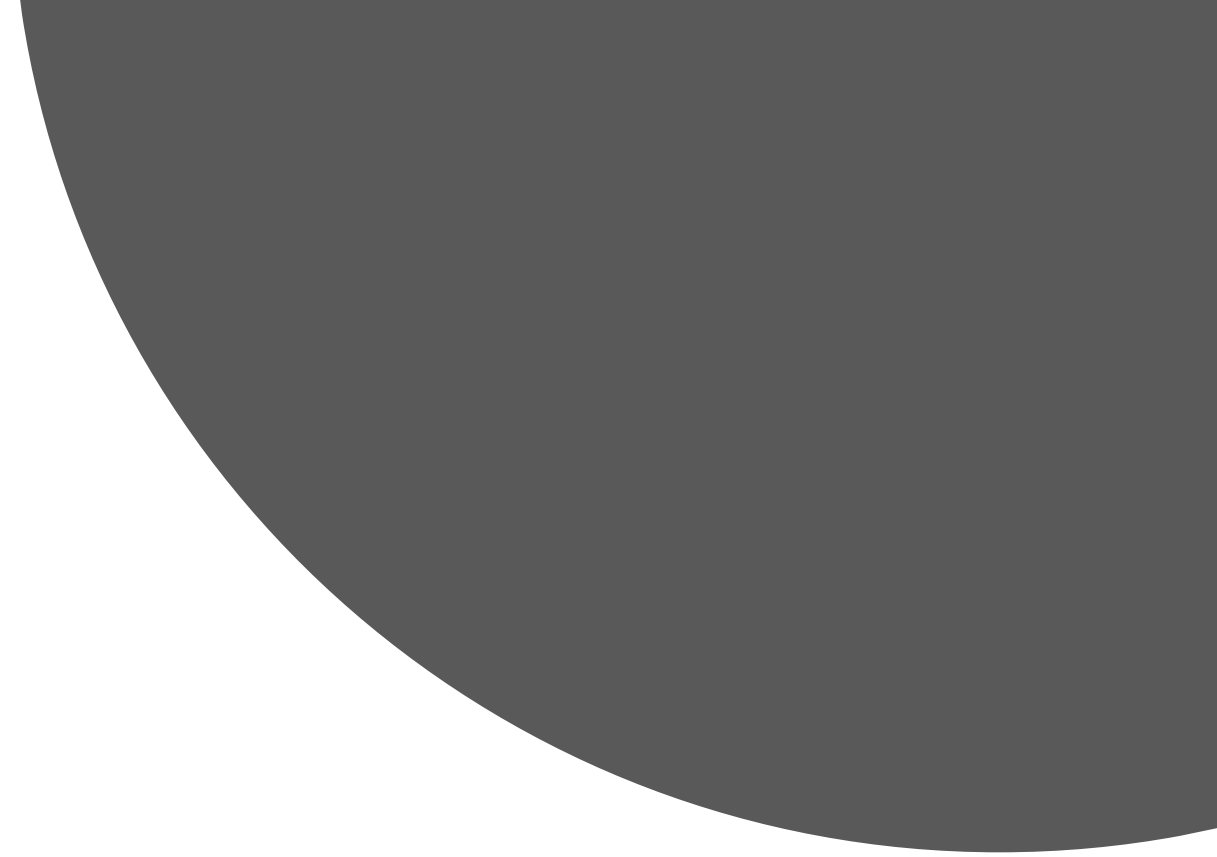
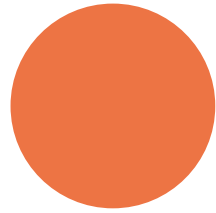
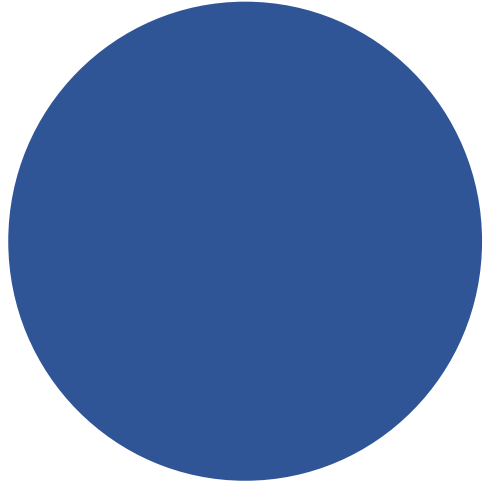
Figure 6: FE results for maternal stress by household income (95% CI)



- In periods where income is higher, maternal stress is lower (when comparing the same mother over time)
- The effects size is larger during pregnancy and at 2 years, but smaller at 9 months of age.

Gelbach decomposition results – 2 years





Conclusions

- Conclusions
- Policy implications

The results suggest (in the preschool years):



Higher income



Less stress



More engaged
parenting



Better child
behaviour outcomes

Further policy implications

- We need to consider children's lives with a developmental perspective.
- Health and housing support are important for expectant and new mothers' wellbeing.
- Screen use should not be considered in isolation, especially when it comes to considering parental stress.



Source: Getty images

Questions?

Feel free to email me:

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Source: Getty images