

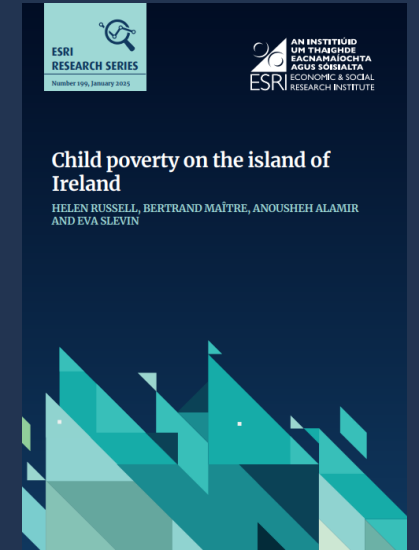
Child Poverty on the Island of Ireland: The Role of Household Labour Market Status

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Motivation

- Child poverty has **wide-ranging** and **long-lasting** impacts
- Neighbouring states similarities but also key differences
 - Higher **inactivity** in NI (NESC, 2022), higher **part-time emp** NI (Hingre et al 2023), higher **productivity & wages** in IE (Bergin & McGuinness, 2022), more **unequal wages** IE (Doorley et al 2024)
 - **Social welfare policy differences** – benefits and services e.g. childcare (Doorley et al 2024).
 - **NI smaller regional economy**, limits of devolved policy
 - **Worklessness, low pay & obstacles to employment faced by mothers** – especially lone mothers are contributing factors to child poverty (Horgan and Monteith, 2009)
- **Reducing barriers to work** key lever for addressing child poverty, alongside welfare system and services (Doorley et al, 2022; Förster and Verbist, 2012; Van Lancker, 2018)

Research Questions

1. How do **patterns** of child deprivation and child income poverty **differ** between **NI & IE** over time?
2. What is the role of household **labour market** situation in shaping the risk of child poverty in both jurisdictions?

Data and Methods

- **Quantitative analysis**
 - **Family Resources Survey (NI)** 700 to 1,700 hh per year (*1,138 children < 18*)
 - **Survey of Income and Living Conditions (IE)** 5-6,000 hh per year (*3,174 children < 18*)
 - Joint analysis for period 2019 to 2023
- **Consultation with Stakeholders Sept 2024**
 - 22 participants: 11 from Ireland, 11 from Northern Ireland
 - NGOs, policy makers, researchers

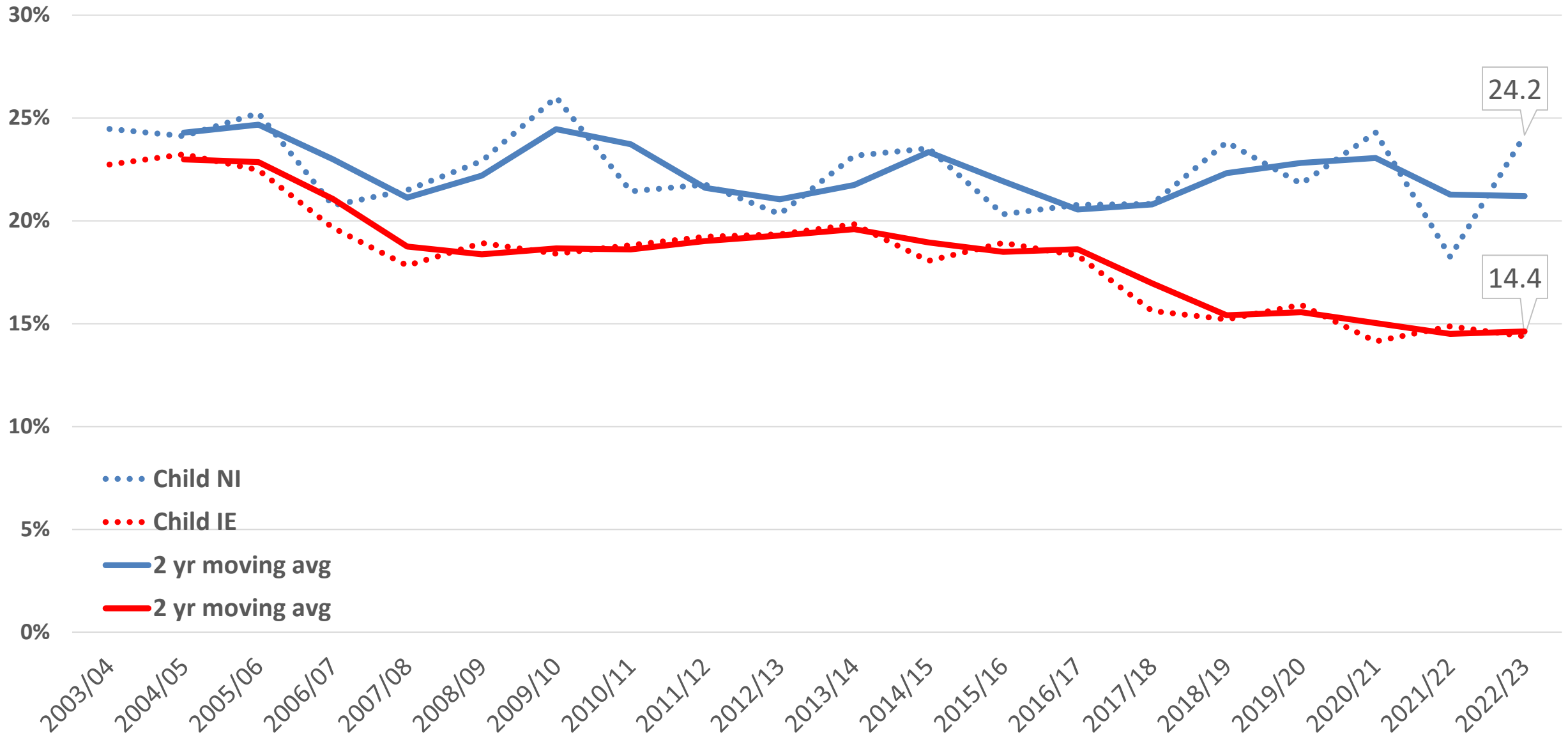
Poverty Measures

Income poverty: A household is defined as income poor if their equivalised household disposable income is below 60% of the national median.

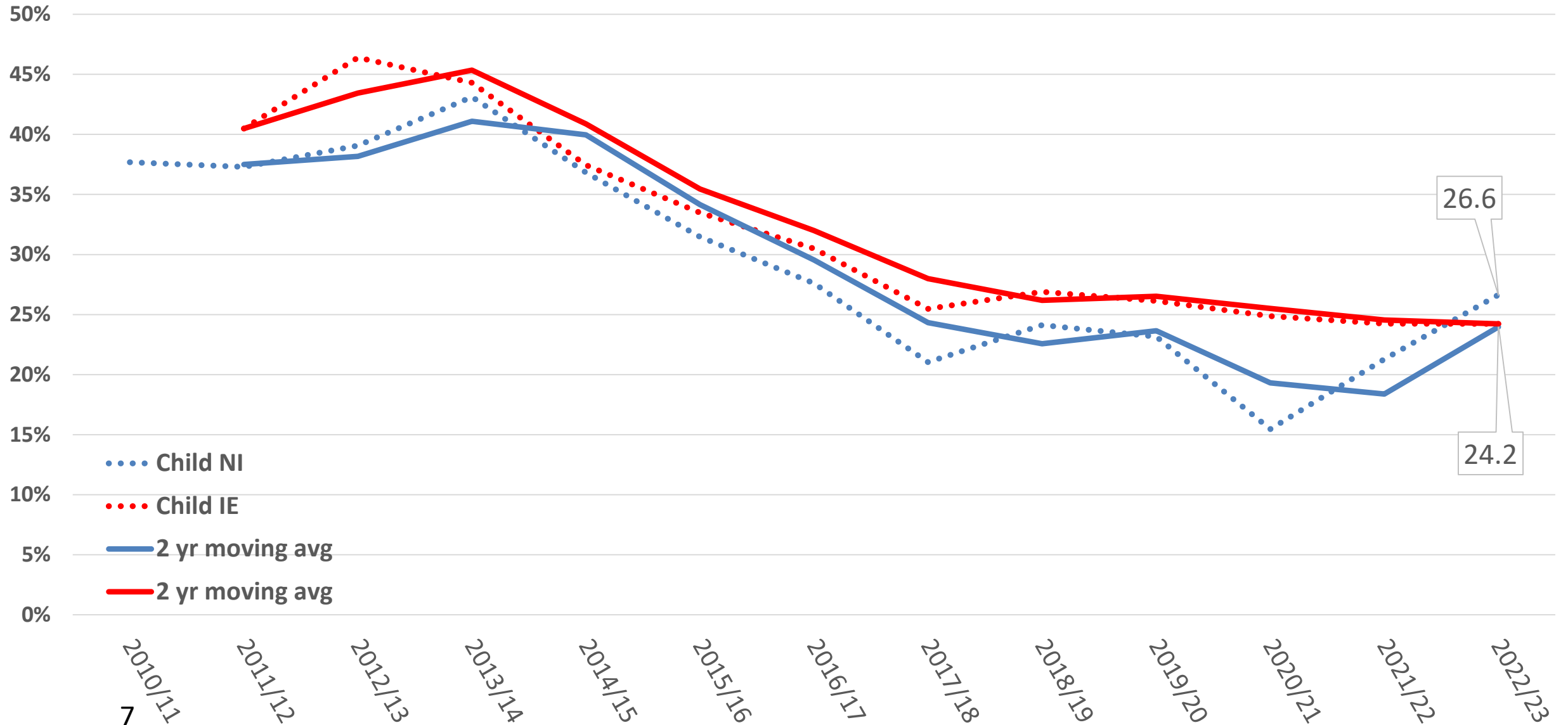
Material deprivation: Inability to afford essential goods, services or activities which are considered the norm for other people in society

- Deprivation measured in this report as experiencing 2 or more of 5 items
 - Arrears (utility bills)
 - Unable to afford to replace worn out furniture
 - Unable to afford to keep the home adequately warm
 - Unable to spend a small amount of money each week on household reference person
 - Unable to afford one week annual holiday away from home.

Trends in Child Income Poverty NI & IE (%)



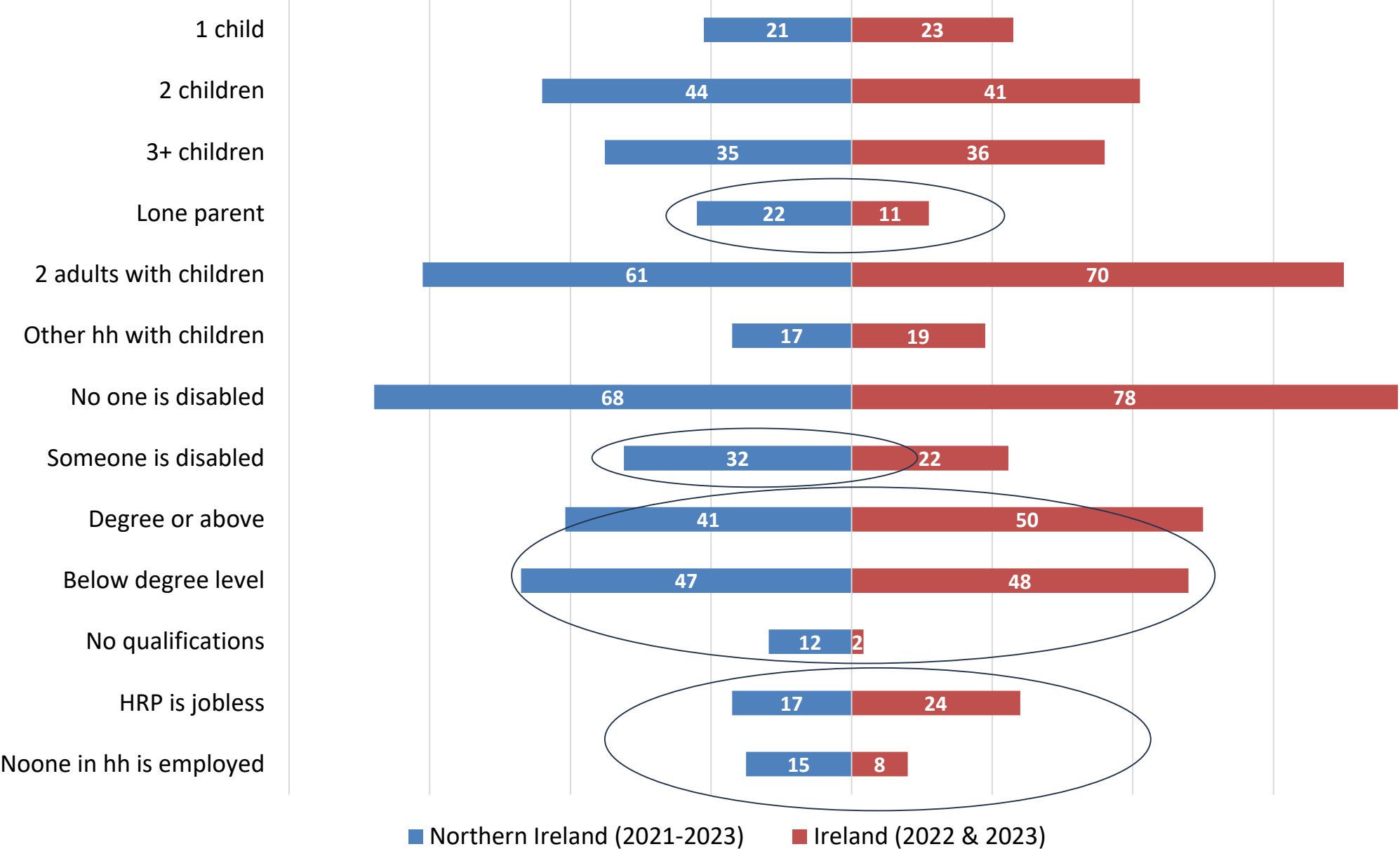
Trend Child Deprivation NI & IE (% lack 2 or more items)



Composition of child population in NI and IE

How do the characteristics of children and their families differ in NI and IE?

Characteristics of children (<18) in Northern Ireland & Ireland (%)



Joint Models of Child Income Poverty and Deprivation in IE and NI

- what is the role of socio-demographic characteristics and parental employment?

Income Poverty Model 2019-2023, AMEs

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Ireland (ref)			
Northern Ireland	0.068***	0.005	0.031
0 to 14 (ref)			
15 to 17		0.053***	0.065***
Two adults with children (ref)			
One adult with children		0.116***	0.011
Other households with children		0.014	0.016
1 child (ref)			
2 children		0.024*	0.024*
3+ children		0.159***	0.133***
In a family where no one is disabled (ref)			
In a family where someone is disabled		0.033*	-0.011
HRP degree or above (ref)			
Qualification below degree level		0.125***	0.097***
No qualifications		0.339***	0.217***
HRP at work (ref)			
HRP not at work			0.091***
At least one adult at work (ref)			
No adults in work (workless)			0.172**

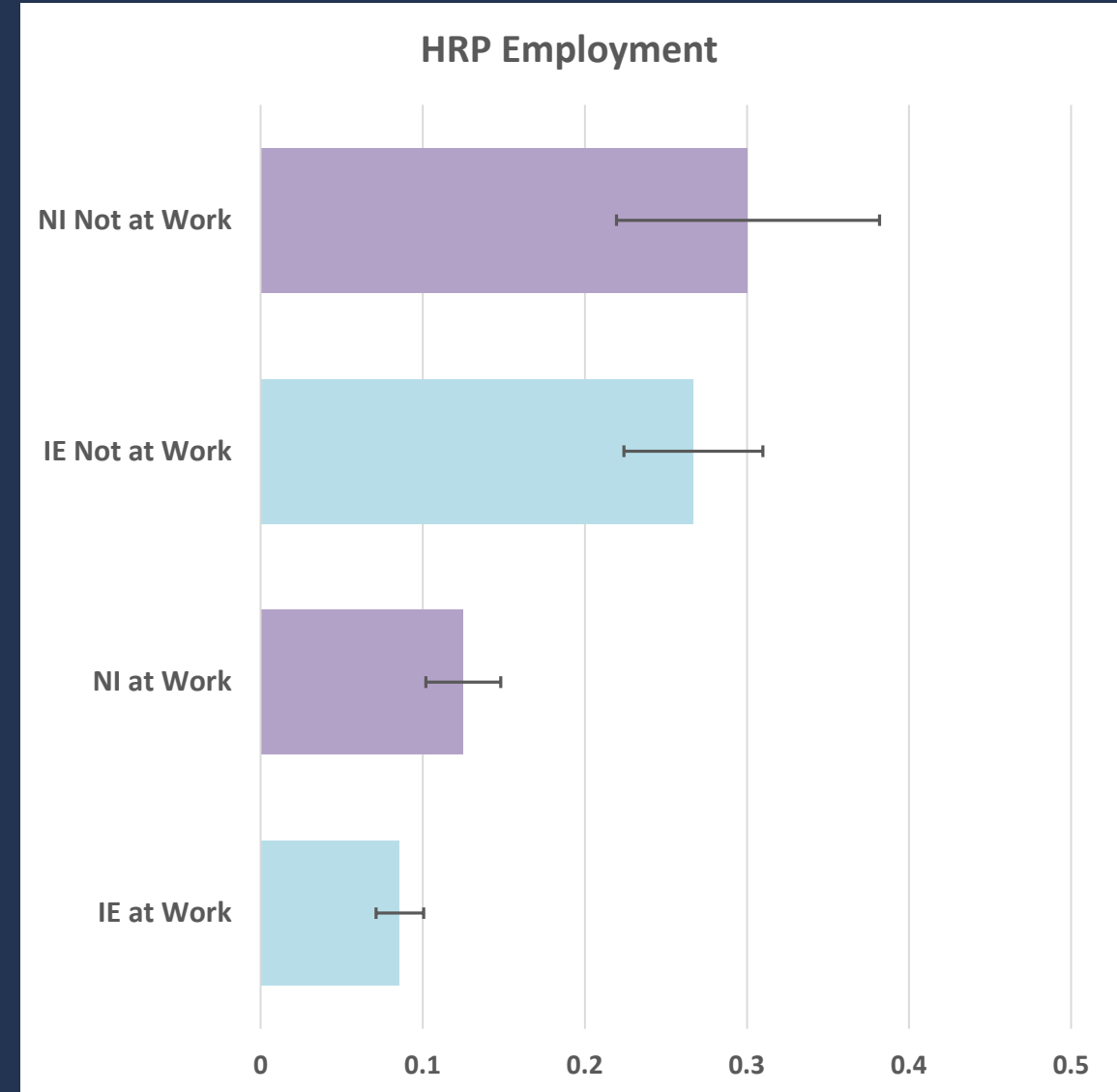
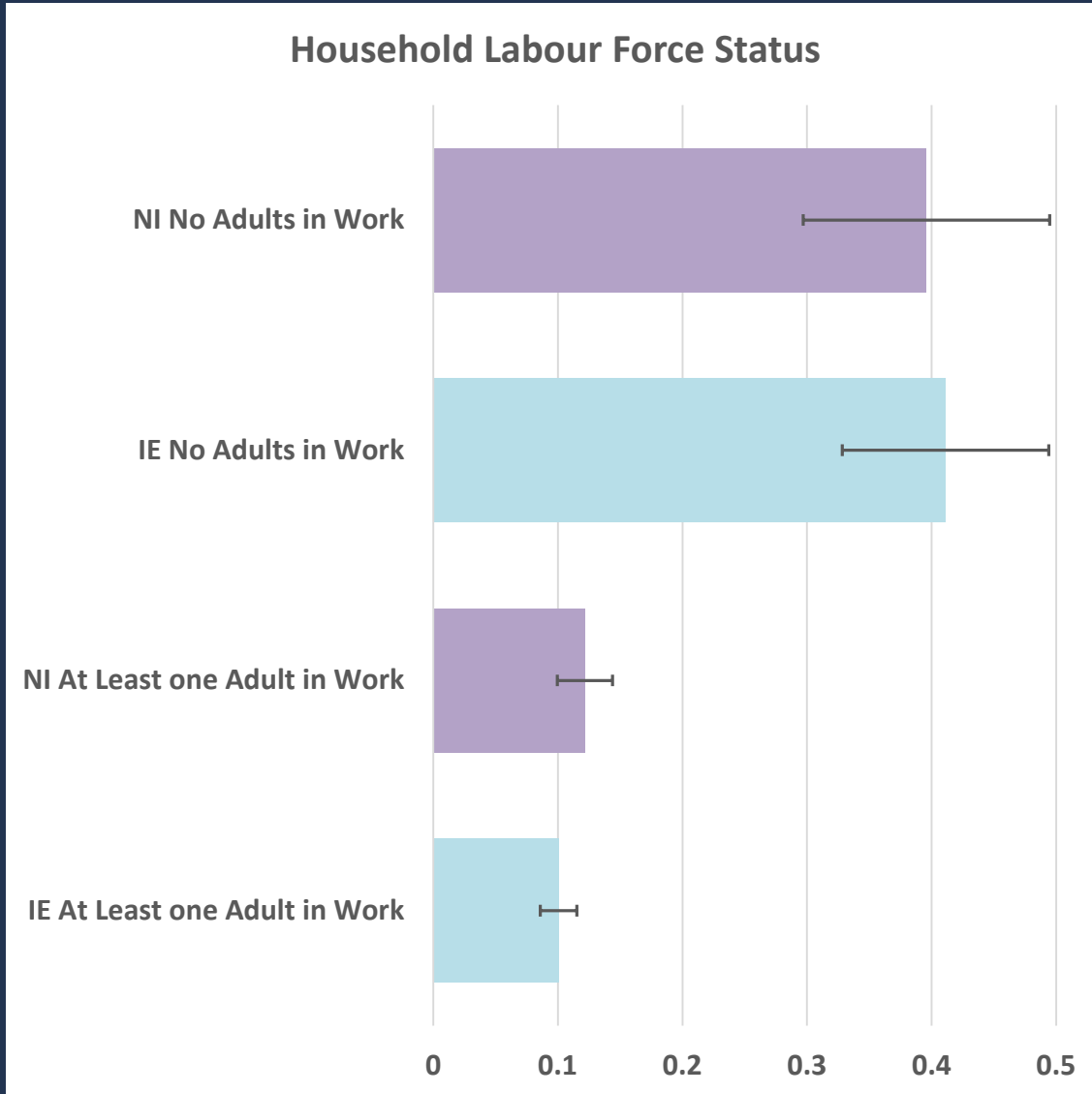
- Higher for children in **NI** (7 pp)
 - Due to differences in family composition, disability prevalence, and educational attainment of HRP
- Children with the same characteristics have similar poverty risks in NI and IE
 - Because these interactions aren't significant
- When employment status is added to the model, lone parent and disability status no longer significant

Child Deprivation Model 2019-2023, AMEs

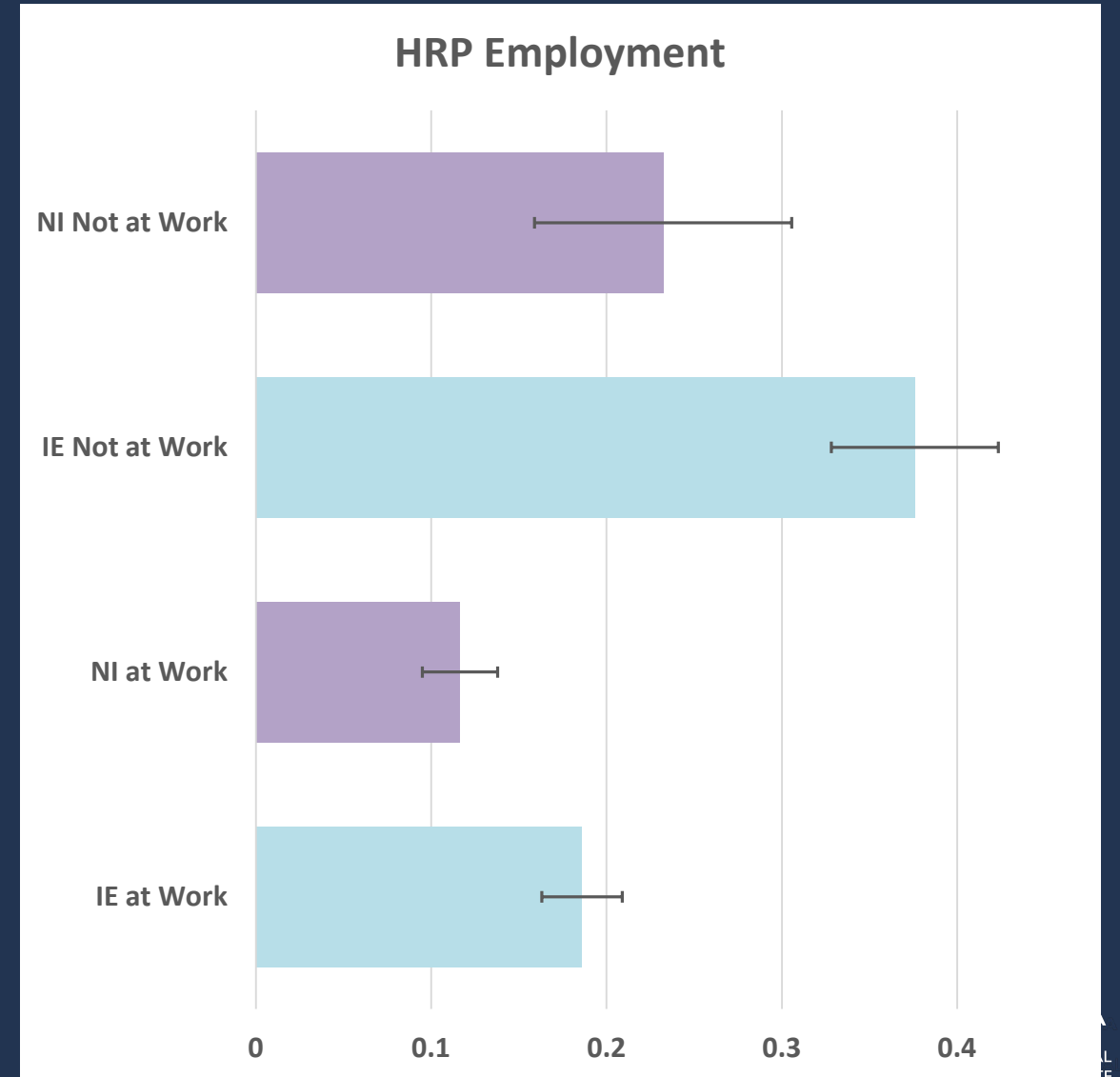
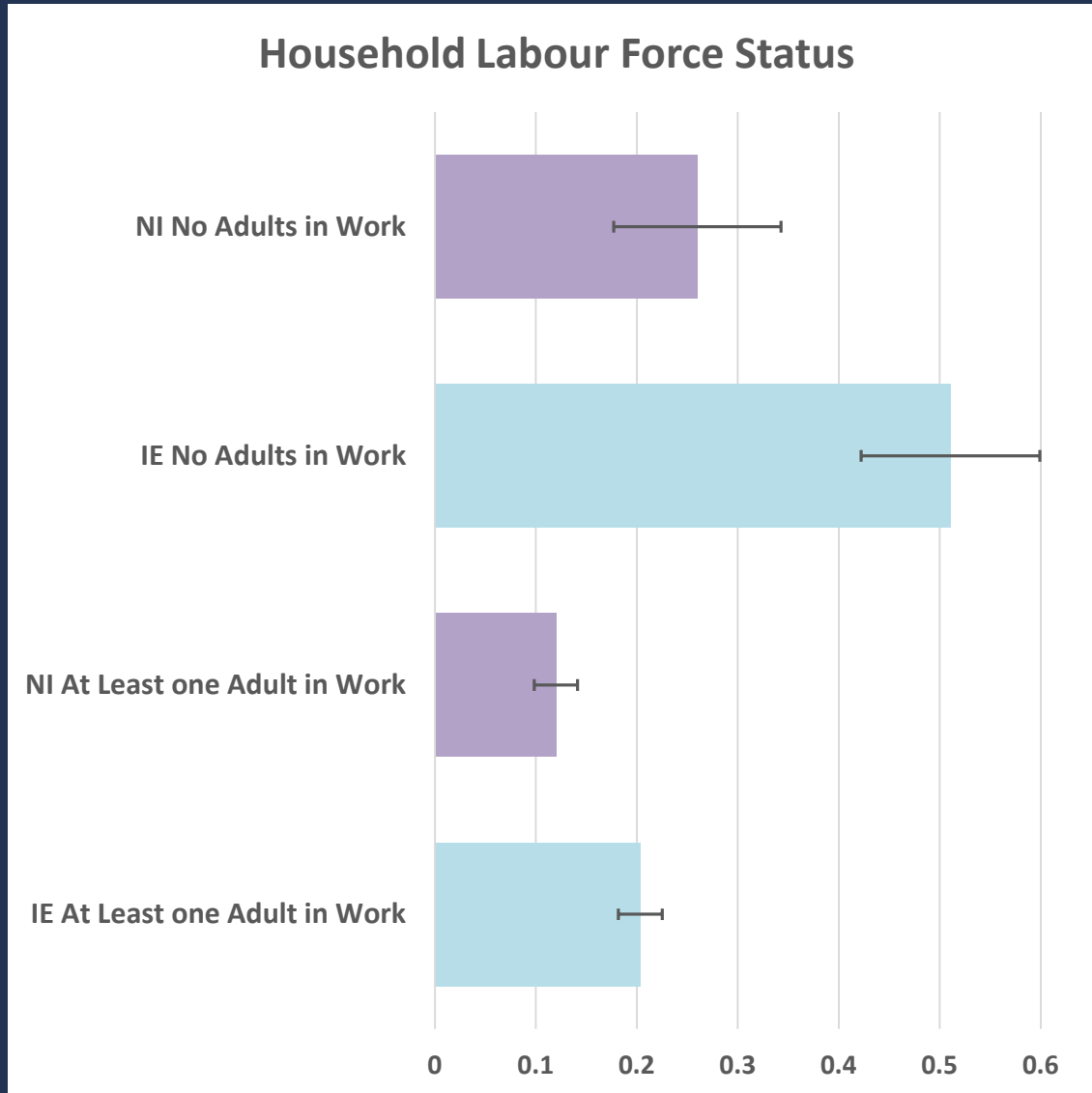
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Ireland (ref)			
Northern Ireland	-0.010	-0.104***	-0.085***
0 to 14 (ref)			
15 to 17		-0.008	0.001
Two adults with children (ref)			
One adult with children		0.326***	0.237***
Other households with children		0.021	0.021
1 child (ref)			
2 children		-0.003	-0.005
3+ children		0.040*	0.017
In a family where no one is disabled (ref)			
In a family where someone is disabled		0.157***	0.116***
HRP degree or above (ref)			
Qualification below degree level		0.154***	0.128***
No qualifications		0.310***	0.221***
HRP at work (ref)			
HRP not at work			0.085**
At least one adult at work (ref)			
No adults in work (workless)			0.133***

- Little difference between jurisdictions overall
- Deprivation is 8.5pp higher for children in IE when we compare children/families with same characteristics
- Same risk factors, but higher risk for children in IE for each factor

Income Poverty: effect of HRP employment & HH Joblessness by jurisdiction (2019-2023) – Model Interactions



Child Deprivation: HRP employment and HH joblessness by jurisdiction (2019-23) – Model Interactions



Impact of the Labour Market Situation of Adults in HH (RQ3)

- Greater joblessness in NI
 - 15% of NI children live in jobless households v 8% IE
- Strong link between adult employment and income poverty and deprivation across both jurisdictions
- Joblessness has a stronger effect on child deprivation in IE
- Higher **in-work income poverty** in NI

Conclusions

- Higher child income poverty in NI but higher deprivation in IE (for most recent period) – **higher cost of living in IE especially housing costs**
 - Lack of indexation of benefit system in IE
- **Compositional factors** key to accounting for differences between jurisdictions – high levels of disability/illness in NI, and lower ed qualification levels
- **Barriers to employment** - link between lone parenthood and disability and income poverty is largely accounted for by employment
 - Further investment in childcare
 - Address educational disadvantage in NI
 - Employment supports for those with disability (NDA 2022)
 - Adequate welfare supports and services for those unable to work (Doorley et al. 2025)
- **Limitations:** differences in scale/autonomy of NI IE, lack of **data harmonisation** post Brexit, missing indicators (e.g. ethnicity), hh survey excludes most disadvantaged

Thank you

“ So we don't have the same kind of childcare provision as they have in Britain or indeed the system that's gradually growing, I suppose in the South, what we have is vouchers really that [you] can redeem some of your childcare costs. But because childcare costs are so exorbitant, who that's helping is people who are already earning quite well It's very often childcare costs can come close to £20,000 a year. The average salary here is about £24,000 a year..... Realistically those in poverty are cut off completely from childcare. (Stakeholder NI)



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