



Evidence for change: understanding the lifelong health and wellbeing trajectories of people who have been in care

The Looked-after children grown up project



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Background

“If we can get it right for the most vulnerable, such as looked after children and care leavers, then it is more likely we will get it right for all those in need.”

(Department of Health and NHS England 2015)

LACGro's objectives

- To determine whether children in care have different health and social experiences **10 to 40 years** later compared to children in parental homes
- To explore if children in residential care **do better or worse** than children in foster or kinship care, and if children in kinship care **fare better** than children in foster care
- To understand if any care differences **vary by gender or ethnicity/migration status**
- To investigate if improving trends in outcomes can be seen for cohorts of children in more recent censuses

→ **YES**

→ **Worse / better**

→ **Complicated**

→ **Not really**

The ONS Longitudinal Study

- Based on the England and Wales censuses
- Started with the 1971 census and then individuals followed up in subsequent censuses
- Random selection based on 4 birthdays - a 1% sample of the population
- More people added from each census if their birthday is one of the 4 birthdates
- All census topics available
- Large sample → subgroup analyses
- Linked to births, deaths & cancer registrations



Data Sample

Definition of a dependent child

- Aged less than 18 years
- Never married
- Not living alone/independently
- Excluded visitors on the census date

ONS LS dependent children in the 1971-2001 censuses followed up until 2011 and grouped into:

- Residential care
- Foster carer
- Kinship care
- Parental care

Health and social outcomes

HEALTH

- Self-rated health
- Long-term illness
- Mortality – overall
- Mortality - cause

EDUCATION & WORK

- Qualifications
- Employment
- Social Class
- Long-term non-employed

HOUSING

- Tenure
- Overcrowding
- Living alone

FAMILY

- Marital status
- No of Children
- Age at 1st birth

Number in each care situation by census year

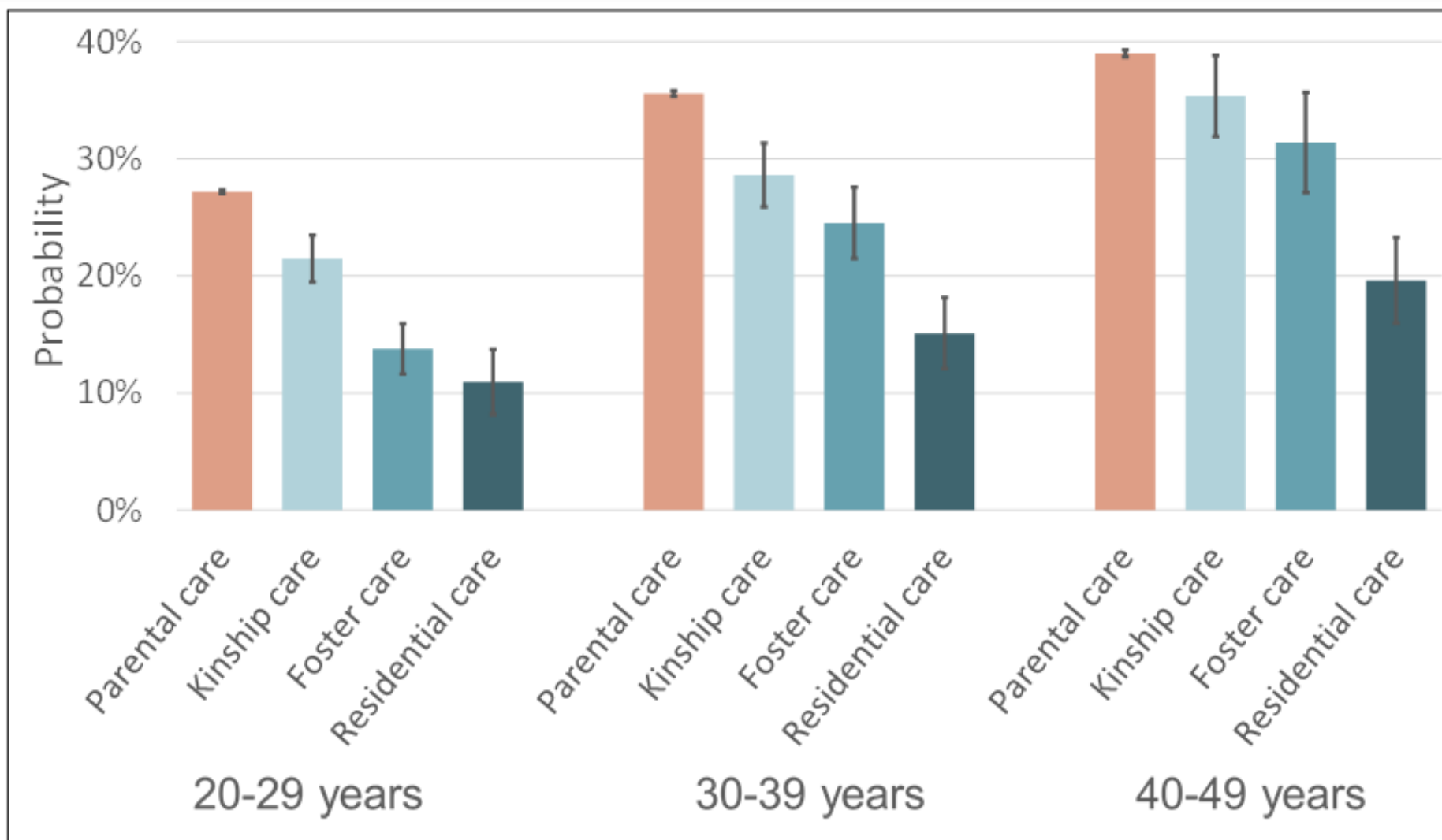
Year	Parental care	Kinship care	Foster care	Residential care	Total
1971	134,347	595	479	399	135,820
1981	124,319	1,094	684	262	126,359
1991	114,008	490	660	186	115,344
2001	112,182	1,363	401	65	114,011
Total	484,856	3,542	2,224	912	491,534

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Key finding 1

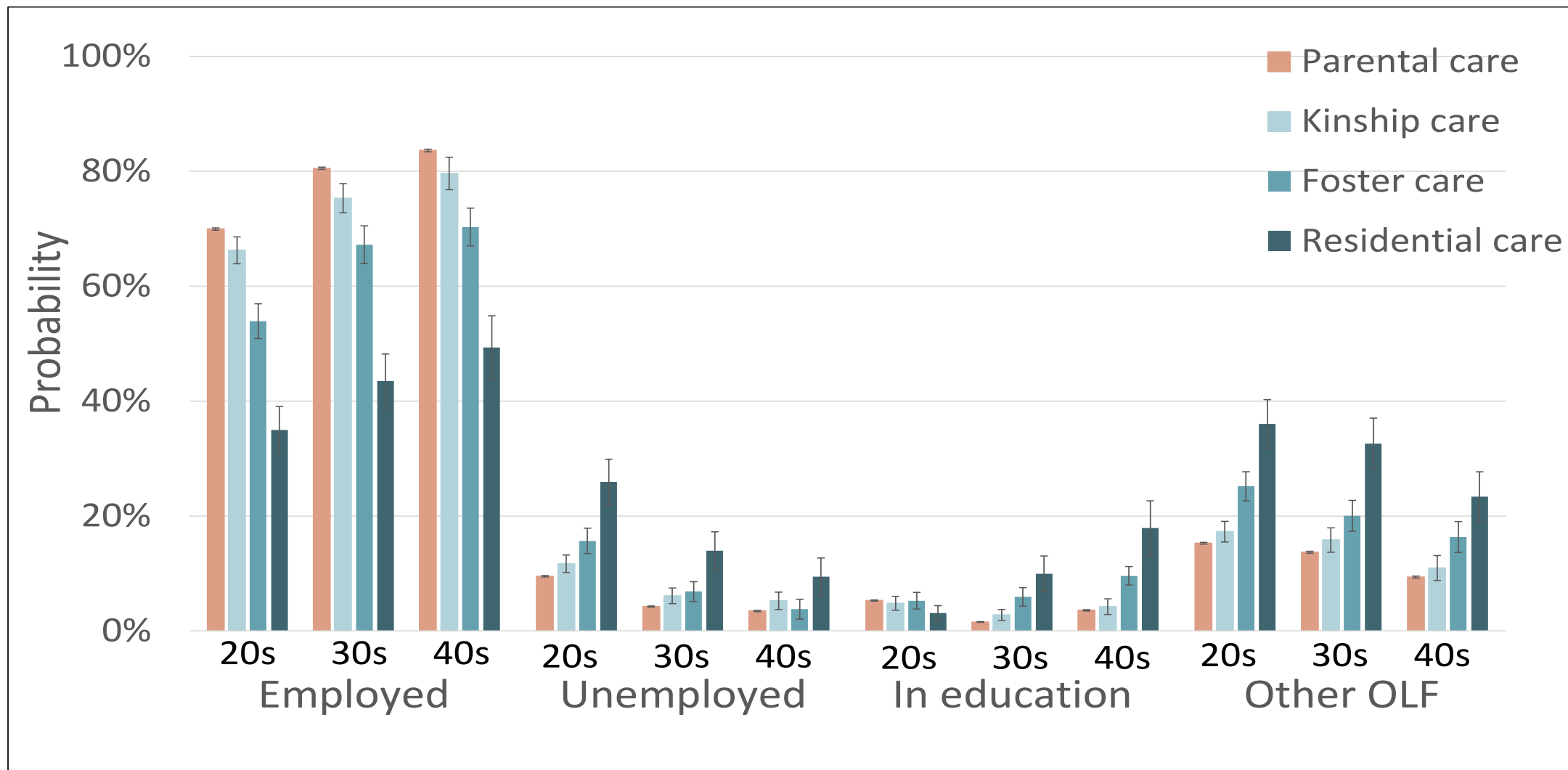
There are large inequalities in adulthood for the care experienced

Probability of achieving NVQ level 3+ qualifications

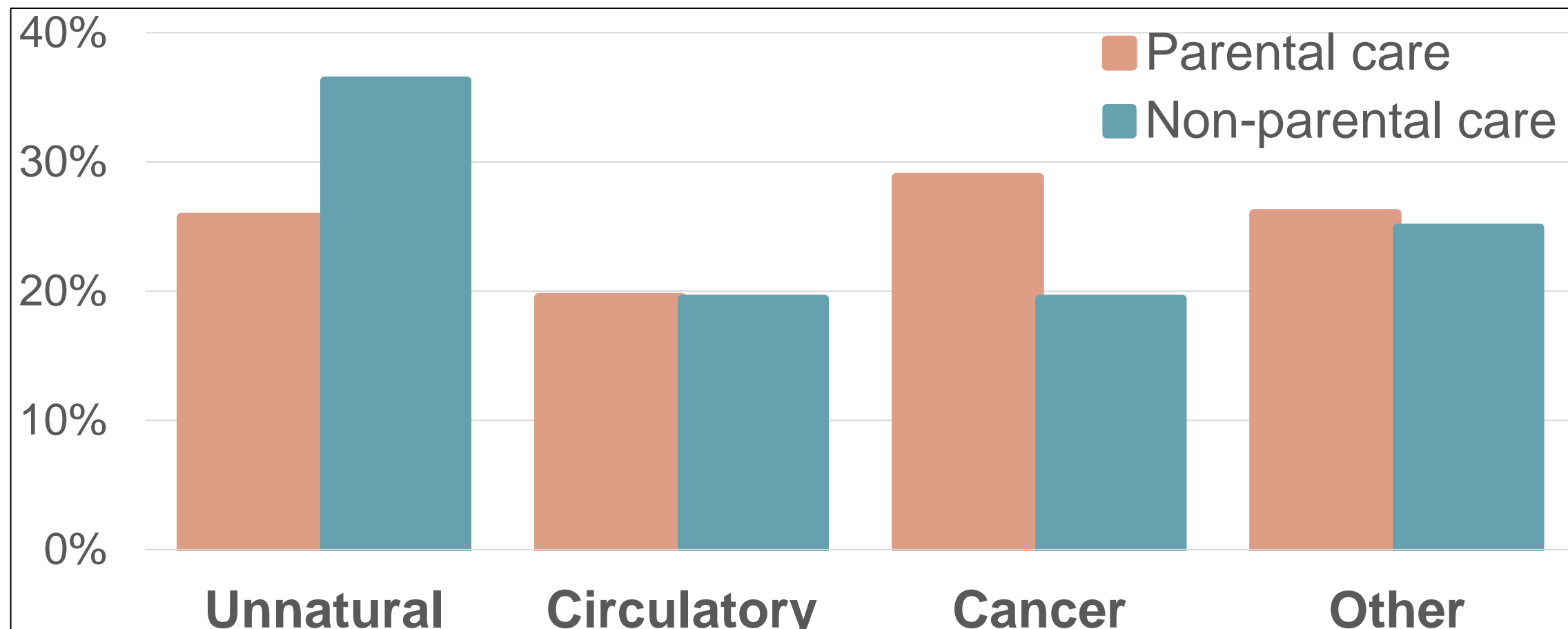


Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Predicted employment status at adult follow-ups

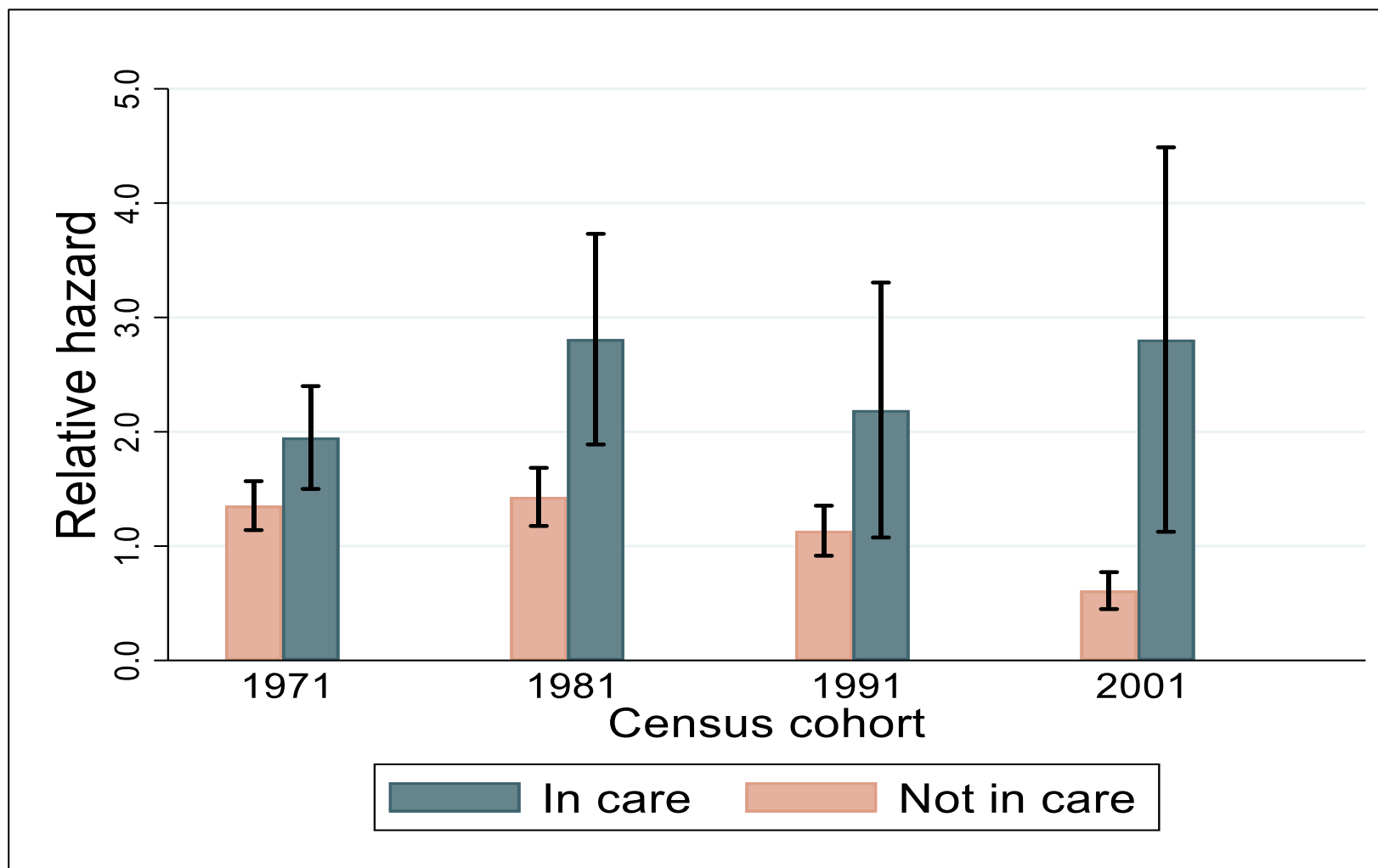


Cause of death by any care status



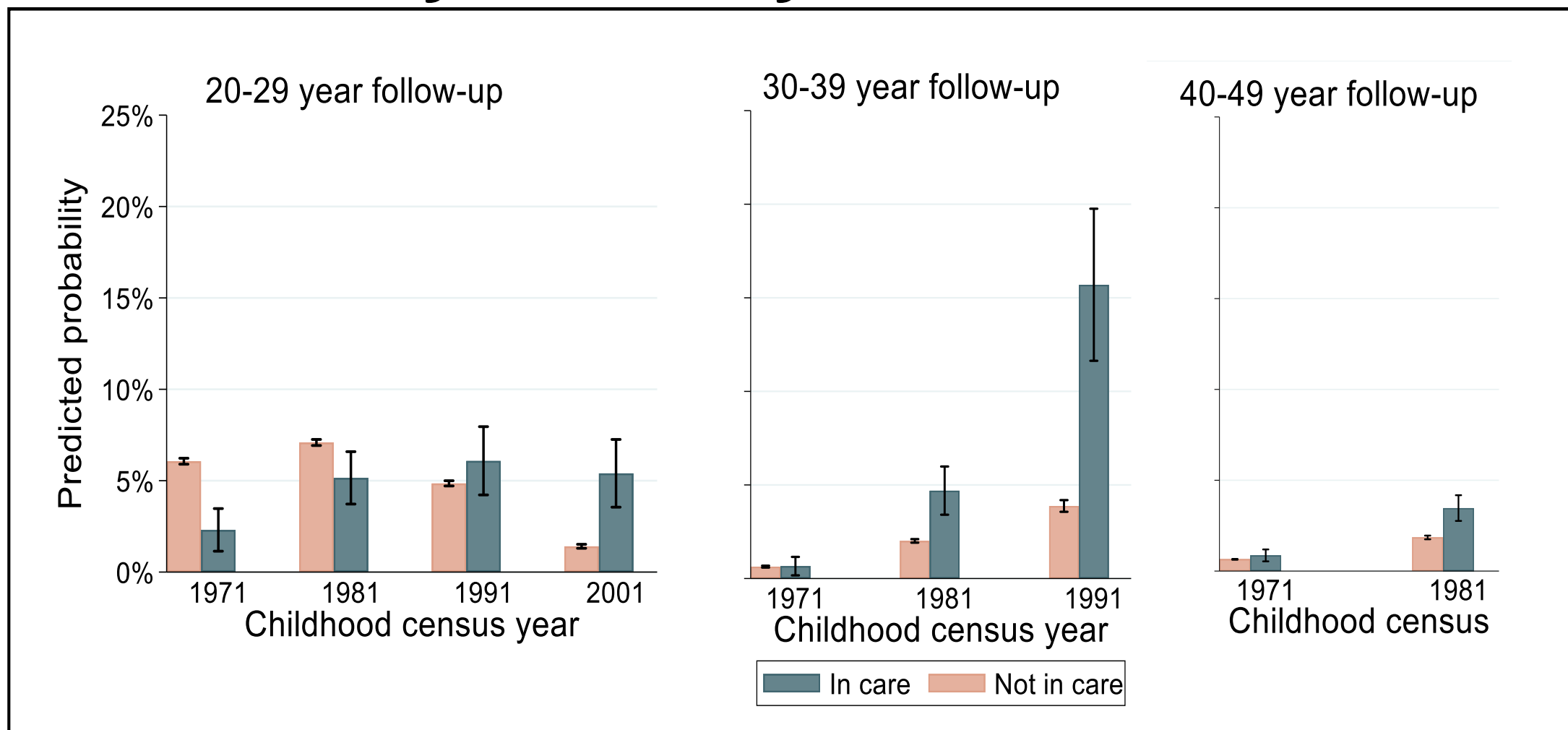
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Risk of death by census year in care



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Differences in probability of being in education by census year in childhood

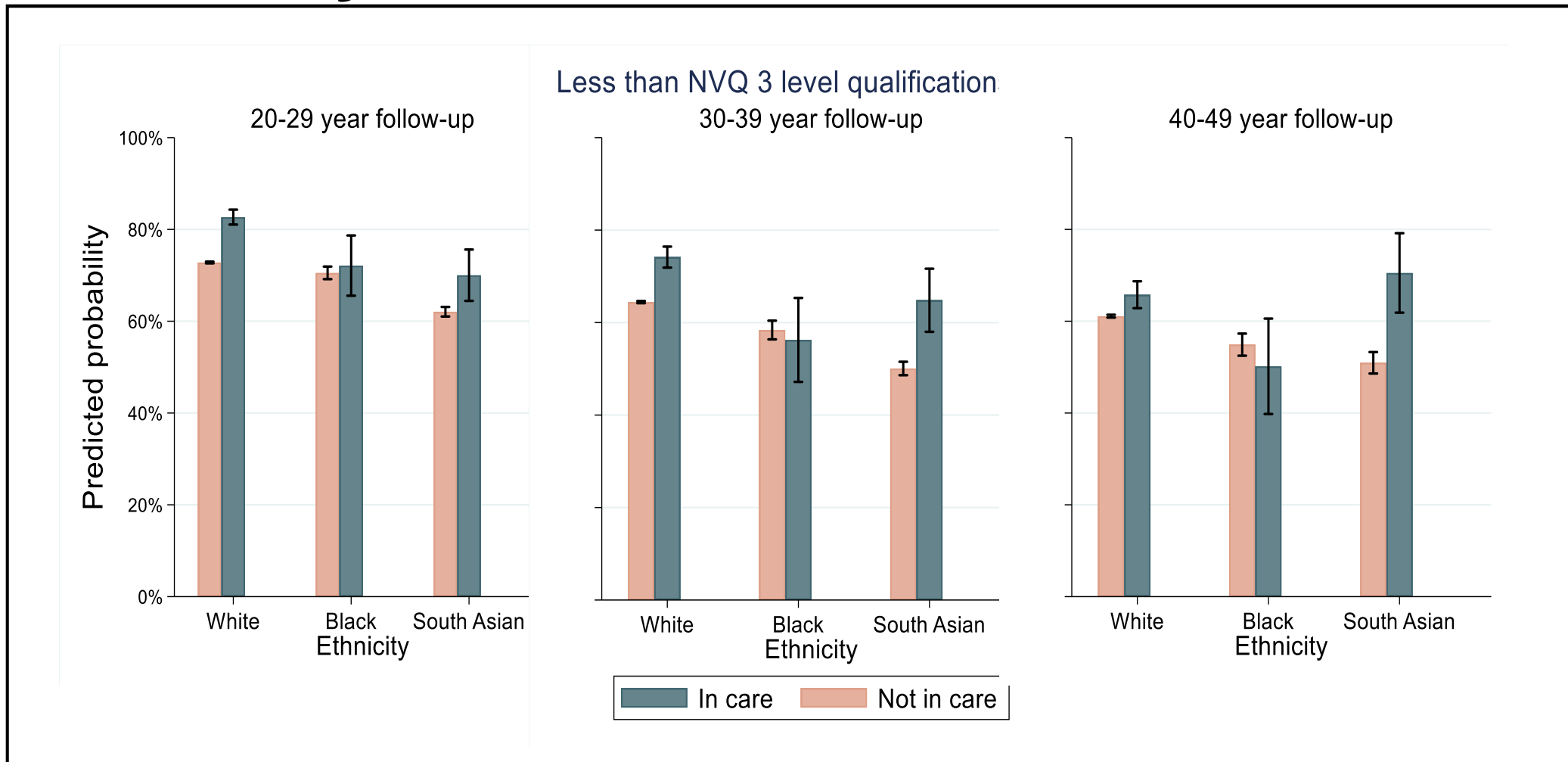


Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Key finding 2

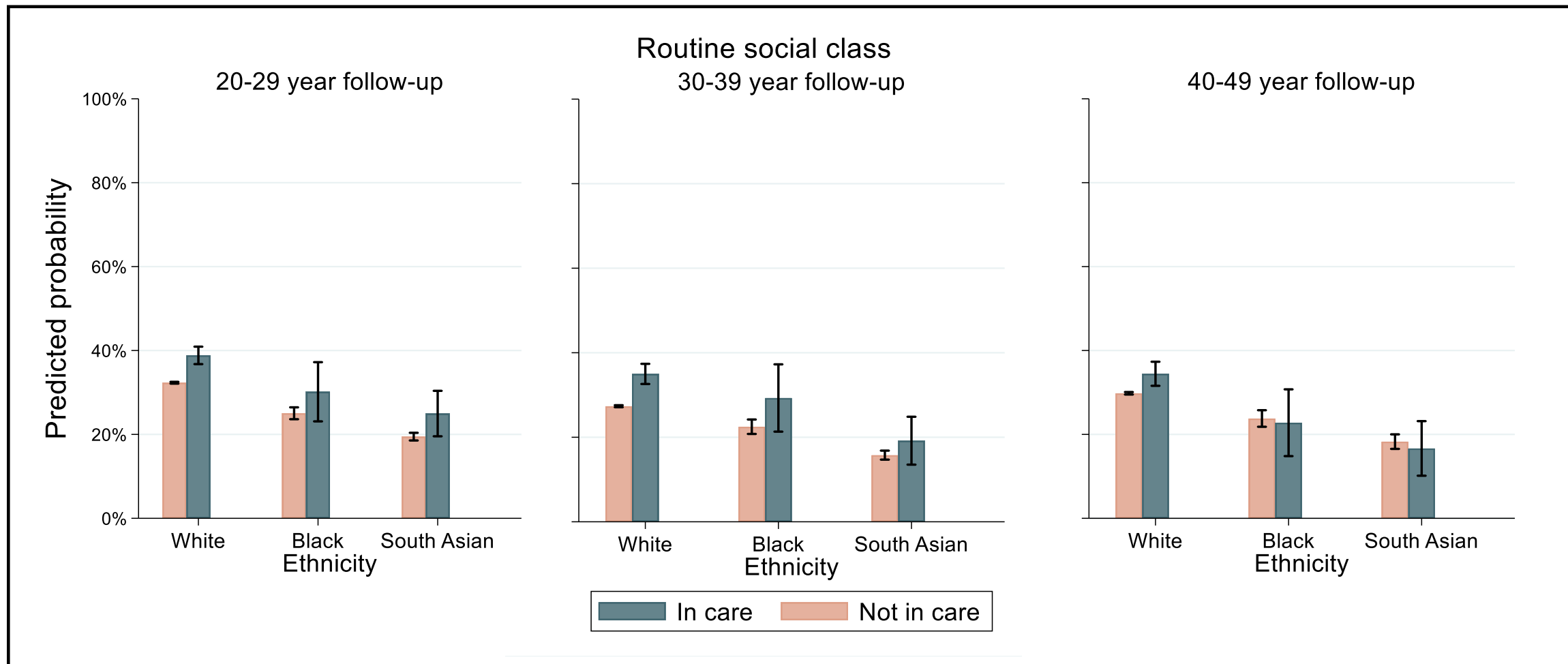
Ethnicity matters but not in the way that we thought

Probability of achieving <NVQ 3 qualifications by ethnicity



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Probability of being in the least advantaged social class by ethnicity



Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Key finding 3

Children of kinship and foster parents need support too

Markers of transitions to adulthood

- Age 20-29 years follow-up
 - Less likely to have age 18+ qualifications
 - More likely to be unemployed or long-term non-employed
 - More likely to be married
 - Less likely to own their own home
 - Women were younger at the birth of their first child
- Age 40-49 years follow-up
 - No differences between carers' children and non-carers' children

Conclusions

- Our research clearly shows that **child placement matters**
- **Falling rates of premature mortality** in the general population have **not been mirrored** among care leavers
- Lifecourse trajectories **are not the same** for all minority children in care
- Children of kinship and foster parents **pass the “big 5” transition milestones to adulthood earlier** than other children

The case for change: Quotes from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care

- 1) Improving children's social care is not something that national government, local authorities or other partners can achieve on their own
- 2) A focus on kinship is needed to promote and support its use and ensure that more children grow up with carers who already know and love them
- 3) Children entering care are not getting the mental health support they need
- 4) Education can be transformational for children and there is more to be done to support children in care to achieve their potential
- 5) There is much more we can do to help children who have been in care progress to further and higher education or find a job or home, acknowledging it might sometimes take longer than their peers



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Thank you

<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/looked-after-children-grown-up>