

Promising practices in family-friendly social protection: Lessons from around the world

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Key findings

- Child and family well-being metrics need to improve
- Social protection systems for families **need to start early**, and be comprehensive in their coverage of need
 - Too little public finance too late for most children
 - Drives inequality nationally and globally
- Policy type and timing matters
- Well-designed family policies are cost-efficient, have multi-sectoral effects
- Cross-sectoral approaches are needed
- Family-centred design



Some thoughts on measuring family and child well-being

- Well-being indices, or social development indices do not come with instruction manuals
- Complementarities and trade-offs in multidimensional goal setting
- Underlying data missing out too many children / biases
- Time, and policy maturity
- From what we **have**, and what we **know**, to **how we are...**
- Influences how and when money is spent
- How we evaluate policy
- Governance / finance / regulation / accountability





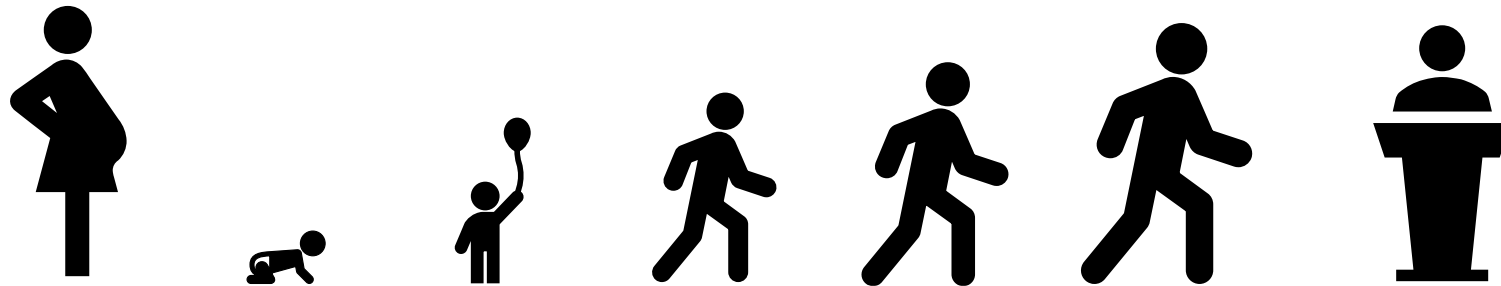
Source: Richardson, Vrolijk, Cunsolo, Cebotari (2021)

What Makes Me? Age-related development of innate human skills

Listening, Empathising, Inquiring

Discerning patterns, Embodying, Observing, Reflecting, Relaxing, Sensing

Fluency in ideation, divergent thinking, self-regulation, affective empathy, intuition



Speed of development and 'type' also matter!

What to do first in policy? Well-being informed

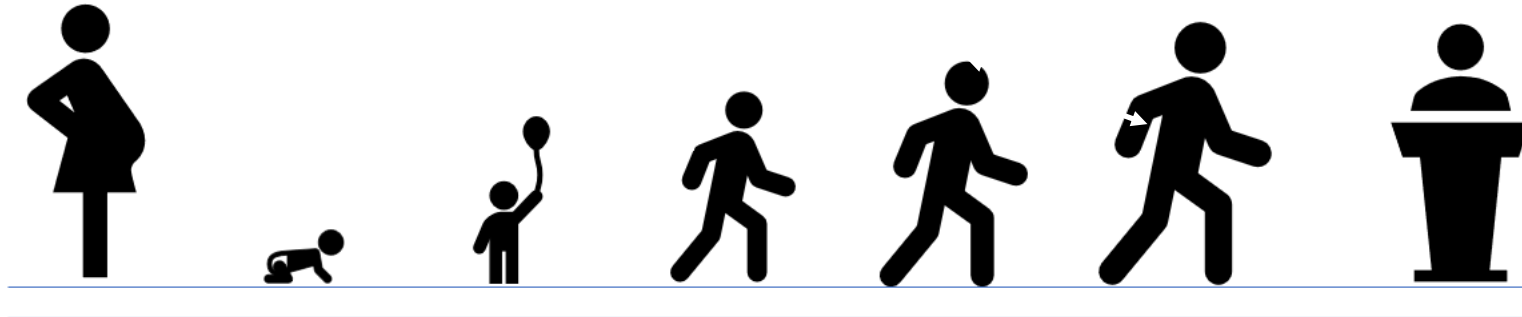
Material

Health

Education

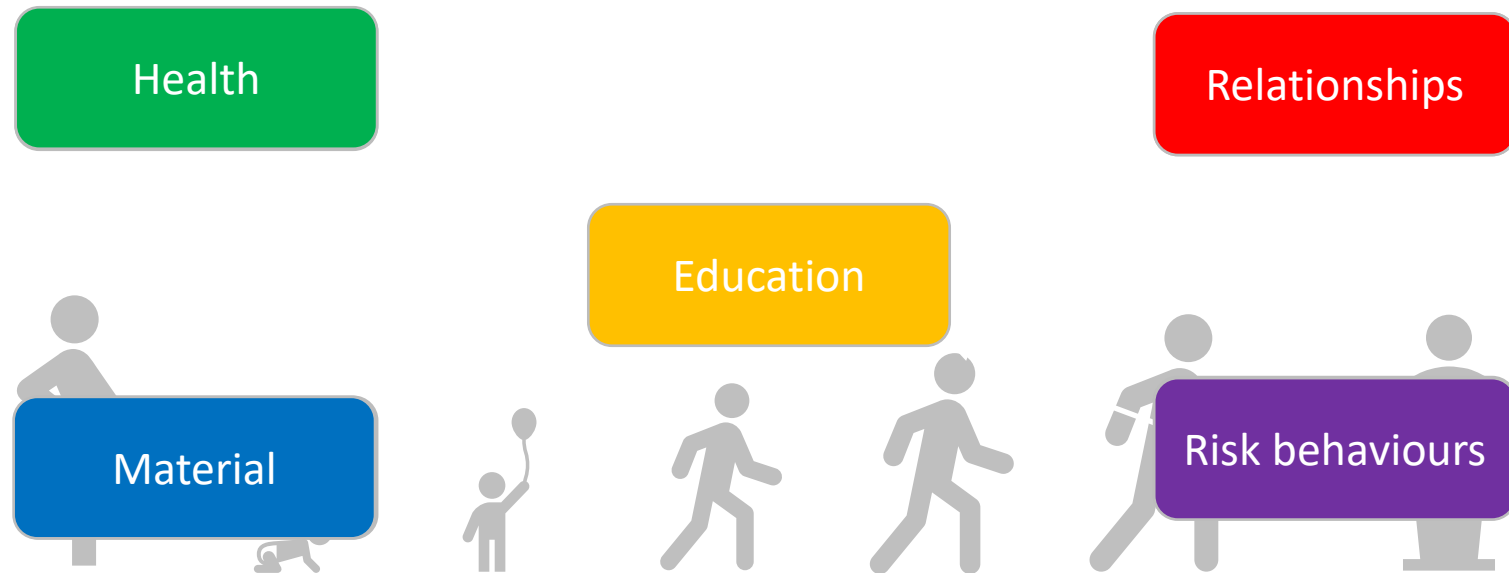
Relationships

Risk behaviours



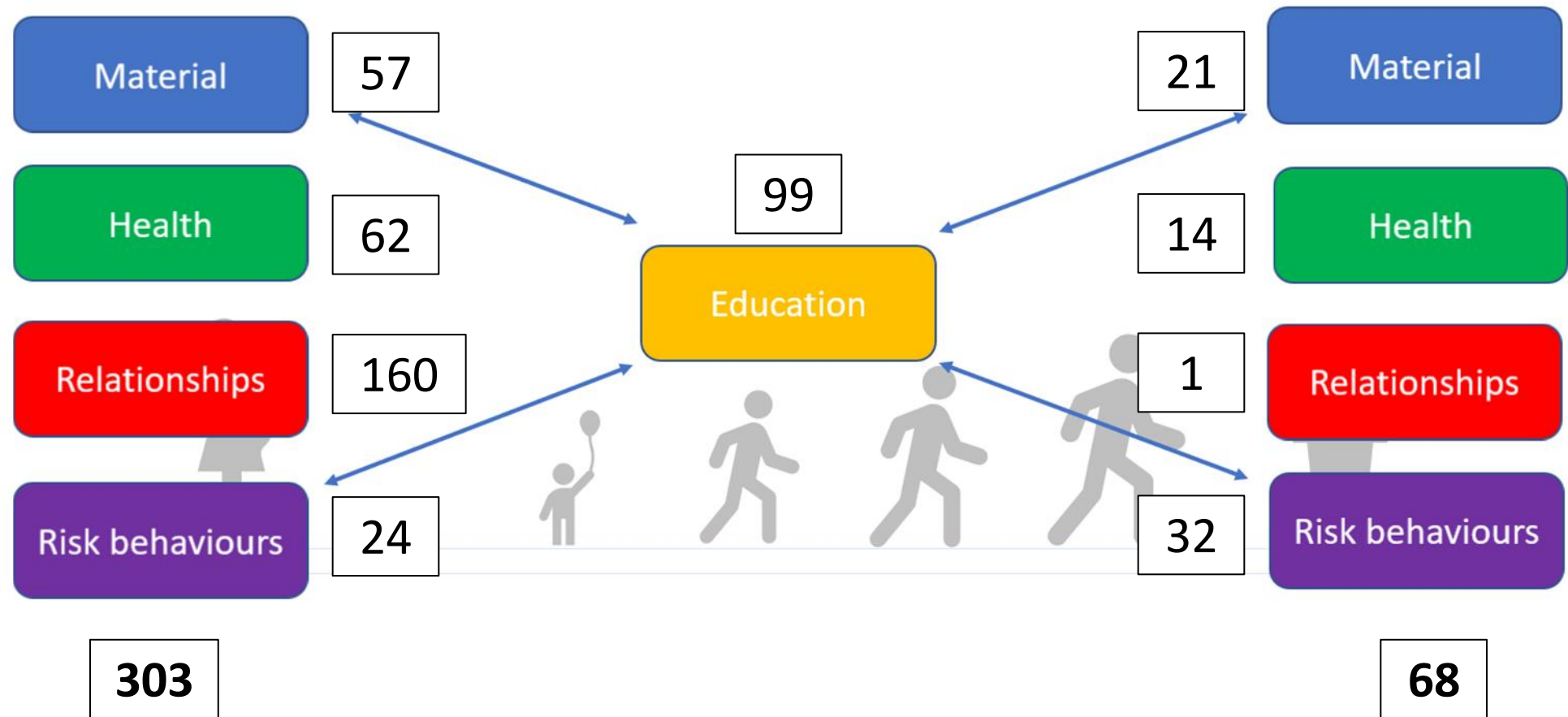
Quality assured metanalysis of covered 300 studies, and 400 effect sizes linking child well-being outcomes globally (Richardson and Karamperidou, 2019, available on request)

Organising the evidence by the lifecourse



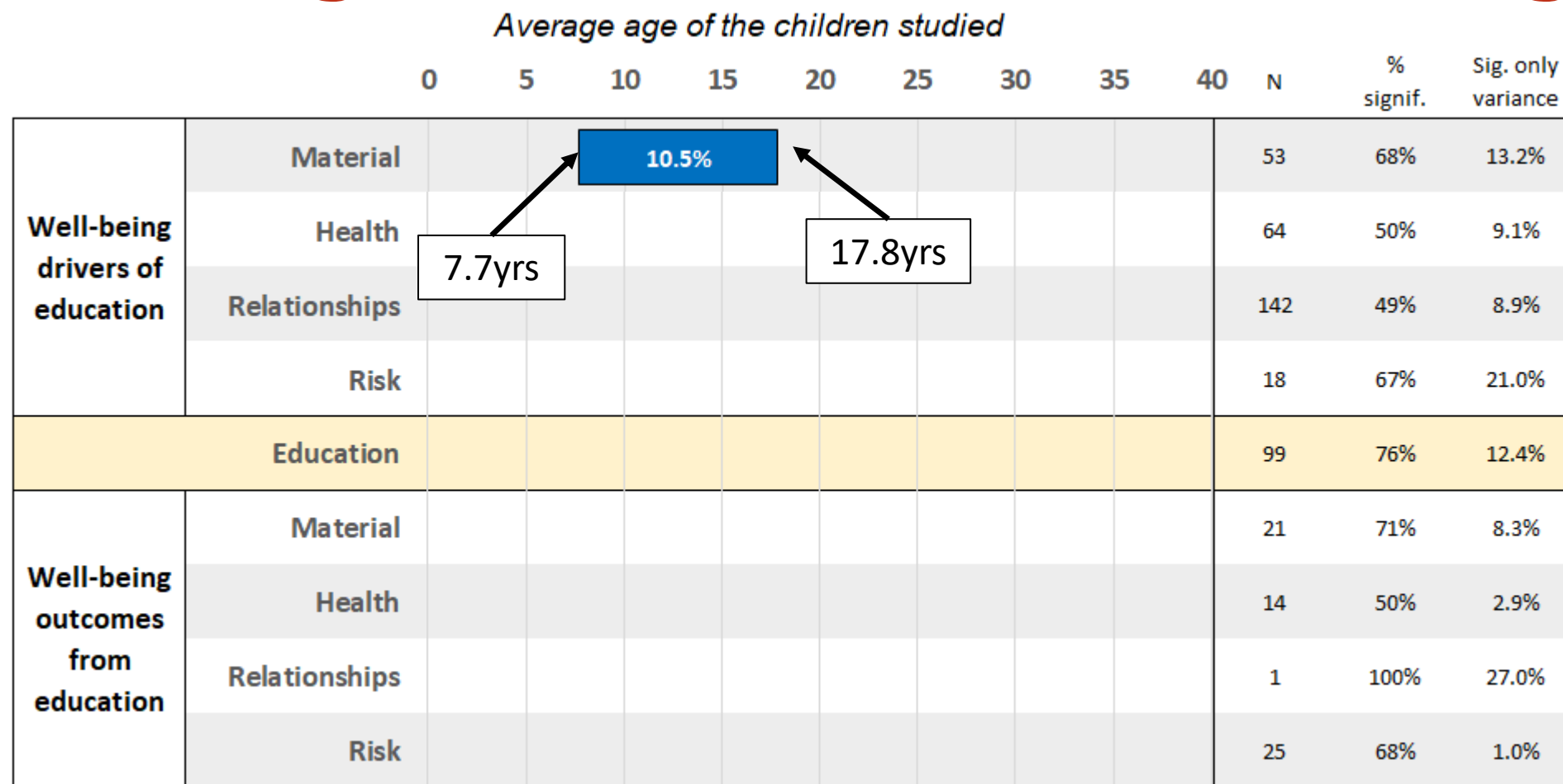
Source: Richardson & Karamperidou, 2019

More than 400 well-being to education effects



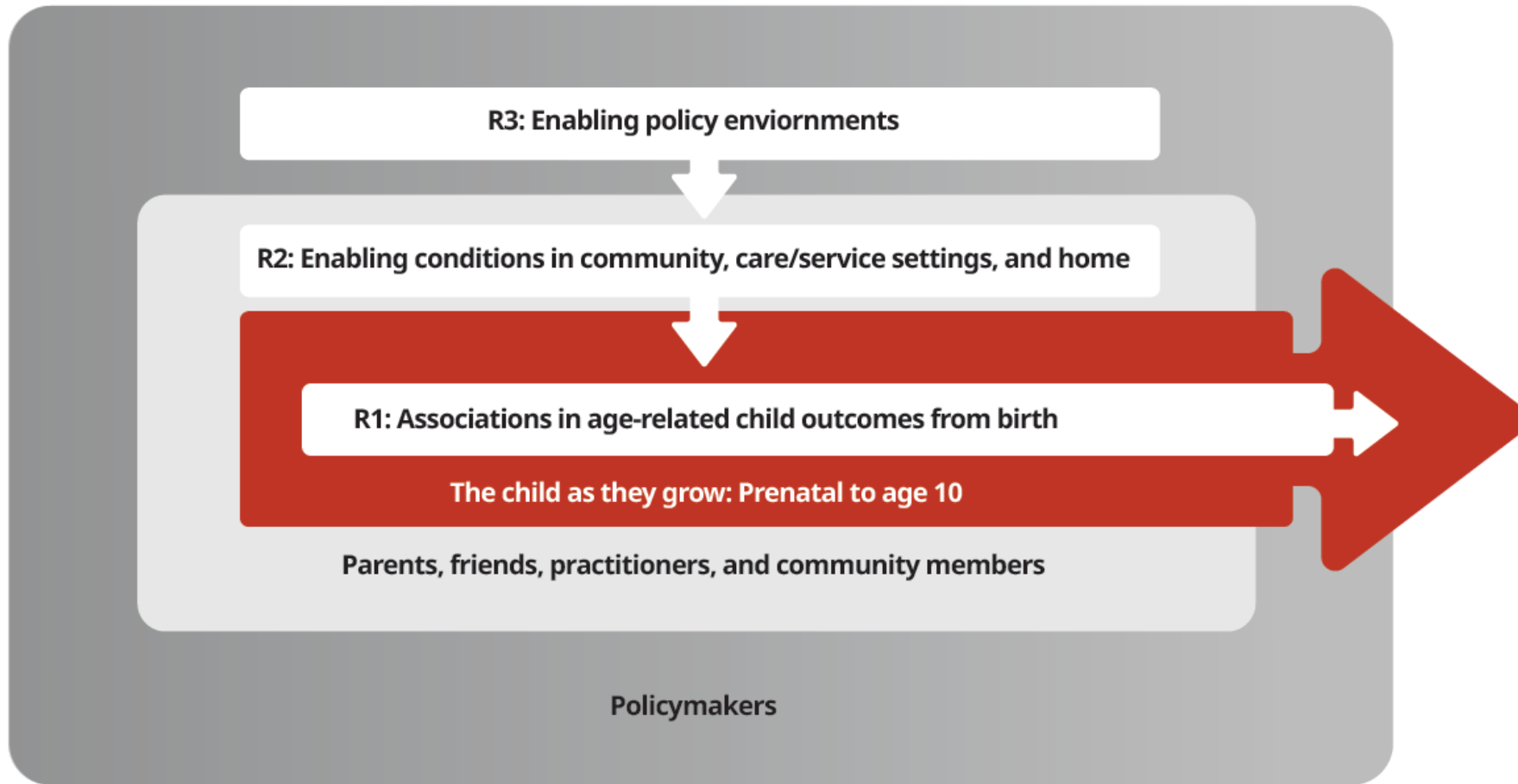
Source: Richardson & Karamperidou, 2019

Well-being determinates of well-being



Source: Richardson & Karamperidou, 2019

Family, the home and foundational learning



*Over 200
additional
studies,
from 2010
to 2023*

Source: Richardson, Olsson, & Richardson, 2024

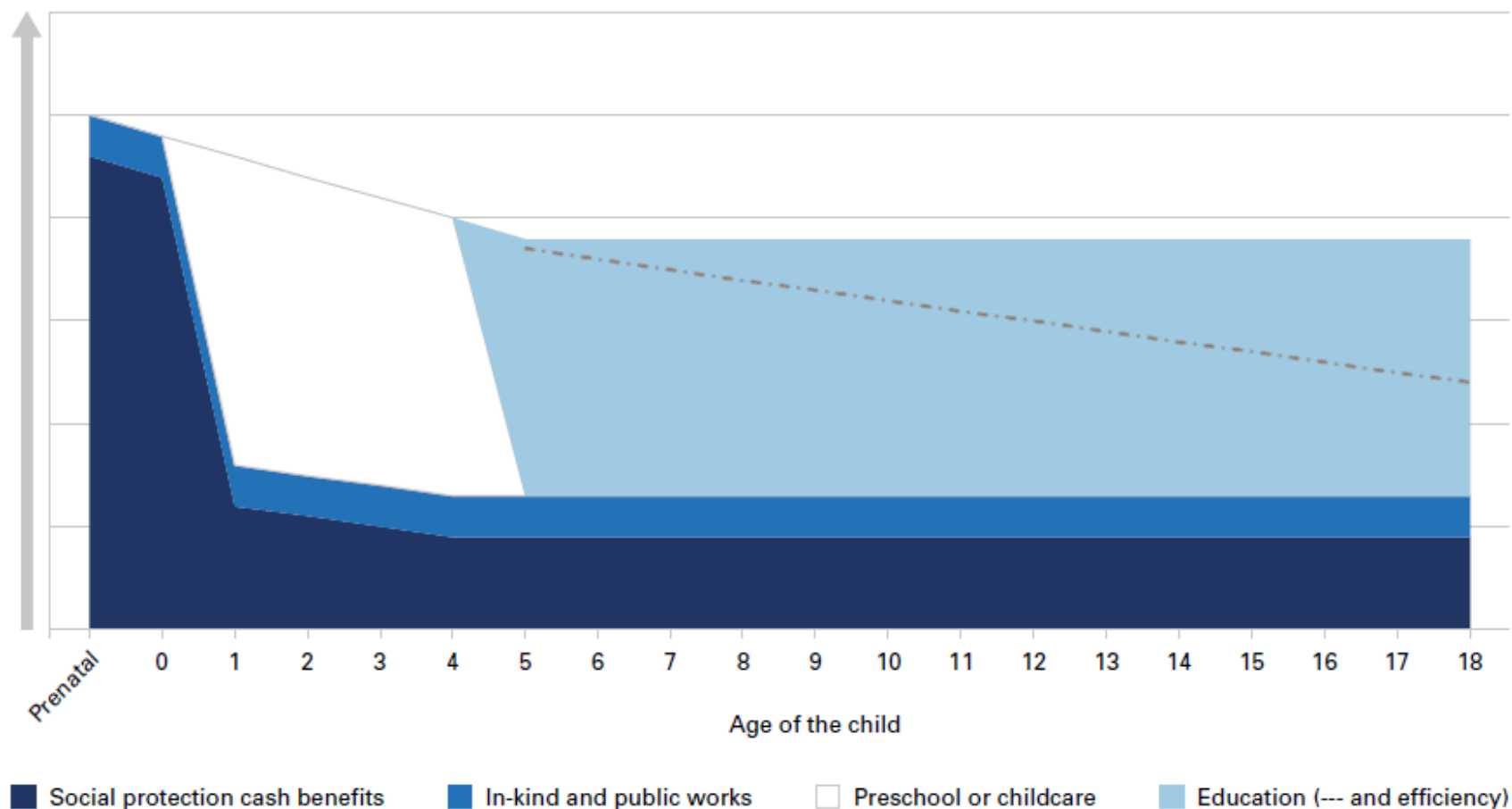
Family, the home and better life outcomes

- Poverty and home learning environments explain more of the variance in later school achievement and skills development than early literacy or preschool
- Parenting styles matter - lower-stress, warm and affectionate improve family relations, school performance, cognitive development, social competences, and children's self-esteem
- Housing conditions (security, quality) significantly affect health, cognitive development, and well-being
- Family engagement with child professionals can unlock children's learning potential and development
- Systems today place an unmanageable burden on education to deliver on child and so family well-being, and (human) development
- Cross-sectoral policies are more effective, with family participation where possible – but contexts matter

Child age		Prenatal	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17+	
Social protection cash benefits	Family allowances		Child and family benefits, child disability benefits, family tax breaks, advances on maintenance payments																		
	Leave and family care policies	Maternity/ paternity leave and benefits		Parental leave and benefits	Child raising/ homecare allowances																
			Birth grant																		
Social and human services	Child protection		Services for children (e.g., institutional care, social work interventions)																		
	Family services	Home visiting, nurse–family partnerships																			
		Additional services in support of child-rearing (e.g., food packages, family accommodation services, family centres and parenting interventions)																			
	Employment/ training																			Active labour market participation for youth	
		Public work supports for caregivers																			
Education and care supports	Subsidies		Fees waiver, or school or childcare fee subsidies, free meals or equipment																		
	Services		Childcare and preschool																		
										Primary					Secondary and post-secondary						
Family health services	Subsidies	Health insurance or health cost waivers																			
	Family health services		Primary and secondary care																		
	Mother and infant health	Prenatal checks	Birth services, postnatal checks, immunizations																		

Source: Richardson, Harris, Hudson, MacKinder, 2023

Stylized age-spending portfolio for children

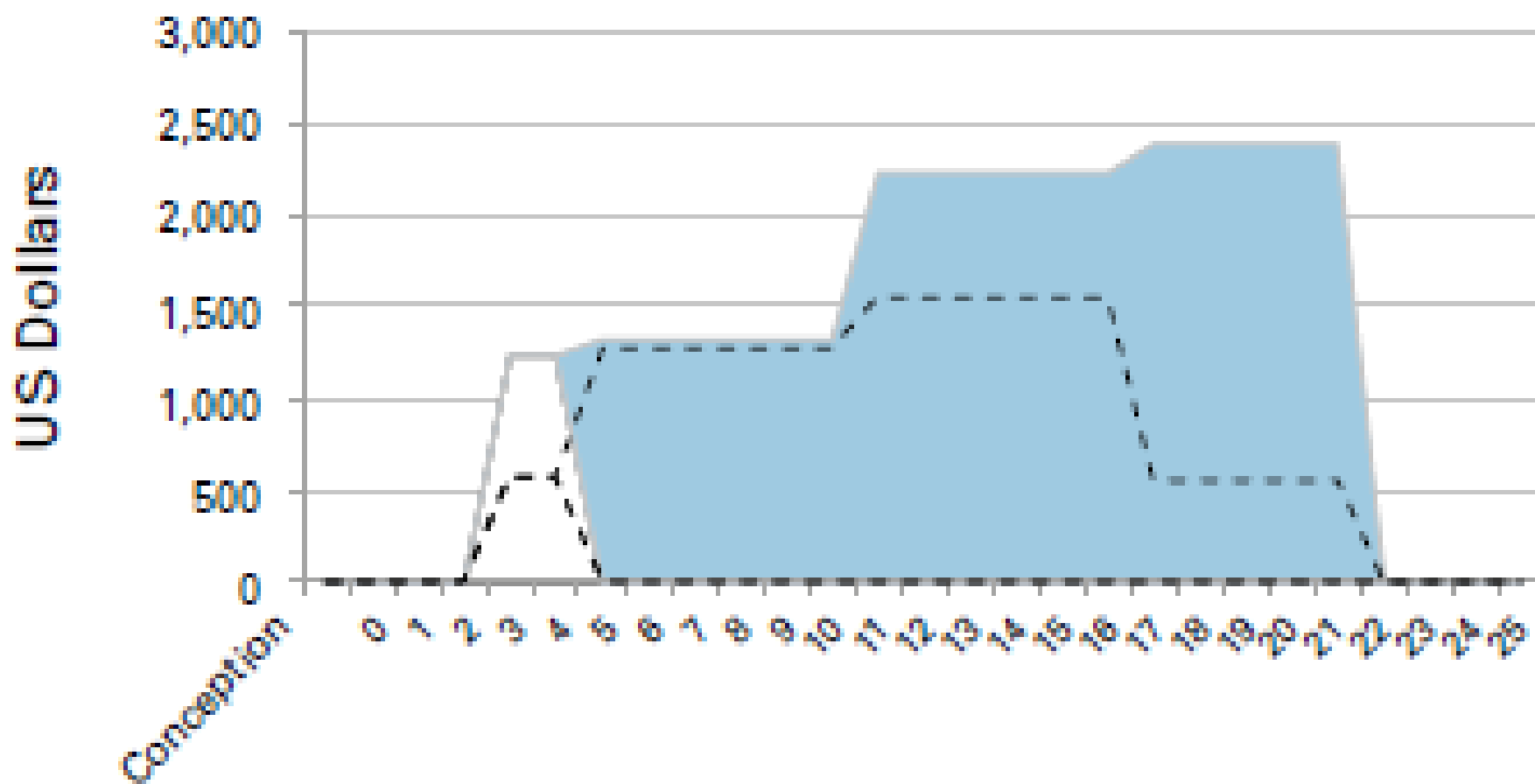


Note: The dashed line marking efficiency portrays the profile under conditions where educational investments were optimized according to Heckman (2008) and earlier learning outcomes allowed for lower levels of investment in later years while achieving the same returns.

How &
when
money is
spent on
children
matters!

■ Education
 ■ In-kind benefits
 ■ Preschool or childcare
 ■ Cash benefits
 --- 2013/15

Belize



Spending patterns are driving inequalities up within and between countries

SDGs covered: and how they were selected

- Group consultation led to a selection of focal goals:



- And 2 targets within each (e.g. SDG 1: No Poverty)
 - **1.1** By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere
 - **1.2** Reduce at least by half, % of people living in poverty in all its dimensions

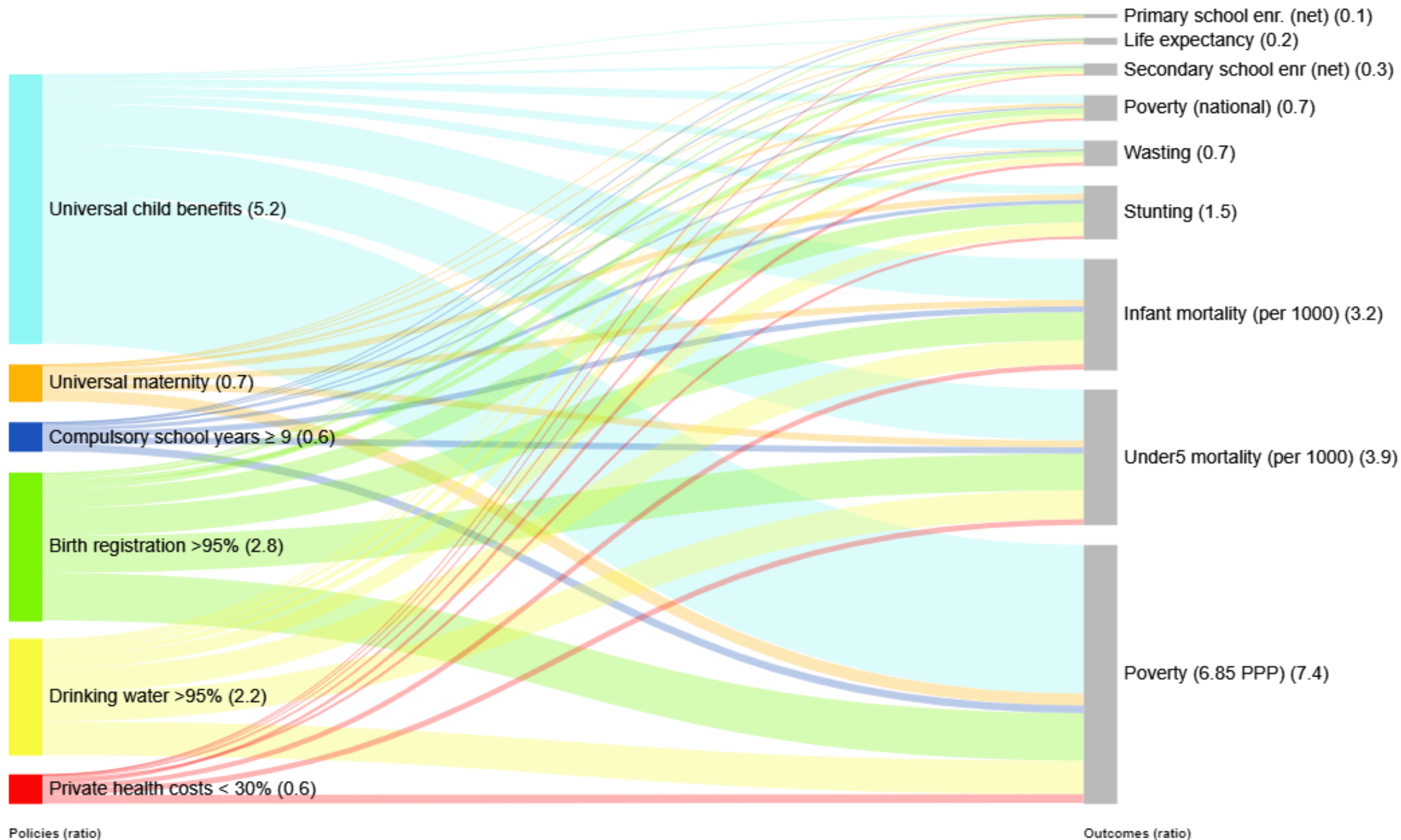
What did the study tell us?

- There is no silver bullet:
 - But family cash benefits consistently reduce poverty and deprivation – can effectively promote employment and gender equality
 - Family focused health approaches are effective – behavioral interventions need family therapists too
 - Parental factors are key to education success
 - family policies work for school access – less so learning
 - Family social protection policies need to be gender neutral in outcomes
 - Violence prevention requires changes in conditions and education (Nurse family partnerships)

Effects on >>>	1 NO POVERTY	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Policies and programming for						
1 NO POVERTY		e.g. Access to health in multiple countries, and health outcomes				
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING						
4 QUALITY EDUCATION						
5 GENDER EQUALITY						
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH						
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS						

- **Observed SDGs connections via family focused policy and programming**
- Strong spillover effects found in the majority of cases
- Yet to cover:
 - Health system effects

Policy Responses to Crises & Their Impacts		Income	Health	Education & Childcare	Work	Safety
 Fiscal Measures	Stimulus					
	Austerity					
 Social Insurance	Health Insurance					
	Unemployment Insurance					
	Weather Insurance					
 Social Transfers, Social Services, & Job Programmes	Cash Transfers					
	Food & School Feeding					
	School & Health Subsidies					
	Social Services					
	Job Programmes					



Parental leaves?

- Parental leave policies influence income trajectories, more spending lower poverty risks for partnered mothers but higher risks for single mothers - conditionality (Zagel and Van Lancker, 2022).
- Longer paid parental leave good for poverty reduction (Maldonado and Nieuwenhuis, 2015)*
- Women viewed maternity leave as beneficial to the health of the child (92.5%), the health of the mother (91.5%), the family (86.2%), and society (90.7%), but fewer women viewed it as beneficial to their income (59.5%), career (46.4%), and employers (30.4%) (Nguyen et al., 2022).
- More (unpaid) parental leave better for MH up to 3 years after the birth of the child (Whitehouse, 2012)



Cost effectiveness of ECCE

- 61 studies, 2014-2024, global quality-assured review
- Immediate returns on ECCE spending (USA) report significantly increased earning potential among parents with access to ECCE, and significant growth in the local economy
 - the effects on poverty vary according to the type of social protection offered
- Improved health and health behaviours promote human capital AND lower demand for costlier interventions resulting from worsening health conditions:
 - preventing mother and child mortality, preventing disease and malnutrition, and using parenting interventions to promote oral health among kindergarteners
- External validity issue with ECCE cost effectiveness evidence remain
- Contexts, costs, and intrinsic value (happiness, security)
- More work is needed

How money is spent matters

Associations between expenditure by child allowance policy type and child and family outcomes



		Relative child income poverty	Female labour market participation	Net primary school enrolment
Child allowances all types	<i>t-1</i>	++	-	+++
	<i>t-2</i>	-	---	++++
	<i>t-3</i>	+	-	+
Child allowances are not universal	<i>t-1</i>	---	_*	---*
	<i>t-2</i>	---	_**	---*
	<i>t-3</i>	++++	-	--
Child allowances are universal	<i>t-1</i>	_**	-	-
	<i>t-2</i>	--***	-	+
	<i>t-3</i>	_***	+	+

Classification of cash benefits in 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009

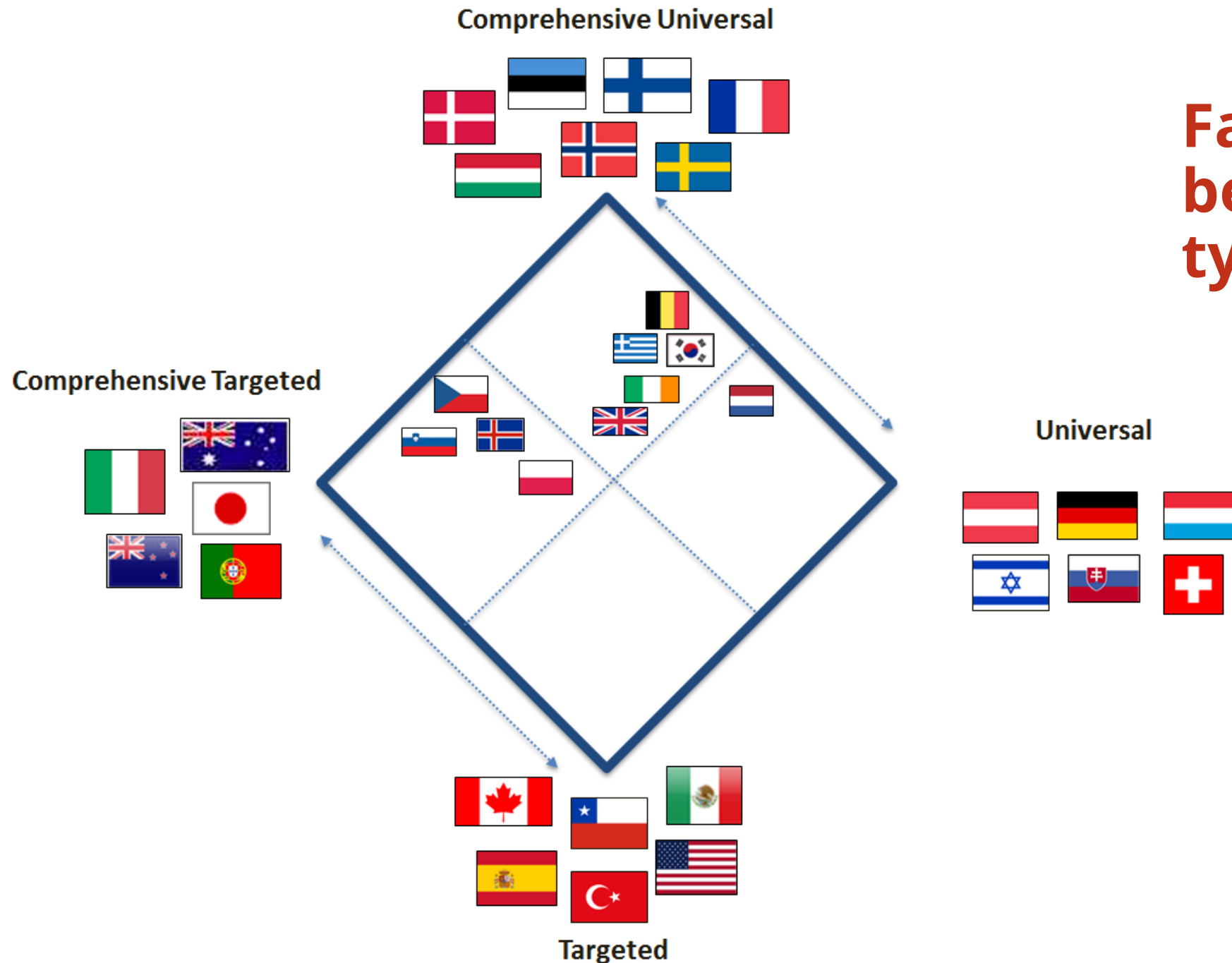
	How family cash benefits are delivered			
	Main Child Benefit is <u>not</u> means-tested	Tax Breaks paid	Sole-parent Supplement	Strong leave Structures
Comprehensive universal	Yes	Sometimes	Yes	Yes
Universal	Yes	Yes	No	Sometimes
Comprehensive targeted	No	Sometimes	Yes	No
Targetted	No	Sometimes	No	No
All remaining combinations are 'hybrid types'				

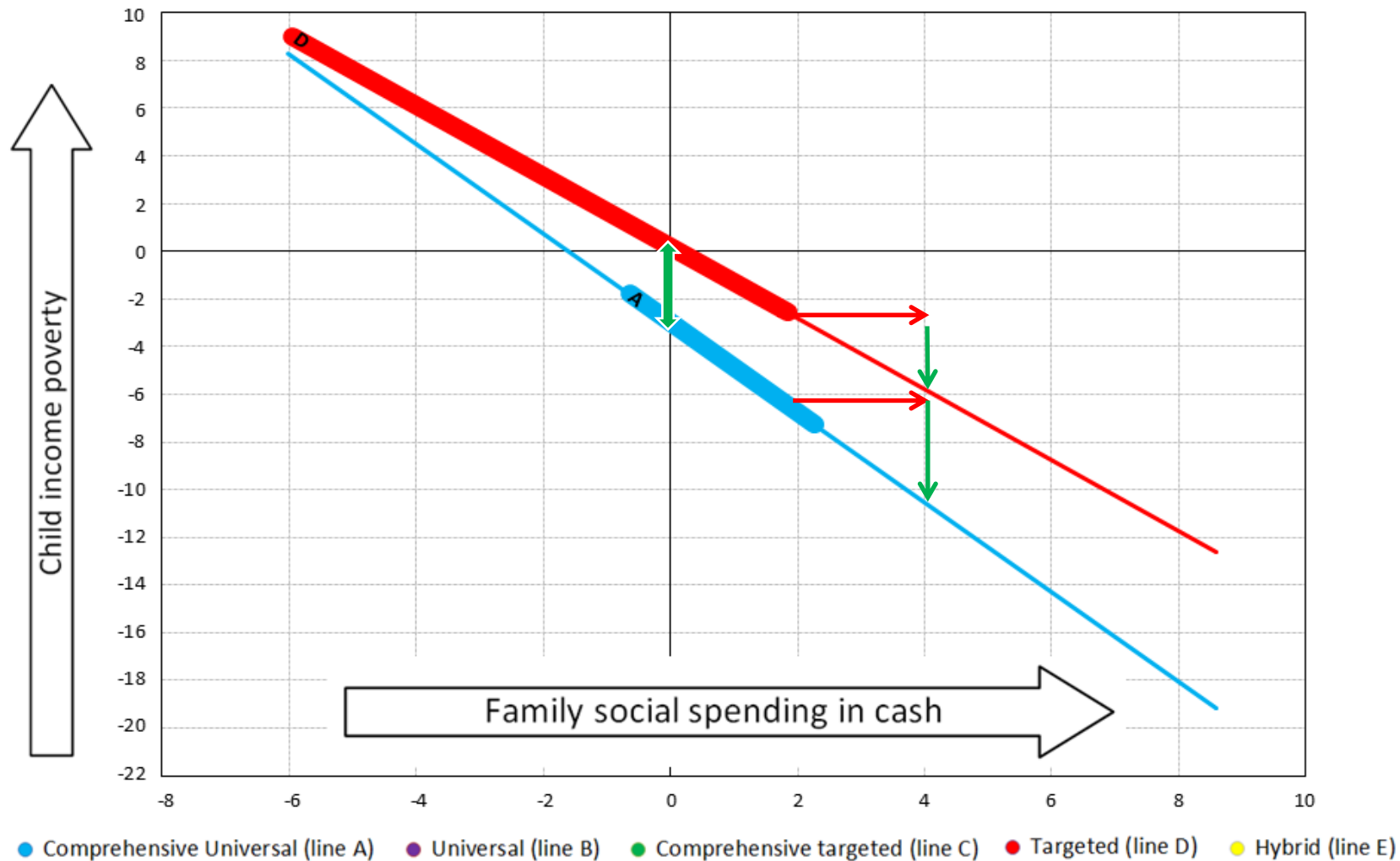
**Family
policy
portfolios
matter**

**'Cash'
types**

Source: Richardson and Frey, Report to the European Commission, 2014

Family cash benefit typologies





Comparing approaches to family cash benefits

Regression lines of child poverty on family cash spending as a function cash benefit structures, 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009.

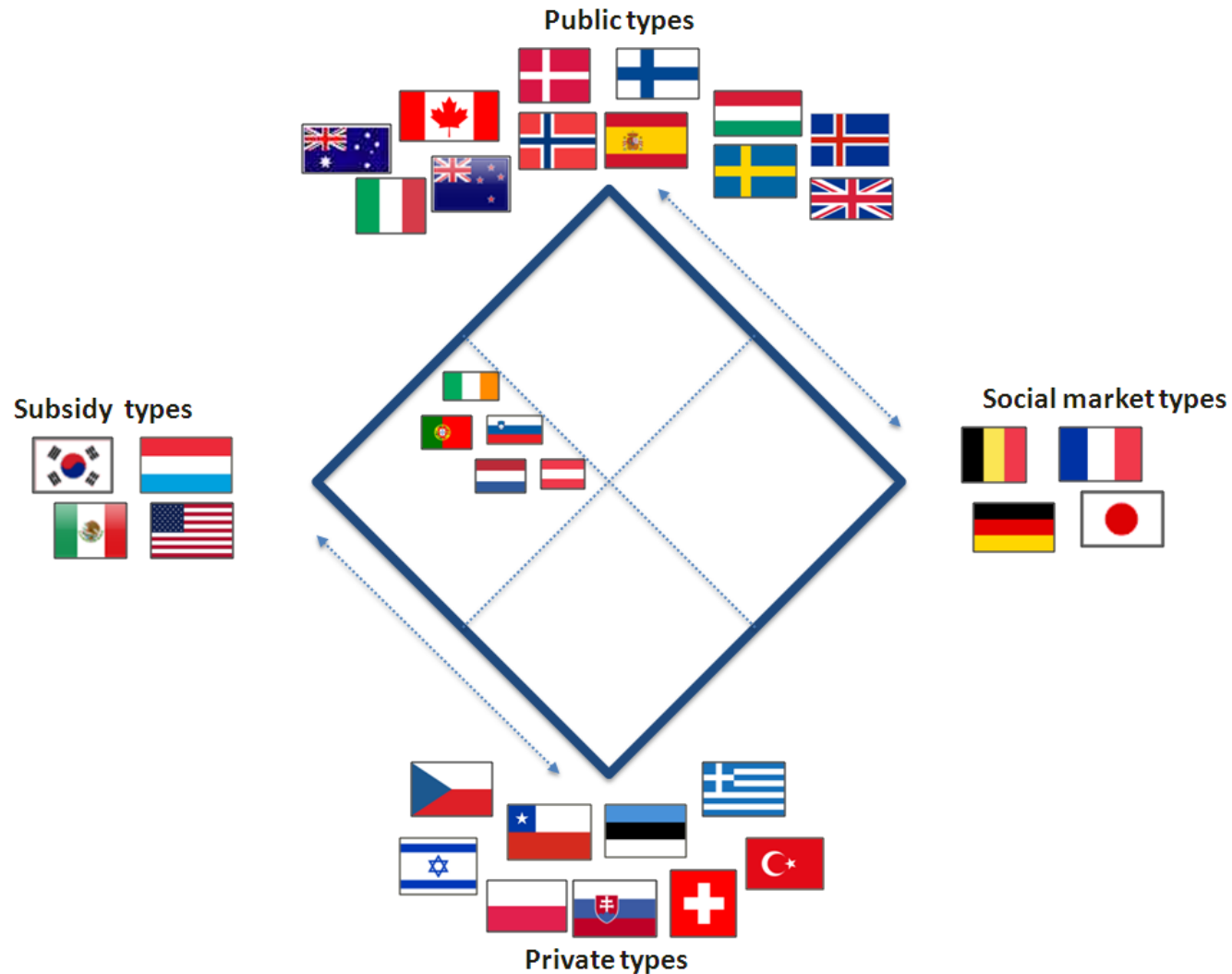
Source: Richardson et al., OECD Report to the European Commission, 2014.

Policy design matters: 'in-kind' types

Classification of early childcare services in 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009

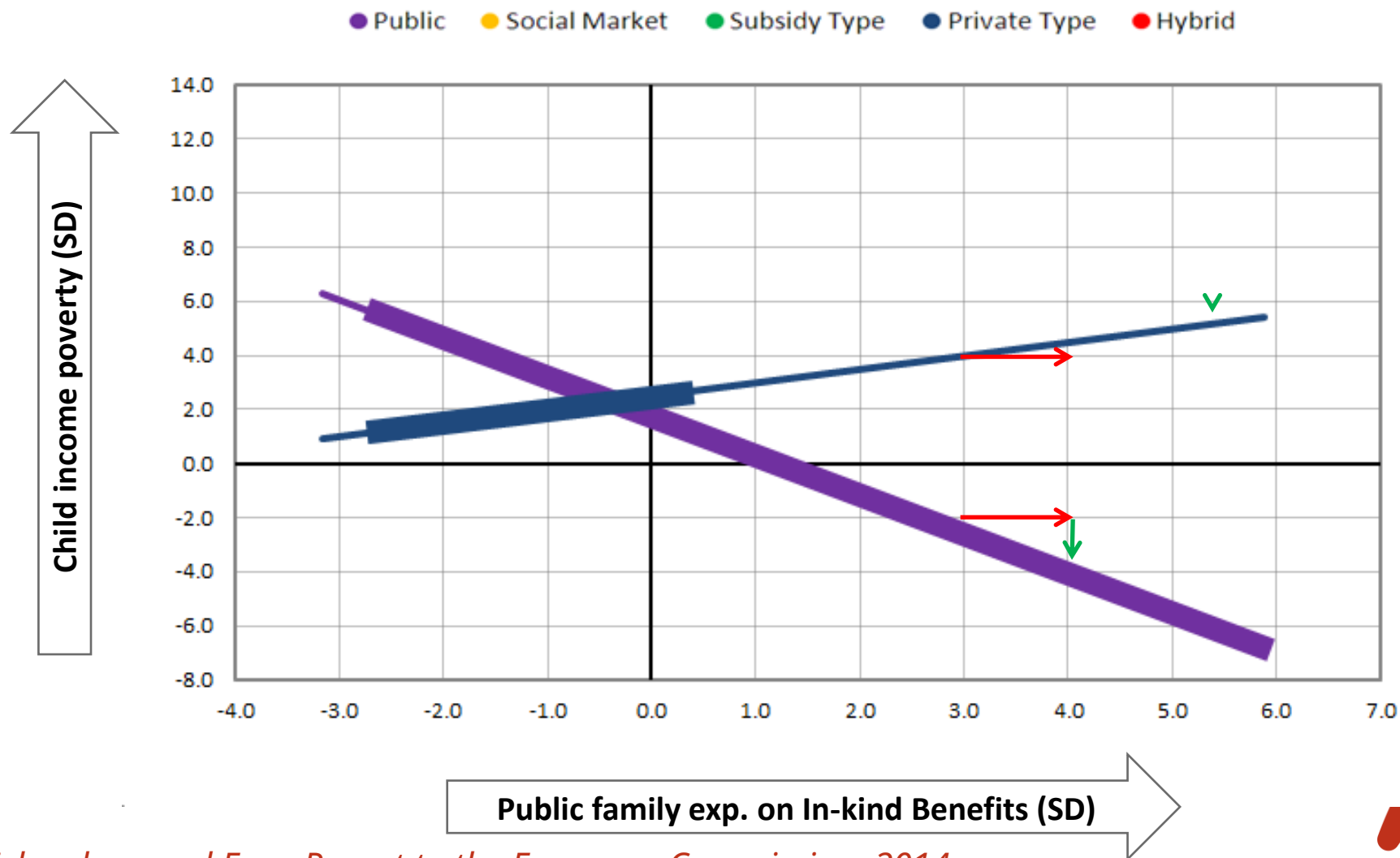
	How early childcare services are delivered		
	<i>Is childcare universal?</i>	<i>Is there a childcare payment to families?</i>	<i>Are birth services free at point of use?</i>
Public	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
Social market	Yes	Yes	No
Subsidy setting	No	Yes	No
Private	No	No	Sometimes
<i>All remaining combinations are 'hybrid types'</i>			

Family service benefit typologies



Comparing approaches to in-kind supports

Regression lines of family in-kind spending on child poverty as a function of spending types, 22 OECD countries, 1996-2009.



Source: Richardson and Frey, Report to the European Commission, 2014

What makes for a good family policy?

1. *Rationale: why it matters.* Parents and caregivers need to see the value of a policy before they're likely to engage with it. Whether it's sending a child to school, taking leave or getting them vaccinated, the "why" has to be clear.
2. *Information on how to?* Good information is more than a leaflet or a website. It's the glue that binds intent to effective family action.
3. *Resources making it possible.* Awareness and good intentions are not enough if families lack the resources to follow through.
4. *Agency, the power to decide.* Agency is about more than having choices - it's about having the ability to act on them.
5. *Time - the invisible currency.* Time is often the most overlooked - and a critical ingredient for strong family functioning.

Opportunity to get it right for children and families

- From material well-being to include eudemonic well-being
- Mismatch between evidence and policy action, with major implications for child and social and economic development
- Population effects, progressive universality, coverage counts
- Spend more and earlier: Reallocate? New money?
- Spend smarter: Coordinate the portfolio, follow evidence
- Promote inclusivity: the costs of inequality, benefits of inclusive growth
- Marginal new investments target age-spending inequities



Thank you

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