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...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland

Social Mobility in Northern Ireland

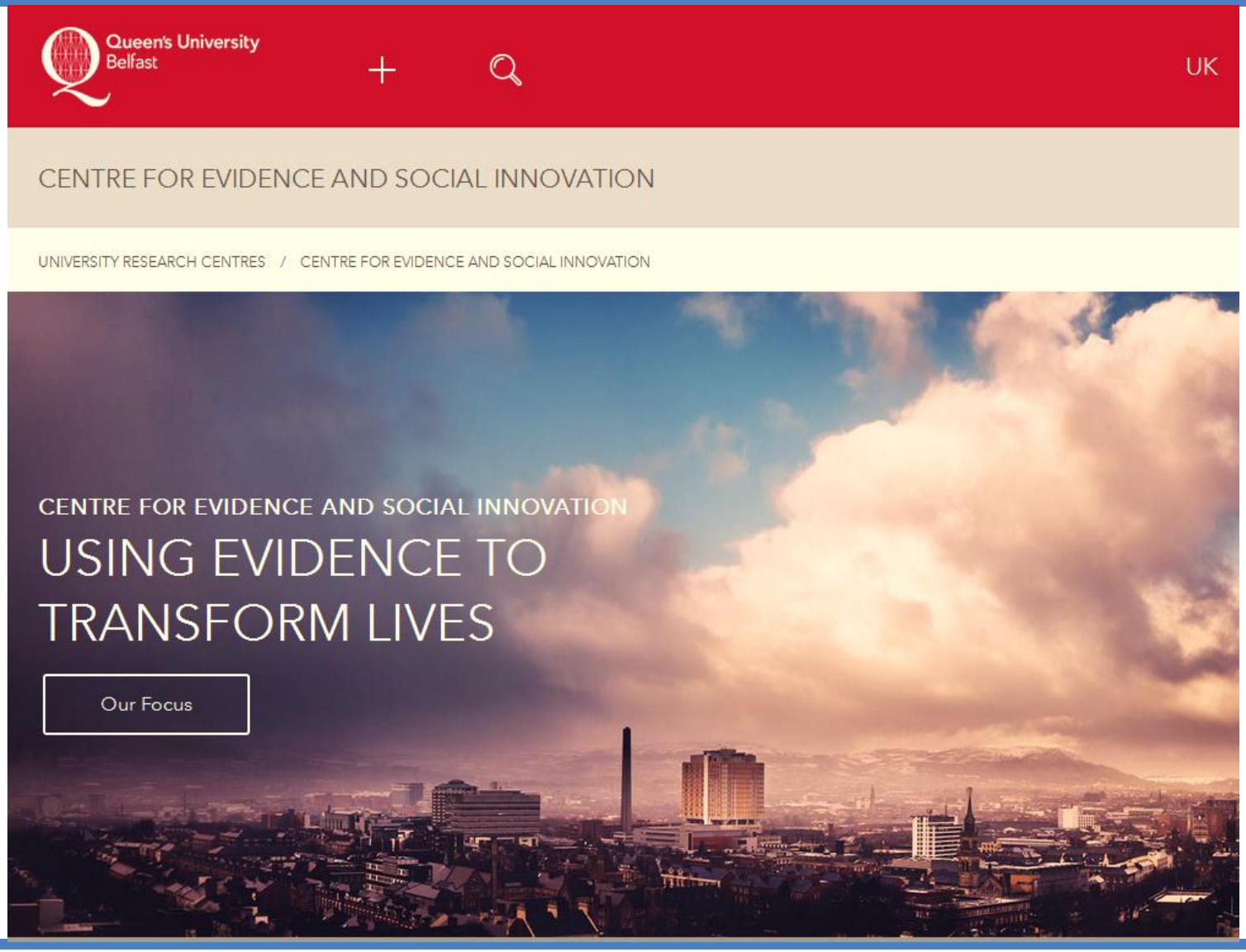
John Moriarty, Allen Thurston

School of Social Science, Education & Social Work

David Wright & Dermot O'Reilly

Centre for Public Health

Queen's University Belfast



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Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland

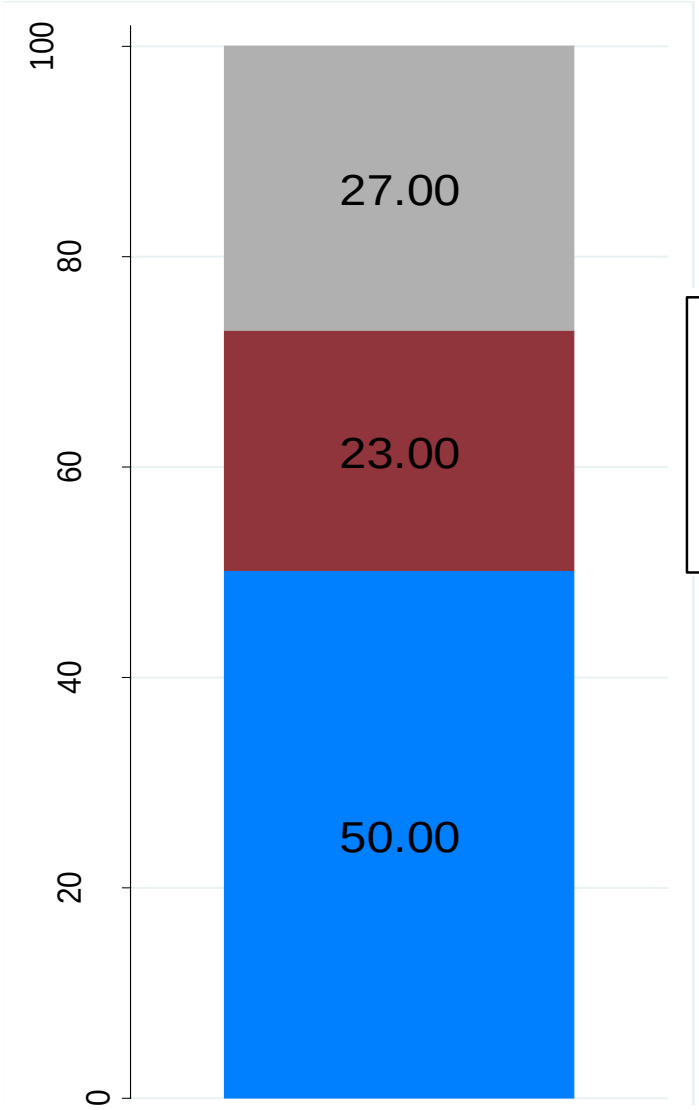
- General information
- Administrative Data Service
- Research Centre - England
- **Research Centre - N Ireland**
  - Our core team
  - Our team
  - Our expertise
  - Our research
  - Researcher Resources

About us

Share

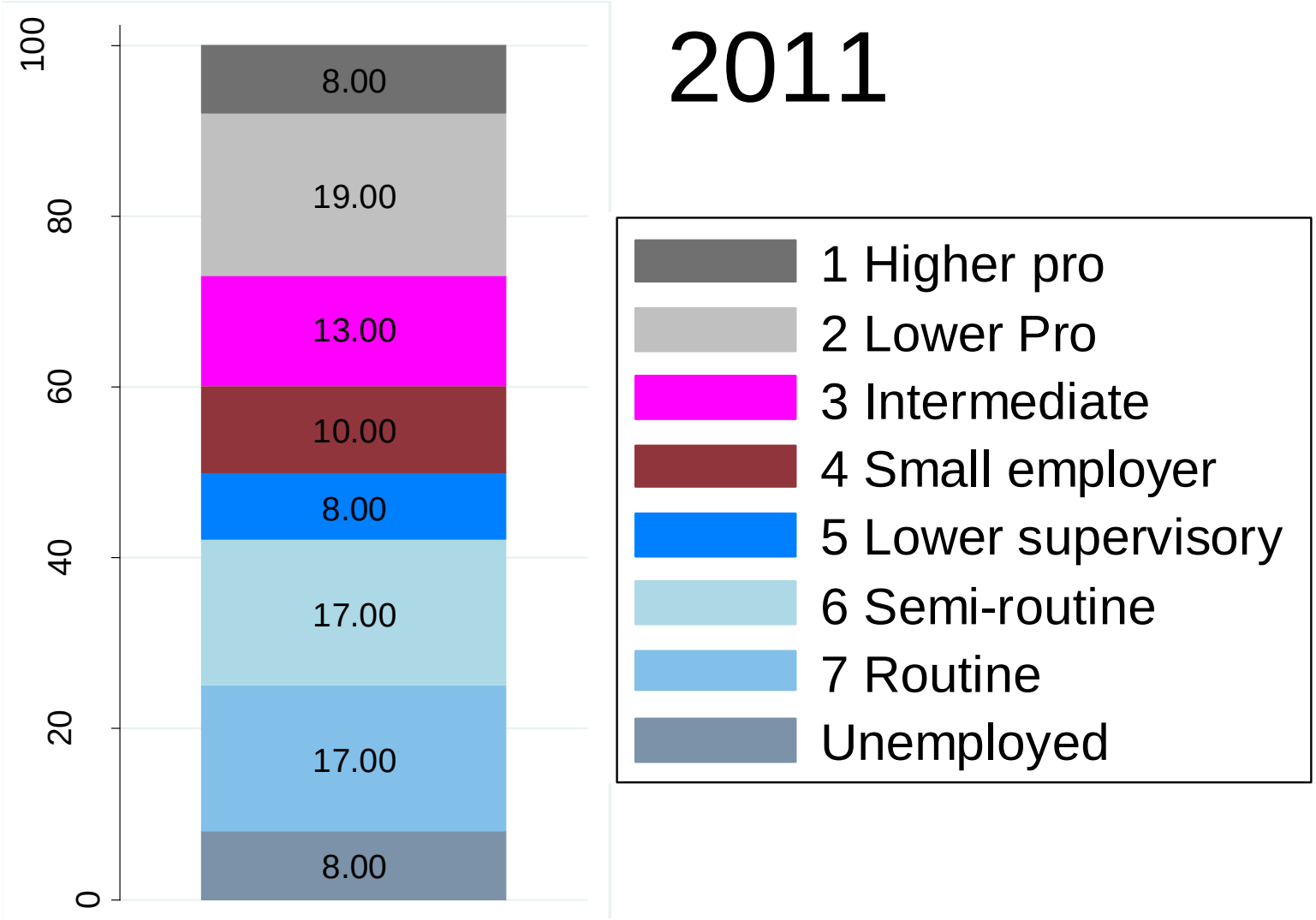
The help provided by the staff of the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study/Northern Ireland Mortality Study (NILS) and the NILS Research Support Unit is acknowledged. The NILS is funded by the Health and Social Care Research and Development Division of the Public Health Agency (HSC R&D Division) and NISRA. The NILS-RSU is funded by the ESRC and the Northern Ireland Government. The authors alone are responsible for the interpretation of the data and any views or opinions presented are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of NISRA/NILS.

2011

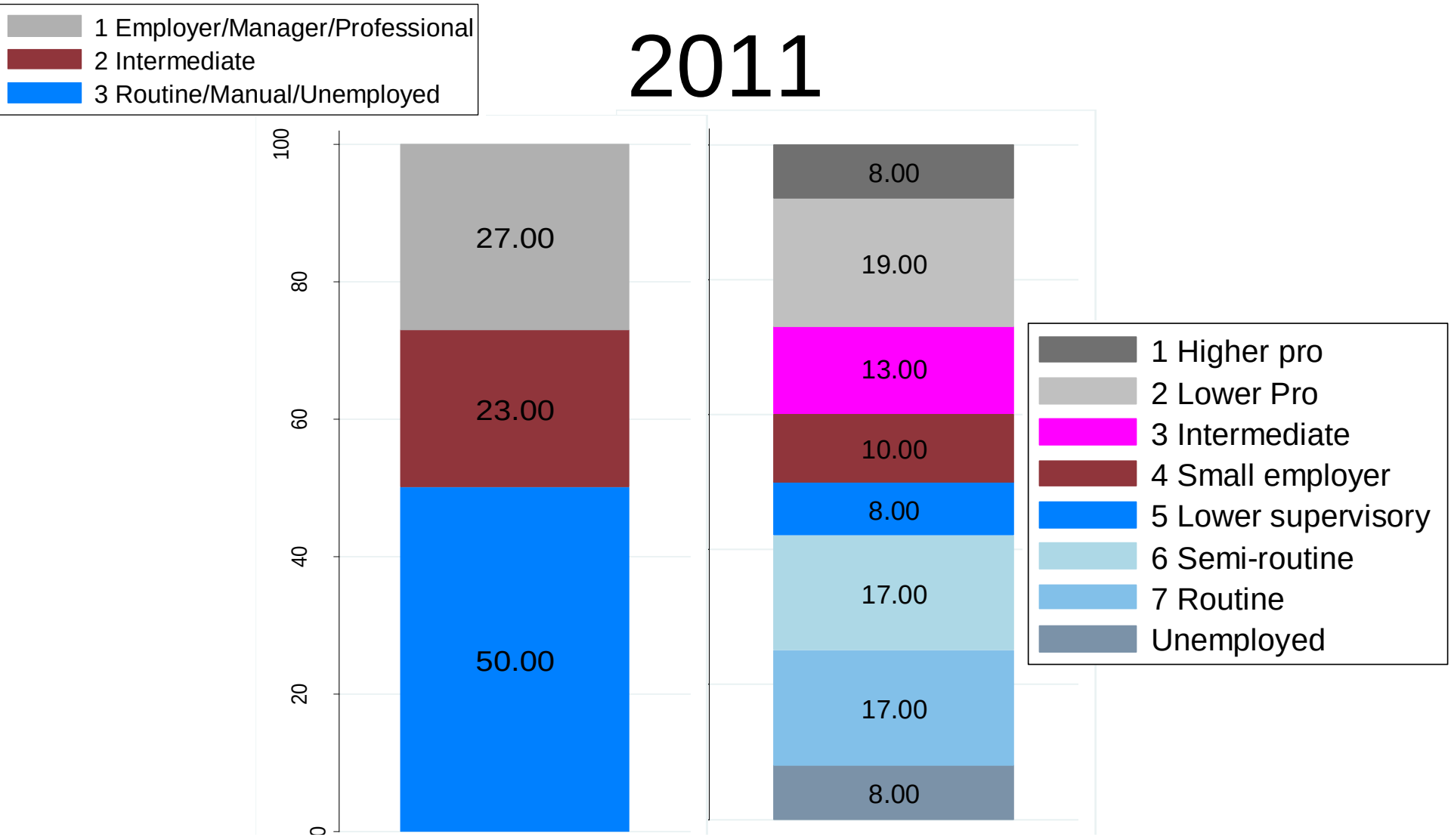


Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

2011



Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study



Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Occupational Class

- The 2011 census gave a good overview of the employment landscape in Northern Ireland and the relative size of occupational class groups

- By then looking at other censuses and capitalising on longitudinal linkage between census (Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study), we can examine how much this landscape has changed and for whom

Linked Census Data:

Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study (NILS)

Anonymously linked via healthcard registration

Census 1991:

Occupataional class 'origin'; Community Background

Study Sub-Cohort:

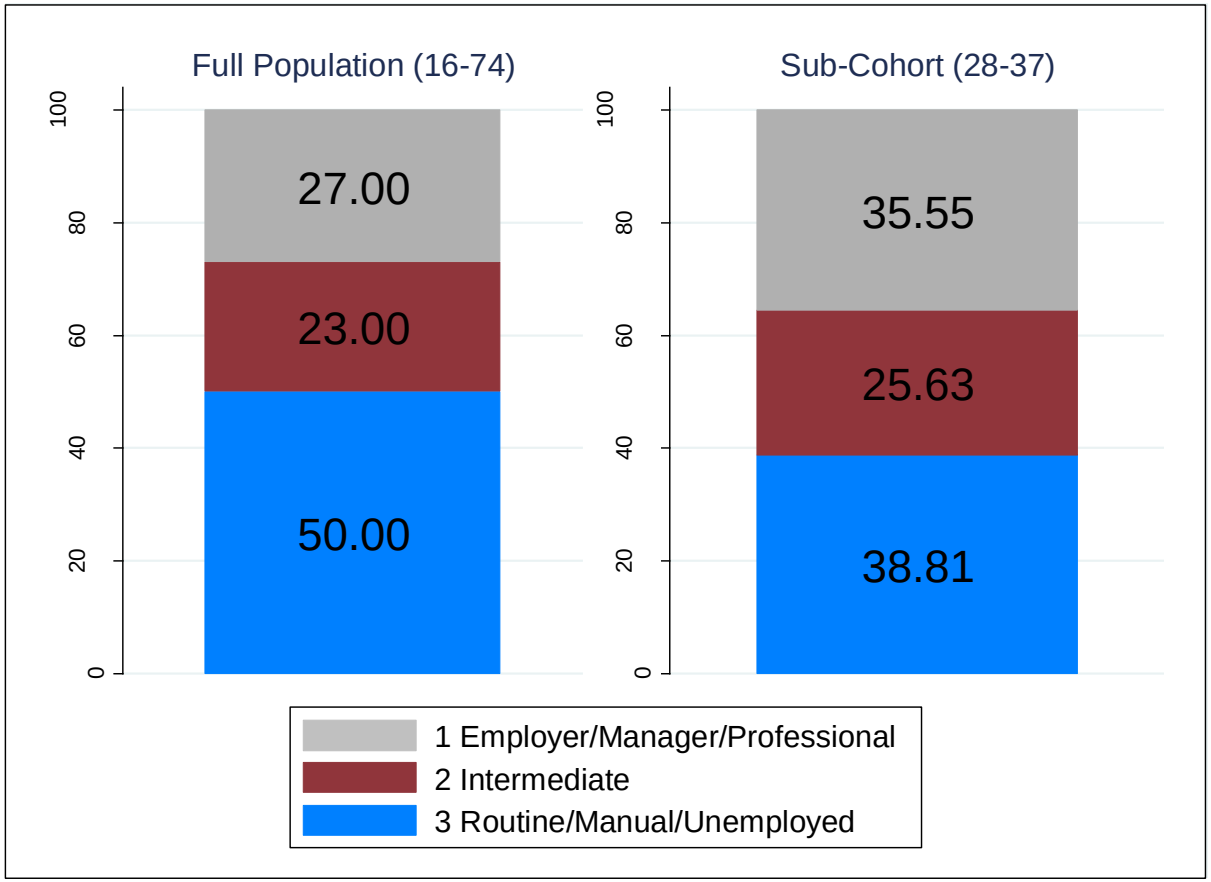
~50,000
Aged 8-17 in 1991;
28-37 in 2011

Census 2011:

Class destination; Education; Gender

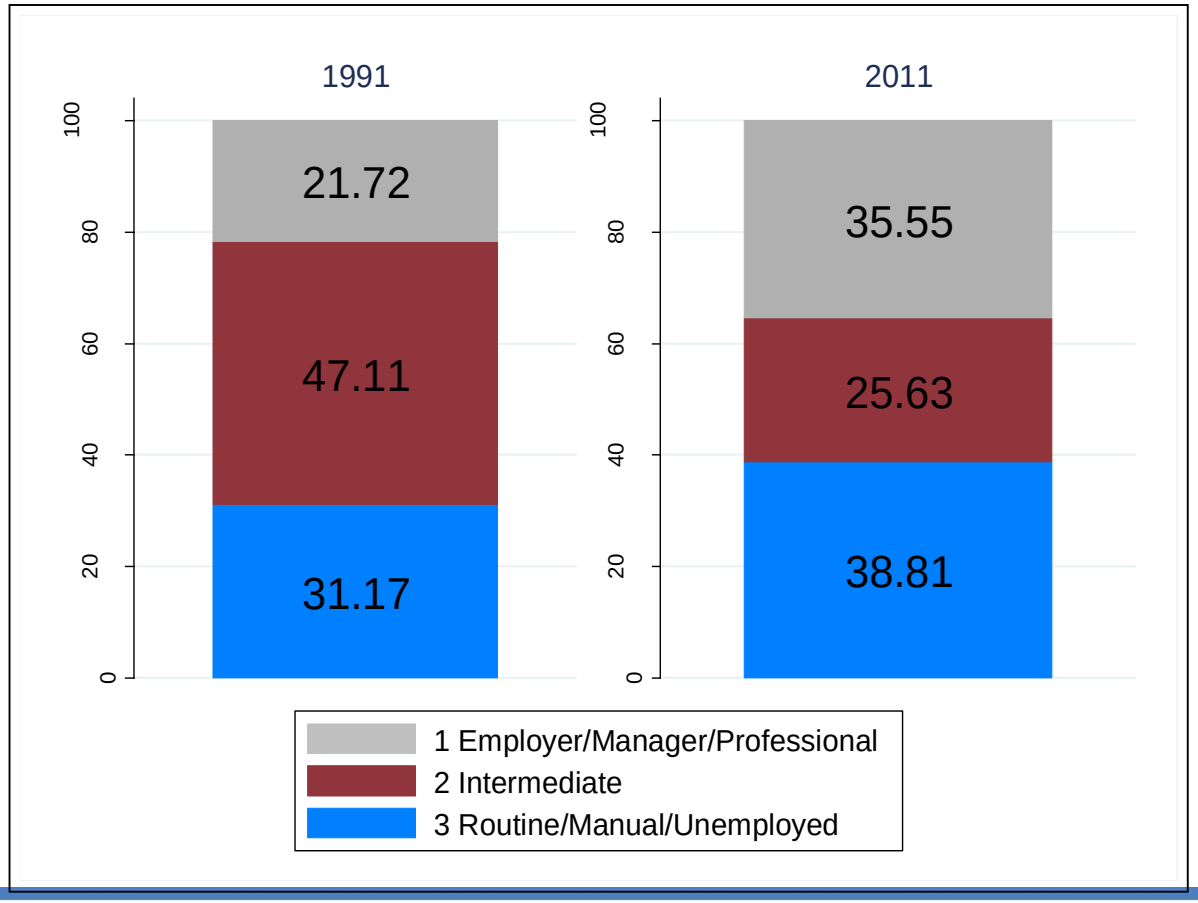
Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Class differentials between the young adult cohort and the full population



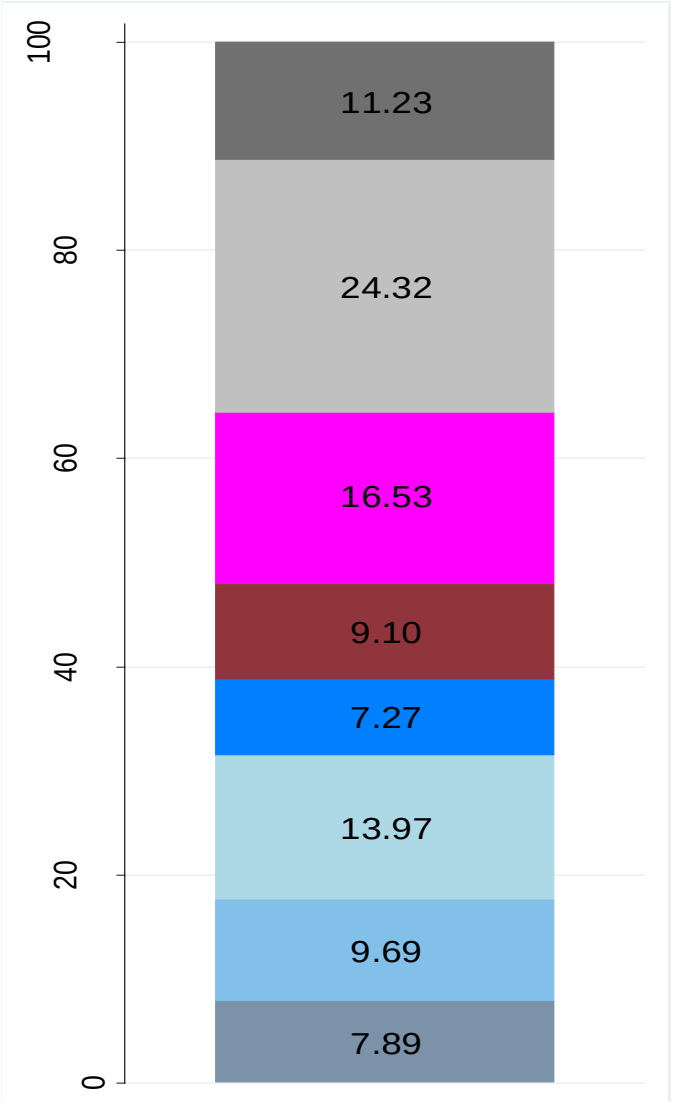
Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Changes from 1991 to 2011



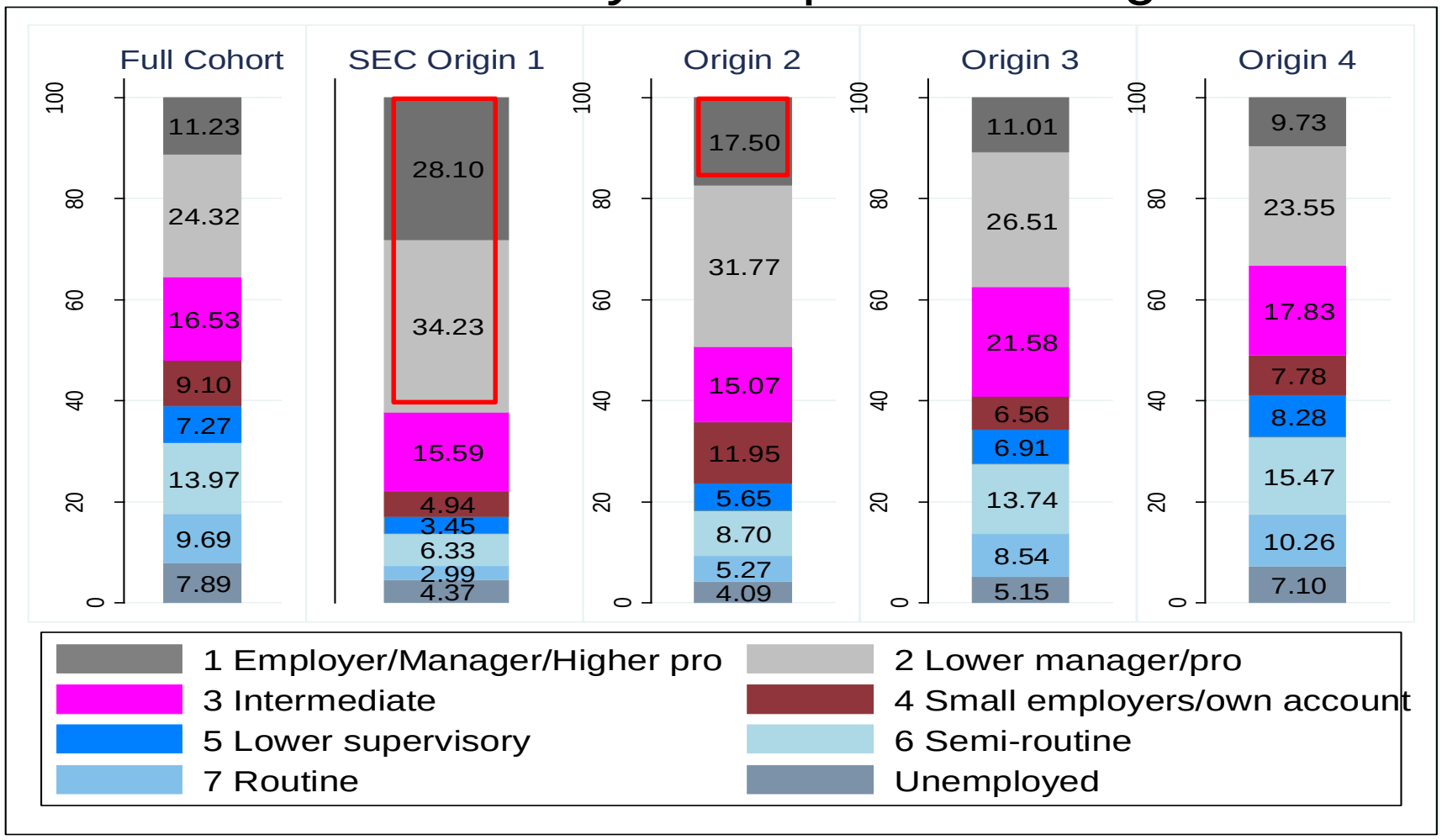
Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

2011



Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

2011 Class by Occupational Origin



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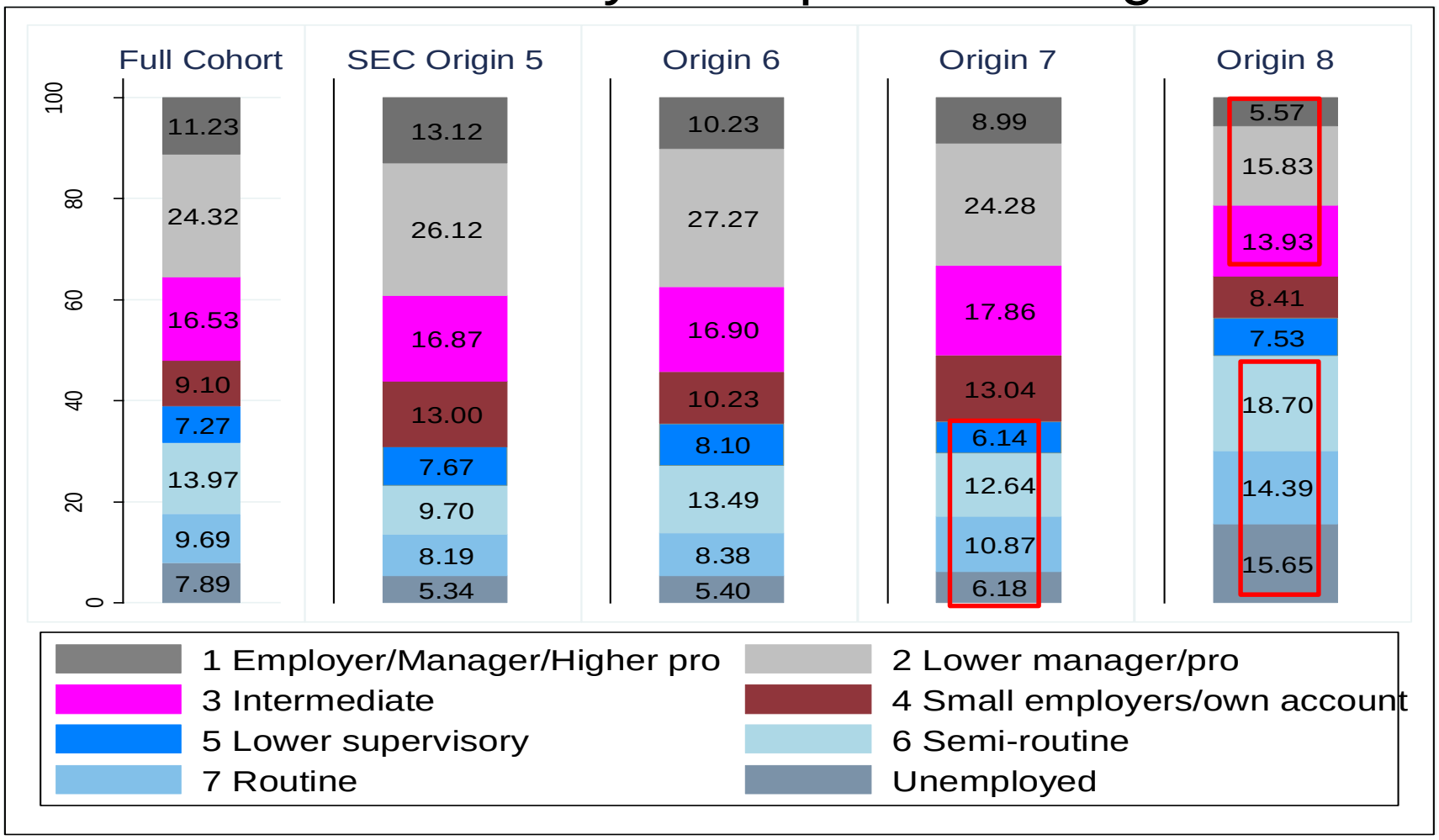
Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Occupational Class Mobility

- Both ends of the class distribution are ‘sticky’.
    - Those from households with higher professionals are more likely to gain the same occupational status themselves than the general population, and more so even than those in lower professional households

2011 Class by Occupational Origin

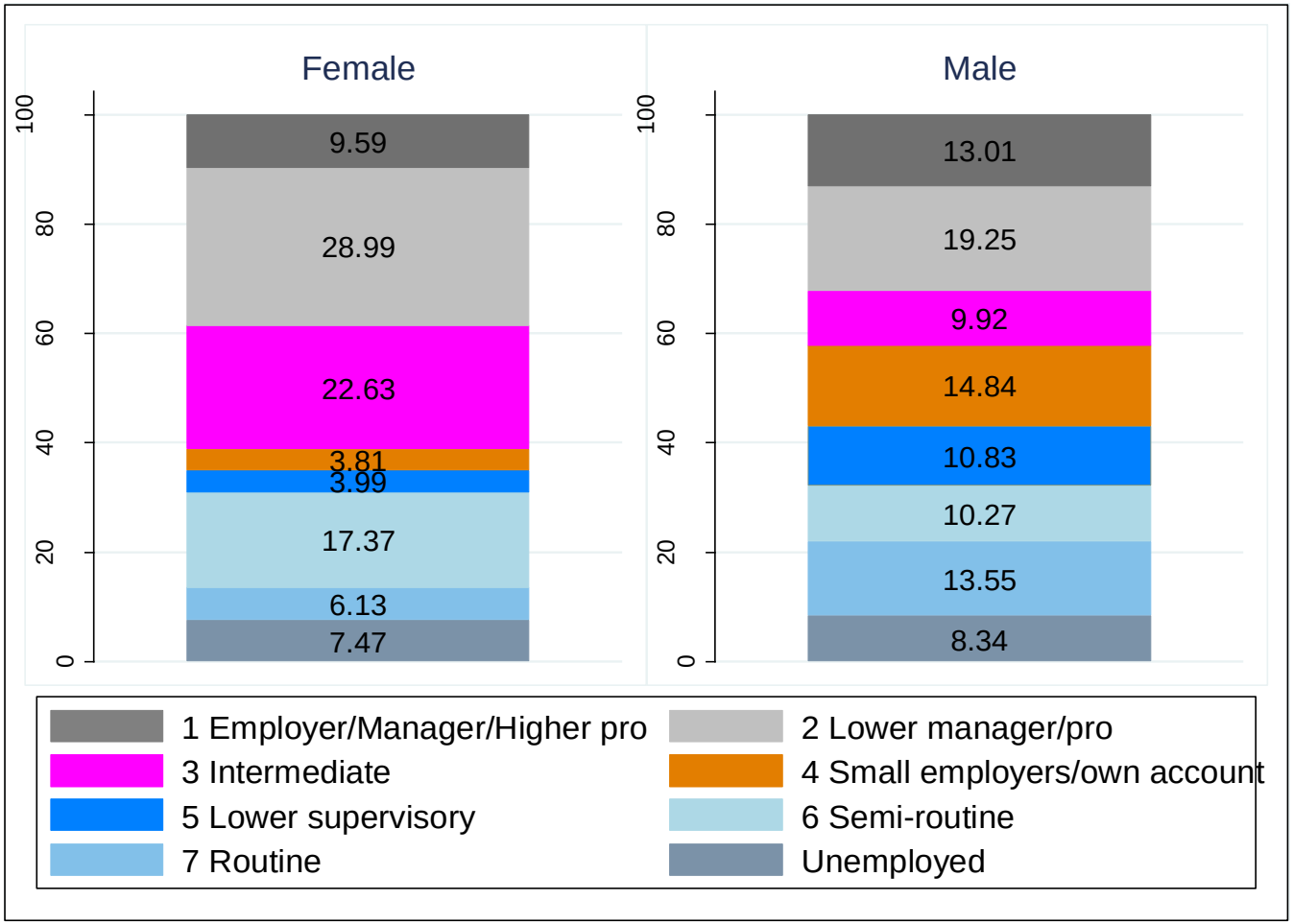


Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Occupational Class Mobility

- Both ends of the class distribution are ‘sticky’.
    - Those from households with unemployment are more like to be unemployed themselves, or to have low status occupations
- In between the extremes there appears to be more fluidity and equivalence of opportunity

Gender

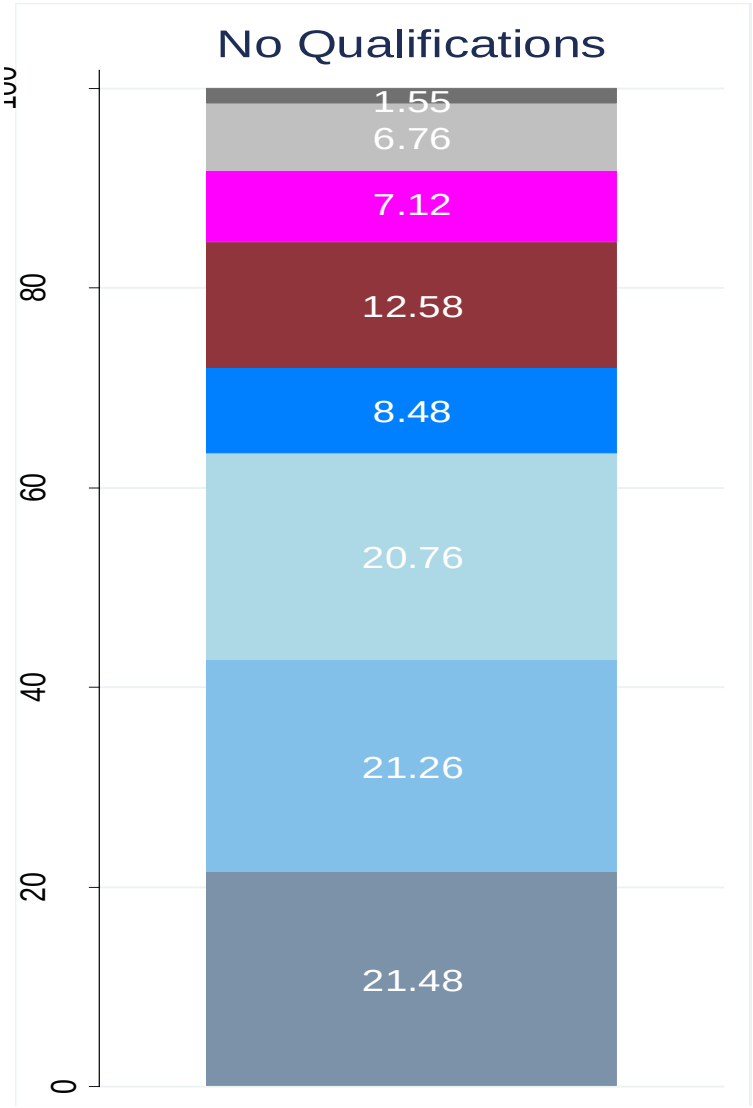


Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Occupational Class and Gender

- Male and female occupational class patterns are quite different. Females in this cohort are under-represented in higher professional occupations, but over-represented in lower professional

- Females are also marginally less likely to be working and more likely to be in semi-routine occupations



No Academic Qualifications

- 1 Higher pro
- 2 Lower Pro
- 3 Intermediate
- 4 Small employer
- 5 Lower supervisory
- 6 Semi-routine
- 7 Routine
- Unemployed

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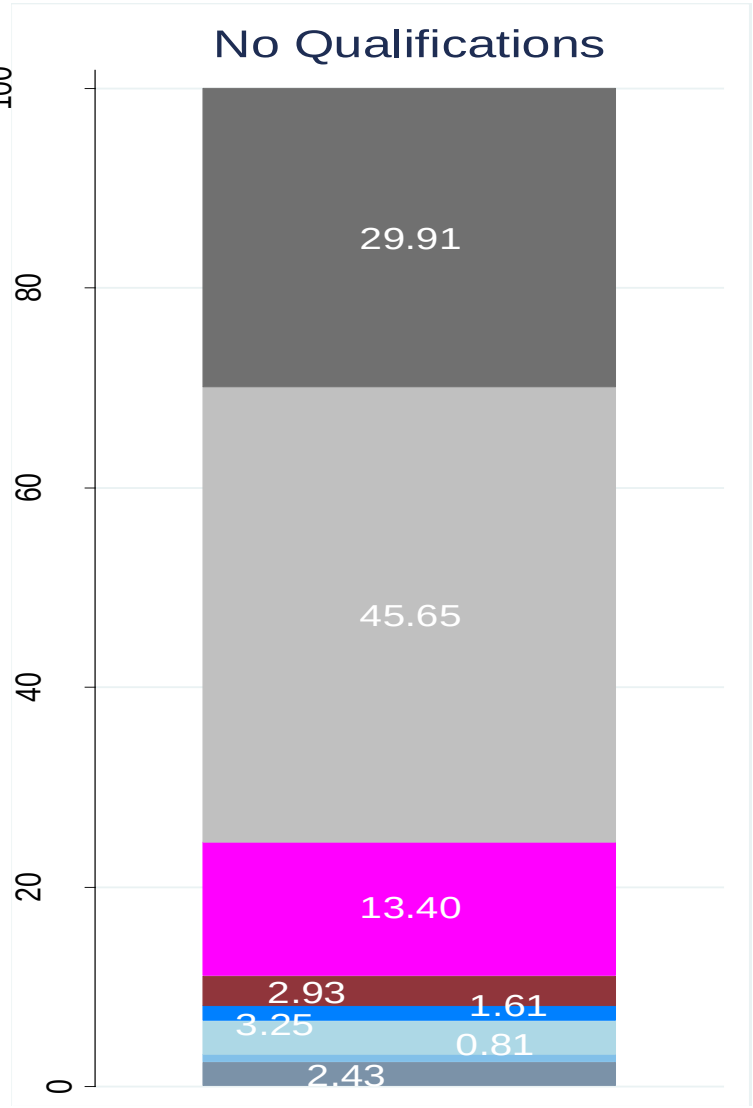
Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

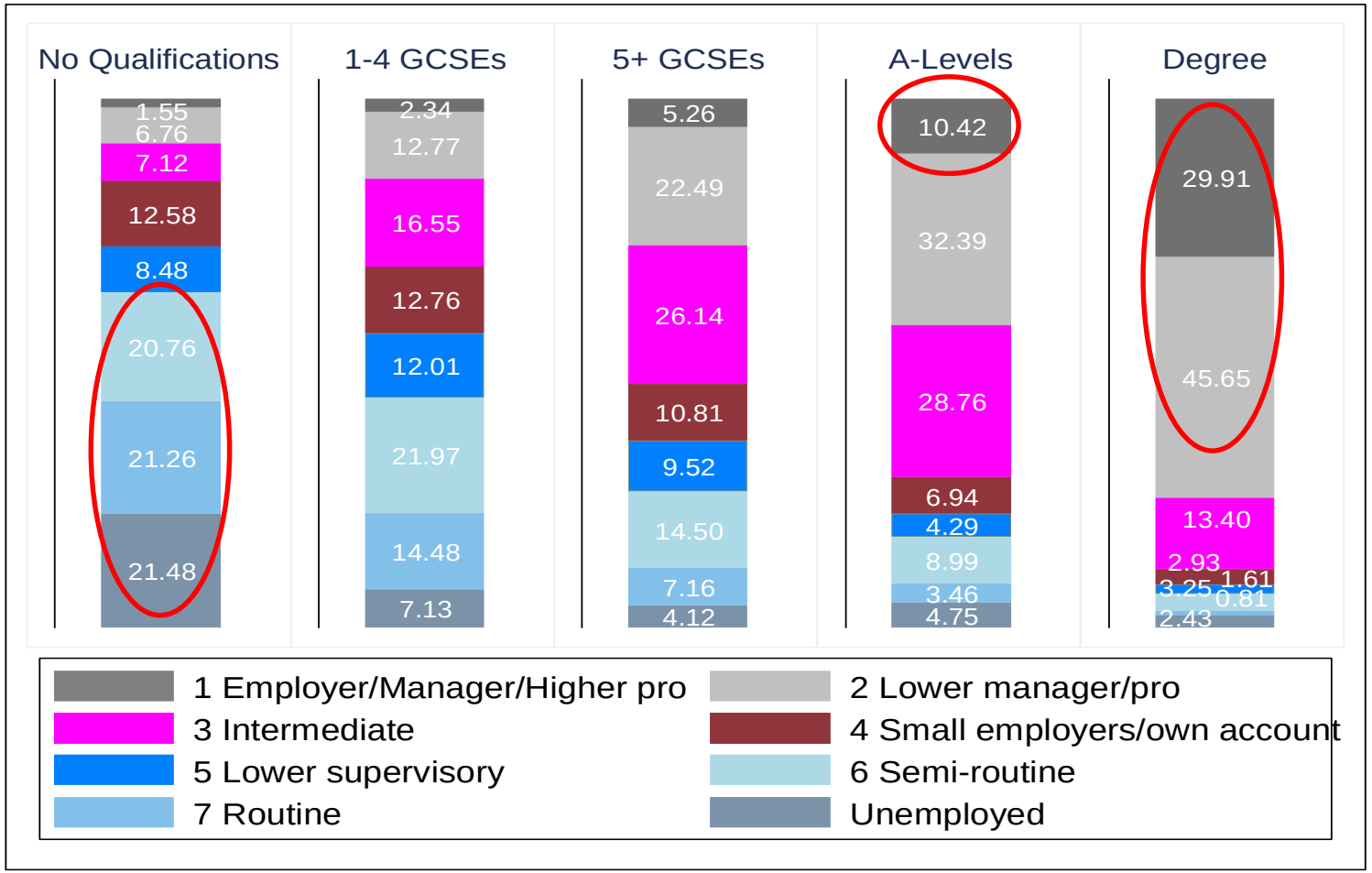


Degree/Third Level Qualifications

- 1 Higher pro
- 2 Lower Pro
- 3 Intermediate
- 4 Small employer
- 5 Lower supervisory
- 6 Semi-routine
- 7 Routine
- Unemployed

Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Academic Qualifications

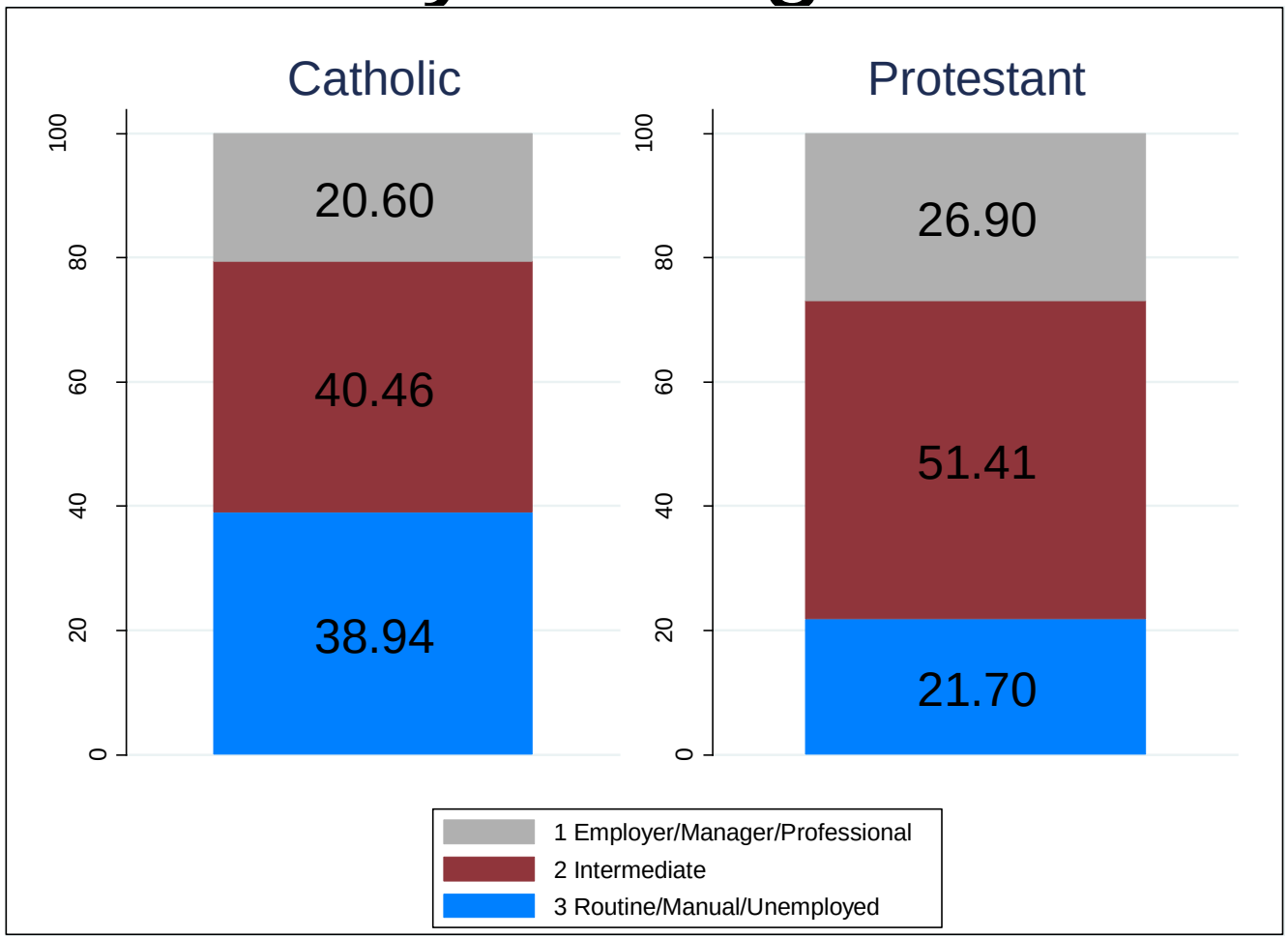


Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Occupational Class and Education

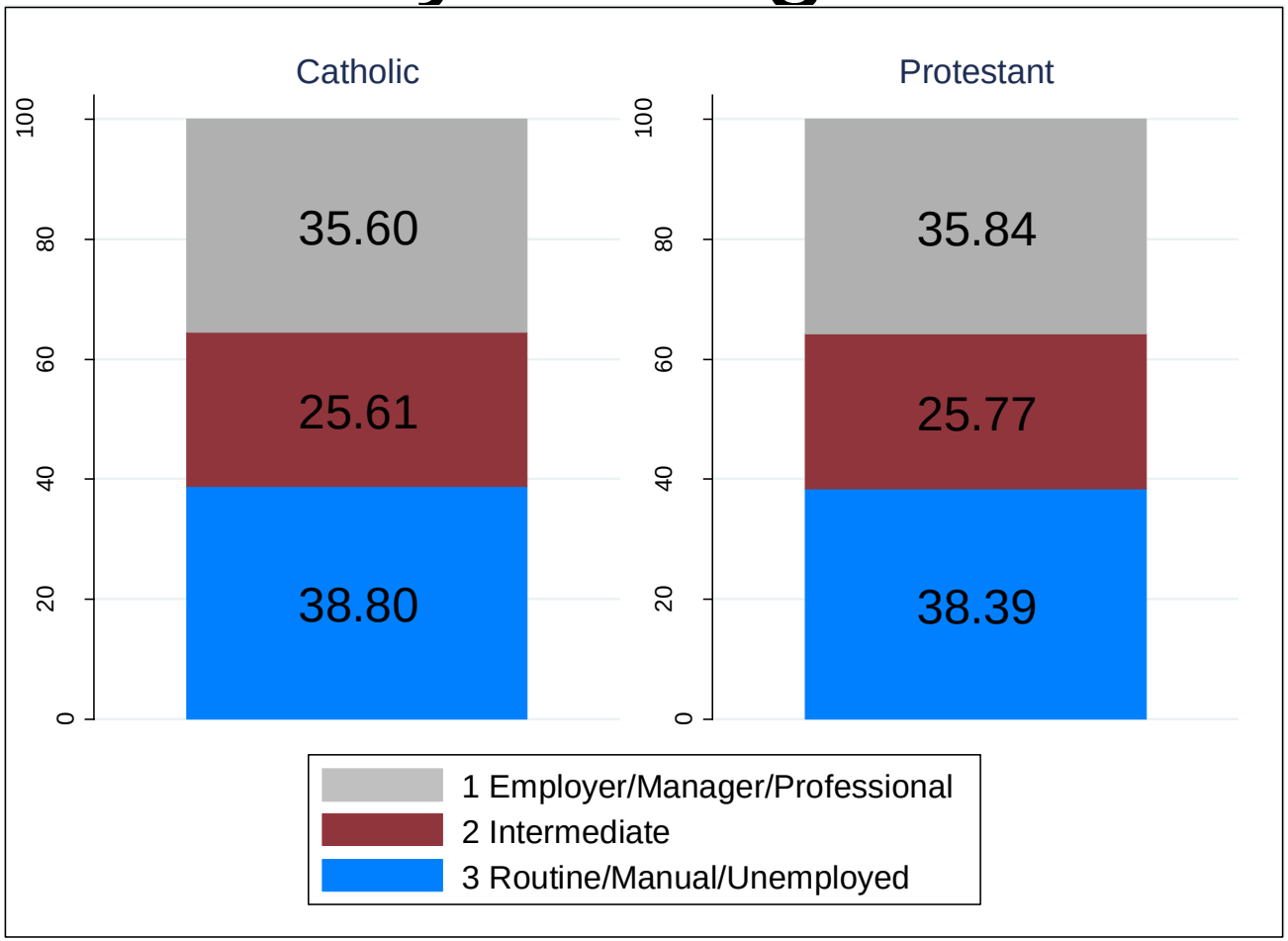
- Academic attainment is the strongest predictor of occupational class, with more pronounced differentials between each successive grade of educational attainment than between class origin groups or any other factor

Community Background: 1991



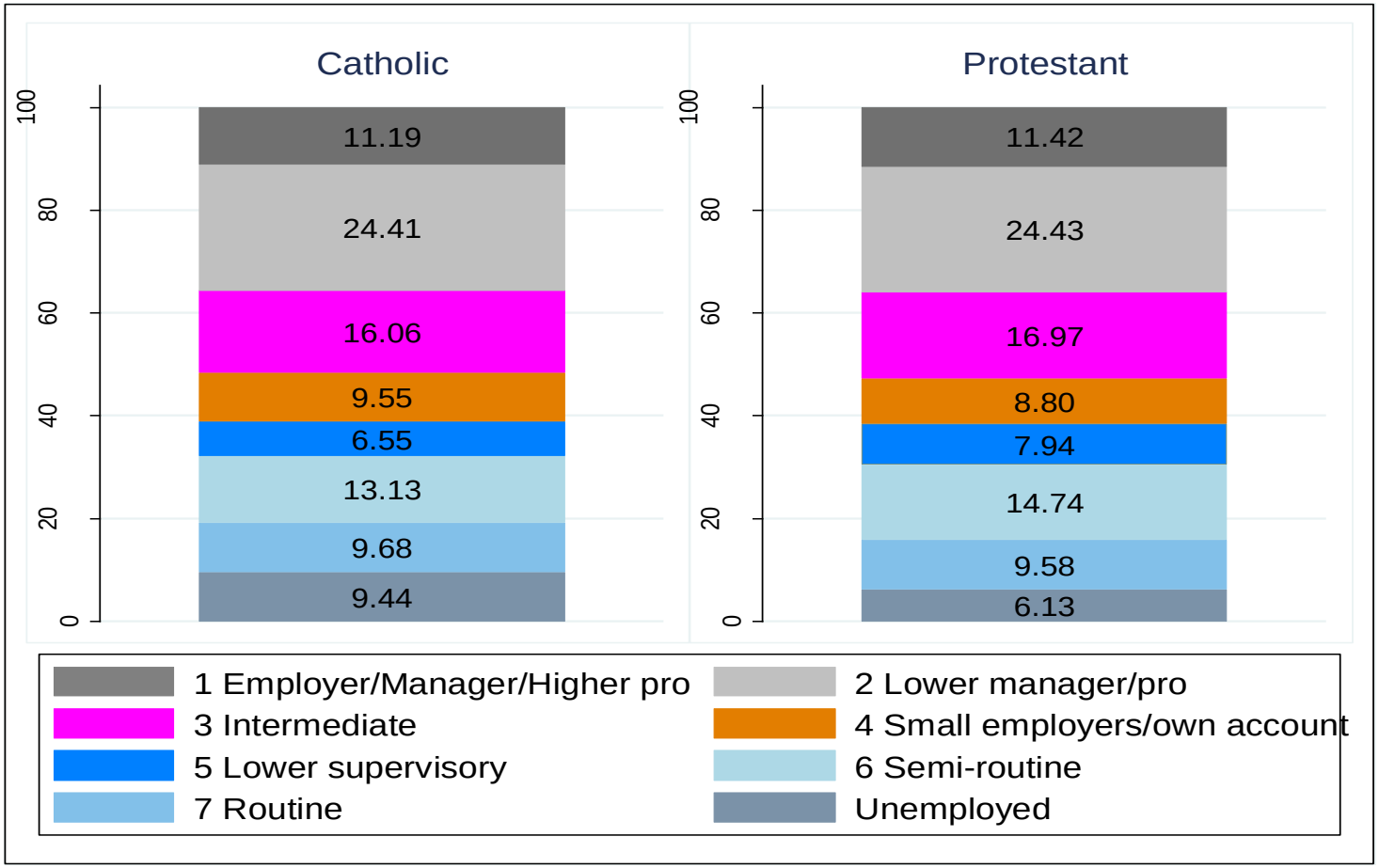
Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Community Background: 2011



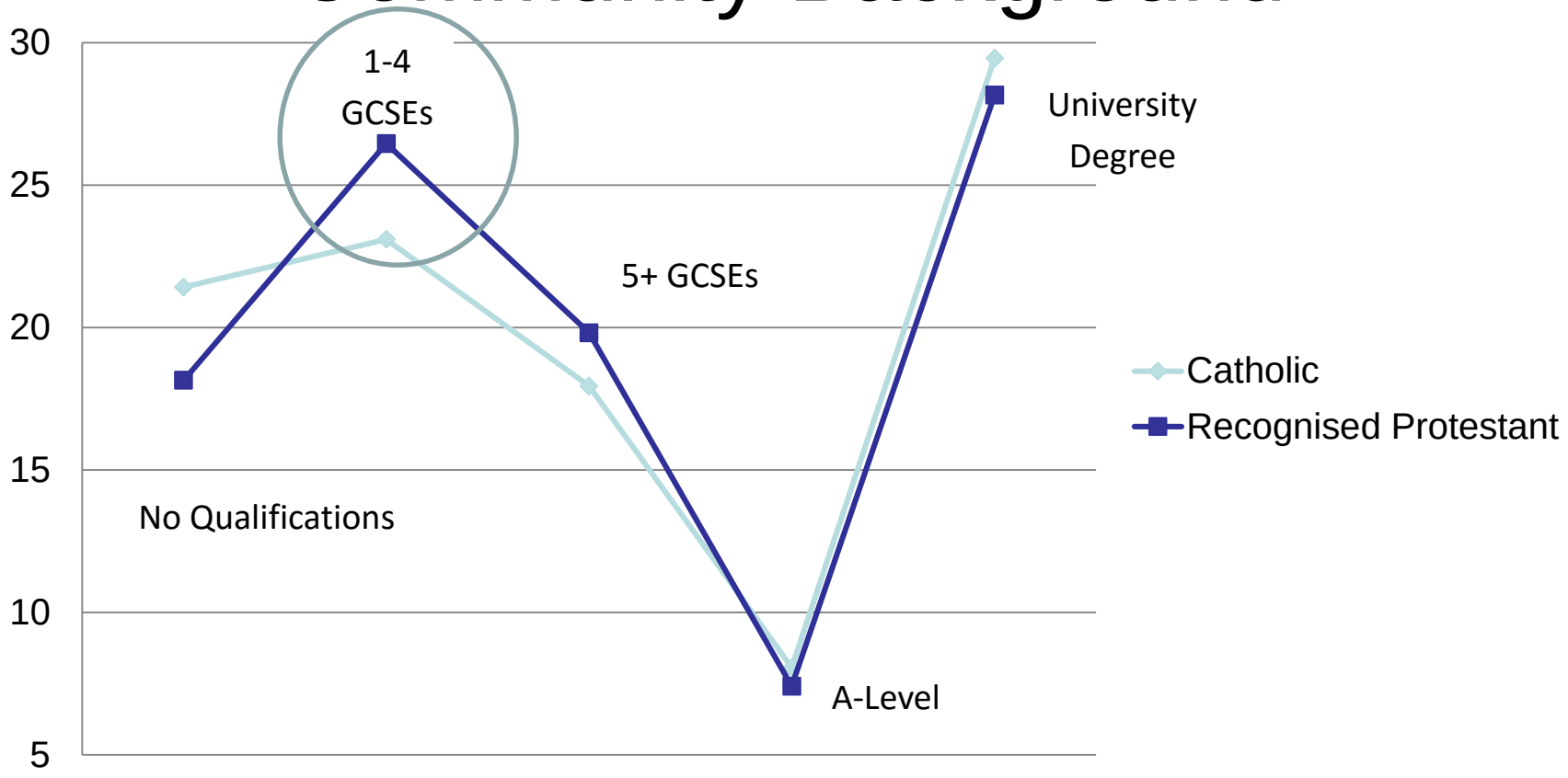
Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Community Background: 2011



Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Academic Qualifications by Community Background



Source: Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study

Conclusions & Future Directions

- Evidence of some intergenerational mobility among middle classes, but also persistent cyclical effects from affluence and unemployment
- Academic attainment is the strongest predictor of occupational attainment
- Social mobility for Catholics has diluted previous inequalities by community background for this cohort. Some of this is likely explained by some Protestants leaving education earlier

- Policy challenges include recognition and reward for non-academic alternatives to academic education attainment, such as in-work training

- Further data linkage, for example on educational attainment, will allow for deeper analysis of critical points at which inequalities take effect

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