

**Development 2022 :  
A Canadian  
Conference on  
Developmental  
Psychology**

**June 15, 2022**



**Centre de recherche  
mère-enfant**  
de l'Université de Sherbrooke



**GRISE**

Groupe de recherche et d'intervention  
sur les adaptations sociales de l'enfance (GRISE)  
de l'Université de Sherbrooke

The

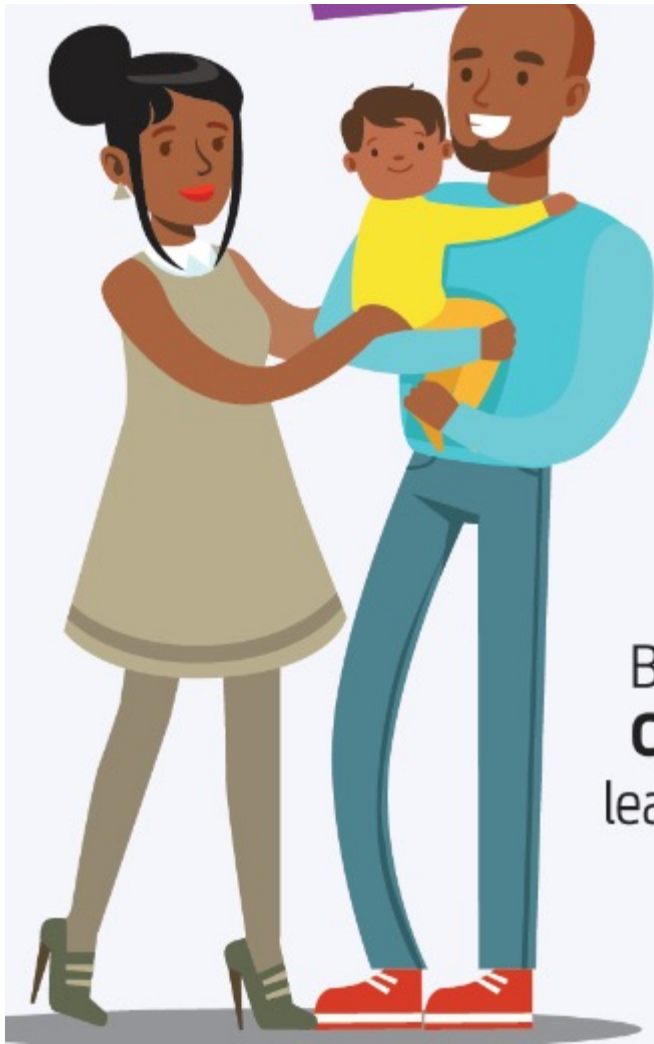


**Maternal Occupational Status  
During the Child's First Year:  
Prediction to School Readiness**

Gabrielle Garon-Carrier

Dufour C, Berrigan F, Shareck M, Côté A-M, & Fitzpatrick C

**Tier II CRC on school readiness, inclusion and social  
adjustment**



Between 2012 and 2017\*, **2.3 million Canadians** (80% of parents) took a leave (paid or unpaid) from their job for the birth or adoption of a child.

# Parental Leave in Canada

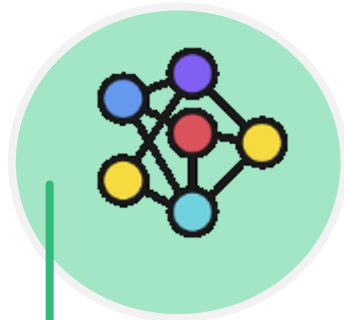
**Benefit parents and family wellbeing**



**Improve child's physical health**



**Engage parents in child rearing**



**Long-term outcomes?**





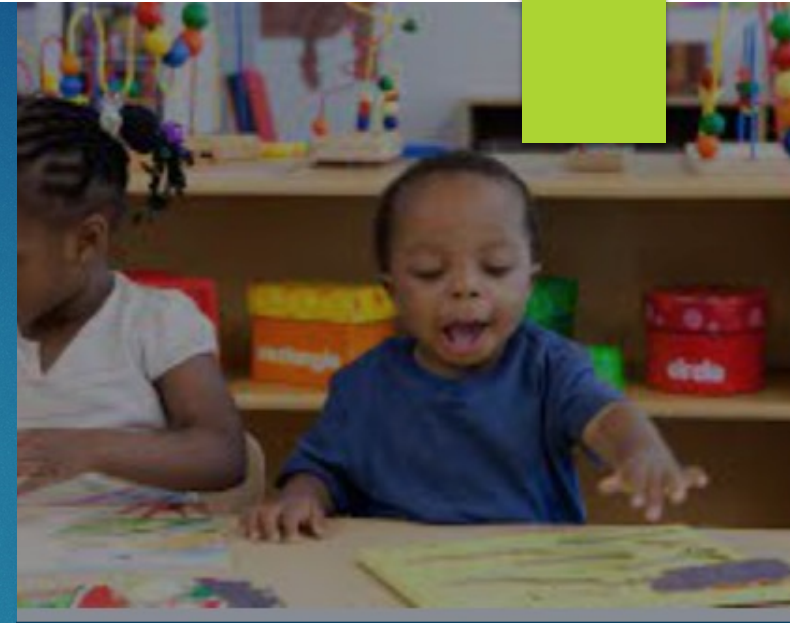
**Parental leave uptake is complex  
and largely depends on leave  
conditions and on families'  
circumstances**

# What Happens when Leave is Unpaid?

- ▶ **Maternal employment**
  - ▶ Child may be deprived of stimulation
- ▶ **Financial support**
  - ▶ Provides family with economic and social resources that can benefit child development



What is the impact of maternal leave on key components of school readiness?



# Objectives

How two key aspects of leave during the first year of the child's life are prospectively associated with child school readiness?

- ▶ the occupational status of the mother (working vs child primary caretaker)
- ▶ financial situation of families (sufficient vs low-income)



Working mothers with sufficient  
income  
n= 245 (12.3%)



Caregiving mothers with  
sufficient income  
n= 1327 (66.4%)



Caregiving mothers with  
low-income  
n= 427 (21.4%)

# Methodology



## **QLSCD (N= 1,999)**

with data on parental leave and the financial situation available at 5 months-old



## **Cognitive dimension of school readiness:**

Number Knowledge Test from ages 4-7



## **Social dimension of school readiness :**

Prosocial skills & Social withdrawal from ages 3-5

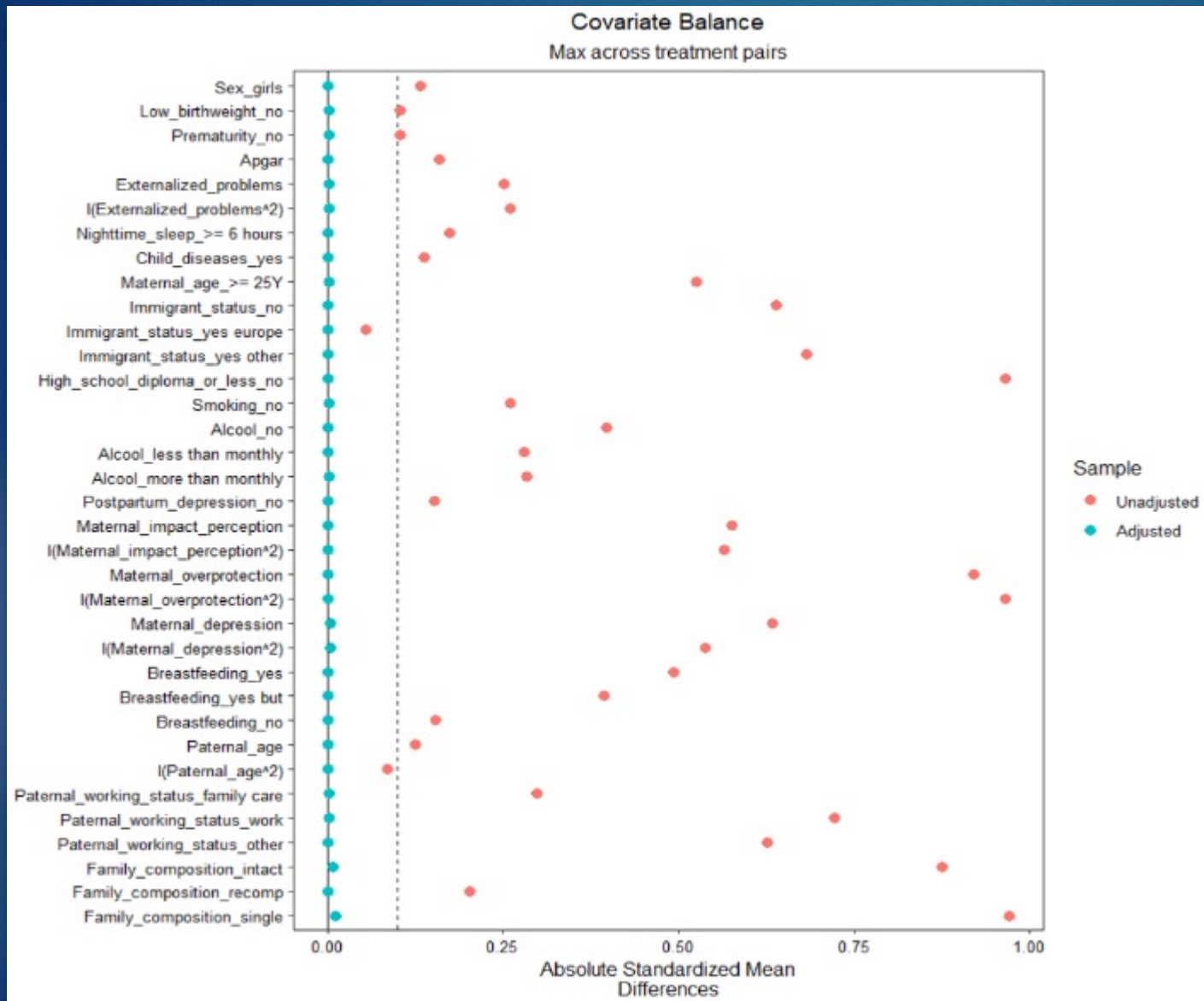


## **20 covariates**

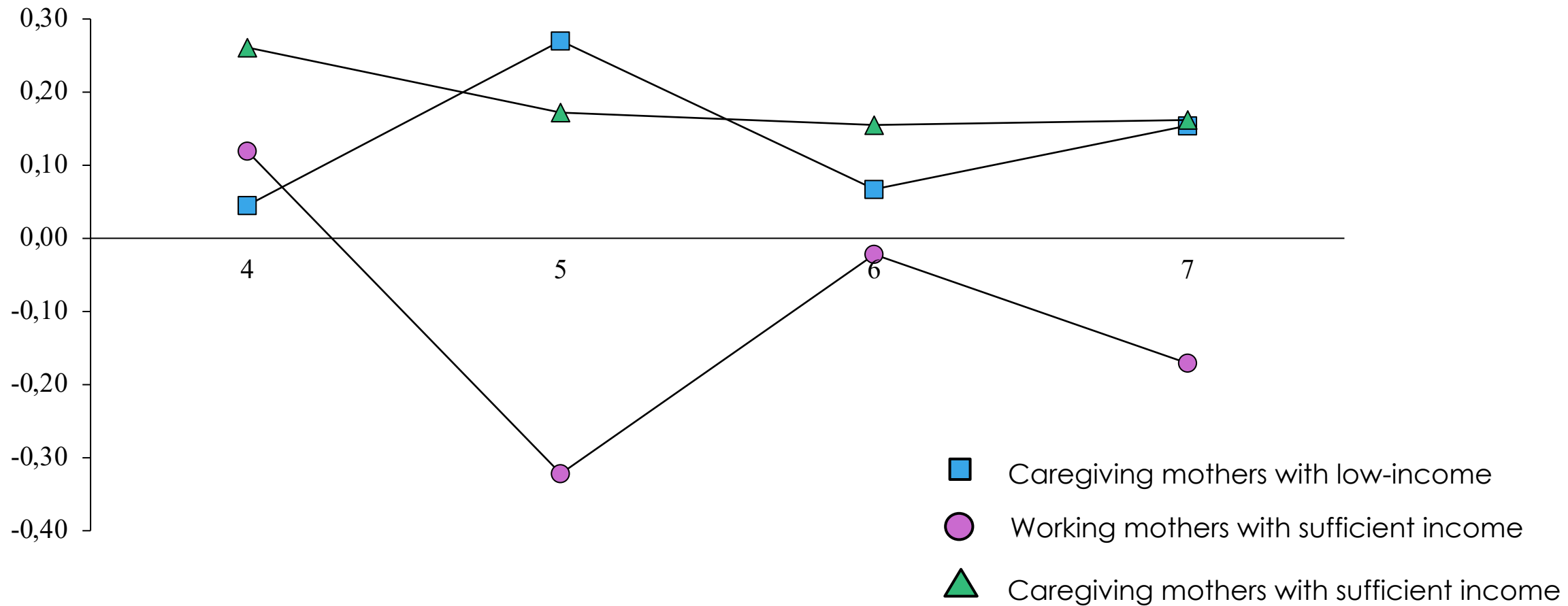
(maternal education, immigration status, child health, parenting, sleep, postpartum depression, breastfeeding, externalizing problems, etc.)



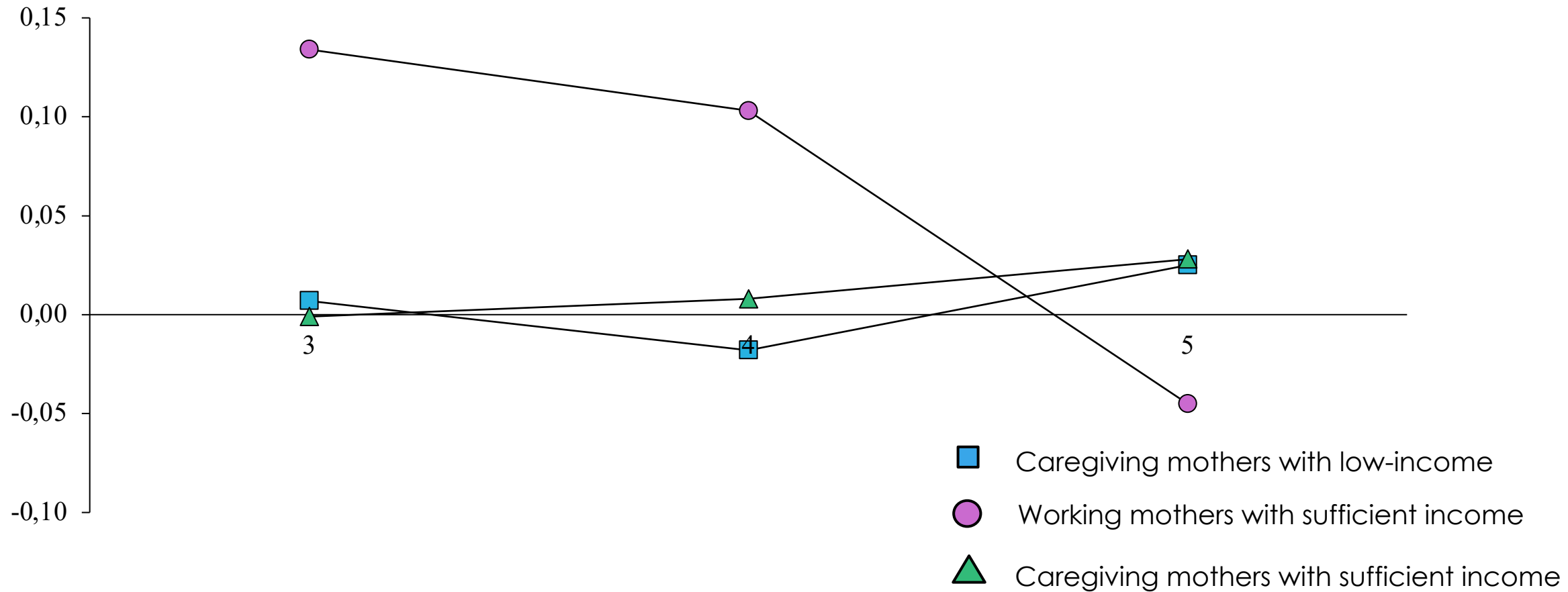
# Covariate balancing propensity score weighting



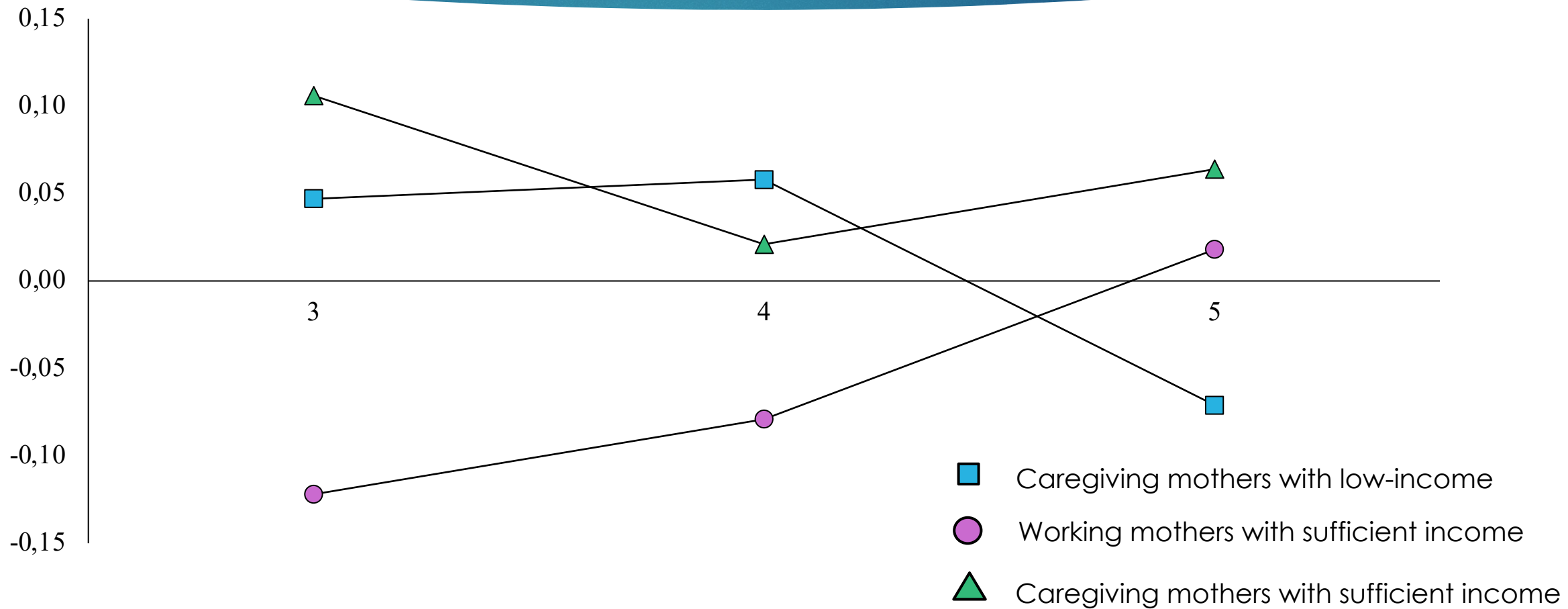
# Cognitive component of school readiness : Number knowledge



# Social component of school readiness : Prosocial behaviors



# Social component of school readiness : Withdrawal behaviors



# Discussion

**Maternal occupation during the first year of the child's life, rather than the financial status per se, seems to distinguish the child's level of school readiness.**

- ▶ Maternal employment may limit child opportunities for stimulating cognitive activities, but provides the child with opportunities for early socialisation (e.g., childcare), in turn, contributing to school readiness

# Limitations and future direction

- ▶ **No information on paid vs unpaid maternal leave**
- ▶ **Under what circumstances maternal leave may generate benefits for children (moderation models)?**
- ▶ **Exploring additional child outcomes focussing on mental health (e.g., separation anxiety)**

Gabrielle.Garon-Carrier@usherbrooke.ca

The **Li** lab



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