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# **Circumstances in Development and Social Class Differences in Adulthood Depression**

**Evidence from the National Child  
Development Study**

# Context



⌘ Increasing

⌘ Inequality of mental health morbidity by  
Social Class

⌘ Variation evident by

☑ Age

☑ Sex

☑ Geography

⌘ Impact on primary care facilities

# Some Risk Factors...



- ⌘ **Low Birth Weight**
- ⌘ **Bottle-fed in infancy**
- ⌘ **Lower IQ**
- ⌘ **Lack of social or parental support**
- ⌘ **Poor quality housing in childhood**
- ⌘ **Low income or financial insecurity**
- ⌘ **Poor physical health**
- ⌘ **Low educational achievement**

# Research Question



Which risk factors for depression during development influence the social class gradient of depressive tendency in adulthood?

- ⌘ *Are class differences in risk factors a sufficient explanation?*
- ⌘ *What are the most influential determinants of poor mental health?*

# National Child Development Study (NCDS, 1958 cohort)

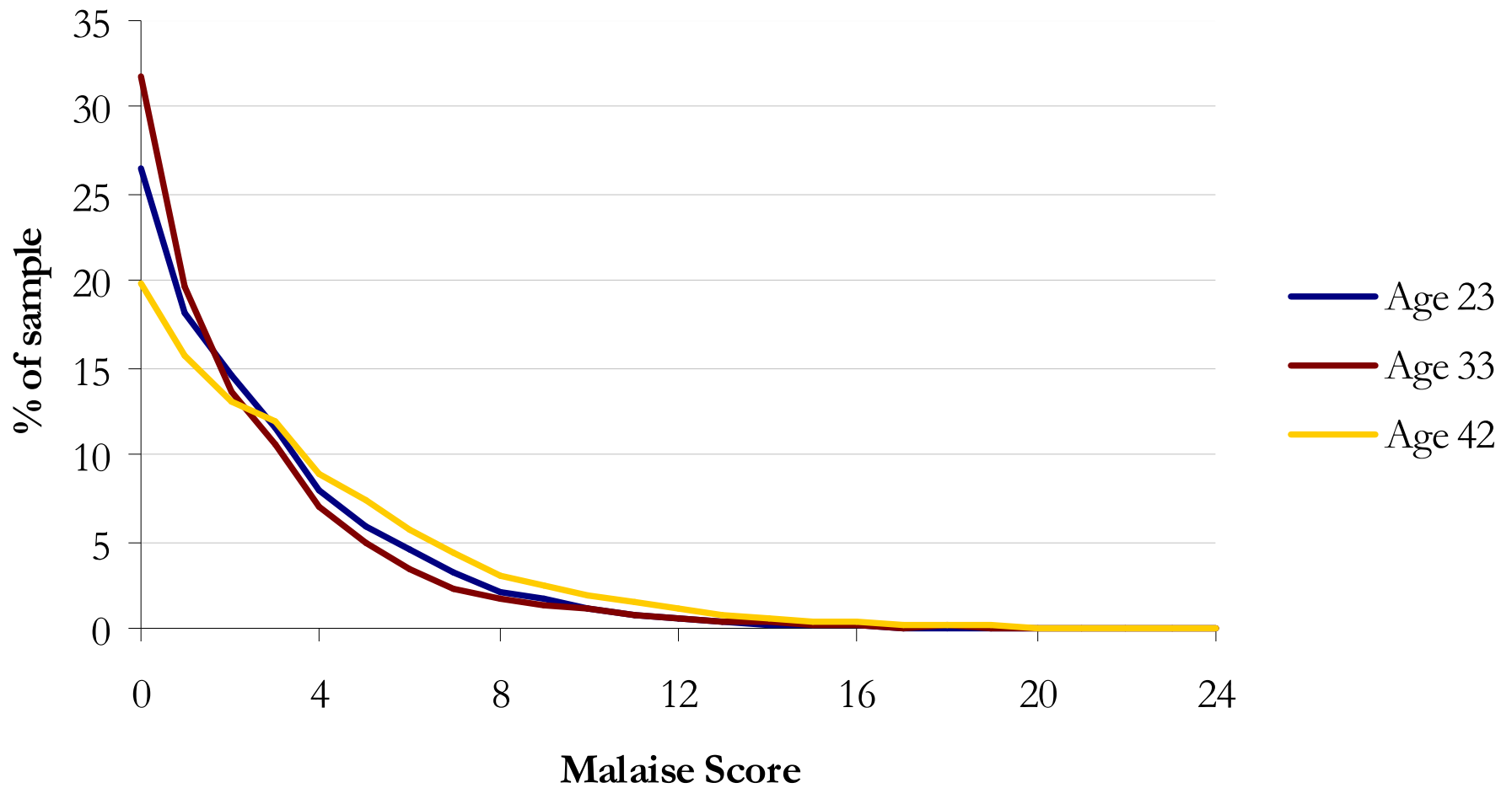
- ⌘ All those living in Great Britain born between 3rd-9th March 1958 (N=18,000)
- ⌘ Data collected at birth, 7, 11, 16, 23, 33 & 42 years of age
- ⌘ Rich data on multiple aspects of life at each 'sweep'

# Malaise Inventory



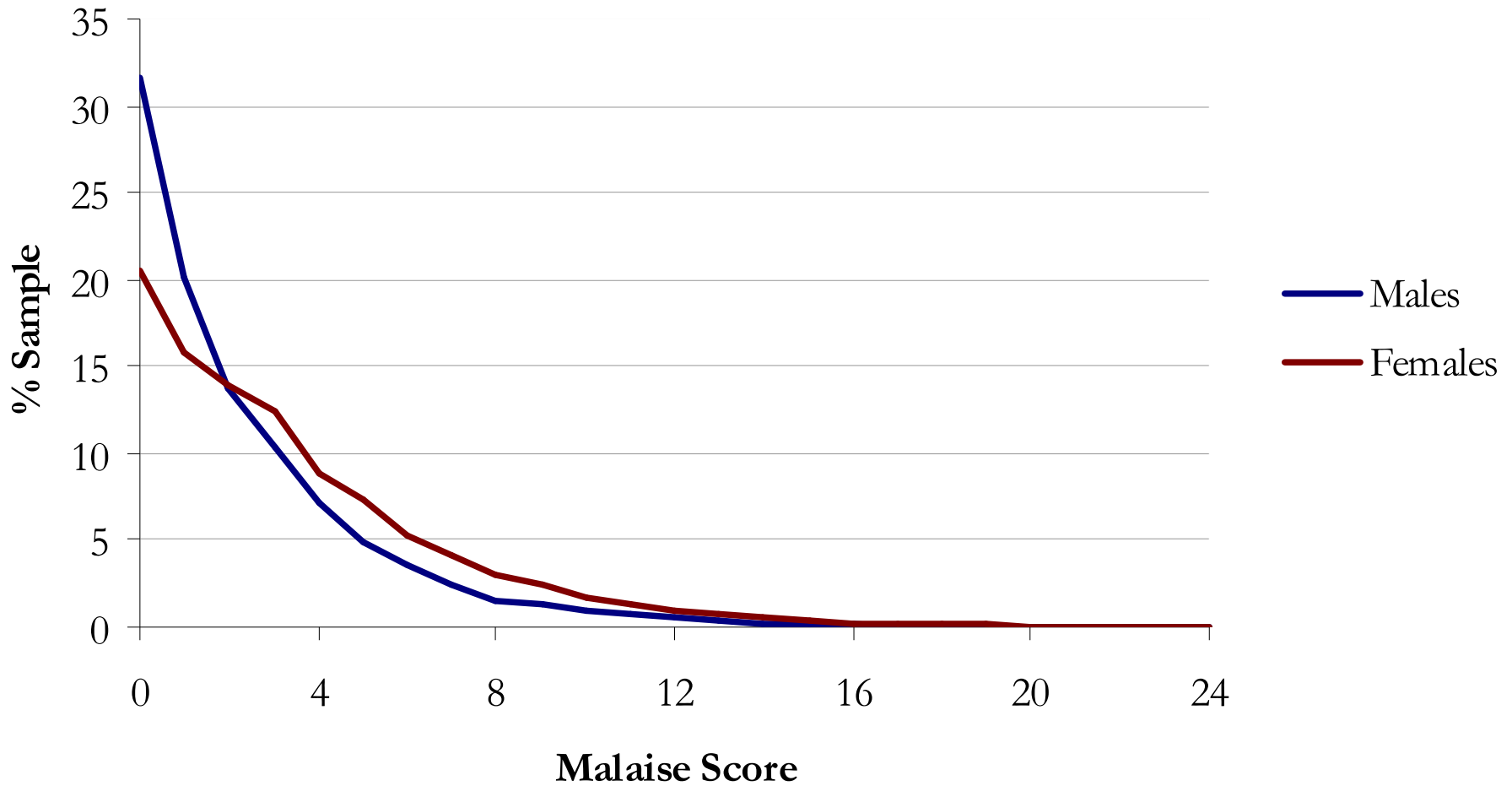
- ⌘ Population measurement of ‘depressive tendency’
- ⌘ Simple sum of a 24 question inventory of dichotomous questions (‘Yes’=1 ‘No=0’)
- ⌘ Measured in NCDS at 23, 33 & 42
- ⌘ Inventories with less than 21 responses not used, those with 22-24 responses treated for missing values

# Distribution

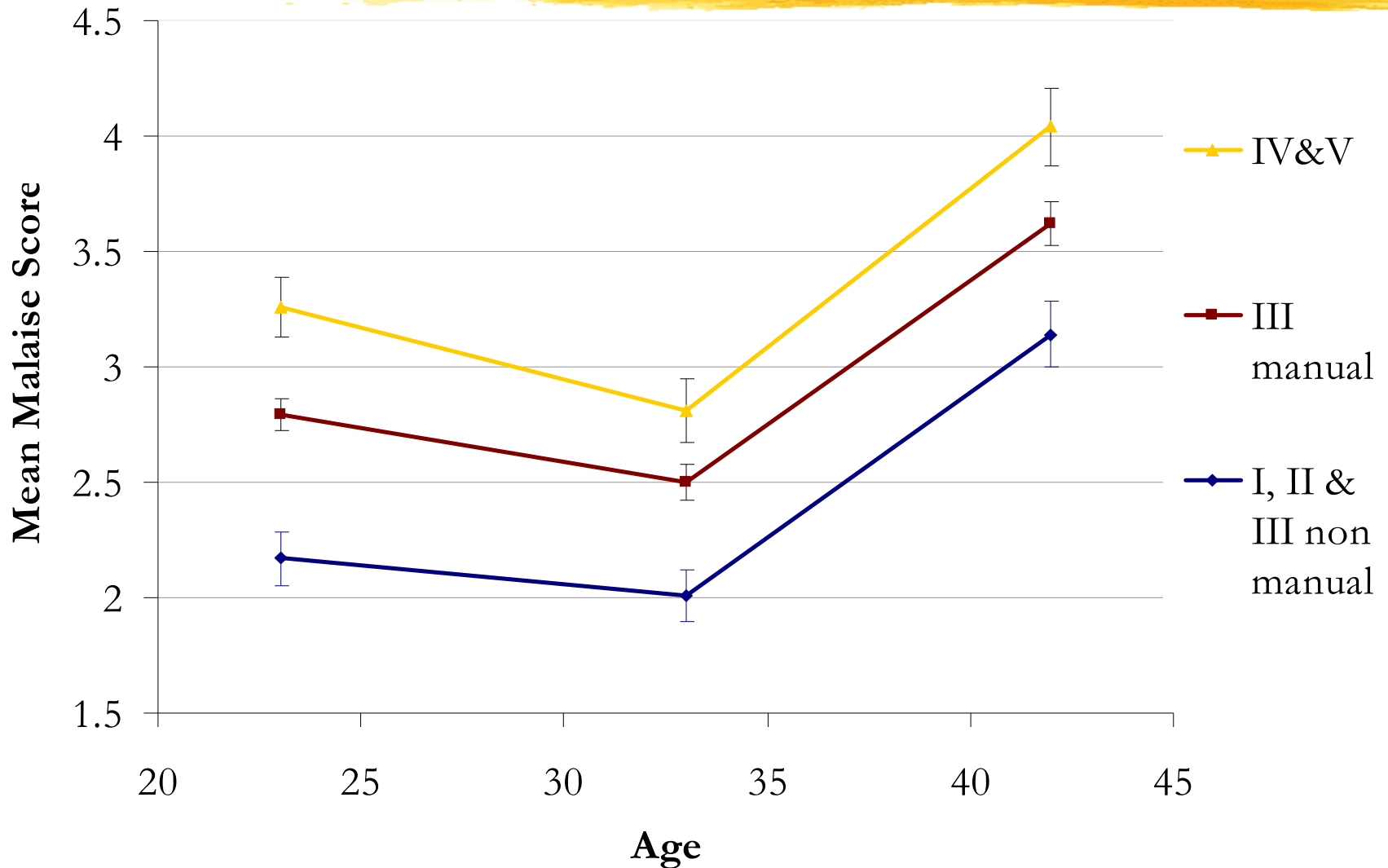




# Sex Differences



# Class & Age Variation



# Changing depressive states

| Depressed (D) or Not Depressed (N) at<br>23 33 42 | %     | Grouped % | Further % |
|---|-------|-----------|-----------|
| D D D   | 1.56  | 1.56      | 17.14     |
| D D N   | 0.73  | 3.96      |           |
| D N D   | 1.40  |           |           |
| N D D   | 1.84  |           |           |
| N N D   | 7.11  | 11.62     | 82.86     |
| N D N   | 1.64  |           |           |
| D N N   | 2.87  |           |           |
| N N N   | 82.86 | 82.86     |           |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | 100   | 100       | 100       |

# Regression Analysis - method



- ⌘ Multiple linear regression models fitted
- ⌘ Control variables from infancy, childhood & adulthood
- ⌘ Regressions initially performed on each separate age survey (23, 33, 42)
- ⌘ Final regressions combined all survey inventories & adjusted additionally for age

# Regression Analysis - controls I



⌘ Sex

⌘ Birth weight

⌘ Breastfeeding

⌘ Ethnicity

⌘ Parity

⌘ Family Size

⌘ Geographical Region

⌘ Housing Tenure (age 7, 11, 16)

# Regression Analysis - controls II



- ⌘ Crowding (age 7, 11, 16)
- ⌘ Health Abnormality (age 7, 16)
- ⌘ Maths ability (age 7, 11, 16)
- ⌘ Reading ability (age 7, 11, 16)
- ⌘ Financial Hardship in family (age 11, 16)
- ⌘ Parental divorce (up to ages 7, 11, 16)
- ⌘ Geographical mobility (birth to 16)
- ⌘ Parental interest in education (ages 7, 11, 16, both maternal & paternal)

# Regression Analysis - results I



## ⌘ Crude Linear Regressions

⌘ Significant increases in mean malaise score with SES ( $p < 0.001$ )

⌘ Malaise score increased by 0.51, 0.76 and 1.15 points for each respective SES group

⌘ Significantly higher malaise among women ( $p < 0.001$ )

# Regression Analysis - results II

## ⌘ Adjusted Linear Regressions

⌘ Non Significant differences in malaise scores between SES groups ( $p > 0.05$ )

⌘ Significantly higher malaise among women persists ( $p < 0.001$ )

⌘ Factors with most explanatory power include maths score, financial hardship & parental interest in education



# Conclusions



- ⌘ Significant gradient with social class
- ⌘ Episodic in nature
- ⌘ Large and persistent gender difference
- ⌘ Gradient can be eliminated by relatively few factors: thus differences can be explained by differentials in risk factors between SES groups
- ⌘ Factors in infancy, childhood & adolescence all play a role



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