

Does a Working Class Background Tend Towards a Life of Economic Stress?

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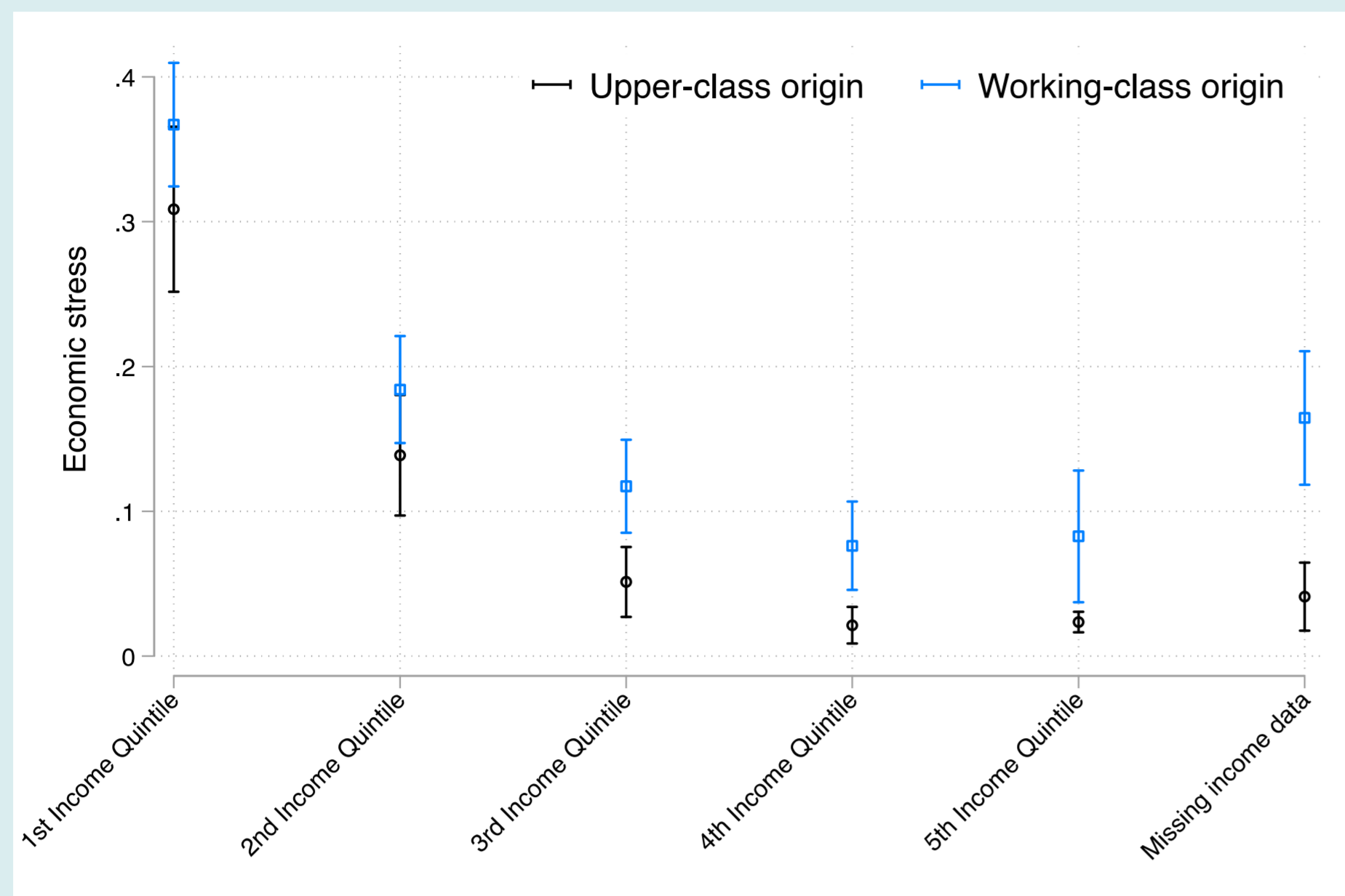


Figure 1. Economic stress by income quintiles in Germany (holding constant education, occupation, activity status, and demographics).

Key conclusions

- Class of origin is influential in shaping economic stress above and beyond socio-economic status.
- Class of origin is more impactful for the already vulnerable groups like the unemployed, the long-term ill, students and those with caring responsibilities.
- There is a class-floor which prevents individuals from advantaged origins from experiencing the same levels of economic stress than those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Class of origin matters less in egalitarian contexts.

What is the problem?

It is well-established that class of origin determines socioeconomic status, commonly captured by educational attainment, occupational class, and income. However, these studies may mask **class inequalities in the lived experiences** of economic life.

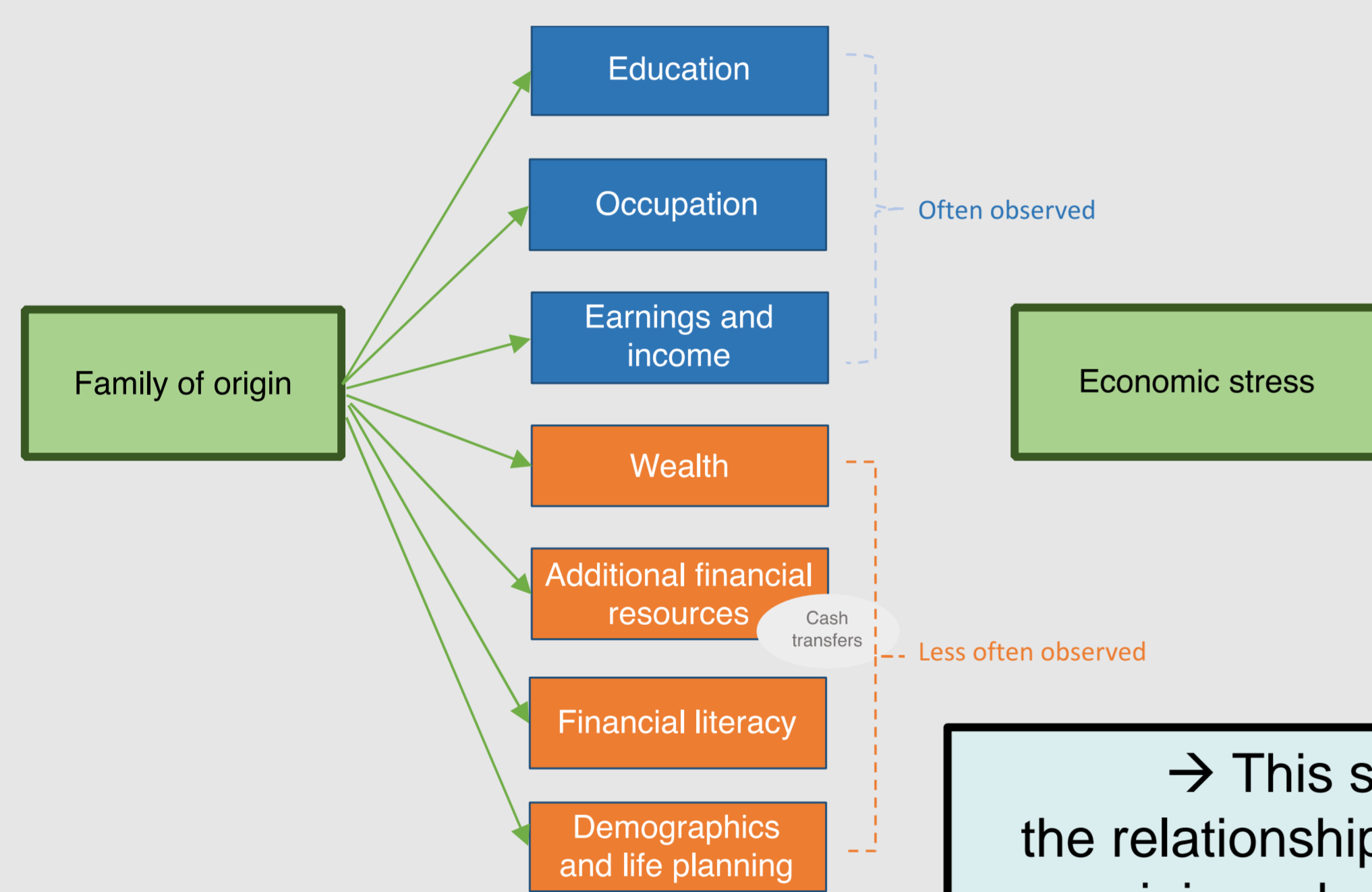


Figure 2. Conceptual model of intergenerational influences

→ This study investigates the relationship between class of origin and economic stress experienced in adulthood, an outcome that is rarely considered in intergenerational class inequality research.

Why focus on economic stress?

Economic stress refers to the pressure a person experiences due to inadequate financial resources. It is important because:

- Objective measures (income, class, wealth) do not necessarily tell us whether people experience economic stress.
- Economic stress is an important dimension of wellbeing.
- Economic stress is an **independent predictor of outcomes like political behaviour and health**, including depression.
- Economic stress is particularly important when it comes to intergenerational class inequality as **it is ultimately the goal of parents to ensure that their offspring will have a life without much economic stress**.

Data, Measures, and Methods

European Social Survey Data: 241,892 individuals interviewed across 29 countries and six survey waves between 2008 and 2018.

Economic stress (DV):

“How do you feel about your household's income nowadays?”. Recoded into a binary variable to indicate if R feels it is “difficult” or “very difficult” to live on present income.

Class of origin (IV):

- upper-class origin, 2) middle-class origin, 3) working-class of origin, 4) farmers origin, 5) parents not working or absent.

SES and Demographics:

ESeC class, economic activity status, household income, education, gender, age, ethnic minority, marital status, children in household.

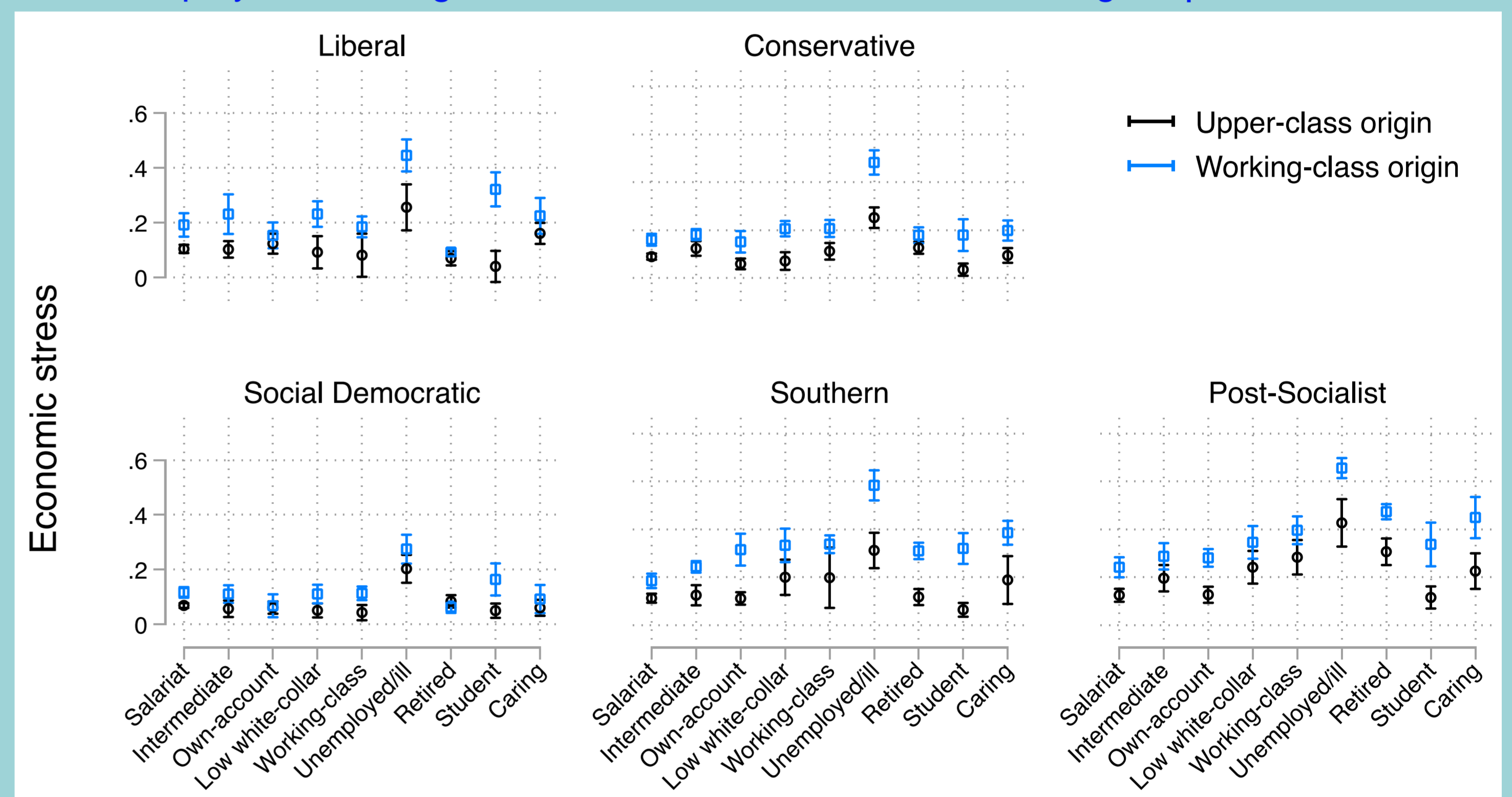
Linear probability models predicting economic stress in adulthood.

Results

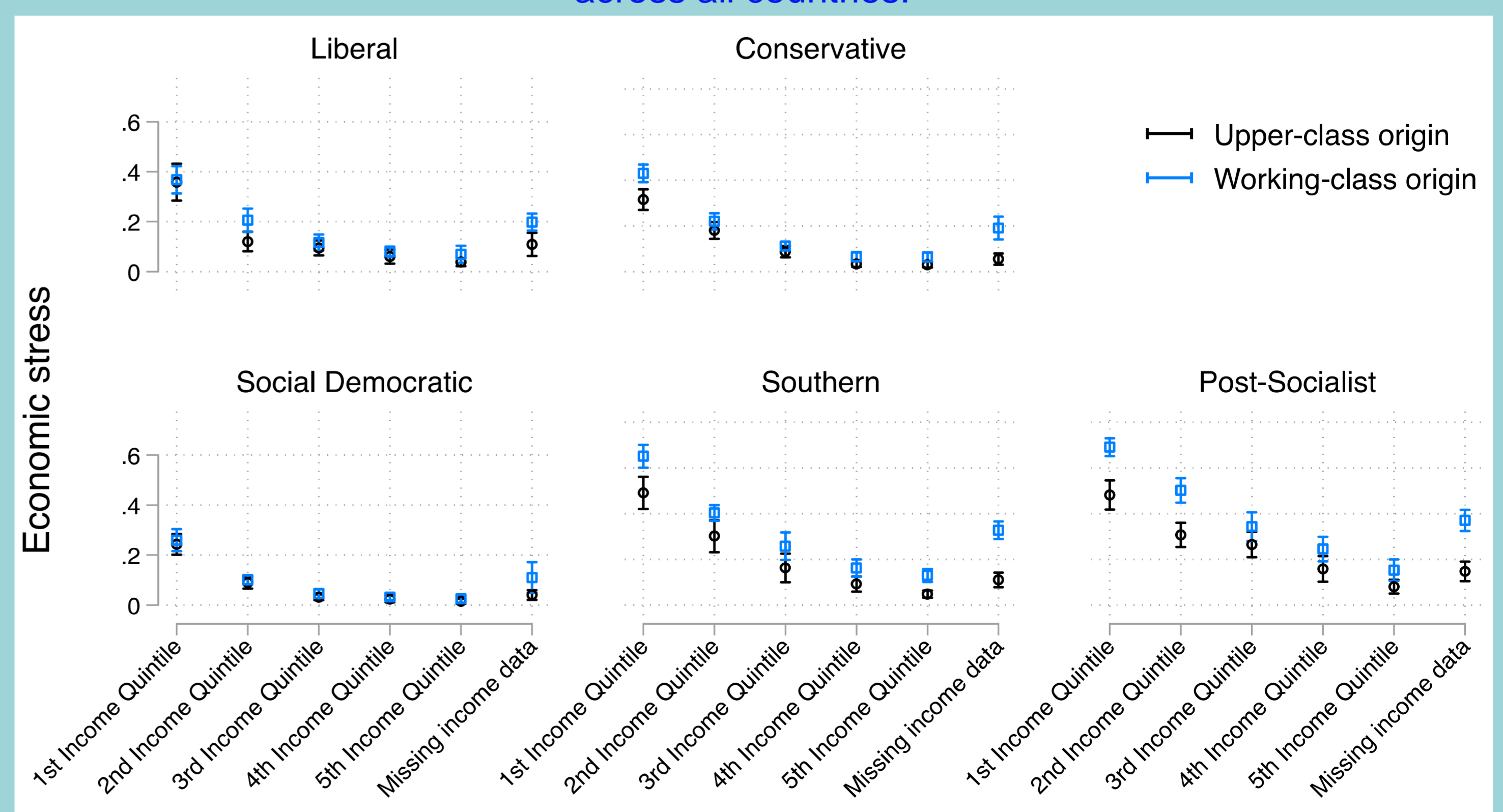
Disadvantaged class of origin is linked with more economic stress even after accounting for education, class, activity, household income, and demographics:

Economic stress across welfare regimes	Liberal	Conservative	Social Democratic	Southern	Post-Socialist
Class of origin (Ref.=Upper class origin)					
Middle-class origin	0.03*	0.00	0.01**	0.01	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Working-class origin	0.03*	0.03***	0.02***	0.06***	0.06***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Farmers origin	0.04*	-0.01	-0.00	0.05*	0.03*
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Parents not working or not present	0.06**	0.06***	0.04*	0.10**	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)

Class of origin impacts economic stress more among vulnerable groups like the unemployed and long-term ill, students and those with caring responsibilities:



Class of origin impacts economic stress across the income distribution but not across all countries:



Notes and Discussion

Findings hold when replicated with alternative measures of economic stress. The next step is to use panel data to see if there is class inequality in economic stress during turbulent life events like unemployment or divorce.