

Who is Missing Out on School? Exploring Socioeconomic Inequalities in School Absenteeism

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- The literature consistently found that low-SES students have a higher risk of school absenteeism than high-SES students (for a meta-analysis on risk factors see Gubbels et al., 2019)
- **But:** Studies rarely look at different dimensions of SES in a single study; most studies from US

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- Are there differences in the association between social background characteristics and types of school absenteeism (truancy, sickness absence, temporary exclusion)?
- Are these relationships moderated by gender and place of residence?

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- Neighbourhood mechanisms (e.g. air pollution, neighbourhood and school conditions, exposure to crime)

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- Period poverty (Phillips-Howard et al., 2016) may lead to greater sickness-related absenteeism among girls from lower social backgrounds.

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- Urban schools tend to suspend more students than rural schools (Achilles et al., 2007).
- Pupils in urban areas are also more likely to be truant than students from rural areas (Darmody et al., 2008; Sheldon and Epstein, 2004)
→ Social inequalities in school absenteeism may be less pronounced in rural areas than in urban areas

Data: Scottish Longitudinal Study

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- Joint project between National Records of Scotland (NRS) and University of Edinburgh

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Our SLS sample

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- Controls: sex, place of residence (urban vs. rural), ethnicity (white vs. non-white), child's age, mother's age at birth, year of schooling

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- Results are based on complete cases (n=4620)

Descriptives

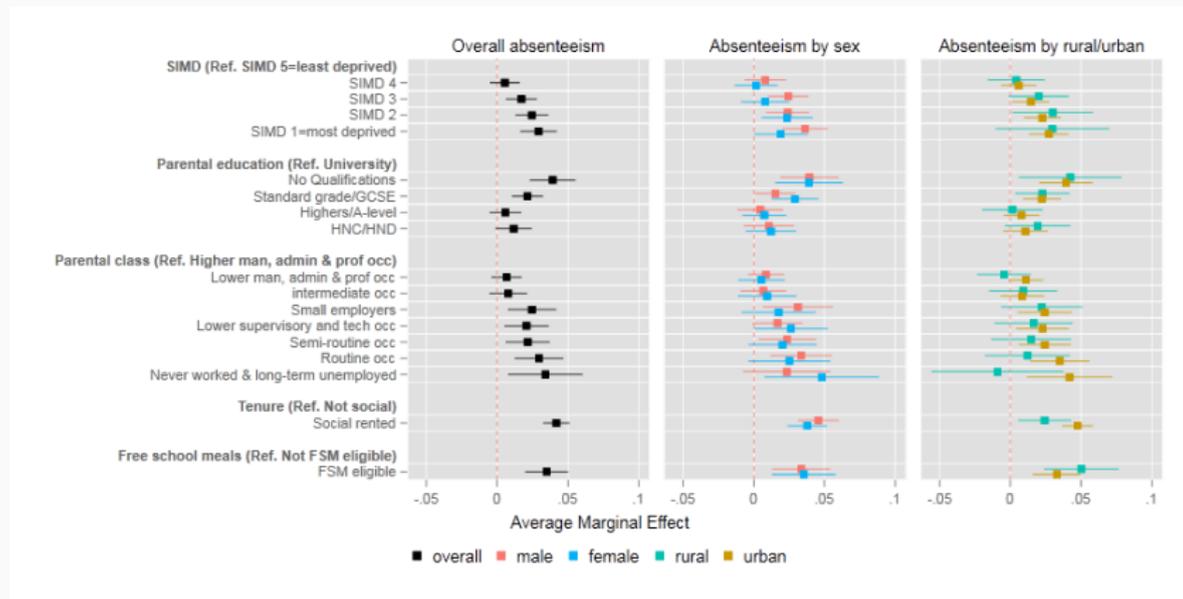
	Proportion/Mean	SD
Overall absenteeism	14.13	12.99
Truancy	1.78	5.37
Sickness-related	4.68	6.70
Temporary exclusion	0.05	
Parental class		
Service class	0.42	
Intermediate occ	0.31	
Working class	0.23	
Never worked and long-term unemployed	0.04	
Parental education		
University	0.27	
HNC/HND	0.11	
Highers/A-level	0.18	
Standard Grade/GCSE	0.31	
No qualification	0.14	

Descriptives (continued)

	Proportion/Mean	SD
Free school meal eligibility: yes	0.09	
Housing tenure: Socially rented	0.28	
SIMD		
SIMD 5= least deprived	0.21	
SIMD 4	0.21	
SIMD 3	0.20	
SIMD 2	0.19	
SIMD 1= most deprived	0.18	
Sex: Girls	0.47	
Place of residence: Rural	0.22	

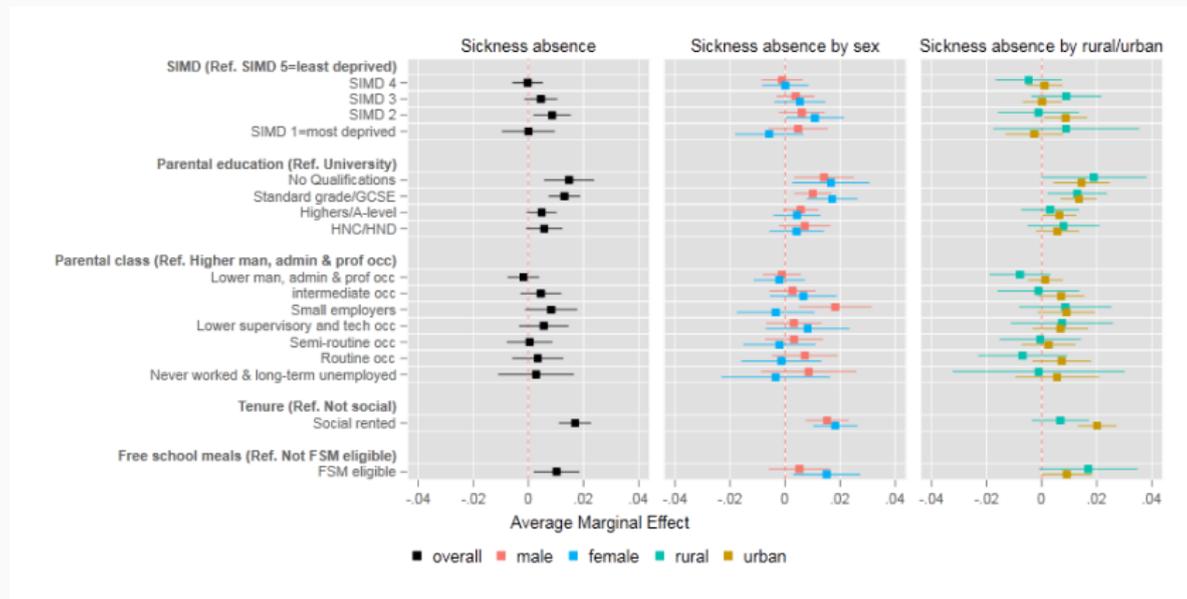
Source: Scottish Longitudinal Study, n=4620, own calculations

SES and overall absenteeism



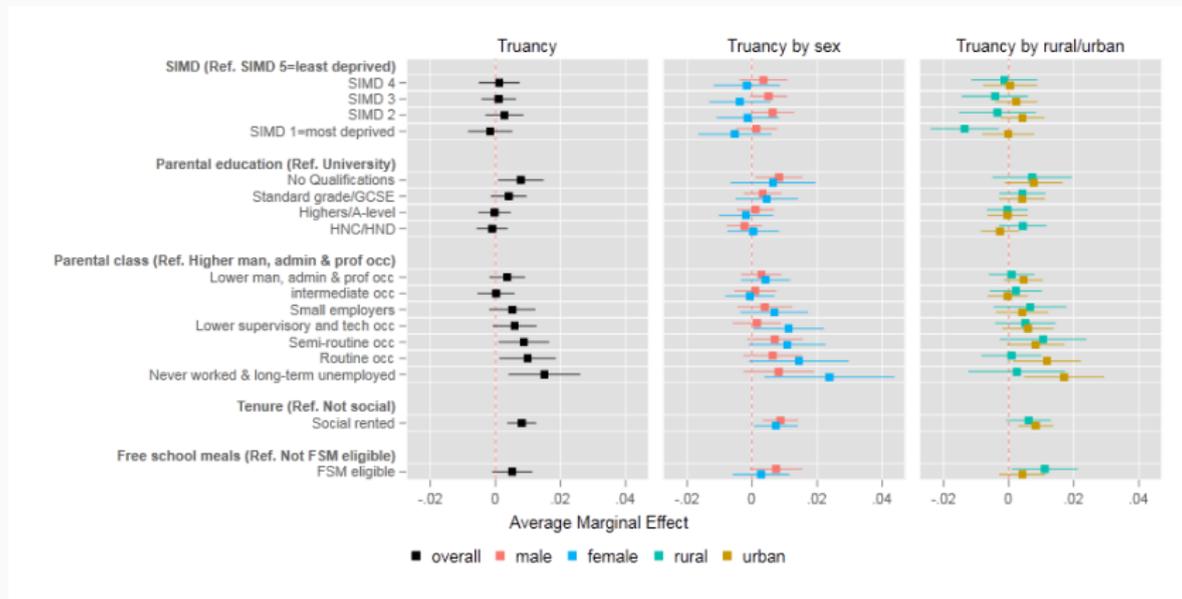
Source: Scottish Longitudinal Study, own calculations

SES and sickness absence



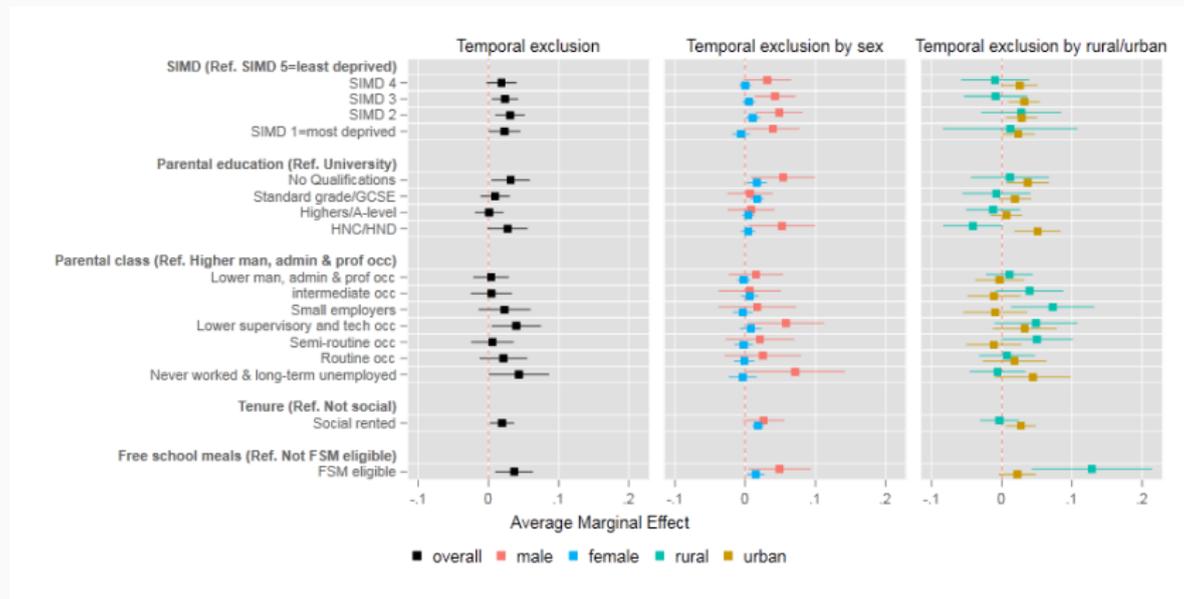
Source: Scottish Longitudinal Study, own calculations

SES and truancy



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SES and temporary exclusion



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Summary

- All social background characteristics including our neighbourhood indicator are uniquely associated with overall absenteeism
- Social rent and originating from households with no qualification are the most persistent social background measures associated with all types of absenteeism
- Main risk factors for sickness-related absenteeism: Parents with lower qualifications, social rent and free-school meal eligibility

- Main risk factors for truancy: Social class, housing tenure and parents with no qualifications

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Summary

- Main risk factors for truancy: Social class, housing tenure and parents with no qualifications
- Main risk factors for exclusion: neighbourhood deprivation, social rent, free-school meal eligibility and parents with no qualifications → visible characteristics appear to influence exclusion although these are not necessarily related to truancy
- No moderation by gender and place of residence. However, trends suggest that social background has a stronger impact on the risk of exclusion among boys than among girls

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- **Limitations**

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 - **Poverty/Family income not directly measured**

Disclaimer

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For more information on the SLS, please visit: <http://sls.lscs.ac.uk>

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Thank you!

Our SLS sample

Table 1. Structure of School Census Data by cohort

STAGE COHORT	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
2007 School Census				p1	p2	p3	p4	p5	p6	p7	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6
2007 Exam results expected																
2008 School Census			p1	p2	p3	p4	p5	p6	p7	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	
2008 Exam results expected																
2009 School Census			p1	p2	p3	p4	p5	p6	p7	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	
2009 Exam results expected																
2010 School Census			p1	p2	p3	p4	p5	p6	p7	s1	s2	s3	s4	s5	s6	
2010 Exam results expected																
Number of pupils	cohort -2	cohort -1	cohort 0	cohort 1	cohort 2	cohort 3	cohort 4	cohort 5	cohort 6	cohort 7	cohort 8	cohort 9	cohort 10	cohort 11	cohort 12	cohort 13
All	3005	2878	2903	3020	2994	3001	2919	3050	3226	3206	3412	3261	3376	3367	2582	1535

Source: Raab (2013)

- We focus on SLS members that passed through the school stages S3-S6 or S4-S6 in 2007-2010 (cohorts 10 and 11)
- and who were present during Census 2001 and for whom father and/or mother were identified

SES correlations

	Parental class	Parental educ.	FSM	Housing	SIMD
Parental class	1	0.34	0.35	0.50	0.25
Parental educ.		1	0.30	0.44	0.22
FSM			1	0.33	0.24
Housing				1	0.45
SIMD					1

Note: Correlations based on Cramer's V; Source: Scottish Longitudinal Study, n=4620, own calculations