

LIVE LONG & PROSPER: THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON MORTALITY

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Education is a process

- Years of school completed (“education”) doesn’t drop down on you in adulthood
- Process across life course
 - Type of school & classes
 - Quality of school & teachers
 - Friends & peers in school
 - Beliefs about the future
 - Extracurricular experiences
 - Early childhood education & “social and emotional” skills
 - Can be what you learned in preschool or in college

Causality in 2 minutes

➤ Can be direct and immediate

- I kick you, it hurts
- Take Tylenol, fever reduced by 2 degrees
- Get college degree: earn higher wages after diploma
- Go to high quality preschool: improve pre-literacy

Causality in 2 minutes

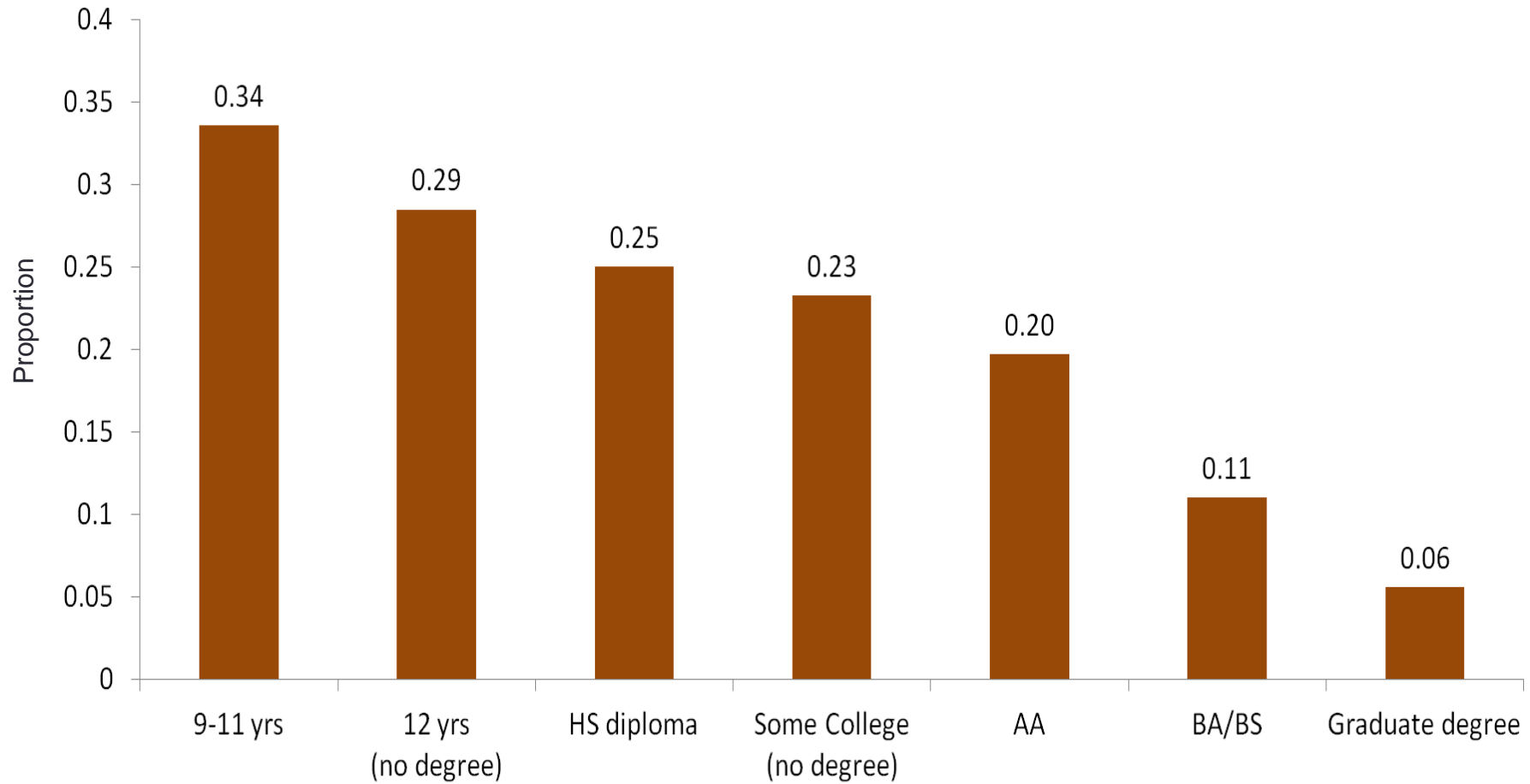
- Or, can be indirect or longer-term effect
 - Learn to solve word problems in 9th grade → increase analytical skills → more likely to breastfeed, read to child at age 3, take meds as prescribed, exercise post heart attack
 - Shape social reference: change stigma of smoking, being overweight, giving toddler soda or candy
 - Shape your social network: Marry someone highly educated, have more educated friends

Actual Causes of Death

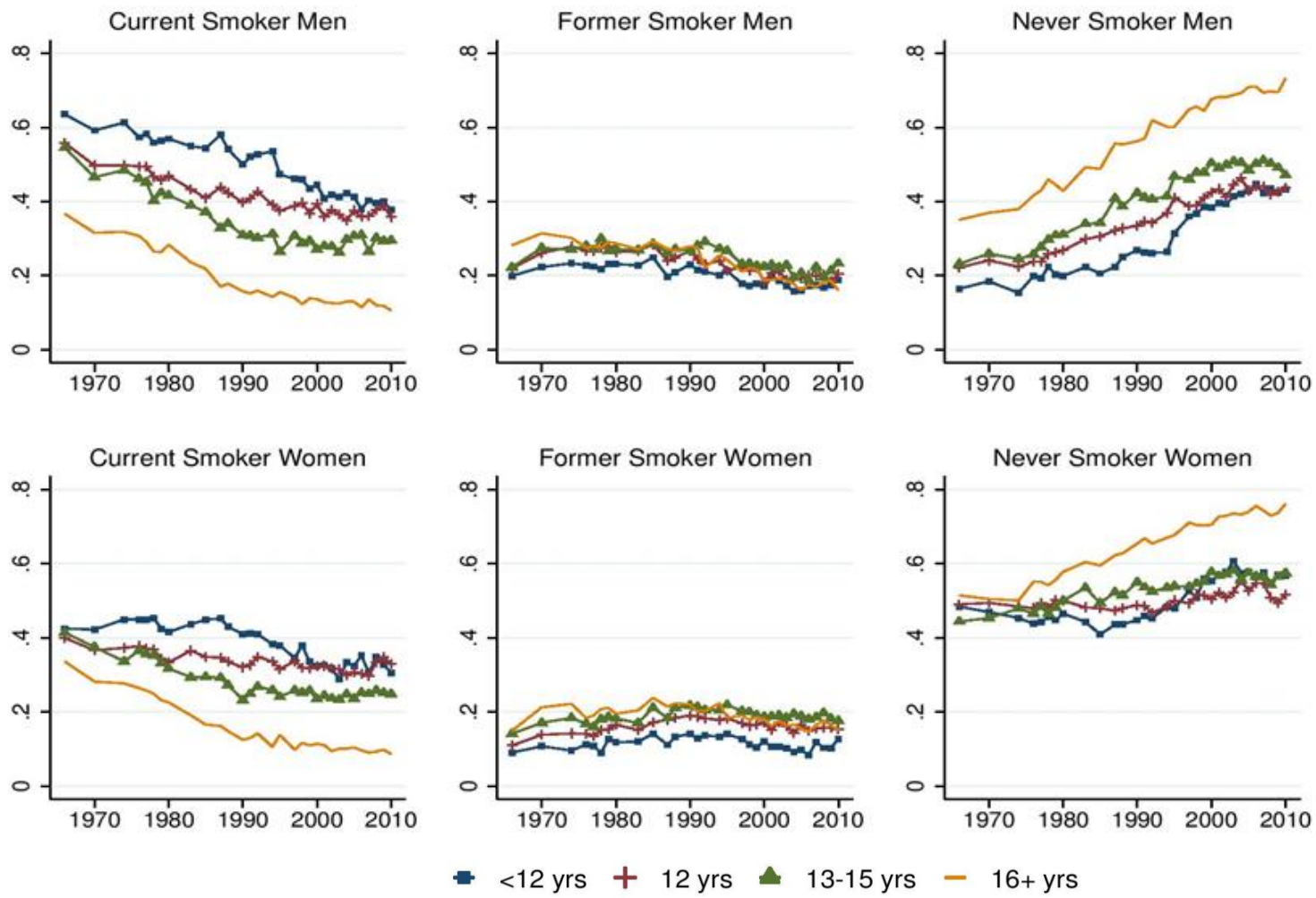
“Modifiable behavioral risk factors are leading causes of mortality in the United States.” Mokdad et al. *JAMA* 2004

- Smoking (18% of total US deaths in 2000)
- Poor Diet and Physical Inactivity (16.6%)
- Alcohol Consumption (3.5%)

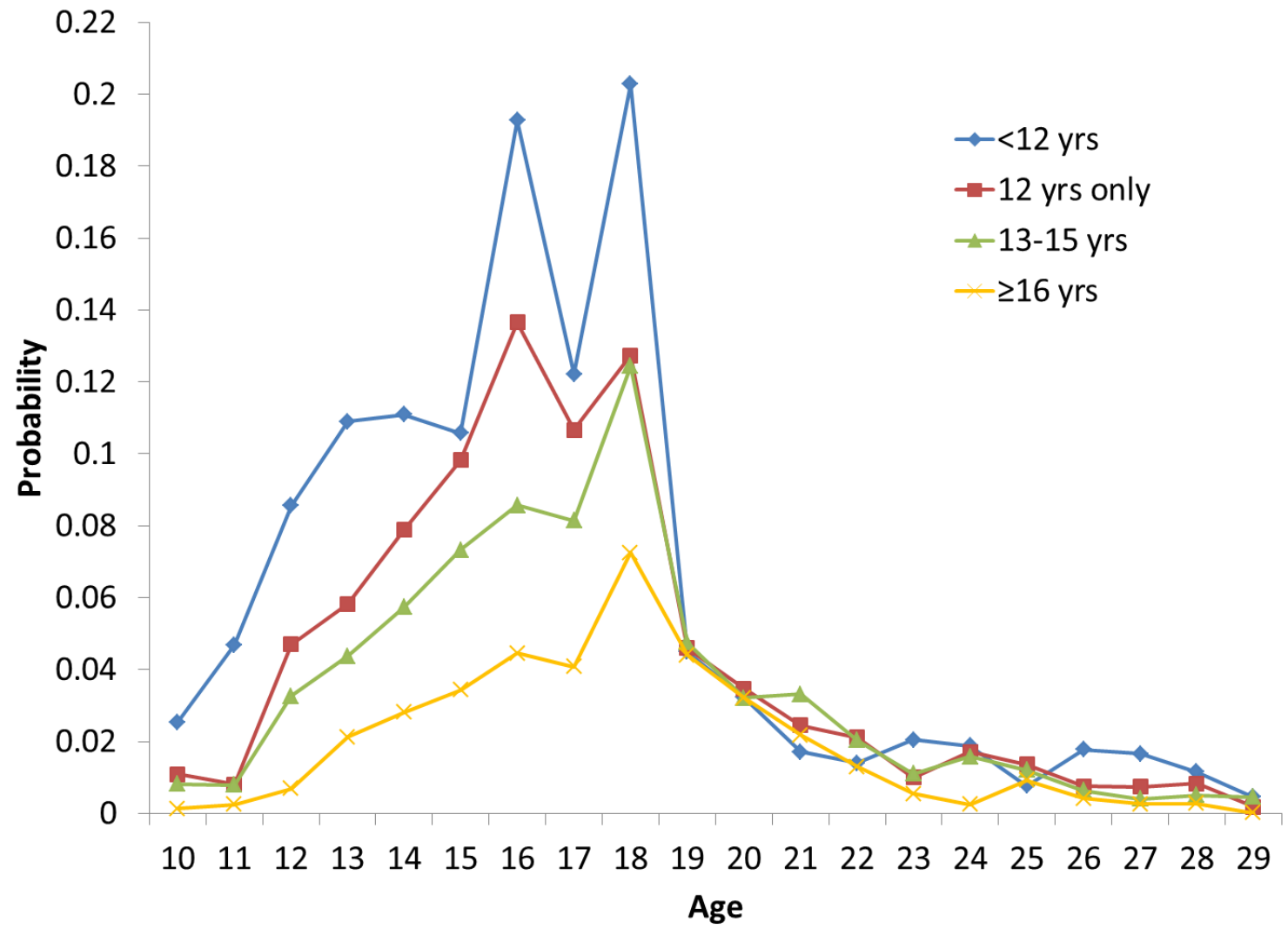
Educational Disparities in Smoking (age ≥ 25)



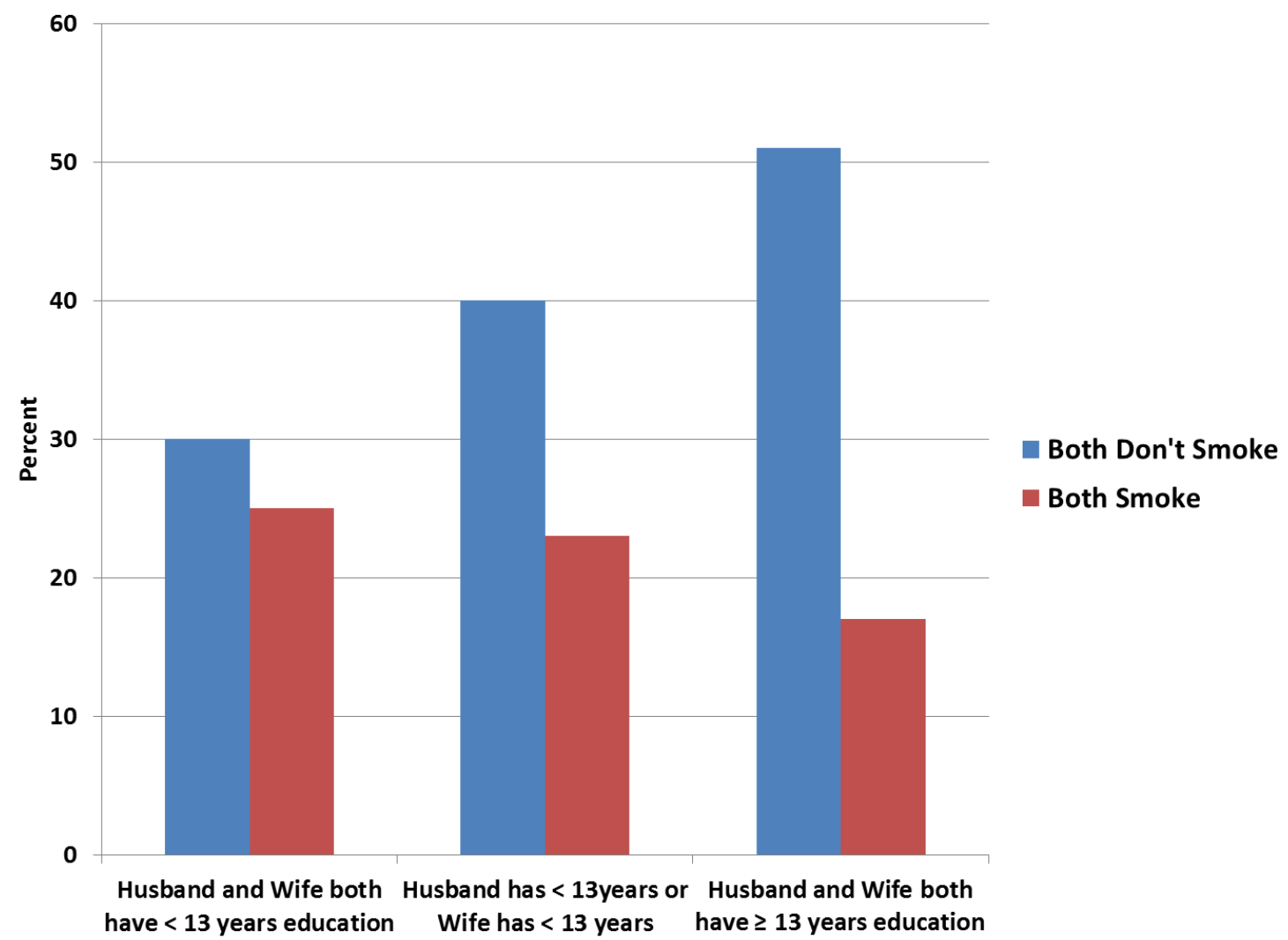
Education & Smoking Across Time (NHIS)



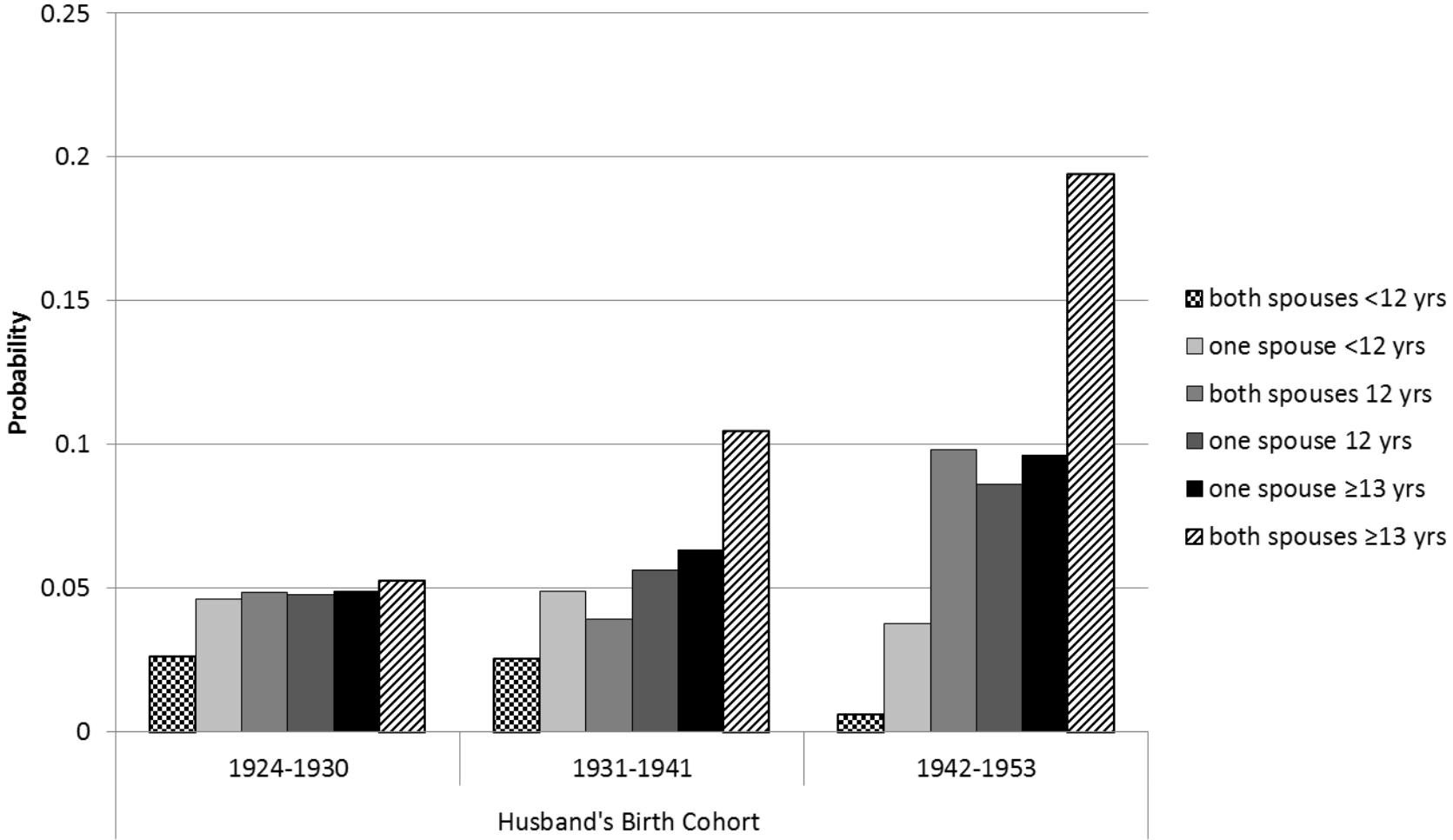
Education & Smoking Across Life Course (Add Health)



Smoking & Education at Marriage (Born 1942-53, HRS)



Quitting & Education Between Marriage & First Birth (HRS)



Wrap Up

- Education and health intertwined across life course
- Large-scale, longitudinal demographic data help us figure out how education shapes health and wellbeing
- To understand how educational policy can have health dividends, need:
 - Longitudinal and detailed data on educational and health-related experiences and characteristics from childhood to adulthood
 - Data on both individuals and families

National data sets used and their sponsors

- **National Health Interview Surveys**
US Census Bureau and CDC
- **Nat'l Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health**
NIH, NSF, DHHS (and many others!)
- **Health and Retirement Study**
National Institute on Aging
- **National Longitudinal Surveys**
Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)