



The dynamics of credentialism: Ireland from bust to boom (and back again?)

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Introduction

- Relationship between education and labour market outcomes is *the* dominant theme in transitions research (Muller and Shavit, 1998; Kerckhoff 2000; Rosenbaum and Jones, 2000; Sorokin 1927).
- But explanations have often been static or assumed a unidirectional trend (as observed by Collins 2000; Ringer 1991).
- Paper seeks to explore the dynamics of credentialism using Ireland as a case study.
- Focus on secondary education leavers.



Conceptual framework

- Explanations of ET-LM relationship:
 1. Human capital theory: focus on education as signal of (actual) productivity (Becker 1964; Mincer 1958, 1989; Schultz 1962).
 2. Institutional theorists (variants Meyer and Rowan 1977) – job queue with less educated ‘falling behind’
- But what factors would lead to a change in this relationship?



Conceptual framework (2)

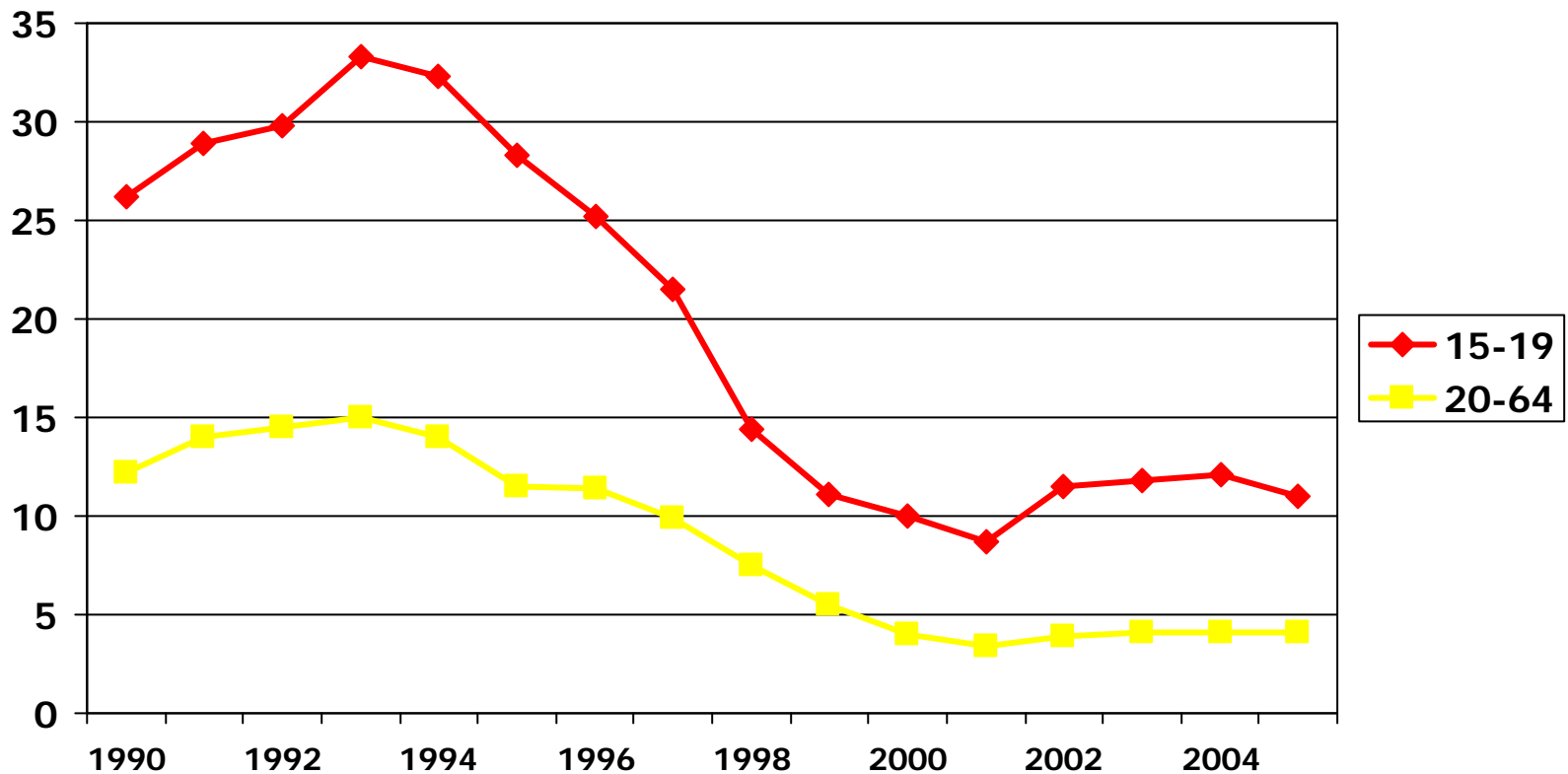
- Accounts of change often focus on 'credential/qualification inflation'
- Many studies focus on the US context (for exceptions see Bills 2004 Germany; van der Werfhorst 2005 the Netherlands; Shavit and Kraus 1990 Israel).
- Expansion of educational participation has not been matched by LM upgrading – less educated 'squeezed out'
- But is change always linear?
- Some work (Raffe; Gangl) suggests that less educated are more vulnerable in recessions,
- Dynamics of ET-LM relationship may therefore be more complex: short-term v. longer term trends, impact of wider economic conditions and policy.



Why is Ireland interesting?

- Strong influence of education on a range of post-school outcomes and longer term impact on adult life-chances
- Rapid growth in participation in tertiary education
- Rapid economic expansion during the 'Celtic Tiger' years
- How have these changes influenced ET-LM link?

Adult and youth unemployment rates: 'Celtic Tiger' years





Research questions

- Did the impact of education on LM entry/unemployment/occupational status change over time?
- Do the different dimensions of education (level v. grades) operate in the same way?



Data

- School Leavers' Survey – regular national survey of secondary school leavers, 18 mths – 2 yrs post-school
- Detailed information on background and post-school outcomes
- Pooled data – 24 surveys covering 1980-2007, over 55,000 individuals



Educational measures

- Educational level
 - Pre-lower secondary
 - Lower secondary
 - Upper secondary
- Grades in final exam: normalised within years (not available for early years)



Background variables

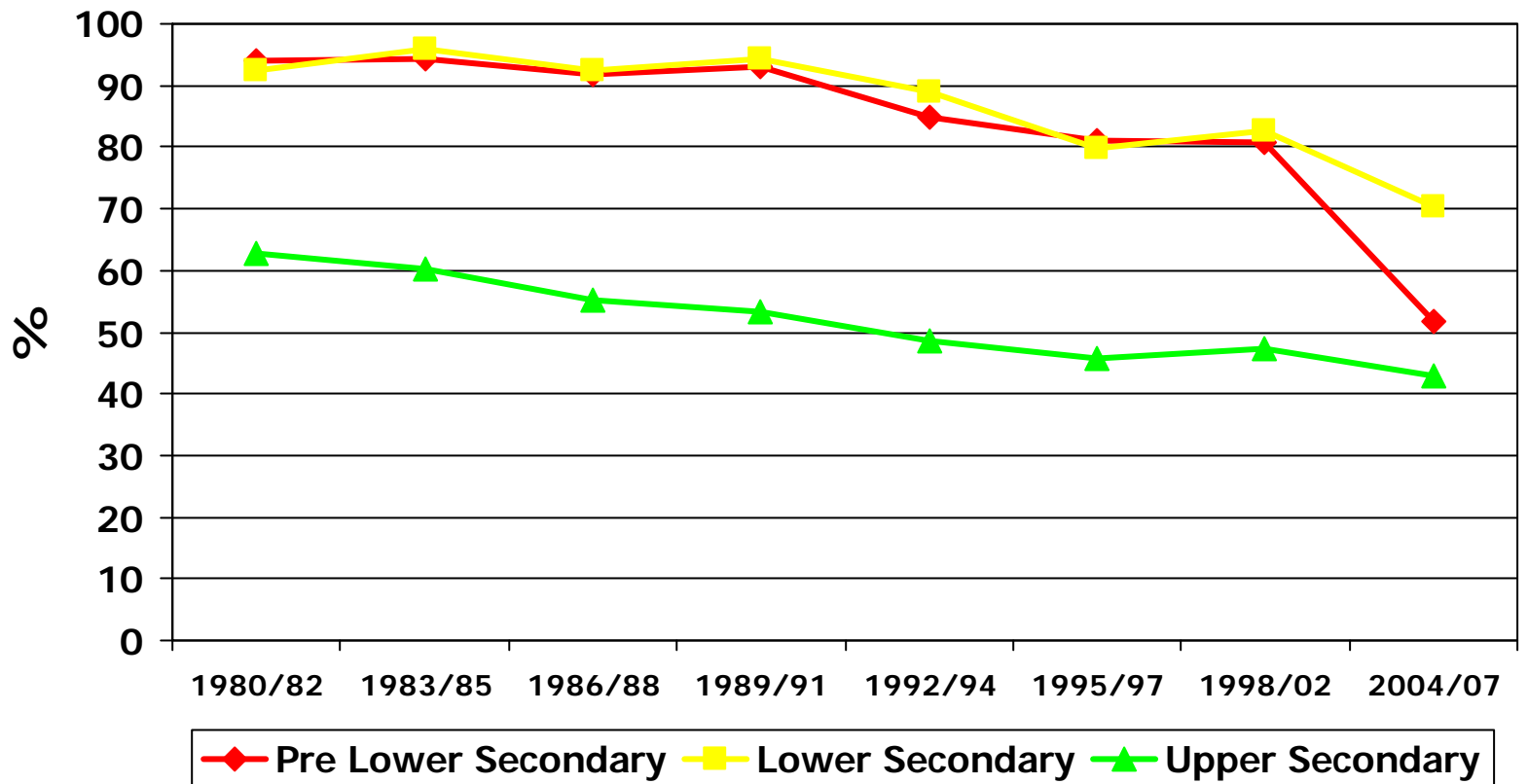
- Gender
- Parental social class (dominance measure)
- Fathers' and mothers' employment status
- Region
- Year (grouped variable)



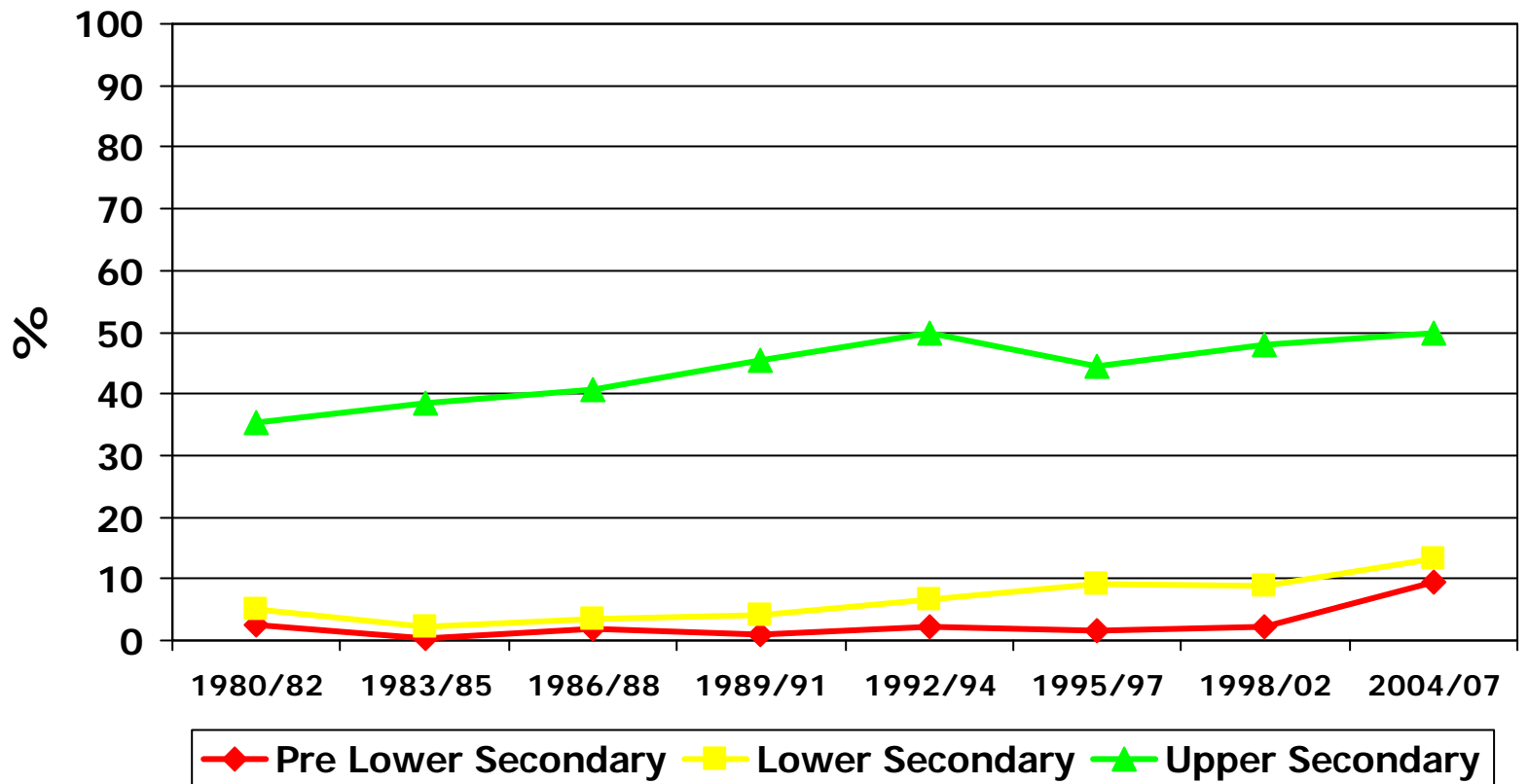
Labour Market Outcomes

- Labour market entry
- Unemployment (among LM entrants)
- Occupational status (ISEI)

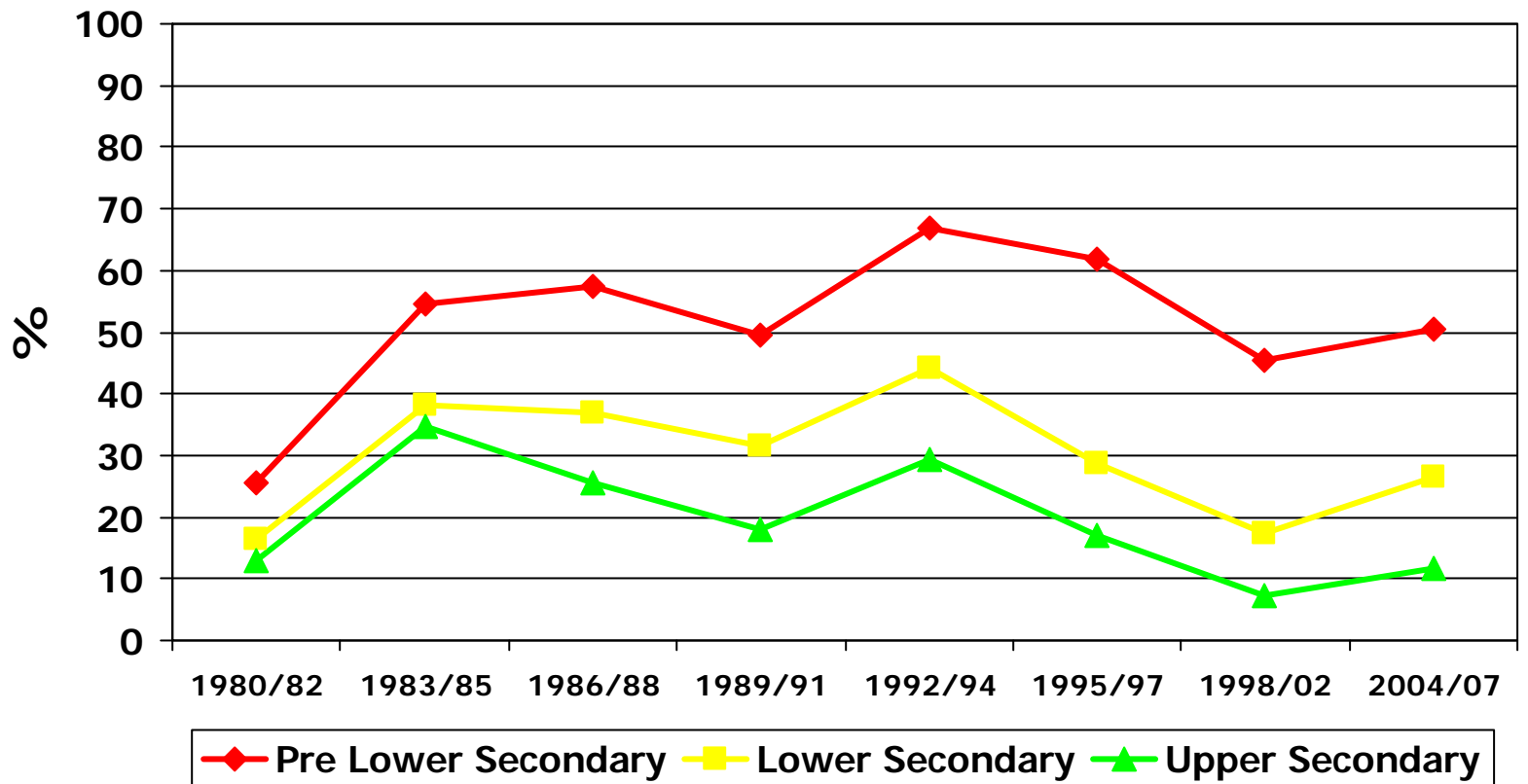
LM entry rates over time



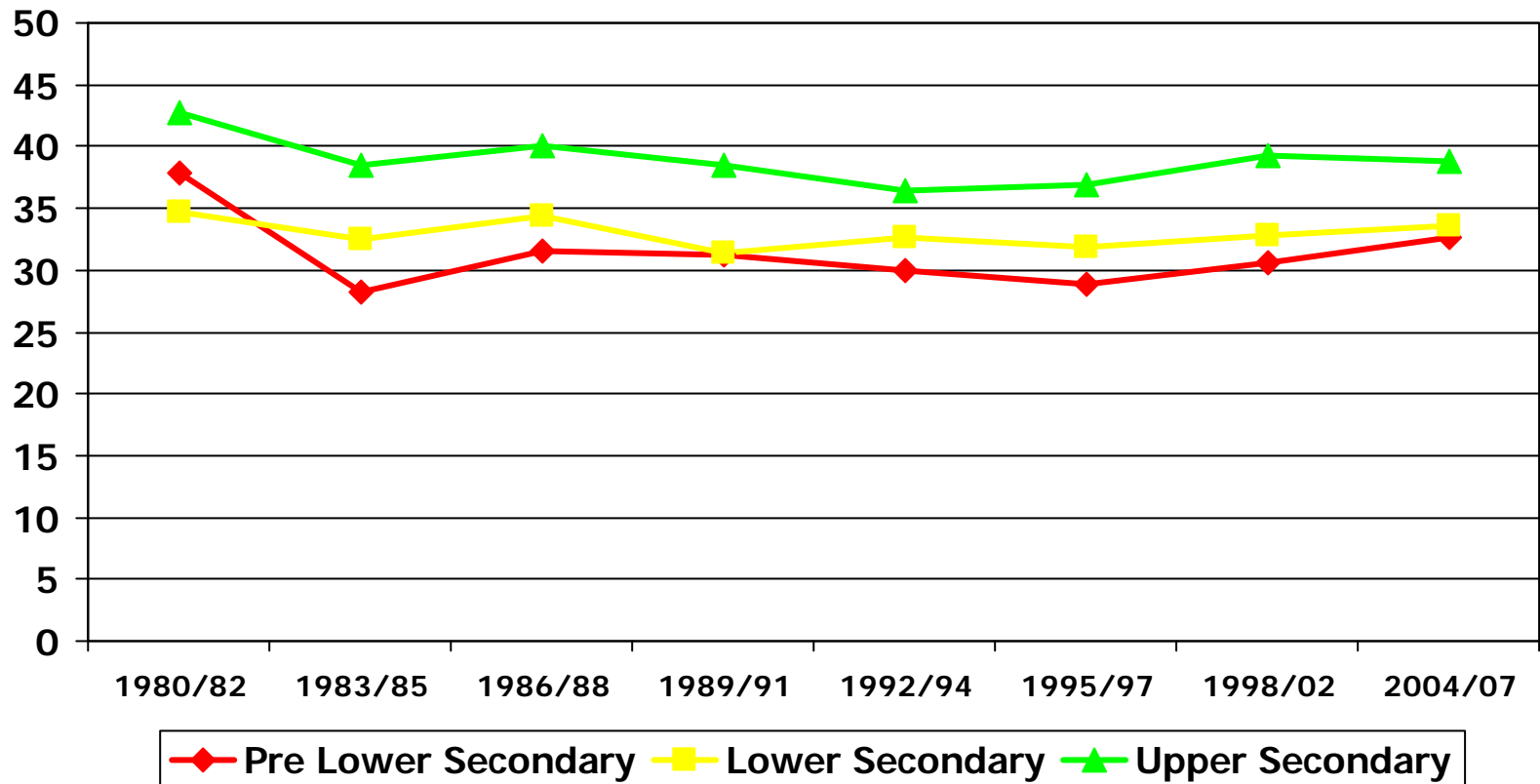
Full-time student one year after leaving school



Unemployment rates over time



Occupational status (ISEI) of current job

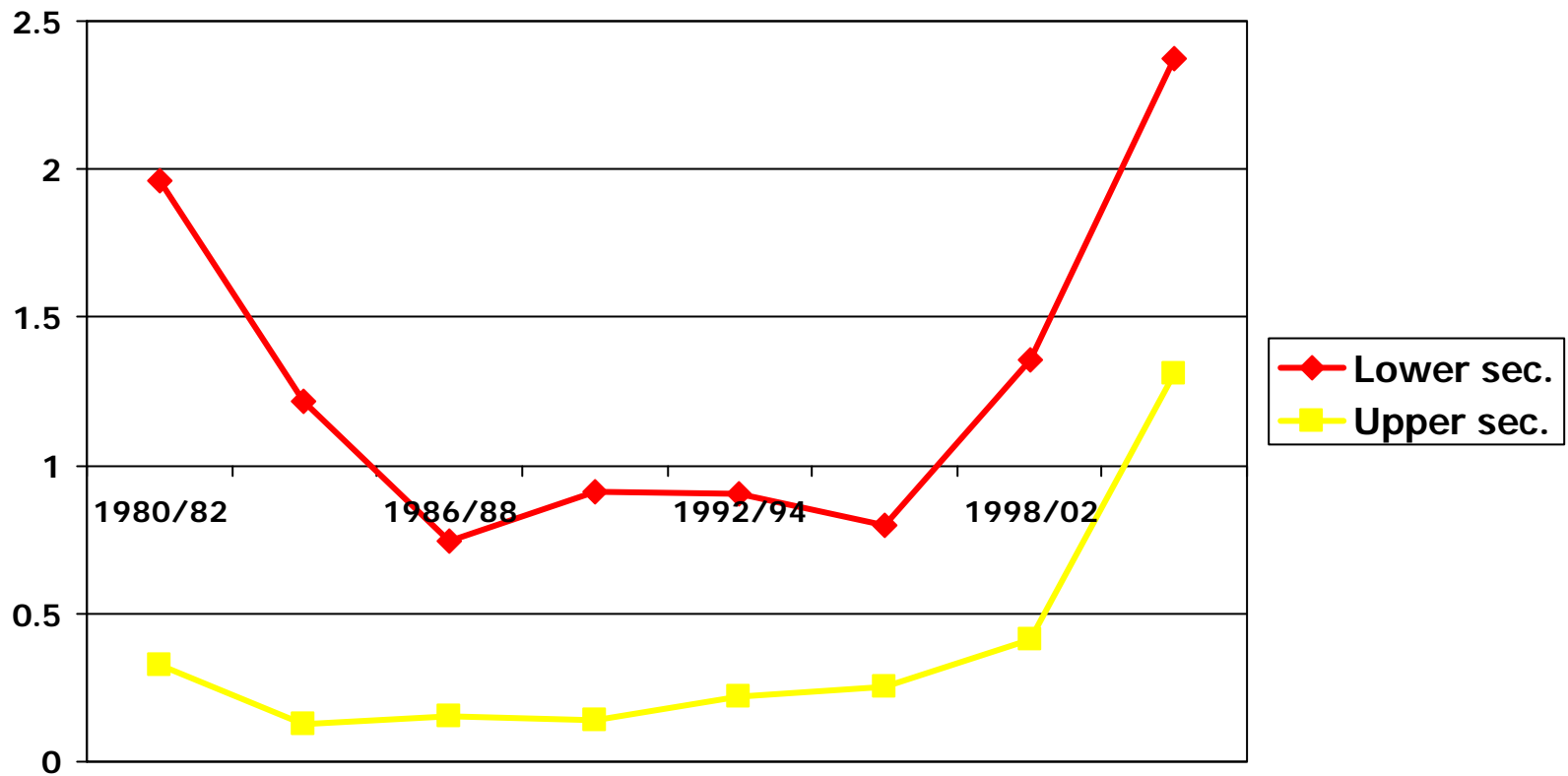




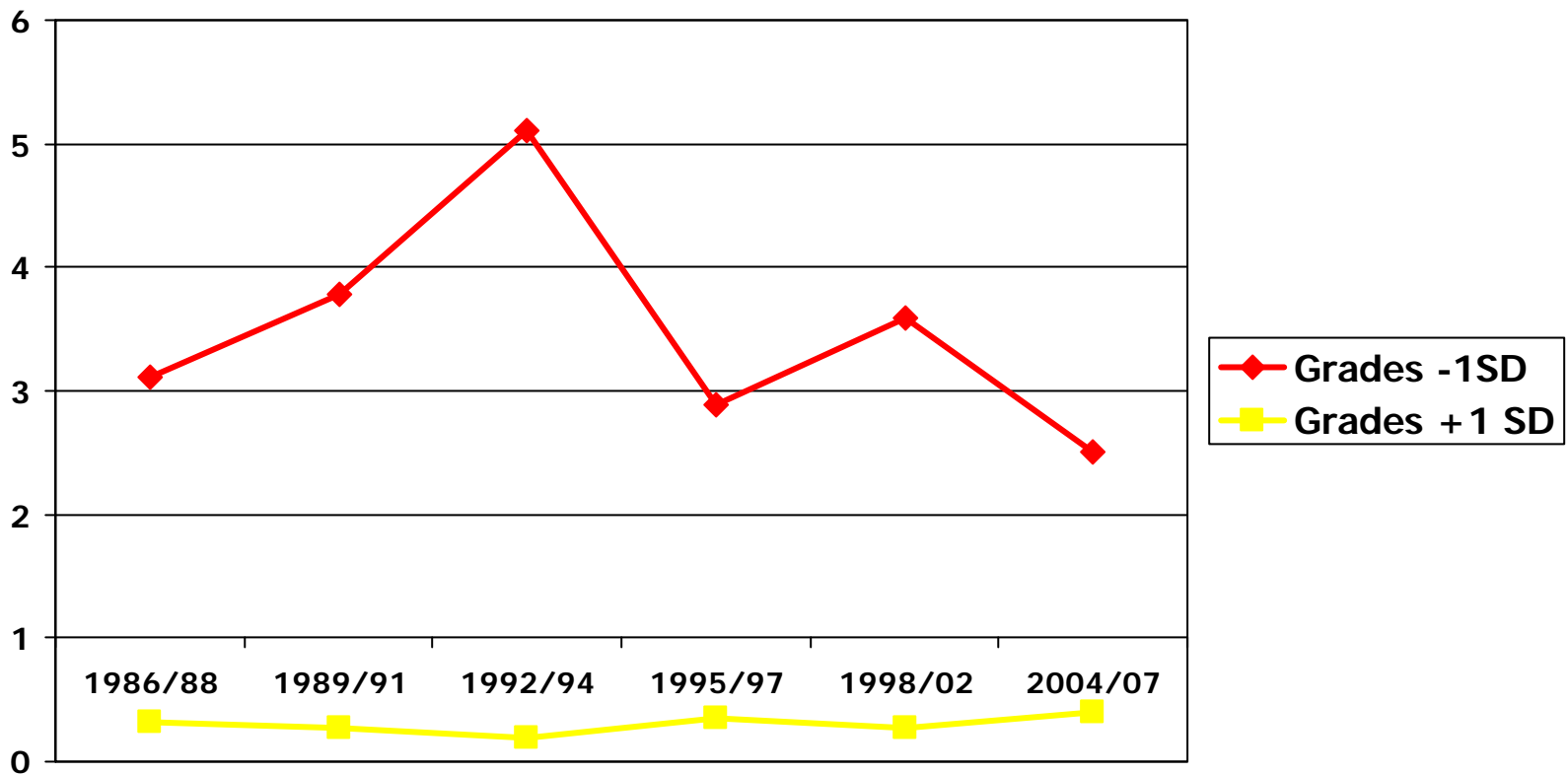
Model: LM entry

- Males +
- Professional classes/farmers –
- Parental employment –
- Some regional variation
- Decline over time (non-linear)
- Different patterns for upper and lower secondary ...

Model: Education level and LM entry (odds ratios v. pre-lower secondary)



Model: Education grades and LM entry (odds ratios v. average grades)

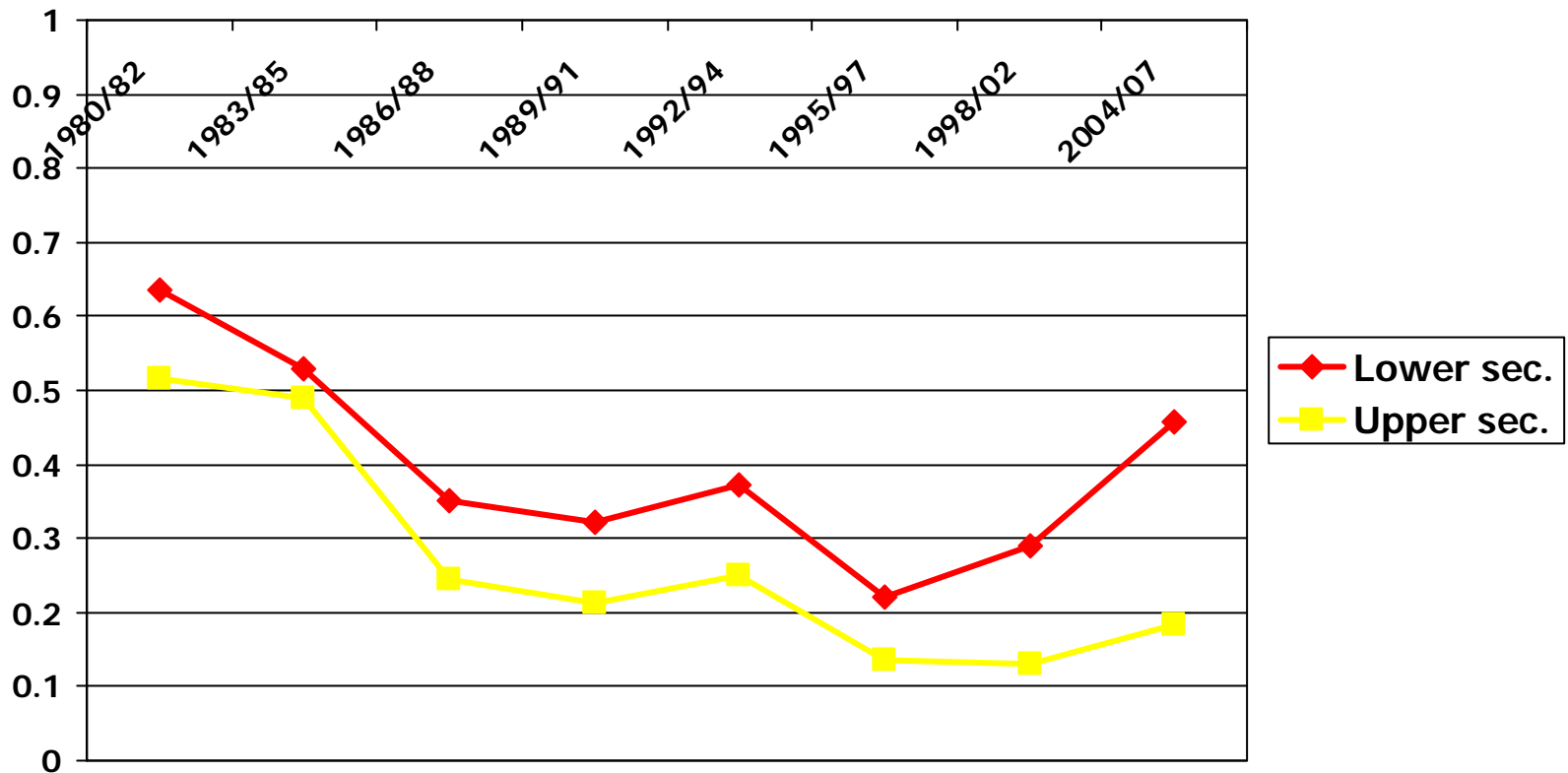




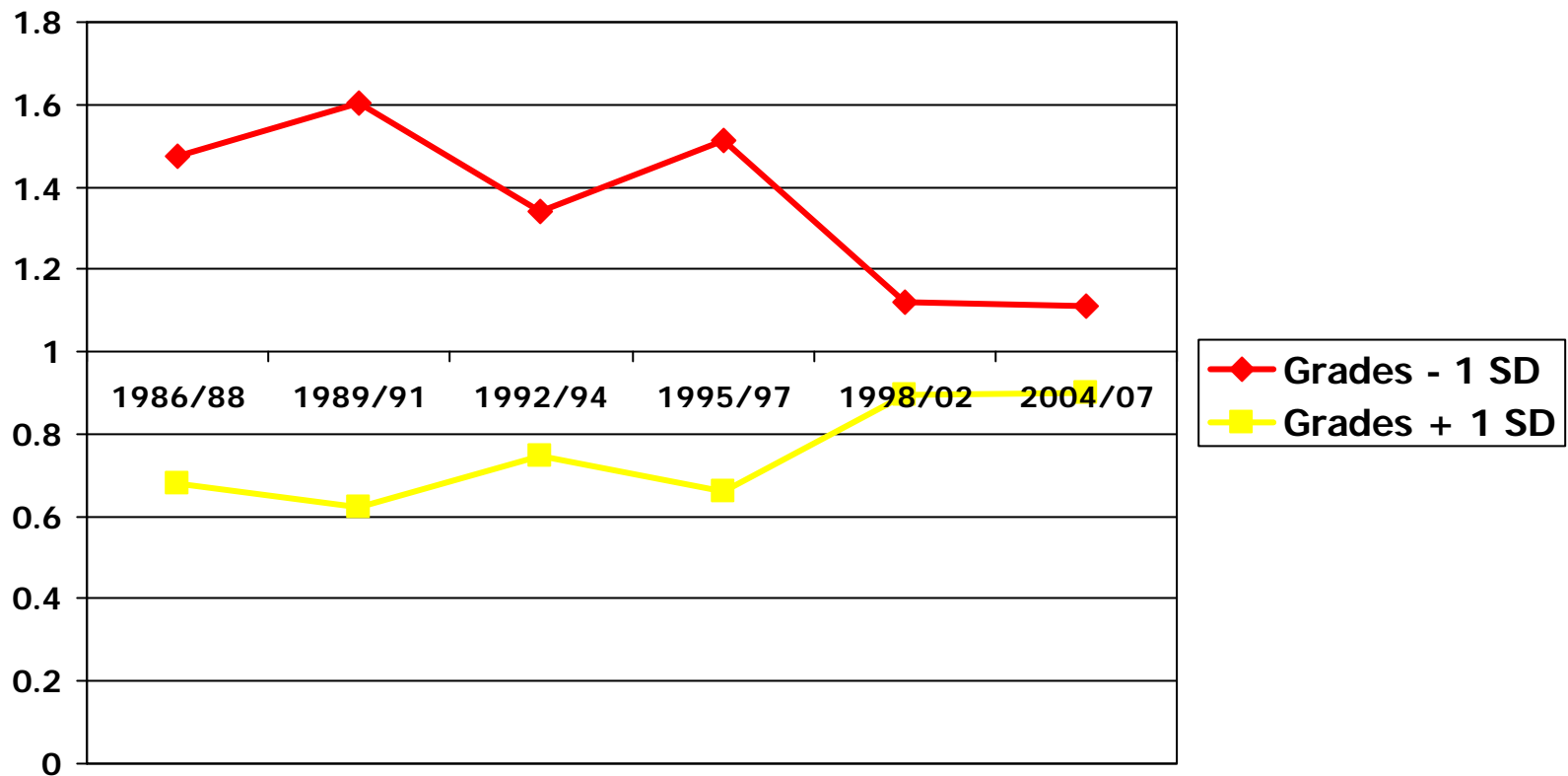
Model: Unemployment

- Males +
- Professional classes/farmers –
- Parental employment –
- Some regional variation
- Changes over time

Model: Education level and unemployment (odds ratios v. pre-lower secondary)



Model: Education grades and unemployment (odds ratios v. average grades)

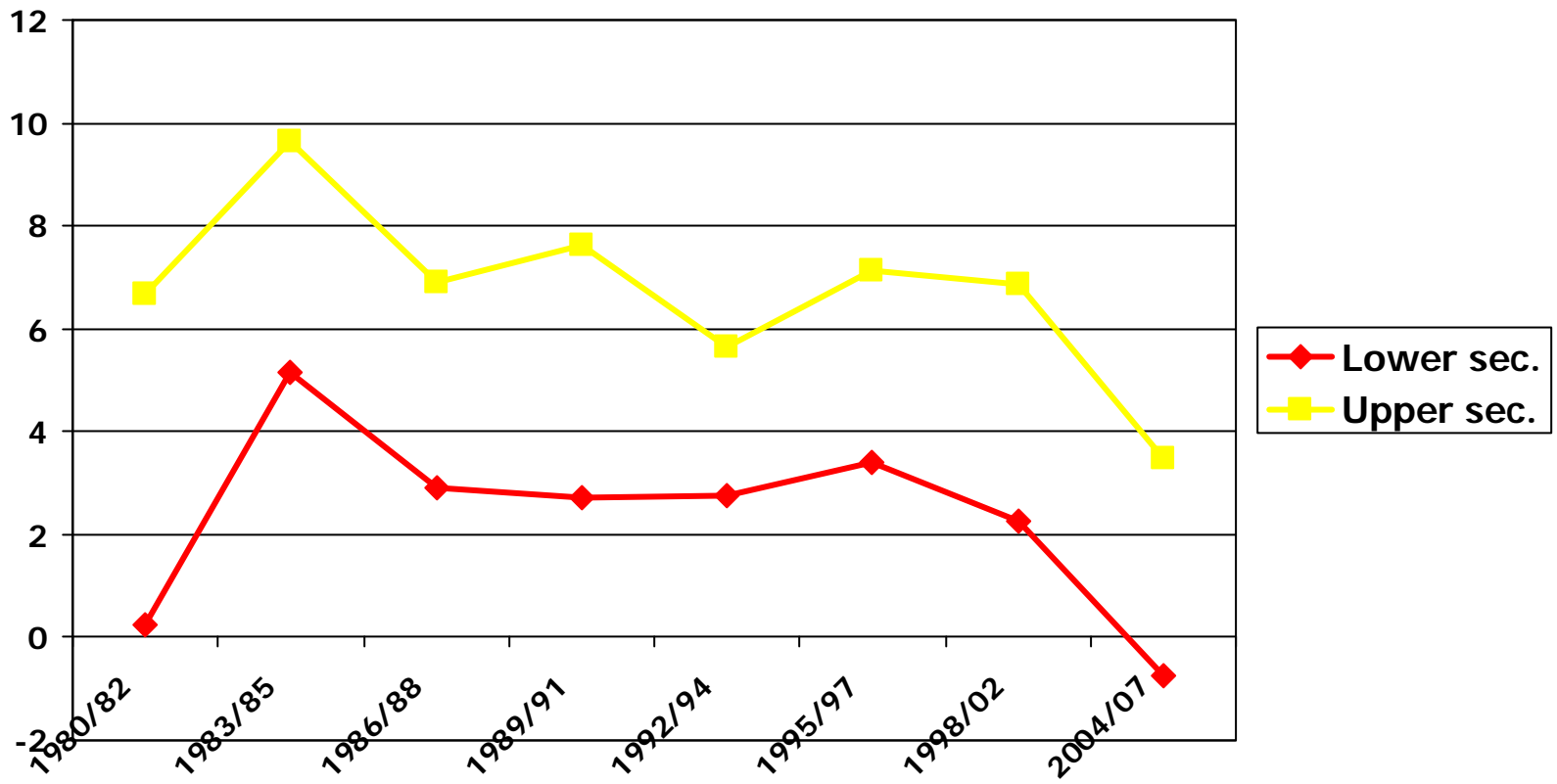




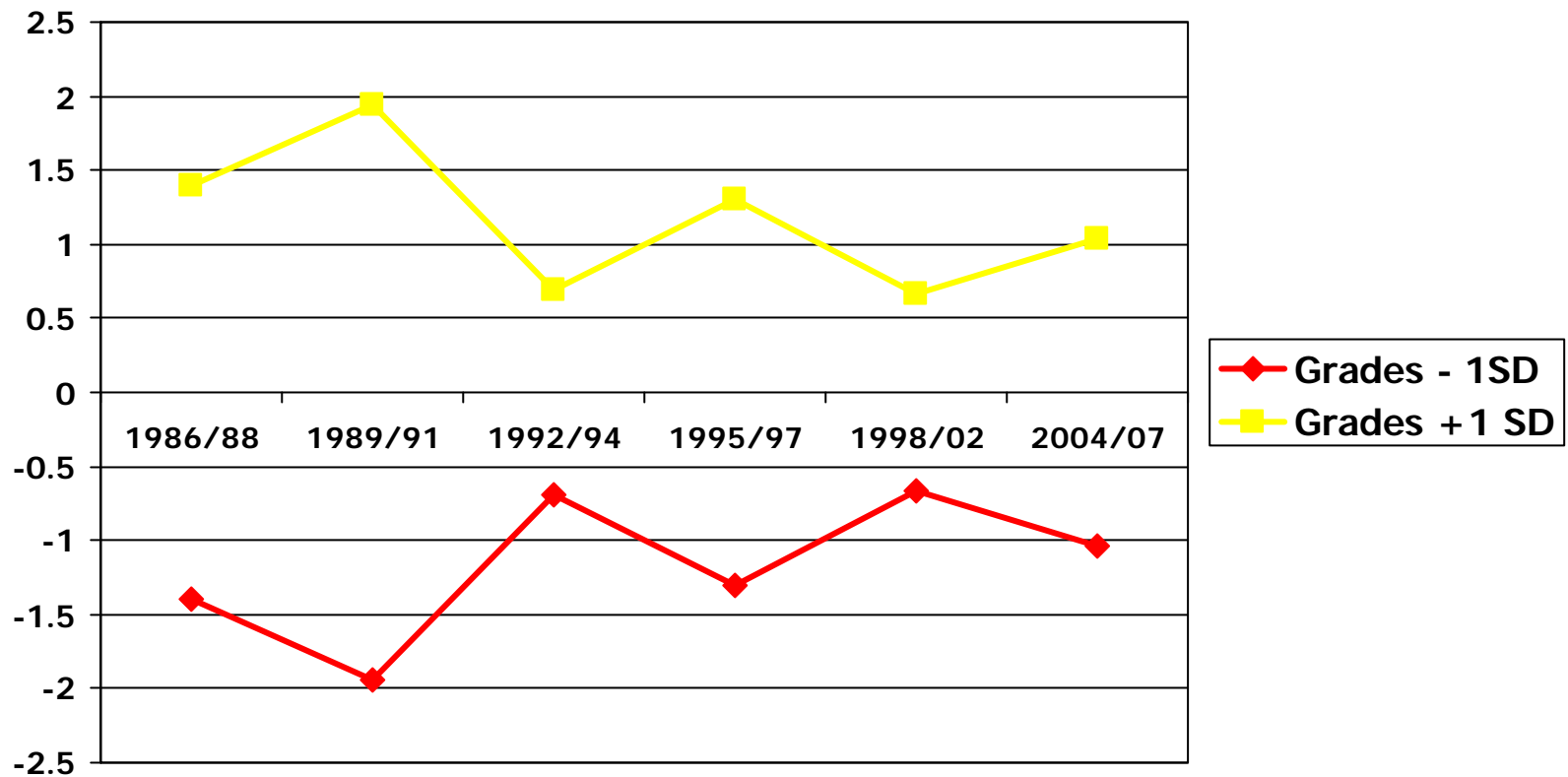
Model: Occupational status

- Males -
- Professional classes/farmers +
- Some regional variation; significant boost to being in the East
- Decline over time (non-linear).

Model: Education level and ISEI (gap v. pre-lower secondary)



Model: Education grades and ISEI (gap v. average grades)





Conclusions

- ET-LM relationship is more complex than often allowed for (see Bills 2004)
- Which measure of educational outcomes?
- Which LM outcomes?
- Unemployment – growing gap by level but grades less important over time
- Occupational status – complex relationship with level but declining importance of grades



Possible next steps

- Examine other linear and non-linear measures of year
- Replace year with a (lagged) measure of adult unemployment
- Selection effects – different profile of LM entrants over time
- Take other changes (e.g. in educational system) into account – emergence of a new secondary 'track'