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Between Structure and Perceived Status: Social Exclusion, Social Isolation, and Loneliness among Young People in Luxembourg

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Introduction

- Growing attention to loneliness since Covid-19 (Almeida, et al., 2022)
 - Loneliness affects mental and physical health (Qualter et al. 2021; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008)
 - Youth report high levels of loneliness (Qualter et al., 2013)
 - Research gap: youth and young adults understudied (Verity et al., 2020)
 - Research question: how are social exclusion, social isolation, and loneliness interconnected?
- Analyse loneliness and its key correlates in youth
 - Clarify distinctions between related social concepts

Theory

Social Isolation

- Objective lack of social contact (Huisman & van Tilburg, 2021)
- Social isolation strongly predicts loneliness (Cornwell & Waite, 2009; Barjaková et al., 2023)

Loneliness

- Subjective unmet social needs (Peplau & Perlman, 1982)
- Loneliness reduces social re-engagement (feedback loop) (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008)

Social Exclusion

- Structural barriers limit social participation (Huisman & van Tilburg, 2021)
- Evidence links exclusion to loneliness (Fakoya et al., 2020)
- Perceived status and deprivation (Barry, 1998)

Theory

Social Isolation

- Objective lack of social contact (Huisman & van Tilburg, 2021)
- Social isolation strongly predicts loneliness (Cornwell & Waite, 2009; Barjaková et al., 2023)



H1: isolated individuals report more loneliness

Loneliness

- Subjective unmet social needs (Peplau & Perlman, 1982)
- Loneliness reduces social re-engagement (feedback loop) (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008)

Social Exclusion

- Structural barriers limit social participation (Huisman & van Tilburg, 2021)
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H2: deprivation increases loneliness

H3: perceives low status increases loneliness

Data

- Youth Survey Luxembourg (Käckmeister et al., 2025)
- Random proportional stratified sampling
- Representative survey on Luxembourgish youth aged 12-29
- CAWI
- Collected April 2024 to May 2024
- Final sample $n = 1988$

Method

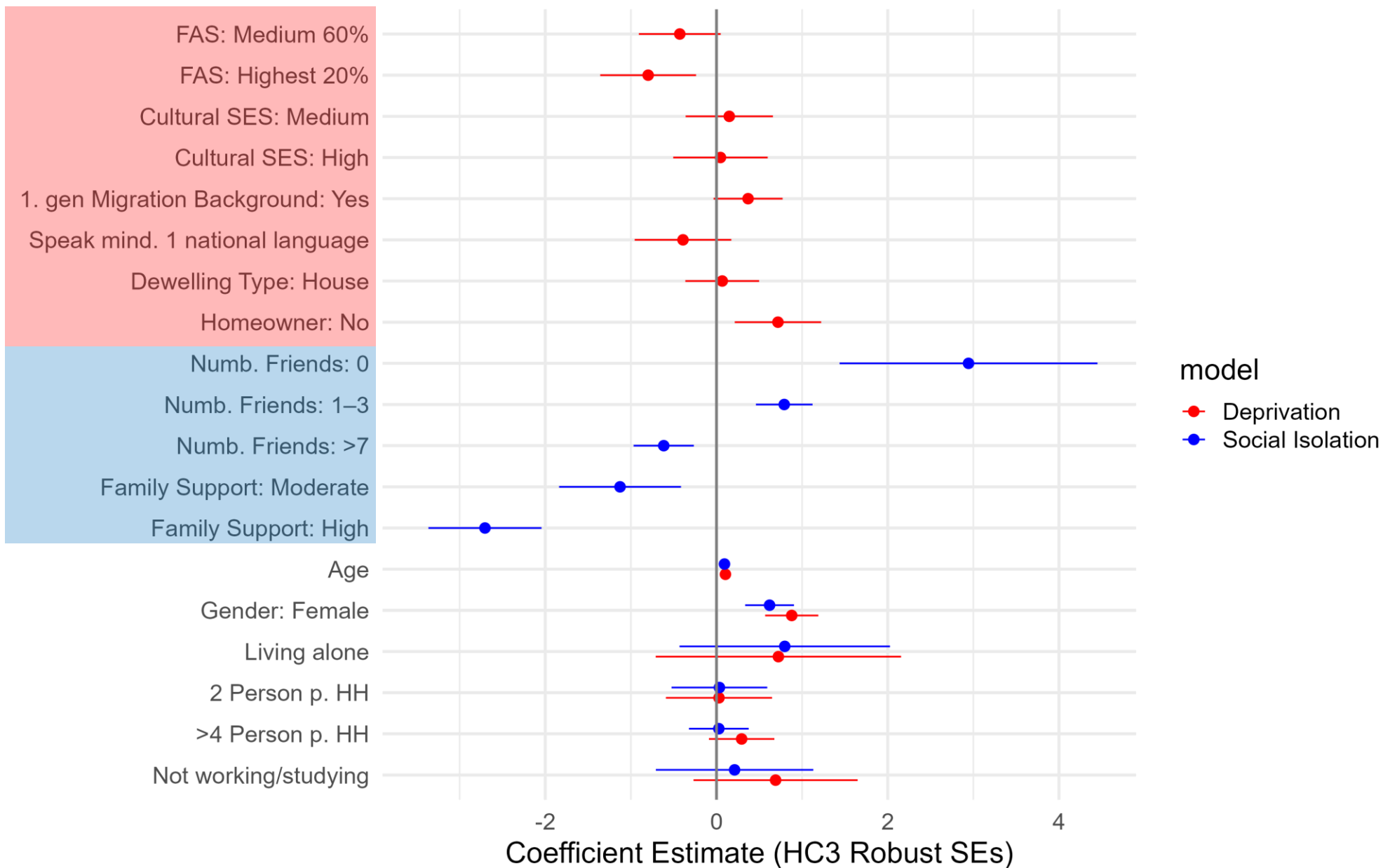
- OLS regression with robust SE
- **Dependent variable:** UCAL loneliness scale (4 items)
- **Independent variables:**
 - **Social isolation:** number of friends, family & peer support system
 - **Deprivation:** FAS III, cultural SES, migration background, homeownership, dwelling type, speaking at least one national language
 - **Perceived status:** subjective social status own life, subjective social status family

Descriptive Results

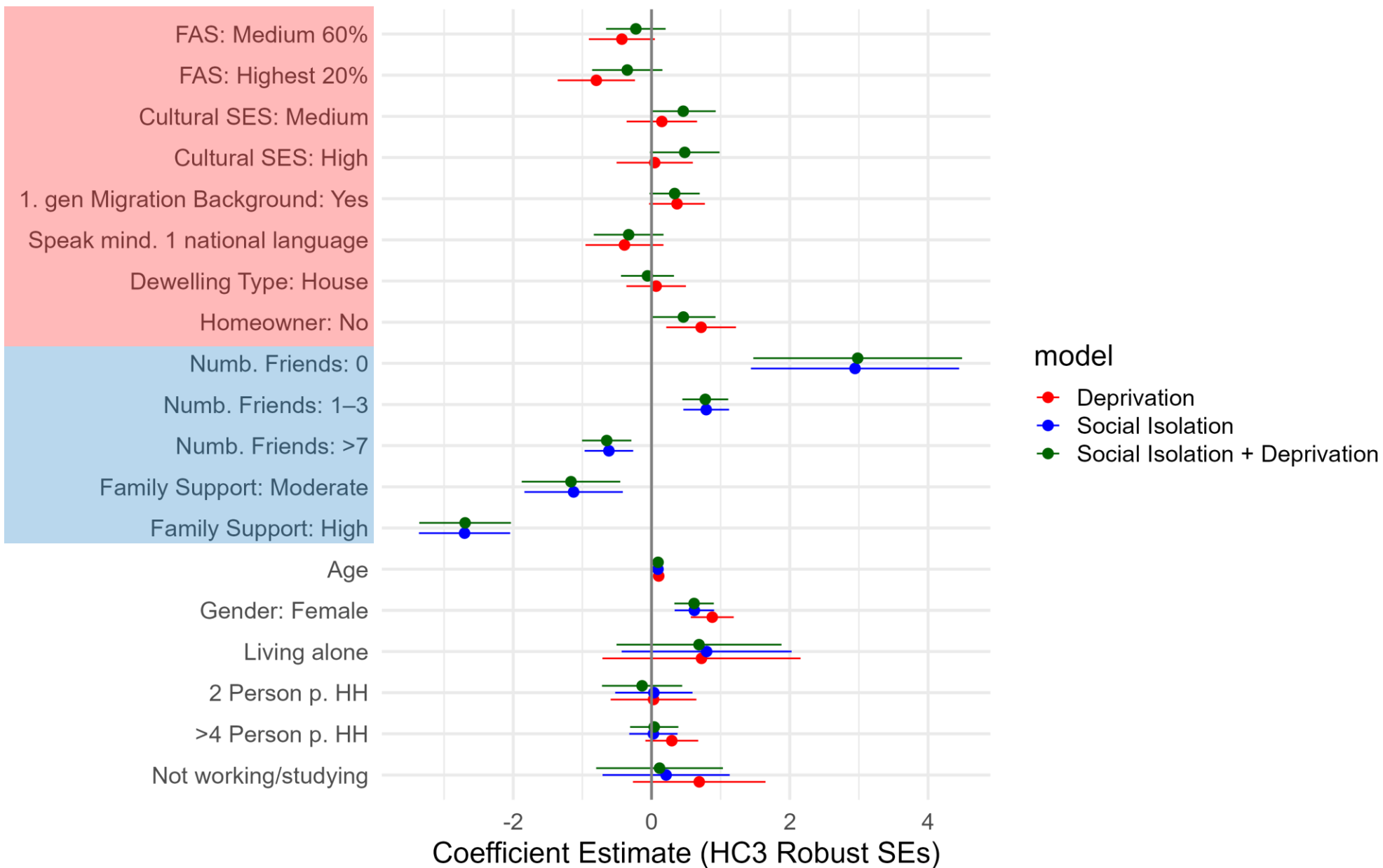
Characteristic	N = 1,988 ¹	FAS III		Number of friends	
Loneliness (low: 0 to high: 16)	4.0 (3.6)	Lowest 20 pct	328 (16.50%)	0 friends	39 (1.96%)
Age	19.0 (4.6)	Medium 60 pct	1,214 (61.07%)	1-3 friends	809 (40.69%)
Gender		Highest 20 pct	446 (22.43%)	4-6 friends	776 (39.03%)
male	933 (46.93%)	Cultural SES		>7 friends	364 (18.31%)
female	1,055 (53.07%)	Low cultural SES (0–10 books)	253 (12.73%)	Family support	
Living situation		Medium cultural SES (11–250 books)	1,141 (57.39%)	Lower family support (1-3.9)	162 (8.15%)
living alone	27 (1.36%)	High cultural SES (251+ books)	594 (29.88%)	Moderate family support (4-5.49)	362 (18.21%)
2 p. Hh.	162 (8.15%)	1. Generation migration background	481 (24.20%)	High family support (5.5-7)	1,464 (73.64%)
3-4 p. Hh.	1,321 (66.45%)	Dewelling Type: House	1,509 (75.91%)	Peer Support	
>=5 p. Hh.	478 (24.04%)	Homeowner: No	1,648 (82.90%)	Lower peer support	90 (4.53%)
Study/Working situation		Speak at least 1 national language	1,776 (89.34%)	Moderate peer support	366 (18.41%)
working/studying	1,902 (95.67%)			High peer support	1,532 (77.06%)
not working/studying	86 (4.33%)			SSS: Own family (low: 0 to high: 10)	6.69 (1.69)
				SSS: Own life (low: 0 to high: 10)	6.80 (1.72)

¹ Mean (SD); n (%)

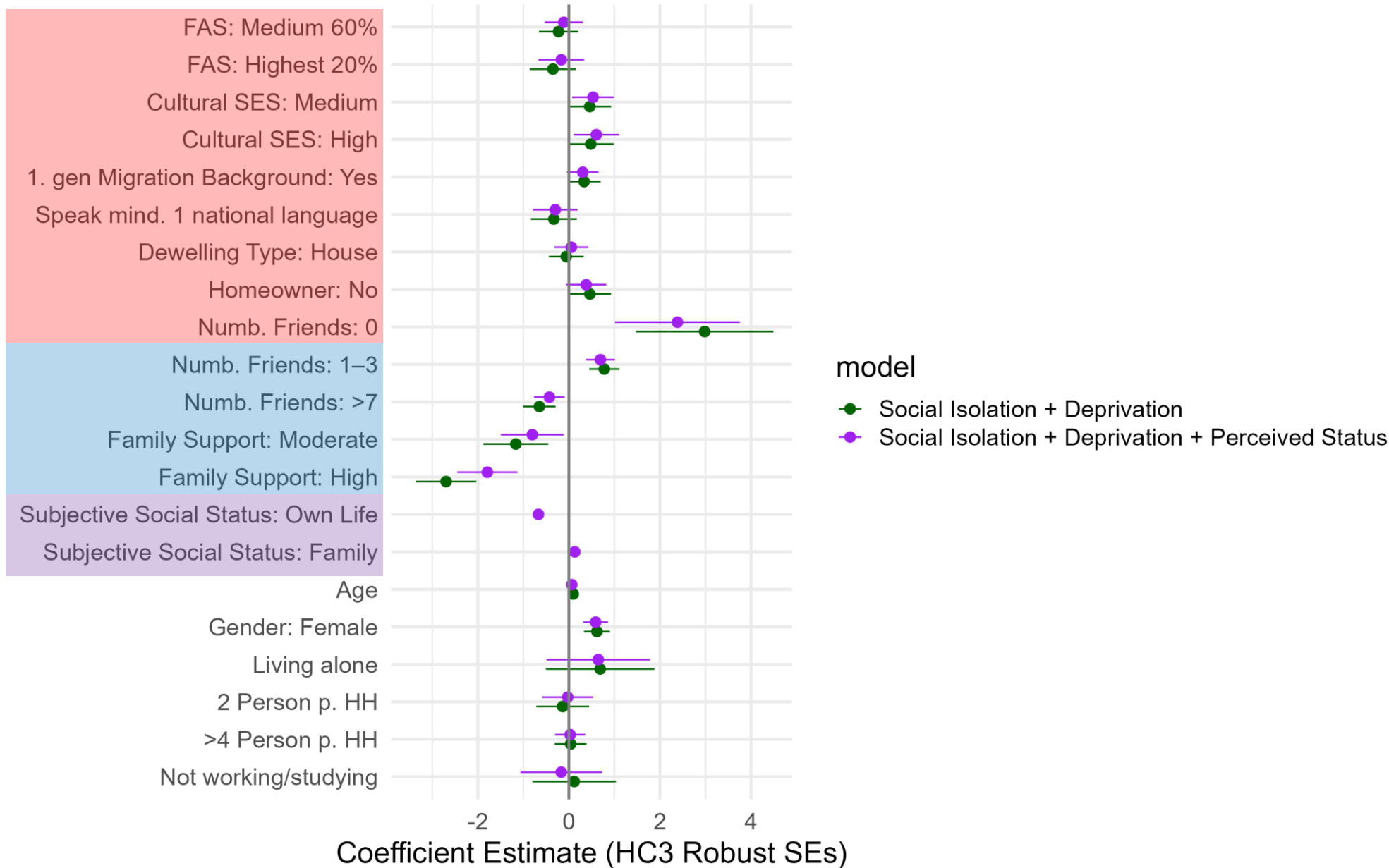
Deprivation & Social Isolation (I)



Deprivation & Social Isolation (II)



Deprivation & Social Isolation & Perceived Status



Conclusion

H1: Isolated individuals report more loneliness

- Yes, social embeddedness is key, robust predictor

H2: Deprivation increases loneliness

- Not clear, higher cultural SES higher loneliness
- No interaction effects between isolation & deprivation

H3: Perceives low status increases loneliness

- Yes, for own status but not for family status
- Comparison theory

Conclusion

- Relational ties are strongest correlates (Luhmann & Hawkley, 2016; Hämming, 2019)
- Mechanism of perceived status unclear
- Concepts must be clearly distinguished
- UCLA scale blurs key distinctions
- Longitudinal data is essential for causal analyses
- Loneliness is central to quality of life (Christiansen et al., 2021)

References

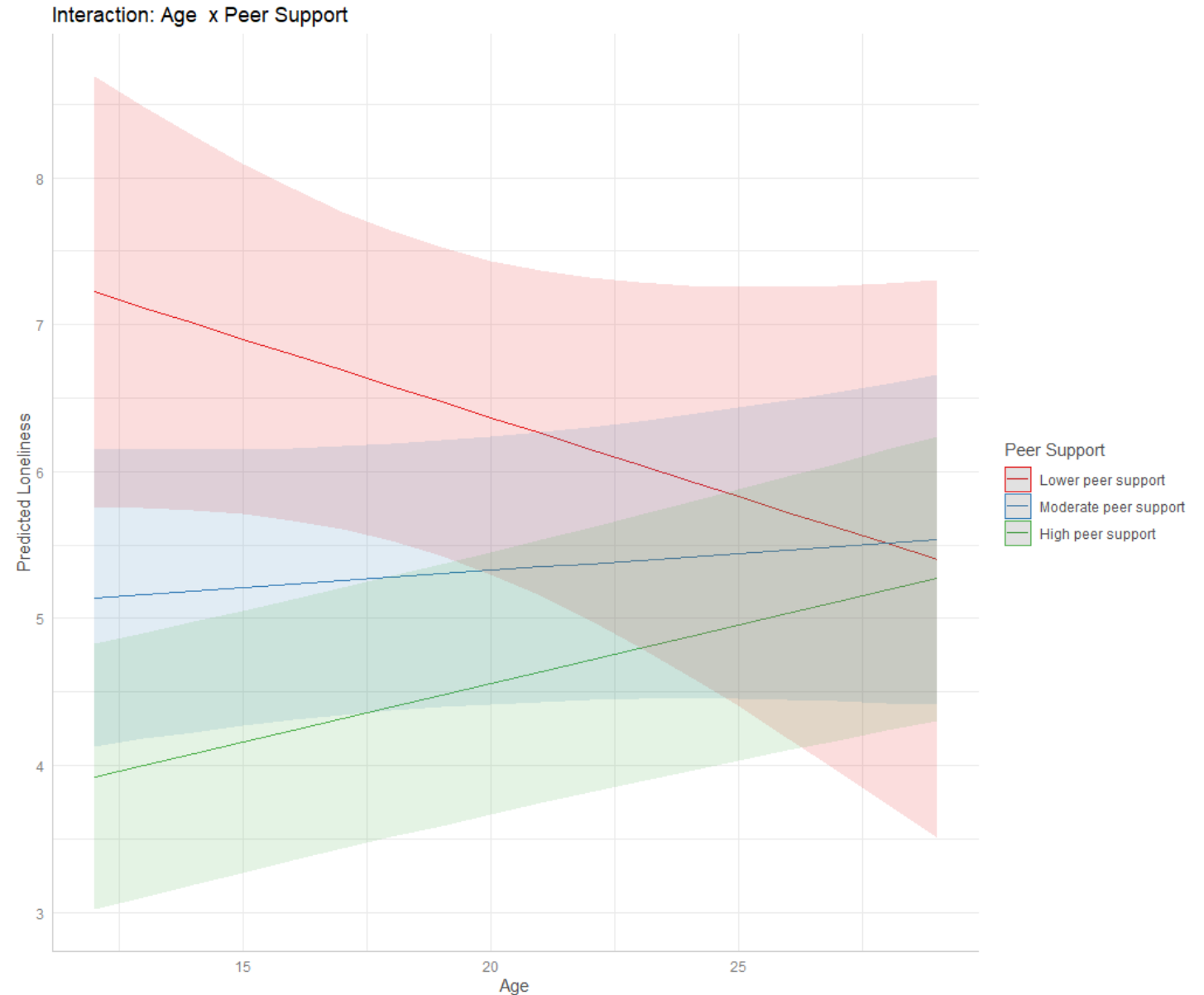
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Transition & support

- Transition effect: from parental support to peer support
- Younger adolescents: parents more important
- Older adolescents: peers shaping identity

H4: Age moderates the association between peer support and loneliness such that the positive association between peer support and loneliness becomes stronger with age.

- No, protection effect does not increase with age



Loneliness Scale

Dependent Variable

- UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1980)
 - UCLA is available in different version (3 items, 4 items, 8 items and 20 items)
 - Broad body of research on validity (Mund et al., 2022)

Loneliness scale in YSL

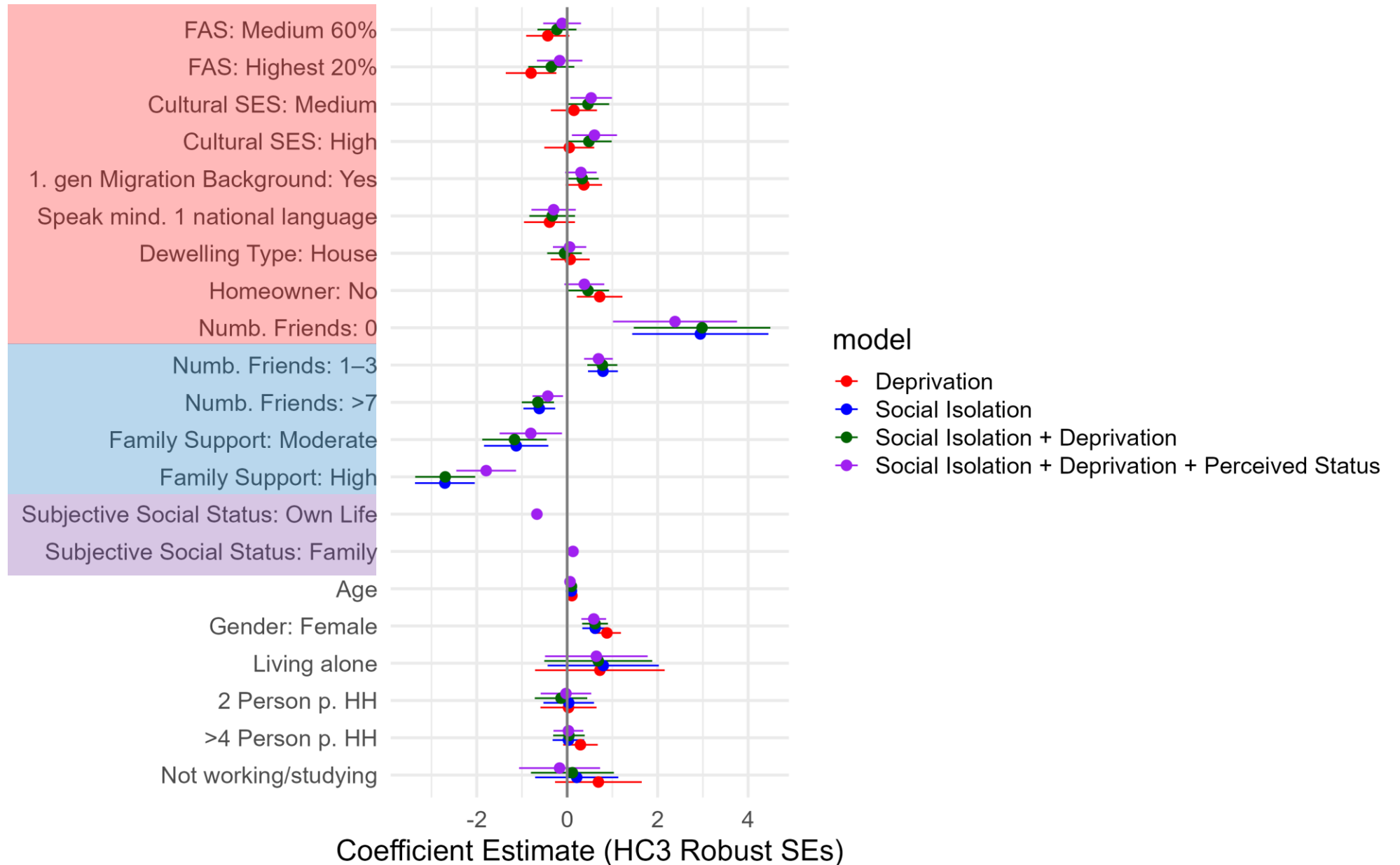
- Adapted version UCLA Loneliness Scale
 - Adapted for young people
 - Chronical/trait loneliness (longer time period)
 - First use in 2021: Young People and Covid-19 (YAC)

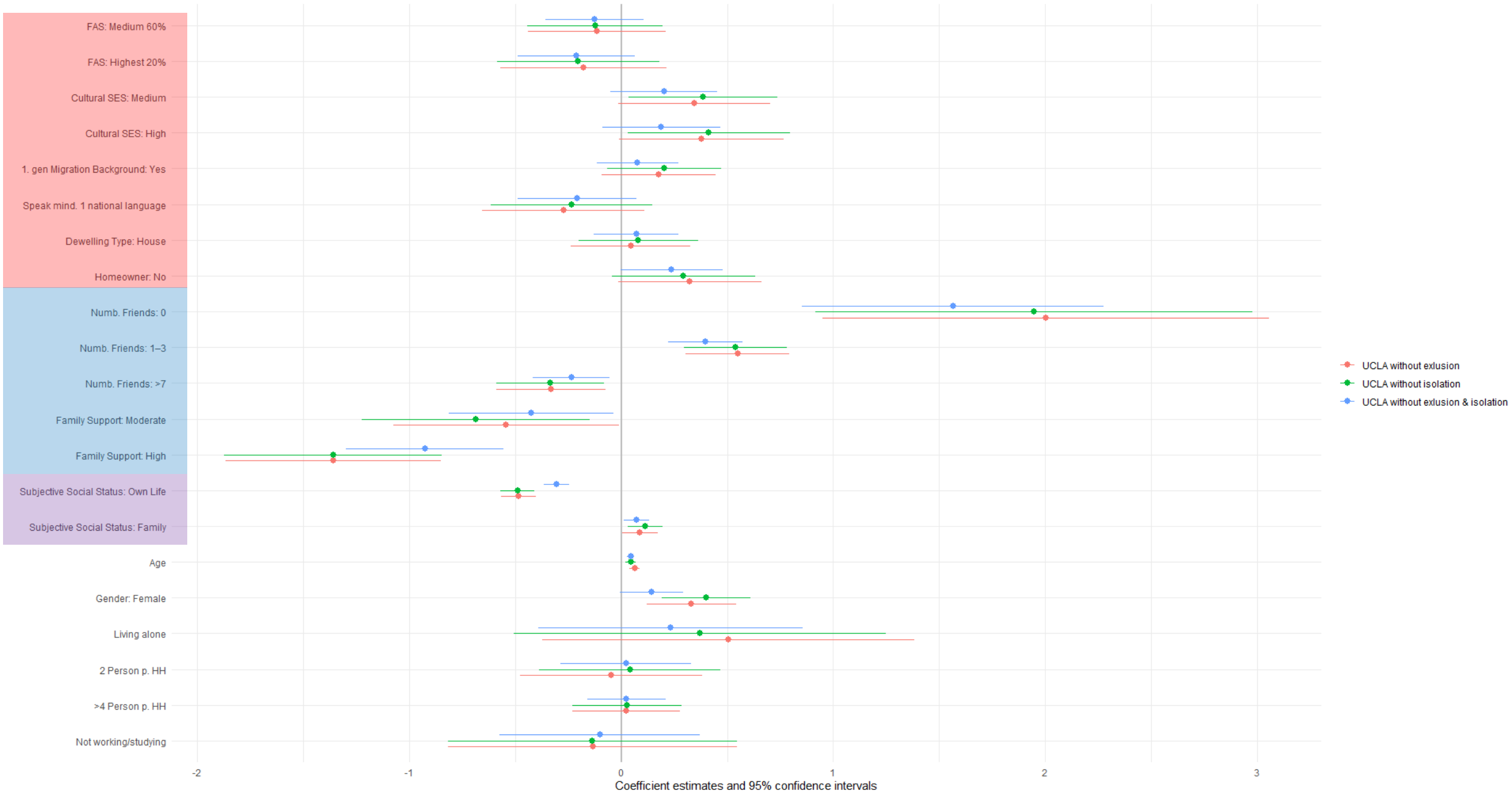
In the last 12 months, how often have you felt as described in each of the following statements?

- a) I feel isolated from others.
- b) I feel excluded.
- c) I lack companionship.
- d) I am no longer close to anyone.

1) Never 2) Occasionally 3) Less than half the time 4) More than half the time 5) Most of the time

Deprivation & Social Isolation & Perceived Status





Correlation Matrix

