

**Educational transitions from  
Secondary to Post-secondary in Singapore:  
Context, antecedents and outcomes**

*(Preliminary Insights)*

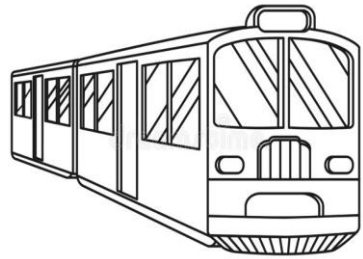
**RPIC 2022, Singapore**  
*Lifelong Learning Symposium*

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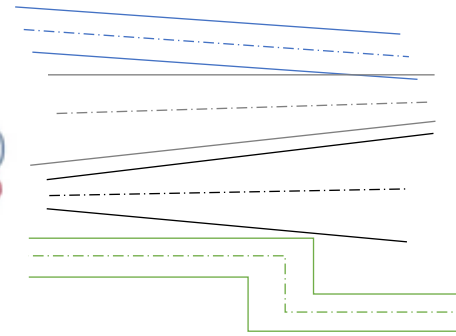
# Educational Transitions in Contexts of Lifelong Learning

- In line with a life-wide and life-deep perspective of learning, research on post-school outcomes has increasingly focused on learners' transitions
- The notion of transitions occupies more than just the age-graded move from one educational setting to another or to work, or from adolescence to emerging adulthood
- Transitions (as experiences of change that affect all areas of life) consider influences from individual level maturation processes (how learners acquire skills, develop life goals, make meaning, develop agency) as well as relational and contextual factors (background, networks, opportunities and constraints) that shape the choices students make about their futures
- Transitions are crucial moments that explain identity formation, agency as well as reproduction and reduction of inequalities; future expectations and aspirations of work and continued learning are also heightened during times of transition

- Yet transitions have also become less linear, less anticipated and less predictable



**From:**  
*A set track to some  
final destination*



**To:**  
*Navigating multiple  
uneven pathways  
with varying reliability*

*A study on transitions draws attention not only on the multiple pathways of (lifelong) learning, but also make explicit how learning at one stage is linked to processes in the years before and after, and in ways that are shaped by the broader patterns of social change*

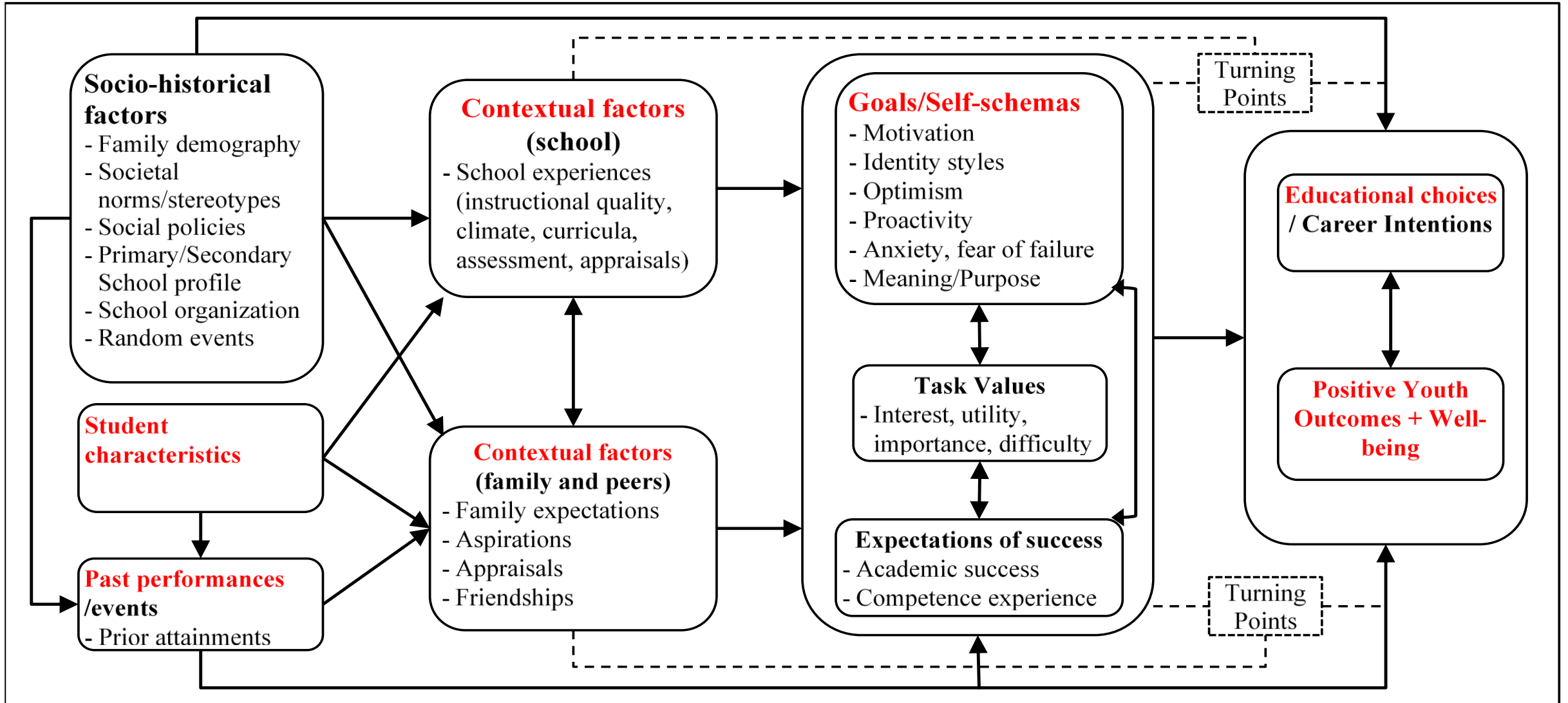
# Framing and Studying Educational Transitions

- 'Who goes where' and 'who does what' are important considerations for future readiness and for mapping subsequent life chances, rewards and well being
- Such research dates back fifty years (Dunlop, 2021), and possibly even more (e.g., the pioneering Berkeley studies of child development in 1920s extended to middle years and later life)
  - Students navigate a new school context (new peer and teacher relations, changing academic requirements)
  - Initial schooling experiences influence adjustments in new school context (cumulative [dis]advantage)
  - Transition studies focus on mapping changes and diversity in pathways and how they are linked to structural constraints and individual agency
- Although the values and experiences acquired at each transition point (from childhood to adolescence, from primary to secondary) influence the next, what constitutes a good transition and later school success remains an open question, particularly in times of evolving uncertainty and rapid social change

## **If quality of early transition influences later outcomes, what are the types of outcomes commonly studied?**

- Beyond traditional markers of skill attainment, there is increasing and expanded focus on positive well-being (holistic) as key post-school outcomes
  - In line with the positive psychology movement at the turn of the Century
  - Focus on individual thriving and flourishing (developing human and social capital and resources) rather than the prevention of developmental problems and difficulties
  - Outcomes measured in this study:
    - Positive youth development outcomes
      - Confidence, Character, Connectedness, Competence, Caring
    - Psychosocial Well-being
      - Depression/Anxiety (Patient Health Questionnaire)
      - Mental Health Construct (Emotional Well-being; Positive Functioning)
      - Mentalising (understand cognition of self and others)
      - Social/cultural/identity capital

# Conceptual Framework (this study)



# In this presentation, we provide some preliminary insights into:

1. Educational pathways of students take after leaving secondary school
  - Overview of Post-secondary destinations
  - Academic regrets (antecedents and consequences)
    - Regrets as opposite of satisfaction linked to universal (negative) cognitive and emotional response to decisions that produce unsatisfied results
    - Linked to indecision, sense of being overwhelmed. Studies show that the most common areas of regret concern education and career, followed by romantic life domains (Roese & Summerville, 2005)
2. Factors that influence post-secondary choices (very preliminary overview)

# Sample Characteristics

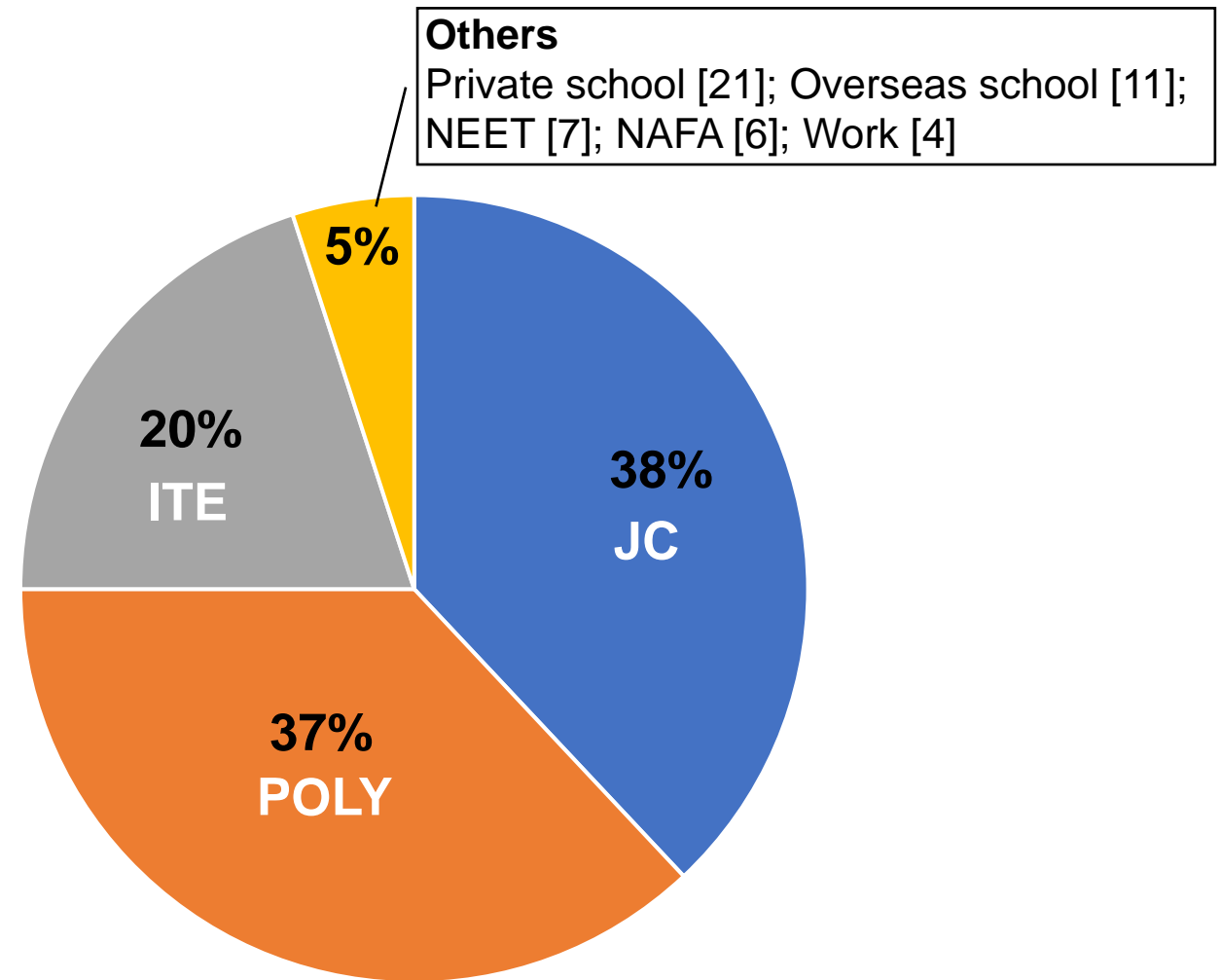
- 1027 respondents (aged 18+) followed up in 2021/2; part of a larger study in 2018 (Sec 3)
  - Data collection ongoing; ~85% of total data collected
  - Response rate ~60%
  - Current sample represented across
    - 155 Primary schools
    - 22 Secondary schools
  - Gender
    - 61% females
  - Race
    - C (77%), M (12%), I (5%), O (6%)



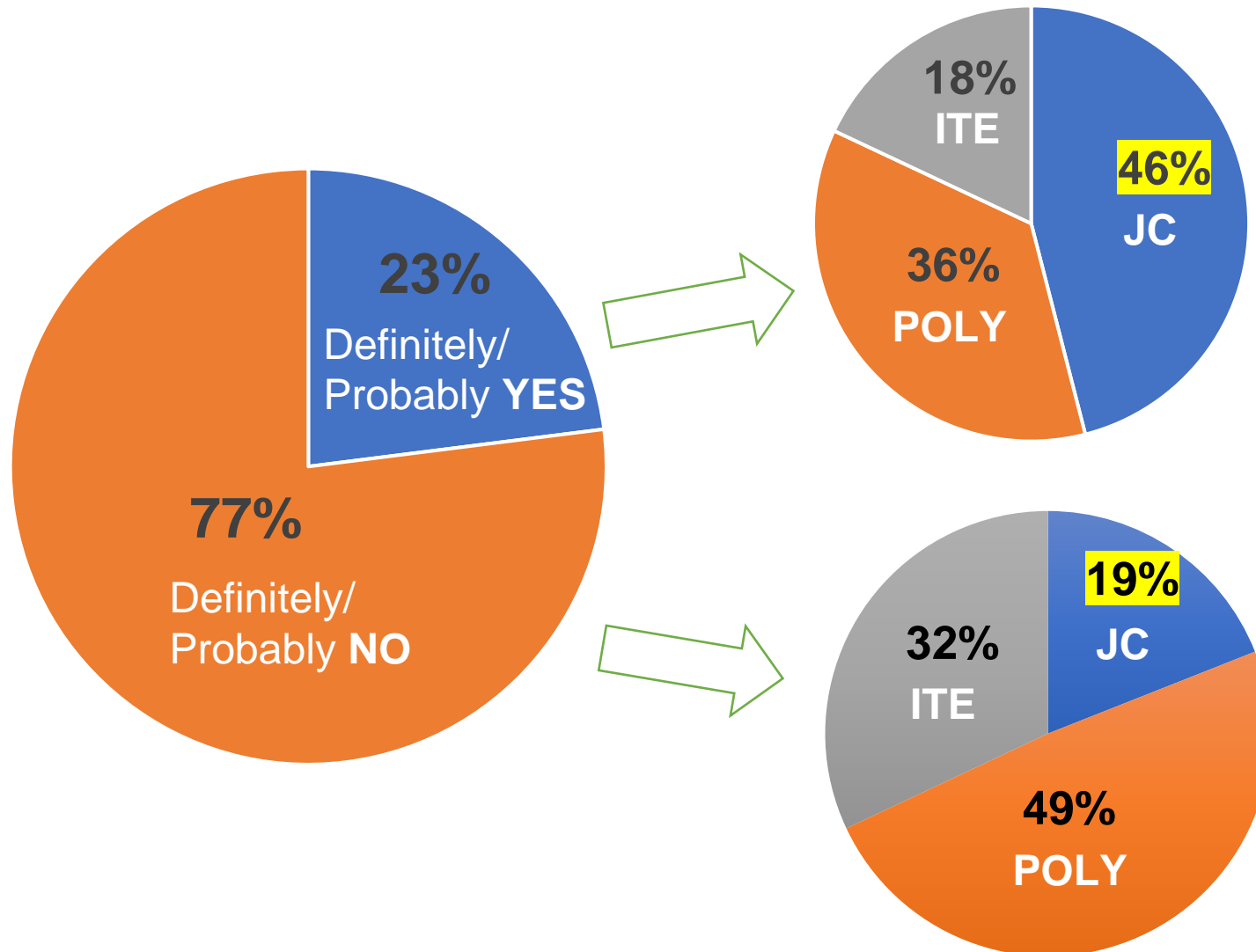
# Where do Students go to after Secondary?

Post-secondary destinations:

- 38% went on to JC
- 37% to Poly
- 20% to ITE
- 5% Others



# Do students regret their post-secondary choices?



## Follow up queries:

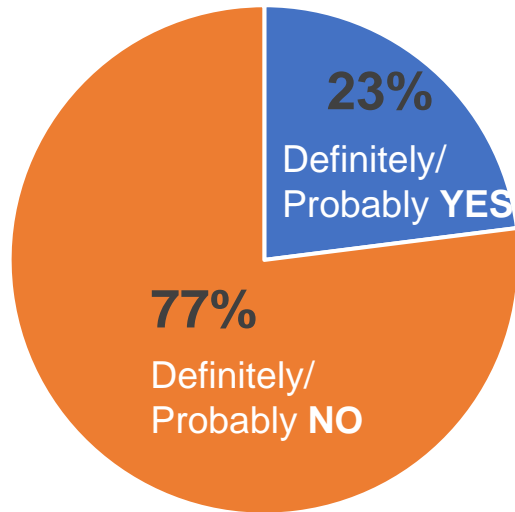
One argument could be that academic regrets are fleeting, a process of academic life, of growing up

But what if students who regretted their PS choices are...

- associated with certain characteristics?
- at risk of poorer future outcomes?

# Do students regret their post-secondary choices?

## Association with student characteristics



“*d*” denotes effect size differences

~ 0.2 – threshold

~ 0.5 – medium effect

~ 0.7 – large effect

Students who regretted their PS choices were associated with...

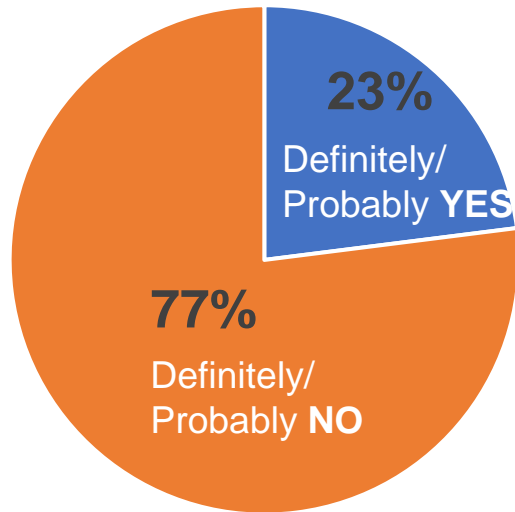
- **lower SES** ( $d=.25$ ,  $p<.01$ )
- **lower PSLE** ( $d=.46$ ,  $p<.01$ )
- **Normal stream** ( $OR=2.2$ ,  $p<.01$ ) – the odds are 2.2 times greater that normal stream students will regret their PS choices.

These students also reported...

- **higher academic anxiety** at Sec 3 ( $d=.28$ )
- **more disruptive classroom environments** at Sec 3 ( $d=.27$ )
- **less positive ratings** of Secondary school experiences ( $d=.30$ )
  - My secondary school education has prepared me for post-secondary education
  - Overall, I had a well-rounded educational experience in Secondary school
- **less positive ratings** of Post-Sec school experiences ( $d=.54$ )
  - I feel that this school will prepare me for life after graduation
  - Overall, I have a well-rounded educational experience in this school
- **lower social (autonomy) support**
  - School ( $d=.45$ ); Parents ( $d=.38$ ); Peers ( $d=.33$ )
- **higher Proximity to Peer Delinquency** (have friends who smoke, skip school, are aggressive, get into trouble, done something illegal, use offensive language) ( $d=.33$ )

# Do students regret their post-secondary choices?

*Association with student outcomes*



Students who regretted their PS choices were associated with...

- **lower Psychological Capital** (efficacy, resilience, hope, optimism) ( $d=.35$ )
- **higher depression** (PHQ – frequency of depressed moods over a two-week period) ( $d=.31$ )
- **lower Mental Health Functioning** (emotional, psychological) ( $d=.33$ )
- **lower Future Optimism** ( $d=.35$ )
- **lower Future Career Prospects** (good jobs, well-paid, well-respected) ( $d=.30$ )

## **Pandemic related impact:**

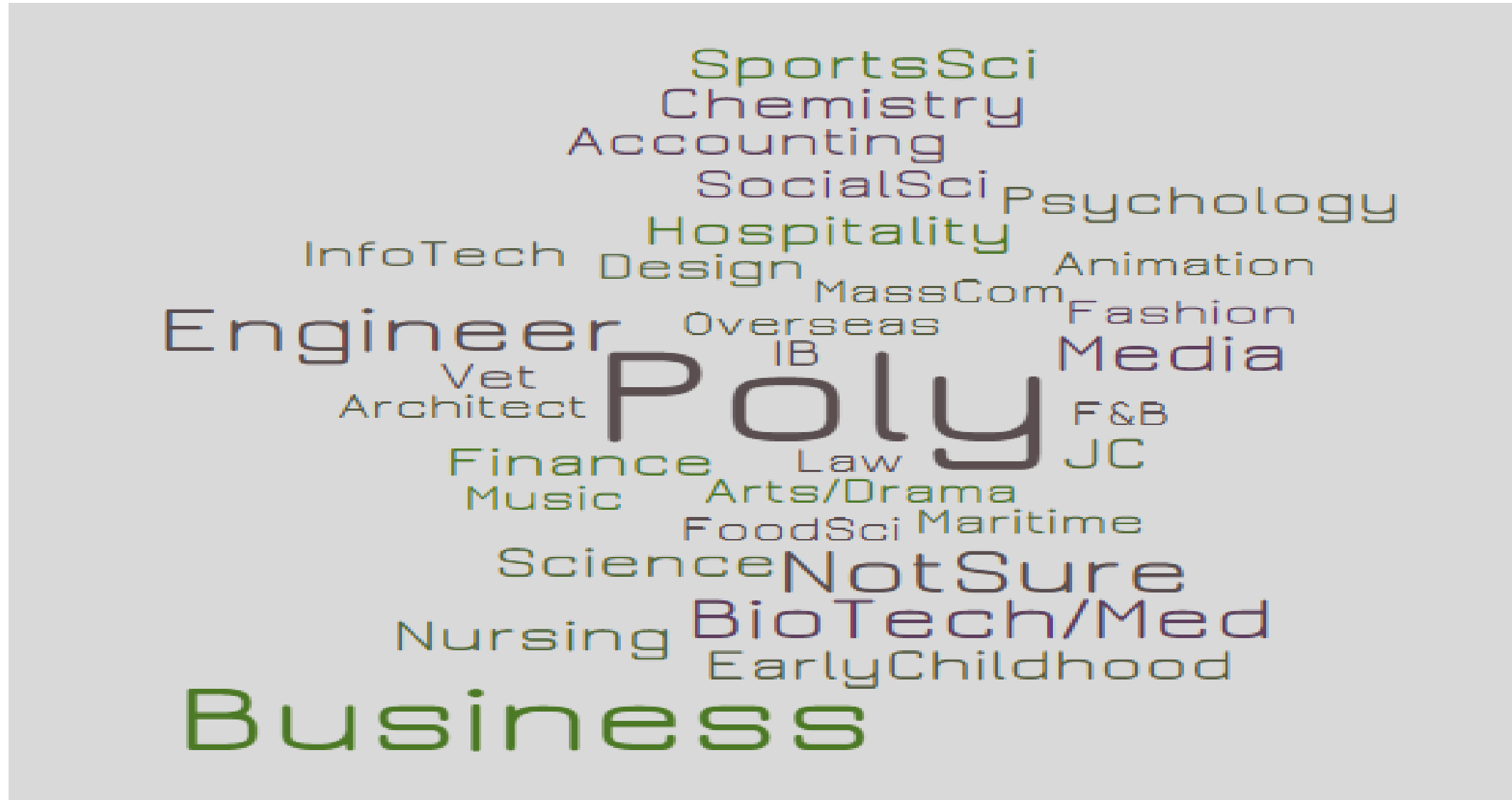
- Significant difference in mental health deterioration ( $d=.35$ )
- But no difference in physical health and family financial status

## **Career-related activities**

- Strongest difference in
  - attending career-related lessons/talks in school ( $d=.35$ )
  - Identifying employers/firms relevant to career possibilities ( $d=.25$ )

# If you could start over, what would you have chosen?

*(for those who regretted their Post Sec choices)*



# Who or what influenced you most in choosing the course you are studying?

	Overall
Myself	45%
Secondary school results	11%
Better job prospects	11%
Parents	11%
Better chances of entering university	10%
Relatives (or friends of parents)	3%
Friends	3%
Siblings	2%
Don't know/Not sure/No other choice/skip	2%
Teachers	2%
School counsellor/ career advisor	1%

Not sure what to take in Poly, so JC seems the right choice

# Who or what influenced you most in choosing the course you are studying?

	Overall	No Regrets	With Regrets
Myself	45%	<b>48%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Secondary school results	11%	9%	19%
Better job prospects	11%	11%	11%
Parents	11%	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Better chances of entering university	10%	<b>11%</b>	<b>5%</b>
Relatives (or friends of parents)	3%		
Friends	3%		
Siblings	2%		
Don't know/Not sure/No other choice/skip	2%		
Teachers	2%		
School counsellor/ career advisor	1%		

# Summary and Discussion

- The quality and characteristics of educational transitions can provide good insights into the pathways of lifelong learning
- Other than Youth Steps (IPS study on transitions and evolving pathways), this is possibly the first longitudinal study that focuses on secondary to post-secondary transitions
- Findings highlight a particular group of vulnerable youths who are likely to experience less successful transitions, and possibly more challenging future readiness, through situational (social, familial and academic background and relationships), institutional (past experiences of schooling) and dispositional (positivity, capitals, mental health) barriers – consistent with the literature
- Although contextual and intra-personal factors can influence outcomes, unpredictable negative events can also affect young people's prospects in life. In a question that asked if students had experienced events that affected them positively, negatively or none (known as turning points), those who reported a negative event were associated with less desirable outcomes and higher depressive traits, compared to those who experienced a positive event. Therefore, important to consider out-of-school factors in examining pathways towards lifelong learning
- Overall, the presented findings are preliminary, but we hope that as further analyses are undertaken, deeper insights (why and how) will surface. We also hope that it will stimulate more interest in youth research related to educational transitions



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Thank you

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