

# PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN CARE IN SCOTLAND ARE UP TO FIVE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUE THAN CHILDREN NOT IN CARE

## INTRODUCTION

All children need substantial support to meet expected developmental milestones for social, emotional, and physical health. Children in care often don't receive this support which has consequences for their ongoing development.

The aim of this study was to compare the rate of developmental concerns identified in two year olds in care with the rate in children not in care using population-level health review data in Scotland.

## DATA

Child Health Surveillance Programme 27-30 Month Health Review data were available for ~90% of eligible children in Scotland from 2013-2021.

These universal reviews are a holistic assessment of a child's development across a range of domains.



## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

	Care	Non-care
N	3,077	349,606
% male	49.0	48.8
Mean age	28.7 months	28.8 months

## OUTCOMES

Binary indicators of a concern in seven domains (see plot), identified by health visitors or the child's caregiver.

## METHOD

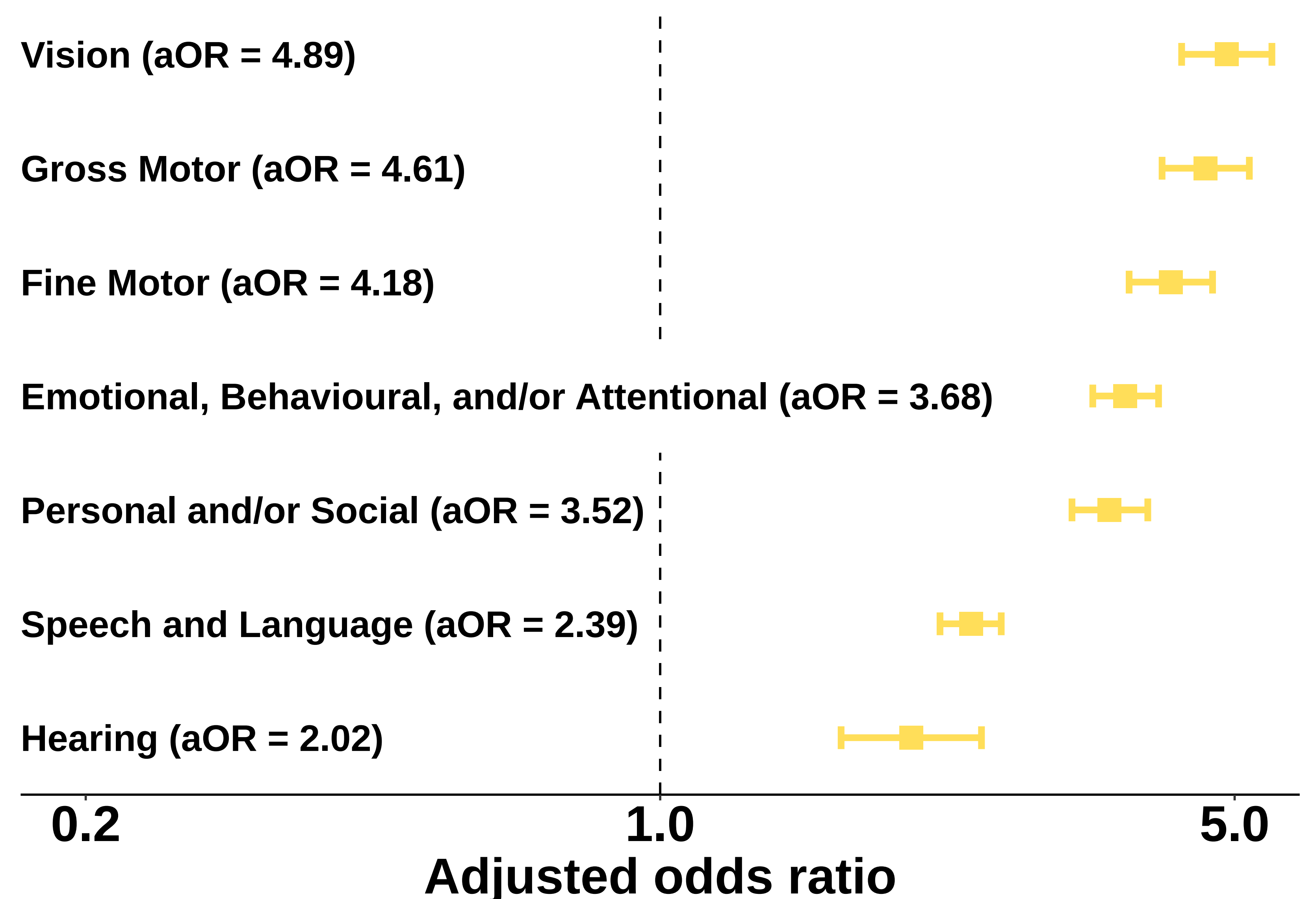
Adjusted odds ratios (aOR) were calculated using logistic regressions adjusted for:

- Age
- Sex
- Area deprivation



## RESULTS

Children in care were more likely to have a developmental issue than children not in care in every domain.



## IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

Young children in care in Scotland are at a disadvantage across a range of developmental domains in the critical preschool period. This has lifelong consequences for education, health, and quality of life outcomes. Policy improvements including increased post-placement support from health professionals are required to address this inequity.

Future work will use this rich dataset to also explore physical health differences and further characterise the wider health of preschool children in care.

