

A photograph of two fluffy, yellow and brown ducklings. One is perched on a grey stone ledge on the left, looking towards the right. The other is on the ledge to the right, facing right. The background is a blurred green and blue, suggesting an outdoor setting near water.

FUNDAMENTAL INFLUENCES ON EARLY DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

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**SOME KEY
(NON-
EXHAUSTIVE)
FACTORS IN
EARLY LIFE**

ATTACHMENT

SENSITIVE CAREGIVING

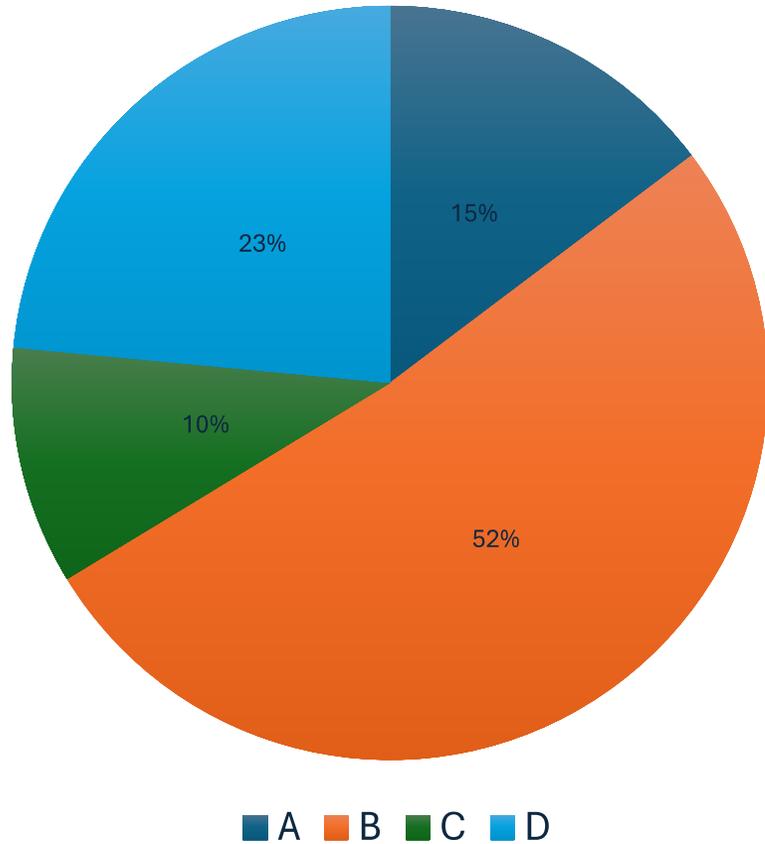


ATTACHMENT

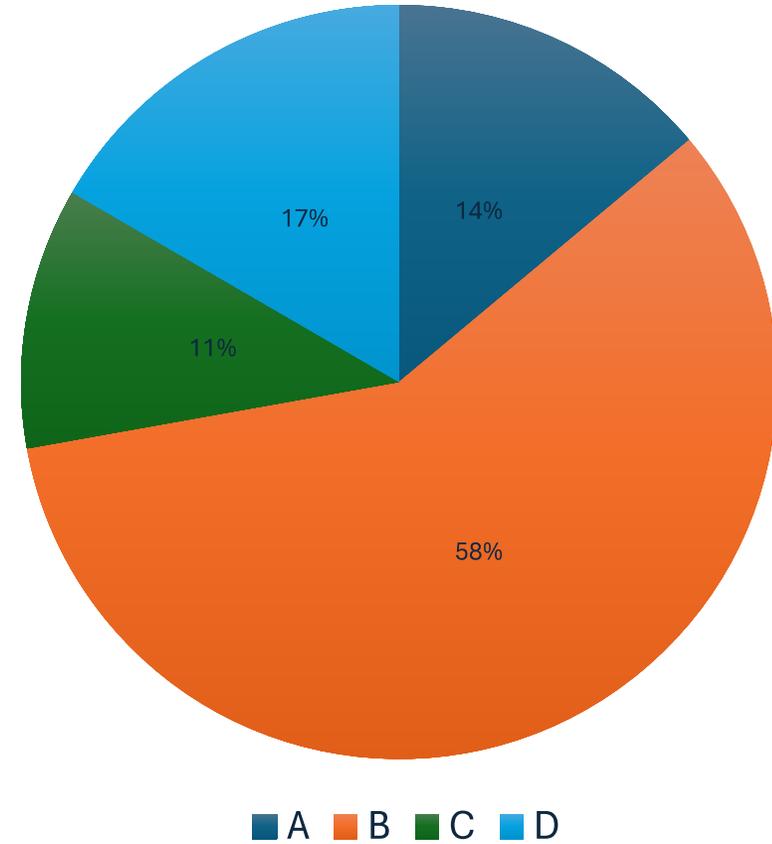
ATTACHMENT IS EVERYWHERE







OVERALL (N = 20,720)



NO SAMPLE RISKS (N = 9,921)

ATTACHMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

Medigan, Fearon et al., 2023
 The First 20,000 Strange Situations
 Psych Bulletin

SOME CORE HYPOTHESES OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

Attachment security-insecurity is caused by the environment

Attachment security is crucial for children's mental health

PARENTAL SENSITIVITY

- Key theoretical aspect of parenting related to attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978)
- Emphasises:
 - 1) Awareness of infant's signals
 - 2) Accurate interpretation of signal
 - 3) Responsiveness to signals
 - 4) appropriateness of response

SENSITIVITY AS A CORE PREDICTOR OF SECURITY

- De Wolff & van Ijzendoorn (1997)
- Overall association of $r = .22$ ($N=1666$), $.24$ for Ainsworth Scale.
- Recent update led by Sheri Madigan and Audrey-Ann Denault (2024)
- 159 studies, ($N = 21, 483$)
- Average $r = .26$ (95% CI $.22, .29$)
- Associations not different for mothers and fathers

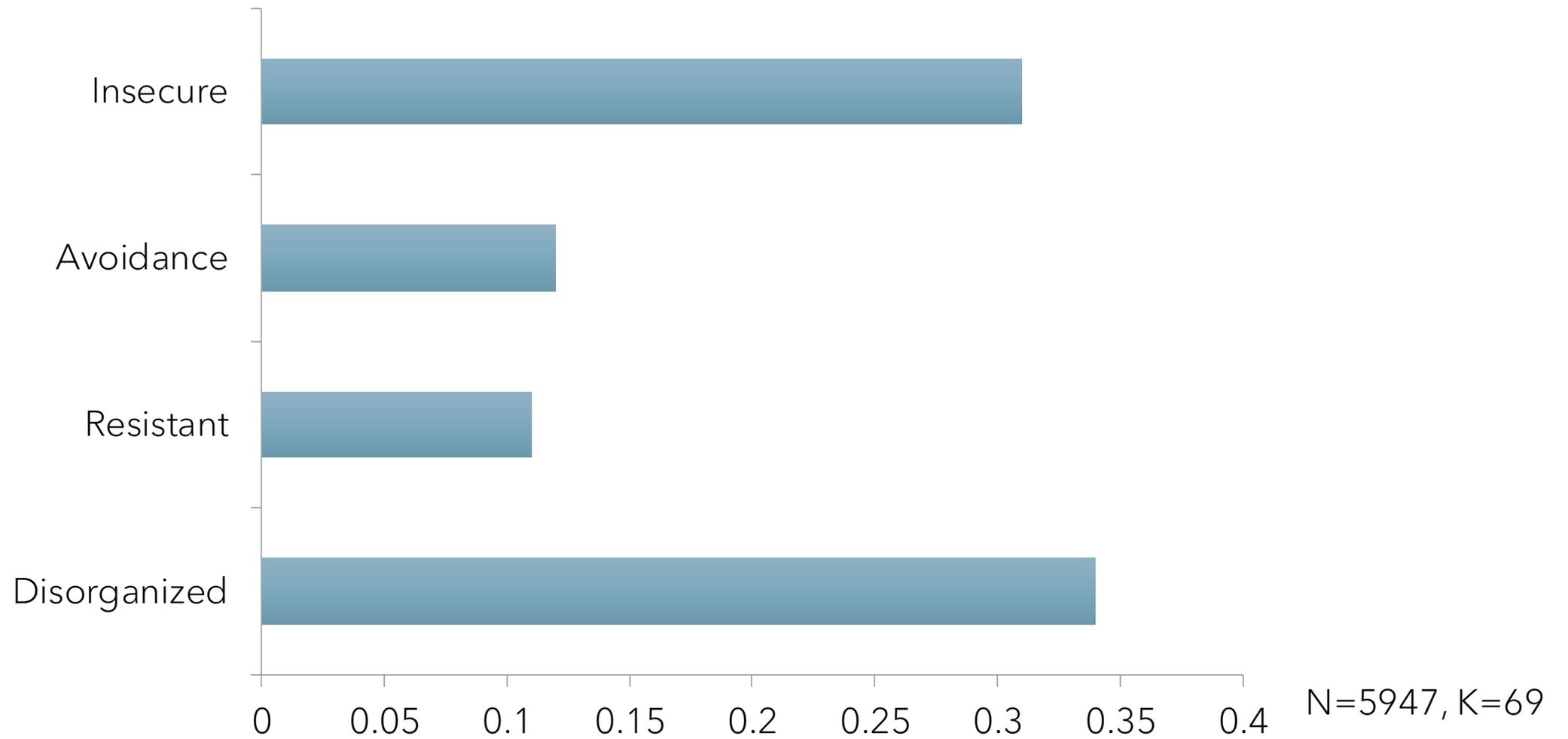
ATTACHMENT AND LATER OUTCOMES

- Three meta-analyses aimed to summarize the overall evidence
- Meta-analysis 1: Children's Externalizing Problems
- Meta-analysis 2: Children's Internalizing Problems
- Meta-analysis 3: Children's Social Competence



ATTACHMENT AND EXTERNALIZING PROBLEMS

- Fearon, R., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., van IJzendoorn, M. H., Lapsley, A.-M., & Roisman, G. I. (2010). The significance of insecure attachment and disorganization in the development of children's externalizing behavior: A meta-analytic study. *Child Development*, 81(2), 435-456.

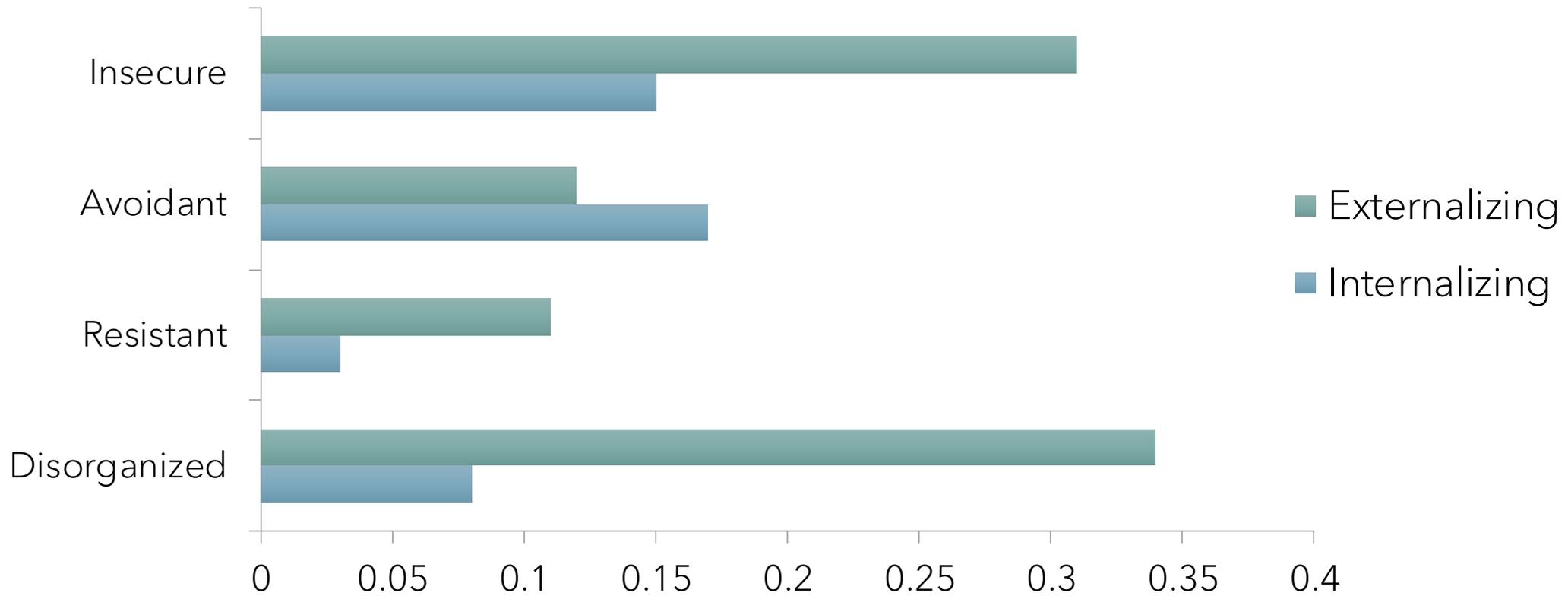


EFFECT SIZES BY ATTACHMENT GROUP



ATTACHMENT AND INTERNALIZING PROBLEMS

- Groh, A. M., Roisman, G. I., van IJzendoorn, M. H., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., & Fearon, R. (2012). The significance of insecure and disorganized attachment for children's internalizing symptoms: A meta-analytic study. *Child Development, 83*(2), 591-610.

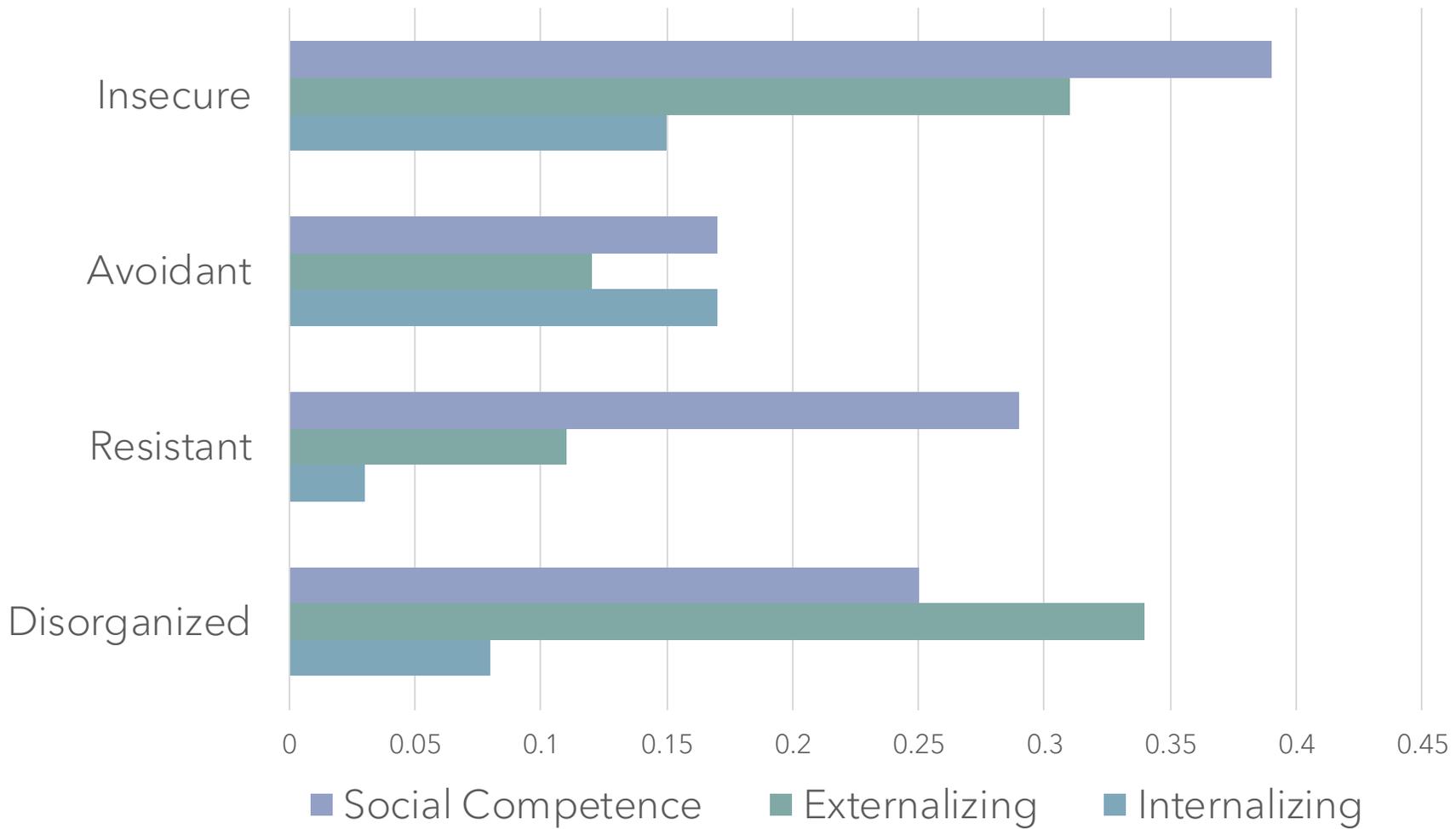


**INTERNALIZING VS.
EXTERNALIZING**



ATTACHMENT AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE

- Groh, A. M., Fearon, R. P., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., Van IJzendoorn, M. H., Steele, R. D., & Roisman, G. I. (2014). The significance of attachment security for children's social competence with peers: a meta-analytic study. *Attachment & human development*, 16(2), 103-136.



GROUP EFFECT SIZES

CONCLUSIONS

Effects of attachment vary by domain

Stronger effects of externalizing problems and social competence than internalizing problems

Broader effects (across more insecure sub-groups) for social competence

Effects are not large – insecure and disorganized attachments are NOT determinative of poor outcomes

Importance of widening the scope to the network of care, how quality interacts with quantity; systems of care

**THE RANGE OF OUTCOMES LINKED
TO CAREGIVER SENSITIVITY**



SENSITIVE CAREGIVING AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Madigan et al., 2019, 38
studies of observed sensitivity
and parent-reported
language development



Average association of r
= .27 (95% CI .21 - .33)

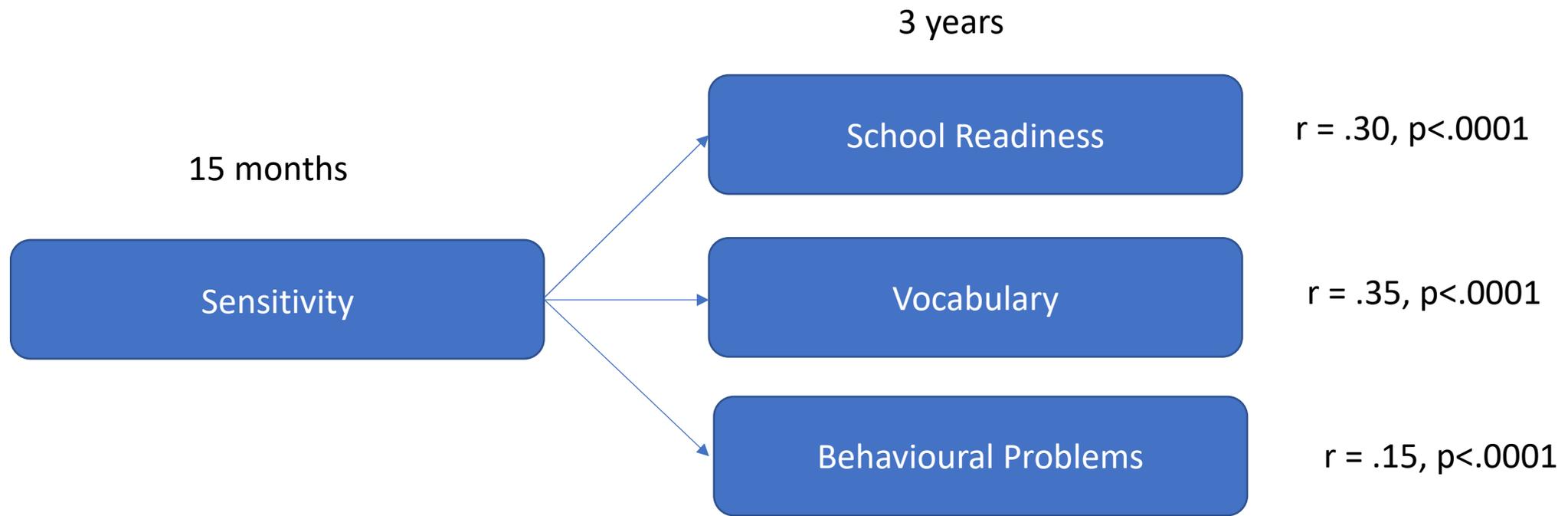
SENSITIVITY AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

Cooke et al. (2022) 108 studies on the association between sensitivity and emotional and behavioural problems

Average effect size externalizing: $r = -.14$

Average effect size internalizing : $r = -.08$

Significantly larger for externalizing problems



N = 1164, NICHD SECCYD

CAREGIVING QUALITY PREDICTS
MULTIPLE OUTCOMES

UMBRELLA REVIEW OF SENSITIVE CAREGIVING

Nivison et al., (forthcoming)

Structured approach to the joint analysis of meta-analyses

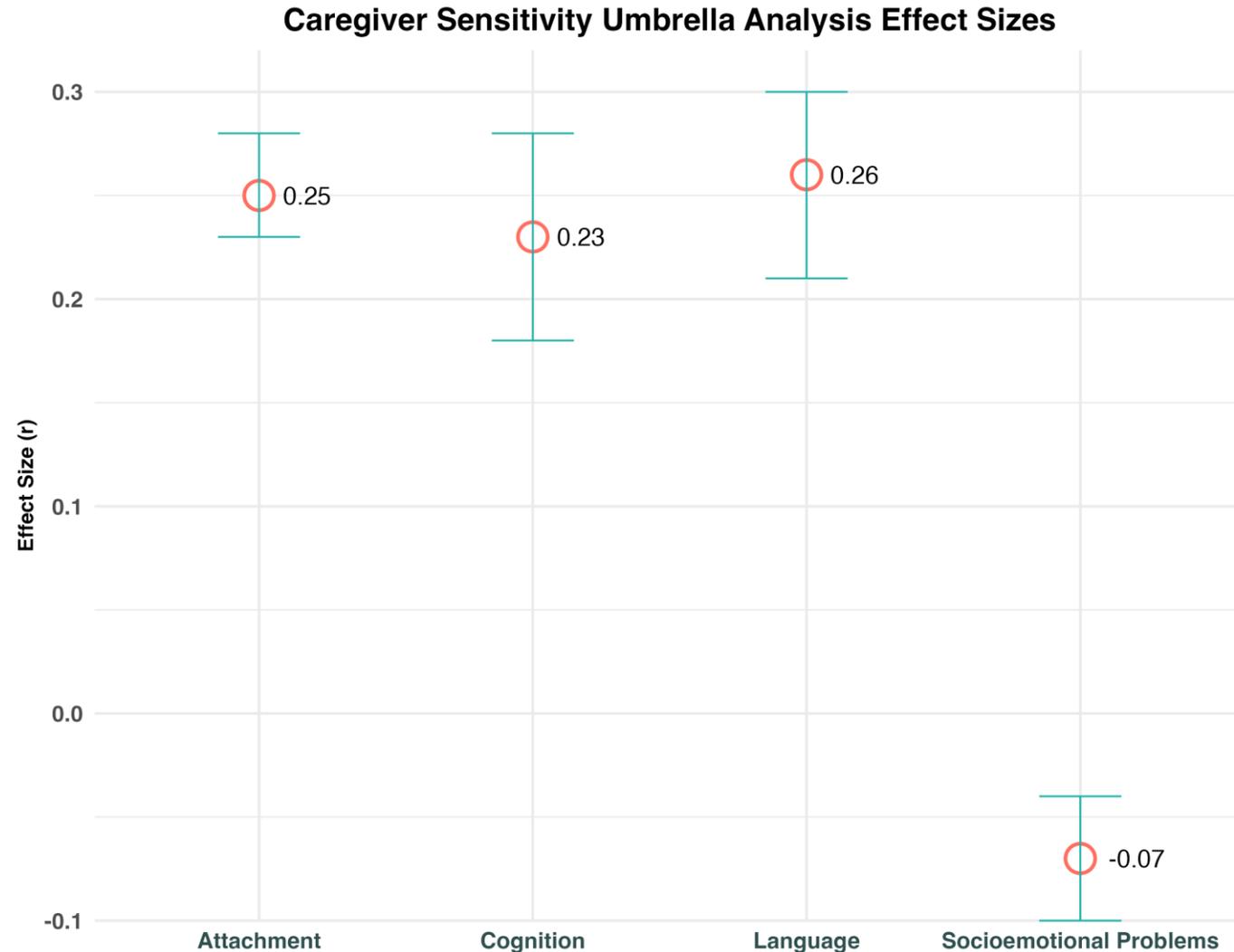
10 meta-analyses on sensitivity and a range of outcomes, yielding 24 average effect sizes

Attachment: N = 37,444

Cognition: N = 4470

Language: 11,136

Socio-emotional problems: N = 33,305



UK NIHR-commissioned systematic review of interventions for attachment (2016)

Wright and colleagues (2016)

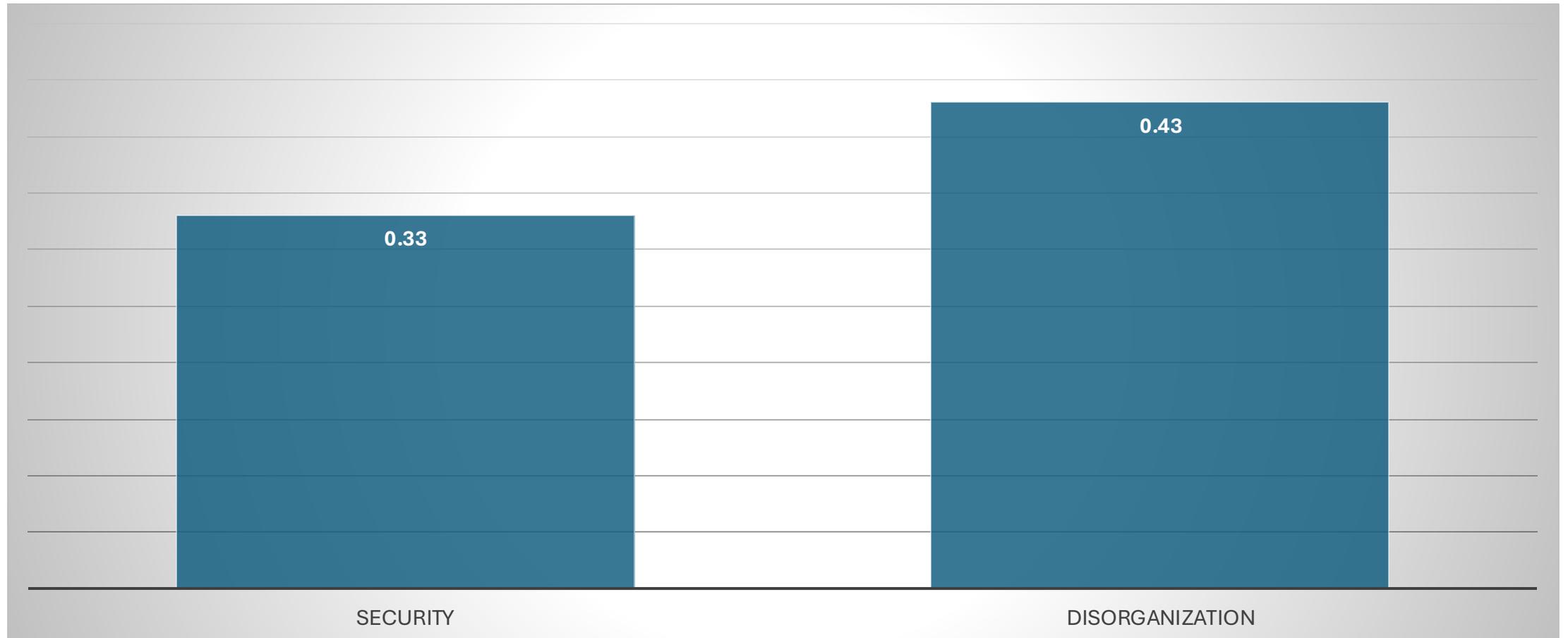
Parent/carer-focused interventions with attachment measured as an outcome

Randomised controlled trials

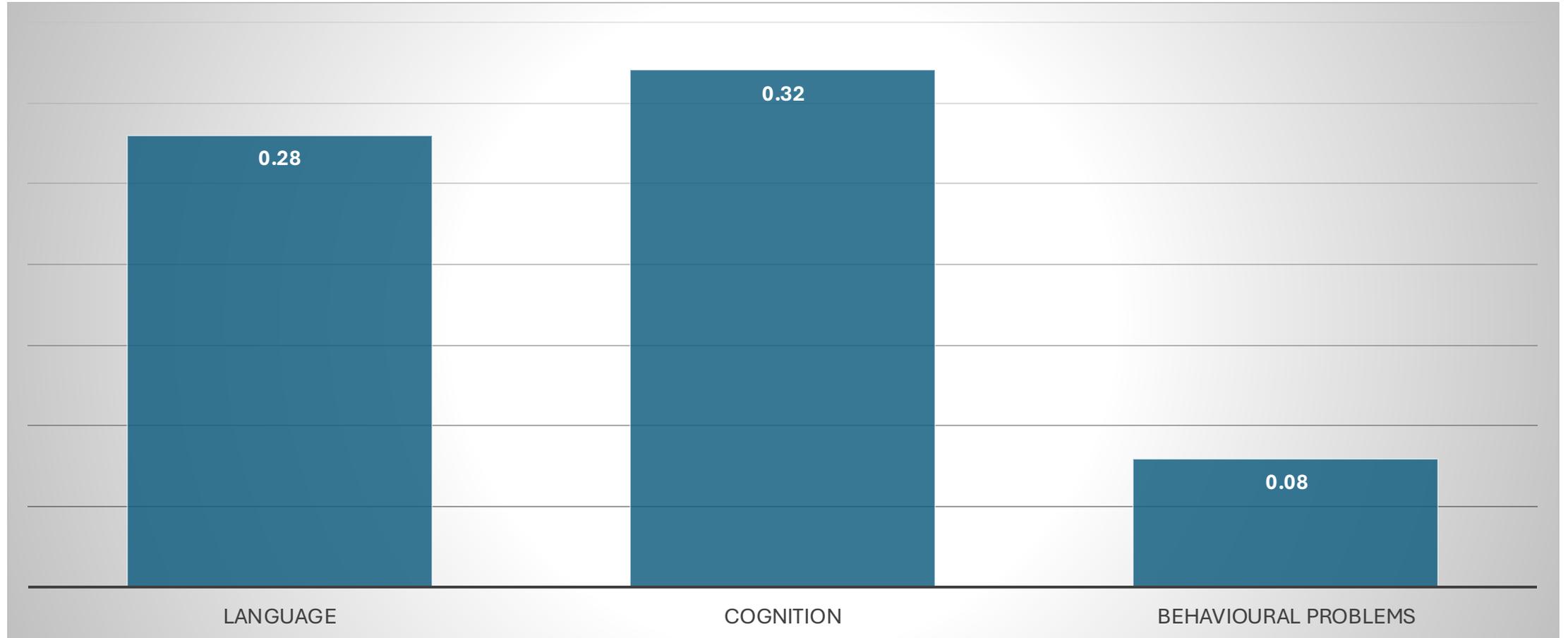
Age <13 years

21 studies met criteria

Intervention effects



Other outcomes



Jeong et al., 2021

NICE Guideline Development

NICE National Institute for
Health and Care Excellence



Sign in

Guidance

Standards and
indicators ▼

Life
sciences ▼

British National
Formulary (BNF)

British National Formulary for
Children (BNFC)

Clinical Knowledge
Summaries (CKS)

About ▼

[Home](#) > [NICE Guidance](#) > [Health and social care delivery](#) > [Children's social care](#)

Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care

NICE guideline [NG26] Published: 25 November 2015



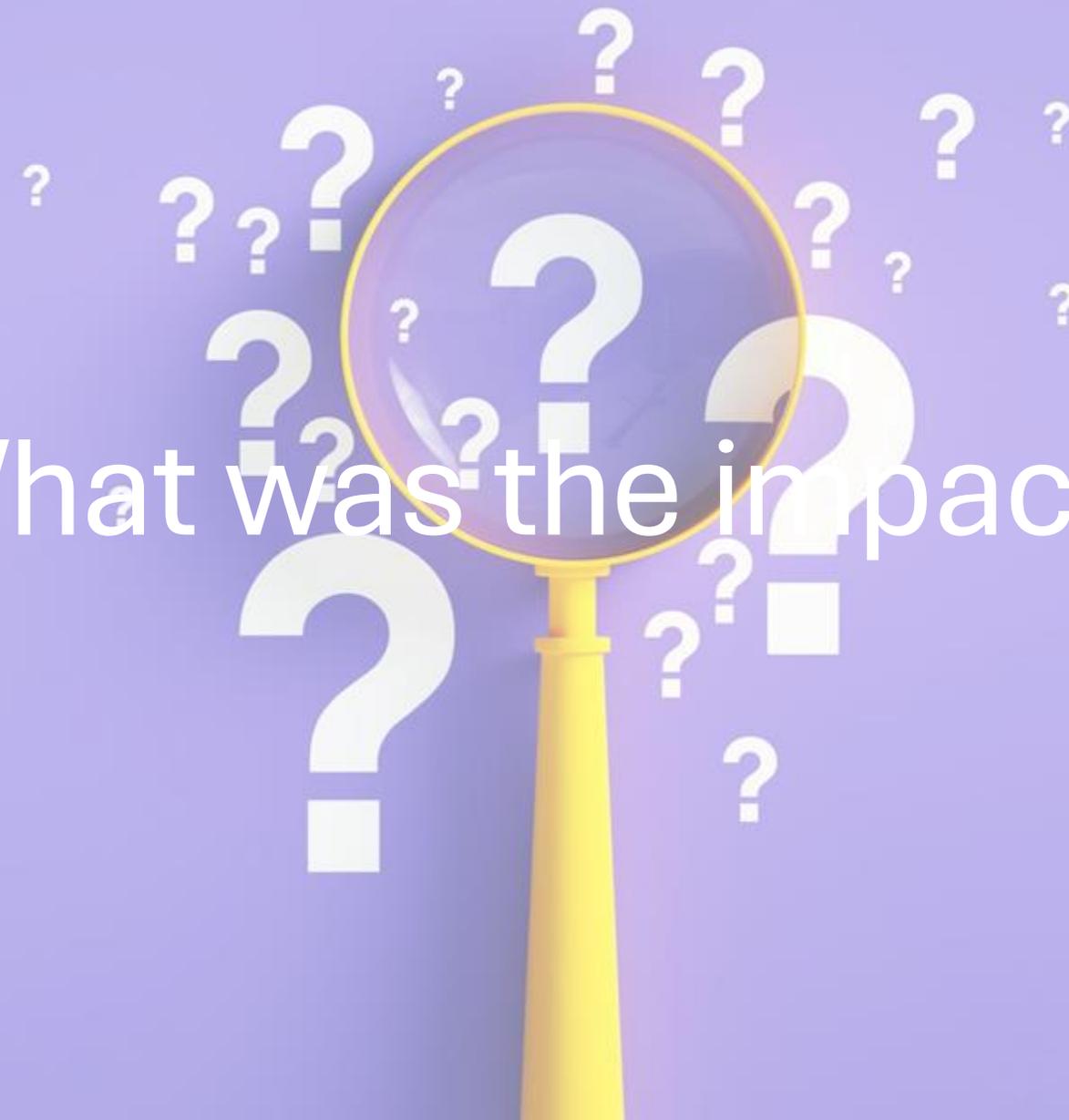
Example
recommendation

1.5 Interventions for attachment difficulties in children and young people in the care system, subject to special guardianship orders and adopted from care

This section covers children and young people with attachment difficulties (or at risk of attachment difficulties) who are in the care system, subject to special guardianship orders or adopted from care; it also covers their foster carers (including kinship carers), special guardians and adoptive parents.

Preschool-age children

- 1.5.1 Health and social care professionals should offer a video feedback programme to foster carers, special guardians and adoptive parents, as described in [recommendation 1.4.2](#).
- 1.5.2 If there is little improvement to parental sensitivity or the child's attachment after 10 sessions of a video feedback programme for foster carers, special guardians and adoptive parents of preschool-age children, arrange a multi-agency review before going ahead with more sessions or other interventions.
- 1.5.3 If foster carers, special guardians or adoptive parents do not want to take part in a video feedback programme, offer parental sensitivity and behaviour training as described in [recommendation 1.4.5](#).



What was the impact?

Wright, Fearon et al (2019) commissioned by NIHR to update the evidence and review evidence for commonly used interventions for attachment

UK-wide survey of routinely used interventions for attachment for 0-<13s circulated to 1279 practitioners

N=625 respondents representing 734 services

Take home findings

- Extremely varied assessment tools used for attachment, very few standardized direct assessments of attachment (though some use of SSP, and AAI for parent reported)
- Somewhat more frequent use of caregiving assessments (Care Index, PIOS, KIPS)
- Evidence-based interventions were at the bottom of the ‘top 10’ most commonly used interventions

TABLE 6 Res

Intervention
Other
Dyadic Deve
Individual Ch
Theraplay
VIG
Child-Parent
Parent-Infan
Circle of Sec
Watch, Wait
Video Feedb
Attachment :

TABLE 8 Number of children with whom intervention had been used

Intervention	Respondents, n (%)	Services, n (%)
DDP	> 5078 (16.7)	436 (59.4)
Theraplay	> 4091 (13.5)	173 (23.6)
ICP	> 3889 (12.8)	168 (22.9)
WWW	> 2839 (9.4)	151 (20.6)
CPP	> 2375 (7.8)	108 (14.7)
PIP	> 1868 (6.2)	86 (11.7)
COS	> 1503 (5.0)	89 (12.1)
VIG	> 1422 (4.7)	72 (9.8)
VIPP	> 842 (2.8)	58 (7.9)
ABC	119 (0.4)	28 (3.8)
Note	Approximate numbers for children and/or caregivers include ‘>’ sign as respondents noted that the number of children they worked with was likely to be greater than the number that they had estimated.	
		11 (1.5)

Evidence for the commonly used interventions

DDP	No RCTs
ICP	No RCTs
Theraplay	No RCTs
VIG	2 RCTs, no attachment outcomes. Positive impact on sensitivity in one trial but not the other
CPP	3 RCTs, all with positive effects on attachment
PIP	6 RCTs, 2 with positive results for attachment, 3 without; 4/5 trials showed improvements in sensitivity
Circle of security	4 RCTs, 3 found no evidence of impact on security, 1 no evidence of impact on sensitivity
WWW	No RCTs

What's the way forward?

- Making evidence more accessible
- Scale-up support for and availability of training and supervision
- Building on existing skills and professional backgrounds – where are the quick wins?
- National curricula and training programmes
- Working with policy makers



Conclusions

Attachment is a universal need children have, and promoting its security is likely to improve wellbeing

Caregiving sensitivity is the main determinant and this appears to apply to all caregivers of children (including educators...)

Sensitivity itself has wider benefits for language and cognition

There are good evidence-based programs to support caregiver sensitivity

The challenge is to make them widely available