

People Living in Place: Circumstances for early childhood development and learning



Stephen R Zubrick

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Overview of talk

A story about:

Part 1: Desirable features for better child development

Part 2: Circumstances that affect early child development

Part 3: Place-based child development: Networks, strategies and opportunities



Part 1

Desirable features for better child development



Influences on child development

Prompts — things that “drive” child development (may be +’ive or –’ive)

Facilitators — things that “assist” child development

Constraints— things that “hinder” child development



Influences on child development

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- ▶ Expectations
- ▶ Opportunities

Facilitators — things that “assist” child development

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Facilitators — things that “assist” child development

- ▶ Temperament plus “average” intellectual ability
- ▶ Good language development
- ▶ Emotional support

Constraints— things that “hinder” child development



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Constraints— things that “hinder” child development

- ▶ Multiple, accumulative stress (allostatic load)
- ▶ Developmental chaos (frenetic activity, lack of structure, unpredictability)
- ▶ Social inequality (concentrates developmental resources for some, not others)
- ▶ Social exclusion (limits expectations and opportunities for some)



How developmental influences work

Prompts, facilitators and constraints

- ▶ Occur close to the child
- ▶ Fairly regularly
- ▶ Over extended time
- ▶ Involve reciprocal change (as the child changes, *others* change!)



What develops?

Key child capabilities (strengths):

Emotional regulation

Exploratory behaviour

Effective communication

Self direction

Intellectual flexibility

Introspection

Self efficacy



Early years programs

Features of successful EY programs

- ▶ They target a small range of developmental prompts, facilitators and constraints to address child capabilities
- ▶ No “silver” bullets – a single EY program will have small effects
- ▶ The area (place) creates *multiple* opportunities and expectations for child and family engagement and participation

macro settings (policy, regulatory, legislative),

environmental features (design, facilities, places),

individuals (staff skills, collaborative gain, programme content and delivery)



Part 2

Circumstances that affect early child development



Developmental circumstances

Children and their families are exposed to varying numbers of developmental circumstances that affect the level children start their growth at and how fast they grow



Developmental circumstances

There are known circumstances for poorer child development

These circumstances don't occur "one at a time"

They occur in "batches"

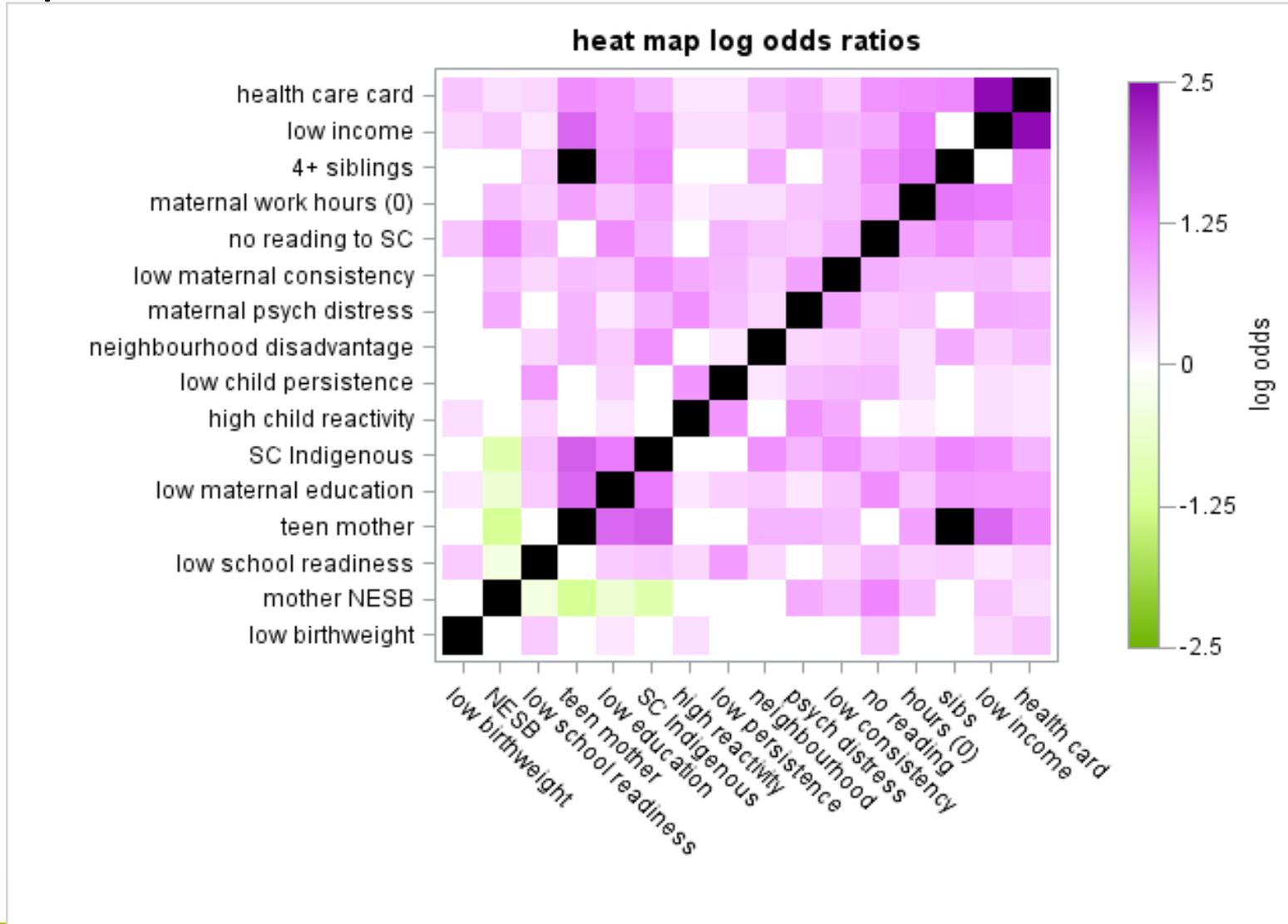
They vary in length, intensity and duration

They vary by place

They offer different ways of thinking about services and policies



Developmental circumstances



Developmental circumstances

Developmentally Enabled 46% (N = 79,520) of WA children

Child: Development is on time and robust

Typical circumstance:

Older mothers, more educated, smaller families, no multiple stresses

Prevalent book reading/book sharing

Place-based needs:

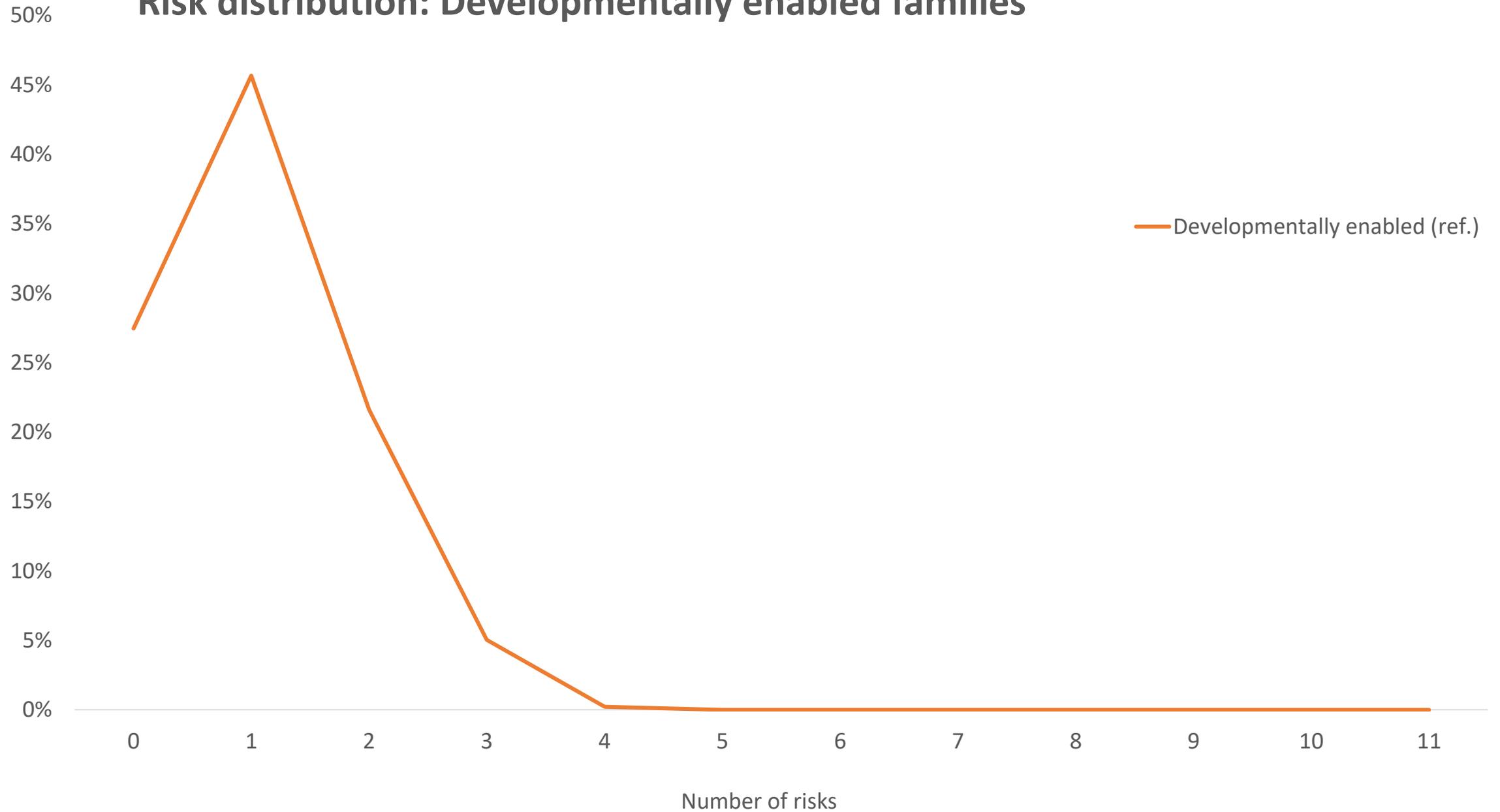
Light-touch universal interventions

Maintain developmental encouragements and opportunities

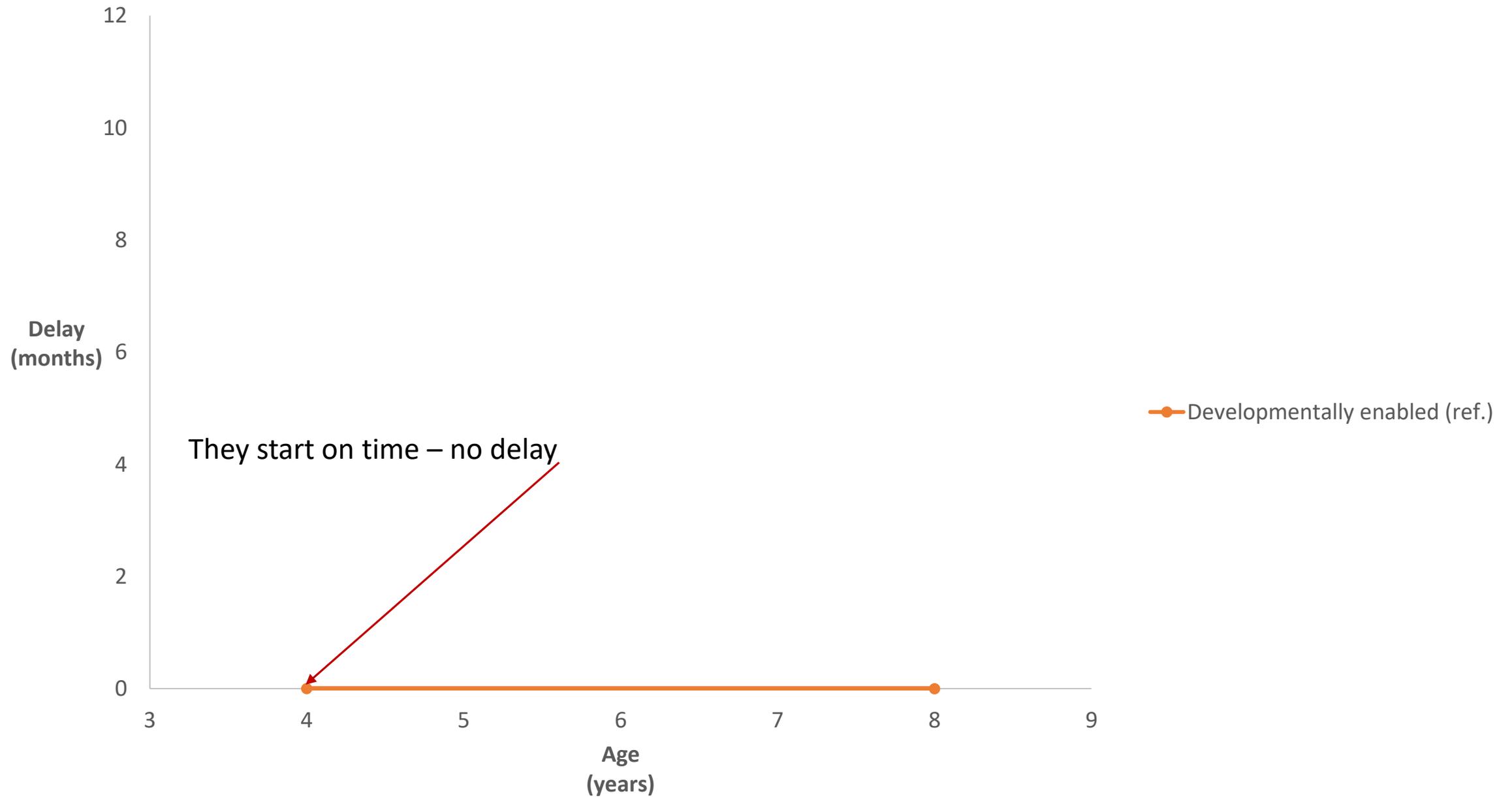
Monitor population progress – grow this group



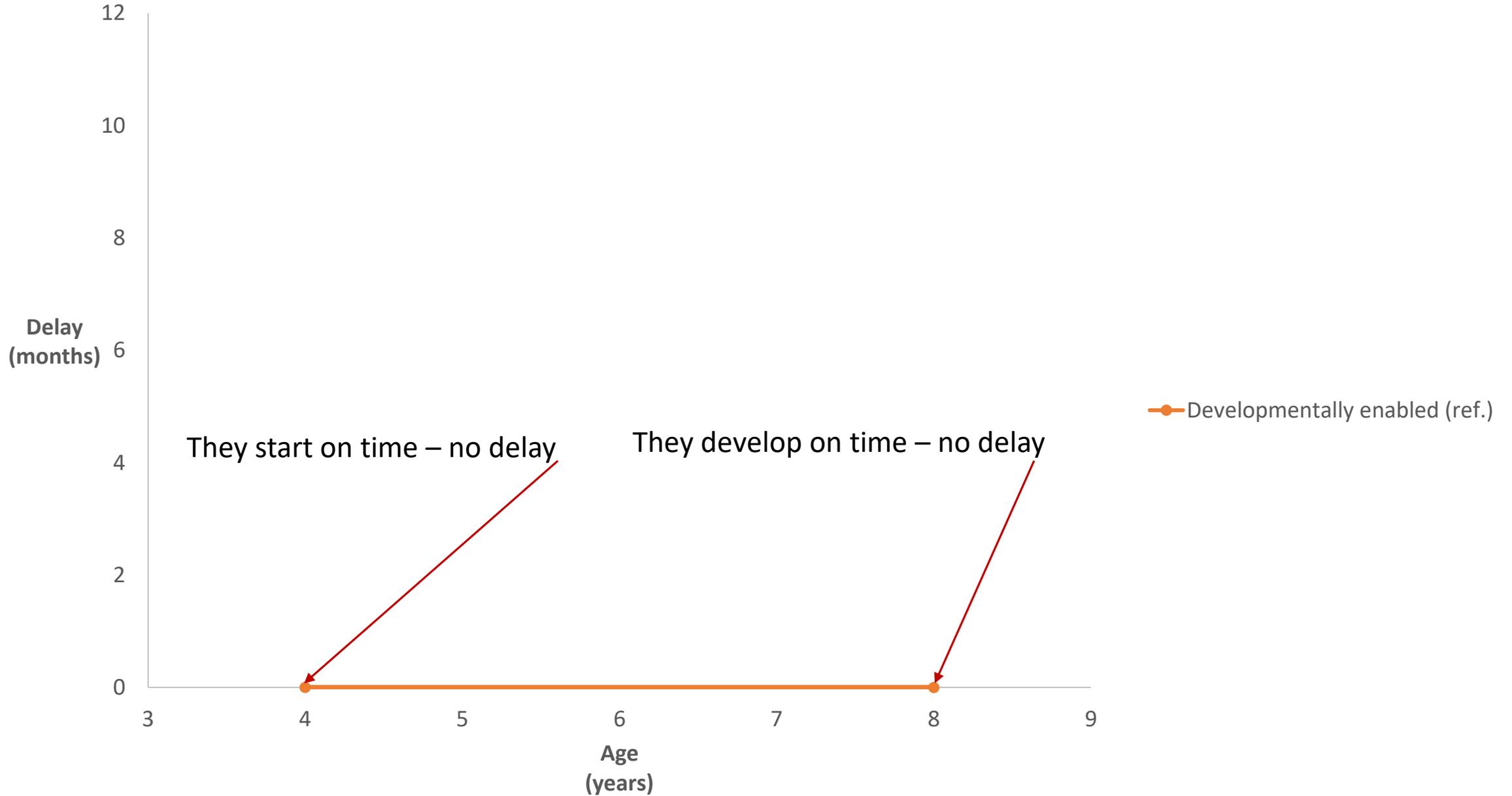
Risk distribution: Developmentally enabled families



Developmental growth from age 4 to 8: Developmentally enabled



Developmental growth from age 4 to 8: Developmentally enabled



Developmental circumstances

Overwhelmed families 10% (N =17,288) of WA children 0-4 years

Child: Development 19 months late at 4 & 14 months late at 8

Typical circumstance:

Very low school readiness

Maternal mental health distress, Very low maternal education, unemployment

Low income, health care card, area poverty

Readily identifiable

Diminished capabilities to use existing services

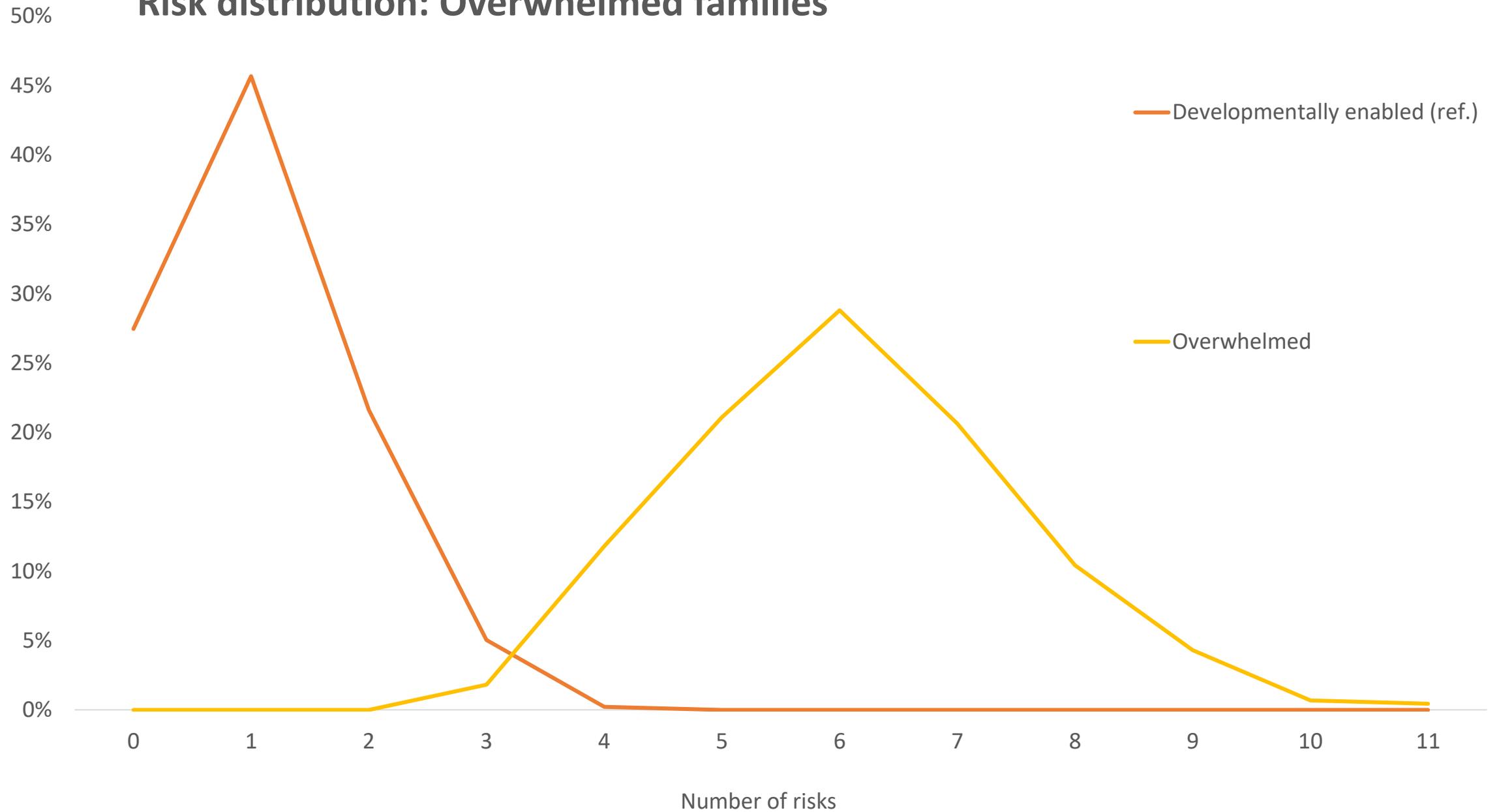
Place-based needs

Proactive service reach is required and help with navigating universal services

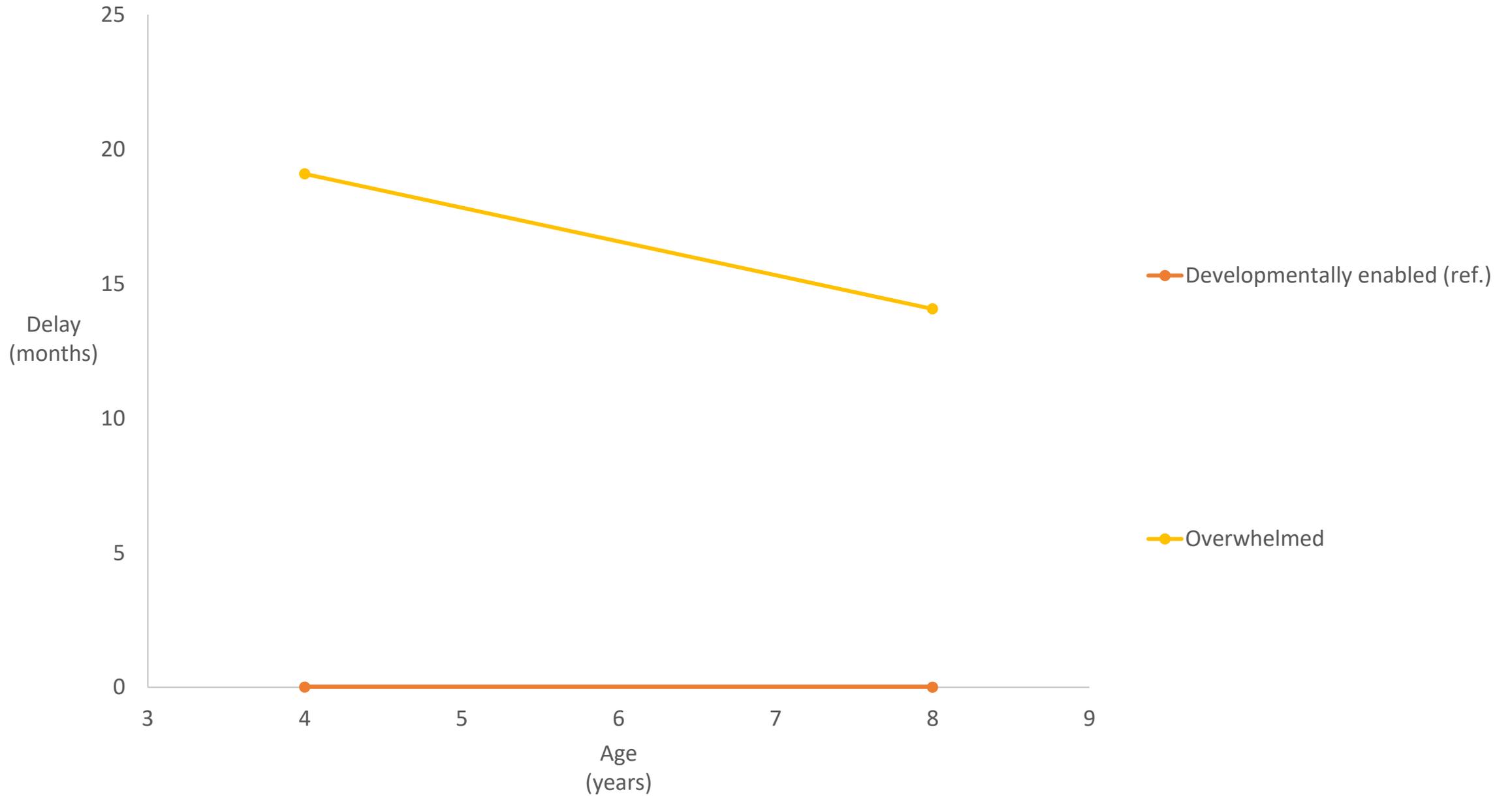
Plus, early, repeated, sustained developmental support – *delivered differently*
(e.g. Child and Family Centres)



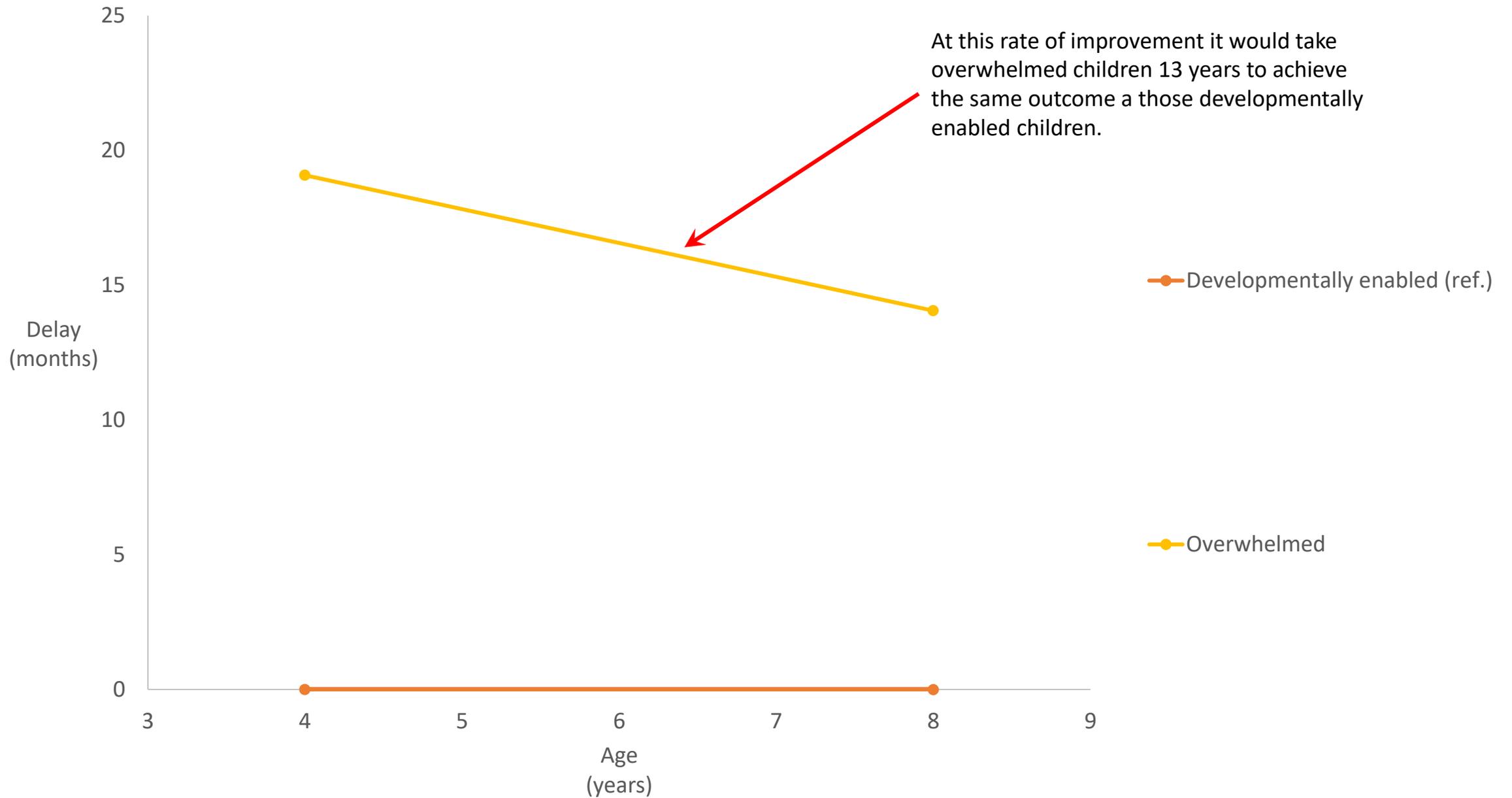
Risk distribution: Overwhelmed families



Developmental growth from age 4 to 8: Overwhelmed families



Developmental growth from age 4 to 8: Overwhelmed families



Developmental circumstances

Developmental Delay 9% (N = 15,558) of WA children 0-4 years

Child: Development 10 months late at 4 and 7 months late at 8

Typical circumstance

low school readiness, high reactive temperament and low persistence

low parenting consistency, maternal psychological distress

low maternal education

Place based needs

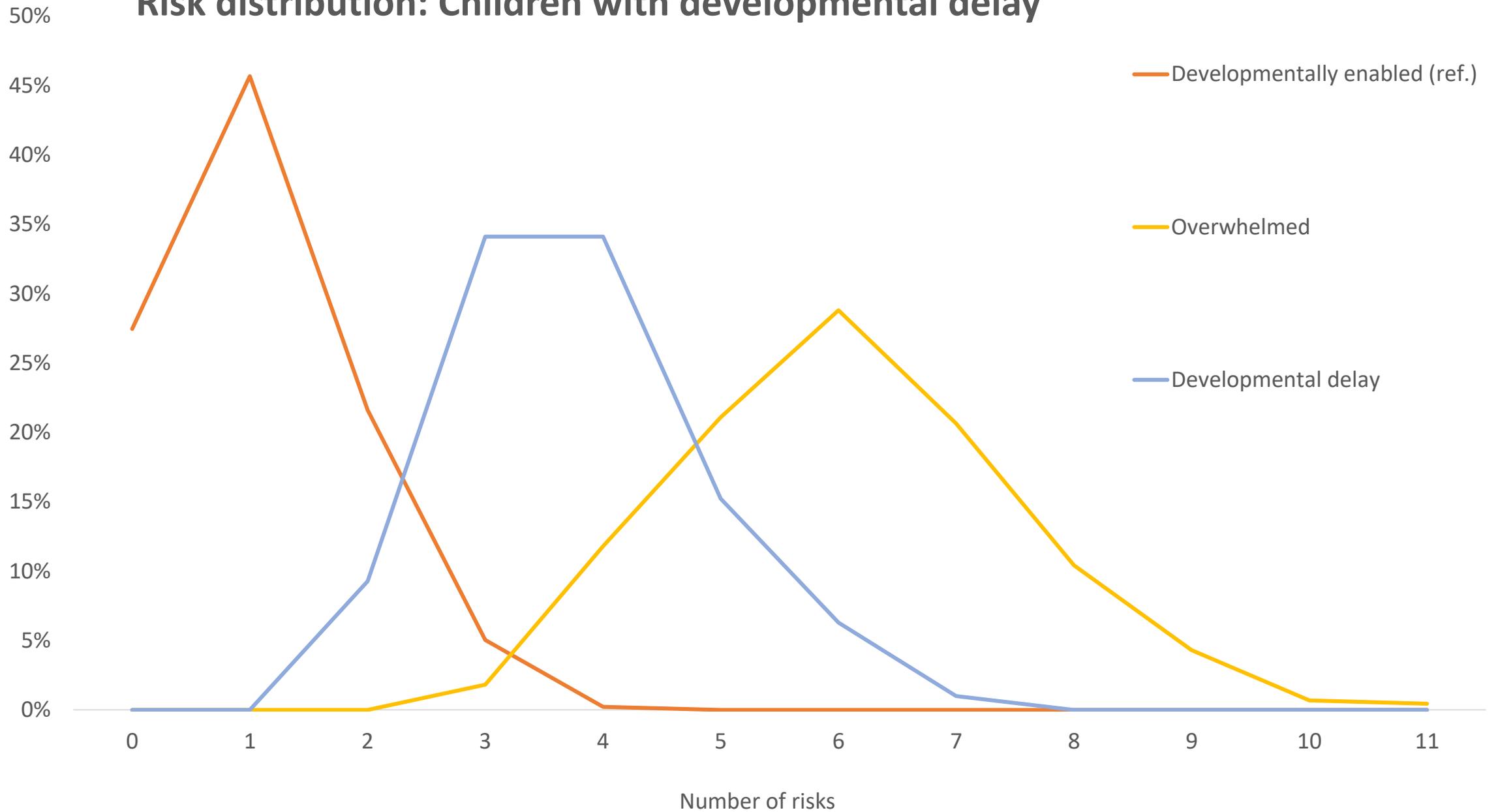
Will enter services at any age

Specialist services, early identification, follow through

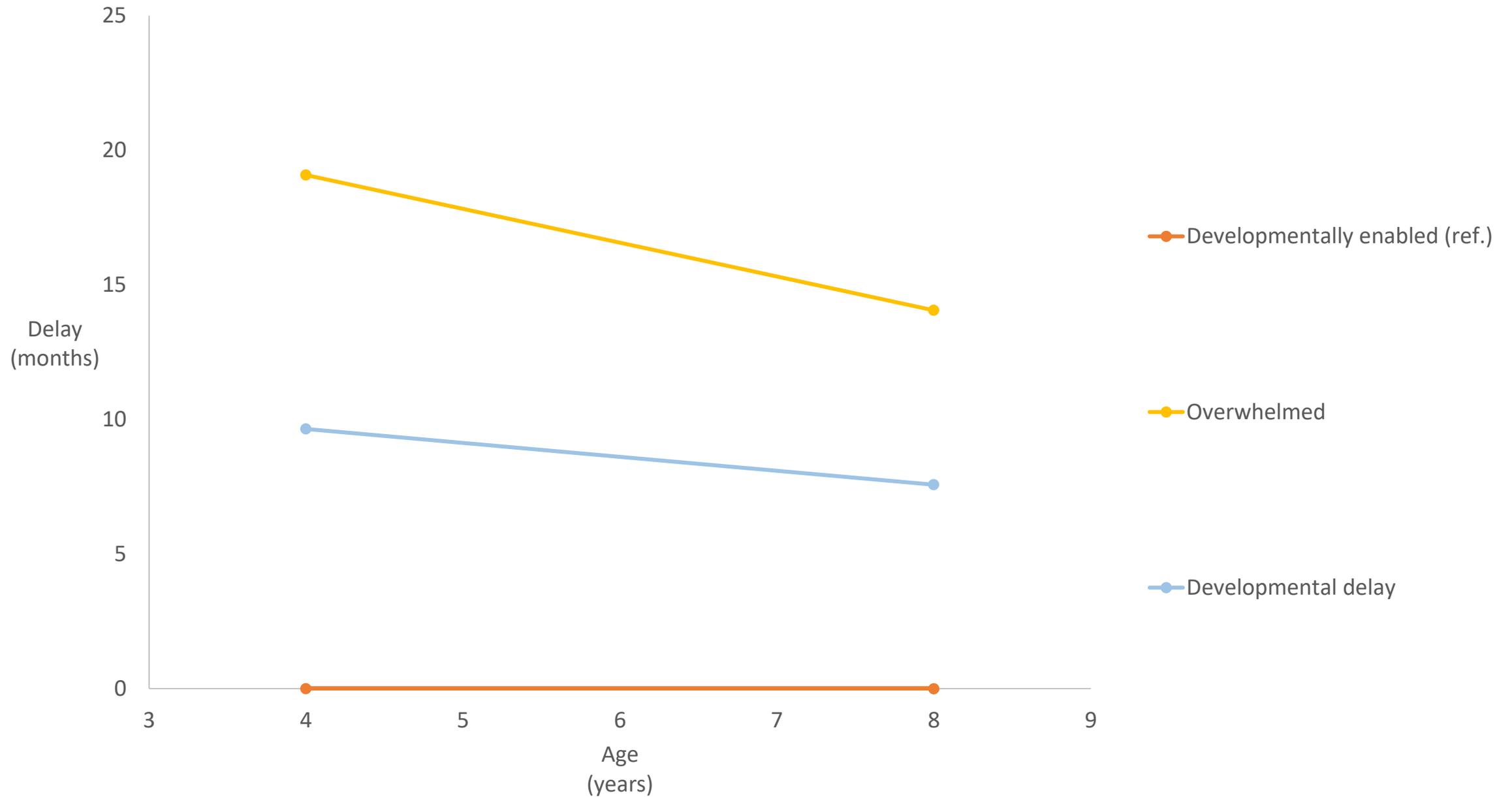
Require regular monitoring and support over extended time



Risk distribution: Children with developmental delay



Child development delay (months) by developmental circumstance



Developmental circumstances

Working Poor families 20% (N = 34,574) WA children 0-4 years

Child: Development 6 months late at 4 and 6+ months at 8

Typical circumstance

parent(s) are employed, 45% in 4th quintile of income (\$600-999 per week)

Cash poor-time poor families

Larger families, low maternal education, disadvantaged areas

Place based needs

Place-based community improvements for children and families

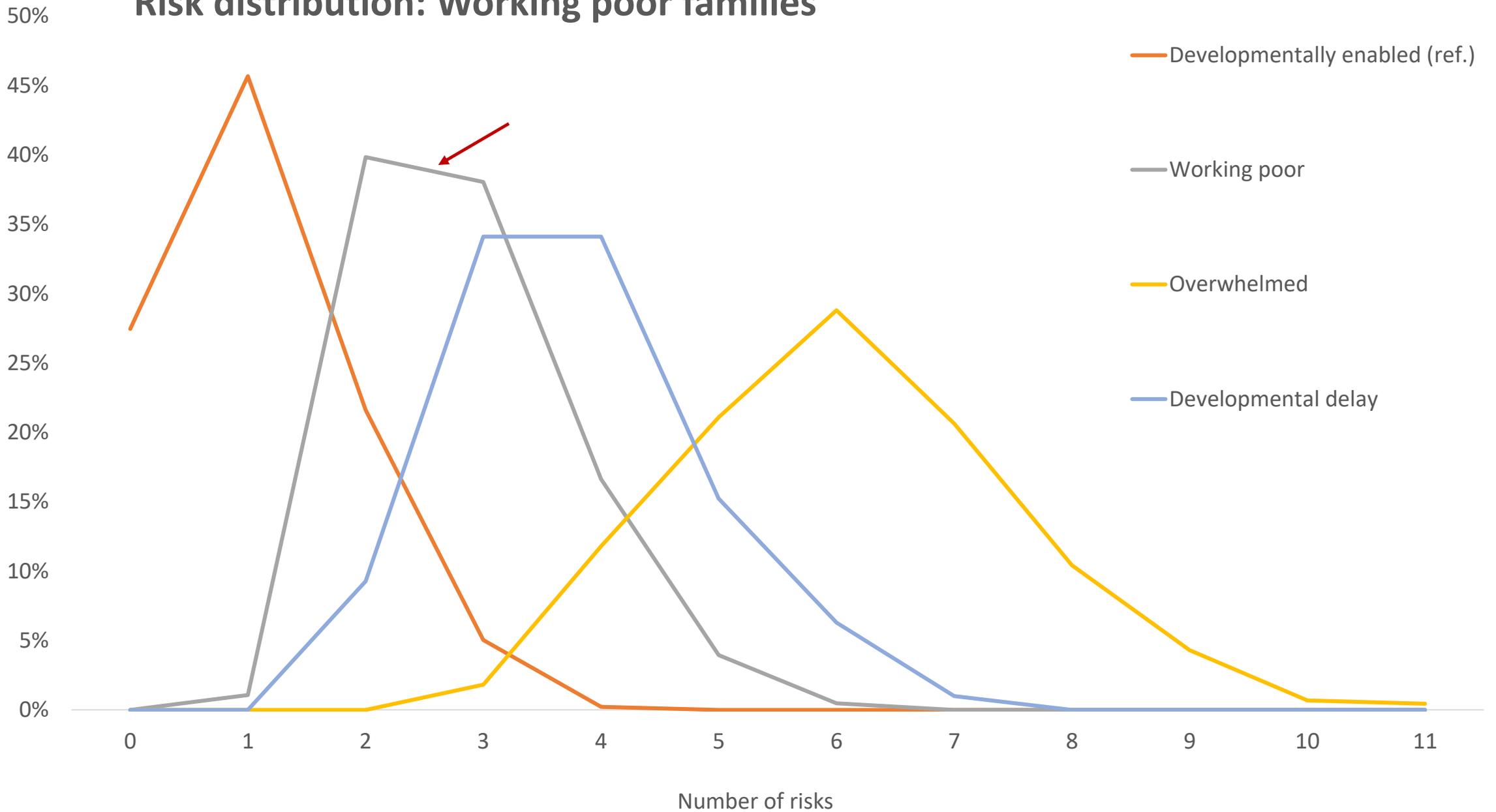
Affordable, high-quality early education and child care

Family friendly workplace arrangements and services

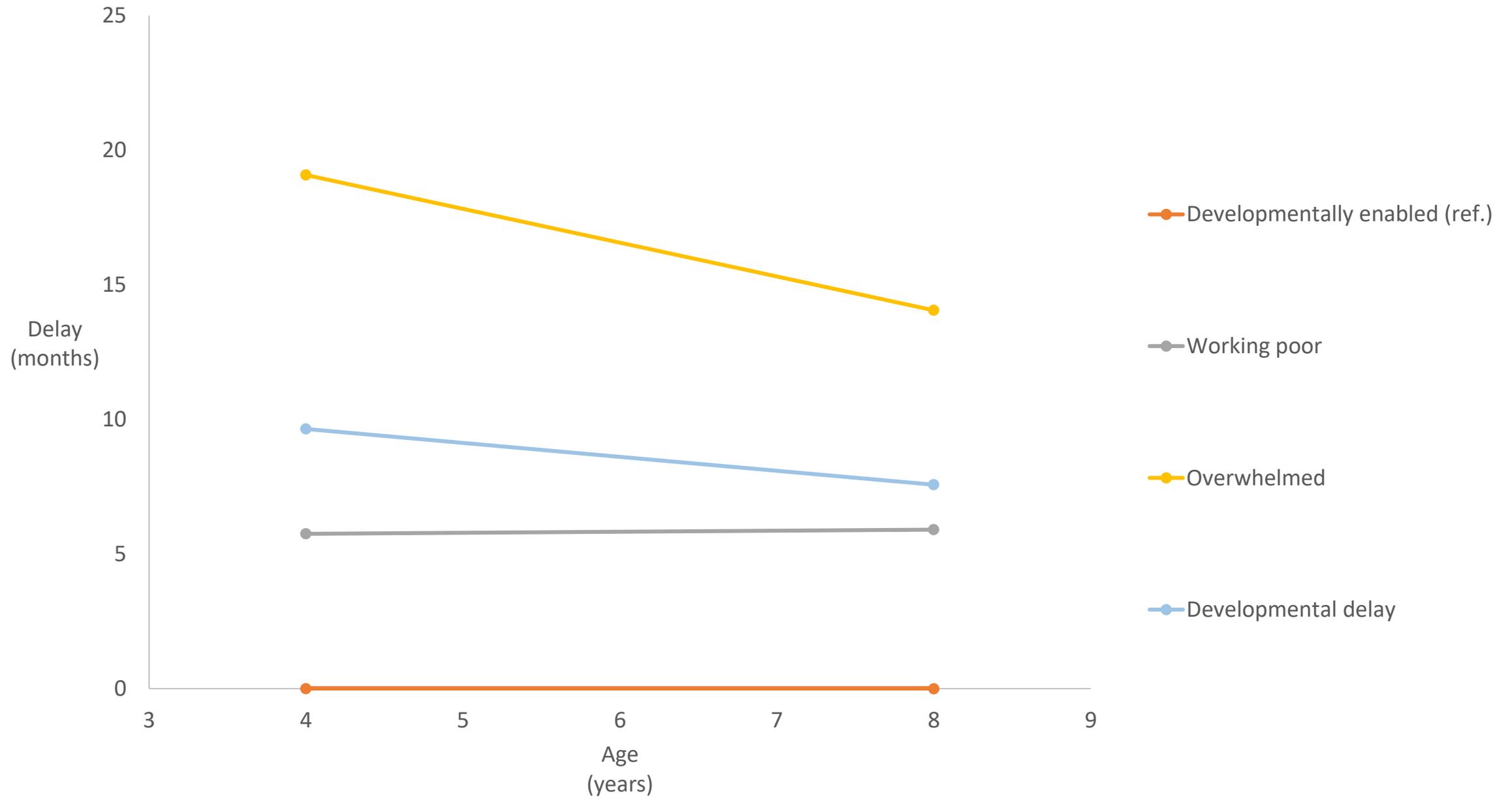
Family benefit increases/better pay/parent education, training



Risk distribution: Working poor families



Developmental growth from age 4 to 8: Working poor families



Developmental circumstances

Low Human Capital 8% (N = 13,830) WA children 0-4 years

Child: Development 6 months late at 4 and again at 8

Typical circumstance

Lowest income quintile **exclusively** – **deep, persistent disadvantage**

Teenage mothers, low maternal education, unemployed

Healthcare card

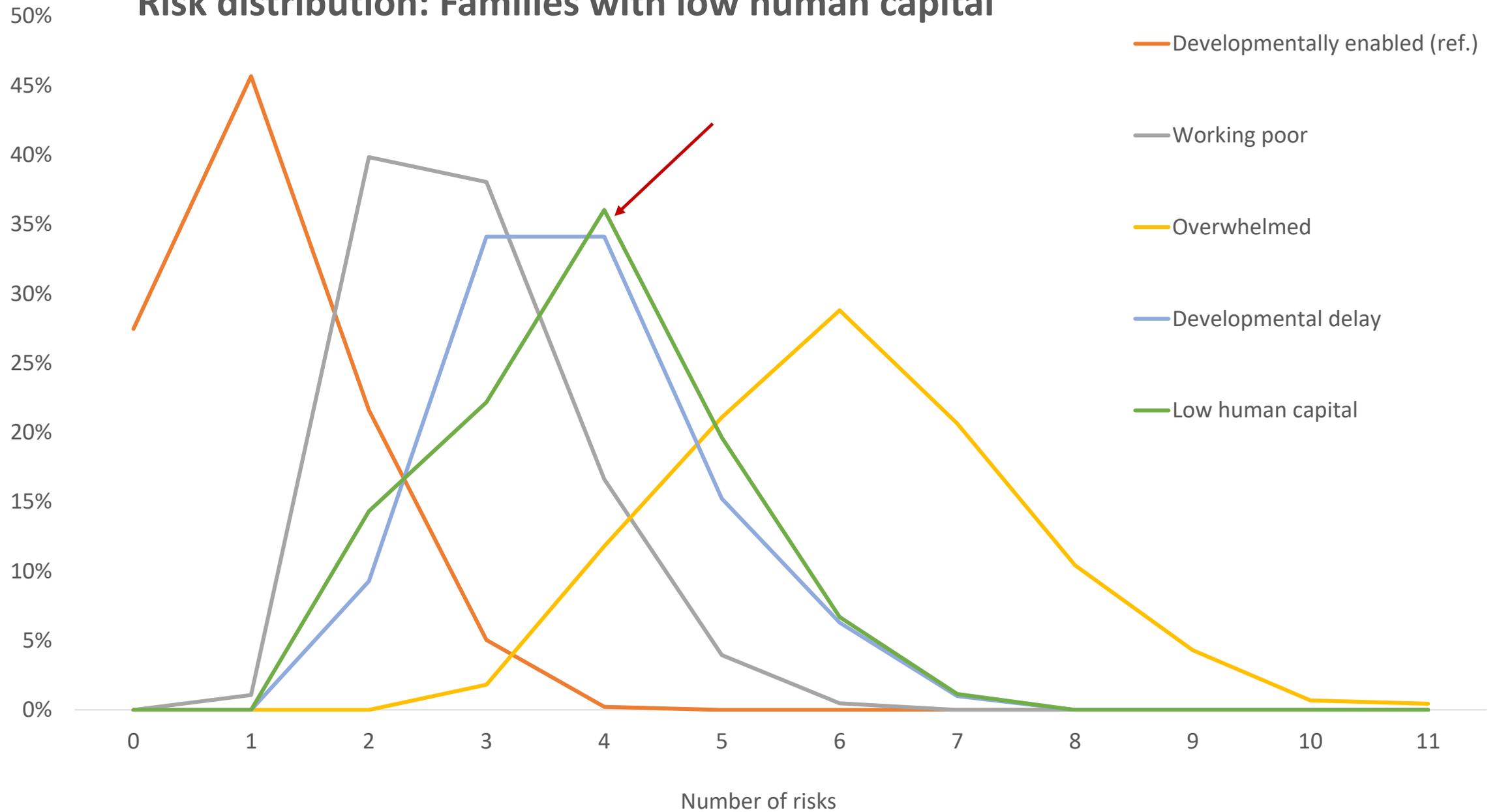
Place-based needs

Family planning

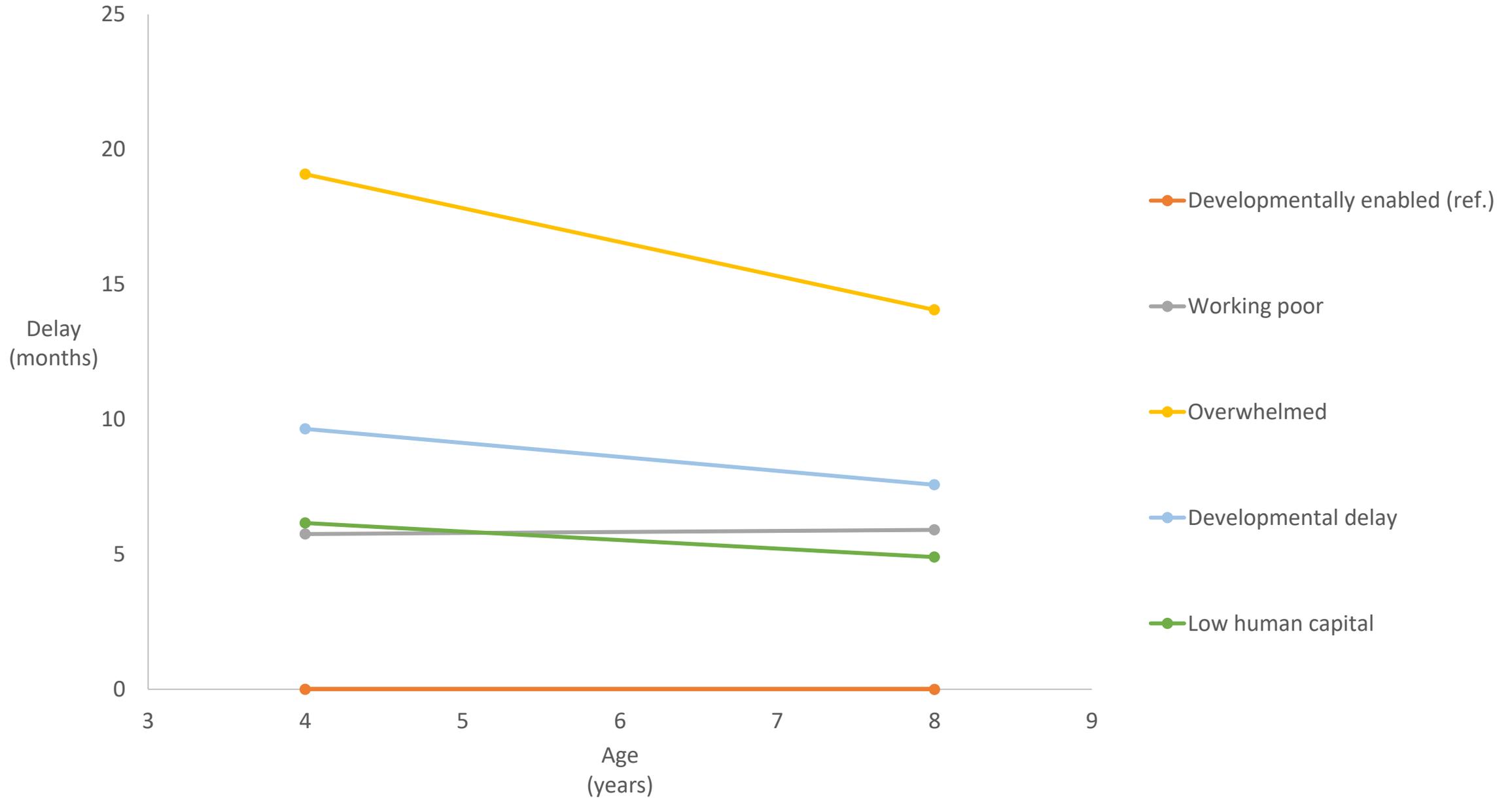
Maternal education/training opportunities linked with enriched early education and child care



Risk distribution: Families with low human capital



Developmental growth from 4 to 8: Low human capital



Recap: Developmental circumstances

172,871 children in WA aged 0-4 as at 30 June 2016

- Developmentally enabled (ref.) 46% = 79,520
- Working poor 20% = 34,574
- Overwhelmed 10% = 17,288
- Developmental delay 9% = 15,558
- Low human capital 8% = 13,830
- Resource poor NESB 7% = 12,101*

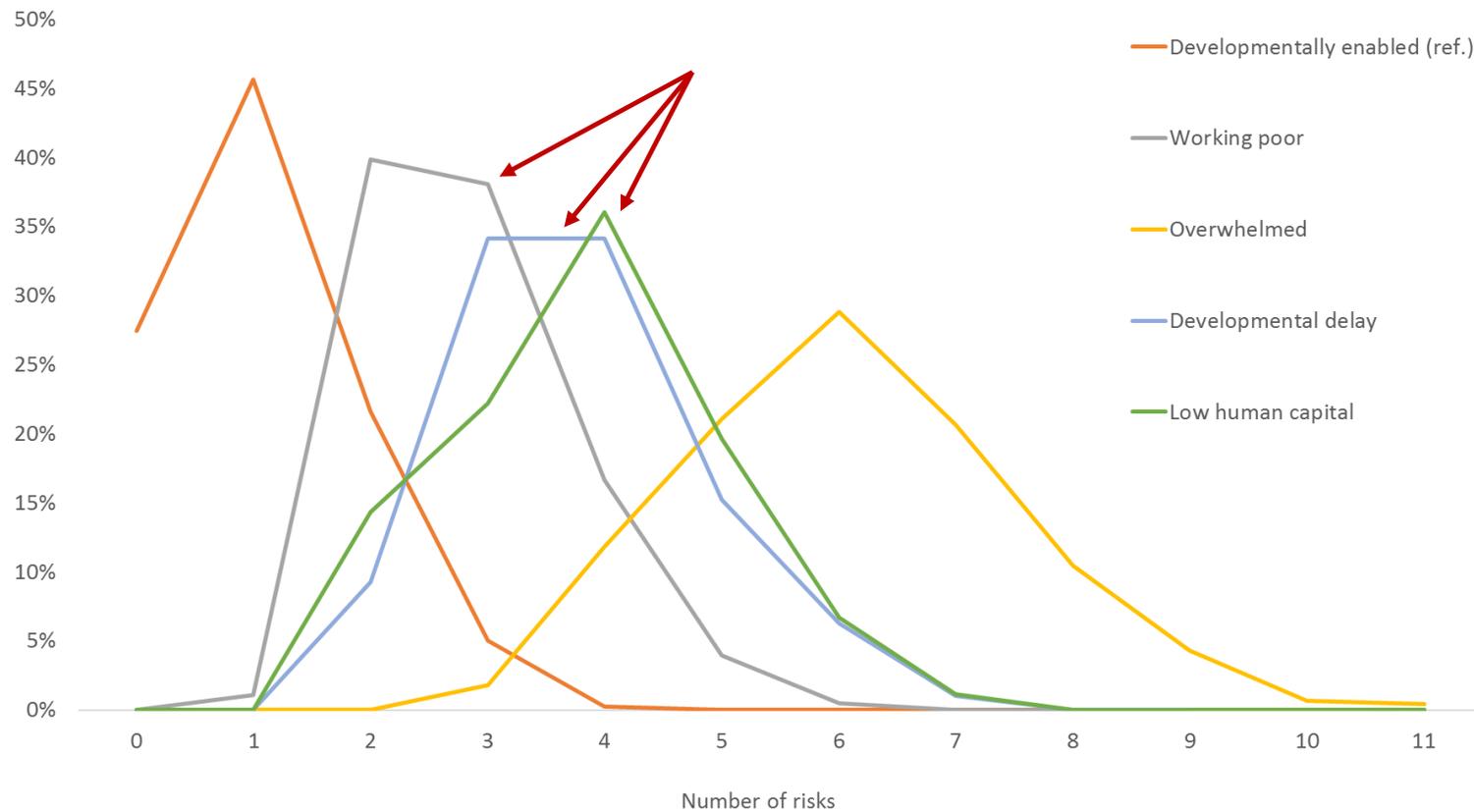
(~36,300 births per year)

*Described elsewhere

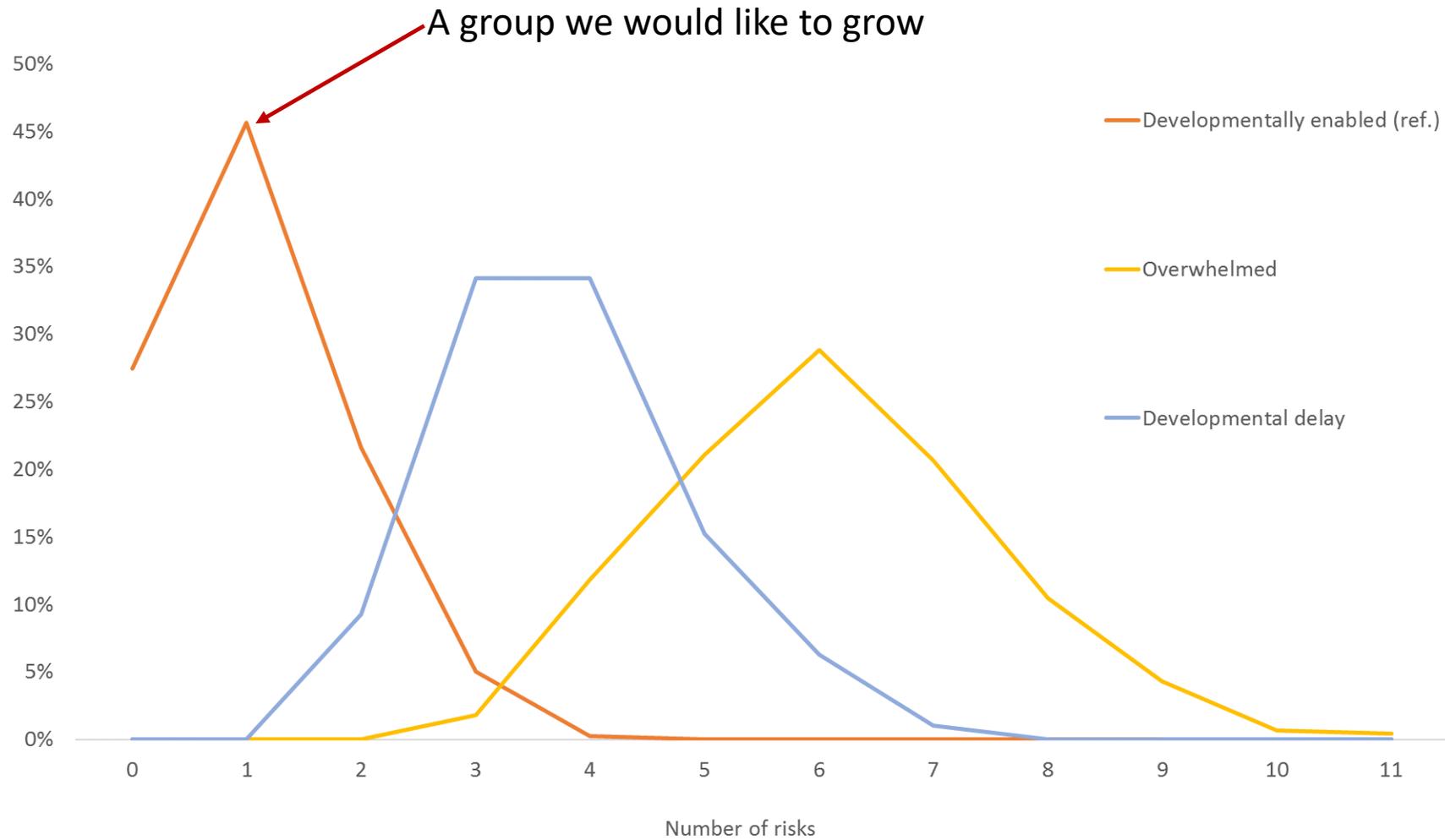


General points to remember

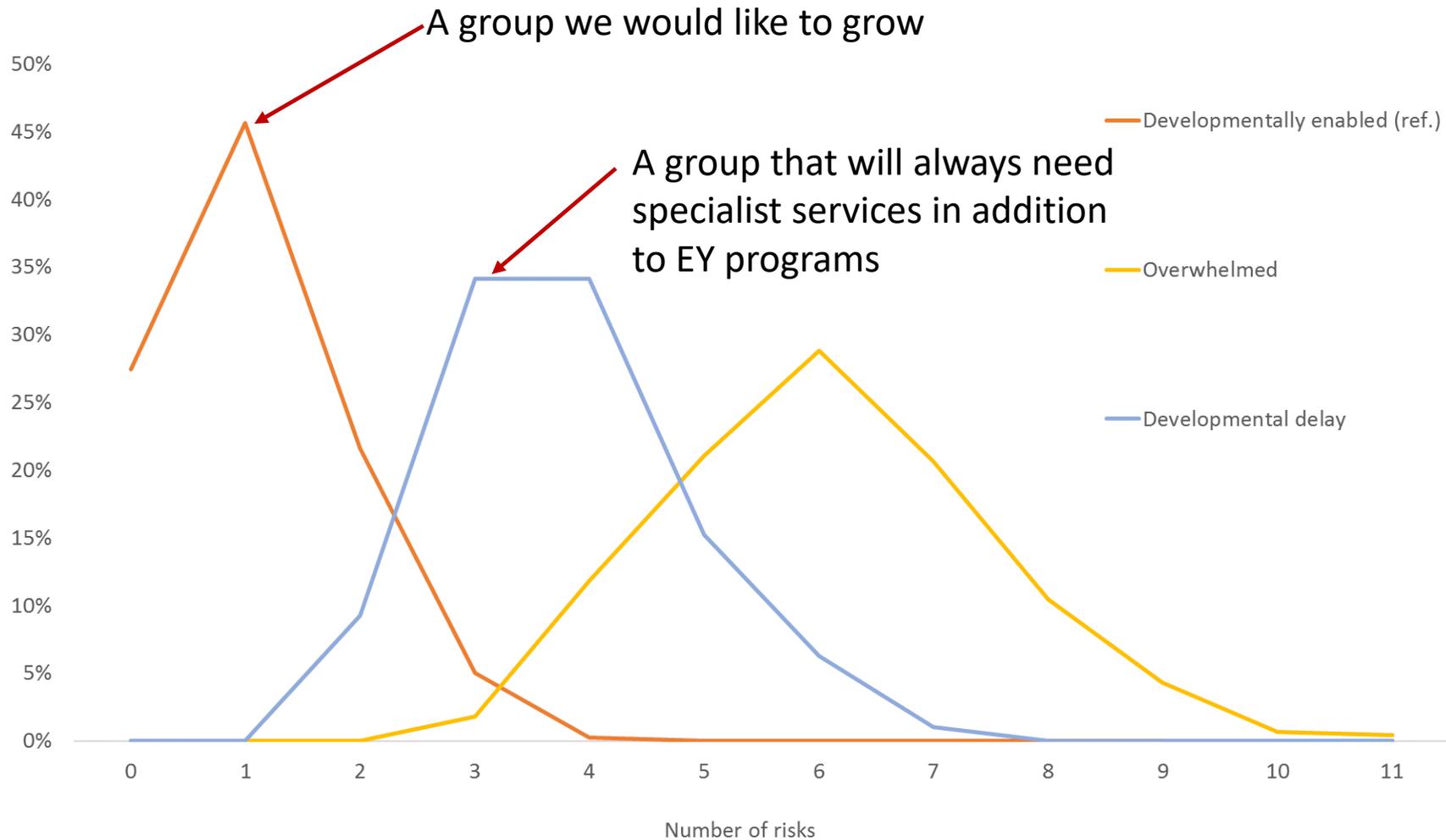
- Merely “counting” risks is misleading
- These circumstances are different



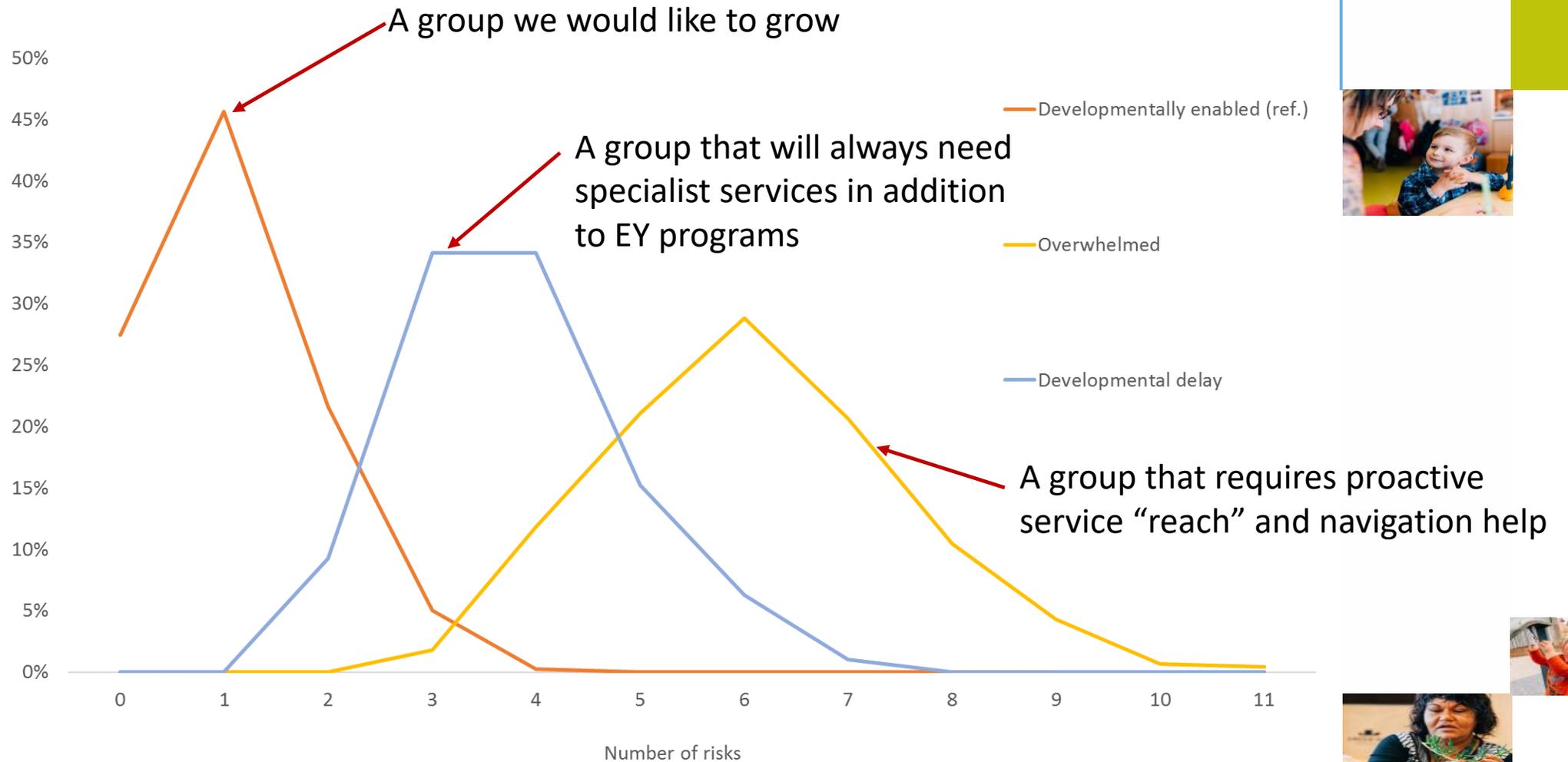
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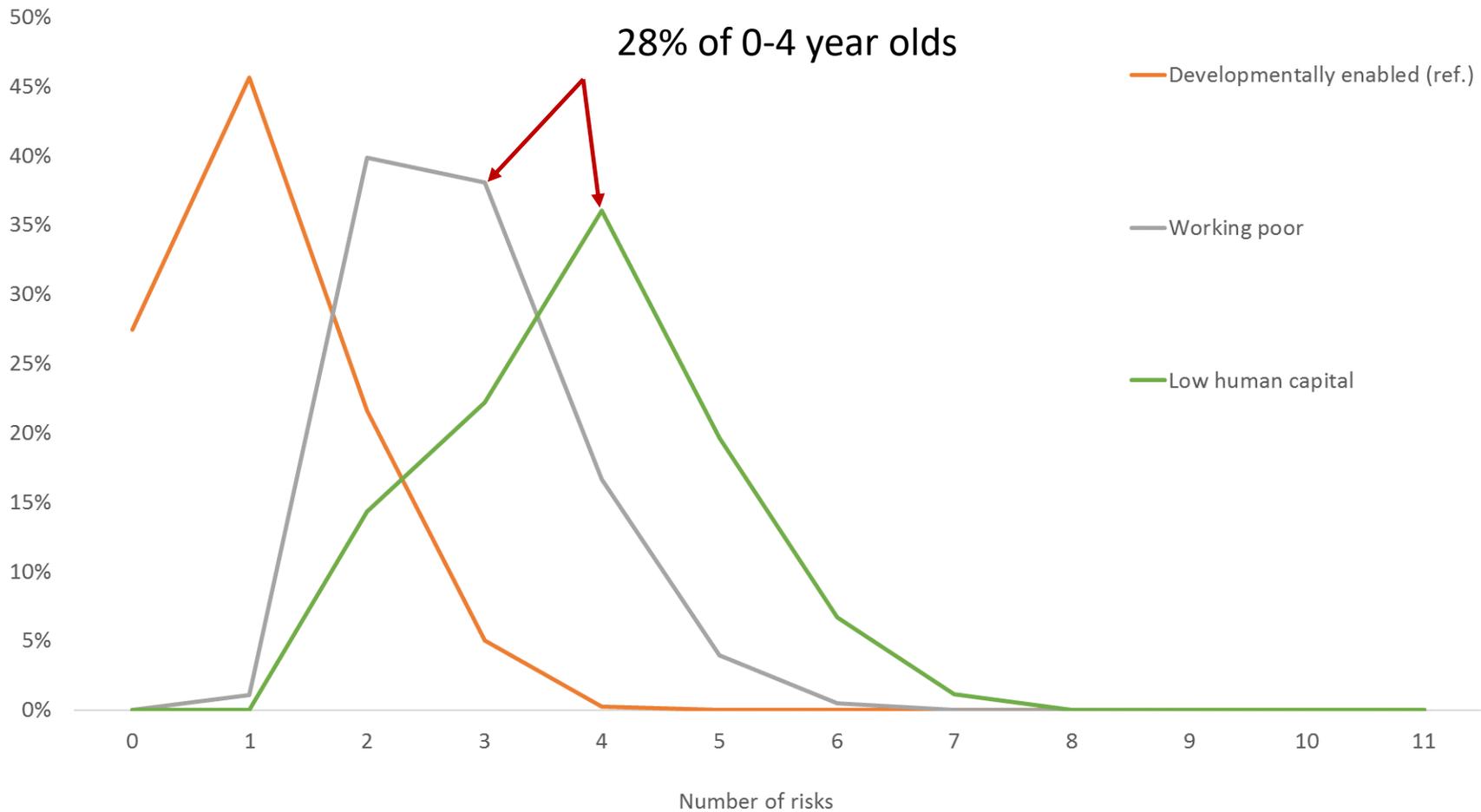
General points to remember



General points to remember

These children are about 6 months behind at age 8 and many will be 2.5 years behind their age peers by the time they reach year 9 in school

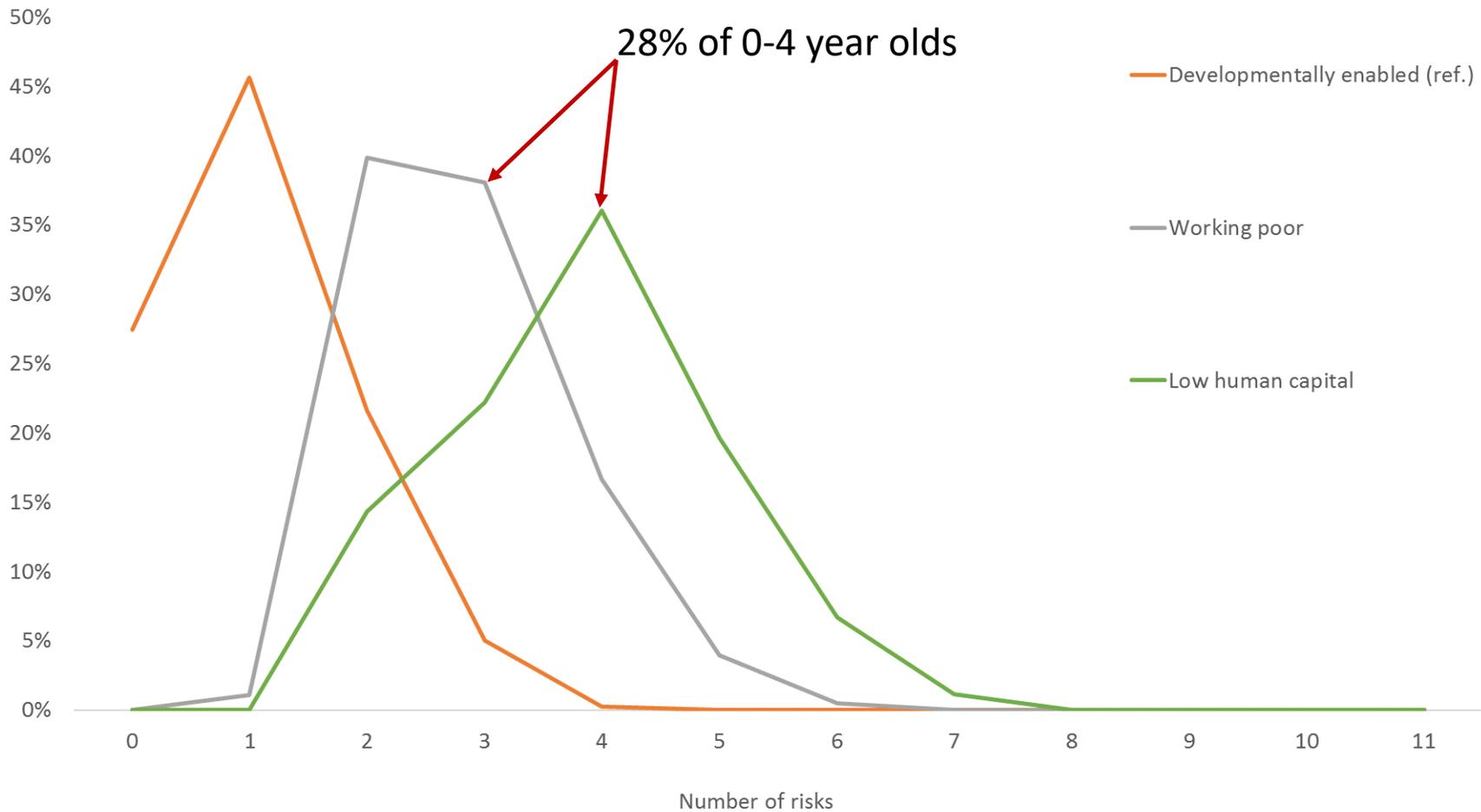
(Taylor, Zubrick and Christensen, under review)



General points to remember

Greatest marginal gains to increase pool of developmentally enabled are with the working poor families and families with low human capital

Network policy strength is needed to do this



Part 3

Place-based child development:
Networks, strategies and opportunities



Early years in place

Network thinking:

The research evidence firmly establishes what works in providing early prevention and child development opportunities –



Early years in place

Universal services that make a difference to places

A place requires at least a “threshold” of investment and activity in these universal services in order to be able to effectively change child outcomes in a place

Children and families need multiple opportunities to engage over time – “one” opportunity will only have a small effect at one point in time for most participants



Early years in place

Universal services that make a difference to places

parenting program(s) and “service navigation” for parents

local mother’s groups, play groups

community development aimed at quality opportunities and facilities for children/families

recreation facilities, open spaces, safety and area enhancements

library programs (inc. book sharing and toys)

social marketing of child development

a focus on engagement and uptake of preschool and K provision



Early years in place

Network thinking:

The research evidence firmly establishes what works in providing early prevention and child development opportunities –

Most intervention effects are very small – No silver bullets!

We don't know how to get these opportunities nearer to the individuals that want or need them – it's about effectiveness

We talk too much about client access rather than service reach

Place-based initiatives are intuitively sensible - can governance arrangements change how things get arranged, located, and close to “wants and needs”?



Early years in place

Network thinking

Networks need to know the developmental circumstances of their **local child population** (how many EY children are in this place? working poor? teen age mothers? overwhelmed?)

When working with a family, be aware of their developmental circumstances: What type of circumstance do they present with?



Early years in place

Network thinking

Whose programs are reaching for the **overwhelmed families**?

Which agency has the best relationship to the family? Can it help them broker/navigate the services they need?



Early years in place

Network thinking

Families with children that may have **neurodevelopmental delay**

The “diagnosis” system (teachers, GPs, child health nurses) is not coordinated and often not well trained

May be a 1-3 year wait for intervention

Networks can respond to this by coordinating the diagnosis system and providing training; and encouraging therapists to ‘let go’ of professional boundaries so that parents and other professionals can provide interventions earlier



Early years in place

Network thinking

For families that comprise the **working poor**:

Networks can respond by enhancing community development activities that build support between families (e.g. looking after each other's children, sharing drop-offs etc.)

Promote universal developmental opportunities



Early years in place

Network thinking

For families that have **low human capital**:

These families will have intergenerational, persistent and deep poverty

Very high proportion of teen and very young mothers

They need a long-term trusting network relationship

Help with navigation, and support for mothers onward education/training



Summing up



Summing up

People living in place(s)

Place-based EY programs and networks

- Intuitively sensible and appealing
- Young children *are* “in place” (home, day care, school, neighbourhood)



Summing up

People living in place(s)

Early years initiatives are here to stay

Families are pushing for these – some are more able than others

Economic, social and civic imperatives drive the EY agenda

- A central driver: the need for paid employment of both men and women and the need for quality child care to replace what once happened at home



Summing up

People living in place(s)

Without strategic delivery, EY programs will entrench inequality
Some families are in a better circumstance to take advantage of them

Place-based EY networks must have 3 “levels” of focus

- Universal, targeted, and macro-policy



Summing up

People living in place(s)

How will the mix of “levels” of EY services be determined?

- Know something about the developmental circumstances of the children and families living in defined places – it’s an essential planning tool – use this knowledge to design a better mix

It doesn’t (and won’t) all be in place – not perfect

- Build it from the ground up
- The mix and pattern of universal services is critical
- It’s not about service access as much as it is about “reach”



Thank you





Supplementary appendix

NESB families who are resource poor
Matching service levels to needs



Developmental circumstances

Resource poor NESB families 7% N=12,101 WA children 0-4 years

Child: starts 27 months late and catch-up is very rapid

Typical circumstance

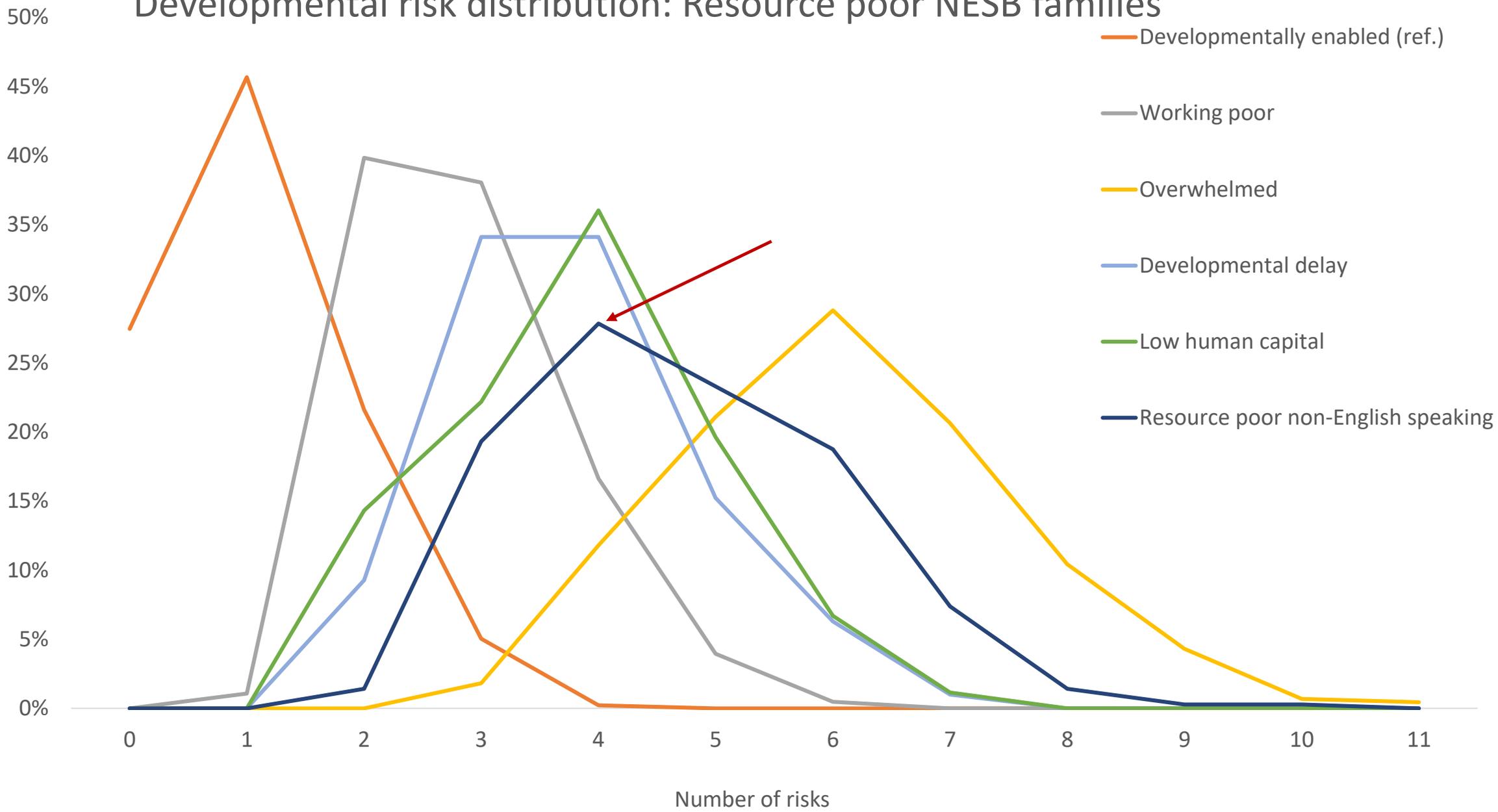
Migrant and refugee background
Maternal mental health distress, Low employment, low income,
Area disadvantage, low book reading

Place based needs

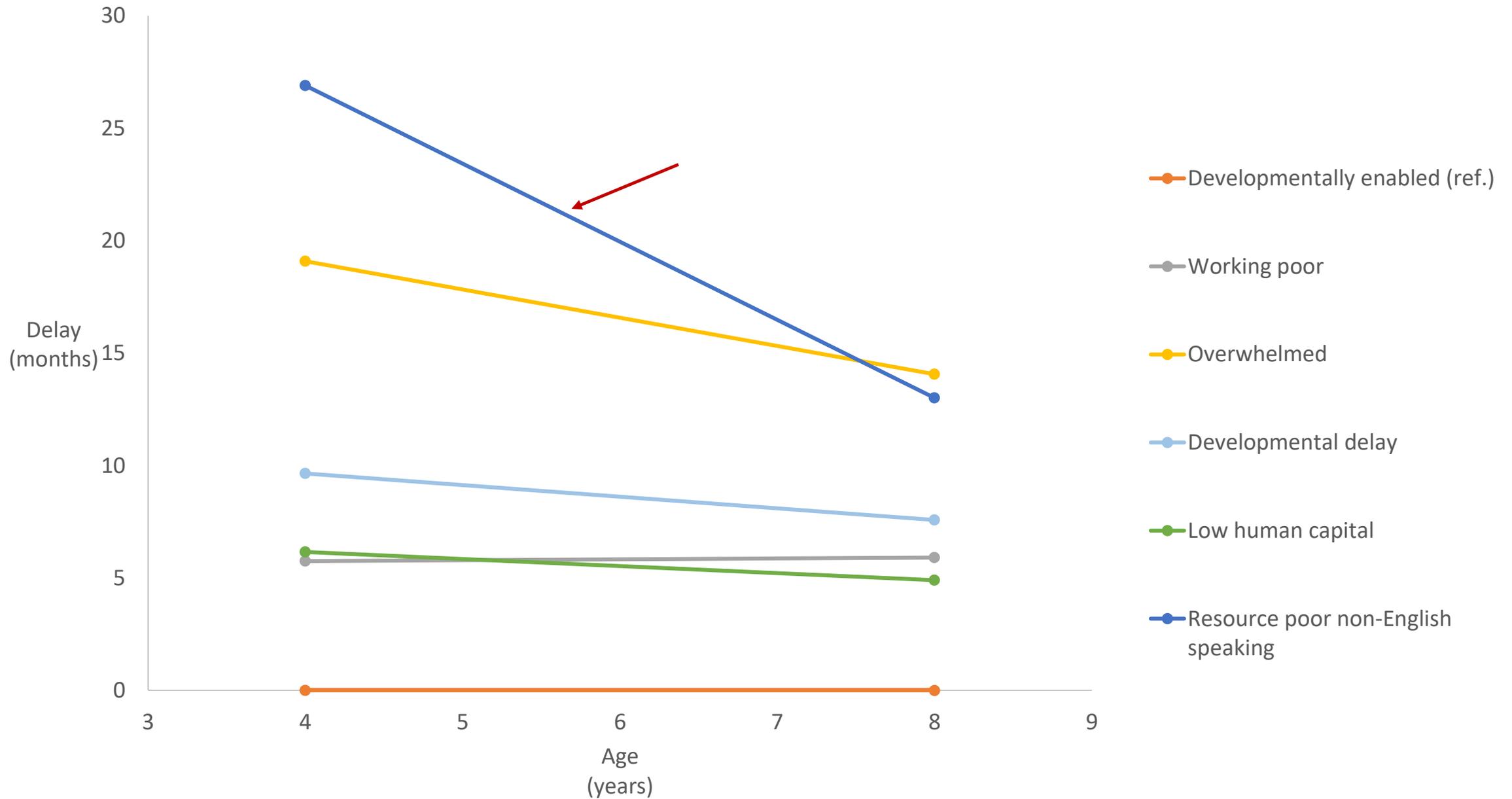
Culturally appropriate services
Provide family support and navigation to child development services
Monitor progress



Developmental risk distribution: Resource poor NESB families



Developmental growth from 4 to 8: Resource poor NESB families





Matching service levels to needs



Place based options and points of developmental leverage (universal)



Place based options for EY programs Universal program level	Enabled	Overwhelmed	Low human capital	Working poor	Child developmental delay
Provide and promote light-touch universal interventions	*	*	*	*	*
Provide family support and navigation pathways to child development services	*	*	*	*	*
Enriched early education and child care			*	*	



Place based options and points of developmental leverage (targeted)



Place based options for EY programs Targeted program level	Enabled	Overwhelmed	Low human capital	Working poor	Child developmental delay
Early, repeated, sustained developmental support – delivered differently (e.g. Child and Family Centres)		*			*
Mental health treatment and support		*			*
Maintain diagnostic, treatment, management, and support services: health, home, school, lifecourse					*
Optimise maternal education			*	*	



Place based options and points of developmental leverage (policy)



Place based options for EY programs Macro-policy level	Enabled	Overwhelmed	Low human capital	Working poor	Child developmental delay
Monitor population progress	*	*	*	*	*
Family planning			*	*	
Parental occupational training opportunities			*		
Family benefit increases/better pay				*	
Family friendly workplace arrangements and services	*	*		*	

