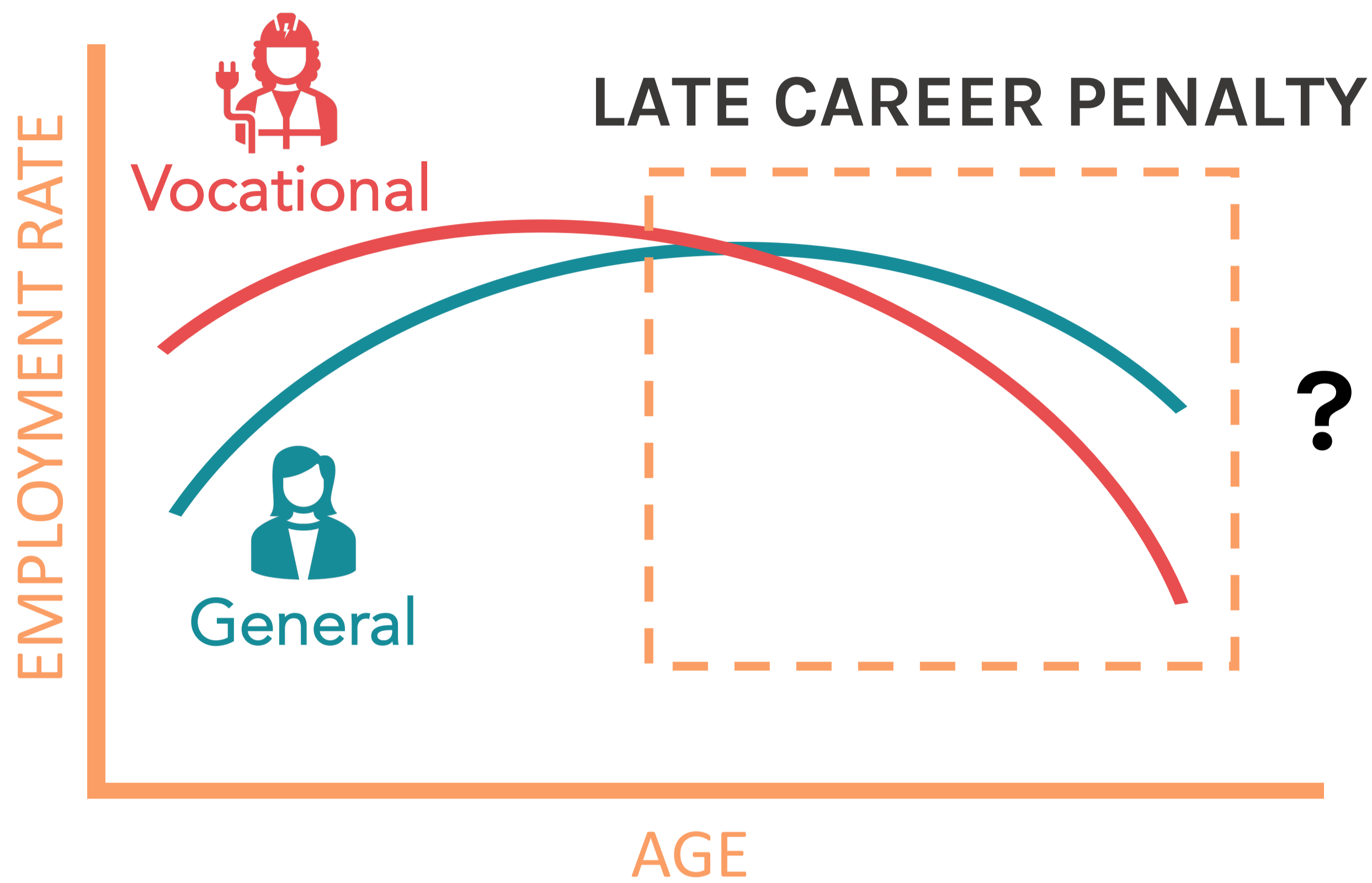


# LIFE COURSE DIFFERENCE IN JOB MOBILITY BETWEEN VOCATIONALLY AND GENERALLY TRAINED WORKERS IN GERMANY

## 1 THE PUZZLE



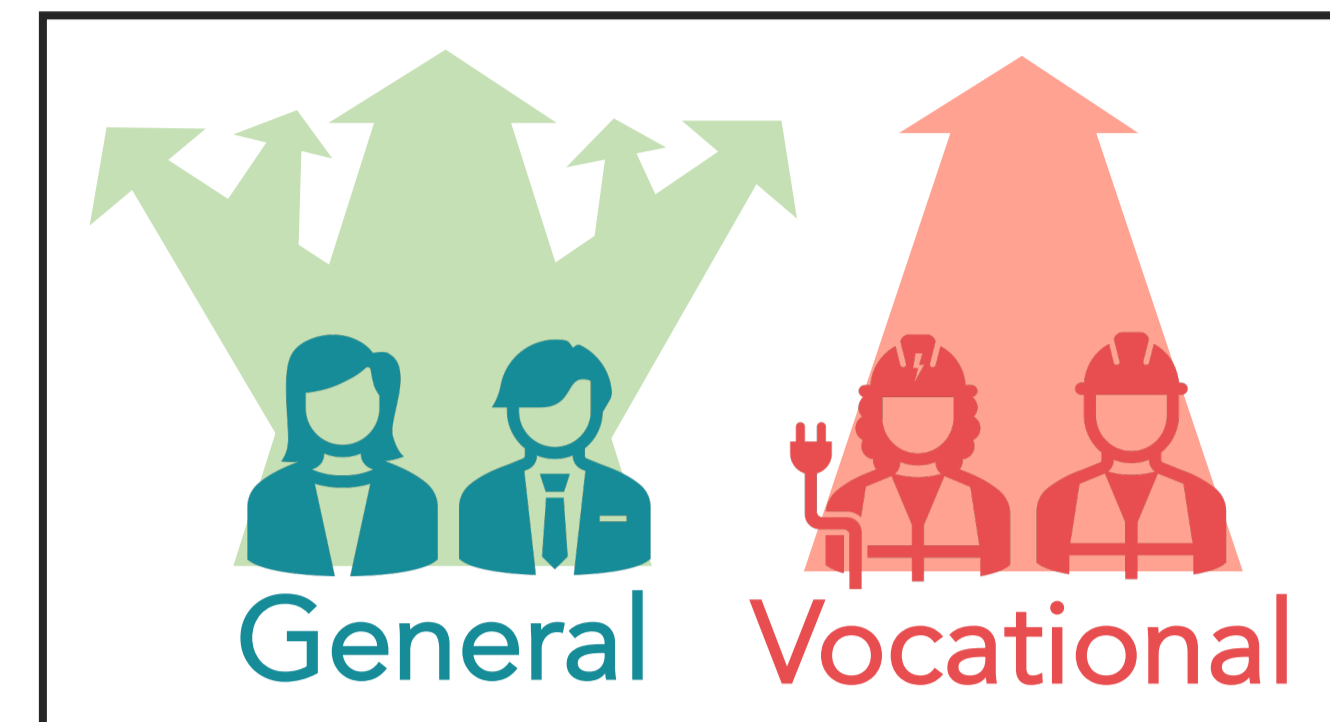
How can we explain the late-career penalty for vocationally trained workers?

👉 Differences in job mobility?

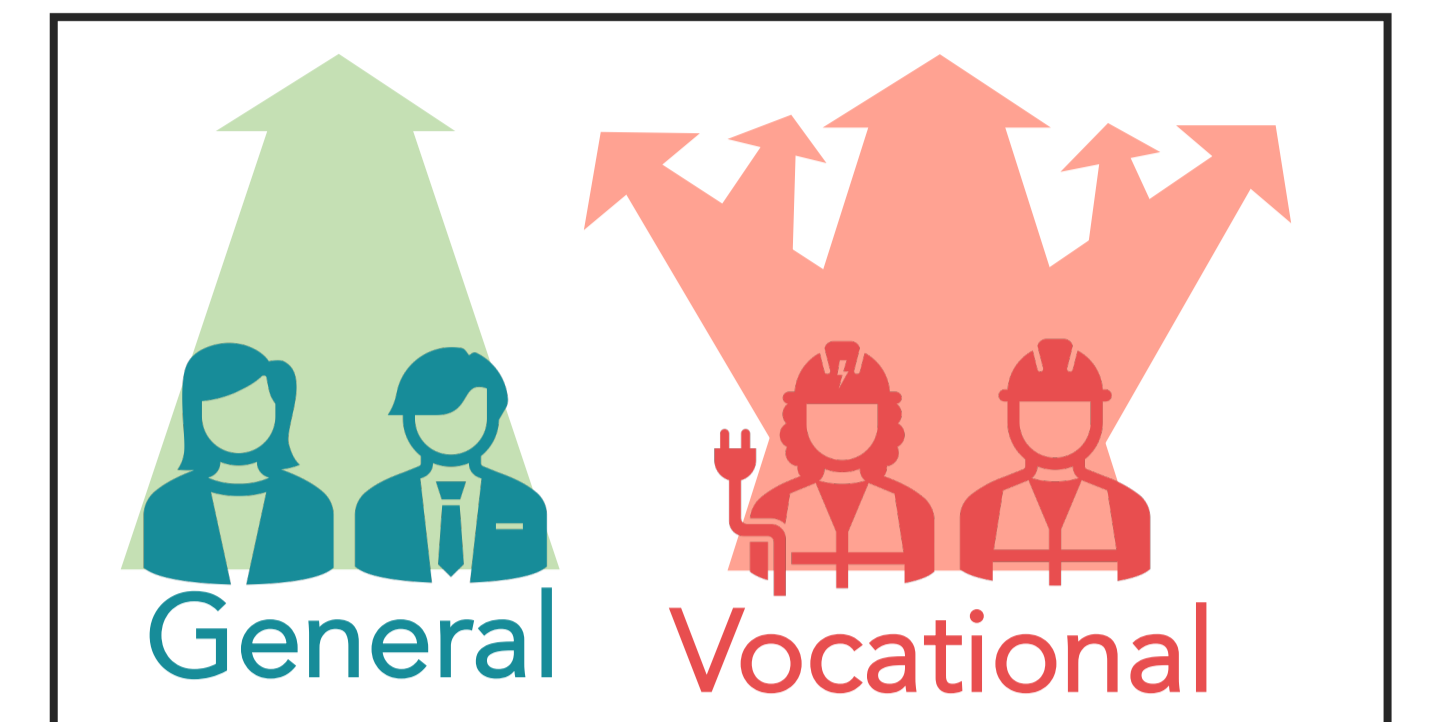
## 2 THEORY

Two opposed perspectives

*Mobility potential*



*Obsolescence risk*



While vocational education teaches workers occupation-specific skills, general education conveys skills that are applicable across various occupations. Consequently, generally trained workers have a higher relative mobility potential. By changing occupations they can react flexibly to changing labour market demands while vocational graduates remain locked in their occupations. Thus, one would expect lower occupational mobility for vocationally trained workers relative to general ones.

Skills produced by vocational education outdate quicker than general skills and general graduates participate more in life-long learning. Thus, vocational graduates are at higher relative risk to experience skill obsolescence forcing them to become mobile and find a new occupations while general graduates are better able to maintain their positions. From this argument, one would expect higher occupational mobility for vocationally trained workers relative to general ones.



## 3 RESULTS

Empirical analyses are based on longitudinal data from the German socio-economic panel. Figure 1 shows predicted probabilities to enter a new occupation over age for different birth cohorts from logistic regression. The dependent variable is 1 when a person enters a new occupation and 0 otherwise. Findings are adjusted for differences in gender (binary) and educational level (high/low dummy). For workers born after 1960 we find that vocational graduates are significantly more likely to enter new occupations than general graduates when surpassing a certain age. Differences between educational groups grow from there on. Figure 2 shows predicted ratios to be upwardly vs. downwardly mobile during occupational transitions over age. Occupational status is measured using the SIOPS scale. The dependent variable is 1 when occup. transitions lead to an increase in status and 0 if

Figure 1: Mobility between occupations over age

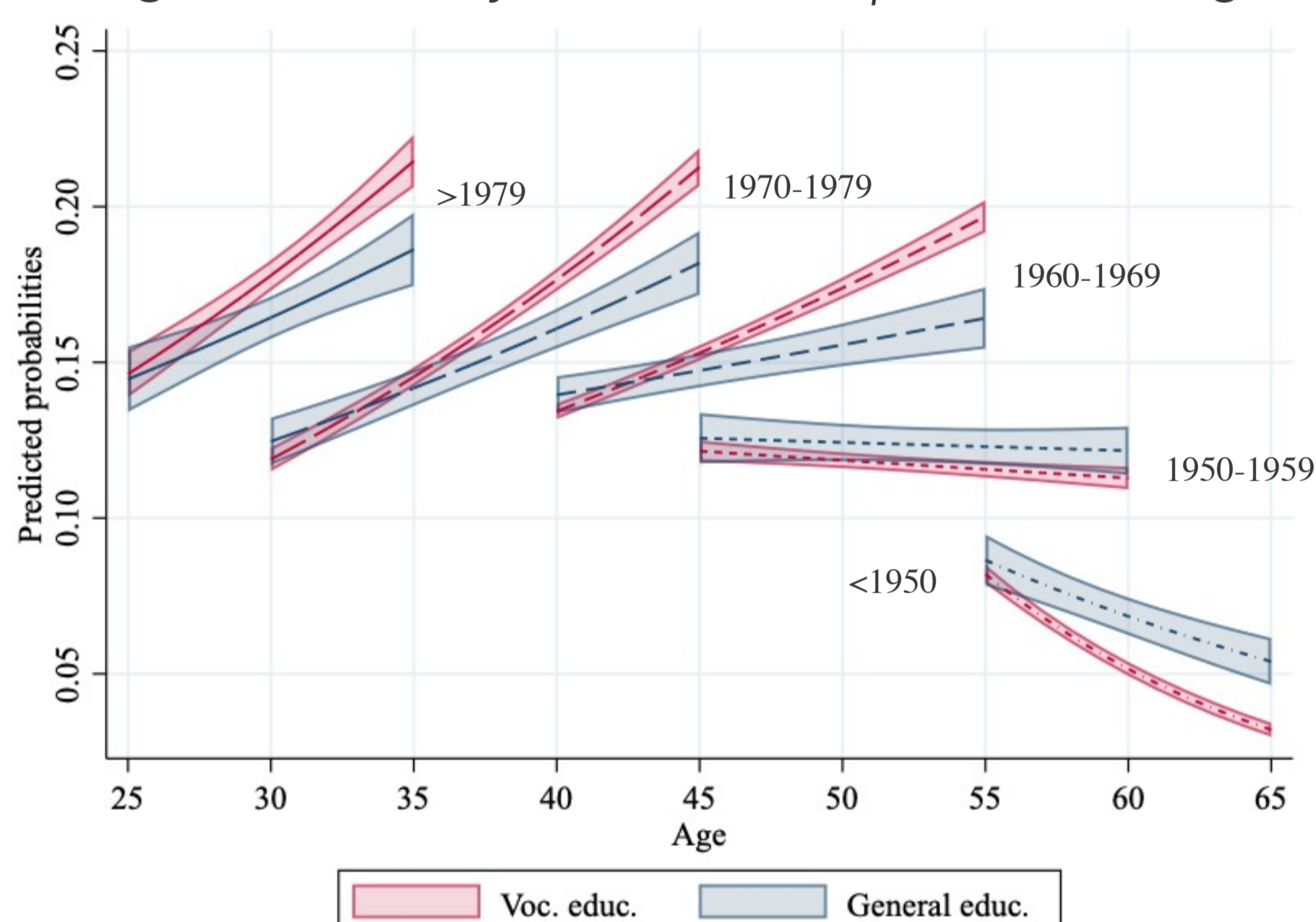
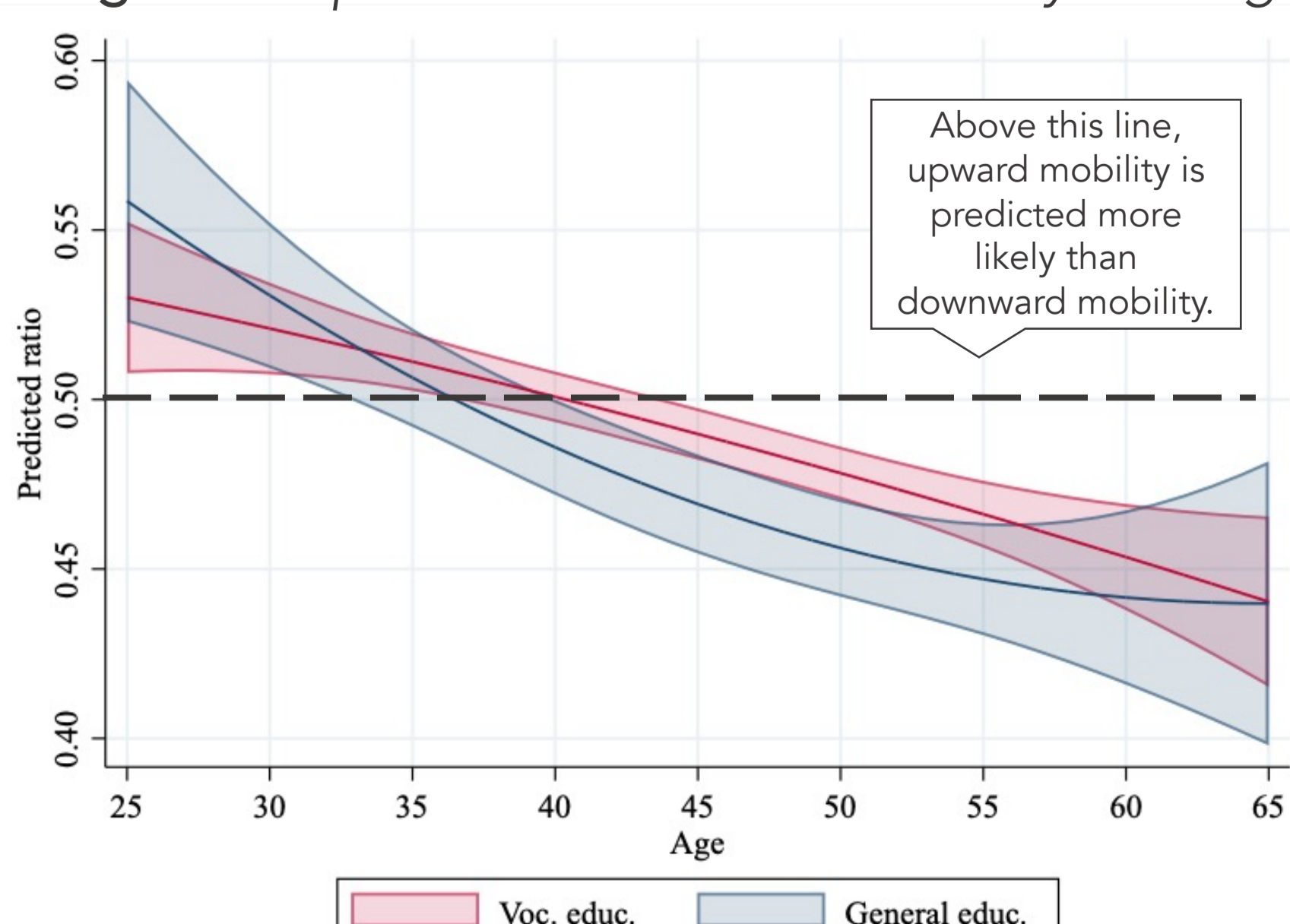


Figure 2: Upward vs. downward mobility over age



transitions leads to status reduction. We find that for both educational groups, occup. transitions after the age of ~40 are more likely linked to status reduction than to status increase. That tendency grows with age. Differences between educational groups are insignificant on 95-percent confidence level.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

- Results rather support the **obsolescence risk** perspective. Vocational graduates are more likely than general graduates to switch occupations in their mid and late careers. The majority of these transitions don't represent career progression as they are more often associated with downward status mobility.
- General graduates seem to have an advantage over vocational graduates in the late career, however, not by using their flexible skill set to switch between occupations and adapt to changing labour market demands but by maintaining their current positions.

## 5 YOUR COMMENTS

Use a **post-it** to leave a note. Your thoughts are greatly appreciated!