DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN NONPROBLEMATIC & PROBLEMATIC SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM: HOW MUCH ABSENCE IS TOO MUCH ABSENCE?

Gil Keppens (Gil.Keppens@vub.be)

Research Group TOR (VUB)

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- Attendance monitoring through centralized student management systems
  - Daily monitoring ➔ fast detection & intervention
  - School need to analyze their data (cf. Response to Intervention frameworks)
    - Systematic decision-making process to assign evidence-based strategies based on students' needs and in accordance to progress monitoring (Kearney, 2016)
  - RtI-frameworks rely on valid and reliable identification and detection systems

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- Preconditions to use attendance data in RtI-framework
    1) Data literacy of school actors involved
    2) Challenges & barries schools are confronted with when collecting and analyzing attendance data
    3) Good understanding of the collected data
- Our research project adresses these issues:
    A. Cross-section of population based attendance data
    B. Comparison registration data & self-reports
    C. Participatory observation on the use of attendance data in school settings

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

- 'How much absence is to much absence?'
- Need for standardized definitions problematic & nonproblematic school absenteeism
  - Criteria and definitions vary from country to country and from school to school
  - Lack of empirical research investigating differentiation between problematic and nonproblematic school absenteeism
- Kearney (2008)
  - Based upon empirical research?
 - Sufficient pragmatic?

TO SUM UP

- We need to investigate:
  - Whether there is a cut-off in the relationship between the rate of school absenteeism and relevant school outcomes
  - Whether the proposed criteria can be measured on a daily basis in a school setting
    - Can it be measured through the attendance data that schools already collect?
    - Substitute pragmatic locally used definitions

REGISTRATION OF ATTENDANCE

- Registration is done twice a day
  - Teachers or school administration
  - First lesson of the day and first lesson in the afternoon
  - Absences are registered with laptops/tablets and directly transferred to Department of Education where they are merged with other student characteristics
- For each half day of absence from school, a pupil receives a code:
  - B-code : unauthorized absence
  - D-code: absence due to illness and authorized by a doctor
  - L-code: absence due to coming to late in the morning
  - Z-code: absence due to illness and authorized by the parents
- School year 2014-2015 among pupils secondary education
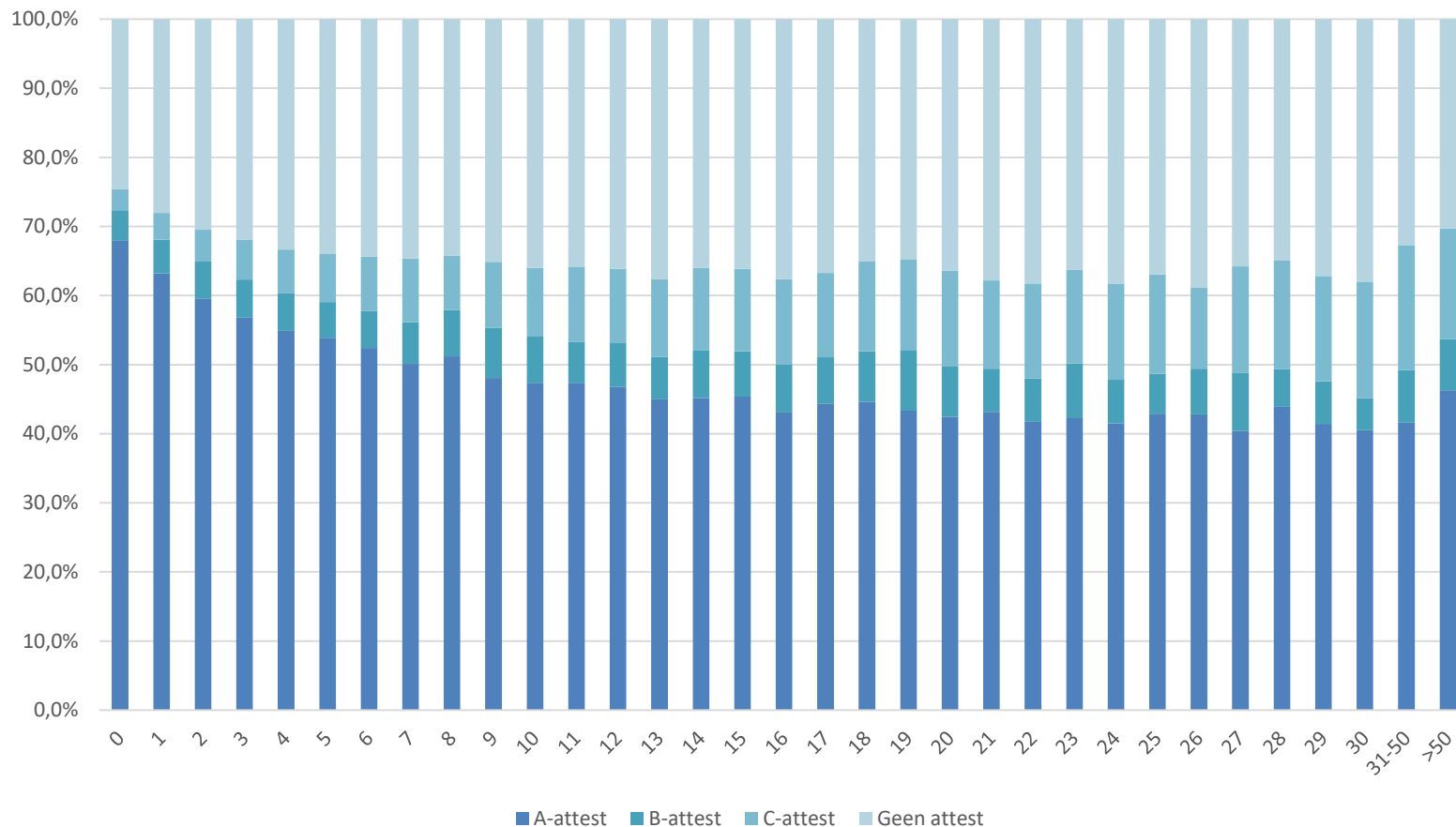 - N=291968
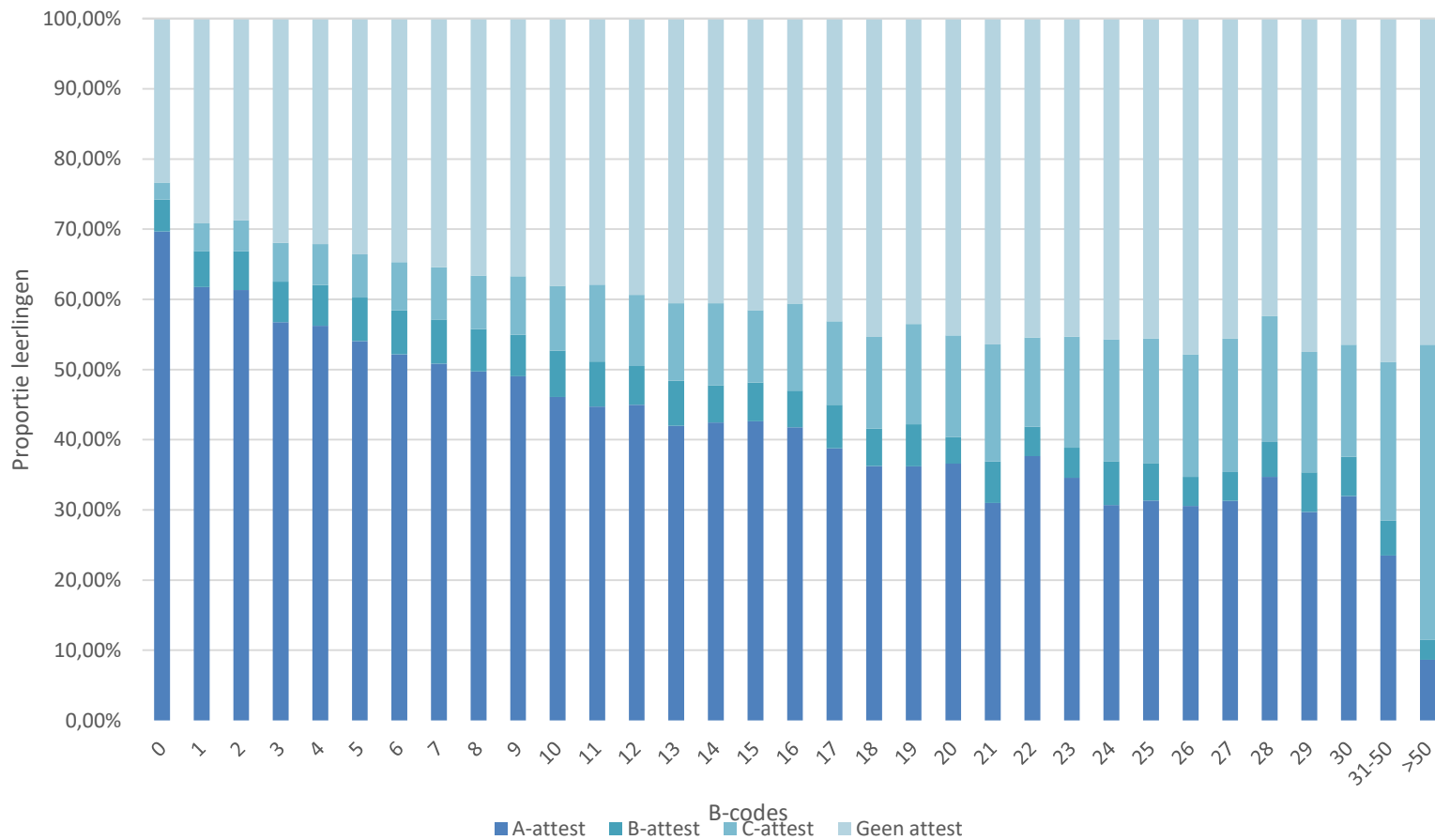
Relationship B-codes & school results at the end of the school year after controlling for gender, SES and ethnicity
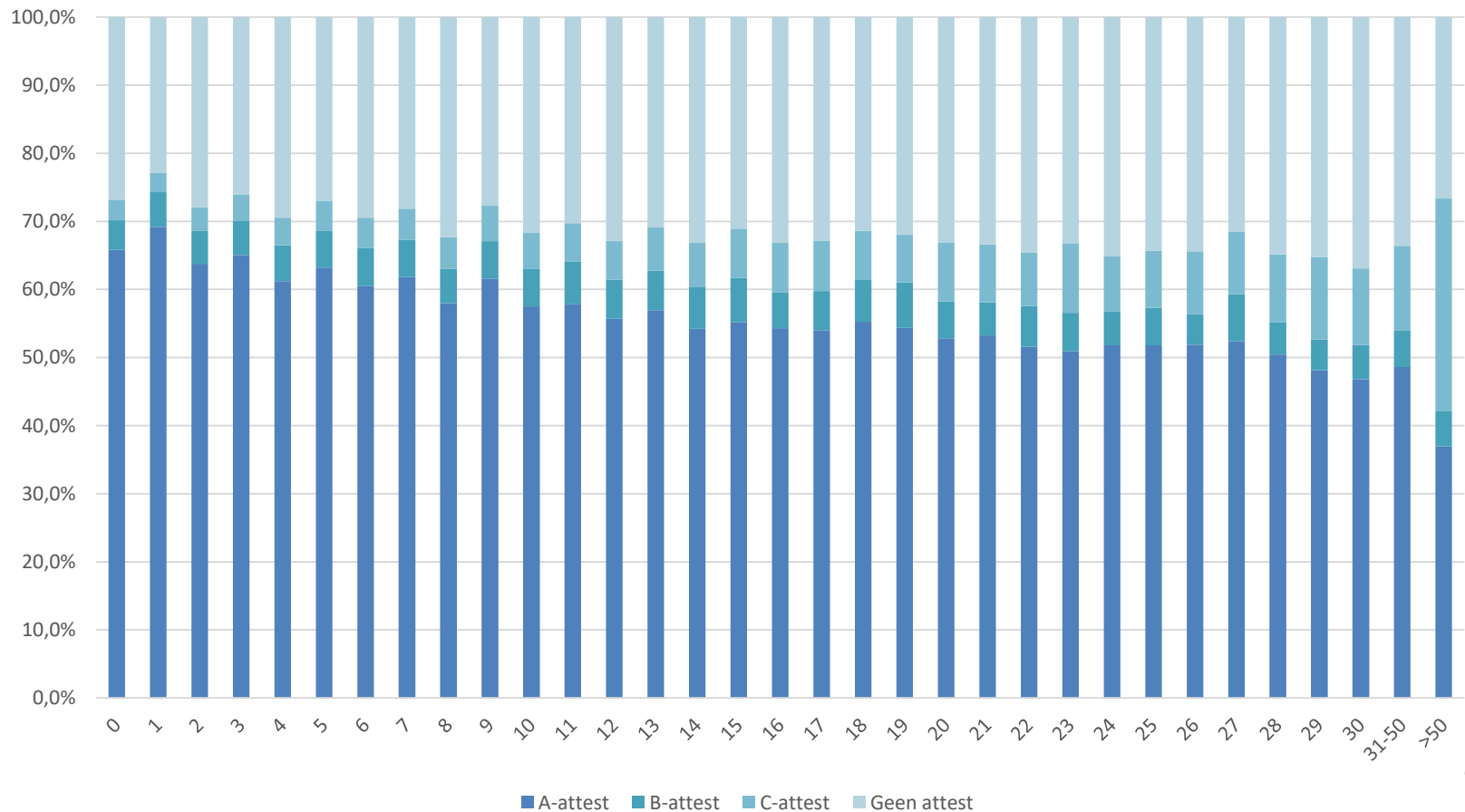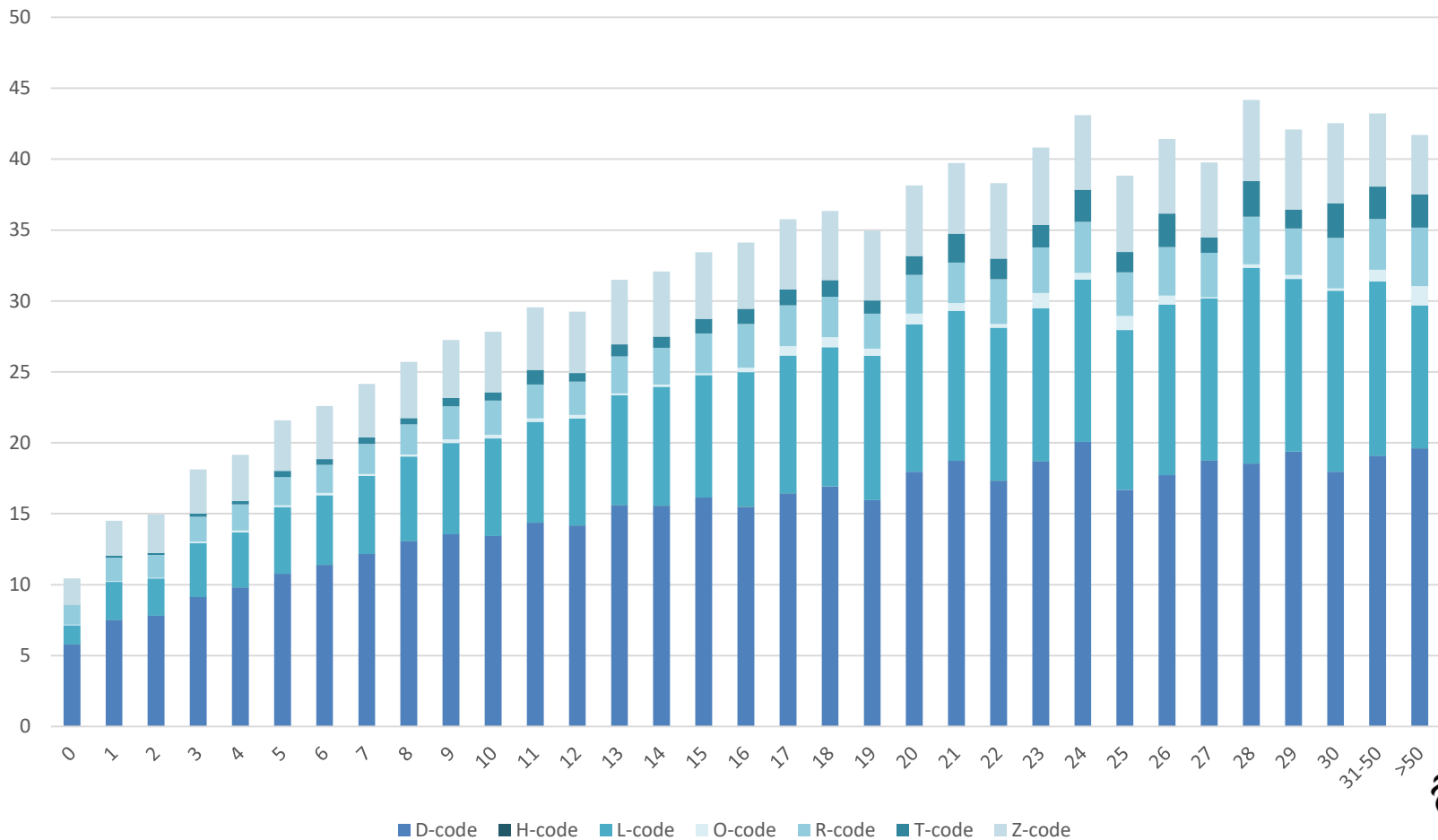
Relationship D-codes & school results at the end of the school year after controlling for gender, SES and ethnicity

Relationship L-codes & school results at the end of the school year after controlling for gender, SES and ethnicity

- There is a correlation between different "codes" of absences
- The degree of B-codes (=unauthorized absences) show only the tip of the iceberg

CONCLUSIONS

- There is no 'safe threshold' for what amounts to harmful or problematic school absenteeism
- Unauthorized absenteeism seems to have more consequences compared to authorized absenteeism
- Students combine absences. Among students with unauthorized absences, authorized absences do matter.
- In the future ➔ longitudinal analyses to examine relationship between any type of absences (primary & secondary education or patterns/trajectories of absences and student outcomes)

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FURTHER READING

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gil_Keppens

https://www.vub.be/TOR/person/gil-keppens/

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