

# The Effects of State Paid Family Leave Policies on Breastfeeding

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# Overview

Background: breastfeeding and work

Paid family leave policies

Study design

Results

Conclusions

# U.S. Breastfeeding Guidelines



# Breastfeeding and Work

60% of women with small children are employed.

A third return to work within 3 months, compared with 5% in some European countries.

Women in full-time employment are less likely to breastfeed than those in part-time employment.

Returning to work early further reduces breastfeeding.

→ What about paid family leave to support working mothers?

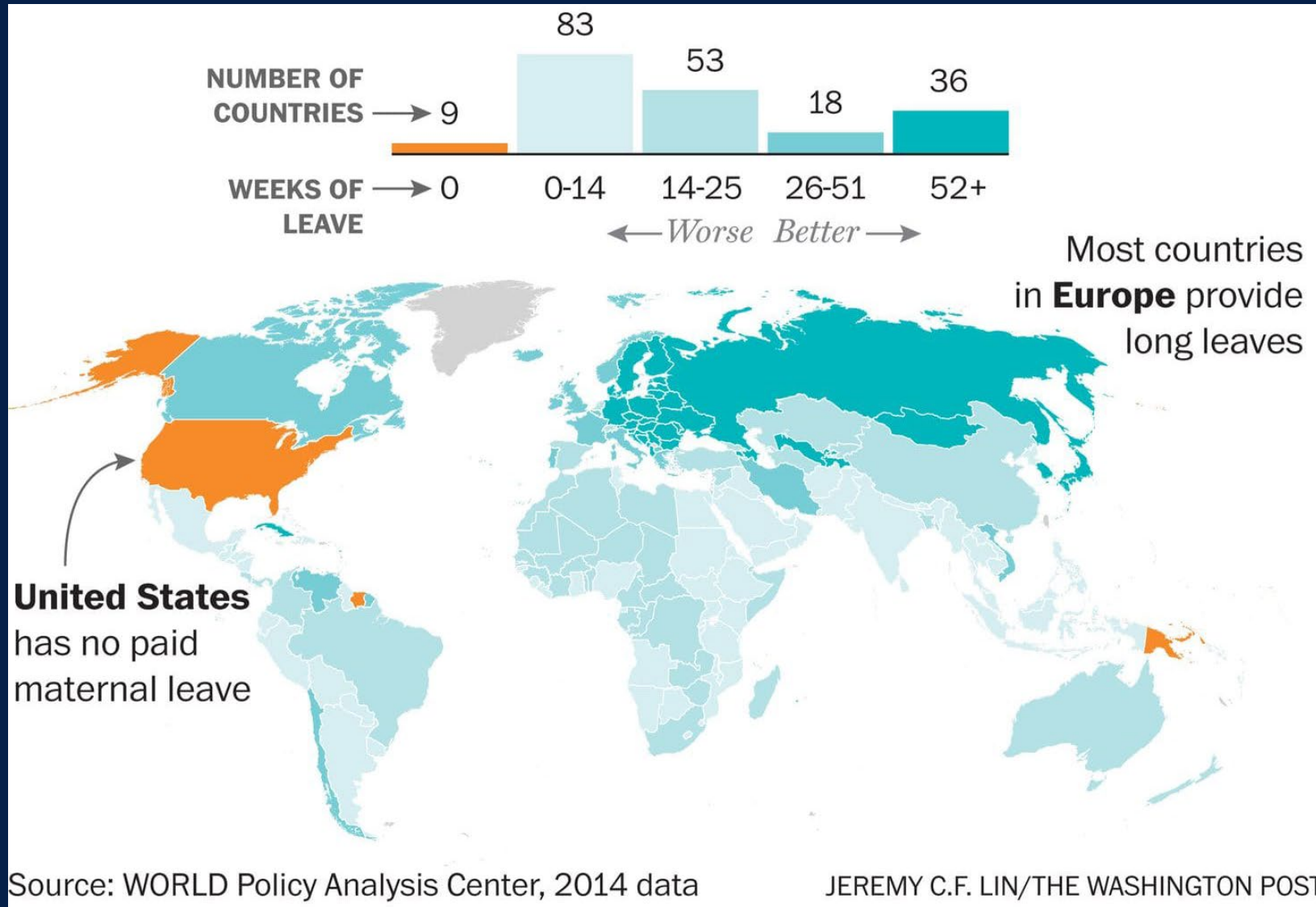
# What is Paid Family Leave?

Wage replacement

Guaranteed job protection

Time for infant-mother bonding, social support

# National Paid Family Leave Policies



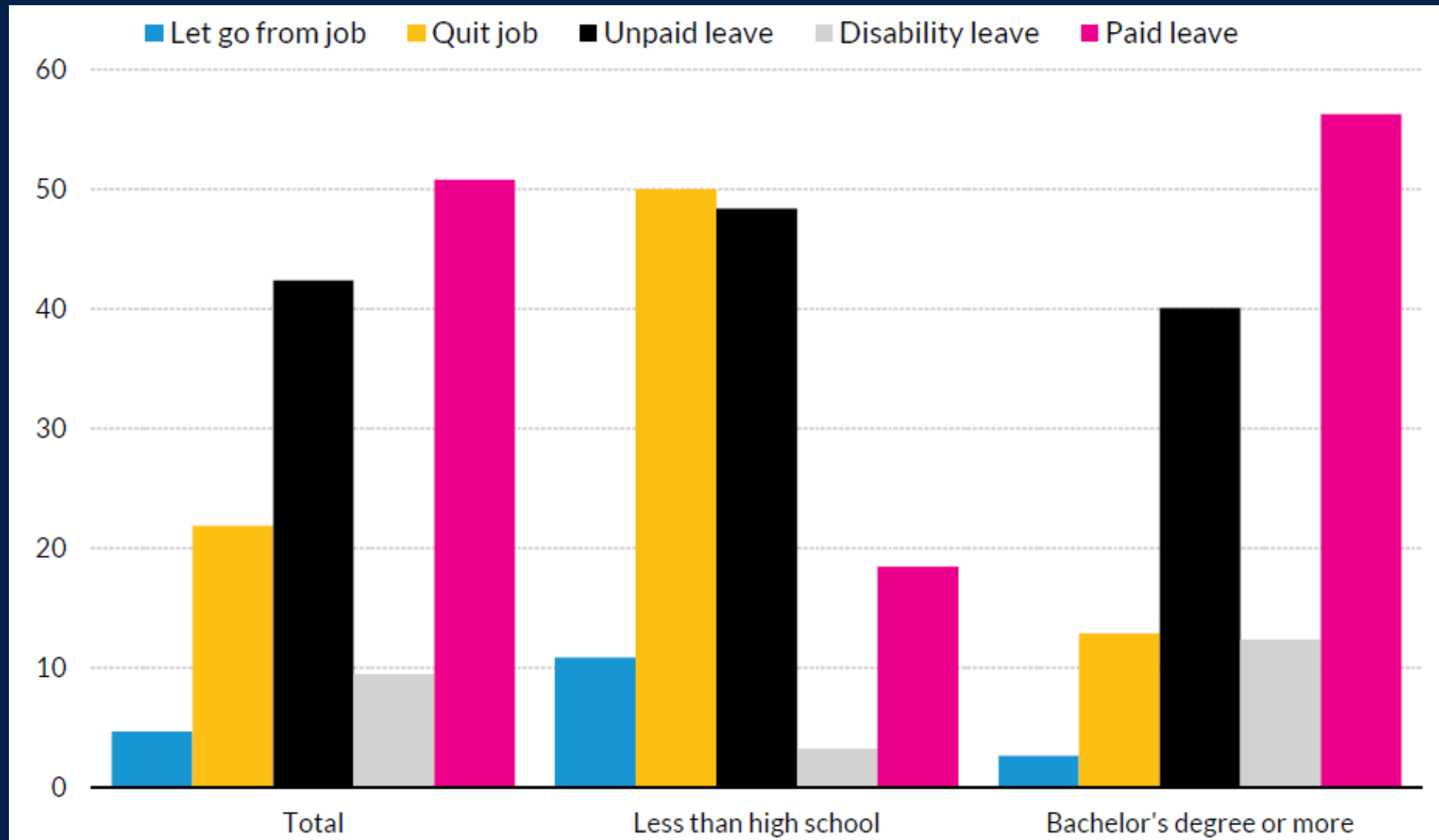
# U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act

Provides unpaid job-protected leave for qualifying workers

More than 40% of employees don't qualify

Low-income workers less likely to take leave

# Leave Arrangements for Working Moms

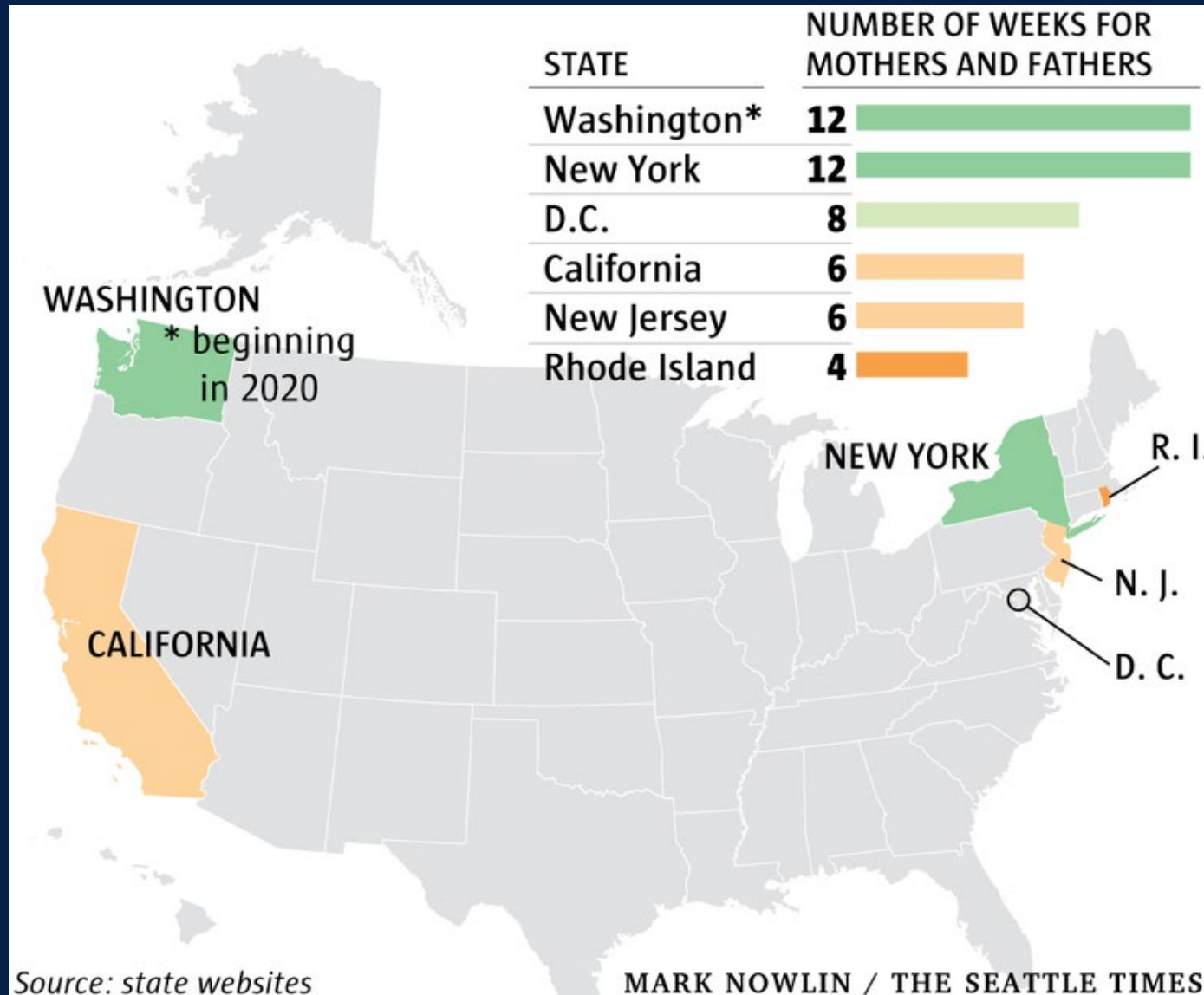




# Lack of Paid Leave May Contribute to Black-White Disparities in Breastfeeding

|                  | Percentage of those breastfeeding in the early postpartum period | Percentage of those breastfeeding at 6 months postpartum | Percentage of total labor force | Percentage of low-wage jobs |
|------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| African American | 58.1%  | 27.5%  | 13%                             | 18%                         |
| White            | 77.7%  | 45.1%  | 65%                             | 51%                         |
| Hispanic         | 80.6%  | 46%  | 15%                             | 24%                         |

# State Paid Family Leave Policies



Wage replacement rates: 50-67%

MA: 80% for low-wage workers  
DC: 90% for low-wage workers

# Research Question

What are the effects of state paid family leave policies on breastfeeding practices?

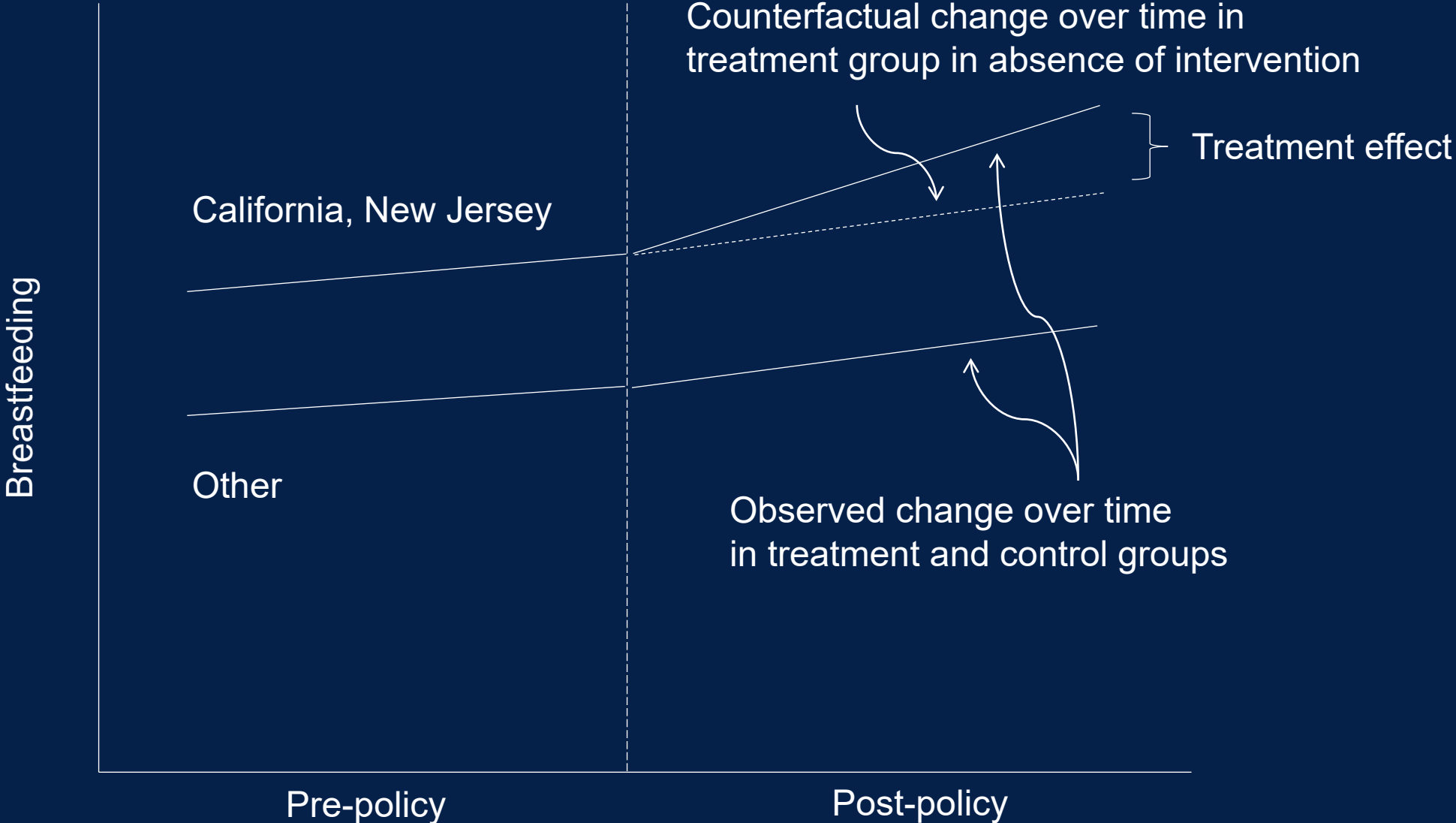
→ California (2004) and New Jersey (2009) policies

→ Subgroup effects by sociodemographic characteristics

# Study Design

- Data from the National Immunization Survey (2003-2015)
  - Nationally representative data collected by the CDC
  - Sample size: 306,266 children
- Outcomes:
  - Ever breastfed
  - Breastfed exclusively: 3 months, 6 months
  - Continued breastfeeding: 6 months, 12 months
  - Duration of breastfeeding: any, exclusive

# Difference-in-Differences Analysis



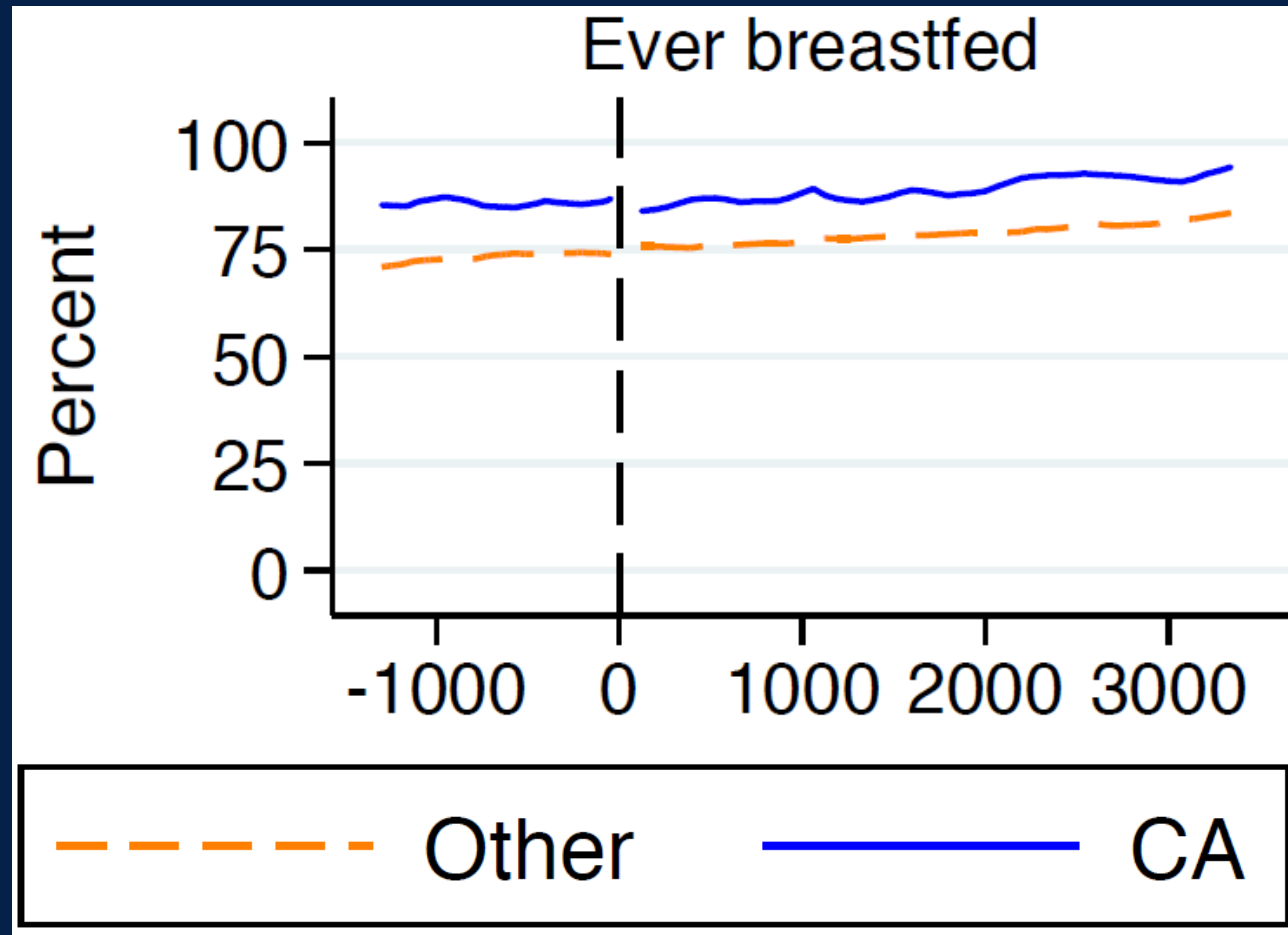
# Maternal Characteristics

|                                      | California | New Jersey | Other States |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
|                                      | N = 10,030 | N = 6,370  | N = 289,866  |
| <b>Age under 30</b>                  | 34.4%      | 31.5%      | 37.4%        |
| <b>Married</b>                       | 74.2%      | 69.5%      | 73.2%        |
| <b>Family income</b>                 |            |            |              |
| <b>\$25,000 or less</b>              | 29.8%      | 26.5%      | 24.6%        |
| <b>\$25,001-\$50,000</b>             | 19.7%      | 17.3%      | 22.9%        |
| <b>More than \$50,000</b>            | 50.5%      | 56.2%      | 52.5%        |
| <b>Race</b>                          |            |            |              |
| <b>White</b>                         | 31.6%      | 43.0%      | 59.8%        |
| <b>Black</b>                         | 4.3%       | 17.5%      | 11.8%        |
| <b>Hispanic</b>                      | 46.4%      | 28.5%      | 18.4%        |
| <b>Other</b>                         | 17.7%      | 11.0%      | 10.0%        |
| <b>Birth after paid leave policy</b> | 58.8%      | 24.7%      | N/A          |

# Breastfeeding Characteristics

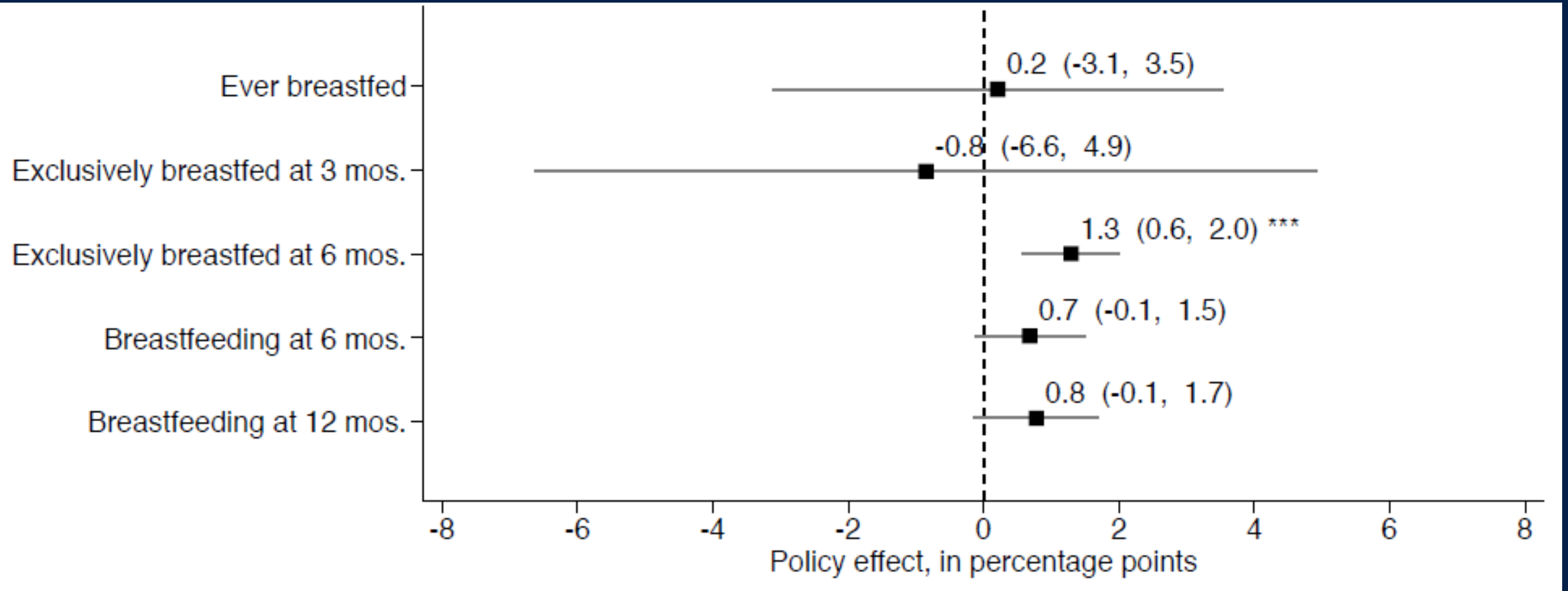
|   | California | New Jersey | Other States |
|---|------------|------------|--------------|
|   | N = 10,030 | N = 6,370  | N = 289,866  |
| <b>Ever breastfed (%)</b>                         | 87.4%      | 74.9%      | 77.0%        |
| <b>Exclusively breastfeeding at 3 mos. (%)</b>    | 51.3%      | 37.0%      | 42.1%        |
| <b>Exclusively breastfeeding at 6 mos. (%)</b>    | 23.0%      | 15.8%      | 18.1%        |
| <b>Still breastfeeding at 6 mos. (%)</b>          | 58.6%      | 44.3%      | 46.2%        |
| <b>Still breastfeeding at 12 mos. (%)</b>         | 30.1%      | 20.6%      | 22.3%        |
| <b>Duration of breastfeeding (days)</b>           | 237 ± 200  | 174 ± 186  | 183 ± 187    |
| <b>Duration of exclusive breastfeeding (days)</b> | 88 ± 84    | 84 ± 64    | 73 ± 82      |

# Trends in Breastfeeding Relative to Policy Implementation, In Days

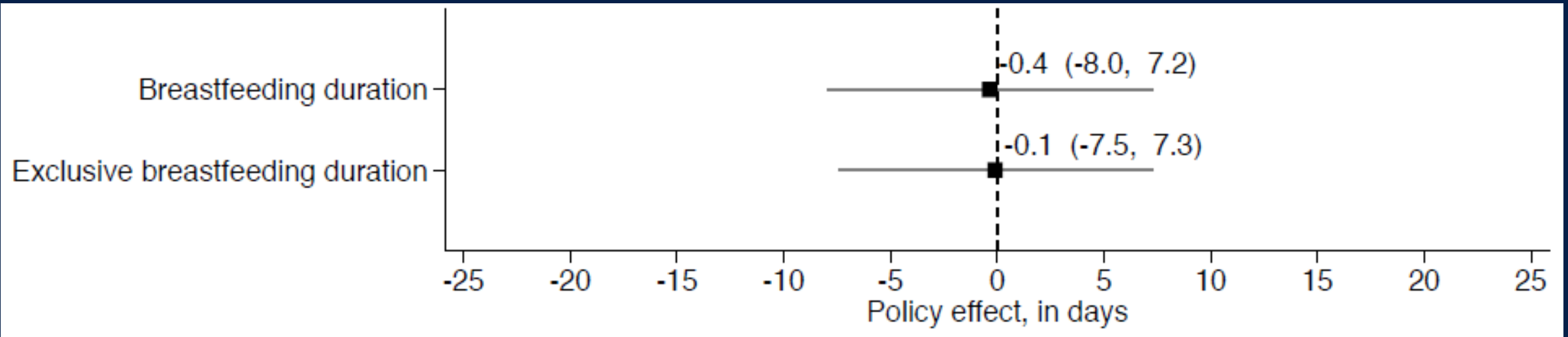




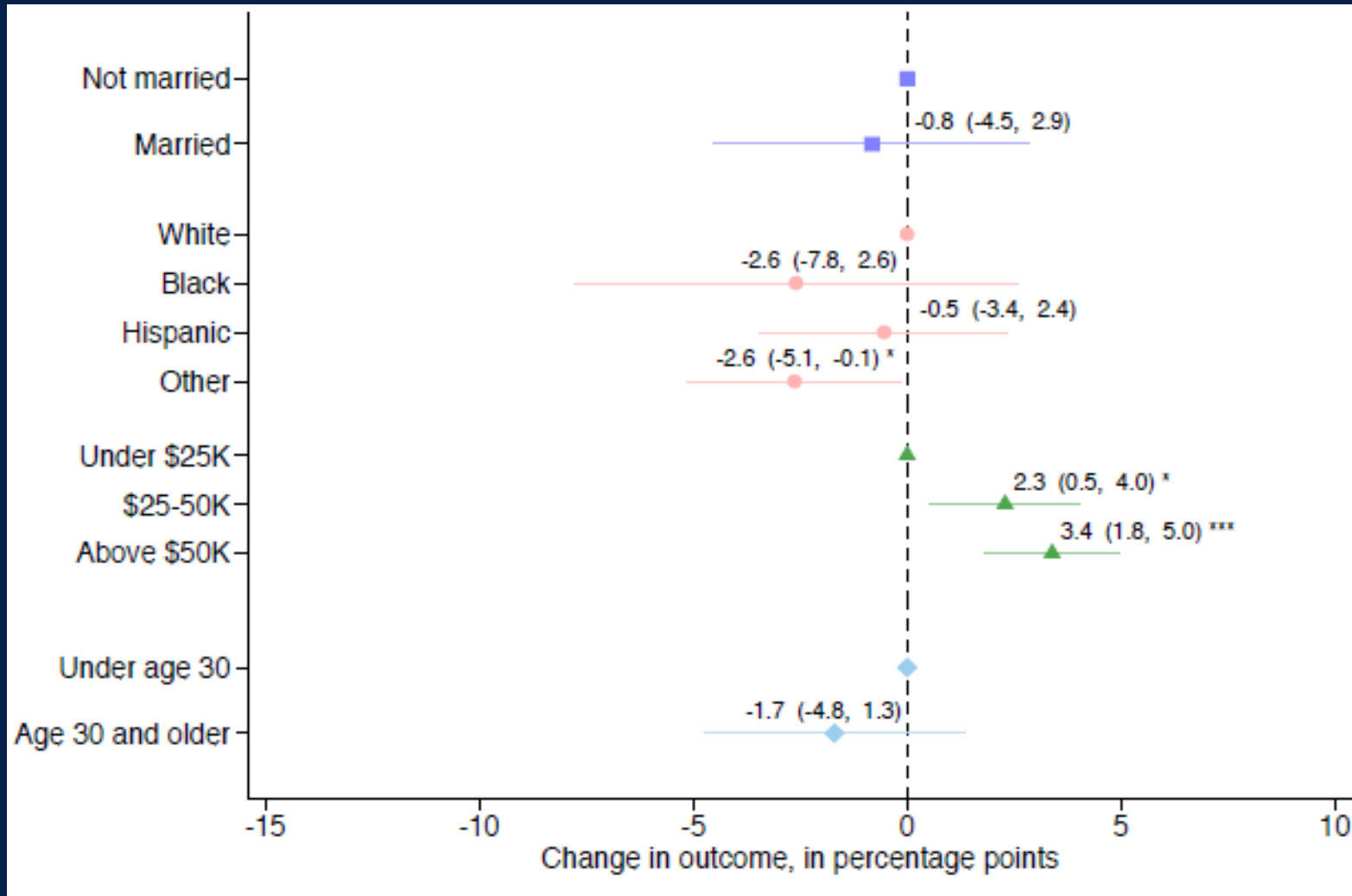
# Main Results (I)



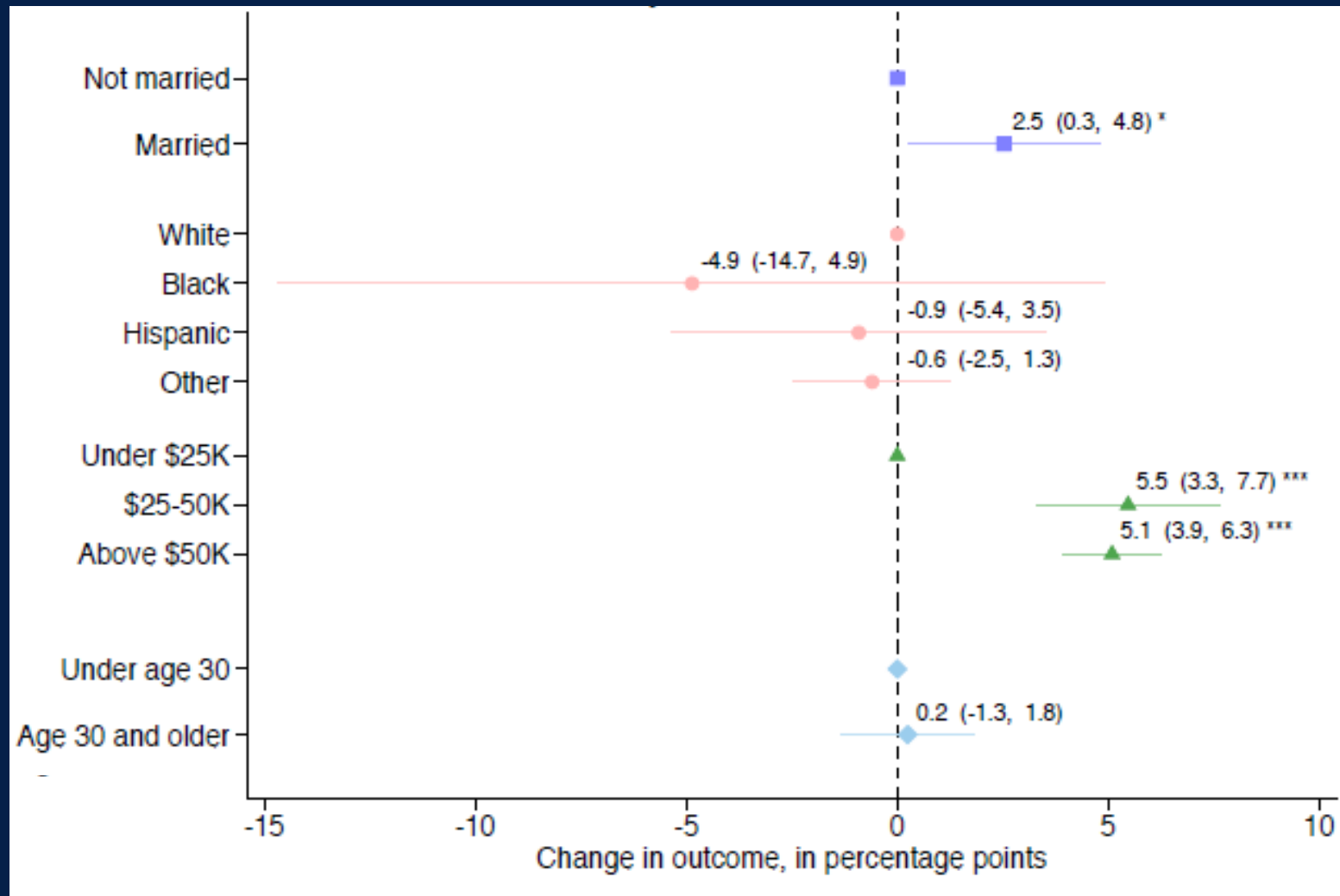
# Main Results (II)



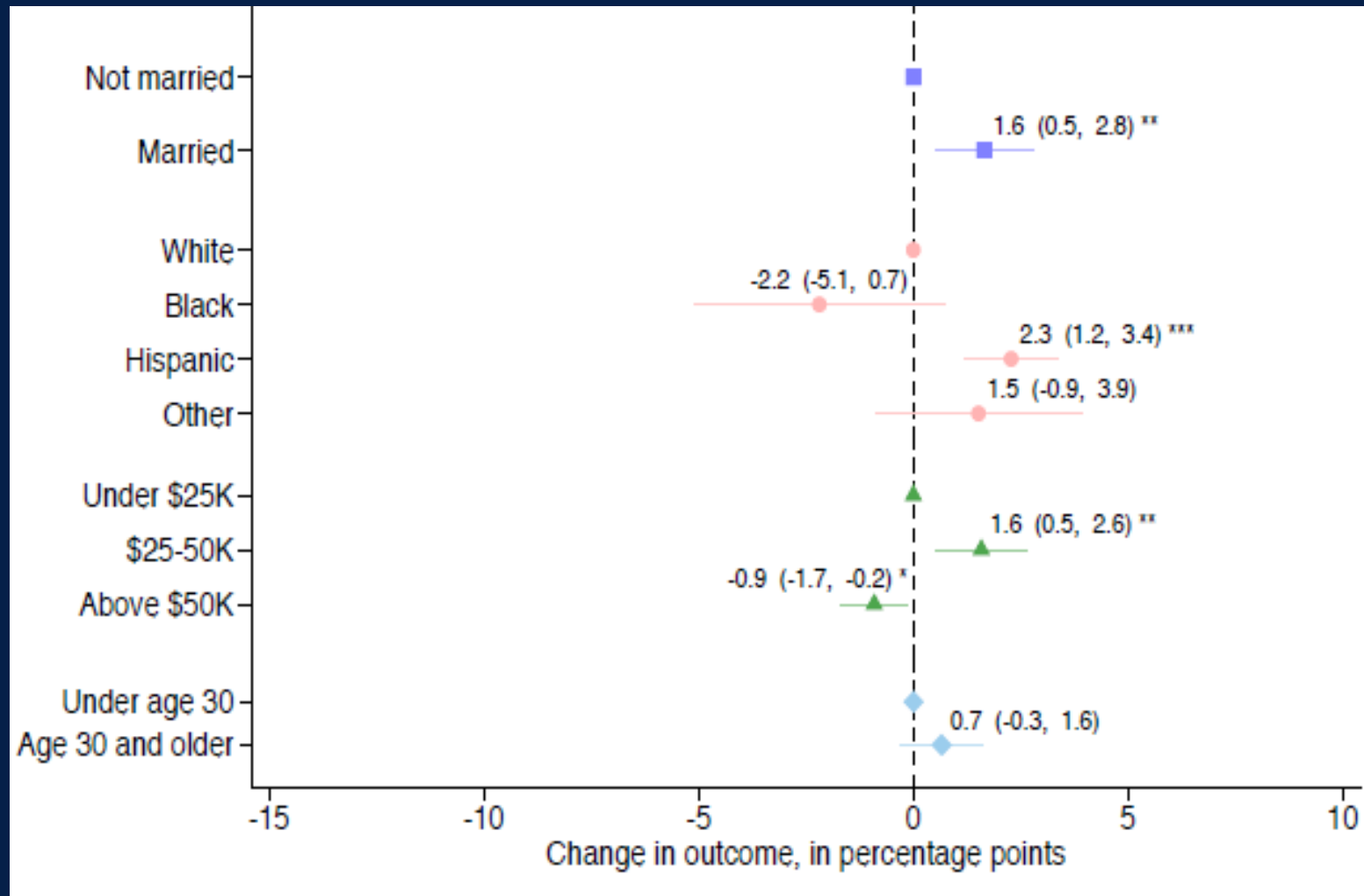
# Subgroup Effects, Ever Breastfed



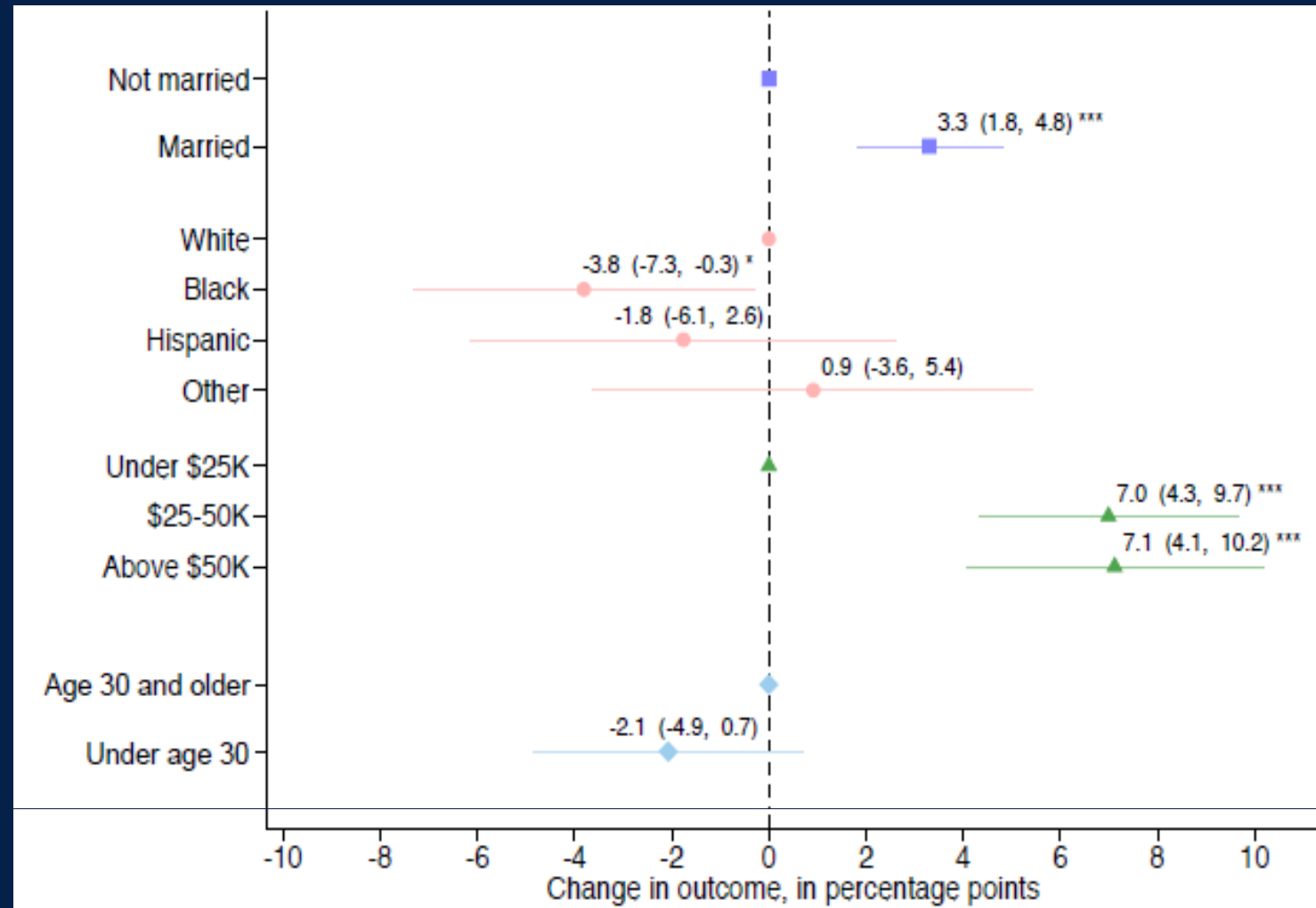
# Subgroup Effects, Exclusive BF @ 3 mo



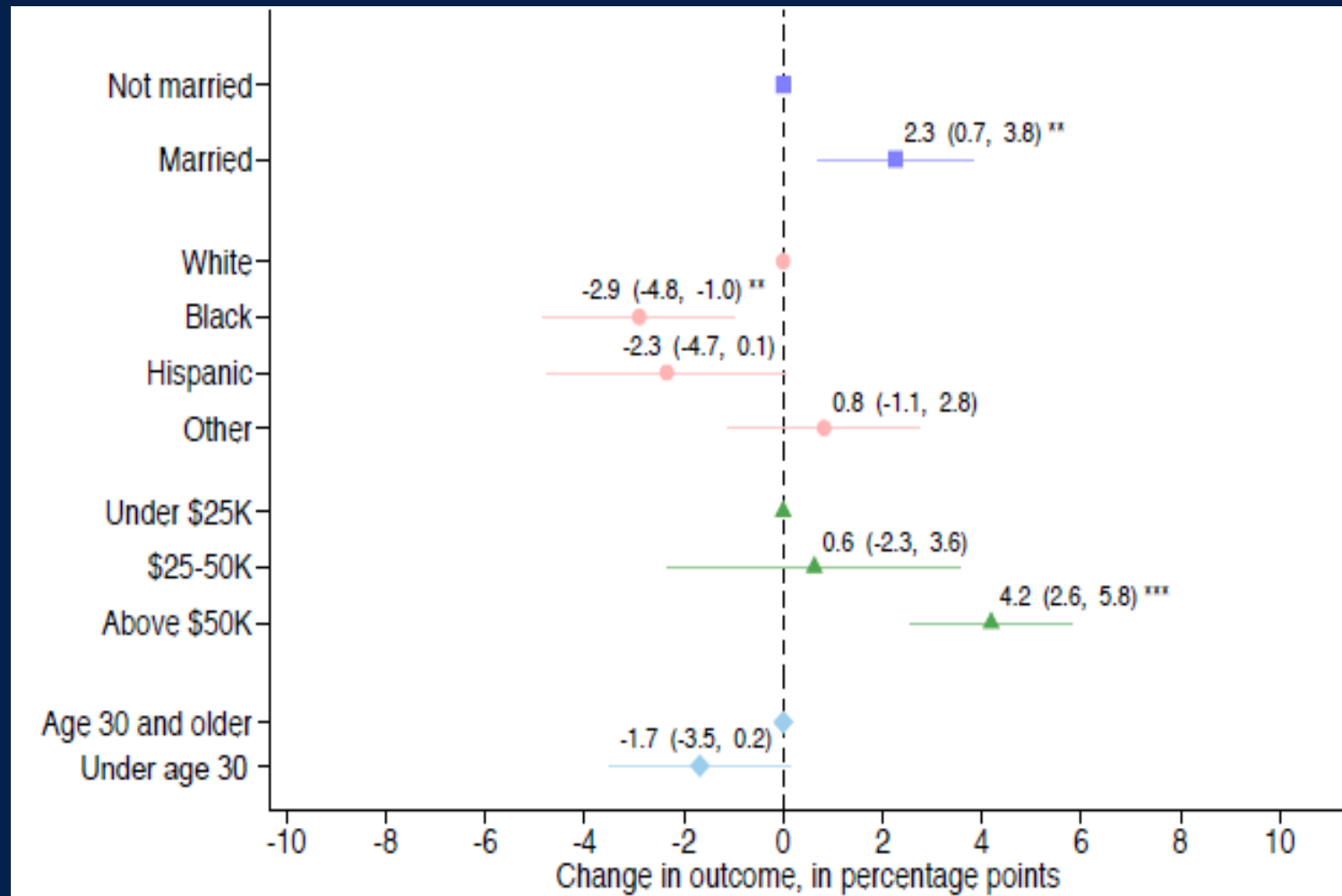
# Subgroup Effects, Exclusive BF @ 6 mo



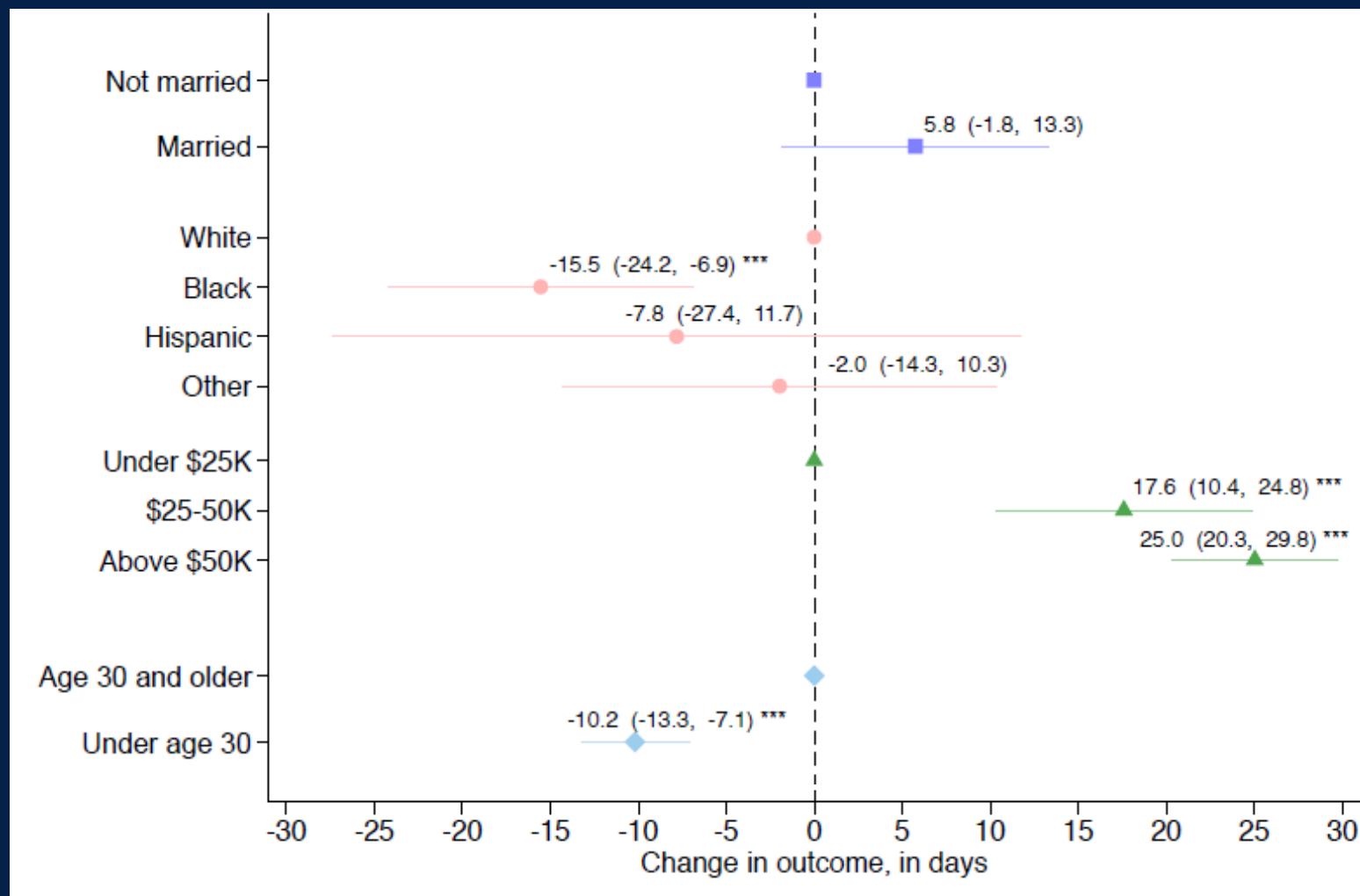
# Subgroup Effects, Still BF @ 6 mo



# Subgroup Effects, Still BF @ 12 mo

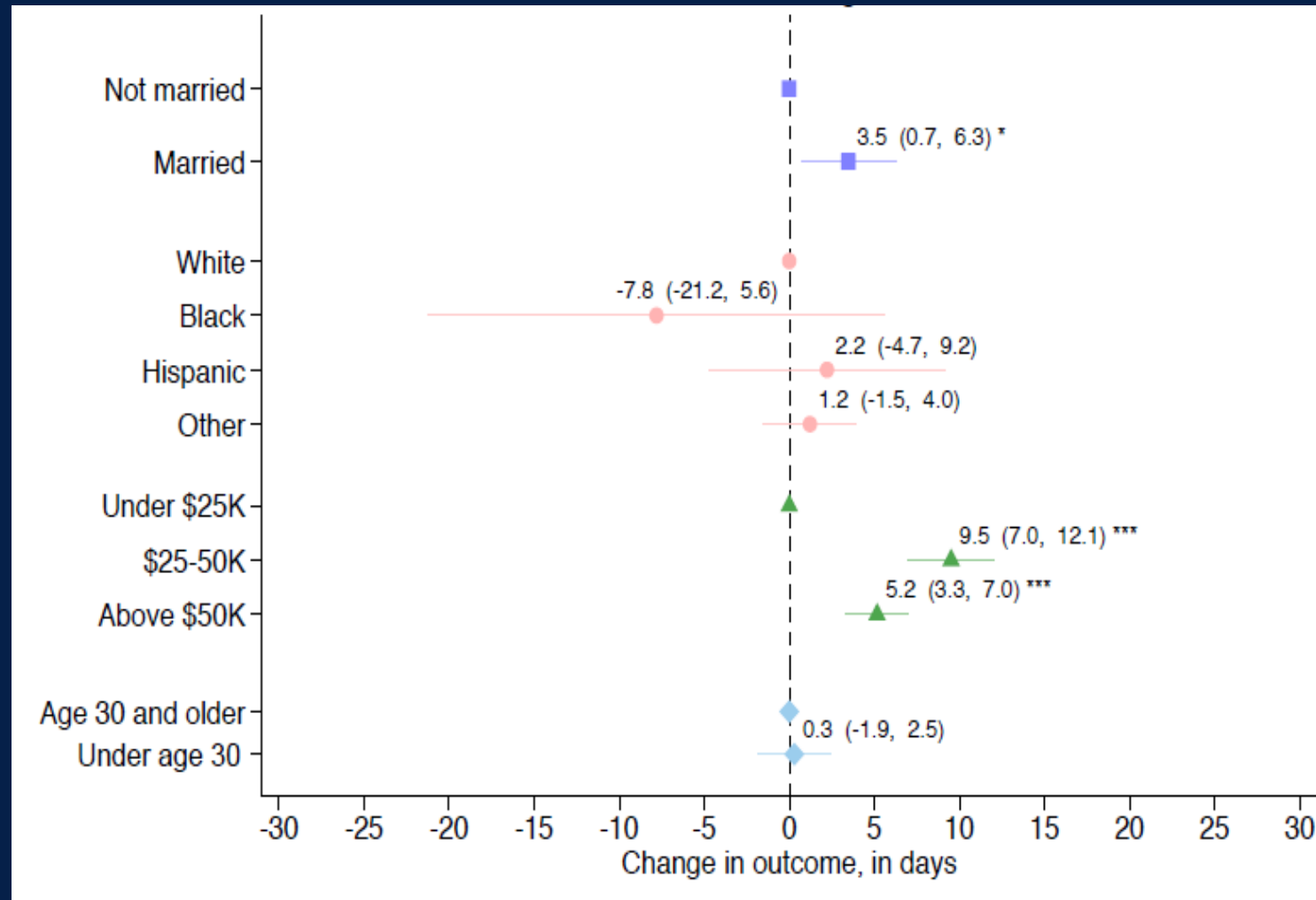


# Subgroup Effects, BF Duration





# Subgroup Effects, Exclusive BF Duration



# Summary

Overall, the policy increases breastfeeding at 6 months.

Findings are consistent with studies of California and international policies.

Subgroup analyses tend to show larger benefits for:

- High-income women

- Married women

- White women

# Conclusion

- These are small effect sizes for individuals, but they translate into important population differences.
- Paid leave policy may be an important lever to increase breastfeeding among working mothers.
- We need to test whether more generous policies avoid exacerbating disparities.
- Future work can examine downstream consequences for child obesity.

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# Questions?



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