

PREDICTORS AND CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVE-TAKING AMONG AMERICAN FATHERS

Richard J. Petts
Ball State University

Chris Knoester
The Ohio State University

Research was supported by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number R03HD087875. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

Opportunities for Paternity Leave in the U.S.

- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
 - Unpaid; around 40% of U.S. employees are eligible for leave under FMLA
- State-level paid family leave
 - CA, NJ, NY, RI (WA and Washington, DC in 2020; MA in 2021)
 - Varying level of wage replacement (50-90%) and time offered (4-12 weeks)
- Employer-based leave
 - 16% of workers have access to paid family leave

Key Questions

- Who takes paid leave? What factors are associated with fathers' paid leave-taking?
 - Barriers to leave-taking due to gendered norms, practices, and policies
 - More advantaged fathers are more likely to take leave, and longer periods of leave
- Is paternity leave associated with longitudinal patterns of father involvement? Does leave increase involvement among nonresident fathers?
 - Paternity leave may help more fathers enact and embrace the new fatherhood ideal
 - Paternity leave may provide structural support to nonresident fathers
- Does paternity leave-taking improve parental relationships?
 - Paternity leave may provide structural support for parents to enact egalitarian ideals and strengthen parental relationships
 - Relationship may be mediated by father involvement and moderated by parents' gender and mothers' work status

Data

- Data taken from three U.S. national longitudinal studies:
 - National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997 (NLSY97)
 - All waves through 2013
 - Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCW)
 - Wave 1 (baseline) through Wave 4 (5-year follow-up)
 - Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLSB)
 - Wave 1 (9 months post-birth) through Wave 3 (4 years post-birth)

Key Variables: Paternity Leave

- **NLSY97:** At each wave, respondents were asked whether there were any periods in which they took a full week or more of paid leave (and how long the period was) due to a pregnancy or birth of a child and how many days of paid leave they took
- **FFCW:** Fathers reported on whether they took time off of work due to the birth of a child, how many weeks of leave they took, and how many paid weeks they received while on leave (W2 survey)
- **ECLSB:** Mothers reported on whether resident fathers took time off for the birth of the child and how many weeks they took

Paternity leave defined as time off of work due to the birth of a child

- Paid paternity leave-taking (NLSY97 and FFCW)
- Paternity leave-taking (FFCW and ECLSB)
- Length of paternity leave (both paid and any)
 - No leave, 1 week or less, 1-2 weeks, more than 2 weeks

Key Variables: Father Involvement and Parental Relationship Outcomes

- Father Involvement
 - ECLSB
 - **Engagement in developmental activities:** How often fathers talk/sing, read books, tell stories, play with child, and take child outside to walk/play
 - **Caretaking:** How often fathers prepare meals, put child to sleep, dress, and bathe child
 - FFCW
 - **Engagement:** Days per week engaging in a number of activities with child
 - **Responsibility:** How often father looked after child when mother needed to do things (mother's reports)
- Parental Relationship Outcomes
 - ECLSB
 - **Relationship Satisfaction:** 1 = not too happy to 3 = very happy
 - **Conflict:** How often parents argue about things (10 items)
 - FFCW
 - **Relationship Quality:** 1 = poor to 5 = excellent
 - **Relationship Support:** 9 items, asked only of mothers who were romantically involved with fathers
 - **Coparenting Quality:** 6 items that assess the extent to which fathers support mothers in parenting

Other Variables

- Age
- Race/Ethnicity
- Income
- Education
- Hours Worked
- Occupational Type
- Relationship Status with Mother
- Number of Children
- Age and gender of focal child
- Religious participation
- Father attitudes (traditional gender attitudes, positive father attitudes)
- Prenatal involvement
- Nativity
- Mother's work hours and income
- Length of maternity leave

Methodological Approach

- Short-term influence of paternity leave (and predicting paternity leave)
 - OLS, logistic regression
- Long-term influence of paternity leave
 - Multilevel models (growth curve models)
- Selection analyses
 - Propensity score matching (to assess selection for paternity leave-taking)
 - Augmented inverse propensity weighted estimators (to assess selection for length of paternity leave)

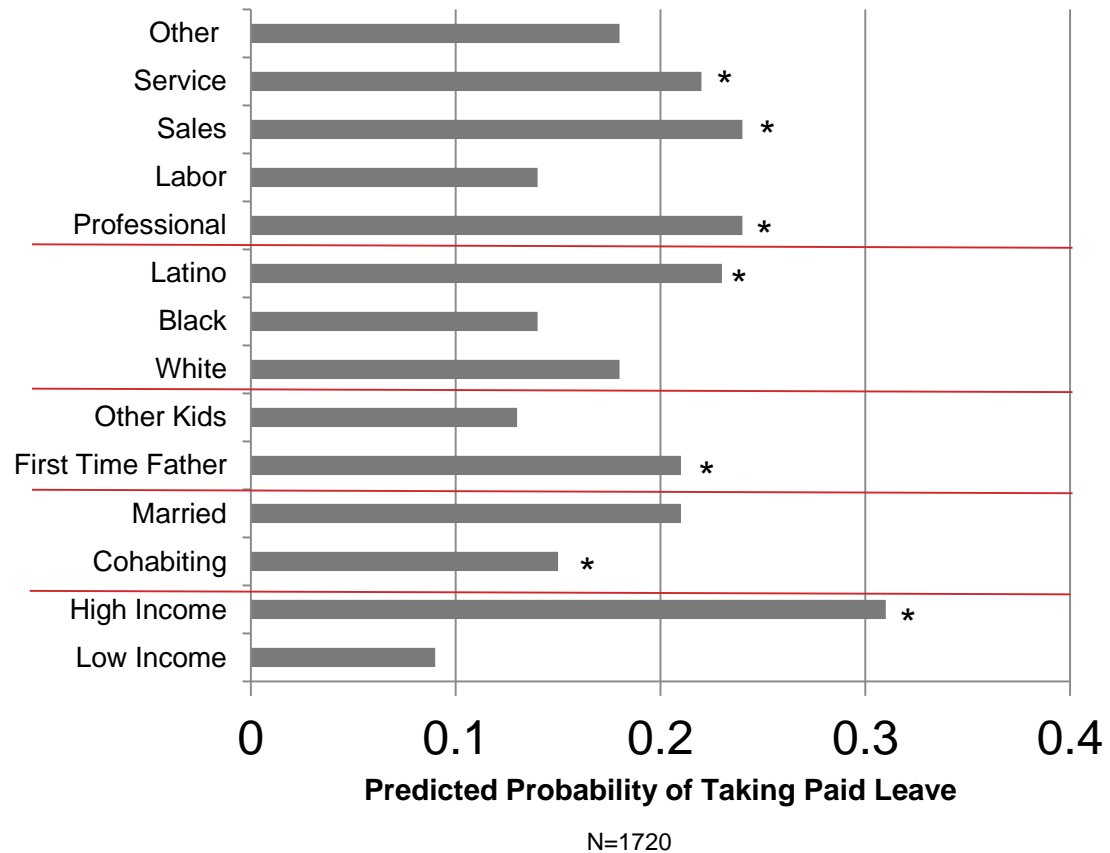
** Significant results presented reflect findings that are significant only after taking into account these selection models**

Who takes leave?

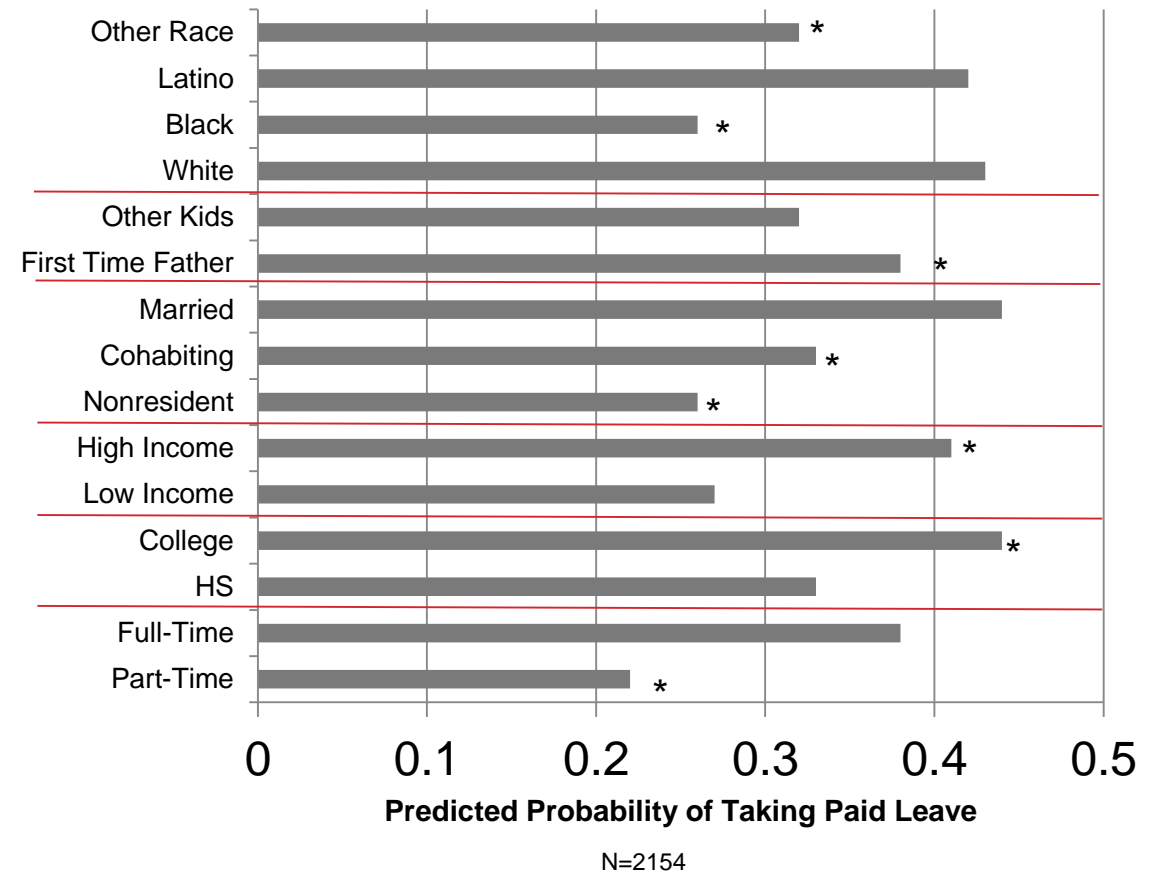
- Any leave
 - **FFCW**: 79% of fathers, 1.06 weeks on average
 - **ECLSB**: 88% of fathers, 1.35 weeks on average
- Paid leave
 - **NLSY97**: 24% of fathers, 0.5 weeks on average
 - **FFCW**: 42% of fathers, 0.6 weeks on average

Predictors of Paid Leave-Taking

NLSY97

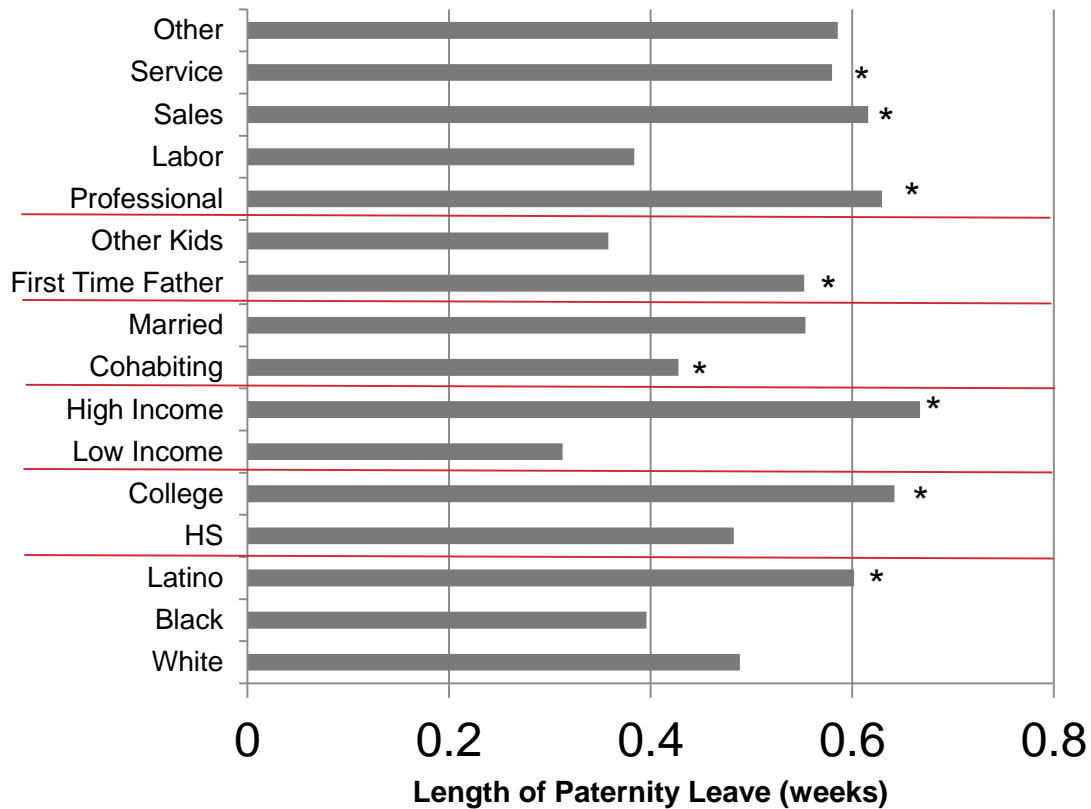


FFCW



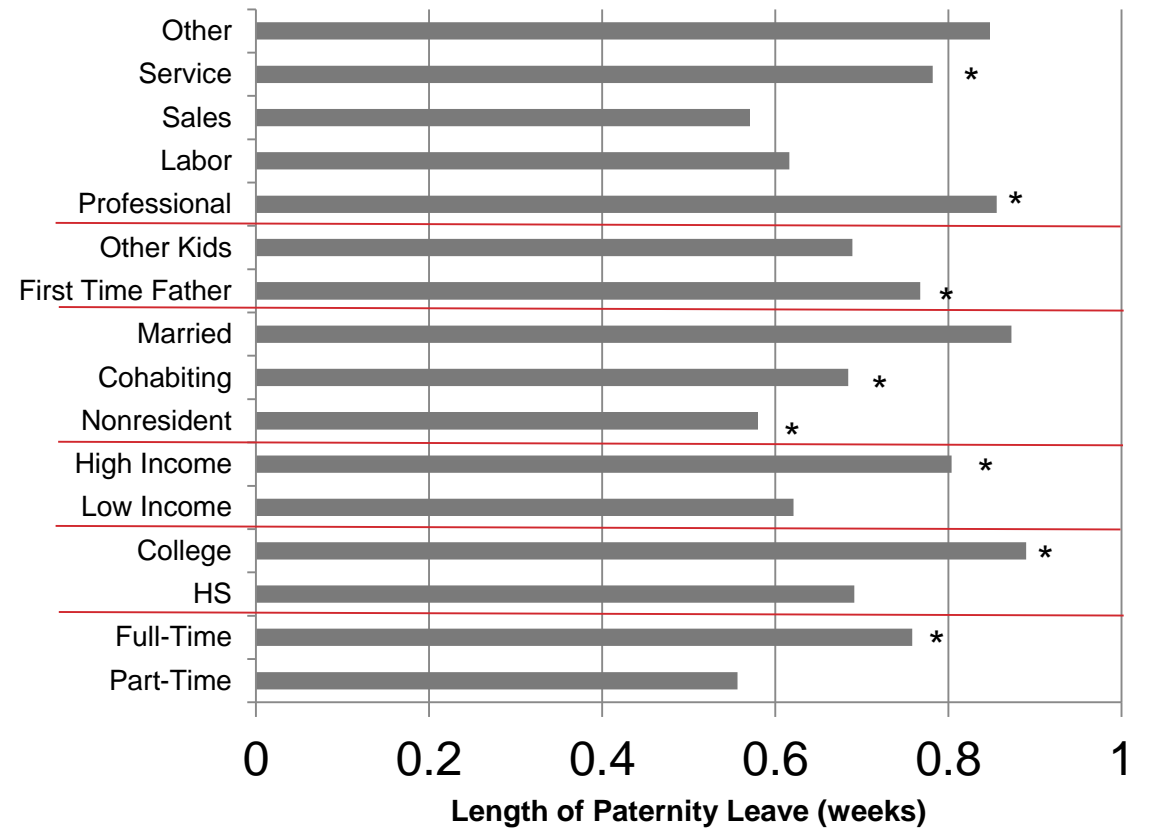
Predictors of Length of Paid Leave

NLSY97



N=1720

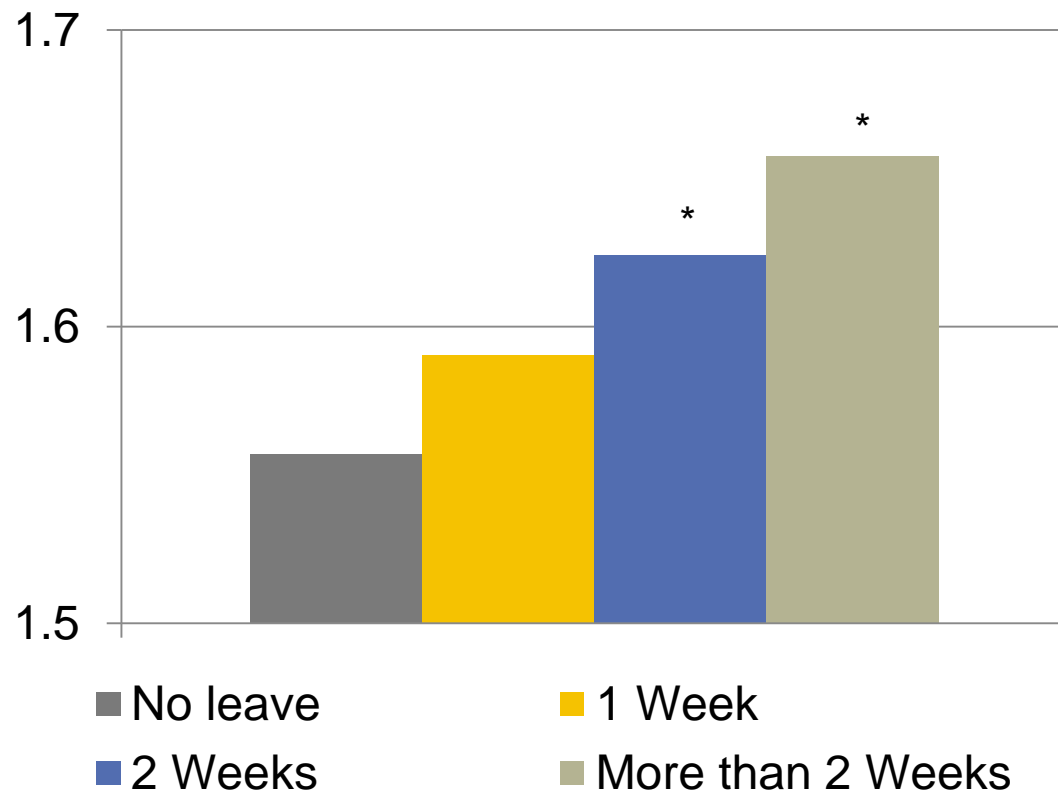
FFCW



N=2154

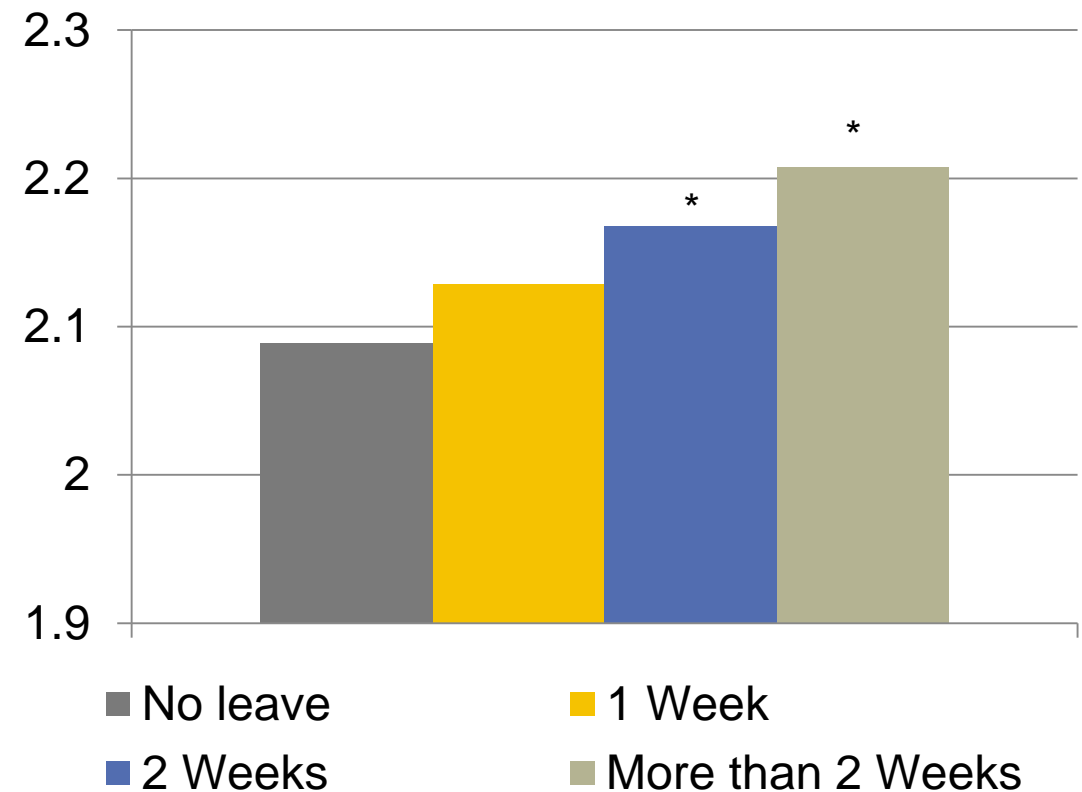
Father Involvement 9 months After Birth (ECLSB)

Developmental tasks



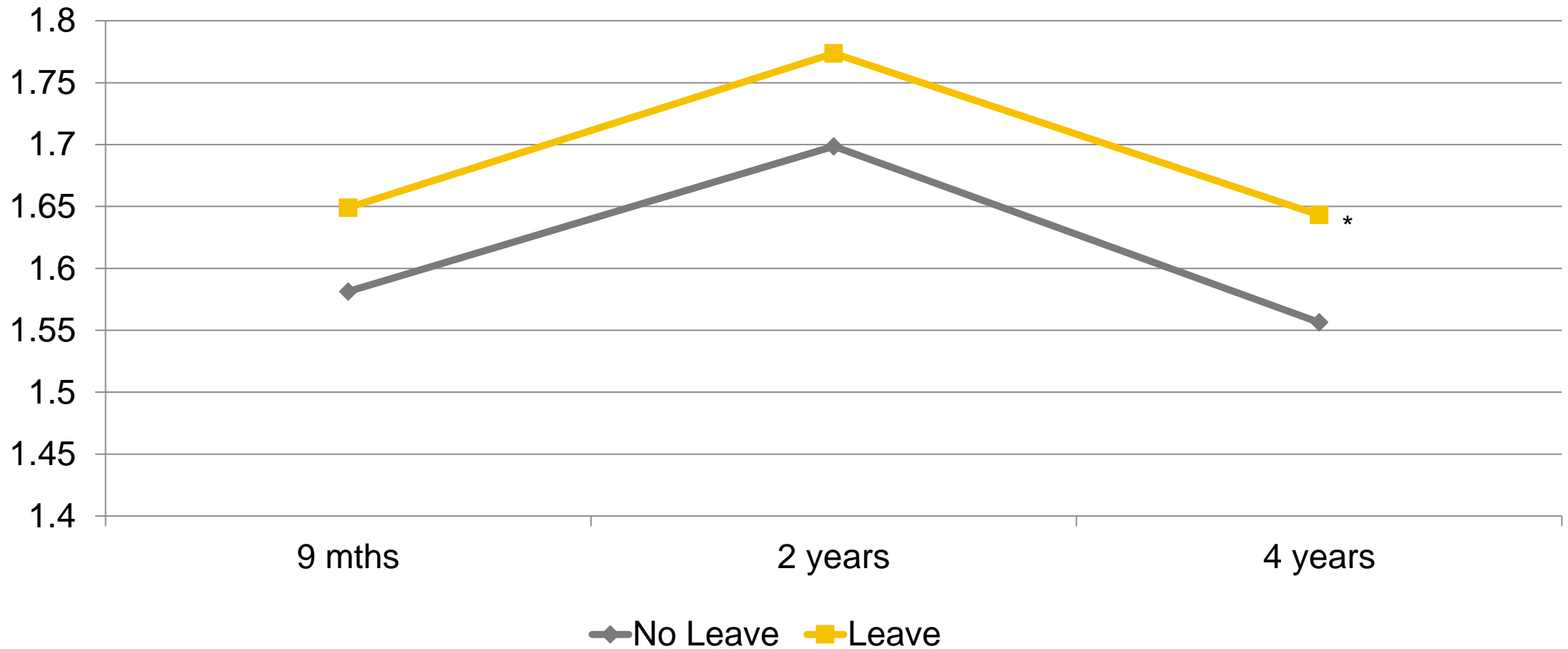
N=5000

Caretaking



N=5000

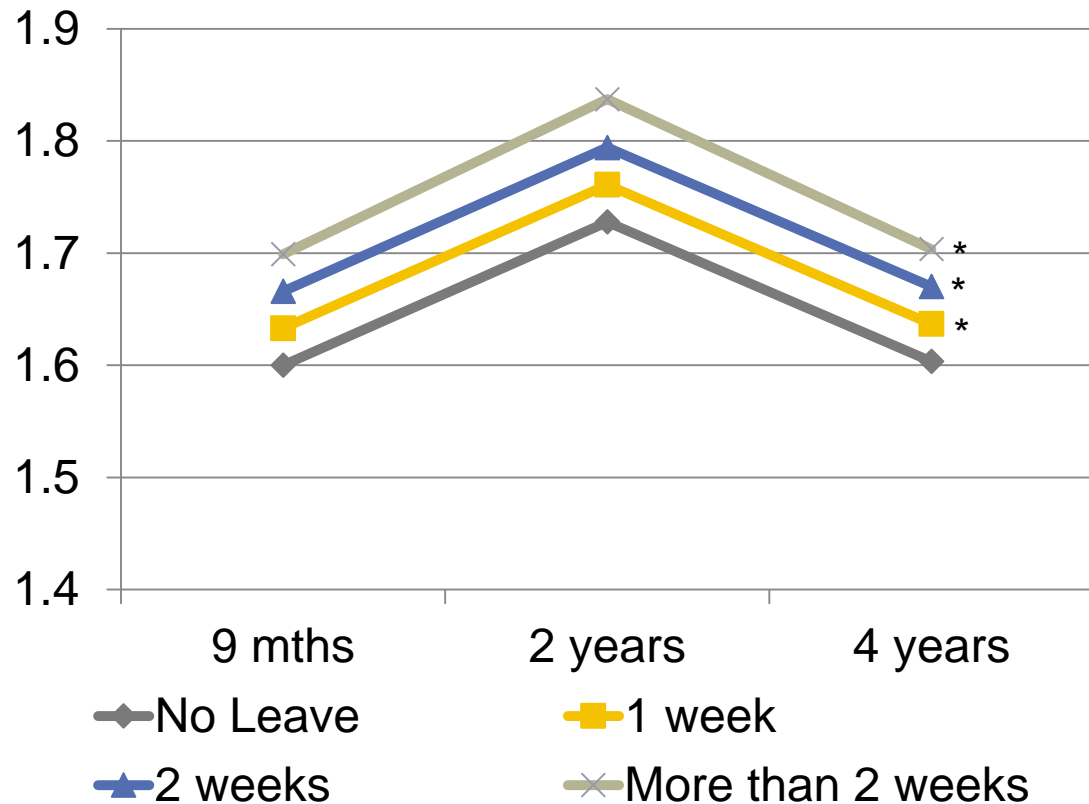
Longitudinal Engagement in Developmental Tasks (ECLSB)



N=3100

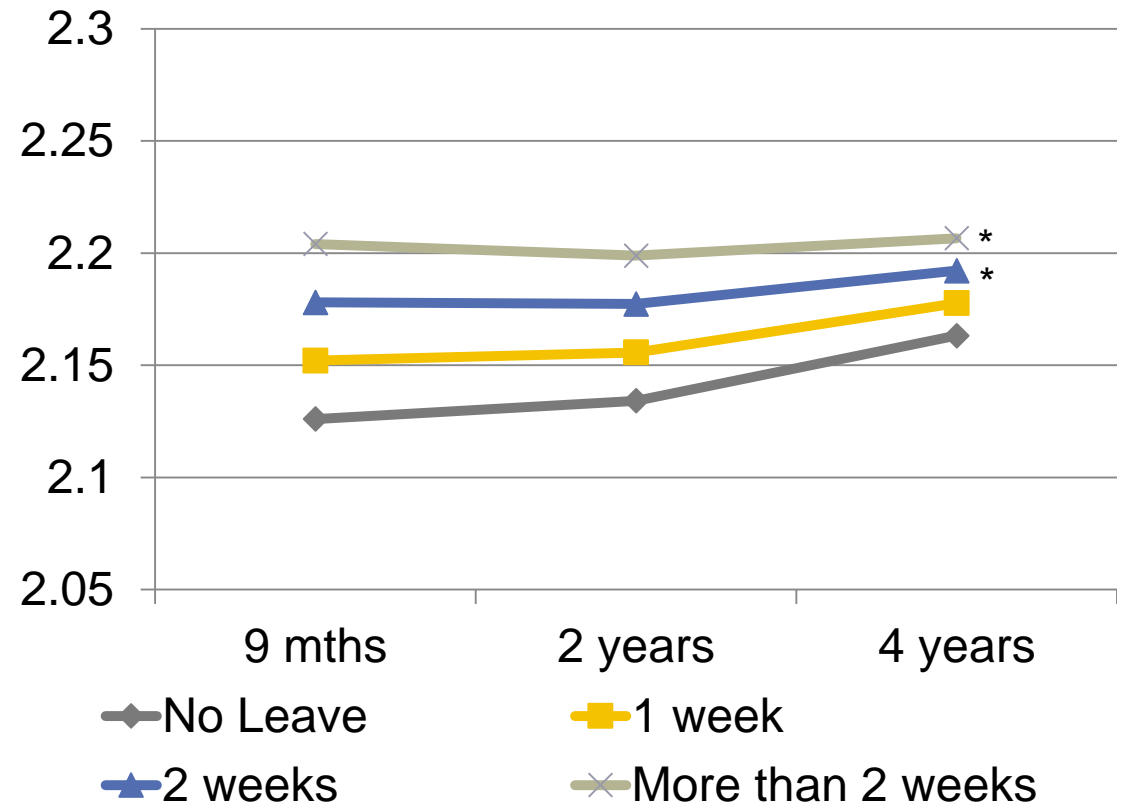
Longitudinal Involvement (ECLSB)

Developmental tasks



N=3100

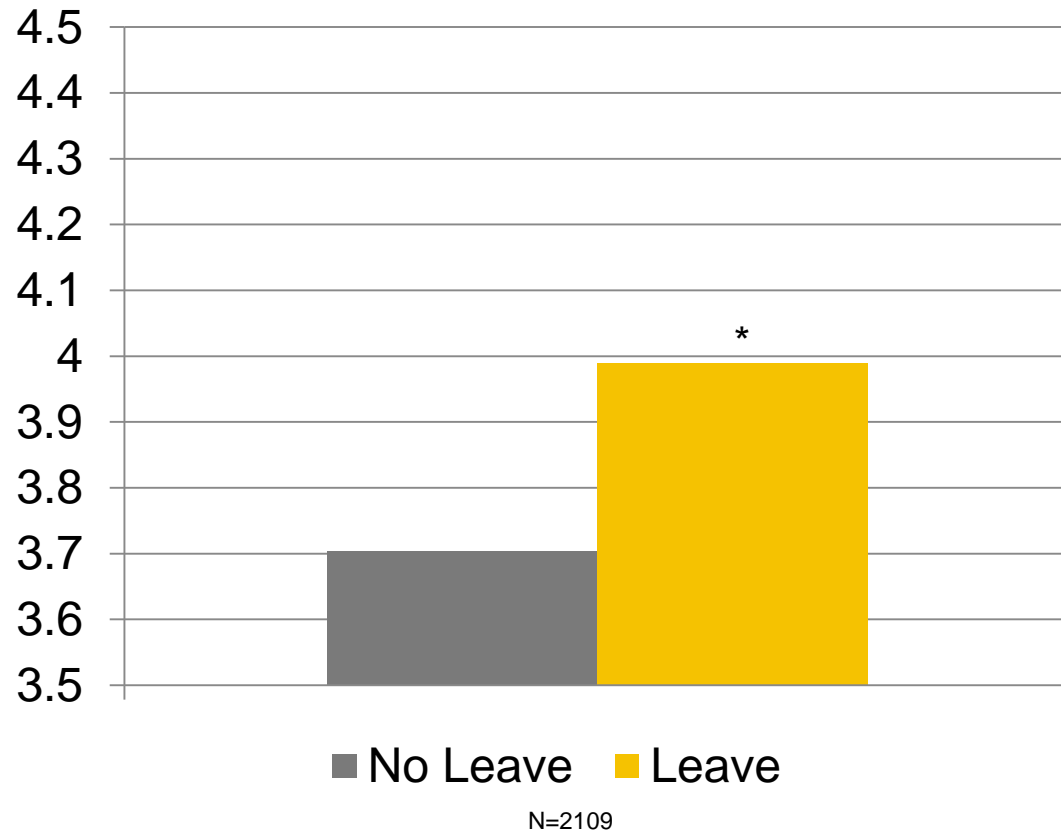
Caretaking



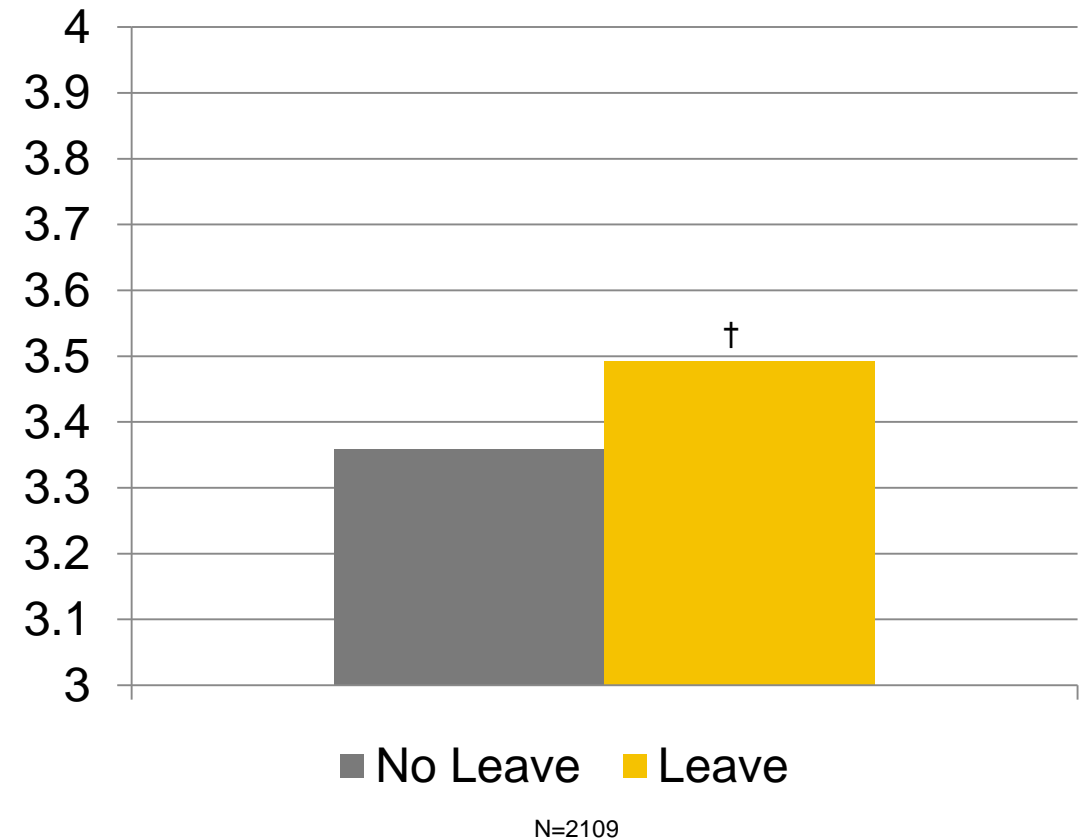
N=3100

Father Involvement One Year After Birth (FFCW)

Developmental tasks

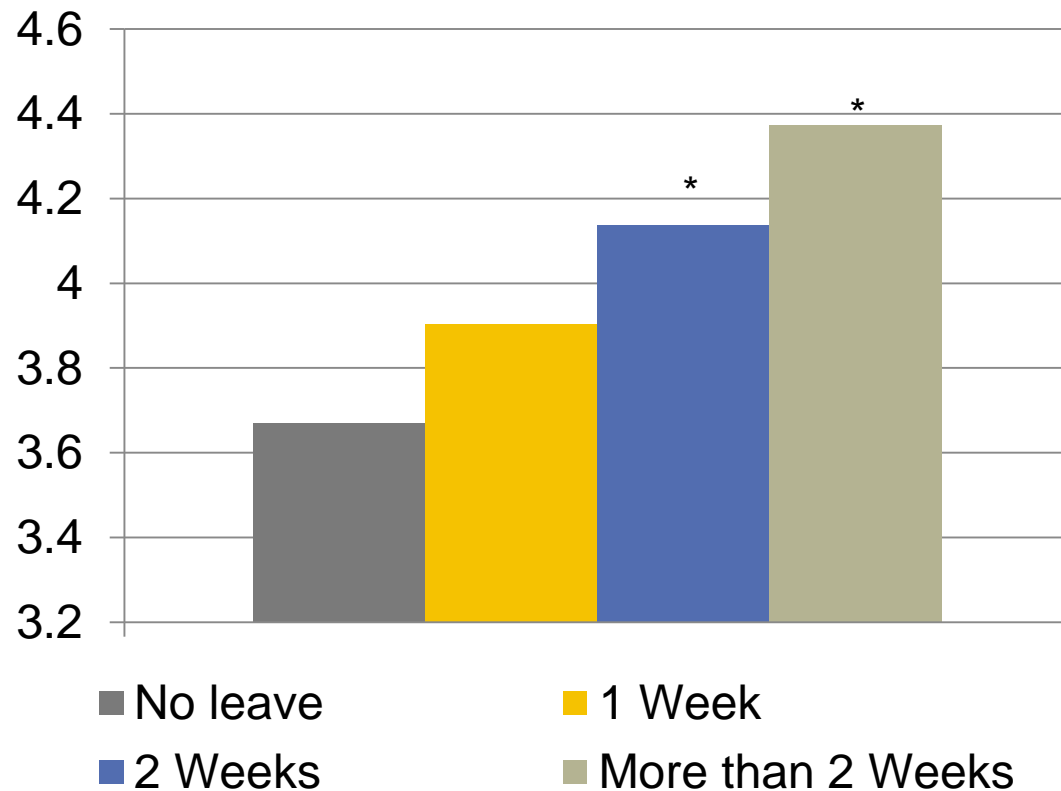


Responsibility



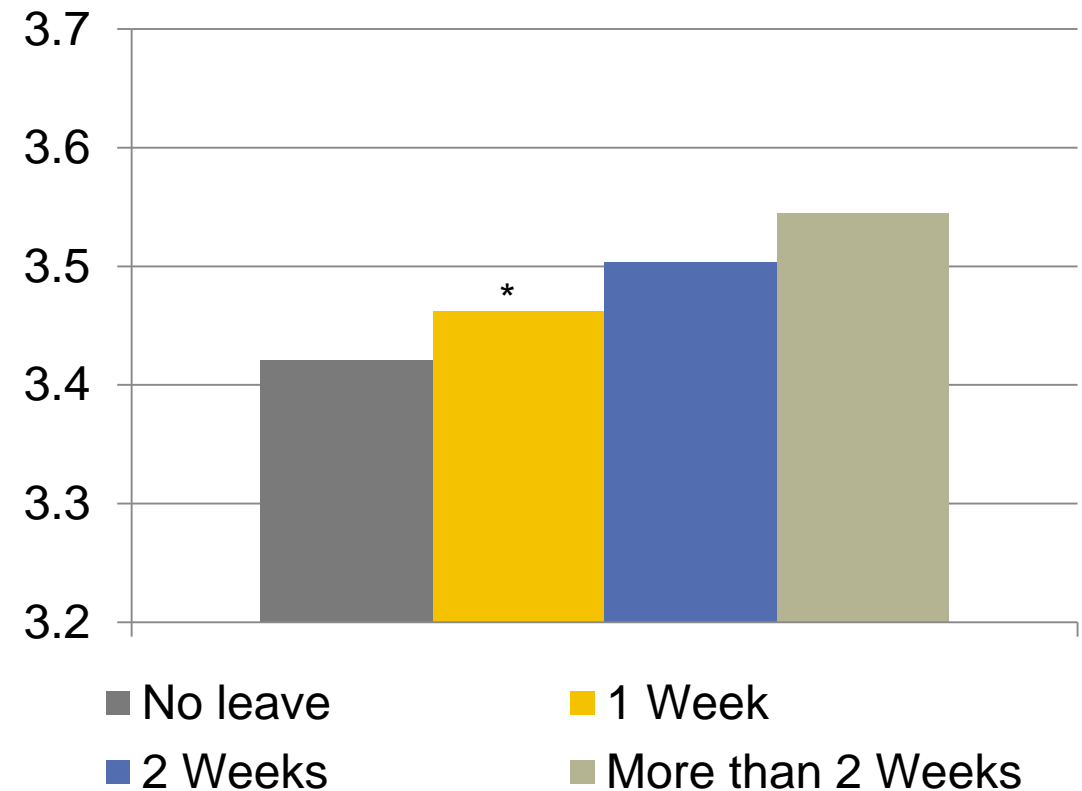
Father Involvement One Year After Birth (FFCW)

Developmental tasks



N=2109

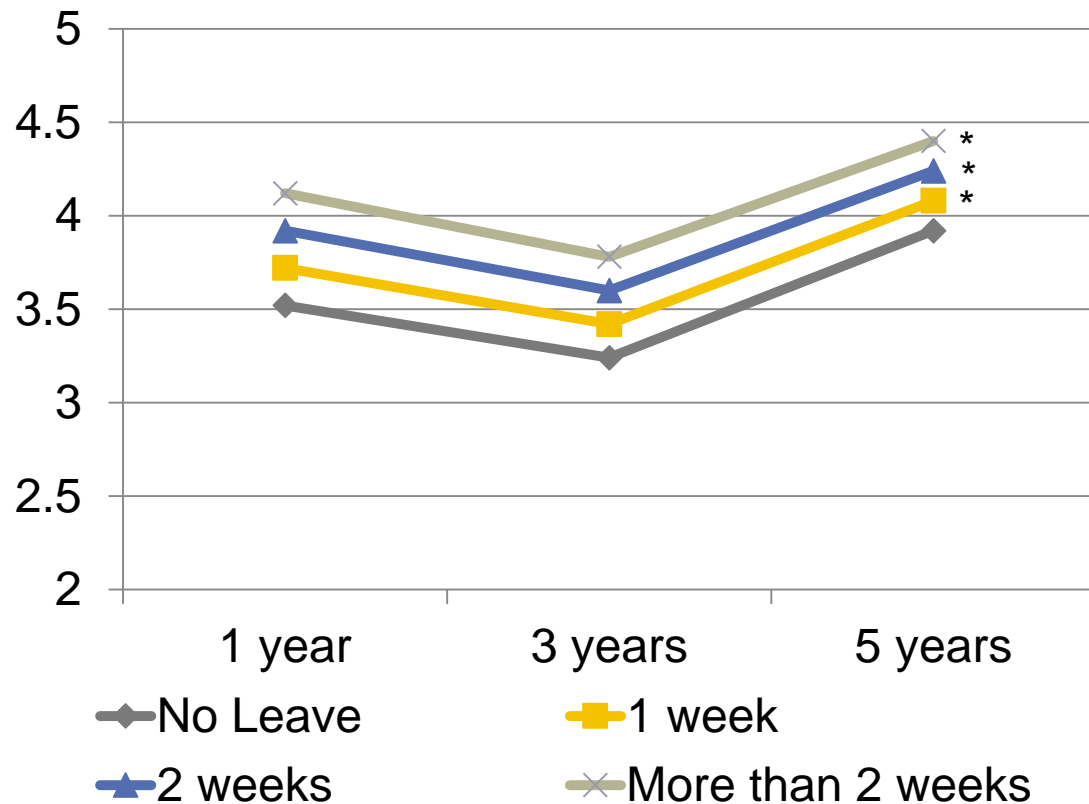
Responsibility



N=2109

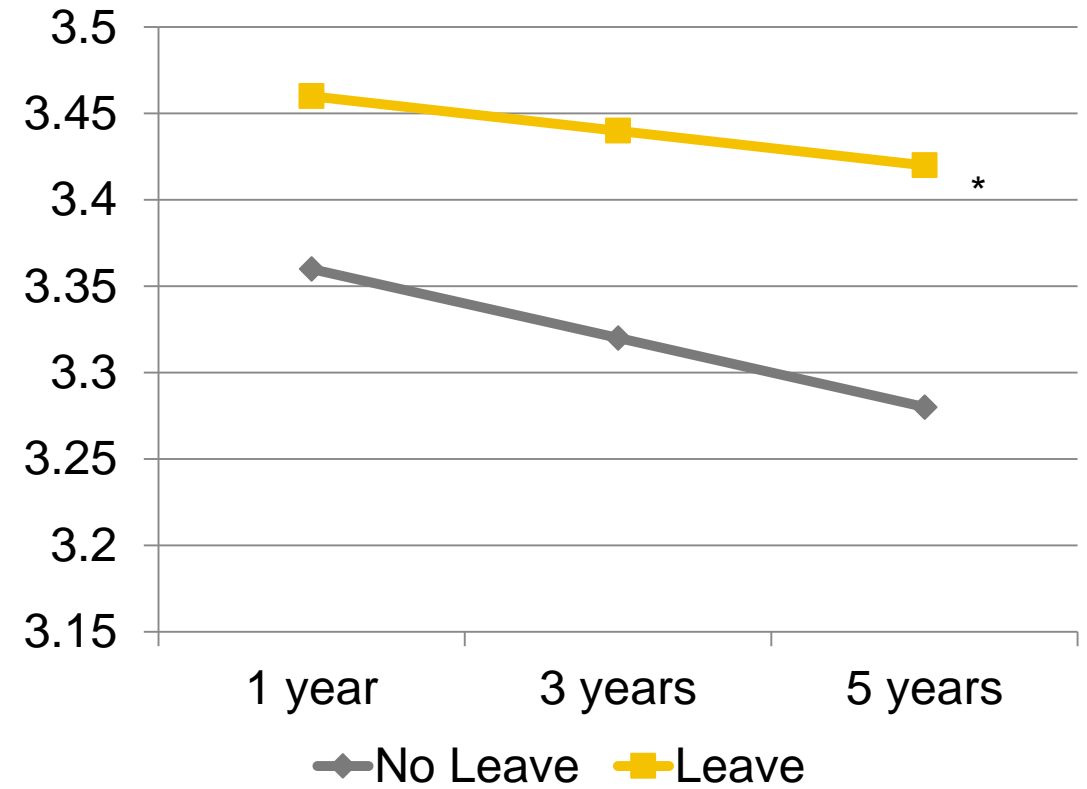
Longitudinal Involvement (FFCW)

Developmental tasks



N=1494

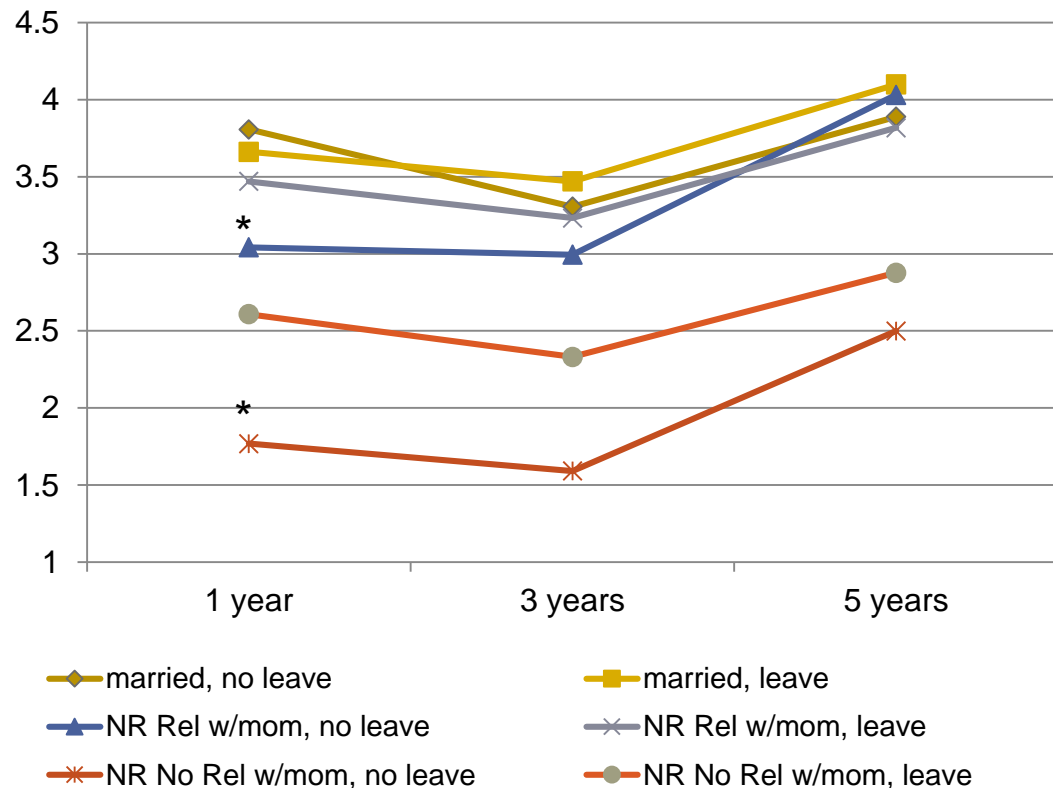
Responsibility



N=1494

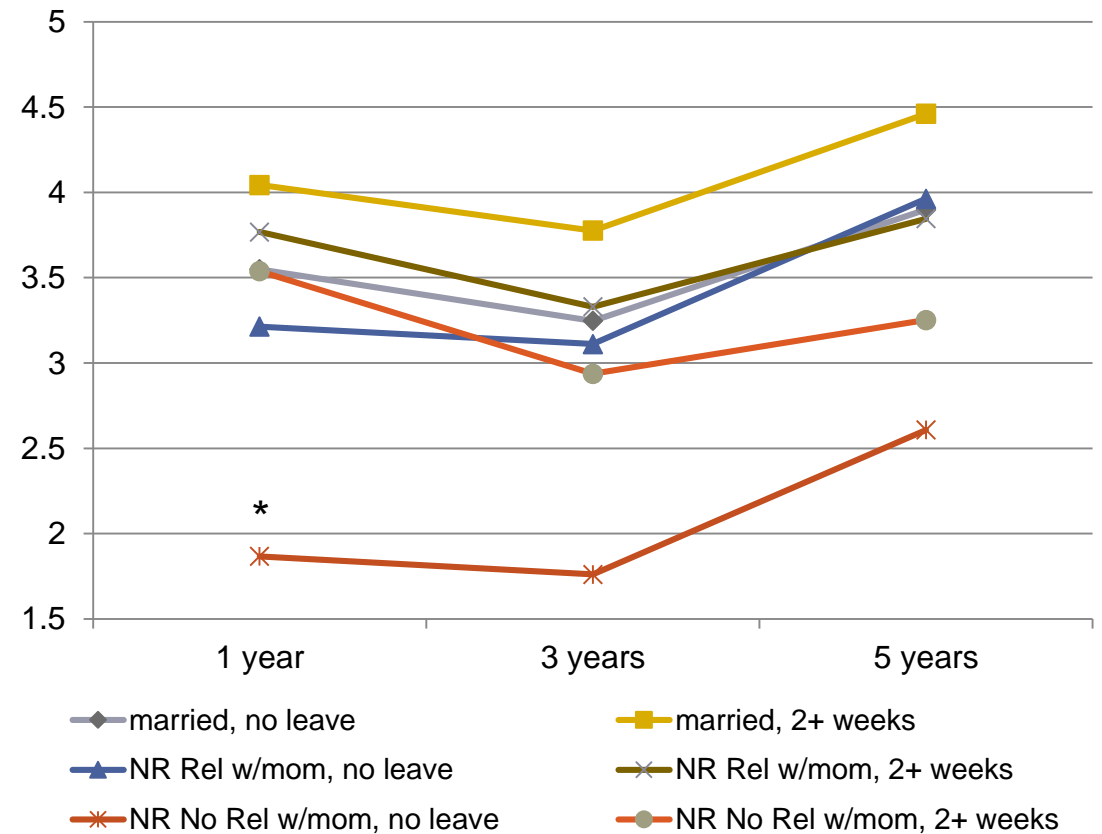
Paternity Leave and Engagement in Developmental Tasks: Variations by Relationship Status (FFCW)

Paternity Leave-Taking



N=1494

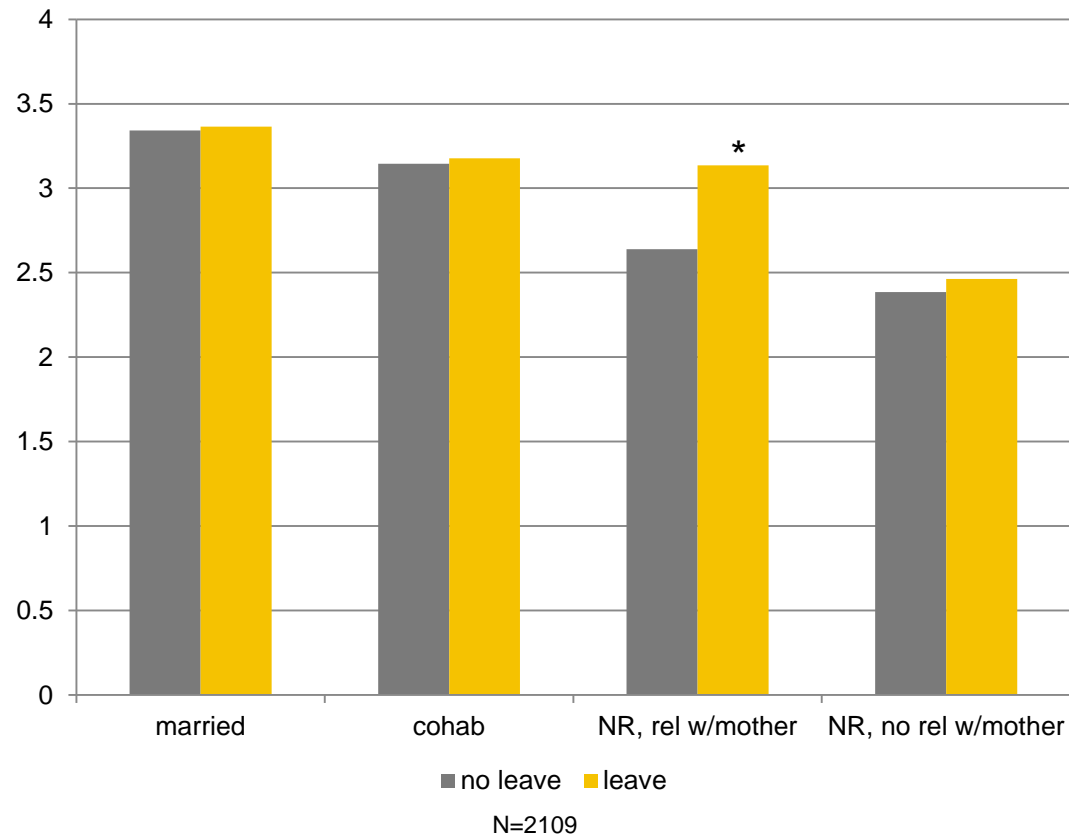
Length of Paternity Leave



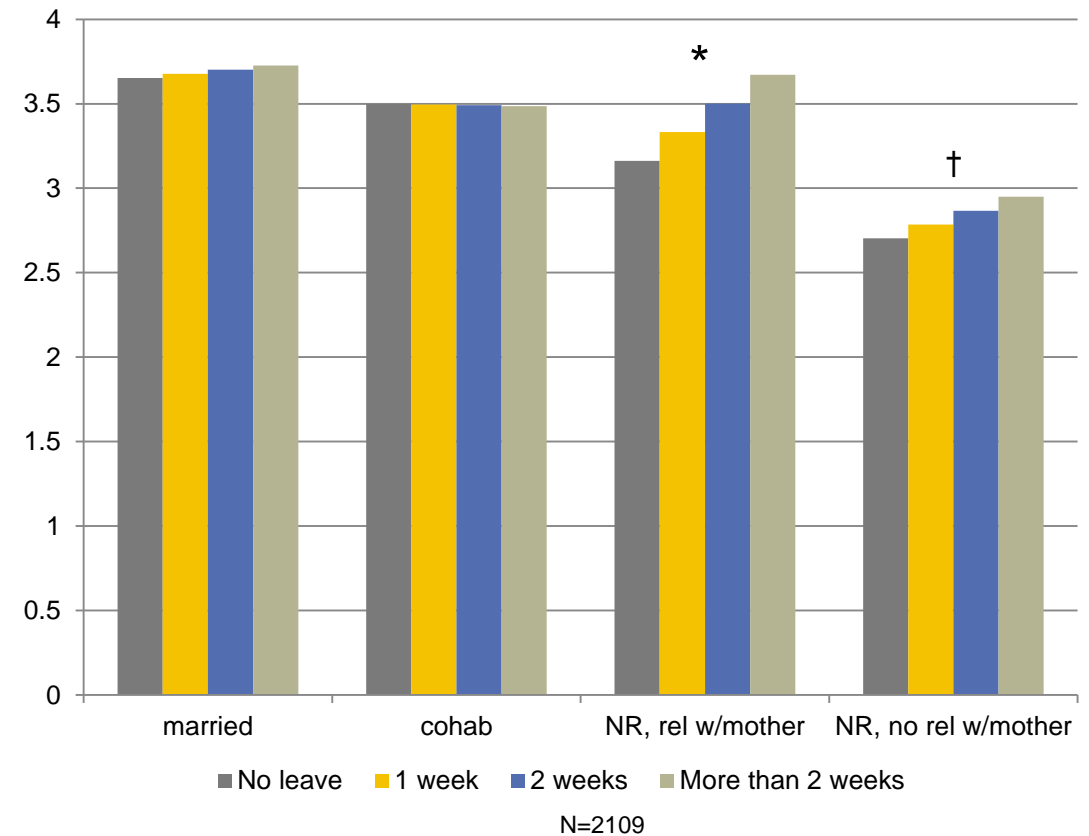
N=1494

Paternity Leave and Responsibility: Variations by Relationship Status (FFCW)

Paternity Leave-Taking

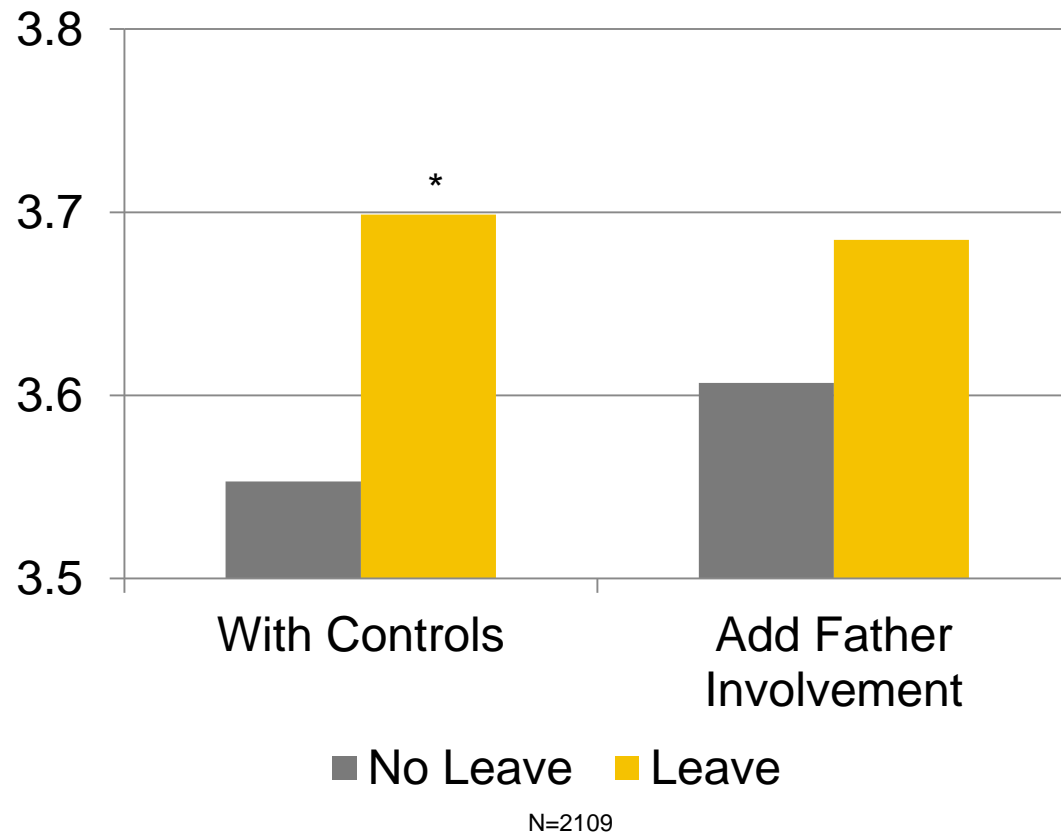


Length of Paternity Leave

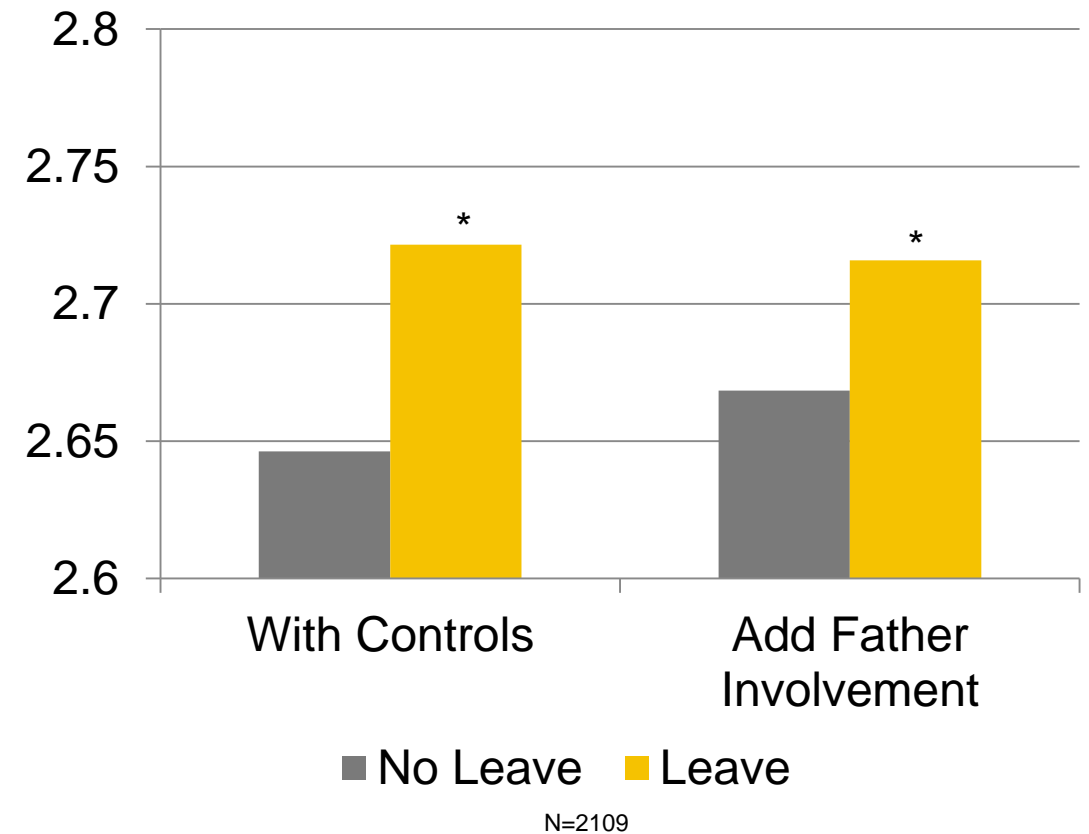


Parental Relationships One Year After Birth (FFCW)

Relationship Quality

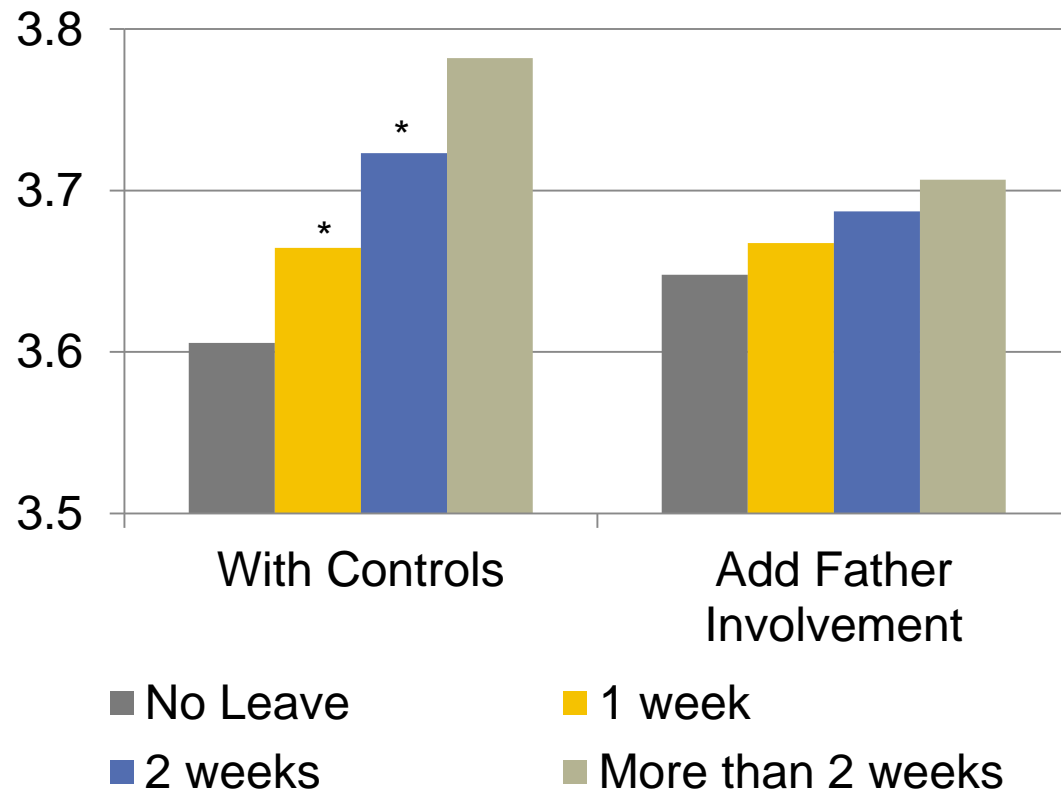


Coparenting Quality



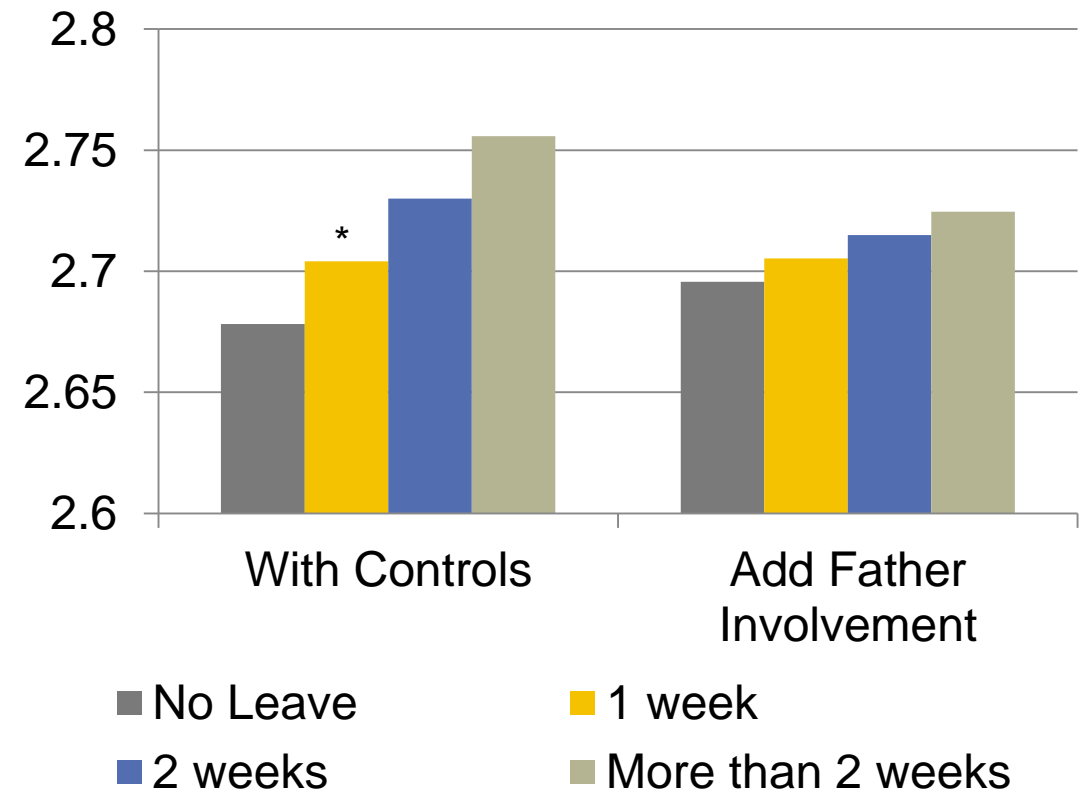
Parental Relationships One Year After Birth (FFCW)

Relationship Quality



N=2109

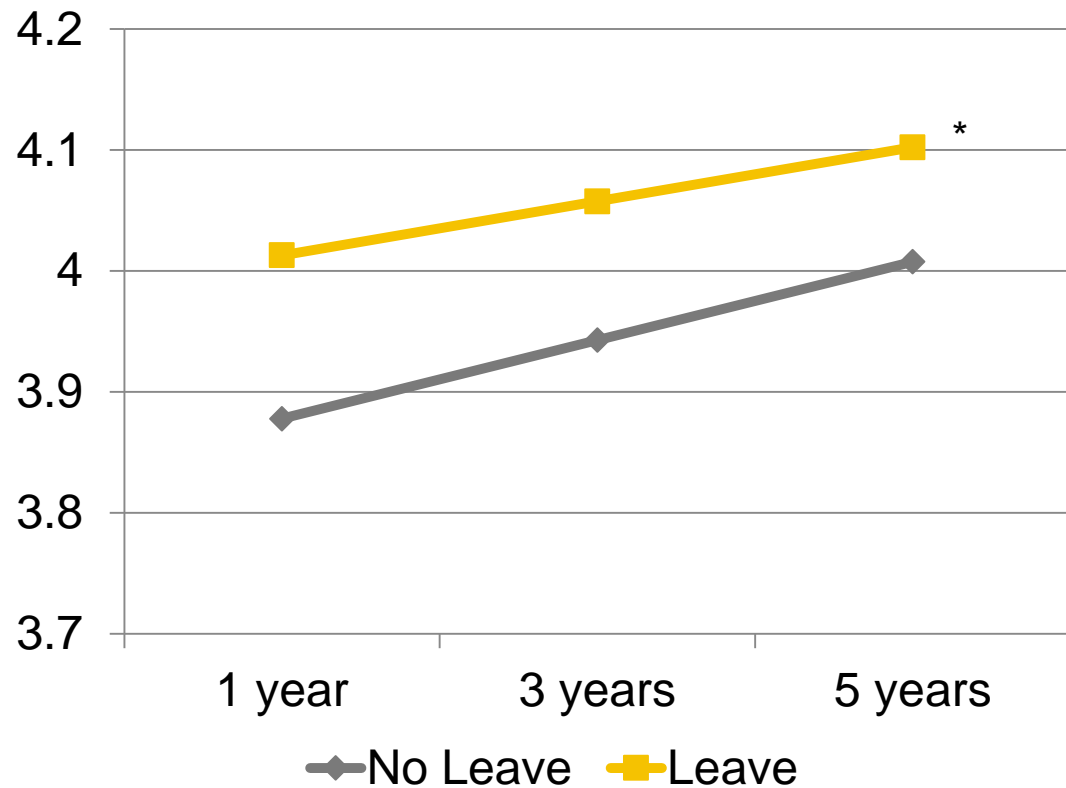
Coparenting Quality



N=2109

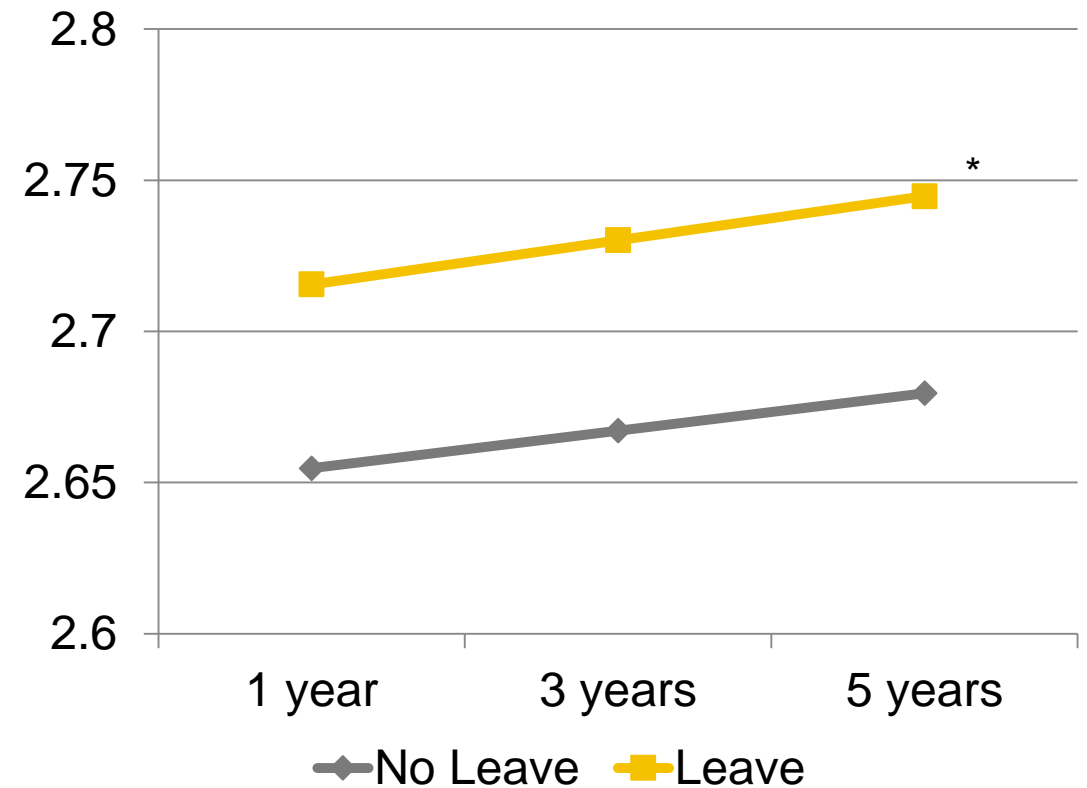
Longitudinal Parental Relationships (FFCW)

Relationship Quality



N=1494

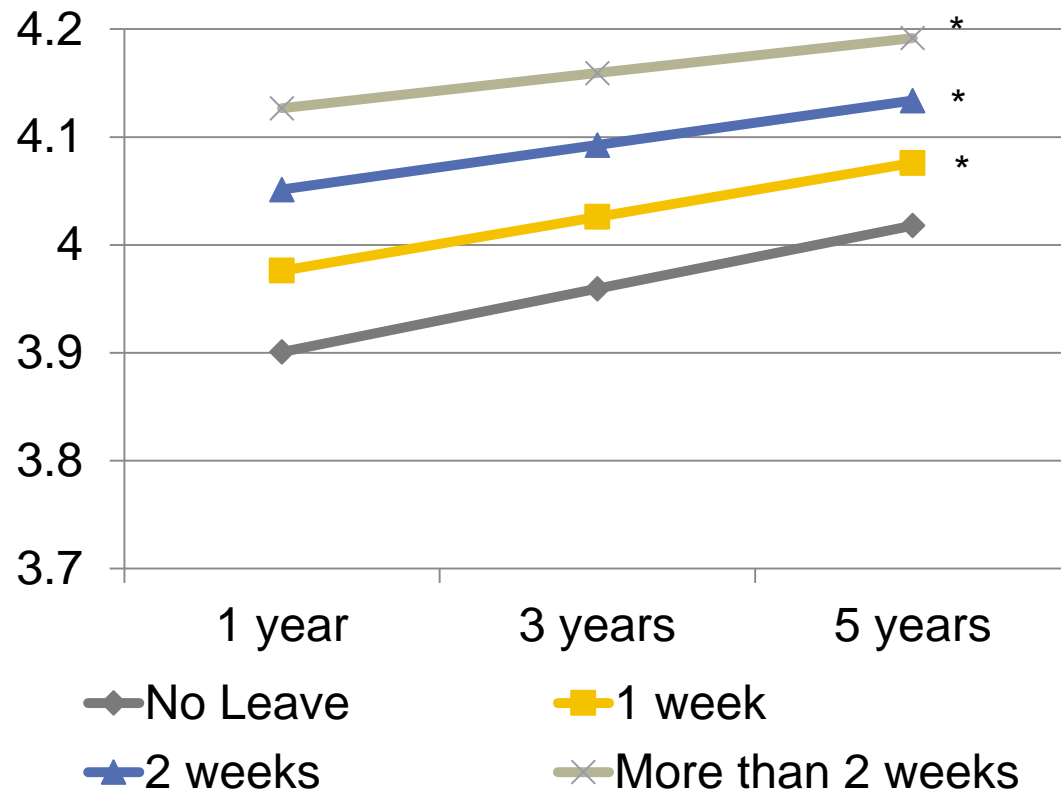
Coparenting Quality



N=1494

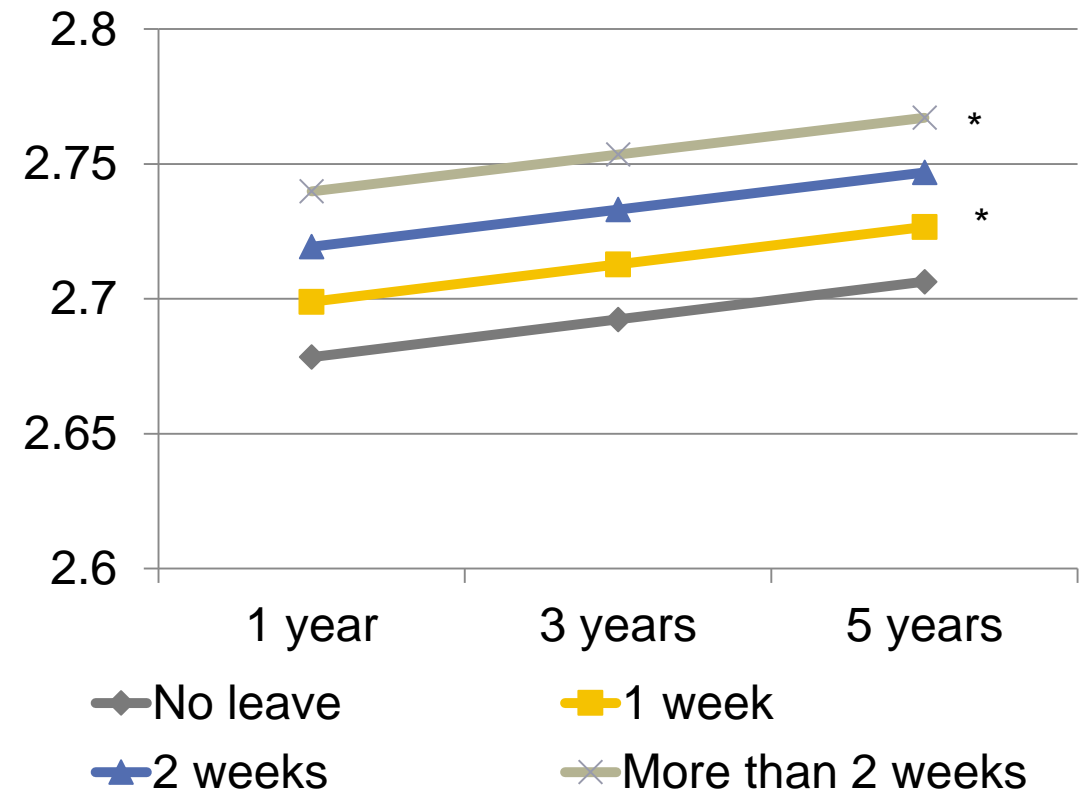
Longitudinal Parental Relationships (FFCW)

Relationship Quality



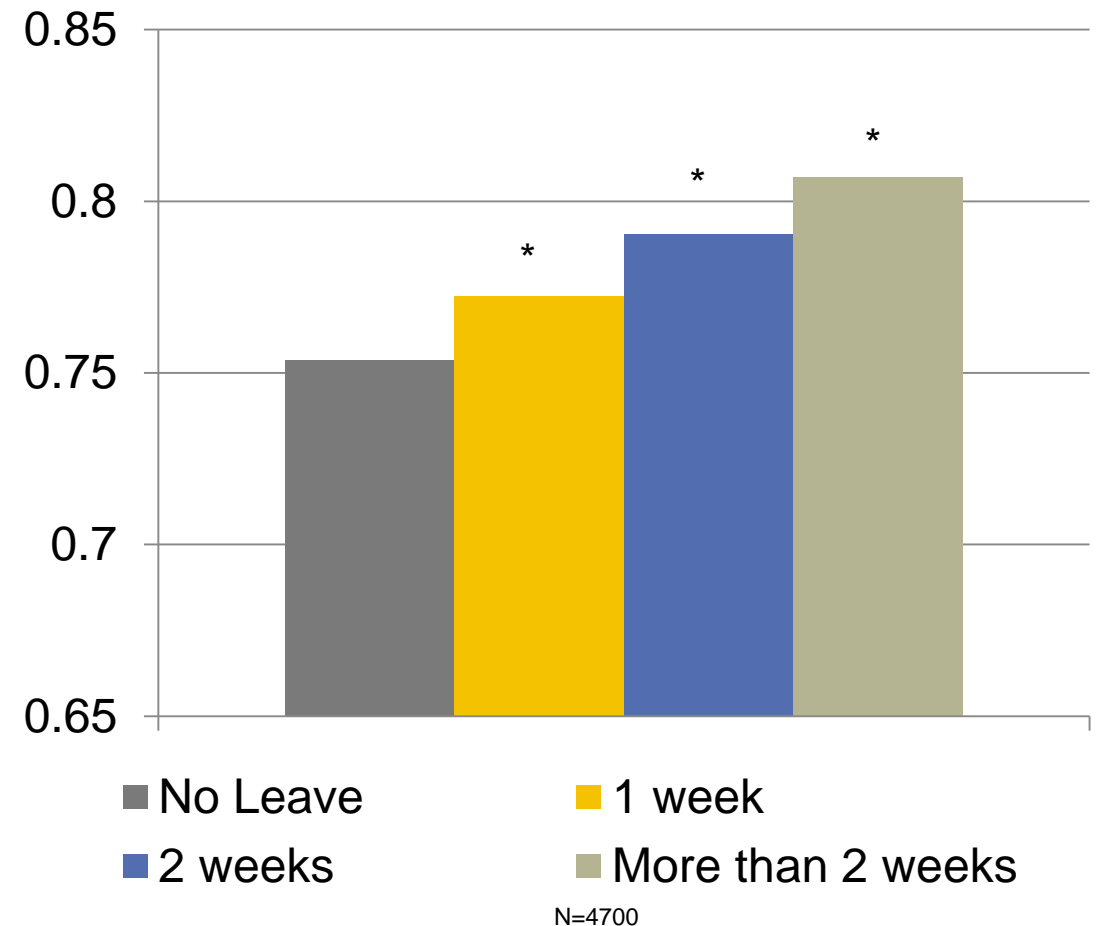
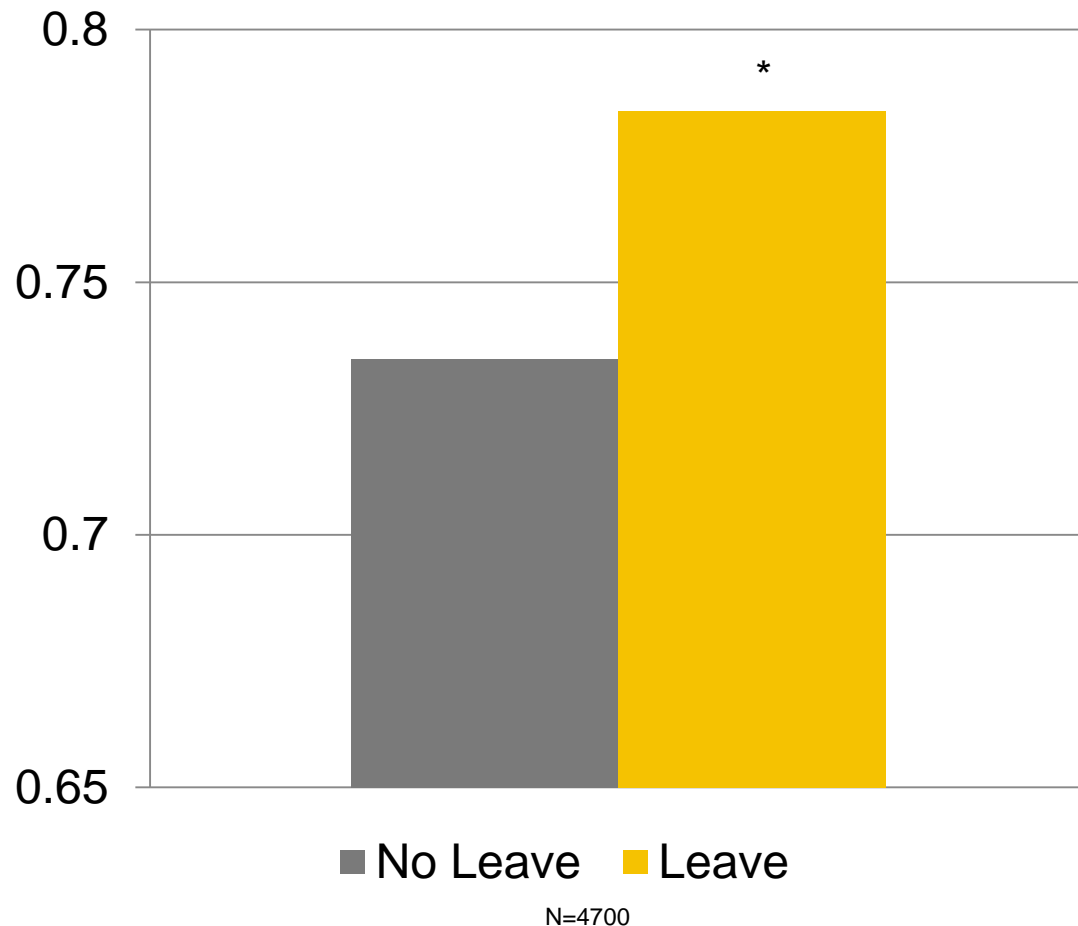
N=1494

Coparenting Quality



N=1494

Predicted Probabilities of Mother's Reporting Being "Very Happy" with their Relationship 9 Months After Birth (ECLSB)



Mother's Reports of Relationship Conflict 9 Months after Birth (ECLSB)



Conclusions

- Current structure of leave in the U.S. may exacerbate inequalities, contributing to the trend of diverging destinies of families
 - Increasing access to paid leave (and providing longer periods of leave) may help to reduce family inequality
- Increasing paternity leave opportunities may help to promote greater levels of father involvement, which is shown to benefit fathers and children
- Increasing paternity leave opportunities may help to strengthen nonresident father families
- Expanding parental leave policies may provide the structural support that parents need to enact egalitarian ideals
 - Doing so may strengthen parental relationships, and especially mothers' perceptions of relationships