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**Paternity leave and father's
involvement in the care of an infant**
Time diary evidence from Australia

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Outline

- Background
- Review recent research from US, UK and Sweden
- Data, variables and method
- Results
 - Infants total time with father
 - Infants time with father in routine physical care
 - Any time with father, mother absent
 - Any time with father, mother absent, routine physical care
- Discussion of findings



Acknowledgement

This paper uses unit record data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) Survey. The LSAC Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and is managed by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). The findings and views reported here, however, are those of the authors and should not be attributed to either FaHCSIA or AIFS.

What role do fathers have?

- Changing views on fathering
- Trends show increases in paternal care
 - Fathers' absolute time
 - Fathers' relative contribution

Parental leave and father care

- “Experience” effect
 - During leave fathers learn parenting skills
 - Mothers, as gate-keepers, allocate caring tasks
- “Selection” effect
 - Fathers who view role as more than economic breadwinner choose to take leave
 - Mothers encourage leave where value sharing of child-rearing or father-child bonding

Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel (2007)

US fathers who took 2 or more weeks leave were ...

More likely to

Diaper more than once/day

More likely to

Feed infant more than once/day

More likely to

Dress infant at leave once/day

More likely to

Bath infant at least a few times/week

Neither more/less likely to

Get up at night always or often

Community, Work and Family 10(4): 427-453

Haas and Hwang (2008)

Swedish fathers who took more days leave were ...

More likely to	Care 'solo' while partner worked
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No more likely to	More responsibility for caring than mother
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More time with	Children on a workday
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No more time with	Children on a non-workday
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More likely to	Perform more physical care tasks
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Research question

Is fathers' uptake of parental leave or a longer parental leave associated with greater involvement in infant care in Australia once fathers have returned to employment?

- Unable to definitively test whether “exposure” or “selection” models explain association
- Reproduce previous research with different measures of fathers' involvement

Data

- LSAC infant sample
 - Children born March 2003 to February 2004

- Wave 1
 - March-November 2004
 - Study child aged 3 to 19 months
 - Interview survey response rate 57%
 - Time diary survey returned by 77% interviewed parents

- Wave 1.5, with Parental Leave in Australia Survey
 - May-September 2005
 - Study child aged 15 to 30 months
 - Mail-out returned by 70% wave 1 participants

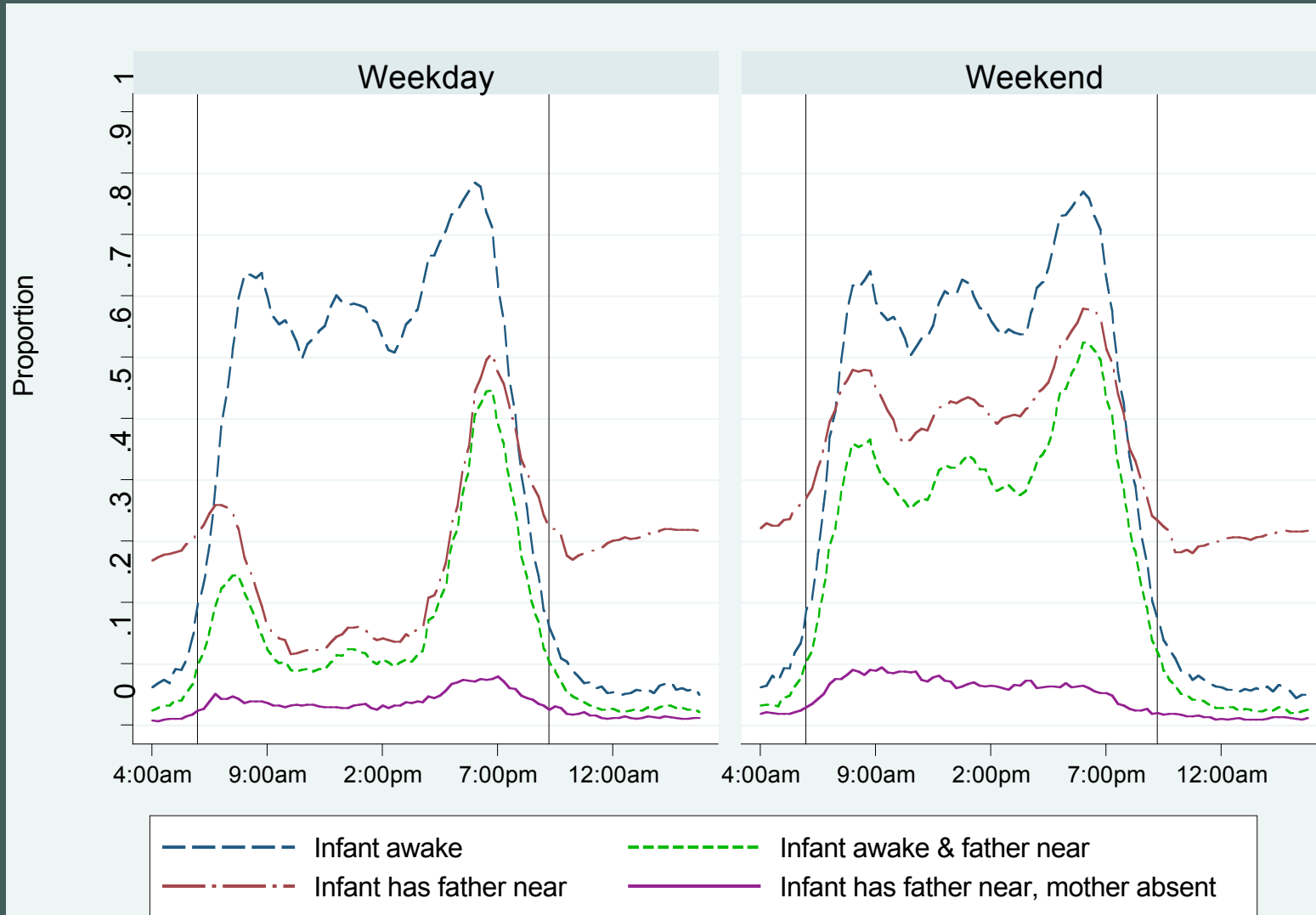
Sample

- Infants in stable family with mother and father
 - Father employed
 - Father 'eligible' for leave
- Mother and/or father provide necessary data
 - Employment and family - wave 1 interview
 - Infant's daily activities - wave 1 time diary
 - Use of leave - wave 1.5 questionnaire
- Final sample
 - 2,196 weekday diaries
 - 2,130 weekend diaries

Dependent variables

- Hours infant has their father with them
 - Father “in the same room, or was near the child if the child was outside”
 - Sum 15min spells infant with father
 - Exclude diary entries before 6.00am and after 9.30pm
 - Include spells awake and asleep
- Hours infant in routine physical care with father
 - Bathing, nappy change, dress, hair care
 - Other eating, drinking, being fed
- Across most spells mother also with infant

Figure 1: Proportion infants' awake and proportion with father



Source: LSAC infant time diary, wave 1 (2004)

Figure 2: Distribution of infants' time with father, 6am – 9.30pm

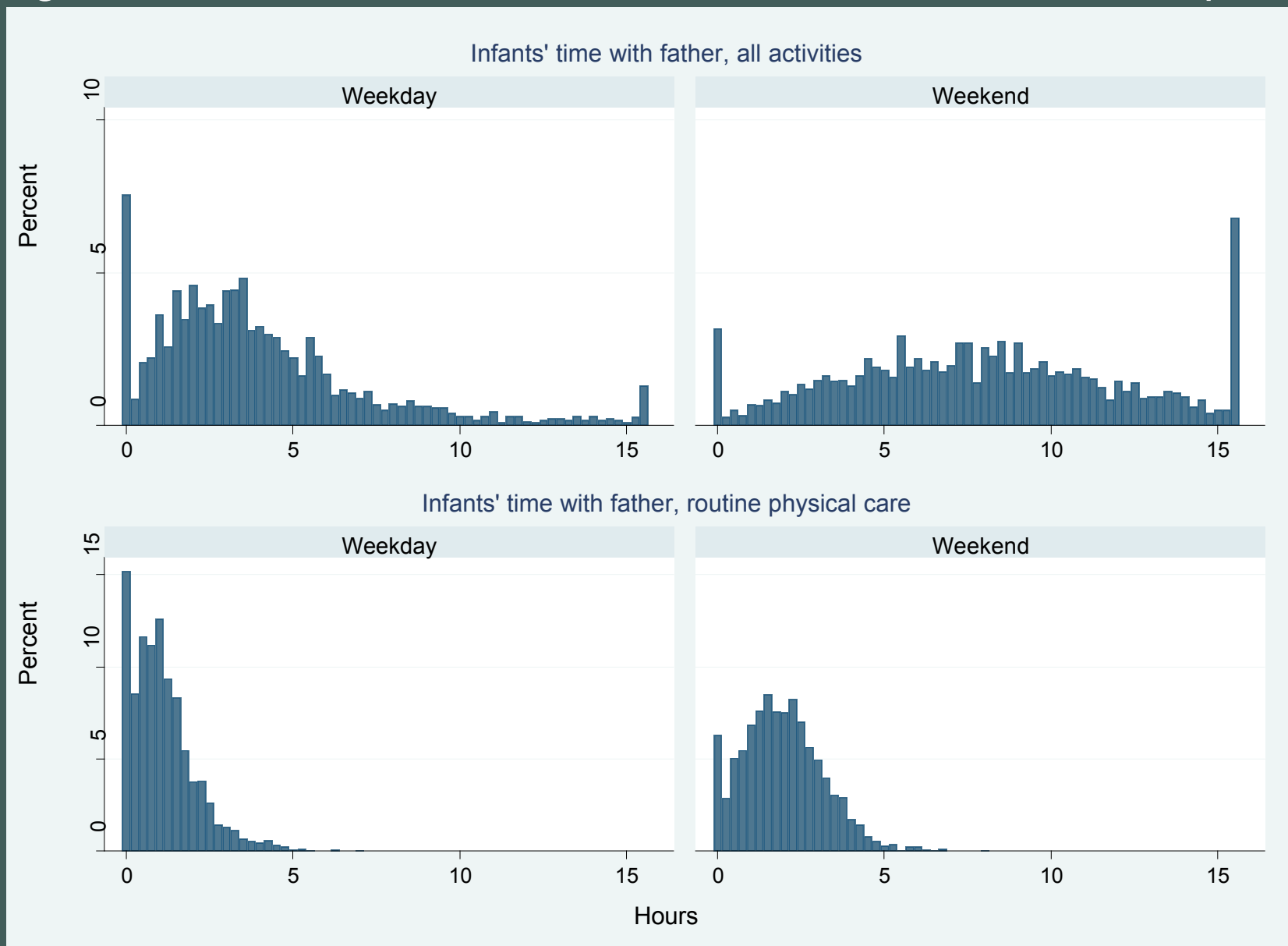
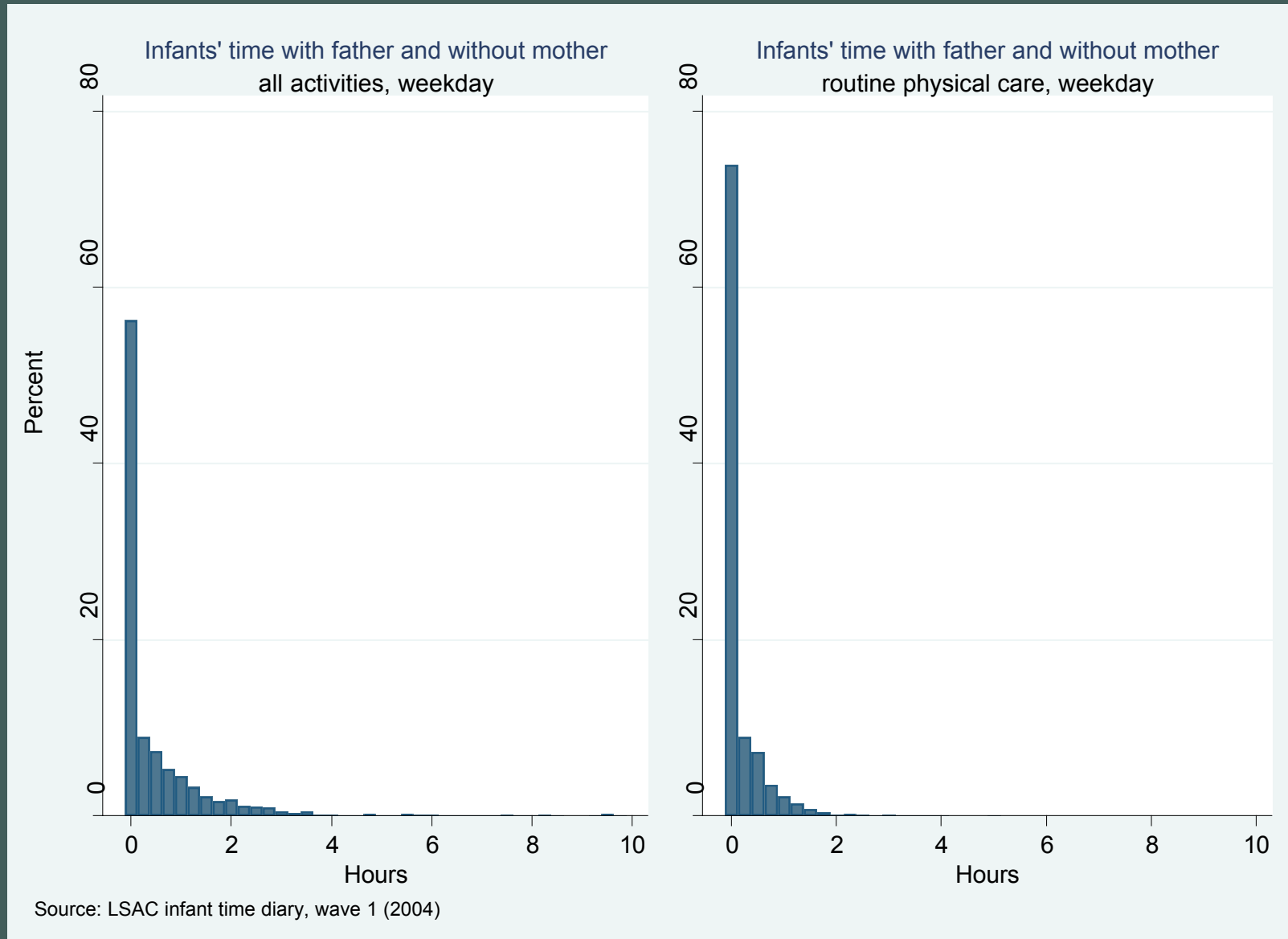


Figure 3: Distribution of infants' time with father and without mother, 6am – 9.30pm, employed fathers



Dependent variables

Infant with their father and mother absent

- Infant in any activity

- Coded yes if at least one 15min spell with father, not mother
- Includes awake and asleep

- Infant in routine physical care

- Coded yes if at least one 15min spell with father, not mother, and either:
 - (1) bathing, nappy change, dress, hair care or
 - (2) other eating, drinking, being fed

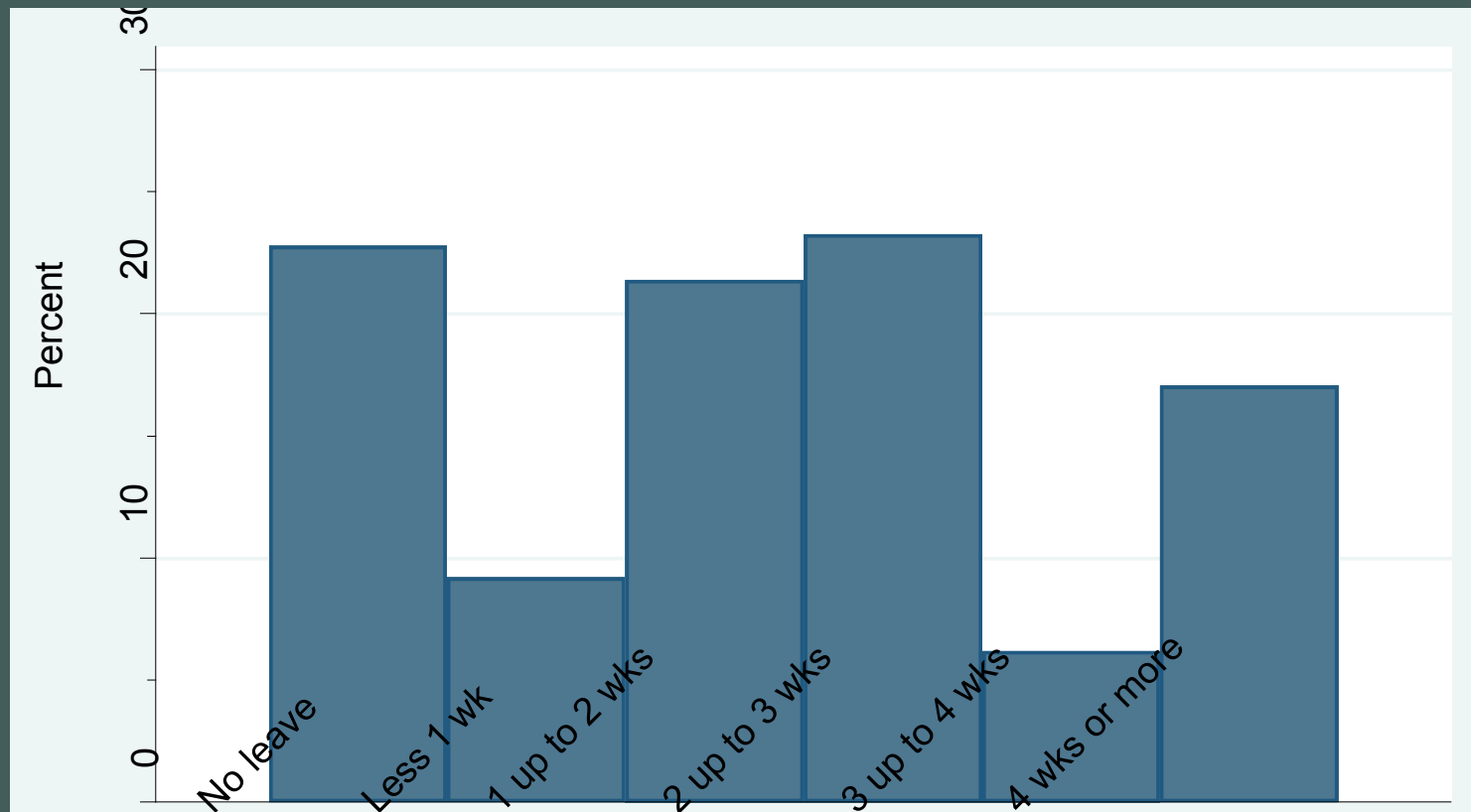
- Exclude diary entries before 6.00am and after 9.30pm

- Weekdays only

Key explanatory variable: fathers' leave

- Days of leave “around the time the study child was born and when you [*mother*] were caring for the new baby”
- Could be
 - paid paternity or parental leave
 - paid annual leave
 - other types paid leave
 - unpaid leave
- Add to derive estimate of total weeks leave

Figure 4: Distribution of fathers' weeks total leave



Source: PLAS, as part of LSAC wave 1.5

Control variables

Father's job characteristics

- Weekly work hours
- Work day schedule
- Work hours schedule
- Self-employed
- Flexible start/finish times
- Occupation

Mother's employment

Demographics

Infant characteristics

- Breastfed
- Age (months)
- Twin/triplet
- Parity
- Medical condition

Features of diary data

- Father completed
- Frequency completed
- Number of missing spells

Regression results: Coefficient significance

	Hours infant with father ¹				Any time with father, not mother ²	
	All activities		Routine care		All	Routine
	WD	WE	WD	WE	WD	WD
No leave	ns	ns	ns	✓	ns	ns
1 up to 2 wks	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
2 up to 3 wks	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
3 up to 4 wks	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
4 or more wks	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

NOTES: Reference: leave less than 1 week

¹ Coefficient values derived using linear OLS regression.

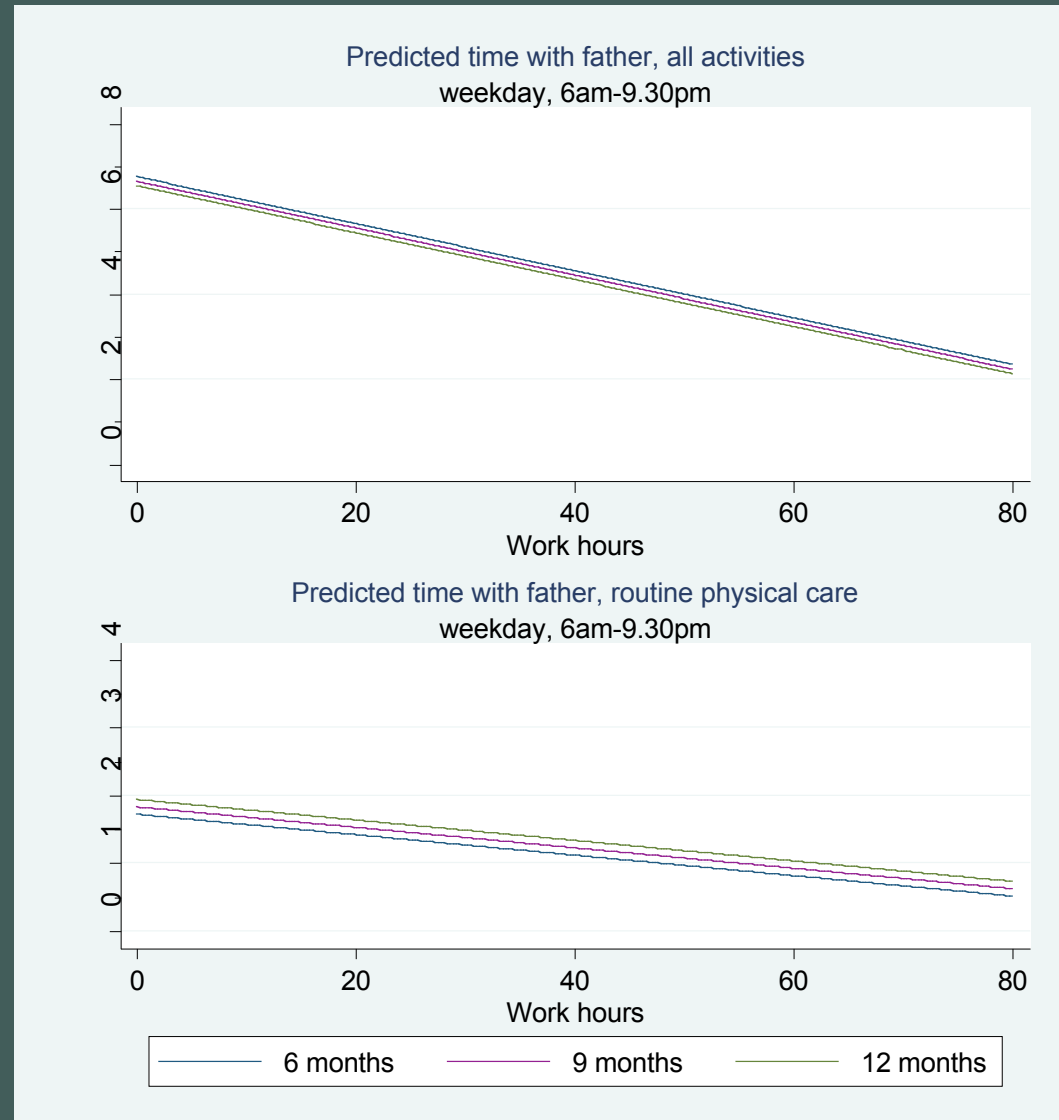
² Coefficient values from logistic regression.

Results: Father's work hours

Coefficients for fathers' work hours significant in all models

- Infants' time with father, in all or routine physical care, declines with increasing work hours
- Probability infant spends any time with father, without mother, lowers with increasing work hours

Figure 5: Predicted time infants' with father



Why no association in Australia?

- Workplace context likely to be similar to UK and US
 - Similar leave categories
 - Long work hours
- Mothers' leave and employment different in Australia
 - Greater role specialisation as Australian mothers exit labour force at high rates and take longer unpaid leave?
- Research design
 - Different measures of fathers' involvement in care
 - Differences in which parent reports involvement of fathers

Data limitations

- Measure of fathers' involvement
 - Unclear what fathers are doing when infant with both parents
 - Do not account for household work where infant is absent
e.g. washing baby clothes, shopping for nappies
 - Where infant is not the first child, fathers who take leave may be caring for an older child
- No measure for gender-role or parenting values
 - Unclear whether fathers who take no leave do so voluntarily
 - Unclear whether fathers, and their partners, are satisfied or dissatisfied with involvement in infant care

Conclusions

- No association between infants' time with their father and the leave fathers' take around the birth
- Infants spend less time with their father where the father works longer hours
- Fathers' time with an infant largely takes place with mother