Why Fathers Don't Take Parental Leave: Understanding and Shaping Beliefs About the Returns to Paternal Leave*

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Abstract

Persistent gender inequalities in the labor market, including the motherhood penalty, are closely linked to the unequal division of childcare within families. Despite the increasing availability of paternity leave policies worldwide, uptake remains low, with most fathers taking little or no leave. One potential explanation is that families perceive limited value in fathers spending time at home with their newborns. This paper investigates beliefs about the UK's Shared Parental Leave (SPL) policy using a novel survey of a nationally representative sample of childbearing individuals. We find that individuals generally assign positive value to fathers taking leave, by reallocating a portion of the mother's leave, across various outcomes related to the well-being of the mother, father, and child. A simple information intervention leads respondents to update their beliefs positively regarding the returns to paternal leave. However, belief updates only weakly affect policy support, charitable giving, and stated behavioral intentions. Responsiveness to the intervention is heterogeneous: parents, women, and individuals with more egalitarian gender norms show larger belief updates and greater changes in actual and hypothetical behavioral outcomes.

JEL classifications: I23, I26, J15, J24
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1 Introduction

Women have made significant gains in higher education and labor market participation over the past century (Goldin, 2024). Yet these gains stall after childbirth: mothers, unlike fathers, experience persistent declines in labor force participation, earnings, and well-being (see, e.g., Ahammer et al., 2023; Goldin et al., 2022; Kleven et al., 2019, 2023; Sun et al., 2025). These post-birth penalties contribute to talent misallocation and aggregate productivity losses (Ashraf et al., 2024; Lee, 2024). Paternity leave schemes may in principle mitigate these imbalances (see González and Zoabi, 2021, for a discussion of the cases where this is more likely to happen).[1] However, despite sustained policy efforts to increase fathers' involvement in newborn care (Canaan et al., 2022), the global average duration of maternity leave is 191 days, compared with just 21 days for paternity leave (Hyland and Shen, 2022). This gap reflects not only limited entitlements, as one-third of countries offer fathers three or fewer days of leave, but also lower take-up rates among fathers than mothers, even in Scandinavian countries where paternity leave uptake is high (Cederström, 2019; Hyland and Shen, 2022; OECD, 2022).

Monetary factors likely contribute to gender disparities in parental leave uptake. While existing evidence finds little to no long-term wage penalties for fathers who take leave (Andresen and Nix, 2022; Ekberg et al., 2013; Johnsen et al., 2024; Kleven et al., 2020; Tamm, 2019), fathers often face higher opportunity costs of taking time off work, as they typically earn more than their female partners. However, paternity leave decisions are not driven by monetary considerations alone. Fathers' leave-taking does not appear to respond fully to financial incentives (Høgholm Jørgensen and Egholt Søgaard, 2024; Meluzzi et al., 2026), and research suggests that, even when on leave, fathers may not always be highly engaged in childcare (Andresen and Nix, 2025; González et al., 2024; Huebener et al., 2024). This raises questions about whether families perceive fathers' caregiving time as equally valuable as mothers' time.

This paper provides the first evidence on how individuals perceive the non-monetary value of fathers' caregiving. We collect novel survey data from 1,400 individuals in the UK (excluding Northern Ireland), aged 18–45 and in stable relationships. We first elicit individuals' perceived non-pecuniary returns to fathers spending time with their newborns (henceforth, "beliefs").[2] We then explore whether these perceived non-pecuniary returns, together with pecuniary costs (e.g., forgone income) and non-pecuniary costs (e.g., gender norms), predict hypothetical paternity leave take-up. Finally, we conduct an information experiment that provides participants with evidence on the consequences of paternity on family well-being and assess its effects on

[1] In contrast, gender-neutral leave or mother-targeted policies often fail to reduce—and may even exacerbate—within-couple specialization and subsequent labor market penalties for women (Antecol et al., 2018; Bailey et al., 2025; Canaan et al., 2022; Dahl et al., 2016a; Glogowsky et al., 2025; Kleven et al., 2024; Lalive and Zweimüller, 2009; Olivetti and Petrongolo, 2017; Rossin-Slater, 2017; Schönberg and Ludsteck, 2014; Waights, 2025; Timpe, 2024; Ziegler and Bamieh, 2025).

[2] We interpret these beliefs as individual-specific causal effects of fathers' leave-taking on non-pecuniary outcomes, constructed from survey-elicited subjective conditional probabilities, in line with (Caplin et al., 2025a; Giustinelli and Shapiro, 2019).

beliefs, support for policy interventions with varying pecuniary costs, and hypothetical leave-taking behavior.

Understanding the drivers of the gender gap in parental leave uptake is particularly relevant in the UK, where the median paternity leave taken by fathers is just 2 weeks and over one-third of men take none, while mothers take an average of 40 weeks of leave (CPP, 2023). The current UK paternity leave policy consists of a voluntary 1- or 2-week paid Paternity Leave and the Shared Parental Leave (SPL) scheme, which allows parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave after childbirth. Parents are entitled to government payments for 36 of the 50 weeks, with employers having the option to enhance statutory pay. Unlike earmarked parental leave policies, such as those in Scandinavia, where a non-transferable portion is reserved exclusively for fathers (Jørgensen and Søgaard, 2024), SPL does not guarantee dedicated time for fathers. Introduced in 2015, SPL has not substantially increased either fathers' take-up rates or leave duration (Clifton-Sprigg et al., 2025). Seven years after its introduction, only about 5% of eligible fathers used SPL, for an average of 14 weeks (Department for Business & Trade, 2023). This paper focuses on SPL. Its fully transferable design provides a setting to study the perceived value of paternal relative to maternal time with the child, holding constant alternative childcare arrangements such as grandparents, nurseries, or childminders.

To elicit beliefs, we use vignettes featuring a hypothetical heterosexual couple expecting a baby and planning to take 40 weeks of SPL. We present respondents with three scenarios, where the father takes 0, 8, or 14 weeks of leave, and the mother takes the remaining weeks. In all scenarios, total household income is held constant, and this is explicitly communicated to respondents. We then ask respondents to estimate the probability of specific outcomes occurring in each scenario. The outcomes we consider are: for the mother, returning to full-time work two years after childbirth and experiencing postnatal depression; for the father, developing a strong bond with the child and assisting with homework; and for the child, receiving adequate nutrition in the first year of life and achieving success in secondary school.

The perceived effect of an additional week of leave taken by the father, rather than the mother, is estimated using within-person differences in the subjective probabilities assigned to each outcome across the three scenarios. Overall, respondents view fathers' time with their children positively, through beliefs vary considerably across respondents and outcomes. Estimated returns are highest for outcomes related to the father, followed by those related to the mother and the child, respectively. For example, moving from the scenario where the father takes no SPL to the one where he takes 14 weeks is perceived to increase father-child attachment and involvement with homework by 0.82 and 0.69 standard deviations, respectively. Maternal labor force participation and mental health improve by 0.48 and 0.31 standard deviations, while child academic performance improves by 0.18 standard deviations. These conclusions hold even without assuming linearity in expected returns. Heterogeneity in beliefs is associated with gender-norm

attitudes and with whether respondents already have children, highlighting the role of both attitudes and lived parental experience in shaping these beliefs.

Respondents' beliefs predict how they would hypothetically split 40 weeks of SPL with their partner, with higher perceived returns to father's time predicting a higher share of leave allocated to fathers. In addition to beliefs, our data also allow us to study other determinants of parental leave take-up. We show that relative income within the couple, employer's wage enhancement policies and knowing fathers who have taken SPL predict respondents' hypothetical leave allocation. The predictive power of beliefs (and other characteristics) comes from female respondents, providing suggestive evidence that parental leave decisions may be driven by mothers. This is perhaps unsurprising in our context where SPL is formally allocated to mothers, who must transfer it to fathers.[3] Alternatively, in line with evidence uncovering a lack of coordinated planning around parental leave between partners (Caplin et al., 2025b), this result may indicate that women and men base their parental leave decisions on different factors, with our survey capturing the drivers of women's decisions more effectively.

Given the importance of beliefs in predicting the allocation of parental leave within couples, we examine whether they can be influenced to affect fathers' leave take-up. We conduct a randomized information intervention in which half of the sample (treatment group) receives information on the costs and benefits of fathers taking leave, from academic research conducted in culturally similar countries to the UK, while the other half (control group) receives no information. We assess the intervention's impact along three dimensions. First, we re-elicit selected beliefs - on maternal depression, fathers' future help with homework, and children's academic performance - using slightly modified versions of earlier question. Second, we look at policy support, measured by respondents' willingness to donate to a charity advocating improved SPL conditions and to sign a petition to the UK Parliament choosing between higher pay or longer leave duration. Third, we analyze whether the intervention affects the hypothetical within-couple allocation of leave.

We find that the intervention significantly influences respondents' beliefs about return to paternity leave on mothers and children, with effect sizes of 15.5% and 12.9% of a standard deviation, respectively. We find only weak evidence for increased support for improved SPL pay: treated participants are 3.4 percentage points more likely to advocate for pay improvements ($p \leq 10$). Finally, we find no significant average effects on the hypothetical within-couple allocation of leave. We document meaningful heterogeneity across all three dimensions. Responsiveness is stronger among individuals for whom parental leave is more salient, either due to direct caregiving experience, as in the case of parents, or greater engagement with caregiving and SPL-related considerations, as observed among women and individuals with more egalitarian gender norms.

[3]For this reason, OECD data classify SPL as leave earmarked for mothers.

Our paper makes several contributions. First, it contributes to the literature on paternity leave uptake. Existing evidence shows that leave duration (Dahl et al., 2016b; Lalive and Zweimüller, 2009), wage replacement rates (Albrecht et al., 2024; Ekberg et al., 2013; Meluzzi et al., 2026; Nielsen, 2009; Rege and Solli, 2013; Rosenqvist, 2024), policy design, including earmarked leave for fathers (Avdic and Karimi, 2018; Cools et al., 2015; Dahl et al., 2014; Ekberg et al., 2013; Patnaik, 2019; Rege and Solli, 2013), peer effects (Carlsson and Reshid, 2022; Casarico et al., 2025; Dahl et al., 2014; Dottori et al., 2024; Johnsen et al., 2024; Welteke and Wrohlich, 2019) and societal gender norms (Agerström et al., 2023; Meluzzi et al., 2026) all affect paternity leave take-up. While an extensive literature documents the non-monetary returns of paternity leave for families (see Canaan et al., 2022, for a survey),[4] to our knowledge, no existing study examines how these returns are perceived or how such perceptions may contribute to paternity leave take-up. We address this gap by collecting rich survey data to elicit these beliefs, testing whether they can be shaped by information, and examining how they - alongside policy and social factors - influence potential paternity leave decisions.

Our second contribution is to the literature on beliefs. It is now well established that measuring beliefs significantly improves our understanding of decision-making (Delavande, 2008; Manski, 2004). In particular, understanding investment decisions requires measuring individuals' perceived returns and costs. This has been shown across various domains, including financial investment (Armantier et al., 2015), education (Bleemer and Zafar, 2018; Delavande and Zafar, 2019; Delavande et al., 2024; Wiswall and Zafar, 2015), and parental investment (Attanasio et al., 2022; Bhalotra et al., 2024; Biroli et al., 2022; Boneva et al., 2025; Carneiro et al., 2024; Cunha et al., 2022; Lekfuangfu et al., 2018; Morando and Sen, 2025). Most of the literature on beliefs about (early) parental investment focuses on the perceived returns to maternal time (Rauh et al., 2025). We contribute to this literature by examining the perceived returns of substituting maternal investment with paternal investment.

Our third contribution is to the literature studying whether information influences beliefs. In particular, we contribute to the growing literature capturing the effect of information both on beliefs and on proxies, such as support for public policies (see, for example: Boneva et al., 2025; Ciancio et al., 2024; Delavande et al., 2024; Fuster and Zafar, 2023).[5] Capturing both is important. An information shock may shift beliefs without translating into policy support if taking action (e.g., signing a petition) involves high psychological or time costs, if people believe

[4] Paternity leave has been found to improve maternal health (Persson and Rossin-Slater, 2024) and children's school performance, egalitarian attitudes, and socio-emotional skills (Cools et al., 2015; Farré et al., 2022; Fontenay and González Luna, 2024; Houmark et al., 2024; Heisig and Zierow, 2025). Effects on gender equality are more nuanced. Some studies find that paternity leave significantly reduces within-couple inequalities (Canaan et al., 2022; Druedahl et al., 2019; Farré et al., 2022; Fontenay and González Luna, 2024; Kotsadam and Finseraas, 2011; Patnaik, 2019; Tamm, 2019), while others find these effects to be short-lived (Andresen and Nix, 2025; Ekberg et al., 2013; Fontenay and González, 2025), suggesting that the inequality-reducing effects of paternity leave may be heterogeneous by the within-couple wage gap (González and Zoabi, 2021). Potentially unintended effects of paternity leave include decreased fertility and reduced marital stability. Some studies find null effects on both outcomes (Cools et al., 2015; Dahl et al., 2014), while others document negative effects on fertility (Farré and González, 2019) or on marital stability (Avdic and Karimi, 2018), but not both.

[5] For studies using proxies only, see (Haaland et al., 2023)

lawmakers are unresponsive to their concerns, or if the specific belief affected by the treatment is not strongly tied to decision-making. We contribute by showing, for the case of shared parental leave, that a light-touch information that significantly shape beliefs does not necessarily translate into increased policy support. This underscores the importance of assessing post-intervention beliefs alongside alternative measures to robustly evaluate the broader policy implications of belief changes.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 outlines the institutional setting. Section 3 describes the survey design and data. Section 4 presents the elicited beliefs. Section 5 analyses the predictive power of these beliefs for hypothetical parental leave choices. Section 6 details the information intervention and assesses its effects. Section 7 presents robustness checks and additional analyses. Section 8 concludes.

2 Shared Parental Leave: Features and Take-up

In the UK, parental leave entitlements earmarked for fathers are much shorter than those earmarked for mothers. Maternity leave entitlements allow new mothers to take 52 weeks of leave. The first six weeks are paid at 90% of average weekly earnings; the following 33 weeks are paid at the lower between 90% of average weekly earnings and the statutory flat rate (£172.48 in 2023/24); the last 13 weeks are unpaid. Paternity leave allows fathers to take two weeks paid leave in the first eight weeks of the child's life, paid at 90% of average weekly earnings or the statutory flat rate, whichever the lower.[6] To qualify for statutory Maternity/Paternity Pay, mothers/fathers need to have been continuously employed by the same employer for at least 26 weeks by the end of 15th week before due date. Self-employed workers are not eligible.[7] Parental leave payments can be enhanced by employers for mothers, fathers or both.

Shared Parental Leave (SPL), introduced in 2015, allows parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of statutory pay.[8] Leave can be taken concurrently or sequentially, but mothers must take a compulsory two (or four, for factory workers) weeks of maternity leave, reducing the shareable entitlement to 50 (48) weeks of leave and 37 (35) weeks of pay. If both parents want to take SPL, both parents need to earn at least £123 per week. If only one parent wants to take SPL, the parent who want to take SPL must earn at least £123 per week and the other parent need to have earned at least £390 in total across 66 weeks before the baby's due date.

[6] For example, for an employee that is on minimum wage and working full-time (40 hours a week) in 2024, the weekly salary would be £457.6 for those 21 or over and £344 for anyone between 18 and 20. This would mean that when these people go on to SPL, if there is no top-up available from their employer, they would lose at least half of their income.

[7] Mothers who do not meet eligibility criteria may be eligible for Maternity Allowance, a benefit paid by the department for Work and Pensions whose depends on mothers' circumstances, but never exceeds the statutory Maternity Pay.

[8] SPL replaced the previous system of Additional Paternity Leave (APL), introduced in 2011. APL allowed fathers to take up to 26 weeks of Additional Paternity Leave and up to 13 weeks of Additional Statutory Paternity Pay (ASPP) once the mother had returned to work and starting from the 20th week after the child's birth.

Take up of paternity leave, and SPL in particular, has been negligible. Survey evidence suggests that, while new mothers took 40 weeks of leave on average, the median length of paternity leave taken by fathers was only two weeks (CPP, 2023). There are no official data on Shared Parental Leave (SPL) uptake, as the scheme is administered by employers (OECD, 2022). However, unofficial estimates suggest that only 2-5% of eligible couples or fathers take SPL (CIPD, 2023; Department for Business & Trade, 2023). This aligns with evidence showing that SPL has not significantly increased paternal leave take-up (Clifton-Sprigg et al., 2025). SPL uptake is concentrated among older, white, married, and higher-income parents employed in large organizations, particularly in public administration, health, education, and professional services. Among those who take SPL, mothers report taking an average of 19 weeks, and fathers 14 weeks; employer-reported figures are slightly lower, at 14 and 10 weeks, respectively (Department for Business & Trade, 2023).

Potential drivers of low SPL uptake

Several non-mutually exclusive factors may explain the low uptake of SPL. One is the presence of *informational barriers*, for example, when parents are unsure whether, or how, a mother's leave entitlement can be transferred to a father. Using Google Trends data, Appendix Figure A2 shows that the introduction of SPL initially sparked public interest, as evidenced by increased search activity. However, in the years following its launch, search volumes for SPL have remained lower than those for maternity or paternity leave, suggesting limited parental interest in seeking information about SPL. Indeed, few individuals seem to fully grasp the details of the policy. Just over half of mothers and fewer than half of fathers who do not use SPL report some familiarity with the policy, while only 15% of mothers and 13% of fathers say they fully understand it (Department for Business & Trade, 2023). Similarly, while around 70% of employers report being aware of SPL, only about one in five claim to have a good understanding of it. These statistics suggest that a lack of awareness or understanding of the policy may contribute to the low uptake of SPL.

Monetary factors are also crucial, especially in the common cases where fathers are the primary household earners. Evidence shows that paternity leave uptake is low when wage replacement rates are low (Nielsen, 2009; Raute, 2019; Rosenqvist, 2024), and due to concerns about potential negative career impacts, which are often perceived as more severe for fathers (Johnsen et al., 2024). Figure A1 (left panel) shows that paternity leave entitlements in the UK are among the least generous in the OECD (source: OECD, 2022). However, the right panel of the same figure shows that this is also true for UK mothers, despite their high rates of parental leave uptake. Gender differences in parental leave take-up may therefore be influenced by disparities in enhanced payments, which tend to be less generous for fathers than for mothers, and are more

likely to be offered to higher-income workers and/or workers in larger firms (see: CIPD, 2023).[9] This evidence strongly suggests the existence of monetary constraints, although it does not seem sufficient to fully explain the observed differences in parental leave uptake between mothers and fathers. Other non-monetary factors are likely to be at play.

Non-monetary factors also play a crucial role in parental leave decisions. Childcare is often viewed as primarily the mother's responsibility. For example, households in Denmark are willing to give up about 3% of weekly income for each additional week of leave taken by fathers, compared to 17% for mothers (Jørgensen and Søgaard, 2024). This preference for maternal over paternal caregivers may stem from traditional gender norms (Boelmann et al., 2025; Kleven et al., 2019), reinforced by social and peer pressure (Agerström et al., 2023; Casarico et al., 2025; Johnsen et al., 2024; Meekes and Lent, 2025; Welteke and Wrohlich, 2019). In the case of SPL, the policy design, which initially assigns leave to mothers and requires them to transfer it to fathers, may also reinforce these norms through 'endowment effects' (Kahneman et al., 1990), making mothers more reluctant to give up their leave. Since parental beliefs about the developmental returns to childcare have been shown to shape leave decisions (e.g., Attanasio et al., 2022; Bhalotra et al., 2024; Biroli et al., 2022; Carneiro et al., 2024; Cunha et al., 2022), a preference for maternal over paternal caregivers may reflect perceptions that maternal time is more beneficial for the child or family. In the UK, fathers who take paternity leave are more likely to hold progressive gender attitudes and to work in female-dominated sectors (Department for Business & Trade, 2023), suggesting that gender roles are likely to play a role in explaining SPL uptake. However, to date, there is no existing evidence on the perceived developmental returns to time spent with fathers versus mothers, an important gap this paper aims to fill.

3 The Survey

We collected primary survey data in collaboration with a professional survey company, using respondents from the company's online panel. Data collection took place in November 2023, with participants residing in England, Wales and Scotland. Respondents were individuals of childbearing age (18-45 years), with or without children, who were married, cohabiting, or in a relationship for longer than two years. To enhance the representativeness of the sample, a quota sampling approach was used, with quotas based on gender, ethnicity (White vs. minority ethnic backgrounds), and socio-economic status, determined by the respondents' highest level

[9] 43% of employers offer no enhanced payment for mothers, 23% offer between 4 and 13 weeks of enhanced maternity pay at or near the full rate, and 27% offer 26 weeks of enhanced payment (the remaining category being 'Other arrangements.' Enhanced payments for fathers are rarer and more variable: 62% of employers provide no enhanced payment, 24% offer between one and 12 weeks, and 8% provide between 13 and 28 weeks of enhanced pay. While only 12% of men with a household income of £20,000-25,000 have access to enhanced payments and can take them in full, this share reaches 51% among fathers whose household income exceeds £200,000 (CPP, 2023).

of education. On average, the survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.[10]

Table 1: Sample

Characteristics	Our Survey	External Benchmark	Source
Female	0.51	0.51	UK Census 2021
White	0.83	0.82	UK Census 2021
UK Born	0.83	0.86	UK Census 2021
# Children	1.42	1.44	Office for National Statistics
High SES	0.51	0.50	Understanding Society 2022-24
Age	36.23	34.81	Understanding Society 2022-24
Income	42,570	33,348	Understanding Society 2022-24
Employed	0.92	0.84	Understanding Society 2022-24
N	1,400		

Notes: Sources: UK Census 2021, Understanding Society 2022-24 wave and Office for National Statistics reports. Understanding Society participants have been interviewed between 2022 and 2024. For the number of children, Office for National Statistics uses data from Local Registration Service and the General Register Office (GRO). High SES is derived from information on education level. If a respondent holds an undergraduate degree or higher, they are classified as a high SES individual. Employed includes both full-time and part-time employment. Data from Understanding Society are weighted.

Table 1 provides an overview of the sample and compares it to the population in England, Scotland, and Wales. We use three different sources. Gender, ethnicity and share of UK born are taken from the 2021 UK Census. Information on number of children comes from the Office from National Statistics. For characteristics not covered by official statistics (SES, age, income, employment status) we use wave 14 of Understanding Society data (University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2024), collected between January 2022 and May 2024. Our sample closely aligns with the general population in most personal characteristics for which we have data. For the measures that come from Understanding Society, we find some differences. The primary difference lies in employment: 92% of individuals in our sample are employed, compared to 84% in the Understanding Society dataset. Additionally, individuals in our sample have higher gross yearly income than Understanding Society data respondents.[11]

Our survey captures data from a sample of individuals who have thought about taking parental leave in the recent past, are currently considering it, or may consider doing so in the near future. While the core of the survey focuses on understanding respondents' beliefs about non-pecuniary returns to sharing parental leave between partners, we also collect information

[10] Respondents who completed the survey in under 3.5 minutes and were in the control group and those who completed the survey in under 4.5 minutes and were in the treatment group were excluded to maintain data quality. The difference between the required time between individuals in control and treatment conditions were due to the fact that the "Next" button on the treatment screen appeared after a minute.

[11] While it is possible that our sample is slightly better off than the Understanding Society sample, various factors may contribute to the differences in income between our data and Understanding Society. First, Understanding Society income data are capped, so very high incomes are not observable. Second, while Understanding Society imputes zero income for respondents who report not having a job, in our data over 60 percent of individuals who report being unemployed also report a positive income, with a mean reported income of £8,507.55 among unemployed respondents. Finally, our survey asks for annual income, whereas income in Understanding Society is generally reported monthly. The minority of Understanding Society respondents who report their income annually report higher-than-average incomes; in the subsample we used to produce estimates in table Table 1, the 75 Understanding Society respondents who report annual income have an average income of £50,842.64.

that can help us have an idea of the pecuniary and other non-pecuniary costs of doing so. In particular, we collect information on people's and partners' education, income and availability of enhanced paternity leave schemes from employers, availability of informal childcare, share of respondents' peers that took SPL and information on gender roles. While some of these factors have been described through various small surveys, we are not aware of any nationally representative survey comprehensively collecting all these pieces of information. The survey content is described in detail in what follows.

3.1 Main Variables

Non-Pecuniary Returns: Perceived Returns to Father's Leave Take-up

To measure whether respondents perceive time spent by fathers with their newborns as less valuable than time spent by mothers for the family's wellbeing, we use vignette questions in which each respondent is asked about the returns, for a hypothetical heterosexual couple, to three alternative ways of sharing parental leave between the parents. Vignettes generate within-individual variation in hypothetical choices and the beliefs associated with them, thus allowing us to estimate the *perceived causal effect* of sharing leave between parents. Since all respondents are shown the same scenarios, this approach ensures that the belief measures we obtain are comparable across individuals. This method helps overcome real-world data limitations by enabling ceteris paribus comparisons and, paired with information treatments, offer a clear way to measure belief updating (Stantcheva, 2023).

The hypothetical heterosexual couple described in our vignettes consists of Claire and David, who are expecting a baby. Both partners are aged 30, earn £30,000 per year, work for the same employer, who offers gender-neutral enhancement payments for shared parental leave (SPL), pool their income, and make household decisions jointly. The couple has agreed to take a total of 40 weeks of SPL but is uncertain how to divide this leave between them.
The vignettes present the following scenarios:

- Scenario 1: Claire takes 40 weeks of leave; David takes 0 weeks.
- Scenario 2: Claire takes 32 weeks of leave; David takes 8 weeks.
- Scenario 3: Claire takes 26 weeks of leave; David takes 14 weeks.

For each of the scenarios above, respondents were asked to indicate, on a 0-100 scale, their subjective likelihood of the following outcomes occurring, for the mother [M], the father [F], and the child.

M1 Claire will return to work full-time two years after giving birth (*back to work*);

M2 Claire will suffer from maternal depression within the first year of giving birth (*depression*);

F1 David will understand the needs of the baby and respond to them effectively (*attachment*);

F2 David will help with the child's school homework for at least an hour a week in primary school (*help homework*);

C1 the child will eat the daily recommended amount of calories in the first year of their life, i.e. 750 kcal per day (*nutrition*);

C2 the child will achieve a grade in the range 6-9 in GCSE Maths,[12] equivalent to A*-B in the previous marking system (*academic performance*).

All respondents were asked about all six outcomes, but the order in which the outcomes were presented was randomized to mitigate potential order effects due to learning and/or cognitive fatigue.

Several considerations inform the vignette design. The three scenarios describing alternative allocations of parental leave between parents are intended to study respondents' perceived returns to increasing fathers' involvement. Scenario 1 reflects the current situation, in which mothers typically take around 40 weeks of leave and most fathers do not use SPL. Scenario 3 mirrors the leave allocation observed among couples who do take SPL, where fathers take approximately 14 weeks on average (CIPD, 2023; Department for Business & Trade, 2023). Scenario 2 represents an intermediate allocation. Across all scenarios, total leave is fixed at 40 weeks, with progressively more weeks transferred from the mother to the father, allowing us to study the trade-off between maternal and paternal leave.

Claire and David are assigned the same age, earnings and enhanced SPL pay.[13] Assigning both partners the same age ensures comparable work experience, so any experience loss due to leave is proportionally similar. Equal earnings, identical employer-enhanced SPL pay, and the fact that the partners pool their income ensure that leave allocation affects only non-pecuniary factors, as household income during SPL is identical across scenarios, regardless of how leave is divided. Finally, the selection of the outcomes to measure family wellbeing was informed by the economic literature on the determinants of fathers' parental leave take-up. The nutrition outcome [C1] was chosen due to the significant emphasis placed on breastfeeding in the UK, as in many other countries. Our aim is to investigate whether concerns about child nutrition might deter fathers from taking leave, without explicitly mentioning breastfeeding to avoid strong social desirability bias.

[12] GCSE exams are exams taken at age 16 at the end of compulsory schooling and are used to gain access to post-16 academic schools that are route to gain admission to universities.

[13] The yearly salary is based on Understanding Society Wave 13, where the average earnings of respondents eligible for our survey (aged 18-45, living in England, Scotland, or Wales, and married, cohabiting, or in a long-term relationship) were £30,800.

Other variables

Alongside information on basic demographics (age and ethnicity) we collect information on likely pecuniary and non pecuniary drivers of SPL take up. Among *pecuniary factors*, we collect information on respondents' and their partners' salaries, including any enhanced payments offered by employers, as well as on availability of free childcare offered by family members.

To capture *non-pecuniary factors*, we collect information on respondents' peers and gender norms. To proxy peer influence, we ask respondents how many fathers they know have taken shared parental leave, with response options: "none", "few", "some", or "most of them". This measure does not allow us to disentangle peer effects from the endogenous selection of peers and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Moreover, it does not capture whether peers' experiences with parental leave were positive or negative. Nevertheless, it provides informative evidence on respondents' social norms environment and their exposure to shared parental leave.

We measure gender attitudes in two ways. The first one is a statement-based approach, commonly used in large surveys such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, the World Values Survey, and Understanding Society. Respondents indicate their level of agreement with several statements on a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix Table C1 for exact wording). We aggregate these responses into a Gender Attitudes scale, with higher values indicating more egalitarian attitudes and lower values reflecting more conservative views. Our second measure of gender attitudes is based on information on the division of housework. Respondents are presented with five tasks: i) cooking, ii) cleaning, iii) washing/ironing, iv) childcare, and v) managing household finances, and asked what share of each task should be performed by the female partner in an average heterosexual couple with equal skills.[14] Under perfect equality, this share would be 50%. We therefore measure gender attitudes as deviations from this benchmark as follows:

$$ga_i = \frac{\sum_{x=1}^{5}(50 - x_i)}{5}$$

where x_i is the proportion of the task i that the respondent believes should be performed by the female partner. A low ga_i means higher share of responsibilities given to women and hence, being less egalitarian.

[14] Shares are collected using a slider. To minimize design and order effects, we randomize both the order of the Likert and task-based modules and the initial slider position.

4 Understanding perceived non-pecuniary returns to father's leave

4.1 Is a reallocation of parental leave from the mother to the fathers perceived as valuable, on average, for family well-being?

As a first way to describe respondents' beliefs about non-monetary returns to father's leave, we present the correlation between the number of weeks of parental leave taken by the father as per our three hypothetical scenarios (i.e., 0, 8, and 14, weeks, with the remaining of the 40 weeks being taken by the mother) and respondents' subjective probability of occurrence of each of our six outcomes. This is done by estimating the following regression:

$$p_{is}^{o} = \alpha_0^o + \alpha_1^o weeks_s + u_i + \epsilon_{is}^o \tag{1}$$

where p_{is}^o is the expected probability of occurrence of the outcome o , for individual i in scenario s, $weeks_s$ is the number of the 40 weeks taken by the father in scenario s, u_i is an individual fixed effect, and ϵ_{is}^o is an idiosyncratic error. α_1^o is our coefficient of interest and measures the average - across all the respondents - perceived return of shifting one week of leave from the mother to the father on the expected likelihood of the event o happening.

Table 2: Perceived Non-Pecuniary Returns to the Father Taking One Additional Week of SPL

	Mother		Father		Child	
	(1) Back to Work	(2) Depression	(3) Emotional Bond	(4) Help Homework	(5) Health	(6) Academic Performance
Weeks	0.888***	-0.564***	1.547***	1.138***	-0.035	0.294***
	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.047)	(0.041)	(0.035)	(0.031)
Observations	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200
Mean	58.32	51.02	55.35	57.55	67.82	62.93
SD	(25.98)	(25.35)	(26.38)	(26.37)	(25.74)	(23.18)
1 extra week	3.42%SD	-2.23%SD	5.86%SD	4.32%SD	-0.14%SD	1.27%SD
From 0 to 14 weeks	48%SD	-31%SD	82%SD	60%SD	-1.90%SD	18%SD

Notes: Results from individual fixed effects model. For each individual, the regressions include 3 observations equivalent to the three scenarios of shared parental leave. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

For each maternal, paternal, and child outcome, Table 2 presents the estimated coefficients α_1^{ot} from equation (4). The number of weeks of leave taken by the father significantly predict five of the six outcomes of interest. The largest effects are estimated for paternal outcomes. Reallocating one additional week of leave from the mother to the father increases the subjective likelihood that the father forms a strong emotional bond with the child and helps with homework by 5.86 and 4.32 percent of a standard deviation, respectively. The effects on maternal outcomes are

just over half as large. The same one-week reallocation from the mother to the father increases the subjective likelihood of the mother returning to work within two years by 3.42% of a standard deviation and reduces the subjective likelihood of her experiencing postnatal depression by 2.23% of a standard deviation. Respondents perceive limited effects on child outcomes. One week of leave taken by the father instead of the mother increases the subjective probability that the child achieves a good GCSE score by 1.27% of a standard deviation and has no average perceived effect on the subjective probability that the child consumes the recommended amount of calories in their first year of life: the estimated coefficient in column 5 is negative, though not statistically significant. This may reflect a belief among some respondents that replacing the mother with the father as the main caregiver might interfere with breastfeeding.

Overall, these effects are sizeable. It is important to note that the estimated coefficients reflect the impact of shifting one week of leave from the mother to the father, holding the total leave duration constant. In other words, they capture the net effect of the father taking one additional week of leave while the mother takes one less. Comparing scenario 1 (the father takes 0 weeks of leave) to scenario 3 (the father takes 14 weeks), the perceived improvements in outcomes are as follows: a 48% of a standard deviation increases in the probability that the mother returns to work; a 31% of a standard deviation decreases in the probability that the mother experiences post-natal depression; a 82% of a standard deviation increase in the probability that the father forms a bond with the child; a 60% of a standard deviation increase in the probability that the father helps with the child's homework; and a 18% of a standard deviation increase in the probability that the child performs well at GCSEs. Note that these effects are only meaningful for the range considered, where mothers take all or the majority of the total weeks of leave. Overall the estimates in Table 2 suggest that, when considering the non-pecuniary benefits of SPL alone, respondents on average perceive the current practice of allocating all parental leave to mothers as suboptimal. Gains can be made by redistributing part of the leave from mothers to fathers. Notably, this pattern is consistent across key subgroups, including gender and educational attainment. Table A1 reports the same regression specifications as Table 2, with estimates disaggregated by respondents' gender and highest educational qualification.

4.2 Eliciting individual-specific perceived non-pecuniary returns to paternity leave

The analysis in subsection 4.1 does not capture individual-specific differences in the perceived non-pecuniary returns to reallocating part of the leave to fathers. Expressing returns as averages, as we did in the previous section, is necessary when we observe only one outcome per respondent, in their chosen state of the world. However, with hypothetical scenarios, we observe each respondent's subjective likelihoods across all three states of the world described through our scenarios. This allows us to derive individual-specific measures of perceived returns.

To estimate individual-specific perceived returns to paternal leave, relative to maternal leave, for each individual and outcome, we estimate the following equation:

$$\ln p_{is}^{o} = \beta_{0i}^{o} + \beta_{1i}^{o} \ln weeks_{si} + \epsilon_{is}^{o} \tag{2}$$

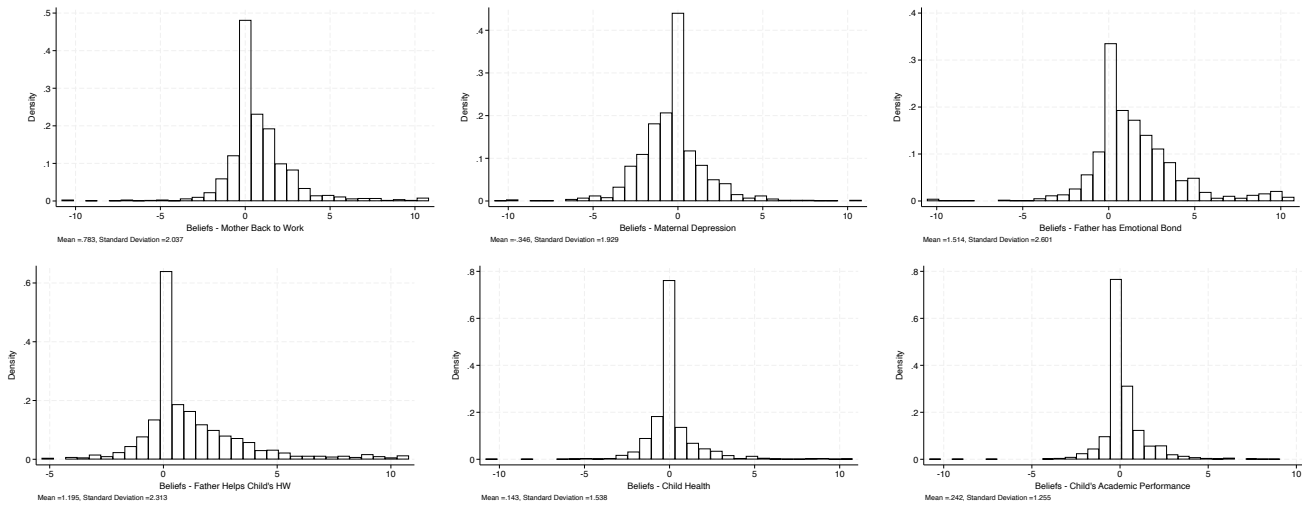
where p_s^{io} is the perceived probability of outcome o for individual i in scenario s, $weeks_s$ denotes the number of weeks (out of 40) taken by the father in scenario s, and ϵ_{is}^{o} is an idiosyncratic error term. Natural logarithms are used to capture the curvature (e.g., due to decreasing marginal returns) of the production function of shifting the parental leave from the mother to the father.[15] We estimate this equation separately for each of the six outcomes and for each individual, as we have three observations per individual per outcome. Our coefficient of interest, β_{1i}^{o}, is thus individual- and outcome-specific, and represents the perceived return to one additional week of leave taken by the father at the expense of one week taken by the mother. Given the model specification, the estimated coefficients can be interpreted as elasticities. To aid interpretation, we standardize them to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1, allowing us to express results in standard deviation units.

Figure 1 plots the perceived returns to father's time across all our measures of family well-being (i.e., our estimates of β_{1i}^{o}), along with their means and standard deviations. Two results emerge. First, respondents on average believe that reallocating part of parental leave from mothers to fathers is beneficial, as indicated by the means of the perceived returns. This result is particularly strong for paternal outcomes, and less pronounced for child outcomes, with perceived return on child nutrition being, on average, close to zero. These findings echo those in Table 2, where linearity was imposed. Second, there is considerable heterogeneity in perceived returns, as indicated by the standard deviations, with a non-negligible share of respondents expecting that reallocating leave to fathers may reduce family well-being. This is reflected in positive perceived returns for maternal depression (indicating that additional leave for fathers is expected to worsen maternal mental health) and negative perceived returns in the other domains. Overall, Figure 1 suggests that, while respondents on average value fathers' time spent with their newborns, there is substantial individual-level heterogeneity.

Appendix Figure A4 to Appendix Figure A7 present the distribution of perceived returns by gender, education, gender norms, and parental status, alongside p-values from Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for equality of distributions. Only the distributions of perceived returns for the mother's probability of returning to work and the child's probability of performing well academically differ significantly by gender and education. In contrast, the distributions of all estimated

[15] Since in scenario 3 the father takes 0 weeks of leave, we run into the issue of $\ln(0)$, which is undefined. Therefore, instead of estimating returns based on weeks of leave taken by the father, we estimate returns based on weeks of leave taken by the mother, i.e., 40, 32, and 26 weeks in scenarios 3, 2, and 1, respectively. In our setting, one additional week of leave taken by the mother implies one fewer week taken by the father. We therefore multiply the coefficient β_{1i}^{o}, estimated from equation (2), by -1 to obtain the perceived returns to reallocating leave from the mother to the father.

Figure 1: Distribution of Beliefs



The histograms present the distribution of individual-specific beliefs about returns to fathers taking one week of SPL from the mother. They are estimated for each outcome separately, using three answers for each of these outcomes. They are β_1^{io} from equation 2.

returns differ significantly by gender norms and parental status. Overall, these figures highlight substantial heterogeneity in individual beliefs about the returns to fathers' leave, particularly along the dimensions of gender norms and parental status.

To formally explore the associations between respondents' characteristics and their perceived returns to shifting parental leave from the mother to the father, we regress the estimated $\hat{\beta_1^{io}}$ from equation (2) on a set of respondents' observed characteristics as follows:

$$\hat{\beta_1^{io}} = \gamma_0^o + \gamma_1^o \mathbf{X} i + \eta_i^o \tag{3}$$

where $\mathbf{X}_i$ is a vector of individual characteristics of i (namely gender, age, education, work status, place of residence and gender norm), γ_1^o is the vector of coefficients indicating how these characteristics correlate with the perceived returns to transferring parental leave from the mother to the father and η_i^o is an idiosyncratic error term.

Results from equation (3) are shown in Table 3. Because beliefs were elicited for a hypothetical couple, respondents' own characteristics should, in principle, play only a limited role in shaping their answers. Consistent with this, we find no statistically significant differences in beliefs by gender, or by most of the other covariates considered. In this context, the fact that gender norms remain strongly associated with perceived returns is particularly informative, especially given the rich set of controls. Respondents with more egalitarian gender norms expect higher returns to SPL for all maternal and paternal outcomes, except academic performance: a one standard deviation increase in the egalitarian norms scale is associated with increases in perceived returns ranging from 6.3% of a standard deviation for beliefs about the mother re-

turning to work to 8.4% for beliefs about the father's bond with the child (columns 1 to 4). Two outcomes differ from this general pattern. Gender norms are not correlated with perceived returns to SPL for academic performance (column 6). By contrast, the association with perceived returns for child nutrition is negative (column 5), suggesting that more egalitarian respondents may believe that reallocating leave from the mother to the father could compromise children's nutrition. This may be consistent with evidence from developed countries showing a positive correlation between egalitarian gender roles and breastfeeding (or breastfeeding intentions), both between and within countries (see Swanson et al., 2017). Overall, the persistence of these associations, despite the hypothetical framing and extensive controls, suggests that egalitarian role attitudes are an important driver of how individuals perceive the returns to parental leave allocation.

Table 3: Heterogeneity in Perceived Non-Pecuniary Returns to the Father (Mother) Taking One More (Less) Week of SPL

	Mother		Father		Child	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Back to Work	Depression	Attachment	Help with Homework	Nutrition	Academic Performance
Female	0.054	0.041	0.026	0.011	0.071	-0.063
	(0.063)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.067)
White	0.018	-0.053	-0.141	-0.192*	-0.133	-0.098
	(0.087)	(0.101)	(0.095)	(0.099)	(0.101)	(0.098)
Age	-0.016***	-0.006	-0.004	-0.001	0.003	0.004
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Degree	0.218***	-0.043	-0.016	0.052	-0.031	0.009
	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.069)	(0.068)	(0.070)
Working	-0.287*	-0.038	-0.241*	-0.174	-0.096	-0.046
	(0.151)	(0.147)	(0.144)	(0.143)	(0.148)	(0.095)
London	-0.111	0.135*	-0.170**	-0.099	0.108	0.078
	(0.077)	(0.079)	(0.072)	(0.080)	(0.077)	(0.086)
With children	-0.048	0.083	-0.104	-0.089	0.076	-0.146**
	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.086)	(0.085)	(0.065)	(0.073)
Liberal gender norms (std)	0.063*	-0.083**	0.084**	0.073**	-0.062*	-0.012
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Observations	1,042	1,042	1,042	1,042	1,042	1,042
Mean	0.78	-0.35	1.51	1.20	0.14	0.24
SD	(2.04)	(1.93)	(2.60)	(2.31)	(1.54)	(1.25)

Notes: Dependent variables are β_1^{io} estimated using equation 2 for each of the 6 pre-intervention measure. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

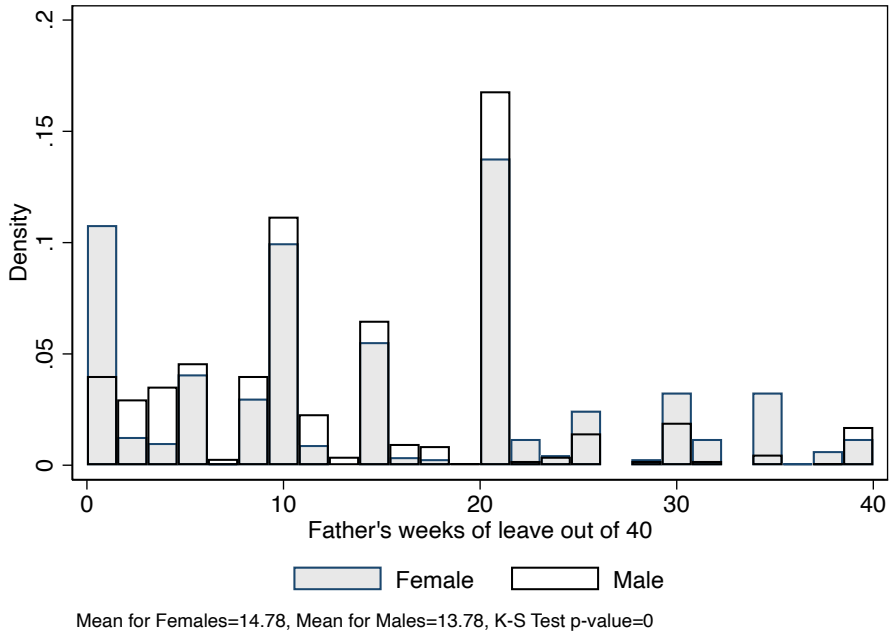
5 What Determines How Much Parental Leave Fathers Would Take?

To understand the main determinants of fathers' leave uptake, we ask respondents how many of the 40 weeks of SPL *they* would take if they were in the hypothetical couple's situation. We explicitly mention that the remaining weeks would be taken by their partner. We then construct a variable for the number of weeks taken by the father: this is equal to the number of weeks indicated by the respondent if the respondent is male, and equal to 40 minus the number of weeks indicated if the respondent is female.

Figure 2 displays the distribution of weeks allocated to the father by female and male respondents. On average, respondents -males slightly more than females - assign a lower share of the total leave to the father (13.78 weeks, or just over 33% for male respondents, and 14.78 weeks, or almost 37% for female respondents). This one-week gender difference in the number of weeks allocated to the father is statistically significant at the 10% level.

The distributions of answers from female and male respondents are different, as indicated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which rejects the null hypothesis of equality of distributions at the 1% level. Male respondents tend to allocate leave primarily between 0 and 20 weeks, with a relatively large proportion (26%, compared to 21% of females) choosing to split the 40 weeks equally between partners. Only 10% of male respondents allocate more than 20 weeks to the father. In contrast, the distribution of answers from female respondents is more dispersed. Over 10% of female respondents allocate 2 weeks or fewer to the father, while a similar proportion assigns more than 25 weeks to him.[16]

Figure 2: Weeks of Leave Allocated to the Father



Notes: The histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "If you were in David and Claire's situation where you have their income, their top-up policies and decided to take 40 weeks of leave, how many weeks of leave would you take?" To construct the measure, we recode responses to reflect the number of weeks assigned to the father. For male respondents, we use their reported values directly. For female respondents, we calculate the allocation as 40 - their response, ensuring consistency in measuring paternal leave allocation across genders. The gray columns represent female respondents while white ones represent answers of male participants. Means for the female and male respondents are presented under the histogram. We also present the p-value of the Kolmogorov - Smirnov test for the equality of distribution of the answers of female and male respondents.

As with beliefs, Appendix Figure A8 also shows differences in SPL allocation by education, gender norms, and whether individuals already have children. There are striking differences in the distribution of answers by education and parental status, with Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests rejecting the null hypothesis of equality of distributions at the 1% significance level in both cases.

[16] Appendix Figure B1 shows that results are qualitatively similar when we allow respondents to indicate the total number of parental leave weeks taken by the couple, alongside their split between partners.

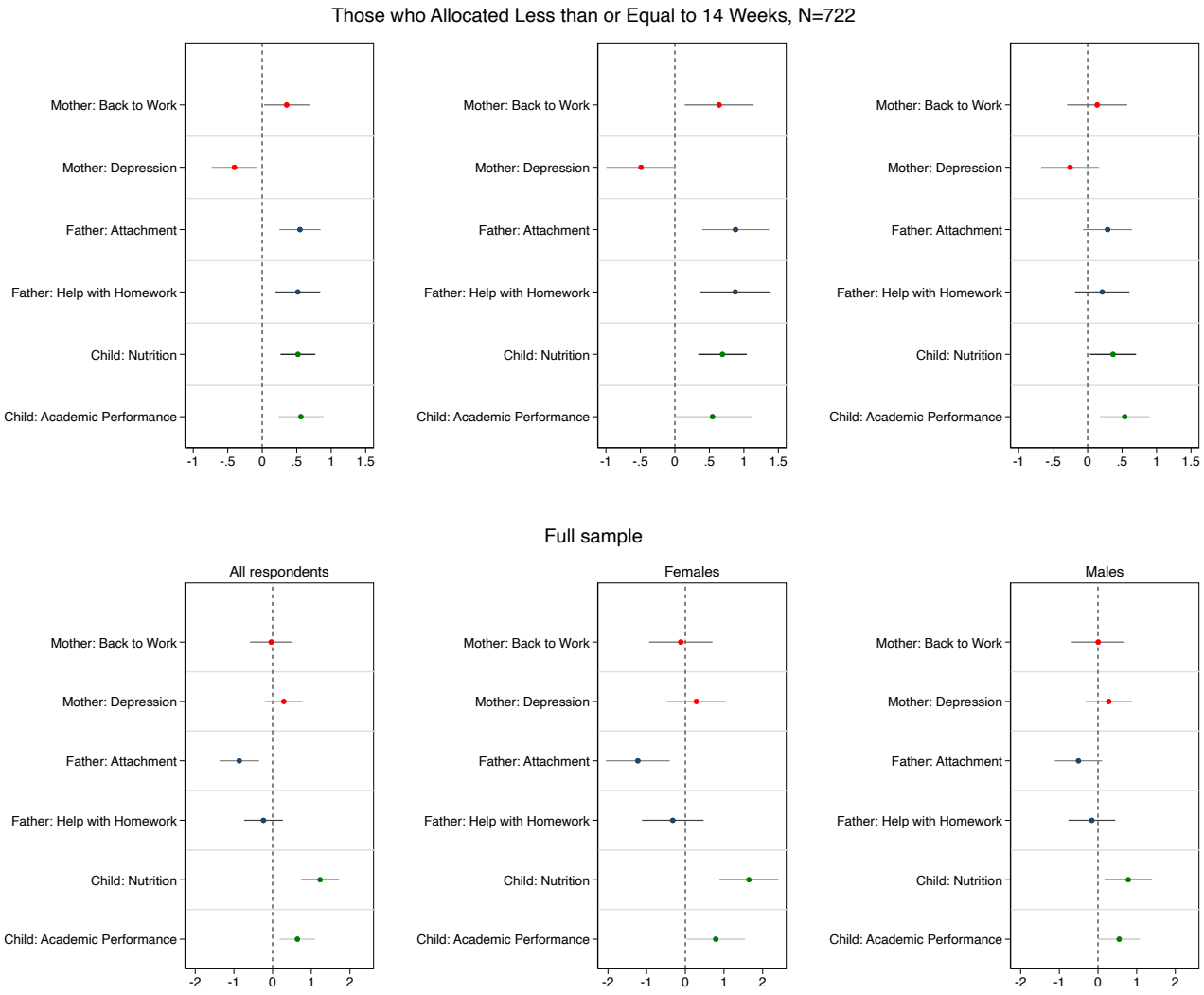
Highly educated respondents allocate an average of 15.86 weeks to the father, while low SES respondents allocate only 12.67 weeks. Similarly, respondents with children assign an average of 14.54 weeks to the father, while those without children assign 13.44 weeks. Both differences are statistically significant at the 1% level. Several factors may explain these results. Highly educated parents may have more financial resources, allowing them to take more time off work, or they may be more likely to work in larger firms that offer more generous enhanced payments for fathers taking SPL. Respondents with children may have a better understanding of the demands of caring for a newborn and the importance of sharing those responsibilities between partners. Interestingly, the average time allocated to fathers by respondents with egalitarian versus traditional gender norms differs by only half a week, and this difference is statistically insignificant.

To understand whether the perceived non-monetary returns to fathers' leave, as estimated in the previous section, explain respondents' hypothetical SPL allocations, we regress the number of weeks allocated to fathers on each respondent's estimated beliefs separately. The resulting coefficients are shown in Figure 3. Because beliefs were elicited over a 0-14 week range for fathers, we first restrict the sample to respondents who allocated up to 14 weeks of leave to the father. The estimated coefficients, shown in the top panel of Figure 3 (left graph), indicate that all beliefs predict leave allocation in the expected direction. Respondents who believe that a father's leave taking improves family wellbeing allocate more weeks of leave to the father. This is shown by the statistically significant negative coefficient estimated for the undesirable outcome (maternal depression), which is perceived to be reduced by fathers' involvement, and by the statistically significant positive coefficients for the remaining desirable outcomes. The effect sizes are substantial: a one standard deviation increase in any of the beliefs results in at least half a week more leave being allocated to the father. Most of these results are driven by female respondents, as shown in the central graph, possibly suggesting that women remain more involved in parental leave decisions. Among male respondents, the only beliefs that significantly influence leave allocation concern child nutrition and academic performance.

The bottom panel of Figure 3 shows the coefficients estimated on the full sample, that is by also considering respondents who allocated more that 14 weeks to the father. We still find that respondents who believe that reallocating some leave from mother to father benefits children allocate more weeks of leave to the father. In contrast, those who think this reallocation improves the father child bond allocate *fewer* weeks to the father. This result is driven by female respondents. Women who believe that parental leave strengthens the father child bond may be less willing to share their leave with fathers, fearing it would reduce their own time, and thus their own bond, with the child.

The richness of our survey data allows us to examine which personal factors most significantly determine parental leave allocation by regressing the number of weeks allocated to the father on

Figure 3: Correlation of Beliefs with SPL Allocation to Father



Notes: The point estimates represent the coefficients of each belief when regressed on the number of weeks allocated to the father. These estimates come from separate regressions, with no additional control variables included. The lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variable is how much SPL should the father in this couple take. The dependent variable is computed using individuals' responses for the question "If you were in David and Claire's situation where you have their income, their top-up policies and decided to take 40 weeks of leave, how many weeks of leave would you take?" To construct the dependent variable, we recode responses to reflect the number of weeks assigned to the father. For male respondents, we use their reported values directly. For female respondents, we calculate the allocation as 40 - their response, ensuring consistency in measuring paternal leave allocation across genders. Top panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using everyone in the sample and the bottom panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using only respondents who allocated up to 14 weeks to the father.

several respondent characteristics. Results are presented in Table 4. In the full sample (column 1), we find that many of the proxies for the monetary and non-monetary drivers of parental leave uptake discussed in the literature are indeed correlated with hypothetical parental leave allocations. Parents appear to factor relative monetary losses into their decisions: respondents in partnerships where the income difference between the male and female partner falls within the highest tercile allocate 3.6 fewer weeks to the father compared with those in the lowest tercile.

Similarly, respondents in relationships where the female partner receives more advantageous enhanced payments from her employer allocate almost two weeks less to the father. Non-monetary factors also appear important. Respondents whose male peers have taken SPL allocate over four additional weeks to the father. Finally, our results suggest that the availability and/or quality of childcare alternatives to the father matter as well. Respondents who can rely on non-parental informal childcare allocate over two fewer weeks to the father, while those in couples where the female partner is more educated, arguably a proxy for higher-quality childcare, allocate about 1.5 weeks less.

Table 4: Weeks of Leave Allocated to the Father

	All		
	(1) All	(2) Female	(3) Male
Female	0.166		
	(0.572)		
Income (Male-Female) Q2	-0.757	-0.057	-0.465
	(0.696)	(0.980)	(1.011)
Income (Male-Female) Q3	-3.602***	-4.406***	-2.254**
	(0.672)	(0.941)	(1.012)
Liberal Gender Attitudes	-0.149	-1.064**	0.715
	(0.333)	(0.456)	(0.449)
Peer Fathers Took SPL	4.190***	6.861***	1.613
	(0.754)	(1.188)	(1.017)
Female Better Top-up	-1.987***	-3.629***	-0.194
	(0.707)	(0.962)	(0.998)
Female Higher Educated	-1.561**	-1.242	-0.611
	(0.766)	(0.915)	(1.361)
Informal Childcare	-2.282***	-3.488***	-0.846
	(0.581)	(0.824)	(0.783)
Has Kids	0.483	0.216	0.084
	(0.694)	(1.045)	(0.937)
Observations	1215	623	592

Notes: The dependent variable is computed using individuals' responses for the question "If you were in David and Claire's situation where you have their income, their top-up policies and decided to take 40 weeks of leave, how many weeks of leave would you take?" To construct the dependent variable, we recode responses to reflect the number of weeks assigned to the father. For male respondents, we use their reported values directly. For female respondents, we calculate the allocation as 40 - their response, ensuring consistency in measuring paternal leave allocation across genders. The regressions include dummies for ethnicity, urban location, respondents being UK born, partner of the respondents being UK born, age, civil status (married, cohabiting, in a long-term relationship), and region of residence. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Like with beliefs, column 2 shows that also the results on the determinants of the share allocated to fathers are driven by female respondents. For example, women in relationships where

the difference between the income of the male and the female partner is in the top tercile allocate over 4 weeks less to the father. Likewise, women who receive more generous enhanced payments than their partners allocate 3.6 weeks more of leave to themselves. Women with more egalitarian attitudes toward gender norms allocate, on average, one week of leave less to fathers. This may be directly linked to the policy design where SPL effectively transfers a portion of maternity leave to the fathers but this interpretation remains speculative as we lack further data on this topic. Additionally, familiarity with SPL - knowing others who have taken it - has a notably positive effect, increasing leave allocation to fathers by 6.9 weeks. This underscores the role of information and social influences in parental leave decisions. For male respondents, only the income difference between the partners is a statistically significant predictor of leave allocation, although the coefficient estimated for men is around half the corresponding coefficient estimated for women.

In summary, while males and females expect similar non-pecuniary returns from sharing leave between partners (see Appendix Figure A4), Figure 3 and Table 4 show that measures of beliefs and other proxies for potential monetary and non-monetary determinants of parental leave uptake do not predict the parental leave allocation of female and male respondents equally. While these factors are generally found to be strong predictors of parental leave decisions among women, they appear to have little or no influence on the decisions of men, suggesting that mothers play a leading role in determining parental leave allocation. In the context of SPL, this may be partly driven by the design of the policy, under which the endowment is formally assigned to mothers, who can then transfer part of it to fathers.

6 Shaping Perceived Returns to Father's Leave and Their Effects on Choices and Potential Behavior

6.1 Intervention and Outcomes

So far we have shown that people generally hold positive beliefs about non-pecuniary returns to fathers' leave. However, the low take up of SPL, as well as the results in Section 5, suggest that these beliefs are not strong or central enough to drive couples' leave decisions. In this section, we use a randomized information intervention to investigate whether these beliefs can be strengthened with effects on people's potential parental leave allocation.

The randomized intervention was implemented as follows. The sample was randomly divided into a treatment and a control group. The treatment group was shown a short text describing the costs and benefits of SPL and parental leave more generally (see Appendix C). [17] The

[17] To make the text more engaging, we added a picture of a family. Each respondent saw a photo of a family from their own ethnic group (e.g., South Asian respondents saw a South Asian family). We did not include interracial families, as we lacked information on respondents' partners' ethnicity.

control group received no information, and, instead, saw a screen saying "Moving on..." and was directed straight to the post-treatment questions. The text first discussed the impact of paternity leave uptake on fathers' salaries: one of the most debated and important factors in parental leave decisions. It noted that existing studies find both negative and null effects, reported the most negative estimate in the literature (a 2% salary reduction), and stated that it corresponds to roughly £50 per month for the hypothetical couple presented. It then summarized evidence on the benefits of fathers taking parental leave for the whole family: for mothers, a lower likelihood of postnatal depression and physical health complications; for fathers, greater involvement in childcare and thus a stronger father-child bond; for children, improved academic performance. To enhance credibility and ensure respondents perceived the information as relevant, we specified that the evidence came from academic research conducted in countries similar to the UK and included a short reference section.

We test the effect of the intervention on three types of outcomes: beliefs, (potential) choices regarding SPL, and demand for public policy. For an information intervention on the returns and costs of SPL to influence allocations, it must first affect people's perceptions of these returns and costs. However, while shaping beliefs is necessary, it may not be sufficient to change actual choices. Some individuals may not value the non-pecuniary benefits of SPL emphasized in the intervention (for instance, some fathers may not be interested in helping their children with schoolwork). Moreover, other pecuniary or non-pecuniary costs may outweigh these benefits. For example, individuals may be unwilling or unable to absorb income losses from taking time off work and therefore prefer policies that increase pay during the leave period. Below, we describe the three outcomes used to assess the impact of the information intervention.

Individual Perceived Non-Pecuniary Returns: To measure changes in individual perceived non-pecuniary returns due to the intervention, we elicit participants' beliefs a second time after the treatment or control screen. To reduce respondent fatigue and limit questionnaire length, each participant sees only one randomly selected vignette question about either (i) maternal depression (maternal outcome), (ii) paternal involvement (paternal outcome), or (iii) children's long-term academic outcomes (child outcome). To minimize the likelihood that participants simply repeat their previous answers without reconsidering them, we ensure that the wording of the pre- and post-treatment questions on the same topic is not identical, while still measuring the same construct.

People's (Hypothetical) Choices Regarding SPL: To measure changes in (hypothetical) SPL allocation, we ask two questions: (i) how many weeks of SPL the couple should take in total, and (ii) how many of those weeks should be taken by David, the father in our hypothetical scenario. We do not impose the 40-week limit used in the vignettes, allowing respondents to provide answers more accurately, particularly if they believe either parent should take more

than 40 weeks, for example to recover from birth or to care for the newborn. As before, asking respondents to state their SPL preferences for a hypothetical couple enables direct comparisons across respondents, minimizes social desirability bias, and helps isolate the effect of the information intervention on non-pecuniary factors, as SPL choices in the hypothetical scenario do not influence household income, and thus pecuniary factors are controlled for.

Support for Public Policy: We also assess whether the intervention influences support for actions to improve the current SPL policy. This aligns with existing literature, which suggests that exogenous changes in beliefs may not fully translate into support for public policies (Settele, 2022; Haaland and Roth, 2023). We include two behavioral measures that differ slightly in their associated pecuniary cost. In the costly setting, participants are informed that, at the end of the survey, five respondents are randomly selected to receive an additional £10 on top of the standard survey reward. These selected participants can choose to donate part or all of their bonus to a charity advocating for improved pay and duration of SPL. Each respondent is asked how much they would donate if they are among the winners. To provide context about the charity, we describe its activities, such as free legal support related to parental leave, and we share statistics on the number of cases it has supported. In the costless setting, participants are asked whether they are willing to sign a petition on the official UK Government website advocating for improved pay and duration of shared parental leave. We provide information on how the petition system operates, including the government's actions at different signature thresholds. Participants are told that we share the petition link to enable easy access. They are then asked whether the petition should focus on: (i) improved pay during SPL and (ii) extended SPL duration, with the option to choose one, both, or neither. This measure provides indirect evidence of potential financial constraints affecting SPL take-up, as individuals who feel financially constrained or who view the income reduction during SPL as a key barrier are more likely to prioritize improved pay.

6.2 Effects of the Intervention: Estimation

The identification of the effect of the intervention relies on the assumption that treatment and control groups are comparable. This comparability should be ensured by the randomization. Table 5 presents the mean and standard deviation of demographic characteristics, beliefs measured before the intervention, and attitudes of the respondents in control and treatment group (columns (1) and (2)), as well as the t-test for the equality of means in the two groups (last column). Table 5 shows that the randomization was successful and no characteristic is unbalanced between groups. In the bottom row, we also present the F-statistics for the joint significance of our variables as they might be correlated with each other and that might lead to some unbalance. Again, the F-statistics is low and, as in the case of individual variables, the joint significance is also not an issue.

Table 5: Balancing

Variable	(1) Control N	(1) Control Mean/SD	(2) Treatment N	(2) Treatment Mean/SD	(3) Total N	(3) Total Mean/SD	T-test P-value (1)-(2)
Female	705	0.515 (0.500)	695	0.511 (0.500)	1400	0.513 (0.500)	0.878
White	705	0.813 (0.390)	695	0.837 (0.369)	1400	0.825 (0.380)	0.225
High SES	705	0.525 (0.500)	695	0.492 (0.500)	1400	0.509 (0.500)	0.221
Age	705	36.016 (5.690)	695	36.450 (5.502)	1400	36.231 (5.600)	0.146
Income (in £10k)	705	1038.222 (7560.198)	695	1301.629 (8493.866)	1400	1168.985 (8035.468)	0.540
FT Work	705	0.801 (0.399)	695	0.784 (0.412)	1400	0.793 (0.405)	0.426
PT Work	705	0.129 (0.336)	695	0.131 (0.338)	1400	0.130 (0.336)	0.918
Cohabiting	690	0.119 (0.324)	679	0.144 (0.352)	1369	0.131 (0.338)	0.163
Married	690	0.683 (0.466)	679	0.679 (0.467)	1369	0.681 (0.466)	0.884
UK Born	705	0.833 (0.374)	695	0.830 (0.376)	1400	0.831 (0.375)	0.904
Number of Kids	705	1.416 (1.019)	695	1.416 (1.019)	1400	1.416 (1.019)	0.997
Informal Childcare	705	0.591 (0.492)	695	0.578 (0.494)	1400	0.585 (0.493)	0.620
Liberal Gender Attitudes, Likert (sum)	705	10.620 (7.006)	695	10.016 (7.150)	1400	10.320 (7.082)	0.111
Liberal Gender Atittudes, Likert (Missing)	705	0.237 (0.425)	695	0.275 (0.447)	1400	0.256 (0.436)	0.104
Gender Atttitudes Scale	655	13.493 (14.164)	660	13.545 (14.787)	1315	13.519 (14.474)	0.949
Beliefs - Mother Back to Work	705	0.844 (2.010)	695	0.722 (2.063)	1400	0.783 (2.037)	0.265
Beliefs - Maternal Depression	705	-0.305 (1.923)	695	-0.386 (1.934)	1400	-0.346 (1.929)	0.433
Beliefs - Father has Emotional Bond	705	1.504 (2.596)	695	1.523 (2.608)	1400	1.514 (2.601)	0.894
Beliefs - Father Helps Child's HW	705	1.212 (2.343)	695	1.178 (2.283)	1400	1.195 (2.313)	0.785
Beliefs - Child Health	705	0.146 (1.560)	695	0.140 (1.517)	1400	0.143 (1.538)	0.945
Beliefs - Child's Academic Performance	705	0.230 (1.313)	695	0.254 (1.193)	1400	0.242 (1.255)	0.721
F-test of joint significance (F-stat)							0.735
F-test, number of observations							1286

Notes: High SES is derived from the education of the respondents and it is a dummy variable equal to 1 if individual is a university graduate and 0 otherwise. Income is in 10,000 terms. Gender Att Likert is a variable that is calculated using the answers from Gender Attitudes measurement which is in likert-scale. Gender Att Scale is a variable that is calculated using the method described in the data section. All beliefs measures are pre-treatment measures and they are calculated for each individual using 2 and the values are β_1 from equation 2. The number of observations is only for the F-statistics and it is lower than those of other tables due to some missing values in Likert-scale gender attitudes measure.

As the randomization was successful, to estimate the impact of the intervention one could simply regress the outcome variables, i.e., beliefs, SPL choices and demand for policy against a treatment indicator. However, we include controls, alongside the treatment dummy, to improve precision.

To estimate the impact on beliefs we estimate the following regression:

$$\tilde{y}_i^o = \psi_0^o + \psi_1^o D_i + \psi_2^o y_i^o + \psi_3^o \mathbf{X}_i + \nu_i^0 \tag{4}$$

where $\tilde{y}_i^o$ is the post-treatment standardized measure of the perceived returns estimated for outcome o (e.g., probability of maternal depression) through equation (2), y_i^o is the same standardized measure estimated pre-treatment, D_i is a treatment indicator equal to 1 if individual i received the information treatment and 0 otherwise, $\mathbf{X}_i$ is a vector of personal characteristics, namely gender, ethnicity, education, age, employment status, region of domicile and number of children, and ν_i^0 is the error term, unknown to the econometrician. The coefficient of interest is ψ_1^o, representing the effect of the intervention on the perceived returns to the mother sharing some of the leave with the father on outcome o.

To estimate the impact on people's potential choices regarding SPL and support for public policy we cannot control for pre-treatment measures of the same behavior, as this information is not collected pre-treatment. However, as the treatment is randomized, pre-treatment information is not needed to estimate the causal treatment effect, and it is only added to increase precision. Therefore, for these outcomes we estimate the following regression:

$$\tilde{y}_i^o = \xi_0^o + \xi_1^o D_i + \xi_2^o \mathbf{X}_i + \mu_i^o \tag{5}$$

where $\tilde{y}_i^o$ is the post treatment outcome of interest, D_i is the treatment indicator, $\mathbf{X}_i$ the same set of controls used in (4), μ_i^o is an unobserved error term, and ξ_1^o is the coefficient of interest, representing the effect of the intervention on outcome o.

6.3 Effects of the Intervention: Results

We first examine the effect of the information treatment on outcomes that are likely to be *directly* affected by the intervention, namely, beliefs about the returns to the mother sharing parental leave with the father in terms of maternal depression, the father's help with homework, and the child's academic performance (our post-intervention beliefs). The estimated effects, captured, for each outcome, by the coefficient β_1^o in equation (2), are reported in Table 6. Columns (1), (4), and (7) show results without controls; columns (2), (5), and (8) include only pre-treatment measures; and columns (3), (6), and (9) include the full set of controls.

We find that the intervention has significant impacts on respondents' beliefs about the ben-

efits for the mother and the child of transferring parental leave from the mother to the father. The effect sizes are striking: Column (3) shows that the intervention reduces individuals' beliefs about the likelihood that a mother will *suffer* from depression by 15.4% of a standard deviation while column (9) shows that it increases individuals' beliefs about the likelihood that the child will receive "good" grades from age 16 exams by 13.2% of a standard deviation, the latter being weakly significant. However, we find no effects of the intervention on participants' expected returns to sharing parental leave with the mother on the father's likelihood of helping with the child's homework.

The presence of a treatment effect for the perceived returns to transferring some leave to the father on the maternal and the child outcome might not be surprising given that the text mentions paternal leave reducing post-partum mental and physical health issues for mothers and increasing children's academic performances in secondary school. The lack of a treatment effect on perceived benefits on the likelihood that the father helps with the child homework may be due to the fact that there is no explicit mention of this in the text, although we provide information that fathers who take leave become more involved in childcare and household responsibilities. Participants may not view helping with homework as part of childcare, associating childcare more with tasks involving general care outside of an educational context. While the coefficient for this belief is positive, it is only one-fourth the size of the other belief estimates suggesting that the information was indeed ineffective in shaping this particular dimension. Another reason for this lack of effect could be that participants already perceived high returns to SPL for fathers before the intervention, particularly in comparison to estimated returns for mothers and children (see: Table 2), leaving limited room for further improvement.

Table 6: Effect of Intervention on Beliefs

	Maternal Depression			Father Help with HW			Academic Performance		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Treatment	-0.128	-0.122	-0.154**	0.055	0.065	0.030	0.161*	0.097	0.132*
	(0.093)	(0.076)	(0.075)	(0.092)	(0.080)	(0.082)	(0.093)	(0.083)	(0.077)
Baseline		0.598***	0.602***		0.493***	0.456***		0.508***	0.467***
		(0.063)	(0.059)		(0.069)	(0.071)		(0.084)	(0.082)
Observations	466	466	466	471	471	471	463	463	463
Controls	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Notes: Columns (3), (6) and (9) report estimates that also control for gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, employment type (full-time employment, part-time employment, unemployment), urban-suburban-rural domicile, whether born in the UK, whether partner is born in the UK and their interaction, number of kids that an individual has, number of kids they expect to have and their interaction and the region of domicile. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

As discussed earlier, a treatment effect that positively influences beliefs may not necessarily lead to changes in behavior regarding SPL. Therefore, we now examine whether the intervention

affected individuals' hypothetical choices about SPL, both the total number of weeks taken by the couple and the split between parents, as well as their actions in support of the policy, such as donations to a charity and willingness to sign a petition for SPL.

Table 7: Effect of Intervention on Preferences for the Hypothetical Couple

	Total Weeks		Share Male		Weeks Male		Weeks Female	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Treatment	-0.171	-0.162	0.004	0.004	0.372	0.311	-0.542	-0.473
	(0.606)	(0.590)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.501)	(0.486)	(0.638)	(0.613)
Observations	1,400	1,400	1,397	1,397	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
Mean	38.82	38.82	0.41	0.41	15.22	15.22	23.60	23.60
SD	(11.47)	(11.47)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(9.26)	(9.26)	(12.34)	(12.34)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: Columns (2), (4), (6) and (8) report estimates that also control for gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, employment status, region of domicile, urban-rural indicator, whether the respondent and the partner are UK born, number of kids and number of expected kids. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 7 shows that the intervention has no effect on the total number of SPL weeks the couple should take, nor on the number of weeks or share allocated to the father. A plausible explanation is that the information treatment explicitly mentions potential costs to fathers' earnings associated with taking leave. Even if these costs are described as relatively small, respondents may be reluctant to reallocate leave toward fathers once pecuniary penalties are made salient. As a result, updated beliefs about the non-pecuniary benefits of fathers' leave may not translate into changes in stated SPL allocations.

Table 8 reports the impact of the information intervention on respondents' support for public policy. The treatment does not increase donations to a charity advocating for improved SPL conditions, but it does increase respondents' stated willingness to sign a petition calling for higher SPL pay. Although the effect is only weakly statistically significant, the magnitude—3.4 percentage points—is meaningful given that 83% of respondents in the control group already support improved SPL pay. This pattern suggests that pay during SPL is a salient constraint for respondents. While the intervention updates beliefs about the non-pecuniary benefits of fathers' leave, respondents appear more responsive when the policy instrument directly addresses financial costs. This helps rationalize why the intervention does not affect respondents' choices for the hypothetical couple's SPL allocation: because we do not impose a cap on SPL duration, respondents may explicitly take potential income losses into account, and these pecuniary considerations may dominate non-pecuniary gains when deciding how leave should be allocated.

Table 8: Effect of Intervention on Demand for Public Policy

	Donation		Petition		Improve Pay		Improve Duration		Improve Pay and Duration	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Treatment	-0.093	-0.042	-0.013	-0.003	0.029	0.034*	0.015	0.020	0.037*	0.041*
	(0.197)	(0.186)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Observations	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
Mean	4.48	4.48	0.70	0.70	0.83	0.83	0.87	0.87	0.79	0.79
SD	(3.69)	(3.69)	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.41)	(0.41)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: Columns (2), (4), (6) and (8) report estimates that also control for gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, employment status, region of domicile, urban-rural indicator, whether the respondent and the partner are UK born, number of kids and number of expected kids. Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

6.3.1 Heterogeneity of the Impact of the Intervention

Since the intervention focuses on decision making for the hypothetical couple and there are baseline correlations between respondents' beliefs and personal characteristics with these decisions, the effects of the intervention may vary based on factors such as gender, education, gender norms, parental status, or initial beliefs. To understand whether this is the case, we study the heterogeneous effects using a fully interacted model.

Heterogeneity by Personal Characteristics

Table A2 documents heterogeneous treatment effects across respondents' characteristics. Several salient patterns emerge.

First, sensitivity to the intervention operates primarily through respondents' direct exposure to caregiving, as proxied by parental status. Respondents with children update their beliefs about the effect of fathers' leave on maternal depression significantly more than respondents without children. Notably, while the coefficients for hypothetical SPL decisions are uniformly negative among childless respondents, they are generally positive among parents, with a statistically significant difference between the two groups arising for the number of SPL weeks allocated to fathers. Differences by parental status also emerge in support for public policy: respondents without children increase charitable donations more strongly than parents following the intervention, whereas parents are more likely to support an extension of SPL duration, although this latter difference is not statistically significant. Taken together, these findings indicate that exposure to caregiving plays a central role in shaping responsiveness to the information intervention, influencing both belief updating and hypothetical behaviour, and affecting the channels through which belief updates translate into policy preferences.

Second, gender differences mirror several of the patterns observed by parental status. Women

update their beliefs about the effect of paternal leave on children's academic performance significantly more than men. Following the intervention, women choose longer total periods of SPL, allocate a higher share of SPL to fathers, and generally assign more SPL weeks to fathers and fewer to mothers than men do, although these heterogeneous effects are statistically significant only for the share of SPL allocated to fathers. Overall, these gender differences are consistent with a greater salience of caregiving considerations among women.

Finally, gender norms also contribute to heterogeneity in treatment effects. Respondents with more egalitarian gender norms update their beliefs about maternal depression significantly more than those with less egalitarian views. Overall, these results suggest that responsiveness to the intervention is greater among respondents for whom the topic of parental leave is more salient—either because of direct caregiving experience, as in the case of parents, or because of greater engagement with caregiving and SPL-related considerations, as observed among women and respondents with more egalitarian gender norms. This interpretation is consistent with the descriptive evidence presented earlier.

Heterogeneity by Initial Beliefs

We also study how the intervention's effects differ according to respondents' initial beliefs. Since beliefs are measured on a continuous scale, we first divide individuals into high- and low-belief groups for the three beliefs assessed both before and after the intervention. This split is based on the median, classifying respondents above it as having high initial beliefs and those below it as having low initial beliefs.

Table A3 reveals statistically significant heterogeneity by initial beliefs in four outcomes. First, for beliefs about maternal depression, the treatment effect differs between respondents with low and high initial beliefs, indicating stronger belief updating among initially sceptical individuals. Second, a similar pattern emerges for beliefs about fathers' involvement in homework, where the difference between low- and high-belief respondents is statistically significant.

Heterogeneity by initial beliefs also appears for policy support outcomes related to child academic performance. Respondents with low initial beliefs respond differently than those with high initial beliefs in terms of both charitable donations and petition signing , suggesting that the intervention affects civic engagement more strongly among initially pessimistic respondents. No other outcomes exhibit statistically significant differences between low- and high-belief groups. Using the continuous measure of initial beliefs, does not uncover novel patterns in heterogeneity, see Table A4.

Heterogeneity by Initial Allocation (Up to 14 Weeks vs More than 14 Weeks)

In Section 5, we show that beliefs are strong predictors of the initial allocation of SPL weeks to fathers. This relationship is particularly pronounced among respondents who allocated up to 14 weeks, as the belief scenarios themselves only range from 0 to 14 weeks, making these beliefs most relevant for this group. Recognizing the importance of this allocation constraint, we also examine whether the intervention's effects differ by initial allocation, i.e. comparing participants who allocated up to 14 weeks to the father with those who allocated more than 14 weeks.

We report the results of this analysis in Appendix Table A5. Overall, we find no statistically significant differences between the two groups. However, treatment effects on beliefs are generally stronger for outcomes related to the father and child. Notably, the coefficients for the father's likelihood of helping with homework point in opposite directions: the effect is negative for respondents who initially allocated more than 14 weeks to the father, but positive for those who initially allocated up to 14 weeks.

7 Further Analysis

7.1 Eliciting Beliefs

7.1.1 Eliciting Beliefs with CES Production Function

When eliciting beliefs, we assume that they follow a Cobb-Douglas production function. However, this assumption may not always hold, particularly if the probability of an outcome increases linearly with the number of weeks allocated to the father. In such cases, the Cobb-Douglas specification may fail to capture respondents' beliefs accurately. To assess this possibility, we re-estimate equation (2) using a Constant Elasticity of Substitution (CES) production function and examine whether the results reported in Table 6 are affected.

We report the results of this analysis in Appendix Table A6. The estimates obtained using the CES production function are consistent with our main findings: we observe a negative treatment effect on beliefs about the returns to fathers' SPL in terms of maternal depression, and a positive treatment effect on beliefs regarding child academic performance. These results suggest that our conclusions about belief formation are robust and not driven by the assumption that beliefs follow a Cobb-Douglas production function.

7.1.2 Eliciting Beliefs Separately without any Functional Form

So far, we have assumed two alternative functional forms for the production of subjective expectations when eliciting beliefs. However, it is possible that subjective expectations do not follow any specific production function. To assess whether our choice of functional form (or the

assumption that one exists at all) introduces bias, we also elicit beliefs without imposing a production function. We do this by eliciting beliefs based on differences in respondents' answers across scenarios. Specifically, we elicit beliefs separately for scenarios defined by the allocation of weeks to the father: (i) middle versus low $(A_m - A_l)$, (ii) high versus middle $(A_h - A_m)$, and (iii) high versus low $(A_h - A_l)$, where A_k denotes the subjective expectation of the outcome in scenario k, with $k =$ low (0 weeks), middle (8 weeks), and high (14 weeks).

We present the results of this analysis in Appendix Table A7. The results show that even when we do not impose a production function for subjective expectations and instead estimate treatment effects by simply taking differences across scenarios, the estimated treatment effects remain statistically significant. In particular, the effects on beliefs about the returns to fathers taking an additional week of leave on maternal depression and child academic outcomes are significant for all three comparisons (middle-low, high-low, and high-middle), with the middle-low comparison for maternal depression being only weakly significant. These findings also indicate that the impacts on beliefs are not driven solely by the lower or upper ends of the leave allocation scenarios, but are instead relatively homogeneous across scenarios.

7.2 Experimenter Demand Effects

A potential issue in an experimental setting is experimenter demand effects (Zizzo, 2010). After reading the intervention text, respondents may infer the purpose of the experiment and adjust their behavior accordingly, either aligning with the intended change or reacting in the opposite direction. If a significant number of participants respond in this way, the results may be biased. This is especially true for the analysis of treatment effects on beliefs as we measure beliefs both before and after the intervention and respondents may be able to understand that we are aiming to change these beliefs. De Quidt et al. (2018) study several games to understand the scope of experimenter demand effects. They find that "weak treatment" where they tell the participants what they expect the participants to do, the experimenter demand effect is on average 13% of a standard deviation but this is close to 0 for non-incentivized setting, which is similar to ours

Given the findings of De Quidt et al. (2018), we expect minimal experimenter demand effect in our setting as there are several characteristics of our study design that ensures this is not strong enough to bias the results. The first is that our beliefs measures are not incentivized. In a setting where individuals can earn (or lose) any reward, one would expect the respondents to answer in a way that would maximize their earnings (or reduce their losses). This is not the case in our setting, where respondents do not derive any monetary returns from guessing the study aim. Second, our survey is anonymous and respondents are aware that we cannot identify them. It has been long argued that anonymity would reduce the social pressure to please the experimenter (Hoffman et al., 1994). Third, our information intervention is framed in a neutral way. In

a setting where we provide only the costs or only the benefits of parental leave, the respondents may be able to understand what we are aiming to measure and hence behave accordingly. Since we combined the costs and benefits of the parental leave in our text, it is harder for the respondents to understand in which direction we want to change their behavior. Finally, two of the three post-intervention belief questions address topics covered in the intervention. One aspect, namely whether the father is likely to help with the child's homework, is not mentioned in the message shown to the treatment group. This is also the belief for which no treatment effect is observed. This result aligns with the idea that attentive respondents updated their beliefs based on the information in the text, rather than simply trying to please the experimenter.

8 Conclusion

One of the common sources of gender gap that has been long-discussed is the childbirth. After childbirth, the existing gender gap tends to widen. Paternity leave is a key policy that can help address this issue. However, despite its increasing availability in many high-income countries, its uptake remains low – even in societies with more gender-equal norms.

In this paper, we examine the factors influencing parental leave take-up, focusing on both monetary and non-monetary aspects, as well as beliefs about the returns to paternal leave. Using a novel, nationally representative survey from England where parental leave can be shared between parents, we assess individuals' perceptions of the benefits of parental leave using vignettes. We measure parental leave take-up based on respondents' decisions for a hypothetical couple. Our findings indicate that individuals recognize the value of fathers taking parental leave, with positive impacts observed for the well-being of the mother, father, and child. Moreover, beliefs about the benefits of parental leave significantly influence leave allocation. Those who perceive greater returns assign more leave to the male partner in the hypothetical scenario. Additionally, we demonstrate that providing information about the costs and benefits of parental leave effectively shapes beliefs. However, this shift in beliefs is not strong enough to influence public policy support or change leave allocation decisions for the hypothetical couple.

Our findings have important policy implications. In the UK, parents who choose to take SPL face a significant income reduction. While employees at large or international companies may implement enhance payment schemes during SPL, most others receive only £172 per week from the government as a salary replacement, less than half the minimum wage, creating a substantial financial barrier. Our analysis reveals that more advantaged individuals are more likely to allocate more SPL weeks to fathers, highlighting the role of financial constraints in leave decisions. Additionally, 87% of participants in the control group of respondents believe that SPL pay should be improved. Our intervention further increases support for improving SPL pay by an additional 3.4ppt, a sizable rise.

Our findings indicate that while beliefs significantly influence the allocation of leave between parents, other factors, such as availability of informal childcare and SPL take-up among peers are even more important. Among all, lost income during parental leave is a critical factor in determining take-up, one that the government can directly address. Some countries have already implemented policies with high wage replacement rates during parental leave. For example, in Spain, fathers receive full pay while on leave, leading to widespread uptake of the entire allocated leave period. Although increasing parental leave pay is a costly policy intervention, it is likely to be more effective in increase fathers' take-up than efforts focused solely on changing beliefs or gender attitudes. If the government aims to increase paternal leave take-up, improving financial support should be a key priority.

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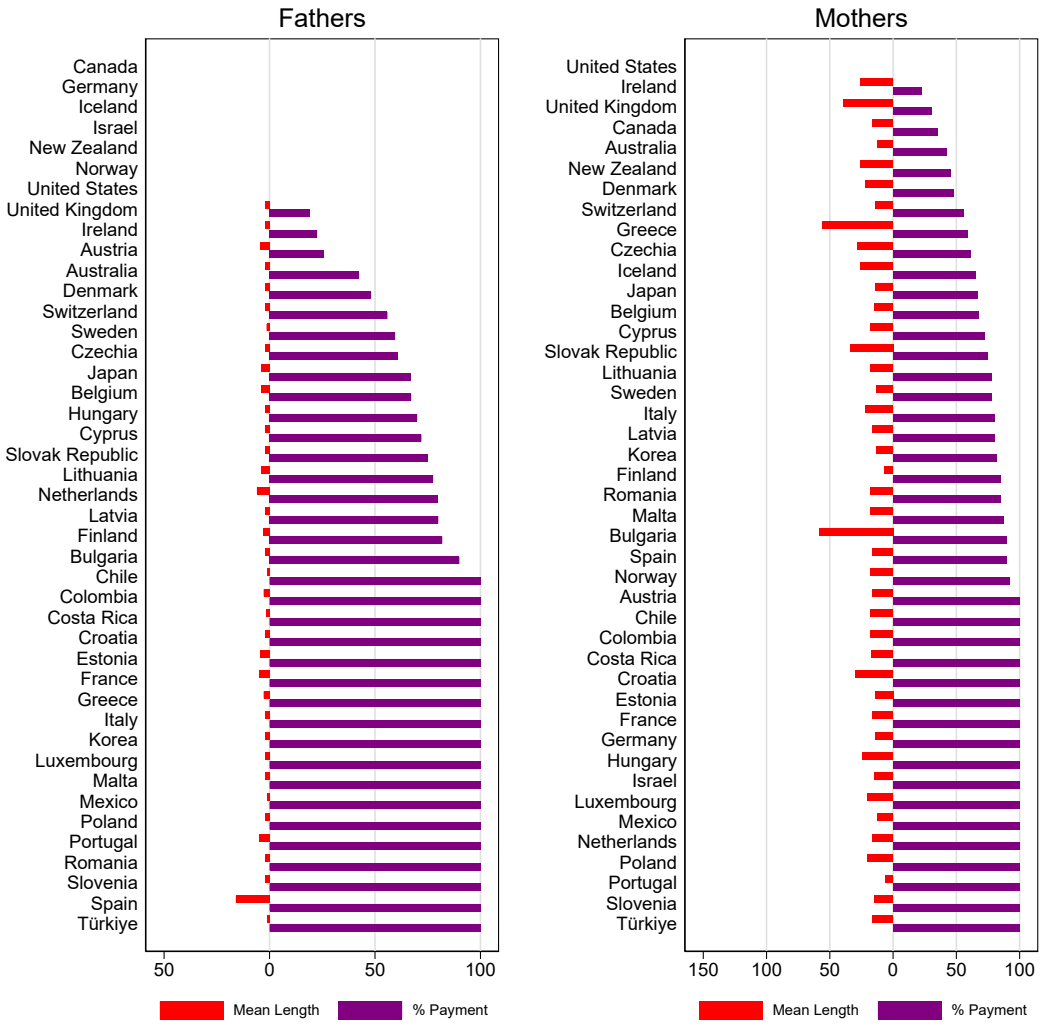
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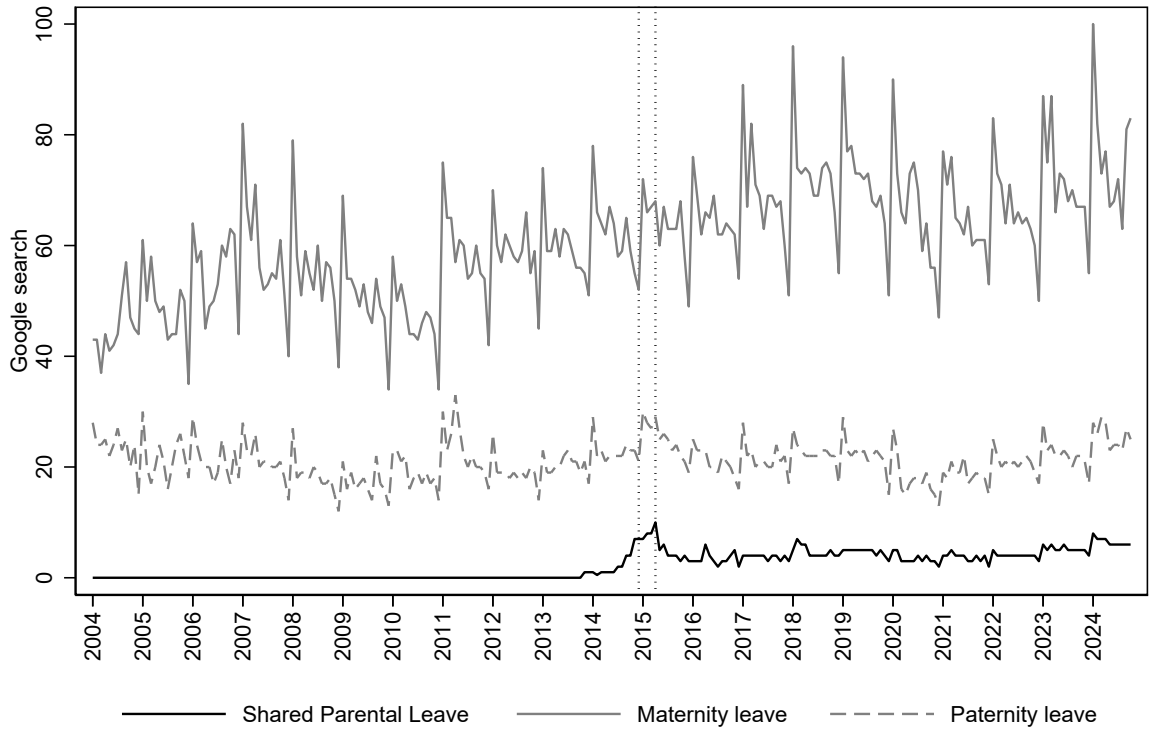
Appendix

Figure A1: Duration and average pay of paid maternity/paternity leave entitlements, 2023



d on the length of each period. For Chile, Germany, Lithuania, Romania and France payment rates reflect the proportion of the appropriate net earnings replaced by the benefit.

Figure A2: People's interest in parental leave, including shared parental leave, 2004-2024



Source: Google trends data. The dotted vertical lines indicate when SPL came into force (December 2014) was first available (April 2015)

Figure A3: Survey Flow

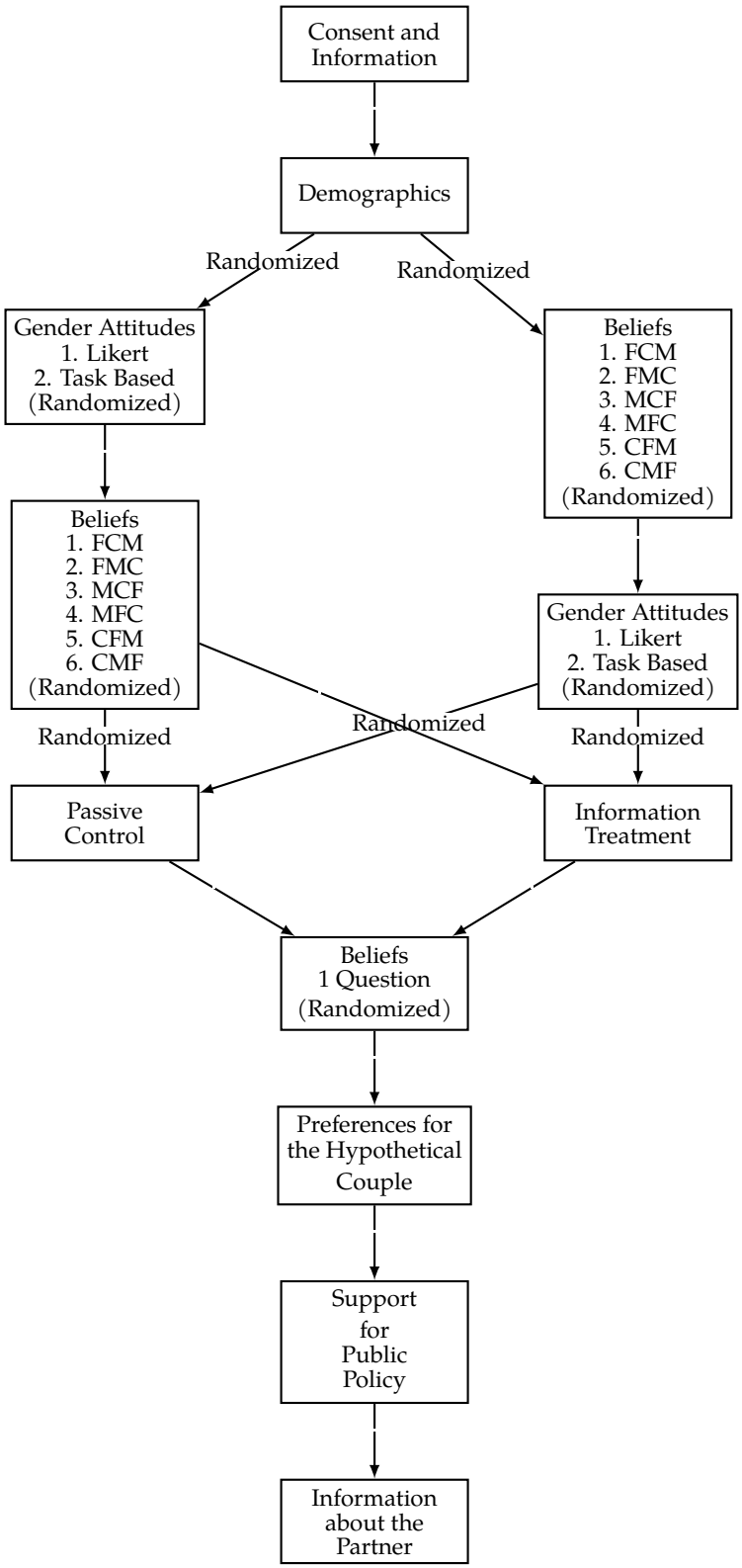
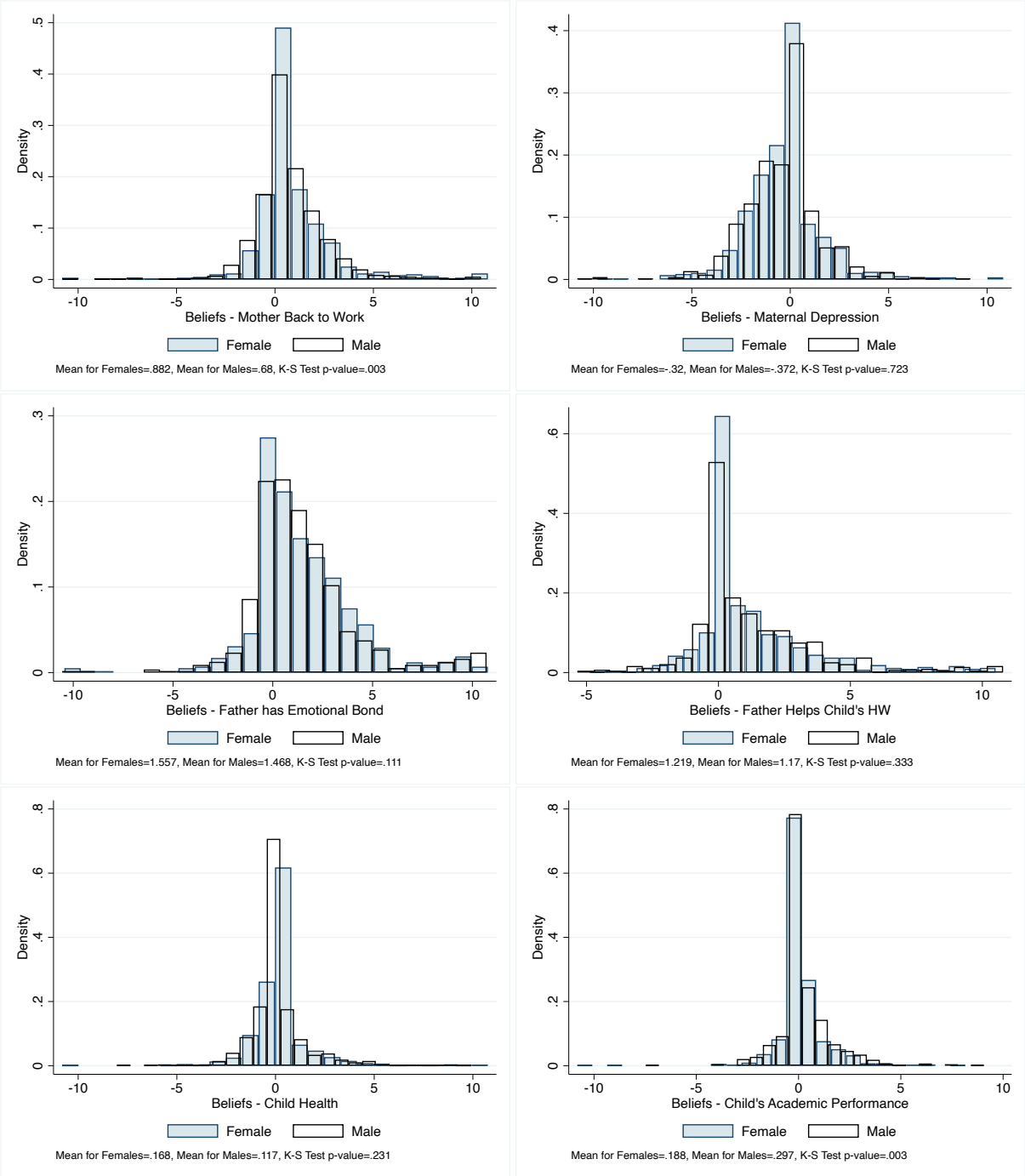
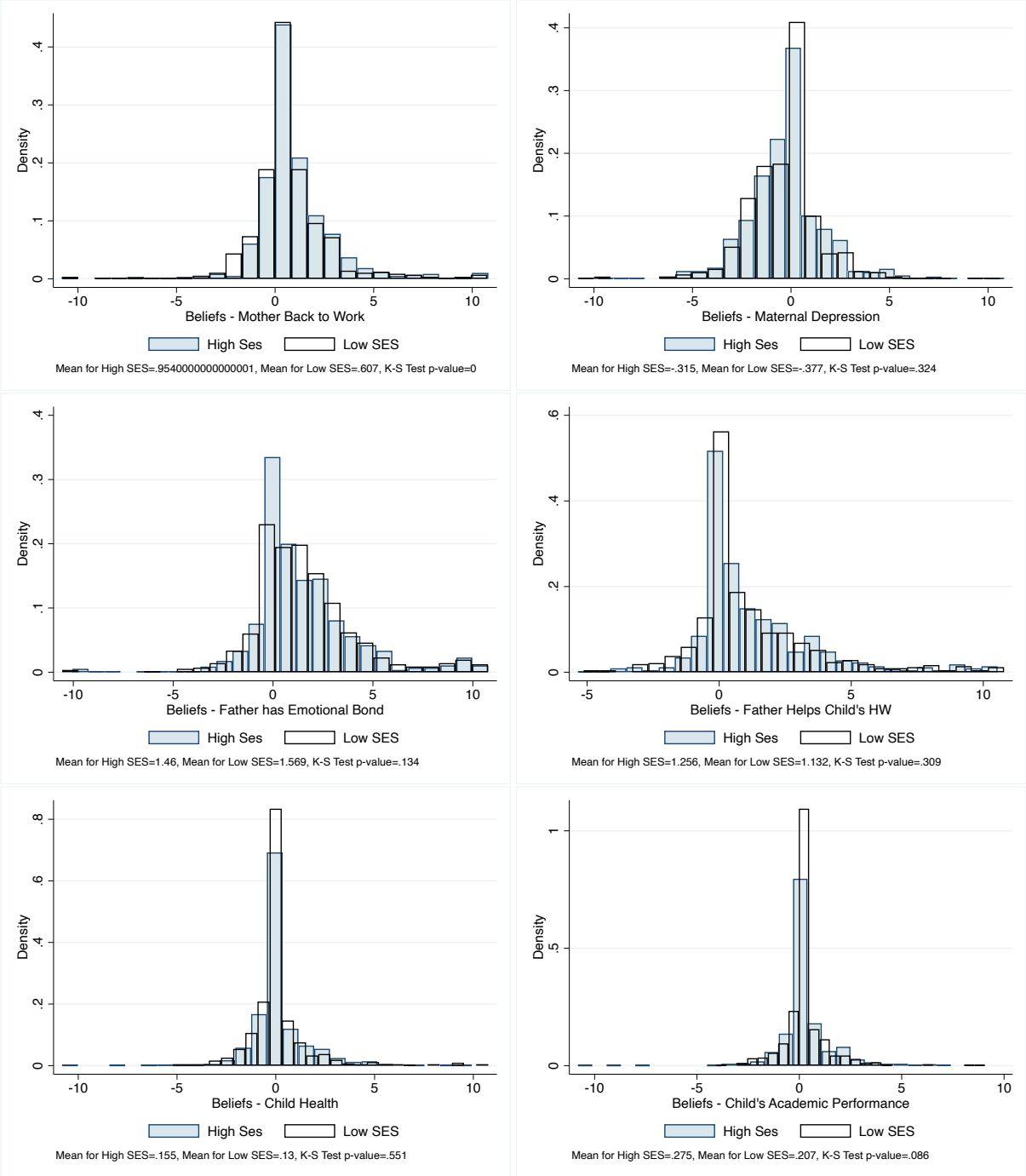


Figure A4: Distribution of Beliefs by Gender



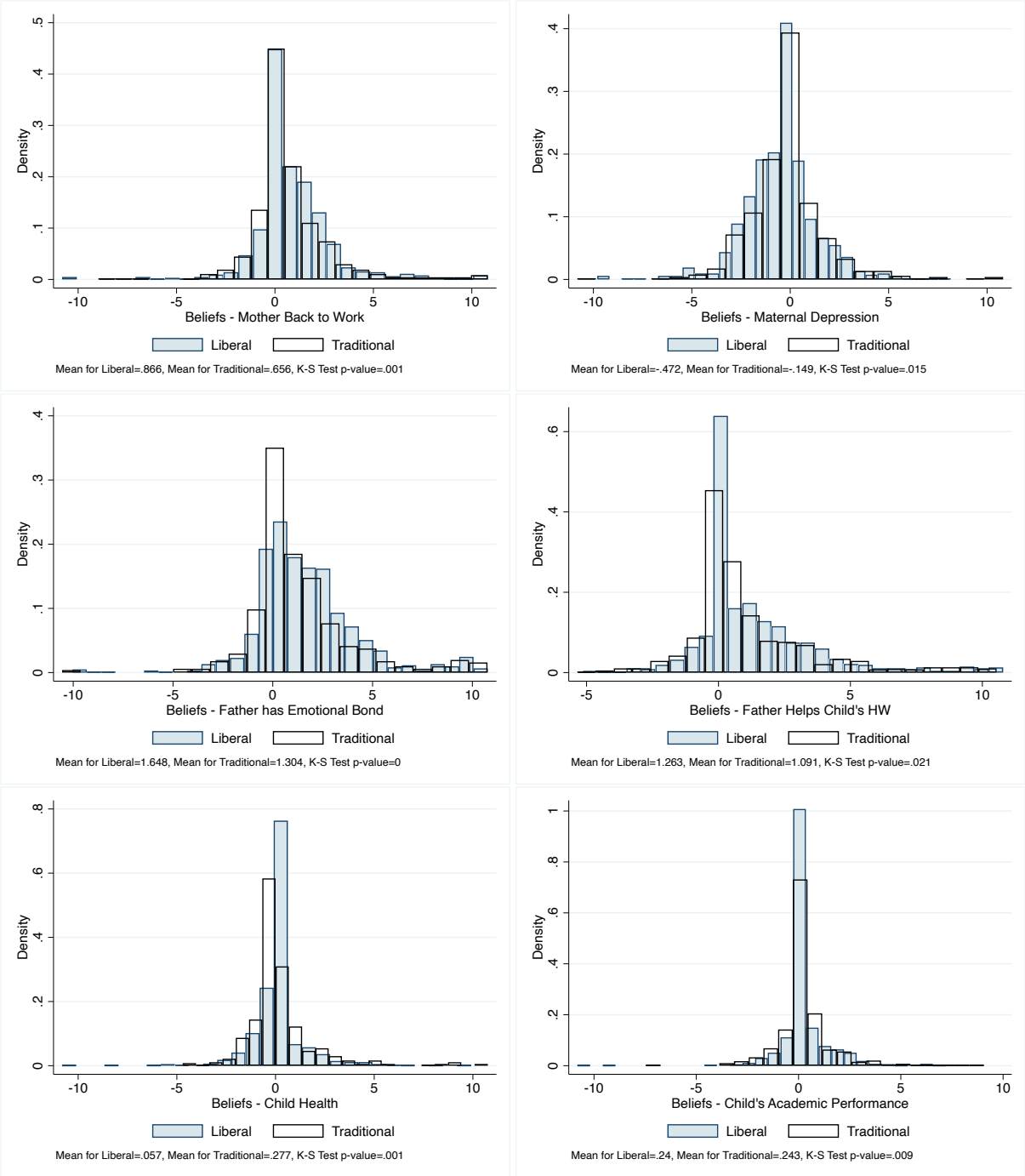
The histograms present the distribution of individual-specific beliefs about returns to fathers taking one week of SPL from the mother by gender. They are estimated for each outcome separately, using three answers for each of these outcomes. They are β_1^{io} from equation 2.

Figure A5: Distribution of Beliefs by Socio-economic Status



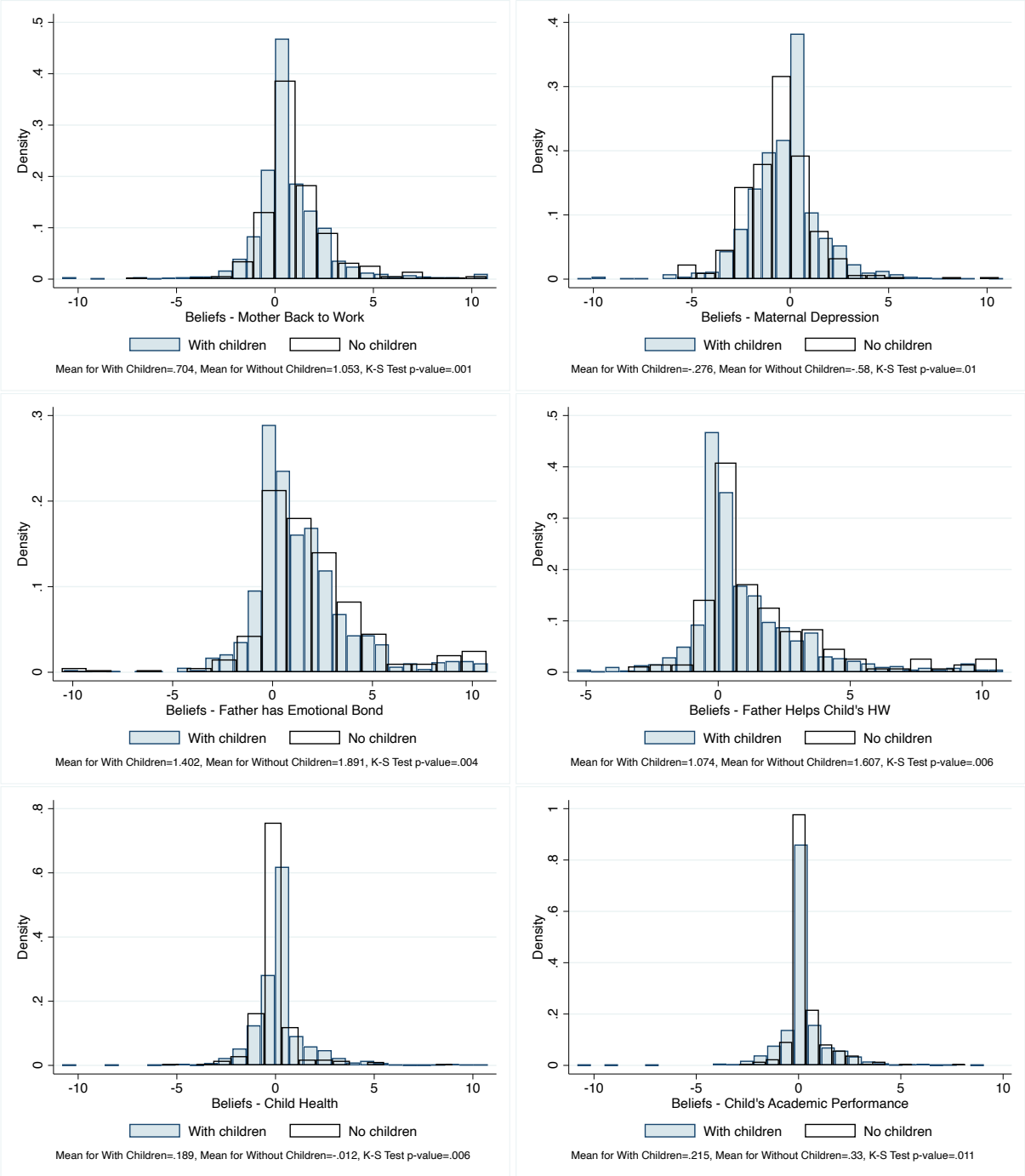
The histograms present the distribution of individual-specific beliefs about returns to fathers taking one week of SPL from the mother by socio-economic status. Socio-economic status is determined by education. Those who have a university degree or higher has been classified as high SES, others as low SES. They are estimated for each outcome separately, using three answers for each of these outcomes. They are β_1^{io} from equation 2.

Figure A6: Beliefs by Gender Norms



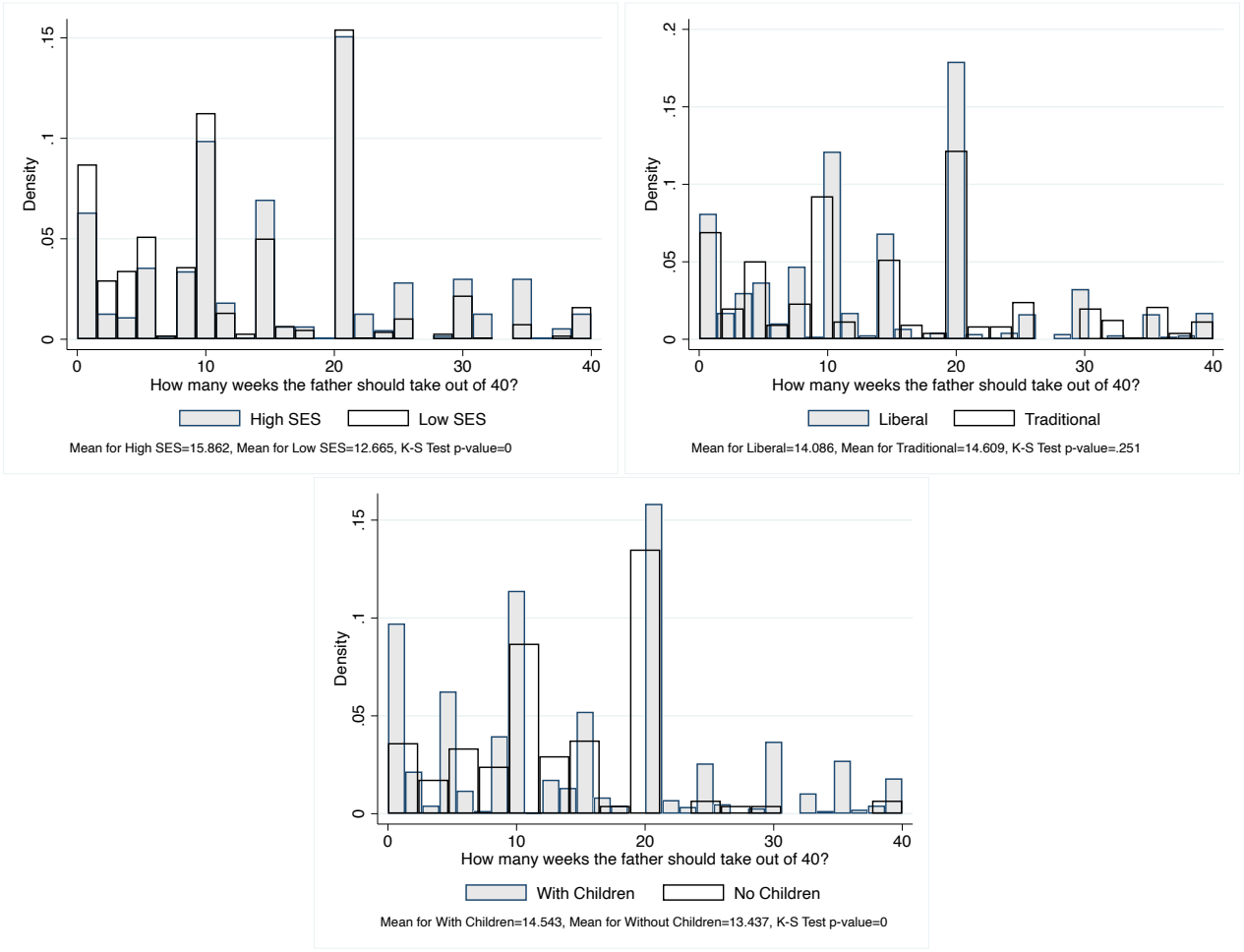
The histograms present the distribution of individual-specific beliefs about returns to fathers taking one week of SPL from the mother by gender norms. To classify individuals as conservative/liberal, we use the median value. They are estimated for each outcome separately, using three answers for each of these outcomes. They are β_1^{io} from equation 2.

Figure A7: Beliefs by Having Children



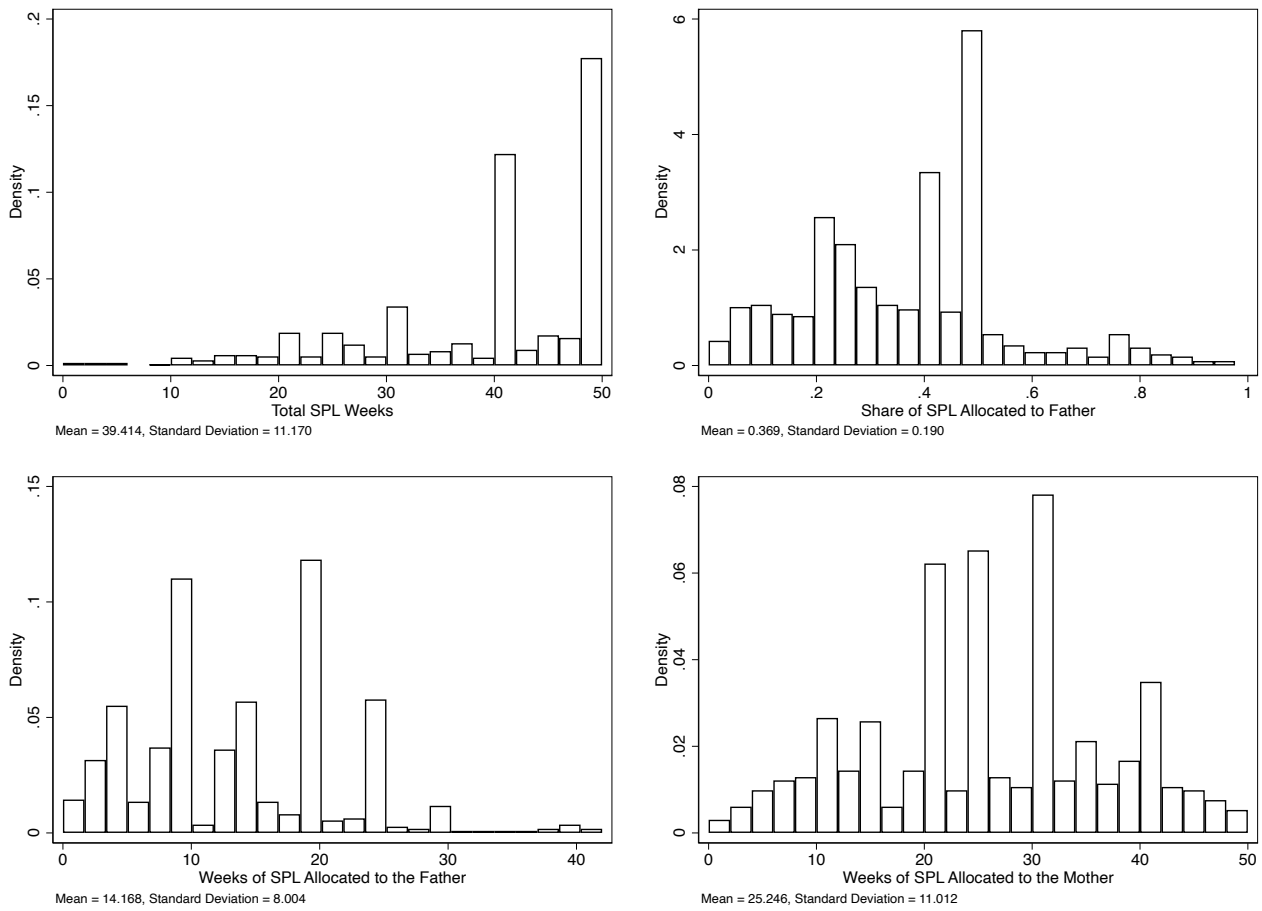
The histograms present the distribution of individual-specific beliefs about returns to fathers taking one week of SPL from the mother by having a children. They are estimated for each outcome separately, using three answers for each of these outcomes. They are β_1^{io} from equation 2.

Figure A8: Heterogeneity in Weeks Allocated to the Father



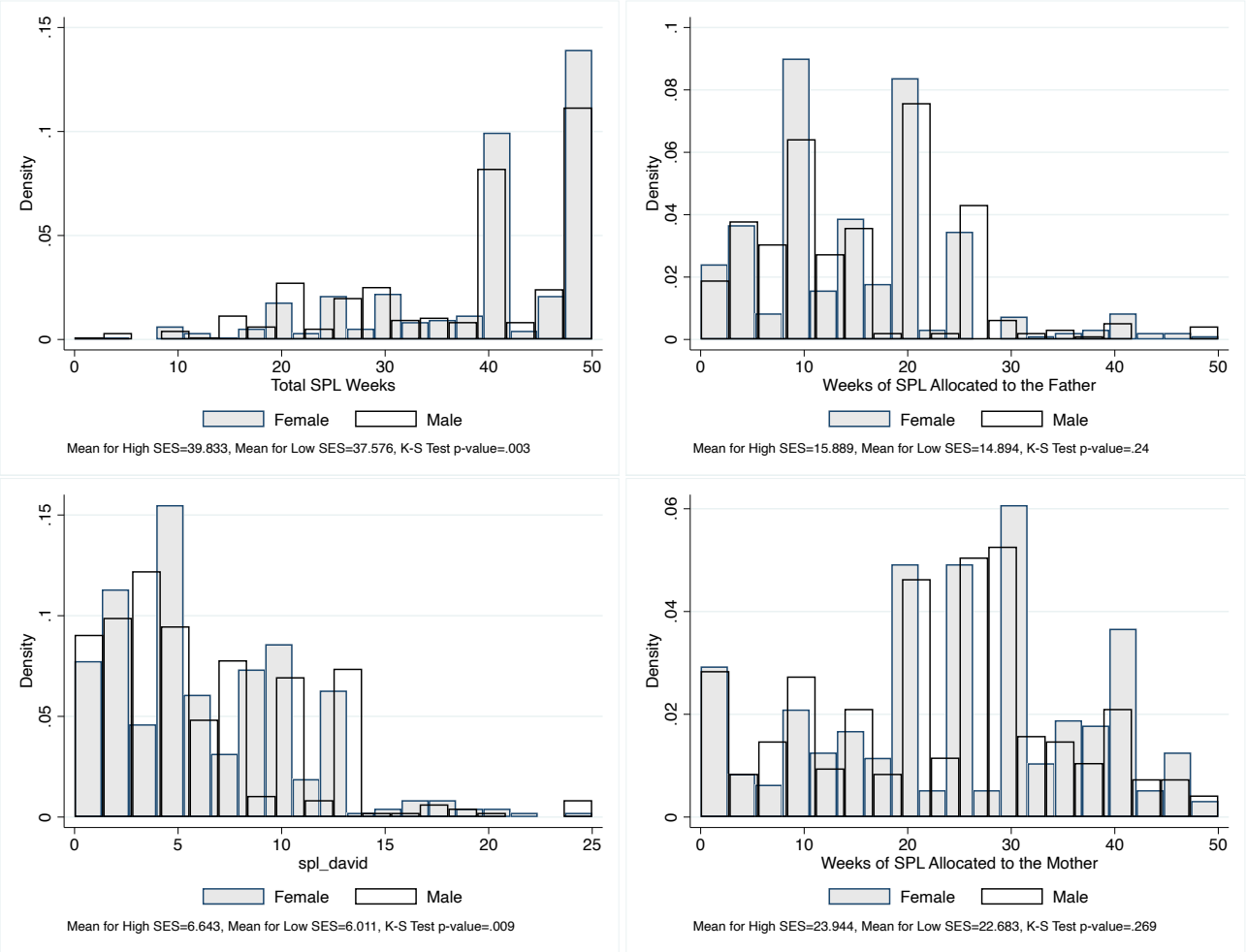
Notes: The histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "If you were in David and Claire's situation where you have their income, their top-up policies and decided to take 40 weeks of leave, how many weeks of leave would you take?" To construct the measure, we recode responses to reflect the number of weeks assigned to the father. For male respondents, we use their reported values directly. For female respondents, we calculate the allocation as 40 - their response, ensuring consistency in measuring paternal leave allocation across genders. Means for the groups are presented under the histogram. We also present the p-value of the Kolmogorov - Smirnov test for the equality of distribution of the answers of female and male respondents.

Figure A9: Total SPL Weeks, Share for the Father, and Weeks for the Father and Mother



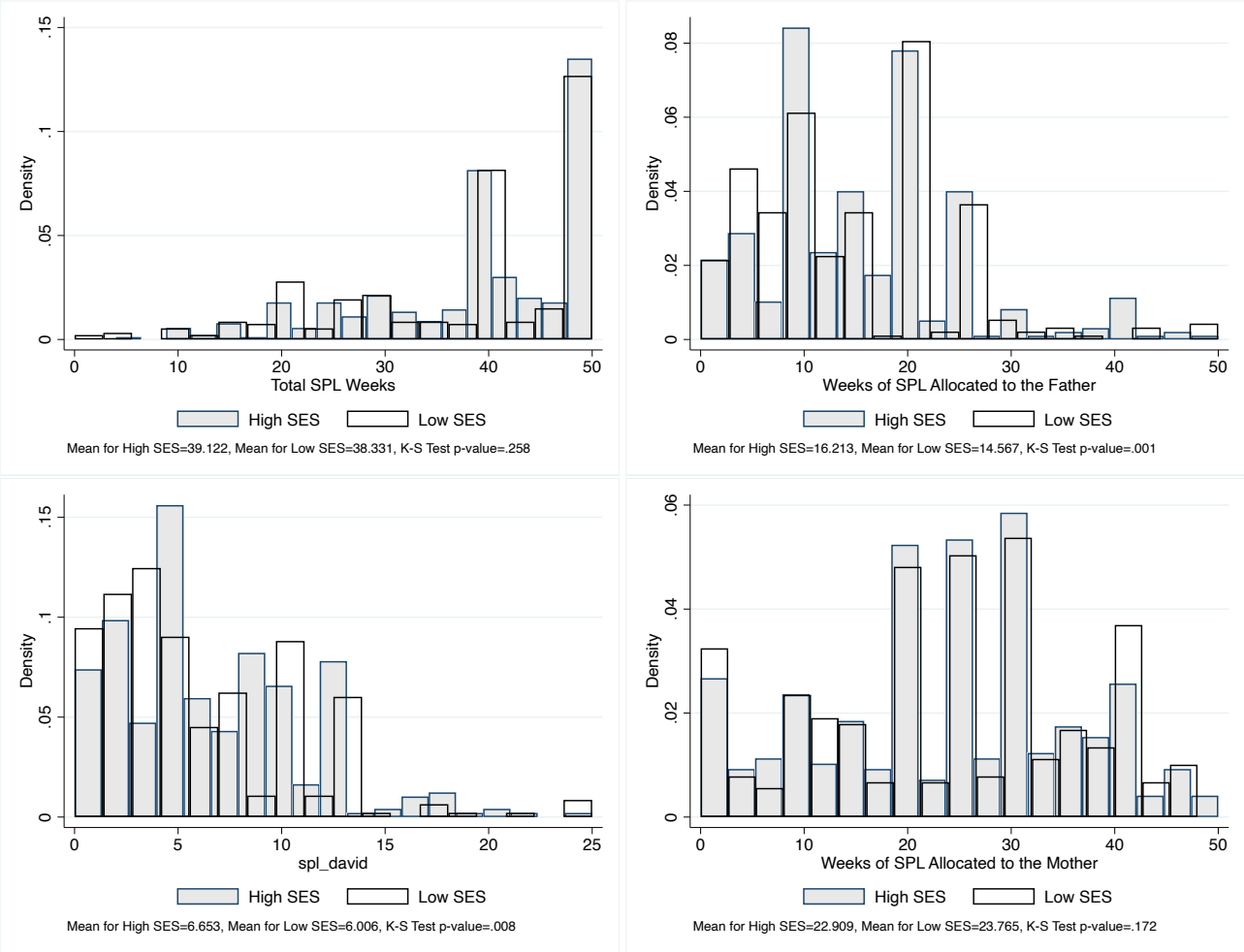
Notes: Top left histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?", bottom left shows individuals responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David" (bottom left), top right shows the share of weeks allocated to the father using the answers to these two questions and bottom right shows the share of weeks allocated to the mother using the answers to these two questions. Means and standard deviations are presented in each table.

Figure A10: SPL Allocation Post - Intervention by Gender



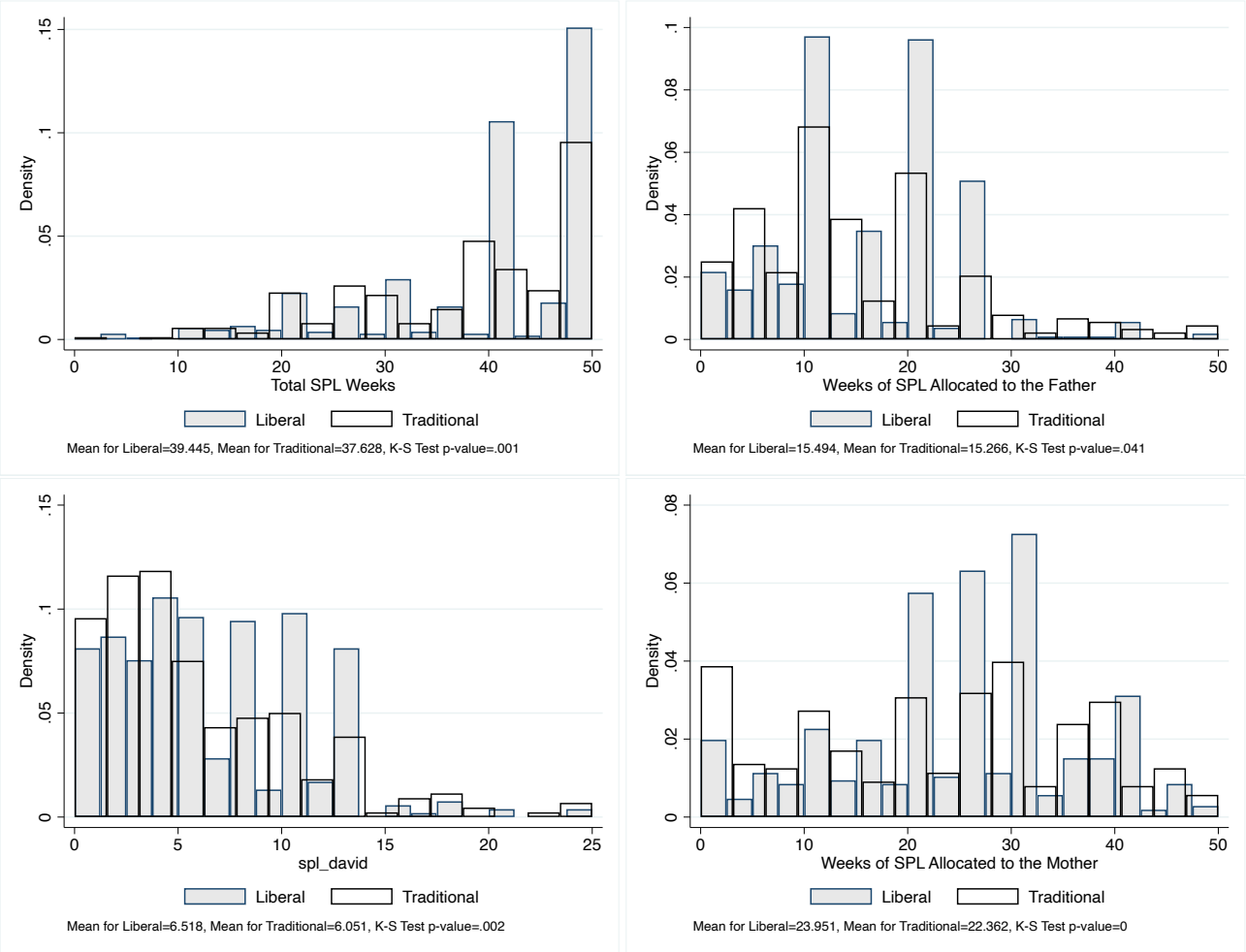
Notes: Top left histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?", bottom left shows individuals responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David" (bottom left), top right shows the share of weeks allocated to the father using the answers to these two questions and bottom right shows the share of weeks allocated to the mother using the answers to these two questions. Means and standard deviations are presented in each table.

Figure A11: SPL Allocation Post - Intervention by SES



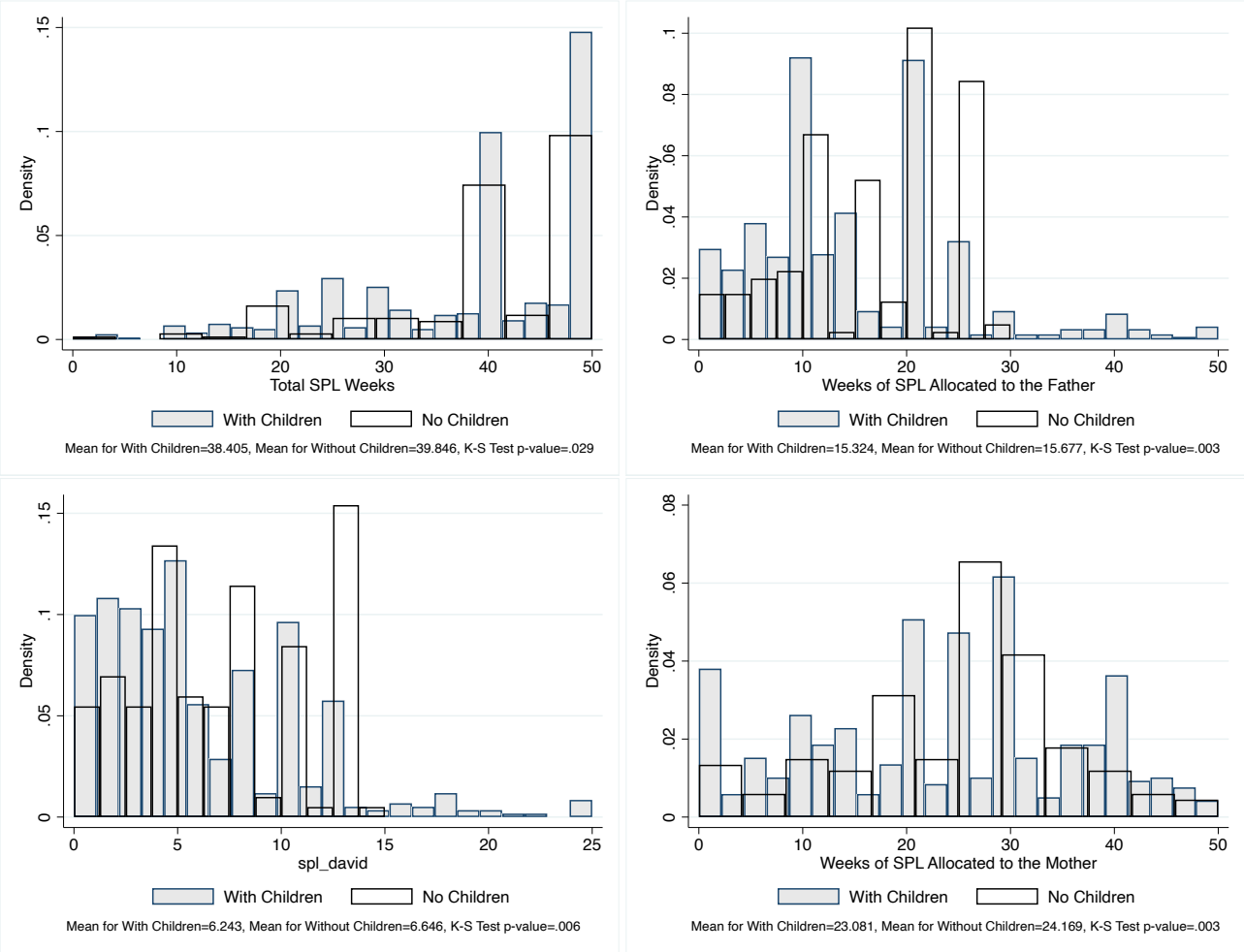
Notes: Top left histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?", bottom left shows individuals responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David" (bottom left), top right shows the share of weeks allocated to the father using the answers to these two questions and bottom right shows the share of weeks allocated to the mother using the answers to these two questions. Means and standard deviations are presented in each table.

Figure A12: SPL Allocation Post - Intervention by Gender Attitudes



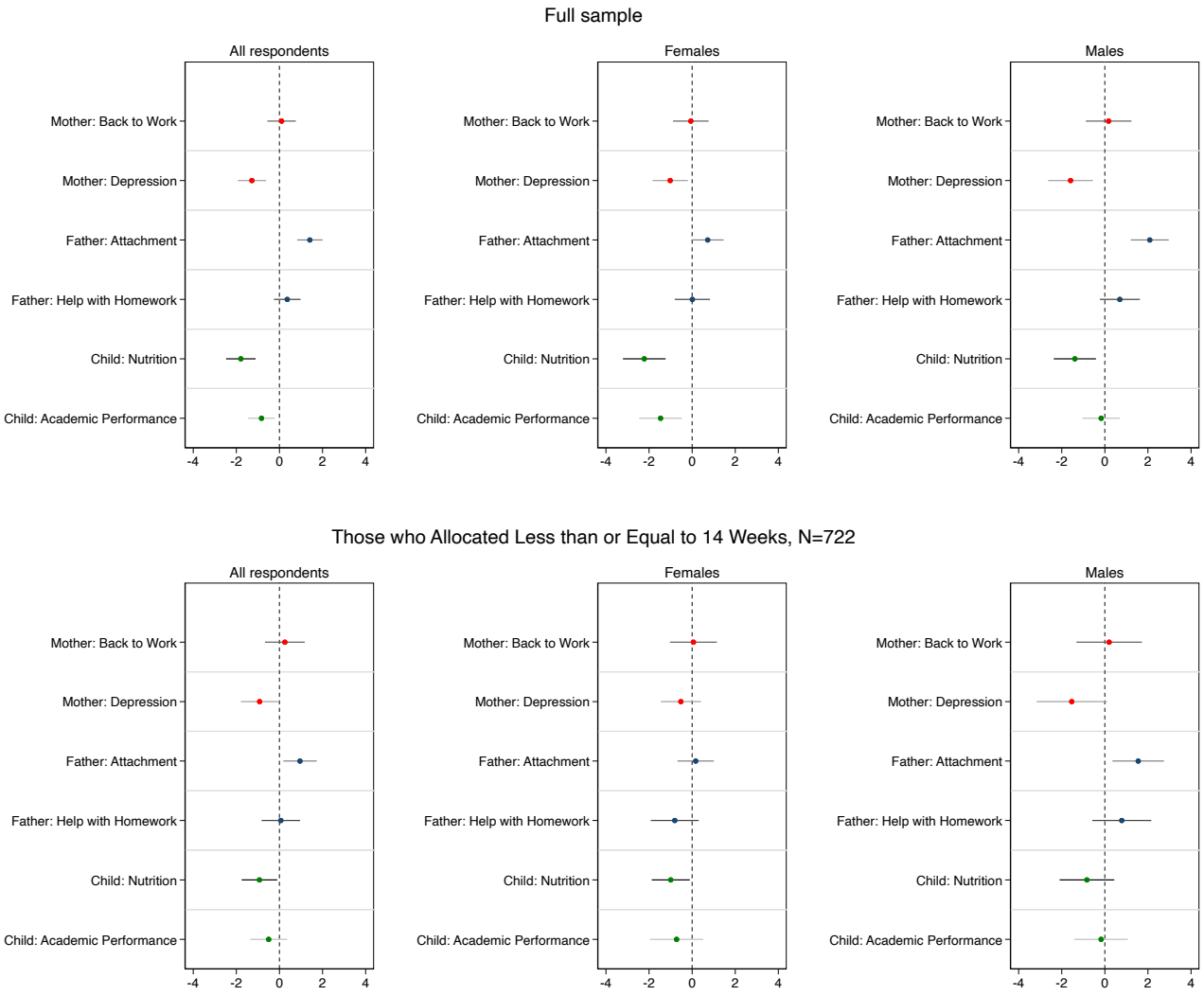
Notes: Top left histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?", bottom left shows individuals responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David" (bottom left), top right shows the share of weeks allocated to the father using the answers to these two questions and bottom right shows the share of weeks allocated to the mother using the answers to these two questions. Means and standard deviations are presented in each table.

Figure A13: SPL Allocation Post - Intervention by Already Having Kids



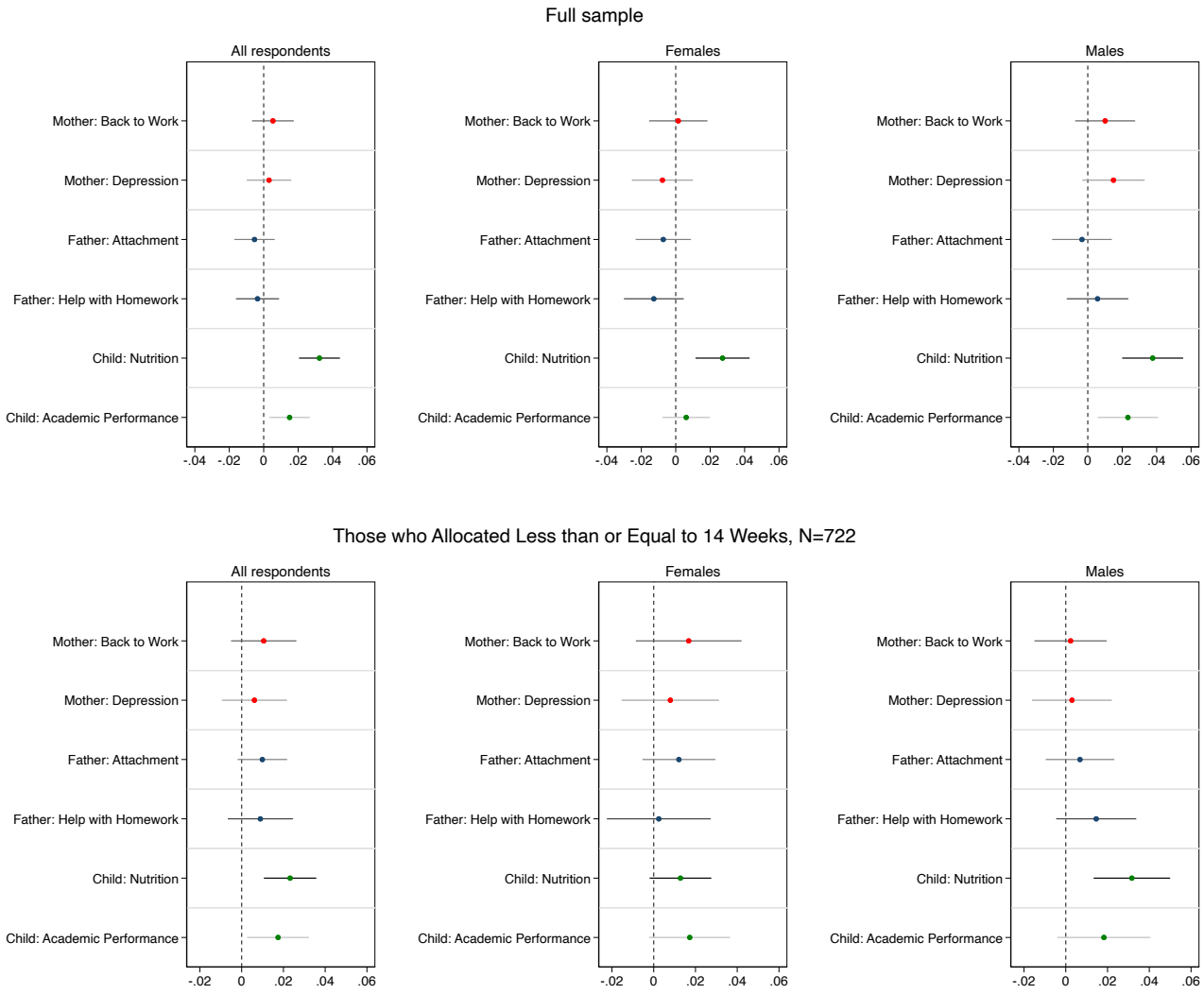
Notes: Top left histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?", bottom left shows individuals responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David" (bottom left), top right shows the share of weeks allocated to the father using the answers to these two questions and bottom right shows the share of weeks allocated to the mother using the answers to these two questions. Means and standard deviations are presented in each table.

Figure A14: Correlation of Beliefs with Post-Intervention SPL Allocation – Total SPL Weeks



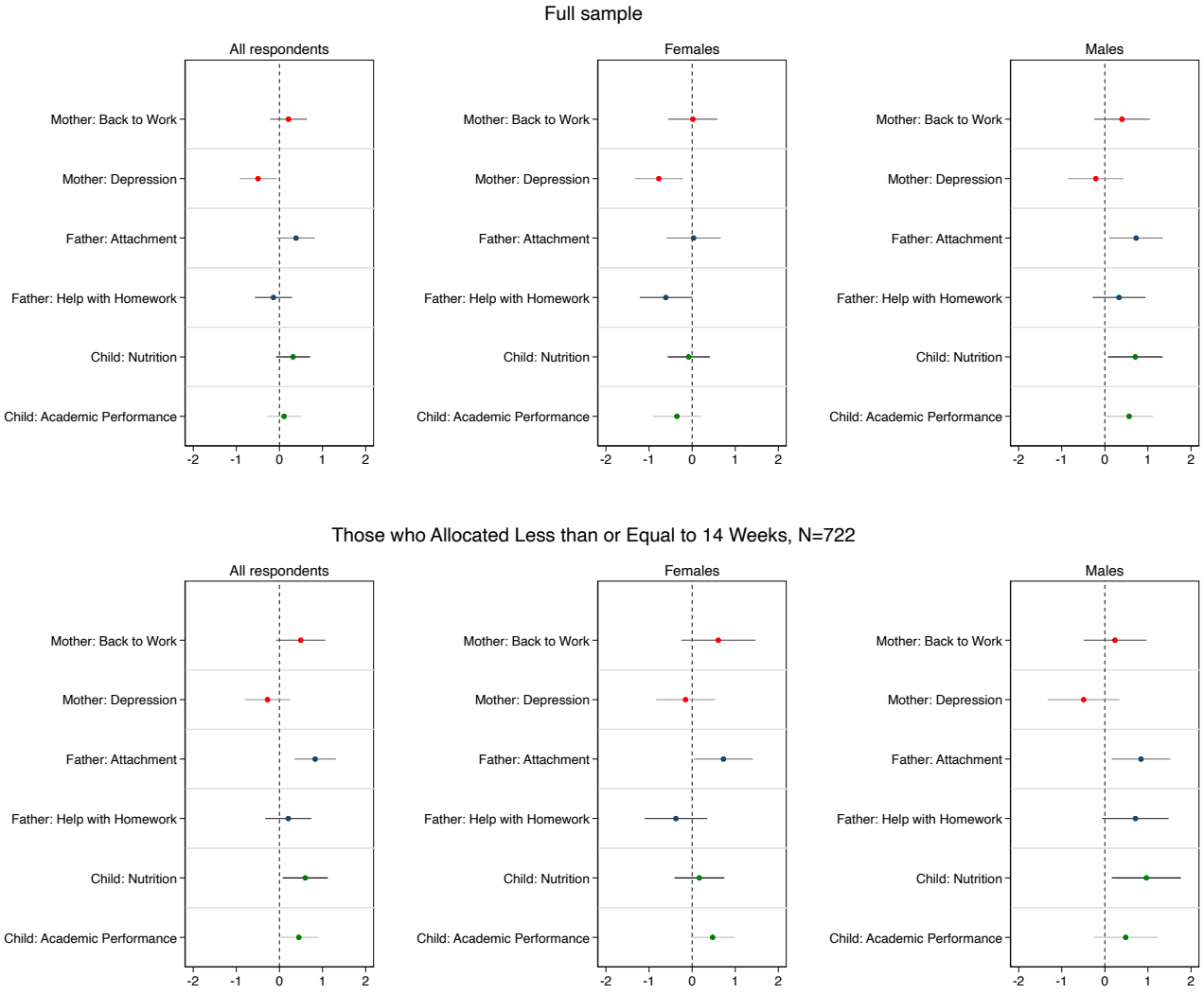
Notes: The point estimates represent the coefficients of each belief when regressed on the dependent variable. These estimates come from separate regressions, with no additional control variables included. The lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variable is individuals' responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?" Top panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using everyone in the sample and the bottom panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using only respondents who allocated up to 14 weeks to the father.

Figure A15: Correlation of Beliefs with Post-Intervention SPL Allocation – Share of SPL Allocated to the Father



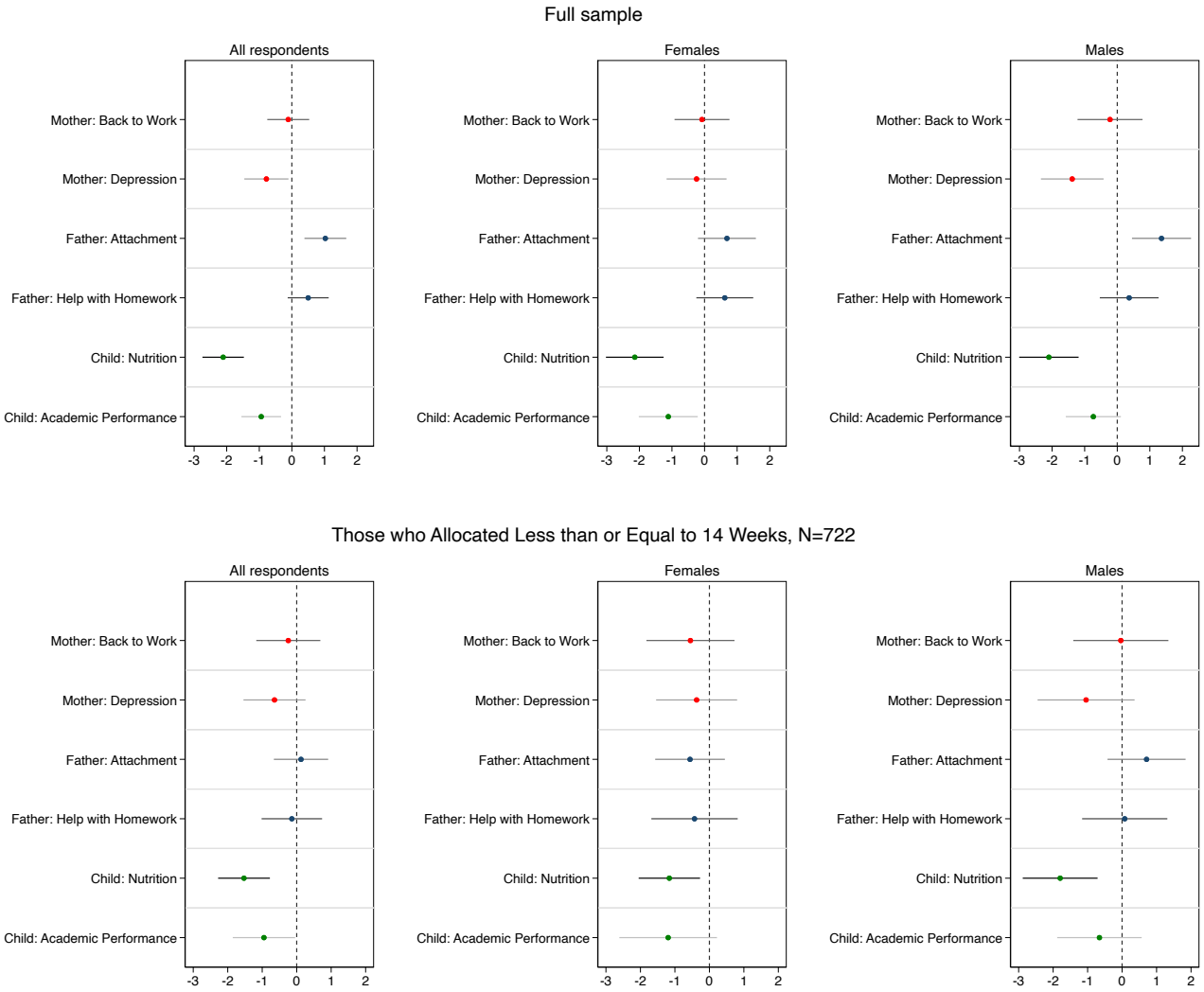
Notes: The point estimates represent the coefficients of each belief when regressed on the dependent variable. These estimates come from separate regressions, with no additional control variables included. The lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variable is the share of weeks allocated to the father calculated using the answers to "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?" and "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David". Top panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using everyone in the sample and the bottom panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using only respondents who allocated up to 14 weeks to the father.

Figure A16: Correlation of Beliefs with Post-Intervention SPL Allocation – Weeks of SPL Allocated to the Father



Notes: The point estimates represent the coefficients of each belief when regressed on the dependent variable. These estimates come from separate regressions, with no additional control variables included. The lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variable is the the answers to "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David". Top panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using everyone in the sample and the bottom panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using only respondents who allocated up to 14 weeks to the father.

Figure A17: Correlation of Beliefs with Post-Intervention SPL Allocation – Weeks of SPL Allocated to the Mother



Notes: The point estimates represent the coefficients of each belief when regressed on the dependent variable. These estimates come from separate regressions, with no additional control variables included. The lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Dependent variable is the number of weeks allocated to the mother calculated using the answers to "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?" and "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David". Top panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using everyone in the sample and the bottom panel shows the coefficients from the regressions using only respondents who allocated up to 14 weeks to the father.

Table A1: Perceived Non-Pecuniary Returns to the Father (Mother) Taking One More (Less) Week of SPL by Gender and Socio-economic Status

Panel A: Female Respondents

	Mother		Father		Child	
	(1) Back to Work	(2) Depression	(3) Attachment	(4) Help Homework	(5) Nutrition	(6) Academic Performance
Weeks	0.949***	-0.523***	1.607***	1.112***	-0.026	0.238***
	(0.057)	(0.059)	(0.066)	(0.054)	(0.048)	(0.040)
Observations	2,154	2,154	2,154	2,154	2,154	2,154
Mean	59.08	52.44	56.17	57.73	69.57	64.27
SD	(26.38)	(24.96)	(26.88)	(26.60)	(25.45)	(22.66)

Panel B: Male Respondents

	Mother		Father		Child	
	(1) Back to Work	(2) Depression	(3) Attachment	(4) Help Homework	(5) Nutrition	(6) Academic Performance
Weeks	0.824***	-0.607***	1.484***	1.166***	-0.044	0.353***
	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.066)	(0.063)	(0.051)	(0.047)
Observations	2,046	2,046	2,046	2,046	2,046	2,046
Mean	57.52	49.54	54.50	57.36	65.97	61.51
SD	(25.54)	(25.68)	(25.82)	(26.14)	(25.93)	(23.63)

Panel C: High SES Respondents

	Mother		Father		Child	
	(1) Back to Work	(2) Depression	(3) Attachment	(4) Help Homework	(5) Nutrition	(6) Academic Performance
Weeks	1.029***	-0.516***	1.488***	1.200***	0.039	0.339***
	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.056)	(0.049)	(0.044)
Observations	2,136	2,136	2,136	2,136	2,136	2,136
Mean	58.45	50.47	56.49	57.96	68.08	63.13
SD	(25.97)	(25.83)	(26.52)	(26.56)	(25.22)	(23.33)

Panel D: Low SES Respondents

	Mother		Father		Child	
	(1) Back to Work	(2) Depression	(3) Attachment	(4) Help Homework	(5) Nutrition	(6) Academic Performance
Weeks	0.742***	-0.613***	1.609***	1.075***	-0.111**	0.247***
	(0.061)	(0.060)	(0.067)	(0.061)	(0.050)	(0.042)
Observations	2,064	2,064	2,064	2,064	2,064	2,064
Mean	58.19	51.60	54.18	57.13	67.55	62.72
SD	(26.00)	(24.84)	(26.19)	(26.18)	(26.28)	(23.02)

Notes: Results from individual fixed effects model. For each individual, the regressions include 3 observations equivalent to the three scenarios of shared parental leave. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table A2: Heterogeneity by Personal Factors

	by Gender			by SES			by Gender Attitudes			by Having Kids		
	(1) Male	(2) Female	(3) p-value	(4) Low SES	(5) High SES	(6) p-value	(7) Conservative	(8) Liberal	(9) p-value	(10) No	(11) Yes	(12) p-value
Beliefs												
Mother: Depression	-0.312	-0.250	0.152	-0.340*	-0.223	0.249	-0.118	-0.381***	0.010	-0.079	-0.338**	0.034
	(0.213)	(0.174)		(0.186)	(0.193)		(0.260)	(0.146)		(0.272)	(0.159)	
Observations	220	246		225	241		171	295		105	361	
Father: Help with Homework	0.058	0.074	0.799	-0.162	0.294	0.186	0.201	-0.026	0.903	-0.457	0.227	0.255
	(0.217)	(0.291)		(0.282)	(0.222)		(0.326)	(0.215)		(0.403)	(0.199)	
Observations	239	232		241	230		189	282		113	358	
Child: Academic Performance	0.082	0.258*	0.096	0.176	0.175	0.247	0.272	0.107	0.414	0.375**	0.122	0.338
	(0.146)	(0.155)		(0.160)	(0.151)		(0.165)	(0.131)		(0.184)	(0.128)	
Observations	223	240		222	241		188	275		101	362	
Decision for Hypothetical Couple												
Total SPL Weeks	-0.716	0.359	0.366	0.708	-1.000	0.153	-0.446	-0.002	0.716	-1.834	0.331	0.130
	(0.906)	(0.769)		(0.906)	(0.771)		(0.951)	(0.758)		(1.258)	(0.670)	
Share of SPL for Father	-0.009	0.017	0.286	-0.010	0.018	0.241	0.004	0.004	0.985	-0.020	0.011	0.220
	(0.018)	(0.017)		(0.018)	(0.017)		(0.023)	(0.014)		(0.021)	(0.015)	
Weeks of SPL for Father	-0.573	1.143	0.080	0.207	0.411	0.834	0.168	0.391	0.832	-1.345	0.799	0.034
	(0.683)	(0.696)		(0.695)	(0.683)		(0.856)	(0.592)		(0.821)	(0.584)	
Weeks of SPL for Mother	-0.142	-0.784	0.601	0.501	-1.411*	0.120	-0.614	-0.393	0.867	-0.489	-0.468	0.988
	(0.906)	(0.829)		(0.905)	(0.830)		(1.080)	(0.739)		(1.126)	(0.724)	
Support for Public Policy												
Donation	-0.150	0.059	0.581	-0.002	-0.081	0.834	-0.196	0.060	0.494	0.929**	-0.328	0.007
	(0.278)	(0.252)		(0.275)	(0.252)		(0.284)	(0.244)		(0.418)	(0.206)	
Petition	-0.026	0.019	0.355	-0.013	0.007	0.673	0.032	-0.025	0.230	0.018	-0.009	0.659
	(0.035)	(0.032)		(0.037)	(0.030)		(0.036)	(0.031)		(0.056)	(0.026)	
Improve Duration	0.055*	0.014	0.296	0.047	0.022	0.533	0.048	0.024	0.555	-0.004	0.045**	0.318
	(0.030)	(0.026)		(0.030)	(0.026)		(0.033)	(0.025)		(0.044)	(0.022)	
Improve Pay	0.021	0.019	0.960	0.040	0.001	0.266	0.016	0.022	0.876	-0.009	0.029	0.417
	(0.027)	(0.023)		(0.026)	(0.024)		(0.031)	(0.021)		(0.042)	(0.020)	
Observations	682	718		688	712		548	852		319	1081	

Notes: This table replicates the findings of the Tables 5-7 by personal factors. All the models include interacted controls, i.e. each control is interacted with the heterogeneity variables, that are dummies for being female, being high SES, holding liberal gender attitudes and having at least 1 children. p-value columns show the p-value for the differences between coefficients for the two groups of interest. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table A3: Heterogeneity by Initial Beliefs – Low vs High Beliefs

	Mother: Depression Initial			Father: Help with Homework Initial			Child: Academic Performance Initial		
	(1) Low	(2) High	(3) p-value	(4) Low	(5) High	(6) p-value	(7) Low	(8) High	(9) p-value
Beliefs									
Mother: Depression	-0.346*	-0.212	0.642	-0.007	-0.583***	0.033	-0.129	-0.411**	0.297
	(0.191)	(0.203)		(0.176)	(0.207)		(0.188)	(0.195)	
Observations	231	235		246	220		229	237	
Father: Help with Homework	-0.302	0.409*	0.045	0.070	0.068	0.997	-0.160	0.300	0.229
	(0.267)	(0.231)		(0.173)	(0.290)		(0.267)	(0.254)	
Observations	239	232		229	242		231	240	
Child: Academic Performance	0.305**	0.048	0.248	0.057	0.280*	0.295	0.224	0.121	0.661
	(0.143)	(0.159)		(0.125)	(0.164)		(0.137)	(0.174)	
Observations	230	233		225	238		240	223	
Decision for Hypothetical Couple									
Total SPL Weeks	0.719	-1.012	0.142	0.515	-0.839	0.255	-0.016	-0.254	0.842
	(0.812)	(0.851)		(0.864)	(0.812)		(0.858)	(0.821)	
Share of SPL for Father	-0.006	0.014	0.434	0.010	-0.001	0.665	0.004	0.003	0.981
	(0.016)	(0.019)		(0.019)	(0.016)		(0.017)	(0.018)	
Weeks of SPL for Father	0.415	0.205	0.830	0.869	-0.232	0.257	0.387	0.221	0.865
	(0.639)	(0.739)		(0.768)	(0.592)		(0.686)	(0.695)	
Weeks of SPL for Mother	0.303	-1.217	0.213	-0.353	-0.606	0.838	-0.403	-0.475	0.953
	(0.828)	(0.896)		(0.917)	(0.821)		(0.867)	(0.872)	
Support for Public Policy									
Donation	-0.076	-0.011	0.862	0.026	-0.107	0.722	-0.465*	0.367	0.025
	(0.276)	(0.251)		(0.261)	(0.265)		(0.270)	(0.255)	
Petition	0.006	-0.011	0.725	-0.028	0.022	0.290	-0.055	0.049	0.029
	(0.035)	(0.032)		(0.033)	(0.034)		(0.034)	(0.033)	
Improve Duration	0.029	0.040	0.789	0.022	0.046*	0.534	0.024	0.043	0.631
	(0.026)	(0.030)		(0.028)	(0.027)		(0.029)	(0.027)	
Improve Pay	0.005	0.036	0.382	0.025	0.015	0.753	0.030	0.010	0.585
	(0.022)	(0.027)		(0.027)	(0.023)		(0.026)	(0.024)	
Observations	700	700		700	700		700	700	

Notes: Notes: This table replicates the findings of the Tables 5-7 by prior beliefs of three categories. To categorize individuals into low/high beliefs, we use the median value for each of these beliefs and if higher than median, they are classified as high beliefs, and lower than median, then they are classified as low beliefs. All the models include interacted controls, i.e. each control is interacted with the heterogeneity variables, that are dummies for being female, being high SES, holding liberal gender attitudes and having at least 1 children. p-value columns show the p-value for the differences between coefficients for the two groups of interest. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table A4: Heterogeneity by Initial Beliefs – Continuous Measure of Beliefs

	Mother: Depression		Father: Help with Homework		Child: Academic Performance	
	(1) Main	(2) Interaction	(3) Main	(4) Interaction	(5) Main	(6) Interaction
Beliefs						
Mother: Depression	-0.289*	-0.029	-0.229	-0.049	-0.305**	0.119
	(0.148)	(0.124)	(0.152)	(0.081)	(0.137)	(0.148)
Father: Help with Homework	0.101	0.134	0.076	-0.008	-0.023	0.378
	(0.193)	(0.166)	(0.175)	(0.132)	(0.175)	(0.251)
Child: Academic Performance	0.131	-0.151*	0.070	0.108**	0.210**	-0.134
	(0.108)	(0.077)	(0.113)	(0.055)	(0.101)	(0.166)
Decision for Hypothetical Couple						
Total SPL Weeks	-0.201	-0.051	0.006	-0.138	-0.044	-0.406
	(0.604)	(0.344)	(0.683)	(0.274)	(0.603)	(0.488)
Share of SPL for Father	0.006	0.006	0.012	-0.006	0.004	-0.001
	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.013)	(0.009)
Weeks of SPL for Father	0.393	0.273	0.683	-0.316	0.351	-0.177
	(0.497)	(0.234)	(0.583)	(0.201)	(0.503)	(0.344)
Weeks of SPL for Mother	-0.595	-0.324	-0.677	0.178	-0.394	-0.229
	(0.631)	(0.350)	(0.719)	(0.281)	(0.627)	(0.459)
Support for Public Policy						
Donation	-0.048	-0.022	-0.032	-0.014	-0.072	0.107
	(0.186)	(0.100)	(0.207)	(0.079)	(0.191)	(0.147)
Petition	0.032	-0.005	0.038*	-0.003	0.036*	-0.011
	(0.020)	(0.010)	(0.022)	(0.009)	(0.020)	(0.016)
Improve Duration	0.020	0.002	0.022	-0.001	0.022	-0.009
	(0.018)	(0.009)	(0.020)	(0.007)	(0.018)	(0.015)
Improve Pay	-0.009	-0.016	-0.009	0.005	-0.011	0.031
	(0.024)	(0.013)	(0.026)	(0.011)	(0.024)	(0.020)

Notes: Notes: This table replicates the findings of the Tables 5-7 by prior beliefs of three categories using continuous (actual) measure of beliefs. Odd columns show the coefficients and standard errors for people who have beliefs that is equal to 0, and the interaction columns present the coefficient and standard errors for the interaction variable that is treatment and the corresponding prior belief. All the models include interacted controls, i.e. each control is interacted with the heterogeneity variables, that are dummies for being female, being high SES, holding liberal gender attitudes and having at least 1 children. p-value columns show the p-value for the differences between coefficients for the two groups of interest. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table A5: Heterogeneity by Initial Allocation

	(1) More than 14 Weeks	(2) Up to 14 Weeks	(3) p-value
Beliefs			
Mother: Depression	-0.332	-0.231	0.727
	(0.211)	(0.185)	
Observations	224	242	
Father: Help with Homework	-0.182	0.289	0.198
	(0.249)	(0.260)	
Observations	223	248	
Child: Academic Performance	0.243	0.114	0.567
	(0.164)	(0.139)	
Observations	231	232	
Decision for Hypothetical Couple			
Total SPL Weeks	0.144	-0.433	0.621
	(0.846)	(0.806)	
Share of SPL for Father	0.017	-0.009	0.257
	(0.017)	(0.015)	
Weeks of SPL for Father	0.624	-0.010	0.503
	(0.728)	(0.595)	
Weeks of SPL for Mother	-0.480	-0.422	0.960
	(0.774)	(0.831)	
Support for Public Policy			
Donation	-0.076	-0.015	0.868
	(0.259)	(0.263)	
Petition	-0.026	0.018	0.349
	(0.031)	(0.035)	
Improve Duration	0.031	0.037	0.871
	(0.028)	(0.028)	
Improve Pay	0.013	0.027	0.708
	(0.027)	(0.023)	
Observations	678	722	

Notes: Notes: This table replicates the findings of the Tables 5-7 by prior beliefs of three categories using continuous (actual) measure of beliefs. Odd columns show the coefficients and standard errors for people who have beliefs that is equal to 0, and the interaction columns present the coefficient and standard errors for the interaction variable that is treatment and the corresponding prior belief. All the models include interacted controls, i.e. each control is interacted with the heterogeneity variables, that are dummies for being female, being high SES, holding liberal gender attitudes and having at least 1 children. p-value columns show the p-value for the differences between coefficients for the two groups of interest. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table A6: Treatment effect on Beliefs with Linear Production Function

	Maternal Depression			Father Help with HW			Academic Performance		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Treatment	-0.124	-0.163**	-0.199***	0.097	0.085	0.052	0.235**	0.194**	0.225***
	(0.093)	(0.075)	(0.076)	(0.092)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.092)	(0.085)	(0.082)
Baseline		0.588***	0.601***		0.502***	0.476***		0.391***	0.370***
		(0.054)	(0.053)		(0.060)	(0.060)		(0.071)	(0.071)
Observations	466	466	466	471	471	471	463	463	463
Controls	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Notes: Notes: This table replicates the findings of the Tables 5-7 by prior beliefs of three categories using continuous (actual) measure of beliefs. Odd columns show the coefficients and standard errors for people who have beliefs that is equal to 0, and the interaction columns present the coefficient and standard errors for the interaction variable that is treatment and the corresponding prior belief. All the models include interacted controls, i.e. each control is interacted with the heterogeneity variables, that are dummies for being female, being high SES, holding liberal gender attitudes and having at least 1 children. p-value columns show the p-value for the differences between coefficients for the two groups of interest. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Table A7: Treatment effect on Beliefs with No Functional Form

	Maternal Depression			Father Help with HM			Academic Performance		
	(1) Middle -Low	(2) High -Low	(3) High -Middle	(4) Middle -Low	(5) High -Low	(6) High -Middle	(7) Middle -Low	(8) High -Low	(9) High -Middle
Treatment	-0.146*	-0.201***	-0.206**	0.117	0.048	-0.035	0.196**	0.226***	0.202**
	(0.082)	(0.076)	(0.086)	(0.082)	(0.080)	(0.085)	(0.091)	(0.082)	(0.090)
Observations	466	466	466	471	471	471	463	463	463

Notes: Notes: This table replicates the findings of the Tables 5-7 by prior beliefs of three categories using continuous (actual) measure of beliefs. Odd columns show the coefficients and standard errors for people who have beliefs that is equal to 0, and the interaction columns present the coefficient and standard errors for the interaction variable that is treatment and the corresponding prior belief. All the models include interacted controls, i.e. each control is interacted with the heterogeneity variables, that are dummies for being female, being high SES, holding liberal gender attitudes and having at least 1 children. p-value columns show the p-value for the differences between coefficients for the two groups of interest. Heteroskedasticty-robust standard errors are in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01.

Appendix B: Extra Material

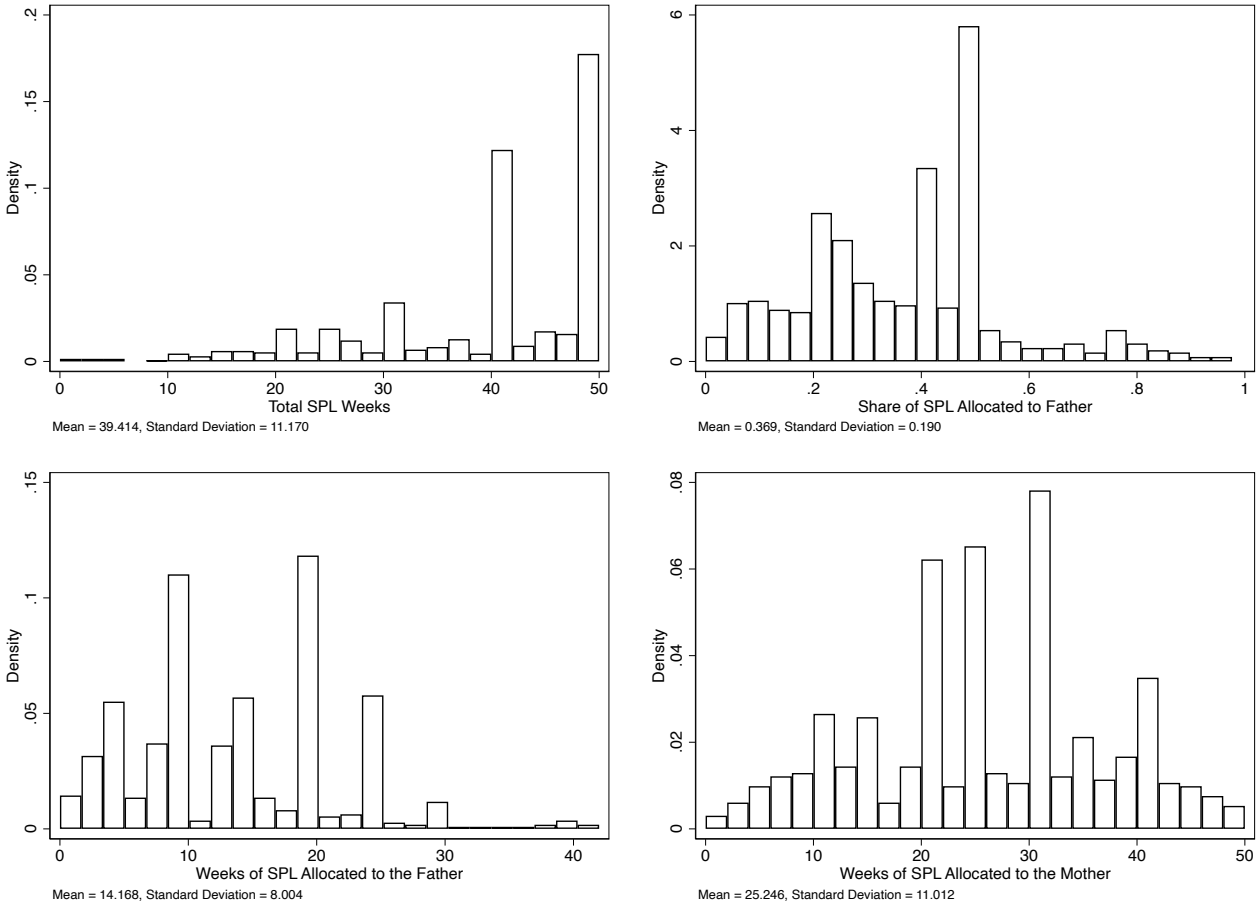
Allowing Respondents to Choose The Total Amount of Leave and The Way It Is shared

To analyze the allocation of SPL weeks within a consistent framework and ensure that the total financial loss remains the same regardless of who takes the leave within the couple, in the hypothetical scenario we set the total SPL duration to 40 weeks. We refer to this as *restricted setting*. To investigate respondents' preferences in terms of total amount of SPL and how it is shared, we ask them directly how many weeks of SPl should Claire and David take in their opinion and how they should split them.

In Figure B1, we present the distribution of respondents' answers to these questions. Since these questions are asked after the implementation of our information intervention, we analyze the responses of the control group only. The total number of weeks remains close to the given scenario, at 39.41 weeks. XX% of respondents suggests that the the hypothetical couple should take more than 40 weeks of SPL. Only 9.41% of respondents choose a total amount of SPL of 20 or fewer weeks. The father receives, on average, 37% of the total SPL weeks (compared to 25% of the participants in the restricted setting) with around 20% of respondents opting for an equal split between the mother and father (compared to 23% of the participants in the restricted setting). The most common allocation of leave to the father is 20 weeks, followed by 10 weeks, which is same in the restricted question scenario. These provide evidence that restricting the allocation setting to the 40 weeks of total SPL does not bias our findings in the previous subsection.

As in the case of restricted allocation setting, we replicate Figure B1 by gender, education, gender norms and having kids and present these in Appendix Figure A10 to Appendix Figure A13. The results are similar. Additionally, we replicate Figure 3 with post-intervention measures in Appendix Figure A14 to Appendix Figure A17 and, again, our results are similar to the restricted allocation setting.

Figure B1: Total SPL Weeks, Share for the Father, and Weeks for the Father and Mother



Notes: Top left histogram shows individuals' responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should David and Claire take?", bottom left shows individuals responses for the question "How many weeks of SPL should be taken by David" (bottom left), top right shows the share of weeks allocated to the father using the answers to these two questions and bottom right shows the share of weeks allocated to the mother using the answers to these two questions. Means and standard deviations are presented in each table.

Appendix C: Survey Instruments

Measuring Gender Attitudes with Statements

We measure gender attitudes in two ways: i) Giving respondents statements as in Appendix Table C1 and asking them how much they agree or disagree with the statements. Following their responses, we use the scores in Appendix Table C1 for each of the answers and calculate a gender attitude measure where a higher score means more liberal attitudes.

Table C1: Measuring Gender Attitudes with Statements

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly Agree
Family suffers if female partner works full time.	5	4	3	2	1
Male partner should earn, female partner should stay at home.	5	4	3	2	1
Men generally understand money-related issues better than women.	5	4	3	2	1
It is more natural for girls to help with housework than boys.	5	4	3	2	1

Second, we use the "preferred" division of household work. For, this we give them the following text first and then ask them to answer the question for 6 different household work categories.

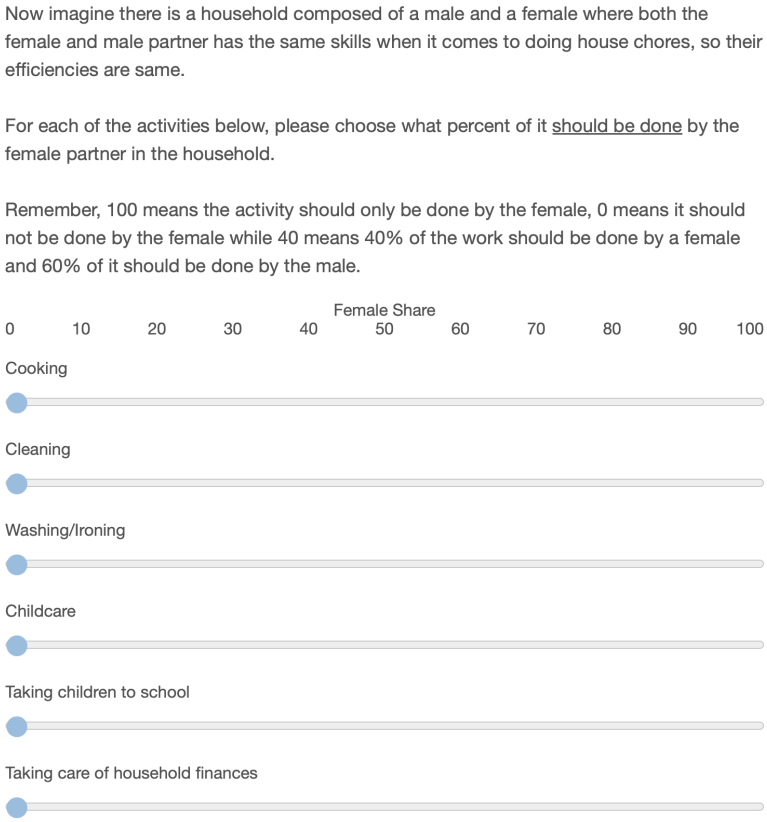
Text: Now, imagine there is a household composed of a male and a female where both the female and male partner has the same skills when it comes to doing house chores, so their efficiencies are same. For each of the activities below, please choose what percent of it should be done by the female partner in the household. Remember, 100 means the activity should only be done by the female, 0 means it should not be done by the female while 40 means 40% of the work should be done by a female and 60% of it should be done by the male.

– Cooking
– Cleaning
– Washing/Ironing
– Childcare
– Taking children to school
– Taking care of household finances

For each category, respondents used a slider to provide their answers. To minimize the influence of the initial reference point on their responses, we randomly assigned participants to one of four screens where three of them had predefined starting points – 0, 50, 100 – and one condition where the slider had no predefined starting point.Appendix Figure C1 displays a screenshot

from the survey with the reference point set at 0.

Figure C1: Gender Attitudes Measure with Scales



Intervention Text

What are the consequences for mothers, fathers and children when fathers take paternal leave? Peer-reviewed research on paternal leave in developed countries similar to the UK reveals that paternal leave does not significantly jeopardize job security. That is to say, fathers typically go back to employment after taking paternal leave. But what happens to the fathers' salary? There are mixed findings here which point to both null and negative effects. The strongest negative effect found in the literature is a 2.1% salary reduction during the child's first five years. For someone earning £30,000 annually after taxes, this negative effect would mean a reduction of £52.50 per month. However, the advantages of paternal leave are substantial. Fathers who take leave become more involved in childcare and household responsibilities, bridging the gender gap and fostering stronger bonds with their children. Paternal leave also contributes to reducing postpartum mental and physical health issues for mothers.

Is it only the parents who benefit from the paternal leave taken? No. Children tend to benefit academically, with those whose fathers take more leave performing better in secondary school.

So, there are several advantages for all members of the family.

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