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Can Parental Leave Policies Change Leave-Taking Norms? Evidence from Immigrants*

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Abstract. When maternity leave policies lower the cost of taking leave, leave durations tend to increase. If enough people extend their leaves, social norms can shift, further reinforcing longer leave-taking. This paper examines whether foreign-born mothers in the US—who are not directly subject to home country policies—respond to policy changes abroad via norms. Exploiting variation in US birth timing and policy reforms abroad, we find that increases in paid leave in immigrants' home countries lead to longer US maternity leaves, even after accounting for country-of-origin fixed effects. Heterogeneity analyses and placebo tests also point to policy-induced shifting leave-taking norms.

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1. Introduction

Despite significant decreases in gender gaps in labor force participation and earnings in the past century, progress has plateaued in the last few decades (Blau and Kahn 2017; Olivetti and Petrongolo 2017). Today, much of the remaining gap is driven by persistent child penalties that begin at childbirth (Kleven et al. 2019), particularly in societies with conservative gender norms (Kleven 2022). Although shifting norms may be key to achieving gender equality, such norms tend to be highly persistent (Giuliano 2020) and typically shift only in response to major disruptions like technological change (Xue 2023) or political regime changes (Campa and Serafinelli 2019; Boelmann et al. 2025). This paper investigates whether small, feasible policy changes—specifically, adjustments to paid parental leave—can also shift gender norms.

Parental leave policies are important. Blair and Posmanick (2023) show that the increased generosity of state and federal family leave policies in the US can explain almost all of the decrease in the rate of gender wage convergence in recent decades. While more generous leave policies typically result in immediate and large increases in leave-taking (e.g., Han et al. 2009; Rossin-Slater et al. 2013; Bartel et al. 2018), it is difficult to separate the direct impact of the policy from the indirect impact via norms. One often-used technique for separating the effects of culture from the effects of economic conditions and institutions is to study the behaviors of immigrants and their offspring (e.g. Fernández and Fogli 2009). When migrants move to a new country, they are subject to the host country's laws and economic conditions but can bring with them their home country's cultural norms. These norms are often transmitted to their children and are sustained, perhaps even strengthened, within ethnic communities.

Our paper explores whether policies can change norms by testing whether immigrants from countries with more generous parental leave policies take more leave after the birth of a child in the United States. Although these immigrants are not directly affected by the financial incentives

of their home countries' policies, such policies may influence their beliefs about the behaviors of an ideal mother and worker. Since immigrants are ineligible for leave benefits from their home countries, any effect of those policies on their leave-taking behavior in the US would suggest that norms—not just financial costs—play a central role in shaping parental leave decisions.

While a simple correlation between home country policies and immigrant behaviors might be interpreted as evidence of the importance of norms, it is difficult to disentangle whether policies shape norms or merely reflect pre-existing cultural attitudes toward leave-taking. Our main contribution to the literature is to include country-of-origin fixed effects in our model, thereby examining whether *changes* in policies are associated with *changes* in norms among immigrant women from the same country-of-origin but who give birth in different years. Women from the same country likely share similar baseline views about maternal employment, but only those giving birth after a policy reform would be exposed to any norm shifts induced by the change. To assess whether a policy change can influence norms, we exploit variation in the magnitude and timing of changes in the number of weeks of leave available to new mothers in immigrants' home countries in conjunction with variation in the timing of birth for mothers originally from those countries but living in the United States.

Our primary source of data is the 1990 and 2000 US Census 5-percent Public Use Microdata Samples along with the 2001-2019 waves of the American Community Survey (ACS) all of which were obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) (Ruggles et al. 2024). The baseline sample is limited to women who were born in OECD countries but who are either working or absent from work (but employed) in the US and whose youngest child is under the age of 1. Data on the total duration of paid leave (maternity and parental) in each woman's country-of-origin were drawn from the OECD Family Database (OECD 2022a. For our

primary specifications, we merge these country-year level data with our individual-level Census and ACS data by country-of-origin and year, so that for each foreign-born new mother in our sample, we can determine how many weeks of paid leave were available to mothers in their home country around the time they gave birth in the United States.

Our first set of results confirm a correlation between home country generosity of leave policies and the likelihood that an immigrant in the US, sampled at some arbitrary date within the first year after giving birth, is on maternity leave. To assess whether changes in policies lead to changes in leave-taking norms, we next add country-of-origin fixed effects to the model. Estimates from these models suggest that as the total duration of paid parental leave available in the country-of-origin in the year of birth increases by one week, the probability of being on maternity leave within the first-year post-childbirth increases by 0.09 percentage points. To illustrate, Austrian immigrants whose childbirth likely occurred during a period when Austria offered 86 weeks of paid leave (e.g., between 2002 and 2007) are estimated to be 2.3 percentage points more likely to be on leave within a year of giving birth than similar Austrian immigrants whose births likely occurred during a later period (e.g., between 2010 and 2019) when only 60 weeks were available. Thus, given that the likelihood of being on leave in our sample is 15.3 percent, this amounts to a 15 percent increase in leave taking.

Two main challenges complicate the interpretation of our findings. First, it is difficult to rule out that changes in leave-taking behavior are driven by unobserved characteristics that systematically vary with the timing of childbirth relative to policy changes, rather than by changes in norms. Second, even if the observed behavioral changes do reflect evolving norms, it remains unclear whether policy reforms caused these norm shifts or merely responded to them.

While these are two distinct difficulties, the steps we take to show that we are identifying causal impacts of the policies themselves, as opposed to impacts of changes in home country norms that may not be driven by policies, also alleviate concerns about identification more generally. First, we show that our results are robust to adding controls for evolving home country variables like GDP per capita and female labor force participation rates into our model. We also show that estimates are stronger for immigrants that likely have stronger ties to their home countries, as proxied by limited English language proficiency and recently arriving in the US.

Moreover, if our results were primarily driven by evolving gender norms rather than discrete policy changes, then controlling for home country-specific trends should attenuate our estimates. Instead, the estimated policy effects remain statistically significant and grow in magnitude when we add country-specific trend lines to our model. Moreover, broader shifts in gender norms would likely affect outcomes beyond leave-taking. Yet we find no evidence that home country leave policies influence fertility, divorce, or overall employment among immigrant women. While there are declines in the probability of never having been married and in working long hours, taken together, these patterns suggest that our results are not solely driven by shifting preferences to more traditional family roles.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide a review of the literatures on gender norms and the epidemiological approach as well as background on parental leave policies in the US and across the world. In Section 3 we present the data and descriptive statistics. This is followed in Section 4 with a discussion of our empirical strategies. Our baseline results are shown in Section 5 as are tests of robustness, checks for heterogeneity, and further analyses of whether home country policies change immigrant behaviors. Conclusions are provided in Section 6.

2. Identity, Norms, and Leave-Taking Decisions

2.1 Endurance and Evolution of Gender Norms

Gender norms are remarkably persistent. A large literature links present-day gender gaps to historical technologies and events. For example, during preindustrial times, in regions suitable for plough agriculture—where physical strength was essential—men tended to specialize in fieldwork, while women focused on caregiving. This division of labor gave rise to enduring cultural beliefs that "a woman's place is in the home," which continue to shape gender roles today (Alesina et al. 2013; Giuliano 2015). In contrast, in China, home-based spinning and weaving allowed women to earn income through textile production. Xue (2023) shows that this early economic participation led to lasting decreases in gender-biased attitudes to this day. In the 20th century, state socialist regimes promoted female labor force participation. Campa and Serafinelli (2019) show that East German women—exposed to pro-work socialist policies—placed greater value on career success than West German women, with these differences persisting long after reunification.

Historical shocks to sex ratios have also had lasting effects. The transatlantic slave trade drastically reduced the number of men relative to the number of women among certain ethnic groups in Africa, forcing women to take on traditionally male roles. Teso (2019) shows that women in these groups are more likely today to work, work in high-ranking occupations, and have decision-making power at home. Grosjean and Khattar (2019) find that a male-skewed sex ratio due to a British policy sending convicts to work in particular places of Australia led to less egalitarian gender norms that persist to this day.

This broad literature (see Fernández 2025 and Giuliano 2020 for more detailed reviews) shows that large shocks—historical, technological, or political—can have long-lasting impacts on gender roles. We contribute to this literature by asking whether smaller, implementable policies can also shift norms. Specifically, we study whether changes in paid parental leave policy influence beliefs about ideal leave lengths.

Our work is also related to two papers that examine the effect of paternal leave reforms on gender attitudes and gender division of household chores (Kotsadam and Finseraas 2013; Farré et al. 2023).[1] We contribute to these findings, not only by considering maternity leave, but also by focusing on actual behavioral changes with career consequences, rather than reported attitudes by teenagers. In addition, while these two papers emphasize vertical transmission (parent to child), we consider horizontal and oblique transmission—from peers and role models (see Giuliano 2020 for further details on how norms are sustained in different societies over the long run).[2]

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Norms can be thought of as behavioral prescriptions specific to a person's social category. Culture—those customary beliefs that ethnic, religious, and social groups transmit from generation to generation (Guiso et al. 2006)—certainly shape norms, but norms refer specifically to behaviors

[1] Farré et al. (2023) shows that children born just after the implementation of a paternity leave policy in Spain report more gender egalitarian attitudes than children born just before the cutoff, when surveyed in high school. They are also more likely to take on less gender-conforming household chores and hold more egalitarian expectations regarding future work and family outcomes. Similarly, Kotsadam and Finseraas (2013) study a parental leave reform in Norway and find men's take up of leave reduced adolescent girls' engagement with household work but had no effect on adolescent boys' involvement.

[2] Related studies have shown that individuals' leave-taking behavior is shaped by that of their peers. Dahl et al. (2014) find that following a paternity leave reform in Norway, coworkers and brothers of initial leave-takers were more likely to take leave themselves, with these effects amplifying over time within firms. Similarly, Welteke and Wrohlich (2019) show that German employees' leave decisions responded to those of their coworkers after a 2007 policy change. These studies suggest peer influence but attribute it primarily to the spread of information—especially about how employers respond to leave-taking—rather than shifts in gender norms. In contrast, our study isolates the impact of policy on cultural norms themselves.

while culture encompasses behaviors as well as the values guiding prescriptions about behaviors. Failing to abide by the norms of a society can result in external punishments such as social exclusion or shaming, but internal punishments, in the form of guilt and anxiety, also serve to sustain norms.

One way to frame internal sanctions is with a model whereby people derive utility by acting in ways that affirm their self-image or identity (Akerlof and Kranton 2000).[3] For the purposes of our analysis, consider women who identify as both mothers and workers. There are societal prescriptions for both identities in terms of ideal behaviors, and the closer one's behaviors are to these ideals, the higher the person's utility (see Akerlof and Kranton (2000) for a formal theoretical model of this basic idea). For example, working at least some weekends may be a prescription for an ideal worker while planning and participating in enriching family activities on weekends may be a prescription for an ideal mother. Given their specific time and budget constraints, working mothers make time allocation decisions to maximize their utility based on the weights they put on their different identities, as well as the specific prescriptions for these identities.

While the importance of their different identities can be rather stable over an individual's lifetime, society's prescriptions attached to these identities can change in response to changing conditions. For example, a massive marketing campaign during World War II showing women doing factory work without loss of femininity is likely to have changed the prescriptions for a "woman" identity, at least temporarily.[4]

[3] Akerlof and Kranton (2000) use the term prescriptions instead of norms in their seminal paper on identity because, as explained in their footnote 2, deviations from norms can be punished both by society and internally. In their model of identity, people abide by society's prescriptions to maintain their own self-concept—not to avoid social punishments. We remain agnostic about whether individuals abide by society's expectations because of internal or external punishments, and so we use the terms norms and prescriptions interchangeably.

[4] This example was taken from Akerlof and Kranton (2000). Interestingly, although the campaign intended to motivate women to join the labor force only temporarily, it had many long run impacts. Sons of mothers who joined the labor force even temporarily during WWII were more likely to have working wives many years later (Fernández et al. 2004),

In our paper, we assume that a policy extending the duration of paid leave available to mothers will have an immediate, direct effect: more new mothers will take longer leaves. We hypothesize that as longer leaves become normalized, whether through actual changes in leave-taking or through heightened media discussion of extended leave policies, social prescriptions surrounding ideal motherhood and ideal worker behavior will shift to incorporate extended leave-taking.[5] As a result, leave durations will increase not only because paid leave reduces the financial cost of time away from work, but also because longer leaves become socially expected. Women who take shorter leaves will not be viewed as ideal mothers by society, and perhaps more importantly, by themselves. In the terminology of Akerlof and Kranton (2000), they would experience identity loss for falling short of this evolving norm. At the same time, if perceptions of the ideal worker also shift in response to the policy, then women who take longer leaves may still be viewed as committed professionals. In this way, norms around both motherhood and work adjust, reinforcing longer leave-taking behavior.

2.3 Epidemiological Approach

While theories of identity and cultural norms can generate many useful theoretical predictions empirically disentangling the effects of culture from those of correlated economic factors—such as paid leave policies—is challenging. To isolate the impact of culture, researchers often use the "epidemiological approach," which examines whether the behaviors of immigrants and their children vary systematically with those in their countries of origin (Fernández 2011). While

presumably because having a working mother while they were growing up changed their views on whether an ideal wife and mother works outside of the home.

[5] For our purposes, it actually does not matter if, in response to an extension of weeks of paid leave, notions of the ideal mother change to require longer leaves or if the social sanctions and/or utility loss from failing to take long leaves increase. Either way, society's expectations regarding leave taking adjust in response to the policy.

migrants cannot bring with them the economies and laws of their home countries, they do bring with them home-country norms and often transmit these informal rules of behavior to their host country-born children. Thus, immigrants living in the same host country, and so subject to the same host country economic conditions and institutions, can behave very differently if they come from different source countries and so have different cultures and norms. In seminal work, Fernández and Fogli (2009) show that second-generation immigrant women are more likely to work and to have more children when female labor force participation and fertility rates are higher in their parents' countries of origin—evidence of the enduring influence of cultural norms on labor supply and fertility decisions.[6]

Our paper makes two main contributions to this general literature. First, we are among the first to link immigrant behaviors to a specific home country policy, as opposed to home country behaviors or self-reported norms.[7] Our main contribution to the norms literature, however, is in examining how a specific *change* in policy may result in *changes* in norms. Even though culture is known to evolve in response to globalization, technological change, and socioeconomic development (Inglehart and Welzel 2005), most of the literature tests for the impact of culture using measures of culture that do not change over time.[8]

[6] Similar approaches have been used to uncover the impact of culture and norms on several outcomes including, but not limited to, living arrangements (Giuliano 2007), participation in the stock market (Osili and Paulson 2008), son preference (Almond et al. 2013), divorce tendencies (Furtado et al. 2013), smoking (Christopoulou and Lillard 2015), gender gaps in math achievement (Nollenberger et al. 2016), having a mortgage (Rodríguez-Planas 2018), domestic violence (Gonzalez and Rodrigues-Planas 2020), disability insurance take-up (Furtado et al. 2022) and even the likelihood of parking illegally on New York City streets (Fisman and Miguel 2007).

[7] To our knowledge, the only other analysis to do this shows that home country policies regarding the protection of private investment from expropriation increases the likelihood that immigrants in the US participate in the stock market (Osili and Paulson 2008). Their results suggest that laws and institutions can have impacts on beliefs and preferences even for individuals who are no longer subject to those laws and institutions. In our work, we can examine how home country policies (paid parental leave) can change general perceptions regarding the virtue of a particular behavior (leave-taking) as opposed to beliefs about the ability of institutions to provide protection against risk.

[8] There are a few exceptions. Giuliano (2007) uses two cohorts of second-generation immigrants in the US to explore the relationship between home country norms regarding family living arrangements and whether adult second-generation immigrants live with their parents. Christopoulou and Lillard (2015) show that cohort-based variation in smoking in the UK predicts smoking behavior among UK immigrants in Australia and the US, suggesting that both

Boelmann et al. (2025) also make use of movers, but instead of comparing immigrants from different origin countries all living in a different source country, they focus on migrants between East and West Germany. Building on the finding that East German women place more emphasis on career than West German women (Campa and Serafinelli 2019), they explore whether movers maintain childhood culture or adjust to their new environments. Their results suggest that women raised in East Germany do not adjust to the more traditional West German environments, but interestingly, West German women do adjust to the more egalitarian East German environments. In fact, even the West German mothers who return to West Germany after spending time in East Germany do not return to their childhood norms. Importantly, all of the women in this study are exposed to the same family policies since all the moves occurred within Germany. We contribute to this work by examining whether specific policy changes in a variety of home countries yield changes in behaviors among women subject to a completely different policy environment in the US.[9]

2.4 Institutional Details on Parental Leave Policies

Currently, every OECD country with the exception of the US offers at least 14 weeks of maternity leave with wage replacements ranging from 50 to 100 percent. Additionally, three-quarters of OECD countries provide at least a few days of paid leave specifically for fathers, with 15 countries

culture and cultural change influence behavior. Our study extends this literature by linking changes in *home-country policies*—not just norms—to behavioral changes in the host country.

[9] Similar in spirit to our paper, Mussino et al. (2018) consider paternity leaves among fathers in Finland and Sweden, countries with similar economies but different paternity leave policies. The authors attribute differences in paternity-leave take-up among fathers born in the same country but exposed to different paternity-leave policies due to migration to the role of policy. They attribute differences among immigrant fathers who migrated at different ages or who are married to spouses of different origins to the role of culture. Their results suggest that although norms matter for leave-taking, they are less important than policy design. We contribute to this work by considering leave-taking among immigrants from several different origin countries, instead of just one other country. We also examine how changes in policies can change norms even among parents who are not themselves subject to these policies.

offering paid paternity leave for 3 months or longer (OECD 2024e). In addition to explicit maternity and paternity leaves, countries also often offer a period of parental leave, which can be taken by either parent. These leaves are often at least partially paid.

The primary policy related to parental leave in the US is the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Passed by Congress in 1993, the FMLA grants 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave to employees who meet certain criteria.[10] California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island currently offer paid leave through their temporary disability programs, thirteen states and Washington DC have explicit mandatory paid family leave policies, and ten states have voluntary programs that provide paid leave through private insurance (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2025).[11] Other states do not have paid leave policies, and new mothers must rely on employers to provide paid leave. According to a 2012 survey, 25 percent of working mothers return to work within two weeks of giving birth (Lerner, 2015). As US policymakers at the state and federal levels grapple with establishing new parental leave policies, it is important to consider the benefits of more generous leave policies to parents and children as well as the costs to employers, taxpayers, and society more generally, both in the short run and in the long run. Our analysis of how norms respond to policy changes will provide insight to policymakers on whether long run impacts of the policies are likely to differ from short run impacts because of changes in norms.

[10] In order to be eligible for leave, employees must have worked at least 1,250 hours in the previous 12 months and work at a firm with 50 employees or more. Due to these eligibility constraints, only 56 percent of employees are able to take advantage of leave through the FMLA (Brown et al. 2020).

[11] The 13 states with mandatory paid leave are California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York, Washington, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Oregon, Colorado, Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, and Maine, while the 10 states with voluntary programs are New Hampshire, Vermont, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, Texas, Florida, South Carolina, and Minnesota.

3. Data

The data for this study comes from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses as well as the 2001-2019 waves of the American Community Survey (ACS).[12] The sample is limited to foreign-born women (from OECD countries) aged 18 to 64 who migrated to the US after 1970, are currently employed, whose children were all born in the US, and whose youngest child is under the age of 1. These women were most likely exposed to parental leave policies in their home countries but did not experience them firsthand for any of their children.

The Census and ACS do not specifically ask respondents if they are taking parental leave, but they do ask if they are temporarily absent from work in the week prior to the survey. Following Bartel et al. (2018), we use whether the woman has reported being temporarily absent for reasons other than a layoff as the dependent variable. Examples of such temporary leaves listed in the survey include parental leave, illness, and vacation. Since the sample is limited to women with an infant in the household, the leave is very likely to be parental leave. Unfortunately, we do not have data on length of leave, but because women are randomly sampled within the year after giving birth and most women take at least some leave, an increase in the probability of being on leave can be considered indicative of a longer duration of leave.

The independent variable of interest is the total length of paid leave available in the country-of-origin in the survey year, which we use to approximate birth year since all women in our sample have a child born within the year.[13] The data on total length of paid leave by year is

[12] The data was downloaded from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) database (Ruggles et al. 2024). The analysis uses the 5% 1990 and 2000 Census samples, the approximately 0.4% samples for years 2001-2004 and the 1% ACS samples beginning in 2005.

[13] This matching is imperfect because we observe only whether the child is less than one year old at the time of the survey, not the child's exact birthday. For example, a woman from Germany in the 2019 ACS is assigned Germany's 2019 paid leave policy, even though her child could have been born as early as January 2018 (if she was surveyed in January 2019 and her child was just under one year old) or as late as December 2019 (if she was surveyed in December

available through the OECD Family Database (OECD 2024a). We use the total duration of parental and home care leave, which lists the number of weeks of paid leave (both from maternity leave and parental leave) for which mothers are eligible after childbirth. The data is available from 1970 to 2022 for 38 OECD countries, but after matching these data to our sample of foreign-born women with an infant in the home, we ultimately use variation within and across 34 countries.[14]

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in our analysis, shown for the full sample and separately by whether the home country's weeks of paid leave is above or below/equal to the median in the sample, 12 weeks. More generous home country leave policies are associated with increased likelihoods that the women in our sample (immigrant mothers with an infant in the home) are on leave. Women from countries with more generous leave policies are also more highly educated, are more likely to be married, have fewer children, and are significantly more likely to report speaking only English or speaking English very well. There is no significant difference in the average age of mothers based on whether their home country provides more vs. less generous paid leave.

Figure 1 shows the weeks of paid leave available for each country-of-origin in 2019, the most recent year in our sample, ordered by generosity. Slovakia, Finland, and Hungary offered more than a year of leave while nine countries offered less than 20 weeks. Figure 2 shows some examples of the substantial variation across years, within the same country, for several countries

and gave birth the day before). As a result, the assigned policy only approximates the one in place at the time of childbirth.

[14] The 34 countries are as follows: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal (including Azores), Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (which includes England, Scotland, Wales and "United Kingdom, country not specified). Not all countries have data on weeks of paid leave for every year in our sample. In particular, we lack information on paid leave in years prior to a country's OECD accession, and several countries joined the OECD during our sample period. We drop observations from our Census and ACS samples when home-country paid leave data are not available.

in our sample period. Notice that parental leave durations not only increase over time but also decrease. Norway's weeks of paid leave increased from 28 weeks in 1990 to 90 weeks in 1999, while Germany increased its duration of paid parental leave in the early 1990s but then decreased the duration of paid leave in 2001.

Appendix Table A1 provides detailed information on weeks of paid leave patterns for all countries of origin in our data. On average, the difference between the maximum and minimum for the countries in our data is 17 weeks, but there is no change over the years in some of the origin countries (e.g. Costa Rica offers 17.3 weeks throughout) and large changes in others (the Czech Republic offered 62.3 weeks in 2019 but 162 weeks in 1990).

To illustrate the relationship between home country paid leave policies and leave-taking among immigrant women in the US, we present binscatter plots in Figure 3. Panel A plots the raw relationship between home country weeks of paid leave (x-axis) and the share of immigrant mothers with an infant in the household who are on leave at the time of the survey (y-axis). The fitted line reveals a clear positive association. Naturally, this correlation may reflect a variety of factors beyond cultural norms around leave-taking. To better isolate the role of such norms, Panel B plots a similar binscatter after residualizing both variables on country-of-origin fixed effects, thereby exploiting within-country variation over time. The positive relationship persists, suggesting that changes over time in home country leave policies are associated with changes in leave-taking behavior among immigrants from those countries. We now turn to a more formal exploration of these relationships.

4. Empirical Strategy

To identify how country parental leave policies influence immigrant women's leave-taking behavior in the US, we estimate the following linear probability model:

$$Y_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 L_{jt} + \beta_2 \mathbf{X_{ijst}} + \gamma_j + \gamma_{st} + e_{ijt}$$

for individual *i*, from country-of-origin *j*, who was surveyed in year *t*. The dependent variable *Y* is a dummy variable equal to one if a woman reports being absent from work during the reference week, which given our sample, most likely reflects being on leave. The main right-hand side variable of interest, *L*, is the total duration of paid parental leave available in the new mother's country-of-origin in the survey year. If the cultural norms associated with home country parental leave policies are important for leave-taking decisions, β_1 will be positive.[15] The vector **X** contains controls for individual characteristics such as marital status, number of own children living in the household, age, age-squared, educational attainment, English language ability, year of migration, and occupation. We also include state-by-year fixed effects, γ_{st}, to take into account time-varying state-specific policies that make it easier to take leaves.[16]

We recognize that some of the variation in leave-taking behaviors may be explained by whether employer firms offer generous leave policies as an employee benefit. We are unable to link workers to specific employers using our data, and even if we were, it is unclear that we would want to control for a firm's generosity in our baseline specification given that women who plan on taking long leaves would choose to work for more generous firms. We hope that our controls for occupation address this concern at least partially. To the extent that firms with more generous leave policies tend to hire workers in specific occupations, we can gain insight into whether firm characteristics are a driving force of our results by comparing our estimates of interest with and

[15] It is important to note that immigrants may not be representative of the people of their home countries. In fact, it is theoretically possible for the coefficient to be negative if women with preferences for shorter leaves choose to leave their home countries in response to longer-leave policies. This would make it more difficult for us to detect an impact of norms on leave-taking even if norms do in fact play an important role.

[16] For example, while all states must adhere to the FMLA, several states offer more generous benefits than the legislation requires, including extending benefits to smaller firms (only firms with more than 50 workers are subject to FMLA), relaxing work eligibility requirements, or extending the duration of unpaid leave. These state-year fixed effects will also control for state paid leave policies.

without the occupation fixed effects. Given the possibility that norms-induced preferences for maternity leave drive occupation choice, we may interpret our estimates from models with occupation fixed effects as lower-bounds of the total effect.[17]

The main contribution of our study to the epidemiological literature is its inclusion of country-of-origin fixed effects, γ_j. The country-of-origin fixed effects control for any time-consistent unobservable characteristic that may be correlated with both home country leave policies and leave-taking in the US. This includes, but is not limited to, the norms regarding leave-taking that stay constant over time. In models with country-of-origin fixed effects, identification comes from variation in the year migrants gave birth in the US in conjunction with variation in the timing of policy implementation in home countries. For example, because Australia implemented its first paid leave policy in 2011, if policies change norms, then we would expect Australian migrant women giving birth after 2011 to take more leave than those giving birth before that year. To provide a more complex example, Austria—one of the first European countries to implement maternity leave—increased paid leave from 58 to 60 weeks in 1974 and then to 112 weeks in 1991, before reducing it to 86 weeks in 1997, 73 weeks in 2008, and 60 weeks in 2010. Thus, Austrian migrant women who gave birth in the US between 1991 and 1996 may have found it more important to take time away from the labor force than those who gave birth either between 1974 and 1990 or after 2010.

The identifying assumption in the model is that, conditional on the covariates included in our model, the timing of policy changes and birth years can be thought of as exogenous to leave-

[17] We use the detailed version of 2010 occupation variable for our fixed effects. There are 382 unique occupation codes. To provide an example, the occupation "engineer" is divided into nine specific types of engineers (e.g. aerospace engineer, chemical engineer, civil engineer, etc.).

taking behaviors of immigrants in the United States.[18] Several other papers (Ruhm 1998, Ruhm 2000, Tanaka 2005) have estimated plausibly causal impacts of changes in leave policies on leave-taking behaviors within the same countries by exploiting country-year variation in the timing of leave policies. Our paper takes this approach one step further by combining the variation in the timing of policies in different countries with the timing of birth among immigrants in the US from these countries. We perform several robustness checks and tests for heterogeneity which will provide support for identifying assumptions.

5. Results

5.1 Baseline and General Robustness

Table 2 presents results for the baseline model. In columns 1-4, we gradually add control variables and various fixed effects. Column 1 controls only for (survey) year fixed effects whereas column 2 adds the controls as identified in vector **X** above and replaces the year fixed effects with state-year fixed effects. Column 3 adds occupation fixed effects. Without the inclusion of country-of-origin fixed effects, results in columns 1-3 suggest that immigrants from countries with more generous paid leave policies are more likely to be on leave in the US regardless of whether state-year and occupation fixed effects are included in the model. The model estimated in column 3 suggests that an additional week of home country paid leave increases the likelihood of taking leave in the US by 0.06 percentage points. While the magnitude of this coefficient is small, it is important to note that these home country policies are no longer binding once migrants come to the US. To provide an example of what this estimate implies, in 2010, Australia offered 0 weeks

[18] For empirical justification of this assumption, we conduct a type of balance test analysis by considering "impacts" of our policy changes on outcomes that cannot change in response to the policy changes--namely, age, years of schooling, and English language fluency. Appendix Table A2 shows that in models including only year and country-of-origin fixed effects, changes in policy yield no statistically significant changes in these likely predetermined variables.

of paid leave while Slovakia had one of the longest durations at 164 weeks. Our results suggest Slovakian immigrants giving birth in 2010 are 9.8 percentage points more likely to take parental/maternity leave compared to Australian immigrants who gave birth in the same year. We interpret the statistically significant coefficient as preliminary evidence of parental leave norms influencing leave-taking behavior in the US.

To shed light on whether *changes* in home country leave policies *change* norms regarding leave-taking behavior, we add country-of-origin fixed effects in column 4. The estimated coefficient on home country paid leave is positive, highly significant, and larger in magnitude than the previous estimates. It indicates that a one week increase in the duration of paid parental leave in the year prior to migrating to the US increases the likelihood of taking leave in the US by 0.09 percentage points, suggesting that migrants indirectly exposed to more generous leave policies in their home countries are more likely to take leave in the US than migrants from the same home country who were exposed to less generous policies.[19] For example, Austrians exposed to 86 weeks of paid leave in 2007 are 2.3 percentage points more likely to be on leave within the first year after giving birth than Austrians in 2010 who had 60 weeks of paid leave available to them. Since, on average, 9.1 percent of the Austrians in our U.S. immigrant sample are on leave at the time of the survey, this amounts to quite a substantial increase for this group. Thus, we believe that these results do provide evidence that changes in policies can change norms.

Table 3 explores the robustness of our estimates. Baseline results are replicated in column 1 for ease of comparison. First, in column 2, we exclude 1990, as all other sample years are in the

[19] We also estimate our baseline model with the duration of paid leave in the home country available from different years (for example, in the year prior or year after the survey year). Results are presented in Appendix Table A3. Paid leave policies change infrequently during our sample period, resulting in substantial collinearity across years. Notably, home-country paid leave two years *after* the survey year has a statistically significant effect on leave-taking in the survey year. This likely reflects the extensive media coverage that precede policy implementation. Anticipated extensions of paid leave—already more generous than in the U.S.—may exert even stronger influences than the policies themselves once enacted.

2000s. Results remain highly significant and similar to baseline results. Next, we explore sensitivity to the exclusion of specific origin countries in columns 3-5. We begin by removing Mexican immigrants from our sample; they are the largest immigrant group, and so there might be a concern that our results are being driven entirely by selection of Mexican immigrants coming to the US in different years and therefore having children in the US in different years. Despite a large reduction in sample size, the coefficient estimate in column 3 remains positive and marginally significant. Columns 4 and 5 remove the outlier countries in terms of paid leave duration - Hungary, Finland, and Slovakia have the longest duration of paid leave, offering 166 weeks of leave on average, respectively, while Mexico, Australia, and Switzerland have the shortest durations, offering 12, 8, and 7 weeks of paid leave on average, respectively. When removing these countries from the sample, results are very similar to the baseline specification, and therefore we conclude the results are not driven solely by countries with extreme values of weeks of paid leave.

5.2 Other Labor Market Outcomes

For our baseline sample, we only include women who are currently employed in order to focus on those who likely place high value on both their worker and mother identities. These women are plausibly planning to return to work after maternity leave, though the duration of their leave may be influenced by leave-taking norms among friends and family in their countries of origin. In contrast, other women may intend to exit the labor force permanently following childbirth or may have already done so after a prior birth. We hypothesize that these women are less likely to respond to changes in home-country leave policies in terms of their labor market behavior within the first months after giving birth.

To test this hypothesis, we broaden the sample beyond currently employed women to include women with different levels of attachment to the labor force. Table 4 presents the results. Column 1 replicates our baseline findings. Column 2 expands the sample to include all women who have worked in the past five years, identified by whether they report an occupation in the survey—only those with recent labor market experience are asked about occupation in the survey. We retain the same covariates as in the baseline specification but modify the dependent variable: it now equals one if the mother is either temporarily absent from work (as in the baseline) or out of the labor force. While the estimated effect remains positive, its magnitude falls by roughly 50 percent and is no longer statistically significant, despite the larger sample size. Column 3 uses the same specification and sample but excludes occupation fixed effects; the estimate declines further and remains statistically insignificant. In Column 4, we expand the sample further to include all women with an infant in the household, regardless of work history (i.e., including those who do not report an occupation). In this model, without the occupation fixed effects, the estimated effect declines to near zero and is again statistically insignificant despite the even larger sample size. These results suggest that home-country leave policies affect leave-taking duration primarily for women currently working and so likely planning to return to their jobs after the leave. Home country policies appear to have little to no influence on the broader decision of whether mothers of infants participate in the labor market at all.

A potential concern with our analysis is that we do not directly observe maternity leave. Instead, we infer leave-taking from whether a woman reports being absent from work during the reference week of the survey. If immigrant women from countries with more generous leave policies are generally more likely to be absent from work—regardless of parental status—then our baseline estimates may reflect broader absence behavior rather than responses to parental leave

norms. To assess this possibility, we examine whether home-country leave policies influence the behavior of women unlikely to be on parental leave: those with older children and those without children. Columns 5 and 6 of Table 4 present these results. In both cases, the estimated effect of home-country paid leave duration is close to zero and statistically insignificant. This suggests that the baseline effects are not driven by general absence patterns but rather reflect parental leave responses among mothers of young children.

Next, we consider the possibility that our findings are confounded by unobserved firm-level leave benefits that may be correlated with home-country leave policies but not fully accounted for by our detailed occupation fixed effects. Because we lack data on employers, we cannot directly observe the family-friendliness of the workplace or formal leave provisions. Moreover, even in the absence of explicit firm policies, workers with greater bargaining power may be able to negotiate extended leave arrangements. Indeed, women who choose to give birth in the US despite generous leave entitlements in their home countries may do so because they are able to secure favorable leave terms from their US employers. While we cannot observe firms' leave policies or women's negotiation behavior directly, it is plausible that leave-taking flexibility is more accessible to high-wage women, conditional on occupation.

To probe this possibility, we examine whether women exposed to more generous home-country leave policies earn systematically higher wages. Columns 7 and 8 of Table 4 present estimates of the effect of home-country leave policy generosity on wages. Column 7 includes all women; Column 8 restricts the sample to women with a child under age five in the household. In both cases, the estimated coefficients are small and statistically insignificant. Women exposed to more generous home-country leave policies do not earn higher wages than women born in the same country but exposed to less generous policies at the time of the survey. Under the assumption

that wages are correlated with workplace benefits and flexibility, these findings provide suggestive evidence that our main results are unlikely to be driven by differences in firm-provided benefits or differential abilities to negotiate longer leaves.

5.3 Home Country Paid Leave or Other Home Country Characteristics?

A potential concern with our analysis is that the timing of home-country leave policies may be correlated with other time-varying country characteristics that also influence our outcomes of interest. While it is not possible to control for all such factors, we examine the robustness of our baseline results to the inclusion of several control variables capturing key home-country characteristics that are particularly relevant to our setting. Data for this analysis come from the OECD. Results are reported in Table 5.

As a first example, one plausible driver of more generous leave policies—particularly paid-leave policies—is a country's fiscal capacity to support such benefits. While our country-of-origin fixed effects account for differences between immigrants from richer and poorer countries, they do not capture time-varying economic conditions such as periods of strong growth, which may increase the likelihood of adopting or expanding paid-leave programs. At the same time, immigrants who choose to give birth in the US despite booming economies in their home countries may be able to afford longer leaves in the US; after all, extended leaves in the US are typically unpaid. To assess whether home-country economic conditions confound our estimates, Column 1 of Table 5 replicates our baseline model, while Column 2 adds the log of home-country GDP per capita in the survey year (OECD 2024b). Interestingly, we find that higher home-country GDP is associated with a lower likelihood that immigrant women are on leave during the first year

postpartum. Nevertheless, controlling for GDP per capita has little impact on the estimated effect of home-country norms.

Another possibility is that home-country gender norms are evolving over time to become more family-oriented and less career-focused. If so, expansions in paid leave duration may coincide with increased leave-taking among immigrants in the US, even if the policy change itself does not causally affect norms. To start our exploration of this, Column 3 of Table 5 adds the female labor force participation rate in the home country in the survey year as a proxy for gender role orientation (OECD 2024c). While this variable is negatively associated with leave-taking among immigrants, its inclusion does not alter the estimated effect of home-country leave norms. Similarly, Column 4 adds home-country fertility rates as an alternative measure of family orientation (OECD 2024d). Once again, the estimated coefficient on paid leave duration remains virtually unchanged from the baseline model.

The last column of Table 5 adds all home country variables (log GDP per capita, , female LFP, and fertility rates) to the model. Our estimate of interest is actually a bit larger in magnitude than that in the baseline model.

5.4 Heterogeneity by Connection to Ethnic Identity

Next, we examine whether norms associated with home country leave duration are stronger for immigrants who are more connected with their home country. Drawing on the framework of Akerlof and Kranton (2000), we posit that expansions in paid parental leave may shift societal expectations regarding the ideal roles of mothers and workers. Immigrants who maintain strong ties to their home country may feel greater pressure to align with these evolving norms, and deviating from them—such as by taking short parental leaves—may create a loss of identity. These

norms are unlikely to be as influential for immigrants who do not maintain strong connections to their home countries. To explore this, Table 6 presents results using two different proxies for the strength of connection to home-country norms.

First, we use English language ability to measure connections to the home country. Immigrants that do not speak English or do not speak it well are likely to have their social circles comprised predominantly or even entirely of those in or from their home countries. They are likely, then, to be more sensitive to changes in home country norms than immigrants who may interact with more Americans or immigrants from other countries (with whom they most likely communicate in English). Column 1 of Table 6 supports this idea: the association between home-country paid leave and leave-taking in the US is stronger among those with limited English proficiency. Specifically, each additional week of paid leave available in the home country increases the likelihood of taking leave in the US by an additional 0.25 percentage points for immigrants who either do not speak English at all or speak it but not well, compared to the responses of those who speak English more fluently.

Second, we examine whether home-country leave norms exert a stronger influence on more recent immigrants—specifically, those who have been in the US for fewer than five years. These individuals are more likely to maintain social ties to their home country and to adhere to its prevailing social expectations. The results in Column 2 of Table 6 support this hypothesis: the effect of home-country paid leave duration on leave-taking in the US is stronger among recent arrivals. Specifically, each additional week of paid leave in the home country increases the likelihood of taking leave in the US by an additional 0.1 percentage points for immigrants who have been in the US for less than five years, relative to longer-term residents. Taken together, the

results in Table 6 suggest that norms associated with paid leave are more influential for immigrants who remain closely connected to their home-country identity.

5.5 Do Policies Change Norms or Do Changing Norms Change Policies?

The results thus far suggest that increases in leave-taking behavior are driven by changes in underlying norms. However, it remains unclear whether these norms shifted in response to changes in home-country policies—or whether pre-existing shifts in norms (which also carried over to the US) prompted policy reforms. To help distinguish between these possibilities, we re-estimate our model including home-country-specific time trends. This approach accounts for gradual, country-specific changes over time, forcing identification to rely on discrete breaks associated with policy implementation. Table 7 first replicates the baseline results (column 1). Columns 2 and 3 restrict the sample to post-2000 years, when annual data permit the inclusion of country-specific trends. The positive and significant effect of paid leave policies persists (column 3). These findings are consistent with policy reforms driving norm shifts rather than the reverse.

We next explore whether the observed effects reflect broader shifts in work-family preferences or more targeted changes in norms around leave-taking. If changing work-family norms were the primary driver of our baseline results, we may expect to see effects across a wide range of work-family behaviors—not just leave-taking. In contrast, if parental leave policies specifically shift norms around time off following childbirth, other work-family behaviors should remain largely unaffected. Put differently, if changes in leave-taking reflect broader shifts in work-family preferences shared by people from the same country—regardless of whether they live in the US or the home country—we would expect home-country leave policies to correlate with a

range of work-family outcomes among US immigrants. If, instead, the policies specifically shift norms around leave-taking, we may expect little impact on other work-family behaviors.

To examine this hypothesis empirically, we first assess whether exposure to more generous parental leave policies is associated with preferences for traditional family structures. Columns 1 through 3 of Table 8 estimates the effect of paid leave on the likelihood of having children, ever having been married, and being divorced. While we find no relationship between paid leave and either fertility or divorce, women exposed to longer durations of paid leave are less likely to remain single.

Another possibility is that countries with more generous paid leave policies hold different attitudes toward women's work—perhaps placing less emphasis on careers for women. If so, we might expect immigrants exposed to longer leave durations to have lower labor force participation and to work fewer hours. Column 4 of Table 8 shows no evidence that paid leave affects overall employment, but column 5 shows that, conditional on working at least one hour in a week, women exposed to longer durations are less likely to work especially long hours. While this could reflect broader cultural attitudes that de-emphasize career ambition—possibly contributing to the adoption of generous leave policies—it may also suggest that the policies themselves shape less work-centric norms.

We interpret these results, taken together, to be more consistent with leave-taking policies changing leave-taking norms. That said, we acknowledge that both processes are likely occurring simultaneously. We leave it to future research to disentangle the relative contributions of each.

6. Conclusion

When countries expand the number of weeks that parents can take off from work while continuing to get paid at least some fraction of their pre-leave salaries, the direct costs of taking additional leave decrease and so more people take more leave. At the same time, because these country-wide policies can increase leave-taking for a large fraction of the population, they may also affect norms regarding leave-taking after giving birth. As more women take longer leaves, the behavioral prescriptions for an ideal mother or ideal worker change, and when women do not abide by these prescriptions, they can experience both external sanctions and, perhaps more importantly, internal sanctions in the form of guilt and loss of identity.

In general, it is very difficult to distinguish the direct effects of a policy change from the indirect effects via changing prescriptions and norms. This paper aims to separate the direct effects of paid parental leave policies from the indirect effects by examining leave-taking behaviors among immigrants in the United States. The mothers in our sample are all subject to US laws and institutions and so home country policies will not have any direct impact on behaviors. However, because immigrants typically maintain home country norms, home country policy-induced changes in norms can still affect their leave-taking behaviors in the United States.

Our results indicate that the norms associated with leave taking in the home country are important for explaining the parental leave taking behavior of immigrants in the US. An increase in paid leave in the home country increases the likelihood of taking leave in the US by 0.09 percentage points. We also present evidence suggesting that maternity leave policies have causal impacts on leave-taking norms; it does not appear to be the case that home country leave policies are associated with other types of work leaves among immigrants in the United States.

Additionally, there is evidence to suggest leave taking norms are not associated with stronger family preferences, such as higher fertility rates or lower rates of divorce.

Our results have important implications for both the culture and policy evaluation literatures. This study finds that changes in policy can impact and change norms. This is important to consider when implementing new policies because, if norms change in response to policies, the long run impacts of policies can be quite different from short run impacts. A new maternal leave policy with relatively low initial take-up can have very high long run take-up rates if, as more people take leaves, taking longer leaves becomes expected of new mothers and is no longer interpreted as a signal of lack of career dedication. In situations where "too much" take-up can have unintended harmful consequences, as might be the case with parental leave-taking (e.g., Friedrich and Hackmann 2021), the potential for multiplier effects is an especially important issue to consider.

In our study, we specifically chose to evaluate the impact of maternity leave policy because of the extensive variation in this particular policy over time and across countries. This choice was also motivated by the fact that labor market decisions shortly after giving birth have long-term effects on women's careers (Kleven et al. 2019). However, we refrain from unequivocally endorsing shorter leave durations. Generous maternity leave policies offer benefits beyond career considerations, such as improvements in child health (Ruhm 2000, Tanaka 2005, Choudhry and Polachek 2019, Lichtman-Sadot and Bell 2017), and mothers' mental health (Lee et al. 2020, Bullinger 2019). Our analysis simply serves as a proof of concept that policy changes can influence gender norms. Future research should explore the most effective policies for altering unhelpful gender norms while considering other critical outcomes and specifically how optimal policy may differ across different contexts.

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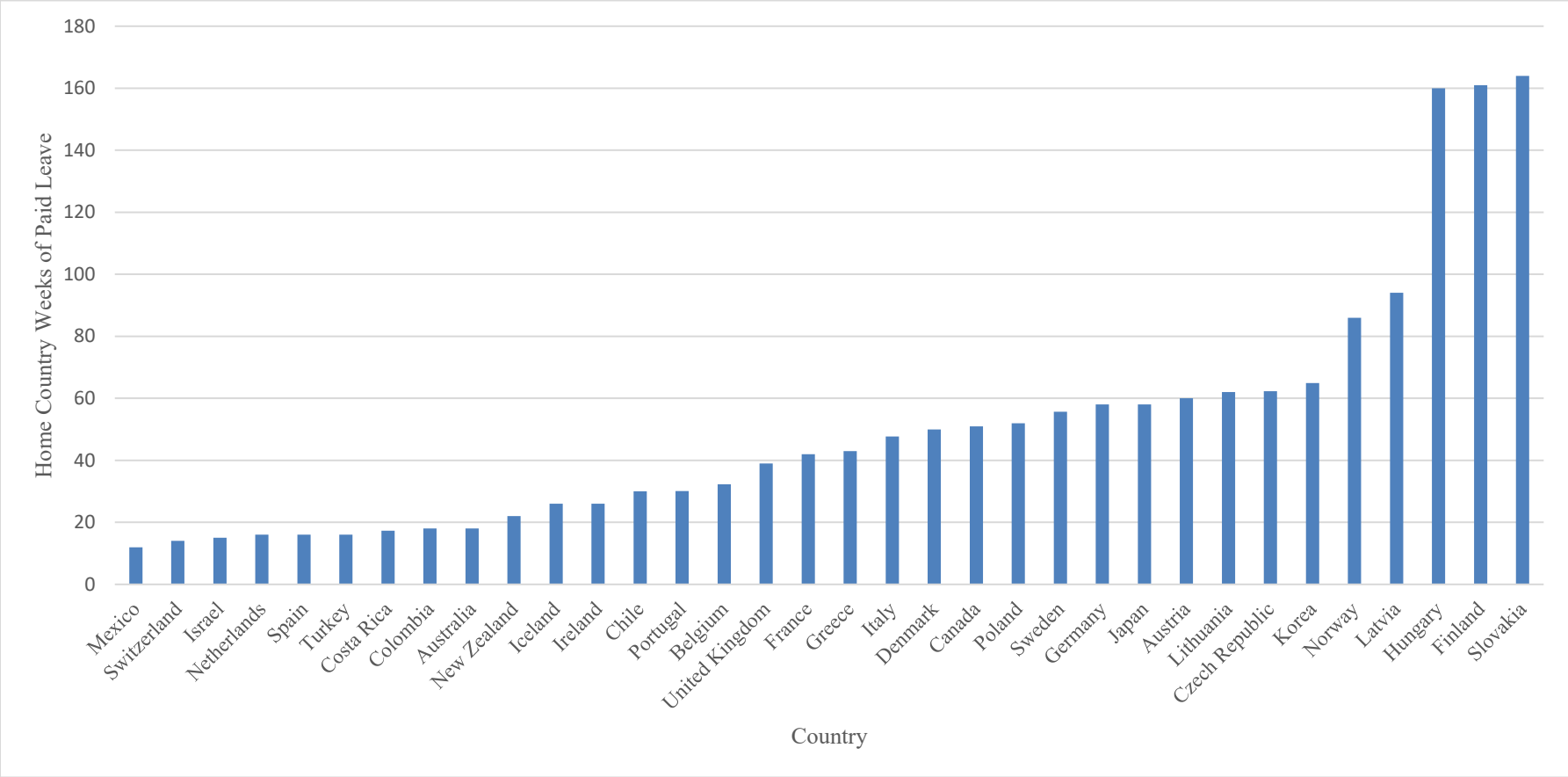
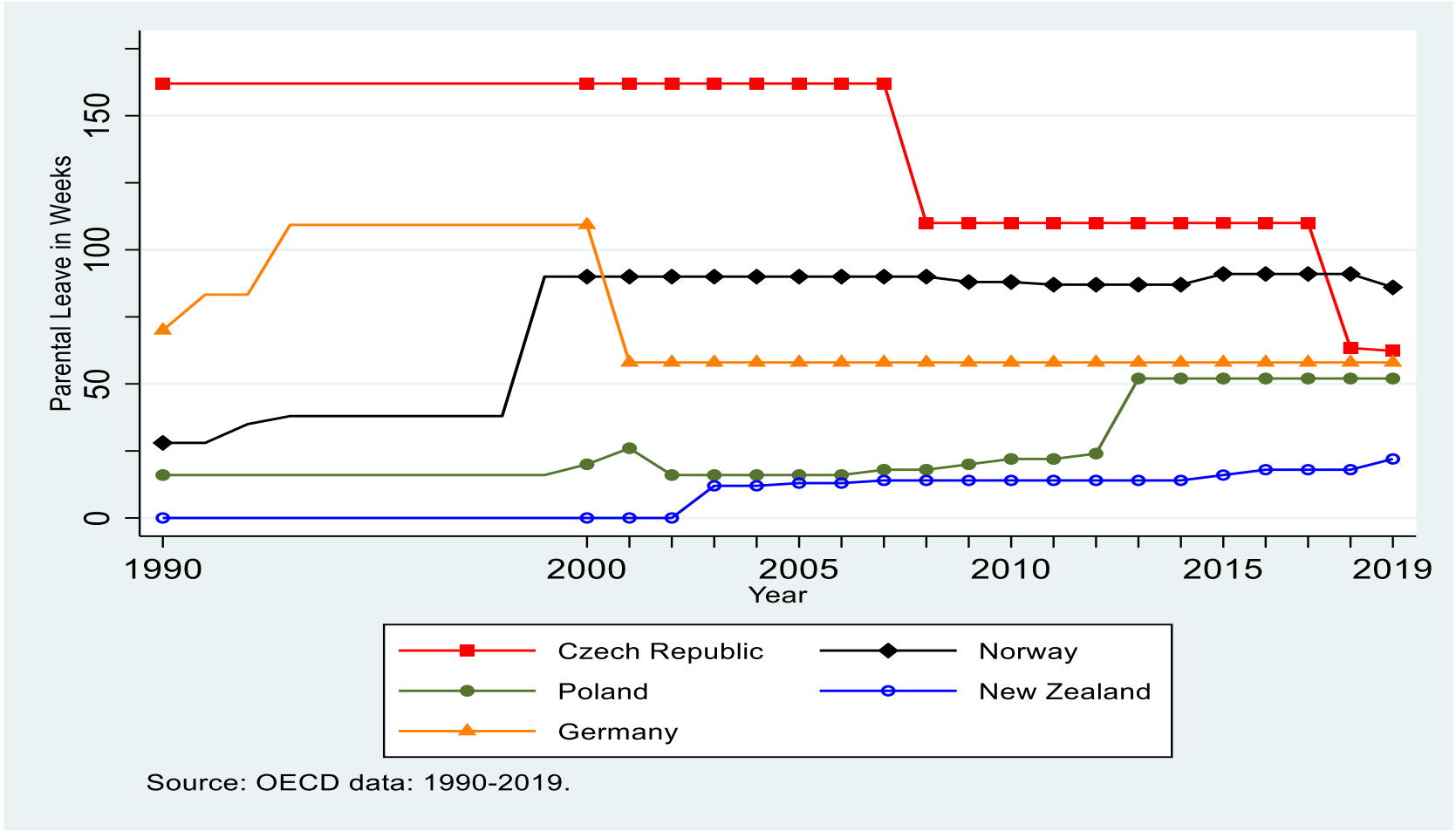
Figure 1: Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave by Country 2019



Notes: Data on weeks of paid leave by country in 2019, downloaded from OECD (2024a).

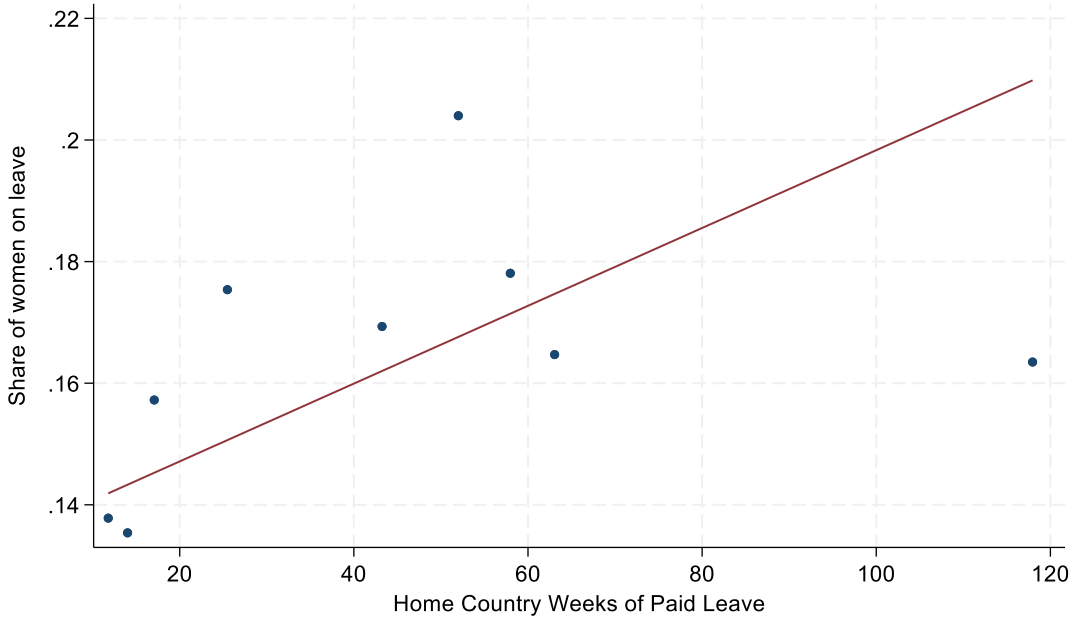
Figure 2: Duration of Paid Parental Leave for Select Countries Over Time



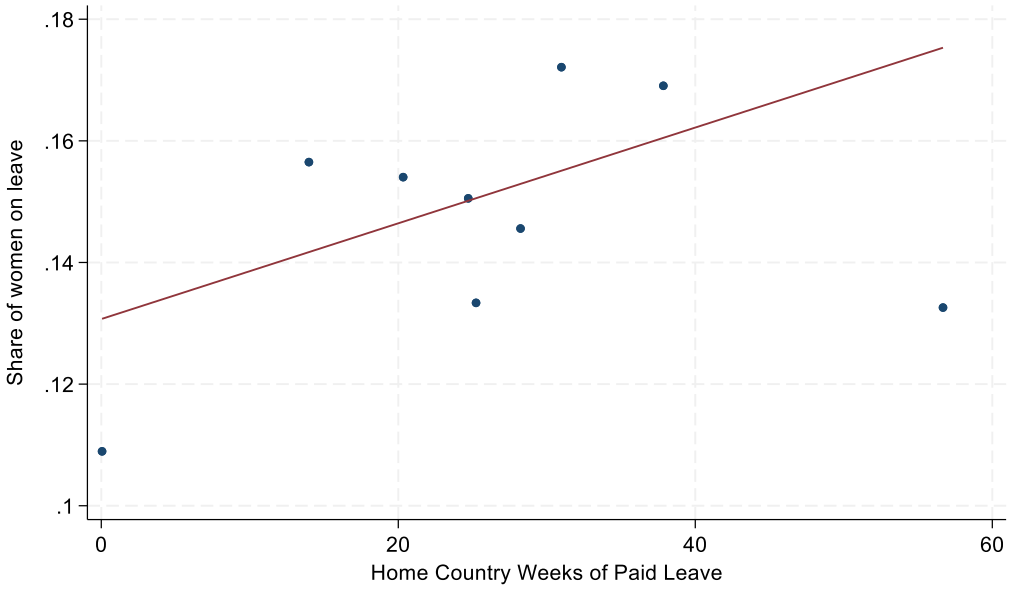
Notes. Years without markers are not in our sample.

Figure 3: Binscatter Plots

Panel A. Raw relationship



Panel B. Relationship after absorbing country-of-origin fixed effects



Notes: The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Whole sample				Above median				Below or equal to median			
Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
On leave	0.15	0.36	0	1	0.17	0.38	0	1	0.14	0.35	0	1
Home country weeks of paid leave	23.90	21.89	0	170	47.10	24.17	12.9	170	11.87	1.09	0	12
Married	0.69	0.46	0	1	0.84	0.37	0	1	0.61	0.49	0	1
Number of children	2.05	1.14	1	9	1.69	0.91	1	9	2.23	1.20	1	9
Age	30.49	5.94	18	64	32.34	5.44	18	60	29.53	5.97	18	64
High school	0.24	0.43	0	1	0.11	0.31	0	1	0.31	0.46	0	1
Some college	0.23	0.42	0	1	0.26	0.44	0	1	0.22	0.41	0	1
College or more	0.28	0.45	0	1	0.61	0.49	0	1	0.11	0.31	0	1
Speak English not well	0.15	0.35	0	1	0.02	0.13	0	1	0.21	0.41	0	1
Speak English well	0.16	0.36	0	1	0.08	0.27	0	1	0.20	0.40	0	1
Speak only English or very well	0.62	0.49	0	1	0.90	0.30	0	1	0.47	0.50	0	1
Observations		19,686				7,299				12,387		

Notes. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year. Estimates are weighted using person weights. The median value of home country weeks of paid leave is 12.

Table 2 – Baseline Model

Dependent Variable: On Leave	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave	0.00073***	0.00055**	0.00061**	0.00094***
	(0.00022)	(0.00025)	(0.00025)	(0.00028)
Survey Year FE	Y	N	N	N
Controls	N	Y	Y	Y
State-Year FE	N	Y	Y	Y
Occupation FE	N	N	Y	Y
Origin Country FE	N	N	N	Y
Mean Share on Leave	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.153
Percent of Mean	0.478	0.361	0.397	0.617
Observations	19,686	19,686	19,686	19,686
Adjusted R-squared	0.00501	0.04091	0.05340	0.05539

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year. Controls include age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children, English-speaking ability and year of immigration fixed effects. Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 3 – Robustness of Results

Dependent variable: On Leave	(1) Baseline	(2) Drop 1990	(3) No Mexico	(4) No Slovakia, Hungary, Finland	(5) No Mexico, Australia, Switzerland
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave	0.00094***	0.00086***	0.00125**	0.00090***	0.00123**
	(0.00028)	(0.00031)	(0.00057)	(0.00027)	(0.00058)
Mean Share on Leave	0.153	0.153	0.170	0.152	0.170
Percent of Mean	0.617	0.559	0.733	0.590	0.725
Observations	19,686	18,233	8,156	19,586	7,976
Adjusted R-squared	0.05539	0.05426	0.08964	0.05402	0.08872

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year. Controls include age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children and English-speaking ability. All models include state by survey year, migration year, occupation, and country-of-origin fixed effects. Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 4 – Selection into Employment?

Dependent variable:	(1) **On Leave**	(2) **On Leave or out of the labor force**	(3) **On Leave or out of the labor force**	(4) **On Leave or out of the labor force**	(5) **On Leave**	(6) **On Leave**	(7) **Log Wages**	(8) **Log Wages**
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave	0.00094***	0.00046	0.00033	0.00015	-0.00004	0.0000033	0.00042	0.00091
	(0.00028)	(0.00051)	(0.00045)	(0.00050)	(0.00006)	(0.0000336)	(0.00029)	(0.00065)
Occupation FE	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mean Share on Leave	0.153	0.459	0.459	0.632	0.0297	0.0274	2.533	2.501
Percent of Mean	0.617	0.100	0.0716	0.0240	-0.146	0.0119	0.0165	0.0364
Sample	Employed (Baseline)	Employed within the last 5 years	Employed within the last 5 years	No restriction on employment	Employed with children aged 5-17	Employed with no children	Employed women	Employed women with at least one child under age 5
Observations	19,686	36,489	36,489	52,875	144,186	270,298	676,498	100,439
Adjusted R-squared	0.05539	0.09084	0.07456	0.12319	0.01162	0.0101131	0.36293	0.40677

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. In all columns, the sample is restricted to foreign born women, age 18 to 64, who migrated to the US from OECD countries after 1970. In columns 1 through 4, the sample is limited to mothers whose children were all born in the US, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. Column 1 further restricts the sample to employed women (baseline, column 4 of Table 2). Columns 2 and 3 include women who have worked at any point within the previous five years, and column 4 places no restrictions on employment. In columns 5 through 8, the sample is again restricted to women who are currently employed. In columns 5 and 8, the sample is again restricted to women whose children were all born in the US. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year. Controls include age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children and English-speaking ability. All models include state by year, migration year, and country-of-origin fixed effects. Occupation fixed effects are not included in columns 3 and 4. Hourly wages (columns 7 and 8) are computed by dividing annual labor income (2010 CPI-U dollars) by imputed weeks worked and usual weekly hours; extreme values (<$2 or >$2000) and the non-employed are excluded. Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 5: Additional Home Country Variables

Dependent variable: On Leave	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave	0.00094***	0.00124***	0.00095**	0.00101**	0.00126**
	(0.00028)	(0.00047)	(0.00047)	(0.00037)	(0.00053)
Home Country Log GDP Per Capita		-0.23474***			-0.20527***
		(0.06104)			(0.06111)
Home Country Female LFP			-0.00558**		-0.00070
			(0.00215)		(0.00196)
Home Country Fertility Rate				-0.06187**	-0.08113**
				(0.02650)	(0.03641)
Mean Share on Leave	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.149	0.155
Percent of Mean	0.617	0.809	0.625	0.678	0.814
Observations	19,686	14,822	15,033	17,608	13,799
Adjusted R-squared	0.05539	0.04480	0.04840	0.05519	0.04571

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. effects. All home country variables obtained from the OECD data page. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year. Controls include age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children and English-speaking ability. All models include state by survey year, migration year, occupation and country-of-origin fixed effects. Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance:*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 6: Connection to Ethnic Identity

Dependent variable: On Leave	(1)	(2)
	English Language Ability	**Recent Arrival**
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave	0.00087***	0.00081**
	(0.00028)	(0.00031)
Does not Speak English or Speaks but Not Well	-0.02064	
	(0.01261)	
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave *	0.00249***	
Does not Speak English or Speaks but Not Well	(0.00087)	
In the U.S. Less than 5 years		-0.03568**
		(0.01362)
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave * In the U.S. Less than 5 years		0.00114*
		(0.00064)
Mean Share on Leave	0.153	0.153
Percent of Mean	0.567	0.530
Observations	19,686	19,686
Adjusted R-squared	0.05591	0.05580

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year. Controls include age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children and English-speaking ability. All models include state by survey year, migration year, occupation and country-of-origin fixed effects. Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 7 – Time Trend

Dependent variable: On Leave	(1) Baseline	(2) Drop 1990	(3) Time Trend
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave	0.00094***	0.00086***	0.00159**
	(0.00029)	(0.00031)	(0.00069)
Mean of Dep. Variable	0.154	0.153	0.153
Percent of Mean	0.609	0.559	1.037
Observations	19,686	18,233	18,233
Adjusted R-squared	0.05780	0.05426	0.05524

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in the survey year. Controls include age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children and English-speaking ability. All models include state by survey year, migration year, occupation and country-of-origin fixed effects. In columns 2 and 3 the number of observations is lower as we drop year 1990 from the sample as in our sample year 1990 is ten years apart from year 2000. Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 8 – Heterogeneity by Women's Family Preferences and Work-Related Preferences

Dependent variable:	(1) **Infant**	(2) **Never married**	(3) **Currently Divorced**	(4) **Employed**	(5) **Work >50 hours per week**
Home Country	0.00005	-0.00070**	-0.00003	-0.00010	-0.00050**
Weeks of Paid Leave	(0.00008)	(0.00028)	(0.00003)	(0.00024)	(0.00019)
Occupation FE	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Mean of Dep. Variable	0.0743	0.234	0.0995	0.550	0.0961
Percent of Mean	0.0679	-0.300	-0.0321	-0.0173	-0.518
Sample	Age < 45	All	Ever married	All	Employed & working more than 1 hour per week
Observations	842,054	1,243,138	970,944	1,243,138	658,779
Adjusted R-squared	0.02624	0.25201	0.05032	0.11473	0.08557

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. Since the sample varies across each of the specifications, the bottom row in each panel briefly describes the sample of women for each regression. In all columns, the sample is restricted to foreign born women who migrated to the US after 1970. All models include state by survey year, migration year, and country-of-origin fixed effects, as well as the full set of controls (age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children and English-speaking ability). Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

APPENDIX TABLES

Appendix Table A1. Average Weeks of Paid Leave by Country (Sorted from Highest to Lowest)

Country	Mean	Median	Min	Max
Slovakia	166.0	164.0	164.0	170.0
Finland	160.0	159.0	159.0	161.0
Hungary	160.0	160.0	160.0	160.0
Czech Republic	122.0	110.0	62.3	162.0
Latvia	94.0	94.0	94.0	94.0
Norway	88.4	90.0	28.0	91.0
Austria	69.2	60.0	60.0	86.0
Lithuania	62.0	62.0	62.0	62.0
Germany	60.2	58.0	58.0	109.0
Sweden	59.6	60.0	55.7	63.0
Japan	57.3	58.0	14.0	58.0
Korea	56.4	64.9	8.5	64.9
Canada	50.5	52.0	17.0	52.0
Denmark	49.4	50.0	28.0	54.0
Italy	47.7	47.7	47.7	47.7
France	37.8	42.0	16.0	42.0
Poland	32.5	22.0	16.0	52.0
United Kingdom	32.4	39.0	18.0	39.0
Greece	32.1	43.0	15.0	43.0
Belgium	30.1	32.3	14.0	32.3
Iceland	26.0	26.0	26.0	26.0
Chile	23.2	18.0	18.0	30.0
Ireland	23.1	26.0	14.0	26.0
Netherlands	22.7	16.0	16.0	42.0
Portugal	21.4	17.1	12.9	30.1
Costa Rica	17.3	17.3	17.3	17.3
Spain	16.0	16.0	16.0	16.0
Turkey	15.7	16.0	12.0	16.0
Israel	14.6	15.0	14.0	15.0
Colombia	13.6	12.0	12.0	18.0
New Zealand	12.6	14.0	0.0	22.0
Mexico	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
Australia	8.0	0.0	0.0	18.0
Switzerland	7.0	8.0	0.0	14.0

Notes. Statistics on home country weeks of paid leave are constructed from values associated with our preferred sample: Data from the 1990 Census, 2000 Census, 2001-2019 ACS on foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant in the household. Estimates are weighted using person weights.

Appendix Table A2. Balance Tests

Dependent variable:	(1) **Age**	(2) **Years of Schooling**	(3) **Does not speak English or Speaks but Not Well**
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave	0.00598	0.00041	0.00031
	(0.00899)	(0.00356)	(0.00113)
Observations	19,686	19,686	19,686
Adjusted R-squared	0.09713	0.34788	0.15757
Controls	N	N	N
Survey Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Origin Country FE	Y	Y	Y

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The only controls are survey year fixed effects and country-of-origin fixed effects. Estimates are weighted using person weights.

Appendix Table A3. Duration of Paid Leave in the Home Country from Different Years

Dependent variable: On Leave	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave, 3 Years Prior	0.00006						
	(0.00024)						
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave, 2 Years Prior		0.00026					
		(0.00027)					
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave, 1 Year Prior			0.00067				
			(0.00043)				
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave, Year of Survey				0.00094***			
				(0.00028)			
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave, 1 Year After					0.00101		
					(0.00068)		
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave, 2 Years After						0.00127**	
						(0.0006)	
Home Country Weeks of Paid Leave, 3 Years After							0.00046
							(0.00069)
Mean Share on Leave	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.153
Percent of Mean	0.038	0.172	0.442	0.617	0.66	0.834	0.301
Observations	19,639	19,650	19,666	19,686	19,686	19,686	19,686
Adjusted R-squared	0.05515	0.05505	0.05502	0.05539	0.05532	0.05535	0.05519

Notes: Standard errors clustered by home country. The sample is limited to foreign born mothers who migrated to the US after 1970, whose children were born in the US, who are currently employed, and who have an infant (child under the age of 1) in the household. The home country paid (HC) parental leave duration corresponds to the total length of paid leave in weeks available in previous years, in the survey year and in years post survey. Controls include age, age squared/100, educational attainment, marital status, number of children and English-speaking ability. All models include state by survey year, migration year, occupation and country-of-origin fixed effects. Estimates are weighted using person weights. Levels of significance: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.