

Integrating Racial/Ethnic Equity into Policy Research: Policy Assessments to Improve Child Health

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The policy research field is moving towards an equity approach



Cochrane Methods
Equity

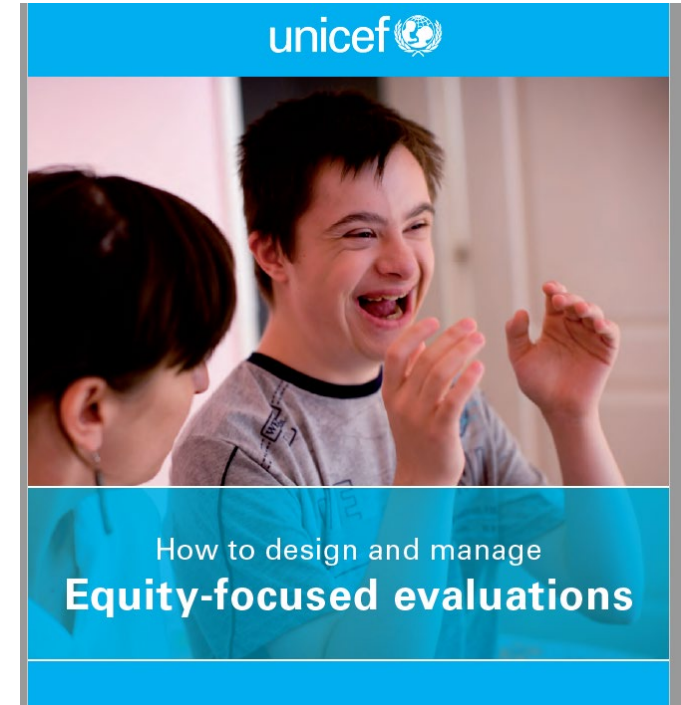
Trusted evidence.
Informed decisions.
Better health.



Identifying Racial and Ethnic
Disparities in Human Services
A Conceptual Framework and Literature Review



**Developing an Equity-Focused Policy
Research Agenda for Low-Income
Families with Young Children**



Policy equity assessments have three stages guided by key questions

- **Logic:** Does the policy set explicit/implicit goals to address racial/ethnic gaps?
- **Capacity:** Does the policy have the capacity to meet the need of the overall eligible population and those of each racial/ethnic subgroup?
- **Research evidence:** Is the policy effective for racial/ethnic subgroups and does it reduce inequities?

Source: Joshi et al., (2014) Integrating Racial/Ethnic Equity Into Policy Assessments to Improve Child Health." *Health Affairs* 33(12): 2222-2229.

Stage 1: Policy logic

Policy Assessment Steps	Examples of Equity-Focused Questions
Historical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the policy change over time to address any documented racial/ethnic exclusionary practices or barriers to participation?
Primary goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are racial/ethnic disparities explicitly included in the policy's targeted outcomes?Does the need for the program differ by race/ethnicity?
Targeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the policy target groups (i.e. migrant workers) or characteristics (i.e. poverty) that include a higher proportion of racial/ethnic minorities?
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is there an existing review of the policy's racial history?

Example sources: original legislation, reauthorizing legislation, regulations, policy guidance, peer-reviewed/published accounts of legislative history, key informant interviews

Stage 2: Policy capacity

Policy Assessment Steps	Examples of Equity-Focused Questions
Policy eligibility and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do eligibility criteria differentially exclude the eligible population or the population in need by race/ethnicity?
Policy resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there resources targeted towards policy enhancements or expansions that could reduce racial/ethnic disparities?
Policy/service implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do implementation practices differentially affect administrative burden by race/ethnicity (e.g., language barriers, documentation requirements)?
Coordination/ Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the program foster collaboration (i.e., across departments, levels of government, sectors) in order to more effectively address racial/ethnic disparities?
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is program data available by race/ethnicity?

Example sources: regulations, Congressional appropriations and budgets, program administrative data, large surveys (Census data), implementation/process evaluations

Stage 3: Policy research evidence

Policy Assessment Steps	Examples of Equity-Focused Questions
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the findings from subgroup analyses by race/ethnicity for short- and long-term impacts?
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does available data document how implementation procedures differ by subgroups of participants or by sites that serve different race/ethnic populations?
Simulations/ Cost effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do studies simulate expansions of different program components and eligibility scenarios and estimate the impact on racial/ethnic disparities?
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is program outcome and implementation data broken down by race/ethnicity?

Example sources: Experimental studies, quasi-experimental studies, natural experiments, systematic reviews, implementation evaluations

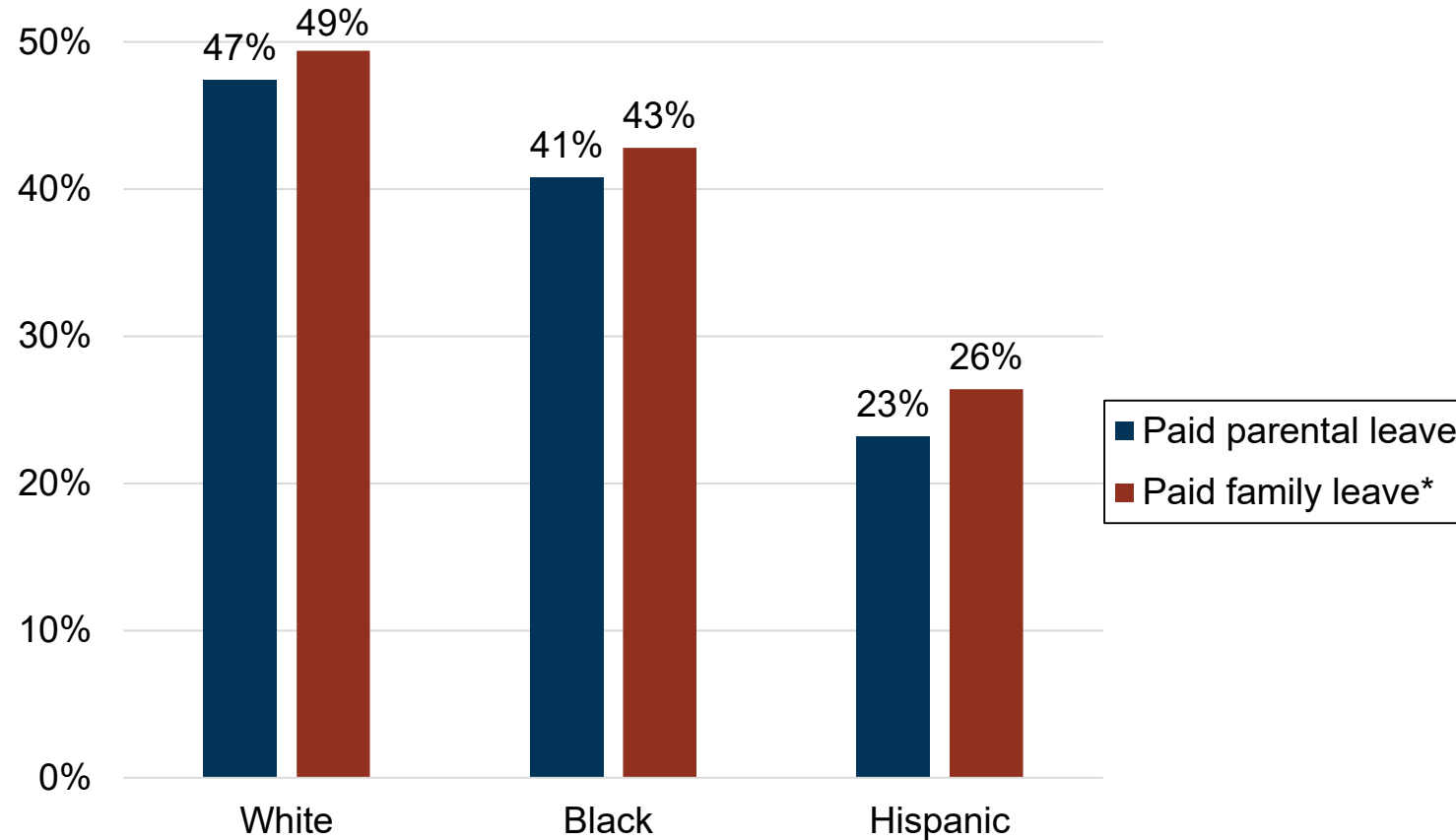
Policy equity assessment of Family & Medical Leave

Focus: Black and Hispanic workers

What is family and medical leave (FML)?

- Time away from jobs to care for serious medical conditions
 - Different from sick leave
- Medical leave
 - Care for own health or family member's health
- Family leave
 - Bond with new child (birth, adoption or foster care)
 - Includes mothers and fathers

Policy need: Limited access to FML through employers



*Paid family leave is paid leave to care for a sick family member

Source: Bartel, Kim, Nam, Rossin-Slater, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2019

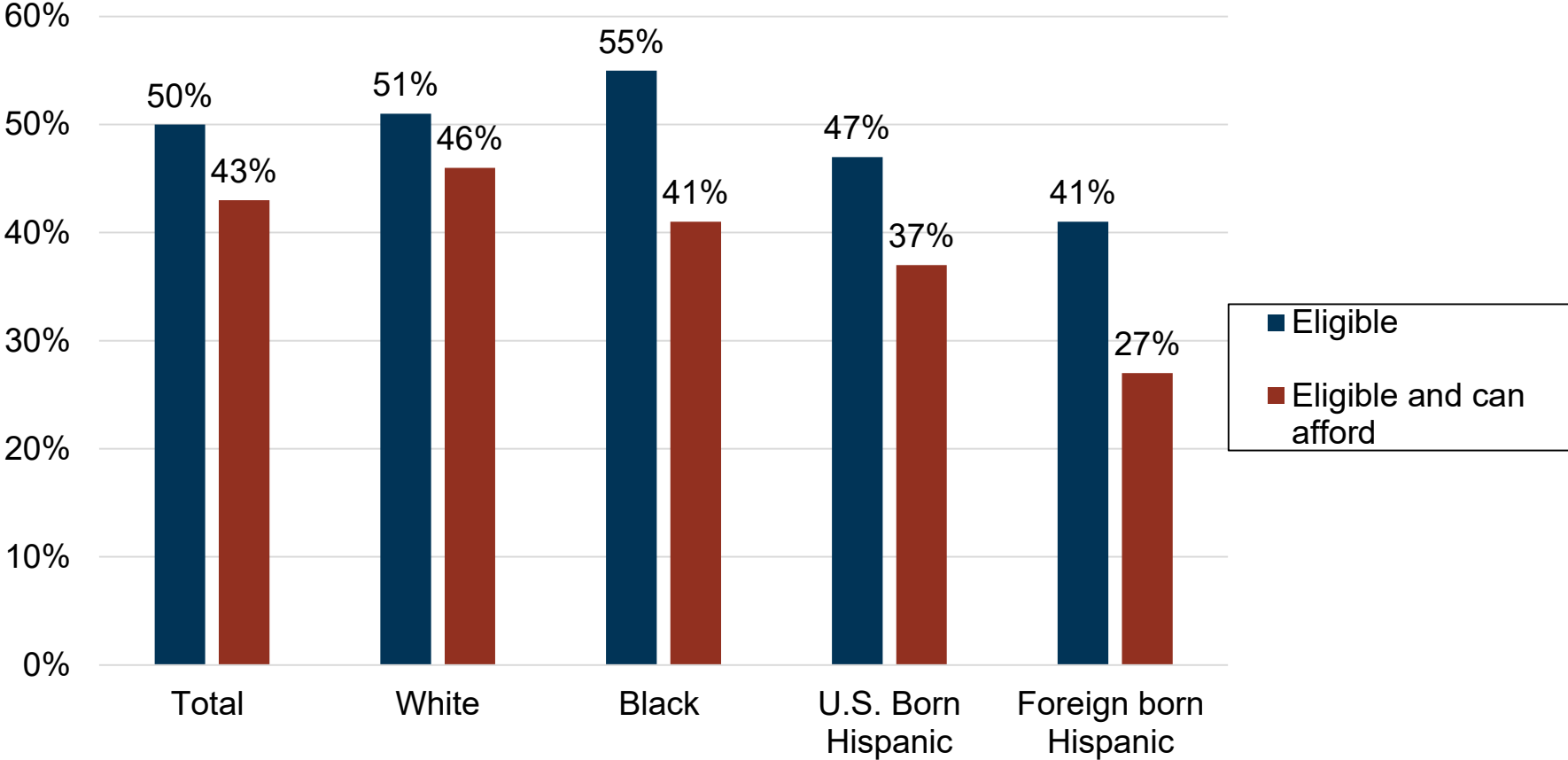
Policy history: Family & medical leave

- Federal employment policies are difficult to enact
- 1993: Family and Medical Leave Act
 - Labor standard that offers 12 weeks of job-protected unpaid leave
 - Focus on preventing **gender discrimination**
- 2002+: Expansion of state level TDI programs
 - Adds FML to existing state social insurance (pregnancy/disability)
 - Some **target lower-income workers** with higher wage replacement
- 2017+: State level paid FML programs
 - Creates a new FML social insurance program

FMLA eligibility: restrictive criteria leaves out many employees

- Employees must meet requirements:
 - Work hours (1,050)
 - Job tenure (at least 1 year)
- Applies to all public sector agencies and schools
- Does not apply to private employers with **less than 50 employees**
- 2018 DOL survey: 56% of employees are eligible

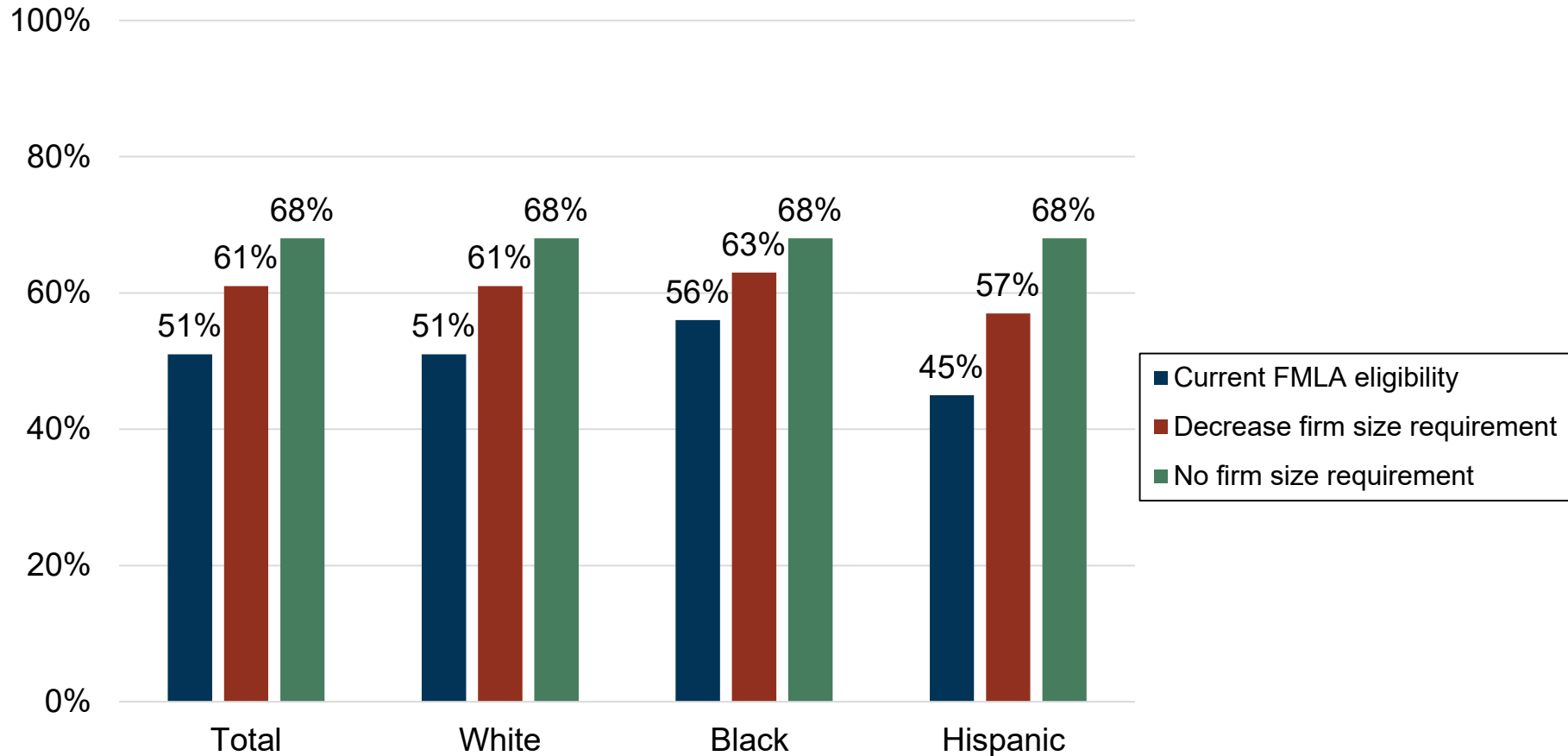
FMLA access: eligibility criteria disproportionately excludes Hispanic workers



Note: Excludes the self-employed

Source: Authors' calculations of *Current Population Survey* 2014-2017.

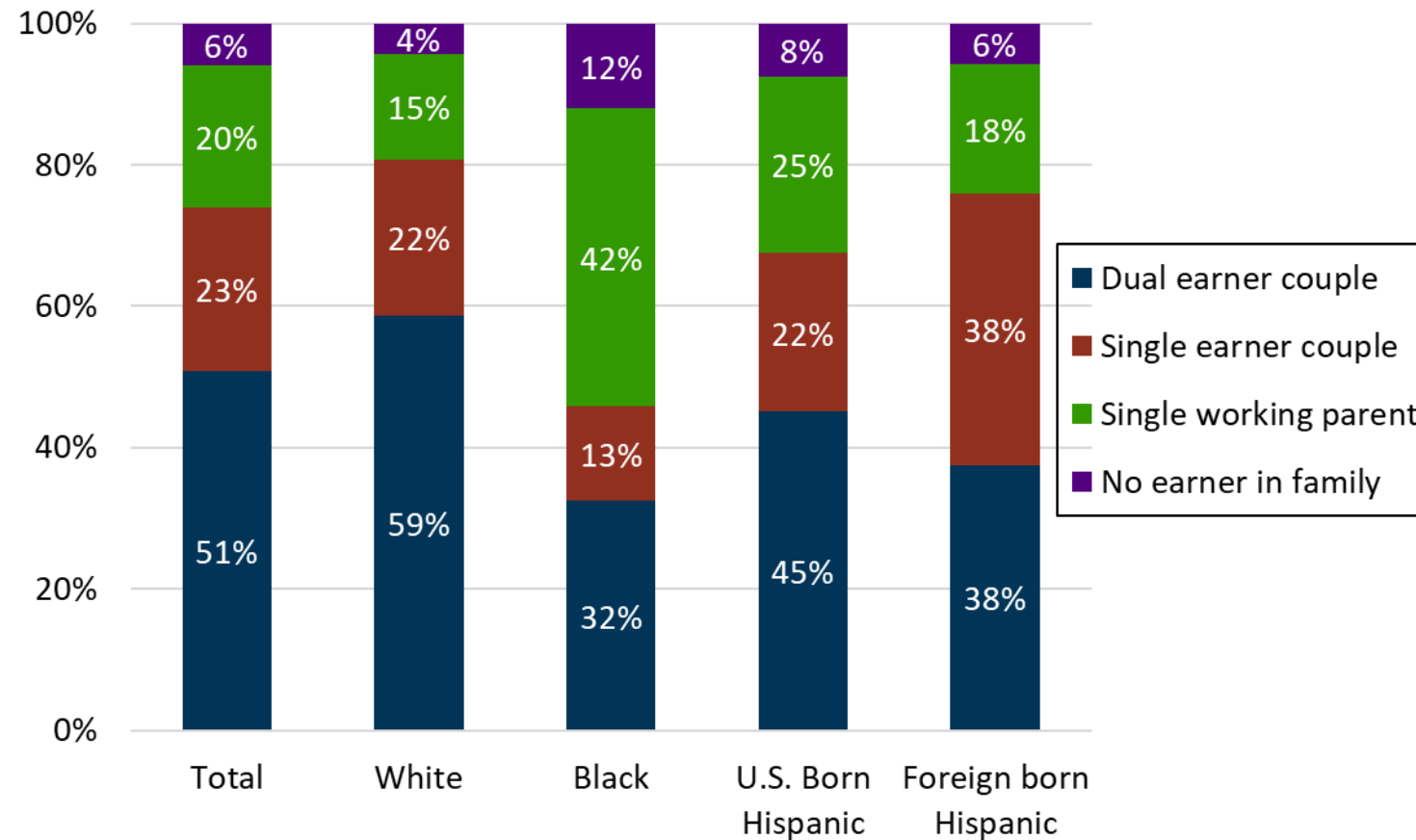
FMLA eligibility: changing firm size threshold increases eligibility access for Hispanic workers



Note: Excludes the self-employed

Source: Authors' calculations of *Current Population Survey* 2014-2017.

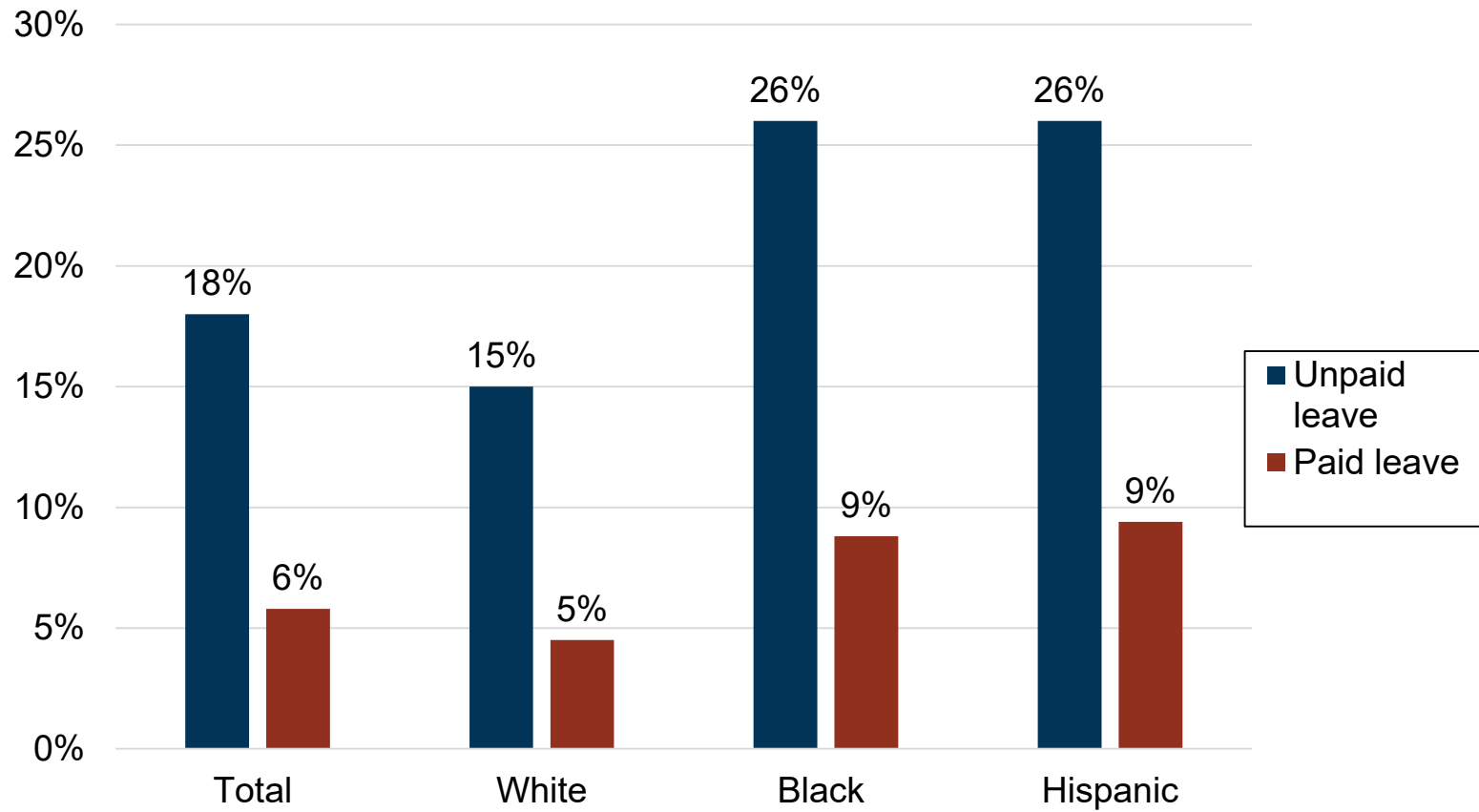
FMLA take up: Do families have more than 1 earner to potentially absorb wage loss from unpaid leave?



*Couple includes married or cohabiting partner

Source: Authors' calculations of the Current Population Survey, 2016-2019.

Research evidence: Paid family leave can help reduce the share of workers that experience economic hardship



Source: Joshi, Baldiga, Earle, Huber, Osypuk & Acevedo-Garcia, 2019

FMLA research evidence: positive impacts accrue to higher SES families

- **Positive impacts on leave taking:**
 - college-educated mothers and fathers
 - married mothers
- **Positive impacts on infant health:**
 - larger impacts on childbirth outcomes for college-educated and married mothers
 - reduced infant mortality for college-educated and married mothers

Sources: Han, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2009; Rossin, 2011

Paid FML research evidence: reduces racial/ethnic disparities in leave taking

- Paid FML increased leave-taking from:
 - White mothers: 3-5 weeks to 6-7 weeks
 - Black mothers: 1-2 weeks to 6 weeks
 - Hispanic mothers: 1-2 weeks to 5 weeks

Source: Rossin-Slater, Ruhm & Waldfogel 2013

Key take aways about equity in FML Policy

- **Logic**
 - FMLA explicitly designed to address gender equity
 - Higher need for affordable FML among Black and Hispanic workers
- **Capacity**
 - Eligibility criteria leaves out many Hispanic workers
 - Barriers likely lower take up rates among Hispanic and Black workers
- **Research evidence**
 - FMLA (unpaid leave) reproduces r/e inequities
 - Reducing firm size criteria and enacting paid FML increases r/e equity but does not eliminate gaps

LEARN MORE ABOUT POLICY EQUITY ASSESSMENTS AND THE FMLA

- ✓ Go to diversitydatakids.org
- ✓ Click “Policy Equity Assessments”

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with 'Policy Equity Assessments' circled in red. Below the menu is the site's logo and tagline. A blue navigation bar contains categories: 'Early Childhood', 'Income, Work and Family', and 'Neighborhoods'. The main content area features a large image of children running with the headline 'Black Children Matter. Mobilizing data for equity'. Three buttons are visible: 'Access raw datasets', 'Explore our research', and 'Learn about racial patterns of child opportunity'.

Datasets Child Opportunity Index **Policy Equity Assessments**

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