



# Who Takes the Baby?: The Effect of Question Ordering on Family Leave Policy Preferences



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**Summary:** Alternating the order in which respondents are asked about maternity and paternity leave policies affects how much parental leave people are willing to advocate for. The gap between maternity and paternity leave reduces when paternity leave is asked first.

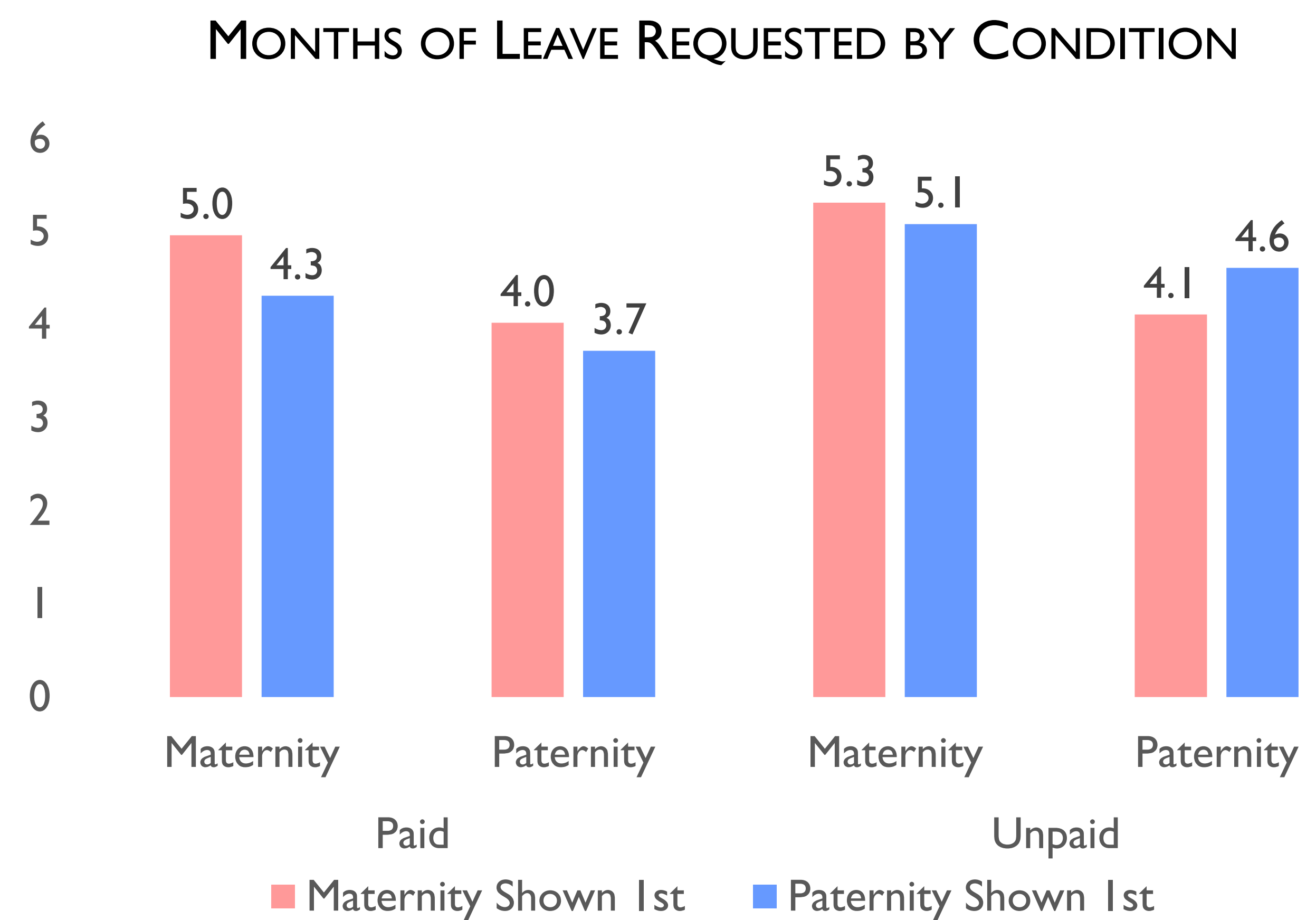
## BACKGROUND

- Maternity leave traditionally longer than paternity leave because mother seen as primary caretaker.
- Survey research literature shows that an earlier question can prime respondents to respond differently on a later question.
- Research Question: How does question ordering affect the length of paid and unpaid parental leave Americans prefer employers to be required to offer?**

## METHODOLOGY

- Survey experiment fielded on the 2015 American Family Survey (total  $n=3,000$ )
- Respondents randomly assigned to a combination of paid or unpaid leave and maternity or paternity leave shown first
- Maternity and paternity leave asked on different screens so respondents couldn't retroactively change responses
- "How many months of [paid/unpaid] [maternity/paternity] leave should employers be required by law to offer?"

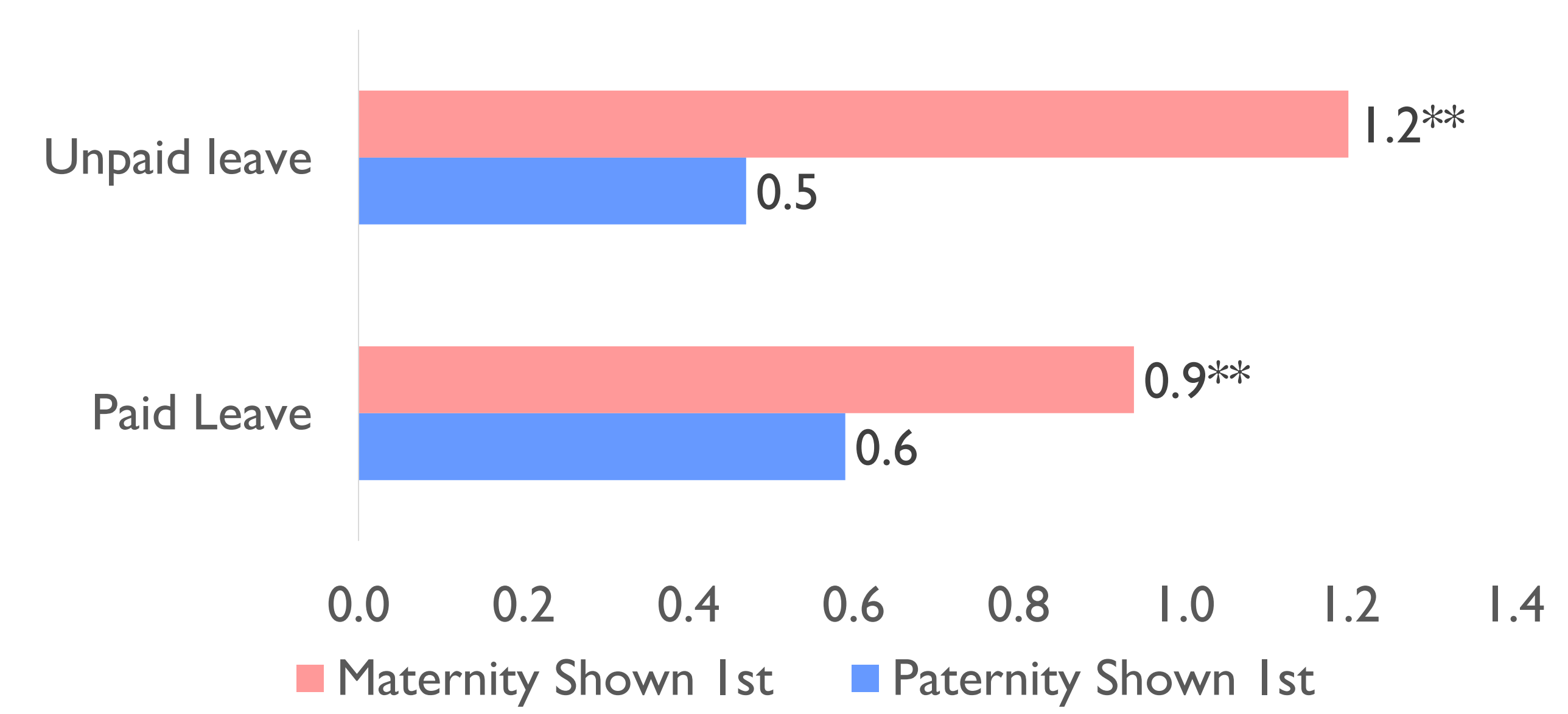
## FINDINGS



- Regardless of order or type of leave, respondents advocate for slightly more maternity leave than for paternity leave.
- Respondents advocate for slightly more unpaid leave than paid leave.

Paid   Maternity shown first 780 respondents	Unpaid   Maternity shown first 748 respondents
Paid   Paternity shown first 734 respondents	Unpaid   Paternity shown first 738 respondents

## MONTHS OF MATERNITY-PATERNITY LEAVE BY CONDITION



Note: \*\*indicates significance at the 0.05 level

- Asking about paternity leave first reduces the gap between maternity and paternity leave.
- 56% of respondents do not express different amounts of maternity and paternity leave.

## IMPLICATIONS

- Question ordering significantly affects relationship between maternity and paternity leave.
- Paternity leave seen as paired with maternity leave while maternity leave seen as independent.