Does Paid Family Leave Save Infant Lives? Evidence from California

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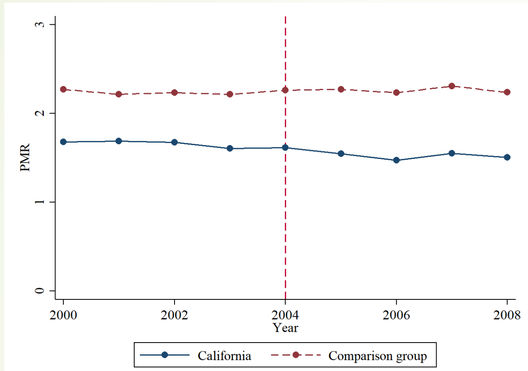
Abstract

One goal of the paid family leave program in the U.S. is to help working parents balance their careers and family responsibilities and hence improve the well-being of their infants. A large body of literature evaluates the effects of California's Paid Family Leave program (CA-PFL) on early childhood outcomes, but most studies have been based on the analyses of surviving infants. If the CA-PFL reduces infant deaths, then such analyses would understate the program's true effects. Using the linked birth and infant death data in the U.S. with a difference-in-differences framework, I find that the implementation of the CA-PFL reduced the post-neonatal mortality rate by 0.135 (per 1,000 live births), or it saved approximately 339 infant lives in California from 2004 to 2008. The effects were driven by death from internal causes and there were larger effects for boys than girls. These results are stable across a variety of robustness checks and no evidence suggests that these estimates result from the endogeneity of policy, simultaneously shocks, and changes in fertility.

Raw trends in the post-neonatal mortality rate (PNMR)



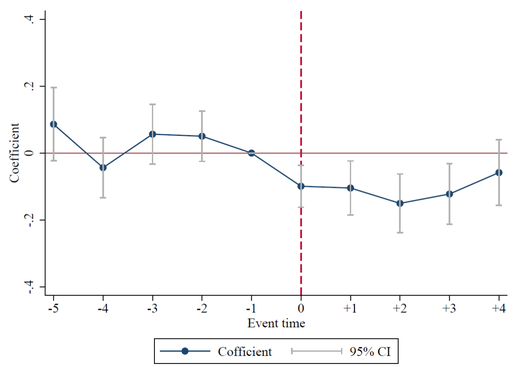
Effects of CA-PFL on the PNMR

Table 3 Effects of CA-PFL on the PNMR

	(1)	(2)	(3)
CA*Post	-0.155	-0.161	-0.135
P-value	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
F-P p-value	[0.098]	[0.050]	[0.008]
R-squared	0.456	0.458	0.460
Observations	5,508	5,508	5,508
State FE, Time FE	Y	Y	Y
Birth control	N	Y	Y
Maternal control	N	N	Y

Notes: The table presents the DD estimates of the effects of the CA-PFL on the PNMR. The birth controls include birth weight, gestational age, sex of birth, and birth order; and the maternal controls include maternal age, race/ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, employment status, and family income. All regressions are clustered at the state level and weighted by the number of births in each state-month cell. The cluster-robust p-values are in parentheses, and the Ferman-Pinto p-values are in brackets.

Event study

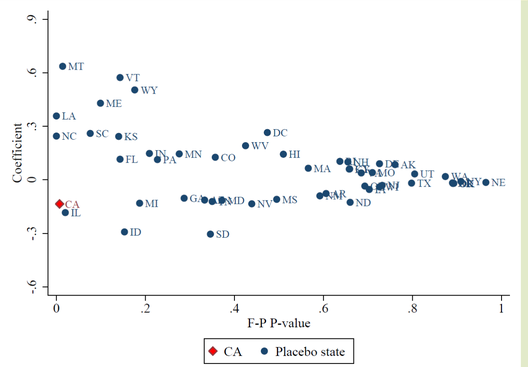


Heterogeneous effects

Table 4 Heterogeneous effects of CA-PFL on the PNMR

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A Cause of death: internal vs external						
Group (mean)	Internal Cause (1.51)			External Cause (0.14)		
CA*Post	-0.151	-0.160	-0.147	-0.004	-0.002	0.012
P-value	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.754)	(0.906)	(0.452)
F-P p-value	[0.136]	[0.063]	[0.031]	[0.922]	[0.972]	[0.789]
R-squared	0.394	0.397	0.398	0.281	0.283	0.286
Panel B Race: Non-Hispanic black vs Non-Hispanic white						
Group (mean)	Non-Hispanic Black (3.80)			Non-Hispanic White (1.50)		
CA*Post	-0.280	-0.242	-0.305	-0.137	-0.1185	-0.067
P-value	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.004)
F-P p-value	[0.676]	[0.710]	[0.602]	[0.163]	[0.179]	[0.333]
R-squared	0.097	0.104	0.107	0.331	0.333	0.336
Panel C Mother's marital status: married vs unmarried						
Group (mean)	Married (1.28)			Unmarried (2.39)		
CA*Post	-0.152	-0.176	-0.167	-0.050	-0.0763	-0.064
P-value	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.363)	(0.195)	(0.310)
F-P p-value	[0.004]	[0.004]	[0.001]	[0.895]	[0.802]	[0.818]
R-squared	0.273	0.275	0.277	0.280	0.286	0.288
Panel D Child sex: female vs male						
Group (mean)	Female (1.48)			Male (1.82)		
CA*Post	-0.100	-0.101	-0.078	-0.207	-0.224	-0.201
P-value	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.017)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
F-P p-value	[0.379]	[0.362]	[0.404]	[0.031]	[0.015]	[0.004]
R-squared	0.271	0.273	0.274	0.333	0.336	0.338
Observations	5,508	5,508	5,508	5,508	5,508	5,508
State FE, Time FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Birth control	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Maternal control	N	N	Y	N	N	Y

Placebo tests using every other state as the treated state



Placebo outcomes: neonatal mortality & fetal mortality

Table 6 Placebo outcomes: neonatal mortality & fetal mortality

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A Neonatal mortality (0-28 days)			
CA*Post	0.059	0.004	0.031
P-value	(0.118)	(0.919)	(0.555)
F-P p-value	[0.704]	[0.984]	[0.857]
R-squared	0.470	0.498	0.499
Panel B Fetal mortality (later in pregnancy)			
CA*Post	-0.049	-0.059	-0.027
P-value	(0.291)	(0.231)	(0.582)
F-P p-value	[0.701]	[0.641]	[0.832]
R-squared	0.602	0.604	0.606
Observations	5,508	5,508	5,508
State FE, Time FE	Y	Y	Y
Birth control	N	Y	Y
Maternal control	N	N	Y

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Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments on it. Thank you!