

# Exploring the Influence of Maternity Leave on Maternal Child Bonding, Breastfeeding and Postpartum Mood Disorders

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## Purpose

- Explore the relationships between participant characteristics, breastfeeding initiation and duration, maternity leave, motherhood, postpartum mood disorders and maternal child bonding and attachment.

## Background

- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is the only form of job protection offered to women after the birth of a child. It allows the mother to take up to 12 weeks of job protected leave from work.
- This leave is unpaid and many families would suffer such a financial burden taking 12 weeks off of work, that they cannot even be home with their baby for this long.
- FMLA also has specific stipulations and only about 60% of the work force even qualify for the program with their employer.

## Sample

- Women who experienced a live birth in the previous 13 months and
- Employed prior to the birth of the child

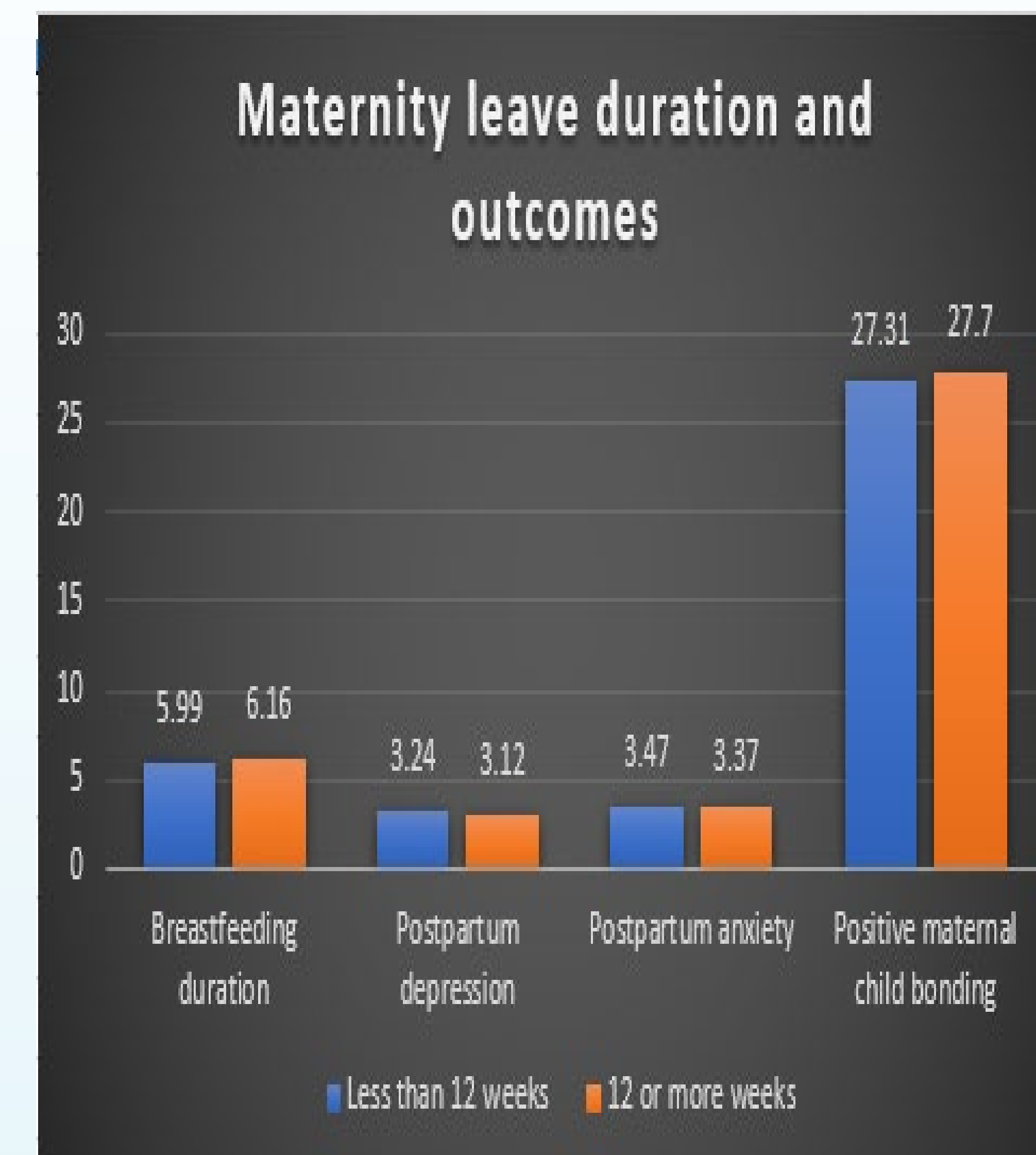
## Methods

- Respondents recruited via social media websites
- Asked to take a short survey via Survey Monkey
- Over 2800 responses, with 2,495 meeting criteria Data saved in a password protected database
- Informed consent and protected health information waiver
- Data maintained in password protected database

## Results

- Longer breastfeeding duration correlated with improved maternal bonding scores
- Improved perception of health correlated with paid maternity leave
- Unpaid leave correlated with decreased maternal bonding and negative impacts on maternal health perception
- Maternal warmth negatively impacted by increasing maternal age, lower income, and negative maternal health changes
- Maternal child bonding positively impacted by increased pay, longer breastfeeding, maternity leave duration, and overall good health perception

## Results



## Conclusion

- Participants with 12 weeks or more maternity leave were older and reported greater overall health.
- Length of maternity leave was positively associated with increased mother-child attachment and interactions
- Longer durations of paid maternity leave and longer durations of breastfeeding may represent factors to improve maternal-child bonding

## Limitations

- Mothers most at risk for unpaid maternity leave and subsequent outcomes were underrepresented in this study sample
- Repeating the survey with a larger, more diverse population may render different results
- Participants were asked to recall aspects of childbirth up to 13 months post-delivery

## Recommendations

- Continue to research the benefits of maternity leave of longer durations and the positive outcomes between mother, child and the family
- Advocate for policy changes at state and federal level to support paid maternity leave
- Use policies currently in place in states such as CA, NJ, and NY to implement paid maternity leave for each state

## Acknowledgements

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