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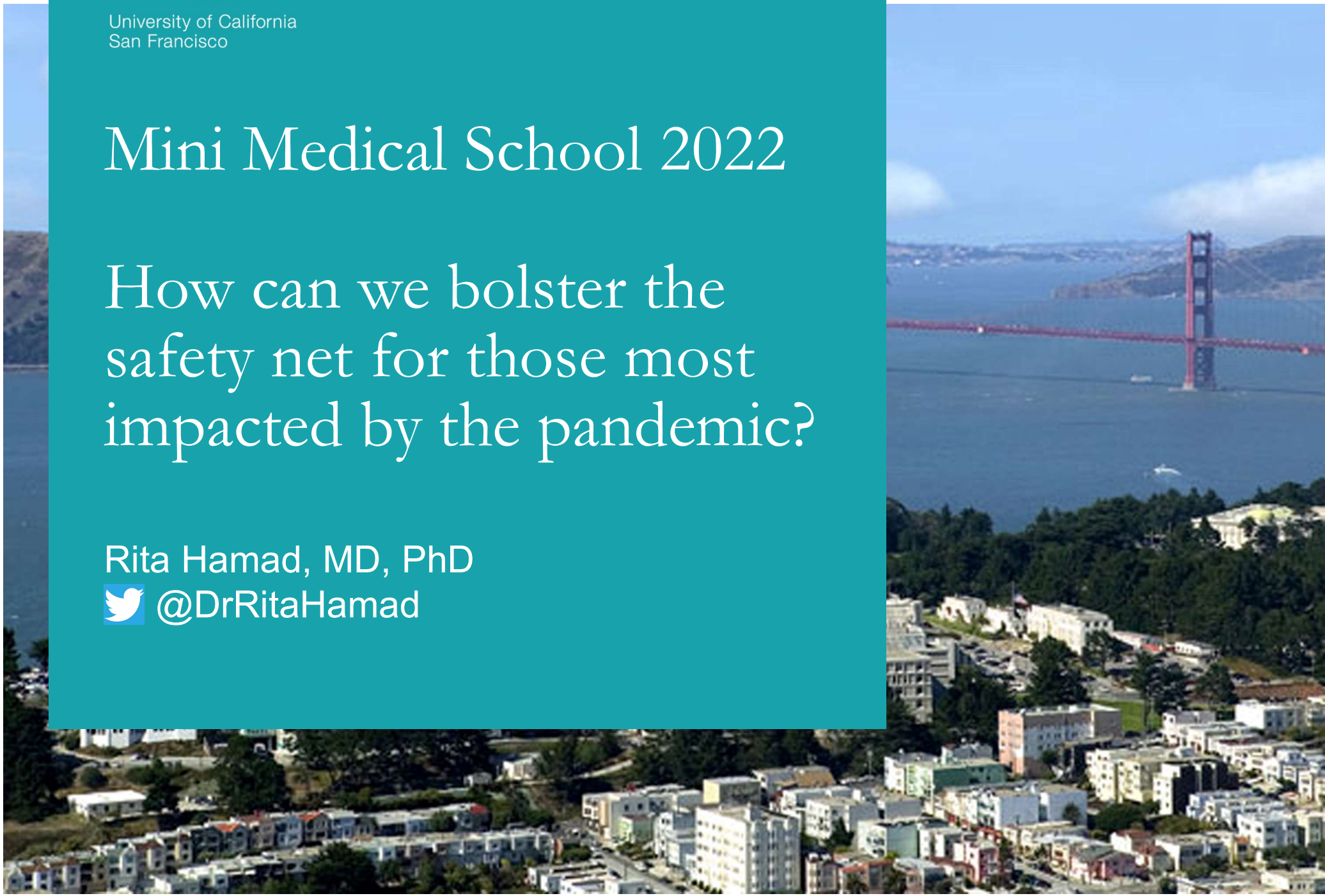
San Francisco

Mini Medical School 2022

How can we bolster the safety net for those most impacted by the pandemic?

Rita Hamad, MD, PhD
@DrRitaHamad



Overview

Who was most affected by the pandemic?

What safety net programs were put in place?

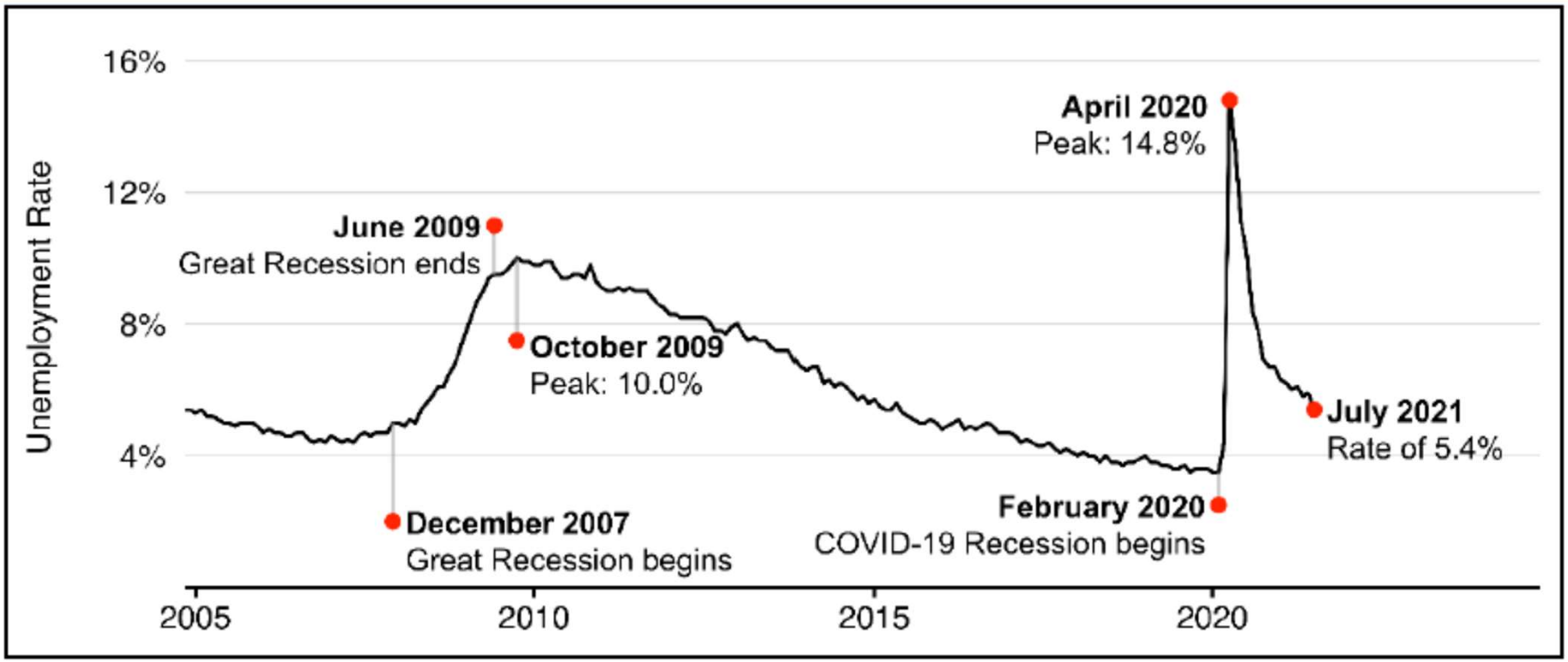
Were these programs effective?

What more could be done?

Conclusions and implications

The Pandemic Caused Widespread Economic Hardship

U.S. Unemployment Rate, Nov 2004 – Jul 2021



Falk et al, Congressional Research Service 2022

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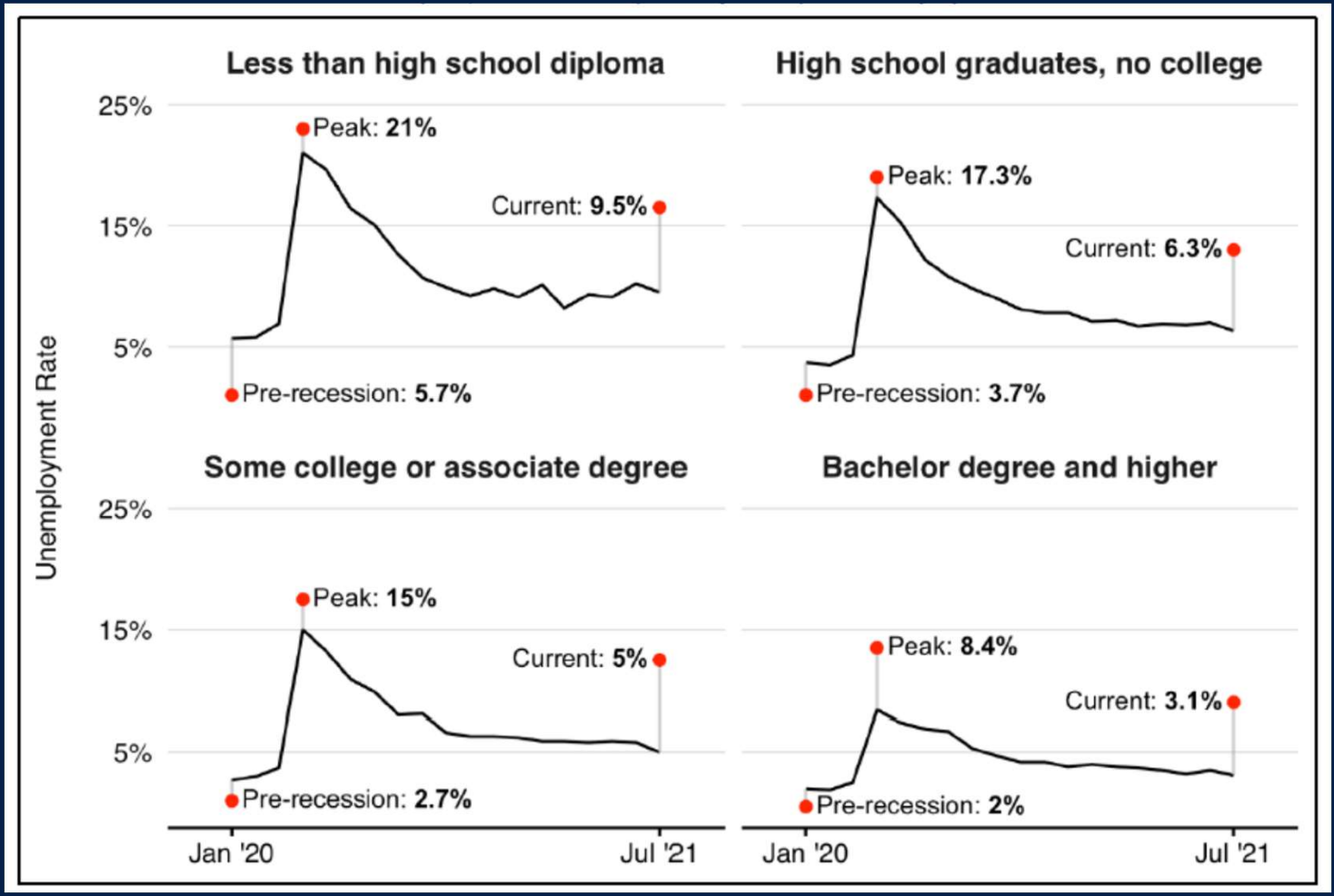
Some Groups Experienced Greater Economic Hardship

U.S. Unemployment Rate, By Education, 2020-2021



Falk et al, Congressional Research Service 2022

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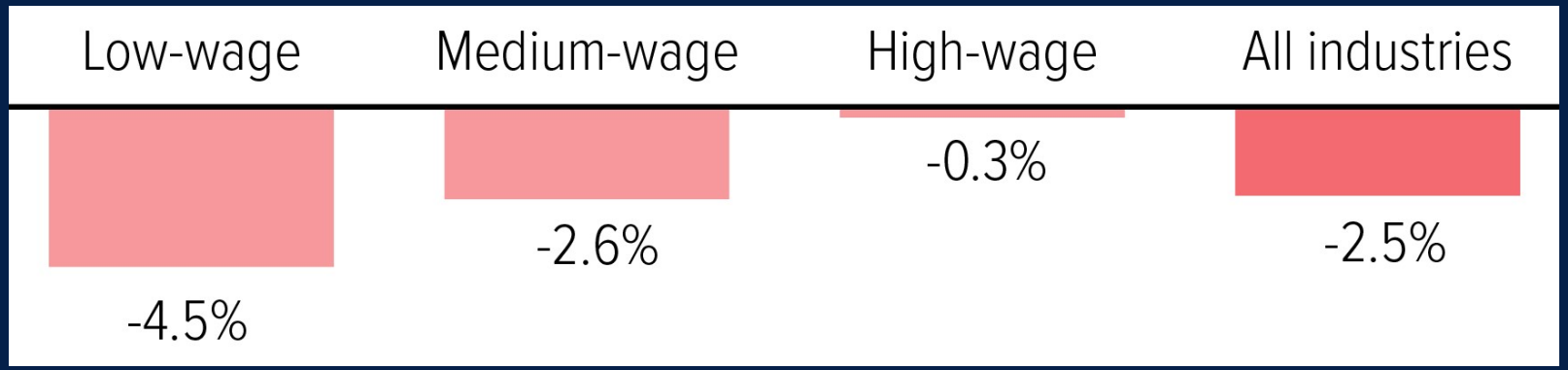
Some Groups Experienced Greater Economic Hardship

Percent Change in Number of Jobs, By Wage Level, Feb 2020-Oct 2021



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2021

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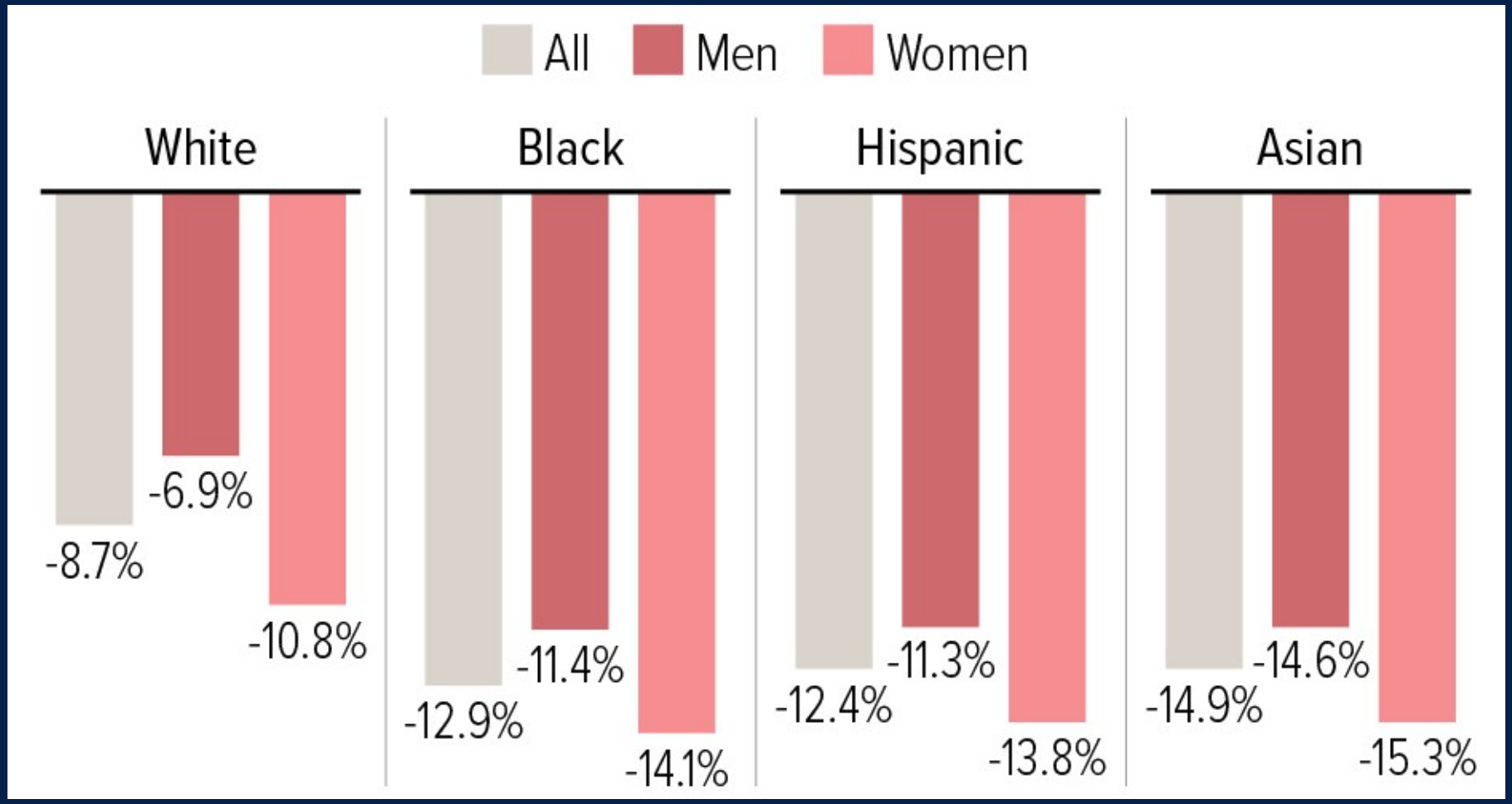
Some Groups Experienced Greater Economic Hardship

Percent Change in Number of Jobs, By Gender and Race/ethnicity, Feb-Jun 2020



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020

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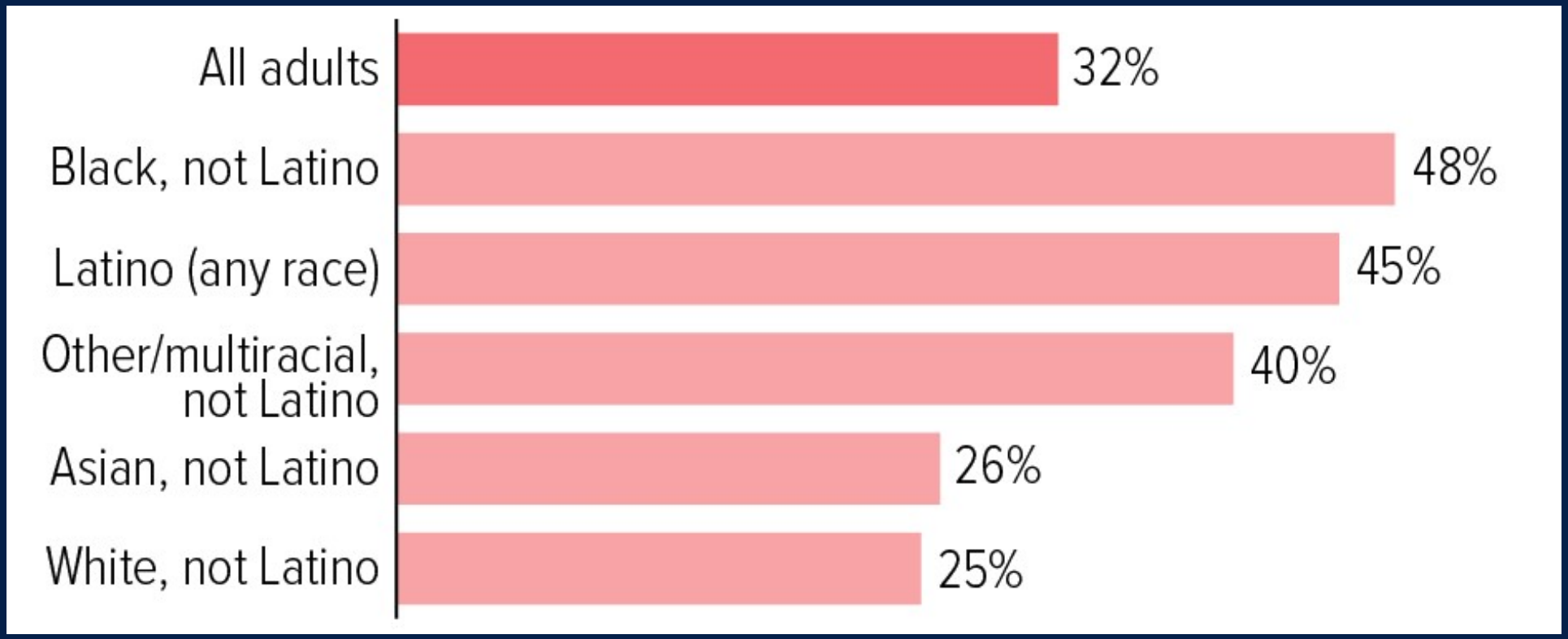
Some Groups Experienced Greater Economic Hardship

Trouble Paying Household Expenses, By Race/Ethnicity, September 2020



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020

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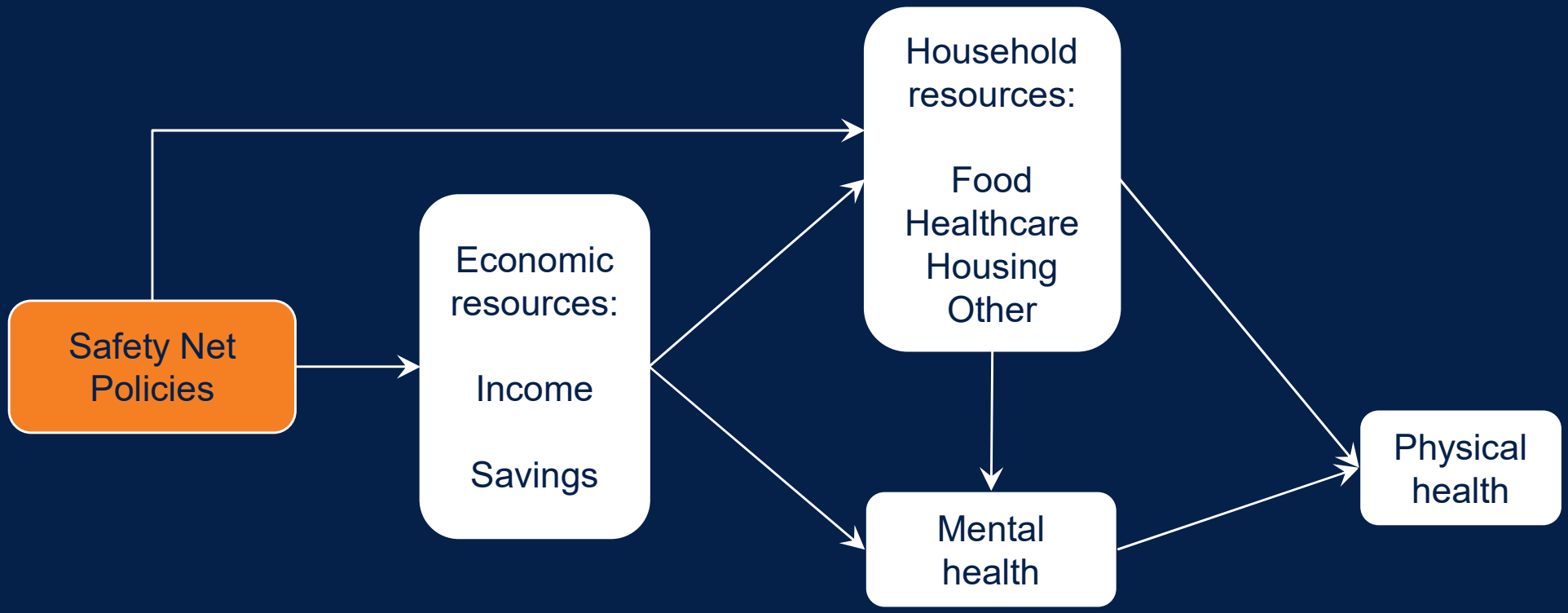
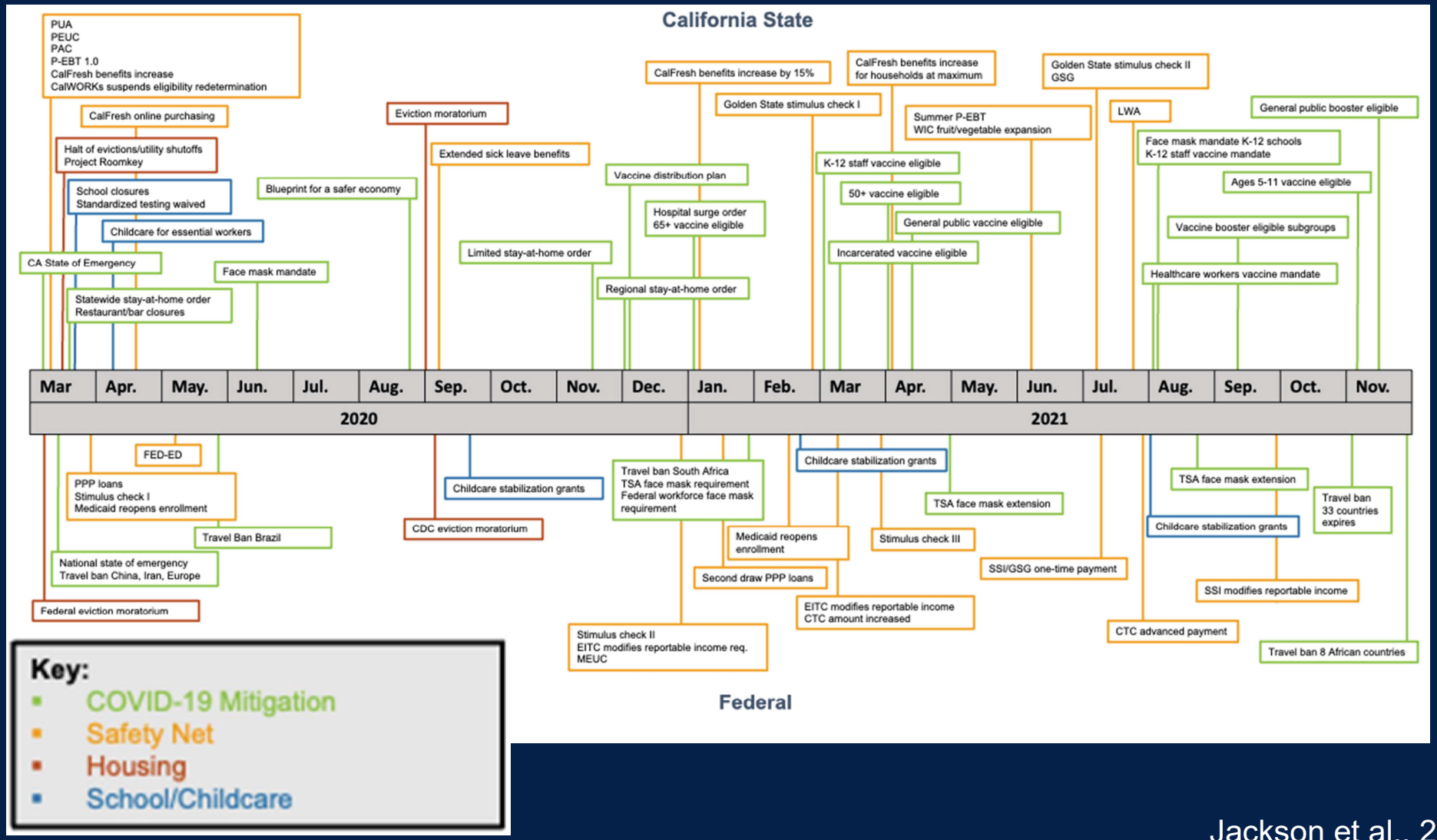
How Do Economic Circumstances Matter For Health?



State and Federal Policies to Address Economic Hardship During the Pandemic



Jackson et al., 2022

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State and Federal Policies to Address Economic Hardship During the Pandemic

Cash support

- Stimulus checks
- Expansion of the child tax credit (CTC)
- Unemployment benefits
- Paid sick leave

State and Federal Policies to Address Economic Hardship During the Pandemic

Food support

- Pandemic-EBT (school meals)
- More SNAP (food stamp) dollars
- WIC fruit/vegetable benefits
- Easier enrollment processes

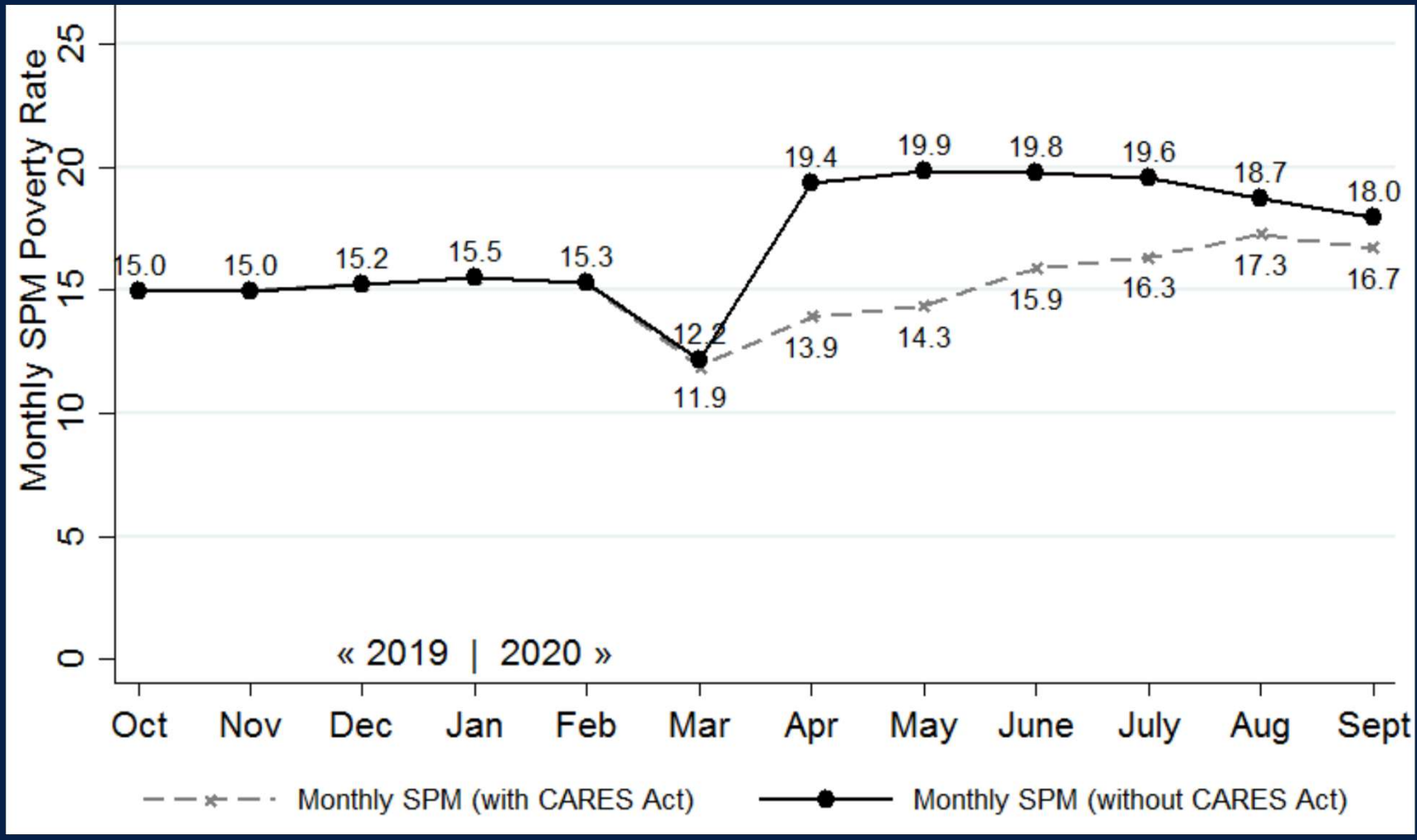
State and Federal Policies to Address Economic Hardship During the Pandemic

Other support

- Eviction moratoria
- More flexible Medicaid enrollment
- Grants to childcare providers

Have These Policies Worked?

Example 1: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act → Poverty Relief



Parolin et al., 2020

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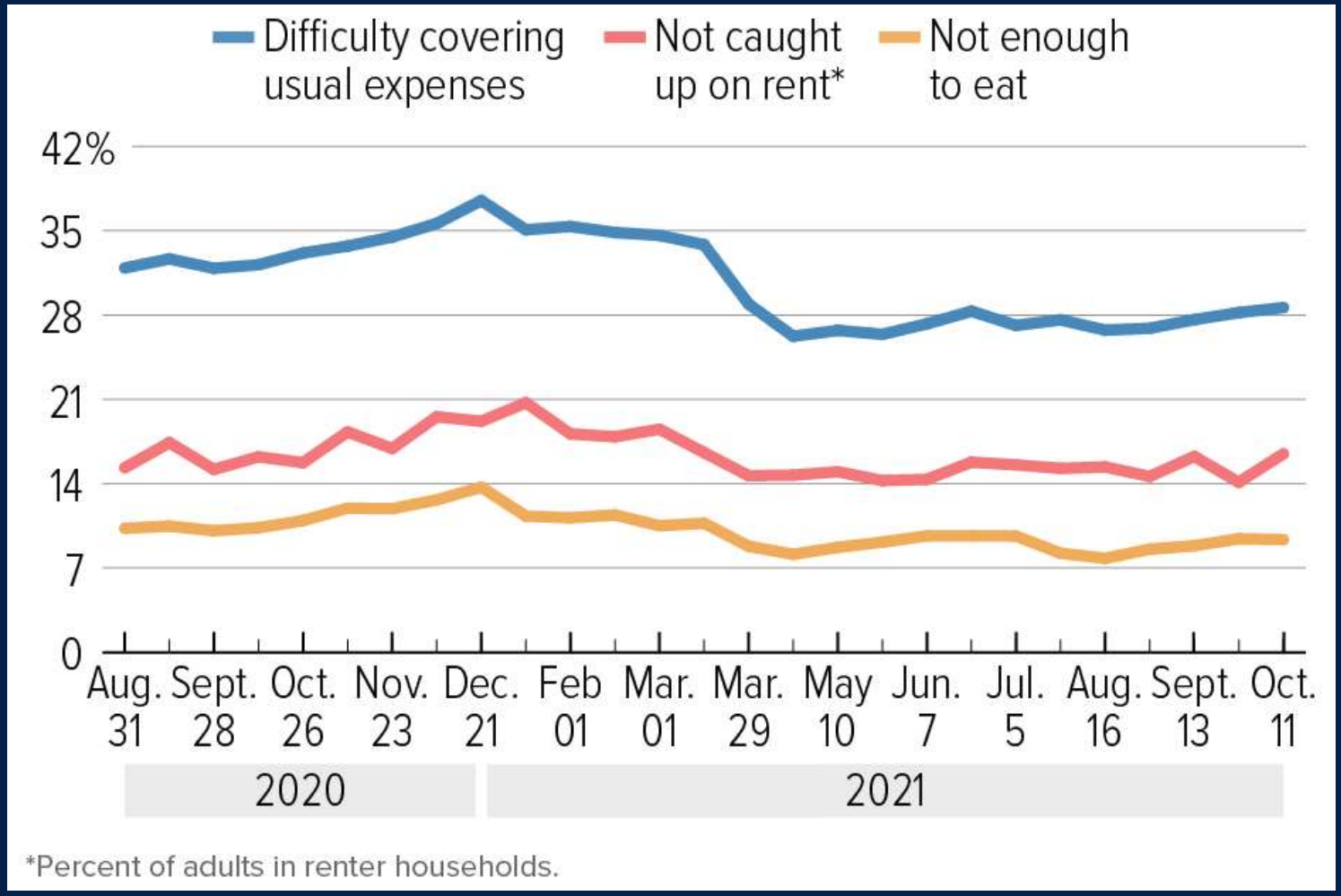
Example 2: American Rescue Plan Act → Reduced Economic and Food Insufficiency



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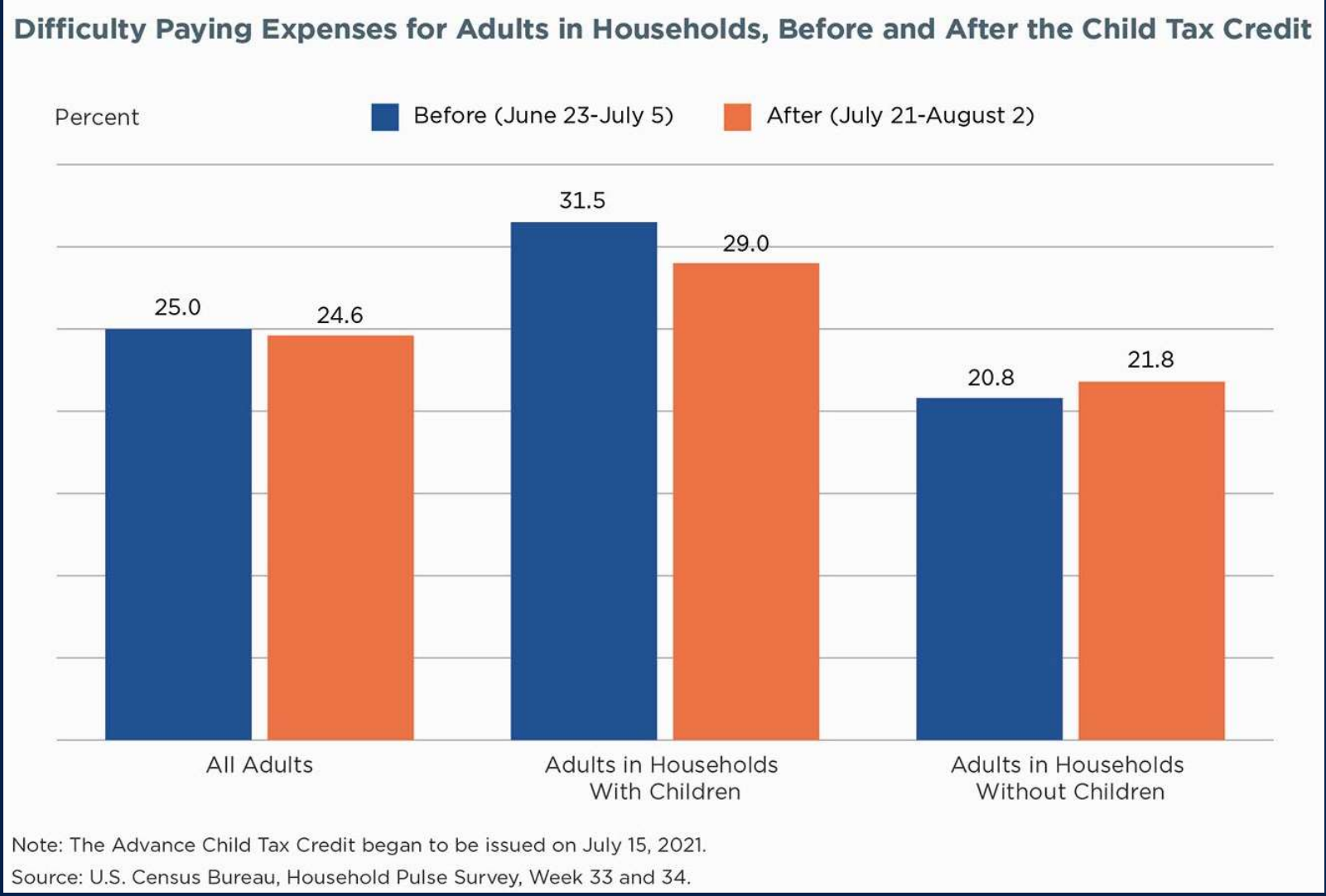
Example 3: The Child Tax Credit → Less Difficulty Paying Expenses



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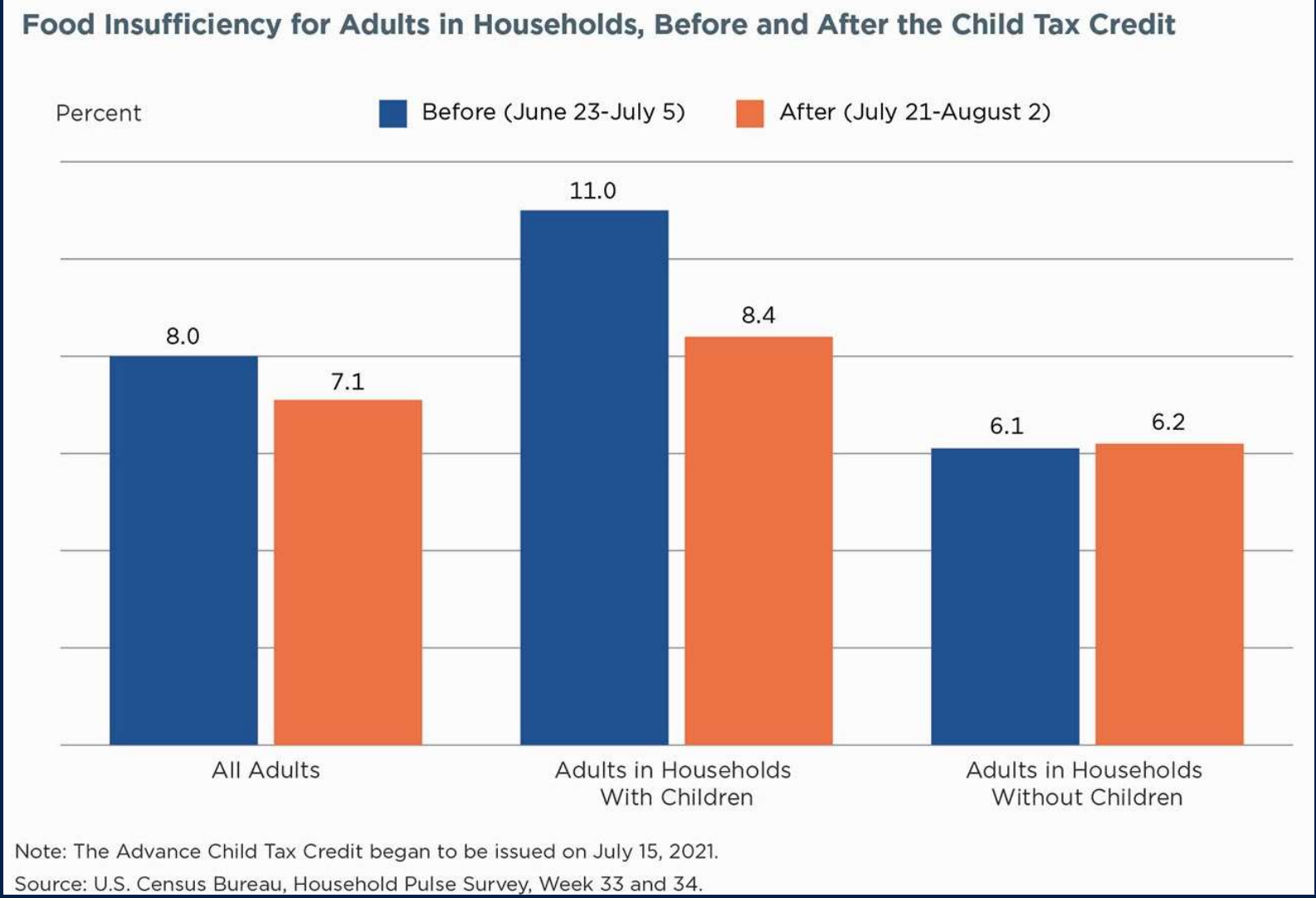
Example 3: The Child Tax Credit → Less Food Insufficiency



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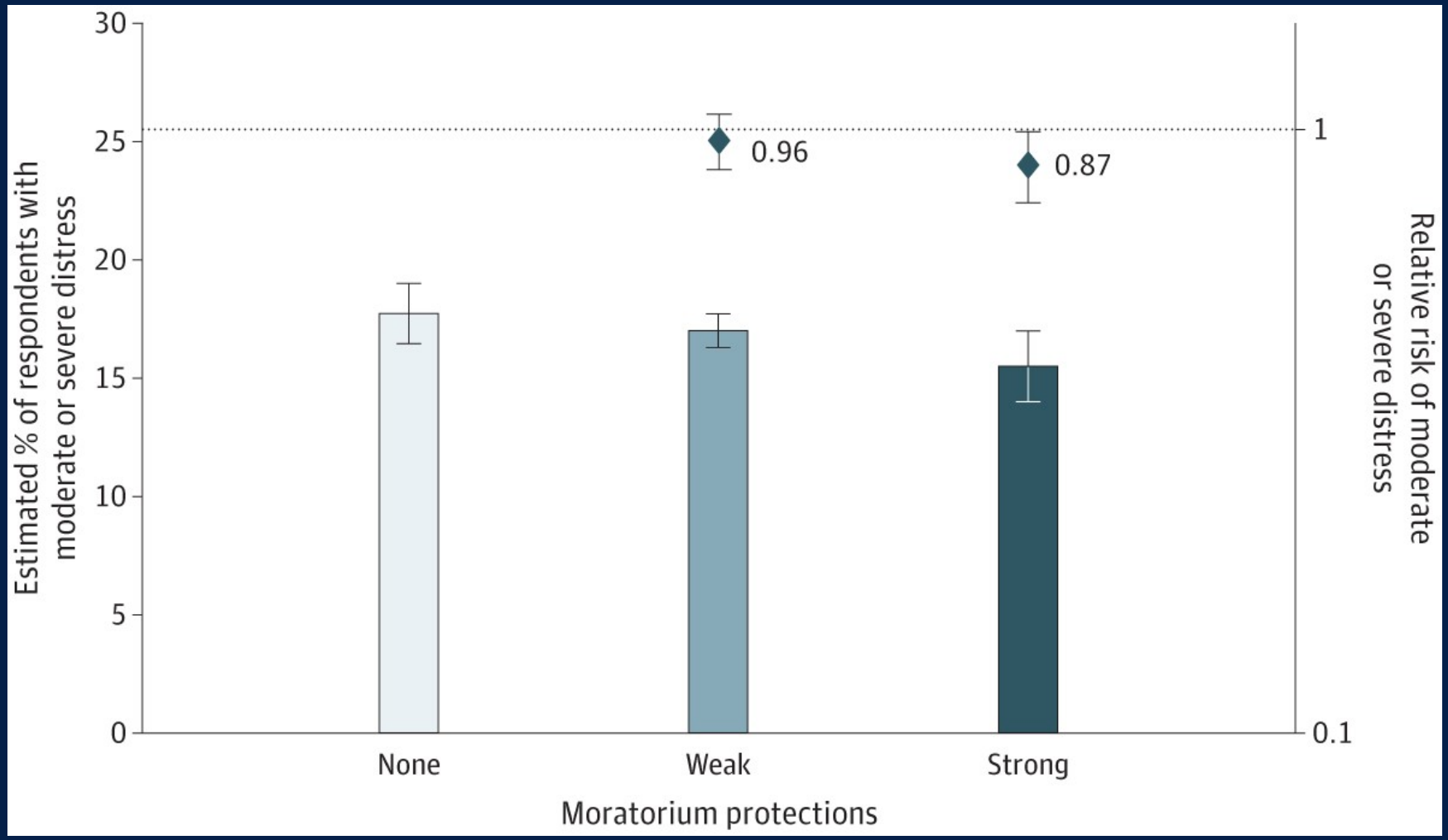
Example 4: State Eviction Moratoria → Improved Mental Health



Leifheit et al, 2021

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Example 5: Paid Sick Leave → Less Food Insufficiency

Raifman et al, 2021

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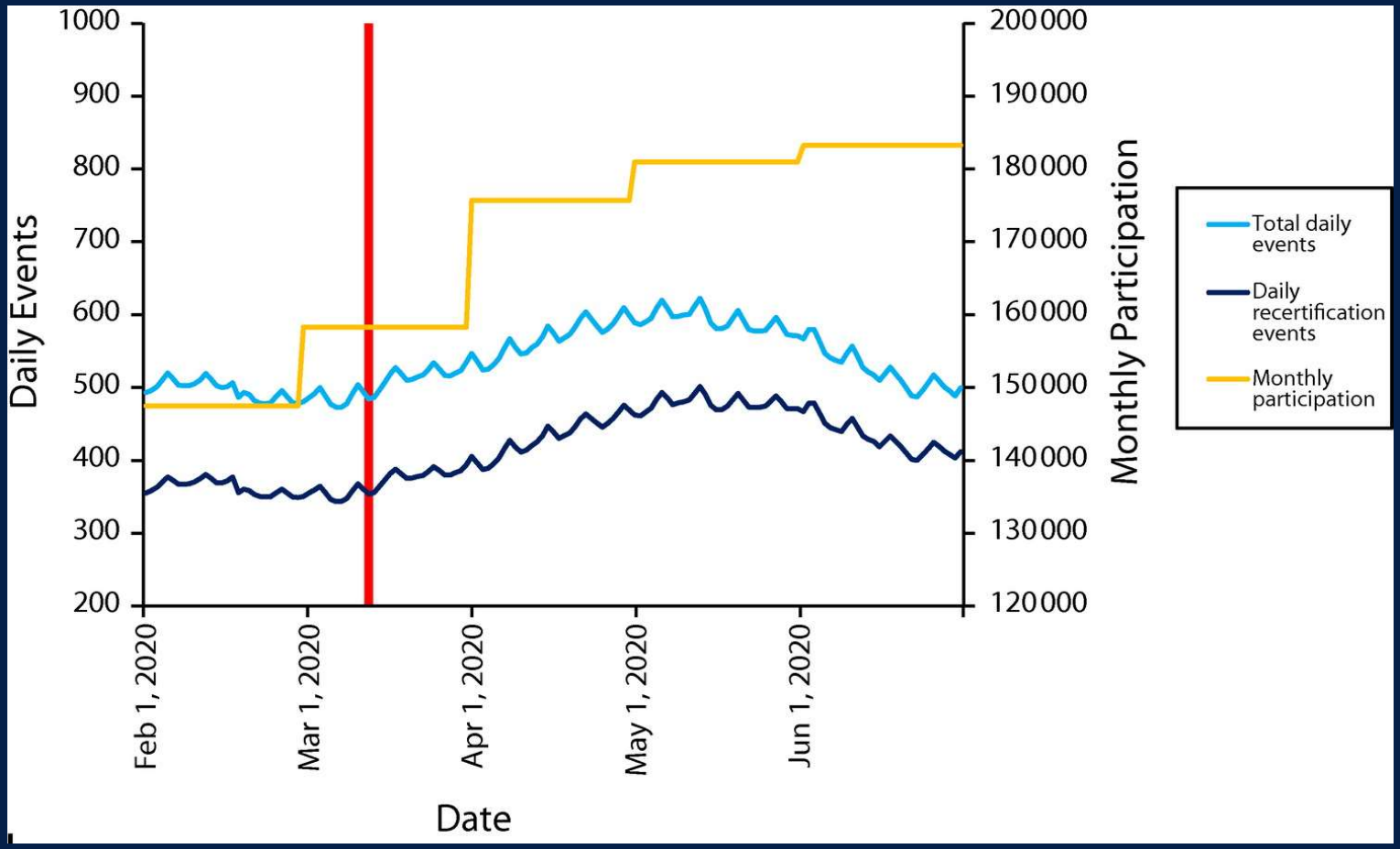
Example 6: Allowing Remote Enrollment → Higher WIC Participation

Monthly WIC Participation, Southern California, Feb-Jun 2020



Whaley et al, 2021

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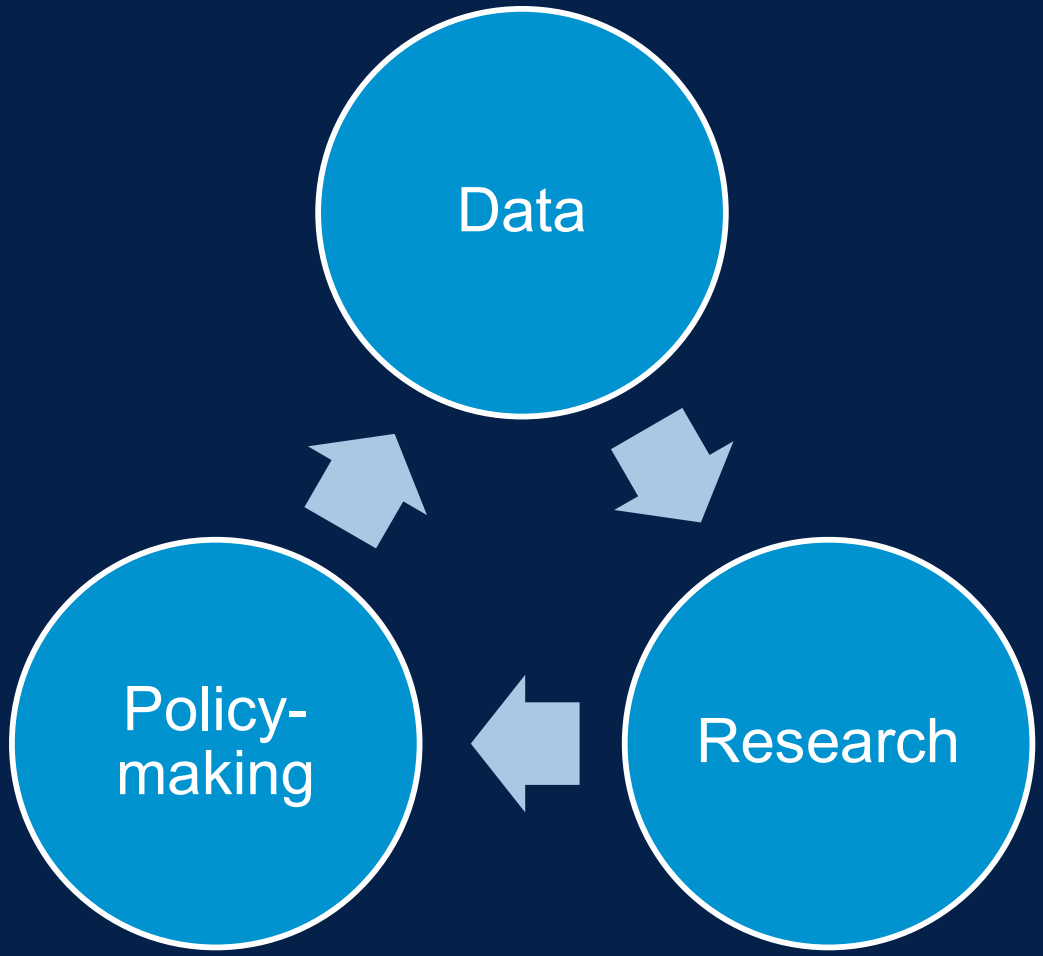
UCSF Researchers Contribute to Evidence-Informed Policymaking



The U.S. COVID-19 County Policy Database

Data are being collected from over 300 counties in all 50 states for the entire period 2020-2021. Policies include:

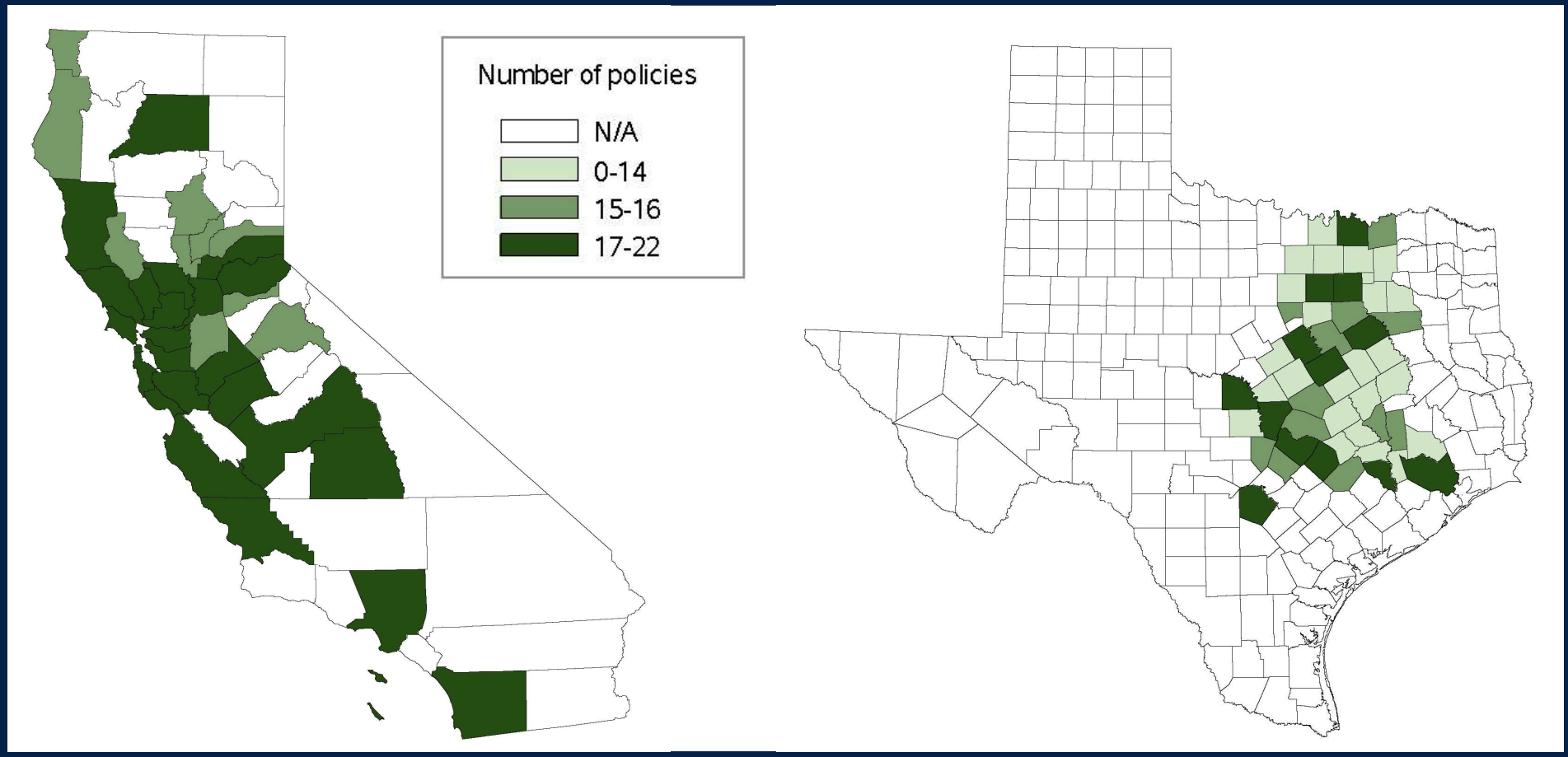
Containment & Closure	Economic Support	Public Health Measures
School closures	Housing support	Public information campaigns
Day care closures	Utility support	Testing policy
Workplace closures	Income support	Contact tracing
Cancel public events	Paid sick leave	Facial coverings
Restrictions on private gatherings	Nutrition support	Vaccination policy
Close public transport		
Stay at home requirements		
Restaurant closures		
Bar closures		
Restrictions on religious gatherings		

Hamad et al, forthcoming

The U.S. COVID-19 County Policy Database

California

Texas



Hamad et al, forthcoming

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How can we bolster the safety net for those most impacted by the pandemic?

Make Temporary Programs Permanent

Paid Sick Leave

Child Tax Credit

Unemployment benefits

Meals for children when schools are closed

Hamad et al, 2022

Make Existing Programs Easier to Access

Waive in-person interviews or allow remote attendance

Simplify application processes

Allow automatic enrollment across safety net programs

Remove barriers based on immigration status

Hamad et al, 2022; Herd and Moynihan, 2018

Conclusions and Implications

Widespread—and unevenly distributed—hardship.

Innovative policies provided a buffer but many expired.

Additional research can inform future policymaking.

We have evidence now to bolster the safety net.

Questions?

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Funding Acknowledgement

- Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (grant number COVID-2020C2-10761)
- National Institute of Mental Health (grant number U01MH129968)