

# WA PAID LEAVE & JOB PROTECTION

Final Report

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# THE STUDY

- ESSB 5187, Section 225(22) allocated funds to study WA Paid Leave and job protection
- Conducted by UW team under contract with ESD
- Consulted with the PFML Advisory Committee three times
- Data shared between ESD and UW at the UW Data Collaborative under data sharing agreement
- All research activities approved by UW IRB



## **JOB PROTECTED LEAVE**

Time off from work to care for self or family member in which the worker is legally guaranteed the right to return to the same or an equivalent job after leave

# JOB PROTECTION WITH WA PAID LEAVE

WA Paid Leave offers job protection if the leave user:

- works for an employer with 50+ employees in Washington
- for at least 1 year and 1,250 hours.

Only source of protected paid leave for longer periods and for caring for a new child.

Among the 13 states with paid leave programs, WA restricts job protection the most, especially for family leave.



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What percentage of workers covered by WA Paid Leave are estimated to have job protection?
2. Does job protection relate to take-up of WA Paid Leave, employment after leave, or Unemployment Insurance receipt after leave?
3. What do workers know and think about protected leave?

# RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

## **Program data analysis**

WA Paid Leave quarterly wage reports from employers

WA Paid Leave claims data

Unemployment insurance claims data

## **Original data collection from workers**

Interviewed 31 WA Paid Leave users

Conducted 2 focus groups with workers who had not used the program in Yakima & Pierce Counties



# KEY FINDINGS



# WE ESTIMATE THAT 53% OF WORKERS WITH AN ELIGIBLE EMPLOYMENT HISTORY FOR WA PAID LEAVE HAVE JOB PROTECTION

## Job protection rates vary by worker earnings

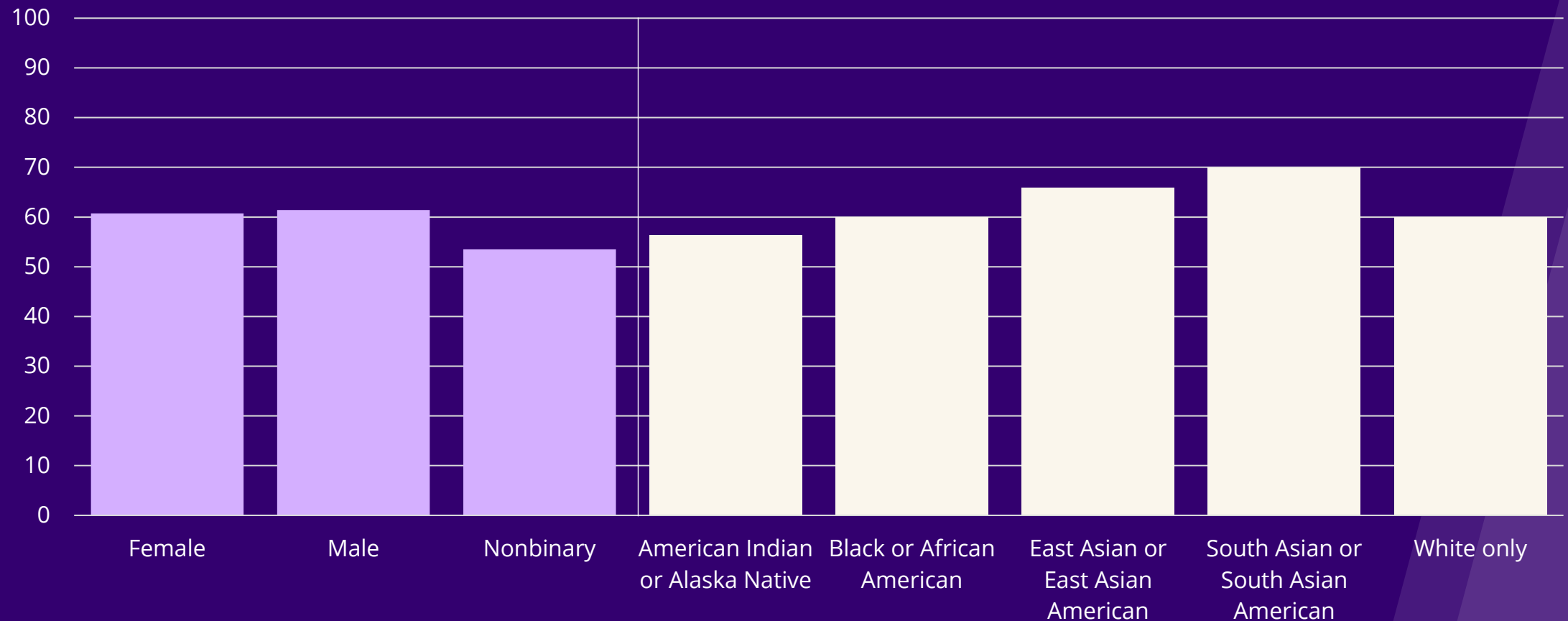
16% for lowest earnings workers  
vs.  
70% for highest earning workers

## Some industries have job protection rates of 30% or less

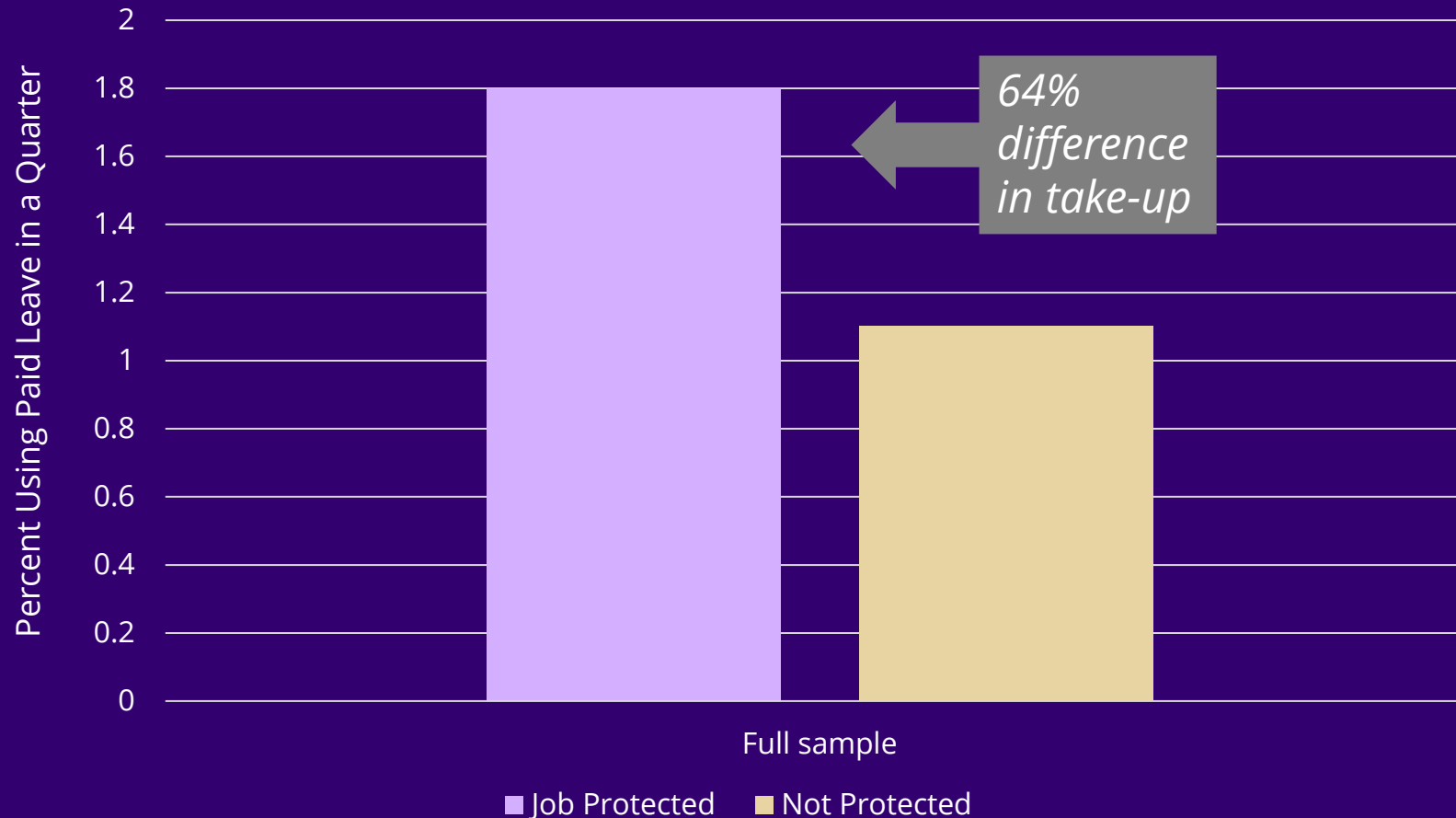
Accommodation & food service  
Other services  
Mining, oil & gas extraction  
Construction  
Arts, entertainment, & recreation



# AMONG LEAVE USERS, NO LARGE DIFFERENCES IN JOB PROTECTION BY GENDER OR RACE/ETHNICITY

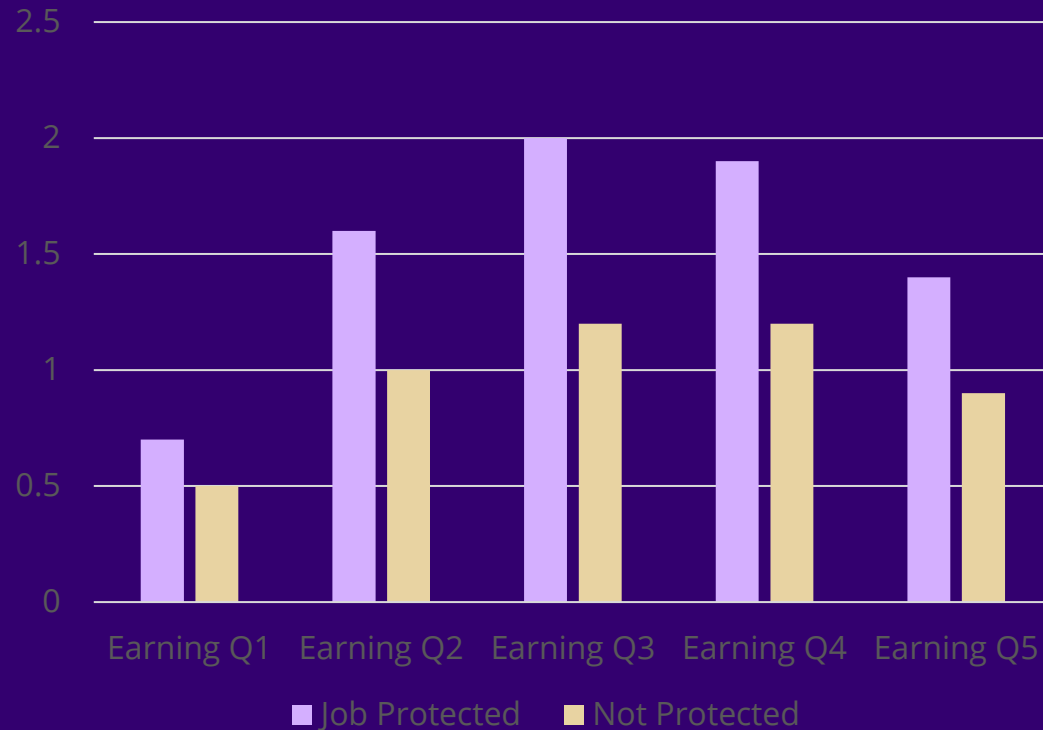


# JOB PROTECTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH A 0.7 PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCE IN THE LIKELIHOOD OF USING LEAVE



# JOB PROTECTION & PROGRAM TAKE UP BY EARNINGS & INDUSTRY

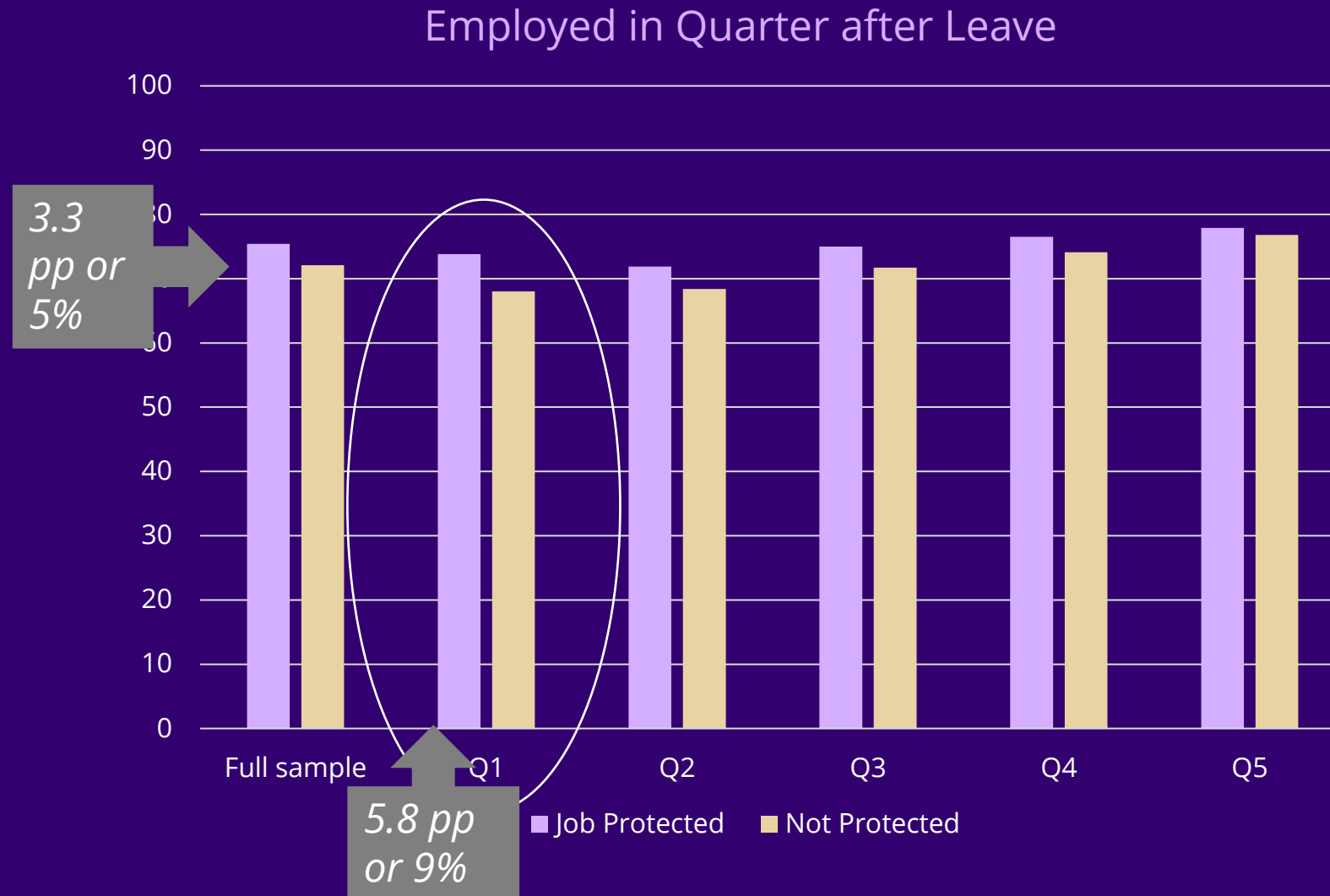
## Largest Association for Middle Earning Groups



## True in Most Industries, with Some Exceptions

- No difference in take-up by job protection: Mining, public administration, educational services
- Lower take-up with job protection: Utilities

# JOB PROTECTION IS POSITIVELY ASSOCIATED WITH EMPLOYMENT AFTER LEAVE, ESPECIALLY FOR LOWER EARNING WORKERS



# WORKER UNDERSTANDING OF JOB PROTECTION IS OFTEN VAGUE

- Most know about the general idea of job protection
  - Confusion about the source of job protection while on WA Paid Leave
  - Confusion about eligibility for WA Paid Leave benefits versus job protection
- Few had discussed job protection with supervisor, HR staff, or other authority at work
- Several doubted that job protection could be enforced

# SENSE OF JOB SECURITY FOR WORKERS IS BROADER THAN LEGAL JOB PROTECTION

- Those who had taken leave did NOT describe job protection as a key factor in the decision
  - Often health situation was too urgent
  - Some felt security from long tenure, knowing their value, trusting their employer
- Those who had not taken leave could not imagine feeling secure enough to do so

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand eligibility for job protection to increase equitable access to the program
2. Provide more direct communication to workers and employers about job protection as a distinct component of WA Paid Leave
3. Consider giving ESD authority and resources to collect data from employers about post-leave employment.





**QUESTIONS?**