Not Without My Sister: The Impact of Same Sex Marriage on the Placement Outcomes of Foster Children

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Disclaimer

Outline for Today's Talk

Research Question

Preview of Results

Institutional Details

Data

Reduced Form Estimation

Model

Welfare

Conclusion

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- Queer youth 2.5 times more likely to be in foster care (Fish et al., 2019)

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- Same-sex marriage increased adoptions from foster care by 9-18% (Martin and Rodriguez, 2024)

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Research Questions

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2. Did fewer children end up in institutions or group homes?
3. Were fewer children separated from their siblings?
4. Which children benefited more or less?

This Matters for Policy Today

- 2015-2020, nine states adopted legislation explicitly allowing private foster care placement agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ+ couples!

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- Same sex marriage reform decreased the rate of sibling separation.
    - Highest results for non-homogeneous groups, a 7 to 10 percentage point drop.

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    - Aggregate welfare rose by 5 percent, rising the most for old children with no siblings
    - Reduced sibling separation only constituted a small fraction of gains: 1-3 percent.
    - Nonetheless, among sibling groups composed of one young and one old child, quantitative results suggest 3 percent would have been separated without reform.

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- This sample constitutes half of states and 57 percent of the foster care population

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    - I do not use any information on race to do this!

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- An important mechanism through which changes in foster market conditions influence welfare
  - Allows identification of important parameters in structural model to estimate counterfactual outcomes

Summary of Removal Reasons to Validate Imputation

Removal Reason	Conditional Probability of Shared Removal Reason	Unconditional Population Average
Physical Abuse	73%	15%
Sexual Abuse	67%	5%
Neglect	90%	60%
Parental Alcohol Abuse	81%	7%
Parental Drug Abuse	87%	28%
Child Drug Abuse	35%	1%
Child Disability	27%	3%
Child Behavioral Problem	53%	11%
Inability to Cope	78%	17%
Abandonment	75%	5%
Relinquishment	70%	1%
Inadequate Housing	82%	11%

Note: The conditional probability of shared removal reason is the probability that if one sibling has the given removal reason, all their siblings share that same reason. Shares don't sum to one, since each child may have multiple removal reasons.

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- *Control group*: not-yet treated states

States in Treated Group by Years Since Reform
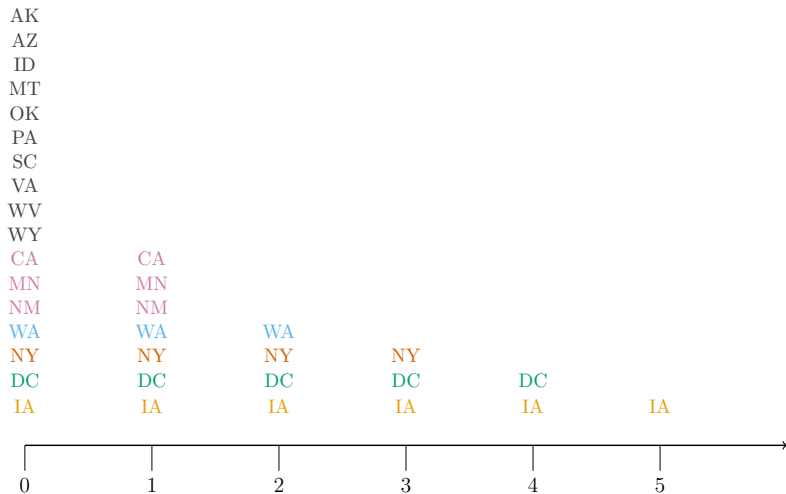
Note: Colors denote the following legalization years: 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009.
Control states include: AR, GA, LA, MI, ND, SD, TN, and TX.

Results by Age

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No statistically distinguishable effect for:

- Single children aged < 10
- Sibling groups all aged < 10

▸ Plots

Results by Race

The probability that foster children were unmatched fell in the first year after reform:

- *Single non-white child*: ↓ **4.9pp** (vs 34% pre-reform)

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No statistically distinguishable effect for:

- Single white children
- Non-white sibling groups
- White sibling groups

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Results by Sex

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Results by Sex

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- *Sibling groups of multiple sexes*: ↓ **2.5pp** (vs 11% pre-reform)

Results by Sex

The probability that foster children were unmatched fell in the first year after reform:

- *Single male child*: ↓ **4.3pp** (vs 39% pre-reform)
- *Sibling groups of multiple sexes*: ↓ **2.5pp** (vs 11% pre-reform)

No statistically distinguishable effect for:

- Single female children
- All male sibling groups
- All female sibling groups

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Results by Disability

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Results by Disability

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No statistically distinguishable effect for:

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- All non-disabled sibling groups

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No statistically distinguishable effect for any other type

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Environment and Assumptions

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    1. Transferrable Utility: Utility can be transferred between family and child
    2. Separability: Families see children of the same discrete type as substitutes and vice versa

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- Expected payoff of type determined in equilibrium

Example: Social Worker Decision

Sibling Group i of Type $\{O,Y\}$ Enters

Don't Separate

Separate

$\mathbb{E}[u_{OY}] + \eta_i$

$\mathbb{E}[u_O] + \mathbb{E}[u_Y]$

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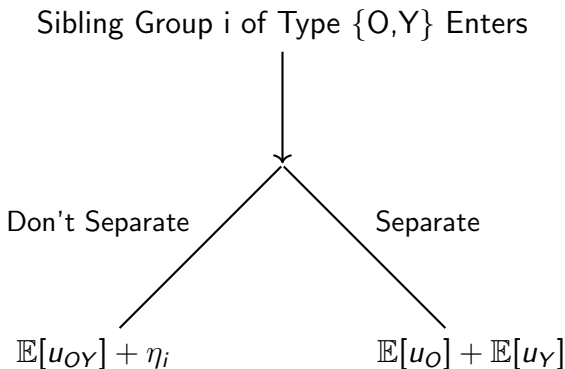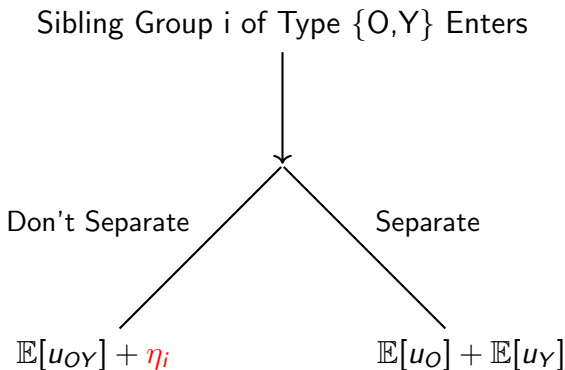
- $\eta_i \sim N(\mu_{OY}, 1)$: Sibling group i's preference for remaining together

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Sibling Group i of Type $\{O,Y\}$ Enters

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$\sigma_{OY} \ln \left(\frac{1}{\Pr(\text{Unmatched}|OY)} \right) + \eta_i$

$\sigma_O \ln \left(\frac{1}{\Pr(\text{Unmatched}|O)} \right)$
$+ \sigma_Y \ln \left(\frac{1}{\Pr(\text{Unmatched}|Y)} \right)$

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$$+ \sigma_Y \ln \left(\frac{1}{\Pr(\text{Unmatched}|Y)} \right)$$
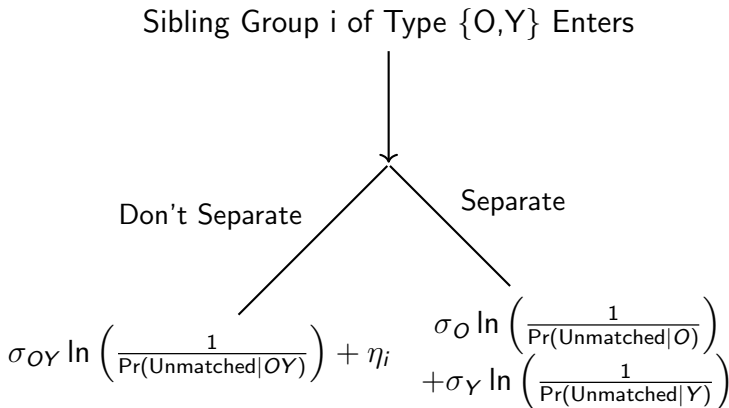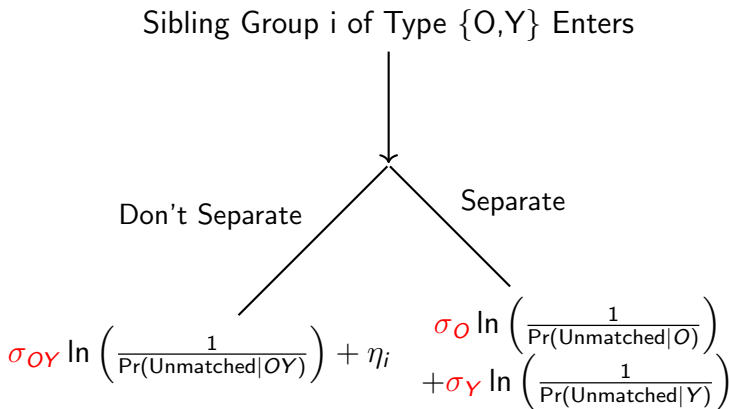
- σ: Importance of unobserved, idiosyncratic portion of preference

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$$\text{Pr(Group i Separated)}=\text{Pr}(\eta_i < \mathbb{E}[u_O] + \mathbb{E}[u_Y] - \mathbb{E}[u_{OY}]) \quad (1)$$

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$$\Pr(\text{Group i Separated}) = \Pr(\eta_i < \mathbb{E}[u_O] + \mathbb{E}[u_Y] - \mathbb{E}[u_{OY}]) \quad (1)$$

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  - Foster markets within states tend to be isolated
  - Only use children who enter foster care for first time
- Assume that the prediction error is independent of child type and market (moment conditions)
- Use market-level variation in match probabilities to identify parameters

Parameter Estimates

Parameter	Estimate	Std Error
σ_O	0.179***	0.0124
σ_Y	0.0146***	0.0039
σ_{OY}	0.0912***	0.0057
σ_{OO}	0.0801***	0.0100
σ_{YY}	0.0583***	0.0047
μ_{YY}	0.787***	0.0135
μ_{OY}	-0.228***	0.0156
μ_{OO}	-0.0236*	0.0137

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μ_{OO}	-0.0236*	0.0137

Parameter Estimates

Parameter	Estimate	Std Error
σ_O	0.179***	0.0124
σ_Y	0.0146***	0.0039
σ_{OY}	0.0912***	0.0057
σ_{OO}	0.0801***	0.0100
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Model Validation: Predicted vs Actual Probability of Separation

Figure: Out of Sample Prediction Errors on Untargeted Markets
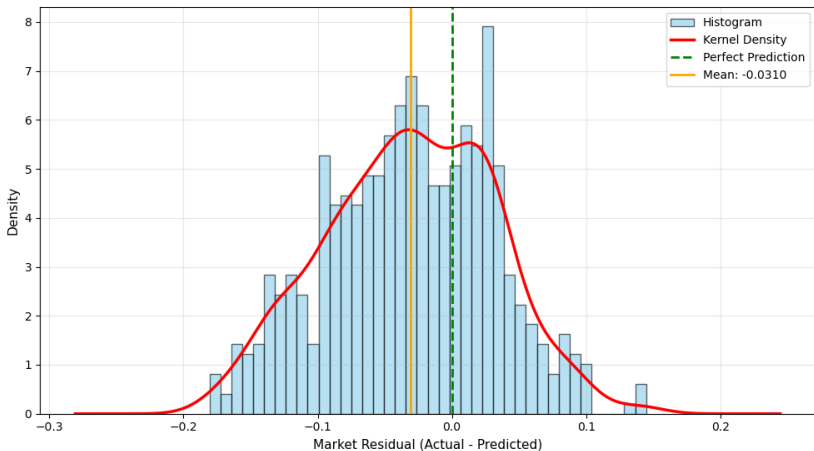
Strategy to Estimate Welfare

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Welfare Effects Across Age

Type	ATET	Percent Change in Total Welfare	Share of Gain due to Reduced Sibling Separation	N
Old-Old	-0.0816**	4.97%	0.05%	29,697
	(0.0386)			
Mixed Age	-0.0570***	7.78%	3.09%	27,372
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Young-Young	-0.0021	0.64%	0.26%	110,944
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Single Young	0.0006	-0.69%		521,494
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- Email inmanch@umich.edu for questions and comments! Thank you!

Figure: ATET: Probability a Single Child Aged $\geq$ 10 was Unmatched
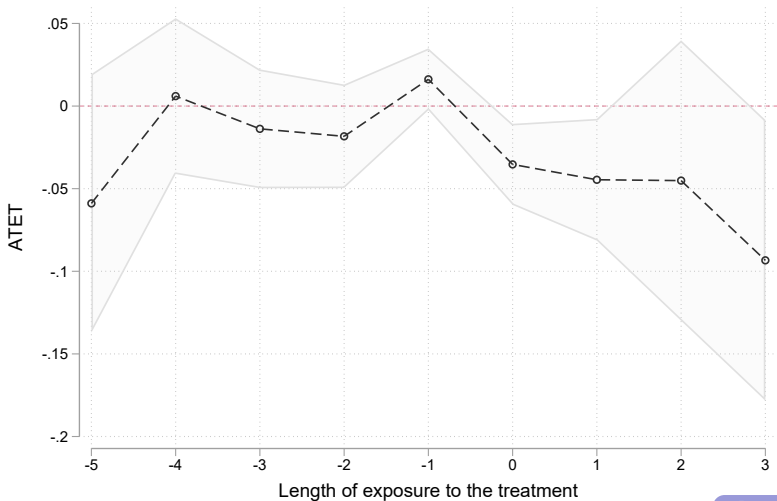
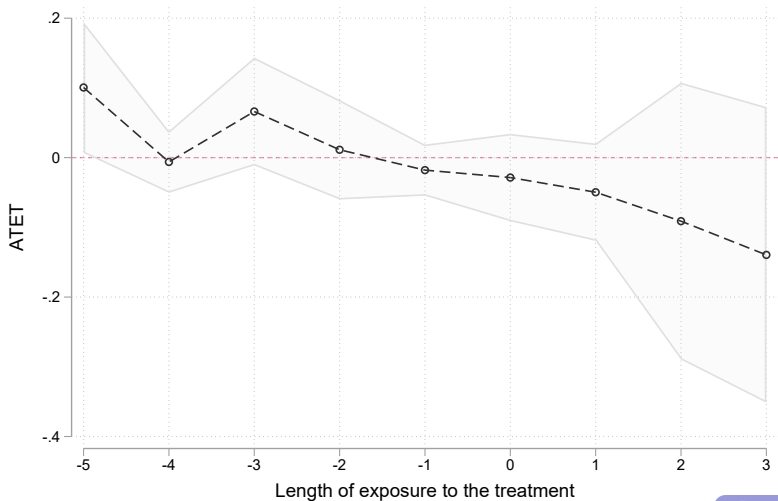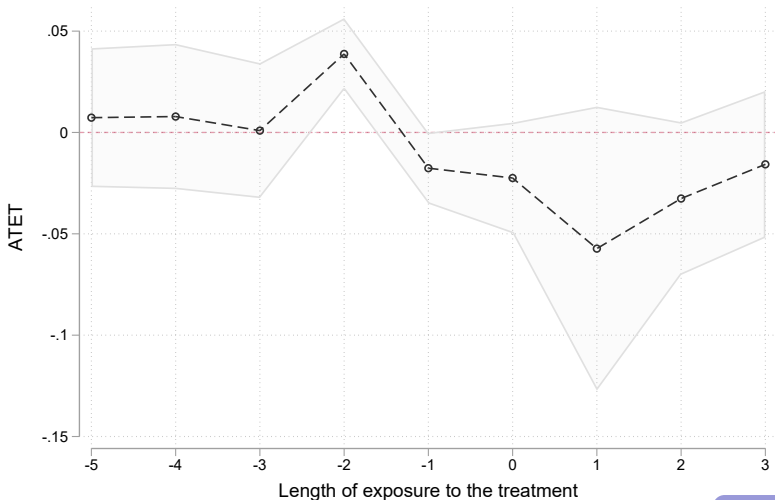Figure: ATET: Probability a Single Child Aged < 10 was Unmatched

Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group All Aged $\geq$ 10 was Unmatched
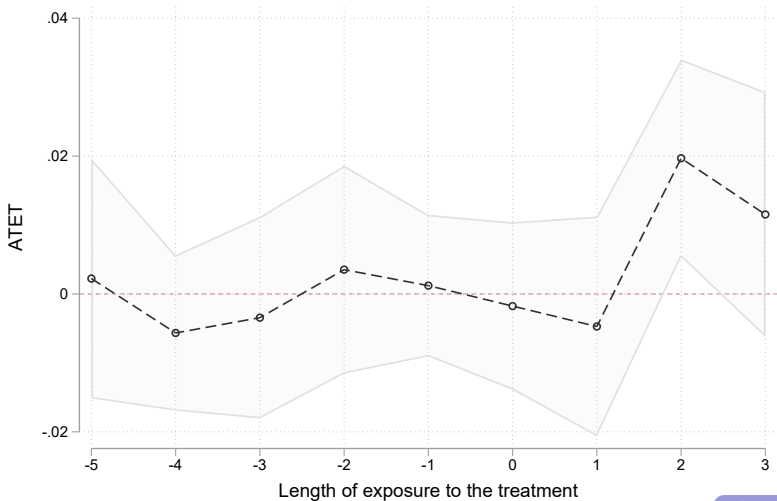
Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group All Aged < 10 was Unmatched
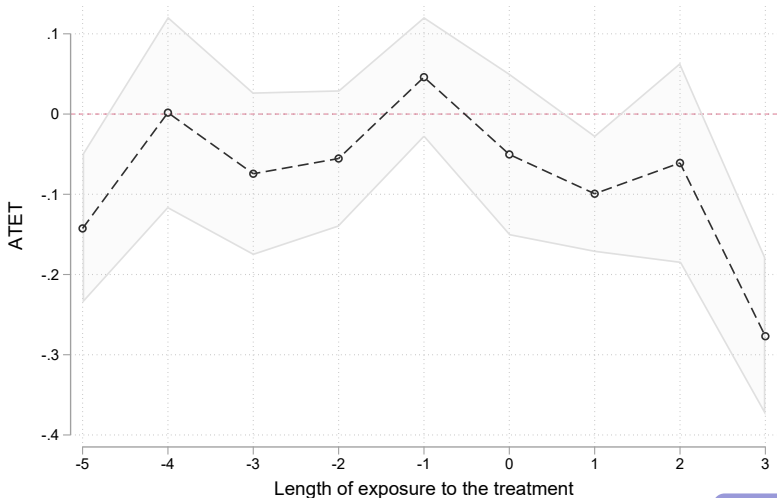
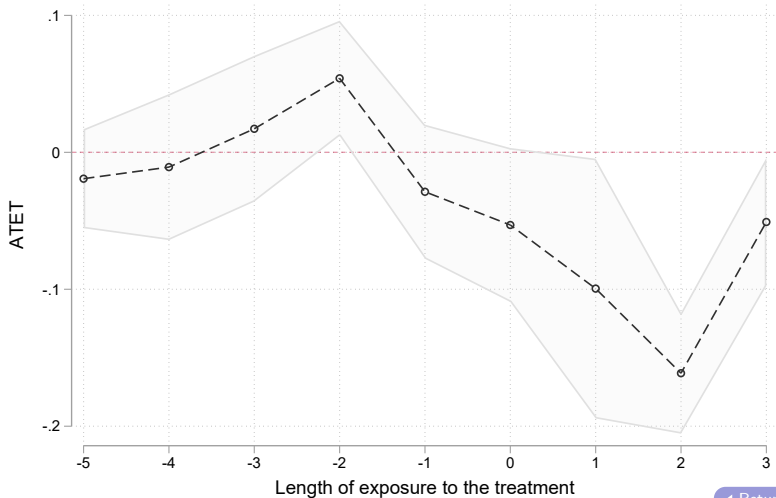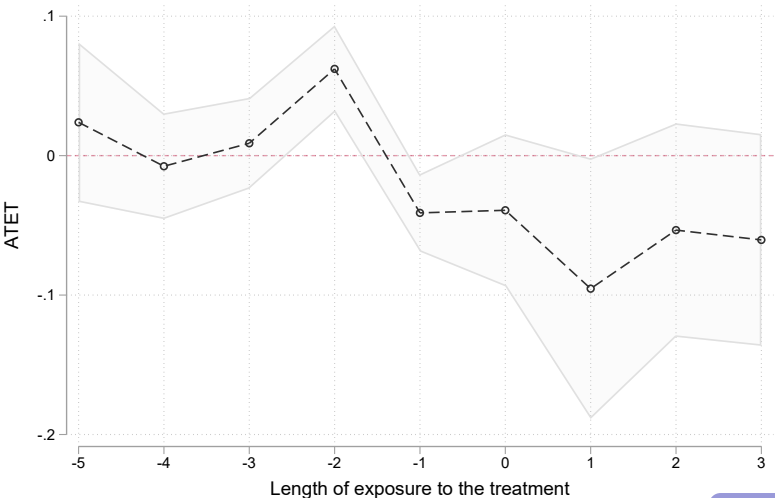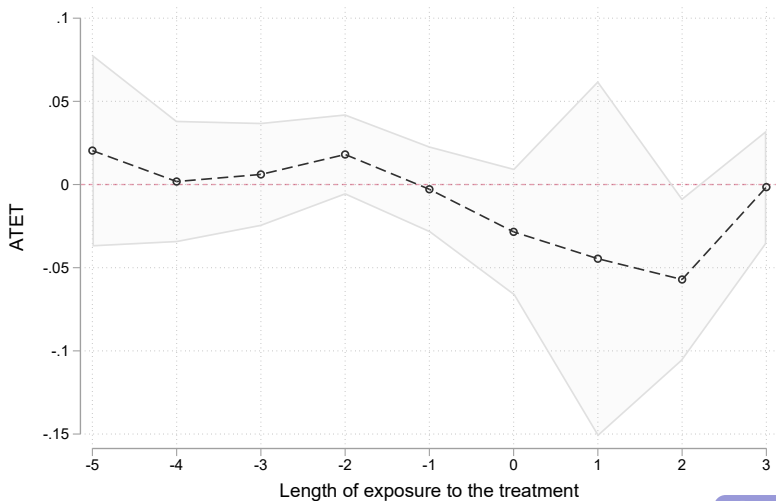Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group of Mixed Age Groups was Unmatched
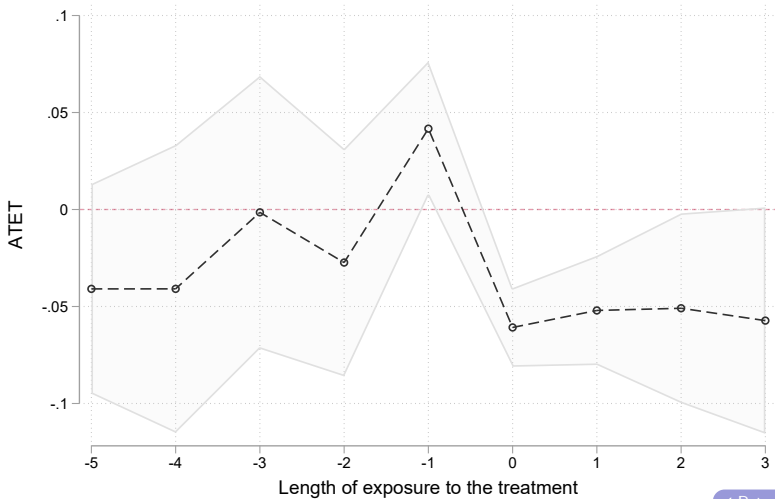
Figure: ATET: Probability a Single Non-White Child was Unmatched
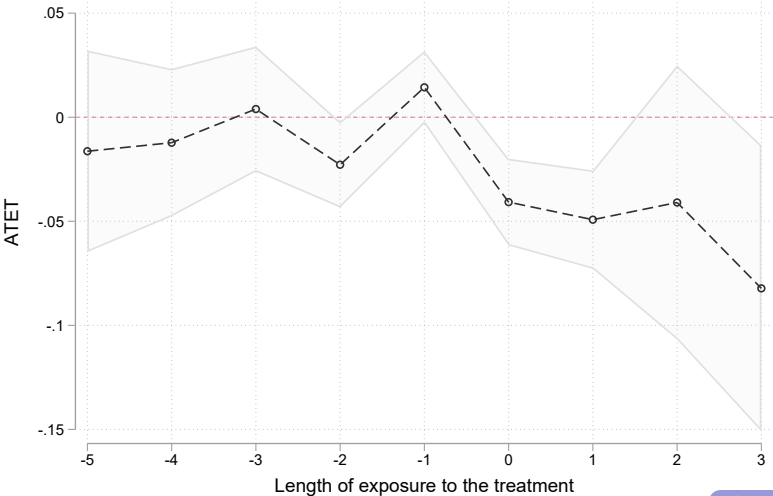
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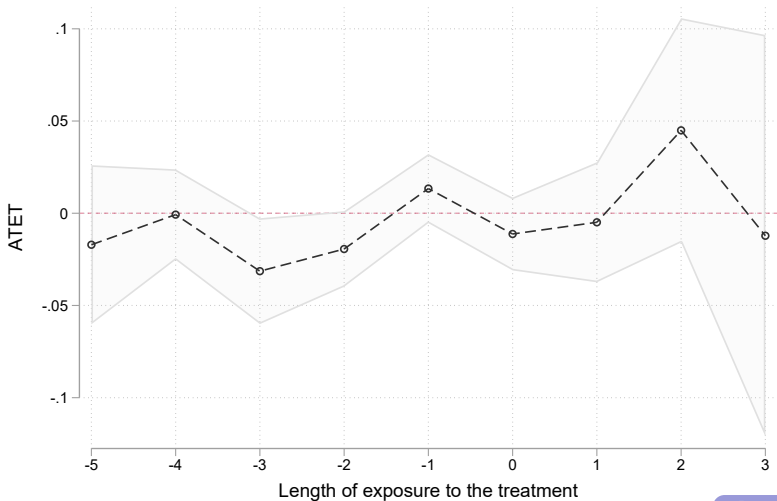
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◂ Return

Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group of Multiple Races was Unmatched
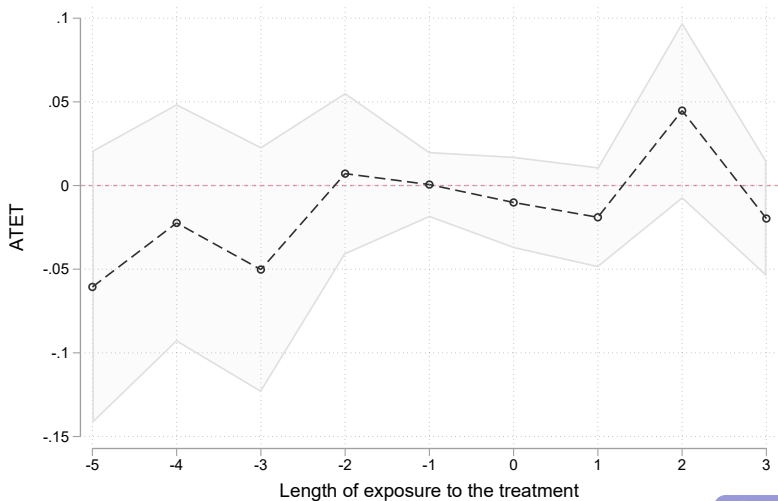
Figure: ATET: Probability a Single Male Child was Unmatched
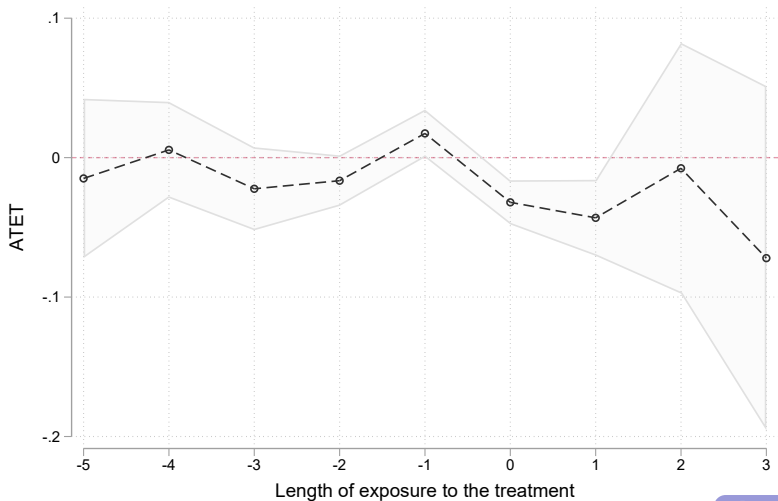
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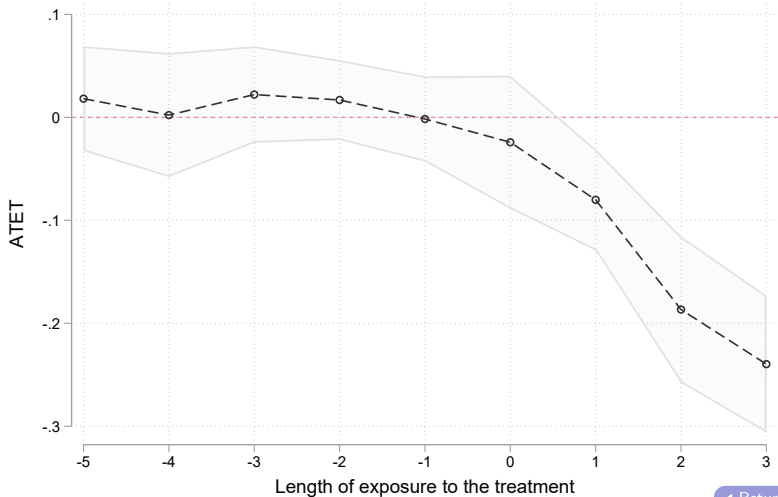
Figure: ATET: Probability a Single Female Child was Unmatched

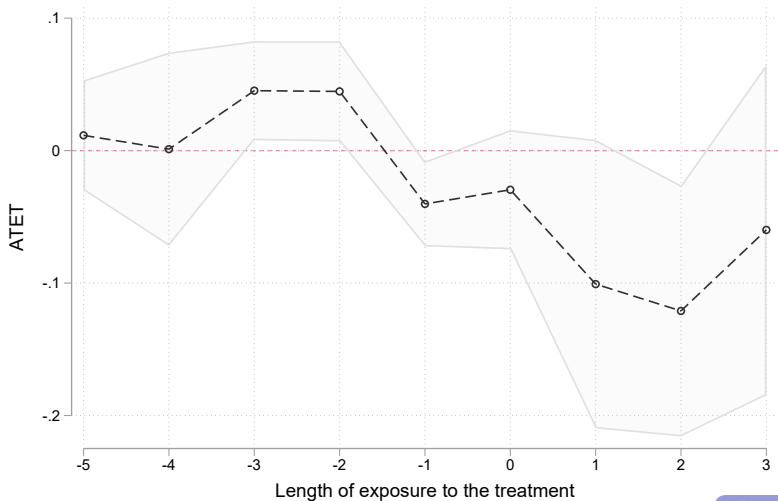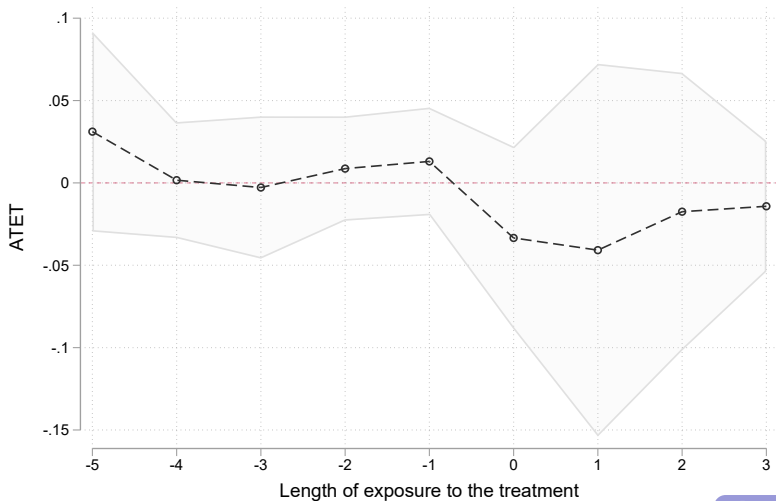Figure: ATET: Probability an All Male Sibling Group was Unmatched

Figure: ATET: Probability an All Female Sibling Group was Unmatched
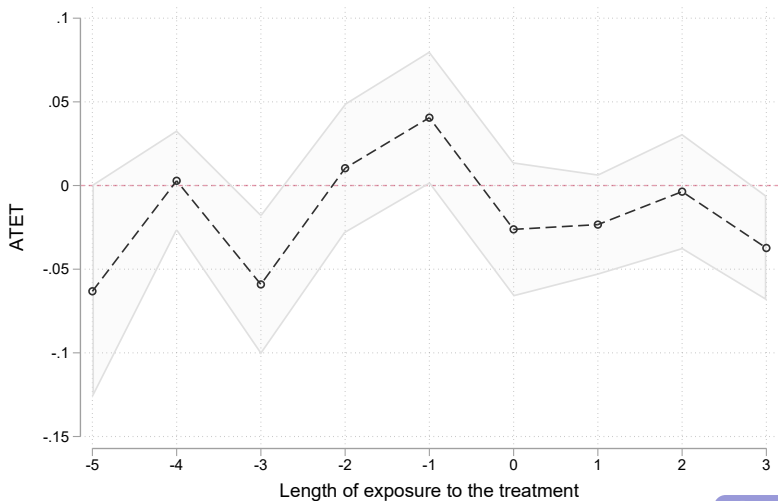
Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group of Multiple Sexes was
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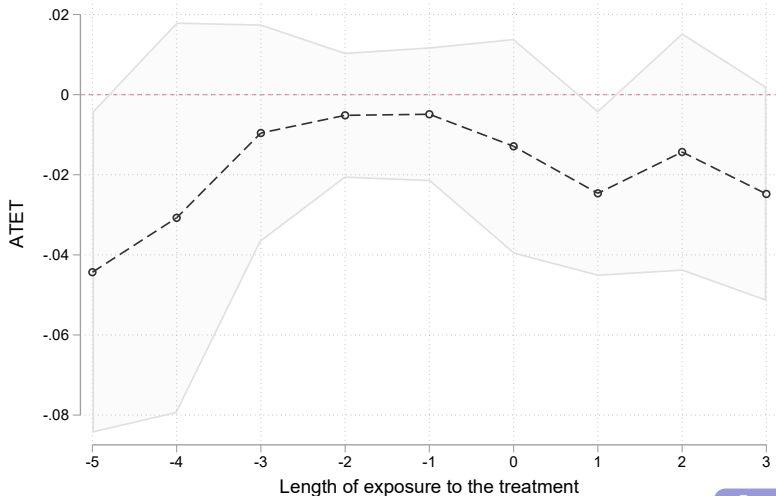
Figure: ATET: Probability a Single Non-Disabled Child was Unmatched
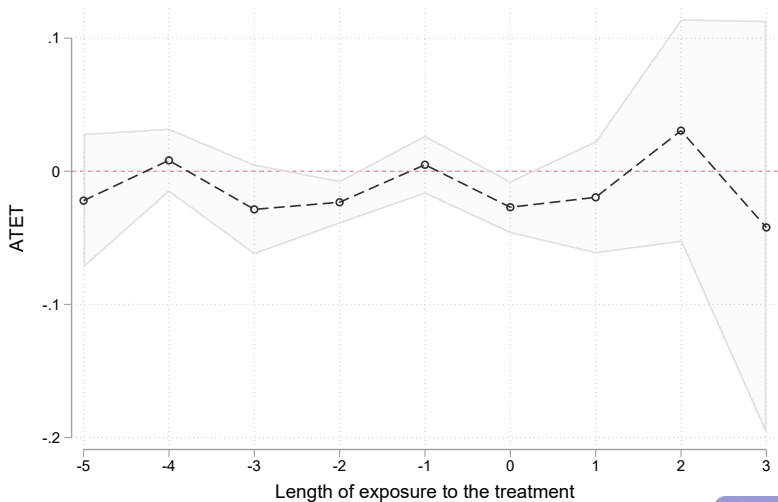
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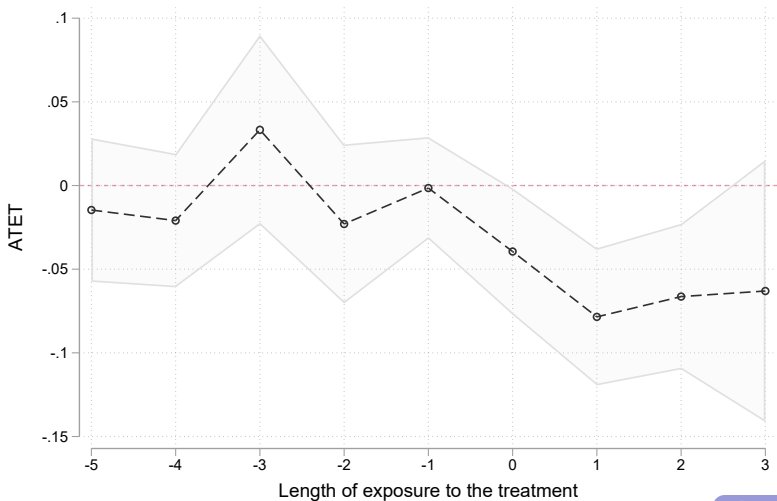
Figure: ATET: Probability a Non-Disabled Sibling Group was Unmatched
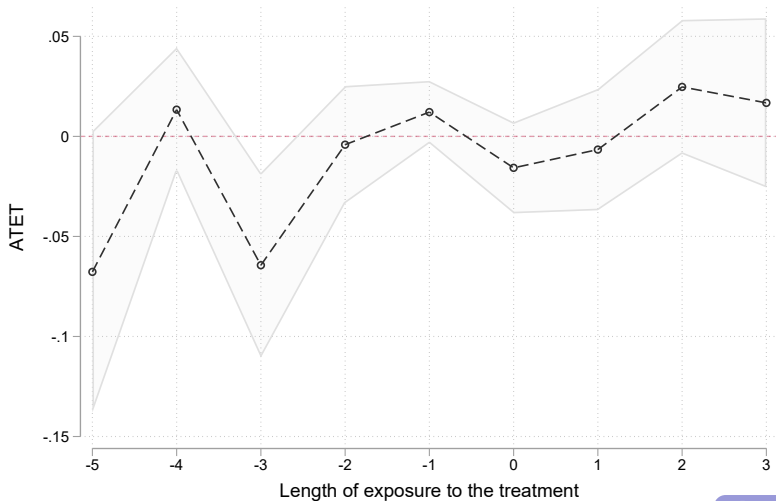
Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group of All Disabled Children was Unmatched
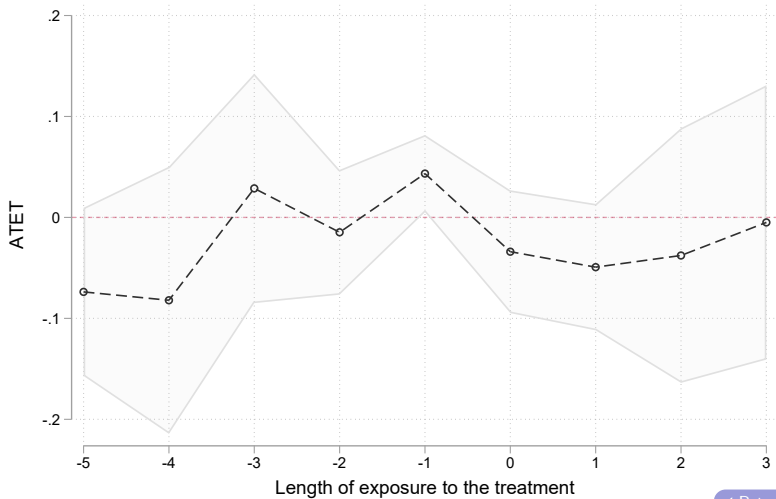
Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group of Multiple Disability Statuses was Unmatched
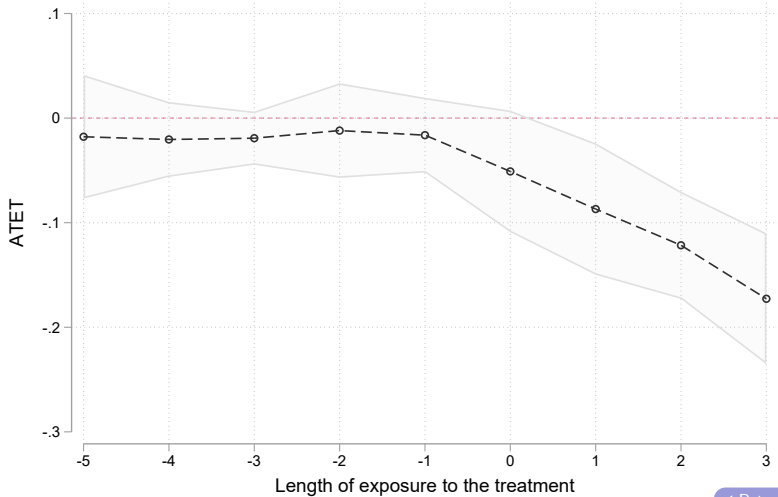
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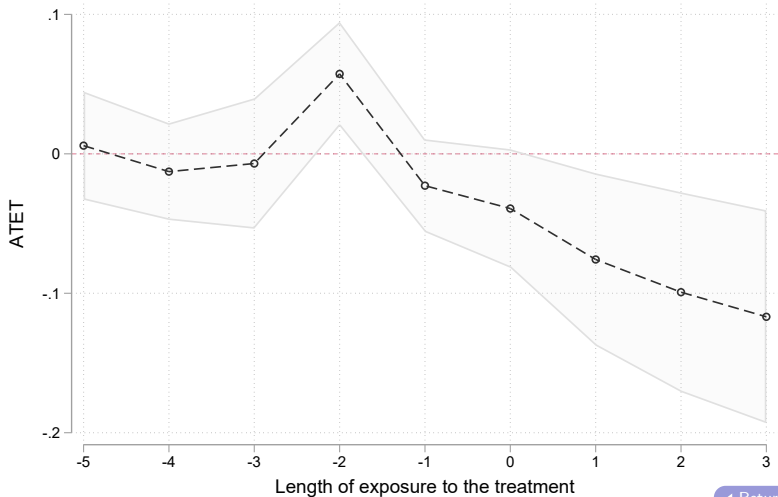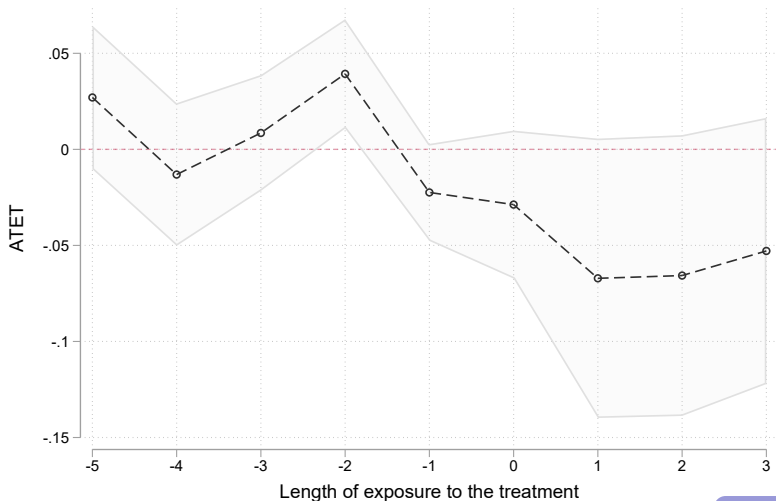Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group of Multiple Sexes was Separated

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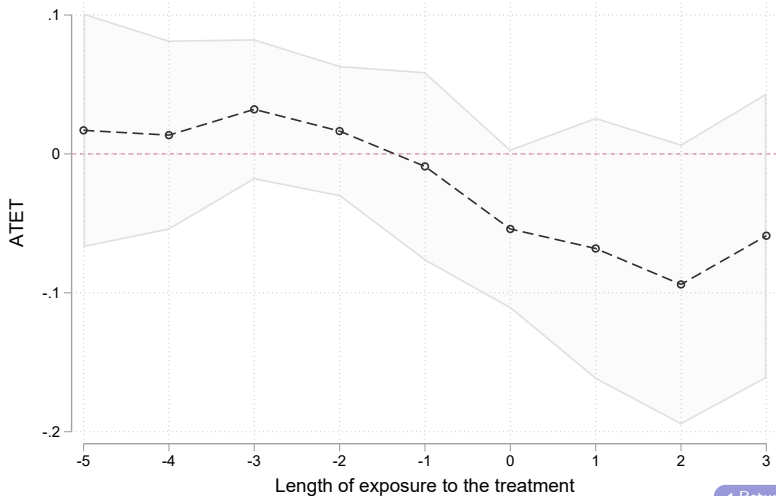Figure: ATET: Probability a Sibling Group of All Disabled Children was Separated

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