

Unemployment insurance & food insecurity among people who lost employment in the wake of COVID-19

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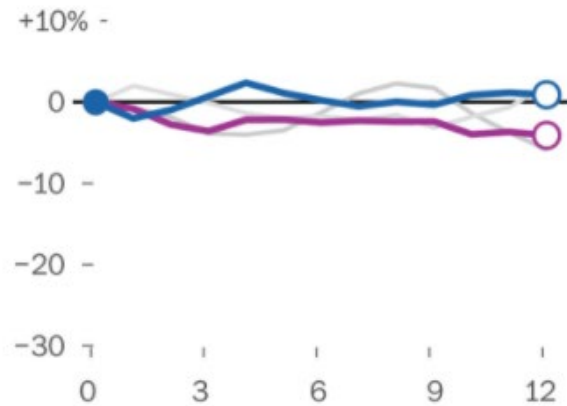
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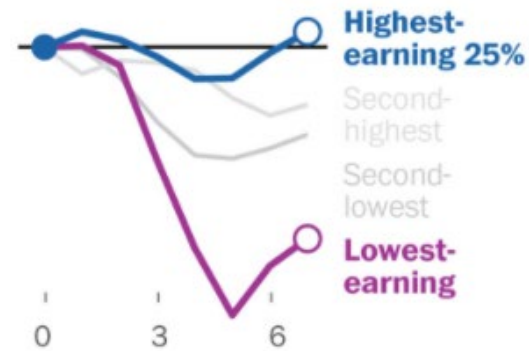


COVID-19-related unemployment

2008 recession



Coronavirus crisis



Note: Based on a three-month average to show the trend in volatile data.

Source: Labor Department via IPUMS

THE WASHINGTON POST

Whenever food deliveries came, Villa's kids would celebrate. "Oh, Mommy, we're going to have food tonight," they would tell her. "We're not going to go to sleep with no food in our tummy."



10% of all households and **15%** of households with children reported not having enough to eat in the past 7 days

Sonia Rodriguez



Armani Rodriguez

Data source: Census Pulse Survey Data, Week 15

<https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/?measures=FIR&mapPeriodSelector=15&barChartPeriodSelector=15>

Image source: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/02/magazine/food-insecurity-hunger-us.html?searchResultPosition=30>

CARES Act

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act authorized a \$600/week federal supplement to weekly state unemployment benefits through July 2020



2020 ELECTION

POLLING HO

CORONAVIRUS

U.S. NEWS

OPINION

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WORLD

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CORONAVIRUS

Jobless benefits for millions are expiring as Washington moves on

With the president and Congress at odds, tens of millions are losing a pandemic lifeline.

Aim

Evaluate the relationship between unemployment insurance and food insecurity among people who lost work between April and July 2020

Methods

UNDERSTANDING AMERICA STUDY

UNDERSTANDING CORONAVIRUS IN AMERICA

[NATIONAL SAMPLE](#)

[CALIFORNIA](#)

[LOS ANGELES COUNTY](#)

[STATE TRACKER](#)

[SURVEY METHODS](#)

[DETAILED DATA](#)

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- Waves 2 through 7 (April 1 – July 8, 2020)
- Inclusion criteria:
 - Live in household earning less than \$75,000 in the past 12 months
 - Participated in at least 2 survey waves
 - Reported being employed in February 2020
 - Lost employment during study period

Methods

- Exposure: receipt of unemployment insurance

Have you received unemployment insurance benefits in the past fourteen days?

- Outcomes: food insecurity and eating less

In the past seven days, were you worried you would run out of food because of a lack of money or other resources?

In the past seven days, did you eat less than you thought you should because of a lack of money or other resources?

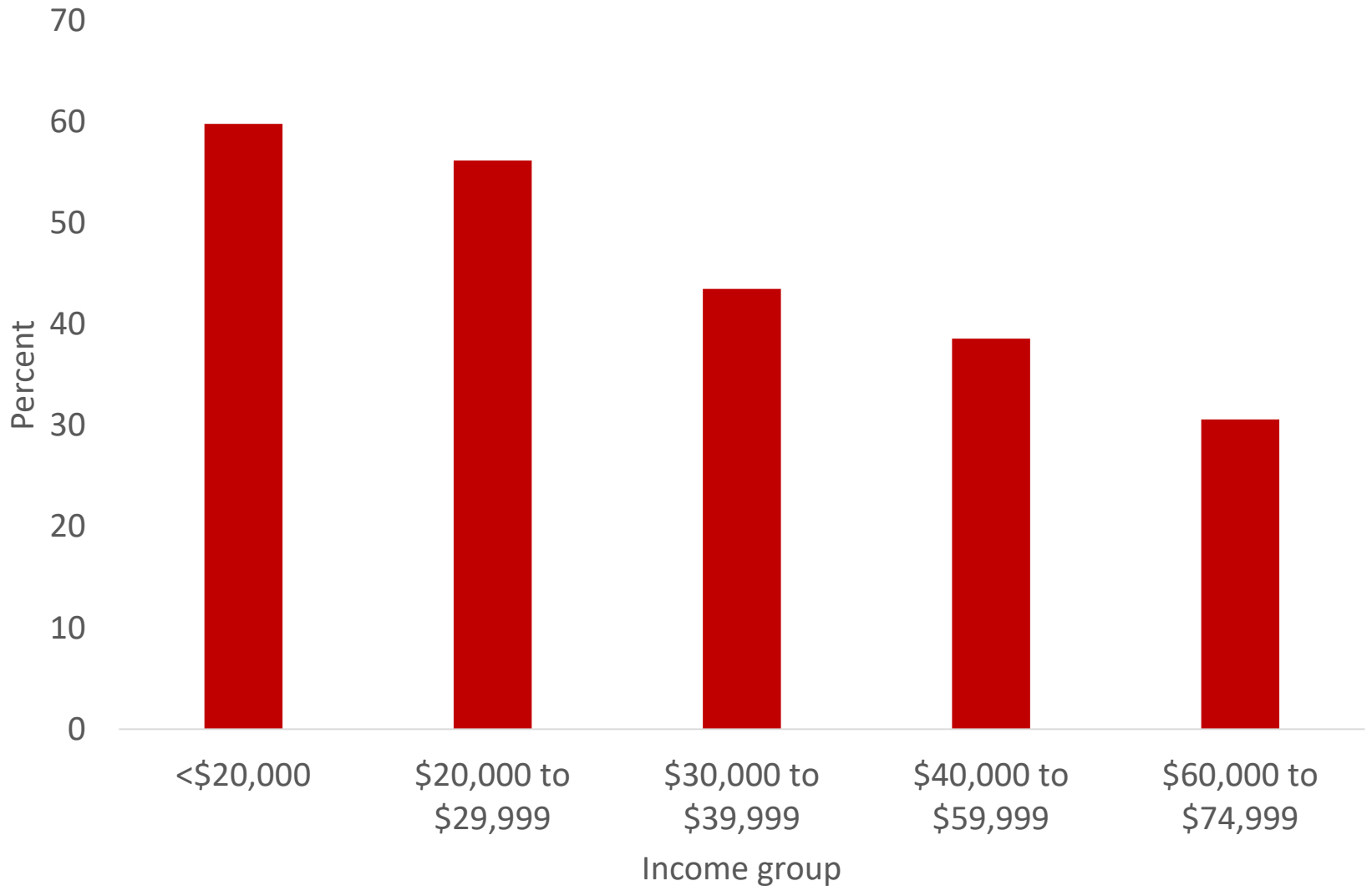
Methods

- Difference-in-differences and event study research design:

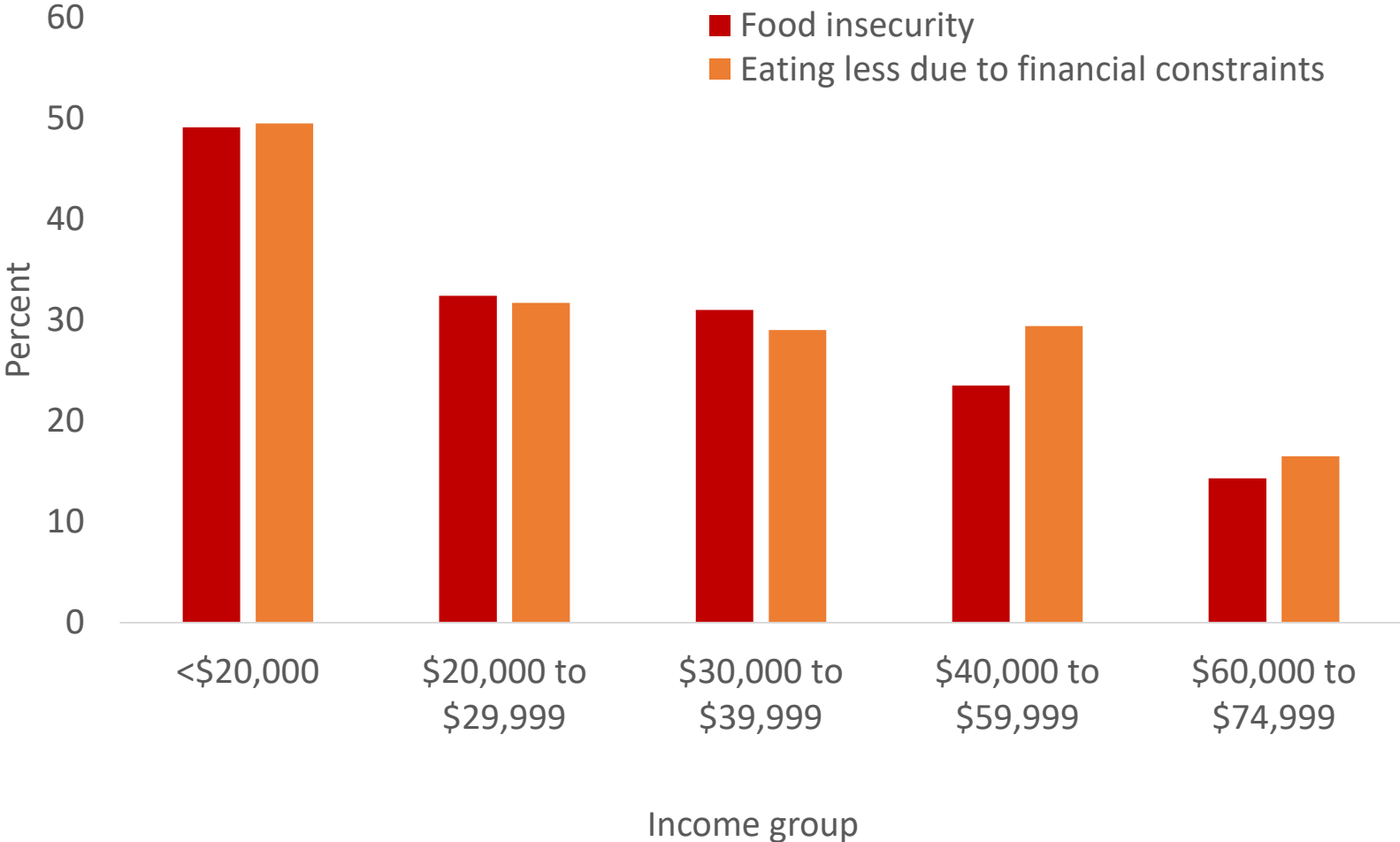
$$Fl_{it} = UI_{it} + S_{it} + SNAP_{it} + CurrentJob_{it} + I_i + t_t + \varepsilon_{ist}$$

- **Individual fixed effects** to adjust for time-invariant individual characteristics
- **Survey wave fixed effects** to adjust for national secular trends in exposure to UI benefits and outcomes of interest
- Adjusted for:
 - Receipt of a federal stimulus payment
 - Receipt of SNAP benefits in the month prior to the survey
 - Employment status at time of survey

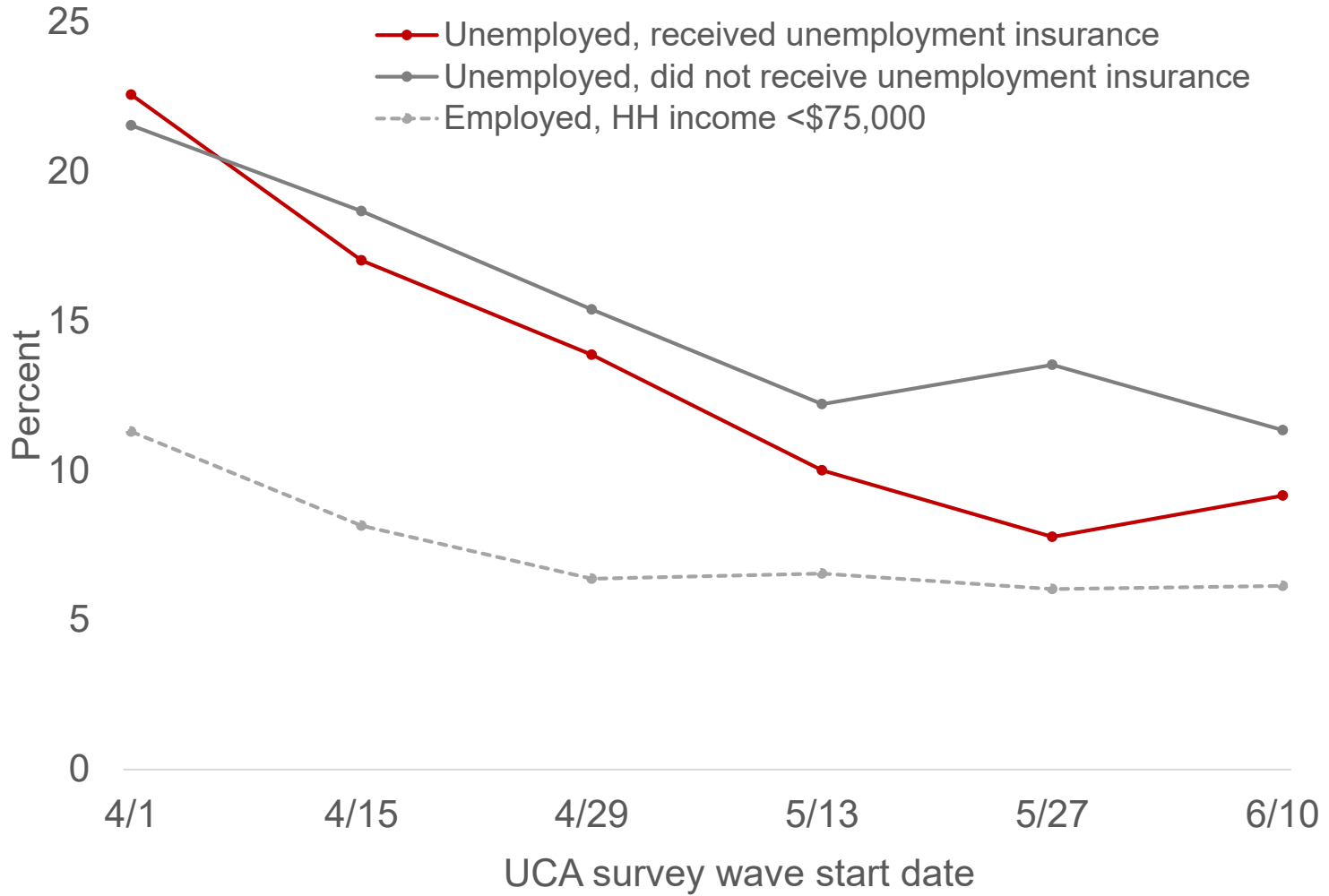
Proportion who were employed in February who lost work at some point by income group



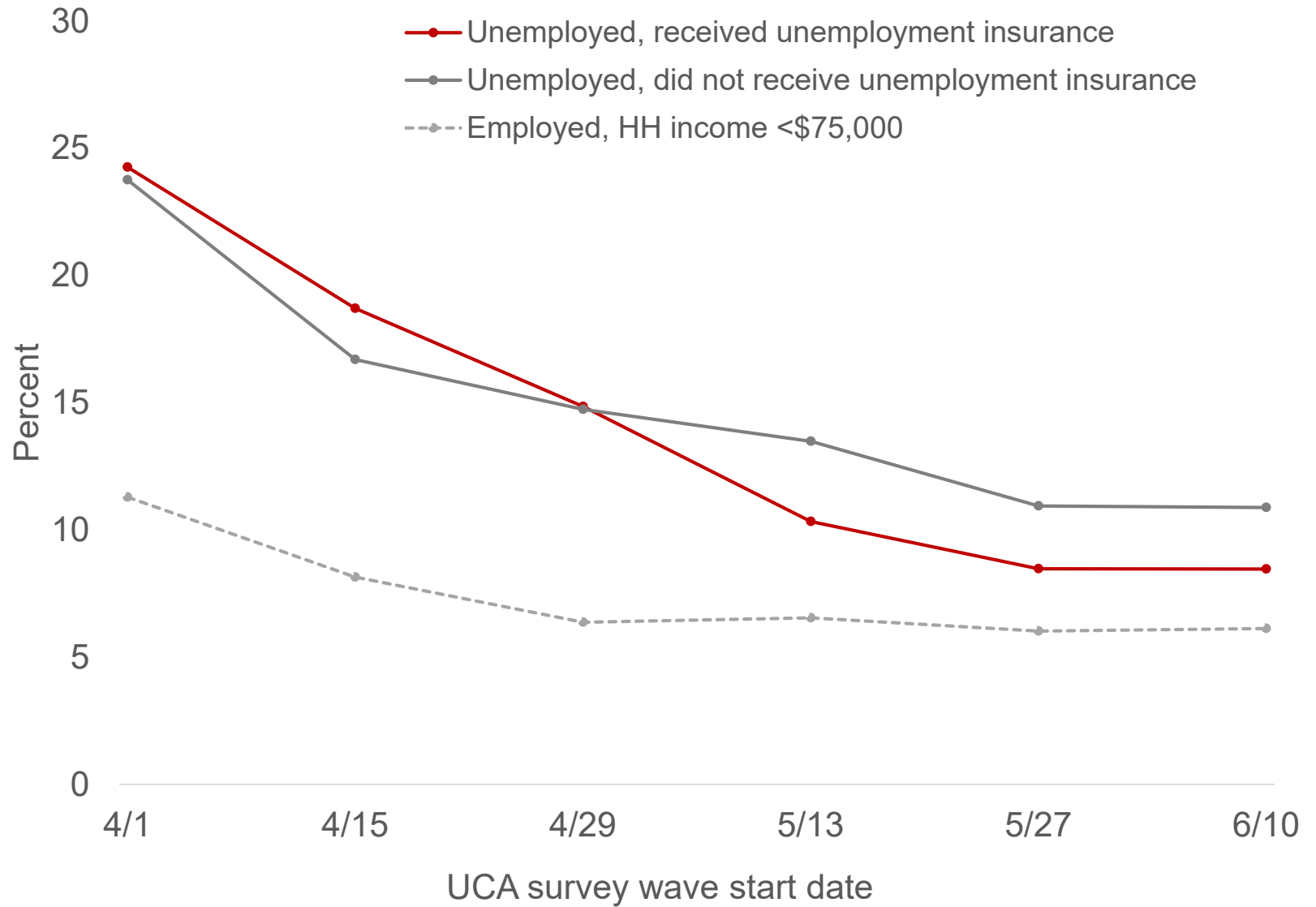
Ever reported food insecurity or eating less due to financial constraints by income group



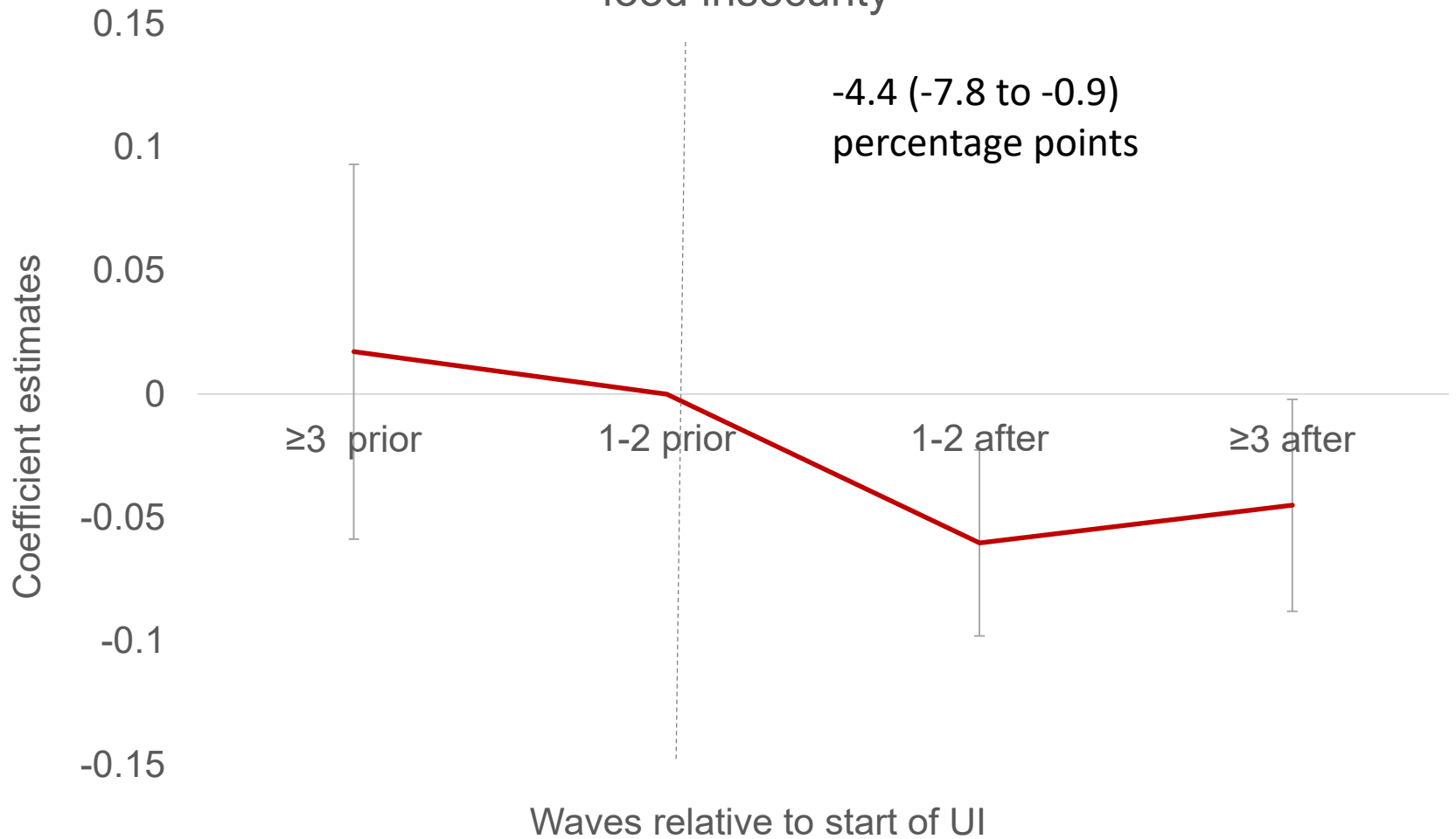
Food insecurity over time



Eating less due to financial constraints over time



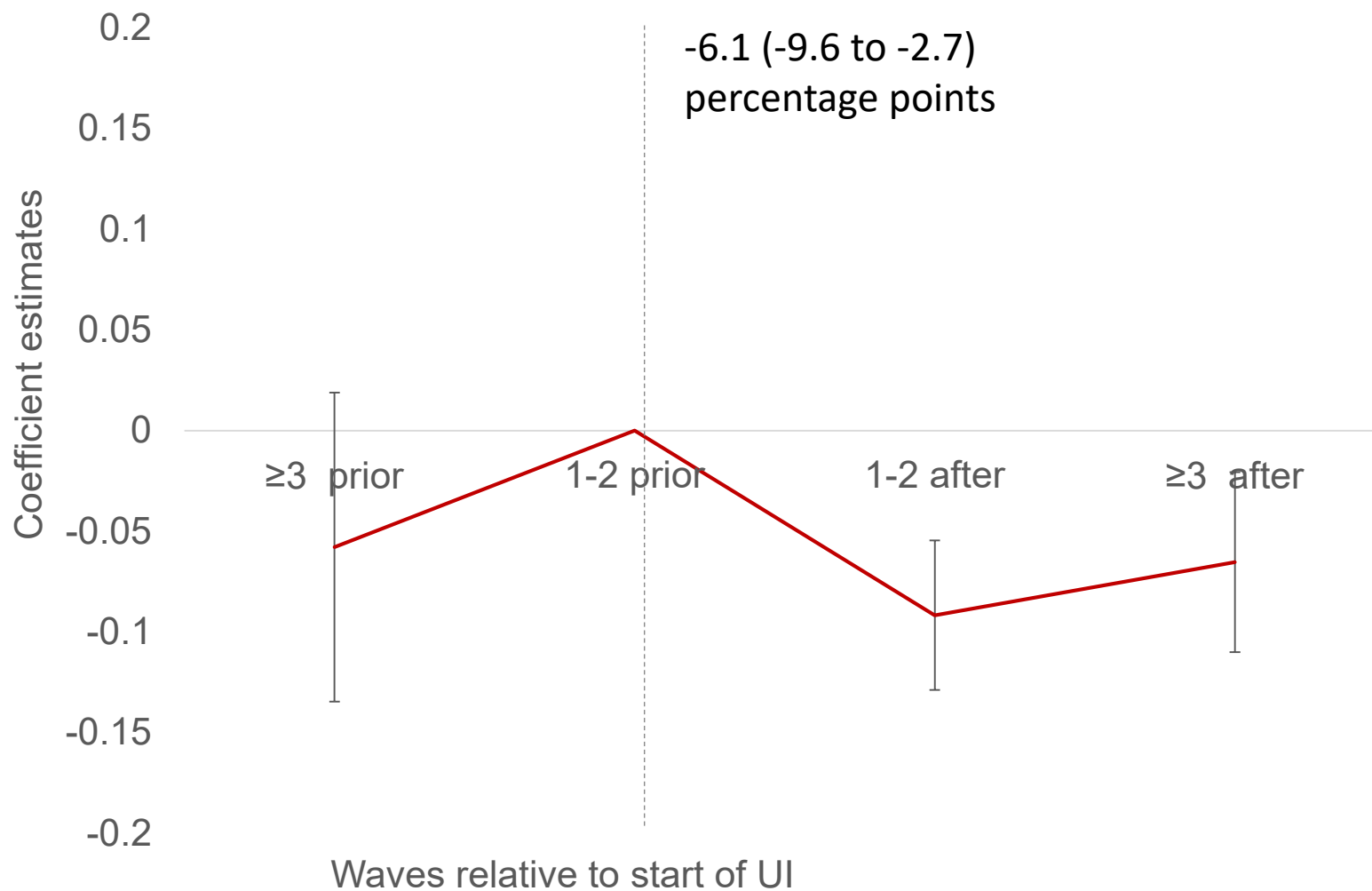
Waves relative to receipt of unemployment insurance and food insecurity



-4.4 (-7.8 to -0.9)
percentage points

Updating, Waves 2-15:
UI: -4.7 (-7.4 to -2.1)
- \$600 CARES: +3.5 (<0.1 to 7.0)

Waves relative to start of unemployment insurance and eating less due to financial constraints



Conclusion

- During the period when the CARES Act provided a \$600 supplement to state unemployment insurance, receiving unemployment insurance was associated with a **30% reduction in reporting any food insecurity** and a **42% decline in eating less**
- Policymakers may wish to consider continued expansion of unemployment insurance eligibility, amount, and duration as an approach to reducing food insecurity during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic

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- Full pre-print is available for access:
<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.07.28.20163618v2.full.pdf>

Thank you



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