

Does Co-Sponsorship Improve Refugee Outcomes?

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US Reception & Placement Process

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Resettlement agencies provide mandated services within the 90-day R&P period, including:

- Finding and furnishing initial accommodation
 - Meeting refugees at the airport
 - School enrollment
 - Social services enrollment
 - Employment assistance
 - Arranging initial medical appointments
 - Legal assistance
- The State Department monitors service provision and records outcomes at 90 days.

Sponsorship Models

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Key differences from private sponsorship:

- Case workers monitor outcomes/service delivery and serve as a backstop.
- Co-sponsor teams are trained by local case workers.
- Co-sponsor teams do not typically select refugee cases.

Evaluating Effectiveness

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Cons:

- Co-sponsors are not professionals and may lack necessary skillsets
- Co-sponsors may not fully understand the administrative and legal context
- Linguistic, cultural, or religious mismatches are possible
- Success may depend on caseworker monitoring

Program Details

We study Global Refuge's co-sponsorship model



Structure:

- Teams of 5-12 individuals linked to an established local community organization
- Pre-raised cash commitment of \$1-8k; along with in-kind contributions valued at \$1-2k
- Agreement to support a case for 6 months to 1 year, meeting 1-2 times per week.

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- 2 tiers:
 - Co-sponsors (handle > 50% of R&P services)
 - Support group (handle < 50% of R&P services)

Research Design

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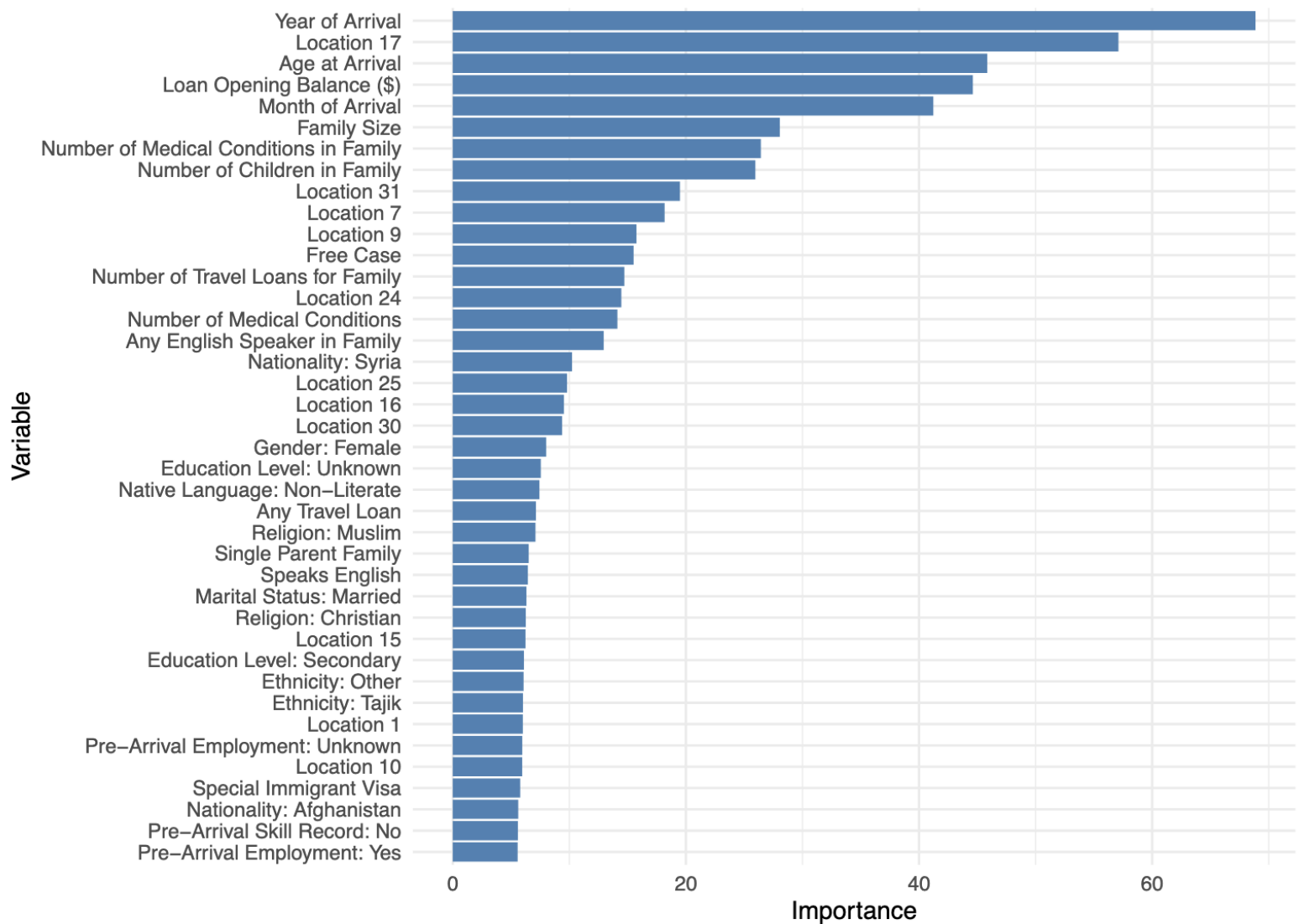
We implement a retrospective observational study, using a credible **selection-on-observables** assumption to identify causal effects.

- We leverage the full administrative data initially used to make initial co-sponsorship assignments

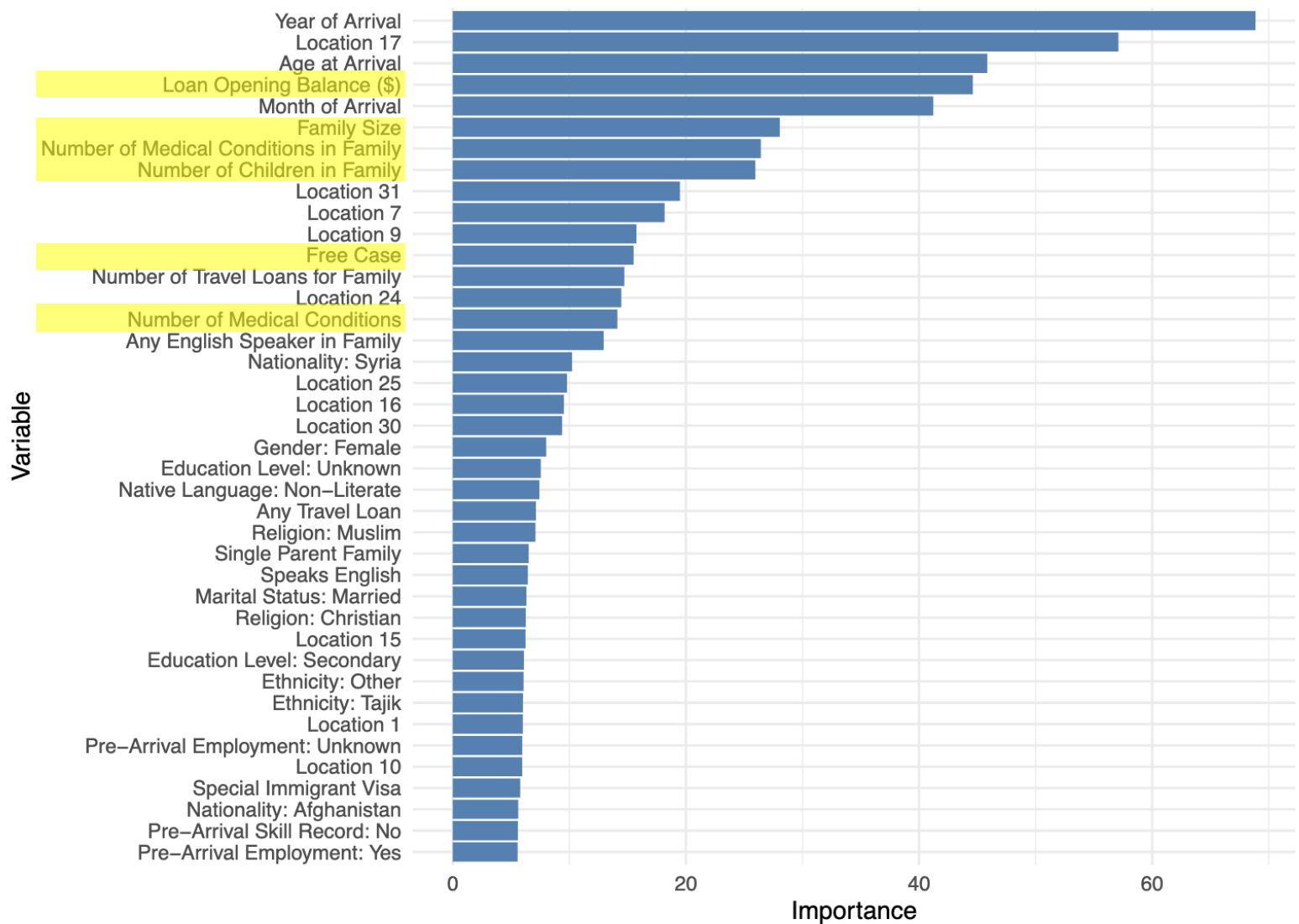
Research Design

- Global Refuge assigns cases directly to co-sponsor teams, *prior to arrival* in the United States.
- Interviews confirm that assignments are a function of:
 - A) Perceived need:
 - *Family size, employment and educational history, language proficiency, health needs*
 - B) Availability of a local co-sponsor team at the time/location of arrival.

Selection Criteria



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Estimation

- We compare outcomes for co-sponsored cases to non-sponsored cases in the same locations, after adjusting for all characteristics which determine selection probability.
- Given the high dimensionality and complexity of the data, we use double debiased machine learning (DML) to identify causal effects without imposing strong functional form assumptions.

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$$Y = g_0(D, X) + U \quad \text{with } \mathbb{E}[U|D, X] = 0$$

$$D = m_0(X) + V \quad \text{with } \mathbb{E}[V|X] = 0$$

$$\theta_0 = E[g_0(1, X) - g_0(0, X)|D = 1]$$

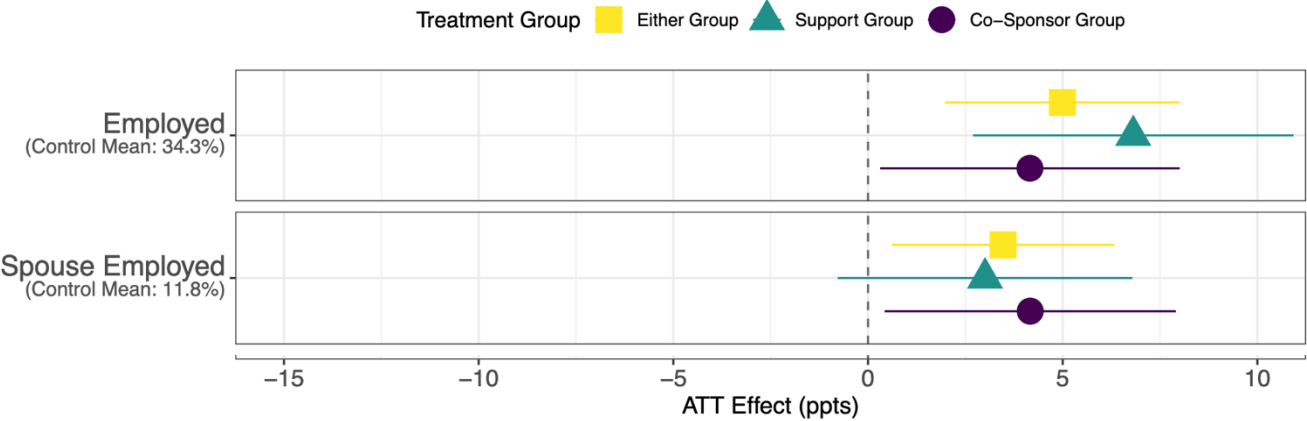
Data

- 2014-2024
- 1,032 assigned families: 622 to co-sponsors, 410 to support groups
- Matched data for principal applicants at the 36 locations with co-sponsored families
 - R&P Outcomes:
 - Employment (primary + spouse)
 - Outmigration
 - ESL Enrollment
 - School Enrollment

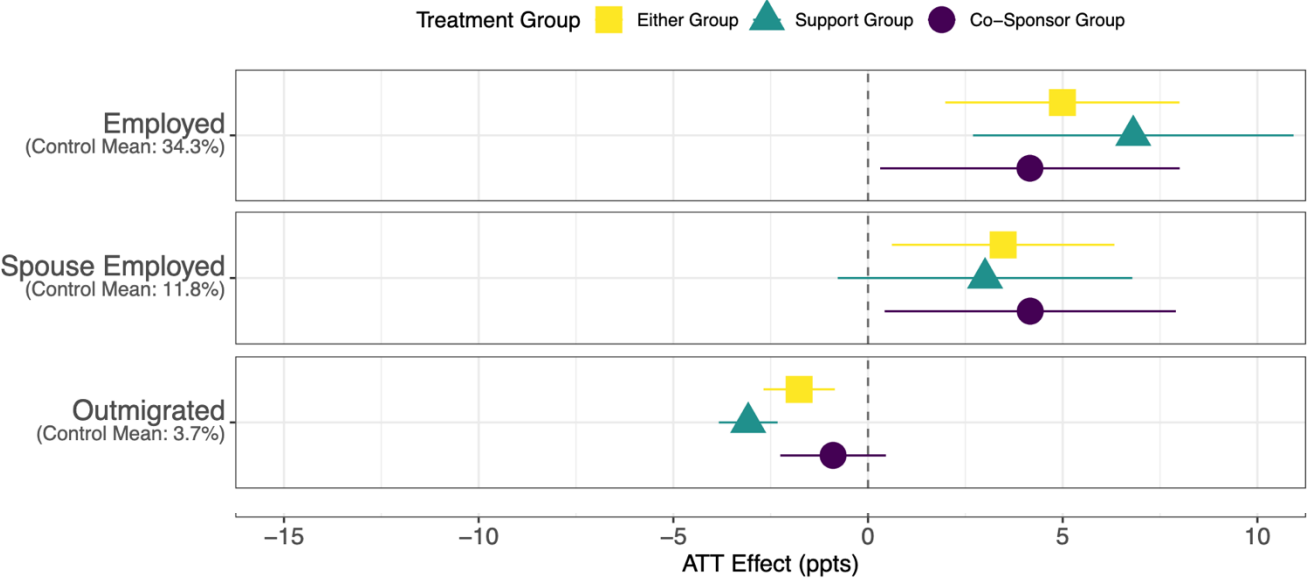
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 - Longer term economic outcome:
 - IOM travel loan status at 5 years
 - ~\$3-4k interest free loan to cover travel costs
 - Subject to credit reporting

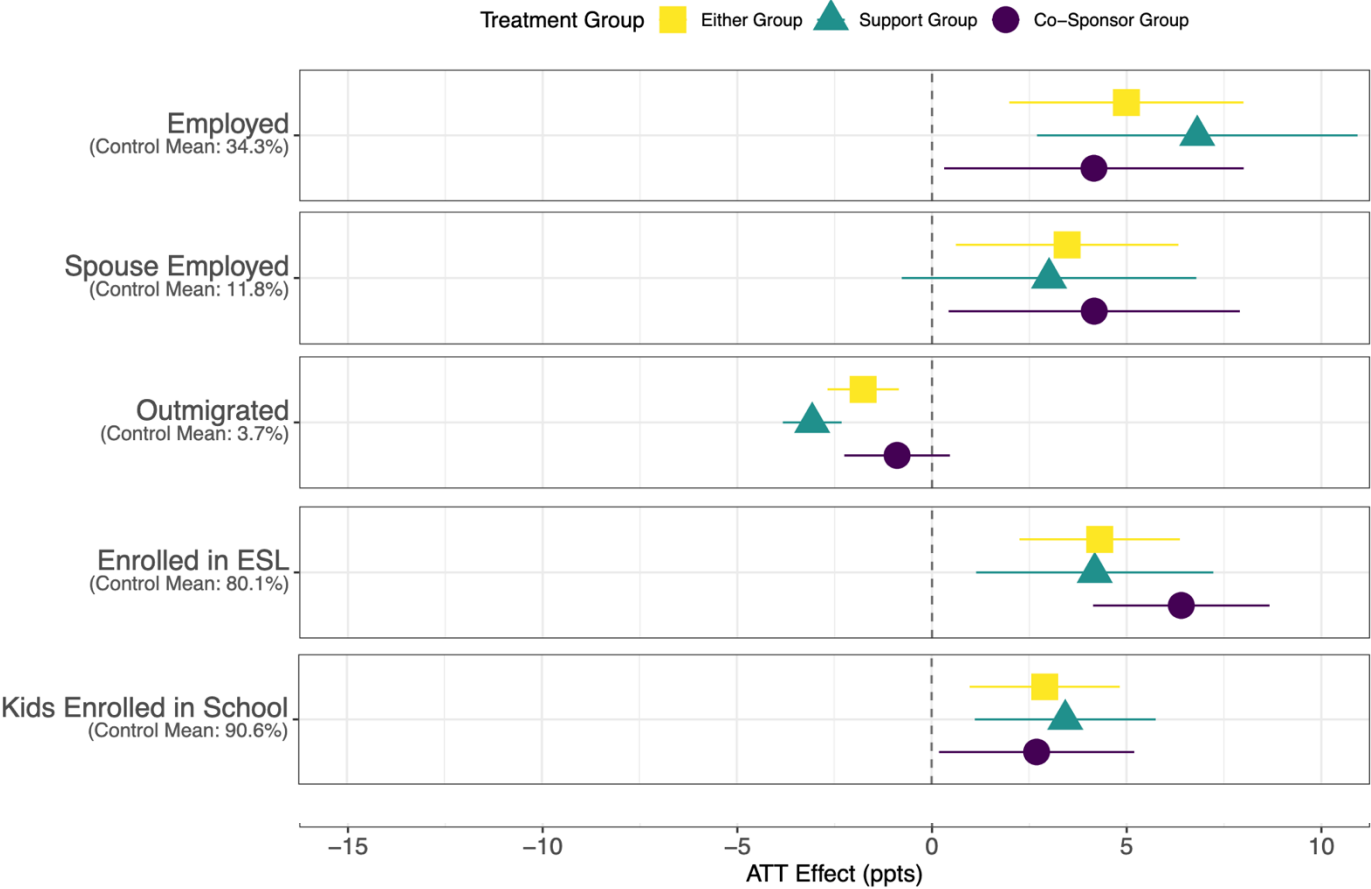
Results



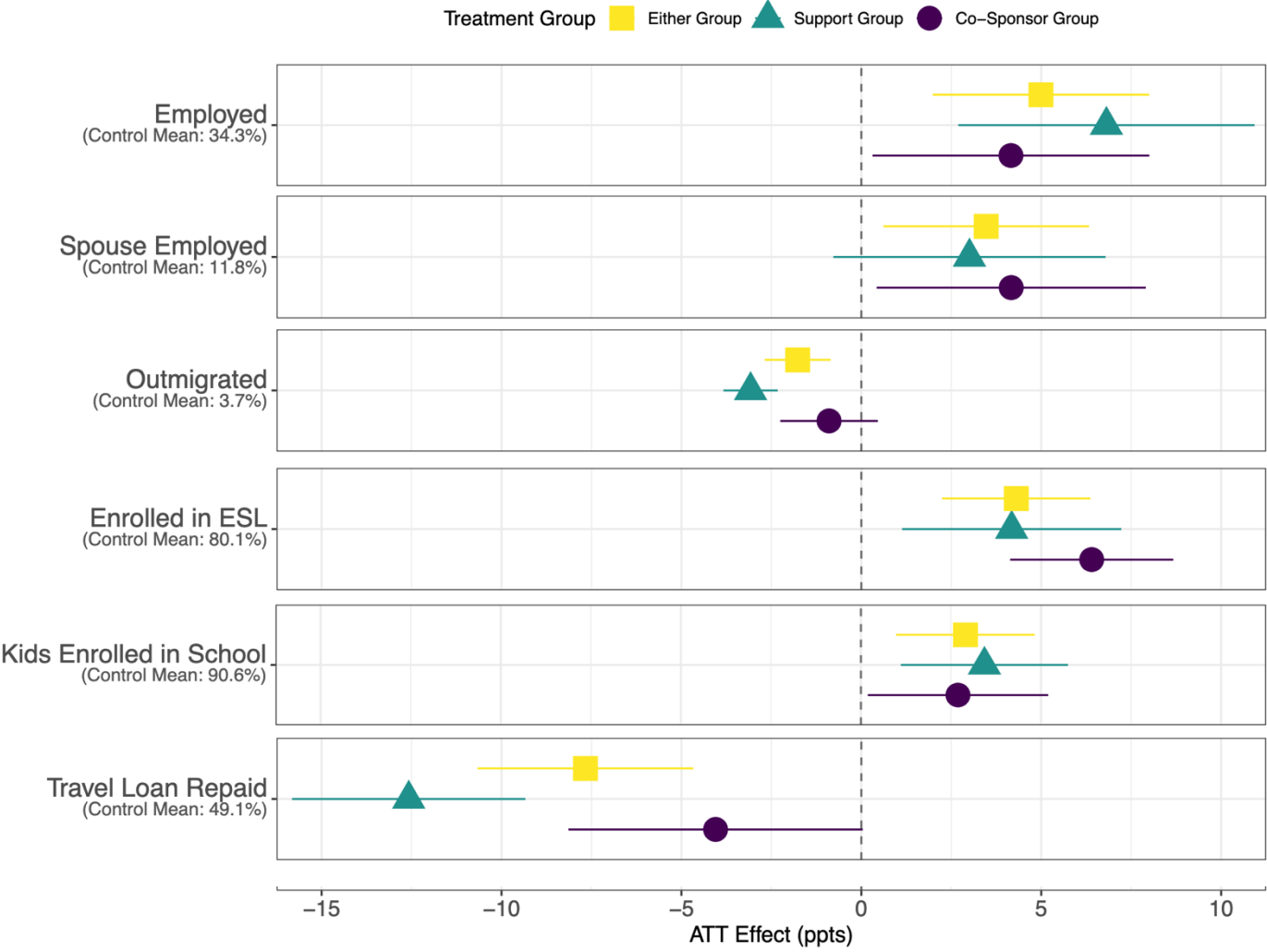
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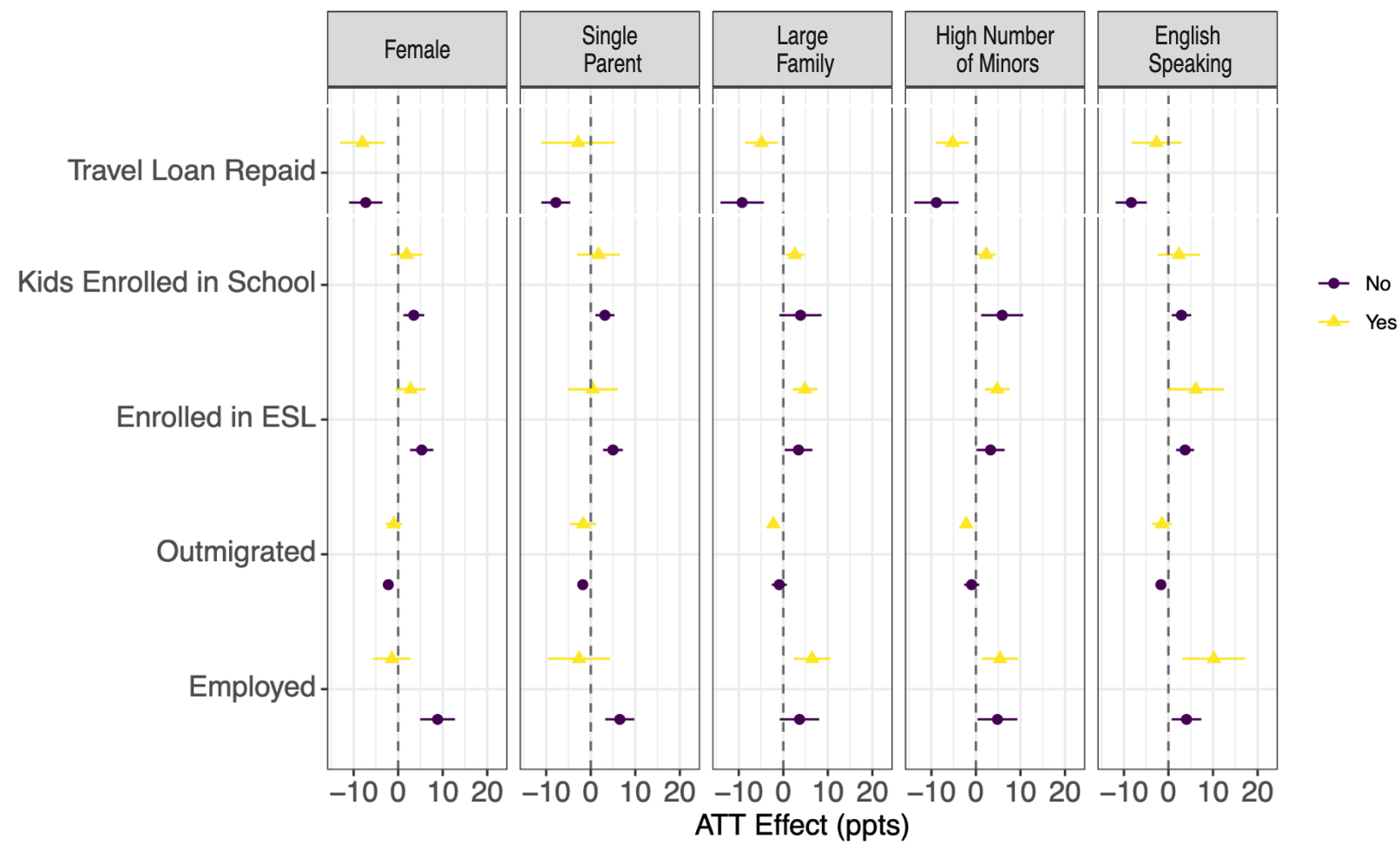
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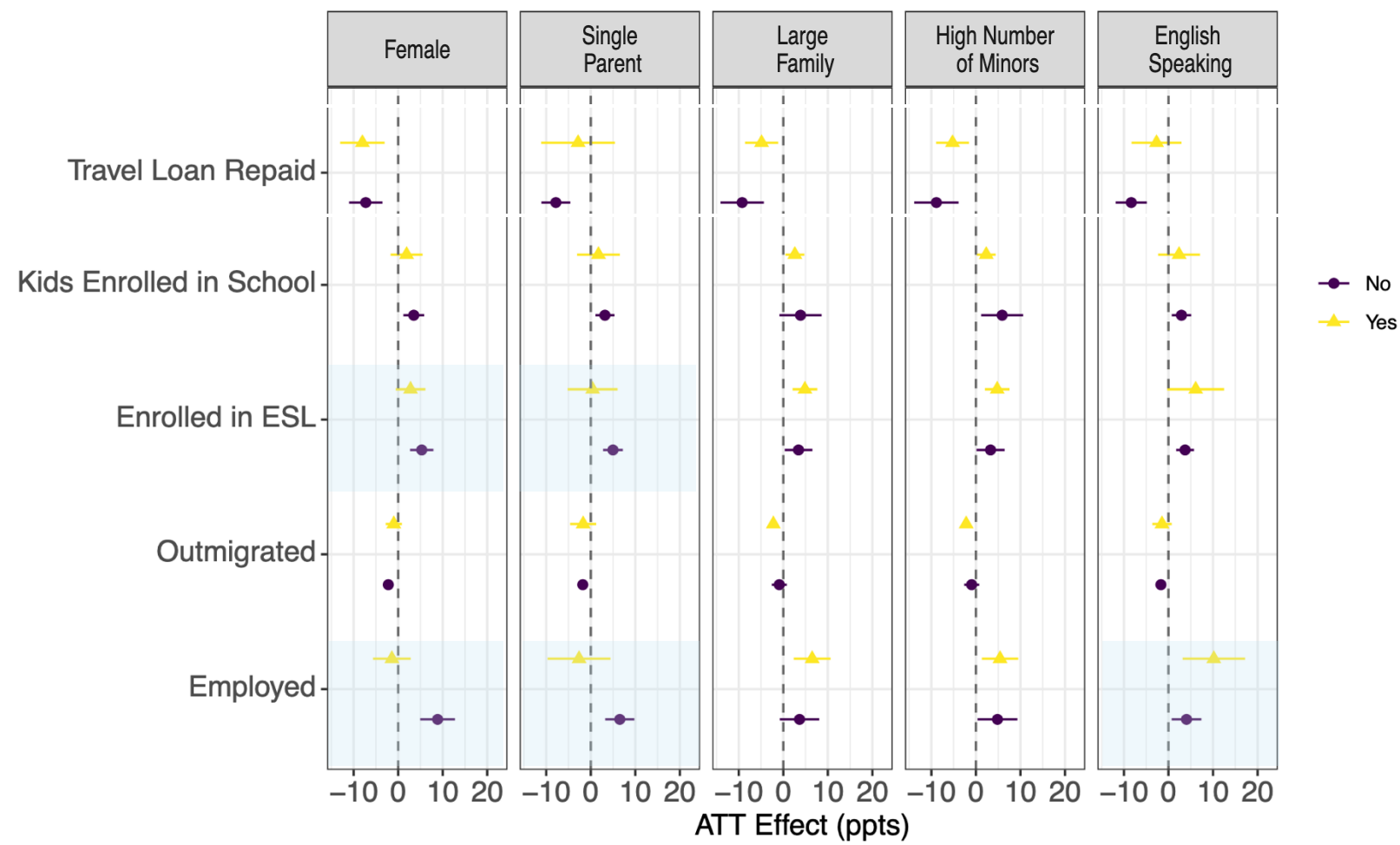
Travel Loans

- One interpretation of the travel loan result is that the program hampers long-term economic integration.
- However, after interviewing Global Refuge staff, we believe it is more plausibly a program effect:
 - Loan repayment was not covered in the standardized co-sponsorship training protocol
 - While all refugees receive automated loan repayment reminders, case workers provide additional nudges.
 - Since the loan is interest free, co-sponsors may not have known about the negative effects on refugees' credit scores

Heterogeneity



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Conclusions

- Our study provides a causal estimate for the effects of a large-scale co-sponsorship program
- Although we do not have data on social/cultural integration or long-term economic outcomes, our results suggest that co-sponsorship can be an effective complement to traditional R&P.
- Key outcome targets set by the State Department are exceeded relative to professionalized caseworkers.

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- Key outcome targets set by the State Department are exceeded relative to professionalized caseworkers.
- The gains do not vary as a function of the share of R&P services delegated; suggests that co-sponsor match may be the most important factor.
- However, the travel loan result and reduced impact for vulnerable groups (non English-speakers; women) suggest the need for further refinement.

Thanks!