

Experiments to Improve Child Support Collections in Washington

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Problem

Some child support cases are hard-to-collect:

- Population challenges
 - Limited/sporadic employment
 - More transient
- Few automated collection methods
- Labor intensive

What works for hard-to-collect cases?

Interventions

- Experimental research design to test two interventions:

1. TANF arrears-only unit

- New, specially trained enforcement unit for TANF arrears cases
- Increase payments from “cold” cases
- Experiment began in December 2012

2. Sending **monthly statements** to new NCPs

- Increase frequency & amount of payments
- Target population:
 - * New NCPs
 - * Known addresses, not incarcerated
 - * No wage withholding when order is established
 - * Children won’t age out before experiment ends
- Experiment began in March 2013

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Variable	Arrears-only		Statements	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
NCPs	3,555	2,000	1,304	1,340
Statement count	-	-	3.48	-
% paying	29.6%	31.2%	29.0%	32.8%
Starting arrears	\$5,950	\$6,136	\$1,391	\$1,445
Ending arrears	\$5,357	\$5,524	\$1,763	\$1,818

Methods

- Test difference in means
- Regressions controlling for study design, age, gender, # kids, starting arrears, monthly order amount, address type, residence region

Acknowledgement

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Arrears-only Enforcement Unit

DIFFERENCE IN MEANS AT 14 MONTHS

	Treatment	Control	Difference
Ending arrears	\$5,357	\$5,524	\$167

PROBABILITY OF PAYMENT AT 14 MONTHS

Logit estimates	#1	#2	#3	#4
Treatment	-0.07	0.17	-1.12	0.42
Months on active caseload		0.12	0.04	0.01
Treatment X Months			0.10	
Cohort 2				-0.26
Cohort 3				-1.79

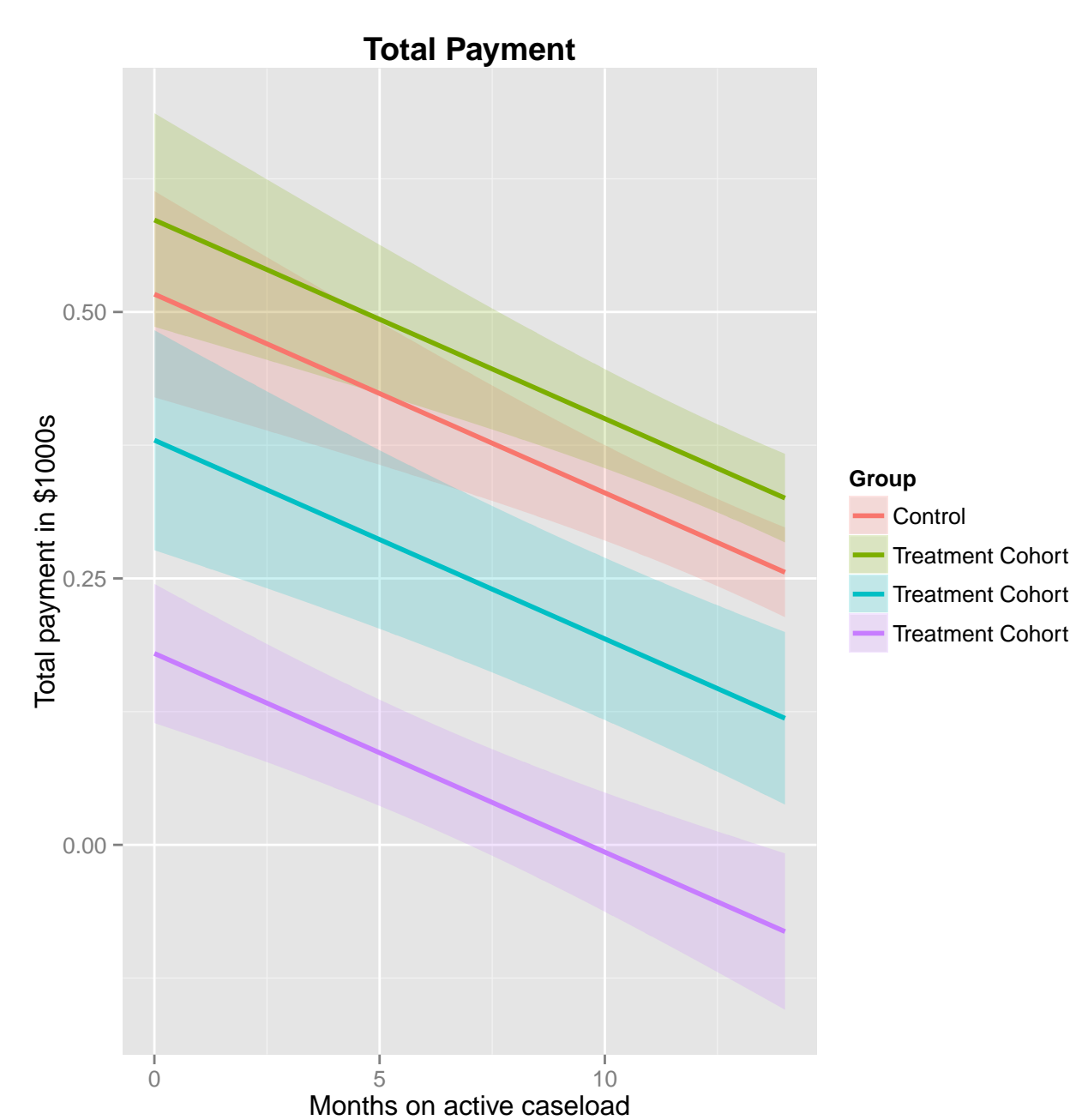
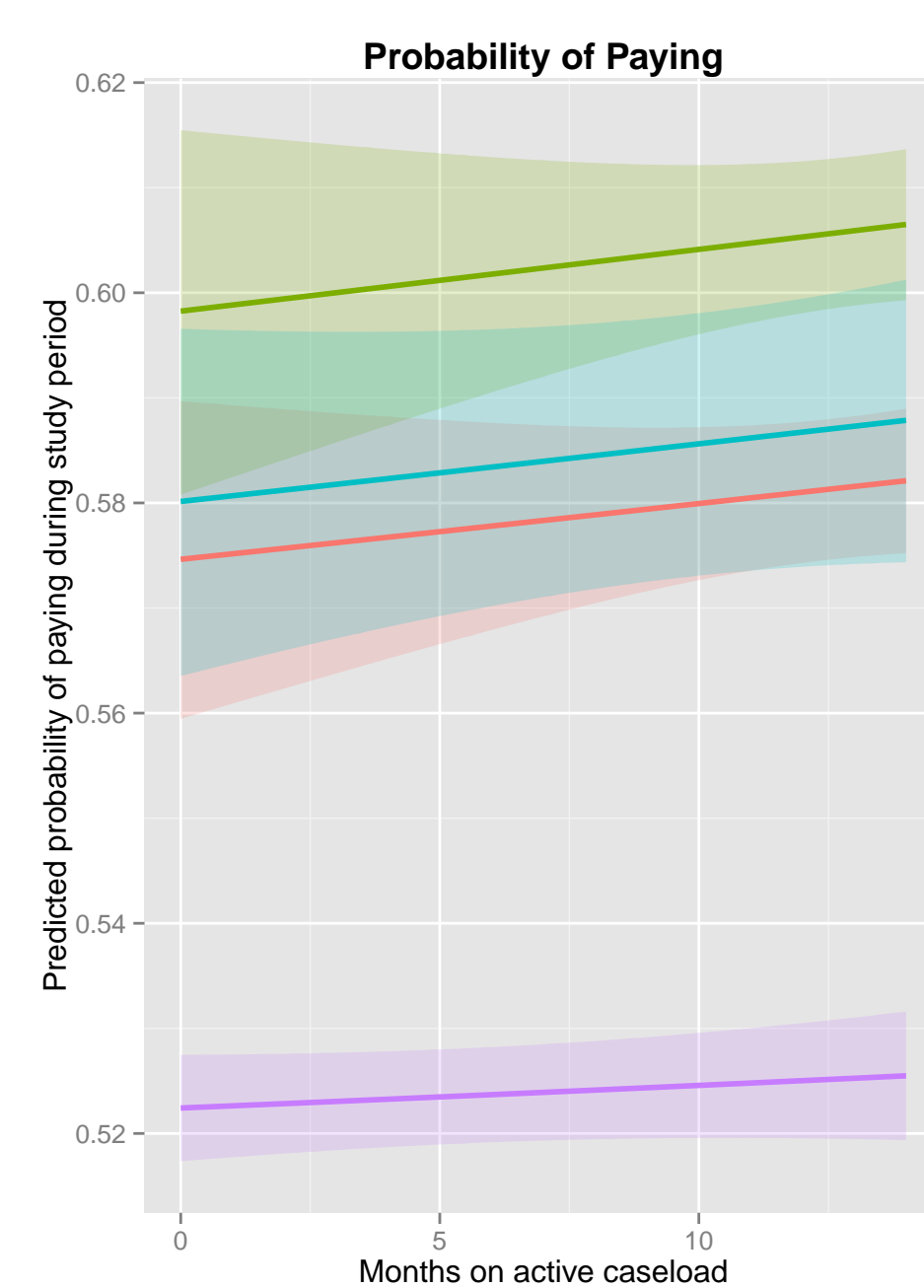
Green indicates 0.01 significance.

TOTAL PAYMENT AT 14 MONTHS (IN \$1000s)

OLS estimates	#1	#2	#3	#4
Treatment	-0.05	-0.03	-0.43	0.07
Months on active caseload		0.01	-0.01	-0.02
Treatment X Months			0.03	
Cohort 2				-0.21
Cohort 3				-0.41

Green indicates 0.01 significance.

PREDICTED VALUES FROM #4 MODELS



INTERPRETATION

- Both groups reduce the mean level of arrears.
- Arrears balances do **not significantly differ** at 14 months.
- Treatment has a **small, positive, significant** relationship with paying.
- Later treatment has a **negative, significant** relationship with total payment.
- More months on caseload has a positive relationship with likelihood of paying, yet a negative relationship with total payment. It is unclear why total payments do not improve over time.

Monthly Statements

DIFFERENCE IN MEANS

	Treatment	Control	Difference
Total payments	\$321	\$395	\$74
Ending arrears	\$1,763	\$1,818	\$55

PROBABILITY OF PAYMENT AT 9 MONTHS

Logit estimates	#1	#2	#3	#4
Treatment	-0.14	-0.14	-0.16	-0.03
Months in study		0.35	0.35	0.35
Treatment X Months in study			0.00	0.14
Statement count				-0.24

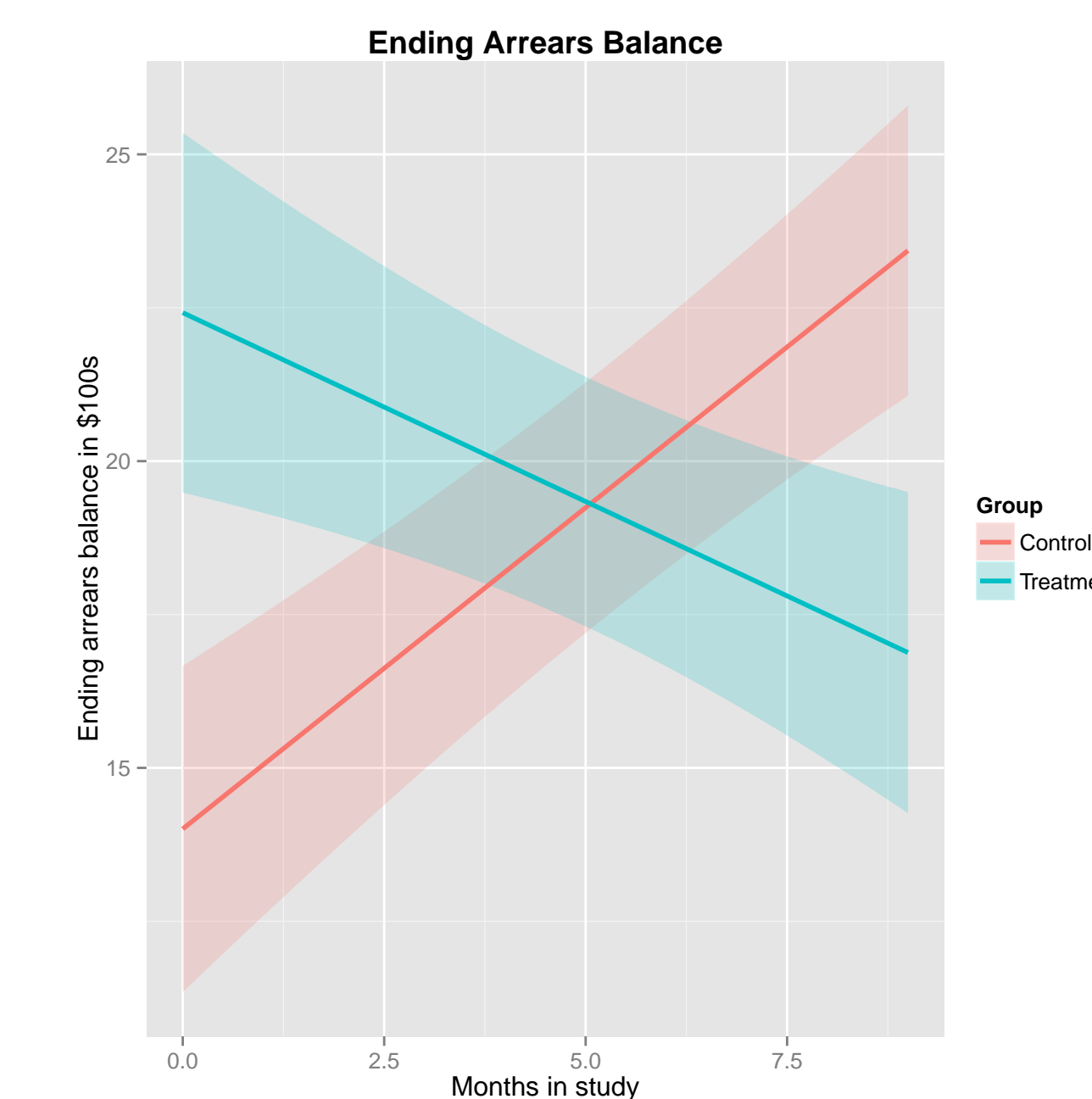
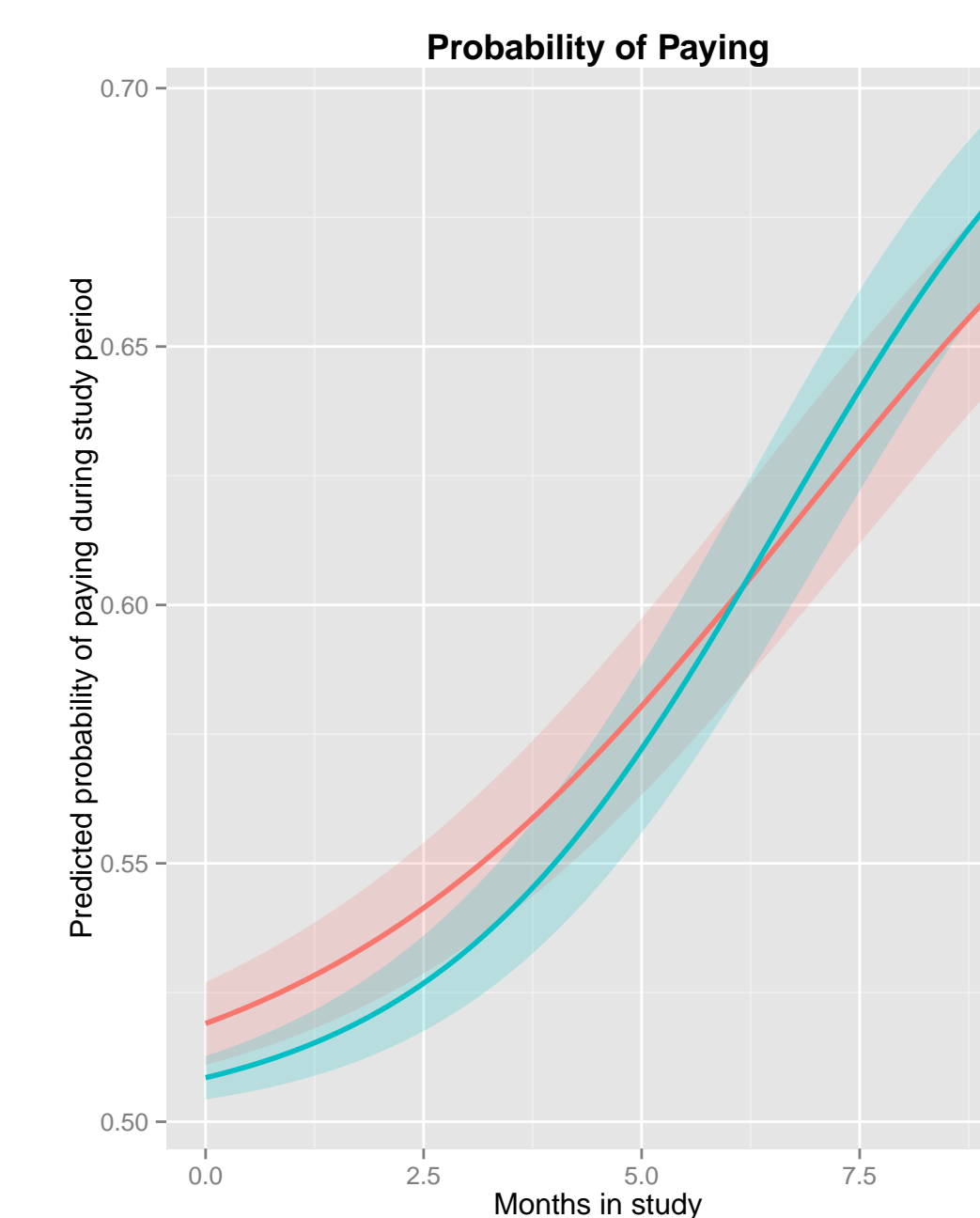
Green indicates 0.01 significance.

ENDING ARREARS BALANCE AT 9 MONTHS (IN \$100s)

Tobit estimates	#1	#2	#3	#4
Treatment	-0.48	-0.40	2.88	1.07
Months in study		1.28	1.60	1.60
Treatment X Months in study			-0.64	-2.26
Statement count				2.86

Green indicates 0.01 significance.

PREDICTED VALUES FROM #4 MODELS



INTERPRETATION

- Average total payments do **not significantly differ** at 9 months.
- Arrears balances do **not significantly differ** at 9 months.
- Treatment does **not have a significant** relationship with paying.
- Months in study has a **positive, significant** relationship with paying.
- Receiving more statements has a **negative, significant** relationship with paying.
- Treatment & months interaction has a **significant** relationship with ending arrears.
- Receiving additional statements has a **positive, significant** relationship with ending arrears.