

The Impact of FLPB Policy Changes on US Army Special Forces Soldiers Testing and Proficiency

Presented to:

ILR Testing Committee Meeting
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Presented by:

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Outline

Project Overview & Policy Summary Study 1: Individual Level Results Study 2: Group Level Results Study 3: Stakeholder Perspectives Overall Summary & Conclusions

Project Overview & Policy Summary

Project Overview

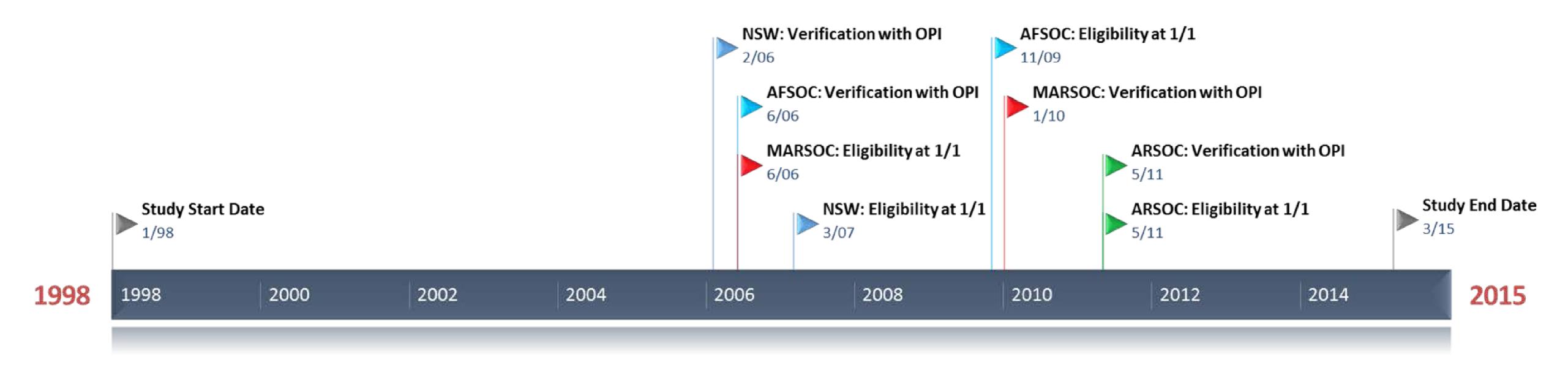
- Study Purpose: To investigate the efficacy and impact of changes to the FLPB policy for SOF operators on individual proficiency and organizational capability.
- Skill-based pay (SBP) programs typically vary on three main dimensions:
 - Eligibility criteria: requirements to be eligible
 - Verification process: formal verification with an exam or assessment
 - Payout type and amount: bonus or permanent change in base pay
- SOF FLPB study focuses on two policy changes (interventions):
 - Lowering eligibility criteria for FLPB payment from ILR 2/2 to ILR 1/1
 - Use of an OPI score as an explicitly accepted verification test for FLPB payment

Summary of DoD FLPB Policy (Time of Study; DoD, 2013)

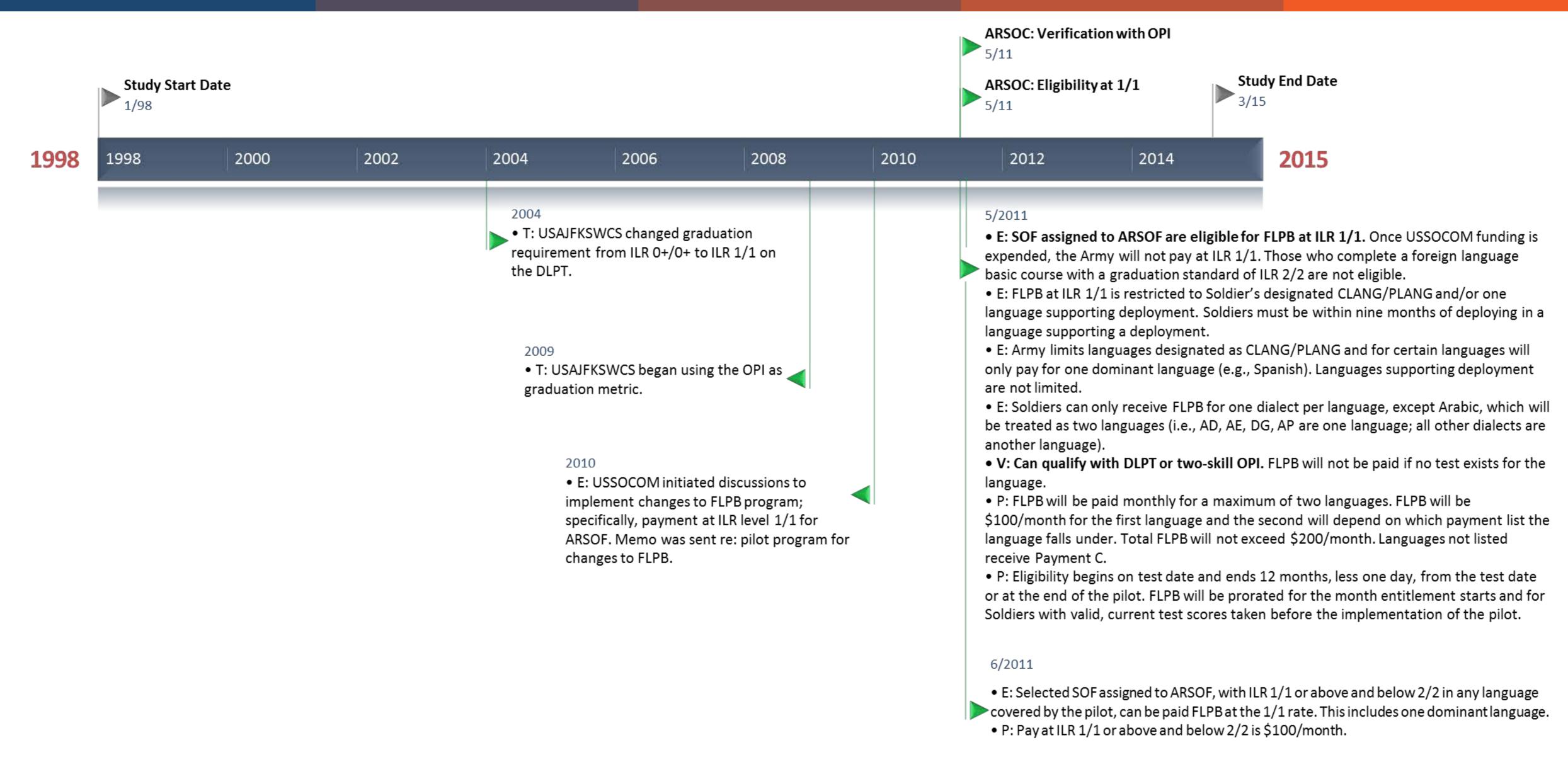
Dimension	Summary
Eligibility Criteria:	 Active and reserve forces are eligible Language category and proficiency level influence eligibility and payment
Verification Process:	 DLPT is the preferred verification test, but OPI is accepted if no DLPT is available Annual recertification is required Some form of waiver is available for deployment Recoupment can occur if certification is lost and payment is not stopped
Payout Type and Amount:	 Annual lump sum or monthly installment options \$12,000 pay ceiling for a single year No more than \$500/month for a single language or \$1,000/month for multiple languages

DoD, 2013

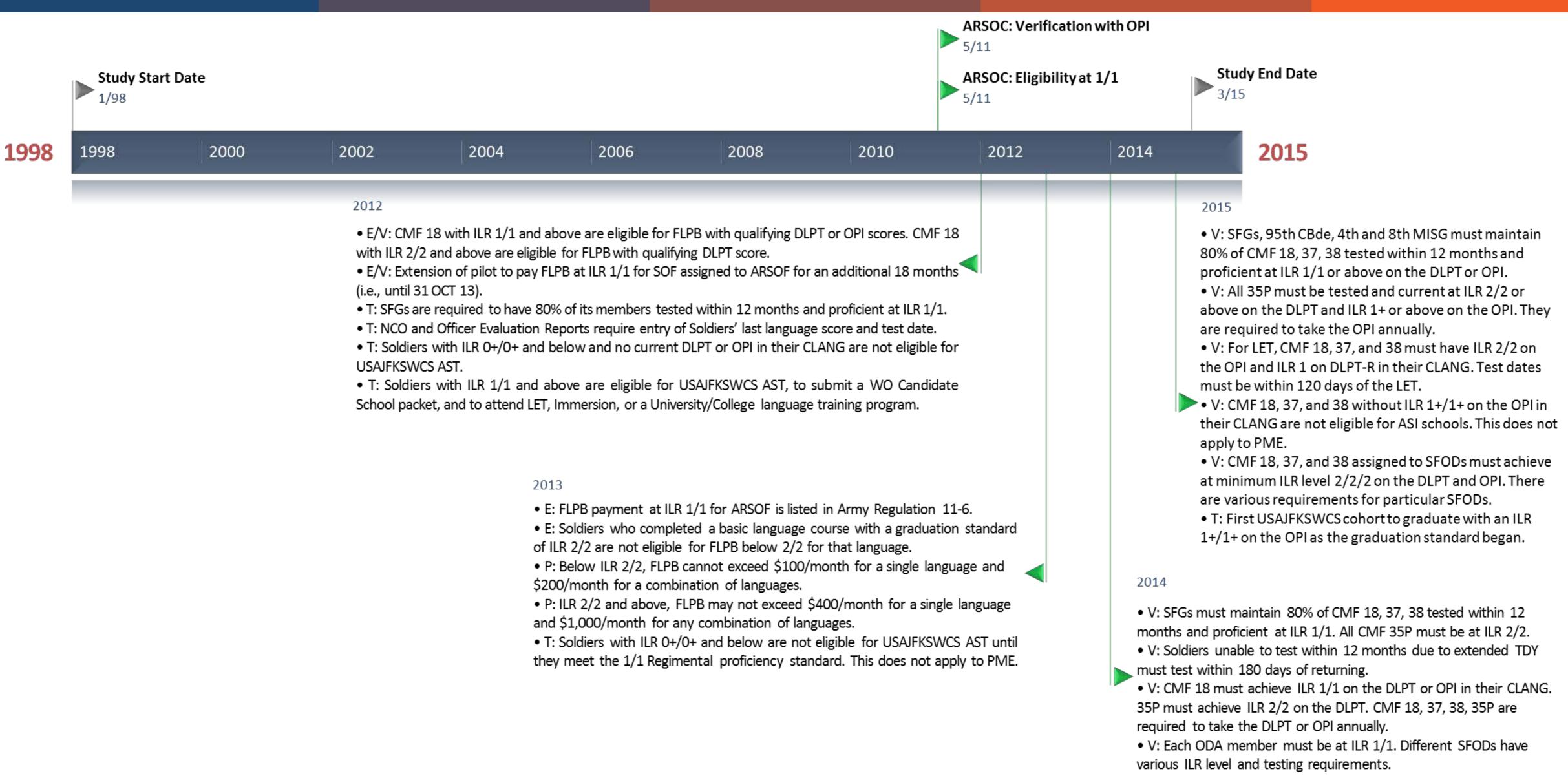
Timing of Eligibility and Verification Changes for SOF



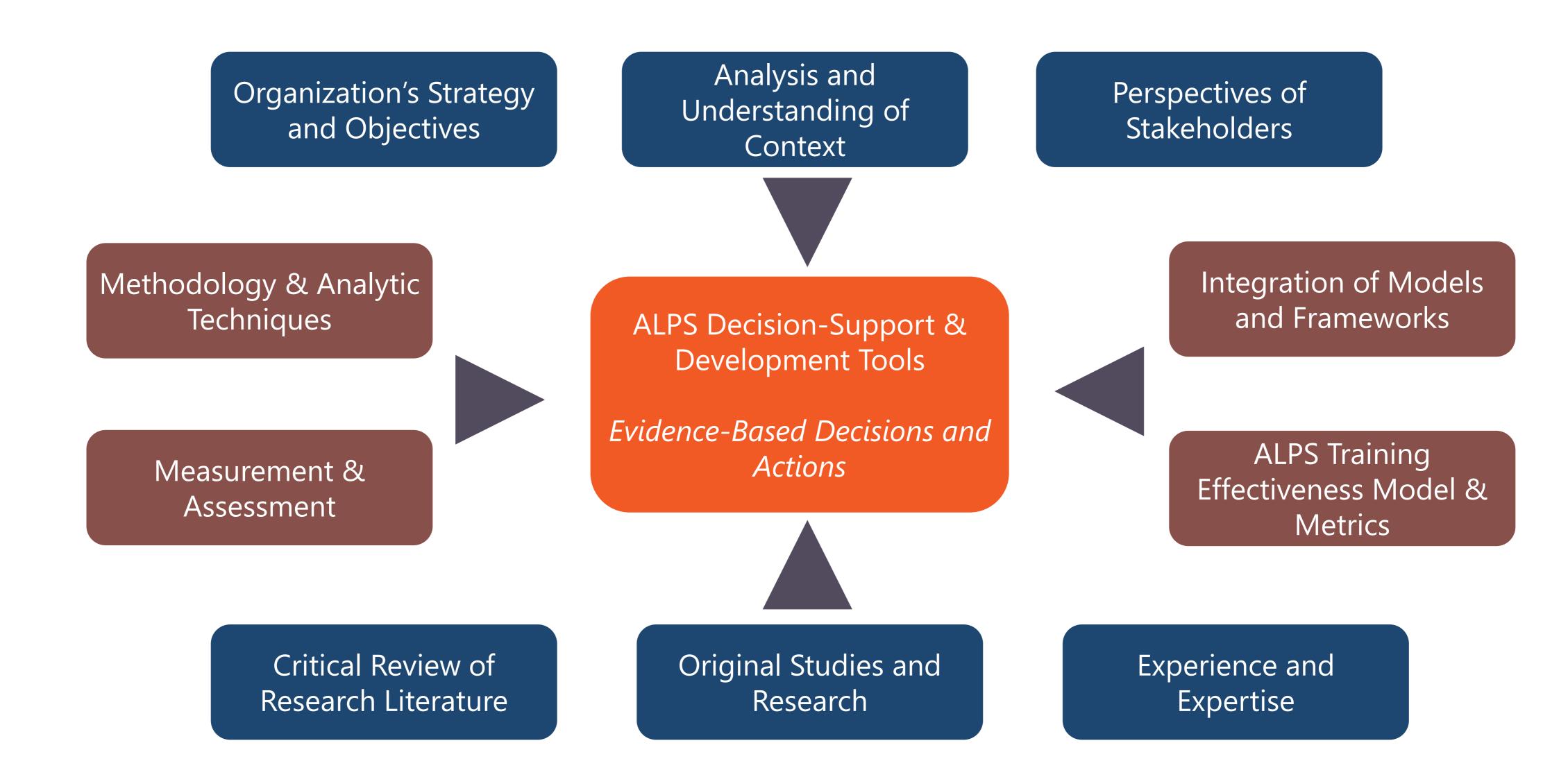
Army Policy Timeline (1998-2011)



Army Policy Timeline (2012-2015)

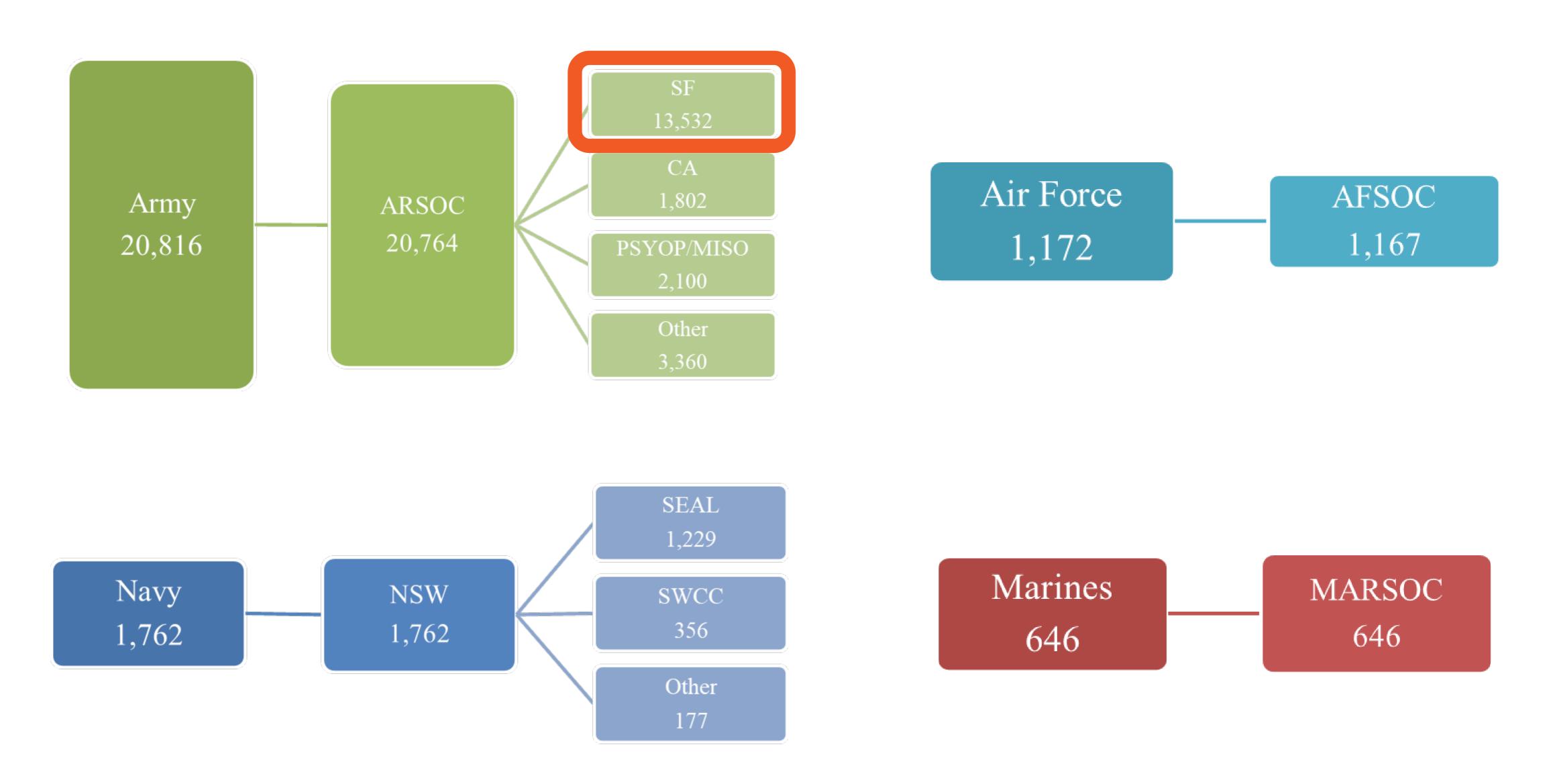


Evidence-Based Decision Model—Three Studies



Study 1: Individual Level Results for SF

Archival Analyses (2007-2015)



Study 1: Methods

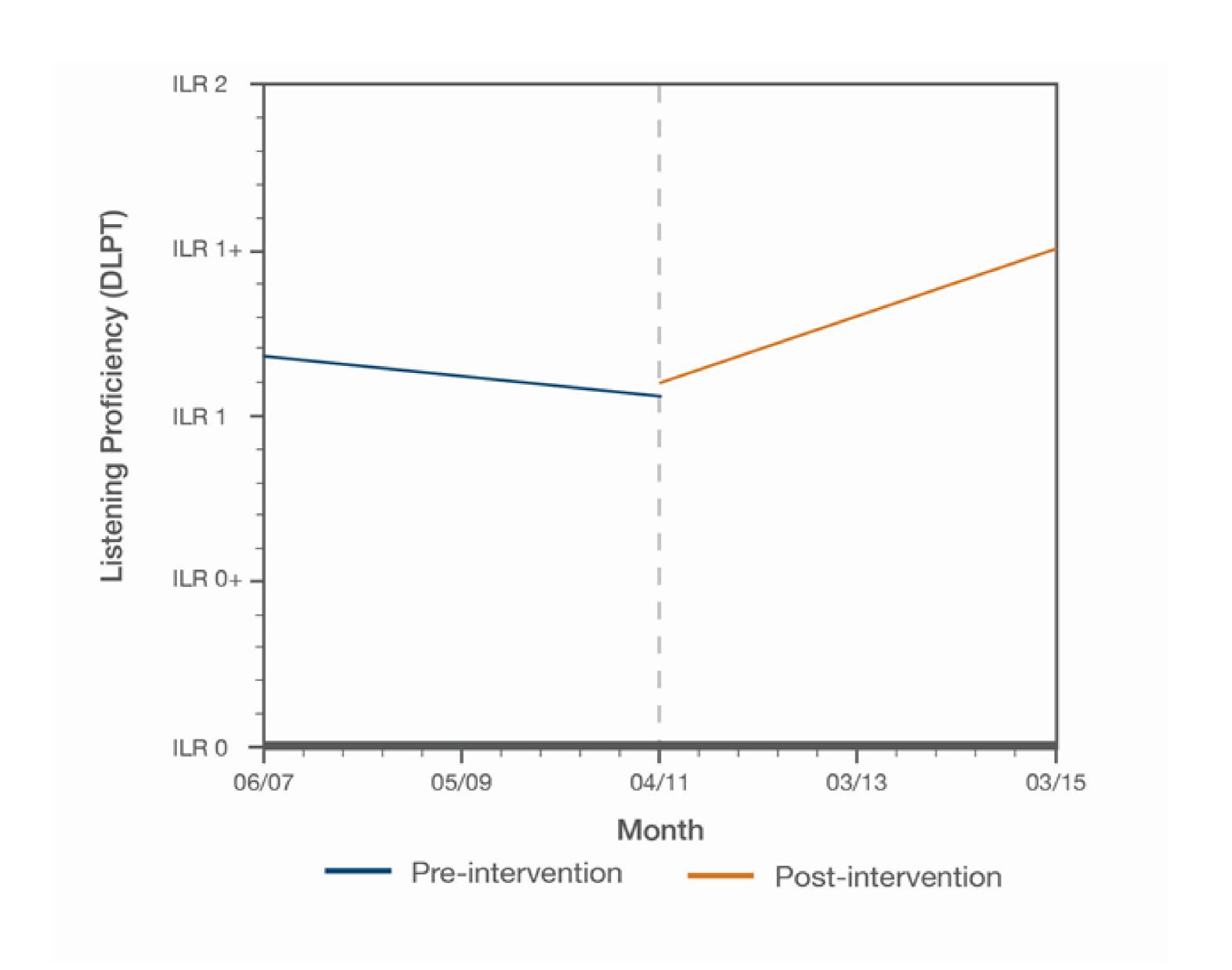
- We restricted the sample to individuals with test scores both pre- and post-intervention
 - 1 JUN 07 31 MAR 15
- Used Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM; multilevel modeling)
 - Piecewise methodology was used to compare the results pre- and post-intervention
- Focused on 5 criteria:
 - Listening proficiency levels over time
 - Reading proficiency levels over time
 - Speaking proficiency levels over time
 - Qualifying for FLPB over time
 - Level of FLPB over time

SF Summary for Piecewise Individual Change Models

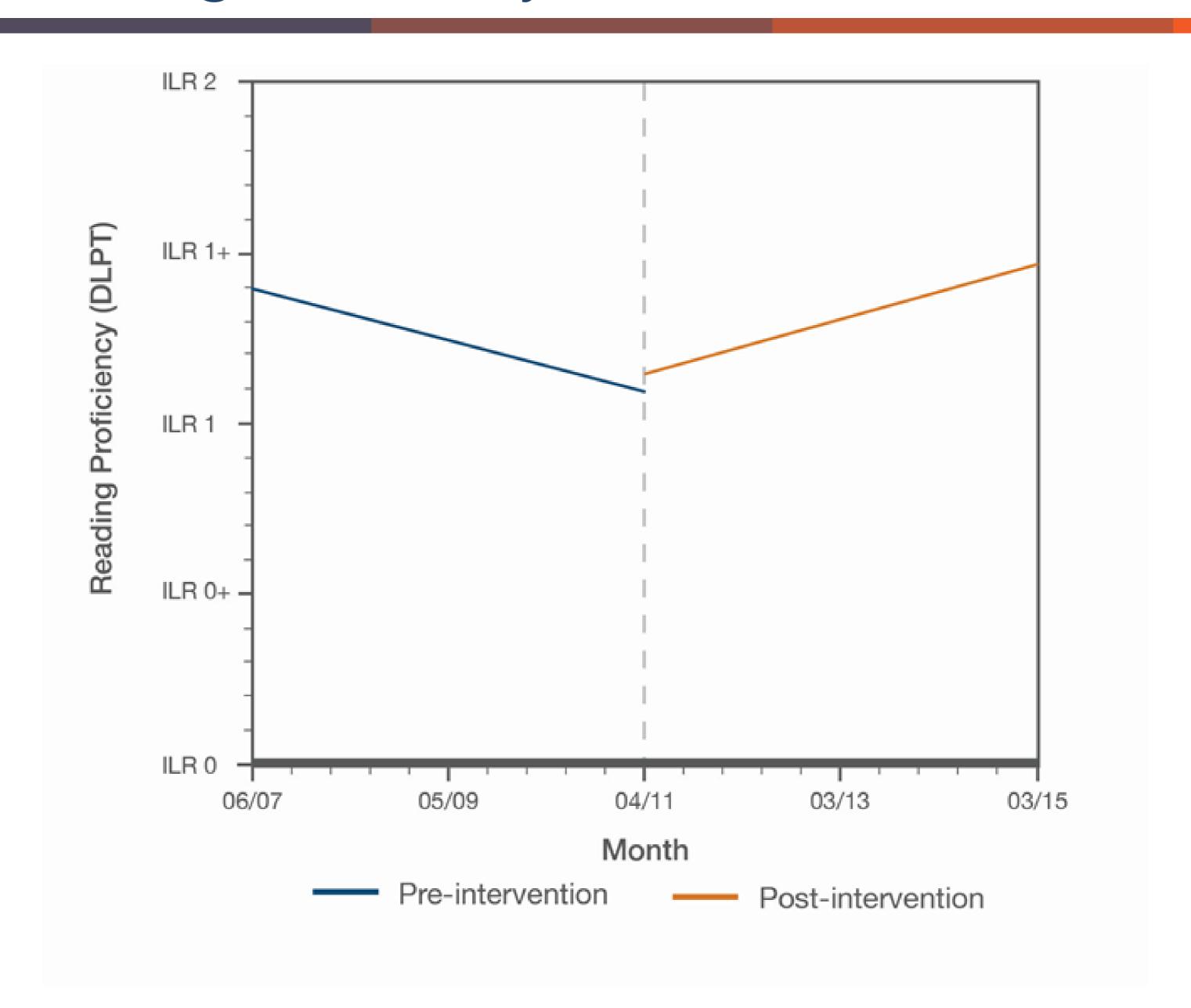
Research Question	Listening Proficiency	Reading Proficiency	Speaking Proficiency	FLPB Qualifying (Yes/No)	FLPB Qualifying Leve
How much variability resides between/within individuals? (ICC)	77% / 23%	82% / 18%	50% / 50%	36% / 64%	61% / 39%
	(T2.1, Null)	(T2.3, Null)	(T2.5, Null)	(T2.7, Null)	(T2.9, Null)
Is there linear change pre-intervention on average? (y ₁₀)	YES, -	YES, -	YES, -	YES, -	YES, -
	(T2.1, P1)	(T2.3, P1)	(T2.5, P1)	(T2.7, P1)	(T2.9, P1)
Is there linear change post-intervention on average? (γ_{20})	YES, +	YES, +	YES, +	YES, +	YES, +
	(T2.1, P1)	(T2.3, P1)	(T2.5, P1)	(T2.7, P1)	(T2.9, P1)
Are there individual differences in linear change during the pre-intervention time period? (τ,,)	YES	YES	YES	NO*	YES
	(T2.1, P2)	(T2.3, P2)	(T2.5, P2)	(T2.7, P2)	(T2.9, P2)
Are there individual differences in linear change during the post-intervention time period? (τ ₂₂)	YES	YES	YES	NO ^a	YES
	(T2.1, P2)	(T2.3, P2)	(T2.5, P2)	(T2.7, P2)	(T2.9, P2)
Is there differential linear change post-intervention on average? (y ₂₀)	YES, +	YES, +	YES, +	YES, +	YES, +
	(T2.1, P3)	(T2.3, P3)	(T2.5, P3)	(T2.7, P3)	(T2.9, P3)
Are there individual differences in differential linear change post-intervention? (τ ₂₂)	YES	YES	YES	NO ^a	YES
	(T2.1, P4)	(T2.3, P4)	(T2.5, P4)	(T2.7, P4)	(T2.9, P4)
Are individual differences in linear change pre-intervention explained by cognitive ability? (y,,)	YES, -	YES, -	YES, +	YES, -	NO
	(T2.2, P4)	(T2.4, P4)	(T2.6, P4)	(T2.8, P4)	(T2.10, P4)
Are individual differences in linear change pre-intervention explained by language difficulty? (y,,)	YES, -	YES, -	NO	YES, -	YES, -
	(T2.2, P4)	(T2.4, P4)	(T2.6, P4)	(T2.8, P4)	(T2.10, P4)
Are individual differences in linear change	NO	NO	NO	YES, +	YES, +
post-intervention explained by cognitive ability? (y ₂₁)	(T2.2, P4)	(T2.4, P4)	(T2.6, P4)	(T2.8, P4)	(T2.10, P4)
Are individual differences in linear change post-intervention explained by language difficulty? (γ ₂₂)	YES, +	YES, -	NO	YES, +	YES, +
	(T2.2, P4)	(T2.4, P4)	(T2.6, P4)	(T2.8, P4)	(T2.10, P4)

Note. T# = table number; P# = piecewise model number; a. Tests of random slopes in HGLM's for discrete outcomes may be unreliable

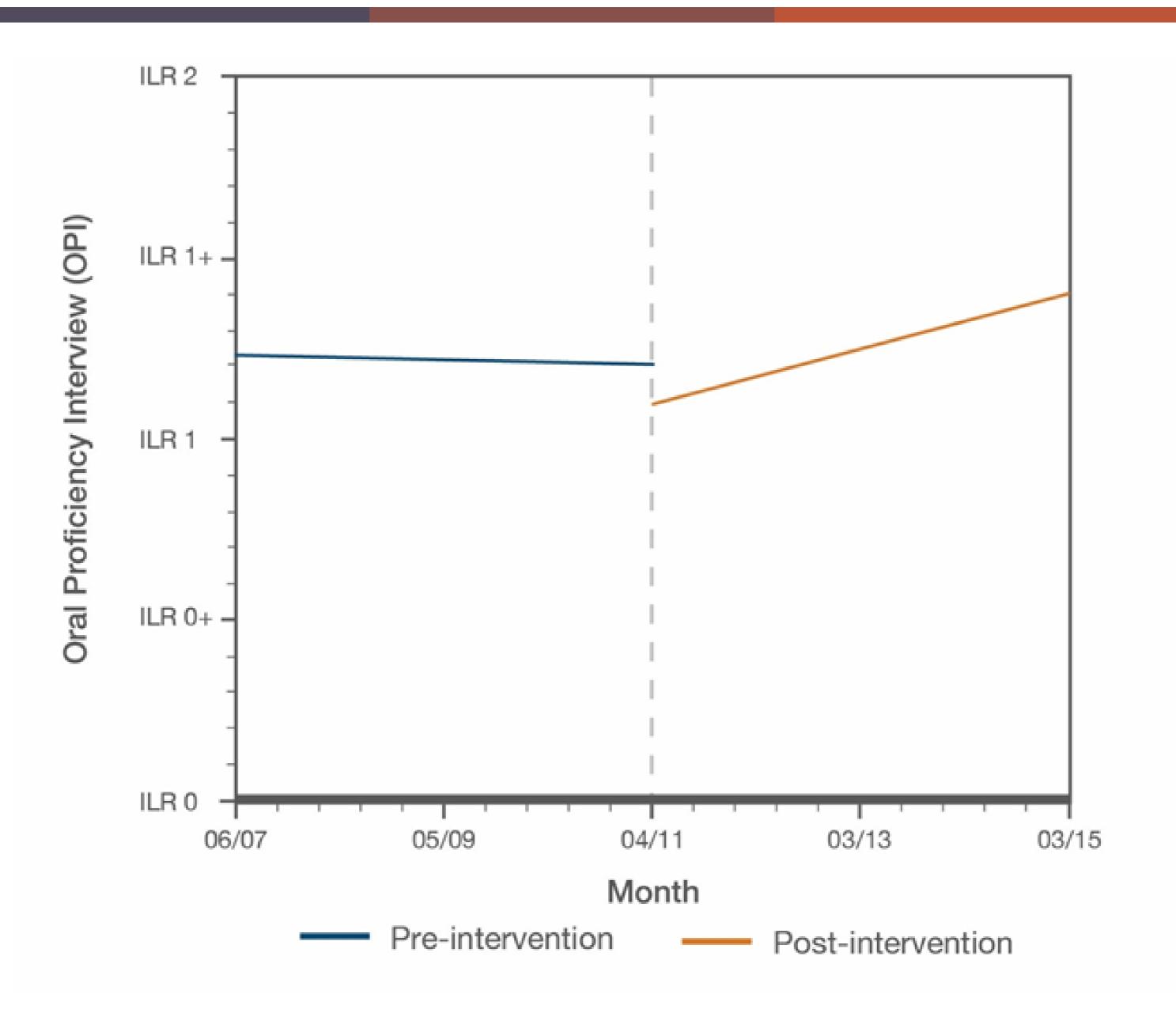
SF: Change in Listening Proficiency Pre-/Post-Intervention



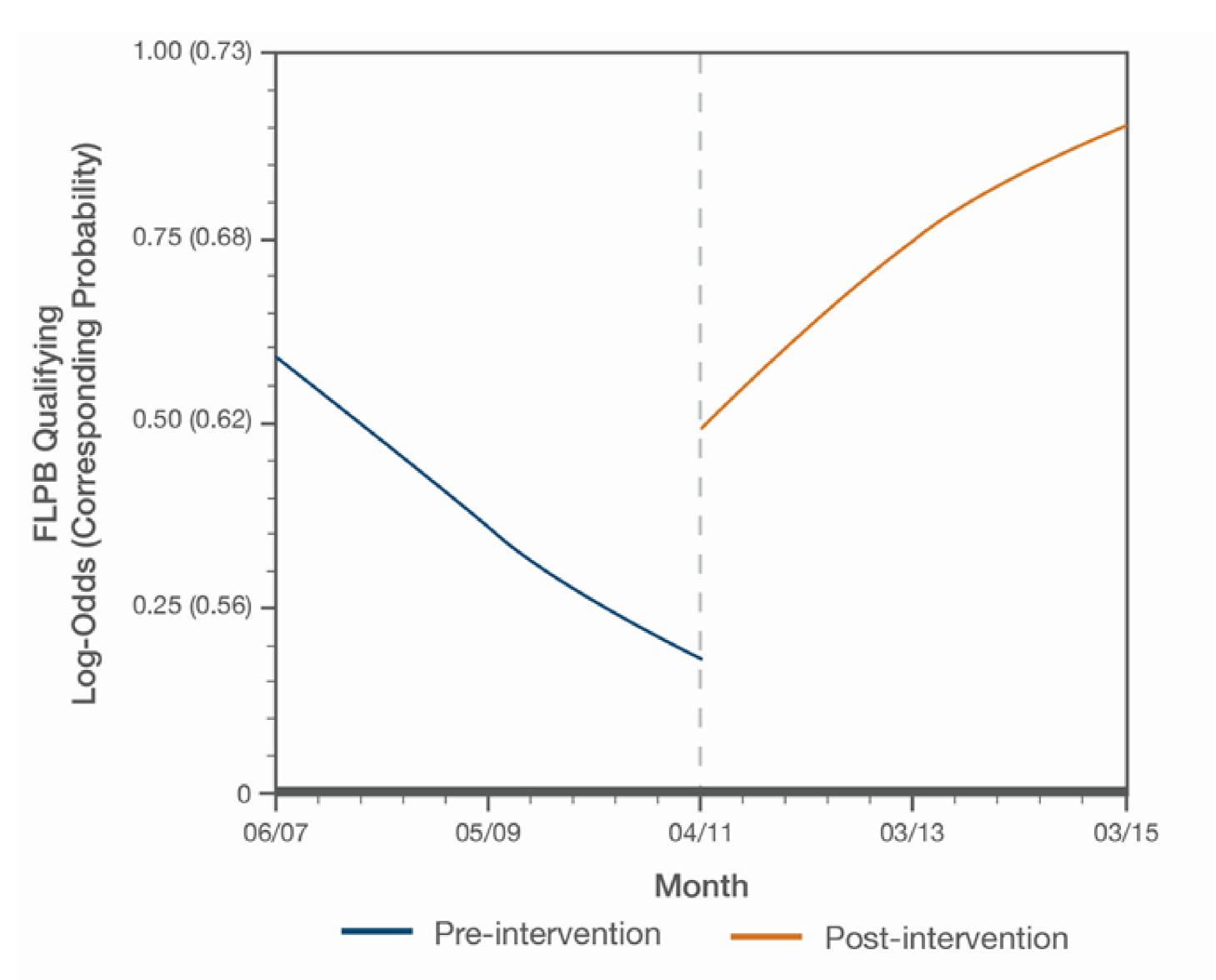
SF: Change in Reading Proficiency Pre-/Post-Intervention



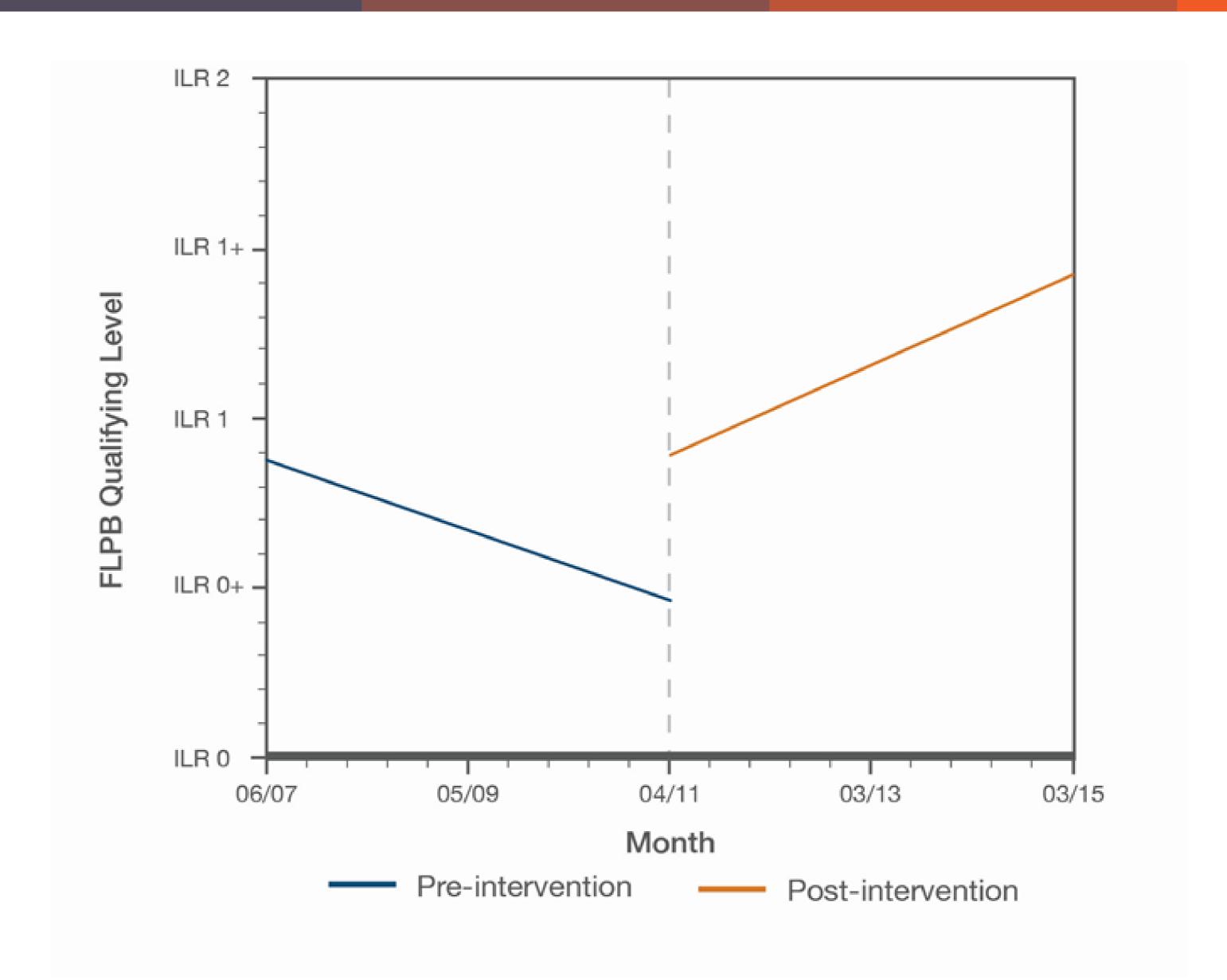
SF: Change in Speaking Proficiency Pre-/Post-Intervention



SF: Change in Log-Odds of FLPB Qualifying



SF: Change in FLPB Qualifying Level Pre-/Post-Intervention



Study 1: SF Summary

- In general, pre-intervention, there was a decrease over time in proficiency and FLPB qualifying
- Post-intervention, individuals who tested on multiple occasions tended to:
 - Improve their proficiency
 - Increase the odds of FLPB qualification
 - Increase qualifying levels over time
- For most outcome variables, there were significant individual differences in rates of linear change pre- & post-intervention
- Across outcome variables, average rates of change were significantly more positive post-intervention

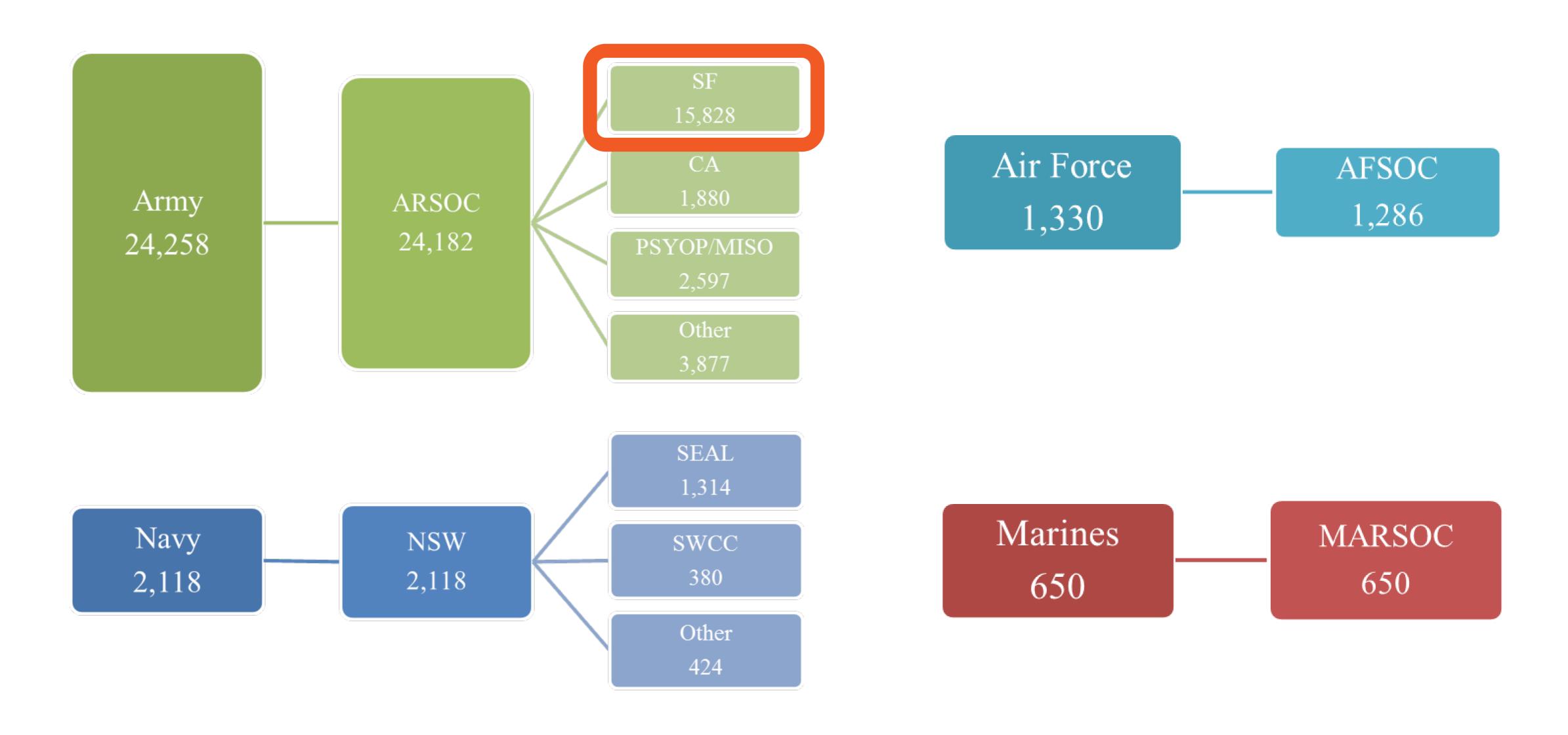
Study 1: SF Summary (continued)

- Individual differences pre-intervention:
 - Higher cognitive ability tended to be associated with less positive trends in listening, reading, & odds of FLPB qualifying
 - Greater language difficulty had a significant negative relationship with listening, reading, odds of FLPB qualifying, & qualifying level
- Individual differences post-intervention:
 - Greater language difficulty had a positive relationship with listening, but negative with reading
 - Greater language difficulty had a positive relationship with odds of FLPB qualifying & qualifying level

 Language difficulty had no association with rates of change in speaking pre- or postintervention

Study 2: Group Level Results for SF

Archival Analyses (1998-2015)

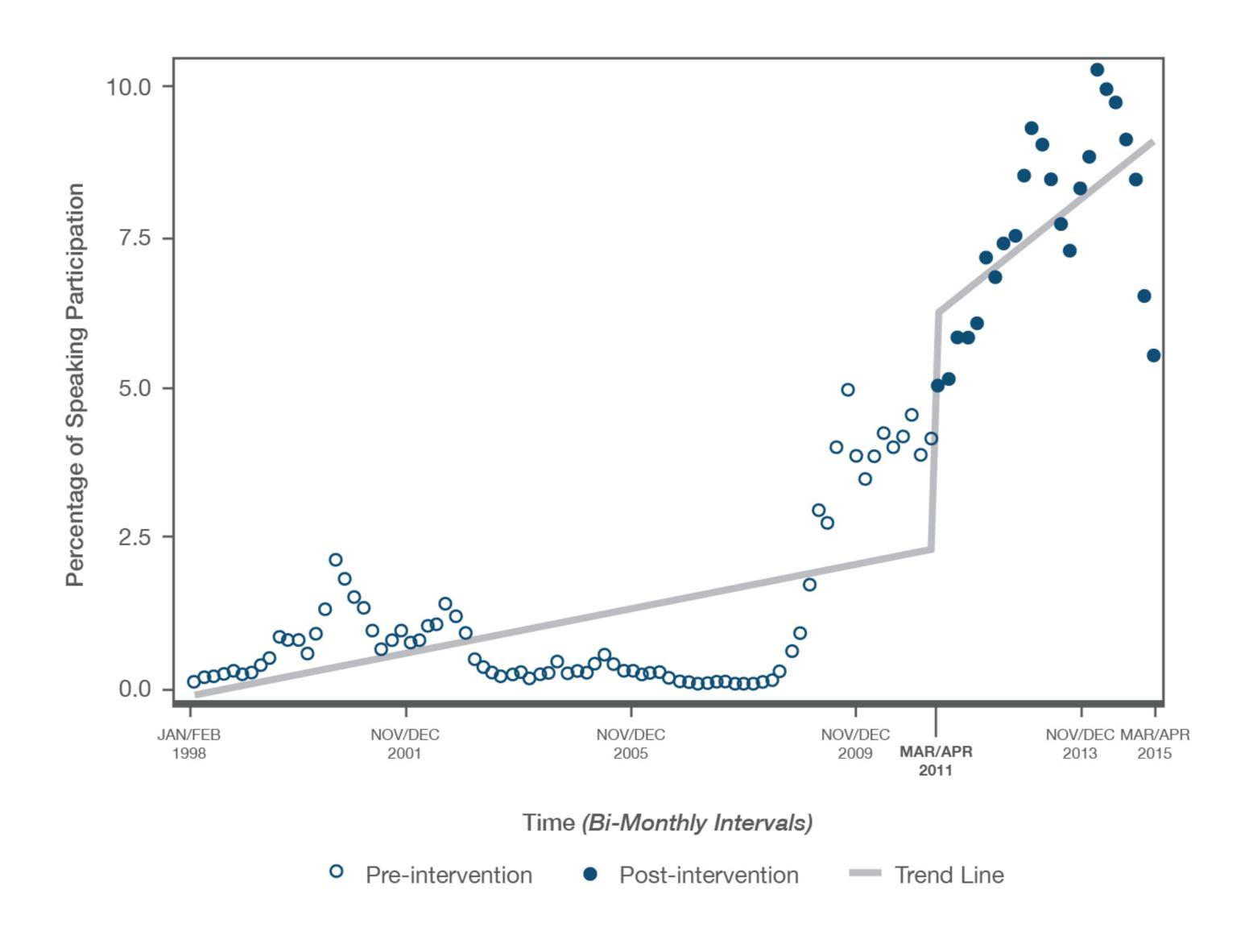


Study 2: Methods

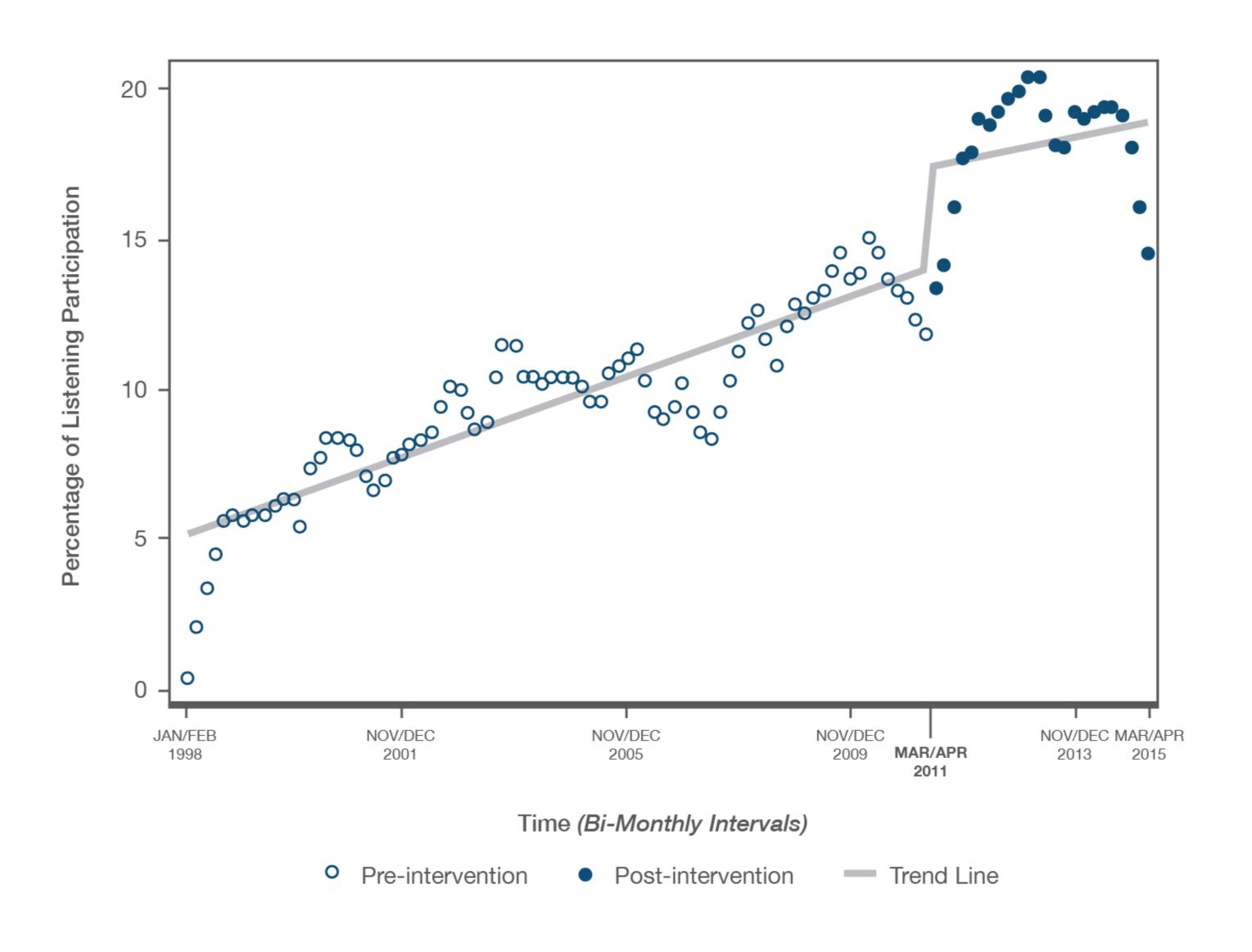
- Captured as much testing data as possible from 1998 March 2015
- Employed several types of time series analysis, before deciding on regression discontinuity time series analysis
 - We chose bimonthly (every two months) as our interval

- Organized data into 6 organizational criteria:
 - Objective 1: Participation in testing (percentage participation per time interval)
 - Objective 2: Average age of test scores (days between tests)
 - Objective 3: Average Proficiency (per time interval per skill)
 - Objective 4: Percentage of test takers at ILR level per time interval
 - Objective 5: Percentage "qualified" at each FLPB level per time interval
 - Objective 6: Percentage of persons qualifying for money per time interval

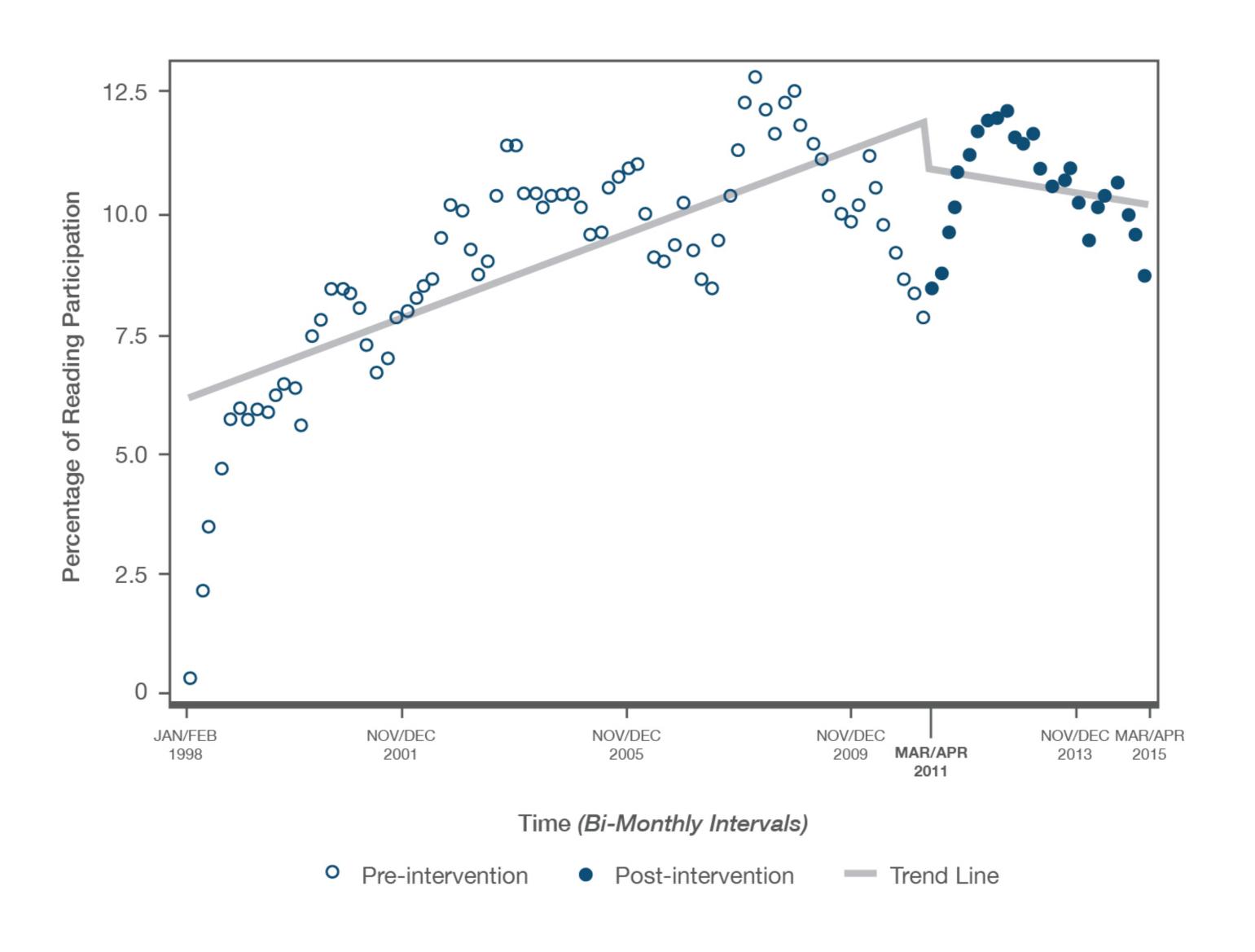
Percentage of Speaking Test Participation for SF



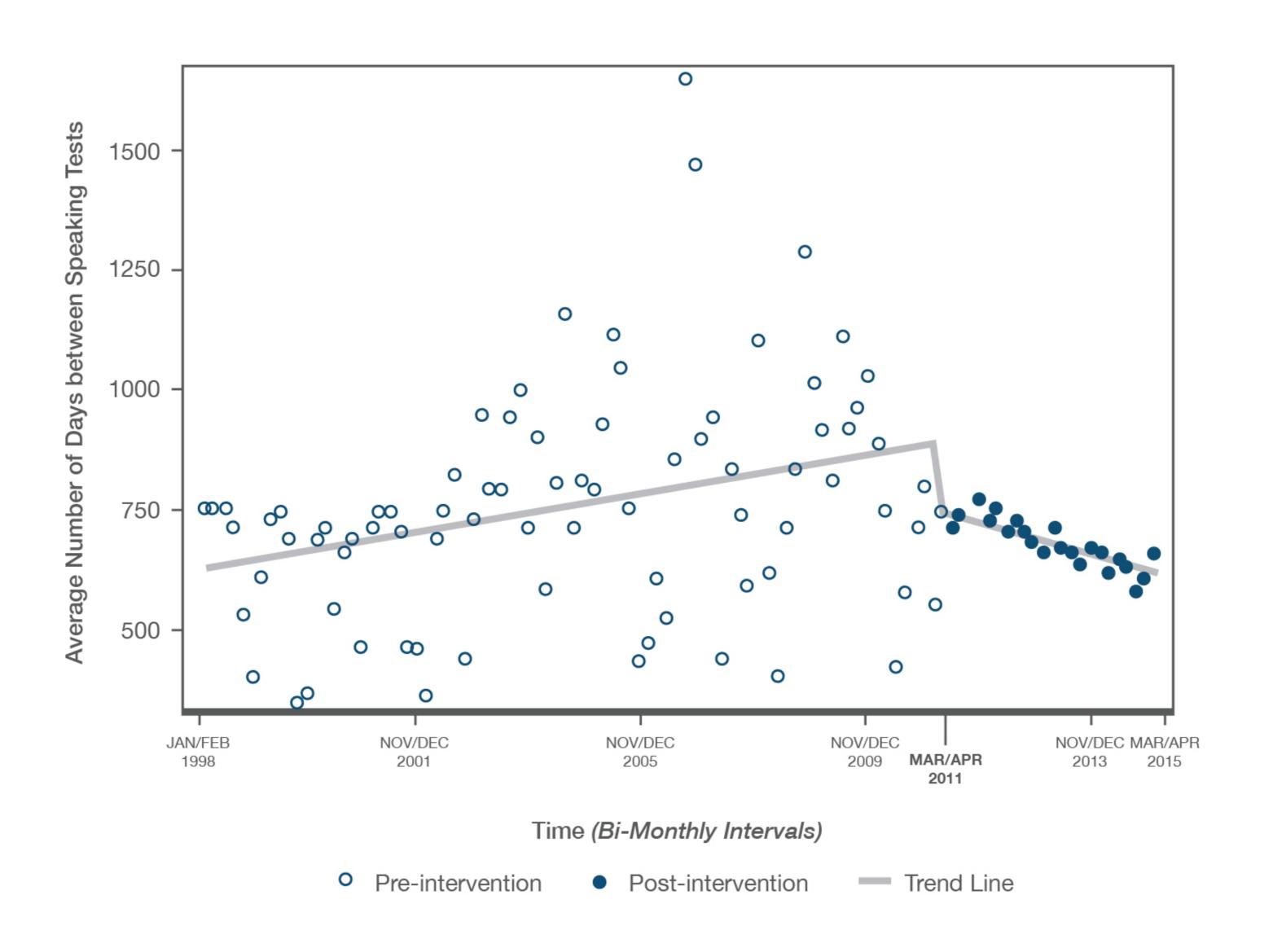
Percentage of Listening Test Participation for SF



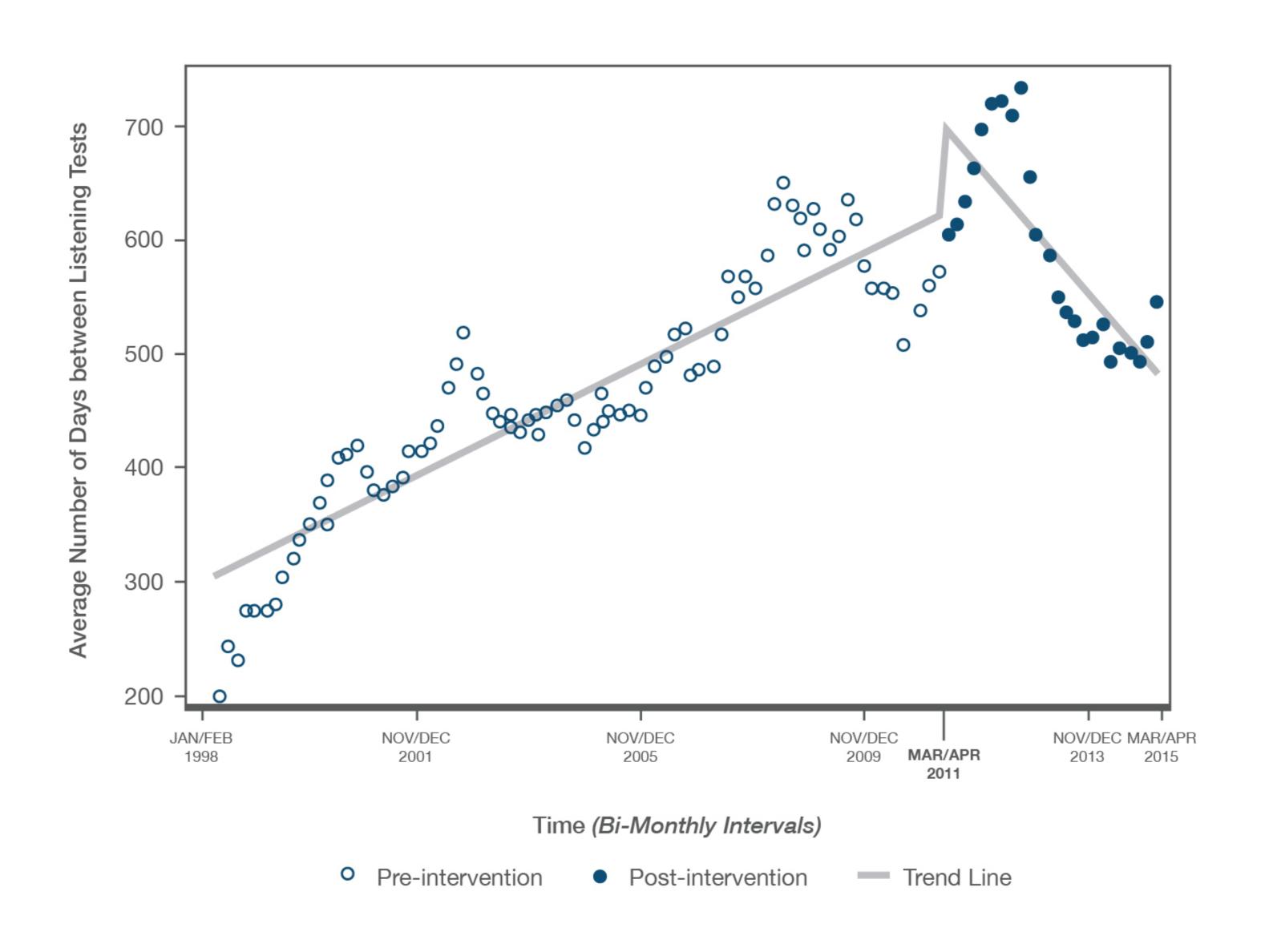
Percentage of Reading Test Participation for SF



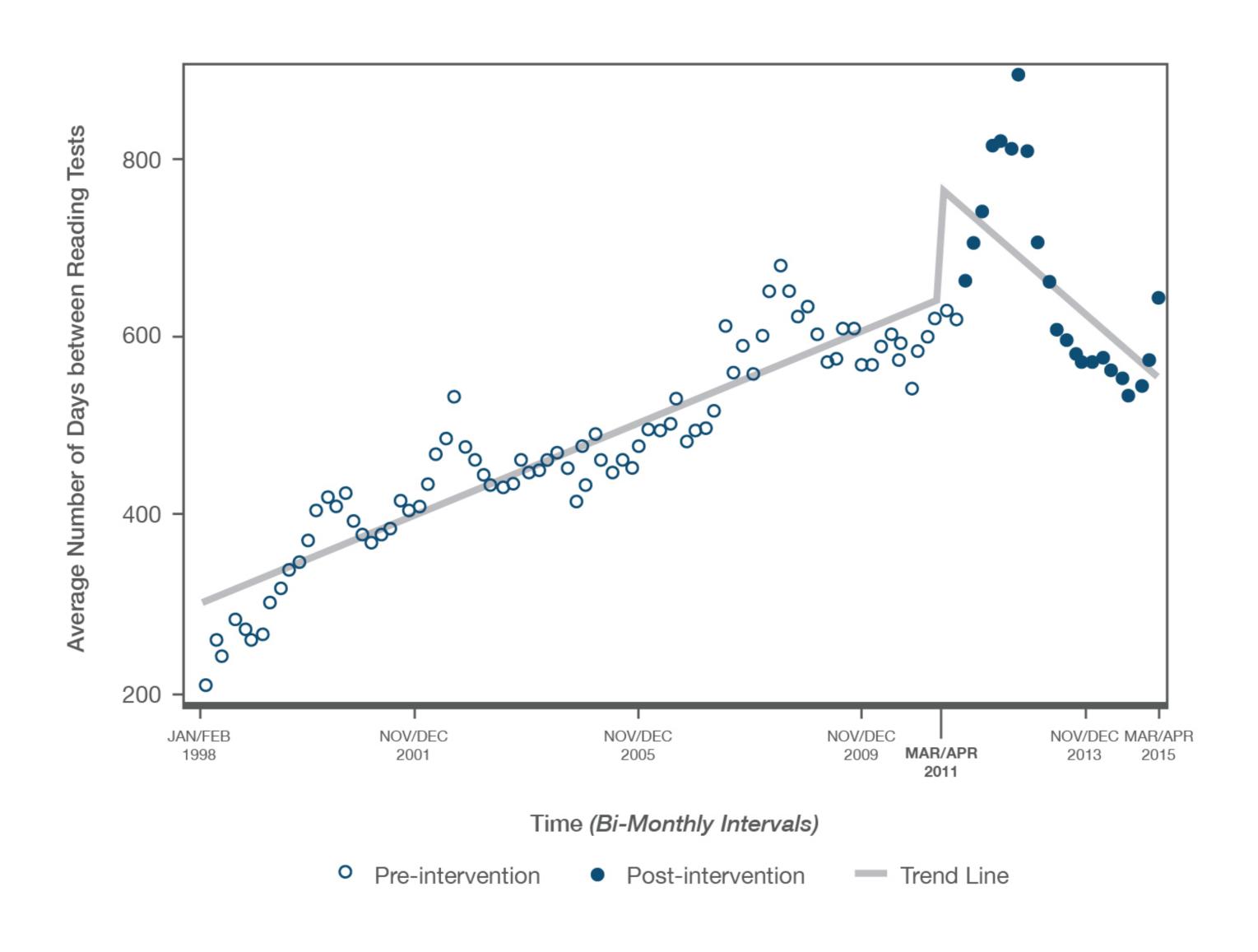
Average Number of Days between Speaking Tests for SF



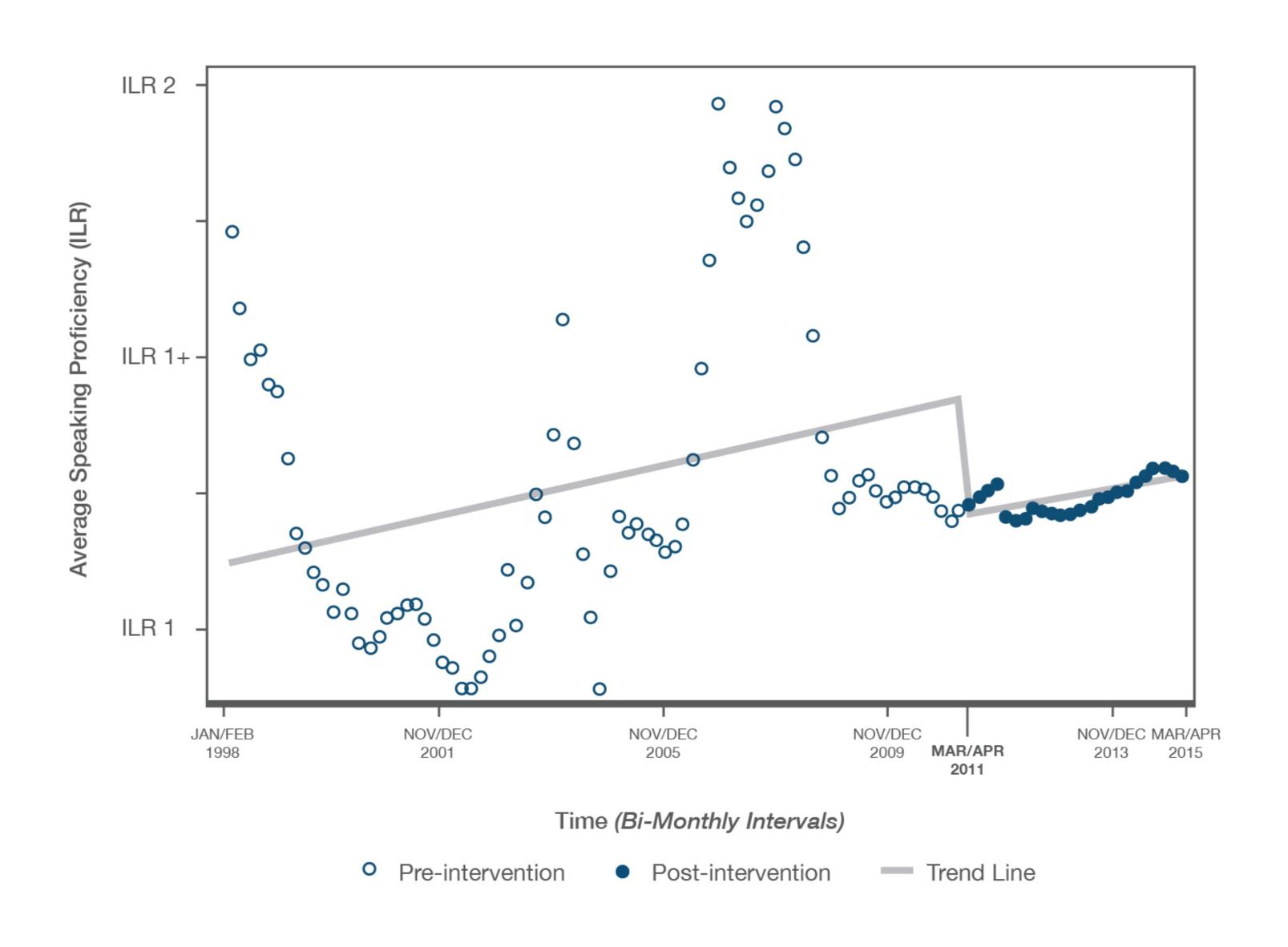
Average Number of Days between Listening Tests for SF



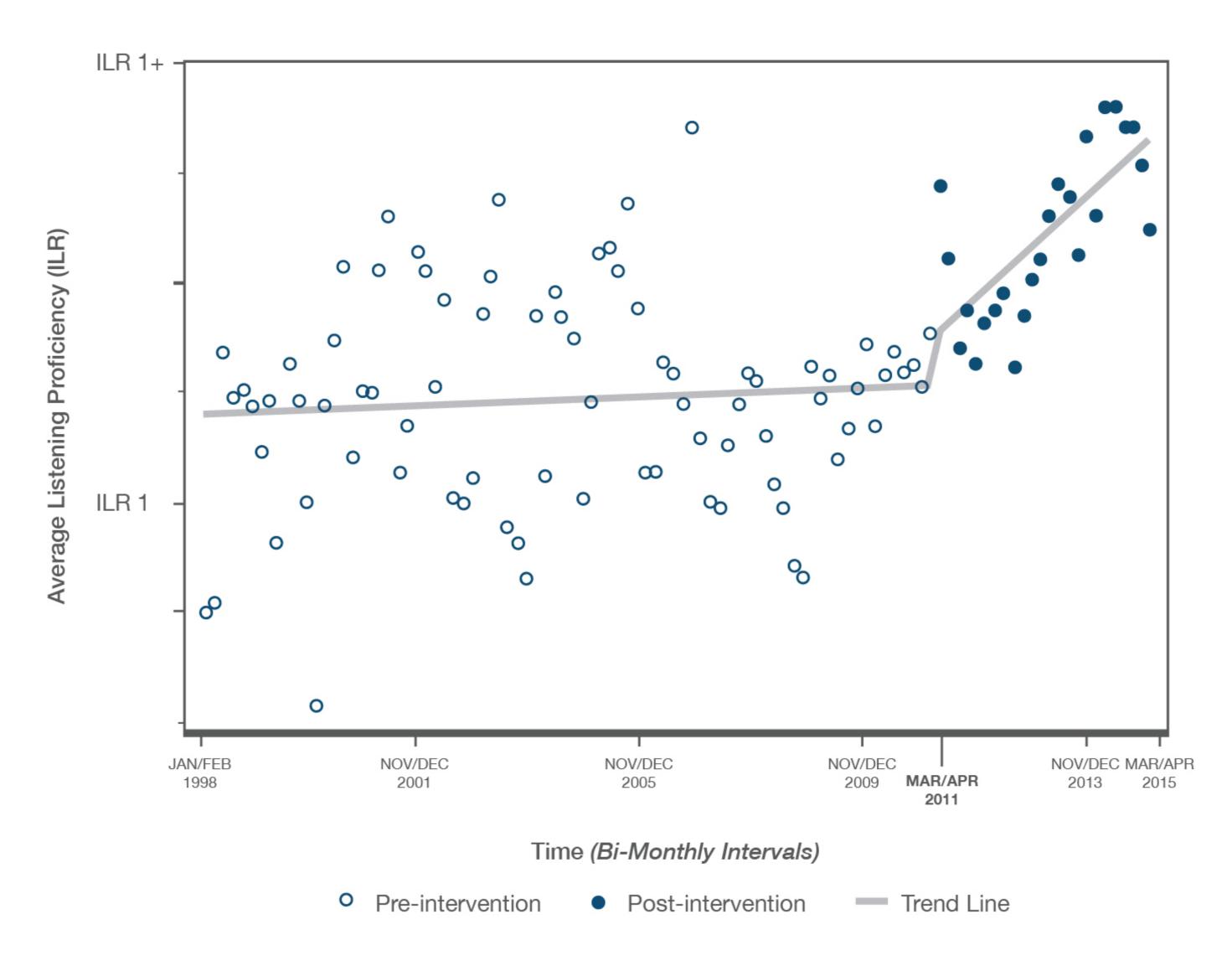
Average Number of Days between Reading Tests for SF



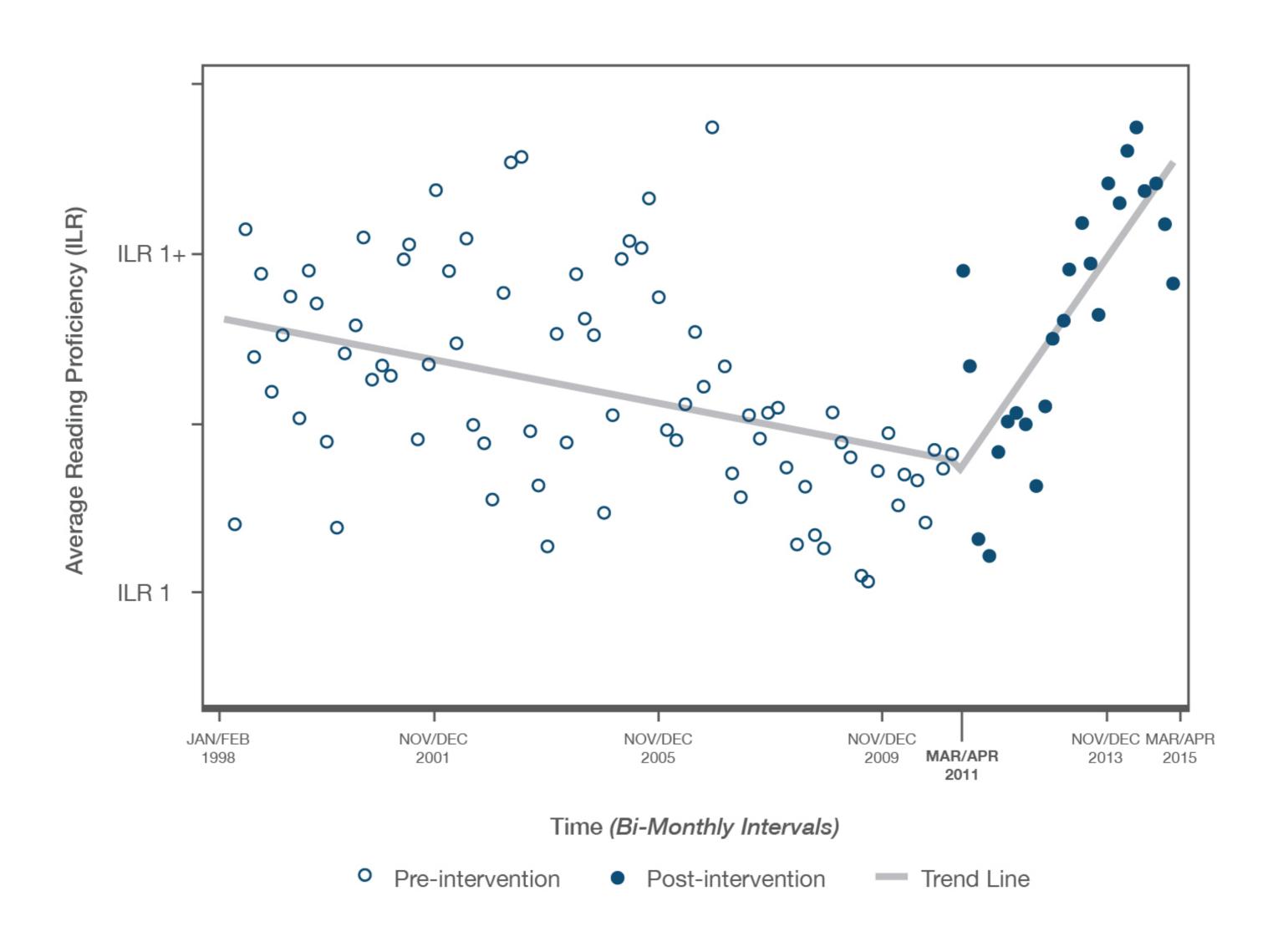
Average Speaking Proficiency for SF



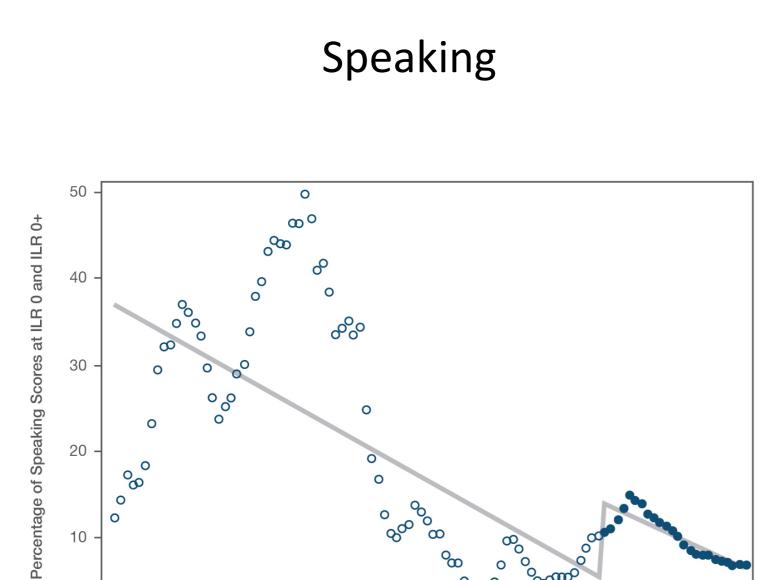
Average Listening Proficiency for SF



Average Reading Proficiency for SF



Percentage of Scores at ILR 0+ for SF



NOV/DEC

Time (Bi-Monthly Intervals)

Pre-intervention
 Post-intervention
 Trend Line

NOV/DEC

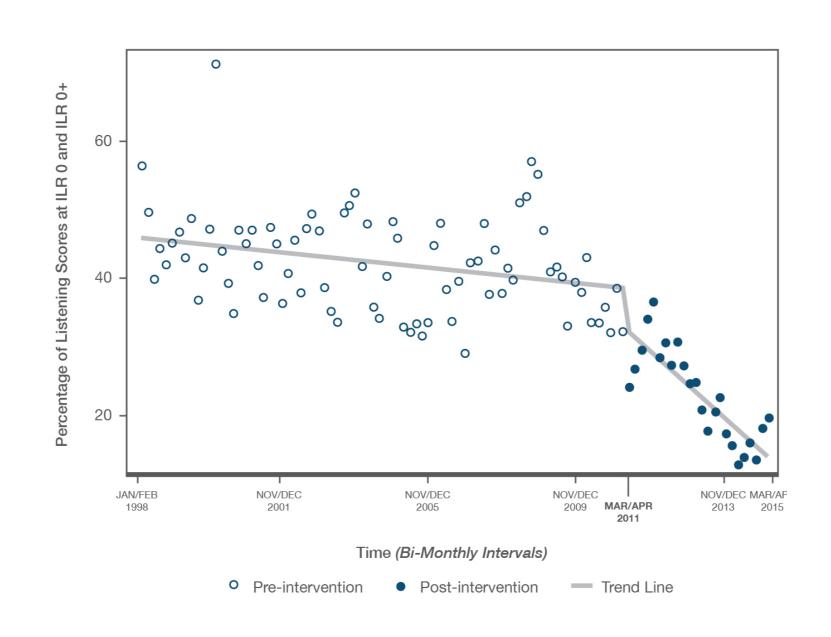
NOV/DEC

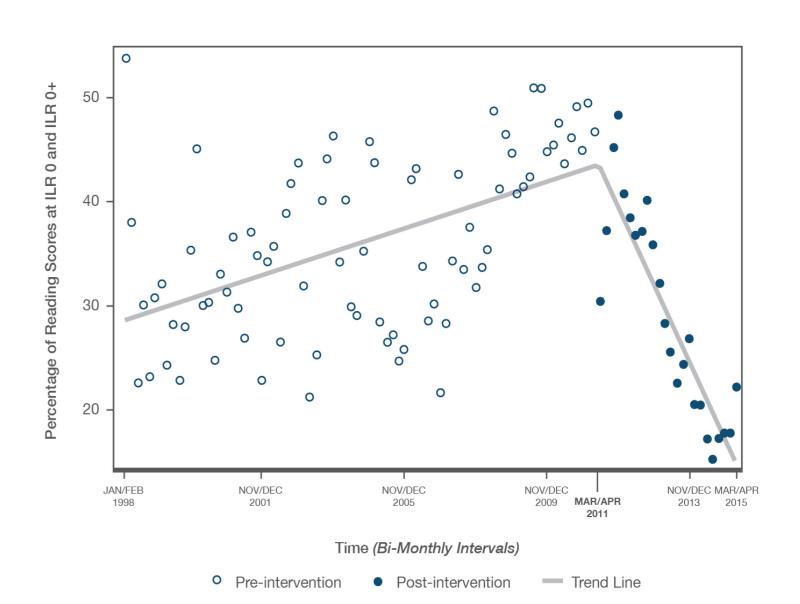
2009 MAR/APR

NOV/DEC MAR/AF

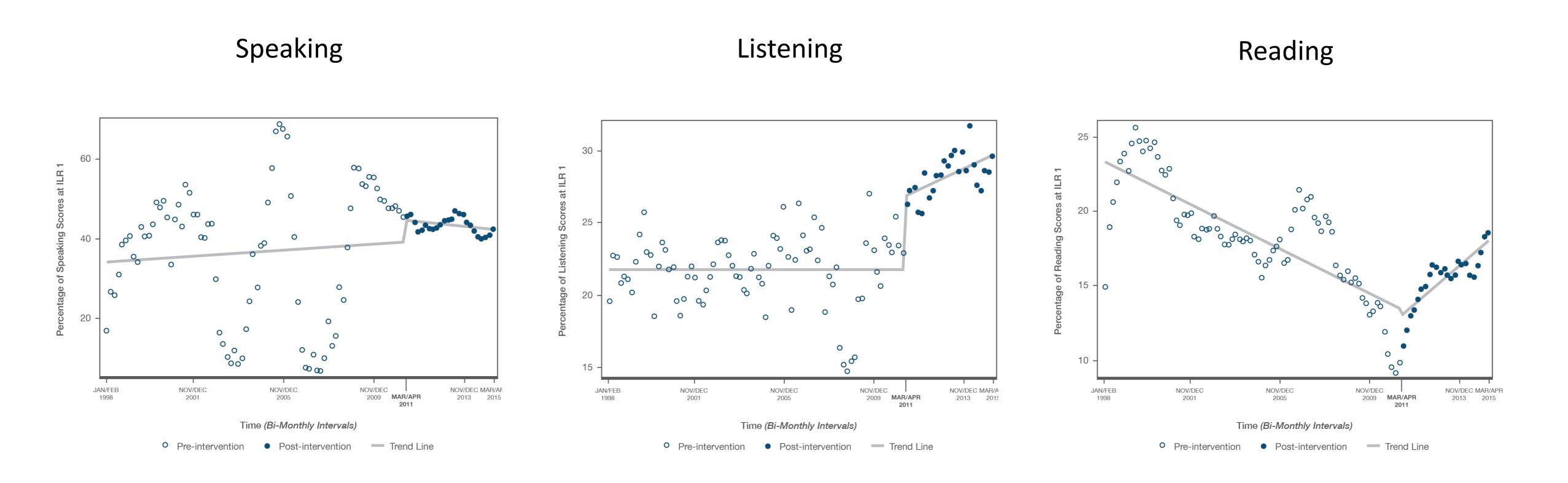


Reading

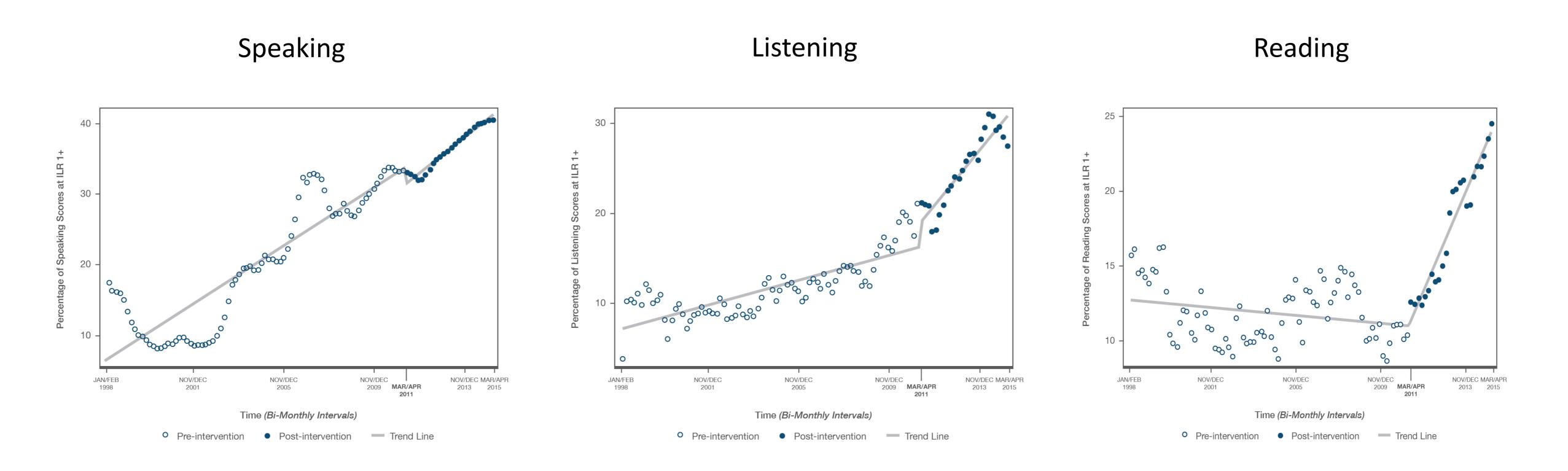




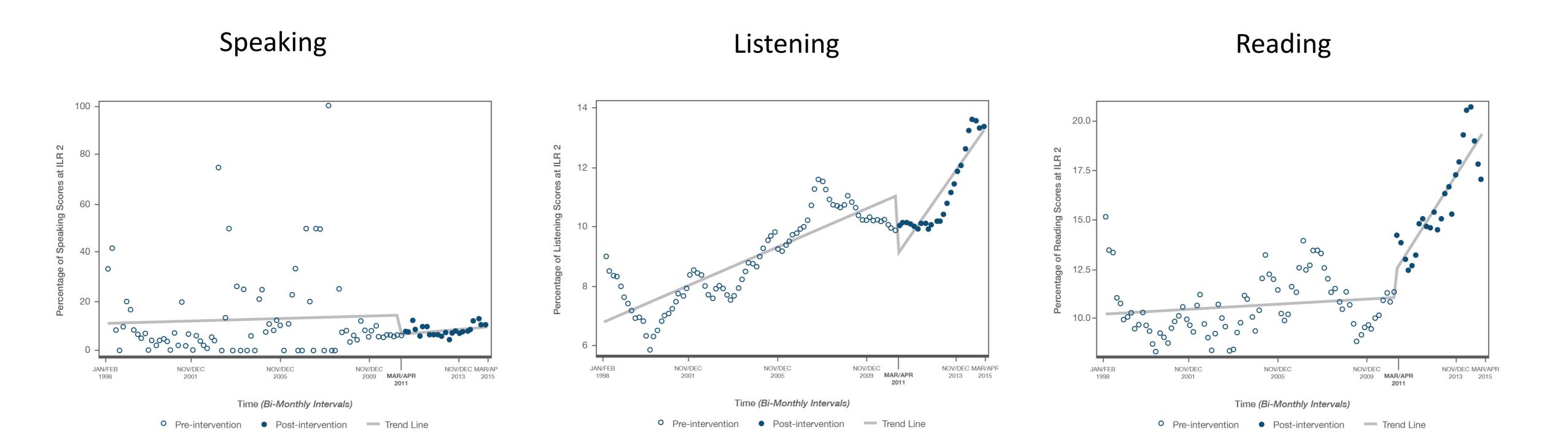
Percentage of Scores at ILR 1 for SF



Percentage of Scores at ILR 1+ for SF

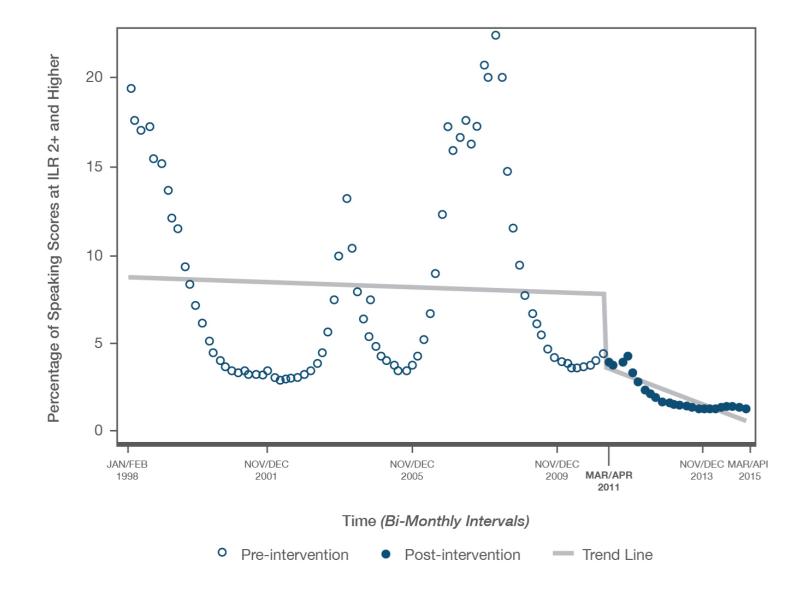


Percentage of Scores at ILR 2 for SF

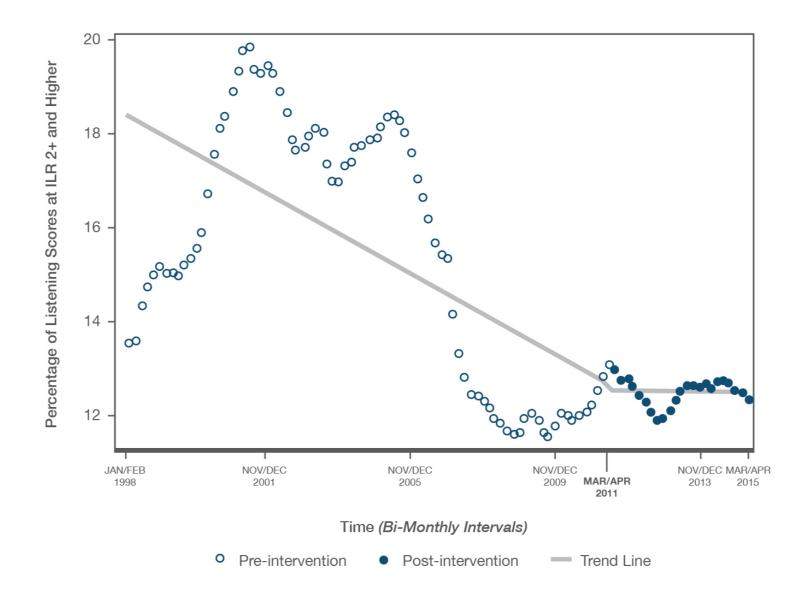


Percentage of Scores at ILR 2+ and higher for SF

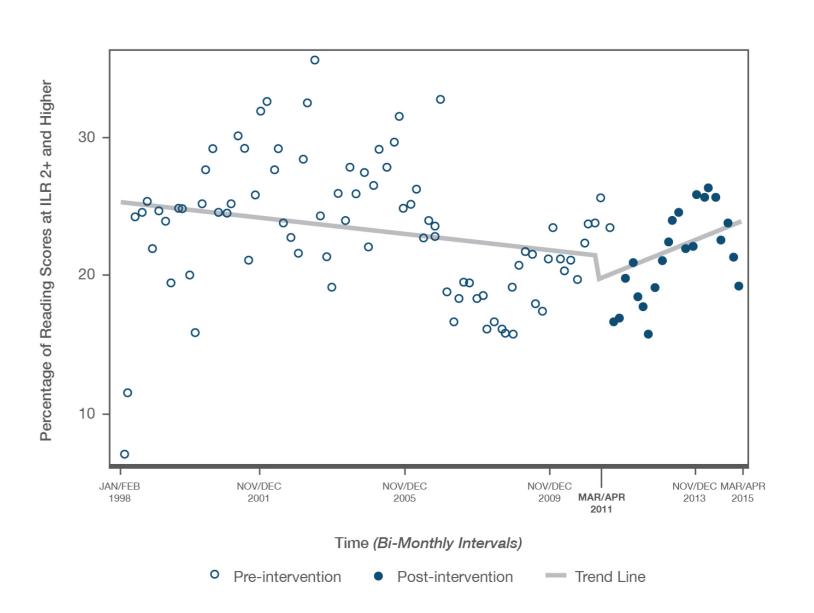




Listening

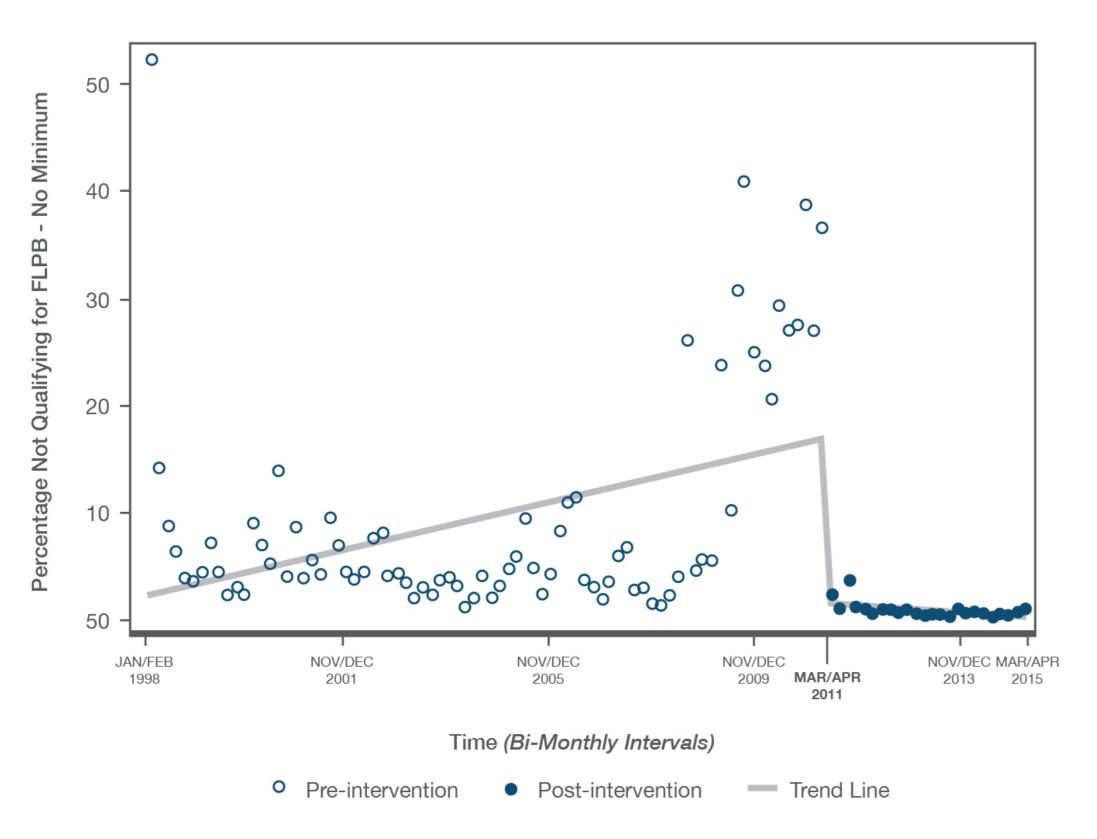


Reading

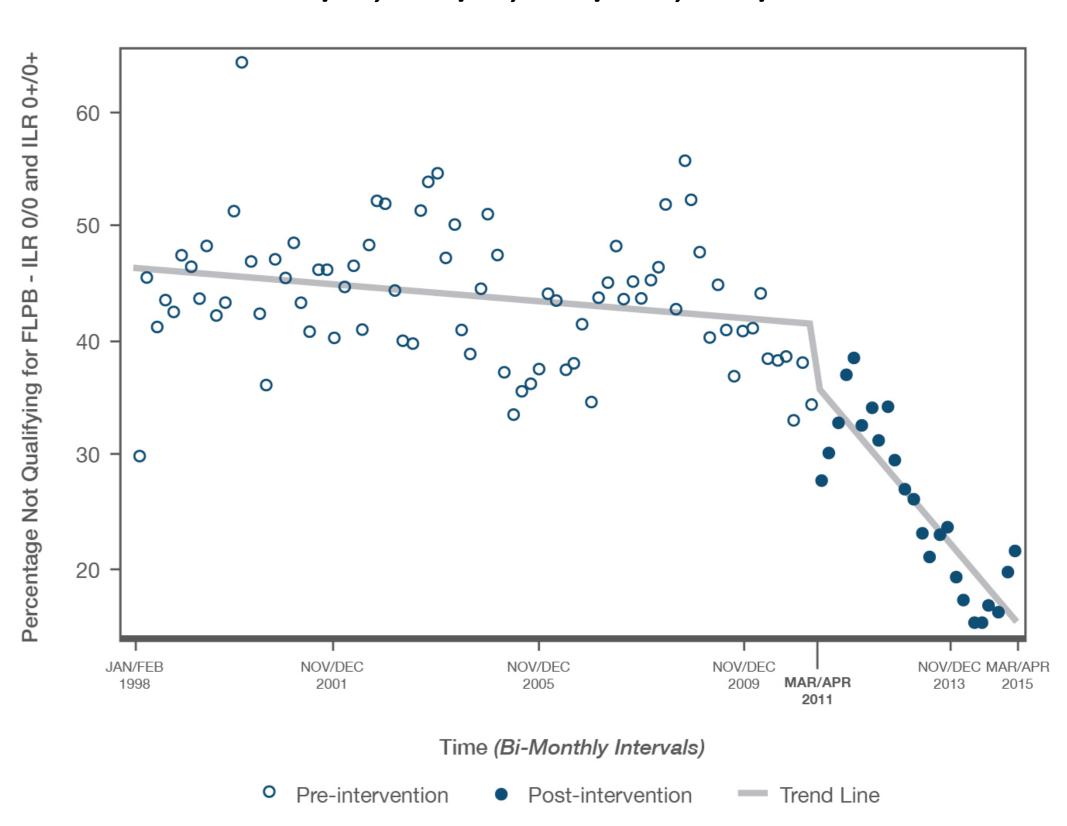


Percentages of Not Qualified for FLPB in SF

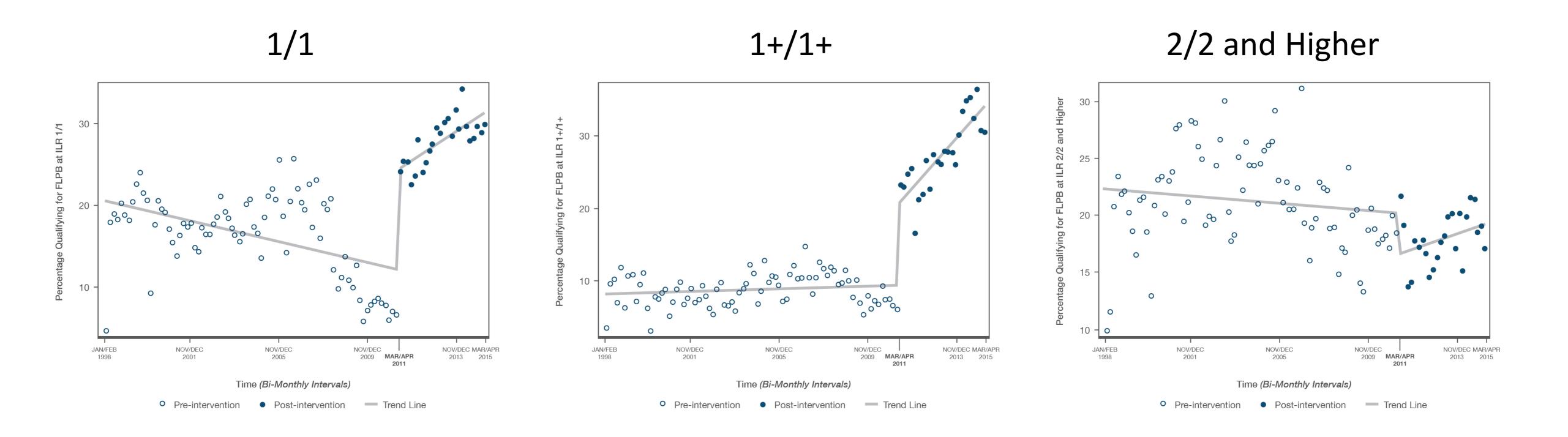
No Minimum Requirements



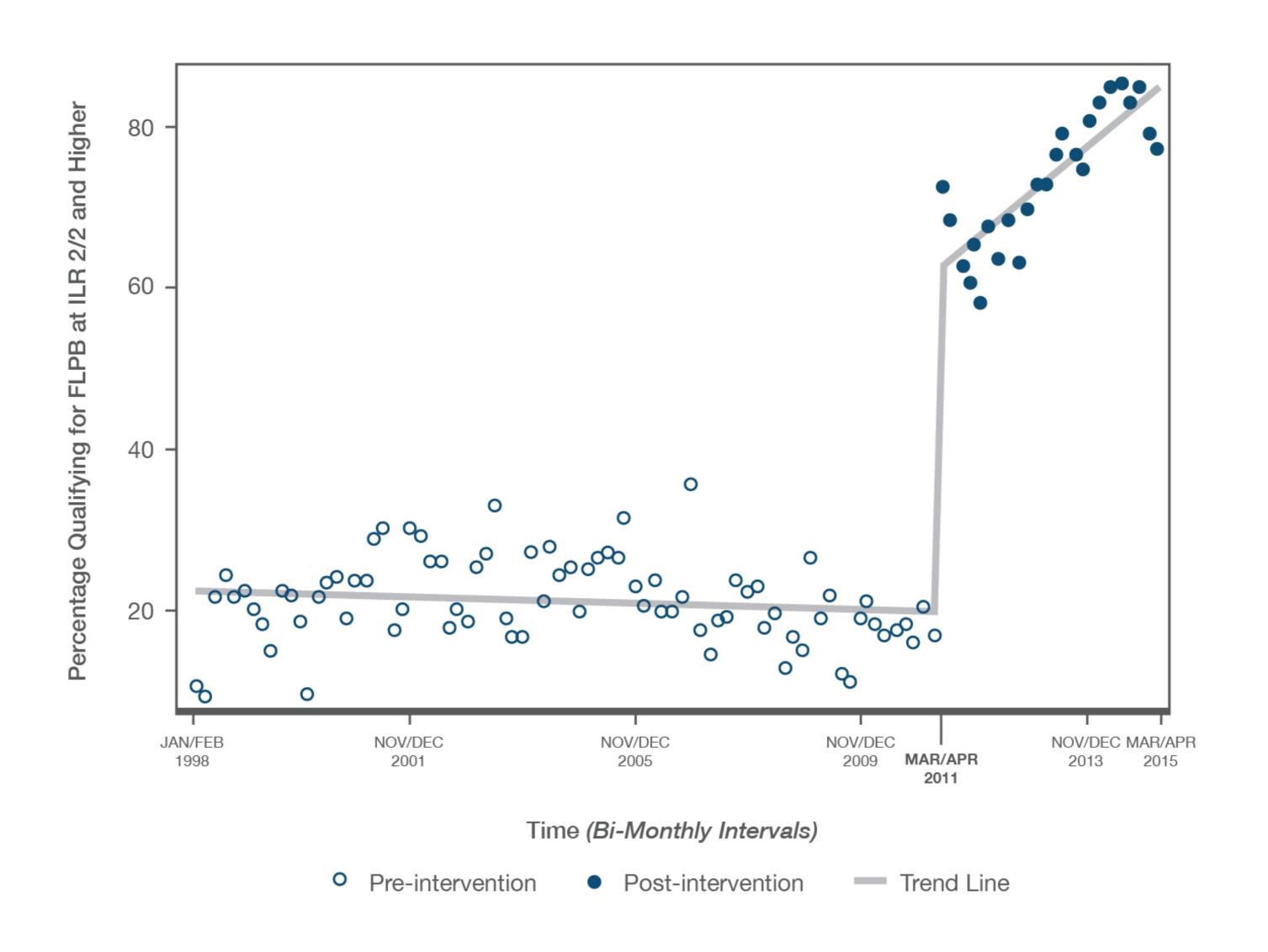
0/0, 0+/0, 0+/0+, 0+/1



Percentages of "Qualified" for FLPB by Qualification Level for SF



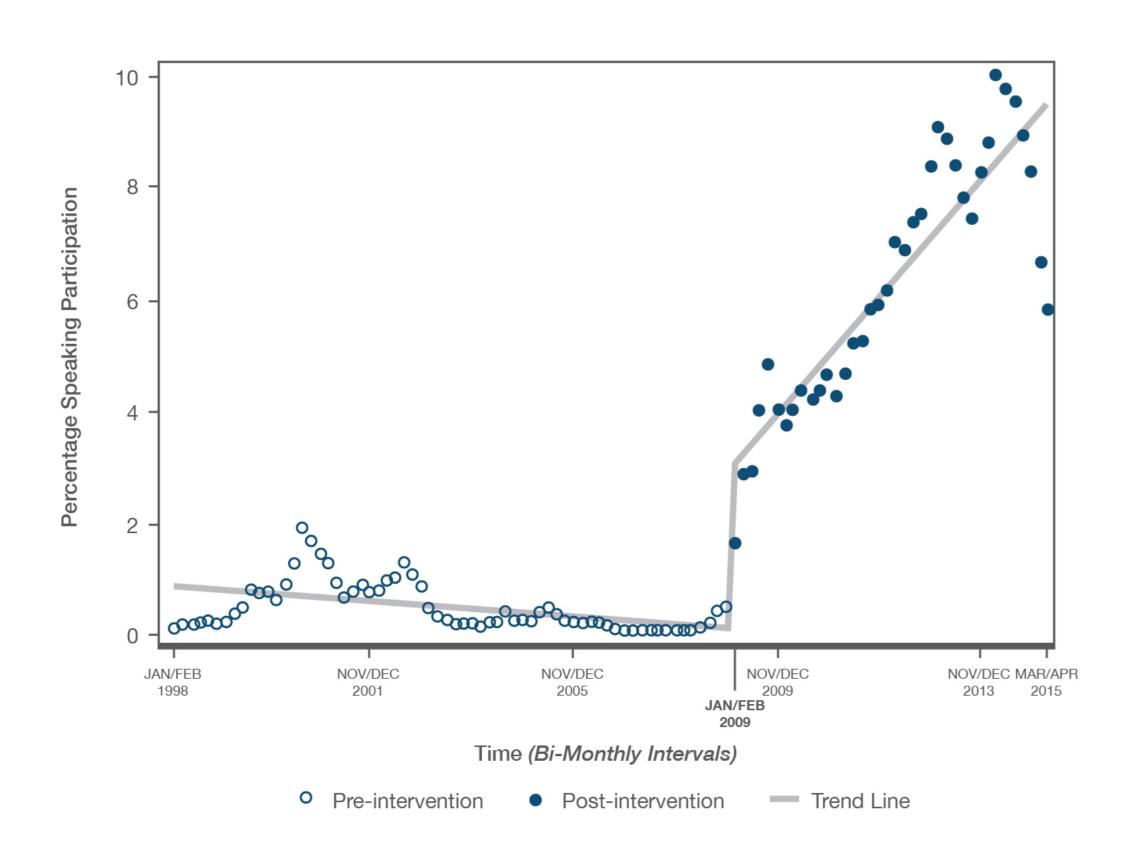
Percentage of SF "Qualifying" for Money

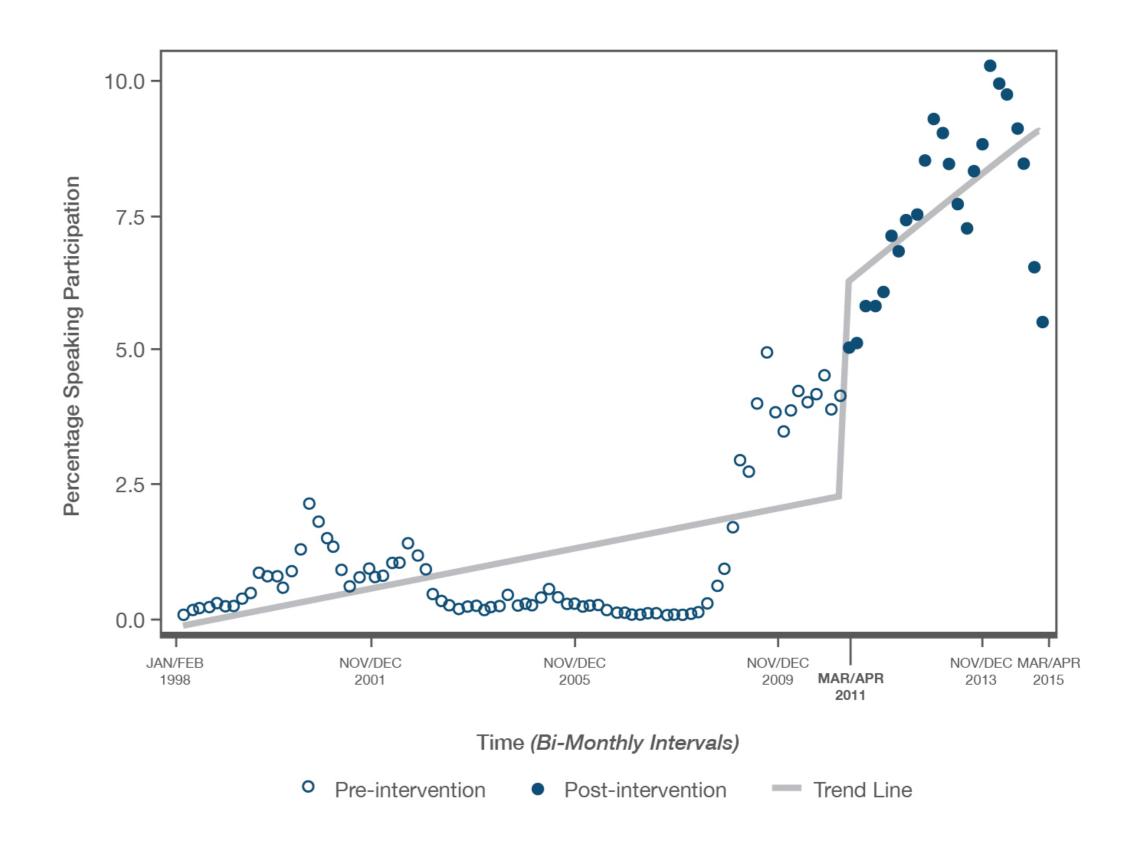


Use of OPI at SWCS & FLPB Policy Change

Participation in Speaking Test - SWCS OPI Start

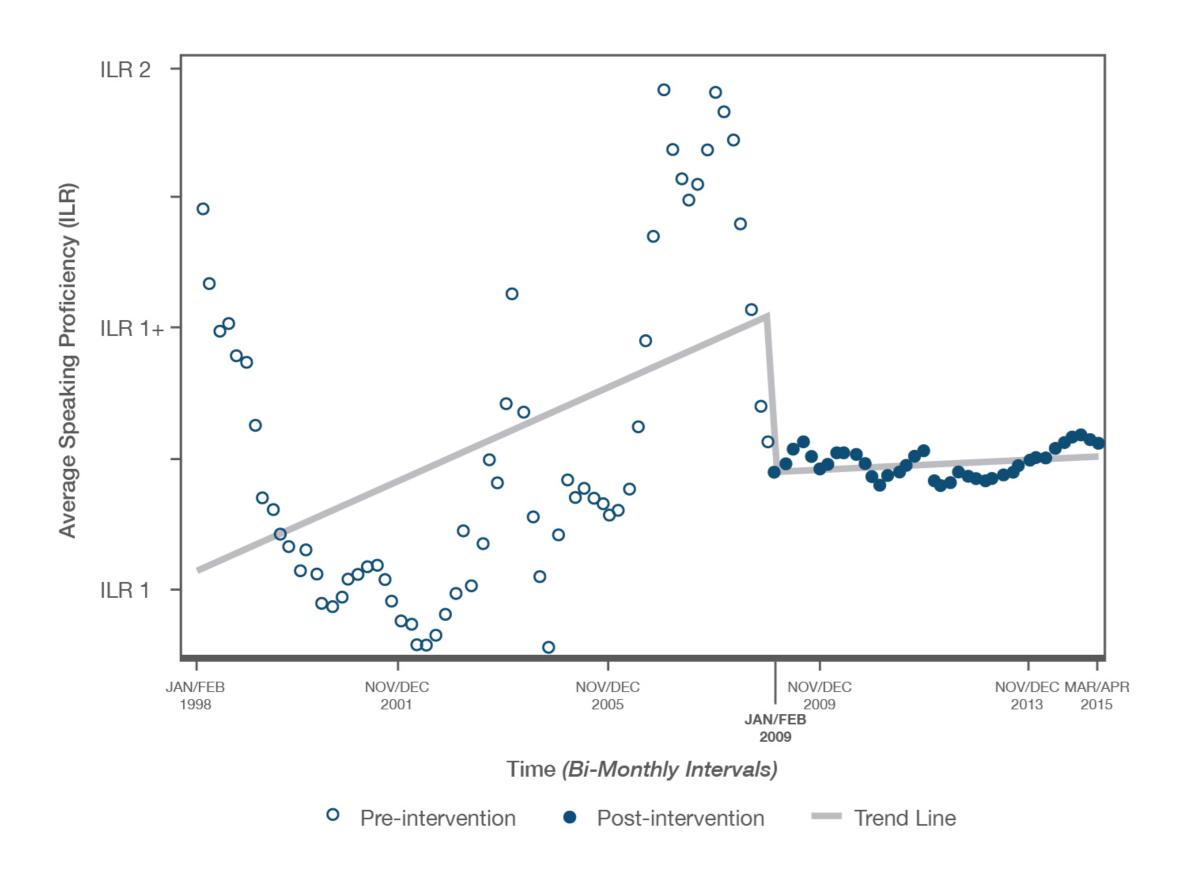
Participation in Speaking Test - FLPB Policy Change



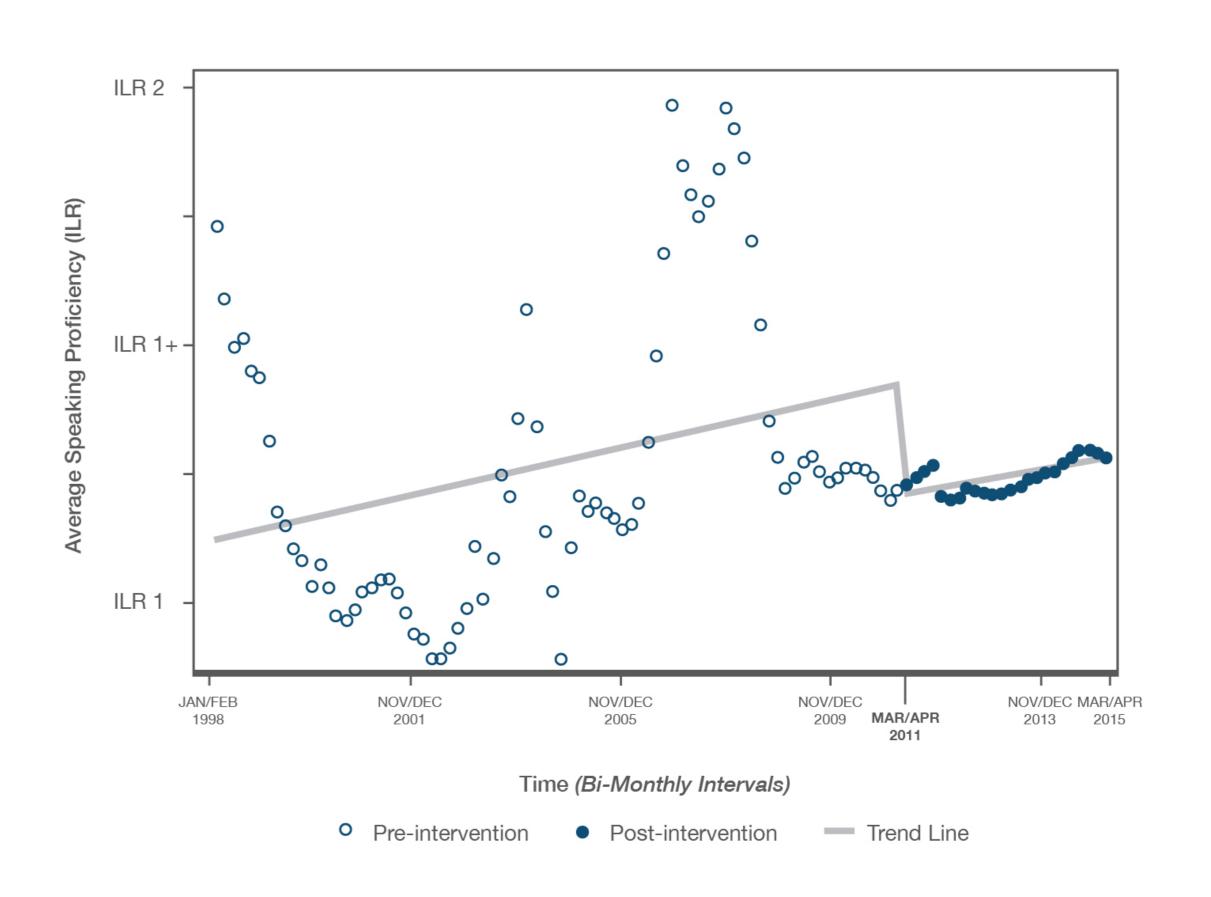


Use of OPI at SWCS & FLPB Policy Change

Average Speaking Proficiency - SWCS OPI Start



Average Speaking Proficiency - FLPB Policy Change



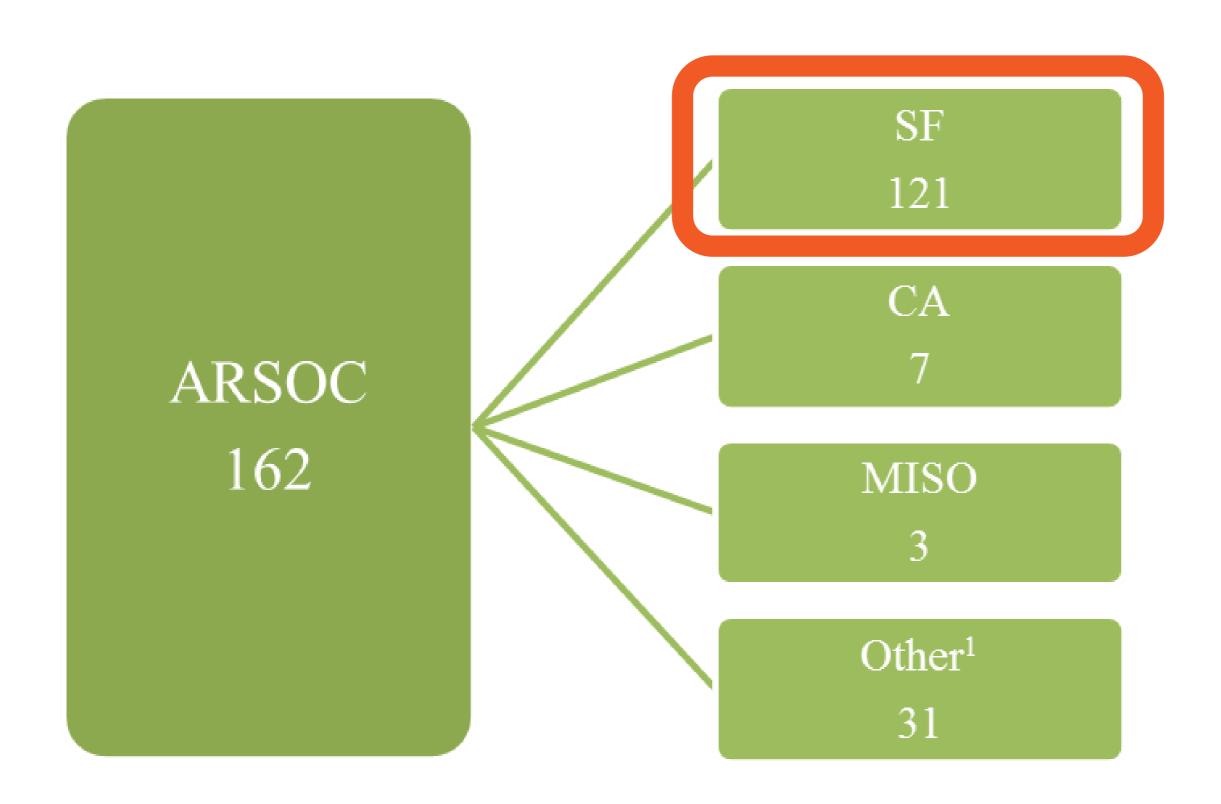
Study 3: Stakeholder Perspectives

Methods: Survey Timeline and Response



- 301 respondents clicked on the survey link.
- 206 retained after data cleaning.
 - 150 SOF Operators or SOF assigned to another duty
 - 56 Unit Commanders/Leaders

Survey Participants



¹These survey respondents indicated that they were assigned to a deployed SO Unit or element (provisional or task force; e.g., JSOTF), JSOC, TSOC, USSOCOM or Other and did not answer questions related to a specific job code.

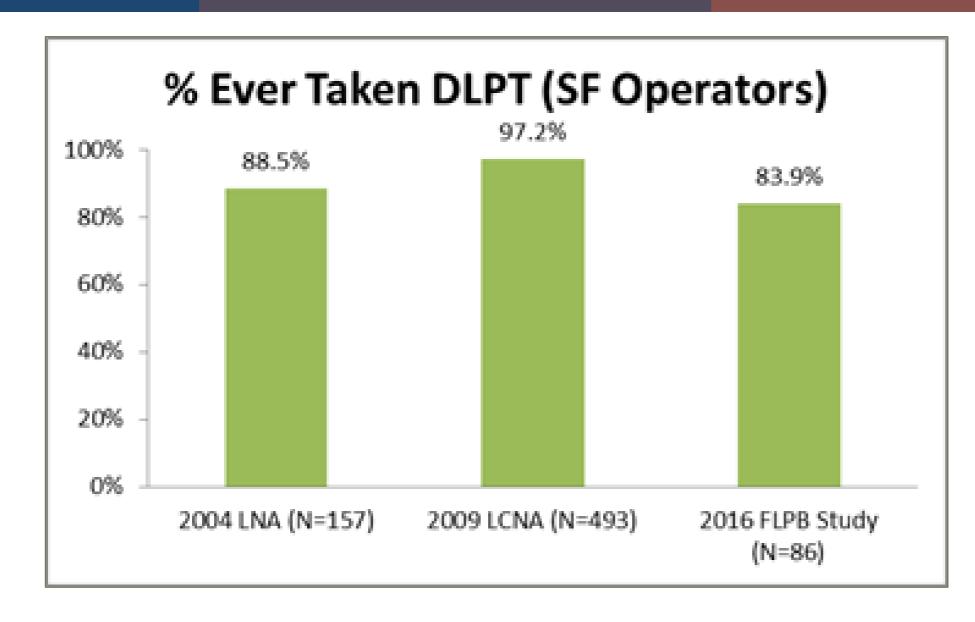


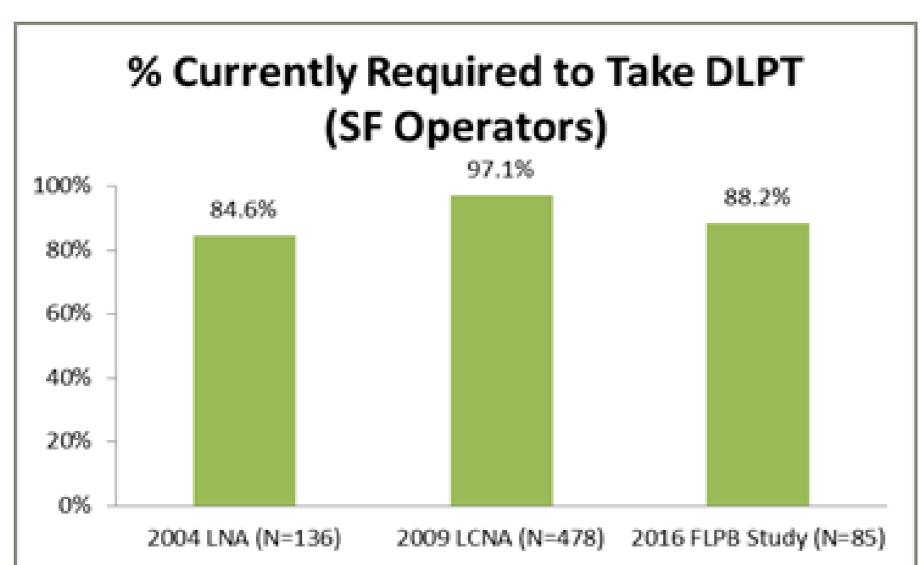
SF Survey Results: Testing Language Capability

Research questions:

- 1) How has participation in DLPT/OPI changed over time?
 - 2) What factors facilitate/interfere with DLPT/OPI?

SF Survey Results: Experiences with Testing (Historical Comparison)

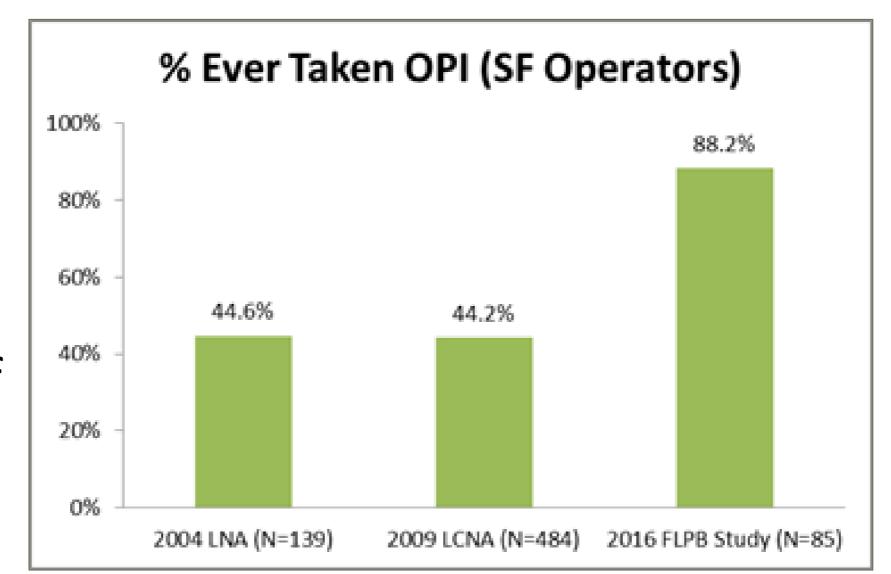




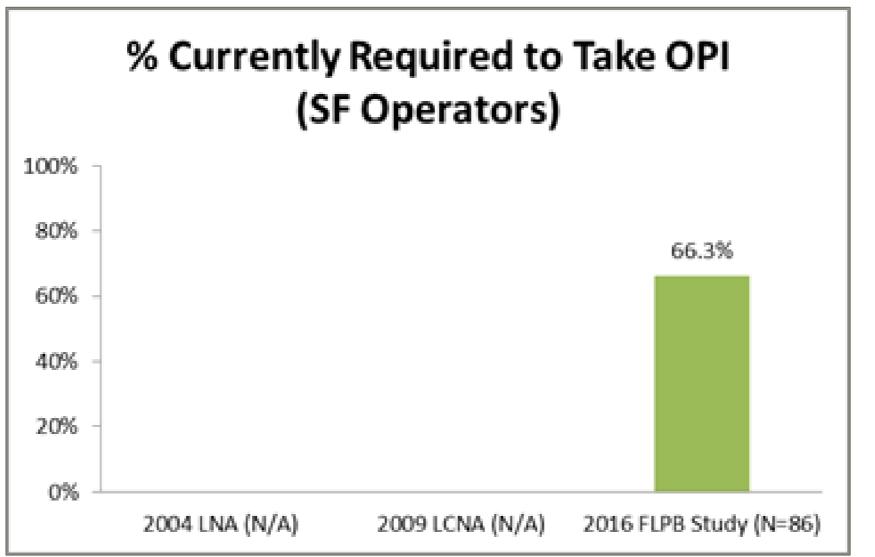
Across the studies, more than 80% of respondents took the DLPT and indicated having a requirement to take the DLPT

SF Survey Results: Experiences with Testing (Historical Comparison)

In 2004 & 2009, less than 50% of respondents took the OPI.

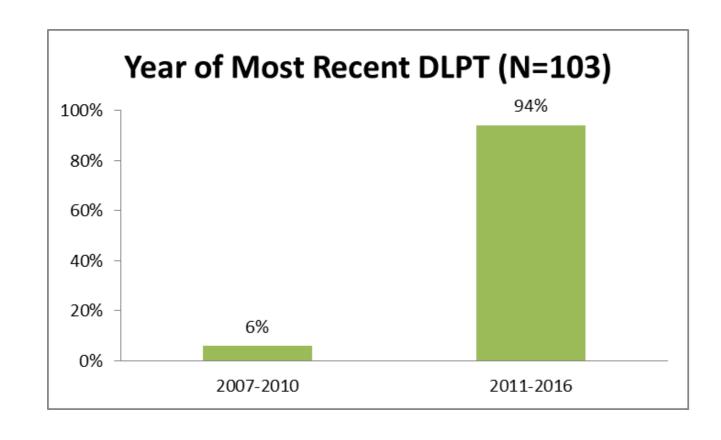


In 2016, 88% took the OPI

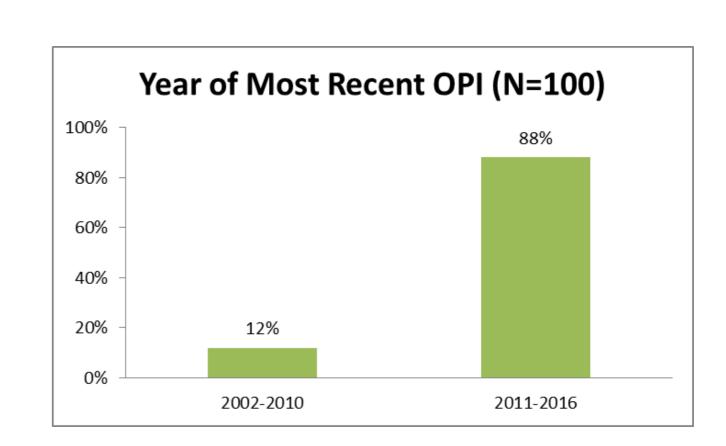


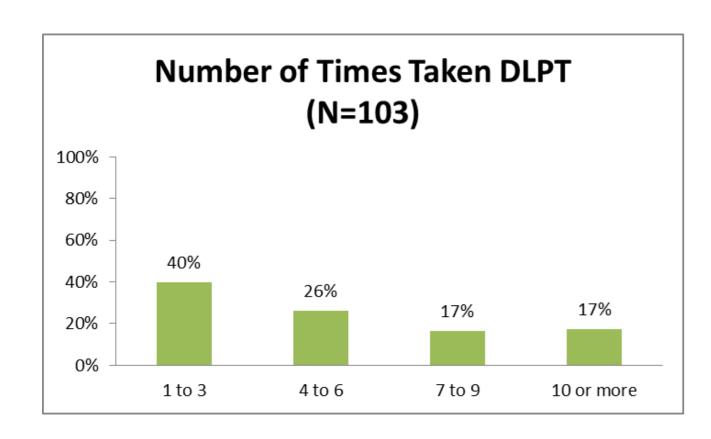
In 2016, 66% indicated having a requirement to take the OPI

2016 SF Survey Results: Experiences with Testing

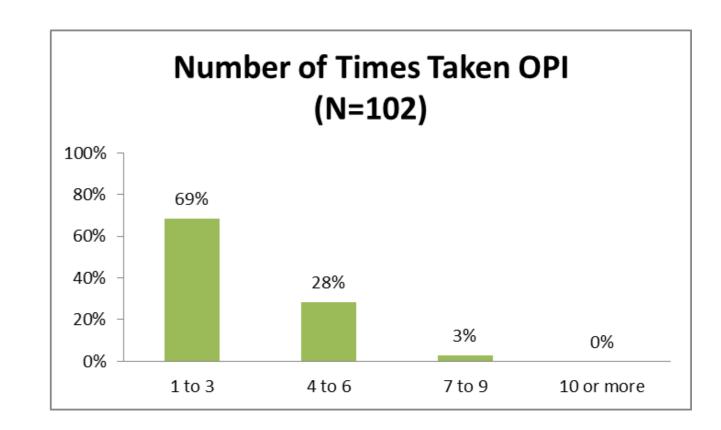


Nearly all reported most recent test within last 5 years





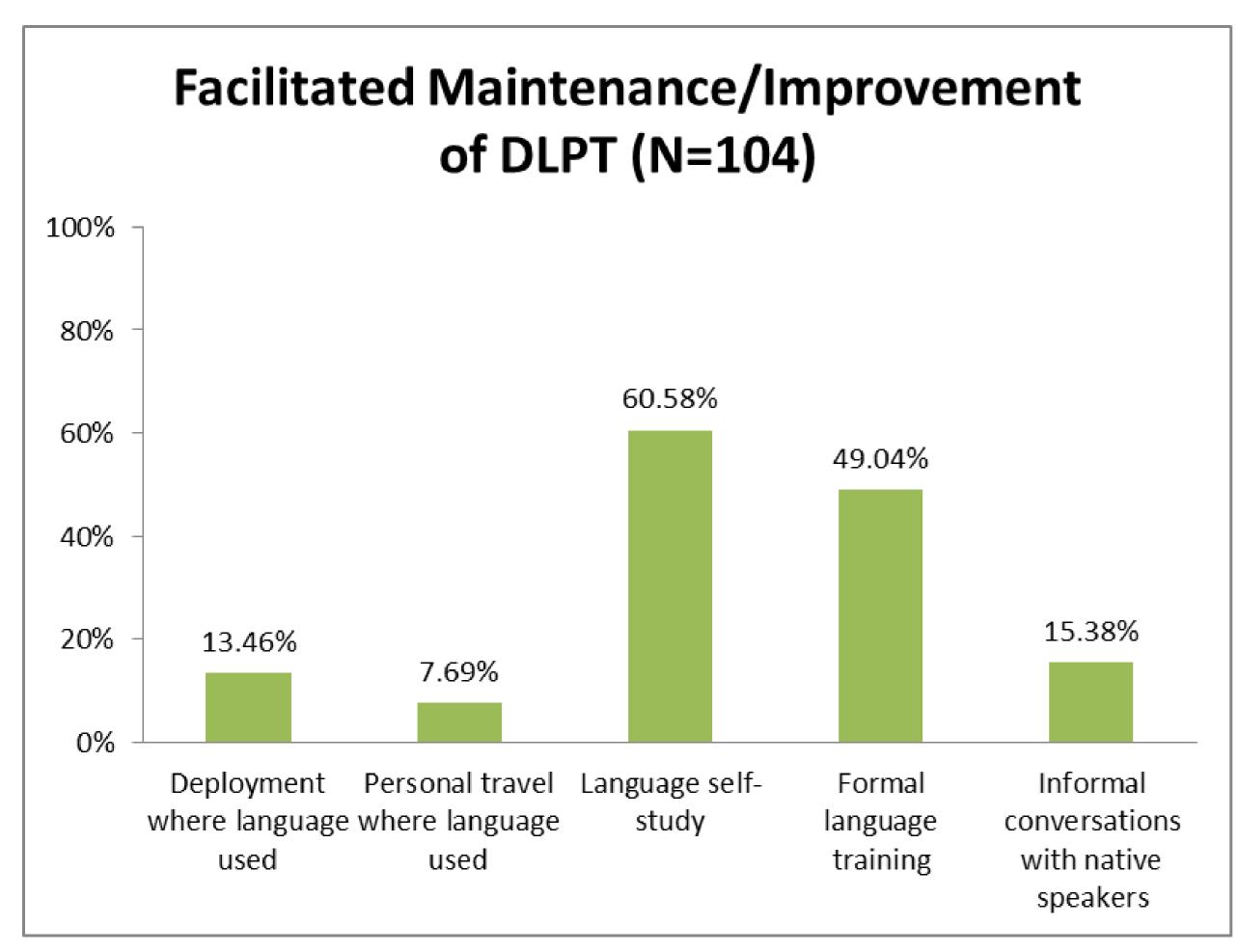
SF have more experience with DLPT than OPI

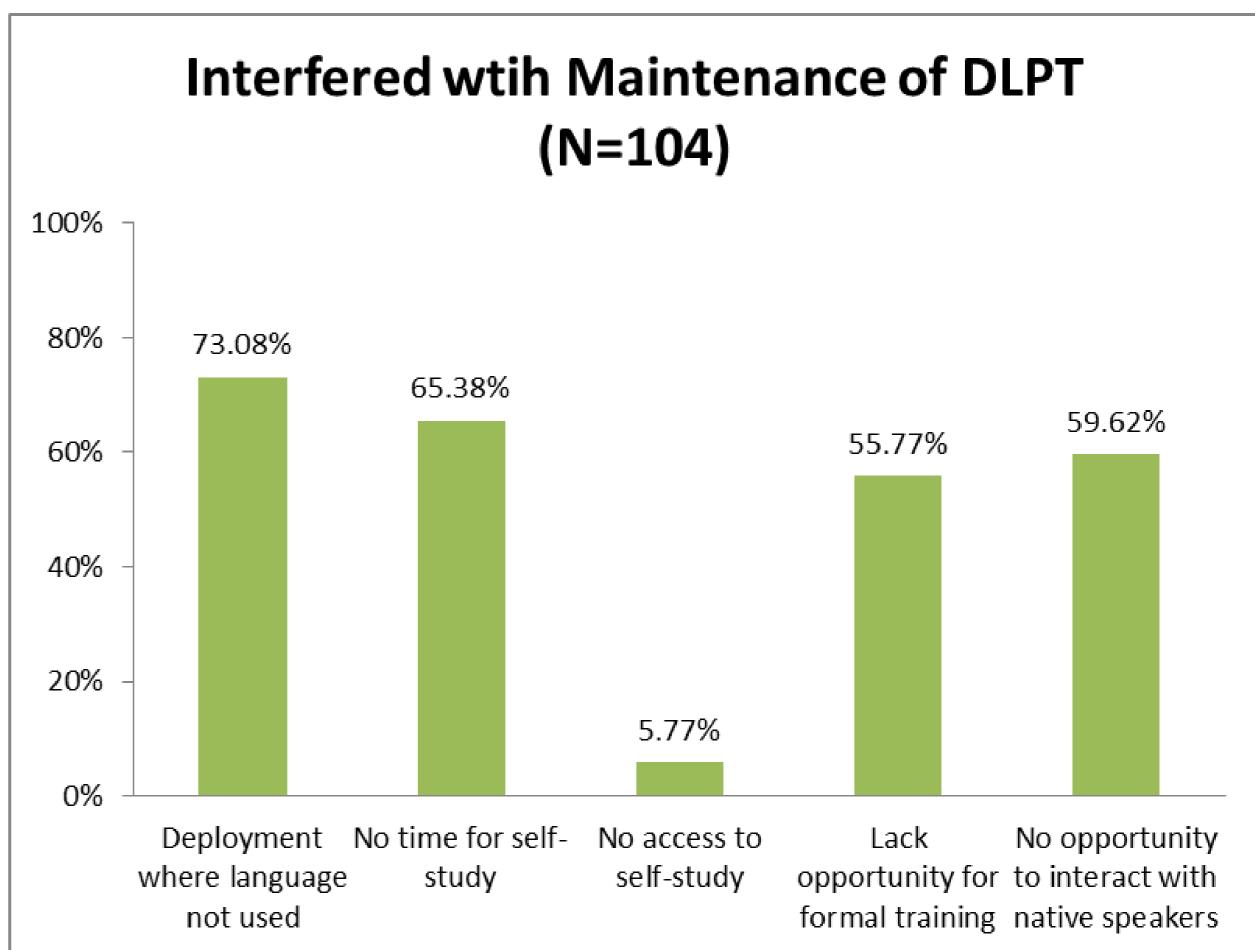


67% score ILR 1/1 or higher on DLPT

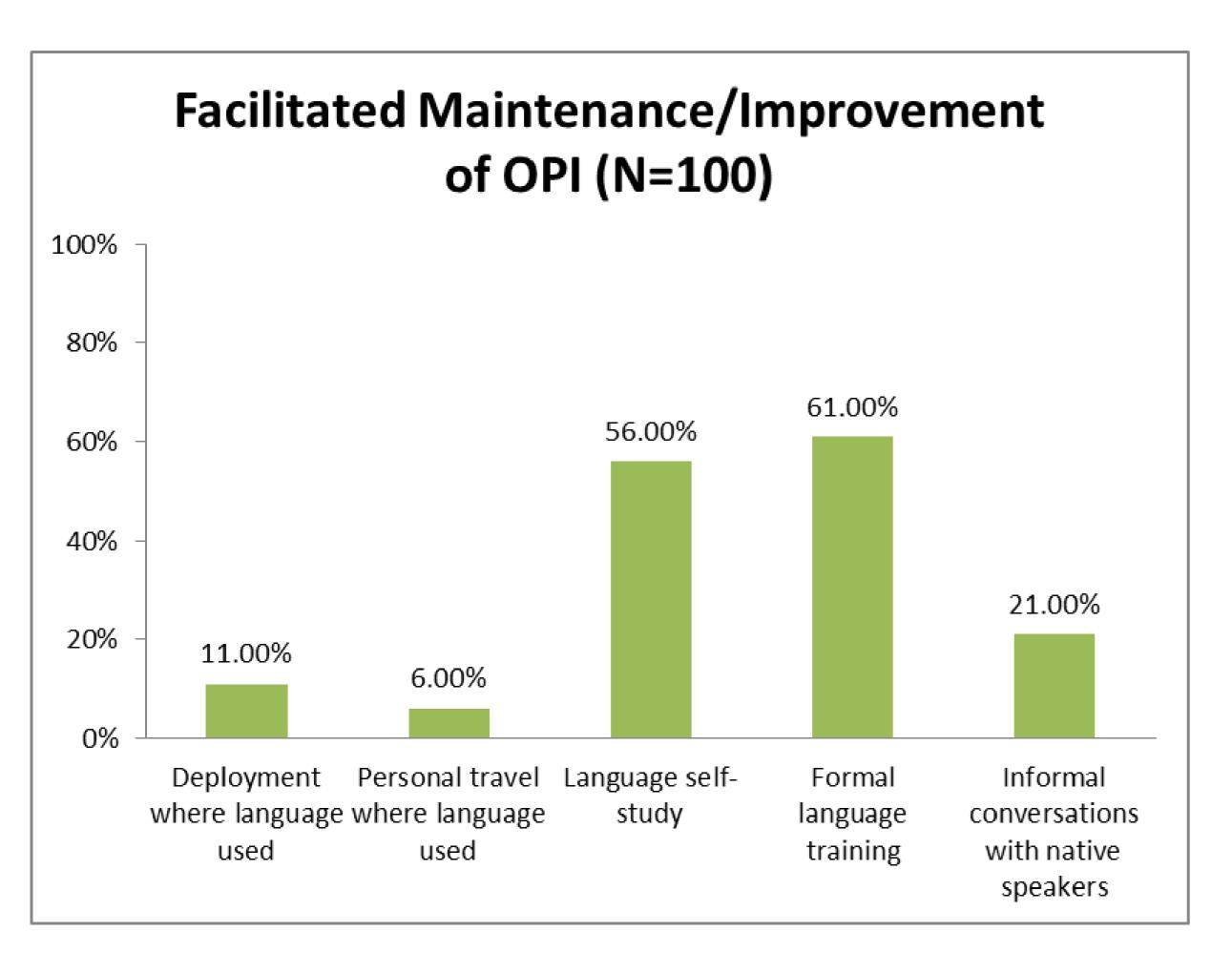
93% score ILR 1/1 or higher on two-skill OPI

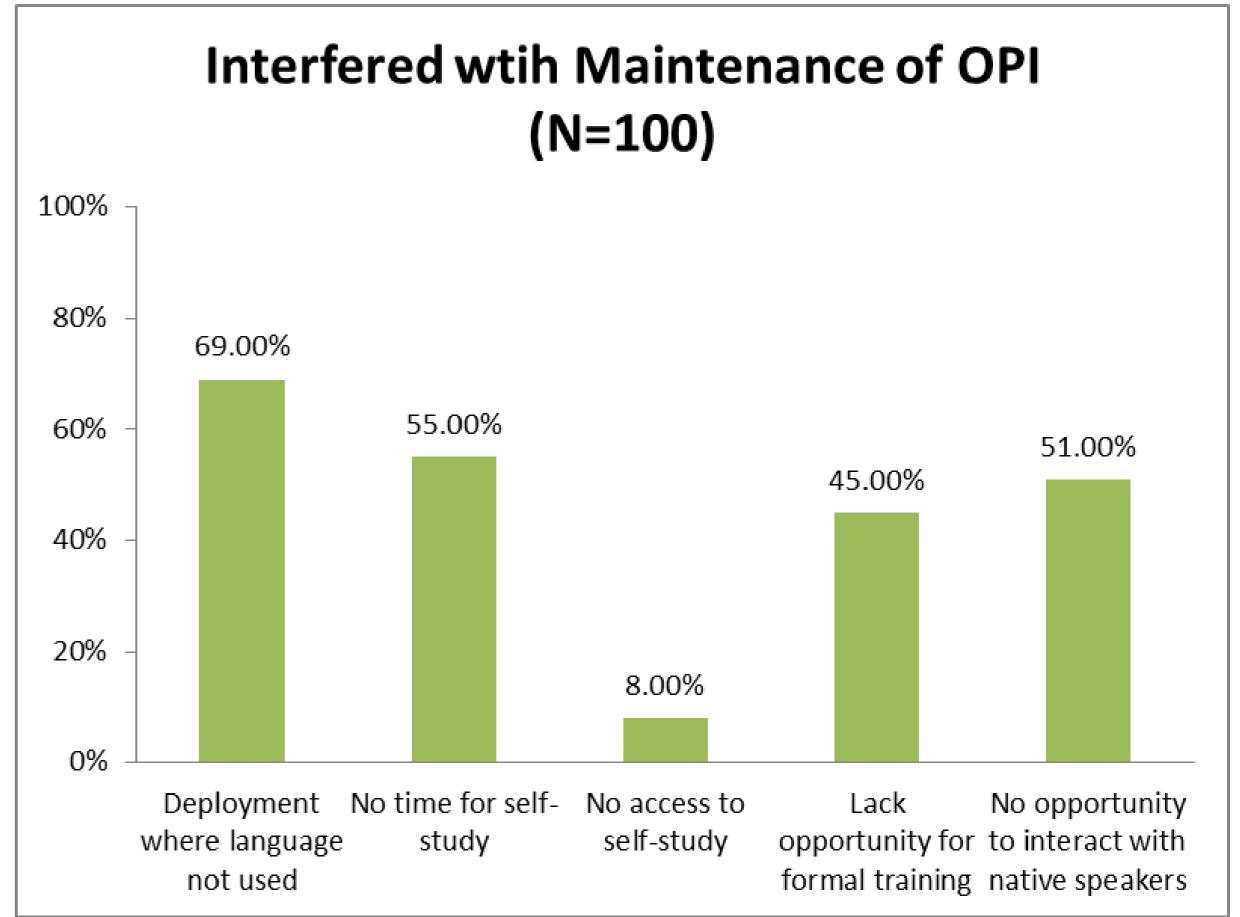
2016 SF Survey Results: Maintenance of DLPT





2016 SF Survey Results: Maintenance of OPI





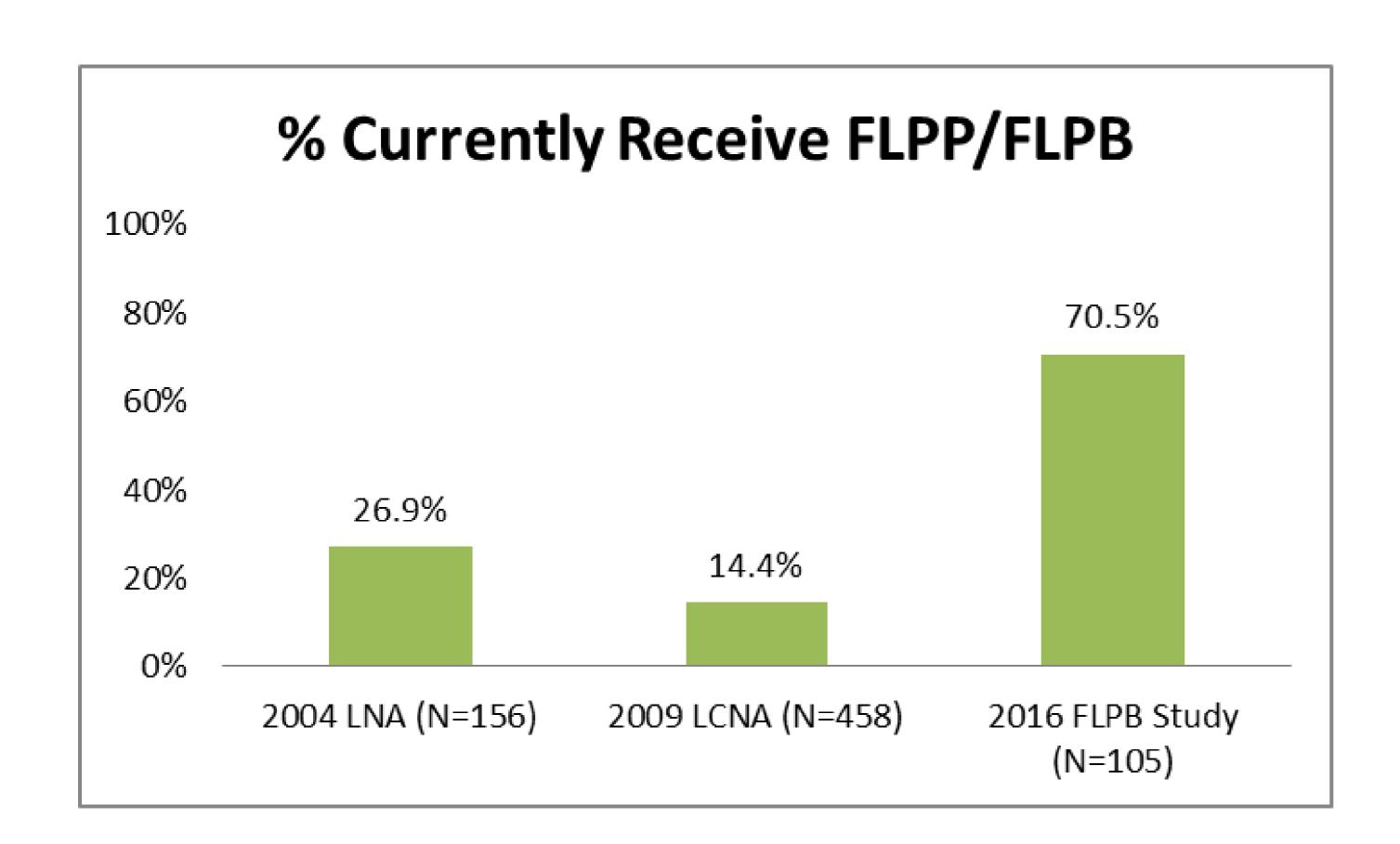
SF Survey Results: Testing Language Capability

Research questions:

1) How has receipt of FLPB changed over time?

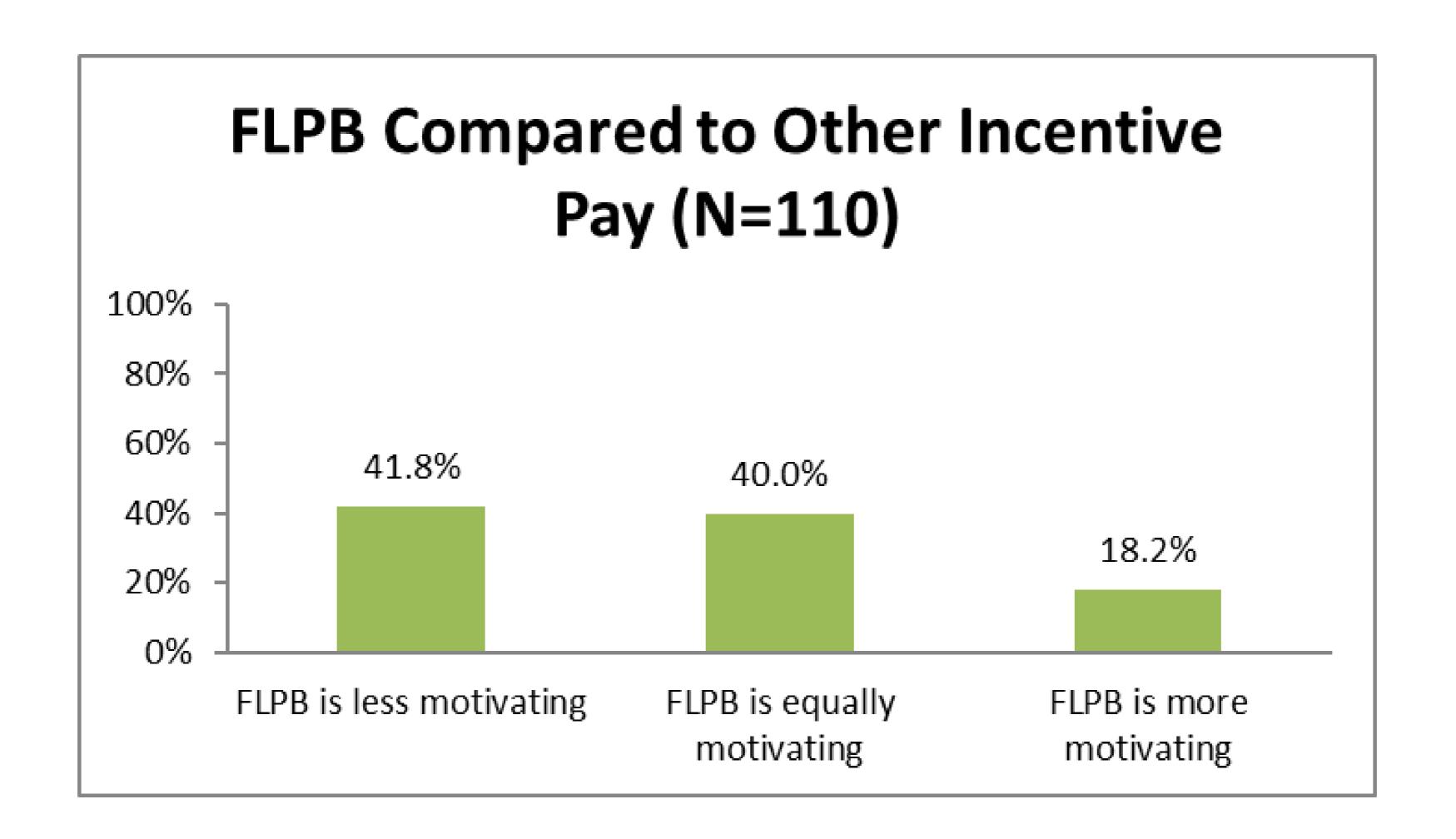
2) Are FLPB procedures perceived to be fair/motivating?

SF Survey Results: Experiences with FLPB (Historical Comparison)



71% of SF operators indicated they currently receive FLPB

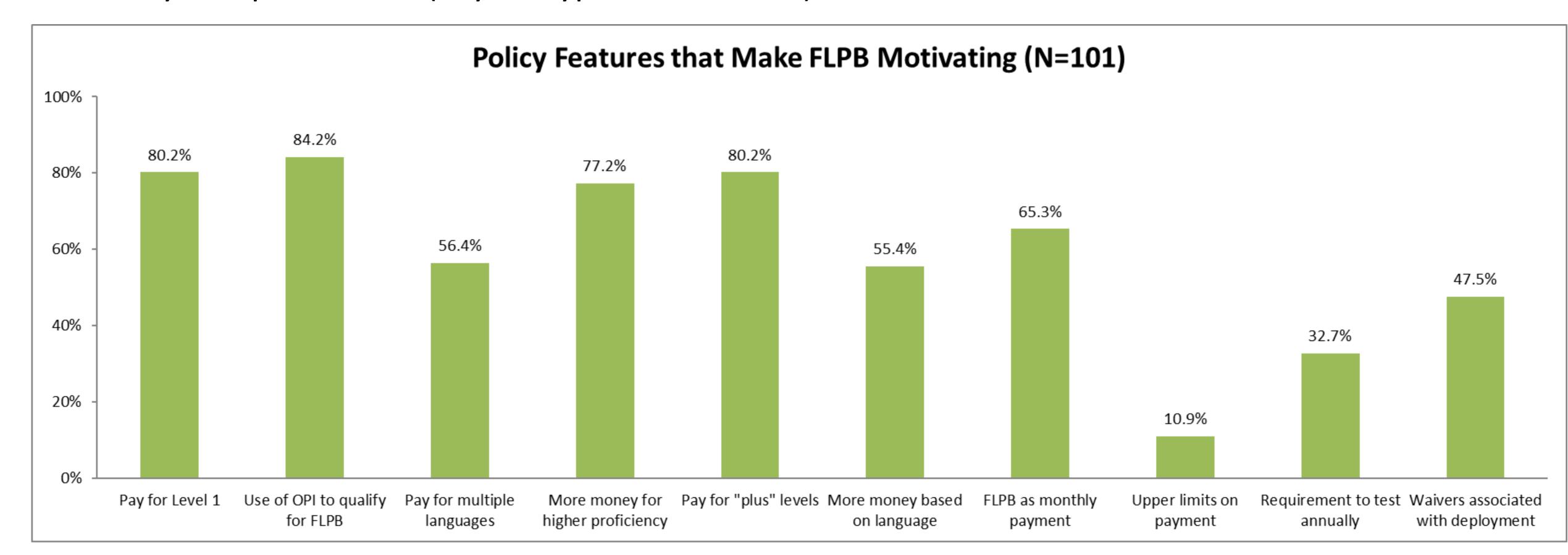
Percentage of SF operators currently receiving FLPB increased from 14% in 2009 to 71% in 2016, consistent with the policy changes



2016 SF Survey Results: Experiences with FLPB

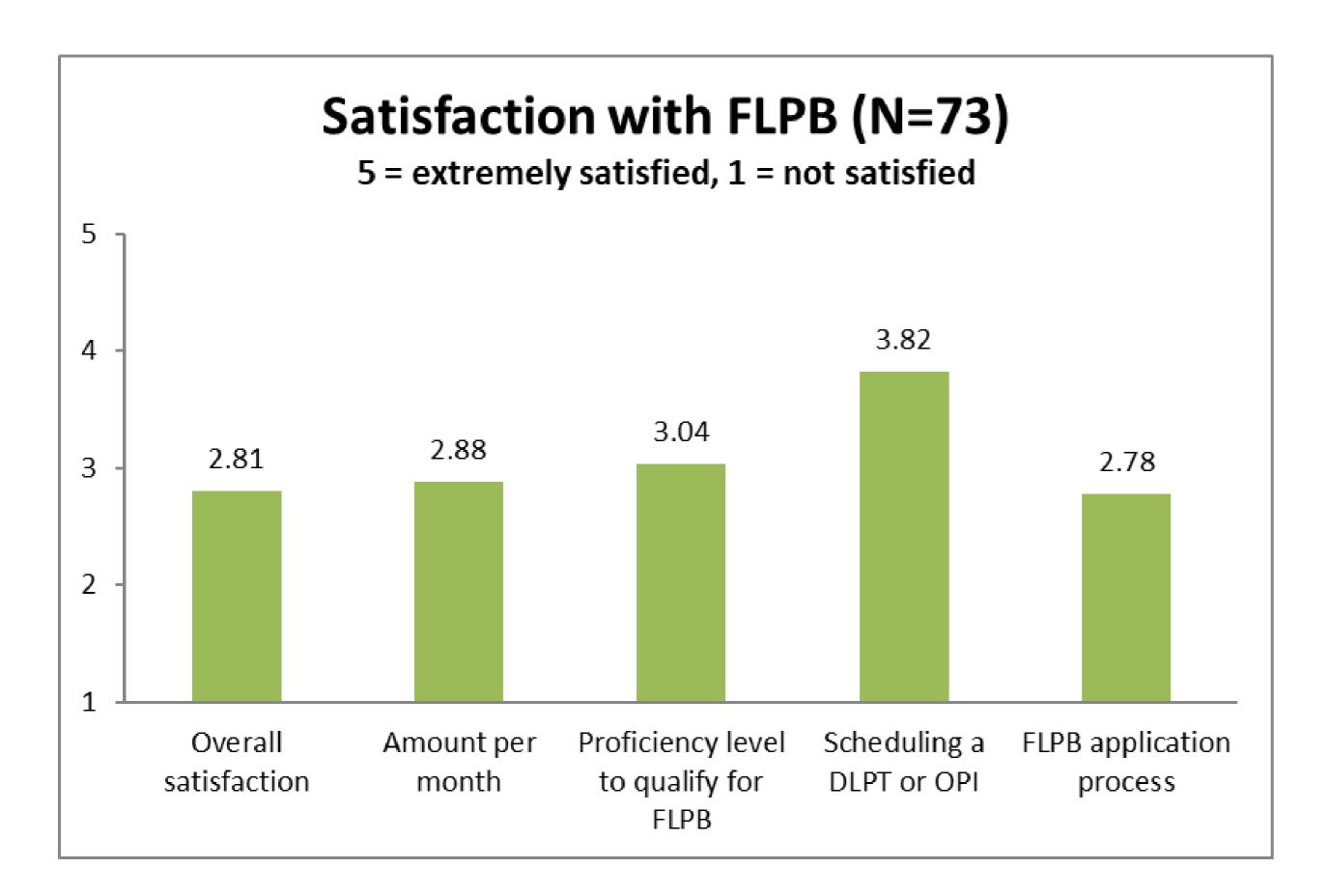
Operators indicated the top 3 policy features that make FLPB motivating:

- Allowing the OPI (Verification Process)
- Lowering threshold to 1/1 (Eligibility Criteria)
- Pay for "plus" levels (Payout type and Amount)

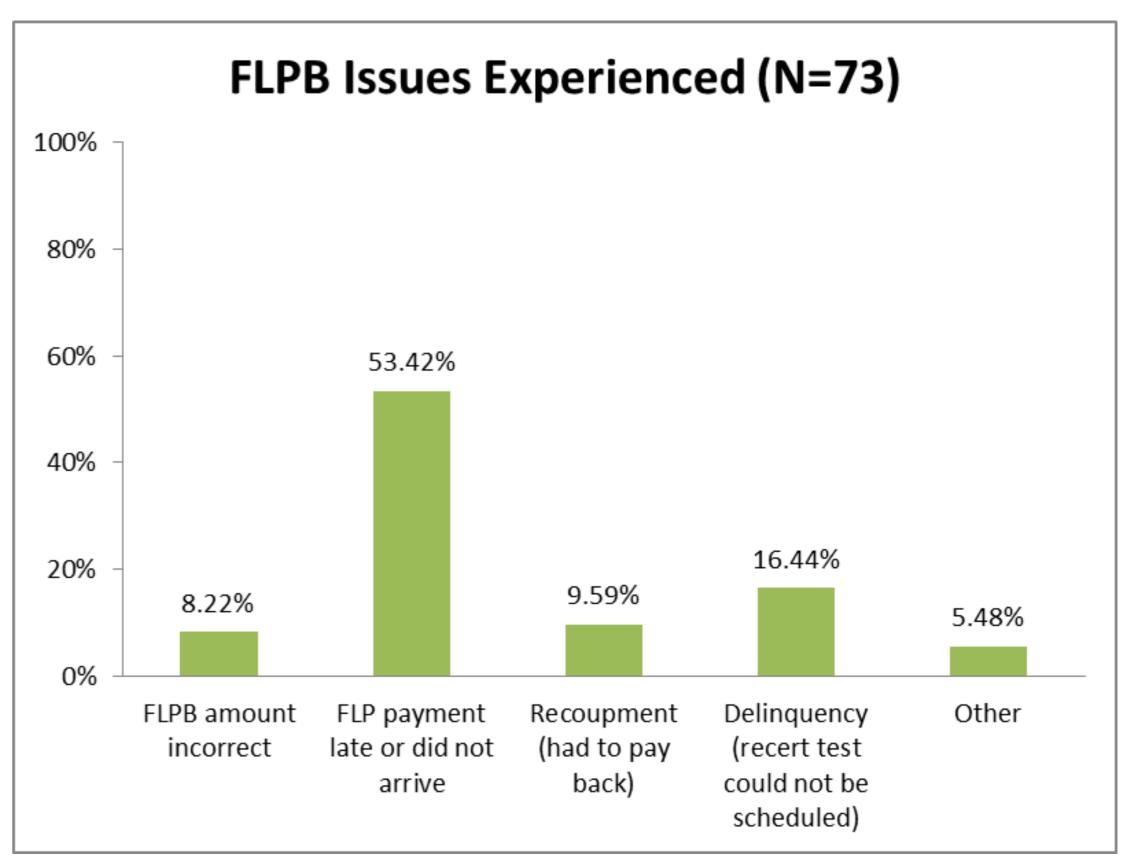


2016 SF Survey Results: Experiences with Incentives

Respondents were moderately satisfied with the FLPB program

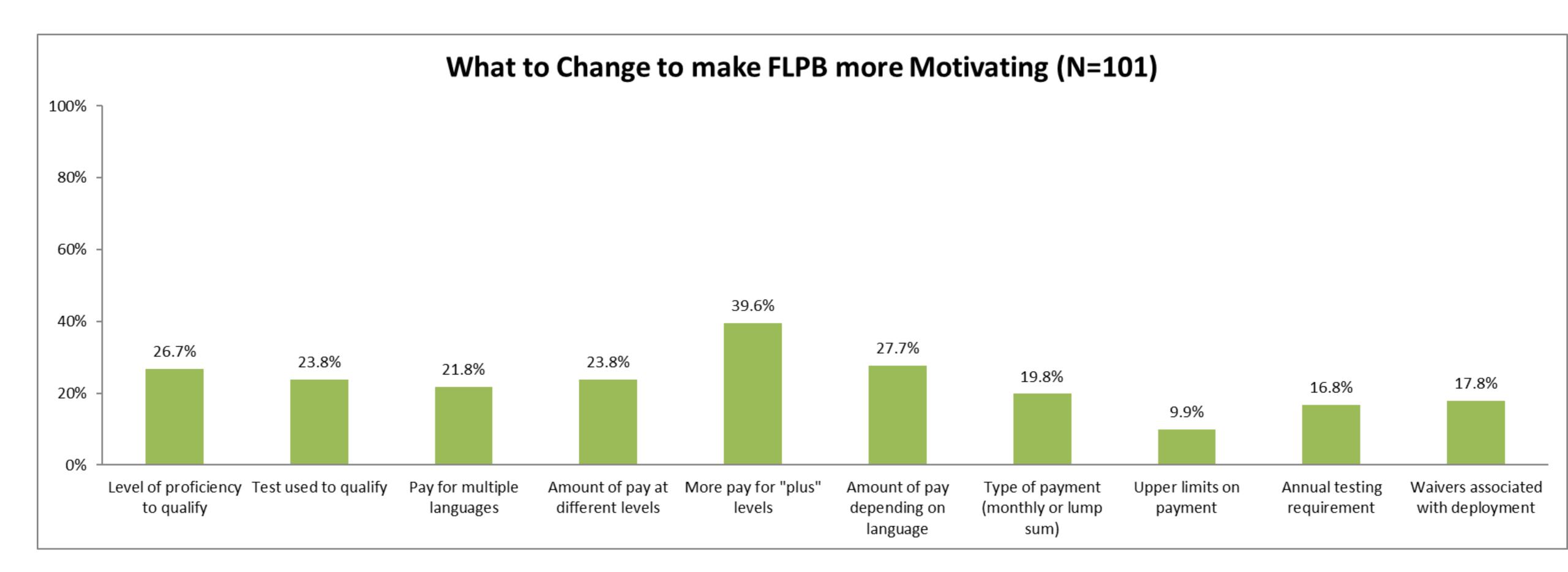


53% of respondents reported either receiving late payment or no payment



2016 SF Survey Results: Experiences with FLPB

Increasing the pay for "plus" levels was the most recommended area for change to FLPB



Summary & Conclusions

Summary

- Use of the OPI and lowering FLPB qualifying level to 1/1 were effective policy changes for SF overall (Study 1 and 2)
- Switching from OPI to DLPT to qualify for ILR 2/2 pay may be establishing a ceiling for speaking proficiency (Study 1 and 2)
- The policy changes were two of the most important motivating features of FLPB for operators (Study 3)
- Still perceived misalignment between FLPB amount and effort required
 - Language proficiency requires more time & effort compared to some other incentive pay (Study 3)
- Delayed FLPB payment or not receiving payment are prevalent issues (Study 3)
- Heavy administrative burden to collect FLPB (Study 3)









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