Gender and paid work in the pandemic: do women pay for working from home?

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Motivation:

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- The covid-19 pandemic affected women's employment more adversely than men's through job loss and furlough (Wielgoszewska et.al., 2023)
- Those who continued working experienced increased working from home (WFH), but the implications of this shift for gender equality are less clear
- Historically women with more flexible working arrangements, such as part-time work, are reimbursed at lower pay rates per hour than their male counterparts
- Lower take up of part-time work by men impedes gender comparison, but WFH rates are similar enabling more direct comparison

Trade-off between pay and flexibility:

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Occupational segregation

Women overcrowded in “secondary jobs” (characterised by lower pay and more insecurity), while men benefit from reduced competition in “primary jobs” (Anker, 1997)

Compensating wage differential

Employers have to offer higher wages to attract workers to do less pleasant jobs, but women’s bargaining power is limited by caring duties (Goldin and Katz, 2011, Lavetti, 2023)

Aims and objectives:

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Aim: to investigate gender differences in gross hourly pay as well as mental health and wellbeing by work location a year into covid-19 pandemic

RQ1: Who works from home?

RQ2: How is working from home related to gender differences in hourly pay?

RQ3: How is working from home related to gender differences in mental health and well-being?

Data and Methods

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Data:

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- Covid survey (https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/covid-19-survey/) utilising information collected at wave 1 (May 2020) and wave 3 (February – March 2021)
- Linked to information from previous sweeps
- Cohorts:
  - National Child Development Study (aged 63),
  - British Cohort Study (aged 51)
  - Next Steps (aged 31)
  - Millenium Cohort Study (aged 20)

Sample:

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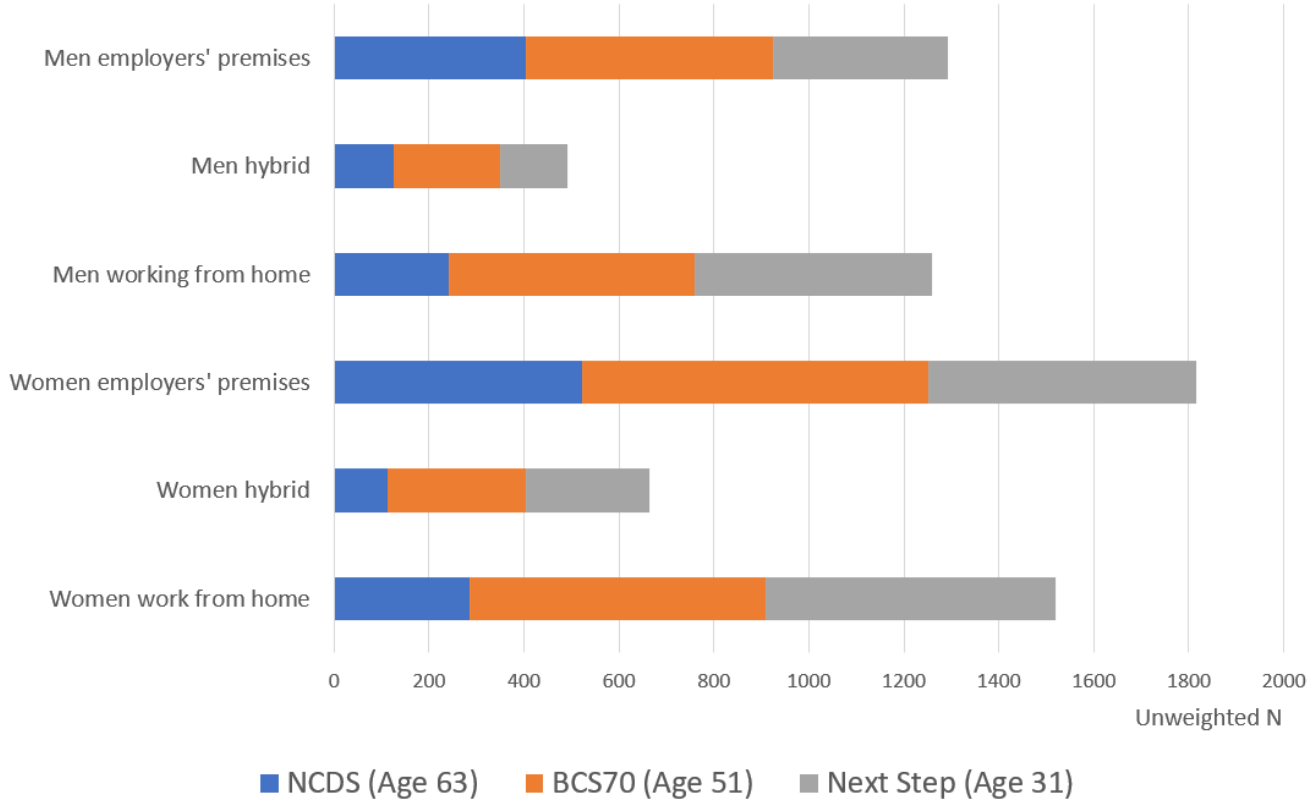

- N = 6984
- Employed in March 2020 and a year later
- Live in England Scotland or Wales
- Have complete information of pay, wellbeing outcomes and work location

Outcomes:

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WFH (logistic regression):

- Broad definition - any work from home, which includes those who work some days at home and some days at employer's premises i.e. hybrid)
- Narrow definition – only those exclusively working from home

Pay (linear model + RIF at 20th and 80th quantile):

- Log gross hourly pay top and bottom coded per cohort

Mental Health and wellbeing (linear model):

- Life satisfaction (0 very dissatisfied -10 very satisfied);
- Anxiety (sum of 2-item general anxiety disorder (GAD-2), where 0 denotes not experiencing either of the symptoms (feeling nervous, anxious or on edge; not being able to stop or control worrying) and 6 denoting experiencing both symptoms nearly every day (Moreno-Agostino et al., 2023)
- Depression (sum of 2-item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2), where 0 denotes not experiencing either of the symptoms (little interest or pleasure in doing things; feeling down, depressed, or hopeless) and 6 denoting experiencing both symptoms nearly every day.

Adjustment:

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- **Basic:** variable denoting cohort (NCDS, BCS, Next Steps), country of residence in wave 3 of covid survey (England, Scotland, Wales), whether respondent lives in London, education (none, NVQ1-5), parental social class (manual, non-manual), mode of survey (CAWI, CATI), number of rooms in the household.
- **Family:** family structure (single, partnered no kids, partnered with kids 0 to 5, partnered with kids 6-11, partnered with kids 12 or older, lone parent, or other), number of children in the household.
- **Job:** pre-pandemic occupation (1/2-digit SOC classification), part-time work (based on job in March 2020, with cut-off of 30 hours per week), binary key workers status based on 4-digit SOC classification as in Wielgoszewska et al. (2023), binary indicator of whether cohort member has changed job since March 2020, change in hours worked since March 2020 (decrease, the same, increase)
- **Pre-pandemic versions of the outcomes:** pre-pandemic propensities for working from home working derived from 2019 Annual Population Survey using 3-digit occupational classification (Wels et al., 2023); log gross hourly pay in March 2020; standardised life satisfaction collected from pre-pandemic surveys (NCDS 2008, BCS 2016, NS 2015).

Results

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Who works from home?

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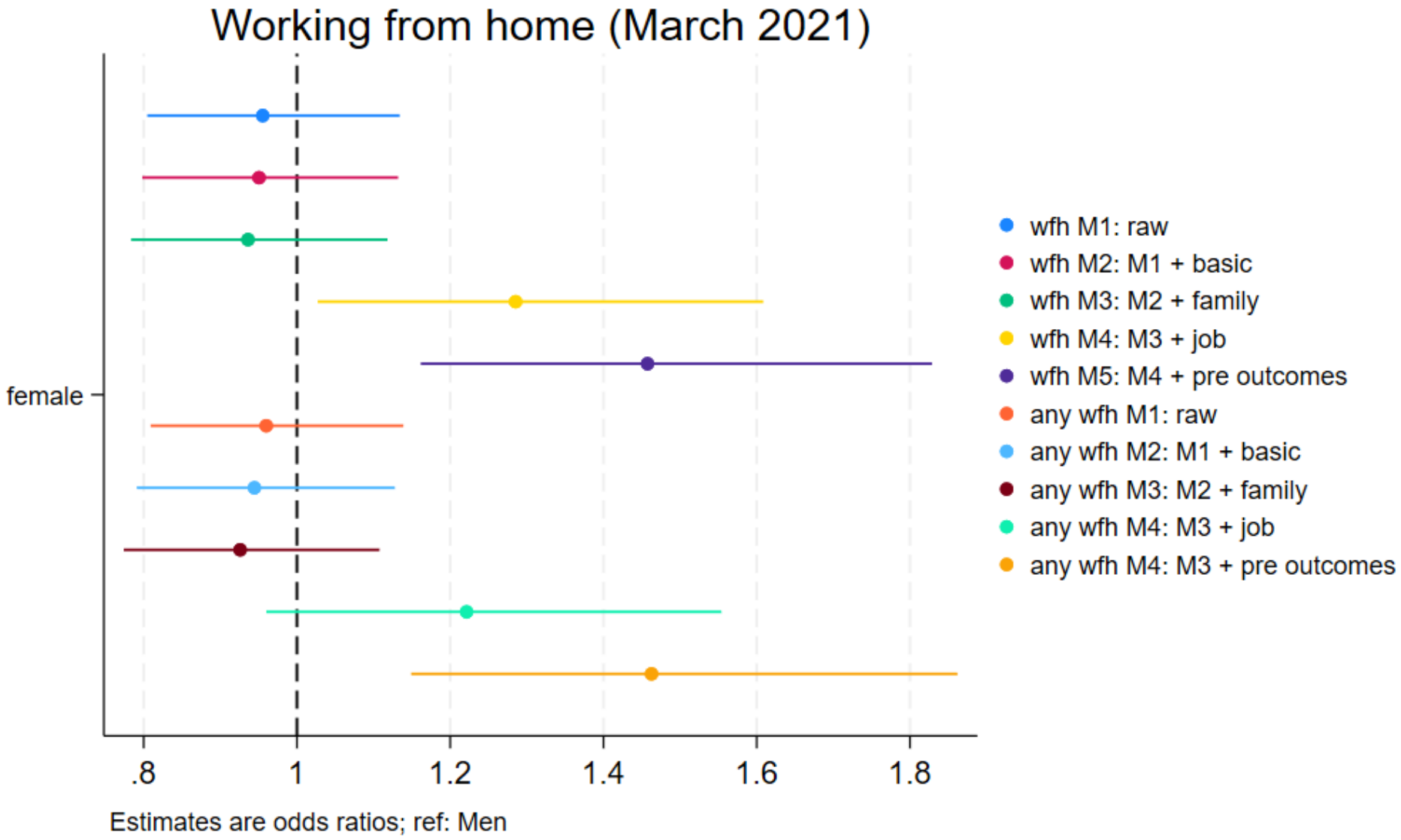

WFH by gender and occupation

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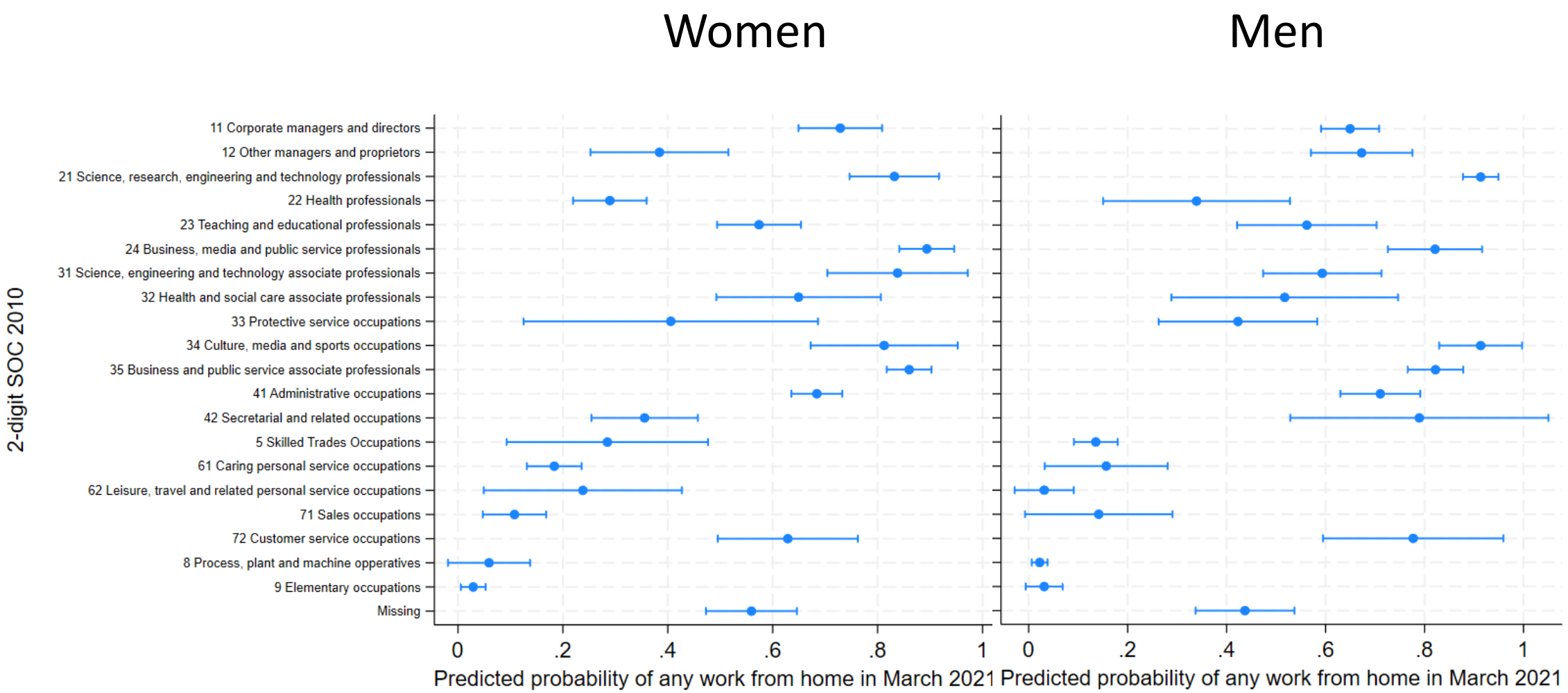

Gender and work location pay gaps

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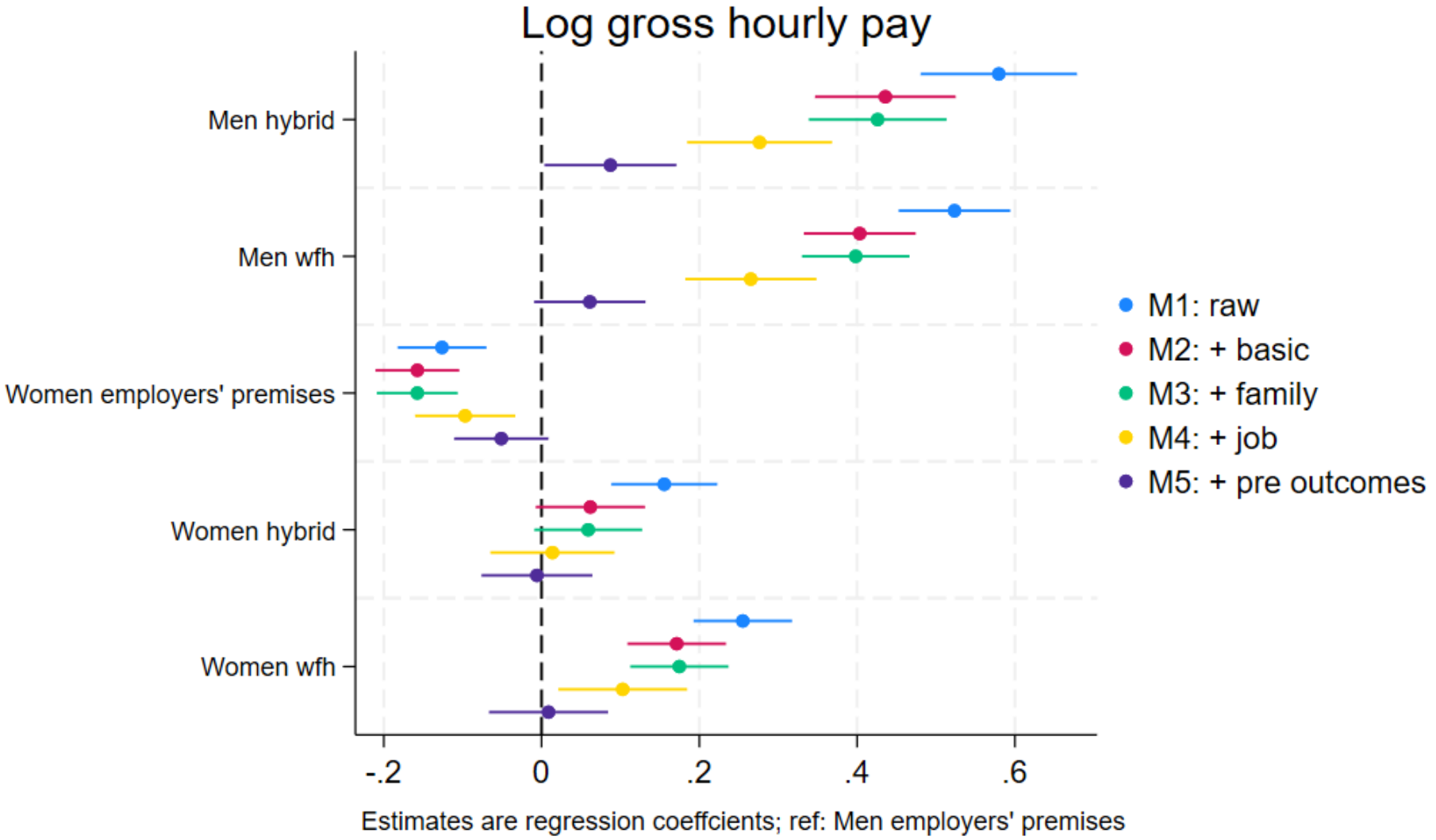

Top and bottom of pay distribution

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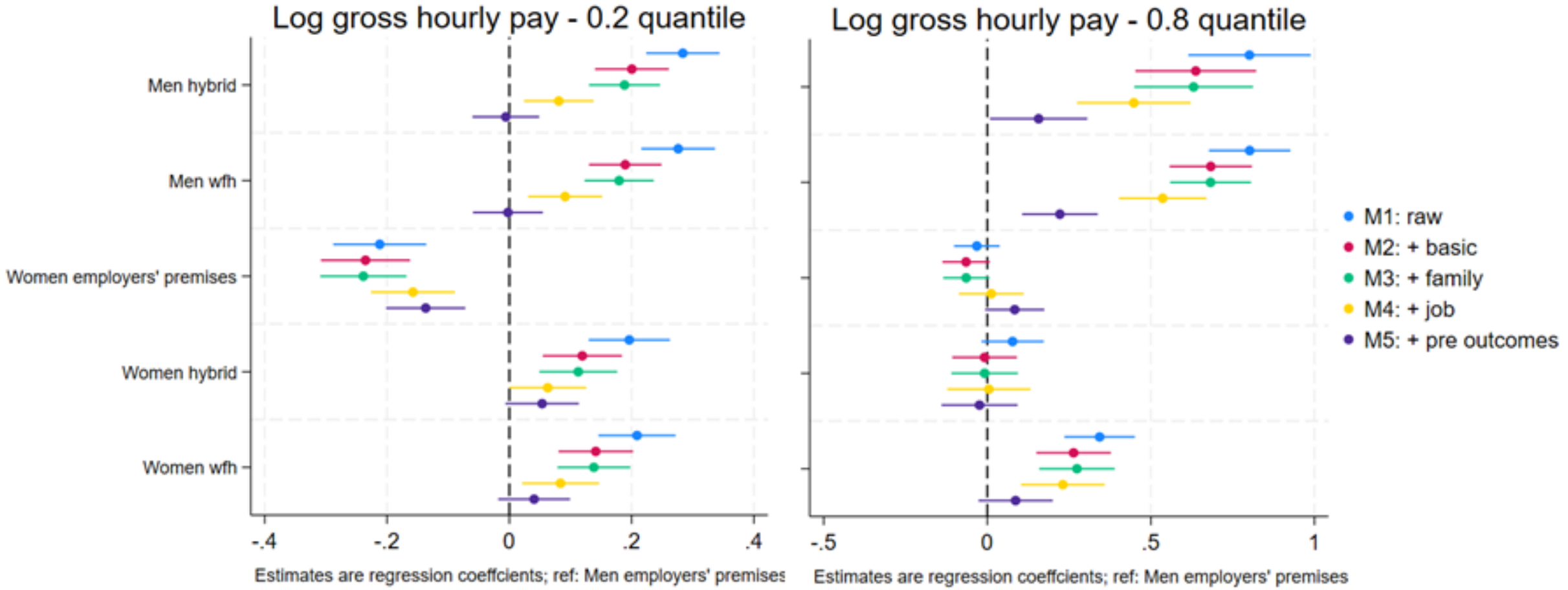

Mental health and wellbeing

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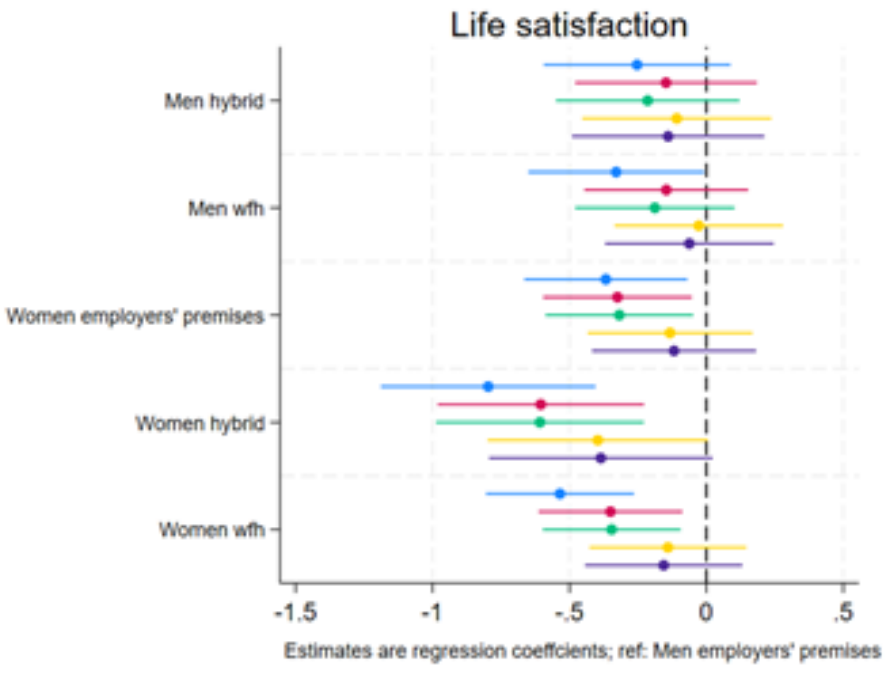

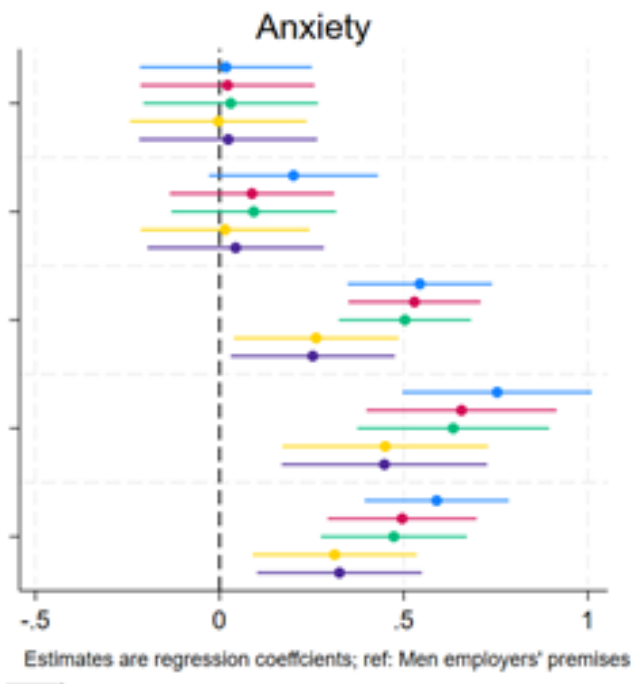

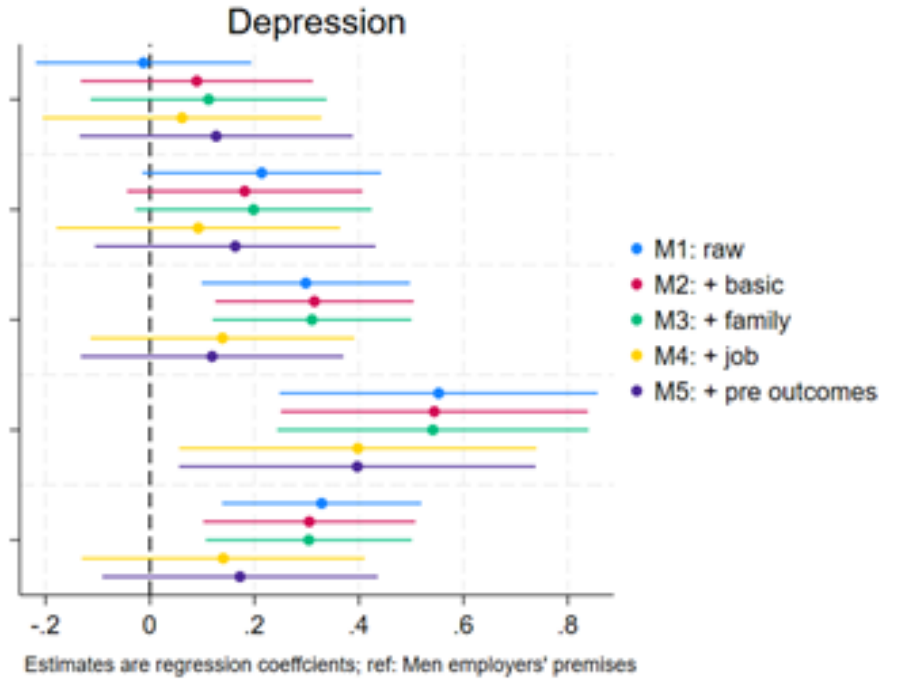

Summary and conclusions

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Summary :

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Who works from home?

- Raw estimates do not show differences in likelihood of WFH by gender, but after adjusting for their job characteristics women appear to be more likely to WFH
- Those who are more educated (and earn more) are more likely to work from home, while part-timers and key workers are less likely to do so
- Large variability within and across occupations with evidence of occupational segregation

How is working from home related to gender differences in gross hourly pay?

- Women earn less than men across all work locations, with gaps the widest amongst those who work from home
- Men who work from home or hybrid are the highest paid, which is explained by their situation prior to the outbreak, implying that cohort members' work location reflects the pre-existing line of gender inequalities (i.e. women underrepresented in the "top jobs")
- Pre-pandemic outcomes do not close the gaps for women who work from employers' premises at the bottom of the distribution and for men at the top of the distribution, indicating men benefited from the shift more

How is working from home related to gender differences in mental health and well-being?

- No/small differences in wellbeing amongst men, but women have worse outcomes, especially if working hybrid, indicating hybrid does not occupy an intermediate position between WFH and from employers' premises

Limitations :

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- Analytical sample is selective which has implications for missing data, but weighted analysis are conservative
- Pandemic context may not be translatable into the post-pandemic world, especially as we don’t know who did and who didn’t WFH by choice. However, sample consists of those who did not go for conditions offered under the furlough scheme, which implies a degree of choice
- Longer term impact on career progression is not yet observed, and we don’t see who continues to work from home or hybrid post-pandemic, even though hybrid is now more common

Thank you! Questions? Comments?

Project website:

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