

Gender Equality During Covid-19 and Beyond

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End-of-project workshop

5 June 2024

ESRC grant number ES/S012583/1

CORONAVIRUS

STAY HOME. SAVE LIVES.



**The new COVID-19 variant is spreading fast.
Every action counts.**

- Wielgoszewska, B., Bryson, A., Costa Dias, M., Foliano, F., Joshi, H., & Wilkinson, D. (2023). Exploring the reasons for labour market gender inequality a year into the COVID-19 pandemic: evidence from the UK cohort studies. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 14(2), 180-202.
- Wielgoszewska, B., Bryson, A., Joshi, H., Wilkinson, D. (in progress) Gender and paid work in the pandemic: do women pay for working from home?
- Wielgoszewska, B., Bryson, A., Crawford C., Joshi, H. (in progress) Why are mothers paid less?

Furlough and employment rates

Motivation and Contribution



The Covid-19 pandemic as a **shecession** – women more adversely affected than men, unlike in previous economic downturns

Furlough - Governments responded with radical labour market intervention allowing to retain workers in post; Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (80% of pay up to a cap of £2,500 per month)

H1: Occupational segregation

Women are over-represented in jobs disproportionately affected by covid-19 pandemic, but also more likely to work in sectors that faced increased demand

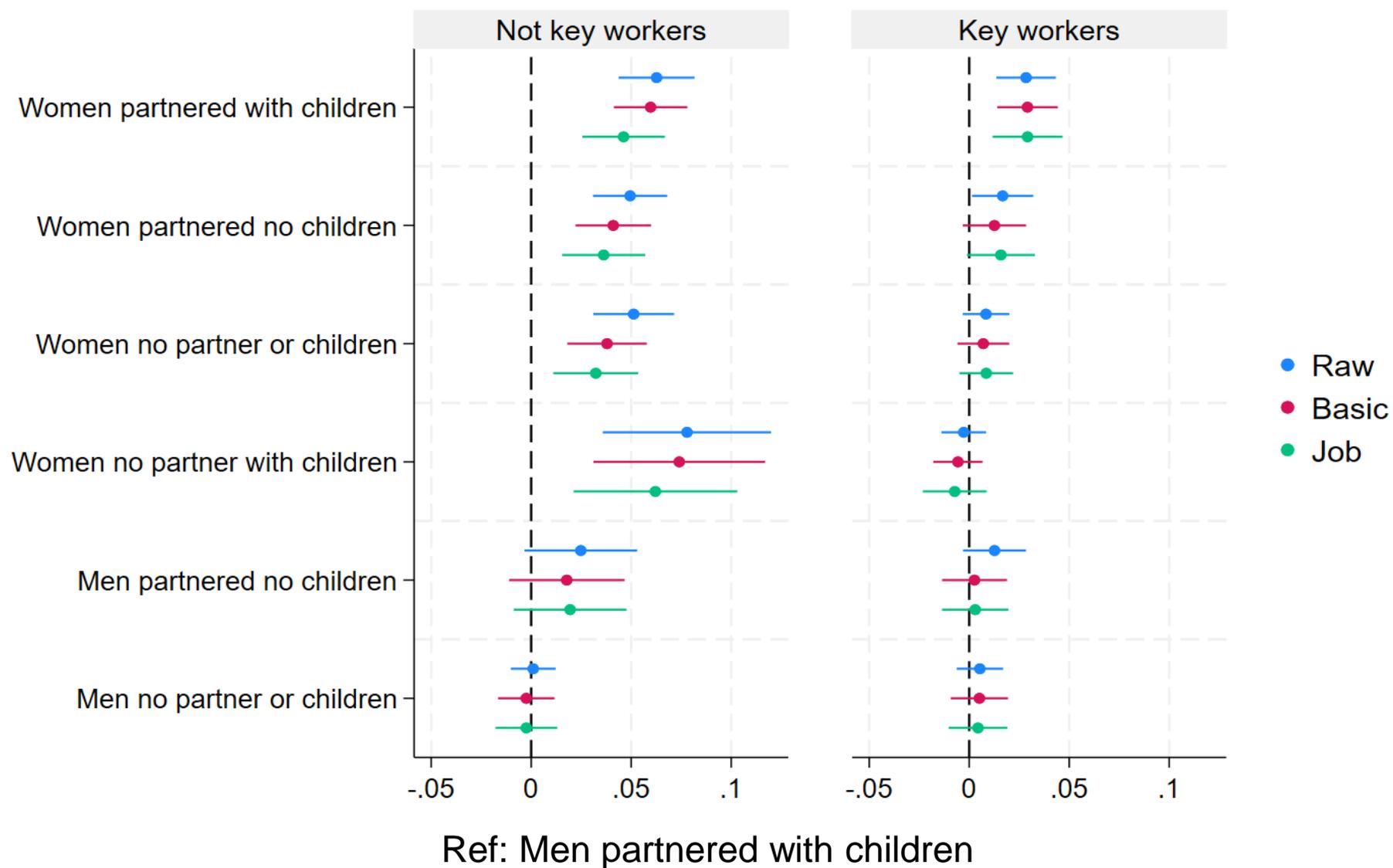
H2: In couples, efficient household allocation

Allocation reflecting comparative advantage of partners (i.e. earnings/development potential)

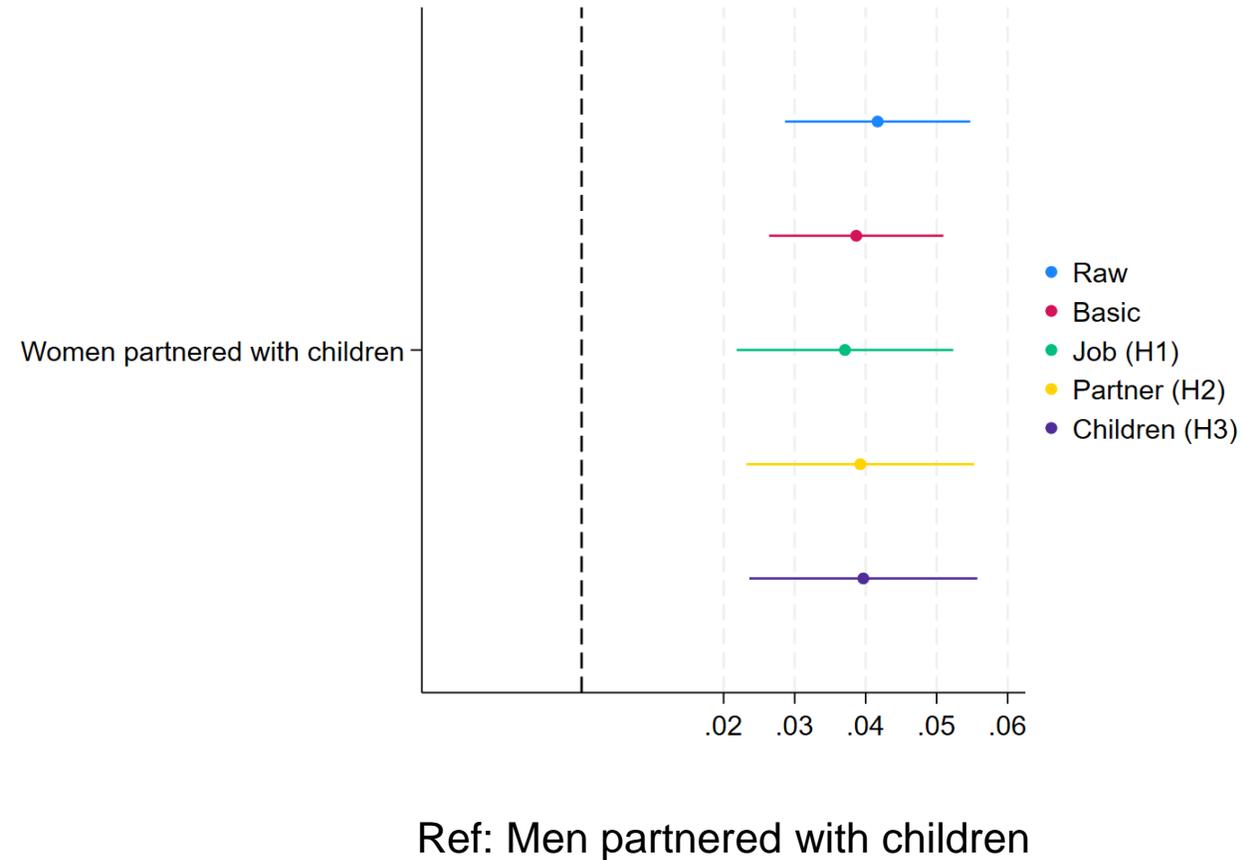
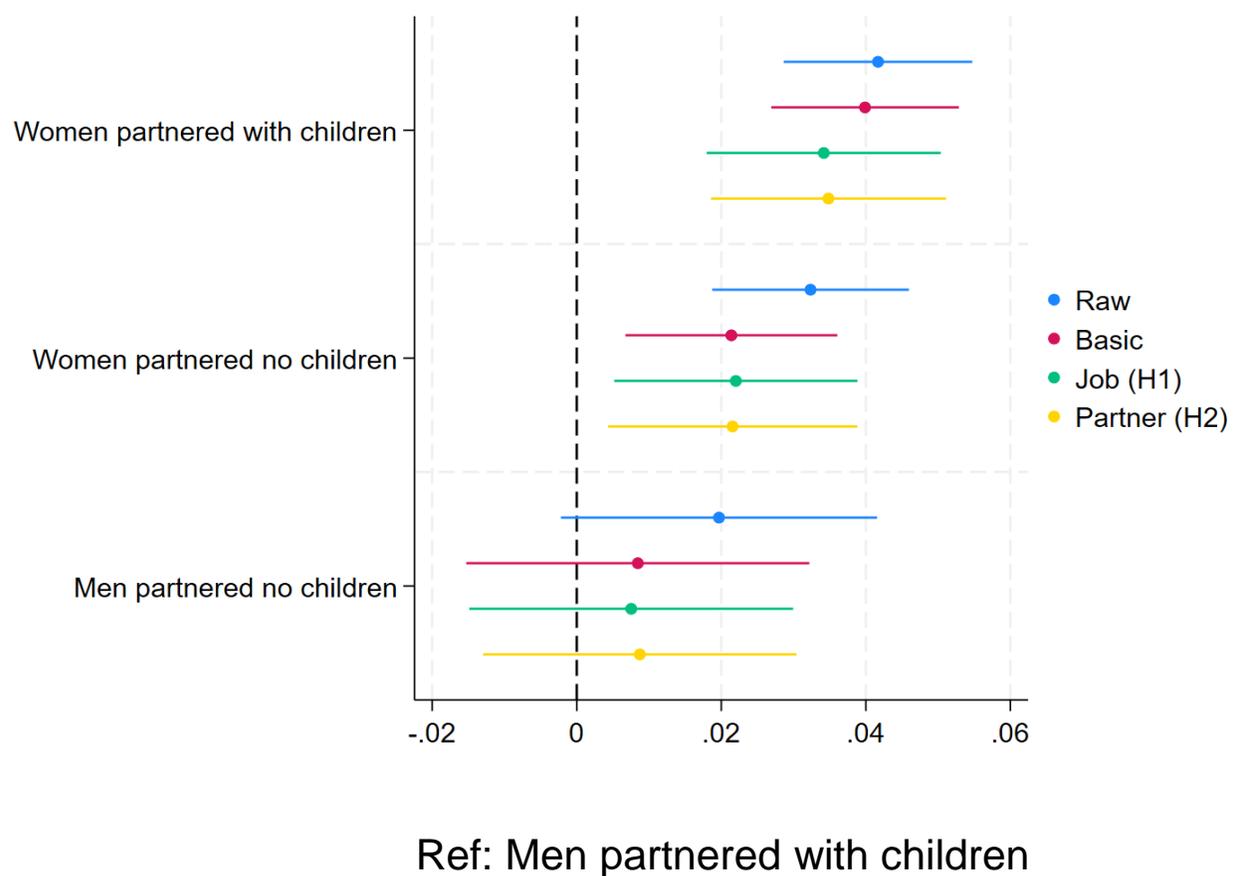
H3: In couples with children, childcare responsibilities

Women, especially mothers, taking a bigger share of childcare needs due to the social distancing restrictions

Furlough (H1)



Furlough (H2 and H3)



Alternative explanations for residual gap:



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Social norms:

Expectation that looking after children and housework is women's responsibility and that they are better suited to it than men.

Preferences:

Women prefer the conditions offered under furlough scheme (i.e., not working while still receiving 80% of their pay)

Gender norms have been fully internalized and directly shape one's preferences; for example, via reputational damage

Employer discrimination:

Women may have been forced to be furloughed at higher rates than men

Despite UK Equality law, Covid-19 pandemic presented unprecedented setting, which may have reinforced existing prejudices and fixed ideas about gender roles



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Permanent workers and working from home



Economic
and Social
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Increased prevalence of **working from home (wfh)** enforced by government, changing perception of the gendered flexibility stigma

Flexibility paradox – rather than facilitating work-life balance, flexible working leads to overwork and blurring of work-life boundaries

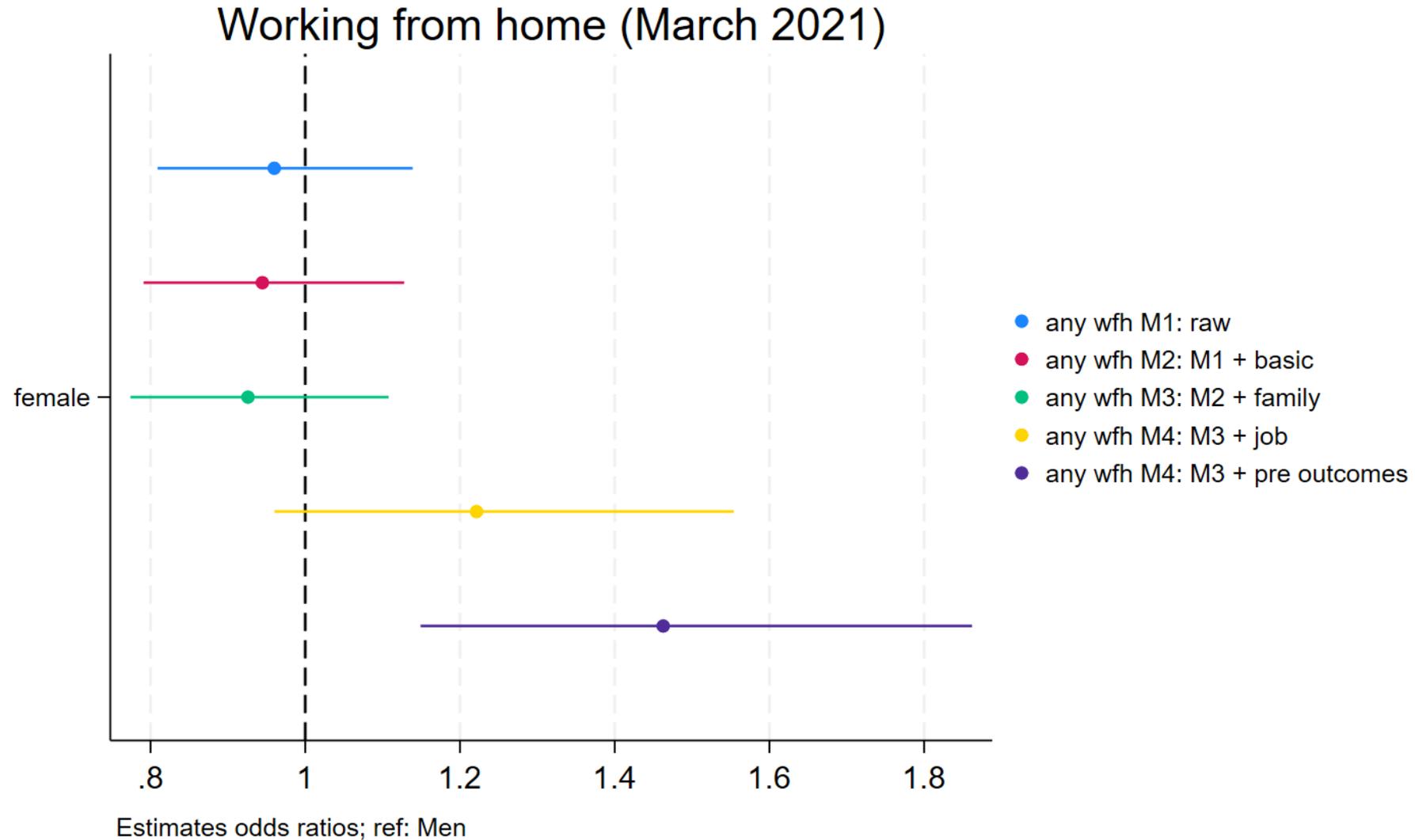
Gender differences enable men and women to perform gender roles without disrupting social norms and ideal-worker norm

Using more recent longitudinal data, which allows to account for pre-pandemic factors

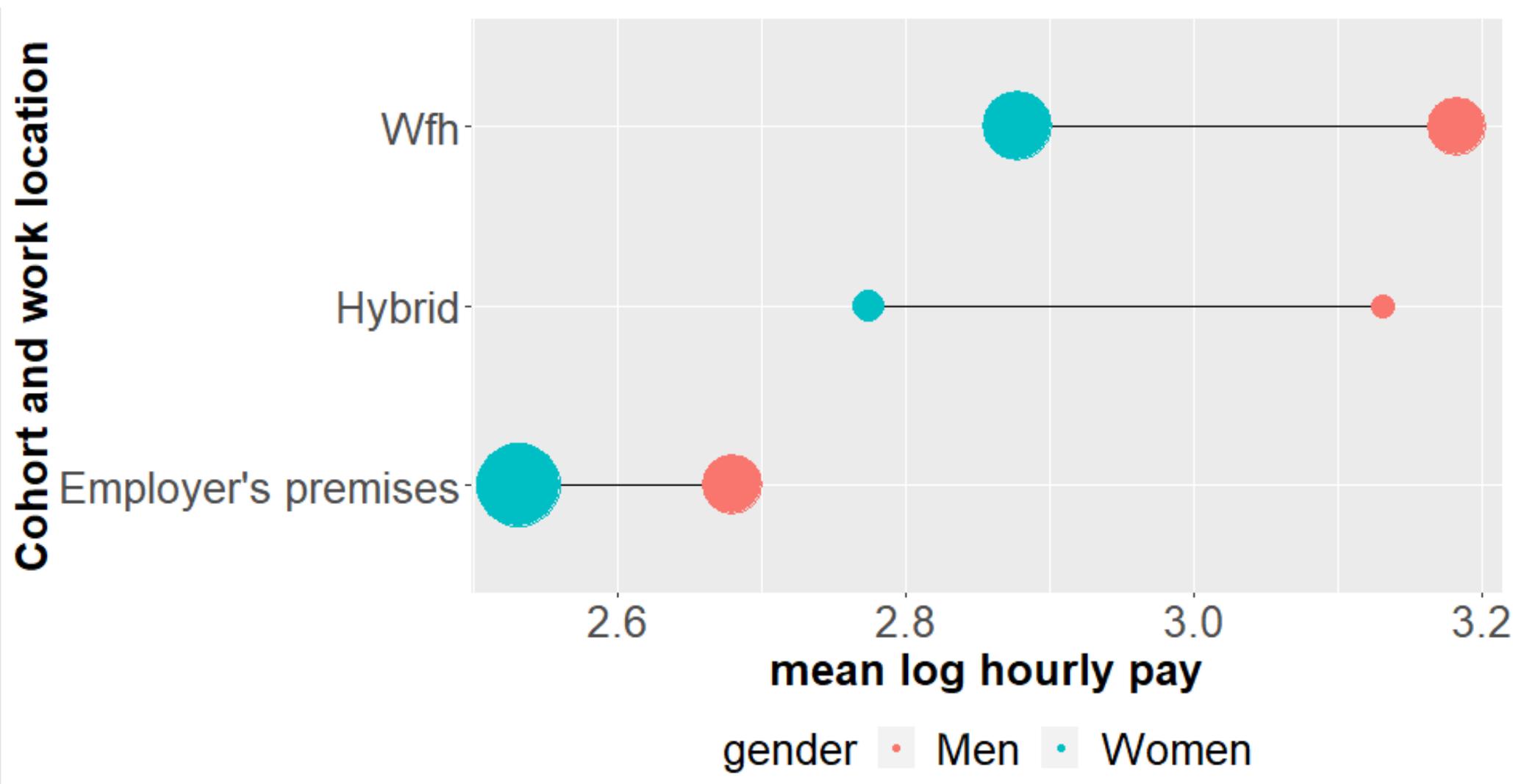
Research questions:

1. Who works from home? (family-focused vs. performance-enhancing; in covid being able to work at all)
2. How is wfh related to gender differences in hourly pay? (compensating differentials vs. bargaining power)
3. How is wfh related to gender differences in mental health and well-being? (work-life balance vs. work-life conflict)

Who works from home?



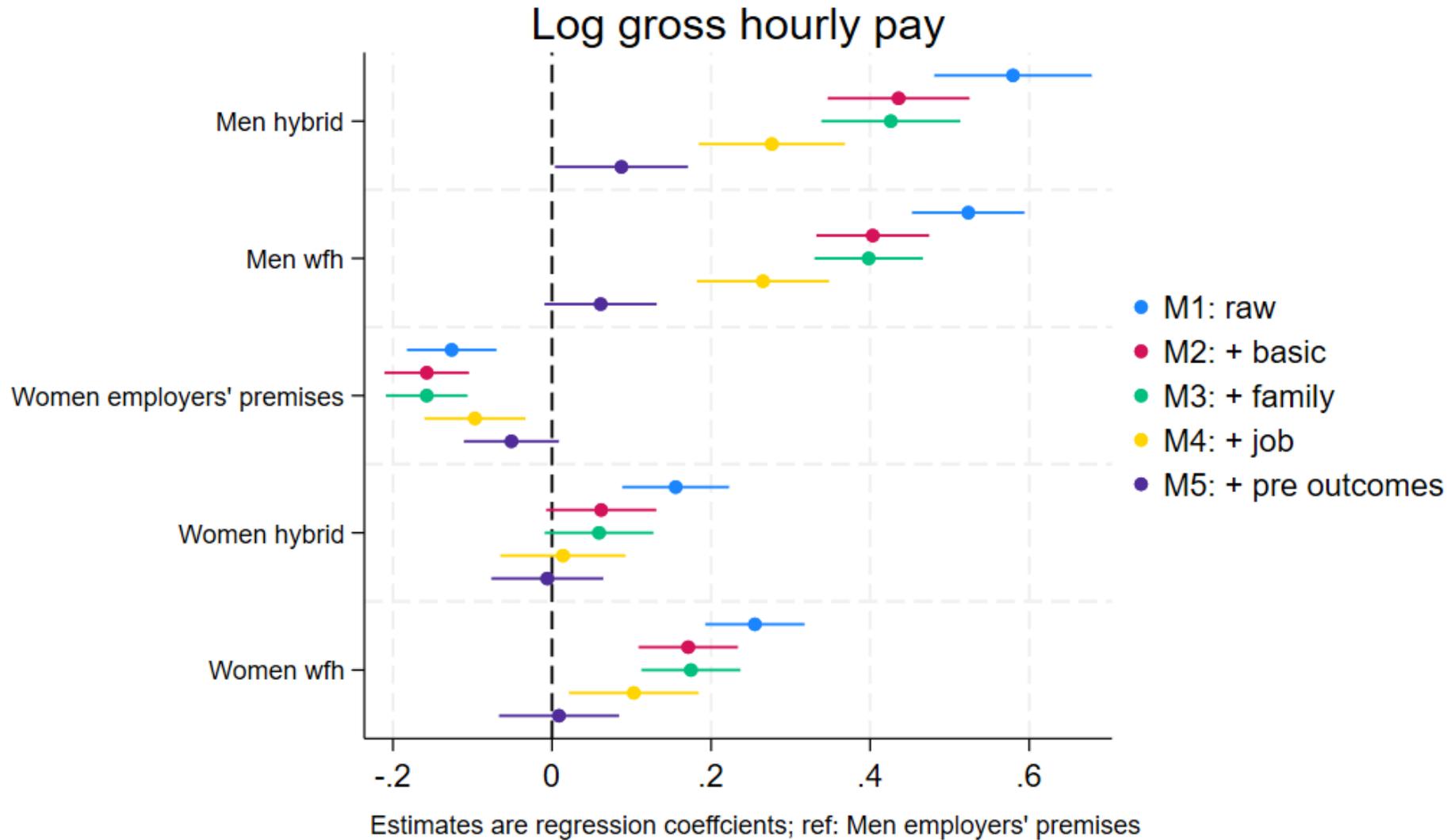
Raw gender pay gaps



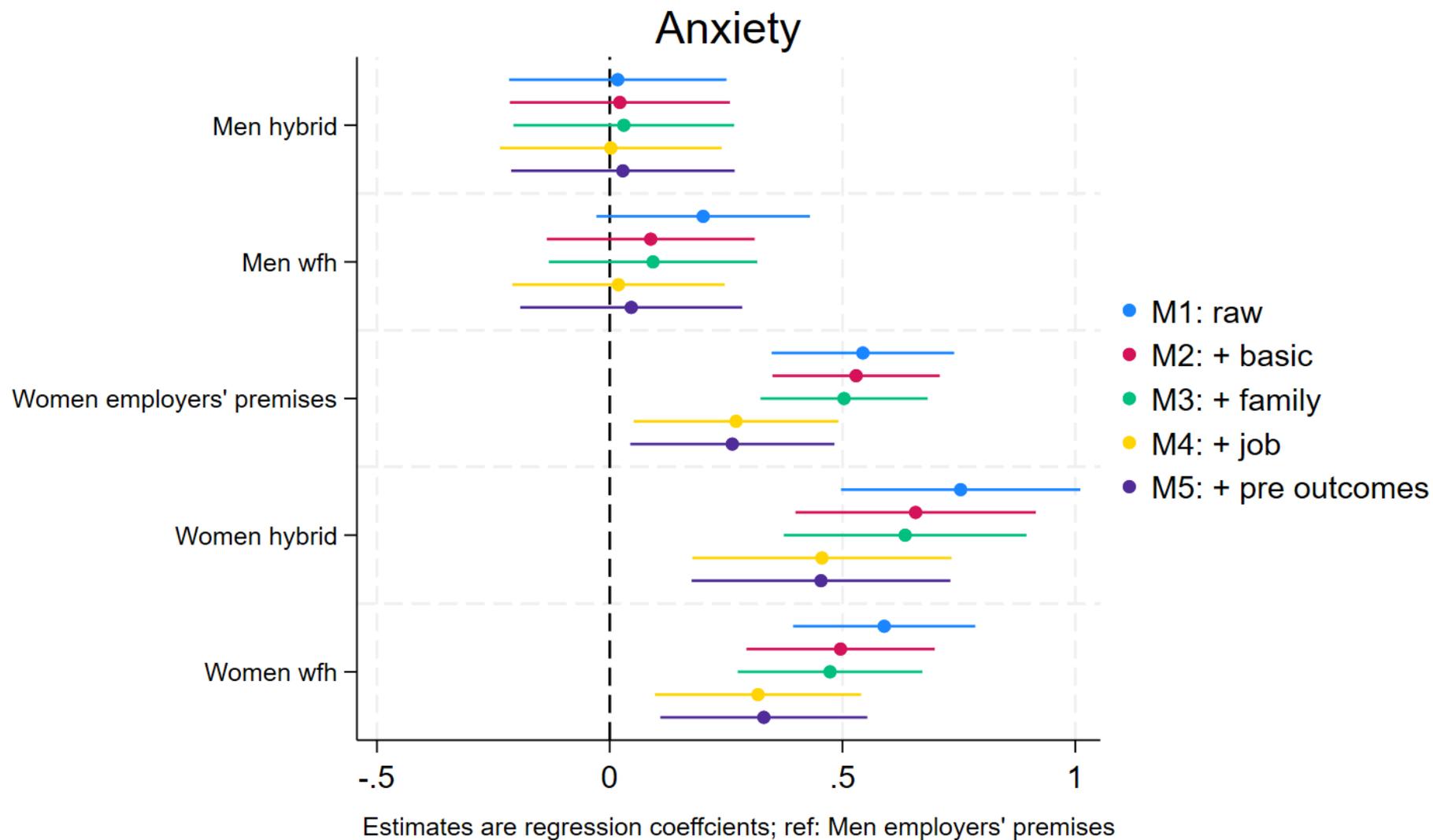
Adjusted pay gaps by location



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Mental health gaps



Summary of findings:



Provision/access to working from home:

- Women more likely to work from home only once we control for job characteristics, putting the family-friendly presumption behind flexible working in question
- Those more educated and in higher status jobs are more likely to work from home, while part-time workers and key workers are less likely

Pay gaps:

- Women earn less than men across all work locations, with gaps the widest amongst those who work from home
- This is largely, but not fully, accounted for by pre-pandemic pay, implying that cohort members' work location reflects the pre-existing line of gender inequalities

Mental health gaps:

- Some support for flexibility paradox post-covid, with women working hybrid having the worst outcomes

Thank you! Questions? Comments?

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