

Bank of England

Gender balance in the household and workplace in the Covid recovery

Discussion of RES Keynote Address by B. Petrongolo

University of Reading – 11/4/2022

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The views expressed here are those of the author and are not necessarily reflective of views at the Bank of England



Gender inequality in the labour market, Covid and Productivity

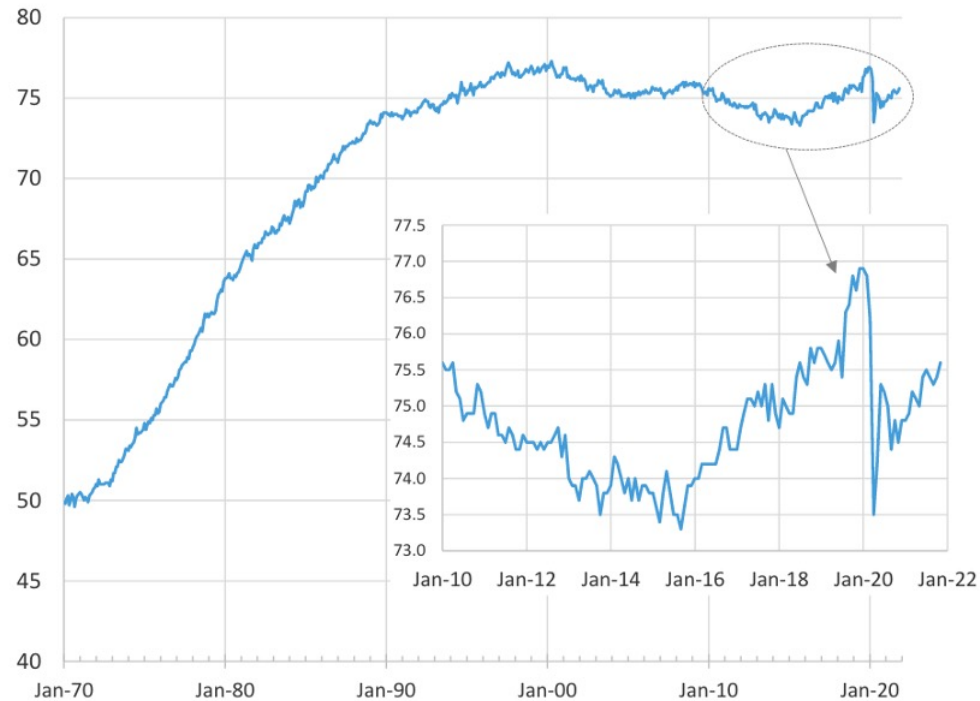
- What do we know?
 - Labour force participation and Employment (US/UK)
 - Not as bad for women as we expected at the onset of the Pandemic.
 - Productivity
 - Evidence of a large drop in women's productivity due to the greater impact of childcare duties.
 - What should we expect going forward?
 - Working from Home (WFH) is here to stay and could have long-lasting effects on gender inequality and productivity.
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What do we know?

Employment and labour force participation during the pandemic

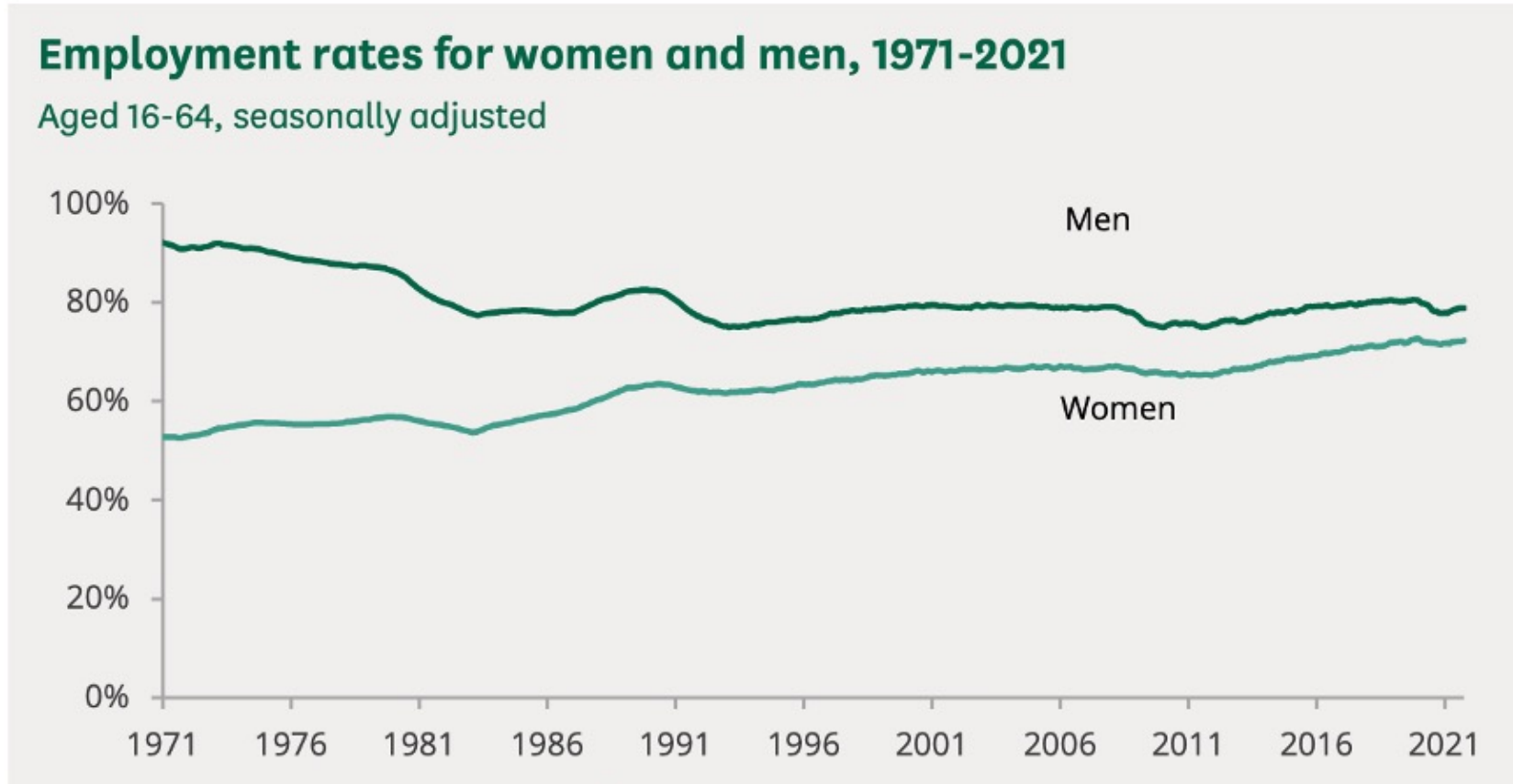
Women Employment and the Pandemic (US)



Source: BLS.gov, series id: LNS11300062, seasonally adjusted, civilian labor force participation rate, 25 to 54 years, women.

- Godin (2022)
- *Contrary to many accounts, women did not exit the labour force in large numbers, and they did not greatly decrease their hours of work.*
- *The real story of women during the pandemic is that they remained in the labour force and stayed on their jobs, as much as they could.*

Women Employment and the Pandemic (UK)



Source: ONS, Labour Market Bulletin, [Table A02 SA](#), 15 February 2022.

- [Powell et al \(2022\)](#)
- [Hupkau and Perongolo \(2020\)](#)
- Similar story for the UK

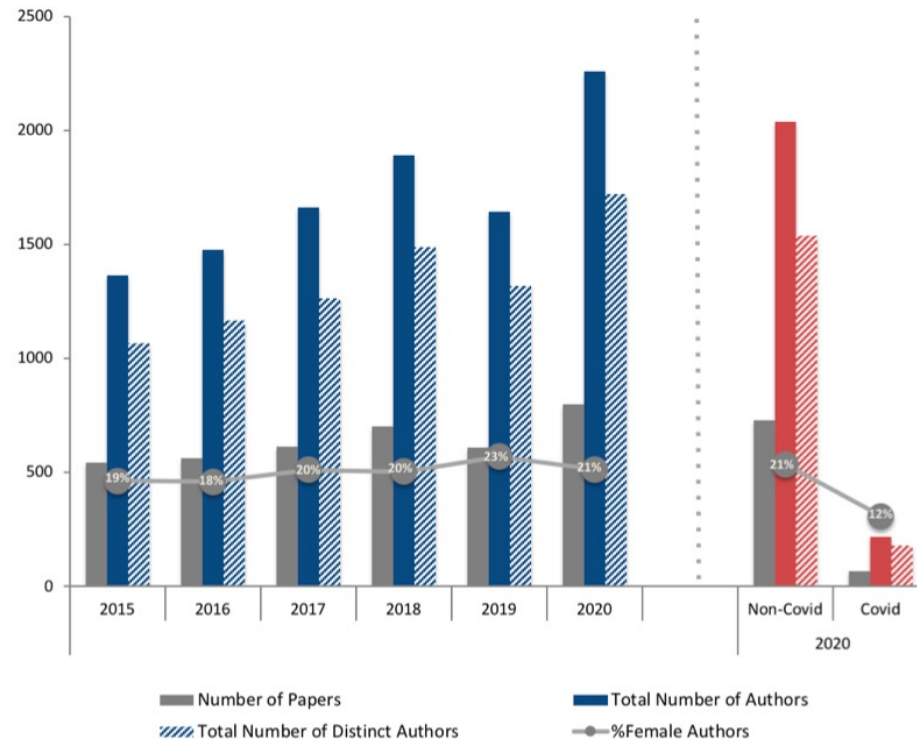


What do we know?

Productivity during the pandemic

The impact of COVID-19 measures on women's research productivity - Economics

Figure 1: NBER and CEPR WP Series



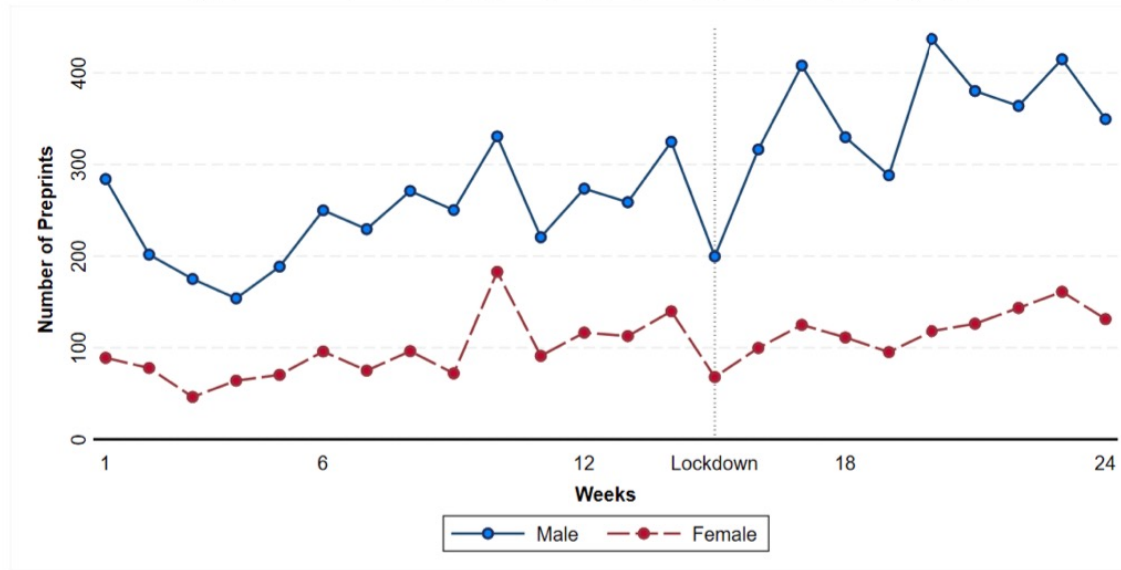
Source: NBER, CEPR, and authors' calculations.

- Amano-Patiño et al. (2020)
- *while the relative number of female authors in non-pandemic related research has remained stable with respect to recent years, women constitute only 12% of the total number of authors working on COVID-19.*

The impact of COVID-19 measures on women's research productivity – Social Sciences

- Cui et al. (2020)

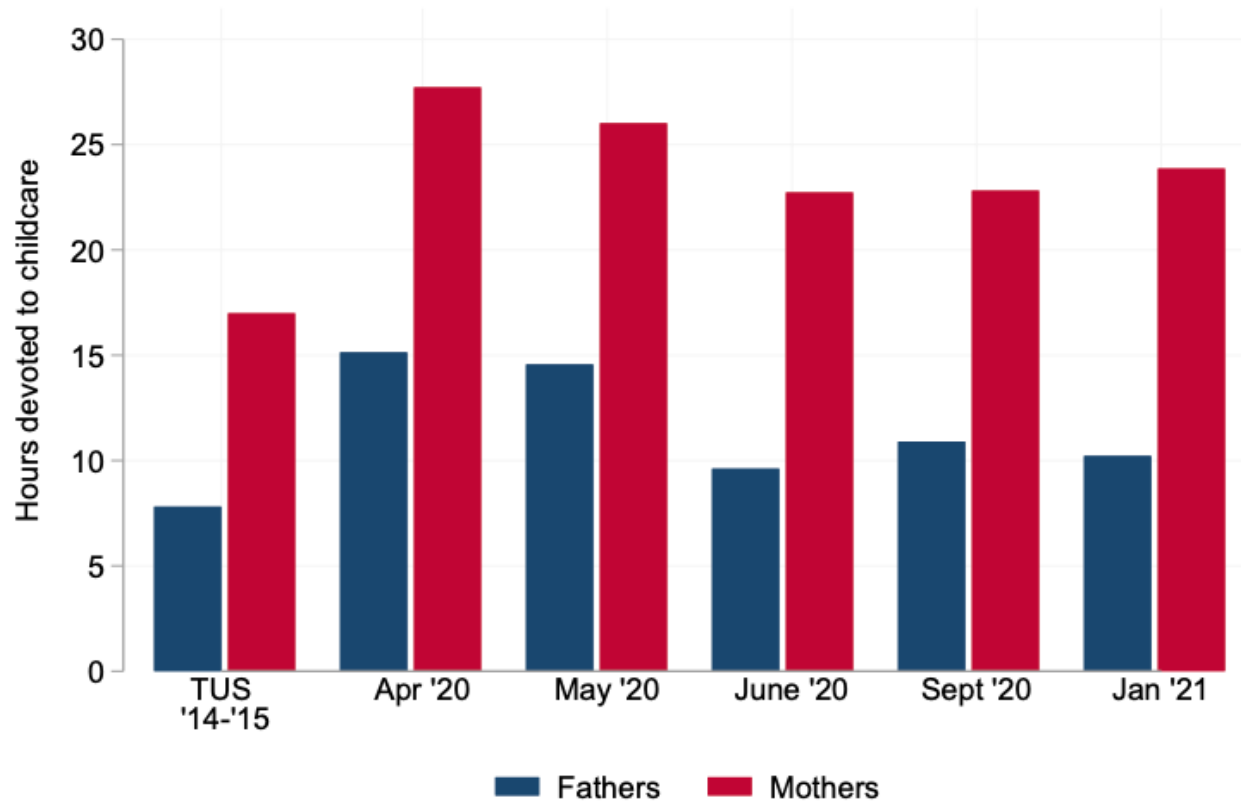
Figure 1 Time Trends of US Preprints from December 2019 to May 2020



This graph plots the time trend of the number of preprints for female and male academics. The vertical line represents the start of the lockdown due to COVID-19 in the US.

- *US-based female researchers' productivity significantly dropped since lockdown began, in comparison to their male colleagues.*
- *during the 10 weeks of lockdown female academics' productivity dropped by 13.9% compared to that of male academics.*

How to link up these two pieces of evidence?



- *women have bore the burden of increased caregiving even as they managed to hold on to their jobs.*
- *working from home with young children at home is detrimental to productivity (e.g. Andrew et al. (2021))*





What about going forward?

WFH, gender inequality and productivity

Long run effect of WFH

- Firms expect a permanent increase in WFH relative to pre-Covid. ([ONS](#) and [Decision Maker Panel \(DMP\)](#))
 - Workers expect to WFH more in the future ([ONS](#) and [Barrero, Bloom and Davis \(2021\)](#))
 - Older workers and mothers prefer more WFH ([ONS](#), [Royal Society for Public Health](#) and [Bloom \(2021\)](#)).
 - **Research open questions:**
 - Impact of WFH on:
 - Gender pay gap
 - Female Labour supply
 - Female productivity
-

- Evidence of 'motherhood penalty'
 - widens the gender pay gap as women reduce hours and earnings after having a child (e.g. [Goldin, Kerr and Olivetti \(2021\)](#) for the US and [Costa Dias, Joyce and Parodi \(2021\)](#) for the UK).
- The long-run impact of WFH is ambiguous:
-  'motherhood penalty': more flexibility in the household increases mothers' working hours, easing the pressure through enhanced shared childcare with fathers.
-  'motherhood penalty': decrease in productivity, not obvious if high profile jobs are doable from home, is there a value to presenteeism?

