

# Gender Economics

## Session 6

# Urban Economics

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Sciences Po Menton



# Introduction

**Urban Economics** focuses on regional inequalities **within a country**

- Mostly with the same institutions
- Analyse how urban spaces influence gender roles, labour market participation, and economic opportunities
- Urbanization impacts men and women differently in terms of employment, mobility, and access to resources
- Understanding gender dynamics in urban settings informs effective policies for equitable urban development.

# Gender Differences in Commuting

Commuting refers to regular travel between one's place of residence and place of employment or study

- Women often face shorter commutes due to greater household and caregiving responsibilities
- Shorter commuting distances may limit women's job opportunities and career growth
- Gender differences in commuting behaviour contribute to the persistent gender wage gap and labour market segmentation.

# Gender Differences in Commuting

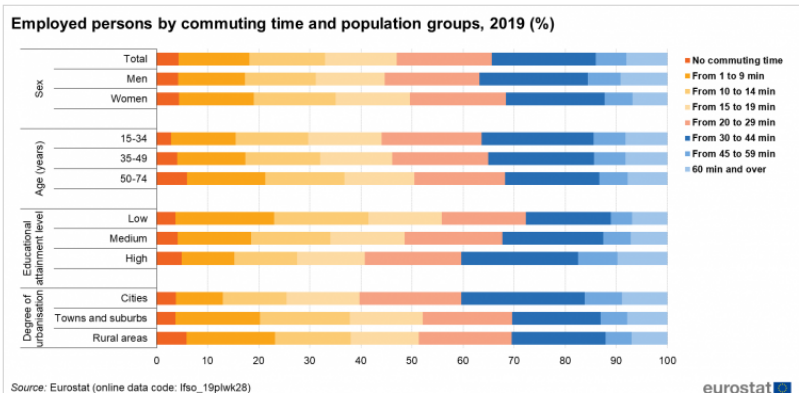
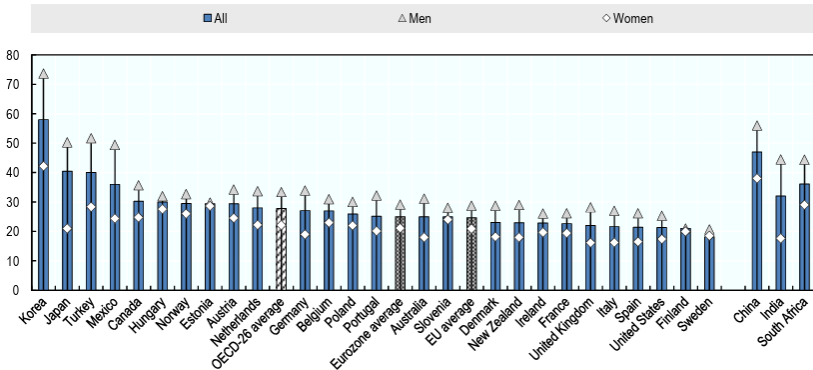


Figure 6: Employed persons by commuting time and population groups, 2019 (%) - Source: Eurostat ([lfso\\_19plwk28](#))

# Gender Differences in Commuting

**Chart LMF2.6.A: Average time spent travelling to and from work, 1999-2014<sup>a</sup>**

Time spent travelling to and from work or study, in minutes per day, all 15-to-64-year-olds<sup>b</sup>



# Gender Differences in Job Search: Trading Off Commute Against Wage (Le Barbanchon et al., 2021)

**Research Question:** *Do gender differences in willingness to commute contribute to the gender wage gap?*

## Data

- French administrative data from Public Employment Service on reservation wages and desired commute

## Results

- Women value commuting 20% more than men
- Women have 12% shorter commutes and earn 4% lower hourly wages post-unemployment
- Gender differences in commute preferences explain 14% of the gender wage gap.

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# (Farré et al., 2023) Commute and labour force participation

- **Research Question:** *Does commuting time affect gender gaps in labour market participation?*
- **Empirical Approach:**
  - ▶ Uses data from Spanish labour markets.
  - ▶ Analysis exploiting spatial variations in commuting infrastructure improvements.
- **Findings:**
  - ▶ Reductions in commuting times significantly increase women's labour force participation.
  - ▶ Improved commuting infrastructure disproportionately benefits women's employment outcomes.



# Gender Differences in Job Flexibility: Commutes and Working Hours after Job Loss (Meekes and Hassink, 2022)

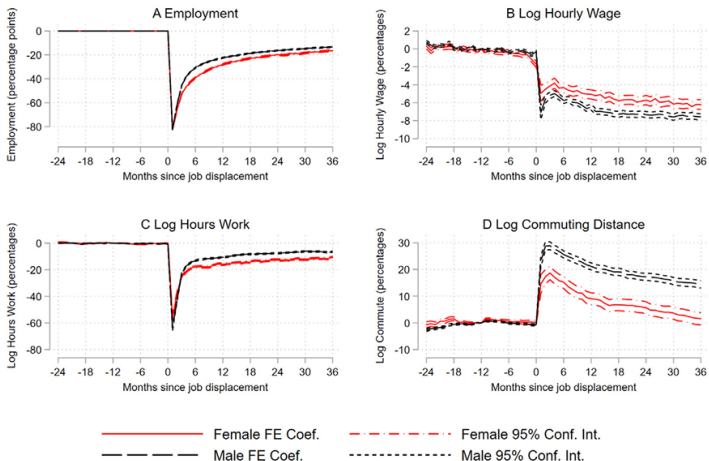
**Research Question** *How do gender differences influence labour market outcomes, such as commuting and working hours, after job loss due to firm bankruptcy?*

## Empirical Strategy

- Quasi-experimental design using job displacement due to firm bankruptcy in the Netherlands (2006-2017)
- Difference-in-Differences (DiD) and Triple-Differences to examine heterogeneity by gender and pregnancy status.

# Gender Differences in Job Flexibility (Meekes and Hassink, 2022)

Panel B: Samples stratified by gender



# Gender Differences in Job Flexibility (Meekes and Hassink, 2022)

## Results

- Displaced women have longer unemployment spells
- Women take jobs with 8 percentage points fewer working hours and 8 percentage points shorter commutes compared to men
- Similar hourly wage losses for both genders
- Pregnancy amplifies negative employment impacts for women.

# Commuting, Gender, and Children (Borghorst et al., 2024)

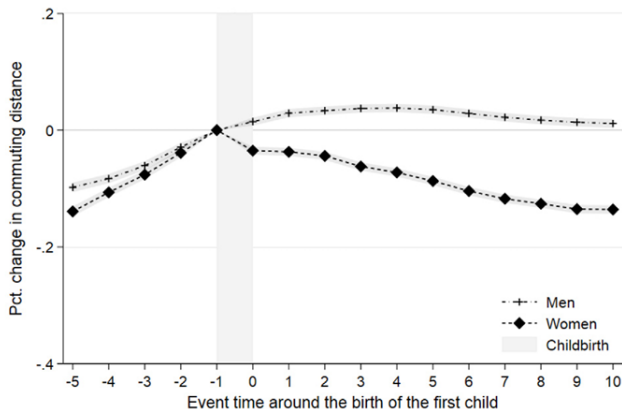
## Research Question:

- *How does commuting impact job retention differently by gender, especially after childbirth?*

## Empirical Strategy:

- Danish administrative data (2003–2013).
- Event study around childbirth.

# Commute and motherhood penalty



(b) Commuting distance

# Commute and motherhood penalty (Borghorst et al., 2024)

## Key Findings

- Women's commuting costs sharply increase after childbirth.
- Women significantly reduce commuting distance post-childbirth, impacting job retention negatively.
- A 12 km increase in commuting distance induces costs equivalent to about 20% of women's wage post-childbirth.

# Question

How to participate?



1

Go to **wooclap.com**

2

Enter the event code in the  
top banner

Event code

**LQBYFL**

# Commuting to Work and Gender Norms by Sexual Orientation (Oreffice and Sansone, 2023)

## Research Question

*How do gender norms influence commuting patterns within same-sex vs. different-sex couples?*

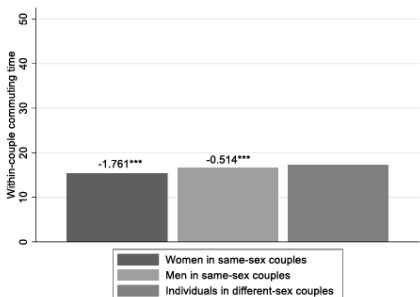
## Empirical Strategy

- American Community Survey data (2008-2019)
- Analysis of commuting times and labour market outcomes by couple type and sexual orientation

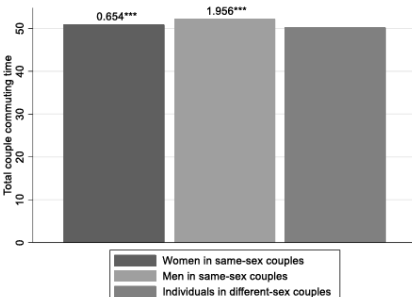


# Commuting to Work and Gender Norms by Sexual Orientation (Oreffice and Sansone, 2023)

**Panel E: Within-couple commuting gap**



**Panel F: Total couple commuting time**



# Results

- Women in same-sex couples commute longer than those in different-sex couples; the opposite for men.
  - Commuting gaps largest among married couples with children
  - Smaller intra-household gaps in same-sex couples
- ⇒ Highlighting the strong influence of gender-conforming social norms in different-sex couples.

# Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India (Muralidharan and Prakash, 2017)

**Research Question** *Can providing bicycles to girls increase secondary school enrollment and reduce the gender enrollment gap in rural India?*

## Empirical Strategy

- Triple-Differences design comparing girls and boys across age cohorts and between Bihar and Jharkhand.

## Results

- Bicycle provision increased age-appropriate girls' enrollment by 32%, reducing the gender gap by 40
- Largest impacts in villages far from secondary schools.
- Cost-effective compared to conditional cash transfers

# Demand for “Safe Space” (Kondylis et al., 2025)

## Research Question:

*How does sexual harassment influence women's commuting choices, and how effective are women-reserved transit spaces in reducing harassment?*

## Empirical Strategy:

- Crowdsourced data from  $\approx 22,000$  train rides by 363 women in Rio de Janeiro
- Randomized controlled trial assigning women to either reserved or public space
- Revealed preference analysis to estimate women's willingness-to-pay for safe spaces.

# Demand for “Safe Space” (Kondylis et al., 2025)

## Findings

- Women face harassment in 18% of public rides, 15% involving physical harassment.
- Reserved spaces reduce harassment by 50%, especially physical harassment.
- Demand for reserved spaces highly concentrated: a third of riders account for 80% of demand
- Social norms significantly shape women’s commuting choices: perceiving reserved space usage as normative strongly increases its demand.

# Urban Wage Premium

- Refers to the observed higher wages of workers in urban areas compared to rural areas
- Explained by higher productivity in urban areas due to better matching, agglomeration economies, and access to larger labour markets
- Gender dimensions exist as women and men benefit differently from urbanization in terms of employment and wage outcomes.

# Phimister (2005): Urban Effects on Participation and Wages

- **Research Question:** *Do urban environments affect gender differences in labour market participation and wages?*
- **Empirical Strategy:**
  - ▶ Econometric analysis using UK Household Panel Data.
  - ▶ Examines urban-rural differentials in labour force participation and wages.
- **Results:**
  - ▶ Urban residence increases participation and wages, especially for women.
  - ▶ Greater urban benefits for female labour force participation compared to men.

# (Costa and Kahn, 2000) Power Couples

- **Research Question:** How has the location choice of college-educated dual-career couples changed from 1940-1990?
- **Methodology:** Historical analysis using U.S. Census data from 1940-1990.  
**Context:** Analysis of U.S. Census data (1940-1990).
- **Empirical Strategy:**
  - ▶ Comparative historical analysis of dual-career ("power couples") vs. other couples.
- **Key Findings:**
  - ▶ Increased clustering of dual-career couples in large metropolitan areas.
  - ▶ Shift driven by desire for job matching opportunities, outweighing commuting costs.
  - ▶ Gender wage gaps influenced by these spatial choices.



# Conclusion

## Key Takeaways:

- Urban environments shape gendered economic opportunities, particularly through commuting patterns and access to jobs.
- Women face structural constraints—such as shorter commutes, caregiving responsibilities, and safety concerns—that limit their labour market outcomes.
- Gender norms influence job search, mobility, and wage disparities, with significant variations across socio-economic contexts.
- Policies that improve transport infrastructure, enhance safety, and support work flexibility can help mitigate gender inequalities in urban labour markets.

# References

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