

Is Women's Competitiveness Expressed through their Husband's Income?

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Introduction

- There is growing concern that the well-established **gender difference in competitiveness** is a major contributing factor to the prevalent gender income gap (Blau & Kahn, 2017).
- **However, this concern presupposes that people compete as individuals within the economy and not as members of households.**
 - In particular, such concern overlooks the possibility that women's competitiveness may not be fully expressed in their own labor market performance
 - but rather may also be partly expressed in the labor market performance of their male partners
 - with whom they enjoy public goods (e.g., children) and a shared income.

This paper tests the influence of individuals' competitiveness on their own and spouse's income.

Data

- Large Dutch representative household survey.
- **Competitiveness surveyed in March 2017** (Buser, Niederle, and Oosterbeek, 2020).
 - “How competitive do you consider yourself to be?”
- Income data spanning 2017-2021.

Methods and Contribution

- Buser et al. report an **association** between competitiveness and **own contemporaneous (2017)** income.
- We report **causal effect** of competitiveness on **own and spouse's future (2018-2021)** income
 - by controlling for contemporaneous income to remove the potential influence of past successes on surveyed competitiveness.

Results from heterosexual couples

Table 1. Yearly OLS regression of the **level** of monthly income on competitiveness

(Euros)	Average monthly income				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
A. Coupled men's income (N ≈ 593; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.180)					
Men's Competitiveness	190.0***	201.8***	262.7***	253.2***	214.0***
Women's Competitiveness	218.6***	253.7***	258.7***	261.1***	292.0***
B. Coupled women's income (N ≈ 593; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.245)					
Men's Competitiveness	46.00	0.975	-2.556	-4.857	-10.83
Women's Competitiveness	113.3**	146.4***	163.0***	185.6***	169.4***

Controls: Men's and Women's age, Men's and Women's education, Men's and Women's risk tolerance, Marital status, and Children.

Table 2. Yearly OLS regression of the **change in** monthly income on competitiveness

(Euros)	Average monthly income controlling for March 2017 income				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
A. Coupled men's income (N ≈ 581; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.819)					
Men's Competitiveness		11.99	56.63	60.65	36.73
Women's Competitiveness		54.50**	63.45*	78.67**	105.7**
B. Coupled women's income (N ≈ 581; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.825)					
Men's Competitiveness		-34.90	-16.21	-8.891	-7.134
Women's Competitiveness		8.074	19.13	47.98	47.96

Controls: Men's and Women's age, Men's and Women's education, Men's and Women's risk tolerance, Men's and Women's March 2017 income, Marital status, and Children.

Male partner's level of income

- Both men's and women's competitiveness are positively associated with men's future income.

Female partner's level of income

- Only women's competitiveness is positively associated with women's future income.

Controlling for March 2017 income to remove the potential influence of past labor market success on surveyed competitiveness,

Male partner's **change** in income

- Only women's competitiveness increases men's future income.**

Female partner's **change** in income

- Neither women's nor men's competitiveness increases women's future income.

Results from singles

Table 3. Yearly OLS regression of the **change in** monthly income on competitiveness

Average monthly income controlling for March 2017 income					
(Euros)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
A. Single women's income (N ≈ 466; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.180)					
Competitiveness		24.58	79.89**	110.9***	79.73
B. Single men's income (N ≈ 391; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.245)					
Competitiveness		78.32**	133.4***	125.3**	64.15
C. Coupled women's income (N ≈ 1,102; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.720)					
Competitiveness		-5.065	-1.839	13.71	21.34
D. Coupled men's income (N ≈ 963; Adj. R-squared ≈ 0.737)					
Competitiveness		7.826	38.69	40.97	39.32

Controls: Age, Education, Risk tolerance, Marital status, Children, and March 2017 income.

- **Single women's** competitiveness increases her future income.
- **Single men's** competitiveness increases his future income.
- Neither coupled men's nor women's competitiveness increases his or her future income.

Household income

Table 4. Yearly OLS regression of the **change in** monthly household income on competitiveness

Average monthly household income controlling for March 2017 household income					
(Euros)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Men's Competitiveness		-23.13	37.31	44.49	18.73
Women's Competitiveness		62.43*	85.91*	135.3***	165.3***

Controls: Men's and Women's age, Men's and Women's education, Men's and Women's risk tolerance, Household's March 2017 income, Marital status, and Children.

- **Only women's competitiveness** increases future household income.

Possible channels and robustness checks

Men's work hours

- Men's competitiveness increase their future hours, but women's does not.
- Men's longer work hours do not increase their future income.
- ***Women's competitiveness increases male partner's future income but not by making them work longer hours.***

Job types

- Results are robust to controlling for men's and women's job types.
- ***Women's competitiveness increases male partner's future income but not through occupation.***

Relative housework

- Neither men's nor women's competitiveness affect their perceptions of own or their partner's housework shares.
- ***Women's competitiveness increases male partner's future income but not by doing more housework and freeing up his time (contrary to household specialization model).***

Wages

- Insufficient data (N = 111 out of 678 couples) for rigorous analysis of effect of competitiveness on wages.

Conclusion

- While single men's and women's competitiveness causally increase their own future income, neither partnered men's nor women's own competitiveness increases their own future income.
 - **However, women's competitiveness increases their male partner's income,**
 - **but men's competitiveness does not influence their female partner's income.**
- Only women's competitiveness increases future household income.
- The causal effect of women's competitiveness on their male partner's future income is not explained by work hours, housework, and job types.