

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

Gahye (Rosalyn) Jeon, Georgia State University

David Ong, Jinan U-U of Birmingham Joint Institute

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

(Euros)	Average monthly income controlling for March 2017 income				
	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.

Household income

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

(Euros)	Average monthly household income controlling for March 2017 household income				
	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.

- 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.

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.