



# Exploring the Reasons for Labour Market Gender Inequality a Year into the Covid-19 Pandemic: Evidence from the UK Cohort Studies

Royal Economic Society Annual Conference, 11 April 2022

Presenter: Bożena Wielgoszewska

Co-authors: Alex Bryson, Monica Costa Dias, Francesca Foliano,  
Heather Joshi, David Wilkinson

CENTRE FOR  
LONGITUDINAL  
STUDIES



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

# Background and Motivation:

- The Covid-19 pandemic has caused unexpected disruptions to Western countries;
- Shecession vs. Mancession –previous studies suggest that, as opposed to previous economic downturns, women are more adversely affected than men by the pandemic;
- 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)

# Hypotheses:

## H1: Occupational segregation

- Women are over-represented in jobs disproportionately affected by covid-19 pandemic (hospitality, tourism etc.) that have been less sensitive to previous declines
- However, women are also more likely to work in sectors that faced increased demand (health, care etc.)

## H2: In couples, efficient household allocation

- Decisions within the household on how to organise paid and domestic work
- Allocation reflects comparative advantage of partners (i.e. earnings/development potential)

## H3: In couples with children, childcare responsibilities

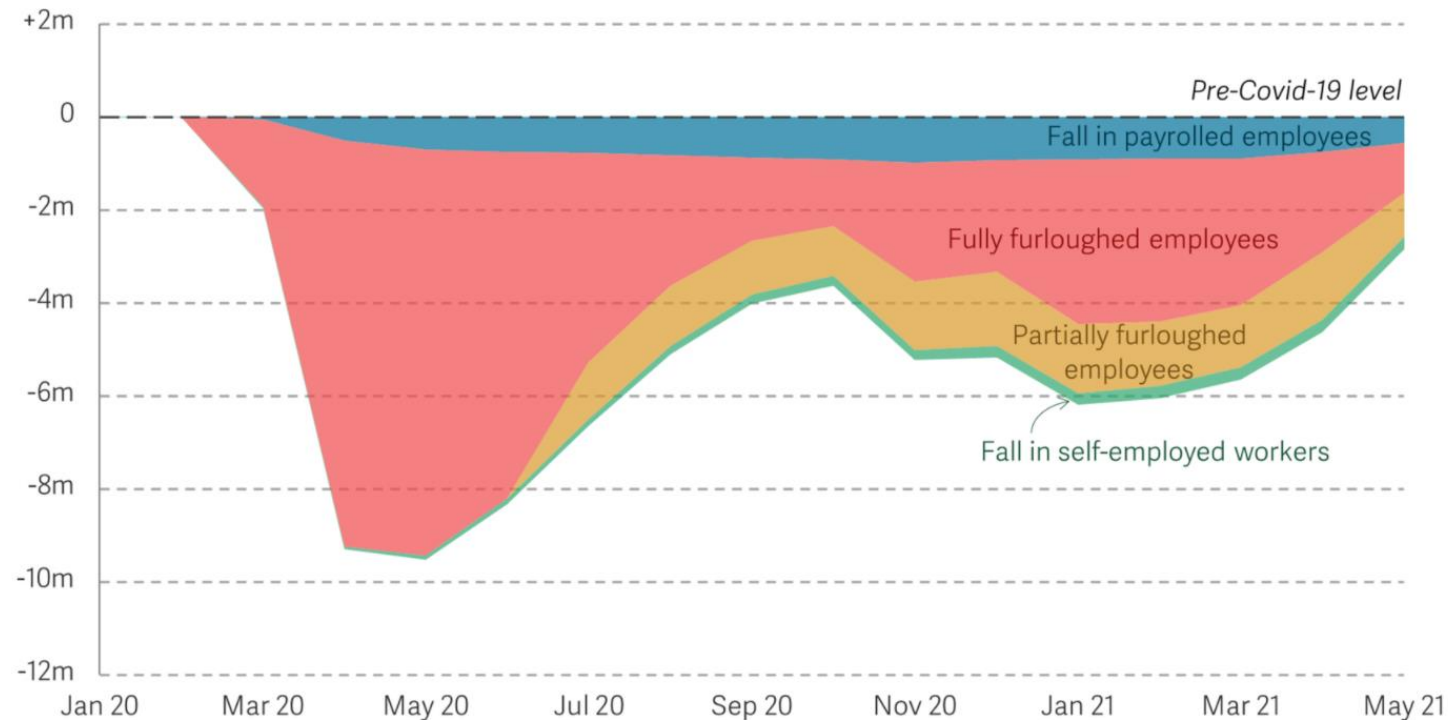
- Increased childcare needs resulting from the social distancing restrictions
- Women, especially mothers, taking a bigger share of housework and childcare responsibilities

# Contribution:

- Focus on a year after the pandemic (February/March 2021);
- Include other “family types” than couples with children;

Change in employment since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic: UK

Resolution  
Foundation



Notes: The May data points for fully and partially furloughed workers estimate the mid-May total based on data from the Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey. May self-employment fall projected forward using the average change over the most recent two data points. Estimated net fall in self-employment adjusted for the average share of self-employment outflows who moved into the 'employee' category between April 2020 and March 2021.  
Source: RF analysis of HMRC, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme Statistics; ONS, Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey; ONS, Labour Market Statistics; ONS/HMRC, Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information; ONS, Labour Market Flows.

# Methods:

- **Data:** Pooled sample from NCDS, BCS70, Next Steps, MCS
- **Estimation Sample:** employed in March 2020; living in England, Scotland and Wales; excluding lone fathers
- **Model:** linear probability, weighted back to population using combined design and non-response weights
- **Missing Data Strategy:** if covariates are missing we add item missing dummy to retain sample size

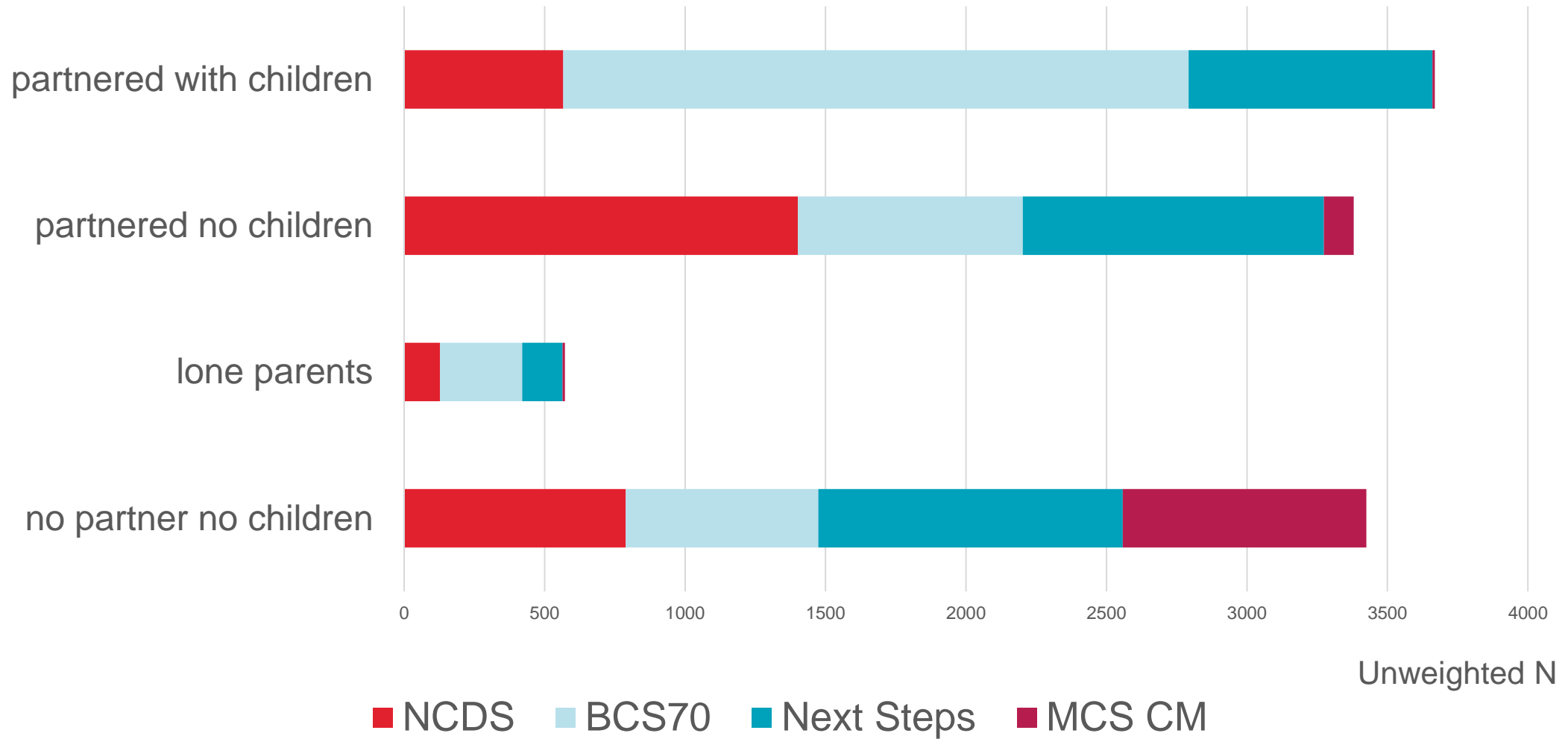
# Outcomes:

- **Remains in employment:** employed, furloughed, apprenticeship, voluntary work, self-employed vs. unemployed, sick, disabled, looking after family, retired, education
- **Actively working:** employed, self-employed, apprenticeship and currently working
- **The same job:** employed and currently working in the same job as in March 2020
- **Furlough:** employed but on paid leave including furlough

# Stages of adjustment:

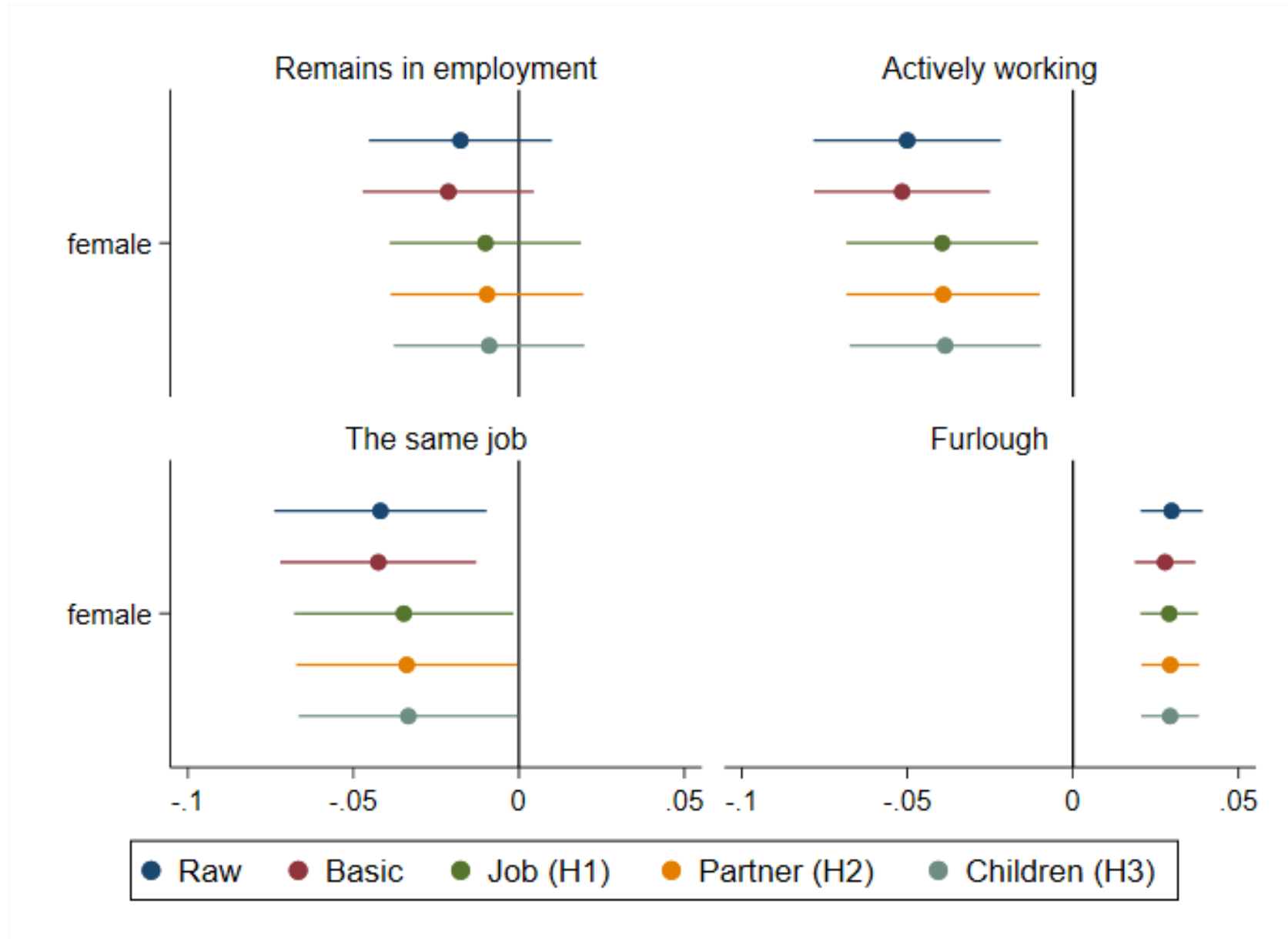
1. Raw gaps
2. + **Basic controls**: Age (NCDS, BCS, Next Steps, MCS), Country (England, Scotland, Wales), London, Education (none, NVQ1-5), parental social class (manual, non-manual), mode of survey (CAWI, CATI)
3. + **Job characteristics (H1)**: SOC in March 2020 (1 digit) , part-time (worked less than 30 hours), key worker (based on 4 digit SOC in March 2020)
4. + **Partner/Partner's job characteristics (H2; couples only)**: SOC in March 2020, part-time (worked less than 30 hours), key worker (based on 4 digit SOC in March 2020)
5. + **Children/Children's characteristics (H3; couples with children only)**: number of children in the household; age of the youngest child (5 or less; 6 to 11; 12 to 18; 19 or more)

# Distribution of family types across cohorts

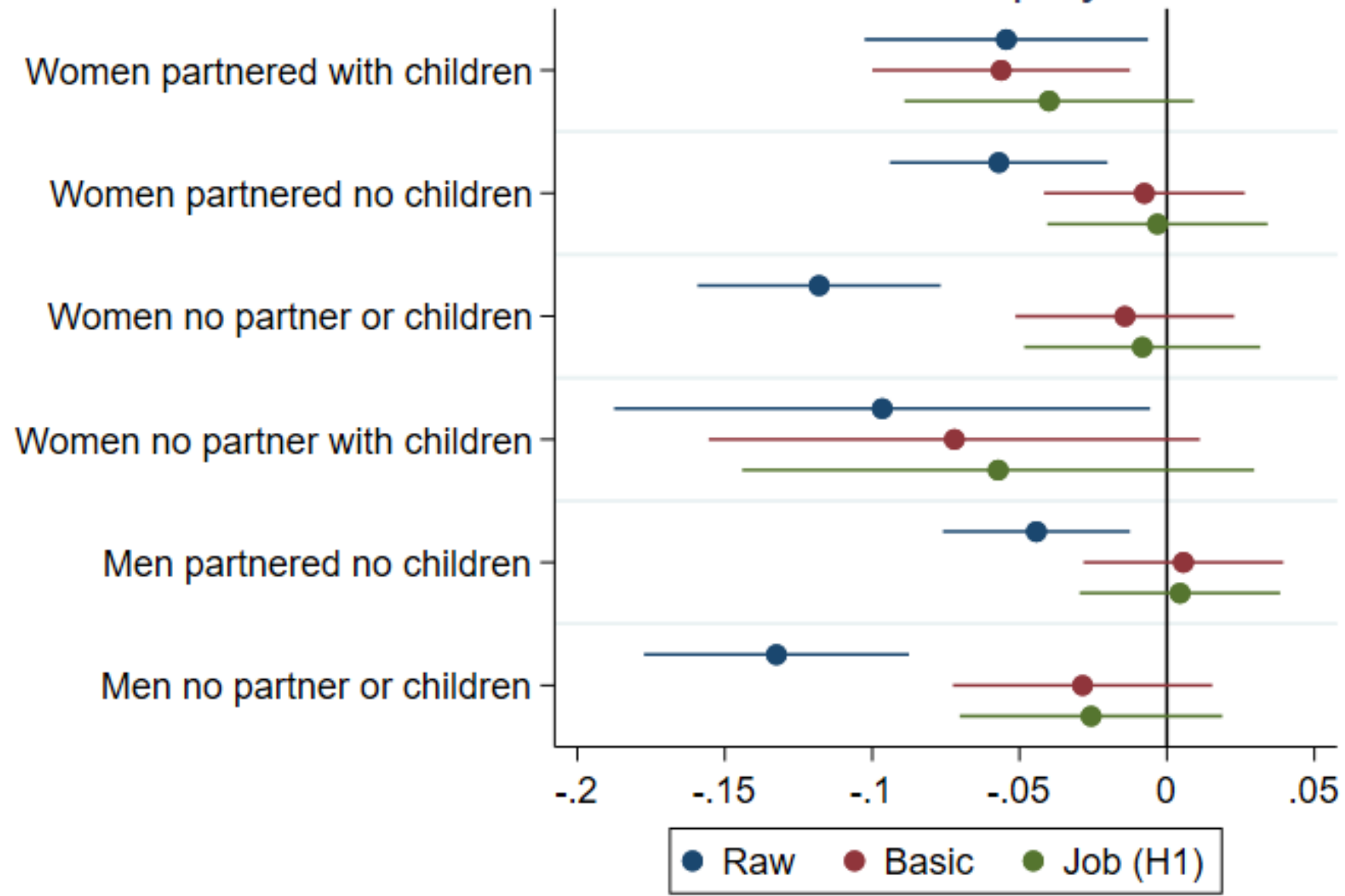


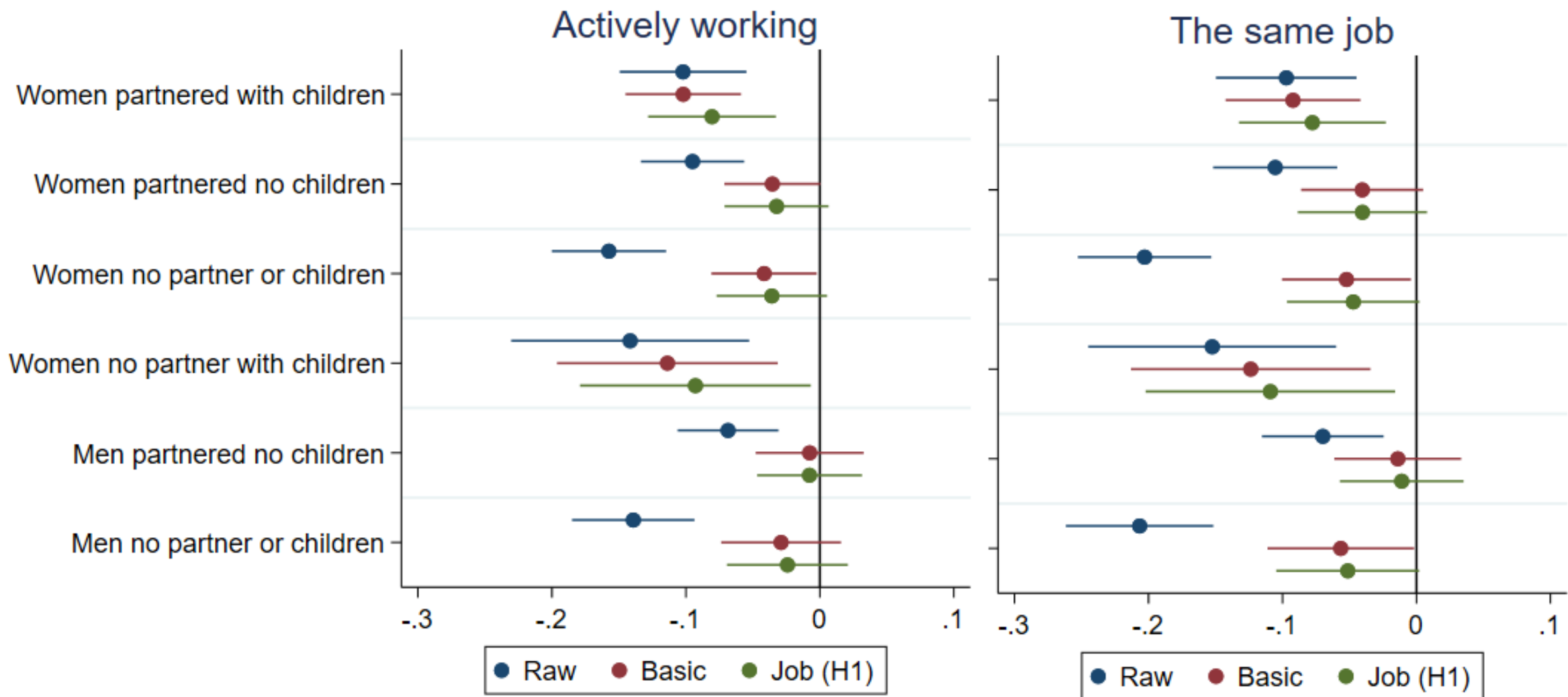


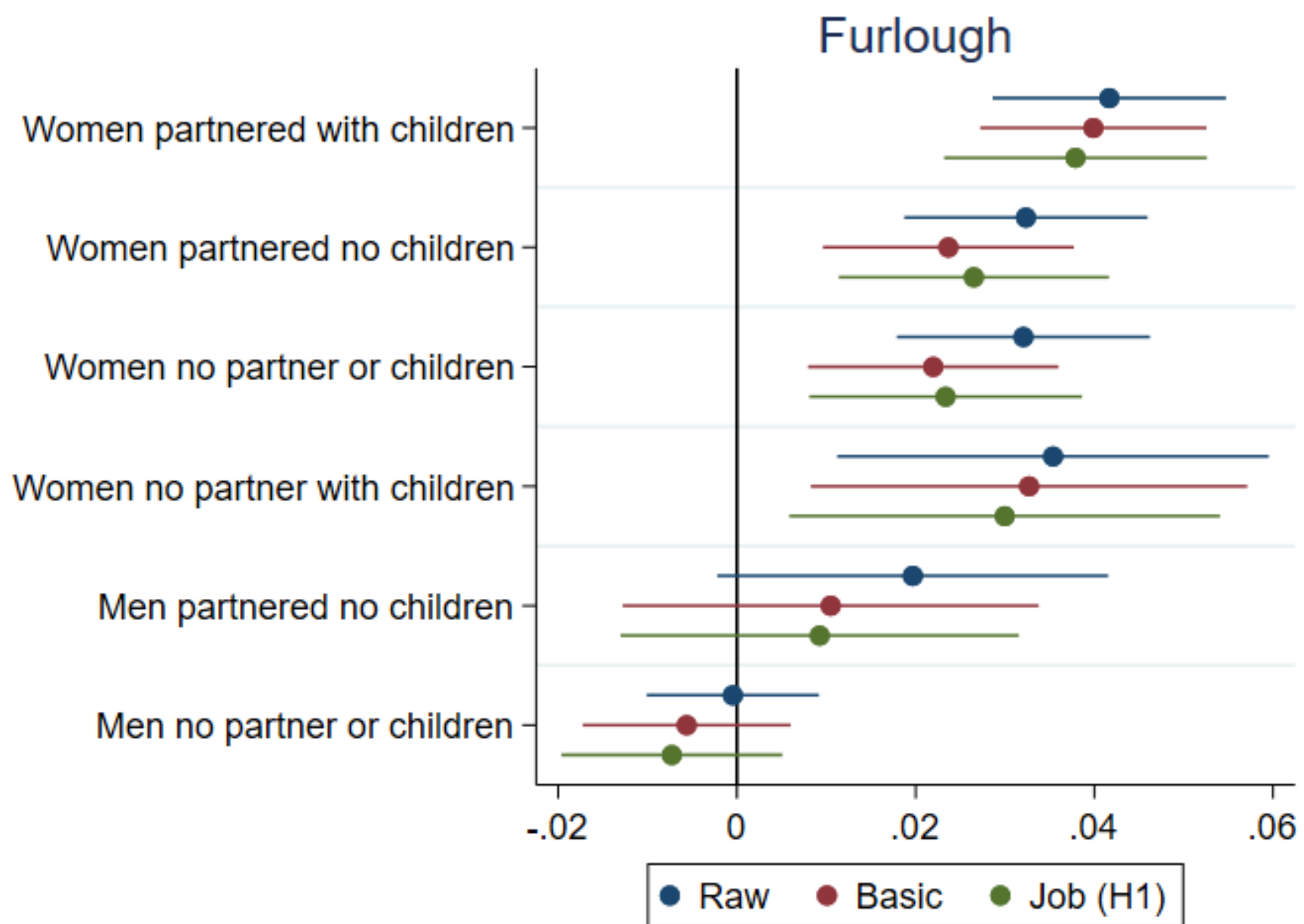
# Overall gender differences

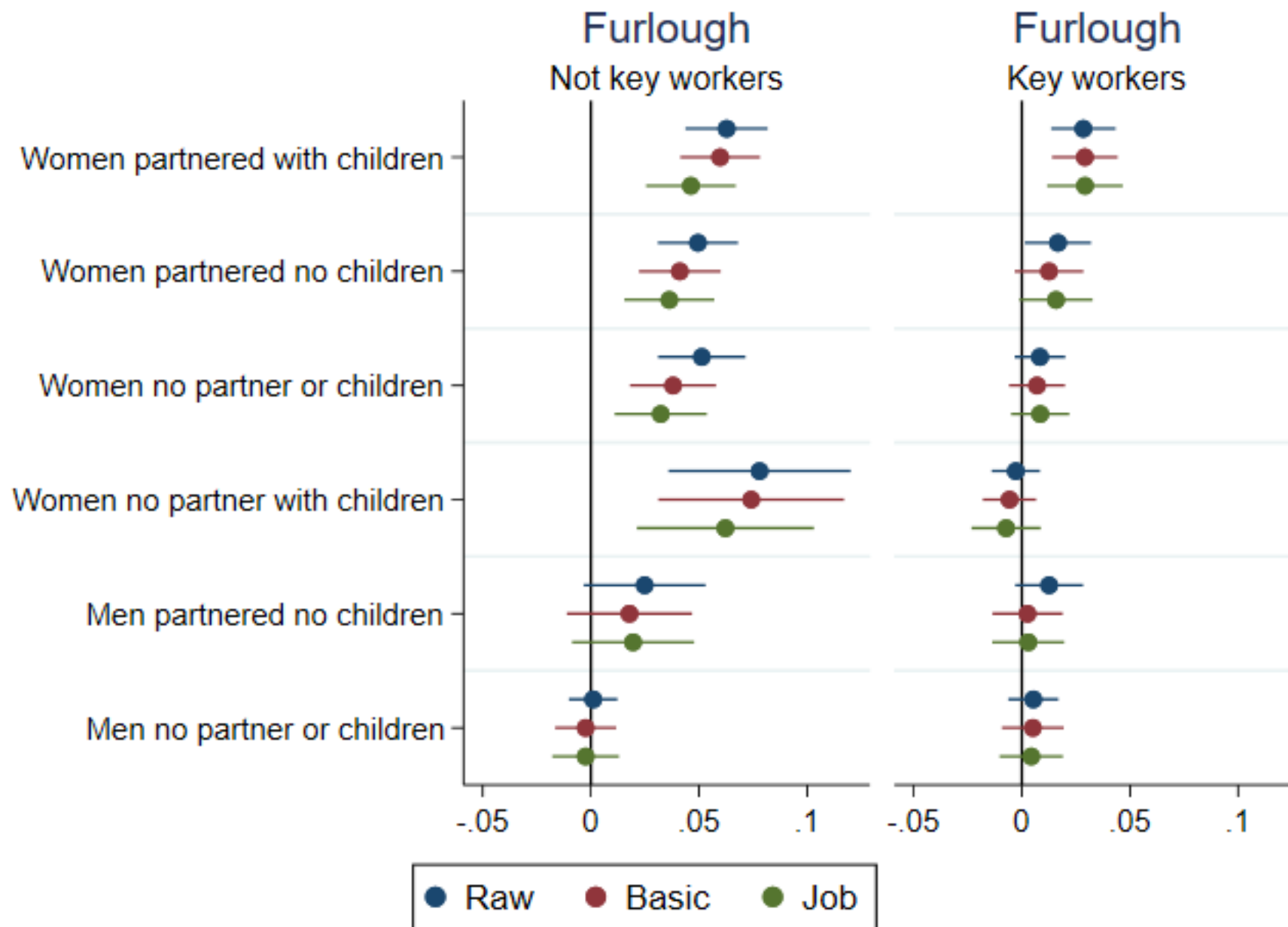


## Remains in employment

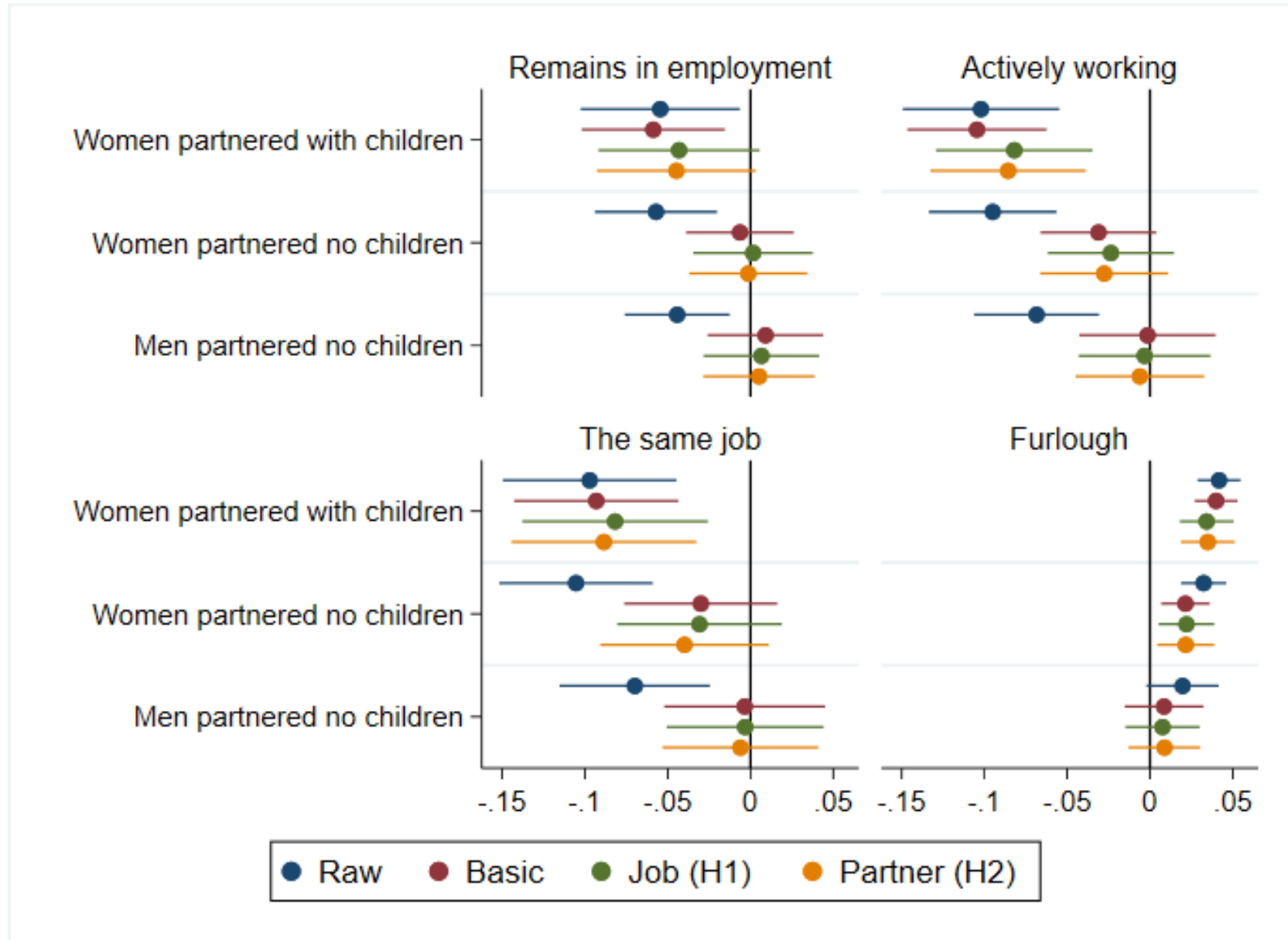




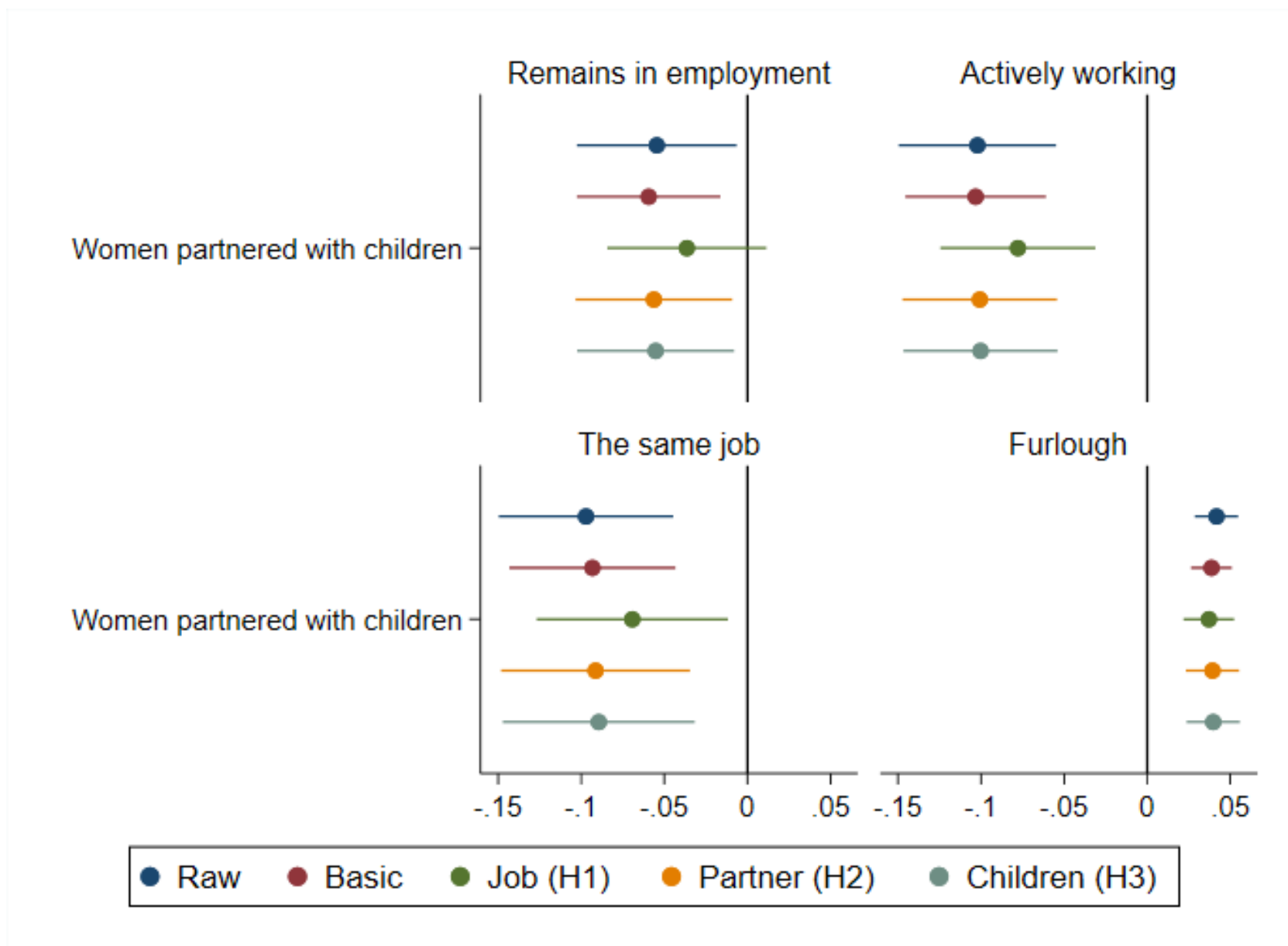




# Partner adjustment



# Children adjustment



# Summary:

- The adverse effects are still experienced by women a year into the covid pandemic, especially if they live with partners and children, even if they were key workers.

## H1: Occupational segregation:

- Gender differences in the probability of employment are attenuated when we account for the job characteristics (occupation, part-time and key worker status pre-covid)
- We observe these effects irrespective of household type

## H2: Efficient household allocation:

- Adjusting for the presence of a partner in the household makes little differences to the gender gaps
- In couples, accounting for the partners' job characteristics makes little difference to the previous estimates.

## H2: Childcare responsibilities:

- Adjusting for presence of children of their characteristics makes little difference to the previous estimates.



# Alternative explanations for residual gaps:

## 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
- Although illegal in the UK, covid-19 pandemic presented unprecedented setting, which may have reinforced existing prejudices and fixed ideas about gender roles

# Thank you! Questions? Comments?

Project website: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/centres/quantitative-social-science/gender-wage-gap-evidence-cohort-studies>

Email: [b.wielgoszewska@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:b.wielgoszewska@ucl.ac.uk)

Twitter: [@MeBozena](https://twitter.com/MeBozena)