

Penalties for Success?

Gender Norms and Women's Leadership



Successful women face societal pressures both in and out of the workplace. Recent studies have highlighted some of the obstacles ambitious women encounter and underscore the importance of discussing gender norms and female leadership in the workplace.

Ambition in Dating: Fisman (2006)

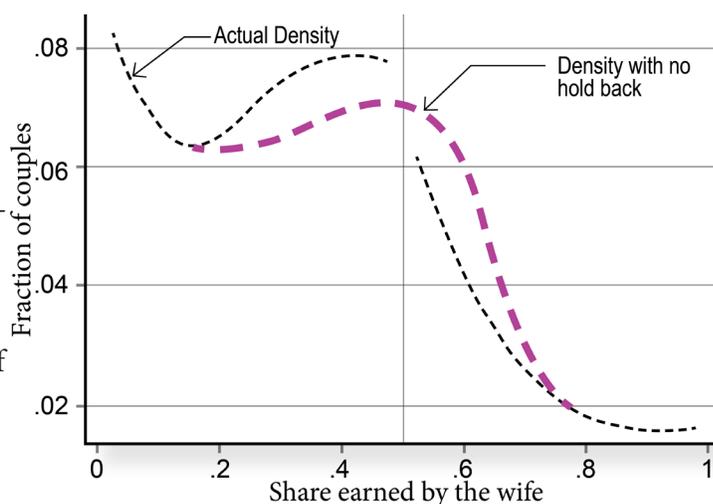
For two years, Professor Ray Fisman ran a speed dating experiment at a New York City bar in which he observed more than 400 daters make thousands of decisions on prospective matches. The researchers asked participants to rate their partner's intelligence, looks, and ambition after each meeting, and combined these data with separately collected background information on the daters. Fisman found that women put greater weight on the intelligence of prospective partners than men, who tend to value physical attractiveness more highly. Moreover, men avoided women whom they perceived to have higher levels of intelligence and career ambition than their own. The study thus indicated that successful women face a "romance penalty" in the dating market, as men select against women who they perceive as having higher levels of intellect or ambition.

Job Search and Migration: Gemici (2006)

Professor Ahu Gemici analyzed the relationship between gender and labor migration, and found that while interregional moves are associated with higher wages for singles and married men, married women are less likely to be employed following a move. Gemici combined data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics with a model for household migration decisions to show that large moves happen more frequently as a result of employment opportunities for men. While both married men and married women make career compromises that their single counterparts do not, Gemici nonetheless found that married women typically realize the lowest level of wage gains from a move.

Household Earnings: Bertrand et al. (2015)

Professors Marianne Bertrand, Emir Kamenica, and Jessica Pan further examined the relative share of income earned by men and women within households. Bertrand and her team used administrative data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, which draws on data from the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service. The researchers showed a sharp dropoff in the share of income earned by the wife at half of household income—a fact that reveals a societal aversion to wives earning more than their husbands. The authors found that in households where the wife earns more than the husband, partners are less likely to be satisfied with the marriage and are more likely to divorce. The authors thus used administrative federal data to illustrate gender identity norms that continue to define modern relationship dynamics.



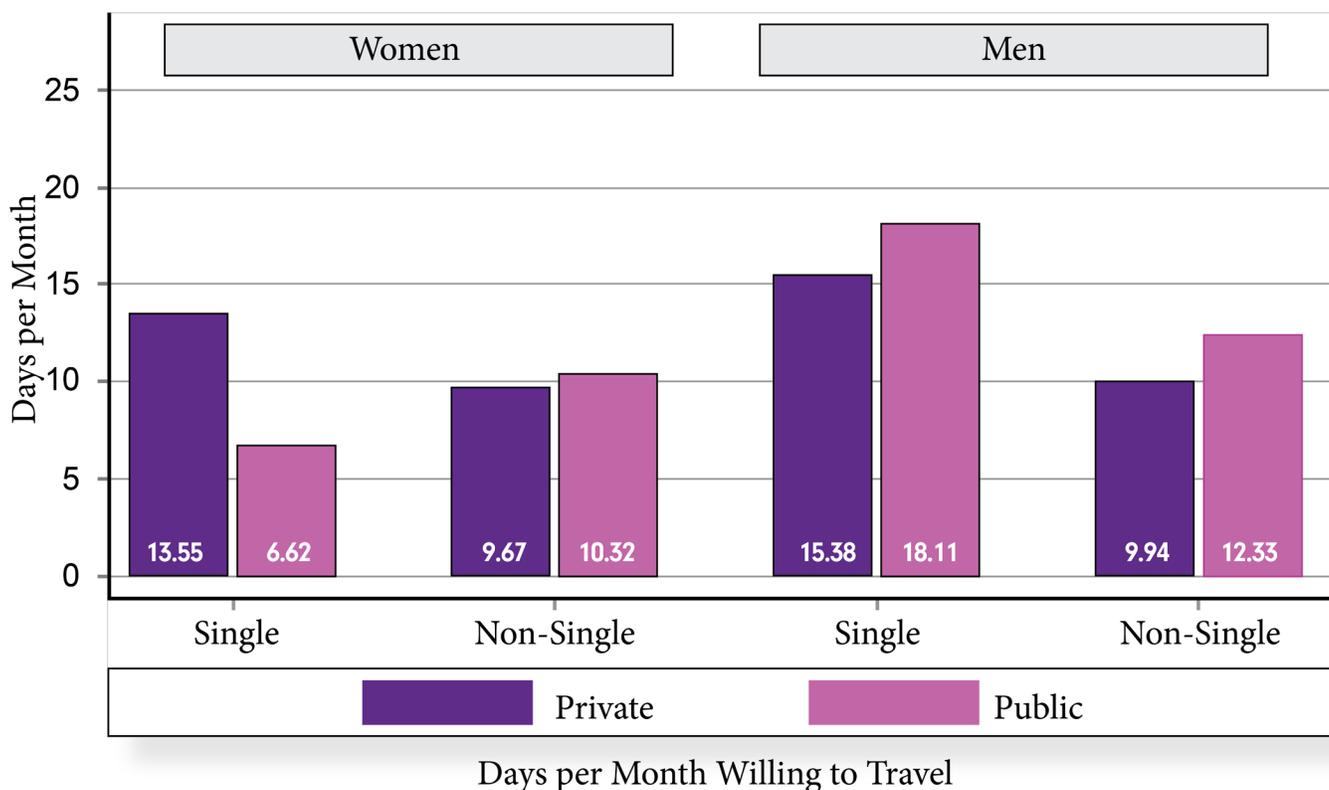
This chart is an illustration based on Figure 1 from Bertrand et al. (2015). The drop in density to the right of .5 shows a societal norm of husbands earning more than their wives.

When they believed their classmates would not see their responses, single and non-single women answered similarly. However, single women reported desired salaries \$18,000 lower and being willing to travel seven fewer days per month and work four fewer hours per week when they expected classmates would see their answers. *-Bursztyn et al. (2016)-*

Career Goals and Anonymity: Bursztyn et al. (2016)

Professors Leonardo Bursztyn, Thomas Fujiwara, and Amanda Pallais further indicated that ambitious women face penalties in the marriage market in their 2016 study. The researchers randomly asked newly admitted MBA students to fill out one of two surveys: one version that would be private and anonymous, and another that would be public under the student’s name. When they believed answers would be anonymous, the researchers found, single and non-single women reported similar desired salaries. Non-single

women also reported similar answers under the public treatment. Single women, however, significantly scaled back their responses when they believed their answers would be public. Single women under the public treatment reported desired salaries \$18,000 lower than before, and reduced their willingness to travel by seven days per month. This study thus revealed a self-censoring by single women, who the authors argue avoid actions that could damage their romantic prospects.



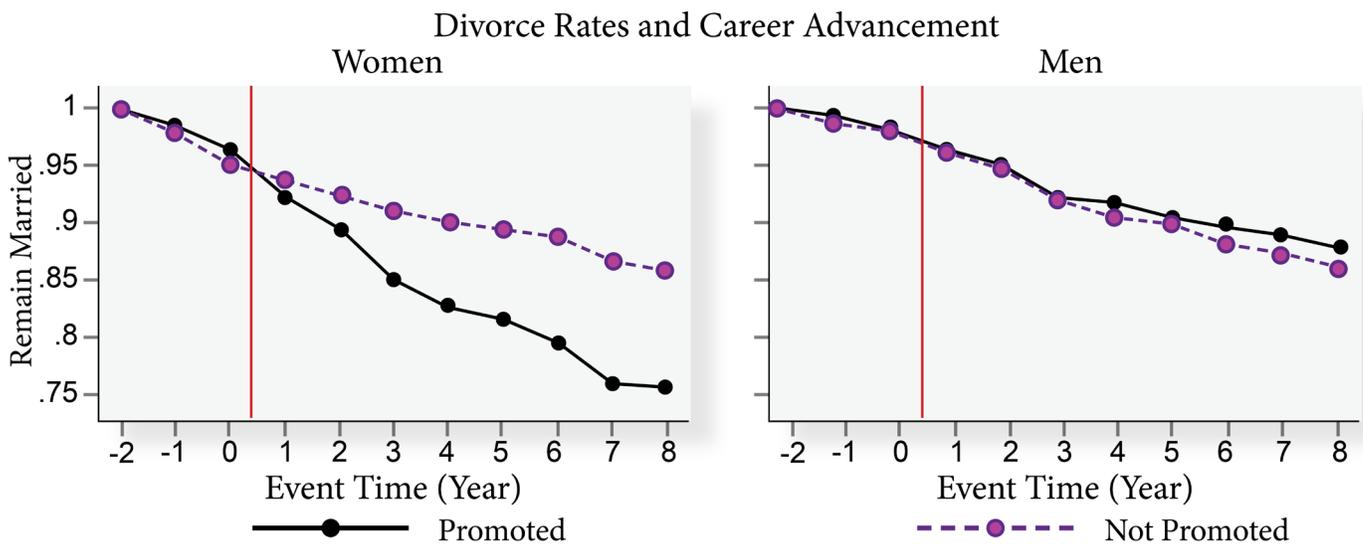
This chart is an illustration based on Figure 5 from Bursztyn et al. (2016), using data from the authors’ research surveys. The chart illustrates the tendency of single women to report a lower willingness to travel when they believe their answers to be public, a tendency that the authors argue arises from romantic norms that discourage women from presenting themselves as too ambitious.

We show that promotions to top jobs dramatically increase women’s probability of divorce, but do not affect men’s marriages... We argue that norms and behavior in the marriage market hinder the closure of the gender gap in the labor market. -Folke and Rickne (2016)-

Divorce Rates for Successful Women: Folke and Rickne (2016)

A study by Professors Olle Folke and Johanna Rickne found a causal effect of female career progression on divorce rates in Sweden. The authors compared the divorce rates of politicians who barely won a seat in parliament to those who didn’t, using effectively random slim electoral margins to identify a causal relationship. While winners and losers showed effectively identical divorce rates before the election, winners’ di-

vorce rates jumped to nearly double that of losers directly following the election. The authors found a similar effect for women who become CEOs, but with a less clearly random selection mechanism. This research highlights that societies around the world still have a ways to go in terms of achieving equity for female leaders in the workplace.



This figure is an illustration based on Figure 7 from Folke and Rickne (2016), using records from the Swedish government on elections and marriage rates. This figure highlights the decline in marriage durability when a female candidate wins an election, in contrast to the relatively stable marriage rate for male candidates. This trend illustrates the personal challenges successful women face in comparison to their male counterparts.