

Conference on Diversity and Inclusion in Economics,
Finance, and Central Banking

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Gender differences in economic opinions

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Why (a lack of) diversity in economics matters

- Women are 15% economics professors in the US/ UK (CSWEP, 2021), 10 – 20% chief economists in banking and finance and 25% economic advisory council members (Hansbach et al, 2021).
- The lack of women (and minority ethnic groups)
 - Restricts the talent pool
 - Narrows perspectives and leads to group think
 - Shapes the discipline because men and women differ in topics of interest (Chari and Pinkham Smith, 2015) and substantive views (May et al, 2014; May et al, 2018)
- **This paper:**
- **Men and women differ in how they express opinions. Economics is dominated by opinionated men**

Related literature

- Evidence that women are less likely to express their opinion than men among the general population (Coffman, 2014; also Crosby and Nyquist, 1977; Thomas-Hunt and Phillips 2004; Babcock and Laschever 2007)
- Our contribution is to provide evidence on gender differences in a real-world relevant sample of (homogeneous) economists who have made it to the top (Adams and Funk, 2014) and have agreed to be on an expert panel
- We are not going to say anything about why there are gender differences
 - Gender differences in self-confidence
 - Different estimation of ability/ knowledge (Moore and Healy, 2008; Niederle and Vesterlund, 2007)
 - Different levels of precision about beliefs (Moore and Healy, 2008; Barber and O'Dean, 2001)
 - Gender differences in social confidence, i.e. expressing opinions publicly (Alan et al, 2020)
 - Different anticipated reaction eg 'backlash' (Brescoll, 2012; Thomas-Hunt and Phillips, 2004)

Where next?

- IGM Expert Economist Panel
- Results

- Bank of England MPC
- Results

- Implications

IGM expert economist panel (University of Chicago Booth School)

Est. 2011. Explores views of 104 US- and European based economists

21% women

63% have PhD from five institutions

46% currently at five institutions

Asked approx. two questions a month

18,990 observations (expert x response)

Some members hold policy positions

Responses (aggregated and individual) are shared with the public

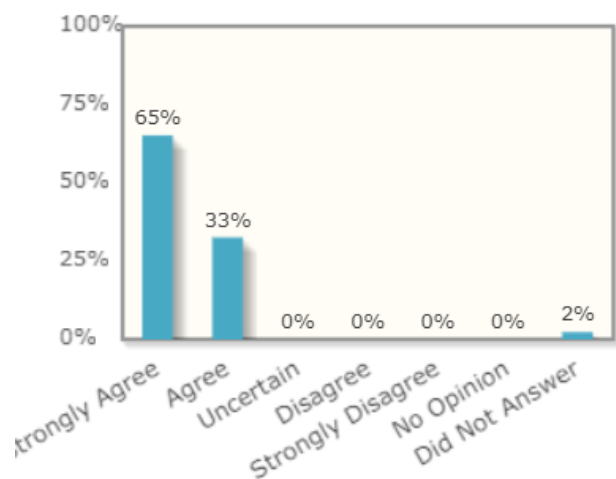
Responses get coverage by journalists

Aaron Edlin	Daron Acemoglu	Jordi Galí	Patrick Honohan
Abhijit Banerjee	Darrell Duffie	Joseph Altonji	Paul De Grauwe
Agnès Bénassy-Quéré	David Autor	José Scheinkman	Per Krusell
Alan Auerbach	David Cutler	Judith Chevalier	Pete Klenow
Alberto Alesina	Edward Lazear	Karl Whelan	Peter Neary
Amy Finkelstein	Elena Carletti	Katherine Baicker	Philippe Aghion
Angus Deaton	Eliana La Ferrara	Kenneth Judd	Pinelopi Goldberg
Anil Kashyap	Emmanuel Saez	Kevin O'Rourke	Pol Antras
Antoinette Schoar	Eric Maskin	Larry Samuelson	Rachel Griffith
Austan Goolsbee	Ernst Fehr	Liran Einav	Rafael Repullo
Barry Eichengreen	Fabrizio Zilibotti	Lubos Pastor	Raj Chetty
Beata Javorcik	Francesco Giavazzi	Lucrezia Reichlin	Ray Fair
Beatrice Weder di Mauro	Franklin Allen	Luigi Guiso	Richard Baldwin
Bengt Holmström	Hans-Joachim Voth	Luigi Zingales	Richard Portes
Botond Köszegi	Henrik Kleven	Luis Garicano	Richard Schmalensee
Canice Prendergast	Hilary Hoynes	Marco Pagano	Richard Thaler
Carl Shapiro	Hyun Song Shin	Marianne Bertrand	Richard William Blundell
Caroline Hoxby	Hélène Rey	Markus Brunnermeier	Robert Hall
Cecilia Rouse	James Stock	Martin Hellwig	Robert Shimer
Charles Wyplosz	Jan Eeckhout	Maurice Obstfeld	Steven Kaplan
Christian Leuz	Jan Pieter Krahen	Michael Greenstone	Thierry Mayer
Christopher Pissarides	Janet Currie	Nancy Stokey	Timothy J. Besley
Christopher Udry	Jean-Pierre Danthine	Nicholas Bloom	Torsten Persson
Claudia Goldin	John Van Reenen	Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln	Veronica Guerrieri
Costas Meghir	John Vickers	Oliver Hart	William Nordhaus
Daniel Sturm	Jonathan Levin	Olivier Blanchard	Xavier Freixas

The survey

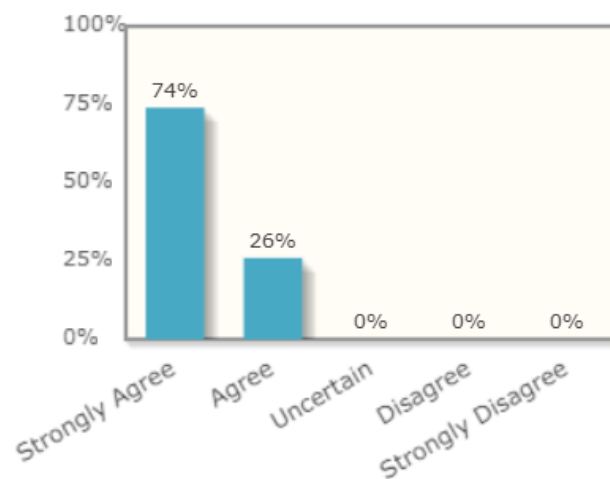
Mandating staff vaccinations and/or regular testing at big employers would promote a faster and stronger economic recovery.

Responses






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 Source: IGM Economic Experts Panel
www.igmchicago.org/igm-economic-experts-panel

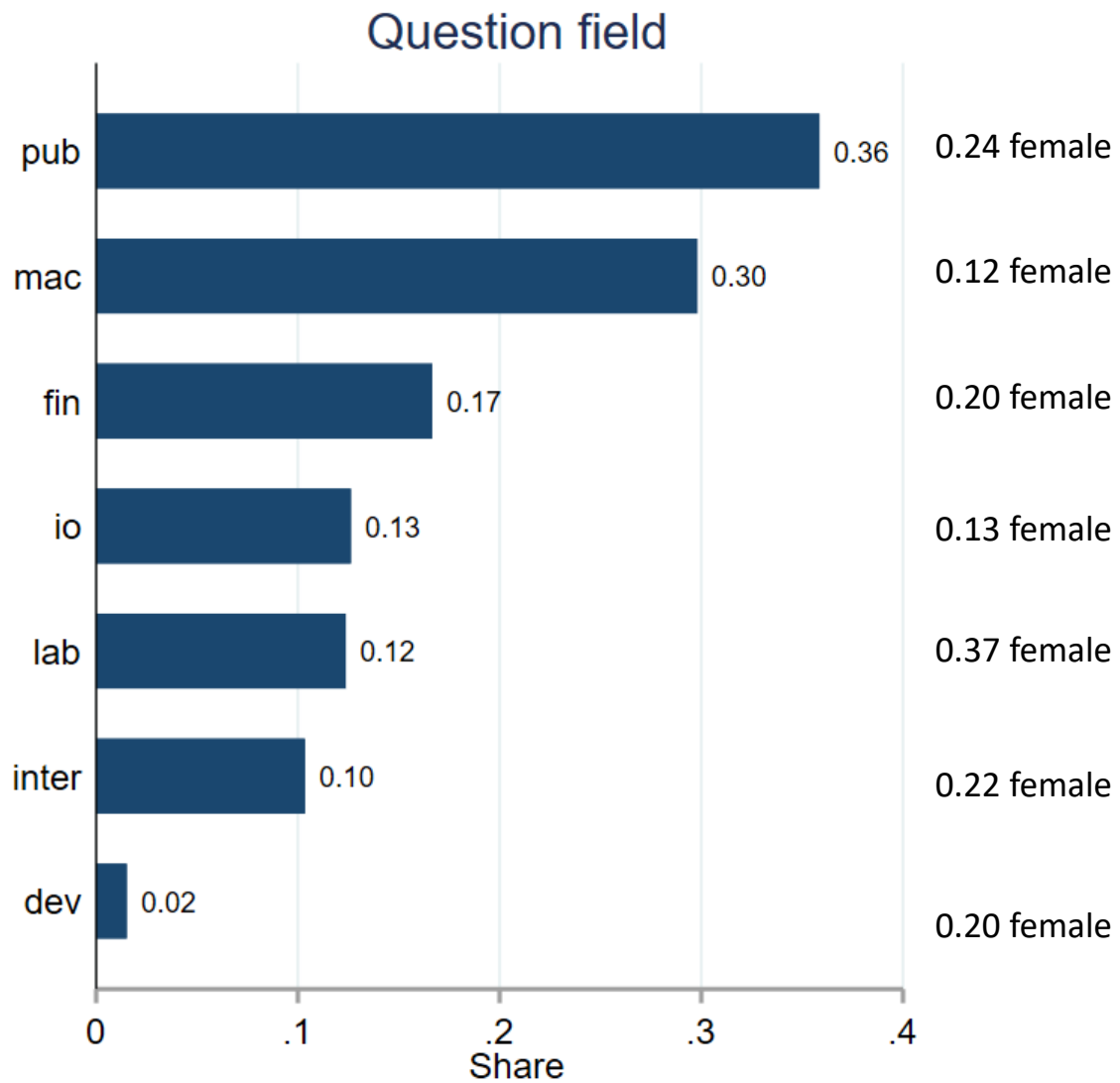
Responses weighted by each expert's confidence



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 Source: IGM Economic Experts Panel
www.igmchicago.org/igm-economic-experts-panel

Participant	University	Vote	Confidence	Bio/Vote History
 Daron Acemoglu	MIT	Agree	4	 Bio/Vote History
But vaccines and testing are not perfect substitutes. Vaccination is absolutely necessary for reaching something resembling "herd immunity".				
 Joseph Altonji	Yale	Strongly Agree	8	 Bio/Vote History
 Alan Auerbach	Berkeley	Strongly Agree	9	 Bio/Vote History

Opinion Measure	Average (min – max) per question
Volubility 1 = respondent gives no opinion (0/1)	0.175 (0.000 – 0.479)
Volubility 2 = respondent leaves a comment (0/1)	0.396 (0.142 – 0.767)
Certainty 1 = respondent is uncertain (0/1)	0.223 (0.000 – 0.721)
Certainty 2 = respondent strongly agrees/ disagrees (0/1)	0.234 (0.000 – 0.923)
Certainty 3 = respondent goes against the consensus (0/1)	0.079 (0.000 – 0.499)
Confidence = how (self)confident the respondent is (1 – 10)	5.989 (3.925 – 8.897)

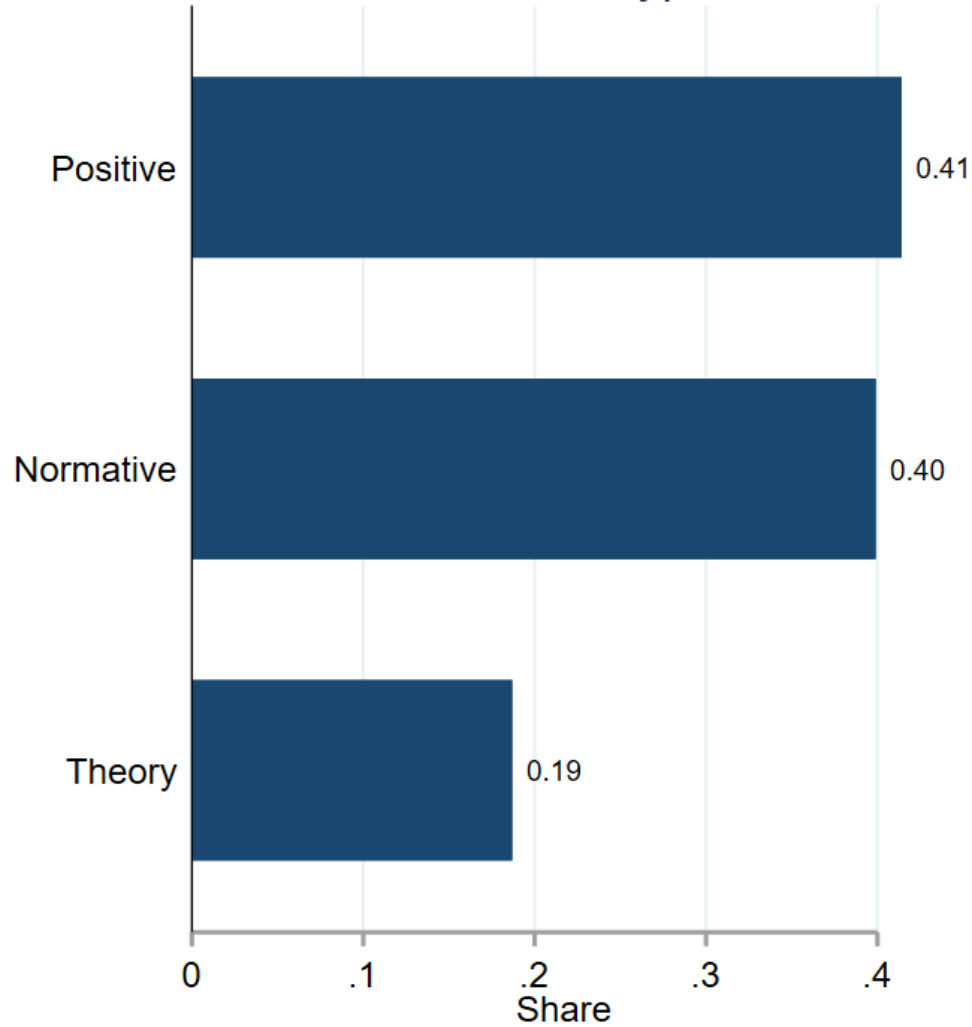


“Male answer syndrome” (Campbell 1997)
 Men have opinions about things they know
 nothing about

Question is “in field”
 Men = 0.37: Women = 0.35

Average number of fields
 Men = 1.93: Women = 1.83

Question type

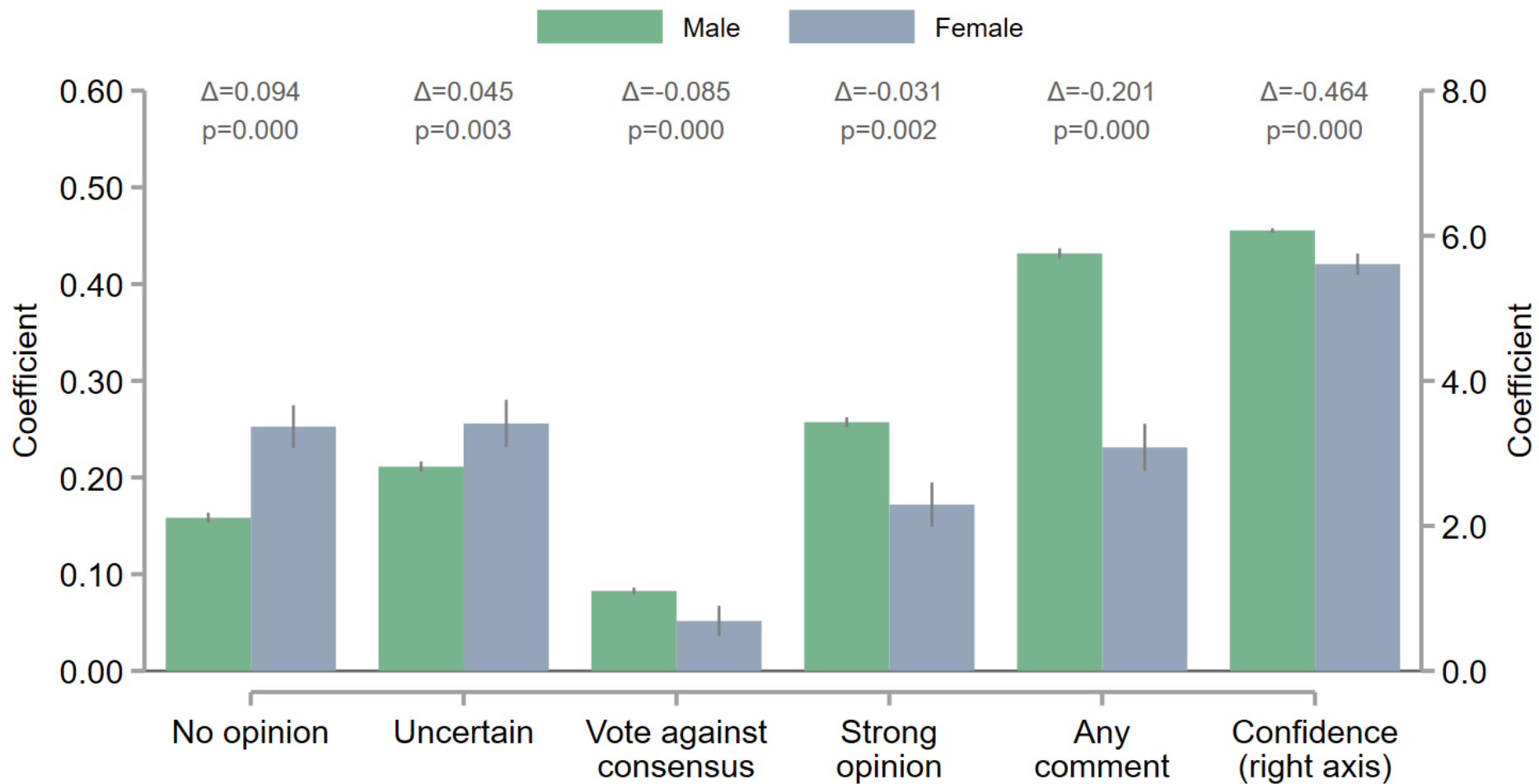


Positive questions are empirically verifiable/ there is relevant evidence. Eg *Raising the federal minimum wage to \$9 would make it noticeably harder for low-skilled workers to find work*

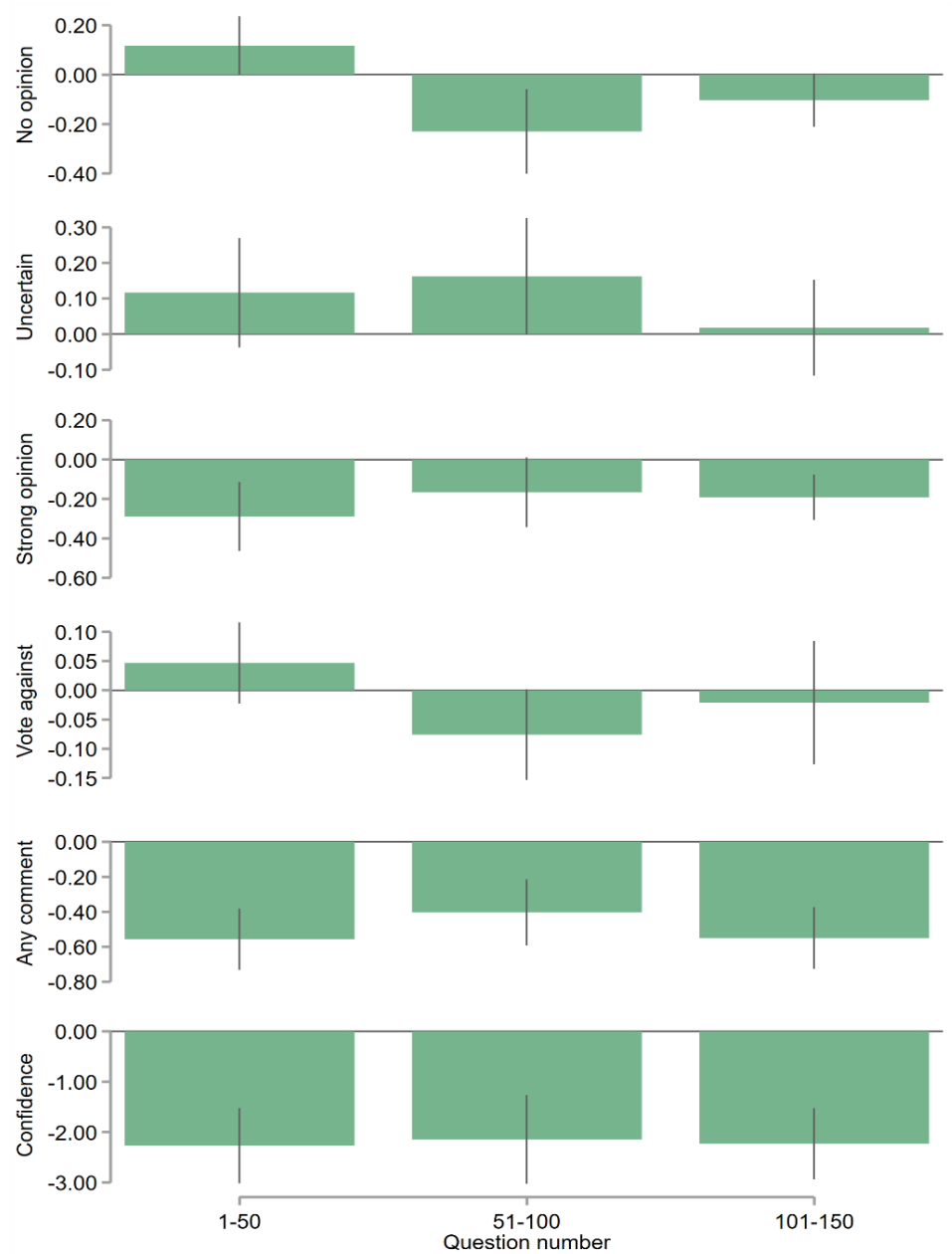
Normative questions contain a trade-off that requires a value judgement. Eg *Considering both distributional effects and changes in efficiency, it is a good idea to let companies that send video content to customers pay more to internet service providers.* These questions are associated with the lowest level of certainty.

Theory questions ask about core aspects of economic theory. Eg *Unless they have inside information, very few investors (if any) can consistently make accurate predictions about whether the price of an individual stock will rise or fall.* These questions are associated with the highest level of certainty

Baseline differences



Coefficients include controls for number of citations, H-index, US sample (0/1), European nationality (0/1), Question (FE), institution (FE), PhD year (FE). Standard errors are clustered at question-level

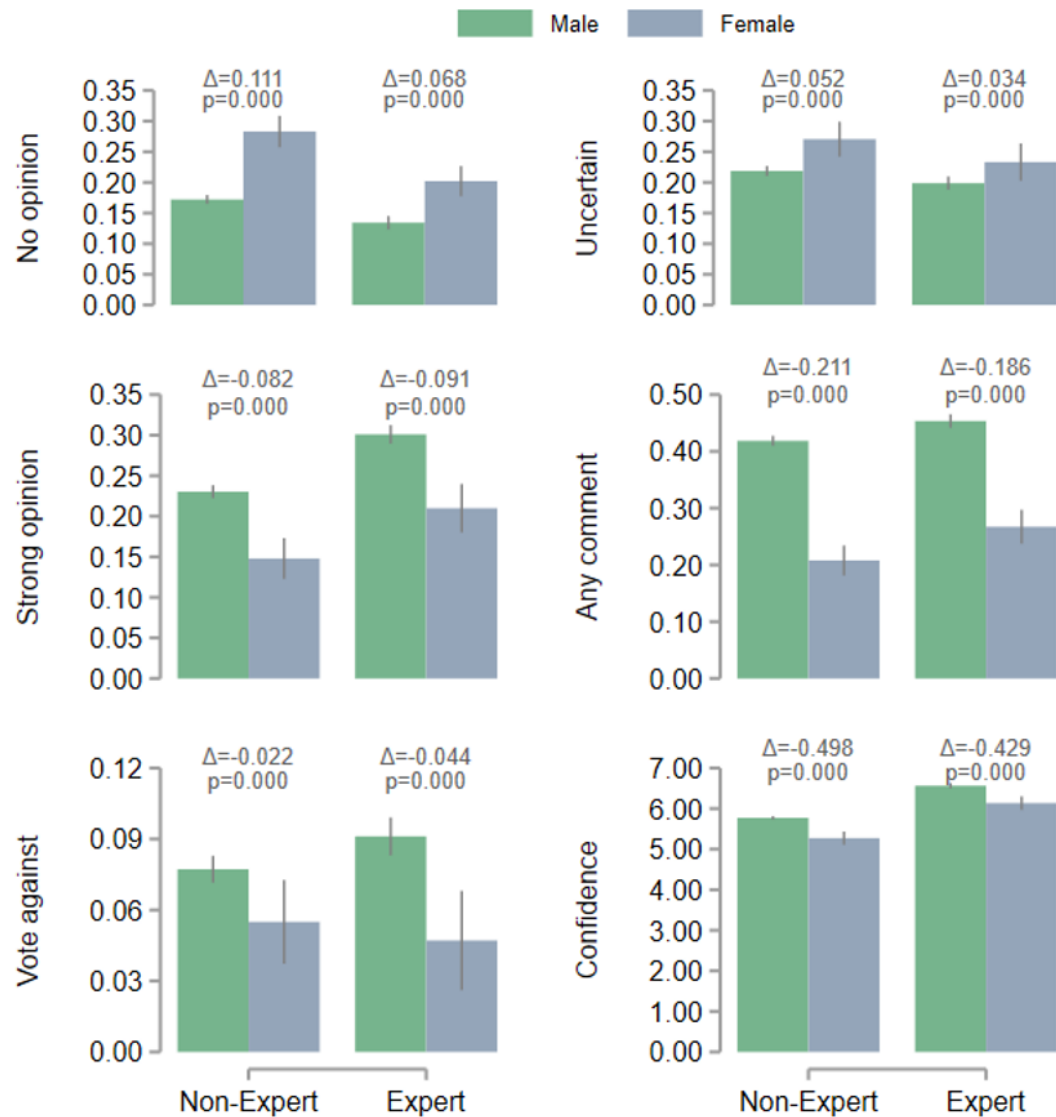


Variation over time

There is no sign that women become more certain, more confident or more voluble over time

Bars show coefficients (female). Controls are number of citations, H-index, US sample (0/1), European nationality (0/1), Question (FE), institution (FE), PhD year (FE). 95% confidence intervals are based on standard errors clustered at question-level

Variation by expertise



- Expertise increases certainty, volubility and confidence
- But women are less certain, less voluble and less confident than men even when they are answering questions in their field
- Women who are experts are less certain, less confident and less voluble on positive and normative questions than men who are experts
- Women experts behave more like men who are non-experts

Expert – question is in field; Non-expert – question is not in field

Coefficients include controls for number of citations, H-index, US sample (0/1), European nationality (0/1), Question (FE), institution (FE), PhD year (FE). Standard errors are clustered at question-level

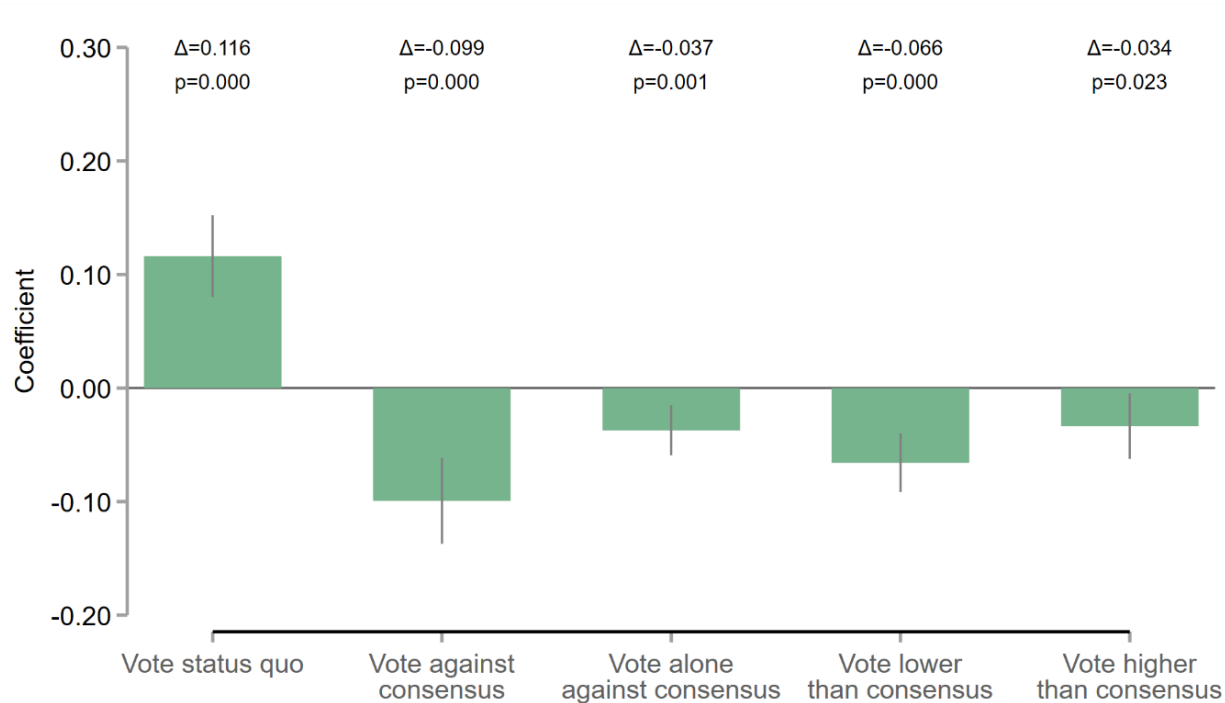
Implications

- Women's voices are even more under-represented in economics than the headline figures suggest
 - *Women account for 21 per cent of EEP members, 19 per cent of opinions, 18 per cent of confidence-weighted opinions, 14 per cent of strong opinions, 12 per cent of comments*
- Gender differences in expressing opinions amplify substantive differences in opinions
 - *IGM should not weight survey results by confidence and not pay attention to strength of opinion*
- Economic opinions in more male fields (macro) are likely to be expressed more confidently
- Increasing the share of women is likely to imply greater uncertainty/caution in economic opinions

Monetary Policy Committee



- Nine members at any one time: five internal; four external
- 43 members since 1997
- 260 votes since 1997
- 0.19 votes by women
- Vote preceded by two meetings; Average consensus share = 90%
- “The Bank of England has an individualistic, one-person, one-vote philosophy and members are encouraged to determine the rate of interest that they feel is most likely to achieve the inflation target and to express their personal policy preferences” (Hansen et al, 2014).
- 47% votes have some dissent
- Women on central banks have different preferences - more hawkish (Masciandano et al, 2018); we focus on effect of confidence.



Two measures of “cautiousness”

- Vote status quo
- Vote against the consensus
- Women on the MPC are more likely to vote with the status quo and less likely to vote against the consensus

Notes: The chart is based on estimating a specification with meeting fixed effects and a dummy for whether the member is an internal member. The spikes show the 95 percent confidence intervals based on standard errors clustered at the meeting level.

Take-aways / next steps

- Gender differences in opinions mean that women's voices are even more under-represented than the headline figures suggest
- Should women assert themselves?
 - Who is listened to? Who is right?
 - Evidence points to male over-confidence; Dani Rodrik "it's OK to say you don't know"
- Implications for economic debate/ decision-making
- Implications for the discipline itself
 - "Confidence is perhaps the greatest achievement of the economics profession – but it is also its most vulnerable trait, its Achilles heel" (Fourcade et al, 2015)