Annual Review of Economics

Masculinity Norms and Their Economic Implications

Ieda Matavelli,[1,*] Pauline Grosjean,[1,2,*] Ralph De Haas,[2,3,4,*] and Victoria Baranov[2,5,*]

[1]Business School, University of New South Wales, Sidney, Australia; email: p.grosjean@unsw.edu.au

[2]Centre for Economic Policy Research, London, United Kingdom

[3]European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, London, United Kingdom

[4]KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

[5]Department of Economics, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Annu. Rev. Econ. 2026. 18:127–55

The *Annual Review of Economics* is online at economics.annualreviews.org

https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-051624-065932

*These authors are listed in randomized order

JEL codes: D91, Z13, J16, J24, I12

Keywords

masculinity norms, gender, cultural economics

Abstract

While economists have extensively studied gender norms affecting women, masculinity norms—social norms about how men should behave—remain underexplored. This review first synthesizes how other disciplines have studied masculinity, providing economists with conceptual foundations and empirical patterns for understanding masculinity norms. We then discuss how the study of masculinity norms can inform the economics literature on gender gaps and men's outcomes across multiple domains: health behavior, labor supply and occupational choice, violence and aggression, and political preferences. We also discuss paths for the transmission and persistence of these norms. Finally, using novel survey data from 70 countries, we present five stylized facts about masculinity norms. We document substantial global variation in these norms and demonstrate their predictive power for various socioeconomic and political outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Masculinity norms are shared expectations about how men should behave. They include beliefs that men should be self-reliant, assertive, and emotionally restrained. In this review, we argue that masculinity norms shape men's lives by prescribing which jobs, health behaviors, and political attitudes are deemed appropriate for them. While a rich economics literature shows how beliefs about the appropriate behaviors of women impact women's lives in many domains,[1] only a few papers in our discipline have studied, or even explicitly acknowledged, the role and strength of masculinity norms. One reason for this asymmetry may be that "to economists, the default agent in an economic model is male, so that masculine characteristics or behavior are seen as 'human' characteristics or behavior" (Lundberg 2025).

This relative blindness to masculinity in economics mirrors a pattern in other social sciences. Nearly 40 years ago, sociologists noted that "although numerous studies have investigated social attitudes toward the appropriate sex roles for women...considerably less research has examined public attitudes toward the male sex role" (Thompson & Pleck 1986, p. 531). This realization spurred a rich literature in sociology, gender studies, and psychology that advanced these disciplines' understanding of masculinity norms and their consequences. We believe that economics now faces a similar reckoning.[2] Our goal is to encourage economists to consider masculinity norms as one important driving factor (among many others) of economic decision making and gender gaps, not as a comprehensive explanation for all gender-related economic phenomena. We believe that economists are well equipped to advance this field through theoretical development, (quasi-)experimental analysis of the causes and consequences of masculinity norms, improved measurement across contexts, and evidence-based policy recommendations.

This review is structured as follows. In Section 2, we synthesize how other fields—evolutionary biology, anthropology, psychology, and sociology—study masculinity, providing economists with conceptual foundations and empirical patterns for understanding masculinity norms. Drawing on literature across these disciplines, we argue that masculinity norms are not simply the inverse of norms governing women's roles but constitute a distinct set of beliefs about appropriate male conduct. Section 3 explores how incorporating masculinity norms can deepen our understanding of gender gaps and men's outcomes in several domains, including labor market and household outcomes, health behaviors, educational choices, violence and aggression, and political populism. Section 4 draws on the cultural economics literature to highlight the mechanisms for the transmission and persistence of masculinity norms. In Section 5, we describe evidence from a new global survey of masculinity norms fielded by De Haas et al. (2025) in partnership with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank in 70 countries, analyzing both demographic variation in norm adherence and its predictive power for occupational choices, health outcomes, and political preferences. Section 6 concludes and sketches directions for future research on masculinity norms and their economic consequences.

2. MASCULINITY IN OTHER FIELDS

Before examining how masculinity norms shape economic outcomes, we review how other disciplines have studied masculinity. This interdisciplinary overview serves several purposes. First,

[1] For comprehensive reviews, readers are referred to Jayachandran (2015), Giuliano (2020), Bau & Fernández (2023), and Anderson (2025).

[2] We are not the only ones making this diagnosis. Others have noted how "of the largest and institutionally most developed social science disciplines, economics has probably been the most reluctant to contribute to studies on men and masculinities, even though economy and economic considerations are absolutely fundamental aspects of gender relations and the gendering of men and masculinities." (Kimmel et al. 2004, p. 4).

it provides conceptual foundations for understanding masculinity norms as distinct from (rather than simply the inverse of) norms governing women's roles. Second, it offers micro foundations for gendered behavior by clarifying some potential biological and social determinants of masculinity. Third, decades of empirical work in psychology and sociology have established robust measurement tools and documented relationships between masculinity norms and outcomes across health, violence, and workplace behavior, which can inform economic research. Finally, economists can build on the theoretical and empirical progress made by other disciplines in understanding how masculinity norms form, persist, and shape human behavior.

We first discuss biological explanations for masculinity norms, then we synthesize relevant findings from anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Space limitations preclude a comprehensive literature review, so we focus on insights most relevant to economic research.[3]

2.1. (Evolutionary) Biology

(Evolutionary) biology offers insights into the origins of masculinity norms by examining how physical and behavioral differences between men and women evolved over time. In doing so, it provides two complementary perspectives on masculinity. First, biological research has identified sex differences, such as hormonal influence, that may shape male behavior both indirectly through physical traits (like musculature and body size) and directly through effects on behavioral tendencies in specific circumstances. Second, it explains how evolutionary pressures have favored certain behavioral patterns (like male competitiveness and aggression) that have solidified as social norms across cultures. Importantly, as we discuss below, contemporary biological research recognizes that these two channels—biological mechanisms and norm-based behaviors—are not mutually exclusive but often interact.

Darwin's theory of sexual selection proposed that sex-based behavioral differences, such as males' high competitive drive and penchant for aggression, evolve because they provide advantages in reproductive competition for mates (Darwin 1871). In particular, Darwin observed that males typically compete more intensely than females because of their relatively lower costs of gamete production. Building on this insight, Trivers (1972) proposed that total parental investment (that is, the cost not only of gamete production but also of gestation, lactation, and offspring protection) determines competitive dynamics between the sexes. The sex with lower obligatory parental investment (typically, among mammals, males) can potentially maximize reproductive success through increased mating rather than parenting effort,[4] helping explain why males often compete more intensely across species.

When applied to humans, this framework faces some challenges from anthropological research pointing to stable pair bonds and high levels of male provisioning (Alger et al. 2020). Nevertheless, males may compete intensively prior to forming stable pair bonds to accumulate status and resources. These insights have also recently begun to inform economic modeling. For example, Alger (2021) develops a theoretical framework in which male–male competition and male–female household formation represent sequential stages of an evolutionary matching process. Male competitive behavior also evolved to extend beyond one-on-one contests to group-based competition (Henrich & Gil-White 2001). That is, men can pursue status through two pathways: dominance-based competition based on physical force and prestige-based competition

[3] Kimmel et al. (2004) and Levant & Wong (2017) provide comprehensive reviews of the study of men and masculinities in the sociology and psychology fields.

[4] Although human males are often involved in provisioning and parenting, their effort is on average both lower and more variable than that of their female partners in most cultures (Hrdy 2011).

that showcases skills valued by the group. Rather than eliminating competitive drives, the shift from physical dominance to prestige-based status has channeled men's competitive instincts into economic success, career advancement, and wealth accumulation, explaining why masculine norms emphasizing competition remain prevalent in modern market economies (De Haas et al. 2025). This competitive dimension of masculinity has direct relevance for the large economics literature documenting gender gaps in competitiveness and their effects on labor market outcomes (Niederle & Vesterlund 2011).

To test whether these competitive tendencies are biologically grounded, researchers have examined the role of physiological pathways, particularly those involving hormones like testosterone, in driving masculine behaviors such as physical aggression and risk taking (Lippa 2016). However, meta-analyses have found only weak positive associations between testosterone on the one hand and aggression (though stronger among men) and risk taking on the other, without evidence of a causal link (Geniole et al. 2020, Yuan et al. 2025). These meta-analyses suggest that testosterone's relationship with behavior is complex and context dependent, driving status-seeking behavior rather than simple aggression (Wingfield et al. 1990). Moreover, testosterone levels are themselves shaped by social roles and caring behaviors: Men who spend time with babies or become primary caregivers exhibit marked reductions in testosterone (Hrdy 2024). Socialization also creates feedback loops between social behavior and endocrine function, as gender norms that encourage risk taking and competitiveness can lead men to engage in behaviors that increase testosterone (Van Anders et al. 2015). All of this challenges the simplistic view that testosterone causes masculinity; instead, testosterone production may also be partly endogenous to gendered behavior and cultural expectations. Lastly, there is stronger evidence for testosterone's influence in utero, where it may shape brain development (Bütikofer et al. 2019). According to brain organization theory, testosterone acts as an organizational hormone, producing lasting changes in brain structure and function that affect responses to hormones and experiences later in life.

These findings relate to economic research on gender differences in risk preferences, which has documented that men consistently exhibit greater risk tolerance (Croson & Gneezy 2009). However, the extent to which these differences reflect biological versus social factors such as masculinity norms remains an open question in both biology and economics.

2.2. Anthropology

While biology seeks to uncover and explain universal tendencies in masculine behavior, anthropology offers a useful complementary perspective. Anthropologists view masculinity not merely as a biological endowment but as a set of culturally shaped practices and expectations. According to Gilmore (1990), cultures typically frame masculine adulthood not as an automatic biological transition but as a social achievement demanding proof through ritualized challenges. While boys are usually indoctrinated and tested before being recognized as men, women's transition to adulthood tends to require less cultural intervention (Gregor 1985).

The anthropological perspective also challenges reductionist explanations of masculinity. Gilmore (1990) argues that masculinity cannot be reduced to either universal patriarchal exploitation (since manhood tests exist even in egalitarian societies like the African Bushmen) or purely evolutionary drives (since many peaceful societies still emphasize masculine achievement). Instead, he argues that "the answer to the manhood puzzle must lie in culture; we must try to understand why culture uses or exaggerates biological potentials in specific ways" (Gilmore 1990, p. 23). This anthropological framework thus bridges the biological foundations discussed earlier with the social psychological approaches we examine next, which analyze masculinity as both an individual identity and a social institution. For economists, this perspective suggests that

masculinity norms, like other cultural traits, represent equilibrium responses to historical, economic, and social conditions that can persist long after those conditions change (Giuliano 2020).

2.3. Social Psychology and Sociology

The literature in social psychology and sociology emphasizes that masculinity operates as a universal set of socially enforced expectations, shaped by institutions, peer interactions, and social sanctions. In this subsection, we review core theoretical frameworks and the main empirical instruments used to measure masculinity norms and link them to key outcomes.

2.3.1. Foundational theories. Although a biological perspective helps explain male competitive and dominance-seeking behavior across societies, it cannot account for the variation in how these tendencies are expressed, channeled, or suppressed. Social psychology and sociology have made important advances in this regard, developing both theory and measurement tools that capture the multidimensional nature of masculinity norms.

Within psychology, early research was dominated by the Male Sex Role Identity paradigm, which treated masculinity as a stable psychological trait that men either possessed or lacked. Pleck (1981) critiqued this approach with the development of the Gender Role Strain paradigm, which redefined masculinity as socially constructed and paved the way for research into how social forces shape masculine ideals into specific behavioral expectations that vary across time, place, and social groups.

Concurrently, sociologists developed the framework of hegemonic masculinity (Carrigan et al. 1985), defined as "the configuration of practices that represents the most honored way of being a man in a given social context, distinguished from less respected masculinities and providing legitimacy for the overall subordination of women in society" (Wedgwood et al. 2023, p. 83). This framework emphasizes that masculine ideals are relational—defined in opposition not only to femininity but also to subordinated forms of masculinity, in particular racial or sexual minorities' masculinities.[5] These developments spurred a rich literature on masculinity in the social sciences.[6]

2.3.2. Measuring masculinity. Although psychologists and sociologists consider masculinity as socially constructed and malleable, cross-cultural research has revealed some remarkably consistent dimensions of masculine roles across societies (Gilmore 1990). These include the breadwinner norm,[7] restrictive emotionality, self-reliance, aggression, dominance over women, a disdain for homosexuality, an emphasis on achievement and status, and avoidance of femininity (Levant & Fischer 1998, Mahalik et al. 2003), a set of behaviors and ideals that align in particular with hegemonic masculinity norms.

To measure these dimensions, psychologists have developed several scales, with the three most influential being the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem 1981), the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI) (Levant & Fischer 1998), and the Conformity to Masculinity Norms Inventory (CMNI)

[5] Other terms such as "traditional," "dominant," or "dominance" masculinity refer to related concepts and are often used interchangeably. Moreover, the plural term "masculinities" refers to multiple facets of masculinity across contexts, social classes, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, etc.

[6] In parallel, gender studies developed a more flexible understanding of masculinity. Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity challenged the notion that gender naturally follows from sex, arguing instead that both are socially constructed through cultural practices. While Butler focused on gender broadly rather than on masculinity specifically, scholars in masculinity studies later applied these ideas to emphasize that masculine identities are continuously enacted and therefore open to disruption and change.

[7] Economists have extensively studied the breadwinner norm but have typically focused on how it constrains women's choices rather than men's.

(Mahalik et al. 2003). These scales differ in their theoretical foundations. The BSRI measures how individuals identify with masculine (e.g., self-reliant), feminine (e.g., warm), or neutral (e.g., friendly) traits. These traits are socially constructed and not necessarily opposite to one another; rather, they are more or less independent characteristics. By contrast, the MRNI and CMNI focus on masculinity as socially prescribed norms and expectations. The MRNI measures agreement with normative beliefs across seven dimensions (e.g., "A man should never reveal worries to others"), whereas the CMNI assesses behavioral conformity to 11 dimensions of masculinity through statements such as "It bothers me to ask for help" and "Sometimes violent action is necessary." Most recent empirical studies on men and masculinity use (variations of) either the CMNI or MRNI.[8] In Section 5, we summarize evidence from data collection in 70 countries using a short form of the CMNI along with normative beliefs adapted from the MRNI (De Haas et al. 2025).

Recent work in economics has also contributed to the measurement of masculinity identity and norms. Brenøe et al. (2024) develop a single measure, Continuous Gender Identity (CGI), adapted from the psychology literature. The CGI asks individuals to self-assess ("Where would you put yourself on this scale?") on a Likert scale from 1 (very masculine) to 7 (very feminine).[9] This continuous approach to measuring gender identity predicts gender gaps in economic preferences, education, and labor market outcomes beyond the explanatory power of binary sex categories. Dean et al. (2025) measure attitudes toward men by randomly flipping the gender referenced (e.g., "Children suffer when their mother works" versus "Children suffer when their father works"). They show that attitudes toward men in nontraditional roles are systematically less progressive than attitudes toward women in equivalent situations, highlighting the distinction between norms about men versus women.

Existing measures of masculinity often conflate personal preferences (i.e., "what I like") with first-order normative beliefs (i.e., "what I think men should do"). Further contributions to the measurement of masculine identities and masculinity norms will have to account more carefully for personal preferences as distinct from first-order beliefs and should additionally consider the roles of descriptive norms (i.e., beliefs about what other men actually do) and second-order beliefs (i.e., beliefs about what others think men do or should do).

2.3.3. Key insights. A large literature in psychology and sociology documents robust relationships between men's adherence to hegemonic masculinity norms (measured by the above scales) and outcomes in health, violence and aggression, and behavior in the workplace. We now provide a selective review of this empirical evidence.

First, in the health domain, a consistent finding is that men's adherence to masculinity norms predicts higher depression scores, suicidal ideation, and health-related problems, including alcoholism and drug overdoses (see Wong et al. 2017 for a meta-analysis). Men with stronger adherence to masculinity norms tend to stigmatize mental health problems (Mahalik et al. 2003). Rather than seeking help, these men often respond to depression through risk-taking behaviors such as substance abuse (Mahalik & Rochlen 2006). This pattern contributes to men's systematic underuse of preventive health services (Mahalik & Rochlen 2005).

Second, research in social psychology suggests that men engage in violence to establish and defend their social status and power. This serves not only to assert dominance over women but

[8]Variations of these scales have been created to accommodate shorter forms, new masculinity dimensions, or different contexts. Readers are referred to Thompson & Bennett (2015) for a review.

[9]While this measure captures how individuals position themselves on a gender continuum, it does not reveal what specific traits or behaviors constitute masculinity. That is, it captures self-perceived gender identity, not gender norms.

also to maintain hierarchical relationships among men themselves.[10] Such patterns reflect the broader concept of precarious manhood: the idea that manhood is a social status that is difficult to achieve but easy to lose, requiring public, performative displays to be maintained (Gilmore 1990, Vandello et al. 2008). When men perceive threats to their masculinity, they often overcompensate by displaying exaggerated masculine behaviors. This is particularly evident in honor cultures, where masculine status must be earned and defended through displays of strength and a willingness to retaliate (Cohen et al. 1996). Researchers have tested this theory in the lab by randomly assigning participants to a condition designed to threaten men's masculine identity (for example, by providing feedback that they are less masculine than others). Consistent with the theory that manhood is precarious, several studies find that men whose masculinity is threatened become more aggressive and take greater risks (Vandello & Bosson 2013). An example from economics is provided by D'Acunto (2020), who conducts online experiments to show that men whose gender identity is threatened (or primed) increase their investment in risky opportunities and become overconfident even in pure games of chance. The effects are larger for older men and for men in regions with more traditional gender norms, suggesting that men take greater risks not because they rationally assess better odds but because they psychologically inflate their chances of success to preserve their sense of masculinity.

Third, research in organizational sociology has focused on masculinity contest cultures, that is, environments that reward masculine behaviors over actual performance. Work then becomes an arena for proving manhood because it enables men to acquire resources (money, power, status) for dominance. Although these cultures may appear merit based, they systematically disadvantage women and other underrepresented groups, both by defining merit standards around traits predominantly held by dominant men and by punishing members of out-groups for displaying those traits—for example, assertiveness, ambition, and self-promotion (Brescoll & Uhlmann 2008). Empirical evidence links masculinity contests to toxic leadership, reduced psychological safety, and higher staff turnover, indicating organizational dysfunction that prioritizes status competition over productive outcomes (Berdahl et al. 2018). Studies of masculinity contest cultures also connect to economic research on gender gaps in career advancement and the glass ceiling (Goldin 2021).

Last, rigid notions of traditional masculinity may interact with broader economic transformations. The decline of heavy industry, mining, and manufacturing and the increase in service employment have contributed to the "feminization" of the workforce, eroding traditional breadwinner roles that provided economic security and masculine identity (Kimmel 2012). Such economic shifts can create threats to core male roles: Michniewicz et al. (2014) show that men fear being viewed as less manly after a job loss. Although there is limited quantitative work linking masculinity norms with political attitudes and work-related outcomes, recent qualitative studies in sociology discuss possible links between threatened masculinity due to employment shocks and support for populism. In Section 3.7, we discuss in more detail how masculinity norms can shape political reactions to economic upheaval.

2.3.4. Future research. In summary, research in psychology and sociology offers well-developed tools for measuring adherence to and endorsement of masculinity norms across multiple dimensions. For specific contexts, this literature shows that masculinity norms are linked to poorer health outcomes and higher rates of violent behavior among men, and that masculinity contest cultures shape men's career choices and workplace conduct. Yet important questions remain that warrant further investigation.

[10]Sociological perspectives similarly emphasize that masculinity is not a stable trait but a status that must be repeatedly demonstrated and defended, producing hierarchies both among men and between men and women (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

First, research on the concept of precarious manhood needs to clarify whether economic threats universally challenge masculine identity or only in contexts where masculinity norms strongly emphasize breadwinning and to examine how men respond to threats in noneconomic domains like relationship rejection or social exclusion. Second, masculinity contest cultures require systematic quantitative measurement to assess their prevalence across organizations and understand their effects on talent allocation, workforce composition, and firm performance. Third, health research should identify what enables some men to seek help despite norms that discourage such behavior. This research could inform interventions that make help seeking less threatening to men's sense of masculinity. Research should also clarify which specific aspects of masculinity (e.g., emotional stoicism, risk taking, or self-reliance) have the strongest independent effects on health outcomes. Finally, measurement challenges persist, particularly the need to validate existing scales beyond Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) samples and to distinguish the role of injunctive norms, descriptive norms, and second-order beliefs about masculinity across cultural contexts.

3. MASCULINITY NORMS IN ECONOMICS

Although few economists explicitly acknowledge it, several strands of the economics literature can be connected to masculinity norms and their economic, social, and political impacts. In this section, we focus on key contributions that have widely documented gender gaps and discuss how considering masculinity norms can enrich our understanding of the origins and manifestations of these gaps as well as inform the design of policy interventions.

3.1. Theoretical Frameworks

We briefly review theoretical frameworks relevant to understanding how masculinity norms can shape behavior. As a particular set of social norms, masculinity norms can be defined as shared beliefs about what individuals of a particular social category (in this case, men) typically do (descriptive norms) or ought to do (injunctive norms) (Bicchieri 2017). In general terms, social norms provide a mapping between a social category and an expected behavior, which then influences individuals' decision making. How this mapping operates depends on the specific mechanisms through which social influences are modeled.

A range of theoretical work in economics has considered situations in which individual behavior is motivated by social factors, such as the desire for conformity (Bernheim 1994) or groupthink (Akerlof 2016), identity or self-image (Akerlof & Kranton 2000), avoidance of social sanctions (Fehr & Gächter 2002), and social image concerns (Bénabou & Tirole 2006). For example, in the self-image framework, norms are internalized as preferences.[11] A person who identifies as a manly man then gets greater utility from actions that, according to masculinity norms, are aligned with a male identity.[12] By contrast, in the social image framework, individuals use their actions to signal membership in a desired group (such as manly men), which may give them access to resources (instrumental motives) or social status (hedonic motives). Here the norms determine others' beliefs

[11]Norms are considered internalized when individuals incorporate them into their personal value systems, resulting in automatic or habitual compliance independent of external incentives or sanctions. During social change, it is possible to observe a disconnect between internalized norms, which are deeply ingrained, and changing social norms—a phenomenon that may generate anxiety and cognitive dissonance.

[12]The identity framework of Akerlof & Kranton (2000, p. 719) is more flexible in the definition of identity, allowing even a social image motivation: "Since an individual's self-concept may be formed by seeing oneself through the eyes of others...these gains or losses may also depend on how others interpret i's actions." Here we take a more simplified interpretation of the models so as to draw out the main distinctions between them.

about someone's group or type as a function of their behavior.[13] These two frameworks differ in their predictions: In the social image framework, behaviors change when they are observable to others, while in the self-image framework the observability is inconsequential.[14] Finally, beyond explicit social motivations, norms can also be thought of in terms of equilibria in a coordination game (Young 2015). For instance, in certain settings, the best response for men may be to be aggressive toward other men if they expect others to be aggressive and friendly if they expect others to be friendly.

3.2. Labor Markets and Organizations

Despite the considerable progress of women in terms of labor force participation and earnings during the second half of the twentieth century, substantial gender earnings gaps remain, at levels remarkably stable since the 1990s (Goldin 2021, Grosjean 2021).[15] Women remain overrepresented in lower-paying occupations and continue to face barriers to the most lucrative positions.

3.2.1. Occupational sorting. The systematic sorting of women and men across occupations and industries is a key determinant of persistent gender wage gaps. Gender differences in occupation and industry choice explained 20 percentage points of the average pay gap in the 1980s, and they explain more than half of it today (Blau & Kahn 2017). Even within occupation and industry, gender sorting across firms is correlated with significant earnings gaps, with women sorting into smaller and lower-paying firms and appropriating a smaller share of the firm-specific surplus than men (Card et al. 2016, Kleven et al. 2019). Gender gaps in negotiation over promotions and pay have been documented, too (e.g., Recalde & Vesterlund 2023).

Several papers have empirically established that social norms about women's roles (particularly regarding domestic responsibilities and relative earnings) are key determinants of gender gaps in labor markets (Fernández 2007, Bertrand et al. 2015, Folke & Rickne 2020). More recently, the role of masculinity norms in occupational sorting has become salient following waves of technological progress and globalization, which have disproportionately reduced male employment (Autor et al. 2019). Many displaced men have remained unemployed or left the labor force, despite growth in service sector jobs. This behavior is consistent with rigid masculinity norms that promote inflexible notions of what constitutes a real man and a real job. Such norms assign social value to occupations based on their gender composition, systematically devaluing female-dominated sectors (Goldin 2014). The presence of women dilutes occupational prestige and reduces the identity-based payoffs for men, who may prefer to switch occupations or, absent suitable alternatives, remain unemployed (Pan 2015). Consequently, men often refuse service sector jobs that conflict with their masculine identity or are perceived as feminine (Akerlof & Kranton 2000, Baranov et al. 2023) or about which they lack information, underestimate the returns to talent, or expect insufficiently competitive environments in which performance is not adequately rewarded (Delfino 2024).

3.2.2. Tariffs. The consequences of appeals to masculine identity can be far-reaching. For example, in recent debates about US trade policy, protectionism has been framed not only as an

[13] Additionally, norms may also determine the social value or esteem of group membership.

[14] Readers are referred to Bursztyn & Jensen (2017) for a more in-depth discussion and review.

[15] Even the recent convergence in earnings observed in some advanced economies since the COVID-19 pandemic partly reflects men's retreat from the labor force rather than women's advancement. This trend began in the early 2000s and has been linked to falling prices of leisure activities, particularly video gaming (Aguiar et al. 2021).

economic strategy but also as a defense of traditional masculinity. Proponents of tariffs as a means to revive manufacturing industries have invoked a narrative in which factory work represents real manhood while portraying service sector employment as emasculating.

3.2.3. Masculinity contest cultures. Beyond occupational sorting, masculinity norms also shape workplace dynamics within organizations and can contribute to the stagnation of women's economic progress. Gender differences in willingness to work long or inflexible hours have been identified as a main contributor to persistent gender inequality and the glass ceiling (Goldin 2021). While motherhood and care obligations partially explain these differences, economists acknowledge that "our understanding of the precise sources of the returns to long/inflexible working hours is limited" (Olivetti et al. 2024, p. 647).

The sociological literature on masculinity contest cultures offers valuable insights here. These cultures enforce dominance masculinity norms within organizations, promoting zero-sum competition governed by masculine ideals (such as displaying strength, showing no weakness or doubt, and valuing work over all else) (Berdahl et al. 2018). They systematically valorize masculine qualities, devalue traits culturally coded as feminine, and exclude racial and sexual minorities from networks, workplace interactions, and positions of power. Recent economic research demonstrates this dynamic. Smoking interactions that disproportionately advantage men can explain up to one-third of the gender gap in promotions (Cullen & Perez-Truglia 2023). Follow-up work examines social drinking as another domain of exclusionary male culture (Kanayama et al. 2025). Academia also provides a revealing case, as it embodies core elements of masculinity contest cultures: hypercompetitive norms, hierarchical structures that divide an elite of those who have what it takes to succeed from others, and the valorization of work over personal life. Dupas et al. (2026) document more interruptions of female presenters during economic seminars, with more hostile and patronizing questions that betray a sense of superiority over the speaker. Guadalupe et al. (2025) find that masculinity contest cultures in academia not only harm employee well-being but also reduce productivity—both its quantity and quality—across the organization, even among those at the top.

Masculinity contest cultures also undermine work–family balance, reinforcing disadvantages for women and discouraging men from taking paternity leave. They can also foster harassment and are associated with tendencies to resent women's advancement, which is seen as taking away from men in a zero-sum competition (Berdahl et al. 2018). These workplace dynamics may contribute to systematic and persistent child penalties in the labor market—that is, worse trajectories in labor market outcomes for mothers compared to fathers (Kleven et al. 2024).

They may also explain the relative failure of gender-neutral parental leave policies in attenuating child penalties (Olivetti & Petrongolo 2017). The take-up of paternity leave remains low compared to maternity leave, even where policies are available (see OECD 2023). Masculinity contests can contribute to this low take-up by imposing social sanctions on men who deviate from expected behaviors. Using a survey experiment and large-scale audit study, Weisshaar (2018) finds that fathers face higher penalties when they take time off for family care relative to mothers, particularly in tight labor markets, due to violations of ideal worker norms that are enforced more rigidly for men than for women. These results suggest that understanding how masculinity norms around fatherhood at the individual and organizational levels impact child penalties represents an important avenue for future research.

3.2.4. Competitiveness. A substantial literature identifies gender differences in competitiveness and confidence as key drivers of occupational sorting and gender pay gaps (Niederle & Vesterlund 2011). Existing evidence suggests that gender differences in competitiveness reflect broader social structures rather than innate preferences (Gneezy et al. 2009, Cassar & Zhang

2022). Given that competitiveness is a core masculinity norm, the lack of systematic research on how masculinity norms shape these gaps is surprising. In recent work, we find that gender differences in adherence to masculinity norms explain 20% of the gender gap in competitiveness in a global sample of more than 70,000 respondents (De Haas et al. 2025).

Other work indicates that individuals' willingness to compete also depends on the proportion of men relative to women in peer groups. Evidence from studies exploiting variation in male-biased sex ratios—due to historical convict transportation to Australia (Baranov et al. 2023) or the random assignment to university accommodations (Delavande et al. 2024) and Army boot camps (Johnsen et al. 2023)—shows that greater exposure to male peers predicts higher male competitiveness. These findings underline that masculinity norms are an important, though underexplored, mechanism linking social environments to gender gaps in economic outcomes.

3.3. Household Outcomes

Households are one of the main places where masculinity norms shape behavior, including bargaining and the division of paid and unpaid work. This subsection reviews evidence on how masculinity norms may affect household bargaining and responses to economic shocks, and how they may influence fathers' involvement and parenting.

3.3.1. Household bargaining. An extensive economics literature has established the influence of social norms about women's roles on marriage formation, marital satisfaction, household bargaining, and the division of home production. A seminal study by Bertrand et al. (2015) shows that households systematically avoid matches in which female earnings exceed male ones, and divorce rates increase after the husband starts to earn less than the wife (see also Folke & Rickne 2020, Muñoz et al. 2025). Moreover, women compensate by increasing their labor supply at home, even when they earn more and work longer hours in the labor market than their male partners (Hancock et al. 2025). These patterns have real consequences: Women's promotions and higher earnings predict lower marital satisfaction and increased divorce rates. Despite significant advances in women's career opportunities and earnings over recent decades, the gendered allocation of housework has proven highly resistant to change. Worldwide, women continue to spend 2 to 10 times more time on unpaid care work, including housework, than men (Ferrant et al. 2014).

So far, these findings have been interpreted through the lens of rigid cultural norms prescribing women's domestic responsibilities and earnings relative to men. Yet, although perhaps not explicitly, several studies also suggest a potentially large role for masculinity norms. In particular, husbands' social image concerns have been highlighted as major drivers of female labor force participation, often overriding personal beliefs about male and female responsibilities about domestic and labor market work (Bernhardt et al. 2018, Bursztyn et al. 2020, Abou Daher et al. 2025).

3.3.2. Economic shocks. Considering masculinity norms can also deepen our understanding of the social implications of the China import shock. Rising international manufacturing competition during 1990–2014 disproportionately reduced employment opportunities for young men in the United States. Autor et al. (2019) study how these gender-specific economic shocks affected marriage, fertility, and children's living circumstances. They find that negative shocks to male relative earnings have reduced marriage and fertility, which is consistent with Becker's (1985) model of household specialization. Yet, these shocks have also increased male idleness and mortality from drug and alcohol abuse as well as raised the share of unwed mothers. We have already discussed how rigid masculinity norms may have contributed to male idleness by preventing men from taking up jobs that did not fit their masculine identity.

The rise in unwed motherhood presents a puzzling pattern that traditional economic models struggle to explain. Typically, increases in out-of-wedlock births reflect higher male bargaining

power in relationships, yet this occurred precisely when men experienced negative economic shocks that should have reduced their bargaining power. Theories of precarious manhood offer a compelling explanation for this puzzle. Because employment—particularly in certain types of "masculine" work—is tightly connected to male social status, unemployment represents an especially severe threat to men's identity. Job loss means losing not only income but also self-worth and social standing as men (Bosson et al. 2009). With their masculinity threatened, men often engage in compensatory behaviors such as increased aggression and risk taking to restore their status. They may also turn to substance abuse as a coping mechanism for the anxiety and stress that accompany both unemployment and threats to their gender identity. These maladaptive responses can make men emotionally unavailable or even abusive in relationships.

3.3.3. Parenting. The household patterns documented above—wherein women continue to bear disproportionate responsibility for domestic work despite significant advances in their career opportunities and earnings—extend to perhaps the most consequential domain of household production: parenting. The vast economics literature measuring time, monetary, and emotional parental investment has almost exclusively studied maternal contributions.[16] The few studies measuring fathers' time investment in children document substantially lower paternal investment compared with maternal investment, even among dual-earner households where both parents work full-time (Aguiar & Hurst 2007, Walker et al. 2024, Buzard et al. 2025).

Masculinity norms can shape fatherhood through both preference formation and social expectations around gendered parenting styles (Pleck 2010). In many cultures, expectations of fatherhood remain anchored in traditional gender roles that prescribe men as breadwinners while limiting their emotional involvement with children. These expectations are reinforced by core masculinity norms emphasizing emotional stoicism and self-reliance, which constrain how fathers interact with and invest in their children (Petts et al. 2018). Empirical evidence supports this connection: Adherence to traditional masculinity norms as measured by the CMNI strongly predicts fathers' level of engagement and discipline style with their children (Petts et al. 2018). Given the influence of parenting styles on cognitive and noncognitive skills formation, the influence of masculinity norms on paternal investments and parenting styles can have profound economic consequences.

3.4. Health

Men face substantial disadvantages in several preventable health behaviors and outcomes. Gender gaps in deaths from drugs, suicide, and alcohol—the so-called deaths of despair (Case & Deaton 2020)—are widespread globally, with men being three times more likely to die from these causes than women (Shirzad et al. 2024). This relative burden is also reflected in life expectancy: Globally, men live on average five years less than women (GBD 2015).[17] Incorporating a masculinity norms perspective into research on men's health can advance our understanding of the drivers of men's health behaviors, the conditions under which men seek or avoid help, and how masculinity norms shape stigma.

[16]Exceptions include work by Del Boca et al. (2014), Dizon-Ross & Jayachandran (2022), and Walker et al. (2024) as well as studies on paternity leave and work flexibility policies, including the one by Farre et al. (2023).

[17]At the same time, there are specific medical issues that disproportionately affect women. Moreover, medicine on average has been viewed through a supposedly gender-neutral lens that in reality may disadvantage women, as medical research and treatment protocols have historically been developed primarily based on male subjects and experiences. These are real and important issues that deserve attention. However, they do not negate the fact that men also suffer from gender-specific health issues, such as deaths of despair, which are influenced by masculinity norms and merit investigation.

3.4.1. Health gender gaps. In economics, emerging research indicates that masculinity norms may help explain health gender gaps. Schünemann et al. (2017) perform a counterfactual analysis, endowing women with men's preferences—making women less risk averse and valuing less a healthy state—and show that these preferences can explain 70% of the gender gap in longevity. Gendered preference differences likely reflect internalized masculinity norms around risk taking and emotional expression. Consistent with this interpretation, previous work has established a negative link between masculinity norms and male health (particularly mental health), risk taking, and underinvestment in preventative health measures, including COVID-19 vaccination (Baranov et al. 2023).

3.4.2. Help-seeking behaviors. Gendered health disparities partly reflect systematic differences in how men and women approach health care. The study of health outcomes through a masculinity lens is well established in the public health, clinical, and social psychology literatures, with research documenting how restrictive masculinity norms contribute to men's health outcomes and gender gaps in this domain (Fleming & Agnew-Brune 2015). Clinical research shows that many men struggle to seek mental and physical health care due to restrictive masculinity norms. Addis & Mahalik (2003) explain that help-seeking tasks (such as relying on others, admitting need for help, or recognizing emotional problems) often conflict with masculine ideals of self-reliance, toughness, and emotional control. This creates a tension whereby seeking help threatens masculine identity, normalizing help-avoidance behaviors. Health care delivery can reinforce these barriers. For example, traditional talk therapy often fails to engage men effectively, leading to higher dropout rates (Seidler et al. 2018).

3.4.3. Depression measurement. Despite men being considerably more likely than women to die from suicide, they are less likely to be diagnosed with depression as measured by standard scales such as the Patient Health Questionnaire (Salk et al. 2017). Because masculinity norms emphasize emotional control and self-reliance, men are less likely than women to recognize and report symptoms of emotional distress commonly assessed in standard measures (e.g., feeling down, depressed, or hopeless). Hence, standard measures of depression likely underestimate its true prevalence among men. Depression in men often manifests through behaviors usually not captured in standard depression scales, such as engaging in risky behaviors related to substance abuse and violence (Cavanagh et al. 2017). To address the methodological caveats, psychometric scales specifically designed to measure depression among men have been developed, including measures that incorporate such externalized risk behaviors (e.g., Rice et al. 2013). These alternative assessment approaches suggest that gender differences in depression may be substantially smaller than traditional measures indicate.

3.4.4. Health impacts of economic displacement. A separate stream of economics literature focuses on the impact of job displacement on men. This work reveals that the relationship between economic stress and health outcomes also operates differently for men and for women and does so in ways consistent with masculine role expectations. Amorim et al. (2023) find that displaced men, but not women, have worse health outcomes as measured by hospitalizations and deaths. Importantly, income shocks alone cannot explain these gender gaps. Instead, stress-related conditions and disorders related to substance abuse explain half of these effects for men. External causes such as injuries, accidents, and assault account for the other half. These factors represent direct manifestations of masculinity norms related to restrictive emotionality and risk taking, suggesting that these norms shape how men respond to economic adversity through health-damaging behaviors. Related work explores the health consequences of the China import competition shock (see also Section 3.3). Several papers document increases in male mortality from substance abuse, health care avoidance, and mental distress both in the United States and the United Kingdom (Autor

et al. 2019, Adda & Fawaz 2020). These patterns are consistent with men turning to substance use and avoiding help seeking when their traditional role as breadwinners, and thus their masculine identity, is threatened.

3.5. Education

Education is another domain where masculinity norms can shape effort, aspirations, and major choices. We review evidence on how these norms may contribute both to gaps that favor boys and to gaps that favor girls.

3.5.1. Gender gaps favoring boys. Extensive research in economics has examined girls' underperformance in math and women's low participation in STEM (see, for example, Niederle & Vesterlund 2010). Fryer & Levitt (2010) provide compelling evidence that standard explanations—such as reduced investment by girls in math, lower parental expectations for girls in math, and gender-biased testing—do not adequately explain these performance gaps. Instead, their country-level analysis suggests that broader gender inequality and restrictive gender norms toward women drive gender gaps in mathematical achievement. This cultural explanation finds further support in work by Nollenberger et al. (2016) and Dossi et al. (2021), which shows that the math gender gap is related to gender equality in origin countries among migrants and is larger among whites in the United States. Masculinity norms also contribute to these educational disparities: Since competitiveness represents a core masculine trait, gender differences in competitive preferences help explain math achievement gaps and gendered patterns in STEM-related subject choices (Buser et al. 2014).

3.5.2. Gender gaps favoring girls. While much attention has focused on girls' underperformance in math, masculinity norms also help explain the opposite pattern: boys' underperformance in other academic domains. These gendered educational differences become particularly pronounced during adolescence, when boys face pressure to man up and conform to masculine ideals. During this developmental stage, rejecting school values by avoiding behaviors perceived as feminine—such as demonstrating academic effort and conscientiousness—can become a strategy for asserting masculinity. This dynamic suggests that social image concerns may drive boys to systematically underinvest in education relative to girls as they seek to maintain a masculine persona. Bursztyn et al. (2018) provide evidence for this mechanism, demonstrating that students strategically reduce participation in educational activities when they anticipate peer pressure that stigmatizes academic effort. Their findings reveal context-dependent norms: In high-achieving environments, it is "cool to be smart," whereas in settings where achievement faces social sanctions, it becomes "smart to be cool" by concealing effort. Although Bursztyn and colleagues' analysis does not examine gender differences, boys may be particularly vulnerable to these social pressures during adolescence, when masculine identity formation becomes especially salient.

Previous work has studied how culture shapes gender gaps in math—which favor boys—but less research explores determinants of gender gaps that favor girls. Boys underperform compared to girls in reading and writing, invest less time and effort in schoolwork, and express more negative attitudes toward school (OECD 2019). Lundberg (2020) shows that socioeconomic status and cognitive skills cannot explain these gender gaps. Instead, differences in behavioral outcomes and, to a larger extent, aspirations appear to be the main drivers. Lundberg concludes that masculinity norms that discourage academic achievement are a potential driver of boys' underperformance. Fortin et al. (2015) also show that girls' GPA scores have improved over the years, whereas boys' have stagnated. They find that gender differences in expectations about attending higher education explain these increased gender gaps. These differential expectations translate into realized outcomes: Women currently comprise the majority of college graduates (Goldin et al. 2006).

Although economic factors may contribute to this trend—men face higher opportunity costs of education given their higher potential earnings across most occupations—masculinity norms likely also play an important role in shaping boys' educational disengagement. Understanding how specific aspects of masculinity norms, particularly those related to competitiveness, risk taking, and avoidance of femininity, influence men's educational choices remains an important area for future research.

3.6. Violent Behavior

Not only are men more likely than women to take their own lives across all age groups, but men and boys also engage in more physical and verbal aggression (Campbell 2007). For example, men commit almost all homicides in the world and account for 81% of the world's homicide victims (UNODC 2019).

3.6.1. Competition and dominance. Violence is intimately related to competition and dominance—core masculinity norms. These violent tendencies typically emerge in contexts of scarcity and intense competition over resources, status, and mates. Studies document that unmarried men, who face the most intense competition for access to females, exhibit significantly higher rates of criminal behavior, including rape, murder, and assault (Henrich et al. 2012).

This competition–violence nexus extends beyond individual behavior to broader social dynamics. The influx of male migrants and associated mating competition has been linked to rising anti-refugee violence and hate crimes in Germany, particularly in areas with deteriorating employment conditions (Dancygier et al. 2022). Economic pressures more generally appear to trigger similar responses: Trade liberalization and increased international competition have been associated with higher crime rates (Dix-Carneiro et al. 2018)—for example, following the China trade shock in the United States (Che et al. 2018). These patterns align with theories of precarious manhood, suggesting that threats to traditional masculine roles, whether through mating competition or economic displacement, can manifest as increased aggression and violence.

3.6.2. Cultures of honor. Violence can also arise from the need to build a reputation for retaliation and revenge to deter theft in the context of economic precariousness and weak formal institutions. So-called cultures of honor (Cohen et al. 1996), which rely heavily on aggression and male honor, are common adaptations among populations whose economic means of livelihoods can easily be stolen, such as herds of animals, and who live in stateless regions (Grosjean 2014, Cao et al. 2021). Cultures of honor are patricentric cultures that are also associated with obsessions with women's chastity and paternal certainty (Becker 2025) and often entail violent punishment of women who escape control.

3.6.3. War and military service. The relationship between conflict and masculinity operates bidirectionally, with each reinforcing the other. Masculinity norms can drive enlistment, as unenlisted young men face public sanctions and shaming for failing to meet idealized masculine standards, including accusations of cowardice (Becker 2021). Consistent with this mechanism, Baranov et al. (2023) show that men from areas with historically male-biased sex ratios, which had developed heightened masculinity norms, were significantly more likely to volunteer for service in World War I.

Military service, in turn, reinforces masculinity norms. Exploiting natural experiments such as draft lotteries, studies show that conscription transforms men beyond combat training, making them more authoritarian, belligerent, and likely to justify violence; more supportive of coups against civilian governments; and less tolerant of out-groups (Ertola Navajas et al. 2022). These effects manifest themselves in civilian life as well. Galiani et al. (2011) find that conscription

increases the likelihood of developing a criminal record, while Autor et al. (2011) document elevated rates of mental distress and post-traumatic stress disorder among Vietnam veterans. Cagé et al. (2023) use the arbitrary rotation of French infantry regiments across battles and generals in World War I to show how military heroism and loyalty to commanders predicted the later renouncement of democratic values and collaboration with Nazi Germany in World War II. These transformations appear to originate in hierarchies of dominance and male-dominated environments rather than in exposure to violence per se (Dahl et al. 2021, Cagé et al. 2023). Consistent with these findings, De Haas et al. (2025) provide large-scale cross-country evidence that men exposed to violent conflict during their impressionable years (ages 18–25) adhere significantly more strongly to dominance masculinity norms.

3.6.4. Violence against women. Masculinity norms may play a central role in shaping intimate partner violence (IPV) and other forms of violence against women (VAW). Norms that valorize emotional stoicism and legitimize violence can help explain why some men resort to violence as a means of expressing emotions. Early empirical work often interpret IPV as arising from a male taste for violence (Aizer 2010) or as impulsive reactions shaped by visceral factors (Card & Dahl 2011). In contrast, the theoretical literature has long acknowledged that IPV may arise from multiple motivations, including instrumental goals—such as exerting control over resources—and status concerns triggered by perceived threats to male authority.[18]

Recent studies have documented the high prevalence and economic costs of VAW in both the workplace and in public spaces (Adams-Prassl et al. 2024, Amaral et al. 2025). Masculinity norms may contribute to VAW in these environments through social image concerns—specifically, men's concerns about appearing manly to other men. Sharma (2023) provides evidence for this mechanism, demonstrating that anti–sexual harassment training for men reduces sexual harassment in college settings primarily through men's increased perception of social disapproval by other men rather than through changes in their intrinsic attitudes toward sexual harassment.

Masculinity norms related to male dominance also emerge as a key factor in explaining VAW in extreme contexts such as war zones. Guarnieri & Tur-Prats (2023) establish a link between masculinity cultures and the use of sexual violence in warfare, demonstrating that sexual violence in conflict is characteristic of groups with stronger norms of male dominance relative to their opponents. This suggests that sexual violence serves not only as a weapon of war but also as an expression of masculine hierarchies between competing groups.

3.6.5. Violence prevention. Violence prevention interventions increasingly focus on the psychological drivers of violent behavior, particularly noncognitive skills and preferences such as self-control and identity formation. A growing literature evaluates cognitive behavioral therapy for high-risk men (Blattman et al. 2017, Heller et al. 2017). Heller et al. (2017) assess Chicago's Becoming a Man program, which incorporates discussions about masculinity alongside other interventions. Although the program demonstrated significant reductions in violent crime and improvements in school participation, the masculinity component cannot be evaluated in isolation from other program elements. Similarly, Shah et al. (2023) find that a soccer-based intervention educating adolescent boys on sexual health, masculinity, and gender-based violence significantly reduces IPV. By contrast, Cullen et al. (2025) find that a couples training in Rwanda that aimed to prevent IPV and promote gender equality resulted in increased violence. Their

[18]Readers are referred to Baranov et al. (2021) and Shah & Barski (2025) for reviews of these and other motivations, their representation in economic models, and empirical evidence from randomized evaluations of cash transfer programs and other interventions.

data suggest this increase stems from male backlash against perceived threats to male authority, as women's more progressive attitudes conflict with patriarchal norms. Although these studies engage with masculinity concepts, they typically do not explicitly measure masculinity norms or isolate their specific effects. Moreover, significant gaps remain in our understanding of effective interventions. Existing research emphasizes violence against women with less attention to how masculinity norms drive male-on-male violence. This represents an important avenue for future research, particularly given that male-on-male violence constitutes the majority of violent crimes worldwide.

3.7. Politics

Recent commentaries highlight growing gender gaps in the support for democratic and liberal values, particularly among younger generations (e.g., Financial Times 2024). Men are more likely to vote for populist leaders and show greater support of strongman leadership than women (Spierings & Zaslove 2017, De Haas et al. 2025). In addition, men occupy most political offices across all levels of the political system (Paxton & Hughes 2017). Masculinity norms may play an important role in explaining both demand and supply side factors that explain these gender gaps.

3.7.1. Demand side. Inglehart & Norris (2019) argue that cultural backlash, often mediated by raw emotional reactions, is a potent force to explain the rise and electoral success of populism in recent years. According to this theory, traditionally dominant groups—particularly white men—feel threatened by decades of progressive social change, including women's empowerment, minority rights, and cultural globalization, which leads them to support populist leaders who promise to resist liberal values and political correctness. The connection between deindustrialization and cultural reaction, primarily among "angry white men," may explain why only economic crises that have disproportionately affected traditional male employment have been linked to the rise of right-wing populism (Kimmel 2017). This pattern of cultural backlash suggests that threats to traditional masculine identity may be a key mechanism linking economic disruption to political change. By comparison, recent research suggests that recessions that had greater economic impacts on women than on men, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, eroded the support for populist parties (Klassen 2022).

Further evidence points to a direct connection between masculinity norms and right-wing politics. The online media environment, particularly for young men, is increasingly prone to content glorifying dominance masculinity norms and resenting the socioeconomic inclusion and economic progress of women and sexual minorities, echoing far-right political leaders (Barker et al. 2023). Additionally, individual endorsement of dominance masculinity (as measured by the CMNI scale) predicts support for US President Trump, even when controlling for political party affiliation (Vescio & Schermerhorn 2021).

3.7.2. Supply side. The supply side of political competition also reveals patterns in which masculinity norms can determine candidate selection. In recent years, manhood has been at the center of many political campaigns, and various candidates have strategically represented masculine ideals while trying to emasculate their opponents (Katz 2016). De Haas et al. (2025) document a positive, statistically significant, and sizable correlation between average CMNI scores and the adoption of a populist agenda by political parties across European countries. Moreover, the contemporary political arena often operates as a masculinity contest culture, preventing women from entering and succeeding in politics. Behaviors considered feminine, such as the use of emotional language in political discourse, is more common among groups less empowered in politics, including women (Gennaro & Ash 2022).

4. ORIGINS, PERSISTENCE, AND EVOLUTION OF MASCULINITY NORMS

Just as historical circumstances have shaped gender norms that guide women's behavior (Giuliano 2018, Fernández 2025), masculinity norms may have similar historical origins. Baranov et al. (2023) demonstrate one such example through their study of convict-era Australia, where historically male-biased sex ratios created a shortage of women and intensified competition among men. These conditions produced enduring changes to masculinity norms that persist today in the form of greater opposition to same-sex marriage, higher rates of violence and suicide, and increased occupational gender segregation. While this study provides important initial evidence, more research is needed to understand the full scope of historical influences on masculinity norms across different contexts.

Regardless of their historical origins, once established, masculinity norms demonstrate remarkable persistence across time. Understanding how these historically rooted masculinity norms persist requires examining the mechanisms through which they are transmitted and reinforced. This section describes four key pathways: institutional channels that formalize masculine identity and norms through rituals and organizational structures, horizontal transmission through peer interactions, vertical transmission from parents to children, and the role of misperceptions that can perpetuate norms even when individual beliefs may be shifting.

4.1. Male Socialization and Conflict

Anthropologists have documented formal rituals involving violent, painful, or dangerous physical challenges used to signify the passage into manhood in preindustrial cultures around the world (Gilmore 1990). Very similar patterns appear in modern organizational life: Factories, elite schools, and the military all use similar socialization processes—physical challenges, hierarchy, and group loyalty—to perpetuate masculinity norms. Criminal organizations exemplify this through rites of passage that bind young men to the group while glorifying violence and toughness (Vigil 1996). Conflict and military experience operate similarly, enforcing masculine codes through hierarchical structures, dominance, and ritualized initiation. In a recent study (De Haas et al. 2025), we document a robust long-run correlation between historical militarized conflict and present-day masculinity. We further show that even within a country, cohorts exposed to militarized conflict as young adults (18–25) demonstrate stronger adherence to masculinity norms.

4.2. Horizontal Transmission

Beyond formal rituals and institutions, informal socialization within organizations also creates dominance hierarchies based on masculinity norms. Schools represent a particularly important social environment because peer interactions during childhood and adolescence are a major influence on the development of gender normative behavior. Baranov et al. (2023) document higher rates of bullying, exclusively among boys, in areas of Australia with historically more male-biased sex ratios. They interpret these results as both a manifestation and a persistence mechanism of masculinity norms.

4.3. Vertical Transmission

While socialization in schools shapes masculinity norms within peer groups, another important pathway of transmission operates across generations (Agostinelli et al. 2025). Baranov et al. (2023) provide evidence for vertical transmission by showing that historically male-skewed sex ratios

continue to influence contemporary attitudes among Australian-born individuals compared to foreign-born residents.

4.4. Misperceived Norms and Persistence

When people misperceive others' views, they may act against their own beliefs just to conform to the perceived norm (Bursztyn et al. 2020). In the context of masculinity norms, overestimating others' beliefs can perpetuate harmful behaviors. For example, men may avoid help seeking or use violence if they incorrectly think that this is what others expect them to do. Matavelli (2025) documents that adolescent boys and girls systematically overestimate their peers' agreement with masculinity norms. Through field experiments with middle school students, she finds that brief discussions about masculinity reduce these misperceptions by approximately 50%. The study reveals that adolescents avoid these conversations because they underestimate how interesting such discussions will be, creating a cycle in which incorrect expectations prevent the very conversations that would correct misperceptions. This suggests that creating structured opportunities for boys to discuss masculinity during early adolescence—when these beliefs are still forming—may help prevent the solidification of misperceptions and break the cycle that sustains restrictive masculine norms.

4.5. Evolution of Masculinity Norms

While transmission and persistence mechanisms explain how masculinity norms endure, understanding how these norms change over time is equally important.[19] Gender norms that constrain women have evolved considerably in recent decades (Goldin 2024), but changes in masculinity norms remain less well documented, largely due to limited systematic measurement. Nevertheless, Connor et al. (2021) identify four emerging themes in contemporary masculinity: inclusivity (supporting gender, racial, and sexual equality), emotional intimacy (encouraging closer relationships and emotional expression among men), physicality (promoting nonsexual physical contact like hugging), and resistance (rejecting violence and risk taking while embracing caregiving and work-life balance). However, these changes may create new challenges. While contemporary masculinity is generally less restrictive, changes in norms can generate stress or conflict among individuals who have internalized traditional expectations, potentially contributing to gender role strain (Levant & Wong 2017). Several questions merit further investigation here: How do more contemporary masculinity norms shape outcomes for men and women? In what ways do tensions between traditional and contemporary forms play out across different social contexts? And how can we develop tools to track these evolving norms over time?

5. STYLIZED FACTS FROM GLOBAL DATA

In the previous sections, we described how understanding various gendered patterns in economic, social, and political outcomes may be enriched by recognizing that masculinity norms also shape these behaviors and attitudes. Much of the literature cited in this review implicitly or explicitly references masculinity norms, yet these norms are rarely measured directly.

This section summarizes findings based on masculinity data we collected in 70 countries through the Global Masculinity Survey (Baranov et al. 2025, De Haas et al. 2025). We measure adherence to masculinity norms using a subset of questions from the CMNI, introduced in Section 2.3.2. We focus on five core dimensions of masculinity (henceforth, CMNI-5) that

[19]For a comprehensive survey of the literature on cultural change, including empirical evidence on how environmental factors, historical experiences, learning, and policies shape cultural evolution, readers are referred to Fernández (2025).

reinforce male dominance, particularly over women and nonconforming men, as measured by agreement with the statements in parentheses: importance of winning ("Winning is the most important thing"), violence ("Sometimes violent action is necessary"), help avoidance ("It bothers me when I have to ask for help"), control over women ("I love it when men are in charge of women"), and disdain for homosexuals ("It is important to me that people think I am heterosexual").

To complement the measurement of adherence to masculinity norms, we also measure normative beliefs about the male role (henceforth, Normative Masculinity Index) in the following five dimensions: importance of winning ("Men should be aggressive and competitive to get ahead"), violence ("Men should use violence to get respect if necessary"), help avoidance ("Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help"), risk taking ("It is important for a man to take risks, even if he might get hurt"), and emotional control ("Men should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside").

We asked both men and women to rate their agreement with each statement on a 4-point Likert scale. We then constructed the CMNI-5 and Normative Masculinity Index so that higher scores indicate greater adherence to masculinity norms and stronger normative beliefs, respectively. We also elicited normative expectations about help avoidance by asking respondents to predict the percentage of adult men and women in their country that agree or strongly agree with the statement "Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help".[20] Finally, we measure personal norms about women's roles and relative position in society, which we refer to as traditional gender role norms, using a standard battery of questions frequently used by economists (e.g., "A woman should do most of the household chores even if the husband is not working").

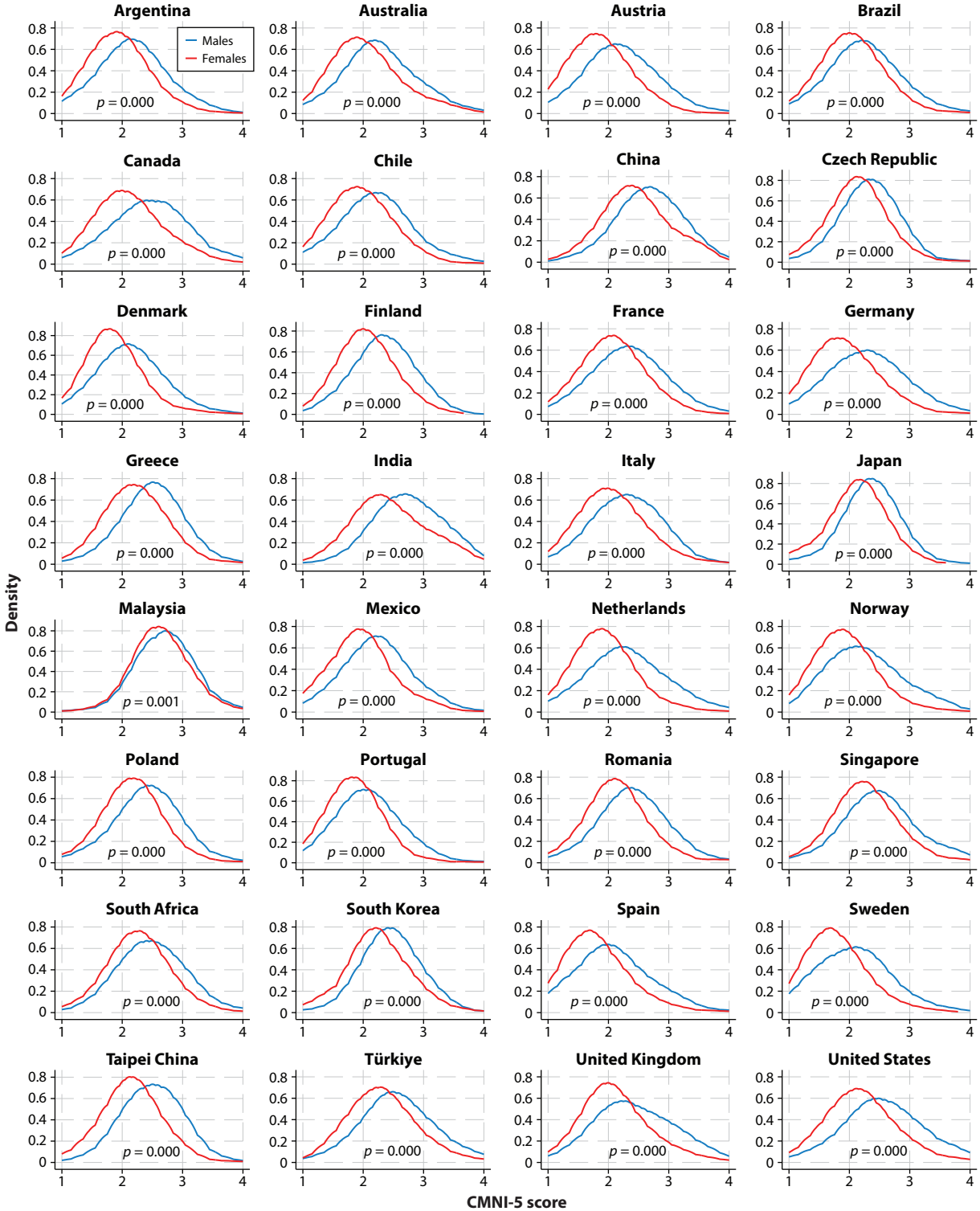
These new data show that masculinity norms vary widely within and across countries. Five stylized facts emerge:

- **Gender differences**. Men display greater adherence to masculinity norms than women in every country (**Figure 1**). Similarly, men have more restrictive normative beliefs about the male role than women (**Supplemental Figure 1**).
- **Age patterns**. Adherence to masculinity norms and endorsement of related normative beliefs follow distinct age patterns among men.[21] Adherence declines steadily with age, whereas endorsement of normative beliefs rises through early adulthood, peaking around age 30, before gradually declining. Although a substantial gap exists between adherence and beliefs in young adulthood, this gap narrows over time and disappears entirely by age 60 (**Figure 2**).[22]
- **Masculinity versus gender role norms**. Masculinity norms correlate positively with traditional gender role norms, but more than half of the variation in masculinity norms remains unaccounted for by gender role norms (see De Haas et al. 2025, figure 1).
- **Masculinity norms predict behaviors**. Masculinity norms predict behaviors related to health, economics, and politics, even when controlling for traditional gender role norms. For example, a one standard deviation increase in the CMNI-5 score is associated with a 5.2 percentage point increase in the willingness to work longer hours. In health, dominance masculinity norms predict greater risk taking and poorer mental health. In politics, adherence to masculinity norms predicts support for strongman leadership (De Haas et al. 2025).

[20]Readers are referred to Baranov et al. (2025) and De Haas et al. (2025) for more information on the data collection process and sampling and further details on how we built each index.

[21]Cross-sectional data on masculinity norms, like ours, cannot disentangle age versus cohort effects.

[22]To enable direct comparison between adherence and normative beliefs, we restrict both indices to the three items that cover the same domains: help avoidance, importance of winning, and acceptance of violence.



(*Caption for* ***Figure 1*** *appears on following page*)

Figure 1 (*Figure appears on preceding page*)

Distributions of adherence to masculinity norms, as measured by the five core dimensions of masculinity in the Conformity to Masculinity Norms Inventory (CMNI-5), by gender and country. Each panel displays the distribution of the CMNI-5 items—an index of adherence to masculinity norms based on work by Mahalik et al. (2003)—as a kernel density by gender for each country. Total sample across the 32 countries is 41,679 males and 38,519 females. *P*-values reflect tests of gender differences in CMNI means within each country. Further details about the survey and index construction are provided by De Haas et al. (2025).

- **Misperceived norms**. Across countries, the majority of men and women overestimate others' support for masculinity norms. Moreover, 84% of countries in our survey exhibit pluralistic ignorance, a situation in which people perceive the minority view to be the majority view (Baranov et al. 2025).

These stylized facts demonstrate that masculinity norms operate distinctly from traditional gender roles, are predictive of important economic behaviors, and may persist partly through systematic misperceptions, highlighting both the scope for policy intervention and the mechanisms through which change might occur. Additionally, they motivate some of the questions for future research that we discuss in the next section.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this review, we have argued that masculinity norms represent an important but underexplored dimension of economic behavior. Drawing on insights from evolutionary biology, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, we discussed how the study of masculinity norms in economics can help explain persistent economic puzzles: why men avoid certain occupations despite unemployment, why workplace cultures resist family-friendly policies, why economic shocks disproportionately

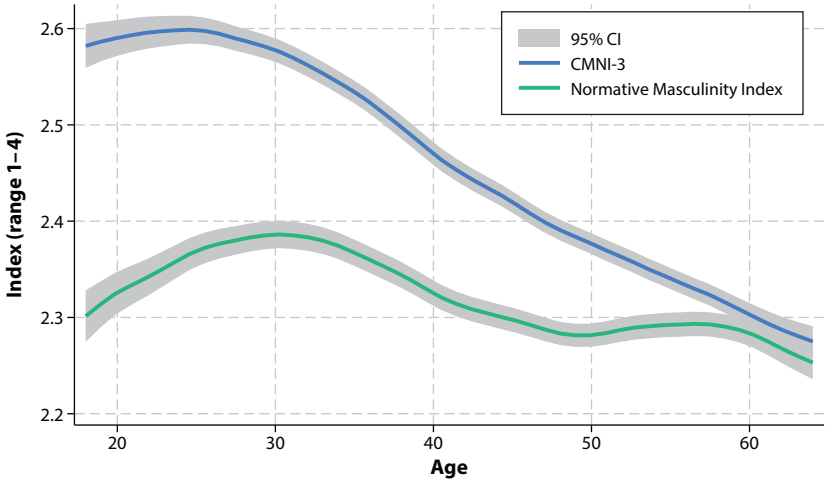


Figure 2

Adherence to and normative beliefs about masculinity norms by age, as measured by three dimensions corresponding to the domains of help avoidance, importance of winning, and violence. The figure displays adherence to these three dimensions in the Conformity to Masculinity Norms Inventory (CMNI-3) and the Normative Masculinity Index as a function of age in the male sample using local linear regression, with corresponding 95% confidence intervals (CI). Both indices have been residualized to remove country fixed effects. Total sample across the 32 countries is 41,654 men for the CMNI-3 and 41,803 men for the 3-item Normative Masculinity Index. Further details about the survey and index construction are provided by De Haas et al. (2025).

affect men's mental health and political attitudes, and why gender gaps in education and health persist despite policy interventions. We have discussed how masculinity norms can spread through institutional socialization, generational transmission, and peer networks and often persist through systematic misperceptions about social expectations. Lastly, using novel data from 70 countries, we documented five key stylized facts: universal gender differences in adherence to masculinity norms, declining adherence with age, partial overlap with gender role norms, strong behavioral predictive power, and widespread pluralistic ignorance.

Looking ahead, we propose three research priorities. First, we encourage economists to more explicitly incorporate masculinity norms when studying men's socioeconomic outcomes and gender gaps. For example, research could examine the causal role of masculinity norms in shaping occupational sorting, the division of labor within the household, men's and women's demand for health services, and political attitudes. Experiments could be designed to identify how these outcomes change in response to manipulations in the descriptive and normative beliefs about what other men do or should do or threats to men's masculinity (e.g., Bosson et al. 2009). Economists could also work closely with policymakers to design and evaluate policies aiming at improving men's outcomes in domains where gender gaps favor women and improving women's outcomes through, for example, programs to combat IPV. Second, future research could explore the social and historical paths of transmission of masculinity norms. How do masculinity norms spread through peer networks, families, and organizations? When and how do they change over the life course? New work could also investigate how women may reinforce masculinity norms, for example, through preferences in the (online and offline) dating market. Third, future research should expand masculinity measures to include more modern dimensions. For example, Reeves (2022) has argued for moving beyond critiques of toxic masculinity toward defining positive masculine identities that preserve valuable aspects of traditional masculinity while discarding harmful elements. This presents interesting opportunities for experimental research. For example, can interventions that teach alternative masculinity norms—such as emphasizing strength through vulnerability or competition through collaboration—improve men's outcomes without perpetuating harm?

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Sofia Amaral, Ivan Balbuzanov, Cordelia Fine, Alex Frankel, Matt Lowe, Joshua Miller, and Nathan Nunn for helpful comments.

LITERATURE CITED

Abou Daher C, Field E, Swanson K, Vyborny K. 2025. Drivers of change: employment responses to the lifting of the Saudi female driving ban. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 115(9):3248–71

Adams-Prassl A, Huttunen K, Nix E, Zhang N. 2024. Violence against women at work. *Q. J. Econ.* 139(2):937–91

Adda J, Fawaz Y. 2020. The health toll of import competition. *Econ. J.* 130(630):1501–40

Addis ME, Mahalik JR. 2003. Men, masculinity, and the contexts of help seeking. *Am. Psychol.* 58(1):5–14

Agostinelli F, Doepke M, Sorrenti G, Zilibotti F. 2025. A stairway to success: how parenting shapes culture and social stratification. NBER Work. Pap. 33963

Aguiar M, Bils M, Charles KK, Hurst E. 2021. Leisure luxuries and the labor supply of young men. *J. Political Econ.* 129(2):337–82

Aguiar M, Hurst E. 2007. Measuring trends in leisure: the allocation of time over five decades. *Q. J. Econ.* 122(3):969–1006

Aizer A. 2010. The gender wage gap and domestic violence. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 100(4):1847–59

Akerlof GA, Kranton RE. 2000. Economics and identity. *Q. J. Econ.* 115(3):715–53

Akerlof R. 2016. "We thinking" and its consequences. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 106(5):415–19

Alger I. 2021. On the evolution of male competitiveness. *J. Econ. Behav. Organ.* (190):228–54

Alger I, Hooper PL, Cox D, Stieglitz J, Kaplan HS. 2020. Paternal provisioning results from ecological change. *PNAS* 117(20):10746–54

Amaral S, Borker G, Fiala N, Kumar A, Prakash N, Sviatschi MM. 2025. Sexual harassment in public spaces and police patrols: experimental evidence from urban India. *Q. J. Econ.* 140(4):3191–231

Amorim G, Britto D, Fonseca AdA, Sampaio B. 2023. Job loss, unemployment insurance and health: evidence from Brazil. Res. Pap. 192, BAFFI Centre, Bocconi University

Anderson S. 2025. Gender biased norms. CEPR Discuss. Pap. 20211, Centre for Economic Policy Research

Autor D, Dorn D, Hanson G. 2019. When work disappears: manufacturing decline and the falling marriage market value of young men. *Am. Econ. Rev. Insights* 1(2):161–78

Autor DH, Duggan MG, Lyle DS. 2011. Battle scars? The puzzling decline in employment and rise in disability receipt among Vietnam Era veterans. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 101(3):339–44

Baranov V, Cameron L, Contreras Suarez D, Thibout C. 2021. Theoretical underpinnings and meta-analysis of the effects of cash transfers on intimate partner violence in low- and middle-income countries. *J. Dev. Stud.* 57(1):1–25

Baranov V, De Haas R, Grosjean P. 2023. Men. Male-biased sex ratios and masculinity norms: evidence from Australia's colonial past. *J. Econ. Growth* 28:339–96

Baranov V, De Haas R, Grosjean P, Matavelli I. 2025. *Misperceived masculinity norms: evidence from 32 countries*. Unpublished manuscript

Barker G, Hayes C, Heilman B, Reichert M. 2023. *The State of American Men: From Crisis and Confusion to Hope*. Equimundo

Bau N, Fernández R. 2023. Culture and the family. In *Handbook of the Economics of the Family*, Vol. 1, ed. S Lundberg, A Voena, pp. 1–48. Elsevier

Becker A. 2021. Shamed to death: social image concerns and war participation. Tech. Rep., University College London

Becker A. 2025. On the origins of restricting women's promiscuity. *Rev. Econ. Stud.* 92(4):2303–29

Becker GS. 1985. Human capital, effort, and the sexual division of labor. *J. Labor Econ.* 3(2):S33–58

Bem SL. 1981. *Bem Sex Role Inventory: Professional Manual*. Consulting Psychologists Press

Bénabou R, Tirole J. 2006. Incentives and prosocial behavior. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 96(5):1652–78

Berdahl JL, Cooper M, Glick P, Livingston RW, Williams JC. 2018. Work as a masculinity contest. *J. Soc. Issues* 74(3):422–48

Bernhardt A, Field E, Pande R, Rigol N, Schaner S, Troyer-Moore C. 2018. Male social status and women's work. *AEA Pap. Proc.* 108:363–67

Bernheim BD. 1994. A theory of conformity. *J. Political Econ.* 102(5):841–77

Bertrand M, Kamenica E, Pan J. 2015. Gender identity and relative income within households. *Q. J. Econ.* 130(2):571–614

Bicchieri C. 2017. *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure, and Change Social Norms*. Oxford University Press

Blattman C, Jamison JC, Sheridan M. 2017. Reducing crime and violence: experimental evidence from cognitive behavioral therapy in Liberia. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 107(4):1165–206

Blau FD, Kahn LM. 2017. The gender wage gap: extent, trends, and explanations. *J. Econ. Lit.* 55(3):789–865

Bosson JK, Vandello JA, Burnaford RM, Weaver JR, Arzu Wasti S. 2009. Precarious manhood and displays of physical aggression. *Personal. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 35(5):623–34

Brenøe AA, Eyibak Z, Heursen L, Ranehill E, Weber RA. 2024. Gender identity and economic decision making. IZA Discuss. Pap. 17564, Institute for Labor Economics

Brescoll VL, Uhlmann EL. 2008. Can an angry woman get ahead? Status conferral, gender, and expression of emotion in the workplace. *Psychol. Sci.* 19(3):268–75

Bursztyn L, Egorov G, Jensen R. 2018. Cool to be smart or smart to be cool? Understanding peer pressure in education. *Rev. Econ. Stud.* 86(4):1487–526

Bursztyn L, González AL, Yanagizawa-Drott D. 2020. Misperceived social norms: women working outside the home in Saudi Arabia. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 110(10):2997–3029

Bursztyn L, Jensen R. 2017. Social image and economic behavior in the field: identifying, understanding, and shaping social pressure. *Annu. Rev. Econ.* 9:131–53

Buser T, Niederle M, Oosterbeek H. 2014. Gender, competitiveness, and career choices. *Q. J. Econ.* 129(3):1409–47

Bütikofer A, Figlio DN, Karbownik K, Kuzawa CW, Salvanes KG. 2019. Evidence that prenatal testosterone transfer from male twins reduces the fertility and socioeconomic success of their female co-twins. *PNAS* 116(14):6749–53

Butler J. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge

Buzard K, Gee LK, Stoddard O. 2025. Who you gonna call? Gender inequality in external demands for parental involvement. *Q. J. Econ.* 140(4):2805–49

Cagé J, Dagorret A, Grosjean P, Jha S. 2023. Heroes and villains: the effects of heroism on autocratic values and Nazi collaboration in France. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 113(7):1888–932

Campbell A. 2007. Sex differences in aggression. In *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. R Dunbar, L Barrett, pp. 365–82. Oxford University Press

Cao Y, Enke B, Falk A, Giuliano P, Nunn N. 2021. Herding, warfare, and a culture of honor: global evidence. NBER Work. Pap. 29250

Card D, Cardoso AR, Kline P. 2016. Bargaining, sorting, and the gender wage gap: quantifying the impact of firms on the relative pay of women. *Q. J. Econ.* 131(2):633–86

Card D, Dahl GB. 2011. Family violence and football: the effect of unexpected emotional cues on violent behavior. *Q. J. Econ.* 126(1):103–43

Carrigan T, Connell B, Lee J. 1985. Toward a new sociology of masculinity. *Theory Soc.* 14(5):551–604

Case A, Deaton A. 2020. *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*. Princeton University Press

Cassar A, Zhang YJ. 2022. The competitive woman: evolutionary insights and cross-cultural evidence into finding the femina economica. *J. Econ. Behav. Organ.* 197:447–71

Cavanagh A, Wilson CJ, Kavanagh DJ, Caputi P. 2017. Differences in the expression of symptoms in men versus women with depression: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Harv. Rev. Psychiatry* 25(1):29–38

Che Y, Xu X, Zhang Y. 2018. Chinese import competition, crime, and government transfers in US. *J. Comp. Econ.* 46(2):544–67

Cohen D, Nisbett RE, Bowdle BF, Schwarz N. 1996. Insult, aggression, and the southern culture of honor: an "experimental ethnography." *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* 70(5):945–59

Connell R, Messerschmidt JW. 2005. *Masculinities*. University of California Press. 2nd ed.

Connor S, Edvardsson K, Fisher C, Spelten E. 2021. Perceptions and interpretation of contemporary masculinities in Western culture: a systematic review. *Am. J. Men's Health* 15(6):15579883211061009

Croson R, Gneezy U. 2009. Gender differences in preferences. *J. Econ. Lit.* 47(2):448–74

Cullen C, Alik-lagrange A, Mũthoni N, Vaillant J. 2025. The unintended impacts of an intimate partner violence prevention program: experimental evidence from Rwanda. Policy Research Work. Pap. 11040, World Bank

Cullen Z, Perez-Truglia R. 2023. The old boys' club: schmoozing and the gender gap. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 113(7):1703–40

D'Acunto F. 2020. Identity and choice under risk. Work. Pap., Carroll School of Management, Boston College

Dahl GB, Kotsadam A, Rooth DO. 2021. Does integration change gender attitudes? The effect of randomly assigning women to traditionally male teams. *Q. J. Econ.* 136(2):987–1030

Dancygier R, Egami N, Jamal A, Rischke R. 2022. Hate crimes and gender imbalances: fears over mate competition and violence against refugees. *Am. J. Political Sci.* 66(2):501–15

Darwin C. 1871. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. John Murray

De Haas R, Baranov V, Matavelli I, Grosjean P. 2025. Masculinity around the world. CEPR Discuss. Pap. 19493 Version 5, Centre for Economic Policy Research

Dean J, Exley C, Niederle M, Sarsons H. 2025. *Measuring gender attitudes toward men and women*. Unpublished manuscript

Del Boca D, Flinn C, Wiswall M. 2014. Household choices and child development. *Rev. Econ. Stud.* 81(1):137–85

Delavande A, Del Bono E, Holford A, Nolen PJ. 2024. *Less macho, more mellow: the malleability of competitiveness*. Unpublished manuscript

Delfino A. 2024. Breaking gender barriers: experimental evidence on men in pink-collar jobs. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 114(6):1816–53

Dix-Carneiro R, Soares RR, Ulyssea G. 2018. Economic shocks and crime: evidence from the Brazilian trade liberalization. *Am. Econ. J. Appl. Econ.* 10(4):158–95

Dizon-Ross R, Jayachandran S. 2022. Dads and daughters: disentangling altruism and investment motives for spending on children. Work. Pap. 2022-51, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics, University of Chicago

Dossi G, Figlio D, Giuliano P, Sapienza P. 2021. The family origin of the math gender gap is a White affluent phenomenon. *AEA Pap. Proc.* 111:179–83

Dupas P, Modestino AS, Niederle M, Seré M, Sheng H, et al. 2026. Gender differences in economics seminars. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 116(2):749–89

Ertola Navajas G, López Villalba PA, Rossi MA, Vazquez A. 2022. The long-term effect of military conscription on personality and beliefs. *Rev. Econ. Stat.* 104(1):133–41

Farre L, Felfe C, Gonzalez L, Schneider P. 2023. Changing gender norms across generations: evidence from a paternity leave reform. IZA Discuss. Pap. 16341, Institute for Labor Economics

Fehr E, Gächter S. 2002. Altruistic punishment in humans. *Nature* 415(6868):137–40

Fernández R. 2007. Women, work, and culture. *J. Eur. Econ. Assoc.* 5(2–3):305–32

Fernández R. 2025. Understanding cultural change. CEPR Discuss. Pap., Centre for Economic Policy Research

Ferrant G, Pesando LM, Nowacka K. 2014. Unpaid care work: the missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes. Issues Pap., OECD Development Center

Financial Times. 2024. A new global gender divide is emerging. *Financial Times*, Jan. 26. **https://www.ft.com/content/29fd9b5c-2f35-41bf-9d4c-994db4e12998**

Fleming PJ, Agnew-Brune C. 2015. Current trends in the study of gender norms and health behaviors. *Curr. Opin. Psychol.* 5:72–77

Folke O, Rickne J. 2020. All the single ladies: job promotions and the durability of marriage. *Am. Econ. J. Appl. Econ.* 12(1):260–87

Fortin NM, Oreopoulos P, Phipps S. 2015. Leaving boys behind: gender disparities in high academic achievement. *J. Hum. Resourc.* 50(3):549–79

Fryer RG Jr., Levitt SD. 2010. An empirical analysis of the gender gap in mathematics. *Am. Econ. J. Appl. Econ.* 2(2):210–40

Galiani S, Rossi MA, Schargrodsky E. 2011. Conscription and crime: evidence from the Argentine draft lottery. *Am. Econ. J. Appl. Econ.* 3(2):119–36

GBD (Global Burden of Disease). 2015. Global, regional, and national age–sex specific all-cause and cause-specific mortality for 240 causes of death, 1990–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013. *Lancet* 385(9963):117–71

Geniole SN, Bird BM, McVittie JS, Purcell RB, Archer J, Carré JM. 2020. Is testosterone linked to human aggression? A meta-analytic examination of the relationship between baseline, dynamic, and manipulated testosterone on human aggression. *Horm. Behav.* 123:104644

Gennaro G, Ash E. 2022. Emotion and reason in political language. *Econ. J.* 132(643):1037–59

Gilmore DD. 1990. *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*. Yale University Press

Giuliano P. 2018. Gender: a historical perspective. In *The Oxford Handbook of Women and the Economy*, ed. SL Averett, LM Argys, SD Hoffman, pp. 644–72. Oxford University Press

Giuliano P. 2020. Gender and culture. *Oxf. Rev. Econ. Policy* 36(4):944–61

Gneezy U, Leonard KL, List JA. 2009. Gender differences in competition: evidence from a matrilineal and a patriarchal society. *Econometrica* 77(5):1637–64

Goldin C. 2014. A pollution theory of discrimination: male and female differences in occupations and earnings. In *Human Capital in History: The American Record*, ed. L Platt Boustan, C Frydman, RA Margo, pp. 313–48. University of Chicago Press

Goldin C. 2021. *Career and Family: Women's Century-Long Journey Toward Equity*. Princeton University Press
Goldin C. 2024. Nobel Lecture: an evolving economic force. *Am. Econ. Rev.* 114(6):1515–39
Goldin C, Katz LF, Kuziemko I. 2006. The Hhomecoming of American college women: the reversal of the college gender gap. *J. Econ. Perspect.* 20(4):133–56
Gregor T. 1985. *Anxious Pleasures: The Sexual Lives of an Amazonian People*. University of Chicago Press
Grosjean P. 2014. A history of violence: the culture of honor and homicide in the US South. *J. Eur. Econ. Assoc.* 12(5):1285–316
Grosjean P. 2021. *Patriarcapitalisme: en finir avec les inégalités femmes/hommes dans l'économie*. Seuil
Guadalupe M, Pollene D, Snellman K. 2025. Masculinity, diversity and inclusion at work: evidence from research institutions. Work. Pap., INSEAD
Guarnieri E, Tur-Prats A. 2023. Cultural distance and conflict-related sexual violence. *Q. J. Econ.* 138(3):1817–61
Hancock K, Lafortune J, Low C. 2025. Winning the bread and baking it too: gendered frictions in the allocation of home production. NBER Work. Pap. 33393
Heller SB, Shah AK, Guryan J, Ludwig J, Mullainathan S, Pollack HA. 2017. Thinking, fast and slow? Some field experiments to reduce crime and dropout in Chicago. *Q. J. Econ.* 132(1):1–54
Henrich J, Boyd R, Richerson PJ. 2012. The puzzle of monogamous marriage. *Philos. Trans. R. Soc. B* 367:657–69
Henrich J, Gil-White FJ. 2001. The evolution of prestige: freely conferred deference as a mechanism for enhancing the benefits of cultural transmission. *Evol. Hum. Behav.* 22(3):165–96
Hrdy SB. 2011. *Mothers and Others: The Evolutionary Origins of Mutual Understanding*. Belknap
Hrdy SB. 2024. *Father Time: A Natural History of Men and Babies*. Princeton University Press
Inglehart R, Norris P. 2019. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge University Press
Jayachandran S. 2015. The roots of gender inequality in developing countries. *Annu. Rev. Econ.* 7:63–88
Johnsen ÅA, Finseraas H, Hanson T, Kotsadam A. 2023. The malleability of competitive preferences. *J. Behav. Exp. Econ.* 104:102015
Kanayama H, Kawata Y, Kitagawa R. 2025. Supervisor accuracy in subjective evaluations and employee careers. Discuss. Pap. 25-E-0982, Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry
Katz J. 2016. *Man Enough? Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and the Politics of Presidential Masculinity*. Interlink Books
Kimmel M. 2017. *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. Hachette UK
Kimmel MS. 2012. *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities*. State University of New York Press
Kimmel MS, Hearn J, Connell RW, eds. 2004. *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*. Sage
Klassen AJ. 2022. The great reset: public opinion, populism, and the pandemic. Rep., Bennett Institute for Public Policy, University of Cambridge
Kleven H, Landais C, Leite-Mariante G. 2024. The child penalty atlas. *Rev. Econ. Stud.* 92(5):3174–207
Kleven H, Landais C, Søgaard JE. 2019. Children and gender inequality: evidence from Denmark. *Am. Econ. J. Appl. Econ.* 11(4):181–209
Levant RF, Fischer J. 1998. The Male Role Norms Inventory. In *Sexuality-Related Measures: A Compendium*, ed. CM Davis, WH Yarber, R Bauserman, G Schreer, SL Davis, pp. 469–72. Sage. 2nd ed.
Levant RF, Wong Y. 2017. *The Psychology of Men and Masculinities*. American Psychological Association
Lippa RA. 2016. Biological influences on masculinity. In *APA Handbook of Men and Masculinities*, ed. YJ Wong, SR Wester, pp. 187–209. American Psychological Association
Lundberg S. 2020. Educational gender gaps. *South. Econ. J.* 87(2):416–39
Lundberg S. 2025. The economics of gender norms. *Scott. J. Political Econ.* 72(2):e12407
Mahalik J, Locke B, Ludlow L, Diemer M, Scott R, et al. 2003. Development of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory. *Psychol. Men Masculinity* 4(1):3–25
Mahalik JR, Rochlen AB. 2005. Men's Gender Role Conflict and Use of Psychological Defenses. *Psychol. Men Masculinity* 6(2):109–15
Mahalik JR, Rochlen AB. 2006. Men's likely responses to clinical depression: What are they and do masculinity norms predict them? *Sex Roles* 55:659–67

Matavelli I. 2025. *We don't talk about boys: masculinity norms among adolescents in Brazil*. Unpublished manuscript

Michniewicz KS, Vandello JA, Bosson JK. 2014. Men's (mis)perceptions of the gender threatening consequences of unemployment. *Sex Roles* 70:88–97

Muñoz E, Sansone D, Tampellini J. 2025. Relative income and gender norms: evidence from Latin America. IZA Discuss. Pap. 18172, Institute for Labor Economics

Niederle M, Vesterlund L. 2010. Explaining the gender gap in math test scores: the role of competition. *J. Econ. Perspect.* 24(2):129–44

Niederle M, Vesterlund L. 2011. Gender and competition. *Annu. Rev. Econ.* 3:601–30

Nollenberger N, Rodríguez-Planas N, Sevilla A. 2016. The math gender gap: the role of culture. AEA Pap. Proc. 106:257–61

OECD. 2019. *PISA 2018 Results*, Vol. II: *Where All Students Can Succeed*. OECD Publishing

OECD. 2023. Paid parental leave: big differences for mothers and fathers. *OECD Blog*, Jan 12. **https://www.oecd.org/en/blogs/2023/01/Paid-parental-leave–Big-differences-for-mothers-and-fathers.html**

Olivetti C, Pan J, Petrongolo B. 2024. The evolution of gender in the labor market. In *Handbook of Labor Economics*, Vol. 5, ed. C Dustmann, T Lemieux, pp. 619–77. Elsevier

Olivetti C, Petrongolo B. 2017. The economic consequences of family policies: lessons from a century of legislation in high-income countries. *J. Econ. Perspect.* 31(1):205–30

Pan J. 2015. Gender segregation in occupations: the role of tipping and social interactions. *J. Labor Econ.* 33(2):365–408

Paxton P, Hughes MM. 2017. *Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective*. Sage. 3rd ed.

Petts RJ, Shafer KM, Essig L. 2018. Does adherence to masculine norms shape fathering behavior? *J. Marriage Fam.* 80(3):704–20

Pleck JH. 1981. *The Myth of Masculinity*. MIT Press

Pleck JH. 2010. Fatherhood and masculinity. In *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, ed. ME Lamb, pp. 27–57. Wiley. 5th ed.

Recalde MP, Vesterlund L. 2023. Gender differences in negotiation: Can interventions reduce the gap? *Annu. Rev. Econ.* 15:633–57

Reeves RV. 2022. *Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do About It*. Swift Press

Rice SM, Fallon BJ, Aucote HM, Möller-Leimkühler AM. 2013. Development and preliminary validation of the Male Depression Risk Scale: furthering the assessment of depression in men. *J. Affect. Disord.* 151(3):950–58

Salk RH, Hyde JS, Abramson LY. 2017. Gender differences in depression in representative national samples: meta-analyses of diagnoses and symptoms. *Psychol. Bull.* 143(8):783–822

Schünemann J, Strulik H, Trimborn T. 2017. The gender gap in mortality: How much is explained by behavior? *J. Health Econ.* 54:79–90

Seidler ZE, Rice SM, Ogrodniczuk JS, Oliffe JL, Dhillon HM. 2018. Engaging men in psychological treatment: a scoping review. *Am. J. Men's Health* 12(6):1882–900

Shah M, Barski L. 2025. Intimate partner violence in low- and middle-income countries: insights from economic research. *J. Econ. Lit.* In press

Shah M, Seager J, Montalvao J, Goldstein M. 2023. Sex, power, and adolescence: intimate partner violence and sexual behaviors. NBER Work. Pap. 31624

Sharma K. 2023. *Tackling sexual harassment: short and long-run experimental evidence from India*. Unpublished manuscript

Shirzad M, Yenokyan G, Marcell AV, Kaufman MR. 2024. Deaths of despair–associated mortality rates globally: a 2000–2019 sex-specific disparities analysis. *Public Health* 236:35–42

Spierings N, Zaslove A. 2017. Gender, populist attitudes, and voting: explaining the gender gap in voting for populist radical right and populist radical left parties. *West Eur. Politics* 40(4):821–47

Thompson EH Jr., Bennett KM. 2015. Measurement of masculinity ideologies: a (critical) review. *Psychol. Men Masculinity* 16(2):115–33

Thompson EH Jr., Pleck JH. 1986. The structure of male role norms. *Am. Behav. Sci.* 29(5):531–43

Trivers RL. 1972. Parental investment and sexual selection. In *Sexual Selection and the Descent of Man, 1871–1971*, ed. B Campbell, pp. 136–79. Aldine

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). 2019. Global study on homicide: homicide trends, patterns and criminal justice response. Rep., UNODC

Van Anders SM, Steiger J, Goldey KL. 2015. Effects of gendered behavior on testosterone in women and men. *PNAS* 112(45):13805–10

Vandello JA, Bosson JK. 2013. Hard Won and Easily Lost: A Review and Synthesis of Theory and Research on Precarious Manhood. *Psychol. Men Masculinity* 14(2):101–13

Vandello JA, Bosson JK, Cohen D, Burnaford RM, Weaver JR. 2008. Precarious manhood. *J. Personal. Soc. Psychol.* 95(6):1325–39

Vescio TK, Schermerhorn NE. 2021. Hegemonic masculinity predicts 2016 and 2020 voting and candidate evaluations. *PNAS* 118(2):e2020589118

Vigil JD. 1996. Street baptism: Chicano gang initiation. *Hum. Organ.* 55(2):149–53

Walker St, Grosjean P, Cristia A, Delavande A. 2024. HeforShe: bargaining power, parental beliefs, and parental investments. CEPR Discuss. Pap. 18775, Centre for Economic Policy Research

Wedgwood N, Connell R, Wood J. 2023. Deploying hegemonic masculinity: a study of uses of the concept in the journal *Psychology of Men & Masculinities. Psychol. Men Masculinities* 24(2):83–93

Weisshaar K. 2018. From opt out to blocked out: the challenges for labor market re-entry after family-related employment lapses. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* 83(1):34–60

Wingfield JC, Hegner RE, Dufty AM, Ball GF. 1990. The "challenge hypothesis": theoretical implications for patterns of testosterone secretion, mating systems, and breeding strategies. *Am. Nat.* 136(6):829–46

Wong YJ, Ho MHR, Wang SY, Miller I. 2017. Meta-analyses of the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and mental health-related outcomes. *J. Counsel. Psychol.* 64(1):80–93

Young HP. 2015. The evolution of social norms. *Annu. Rev. Econ.* 7:359–87

Yuan B, Gao D, Yu R, Huang Y. 2025. Unpacking the link between hormonal fluctuations and risk-taking: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Neurosci. Biobehav. Rev.* 175:106215