

# Gender Lab

The Newsletter of

AXA Research Lab on Gender Equality



Issue 49, May 2026

## WELCOME

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The AXA Research Lab on Gender Equality welcomes you to the forty-ninth edition of our monthly newsletter. At the Lab, we aim to promote gender equality in the economic and social spheres through rigorous scientific methodologies. We carry out theoretical and empirical, high-quality research with a strong policy impact.

In this edition, you will find highlights of the research and activities we carried out during the past month. Our research includes all areas of gender economics, gender policies, gender diversity management, education, family dynamics, culture, politics, and women's empowerment. You will also find updates about events and our team.

We are happy to connect with you, for which we have left our contact information at the end of the newsletter.

## MEET THE TEAM!

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- [Paola Profeta](#), *Director*
- [Francesco Maura](#), *Post-doctoral Researcher*
- [Sina Smid](#), *Post-doctoral Researcher*
- [Ximena Caló](#), *PhD Student*
- [Mohamed Horchani](#), *PhD Student*
- [Matilde Bontempo](#), *Pre-Doc*
- [Edoardo Epifori](#), *Pre-Doc*
- [Miriam Orlando](#), *Research Assistant*

In addition to our core team, we collaborate with [external fellows](#) and welcome [visitors](#). This month we are happy to host [Maya Aidlin-Perlman](#), Development Economics Research Assistant at Yale's Department of Economics. Maya will visit the Gender Lab until the end of June 2026.

We also host students for their [curricular internships](#). This month: [Niklas Reinecke](#) (MSc PPA), [Anna Stanghellini](#) (MSc ESS), [Hanna Hollos](#) (BA, Central European University), [Irina Alexeeva](#) (MSc PPA), [Mariateresa Cesare](#) (MSc PPA), [Alessandro Pini](#) (MSc

## OUR RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

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### **Family**

#### **Parental Leave Uptake in Denmark: Fathers and Workplace Constraints – [Sina Smid](#)**

Key points:

- Following Denmark's parental leave reform, which earmarked 11 weeks for each parent, fathers' leave uptake has increased substantially. Yet most fathers still do not use their full entitlement.
- This paper examines which fathers do not take the full leave and the workplace and labour-market barriers behind this gap.
- Combining register and survey-experimental data, we analyse uptake patterns and explore fathers' experiences with workplace norms, barriers, and discrimination.
- The findings aim to inform policies and workplace practices that promote a more equal sharing of care and improve the effective use of parental leave rights.

Sina, Post-doctoral Researcher at the Lab, recently [presented](#) her work at the Mend the Gap in Economic Opportunities in Europe and Central Asia workshop held at EIEF, Rome.

#### **Survival and Financial Literacy in Investment Decisions Later in Life – [Francesco Maura](#) co-authored with Chiara Dal Bianco, Francesca Parodi, and Guglielmo Weber**

Key points:

- Financial resilience in old age is a pressing concern in rapidly aging societies.
- This paper examines how subjective life expectancy shapes saving behavior and financial market participation among older adults, and how these effects are mediated by financial knowledge.
- We empirically show that discrepancies between subjective and objective survival probabilities influence both savings and stock market participation, and that these misperceptions are correlated with cognitive ability.
- We develop a structural life-cycle model to evaluate the impact of policy interventions.
- We find that survival literacy policies – which inform individuals about their true survival probabilities – encourage greater wealth accumulation and reduce exposure to longevity risk.
- In contrast, financial literacy interventions – aimed at lowering participation costs in financial markets – promote investment in risky assets, but disproportionately benefit wealthier households.

Francesco, Post-doctoral Researcher at the Lab, recently [presented](#) his work at WISE 2026 – Workshop IdEP in Sustainable Economics in Airolo, and at the Mend the Gap in Economic Opportunities in Europe and Central Asia workshop at EIEF, Rome.

### **Education**

#### **Student Gender Composition and University Climate – [Paola Profeta](#), co-authored with Silvia Griselda (Atlassian) and Giulia Savio (University of Turin)**

Key points:

- The university climate is an essential factor that influences students' academic outcomes and career trajectories.
- Traditional masculinity norms, particularly prevalent in male-dominated fields, can pose substantial barriers to success, especially for female students.
- This paper first measures students' adherence to masculinity norms, their anxiety levels, and their confidence in their academic performance relative to peers.
- Second, we explore how these factors correlate with and predict academic performance and future career aspirations.
- Finally, leveraging the random assignment of students into different class groups within the same course at an elite university, we examine how peer gender composition influences students' masculinity norms, anxiety levels, academic confidence, and exam performance.
- Our findings demonstrate that increased exposure to female peers reduces adherence to traditional masculinity norms and anxiety, while enhancing students' confidence and academic outcomes.

Paola, Director of the Lab, recently [presented](#) her work at the XXIII Ridge Forum – WELAC (LACEA) Workshop on Gender and Household Economics held at the University of the West Indies, Barbados.

### **Politics**

## Decomposing a Bundled Attribute: What Gender Means in Refugee Preferences – Sina Smid

Key points:

- Existing research suggests natives perceive refugees' gender as signalling deservingness of protection, threat, and cultural distance to host communities – but these mechanisms are bundled together and difficult to disentangle.
- We decompose them using a conjoint experiment with systematic attribute omission, an Implicit Association Test, and open-ended survey responses, fielded in a nationally representative German survey in 2025.
- Across all three methods, we find that gender operates as a heuristic for vulnerability and security, but not cultural difference – challenging dominant interpretations of gender in refugee attitudes.
- More broadly, our design can be applied to any conjoint attribute that bundles multiple cognitive associations, offering a template for distinguishing mechanisms from average treatment effects.

Sina recently [presented](#) her work at the Visions in Methodology conference held at the Hertie School, Berlin.

## The Gendered Aftershocks of Crises: Evidence from Chile's 2010 Earthquake – Ximena Caló

Key points:

- Do natural disasters systematically disadvantage women politicians, and through what channels? I argue that crises activate masculine-coded leadership stereotypes, producing a voter penalty that propagates through the candidate pool over multiple electoral cycles.
- Using Chile's 2010 Maule earthquake within a triple-differences design across six municipal council elections, I show that women candidates in high-exposure municipalities experienced a significant decline in their vote shares after the disaster – a penalty that does not fade across consecutive cycles.
- This perpetuation reflects two processes operating at different speeds, governed by parties' internal selection institutions: in parties with centralized candidate selection, voters impose a sharp first-election penalty that attenuates as crisis salience recedes; in parties with decentralized selection, women withdraw from candidacy and local branches reduce nominations, generating slow-burn candidate-pool erosion that compounds over cycles.
- Additional tests rule out retrospective accountability: the penalty does not concentrate on incumbent women with governing records, does not vary with the pace of post-disaster reconstruction, and is not driven by differential resource allocation to women-led municipalities.
- A positive economic shock of comparable salience – the mid-2000s copper boom – produces no comparable gender gap, distinguishing crisis-specific stereotype activation from generic accountability.
- As climate change increases the frequency of natural disasters, these findings suggest that the political costs of climate vulnerability represent a barrier to gender parity in elected office.

Ximena, PhD Student at the Lab, recently [presented](#) her work at the Bocconi-Unimi/NASP Joint Seminar Series in Political Science at the University of Milan.

## AT A GLANCE

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- Paola Profeta was [interviewed](#) by *Authority Magazine* on "5 Things We Need to Do to Close the Gender Wage Gap," arguing that the unequal allocation of time is at the root of gender inequality, and that fixing it would not just narrow the wage gap, but improve well-being, productivity, and efficiency across society.

You can check more on news and participations [here](#), and also follow us on [X](#) and [Bluesky](#).

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## NEWS & EVENTS

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### Seminar Series

We host a [seminar series](#), typically on Tuesdays at 1pm CET. Our sessions are conducted in hybrid format, so feel free to join us in person at room 3-B3-SR01 or online!

This month we held the following seminars:

- May 5th: "Gender Differences in Job Finding After Unemployment" – [Fabrizio Colella](#) (Università della Svizzera italiana)
- May 26th: "Did Brazil's homicide law stop men from killing their intimate female partners?" – [Shoshana Grossbard](#) (San Diego State University)

The seminar series now pauses for the summer. Stay tuned for the 2026–2027 line-up in the fall.

[Mend the Gap in Economic Opportunities in Europe and Central Asia \(Second Edition\) – EIEF, Rome \(May 14–15, 2026\)](#)

This month the Lab co-organized the second edition of the [Mend the Gap in Economic Opportunities in Europe and Central Asia](#) workshop at EIEF in Rome, together with the Einaudi Institute for Economics and Finance and the World Bank's ECA Gender Innovation Lab, Institute for Economic Development, and Center for Research on Women and Jobs.

The workshop provided a platform for evidence-based policy dialogue on strategies to promote women's economic empowerment, labour market participation, and entrepreneurship, combining rigorous academic research with institutional presentations from the World Bank – including the *Women, Business and the Law 2026* report. The keynote by Professor Kjell Salvanes (Norwegian School of Economics) on intergenerational mobility was a highlight, and the Policy Roundtable showcased how technology adoption can reduce gender gaps and drive development.

#### **Joint Webinar Series with World Bank ECA Gender Innovation Lab**

As part of our growing collaboration between the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Gender Innovation Lab (ECA GIL), we run a [webinar series](#) bringing together researchers and policymakers to discuss cutting-edge evidence on gender equality and labor markets. The series aims to strengthen dialogue between frontier research and policy practice, with a focus on how rigorous evidence can inform operational and policy decisions in Europe and Central Asia and beyond.

The joint webinar series takes place monthly and online only. The format of each session will include 30 minutes of research presentation, 15 minutes of policy discussion by a World Bank Task Team Leader, and 15 minutes of Q&A.

This month we held the following seminar:

- May 27th: "Women's STEM Enrollment in Uzbekistan" – Speaker: [Dilnovoz Abdurazzakova](#) (Central European University)

The joint webinar series will resume in the fall – stay tuned for the next academic year's program.

#### **CONTACT US:**

If you have any questions about our research or if you would like to know more about the Lab and the team, please visit our website at <https://genderlab.unibocconi.eu/> or email us at [genderlab@unibocconi.it](mailto:genderlab@unibocconi.it). You can also follow us on X [@AXAGenderLab](#) and Bluesky [@axagenderlab.bsky.social](#).

**Until next time,**

#### **The AXA Research Lab on Gender Equality**

Bocconi University

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