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Childcare constraints forcing more women to work closer to home

Gender commuting gap shows women across UK more likely to live 15 minutes from work.

A disproportionate share of childcare responsibilities results in women working closer to the home, potentially contributing to the gender pay gap, new data has revealed.

- 5 Women in every region of the UK apart from London are more likely than men to live within a 15-minute commute to their place of work, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The pattern is reversed for longer commutes, adding to a so-called gender commuting gap.

- 10 Some 61% of commuters who travel for more than an hour are men, the data shows. In the east of England men represent more than three-quarters of those who spend more than an hour travelling.

- 15 The constraint on commuting longer distances is thought by economists to be one of multiple contributing factors to the gender pay gap, as women are limited in their choice of work, even if it pays more.

Analysis of similar data by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) thinktank shows that the difference in commuting times is largely driven by women working closer to home in the decade after having their first child. Fatherhood has little effect on men's travel times.

- 20 Agnes Norris Keiller, a research economist at the IFS, said the gender commuting gap "closely mirrors the gender wage gap", although economists have yet to establish a direct causal link.

The rise of the gender commuting gap comes in the context of rapidly increasing commuting times for people of all genders.

- 25 The number of people spending more than an hour on their commute has risen by almost a third since 2011, the ONS said.

By Jesper Jolly, adapted from *The Guardian*, November 2018