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Breadwinning or On the Breadline? Female Breadwinners' Economic Characteristics across 20 Welfare States

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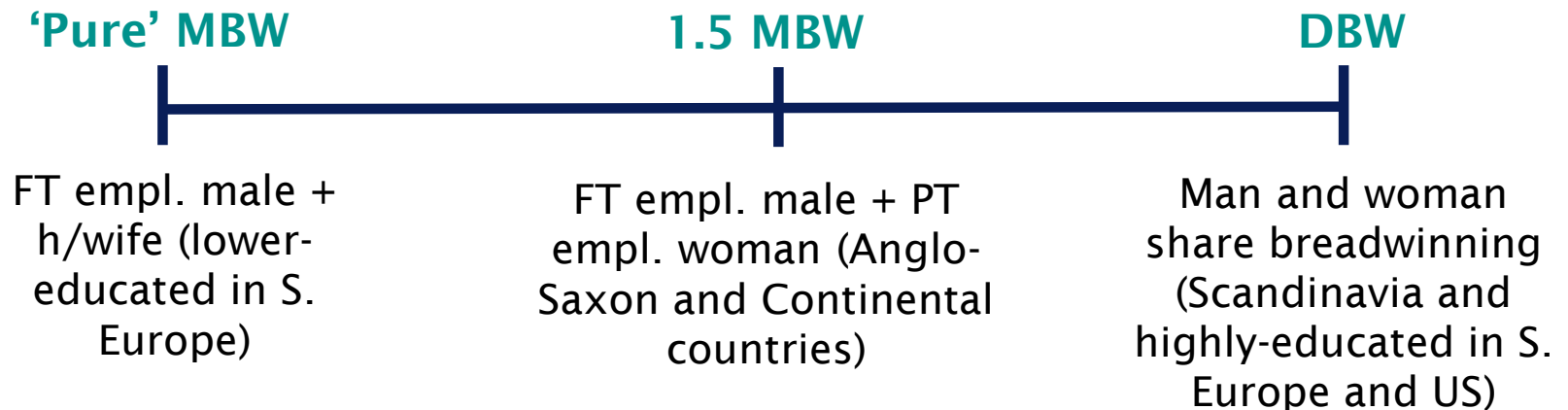
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From male breadwinners to dual breadwinners...

Policymakers and academics promote a **'dual-breadwinner' (DBW)** family model (e.g. Esping-Andersen et al., 2002; European Commission, 2013; Hemerijck, 2013).

In reality, the **male-breadwinner (MBW)** and **'one-and-a-half' male-breadwinner (1.5 MBW)** models persist (e.g. Lewis et al., 2008; Hook, 2015).



...To female breadwinners?

Not considered in social-policy research, which assumes men in couple-households are full-time employed (Hook, 2015).

Our research contributes to addressing this gap by examining the economic characteristics of female breadwinners.

Data: LIS Wave 10 (~2016) or 9 (~2013).

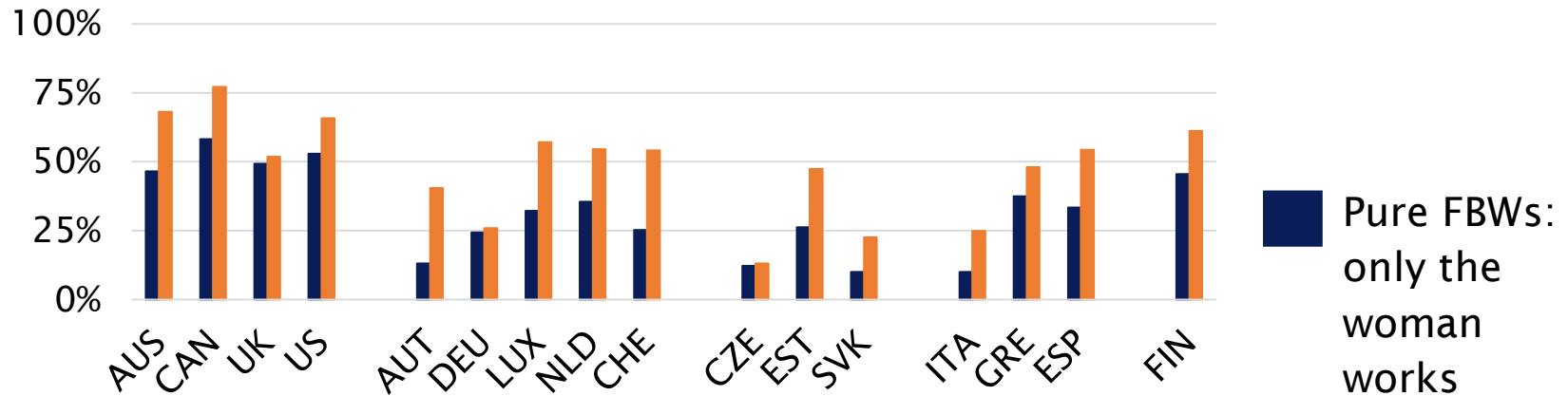
Sample: Heterosexual co-residing couples with/without children; 18-65 years; neither partner retired, in education, or disabled.

Monetary amounts expressed in US\$ 2016, transformed using the Purchasing Power Parity and a deflator.

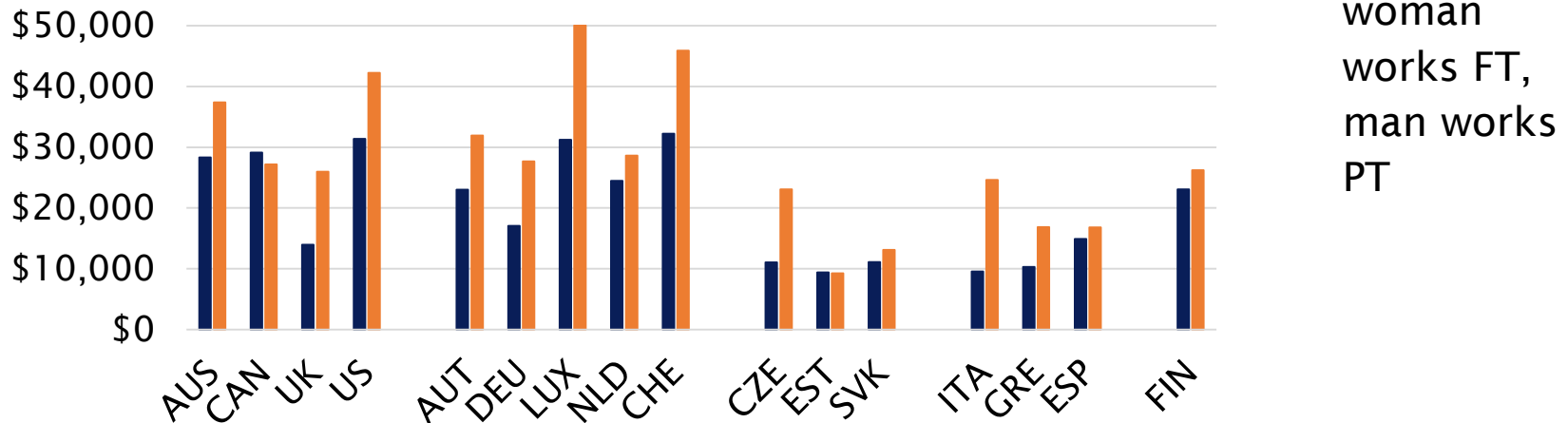
To assess whether observed income differences between FBWs and MBWs are statistically significant, we use two-sample t-tests on the difference between two population proportions/means and Wilcoxon rank-sum tests for the difference between two population medians.

We identify two 'types' of female breadwinner, stratified by class

% of FBWs who are highly educated

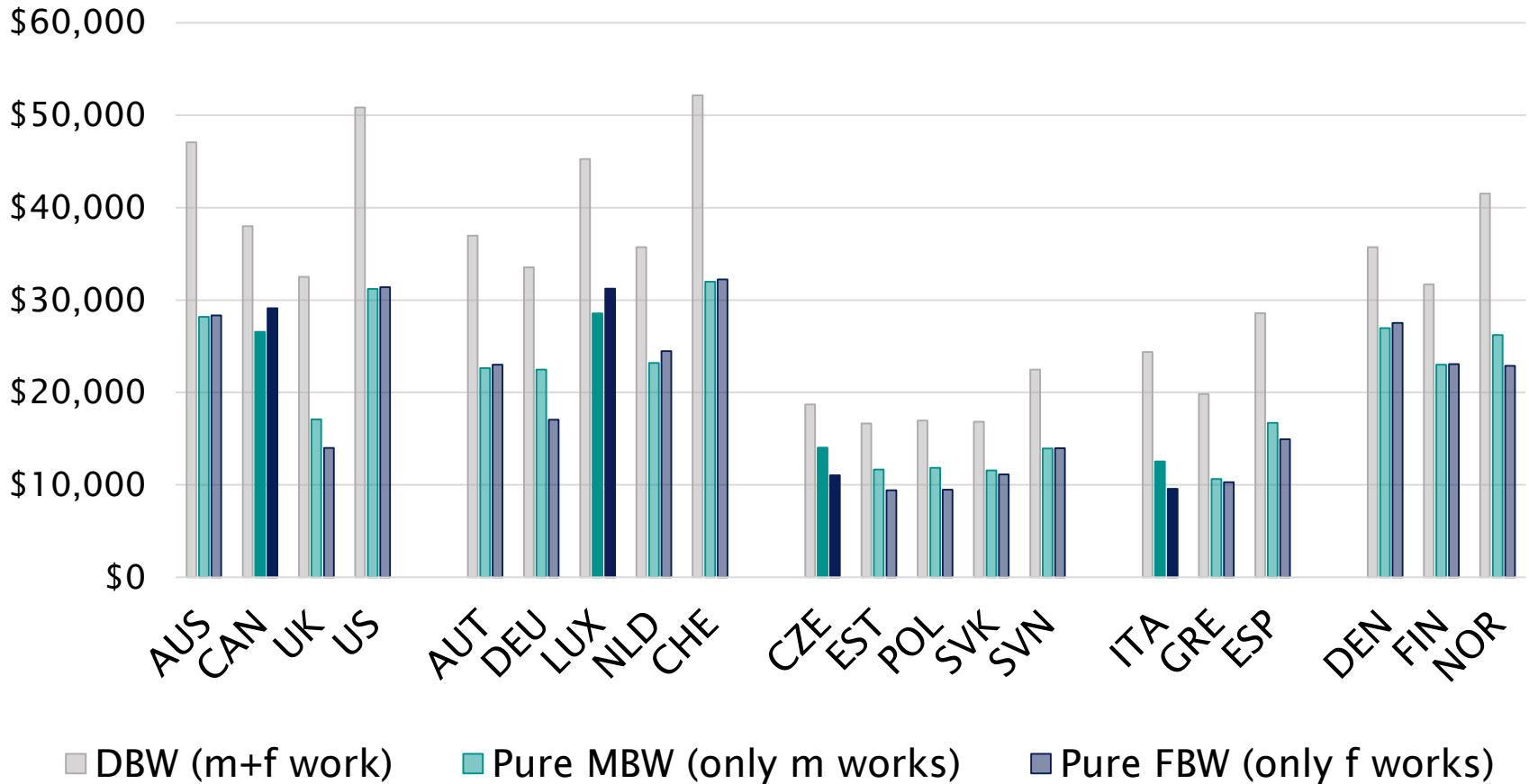


Median disposable HH income, 2016 US\$



'Pure' female breadwinners: 'on the breadline'

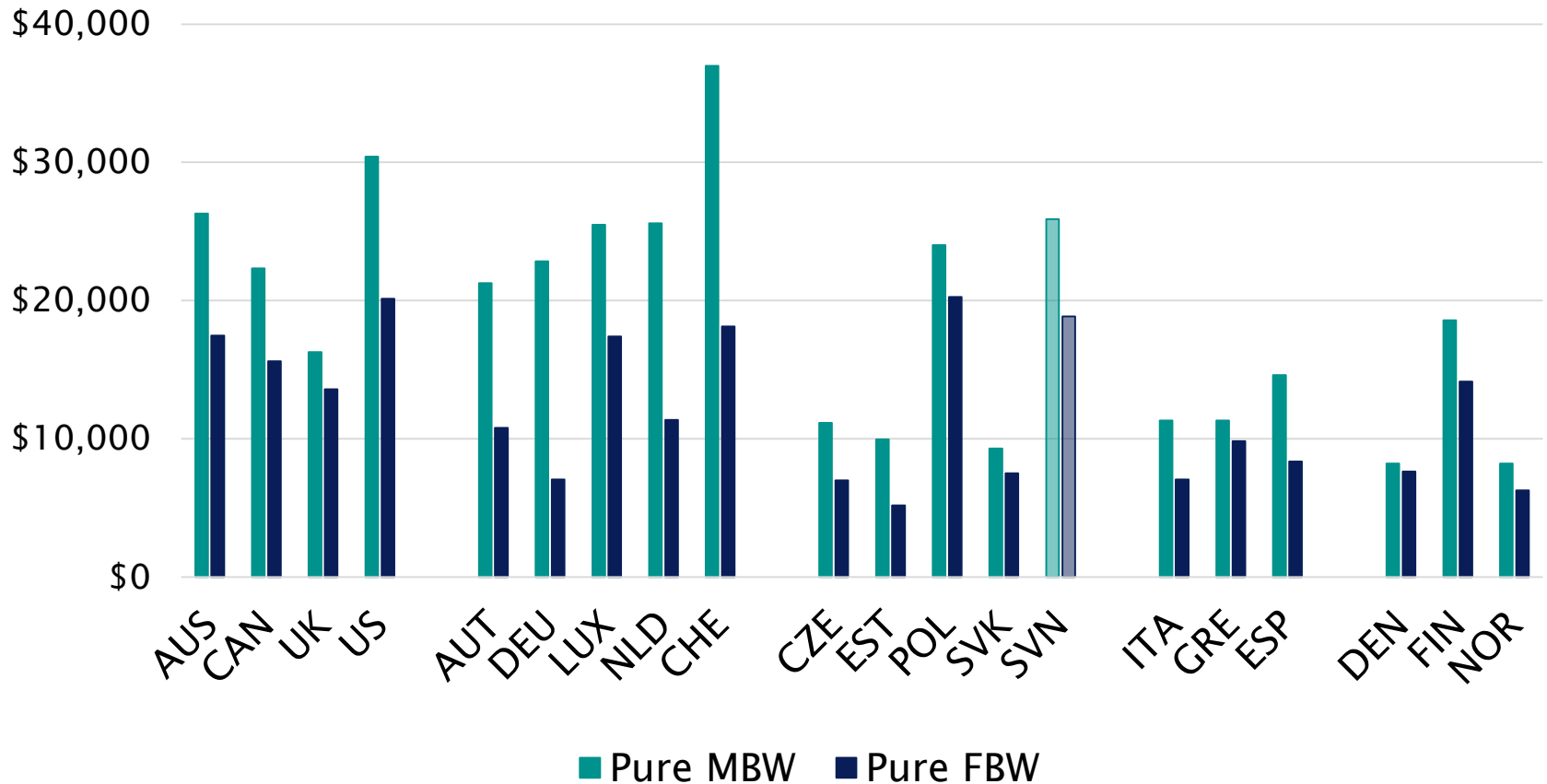
Median disposable household incomes, 2016 US\$



N.B. Solid colour indicates income differences between male and female BWs are statistically significant

But 'pure' female breadwinners earn significantly less as individuals than MBWs

Median labour income of breadwinner, 2016 US\$



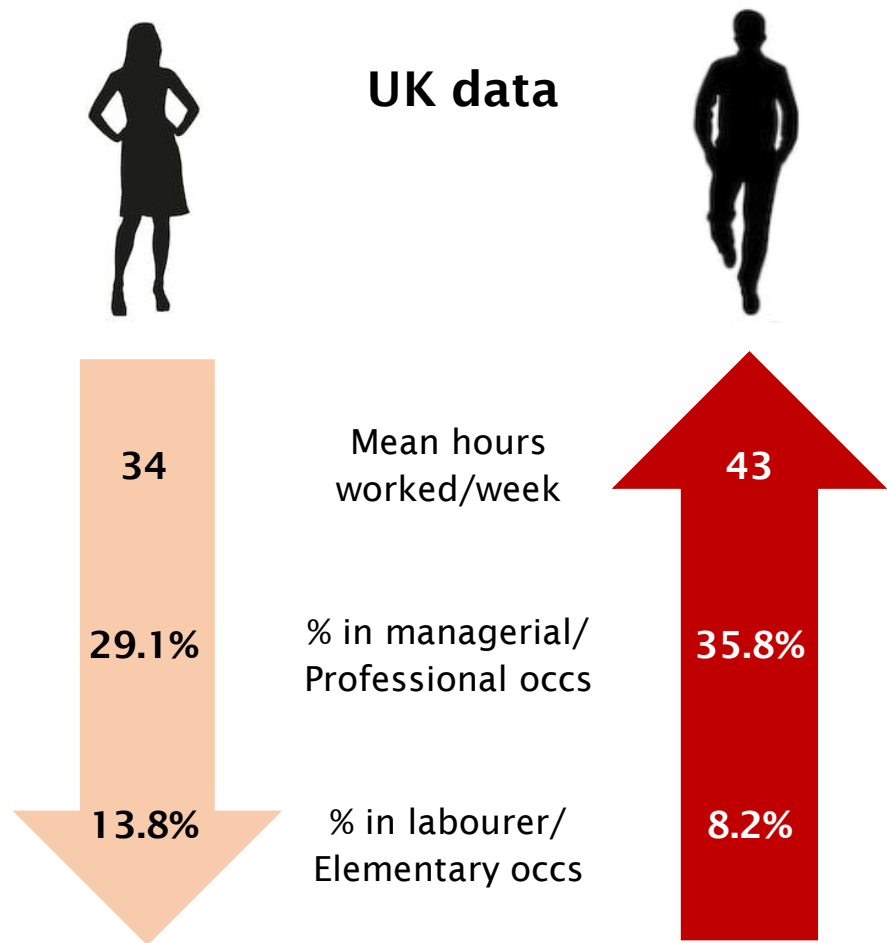
N.B. Solid colour indicates income differences between male and female BWs are statistically significant

Pure FBWs are more likely to be 'emergency' breadwinners

Compared with pure MBWs, pure FBWs:

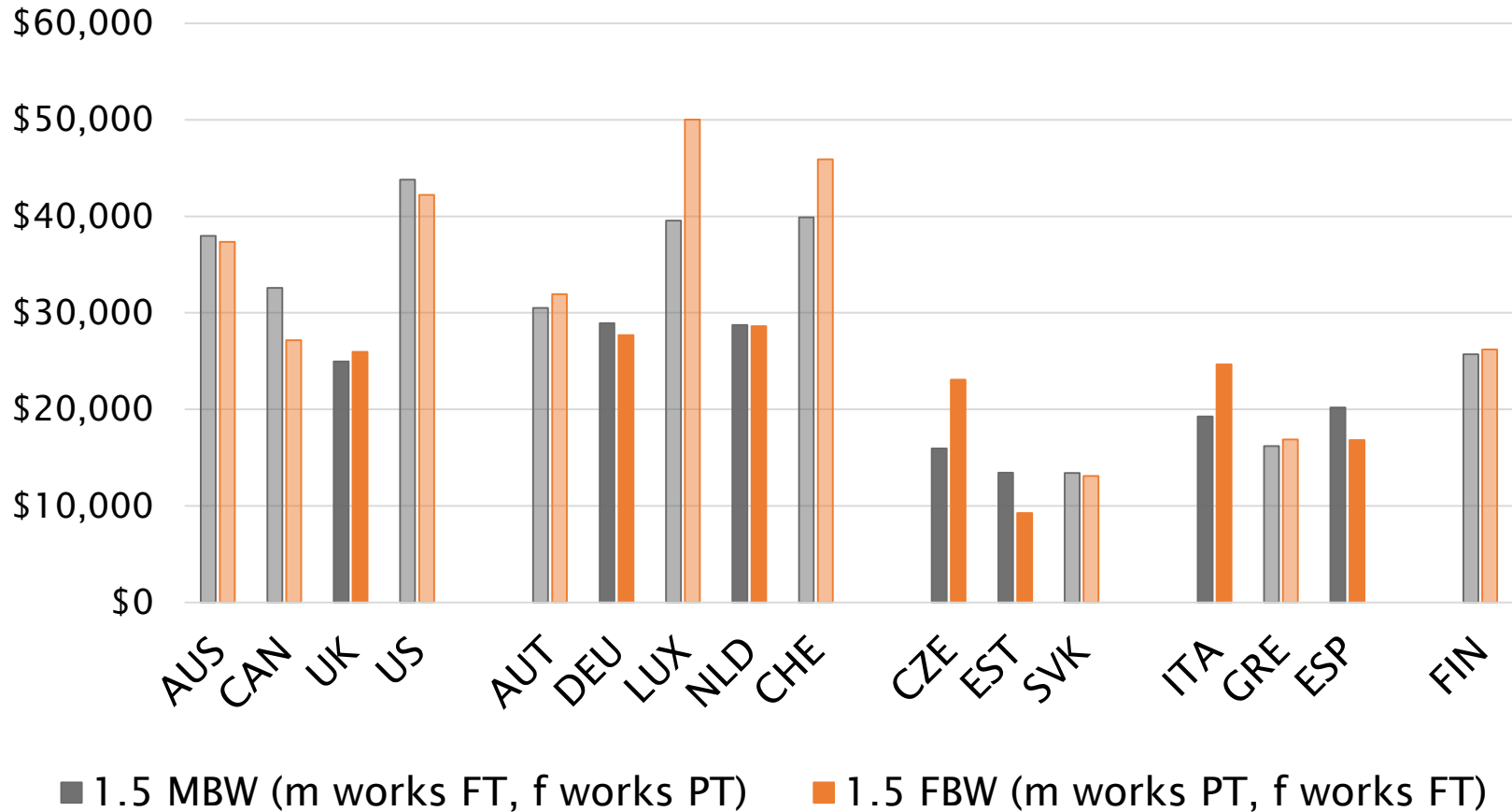
- Work fewer hours
- Are less likely to be in managerial positions
- Are more likely to be in elementary occupations

Previous research suggests male job-loss is associated with a rise in female breadwinning - especially among lower-educated couples (e.g. Dotti Sani, 2018).



One-and-a-half female breadwinners are doing better...

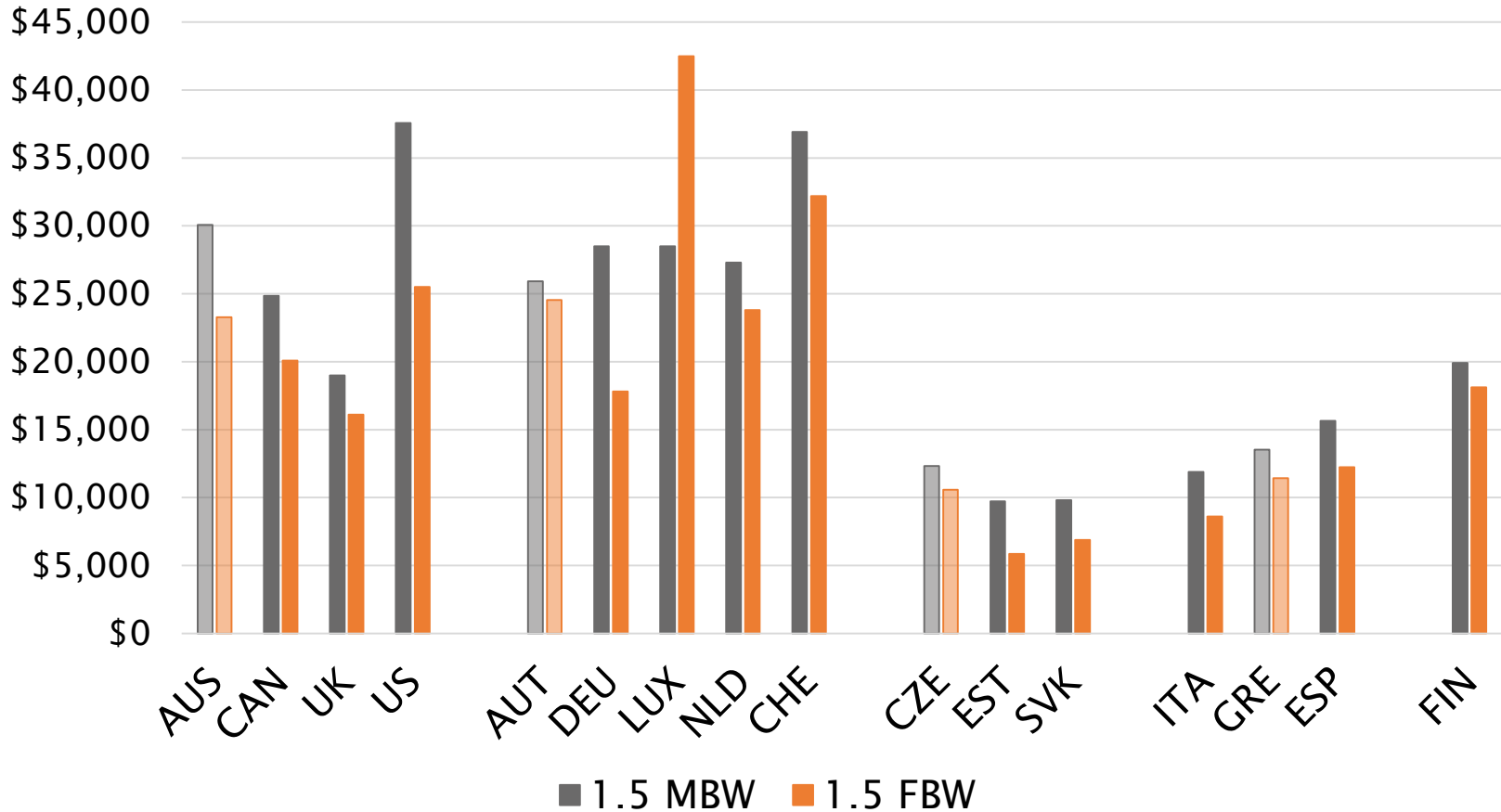
Median disposable household incomes, 2016 US\$



N.B. Solid colour indicates income differences between male and female BWs are statistically significant

But, as individuals, 1.5 female breadwinners earn less than 1.5 MBWs

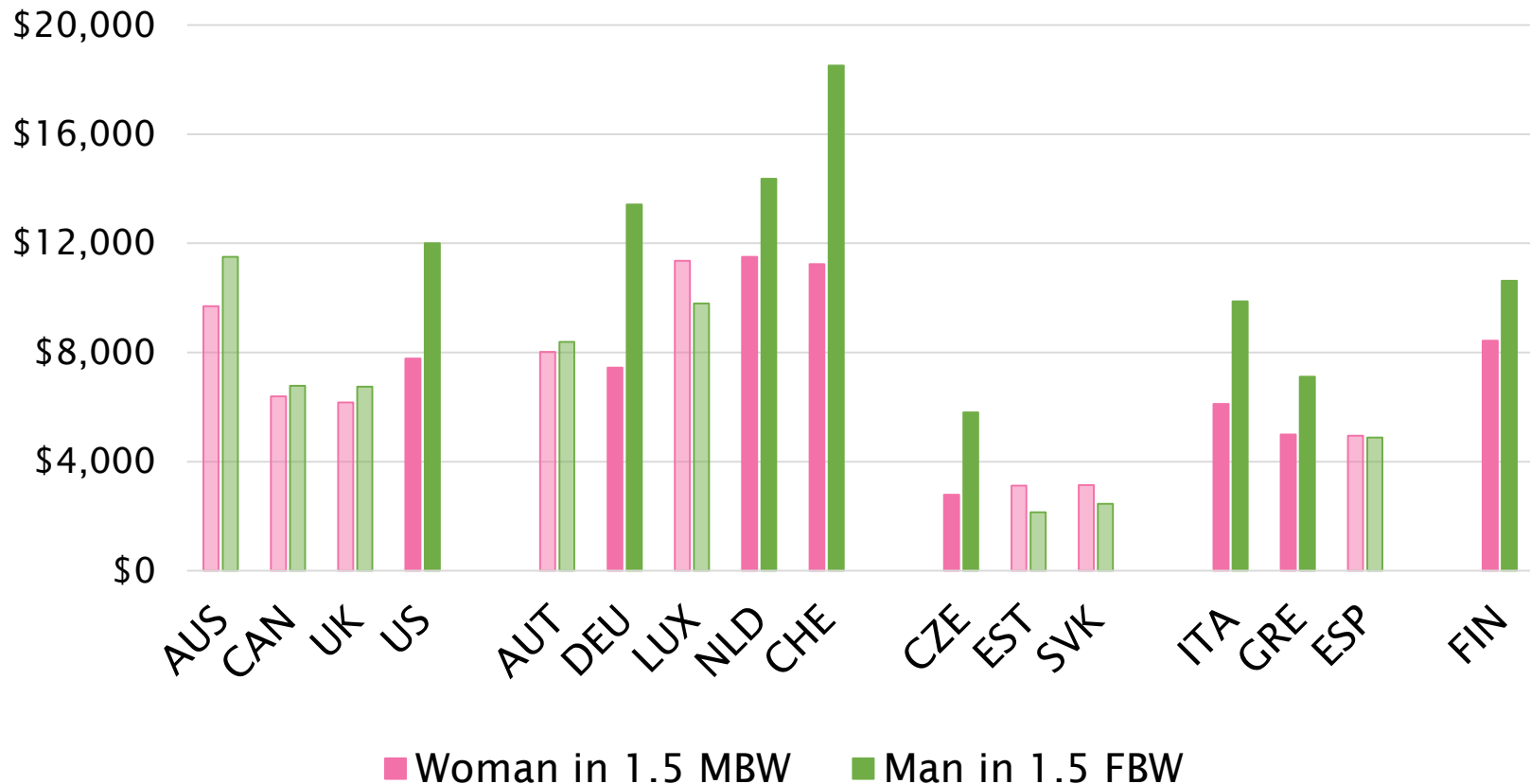
Median labour income of breadwinner, 2016 US\$



N.B. Solid colour indicates income differences between male and female BWs are statistically significant

Gender inequalities in secondary earners' labour incomes

Median labour income of secondary earner (i.e. non-breadwinner), 2016 US\$



N.B. Solid colour indicates income differences between male and female BWs are statistically significant

Implications

- Rather than reflecting women's empowerment, 'pure' FBWs are poorer and potentially breadwinners by default.
- Breadwinning will remain a gendered opportunity without broader policies to address gender inequalities beyond employment rates (e.g. combatting discrimination in workplaces).
- Differences between pure and 1.5 FBWs suggest integrating the female-breadwinner category into comparative social policy literature can illuminate how welfare state reduce or potentially reproduce stratification along gender *and* class lines.



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