



FAIR

Centre for Experimental
Research on Fairness,
Inequality and Rationality

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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Words from the Director

2025 has been a year of scientific achievement, strong collaboration and continued growth at FAIR. Our research community has continued to expand its reach, strengthen partnerships and advance knowledge on fairness, inequality and rationality.

FAIR researchers have published in leading international journals such as the American Economic Review, the Journal of Political Economy and many other highly relevant outlets. These studies span topics including mental health, school choice, gender gaps, intergenerational mobility and moral decision-making, and they deepen our understanding of economic behaviour while helping to inform policy and public debate on how to address inequality in society.

We are also proud to have hosted a number of important conferences and workshops in labour economics, behavioural economics and development economics. Collaboration is central to FAIR's success, and our many visitors have contributed significantly to strengthening FAIR's position as a leading research hub in Europe for studies on fairness, inequality and rationality. Our community has also grown stronger through continued collaborations with international researchers and institutions, bringing valuable expertise and new perspectives to FAIR.

Our outreach activities continued to expand in 2025, reflecting the growing visibility and relevance of FAIR's research beyond academia. We remain deeply committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, and to maintaining an open, engaging and supportive research environment.

As we look ahead, we do so with energy and optimism. With new grants, new talents and new questions to explore, FAIR is well-positioned to continue producing high-impact research in 2026 and the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Bertil Tungodden

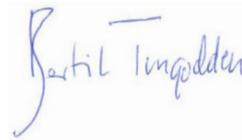


Photo by Odd Mehus

Director, Centre for Experimental Research on Fairness, Inequality and Rationality (FAIR)



Photo by: Hundeen Clements

About FAIR

FAIR is the Centre for Experimental Research on Fairness, Inequality, and Rationality. It has three research groups: the Labour Group - Centre for Empirical Labor Economics, the Behavioural Group - The Choice Lab, and the Development Group.

“ Our aim is to conduct ground-breaking experimental research on how to address inequality in society.

FAIR has over 60 team members, including the Scientific Coordination Group, faculty, visiting professors, leading collaborators, PhD students, administrative staff, the FAIR Insight Team and many short and long-term guest researchers.

NHH Norwegian School of Economics is the host institution of FAIR and is strongly committed to this research initiative. The Centre represents a critical step in the long-term development of excellent research at NHH. FAIR was established as a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in 2017 with funding from the Research Council of Norway and is located at the Department of Economics at NHH.



Scientific Highlights

FAIR researchers continued to make significant contributions to the academic community through publications in leading international journals. In 2025, 25 articles were published in 16 high-quality journals, spanning fields such as labour economics, behavioural economics and development, including several in the prestigious top-five journals in economics. Our publications are key in advancing knowledge and shaping important policy debates.

The American
Economic Review

Universalism: Global Evidence

 *American Economic Review*

 Alexander W. Cappelen, Benjamin Enke, Bertil Tungodden

The American
Economic Review

First Generation Elite: The Role of School Social Networks

 *American Economic Review*

 Emma Tominey, Kjell G. Salvanes, Sarah Cattan

American Economic Journal
Applied Economics

Pulled In and Crowded Out: Heterogeneous Outcomes of Merit-Based School Choice

 *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*

 Antonio Dalla-Zuanna, Kai Liu, Kjell G. Salvanes

American Economic Journal
Applied Economics

Childcare, Labor Supply, and Business Development: Experimental Evidence from Uganda

 *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*

 Arne Nasgowitz, Denise Ferris, Kjetil Bjorvatn, Lore Vandewalle, Selim Gulesci, Vincent Somville

Journal of the
European Economic
Association

The Making of Social Democracy: the Economic and Electoral Consequences of Norway's 1936 Folk School Reform

 *Journal of the European Economic Association*

 Daron Acemoglu, Kjell G. Salvanes, Matti Sarvimäki, Tuomas Pekkarinen

Journal of the
European Economic
Association

Experimental Evidence on the Acceptance of Males Falling Behind

 *Journal of the European Economic Association*

 Alexander W. Cappelen, Bertil Tungodden, Ranveig Falch

Journal of
Political
Economy

The Impact of Working-Memory Training on Children's Cognitive and Noncognitive Skills

 *Journal of Political Economy*

 Eva M. Berger, Ernst Fehr, Henning Hermes, Daniel Schunk, Kirsten Winkel

*The Review
of
Economics and Statistics*

Breaking the Links: Natural Resource Booms and Intergenerational Mobility

 *The Review of Economics and Statistics*

 Aline Bütikofer, Antonio Dalla-Zuanna, Kjell G. Salvanes

Additional Journal Publications (2025)

American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, Annual Review of Economics, European Journal of Social Psychology, Experimental Economics, Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, Journal of Economic Literature, Journal of Environmental Economics and Management, Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Public Economics, Magma, The Journal of Economic Inequality, The Economic Journal



Life at FAIR

FAIR continues to thrive as a dynamic research hub where scholars connect, collaborate, and innovate. In 2025, FAIR hosted 180 guests and organised 126 events, including workshops, high-impact conferences and seminars.

Guests

Throughout the year, FAIR welcomed researchers and collaborators from around the world. These visitors not only presented cutting-edge research, but also mentored early-career scholars and contributed to strengthening FAIR's reputation as a vibrant academic centre based in Bergen, Norway. Their presence sparks new ideas and deepens our global academic network.

FAIR Events 2025

- 14 Workshops and Conferences
- 31 Seminars
- 33 Coffee Meetings
- 8 Pizza and Presentations
- 40 Breakfast Meetings

Events



FAIR NHH. Photo: Kata Urban.

Mentoring Lunch with Professor Johanna Mollerstrom

📅 12 March

As part of FAIR's commitment to promoting gender balance and inclusive academic careers, a mentoring lunch was held with Professor Johanna Mollerstrom (Interdisciplinary Center for Economic Science, ICES). The event provided a forum for discussion on mentoring, career development, and navigating academic life.



Group picture. Photo: Viviana Lalli.

Bergen-Berlin Behavioural Economics Workshop

📅 April

FAIR's annual Behavioural Economics Workshop, organised with Humboldt University, was held in Berlin. The workshop featured presentations by researchers at both FAIR and Humboldt University. It is a long-term collaboration between the two institutions.



Nina Serdarevic and Karl Solbue Vika.

Guest Lecture in Behavioural Economics

📅 3 April

FAIR hosted a guest lecture in behavioural economics by Senior Advisors Nina Serdarevic and Karl Solbue Vika from the Norwegian Tax Administration, focusing on the application of behavioural insights in public policy.



Group picture, Mount Ulriken.

Bergen Labor Workshop 2025

📅 13-14 May

FAIR organised a two-day workshop at NHH, bringing together a selected group of leading applied labour economists. Participants presented recent research and engaged in vibrant discussions. The programme included the Junior Sandmo Lecture by Assistant Professor Ingrid Huitfeldt (BI Norwegian Business School) and concluded with the Sandmo Lecture by Nobel Laureate Professor David Card (University of California, Berkeley).



Photo: Else Johansson.

Development Workshops

📅 20 May, 26 May & 6 November

FAIR organised three development workshops focusing on presentation and discussion of ongoing research in development economics. Two were part of the Bergen Development Workshop, organised in collaboration with the University of Bergen (UiB) and Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI). The third was an internal FAIR Development Workshop, bringing together researchers from the centre.



Photo: Hotel Collegium Leoninum.

SEEDEC 2025: Symposium on Economic Experiments in Developing Countries

📅 12-13 June

SEEDEC 2025 took place at the Collegium Leoninum in Bonn, Germany, and was organised in collaboration with the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods. SEEDEC is an annual event that brings together scholars who use laboratory experimental economics methods to study economic behaviour in developing countries.



Group picture. Mount Fløyen.

ECBE 2025: Early Career Behavioral Economics Conference

📅 19-20 June

The 11th edition of the ECBE Conference was hosted by FAIR at NHH, bringing together early-career researchers from across the globe to share their work, receive feedback, and build professional connections within the field.



Group picture, Stoltzekleiven.

PhD Course with Professor Matthew Rabin: Incorporating Psychology into Economic Models

📅 11-14 August

FAIR hosted a PhD course at NHH led by Professor Matthew Rabin (Harvard University), with participants from across the globe. The course covered the cutting edge of research in behavioural economics, with a particular focus on how psychological mechanisms can be incorporated into economic models, and their implications for key economic questions.



Panorama Hotel & Resort. Photo: Odd Mehus.

FAIR Day 2025

📅 16-17 September

FAIR Day, the centre's annual kick-off event, took place at the Panorama Hotel & Resort. The event brought together the FAIR community for academic presentations, team-building activities, and discussions of future directions.



Group picture. Bonn, Germany.

FAIR-MPI Workshop

📅 30 September

The annual FAIR–MPI Workshop for behavioural researchers is a joint initiative between FAIR and the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods. This year's workshop was held in Berlin and it included research presentations and poster sessions. The event is hosted alternately in Bergen and Bonn.



FAIR NHH. Photo: Susanne B. Løge.

Visit by the State Secretary to the Ministry of International Development

📅 6 November

FAIR welcomed State Secretary to the Ministry of International Development Stine Håheim. The visit included a broad discussion of how FAIR's research can be relevant for the present debate on Norwegian aid. Topics included NHH's international ambitions and FAIR's research on inequality, trust and labour markets, emphasising the close link between research, education and societal impact. The students from NHH Aid also gave an inspiring presentation on their work.



Photo: Sigrid Folkestad

Meeting of the Norwegian Association of Economists

📅 24-25 November

The Meeting of the Norwegian Association of Economists is the association's annual research conference and brings together researchers in economics from across Norway. FAIR hosted the conference, with Professor Sissen Jensen as the main organiser. FAIR Professor Aline Bütikofer delivered a keynote address, and many others presented their ongoing research projects.



FAIR NHH. Photo: Caroline Borgen.

Visit by the Associated Editor of Nature Human Behaviour

📅 2 December

Associate Editor at Nature Human Behaviour, Yushi Jiang, visited FAIR and gave a lecture on how to publish in the Nature Portfolio journals. The visit included a full-day academic programme at FAIR, featuring research presentations from across the centre.



Grand Hotel Terminus. Photo: Caroline Borgen.

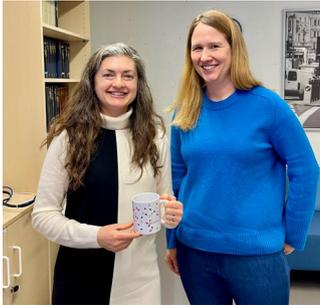
Annual End-of-Year Gathering

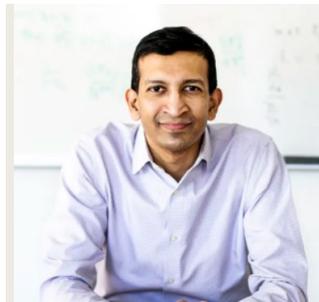
📅 10 December

This year's end-of-year gathering at the Grand Hotel Terminus brought together colleagues from FAIR and collaborating departments at NHH. The evening combined good food with reflections on the past year and discussions of future priorities and plans for 2026.

FAIR Seminars

In this seminar series, leading researchers from across the world presented their latest research. In 2025, the series included 28 in-person seminars and 3 online seminars.





WomEN at FAIR

Project Manager: Aline Bütikofer

The Women in Economics Network (WomEN) is dedicated to advancing gender equity within the economics profession, with a particular focus on increasing women's representation in academic leadership roles. Its mission extends beyond advocacy to include the creation of vibrant platforms for scholarly exchange, fostering professional networks and strengthening career pathways for female economists at all stages of their careers.

WomEN places a strong emphasis on facilitating high-quality research dialogue, supporting collaborative initiatives and amplifying the visibility and impact of female scholars within academia and the broader policy community. Highlights from 2025 include the continued success of our mentoring lunch



Photo by Hallvard Lyssand

initiative, visits by several highly regarded female researchers to FAIR, and the global research dissemination efforts of FAIR affiliates.

In 2025, WomEN also received a gender equality grant from NHH to further support research exchange between female faculty members. In addition, the WomEN team submitted a new grant proposal to the Research Council of Norway as part of the BALANSE programme. This proposal builds on both previous and ongoing WomEN initiatives and aims to strengthen diversity and gender balance in economics by addressing three persistent barriers: structural bias in research recognition and promotion, exclusion from influential professional networks, and the undervaluation of innovative contributions by underrepresented groups.

To address these challenges, WomEN proposes three evidence-based measures. First, revision-and-submission sprints – structured writing and mentoring programmes – will help scholars publish more effectively and with greater confidence. Second, networking conferences and

travel grants will provide early-career researchers with opportunities to connect with leading international economists and establish lasting collaborations. Third, enhanced visibility and outreach, including a redesigned seminar series and strengthened media engagement, will ensure that diverse voices gain greater presence in academic, policy and public spheres.

By reducing barriers to career progression, fostering inclusive networks and amplifying underrepresented voices, WomEN seeks not only to promote equity, but also to improve the quality, breadth and societal relevance of economic research. The initiative's long-term outcomes will provide role models, support structural change within academia, and help ensure that future research and policy advice reflect the full diversity of society.



Adriana Condarco Quesada



Aline Bütthofer



Anna Hochleitner



Catalina Franco



Marlis Marie Schneider



Pallavi Prabhakar



Sissel Jensen

Achievements

In 2025, FAIR team members were recognised for their contributions to research, teaching and academic leadership through a range of appointments, awards and professional roles.



Adriana Condarco-Quesada & Kjell G. Salvanes

Bergen Ambassador Award for the EALE Conference 2024

BERGEN



Bertil Tungodden & Alexander W. Cappelen

Mercator Fellows, Humboldt University and University of Munich (2025–2029)



Bertil Tungodden

- Board Member, Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters (DNVA)
- Elected Member, Academia Europaea
- Ambassador, European Research Council (ERC)
- Fellow, Royal Economic Society



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission



**Morten N. Støstad**

Master's Students' Prize for Outstanding Teaching

**Pallavi Prabhakar**

Best Paper by a PhD Student, Norwegian Association for Economists Conference



Elected and Appointed Roles at NHH



Erik Ø. Sørensen

Chair, NHH Institutional Review Board



Katrine V. Løken

Vice Rector for Research, NHH (2025–2029)



Department of Economics – Board Elections

Aline Bütikofer – Research Coordinator

Sissel Jensen – Teaching Coordinator

Erik Ø. Sørensen – Permanent Faculty Board Member

Alexander L. P. Willén – Deputy Faculty Board Member

Andrea Bocchino – Deputy Member, PhD Representative to the Department Board

Department of Economics – Management Group

Aline Bütikofer & Sissel Jensen



NHH Board

Aline Bütikofer – Board Member

Alexander L. P. Willén – Deputy Board Member

New Grants



Aline Bütikofer, Alexander L. P. Willén & Andreas Haller

Determinants of Demand and Supply of Elder Care: Pathways to Sustainable Care Systems

NordForsk – NOK 7,300,000



Katrine V. Løken & Alexander L. P. Willén

Labor Market Power, Institutional Structures, and Social Consequences

Research Council of Norway – NOK 12,000,000



Alexander L. P. Willén & Katrine V. Løken

Recruitment of Talented Researchers to Norway

Research Council of Norway – NOK 6,000,000



Erik Ø. Sørensen

Reporting in Practice: Lessons from 350 RCTs and Interventions to Increase Results Reporting in Economics

Peder Sather Grant Program – USD 23,000



Aline Bütikofer

Pollution and Health Inequalities: New Perspectives on Long-Term Distributional Consequences of Environmental Policies

Research Council of Norway – NOK 11,999,000



Ethan C. O'Leary & Roberto Caputo

Expecting Bias: How Beliefs of Discrimination Shape the Gender Application Gap

Research Grant, University of Mannheim – EUR 50,000

PhD Defences



Daniel V. A. Duque

31 March

Essays on Economics of Education



Weijia Wang

28 August

Essays on Fairness and Decision Making

PhD Midway Evaluations



Andrea Bocchino

Essays on Education and Family Economics



Irene M. Brusini

Essays on Gender Inequalities in the Labour Market



Nadine Kuntz

Essays on Working Conditions and Social Protection





Research: Behavioural Group

Exercise Improves Academic Performance

By Alexander W. Cappelen (FAIR NHH) | Gary Charness (UC Santa Barbara) | Mathias Ekström (FAIR NHH) | Uri Gneezy (UC San Diego) | Bertil Tungodden (FAIR NHH)

A familiar idea in public discourse is that "a healthy mind needs a healthy body". Many parents, teachers, and students believe that regular exercise can improve learning and academic achievement – not only by supporting physical health, but by helping people sleep better, form better habits and stay focused. At the same time, there is an obvious counterargument: exercise takes time and energy, and could potentially crowd out studying, particularly when students face tight schedules and exam pressure.

So, does increasing exercise actually improve academic performance? And if so, why? These questions speak directly to current debates in education policy and student welfare. In the United States, for example, there has been growing concern that physical education is no longer treated as a core part of schooling, and physical inactivity is widely seen as a major public health challenge across OECD countries.

In this project (now published in the *Journal of Political Economy*), we provide rigorous causal evidence on this question by running a large randomised controlled trial that removes a key barrier to exercise for university students.

Methodology

We conducted a randomised intervention among university students in Bergen, Norway. Students who did not already have a gym membership were recruited early in the spring semester and randomly assigned either to receive a free gym card for one semester (treatment) or to a control group that was not offered a free gym card.

A key strength of the study is the quality of the data. We combine (i) administrative "scanner" data on gym attendance (each time students swiped into the gym), (ii) complete administrative data on academic outcomes (including registered study points, completed study points, exam participation and grades), and (iii) baseline and follow-up surveys capturing perceived self-control, lifestyle, study hours and well-being. The administrative data imply

essentially zero attrition in the main academic outcomes, giving unusually clean identification of causal effects.

Key findings

1) Removing a barrier to exercise leads to a large increase in gym attendance.

The free gym card strongly increased exercise: many more treated students visited the gym, and they accumulated substantially more visits during the semester. This is an important starting point: the intervention genuinely changed behaviour, rather than merely shifting attitudes.

The evidence also suggests that the gym card can reduce more than a financial barrier. Even among students who were not significantly financially constrained, the treatment increased gym visits, consistent with the idea that the offer of a gym card can also help overcome psychological barriers – for example by removing “excuses”, making exercise more salient as a norm, or creating a “fresh start” that triggers goal-setting.

2) Exercise improves academic performance – without harming grades.

Our main outcome is completed study points (credits actually completed during the semester). We find a clear positive intention-to-treat effect: treated students complete about 0.15 standard deviations more study points than control students.

Crucially, this improvement does not come at the expense of lower performance in the courses they complete. The treatment effect on grade average is small, statistically

insignificant and, if anything, slightly positive. In other words, students progress faster through their studies without lowering their grades.

3) Why do completed study points increase? Fewer dropouts and fewer failed exams.

Completed study points reflect both whether students stay enrolled in courses and whether they pass their exams. We show that the improvement is driven by both margins. About 62% of the gain comes from treated students being less likely to drop courses, and about 38% comes from being less likely to fail exams. This matters because delayed progress is a central challenge in higher education – for students, institutions and policymakers.

4) Strongest effects for students who struggle at baseline.

A pre-specified heterogeneity analysis shows that the benefits are concentrated among students who initially struggle. Students who were below the median at baseline in perceived self-control, lifestyle, happiness and study hours experience consistently greater treatment effects, and those who struggle on all four dimensions show an improvement in completed study points in the order of 0.5 standard deviations. This pattern suggests that a removal-of-barriers approach can be especially valuable as a tool for supporting students at risk of falling behind.

5) Mechanisms: improved self-control and a more productive lifestyle.

Beyond documenting effects, the study provides evidence on why exercise helps. The intervention improves perceived self-control and lifestyle measures that are widely

viewed as important for learning – including routines linked to sleep and procrastination. The overall picture is that exercise can help students translate intentions into follow-through: staying in courses, showing up at exams and improved performance on the margins that determine study progress.

Implications

Education and human capital are central to individual opportunity and societal prosperity. Our results suggest that lowering barriers to physical activity can create benefits that go beyond health: it can also improve academic achievement.

The effect size is noteworthy in the context of the education literature. In the paper, we compare the magnitude to influential changes such as substantial improvements in teacher quality, reductions in class size, or strong academic incentives in college – interventions that are often costly or difficult to scale. In contrast, providing access to exercise is simple, and it works through indirect channels (habits, routines, self-control) rather than by paying students for performance.

The results also speak to policy choices about whether such initiatives should be universal or targeted. A back-of-the-envelope calculation in the paper compares the cost of providing a gym membership with the additional funding institutions receive when students complete more study points. Using Norwegian institutional financing rules, the implied additional income per treated student exceeds the market price of the gym membership, and the case for

cost-effectiveness becomes even stronger when focusing on the subgroup of struggling students.

More broadly, the study illustrates a central theme in behavioural economics: small changes in constraints and opportunities can meaningfully affect outcomes that matter for society. By reducing barriers to exercise, we see improvements in self-control and everyday routines, which in turn translate into higher educational achievement.

Treatment effects on academic outcomes

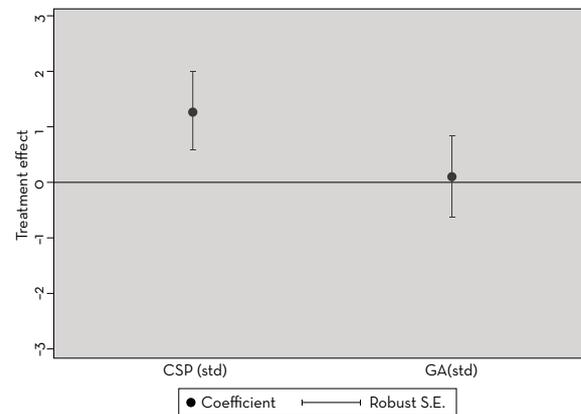


Figure: Treatment effects on academic outcomes. The figure shows standardised intention-to-treat effects of receiving a free gym card on completed study points (CSPs) and grade average (GA). The intervention increases CSPs while leaving grades unaffected.

Read full paper: [Journal of Political Economy, Volume 134](#)



Research: Labour Group

Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Commuting

By Aline Bütikofer (FAIR NHH) | Alexander L.P. Willén (FAIR NHH) | Rene Karadakic (Harvard University)

Despite substantial progress towards gender equality in labour market participation, large and persistent gender gaps in earnings and career outcomes remain across advanced economies. A growing body of research shows that a significant share of these gaps emerges around the transition to parenthood, when women, but not men, experience long-lasting earnings penalties. While previous work has documented the magnitude and persistence of these "child penalties", less is known about the mechanisms through which parenthood reshapes mothers' labour market opportunities. This project, now published in the *Journal of Public Economics*, identifies commuting as a central and previously under-appreciated mechanism linking childbirth to long-run gender inequality in the labour market.

The core premise of the analysis is that parenthood raises the opportunity cost of commuting, making it more difficult for parents, particularly mothers, to work far from home. Commuting distance is a key determinant of the set of jobs a worker can access. A shorter acceptable commute narrows the job search area, reduces exposure to high-quality or high-paying firms, and increases workers' vulnerability to labour market concentration and monopsony power. If childbirth leads women to reduce commuting more than men, these spatial constraints may systematically expose mothers to worse labour market conditions, thereby contributing to persistent gender gaps in earnings and career trajectories.

Norway provides a particularly informative setting for this analysis. The country combines high female labour force participation, generous family policies and strong norms of gender equality with a persistent gender wage gap and a well-documented motherhood penalty. Moreover, commuting distances have increased substantially over time, amplifying the potential labour market consequences of spatial constraints.

Methodology

Using comprehensive Norwegian register data, this paper examines how the birth of a first child affects commuting behaviour for mothers and fathers, and how these changes translate into differences in labour market exposure and

earnings. The rich administrative data allow us to track individuals' residential and workplace locations, employment histories, earnings, occupations and firm characteristics over long time horizons.

We adopt an event-study design that compares mothers' and fathers' outcomes relative to the timing of childbirth, enabling us to trace dynamic effects while controlling for permanent differences between individuals. Commuting distances are measured precisely using geocoded home and workplace addresses combined with driving-distance calculations. This approach allows for a detailed analysis of how commuting behaviour evolves around parenthood and how it interacts with labour market structure.

Key Findings

1) Motherhood penalty in earnings and hourly wages

Consistent with previous research, we document a substantial and persistent motherhood penalty in earnings and hourly wages. Mothers experience a sharp decline in earnings following childbirth that does not recover even a decade later, while fathers' earnings trajectories remain largely unaffected. This confirms that parenthood represents a critical turning point in women's labour market outcomes, even in a country with extensive family-friendly policies.

2) Change in commuting behaviour

Commuting behaviour diverges sharply between men and women at the time of childbirth. Prior to the birth of the first child, mothers and fathers exhibit nearly identical commuting patterns, suggesting similar job search behaviour and spatial labour market exposure. Immediately after childbirth, however, women significantly reduce their commuting distance relative to men. This divergence emerges at



the time of birth and persists for at least ten years. Fathers' commuting distances continue to increase over time, in line with broader labour market trends, while mothers' commutes remain shorter and more geographically constrained.

3) Trade-off between spatial proximity and job quality

The divergence in commuting behaviour has meaningful consequences for the labour markets to which parents are exposed. Reduced commuting distances place mothers in more spatially concentrated and suburban labour markets with fewer potential employers. These markets are characterised by lower average establishment quality, fewer job opportunities and greater employer concentration. While the firms at which mothers work are often more family-friendly, offering greater flexibility or shorter hours, they also tend to pay lower wages and offer fewer opportunities for advancement. As a result, mothers face a trade-off between spatial proximity and job quality that fathers largely avoid.

4) Earnings and commuting preferences

The magnitude of the motherhood earnings penalty is closely linked to changes in commuting behaviour. Mothers who experience larger reductions in commuting

distance at childbirth also experience larger and more persistent earnings losses. This strong correlation suggests that commuting is not merely a side effect of parenthood, but a key mechanism through which childbirth reshapes women’s labour market opportunities and contributes to long-run earnings inequality.

Implications

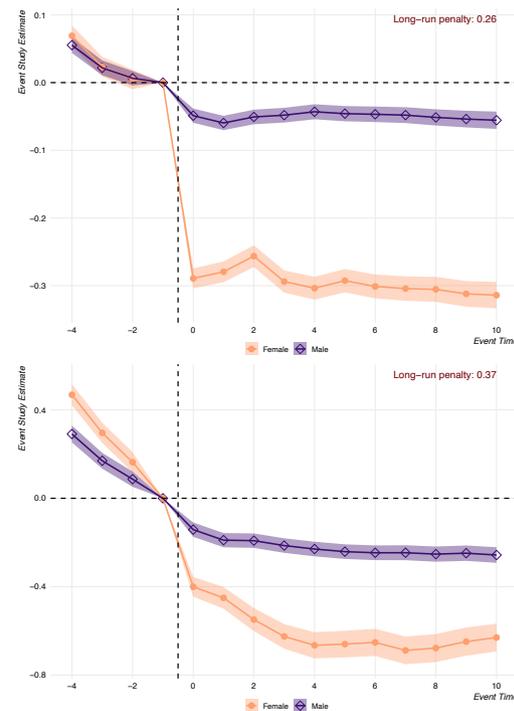
These findings provide new insights into how spatial constraints interact with family formation to generate persistent gender gaps. While much of the existing literature has focused on differences in hours worked, occupational choice or employer characteristics, this paper highlights commuting as a fundamental margin of adjustment shaping access to jobs, firms and wages. By narrowing mothers’ job search areas, childbirth effectively alters the structure of the labour markets they face, exposing them to environments with fewer opportunities and weaker wage competition.

The results also help explain why gender wage gaps persist even in contexts with high female employment and extensive family support policies. Policies that facilitate mothers’ return to work – such as subsidised childcare or parental leave – may be insufficient if they do not address spatial frictions and transport constraints. When mothers are constrained to work closer to home, they may remain employed, but in jobs with systematically lower pay and limited career progression.

From a policy perspective, the findings underscore the importance of considering transport and spatial factors in the design of family and labour market policies. Investments in transport infrastructure, remote and flexible working arrangements, and spatially distributed job opportunities

may play a critical role in mitigating the long-term labour market costs of parenthood. Similarly, policies that encourage a more equal sharing of childcare responsibilities between parents may reduce gender differences in commuting constraints and help narrow persistent wage gaps.

Text for figure:



The figure shows estimated event time coefficients relative to the birth of the first child. Coefficients are estimated separately for men and women, with shaded areas representing 95% confidence intervals. Long-run penalties, shown in the top-right of each panel, represent the male-female difference ten years after the first birth.

Read full paper: Journal of Public Economics, Volume 248



SORESHA
STUDIO

Research: Development Group

Helping Young People Navigate the Transition from School in Low-Income Countries

By Adrien Dautheville (FAIR NHH & CMI) | Bet Caeyers (CMI & FAIR NHH) | Ingvild Almås (Stockholm University & FAIR NHH) | Sonya Krutikova (IFS) | Vincent Somville (FAIR NHH) | Vivian Kazi (ESRF)

For millions of young people in low- and middle-income countries, finishing secondary school marks a critical and uncertain turning point. Education systems have expanded rapidly, especially in Africa, and far more students now reach the end of lower secondary school than in previous generations. Yet opportunities beyond this point remain limited. Only a minority progress to higher secondary education or university, and many young people struggle to find productive work.

This transition is risky because early setbacks can have long-lasting consequences. Failing a high-stakes exam, not being selected for further education, or spending long periods idle after school can reduce future earnings, weaken confidence and lead to discouragement. At the same time, adolescents often make decisions with limited information. Many overestimate their chances of academic success or misunderstand what alternative education and work pathways are available. When expectations are too optimistic and plans are narrow, young people can be poorly prepared for reality.

The challenge, however, is delicate. Simply confronting students with negative information – such as low pass rates or poor job prospects – can backfire, reducing motivation and hope. The key question our study addresses is therefore: **Can we help young people develop more**

realistic plans without undermining their aspirations and motivation?

The idea: hope, realism and "B-planning"

We designed an intervention that aims to preserve aspirations while strengthening agency and pathways. A central feature was encouraging students to think about *backup plans* ("B-plans") – alternative education or work options they could pursue if their first choice did not work out.

The programme was implemented in public secondary schools in two regions of Tanzania among students in their final year of lower secondary school (Form IV). This is a particularly high-stakes moment: students must pass a national exam (the CSEE) to qualify for further education, and failure often marks the end of formal schooling.

The intervention consisted of a 12-episode podcast series, developed specifically for Tanzanian youth and delivered in schools by trained teachers. The podcasts combined storytelling, role play and testimonials from young people who had recently gone through similar transitions. Each episode was followed by guided classroom discussions and practical exercises.

The programme was introduced through a cluster-randomised controlled trial involving 50 schools and more than 2,000 students.

What students believed before the programme

At baseline, students were strikingly optimistic. Although most attended low-performing schools, they believed they had a high chance of passing the national exam and continuing to higher education. In reality, nearly 80 percent of students in these schools failed the exam.

This mismatch between expectations and outcomes highlights a key problem: students were not adequately prepared – mentally or practically – for the most likely scenarios they would face.

Key findings: better outcomes in school and work

The results show that the podcast-based intervention had meaningful and lasting effects.

1. Improved exam performance and education outcomes

Students in treated schools were significantly more likely to pass the national exam. Their probability of achieving the grades required to continue education increased by about one-third relative to the control group.

As a result, they were also more likely to be selected into further education, including both academic tracks (higher secondary school) and vocational programmes. Importantly, these gains were observed using administrative exam data, making them particularly credible.

2. Smoother entry into the labour market

For students who did not continue in education, the programme helped ease the transition into work. Treated students were more likely to engage in self-employment shortly after finishing school, rather than remaining idle while waiting for exam results.

One year later, these differences persisted. Students exposed to the podcasts were more likely to be working and earned higher incomes on average – about 28 percent more than students in the comparison group. These income gains did not come from working longer hours, but from more productive engagement, particularly in self-employment.

Why did it work? Understanding the mechanisms

Stronger agency and clearer pathways

Shortly after the programme, students in treated schools scored significantly higher on a multidimensional “hope index.” This increase was driven entirely by improvements in agency (belief in one’s own ability to shape the future) and pathways (knowledge of how to reach goals).

Importantly, aspirations did not decline. Students did not lower their goals – they became better equipped to pursue them realistically.

More and better backup plans

Treated students were more likely to develop concrete alternative plans. This showed up in several ways:

- They were more likely to apply to multiple education tracks, including vocational options, rather than focusing exclusively on academic routes with low chances of success.
- They reported greater confidence in knowing what to do if their first plan failed.
- They discussed education and career choices more with parents and peers.

These changes suggest a shift from “all-or-nothing” thinking to more flexible and resilient planning.

Reduced stress

The intervention also reduced perceived stress around exams and future uncertainty. Lower stress may have contributed to better exam performance, as excessive anxiety can impair concentration and learning.

Why this matters for policy

This study offers several important lessons for education and youth policy:

1. Information alone is not enough

Simply providing facts about exam pass rates or job prospects may not improve outcomes and can even discourage students. How information is framed – and whether it supports agency and hope – matters enormously.

2. Guidance can start earlier and be low-cost

The intervention was delivered within schools, used audio content, and relied on teachers rather than specialised

counsellors. This makes it relatively inexpensive and scalable, especially in contexts with limited resources.

3. Supporting multiple pathways is crucial

Most education systems implicitly prioritise academic success, even though only a minority will follow that route. Helping students prepare for vocational training, self-employment, or other alternatives can improve welfare without lowering ambitions.

4. Hope is a productive asset

Policies that strengthen young people’s sense of control and understanding of pathways – while preserving aspirations – can improve both education and labour market outcomes.

Conclusion

The transition from school to adulthood is one of the most consequential periods in a young person’s life. Our study shows that a simple, well-designed intervention can help students navigate this transition more successfully – not by dampening dreams, but by grounding them in realistic plans and alternatives.

By combining edutainment with structured reflection, the programme improved exam results, increased access to further education, and helped young people earn more in the labour market. The findings suggest that helping students prepare for reality, without taking away hope, can pay off – both for individuals and for society as a whole.

Read full paper: [NHH Dept. of Economics Discussion Paper No. 19/2025](#)



Selected Projects



Determinants of Demand and Supply of Elder Care: Pathways to Sustainable Care Systems



Project Managers: Aline Bütikofer, Alexander L. P. Willén & Andreas Haller
Funding: Nordforsk

Accelerating population ageing poses a fundamental challenge for Nordic elder care systems, as rising demand coincides with persistent workforce constraints. This project studies the determinants of supply and demand in elder care across Denmark, Sweden and Norway, with the aim of informing evidence-based policies that ensure long-term sustainability, cost-effectiveness and quality of care.



Media Bias and Political Polarisation



Project Manager: Ingar K. Haaland
Funding: Research Council of Norway

The project tries to understand how different reporting strategies by newspapers affect news demand, belief updating and political polarisation. It encompasses four key subprojects, each addressing distinct aspects of the topic, such as exploring the impact of slanted language on political polarisation and estimating the relative weight of accuracy concerns versus belief confirmation.



Firm Power, Worker Power and the Structure of Labor Markets



Project Manager: Alexander L. P. Willén
Funding: Research Council of Norway

This project aims to provide an inclusive understanding of how the employer-employee dynamics in labour markets affect current workers, future generations and the societal goals of economic efficiency and equality. The project combines state-of-the-art research methods with unique combinations of natural experiments, population-wide register data and surveys.



Intra-Household Resource Allocation and Targeted Transfers



Project Managers: Charlotte Ringdal & Ingvild Almås
Funding: Research Council of Norway

Many welfare programmes around the world target women with cash transfers rather than men. Examples are the many conditional cash transfer schemes around the world. This research project aims to provide research evidence on the effect of gender targeting. The project is developing and using novel survey design and economic experiments, both in the “lab” and in the field, to study the effect of gender targeting on female empowerment and child development.



The Freedom to Choose



Project Manager: Alexander W. Cappelen & Hallgeir Sjåstad
Funding: Research Council of Norway

FREE will conduct a global study across 80 countries to shed new light on the striking differences in attitudes to inequality and paternalistic policies across the world. The project investigates how perceptions of free choice shape behaviour and political attitudes.



The Casual Effects of Income Instability



Project Manager: Vincent Somville
Funding: National Institutes of Health

Poverty is characterised not only by low income, but also by instability in earnings, which generates uncertainty about meeting basic needs. Such instability may prolong stress responses, heighten disease risks and affect economic behaviour. While the relationship between income levels and health is well documented, causal evidence on the effects of income instability – both predictable and unpredictable – remains scarce.



Childhood Gap, Parenting Styles and Life Time Inequality



Project Manager: Kjell G. Salvanes

Funding: Research Council of Norway

In past decades, most Western countries have experienced an important social phenomenon in that economic and social inequalities have risen sharply along many dimensions, including education, employment, income, physical and mental health. Changes in income inequality have been associated with disparities in other dimensions of life, including education, health and family structure – all critical for the well-being of individuals and their families. Coinciding with the increase in social inequality, many societies have experienced that the behavioural problems, educational and labour market outcomes have been widening more for men than for women. The project aims to address these research challenges by making use of a set of innovative methodological approaches to study inequality by uniquely combining census-wide population register data with different types of experiments, including lab experiments, randomised control trials and natural policy experiments

FAIR Insight Team

The **FAIR Insight Team (FIT)** connects academic research with society by initiating applied research projects and actively communicating research findings to key stakeholders and the wider public. FIT is organised as a research programme under SNF, the Centre for Applied Research at NHH, and is led from FAIR by Co-Directors Kjetil Bjorvatn and Kjell G. Salvanes.

Research: FAIR Insight Team

Making a Promise Increases the Moral Cost of Lying: Evidence from Norway and the United States

Making a promise reduces lying by 25 percent

The moral cost of lying

Informal commitments play an important role in human social life. As a striking example, the practice of requesting and making promises about future behaviour has been widely observed across different cultures for millennia. These commitments are typically expressed in plain words, sometimes followed by a simple nod or a handshake, without any contract or other legal instruments. Even in modern life, when a person makes a promise to tell the truth, we may be more inclined to believe it. From the business world and politics to academia and our courtrooms, promises are frequently encouraged and sometimes required (De Bruin, 2016; Rabesandratana, 2022). Given the prominent role promises may play in fostering morally appropriate behaviour in society – and the recent controversy surrounding past research on the topic (Simonson et al., 2023) – there is a need for robust



Hallgeir Sjøstad
SOL NHH



Kjetil Bjorvatn
FAIR NHH



Mathias Ekström
FAIR NHH



Pablo Soto Mota
El Colegio de México

scientific evidence to shed light on whether and why promises promote honesty. In this project, we take one step in that direction by investigating the psychology of promises, and whether they have a causal effect on the internal moral cost of lying.

The mind game

Based on three incentivised experiments with more than seven thousand participants from Norway and the United States, we estimate the average level of dishonesty and test whether a promise to tell the truth can reduce dishonesty in a reliable way. By adopting the well-established “mind game” paradigm from behavioural economics (Jiang, 2013; Kajackaite & Gneezy, 2017; Potters & Stoop, 2016; Shalvi & De Dreu, 2014), we can isolate the potential effect on the internal moral cost of lying. In the mind game, participants are asked to guess the outcome of a die-roll by thinking of a number from 1 to 6. Crucially, participants do not report their private guess anywhere. Once the outcome of the die-roll is revealed, the participant is asked whether they guessed correctly, which may result in a monetary reward.

Reporting an incorrect guess provides no reward. As such, each individual participant is presented with an economic incentive to lie without facing any risk of getting caught or future reputational consequences, while at the same time giving researchers the opportunity to estimate group-level dishonesty across treatment conditions by comparing the proportion of reported correct guesses with the statistically expected level of correct guesses of a random die-roll (1/6). By design, this method is an attempt to reduce all external and instrumental motives for telling the truth to an absolute minimum, leaving the decision-maker with a direct trade-off between the moral ideal of being honest and their economic self-interest of telling a non-detectable lie.

Online experiments

We conducted three high-powered and pre-registered online experiments (N=7,200) to examine whether random assignment to a promise intervention could reduce dishonesty. The three experiments share the same basic design but vary in terms of the participants’ country of residence (Norway or the United States) and the number of complementary treatments. Hence, the experiments build on each other to uncover potential contextual differences as well as the underlying mechanisms. Online experiments are a popular method to study dishonest behaviour, as evidence shows that individuals behave quite similarly in online experiments and in laboratory environments (Prissé & Jorrat, 2022). In addition, dishonesty levels measured in online experiments correlate with moral behaviour in other experiments (Schild et al., 2021) and norm violations in daily life (Dai et al., 2018).

Making a promise reduces dishonesty

As our primary result, we find that making a promise causes a 25 percent reduction in dishonesty on average, a difference of 7 percentage points (or 0.15 SD), by increasing the internal moral cost of lying. Second, this promise effect is observed across two different societies, Norway and the United States, and across a broad range of individual traits, such as gender, age, income and political views. Third, we find that the promise effect is independent of trust – both in terms of an experimentally manipulated expression of trust, and with respect to endogenous variation in subjects’ own perceptions on whether most people can be trusted or not. Finally, we provide suggestive evidence that the effect of making a promise seems to require what in the choice architecture literature is referred to as an active or open choice (Carroll et al., 2009), as promises made via

presumed consent in the form of a “choice default” did not significantly reduce dishonesty.

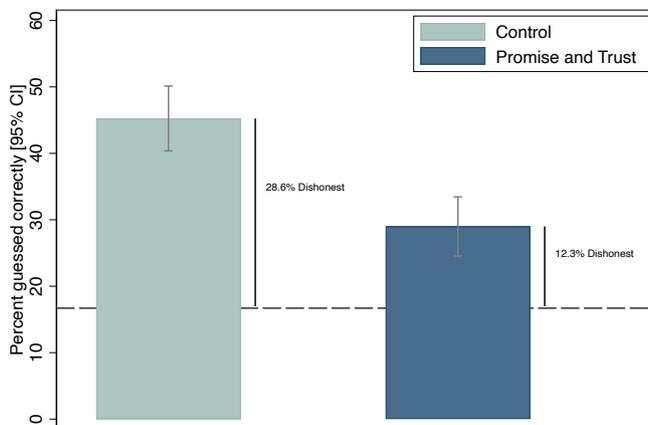
Figure 1 presents the main result for Norway (Experiment 1). By comparing the fraction of people who declared that they made the correct guess in the two groups, we observe a large and significant treatment effect in the predicted direction. In the Control group, 45.3% stated that they guessed the correct outcome of the die-roll, which is well above the statistical base-rate prediction of 16.7%, suggesting a behavioural dishonesty level of 28.6%. In the Promise and Trust group, however, only 29.0% of participants stated that they guessed correctly, suggesting a behavioural dishonesty level of 12.3%.

Conclusion

We explored honesty in three high-powered experiments using representative samples from Norway and the United States (N = 7,200). Based on a one-shot “mind game”, in which dishonesty is economically incentivised but

impossible to detect at the individual level, we find that about 1/4 of participants are willing to lie for the chance of winning a bonus reward of \$100. Crucially, dishonesty was significantly reduced, on average by 7 percentage points (25 percent), when participants were asked to make an inconsequential promise to report accurate information. This promise effect was equally strong in both Norway and the United States, and in different participant sub-groups. However, promises reduced dishonesty only when the promise required active choice, suggesting that personal engagement increases the internal inconsistency that would arise from a subsequent lie. In contrast with predictions, an experimentally manipulated expression of trust did not impact honesty by itself or boost the effect of making a promise. Given recent debates about the replicability of dishonesty research in social science, the current work provides high-quality evidence of broad relevance, documenting a moderate but robust effect of promises on subsequent dishonesty.

Figure 1. Results of Experiment 1



Note: In the figure, behavioural dishonesty is estimated by subtracting the expected frequency of correct guesses (1/6: 16.67%), highlighted by the dashed line, from the reported proportion of correct guesses in each group. In Experiment 1 (N = 800, Norway), dishonesty was significantly reduced in the combined Promise and Trust treatment ($p < .001$), amounting to a difference of 16.3 percentage points in estimated dishonesty (Control: 28.6%, Promise and Trust: 12.3%). Error bars indicate the 95% confidence interval.

Read full paper: [Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, Volume 233](#)

Data Infrastructure Unit

The FAIR Data Infrastructure Unit (DIU) provides vital administrative support to FAIR researchers, with a core focus on facilitating the efficient collection and processing of research data. It plays a key role in ensuring compliance with national and institutional regulations and serves as a trusted interface between researchers and external data providers, such as Statistics Norway, public authorities and survey agencies.

By consolidating institutional experience and maintaining strong relationships with data suppliers, the DIU streamlines data-access procedures and ensures FAIR researchers benefit from economies of scope and scale – ultimately reducing the cost and complexity of data acquisition.

In 2025, the DIU continued to provide essential guidance on data protection, including assistance with personal data notifications, data management plans and IRB applications. The unit also represents FAIR researchers in dialogue with NHH's data protection officers and other regulatory bodies, both internally and externally.

The DIU maintains expertise in metadata management and documentation using open standards such as Dublin Core and the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI). This ensures that research data is archived responsibly and made available through institutional or open repositories, in line with the FAIR principles: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable.

While the unit saw the departure of some highly experienced data managers in 2024, it successfully recruited new staff to continue supporting FAIR's research mission. The DIU

also manages the registry of research assistants and coordinates their allocation across projects, ensuring a balanced match between research needs and available capacity.



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Head of DIU



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Research Data Manager



Malte Baader
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Predoctoral Fellow



Adriana Condarco-Quesada
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Learning Exchange: FAIR Administration visits the University of Bologna

From 21-23 May, FAIR Administration visited the Department of Economics at the University of Bologna as part of this year's annual knowledge exchange. The visit provided an opportunity for both teams to share experiences and insights into how their administrative operations are organised and managed, resulting in constructive and engaging discussions.

The programme also included a guided tour of the University of Bologna's botanical garden, followed by a joint dinner hosted by our colleagues in Bologna.

On the following day, the FAIR Administration team gained further insight into local traditions through visits related to traditional Parmesan cheese and balsamic vinegar production, offering a cultural complement to the professional exchange.

This visit forms part of FAIR Administration's ongoing commitment to regular knowledge exchanges. Previous exchanges have included a visit to CEBI in Copenhagen, and FAIR looks forward to continuing this tradition of sharing best practices and strengthening collaboration across institutions.



Policy Impact

FAIR contributes to evidence-based policymaking by participating in expert groups and preparing reports for a range of government ministries and public institutions. These activities demonstrate FAIR’s commitment to translating research into practical solutions for societal challenges, ensuring that the work informs both policy design and public debate.



Alexander W. Cappelen
Appointed Member of the Government Committee on the Ethical Framework for the Government Pension Fund Global



Regjeringen.no



Katrine V. Løken
Appointed Member of the Committee on Birth Rates and Welfare Schemes for Families with Children



Regjeringen.no



Hallgeir Sjøstad
Appointed Member of the Board of the Consumer Council







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*The Choice Lab
(2024/25 cohort)*



Xinyi Cao

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(2024/25 cohort)*

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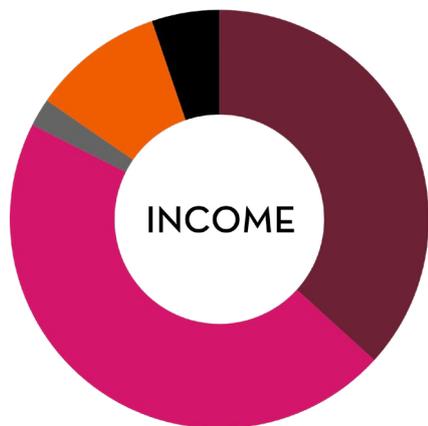
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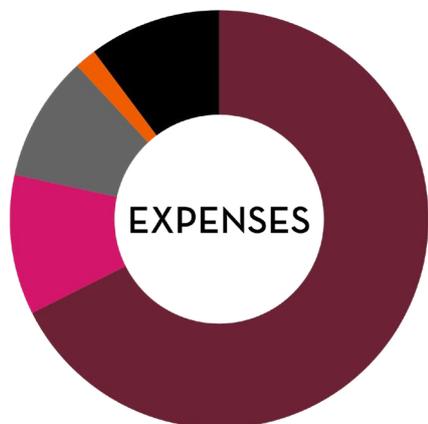
PhD Student
Bocconi University

Statement of Accounts



- The Research Council of Norway **37%**
- Norwegian School of Economics **46%**
- EU funding **2%**
- International and Norwegian partners in-kind **10%**
- Other funds **5%**

SFF FAIR*	2025
INCOME	
The Research Council of Norway (RCN)	23,515
Norwegian School of Economics	29,229
EU funds	1,381
International & Norwegian partners in-kind	6,521
Other funds	3,335
Income, total	63,980



- Payroll and indirect expenses **68%**
- Experiments, data purchase **10%**
- Other operating expenses **10%**
- RCN grants to international partners **2%**
- International and Norwegian partners in-kind **10%**

EXPENSES	MNOK
Payroll and indirect expenses	43,238
Experiments, data purchase	6,934
Other operating expenses	6,208
RCN grants to international partners	1,080
International & Norwegian partners in-kind	6,521
Expenses, total	63,980

*Real turnover, not transfers

Outreach and Media



Article in VoxEU CEPR

The Nordic model and income equality: Myths, facts and policy lessons

Gaute Torsvik, Kjell G. Salvanes & Magne Mogstad

This article examines key myths and facts about the Nordic economic model, showing that equality in pre-tax labour earnings – driven by coordinated wage-setting and strong labour unions – is the main reason for low income inequality in the Nordic countries. The Nordic model and income equality: Myths, facts and policy lessons | CEPR



The Washington Post

Trash sucks: A Norwegian city uses vacuum tubes to whisk waste away

Mathias Ekström & Kjetil Bjorvatn

The Washington Post highlights research by FAIR researchers at NHH on Bergen's waste-collection and pricing system, illustrating how behavioural economics can inform effective and sustainable public policy



Podcast

Curious Norway: People's Views on Fairness

Alexander W. Cappelen & Bertil Tungodden

An episode from the Nysgjerrige Norge podcast series, presenting Norwegian research on fairness and justice to a broad, non-academic audience. (In Norwegian)



Book

Micro Economics - 2nd edition

Kjetil Bjorvatn

An ABC in 1-2-3 provides a clear and engaging introduction to core microeconomic theory at the bachelor's level, designed to inspire further learning. (In Norwegian)

BA

Alttinget

Khrono

NRK

VOX^{EU} CEPR

The Economist

2

Dagsavisen

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HELSINGIN SANOMAT



Bluesky

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