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Introduction








Do people hire differently when they know they're being watched? Hiring bias has long been studied, but how research is conducted may change what we find. This project tested whether telling recruiters they were in a study affected differences in hiring outcomes by things like gender of the applicant. The project explores whether transparency in experiments can hide or shrink bias, raising important questions about how labor market discrimination is measured.



Objective

To examine whether disclosing to recruiters that they were part of a research study changes observed gaps in hiring outcomes by things like gender of applicant, specifically in callback rates and recommended salaries.

Methodology

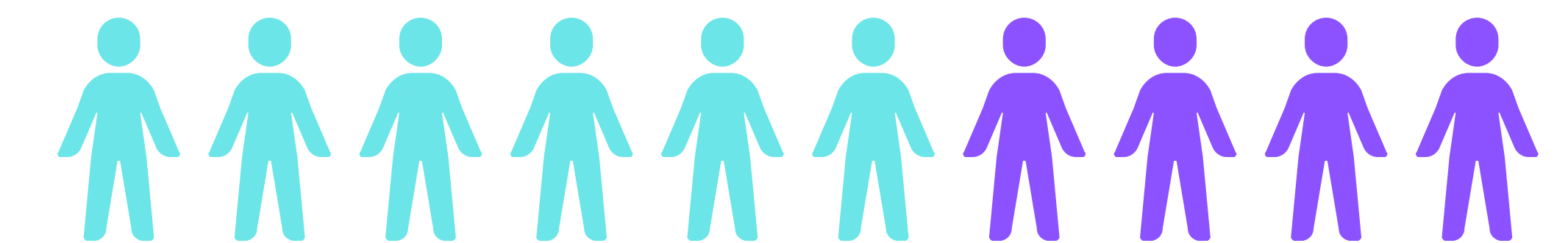
- 01  **Online field experiment on a freelance platform** – recruiters were hired on the freelance platform to evaluate candidates for short-term tech jobs.
- 02  **Random assignment** – recruiters were split into two main groups: one told upfront this was research (Professor Account), the other not informed (Construction Account).
- 03  **Transparent condition** – participants gave informed consent and knew they were reviewing hypothetical candidate resumes. 
- 04  **Hidden condition** – recruiters believed it was a real task, ensuring behavior reflected natural decision-making processes. 
- 05  **Measured outcomes** – callback (interview) rates and suggested salaries for resumes, tracked with strict protocols.

Pilot Results

The data from this summer are still being cleaned. However, pilot data showed differences between the two conditions. In the hidden group (when recruiters didn't know it was research), women were about 6 points less likely than men to get callbacks, with salaries 3–4% lower. In the transparent group (when recruiters were told it was research), differences got smaller to about 2 points for callbacks and 1% or less for salaries (Agan, Cowgill, and Gee, working paper).



Men vs. Women: Callback Gap



Analysis

The end goal of the summer research is to expand the sample size from the pilot and to test if the results still hold for gender in this larger sample. Furthermore the summer research also varied the race and criminal history of fictitious applicants.



Conclusion

Our study tests if bias in hiring changes depending on how research is done. Pilot results found that when recruiters didn't know it was a study, men got more callbacks and higher pay offers than women with the same resumes. When recruiters were told it was research, the gap was smaller, meaning people act differently when they know they are being watched.



Figure 1: Outcomes and Effects By If Told You Are In An Experiment

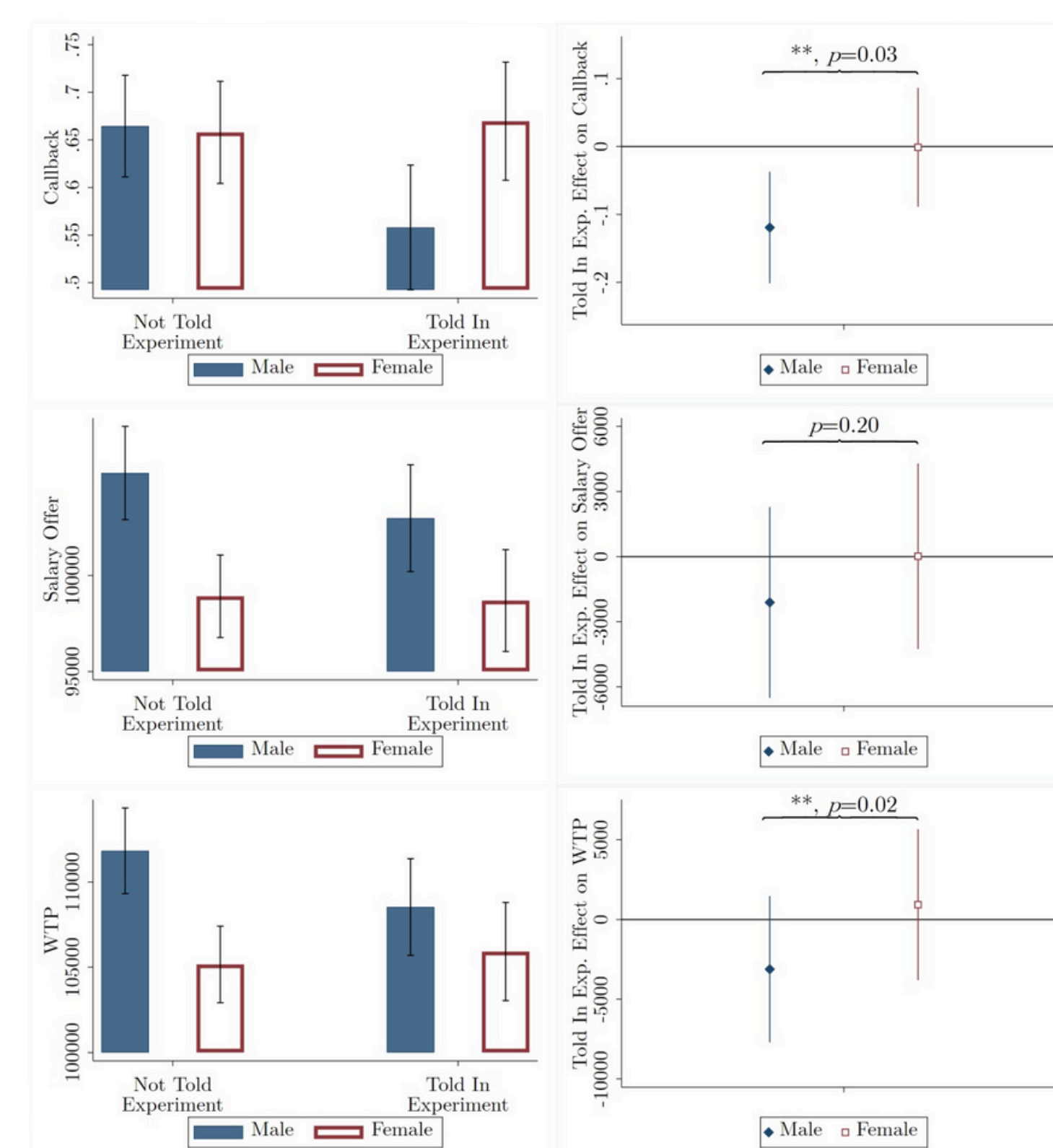
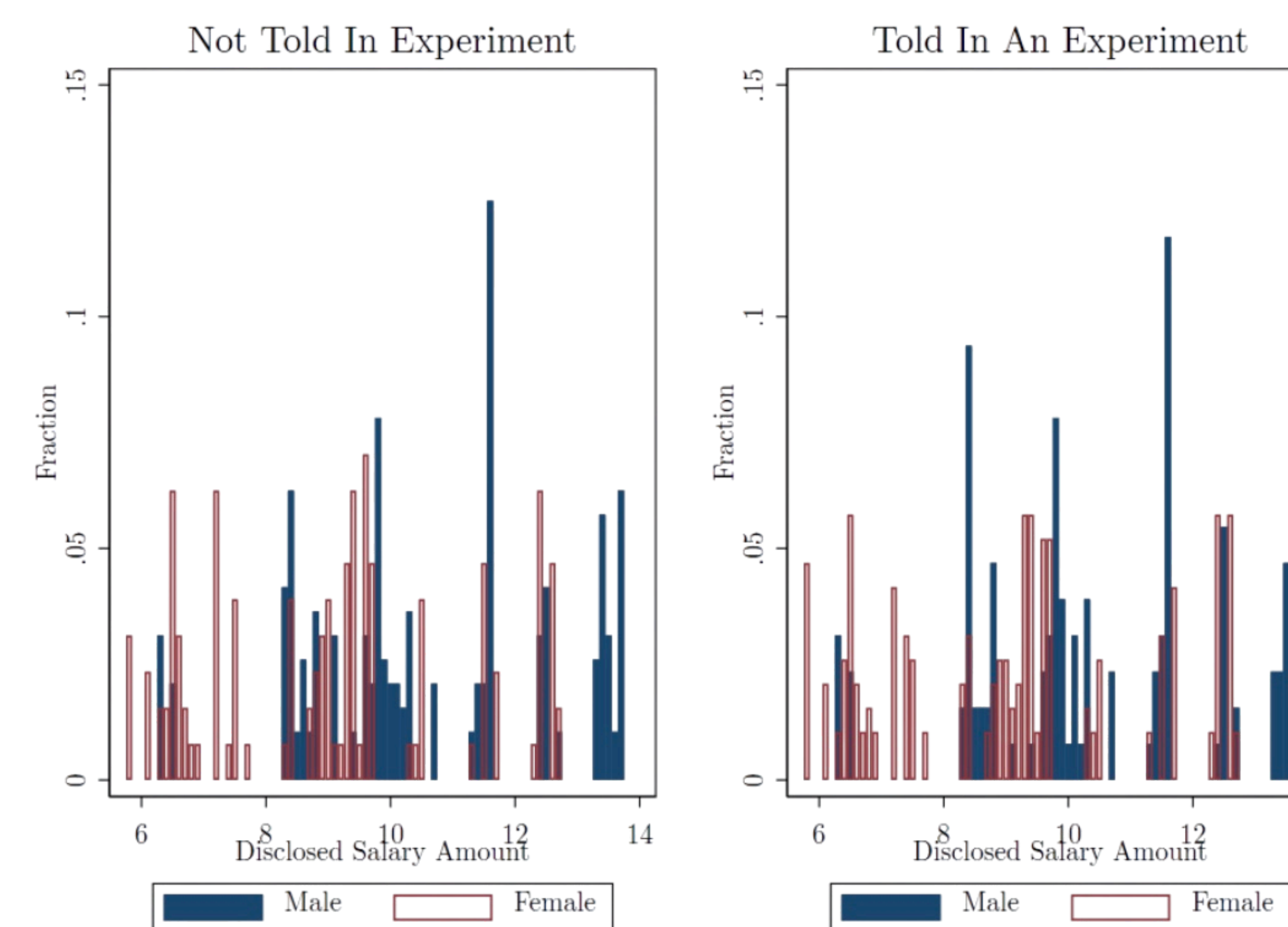


Figure 2: Distribution of Disclosed Salary Amounts by Told In An Experiment



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