Abstract

"When Do Amenity Preferences Generate a Gender Wage Gap? Evidence from Gig Labor Markets"

The gender wage gap remains one of the most studied and persistent features of labor markets. The rise of gig platforms, which use algorithms for both wage setting and matching workers to jobs, offers a new lens on this question, highlighting two distinct channels through which gender pay gaps can arise. First, a wage-setting channel: platforms may facilitate mechanisms that price job characteristics that men and women value differently, translating preference heterogeneity into wage differences. Second, a matching channel: the platform algorithm may steer men and women toward systematically different job offers, generating pay differences independently of how wages are set. We test both channels using data from a large gig platform in China for short-term jobs, combining a discrete choice experiment that elicits gender differences in willingness-to-pay for job amenities, administrative wage records, and job offers shown to each worker, allowing us to separately identify each channel. Our results speak to how technological change in labor markets may perpetuate or attenuate gender wage gaps and have implications for the design of platform wage-setting and matching algorithms more broadly.