

Gender Differences in Labor Supply: Experimental Evidence from the Gig Economy*

Sydnee Caldwell

UC Berkeley

Emily Oehlsen

University of Oxford

Open Philanthropy

July 2022

Abstract

We use field experiments to study market-level and firm-level labor supply. Market-level elasticities govern how labor supply responds to temporary productivity shocks. Firm substitution elasticities determine wage markdowns in frictional markets. We find that women are twice as elastic to the market as men. This is true even among high hours individuals. We find no evidence that women are less likely to switch between firms when relative wages change. Our results suggest that in environments without differences in firm location or amenities, firms with market power have little incentive to pay equally productive women less.

JEL: J22, J31, J42

Keywords: labor supply, monopsony, gig economy, gender wage gap

*Caldwell: scaldwell@berkeley.edu; Oehlsen: emily.oehlsen@economics.ox.ac.uk. Caldwell thanks Daron Acemoglu, Joshua Angrist, and Patrick Kline for guidance and support. Special thanks go to the staff of Uber's Houston city team for hosting and assisting with our study and to Christopher Ackerman, Phoebe Cai, Javier Feinmann, Anran Li, and Tadej Svetina for excellent research assistance. We thank David Autor, David Card, Arindrajit Dube, Jonathan Hall, Jonathan Kolstad, Dan Knoepfle, Alexandre Mas, Jonathan Meer, Elizabeth Mishkin, Suresh Naidu, Ricardo Perez-Truglia, Raffaele Saggio, Heather Sarsons, Todd Sorensen, and Steve Tadelis for helpful comments. We also thank seminar audiences at Arizona State University, Berkeley-Haas, the Bank of Italy, the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, MIT, Oxford, U Mass Amherst, the University of Melbourne, U Nevada-Reno, Toronto-Rotman, the SOLE annual meeting, the U Chicago Advances in Field Experiments conference, the CesIfro Gender in the Developed & Developing World conference, the National Tax Association Meeting, the AEA/ASSA annual meetings, the Columbia Junior Micro-Macro Labor Conference, and the EIEF Junior Applied Micro workshop. This study is registered in the AEA RCT Registry as trial no. AEARCTR-0001656. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship under Grant No. 1122374 (Caldwell) and by the National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant No. 1729822 (Caldwell). Some of the results in this paper were previously circulated as "Monopsony and the Gender Wage Gap: Experimental Evidence from the Gig Economy." The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Uber Technologies, Inc. Caldwell's work on this project was carried out under a data use agreement executed between MIT and Uber. Oehlsen is a former employee of Uber Technologies, Inc. This manuscript was not subject to prior review by any party, except to verify that it does not contain any confidential data or information. All mistakes are our own.