

Understanding Gender Differences in Applying for Jobs¹

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I. Introduction

There is evidence that there are gender differences in job applications (Abraham & Stein 2022). To better understand the reasons for this, a hypothetical job application situation is posed to respondents in the RAND American Life Panel (ALP): they are told that they see a job title they are interested in, they receive information about their qualification level relative to the listed skills in the job posting, and then they are asked about: (1) the likelihood that they will apply for the job; (2) how certain they are that they will obtain the offer; and (3) whether they have any concerns about taking the position given their qualifications.

II. Experimental Design

Respondents are randomized in two ways: (1) the number of qualified applications the company receives for similar positions (respondents see either “20 or more” or “100 or more”); and (2) the qualification level of the respondent relative to the listed skills in the job posting (respondents see that they either “have some of the required skills and some of the preferred skills” or that their “skills exceed all of the required skills”. (Note that these two randomizations are independent of each other.) The order of the answer choices for having any concerns about taking the position is also randomized.

The text of the experiment is below:

Imagine you are looking for a new job. You see a job title you like. The position is one of several openings at a company that typically receives [Version A: 20 OR Version B: 100] or more qualified applications for each opening.

You click on the job posting to see what skills are listed.

[Version C: You have some of the required skills and some of the preferred skills. (Preferred skills are helpful but not required). OR Version D: Your skills exceed all of the required skills.]

How likely are you to apply?

<i>Not Apply</i>	<i>Apply</i>
<i>[0%]</i>	<i>[100%]</i>

¹ This pre-analysis plan was posted to the AEA registry before any data from the experiment had been received by me.

Assuming you apply, what are the chances you think you'll get an offer?

No Chance *Certain*
[0%] ===== *[100%]*

[NEXT PAGE]

Considering that [Version C: you have some of the required skills and some of the preferred skills OR Version D: your skills exceed all of the required skills], would you have any concerns about taking the job? Choose the statement you agree with the most:

Choose one

- ☐ *I may not enjoy the work*
- ☐ *I may not have good pay and/or career opportunities*
- ☐ *I may not perform well*
- ☐ *I may not be treated well by my colleagues*
- ☐ *I don't have major concerns*

Because this experiment is being fielded as part of the RAND Omnibus survey, it is part of a larger set of questions shown to respondents. The questions listed above are listed fourth from the top, i.e., immediately after a set of four questions about military veterans. ALP respondents are very familiar with the Omnibus survey (i.e., the style of having multiple different sets of questions presented together in the same survey).

Note that gender, which identifies sex, is determined by prior demographic information collected by the ALP (i.e., respondents are not asked about gender in this Omnibus survey).

III. Empirical Strategy

The empirical strategy will examine whether there are differences in how men and women respond to each of the three questions: (1) likelihood of applying; (2) beliefs about receiving an offer; and (3) concerns about taking the job.

It will be important to examine whether there are gender differences for each condition of the two randomizations described above (i.e., whether there are differences between women and men randomized into seeing that their "skills exceed the required skills"). Examining these

differences will identify whether there are differences between the genders holding fixed perceived qualifications (or perceived competition).

It will also be important to examine whether the randomization produces differences within gender (i.e., whether there are differences in men who are randomized to see that their “skills exceed the required skills” versus men who are randomized to see that they have “some of the required skills and some of the preferred skills”). Examining these differences will identify whether there are differences between the perceived qualification levels (or perceived competition levels) holding gender fixed.

We will also explore how the above results differ in terms of other demographic characteristics (e.g., education, income, race/ethnicity, age, etc.).

IV. Variables of Interest

As discussed above, the answers in the survey will be correlated with standard demographic questions asked in the American Life Panel, such as education, income, race/ethnicity, and age (among others). The results will also be connected with other respondent-level information from prior RAND ALP surveys.

V. Sample Size

The survey will be fielded to ~1,500 ALP respondents, with 750 respondents (50%) in each arm of the two randomizations discussed above.

VI. Appendix

Screenshots of the survey instrument are presented below (see text above for alternative wordings in each randomization scheme).

Thank you for participating in the ALP Omnibus Survey Wave 12. This short survey will ask you questions about a variety of topics. You will be paid \$4.00 for completing this survey.

Please note: You can complete this survey on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. If you are using a device with a small screen, please use the horizontal view so you can see the entire question and all response options, as shown below. We recommend using a laptop or tablet if one is available to you.



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Imagine you are looking for a new job. You see a job title you like. The position is one of several openings at a company that typically receives 100 or more qualified applications for each opening.

You click on the job posting to see what skills are listed.

You have some of the required skills and some of the preferred skills. (Preferred skills are helpful but not required).

How likely are you to apply?



Assuming you apply, what are the chances you think you'll get an offer?



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Considering that you have some of the required skills and some of the preferred skills, would you have any concerns about taking the job? Choose the statement you agree with the most:

Choose one

- ☐ I may not be treated well by my colleagues
- ☐ I may not perform well
- ☐ I may not have good pay and/or career opportunities
- ☐ I don't have major concerns
- ☐ I may not enjoy the work

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