Do Politicians Discriminate Against Internal Migrants? Evidence from Nationwide Field Experiments in India*

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Abstract

In recent decades, the global south has witnessed an explosive increase in the number of people relocating from rural to urban areas. Yet many migrants struggle to integrate into destination cities, facing severe hurdles to accessing adequate housing, as well as essential public goods and services such as healthcare and education. We posit that a key explanation for these difficulties lies in unequal political representation. We conduct two audit experiments to test whether urban politicians discriminate against internal migrants vis-à-vis long-term residents ("natives") in providing essential constituency services. We find that fictitious migrants are 23% less likely to receive a callback from a councilor in response to a mailed letter request for assistance compared to an otherwise similar native. What mechanisms explain this effect? In a second experiment using SMS, we show that migrants signaling that they are registered to vote in municipal ward elections receive callbacks at much higher rates than migrants signaling they are unregistered. Even more strikingly, signaling that migrants are registered to vote closes the migrant-native callback gap documented in the first experiment. We take this to indicate that politicians' beliefs about migrants' generally low participation in city elections leads them to ignore requests by migrants for help, because they foresee no electoral returns to providing assistance. Overall, this paper informs policy debates about how to improve the welfare of internal migrants, who count among the world's most marginalized population groups.

The global south has witnessed an explosive increase in the number of people relocating from rural to urban areas in recent decades (Bell and Charles-Edwards, 2013). Internal migration is a major engine of economic growth, facilitating the efficient allocation of skills across the economy, shrinking wage differentials, and enhancing welfare. Apart from spurring urban prosperity, migration provides an important lifeline for rural households dependent on remittances (Castaldo, Deshingkar and McKay, 2012). By holding out the prospect of a better life, the ability to move freely in search of opportunity may lift individual aspirations and promote entrepreneurship. The leveling of the economic playing field brought about by migration aligns with democratic norms of equality.

At the same time, fast-paced urbanization caused by an influx of migrants is giving rise to a large, marginalized underclass in cities of the developing world (Davis, 2006). Informal settlements have expanded to vast proportions, and for the most part are populated by migrants unable to access adequate housing, healthcare, and education. In some settings, cities' long-term residents engage in violence against migrants, reflecting fears of heightened labor-market competition, strains on public goods and services, and a belief that migrants of disparate ethnic backgrounds threaten to upend the ethnic and cultural demography of the city. These adversities are worrisome in themselves; they may also act as a deterrent to future migration. Both are detrimental to growth and development.

In this paper, we address an important potential source of disadvantage faced by internal migrants—one that could help account for their subordinate social position. Recent research on developing democratic countries documents the importance of *street-level politicians* in mediating access to state goods and services, particularly in places where institutions are weak and bureaucracies do not live up to the Weberian ideal (Berenschot, 2010). In these environments, incumbent politicians selectively distribute assistance as well as material benefits to citizens in exchange for electoral support (Stokes et al., 2013). Chandra (2004) terms these systems "patronage democracies." We ask: Do urban politicians in a patronage democracy discriminate against migrants in providing

essential constituency services? If so, what explains this discrimination?

The theoretical literature points to a dilemma facing incumbent politicians on the issue of internal migration. One prominent view of democratic representation holds that the behavior of sitting officials hews to the preferences of the social coalitions that elected them. Since most urban politicians' constituents are natives, and natives tend to be antagonistic toward high-volume in-migration, it follows that politicians should display nativist proclivities and discriminate against migrants who ask for their help. Alternatively, however, internal migrants in most countries have the right to vote in their destination cities. This makes migrants a potential new source of votes for ambitious political candidates. If this electoral consideration predominates, native-migrant discrimination will fail to materialize.

Importantly, the electoral incentives model supposes that all citizens—natives and migrants alike—participate in elections at similar rates. Given limited time and resources, it makes sense for politicians to be responsive only to citizens who are likely voters. This assumption may be untenable, however. Re-registering to vote in destination areas is a complex and costly process for migrants. Consequently, politicians may perceive migrants (accurately or otherwise) as less likely to vote than comparable natives. This perception may impel politicians to underserve migrants as a matter of rational electoral strategy.

To study this issue empirically, we conducted two nationwide audit experiments in India. We compiled near-comprehensive lists—including names, mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and various background characteristics—of incumbent municipal councilors in 28 of the largest Indian cities. Municipal councilors are at the front line in granting access to a range of important individual and neighborhood services, from the provision of basic primary healthcare to helping constituents obtain income certificates, ration cards, and pension benefits. Therefore, evaluating and understanding their biases can guide policymakers seeking to equalize the distribution of these goods and services.

In the first experiment, we mailed a mix of short handwritten and printed letters

("chits") to 3,013 councilors for whom we had postal addresses. Our qualitative fieldwork indicated that all types of citizens—rich and poor—often communicate with councillors in this manner. Within the letters, we randomly varied both the identity of the petitioner, and the problem for which they were requesting help. The main manipulation involved petitioners signaling long-term residence in the city, versus recent migration to the city from a different Indian state. In addition, we orthogonally varied the gender, religion, and occupation of the requester. The letters concluded by asking the councilor to call back the fictitious citizen at a (real) mobile phone number. Since all attributes of the requesters were randomized, comparing average callback rates across these attribute conditions yields a consistent estimate of the marginal effect of switching requester identities. The experiment is thus highly informative about the dimensions along which politicians discriminate. The main result to emerge from the first experiment is that that fictitious "native" requesters in cities are 23.4% more likely than otherwise similar migrant requesters to receive a callback from their local councilor. However, it reveals little evidence that this discrimination varies according to migrants' economic or cultural profiles.

To further probe the mechanisms driving anti-migrant discrimination, we carried out a second experiment, conducted 4 months after the first one on 2,513 of our sample of urban politicians. We sent text messages (a.k.a. Short Message Service, or SMS) to councilors' mobile phones. Once again, each message contained a request for help, and the identity of the requester was signaled to be either native or migrant. On this occasion, however, we manipulated additional requester attributes pertaining to politics. Most significantly, the requester reported being either registered or unregistered to vote in the councilor's electoral ward. The results provide compelling evidence that politicians' perceptions about migrants' registration status underlie the observed discrimination. Migrants reporting that they are *not* registered to vote were 24% less likely than natives to receive a callback. But migrants reporting that they *are* registered to vote received

callbacks at a rate that is statistically indistinguishable from that seen for otherwise similar natives. Put differently, after clarifying migrants' voter registration status, the responsiveness gap closes and discrimination disappears. We take this as strong evidence for the claim that the representational shortfall migrants suffer at the hands of urban politicians is not due to animus; rather it is an outcome of a simple calculation made by politicians, based on their belief about the low likelihood of the average migrant being eligible to vote in forthcoming municipal elections.

While this paper tells a straightforward story, its implications are far-reaching. We identify a previously overlooked form of unequal political representation in the world's largest democracy and provide a mechanism that appears to largely explain its cause. We propose a low-cost policy intervention that could rectify the problem. Registering recent migrants to vote in the city and informing politicians that this registration process is underway can reliably be expected to increase politicians' responsiveness to these citizens' needs. The knock-on effects could include a substantial welfare gain for internal migrants.

The Politician's Dilemma: To Discriminate or Not?

Politicians' overarching goal, we presume, is to win elections. Internal migration is a special and thorny issue from the perspective of elected officials. In deciding whether or not to provide equal representation to migrants, politicians confront competing electoral pressures. On the one hand, they face incentives to articulate the underlying preferences of their constituents. Importantly, many (and perhaps most) of these constituents are likely to be long-term city residents who may fear the distributive and cultural consequences of high-volume in-migration to the city. To curry favor with these individuals, city politicians may propose and enact policies hostile to migrants. On the other hand, internal migrants hold out the prospect of new votes for ambitious office-seekers. Conceivably, therefore, politicians looking to expand their electoral base might reach out to

migrants, soliciting their support by supplying assistance and representation.

The competing electoral considerations just outlined could impact all sorts of politician behavior—including legislating, campaigning strategies, and recruitment of party workers. Our primary focus in this paper, however, is on the provision of constituency services. By helping constituents with basic tasks, incumbent politicians can build a "personal vote" (Fenno, 2002). For citizens, meanwhile, these services can provide a social safety net, and are often vital for obtaining state benefits. Normatively, under democratic institutions, politicians should be equally responsive to all constituents. However, as we now elaborate, electoral incentives may push politicians to selectively allocate their services between natives and migrants.

Courting Native Votes

Our starting point for investigating politicians' responses to migration is the notion that political actors aggregate and advance the interests of the societal coalitions they represent (Downs, 1957). This perspective implies that the behavior of politicians when in office should mirror the preferences of the groups who elected them. As Goldin (1994, 223) puts it in the immigration context, "behind the legislative tale are the shifting interests of various groups." Existing theory suggests that two major sets of determinants—cultural and economic—inform voter preferences over migration, and should thus find echo in politicians' position-taking and day-to-day activities (O'Rourke and Williamson, 1999, 186-206).

First, on the cultural identity side, ethnocentrism and cultural stereotypes have been shown to shape native sentiments about incoming (im)migrants (Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008; Hopkins, 2013). Indeed, Malhotra, Margalit and Mo (2013, 392) note that research has "without exception" identified "strong evidence of pervasive cultural concerns" undergirding popular hostility toward immigration. Using data on immigrant referenda in Switzerland, for example, Hainmueller and Hangartner (2013) show that

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antagonism toward immigrants is driven by country of origin—a result they attribute to xenophobia. Recent work expands the scope conditions of this literature, finding ethno-cultural distinctiveness to be a source of anti-migrant bias in the internal migration domain too, although only for minority groups (Gaikwad and Nellis, 2014). It follows from this literature that native citizens and their elected representatives should be averse to helping migrants belonging to ethnic or cultural "out groups."

Second, on the economic side, scholars posit that natives fear the employment and fiscal consequences of migration. Under the closed-economy factor proportions model, native workers experience a decline (or increase) in real wages as immigrants with similar (or different) skill competencies enter the labor market (Benhabib, 1996; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). This analysis suggests that natives should oppose influxes of workers with skill sets similar to their own. Migrant skill profiles are also central to fiscal burden theories. A number of studies posit that natives anticipate that a rise in low-skilled immigration will impose additional taxes on natives and/or lead to a decrease in per capita transfers (Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Hanson, Scheve and Slaughter, 2007). In an urban environment, these strains could be manifested in overcrowded infrastructure and public services, proliferation of informal housing settlements, or a rise in property taxes. These considerations should motivate opposition toward migrants in general, and especially toward low-skilled migrants who may be perceived as the biggest net receivers of government transfers.

It is worth stressing that in developing societies, where the majority of voters are poor and competition for public goods and services is intense, the predictions of labor market competition and fiscal burden models converge. Both forecast animosity toward low-skilled migrants on the part of cities' long-term city residents. If these economic accounts hold purchase, and politicians are primarily mouthpieces for their constituents' views, we should expect politicians to discriminate against migrants, and most especially against migrants with low skills.

There is ample evidence that politicians do indeed appeal to nativist preferences in many contexts. Political parties in western Europe have built popular support by opposing immigration (Howard, 2010; Pettigrew, 1998). "Sons of the soil" political parties are found in developing democracies too (see e.g. the Shiv Sena in India; Weiner 1978; Katzenstein 1979).[1] It is thus possible that politicians treat migrants unequally as one component of a broader strategy geared toward stirring up nativist fervor, which they anticipate will redound to their electoral benefit.

Courting Migrant Votes

A unique aspect of internal migration—and a feature separating it from international immigration—is that citizens who relocate from one region of their home country to another region almost always possess the formal (and constitutionally guaranteed) right to re-register to vote in their destination city. This fact is at the heart of the dilemma confronting urban politicians, for while they might face nativist pressures to oppose migrant inflows, they also have the option of tapping the fresh pool of migrant votes (cf. Dancygier and Saunders, 2006). This would imply that politicians should help migrants in the same way as they help natives, and discrimination will be minimal.

There are reasons to be skeptical that the strategy of pursuing migrant votes is the dominant one in practice, however. To begin, although internal migrants possess the constitutional right to register to vote in destination-city elections, their actual rates of registration may be much lower than those of their native counterparts. Voter registration is a costly and sometimes frustrating exercise, normally requiring proof of identity and residence (e.g., utility or phone bills), the completion of a local-language form, visits to government offices, dealing with prejudiced staff, and sometimes the payment of bribes

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[1]Importantly, the mere presence of anti-immigrant parties can have a "contagion" effect, shifting entire political systems to the right as even centrist politicians are forced to take a stance on (im)migration issue (van Spanje, 2010; Bale, 2008).

(White, Nathan and Faller, 2015; Nickerson, 2015; Gaikwad and Nellis, 2014). Migrants may find all of these steps to be especially challenging; they also face the added cost of having to de-register in their prior home constituencies. Compelling evidence of the special difficulties migrants face on this score comes from the United States. Gay (2011) analyzes the political effects of the *Moving to Opportunity* experiment. She finds that migrants ("movers") are 3 percentage points less likely to be registered to vote than a stationary control group ("stayers") and, among experimental compliers, 6.8 percentage points less likely to vote. A particularity of migrant voting behavior in some developing democracies is also pertinent in this connection. In countries including India, migrants return to their home villages to cast their vote at election time. In fact, rural politicians often encourage this by providing transport and clientelistic inducements. Taken in conjunction, these factors predict a disparity in native-migrant voter registration levels.

This may have a direct bearing on politicians' behavior when it comes to interacting with internal migrants. Politicians have scarce time and resources. Therefore, it is optimal for them to cater only to constituents who are likely to participate in forthcoming elections. If politicians are aware of the impediments that migrants face in registering to vote, they may (correctly or otherwise) come to believe that the average migrant is unregistered. Resultantly, they may come to be less responsive to migrants as a class. This would constitute an archetypical case of statistical discrimination: maltreatment of an individual based on the aggregate behavior of that individual's group.

Voter registration status is not the sole potential driver of discrimination. Politicians may have a rich understanding of the preferences of the local, native population—the milieu into which they were born and in which they cut their political teeth. Migrants, however, may be more inscrutable. Politicians therefore may view helping migrants as a riskier proposition, and likely to yield lower electoral returns in expectation. In sum, these real and perceived political characteristics of migrants might moderate politicians' inclination to view migrants as a source of votes—a proposition we carefully explore.

Context

Municipal Corporations in India

India operates two forms of local government. Rural areas are governed by elected panchayats, while urban areas are governed by municipal councils or corporations. The 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution grants municipal corporations (MCs) expansive formal powers and responsibilities. These include construction and maintenance of roads, water supply, drainage, fire brigades, public lighting, sewage systems, in addition to education and public health (Bhagat, 2005). MCs also perform crucial regulatory functions, such as the enforcement of building codes. City revenues are drawn from property taxes, entertainment and vehicular taxes, fees and fines, returns on municipal assets and investments, and grants-in-aid from state and central governments.

India's municipal corporations are representative bodies whose elected members are referred to as councilors or corporators. These are the officials whom we seek to audit. Councilors are elected to single-member districts ("wards") approximately once every 5 years under simple plurality rules. The total number of councilors, and the magnitudes of the wards they represent, vary widely across cities. Noteworthily, 33% of seats within the corporations are reserved for women on a strict rotating basis (Bhavnani, 2009). The qualitative literature, to which we now turn, attests to the importance of municipal councilors in the lives of India's city residents, and can also shed light on councilors' activities and incentives.

A councilor's main day-to-day function is to serve as a mediator between constituents and the state. Put differently, councilors facilitate access to the goods and services which the state provides. Because corruption and shirking is rampant in the Indian bureaucracy, directly interfacing with public officials is difficult for most citizens. In Ahmedabad, for example, "residents often used the expression *'dhakka khaavadave chhe'* ["getting pushed around"] to describe their experiences with the bureaucracy ... you have

to visit the relevant officials again and again without any result" (Berenschot, 2010, 889). Given this irksome conditions, municipal councilors act as fixers or middlemen (Manor, 2000). When an individual or neighborhood problem arises, citizens' first port of call is often to their local councilor. Councilors or their assistants then endeavor to solve the problem using a mix of formal and informal instruments: notarizing documents, making calls and formal requests to zonal and ward-level staff as well as the departments of the corporation, disbursing money from their discretionary funds,[2] and contacting higher-level politicians. One councilor claimed that he "does as much work as an MLA and an MP put together" (Oldenburg, 1976, 240).

What incentives do municipal councils have to carry out these multiplex and often-times laborious tasks? According to ethnographic research, electoral motivations hold the key. Councilors are not term-limited.[3] Therefore, the desire to win re-election—and/or the desire to build up local support so as to compete in elections for higher office—spurs many councilors to win favor with voters by diligently attending to the development and upkeep of the ward, and by doing case work on constituents' behalf. In Berenschot's analysis, "as citizens have come to rely on services that the state provides, politicians are judged on the basis of their capacity to provide access to these services" (Berenschot, 2010, 888). As one councilor put it, "I don't say, now the elections are over, I'll talk to you after five years. Every day, I fight like the election were tomorrow" (Oldenburg, 1976, 106).

To be sure, several studies cast doubt on the competence and commitment of many politicians within this tier of elected officials. Using survey data, de Wit (2009) reports extremely low levels of citizen satisfaction with the work done by the Municipal Corpo-

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[2]These include the Municipal Councillor Local Area Development Funds (MCLADS).

[3]Note that the rotation of reservations for women can impose de facto term limits. That said, there is widespread "capture"—many of female corporators are the wives of the former corporators, who are the de facto power holders.

ration of Delhi. Buttressing this countervailing view, (Swain, 2012) interviewed a large number of councilors and detected minimal knowledge about the MC procedures and budgetary processes. One possible reason for lax performance is that the position of councilor affords ample opportunities for rent seeking. de Wit (2009) transcribed the impressions of Delhi MLAs: "In MCD everyone from official to councillors is corrupt." "Councillor X [sic.] does not come to meet me. He does not work. He has got arrested once." A strikingly large portion of councilors are engaged in construction businesses—a highly lucrative sector given the large numbers of contracts awarded by MCs (de Wit, 2009, 11).

To date, no large-scale, systematic evaluation of urban politicians in India has been undertaken. Ethnographic evidence strongly suggests that discrimination is rampant. Consider the following quotations from Berenschot (2010):

> These party workers [who work for the municipal councilor] ... do not help everybody. Their work seems to be geared towards those groups who will be helpful during elections. Since control over the resources of the hospital is an important instrument to gain electoral support, the political competition outside the hospital shapes the daily struggle for hospital beds and cheap treatment within the hospital (895).
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> Pravin Dalal [a municipal councilor] targets the coalition of upper castes and upwardly mobile castes that the BJP relies on in Gujarat and barely entertains requests from the small section of Muslims in his electoral ward. The latter take their requests to a Congress politician from another area (896).

Inferring responsiveness—let alone discrimination—from observational data is challenging. Fieldwork suggests that few, if any, councilors keep systematic records of their case loads, and Oldenburg (1976, 238) found that councilors were prone to exaggerating the extent of their contact with citizens. We ourselves interviewed a number of councilors in-depth, and in no case did a councilor admit to discriminating against *any* classes of individuals. Citizen reports or surveys, too, may be unreliable. For example, they would be uninformative if citizens expect low responsiveness from politicians, and thus do not go to them for help. The need for a systematic evaluation helps motivate this study.

India's Rural-Urban Migrants

The Indian constitution states that "All citizens shall have the right ... to move freely throughout the territory of India [and] to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India." According to the 46th Round of the National Sample Survey, there were 326 million internal migrants in India as of 2007–9, comprising 29% of the country's population. 35% of India's urban population were recorded as being migrants. Inter-state migration has been a major area of migrant growth in the past two decades, with the biggest sending regions being the two northern states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, while the largest receivers are the fast-growing states of Delhi NCT, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. Impressive as these figures appear, official statistics dramatically underestimate the true extent of internal migration, and particularly labor mobility. This is because government operational definitions exclude seasonal migrants—i.e. those who relocate to cities in search of non-farm work during periods of low demand for agricultural labor. This group is purported to number 100 million individuals, most of whom, it is believed, now spend the majority of the year in their destinations cities (Deshingkar and Akter, 2009)

The social profile of the migrant population is variegated (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). On one tail of the distribution, historically marginalized communities such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward castes, are overrepresented. At the other tail, NSS data reveal a greater incidence of long-term migration among households in higher income deciles compared to lower ones (but the reverse for seasonal migrants) (Rajan, 2014, 232). Reflecting this disparity, the Gini coefficient for migrants is higher than that for non-migrants (de Haan, 2011, 11).

With respect to migrant welfare, the general picture is one of deprivation. On Deshingkar and Akter (2009)'s assessment, "migrants remain on the periphery of society, with few citizen rights and no political voice in shaping the decisions that impact their lives." A United Nations report concurs, emphasizing that "internal migration has been accorded very low priority by the government, and existing policies of the Indian state

have failed in providing legal or social protection to this vulnerable group" (UNICEF et al., 2013). Statistics corroborate this claim. Public health research documents an adverse association between migrant status and health outcomes in India (for a summary, see Nitika, Nongkynrih and Gupta 2014). Compared to natives, migrants display much lower vaccination rates, higher child mortality, worse malnutrition, higher alcohol consumption, greater prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, as well as cardiovascular diseases. Other forms of exclusion also obtain. Thachil (2014) finds in a sample of Delhi construction workers that only one in five migrants had voted in city elections, and 80% had only village voter ID cards. Migrant slums are characterized by government neglect (Auerbach, 2014). Of course, many migrants prosper in cities, particularly those with high skills. But for many poor Indian migrants, life is permeated with hardship.

Research Design

Audit experiments have emerged as a valuable tool for detecting systematic biases among employers, bureaucrats, and politicians (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1994). In the standard set-up, researchers generate a set of communication documents—for example, resumes or petitions for assistance—and, within those documents, randomly manipulate relevant characteristics of the document's fictitious author (the "requester"). These documents ask the subjects of the experiment to respond to the request, and provide the necessary contact information. After the documents are prepared, they are mailed to the subject pool. Because requester identities are randomly assigned to subjects, a simple comparison of average response rates between these requester-identity groups yields a consistent estimate of the effect of requester identity on the likelihood of response, with differential rates suggesting discrimination.

We implemented two audit experiments to test for discrimination against internal migrants. The research design proceeded in several steps. To start, we compiled lists and

accompanying information for all municipal councilors in 28 of the largest Indian cities.[4] We sought to include all state capitals in the sample, as well as the ten most populous cities in the country. Together, our cities represented migrant-receiving destinations in states with a combined population of over one billion people; the municipal councilors in our sample were directly accountable to an urban population totaling over 113 million citizens. Our lists contained information on the councilor's name, mailing address, and mobile telephone number. In the vast majority of cases, these lists were available on the websites of the municipal corporation, or in publicly available affidavits filed with the state election commissions. For two cities where this information was not readily available, we obtained contact details directly from the municipal corporations.

The second step was to produce a bank of letters to mail to councilors. These letters were written by fictitious citizens and asked for help with various problem that they were facing. The challenge was to generate realistic letters that would effectively signal the migrant/native status of the citizen-requester, plus a number of additional attributes. To achieve this realism, we asked several former councilors from one large corporation to provide us with examples of real letters that they had received while in office. The letters they gave us turned out to be highly varied in content and style—they were handwritten and typed, long and short, and asked for help with a wide range of issues. We used these to make a letter template for our experiment. Our letters were written in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, and Telugu,

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[4]These cities were: Agra, Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwara, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dehradun, Delhi (East, North, and South Delhi corporations), Gulbarga, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jalandhar, Kolkata, Lucknow, Ludhiana, Madurai, Mumbai, Panaji, Pune, Raipur, Ranchi, Shimla, Surat, Thane, Thiruvananthapuram, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata. We excluded cities in the contested North-Eastern states and in Jammu and Kashmir in order to guarantee the safety of our research team.

depending on the lingua franca of each urban region.[5] A randomly chosen 1,000 letters were handwritten; the remainder were typed.[6] The physical appearance of the letter—a small, simple chit in a plain envelope—was intended to look home-made. Each envelope was inscribed with handwritten names and addresses. They were then stamped and postmarked from a local post office in each respective city.

Independent Variables

We vary a battery of other letter attributes besides the migrant/native characteristic. We relate these additional variations to the theoretical discussion, and draw on them to illuminate the mechanisms behind anti-migrant bias (should it exist). They also help to overcome inferential challenges stemming from correlated threats. In simple terms, if councilors without additional information tend to associate migrants with some other class of citizens (perhaps low-skilled), then attributing differential callback rates between migrants and natives to migrant status per se would be problematic. Including additional clarifying information about the requester counteracts this danger. Last, because these auxiliary attributes are assigned independently of one another, they are amenable to separate analysis and thus provide insight into other sources of unequal representation in India's democracy. It is important to emphasize that the inclusion of further manipulations does not compromise the interpretation of our primary outcome of interest: native/migrant status.

The varied attributes were assigned with equal probability as follows:

- **Migrant/Native.** To convey *native* status, we specified that the citizen and

[5]We carefully translated and reverse-translated our letters in each of these languages.

[6]Due to budget and logistical constraints, we could not write out by hand all of our letters. Based on our discussions with councilors, however, both types of letter presentations were plausible and commonly encountered.

his/her family were "native to this city" and had "lived here all our lives." By contrast, to convey *migrant* status, we mentioned that the citizen and his/her family were native to another state and had "recently moved to this city." We selected four migrant states of origin, which are representative of the major regions of India: Bihar (north), Andhra Pradesh (south), Assam (north east), and Maharashtra (north west). Naming specific states was important for adding concreteness to the request. It also allows for tests of regional discrimination.

- **Religion and Gender.** The names selected are distinctively Hindu or Muslim, and either male or female.

- **Occupation.** In selecting occupations—which we bundle into two skill levels, high and low—it was necessary to select jobs that might plausibly be carried out by both men and women, since gender was an attribute we wished to manipulate.

- **Problem Type.** We selected a number of "problems" for which the fictitious citizen petitioned for help. An implication of the electoral incentives argument is that politicians should be more eager to assist in providing a neighborhood good as against an individual good. Based on interviews, we made a list of issues and classified them as problems afflicting individuals or communities. From these, we selected six.

The full list of attributes is given in Table 1. Randomization was performed by a random-number generator integrated within a computer platform.

Dependent Variable

At the end of the letter, the fictitious citizen provided a phone number and asked for a callback. The telephone number was attached to a real SIM card that had a local area code. This was important to signal local residence, and to keep the monetary costs of

replying as low as possible for councilors. Local calls are very cheap in India—a one minute call or one text message costs approximately Rs.1—or \$0.015—but inter-state calls can be expensive. Enumerators at a central call center fielded the calls. They recorded the date and time of the call, and the councilor's (or his/her assistant's) name. Enumerators informed the councilor that the letter was fictitious and was part of an academic research study, and thanked them for their time. In a few instances of missed calls, enumerators phoned back and elicited the key information.

Our main dependent variable, therefore, is an indicator variable for whether or not a callback was received.[7] We are the first to admit that this outcome measure is coarse, although taking the trouble to make contact with citizens shows that the councilor is motivated to help. This does not capture the quality or depth of assistance that the politician would be willing to provide a citizen, but obtaining these richer measures of responsiveness would have involved engaging in undue levels of deception and wasting a great deal of councilors' time.

Example Letters

> *Example of letter from migrant:* Hello, My name is Arjun and I live in your ward. My family and I are native to Maharashtra and we recently moved to this city. I work as a doctor. I am writing because I would like help getting an income certificate for myself. I have tried contacting many different people about this and also tried coming to see you, but you weren't available. Please could you or one of your assistants call me (971729XXXX) and let me what know I should do next? Thank you."

> *Example of letter from native:* Hello, My name is Zafar and I live in your ward. My family and I are native to this city and we have lived here all our lives. I work as a vegetable seller. I am writing because I would like help getting a government dispensary set up in our neighborhood. I have tried contacting many different people about this and also tried coming to see you, but you weren't available. Please could you or one of your assistants call me (981043XXXX) and let me what know I should do next? Thank you.

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[7]We also employ the number of days elapsed between the sending of the letter and the receipt of a reply as an outcome variable.

Additional Data

We collected additional data at the councilor and city level. We used councilors' names to classify them according to gender, and whether or not they had a Muslim-sounding name.

Plausibility and Additional Methodological Features

Several additional features of the letters and experimental design warrant clarification.

Language   India is a multi-lingual country in which 30 languages are spoken by at least 5 million people each. Migrants' native language, therefore, might differ from the dominant language spoken in their destination cities, and, by extension, from the language spoken by the elected officials whom we were auditing. Evidently, letters addressed to politicians must employ the politician's language, otherwise there would be little chance of obtaining a reply.

One might worry that letters written by migrants in the councilors' local language (i.e. not the migrants' primary language) might be seen as less plausible than letters from natives. Similarly, one might question whether migrants would attempt to communicate with councilors in this way. However, several features of our local context make this highly unlikely to be the case. First, in India, it is common practice for illiterates, non-native speakers, and those who are unfamiliar in formal written language to ask scribes, friends, notaries, or local computer shop owners to pen petitions on their behalf.[8] Therefore, migrants can easily procure letters in the local language of their destination cities. Second, migrants tend not to move to arbitrarily selected cities; rather, they migrate to places where they have linguistic abilities, and/or places where they have

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[8]Scribes—or professional letter writers—are a common feature of urban life in Indian cities. They are found easily, from market to mosque, and charge reasonable fees for their services. See, for example, *The British Broadcasting Corporation*, March 20, 2014.

established social networks containing people who can assist in communicating with officials. Thus, we view letters from migrants and natives letters as equally plausible.

We note, additionally, that letters written by migrants in their primary language (i.e., languages foreign to councilors) would likely be subject to additional discrimination by councilors. By signaling a willingness to engage with the councilor in his/her own language, we likely bias downward estimates of potential discrimination.

Mode of Contact To enhance realism, we employed simple wording and sentence structures, avoiding complicated (and, in particular, heavily Sanskritized) language. In reality, citizens can interact with politicians using several channels, including in-person meetings. The content of our letter acknowledges this fact by explicitly presenting the choice to write a letter as a last resort. It is made to seem as if the requester has attempted a number of different avenues for getting in touch with the councilor and has finally opted to write and mail a letter. A limitation of our study is that is not informative about the discrimination citizen-requesters encounter in face-to-face interactions with politicians.

Still, we see our choice of letters—and later on text messages—as an advantage of our study. Visiting political offices is usually a protracted and frustrating experience. From a citizen's perspective, having information about the efficacy of more impersonal and "modern" contacting technologies is valuable. It is also instructive about the potential for the emergence of more routinized citizen-politician interactions in poorer countries—a topic of hot debate (e.g. Grossman, Humphreys and Sacramone-Lutz, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Careful thought was given to the ethics of the experiment (Teele, 2014). As with all audit experiments, deception was unavoidable. However, we judged that the very small costs to public officials in terms of time and effort—at the most, reading a 5-line letter, and making a ca. 20-second phone call—would be far outweighed by the insights to be

gleaned about this little-understood but vital tier of the Indian democratic system. The topic is one of considerable public interest, and the lessons learned could conceivably help ameliorate the and wellbeing of migrants in India and elsewhere. The protocol was approved by our institution's IRB (reference number 1403013586).

Experiment 1: Results

The statistical results are based on simple differences-in-means tests. Note that point estimates reflect intent-to-treat (ITT) rather than treatment-on-the-treated (TOT) effects. This is because some proportion of the letters may not have been delivered to the intended councilors due to factors outside our reach, such as postal-service errors, or misplacement (after delivery) by councilors themselves.[9] More subtly, it is also plausible that some councilors did not associate our experimental manipulations with the underlying characteristics these manipulations were intended to conjure. For instance, a councilor reading her correspondence in a hurry may have failed to properly notice the alias of the sender. In so doing, she would have failed to recognize the requester's gender and religion. Both considerations imply that the results place a lower bound on the true parameters of interest.

Of the 3,013 letters mailed to councilors, 418 (14%) received a callback, and these 418 responses took an average of 7.3 days to arrive after mailing. The low responsiveness we observe resonates with other scholarly work that points to the generally low capacity of India's political system. It also suggests the difficulty of establishing routinized communications between citizens and elected officials in developing-country settings.[10]

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[9]We sent letters by regular mail, judging that registered mail would not have been realistic for several of the categories of fictitious constituents in our experimental design.

[10]Our response are below the average response rates obtained for parallel audit studies conducted in the United States and Europe (e.g. Butler and Broockman, 2011; White,

We shall see later that this response rate remains stable when we use an alternate contacting method. It is also important to emphasize that the average response rate masks significant heterogeneity by treatment conditions—the matter to which we will now turn.

We are primarily interested in differences in average response rates for migrant-versus-native citizens. The main results are graphed in Figure 1. Recall that if discrimination were absent, there would be no tangible differences in average response rates across treatment conditions. We reject the null hypothesis of no significant effect. Letters from purported migrants were 23% (3.0 percentage points) less likely to receive a callback than letters from purported migrants ($p < 0.01$), yielding evidence of substantial anti-migrant discrimination.

Figure 2 graphs the Kaplan-Meier hazard function by native/migrant treatment condition for the time elapsed between the mailing of the letters and the receipt of callbacks. The chart may be interpreted as the proportion of letters going unanswered ("surviving") by treatment group, for each day following the mailing of the letters. It provides additional confirmation of the unequal handling of requests.[11]

In Figure 3, we report the main effects of additional requester characteristics on callback rates. Gauging these overall impacts is important in its own right; it also provides a useful benchmark for assessing the magnitude of the anti-migrant bias revealed in Figure 1. Citizens declaring a high-skilled occupation are 22.4% (2.8pp) more likely than those declaring low-skilled occupations to receive callbacks ($p = 0.013$). Meanwhile, citizens bearing Hindu aliases are 20.1% (2.8pp) more likely to receive a callback than Muslim-named citizens ($p = 0.014$). But the data suggest that the requester's gender is

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Nathan and Faller, 2015). It is worth stressing, however, that our mode of communication was posted letters, rather than emails (which have always been employed in prior studies). Also, the resources available to politicians to help citizens varies considerably between the Indian context and western contexts.

[11]The study ends at day 33, when the phone lines were closed.

inconsequential for responsiveness: councilors were equally likely to reply to requesters with female versus male names. We find evidence that politicians are more reactive to problems that affect neighborhoods rather than individuals: neighborhood problems were 16% more likely to elicit a response than individual problems. Professed support for the councilor's political party had no net measurable effect on callbacks. The key takeaway from this inventory of results is that the migrant "penalty" exceeds in magnitude the effects on skill, religion, and problem-type, making this an important new addition to our understanding of political discrimination in India.

How does migrant status itself affect returns to these other attributes—that is, how does it condition their effects? Figure 4 sheds light on this issue by plotting the treatment effects of the auxiliary characteristics for migrants and natives separately. Broadly speaking, an asymmetric pattern emerges. Discrimination by skill level and religious background is targeted wholly toward *native* requesters: high-skilled natives are 5.5pp more likely to get a callback than low-skilled natives ($p < 0.01$), and Hindu natives are 4.3pp more likely to get a callback than Muslim natives ($p = 0.010$). Strikingly, politicians overlook these characteristics in determining whether or not to follow up on migrants' requests. They tend to treat migrants as an undifferentiated mass, belying the prediction that incumbent politicians emulate the nativist sentiments of locals when deciding who should receive assistance. The same is not true for the effects of the two remaining treatments: party membership, and type of problem. Migrants gain from requesting assistance with a neighborhood (as opposed to a group) problem (3.4pp, $p = 0.025$). There is ambiguous evidence that migrants benefit from mentioning that they belong to the councilor's political party (2.3pp, $p = 0.094$); we discuss the interpretation of this result below, and we design a second experiment to explore in greater detail potential electoral factors that might be play.[12]

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[12]Additionally, we look for the presence of differential callback rates by region of migrant origin. In Figure 5 we plot average callbacks for natives and migrants from each

One illustrative exercise to help gauge the magnitude of the discrimination we measure is to compare callback rates for the "best" migrants with those of the "best" native. For example, a Hindu native who is high-skilled, a party supporter, and who asks for help with a neighborhood problem is called back 25% of the time. An otherwise identical migrant is called back just 13% of the time. This is a striking difference.

Our results from the first experiment indicate that politicians abide by expectations insofar as they discriminate strongly against migrants. Migrants' cultural and economic attributes fail to offset this discrimination. In particular, politicians do not show special patronage toward co-ethnics, as theories of ethnic voting would suggest, nor do they discriminate against migrants based on skills levels, as economic theories predict. We noted earlier that politicians' relative uncertainty about migrant participation in municipal elections, as well as uncertainty about migrants' underlying political preferences, could induce non-responsiveness by undercutting political incentives to court migrant votes. Mitigating uncertainty about political preference, therefore, should be expected to benefit migrants more than it does natives. In the following section, we take up this issue in much greater detail.[13]

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of the four chosen states of origin. While all four migrant groups fall short of the callbacks received by natives, it is purported migrants from Bihar and Assam who arouse the greatest animosity. We view this as an informal validation check, since, anecdotally, migrants from Bihar and north-east India have tended to trigger the strongest antipathy.

[13]The null effect on gender persists for both groups. The premium attached to requesting help with a neighborhood (as opposed to individual) problem is positive and significant for migrant requesters, but non-existent for native requesters.

Experiment 2: Text Messages

The mailing experiment generated evidence of extensive discrimination against internal migrants. But the mechanisms driving this effect remain ambiguous. The experiment embedded one manipulation that directly addressed political mechanisms—namely, support for the councilor's party. However, if politicians believe that migrants are unlikely to be registered to vote in municipal elections—whether due to migrants' relatively higher cost of voter re-registration or migrants' perceived preference for voting in their home villages—then having migrants profess support for the councilor's party might not be enough to convince a politician that helping migrants will be electorally remunerative.

We designed a second experiment to evaluate the hypothesis that councilors' antecedent expectations about voter registration status underlie anti-migrant discrimination. Our second approach parallels that of the letters experiment in its basic aspects, but now involves sending short text messages to councilors' mobile phones. Sending SMSes instead of letters for the second experiment had several advantages from an implementation standpoint. Because we were relying on the same set of councilors, sending additional letters may have provoked suspicion. (It is important to stress that the SMSes were sent at least 4 months after the letters and included very different wording. The chances of detection were minimal, therefore, and we received no complaints.) Substantively, SMSes also enable us to get a sense of the relative efficacy of different modes of contacting politicians, thereby giving a point of comparison for the callback rates observed in the letters experiment, and enhancing the generalizability of the research.

In this round, our aim was to generate a set of SMSes from fictitious citizens who share similar traits to the requesters depicted in the letters. But this time citizens also had differing political attributes. Specifically, they varied along the dimensions of self-declared registration status (yes/no) and an expression of past political support for the individual councilor.

For logistical reasons, we were forced to limit the number of attributes randomized

in the SMS phrase of the project. We employ two male names (Hindu/Muslim), two largely male occupations (construction worker/engineer), two states of migrant origin (Bihar/Assam) and two problems (aadhaar card/street lamp fixed). The shift toward looking at only male citizen requests was based on the null effects of gender in the letters experiment.

The 5 main treatment groups are as follows:

1. *Native registered to vote [Pr(Assignment) = 1/8]:* i'm [Arjun / Salman]-[construction worker / engineer] in ur ward. me & my family r originally from this city. we are/aren't registered 2 vote here. could u help me get [aadhaar card / street lamp fixed]?

2. *Native not registered to vote [Pr(Assignment) = 1/8]:* i'm [Arjun / Salman]-[construction worker / engineer] in ur ward. me & my family r originally from this city. we are/aren't registered 2 vote here. could u help me get [aadhaar card / street lamp fixed]?

3. *Migrant not registered to vote [Pr(Assignment) = 1/4]:* i'm [Arjun / Salman]-[construction worker / engineer] in ur ward. me & my family r originally from [bihar / assam]. we aren't registered 2 vote here. could u help me get [aadhaar card / street lamp fixed]?

4. *Migrant registered to vote [Pr(Assignment) = 1/4]:* i'm [Arjun / Salman]-[construction worker / engineer] in ur ward. me & my family r originally from [bihar / assam]. we're registered 2 vote here. could u help me get [aadhaar card / street lamp fixed]?

5. *Migrant registered to vote & supports party [Pr(Assignment) = 1/4]:* i'm [Arjun / Salman]-[construction worker / engineer] in ur ward. me & my family r originally from [bihar / assam]. we're registered 2 vote here we've voted 4 u before. could u help me get [aadhaar card / street lamp fixed]?

The analytic strategy is to compare average callbacks between natives and migrants, as well as between different types of migrants. The results of the second experiment are presented in Figures 6 and 7. The larger white boxes present mean response rates, with italicized numbers corresponding to the treatment conditions just enumerated. The shaded boxes present formal pairwise comparisons of these averages using one-sided t-tests. The average callback rate for natives was 13.5%. Reassuringly, this is almost

identical to the average callback rates obtained in the letters experiment, suggesting that low responsiveness is not confined to a single contacting method.

The data displayed in Figures 6 and 7 tell a straightforward story—one that meshes with the voter registration hypothesis. Whether using both unregistered *and* registered natives as the comparison group (Figure 6) or only registered natives (Figure 7), unregistered migrants suffer discrimination. Indeed, a request from a registered native is 4.2 percentage points—proportionally, 42%—more likely to evoke a callback than a request coming from a homologous unregistered migrant. This effect is sizable and exceeds in magnitude even the anti-migrant discrimination observed in the letters experiment. Crucially, however, after introducing a minor manipulation change for the hypothetical migrant—from "we aren't" to "we are registered 2 vote here"—the apparent migrant penalty disappears. The likelihood of callback is 27.5% (2.8pp, $p = 0.057$) greater for registered migrants versus unregistered ones. More notably still, the native-migrant difference is attenuated and is no longer statistically significant (in either Figures 6 or 7). In Figure 7, we observe that 66% (2.8/4.2) of the difference between registered natives and unregistered migrants goes away after signaling that migrants are registered; the equivalent number for Figure 6 (using *all* natives as the base group) is 85% (2.8/3.3). In short, there is strong evidence that migrants' registration status constitutes a potent explanation for the unequal treatment meted out to these citizens by municipal councilors.

The theory section posited an additional electoral-incentives based explanation for why politicians might be less responsive to migrant requests. Plausibly, migrants' political preferences are more obscure to politicians, owing to the fact that politicians are less acquainted with this diverse and unfamiliar group. As a corollary, and conditional on migrants being registered to vote, politicians may be less certain that providing constituency service to migrants will translate into electoral support. One way to evaluate the veracity of this conjecture is to provide a signal of migrants' political preferences and test for a potential boost in callbacks. This we do in treatment group 5, which depicts

an registered migrant, yet one who also claims to have voted for the councilor in the prior election. As it turns out, the addition of a clarifying statement about the migrant's political preferences confers only a small extra callback advantage to registered migrants (1.9pp), and one that is not statistically significant.

As in the letters experiment, we exogenously varied three other attributes in the SMS: the requester's religion, his occupation, and the type of problem. The overall impacts of these treatments are large and significant in the expected direction. A Hindu-named requester is 23% (2.7pp) more likely to get a callback than a Muslim-named one; the neighborhood problem was 21% (2.4pp) more likely to get a callback than the individual problem; and high-skilled requesters were 48% (5.0pp) more likely to receive callbacks than low-skilled requesters.

Does migrant status affect the returns to these additional attributes? Recall that the letters experiment revealed that signaling "positive" individual characteristics does not offset the disadvantages associated with being a migrant. A crucial difference in the SMS experiment, however, is that migrants come in two definite varieties, registered and unregistered voters. We find that migrants' registration status does affect returns to individual attributes (results not shown). Having a Hindu as opposed to a Muslim name is beneficial for *registered* migrants but inconsequential—just like in our letters experiment—for *unregistered* migrants. Being such, the treatment accorded to registered migrants is now equivalent to that accorded to natives.

The phenomenon of co-ethnic voting provides a potential explanation for this pattern of results. If voters typically prefer to cast their vote for "in-group" candidates, then politicians might preferentially help co-ethnics, since they are the group(s) most easily mobilized to the politician's side (Dunning and Harrison, 2010). Yet once again, in order for this logic to operate, politicians must believe that the citizen-requester is registered to vote. What the results suggest, therefore, is that co-ethnic discrimination by politicians is highly strategic: they assist co-ethnics whom they believe to be registered (which

includes all natives, as well as registered migrants), but see little reason to discriminate on the basis of ethnicity when citizens are perceived to be unregistered.

We note next that migrants' skill levels in the SMS experiment play an important role in determining who does and does not get a callback, with high-skilled, high-income migrants receiving a pronounced bounce in support from politicians in our sample. Theories of fiscal burden discussed earlier indicate that migrants who are net contributors to the welfare state are preferred by citizens to migrants who are net beneficiaries of the state. Elected representatives might be especially attuned to these considerations, given that their budgets and spheres of influence directly depend on the amount of resources that they are able to collect from local tax-paying citizens. The size of these budgets can be large; for example, the Mumbai Municipal Corporation by itself has an annual budget of Rs.310 billion and employs 108,000 citizens. Because these budgets are financed by local property and sales taxes, politicians might expect that migrants who relocate to cities on a more permanent basis will contribute such taxes. Meanwhile, politicians might view poor migrants as net drains on the welfare state, since in India, permanent migrants are accorded access to social protection in the form of food and other benefits via the Public Distribution System (Bhatia and Chatterjee, 2010). Together, these considerations might reasonably help explain why politicians are particularly responsive to the skill level, and thus income status, of respondents.

Survey Experiment

Evidence from the SMS experiment strongly suggests that corporators are less responsive to migrant requesters owing to prior beliefs about registration status: corporators generally think migrants unregistered to vote in city-wide elections, hence the expected electoral returns to assisting this class of citizens are minimal. While this is a reasonable inference to draw from the forgoing results, however, we have not yet supplied a direct

test of this mechanism.

To provide such a test, we conducted a telephone-based survey experiment on a subsample of corporators. We attempted to interview 1,500 corporators by telephone. In total, 412 corporators answered our calls and completed the brief survey, making for a response rate of 27 percent. Each corporator was read the following vignette in their native language by an enumerator:

> Suppose a citizen living in your ward comes to you asking for help with some matter. [**The citizen is originally from your city and has lived and worked in the city all his life / the citizen is originally from a different state and he has recently come to your city to live and work.**]
>
> If you had to guess, and based on your experience, do you think that this [**long-term resident / migrant**] would have a local voter ID card allowing him to vote in Municipal elections in this city? *[Choose from: Yes, No, Don't know.]*
>
> How LIKELY do you think it is that this [**long-term resident / migrant**] would have a local voter ID card allowing him to vote in Municipal elections in this city? *[Choose from: Very likely, Somewhat likely, Somewhat unlikely, Very unlikely.]*

Within the vignette, respondents were randomly assigned to one of the two treatments (native/migrant), indicated in bold.

The frequency distributions of responses to both questions, broken down by treatment condition, are shown in Figures 8 and 9. The results are clear. 96 percent of corporators presented with a native citizen believe the citizen to be registered; the equivalent figure for corporators presented with a migrant citizen is 50 percent—a difference of 46 percentage points ($p < .000$). The same finding emerges from an analysis of answers to the second question ("How LIKELY do you think it is..."). We regress the four-category outcome on the dichotomous treatment variable. The ordered log-odds regression coefficient is 2.674 ($p < .000$), firmly suggesting that corporators believe migrants to be less likely to be registered to vote than natives.

Conclusion

We offer the first large-scale audit experiment of anti-migrant discrimination by politicians in a major developing country. There is a near consensus about the importance of rural-to-urban migration for economic growth and development. Yet in most settings, internal migrants remain a marginalized class of citizens who lag on key indicators of human development, and who face an uphill battle as they seek to integrate into destination cities. This paper suggests that one source of these hindrances lies in unequal political representation. Using two experiments, we show that migrants are 23.4% less likely to receive callbacks to requests for help compared to otherwise similar long-term city residents. Moreover, migrant status undercuts the returns to other positive attributes, such as ethnic-group identity and higher skill type. However, our second key finding is that if migrants can effectively convey that they are registered to vote in politicians' constituencies, anti-migrant discrimination vanishes. Thus, it appears that the native-migrant responsiveness gap is largely caused by statistical discrimination. That is, urban politicians appear to operate under the (quite plausible) working assumption that migrants are unlikely to be registered to vote in destination cities. Because politicians expect that providing constituency service to unregistered citizens will not translate into future electoral support—politicians' primary motivation—they are less inclined to help this class of citizens.

Overall, our findings illuminate a major source of inequality in accessing constituency services provided by street-level politicians in India. The importance of these services to lives of the urban poor—many of whom are migrants—is difficult to overstate. The municipal councilors we audit shoulder responsibility for local public health, sanitation, clean water supply, education, roads, lighting and a vast menu of related government services. Although internal migrants are guaranteed equal representation by almost all constitutions of the world, our experiment reveals that they might face de facto disenfranchisement in the political arena.

Yet, against this pessimistic picture, the paper's results are salutary and unusual insofar as they point toward a clear, relatively low-cost remedy for the unequal treatment that we document. In simple terms, governments and non-governmental organizations should put in place initiatives that encourage migrants to register to vote in their destination cities, and they should take pains to inform politicians that this process is underway.

This implies two fruitful areas for research going forward. The first is to evaluate the relative cost-effectiveness of different voter registration campaigns in poorer settings. This could be modeled after the Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) literature in the United States and Europe, and its registration-related extensions. Second, and more ambitiously, researchers should rigorously assess the welfare impacts of voter registration in destination cities on migrants themselves. If our interpretation of the paper's results is correct, registration may be expected to produce substantial welfare gains, as politicians become incentivized to respond to migrant needs. We hypothesize that this newfound responsiveness could improve such things as public goods and services in slum areas. At the same time, it would be important to elucidate the broader societal impact of these interventions. For instance, sudden large-scale migrant voter registration could deepen native-migrant tensions sufficient to offset any other welfare improvements (Dancygier, 2010). As the magnitude of rural-to-urban migration expands in rapidly modernizing societies, scholarly work that explicates how political systems mediate native-migrant interactions will become all the more essential.

Outside of the domain of migration, our findings provide new insights on the interface between urban political elites and citizens. A rising body of literature shows that new technologies such as those related to cell phones have mixed consequences on how citizens engage politically.[14] We shift the focus of this line of investigation on to political elites.

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[14]Some studies show that cell phones are not very likely to boost political participation among citizen groups (Grossman, Humphreys and Sacramone-Lutz, 2014). Others show, by contrast, that cell phones can have a big impact on collective action (Pierskalla and

Do technological advancements make politicians more responsive to citizens? Our study employed two contacting methods: postal letters, and SMSes. It is striking that both modes of contact yielded near-identical response rates: 14% for letters and 13% for SMSes. Because our mode of contact was not randomly assigned, we cannot draw causal inferences about which contacting method was more effective. Yet, our findings suggest that the cost and convenience benefits provided by cellular telephony do not appear to significantly alter the dynamics of political representation. Politicians are just as likely to respond to "old fashioned" methods of citizen interaction as they are to new methods. These findings suggest that overall levels of representation remain low in the large urban conurbations of the global south, where population density is high and demands on the state are substantial.

We conclude by noting that our study reveals several other dimensions of inequality (apart from migrant-native status) in India's political system. Most seriously, higher-skilled citizens and Hindus enjoy much better access to constituency services than the lower-skilled citizens and Muslims. The results on religion accord with a substantial body of qualitative literature and some quantitative studies although, to our knowledge, this is the most direct test of religious-based discrimination by Indian politicians to date. Our findings on occupation and income-based discrimination are more novel. Fiscal burden theories lead us to expect that politicians prefer net contributors to the state over those that pose a drain on government resources. Our evidence indicates that politicians do indeed discriminate in favor of high-income citizens. It is quite reasonable to expect that politicians are more responsive to the class of citizens who provide most tax revenues. Other factors might also be at play; for instance, urban political elites might anticipate campaign contributions or quid pro quo favors from richer constituents in exchange for help. Future work should probe these possibilities.

Hollenbach 2013, see also Shapiro and Weidmann 2015).

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Tables and Figures

Name	Native/Migrant	Occupation	Problem Type	Party member
Ram	Native	Cleaner	Aadhar card	Always
Arjun	Migrant (Bihar)	Vegetable Seller	Income Certificate	Never
Seeta	Migrant (Assam)	Cook	Job	
Sushma	Migrant (Maharashtra)	Doctor	Drainage	
Zafar	Migrant (Andhra Pradesh)	Lawyer	Government dispersary	
Salman		Engineer	Street lamp	
Waheeda				
Zahra				

Table 2: Treatments in SMS Experiment

Name	Occupation	Problem Type	Native/Migrant Registered/Registered/Voted
Arjun	Engineer	Aadhar card	Native (not registered to vote)
Salman	Construction worker	Street lamp	Native (registered to vote)
			Migrant–Bihar (not registered to vote)
			Migrant–Bihar (registered to vote)
			Migrant–Bihar (registered to vote, voted before)
			Migrant–Assam (not registered to vote)
			Migrant–Assam (registered to vote)
			Migrant–Assam (registered to vote, voted before)

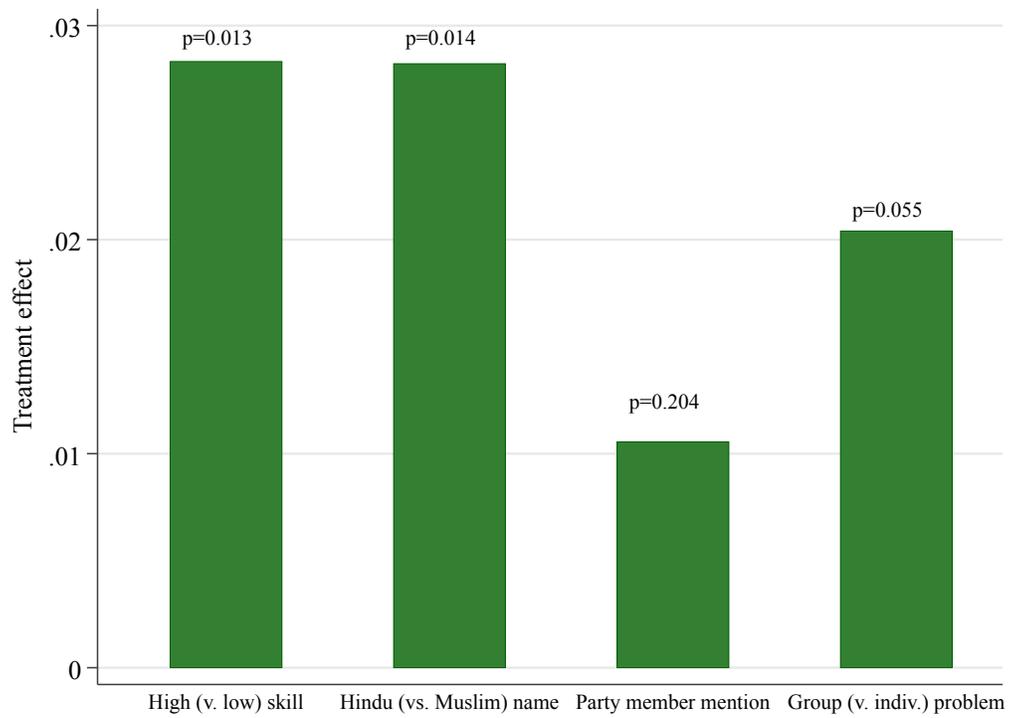Figure 1: Impact of migrant status on politician callbacks to letter requests
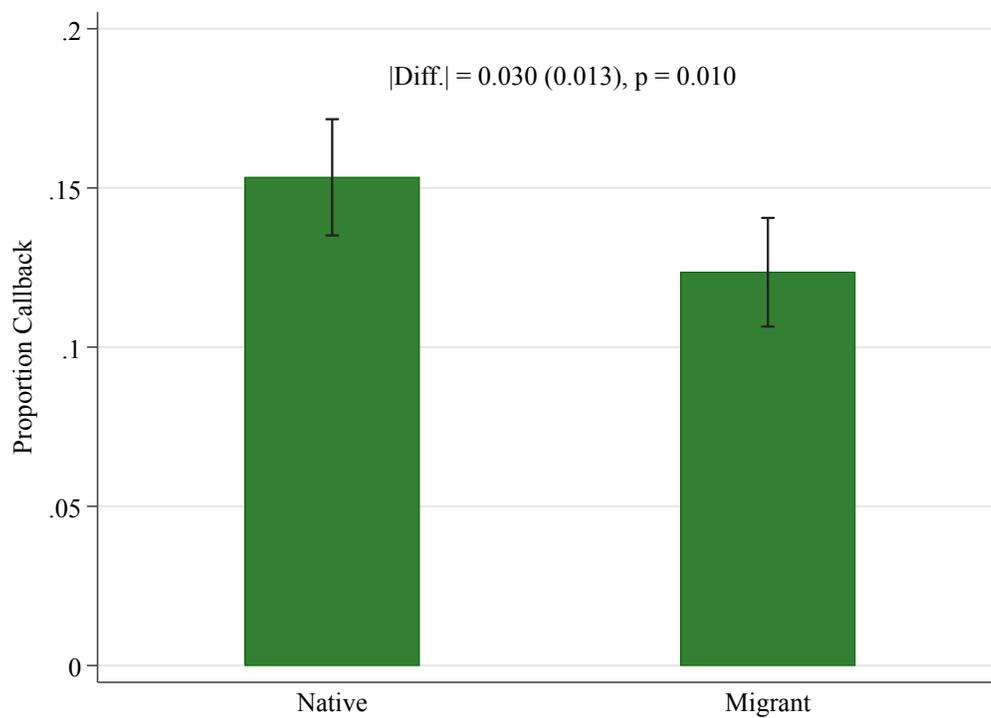
Notes: This graphs presents average callback rates for requesters signaled to be natives and migrants. The reported difference in callbacks, associated standard error (in parentheses), and p-value are based on one-tailed t-tests.

Figure 2: Survival analysis
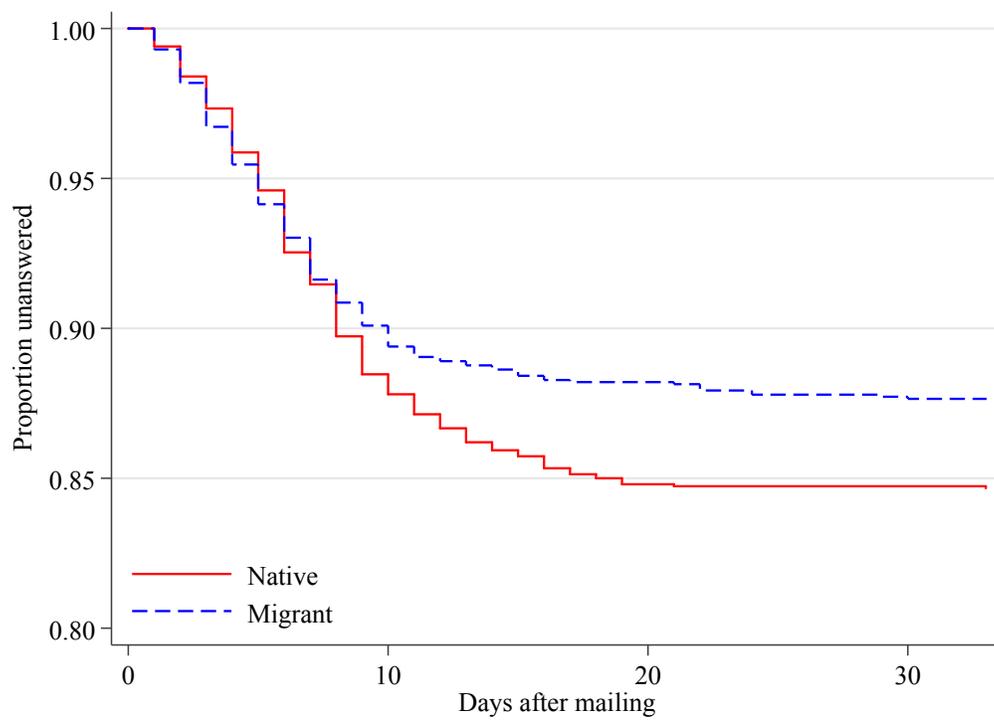
Notes: This graphs presents the average *non*-response to requests by natives and migrants for each day after the letters were mailed.

Figure 3: Impact of additional requester attributes on politician callbacks to letter requests
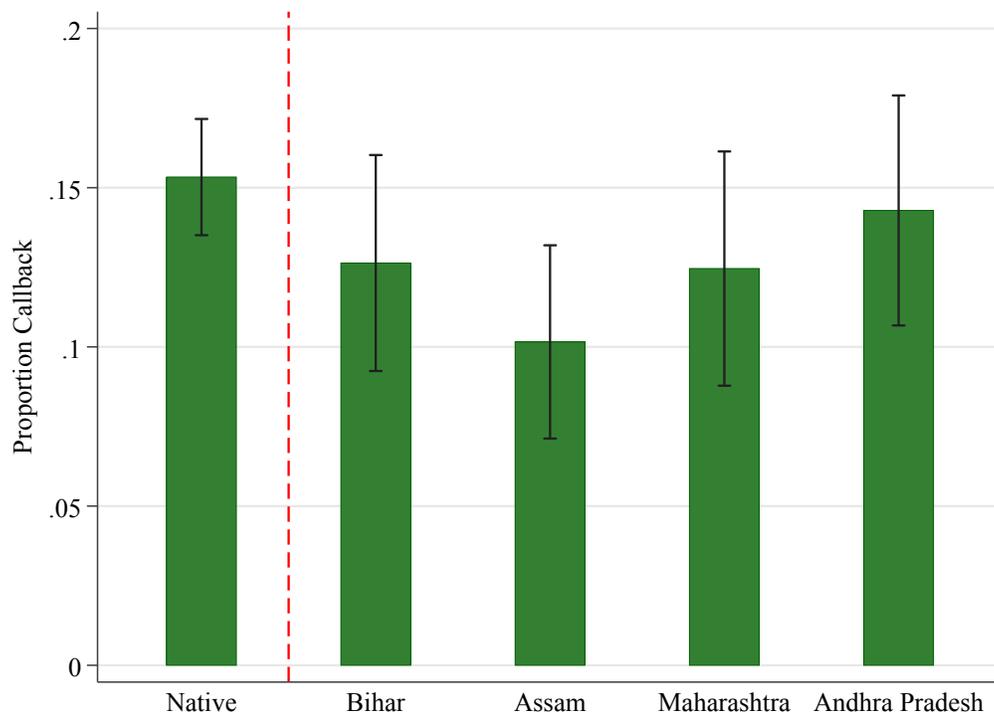

Notes: This graphs presents the treatment effects on callback rates of four other attributes randomized in the letters. Results are derived from one-tailed t-tests.

Figure 4: Impact of additional requester attributes on politician callbacks to letter requests, by native/migrant status
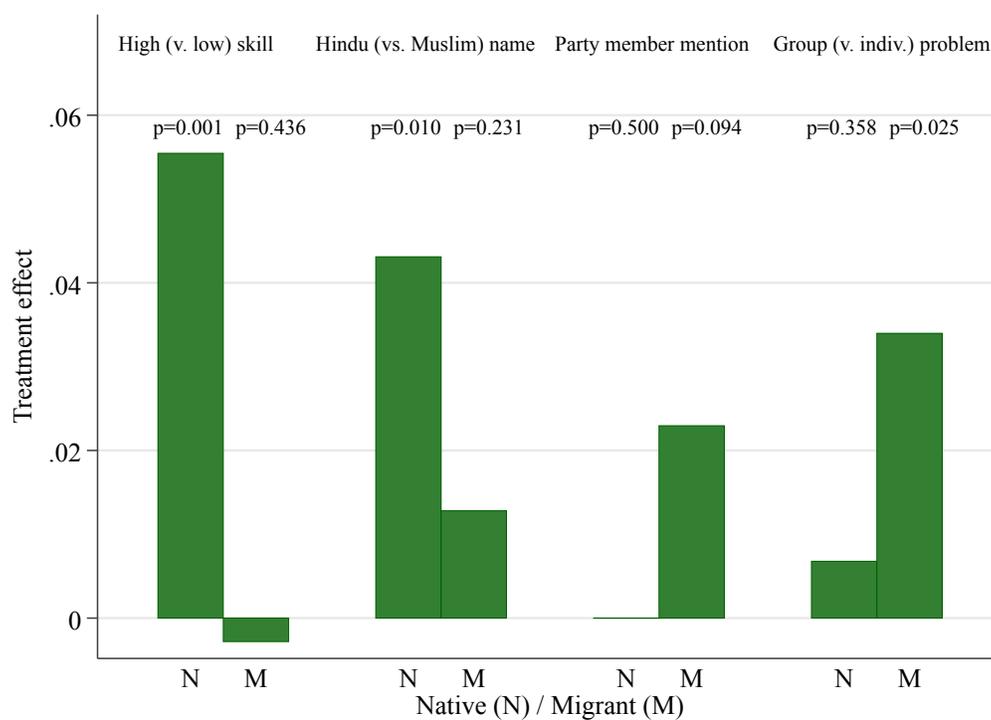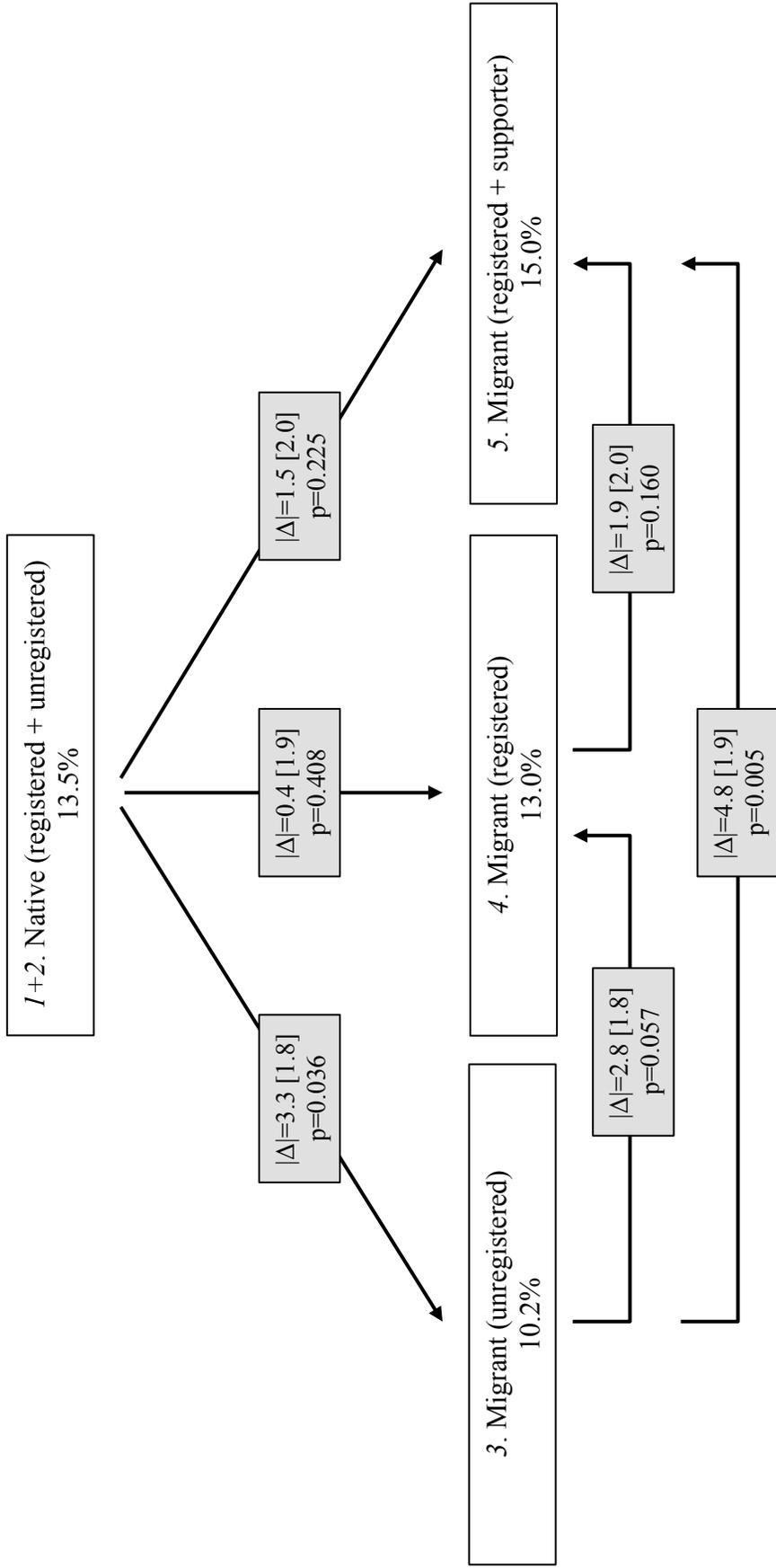

Notes: This graphs presents the treatment effects on callback rates for natives and migrants of four other attributes randomized in the letters. Results are derived from one-tailed t-tests.

Figure 5: Impact of migrant region of origin on politician callbacks to letter requests


Notes: This graphs presents average callback rates for requesters signaled to be natives, and for migrants signaled to come from four different regions.

Figure 6: SMS response rates and treatment effects by requester type

1+2. Native (registered + unregistered)
13.5%

|Δ|=1.5 [2.0]
p=0.225

|Δ|=0.4 [1.9]
p=0.408

|Δ|=3.3 [1.8]
p=0.036

5. Migrant (registered + supporter)
15.0%

4. Migrant (registered)
13.0%

3. Migrant (unregistered)
10.2%

|Δ|=1.9 [2.0]
p=0.160

|Δ|=4.8 [1.9]
p=0.005

|Δ|=2.8 [1.8]
p=0.057

Notes: This chart displays the average callbacks rates for each treatment condition (in large white boxes) and the results of one-sided t-tests between these conditions (in smaller gray boxes). Standard errors are in square parentheses.

Figure 7: SMS response rates and treatment effects by requester type
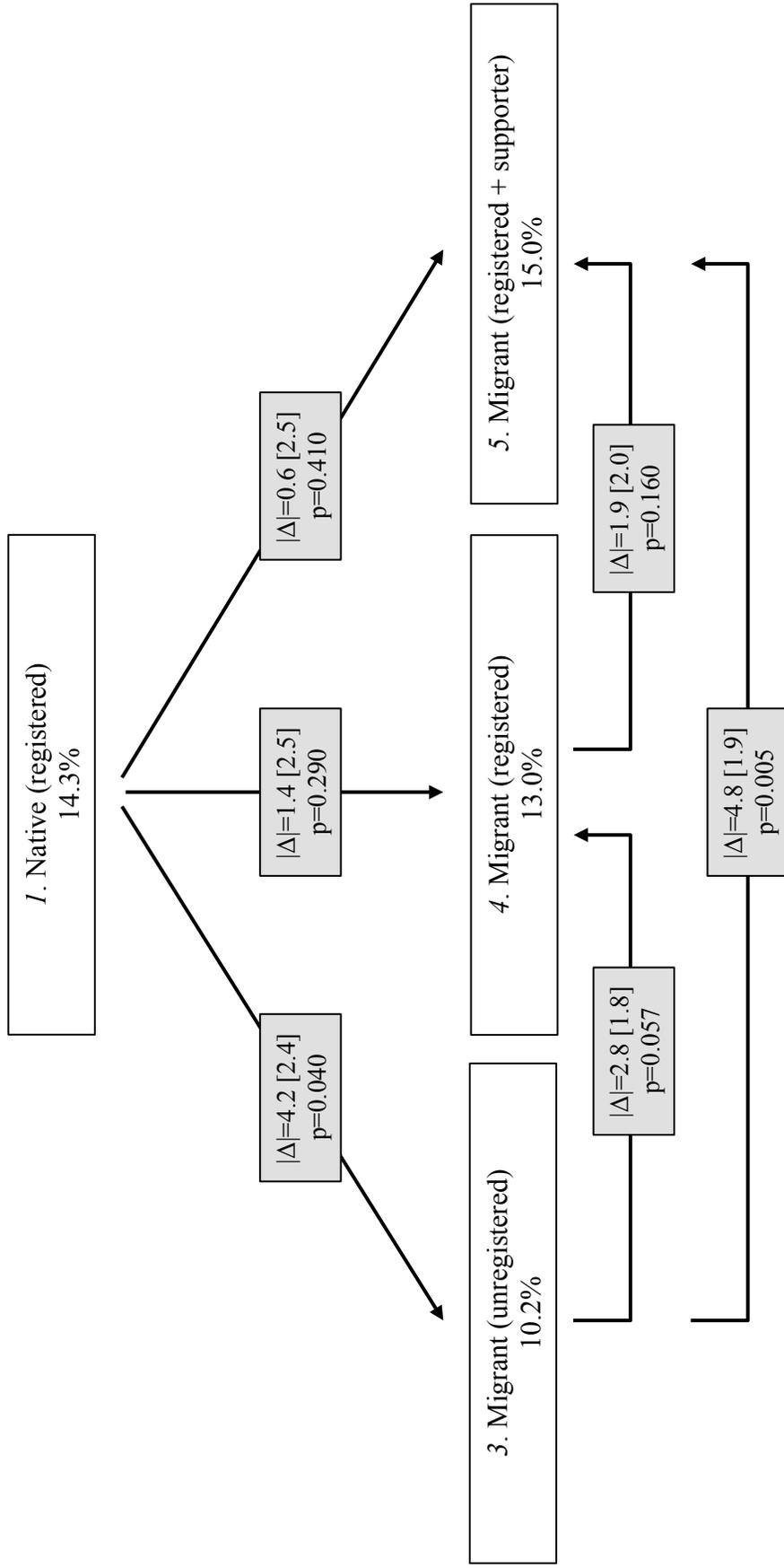
Notes: This chart displays the average callbacks rates for each treatment condition (in large white boxes) and the results of one-sided t-tests between these conditions (in smaller gray boxes). Standard errors are in square parentheses.

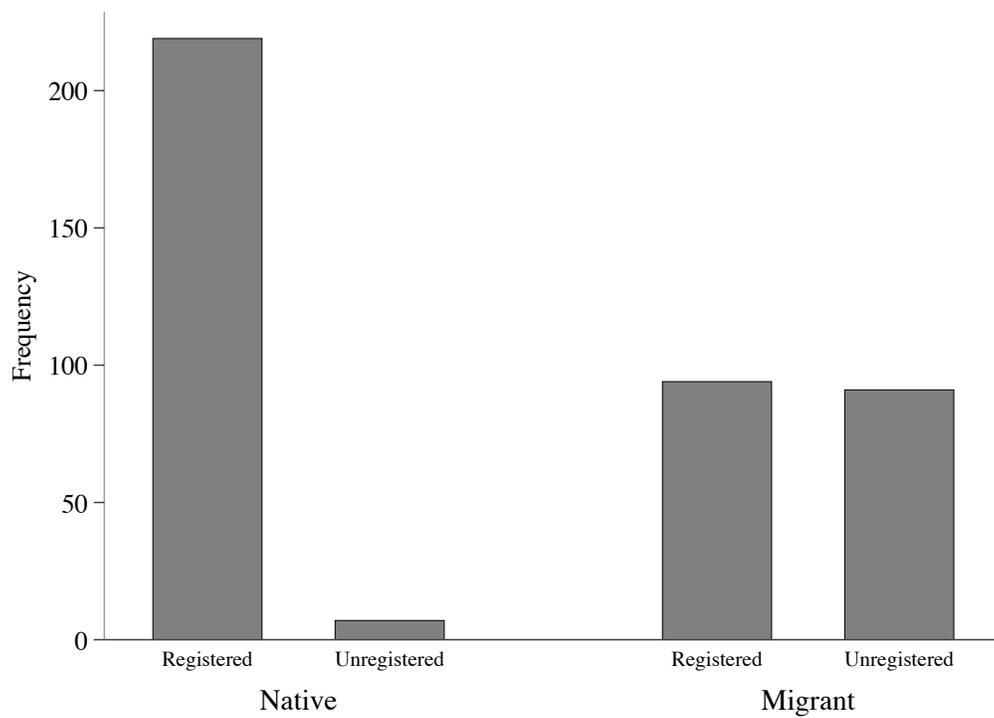Figure 8: Survey experiment: frequency of responses by treatment condition (binary outcome)

Figure 9: Survey experiment: frequency of responses by treatment condition (ordinal outcome)