

# Do Politicians Discriminate Against Internal Migrants: Evidence from Nationwide Field Experiments in India

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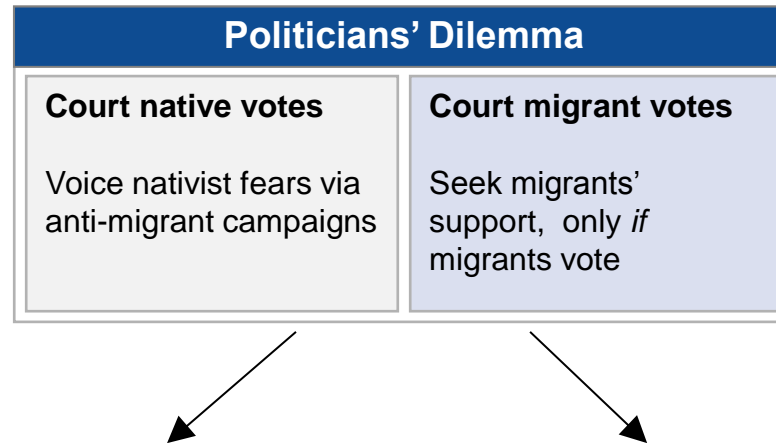
Yale University

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# Migrants face recurring political discrimination in rapidly urbanizing countries



# Politicians face an electoral tradeoff regarding migration



## Uddhav Thackeray vilifies migrants



“The migrant laborers are bringing malaria with them to Mumbai ...

The influx of migrants continues ... There is need to have a check on these migrants.”

## Abu Azmi courts migrants



“Come to Mumbai and Maharashtra ... as paupers and end up striking gold.

I will ensure that your dignity is not violated till the last drop of my blood.”

# Electoral tradeoffs determine when politicians discriminate against migrants

## **Scenario #1: Discrimination**

Migrants do not vote; politicians believe migrants will not vote

Politicians rally natives with anti-migrant campaigns

Politicians disenfranchise migrants

## **Scenario #2: Enfranchisement**

Migrants vote; politicians believe migrants will vote

Politicians downplay anti-migrant hostility

Politicians court migrant votes; respond to migrant needs

# Sample: Municipal councilors across India

## Municipal corporation characteristics

### Background

Cities divided into electoral wards; each ward elects one councilor

Ward size varies, but ca. 50,000

Revenues raised by property and sales taxes; Mumbai annual budget Rs. 310 billion

### Councilor duties

Formal responsibilities include: public health & sanitation, public works, education, development, administration

Informally, councilors serve as key intermediaries with bureaucracy, e.g.

*“When people inform me that there is a problem, I immediately start to solve the problem. The official procedure is too long, it takes too much time” (Berenschot 2010)*

### Sample

All councilors with listed addresses in 28 largest municipal corporations across India

Directly represent 127 million citizens



# Study 1: Do politicians discriminate against migrants?

## Audit experiment

Send handwritten/typed letters from hypothetical citizens requesting help with problem

- Small, simple chit in plain envelope
- Modeled on real letters to councilors
- Handwritten address
- Stamped and postmarked from local post office

Vary characteristics of the citizen—specifically migrant/native status

Provide cell number and request callback on local SIM card

N = 3,013

# Experimental setup

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## Treatment conditions orthogonally assigned

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**Native/migrant status:** My family and I are native...

- to this city and we have lived here all of our lives
- (Maharashtra/ Bihar/ Assam/ Andhra Pradesh) and we recently moved to this city

**Name:** Hindu or Muslim

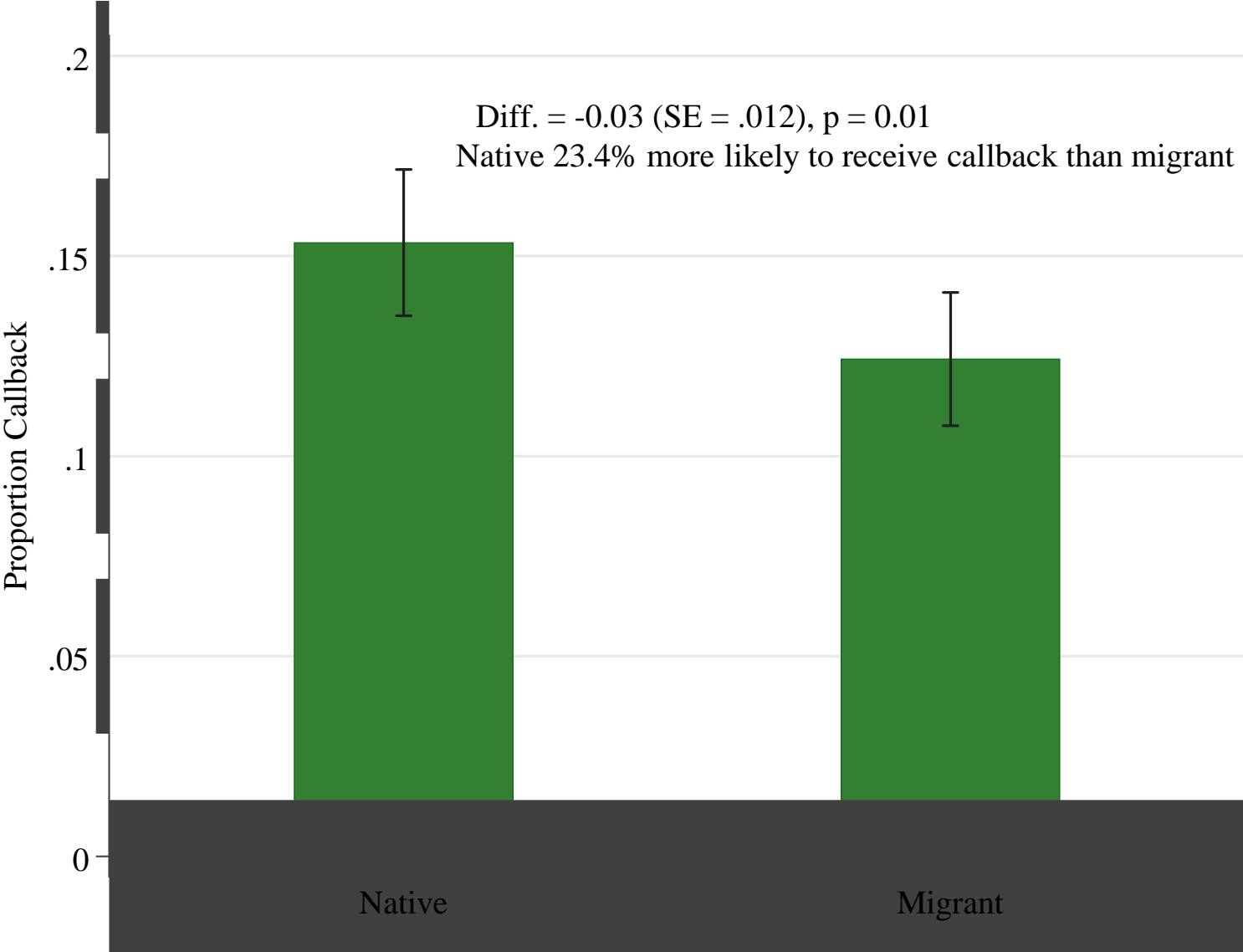
**Occupation:** High-skill or low-skill

**Problem:** Excludable or non-excludable

**Party support:** Belong to councilor's party

Dependent variable captures willingness to provide constituency services

# Is there a migrant-native gap in callbacks? Yes





# Migrant status affects rewards to other attributes

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## **Migrants do not benefit from favorable attributes**

- High-skilled natives 40% more likely to receive callback; skills irrelevant for migrants
- Co-ethnic natives 36% more likely to receive callback; ethnicity irrelevant for migrants
- Similar to Bertrand & Mullainathan 2004: African-American aliases don't benefit from better credentials

## **Migrants treated as political “underclass”**

### **Do political or electoral mechanisms underlie this effect?**

- Politicians might not believe that migrants are registered to vote in city elections
- Politicians might have uncertainty that help will translate into votes

# Study 2: Test electoral mechanism with SMS experiment

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## Treatments

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### Five new political conditions:

Native not registered to vote

Native registered to vote

Migrant not registered to vote

Migrant registered to vote

Migrant registered to vote & supports incumbent

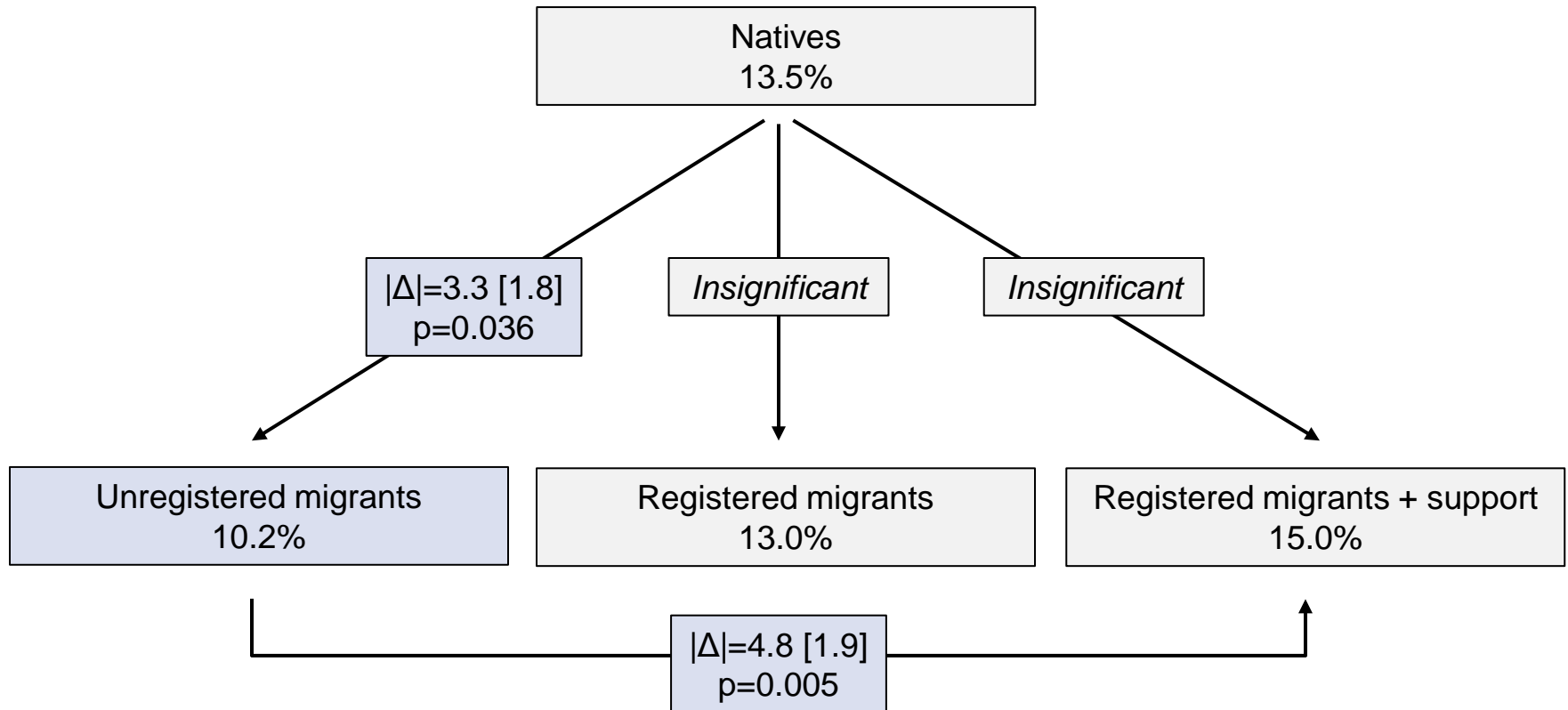


### Example:

"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]?"

Experiment tests whether political/electoral mechanisms underlie effects of prior study

# Results: Migrants registered to vote face no discrimination



# Why did politicians discriminate against migrants in first experiment?

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## Recap of findings

- When migrants don't signal registration status, politicians discriminate against them
- When migrants signal registration status, politicians don't discriminate against them

**If electoral concerns are key, then politicians must not typically believe that migrants are registered to vote**

**This hypothesis is testable!**

# Study 3: Do politicians believe that migrants vote in cities?

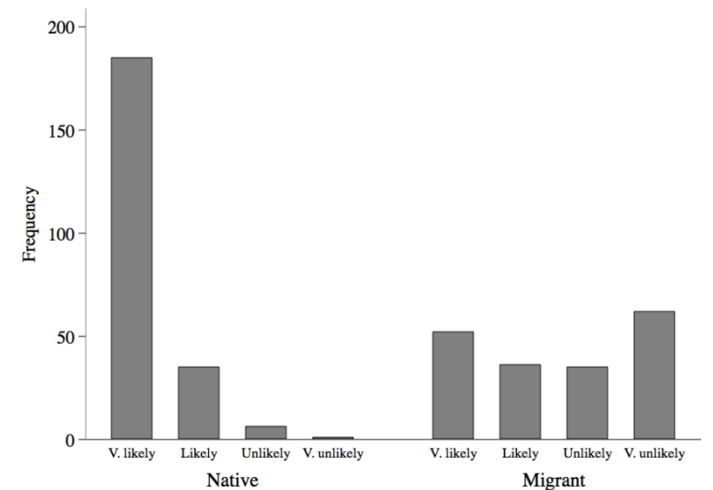
## Politician Survey Experiment Treatments

“Suppose a citizen living in your ward comes to you asking for some help with some matter.

The citizen is originally from **[your city and has lived and worked in the city all his life / 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?

## Results



Politicians do not believe that migrants are likely voters

# Discussion

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## **Start new research agenda on internal migration**

- Provide evidence of anti-migrant discrimination; explain its triggers
- Establish electoral considerations undergirding migration responses
- Suggest directions for future research: Factors that might mediate the relationship between enfranchisement and political inclusion

## **Provide insights into study of urban poverty, economic competition, and ethnic strife**

## **Contribute to immigration literature on political triggers of discrimination**

- Immigrants vote in many local elections (e.g., Dancygier 2010)

# Treatments in letters experiment

Table 1: Treatments in Letter Experiment

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 dispensary	
Salman		Engineer	Street lamp	
Waheeda				
Zahra				

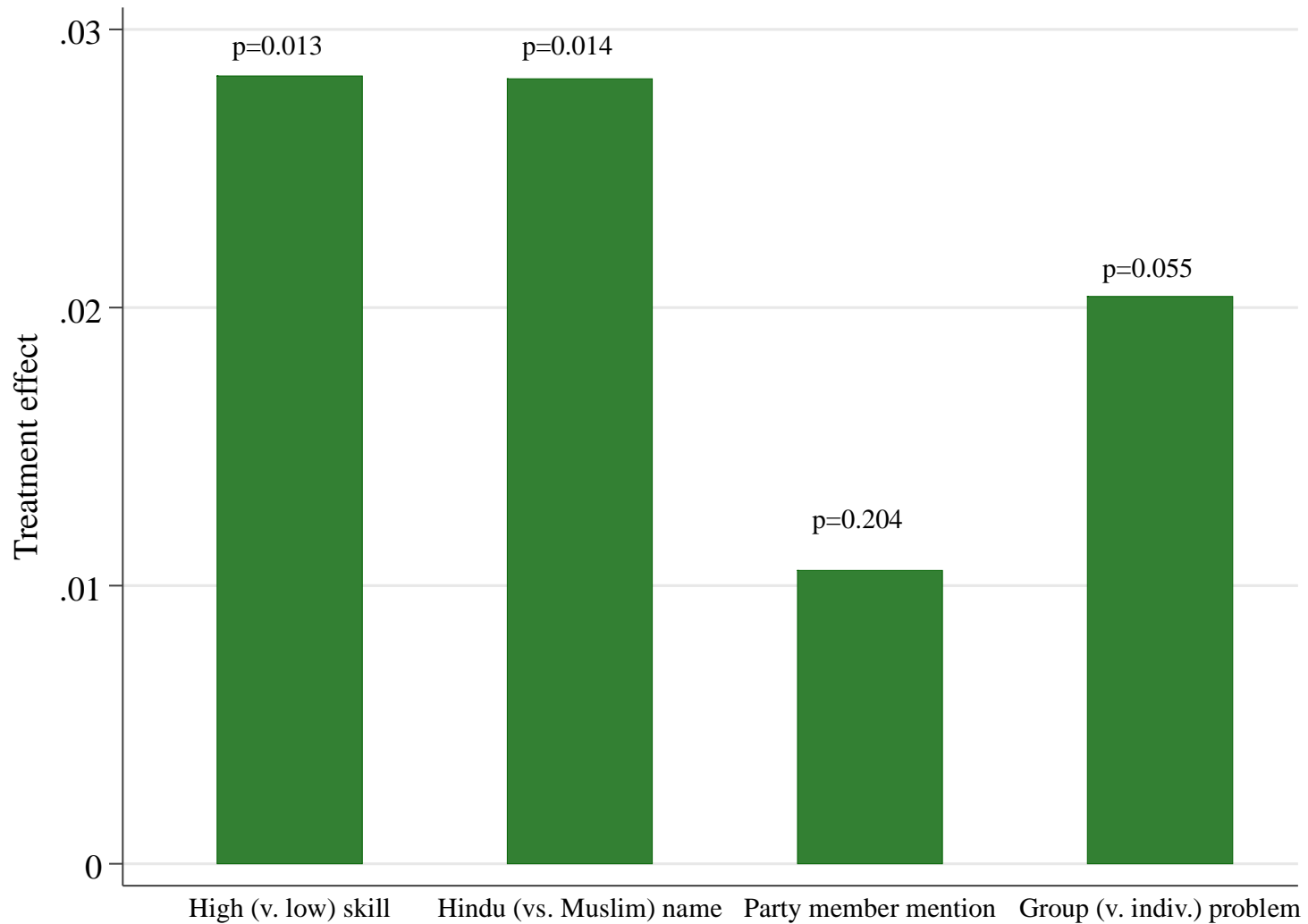
# Treatments in SMS experiment

Table 2: Treatments in SMS Experiment

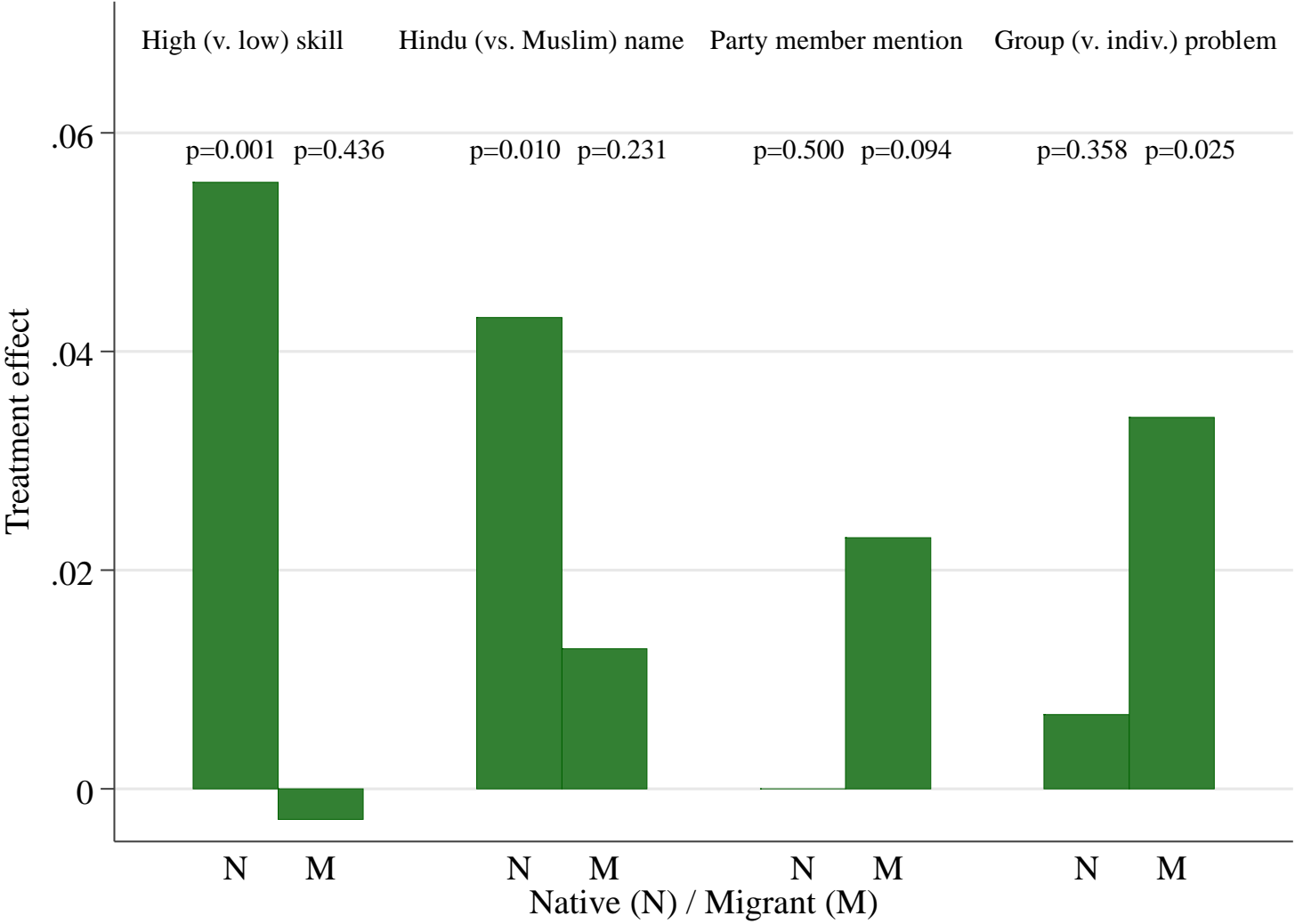
Name	Occupation	Problem Type	Native/Migrant Registered/Registered/Voted
Arjun	Engineer	Aadhar card	Native (not registered to vote)
Salman	Construction worker	Street lamp	Native (registered to vote) Migrant-Bihar (not registered to vote) Migrant-Bihar (registered to vote) Migrant-Bihar (registered to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



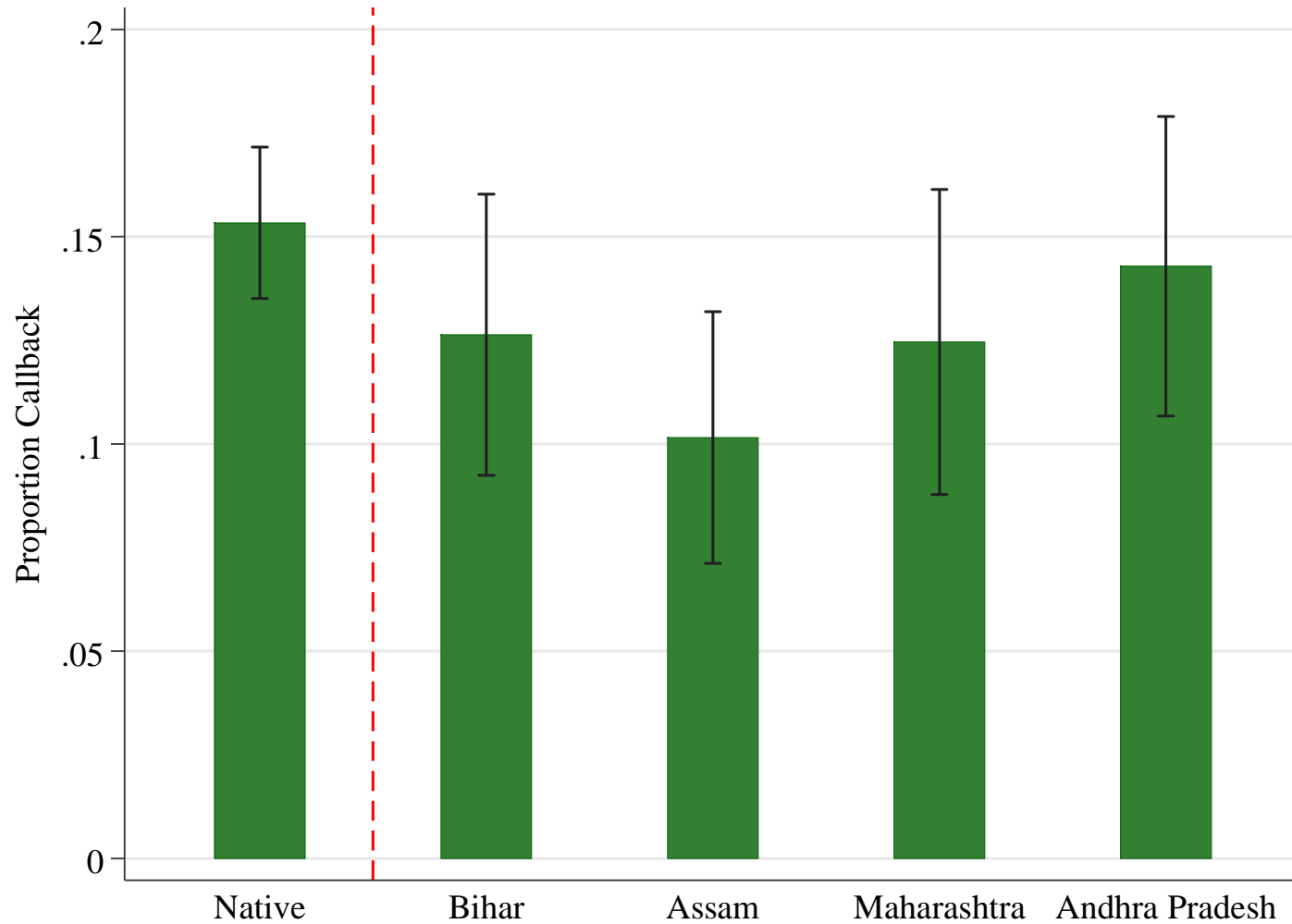
# Magnitude of migrant-native gap is large in comparison



# Are migrants and natives appraised differently? Yes



# Effect of region of origin of migrants



# Survival analysis in letters experiment

