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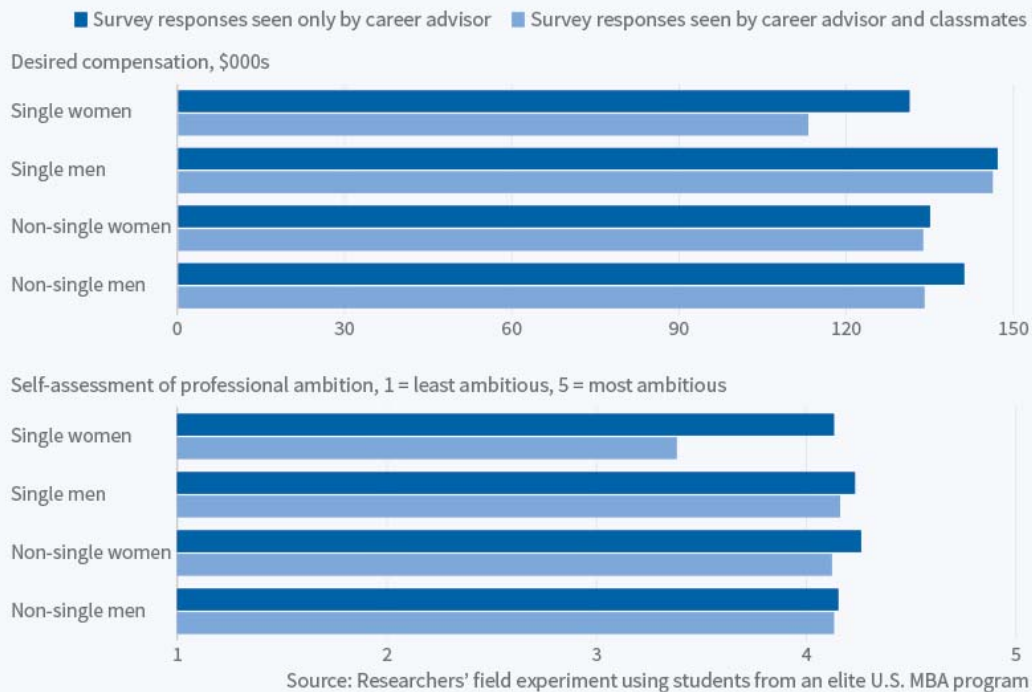
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## Marriageability Concerns and Professional Ambitions

### Reported Job Preferences and Relationship Status



Single women were less likely to display high levels of ambition when they believed that their preferences would be shared with single male classmates.

Some women avoid actions that would help their careers in an effort to appear more marriageable, according to the results of experiments conducted with students starting an elite U.S. MBA program. [Leonardo Bursztyn](#), [Thomas Fujiwara](#), and [Amanda Pallais](#) report those findings in **'Acting Wife': Marriage Market Incentives and Labor Market Investments** (NBER Working Paper No. [23043](#)).

In their primary experiment, the school's career center distributed a questionnaire to students designed to be used by the career center in first-year internship placement — a central part of an MBA education that is considered to have a substantial impact on career prospects.

Students were asked about desired salary, willingness to travel, willingness to work long hours, and overall professional ambition. On these dimensions, answers that make women more desirable to employers may make them less desirable to potential romantic partners, the researchers found. Some randomly selected students believed their answers would be seen only by a career counselor, while the remainder believed their classmates would see their answers as well.



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**Robots and Jobs in the U.S. Labor Market**

**W**ith America's workers already squeezed by forces ranging from international competition to shifting to new information technologies, concerns are growing about the impact of robots on jobs and wages.

In *Robots and Jobs: Evidence from U.S. Labor Markets* (NBER Working Paper No. 23203), Daron Acemoglu and Paul Restrepo find that deployment of robots reduces employment and wages, but they caution that it is difficult to measure net labor market effects.

Since at least the start of the Industrial Revolution, economists and policy makers have pondered how automation technologies impact labor markets. John Maynard Keynes warned in 1926 of coming "technological unemployment" and Wanda Lovett predicted several decades later that "labor will become less and less important." In more than a range of studies has estimated that nearly half of all U.S. workers' jobs will be at risk of being automated over the next two decades, and noted that this risk extends beyond laborers to include many white-collar occupations with substantial routine components.

The researchers note that automation has several effects on the labor market. It may displace the workers performing a particular job in a particular industry, leading to reduced employment opportunities and wages for workers who historically held such positions. However, other sectors and occupations may expand to soak up labor freed from the tasks performed by machines.

On average, the arrival of one new industrial robot in a local labor market coincides with an employment drop of 5.6 workers.

and it is even possible that productivity gains due to new automation technologies may expand employment possibilities in the industries in which they are deployed.

The researchers focus on how the adoption of Robotics (RPA) definition of robots as autonomous, reprogrammable, multipurpose machines, this excludes single-purpose automated machinery and artificial intelligence technologies. By combining data from the BLS, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and other sources, the researchers analyze the effect on labor markets of increases in industrial robot usage in 19 industries between 1990 and 2007. They measure the within industry rate of robot adoption in counties other than the U.S., and pair that with information on the location of industrial employment across commuting zones to construct a measure of potential exposure to robots for each local labor market.

The researchers find large and robust negative effects of robots on employment and wages. They estimate that one more robot per thousand workers reduces the employment-to-population ratio by between 0.18 and 0.24 percentage points, and is associated with a wage decline of between 0.25 and 0.6 percent. The effects are most pronounced in industries most exposed to robots, on workers with less than a college degree, and on routine manual.



**Employment and Exposure to Robots**

Log of the employment-to-population ratio vs. Log of the number of robots per thousand workers, 1990-2007

**May 2017 Issue**

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When single women believed that only a career counselor would see their responses, they reported similar preferences and abilities to other students. However, when they thought their classmates would see their answers, they reported \$18,000 less in desired yearly compensation and they reported being willing to work four fewer hours per week and travel seven fewer days per month. They reported less ambition and less tendency for leadership, though they did not change their self-reports on a placebo question about writing abilities, a skill not penalized in the marriage market. Women in relationships, single men, and men in relationships did not adjust their answers when they thought that their peers would see their responses.

In a supplemental study, students were given a different questionnaire, also to be passed on to the career center. In this questionnaire they were asked to make choices about pairs of hypothetical jobs individually, which would later be discussed with a small group. Membership in the small group was randomized such that some single women had male groupmates, while the remainder had only female groupmates. When placed with female peers, 68 percent of women

reported that they would prefer a job with a higher salary and requiring 55 to 60 hours a week over a job with a lower salary requiring 45 to 50 work hours. When placed with male peers, only 42 percent of women expressed this preference. Similarly, with female peers, 79 percent of single women reported preferring a job with quicker promotion to partner but substantial travel over a job with slower and less certain promotion but no travel. When placed with male peers, only 37 percent of women chose that option. Single women were also substantially less likely to choose the career-focused option when there were more single — as opposed to married — men in the group.

The researchers found a similar pattern in class grades, which this business school shares with employers. While married and unmarried women performed identically on exams and problem sets — grades that can be kept from classmates — unmarried women had substantially lower participation grades. Marital status did not predict participation grades for men. In an additional survey, three-fourths of single female students reported that they had at some point avoided actions that they thought would help their careers because they did not want to look too ambitious, assertive, or pushy. Single women were much more likely to report having avoided actions for these reasons than were non-single women or men.

— Jen Deaderick

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