Housing market discrimination following the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China

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\textbf{Abstract:} Following the COVID-19 outbreak, there were frequent reports of discrimination against ethnic Asians across the world. Discrimination within countries often targeted individuals from the epicenters of the outbreak. We focus on the impacts of discrimination on matching in the real estate market, adding to the growing experimental literature on this topic. Emails are being sent to landlords following advertisements for apartments in different parts of China. In a 3 x 2 full factorial design, we manipulate the content of these messages. The message either presents the tenant as being from Wuhan (most affected by the outbreak), Changsha (similar to Wuhan, but not as severely affected), or from another (unnamed) city. In addition, the message either contains or does not contain a short message about being affected by the virus. We study three outcomes: (1) whether or not there is a response, (2) conditional on a response, whether or not there is an invitation to see the apartment, (3) response time. We expect discrimination against prospective tenants from Wuhan in all outcomes. We expect less discrimination for treatments that explicitly state that the prospective tenant has not been affected.

\textbf{Data description:} Data are collected, starting in mid/end April 2020. The study received expedite ethical approval from the East China University of Science and Technology and was pre-registered at aspredicted.org before the start of data collection.

\textbf{JEL Codes:} D91; O18; R31

\textbf{Keywords:} Field experiment; real estate; urban economics