

Worker Beliefs about Occupational Mobility*

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Abstract

We study how employed workers perceive and respond to opportunities for occupational mobility. Using a large-scale survey of 4,500 full-time workers in Germany, linked with administrative employment data, we measure workers' beliefs about the transferability of their skills, the similarity of alternative occupations to theirs, the benefits—potential earnings—and costs—retraining and licensing requirements—of moving to other occupations. We also capture respondents' beliefs about exposure of their own and alternative occupations to automation and AI. The results reveal that workers are imperfectly informed about opportunities in other occupations: they systematically underestimate task similarity and wages in alternative occupations while overestimating the need for retraining or licensing. These misperceptions are more severe for white-collar workers more exposed to AI and for workers in lower-paying firms, and are strongly negatively correlated with intentions to seek jobs in other occupations. Randomized information treatments providing data on wages, retraining requirements, and displacement risk meaningfully alter workers' beliefs and mobility intentions, even nine months after the intervention.

Keywords: Occupational mobility, Information frictions, Job search, Beliefs, Automation, AI.

JEL Codes: J01, J24, J62, D91, D83

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1 Introduction

Job mobility is a crucial driver of labor market dynamism and an important factor shaping workers’ career development and earnings growth (Neal, 1999, Topel and Ward, 1992). The relevance of occupational mobility has increased substantially in recent years as labor markets undergo significant structural transformations driven by technological change and the diffusion of AI (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2020, Brynjolfsson, Chandar and Chen, 2025, Humlum and Vestergaard, 2026). As workers in occupations more exposed to automation or generative AI face a higher risk of displacement, transitioning to less-exposed occupations offers a potential pathway to avoid the substantial scarring effects associated with unemployment (Jarosch, 2023, Schmieder, Von Wachter and Heining, 2023).

Recent evidence suggests that workers have imperfect information about their outside options within their current occupation (Jäger et al., 2024). This raises a natural question: How well are workers informed about opportunities in other occupations? Understanding workers’ knowledge about alternative career paths is a key step to correctly define the span of the labor market that workers have in mind when they consider their outside options. Measuring workers’ consideration set is essential to correctly assess the degree of monopsony in the labor market (Caldwell, Dube and Naidu, forthcoming). It becomes even more important in a time of profound structural changes in the labor market: if workers systematically misperceive opportunities in alternative occupations, information frictions may prevent efficient reallocation of labor in the economy and limit workers’ ability to escape deteriorating employment prospects.

How do workers think about changing occupations? How informed are they about opportunities in other occupations? How do they perceive the transferability of their skills to other occupations and assess the cost of occupational mobility? What role do these beliefs play in workers’ occupational mobility decisions? To answer these questions, we administer a comprehensive online survey through the German Employment Agency to approximately 4,500 wage and salary workers. The survey elicits workers’ beliefs about the transferability of their skills, how similar—in terms of tasks and skill requirements—alternative occupations are to their current occupation, the benefits—wage gains—and costs—licensing requirements and retraining needs—of moving to such occupations, and their exposure to automation and AI. We also measure workers’ willingness to change occupations and link their survey responses with administrative data on their employment histories. Crucially, within the survey we implement three randomized information treatments that provide workers with objective information about the distribution of wages in alternative occupations, the licensing and training requirements to work in alternative occupations, or the risk of displacement from

automation and AI of theirs and alternative occupations.

Our analysis yields three main findings. First, we document substantial information gaps about alternative occupations. When asked to list the two occupations closest to theirs in terms of tasks and skill requirements, only 32 percent of respondents mention at least one occupation that is actually in the top 10 most similar occupations according to a similarity index compiled by experts and based on actual requirements and occupational content. By comparing respondents' beliefs against benchmarks computed from the administrative data, we show that workers systematically underestimate how similar specific alternative occupations are to their current occupation, overestimate retraining and licensing requirements, and underestimate both median wages in alternative occupations and potential wage gains if they were to change occupation. These misperceptions appear systematic rather than random, and are not just the result of measurement error in workers' responses. Respondents' beliefs display a high degree of internal consistency: those who believe an alternative occupation is more similar to theirs also expect a higher wage change if moving to that occupation and a higher probability of receiving a job offer there; those who believe they would need to retrain to work in an alternative occupation estimate a lower probability of landing a job there. This suggests that workers reason about occupational mobility but their reasoning is misguided by information gaps and biases in beliefs. Workers are more accurate about and even overestimate the similarity of occupations that are more common destinations in the transitions observed in the labor market—but are not necessarily the most similar to their occupation nor those where they would get the highest wage gain. This suggests that workers' beliefs may be biased by the salience or availability of certain occupations.

Respondents working in white-collar—including commercial and administrative routine occupations—that are especially at risk of being displaced by automation or AI— as well as workers in lower-paying firms underestimate the benefits and overestimate the costs of occupational mobility more severely. Hence, workers who would benefit the most from moving to an alternative occupation seem to be the least informed about opportunities for occupational mobility.

Second, we establish that beliefs about alternative occupations strongly correlate with intentions to search for jobs in other occupations. Workers who perceive greater similarity, fewer training and licensing requirements, and greater potential wage gains express a significantly higher willingness to look for a new job in alternative occupations. These correlations hold even after controlling for objective benchmarks and for observed worker characteristics, job tenure, job satisfaction, and perceived skill fit with their current job, showing that beliefs represent an important driver of mobility decisions rather than merely reflecting actual heterogeneity across occupations or unobserved worker heterogeneity.

Third, our randomized information treatments successfully shift both beliefs and stated mobility intentions. All treatments generate strong effects on beliefs about alternative occupations and meaningfully increase workers’ willingness to consider occupational changes. Information about the wage distribution in alternative occupations or the lack of retraining and licensing requirement increases workers’ willingness to search for a new job in these occupations by 15 percent of a standard deviation. Information about displacement risk is slightly more effective at increasing mobility intentions—20 percent of a standard deviation—than information purely about the benefits or costs of occupational mobility, but all treatments have economically significant effects. These treatment effects are driven by respondents who initially overestimate the training and licensing requirements, or underestimate the median wage in alternative occupation or their occupation’s automation risk, suggesting that the treatments work through genuine information updating, rather than simple priming. Respondents who are more open to new experiences—a personality trait that we also measure in the survey—respond more strongly to the treatments. Crucially, the treatment effects on beliefs and mobility intentions persist when measured in a follow-up survey that we field nine months after the initial intervention, suggesting that information provision generates lasting changes in workers’ understanding of their labor market opportunities.

This paper contributes to several strands of the literature. First, we add to the growing body of research studying whether workers have accurate information about their outside options. While previous work has investigated information frictions within occupations (Jäger et al., 2024) or regarding firm wage premia (Caldwell, Haegele and Heining, 2025), we provide the first comprehensive evidence on workers’ knowledge about opportunities across occupational boundaries. This represents an important additional dimension, as occupational mobility offers a distinct margin of adjustment with potentially different information requirements and different implications for worker careers than within-occupation job changes, especially in a time of structural changes in the labor market.

Second, we contribute to the literature examining how workers’ beliefs affect their search behavior. Previous research has focused primarily on unemployed workers (Mueller and Spinnewijn, 2021, Mueller, Spinnewijn and Topa, 2021, Spinnewijn, 2015), except for Conlon et al. (2018) studying job-seekers in general and Jäger et al. (2024) and Miano (2023) focusing on employed workers. We extend this literature by studying the search behavior of employed workers, who face different constraints and opportunities than unemployed job seekers, and by focusing especially on search and mobility decisions across occupations. Understanding employed workers’ cross-occupation search behavior matters particularly for analyzing labor market responses to structural changes in the labor market, as workers who could be displaced by technological shifts may want to consider transitioning to alternative

occupations before experiencing unemployment.

Third, we relate to the literature on job recommendations and interventions designed to push unemployed workers towards jobs in high-demand occupations (Altmann et al., 2022, Behaghel et al., 2024, Belot et al., 2025, Belot, Kircher and Muller, 2019, Le Barbanchon, Hensvik and Rathelot, 2023). We contribute to this literature by showing that similar interventions can meaningfully affect the behavior of employed workers, suggesting broader applicability of information-based policies to facilitate labor market adjustment. Furthermore, our experimental setting allows us to disentangle the effect of different kinds of information—benefits or costs of occupational mobility or unemployment risk related to automation—and to observe directly the impact of this information on workers’ beliefs.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes our survey design, sample construction, and the methodology for selecting alternative occupations. Section 3 presents evidence on workers’ beliefs about alternative occupations and documents systematic information gaps. Section 4 examines the relationship between beliefs and stated mobility intentions. Section 5 presents our experimental results on information treatments. Section 6 discusses the persistence of treatment effects using the follow-up survey data. Section 7 concludes.

2 Survey Design and Data

2.1 Sample Construction and Survey Administration

Our target population consists of wage and salary workers employed full-time in Germany, aged 20 to 50 years.¹ We randomly extracted a sample of workers from this population and obtained their contact information from social security records maintained by the German Employment Agency. We mailed invitation letters to potential respondents in November 2024, asking them to complete the survey online. We include a copy of the invitation letter in Appendix C. Respondents spent a median of 27 minutes completing the survey, with a mean completion time of 42.5 minutes. Participants who completed the survey fully received a 5€ voucher.

We collected approximately 4,800 complete responses. After excluding respondents with missing answers in key questions, extreme interview durations—too short or too long—or unidentifiable occupations, our final analysis sample comprises 4,506 respondents. As shown in Table 1, this sample is broadly representative of our target population in terms

¹We do not sample older workers because occupational mobility is likely less relevant for them, given they are closer to retirement.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

	Survey	SIAB
Male	0.65	0.68
Age		
20-29 years old	0.21	0.26
30-39 years old	0.44	0.40
40-51 years old	0.35	0.35
Education		
College degree	0.45	0.27
Professional education degree	0.49	0.61
High-school degree	0.05	0.10
No school degree	0.01	0.02
Foreign-born	0.12	0.20
Married/living w. Partner	0.71	NA
Sample size	4506	274909

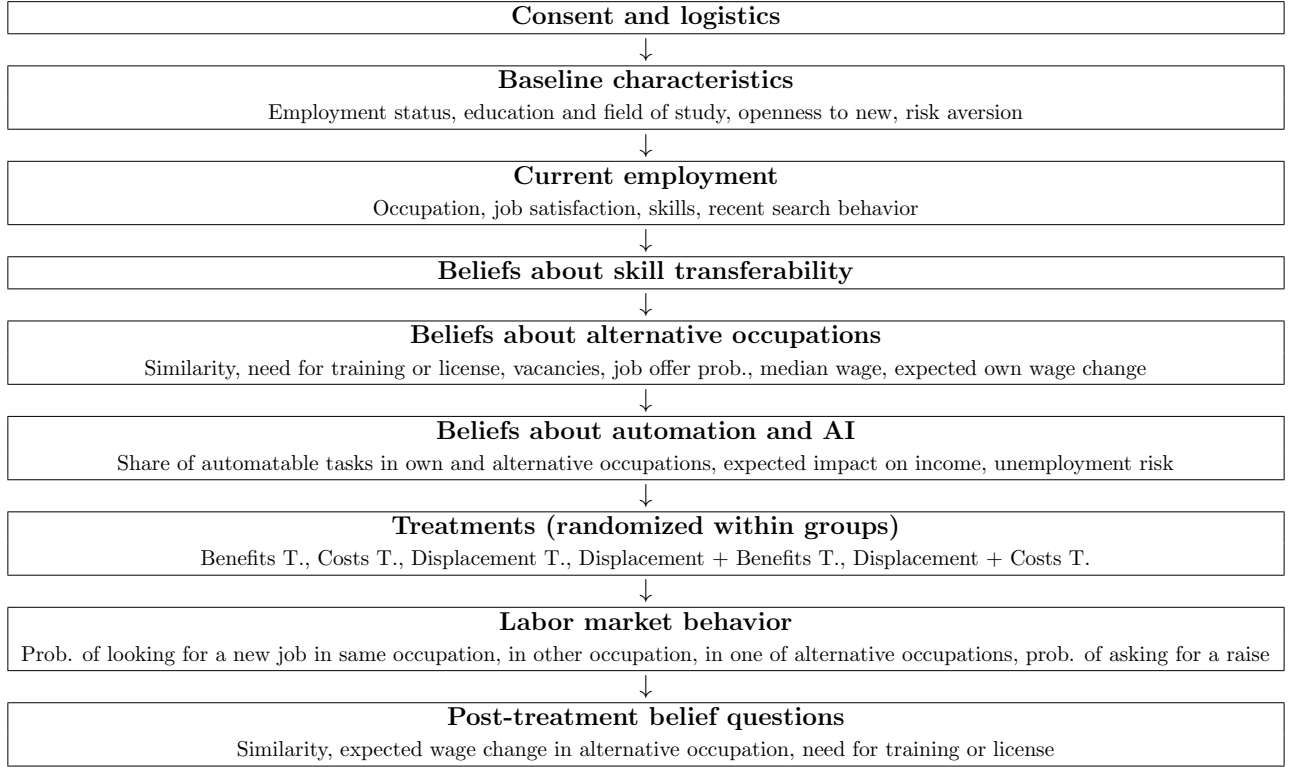
Notes: This table reports summary statistics for the survey, in the first column, and corresponding statistics for the target population in Germany, in the second column. Population statistics come from the 2023 Sample of Integrated Labor Market Biographies (SIAB). Target population: full-time wage and salary workers, between 20 and 50 years old.

of age and gender. College-educated workers are somewhat overrepresented compared to the general population, while foreign-born workers are underrepresented. These patterns are comparable to other studies with similar sampling procedures (e.g., [Caldwell, Haegele and Heining, 2025](#) and [2026](#)).² The occupational composition of our sample closely matches the population distribution, with a correlation of 0.84 between sample and population shares across occupations, as reported in Appendix Figure [A1](#).

A critical feature of our design involves linking survey responses with administrative labor market data from the Integrated Employment Biographies (IEB) of the German Federal Employment Agency. These administrative records provide complete employment histories for all respondents, including information on wages, occupations, employer characteristics, and employment transitions over time. This linkage enables us to benchmark survey-elicited beliefs against objective labor market outcomes, trace workers’ beliefs back to their employment histories to understand the beliefs formation process, and link beliefs to labor market outcomes, to study their implications. Given the importance of this linkage for our analysis, only respondents who gave their consent to link their survey answers to their employment histories were allowed to take the survey. Respondents’ consent to be recontacted for the follow-up survey was another requirement to participate in the main survey.

²Foreign-born workers and workers without a college degree generally have a lower response rate and hence are inevitably underrepresented in studies with a sampling structure like ours.

Figure 1: Survey Outline



2.2 Survey Structure

After obtaining informed consent and collecting basic demographic information, the survey proceeded through the following modules, summarized in Figure 1.

First, we collected baseline characteristics complementing the information we could retrieve *ex-post* from the administrative data, including educational attainment and field of study. We also measured some personality traits, such as openness to new experiences, and risk aversion using validated survey instruments. These baseline measures allow us to examine heterogeneity in beliefs and treatment responses across different types of workers.

Second, we gathered detailed information about current employment, including occupation—coded using the German Classification of Occupations 2010 (KldB 2010) at the three-digit level (roughly equivalent to the three-digit ISCO classification)—job satisfaction measured on multiple dimensions, perceived skill fit in their current role, and recent job search behavior both within and across occupational boundaries.

Third, we elicited beliefs about skill transferability using multiple complementary approaches. We asked workers to rate on a seven-point scale how transferable they believe their skills to be to other occupations. We also featured an open-ended question asking workers to list the two occupations they perceive as the most similar to their current one

in terms of tasks and skill requirements. Following [Haaland et al. \(2025\)](#), this open-ended question provides us with a measure of perceived alternatives that come to workers’ mind when they are prompted to think about occupational mobility in an unstructured way.

Fourth, we collected detailed beliefs about specific alternative occupations that we selected for each respondent based on an objective similarity measure to their current occupation—the similarity matrix—and on common transitions across occupations observed in the data—the transition matrix. For each alternative occupation, we elicited beliefs about task similarity to their current occupation—on a six-point scale—necessity and difficulty of retraining or obtaining a license, vacancy rates and job availability, probability of receiving a job offer conditional on applying for a job in that occupation, median wage in the occupation, and expected wage change if the worker were to move to that occupation.

Fifth, we measured beliefs about exposure to automation and AI by asking workers to estimate the share of tasks that can be automated or performed by AI in their current and alternative occupations, the expected impact on their earnings of technological changes, and their perceived displacement risk from this structural transformation.

We then implemented the randomized information treatments, described in detail in Section 5. Following these treatments, we re-elicited beliefs about some key variables—similarity, wage change if moving to the alternative occupations, need to retrain or obtain a license—to measure whether the treatments effectively shifted respondents’ beliefs.

Finally, we measured respondents’ intended labor market behavior, including the probability of looking for a new job in the same occupation or in a different occupation, including each specific alternative occupation shown, and the probability of asking for a raise at their current job.

2.3 Selecting Alternative Occupations

A crucial design challenge involved selecting appropriate alternative occupations to present to each respondent. Alternative occupations must be sufficiently similar to be plausible low-cost transitions, yet diverse enough to capture meaningful variation in mobility options. We developed a systematic approach to address this challenge.

For each worker occupation defined by three-digit occupational code plus educational requirement (3 digits + 5th digit of the KldB 2010), we selected four alternative occupations. We drew the first three occupations from the similarity matrix: two very close in terms of tasks to the respondent’s occupation and one further away but still representing a reasonable transition. For the fourth occupation we picked the occupation to which we observe the most transitions from respondent’s occupation in the transition matrix constructed from the

Table 2: Examples of Alternative Occupations

Current Occupation	Alternatives
Office clerks and secretaries	Computer specialist Public administration Occupations in media, documentation and information services Occupations in business organisation and strategy
Warehousing, delivery and cargo handling	Drivers and operators of construction and transportation vehicles and equipment Ship’s officers and masters Occupations in beverage production Occupations in metalworking
Occupations in machine-building and -operating	Occupations in building services and waste disposal Occupations in mechatronics, automation and control technology Occupations in precision mechanics and tool making Occupations in metalworking
Driver of vehicles in road traffic	Management assistants in transport and logistics Technical occupations in production planning and scheduling Drivers and operators of construction and transportation vehicles and equipment Warehousing, delivery and cargo handling
Occupations in business organization and strategy	Occupations in purchasing and sales Technical occupations in production planning and scheduling Office clerks and secretaries Occupations in advertising and marketing

Notes: This table reports some examples of occupations frequently occurring in our sample, together with the alternative occupations that were shown to respondents in each of these occupations in the survey.

administrative data.

The similarity matrix relies on a comprehensive occupation similarity index developed by [Dengler, Matthes and Paulus \(2014\)](#) and updated annually. This index measures the similarity between two occupations based on the skills and knowledge required to work in these occupations and the tasks typically performed in each occupation, including specific tasks (*e.g.*, customer service) and knowledge requirements (*e.g.*, foreign language proficiency, specific software competencies). The requirements and similarity are assessed by experts from chambers of commerce and trade associations. The index, regularly used by the German Employment Agency caseworkers to give job search advice to job-seekers, provides pairwise ratings for occupations on a scale from 0 to 6, where 0 indicates no similarity at all and 6 indicates similarity exceeding 95 percent. This granular measure allows us to identify occupations at different distances from each worker’s current role.

This selection methodology generates meaningful variation in alternative occupations for each respondent while ensuring that the alternatives remain realistic possibilities. Table 2 reports some examples of occupations commonly occurring in our sample, as well as the alternatives presented ordered from first to fourth. For instance, office clerks and secretaries were presented with the following alternative occupations: computer specialist (very similar), public administration (also very similar), occupations in media and information services (moderately similar), occupations in business organization and strategy (reasonably similar but a common alternative occupation for office clerks and secretaries in the transitions observed in the administrative data).

Similarity vs. transition matrix We drew the first three alternative occupations from the similarity matrix rather than relying entirely on the transition matrix because the observed transition matrix itself may be biased if workers are imperfectly informed about other occupations. The similarity matrix, instead, is built from an objective measure of similarity constructed by experts who are familiar with the occupations.

Importantly, when we look at all transitions across occupations in the administrative data, we find that those that occurred between highly similar occupations are associated with significantly higher wage change when changing occupations. In Table A1 we regress all the transitions between 3+5th digit occupations observed in the data between 2018 and 2024 on dummies for low similarity and high similarity (relative to no similarity) between the origin and destination occupations, controlling for occupation fixed effects. Transitions to highly similar occupations are associated with 25% higher wage growth compared to the average wage growth. The wage growth is much higher (200% of the sample mean) when restricting to transitions involving an unemployment spell in between (E-U-E).

Nonetheless, drawing one occupation from the transition matrix allows us to compare respondents’ beliefs about similar occupations against beliefs about occupations that are common alternatives and as such more salient—but not necessarily more similar nor associated with higher wage changes.

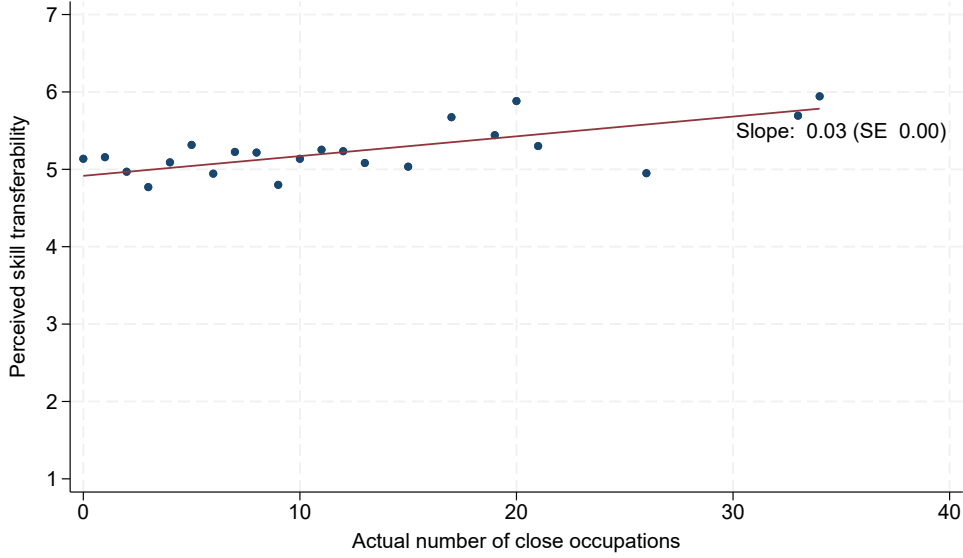
3 Worker Beliefs About Alternative Occupations

3.1 Beliefs About Skill Transferability

We begin by examining workers’ general perceptions about the transferability of their skills to other occupations. We asked respondents to rate how applicable they believe their skills are to other occupations on a seven-point scale (from “not at all transferable” to “extremely transferable”). We report a screenshot of the question shown to respondents (and translated in English) in Appendix B. Appendix Table A3 includes some summary statistics of respondents beliefs about their current occupation.

We benchmark these subjective assessments against objective measures of how many occupations actually require similar skills and perform similar tasks to the worker’s current occupation. Using the occupation similarity index, we count the number of occupations with a similarity rating of 4 or higher (on the 0-6 scale) to each worker’s occupation. This provides an objective measure of the breadth of each worker’s potential mobility options based on skill overlap. We find a positive but remarkably weak correlation between perceived skill transferability and this objective measure. A regression of perceived transferability on the

Figure 2: Beliefs about Skills Transferability and Actual Number of Similar Occupations



Notes: This figure is a binned scatterplot of respondents’ perceived skill transferability (measured on a 1 to 7 scale) over the number of occupations that can be considered “close”—that is, similar enough—to their current occupations. An occupation is considered close to the respondent’s current occupation if their similarity index is > 3 .

number of close occupations yields a slope coefficient of just 0.03, implying that respondents with a one-standard-deviation higher number of close occupations report only a 2%-of-a-standard-deviation higher skill transferability. This shows that workers with objectively more transferable skills do not perceive meaningfully greater transferability (Figure 2).

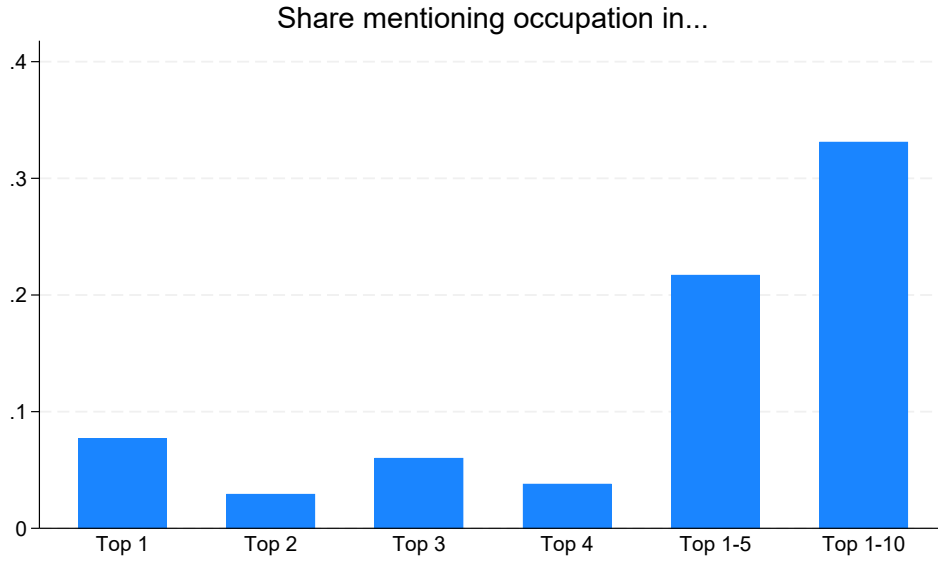
The disconnect between objective and perceived skill transferability suggests fundamental information gaps. Workers appear to form beliefs about skill transferability without systematic reference to the actual structure of occupational skill requirements in the labor market. This finding motivates our deeper investigation into beliefs about specific alternative occupations.

3.2 Open-Ended Beliefs About Similar Occupations

To complement our structured belief elicitation, we asked workers in an open-ended format to name the two occupations they believe have tasks and skill requirements most similar to their current occupation.³ We then manually classified responses into occupational categories using the taxonomy from Berufenet, the German equivalent for O*NET.

³Respondents are asked: “What other occupations do you think have tasks and skill requirements that are most similar to your occupation? Write the names of the two nearest occupations in the box below. Please try to name the occupations as accurately as possible.”

Figure 3: Share of Respondents Mentioning Most Similar Occupations



Notes: This figure reports the share of respondents mentioning an occupation in the top N occupations ranked by similarity index, when asked to list the two occupations most similar to theirs.

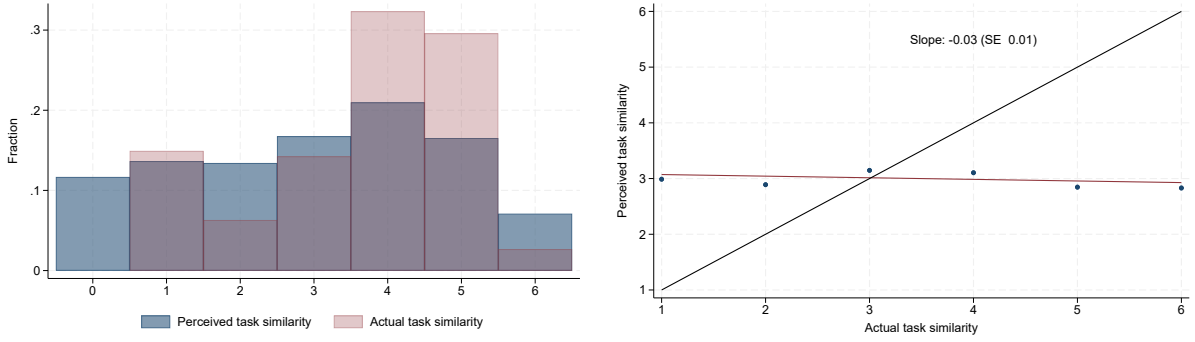
The open-ended responses reveal limited accuracy in workers' spontaneous assessments of occupational similarity. As shown in Figure 3, among all respondents only 8 percent mention the occupation that is most similar to theirs according to the objective similarity index, about 20 percent name at least one of the top five most similar occupations, 32 percent of respondents mention at least one occupation in the top ten objectively most similar occupations.

These patterns suggest that workers have limited awareness of the occupations that are objectively most similar to their own. Interestingly, respondents are slightly more likely to mention occupations that are highly ranked in the transition matrix—but not necessarily highly similar—suggesting that their spontaneous beliefs are shaped more by observed career patterns and by the salience of certain occupations rather than an accurate assessment of skill and task similarity. This implies that if workers had to start searching for a new job in a different occupation now without any further guidance and wanted to find a job where they could use their current set of skills, they would not know where to direct their search.

3.3 Beliefs about specific alternative occupations

Beliefs About Task Similarity of Specific Occupations Next we study whether workers have accurate beliefs about alternative occupations that are presented to them and are able to correctly assess the differences among these occupations. We start from beliefs about

Figure 4: Perceived vs. Actual Task Similarity of Alternative Occupations



Notes: Left panel: distribution of perceived (blue) and actual (red) task similarity across respondents and occupations. Right panel: binned scatterplot of perceived task similarity over actual task similarity. The red line is the fit line. 45 degree line in black.

the similarity of the specific alternative occupations selected for each respondent. For each alternative occupation, we asked workers to rate the similarity of said occupation to their current occupation on a scale from 0 (completely different) to 6 (extremely similar), matching the scale used in the objective similarity index. A screenshot of the question is included in Appendix B. Appendix Table A4 reports some summary statistics of respondents' beliefs about alternative occupations.

Workers systematically underestimate the similarity of alternative occupations to their current ones. As shown in Figure 4, the distribution of perceived similarity concentrates at lower levels than the distribution of actual similarity. On average, workers rate alternative occupations as less similar than the objective index suggests by approximately 0.5 points on the six-point scale. More strikingly, we find essentially zero correlation between perceived and actual similarity, with a slope coefficient of -0.03 (standard error 0.01) when regressing perceived similarity on actual similarity. Furthermore, most points of the binned scatterplot are largely below the 45 degree line, suggesting substantial underestimation of task similarity.

This systematic underestimation of the similarity across occupations has important implications. If workers underestimate how similar alternative occupations are to their current roles, they may overestimate the difficulty of transitioning to these occupations and underestimate their probability of success if they attempt such transitions. These misperceptions could substantially reduce workers' willingness to consider occupational mobility even when such moves would improve their labor market outcomes.

Beliefs About Licensing and Training Requirements Beyond task similarity, the costs of transitioning between occupations depend critically on regulatory requirements such as occupational licenses and the need for additional training or education. We elicited work-

ers’ beliefs about whether transitions to each alternative occupation would require obtaining a license and whether substantial retraining would be necessary.

Workers substantially overestimate both licensing and training requirements, as shown in Figures 5 and 6. For occupations that do not actually require a specific license, the majority of workers believe they would need to obtain one to make the transition. The fraction of workers who believe a license is required substantially exceeds the fraction of alternative occupations that genuinely require licensing.

Similarly, workers overestimate training requirements. When asked to assess the likelihood that they would need additional training to work in each alternative occupation (on a five-point scale from “definitely not” to “definitely yes”), workers’ assessments skew heavily toward believing training is necessary even for relatively similar occupations where skill overlap is high. Among workers who believe training or obtaining a license would be required, assessments of the difficulty or effort required to complete such processes cluster at moderate to high levels, as shown in Appendix Figures A2 and A3.

These overestimates of licensing and training requirements likely reflect genuine uncertainty about regulatory requirements and skill gaps. Occupational licensing regimes vary considerably across occupations and often involve complex requirements that are not transparent to workers outside the licensed occupation. Similarly, assessing skill gaps requires detailed knowledge of both one’s own capabilities and the requirements of alternative occupations, information that may be costly for employed workers to acquire.

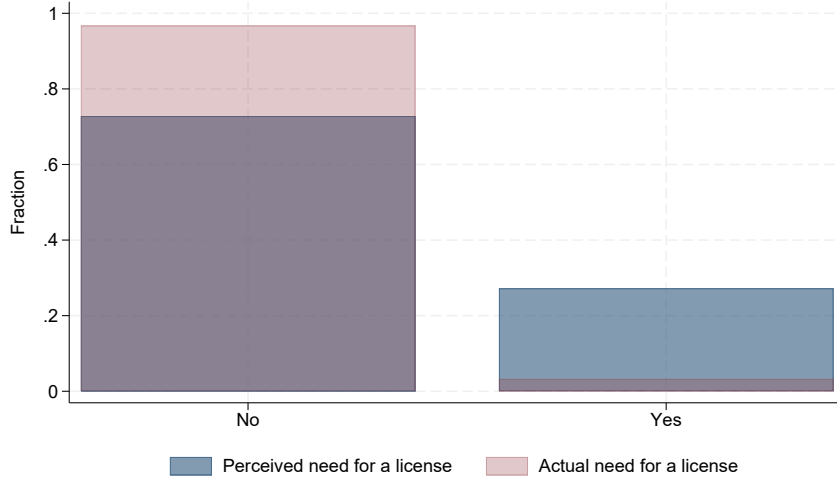
The systematic overestimation of costs suggests a reinforcing dynamic in information frictions: while workers underestimate how similar alternative occupations are to their current roles, they simultaneously overestimate the barriers to entry. Both biases work in the same direction, reducing perceived net benefits of occupational mobility and potentially leading to inefficiently low levels of occupational transitions.

Beliefs about median wage and wage change if moving to alternative occupations

Wage expectations represent a crucial determinant of mobility decisions. We elicited beliefs about wages in alternative occupations using two complementary approaches: we asked workers to estimate the median wage in each alternative occupation and to predict how their own wage would change if they were forced to find a job in each alternative occupation having six months to find one.

Workers systematically underestimate median wages in alternative occupations. On average, perceived median wages fall 4.78 percentage points below actual median wages. However, the distribution exhibits a long right tail, indicating that while most workers underestimate wages, some workers substantially overestimate them. This long right tail was also

Figure 5: Perceived vs. Actual Need to Obtain a License



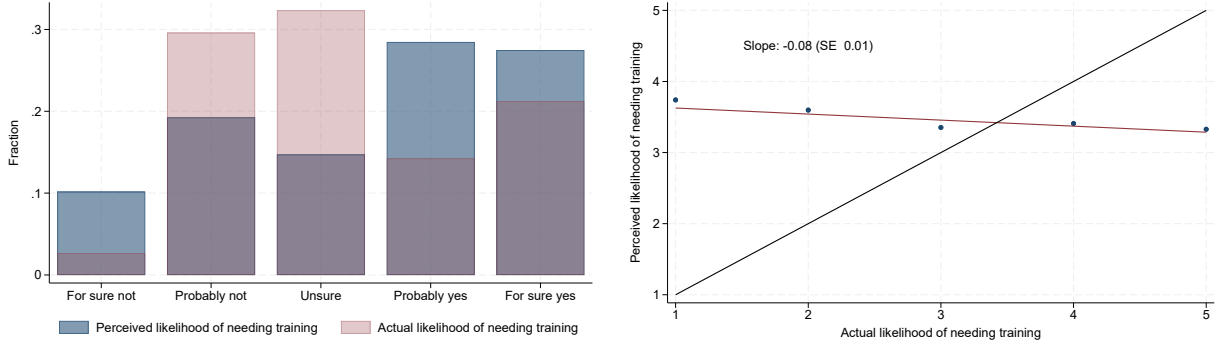
Notes: Distribution of perceived (blue) and actual (red) need to obtain a license across respondents and occupations.

observed in similar studies, such as [Jäger et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Miano \(2023\)](#).

Perceived median wages show evidence of anchoring to workers’ own current wages. Following [Jäger et al. \(2024\)](#), we residualize both perceived and actual median wages on the worker’s own wage and examine the correlation of residuals. We find a positive relationship with a slope of 0.63 (standard error 0.01). This suggests workers form beliefs about wages in alternative occupations partly by reference to their own earnings, potentially underweighting information about market-wide wage differences across occupations.

Workers also underestimate expected wage changes from occupational transitions. In Figure 8 we benchmark beliefs about wage changes against actual wage changes observed among occupation movers in the administrative data over the period 2018-2024. Because raw mover wage changes can be noisy—especially for occupation pairs with fewer transitions—we also implement an empirical Bayes (EB) correction ([Morris, 1983](#)) that shrinks imprecisely estimated averages toward the sample mean, and report both the simple-average and EB-corrected benchmarks in the figure. Perceived wage changes correlate positively with actual wage changes but substantially underestimate the true relationship: the slope is 0.313 (SE 0.050) against the simple-average benchmark and 0.393 (SE 0.052) against the EB-corrected benchmark, with most points falling well below the 45 degree line. Appendix Figure A4 repeats this exercise restricting to transitions from unemployment to employment, that are reasonably “less selected” compared to employment transitions. This benchmark wage change is also closer in spirit to the benchmark used in [Jäger et al. \(2024\)](#)—wage

Figure 6: Perceived vs. Actual Need for Retraining



Notes: Left panel: distribution of perceived (blue) and actual (red) likelihood of having to retrain in order to work in the occupation. Right panel: binned scatterplot of perceived likelihood over actual likelihood of having to retrain in order to work in the occupation. The red line is the fit line. 45 degree line in black.

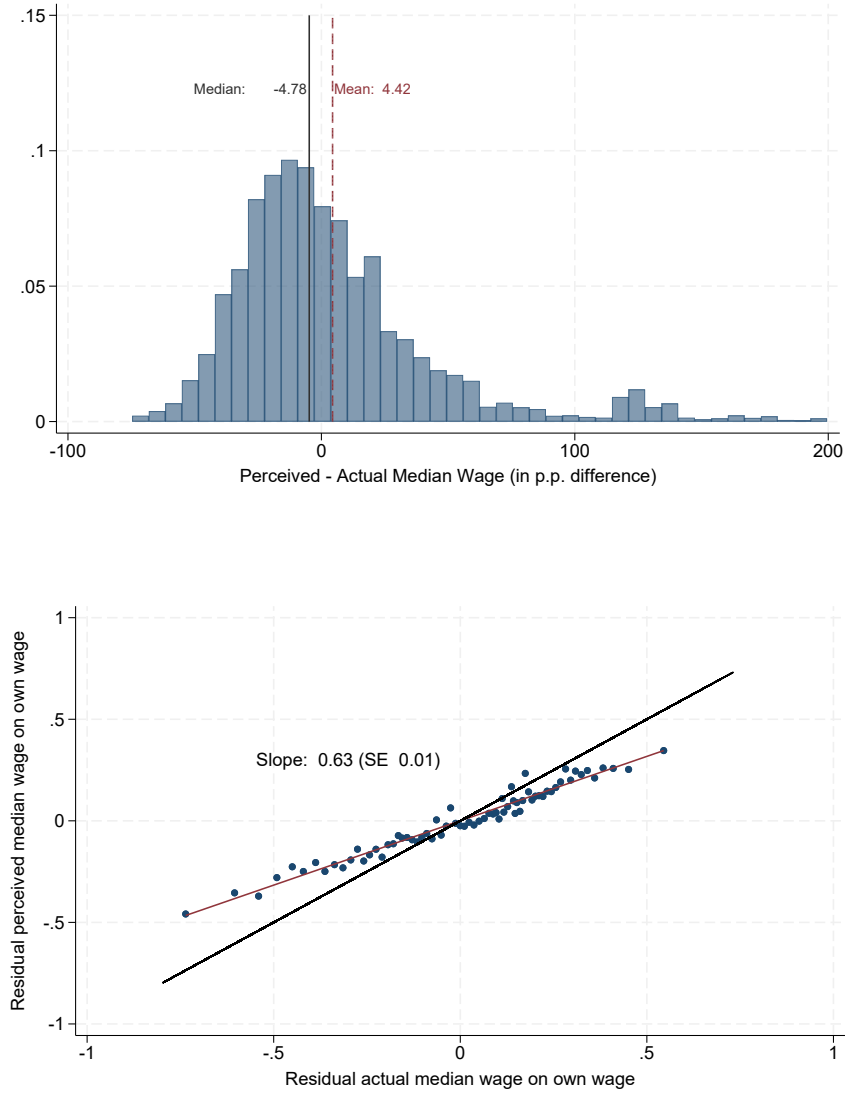
changes associated with involuntary coworkers moves. In this subsample the relationship is even weaker, with slopes of 0.007 (SE 0.021) against the simple-average benchmark and 0.035 (SE 0.026) against the EB-corrected benchmark. Interestingly, these correlations are smaller than the correlations between beliefs about within-occupation wage changes and objective benchmarks reported in Jäger et al. (2024), suggesting that workers are even less informed about opportunities in other occupations.

These patterns suggest workers face significant information constraints regarding wage outcomes in alternative occupations. The positive correlation between beliefs about wage changes and benchmark wage changes shows that respondents gave thoughtful answers that do not reflect pure noise. However, this correlation being weak implies that workers cannot perfectly infer wage opportunities from observable characteristics of occupations. This information friction may lead workers to forgo beneficial occupational transitions when potential wage gains are not readily apparent.

Beliefs About Automation and AI In the survey we also directly elicited beliefs about exposure to automation and AI. Workers vastly underestimate the share of tasks that can be automated in their own occupation. When we regress perceived automation potential on actual automation potential as measured by expert assessments (Grienberger, Janser and Lehmer, 2023), we obtain a slope coefficient of just 0.09 (standard error 0.01), indicating a very weak correlation, as reported in Appendix Figure A5.

Interestingly, as shown in Appendix Figure A6, workers are somewhat more accurate in assessing automation potential in alternative occupations, with a slope coefficient of 0.19 (standard error 0.01), though they still substantially underestimate exposure. This asym-

Figure 7: Beliefs about Wages in Alternative Occupations

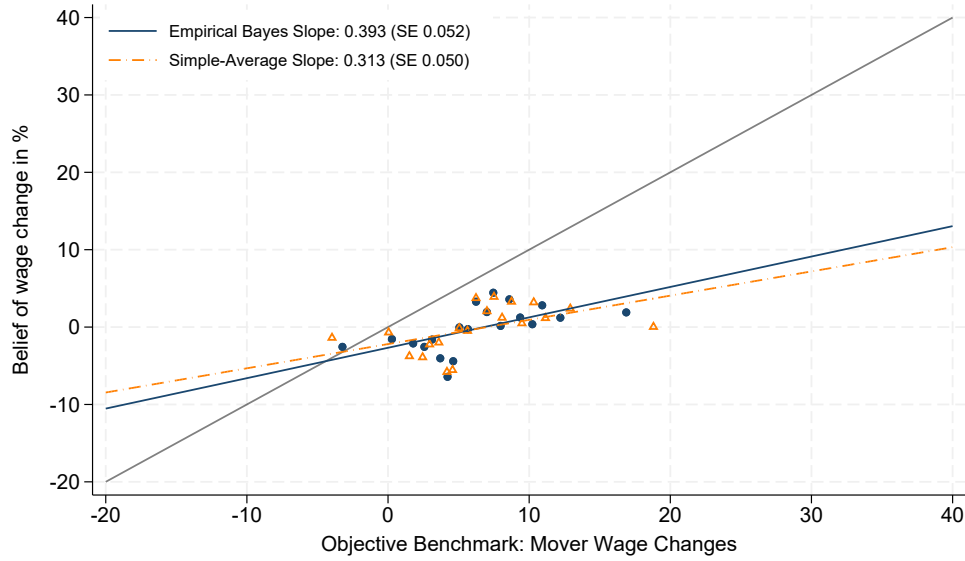


Notes: Top panel: distribution of misperception about median wage, defined as $(\text{perceived median wage} - \text{actual median wage}) / \text{actual median wage}$. Bottom panel: correlation between perceived and actual median wage, both residualized on respondents' own wage.

metry may reflect workers' motivated reasoning about their own occupations combined with greater objectivity when assessing alternatives.

Despite underestimating automation potential, most workers expect either no effect or even a positive effect of automation on their own earnings. This combination of underestimating technical feasibility of automation while remaining optimistic about personal consequences suggests workers may not fully internalize displacement risks from structural change. Such beliefs could lead to insufficient precautionary occupational mobility even when transitions would reduce long-run displacement risk.

Figure 8: Expected *vs* Benchmark Wage Changes if Moving to Alternative Occupations

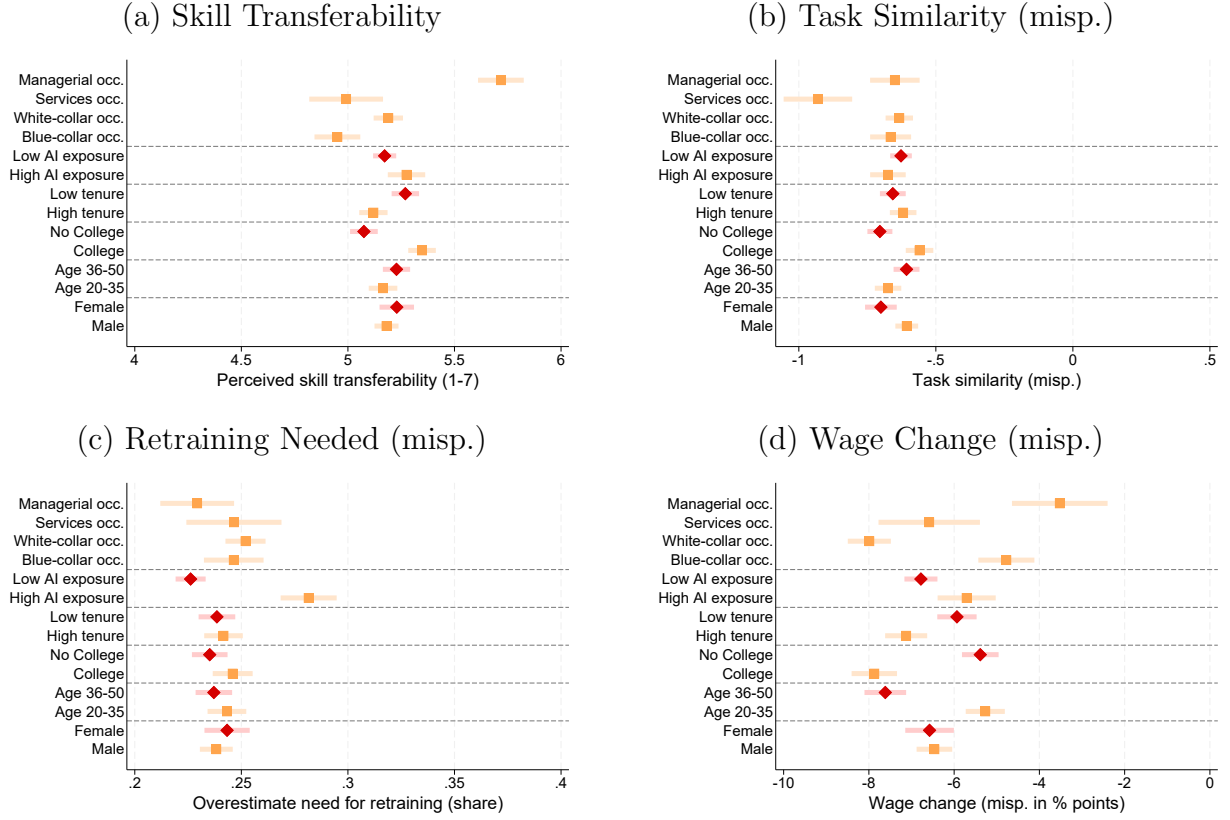


Notes: This figure plots a binned scatterplot of expected wage change over the benchmark actual wage change of occupation movers if moving to the alternative occupation, over the period 2018-2024. The dashed orange line reports the fit using the simple-average benchmark (slope 0.313, SE 0.050); the solid navy line reports the fit using the benchmark corrected with the empirical Bayes (EB) procedure of [Morris \(1983\)](#), which shrinks imprecisely estimated occupation-pair averages toward the sample mean (slope 0.393, SE 0.052). The 45 degree line is shown in gray for reference.

Internal Consistency of Beliefs As an additional check on the internal consistency of respondents' beliefs, Appendix Table [A5](#) reports regressions of two beliefs about a given alternative occupation—the expected wage change and the perceived probability of receiving a job offer—on respondents' beliefs about how similar that occupation is to theirs, need for retraining, and need for a license, both without (columns 1–2) and with (columns 3–4) individual fixed effects. Believing an alternative occupation to be more similar to one's own is strongly associated with expecting both a higher wage change and a higher probability of receiving a job offer there. Believing that an occupation requires more retraining or licensing is likewise associated with expecting a higher wage change—consistent with respondents treating training and licensing requirements as markers of occupation quality—but, in the case of perceived retraining needs, with a lower expected probability of receiving a job offer. These patterns are very similar with and without individual fixed effects, indicating that they are not just the result of some respondents being systematically more optimistic or extreme than others across all dimensions of belief, and instead reflect a coherent structure where workers reason jointly about the different features of alternative occupations.

These correlations suggest that beliefs about the similarity of alternative occupations—

Figure 9: Heterogeneity in Beliefs about Alternative Occupations



Notes: Panel (a) plots the average perceived skill transferability for the groups listed on the left. Panels (b), (c), and (d) plot the average misperception of the variable listed on top for the groups listed on the left. Misperceptions are defined as belief minus actual benchmark. Bars are 95% confidence intervals around the means.

and, coherently, the need to retrain or acquire a license—can shape workers’ perceptions of alternative occupations—how much they would make in that occupation and how easy it would be for them to obtain a job there—and hence influence their propensity to consider jobs in those occupations.

3.4 Heterogeneity in Beliefs

Heterogeneity by alternative occupation source Appendix Figure A7 breaks down misperceptions by the source of the alternative occupation. Recall that Alternatives 1 to 3 are drawn from the similarity matrix, in decreasing order of objective similarity to the respondent’s current occupation, while Alternative 4 is the occupation to which we observe the most transitions in the administrative data. Workers underestimate the similarity of alternatives drawn from the similarity matrix, but tend to overestimate the similarity of the alternative drawn from the transition matrix. Consistently, they overestimate the need for retraining for alternatives from the similarity matrix, while this misperception is much

closer to zero for the alternative drawn from the transition matrix. This pattern points to a salience or availability heuristic: workers appear relatively more familiar with, and hence more accurate about, occupations that are common destinations for workers in their occupation, even though these need not be the occupations objectively most similar to their own in terms of tasks and skill requirements, nor the occupations where they would earn the highest wages.

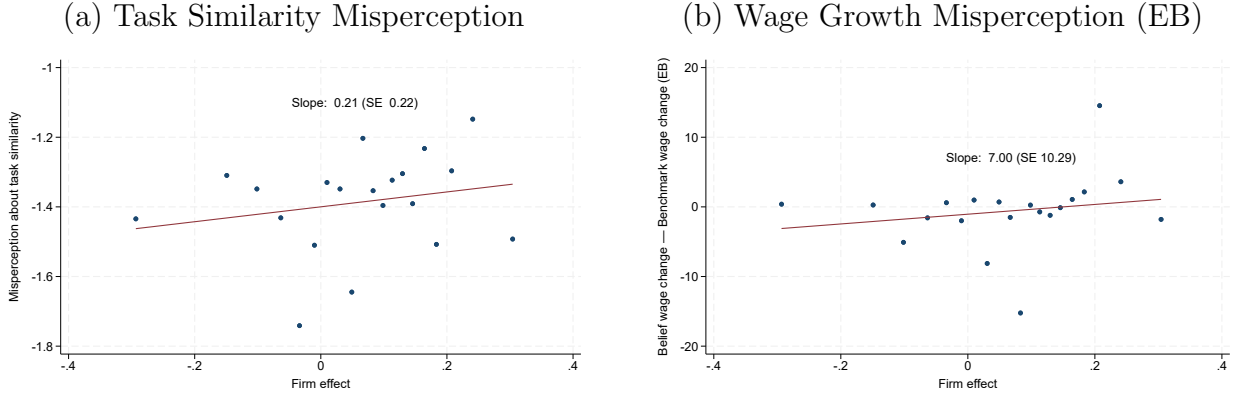
Heterogeneity by worker characteristics Do workers in different groups hold systematically different beliefs about alternative occupations? In Figure 9 we visualize the heterogeneity in beliefs about alternative occupations by plotting their averages for different groups of respondents. In particular, we classify respondents’ current occupations in blue-collar, white-collar—which include routine commercial and administrative occupations—services and managerial occupations, following Blossfeld (1985). In an alternative classification we split respondents’ current occupation into high- and low-AI-exposure occupations using the index developed by Eloundou et al. (2024) and adapted for German occupations. The index measures the share of the tasks usually performed by workers in a certain occupation that could be affected by large language models (LLMs). We define “High-AI-exposure” occupations the occupations in the top 10 percent of the index distribution across all occupations in Germany.

Respondents currently working in managerial occupations believe that their skills are more transferable than workers in white-collar, blue-collar or services occupations. College-graduates and low-tenure workers (respondents who have been at their firm for fewer years than the median respondent) also estimate a higher skill transferability.

Respondents in all groups underestimate the task similarity of alternative occupations and overestimate (relative to our benchmark) the wage change if they were to move to these occupations. A large share of respondents in each group overestimate that they will need to retrain in order to work in one of the alternative occupations. Workers in services occupations underestimate the task similarity of alternative occupations more severely. A much higher share of workers currently in high-AI-exposure occupations and, marginally, in white-collar, blue-collar or services occupations overestimate the need for retraining. Workers in these occupation groups and in high-AI-exposure occupations underestimate the wage change if moving to alternative occupations more severely. This heterogeneity is even starker when we restrict to beliefs about alternative occupations 1 and 2—the most similar ones to the respondent’s occupation according to the objective similarity matrix—as we show in Appendix Figure A9.

Given the overlap between many of the demographic and occupational groups, in Ap-

Figure 10: Misperceptions and Firm Effects



Notes: This figure plots binned scatterplots of respondents’ misperceptions against the firm effect of their employer, estimated over the period 2017-2023. The firm effect is the firm component from an AKM (Abowd-Kramarz-Margolis) two-way fixed effects decomposition of log wages into worker and firm components. Panel (a) reports the misperception about the task similarity of alternative occupations; panel (b) reports the misperception about wage growth in alternative occupations. Misperceptions are defined as belief – actual benchmark. The actual benchmark for the wage growth computed from the admin data is EB-adjusted.

pendix Figure A8 we regress misperceptions on a set of dummies for these groups, to evaluate the marginal contribution of each one to the misperceptions. This regression setting confirms the average patterns observed in Figure 9: workers in High-AI-exposure occupations underestimate the similarity more strongly and are more likely to overestimate the need for training. Workers in white-collar and services occupations underestimate the wage change if moving to alternative occupations more strongly.

Finally, we examine whether misperceptions vary with the quality of respondents’ current employer, as captured by the firm effect from an AKM decomposition (Abowd, Kramarz and Margolis, 1999) of wages estimated on 2017-2023 administrative data (Figure 10). Both the task similarity and wage growth misperceptions are positively correlated with firm effect—although these correlations are noisily estimated and not statistically significant—suggesting that workers at low-wage firms underestimate more severely opportunities for occupational mobility.

Taken together, this heterogeneity suggests that respondents who would benefit the most from occupational mobility—because they are in occupations more at risk of being displaced by automation or AI or work in lower-paying firms—underestimate the benefits and overestimate the costs of moving to an alternative occupation more severely.

4 Beliefs and Search Intentions

Having documented systematic information gaps in workers' beliefs about alternative occupations, we now examine whether these beliefs relate to stated mobility intentions. If workers' beliefs about alternative occupations genuinely influence their decisions rather than merely reflecting measurement error, we should observe strong correlations between beliefs and willingness to search for jobs in other occupations.

4.1 Occupations Workers Would Consider

First, we asked respondents an open-ended question about which occupations they would seriously consider if looking for a job in a different occupation, allowing them to name up to two. This provides a revealed measure of which alternative occupations workers view as most attractive, unconstrained by the specific alternatives we selected for the detailed belief elicitation.

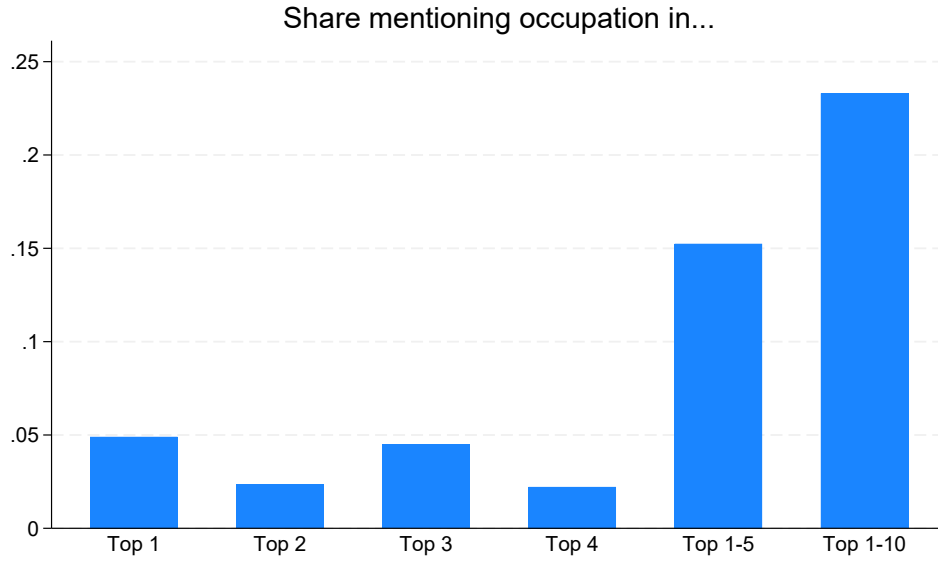
As shown in Figure 11, when we examine where the occupations workers mention fall in the objective similarity distribution, we find that only a small share of workers mention occupations that are objectively most similar to their current occupation. Among respondents who name specific alternative occupations, only 15 percent mention at least one of the top four most similar occupations according to the objective index, 24 percent mention at least one of the top 10 most similar occupations. This concentration is lower than what we observed in the earlier open-ended question about similar occupations (Figure 3).

Furthermore, only approximately 40 percent of respondents mention one or both of the occupations they earlier identified as most similar to their own. These patterns suggest that there is some reasonable internal consistency in workers' assessments, which, however, are often biased by incorrect beliefs about similarity between occupations, as we previously demonstrated. At the same time, they also show that most respondents weight other factors when thinking about alternative occupations they would move to. This motivates the need to study the relation between mobility intentions and a broad set of beliefs about alternative occupations. We proceed to this analysis in the following section.

4.2 Correlations Between Beliefs and Mobility Intentions

We examine the relationship between beliefs about alternative occupations and stated probability of looking for a new job in those occupations using a regression framework. For each alternative occupation shown to each respondent, we regress the stated probability of looking for a job in that occupation on the beliefs elicited about that occupation, controlling for the

Figure 11: What Alternative Occupations Would Workers Consider?



Notes: This figure reports the share of respondents mentioning an occupation in the top N occupations ranked by similarity index, when asked to list the two occupations they would consider if they had to look for a job in another occupation.

corresponding objective benchmark, as well as personal characteristics, tenure at worker's current job, current job satisfaction, and perceived skill fit in the current job.

These regressions reveal strong correlations between beliefs and mobility intentions. Workers who perceive greater task similarity to an alternative occupation report 0.35 standard deviations higher probability of looking for a job in that occupation. Workers who believe they would need retraining report 0.23 standard deviations lower probability, while beliefs about licensing requirements display a smaller but still statistically significant correlation.

Perceived job offer probability exhibits a very strong relationship, with a one standard deviation increase in expected offer probability associated with 0.37 standard deviations higher search probability. Expected wage changes also matter substantially. Workers who believe they would earn more in an alternative occupation report 0.16 standard deviations higher probability of searching in that occupation. Beliefs about median wages in the alternative occupation show an additional positive correlation of 0.10 standard deviations even after controlling for expected own wage changes, suggesting workers value access to occupations with higher average wages independent of their personal expected outcomes.

Interestingly, perceived automation potential in alternative occupations shows essentially zero relationship with mobility intentions. This is consistent with most workers believing

Table 3: Beliefs and Search Intentions

	Prob. Looking for New Job in Alternative Occupation (1)
Belief similarity	0.344*** (0.0143)
Belief retraining needed	-0.224*** (0.0155)
Belief license needed	-0.0308** (0.0150)
Belief job offer prob.	0.362*** (0.0184)
Belief wage change	0.155*** (0.0156)
Belief median wage	0.0718*** (0.0197)
Belief substitution potential	0.00778 (0.0151)
Observations	6440
Individual controls	Yes
Objective benchmarks	Yes

Notes: All variables in the regression are standardized so they have mean 0 and standard deviation 1, hence coefficients represent partial correlations. Each correlation is estimated in a separate regression which also includes the relevant objective benchmark for the specific belief, personal characteristics, tenure at current job, current job satisfaction, perceived skill fit with current job. Sample: respondents who did not receive any treatment. Each observation is respondent $\times$ alternative occupation. Robust standard error in parentheses.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

that automation and AI will have a positive (or no) effect on their earnings.

These correlations provide several important insights. First, the strong relationships between beliefs and intentions suggest that workers' stated beliefs represent genuine inputs into mobility decisions rather than merely reflecting actual heterogeneity across occupations or measurement error. The magnitudes of these correlations are economically meaningful, implying that shifts in beliefs of realistic size may be associated with substantial changes in mobility intentions.

Second, the pattern of correlations accords well with economic theory. Beliefs that increase perceived benefits of transitions (similarity, offer probability, wages) positively predict mobility intentions, while beliefs that increase perceived costs (retraining needs) negatively predict mobility. This sensible pattern increases confidence that our belief measures capture economically relevant variables.

Third, the limited role of automation beliefs suggests workers may not fully incorporate displacement risks into mobility decisions, consistent with our earlier finding that workers

underestimate these risks. This disconnect between objective exposure to structural change and behavioral response motivates our information treatments focused on displacement risk.

5 Information Treatments

5.1 Experimental Design

To examine whether information provision can shift beliefs and mobility intentions, we implemented five randomized information treatments. First, we split respondents in three groups, as reported in Appendix Table A2, according to their potential eligibility for one or more treatments. Respondents who work in occupations that do not have any similar enough alternative occupation where the median wage is higher than the median wage in their current occupation are not considered eligible for any treatment. Indeed, for these respondents moving to a similar alternative occupation would likely imply a wage loss and hence would not be an improvement with respect to their current job. Of the remaining respondents, those who work in occupations that have a high “substitution potential”—meaning a high share of tasks that can be automated/performed by AI—are considered eligible for both the displacement treatment and the benefits and costs treatments. The remaining respondents are only eligible for the benefits and costs treatments.

Workers were randomly assigned to one of the three treatments or to the control group. Some respondents received both the displacement and the benefits or costs treatments, generating five treatment groups. The randomization was performed within treatment eligibility group, ensuring that we have a comparable set of treated and control units for each treatment. Some screenshots from the treatments are included in Appendix B. Respondents in the control group did not receive any piece of information and jumped directly to the remainder of the survey. All treated workers were presented with two alternative occupations selected from the pool of alternatives shown earlier. These occupations were chosen to be the most similar to the respondent’s current occupation and to have median wages higher than the median wage in the respondent’s occupation, ensuring that the alternatives represented potentially attractive and welfare-improving options. The specific treatments provided different types of information about the two alternative occupations.

Benefits Treatment This treatment provided information on the wage distribution (25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles) in each alternative occupation and qualitative information about the ratio of job vacancies to job seekers, indicating whether finding a job in that occupation would be relatively easy or difficult.

Costs Treatment This treatment provided information about whether workers would need to complete additional training or acquire a license to work in each alternative occupation.

Displacement Treatment This treatment began with a primer on the increasing risk of displacement due to structural transformations in the labor market. It then provided information about the share of automatable tasks in both the worker’s current occupation and each alternative occupation allowing workers to assess their relative exposure to displacement risk.⁴

Some respondents eligible for the displacement treatment also received the benefit or the cost treatment, creating two interacted treatment groups.

Displacement + Benefits Treatment Respondents in this treatment group received the information provided in the displacement treatment plus the information provided in the benefits treatment, allowing us to examine whether information about displacement risk amplifies the effect of information about benefits.

Displacement + Costs Treatment Respondents in this treatment group received the information about displacement plus the information provided in the costs treatment, testing whether highlighting displacement risk affects how workers process information about barriers to occupational mobility.

Following the treatments, we re-elicited beliefs about the similarity of alternative occupations, the wage change if moving to alternative occupations, and the need to retrain or obtain a license, to measure effects of the treatments on knowledge and expectations. We elicited these beliefs in a slightly different and more qualitative way compared to the pre-treatment questions in order to minimize repetitions that could be unpleasant for respondents or prompt stronger experimenter demand. We then elicited mobility intentions, including the probability of looking for a job in the same occupation, in any different occupation, in each of the two treated alternative occupations specifically, and in the untreated alternative occupations shown earlier in the survey.

Table 4: Treatment Effects on Beliefs about Alternative Occupations

	Similarity	Earn more or less	Training or license necessary
Benefits T.	0.0608* (0.0367)	0.154*** (0.0233)	0.0155* (0.00840)
Costs T.	0.185*** (0.0376)	0.0348* (0.0203)	-0.0852*** (0.0104)
Displacement T.	0.0583 (0.0639)	0.0701** (0.0337)	0.0158 (0.0142)
Displacement x Benefits T.	0.0404 (0.0916)	-0.0560 (0.0551)	-0.0221 (0.0197)
Displacement x Costs T.	0.0710 (0.0939)	-0.0451 (0.0508)	0.0100 (0.0241)
Observations	7568	7568	7568
Control mean	3.52	3.09	0.89
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior beliefs	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are post-treatment beliefs about skill similarity (0-6 scale), likelihood of earning more or less if moving to the alternative occupation (1-5 scale) and need of acquiring a license or retraining (0-1) for the alternative occupation. The regressors include dummies for each treatment and interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments. Controls include gender, education, age, and the corresponding pre-treatment belief. Observations are at the respondent $\times$ alternative occupation level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

5.2 Treatment Effects on Beliefs

In order to study the effects of the treatments on respondents’ beliefs we estimate the specification:

$$y_{i,o,post} = \alpha + \beta_B T_i^B + \beta_C T_i^C + \beta_D T_i^D + \beta_{DB} T_i^D * T_i^B + \beta_{DC} T_i^D * T_i^C + \gamma y_{i,o,prior} + X_i' \delta + \varepsilon_{i,o} \quad (1)$$

Where respondent i post-treatment beliefs about occupation o are regressed on indicator variables for the benefits, costs and displacement treatments and their interactions. We include prior beliefs about occupation o in the specification, following [Fuster and Zafar \(2023\)](#), in order to estimate the treatment effect on beliefs updating and control for individual heterogeneity in beliefs at baseline. Even if the treatments were randomly assigned we include some individual controls—gender, education, age—to improve the precision of the estimates.

The information treatments successfully shifted beliefs about the alternative occupations they targeted in the expected direction, as shown in Table 4. The benefits treatment

⁴117 respondents received a “Green-transition framed” displacement treatment, where the primer about the increasing risk of displacement was followed by information about the share of environmentally damaging tasks in their own current occupation and in alternative occupations. Given the very small number of respondents who received this version of the treatment we do not analyze it separately.

increased the perceived likelihood of earning more in alternative occupations by 0.16 and increased the perceived task similarity index by 0.06, corresponding to 4 percent of a standard deviation. The costs treatment increased the perceived similarity index by 0.18 or 10 percent of a standard deviation and reduced the perceived likelihood of needing to retrain or acquire a license by 8 percentage points.

The displacement treatment increased the perceived likelihood of earning more if moving to the alternative occupations—0.07 or 7 percent of a standard deviation—while it did not have a statistically significant effect on the perceived similarity or probability of needing retraining. The combined displacement and benefits treatment shows negative interaction effects, suggesting that providing both types of information simultaneously may lead to more complex processing than providing each separately, or some plateauing in the potential effect of information.

Importantly, these first-stage effects show that the treatment induced substantial shifts in beliefs relative to control group means. For the training/licensing outcome, where the control mean is 0.89, the costs treatment reduces the perceived necessity of retraining or obtaining a license by nearly 10 percent. For the perceived earnings changes, where the control mean is 3.09 on a five-point scale, the benefits treatment shifts beliefs by approximately 5 percent.

We also observe some modest spillover effects across treatment dimensions. The benefits treatment slightly increases the perceived necessity of training or licensing suggesting that information about positive aspects of alternative occupations may prompt workers to consider barriers they had not previously weighed carefully. Similarly, the costs treatment slightly increases the perceived likelihood of earning more. These spillovers across belief dimensions indicate that information provision triggers broader updating of mental models about alternative occupations, as we would expect. However, the magnitudes of these spillover effects are much smaller than those of the direct effects, suggesting that the treatments overwhelmingly operate through the beliefs they are designed to target.

5.3 Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions

We now move to analyzing the effects of the treatments on respondents' mobility intentions. To this aim we estimate the following reduced-form specification:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta_B T_i^B + \beta_C T_i^C + \beta_D T_i^D + \beta_{DB} T_i^D * T_i^B + \beta_{DC} T_i^D * T_i^C + Z_i' \gamma + X_i' \delta + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Where y_i is respondent's stated probability of looking for a new job in the 12 months following the survey in their same occupation, in any different occupation, in the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatment, or the alternative occupations not mentioned in the

Table 5: Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions

	Probability of looking for a new job in		Treated Alternative Occ.	Untreated Alternative Occ.
	Same occupation	Different occupation		
Benefits T.	-0.415 (1.298)	1.463 (1.131)	3.382*** (0.711)	2.051*** (0.729)
Costs T.	0.354 (1.320)	1.912* (1.160)	3.387*** (0.705)	1.768** (0.737)
Displacement T.	1.389 (2.271)	4.041** (1.950)	4.835*** (1.257)	2.156* (1.226)
Displacement x Benefits T.	-3.054 (3.240)	-4.412 (2.830)	-3.116* (1.843)	-3.228* (1.802)
Displacement X Costs T.	-7.634** (3.062)	-8.183*** (2.670)	-3.747** (1.753)	-4.264** (1.700)
Observations	3516	3474	7055	7042
Control mean	35.21	22.98	14.35	15.87
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are respondent's stated probability (0-100 scale) of looking for a new job in the 12 months following the survey in the current respondent's occupation, any different occupation, the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatment, the alternative occupations not mentioned in the treatment. The regressors include dummies for each treatment and interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments. Controls include gender, education, age, tenure at current job and tenure squared, perceived skill fit for the current job, respondent's satisfaction for the current job. Observations are at the respondent level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

treatment. For the last two variables the specification is at the respondent x occupation level. In addition to controlling for respondent's characteristics, we include respondent's tenure at the current job and tenure squared, their perceived skill fit for their current job, and their satisfaction for the current job in the specification. These variables are strong predictors of workers' baseline mobility intentions and by including them we increase the precision of the estimates and make sure that our results are not driven by unobserved heterogeneity among treated and untreated respondents.

The information treatments produce meaningful increases in stated mobility intentions. For the treated alternative occupations, the benefits treatment increases the probability of looking for a job in those occupations by 3.6 percentage points, representing a 25 percent increase relative to the control mean of 14.4 or 15 percent of a standard deviation. The costs treatment produces a similar increase of 3.4 percentage points.

The displacement treatment generates an even larger effect, increasing the probability to search for a new job in one of the treated occupations by 4.7 percentage points, or 33 percent relative to the control group mean. This stronger effect suggests that information about displacement risks may be particularly salient for workers or may operate through additional channels beyond simply updating beliefs about specific occupation characteristics.

The combined treatments show interesting patterns. The displacement plus benefits

treatment exhibits a negative interaction effect of 3.3 percentage points, suggesting diminishing returns to providing multiple types of information simultaneously. The displacement plus costs treatment shows an even stronger negative interaction of 3.8 percentage points.

Treatment effects extend beyond the specific occupations featured in the treatments. Workers receiving information treatments also increase their stated probability of looking for jobs in the untreated alternative occupations shown earlier in the survey. The benefits treatment raises this probability by 2.0 percentage points, while the costs treatment increases it by 1.4 percentage points. These spillover effects suggest that information about specific alternative occupations causes workers to reconsider their general openness to occupational mobility rather than merely shifting interest toward the particular occupations featured.

We also examine effects on within-current-occupation search and find limited impact. None of the treatments significantly affect the probability of looking for a new job in respondent’s current occupation, with point estimates ranging from slightly negative to slightly positive. This null result suggests the treatments specifically increase interest in cross-occupational moves rather than generally increasing job search propensity, as we would expect given the focus of the treatments.

5.4 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Heterogeneity by pre-treatment beliefs In Table 6 we explore heterogeneity in the effect of the treatments conditioning on respondents’ pre-treatment beliefs. The effect of the Benefits treatment is entirely driven by respondents who initially underestimate the median wage in alternative occupations. These respondents display a higher propensity to search in alternative occupations, after having received information that makes them revise upward their estimate of the wage distribution in alternative occupations. Respondents who initially overestimate the median wage in alternative occupations do not react to the treatment. We find a similar pattern for the Costs treatment: respondents who find out, contrary to their prior beliefs, that they do not need to acquire a license or retrain in order to work in one of the alternative occupations display a higher likelihood of searching for a job in one of the alternative occupations; respondents who are negatively surprised by the treatment do not change their mobility intentions. Similarly, respondents who initially underestimate the automation potential of their occupation react strongly to the Displacement treatment by increasing their propensity to look for a job in one of the alternative occupations. Heterogeneous treatment effects on beliefs, reported in Appendix Table A6, are consistent with these patterns.

These results show that the treatments work through genuine information updating rather

Table 6: Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions – Heterogeneity by Pre-Treatment Beliefs

	Probability of looking for a new job in	
	Treated Alternative Occ.	Untreated Alternative Occ.
Benefits T. x Med. wage under	4.863*** (0.850)	2.986*** (0.963)
Benefits T. x Med. wage over	1.521 (1.074)	1.523 (0.953)
Med. wage under	-4.045*** (0.727)	-3.201*** (0.707)
Costs T. x Costs under	0.647 (2.929)	1.047 (1.330)
Costs T. x Costs over	3.577*** (0.712)	2.244*** (0.810)
Costs under	3.716** (1.726)	7.066*** (0.809)
Displacement T. x Own displacement under	6.183*** (1.367)	3.530*** (1.296)
Displacement T. x Own displacement over	11.81 (17.68)	-4.826 (13.66)
Own displacement under	-5.074*** (0.749)	-3.689*** (0.787)
Observations	6129	6099
Control mean	14.30	15.89
Individual controls	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are respondent’s stated probability (0-100 scale) of looking for a new job in the 12 months following the survey in the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatment, or the alternative occupations not mentioned in the treatment. The regressors include dummies for each treatment interacted with dummies for respondents who underestimate or overestimate the median wage in alternative occupations, the need for retraining and acquiring a license to work in alternative occupations, and the substitution potential of their current occupation. See notes to Table 5. Observations are at the occupation x respondent level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

than simple priming, and further confirm that the effects are not driven by experimenter demand. These patterns also provide some evidence of asymmetric updating, as respondents who are negatively surprised do not significantly reduce their propensity to move to one of the alternative occupations relative to the control group.

Heterogeneity by worker characteristics We observe some variation in treatment effects across workers’ baseline personality traits. As shown in Table A7, respondents who are more open to new experiences are more responsive to the treatments, especially the Benefits one. This finding suggests personality traits related to exploration and flexibility amplify responsiveness to information about labor market opportunities.

We find less variation, instead, across workers’ demographics. Younger (age below 35) respondents respond somewhat more strongly to treatments than older (age above 35) respondents, especially to the combined displacement plus benefits or costs treatments, as reported in Table A9. This age gradient may reflect younger workers having longer time horizons over which to benefit from improved occupational matches, facing lower costs of retraining given more years to amortize human capital investments, or simply being in earlier career stages where occupational identity remains more fluid. Women and men, and college and non-college educated respondents show broadly the same responsiveness to treatments, as reported in Tables A10 and A8. The fact that college graduates and workers with vocational training do not differ significantly in treatment responsiveness suggests that formal education does not strongly predict how workers process information about alternative occupations, perhaps because the specific knowledge required to assess occupational opportunities is not systematically conveyed through educational systems.

6 Persistence of Treatment Effects

To assess whether information treatments generate lasting changes in beliefs and intentions versus merely temporary shifts, we conducted a follow-up survey nine months after the main survey. We invited all respondents who completed the main survey to participate in the follow-up. Approximately 1,700 respondents completed the follow-up survey, representing a 38 percent recontact rate. Reassuringly, we did not observe any selection in the follow-up based on treatment status in the main survey.

The follow-up survey repeated key questions about beliefs and mobility intentions but did not include additional information treatments. This design allows us to measure whether the effect of the information received in the main survey persists nine months post-treatment.

Appendix Table A11 shows that some treatment effects on beliefs persist nine months after the initial intervention, though with varying strength across outcomes and treatments. The benefits treatment still has a positive and statistically significant effect on the perceived likelihood of earning more in the treated alternative occupations. The cost treatment also has a positive effect on perceived similarity and training/licensing requirement, however these are noisier and not statistically significant. The displacement treatment exhibits the strongest persistence, maintaining a strong positive effect on perceived likelihood of earning more in alternative occupations.

Treatment effects on mobility intentions show remarkable persistence nine months post-intervention, as reported in Table 7. Respondents who were exposed to the costs and, even more so, the displacement treatment are still significantly more likely to search for a job in

Table 7: Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions in Follow-up Survey

	Probability of looking for a new job in			
	Same occupation	Different occupation	Treated Alternative Occ.	Untreated Alternative Occ.
Benefits T.	1.887 (2.677)	0.910 (2.410)	1.831 (1.362)	0.448 (1.411)
Costs T.	4.291 (2.641)	0.785 (2.275)	3.195** (1.317)	2.336* (1.396)
Displacement T.	-3.149 (4.236)	2.133 (4.024)	8.102*** (2.682)	5.753** (2.688)
Displacement x Benefits T.	1.610 (6.386)	0.315 (5.977)	-2.502 (3.662)	-2.532 (3.654)
Displacement x Costs T.	-2.751 (6.109)	-2.788 (5.732)	-10.61*** (3.385)	-9.633*** (3.511)
Observations	989	971	1979	1983
Control mean	35.45	25.86	14.10	16.50
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are respondent’s stated probability (0-100 scale) of looking for a new job in the 12 months after the follow-up survey in the current respondent’s occupation, any different occupation, the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatments, the alternative occupations not mentioned in the treatment. The regressors include dummies for each treatment received in the main survey and interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments. Controls include gender, education, age. Observations are at the respondent level in columns 1 and 2, and at the respondent x occupation level in columns 3 and 4. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment were excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

one of the treated alternative occupations—by 3.2 and 8.1 percentage points, respectively. These treatments also have a persistent “spillover” effect on the likelihood to search for a job in one of the other alternative occupations that were mentioned in the survey but were not in the treatments. The effect of the benefits treatment, instead, does not appear to be equally long-lasting: albeit positive, it is smaller and not statistically significant. Considering both the effects on beliefs and on mobility intentions, information about displacement risks shows the strongest persistence, suggesting that respondents are particularly sensitive to this kind of information or that it fills particularly important gaps in workers’ mental models.

7 Conclusions

This paper provides comprehensive evidence on workers’ knowledge about opportunities for occupational mobility and demonstrates that information provision can meaningfully shift beliefs and mobility intentions. We document substantial information frictions: workers systematically underestimate how similar alternative occupations are to their current roles, overestimate barriers to entry, and underestimate potential wage gains from occupational transitions. These beliefs strongly correlate with stated willingness to change occupations, suggesting information constraints genuinely affect mobility decisions.

Randomized information treatments successfully update beliefs and increase mobility intentions, with effects persisting nine months post-treatment. Information about displacement risks from automation and AI proves particularly effective, suggesting this type of information fills especially important gaps in workers' mental models. Treatment effects extend beyond the specific occupations featured, indicating that information provision triggers broader reconsideration of occupational mobility options.

These findings contribute to our understanding of labor market frictions and have important implications for policy. As structural transformations reshape occupational demand, workers' ability to navigate occupational transitions becomes increasingly important for maintaining employment and earnings. Information frictions may impede such transitions, leading to inefficient labor allocation and elevated displacement risk for workers in declining occupations.

Our results suggest that relatively low-cost information interventions can meaningfully improve workers' knowledge and increase their consideration of occupational mobility. Such interventions may complement other policies supporting labor market adjustment to structural change.

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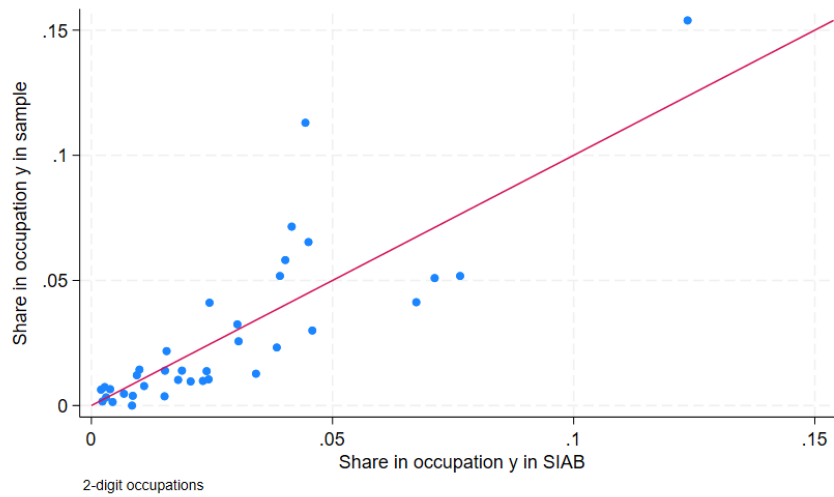
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Appendix

A Additional Figures and Tables

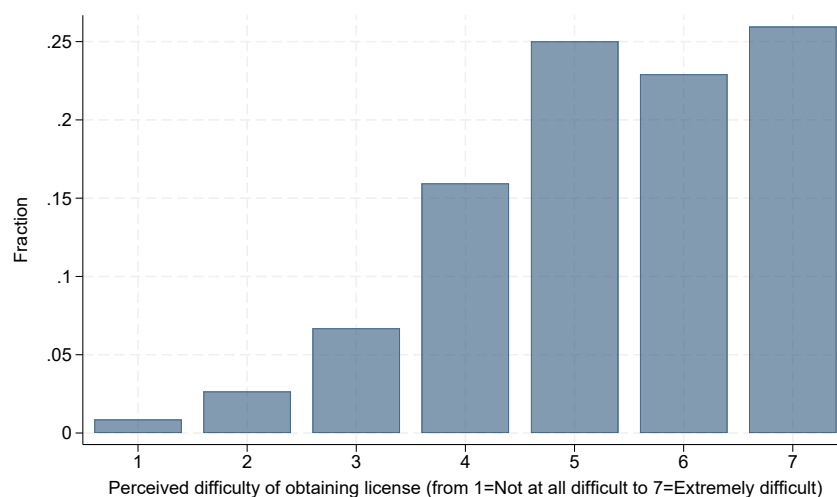
A Additional Figures

Figure A1: Occupation Composition in Survey vs. Population



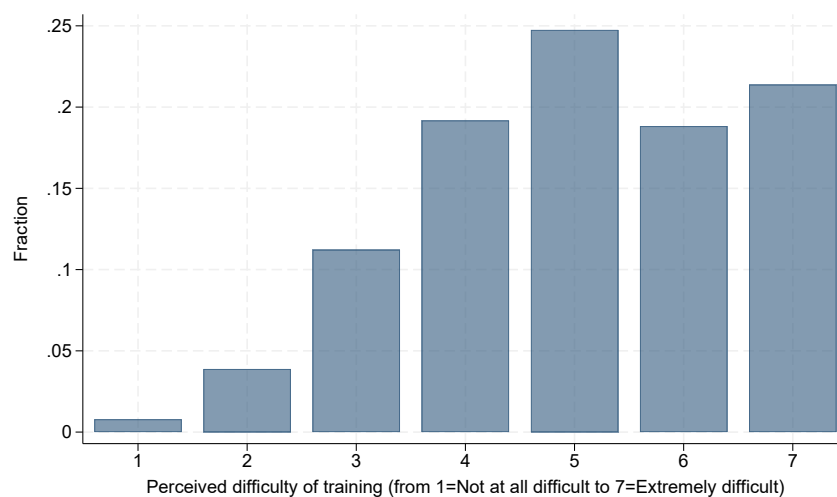
Notes: This figure plots the share of respondents by 2-digit SOC occupation group in the Sample of Integrated Employment Biographies (SIAB) against the share of respondents by 2-digit SOC occupation group in the main survey sample. The SIAB is restricted to full-time wage and salaried workers between 20 and 50 years old.

Figure A2: Perceived Effort Required to Obtain a License to Work in Alternative Occupation



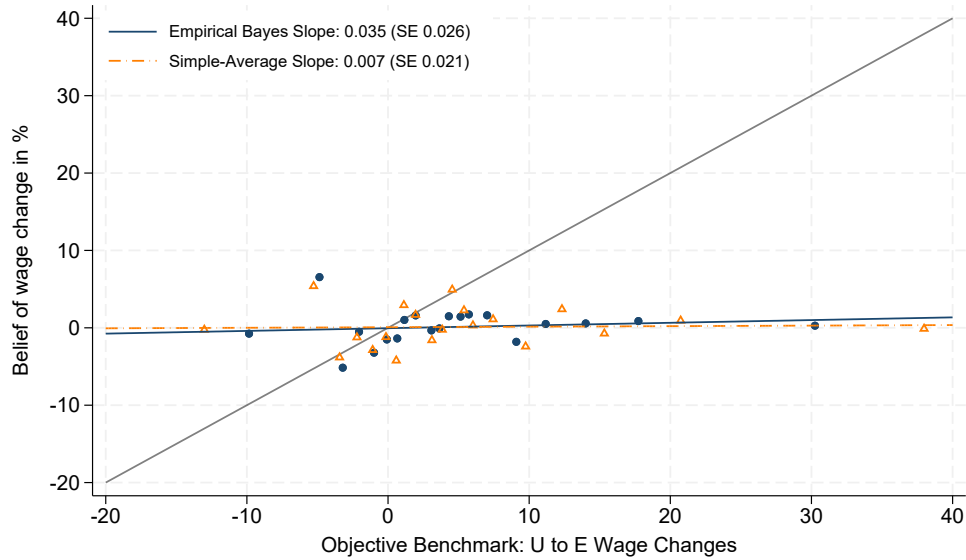
Notes: The figure shows the distribution of the perceived effort required to obtain a license to work in alternative occupations.

Figure A3: Perceived Effort Required to Retrain in order to Work in Alternative Occupation



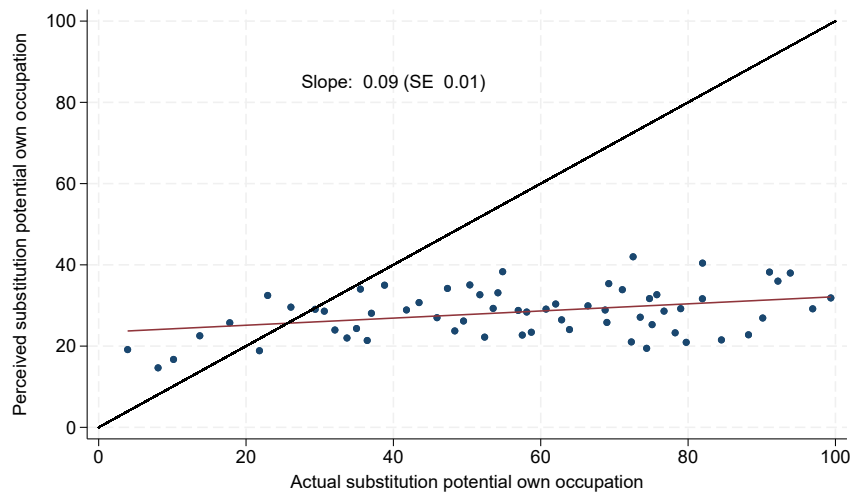
Notes: The figure shows the distribution of the perceived effort required to retrain to work in alternative occupations.

Figure A4: Expected *vs* Benchmark Wage Changes if Moving to Alternative Occupations – Unemployment to Employment



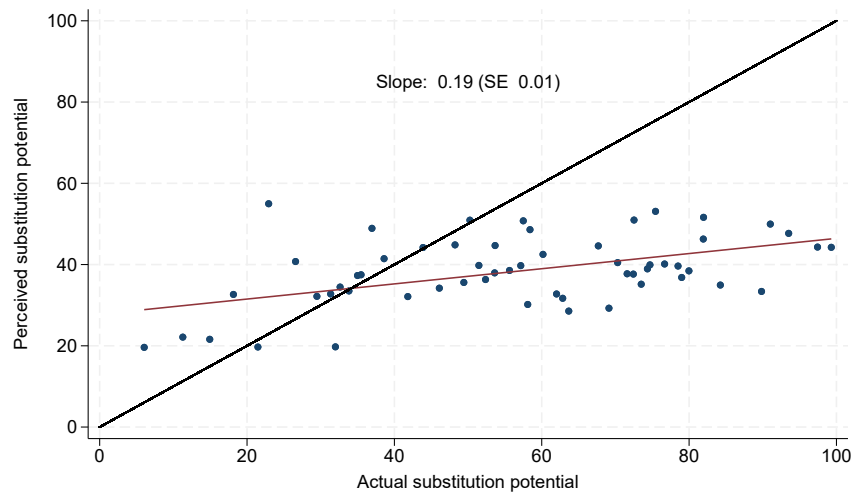
Notes: This figure plots a binned scatterplot of expected wage change over the benchmark actual wage change of occupation movers transitioning from unemployment to employment, over the period 2018-2024. The dashed orange line reports the fit using the simple-average benchmark (slope 0.007, SE 0.021); the solid navy line reports the fit using the benchmark corrected with the empirical Bayes (EB) procedure of [Morris \(1983\)](#), which shrinks imprecisely estimated occupation-pair averages toward the sample mean (slope 0.035, SE 0.026). The 45 degree line is shown in gray for reference.

Figure A5: Perceived vs. Actual Substitution Potential Own Occupation



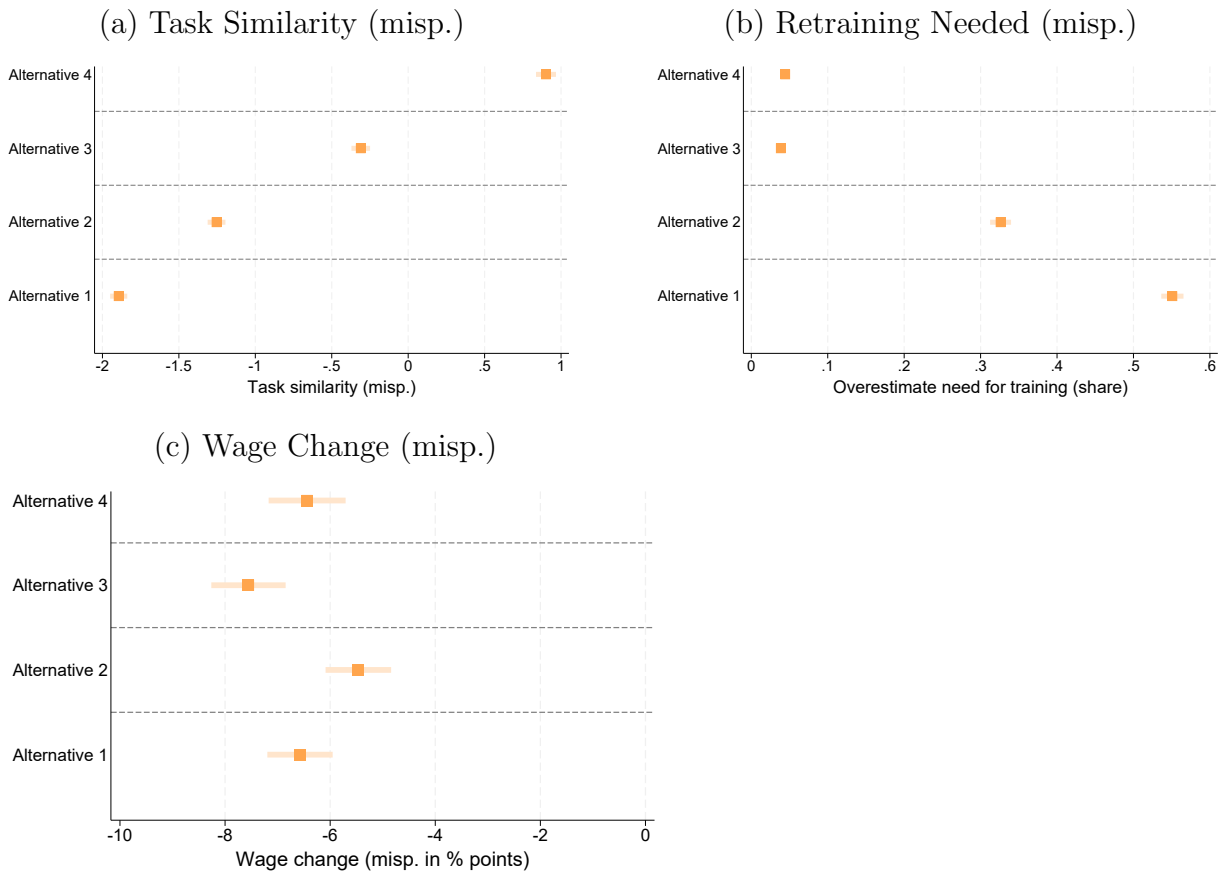
Notes: The figure shows the correlation between the perceived and the actual share of tasks in respondent's occupation that can be automated.

Figure A6: Perceived vs. Actual Substitution Potential Alternative Occupations



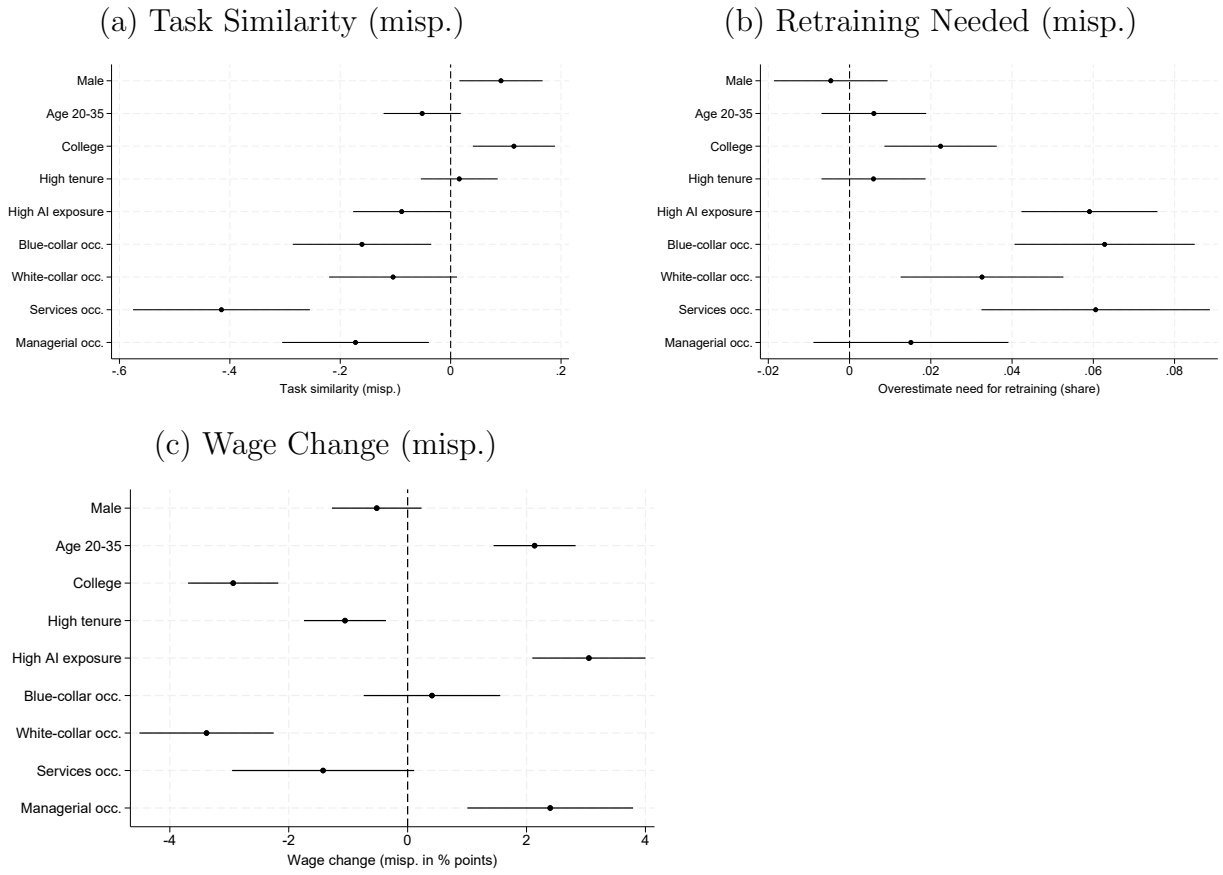
Notes: The figure shows the correlation between the perceived and the actual share of tasks in alternative occupations that can be automated.

Figure A7: Heterogeneity in Beliefs by Alternative Occupation Option



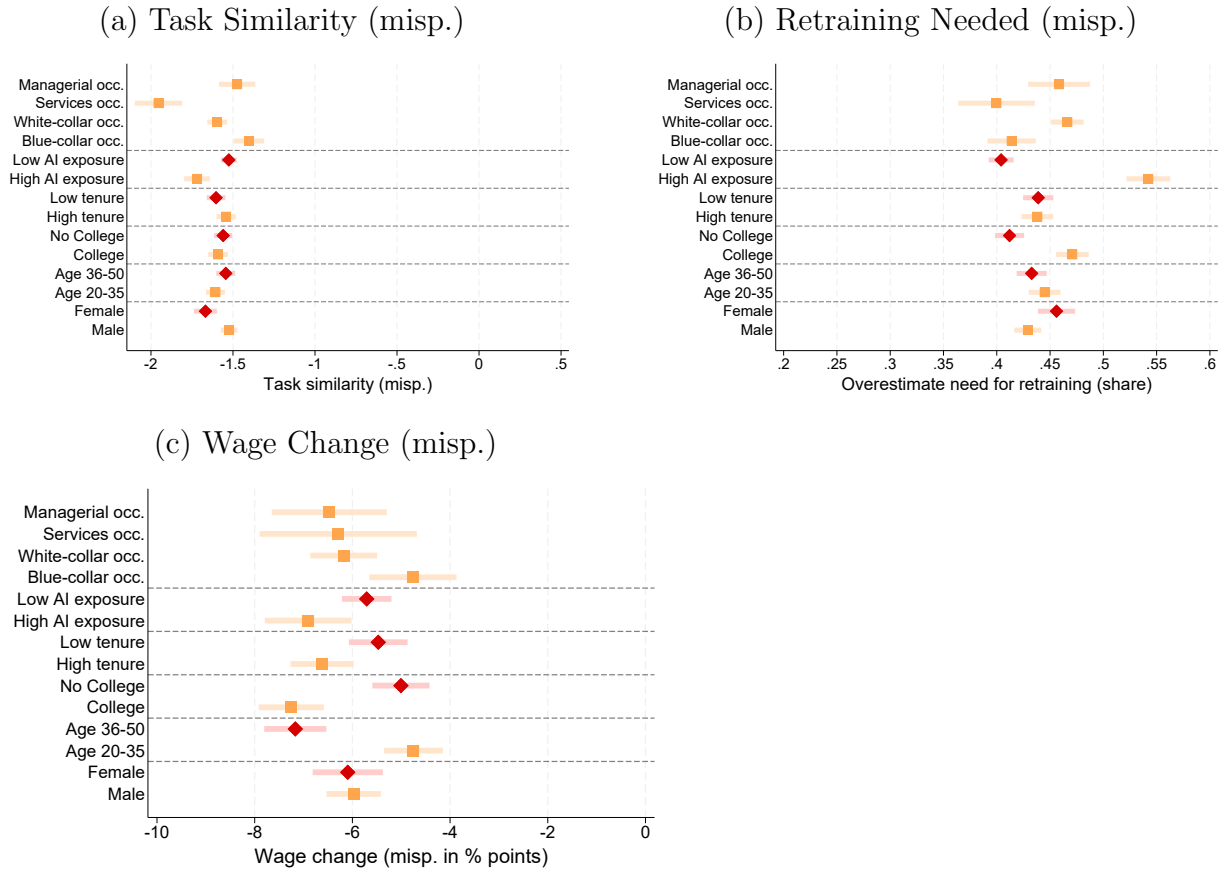
Notes: Each panel plots the average misperception listed on top separately for each alternative occupation (Alternative 1 through 4). Alternatives 1 to 3 are selected from the similarity matrix and are listed in decreasing order of actual similarity to the respondent's current occupation. Alternative 4 is the occupation to which the most transitions are observed from respondent's current occupation in the transition matrix. Bars are 95% confidence intervals around the means.

Figure A8: Heterogeneity in Beliefs about Alternative Occupations: Multivariate Regressions



Notes: Each panel plots OLS coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from regressing the misperception listed on top on worker and occupation characteristics listed on the left. Variables are standardized, so coefficients can be interpreted as partial correlations.

Figure A9: Heterogeneity in Beliefs about Alternative Occupations: Alternatives 1 and 2



Notes: Same specification as Figure 9, restricted to Alternatives 1 and 2—the two occupations drawn from the similarity matrix that are closest in terms of tasks to the respondent’s current occupation. Each panel plots the average misperception of the variable listed on top for the groups listed on the left. Misperceptions are defined as belief minus actual benchmark. Bars are 95% confidence intervals around the means.

B Additional Tables

Table A1: Relation between Similarity and Wage Change

	All moves		Unemployment to Employment	
	Raw mean	Empirical Bayes	Raw mean	Empirical Bayes
<i>Baseline: No similarity</i>				
Low similarity	0.0100 (0.0070)	0.0073 (0.0049)	0.0352*** (0.0079)	0.0243*** (0.0051)
High similarity	0.0243*** (0.0042)	0.0217*** (0.0029)	0.0426*** (0.0048)	0.0348*** (0.0031)
Observations	40809	40809	15045	15045
Observations	40809	40809	15045	15045
Mean	0.08	0.08	0.02	0.02
Occ. FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: This table reports coefficients from regressions of occupation-pair average wage changes on dummies for whether the destination occupation is of low or high similarity—based on the occupation similarity index of [Dengler, Matthes and Paulus \(2014\)](#)—to the origin occupation, relative to occupation pairs with no similarity (the excluded baseline). Wage changes are computed from the administrative data as the average wage change observed when workers transition from the origin to the destination occupation over the period 2018-2024 (see Section 3). “Raw mean” columns use raw average wage changes for each occupation pair; “Empirical Bayes” columns use wage changes corrected with the empirical Bayes procedure of [Morris \(1983\)](#), which shrinks imprecisely estimated occupation-pair averages toward the sample mean. “All moves” includes all occupation-to-occupation transitions; “Unemployment to Employment” restricts to transitions out of unemployment. All regressions include origin occupation fixed effects. Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A2: Treatment Groups

	Not eligible for any treatment	Eligible for Benefits/Costs T. only	Eligible for all treatments
Control	723	866	188
Benefits T.	0	877	193
Costs T.	0	812	205
Displacement T.	0	0	218
Displacement + Benefits T.	0	0	214
Displacement + Costs T.	0	0	210
Tot Observations	723	2555	1228

Notes: This table reports the breakdown of respondents across treatment and potential treatment groups.

Table A3: Summary Statistics: Beliefs about Current Occupation

	Mean	SD	P25	Median	P75	N
Perceived skill transferability	4.198	1.584	3.000	4.000	6.000	4507
Perceived share of automatable tasks	28.339	20.959	12.000	25.000	41.000	4383
Misp. share of automatable tasks	-27.132	29.894	-49.023	-27.023	-6.732	4383

Notes: This table reports summary statistics for beliefs and misperceptions about respondents’ current occupation. Misperceptions are defined as belief – actual benchmark.

Table A4: Summary Statistics: Beliefs about Alternative Occupations

	Mean	SD	P25	Median	P75	N
Panel A: Beliefs						
Task similarity	2.996	1.799	1.000	3.000	4.000	18028
Retraining needed	0.559	0.497	0.000	1.000	1.000	18028
License needed	0.272	0.445	0.000	0.000	1.000	18028
Prob. receiving a job offer	33.078	31.071	0.000	25.000	54.000	17203
Wage change if changing occupation (pp)	-0.586	22.367	-13.000	0.000	8.000	18028
Median wage (euro)	5333.428	2965.157	3500.000	4500.000	6000.000	18028
Share of automatable tasks	37.909	24.871	20.000	36.000	52.000	17533
Panel B: Misperceptions						
Task similarity	-0.639	2.313	-2.000	-1.000	1.000	18028
Belives retraining is needed when it is not	0.240	0.427	0.000	0.000	0.000	18028
Believes license is needed when it is not	0.252	0.434	0.000	0.000	1.000	18004
Wage change if changing occupation (pp)	-6.502	22.542	-18.481	-7.081	3.187	17194
Median wage (pp)	8.576	53.857	-21.253	-4.054	20.070	18004
Share of automatable tasks	-16.215	30.397	-36.468	-16.510	3.490	17510

Notes: This table reports summary statistics for beliefs and misperceptions about alternative occupations. Misperceptions are defined as belief – actual benchmark.

Table A5: Correlation Between Beliefs about Alternative Occupations

	Beliefs about alternative occupations			
	Wage change (1)	Job offer probability (2)	Wage change (3)	Job offer probability (4)
Belief similarity	2.025*** (0.141)	4.578*** (0.189)	2.520*** (0.110)	4.534*** (0.125)
Belief retraining needed	2.475*** (0.185)	-2.430*** (0.274)	2.617*** (0.160)	-3.353*** (0.181)
Belief license needed	2.848*** (0.493)	0.0384 (0.672)	3.318*** (0.410)	0.693 (0.466)
Observations	18028	17203	18028	17203
Mean	-0.59	33.08	-0.59	33.08
Individual FE	No	No	Yes	Yes

Notes: This table reports coefficients from regressions of respondents' beliefs about the wage change and the job offer probability associated with a given alternative occupation on their beliefs about that occupation's task similarity, need for retraining, and need for a license. Columns (1)–(2) report regressions without individual fixed effects; columns (3)–(4) include individual fixed effects. Standard errors, clustered at the respondent level, in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A6: Treatment Effects on Beliefs about Alternative Occupations – Heterogeneity by Pre-Treatment Beliefs

	Similarity	Earn more or less	Training or license necessary
Benefits T. x Med wage under	0.0782* (0.0452)	0.385*** (0.0373)	0.0249** (0.0112)
Benefits T. x Med wage over	0.0401 (0.0538)	-0.165*** (0.0470)	0.00571 (0.0151)
Med wage under	-0.0435 (0.0380)	-0.362*** (0.0311)	0.00234 (0.0111)
Costs T. x Costs under	0.241* (0.146)	-0.0104 (0.121)	-0.0584 (0.0485)
Costs T. x Costs over	0.192*** (0.0387)	0.0544* (0.0314)	-0.0895*** (0.0116)
Costs under	0.335*** (0.0877)	-0.188*** (0.0701)	-0.0195 (0.0227)
Displacement T. x Own displacement under	0.0985 (0.0689)	0.172*** (0.0552)	0.0215 (0.0166)
Displacement T. x Own displacement over	-0.500 (0.397)	-0.122 (0.460)	-0.0944 (0.143)
Own displacement under	-0.0402 (0.0381)	-0.0758** (0.0314)	-0.0299*** (0.0102)
Observations	6470	6470	6470
Control mean	3.51	3.09	0.89
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior beliefs	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are post-treatment beliefs about skill similarity (0-6 scale) likelihood of earning more or less if moving to the alternative occupation (1-5 scale) and need of acquiring a license or retraining (0-1) for the alternative occupation. The regressors include dummies for each treatment interacted with dummies for respondents who underestimate or overestimate the median wage in alternative occupations, the need for retraining and acquiring a license to work in alternative occupations, and the substitution potential of respondent's current occupation. Controls include gender, education, age, and the corresponding pre-treatment belief. Observations are at the respondent $\times$ alternative occupation level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A7: Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions – Heterogeneity by Openness to New Experiences

	Probability of looking for a new job in			
	Same occupation	Different occupation	Treated Alternative Occ.	Untreated Alternative Occ.
Benefits T.	-2.367 (1.547)	-0.0228 (1.336)	1.690** (0.844)	0.954 (0.866)
Costs T.	-0.542 (1.578)	1.557 (1.361)	2.999*** (0.841)	1.397 (0.868)
Displacement T.	1.742 (2.598)	4.525** (2.243)	5.047*** (1.487)	2.067 (1.414)
Displacement x Benefits T.	-3.827 (3.629)	-4.427 (3.208)	-4.162** (2.077)	-3.593* (2.016)
Displacement X Costs T.	-7.148** (3.507)	-9.387*** (3.079)	-5.098** (2.027)	-4.886** (1.930)
Benefits T. X High Openness	6.251** (2.790)	4.790* (2.454)	5.349*** (1.546)	3.513** (1.585)
Costs T. X High Openness	3.291 (2.856)	1.494 (2.565)	1.331 (1.546)	1.372 (1.627)
Displacement T. X High Openness	-0.912 (5.232)	-1.422 (4.430)	-0.949 (2.789)	0.461 (2.808)
Displacement x Benefits T. X High Openness	4.849 (7.689)	1.205 (6.664)	5.727 (4.383)	2.540 (4.345)
Displacement X Costs T. X High Openness	-2.355 (7.040)	3.262 (6.065)	4.417 (3.958)	1.556 (3.925)
High Openness	4.181** (2.048)	3.649** (1.803)	0.501 (1.048)	1.794 (1.108)
Observations	3516	3474	7055	7042
Control mean	35.21	22.98	14.35	15.87
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are respondent's stated probability (0-100 scale) of looking for a new job in the 12 months following the survey in the current respondent's occupation, any different occupation, the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatments, and the alternative occupations not mentioned in the treatment. The regressors include dummies for each treatment, interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments, interactions of each treatment with a dummy for high self-reported openness to new experiences, and the main effect of this dummy. Controls include gender, education, age. Observations are at the respondent level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A8: Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions – Heterogeneity by Gender

	Probability of looking for a new job in			
	Same occupation	Different occupation	Treated Alternative Occ.	Untreated Alternative Occ.
Benefits T.	-0.777 (1.561)	0.586 (1.326)	2.998*** (0.876)	1.208 (0.913)
Costs T.	1.173 (1.585)	1.892 (1.393)	3.440*** (0.864)	1.293 (0.924)
Displacement T.	2.320 (2.642)	5.030** (2.330)	7.019*** (1.567)	2.063 (1.519)
Displacement x Benefits T.	-2.092 (3.832)	-3.967 (3.379)	-4.781** (2.257)	-3.511 (2.187)
Displacement X Costs T.	-9.196** (3.640)	-9.696*** (3.234)	-4.400** (2.215)	-5.187** (2.078)
Benefits T. X Female	0.861 (2.815)	2.645 (2.511)	1.072 (1.499)	2.567* (1.510)
Costs T. X Female	-2.689 (2.872)	0.0641 (2.525)	-0.218 (1.503)	1.473 (1.525)
Displacement T. X Female	-3.365 (5.158)	-3.678 (4.187)	-7.868*** (2.460)	0.0146 (2.512)
Displacement x Benefits T. X Female	-3.222 (7.165)	-1.242 (6.118)	6.403* (3.793)	1.659 (3.821)
Displacement X Costs T. X Female	5.312 (6.788)	5.207 (5.724)	3.461 (3.484)	2.918 (3.556)
Female	26.01*** (3.231)	-0.384 (10.12)	5.448 (5.317)	-0.182 (5.997)
Observations	3516	3474	7055	7042
Control mean	35.21	22.98	14.35	15.87
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are respondent's stated probability (0-100 scale) of looking for a new job in the 12 months following the survey in the current respondent's occupation, any different occupation, the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatments, and the alternative occupations not mentioned in the treatment. The regressors include dummies for each treatment, interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments, interactions of each treatment with a dummy for female respondents, and the main effect of this dummy. Controls include gender, education, age. Observations are at the respondent level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A9: Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions – Heterogeneity by Age

	Same occupation	Different occupation	Probability of looking for a new job in Treated Alternative Occ.	Untreated Alternative Occ.
Benefits T.	-0.152 (1.758)	1.957 (1.533)	3.592*** (0.962)	1.655* (1.005)
Costs T.	1.732 (1.773)	3.591** (1.583)	4.236*** (0.954)	2.348** (1.021)
Displacement T.	-0.0521 (2.862)	5.947** (2.534)	6.590*** (1.757)	3.452** (1.694)
Displacement x Benefits T.	-4.051 (4.315)	-6.371* (3.776)	-6.995*** (2.453)	-6.649*** (2.388)
Displacement X Costs T.	-10.51*** (3.981)	-11.50*** (3.629)	-9.031*** (2.367)	-9.285*** (2.322)
Benefits T. X Age 20-35	-0.510 (2.607)	-1.027 (2.273)	-0.429 (1.427)	0.840 (1.463)
Costs T. X Age 20-35	-3.000 (2.656)	-3.571 (2.326)	-1.837 (1.421)	-1.279 (1.478)
Displacement T. X Age 20-35	3.120 (4.537)	-4.016 (3.912)	-3.723 (2.504)	-2.767 (2.444)
Displacement x Benefits T. X Age 20-35	2.277 (6.478)	4.125 (5.701)	8.383** (3.704)	7.379** (3.625)
Displacement X Costs T. X Age 20-35	6.430 (6.128)	7.071 (5.352)	11.42*** (3.504)	10.84*** (3.387)
Age 20-35	3.850* (2.191)	0.811 (1.904)	1.321 (1.143)	-0.513 (1.192)
Observations	3516	3474	7055	7042
Control mean	35.21	22.98	14.35	15.87
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are respondent's stated probability (0-100 scale) of looking for a new job in the 12 months following the survey in the current respondent's occupation, any different occupation, the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatments, and the alternative occupations not mentioned in the treatment. The regressors include dummies for each treatment, interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments, interactions of each treatment with a dummy for respondents aged 20-35, and the main effect of this dummy. Controls include gender, education, age. Observations are at the respondent level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A10: Treatment Effects on Mobility Intentions – Heterogeneity by Education

	Same occupation	Probability of looking for a new job in		
		Different occupation	Treated Alternative Occ.	Untreated Alternative Occ.
Benefits T.	1.875 (1.805)	1.788 (1.553)	3.692*** (1.012)	4.010*** (1.018)
Costs T.	1.375 (1.805)	1.589 (1.585)	3.421*** (0.989)	2.757*** (1.007)
Displacement T.	2.908 (2.634)	3.691 (2.251)	5.366*** (1.500)	3.307** (1.453)
Displacement x Benefits T.	-4.121 (3.815)	-3.065 (3.352)	-3.211 (2.242)	-4.503** (2.205)
Displacement X Costs T.	-6.968* (3.633)	-7.904** (3.144)	-4.396** (2.099)	-5.804*** (2.020)
Benefits T. X College	-4.715* (2.595)	-0.658 (2.261)	-0.639 (1.422)	-4.023*** (1.458)
Costs T. X College	-2.164 (2.645)	0.636 (2.323)	-0.0827 (1.417)	-2.064 (1.476)
Displacement T. X College	-3.391 (5.408)	1.585 (4.652)	-1.863 (2.817)	-2.673 (2.762)
Displacement x Benefits T. X College	0.147 (7.610)	-5.863 (6.535)	-0.00970 (4.058)	1.521 (3.912)
Displacement X Costs T. X College	-3.987 (7.057)	-0.710 (6.265)	2.542 (3.964)	4.162 (3.884)
College	11.46*** (1.905)	2.257 (1.662)	1.510 (0.991)	3.515*** (1.028)
Observations	3516	3474	7055	7042
Control mean	35.21	22.98	14.35	15.87
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are respondent's stated probability (0-100 scale) of looking for a new job in the 12 months following the survey in the current respondent's occupation, any different occupation, the alternative occupations mentioned in the treatments, and the alternative occupations not mentioned in the treatment. The regressors include dummies for each treatment, interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments, interactions of each treatment with a dummy for respondents holding a college degree, and the main effect of this dummy. Controls include gender, education, age. Observations are at the respondent level. Respondents who were not eligible for any treatment are excluded. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A11: Treatment Effects on Beliefs about Alternative Occupations in Follow-up Survey

	Similarity	Earn more or less	Training or license necessary
Benefits T.	-0.0823 (0.0811)	0.132** (0.0551)	0.0184 (0.0163)
Costs T.	0.0224 (0.0799)	0.0289 (0.0541)	-0.0173 (0.0174)
Displacement T.	-0.0374 (0.140)	0.178** (0.0869)	0.00424 (0.0270)
Displacement x Benefits T.	0.222 (0.191)	-0.187 (0.121)	-0.0416 (0.0386)
Displacement x Costs T.	-0.236 (0.196)	-0.167 (0.125)	0.0391 (0.0378)
Observations	2028	2028	2028
Control mean		3.12	0.90
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior beliefs	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variables are beliefs about skill similarity (0-6 scale) likelihood of earning more or less (1-5 scale) and need of acquiring a license or retraining (0-1) for the alternative occupation measured in the follow-up survey. The regressors include dummies for each treatment received in the main survey and interaction terms for the Displacement + Benefits and Displacement + Costs treatments. Controls include gender, education, age, and the corresponding pre-treatment belief. Observations are at the respondent $\times$ alternative occupation level. Robust standard error in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

C Invitation Letter

B Screenshots of Selected Questions and Treatments

Figure A10: Invitation Letter (Translated in English)

AD:APT
Karriere & Beschäftigung



INSTITUT FÜR ARBEITSMARKT- UND
BERUFSFORSCHUNG
Die Forschungseinrichtung der Bundesagentur für Arbeit

Institute for Employment Research,
Regensburger Str. 104, 90478 Nuremberg

"Woman"

"First name Last Name"

«Street_HN»

"Zip Code Residential Address"

Nuremberg, October 2024

Dear Mrs. [Last Name],

The *Institute for Employment Research (IAB)* is currently conducting the scientific study "**Career and Employment**" to understand how you assess the current challenges in the German labor market. The survey focuses specifically on your career decisions and experiences in the job market. We therefore cordially invite you to participate in the survey.

By participating, you will provide crucial support to the IAB in advising political decision-makers and thus improving economic and social policy in Germany.

In short – we will survey you online

The entire survey takes **only 15 minutes**. You can start the online survey by scanning the QR code or entering the link into your internet browser:
<https://umfragen.iab.de/goto/karriere>

Your personal password for participation is: «**password**»

You can answer the questionnaire **up to and including December 15, 2024**.



Participation pays off

As a small thank you, after completing this and all subsequent surveys you will receive a **shopping voucher worth €5 for various providers**.

Your information is safe with us.

Participation in the survey is, of course, voluntary. Your responses will be treated confidentially, evaluated anonymously, and no personal data will be processed further without your explicit consent. Further information on data protection can be found in the enclosed data protection sheet or on our website at <https://iab.de/adapt>. For further questions, please contact us at IAB.ADAPT@iab.de.

We would like to thank you most sincerely for your support!

Best regards



Prof. Bernd Fitzenberger, PhD
Director of the Institute for Employment Research (IAB)

Figure A11: Measuring Perceived Transferability of Own Skills



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Progress **53%**

To what extent do you believe your qualifications and skills can be applied in occupations other than the one you currently work in?

Please assess the "transferability" of your skills by choosing a score from 1 to 7, where 1 means that your qualifications and skills can only be used in your current occupation, and 7 means they can be used in many other occupations.

1 Skills can only be used in my current occupation	☐
2	☐
3	☐
4	☐
5	☐
6	☐
7 Skills can be used in many other occupations	☐

Figure A12: Measuring Perceived Task Similarity of Alternative Occupations

Fortschritt **17%**

In your opinion, how similar are the tasks in these occupations compared to your current occupation?

Please rate the similarity of the tasks in each occupation on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means that the tasks in these occupations do not overlap at all with the tasks in your current occupation, and 7 means that the tasks completely overlap.

	Tasks do not overlap						Tasks do fully overlap
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Alternative 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Alternative 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Alternative 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Alternative 4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Figure A13: Treatments Intro (common to all treatments)

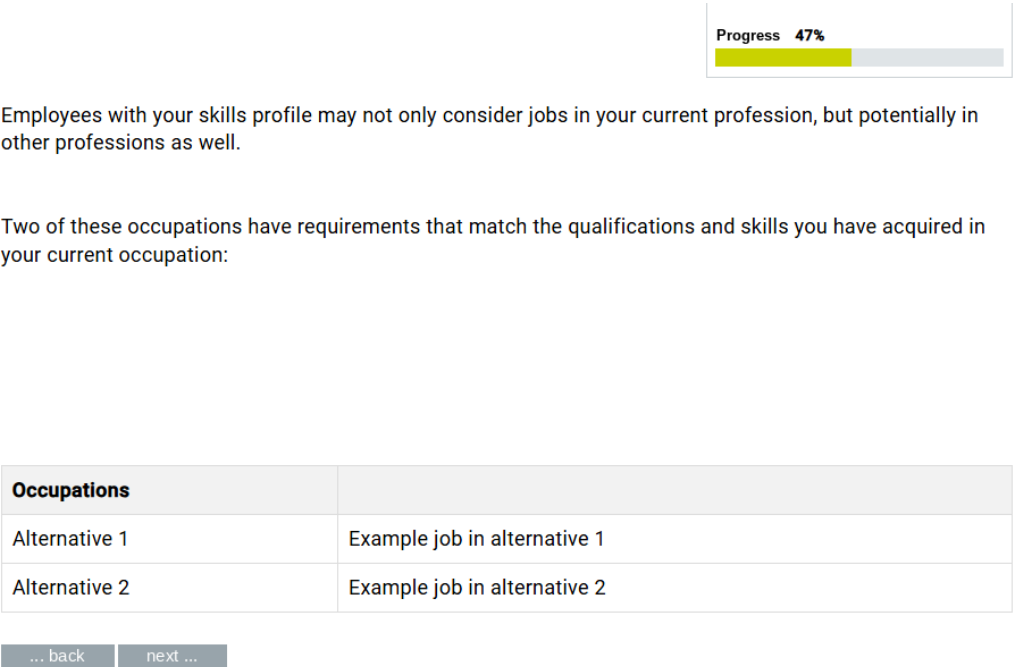


Figure A14: Benefits Treatment

Progress 64%

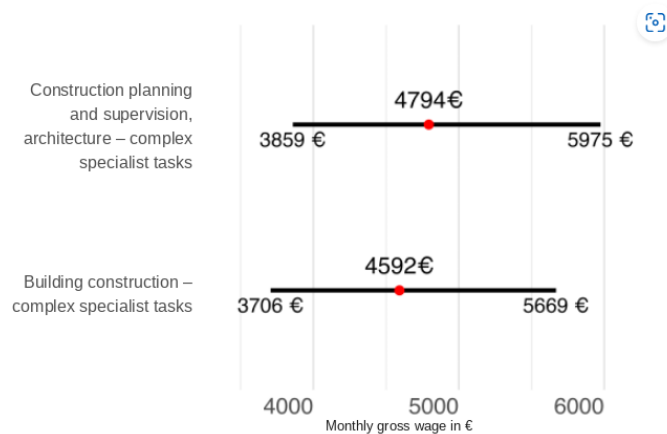
When employees consider switching to another profession, many of them think primarily of the earnings and employment prospects.

In the following, we would like to show you how much someone like you [without degree / with training degree / with university degree] earns in the two alternative occupations and how many jobs are currently available in these occupations.

[... back](#)

[next ...](#)

The following figure shows how much employees like you [without degree / with training degree / with university degree] normally earn in the two alternative occupations.*



* Note: The red dot represents the average income (median) in the respective occupation. The bar shows how much the middle 50% of employees earn (25th percentile to 75th percentile). Wages above €7000 are probably higher than shown due to the capping at the income threshold. The data comes from the Institute for Employment Research.

Figure A15: Costs Treatment



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Progress 82%

When employees consider changing jobs, many of them think about how difficult the change will be and what problems may arise.

In the following, we would like to show you how little effort it takes for someone like you [without degree / with training degree / with university degree] to switch to the two alternative occupations.

... back

next ...



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Progress 94%

The following table shows whether the alternative occupations are regulated, i.e. whether you need a special license to be allowed to take a job in this occupation*.

Occupation	License needed?
Alternative 1	[Licensing status]
Alternative 2	[Licensing status]

* Note: The data comes from the BERUFENET platform of the Federal Employment Agency.



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Progress 88%

The following table shows how likely it is that you will need further training if you want to switch from your current occupation to one of the two alternative occupations*.

Occupation	Training necessary?
Alternative 1	[Training status]
Alternative 2	[Training status]

*The data comes from the Institute for Employment Research and is valid for the year 2023.

... back

next ...

Figure A16: Displacement Treatment

