

Can Women “Have It All”?  
The Trade-Off Between Social Tasks  
and Workplace Flexibility

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# Introduction

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# Compare and contrast two jobs



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Computer Scientist

Lawyer

These jobs are *structured* differently



Computer Scientist

The diagram consists of two identical, side-by-side light gray rectangular boxes. Each box has a thin black border and contains a job title in the center. The left box is labeled 'Computer Scientist' and the right box is labeled 'Lawyer'.

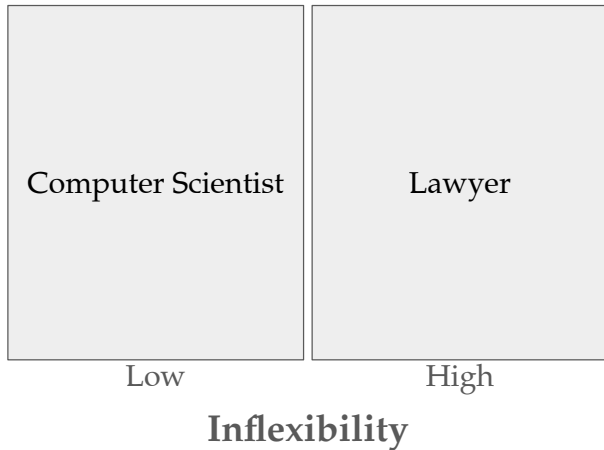
Lawyer

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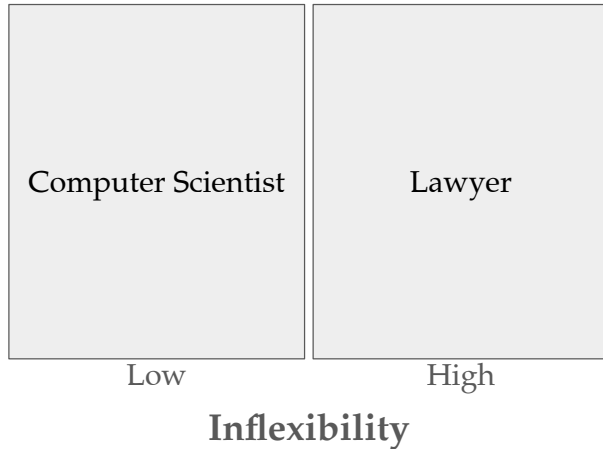


→ when you supply your labor (and how much you supply) is more *intrinsically* tied to lawyer's productivity

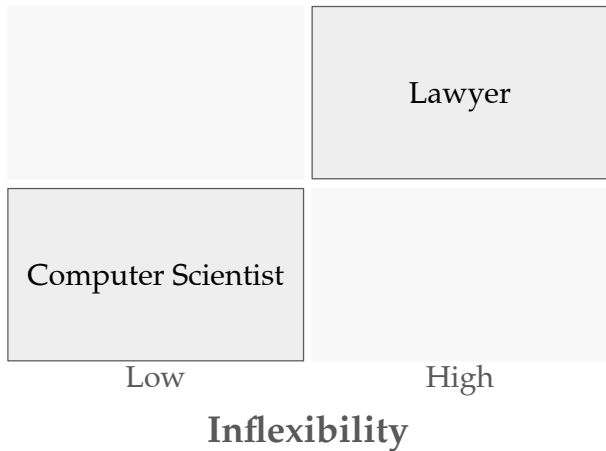
Legal work is comparatively *less flexible*



But, these jobs are also different in *other ways*...

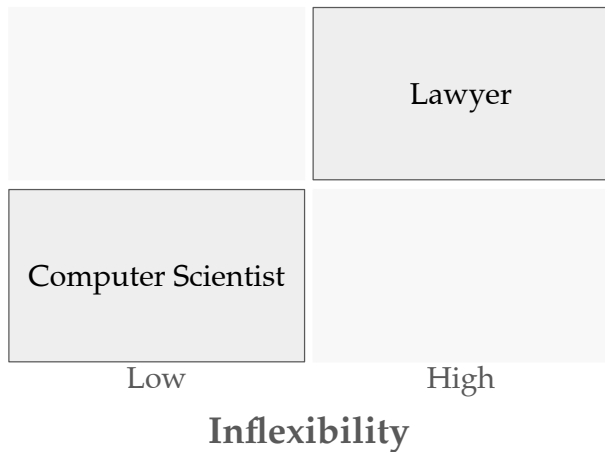


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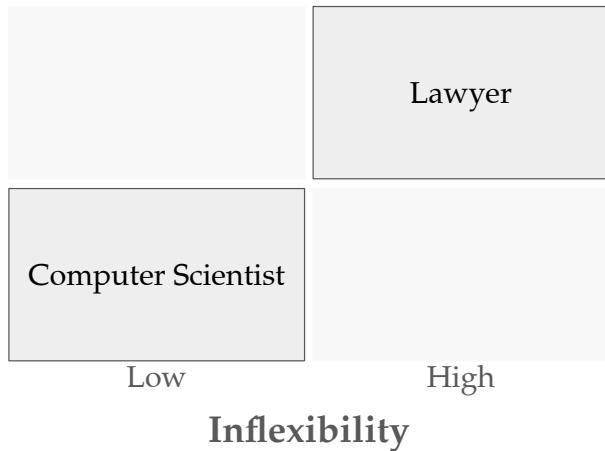




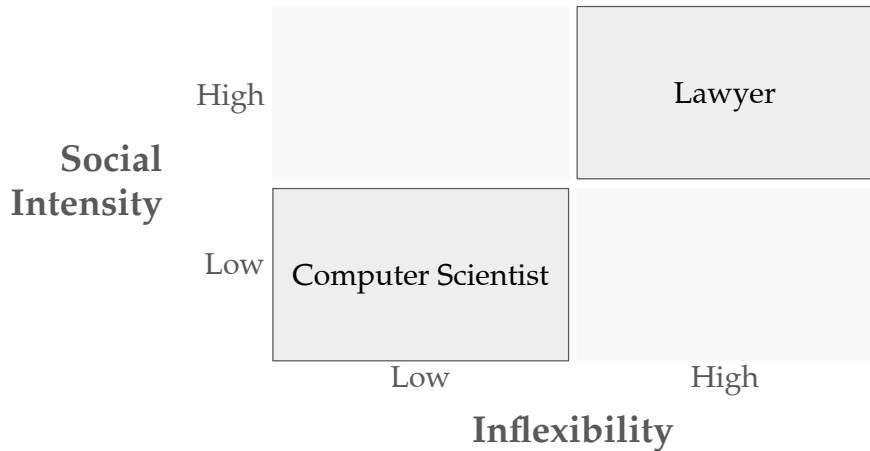
# Lawyers work with people



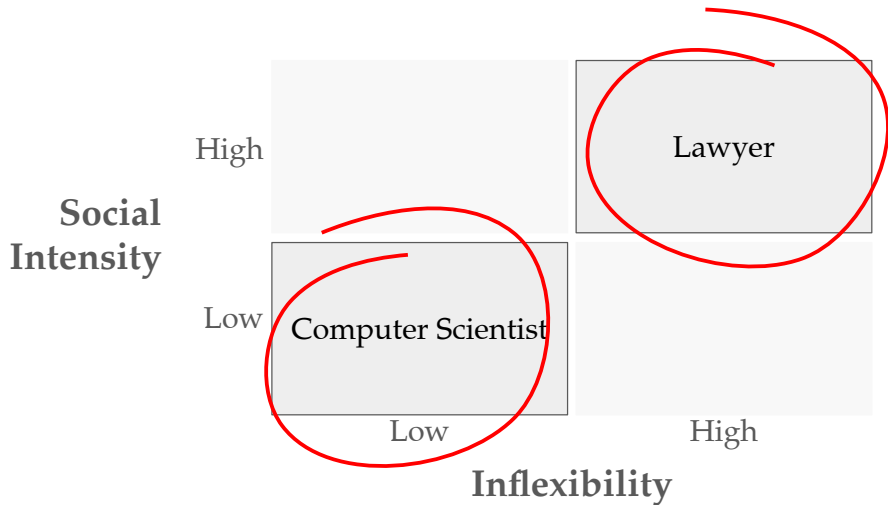
Lawyers work with people (and computer scientists work with machines)



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# Most occupations fall in these two quadrants



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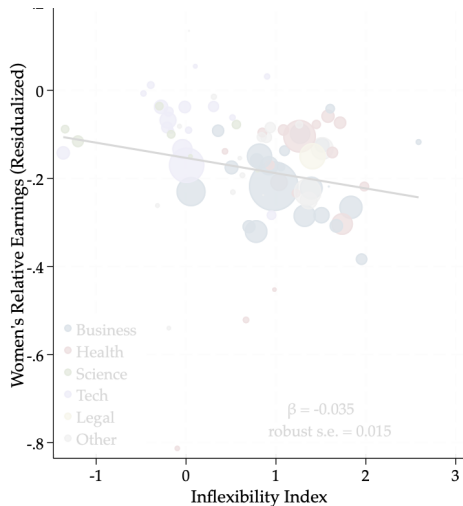


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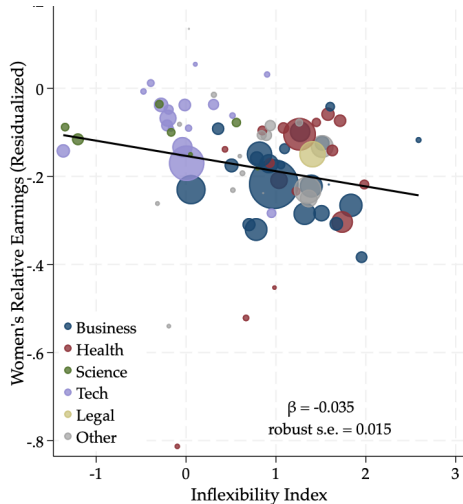
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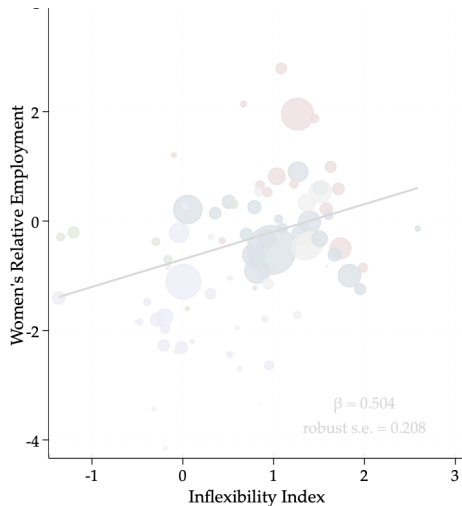
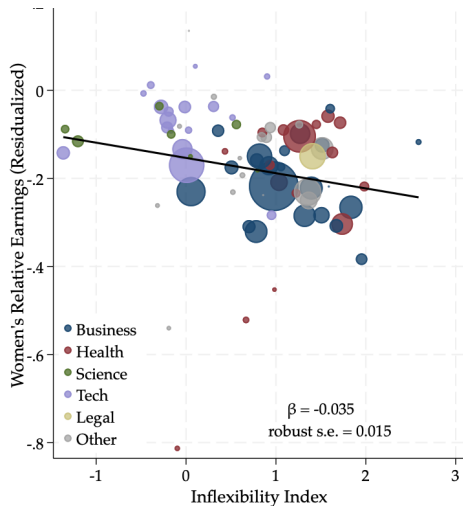
Notes: high income, college educated, FTFY workers in ACS 2015-2019. Left panel replicates Goldin (2014).

# Wage gap larger in less flexible occupations...



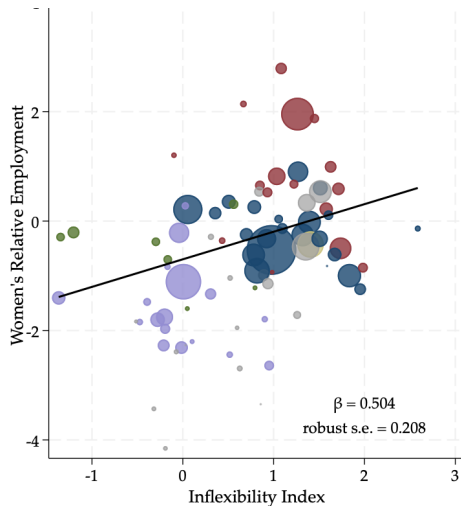
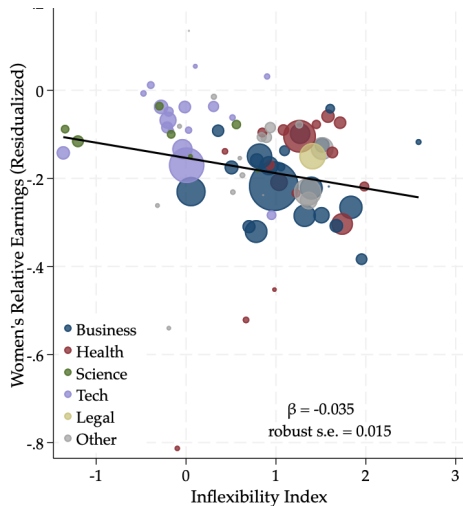
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...we expect women to be attracted to flexible occupations...



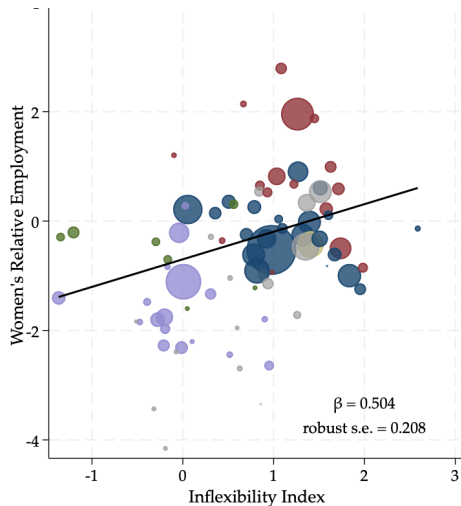
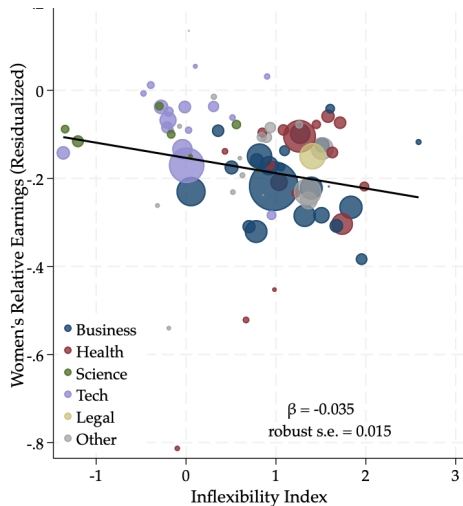
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## But, women's relative employment is increasing in inflexibility



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## Women find *some other* attribute of these jobs attractive...



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# Contribution to the Literature

## 1. Lack of workplace flexibility hinders women's labor market outcomes

(Bang, 2021; Bütikofer et al., 2018; Ciasullo & Uccioli, 2024; Cortés & Pan, 2016, 2019, 2023; Cubas et al., 2023; Erosa et al., 2022; Goldin, 2014; Goldin et al., 2024; Juhn & Rubinstein, 2022; Kleven et al., 2019; Maestas et al., 2023; Mas & Pallais, 2017, 2020; Pertold-Gebicka et al., 2016; Wasserman, 2023; Wiswall & Zafar, 2018)

⇒ *quasi-experimental evidence: flexibility varies by occupation*

⇒ *negative consequences are amplified due to women's comp. adv. in social sk.*

## 2. Certain jobs have enhanced flexibility

(Goldin, 2021; Goldin & Katz, 2011, 2016; Harrington & Kahn, 2023; Wasserman, 2023)

⇒ *these advancements have been concentrated in jobs in which women excel*

## 3. Women do not *always* opt for flexible jobs

(Mas & Pallais, 2017, 2020)

⇒ *resolve puzzle by considering job amenities and tasks jointly*

## 4. Growth in prevalence of social tasks, which plays to women's comp. adv.

(Atalay et al., 2020; Cortes et al., 2023; Cortés et al., 2024; Deming, 2017; Edin et al., 2022; Ngai & Petrongolo, 2017)

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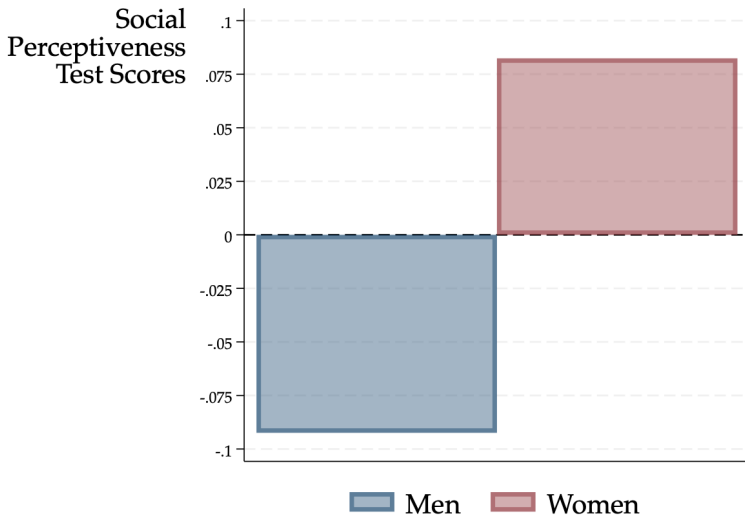
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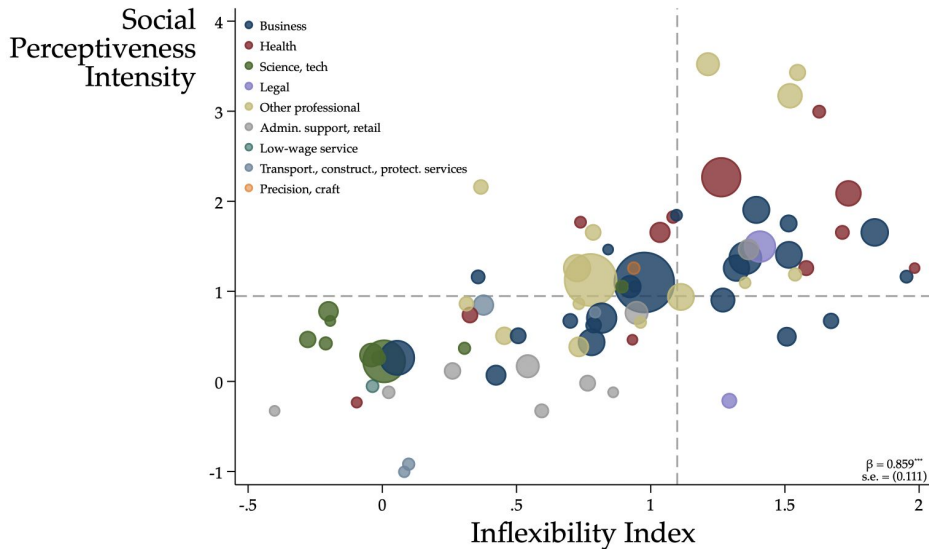
Notes: bar graph reprints U.S. results from Greenberg et al., 2023. Test score comes from the Reading the Mind in the Eyes test and is standardized.

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*Ex: college-intensive occupations*

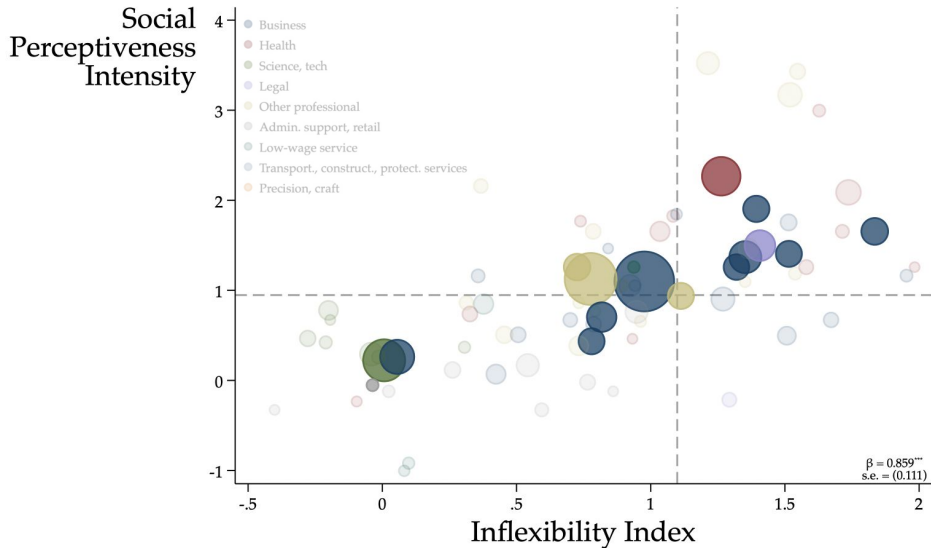
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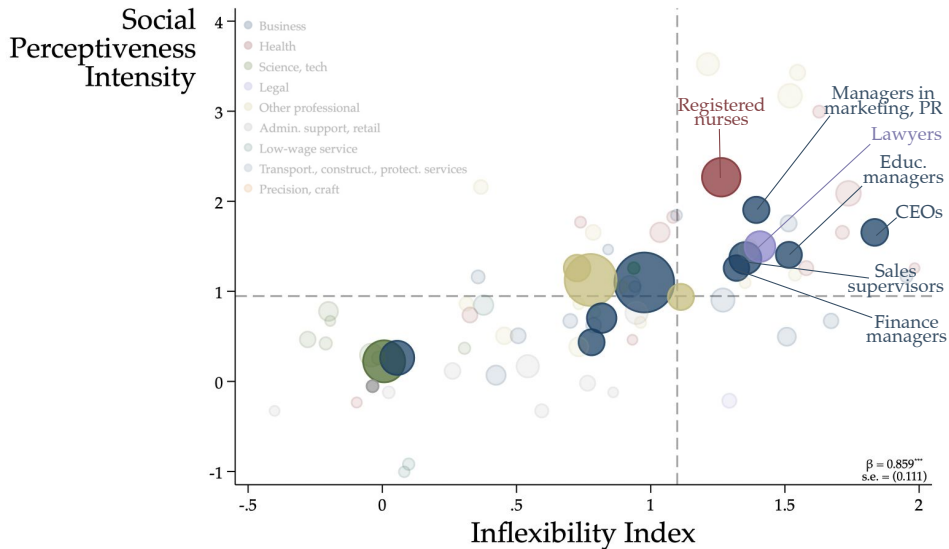
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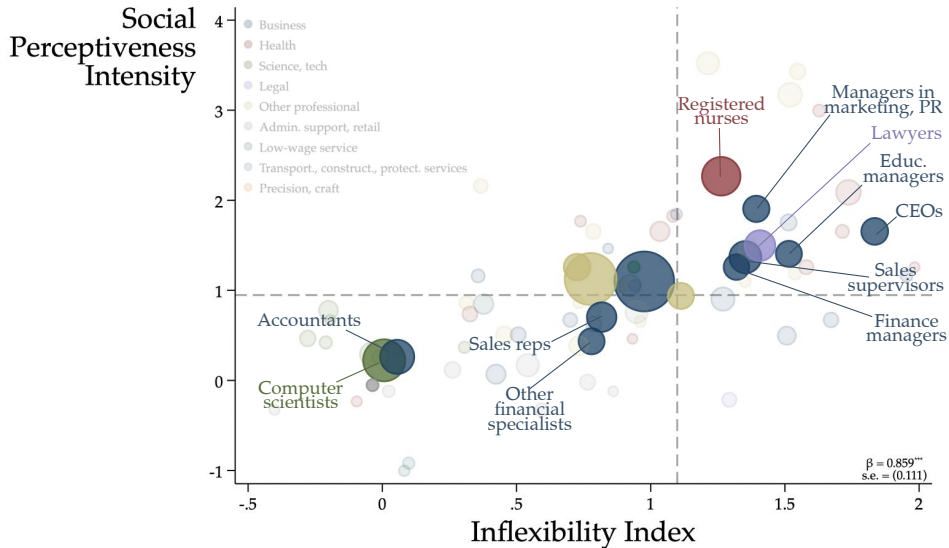
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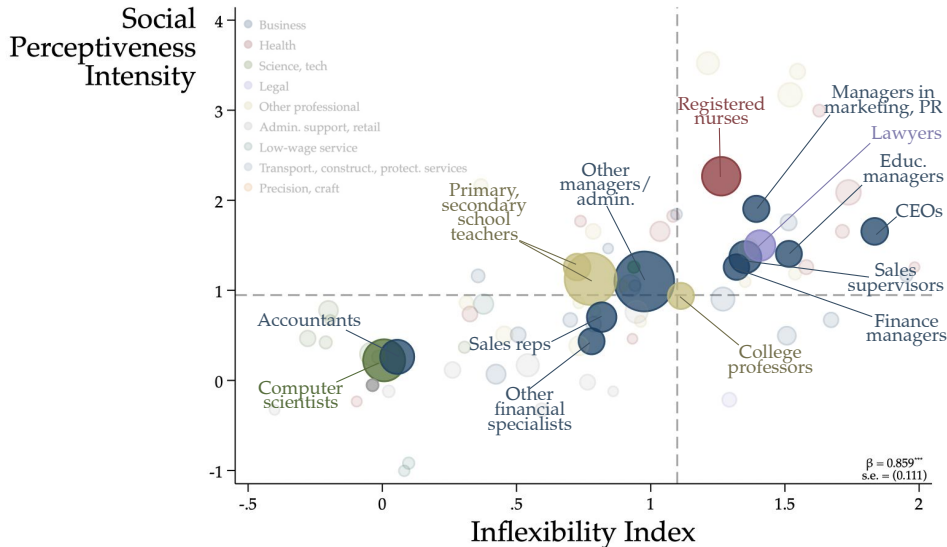
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- Future work: understanding what frictions/costs may hold firms back

Thank you! Email: [savannahnoray@g.harvard.edu](mailto:savannahnoray@g.harvard.edu).