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The #MeToo Movement and Judges' Gender Gap in Decisions*

Xiqian Cai[†] Shuai Chen[‡] Zhengquan Cheng[§]

Abstract

Gender inequality and discrimination still persist, even though the gender gap in the labor market has been gradually decreasing. This study examines the effect of the #MeToo movement on judges' gender gap in their vital labor market outcome—judicial decisions on randomly assigned legal cases in China. We apply a difference-in-differences approach to unique verdict data including rich textual information on characteristics of cases and judges, and compare changes in sentences of judges of a different gender after the movement. We find that female judges made more severe decisions post-movement, which almost closed the gender gap. Moreover, we explore a potential mechanism of gender norms, documenting evidence for improved awareness of gender equality among women following the movement and stronger effects on judges' gender gap reduction in regions with better awareness of gender equality. This implies that female judges became willing to stand out and speak up, converging to their male counterparts after the #MeToo movement.

Keywords: #MeToo movement, Gender gap, Inequality, Judicial decision, Crime, Machine Learning

JEL-codes: J16, K14, O12, P35, D63

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1 Introduction

The gender gap in the labor market has been gradually decreasing in many countries around the world, thanks to the converging roles of men and women (Goldin, 2014). However, gender inequality has still remained, and discrimination against women has prevailed in society and the economy. One of the most detrimental and common manifestations of gender discrimination is sexual harassment against women. Such offenses harm not only direct victims, but also (workplace) environment and society (Adams-Prassl et al., 2024). Thus, once reported and disclosed publicly, they have triggered extensive and intense societal responses, sometimes in the form of civic engagement such as the #MeToo movement. This mass movement may improve the societal awareness of the contemporary gender inequality and discrimination, and hence escalate the demand for strengthening women’s status and accelerating changes in traditional gender norms. This will, in turn, facilitate closing the gender gap in the labor market.

The current study examines the effect of the #MeToo movement on judges’ gender gap in their vital labor market outcome—judicial decisions on randomly assigned legal cases. We also explore the potential role of gender norms amid the influence. We pay special attention to a highly educated and skilled group of professionals, and investigate whether and how a gender-specific mass movement will change the gender gap in their labor market outcomes after deliberation. Breaking out on social media following the sexual harassment report by Luo Qianqian in October 2017, the #MeToo movement has been one of the most influential and prevalent social and civic movements in mainland China in the past decade. Chinese people have not only been well aware of the incidents, but also actively participated in the movement especially on social media by sharing their suffering, making comments and reposting.

Specifically, we conduct a difference-in-differences (DiD) analysis with judge fixed effects and verdict date fixed effects to compare changes in judicial decisions of judges of a different gender, following the first online report of sexual harassment relevant to the #MeToo movement in China. We apply the DiD framework to a unique textual data set that contains the universe of judicial judgements on cases of drunk driving in China from 2016-2018. The data set is a panel at the judge level. We exploit machine learning and text mining techniques to acquire characteristics of judges and cases from the verdict documents for our analysis. The legal cases are randomly assigned to qualified judges by China’s courts system.

We focus on crimes of drunk driving for three reasons: first, the key criterion for the

sentence on these cases is the blood alcohol content (BAC) of the defendant. The BAC is professionally tested on-site immediately after a stop or an accident. The transparent and straightforward criterion minimizes the discretion of judges and potential external interference such as favoritism. This also renders verdicts more comparable across cases and judges. Second, crimes of drunk driving are classified as the mildest offenses in the criminal hierarchy of China, and hence usually handled by only one judge. This is helpful to identify the effect of interest which is judge-gender-specific. Third, crimes of drunk driving were not directly relevant to the #MeToo incidents of sexual harassment or assaults. The judges and offenders in cases of drunk driving were also not involved in the #MeToo incidents. Thus, crimes of drunk driving facilitate identifying the causal effect of the movement on judicial decisions.

We find that prior to the #MeToo movement, female judges made significantly less severe decisions on the amount of fines than their male counterparts did. This gap could be attributed to gender-specific attitudes imposed by traditional gender norms: stronger risk-aversion, lower tolerance for pressure and weaker incentives to compete of women (Cortés et al., 2023; Cai et al., 2019). Female judges made more lenient decisions, avoiding being focused on or targeted at by the public or media. There was no judge-gender difference in the sentence of imprisonment, owing to the straightforward key criterion of BAC combined with accident consequences. However, after the movement, the amount of fines decided by female judges significantly increased, which almost closed judges' gender gap in this type of sentence.

Our tests of covariate balance show that there are no systemic changes in case characteristics following the movement such as BAC and accident consequences, and that there are also no differentials in characteristics of cases dealt with by judges of a different gender. Moreover, the random assignment of legal cases in China's courts system ensures that judges of a different gender handle comparable cases.

In a second step, we explore the role of gender norms through which the #MeToo movement reduced judges' gender gap in their sentences of fines. We document that after the movement, awareness of gender equality significantly improved for women in comparison to men, regarding the priority of family versus career, the competence of men versus women, the importance of work versus marriage, and the share of housework between the couple. Such changes in social attitudes only concentrated on gender norms, and did not spill over to other dimensions including self-perceived social class, social trust, perceived fairness, or happiness.

Moreover, we find stronger effects of the movement on the decrease in judges' gender

gap for judges in regions with a more gender-balanced juvenile population, more prevalent discrimination against women, and higher female labor force participation. All of these provide suggestive evidence for a potential mechanism of gender norms of female judges becoming willing to stand out and speak up, making more severe judgements as their male counterparts post-#MeToo movement.

Our estimated effects of the #MeToo movement on judges' gender gap in their decisions are robust to a battery of important sensitivity analyses. First, we leverage the timing of the first #MeToo report in each provincial administrative division as the commencement of the movement for the corresponding province. That is to say, the variations in the movement timing are at the provincial level rather than the national level. So, the empirical strategy becomes a staggered DiD approach. The results are virtually identical to the baseline estimates.

Second, we exploit the Baidu daily search index for the "MeToo movement" as an alternative continuous measure to the timing of the first #MeToo report used in the baseline estimation. The Baidu search index captures the public attention to the #MeToo movement in China. We find that the decisions of female judges were more aligned with those of male judges when the #MeToo movement caught stronger public attention. The conclusions hold whether we use the search index at the national level or break it down at the provincial level.

Third, instead of the first #MeToo report by Luo Qianqian, we utilize the timing of the first report involving a celebrity potential offender, Zhu Jun who is a nationwide well-known master of ceremonies, as the initiation of the movement. This incident reported in late July, 2018 drew massive attention of the public, illustrated by the peak of the Baidu daily search index in Figure 1. As expected, we obtain a more sizeable effect.

Furthermore, we additionally control for $judge \times month$ fixed effects to account for judge-specific and time-varying unobservables such as potential influence of emotional volatility. We acquire qualitatively similar estimates.

In addition, we conduct more heterogeneity investigations concerning various characteristics of regions where judges locate. We document a larger and more significant effect of the #MeToo movement for judges in regions with a higher proportion of women, people younger than 45 years old, or people without a college degree in the local population. These groups of people are the base of participants in the #MeToo movement. The results of these heterogeneity analyses imply that the influence of the #MeToo movement on judges' gender gap in their decisions materialized to a larger extent in places with a bigger base of the movement.

This study speaks to several strands of literature. First and foremost, it adds to multidisciplinary studies about the relation between judges’ or defendants’ identities and judicial outcomes. Previous studies in this literature mainly focus on the race or ethnicity of judges and gender of defendants or offenders. Most of them document that judicial decisions are in favor of the defendants or offenders, i.e., less severe type of punishment, shorter sentence duration or less fine, if they are individuals of the same race or ethnicity as the judges (e.g., Price and Wolfers (2010), Grossman et al. (2016)). There are exceptions with the opposite finding, such as Depew et al. (2017). Divergent from research discussed previously, Schanzenbach (2005) and Lim et al. (2016) claim that judges’ characteristics including race and gender have little or near zero effect on judicial outcomes.

The situation regarding the gender of defendants or offenders is rather similar. Majority of relevant studies find that sentences are more lenient to female defendants than male ones (Bontrager et al., 2013; Starr, 2015). However, Tillyer et al. (2015) leverage information on criminal history, and find that the premium of female defendants materializes only for those with lower criminal (history) scores. The female defendants with higher criminal history scores receive more severe sentences than their male counterpart.

Examining the influence of judges’ and jurors’ gender, Schanzenbach (2005), Cai et al. (2021), and Ahrsjö et al. (2022) are among the handful of research closest to our study. Schanzenbach (2005) finds that for serious offenses, a higher proportion of female judges in a district reduces the gender inequality of sentences, namely increase in prison sentences for female offenders and hence convergence of such sentences for male and female defendants. The author interprets the result as “a paternalistic bias” of male judges in favor of female offenders. Cai et al. (2021) find that divorce cases with a male plaintiff are 3.9 percent more likely to be approved by a male judge as opposed to a female judge in China. The authors attribute this gender bias to traditional culture and attitudes. Ahrsjö et al. (2022) document that defendants sharing the same identities, including gender, origin, education and income, with jurors are 15 percent less likely to receive a prison sentence.

Our paper also investigates the gender disparity of judges in their decisions. Moreover, we exploit a gender-specific social movement as a natural experiment to explore the evolution of such gender disparity and in-group bias (Depew et al., 2017). We document a closure of gender gap following the prevalence of the #MeToo Movement in China. Prior to the movement, female judges made more lenient punishment decisions than their male counterparts in cases of drunk driving where defendants are predominantly men. Nonetheless, after the #MeToo movement prevailed, female judges made more severe

decisions, converging to male judges.

Moreover, our study is related to the small but recently fast growing research about direct consequences and spillovers of gender-specific crimes or offenses, especially sexual harassment and violence against women. Harassment is widespread in organizations and workplaces (Boudreau et al., 2023; Adams-Prassl et al., 2024), but sexual harassment at workplaces is under-reported due to concerns of victims over potential retaliations of perpetrators and/or employers (Dahl and Knepper, 2021).

Direct consequences to female victims of such offenses in an abusive relationship include their costs in labor market outcomes such as earnings and employment (Adams-Prassl et al., 2023). Spillovers of the gender-specific harassment and violence at workplaces operate in the way of a reduction in the likelihood of choosing such a workplace especially among individuals of the high-risk gender (Folke and Rickne, 2022), and a decrease in the proportion of employees belonging to the same gender as the victim (Adams-Prassl et al., 2024). This decline is owing to both departures of existing individuals sharing the victim’s gender and fewer new hires of such people. More indirect impacts of sexism presented in the adverse labor market outcomes of women relative to men, increased marriage and reduced childbearing age of women who reside in a U.S. area of more prevalent sexism (Charles et al., 2022).

The current paper extends the spillover examination further to a more distant and thus general setting, represented by the judicial labor market where neither judges nor defendants in cases of drunk driving were directly involved in the incidents of sexual harassment during the #MeToo movement. We find that post-movement in which victims were almost constantly women, female judges dealing with cases completely irrelevant to sexual crimes made more severe decisions and converged to their male counterparts. This phenomenon is related to Eren and Mocan (2018) which documents that decisions of highly educated and skilled groups of professionals after deliberation could be still influenced by seemingly unrelated events.

Last but not least, our study adds to academic discussions about gender differences in labor market outcomes owing to group-specific attitudes and beliefs, as well as social perceptions/norms and external environment (see Bertrand (2011) for an overview). Regarding the group-specific attitudes, for instance, Cortés et al. (2023) argue that the gender gap in job-finding behavior and hence early career wage can be partially explained by stronger risk-aversion and less overoptimism of women. Cai et al. (2019) also find that the underperformance of women compared to men in high-stakes situations may be attributed to women’s lower tolerance for pressure and weaker incentives to compete.

Concerning the social perceptions and environment, gender identity norms (Bertrand et al., 2015), stereotypes about gender-specific skills and roles (Bertrand, 2020; Eberhardt et al., 2023), negative social attitudes towards working women (Bertrand et al., 2021), family, work and social environment, e.g., broken families (Bertrand and Pan, 2013), rigid job structure and long and inflexible work hours (Goldin, 2014), high-stakes and competitive settings (Cai et al., 2019), and prevalence of sexism in the area of residence (Charles et al., 2022), all contribute to gender disparities in labor market outcomes.

This study investigates differentials in judicial decisions—a special type of labor market outcome—between male and females judges, following a gender-specific social movement. We find that after the #MeToo movement prevailed in China, women’s consciousness of gender equality significantly improved relative to men’s nationwide. In such changing social environment, female judges decided more severe sentences and almost closed the gender gap in judicial decisions. Moreover, in regions with a bigger base of the #MeToo movement and/or stronger awareness of gender equality, this gender gap of judges in their decisions was reduced to a larger extent. Therefore, our paper communicates with the literature about how social movements cause cultural changes as well (Dunivin et al., 2022; Goldin, 2023).

2 Institutional Background

In this section, we briefly discuss the commencement and development of the #MeToo movement around the world, especially in the United States and China. We also explain why we focus on crimes of drunk driving, and provide information on the procedure of dealing with this type of crimes in China.

2.1 The #MeToo Movement

The #MeToo movement emerged as a vital awareness campaign focusing on issues of sexual harassment and abuse, particularly targeting women in the workplace. Its surge to the peak in 2017 followed a series of disturbing reports detailing sexual misconduct allegations against the renowned American film producer Harvey Weinstein. Although the phrase *MeToo* had been used for over a decade, its massive impact was triggered by a tweet from the American actress Alyssa Milano in October 2017. The tweet led to a powerful social media phenomenon, amplifying awareness, encouraging victims to speak out, and catalyzing a significant cultural change.

The movement is widely acknowledged for throwing light upon the prevalence of sexual violence especially against women both in the United States and globally. It is characterized by a firm call for accountability, which entails scrutinizing power dynamics in workplaces that have facilitated misconduct. Furthermore, it has spurred legal endeavors to pursue justice for victims. During the first year of the movement, a large number of influential figures faced adverse professional repercussions following public accusations of sexual misconduct. Over time, the impact of the #MeToo movement has expanded to cover broader concerns on gender equality especially in professional settings and policy reforms to dismantle barriers preventing victims from speaking out.

The #MeToo movement began in China in October 2017 as well, when Luo Qianqian (罗茜茜) accused her previous Ph.D. advisor Chen Xiaowu (陈小武), a professor at Beihang University, of sexually harassing her in 2004 during her PhD program. She shared on October 15th her experience on the online forum Zhihu–Quora’s counterpart in China, and the post went viral on social and mass media. This was the first reported incident relevant to the #MeToo movement that gained substantial media attention. More victims of sexual assaults followed her and published their suffering on social media. Appendix C provides the list of accused sexual offenders/harassers in the reported #MeToo incidents in China chronologically.

The peak of the movement in China was the public report of the incident involving Zhu Jun (朱军)—a big-name master of ceremonies at the China Central Television (CCTV). On July 26th, 2018, Zhou Xiaoxuan, also known as Xianzi (弦子), published an article on Weibo telling the details about her experience of being sexually assaulted by Zhu Jun. The incident took place in 2014 when she was an intern at the CCTV. Immediately, the post went viral on Chinese social media and pushed the #MeToo movement to its pinnacle. Figure 1 illustrates the nationwide Baidu daily search index for the “MeToo movement” from January 1st, 2017 to December 31st, 2018. Although the movement started to draw increased public attention from late 2017, the spike of the attention erupted in late July, 2018 coincidentally with the Zhu Jun incident. Figure 2 further displays variations at the provincial level in the Baidu search index and hence public attention to the movement.

(Insert Figure 1 Here)

2.2 Drunk Driving and Its Penalties in China

In our study, we analyze crimes of drunk driving for the following reasons: first, the key criterion for the sentence is the offender’s BAC. The BAC is professionally tested by the traffic police on-site immediately after a stop or an accident. The transparent and simple criterion minimizes the discretion of judges and external interference such as favoritism. This also renders verdicts more comparable across cases and judges. Second, drunk driving is classified as the mildest offense in the criminal hierarchy of China, and hence usually dealt with by only one judge. This is helpful to identify the effect of interest that is judge-gender-specific. Less than 15% of cases in the estimation sample were decided by the collegiate bench which usually consists of one main judge and another couple of assistant judges. We use the gender of the main judge for such cases.¹ Third, drunk driving was not directly relevant to the #MeToo movement, and the judges and defendants were also not involved in the incidents of sexual harassment or assaults. This type of crimes facilitate identification of the causal effect of the movement on judicial decisions.

As in many other countries, drunk driving in China also causes significant casualties and property damages (Hansen, 2015; Killoran et al., 2010; Levitt and Porter, 2001). Chinese legislators added drunk driving to the scope of punishment in *Amendment VIII to the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China* on May 1st, 2011. On December 18th, 2013, the Supreme People’s Court, the Supreme People’s Procuratorate, and the Ministry of Public Security jointly issued a judicial interpretation, defining drunk driving as driving with the blood alcohol content (BAC) at a level higher than 80mg/100ml. According to Article 133 of the Criminal Code, a driver whose BAC exceeds 80mg/100ml is considered drunk driving, and will face criminal penalties of dangerous driving determined by a judge; those with the BAC under 80 mg/100ml will merely receive administrative penalties. Our verdict data only include criminal cases, that is, the driver’s BAC is above 80mg/100ml.

The traffic police rely on breathalyzers to test a driver’s BAC. If the BAC is above 80mg/100ml, the driver’s blood should also be drawn as evidence for future use. On arrest for the crime of drunk driving, the traffic police will impose a five-year disqualification from driving and deactivate the driver’s license. After the investigation and evidence collection complete, the traffic police will release the driver on bail. The traffic police then inform the local police station of the suspected crime of drunk driving, and refer the case to the prosecutor.

¹We also conduct a sensitivity analysis in Section 8, focusing on cases handled by only one judge. The results and conclusions are unchanged.

Prosecutors generally apply a “one-size-fits-all” approach such that an offender arrested for the crime of drunk driving is found guilty of dangerous driving. Once the procuratorate has reviewed the case and determined that the facts are clear and that evidence is sufficient, the case proceeds to court.

The court first issues a summons, and informs the defendant of the time and venue of the hearing. It also entrusts the Justice Bureau with an investigation into the defendant’s family background, mental status, personal characteristics, criminal history, etc. The court then usually adopts a simple trial procedure to host the hearing and pronounce the sentence for crimes of drunk driving. There are two types of punishment for such crimes: imprisonment and fines. The Chinese law provides straightforward guidelines of the jail duration corresponding to different levels of the BAC, and limits the maximal duration to be six months for drunk driving. Cases having serious consequences such as major casualties and even deaths are classified as more severe types of crimes rather than dangerous/drunk driving. However, the law leaves some room for the discretion of judges regarding their decisions on fines which are consistent with the jail duration.

The legal system in China is largely a civil law system. There are no juries or established, legally binding precedents in crimes of drunk driving. Judges play a pivotal role in the sentence process in that they act as chief investigators, restore facts, and make final decisions. In crimes of drunk driving, the BAC of the driver is the key criterion for assessing the severity of the offense, even though other factors such as consequences about casualties and property damages are taken into account.² The BAC is determined through a breathalyzer screening by the police or traffic enforcement officers. This serves as the primary evidence in subsequent legal proceedings.

While China has been a country in which drinking culture prevails, heavy drinkers predominantly consist of men. Thus, in crimes of drunk driving, almost 99% of the defendants are male, showing an extremely unbalanced distribution between genders among the offenders.

3 Data

We obtained a unique textual dataset including the universe of verdicts on crimes of drunk driving from the website China Judgments Online (CJO). This is a digital platform launched in 2013, as part of efforts of China’s Supreme People’s Court to increase the

²Again, cases having serious casualty and even death consequences are not in the criminal category of drunk driving any more.

transparency of the judicial system. The centralized platform requires local courts at all administrative levels to disclose all their historical verdicts.

We preserve the data of verdicts from the beginning of 2016 to the end of 2018, in order to accommodate the initiation of the #MeToo movement, i.e., the first public report by Luo Qianqian on October 15th, 2017. We take the following measures to guarantee as clean identification of the effect of interest as we can. First, we retain first-instance verdicts only which account for about 97%, since second-instance or retrial cases tend to involve more complex and/or unobserved factors we cannot control for. Second, we keep cases in which the offender is male, to avoid inappropriately generalizing the results and for simplicity. Such cases account for 98.62%.³

Third, we adopt the approach from Cai et al. (2021), and combine manual verification with machine learning to identify the gender of judges. The final sample contains 299,518 verdicts on crimes of drunk driving.

We elaborate now how we identify the gender of judges in verdicts. To begin with, using judges' names and localities in the verdicts, we identify them in the available database of judges nationwide which is accessible on the *China Judicial Process Information Online*. The database includes personal traits such as the gender of judges. For judges not included in the database, we then search for their information on the official website of the court where they work. If information on judges' gender is unavailable, we turn to the *China Court Trial Online* and watch recorded videos of their verdicts to determine their gender. Finally, if we cannot identify the gender of judges in the previous three steps, we exploit machine learning to determine their gender based on names. We rely on an existing and widely used database available on Python-*ngender*, i.e., the Chinese counterpart of *gender-guesser*, and match Chinese names to a gender.⁴ The process of gender identification is illustrated in Appendix D.

Table 9 in Appendix A reports descriptive statistics of main variables used in our analysis. Regarding judicial decisions, the average duration of imprisonment for crimes of drunk driving is a little longer than two months; the average amount of fines is around 4500 Chinese yuan (620 USD). In the estimation sample, female judges account for 36% only, substantially less than male judges. This implies a gender gap in employment of the profession.

³In Table 11 of Appendix B, we also conduct the same analysis with the sample of female offenders which accounts for around 1.4%, i.e., 2,205 observations. The estimate with our preferred specification in column (6) is in a very similar magnitude, but non-significant due to the small sample size.

⁴Chinese names are generally gender-specific with exceptions. We take a sensitivity analysis by switching the gender of judges with a gender-ambiguous name, and obtain virtually identical results.

We further divide the sample by judges' gender and by pre-/post-#MeToo movement, and report the means of fine amounts in the corresponding cells of Table 1. This table provides an overview how judicial decisions made by judges of a different gender evolved over time. Before the #MeToo movement, male judges imposed significantly larger amount of fines compared to female judges. However, following the movement, verdicts of female judges became significantly more severe and converged to those of male judges.

(Insert Table 1 Here)

4 Empirical Strategy

We establish the difference-in-differences (DiD) framework with judge fixed effects and calendar date fixed effects for our empirical analysis in this section. We also provide evidence for assumptions needed for identification of the causal effect of the #MeToo movement.

4.1 Statistical Model

We conduct a DiD analysis to examine the effect of the #MeToo movement on judges' gender gap in their decisions. The model is specified as follows

$$Judgement_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FemaleJudge_j \times \#MeToo_t + X'_{ijt}\gamma + \mu_j + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

in which i denotes cases, j refers to judges, and t stands for calendar dates of verdicts. $Judgement_{ijt}$ represents judicial decisions on crimes of drunk driving, including the duration of imprisonment and the amount of fines. $\#MeToo_t$ is a dummy variable indicating the period following the initiation of the #MeToo movement in China, namely after October 15th, 2017. $FemaleJudge_j$ is another dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the judge is female. Hence, β_1 is our coefficient of interest which captures changes in judges' gender gap in decisions after the #MeToo movement.

Moreover, X_{ijt} contains rich characteristics of cases of drunk driving, including the natural logarithm of the blood alcohol content (BAC) of the offender, a dummy variable that values 1 if the case was heard by a collegiate bench, a set of dummy variables for different types of vehicles of the offender including trucks, coaches with cars as the reference, a dummy variable which takes the value of 1 if the offender held a driver's

licence, a dummy variable that values 1 if an accident took place, a dummy variable which takes the value of 1 if the offender showed cooperative attitudes before or in the hearing such as confession, guilty plea, voluntary surrender to court, meritorious service, active compensation, etc., and another set of dummy variables for different types of consequences such as property damages, injuries, and deaths.

In addition, μ_j and λ_t refer to judge fixed effects and fixed effects of calendar dates of verdicts, respectively. The former set of fixed effects take into account judge-specific and time-invariant unobserved traits, such as intelligence, personality, talent and ability of judges. It is important to include this type of fixed effects in that these unobserved characteristics of judges may directly affect their judgements on crimes. The latter set of fixed effects help to remove time-varying unobservables which influence over time decisions of all judges in the same pattern, such as seasonal effects, business cycles, and the common part of the #MeToo movement impact on all judges. Finally, ε_{ijt} denotes random errors.

4.2 Identification Assumptions

We try to identify the causal effect of the #MeToo movement on judges' gender gap in their judicial decisions on crimes of drunk driving. This relies on the established random assignment of cases by China's courts system to judges. Hence, specific personal traits, such as the gender, of judges or characteristics of cases are not considered in the assignment. Even so, our preferred model specification still includes a large set of such covariates relevant to judges and cases, as elaborated previously, in order to remove their potential unwanted influence.

Moreover, the commencement of the #MeToo movement in China was an exogenous shock to people who were not involved in the #MeToo incidents of sexual harassment and/or assaults. These people may include judges and offenders of the crimes of interest in our study—drunk driving that was not directly relevant to the movement. Reverse causality is also not a valid concern, in the sense that judicial decisions on crimes of drunk driving could not affect the initiation or evolution of the #MeToo movement.

Furthermore, crimes of drunk driving in China are characterized by substantially frequent and huge numbers of cases, a simple and transparent procedure of verdict, and the mildest type of crimes. The likelihood of external interference, such as favoritism or prejudice, is hence minimal. Even if there might exist such exceptions, this would account for a trivial proportion of cases in the sample. So the random assignment of cases is further bolstered.

In addition, in Table 2 we test the characteristics balance between cases handled by female judges and those by male judges. We also test the same balance before and after the #MeToo movement. In this way, we aim to provide additional evidence for the random assignment of cases. If case characteristics are not significantly differential between judges of a different gender, and before and after the movement, this implies that cases are randomly assigned.

Specifically, in Panel A of Table 2, we regress each of case characteristics on the dummy variable of *FemaleJudge*, other case characteristics except for that used as the outcome in the corresponding column, and court fixed effects. The coefficients of *FemaleJudge* show that all case characteristics except for the collegiate bench and truck are not significantly divergent between judges of a different gender. Likewise, in Panel B we regress each characteristic on the dummy variable of *#MeToo*, other case characteristics except for the one used as the outcome variable in the corresponding column, and judge fixed effects. Again, all case characteristics except for the collegiate bench are not significantly differential prior to and following the movement. In general, the estimates in Table 2 suggest that cases are randomly assigned to judges of a different gender, and distributed over time in the same pattern. All case characteristics are included in our main model specification, hence differences in the likelihood of cases being heard by a collegiate bench are taken into account.⁵

(Insert Table 2 Here)

5 Baseline Estimates

Table 3 reports estimates of the effect of the #MeToo movement on decisions of judges of a different gender. Columns (1) to (3) present results for judicial decisions on the jail duration, and columns (4) to (6) the fine amount. Columns (1) and (4) do not include any covariates. Columns (2) and (5) control for case characteristics. Columns (3) and (6) further control for judge fixed effects and verdict date fixed effects. These two columns are our preferred model specification and the baseline specification which accounts for judge-specific unobservables such as intelligence, personality, talent and ability, as well as seasonal effects, business cycles and other time-varying factors.

⁵Moreover, we perform a sensitivity analysis in column (6) of Table 8 by discarding all the cases decided by the collegiate bench, and obtain the similar estimate. This suggests that this type of cases cannot influence our results or conclusions.

Including case characteristics, column (2) shows trivial and non-significant variations in jail duration decisions between judges of a different gender (i.e., the coefficient of *FemaleJudge*), over time (the coefficient of *#MeToo*), and concerning the gender gap spanning the *#MeToo* movement (the coefficient of *FemaleJudge* × *#MeToo*). Column (3) also reports null effect of the movement on judges’ gender gap in decisions on the jail duration, when we additionally include the two sets of fixed effects. These results are expected, because judicial decisions on the jail duration are strictly based on the offender’s BAC by law.

The situation for judicial decisions on fines is different. In column (5), before the *#MeToo* movement, female judges made significantly more lenient or less severe decisions than male judges (the coefficient of *FemaleJudge*). This gap could be attributed to gender-specific attitudes imposed by traditional gender norms: stronger risk-aversion, lower tolerance for pressure and weaker incentives to compete of women (Cortés et al., 2023; Cai et al., 2019). Giving more lenient judgements, female judges could avoid being focused on or targeted at by the public or media. Following the movement, judges irrespective of their gender became more severe in terms of the fine punishment. Moreover, the increase in severity of female judges surpassed that of male judges, so female judges’ decisions converged to those of their male counterparts after the movement. Our preferred specification in column (6), which is also the baseline specification we choose, yields a similar estimate: post-movement, female judges made more severe decisions, increasing the amount of fines by 1.2% and converging to male judges. The variables of *FemaleJudge* and *#MeToo* are dropped from this specification, due to the inclusion of judge fixed effects and verdict date fixed effects.

(Insert Table 3 Here)

6 Mechanism Exploration

Why did the *#MeToo* movement render judicial decisions of female judges more severe and hence almost close judges’ gender gap in their decisions. We explore a potential mechanism of changes in gender norms in this section. As an influential and prevalent awareness campaign around the issues of sexual abuse and violence against women at the beginning and then broader concerns on gender discrimination, the *#MeToo* movement may substantially enhance societal consciousness of gender equality, especially among

women. If such improvement in awareness of gender equality operated among female judges as well, they were likely to change previous group-specific attitudes, such as stronger risk-aversion, lower tolerance for pressure and weaker incentives to compete of women, and become willing to stand out and speak up by making as severe judicial decisions as their male counterparts. This may reduce or even close judges' gender gap in judicial decisions.

Unable to directly interview judges in our verdict data and acquire their perceptions of gender equality, we analyze changes in awareness of gender equality among women in China following the movement. We assume that such responses of women in general also apply to female judges who are a subset of women in China. This mechanism exploration relies on the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) Waves 2015 and 2018. This is a repeated cross-sectional data set based on nationally representative random samples of the Chinese adult population. Wave 2015 serves as the period prior to the #MeToo movement, and Wave 2018 the post-movement phase.

Awareness of gender equality is measured with four statements in the CGSS: (1) men prioritize their career, while women family; (2) men are naturally more capable than women; (3) marrying well is more important than being good at work for women; and (4) a couple should equally share household chores. The responses to all the four statements are from "1. completely Agree" to "5. completely disagree." We transform the responses so that a larger value refers to stronger awareness of gender equality. In addition, we construct a composite index of awareness of gender equality which is the average of the previous four (re-scaled) responses.

The model of the mechanism analysis is

$$Awareness_{ipt} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 Female_{ip} + \delta_2 \#MeToo_t + \delta_3 Female_{ip} \times \#MeToo_t + X'_{ipt}\gamma + \alpha_p + \varepsilon_{ipt} \quad (2)$$

in which $Awareness_{ipt}$ denotes each of the four dimensions of awareness of gender equality and the composite index of awareness of respondent i in province p in year t ; $\#MeToo_t$ is a dummy variable for the period after the #MeToo movement, i.e., Wave 2018; $Female_{ip}$ is a dummy variable for female respondents; X_{ipt} refers to personal characteristics of respondents, including age, the place of residence, the status of ethnic minority, religion, educational attainment, party membership, marital status, and employment status. α_p represents province fixed effects. δ_3 is the coefficient of interest capturing the extra positive effect of the #MeToo movement on awareness of gender equality among women.

Table 4 displays the results: following the #Metoo movement, all the four dimensions (i.e., the first four columns) of awareness of gender equality improved for women in

comparison to men, though the relative increment in the view of capability of women versus men was non-significant. Column (5) further verifies that the composite awareness of gender equality significantly enhanced after the movement among women compared to men. As a highly educated and skilled subgroup of women, female judges are expected to be affected by the #MeToo movement in the same pattern. Thus, their awareness of gender equality was likely to improve post-movement as well. This may suggest that they became willing to make more severe judicial decisions, converging to their male counterparts.

(Insert Table 4 Here)

Moreover, we conduct a placebo test to show that changes in awareness of gender equality for women after the movement could not be explained by the evolution of social attitudes or perceptions in general. This will also exclude that the identified effect of the movement on judges' gender gap was driven by other events or reforms of social policies which might take place at a time close to the movement.

Using the same model specification, we analyze the potential influence of the #MeToo movement on social attitudes or perceptions irrelevant to gender equality among women relative to men. The outcome variables include perceived self-social class, general trust (two variants: trust 1—the majority of people in society can be trusted; trust 2—others will take advantage of you, if you are not careful), perceived fairness of society, and happiness. The range of the response to perceived self-social class is 1–10, and the range of other outcomes is 1–5. We again re-scale the responses so that a larger value means a higher perceived social class, higher trust, fairer society, or happier life.

The estimates in Table 5 show that the #MeToo movement did not significantly alter any of the social attitudes or perceptions of women compared to men. The results imply that changes in awareness of gender equality for women following the movement were not attributed to the evolution of general social attitudes. Furthermore, the #MeToo effect on judges' decisions was also not due to potential confounding events or policy reforms around the time of the movement.

(Insert Table 5 Here)

There might exist a concern such that female judges were somehow coincidentally assigned more cases of drunk driving following the #MeToo movement. They could

hence impose more severe penalties after observing the extensiveness of such crimes. Table 10 in Appendix B compares the numbers of cases of drunk driving handled by judges of a different gender and before/after the movement. On average, the number of cases per month decreased post-movement for both a male judge and female judge. Moreover, the reduction in the numbers of cases was even larger for a female judge than a male judge. Therefore, the statistics reject this potential mechanism.

7 Heterogeneity Investigation

In this section, we investigate potential heterogeneous effects of the #MeToo movement in terms of two aspects: gender equality at the regional level, and the base of the movement at the city level. These analyses provide additional suggestive evidence for the mechanism of gender norms documented in the previous section, and facilitate better understanding the role of awareness of gender equality.

7.1 Gender Equality at the Regional Level

We examine heterogeneity of gender equality at the regional level, by studying the gender balance of the juvenile population, female labor force participation, gender equality awareness, and prevalence of gender discrimination. The information on the gender balance of the juvenile population and female labor force participation is from the 2015 Chinese Census. Awareness of gender equality is the same as that in column (5) of Table 4 and the relevant data are from the CGSS Wave 2015, while the information on experience of gender discrimination is from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) Wave 2014. The gender balance of the juvenile population is measured as the sex ratio of people aged 15 at the city level. This is a proxy for the (historic) revealed preference for son indicating perceptions of gender equality in the corresponding city (Almond et al., 2019), in that a twisted sex ratio among juveniles is largely owing to historic abortions of female fetuses. The prevalence of (self-reported) experience of being discriminated against because of one’s gender is measured at the provincial level with answers from female respondents only. Since the CGSS Wave 2015 and the CFPS Wave 2014 do not include all the cities in mainland China, we would lose part of our verdict sample if we chose to measure gender equality awareness or gender discrimination at the city level in columns (5) to (8).

In Table 6, cities/provinces with a ratio/prevalence/rate higher than the median among the cities/provinces are in the “High” column, otherwise they are in the “low”

column. The results show that the #MeToo effect on the reduction in judges' gender gap in decisions was stronger and only significant in cities with a more gender balanced juvenile population and higher female labor force participation, and in provinces where awareness of gender equality was stronger and reported gender discrimination was more prevalent. We calculate the correlation between the index of gender equality awareness and self-reported gender discrimination, and obtain its coefficient +0.1228. Thus, more self-reports of gender discrimination may signal stronger awareness of gender equality and less tolerance for such discrimination among women. The results of this heterogeneity analysis display larger influence of the movement in regions with better (awareness of) gender equality, reflecting the mechanism of gender norms.

(Insert Table 6 Here)

7.2 Movement Base at the City Level

We then investigate heterogeneous effects concerning the base of the #MeToo movement. This analysis helps to provide additional evidence that the effect we identify in the main analysis is attributed to the #MeToo movement rather than confounding events. Apparently, women were the majority of supporters for this awareness campaign. Moreover, the participation in the movement among civilians was predominantly on social media, including reporting and sharing one's own experience, re-posting, discussing and commenting. Thus, we also explore whether the movement had a stronger effect in cities with a higher proportion of individuals who may be heavy users of social media such as younger people or those without college education (Ellingsen and Hernæs, 2018).

In Table 7, again cities with a proportion of the corresponding group higher than the median are in the "High" column, otherwise in the "Low" column. The estimates verify our expectation. The effect was more sizeable and only significant in cities with a larger relative base of the movement, i.e., women, younger people aged 22-45, and people without college education. The results render the conclusion more compelling that the effect on judges' gender gap in decisions following the first #MeToo incident was not very likely due to other events or policy reforms occurring closely.

(Insert Table 7 Here)

8 Robustness Checks

We perform a battery of sensitivity analyses in Table 8 to show the robustness of our results and conclusions. We adopt alternative measurements of public attention to the movement, and exploit the first #MeToo incident involving a celebrity Zhu Jun as a shock. We also employ different model specifications, by leveraging variations in the movement timing and public attention at the regional level.

The nationwide Baidu daily search index of the “MeToo movement” In the baseline analysis, we use the first publicly reported #MeToo incident involving Chen Xiaowu as the commencement of the #MeToo movement in China. By this means, we identify the extensity of the #MeToo effect.

We also study the intensity of the #MeToo effect, by utilizing the nationwide Baidu daily search index of the “MeToo movement.” Similar to the Google Trends indicator of daily searches, the Baidu daily search index is widely used as a proxy for public attention to specific terms of interest (Baker and Fradkin, 2017; Slovic et al., 2017; Tu et al., 2020). Replacing the dummy variable of post-#MeToo period with the Baidu index of the “MeToo movement” in column (1), we find that the positive #MeToo impact on the reduction in judges’ gender gap in decisions was increasing in public attention to the movement nationwide over time.

Celebrity Zhu Jun incident Figure 1 shows that public attention to the #MeToo movement nationwide surged to its peak when the celebrity Zhu Jun, a big-name master of ceremonies at the CCTV, was accused of sexual assault on Weibo. Providing the salience of this incident relative to other incidents, in column (2) we substitute the Zhu Jun incident for the Chen Xiaowu incident as the initiation of the movement. We also exclude observations between these two incidents from our estimation sample, in order to avoid potential contamination of incidents prior to the Zhu Jun incident. This leads to a decrease of observations in the estimation sample. The approach yields a more sizeable effect as expected: following the Zhu Jun incident, the reduction in judges’ gender gap in decisions was almost twice as large as that after the Chen Xiaowu incident.

Variations at the regional level Previously, we rely on variations in either the timing of a specific incident or public attention to the movement at the national level, to examine the extensity or intensity of the effect of interest. We now account for such variations which are divergent across provinces.

Specifically, in column (3) we exploit the first #MeToo incident in each province as the commencement of the movement in the corresponding province. That is to say, we

adopt a staggered DiD framework, and document an estimate close to the baseline. In addition, Figure 2 illustrates variations in public attention to the #MeToo movement across different provinces of mainland China, based on the Baidu search index of the “MeToo movement” at the provincial level. Thus, in column (4) we incorporate this province-specific proxy for public attention, and acquire qualitatively similar but quantitatively smaller effect.

(Insert Figure 2 Here)

Judge-specific and time-varying confounders The baseline model specification of our analysis controls for both judge fixed effects and fixed effects of verdict dates. So judge-specific unobservables such as intelligence, personality, talent and ability of judges, and seasonal effects and business cycles are taken into account. However, there might exist other potential confounders that could affect judicial decisions and depend on both judges and time, e.g., judges’ emotion. Hence, column (5) further includes $judge \times month$ fixed effects to account for such confounding unobservables. The effect of interest becomes even stronger and more significant, and our conclusions are unchanged.

Cases decided by the collegiate bench The estimation sample includes about 15% cases decided by the collegiate bench that usually consists of one main judge and another couple of assistant judges. In the baseline analysis, we use the gender of the main judge for such cases. Column (6) focuses on cases decided by only one judge, dropping all the cases handled by the collegiate bench. The estimated effect is substantially close to the baseline in column (6) of Table 3 both economically and statistically.

(Insert Table 8 Here)

Dynamic effect of the #MeToo movement To examine the dynamic effect of the #MeToo movement on judicial decisions of judges of a different gender, we interact the dummy variable of female judges with every time period in the baseline specification. The time periods are set to be every two months. We display the coefficients of these interaction terms in the style of the event study in Figure 3. The coefficient estimate right before the movement is normalized to be zero for identification.

The figure shows that preceding the movement, the estimates of the interactions are all non-significantly close to zero. This additionally supports our identification assumption in the DiD framework: judicial decisions before the movement did not evolve in a

divergent pattern between male judges and female judges. One can observe a general increasing pattern of the coefficients with fluctuations following the #MeToo movement. The first strong and significant effect appeared in period $t + 3$, namely April-May 2018, and persisted to some extent, as increased #MeToo incidents reported on social media kept drawing more public attention.⁶

(Insert Figure 3 Here)

9 Conclusions

Gender inequality and discrimination against women have still persisted, even though the gender gap in the labor market has been decreasing. Sexual harassment and violence against women, a substantially detrimental form of gender discrimination, have prevailed. This has led to the outbreak of the #MeToo movement, an influential social movement, civic engagement and awareness campaign around the world.

The current paper studies the effect of this gender-specific social movement on judges' gender gap in their decisions on crimes of drunk driving in the context of China. We find that after the movement, female judges made more severe decisions, which almost closed judges' gender gap. We also provide evidence that the movement improved awareness of gender equality among women in comparison to men, and that the #MeToo effect on the reduction in judges' gender gap was stronger in regions with higher (awareness of) gender equality. This suggests a mechanism of gender norms such that female judges changed previous gender attitudes, i.e., stronger risk-aversion, lower tolerance for pressure and weaker incentives to compete, and became willing to stand out and speak up, converging to their male counterparts following the movement.

Our study shows that social movements triggered by inequality and discrimination may effectively lead to cultural change such as changes in social or gender norms as well. This could, in turn, facilitate reducing the corresponding inequality and discrimination in society and the economy.

⁶The dramatic drop in period $t + 6$, i.e., October-November 2018, was likely to be attributed to distractions during long holidays of the Chinese National Day.

Figures and Tables

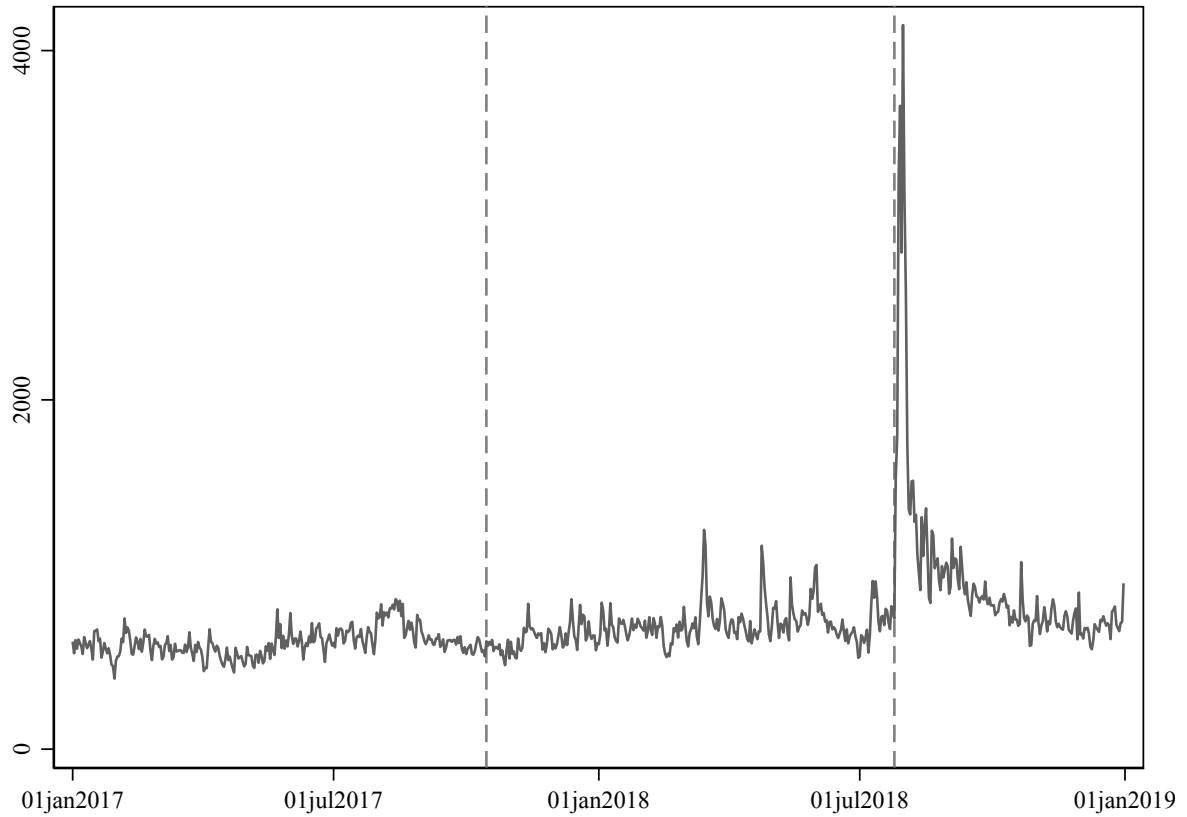


Figure 1: The trend of the daily Baidu search index of the “MeToo movement” in 2017-2018

Note: The first vertical dashed line corresponds to the Chen Xiaowu incident on October 15th, 2017, namely the initiation of the #MeToo movement in China. The second vertical dashed line corresponds to the Zhu Jun incident on July 26th, 2018, namely the peak of the movement in China.

Source: Baidu Search Index

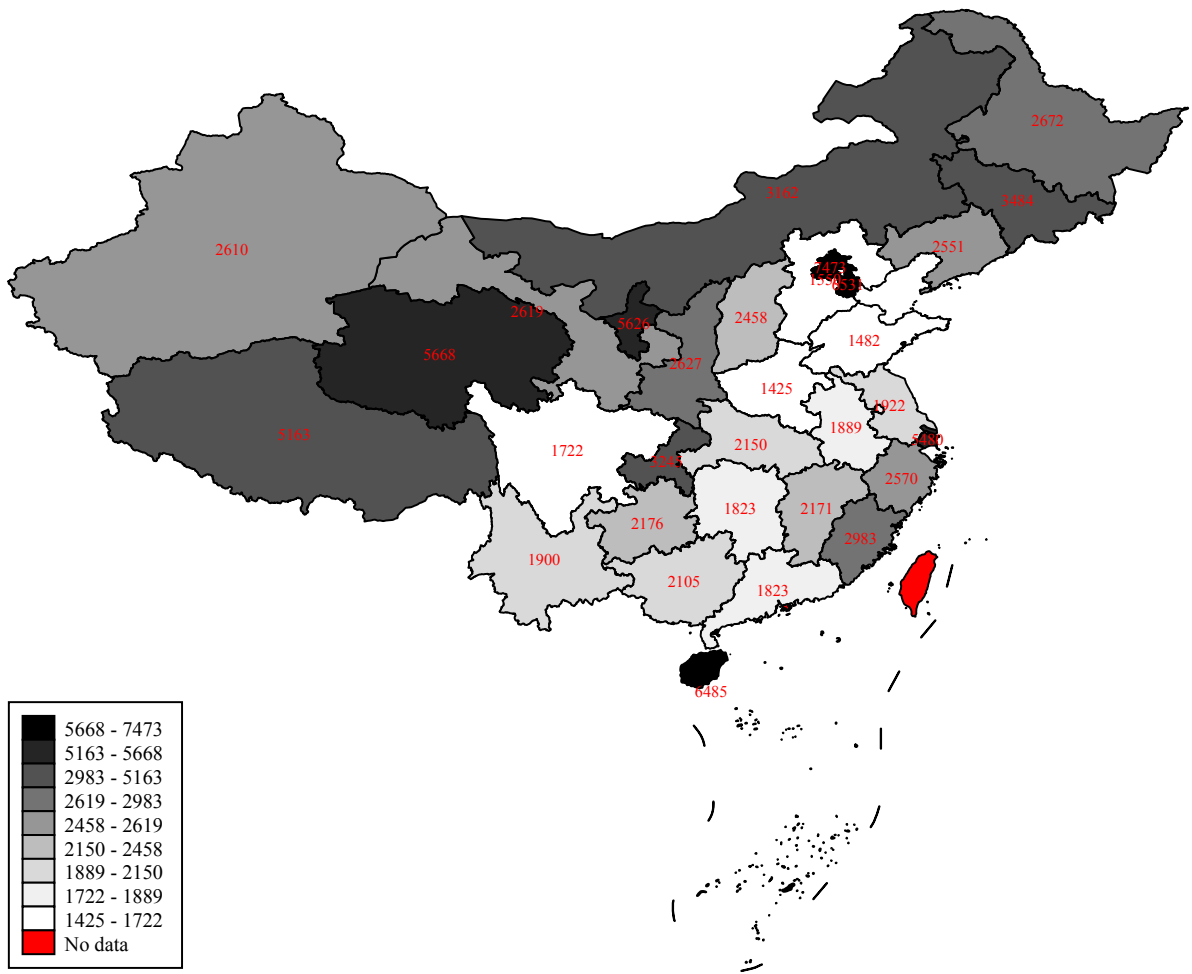


Figure 2: The regional distribution of the Baidu search index of the “MeToo movement” in 2017-2018

Note: The red numbers denote the Baidu search index measured per million people in the corresponding province in 2017-2018.

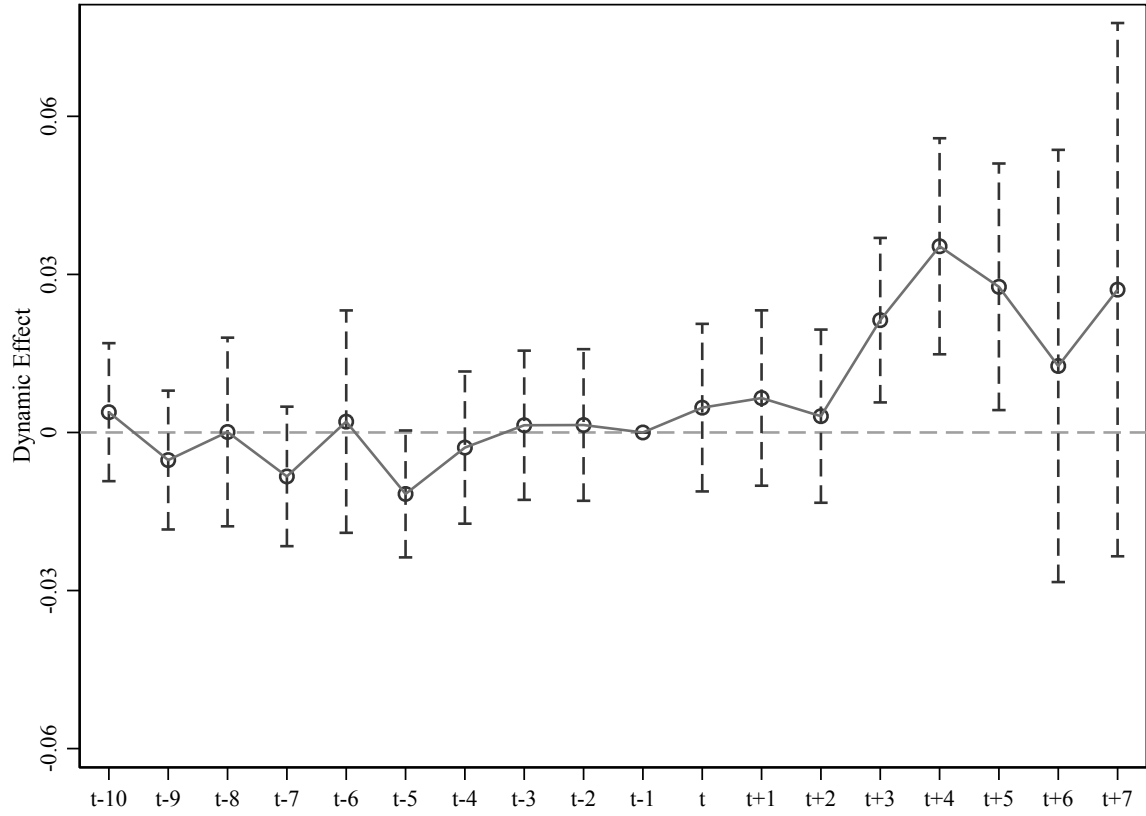


Figure 3: Event study about judicial decisions on fines-coefficients of interactions of *FemaleJudge* and month periods
Note: The vertical dashed segments denote 95% confidence intervals of estimated coefficients.

Table 1: Descriptive evidence for the effect of the #MeToo movement on judicial decisions on fines; 2016-2018

	Before #MeToo	After #MeToo	Difference
Male judge	4471.805	4561.600	89.796***
Female judge	4370.137	4540.395	170.258***
Difference	-101.667***	-21.205	80.463**

Note: Means of fines are in corresponding cells. “After #MeToo” refers to the period after October 15th, 2017. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 2: Tests of characteristics balance between cases handled by judges of a different gender, and before and after #MeToo movement

	(1) Ln(BAC)	(2) BAC >200	(3) Collegiate bench	(4) Truck	(5) Coach	(6) No plate or license	(7) Accident	(8) Property damage	(9) Injury	(10) Death	(11) Cooperative attitudes
Panel A											
FemaleJudge	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.019*** (0.005)	-0.002** (0.001)	0.000 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.002)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Court FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs.	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518
R-sqr	0.543	0.531	0.202	0.032	0.039	0.064	0.513	0.569	0.428	0.020	0.063
Panel B											
#MeToo	0.000 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	-0.016*** (0.004)	0.004* (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.005 (0.003)	-0.006* (0.003)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.000 (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Judge FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Obs.	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518
R-sqr	0.579	0.561	0.513	0.099	0.111	0.176	0.615	0.640	0.487	0.134	0.350

Note: The controls include all other case characteristics except for that used as the outcome in the corresponding column. Panel A does not include judge fixed effects, in order to report coefficients of *FemaleJudge*. Panel B does not include verdict date fixed effects, in order to report coefficients of *#MeToo*. Standard errors are clustered at the judge level. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 3: #MeToo movement and decisions of judges of a different gender

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Ln(Jail duration)			Ln(Fines)		
FemaleJudge \times #MeToo	0.007 (0.005)	0.005 (0.004)	-0.000 (0.004)	0.017** (0.008)	0.016* (0.008)	0.012** (0.005)
FemaleJudge	-0.006* (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	-	-0.014*** (0.005)	-0.010** (0.005)	-
#MeToo	-0.015*** (0.003)	-0.005* (0.003)	-	0.016*** (0.005)	0.018*** (0.005)	-
Case controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Judge FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Verdict date FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Observations	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518	299,518
R-squared	0.000	0.304	0.597	0.000	0.075	0.704

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the judge level. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 4: Mechanism: #MeToo movement and awareness of gender equality

	(1) Career	(2) Capability	(3) Work	(4) Chore share	(5) All
Female×#MeToo	0.068** (0.033)	0.032 (0.033)	0.071** (0.033)	0.074*** (0.028)	0.061*** (0.020)
Female	0.188*** (0.024)	0.160*** (0.024)	-0.045* (0.024)	0.230*** (0.021)	0.133*** (0.015)
#MeToo	0.152*** (0.024)	0.115*** (0.024)	0.050** (0.024)	0.037* (0.021)	0.089*** (0.015)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,566	19,566	19,566	19,566	19,566
R-squared	0.119	0.078	0.060	0.035	0.130

Note: Gender equality awareness includes four dimensions: priority of career versus family, capability of women versus men, importance of work versus marriage, perception of chore share between the couple. The data source is the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) Waves 2015 and 2018. 2015 is the period prior to the #MeToo movement, and 2018 post-#MeToo period. We transform all the responses so that a larger value refers to stronger awareness of gender equality in every corresponding dimension. Covariates include age, the place of residence, the status of ethnic minority, religion, educational attainment, party membership, marital status, employment status, and province fixed effects. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 5: Placebo test of mechanism: #MeToo movement and other social attitudes irrelevant to gender equality

	(1) Social class	(2) Trust 1	(3) Trust 2	(4) Fairness	(5) Happiness
Female \times #MeToo	-0.042 (0.045)	0.021 (0.028)	0.016 (0.029)	-0.016 (0.029)	-0.012 (0.022)
Female	0.222*** (0.033)	-0.015 (0.020)	0.041* (0.021)	-0.031 (0.021)	0.051*** (0.017)
#MeToo	-0.064* (0.034)	0.056*** (0.020)	0.012 (0.022)	0.019 (0.021)	0.040** (0.017)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,566	19,566	19,566	19,566	19,566
R-squared	0.075	0.036	0.012	0.030	0.039

Note: The data source is the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) Waves 2015 and 2018. 2015 is the period prior to the #MeToo movement, and 2018 post-#MeToo period. Trust 1 is based on responses to the statement “the majority of people in society can be trusted,” and Trust 2 “others will take advantage of you, if you are not careful.” Responses concerning all the five outcome variables are re-scaled so that a larger value means a higher perceived social class, higher trust, fairer society, or happier life. Covariates include age, the place of residence, the status of ethnic minority, religion, educational attainment, party membership, marital status, employment status, and province fixed effects. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 6: Heterogeneity analysis about judicial decisions on fines: gender equality at the regional level

	Outcome variable: Ln(Fines)							
	City juvenile		City rate of female		Province index of		Province prevalence of self-	
	gender balance		labor force participation		gender equality awareness		reported gender discrimination	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Diff p-value: 0.000</i>		<i>Diff p-value: 0.000</i>		<i>Diff p-value: 0.000</i>		<i>Diff p-value: 0.000</i>	
FemaleJudge \times #MeToo	0.006	0.018**	0.001	0.024***	0.009	0.018***	-0.010	0.038***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Case controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Judge FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Verdict date FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	150,732	148,667	150,355	149,035	161,201	138,204	168,649	130,744
R-squared	0.716	0.692	0.713	0.698	0.708	0.658	0.732	0.667

Note: The first two columns are about the sex ratio of juveniles aged 15 at the city level. This is a proxy for revealed preference for son indicating perceptions of gender equality in the corresponding city. Columns (7) and (8) are about self-reported experience of being discriminated against because of one's gender from female respondents in the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) Wave 2014. In columns (1) to (4), information about sex ratio and female labor force participation is from the 2015 Chinese Census data; cities with a ratio or rate higher than the median among the cities are in the "High" column, otherwise the cities are in the "Low" column. In columns (5) to (8), heterogeneity is measured at the provincial level rather than the city level, due to the limitation of survey data (CGSS Wave 2015 for columns (5) and (6), and CFPS Wave 2014 for columns (7) and (8)). Standard errors are clustered at the judge level. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 7: Heterogeneity analysis about judicial decisions on fines: the base of the movement at the city level

	Outcome variable: Ln(Fines)					
	City proportion of females		City proportion of younger people		City proportion of people without college education	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	<i>Diff p-value: 0.000</i>		<i>Diff p-value: 0.000</i>		<i>Diff p-value: 0.000</i>	
FemaleJudge \times #MeToo	0.010 (0.007)	0.016** (0.007)	0.003 (0.007)	0.022*** (0.007)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.027*** (0.007)
Case controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Judge FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Verdict date FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	151,383	148,030	149,914	149,478	151,003	148,390
R-squared	0.689	0.722	0.730	0.675	0.688	0.720

Note: Younger people refer to people aged 22-45. Information about proportions of different groups of people at the city level is from the 2015 Chinese Census data; cities with a proportion of the corresponding group higher than the median are in the “High” column, otherwise the cities are in the “Low” column. Standard errors are clustered at the judge level. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 8: Robustness checks of baseline estimates

	Ln (Fines)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
FemaleJudge×Baidu index	0.024*** (0.008)					
FemaleJudge×Zhu Jun incident		0.022** (0.011)				
FemaleJudge×#MeToo by province			0.016* (0.008)			
FemaleJudge×Baidu index by province				0.001** (0.000)		
FemaleJudge×#MeToo					0.021*** (0.007)	
FemaleJudge×#MeToo						0.014*** (0.005)
Case controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Judge FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Verdict date FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Judge×month FE	-	-	-	-	Yes	-
Observations	299,518	220,001	299,518	299,518	270,394	254,558
R-squared	0.704	0.709	0.704	0.704	0.775	0.711

Note: Column (1) uses the Baidu daily search index of the “MeToo movement” as a proxy for public attention to the movement to replace the dummy variable of #MeToo in the main specification; column (2) exploits the Zhu Jun celebrity incident as the initiation of the movement; column (3) leverages the first #MeToo incident in each province as the initiation of the movement in the corresponding province; column (4) utilizes the relevant Baidu daily search index by province; column (5) additionally adds judge×month fixed effects to our main specification; column (6) excludes cases decided by the collegiate bench. Standard errors are clustered at the judge level. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

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Appendix A: Variable Descriptives

Table 9: Descriptive statistics of main variables

	No. obs.	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max
Jail duration	299,518	63.283	31.901	30	60	180
Fines	299,518	4451.955	3867.321	1000	3000	35000
Female judge	299,518	0.359	0.480	0	0	1
#MeToo	299,518	0.313	0.464	0	0	1
BAC	299,518	160.402	58.453	80	149.68	698
BAC>200	299,518	0.209	0.407	0	0	1
Collegiate bench	299,518	0.148	0.355	0	0	1
Truck	299,518	0.060	0.237	0	0	1
Coach	299,518	0.102	0.303	0	0	1
No plate/license	299,518	0.037	0.188	0	0	1
Accident	299,518	0.216	0.412	0	0	1
Property damage	299,518	0.208	0.406	0	0	1
Injury	299,518	0.133	0.340	0	0	1
Death	299,518	0.002	0.048	0	0	1
Cooperative attitudes	299,518	0.016	0.125	0	0	1

Appendix B: Additional Estimation Tables

Table 10: Descriptive evidence for the effect of the MeToo movement on the number of cases assigned to judges

	Before #MeToo	After #MeToo	Difference
Male Judge	2.684	2.551	-0.133***
Female Judge	2.949	2.789	-0.160***
Difference	0.265***	0.238***	-0.027

Note: Means of numbers of cases per month assigned to judges per capita are in corresponding cells. “After #MeToo” refers to the period after October 15th, 2017. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Table 11: #MeToo movement and decisions of judges of a different gender: sample of female offenders

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Ln(Jail duration)			Ln(Fines)		
FemaleJudge \times #MeToo	-0.033 (0.053)	0.000 (0.045)	-0.088 (0.065)	0.092 (0.078)	0.123 (0.080)	0.014 (0.084)
FemaleJudge	-0.045 (0.036)	-0.058* (0.034)	-	-0.086 (0.058)	-0.101* (0.058)	-
#MeToo	-0.042 (0.035)	-0.039 (0.032)	-	0.044 (0.063)	0.036 (0.063)	-
Case controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Judge FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Verdict date FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,205	2,205	2,205	2,205	2,205	2,205
R-squared	0.007	0.326	0.857	0.005	0.073	0.901

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the judge level. *, **, and *** indicate 10%, 5%, and 1% significance levels, respectively.

Appendix C: List of #MeToo Incidents in China



Figure 4: The screenshot of partial accused sexual offenders in reported #MeToo incidents in China chronologically

Note: The screenshot is collected from <https://metoochina.me>, and shows only part of the list.

被指控者	作者简介	指控时间	详细内容
陈小武	原长江学者特聘教授、北京航空航天大学计算机学院教授	2017年10月15日	北京航空航天大学博士生罗茜茜在知乎发文表示其在攻读博士期间被副导师陈小武性骚扰，此外亦有
周斌	南昌大学国学研究院原副院长	2017年12月19日	南昌大学2017届毕业生小柔发文指控周斌曾对其性侵犯长达七月。
邓光荣	香港知名演员	2018年1月10日	娱乐记者卓伟在微博公布了声称是演员蓝洁瑛于2013年受访的视频，其中蓝洁瑛讲述了早年遭邓开
曾志伟	香港知名演员	2018年1月10日	娱乐记者卓伟在微博公布了声称是演员蓝洁瑛于2013年受访的视频，其中蓝洁瑛讲述了早年遭曾志
薛原	对外经贸大学统计学院副教授	2018年1月11日	一北京在校大学生在知乎发问指控薛原于2016年起多次对其性骚扰。该问题下亦有其他学生表示薛
谢灿	北京大学生命科学学院教授	2018年2月5日	记者赵敬曦在女性权益平台橙雨伞上发文，指控在采访谢灿时被其性骚扰。
徐钢	美国伊利诺伊大学香槟分校（UIUC）东亚研究系副教授	2018年3月10日	美国卫斯理安大学（Wesleyan University）王敏在豆瓣与知乎上指控徐钢长期性骚扰学生，此后
沈阳	长江学者特聘教授，原北京大学中文系副主任、南京大学文学院语言	2018年4月5日	原北京大学社会学系学生李悠悠发文指控沈阳在北大任教期间对其好友高岩性侵犯，污蔑高岩患精神
张鹏	中山大学社会学与人类学院教授、青年长江学者	2018年4月8日	2018年4月起数名女生向中山大学纪委举报张鹏的性骚扰行为，此后网文《她曾以为自己能逃开教
顾海兵	中国人民大学经济学院教授	2018年4月11日	中国人民大学学生、知乎匿名网友在知乎问题“大家怎么看中国人民大学顾海兵教授？”（已被删
张康之	长江学者特聘教授，中国人民大学行政管理学系教授	2018年4月13日	原中国人民大学学生、新浪微博网友夜宛阁发微博指控张康之曾于2005年在宿舍对其性骚扰。她同
谢耘耕	原上海交通大学媒体与与设计学院副院长	2018年4月25日	上海交通大学校方表示谢耘耕因在与学生接触时有“不当言论和不当肢体动作”而被免职。
肖开恩	诗人、河南大学教授	2018年5月5日	北京大学博士、河南大学硕士王东东曾于2013年爆出肖开恩2008年时性骚扰王东东当时女友的事
王以培	诗人、原中国人民大学文学院副教授	2018年5月28日	有受害者匿名指控王以培曾于2005年在酒店内对其性骚扰。
吴永厚	甘肃庆阳六中教师	2018年6月20日	曾在庆阳六中就读的李奕奕于2018年6月20日晚楼自杀，后被曝出她在校期间曾被班主任吴永厚猥
郑明璋	临沂大学文学院教授	2018年6月30日	网友发帖爆料郑明璋长期骚扰女学生，并晒出其与一女生王清（化名）的聊天记录为证。
袁天鹏	议事规则专家	2018年7月20日	一曾在广州市表明社会组织发展中心工作的女性在微信朋友圈中爆料，指控袁天鹏曾于2012或201
冯永峰	知名环保人士、自然大学发起人	2018年7月23日	一环保人士在微信朋友圈发文指控冯永峰对其机构的多位女实习生与女员工实施各种性质骚扰行为，
雷闯	知名公益人、亿友公益创始人	2018年7月23日	一匿名女生发文指控雷闯于2015年7月在参与徒步活动时被其在酒店房间内性侵。
刘国强	心目小马国际学院首席运营官、副院长	2018年7月24日	微信公众号“自绝于江湖”上有网友匿名爆料刘国强曾对其多次性骚扰。
赵秉志	原北京师范大学刑事法律科学研究院院长	2018年7月24日	赵秉志因生活作风问题被北师大免职处分。
张锦雄	同性运动人士，香港彩虹与彩虹中国创办人	2018年7月24日	三位匿名男性举报人指控张锦雄在分享会期间对其有性骚扰举动。
章文	知名媒体人	2018年7月24日	一位匿名女称章文于2018年5月在酒后对其实施强奸，此后作家蒋方舟、记者易小荷等亦发声揭露
周非	世界自然基金会（WWF）北京代表处项目总监	2018年7月25日	原世界自然基金会（WWF）员工王琪实名指控其原上司周非曾于2016年在西双版纳一酒店强奸了她
信力建	民办教育专家、信孚教育集团创始人	2018年7月25日	媒体人何满在 Facebook 上指控信力建于2007年在酒店房间内对其性骚扰。
熊培云	南开大学副教授、公共知识分子	2018年7月25日	知名女权活动人士赵思乐在微信朋友圈指控熊培云曾于2012年在一次活动中对其进行骚扰。
孙冕	《新周刊》创始人、社长	2018年7月25日	作家春树在豆瓣上指控曾是其领导的孙冕在她刚入职时将她带回了住处并侵犯了她。
张弛	作家	2018年7月25日	作家春树在豆瓣上指控张弛曾对其性侵，并使其得急性性病。
霍庆川	“金动未来”创始人、原浙江教和慈善基金会秘书长助理	2018年7月26日	一媒体人在微信公众号“自绝于江湖”上发文，指霍庆川曾于2012年在电影院对其性骚扰，并在电
王先胜	原广东省民政厅副巡视员、广州市公益慈善联合会会长	2018年7月26日	公益人士赵海伶在微信公众号“自绝于江湖”实名指控王先胜曾在一饭局上对其性骚扰，并指出她
朱长振	《大河报》记者	2018年7月26日	一女记者发文指控朱长振于2012年夏天借谈公益为由将她带到家中，并试图对她性侵。
潘杰客	“为你读诗”创始人	2018年7月26日	网友 Steffi- 在 微博上指控潘杰客（本名潘学光）曾对“为你读诗”多位女员工实施各种性质骚扰
司屠	作家	2018年7月26日	豆瓣网友 liuliu 指控司屠于2012年曾试图对其实施侵犯。
张伟	宁波羽毛球队教练，前羽毛球国家队员	2018年7月26日	17岁高二女生“孙孙向你扔了只狗”在 微博指控张伟，称其15岁赴台湾比赛时张伟曾试图强奸她。
刘坚军	宁波羽毛球队总教练，前羽毛球世界冠军	2018年7月26日	17岁高二女生“孙孙向你扔了只狗”在 微博指控刘坚军，称其未满14岁时便被刘坚军在宾馆房间性
谢伦灿	中国传媒大学文化产业研究院副院长、教授	2018年7月26日	中国传媒大学新闻学院大三女生面儿儿哈揭露谢伦灿于2016年11月在饭店停车场与工作室对其性侵
朱军	中央电视台主持人	2018年7月26日	原中央电视台《艺术人生》节目组实习生弦子在 微博发文指控朱军曾在化妆室对其有猥亵行为。
刘猛	知名公益人士、心理援助专家、一天公益理事长	2018年7月27日	两位女社工指控刘猛多次对她们实施性骚扰与性侵犯。
邓飞	知名记者、公益人，《凤凰周刊》记者部主任	2018年7月27日	微博用户“不要怕不要怂”指控邓飞于2011年“免费午餐”活动期间在酒店对其性骚扰，后又有多
蔡翔	原中国传媒大学副校长	2018年7月27日	中国传媒大学2012届毕业生指控蔡翔曾于2008年邀其一同泡温泉，并对其性骚扰。
陈国昌	广东外语外贸大学新闻与传播学院教师	2018年7月28日	广东外语外贸大学两位女生指控陈国昌对其言语性骚扰，并指他对许多女生有类似行为。
周翔	迷笛公司副总裁	2018年7月28日	微博网友“我是落生”代一21岁女生（再见罗丝）发文指控周翔，表示她在2017年太湖迷笛音乐节
姚树洁	长江学者特聘教授，重庆大学经济学教授、诺丁汉大学经济学教授	2018年7月28日	网友蜗牛揭露姚树洁曾在西安交通大学讲座期间对其性骚扰。
高雷	长春中医药大学体育老师	2018年7月29日	新浪微博网友“可爱的虫二二”指控高雷曾在学校仓库房里对其性骚扰。
米彦军	山西大学外国语学院日语系副教授	2018年7月29日	“托奶王天王”在 微博代一山西大学学生发文，文中指控米彦军长期言语性骚扰女学生。
张晓	西北大学新闻传播学院教师	2018年7月29日	清华大学教授常江代一西北大学新闻传播学院女生发文，文中指张晓曾对她及其他女生实施猥亵。
王光亮	建筑师，哈佛大学社会人类学博士、原悉尼大学城市建筑学系高级讲	2018年7月31日	《南方人物周刊》的报道《恋爱暴力中的性与爱》中描述了H博士在与伊婷（化名）近一年的亲密
杨国强	新华社英语电视台台长	2018年7月31日	一女生林婷在微信公众号“074职场女性法律热线”上发文表示杨国强于2016年春通过微信对其性
释学诚	中国佛教协会会长、全国政协常委、北京龙泉寺住持	2018年8月1日	北京龙泉寺两位都监释贤佳、释贤启举报释学诚性侵犯出家弟子，并对其实施精神控制。
熊广基	湖南大学经济与贸易学院副教授	2018年8月2日	网友 whenyousaynothingatall1585 在 微博发文指控熊广基（原名熊伟）曾在办公室对其学妹3
任继长	杭州文澜中学校长、余杭高级中学总校长，原全国人大代表	2018年8月3日	王五四在公众号上代一受害者发文，指控30年前时任杭州二中初中部教导主任任曾对当时13岁时受
宋协伟	中央美术学院设计学院院长	2018年8月6日	清华大学教授常江在 微博发文称一中央美院学生指控宋协伟涉嫌猥亵。
张耀春	摩拜单车前端负责人、原滴滴出行公共前端负责人、《Vue.js 权威	2018年8月9日	摩拜单车一女员工指控张耀春（网名小春）对多位女下属有不同程度的性骚扰。
梁栋	山东中医药大学副教授、山东省中医院乳腺甲状腺外科副主任医师	2018年8月10日	原山东中医药大学学生仇英燃实名举报其硕士导师梁栋，指梁栋在其硕士研究生期间曾对其两次性
杨雄里	复旦大学脑科学研究院首任院长、中国科学院士	2018年8月12日	美国韦恩州立大学（Wayne State University）医学院研究员陆绮雯表示，其2005年左右在
周洪双	光明日报记者	2018年9月29日	原光明日报实习生“灵灵虎儿”在 微博指控周洪双曾于2016年在酒店房间对其实施性侵犯，并于此

Figure 5: The list of accused sexual offenders in reported #MeToo incidents in China chronologically

Note: The list shows information on the names of the accused offenders, and the dates and other details of the accusations of the #MeToo incidents in China chronologically.

Appendix D: Process of Identification of Judges' Gender

First, using judges' names and localities in the verdicts, we identify them in the available database of judges nationwide which is accessible on the *China Judicial Process Information Online*. The following screenshot shows an example in Jinan City of Shandong Province.

序号	姓名	性别	省份	部门	职务
1	赵悦红		山东	院领导	院长
2	张美丽	女	山东	院领导	副院长
3	姚文辉	女	山东	院领导	副院长
4	周广军	男	山东	院领导	执行局局长
5	许莉	女	山东	院领导	副院长
6	朱庆臻	男	山东	院领导	专职审判委员会委员
7	闫勇	男	山东	院领导	专职审判委员会委员
8	王东	男	山东	院领导	局长
9	孙晓博	女	山东	办公室	无
10	于骥宁	男	山东	立案庭	副庭长
11	上官东升		山东	立案庭	法官
12	王永革	女	山东	刑庭	法官
13	孙志彬	男	山东	刑庭	法官

Note: The screenshot of partial judges on the *China Judicial Process Information Online* in Jinan City of Shandong Province. It includes the gender of listed judges.

Source: <https://splcgk.court.gov.cn/gzfwfw//fgml>.

Second, for judges not included in the previous database, we then search for their gender information on the official website of the court where they work. The following screenshot is an example of the court of Beijing.



The screenshot shows the official website of the Beijing Court (北京法院) with the URL www.bjcourt.gov.cn. The navigation bar includes links for Court News, Announcements, Judgments, Trial Procedures, Enforcement Information, Judge Information (highlighted), Name Information, Case References, Litigation Services, Digital Judgments, and Video Litigation. The main content area is titled '北京市东城区人民法院法官信息' (Judge Information of the Beijing Dongcheng District People's Court) and lists five judges in a table.

序号	法院	姓名	性别	法律职务
1	北京市东城区人民法院	何马根	男	院长, 审判委员会委员, 审判员
2	北京市东城区人民法院	爱新觉罗启骋	男	副院长, 审判委员会委员, 审判员
3	北京市东城区人民法院	刘行	男	副院长, 审判委员会委员, 审判员
4	北京市东城区人民法院	芦超	男	副院长, 审判委员会委员, 审判员
5	北京市东城区人民法院	孟德英	女	审判委员会委员, 审判员

Note: The screenshot of partial judges on the official website of the court of Beijing. It includes the gender of listed judges.

Source: <https://www.bjcourt.gov.cn/fgxx/detail.htm?court=13&channel=100336002>.

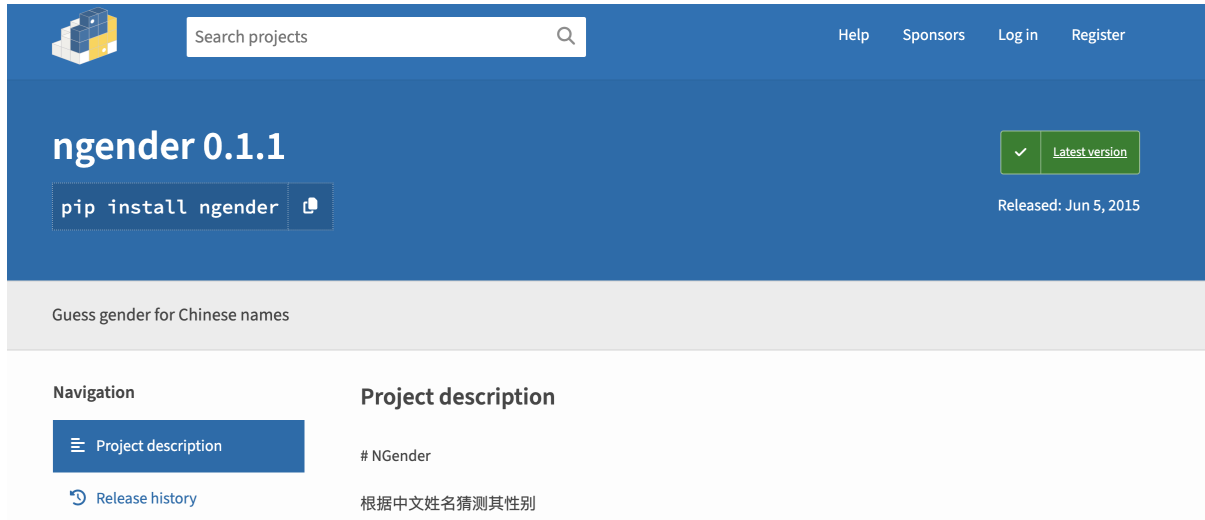
Third, if information on judges' gender is unavailable, we turn to the *China Court Trial Online* and watch recorded videos of their verdicts to determine their gender. The following screenshot shows a video example.



Note: The screenshot of a recorded verdict video on the *China Court Trial Online*. The gender of the judge can be observed in the video.

Source: <https://tingshen.court.gov.cn/live>.

Finally, if we cannot identify the gender of judges in the previous three steps, we exploit machine learning to determine their gender based on names. We rely on an existing and widely used package available on Python—*ngender*, and match Chinese names to a gender.



The screenshot shows the PyPI project page for **ngender 0.1.1**. The header is blue with a search bar, links for Help, Sponsors, Log in, and Register. Below the header, the project name **ngender 0.1.1** is displayed in large white text. To the right, there is a green button with a checkmark and the text "Latest version", and below it, the release date "Released: Jun 5, 2015". A dark blue button with the text "pip install ngender" and a copy icon is also present. Below the header, a light gray bar contains the text "Guess gender for Chinese names". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled "Navigation", contains a blue button for "Project description" and a link for "Release history". The right column, titled "Project description", contains the text "# NGender" and the Chinese description "根据中文姓名猜测其性别".

Note: Adopting the approach from Ash et al. (2022), we exploit machine learning with the Python package *ngender* to identify the gender based on judges' names.

Package source: <https://pypi.org/project/ngender/>.