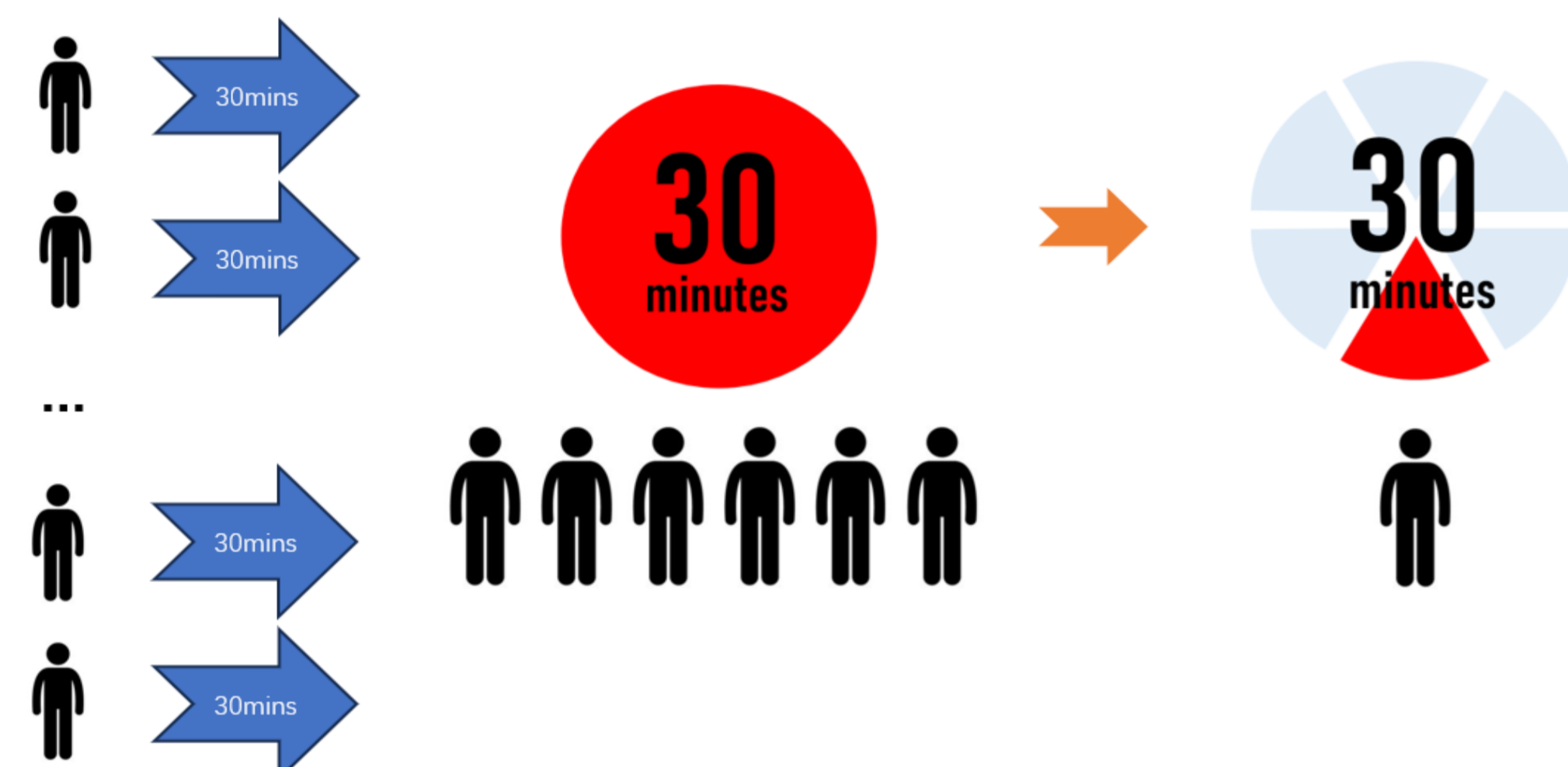


Introduction

People often encounter waiting times collectively or individually. Normatively, without real interactions with others, individuals might value the same duration when waiting in a nominal group as they would when waiting alone. However, this research documents a **Social Dilution Effect of Time** that people demand less individual compensation when waiting in a nominal group than alone.

Theory



The **intangible nature of time** distorts the interpersonal independence of individual time losses, making people collapse individual time losses in the same duration as a collective one and perceive it as socially shared by nominal group members.

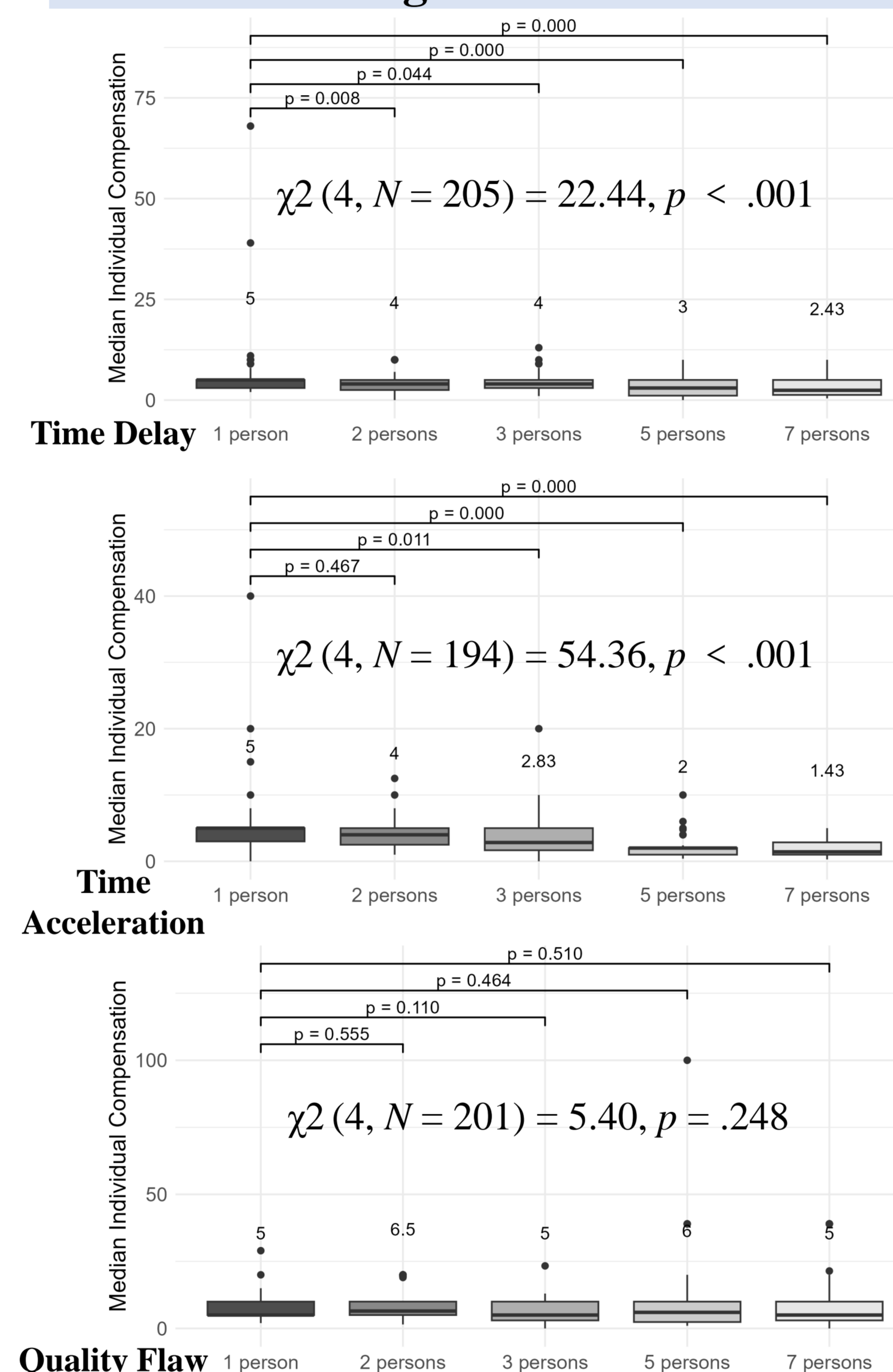
Method

- Study 1: Online group shopping for winter gloves**
IV: 5 (Group size: 1 vs. 2 vs. 3 vs. 5 vs. 7) × 3 (Type: delivery delay vs. delivery acceleration vs. product flaw)
DV: Minimum individual compensation (RMB: yuan)
- Study 2: Waiting for the car wash**
IV: 1 person vs. 6 visually collective persons vs. 6 visually independent persons
DV: Minimum individual compensation (RMB: yuan)
- Study 3: Delay of the lunch delivery**
IV: 1 person vs. 6 socially close persons vs. 6 socially distant persons
DV: Minimum individual compensation (RMB: yuan)

Results

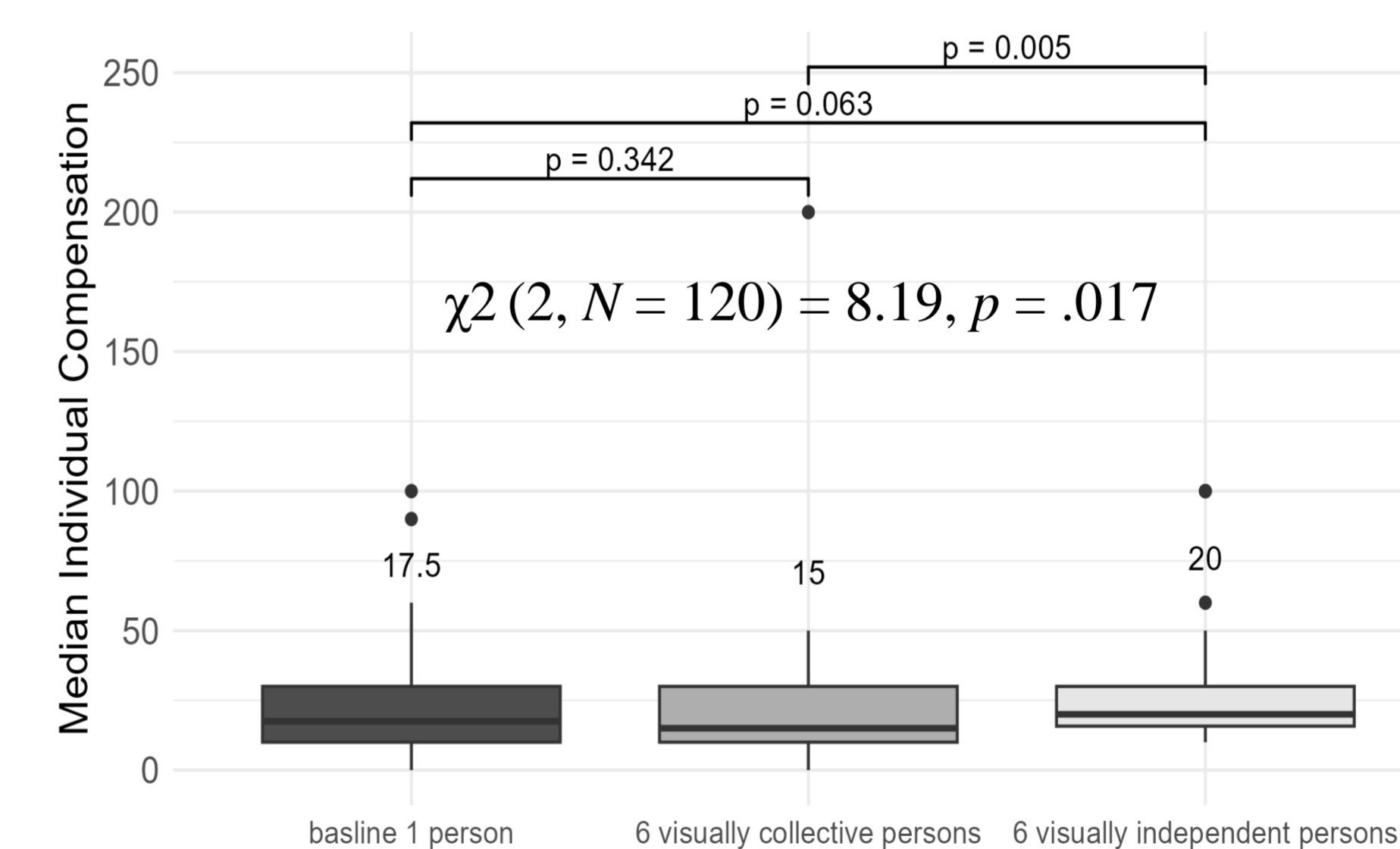
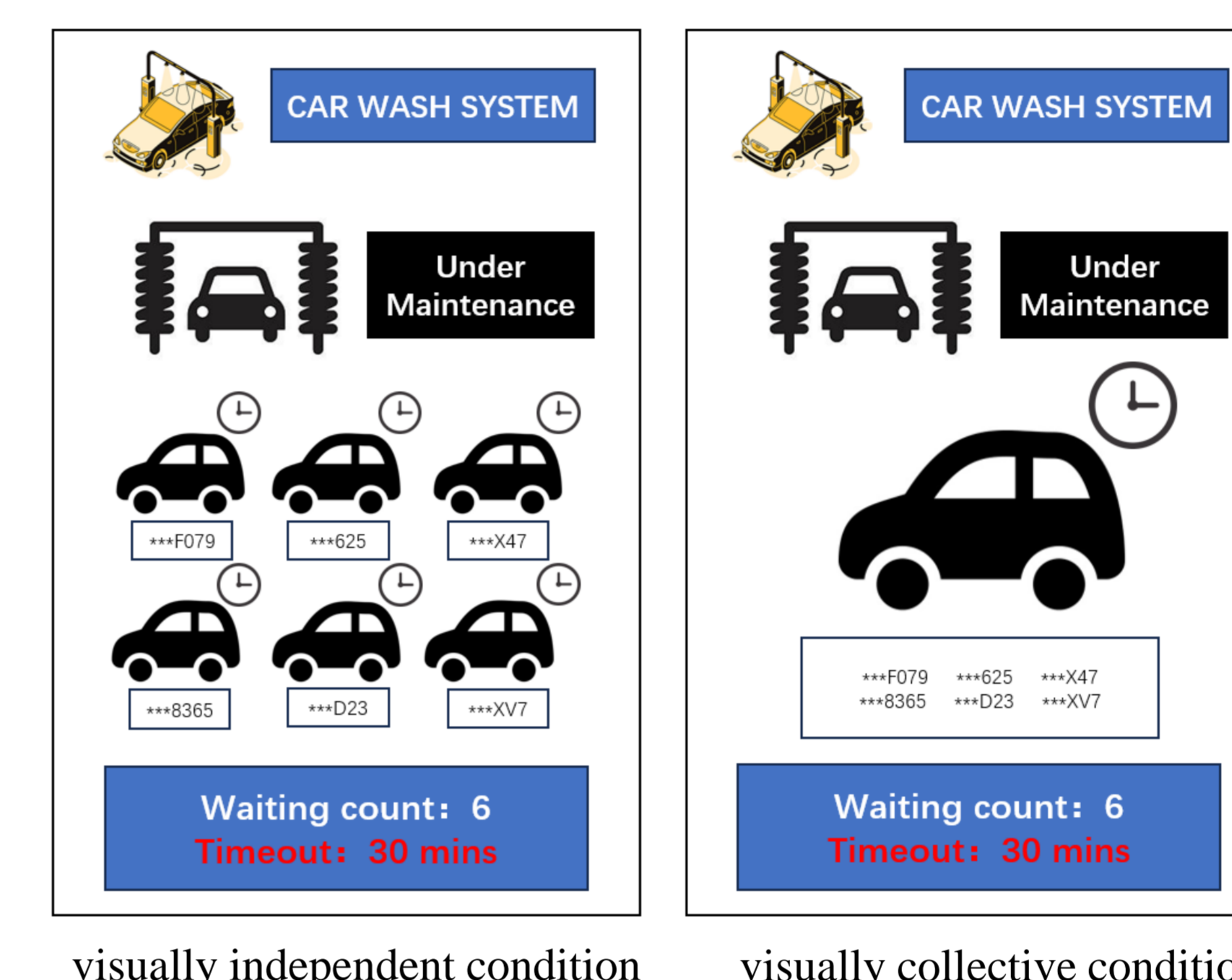
Study 1

Scenarios: Participants imagined they purchased gloves online with colleagues or alone. They faced a 2-day **delivery delay** or tried to **speed up the delivery** by 2 days or received **flawed gloves**.



Study 2

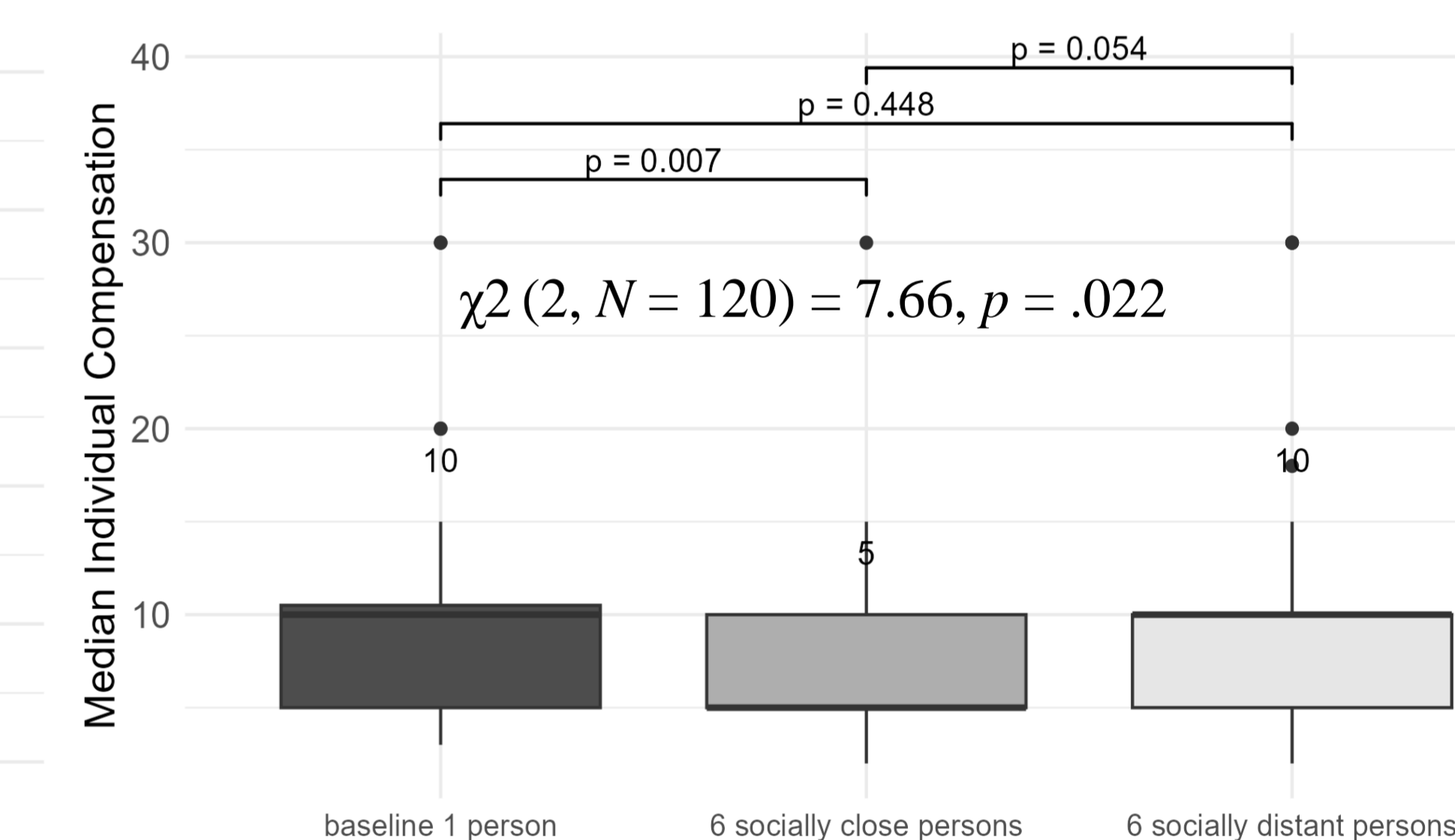
Scenarios: Participants imagined they experienced a 30-minutes car wash delay. In the group conditions, individual time losses were **visually reminded as independent versus collective**.



Study 3

Scenarios: Participants imagined they ordered a lunch combo on a working day. **The delivery was delivered 30 minutes later.**

- 1-person condition: participants imagined they ordered alone
- 6-socially-close-person condition: participants imagined they set a group order with 5 familiar colleagues
- 6-socially-distant-person condition: participants imagined they set a group order with 5 unfamiliar colleagues



Discussion

- People demand less individual compensation for time loss when waiting in a nominal group compared to waiting alone.
- This effect does not extend to material loss, suggesting that the intangibility of time makes this effect unique to time loss.
- Social dilution effect of time weakens 1) when time independence are visually reminded and 2) when nominal group members are too socially distant to collapse individual time losses as a collective one.
- For marketing practices, marketers can guide users to frame their delays as a collective time loss by emphasizing they are close nominal group members.

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