

# Study: Women Heavily Discriminated Against in Math Hiring

Men and women alike may be twice as likely to hire a man over a woman for a math position, a new study finds.



Kristin Martins-Taylor feeds stem cells Aug. 27, 2010, at the University of Connecticut's Stem Cell Institute. A new study has found that women are discriminated against in hiring for jobs that involve math.

By Alan Neuhauser | March 26, 2014

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Women suffer serious discrimination in hiring for jobs in mathematics, making them far less likely to be selected for new positions, a study on gender discrimination has found.

Researchers from three of the nation's top business schools examined why women make up such a small portion of those studying or working in math and science, even though they outnumber men in overall undergraduate enrollment, according to a new [study](#) published this week.

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To examine how this trend may stem from stereotypes, the researchers conducted an experiment asking 191 volunteers to "hire" someone to complete a math-related task.

Their findings? When presented with no information other than the applicant's appearance, both men and women were twice as likely to hire a male applicant over a female applicant. What's more, this discrimination persisted even after the applicants reported how well they'd done on the math task.

"If ability is self-reported, women still are discriminated against, because employers do not fully account for men's tendency to boast about performance," the study said.

In fact, even when given full information on the applicants' past math performance, discrimination fell by

about 9 percentage points, but still remained "substantial."

Volunteers also took an implicit association test, which revealed further prejudices.

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The hiring choices underscore biases "regarding the performance of female and male candidates," said researchers Ernesto Reuben of Columbia Business School, Paola Sapienza of the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern and Luigi Zingales of the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago. "The gender gap in hiring decisions is due to a systematic underestimation of the performance of women compared to men."

Moreover, employers also often fail to recognize that men typically brag about or inflate their abilities more readily than women, Reuben, Sapienza and Zingales added.

"Employers biased against women are less likely to take into account the fact that men, on average, boast more than women about their future performance, leading to suboptimal hiring choices that remain biased in favor of men," the researchers said.,

The study was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

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