

Evidence of hiring discrimination against nonwhite groups in nine countries examined

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A new meta-analysis on hiring discrimination by Northwestern University sociologist Lincoln Quillian and his colleagues finds evidence of pervasive hiring discrimination against all nonwhite groups in all nine countries they examined. Yet some countries discriminate more than others—and certain laws and institutional practices might explain why. The study published in *Sociological Science* today.

The researchers examined more than 200,000 job applications in nine [different countries](#): Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States.

Quillian and his colleagues measured the level of discrimination by calculating the percentage of interview callbacks a white native person received compared to a person who is not white. France and Sweden had the highest levels of hiring discrimination, while the U.S., the Netherlands and Germany had relatively lower levels.

"Clearly, there is a lot of discrimination against nonwhites in hiring in Western countries with a variety of negative effects," said Quillian, professor of sociology in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences and a faculty fellow with the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern.

In France and Sweden, minority applicants would need to send out 70 to 94 percent more resumes than white applicants to receive the same number of responses as white applicants. In Germany and the U.S., minority applicants would need to send out 25 to 40 percent more.

The levels of discriminations were fairly similar among other nonwhite groups, including those applicants with backgrounds from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. The researchers also found low levels of discrimination against white immigrants, who are only "mildly disadvantaged" when compared to white natives of a country.

Certain laws and institutional practices explain why the U.S. had [lower levels](#) of discrimination than most of the other eight countries. More discussions about race and ethnicity take place in U.S. workplaces than in European ones, Quillian said.

"No other countries require monitoring of the racial and ethnic makeup of ranks of employees as is required for large employers in the U.S.," Quillian said. "For instance, large employers in the U.S. are required to report race and ethnicity of employees at different ranks to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission."

Nevertheless, Quillian found in a previous study he conducted no change in rates of discrimination against African-Americans in field experiments of hiring from 1990 to 2015 in the U.S.

In Germany, the country with the lowest level of racial discrimination in hiring among the nine studied, job applicants submit several documents in their applications, including high school grades and apprenticeship reports.

"We suspect that this is why we find low discrimination in Germany—that having a lot of information at first application reduces the tendency to view minority applicants as less good or unqualified," Quillian said.

But in some countries with higher levels of hiring discrimination, like France, employers are forbidden from asking about an [applicant's](#) race.

"The French do not measure race or ethnicity in any official—or most unofficial capacities, which makes knowledge of racial and ethnic inequality in France very limited and makes it difficult to monitor hiring or promotion for [discrimination](#)," Quillian said.

The more information employers have about applicants, Quillian offers, the less room employers have to project their own views and stereotypes onto minority applicants.

More information: Lincoln Quillian et al, Do Some Countries Discriminate More than Others? Evidence from 97 Field Experiments of Racial Discrimination in Hiring, *Sociological Science* (2019). [DOI: 10.15195/v6.a18](#)

Provided by Northwestern University

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