

# Employers reject transgender people

August 13 2020

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Prof. Ali Ahmed is a professor in economics Credit: Teiksma Buseva

Employers in Sweden more often reject job applications from transgender people—especially in male-dominated occupations. Moreover, transgender people face discrimination from two different grounds for discrimination. This is according to a study from Linköping University that was recently published in the journal *Labour Economics*.

Since 2017, gender identity and [gender expression](#) is one of the seven grounds for discrimination in Swedish discrimination legislation. However, [transgender people](#), that is, people who identify with another gender than the one they were assigned at birth, report that they are often subject to discrimination in the workplace. Economics researchers at Linköping University in Sweden have now confirmed that this is the case. Their study is the first to prove this by way of an experimental method.

"From an economic point of view, it's interesting to ask why employers don't make use of these people's skills. We wanted to find out on which grounds employers discriminate against transgender people, because in this case there are two legislative grounds for discrimination that could apply: firstly, sex, and secondly, [gender identity](#) and gender expression," says Mark Granberg, doctoral student in economics at Linköping University.

Mark Granberg carried out the study together with Ali Ahmed, professor in economics, and Per A. Andersson, doctoral student in psychology.

Previous studies show that transgender people experience workplace discrimination in various forms. In an American study from 2011, half of the transgender people reported that they had been subject to, among other things, harassment at work. But there has been a lack of experimental studies—as opposed to self-report studies—into workplace discrimination of transgender people.

The study is the first to use a correspondence test to investigate employer discrimination against transgender people. The correspondence test is a common method when studying discrimination: the participants do not physically meet the employer, they submit a written application. The Linköping researchers sent in 2,224 fictitious applications for low-skilled jobs listed on the Swedish Public Employment Service's job

database. The applications stated that the applicant had undergone a name change—in some cases from a male name to another male name, and in some cases the names crossed gender boundaries, e.g. Erik became Amanda. For every application, the researchers noted whether they received a reply, and if so, what the reply was.

The results show that it was 18 per cent more likely that a cis person—a person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth—got a positive response from the employer, compared to a transgender person.

The results also reveal differences between female and male-dominated occupations. With regard to positive replies to applications, the researchers found that the greatest differences between cis and transgender people were in male-dominated occupations. Here, cis men received a positive reply from the [employer](#) in 44 per cent of the cases, compared to 24 per cent for the [transgender women](#)—i.e. the cis men received nearly twice as many positive replies.

In the female-dominated occupations, the discrimination appeared to depend mainly on the gender with which the applicant identified at the time of application. In occupations where men and women are more or less equally represented, the researchers saw no statistically significant differences between the applicants.

"The study shows that the legislation is not sufficient to protect this group on the labor market. It also suggests that employers discriminate based on several grounds. For instance, it is likely that a transgender man is discriminated against for being [transgender](#) in male-dominated occupations, while in female-dominated occupations, the same person would probably face [discrimination](#) for being male."

**More information:** Mark Granberg et al, Hiring Discrimination Against Transgender People: Evidence from a Field Experiment, *Labour*

*Economics* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.labeco.2020.101860](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2020.101860)

Provided by Linköping University

Citation: Employers reject transgender people (2020, August 13) retrieved 14 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-08-employers-transgender-people.html>

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