

Want to hire more women? Expand your short list

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As more male-dominated industries look for ways to hire women, new Cornell University research offers employers a simple solution—make your initial job candidate short list longer.

Many professional advancement opportunities—jobs, promotions, trainings and mentorships—are filled through informal recruitment practices. But these practices pose an unintended barrier to [gender](#) diversity in male-dominant workplaces because when hiring managers consult their "mental Rolodex," they are more likely to associate certain jobs with specific genders.

"Our research investigates informal short lists," said Brian Lucas, assistant professor in the ILR School and co-author of "A Longer Shortlist Increases the Consideration of Female Candidates in Male-Dominant Domains," recently published by *Nature Human Behaviour*.

"These are the initial shortlists that hiring managers generate on their own and bring with them into the formal recruitment process," Lucas said. "For positions with no formal process, the informal list is the final list."

Lucas and his co-authors conducted 10 studies asking individuals to generate an informal short list of candidates for a male-dominant role and then to extend the list.

"We consistently found more [female candidates](#) in the extended lists," Lucas said. "This longer short list intervention is a low-cost and simple way to support gender equity efforts."

The study also integrates insights from Lucas' previous research on the creative cliff illusion, which finds that as people generate more ideas, their ideas increasingly deviate from the status quo.

"It is important to elucidate the barriers to gender equity at all stages of the professional advancement pathway," said Lucas. "Our research shines a light on the gender biases that can operate at the informal shortlist generation stage and offers a simple and low-cost way to

attenuate the gender bias."

More information: Brian J. Lucas et al. A longer shortlist increases the consideration of female candidates in male-dominant domains, *Nature Human Behaviour* (2021). [DOI: 10.1038/s41562-020-01033-0](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-01033-0)

Provided by Cornell University

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