

# Research reveals accent discrimination in hiring

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People from minority groups who speak with 'non-standard' accents face discrimination in job interviews, researchers from The University of Queensland have found.

The study examined the experiences of people classed as speaking with a 'standard' [accent](#), one that is generally known and accepted as the way of speaking (for example American-accented English in the United States), versus candidates with 'non-standard' accents.

Dr. Jessica Spence from UQ's School of Psychology led the research team which reviewed 27 papers on accent-based hiring biases, that included 4,576 participants.

"We found accent bias was strongest against people in marginalized or [minority groups](#)," Dr. Spence said.

"This is concerning because more than 272 million people live in a country other than their place of birth and one of the top motivations for migration is better job opportunities.

"We found women with standard accents were favored as [job candidates](#) over women with non-standard accents, but men were judged equally regardless of their accent."

The study compared candidates who differed by regional accent—for example, American-accented English versus British-accented English—and found there was no prejudice.

"There was, however, strong prejudice between candidates who differed by foreign accent, such as American-accented English versus Chinese-accented English," Dr. Spence said.

"We could interpret from these findings that [female candidates](#) who have a non-standard accent and candidates with accents that may signal they belong to a minority racial-ethnic group may be subjected to stronger discrimination when being interviewed for jobs."

Job [candidates](#) in the study spoke in a large variety of accents, including American-accented English, British-accented English, Mexican American-accented English, Arabic-accented English, European-accented English and Asian-accented English.

Co-author Dr. Kana Imuta from UQ's School of Psychology said the findings highlighted the importance for people in hiring roles to be aware of prejudice based on accent to minimize discriminatory decision-making.

"Accent-based discrimination can often fly under the radar, and we hope this research will help increase awareness that it is a reality," Dr. Imuta said.

"Further research is needed into the underlying processes that contribute to accent-based biases.

"We also need to identify strategies to mitigate the negative impact these biases have on people."

The research is published in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

**More information:** Jessica L. Spence et al, Is Your Accent Right for the Job? A Meta-Analysis on Accent Bias in Hiring Decisions, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/01461672221130595](#)

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