Canadian Companies Still Struggling to Overcome Hiring Bias Against Minorities

Joint Ryerson/University of Toronto study shows discrimination is worst in smaller companies

In a new research paper called ‘Do Larger Employers Treat Racial Minorities More Fairly?’ in the March issue of Canadian Public Policy (CPP) finds evidence of discrimination against Asian-named job applicants among larger employers, though it is less extensive than among smaller employers. The study uses data from a Canadian employment audit study from 2011 in which different employers were randomly sent simulated resumes that varied only in information regarding the origin of the applicant.

Authors Rupa Banerjee of Ryerson University’s Ted Rogers School of Management, Jeffrey G. Reitz of University of Toronto’s Faculty of Sociology and Munk School of Global Affairs and Phil Oreopoulos of the Department of Economics of the University of Toronto find that:

1. For jobs that required a university degree, resumes with Asian names had a 32.6% lower rate of selection for interview as compared to resumes with Anglo names, even though both groups of resumes listed equivalent all-Canadian qualifications.
2. For larger firms the difference is significant but less pronounced than for small firms.
3. In large organizations, having an extra Canadian Master’s degree gives Asian-named applicants an equal rate of selection compared to Anglo-named applicants without the extra degree.
4. In small organizations, even with the extra Canadian Master’s degree, their rate of selection is still 29% lower than for Anglo-named applicants without any extra degree.
The authors are available for interview. Contact information is provided below. Noting recent news coverage¹ of a Public Service Commission (PSC) pilot study which found no discrimination in hiring, the authors respond that while commendable in spirit, the PSC study used a methodology with volunteer organizations and hiring managers who knew they were under study. They argue that the audit procedure which generated the data used in this study may give more robust estimates of discrimination.


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