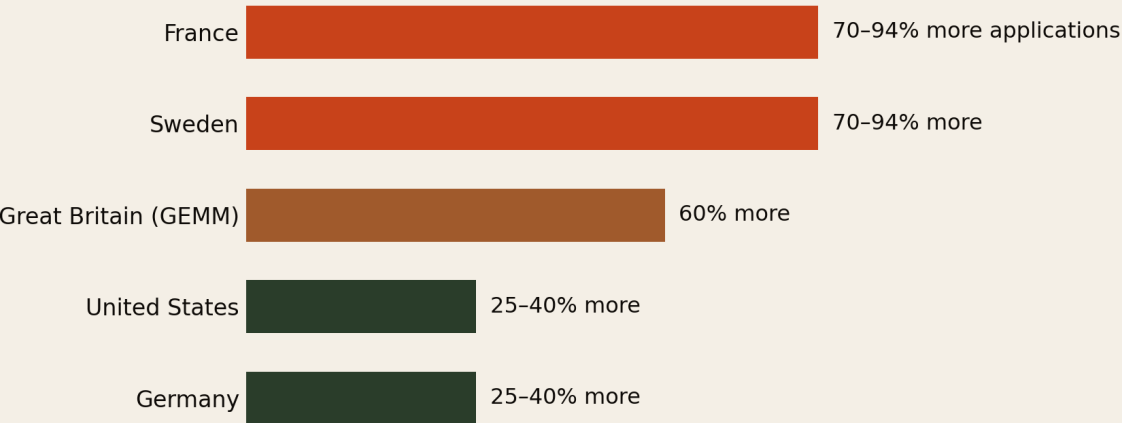
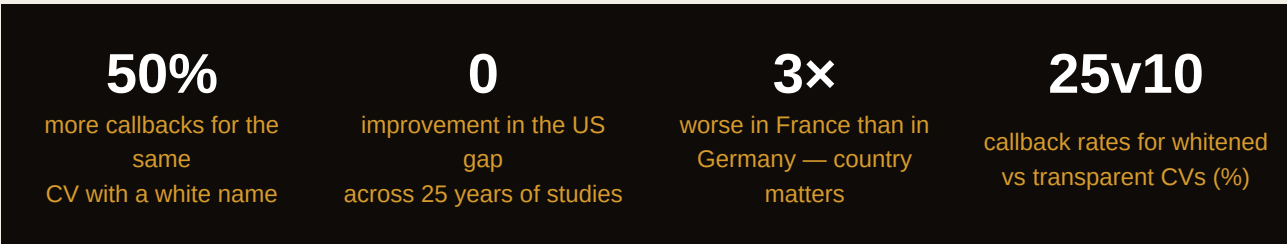


AGF RESEARCH · FACT-CHECKED · 2026

The Name on the CV.

What the experiments found.

For thirty years, researchers have run the same experiment: send employers **identical CVs** with different names, and count who gets called. It is the closest thing social science has to a controlled trial of prejudice. This report is what those experiments found — and what a candidate can actually do with it.



Extra applications a nonwhite candidate must send for the same number of callbacks. Nine-country meta-analysis; bars use range midpoints.

Fig 3 — Extra applications a nonwhite candidate must send for the same callbacks, from the nine-country meta-analysis (Quillian et al., 2019) with the British GEMM figure added. See Section 05.

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01 · The Short Version

Every African abroad has wondered it, usually at 11pm after the fortieth silent application: *is it the CV, or is it my name?* This is one of the very few questions in this library where science has a direct, experimental answer.

- **The name effect is real, large and causal.** In the founding experiment, identical CVs with white-sounding names received **50% more callbacks** than the same CVs with Black-sounding names. The CVs were fictional and the names randomly assigned, so nothing else can explain the gap.
- **It has not improved.** A meta-analysis of every US field experiment since 1989 — 28 studies, 55,842 applications — found **no change in discrimination against Black applicants over 25 years**. Whites receive on average **36% more callbacks**.
- **Where you apply matters enormously.** Across nine countries: in **France and Sweden**, a nonwhite candidate needs **70–94% more applications** for the same callbacks. In **Germany and the US**, **25–40%**. The worst country is more than three times the best.
- **Britain measured it for Africans specifically.** In the GEMM experiment, minority applicants needed **60% more applications**; for **Black African** applicants, callback odds were **less than half** those of an identical white British applicant — including for candidates born and educated in Britain.
- **“Whitening” measurably works, which is its own indictment.** Black candidates who scrubbed racial cues got **25% callbacks against 10%** for the untouched version. Employers with pro-diversity statements discriminated **just as much**.
- **The name is only half the bill.** In 13,000 Canadian CVs, an English name beat an Asian name by ~40% — but **where the experience happened mattered even more**. Foreign-only experience roughly halved callbacks again.
- **And it is concentrated.** In 83,000 applications to 108 Fortune 500 firms, most showed small gaps — while **an identifiable subset accounted for most of the discrimination**. Bad news about those firms; useful news for a candidate.

You were never imagining it. The silence has been measured, in controlled experiments, for thirty years. The rest of this report is about what to do inside that fact.

02 · How We Know

A **correspondence study** works like this. Researchers write fictional CVs — realistic, matched in every detail. They send them to real job postings, randomly assigning names that signal race or origin: one employer receives “Emily Walsh,” the next receives the identical document as “Lakisha Washington” or “Adebayo Okonkwo.” Then they count callbacks.

Because the applicants do not exist and the names are assigned by lottery, **nothing differs between the piles except the name**. Any gap in callbacks has exactly one available explanation.

- **It is a true experiment**, with random assignment — the same design standard as a drug trial.
- **It measures behaviour, not attitudes**. No one is asked whether they discriminate. Their inbox answers.
- **It has been replicated for decades**, in dozens of countries, across hundreds of thousands of applications — and the direction of the finding has never reversed.

One honest boundary: correspondence studies measure **the first screen only** — the decision to call. Everything in this report is about the doorway, not the room.

03 · The Founding Experiment

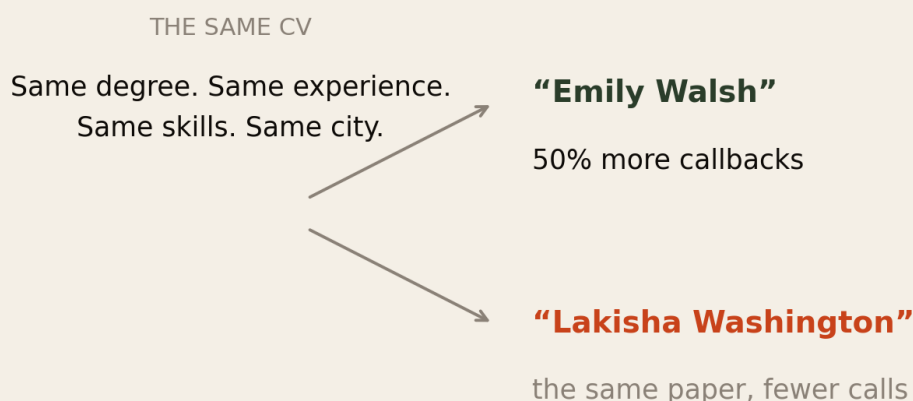


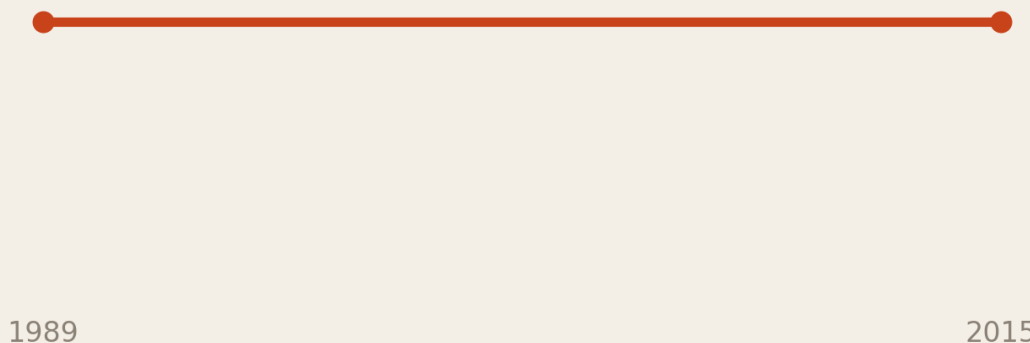
Fig 1 — The design of Bertrand & Mullainathan (2004): nearly 5,000 CVs answering real advertisements in Boston and Chicago.

White names received **50% more callbacks for interviews**. The second finding is less quoted and, for this audience, more important: the researchers also varied CV quality. **Improving the CV helped white names substantially and Black names much less**. The market rewarded Emily for being excellent and largely ignored the same excellence from Lakisha.

Read that carefully, because it breaks the advice every immigrant parent gives: “be twice as good.” The experiment found that being twice as good is precisely what the screen fails to see.

04 · Twenty-Five Years, No Change

White applicants receive 36% more callbacks —
unchanged across every study since 1989



28 field experiments · 55,842 applications · Quillian et al., PNAS 2017

Fig 2 — The trend that is not a trend. Quillian, Pager, Hexel & Midtbøen, PNAS (2017).

In 2017 a team led by Lincoln Quillian gathered **every available US field experiment since 1989** — 28 studies, 55,842 applications — and asked whether hiring discrimination against Black applicants had declined. **It had not moved.** Whites received on average **36% more callbacks**, and the gap in 2015 was statistically indistinguishable from 1989.

- **Do not price in progress.** A generation of corporate diversity effort left the callback gap intact. Plan for the market as measured, not as advertised.
- **This is a structural constant, not a passing mood.** The useful question shifts from “when will it end?” to “where is it weakest, and how do I route around it?”

05 · Where It Is Worst

The most practically useful finding in the literature: **the same nonwhite candidate faces radically different screens in different countries.** Fig 3 on the cover has the chart. Across nine countries, discrimination was found everywhere — but in **France**, the worst measured market, the white-native advantage is **more than three times** what it is in **Germany**, the lowest. In France and Sweden a minority candidate must send **70–94% more applications**; in Germany and the US, **25–40%**.

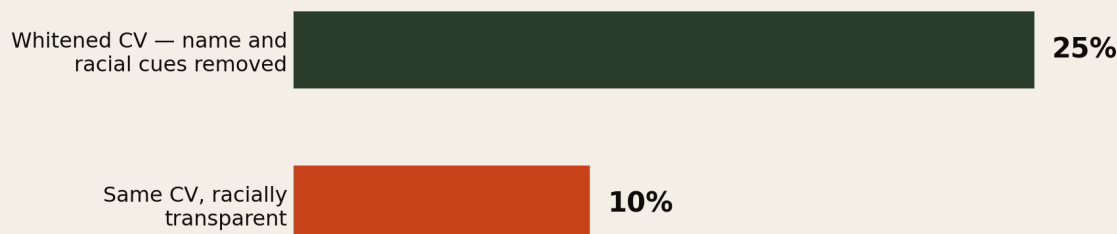
- **This belongs in your destination arithmetic.** A market with a slightly lower salary and a Germany-grade screen can beat one with a higher salary behind a France-grade screen.
- **It reframes the French paradox.** France hosts more African students than any other single country — and runs the most hostile measured CV screen in the West. Presence and access are different things.
- **Sweden is the surprise.** Reputation for progressive politics; screen measured alongside France's. Reputation is not data.
- **The caution:** country effects partly reflect application formats and which minorities were tested. Treat the ordering as robust and the exact figures as ranges.

06 · The British Numbers

The British **GEMM experiment** (2016–17) tested this network's situation directly: applications in the name of candidates of **Nigerian** and other specific origins, sent to real British vacancies. Ethnic minority applicants needed **60% more applications**; for a **Black African** applicant, callback odds were **less than half** those of an identical white British applicant. The penalty applied to candidates **born, raised and educated in Britain** — the document is read before the person exists.

Our earnings-gap research found that most of the African pay penalty is about which jobs people get, not unequal pay within jobs — and this is the mechanism at the very front of that pipeline: **the gap begins before anyone has met you.**

07 · The Whitening Experiment



Callback rates for Black candidates, identical qualifications (Kang et al., 2016).
Employers advertising their commitment to diversity discriminated just as much.

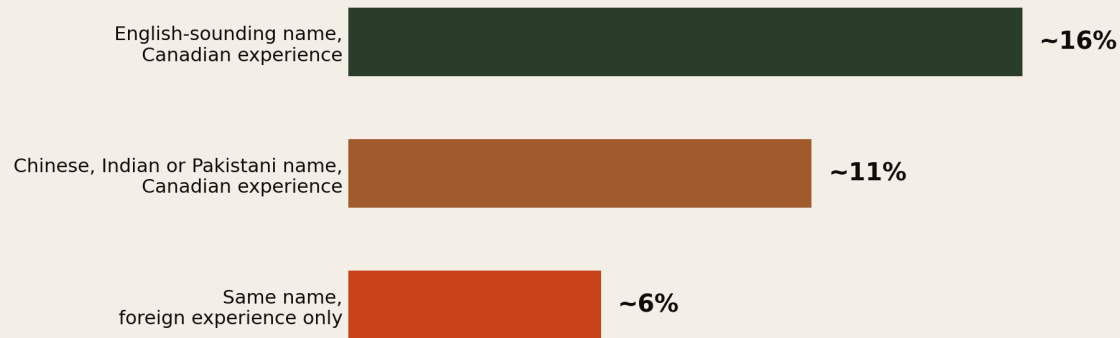
Fig 4 — Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik & Jun, *Administrative Science Quarterly* (2016). Asian candidates showed the same pattern: 21% whitened, 11.5% transparent.

“Whitened” CVs — name anglicised, racially identifiable associations reworded — received **25% callbacks**. The identical, racially transparent versions received **10%**. Two and a half times the response, for the same person, minus their identity.

The study's second finding is bleak. Employers whose ads **advertised a commitment to diversity** punished transparent CVs **just as much**. Worse, candidates trusted the statements: they whitened *less* for pro-diversity employers, and so were exposed *more*. The researchers called it the diversity paradox.

The diversity statement is marketing, not measurement. On the evidence, it predicts nothing about how the screen will treat your name — except that you will trust it more than you should.

08 · The Foreign-Experience Discount



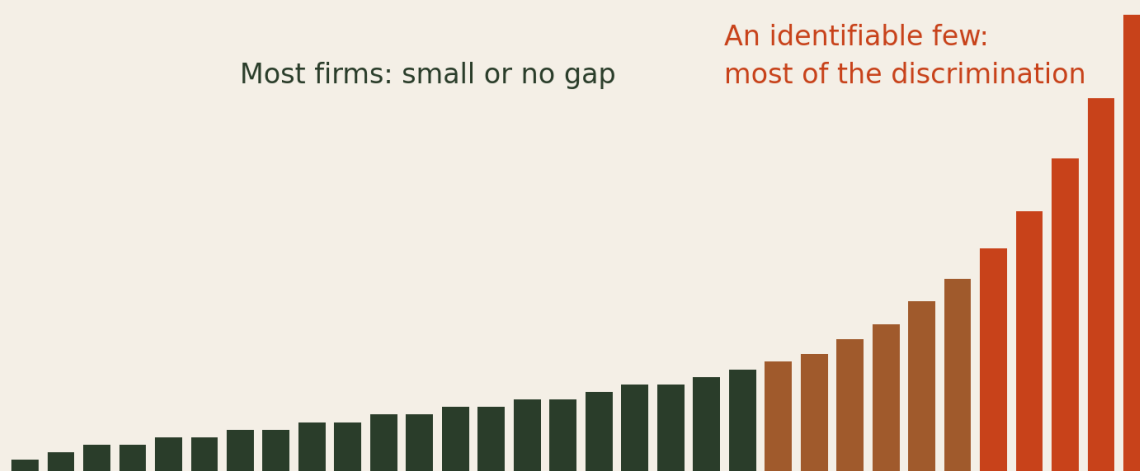
Callback rates, 13,000 CVs in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver (Oreopoulos).
The name costs you once; where your experience happened costs you again.

Fig 5 — Oreopoulos's Canadian field experiments. Figures are approximate rates across study waves; the ordering is the finding.

The name penalty: with identical Canadian qualifications, English-sounding names were called back about **40% more often** than Chinese, Indian or Pakistani names (~16% vs ~11%). **The geography penalty:** keep the name and swap the experience — foreign-only work history fell to roughly **6%**, while adding Canadian experience pulled the same candidate back to ~11%.

For a newly arrived professional this is the most actionable chart in the report, because **the geography penalty is the one you can retire**. One local contract, one recognised local credential converts the document from “foreign CV” to “local CV with extra depth.” It is also, mechanically, why the first job abroad is so much harder than the second.

09 · It Is Concentrated



Firms, ordered by measured racial contact gap — illustrative shape of the Kline, Rose & Walters finding: 83,000 applications to 108 Fortune 500 firms; discrimination concentrated in a subset that can be named

Fig 6 — Illustrative shape of the distribution in Kline, Rose & Walters, QJE (2022). The bar heights are ours; the concentration is theirs.

A Berkeley–Chicago team sent **83,000 fictional applications to 108 Fortune 500 companies** and measured each firm's gap separately. On average, distinctively Black names reduced employer contact by 2.1 percentage points — but the gaps varied enormously, and systemic discrimination was **concentrated in a specific, statistically identifiable subset of companies**, some later publicly named in a “discrimination report card.” Federal contractors, subject to audit, discriminated measurably less.

- **The market is not uniformly hostile.** Most large firms showed small or undetectable gaps. “They are all the same” is measurably false, and strategically expensive if it stops you applying.
- **Where firms are accountable, the gap shrinks.** Large regulated employers, government and audited institutions are statistically safer doors.
- **The naming of firms matters.** Discrimination now carries firm-level reputational risk — worth checking before you spend your applications.

10 · What Does Not Work

France ran a large randomised trial of **anonymous CVs** with about a thousand firms. The measured result was the opposite of the intention: **participating firms became less likely to interview and hire minority candidates**, and the policy was abandoned in 2015. The firms that volunteered were disproportionately those already favourable to minority candidates — and anonymisation stopped them favouring anyone. Hiding the name also hides **context that helps**: an employment gap that reads charitably for a known immigrant is, anonymised, just a gap.

The lesson is not that nothing works. It is that **the screen cannot be tricked into fairness by deleting information** — what works is changing who screens, what they look for, and whether anyone audits the result.

11 · The Toolbox

What the evidence offers a candidate — none of it fair, all of it usable

01 Referrals bypass the pile entirely

Discrimination in these studies happens at the CV screen. A warm introduction skips the screen. This is what a network is for — and what this Forum is for.

02 Target the firms with clean records

The discrimination is concentrated and increasingly public. Federal contractors and audited large firms measurably discriminate less.

03 Get the local line on the CV fast

The foreign-experience discount is huge. One local contract, internship or volunteer role reprises the whole document.

04 Certifications that machines read

Recognised local credentials give screeners a reason that overrides the name.

05 The whitening question is yours to answer

It measurably works — 25% vs 10% — and it costs something no study can measure. We state the trade-off; we do not make the choice for you.

Fig 7 — What the evidence offers a candidate. None of it is fair. All of it is usable.

- **Referrals do not fix the screen — they skip it.** Every result in this report happens at the anonymous first read of a document. A warm introduction moves you past the exact stage where the discrimination lives. This is the strongest single implication of the literature — and why a functioning network is not a nice-to-have but a documented counter-measure.
- **Spend applications where the odds are best.** Discrimination is three times worse in some countries than others and concentrated in identifiable firms. Sixty applications aimed well beat a hundred sprayed.
- **Kill the geography penalty first.** It is the largest penalty you can actually remove. Prioritise anything that puts a local employer's name on the document.
- **Put machine-readable proof above the fold.** Recognised local credentials give a hesitant screener a legible reason that overrides the name.
- **On whitening: we will not decide for you.** The evidence is that it works — 25% against 10% — and that no diversity statement protects the transparent version. It is also a tax paid in identity, levied on people who did nothing wrong; and our language research shows the name is often the last inheritance a diaspora family keeps. Some initialise the first name and keep the surname; some refuse entirely; some cannot afford the filter this year. All three are rational. The only wrong move is not knowing the numbers when you choose.

12 · If You Are the One Hiring

- **Structure beats sentiment.** Discrimination lives in unstructured judgement calls. Defined criteria, set before CVs are opened and scored consistently, shrink the space where a name can operate.
- **Test work, not paper.** A short skills task moves the decision from “does this CV feel right?” to “can this person do the thing?”, where names cannot operate.

- **Audit your own funnel.** Count callbacks by name type in your own pipeline once a quarter. Firms that measure, behave.
- **Do not confuse your statement with your screen.** The whitening study's employers surely believed their diversity language. Their inboxes disagreed.
- **And check your own in-group.** An African founder's pile has its own gravity — toward kin, church, ethnicity, accent. The mechanism is human, not white. If the screen is unstructured, someone's name is paying for it, including in Lagos and Nairobi.

13 · The Uncomfortable Part

First, every mitigation in this report taxes the victim. Network harder, target smarter, re-credential locally, consider your own name — each is work assigned to the person who did nothing wrong. This report gives you the toolbox because you need it this year; it declines to pretend the toolbox is justice. The actual fix — audits, structured hiring, enforcement — belongs to employers and states, and the evidence shows it works when applied.

Second, the “be twice as good” covenant is broken, and we should say so. The founding experiment found excellence under-rewarded for the wrong name; the British data found the penalty untouched by British birth and degrees. The generation that taught us to be twice as good was not wrong about the world; it was optimistic about which door the effort opens.

Third, the name is not the problem, and the framing matters. Everything in this literature is a measurement of *employer behaviour*; it is routinely misread as advice that African names are liabilities to be managed. Our shame research described systems that punish people for what they are rather than what they did — this is one, industrialised. Whether you whiten a CV is a tactical question. Whether your name is a defect is not a question at all.

The experiments prove the bias sits in the reader, not the name. Plan for the reader you have — and refuse the conclusion that anything about your name needed forgiving.

14 · Method & Limits

This report reviews the published correspondence-study literature as at 24 August 2026, selected for scale, replication and relevance to Africans abroad.

- **Callbacks are not jobs.** Every result measures the first screen — the decision to make contact. Discrimination at interview, offer and salary stages is outside this method's reach, so these figures are a *floor* on the total penalty.
- **Most US studies test African-American names, not African ones.** “Lakisha” and “Adebayo” are different signals, and the US evidence transfers to African immigrants by inference. The studies that test this network's situation most directly are GEMM (Nigerian-origin applicants in Britain) and Oreopoulos (immigrant names and foreign credentials in Canada).
- **Fig 3 mixes sources and eras.** The nine-country figures are from the 2019 meta-analysis; the British 60% is from the single GEMM experiment; bars plot range midpoints. The ordering is robust; the decimals are not.
- **Fig 5's rates are approximate,** drawn from across Oreopoulos's study waves.
- **Fig 6 is an illustration.** The concentration finding is real and quantified in the papers; our bar chart depicts its shape, not their data.
- **Fictional applicants mean entry-level bias.** Senior hiring runs through networks and search firms, where the same forces are plausible but unmeasured by this method.
- **AI screening is the open frontier.** Most of this evidence predates algorithmic CV filtering at scale; early audits show name effects can persist or amplify, but the literature is young and we have not leaned on it.
- **Publication bias runs both ways.** The meta-analyses attempt corrections, and the headline gaps survive them. We cite meta-analyses over dramatic single studies wherever possible.
- **Nothing here is legal advice.** Name-based hiring discrimination is unlawful in the US, UK, EU and Canada. An employment lawyer, not this report, is the right reader of your specific case.

Principal sources

Bertrand & Mullainathan, *American Economic Review* (2004); Quillian, Pager, Hexel & Midtbøen, *PNAS* (2017); Quillian, Heath et al., *Sociological Science* (2019); Zwysen, Di Stasio & Heath on the GEMM experiment, *Sociology* (2021); Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik & Jun, *Administrative Science Quarterly* (2016); Oreopoulos, *NBER* (2009/2011); Kline, Rose & Walters, *QJE* (2022) and their *Discrimination Report Card*; Behaghel, Crépon & Le Barbanchon on anonymous CVs in France (J-PAL). Full inline links in the web edition.

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