Unconscious bias refers to the assumptions and conclusions we jump to without thinking.¹

An example might be assuming that an older person walking with a child is their grandparent. These biases do not indicate hostility towards certain groups; they reflect how the individual has been socialized.

Several studies demonstrate the impact unconscious bias can have on the hiring process, particularly for women.

These biases may not be intentional, but their impact is severe. The effects of unconscious bias will not be overcome by maintaining our current efforts to recruit and retain more women.²

To reduce unconscious bias in hiring, committees and individuals need to be educated about its existence and effects in academia and industry.

Online tools such as the Harvard Implicit Association Test can help identify an individual's unconscious biases. Sharing research and becoming aware of your organisation's hiring tendencies can also help reduce unconscious discrimination.

To be seen as equally “competent” by reviewers, female researchers need to publish:

- 3 more articles in Nature or Science
- OR
- 20 more articles in specialist journals

than male applicants when applying for a medical fellowship.³

US science professors were asked to evaluate a CV for a lab manager:²

The male candidate was offered a higher salary...

... more mentorship

... and was rated more “competent” and “hireable.”

Reference letters for female medical faculty were shorter, more vague, and placed less emphasis on research than those for males.⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of letters that contained the phrase:</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“compassionate” or “relates well with patients/staff”</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“accomplishment” and “achievement”</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“successful”</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average letter length for women was 227 words, compared to 253 words for men.⁶

Women are 50% more likely to advance in an orchestra audition if they can’t be seen.³
References

Recommended Readings
2. Harvard Implicit Association Test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/
More resources can be found at: http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/

About SCWIST
SCWIST is a non-profit association that promotes, encourages and empowers women and girls in science, engineering and technology. The MS Infinity Program introduces girls to exciting career options and positive female role models in science and technology. The IWIS (Immigrating Women in Science and Technology) Program provides support to immigrating professional women including resources, skill development workshops and networking opportunities. Program details at www.scwist.ca/

About Make Possible
The Make Possible Mentoring Network is part of the Government of Canada’s Status of Women Initiative to help attract and retain women in technology and advance the digital economy. Make Possible provides mentoring support, networking connections, professional development and leadership opportunities to help women reach their full potential in the technology sector and all STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. The Make Possible vision is a world where aspiration, opportunity and diversity intersect. The Make Possible mission is to help women connect, collaborate and lead through a dedicated mentoring network in STEM. For more information: contact@makepossible.ca or visit http://www.makepossible.ca/