Action Potential #1
Gender Bias in Letters of Recommendation

Research has shown that letters of recommendation for women are on average shorter, contain fainter praise, more doubt-raisers, and more “grindstone” adjectives (e.g. hard-working).\(^1\) Doubt-raisers, in turn, have been found to influence how applicants are evaluated.\(^2\)

The resources below can help you ensure the letters you write reflect your intentions and reduce unintentional gender bias.

Selected resources:

- [Avoiding gender bias in reference writing](handout) (handout)
  University of Arizona

- [Gender bias calculator – English](check how many words are female-versus male-associated)
  GitHub and Tom Forth, Head of Data, Open Data Institute Leeds

- [Gender bias calculator – German](check how many words are female-versus male-associated)
  Projektteam FührMINT, Technische Universität München (TUM)

Recommended reading:


Contact: kimberly.mason@charite.de