

Backlash to Gender Equality?

We study how adolescents respond to gender-equality messages from corporations at the time of their first occupational choice. In a randomized field experiment with nearly 3,000 eighth-grade students in Switzerland, treated students viewed recruitment videos in which major employers emphasize their efforts to attract girls to math-intensive occupations and to promote women into management. The intervention significantly increases students' perceptions of women's hiring prospects, but it does not affect boys' or girls' occupational aspirations. Moreover, evidence from incentivized sabotage and helping games reveals no behavioral backlash among boys. Light-touch diversity messages can credibly shift beliefs about employer demand without generating behavioral backlash, but they are insufficient on their own to alter gendered career plans.