

# Equity in Motion: Four Years of Action in Science Faculty Hiring

Christian, SL, Booth, V, Harding, S, Todd, A, and Berry, MD (2025). Equity in action: a 4-year journey towards gender parity and racial diversity in biochemistry hiring. Biochem Cell Biol 103, 1-9.



**EDI-AR Lunch Hour - Oct 15, 2025**

**Valerie Booth - Department of Biochemistry-Human Biosciences, MUN**

# Who are we?



(Scientists, not experts in EDI-AR)

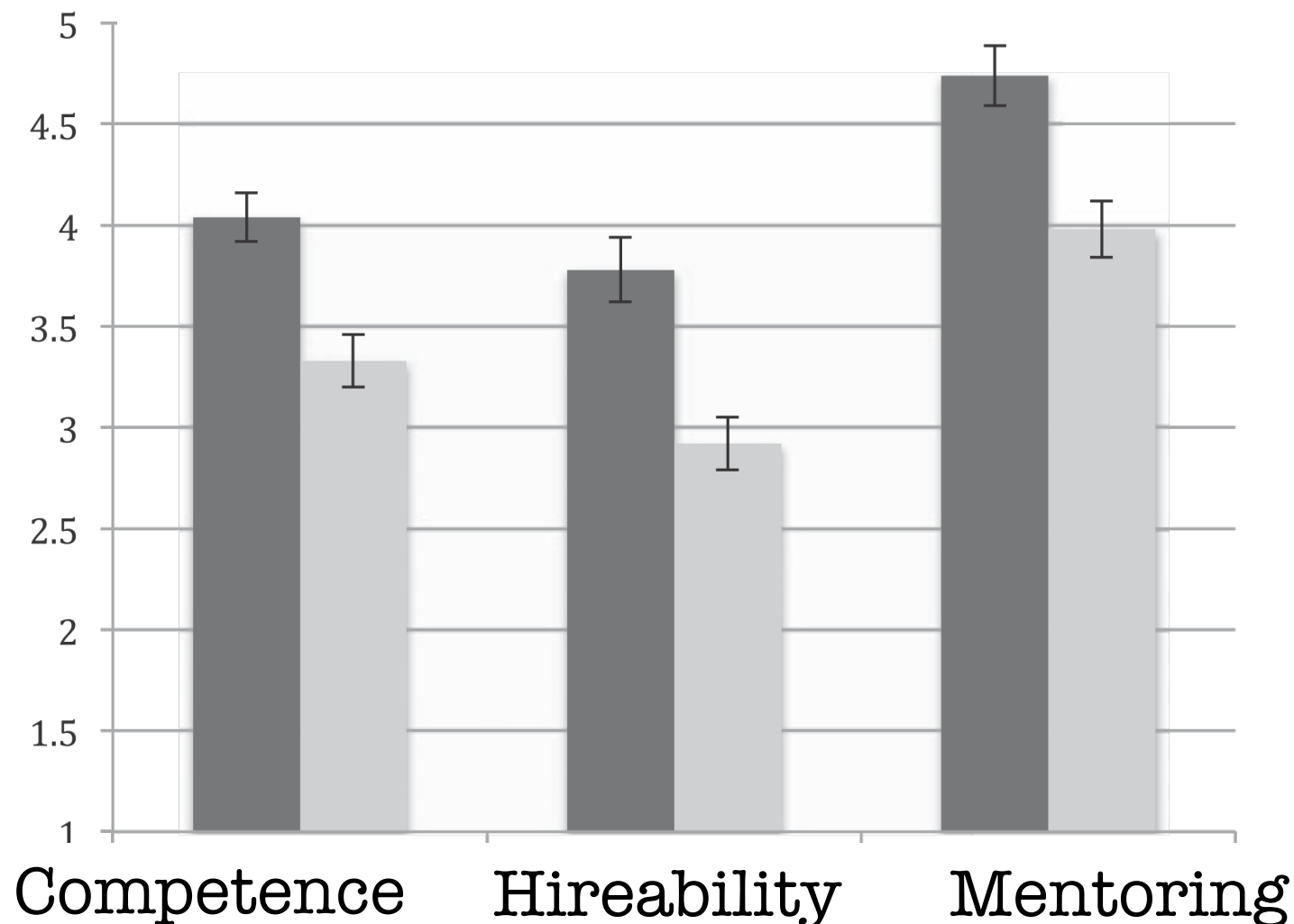
Christian, SL, Booth, V, Harding, S, Todd, A, and Berry, MD. (2025). Equity in action: a 4-year journey towards gender parity and racial diversity in biochemistry hiring. Biochem Cell Biol 103, 1-9.

# How it started ~ Late 2010s (?)

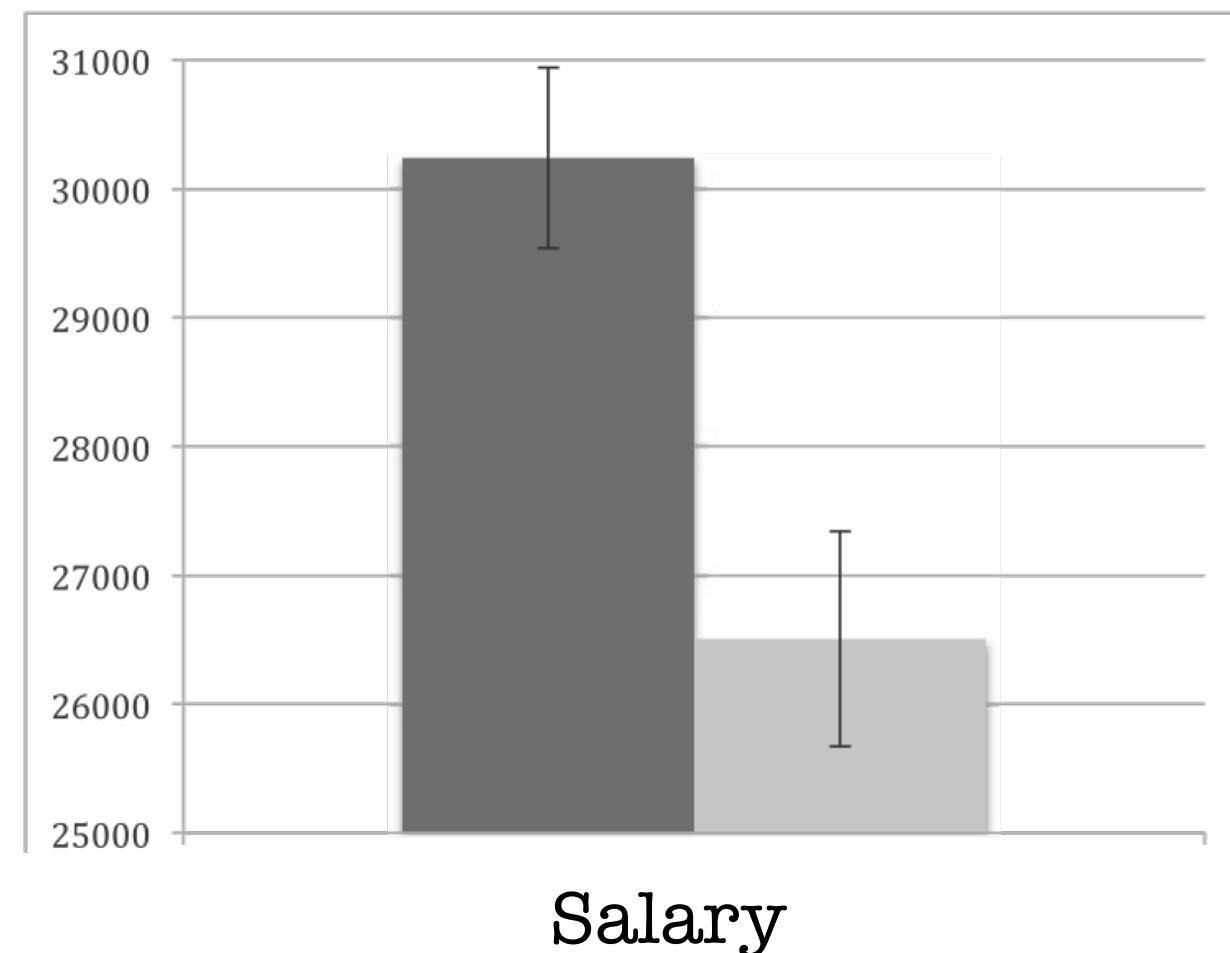
- Started teaching EDI-AR in Biosciences material in undergrad classes —> Learned more —> Action to counter student/instructor depression

# Example of material taught in class:

## Same resume - only difference was if the name on it was male or female (rated by science profs)



■ Male Student  
■ Female Student



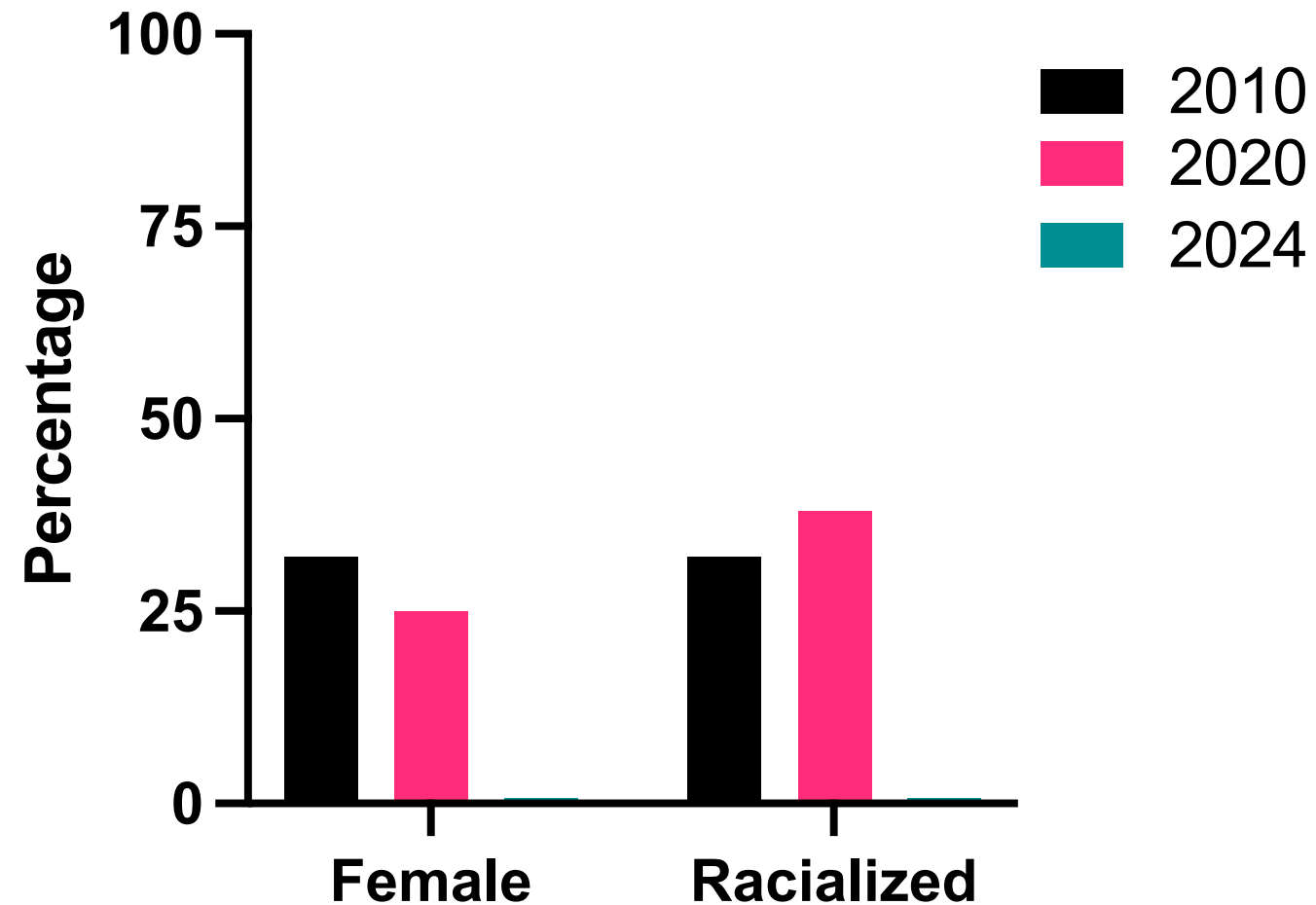
- Results did not depend on whether the prof ranking the student was male or female

- Moss-Racusin C A, Dovidio J F, Brescoll V L, Graham M J, Handelsman J. Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2012;109:16474-16479.

# How it started ~ Late 2010s (?)

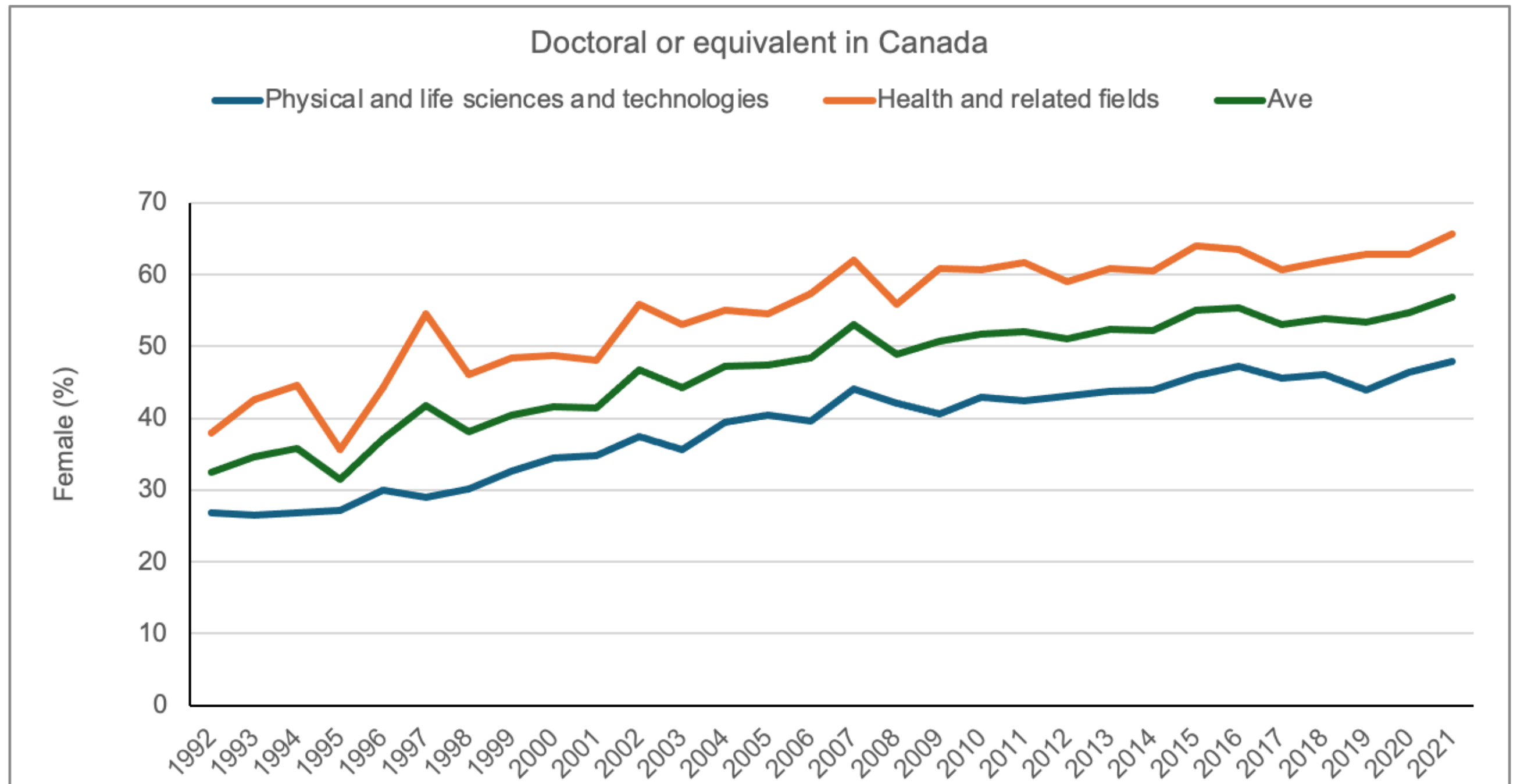
- Started teaching EDI-AR in Biosciences material in undergrad classes —> Learned more —> Action to counter student/instructor depression
- Sherri Christian:
  - noted our hiring pattern and
  - did a sabbatical at UBC where she learned about their faculty hiring best practices then
  - led the way

# Biochemistry Faculty



**Representation?** —> this group of people teaches more than 1000 students every year

# Stats Canada: Candidate Pool



- PhDs at parity since mid-90s; would expect to have been hiring at parity since early 2000s

# An experiment we did on ourselves

- **Literature:** identical CVs rated differently depending on name
- **Hypothesis:** redacting application materials from candidate applications for tenure-track faculty positions will change hiring patterns
- Resistance? Not zero (e.g. some co-workers felt a bit like they were being accused of bias in past searches), but overall a pretty willing group of people



# Application redaction (by Dept Head)

## Redacted:

- all names
- all country names
- all institutional names
- all contact information
- all leaves of absences (eg. parental leave, sick leave)
- the location of talks
- any information from which the candidate's gender, gender, religion, ethnicity, race, age, nationality

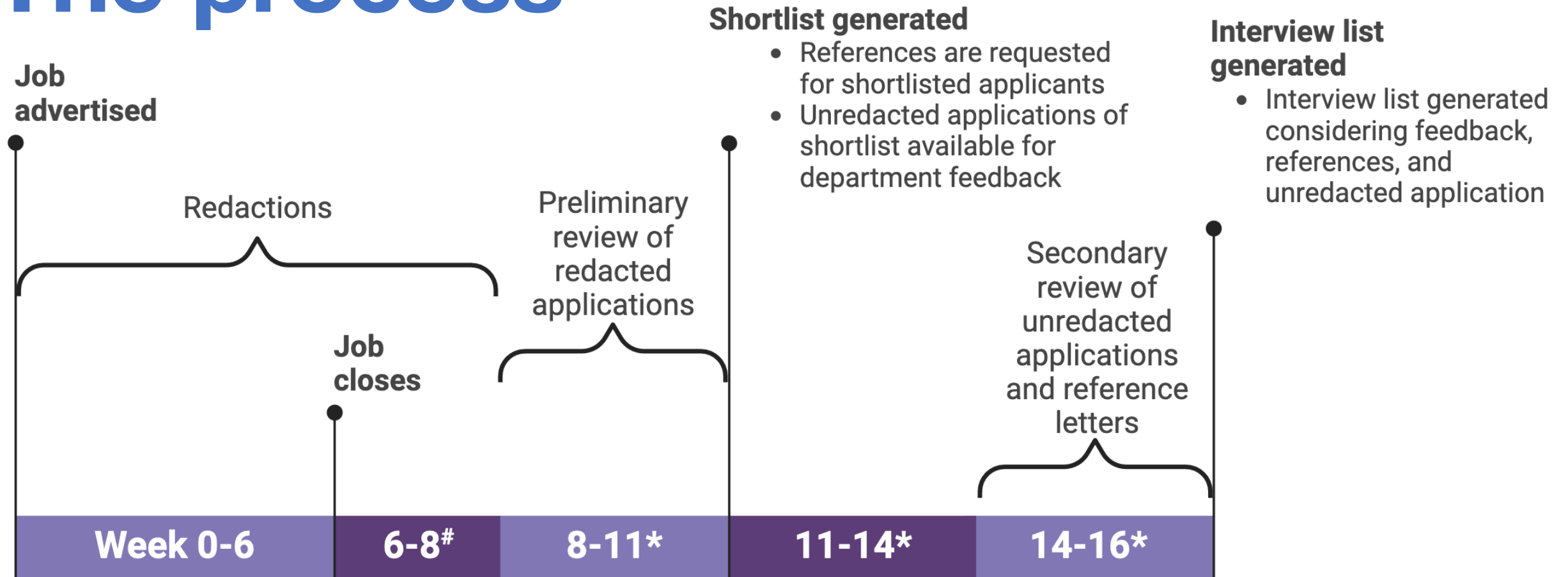
## Retained:

- the location and titles of conference presentations
- degree type and year awarded
- thesis titles
- publication: titles; year; and journal
- added to the CV was the location of the candidate in the authorship line (e.g. “1/5” indicates first author out of five total authors) of each publication and presentation



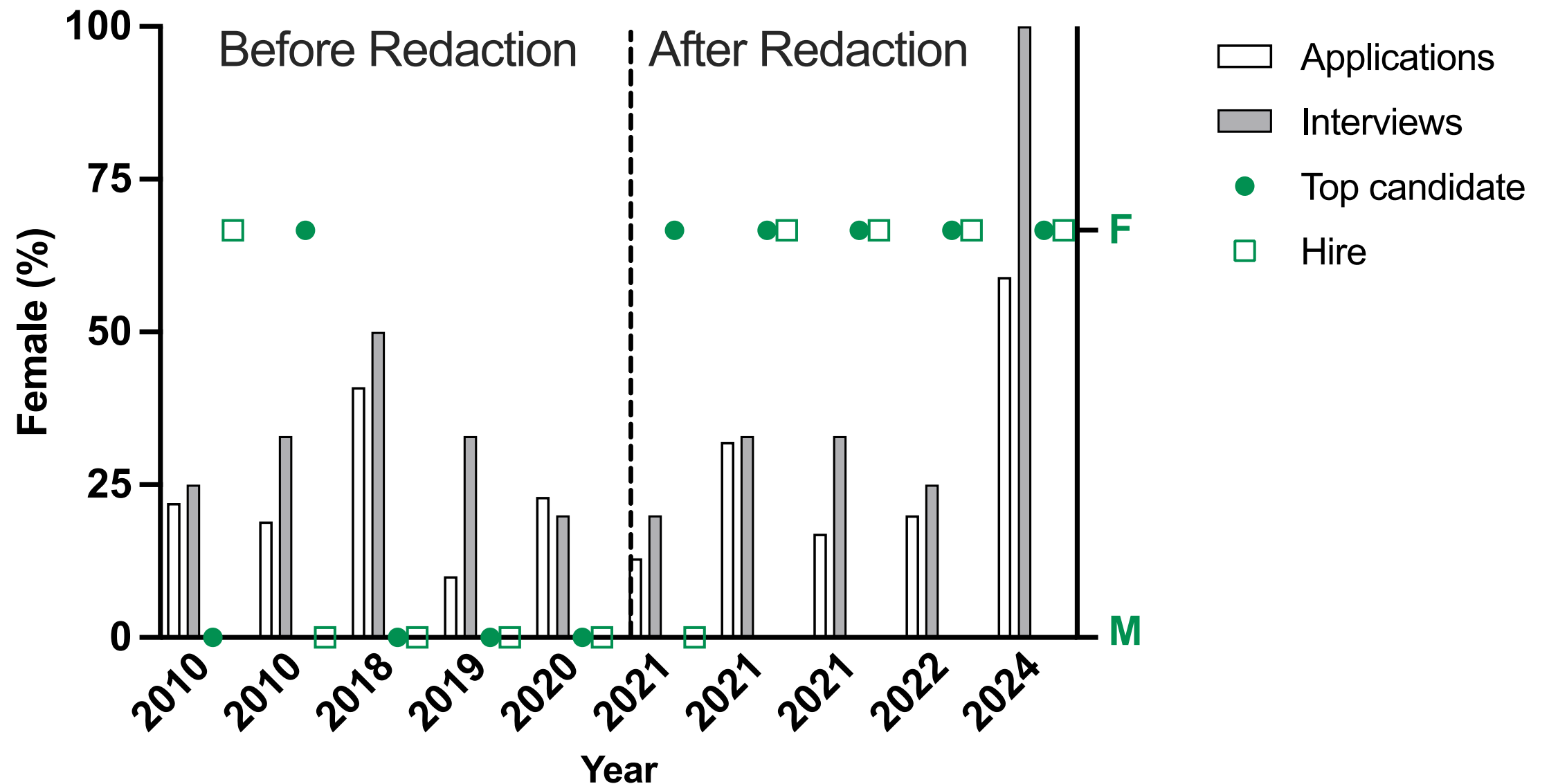
~45 minutes to 2 hours per application

# The process



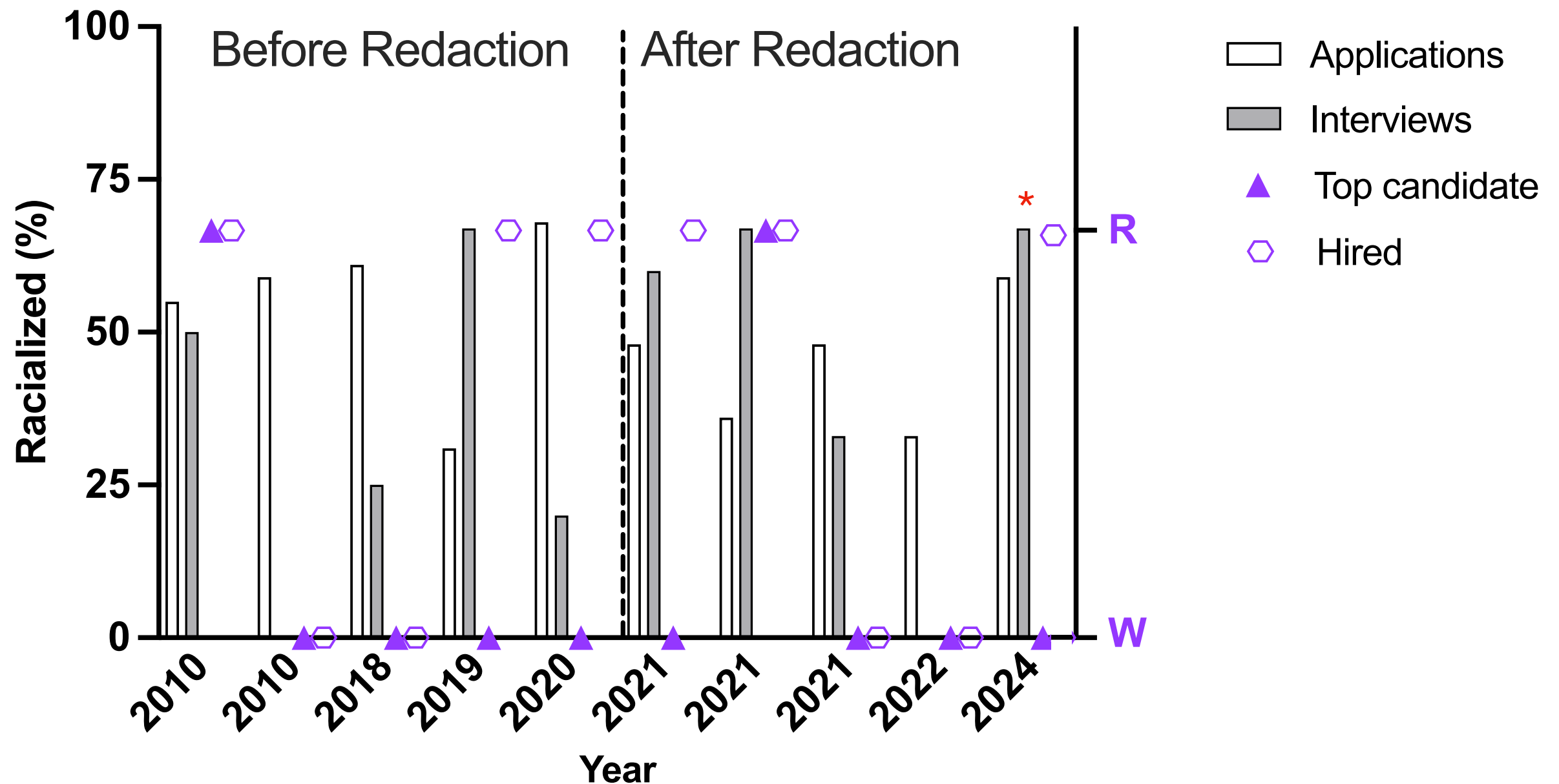
- Had to make rubrics - different committee members were free to make different rubrics
- Sample comments from faculty:
  - relief that they no longer had to attempt to reduce their implicit bias consciously and could just focus on the qualifications
  - fewer instances where committee members would claim a “lack of fit” without substantive reasons or speculations that the candidate “may not be able to communicate well in English”
- Conflict-of-interest “bonus”

# Gender



- Pre-redaction - we don't seem to have viewed women interviewees as serious candidates - maybe they were included as tokens
- Post-redaction - the women interviewed were more likely to be ranked highly

# Racialized

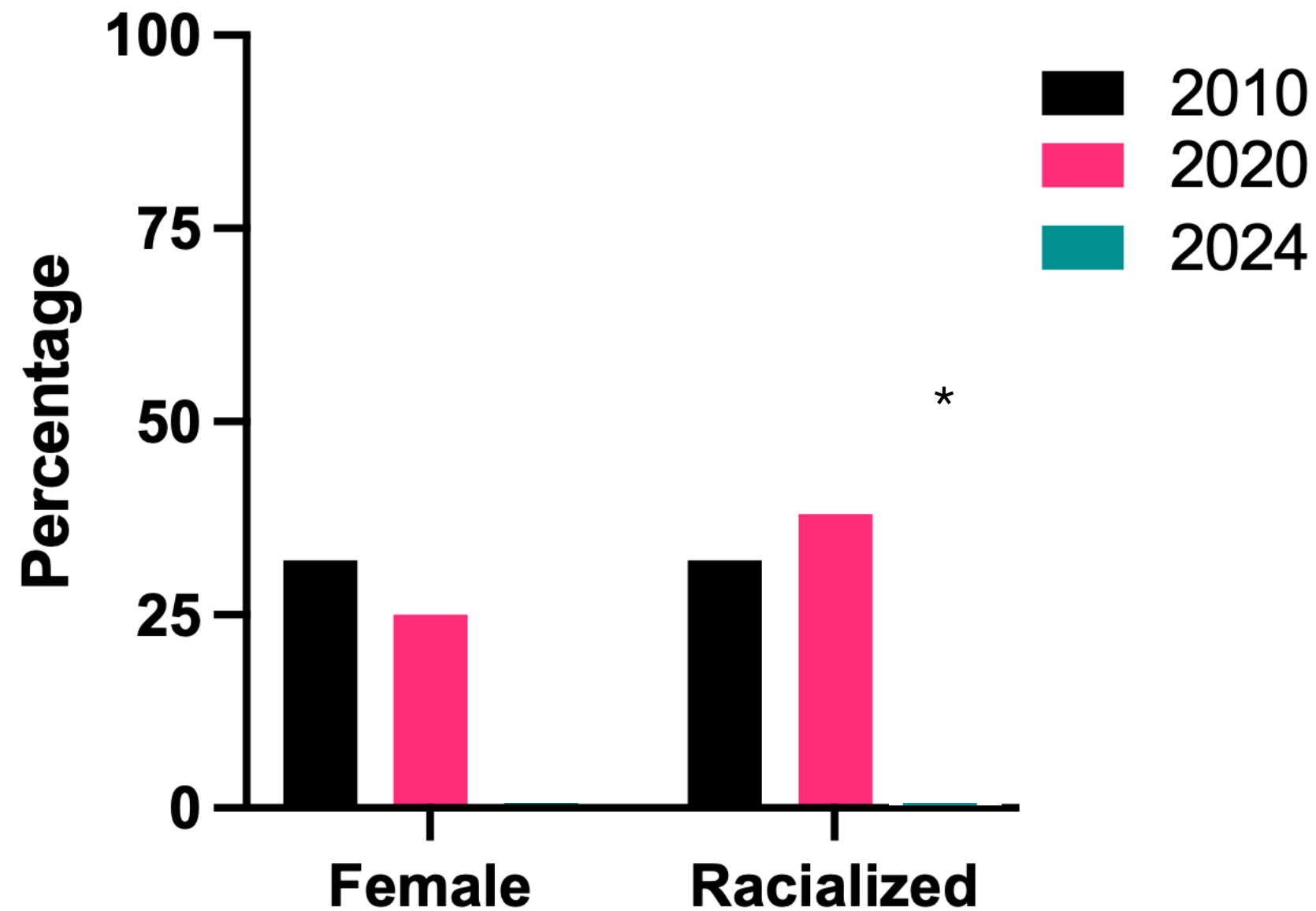


- Application pressure is harder to evaluate than for gender - our equity data from Human Resources does not differentiate between Canadian/PR candidates and everyone else who applies

# Beyond %Female and %Racialized

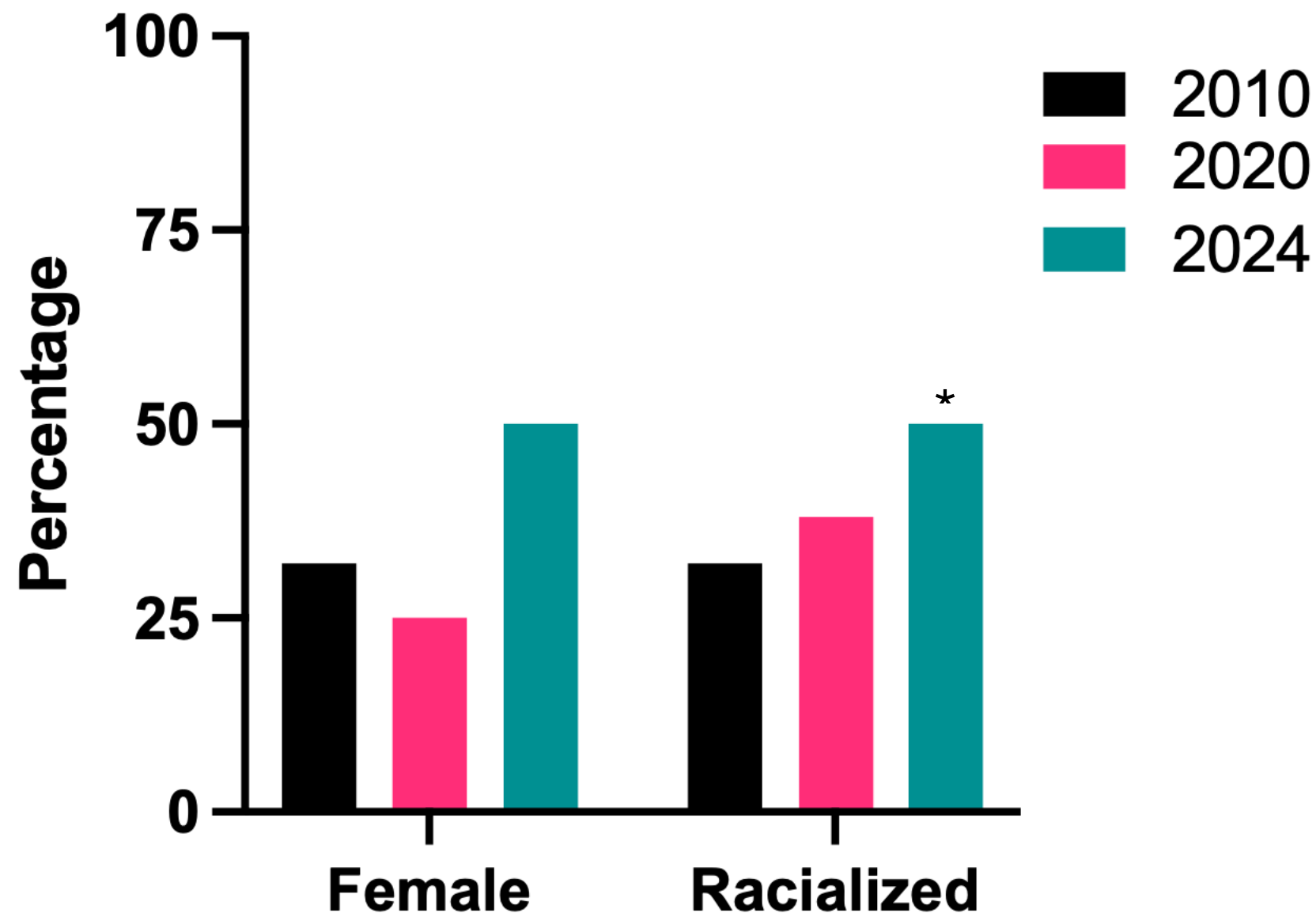
- Are many additional equity seeking groups, e.g. Indigenous, disabled, neurodivergent, 2SLGBTQ+, ...

# Then and now



\*updated from published article to reflect 2025 data

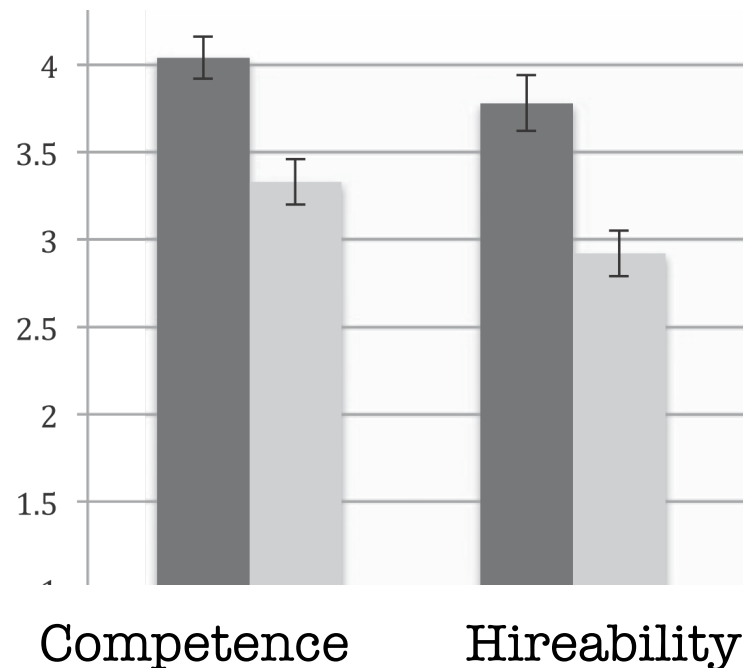
# Then and now



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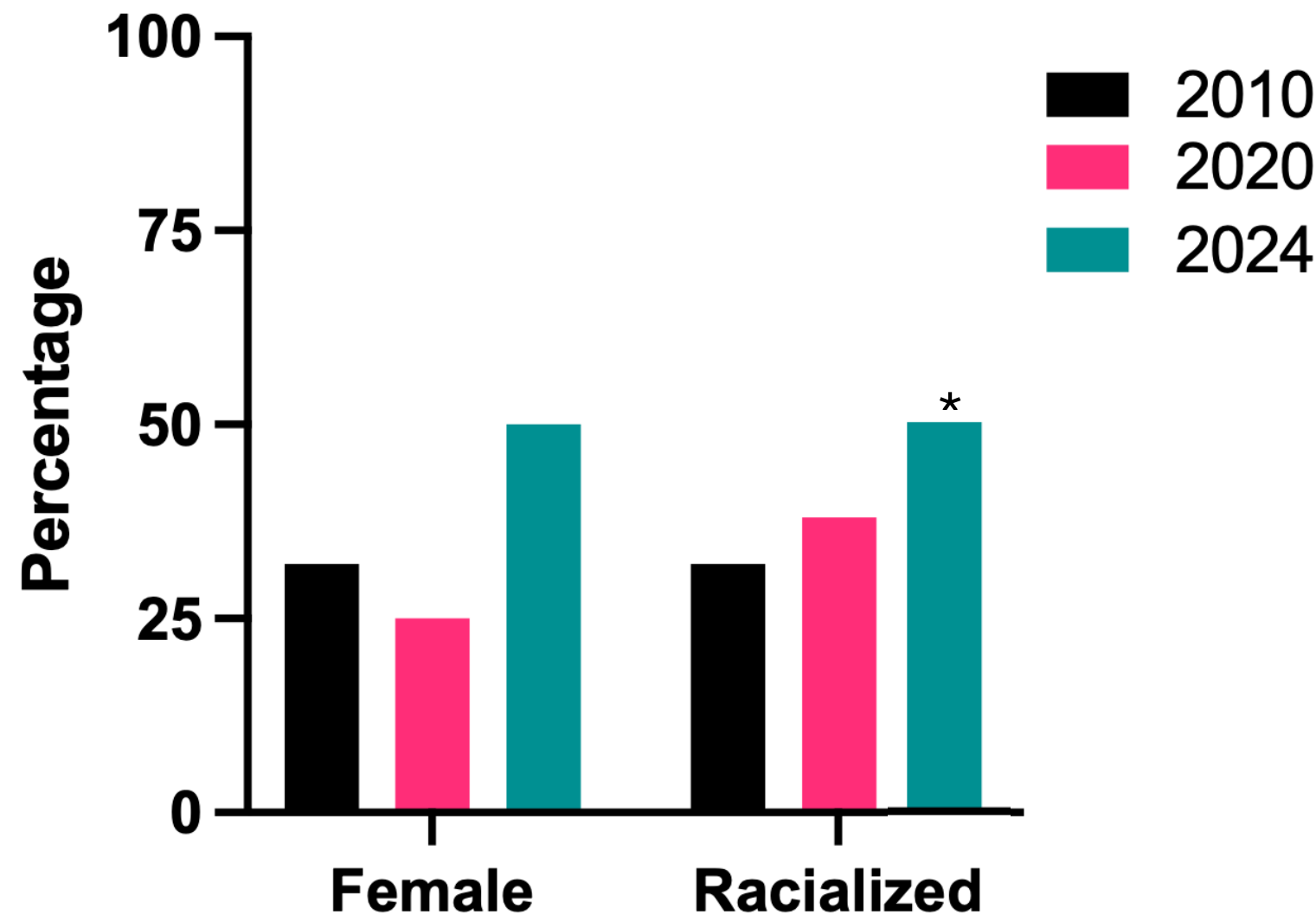
- Achieved gender parity in 4 years! 🎉
  - (Combined effect of new hires + retirements)
  - One common reaction from scientists: 🗣️ “you were discriminating against women” (💭 “I/we are not”)

# A challenge: Scientists recognizing they have unconscious bias



- **“research demonstrates that people who value their objectivity and fairness are paradoxically particularly likely to fall prey to biases, in part because they are not on guard against subtle bias (24, 25)”** (Moss-Racusin C A, Dovidio J F, Brescoll V L, Graham M J, Handelsman J. Science faculty’s subtle gender biases favor male students. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2012;109:16474-16479)

# Has quality suffered?



\*updated from published article to reflect 2025 data

- Still very early career, so metrics are limited, but
  - Succeed at much higher rates for NSERC DG applications than national averages
  - Teaching and service indicators are very good



# What made the difference?

- CV redaction itself?
- And/or increased education/conversation in the department making people more aware of implicit bias and how to counteract it?
- Other possible factors:
  - Job ads written a little more inclusively
  - Many of the interviews were conducted a bit differently than traditionally



# We chose to publish this and publish it in a science journal

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- Why?
  - In the hopes that other science departments will be inspired to take action (not necessarily the same action, but some action)
  - To try to speak to our science colleagues who say things like, “I’m not a social scientist, therefore I can’t take action on EDI-AR”
  - *Aside... this is the paper we are all least qualified to write and has received the most attention of anything we’ve ever published over the course of our careers*

**Thank You!**