

# Performance bias

Performance bias is based on deep-rooted—and incorrect—assumptions about women's and men's abilities. We tend to underestimate women's performance and overestimate men's.<sup>146</sup>

We tend to underestimate women's performance and overestimate men's. As a result, women have to accomplish more to prove that they're as competent as men. This is why women are often hired based on past accomplishments (they need to prove that they have the right skills), while men are often hired based on future potential (we assume they have the skills they need).<sup>147</sup>

To understand the impact of this bias, consider what happens when you remove gender from decision-making. In one study, replacing a woman's name with a man's name on a résumé improved the odds of getting hired by more than 60%.<sup>148</sup> In another, when major orchestras used blind auditions—so they could hear the musicians but not see them—the odds of women making it past the first round improved by 50%.<sup>149</sup>

Performance bias often leads to missed opportunities and lower performance ratings for women—and both can have a huge impact on career progression.<sup>150</sup> This bias is even more pronounced when review criteria aren't clearly specified, leaving room for managers and others to rely more on gut feelings and personal inferences.<sup>151</sup>



# Attribution bias

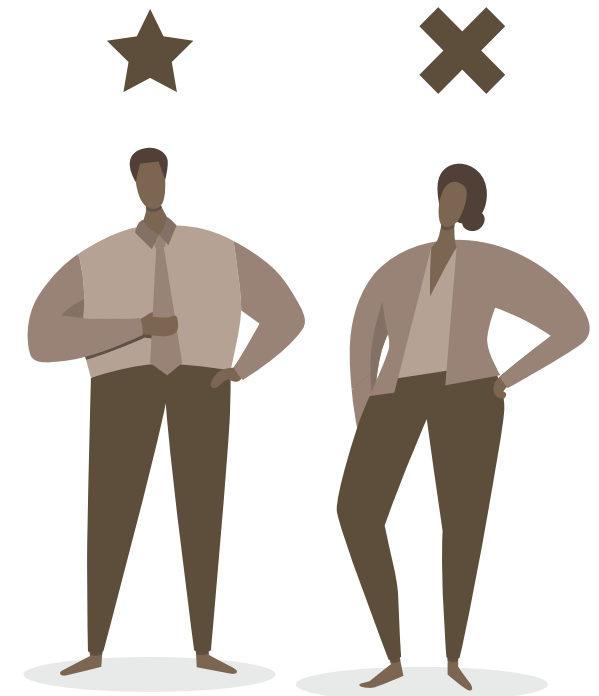
Attribution bias is closely linked to performance bias. Because we see women as less competent than men, we tend to give them less credit for accomplishments and blame them more for mistakes.<sup>152</sup>

Because we see women as less competent than men, we don't always recognize the work they do. Even when women and men work on tasks together, women often get less credit for success and more blame for failure.<sup>153</sup>

We also fall into the trap of thinking women's contributions are less valuable. This often plays out in meetings, where women are more likely to be talked over and interrupted.<sup>154</sup> In one study, men interrupted women nearly three times as often as they interrupted other men, and women fell into the same pattern.<sup>155</sup>

Given that women are often blamed more for failure and tend to wield less influence, they are prone to greater self-doubt. The bias women experience can be so pervasive that they underestimate their own performance. Women often predict that they'll do worse than they actually do, while men predict that they'll do better.<sup>156</sup>

In some cases, women are also less likely to think they're ready for a promotion or new job. One study found that men apply for jobs when they meet 60% of hiring criteria, while women wait until they meet 100%.<sup>157</sup> Of course, women don't lack a confidence gene. Given we hold women to higher standards, women may rightfully feel like they have to hit a higher bar.



# Likeability bias

Likeability bias is rooted in age-old expectations. We expect men to be assertive, so when they lead, it feels natural. We expect women to be kind and communal, so when they assert themselves, we like them less.<sup>158</sup>

Likeability bias—also known as the “likeability penalty”—often surfaces in how we describe women. Women are more likely to be described as “too aggressive” or “bossy”—words rarely used to describe men in the workplace.<sup>159</sup>

You may even have caught yourself having a negative response to a woman who has a strong leadership style or who speaks in a direct, assertive manner. This is likeability bias at work. And being liked matters. Who are you more likely to support and promote: the man with high marks across the board or the woman who has equally high marks but is not as well liked?

To make things more complicated, women also pay a penalty for being agreeable and nice, which can make people think they’re less competent.<sup>160</sup> This double bind makes the workplace challenging for women. They need to assert themselves to be seen as effective. But when they do assert themselves, they are often less liked. Men do not walk this same tightrope.<sup>161</sup>



# Maternal bias

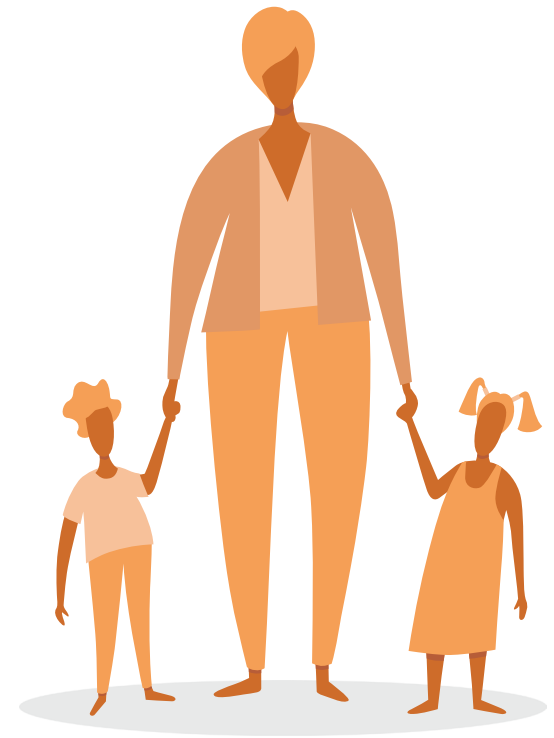
Motherhood triggers false assumptions that women are less committed to their careers—and even less competent.<sup>162</sup>

We incorrectly assume that mothers are less committed and less competent. As a result, mothers are often given fewer opportunities and held to higher standards than fathers.<sup>163</sup>

We fall into the trap of thinking mothers are not as interested in their jobs, so we assume they don't want that challenging assignment or to go on a big work trip. And because we think they're less committed, we're more likely to penalize them for small mistakes or oversights.<sup>164</sup>

Research shows that maternal bias is the strongest type of gender bias.<sup>165</sup> When hiring managers know a woman has children—because “Parent-Teacher Association coordinator” appears on her résumé—she is 79% less likely to be hired. And if she was hired, she would be offered an average of \$11,000 less in salary.<sup>166</sup>

Men can face pushback for having kids, too. Fathers who take time off for family reasons receive lower performance ratings and experience steeper reductions in future earnings than mothers who do.<sup>167</sup>



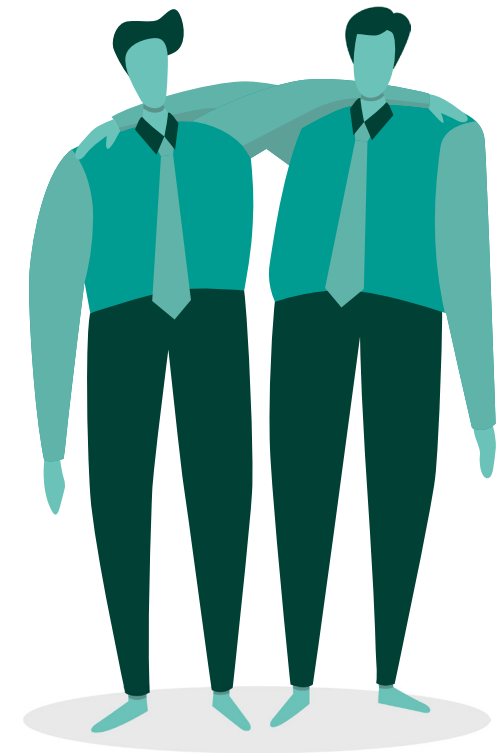
# Affinity bias

Affinity bias is what it sounds like: we gravitate toward people like ourselves in appearance, beliefs, and background. And we may avoid or even dislike people who are different from us.<sup>168</sup>

Because of affinity bias, we often gravitate toward people like ourselves—and may avoid or even dislike people who are different.<sup>169</sup>

Affinity bias plays out in several ways in the workplace. Mentors say they're attracted to protégés who remind them of themselves.<sup>170</sup> And hiring managers are more likely to spend time interviewing people who are like them and less time getting to know people who are different.<sup>171</sup> They are also more likely to give people like them a favorable evaluation.<sup>172</sup>

Because white men hold more positions of power—and are more likely to gravitate toward other white men—affinity bias has a particularly negative effect on women and people of color.<sup>173</sup> They can end up being overlooked or left out.



# Double discrimination & intersectionality

Bias isn't limited to gender. Women can also experience biases due to their race, sexual orientation, a disability, or other aspects of their identity.

Women can also experience biases due to their race, sexual orientation, a disability, or other aspects of their identity—and the compounded discrimination can be significantly greater than the sum of its parts.

For example, women of color often face double discrimination: biases for being women and biases for being people of color. Compared to white women, women of color receive less support from managers, get less access to senior leaders, and are promoted more slowly.<sup>201</sup> As a result, they are particularly underrepresented in the corporate pipeline, behind white men, white women, and men of color.<sup>202</sup>

A similar dynamic holds true for LGBTQ women. Research shows that lesbians have a harder time securing employment than women more broadly.<sup>203</sup>

When different types of discrimination interconnect and overlap, this is called intersectionality.<sup>204</sup> Imagine the compounded effect of being Black, Muslim, an immigrant, and a woman. Research shows people with three or more marginalized identities often feel like they don't belong anywhere.<sup>205</sup> Each card in this pack includes a reminder about intersectionality because it's critical that we're aware of the different biases people can experience and commit to fairness for everyone.

