



LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

A program that equips all employees to identify and challenge the biases women face at work

Hiring



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TO GET STARTED:

Download our [Moderator Guide & Speaker Notes](#) to prepare for your session, find links to necessary handouts, and learn what to say.

Use "Slide Show" mode to click on links in this presentation or right click to access the hyperlink when not in "Slide Show" mode.

Presentation starts
on the next slide

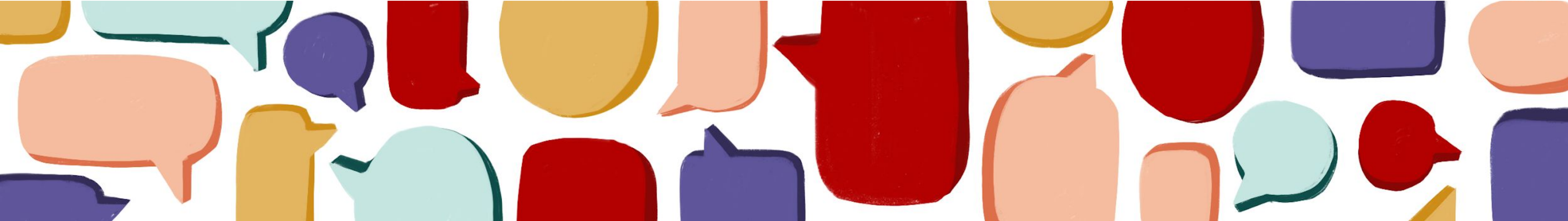


LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

A program that equips all employees to identify and challenge the biases women face at work

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Welcome

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

LEAN IN

LeanIn.Org helps women achieve their ambitions and works to create an equal world.

LeanIn.Org thanks our partners for their valuable contributions to this program:



WHY WE ARE HERE

- ▶ Bias—whether deliberate or unconscious—is holding women back in the workplace.
- ▶ It makes it harder for women to get hired and promoted and negatively impacts their day-to-day work experiences.
- ▶ This hurts women and prevents companies from fully leveraging their talents.
- ▶ Today, we'll learn concrete steps to address the biases women face head-on.

TODAY'S AGENDA

1

Set the tone

2

Learn about
biases women
face at work

3

Dive into specific
situations and
solutions

4

Finish with a
closing activity

1

Setting the tone

SETTING THE TONE

- 1 Women can experience a broad range of biases that can undermine their capabilities or leave them feeling disrespected at work.
- 2 Multiple kinds of bias can be at play in any situation.
- 3 We all fall into bias traps.
- 4 Knowing that bias exists isn't enough — commit to take action.

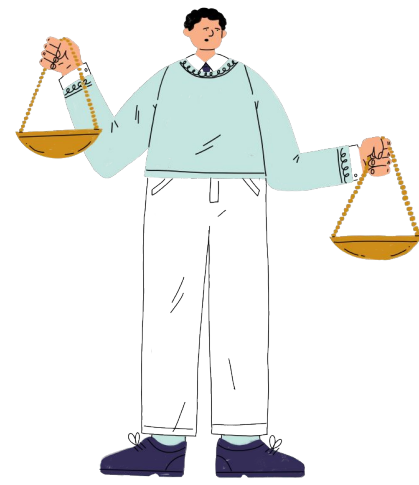
GROUND RULES FOR TODAY

- 1 Some situations may be difficult to hear.
- 2 Stories should be anonymous.
- 3 Give people the benefit of the doubt.

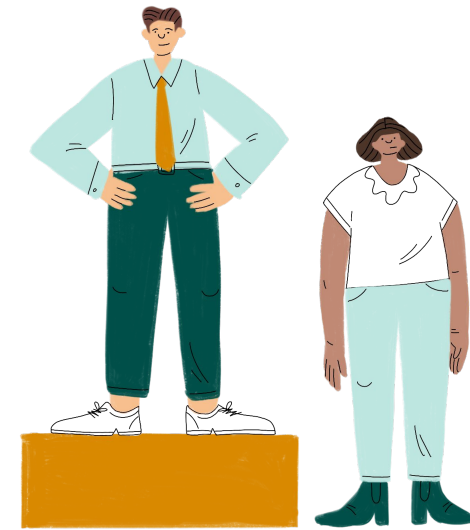
2

Overview: Common types of biases women face at work

COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



Unconscious bias



Performance bias



Attribution bias

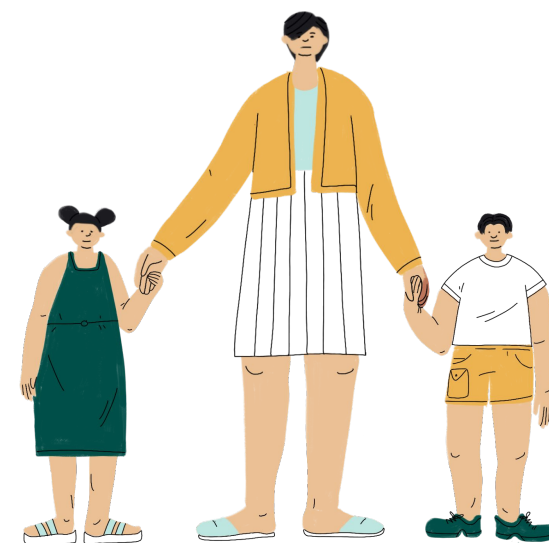


WATCH THE VIDEO:

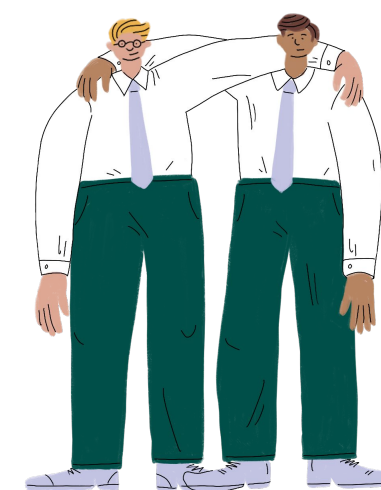
“Introduction to the Common Biases Women Experience”



Likeability bias



Maternal bias



Affinity Bias

COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



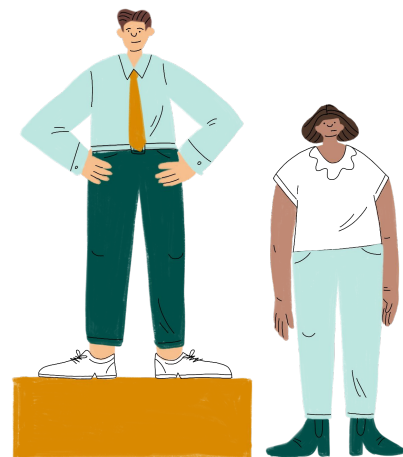
Likeability bias

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.¹¹



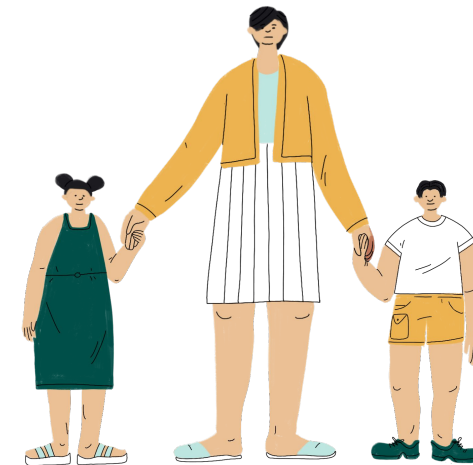
Attribution bias

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.¹⁰



Performance bias

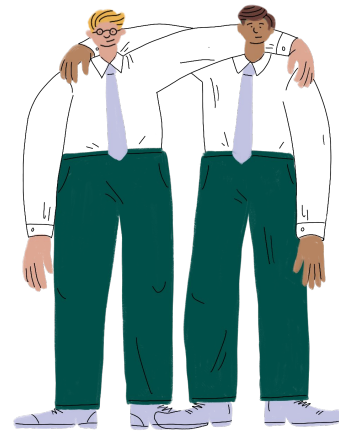
Performance bias is based on deep-rooted — and incorrect — assumptions about women's and men's abilities. We tend to underestimate women's performance and overestimate men's.⁹



Maternal bias

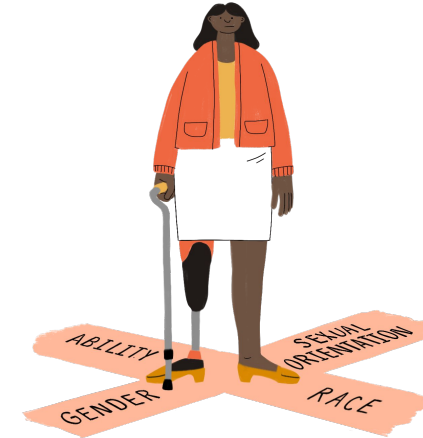
Motherhood triggers false assumptions that women are less committed to their careers — and even less competent.¹²

COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



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.¹³



Compounding bias

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



Unconscious bias

Unconscious biases are mental "shortcuts" that our brains use to make sense of the world around us. We all have unconscious biases, but by slowing down and becoming aware of them, we can reduce their impact on our decisions.

Icebreakers

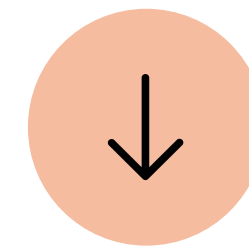
ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

When a woman's name was replaced with a man's name on a résumé, how much more likely were evaluators to say they would hire the applicant?

Did you know?

Guess the answer as a group.

SEE THE ANSWER



ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

When a woman's name was replaced with a man's name on a résumé, how much more likely were evaluators to say they would hire the applicant?

ANSWER:

Over 60% more likely.²⁷¹

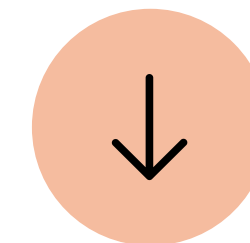
ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

When hiring managers believed a woman had children because “Parent-Teacher Association coordinator” appeared on her résumé, how much less likely was she to be hired?

Did you know?

Guess the answer as a group.

SEE THE ANSWER



ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

When hiring managers believed a woman had children because “Parent-Teacher Association coordinator” appeared on her résumé, how much less likely was she to be hired?

ANSWER:

79% less likely to be hired.
(And if she was hired, she would be offered an average of \$11,000 less in salary.)³²⁴

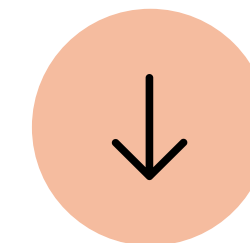
ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

In one study, how much more likely was a woman to get an interview if her resume pictured her without a hijab, compared to picturing her with a hijab?

Did you know?

Guess the answer as a group.

SEE THE ANSWER



ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

In one study, how much more likely was a woman to get an interview if her resume pictured her without a hijab, compared to picturing her with a hijab?

ANSWER:

Three times more likely.³²⁶

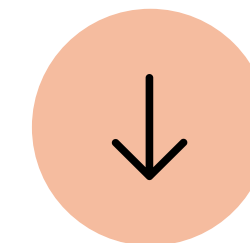
ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

In one study, job applicants with white-sounding names got what percentage more callbacks than identical job applicants with Black-sounding names?

Did you know?

Guess the answer as a group.

SEE THE ANSWER



ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

In one study, job applicants with white-sounding names got what percentage more callbacks than identical job applicants with Black-sounding names?

ANSWER:

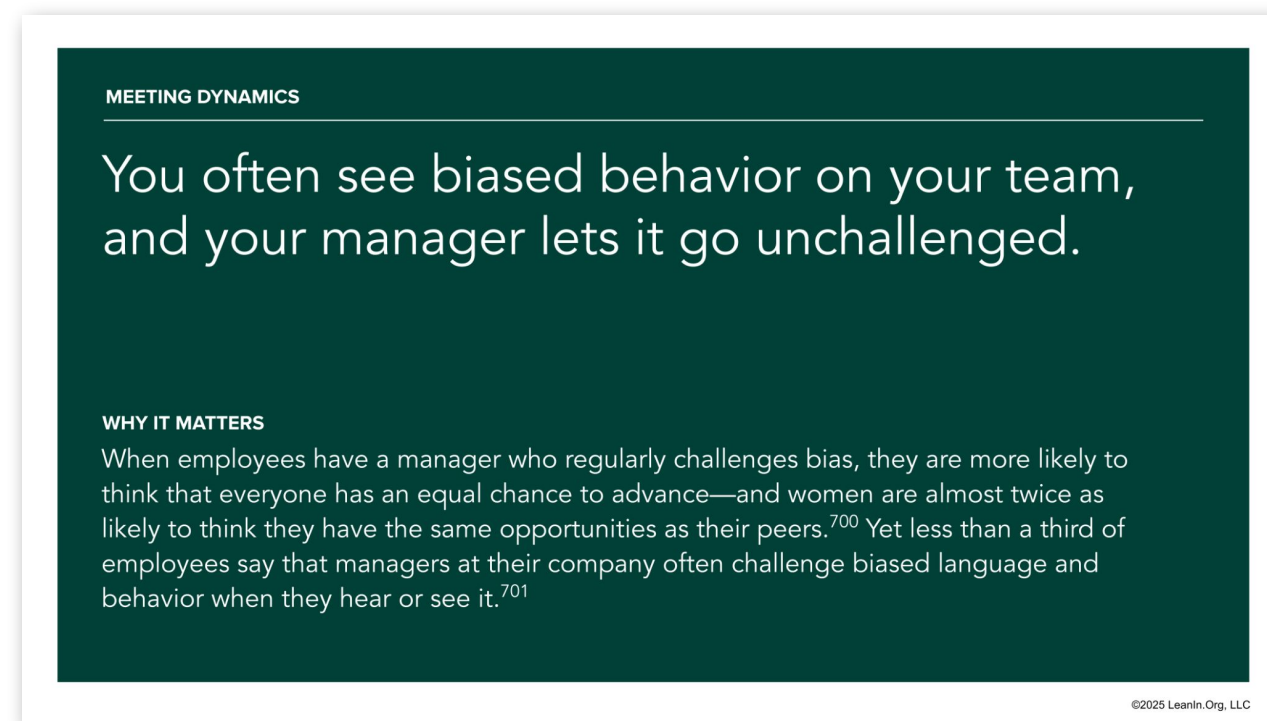
It led to 50% more callbacks—the equivalent of adding eight years of work experience.³²⁷

3

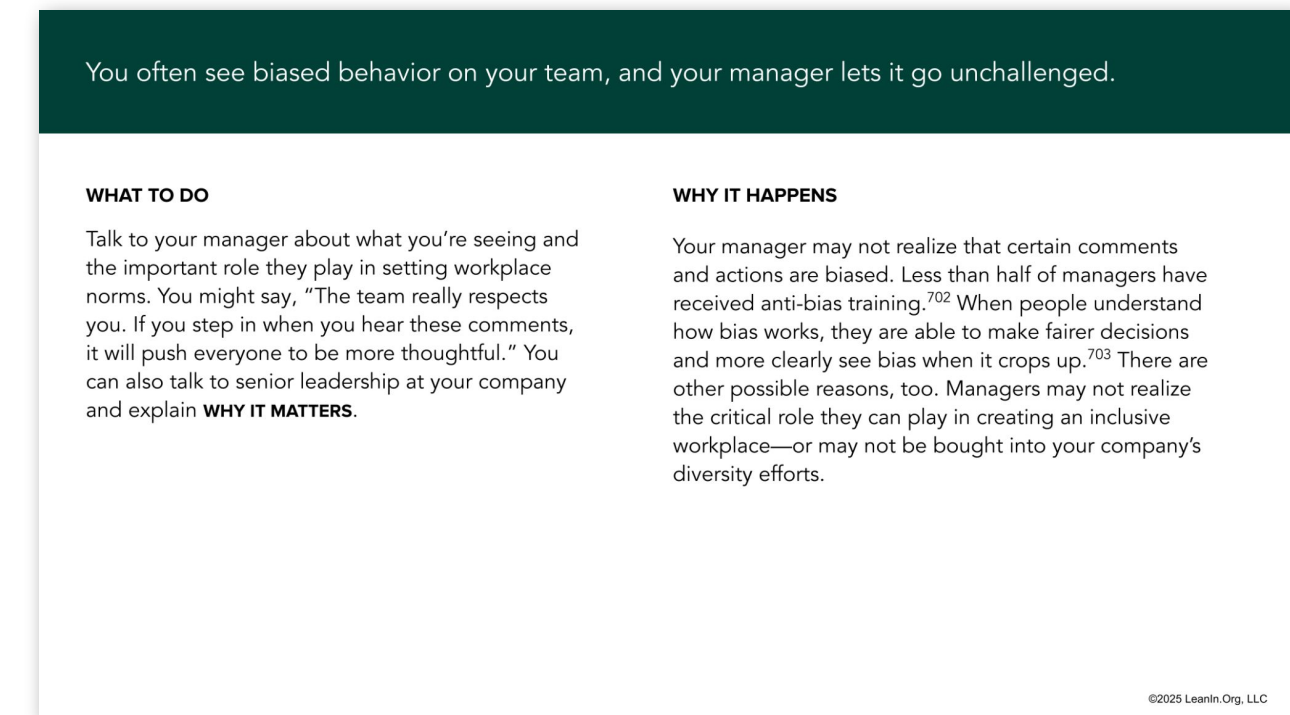
Workplace situations

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Move into your small group or breakout room. Everyone should have a copy of the presentation you will use for discussion.
- 2 Select one person to read the situation and **WHY IT MATTERS**.



- 3 As a group, discuss what you would do in this situation.
- 4 After 3–5 minutes of discussion, read **WHAT TO DO** and **WHY IT HAPPENS**.



- 5 Continue through as many situations as you can in the time allotted.

HIRING

You're asked to interview candidates for a role on your team and notice none are women.

WHY IT MATTERS

Your company is likely missing out on talented candidates—and women are missing out on a chance to advance their careers. This is a widespread problem: fewer women than men are hired at the entry level, and at every subsequent step, the representation of women further declines.²⁷⁷

You're asked to interview candidates for a role on your team and notice none are women.

WHAT TO DO

Talk to the hiring manager. Point out that there aren't any women being interviewed. Suggest an additional push to identify two or more viable women candidates.²⁷⁸

You might also ask if they've taken any of the research-backed steps that make hiring fairer. Did they set clear, objective criteria before the recruitment process, and are the criteria applied consistently by all evaluators?²⁷⁹ Do their hiring tools support fairness—e.g. does their software anonymize candidates or prompt evaluators to give concrete evidence for their assessments? Based on the hiring manager's responses, you can suggest improvements to their process.

WHY IT HAPPENS

This may be happening because fewer women work in your field. But it may also reflect bias in your company's hiring process, an area where all types of bias can come into play, from favoring people like yourself (affinity bias) to holding women to higher standards (performance bias).²⁹⁷

HIRING

You're on a hiring committee and a colleague rules out a woman of color because she's "not a good cultural fit."

WHY IT MATTERS

Evaluations of "culture fit" tend to be subjective. They can lead us to screen out people who aren't like us, which means we can miss qualified candidates and end up with less diverse teams. Plus, it can mean that talented job seekers lose out on opportunities.

You're on a hiring committee and a colleague rules out a woman of color because she's "not a good cultural fit."

WHAT TO DO

When someone rules out a candidate because of fit, ask them to be more specific. If their thinking boils down to "she's different," point out that different can be good. Propose that you look for someone who adds to the team dynamic—a "culture add"—instead of someone who simply fits into it.

As a longer-term solution, ask that a set of standardized criteria be used for all hires. This reduces bias by minimizing subjective evaluations.⁵⁵

WHY IT HAPPENS

We tend to gravitate toward—and hire—people who remind us of ourselves, which can impact our ability to objectively evaluate who would bring the most to the job.⁵⁶

Rooted in affinity bias

HIRING

You're on a hiring committee and you notice that your colleagues prefer candidates who are men over women with very similar experience.

WHY IT MATTERS

This could be a sign of bias in your hiring process—and may unfairly disadvantage women. When qualified women are overlooked, your company misses out on their talents and on the chance to build more diverse teams.

You're on a hiring committee and you notice that your colleagues prefer candidates who are men over women with very similar experience.

WHAT TO DO

Mention to the hiring committee that you've noticed they tend to select men over women with similar abilities. You can also explain **WHY IT HAPPENS**. Then suggest a solution. Research shows that when teams agree on a set of clear criteria and use it consistently for all candidates, the hiring process is fairer and the most qualified women and men can rise to the top.²⁸²

WHY IT HAPPENS

We tend to rate women lower than men, even if they have similar qualifications.²⁸⁴ This can make a real difference in hiring. In one study, replacing a woman's name with a man's name on a résumé increased the likelihood of being hired by more than 60%. The impact can be even greater for some groups—including Black women, Latinas, Native American women, and women with disabilities—whose competence is questioned both because they're women and because of stereotypes about their race or ability.²⁸⁵

Rooted in performance bias

HIRING

Your colleague advocates for a job candidate with no gap in her résumé over another with a gap from when she was a full-time mom.

WHY IT MATTERS

Companies that look negatively on job applicants who take time off to raise kids risk missing out on qualified candidates—in particular, women. Mothers are more likely than fathers to take time off for childcare, and they face harsher career penalties when they do.

Your colleague advocates for a job candidate with no gap in her résumé over another with a gap from when she was a full-time mom.

WHAT TO DO

Push for the candidates to be evaluated on their skills and experience, without taking into account the time taken off for caregiving.

Longer term, recommend that your team use standardized hiring criteria and apply them consistently to all candidates. That can help ensure you judge everyone by the same yardstick.³³⁹

WHY IT HAPPENS

When a woman becomes a mother, it can make others think that she's less committed to her career—even less competent.³⁴⁰ As a result, she is often held to higher standards and offered fewer opportunities.³⁴¹ Seeing a gap in a woman's résumé can trigger this maternal bias and hurt her chances of being hired.³⁴²

Rooted in maternal bias

HIRING

After an interview, a coworker says that an appropriately-dressed Black woman “didn’t look very professional.”²⁹⁸

WHY IT MATTERS

Black women can miss out on jobs, promotions, and other opportunities because of arbitrary judgments about their appearance.²⁹⁹ To avoid this penalty, many Black women say they have to dress more formally than their colleagues and spend more money on hair and accessories.²⁹³

After an interview, a coworker says that an appropriately-dressed Black woman “didn’t look very professional.”²⁹¹

WHAT TO DO

Ask your coworker to explain what they mean by “not professional.” Say that you think she looked appropriate, then refocus the discussion: “Let’s talk about her qualifications.” Consider speaking to your manager or HR team about making sure your company sets clear hiring criteria ahead of time, so subjective opinions like this don’t carry weight. It can also be helpful to appoint a “criteria monitor” in hiring meetings to make sure everyone evaluates candidates by the same standards.²⁹⁴

WHY IT HAPPENS

People often view white men as more competent and leader-like than women or Black people.²⁹⁵ This can mean that Black women are automatically considered less hireable, regardless of what they wear. In addition, many people wrongly view Black women’s natural hair as unprofessional.²⁹⁶ This bias can be so strong that Black women who wear natural hairstyles are less likely to be hired or promoted than those who do not.²⁹⁷

Situation adapted from *The Memo: What Women of Color Need to Know to Secure a Seat at the Table*, by Minda Harts

HIRING

A colleague mentions how aggressive and pushy a job candidate seemed when negotiating her salary.

WHY IT MATTERS

Negotiation is a vital part of job seeking for any employee. But women who negotiate are often perceived as less likeable.²⁴⁰ Since people tend to want to hire coworkers who are seen as likeable as well as competent, this could mean talented women are overlooked.

A colleague mentions how aggressive and pushy a job candidate seemed when negotiating her salary.

WHAT TO DO

Prompt your colleague to rethink their impression of this woman. You might ask, “Have we had a problem with job candidates negotiating in the past?”

Longer term, recommend that your company make it clear what can be negotiated and how. For example, HR could publish a list of areas open to negotiation—such as promotions, flexible scheduling, or working from home—along with the criteria for how decisions will be made.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Women are expected to be communal and selfless. When they seek higher pay, they act against that stereotype, and people can respond negatively. Women who negotiate are more likely than men who negotiate to receive feedback that they are “intimidating,” “too aggressive,” or “bossy.”

Rooted in likeability bias

HIRING

You realize that your company gets most of its new employees through referrals by current employees.

WHY IT MATTERS

If you're not careful, you may end up with a lot of employees of the same race or gender, or from similar educational or economic backgrounds. This could mean that your company is failing to get the benefits of diversity—and isn't necessarily getting the best talent.

You realize that your company gets most of its new employees through referrals by current employees.

WHAT TO DO

If the new hires lack diversity, talk to HR or someone senior. Say that you've noticed that your company tends to hire people who are referred by other employees and explain the shortcomings of this strategy. Another issue could be that your process for evaluating new hires is too subjective, so someone saying, "He's my friend" ends up carrying a lot of weight. To counter that, suggest using a list of standardized criteria, so all candidates are judged by the same standard.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Affinity bias makes us more comfortable with others like ourselves.²⁰³ This can make it feel safer and more comfortable to hire people who are already known and liked by existing employees.²⁰⁴

Rooted in affinity bias

HIRING

During a hiring meeting, a coworker ranks a qualified applicant poorly because she graduated from an overseas school they don't know.

WHY IT MATTERS

This judgment could mean this woman misses out on a job that she's qualified for. And your company could miss out on a strong candidate—one who would add a more global perspective.³¹⁷

During a hiring meeting, a coworker ranks a qualified applicant poorly because she graduated from an overseas school they don't know.

WHAT TO DO

Point out that the requirements for the role don't include attending specific colleges or hailing from specific countries. Remind them that educational background is only one dimension of a candidate's experience, and it's typically not the most important one. And highlight the candidate's skills that do match up with the job description.

WHY IT HAPPENS

This type of pushback is common for immigrant women. On top of the gender bias women generally experience, immigrant women often face bias if their credentials come from overseas. In the U.S. and Britain, people tend to be biased against colleges in less wealthy countries and to believe that degrees from those countries are worth less.³¹⁸ As a result of this and other biases, immigrant women are hired at lower rates than women overall and earn less than any other group of women or men.³¹⁹

HIRING

After interviewing a Black woman, a coworker expresses surprise over “how articulate she sounded.”

WHY IT MATTERS

Comments like these may sound like compliments, but they definitely are not. They perpetuate a stereotype that Black people aren't articulate or educated, which is not only insulting but can also lead to fewer career opportunities.³¹²

After interviewing a Black woman, a coworker expresses surprise over “how articulate she sounded.”

WHAT TO DO

Asking a probing question can prompt your coworker to examine their assumptions. You might ask, “Why wouldn’t you expect her to be articulate?” You can also talk to the hiring manager responsible for making sure job candidates are evaluated fairly and explain that comments like these undermine that process.

WHY IT HAPPENS

This type of statement is fueled by a centuries-old belief that Black people have worse language skills than other groups.³¹³ This assumption is all too common: compared to any other racial or ethnic group, Black women are the most likely to have others express surprise over their language skills or other abilities.³¹⁵

Rooted in performance bias

HIRING

After interviewing an out lesbian woman, a manager at your company says he didn't click with her.

WHY IT MATTERS

Comments about "clicking" or "culture fit" in a hiring process are vague and subjective, and this opens the door to bias.³¹⁶ As a result, good candidates might get dismissed without a detailed look at their qualifications. This could mean that your company ends up with less diverse, less qualified teams.

After interviewing an out lesbian woman, a manager at your company says he didn't click with her.

WHAT TO DO

Ask the manager if the candidate met the criteria for the role. The best way to reduce bias in hiring is to evaluate all candidates for a role based on the same predefined set of criteria.³¹⁷ And you could also explain to him **WHY IT MATTERS**.

WHY IT HAPPENS

This manager may be influenced by homophobia, a conscious or unconscious dislike for lesbian and gay people. His comment may also be fueled by affinity bias, which leads us to gravitate toward people like ourselves and to avoid or even dislike those who are different.³¹⁸ As a result, gay and lesbian people tend to face unfair barriers to getting hired. For example, one study found that straight hiring managers spend 50% longer interviewing straight candidates than gay candidates.³¹⁹

Rooted in affinity bias

HIRING

After an interview, a colleague says they didn't like how a woman candidate bragged about her strengths and accomplishments.

WHY IT MATTERS

In general, candidates who are well liked are more likely to be hired—so when women are seen as less likeable, they're often less likely to get the job. And companies that fail to hire talented women miss out on their contributions and leadership.

After an interview, a colleague says they didn't like how a woman candidate bragged about her strengths and accomplishments.

WHAT TO DO

Ask your colleague to explore their thinking: "That's interesting. Do you think you'd have that reaction if a man did the same thing?" You can also reframe what happened: "I noticed that too, but I don't see it as bragging. I just thought she was talking confidently about her talents." It's also worth pointing out that a job interview is exactly the place to talk about your strengths.

WHY IT HAPPENS

We expect men to assert themselves and promote their own accomplishments. But we often have a negative reaction when women do the same thing. This puts women candidates in a difficult spot. If they tout their achievements, it can hurt their chances of being hired. If they don't, their achievements might be overlooked.

Rooted in likeability bias

HIRING

When discussing a job candidate who wears a hijab, a hiring manager says they're worried clients won't be able to relate to her.

WHY IT MATTERS

The hiring manager's statement could unfairly shut out the woman from a job she's well qualified for. It would also mean your company would miss out on adding her talents and diverse perspective to the team. Plus, statements like this can reinforce bias against Muslim women by presenting a spurious "business case" for not hiring them.

When discussing a job candidate who wears a hijab, a hiring manager says they're worried clients won't be able to relate to her.

WHAT TO DO

Say to the hiring manager, "I don't understand why they wouldn't be able to relate to her," and list a few of her qualifications for a client-facing role. In general, refocusing the conversation on the criteria for the role helps to shut down bias.³²⁸

WHY IT HAPPENS

Hijab-wearing women can suffer unfair judgments based on their ethnicity, religion, and gender combined.³²⁹ Many Americans negatively judge the hijab, seeing it as a sign of backwardness, extremism, or of Muslim women's oppression.³³⁰ As a result, they might see the woman as less modern, lacking in agency, and less relatable to clients. In reality, the hijab isn't a sign of any of those things, and women who wear it have a wide range of experiences and beliefs.³³¹ But this biased thinking can hurt hijab-wearing women, as they are less likely to be hired than women overall.³³²

HIRING

You realize that many of the candidates your colleague has hired went to her elite university.

WHY IT MATTERS

If hiring managers only hire people they have something in common with, they're likely missing out on great candidates who are different from themselves. And recruiting only from elite colleges means that they'll miss qualified candidates who tend to be underrepresented at elite schools, like Black and Latinx people.³⁸⁵ This approach to hiring can hurt your company—many studies find that diverse teams perform better.³⁸⁶

You realize that many of the candidates your colleague has hired went to her elite university.

WHAT TO DO

Point out that many of your colleague's hires are from her university. Suggest that it could help her team to include qualified candidates from a broader range of schools and backgrounds. Recommend a job board or colleague in HR who can help her recruit more diverse teammates. If she needs convincing, explain **WHY IT MATTERS**.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Research shows that people tend to gravitate toward others like them—we are drawn to people with backgrounds and experiences similar to ours.³⁸⁷ This makes us more likely to want to work with and hire people with whom we already share common ground, including people of our gender or race—or people who went to our alma mater.³⁸⁸

Rooted in affinity bias

HIRING

Over lunch, your colleague says, “It’d be great to hire more women, but I worry about lowering our bar.”

WHY IT MATTERS

Comments like this promote the false idea that women are less competent and qualified than men. This comment is particularly concerning if it’s made by someone involved in hiring. If hiring teams unfairly overlook women, women miss out—and so does your company.

Over lunch, your colleague says, “It’d be great to hire more women, but I worry about lowering our bar.”

WHAT TO DO

Try asking, “Why do you think hiring women would lower the bar?” Restating their words may prompt your colleague to rethink their assumption. You can also explain **WHY IT MATTERS**.

Longer term, push your company to use standardized hiring criteria. That way, the bar will be set before the hiring process begins, so all candidates will be evaluated against it and the notion that “we lowered the bar” is likely to fade.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Comments like this wrongly assume that the bar is set the same for everyone, so if women aren’t hired, it’s because there aren’t enough qualified women out there. In reality, the bar is set differently for women and men. We consciously or unconsciously expect women to meet a higher standard. The false belief that everyone is evaluated fairly and objectively is known as the “myth of meritocracy.”

Rooted in performance bias

4

Closing Activity

SUMMARY: STRATEGIES TO COMBAT BIAS

When bias occurs, there are a number of ways to respond, some of which you discussed today. Below is a summary of the strategies you can use to combat bias:

- ▶ Speak up for someone in the moment
- ▶ Ask a probing question
- ▶ Stick to the facts
- ▶ Explain how bias is in play
- ▶ Advocate for policy or process change

“My One Action to address bias against women in the workplace is...”