

WHEN YOUR QUALIFICATIONS OR ABILITIES ARE QUESTIONED

READ THIS HANDOUT TO YOURSELF BEFORE YOU START THE ACTIVITY

What is performance bias?

When it comes to earning respect at work and getting credit for their qualifications, women and men are judged with different scorecards. Even when they have all the necessary experience to do a job well, women are often doubted. They tend to be seen as less capable than men, earning less credit for their accomplishments and getting more blame for mistakes.¹ This happens because of performance bias—a bias we all hold that causes us to underestimate women’s performance and overestimate men’s.²

What does this mean for women?

As a result, women have to accomplish more to prove they are as qualified as men. On a jobsite, men might hold women to higher standards, expecting them to do more work to prove their ability. Women of color are subjected to these biases even more often and have to provide greater proof of their skills.³

What does this mean for tradeswomen specifically?

For tradeswomen, this can be frustrating, but in some cases it can also be downright dangerous. One study found that women who reported feeling they have to overcompensate or prove themselves on the job were four times more likely to get injured, compared to women who did not report feeling this way.⁴ When women in the trades are constantly dealing with performance bias, the effects can be mentally and physically damaging.

The activity in this meeting will help you identify performance bias and practice strategies to fight it.

To learn more and access key research, visit leanin.org/tradeswomen.

FLIP THIS PAGE OVER TO READ QUOTES FROM REAL TRADESWOMEN.

DIFFERENT CIRCLE MEMBERS SHOULD VOLUNTEER TO READ THESE QUOTES OUT LOUD

Voices of Tradeswomen



As a woman in the construction field, proving yourself comes with the territory. To overcome this gender bias, I build trust through demonstrating my knowledge, commitment, and communication skills so that construction managers and crews I work with feel confident in my abilities. Sometimes I feel this causes me to work harder than others, but I face it as a challenge and a victory accomplished when my work proves itself."

Renee, 46, an operating engineer/building inspector with 6 years' experience



I had someone I thought was a good friend say something like 'Now we'll see if you're really a journeyman!' the first time we worked together as a crew. First, I was devastated, and I cried. Then I was furious. I told him I'd already proven myself over and over again on every jobsite, and why should I have to prove anything to him anyway? He wasn't my foreman, and he was supposed to be my friend and stick up for me, not tear me down. He apologized and told me I was right."

Anonymous, a carpenter with 31 years' experience