



LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

An activity that helps you combat bias against women at work

Bias in hiring



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An activity that helps you combat the biases women face at work

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

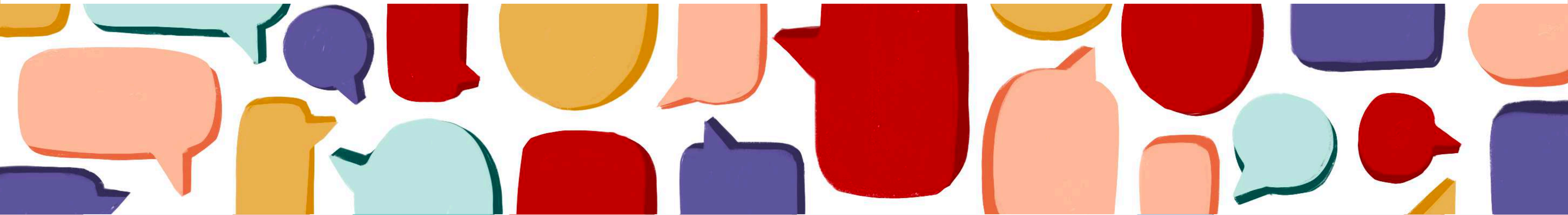


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An activity that helps you combat the biases women face at work

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Women of Color
in the
Workplace®

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 makes it hard for companies to level the playing field.
- ▶ 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

Setting the tone

- 1 **Women face biases due to their race, sexuality, and other aspects of their identity.**
- 2 **Intersectionality 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

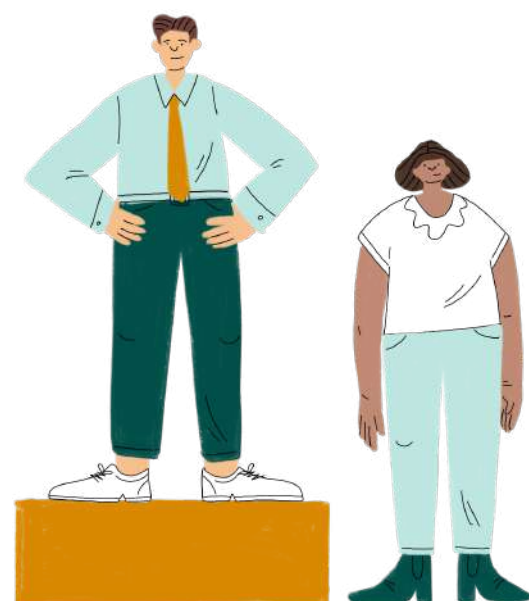
- ➊ Some situations may be difficult to hear.
- ➋ Stories should be anonymous.
- ➌ Give people the benefit of the doubt.

Overview: Common types of biases women face at work

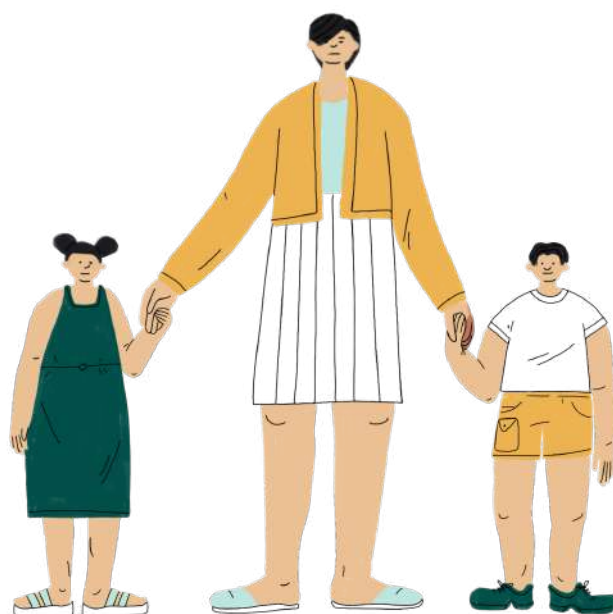
COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



Likeability bias



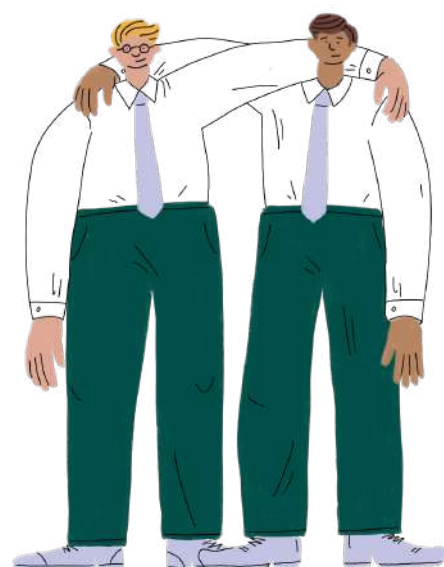
Performance bias



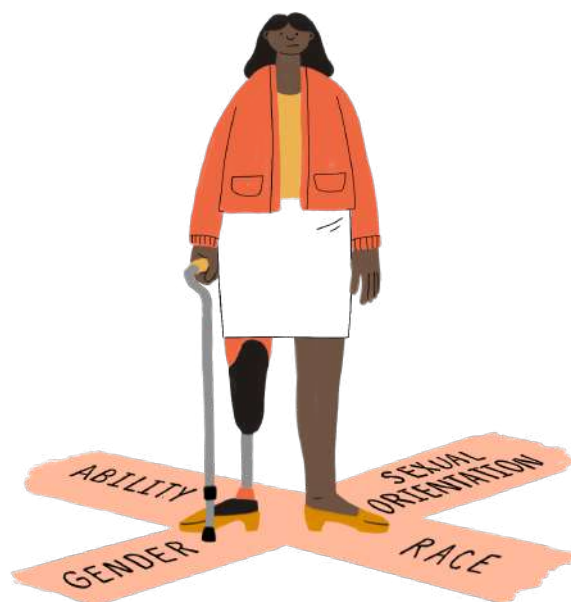
Maternal bias



Attribution bias



Affinity bias



Intersectionality



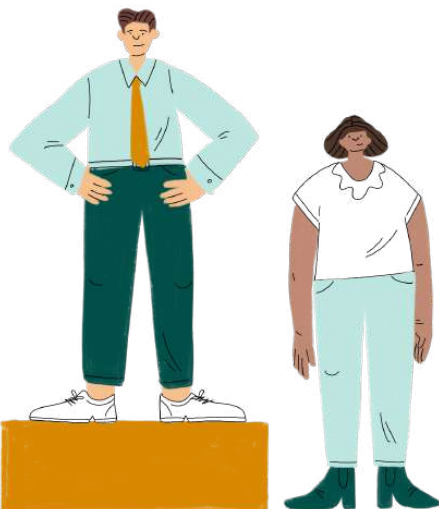
Watch the video:
"Introduction to the Common
Biases Women Experience"

COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



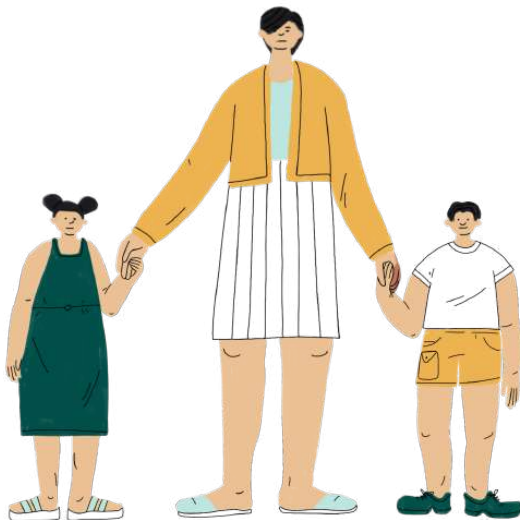
Likeability bias

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



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



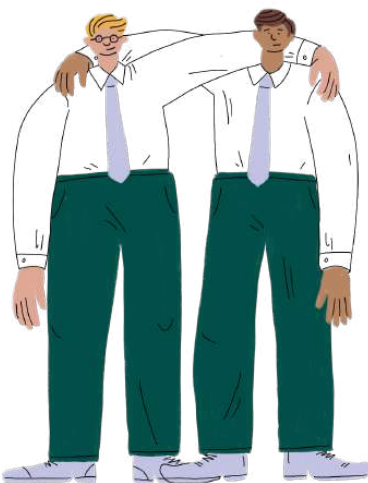
Maternal bias

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



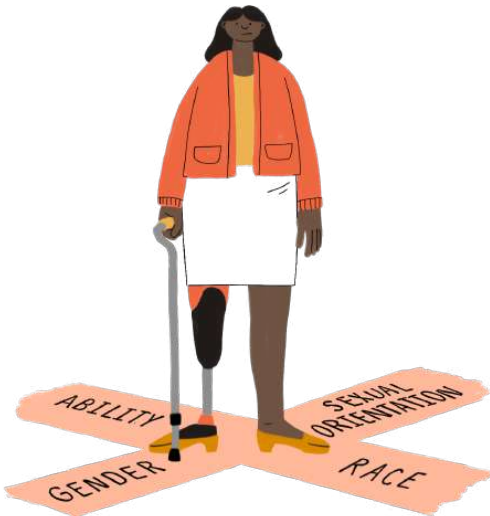
Attribution bias

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



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



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.

OVERVIEW: MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are comments and actions that demean or dismiss someone based on their gender, race, or other aspects of their identity.

Some groups of women experience them even more often:

- ▶ Black women are nearly 2.5x more likely than white women to hear someone at work express surprise about their language skills or other abilities
- ▶ Lesbian and bisexual women and women with disabilities are far more likely than other women to hear demeaning remarks about themselves or others like them



Icebreakers

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?

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.³²³

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?

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

For every 100 men hired as managers,
how many Latinas are hired?

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

For every 100 men hired as managers, how many Latinas are hired?

ANSWER

57.³²⁵

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?

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

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

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

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.

REVIEWS & PROMOTIONS

You're on a team doing performance reviews and notice that a lot of women get feedback on their speaking style.

WHY IT MATTERS

Criticisms like this can prevent qualified women from advancing, which hurts both them and your company.

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You're on a team doing performance reviews and notice that a lot of women get feedback on their speaking style.

WHAT TO DO

When you notice this pattern, point it out. Explain this is a common bias against women and **WHY IT HAPPENS**. Suggest that the group focus on the substance of what people say, not their speaking style.

Longer term, recommend that your company use standardized criteria for performance reviews, which will reduce subjective opinions. Consider recommending anti-bias training for employees involved in the review process. When people understand how bias impacts their decision-making, they are able to make more objective decisions.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Studies show that women often get negative feedback on their speaking style, while men do not.⁵² If women are confident and assertive, they can be criticized for speaking too loudly or often. But if they are quieter, they are more likely to be told that they need to speak more confidently and assertively.⁵³ For some groups of women, no matter how they speak, people project stereotypes onto them: Asian women are more likely to be criticized for being too quiet, while Black women and Latinas are more often labeled angry or loud.⁵⁴

Rooted in likeability bias

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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.³²⁸

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.³²⁹

Longer term, recommend that your company start using diverse slates—that is, include at least two women and underrepresented minorities in each candidate pool. This has been shown to reduce bias in hiring.³³⁰

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).³³¹

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."

Intersectional card

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.³³²

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.³³³

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.³³⁴

WHY IT HAPPENS

We tend to rate women lower than men, even if they have similar qualifications.³³⁵ 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%.³³⁶ The impact can be even worse 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.³³⁷

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.³³⁸

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

After an interview, a coworker gives a low rating to an appropriately dressed Black woman because “she did not look professional.”³⁴³

WHY IT MATTERS

Black women can miss out on jobs, promotions, and other opportunities because of arbitrary judgments about their appearance.³⁴⁴ 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.³⁴⁵

After an interview, a coworker gives a low rating to an appropriately dressed Black woman because “she did not look professional.”³⁴³

Intersectional card

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.³⁴⁶

WHY IT HAPPENS

People often view white men as more competent and leader-like than women or Black people.³⁴⁷ 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.³⁴⁸ This bias is so strong that Black women who wear natural hairstyles are less likely to be hired or promoted than those who do not.³⁴⁹

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.³⁵⁰ Since people tend to want to hire coworkers who are seen as likeable as well as competent, this could mean talented women are overlooked.³⁵¹

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.³⁵² When they seek higher pay, they act against that stereotype, and people can respond negatively.³⁵³

Women who negotiate are more likely than men who negotiate to receive feedback that they are “intimidating,” “too aggressive,” or “bossy.”³⁵⁴

Rooted in likeability bias

In a meeting about hiring, colleagues agree the most qualified candidate is a trans woman but worry about how clients will respond.

WHY IT MATTERS

It's inappropriate to speculate about how clients would respond to someone's gender identity, just as it would be about their religious faith or ethnicity.³⁵⁵ The discussion also harms company culture, because it could make it feel acceptable to discriminate against trans people.³⁵⁶

In a meeting about hiring, colleagues agree the most qualified candidate is a trans woman but worry about how clients will respond.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Remind the group that they all agreed that she was the most qualified candidate and push back against the idea that you should give up on the strongest hire. You can also point to some of her specific qualifications and experience that fit the criteria for the role.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Transgender people often experience workplace mistreatment, including difficulties getting hired and promoted. This mistreatment is often due in part to concerns that clients and other employees have negative attitudes toward transgender people.³⁵⁷ In this case, allowing such concerns to determine who gets hired results in discrimination against trans women.³⁵⁸

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.³⁵⁹ This can make it feel safer and more comfortable to hire people who are already known and liked by existing employees.³⁶⁰

Rooted in affinity bias

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.³⁶¹

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

Intersectional card

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.³⁶² 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.³⁶³

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 are microaggressions that perpetuate a stereotype that Black people aren't articulate or educated, which is not only insulting but can also lead to fewer career opportunities.³⁶⁴

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

Intersectional card

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 racist belief that Black people have worse language skills than whites.³⁶⁵ It also reflects a narrow view of what “articulate speech” sounds like by reinforcing the idea that to be considered smart or have your words valued, your speech must sound “white.”³⁶⁶ 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.³⁶⁷

Rooted in performance bias

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.³⁶⁸ 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.

Intersectional card

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.³⁶⁹ 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.³⁷⁰ 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.³⁷¹

Rooted in affinity bias

In a debrief after a round of job interviews, someone says of a candidate, “She seemed a little OCD.”

WHY IT MATTERS

When people casually misuse terms for real mental health issues, like OCD, it trivializes the conditions and the difficulties faced by those who have them.³⁷² If others with mental health issues hear comments like this, they may feel belittled.³⁷³ The comment could also unfairly harm this candidate’s chance of getting a job, as it’s a vague critique that’s not tied to a job requirement.

In a debrief after a round of job interviews, someone says of a candidate, “She seemed a little OCD.”

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Ask the speaker to explain their comment: “How does that relate to the job requirements?”³⁷⁴ Or let them know the language is problematic: “You might not know this, but casually calling someone ‘OCD’ can be harmful to people with mental health conditions.” Then explain **WHY IT MATTERS**. You can also ask HR about training that raises awareness of mental health issues and encourages employees to use more inclusive language.³⁷⁵

WHY IT HAPPENS

Many people are in the habit of using terms like “OCD” casually and inaccurately, rather than in reference to the real conditions they're meant to describe. This can be because they don't realize how likely it is that someone around them has a mental health condition—nearly 1 in 5 U.S. workers does, but many don't disclose this at work.³⁷⁶ It could also be because they haven't learned much about mental health issues.³⁷⁷

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.³⁷⁸ 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.³⁷⁹ 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

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 discrimination 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.

Intersectional card

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.³⁸⁰

WHY IT HAPPENS

Hijab-wearing women can suffer discrimination based on their ethnicity, religion, and gender combined.³⁸¹ Many Americans negatively judge the hijab, seeing it as a sign of backwardness, extremism, or of Muslim women's oppression.³⁸² 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.³⁸³ But this biased thinking can hurt hijab-wearing women, as they are less likely to be hired than women overall.³⁸⁴

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.³⁹⁰ 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.³⁸⁷ The false belief that everyone is evaluated fairly and objectively is known as the “myth of meritocracy.”³⁹¹

Rooted in performance bias

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...”