



LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

And #InspireInclusion in partnership with



International Women's Day



International Women's Day

LeanIn.Org and InternationalWomensDay.com are
working in collaboration to #InspireInclusion this
International Women's Day.

This content has been developed by LeanIn.Org and is
distributed by InternationalWomensDay.com.



MODERATOR GUIDE

Preparing to host your International
Women's Day event with Lean In

WHY WE'RE HERE

73% of women experience bias at work—yet less than a third of employees are able to recognize bias when they see it. Whether deliberate or unconscious, bias 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 difficult for companies to level the playing field.

Knowing that bias exists isn't enough.

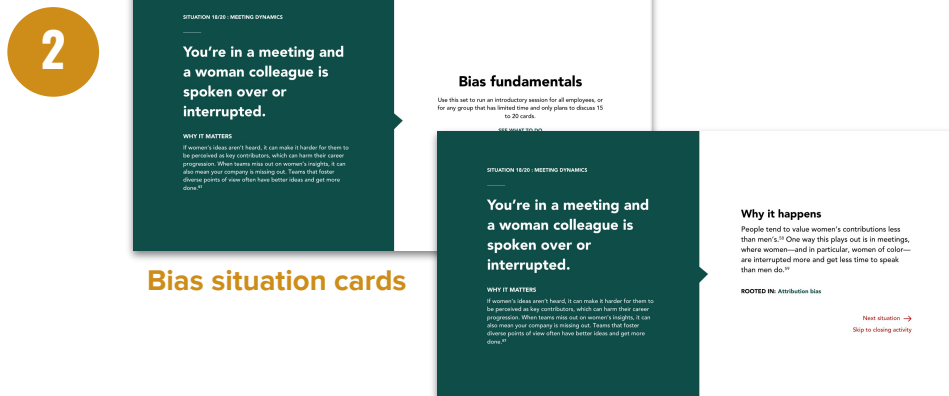
**This International Women's Day
and beyond, let's #InspireInclusion.**

Source: LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company, Women in the Workplace 2021



50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

Is a free program to empower all employees to identify and challenge bias head on.
The program is optimized for virtual workshops and consists of two parts:



The situation cards highlight almost 100 specific instances of workplace bias including the compounding biases women experience because of their race, sexual orientation, disability, or other aspects of their identity and are used as part of an interactive activity where small groups discuss the situations and learn from one another.

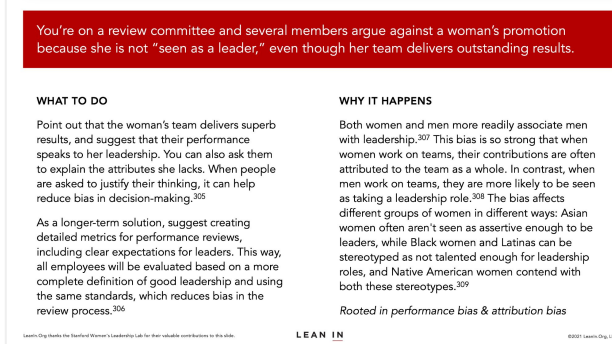
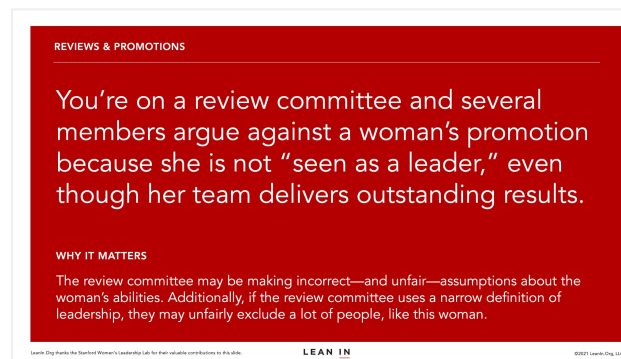
50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

On the front of each card:

- There's a specific example of how gender bias shows up in the workplace

On the back of each card:

- There's a research-backed explanation of what's behind the bias
- and recommendations for what employees can say or do in the moment to interrupt it



WHAT MAKES 50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS EFFECTIVE?

- ✓ Specific and solutions orientated
- ✓ Rooted in research
- ✓ Strong emphasis on intersectionality
- ✓ Designed to engage all employees

50 Ways has been used by thousands of organizations, including **Amazon**, **Fossil Group**, **PayPal**, **Momentive** and **The Wharton MBA Program**



95% of program participants are more committed to challenging bias

96% of managers feel better equipped to talk about bias with their teams

90% of program participants say they know what to do when they see women face bias at work

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT OBJECTIVES

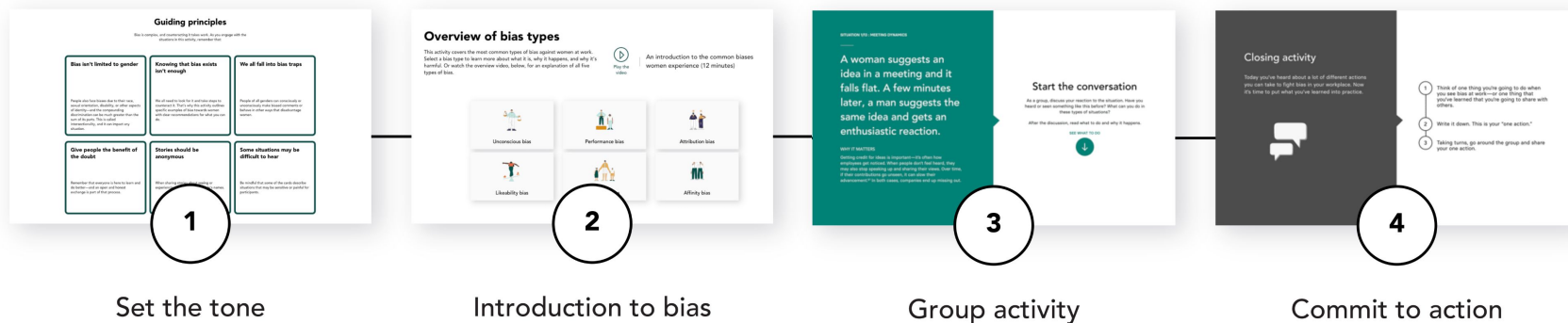
- ▶ Educate people on how to identify and challenge bias in the workplace using specific examples.
- ▶ Encourage solutions-oriented discussions and learn research-backed recommendations for what to do and why it matters to challenge bias when you see it.
- ▶ Commit to one action that participants will take to **#InspireInclusion** and create a more fair and equal workplace this year.

Note: This presentation works well for large mixed-gender groups; however, during the activity we recommend you split into small discussion groups of 6-8 people using virtual breakout rooms.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT AGENDA

Agenda for 60-90 minute workshop:



PREPARING TO HOST YOUR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

Step 1: Download and review these [Speaker Notes](#) for a step-by-step guide on how to moderate a 50 Ways workshop for International Women's Day

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS Speaker Notes LEAN IN

Overview

50 Ways to Fight Bias is a free digital program to empower all employees to identify and challenge bias head-on. The program is optimized for virtual workshops and consists of two parts: a short video that explains the most common types of biases that women face, and a digital card activity where participants discuss specific examples of bias in small groups, brainstorm solutions together, and learn research-backed recommendations for what to do.

This digital program includes 12 sets of digital cards curated for different audiences and workplace interactions—for example, we offer a set for managers and a set focused on bias in hiring and promotions.

Your role as moderator

To facilitate real conversations about biases women face at work, you will:

- Guide the group through the different parts of the activity
- Ask follow-up questions to encourage discussion and mutual learning
- Make sure everyone feels supported

Running the program virtually

50 Ways to Fight Bias can be run virtually using any platform you choose. Below are some best practices for engaging participants virtually.


- **Use breakout rooms:** For the group activity, you will divide participants into mixed gender groups of 4-8 people. Some platforms will allow you to assign participants to breakout rooms before the meeting, while others will only allow this while the meeting is in progress.
- **Share the link to the digital program with participants:** Before sending participants to breakout rooms, share the link to the digital program and the name of the set you have selected. This will allow all breakout rooms to engage with the situations you selected.
- **Use announcement features:** If your platform allows for it, keep participants on track and moving through the situations by using the announcement feature.
- **Leverage chat features for closing activity:** When facilitating the "One Action" activity, ask participants to share their One Action in the chat of the platform.

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50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS Speaker Notes LEAN IN

5. Choose a set

WHAT THEY'LL SEE




WHAT YOU'LL DO

Select the set of digital cards that participants will discuss in your workshop. You should have chosen which set you will use during your preparation. There are 12 sets of digital cards curated for different audiences and workplace interactions—for example, we offer a set for managers and a set focused on bias in hiring and promotions.

6. Warm up the room (~5-10 min)

WHAT THEY'LL SEE



WHAT YOU'LL DO

Challenge the group to guess the findings of some of the most surprising research on biases women face at work.

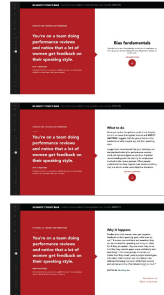
- 1 Read the prompt to the group.
- 2 Instruct the audience to guess the answer aloud or in the chat feature of your platform.
- 3 Click on the arrow button to reveal the answer.

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50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS Speaker Notes LEAN IN

7. Group activity (~30-60 min)

WHAT THEY'LL SEE



WHAT YOU'LL DO

- 1 Break participants into small groups and share the link to the digital program.
- 2 Ask each group to select one person to read the situation and **WHY IT MATTERS** aloud to the group.
- 3 Prompt participants to share with the group what they would do in this situation. You can use any of the following prompts (or your own):
 - Has anyone experienced something like this before?
 - How would you respond in this situation?
 - How do you think bias is involved here?
- 4 After the discussion, have participants read **WHAT TO DO** and **WHY IT HAPPENS** aloud to the group.
- 5 Groups will continue through as many of these situations as they can until there are only 10 minutes remaining in the session.

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PREPARING TO HOST YOUR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

Step 2: Attend an optional, virtual moderator training session hosted by LeanIn.Org

Our 75-minute virtual training will walk you through the program materials, give you an understanding of the program concepts, and provide tips for answering frequently asked questions so that you can feel confident about running Lean In's 50 Ways to Fight Bias program this International Women's Day.

[REGISTER HERE](#)



PREPARING TO HOST YOUR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

Step 3: Use the bias situations included in this presentation or choose your own

Designed to be flexible and tailored to suit your organization's needs, 50 Ways to Fight Bias features almost 100 digital cards that highlight specific instances of workplace bias.

This PDF presentation includes all of the Bias Fundamentals we think everyone should know and is ready to be used for your International Women's Day event (feel free to prioritize the situations that resonate most with your organization).

However, we also make it easy to run your workshop your way:

- Explore 12 digital sets curated for different audiences [here](#)
- If you don't see a set that works for you, you can always create your own [here](#)
- Access the program translated into six languages [here](#)



HOW TO USE 50 WAYS TO BREAK THE BIAS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION ALL YEAR ROUND

1 ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES	<p>Format: For large gatherings—either in-person or virtual—select a set of cards and use our virtual moderator guide to walk everyone through the activity. Break participants into smaller groups or virtual breakout rooms to discuss the situations and brainstorm solutions together.</p> <p>Set recommendations: Bias Fundamentals; Experiences of women of color; Bias in networking and mentoring</p>
2 TRAIN YOUR MANAGERS AND SENIOR LEADERS	<p>Format: Managers play a critical role in creating inclusive team cultures, yet only a third of managers challenge bias when it happens. Lead managers through the program to help them understand how they can challenge bias—and then ask them to bring the program to their teams. .</p> <p>Set recommendations: For Managers</p>
3 INTEGRATE INTO YOUR HIRING AND REVIEWS/PROMOTIONS PROCESS	<p>Set recommendations: Addressing the broken rung; Bias in hiring; Bias in reviews and promotions</p>
4 FACILITATE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS	<p>Set recommendation: Use one of our 12 sets that is relevant to your small group—or customize your own set.</p>



DISCOVER MORE FROM LEAN IN

Lean In's free diversity, equity, and inclusion training programs equip every employee with the knowledge and tools they need to create a more inclusive workplace culture.

CHALLENGE GENDER BIAS

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS



This digital workshop highlights almost 100 specific examples of workplace bias against women, and gives employees expert recommendations to push back.

[EXPLORE 50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS](#)

CREATE A CULTURE OF ALLYSHIP

ALLYSHIP AT WORK



This diversity training program guides employees to recognize their privilege and power to create change, and equips them with more than 50 specific actions they can take to show up as allies.

[EXPLORE ALLYSHIP AT WORK](#)

CREATE A NETWORK

CIRCLES FOR COMPANIES



Circles bring women together in small groups to talk about their experiences, build skills, share advice, and celebrate each other's wins.

[EXPLORE CIRCLES FOR COMPANIES](#)

Scan this QR code to sign up for more information on how our **FREE** programs can help you build a more inclusive workplace



**PRESENTATION STARTS ON THE
NEXT SLIDE**

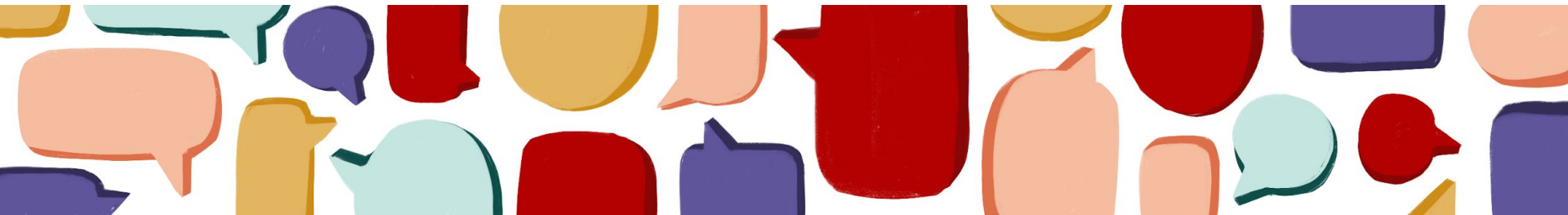


LEAN IN

50 WAYS TO FIGHT BIAS

An activity that helps you combat 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:



Dartmouth College
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KAPOR CENTER

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THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
The Power of Inclusive Leadership



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for asian pacific american women

UNIDOSUS
STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

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 bias against women 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



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

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

OVERVIEW: COMMON TYPES OF BIAS WOMEN FACE AT WORK

COMMON TYPES OF BIASES WOMEN FACE AT WORK



Unconscious bias



Performance bias



Attribution bias



Likeability bias



Maternal bias



Affinity bias



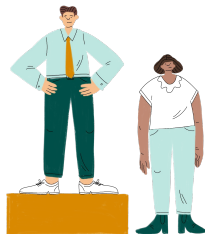
Watch the video: "Introduction to the Common Biases Women Experience"

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



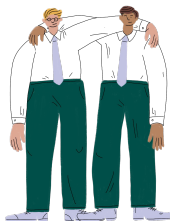
Maternal bias

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



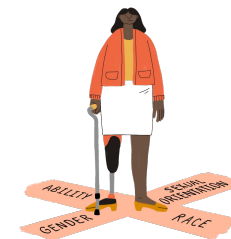
Attribution bias

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

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

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

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

Did you know?

Guess the answer as a group.

SEE THE ANSWER



ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

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

57. ²³²

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

Compared to men without disabilities, how much more likely are women with disabilities to hear demeaning remarks at work about themselves or others like them?

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

Did you know?

Guess the answer as a group.

SEE THE ANSWER



ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

Compared to men without disabilities, how much more likely are women with disabilities to hear demeaning remarks at work about themselves or others like them?

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

Nearly three times more likely. ³⁴⁹

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?

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

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?

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

Over 60% more likely. ²³¹

ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

What % of Black women have never had an informal interaction with a senior leader at their company?

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

Did you know?

Guess the answer as a group.

SEE THE ANSWER



ICEBREAKER: DID YOU KNOW?

50 WAYS WORKSHOP

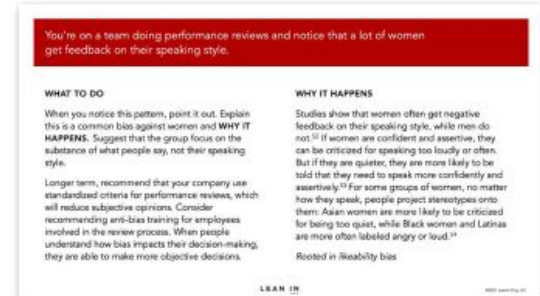
What % of Black women have never had an informal interaction with a senior leader at their company?

59%.⁵¹

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.



You often see biased behavior on your team, and your manager lets it go unchallenged.

WHY IT MATTERS

When employees have a manager who regularly challenges bias, they are more likely to think that everyone has an equal chance to advance—and women are almost twice as likely to think they have the same opportunities as their peers.¹²² Yet less than a third of employees say that managers at their company often challenge biased language and behavior when they hear or see it.¹²³

You often see biased behavior on your team, and your manager lets it go unchallenged.

WHAT TO DO

Talk to your manager about what you're seeing and the important role they play in setting workplace norms. You might say, "The team really respects you. If you step in when you hear these comments, it will push everyone to be more thoughtful." You can also talk to senior leadership at your company and explain **WHY IT MATTERS**.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your manager may not realize that certain comments and actions are biased. Less than half of managers have received anti-bias training.¹²⁴ When people understand how bias works, they are able to make fairer decisions and more clearly see bias when it crops up.¹²⁵ There are other possible reasons, too. Managers may not realize the critical role they can play in creating an inclusive workplace—or may not be bought into your company's diversity efforts.



You overhear a coworker confuse the names of the only two Black women in your company.⁶⁷⁰

WHY IT MATTERS

This mistake could diminish the women's value in the eyes of those who hear it. It can also signal disrespect for Black women at the company more broadly because, consciously or unconsciously, it is a form of stereotyping. And it can make the women feel that their names are not considered worth learning or that they are viewed as interchangeable.

You overhear a coworker confuse the names of the only two Black women in your company.⁶⁷⁰

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

You can correct the mistake in the moment: “You’re confusing Maya with Alicia. They’re very different! You should get to know them.”⁶⁷¹ If that doesn’t work and your coworker continues to confuse them, you might need to talk to your manager. Explain WHY IT MATTERS and suggest that someone speak to them about trying harder to get this right.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Decades of research show that people often find it harder to differentiate between people of another race than people of their own race.⁶⁷² This is called “own-race bias.”⁶⁷³ Research also suggests that people are less likely to remember employees with less power—and Black women (and people of color generally) are less likely to be viewed as powerful in their organizations.⁶⁷⁴

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



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.¹³¹

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.¹³²

Rooted in affinity bias

A coworker criticizes her manager, an Asian woman, for being “ruthless” and “abrasive.”

WHY IT MATTERS

The comment may negatively—and unfairly—influence other people’s perceptions of the woman’s leadership ability and character. The language is subjective and vague, which makes it more likely to be influenced by bias.

A coworker criticizes her manager, an Asian woman, for being “ruthless” and “abrasive.”

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Ask your colleague to reexamine the basis for her criticism: “Could you give some examples?” Depending on her response, you can push back and reframe the criticism in a positive light. For example, if she says her manager is ruthless because she talks a lot about metrics, you can point out that that doesn’t seem particularly ruthless, just goal oriented. You could also explain WHY IT HAPPENS.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Because women are expected to be nice and accommodating, they are often penalized when they assert themselves. Compared to other groups of women, Asian women—who are often stereotyped as overly accommodating—can experience an even stronger backlash when they act assertively.⁹²⁵

Rooted in likeability bias



In a private conversation, a coworker expresses resentment about “special treatment” for a woman with a disability who is allowed to work flexible hours.

WHY IT MATTERS

People with disabilities may need flexibility for many reasons—for example, to manage pain or for medical treatment. When those needs are questioned, they may feel undermined, stigmatized, and unhappy at work.¹⁴⁰ But when employees with disabilities are fully supported, they’re usually just as happy as their colleagues.¹⁴¹ This has a big impact, since 1 in 6 working-age Americans has a visible or invisible disability.¹⁴²

In a private conversation, a coworker expresses resentment about “special treatment” for a woman with a disability who is allowed to work flexible hours.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Tell your coworker **WHY IT MATTERS**. You can also talk to HR and ask them to clarify your company’s general policies on flexible work, so that people are less likely to view specific situations as unfair.¹⁴³

WHY IT HAPPENS

This can happen when people don’t understand that accommodations like flexibility aren’t “nice to have” for employees with disabilities—they’re essential. Additionally, because people with disabilities tend to be seen as less valuable and competent, coworkers may question whether they really need or deserve extra support.¹⁴⁴ This is especially true for women with disabilities, who face more bias and disrespect at work than almost any other group.¹⁴⁵



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.¹⁵⁷ 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.¹⁵⁸ 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.¹⁵⁹ 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.¹⁶⁰ *Rooted in affinity bias*



Your team holds regular happy hours after work for networking and bonding at a local bar. You realize that one colleague, a Muslim woman, has never come.

WHY IT MATTERS

Some Muslims avoid alcohol and may therefore feel uncomfortable in a bar.²²⁹ If most networking events are held in bars, it means they miss out on the team bonding that can lead to career opportunities.²³⁰ It can also send a message that employees who don't drink—and other groups like caregivers who need to be home soon after work—are not considered when social events are planned.²³¹

Your team holds regular happy hours after work for networking and bonding at a local bar. You realize that one colleague, a Muslim woman, has never come.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Talk to your team leader and explain **WHY IT MATTERS**. Encourage them to plan a wide range of events that leave out as few people as possible. For example, if your team goes out every week to a bar, consider moving it to a restaurant sometimes. Move a few evening events to lunchtime so working parents can join. And make the changes with sensitivity, so no one gets blamed. If happy hours are simply canceled, it may create bad feelings among some employees.²³²

WHY IT HAPPENS

Many teams—and companies—don't realize how much thoughtfulness is needed to ensure that work events are inclusive to as many employees as possible. This might happen because teams fall into the habit of replicating bonding events that have been offered for decades—many of which were designed for less diverse and inclusive workplaces.



Before an event, your manager says to a Latina, "Don't forget there's a dress code." He does not give this reminder to others on your team.

WHY IT MATTERS

This comment could adversely impact how others view your Latina colleague, especially as it comes from her manager. It could also add to the pressure felt by many Latinas to present themselves with extreme care to fit a narrow definition of professional attire.⁹¹⁰ Most Latinas in corporate America say that they style their hair and makeup conservatively (87%) and dress conservatively (84%) to fit in at work.⁹¹¹

Before an event, your manager says to a Latina, "Don't forget there's a dress code." He does not give this reminder to others on your team.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Push back on the comment. You can do it lightly: "I think [Name] always looks well put together." Or privately ask your manager to explain why they directed that comment at her, rather than everyone. You can also explain WHY IT MATTERS.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your manager may believe common stereotypes about what Latinas like to wear, such as large earrings, bright colors, or tight clothes.⁹¹² They may be unaware that Latinas are a diverse group with a wide range of style preferences. Your manager is also probably influenced by corporate norms for dress in the U.S., which encourage us to think that certain styles typical of white businessmen, such as dark colors and button-down shirts, are the most tasteful and appropriate, even though they have no impact on the way someone does their job.⁹¹³



You offer the rising star on your team a stretch assignment, and she says she doesn't feel qualified to take it on.

WHY IT MATTERS

When women turn down opportunities they're qualified for because of self-doubt, they miss out—and your company isn't able to fully leverage their talents.

You offer the rising star on your team a stretch assignment, and she says she doesn't feel qualified to take it on.

WHAT TO DO

Let her know that you believe in her. Remind her she is being offered the opportunity because of her strong performance, not as a favor. You can also reassure her that how she's feeling is perfectly understandable: "It's normal for anyone to be nervous about taking on a bigger role. And women get sent signals that they're not good enough. It's hard not to internalize them."

WHY IT HAPPENS

Women can be prone to more self-doubt than men, and it's not because they're missing a special confidence gene.¹⁹⁶ Because we tend to underestimate women's performance, women often need to work harder to prove they're capable. And they are more likely to be passed over for promotions and stretch assignments. This bias is so pervasive that women often underestimate their own performance and are more likely than men to attribute their failures to lack of ability.¹⁹⁷

Rooted in performance bias



Your coworker introduces a colleague who uses the pronouns “they” and “them” to a client by saying “This is Jamie. She’s going to walk you through the project.”

WHY IT MATTERS

This puts Jamie in a tough position. Either they start their relationship with the client by correcting a coworker or they accept being referred to with the wrong pronoun. This could make them feel nervous and awkward while interacting with the client, and it also conveys disrespect to any trans or nonbinary people present.⁶⁴⁷

Your coworker introduces a colleague who uses the pronouns “they” and “them” to a client by saying “This is Jamie. She’s going to walk you through the project.”

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Wait a few seconds and see if your mistaken coworker corrects themselves. If they don't, jump in and say, “A quick but important correction before [Name] gets started—[Name] uses they/them pronouns.” Experts recommend doing this because it can be less confrontational and awkward for you to say this than for your misgendered colleague to correct the mistake themselves. By speaking up, you add legitimacy to their chosen pronouns. In addition, you could speak privately to your mistaken colleague later about WHY IT MATTERS.

WHY IT HAPPENS

It’s common for LGBTQ+ people to face the painful experience of being misgendered or referred to with words that don’t align with their gender identity.⁶⁴⁸ This often happens accidentally or thoughtlessly, but it can also happen due to prejudice.⁶⁴⁹



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.⁶⁴¹ If others with mental health issues hear comments like this, they may feel belittled.⁶⁴² 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?”⁶⁴³ 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.⁶⁴⁴

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.⁶⁴⁵ It could also be because they haven't learned much about mental health issues.⁶⁴⁶



A Native American colleague says in a team meeting that she didn't celebrate Thanksgiving. Another colleague replies, "That's not very American of you."

WHY IT MATTERS

For many people, Thanksgiving represents joy, gratitude, and coming together as family. But for Native Americans, Thanksgiving can be a reminder that many of their ancestors were killed when Europeans arrived in North America.⁶⁶³ In light of this, your colleague's response could feel hurtful or judgmental. It also puts the burden on your Native American coworker to defend herself.

A Native American colleague says in a team meeting that she didn't celebrate Thanksgiving. Another colleague replies, "That's not very American of you."

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

You could jump in on your coworker's behalf. Say, "For some people, holidays like Thanksgiving are reminders of some of the worst parts of our history, rather than the best." You might also explain **WHY IT MATTERS**.

WHY IT HAPPENS

The comment may also reflect an assumption that Native Americans should try to fit in with mainstream U.S. culture.⁶⁶⁴ It also likely reflects a lack of knowledge. Most Americans learn history from the viewpoint of Americans with European ancestry, not from a Native American perspective. For example, many learn in school that Plymouth settlers and Wampanoag Indians held the first Thanksgiving in 1621. But few learn that just 16 years later, Plymouth settlers massacred hundreds of Native Americans.⁶⁶⁵



Your manager, who is a man, often meets the men on his team for dinner or drinks—but rarely meets with the women outside of work.

WHY IT MATTERS

Friendships at work are valuable. Important relationship building and information sharing can happen over coffee or pizza. When people are routinely excluded from outings like these, they can miss out. If it's a manager making arrangements, it's especially problematic—part of their responsibility is to make sure the whole team has equal access to networking opportunities.

Your manager, who is a man, often meets the men on his team for dinner or drinks—but rarely meets with the women outside of work.

WHAT TO DO

This is your manager, so you have standing to raise this with him. Say that you've noticed he goes for drinks with men on the team more than women. Explain **WHY IT MATTERS**. You can also offer solutions: if he's uncomfortable going to dinner with women, suggest that he meet everyone for breakfast or lunch.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your manager may feel more comfortable with men because of affinity bias, which draws us toward people like ourselves.⁶⁵⁶ Or he may be nervous for other reasons: some men are wary of spending time with women colleagues outside of work for fear of seeming inappropriate.

Rooted in affinity bias



A coworker complains that their team is switching their video call software to accommodate a visually impaired woman on the team.

WHY IT MATTERS

If employees with disabilities hear this comment, they may feel as though they aren't valued and don't belong.⁶⁵⁷ That could affect more people than you realize, since 1 in 6 working-age Americans has a visible or invisible disability.⁶⁵⁸ And it has a big impact—employees with disabilities are often less happy at work than their colleagues, but that gap goes away when workplaces are accommodating and inclusive.⁶⁵⁹

A coworker complains that their team is switching their video call software to accommodate a visually impaired woman on the team.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Speak up on behalf of your visually impaired colleague. Say you think it's reasonable for all employees to have the software they need to do their job. Remind your coworkers that if this woman isn't able to fully participate in video calls, the team won't get the full benefit of her input. You could also ask your HR team to offer inclusion trainings that explicitly address disability, which can help employees build empathy.⁶⁶⁰

WHY IT HAPPENS

People with disabilities face particularly strong negative biases.⁶⁶¹ Compared to most other groups, including men with disabilities, women with disabilities are more likely to be underestimated and devalued in the workplace—and this sets the stage for them to be denied the support they need to do their jobs effectively.⁶⁶²



In a meeting about hiring for a senior role that requires travel, someone questions whether a Latina would want to be away from her family that much.

WHY IT MATTERS

The question is based on biased assumptions about this employee's family commitments and ambition. It could mean she loses a major opportunity that she's qualified for and that your company misses out on her talents.

In a meeting about hiring for a senior role that requires travel, someone questions whether a Latina would want to be away from her family that much.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Ask your co-worker, “What makes you think that?”

This may make them realize their comment isn’t based on hard evidence. Explain WHY IT HAPPENS Latinas are often stereotyped as having lots of kids or not being career-oriented.⁸³⁶ You can also recommend asking all of the candidates how they feel about the travel requirements. Let them speak for themselves.

WHY IT HAPPENS

This comment may be influenced by several stereotypes about Latinas: that they aren’t ambitious in their careers, they usually have a lot of children, they prioritize family more than other groups do, and they’re more naturally suited to junior roles.⁸³⁷ All of these preconceptions can keep Latinas out of the senior roles they’re qualified for.



When reviewing candidates for promotion to a senior role, a member of the committee comments that an Asian woman “doesn't seem like a leader.”

WHY IT MATTERS

If this statement isn't supported by any evidence, it's unfair to the woman and reinforces a common bias against Asian women as leaders. It could cause your colleague to miss out on a job opportunity and your company to miss out on a talented leader.

When reviewing candidates for promotion to a senior role, a member of the committee comments that an Asian woman "doesn't seem like a leader."

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Ask your colleague, "What leadership traits do you think she's missing?" Asking someone to give evidence for their thinking can prompt them to question any biased assumptions. If you know examples of her leadership, mention them. To help reduce bias in future promotions, talk to your HR team about the importance of consistently using a list of clear criteria to assess all candidates.²⁴³

WHY IT HAPPENS

When people make vague comments like "doesn't seem like a leader," they are often drawing on gut feelings rather than evidence from the person's experience or skill set. This vagueness opens the door to bias.²⁴⁴ The comment may also be rooted in the false stereotype that Asian American women are submissive and lack the communication skills for leadership roles.²⁴⁵

A coworker asks an openly bisexual colleague why she's participating in the company's LGBTQ+ resource group when she's dating a man.

WHY IT MATTERS

This question could make your bisexual colleague feel like she isn't welcome in LGBTQ+ spaces. It may imply that she's actually heterosexual, undermining her identity and suggesting she isn't being truthful about herself.

A coworker asks an openly bisexual colleague why she's participating in the company's LGBTQ+ resource group when she's dating a man.

Intersectional card

WHAT TO DO

Show your support by saying you're glad that she's attending the meeting. You may want to ask the offending coworker, "Why wouldn't she attend, given that she's bisexual?" You could also refer to WHY IT MATTERS.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Research shows that bisexual people often have their sexuality cast into doubt. This happens in part because people tend to feel comfortable placing others into more clearly defined categories, like "straight" or "gay." Sometimes people dismiss bisexual people as simply confused.⁹⁴² Today, as more millennial and Gen Z women come out as bisexual at work, biphobia is also on the rise.⁹⁴³



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

To truly include women means to openly embrace their diversity of race, age, ability, faith, body image, and how they identify. This International Women's Day and beyond, let's all **#InspireInclusion**.

CLOSING ACTIVITY: ONE ACTION

5–10 minutes

Take a moment to think through an action you will commit to take after today's workshop. Then take turns going around the room to share.

My One Action to
#InspireInclusion in 2024 is...

You can also join the conversation and share your commitment on social media using the hashtags **#InspireInclusion** and **#IWD2024**

Learn More

If you enjoyed this workshop, scan this QR code to hear more from LeanIn.Org.

- Explore more of Lean In's 50 Ways to Fight Bias program
- Learn more about their other original research and other programs to help create more inclusive workplaces.



Together, we can all help create an equal
and inclusive world.

#InspireInclusion