

# What is Unconscious bias?



You find some examples for unconscious bias:

## Halo/Horn effect

..occurs when one noticeable trait of a person leads you to make a judgement about their whole personality, without considering all relevant information objectively. This bias can work in a negative way (horn effect) or, conversely, in a positive way (halo effect) - when a dominant strength shapes the overall impression too positively.

## Gender bias

..refers to systematic distortion effects that arise from gender-related stereotyping and prejudice.

Gender Bias occur not only in every day communication and interaction, but also science and research, for instance, in the assessment of career paths and research achievements.

An unconscious bias is a distortion in information processing that acts as a mental shortcut to facilitate decision-making.

Such distortions can subconsciously influence our thinking processes, leading to errors in decision-making and, consequently, to disadvantages.

In selection processes, this can lead to candidates' potential being overlooked or to the over- or underestimation of candidates' skills and accomplishments.

## Authority bias

..is the tendency to trust the opinions and judgements of authority figures more than those of others, and to challenge them less critically. There is a tendency to be particularly influence by those in positions of authority.

However, authority figures can also be susceptible to biases and cognitive distortions themselves.

## Age bias

..describes the phenomenon that people are subjected to prejudice and discrimination because of their age.

Examples include stereotypes suggesting that older scientists are less innovative and creative, while younger scientists are assumed to have fewer leadership skills due to their lack of experience.

## Motherhood Penalty

*"She has small children - will she be able to manage?"*

Due to gender-related stereotypes, scientists with children, particularly women, are often assumed to have lower availability. As a result, they receive fewer promotion opportunities and chances for advancement compared to childless scientists or male scientists with children. These disadvantages slow career progression, lead to income gaps compared to peer groups, and reduce the visibility of mothers in leadership positions.

## Affinity bias

*"Birds of a feather flock together."*

..describes the unconscious tendency to feel a preference for people who are similar to ourselves, for example, in their behavior, experience, or personal characteristics, such as having studied or conducted research at the same university.

## Confirmation bias

..describes the tendency to focus on information that supports what you already believe, while questioning or overlooking information that challenges it.

In recruitment or appointment procedures, this can result in unfair evaluations. For example, if committee members may pay attention only to evidence that reinforces that first impression.

## Salience bias

..refers to the prominence or noticeable quality of information. Striking features or content attract particular attention, while other equally relevant information tends to be overlooked.

When making decisions, there is a tendency to focus disproportionately on prominent or emotionally charged information.

## Group effects

..occur when the group's wish for consensus discourages members from critically reflecting, questioning decisions, or considering alternative options.

Pressure to conform, time constraints, and stress can make these effects stronger and influence the decision-making process.