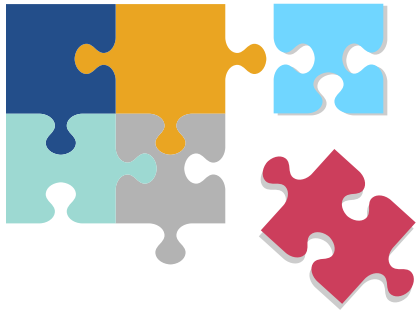# Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

Recognizing Unconscious Biases

Human minds are efficient because they develop shortcuts that operate below our conscious decision making. Our unconscious minds group things together and impose patterns, but these shortcuts can also be harmful. These automatic decisions can play out as biases and stereotypes that cause us to act unfairly toward others. Our conscious and rational decision making can be sabotaged by our unconscious biases and stereotypes.

What assumptions do you make about people based on appearance, height, weight, accent, age, disability, religion, race, gender, tattoos, name, military status, clothes, car, shoes, etc.?

Types of Unconscious Bias

Researchers have identified more than 150 types of unconscious bias.[1,2] Here are a few examples that can affect our workplace decision making.

Affinity Bias:
Favoring people like ourselves (e.g., hiring a candidate that is like you or others at the company)

Confirmation Bias:
Only seeking information that confirms preexisting beliefs or assumptions (e.g., based on your preconceptions about what types of people make the best engineers, you attribute the success of some candidates to hard work and intellect and the success of others to luck and special treatment)

Conformity Bias (Groupthink):
Making decisions based on what your peers think or to gain their approval (e.g., you think others on the hiring committee are passing over the best candidate for the job but you don't speak up because you are new and want to fit in)

The Halo Effect:
Assuming a person that meets one job requirement will have skills in all the other required areas (e.g., hiring a candidate who interned at a prestigious company but has the weakest qualifications compared to other applicants)

The Horns Effect:
Assuming a person who has one negative quality will not perform in other areas (e.g., dismissing a candidate with many strong qualifications because they had a low college GPA)

Name Bias:
Preferring or discriminating against people based on their name (e.g., you worry a candidate with a foreign-sounding name will not fit in or be good with customers)
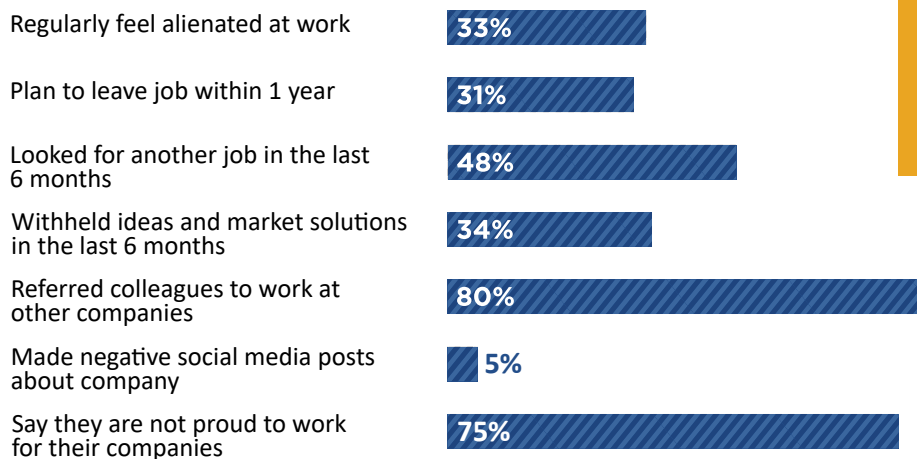
Gender Bias:
Preferring or discriminating against one gender over another (e.g., you dislike a female candidate because you think of the position as a man's job)

Bias Blind Spot:
Thinking bias only shapes other peoples' decisions but not your own (e.g., you know bias affects how other organizations hire and promote but do not recognize such bias in your organization)

Employees who perceive Bias in the Workplace[4]

Regularly feel alienated at work	33%
Plan to leave job within 1 year	31%
Looked for another job in the last 6 months	48%
Withheld ideas and market solutions in the last 6 months	34%
Referred colleagues to work at other companies	80%
Made negative social media posts about company	5%
Say they are not proud to work for their companies	75%

Where Does Bias Hurt Most?
Bias often occurs in hiring and promotion where it can have major career impacts.[3]

A survey of 3,000 workers in large organizations asked:
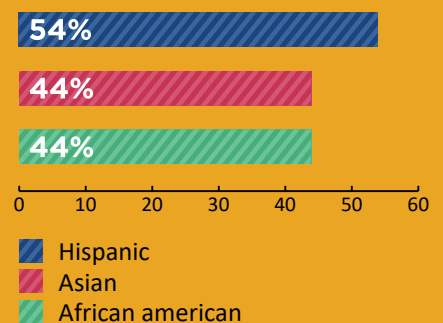**Do you feel you've experienced bias at least once a month in the last year?[5]**

42% Women

38% Men

56% LGBTQ

54% People with Disabilities

53% Military

54% Hispanic
44% Asian
44% African american

0 10 20 30 40 50 60

■ Hispanic
■ Asian
■ African american

[1] Bendick Jr, M., & Nunes, A. P. (2013). Developing the research basis for controlling bias in hiring. *Journal of Social Issues, 68,* 238-262.

[2] Cooper, T. & Horn, E. (2019). *The bias barrier: Allyships, inclusion, and everyday behaviors.* Deloitte. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-deloitte-inclusion-survey-research-the-bias-barrier.pdf

[3] Desjardins, J. (2021, August 26). Every single cognitive bias in one infographic. *Visual Capitalist.* https://www.visualcapitalist.com/every-single-cognitive-bias/

[4] Hewlett, S. A., Rashid, R., & Sherbin, L. (2017). *Disrupt bias: Drive value.* COQUAL. https://coqual.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CoqualDisruptBiasDriveValue090720-1.pdf

[5] McCormick, H. (2015). *The real effects of unconscious bias in the workplace.* UNC Executive Development, Kenan-Flagler Business School.

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