

How to deal with gender bias in the workplace

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Bias is prevalent in all facets of our lives. Our brains are wired to categorize things that we find to make sense of the complicated world that surrounds us. Biases, however, may cause us to develop biases towards others, thereby allowing for the creation of unacceptable differences between different populations.

Gender bias is the tendency to prefer one gender over another.

This is a form of unconscious bias, or implicit bias, which occurs when one individual unconsciously assigns to another person or group of people certain attitudes and stereotypes. These habits are attributed to influence how the person understands and interacts with others.

Below are some statistics to illustrate the role gender bias plays in the workplace:

- 42% of women experience gender discrimination at work. (Kim Parker & Cary Funk, 2017, 'Gender discrimination comes in many forms for today's working women')
- According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in 2017, 25,000 sex-based discrimination claims were filed. {Sex-Based Charges (Charges filed with EEOC) FY 1997 - FY 2019}
- According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in 2018, victims of sex-based discrimination received more than \$148M in payouts from the complaints. {Sex-Based Charges (Charges filed with EEOC) FY 1997 - FY 2019}
- 5 of the 14 top barriers women face in the workplace are related to discrimination and gender bias. (Women in business and management: gaining momentum/ International Labour Office. Geneva: ILO, 2015)
- Both men and women are twice as likely to hire a male candidate. (Ernesto Reuben, Paola Sapienza, & Luigi Zingales, 2014, 'How stereotypes impair women's careers in science')
- Women are 79 times more likely to be hired when there are at least two female candidates in the finalist pool. (Stefanie K. Johnson, David R. Hekman & Elsa T. Chan, 2016, 'If There's Only One Woman in Your Candidate Pool, There's Statistically No Chance She'll Be Hired')
- Women are 25-46% more likely to be hired with blind applications or auditions. (Claire Cain Miller, 2016, 'Is blind hiring the best?')
- Half of the men believe women are well-represented at their company, when 90% of senior leaders are men. (McKinsey & Company, 2019, 'Women in the Workplace 2019')
- Men view unconscious bias as the number one barrier women face in their careers. (ILO, 2017, 'Breaking barriers: Unconscious gender bias in the workplace')
- 34% of men and women believe male executives are better at risk assessment. (Pew Research Center, 2015, 'Women and Leadership')
- Men are 30% more likely to obtain managerial roles. (McKinsey & Company, 2019, 'Women in

the Workplace 2019’)

- Women and men ask for pay raise at the same rate. (Benjamin Artz , Amanda Goodall & Andrew J. Oswald, 2018, ‘Research: Women Ask for Raises as Often as Men, but Are Less Likely to Get Them’)
- Women receive pay raises 5% less often. (Benjamin Artz , Amanda Goodall & Andrew J. Oswald, 2018, ‘Research: Women Ask for Raises as Often as Men, but Are Less Likely to Get Them’)
- 23% of CEOs are women. (McKinsey & Company, 2019, ‘Women in the Workplace 2019’)
- 4% of C-Suite roles are held by women of colour. (McKinsey & Company, 2019, ‘Women in the Workplace 2019’)
- 6.6% of CEOs at Fortune 500 companies are women. (Claire Zillman, 2019, ‘The Fortune 500 Has More Female CEOs Than Ever Before’)
- 0.2% of CEOs at Fortune 500 companies are women of colour. (Dion Rabouin, 2019, ‘Only 1 Fortune 500 company is headed by a woman of colour’)

To fight bias in the workplace, here are some ways:

1. Implement gender-neutral recruitment processes

Standardize interviews, anonymize resumes and use blind evaluation processes.

Unilever and Vodafone have found that blind evaluation procedures — including work sample tests and neuroscientific tests of an applicant’s aptitude and skills — have helped them recruit from more diverse backgrounds.

1. Promote a culture of meritocracy

Promote a culture where great ideas come from all levels, genders and races and all voices are welcome and respected around the table.

1. Provide training on unconscious bias

Educate employees about their own unconscious bias. Although this does not guarantee that attitudes will change, it does help employees to understand their biases and to work towards eliminating them.

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