



# TYPES OF IMPLICIT BIASES IN THE WORKPLACE

Implicit biases can take a variety of forms. Here are some more specific terms and examples to be aware of.

## Affinity Bias

**Definition:** This bias occurs when someone favors another person because they share similarities with them and sometimes see themselves in that person.

**Example:**

- For instance, a male manager may choose another male for a position simply because he went to the same university and is pursuing a role that the manager held at that age.

## Beauty Bias

**Definition:** This bias occurs when employees form conclusions or opinions about others based on their appearance. As a result, they may favor certain employees over others due to their looks rather than their skills, experience or work performance.

**Example:**

- If a manager has a choice between two candidates, beauty bias might prompt them to choose the more attractive person—even if they’re less qualified.

## Confirmation Bias

**Definition:** Confirmation bias occurs in two stages. First, you form an initial opinion about a person. Then, your brain starts searching for evidence to support this judgment or belief. The problem is that while you’re looking for confirmation, it’s all too easy to overlook other evidence that contradicts your original belief. Marketing departments are particularly prone to confirmation bias.

**Example:**

- Imagine that one of your employees has a gut feeling that customers want a specific new product. Instead of looking at the market research data objectively—which shows that customers actually want a new feature added to an existing product—the employee gives in to confirmation bias and cherry-picks the data points that support their idea.

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# TYPES OF IMPLICIT BIASES (CONT.)

## Types of Implicit Biases, Continued

### Conformity Bias

**Definition:** Conformity bias is an individual's desire to agree with anything a group of people say, despite their own opinions or judgments. This often keeps other employees from voicing their own thoughts or having unique opinions that differ from the group.

**Example:**

- For instance, during a meeting to brainstorm new marketing campaigns, leadership members may provide their own ideas and encourage others to agree with them. If an employee disagrees or tries to change their original suggestions, the leadership team disapproves and turns down the ideas in front of all the meeting attendees. This can cause other employees to feel hesitant about expressing their own thoughts.

### Gender Bias

**Definition:** This bias occurs when a person has a stereotypical belief about someone based solely on their gender. Traditionally, workplace gender bias works against female employees.

**Examples:**

- If a manager is biased in favor of men, they might:
  - ⇒ Defer to male employees' opinions
  - ⇒ Give men preference when assigning tasks
  - ⇒ Assign caretaking tasks, such as setting out snacks for meetings, to women
  - ⇒ On a larger scale, biased managers may choose not to promote a new mother to a more demanding role because they fear the woman won't have the necessary time or energy to handle both responsibilities.
- This type of bias can also affect male employees. Managers might overlook men for "soft" tasks and projects or refuse to give them parental leave to care for a new child.

Source: [go.umd.edu/5biases](http://go.umd.edu/5biases)

**While this handout offers a sampling of biases that can affect your behavior, we invite you to learn more about 50 cognitive biases that may be influencing you unconsciously. Awareness of these biases can lead to meaningful change. Visit: [go.umd.edu/50biases](http://go.umd.edu/50biases)**