

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white blouse and a grey cardigan, is smiling and gesturing with her hands. She is standing in front of a large window with a view of a city. The image has a blue overlay on the right side where the text is located.

NEOED

7 TYPES OF BIAS

*That Can Negatively
Impact Your Workforce*



BIASED THINKING

Biased forms of thinking can have a negative impact on how employees from all walks of life are treated or feel about their work environment. Because of this, it is crucial that leaders and employees alike educate themselves on the various forms of bias, learn to recognize their own biased thinking, and reflect on those thoughts to change their behavior for the better in the future.

Not all biased thinking is inherently bad. Our brains are set up to make quick and efficient decisions based on our past experiences or things we've learned (or think we've learned). This quick form of mental processing doesn't always have to do with judging another person -- it could simply help save you time by choosing one option over another because it resulted favorably for you in the past.

These same forms of processing can cause people to judge irrelevant criteria that has nothing to do with the decision, however, can lead to unfair treatment or discrimination of others.

We will explain the various types of bias that can have an impact on employee experience. Then we will provide several examples of scenarios that illustrate where one or more of the types of biased thinking created an unfortunate or unlawful situation.

*80% of employees
who experience workplace bias
would not recommend friends
or family to their employer.*

- Impact Group HR study

7 TYPES OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

1. CONFIRMATION BIAS

Confirmation bias describes when you subconsciously look for evidence to confirm your own biased thinking without considering anything that might debunk it. This solidifies your stance on a subject even when it may not be based in truth.

2. RECENCY BIAS

Recency bias is when a recent experience impacts your thought process. If, for example, an employee delivered a stellar presentation last week despite underperforming the rest of the year, you might still rank them above another stronger employee.

3. AFFINITY (“LIKE ME”) BIAS

When you see traits in others that remind you of yourself, you are more likely to treat that person better than someone else that does not share those common attributes or interests with you. That means, for example, if an employee has a similar work history or education to yours, you might favor them over someone else.

4. GENDER BIAS

Gender bias is the treatment of individuals differently based on their gender. Studies have shown that women tend to be judged more harshly based on their personalities rather than their ability to do the job -- even by other women.

5. “HALO” OR “HORNS” EFFECT

“Halo” or “horns” effect refers to something, either positive (halo) or negative (horns) that sticks out in your mind about someone for the long run. If you remember one particular positive or negative experience with the person above all else, it can cause you either to treat that person more favorably or less favorably.

6. IDIOSYNCRATIC RATER EFFECT

This bias effect comes from judging others' performance based on your own beliefs of what makes “good” or “bad” performance. In other words, your unique perspective -- of what constitutes high skill, how much of the skill you think you have, how tough you generally grade others, etc. -- influences your measurement of others. According to Harvard Business Review, 61% of all performance review data collected is tainted by this effect.

7. STEREOTYPE BIAS

The most common type of bias, called stereotyping, is when someone associates a person's name, age, race/ethnicity, or any other personally identifiable information with specific traits that may either be positive or negative. These biases can come from previous experience, upbringing, or portrayals in the media or society at large.



*Those who perceive bias in their workplace are **3x more likely** to be actively searching for work than those who do not.*

– Center for Talent Innovation

7 BIASED BRAIN SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 1

Steven recently turned in a project that received excellent marks not only from his manager, Jessica, but also from many other members of the larger organization. Before this, Steven was regularly missing deadlines and turning in work with poor attention to detail. Still, Jessica ranked his performance favorably in his annual review.

How does Jessica's ranking of Steven demonstrate bias?

Jessica's thought process was tainted by **recency bias**. Despite struggling all year, Steven did well on a project he turned in recently, which is top of mind for Jessica. This caused her to rate his overall performance higher than it should have been.



The taller a man is, the more likely he is to make a higher salary than his shorter counterparts.

– Journal of Human Capital

SCENARIO 2

New employee William, who is 6'3, is being introduced to his other coworkers by Savitha. When Savitha introduces William to Hector, Hector comments that he hopes William is on his team for the upcoming company picnic olympics.

Why might Hector's comment be an example of biased thinking?

Hector just met William, so therefore he has zero insight into what William's athletic interests or abilities are. He is making a snap judgment that William must be athletic, likely just because William is tall. Even though this might be considered to be a "positive **stereotype**," it can still make people uncomfortable or put undue pressure on them.

SCENARIO 3

Paulina's team has been tasked with creating a fun video to share with the entire organization. Paulina puts her youngest team member, Nima, who is in his 20s, in charge of the project. Nima then asks Linda, who is in her 50s, for help because she produces videos in her free time outside of work.

How might have Paulina done a better job of assigning the project?

Paulina immediately assumed that Nima would either be the best or most interested in leading the project because he is the youngest. Not only might have Paulina set the team up for less success, she may have hurt Linda's feelings in the process by not considering her for the project due to her age (another common **stereotype**).

SCENARIO 4

After learning that Andre went to the same university as he did, and that Emily went to their rival school, Mitchell begins to work more closely with Andre on projects over Emily.

How is this an example of biased thinking?

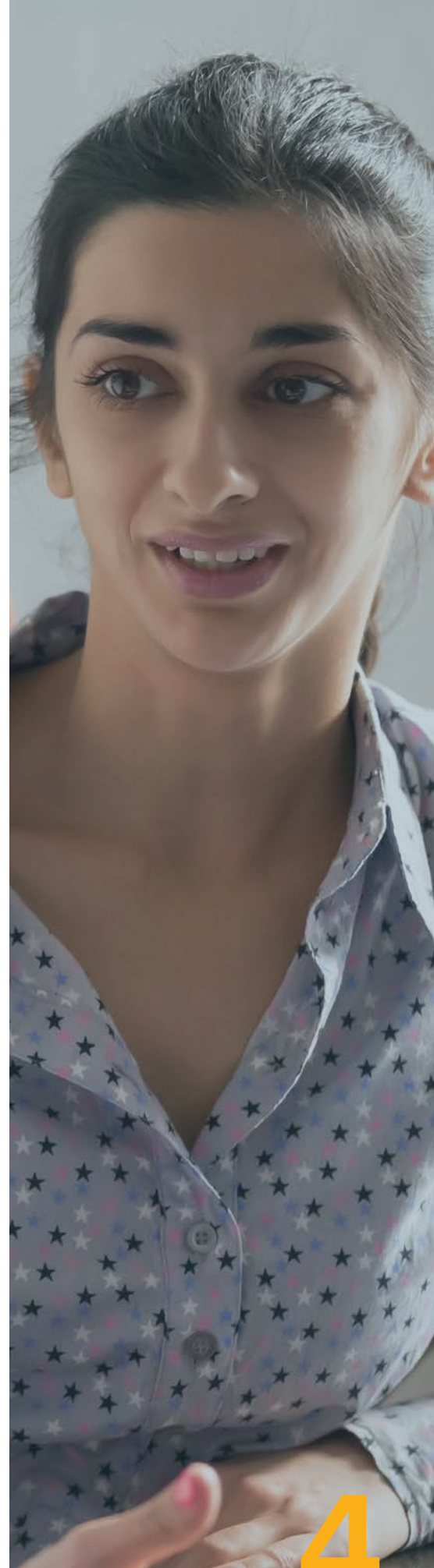
Mitchell is seeing a common trait between himself and Andre that creates a bond between the two of them (via **affinity** or "**like me**" bias), but also makes him treat Emily unfairly. Where anyone went to school almost certainly has no bearing on how well they can do their jobs.

SCENARIO 5

Kenneth was recently hired to the team, having previously worked at Spring Valley University, a different school in the region. Marisa previously worked with another colleague from Spring Valley University and found them extremely difficult to work with. After having trouble bonding with Kenneth, Marisa concludes that everyone who has worked at Spring Valley University is difficult to work with, even though Thuy, another coworker, gets along well with Kenneth.

What kind of bias is Marisa demonstrating?

Marisa had a prior negative experience with someone who worked for Spring Valley University. Because she and Kenneth did not hit it off immediately, she made a judgment against everyone who previously worked at Spring Valley University, ignoring Thuy's contrary evidence. This is an example of **confirmation bias**.





SCENARIO 6

Thomas has recently taken a position as head of a department, inheriting two direct reports. Before meeting them, he presumes Peter is more experienced and senior than McKayleigh, even though they both have the same job title.

How might Thomas have come to this conclusion without knowing anything else about them?

Thomas sees the name McKayleigh as being from a “younger” generation, which made him assume that McKayleigh is inexperienced or less qualified, a form of **stereotype bias**. Thomas may also have fallen victim to **gender bias**, preferring his male direct report over his female direct report before learning anything about them.

SCENARIO 7

Raquel has worked with Irene and Nathan for the same period of time, about three years. Irene helped Raquel get her bearings in the office when Raquel first started, which Raquel greatly appreciated and has always remembered. Around that same time, Nathan once mistakenly parked in Raquel’s parking spot, causing Raquel to be late to a meeting. When peer reviewing both Irene and Nathan, these separate incidents played a role in how Raquel viewed and ultimately rated both her colleagues.

What kind of bias does this represent?

Even though these incidents happened years ago and have no bearing on how well either is performing, they have had a lasting impact on Raquel’s opinion of both Irene and Nathan. The “**halo effect**” unduly causes Raquel to think of Irene more favorably, while the “**horns effect**” clouds Raquel’s judgment of Nathan.



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