

### **What is unconscious bias?**

Unconscious bias, also referred to as implicit bias, is defined as ‘learned assumptions, beliefs or attitudes we hold outside of our conscious awareness and control’. These biases are activated involuntarily to be used by the brain as mental shortcuts for faster information processing and as such have influence on our beliefs and behaviours. This can happen in a number of ways, however, here are some common biases we often see throughout the recruitment process – and tips to overcome them:

**Gender bias** An individual is treated differently or less favourably due to their sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

**Recruitment tip** Keep job descriptions and advertisements gender neutral; anonymise resumes for candidate selection and shortlists; have diverse interview panels; use objective scoring measures throughout the recruitment process.

**Ageism** Stereotyping or discriminating against an individual due to their age .

**Recruitment tip** Remove age bias from job ads avoiding phrases such as ‘mature experienced professional’, ‘new grads’, or ‘dynamic youthful team’; consider any assumptions you might hold about both younger and older candidates – such as younger people will be less committed, or older people won’t commit to long-term employment or learn new skills.

**Name bias** Judgement or preference based on an individual’s name.

**Recruitment tip** Anonymise candidate searching, resume and shortlists.

**Beauty bias** Favourable treatment and positive stereotyping of individuals who are considered more conventionally attractive.

**Recruitment tip** Structure interviews where everyone is asked the same questions, and candidates are scored objectively on their answers.

**Halo / Horns effect** A trait or quality of a person is used to make an overall positive or negative judgement.

**Recruitment tip** Have a minimum of three people during the interview process or on a panel - the more diverse the panel the better; anonymise applications and shortlists; use scoring criteria for interviews.

**Affinity bias** Preference for people similar to ourselves, or people we know and like.

**Recruitment tip** Be aware of your own opinions and thoughts; anonymise candidate information; keep the feedback loops private.

- Confirmation bias** Tendency to search for, interpret, favour and recall information in a way that confirms or supports your prior beliefs or values.
- Recruitment tip** Consider skills-based assessments prior to interviews; create a consistent and objective interview process; seek out multiple sources of information about candidates; take time making decisions.
- Attribution bias** Making judgements and assumptions about others based on their actions.
- Recruitment tip** Candidate screen prior to presenting shortlists to obtain a fuller picture of the current skills and attributes of the candidate; ask behaviour-based interview questions to understand behavioural motivations and preferences.
- Conformity bias** When an individual changes their opinion or behaviour to match those of the majority of the group.
- Recruitment tip** Use skills assessments or objective interview scores completed after each interview to make decisions.
- Perception bias** A judgement made from stereotypes and assumptions about the group an individual belongs to.
- Recruitment tip** Reflect on what the candidate showed in the interview of themselves and refer to your interview notes to make objective conclusions.
- Affect heuristic** When current emotions are relied upon to make a quick decision.
- Recruitment tip** Be aware of emotions, or negative events that may have happened the day of interview or when decision making; reflect on your reasons why you have made the decision you have, using objective measures.
- Recency bias** Where greater importance is placed upon recent events as they are easier to remember than past events (more likely to occur when attempting to process large amounts of information).
- Recruitment tip** When interviewing or screening take detailed notes of each candidate and review before coming to a decision; ensure adequate breaks are taken between interviews as working memory is affected by cognitive fatigue.