

Gender Bias in the Workplace

GENDER EQUALITY CHALLENGE



BUILDING A 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE

Introduction

There is a silent, yet powerful force - unconscious gender bias - and we all have it, men and women. Even if you are pro-women, this bias looms unconsciously unless, conscious action is taken to shift our default mode of thinking. There is actually a neuroscience behind it.

This unconscious gender bias is represented everywhere - the film industry, the media, advertising, social media, speaker representation at conferences, stock photography, and children's toys. However, the college of business science in organizational psychology also reveals that more educated women in leadership means reduced poverty, increased business performance, greater group intelligence through diversity of thought and myriad additional strengths. It will create better work environments - for men too.

As a first step, we can acknowledge that we are all influenced by gender biases, whether or not we consciously endorse them. Second, individuals tasked with making evaluations or hiring decisions — including employers, academics, and peer reviewers alike — can help reduce the influence of bias by removing information about an individual's age, race, and gender from decision-making contexts (like résumés and cover letters). And third, whenever possible, managers should base their hiring and promotion decisions on objective past performance information.

It's critical that we work to end gender bias in all fields, including STEM. Diversity in the workforce contributes to creativity, productivity, and innovation. Finding solutions to many of the big problems of this century, including climate change, universal access to water, disease, and renewable energy, will require the skills of scientists, engineers, and computer scientists. When women are not well represented in these fields, everyone misses out on the novel solutions that diverse participation brings.

Define Gender Bias ...

Gender bias is behavior that shows favoritism toward one gender over another. Most often, gender bias is the act of favoring men and/or boys over women and/or girls; however, this is not always the case.

In order to define gender bias completely, we first must make a distinction between the terms gender and sex. When we use the term gender, we mean socially constructed expectations and roles for women and men, for girls and boys. Specifically, girls and women are expected to demonstrate feminine behavior, and boys and men are expected to act masculine.

By sex, we mean biological differences assigned to females and males in order to distinguish between the two. The biological characteristics assigned to females and males often consist of primary or secondary sex characteristics. The term gender bias is often (wrongly) used interchangeably with the term sexism.

Sexism is typically defined as the subordination of one sex, usually female, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex or an ideology that defines females as different from and inferior to males.

Sex is the basis for the prejudice and presumed inferiority implicit in the term sexism.

The term gender bias is more inclusive than the term sexism, as it includes both prejudice (attitudes) and discrimination (behavior) in its definition.

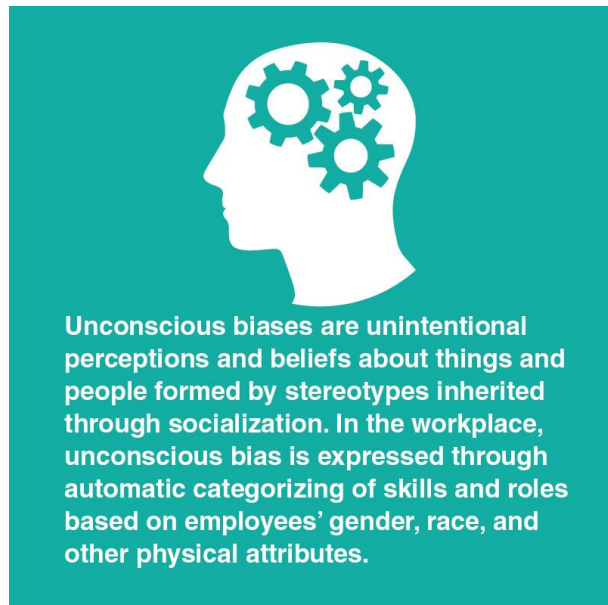
Yet, even if we succeed at achieving gender parity and full diversity in the workplace, every organization must continue to strive towards becoming truly inclusive, or risk becoming a revolving door for talent.

Long-term benefits strategies can have particular impact on increasing diversity and inclusion.

Organizations that commit to equal pay, allow extended parental leave, or support their employees' religious, cultural, dietary or disability requirements, can find that not only do they start to attract more candidates – a key concern during this era with the ongoing global skills shortage – but they can also create a more engaged and loyal workforce.

This in turn can enable organizations – as well as their employees and wider society – to reap the rewards of sustainable diversity over the long term.

“Diversity is counting heads; inclusion is making heads count.” - Barnes Marshall



We All Have Gender Bias ...

The reality is that the socio-economic landscape is dominated by an assumption that men are superior to women, and that male professionals command greater authority and therefore warrant greater reward and respect; however, this phenomenon is a social belief and attitude, and is perpetuated by both men and women.

Because these unreasonable beliefs are rooted in ignorance, the corrective strategy is typically to **raise awareness**, develop policy to offer protections, and to actively work to alleviate improper conduct or attitudes.

However, because this is a particularly awkward subject, all too often these corrective initiatives are ineffective, inefficient, and incomplete.



We cannot, in good conscience, continue to sweep the issue under the rug.

The road to achieving gender equality in the U.S. is quite clearly checkered with significant potholes; while still setting a high standard when compared to the globe.

Some cultures are highly oppressive toward the female gender, while others are more subtle and surreptitious. These social norms carry over into the professional work environment.

While great strides have been made to create a more inclusive and egalitarian workplace environment, much work still needs to be done.

Gender equality is an intricate mosaic, a picture that cannot be complete without understanding and exploring the dynamics of myriad factors contributing to the misconduct.

As a result, we cannot adequately understand these issues without thoroughly peeling back and exploring each layer.

Gender bias in the workplace is the unequal treatment in employment opportunity (such as promotion, pay, benefits and privileges), and expectations due to attitudes based on the sex of an employee or group of employees.

Gender bias can be a legitimate basis for a lawsuit under anti-discrimination statutes. But lawsuits aside, one must remember this: **Gender bias is a form of prejudice and discrimination and it has no place in the contemporary workplace environment.**

In other words, the issue of gender bias in this country is incredibly complex, and as a result, there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution to achieving gender equality; however, the corrective strategy is to raise awareness, set a zero tolerance standard and develop a professional culture that values diversity and works without regard to gender assumptions.



How to Identify Gender Bias ...

Gender bias can sometimes be hard to spot and in some instances, even harder to purge. But if you look carefully, especially with a nod to what I've listed here, you might start seeing these biases popping up. Do everything you can to prevent them and your business will be a much happier and healthier environment.

1: Unequal pay

The issue of pay equity between genders goes all the way up the top of organizational structure. Effective leadership and managerial competency in human resources will make sure to base compensation strategy on performance and experience rather than gender.

2: Interview questions

Inquiry into domestic arrangements such as children and family planning have zero business in an interview. Questions about family and family life should be out of bounds—and in some cases, they're illegal. Do not predicate the hiring or firing of potential employees on the idea that they may require maternity leave.

3: Diminished responsibilities

Don't refer to co-workers by terms of endearment, and only use their name. Terms such as 'honey' or 'cookie' are inappropriate and unprofessional. The same holds true with standard positional responsibilities. Two equally qualified administrators will be given them equal authority and responsibilities.

4: Restrooms

Do not let the restrooms reach a state of unhygienic or unhealthy conditions. Second, if you do ... don't expect the women to clean them! The female coworkers are not considered maids or mothers because of gender. Cleaning schedules, duties, and standards should be egalitarian.

5: Conversations

Leadership and management should speak to both male and female coworkers with the same demeanor. When addressing the entire staff, leadership style should be consistent with other conversations exclusively between men and between women. While in the workplace, effective leaders adopt a gender-neutral style of conversation.

6: Glass ceilings

Each employee, regardless of gender, should experience equal opportunity to earn promotions. If there is no justifiable reason for gender specific qualifications, then take steps to remove that glass ceiling. All things being equal, men and women should be able to reach as high as possible, given their knowledge, skills and performance.

7: Positional bias

This type of gender bias is rampant in all types of organizations (i.e. assumptions that females are admin assistants, receptionists, or secretaries. Don't fall into the stereotype nightmare; hire based on who you believe can perform best, based on skills and past experience, not gender.

8: Terminations

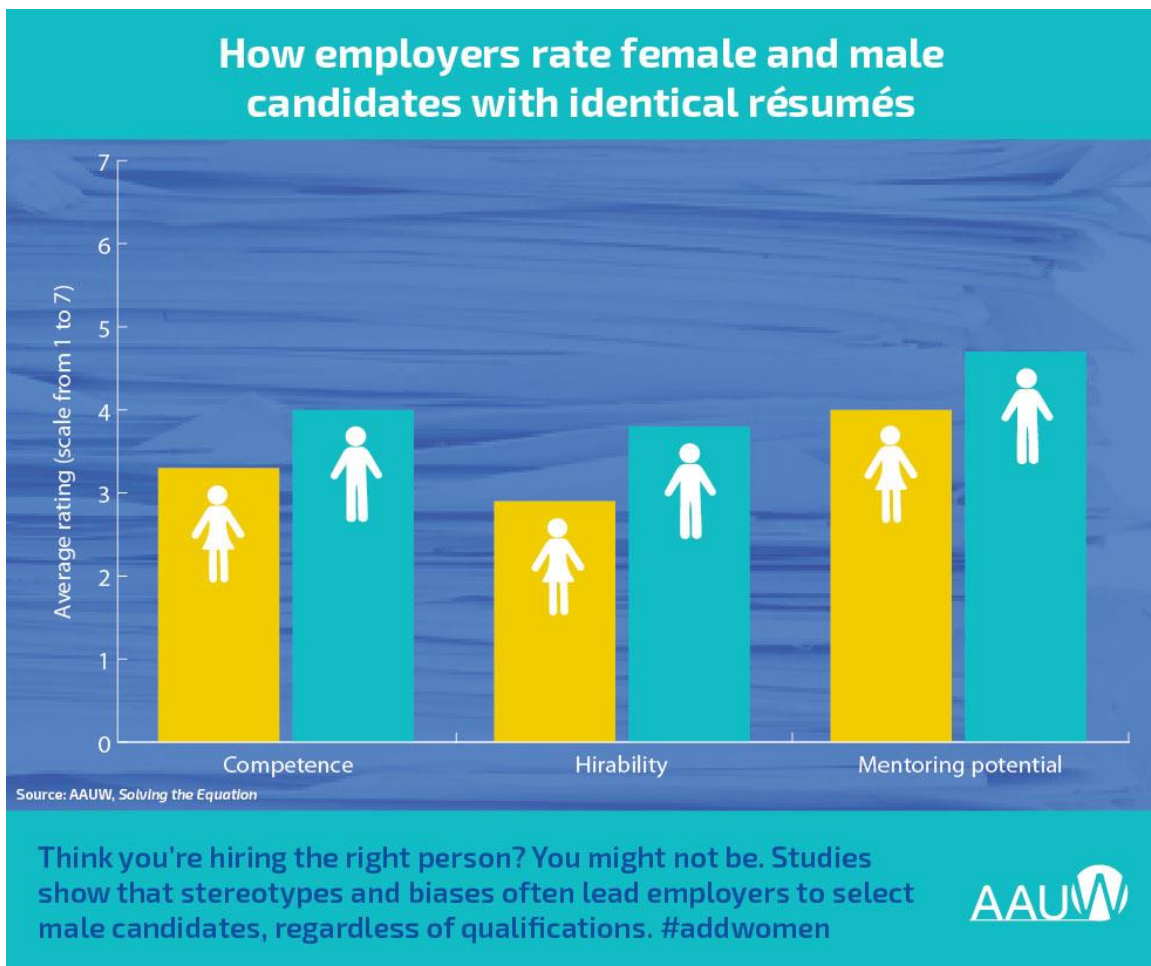
Historically, inappropriate behavior has been tolerated to a degree that was different depending on the gender of the perpetrator. The employer action of disciplinary action such as termination or non-termination needs to be treated without bias. Rules and policies should apply for both genders—across the board.

9: Outdated views

There is no dress code other than 'professional' or 'business casual' or 'safety compliant' in the workplace. The notion that women should adhere to some outdated fashion standard—and similar kinds of obsolete thinking—should be eradicated from the workplace. Dress codes should be given definition and expectation regardless of gender.

10: Sexual harassment

There is a reason why organizations have had to implement policies regarding harassment; however, 'sexual' harassment is often either overlooked or not even perceived. Not only can it cause serious issues with staff morale and productivity, it can come back to haunt your company legally and in the court of public opinion. There are NO circumstances where sexual harassment should be permitted.



Paradigm Shift in Progress ...

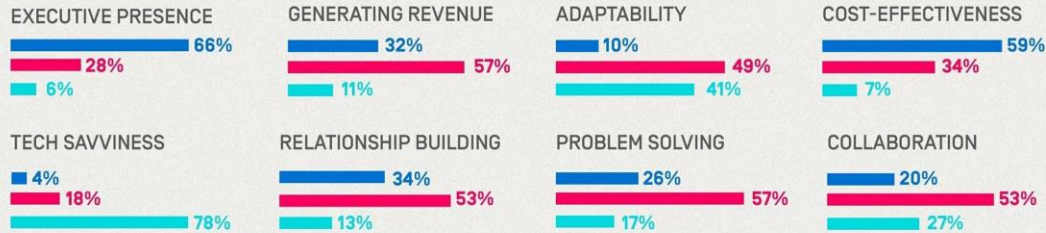
Today there are a number of high profile female leaders, and women in business are more prominent than ever. However, workplace statistics tell a very different story. Women remain underrepresented at every level in the corporate pipeline, with the most senior levels by far the worst affected.

This isn't just about increasing the number of women – and others from more diverse backgrounds – in the workplace. The transformation must take place at a temporal level, a paradigm shift in the mind, a change of attitude and vision, if you will.

The disparity between male and female career progression is most pronounced in the financial and technology sectors, where despite years of effort, there is still a steep drop off of female participation at the management and leadership levels.

THE GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

BASED ON A SURVEY OF 1,200 WORKERS ACROSS DIFFERENT GENERATIONS MEASURING THEIR STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES



BABY BOOMERS

BORN: <1963

PROS: Productive, hardworking, team players, mentors

CONS: Less adaptable, less collaborative



GEN X

BORN: 1963-1980

PROS: Managerial skills, revenue generation, problem solving

CONS: Less cost-effective, less executive presence



MILLENNIALS

BORN: 1980-1995

PROS: Enthusiastic, tech-savvy, entrepreneurial, opportunistic

CONS: Lazy, unproductive, self-obsessed



UXC professional solutions

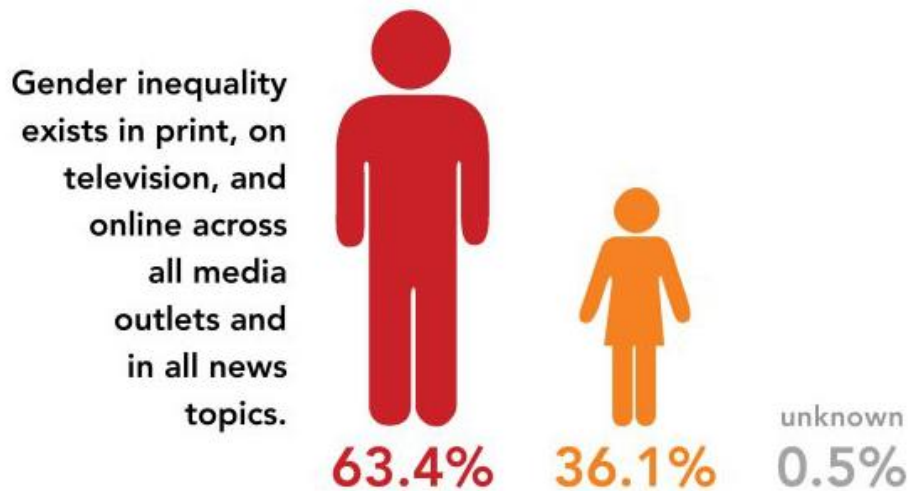
To find out where we got this information drop us a line: contactus@uxcps.com.au

Data show that men win more promotions, more challenging assignments and more access to top leaders than women do. Men are more likely than women to feel confident they are destined to an executive role and feel more strongly that their employer rewards merit.

Women, meanwhile, perceive a steeper trek to the top. Less than half feel that promotions are awarded fairly or that the best opportunities go to the most-deserving employees. A significant share of women say that gender has been a factor in missed raises and promotions. Even more believe that their gender will make it harder for them to advance in the future—a sentiment most strongly felt by women at senior levels.

The disparity begins at entry level, where men are 30% more likely than women to be promoted to management roles. It continues throughout careers, as men move up the ladder in larger numbers and make up the lion's share of outside hires. Though their numbers are growing slowly, women hold less than a quarter of senior leadership positions and less than one-fifth of C-suite roles.

BOTTOM LINE: MEN DOMINATE MEDIA



Male dominance in global media is well documented, and has been for many decades.

But here's another way to look at it: Women represent about half the global population, and yet they're dramatically underrepresented in stories meant to help people understand much of the complexity in the world.

"Inequality defines our media," said Julie Burton, the president of the Women's Media Center, in a statement last year. "Media tells us our roles in society and it tells us who what we can be."



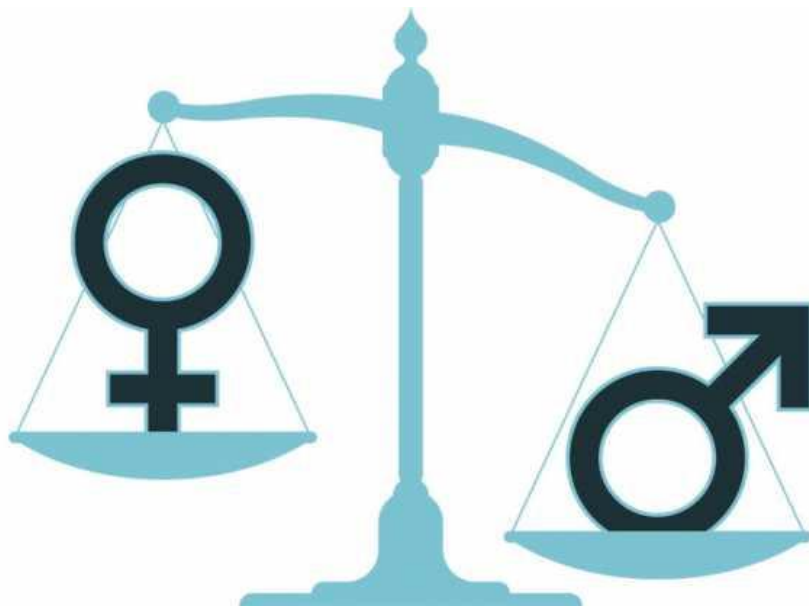
Organizations like Forbes and the BBC were particularly egregious, referring to men in their stories 81 percent of the time. Part of the problem, clearly, is that the people who are considered newsworthy such as presidents, governors, military leaders, CEOs, and so on, are often men.

"The media focuses nearly exclusively on the highest strata of occupational and social hierarchies, in which women's representation has remained poor," a group of researchers wrote in another study published last year by the American Sociological Review.

People all over the world are exposed to media ‘messages’ that program our understanding of reality. As a global society, we are actually at their mercy, and more so as the technology revolution facilitates increased access.

Both in newsrooms and in news articles, men are leaders—they make more money, get more bylines, are featured more often, spend more time on-camera, and are quoted far more often than women—by a ratio of about **5:1**.

Either you want a diverse workforce that values and includes people regardless of gender, or you don’t. You can be someone who pays lip service to a problem; or you can be someone who tries to understand how you’re contributing to that problem, then take corrective action.



Gender Equality in the Workplace ...

Developing a culture of equality within an organization is essential to attracting and retaining the best of this talent pool. Moving from legacy practices that exacerbate unintended bias to a place where science and data determine who to hire – and promote – will require effort and commitment.

Research shows that including different perspectives into your organizational decision making process generates more innovation, more profitability, and more productivity. All kinds of really great things happen when we stop making decisions based on irrational cognitive biases.

Cognitive biases are tendencies to think in certain ways that can lead to systematic deviations from a standard of rationality or good judgment, and are often studied in organizational psychology and human resource management.

Unconscious biases are embedded within all of us, often shaped over many years through education, culture, and experience.

GENDER EQUALITY BY DESIGN

To change our behavior, we need to make a conscious effort to identify and recognize these biases within ourselves; however, then take effective and corrective action. Debiasing is the reduction of biases in judgment and decision making through education, incentives, training, and objective audit tactics to expose bias.

“The systemic biases that occur across the entire talent management lifecycle cannot be underestimated, says Lorraine Stomski, Partner and Global Practice Leader for Assessment and Leadership at Aon Hewitt. “I encourage all organizations to do a thorough audit of their talent processes to ensure that this kind of bias is removed as much as humanly possible.”

Unconscious bias often also emerges during deciding on the right candidates for leadership positions through preconceptions of what ‘ideal’ looks like. The end result of this pattern is a management team with little real diversity.

While senior managers genuinely agree about the need for diversity at leadership levels, they still tend to fall back on unconscious beliefs when making final hiring and promotion decisions, such as the idea that it would be easier to onboard people with similar backgrounds to themselves.

Talent processes such as succession planning, leadership development, talent reviews and high potential programs should all be examined closely for these biases, many of which can be observed through the kinds of conversations held about women when being considered for such programs, and analysis of coaching, mentoring, and performance reviews.

Gender Equality Metrics ...

Forty-five years on from the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1975, you would have thought that gender discrimination in the workplace would be a thing of the distant past.

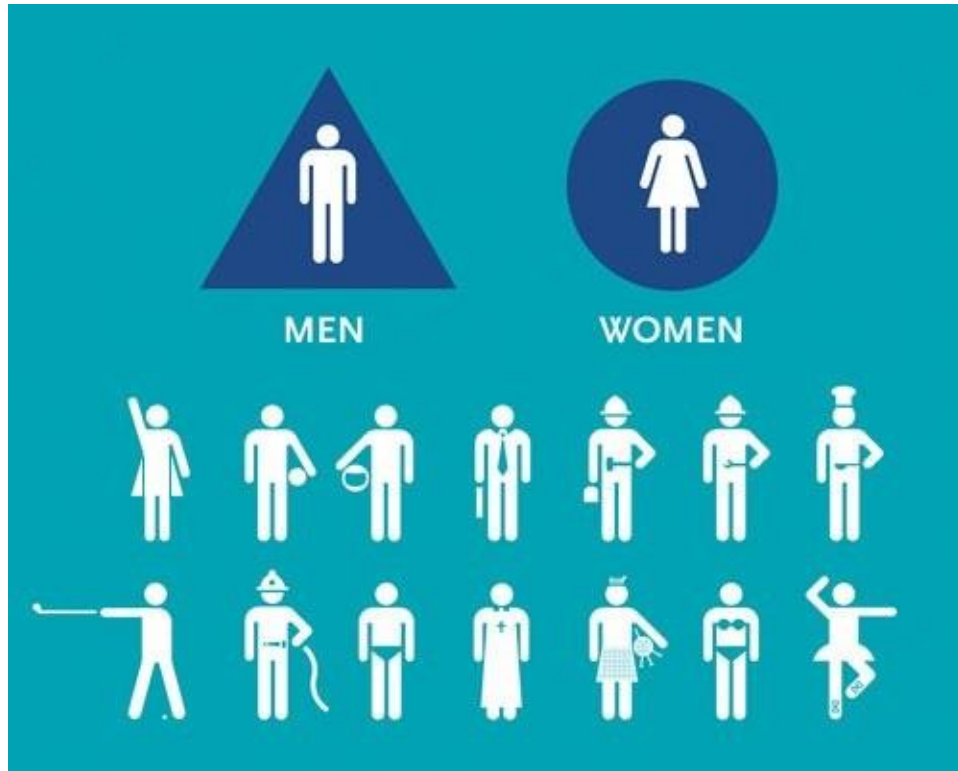
Although women are in the strongest position they’ve ever been in terms of career progression and opportunities, it would appear that we are not quite there yet, as many women report that they still do not feel that they are treated in the same manner as their male counterparts.

In 2015, there is still a significant pay gap between men and women, with women in full-time work earning 18% less than men in the same roles, despite them being more likely to have a degree.



On the contrary, behavioral evidence compiled over the past two decades suggests workplace gender bias not only persists but thrives in ways many of us don't even realize, particularly for women in male-dominated professions. These stereotypes are so embedded in the cultural brain that we often serve them without being aware.

The first, known as descriptive stereotype, ascribes certain characteristics to women. They are caring, warm, deferential, emotional, sensitive, and so on—traits consistently used to describe women for decades. Left alone those traits aren't bad, of course, but when a woman performs a job traditionally held by men they can become incredibly harmful.



Here's where the male descriptive stereotypes come into play: competent, assertive, decisive, rational, objective. The second major form of gender bias is prescriptive. In this case, women who do break through and claim a traditionally male position are seen to have violated their prescribed norms. Here's where the woman who should be compassionate acts forcefully and instead of being called decisive gets labeled "brusque" or "uncaring." When managers have little information about what an employee or candidate is actually like, they fill in the knowledge gap with these descriptive stereotypes, often to the detriment of women. The lack of awareness makes the problem harder to address, especially if a company has an ineffectual gender equity policy in place.

Human Resource Management Professional Development:

Familiarize yourself with anti-discrimination laws:

As an employer, you should have a thorough understanding of the laws in place to prevent discrimination in the workplace, for example equal pay, harassment, victimization and direct discrimination based on sex. By doing so, you will be in a better position to administer them.

Create a strict policy against sexual harassment:

Sexual harassment strictly should not be tolerated and clear guidelines must be put in place to ensure staff understand what this involves. Make it easy for employees to report any instances of harassment and inform them of the professional consequences for offenders.

Equal pay and opportunities:

Equal work, should equal pay. Establish a policy that ensures that both your male and female staff are paid equally for the same role, and that they are given the same opportunities in terms of recruitment and promotion.

Provide training to managers:

By providing training to those in a management position for how best to deal with gender equality in the workplace, they will be better equipped for tackling any issues that arise. You should educate them on how to identify and handle any form of discrimination that may take place in a work environment and how to prevent it from happening in the future.

Celebrate success:

Acknowledge the success of employees in the company, both male and female. It's good to show appreciation for the hard work that is put in from your staff, and even more important to note achievements from all members of staff equally, regardless of their position in the company, gender, race, etc.

Assign roles or jobs based on ability, not gender:

It's a common perception that women are generally better suited to support type roles, whereas men will excel in leadership positions; however it is these kinds of stereotypes that form the basis of gender discrimination at work.

Ignorance must be dispelled, and gender bias must be addressed and corrective action must take place to prevent discrimination happening.

The hiring and allocation of work must to be conducted on the basis of an individual's abilities and character, regardless of whether they are male or female and the preference of customers, clients or other employees is not a legitimate and protected reason to treat employees differently according to gender.

The Ideal Workplace ...

Many companies claim to be great places to work, but employees may often find that the wonderful workplace they heard about during the job interview process doesn't always live up to their expectations. Situations such as dissension, poor communication and general dysfunction occur frequently. Great small business workplaces are those that exhibit a number of key characteristics.

Positive workplaces tend to exhibit a common set of traits that foster excellence, productivity and camaraderie. Innumerable studies have shown the benefits of greater gender equality in the workplace and of introducing more women to leadership positions. Even though most of us strive to eliminate gender bias in the way we think and behave, research – not to mention the evidence of just looking around most boardrooms – shows that it's still there.

Gender discrimination in the workplace, also known as sex discrimination, occurs when an employee is treated differently than other employees because of his or her sex or gender identity. There are two main legal classifications of gender discrimination: disparate treatment and disparate impact. The former is when the discrimination is intentional, while the later focuses on the unintentional discriminatory consequences of an action or corporate policy.

Gender discrimination in the workplace is illegal under the federal law Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Specifically, it prevents employers from discrimination against employees on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion.

As an advocate of women's rights, I am hopeful to see the day that both women-on-women gender interactions and male-female interactions change. Perhaps we are taught as girls that since few climb up the corporate ladder, it's a dog eat dog world. Perhaps the judgment-ridden approach of our gender is a direct result of past male discrimination. Until we are able to change the way we view other women's successes, we won't be able to close the gender gap or break that final glass ceiling.

What we need to do to is rethink the way we think and act towards each other as we strive to achieve a fairer, more inclusive, and more effective workplace.

The **Equality Act** would amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to explicitly enumerate LGBTQ+ Americans as a class protected from discrimination. However, the Supreme Court ruled last year that discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity was unconstitutional under the "sex" provision in the Civil Rights Act — thereby extending protections in housing, education, and employment to LGBTQ people.



The Equality Act, if signed into law, would go further, banning discrimination for all federally funded programs and "public accommodations," like stores, stadiums, rental establishments, and hotels.

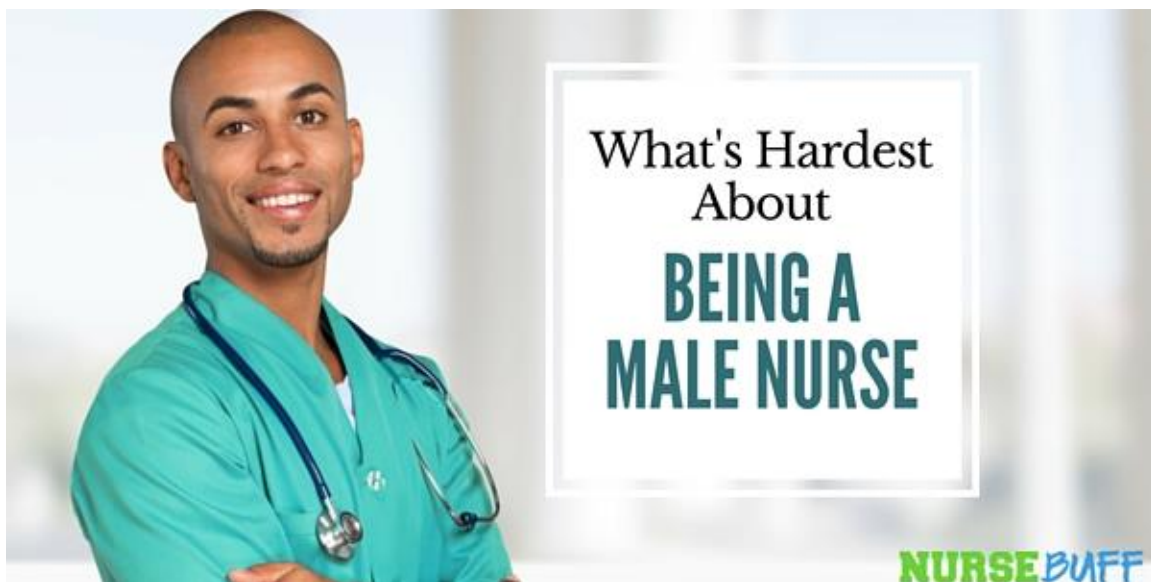
The sign should just read "RESTROOM" in the end.

Conservative and Religious groups disqualify the bill because it would prohibit businesses from claiming freedom, to deny service to anyone, including LGBTQ+ Americans, in turn, explicitly superseding 1993's Religious Freedom Restoration Act if they're compelled to comply.

Case Study ...

I was a male nurse, and was assigned only male patients, while operating a mobile enema lab at the San Diego hospital. I felt proud to be a medical professional and was treated normally without regard to my gender. However, many of my friends and family made jokes about homosexuality ... not an insult, just a stereotype. Some of my coworkers were gay men, but that's true in other professions as well. Perhaps the military was ahead of the social curve ... respect for the male nurse.

Thank you for your military service. Such stigmatizing factors form a barrier to patient care, deter men's entry into the profession, and play a major role in problems related to retention (Harding, 2007). Published evidence also suggests that success of men in nursing is disproportionate and male nurses face gender-based disadvantage compared with that of women (Tracey and Nicholl, 2007). Recent research studies have shown that male nurses face gender-based barriers even during their nursing education programs (Keogh and O'Lynn, 2007).



The field of nursing is dominated by women, and traditionally, men have been chastised for becoming professional nurses. However, there are men who do practice medicine as a professional nurse, and should be respected, as should all nurses, regardless of gender.

One nursing school required all male nurses to have a female nurse present in the room as a witness if they are assigned to administer an intimate procedure on a female patient.

This policy is part of an HRM risk management strategy, professional courtesy, and patient security measure. However, this is not the policy if a female nursing student administers an intimate procedure on a male or female patient.

A former student male nurse yesterday won a landmark sex discrimination case against NHS hospitals that refused to let him perform intimate medical procedures on women patients unless he was accompanied by a female chaperone.

The Equal Opportunities Commission said the ruling challenged assumptions that all men are sexual predators. It would help to open nursing for men, who make up only 10% of the workforce.

The case was brought at the employment appeals tribunal in London by Andrew Moyhing, 29, who said he abandoned nursing because he was not allowed to do the job properly in a female-dominated profession.

While this policy is a blatant violation of trust, ethics, and gender neutrality ... it is also a vehicle to expose myriad instances of gender bias in the field of nursing, and why male nurses are so rare.

What is the workplace environment and cultural experience for men and women in the medical field ... or more specifically, in the field of nursing?

Gender Balance in the Human Resources Field

As gender equality in the workplace becomes the standard instead of the exception, several careers that were once open only to men are now seeing more diverse demographics among their workers. Despite these improvements, certain fields remain dominated by only one gender.

In 2016, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) found that 72% of HR managers were women; in 2017, Payscale.com reported that a whopping 86% of HR generalists were women.

Though men have been steadily pursuing more HR jobs and thereby diminishing the gender divide, there is no denying that human resources is a female-dominated field.

Additionally, there are few if any barriers preventing men from finding HR jobs. There are no physical or mental restrictions that make it more difficult for a male to perform the functions of an HR professional. The jobs are there; men simply do not have an urgent desire to pursue them.

Human Resources Management is evolving into a more data-driven and technology-focused field. Instead of simply handling employee relations, HR professionals are expected to understand other complicated concepts such as:

HR metrics

Alignment between HR and organizational strategy

Service delivery tools

Project management

Employee benefits and compensation

Teams and teamwork orchestration

Moving forward, the human resources management field faces two challenges:

1. Find a way to get more men to enter the field and make valuable contributions.
2. Make sure that women are paid the same as their male counterparts.