



BIAS IN THE MACHINE

KEEPING AI HUMAN IN HR

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping HR — from recruitment and onboarding to performance, pay, and retention. But, if not carefully designed and monitored, AI can quietly reinforce the very inequalities organisations aim to eliminate.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

- 80% of large companies now use some form of AI.
- Yet 49% of employees believe AI hiring tools are more biased than humans.
- Poorly governed AI can replicate bias across multiple stages of the employee journey, risking trust, reputation, and compliance.

AI doesn't create bias — it learns it. And if we're not paying attention, it can scale it in our organisations and cause issues we didn't see coming.

AI IN HR BEYOND RECRUITMENT

AI and algorithmic tools in the workplace, while designed to improve efficiency, can unintentionally perpetuate biases across hiring, performance, development, compensation, retention, and employee wellbeing.

Onboarding:

AI chatbots and mentors can reinforce cultural “fit” bias.

Performance Management:

Algorithms can mirror biased performance ratings.

Career Development:

AI succession models risk reproducing gender and racial gaps.

Learning & Development:

Automated training recommendations may reinforce existing inequalities.

Compensation:

Pay-setting algorithms can perpetuate wage gaps.

Engagement & Retention:

Predictive attrition AI can flag women and minoritised groups as “flight risks” more often.

Wellbeing & Safety:

Sentiment-analysis tools can misinterpret emotional tone across cultures.

SELF AUDIT

STEP 1: MAP YOUR AI TOUCHPOINTS

AI plays a role in many HR decisions, from recruitment to wellbeing.

Mapping where it currently influences your people processes helps identify potential bias, ensure fairness, and maintain transparency across the employee journey.

Where does AI currently influence people decisions?

<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment / Sourcing	<input type="checkbox"/> Career Progression / Promotion
<input type="checkbox"/> Onboarding / Induction	<input type="checkbox"/> Compensation & Reward
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Engagement / Retention
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning & Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Wellbeing / Safety Monitoring

STEP 2: FIVE FAIRNESS QUESTIONS

To ensure your AI-driven HR processes are fair and inclusive, it's important to pause and examine them critically. Doing this helps catch bias early and keeps accountability clear.

For each AI system or process you use ask yourself:

- 1 Data** - Where did the data come from? Is it representative of your current or desired workforce?
- 2 Design** - Who built or selected the system? Were diverse stakeholders involved?
- 3 Decision** - Does a human still review and approve AI-driven outcomes?
- 4 Transparency** - Do employees and candidates know when AI is being used and how it affects them?
- 5 Oversight** - Who owns the responsibility for fairness audits and ongoing monitoring?

STEP 3: QUICK FAIRNESS HEALTH CHECK

After reviewing your AI systems, it's helpful to take a moment to assess their fairness at a glance.

Rate each area from 1 (low) to 5 (strong) to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement, and capture evidence or notes to guide next steps.

Category	Rating					Evidence/Notes
Data representativeness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Design inclusivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Decision transparency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Oversight and accountability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Ongoing monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1	2	3	4	5	

STEP 4: ACT NOW - CHOOSE 2 NEXT STEPS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Map one AI-HR process and identify its data sources | <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a quarterly "AI fairness review" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Run a small fairness audit on one outcome (e.g., gender or age bias) | <input type="checkbox"/> Form an internal "Responsible AI in HR" working group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create a transparent communication statement for candidates/employees | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide tips to managers on responsible AI use in HR decisions |

STEP 5: KEEP THE CONVERSATION ALIVE

Even when DEI feels complex or challenging, it's important to maintain momentum.

Reframe discussions around data fairness and transparency, track meaningful metrics like explainability and trust, and celebrate internal wins that show how responsible AI strengthens both fairness and business credibility.

Use this checklist as a starting point - commit to at least two concrete actions today, revisit your progress regularly, and keep your team engaged in building a more inclusive, accountable, and equitable workplace.

Remember, keeping AI fair and inclusive is just one part of building a truly equitable workplace. We're always happy to chat about your DEI, learning, and OD needs, and to help you turn these ideas into actions that really stick.

If you want some expert support to make sure inclusion isn't just a checklist but part of your everyday culture, reach out to us at hello@zingrevolution.co.uk or set up a call with us by clicking below:

Book A Call

