

Factsheet



# BIASES, STEREOTYPING AND PREJUDICE

## AN INTRODUCTION

Building understanding around how biases, stereotyping and prejudice are linked can help us to move past them and instead make conscious decisions to be more inclusive in everything we do.



## WHAT IS BIAS?

How we each think and behave can depend on our own life experiences, views and beliefs and it starts right from the moment we are born.

Unconscious bias tends to be a belief that isn't founded on facts about a person/group of people and happens without us even realising. An example may be that we notice a person driving very fast down the road and assume that it is a young man, however, when we pull up next to them at the traffic lights we may be surprised instead to see that it is in fact a middle-aged woman.

## WHERE DO OUR BIASES COME FROM?

Our biases are often learned throughout our lives from birth and can be influenced by our upbringing, cultural conditioning, geography, media (TV, news, social media), our schools, friends, family and our experiences.

## HOW ARE BIASES HELPFUL?

Our biases actually help us to make quick decisions as they are basically shortcuts for us to be able to react and make decisions fast. With each of us making an estimated 35,000 decisions a day and with our brains only having the ability to handle around 7 pieces of information in any one situation, it's vital for us to take these shortcuts to function daily.



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## IS BIAS GOOD OR BAD?

It's both! Our unconscious brain protects us from danger, allows us to connect with others and enables us to function every single day; think about how we all learned to walk, talk, eat, read, write etc.

Our unconscious mind is extremely helpful and by the time we get to whatever wonderful age we are now, we've created a few million shortcuts!

It can however, be unhelpful and can create exclusionary behaviour...

## WHEN IS BIAS NOT GOOD?

When our mind takes the necessary shortcuts, we categorise an individual/group of people and our unconscious mind tells us that they are a certain way (this is called stereotyping). Our unconscious mind is looking back through our 'filing cabinets' of our brain and when it sees someone who is different to us, it finds another experience or memory where a person who looked, sounded or acted like them previously and matches that person with this memory. Often the 'matching' is incorrect and this then leads to us having prejudice against people even though they have given us no reason to dislike them (or like them in some instances).

## HOW IS BIAS LINKED TO PREJUDICE?

Prejudice is a preconceived idea or opinion that is not based on reason or facts. Often when we are biased towards other people we don't mean to be and these biases can lead us to being prejudiced against people from different backgrounds to us.



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## HOW CAN WE REDUCE OUR BIAS AND LOSE PREJUDICE?

1. Accept that we all have unconscious bias and discover your own by completing an [Implicit Bias Test](#) for free
2. Widen your social circle – a more diverse group of people in your life will help you to understand different views of the world and help to shatter stereotypes
3. Challenge your thinking and question your first impressions by taking a moment before you react to a situation, asking yourself “was this unconscious bias or an objective observation?”



## WE CAN HELP

This and so much more are areas of DEI that we can help your organisation with; to feel knowledgeable, confident and empowered to create true inclusion and belonging for all of your employees.

Get in touch if you want to explore these important questions further – we're here to support the incredible things you're already doing.



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