



Understanding & Managing Unconscious Bias

Welcome to the Understanding & Managing Unconscious Bias course.
By completing this course you will develop your knowledge and skillset so you can apply a diversity lens to the work you do, while actively promoting inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

- Introduction

DIVERSITY AWARENESS

- What is Diversity?
- Diversity Self-Assessment
- Equity or Equality?
- Your Circle of Trust

THE WHAT AND WHY OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

- What is Bias?
- Cognitive Biases and Perceptions

- How Unconscious Bias Works
- What Can We Do?

MANAGING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

- Types of Bias Commonly Found in the Workplace
- Strategies for Countering Bias
- Strategies for Creating Diversity

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

- Quiz
- Wrap up

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Introduction

Unconscious biases are a range of stereotypes that are developed and shaped throughout our lifetimes. These biases involuntarily expose themselves and influence our behaviour, and consequently affect other people's lives.

Click on the headings below for more information on this course.

Learning Outcomes

The completion of this course will enable you to:

- examine diversity and diversity awareness and its relationship to inclusion,
- increase knowledge and awareness of unconscious bias,
- understand the influences of unconscious bias,
- develop skills for recognising unconscious bias and minimising its negative impacts,
- explore ways to enhance equity and ensure inclusion within your team.

Audience

Everyone has unconscious biases, it is a part of the way our brains are wired as human beings. As such, biases are often subtle and can be difficult to identify. Therefore, this course is applicable to everyone in our organisation.

Duration

This course will take 20 minutes to complete. Feel free to leave whenever you want, your progress will be saved.

First, let's take a look at why being a diverse organisation is so important



What is Diversity?

Diversity is about acknowledging the unique blend of knowledge, skills and perspectives each individual brings to the workplace

Diversity includes obvious characteristics such as cultural background and ethnicity, age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, language and education, but also includes more abstract attributes such as professional skills, working style, location and life experiences

Click on the headings below for more information.



Variety
Click to reveal

Diversity includes knowing how to relate the qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups.

It is extremely important

It is extremely important




Diversity
Click to reveal

to support and protect diversity, and by valuing individuals and groups free from prejudice, and fostering a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic it's possible.



Judgeless
Click to reveal

Diversity as a concept doesn't judge, rather a lens is applied by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences.

 Click on all of the tiles above before continuing.

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So What Influences Diversity?

Everything that has happened to us has made us who we are. Some experiences are positive, some are negative. These experiences influence how we feel and how we act.

Let's have a look at a few of the major influencers in our lives.

1

Cultural Background

Think of cultural background as being your ethnicity, which includes your values, customs and patterns of behaviour. Unlike race, ethnicity has a degree of choice, process and change. Often we consciously modify or reinforce our ethnicity to either maintain status quo or to embrace other social constructs at other times.

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Life Experiences

Everything, small or large, that you experience from the age of a small child through to university, work, parenthood and so much more, diversifies your life and outlook. Life experiences may also include stereotypes formed through interactions with others, through your own cultural background or even through the media.

Personal Characteristics

Personal characteristics may include your race, age and sex. These are things that are often outside of your control. However, personal characteristics can also include things like gender and personality, both of which can be influenced by other factors.


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Skills and Abilities

Skills and abilities links very closely to your life experiences as these are often things you may have picked up along the way, like playing sport or knitting! However disabilities may also be included here as they can either enhance or impair your skills and abilities. Having a disability personally or having a close personal experience with someone living with a disability allows you to see a different perspective in society.

Summary

These experiences shape our view of diversity within the workplace. Obviously we can't change our past or our genetics. But we can change our thinking - more on this later

 Complete the content above before moving on.

The Importance of Diversity Within the Workplace

A diverse workforce is a great enabler for our organisation.
Click through the statements below to see why this is the case.

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Diversity is related to more creativity and innovation



Diversity is hard to achieve but rewarding - diverse teams outperform homogenous teams but they have more difficulties along the way



Diverse leadership relates to better financial performance



Having a diverse workforce does not necessarily mean that you are including that diversity of thought into the make up the company culture



Diverse & Inclusive teams make better business decisions

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Diversity Self-Assessment

It's often easy to make assumptions about individuals and groups based on factors, like how they look, where they come from and what they do.

Below five people have written a fact about themselves, can you match the fact with the face? Try not to overthink this process and just go with your first instinct.


When you are ready, click **SUBMIT**.



Five blue buttons with white text, each containing a fact about a person:

- I play cricket
- I have two children
- I love mathematics
- I'm a vegetarian
- I'm allergic to peanuts

Below the buttons is a green button with a white arrow and the text **SUBMIT**.

 Complete the content above before moving on.

This activity aimed to show you how easily our unconscious bias groups individuals (or things) based on our preconceived notions.

It's likely that in doing this activity (being that this is an unconscious bias course) that you did take some time to consider where you matched things too.

There were actually no right or wrong answers here, we simply wanted to highlight how your unconscious bias can work when considering diversity.

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It's likely that this activity left you feeling quite uncomfortable. What we want to remind you here is that with anything Diversity & Inclusion related, it's important to be comfortable with the uncomfortable.

You aren't always going to get everything right, but so long as you continue to be aware and continue to grow you're making progress!



Lesson 4 of 14

Equity or Equality?

So, do we want equity or equality in our workplace?

First, we need to identify what the differences are...



Equity

Equity is about being fair and impartial, not everyone starts from the same position in life. Some people need more to help to get to where they should be.

Equity would be about giving everyone what they **needed** in order to have the same opportunities at a healthy life

Equality

Equality is about being equal, everyone no matter what they start with receives the same.

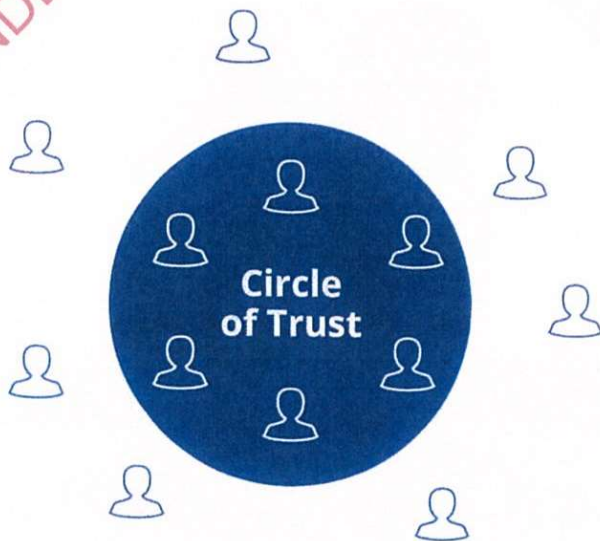
Equality is about giving everyone **exactly** the same to enjoy a healthy life.

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Our goal is to create a diverse and equitable organisation where the unique culture and makeup of our teams come together and flourish.

Lesson 5 of 14

Your Circle of Trust



Think of 5 - 10 people in your life that you trust the most (excluding your family).

If you have a piece of paper, write their names down.

CLICK HERE ONCE YOU HAVE DONE THIS

Have a look at how diverse this group of people are:

- Are they similar to you?
- Do they share similar traits?
- Do they like the same things?

These people are apart of your 'in' group.

Often the people you surround yourself with are similar to you in one way or another and will likely confirm your existing beliefs or biases, this is called confirmation bias - more on this later.

Lesson 6 of 14

What is Bias?



A bias is a tendency, inclination or prejudice toward or against something or someone.

Biases are often misconstrued as being negative, however, it's important to realise that they can be positive.

Positive biases can include things like

- Eating healthy foods
- Staying away from a situation that appears dangerous or threatening

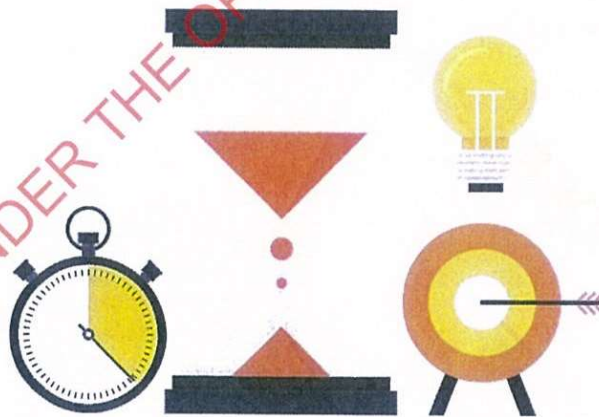
There are instances where biases can have an impact on your personal or professional life, so it's important to understand what your biases are and why you need them.

CONTINUE

Often these biases are not deliberate, but are what's known as implicit or unconscious bias.

Because of the sheer complexity of the world around you and the amount of information available, it is sometimes necessary to rely on mental shortcuts, these shortcuts are formed from the experiences you have over the entirety of your lifetime.

These mental short cuts (heuristics) are the origin of your biases.



Can you think of some influences which might have an affect your bias.

- Your cultural background - who you grew up around
- Life experiences - events which might have had an impact on you, positively and/or negatively
- Skills and abilities - maybe you find some things easier/harder to do than others, this might make you perceive others as less/more intelligent than yourself

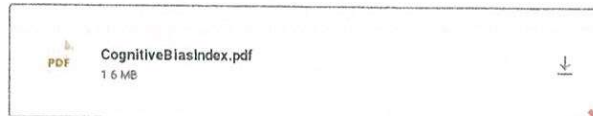
As a result of never addressing our perceptions, the same things will happen over and over again, all because our perceptions have begun to shape our reality. When this happens, we start believing that what we are doing is right because we've always just done that.

Look at the process below to see how cognitive biases are formed.



Change is always difficult and your biases don't always help you, so understanding what your biases are and how they manifest themselves can help you change your perceptions.

Click the button below to open a visual representation of cognitive bias.



Lesson 8 of 14

How Unconscious Bias Works

As mentioned earlier, your unconscious biases are reflections of your preferences formed from a lifetime of experience.

The way these biases are expressed are explained below.

Click on each of these for examples.

Including and excluding individuals or groups

This can be explained through the social psychological concept known as 'In' and 'Out' groups. If you identify yourself with a group, then you are a member of its 'In' group, if you don't then you are in the 'Out' group.

Think about a Bledisloe cup match, you will likely be in the All Blacks camp or 'In' group, and the Aussies are in the 'Out' group.

This affect is also present in everyday life, examples include:

- Male vs Female
- Black vs White
- Young vs Old
- Who is a New Zealander
- One agency vs Other agency

These groups have an impact on a number of characteristics such as:

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Personal characteristics - your own personal traits

SUBMIT

Your unconscious bias can determine how you treat an individual and/or groups of people. By becoming aware of your own harmful implicit bias, you can actively resist and avoid them.

Lesson 7 of 14

Cognitive Biases and Perceptions

Our perceptions shape how we think and can form identifiable patterns. These patterns are our implicit bias in action.

The perceptions we have about people, locations, situations and much more can often cause inaccurate judgements and can lead us to...

Minimise our cognitive effort

Rely on what we "know" to be true

Never question our own decisions

Continue what we are doing without reflecting on it, due to fast thinking

If you are aware of your bias, it is no longer an unconscious or implicit bias, instead it becomes an explicit bias. Being self-aware enables us to identify this bias and work towards challenging how we think.



If you are having trouble remembering which bias is which, this is a simplified explanation:
Implicit Bias = Unconscious prejudices which turn into actions
Explicit Bias = You are aware of your bias

- Favouritism
- Discrimination
- Influence your beliefs
- Polarisation
- Diversity (or the lack of diversity)

As humans, we are good at forming bonds with like-minded individuals. When we make friends, we are assigning others to our in-group. These constructs that we form not only affect our decisions, but also those of others.



Confirming preconceptions we already hold

People want to be right. So we often go out of our ways to confirm the ideas that we already have. For example, different news sites often cater to a specific audience type, in America CNN is typically a left-leaning media outlet, meaning democrats will typically watch this.

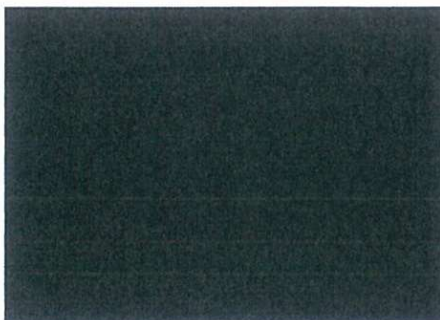
Whereas Fox news is right-leaning, meaning republicans will typically watch this. The news stories that these outlets run are presented in a completely different manner to fit their audience.



"I trust this site to tell the truth."

Perceiving and evaluating situations based on our preferences

Our preferences really do affect how we judge a person or situation. Have a watch of the video below to see this in action. (If you need headphones, contact Learning and Development)



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Maintaining the status quo

This often comes down to change and how our brains aren't wired for it. It's our brain's preference to favour the current state so we continue to choose old ways of doing things over the new, often better alternative. This status quo can undermine diversity awareness and inclusiveness.



CONTINUE

Structural Bias

These biases are not just created by individuals. Bias that affects how the core fabric of society works are known as structural bias. This is when an entire network of systems reflects rules, policies and practices that disadvantage less powerful groups.

Structural bias affects everyone by privileging some groups and marginalising others.

Have a go at sorting out the following statements into the groups that they likely apply to, this is an illustration of how structural bias works on a daily basis in New Zealand.

Maori / NZ European

Most suitable for employment

Least likely to be convicted

Maori / Pasifika

More likely to be convicted

Lowest expectations in education

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Highest expectations in
education

Least suitable for
employment

CONTINUE

It's likely that some of these statements made you feel uncomfortable. Unfortunately these are very real structural biases that impact different groups every day.

Remember, while some unconscious biases are important to our survival there are others, such as the examples above, that we should bring into our conscious to help change the impact they have on individuals within different groups.

Lesson 9 of 14

What Can We Do?



While you may believe that you are acting free of preconceptions or prejudice, your underlying bias may still be influencing your decisions.

But it isn't all doom and gloom. We can counter this by keeping the following points in mind when making a decision:

- Cognitive biases exist because the human brain is designed to create mental shortcuts.
- The impact that cognitive bias has on our decision-making and behaviour can be minimised.
- When we make a decision quickly it is often through a cognitive bias, which is different from taking time to make a decision which might expose out explicit bias.
- Our biases are more likely to occur when we are busy or distracted.



We will have a look at more strategies on dealing with our biases in the next section.

Lesson 10 of 14

Types of Bias Commonly Found in the Workplace

There are over 180 different types of biases. Below we've covered a small number of bias' that are commonly found in the workplace.

Click on each one for more detail.



Affinity Bias

Click to reveal

This is a preference towards people with similar qualities. Our brain sees them as being familiar and we want to be around people that we can relate to.



Attribution

This is how we assess other people; i.e. how we perceive our actions and those of others.

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Bias

Click to reveal



Beauty Bias

Click to reveal

This is how we judge others based on appearance and what we perceive an appropriate or successful person should look like.



Confirmation Bias

Click to reveal

This is how we search for evidence that backs up our own opinions, rather than looking at the whole picture.



This is a preference



Gender Bias

Click to reveal

for one gender over another. This stems from beliefs about gender roles/ stereotypes and/or because we favour those we can relate to.



Halo Effect

Click to reveal

This is when we hone in on a solitary positive feature and from that point on, everything about the person is viewed in a positive 'halo' light.



Horns Effect

This is when we hone in on a solitary negative feature and from that point on, everything about the person is viewed in a negative light. This clouds our view of

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Click to reveal

their other qualities.



Have a think...

Do any of these sound like they might apply to you?

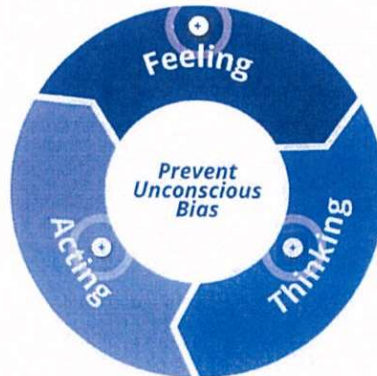
We all have them, it is nothing to be ashamed of.

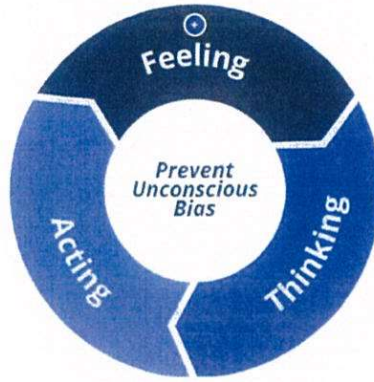
Lesson 11 of 14

Strategies for Countering Bias

Preventing unconscious bias in the workplace is vital in ensuring that our organisations remain diverse.

Click on the icons in the image below for strategies you can employ when tackling your unconscious bias.





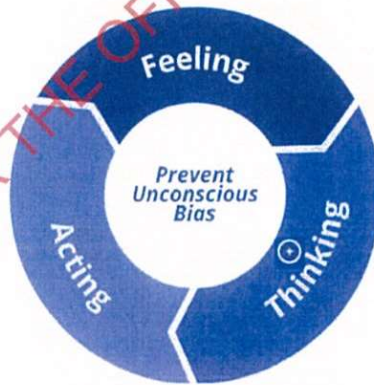
Feeling

Questions

- What am I feeling?
- Why am I feeling this way?
- How do others feel?

Checklist

- Don't react, be mindful
- Be an observer, be objective
- Describe what is going on



Thinking

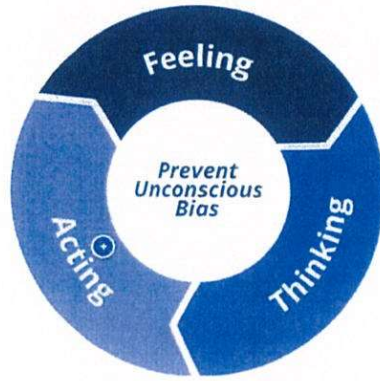
Questions

- Who is involved?
- What are their intentions?
- Are any assumptions being made?
- What do we need to achieve?

Checklist

- Take stock of the situation and priorities
- Identify key factors
- Minimise miscommunication

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Acting

Questions

- What is the best course of action?
- What is the plan to move ahead?
- Who is responsible for what?

Checklist

- Ensure safety and security for everyone
- Paraphrase issues to everyone involved
- Be rational and pragmatic
- Form a SMART plan with individual responsibilities
(SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant & Timely)

Lesson 12 of 14

Strategies for Creating Diversity

Having a greater understanding of your own unconscious bias helps to create a more diverse workplace.

The Five A's

Click on each of the items below for more information.



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Awareness

Examine your own behaviour to understand and become aware of your own personal values and biases. Learn from the experiences of others.



Authenticity

Feelings of threat and fear of the unknown are normal, especially when it comes to diversity. Take ownership of this feeling and bring your own skills and experience to the conversation.

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Assumptions

Understand your own assumptions and actively work to challenge them. Question these assumptions to reduce the likelihood of prejudice and discrimination against others



Association

Keep talking. Develop associations with others in an open dialogue, learn about diversity in all its forms

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Action

Don't be a bystander. Take action when you feel that people are being treated with inequity. Fairness is different from everyone being treated the same.

Keep these five As in the forefront of your mind to grow your understanding and awareness of diversity and to help contribute to enhancing the cultural makeup in the workplace.

Lesson 12 of 14

Quiz

You have come to the end of the course. It's now time to check what you have learnt. If you get stuck, go back and have a look through the course again.

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Question

01/04

Match the definitions to the bias type.

<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive Bias	Hard to function without them, some save our lives. We need to identify & change bad ones
<input type="checkbox"/> Unconscious Bias	A bias that you are aware of. Becomes unconscious if change isn't made

Question

02/04

Which sentence best describes what biases are?

- Biases always have a negative impact on individuals and their diversity awareness
- Biases are misinterpreted as being negative, when in fact the impact they have on your life is positive
- Biases can be positive, but having a better understanding of negative biases helps mitigate their impact

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Question

03/04

Arrange the following to show how cognitive biases work.

- Perceptions are formed Step 1
- Experiences are had Step 2
- Change isn't made Step 3
- Realities created Step 4

Question

04/04

Assign each bias with the right definition.

- Halo effect This is a preference for people with similar qualities
- Affinity bias This is how we assess other people; i.e. how we perceive our actions and those of others
- Gender bias This is how we judge others based on appearance
- Confirmation bias Searching for evidence that backs up our own opinions
- Beauty bias This stems from beliefs about gender roles/stereotypes
- Horns effect A single impressive feature prevents us from looking at the big picture

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Attribution bias

A single negative feature clouds our view of a person's other qualities

Lesson 14 of 14

Wrap up



Implicit Bias Test

Why not have a go at completing the Harvard Implicit Bias test [s6\(a\)](#) it will give you an idea of where your biases lie, which can help you in making necessary changes.

To find it go Google "Project Implicit", and pick Australia as the language.

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① Remember, identifying unconscious bias is just the first step. Learning to understand your own biases' and making changes to minimise the negative impacts is the next step.



Bystander Awareness Course

This course will provide you with information and a toolkit for standing up to or reporting unprofessional behaviour in our agencies

[OPEN COURSE](#)

If you are a Manager...

In order to contextualise the content covered in this module we're running 1.5 hour workshops. This will be a space to explore some of the themes covered throughout this module and discuss practical ways of mitigating Unconscious Bias within our teams and workplace.

Keep an eye on your inbox for more information on this workshop. It is mandatory for all managers.

① If you are a manager and complete this course you will be added into the course of the Face-to-Face workshop and notified of the next cohort.

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