



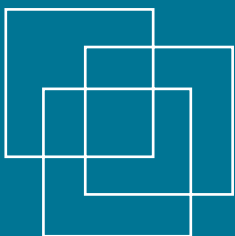
ACT/EMP
The Bureau for Employers' Activities



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ACT/EMP Research note

Breaking barriers: Unconscious gender bias in the workplace



ACT/EMP

Research note

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Breaking barriers: Unconscious gender bias in the workplace

Unconscious gender bias remains a significant barrier to women's career advancement.

It is also difficult to identify and prevent. This research note provides a review of unconscious gender bias and its role in impeding women's career advancement before discussing how to mitigate and overcome unconscious gender bias in the workplace.

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Introduction

Globally, women are underrepresented in corporations, and the share of women decreases with each step up the corporate hierarchy. Women encounter many barriers to advancement into corporate leadership positions, and these barriers include gender-based discrimination as well as unconscious gender bias. Many companies have shown their commitment to gender equality by establishing family friendly policies and facilitating women's careers and professional networks. Nevertheless, unconscious gender bias continues to impact women in the workplace, and more must be done to enable highly skilled women to advance into leadership positions.

This research note provides a review of unconscious gender bias and its role in impeding women's career advancement before discussing how to mitigate and overcome unconscious gender bias in the workplace.¹ The first part of this research note explains unconscious gender bias and provides examples of challenges to women's career advancement that arise from it. The second part examines mitigation measures and their effectiveness to date. The third part describes practical steps that employers' organizations can take to help their members to reduce the impact of unconscious bias.

1. Unconscious gender bias in the workplace

Unconscious gender bias is defined as unintentional and automatic mental associations based on gender, stemming from traditions, norms, values, culture and/or experience. Automatic associations feed into decision-making, enabling a quick assessment of an individual according to gender and gender stereotypes. Organizations can take steps to counteract gender biases and other types of biases, thus the presence of unconscious gender bias in an individual does not automatically translate into biases in the workplace.

The ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) surveyed many companies on the top barriers to women's leadership. The results were published in the global report on *Women in Business and Management: Gaining momentum*. Five of the barriers to women's leadership were related to discrimination and unconscious gender bias. According to the report, the second most-cited barrier was the social roles of men and women. Respondents also mentioned the general perception that management is a man's job. The third most-cited barrier was masculine corporate culture. The respondents also cited stereotypes against women and inherent gender bias in recruitment and promotion.²

Likewise, research by McKinsey and Company confirmed that invisible barriers are holding women back, rather than overt sexism alone. Gender biases in the mindsets of managers can prevent women from advancing into leadership positions.³ Many companies have taken steps to facilitate women's

1 This research note forms part of ILO ACT/EMP's global initiative on Women in Business and Management which seeks to better understand the realities, challenges and opportunities facing women in leadership positions. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency-ILO Partnership Programme provided funds to produce this note.

2 ILO ACT/EMP: *Women in business and management: Gaining momentum*, Global report, 2015.

3 J. Bush and L. Yee: "Changing companies' minds about women", in *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2011, Sep.

networking and career growth, but more can be done to identify and overcome unconscious gender bias to truly give women and men an equal chance to advance into leadership positions.

1.1 Gender bias in company practices and structures

In recent years women have gained significant ground in the world of work. They have entered many sectors and excelled in fields that were once the exclusive domain of men. Despite the progress that has been made toward gender equality, women are sometimes held back by company practices and structure that are biased toward men. This section provides an overview of human resources practices and other factors in which unconscious bias may hinder the career advancement of women.

Performance evaluation

Processes and programmes that reflect stereotypically masculine criteria naturally place women in worse positions and negatively impact their opportunities. Talent management documents may have pro-male definitions of leadership, and some talent management criteria and competencies included in performance review documents have a masculine bias. For instance, the McKinsey report *Women Matter* cited one company's performance indicator "unfailing availability and total geographical mobility" as a leadership criterion. In general, the reduced domestic obligations of men make it easier for them to be available and geographically mobile. Thus, this criterion has a pro-male, pro-childless bias, and thus penalizes women, particularly working mothers.⁴

Project assignments

Leading or participating in an important project increases an employee's visibility and competitiveness for promotion. Staff are generally assigned to projects in one of two ways. Senior executives or teams of employees were often involved in the assignment decision for projects with high visibility, high consequences, significant responsibilities, and/or requiring highly specific skill sets or competencies. Assignments to lower profile projects are often made selectively by business unit managers or designated employees.⁵ In either case, the decision about who should be assigned to a project may be impacted by stereotypes and unconscious biases. In the absence of first-hand knowledge of the staff and experience or training to minimize the impact of gender bias these decisions may rely heavily on perceptions that result from stereotypic impressions rather than on the employee's skills and merit.

Meritocracy

Companies tend to prioritize and focus on performance. However, the "paradox of meritocracy" is that the rewards of strong performance may accrue to the employees that already enjoy significant advantages.⁶ Where women incur social or cultural disadvantages, a purely merit-based performance appraisal may simply reinforce those inequalities. Furthermore, managers may be over-confident in their capacity to make impartial judgements and may be unaware of the gender stereotypes they hold. In contexts that emphasize meritocracy, safeguards are needed to minimize managerial discretion and ensure accountability. Compensation and promotions committees should consider the possibility of

4 McKinsey & Company: *Women Matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver* (2007).

5 A.K. Warren: *Cascading gender biases, compounding effects: An assessment of talent management systems* (Catalyst, 9 Feb. 2009).

6 I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

unconscious bias if the performance management policy and procedure allows the manager a high degree discretion, as this could work against female employees.

Leadership development programmes

Men and women rarely have equal access to participation in leadership development programmes, even though this is critical for progression up the corporate hierarchy. Programmes are primarily offered for senior leaders or those thought to have high potential. Employees do not have equal access to these opportunities. Women reported far fewer interactions with a senior leader than their male counterparts and this gap widens with career advancement. At the senior management level, only 51 per cent of women compared to 62 per cent of men reported that they interacted with a company leader at least once a week.⁷

Norms

Workplace norms may hinder women's careers. For example, when senior leadership positions are held exclusively by men (which is indeed the typical phenomenon), it perpetuates the "think-manager-think-male" perspective. Companies should be mindful of the visibility of minorities and the impact it has on the stereotyping of social groups.⁸ Furthermore, policies such as quotas may also (but not always) create the impression that women's token presence is sufficient progress toward gender equality, doing away the need to continue to work to overcome the fundamental issue of gender bias.

1.2 Assessing unconscious bias against women at work

To overcome the obstacles outlined in the foregoing section, the first step is for organizations to assess unconscious gender bias in their operations and measure its impact on staff. Organizations can use a variety of methods, including perceptions surveys, language analysis, analysis of gender gaps in pay and career advancement, and they can even run experiments. Each of these methods is described below.

Perception surveys

One of the most common methods of assessing unconscious gender bias at work is to gather data on people's experiences. Indeed, the global report on *Women in Business and Management*, as well as the reports from the regional level, used this approach. Companies were asked to list barriers to women's advancement into leadership roles. Another perception survey of women professionals in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Australia found that 70 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that unconscious bias had negatively impacted their career advancement, and 60 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that it had negatively impacted their earnings.⁹ Ernst and Young conducted a perception survey of 400 managers from a cross-section of industries globally (40 per cent from Europe, the Middle East, India and Africa; 30 per cent from North America; and 30 per cent from

7 McKinsey & Company: *Women in the workplace, 2016*. The survey sample included more than 34,000 employees of companies across North America. Each participating company submitted data through 31 Dec. 2015 on the gender diversity talent pipeline, policies and programmes. Pipeline data included the current gender balance (overall and by race/ethnicity), distribution of line and staff roles, number of hires, promotions, and employees who left the company by gender. Reporting on the employee experience is based on a survey from 39 companies. Survey comprised 83 questions.

8 I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

9 Professionals Australia: *Unconscious gender bias in the STEM professions* (Melbourne, 2015).

Asia and the Pacific). Men listed unconscious bias as the top barrier they witnessed to women's career progression.¹⁰

Language analysis

Nowadays, job descriptions that specify the preferred gender of the ideal candidate are less common (though it still happens in some parts of the world).¹¹ However, even when a job description lacks overt sexism, it may replicate and reinforce gender stereotypes in subtle ways. For example, certain words are associated with common gender stereotypes, and these words can signal an unconscious gender bias. Research conducted in 2005 in the United States found an association between women and adjectives such as 'emotional', 'mild', 'pleasant', 'sensitive', 'warm', 'affectionate' and 'friendly', and between men and adjectives such as 'dominant', 'achievement-oriented', 'ambitious', 'self-confident', 'rational', 'tough' and 'aggressive'. If leaders and job descriptions for leadership roles in an organization are described with words commonly associated with the male gender, such as 'dominant' and 'ambitious', then male applicants may benefit from an unconscious bias in their favour. Men would be regarded as a natural fit for the job, while the unconscious bias would work against women.

A study of job ads posted on Canada's leading job search websites assessed the language used to describe occupations typically held by men versus those typically held by women.¹² The study found a correlation between the use of gender stereotyped words in the vacancy announcement and the proportion of men and women in a profession. A higher share of male-stereotypic words appeared in job ads for the most male-dominated occupations, such as plumbers, while a lower number was used for computer programmers. Likewise, a higher share of female-stereotypic words appeared in vacancy announcements for administrative assistants than for human resources professionals. Furthermore, the research undertook experiments revealing that people were able to infer from the advertisements the extent to which the profession was dominated either by men or women, and that women find jobs less appealing if they infer them to be male dominated.

Gender bias in language extends beyond vacancy announcements into other kinds of communication. Catalyst, a leading research and advisory organization, analysed talent management systems data collected from 110 corporations representing 19 different industries (the research included interviews, analysis of documents of some of the participating companies and an online survey). The analysis showed that stereotypically masculine behaviours appeared more frequently in talent management documents focusing on senior leadership positions than in other talent management documents.¹³

Analysis of gender gaps

This method builds on the assumption that gender gaps in workplaces arise in part from gender bias. Common gender gaps include both career advancement and pay, as well as gaps in hiring and

10 Ernst & Young: *Women. Fast Forward: The time for gender parity is now* (2015).

11 An examination of online job ads in China aimed at highly educated urban job seekers posted during 2008 and 2009 revealed that about one-third of the more than 70,000 firms identified the sex of the ideal employee in one or more of their ads. When targeting women, the ads encouraged young, tall and attractive applicants; and when targeting men, they encouraged older applicants. See I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

12 Gaucher and Friesen: "Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2011)

13 A.K. Warren: *Cascading gender biases, compounding effects: An assessment of talent management systems* (Catalyst, 9 Feb. 2009).

opportunities for mentoring and professional development. An analysis of these gaps may show the impact of unconscious gender bias.

A gender gap has been observed in corporate jobs that are prerequisites to leadership positions and executive management, such as line functions (positions with profit-and-loss responsibility or a focus on core operations). McKinsey and Company's analysis of data from 132 companies showed a correlation between an employee's function and his or her gender. At more senior levels, women tend to shift from line functions to staff roles (positions in human resources and public relations) resulting in few women remaining on the path to the highest level of management.¹⁴ The tendency for women to take staff roles while men take sales and general management roles, suggests the presence of an unconscious gender bias dividing men and women.

A study of employees of a large service organization found that even when there are no gender differences in performance appraisals, more men than women received promotions. This occurred even when the organization explicitly linked rewards to performance.¹⁵ Bohnet argued that the performance-reward bias towards men may result from the stereotype that women would not demand or negotiate a promotion. Another study examined data of more than 8,000 employees in a firm in the financial sector and found a larger gender gap in bonuses and variable pay than in base salary or merit raises after controlling for performance. Bohnet attributed this to the lack of formal rules for the distribution of bonuses and variable pay while the base salary was subjected to formal rules. Unconscious gender bias appears to have a greater negative impact on women when decisions are made in the absence of formal rules.

Unconscious bias can also impact how employers view prospective employees who are parents. A study compared equally qualified candidates and found that mothers were significantly less likely to be recommended for hire or when they were recommended for hire, they were offered starting salaries on average US\$11,000 lower than equally qualified childless women. Fathers, by contrast, were not penalized when compared to childless men, but were offered significantly higher salaries than childless men.¹⁶ This difference suggests the influence of a bias that penalizes women, particularly working mothers.

Employees need feedback on their work as a critical contribution to their efforts to improve their performance. McKinsey found that women received less feedback than their male counterparts despite asking for informal feedback as often as men do.¹⁷

Experiments

This method relies on subjects to describe their perceptions of gender when presented with a certain scenario or set of facts. The 'Howard vs. Heidi' case study explored the competency-likeability trade-off for women leaders. Subjects in the study were asked to evaluate the performance and rate the competency and effectiveness of a candidate, presented alternately as either Howard or Heidi. All other

¹⁴ McKinsey & Company: *Women in the workplace*, 2016.

¹⁵ I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

¹⁶ S.J. Correll, S. Benard and I. Paik: "Getting a job: Is there a motherhood penalty?" in *American Journal of Sociology* (2007, Vol. 112, No. 5, Mar.) pp. 1297–1338.

¹⁷ McKinsey & Company: *Women in the workplace*, 2016.

details remained the same. The candidate was presented as a venture capitalist, former entrepreneur and proficient networker. The candidate co-founded a very successful technology company, became an executive at Apple and then turned to venture capitalism. Most recently, the candidate joined the board of directors of several prestigious companies.

When presented with the candidate identified as 'Howard', the subjects rated him as highly competent and effective. They also found him likeable and were willing to hire him or work with him. However, when presented with the same information for a candidate identified as 'Heidi', the subjects rated her differently. While the subjects found Heidi as competent and effective, they did not like her or did not want to work with her. Given that gender was the only variable in the case study, it is reasonable to infer a gender bias that high-achieving women are less likeable than high-achieving men. According to Bohnet, entrepreneurship, self-confidence and vision are celebrated in men, but these qualities are perceived as arrogance and self-promotion in women. The trade-off between success and likeability intensifies when women are in jobs considered 'typically male'.¹⁸

2. Mitigating unconscious bias

Unconscious gender bias can exist in both individuals and organizations. This section looks at steps organizations can take to prevent unconscious gender biases from influencing an individual's decisions.

2.1 Methods for objective personnel decisions and talent management

Companies must ensure that hiring and promotion processes extend equal opportunities to men and women. Most companies report having policies in place to support unbiased hiring, performance review and promotion, but those policies are not always comprehensive or implemented effectively. This section describes measures that can help companies reduce the impact of unconscious gender bias in critical workforce management processes.

Blind evaluation

Hiding a job applicants' physical attributes can prevent implicit bias from influencing the selection process. This is a relatively simple way to minimize bias, however, only a small percentage of companies have applied this practice.¹⁹ Several online recruitment platforms have software to help companies see past physical attributes and improve the hiring and evaluation procedure. For instance, GapJumpers requires each jobseeker to solve skill-based challenges predictive of future performance at work. Performance on the challenges is the sole factor determining which jobseekers advance to the next stage of the evaluation. This approach does not prevent unconscious bias from interfering later in the application process, but it eliminates bias from the initial stage. According to GapJumpers, following the blind testing round, about 58 per cent of the jobseekers who were selected for an interview were women, and 68 per cent of those who were ultimately hired were women. GapJumpers has seen an

18 I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

19 McKinsey & Company: *Women in the workplace*, 2016.

average 60 per cent increase in job placement of diverse candidates through blind testing.²⁰

Structured recruitment and performance evaluation

A structured recruitment process is crucial to minimize the impact of unconscious gender bias on hiring decisions. Structured interviews ensure all candidates are evaluated according to relevant and pre-determined criteria related to work performance. Comparative evaluations of the candidates answers according to explicit criteria can help to reduce gender bias and enable hiring authorities to more easily select the candidate with the best performance.

Without a structured approach to individual performance evaluation, a company is vulnerable to unconscious bias. Some companies have implemented a system of ranking to make their supervisors assess their subordinates according to uniform criteria. However, the evidence on rating and ranking systems in performance management is not conclusive, and their impact on male and female employees is not sufficiently studied.²¹ Generally, to mitigate the influence of unconscious bias on intuitive judgments, training for those in charge of reviewing performance and putting in place processes and procedures that enhance judgments could help, such as having a few evaluators doing independent assessments before coming together, and clearly listing each metric. Evaluators can be required to explain how they derive scores for each candidate or employee. Human resources can have oversight to spot any signs of unconscious gender bias.

Transparency and accountability

Scotiabank adopted a completely transparent career advancement process in which employees self-assess their progress and determine steps they should take to develop the skills and experience for promotion to the next level. This strategy was implemented along with other initiatives to ensure a broad pool of candidates was considered for promotion and evaluated objectively. Scotiabank established the Human Investment Committee, comprising the President, Chief Executive Officer and their direct reports to discuss major policies and programmes. Finally, Scotiabank formalized the position of Senior Vice President of Top Talent and hired a woman for the post to mentor high-potential men and women. The result was a significant increase in the number of women at the senior management level, from 18.9 per cent in 2003 to 31.0 per cent in 2006. Likewise, the share of women at the highest level (executive vice president/corporate officer) increased from 26.7 per cent in 2003 to 36.8 per cent in 2006.²²

2.2 Using data

Unconscious bias can be revealed by analysing data patterns and identifying gender gaps. These gaps can be assessed as potential areas for intervention. Stereotypes and biases can make it difficult to be objective in assessing and making inferences about the observed outcomes. For example, two of the largest stock brokerage firms in the United States were reported to be paying female staff about 60 per cent of what male staff received. Stockbrokers received commissions from sale of securities to their clients, and it was easy to infer that the female brokers earned less because they sold less than their male colleagues.

20 GapJumpers, <https://www.gapjumpers.me/> [accessed 18 June 2017].

21 I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

22 A.K. Warren: *Cascading gender biases, compounding effects: An assessment of talent management systems* (Catalyst, 9 Feb. 2009).

Data analysis revealed, however, that the female brokers had been given inferior accounts and sales opportunities, and thus were not on an equal footing with their male colleagues.²³

Large organizations with data analytics capability are increasingly turning to data to identify gender inequalities and overcome these obstacles. For example, Google examined employee data and found that its female employees were quitting the company at twice the average rate. Employee turnover is costly, so Google wanted to reduce the rate. Further data analysis revealed that it was in fact young mothers, rather than female employees in general, who were twice as likely to quit. This insight drove Google to introduce a new maternity and paternity leave plan. The plan has had a significant impact, as new mothers at Google are now no more likely to leave than the average employee. Google has since identified five indicators that are most predictive of turnover, and has targeted its interventions accordingly.²⁴

2.3 Training employees

Companies have invested in diversity training to change attitudes and behaviours. However, there is insufficient evidence about the impact of training. For example, “Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies” analysed 800 mid- to large-size companies in the United States from 1971 to 2002 and found that diversity training had no relationship to the diversity of the workforce. In fact, in some cases diversity training was associated with a reduced likelihood that certain under-represented groups became managers.²⁵ It may be that diversity training programmes have not succeeded because they have not targeted unconscious bias. Diversity training likely focused instead on deliberative, conscious thinking.²⁶

According to McKinsey and Company (2016), almost all companies offer anti-harassment/discrimination training but far fewer offer employees training to eliminate bias in hiring (67 per cent) and in performance reviews (56 per cent). When employees do not understand how bias works, they are less likely to identify it in themselves and come to fair and accurate decisions. They are less likely to push back on bias when they experience it.²⁷

Even if training on unconscious gender bias is in place, the training may not be properly executed. The insights of experts on this topic indicate that training aimed at promoting awareness of unconscious bias in general is not enough to overcome it. The training must be complemented with capacity building so that people learn strategies to mitigate the impact of their unconscious biases. It must also offer support to those who are making the effort to tackle their unconscious biases.

23 J.F. Madden: “Performance-support bias and the gender pay gap among stockbrokers”, in *Gender and Society* (2012, Vol. 26, No. 3), pp. 488–518.

24 I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

25 A. Kalev, F. Dobbin and E. Kelly: “Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies”, in *American Sociological Review* (2006, Vol. 71, Aug.) pp. 589–617; F. Dobbin, A. Kalev and E. Kelly: “Diversity management in corporate America”, in *Contexts* (2007, Vol. 6, No. 4) pp. 21–27.

26 I. Bohnet: *What works: Gender equality by design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

27 McKinsey & Company: *Women in the workplace*, 2016.

3. Overcoming unconscious gender bias

This section describes methods of supporting companies and people who aim to reduce the impact of unconscious gender bias in the workplace. Employers' organizations can help their members to understand risk factors, identify specific threats and work with them to implement mitigation measures. Another option is to provide training that targets unconscious gender bias.

Analysis

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for unconscious gender bias. Effective interventions depend on the context and challenges in the company. Catalyst, for example, supports its member companies with the Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument to help them assess their level of risk and select priorities for intervention. It assesses structural factors which have been found by socio-psychological research to be particularly important in the development and maintenance of gender stereotypes. The factors included in the Stereotypes Diagnostic Instrument are:

- i. **Organizational size and industry:** While organizational size does not directly affect risk, the number of employees may influence the ways in which other risk factors intersect and the effectiveness of human resource practices in promoting change. As for industry, male-dominated industries are found to be particularly prone to gender stereotyping and women in these industries encounter barriers to advancement.²⁸
- ii. **Ratio of women and men in the organization overall and within a division, and at different organizational levels:** Stereotypic bias is more likely to occur where the gender composition of the workforce is lopsided or where a few individuals have been placed in token positions. Gender stratification, where leadership positions are held by one gender and support positions held by the other, may result in generalizations about the role of gender in determining which people can hold certain jobs.
- iii. **Human resource practices:** Current efforts to become more inclusive are relevant factors, including the implementation of human resource programmes to improve hiring and promotional practices, and performance evaluation practices (for example, whether there is objective and unambiguous evaluation criteria). Other relevant factors are related to personnel, the gender composition of committees, and training. To accurately analyse human resource practices, research will need access to the participating companies' performance management documents.
- iv. **Organizational climate:** Primarily norms related to the "ideal worker" and the leadership style that corresponds to the corporate culture.

Evaluation tools help companies to identify priorities and track qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess their progress towards gender diversity goals. So far, multinational enterprises or their subsidiaries

28 D.J. Maume: "Occupational segregation and career mobility of white men and women", in *Social Forces* (1999), Vol. 77, No. 4, June) pp. 1433–1459.

have benefitted from these tools, but many other enterprises have not had the opportunity. Employers' organizations can consider filling this gap in supporting local companies, whether small or large, to reduce the harmful impact of unconscious gender bias. In partnership with local think tanks, human resources firms and academia, employers' organizations can localize existing tools and adapt them to the needs of their members.

Training

Employers' organizations can also provide targeted training to companies on unconscious biases, whether related specifically to gender or other factors. Training programmes usually follow the formula of identifying implicit and structural biases in the company, demonstrating the impact of the bias and equipping the training participants with skills and strategies to recognize and overcome their unconscious biases. For example, the National Women's Council of Ireland launched an unconscious bias training pack in February 2016 which outlines the negative consequences of failing to address unconscious gender bias in recruitment, promotion and retention policies and lists the benefits to organizations of greater gender balance in decision-making roles.²⁹ The training pack is available to employers free of charge and provides a complete set of tools for a half-day training workshop on unconscious gender bias. Case studies help the training participants to better understand and identify unconscious bias and adapt their own workplace culture, processes and practices to promote gender balance. The pack also includes notes for trainers on how to approach the sessions and achieve effective delivery of the training programme.

Conclusion

This research note shows that studies on unconscious gender bias related to workplaces are found overwhelmingly in North America and Europe. So far, research has focused on multinational companies and additional research is needed to generate data on the impact of unconscious gender bias in many other countries that likely face similar challenges.

National employers' organizations can take an active role in filling the information gap. They can engage with their members and the business community to raise awareness of the impact of unconscious gender bias. They can also provide services to help their members mitigate the impacts of unconscious gender bias in workplace.

29 National Women's Council of Ireland: "Recognising and challenging our unconscious bias", Sample training pack, 2016, http://www.nwci.ie/images/uploads/NWCI_Training_Pack_Final.pdf [accessed 18 June 2017].

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