

Beyond Unconscious Bias

Inclusiveness in European Leadership

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Requisitioned by CEC European Managers

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Beyond Unconscious Bias - Inclusiveness in European Leadership

Introduction

The leader of the *Global Institute for Women's Leadership* at the Australian National University Michelle Ryan¹ notes that organisations typically make three mistakes when striving to achieve equality:

1. **Overemphasis the quantity of minority employees** – thereby overestimating their degree of influence, their visibility, the recognition they receive, and their access to resources (compared to the majority group members).
2. **Overemphasis on the training of individual employees** – thereby overlooking the culture in the organisation. This approach has been labelled the “fixing the minority-approach”.
3. **Overoptimism** – overestimating the representation of minorities in the organisation as well as their role in decision making organs and management structures.

However, in order to achieve change it “requires sustained investment, appropriate incentives and evidence-based interventions”². This is asking a lot of organisations. Managers need to invest time and money in *re-thinking* and *re-shaping* their organisations through the lens of diversity if they are to harness the value of minorities and organisational diversity. The first step in this process is to identify the challenges and consider them worth solving. That is, in order to make an organisational change (a) the diversity challenges need to be made *visible* and (b) considered a challenge *worth investing in*.³⁴⁵ This project and the report is designed to bring *visibility* to the diversity challenges in your organisations. But as this report will show, not everyone is motivated to make all types of biases visible in order to address them. The focus of this report is biases in relation to: (a) gender, (b) race, (c) people identifying with LGBT+ categories, as well as (d) age. We will show that managers within your organisations are more motivated to address age and gender bias, than they are to address race and LGBT+ biases – despite all the four types of biases being close to equally severe in your organisation.

¹ Ryan, M. K. (2022). To Advance Equality for Women, Use the Evidence. *Nature*.

² Ryan, M. K. (2022). To Advance Equality for Women, Use the Evidence. *Nature*.

³ Acker, J. (2006). Inequality Regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender and Society, 20(4)*, 441-464.

⁴ Devine, P.G. & Monteith, M.J. (1993). Affect, cognition, and stereotyping: Interactive processes in group perception. San Diego, CA: Academic Press. The role of discrepancy-associated affect in prejudice reduction, pp. 317-344.

⁵ Devine, P.G., Forscher, P.S., Austin, A.J, and Cox, W.T.L. (2012). Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48*: 1267-1278.

Bias versus Discrimination

If we are to intervene on *biases* and *discrimination* in the workplace, we first need to be explicit about what these terms mean. *Bias* refers to an irrational expectation we form about someone simply due to which social categories they belong to (rather than being based on our knowledge about the person's skill set or abilities). For instance, it might be the expectation that a particular person will be more communal because they happen to identify as a woman. Or it might be the expectation that a gay man will be more stereotypically feminine and therefore less agentic, compared to a heterosexual man. Often, we have internalised these expectations from our families, our educational contexts, and the media. That is, a *bias is an irrational or unfounded expectation of someone based on gender, race, sexual orientation or age*. We all have these biases (or unfounded expectations), but in bias work we strive to become more aware of them and how they affect our actions and decisions.

But if biases are just expectations we form in our heads, then why might they pose challenges worth addressing in the workplace? Biases are worth addressing, because as soon as we act on biases or irrational expectation (with words or with actions) we are discriminating against someone. For instance, if we assume that we need to find a woman for a particular work task because it involves emotional labour - and we assume that all women are better at emotional tasks - we are acting in a discriminatory way in the workplace. If we consider a job applicant an ill fit for a technically demanding job, simply because they happen to be an older person - and we expect older people to be technically challenged - then we are being discriminatory in the workplace. This is also why it can be a good idea to remove as much information about which social categories applicants belong to when we assess their CV's and job applications. In this way we can ensure that we are assessing their skill set and abilities, rather than the fit between the social categories they belong to and the majority of employees in our organisation.

Interventions

Interventions addressing biases are typically categorized into two types: (a) individual level interventions, or (b) structural or cultural level interventions. Bias intervention in its early days typically applied *individual level interventions* - often in the form of "fixing the minority-approaches"⁶, for example courses teaching female employees how to "lean in"⁷ or behave more like men (and therefore asking women to assimilate to a male dominated culture or norm). These types of interventions only target subgroups amongst the employees, specifically the minorities. Furthermore, these types of interventions often assume that the work environment will be improved if all employees behave like the

⁶ Ryan, M. K. (2022). To Advance Equality for Women, Use the Evidence. *Nature*.

⁷ Sandberg, S. (2013) *Lean In – Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. W. H. Allen.

majority of the organisation. This overlooks that people are not treated like the majority members of the organisation (independent of how they act), if they do not belong to the social categories of the majority. Even if women *lean in* and behave in a way that is more masculine, they may still be read and discriminated against as women. Another downside to this approach is that it aims to solve a *cultural problem* by fixing one minority group member at a time, when in fact the cultural norm of the organisation is primarily carried by the employees belonging to the majority. Simplistically put, the “fixing the minority-approaches”⁸ strives to compensate for the existing biases in the organisation by asking members of the minority to overcompensate for the majority’s cultural norms and biases. But to successfully solve bias challenges, the heart of the problem needs to be addressed: organisations need to avoid systematically favouring the majority group members over minority group members; for hiring, evaluations, promotion, salary, and degrees of influence within the organisation. That is, whoever the organisation was designed *by and for*, will benefit disproportionately from belonging to the majority unless these biases are addressed explicitly. If one is in doubt about who that might be within one’s own organisation, it is most likely to be the group who dominates the top of the organisation. Simply put, those who earn the biggest pay check, and make most of the important decisions within the organisation, will be the ones who belong to the favoured social categories in the organisation. The way to best address the biases which favours the majority members, is by creating an awareness of what the majority culture or norms are, and how these create disadvantages for minorities. Once we know that, we can start creating more space for the people who ‘deviate’ from the cultural norms by belonging to different social categories. Every employee that is perceived as ‘deviating’ from the cultural norms in an organisation indirectly offer us information about what the norms currently are.

The realisation that “fixing the minority-approaches”⁹ has in fact only treated the symptoms, without treated the underlying cause, has brought about a change in focus of bias interventions. Now, almost all bias interventions focus on *structural or cultural level interventions* which involve all employees in an organisation, including the majority groups. In fact, the focus is very often on the majority group, because they are the primary carriers of the cultural norms. The majority needs to develop explicit knowledge about the organisation’s implicit cultural norms, in order to gradually challenge these cultural norms, and thereby contribute to a more inclusive work environment.

We all have implicit associations about people belonging to different social categories (based on gender, race, sexual orientation and age etc.)¹⁰. For instance, we often expect men to be more agentic, and women to be more communal. Or we expect young people

⁸ Ryan, M. K. (2022). To Advance Equality for Women, Use the Evidence. *Nature*.

⁹ See above footnote.

¹⁰ Rudman, L. A. and Glick, P. (2021). *The Social Psychology of Gender – How Power and Intimacy Shape Gender Relations*. Routledge.

to be great at technology, and older people to be at a loss with new technology. These associations shape our expectations of others – both explicitly and implicitly. When people conform to our expectations, we do not spend much cognitive energy on them or their actions. However, if they violate our normative expectations, we notice them (and the cultural norms or expectation they violated). This means that we never meet anyone as a ‘blank slate’. We are human, so we never assess or evaluate anyone objectively. Our brain colours the world and other people in the light of our expectations and cultural norms. Therefore, all assessments depend on which social categories (we assume) people belong to. Bias studies show again and again that people’s employability, capabilities, and salaries are adjusted according to which social categories they happen to belong to. Studies also show that the more objective we believe ourselves to be, the more biased we in fact are¹¹.

Diversity versus Inclusion

As Ryan¹² notes an “overemphasis [on] the quantity of minority employees” is a typical bias challenge. Thus, it is not sufficient to just bring in a diverse workforce. One needs to ensure the minority employees are empowered within the organisation as well. Merely having minorities in the organization does not indicate that one has overcome biases. In fact, hiring diverse employees is just the start of the *re-thinking* and *re-shaping* of the organisation. Once the minority employees are introduced to the organisation the next step is making them stay and thrive. To achieve this, one needs to be aware of what *inclusion* entails.

Shore et al.¹³ explains inclusion through two axes: the first axes being (a) the value of uniqueness, and the second axes being (b) the degree of belongingness. With these two axes they capture four different types of organisational environments or cultures: *Exclusion, Assimilation, Differentiation, and Inclusion*. Of these four types of cultures *exclusion* is the least beneficial for both the individual employee and the organisation, while the *inclusive* culture is the one that benefits the individual employees and the organisation the most.

¹¹ Skewes, L., Skewes, J. C. & Ryan, M. K. (2019). Attitudes to Sexism and Gender Equality at a Danish University. In *Women, Gender & Research’s* special issue on Gender and Academia, 27 (1-2), 71-85.

¹² Ryan, M. K. (2022). To Advance Equality for Women, Use the Evidence. *Nature*.

¹³ Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart & Singh (2011). Inclusion and Diversity in Group Work: A Review and Model for Future Research, *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1262-1289.

Table 1: *Forms of exclusion/inclusion based on uniqueness and belongingness of individuals from minority groups*

	High value of uniqueness	Low value of uniqueness
Low belongingness	Differentiation	Exclusion
High belongingness	Inclusion	Assimilation

Most managers can identify *exclusion* (that is if an organisation has a low degree of appreciation for employee’s uniqueness *and* if the organisation does not prioritise employees’ sense of belonging). In organisations like this, minority groups will rarely be hired in the first place, and if they are hired, they will typically churn quickly out of the organisation. This is an obvious waste of resources, that makes exclusion easy to identify. However, some leaders mistake *assimilation* (where the minority exclusively must adjust to the majority culture) and *differentiation* (where subgroups of employees gather with each other, but do not integrate with the organisation at large) as forms of *inclusion*. But *assimilation* and *differentiation* are instead forms of *pseudo-inclusion*¹⁴. If one wishes to optimise the positive effects of diversity in one’s organisation, one should strive for genuine *inclusion*:

“Real inclusion happens when you manage to create a feeling of belongingness across different groups, so that people can feel valued for their uniqueness while belonging to a whole – your organisation.” (Luthra & Muhr, 2023, 20).

“Inclusion is a culture, an environment, where everyone is able to bring their unique self, feel respected and appreciated as a valuable member, where their voices are heard, and where they feel a sense of belonging.” (Luthra & Muhr, 2023, 17).

Luthra and Muhr argue that if an organisation has not yet achieved an *inclusive* culture, a first step in the right direction is to invest in *exit interviews*. *Exit interviews* offer the organisation knowledge about why employees – but particularly why minorities group members - are choosing to leave the organisation. Minorities who chose to leave an organisation typically have valuable information about where the blind spots are in the organisation, and where there is room for improvement going forward. This can help the organisation to identify and correct blind spots, so that the next minority member to join the organisation is more like to stay and invest their optimal work effort.

¹⁴ Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Ehrhart & Singh (2011). Inclusion and Diversity in Group Work: A Review and Model for Future Research, *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1262-1289. And Luthra, P. and Muhr, S. L. (2023). *Leading Through Bias – 5 Essential Skills to Block Bias and Improve Inclusive Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Bias Study

Survey Design

The first step in an organisation's move towards greater diversity is to create greater *visibility* of problems with the status quo.¹⁵ We need to diagnose what the challenges are, in order to address them. In this study we have uncovered which biases affect your organisations the most.

We designed a survey study which built on previously tested scales developed to measure four types of bias:

- (a) Gender bias,
- (b) Race (or racialisation) bias,
- (c) Bias against people identifying with LGBT+ categories
- (d) Age bias

We chose scales which have been developed to measure these four types of biases.¹⁶ Three of the scales have already been validated in both psychometric and applied research. The LGBT+ scale has been developed for this particular study and was successfully validated.

Concretely these scales ask people about their attitudes towards minorities. The responses from the participants are subsequently used to generate scores of levels of bias. When combined, these scores provide a comprehensive measure of the types of bias that minorities within the organisations might encounter. In other words, the scales offer a simple way in which we can quantify the different types of biases that are at play in your organisations. The advantage of this quantitative approach is that we can test a large number of participants, which strengthens the reliability of our findings.

We also chose to pair the four scales with one question about which of the types of bias managers find more urgent to address - offering an indirect measure of which type of bias they would be most motivated to address in their organisation.

¹⁵ Acker, J. (2006). Inequality Regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender and Society*, 20(4), 441-464. And Devine, P.G. & Monteith, M.J. (1993). Affect, cognition, and stereotyping: Interactive processes in group perception. San Diego, CA: Academic Press. The role of discrepancy-associated affect in prejudice reduction, pp. 317-344. And Plant E.A., & Devine P.G. (2009). The active control of prejudice: Unpacking the intentions guiding control efforts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, pp. 640-652.

¹⁶ Swim, J. K., Aikin, K. J., Hall, W. S. & Hunter, B. A. (1995). Sexism and Racism: Old-Fashioned and Modern Prejudice. In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 68(2), pp. 199-214. Akrami, Ekehammar and Araya (2000). Classical and modern racial prejudice: a study of attitudes towards immigrants in Sweden. In *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol 30, page 521-532. And Furunes & Mykletun (2010). Age discrimination in the workplace: Validation of the Nordic Age Discrimination Scale (NADS). In *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, vol. 51(1) page 1-92.

Finally, we chose to combine the quantitative scales with some qualitative response options, which can offer a more detailed insight into potential challenges with biases in the organisation, as well as managers' perception of these challenges. We offered four open-ended questions which explored peoples' attitudes about potential interventions aimed at achieving a fair workplace for all employees belonging to any of the four social categories: (a) women, (b) people of colour, (c) sexual minorities or transgender and non-binary people, as well as (d) older people.

Survey structure:

1. Information about the study and the option of consent for anonymous data use
2. Demographic information (such as country, gender, ethnicity etc.)
3. Scale exploring gender bias
4. Scale exploring racial bias
5. Scale exploring LGBT+ bias
6. Scale exploring age bias
7. A question about which biases participants find most urgent to address (gender, racial, LGBT+, age biases, or none of the above)
8. Four open questions about the four types of biases and participants perception of the need to address them in their organisation.

Because answers to the above questions are sensitive, anonymity was essential. Therefore, we used the external data analysis company *Wilke* to collect the data. Anonymity was achieved by *Wilke* erasing all e-mail addresses and IP-addresses before sending the data file on to the researchers. In this way, no participants answers can be referred back to any one person, or any one organization. Information about the researchers who carried out this study can be found in the appendix.

Findings

The study was conducted in a range of European countries. Very few responses were collected from participating Central European Countries, so these are categorised together throughout the report as CEC. The other participating countries included Denmark, France, Germany, and Italy.

Complete versus Incomplete Surveys

Table 2 shows the overall number of respondents in each participating country in the study, broken down by gender. The table includes counts from participants who did not complete the survey, and also includes counts of participants who did not report their gender or nationality.

Table 2: *Overall number of respondents (including incomplete responses).*

Country/Gender	Women	Men	Other	Not reported	Total
CEC	20	54	0	2	76

Denmark	74	156	0	24	254
France	159	142	1	65	367
Germany	57	9	0	9	75
Italy	49	96	1	28	174
Not reported	21	35	0	1	57
Total	380	492	2	129	1003

Note: The category CEC indicates Central European Countries, which were collapsed into one category due to a lower number of responses.

Table 3 shows how many responses were incomplete within each country.

Table 3: *Counts of incomplete responses by country*

	Complete surveys	Incomplete surveys
CEC	73	3
Denmark	230	24
France	300	67
Germany	65	10
Italy	145	29
Not Reported	56	9
In total	869	142

We ran a dropout analysis, the conclusion of which is shown in the appendix. It shows that incomplete survey responses are not observably affected by the main organisational or demographic variables. We have therefore excluded all the incomplete responses from further analysis in the report.

Demographics

Table 4 presents the average and standard deviation for the age of respondent in the survey, broken down by gender.

Table 4: *Mean age of respondents by nationality and gender.*

Country	Gender	Mean	SD
CEC	Women	56.15	5.83
	Men	59.62	7.23
Denmark	Women	51.03	8.57
	Men	54.24	7.79
France	Women	52.88	8.15
	Men	55.79	8.94

Germany	Women	47.75	11.27
	Men	55.25	10.29
Italy	Women	49.26	8.12
	Men	57.00	9.26
Not Reported	Women	50.62	8.21
	Men	52.17	8.15

Note: Other gender category not included – because of too few participants

Table 5 presents the counts for number of individuals at each management level in the participating countries. Counts are broken down by gender, and the table includes the result of statistical tests for differences in the number of men and women at each management level within each country.

Table 5: *Management level of participants*

Country	Management Level	Women	Men	Chi Square	p value
CEC	Lower	2	6	3.35	.187
	Middle	11	17		
	Upper	7	30		
Denmark	Lower	18	21	4.88	.087
	Middle	34	73		
	Upper	22	62		
France	Lower	70	36	17.32	.002**
	Middle	77	77		
	Upper	12	27		
Germany	Lower	22	0	Inconclusive – too few men	
	Middle	21	5		
	Upper	14	3		
Italy	Lower	7	14	1.03	.906
	Middle	26	48		
	Upper	16	33		
Not Reported	Lower	8	6	3.22	.200
	Middle	11	23		
	Upper	2	6		
Total	Lower	127	83	40.15	<.001***
	Middle	180	243		
	Upper	73	161		

Across the whole sample, there is a significant relationship between gender and management level, with higher management levels dominated by men in the sample. This could be because women have made it into management levels but are still typically not included in upper-level management at the same rate (within the research literature this is referred to as the ‘glass ceiling effect’), or it could be because of sampling effects in these countries. Within countries, this same effect is clearly present in France, and possibly also in Denmark, however the effect is not statistically significant within Italy or among respondents who did not report their nationality. This same effect is not statistically significant in Italy, in CEC countries, or among respondents who did not report their country of origin, possibly due to the lower sample size within these groups. It is not possible to make any inferences about this effect in Germany, because too few men (eight in total) responded to the survey.

Table 6 presents the counts for number of individuals within private and public organisations in the participating countries. Counts are broken down by gender, and the table includes the result of statistical tests for differences in the number of men and women at each type of organisation within each country.

Table 6: *Organisation type of participants*

Country	Organisation Type	Women	Men	Chi Square	P value
CEC	Private	12	48	7.30	.007**
	Public	8	5		
Denmark	Private	64	141	0.44	.509
	Public	10	15		
France	Private	126	116	0.87	.648
	Public	33	24		
Germany	Private	41	8	Inconclusive – Too few men	
	Public	16	0		
Italy	Private	19	34	0.70	.70
	Public	30	61		
Not Reported	Private	18	31	Inconclusive – Too few public	
	Public	3	4		
Total	Private	280	378	2.53	.281
	Public	100	109		

There is only a significant effect of organisation type on gender in Central European Countries, where there are proportionally more women in the private sector, however this result should be treated with caution, due to the low number of responses from the public sector companies.

Table 7 presents the counts for number of individuals within small medium and large companies in the participating countries. Counts are broken down by gender, and the table includes the result of statistical tests for differences in the number of men and women at each type of organisation within each country.

Table 7: *Organisation size by participants*

Country	Management Level	Women	Men	Chi Square	p value
CEC	Small	3	18	2.55	.279
	Medium	6	12		
	Large	11	23		
Denmark	Small	29	71	1.13	.567
	Medium	21	44		
	Large	24	41		
France	Small	11	6	5.05	.282
	Medium	33	36		
	Large	115	98		
Germany	Small	17	2	Inconclusive – too few men	
	Medium	8	0		
	Large	32	6		
Italy	Small	7	10	4.23	.376
	Medium	7	27		
	Large	35	58		
Not Reported	Small	8	3	7.35	.025*
	Medium	6	13		
	Large	7	19		
Total	Small	75	110	7.62	.106
	Medium	81	132		
	Large	224	245		

There is an effect of organisational size on gender among participants where country of origin is not reported.

These tables indicate that the sample is reasonably gender balanced across organisation type, with only minor effects in organisation type and size. However, at the level of the total sample, more men are represented in higher level management positions, and more women are represented in lower-level management positions, particular in France, and possibly also in Denmark, indicating likely glass ceiling effects in this sample. The sample is heavily biased towards women for German respondents, and therefore the German data will be omitted from all national level comparisons in the remaining analyses.

Scale Scores

The main aim of this study was to uncover whether your organisations have any current bias challenges. The key finding is therefore the scale score of the four scales: (a) the modern sexism scale, (b) the modern racism scale, (c) the modern LGBT+ scale, and (d) the Nordic age discrimination scale. Each of these scales measure the extent to which people can identify problems with (i.e. gender, race, LGBT, or age) bias, measured as agreement with statements that identify relevant bias problems. Respondents can agree or disagree with the statements to various degrees, with agreements/disagreement measured using a 5-point response scale. Scores are averaged for each individual, and the average score represents the extent to which that individual can recognise the form of bias in society. *Thus, a high score on the scales capture (a) an inability to identify or recognise bias challenges, as well as (b) a lack of motivation to address them.* In an ideal world, all employees would score close to 1 on these scales, indicating full recognition of bias problems. A score of 5 would indicate complete lack of recognition of any bias. Scores in between represent intermediate levels of bias. Finally, any variable (e.g. age, nationality, seniority level, etc) that affects bias scores, can be interpreted as having an effect on recognition of bias.

Overall, we find is that for all four forms of bias, the average score for respondents is slightly above the mid-range of the scale. This means that the organizations could significantly benefit from interventions on all four types of biases, to increase recognition of these biases and their effects:

Table 9: *Bias Scale Scores*

	Gender	Race	LGBT+	Age
Scores	2.63	2.57	2.78	2.67

These are the overall scale scores for the entire sample (see appendix for analysis of psychometric properties of the scales). However, we also find variations in these scores, dependent on both gender and country.

Table 10 shows that respondent gender has the most pronounced difference, with men scoring higher on the gender, race and LGBT+ bias scales, compared to women:

Table 10: *Bias scale scores – showing gender differences*

	Men		Women		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p value</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Gender	2.95	0.72	2.27	0.66	728.6	13.66	<.001***
Race	2.66	0.69	2.49	0.67	706.6	3.37	<.001***
LGBT+	2.95	0.69	2.61	0.69	687.2	6.88	<.001***
Age	2.57	0.73	2.72	0.79	655.46	2.91	.004**

This suggests that men have a harder time identifying bias challenges, and that they will be less motivated to address them.

Further analysis of the effects of gender, nationality, and management level differences are spelled out below.

Effects of Country, Gender, and Management Level on Discrimination Scores

Our analyses show consistent differences between the nations sampled. It is worth noting that our samples within each country were small, and therefore national level differences should be interpreted with some caution.

Table 11: *Effects of nationality, gender, management level, and age on gender bias scores*

	β	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.35	.17	14.08	<.001***
Country Effects				
<i>CEC</i>	0.01	0.12	0.05	.957
<i>Denmark</i>	0.51	0.10	5.35	<.001***
<i>France</i>	-0.10	0.10	-1.05	.295
<i>Italy</i>	-0.22	0.10	-2.21	.028*
Gender (Male)	0.62	0.05	12.81	.001**
Management Level (Lower)				
<i>Middle</i>	0.01	0.06	0.14	.890
<i>Upper</i>	0.01	0.07	0.10	.920
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.83	.407

R^2 adjusted = .31, $F(8,788) = 46.51$, $p < .001$. Baseline for analysis is respondents who do not report a country of origin, women, and people in lower-level management positions.

Table 11 shows that using the baseline of non-reported country, women, and lower management positions – we explored whether there was any effect of these variables on modern sexism. We find that the Danish respondents expressed more sexist attitudes than the other countries¹⁷ - with a score 0.51 higher than the baseline, while Italy expresses less sexist attitudes than the baseline with a score of -0.22 below the baseline. None of the other countries were significantly different from the baseline. This suggests that Danish organisations are likely to be more in need of addressing gender biases and discrimination, than the other countries' organisations, and that they may experience more backlash when doing so.

Furthermore, there is a significant effect of being a man, meaning that men have a higher sexism score by 0.62, compared to women. This aligns with other studies using the modern sexism scale – men on average score higher on this scale. This captures that people belonging to the norm – in the case men – typically do not notice or recognise the presence of discrimination and bias, or the need to address. More generally, people who belong to the privileged majority often do not notice the biases or discrimination directed at the minority. This is why it is so important to collect (anonymous) information from minority groups (whether it be women, people of colour, LGBT+ people or elderly people) about how one's organisation is doing on fighting biases and discrimination. The minority typically have a much sharper eye for which biases are at play and can help point the organisation in the right direction if they wish to address the biases and the discrimination that follows from these biases.

We find no effect of neither management level nor age on the sexism scale scores.

¹⁷ Former research has uncovered similar findings about Danish samples standing out with unusual degrees of modern sexist attitudes: Skewes, L., Skewes, J. C. & Ryan, M. K. (2021). Attitudes to Sexism and the #MeToo Movement at a University in Denmark. In *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 29 (2), 124-139. And Skewes, L., Skewes, J. C. & Ryan, M. K. (2019). Attitudes to Sexism and Gender Equality at a Danish University. In *Women, Gender & Research's* special issue on Gender and Academia, 27 (1-2), 71-85. And Ea Høg Utoft show that Danes stand out from other Europeans in their ability to identify biases in her work: "Motivation, organisational gender equality work and the postfeminist gender regime: A feminist approach".

Table 12: *Effects of nationality, gender, management level, and age on racial bias scores*

	β	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.50	.17	14.60	<.001***
Country Effects				
<i>CEC</i>	-0.21	0.12	-1.73	.084
<i>Denmark</i>	0.13	0.10	1.40	.162
<i>France</i>	-0.01	0.10	-0.07	.941
<i>Italy</i>	-0.38	0.10	-3.67	<.001***
Gender (Male)	0.18	0.05	3.69	<.001***
Management Level (Lower)				
<i>Middle</i>	-0.05	0.06	-0.80	.425
<i>Upper</i>	-0.02	0.07	-0.26	.793
Age	0.01	0.01	0.37	.711

R² adjusted = .08, F(8,788) = 9.52, p < .001. Baseline for analysis is respondents who do not report a country of origin, women, and people in lower-level management positions.

Using the baseline of non-reported country, women, and lower management positions – we explored whether there was any effect of these variables on racial bias scores. We found that Italy had lower racial bias scores than the baseline with a score of -0.38 below the baseline. None of the other countries were significantly different from the baseline.

We also find that there is a significant effect of being a man, meaning that men have a higher racial bias score by 0.18, compared to women.

There is no effect of neither management level nor age.

Table 13: *Effects of nationality, gender, management level, and age on LGBT bias scores*

	B	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.66	.17	15.63	<.001***
Country Effects				
<i>CEC</i>	-0.11	0.12	-0.98	.328
<i>Denmark</i>	0.34	0.10	3.44	<.001***
<i>France</i>	-0.10	0.10	-1.04	.300
<i>Italy</i>	-0.28	0.10	-2.73	<.006**
Gender (Male)	0.32	0.05	6.57	<.001***
Management Level (Lower)				
<i>Middle</i>	-0.07	0.06	-1.17	.243
<i>Upper</i>	-0.04	0.07	-0.58	.565
Age	0.01	0.01	0.02	.981

R² adjusted = .15, F(8,788) = 19.13, p < .001. Baseline for analysis is respondents who do not report a country of origin, women, and people in lower-level management positions.

Using the baseline of non-reported country, women, and lower management positions – we explored whether there was any effect of these on LGBT+ bias. We find that the Danish respondents express higher LGBT+ bias scores compared to the other countries, with a score 0.34 higher than the baseline. This suggests that Denmark has a greater challenge with LGBT+ biased attitudes than the other countries. Furthermore, we also find that the Italian respondents expressed less LGBT+ bias than the baseline (-0.28). None of the other countries were significantly different from the baseline.

Again, we find that there is a significant effect of being a man, meaning that men have a higher LGBT+ bias score by 0.32, compared to women. This finding aligns with other studies which show that men score higher on LGBT+ biases and discrimination. This might partly be because LGBT+ biases correlate with gender biases – because both women (moving into male dominated fields) and people identifying with the LGBT+ categories often violate stereotypical gender norms and/or heteronormative norms, which privileges cisgender, straight men.

There is no effect of neither management level nor age.

Table 14: *Effects of nationality, gender, management level, and age on age bias scores*

	β	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.85	.18	15.93	<.001***
Country Effects				
<i>CEC</i>	-0.06	0.12	-0.50	.617
<i>Denmark</i>	0.42	0.10	4.07	<.001***
<i>France</i>	-0.18	0.10	-1.79	.074
<i>Italy</i>	0.38	0.11	3.47	<.001***
Gender (Male)	0.04	0.05	0.86	.390
Management Level				
<i>Middle</i>	0.07	0.06	1.14	.254
<i>Upper</i>	0.27	0.07	3.69	<.001***
Age	-0.01	0.01	-2.80	<.001***

R² adjusted = .19, F(8,788) = 23.72 p < .001. Baseline for analysis is respondents who do not report a country of origin, women, and people in lower-level management positions.

Using the baseline of non-reported country, women, and lower management positions – we explored whether there was any effect of these on age. We find that Denmark has a higher age bias score than baseline by a score of 0.42. We also find that Italy also has a higher age bias score than baseline by a score of 0.38. This indicates that although Italian organisations may do better on gender and race compared to other countries, there may be important work to be done on age bias in Italy. France exhibited a lower score than baseline, however this was only marginally statistically significant.

Unsurprisingly, there is a significant effect of age, such that age bias scores decrease with age. Put differently, the closer one comes to moving into the older age category oneself, the more aware one becomes of ageism challenges. This aligns well with other bias studies - if one belongs to a social category which is exposed to discrimination, then one is typically more attuned to these biases, than people who do not belong to those social categories. Just like people of colour are more aware of racism than white people, and women are more likely to recognise and oppose gender bias than men.

Interestingly, we also find that there is a significant effect of management level, with upper-level managers having lower age bias scores than lower management. This effect is statistically controlled for effects of the fact that upper-level managers are also likely to be older.

There is no effect of gender, meaning men or women are no more or less agist than each other.

Effects of Organizational Diversity on Discrimination Scores

We explored whether the diversity of the organisations affected the overall attitudes in the organisation. Specifically, we investigated whether the percentage of men and the percentage of white individuals in an organisation influences the different bias scores in the study.

Table 15: Effects of gender and racial diversity on sexism scores

	β	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.67	0.12	22.77	<.001***
% Men in Org.	0.38	0.13	3.00	.003**
% White in Org.	-0.20	0.13	-1.58	.115

R² adjusted = .02, F(2,683) = 5.17, p = .006

Table 15 shows that when there is a higher proportion of men in an organisation, then managers from that organisation exhibit higher sexism scores. This means that in organisations with a higher proportion of men, more effort will need to be made to *re-work* or *re-think* the organisational culture in order to successfully integrate and include women and diversify the workforce. We did not observe a similar statistically significant effect in organisations with a higher proportion of white employees.

Table 16: Effects of gender and racial diversity on racism scores

	β	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.60	0.10	24.98	<.001***
% Men in Org.	0.30	0.11	2.68	.008**
% White in Org.	-0.21	0.11	-1.87	.06

R² adjusted = .01, F(2,683) = 4.72, p = .009

Table 16 shows that when there is a higher proportion of men in an organisation, then managers from that organisation also exhibit higher racism scores. This means that the more men there are in an organisation, the more the organisation will need to *re-work* or *re-think* their organisational culture in order to successfully integrate and include people of colour. Surprisingly, we also find a similar effect when there is a higher proportion of white employees, however this effect is only marginally statistically significant. If this result expresses anything, it may be that a manager does not experience interracial conflict, if one is in an almost exclusively white organisation. Put simply, one does not perceive there to be organisational challenges with people of colour if one never interacts with them.

Table 17: *Effects of gender and racial diversity on LGBT+ scores*

	β	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.92	0.11	27.45	<.001***
% Men in Org.	0.23	0.12	1.99	.047*
% White in Org.	-0.27	0.12	-2.34	.020*

R² adjusted = .009, F(2,683) = 4.14, p = .016

Table 17 shows, that when there is a higher proportion of men in an organisation, then managers from that organisation exhibit higher LGBT+ bias scores. This suggests that organisations which are male dominated, need to be more attentive to LGBT+ biases, compared to organisations which are gender balanced or female dominated. Table 17 also shows that when an organisation is less racially diverse (i.e. a higher proportion of white workers), then managers of the organisation will exhibit *less* LGBT+ bias. This suggests that increased racial diversity may be associated with increased bias against LGBT+ individuals.

Table 18: *Effects of gender and racial diversity on agism scores*

	β	SE	t	p value
Baseline	2.39	0.11	21.14	<.001***
% Men in Org.	0.01	0.12	-0.12	.904
% White in Org.	0.37	0.12	3.02	.002**

R² adjusted = .01, F(2,683) = 4.61, p = .010

Finally, we find that the proportion of men in an organisation does *not* make an organisation more ageist. Thus, male dominated work environments are not more prone to agism than other work environment. However, the proportion of white people does make an organisation more agist, meaning that the less racially diverse an organisation is, the more agist it likely to be.

Qualitative Analysis of Open Answers about Gender

Out of the entire sample, 241 offered an open answer to the question “Do you believe that interventions addressing gender bias are necessary in your organization - why/why not?” Out of these 241 answers, 36 were in French or Italian (and where therefore not analysed¹⁸), while four people were off topic and addressed age bias (3 people) or race bias (1 person). This left 201 open answers about the need to intervene on gender issues in their organisations. Out of these answers 115 (57.2%) expressed support for or a need

¹⁸ A few French or Italian answers only stated “Yes” or “No” in the comments – and because this required minimal interpretation skills – these were in fact included in the analysis. However, any comments in French or Italian which included further information that might have modified the “Yes” or “No” answers (one way or the other) were excluded. This principle was applied to all the qualitative analysis below.

for gender interventions within their organisation. The following examples illustrate this supportive mindset:

“Yes indeed – no change will happen if [there is] no interventions!” (Denmark¹⁹)

“Yes, there is a belief that there is no issue and that we are doing well, but we can still get better” (Denmark)

“My organisation is part of society and therefore it needs some interventions” (Italy)

“Yes [due to] glass ceiling and pay gaps” (Germany)

“Yes, interventions are needed, because women are not offered the same opportunities as men” (Italy)

“Yes, because there is still too much disrespectful behaviour and strong inequalities in career progression.” (France)

“Yes, because it [the organisation] is clearly sexist” (France)

“Yes, because men are dangerous for women” (France)

“Yes, because it is not fair that 50% of humanity is excluded from decisions and high incomes” (France)

“Often you recruit a person [who] is similar to you – so a mindset change is needed” (Denmark)

The most prominent themes which are brought up in the group which is supportive of gender interventions (in order of frequency or prominence) are:

1. The need to hire women in leadership roles – particularly higher level management (which is backed up by the survey data demographics showing that women are primarily hired for lower-level management positions)
2. The need for bias training – reminding people of biasing effects (which is indirectly back up by the large group of people who oppose gender interventions on the basis that no biases exist or that one can hire someone for a task without letting social categories affect the decision process)
3. Sexual harassment (the majority of these comment focus on *sexist or sexual hostility*²⁰, but the data also include some comments on assaults)
4. Gender gaps in pay between men and women
5. Women’s lack of access to decision-making positions in organisations

¹⁹ Both the Danish and the French managers answers are overrepresented in the qualitative answers, because they are overrepresentation in the overall study.

²⁰ See definition of the concepts of sexist and sexual hostility below. These are concept develop for the Sexual Experience Questionnaire (SEQ).

Overall, these themes suggest that there is a clear power imbalance between genders in the organisations. Both the glass ceiling theme (of not hiring women for upper management roles), the gender pay gap, and the lack of access to decision-making positions point to a power asymmetry, which needs to be addressed. Similarly, sexual harassment only arises when there is power asymmetry between genders.

We further find that, 81 (40.3%) of people expressed resistance to gender interventions or declared it unnecessary to address in their organisation. The following examples illustrate this resistive mindset:

“No, because [there is] no gender discrimination.” (France)

“No, a lot of things are already done in my organisation, like women’s day and pride month.” (France)

“Already done.” (France)

“It is simply not an issue in any way – gender is private.” (Denmark)

“No – the more we talk about [gender] difference, the more we show [gender] difference” (France)

“I find the discussion [of gender bias] overly simplistic and polarizing. Patronizing interventions create resistance.” (Germany)

“No. It is all about education, experience and personality.” (Denmark)

“It is not necessary, because we want the best [person] for the job” (Denmark)

“There is no gender bias, and if there is it is against males over 50” (CEC)

“No intervention needed. We have women-preferred bias.” (Denmark)

“No, because women are already preferred to men” (Denmark)

The most prominent themes which are brought up in the group which is resisting gender interventions (in order of frequency or prominence) are:

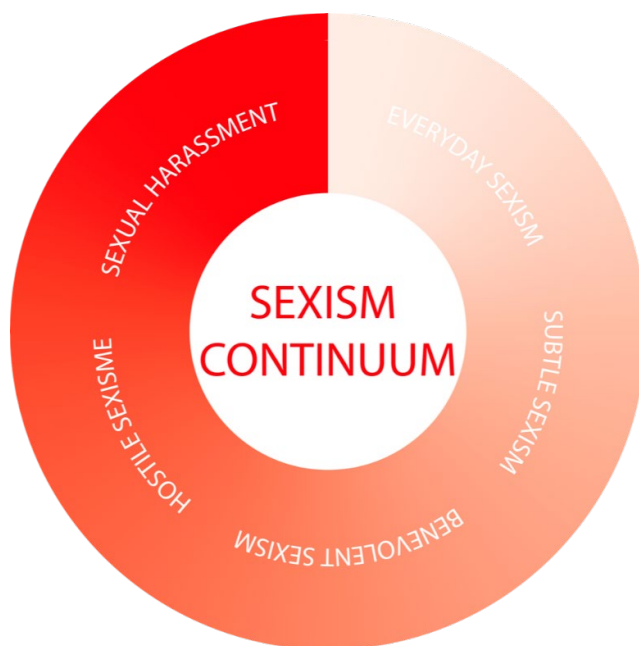
1. No gender bias or discrimination exists
2. The problem used to exist, but has now been solved (post-feminism)
3. Reverse discrimination (men are being suppressed by gender equality initiatives)
4. Assumed neutrality – thinking that one can abstract from the social category of gender and therefore interact with and hire people on a neutral basis (which bias studies would not support)

5. Assuming that gender interventions create a problem, rather than address a problem²¹

All of the above-mentioned themes would result in a high modern sexism score flagging an organisational challenge with these particular managers attitudes. These attitudes are typically combined with an active resistance against gender interventions, and these managers will therefore most likely be drivers of a gender backlash if interventions are attempted within their organisations, rather than be supportive of interventions. The expected correlation between the resister's attitudes and a high sexism bias score is confirmed. We find that the *resisters* score 3.09 on the sexism scale, while the *supporters* score 2.18. This difference is statistically significant [$t(143.71) = 8.41, p < .001$].

Sexism

Our findings suggest that some tools to understand and deal with sexism might be of use. Einersen et al.²² places sexism on a continuum to capture that different degrees of sexism is interconnected. The continuum consists of five different types of sexism:



²¹ Sara Ahmed is a diversity researcher who is known for capturing this misinterpretation of bias or discrimination issues. She states that when minorities address or comment on bias or discrimination challenges within an organisation, many organisations respond by labelling the minorities speaking up as *the problem* (rather than accepting *the discrimination as a problem*). In this way, she captures that minority responses to discrimination often are silenced by a re-writing of what, or rather who is the problem. She also captures that this type of organisational response has the effect that discrimination is left unchallenged. See more in her book "On Being Included – Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life" (2012).

²² Einersen, Krøjer, MacLeod, Muhr, Munar, Myers, Plotnikof & Skewes (2021). *Sexism in Danish Higher Education and Research – Understanding, Exploring, Acting*.

Table 19: *Properties of forms of sexism on the sexism continuum*

Types of sexism	Descriptions
Everyday sexism	Statements which degrade female employees for instance through jokes or comments. E.g. comments about how women are ‘naturally’ better equipped for care work. These are often comments which reproduce gender stereotypes.
Subtle sexism	“Just the way we do things here” – a negative cultural norm that is reproduced through normalisation. E.g. an expectation that women take on more task which do not lead to promotions, compared to men. A norm of interrupting women or offering them less options to speak or present work.
Benevolent sexism	Care, compliments, or help that indirectly signals that female employees are ‘second rate’ employees who need to be facilitated in order to carry out their job. E.g. the assumption that female employees with children are not able to take on great organisational tasks or work late.
Hostile sexism	A negative and hostile response to employees who violate gender norms expressed as threatening, aggressive behaviour, harassments or threats. E.g. labelling women incompetent, overly sensitive, or sexually manipulative. This includes referring to female employees as “bitches”, “ice queens”, “too much” or claiming that “they slept their way to the top.”
Sexual harassment	Any unwanted sexual behaviour that makes a fellow employee feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated. E.g. texts or mails with sexual content (such as porn or nude pictures), but also unwanted kissing, touching or requests for sexual favours.

As the sexism continuum indicates there can be different degrees of sexism in an organisation. Verbal or subtle sexism might go unnoticed by many employees, but it rarely goes unnoticed by the employees who are targeted. Some of the verbal sexism is explicit – for instance statements about how women are less qualified to carry out technical jobs. But it can also be much more subtle than that - maybe female employees are primarily complimented for their looks, rather than their competencies in the organisation (suggesting that they are primarily decorative employees, compared to competent ones). Maybe there are different dress code standards for male and female employees, which facilitate men better in carrying out their job, compared to women. It can be subtle things, but it all adds up and sends a powerful message to the minority group that they a ‘second rate’ employees.

If the milder forms of sexism are not addressed in the organisation this will legitimize the more severe types of sexism. Therefore, it is key that even simple - and seemingly 'innocent' types of sexism - are addressed by both managers and bystanders. The norm in the organisation ideally is that all employees rally around the victims of sexism and request the employee carrying out the sexist act to align better with anti-sexist organisational norms. This same intervention or response can of course also be applied to any form of racial, LGBT+ type or age discrimination.

Milder forms of sexism can be expressed very subtly; like primarily encouraging women to take minutes at meetings or provide coffee for others (even when this is not in their job description). It can also be expressed as allowing female employees less time to speak in meetings. One can carry out a simple test of this type of biases at meeting in one's own organisation. Simply assign an employee to time how much men vs. women (or other minorities) in the organisation speak in meetings. If there is a gender discrepancy (factoring in the amount of men and women in each meeting) the organisation needs to make some changes allowing women (and other minorities) to be heard as equally valuable employees. A way in which one can start a norm change towards greater gender equality in meeting is if the meeting leaders make sure that every employee is asked to comment or contribute to the discussion. And when everyone has been heard it is important that new ideas which are taken on are explicitly attributed to the employee who birthed the idea (because we tend to offer less credit to minority employees for their contributions – and often misattribute their efforts to majority members instead).

To achieve (gender) equality in any organisation managers also ought to make an explicit list of the tasks the organisation needs carried out.²³ Each task should then be categorised as either (a) a task that will increase the odds for promotions for the employee taking it on, or (b) a task that will not be rewarded with promotion opportunities. The latter category is often thought of, or even spoken about, as the 'household tasks' of the organisation. These tasks are essential and need doing, but the employees carrying them out do not typically benefit from this type of work. Once this list is made, one should make sure that these types of tasks are distributed evenly between male (majority) and female (minority) employees – ensuring that everyone achieves equal opportunities for promotions, as well as equally stimulating work tasks. Intervening in this way will help level the playing field, so that minority employees will achieve a better chance at promotions – and the organisation will be able to achieve greater (gender) equality at the top of the hierarchy of the organisation.

In order to address the severe end of the sexism continuum – the sexual assaults and rapes – managers as well as employees need to have a vocabulary to distinguish between different types of sexism and assaults. One of the most common used questionnaires to

²³ Luthra, P and Muhr., S. L. (2023). *Leading Through Bias – 5 Essential Skills to Block Bias and Improve Inclusion at Work*. Palgrave MacMillan.

capture these types of challenges in an organisation is called the *Sexual Experience Questionnaire (SEQ)*²⁴ – in this questionnaire the researchers offer four very useful distinctions: (a) sexist hostility, (b) sexual hostility, (c) unwanted sexual attention, and (d) sexual coercion.

Table 20: *SEQ types of sexism*

Types of sexism	Examples
Sexist hostility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That someone has cast doubt about whether you were capable of carrying out a work task due to your gender • That you were treated in a patronizing manner because of your gender • That you have been excluded from social activities because of your gender
Sexual hostility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That you have been catcalled, or received sexually provoking comments • That your body has been commented on • That someone has made jokes about your gender (e.g. jokes about how blond women have a low IQ)
Unwanted sexual attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That you have been touched in a sexual manner • That you repeatedly have been asked on dates even though you explicitly have said no • That you have been raped
Sexual coercion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That someone has treated you badly after you have refused to have sex with them • That someone has threatened you with some form of punishment if you were not sexually cooperative • That someone has offered you some form of reward (e.g. contract extensions or promotions) for sexual cooperation

These four categories: *sexist hostility*, *sexual hostility*, *unwanted sexual attention* and *sexual coercion* are all types of verbal and physical behaviour which contributes to a *hostile work* environment. However, the last two categories: *unwanted sexual attention* and *sexual coercion* can be so severe that they warrant reporting to the police. Yet, the organisation also needs to have its own explicit measures and action planes in place for how employees are expected to deal with these types of challenges.

²⁴ Fitzgerald, L. F., Magley, V. J., Drasgow, F., Waldo, C. R., Wiskoff, M. F. (1999). Measuring Sexual Harassment in the Military: The Sexual Experience Questionnaire (SEQ-DoD). In *Military Psychology*, 1(3), p. 243-263.

Sexual assault or rape in the workplace is an expression of a *structural or cultural problem in the organisation – not an individual problem between two employees*. One needs to be particularly attentive of these organisational challenges, if one has:

- (a) An overrepresentation of men in the organisation,
- (b) Particularly if the men are overrepresented in the top of the hierarchy, and
- (c) If many people are employed on temporary contracts.

All these three factors are what we call *risk factors* that increase the odds that sexual assault or rape will take place within the organisation.

It is also strongly recommended that one checks in on employees in the organisation through regular and anonymous surveys – asking explicitly about discrimination within the organisation (for instance using the questionnaire mentioned above: *SEQ*) as well as about psychological well-being. In this way, the organisation can address the challenges in the organisational culture without outing the victims. This is essential because most victims never report their assaults, rather they withdraw from the organisation. However, by anonymously checking in through surveys the organisation will be able to address the challenges moving forward, without forcing the victims into the vulnerable position of reporting.

For the few employees who do chose to report sexual assaults or rapes within the organisation it is essential to have a clear line of reporting outlined. This line of reporting needs to include explicit explanations of what each reporting step entails as well as what the employee reporting the problem can expect from the organisation throughout the process²⁵. Ideally each organisation will employ a reporting mechanism that is placed outside of the organisation itself – for instance a judicial service external to the organisation where the victims of assault or rape can report. This is the best way of protecting the victims of assault within an organisation. If this is not possible (due to the organisation's size), the HR employees who take in these reports need to be trained in carrying out this type of interviews. This is necessary to ensure that *victim blaming* or any attempts at *individualising the problem* is avoided. This is an organisational challenge and a structural and cultural problem, and it should be addressed at the structural level (not the individual level)²⁶. It is very important to ensure that the organisational interventions taken on after the reporting protects the victim from the perpetrator. Many companies achieve this by removing the victim from their work environment to a different subsection of the organisation (rather than firing or removing the perpetrator). However, if this is the organisations go-to intervention, one must be aware what one is signalling to all other employees that the price paid for reporting is paid by the victim, not the

²⁵ Einersen, Krøjer, MacLeod, Muhr, Munar, Myers, Plotnikof & Skewes (2021). *Sexism in Danish Higher Education and Research – Understanding, Exploring, Acting*.

²⁶ See footnote above.

perpetrator. This can have negative consequences for the work environment and for the organisations potential for attracting future female (or other minority) employees. And most importantly, perpetrators are typically repeat offenders, so if they are not removed (or at a minimum removed from positions of power), they may continue assaulting or raping other employees.

Qualitative Analysis of Open Answers about Race

Out of the entire sample, 234 offered an open answer to the question “Do you believe that interventions addressing racial bias is necessary in your organization - why/why not?” Out of these 234 answers, 33 were in French or Italian (and where therefore not analysed), while four people were off topic and addressed gender bias (3 people) or sexual orientation (1 person). This left 197 open answers about the need to intervene on racial issues in the organisation. Out of these answers 78 (39.9%) expressed support for racial interventions within their organisation. The following examples illustrate this supportive mindset:

“Yes, I find that we in society in general have underlying racism that needs to be addressed.” (Denmark)

“Absolutely there is not enough diversity in my organisation.” (France)

“Raising awareness of our biases requires constant attention.” (France)

“Yes, we do not have a sufficient level of awareness or a toolbox to spot racial bias or minority stress.” (Denmark)

“Yes. Many have never dealt with the topic before, and don’t understand the urgency.” (Germany)

“Yes, because [there is] too much free speech in France – 30% of the population have the intent to vote for the RN party” [the RN party is a radical right-wing party which is nationalist, nativist, and anti-globalist] (France)

“Yes, because right now only one race is holding all leadership positions.” (Germany)

“Yes, because there are very few non-Caucasians in my company and none in the top positions.” (CEC)

“Yes, because racism might deprive my organisation of using the best brains.” (CEC)

“Yes because [there are] too much disrespectful behaviour and strong inequality in career progress.” (country not noted)

“Yes, if the intervention consist of a prosecutor to prosecute the ones doing the discrimination.” (France)

Several of the comments which support interventions on race bias comment on how racism in society seeps into the organisation. Others comment on how tools are needed to spot and intervene on bias or discrimination issues. A few points to more severe issues – suggesting that court case should be carried out against the people who are doing the discrimination - pointing to a need for much more basic and radical interventions. But the majority point to challenges with access to better or higher jobs in the organisation for people of colour.

Overall, the comments from the supports of racial bias interventions are less precise or concrete about which challenges needs to be addressed, compared to the group which are supportive of gender bias interventions. This might indicate that issues with racism have not been as openly debated or addressed within the organisations, compared to gender biases. If this is the case, awareness raising of concrete challenges within the organisation might be an important place to start.

Out of these answers 112 (56.9%) objected to the need for racial interventions within their organisation. The following examples illustrate this resistive mindset:

“No, we are okay with multicultural colleagues.” (CEC)

“No, we are a global company inviting all races to work with us.” (Denmark)

“No, it seems to me that there is no discrimination.” (France)

“No, just tell people to leave race at home.” (Denmark)

“It is not a problem in our organisation, because those people will not work here.” (France)

“No because foreigners are already promoted more often – especially the ignorant ones.” (France)

“It is not necessary because we want [to hire] the best for each position. Then diversity will follow automatically.” (Denmark)

“No, not in France – but definitely in other countries like the US.” (France)

“No, not in Denmark. But in some other country offices there is a strong bias against Europeans.” (Denmark).

“Not in France, but there are challenges because Hindu nationalism interferes with recruiting in India.” (France)

“Why don’t you have any question about racism against white men?” (France)

All the above quotes would result in a high modern racism score flagging an organisational challenge with this large subgroup of managers attitudes. These attitudes are typically combined with an active resistance to race bias interventions, and these

managers will therefore most likely drive a racial backlash if interventions are attempted within their organisations. The expected correlation between the resister's attitudes and a high racism sexism score is confirm. We find that the resisters score 2.68 on the racial bias scale, while the supporters score 2.26. This difference is statistically significant [$t(223.36) = 5.03, p < .001$].

Furthermore, this group of managers seem to assume that just because people of difference races are present in an organisation this means that racial equality has been achieved. However, having brought in diverse employees does not mean that they have successfully been integrated. In fact, the comments from the group who is supportive of racial bias interventions, suggest that people of colour only make it to the lower level of the organisation, which captures the fact that integration has *not* been achieved. If race did not matter in the organisation, then the organisation should be just as likely to hire employees of colour at any level. Finally, a subgroup points the finger elsewhere – stating that there are challenges with racism in other organisations or other countries – just not in theirs. Once again, the comments from the group that is supportive of intervention on race bias, seem to undermine these claims, because they point to systematic racism in society at large which seeps into the organisations and affects everyone. One would expect that when we see an increasing amount of support for radical right-wing political parties all over Europe, that racism amongst organisational employees would also reflect this attitude change – therefore this type of bias or discrimination would be important to address.

Finally, many employees tend to use two different terms interchangeably: race and ethnicity. These different social categories are often interrelated, but they do capture different sides of a person. *Race* refers to the colour of someone's skin, which may be independent of their ethnicity or cultural background. Race is a term which has often been used to justify colonial interventions and racist treatment of people of colour, by assuming that skin colour differences relate to other biological or psychological differences. However, race exclusively captures a difference in skin colour, and there is no scientific proof for any correlations with ability, temperament or personality characteristics²⁷. A way to talk constructively about the term *race* can therefore be by drawing attention to its cultural or normative function by labelling it *racialisation* (as opposed to race). In this way race becomes something we *do* or *negotiate* in social settings – rather than an essence one is born with. With the term *racialisation* one can move away from an essentialising of race which typically comes with colonial baggage – and instead draw attention to how race often is enforced as a norm in an organisation through practices and actions that privileges white employees. *Ethnicity* refers to which countries or cultural contexts a person was raised into, which often is just one, but of

²⁷ Luthra; P. and Muhr, S. L. (2023). *Leading Through Bias – 5 Essential Skills to Block Bias and Improve Inclusion at Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.

course can be a complex web of different countries and cultures. It is important that an organisation equip everyone with a vocabulary for these types of conversation – and many of the open comments suggest that this has not been done yet in some organisations.

Racism

Many people still believe that race is a biological fact about a person, however race is also a social construct which is often used to assign physical features certain cultural meanings typically in order to justify racial hierarchies:

Racism is the “belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race” (Luthra & Muhr, 2023, 76).

Unsurprisingly, racism is closely linked to xenophobia, which is a dislike for people from other countries (different ethnicities). So, if one has challenges with racism in an organisation, one most likely also has challenges with xenophobia. This is of course particularly important to pay attention to if one’s organisation is international or produces products for an international market.

In an organisation striving to achieve a more diverse workforce it is important to be aware that race bias enters the organisation even before potential employees enter the organisation. Studies show that people with non-Western sounding names in Western countries must submit approximately 50 pct. more applications to get a job interview, compared to people with Western sounding names²⁸. Therefore, any organisation motivated to increase racial diversity could benefit from anonymising job applications, so non-Western sounding names are not revealed before the job interview (this type of intervention also benefits women in male dominated fields, because gender is not revealed before the job interview).

In society at large, and therefore in organisations, there is a tendency to associate lighter skin with competence and professionalism, and darker skin with low competence, aggression and even criminality. (Luthra & Muhr, 2023). This has the consequences that employees with darker skin must exert higher levels of emotional labour (compared to other employees) to compensate for the stereotypical expectation that they are more aggressive. This means they have to smile more and be more friendly in order to be

²⁸ Gaddis (2017) How Black Are Lakisha and Jamal? Racial perceptions from names used in correspondence audit studies. *Sociological Science*, 4, pp. 469-489; Bertrand & Sendhil, 2004, Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labour market discrimination, *American Economic Review*, 94(4), pp. 991-1013.

perceived as similar to their white coworkers. In other words, people of colour must overcompensate for other people's stereotypical perception of them.

Furthermore, we see in the survey comments that people of colour struggle to get access to promotions and higher leadership positions. This is far from an unusual finding. Other studies also show that people of colour are less likely to be promoted or hired for leadership roles, because the majority of people still associate white people with leadership²⁹. This captures that the norm of the organisation is white, which privileges some employees and marginalises others. The colour of an employee's skin can also have negative effects on their pay check. A Danish study found that non-Western men earn 8.4% less compared to Western men, while non-Western women earn 3.1% less compared to their Western counterparts³⁰ – suggesting that for people of colour the pay gap is greater for men, compared to women.

White people tend to assume that an organisation has achieved racial diversity, as soon as people of colour have entered the organisation – independent of whether the people of colour are situated at the entry level, middle management, or leadership levels. However racial minorities do not perceive an organisation as racially diverse unless people of colour have entered all levels of the organisation³¹. Furthermore, people of colour distinguish between subgroups of people of colour, and perceive an organisation which represents their particular racialized category as more diverse. For example, Black people perceive a group including other Black people as more diverse, while people of Asian descent perceive a group which include other Asian people as more diverse³².

Qualitative Analysis of Open Answers about LGBT+ Biases

Out of the entire sample, 218 offered an open answer to the question “Do you believe that interventions addressing LGBT+ bias is necessary in your organization - why/why not?” Out of these 218 answers, 30 were in French or Italian (and where therefore not analysed), while four people were off topic and addressed gender bias (2 people) or unrelated topics (2 people). This left 184 open answers about the need to intervene on LGBT+ issue in their organisations. Out of these answers 60 (32.6%) expressed support for or a need for LGBT+

²⁹ Petsko & Rosette (2023). Are Leaders Still Presumed White by Default? Racial Bias in Leader Categorization Revisited. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 108(2), pp. 330-340.

³⁰ Henriksen, Holck & Muhr (2023). Organizing Against Inequality: Wage Gaps and Workplace Unionization Amongst High-Skilled Male and Female Immigrants. Working paper. Frederiksberg, DK: Copenhagen Business School.)

³¹ Unzueta & Binning (2012). Diversity is in the eye of the beholder: How concern for the in-group affects perceptions of diversity. *Personality and Social Bulletin* 38(1), 26-38.

³² Bauman, Trawalter & Unzueta, (2014). Diverse according to whom? Racial group membership and concern about discrimination shape diversity judgements. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40(19), 1354-1372.

interventions within their organisation. The following examples illustrate this supportive mindset:

“Yes. All employees deserve to be treated fairly and respectfully, regardless of their sexual orientation.” (Denmark)

“Yes, currently concerns about gender bias is prevalent at the expense of other relevant biases.” (Italy)

“Yes, I hear some comments” (France)

“Yes, homophobia and transgender bias still exist. Prevention/training really should be mandatory.” (France)

“Biases against sexual minorities often reflect rigid role expectations which should be addressed.” (Germany)

“We should learn not to judge the sex life of others.” (country not noted)

“It is not obvious who belongs to a sexual minority, which to me would indicate that people do not feel free.” (CEC)

“Yes, because tolerance is difficult to find in our society.” (Germany)

“Yes, we only have one openly gay person in a low grade position and soon they will leave due to lack of opportunity.” (Italy)

“Yes, because they currently have no representation in leadership or otherwise.” (Germany)

“Yes. I do not believe there are as many employees from sexual minorities [in our company] as in our population.” (Germany)

Even amongst the ones who were supportive of LGBT+ interventions almost none addressed transgender or nonbinary employees – there was an almost exclusive focus on sexual orientations. Some marked that stereotypical gender roles and judgement of sexual minorities often go together (which research confirms). Several commented on how their society’s homophobic norms have seeped into their organisation as well. Others noted that a lack of openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual employees indicated an unsafe or hostile work environment where sexual minorities did not feel psychologically safe. Many commented on how sexual minorities were underrepresented in their organisation overall, but particularly in management positions – suggesting a power asymmetry between heterosexual versus homosexual and bisexual employees.

Out of the 184 answers commenting on LGBT+ interventions, 118 (64.1%) objected to LGBT+ interventions within their organisation. The following examples illustrate this resistive mindset:

“Sexual orientation has nothing to do with work” (Denmark)

“No – I don’t think about people’s sexuality. It is a private matter.” (Denmark)

“It belongs to the private life which should not impact professional activities.” (France)

“No people should stop flashing what they are and why. Who cares if they do their job.” (Denmark)

“No, it is not something to display or discuss in a professional setting.” (Denmark)

“Sexual preferences should never be a qualification.” (Denmark)

“Sexuality is something which is kept outside the job.” (France)

“No, it is not as visible as other more prominent diversity aspects.” (Denmark)

“Sexuality is not apparent in my company. I don’t know the sexual orientation of my colleagues.” (Italy)

“Bias against sexual minorities has not been a problem in Denmark for at least 15 years in the major cities.” (Denmark)

“In my group I feel that people with traditional [heterosexual] sexual orientation may suffer.” (CEC)

“The issues lie not with the organisation itself, but rather with the acceptance by the customers.” (Denmark).

Here the difference between the supporters and the resisters stands out, and we would expect the resisters to score higher on the LGBT+ bias scale, compared to the supporters. This is also what we find. The resisters score 3.03 on the LGBT+ bias scale, while the supporter score 2.45. This difference is statistically significant [$t(229.62) = 6.05, p < .001$].

Again, we see that almost no one address transgender or nonbinary employees. The focus is almost exclusively on sexual minorities – suggesting that most organisations have barely discovered this subgroup of employees (and therefore are unlikely to address biases or discrimination that this group might be exposed to). This is particularly noteworthy because the survey explicitly asks about attitudes to transgender and non-binary people – and participants therefore should be primed to include them in the LGBT+ category – but they do not. The overall theme in the resistant group seemed to be that sexual identities are a private matter which should not be dealt with in the workplace. Some even seem to find it offensive that sexual minorities exist in a workplace – and advocate that they should stop “flashing what they are” – suggesting that even the mere existence of sexual minorities can be interpreted as an offensive violation of the heterosexual norm of the organisation. Some imply that there may be a risk that we favour

sexual minorities over heterosexual people. Several place the problem elsewhere – in other countries, other organisations, or with customers (rather than fellow employees).

LGBT+ Discrimination

LGBT+ bias or discrimination refers to homophobia, biphobia, or transphobia. This is biases or discrimination directed at people who are not heterosexual (homosexual, bisexual, pansexual etc.), or whose gender identity does not align with the gender they were assigned at birth (people who are not cisgender³³). Often people who *do* conform to society and most organisations’ script of *heteronormativity* – the expectation that all humans are heterosexual, and that anyone deviating from that normative script are problematic – do not understand why sexuality should matter in the workplace. However, this is primarily because they themselves align with their organisation’s cultural norm of heterosexuality. We typically do not notice the norms we align with ourselves. A key step in creating a diverse organisation is realising that just because some employees are comfortable within the organisational culture, it does not mean that everyone is. As a heterosexual person it is very easy to overlook that heterosexual norms often are being confirmed or acted out in a workplace. For instance, whenever a coworker describes activities in their private life which includes a mention of their partner (husband or wife) or their children, sexuality is indirectly being brought into the workplace. However often we only notice this whenever our heteronormative expectations are *not* met. So, we do *not* realise that sexuality is in fact brought into the workplace when a male coworker is telling a story which includes the information that he is married to a woman – but we *do* tend to notice it if a male employee tells a story which includes the information that he is married to (or partnered with) another man. This does not indicate that sexuality was not part of the organisation’s norms already – it just indicates that we did not notice it until the organisations heteronormative norms were challenged.

This is key to be aware of if one wishes to achieve diversity, because one cannot achieve a diverse organisation if some employees can freely discuss their family and partner relations, while others cannot. Furthermore, family life often affects work life – for instance in the case of break ups, divorces, or deaths of family members – and all employees need to be able to speak openly about this. Similarly, if some social event in the workplace involves inviting employee’s family members, it is key that this includes all types of families – also the ones that do not align with heteronormative expectations or norms.

³³ A cisgender person is a person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth (so it is the opposite of a transgender person). Cisgender is a term one uses in order to avoid offensive language like “real” men/women or “biological “men/women which positions transgender people as abnormal or deviant (maybe even less human, compared to cispeople).

LGBT+ bias or discrimination stands out from the other type of biases we address in this report, because it tends to be more hidden. Gender, race, and age can often be “read” from the body of an employee. However, sexual orientation and gender identity are rather *invisible* social categories which people typically choose to withhold in settings where they do not feel psychologically safe or included. This means that organisation which have not invested in educating their employees about LGBT+ sensitive language (e.g referring to people’s “partners”, rather than assuming that they are married or partnered with a person of the ‘opposite’ gender) or heteronormative norms (the normative expectation that everyone is heterosexual) are at high risk of discriminating against employees who already are in the organisation. In other words, the fact that sexuality and gender identity are *invisible* social categories, means that employees are likely to be discriminated against by coworkers who do not realize the target of discrimination is present within the organisation already.

Furthermore, the qualitative answers capture that transgender and non-binary are undiscovered categories within most of the sampled organisations. Therefore, we recommend spending time laying out how one might best accommodate this subgroup of employees. Because society, and most organisations, are designed to facilitate cisgender employees, we often do not discover how these cis normativity’s might hurt transgender or non-binary employees. For instance, many organisations IT-systems categorise employees in a binary fashion as a man or woman, which does not align with non-binary employee’s gender identities. It forces them to misgender themselves in the organisational system, and thereby legitimises that coworkers misgender them as well.

Rather than trying to understand (as a cisgender person) what it would be like to belong to a transgender or non-binary gender category, it might be helpful with a thought experiment. Imagine what it would be like for you, if you were exactly the person you have always been, with the same gender identity as always, but when you entered your workplace tomorrow, everyone systematically misgendered you, and referred to you by the ‘opposite’ sex of which you identify. How would that make you feel? How would that affect your relations with your coworkers? How would that affect your sense of belonging in the organisation? How would that affect your willingness to invest in that organisation? This is exactly what many transgender and non-binary people are exposed to daily. To develop a sense of belonging in an organisation one needs to be allowed to be oneself – and a key part of that self is one’s gender identity.

In a recent study of 400 non-binary people, 80 pct. of the interviewees reported believing that identifying as non-binary would hurt their job search³⁴. The same study also found that applications were 8 pct. less likely to receive employer interest, compared to applications with binary applicants (i.e. people who identify as cismen or ciswomen). A

³⁴ www.business.com/hiring/nonbinary-discrimination-job-market-report/.

McKinsey report³⁵ from 2021 find that transgender people are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to their cis counterparts. The same report also found that the transgender people who *are* employed feel less supported by their workplace than cis employees. *The Nordic Council of Ministers* report from 2024 confirms that transgender and non-binary people are discriminated against in recruitment, and in promotion procedures, as well as in the workplace in general ³⁶. Other studies have shown that transgender and non-binary employees are paid less than their cisgender coworkers.

The Nordic Council of Ministers report shows that discrimination in the workplace leads to increased stress levels and exhaustion – and that particularly young transwomen and non-binary people are the target of discrimination. Minorities often suffer psychological consequences because they are at risk of being bullied, discriminated against, or even exposed to violence (this is called *minority stress* in the research literature). One of the risk factors that prevent transgender and non-binary people from thriving are (a) a heteronormative work environment, as well as what the *Nordic Council of Ministers* report calls (b) ‘macho-oriented’ work cultures. This means that if one’s organisation is dominated by men and there is a boys-will-be-boys-culture in combination with heteronormative norms, then transgender and non-binary people will struggle to thrive and achieve a sense of belonging. The reports show that the most important factor to address in order to make one’s organisation LGBT+ inclusive is a change in cultural norms. Heteronormative expectations and macho cultures are a hinderance to LGBT+ inclusivity.

However, there are also basic practical things which can facilitate a more inclusive working environment. Some IT-systems might make it hard to move from one binary category to another – which exposes transgender employees, to the risk of being involuntarily outed in the IT-systems (if they transition within the same organisation). This is essential to correct. This seem unimportant to people who are cisgender, however all LGBT+ people (but particularly transpeople) experience a high rate of hate crimes in society, so organisational outing of their gender identity places them at risk of both verbal and physical violence³⁷. What may seem like a minor clerical adjustment from a cisgender perspective can in fact help LGBT+ people live safer lives both within and outside the organisation. This is not minor – it can be lifesaving³⁸.

Similarly, gender neutral bathroom or change room facilities can make it possible for transgender or non-binary employees to safely use facilities without being confronted

³⁵ McKinsey & Company report: "Being transgender at work": <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/being-transgender-at-work>

³⁶ Nordiska ministerrådets samarbetsorgan NIKK report "Transpersoners arbetslivsvillkor i Norden" <https://pub.norden.org/temanord2024-523>.

³⁷ The EU Agency for Fundamental Human Rights (FRA): <https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2024/harassment-and-violence-against-lgbtiq-people-rise>

³⁸ See above foodnote.

with binary gender norms or placed at risk for being outed. Furthermore, gendered uniforms can create unnecessary challenges for transgender and non-binary people. If an organisation has (binary) gendered uniforms, it is important to allow people to dress according to their gender identity, and not the gender they were assigned at birth.

Qualitative Analysis of Open Answers about Age Biases

Out of the entire sample, 269 offered an open answer to the question “Do you believe that interventions addressing age bias are necessary in your organization - why/why not?” Out of these 269 answers, 44 were in French or Italian (and were therefore not analysed), while two people were off topic. One addressed bias about sexual minorities and nationality, while another commented on the survey itself. This left us with 223 open answers about the need to intervene on age biases in the organisations. Out of these answers 142 (63.7%) expressed support for or a need for age bias interventions within their organisation. The following examples illustrate this supportive mindset:

“Yes, because society is a youth cult” (France)

“Excluding the oldest is depriving yourself of their knowledge” (France)

“Yes, because we need their experience” (France)

“Yes - respect age and experience” (France)

“Yes. Age bias is becoming more and more common as new technologies move into organisations.” (Denmark)

“I often observe that elder people have fewer career opportunities, less wage increase, and less training.” (Italy)

“Yes, especially for women – it is obvious that the current window for promotions is only 5 years.” (Germany)

“It seems like age is becoming an issue and people are getting laid off when they reach a certain age.” (Denmark)

“Yes, despite the skill shortage, older employees are not seen as a resource.” (Germany)

“Yes, older employees have limited salary increases and are pushed out!” (France)

“The age of retirement is 67 years! At 55 years of age, you are said to be too old!” (France)

“France is a very agist country, senior citizens are pushed out of work at 55-57.” (France)

“The French government want old employees to work more, but employers don’t really want this workforce.” (France)

“Elderly employees are too often seen as a burden - as too expensive and unable to develop.” (France)

“Yes, we are very bad at hiring people who are older” (Denmark)

“I think it is right to offer room for the young generation” (Italy)

“Yes, older people often hold the power.” (Italy)

Overall, the type of support offered for age-based interventions differs radically from the type of support offered for the other three categories, in that many equate the social category of age with *experience* or *know-how*, rather than with limitations or challenges for the organisation. That is, many managers equate older age with something positive. For instance, many state that older employees are needed to train or mentor younger employees. This differs from all the other social categories of gender, race and LGBT+, because no one suggested that their know-how or unique perspective was beneficial for the organisations, even though studies show that there are many financial benefits of diversity of gender, race and LGBT+.

Furthermore, the age bias category stands out because some managers openly state that they are bad at hiring older employees – something which is not openly admitted under any of the other social categories. Both these elements suggest that age-based interventions – in contrast to the other bias interventions - would be exposed to minimal backlash if interventions were to be carried out. Managers are much more open to work with this social category, compared to the other social categories.

Maybe part of the acceptance and openness is driven by self-interest, since age is the only category which will affect every manager at some point. The other categories are much more stable, and not something one typically moves in or out of, and this study’s participants are on average 50+ years of age (see table). No matter what the cause, age is viewed as far less problematic to address than any of the other categories. At the same time, it is perceived to be the category which is most urgent to address.

A final point about the qualitative comments about age, is that France specifically seems to have great challenges with older employees being forced into early retirement. Worryingly many participants mention this problem. This speaks to a norm in France that when an employee hits the age of around 55, they are pushed out of the organisation. Thus, there seems to be significant challenges with involuntary retirement which ought to be addressed in French organisations.

Out of the sample of 223 open answers about age bias or discrimination, only 69 (30.9%) were against age bias interventions. The following examples illustrate this supportive mindset:

“No. We employ those with the right skills regardless of age.” (Denmark)

“No, we don’t hire based on age, but on competence.” (Denmark)

“No, we have employed people aged over 55 – and even one of 62.” (France)

“No, we have a good mix of young and experienced people.” (Italy)

“Age is no issue, while performance expectations are high – and some candidates are therefore excluded.” (Denmark)

“No because age assessments depend on gender: a man is perceived as more competent, but a woman is perceived as expired.” (France)

“Mostly older people are employed even at the top – so there is no problem.” (Germany)

“No as the elderly have great influence.” (Denmark)

“No in my organisation younger employees are penalized.” (Italy)

“In our company we are already addressing too many types of biases – about gender and race equality.” (France)

“No. We are a very inclusive workplace – even sometimes too inclusive.” (Denmark)

Unlike the supportive responses, the resistive responses are similar to the other bias categories. In this group, we again see the assumption that one can leave social categories aside and hire, promote, or evaluate employees purely on competence, which most bias studies show does not regularly occur. We also see the belief that just having older employees in the organisation is considered sufficient proof that there are no challenges with age biases or discrimination. Here we again draw attention to the fact that *diversity* and *inclusion* are two radically different things. *Diversity* means people of a certain categories have been brought into the organisation, while *inclusion* means that people of these social category are in fact being accommodated within the organisation. The latter requires a process of integration in which the organisational norms are adjusted to accommodate the minorities needs as well. Some managers in this group point out that age intersects with gender, so that being perceived as old has more negative effects for female employees – a point which some research backs up³⁹. Others reject the idea of an age bias intervention, because they assume it would be directed at improving things for older employees, who they perceive to be in powerful positions already, at the expense of younger employees.

³⁹ Luthra, P. & Muhr, S. L. (2023). *Leading Through Bias – 5 Essential Skills to Block Bias and Improve Inclusion Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Age Discrimination

Ageism refers to discrimination against employees due to their age. This form of bias or discrimination takes two forms: (a) one form is directed towards older employees. In this form it may be expressed as more or less voluntary early retirement, or simply as lack of investment in older employee's education or promotions. For instances, studies have shown that women 65+ are more likely than men in the same age group to be considered too old for leadership roles⁴⁰. The ageism directed towards the older population is important to address because we are facing an ageing population. However, there is also another type of agism (b) one directed towards younger employees (particularly women). Some studies point to that this latter form of agism might be more common than the first type of agism, at least in Europe. For instances, a study carried out in the US, UK, France, and Germany found that young employees (18-34 years of age) were more likely to have witnessed or experienced agism, compared to older employees (aged 55+)⁴¹. This effect is particularly pronounced for young women, compared to men. Other studies show that while it may be advantageous to be perceived as young for men, the benefits for women are much less pronounced.

For agism directed at older employees, studies show that people associate older employees with a lack of energy, a lack of competence, and a lack of willingness to put in the necessary work⁴². Some of the qualitative statements in this study confirm the assumption that older employees lack energy, and some point to an expectation of a lack of technological skills. Furthermore, studies have found that older people with identical qualifications compared to younger people receive lower performance evaluations⁴³, once again suggesting that we do not assess people objectively in evaluations, but based on which social categories we assume they belong to.

⁴⁰ Luthra & Muhr, (2023). *Leading Through Bias – 5 Essential Skills to Block Bias and Improve Inclusion Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴¹ (www.glassdoor.com).

⁴² Buttigieg, (2011). *The business case for age-diverse workforce*. In E. Perry & S. Tyson (Eds.) *Managing an age-diverse workforce*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴³ Posthuma, Fernanda Wagstaff & Campion (2012). *Age stereotypes and workplace age discrimination: A framework for future research*. In W. C. Borman & J. W. Hedge (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Work and Aging*. Oxford Libera of Psychology.

Summary

Table 21: *Count of respondents for or against each type of intervention*

Intervention type	For	Against
Gender interventions	116 people	81 people
Race interventions	78 people	114 people
LGBT+ interventions	59 people	118 people
Age interventions	142 people	68 people

Table 21 shows that age bias interventions will have both the *greatest support* and the *least resistance* in the organisation. Most managers will actively embrace and support this type of intervention. After age interventions, gender bias interventions will receive the greatest support. However, gender interventions are more likely to receive a greater amount of resistance, compared to age interventions. So, while there is reasonable support for gender interventions, one must also expect some backlash from people who are resistive to those interventions. Finally, most managers show great resistance to interventions on both racial bias and LGBT+ biases. In fact, there are more managers resisting racial bias and LGBT+ interventions than supporting them. In other words, these types of interventions will require a long and sustained effort in order to succeed, and it will matter greatly who is appointed to push that agenda.

Table 22: *How many interventions are people for or against?*

Interventions	One	Two	Three	Four
For	103 people	51 people	22 people	31 people
Against	54 people	49 people	31 people	34 people

One might expect that people are either *for* or *against* bias intervention as a whole – so that they either *resist* all bias interventions or *support* all bias interventions – however that is not the case. Table 22 shows that most managers (74.4 pct.) only support one or two types of bias intervention, with age being the preferred intervention. Only 15 pct of managers are committed to all four bias interventions. This means that it might be wise to let different managers take charge of different types of bias interventions – dependent of which they are most motivated to drive forward.

One needs to keep in mind that interventions aimed at changing attitude towards minorities within the organisation ought not to be driven exclusively by people belonging

to these minorities – because these minorities typically are marginalised and disempowered, relative to the majority employees. In other words, a balance needs to be found between managers power position within the organisation, and their motivation to push for certain bias interventions.

Table 23: *For or Against Interventions (coding from open answers)*

Bias Type	For versus Against	Percentage
Age	Supportive of intervention	63.7%
	Resistant to intervention	30.9%
Gender	Supportive of intervention	57.2%
	Resistant to intervention	40.3%
Race	Supportive of intervention	39.9%
	Resistant to intervention	56.9%
LGBT+	Supportive of intervention	32.6%
	Resistant to intervention	64.1%

We have noted the degree of support and the degree of resistance to the four different biases. This is important to pay attention to because the supporter can and should be recruited to support an intervention agenda. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the resisters, because they are likely to create a backlash against any interventions addressing the type of biases they are not able to identify themselves. The resisters make it necessary for the organisation to document the current bias challenges, before intervention initiatives are started. This is important to ensure that their claims can be put to rest that no such challenges exist in their organisation or society at large.

The risk of backlash does not mean that organisations should shy away from starting bias interventions. But it does underline that documentation of the challenges is necessary, in order to reduce backlash as much as possible. Furthermore, it underlines that an intervention will need to be as transparent as possible – making explicit: 1) which challenges have been uncovered, 2) how they will be intervened upon, and 3) what the goal of the intervention is. Being transparent will reduce the resistance – and it is therefore a very important first step in intervention efforts.

Which intervention is perceived as most urgent?

The above analysis is further backed up by managers answers to the question: “Which type of bias do you find most urgent to address in your organisation?”

Table 24: *Percentage of supporter for bias interventions*

Biases	Percentage of supporters for interventions
Age	44.6%
Gender	17.0%
Race	8.3%
LGBT+	7.2%
None of the above	22.7%

If intervention action plans are determined by managers perceptions of which biases are most urgent to address, then the vast amount of organisations would intervene on age biases. More than one in every five managers would not perceive a need to intervene on any biases at all. A little less than a fifth of sampled managers would be motivated to address gender bias and discrimination. And finally, only 8.3 pct. and 7.2 pct. respectively would want to address race and LGBT+ biases and discrimination.

These findings are noteworthy, because our scale score suggest that the organisations struggle just as much with all the other biases, compared to age biases. This table captures the order in which the organisation should be addressing biases if they went by severity of the challenges:

Table 25: *Scale scores in order of severity*

Bias scales	Scores
LGBT+	2.78
Age	2.66
Gender	2.63
Race	2.57

So, while 44.6 pct. of managers are motivated to take on age bias interventions, on which the average manager scored 2.66 points on the 5-point Likert scale, only 17 pct of managers are motivated to take on gender bias, which scores almost identically with 2.63 on the Likert scale. Only 8.2 pct. of managers are interested in taking on race bias, even though the average manager scores 2.57 on the racial bias scale, which places the race bias challenges very close to both age and gender biases. Finally, 7.2 pct of managers are

motivated to take on LGBT+ biases, even though it is in fact the bias which has the highest score of all at 2.78 points. In other words, manager's perception of which biases ought to be addressed within their organisations do not reflect the severity of the biases in the organisation, as measured quantitatively using the four bias scales. We also note that even though the survey explicitly addressed both bias against sexual minorities *and* transgender or non-binary employees – the qualitative comments reveal that managers almost exclusively think of lesbian and gay employees under the umbrella of LGBT+ biases (with one exception shown in the quotes above). In other words, transgender and non-binary people do not seem to be factored in as potential employees within any of the organisations and are likely to face the most systematic and pervasive bias.

Appendix

The Researchers

This bias project was embedded within the *Centre for Gender and Diversity* and was carried out by post.doc Lea Skewes guided by Professor Karen Hvidtfeldt. Lea Skewes is a social psychologist whose research focuses on gender stereotypes, bias, and discrimination. Most of her research explores how gender biases affect women in male-dominated fields. However, she has also published on biases against people identifying with, LGBT+ categories. Furthermore, she has taught discrimination based on race/racialization at university level. Most recently she has co-authored a handbook about gender discrimination and sexism in academia along with expert in the field from all Danish Universities and she has contributed a chapter to the book *Re-Imagining Sexual Harassment: Perspectives from the Nordic Region*.

Key Publications on Diversity

Einersen, A. F., Krøjer, J., MacLeod, S., Muhr, S. L., Munar, A. M., Myers, E. S., Plotnikof & Skewes, L. (2021). *Sexism in Danish Higher Education and Research – Understanding, Exploring, Acting*. <https://sexismedu.dk/get-the-book/>

Skewes, L (2023). Men Run Academic Track; Women Jump Sexist Hurdles. In *Re-Imagining Sexual Harassment: Perspectives From the Nordic Regions*. red. M. Lundqvist, A. Simonssen, K. Widegreen. Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2023. s. 92-116. <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/re-imagining-sexual-harassment>

Skewes, L., Skewes, J. C. & Ryan, M. K. (2021). Attitudes to Sexism and the #MeToo Movement at a Danish University. *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 29(5), s. 124-139.

Skewes, L., Skewes, J. C. & Ryan, M. K. (2019). Attitudes to Sexism and Gender Equity at a Danish University. *Women, Gender & Research*, 1-2 (19), 71-85.

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The Centre for Gender and Diversity

The *Centre for Gender and Diversity* is anchored at *The Department of Culture and Language at the University of Southern Denmark*. It is a platform for research, teaching, and communication that addresses issues related to gender and diversity from an interdisciplinary humanistic approach. The concepts of gender and diversity are broadly understood and analysed across local, national, and global contexts. The *Centre for*

Gender and Diversity aims to qualify, develop, and disseminate research about gender and diversity across the University of Southern Denmark and in collaboration with external stakeholders. The *Centre for Gender and Diversity* is the first Danish gender research centre to explicitly commit to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The centre's activities address goals 5 (gender), 10 (inequality), 3 (health) and 16 (inclusion). The centre also works actively to strengthen awareness of research-based knowledge about gender and diversity and strive to qualify the public conversation on these themes.

Dropout Analysis

We explored whether there was differential dropout across countries which might bias our findings. We used a logistic regression to analyse the effects of demographic and organisation variables on the probability that an individual would not complete the survey.

Table 26: *Differential dropout by country*

	% complete	Estimate	Std Error	Z	p
Not Reported (used as baseline)	91.3	1.83	0.36	5.10	< .001***
CEC	96.1	1.36	0.69	1.98	.048*
Denmark	91.6	0.43	0.42	1.03	.302
France	81.7	-0.33	0.38	-0.86	.391
Germany	86.7	0.04	0.49	0.08	.930
Italy	83.3	-0.22	0.41	-0.53	.596

We find that respondents from CEC countries are slightly more likely to complete the survey, compared to people who do not report country. No other significant results, indicating that respondents from all other countries are equally likely to complete the full survey.

Table 27: *Differential dropout by gender*

	Completed Survey	Incomplete Survey
Female	380	0
Male	487	5
Other	2	0
Not Reported	0	137

We find generally low dropout rates for people who complete the gender demographics question, for people who report whether they are employed in the private or public

sector, for people who report their management level, and for people who report their company size. These rates are so low that statistical analysis is not meaningful.

Table 28: *Differential dropout by Organisation Type*

	Complete Survey	Incomplete Survey
Private	659	10
Public	210	5
Not Reported	0	127

Table 29: *Differential dropout by Management Level*

	Complete Survey	Incomplete Survey
Lower	211	3
Middle	424	7
Upper	234	3
Not Reported	0	129

Table 30: *Differential dropout by Organisation Size*

	Complete Survey	Incomplete Survey
Less than 1000 people	185	2
Between 100-1000 people	214	3
Above 1000 people	470	9
Not reported	0	128

Scale Reliability

Table 31: *Reliability of each of the scales used in the study*

Scale	Cronbach's α
Modern Sexism Scale (MS)	0.87
Modern Racism Scale (MR)	0.83
Agism Scale (AGE)	0.83
LGBT+ Scale (LGBT+)	0.82
Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)	0.89

All the scales we used had good internal reliability, including the LGBT+ scale which was designed for this particular study. This means that each scale is internally consistent.

Social Domination Orientation

Other than the four bias scales that focused on gender, race, LGBT+ and age biases, we also chose to add the *Social Domination Orientation* scale. The main purpose for us to include it in this study was to ensure that our new LGBT+ scale could be validated. We expected the new scale to positively correlate most with the gender bias scale, and we also expected it to correlate moderately with the racism scale. However, to further support the validity of the new scale it was useful to include the SDO scale as well – to confirm that the scale was capturing the kinds of legitimising attitudes that undergird biases. In addition, this scale is useful in the present context because it captures the degree to which people perceive social hierarchies as legitimate. The greater the extent to which people legitimise social hierarchies based on social categories, the more supportive they typically are of biases and discrimination.

Table 32: *Effects of country, gender or management level on SDO*

		β	SE	t	P value
Baseline		1.98	.15	12.77	<.001***
Country Effects					
	<i>CEC</i>	-0.01	0.11	-0.14	.892
	<i>Denmark</i>	0.24	0.09	2.74	.006**
	<i>France</i>	0.06	0.09	0.69	.488
	<i>Italy</i>	-0.17	0.09	-1.81	.070
Gender (Male)		0.19	0.04	4.22	<.001***
Management Level					
	<i>Middle</i>	0.05	0.05	0.82	.412
	<i>Upper</i>	0.08	0.06	1.21	.226
Age		0.01	0.01	-0.14	.885

R² adjusted = .07, F(8,788) = 8.63, p < .001

Using the baseline of non-reported country, women, and lower management positions – we explored whether there was any effect of these on Social Domination Orientation. We find that Denmark scores higher on Social Domination Orientation, compared to the other countries, with a score 0.24 higher than the baseline. None of the other countries were significantly different from the baseline.

There is a significant effect of being a man, meaning that men have a higher Social Domination Orientation score by 0.19, compared to women. This aligns well with other studies, where men typically score higher on this scale, perceiving current cultural hierarchies as more legitimate, than women do.

There is no effect of neither management level nor age.

Table 33: *The effects of SDO on gender and race*

	β	SE	t	p value
Intercept	2.12	0.09	22.82	<.001***
% Men in Org.	0.19	0.10	1.90	.058
% White in Org.	-0.05	0.10	-0.48	.629

R² adjusted = .002, F(2,683) = 1.83, p = .16

When analysing the effects of organisational features on the SDO scale, we find a marginally significant relationship between the percentage of men in an organisation, and the level of Social Domination Orientation reported by the manager. This indicates that male dominated organisations will be slightly more hierarchically oriented, compared to organisations with a greater gender balance

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