

This white paper provides an excellent synopsis of unconscious bias starting with its definition, an overview of the types along with strategies to address unconscious bias on both an individual and company level.

The findings are from a primary research study with Sonru clients on Assessment and Interview Training, with a particular focus on how Video Interviewing protects against unconscious bias. Client vignettes from nucleargraduates, WestRock and EE are also included.

## We All Have Unconscious Biases

Unconscious biases are prejudices we have but are unaware we have them. They are *“mental shortcuts based on social norms and stereotypes.”* There are more than 150 identified unconscious biases, making the task of rooting them out and addressing them daunting.

## The Implicit Association Test (IAT)

For many years, scientists have been working on instruments to assess unconscious bias (also known as implicit associations). Of the various tools that are available, the Implicit Association Test (IAT) is one of the most popular and well-known studies.

**The online Implicit Association Test, a result of collaboration among psychologists from Harvard, the University of Virginia, and the University of Washington, was designed to help test takers assess their unconscious biases. Since it was launched in 1998, more than 6 million people have taken the test. The test assesses bias based on how quickly the test taker pairs a face with a positive term and then compares it to how quickly the test taker responds to more difficult terms.**

### 5 Common Hiring Biases

**Halo/Horn Bias:**

Allowing your judgment to be influenced by a particular trait (either positive or negative).

Manager X sees that Applicant Y is proficient in sales, therefore probably competent in sales management as well.

**Recency Bias:**

Recent events tend to weigh more heavily on our decisions than events in the past.

*"We've had really good luck with hiring those last two people from Competitor A, let's cut through all the red tape and hire a few more."*

**Anchoring Bias:**

Giving more weight to the first bit of information we gather. Often, the anchor may or may not have any real relevance.

*"Now that Anita has retired, we will probably never find anyone to replace her." Any applicant will be compared to Anita.*

**Confirmation Bias:**

The tendency to favour information that confirms already established beliefs.

*"The candidate coming in this afternoon led two fundraisers last year. She's bound to have some good leadership skills." - Don't assume!*

**Commitment Bias:**

The tendency to increase our commitment in a decision based on prior investments despite evidence that the cost of continuing down our current path is much greater than any expected benefit.

*"Do you know how much we've invested into evaluations, background checks, interviews, hotels, airfare, meals, and recruiting expenses to get this guy in here? Make him an offer for Pete's sake! We can't go through this again!"*

## Sonru Client Research Findings: Assessment and Training Survey

*"It [unconscious bias training] is a very small part.... 10 minutes at the end of a long training day - more to raise awareness and stimulate thoughtful discussion."*

*"Sometimes information irrelevant to the job delivers some clues or insights about the candidate that are important when deciding to short list or not."*

*"It [explicitly mentioning the potential impact of Unconscious Bias] is something we could elaborate on in our guidelines..... we talk about it, but having it upfront is a good idea."*

*"We give them the opportunity to fill in a standardised form but they don't have to."*

### Assessing Applications

27%

invite candidates to submit standardised application forms rather than CVs

77%

define the criteria for the post before applications are reviewed

47%

feel confident that anonymous shortlisting would deliver the same shortlist

### Unconscious Bias Testing and Training

< 10%

of the Assessors are bias tested

20%

provide training around Unconscious Bias

10-20 mins

typical amount of time devoted to Unconscious Bias training

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## How Video Interviewing Protects Against Unconscious Bias

The advantage of Asynchronous Video Interviewing is that it is Transparent, Consistent, Objective and Documented. All candidates are asked the same questions and given the same time to view and to respond.

*"When speaking to someone on the phone, there may be language issues, a bad connection, or the interviewer might be distracted or entering the conversation with some biases. All this risk is removed with a standardised process which is respectful and fair - all candidates are asked the same questions in the same manner - there is no difference how we treat candidates."*

**Cezary Wasiak**

**Manager Talent Acquisition Europe, WestRock**

*"The key learning from this white paper is that we need to talk about Unconscious Bias. We need to stand up and recognise that each of us has individual biases but it is okay. Self awareness and training can ensure our recruitment and selection processes control for these biases."*

*By its very nature, asynchronous video interviewing lends itself to protecting against Unconscious Bias. By combining this with the unconscious bias training, our amazing clients can strive towards choosing the very best candidates for the very best reasons."*

**Maiken O'Byrne**

**Head of Client Success, Sonru**