



2026 Opportunity & Impact in Nursing Summit



American
Nurses
Enterprise



Bias Interrupted

Creating Inclusion for Real and for Good

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Prove-It-Again!

Groups stereotyped as less competent need to provide more evidence to be judged equally competent

Triggered by:

- Gender
- Age
- Class-origin
- LGBTQ+ status
- Race – stronger for women of color than for any other group; strongest for Black women

“I feel like I can never make a single mistake”

– Black woman



Prove-It-Again!

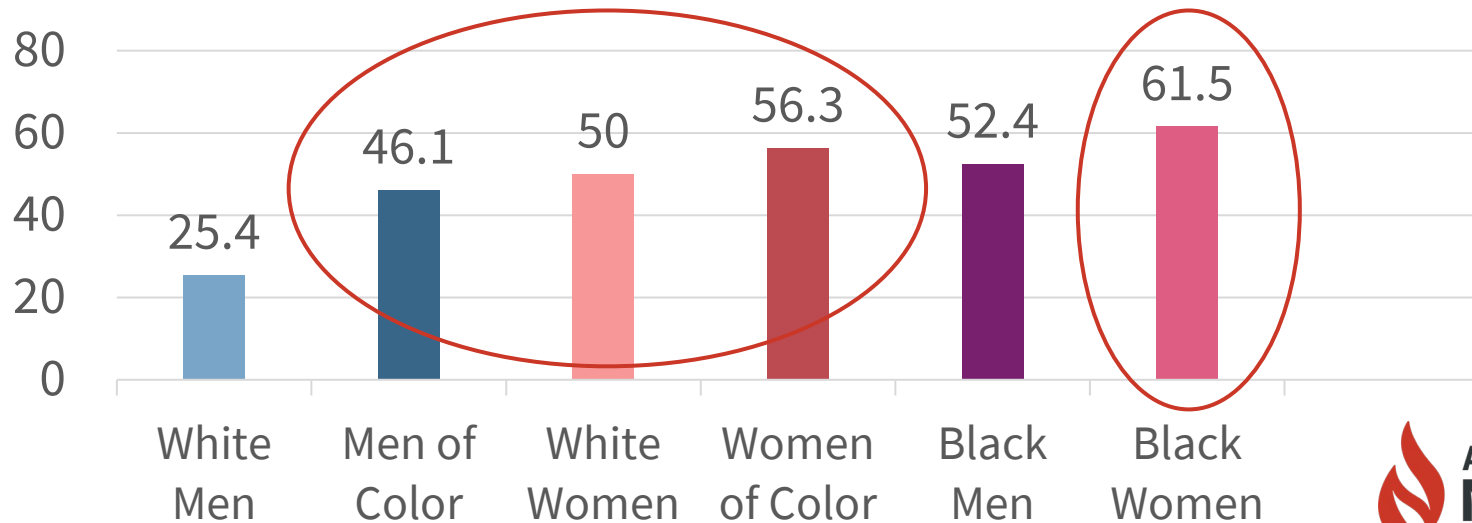
“Every time I go into a meeting, I feel like I have to prove my technical capability again”

– Long-tenured female engineer



National study

Prove myself over and over





By show of hands

Have seen prove-it-again bias at work?



Tightrope | Prescriptive stereotypes

Women are expected to be...

- Nice
- Warm and kind
- Patient
- Polite

→ Good team players

Men are expected to be...

- Assertive
- Ambitious
- Competent
- Decisive

→ Leaders





Tightrope | Personality critiques

2021 study of performance evaluations in tech

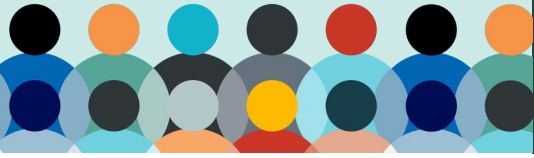
- Men are given more leeway for negative emotions than women
- Negative feedback less likely to be accepted from women





Tightrope | Race

- *African Americans*: “angry Black woman”; “intimidating”; “well-liked”
- *Latinas*: “feisty”; “sassy”
- *Asian Americans*: non-dominance preferred
- 94% of POC in tech received personality comments



By show of hands....

Have seen tightrope bias at work?



Maternal Wall

Negative competence and commitment assumptions

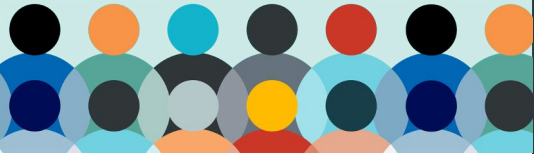
- 79% less likely to be hired
- Only half as likely to be promoted
- Offered \$11,000 less in salary
- Held to higher performance and punctuality standards





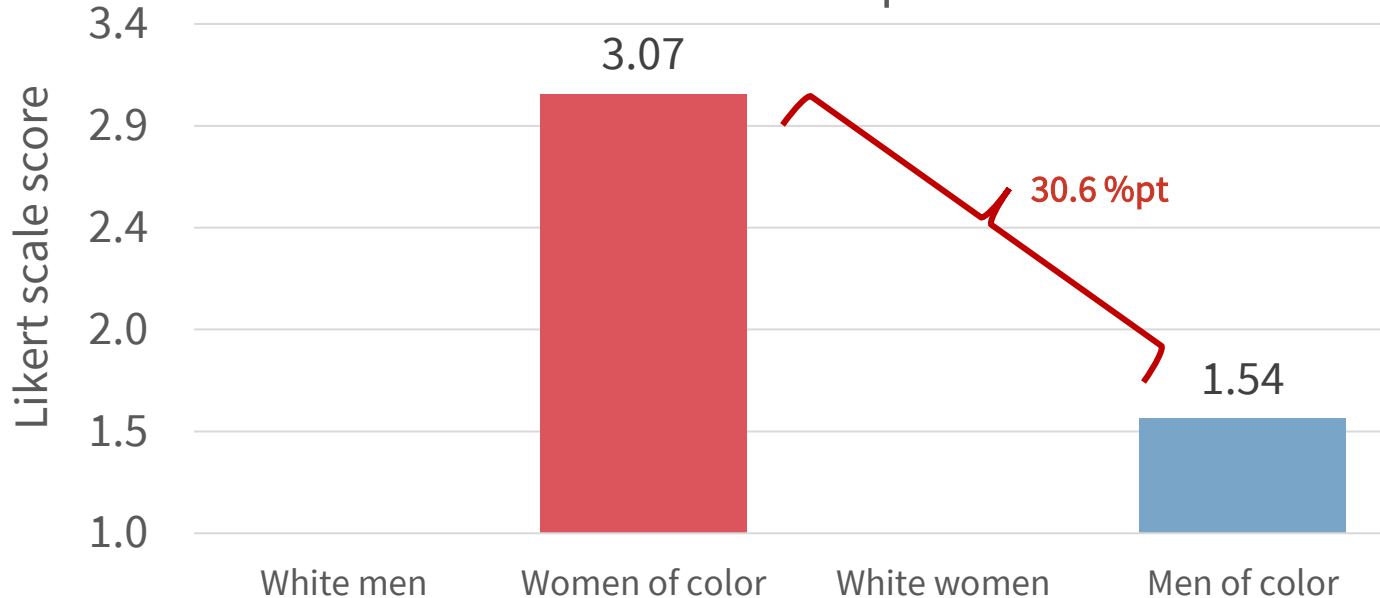
Maternal Wall | Benevolent prescriptive bias

“This is not a good time for her”



Maternal wall bias is very strong

When women have children, it changes colleagues' perception of their work commitment and competence.





By show of hands...

Have seen maternal wall bias at work?



Tug of War

“Opportunities for women are very zero-sum. If one woman gets a prized position...another woman won’t. And so, it breeds a sense of competition.”



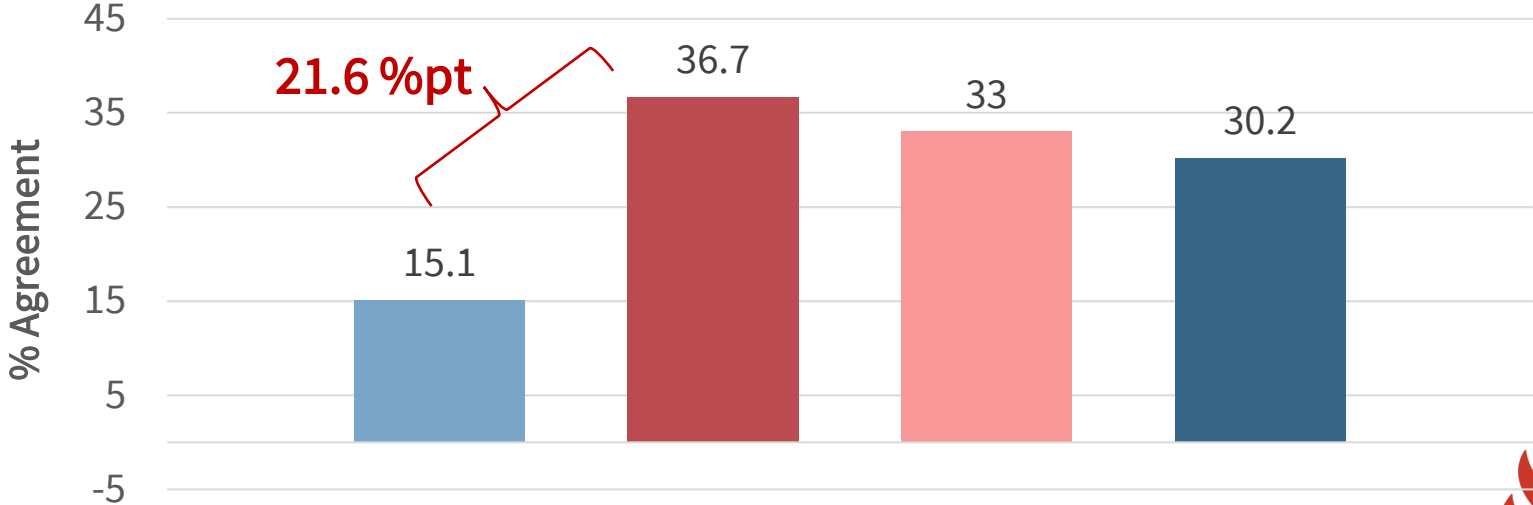
Tug of War | Race, gender, LGBTQ+

- Collective threat
 - *“If another member of my demographic group performs poorly, it reflects negatively on me.”*
- Favoritism threat
 - *“If I support someone in my group, it will look like I’m playing favorites.”*
- Competitive threat
 - *“There’s only room for one, so if there’s another qualified member of my group, I’ll lose out.”*



Tug of War

Competition within my group for career-enhancing opportunities



Williams, Korn & Mass, 2021.

White Men

Women of color





By show of hands...

Have seen tug of war bias at work?



Racial stereotypes | Distinctive experiences

- African Americans: disrespect and isolation
- Asian Americans: “good at technical skills, but lack leadership potential”; forever foreign
- Latinas: “too emotional”





Racial stereotypes | Asian Americans

“Asians are stereotypically seen as subservient and lacking management skills, which you can see in the low representation of Asians in senior management at [STEM organization].”

–East Asian woman in STEM



By show of hands...

Have seen these racial biases at work?



Your organization could be making steady, **year-over-year progress** to level the playing field



If bias is playing out...

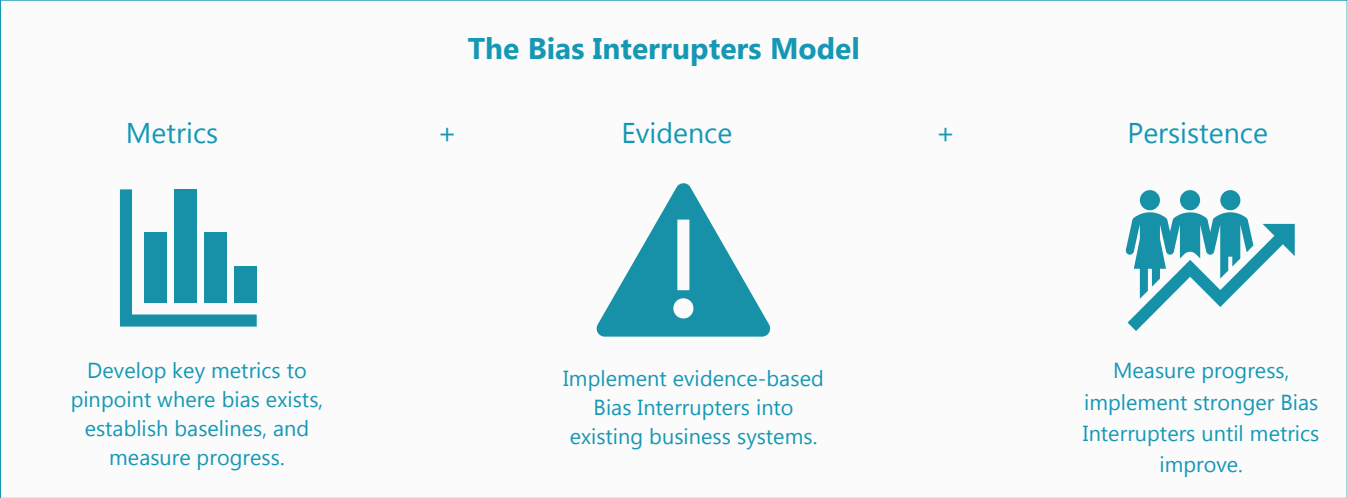
It's constantly being transmitted through your basic business systems

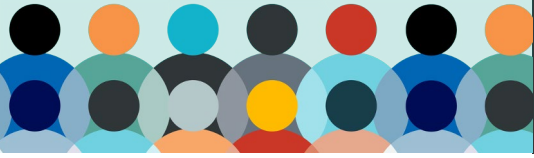
Diversity goals, ERGs, women's initiatives...

Solution? Fix the business systems



Our model





Bias Interrupters work!

Comparing Pre-intervention & Post-intervention results



Interrupting bias in informal workplace interactions

1. Use our Workplace Experiences Survey (WES) to establish a baseline
2. Individual Bias Interrupters workshop
 - How the 5 patterns play out at work
 - In small groups, people brainstorm how they could interrupt bias
3. Re-run survey

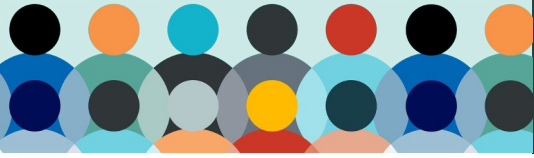




Workplace Experiences Survey

- 10-minute climate survey:
 - Is there bias?
 - If so, where?
 - Impact on outcome measures

Data changes the conversation!



Bias training



*“That’s an excellent suggestion Miss Trigg.
Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it.”*

Duncan, 1988.





Bias training| PIA Scenario

You are sitting in a meeting, and you see the stolen idea occur. How can you interrupt this bias?



Bias training| PIA Scenario

You are sitting in a meeting, and you see the stolen idea occur. How can you interrupt this bias?

“I’ve been pondering that idea **ever since Jane first said it**. You’ve added something important...”



Maternal Wall | Scenario

A colleague tells his manager that he has decided to take a parental leave as long as women typically take. The manager responds, “You know, either you’re in it to win it or you aren’t. And once people decide you aren’t, it’s hard to change that impression.” Inappropriate, or just good career advice?



Maternal Wall | Scenario

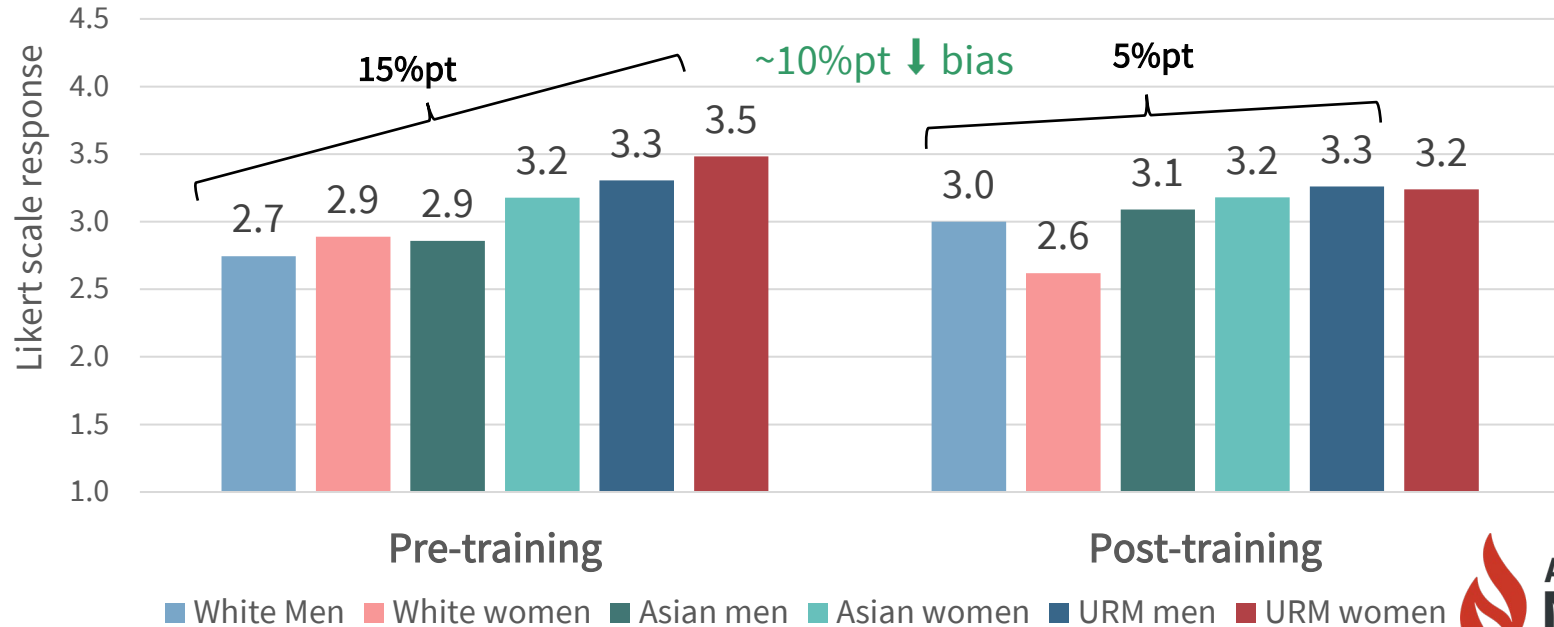
A colleague tells his manager that he has decided to take a parental leave as long as women typically take. The manager responds, “You know, either you’re in it to win it or you aren’t. And once people decide you aren’t, it’s hard to change that impression.” Inappropriate, or just good career advice?

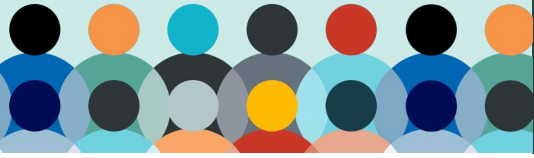
*Don’t discourage **anyone** from taking parental leave
Regardless of gender*



White & URM women report less PIA

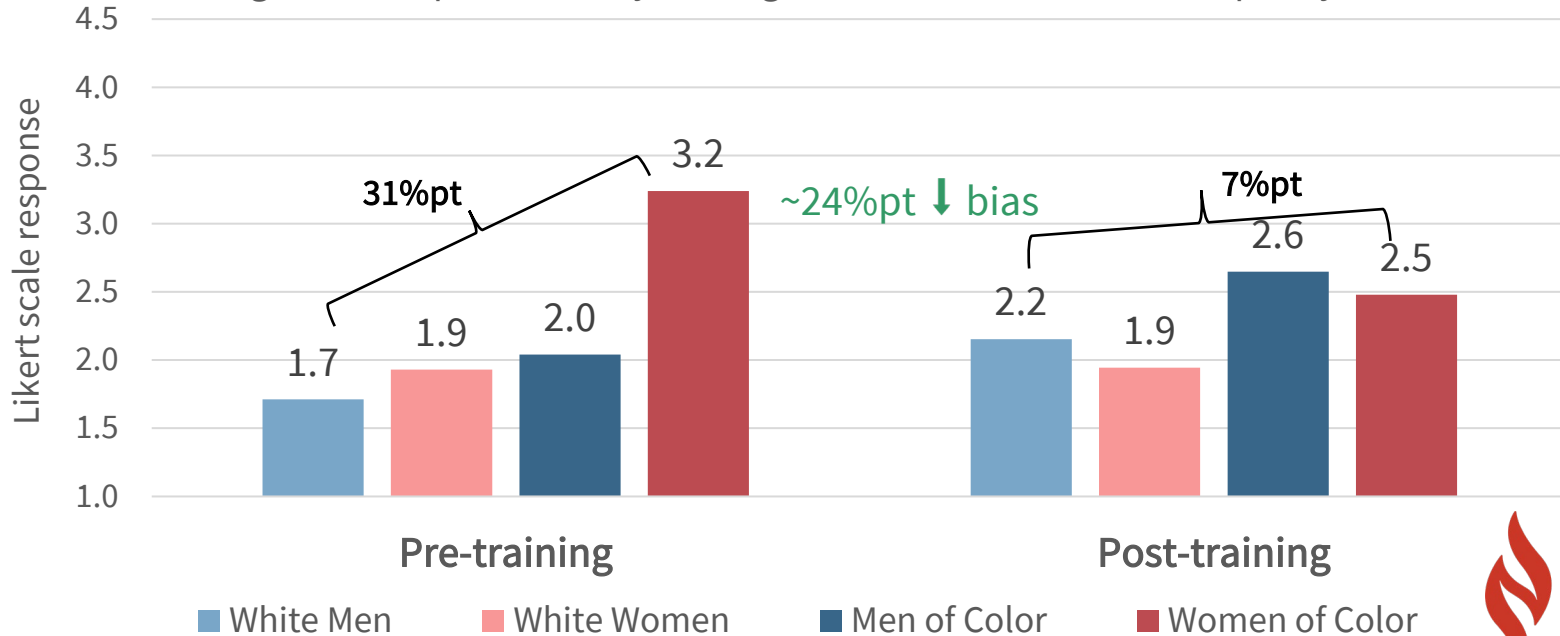
Have to prove themselves repeatedly to get same recognition





WOC report more respect

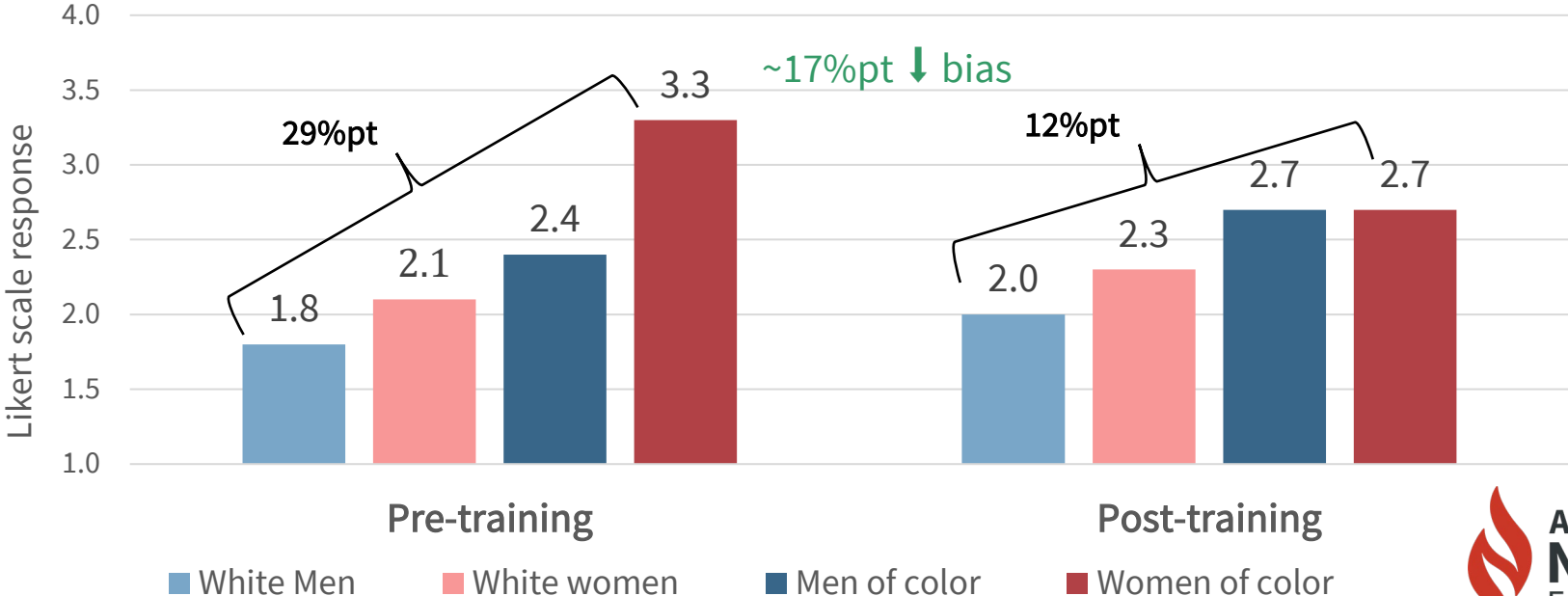
I get less respect than my colleagues for the same level and quality of work





PIA improves for WOC

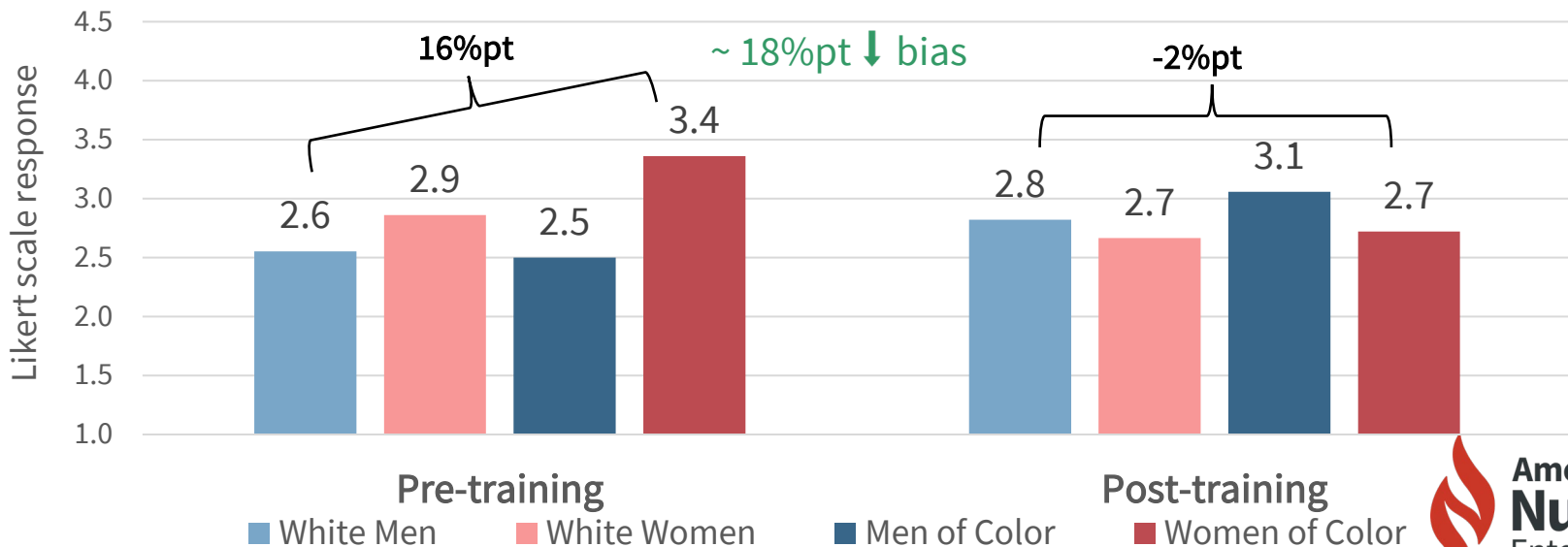
When I give an outstanding performance, people seem surprised

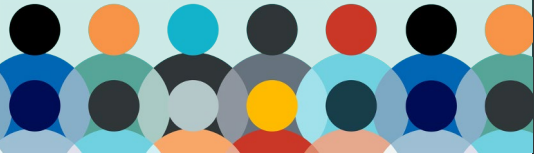




Personality comments

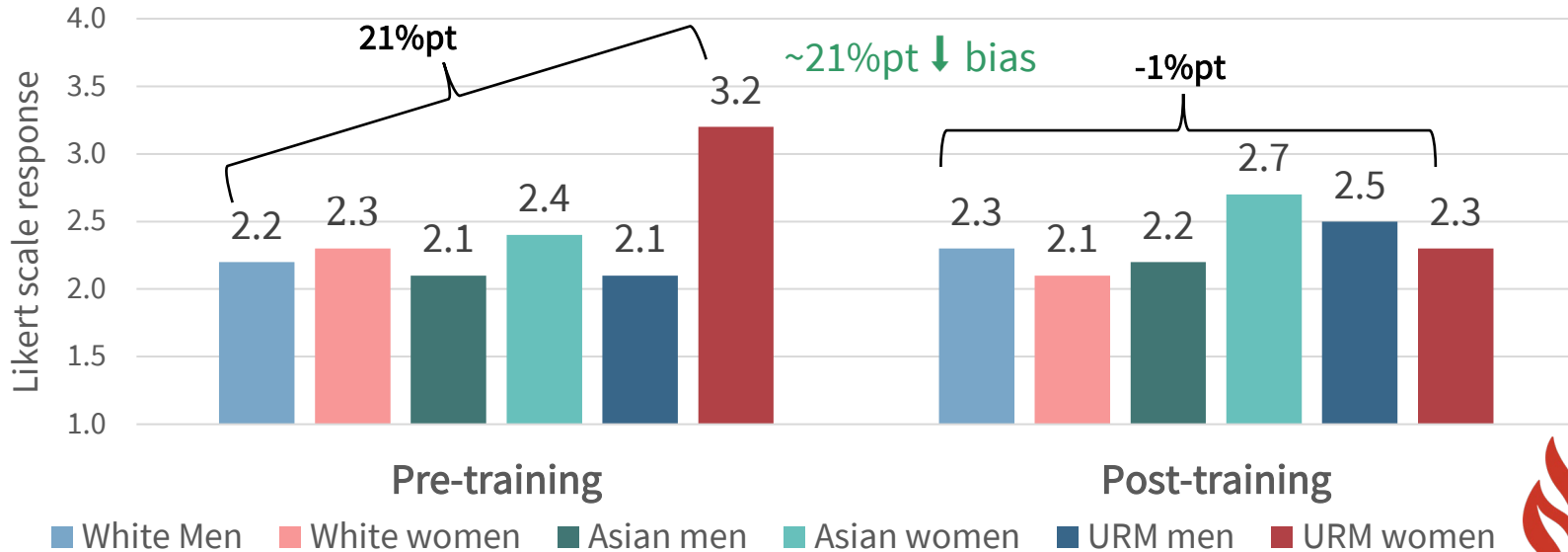
I get comments about my personality





Team player

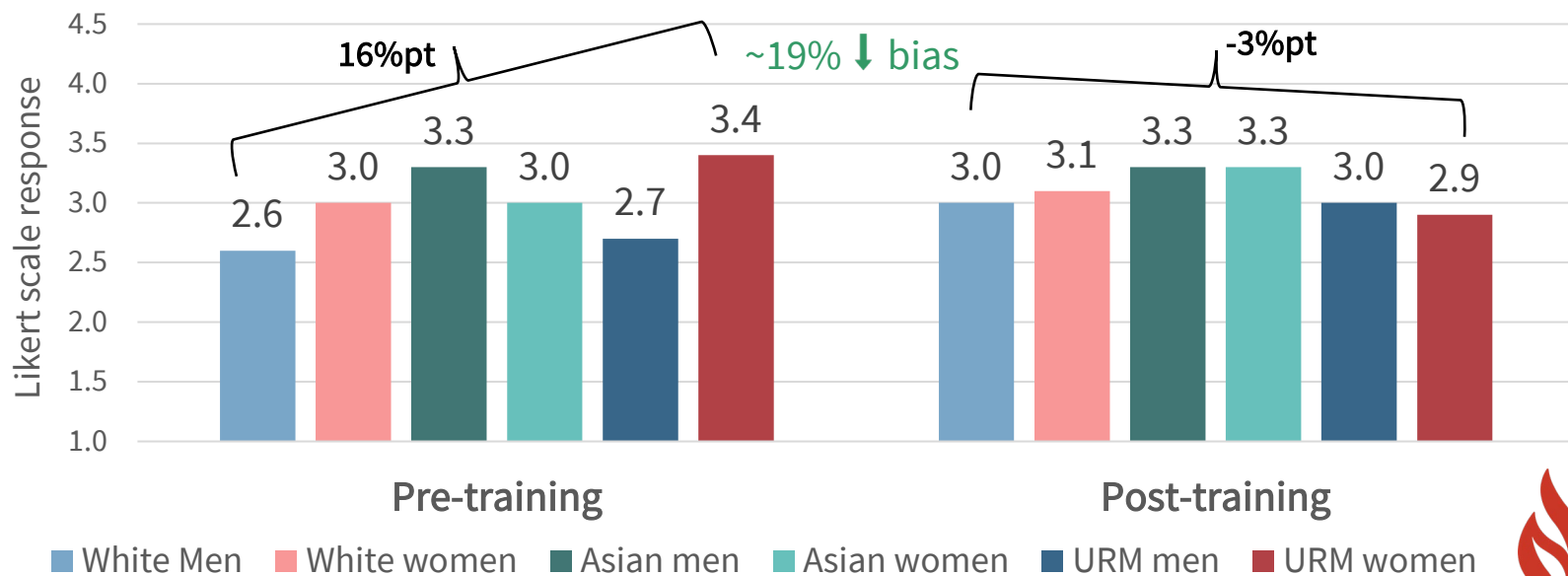
Have to work harder to be seen as a team player

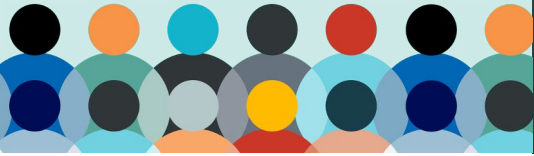




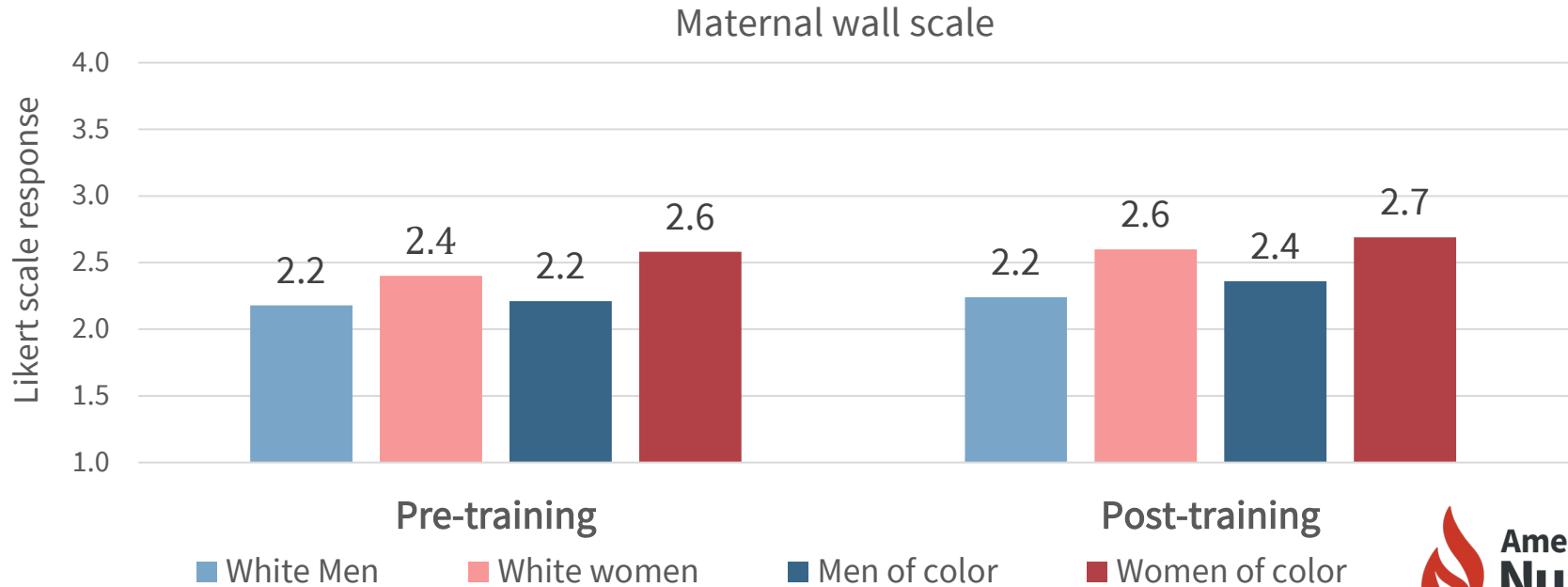
Tightrope bias reduced

I have to be everyone's best friend to get ahead





Maternal wall scale – no improvement



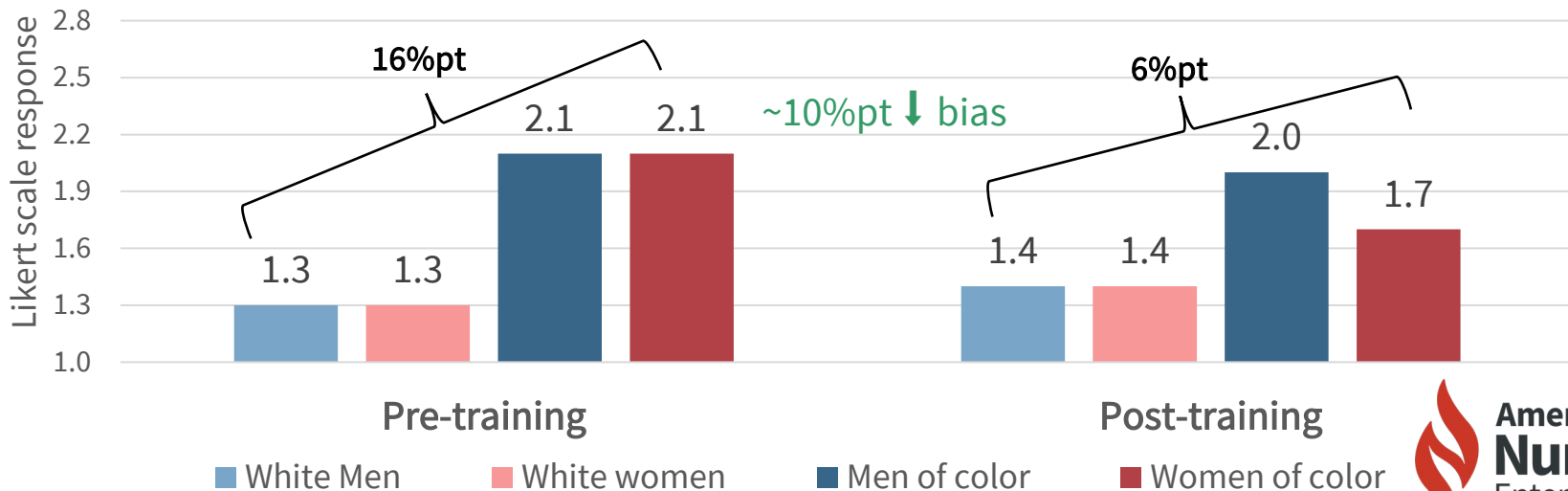
Aggregated data from 4 companies





Tug of war bias reduced

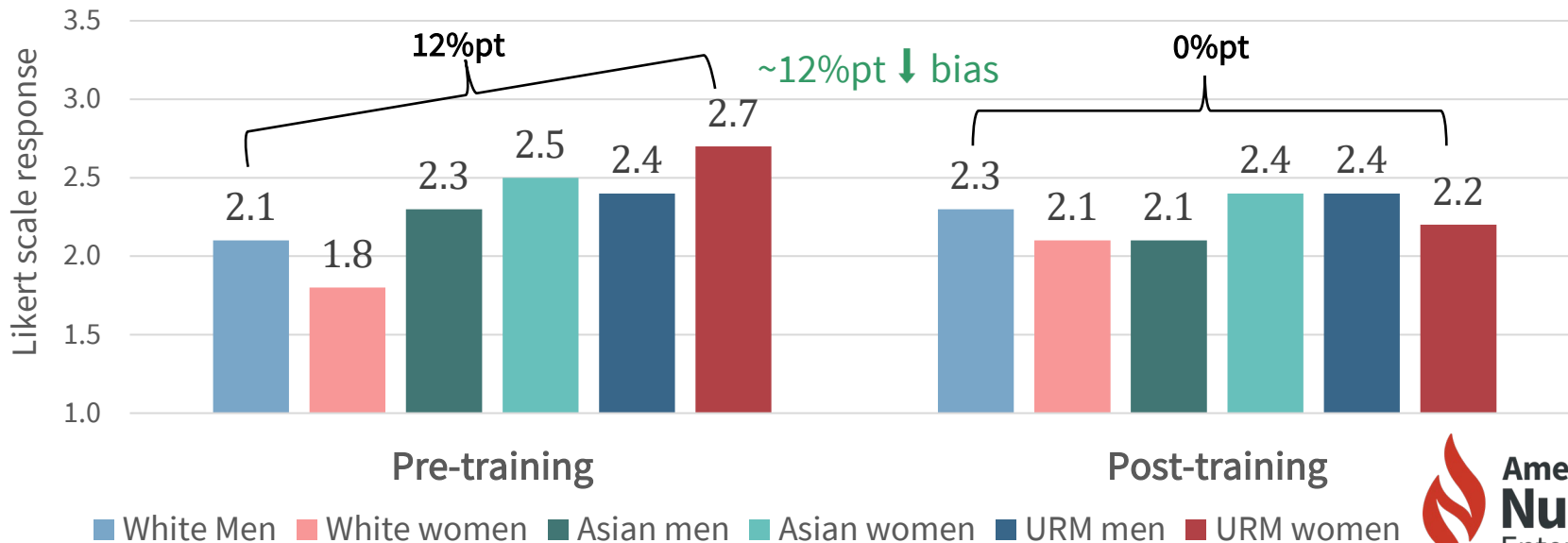
If someone else of my race/gender performs poorly, I worry that it will reflect negatively on me.

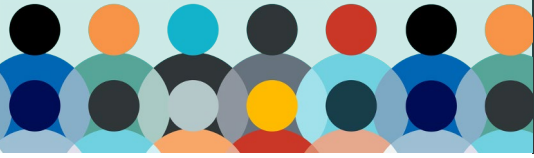




Tug of war bias reduced

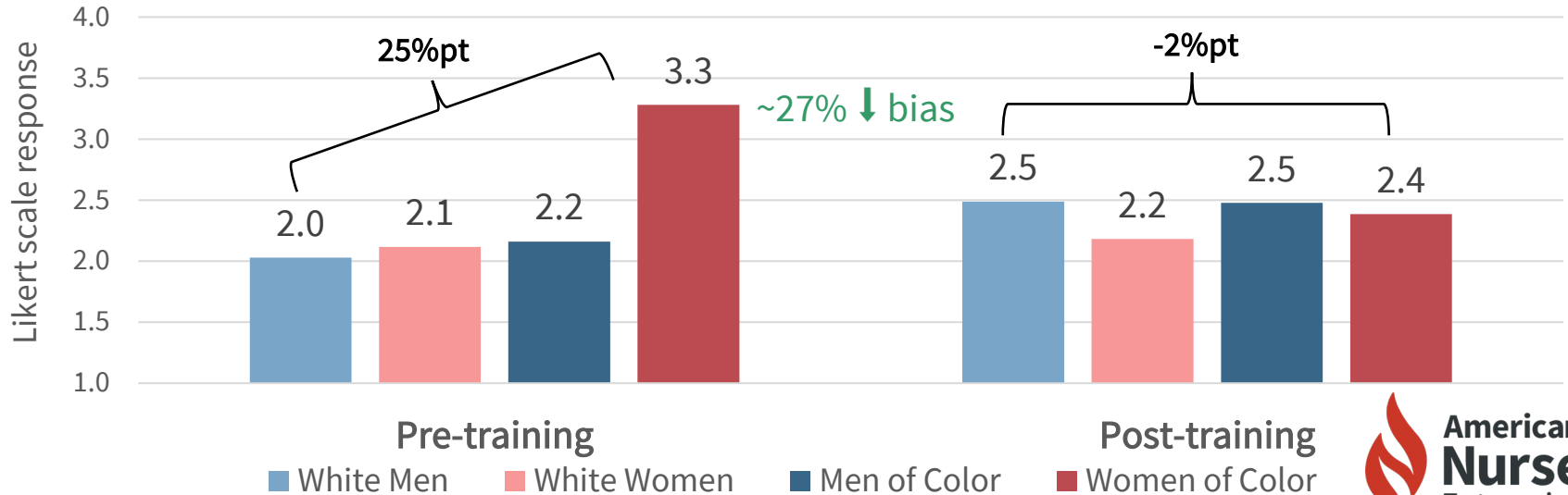
Seen as favoritism if support others from same race/gender





Improvement in expertise questioned

Even though I am the expert, questions are often addressed to others on my team.



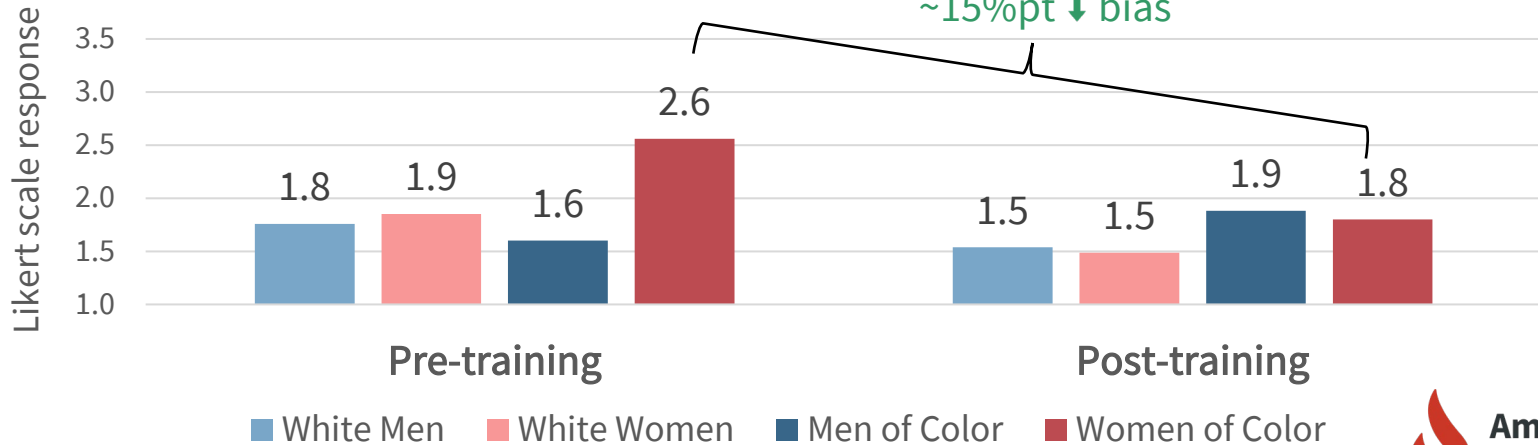
Company B





WOC report less disrespect

People have attempted to demean, disrespect, or humiliate me at work.



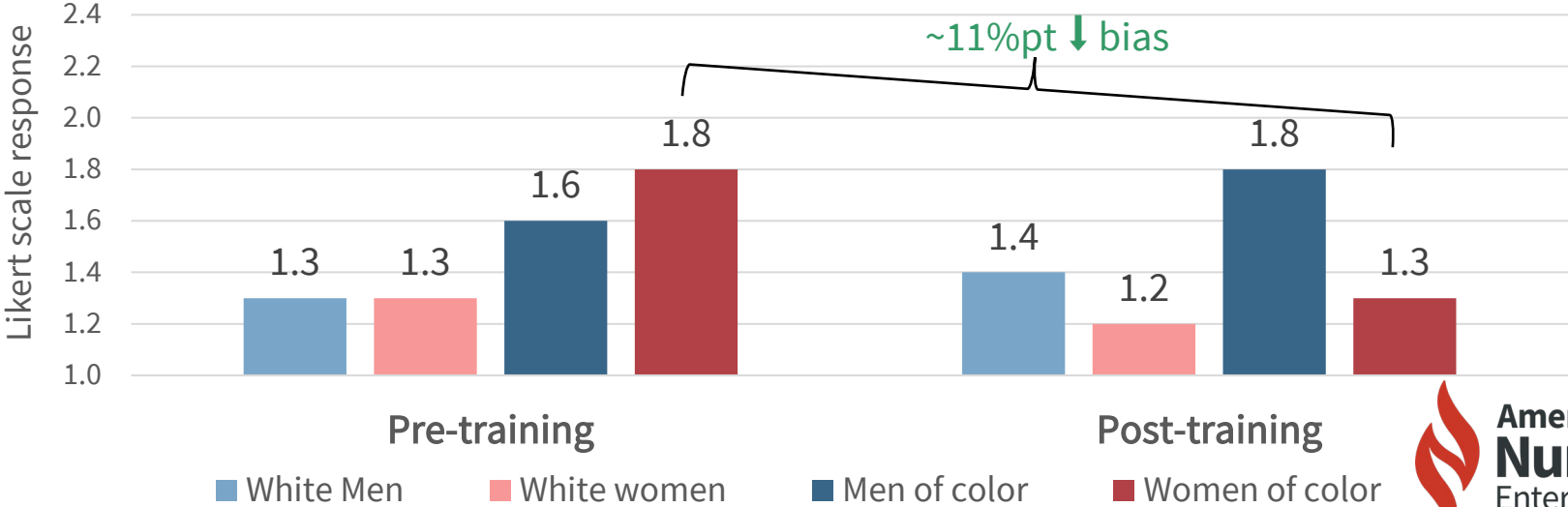
Company B





Language bias

Coworkers are surprised by my English language skills.



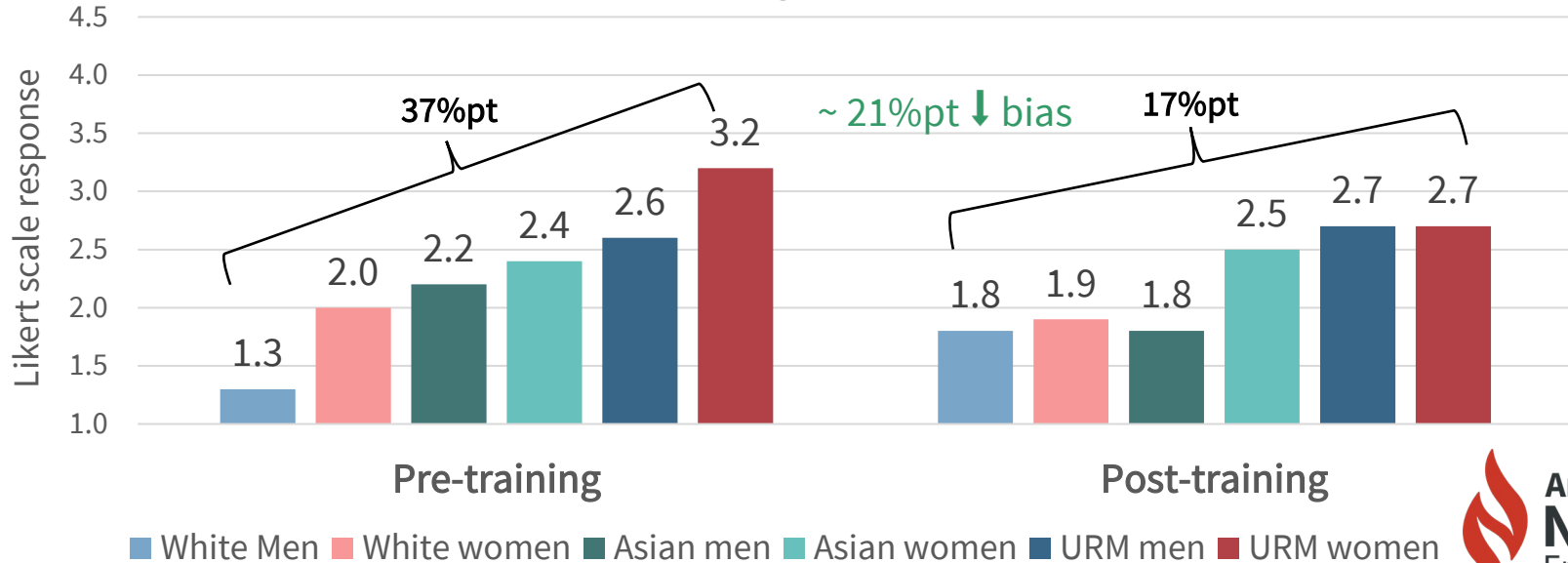
Company D





Extra mentorship

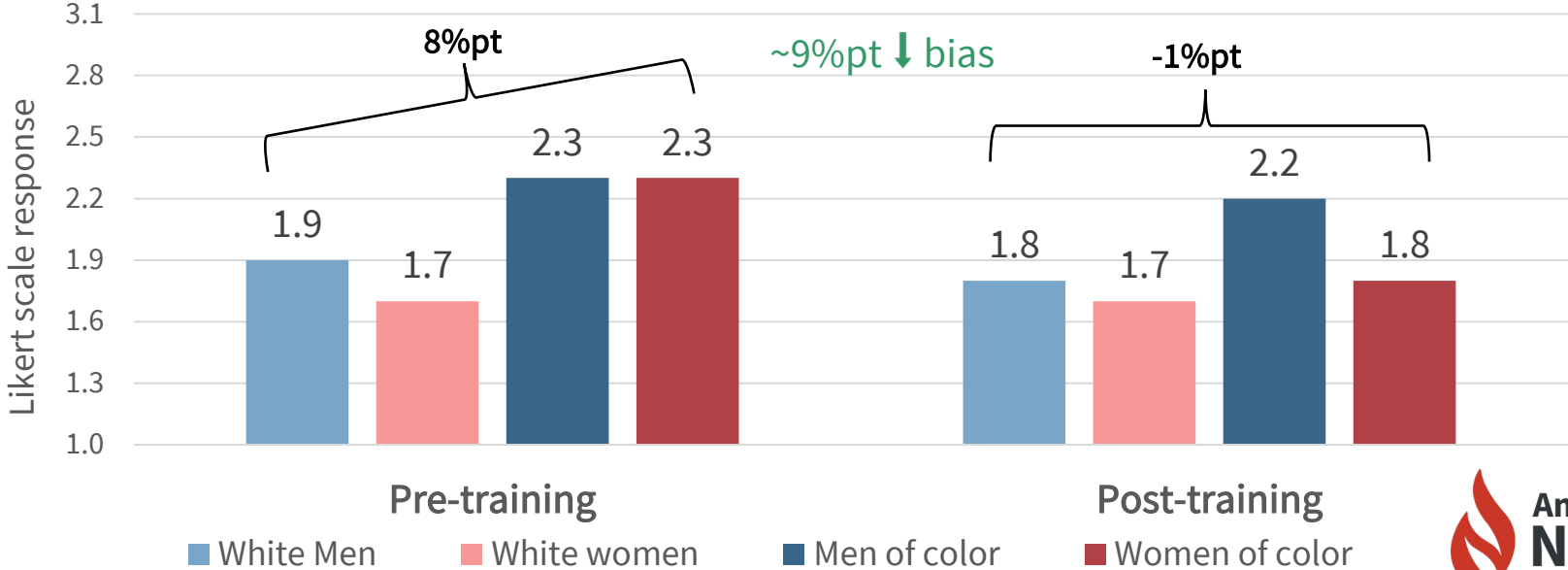
I spend extra time mentoring people of my own ethnicity/race





Mentoring

I spend extra time mentoring people of my own ethnicity or race.





A bias training is **not enough** to
interrupt bias!
Bias interrupters are



Interrupting bias in access to opportunities

1. Helped create typology of high- and low-profile opportunities
2. Managers kept track (5-10 minutes/month)
3. Ensuring fair access to opportunities workshop
 - Show company data
 - Explain why this happens
4. Analyze impact

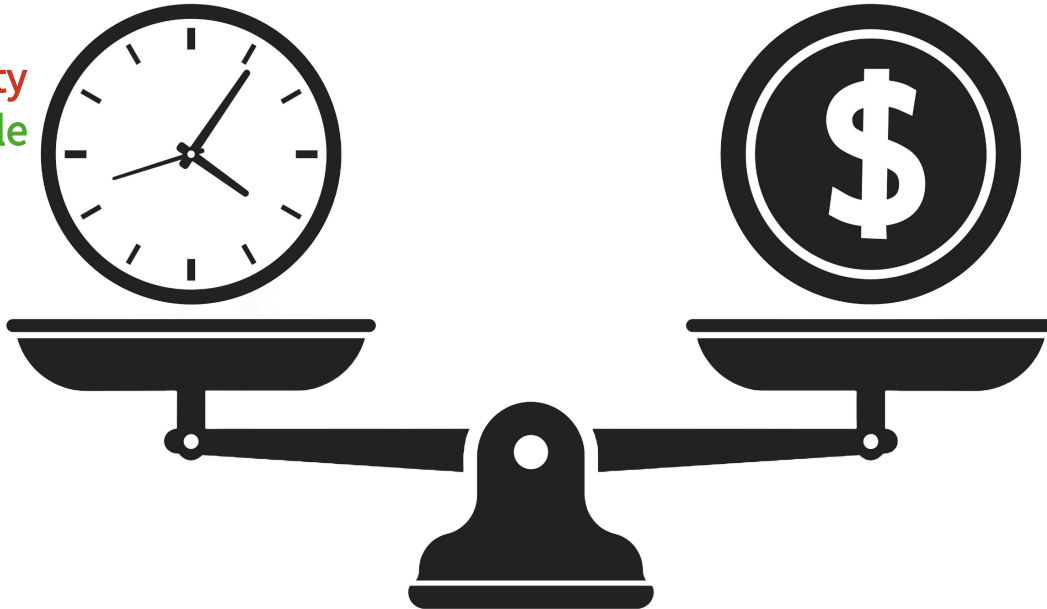




A two-step process

Equalizing access to career-enhancing opportunities requires both

Equal **responsibility**
for **non-promotable**
work



Equal **access** to
high-profile
work



Creating a tasking tool

Tasking Tool

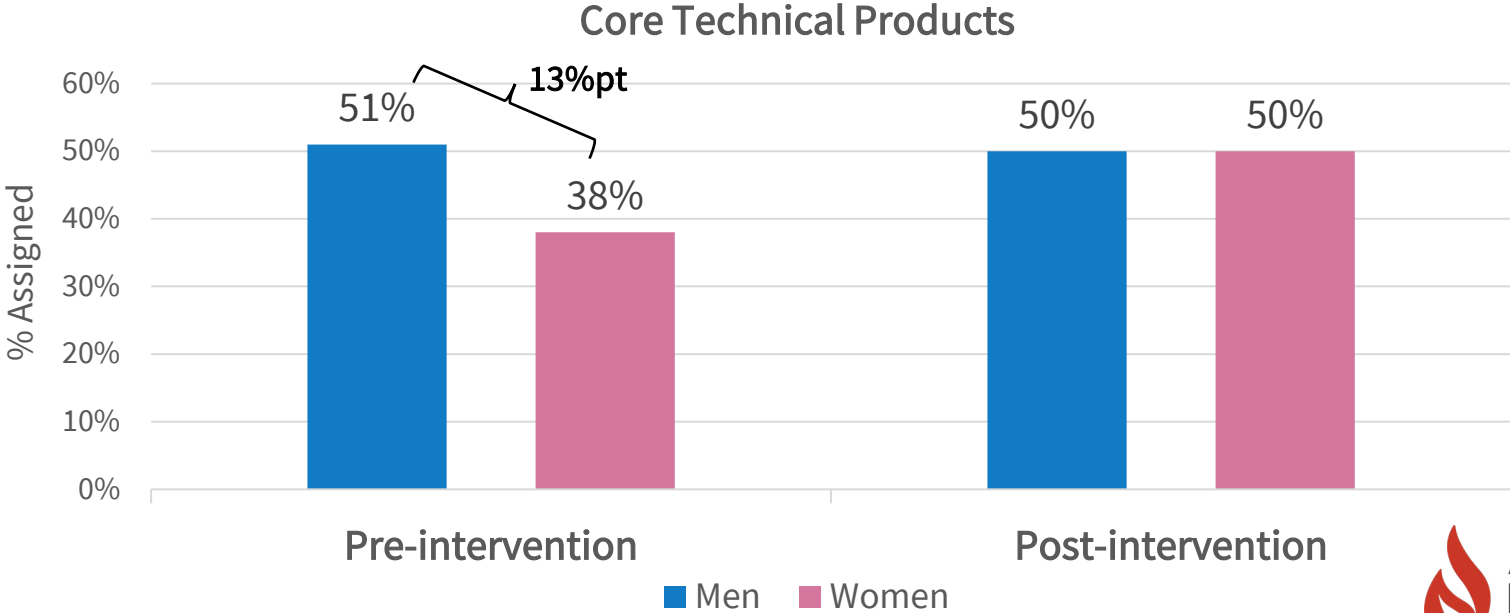
Please match up your direct reports with the opportunities they have worked on during the past month by checking the corresponding boxes.

Core Technical Products

| | Rachel | Asma | Joan | Raafiya |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Novel analyses | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tool development | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Research | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



More equitable allocation

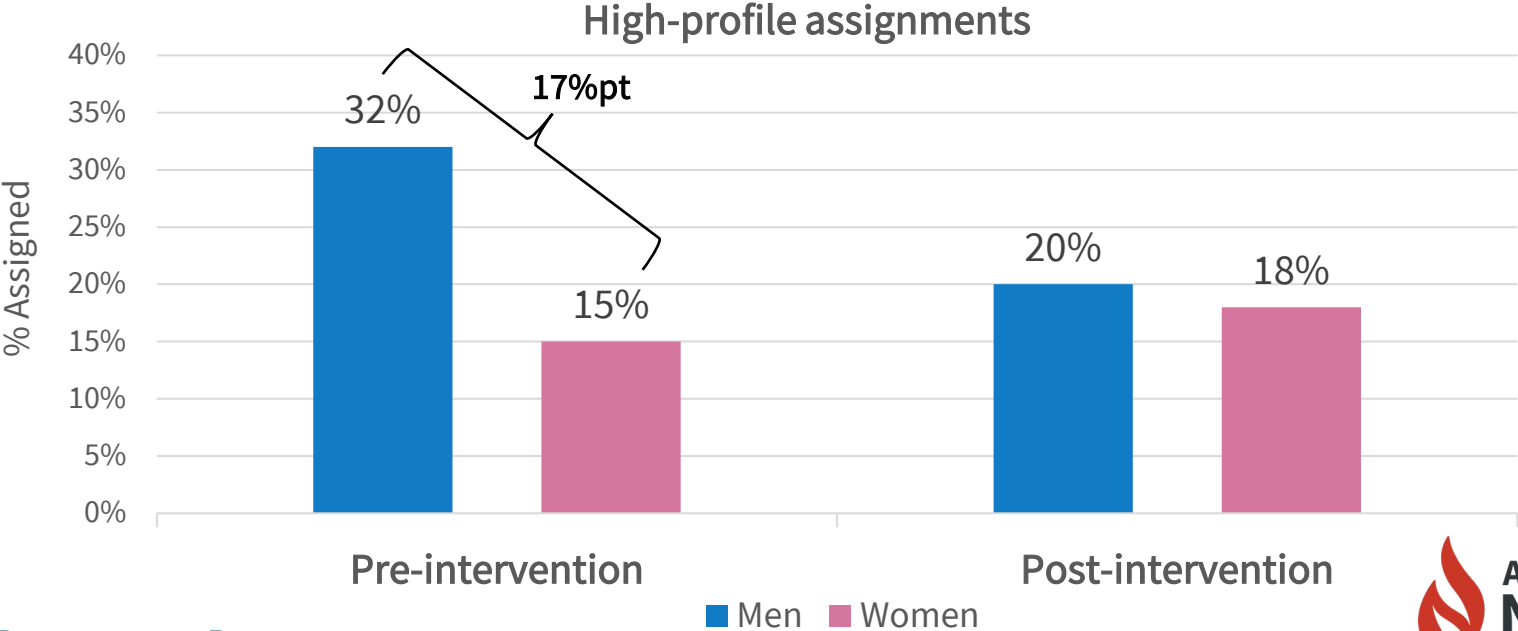


Department A





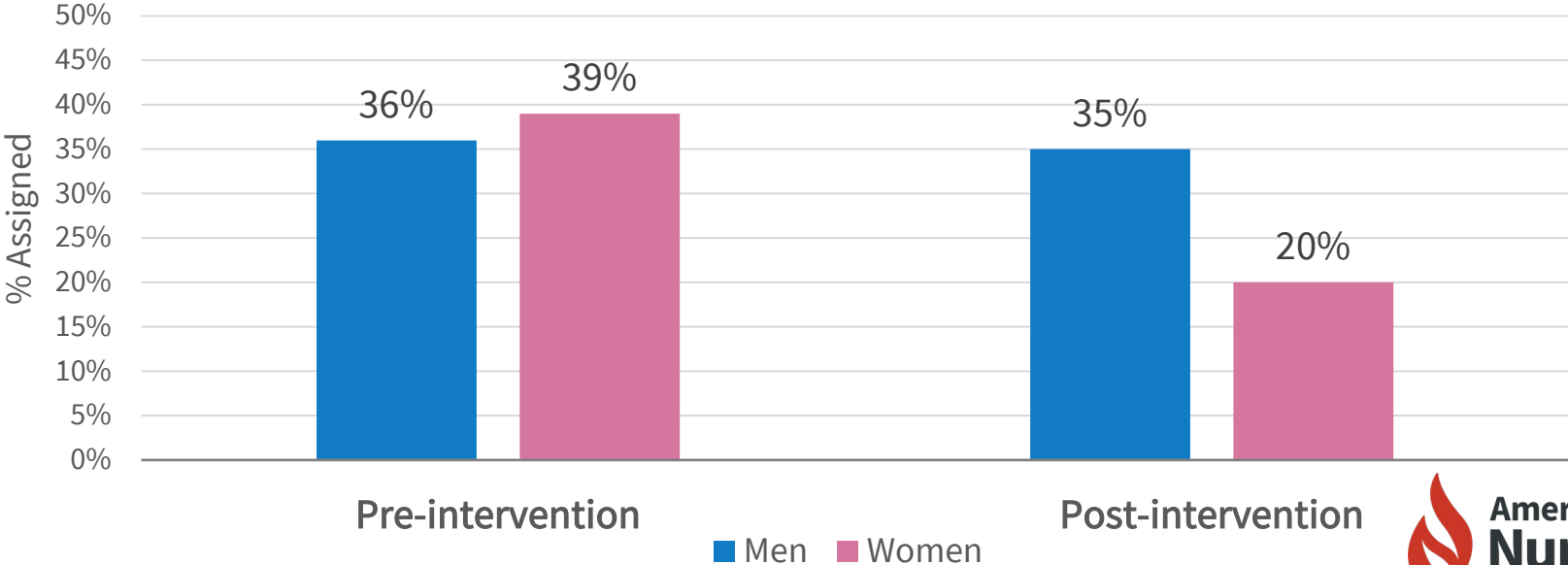
More equitable allocation





Not one and done!

Administrative work



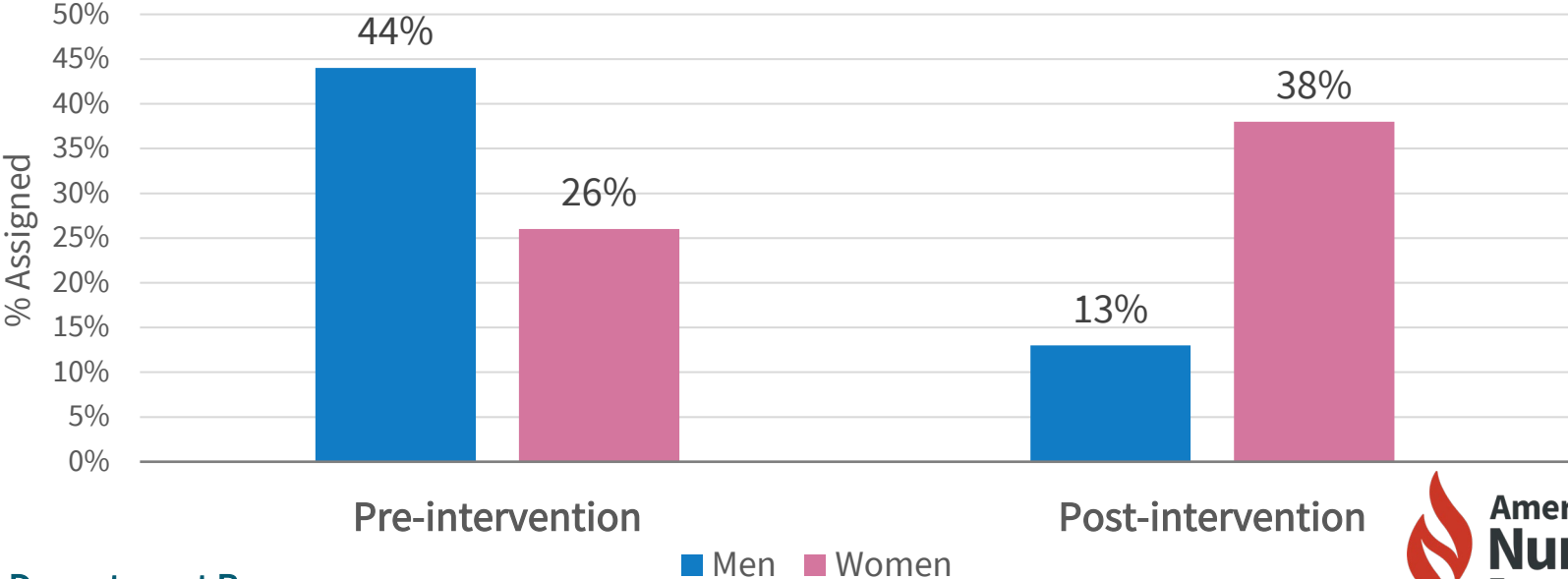
Department A





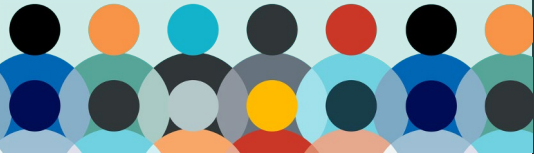
Not one and done

External visibility



Department B



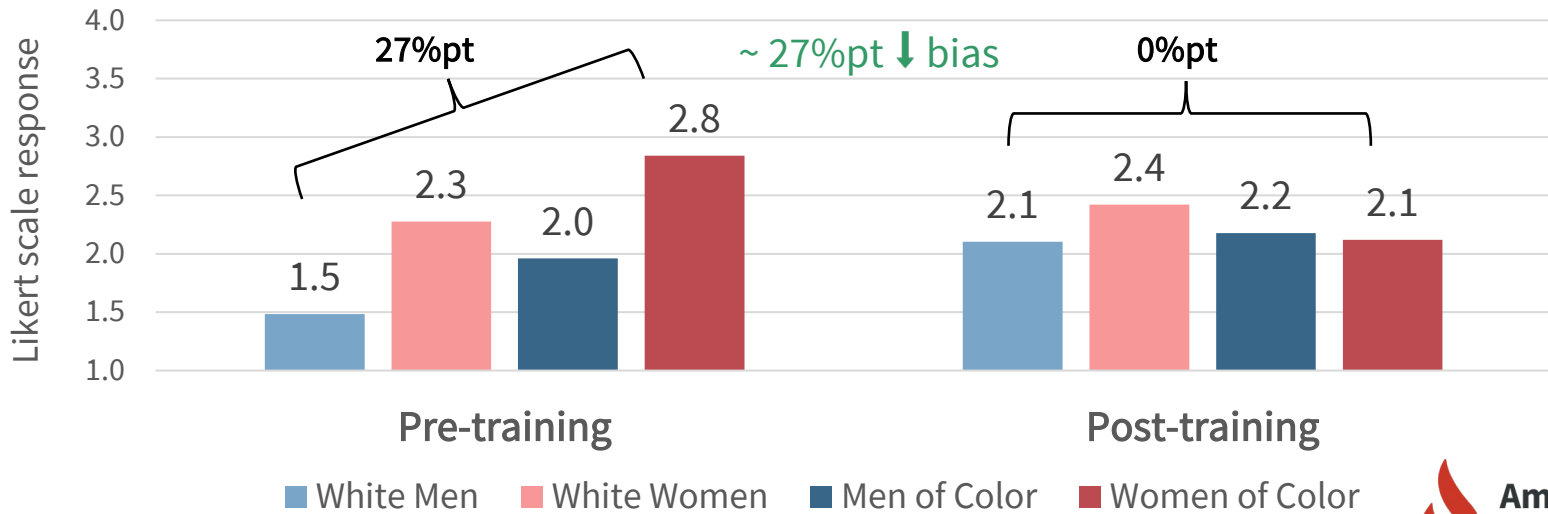


IBI training resulted in **more equal**
division of office housework



Literal office housework more equitable

More literal housework: planning parties, cleaning up, ordering food

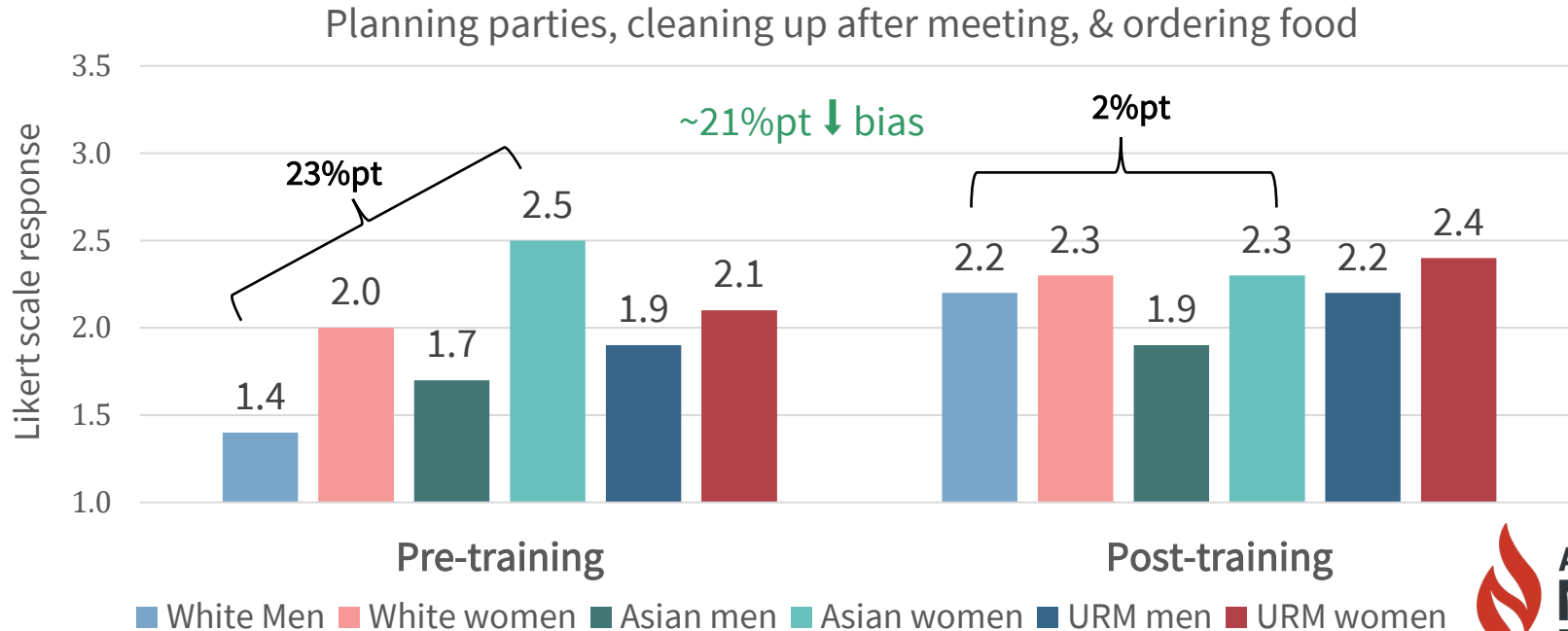


Company B



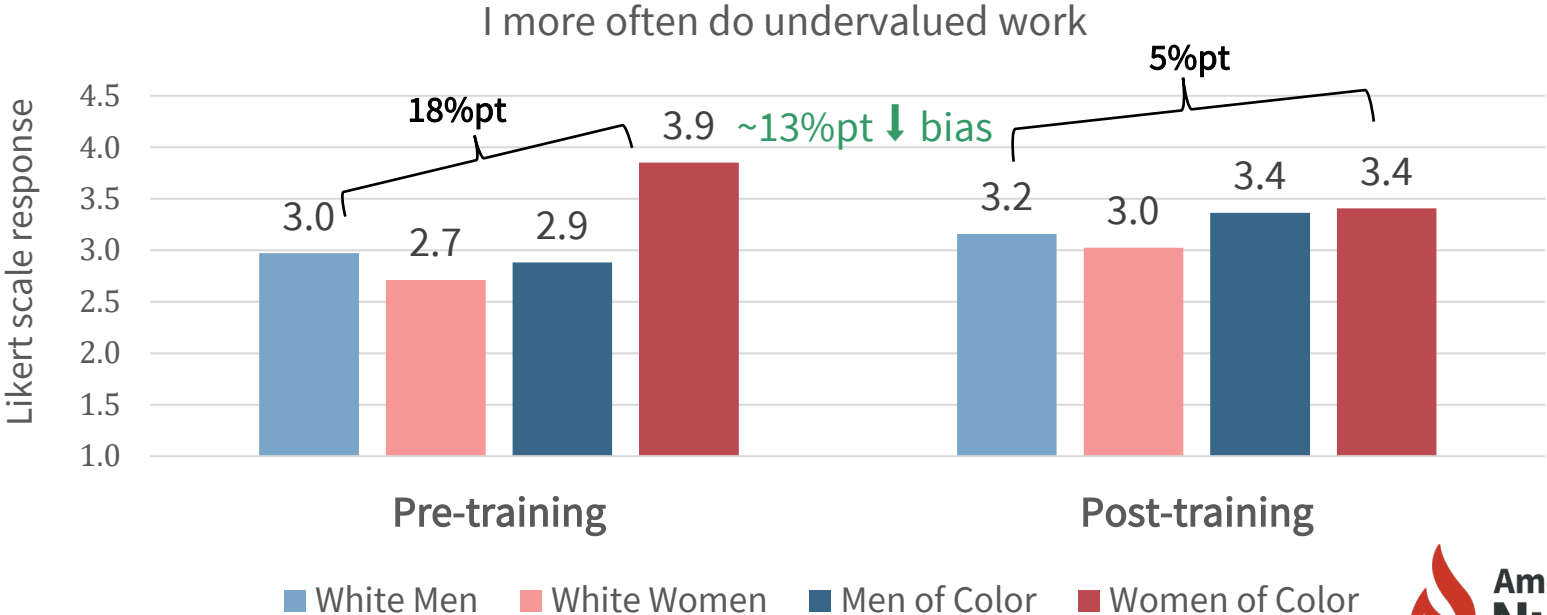


Literal office housework more equitable





Undervalued work more equitable

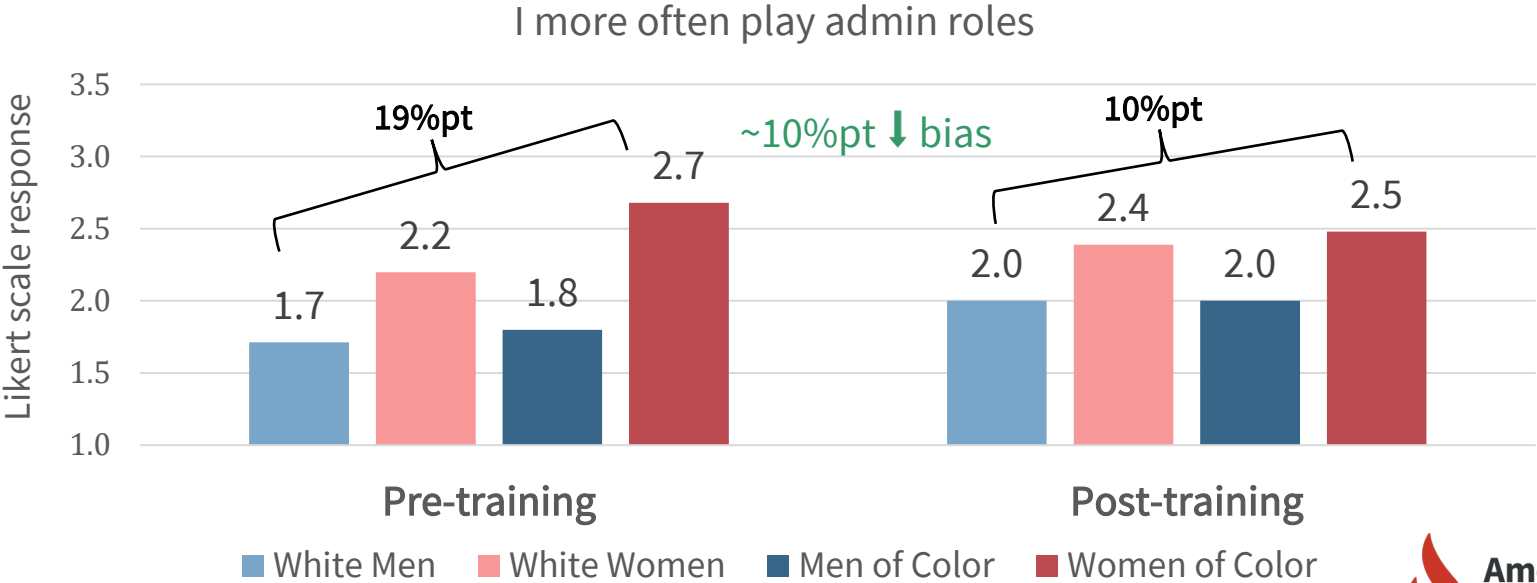


Company B





Admin work more equitable

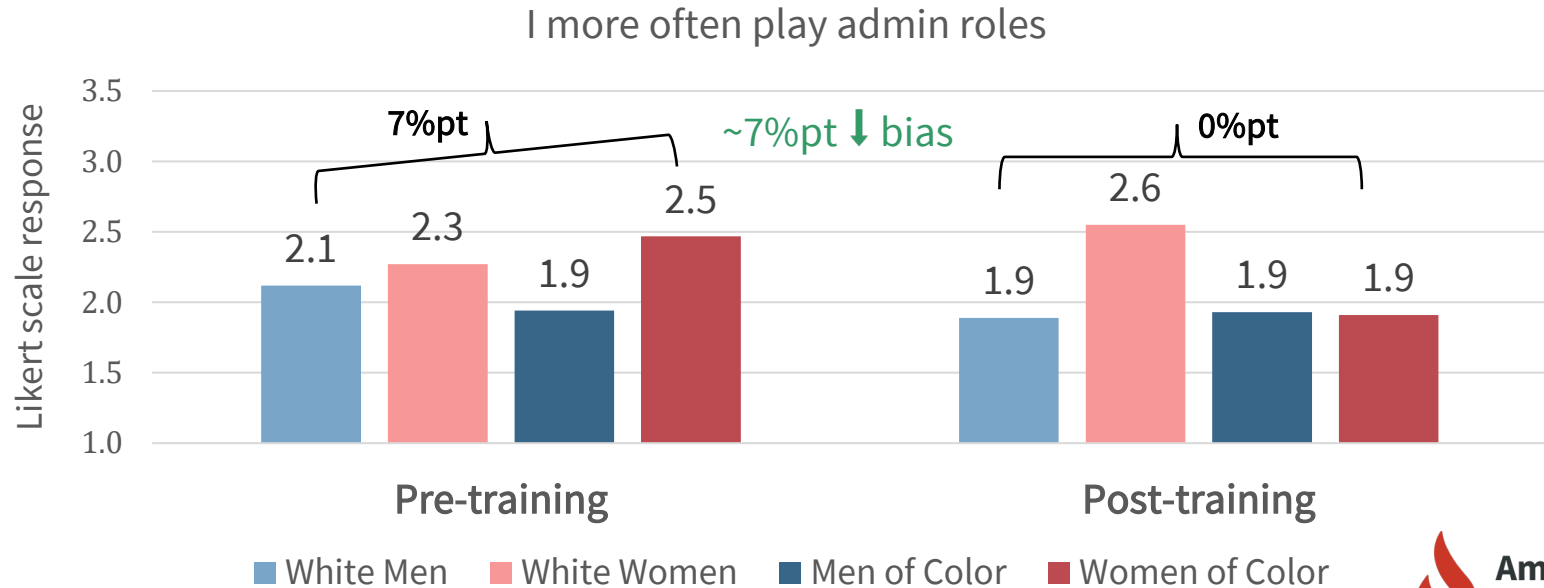


Company B





Admin work more equitable





Challenges & opportunities

- Start small with a pilot
- Be ready to take a second step if you don't immediately reach the results you want



Interrupting bias in hiring

1. Analyze baseline data
2. Fair and Effective Hiring Workshop
 - How the 5 patterns play out in hiring
 - Have people brainstorm how they will interrupt it
3. Each company chose ways to move towards more structure, with evidence
 - Rubrics, scales & etc.
4. Assess results



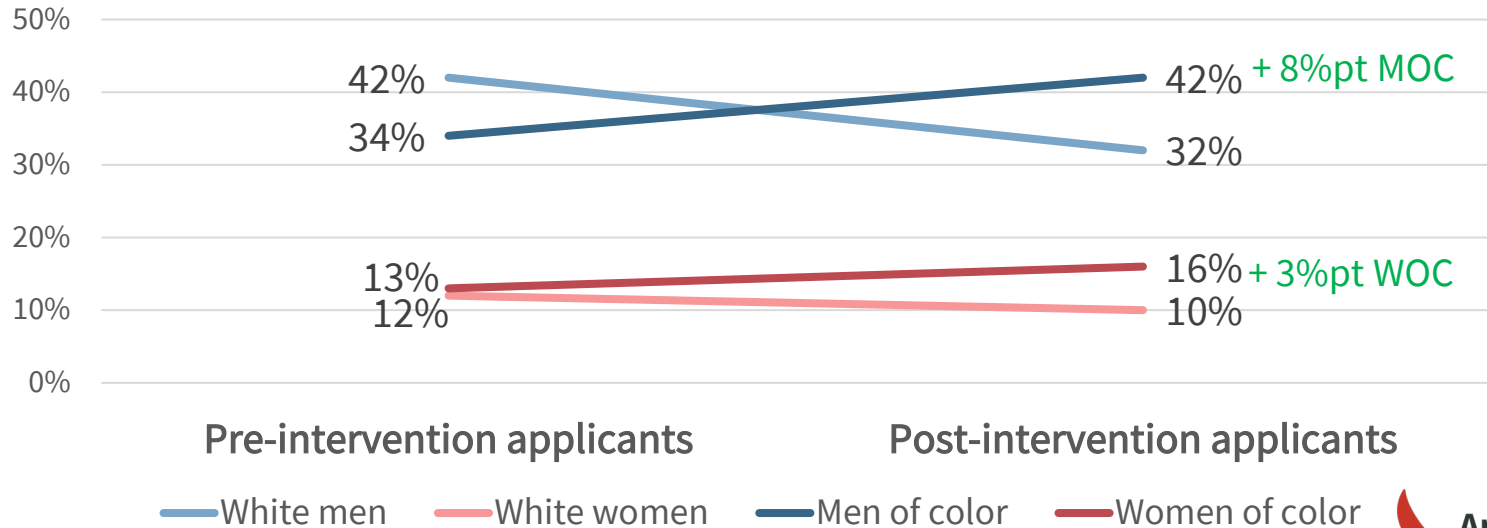


Change the system –or do it yourself

- KEY: rate people on competencies, with evidence
- Changing the system
- You can this yourself if your org doesn't
 - List 3-4 key competencies
 - Rate people on each, with 2-3 pieces of evidence



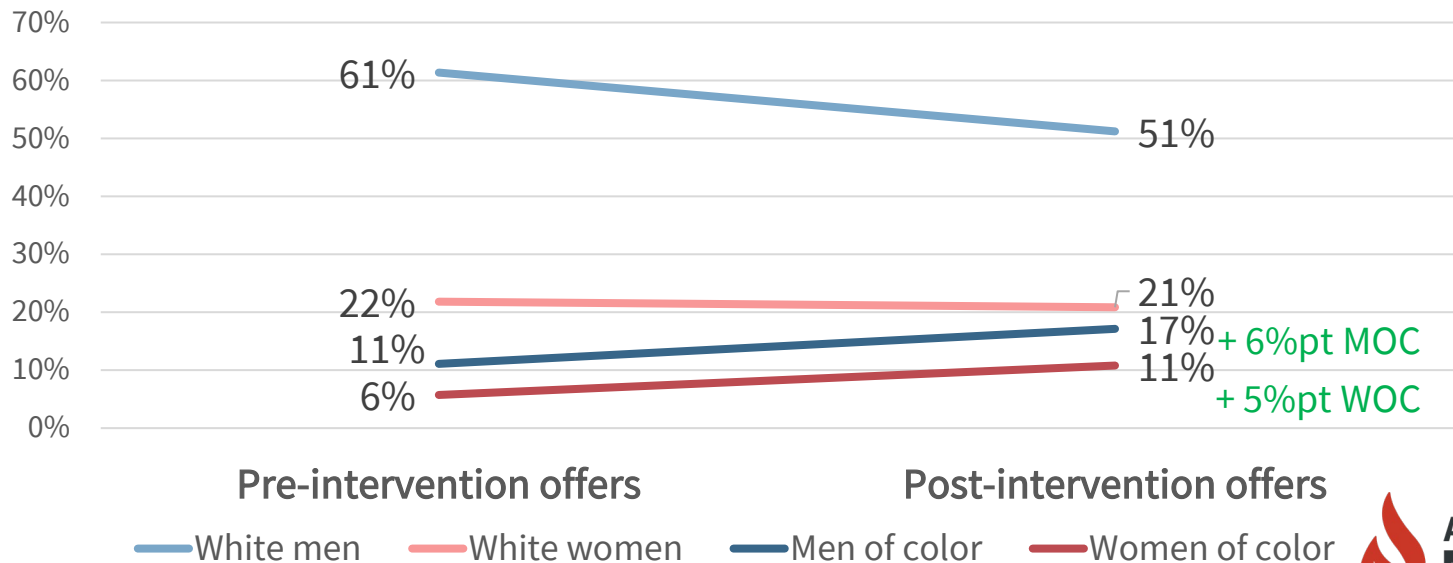
More people of color applied



Company E



More people of color received offers

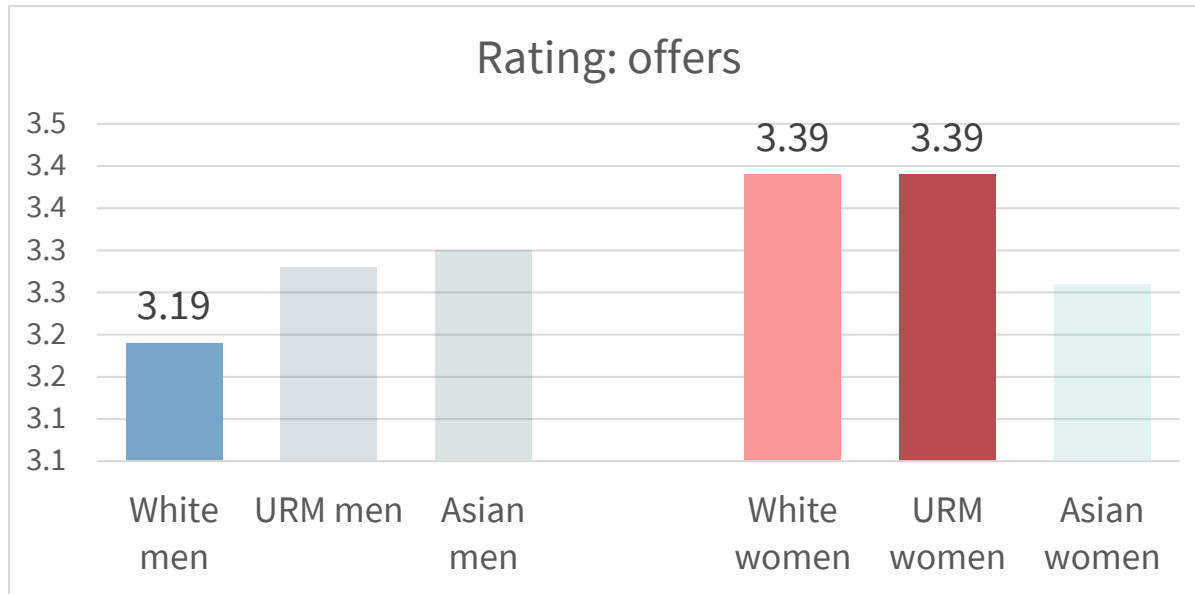


Company E





Pre-intervention ratings

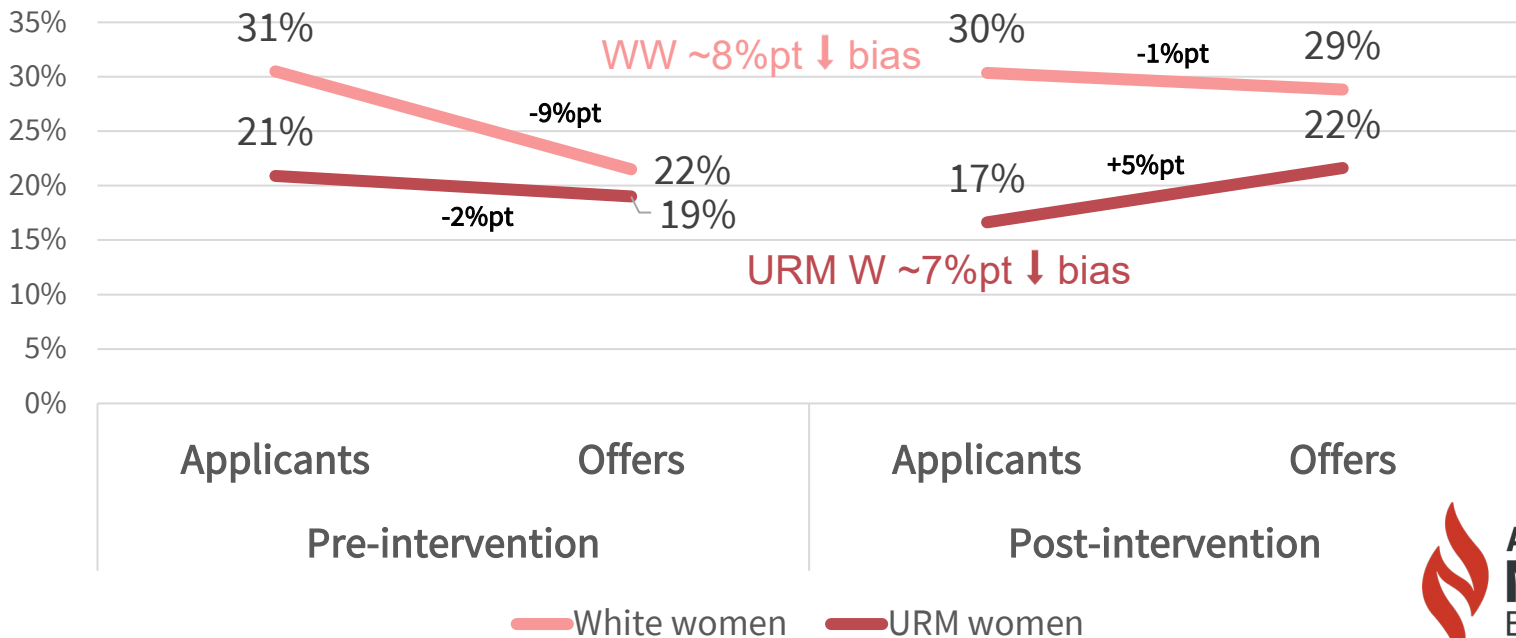


White men getting offers with lower scores than all other groups.

White women and URM women need to have **much higher scores** to get offers



White & URM women more likely to be fired





Challenges & opportunities

- Keep track of demographics at each step of hiring funnel to pinpoint where problems are arising
- Lack of a diverse pool initially is different from
 - Where referrals are disproportionately helping one group
 - Where no woman ever survives the interview because each is either “too meek” or “too much”



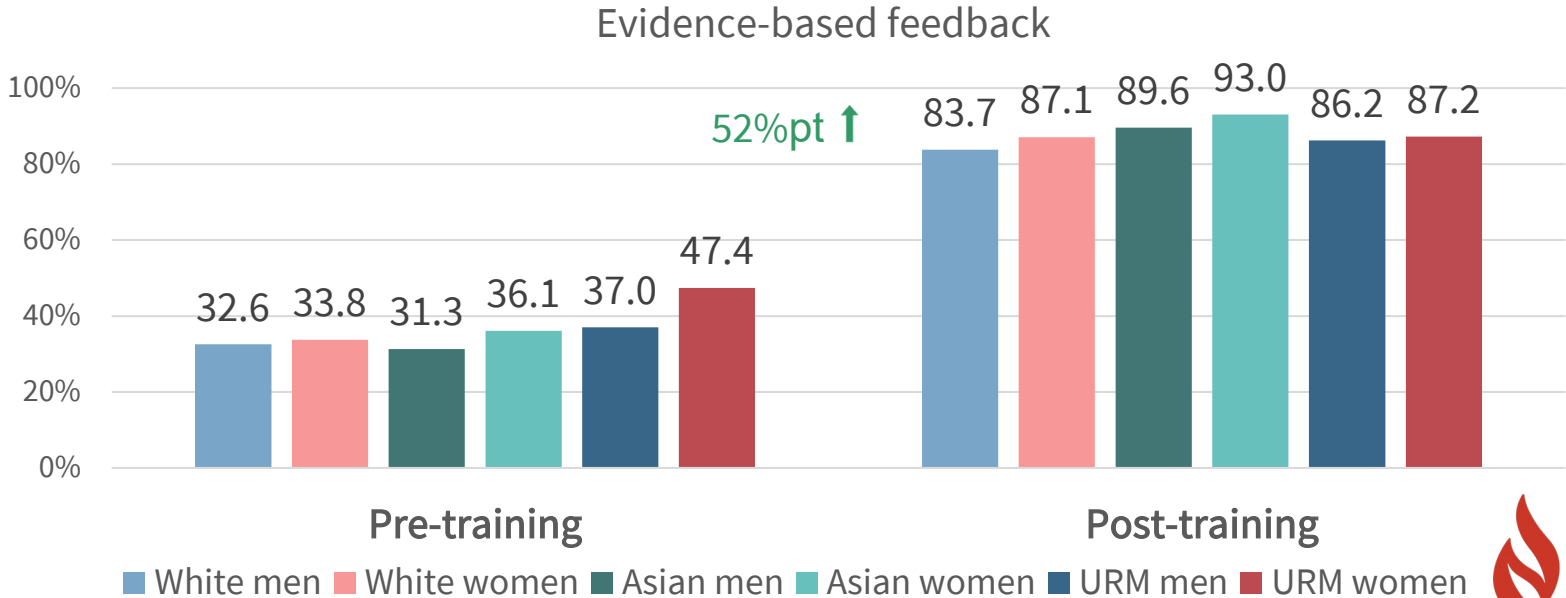
Interrupting bias in performance evaluations

1. Analyze evals for 5 patterns of bias
2. Fair and Effective Performance Evaluation Workshop
 - How the 5 patterns play out
 - Have people brainstorm how they will interrupt it
3. Competencies, with evidence
4. Assess results





More evidence-based feedback

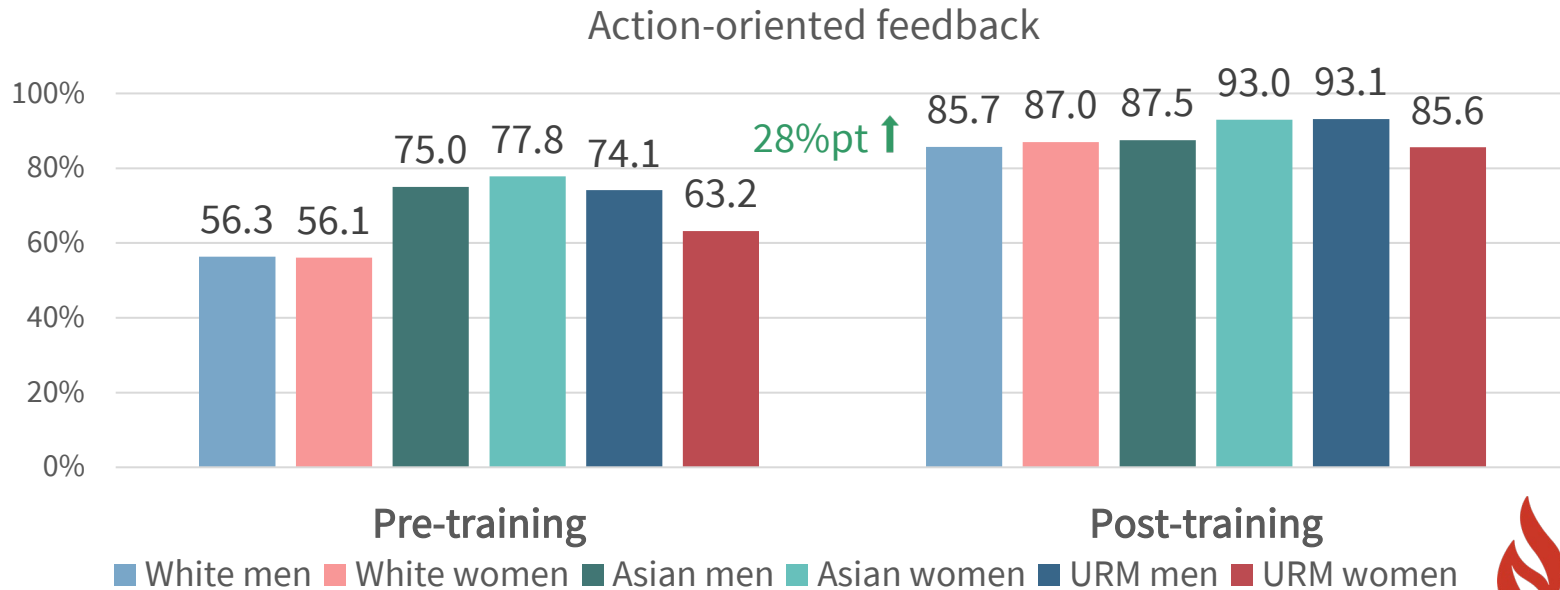


Company I





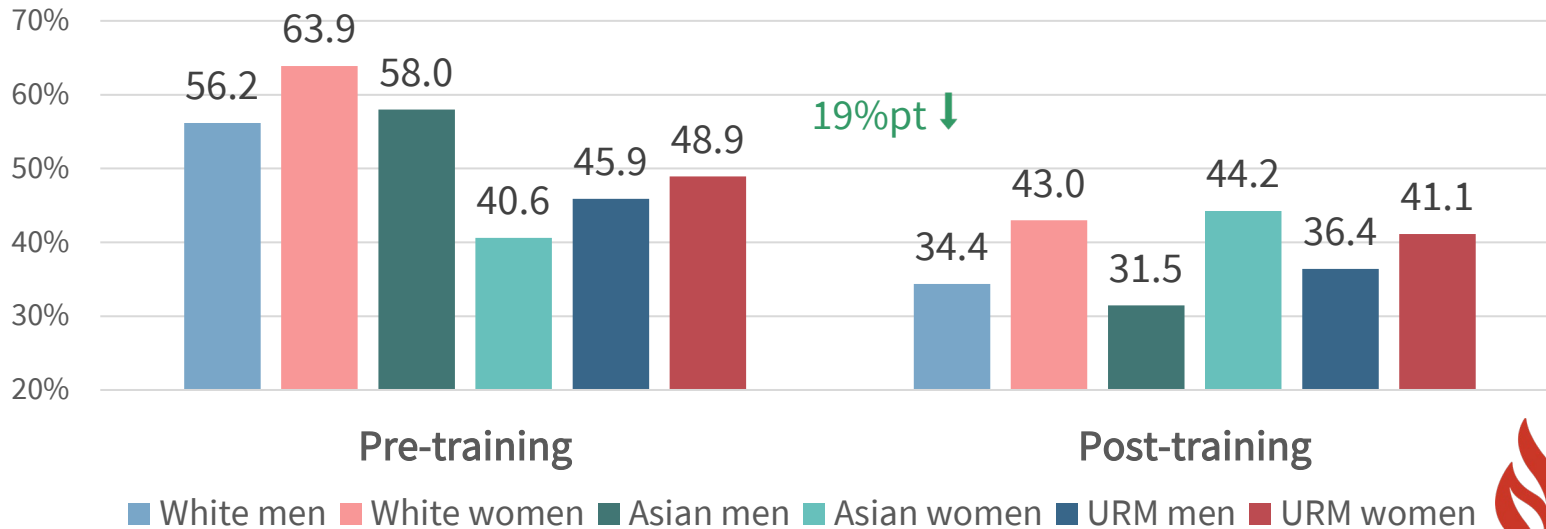
More action-oriented feedback





Fewer personality comments

Personality



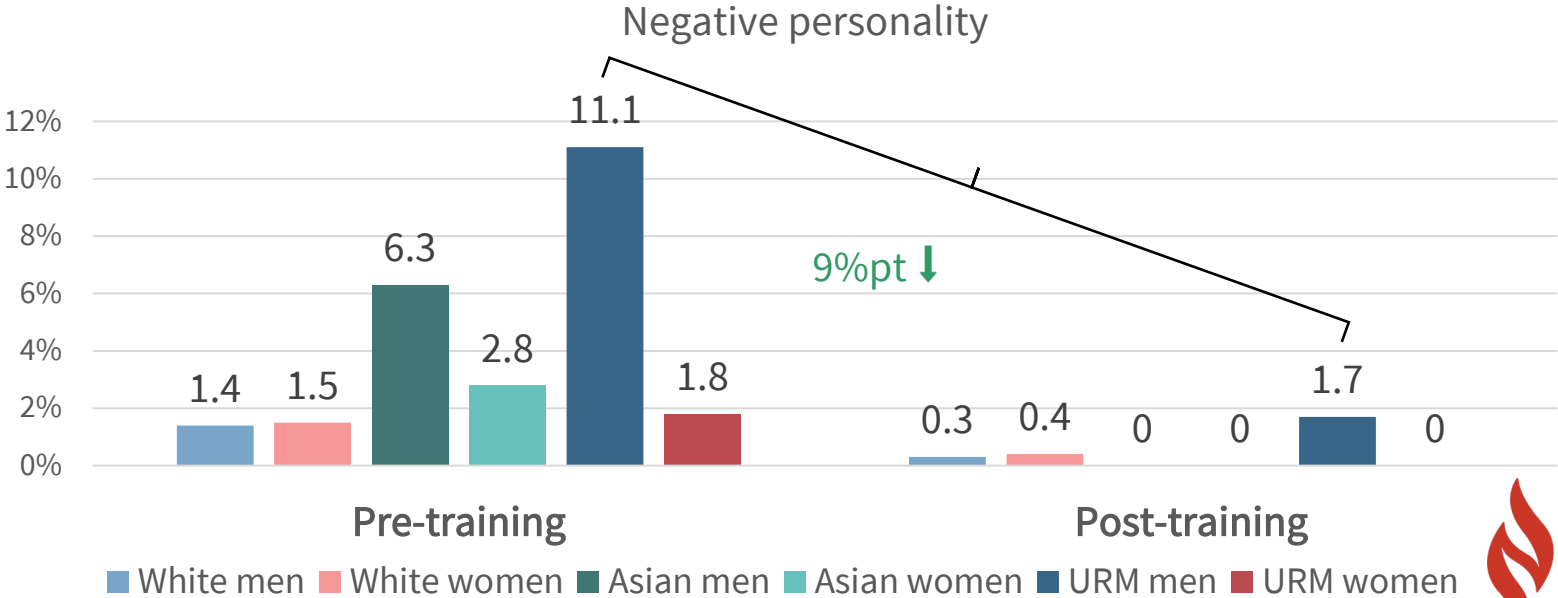
19%pt ↓

Company J





Negative personality comments



Company I





Negative personality comments

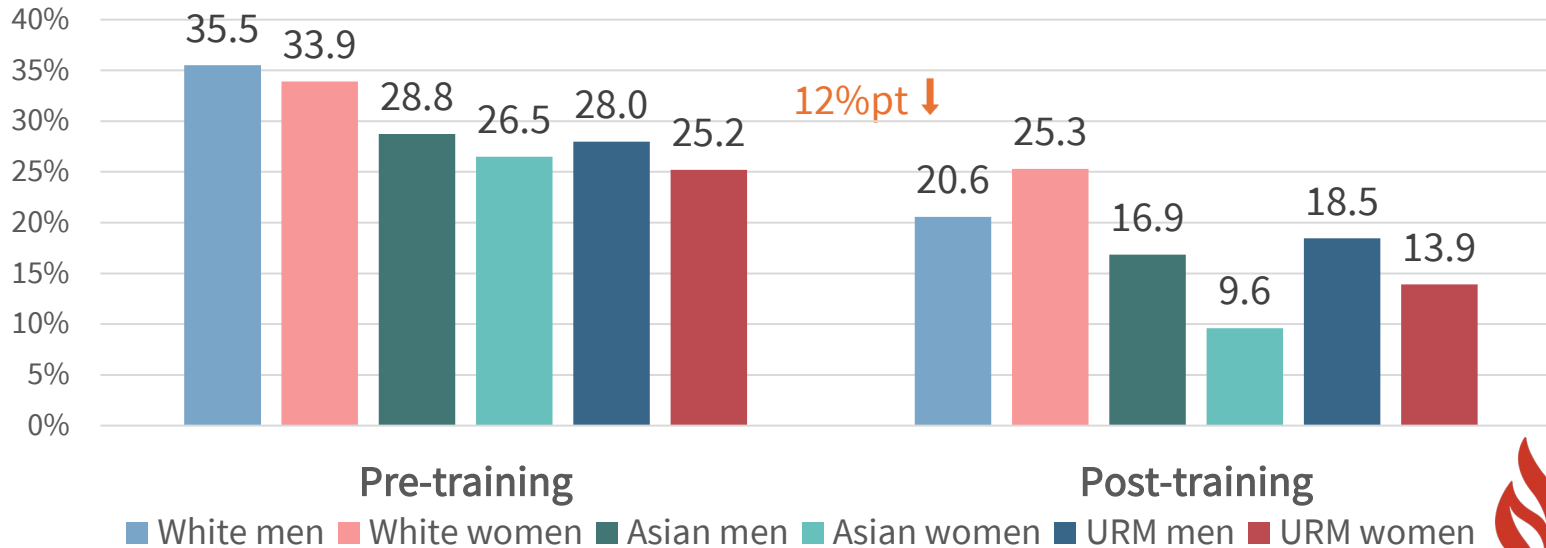
“Sometimes [he] may be too straightforward... his comments or opinion can be viewed as negative.”

– About a man of color



What didn't improve: Leadership

Leadership

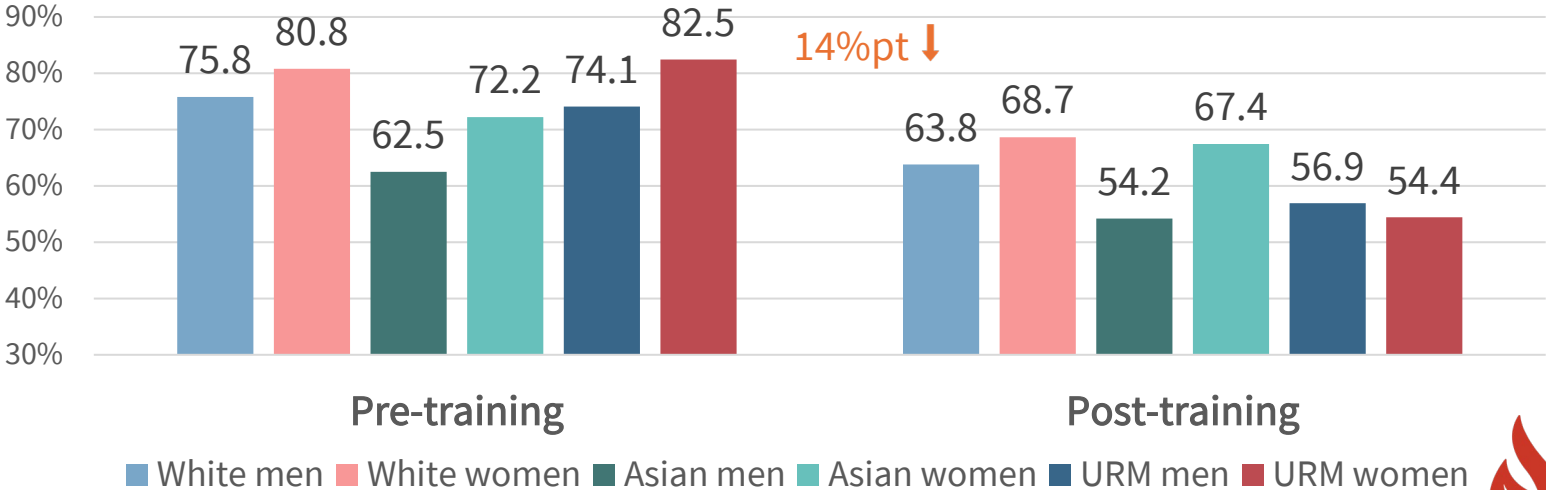


12%pt ↓



What didn't improve: Team player

Team Player



14%pt ↓



Common derailers



Workshop design

- Connect workshop with business goals
- Describe how bias plays out in everyday workplace interactions
- Give evidence that bias exists
- Use examples tailored to your industry
- Breakout groups of 6 (5-6 mins)



- Describe cognitive bases of bias
- Large-scale views of structural racism & patriarchy
 - Both often result in opposite of desired impact



Bias Interrupted

Creating Inclusion for Real and for Good

Joan C. Williams

Distinguished Professor (emerita), UC Law San Francisco

Founding Director, Equality Action Center

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