

Less and DEI

What happens when we stop looking?

Saloni Seth-Watkins, October 9, 2025. LeSS Learning Track.



The WHITE HOUSE

- President Trump: “We will terminate every diversity, equity, and inclusion program across the entire federal government.”

“We will terminate every diversity, equity, and inclusion program across the entire federal government”

Donald J. Trump, 2025

WHIV

Dissolution of the Department's Diversity & Inclusion Council, effective immediately:

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Department of Education Takes Action to Eliminate DEI

JANUARY 23, 2025

Agency, department and commission heads have 60 days to terminate to the maximum extent allowed by law all DEI, DEIA and "environmental justice" offices and positions, action plans, equity-related grants or contracts as well as end all DEI or DEIA performance requirements.

Diversity Matters Even More

The case for holistic impact

"Companies in the top quartile for **board-gender diversity** are **27 percent more likely** to outperform financially than those in the bottom quartile.

Similarly, companies in the top quartile for **ethnically diverse boards** are **13 percent more likely** to outperform than those in the bottom quartile."

McKinsey: Diversity Matters More, 2023.

1,265 companies, 23 countries, 6 global regions.

- In the UK, around **4 in 5 employers already see tangible benefits** from having a diverse workforce – like better retention, higher engagement, improved reputation. (Shaw Trust)
- Embracing a multigenerational workforce could **raise GDP per person by ~19%** over the next 3 decades. (OECD)
- Firms in the Netherlands that employ a more diverse foreign workforce are more innovative, particularly in terms of **product innovations**. (University of Birmingham)

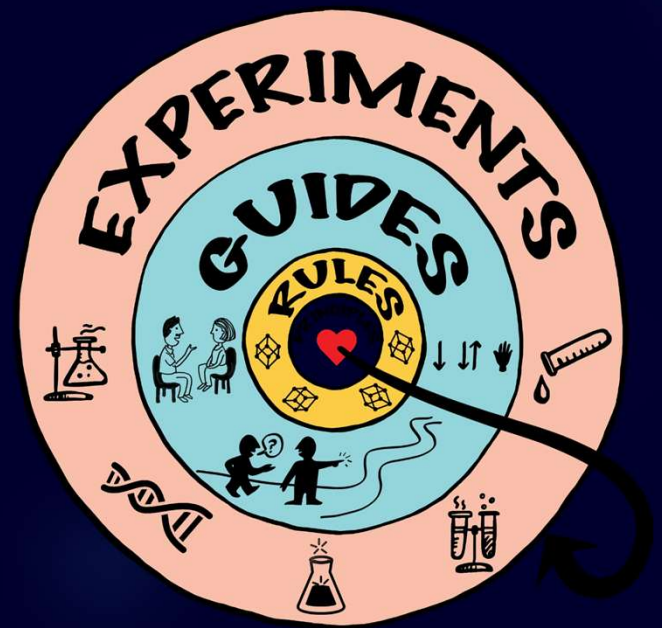


LeSS' design appears naturally inclusive.

LeSS takes a systemic view

Champions the removal of silos

Advocates for shared mental models



LeSS Mechanism

How it supports DEI

Feature Team

Equal voices and value.

Flat structure

Inclusive leaders cast long shadows.

Communities of Practice

Low/No barrier to entry.

Organisational Perfection Vision

Inclusion is baked into the art of imagining the future together.

LeSS Principles

How it supports DEI

Systems Thinking

Encourages shared mental models.

(Painful) Transparency

A mirror that keeps us honest.

Whole-Product Focus

Blind spots disappear when everyone owns the outcome.

Example LeSS Element

How it supports true meritocracy

Flat structure

Fewer layers, less politics

(Painful) Transparency

No hiding in reporting lines

Whole-Product Focus

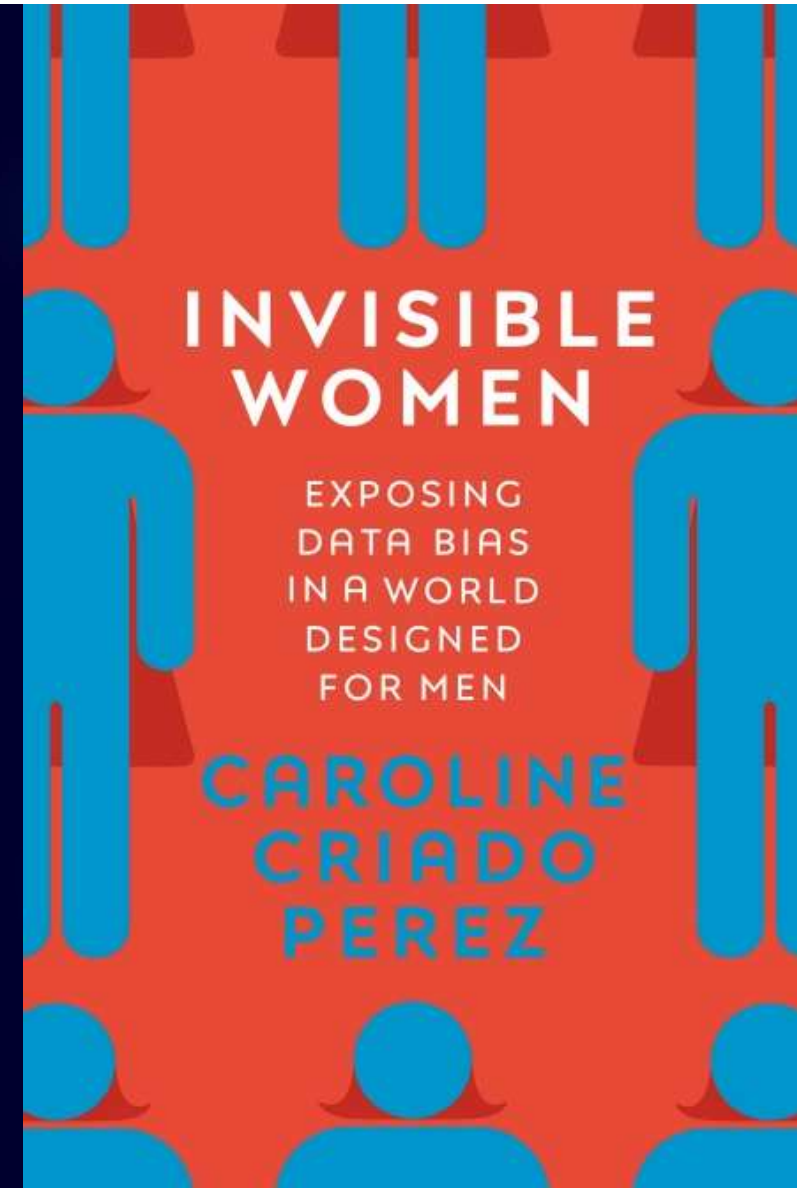
Real customer value v local heroics

Self-Managing team

Advancement by contribution not title

Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men.

Caroline Criado Pérez, 2019



"When Apple launched its health-monitoring system with much fanfare in 2014, it boasted a 'comprehensive' health tracker. It could track blood pressure; steps taken; blood alcohol levels; even molybdenum (nope, me neither) and copper intake

But as many women pointed out at the time, they forgot one crucial detail:

a period tracker"

“When Apple launched their AI, Siri, she (ironically) could find prostitutes and Viagra suppliers, but not abortion providers. Siri could help you if you’d had a heart attack, but if you told her you’d been raped, she replied ‘I don’t know what you mean by ‘I was raped.’

These are basic errors that surely would have been caught by a team with enough women on it – that is, by a team without a gender data gap.”

Gender neutral = Biased towards men.

'According to a 2016 survey, the number one concern of tech start-ups founders was “hiring good people” while having a diverse workforce ranked seven on the list of 10 business priorities'

(and in fact a quarter said that they didn't much care about diversity at all)

"When taken together, it points to a belief that if you want to find 'the best people', addressing structural bias is unnecessary. A belief in meritocracy is all you need."

When you don't collect the date,
you don't see the problem.

“One of the most important things to say about the gender data gap is that it is not generally malicious or even deliberate. Quite the opposite. It is simply the product of a way of thinking that has been around for millennia and is therefore a kind of *not* thinking.”

~~Does LeSS support DEI?~~

What do we really know?

Do we see who's included — and who isn't?

Or are we just trusting the system?

*What do we really know about how inclusive our
LeSS adoptions actually are?*

LeSS in Numbers:

① **18k**

② **32**

③ **77**

Where is the problem?



Bias - Cognition / Thought.

Unseen mental models to shape what we see....

....and what we don't.



Barriers = structure / system

The organisational design that silently obstruct inclusion.



Bros = culture / behaviours

Access often depends on who you know.

LeSS Mechanism

Without DEI...

Feature Team

self-selection = people like us

Flat structure

informal hierarchies rule

Communities of Practice

echo the majority voice

Organisational Perfection Vision

'everyone' doesn't really mean 'everyone'

Let's make LeSS better.

Thank you, Saloni