Xebia

Shaping Tomorrow
with AI Today

Beyond the algorithm: Tackling gender bias in AI with your Product Teams

Gender equality is still 60+ years away

Quick Disclaimer

I am not here to blame or make anyone feel guilty.

We’re here to build awareness, and explore practical tools you can use to tackle gender bias.

Your facilitator

Evelien Acun-Roos

- Trainer at Xebia
- Professional Scrum Trainer Scrum.org
- Certified Training From the Back of the Room (TBR) trainer
- Co-author of the Scrum Master Playbook

BEARS 5 steps

Beginnings

Exchange

Apply

Reflect

Sustain

Interactive session and you have the right to pass.

This is a learning space, not a blaming space.

Where does bias live?

In pairs

Take 60 seconds each:

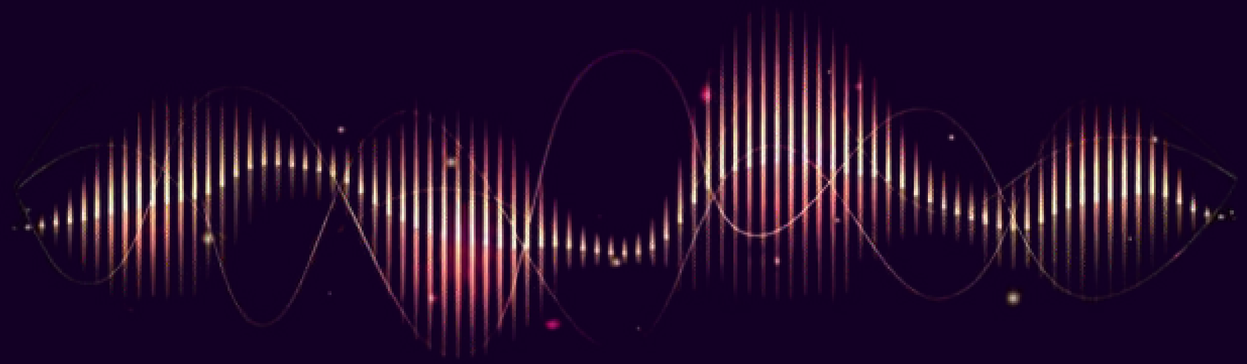
Where have you experienced or seen bias in a product or technology?

Write it down on a sticky note

Where does bias live?

Raise your hand if you work with AI in your products?
Keep your hand up if you've specifically
checked for gender bias in that AI?

“I’m sorry, I didn’t understand that.”



Voice recognition bias is real

Heart attack misdiagnosis in women is real

Voice assistant emergency failures happen

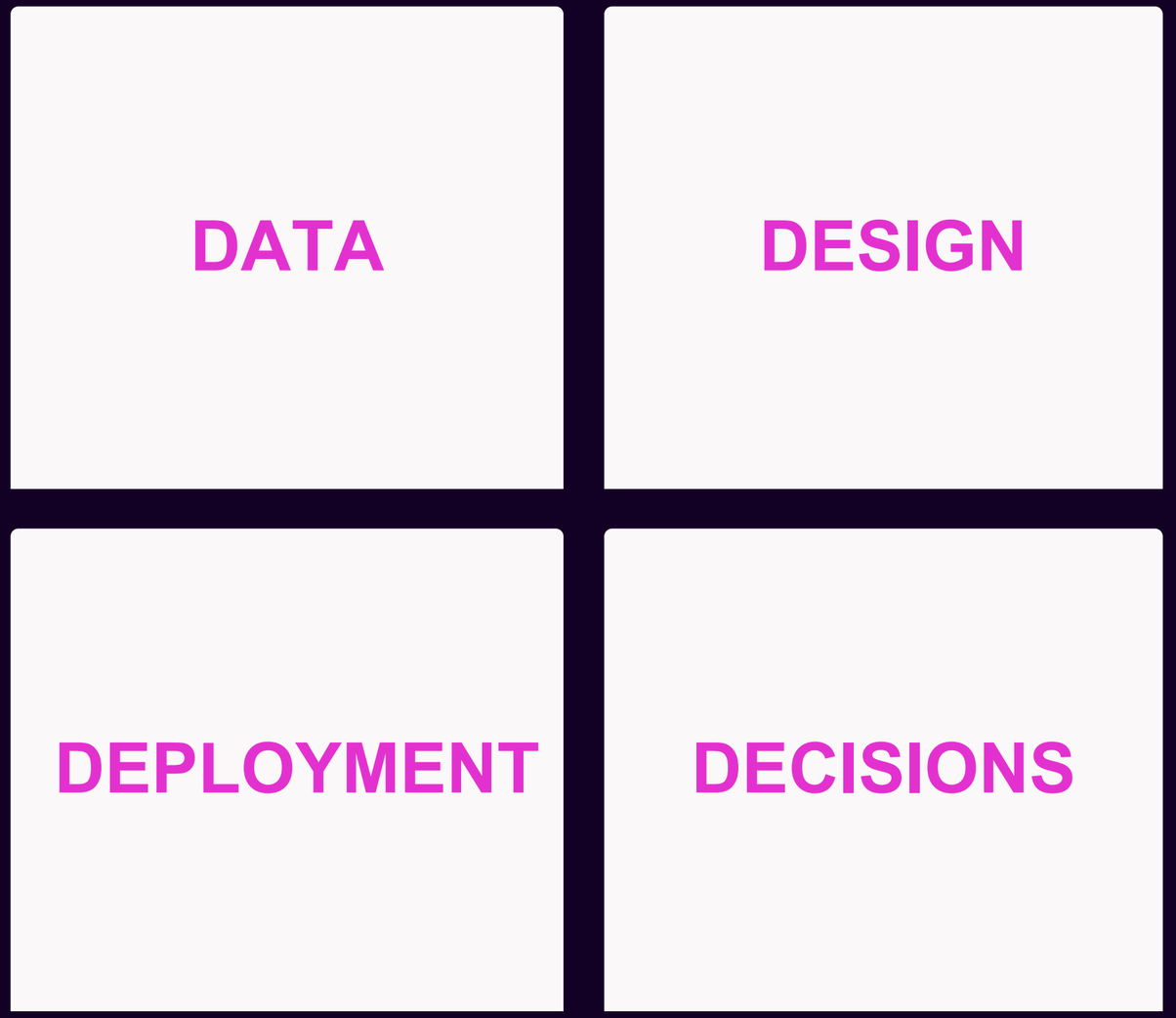
DATA

The Voice Assistant that couldn't hear women

What data might be missing or underrepresented in YOUR product?"

The four Ds framework

Where gender bias enters AI Systems (and where your team can intervene)



DESIGN
The Health App that didn't track "Female Problems"

What assumptions about 'normal users' might be built into your product design?

DEPLOYMENT & DECISIONS
The Hiring AI that preferred men

Who on your team has permission to challenge AI decisions? Who should?

The four Ds framework

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Where gender bias enters AI Systems (and where your team can intervene)

1. DATA

What data are we training on?

- Who's included?
- Who's missing?
- What's being measured?

2. DESIGN

What assumptions are we building into the product?

- What's "normal"?
- Who did we design for?
- What did we not consider?

3. DEPLOYMENT

How are we testing and releasing this?

- Who's testing?
- Who's affected?
- Who monitors after release?

4. DECISIONS

Who has power to question and challenge this?

- Is it safe to speak up?
- Who has final say?

Why This Matters Now

- 44% of AI systems show gender bias*
- Small bias entering a model → larger bias after scaling
- Rise of generative AI in UX
- Regulatory pressure

*https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/artificial-intelligence-and-gender-equality

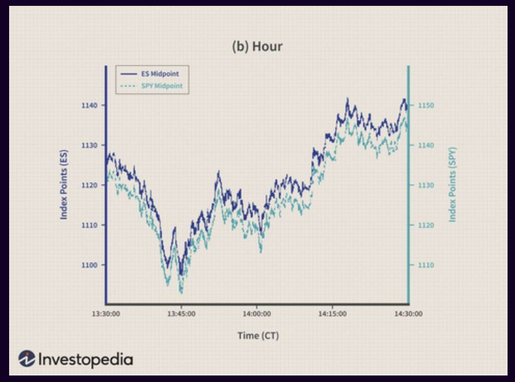
Real World Impact

Health

AI diagnostic tools failing to recognize heart attack symptoms in women, which present differently than men.*

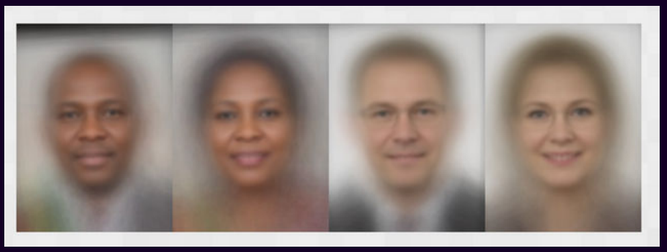
Finance

Credit limit algorithms offering significantly lower limits to women than their husbands, despite identical assets.**



Recognition

Facial analysis software misclassifying darker-skinned female faces at error rates of up to 35%.***



*https://www.pharmasalmanac.com/articles/the-gender-bias-built-into-ai-and-its-threat-to-womens-health

**https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/11/11/131983/apple-card-is-being-investigated-over-claims-it-gives-women-lower-credit-limits/

***https://ssir.org/articles/entry/when_good_algorithms_go_sexist_why_and_how_to_advance_ai_gender_equity

The Amplifier Effect

Human Bias

- Human scale
- Inconsistent
- Affects decisions
- Humans can break historical patterns

Example: A hiring manager unconsciously favors candidates who remind them of themselves.

AI Bias

- Machine scale
- Systematic
- Affects entire populations
- Learns from historical patterns

Example: An automated resume screener rejects all female candidates because it learned from historical male-dominated data.

What is gender bias?

Unfair treatment based on someone’s gender.

Forms through learned associations and past experiences.

Historical norms made men the ‘default’ in leadership, authority, expertise...

AND PRODUCT DESIGN

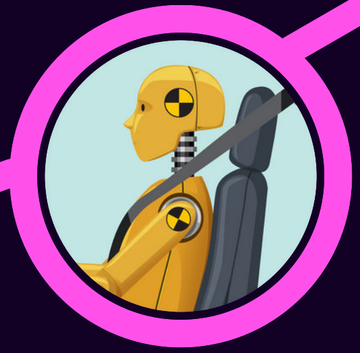
Designed for men, not for women

Stab vests

Not designed for the female body

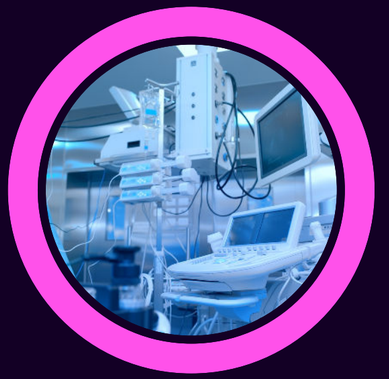
Aircondition

Ideal temperature based upon male bodies

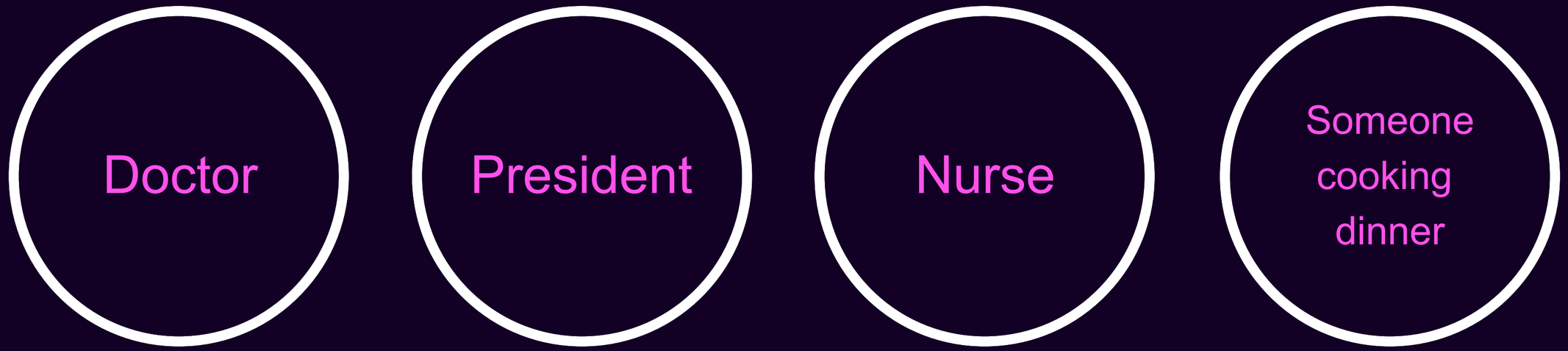


Crash Test Dummies

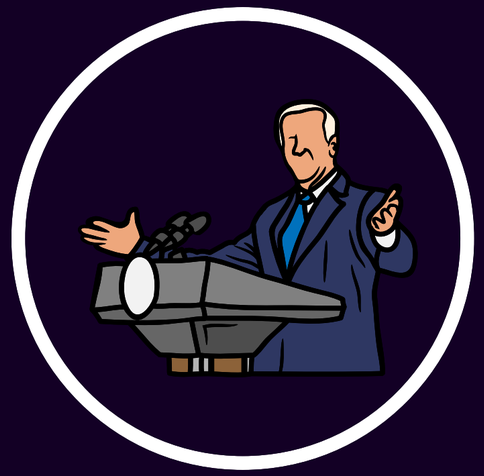
Based upon the ‘average’ male body



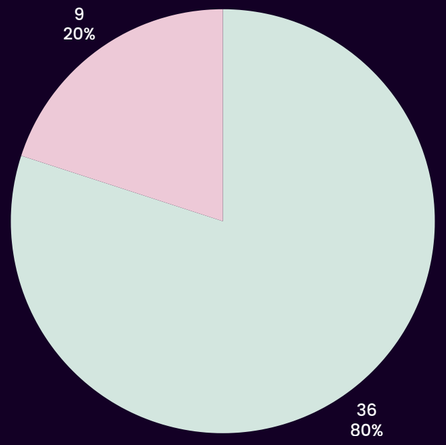
Think of a .....



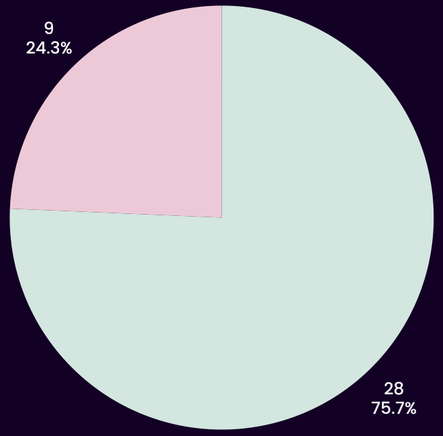
What did you see?



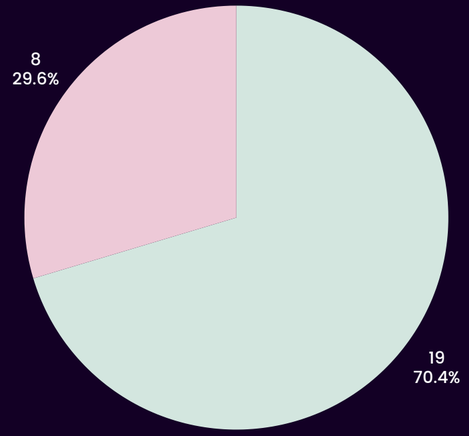
Gender Ratios of Speakers at Agile Conferences



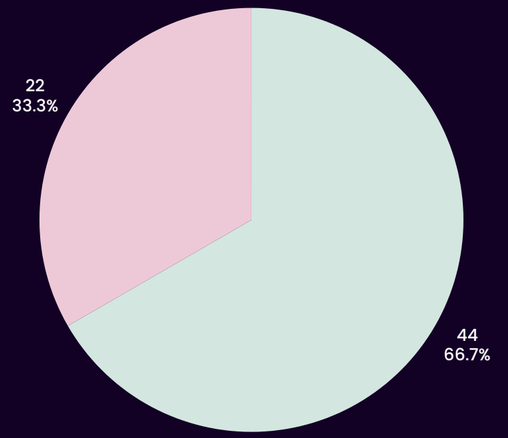
Agile Prague
2024



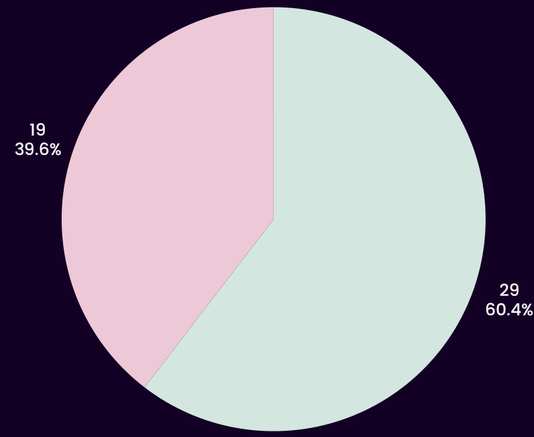
World Agility Forum Portugal
2024



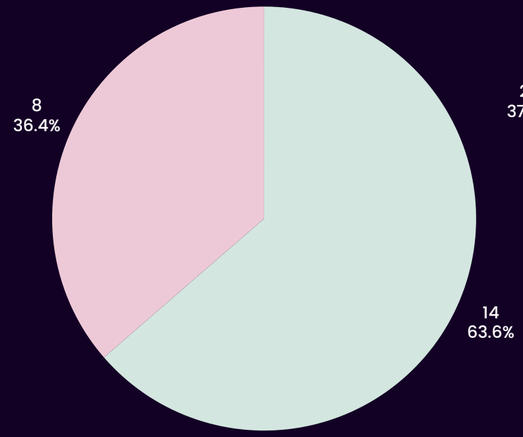
Business Agility Day
2024



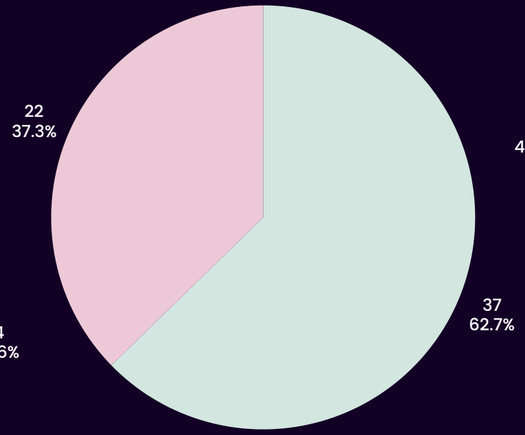
Global Scrum Gathering
2025



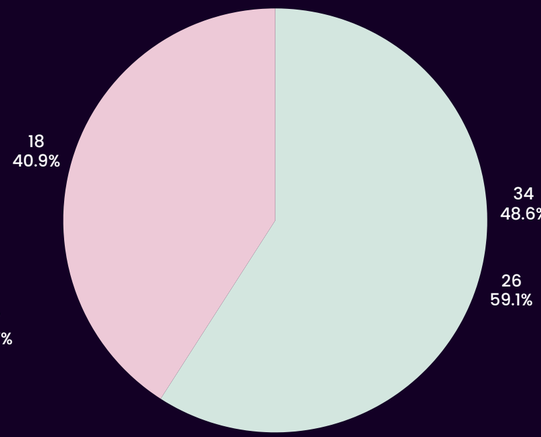
Agile & DevOps Orlando
2024



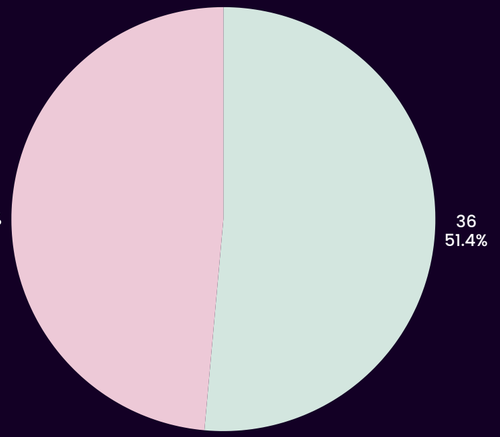
Scrum Day Europe
2025



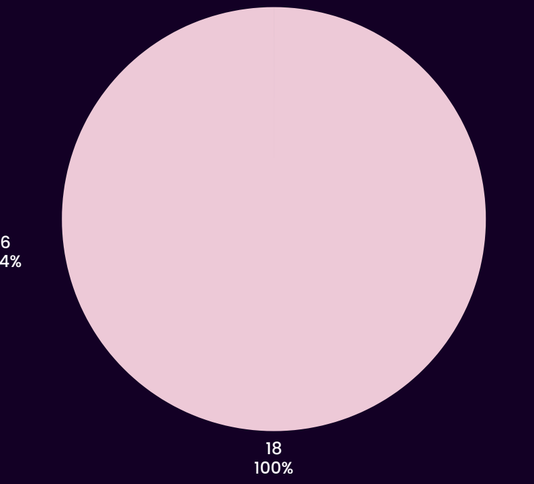
Global Scrum Gathering
New Orleans
2024



XPDays2025

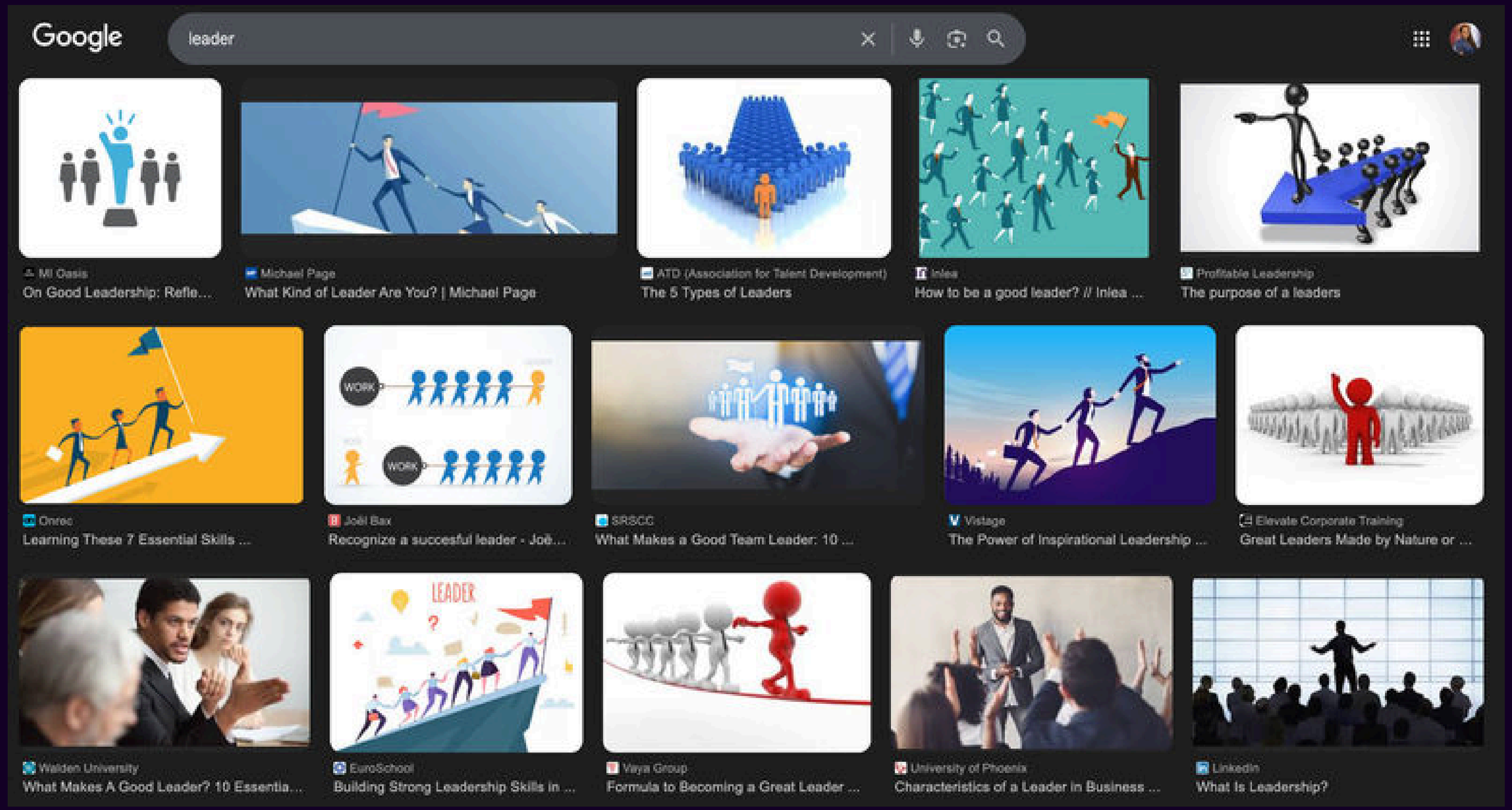


Agile2025



Women in Agile EUrope

Do a search on “Leader” on Google



The ChatGPT gender bias in image generation

“can you create a realistic image of 10 leaders discussing gender inequality” (2023)

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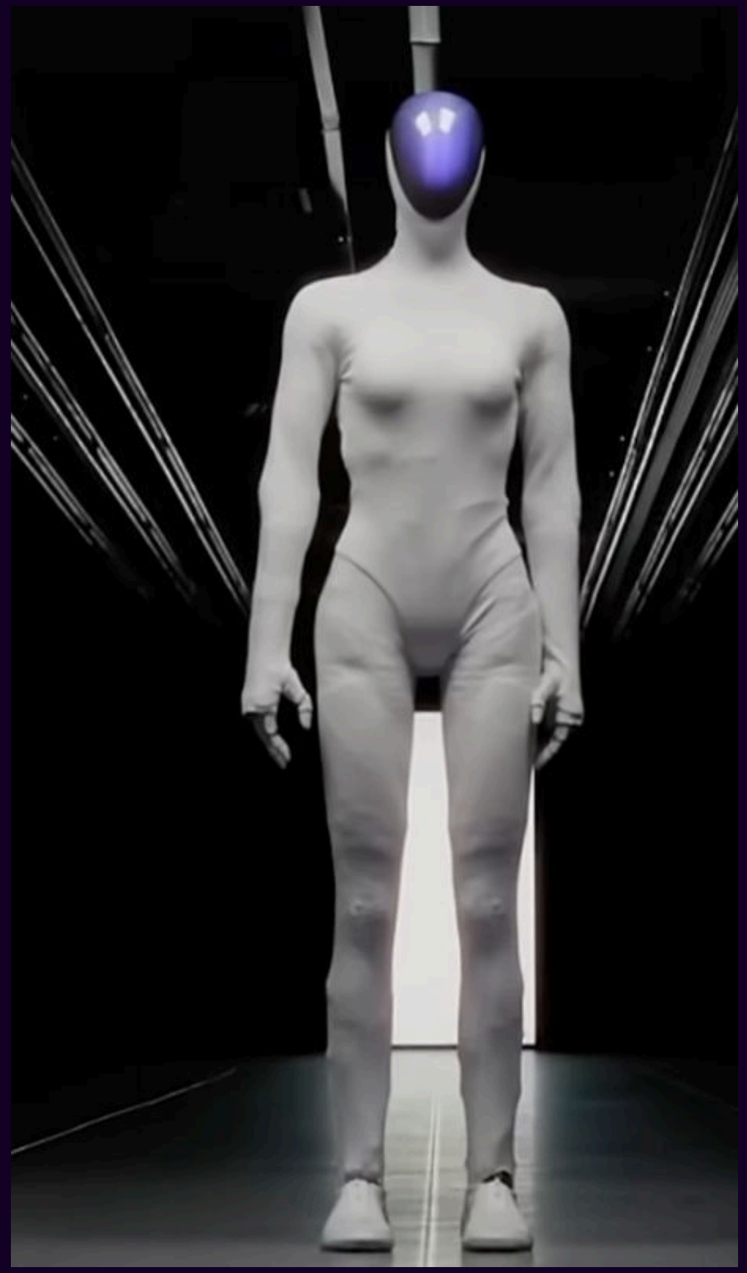
“can you create a realistic image of 10 leaders discussing gender inequality” (2025)



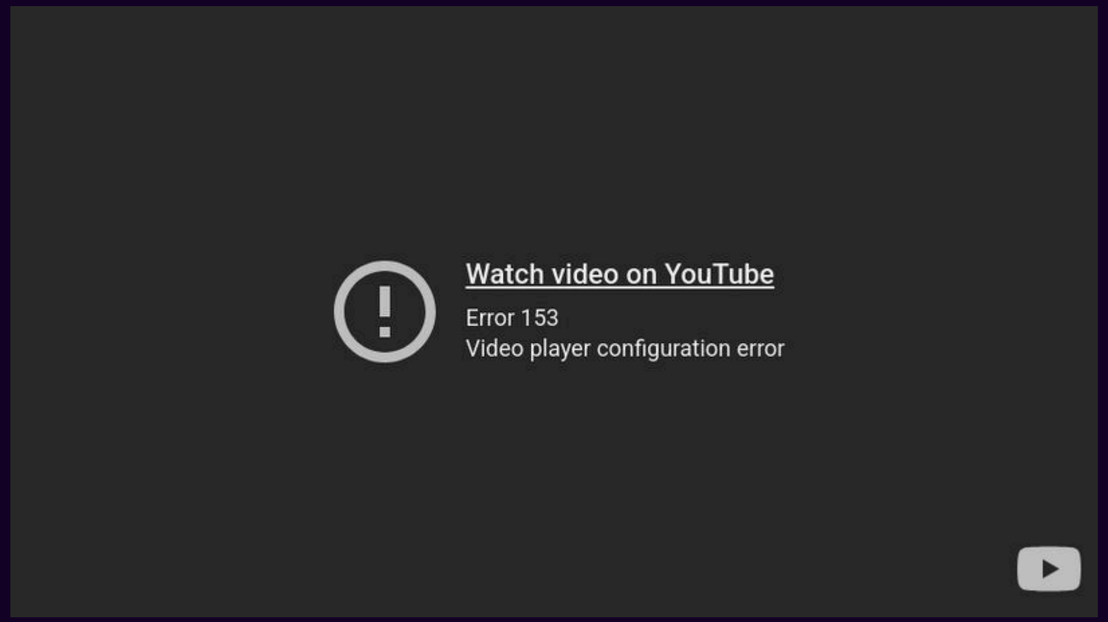
My 'She' AI

What is the most 'gendered' piece of technology you interact with?

Is your GPS voice female?
Your scheduling assistant?
Why?

How does this default setting shape user perception?

My 'She' AI



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Your scheduling assistant?

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AI and Gender Inequality: A growing Risk

1 Teams who create products

Women are underrepresented in tech

- Only 22% of AI jobs
- Just 2% of EU tech funding goes to women-led startups

2 The Product

- Bias is built into products
- Bias is already built into AI systems

3 Users of AI

- Women using AI less, risk of future inequality
- Cyber violence silences women (deepfakes, online bullying)

The Product Problem

data → model → decisions → user experience.

It's Real

Built In

Agile Fit

And as of August 2026, detecting and mitigating gender bias isn't just ethical.
It's required by EU law for high-risk AI systems.

Interventions

Definition of Done

Retro Bias Lens questions

Product Backlog Bias Review

Definition of Done

Before (Traditional DoD)

Code reviewed

Tests passing

Documentation updated

Deployed to staging

After (Inclusive DoD)

Code reviewed

Tests passing (including edge cases for diverse inputs)

Reviewed by team members from different backgrounds

Documentation updated (checked for gendered language)

Deployed to staging

Tested by diverse user group (not just QA team)

Feedback channels confirmed working

Retro Bias Lens questions

Data reflection

"Let's talk about the data and information that informed our Sprint..."

Design reflection

"Let's talk about design choices and product decisions..."

Deployment reflection

"Let's talk about testing, releasing, and monitoring..."

Decisions reflection

"Let's talk about power and voice..."

Bias Buster Toolkit

Each group uses the toolkit to:

1. Identify which of the Four Ds is involved (2 min)
2. Use the relevant toolkit section to detect the bias (4 min)
3. Design one intervention (Definition of Done item, retro question, or backlog refinement) (4 min)
4. Prepare 30-second share (2 min)

How do you know it's working?

Examples:

- # of bias concerns raised in Sprint Retrospectives
- diversity of test users
- inclusion items in DoD being checked

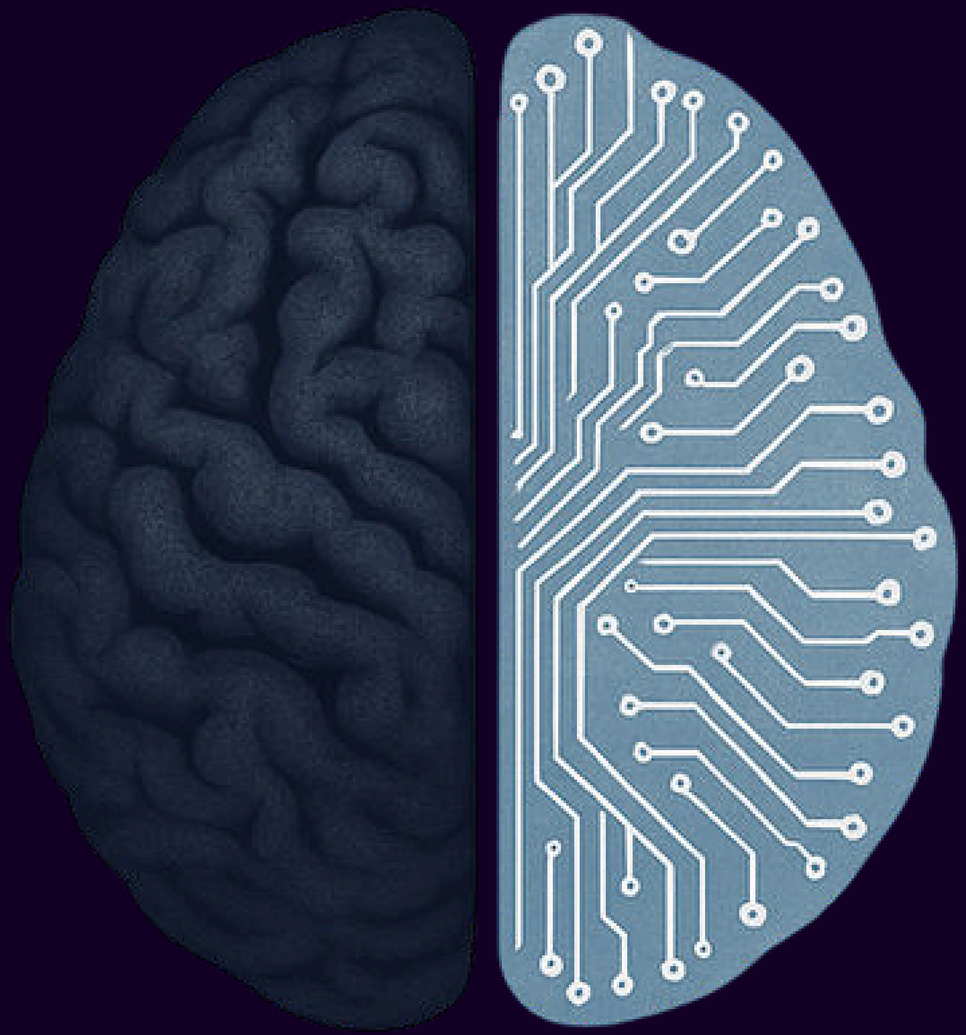
Personal Reflection

Choose ONE question to answer

Where might bias already exist in your product?
What would it take for someone on your team to speak up about it?
What's one assumption you're going to question next Sprint?

Write your answer on a sticky note

Bias in = bias out



ONE action you'll take

Add one inclusion question to your Definition of Done

Add bias lens to your next retrospective

Review one Product Backlog Item through the Four Ds

Start a conversation about who can challenge AI decisions

This is not just a tech problem.
It's a product problem.
It's a team problem.

And you now have the tools to solve it,
one Sprint at a time.

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Thank you for being part of Scrum Day Europe!

Scan this QR code

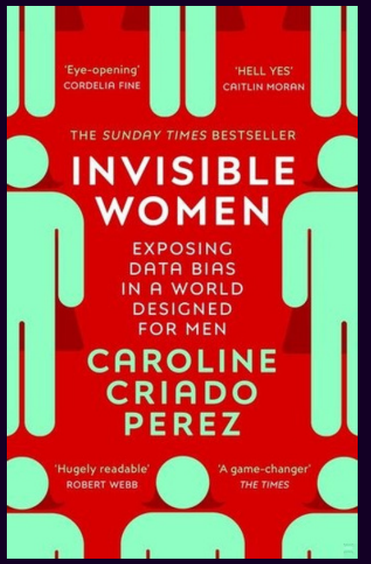
Give feedback
get access to the
digital goodiebag and win!

Enter to Win

LinkedIN evelienroos
Instagram/TikTok @scrumboosters

Source material used while researching

1. The theory that men evolved to hunt and women evolved to gather is wrong
2. Do wages fall when women enter an occupation?
3. Faking deep voices to sound like an authority
4. Deep impact asserting authority low pitched voice
5. Perceptions of male - female leaders
6. The origins of sexism, how men came to rule 12000 years ago
7. Ambivalent Sexism and Religion: Connected Through Values
8. Teaching feminism to toddlers



AI related

1. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/chatgpt-replicates-gender-bias-in-recommendation-letters/
2. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-com-jobs-automation-insight-idUSKCN1MK08G/
3. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/generative-ai-unesco-study-reveals-alarming-evidence-regressive-gender-stereotypes
4. https://nypost.com/2024/04/26/tech/chatgpt-overwhelmingly-depicts-financiers-ceos-as-men-and-women-as-secretaries-study/
5. http://gendershades.org/overview.html
6. https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/06/23/1043082/podcast-hired-by-an-algorithm-2/
7. https://www.wired.com/story/openai-sora-video-generator-bias/
8. https://www.washington.edu/news/2024/10/31/ai-bias-resume-screening-race-gender/
9. https://www.pharmasalmanac.com/articles/the-gender-bias-built-into-ai-and-its-threat-to-womens-health
10. https://www.theguardian.com/law/2024/oct/08/family-court-judges-victim-blaming-language-domestic-abuse-cases-ai-project
11. https://www.changeincontent.com/women-in-ai-underrepresentation-bias-barriers/
12. https://www.changeincontent.com/feminine-voice-for-digital-assistants/