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Visual GPS

Your guide to picking the
right visuals for any project

I'm not biased,
everyone else is

Using research to decode bias

Contents

1311725875, Aleutie

1193052595, Klaus Vedfelt

About Visual GPS

Welcome to a new way to think about visual storytelling

The world's constantly changing—and so are the priorities of your customers. Visual GPS, built on Getty Images' 25 years of trend research and reporting, helps you find the images and videos that will connect with your audience. Our multi-faceted approach leverages our internal search data, insights from our visual experts, and the latest market research—gleaned from surveying thousands of consumers and professionals in 13+ languages, across 26+ countries. We pinpoint what your customers care about, all while providing the actionable insights and engaging images and videos that you need to reach them.

Explore Visual GPS

Our Creative Team

Artists. Curators. Archivists. Futurists. From concept to creation, our award-winning team oversees the development of incredible, must-see imagery through detailed briefs and expert art direction that informs and inspires our global contributors. Backed by proprietary search data, a breadth of professional experience, and data-backed consumer insights from Visual GPS, our art directors and visual experts know what's trending and why—putting them in the unique position to curate and deliver perfect, on-trend images and videos to our customers.

Meet the Team

We're all biased,
even if we don't recognize it in ourselves.

But why? Where do biases come from? What do they mean? How do they make us feel and act? For example, why do nearly all consumers believe that the world would be a better place if we personally did something, but less than half are actually committed to doing it? What does this mean for the future? And how do we, as brands, confront our biases?

1218082382, Nadzeya_Dzivakova

2 out of 3
of us feel that others are biased against us,

but...

we don't admit to having biases ourselves.

The past may be prologue, but it can be problematic for any brand relying upon predictive modeling based on prior advertising performance. Although the old way of doing things may not be off-putting, visual communications can't really move forward when it comes to tackling stereotypes and entrenched biases unless you can get into the mind of today's consumer. In other words, progress will be kept at bay until you take into account the latest research.

In this Visual GPS Special Report on Social Justice and Bias, we explore why stereotypes exist and how using a diverse selection of images and videos can help break through them, while addressing the biases we encounter every day, both conscious and unconscious. We then turn to what this means for brands and what bias feels like. And finally, what you can do about it. Coupled with the actionable insights and links to robust articles throughout, you hold in your digital hands powerful information to consider before starting your next project or campaign.

Let's continue to move the world. Like all of our Visual GPS research and content, this latest report shows you what consumers really care about, how they react, and what that means for your brand. What comes next? We point you in the right direction, the rest is up to you.

Dr. Rebecca Swift
Global Head of Creative Insights at Getty Images

684170392, Thomas Barwick

1316651944, Justin Lambert

Why **stereotypes?**

We know them when we see them, hear them, witness them, and to be frank, they serve a purpose. Our modern understanding comes courtesy of Walter Lippman who, when writing a century ago, defined a stereotype as the picture in our head that we use to fill in missing information[1]. In this way, stereotypes help us understand what we are looking at and allow our imagination to create a story that we can connect to instantaneously. However, Lippman also argued that our imagination is equally shaped by pictures we have already seen, meaning those stereotypes become ingrained. While there's a growing body of research around harmful stereotypes, much less is known as to how the ingraining of pictures in our minds creates unconscious bias which impacts us every single day.

> Stereotypes are... the picture in our head that we use to fill in missing information

1146945106, Rifka Hayati

1219252603, Alex Potemkin

How we connect, go about our days, and age

When focusing on holidays and cultural observances, find imagery that depicts aspects unique to that culture—not just token images.

Show how people of different backgrounds interact in their daily lives as authentically as possible.

Challenge ageism by breaking with disconnected, dependent, and passive stories of age that hugely impact the wellbeing of older generations.

[1] https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/920442.Public_Opinion

For this reason, Getty Images' Visual GPS research has intentionally focused on bias since its launch in 2019 in an effort to better understand its effect on image choice. For instance, while we know that brands don't consciously set out to perpetuate stereotypes, why is it that only 14% of consumers have said that they see diversity from the companies they do business with?

Key to this issue is the fact that consumers don't actively turn away from companies that fail to celebrate diversity, and unfortunately, our evidence backs this up. In fact, almost all (91%) of consumers believe the world would be a better place if we personally did something, yet we've seen no evidence that they are actually committed to doing it—at least not in significant numbers at the moment. Why the disconnect? And why should a brand even care? It's partly, as they say, a generational thing. But we see an opportunity for growth, nonetheless.

Only 14% of consumers see diversity from the companies they do business with.

1227475037, Ada daSilva

1196506758, Zuraisham Salleh

So what? **Why take action now?**

As the spending power of younger generations grows, the risk to brands that are not transparent, honest, and real grows with it.

Over the past year…

20%
of consumers have boycotted a brand that went against their values

27%
of consumers say they have started purchasing from a brand that supported a cause they believe in
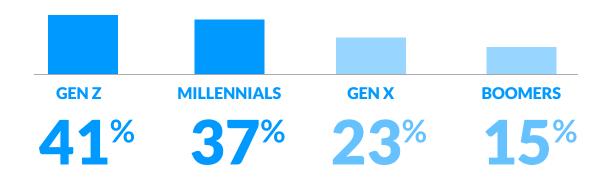
Bottom line for the bottom line

The imagery you choose matters because it can affect the way people perceive your business and whether or not they want to spend with you. This is particularly true for younger generations (see below), whose growing purchasing power will only grow stronger over time.

The younger generations will lead the way…

Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to show their support for brands that align with their values.

% "Started purchasing a brand that supported a cause I care about"
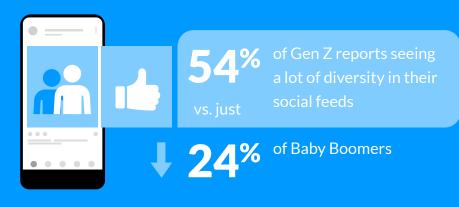
GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BOOMERS
41%	**37%**	**23%**	**15%**

What does this mean
for brands?

Bias towards imagery depicting stereotypical beauty and aspiration seems to vary by generation. Millennials and Gen X value authenticity and acceptance and are often concerned about others' levels of acceptance. While they believe in the strength of the collective toward fighting bias and building an equitable world, they're split on the role they themselves should play. However, Millennials are more aligned with Gen Z in how engaged they are and how they demonstrate activism. This is evidenced in the imagery that different age groups are drawn to. While younger generations report significant diversity in their social media feeds, older generations report at least half as much (pointing to a lack of diversity in who they follow); older consumers are also more drawn to aspirational imagery than younger consumers. Furthermore, the older self-identified male consumer has the lowest personal commitment to making the world a better place and moving the visual language forward.

1216522631, d3sign

1264127382, Malte Mueller

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54%

vs. just

of Gen Z reports seeing a lot of diversity in their social feeds

24% of Baby Boomers

Though not unsurprising, Gen Z, which is the youngest generation, is the most likely to relate to imagery of people that are less commonly seen, as well as to photographic techniques that are less common, more than any other generation. Young self-identified females are the most action oriented when it comes to making the world a better place, but they're also shown in advertising twice as much as young men, according to Visual GPS. Perhaps there's an opportunity there for impact, which a savvy brand might explore.

1267107181, Jessie Casson

1307394092, Maskot

For your consideration

How we broaden the scope of the visual stories we tell

When it comes to picturing work, show roles equally attributable to all genders.

When representing ethnic minority communities intentionally address issues of colorism by reflecting all skin shades.

Be inclusive of transgender people in visual stories while being conscious of the other intersecting identity factors such as race, ethnicity, age, body size, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and more.

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What does **bias "feel" like?**

Our Visual GPS research has been tracking bias and how it's felt and experienced for over a year, and here's what we've found—bias is everywhere. It's felt by two-thirds of people (regardless of gender) and most often felt because of body shape and age. In fact, younger generations (especially females) experience it most often, with 82% stating that they have felt bias. A third of that number stated that they have felt it because of their body shape, and most identified "being too heavy" as the reason.

Global experience with bias

Men and women experience the same amount of bias, but slightly different kinds:

67% of men experience bias

66% of women experience bias

21% Age
20% Political beliefs
18% Body

26% Body
21% Age
16% Income/socio-economic level

On social media, it's especially important to highlight male bodies of all types throughout content. There's been strong support for brands like Fenty who incorporate full figured male-identifying models into their photos.

67% globally, have experienced bias

Primarily because of their...

22% Body
21% Age
17% Political beliefs

Let's not forget that there's power in that qualifier, however, as "too" is a comparison made with what's seen in mainstream media, and increasingly in influencer marketing, too. Simply put, there's a gap. Editorial outlets rarely discuss body inclusivity, with the UK, Australia, and Italy having the most coverage at approximately 2% of the time, further demonstrating room for improvement.[2] We also found that body bias has the greatest intersection with other biases and goes hand-in-hand with bias about socio-economic class, race and ethnicity, immigration status, and gender and sexual orientation.

Body bias has the greatest intersection with other biases.

Body image bias has the greatest intersection with other biases

Biases related to one's **Body Image** and **Income & Socio-Economic Status** are strongly correlated.

Biases related to one's **Race & Ethnicity, Religion**, and **Immigration Status** have been significantly positively correlated.

Biases related to one's **Gender/Gender Identity** and **Sexual Orientation** have been significantly positively correlated.
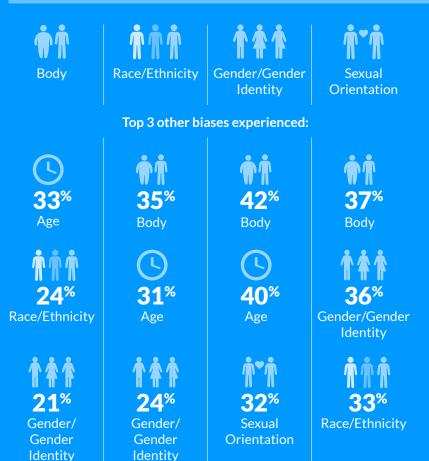

694019327, LWA/Dann Tardif

AMONG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING THE FOLLOWING BIASES

Body	Race/Ethnicity	Gender/Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation

Top 3 other biases experienced:

33% Age	35% Body	42% Body	37% Body
24% Race/Ethnicity	31% Age	40% Age	36% Gender/Gender Identity
21% Gender/Gender Identity	24% Gender/Gender Identity	32% Sexual Orientation	33% Race/Ethnicity

For your consideration

Bringing the marginalized into the mainstream

To reach those that have in the past been marginalized, focus on community, family, and friendships

When disabilities are part of the story, focus on the person, their relationships, and how they live, not the disability

Now let's explore what we find appealing, in terms of imagery. Our research found, consumers stated that they are drawn to images of people with a range of body types that have typically been underrepresented (as we have found by looking at millions of examples of image usage). We've also seen a 16x growth in quantity of content that is tagged as "body positive" in the last five years alone, although half of that content is focused on fitness, nutrition, weight loss, and other one-dimensional or stereotypical concepts about the larger body.

Is it working? Short answer, yes but slowly. We're seeing a slight shift that points toward a positive evolution. In 2021, our research shows a 7% drop in people feeling body bias, when compared to 2020 figures—possibly because we have been living less public lives but it's also likely that our empathy has increased since the start of the pandemic.

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What's the answer?

More visual representation, across the spectrum.

Visual GPS demonstrates that the aforementioned biases are less felt by the affected community when visual representation of that group is directly and intentionally addressed by brands. Simply put, when they are seen, authentically, groups feel more accepted, and no longer marginalized.

For instance, our 2020 and 2021 efforts examining how the LGBTQ+ community is visualized, demonstrated a correlation between representation and bias, specifically that countries with greater frequency of representation tend to exhibit less stated bias among the LGBTQ+ community.[3]

Making connections with your audience means you see them, understand what makes them unique, and that your brand can fill their specific needs while aligning with their values. As mentioned at the top, choosing images and videos that connect with an audience is an opportunity to reinforce your commitment to current customers and signal to potential new customers that you "get" them in a way your competitors may not. And further, giving visibility to groups that have been marginalized will help reduce biases now and into the future—an effective way to help move the world.

1162039258, Nazar Abbas Photography

1334471163, SolStock

Moving The World:
How Getty Images is tackling bias

Through our research, products, and partnerships, Getty Images and iStock help brands break barriers and tell the authentic stories that connect with today's consumer across the globe.

Our work with organizations like the Unstereotype Alliance and SeeHer, champion change in the production process of advertising, pushing the conversation around positive change further than ever before. Through the research you find in these pages, we provide guidance to clients across industries and direction to our contributors around the world.

Find our curated collections at gettyimages.com or use our advanced search to find content that reflects your world, whatever your audience looks like. And if it's custom shot content you're looking for, we can help you with that, too. Backed by our Visual GPS research, our Custom Content team can create exclusive images and videos that speak to your audience like no one else can. Contact your Getty Images Representative to learn more.

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Visual GPS

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View all of the images in this guide here.

We don't just report on visual trends, we partner with organizations that drive change to create image and visual collections that make an impact.

Click on the logos below to explore some of our latest collaborations.