Dictionary Definitions of Bias (noun)

Descriptive versus Evaluative

Here are 14 dictionaries that use two separate entries for bias (one for evaluative, the other for descriptive) or that include 'usually' or 'especially' to introduce the evaluative entry.

**Merriam Webster:**
a. an inclination of temperament or outlook especially a personal and sometimes unreasoned judgment: prejudice
b. an instance of such prejudice
c. bent, tendency
d. 1: deviation of the expected value of a statistical estimate from the quantity it estimates  
   2: systematic error introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others

[https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bias)

**Harper-Collins**
British English 1. mental tendency or inclination, esp an irrational preference or prejudice
American English:
1. an oblique or diagonal line of direction, esp. across a woven fabric
2. a particular tendency or inclination, esp. one that prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question; prejudice
3. Statistics: a systematic as opposed to a random distortion of a statistic as a result of sampling procedure


**Britannica Dictionary**
1. a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly
2. a strong interest in something or ability to do something

[https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/bias](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/bias)

**Macmillan**
1. an attitude that you have that makes you treat someone in a way that is unfair or different from the way you treat other people
1a. A special interest or ability in a particular thing, or a particular tendency

[https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/bias_1](https://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/bias_1)

**Dictionary.com**
1. a particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned: illegal bias against older job applicants; the magazine’s bias toward art rather than photography; our strong bias in favor of the idea.
2. unreasonably hostile feelings or opinions about a social group; prejudice: accusations of racial bias.

[https://www.dictionary.com/browse/bias](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/bias)

**Cambridge Dictionary**
the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment
the fact of preferring a particular subject or thing:


**Oxford English Dictionary (US)**
1. Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.
   1.1 A concentration on or interest in one particular area or subject.

[https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/bias](https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/bias)
Vocabulary.com
a preference for one thing over another, especially an unfair one.
https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/bias

American Heritage Dictionary
1. A line going diagonally across the grain of fabric: Cut the cloth on the bias.
2. a. A preference or an inclination, especially one that inhibits impartial judgment.
   b. An unfair act or policy stemming from prejudice.
   https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=bias

Oxford Learners Dictionary
an interest in one thing more than others; a special ability
https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/bias_1

Wikipedia
a disproportionate weight in favor of or against an idea or thing, usually in a way that is closed-minded, prejudicial, or unfair.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bias

The Free Dictionary
1. A line going diagonally across the grain of fabric: Cut the cloth on the bias.
2. a. preference or an inclination, especially one that inhibits impartial judgment.
   b. An unfair act or policy stemming from prejudice.
   https://www.thefreedictionary.com/bias

Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English
1 an opinion about whether a person, group, or idea is good or bad that influences how you deal with it.
2 a natural skill or interest in one type of thing. Lydia has a strong artistic bias.
https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/bias

APA Dictionary of Psychology
1. partiality: an inclination or predisposition for or against something. See also prejudice.
2. any tendency or preference, such as a response bias or test bias.
https://dictionary.apa.org/bias

Here is one dictionary that presents only an evaluative meaning:

Sociology Dictionary
A tendency (either known or unknown) to prefer one thing over another that prevents objectivity, that influences understanding or outcomes in some way

Usage notes: The terms bias and prejudice are often used interchangeably. However, prejudice is an extreme type of bias that is typically preconceived, intentional, and negative such as homophobia, racism, or sexism.
https://sociologydictionary.org/bias/

Miscellaneous
Note: This summary excludes definitions involving fabric (to cut across the bias) or electronics.

For more on specific kinds of bias, see