prove fruitful, since there are bound to be discrepancies in how people experience and remember events. Four friends may have been to the same party, but they probably remember different things about it, and some of these memories might even contradict each other ("Jason danced on the table", "No, it was John who did it"). The inconsistencies do not necessarily mean there was no party. Or no dancing.

discrepancy uoverensstemmelse

The example above is lighthearted, but the problem becomes less so when people who have witnessed genocide, war crimes, and terrorist attacks suddenly are accused of lying because of inconsistencies in reporting and testimonials.

genocide folkedrab

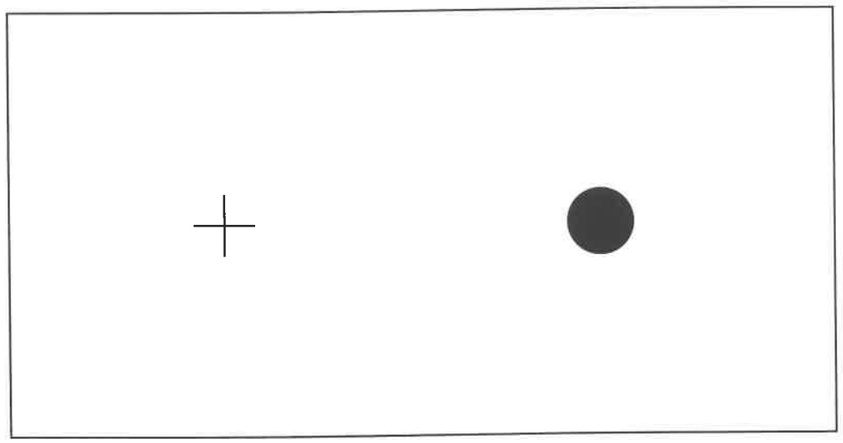
Blame the Brain

Figuring out what to believe and who to trust is very difficult. And it becomes even more difficult once you realize that human beings are saddled with a lot of cognitive biases, i.e. deviations in our ability to think rationally and perceive the world as it is. A cognitive bias reveals how a human being's biology influences the way we think and act; in a sense, we are "wired" to be wrong about a lot of things in the world around us.

deviation afvigelse

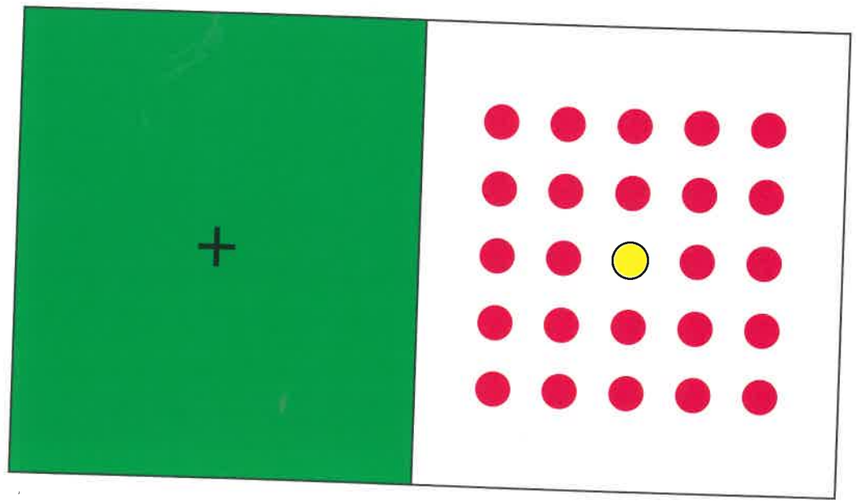
On the following pages, you will see a couple of examples of cognitive biases. Our first example is a reminder that your brain is lying to you. Have a look at the illustration below:

Cover your left eye and stare at the plus sign with your right eye. Now slowly move the book towards your face until your right eye only sees



retina nethinde

the plus sign and the black circle disappears. Congratulations! You have now found your blind spot. In your retina, there is a place lacking in photoreceptor cells. This causes a blind spot in your vision. The black circle disappeared when you found the spot, but instead of getting an error message, your brain simply told you that there was no black circle, just white paper; you got no information. And if you try looking at the other example below (cover left eye, look at plus sign with right eye, locate the blind spot), you will find that not only does the yellow circle disappear, but it is actually replaced with a red one! Your lying brain decided it would rather give you fake news than no news.



Looking at drawn circles might not seem relevant to how we think about world events, but it does go to show that our assumptions are not always correct. Furthermore, to illustrate why it sometimes seems safer to believe in conspiracies than not believe in them, you can look at the concepts of false positives and false negatives.

False Positives and False Negatives

Imagine that you are walking alone on the savannah. You hear something in the bushes. But what is it? It might be a lion, so you choose to run. But it turns out there was no lion, so the joke is on you. You thought something was there, but there was not. That is a false positive.