

GOOQUAL

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Equity Series, Part 2

Equity Calls on Everyone Managers, Colleagues, and You

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In response to public attention on long-entrenched social inequities, corporations made sweeping commitments in the summer of 2020 to focus on equity as a company value and business imperative. Since then, the question has become: how can we build equity efforts that are effective and sustainable?

Equity is only as strong as the individuals who provide it. Institutions are paramount to driving equity, but individuals also have a critical role to

“How to start on equity work? Start with what the data tells us about who’s in the workplace and how they’re experiencing the workplace.”

- Melonie Parker, Chief Diversity Officer,
Google

play. After all, managers and peers shape daily experiences in the workplace—for better and worse. They are gatekeepers to opportunities, resources, and networks. They can make us feel included or like perpetual outsiders.

Workplace interactions between colleagues don’t just impact inclusion; they also

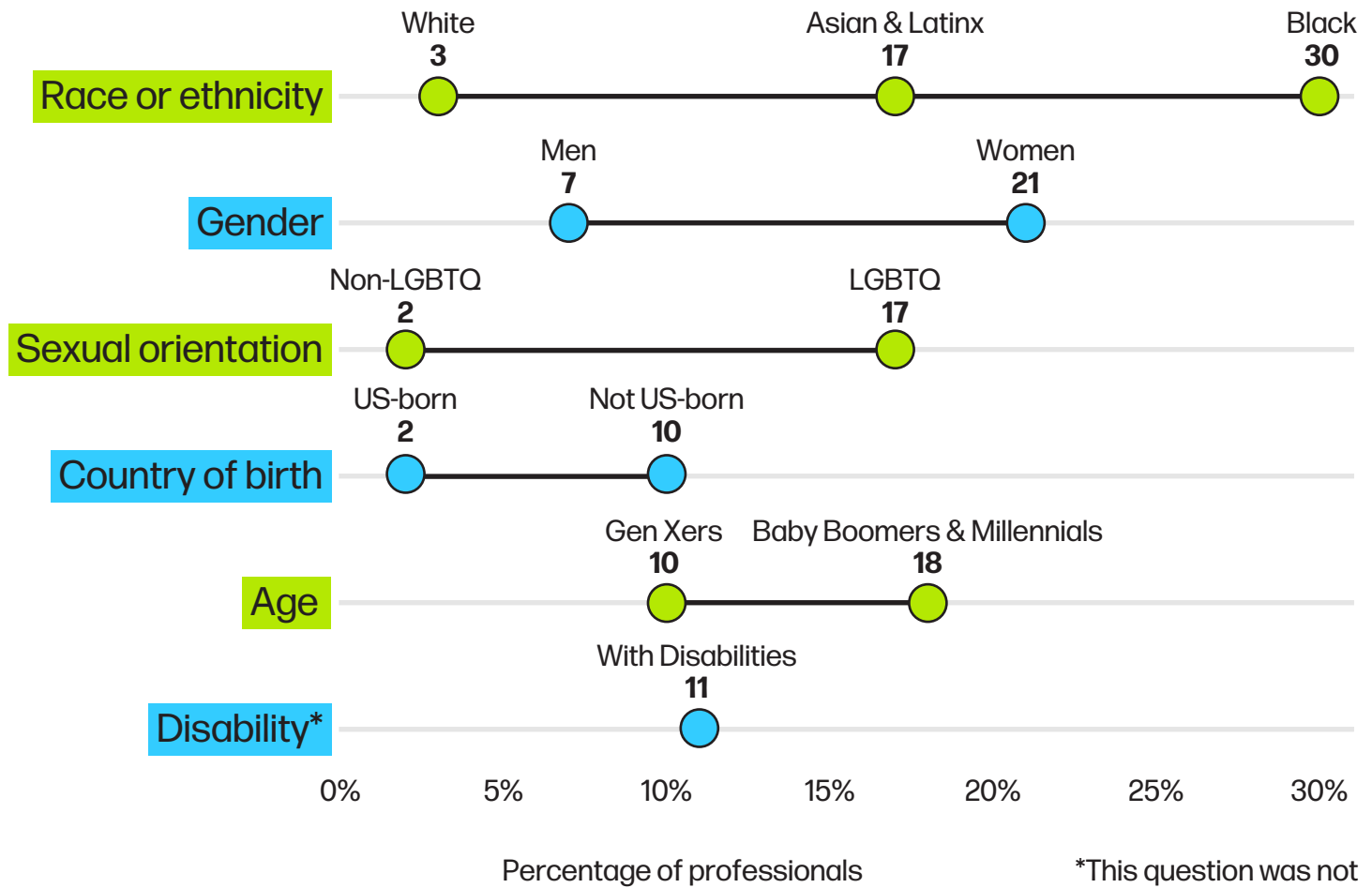
contribute to inequities in access to career opportunities and resources for professionals of different backgrounds.¹ Fortunately, we find there are specific, implementable behaviors that managers and peers can engage in to foster inclusion, producing payoffs for employees.

The Current State of Colleague Interactions

Many professionals feel work is unfair, a perception often created by the behavior of those around them. Negative colleague interactions can lead to worse outcomes for members of marginalized groups, such as inequities in talent processes, blocked

access, and lost opportunities.² Employees from groups that have not traditionally held power at work often connect unfair workplace treatment to a marginalized aspect of their identity, we find.

Professionals who have been treated unfairly because of their:



*This question was not asked of professionals without disabilities.

Black and Latinx Professionals

Individuals from marginalized groups often feel added pressure to succeed at work in the face of negative stereotypes that others hold about their groups.³ Black and Latinx professionals, we find, are more likely than White peers to express concerns about how their mistakes might reflect on other members of their group.

Professionals who worry about how their mistakes at work might reflect on others who look like them

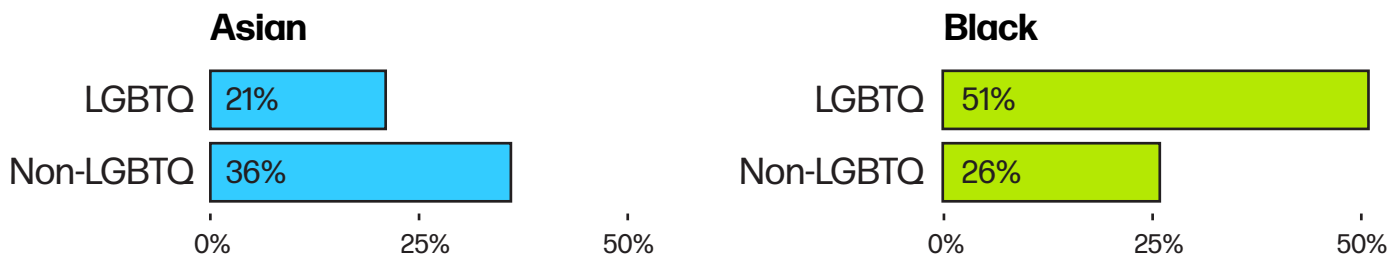


LGBTQ Professionals

The experience of LGBTQ professionals at work is complex, especially when considered at the intersection of race, we find. Black LGBTQ professionals are nearly twice as likely as Black

non-LGBTQ peers to describe their company culture as inclusive. Yet Asian LGBTQ employees are significantly less likely than Asian non-LGBTQ employees to say their company culture is inclusive.

Professionals who describe their company culture as inclusive



Professionals with Disabilities

Deep stereotypes about employees with disabilities persist in the workplace, resulting in unfair treatment. Professionals with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to experience

nearly every negative interaction we asked about, from subtle slights about their appearance, to obvious acts of exclusion, such as not being invited to meetings relevant to their jobs.

Professionals with disabilities are more likely than professionals without disabilities to say they experience most behaviors asked about, including:

Colleagues have made inappropriate comments about my physical appearance

Colleagues have underestimated my intelligence

I have been excluded from meetings relevant to my job

Colleagues have regularly taken credit for my ideas in meetings

The Current State of Team Leadership

Making daily decisions on tasks, clients, and roles for each team member, managers are pivotal to the success of their teams and to the career trajectory of each employee who reports to them. Such great influence can come at a great cost when bias seeps in, contributing to inequities across the career life cycle.⁴

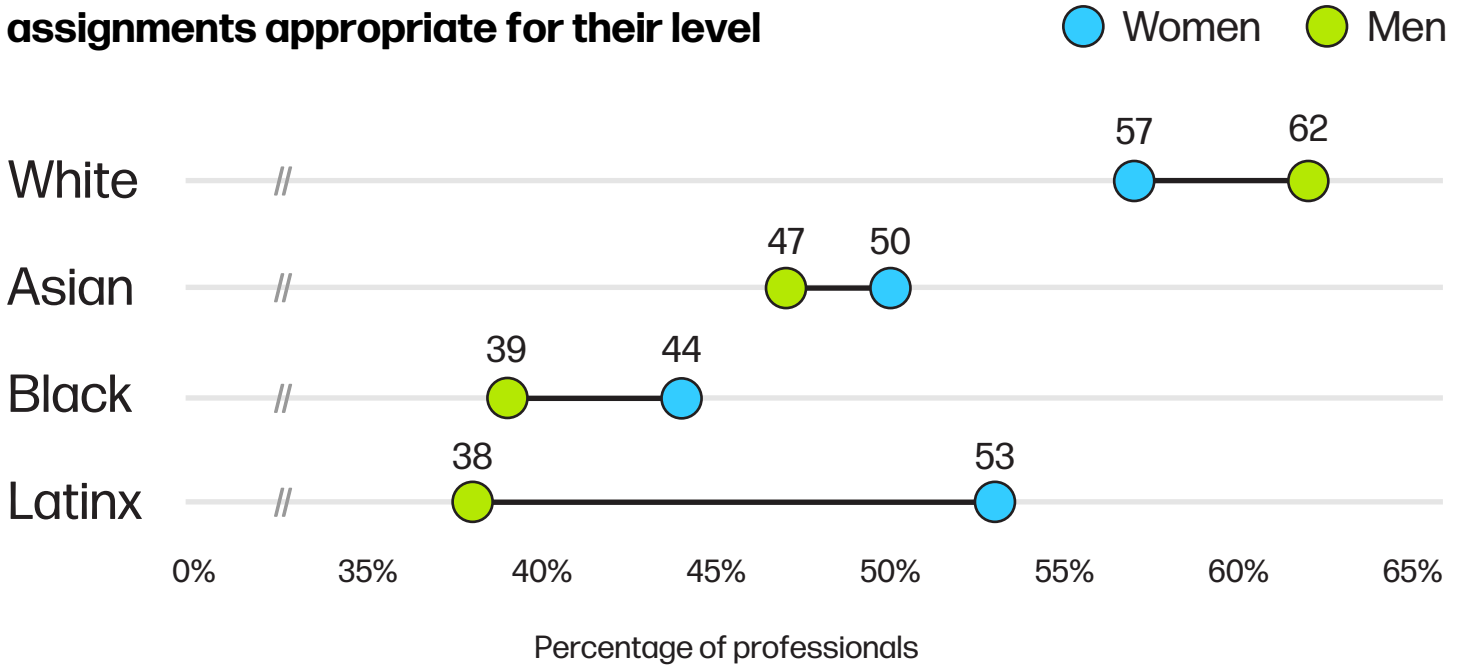
“White men will be promoted for star performance on a project. Black employees need star performance plus seniority, credentials, certifications. Black employees are seen as ‘not like us’ and need to do so much more to counter that.”

- DE&I expert

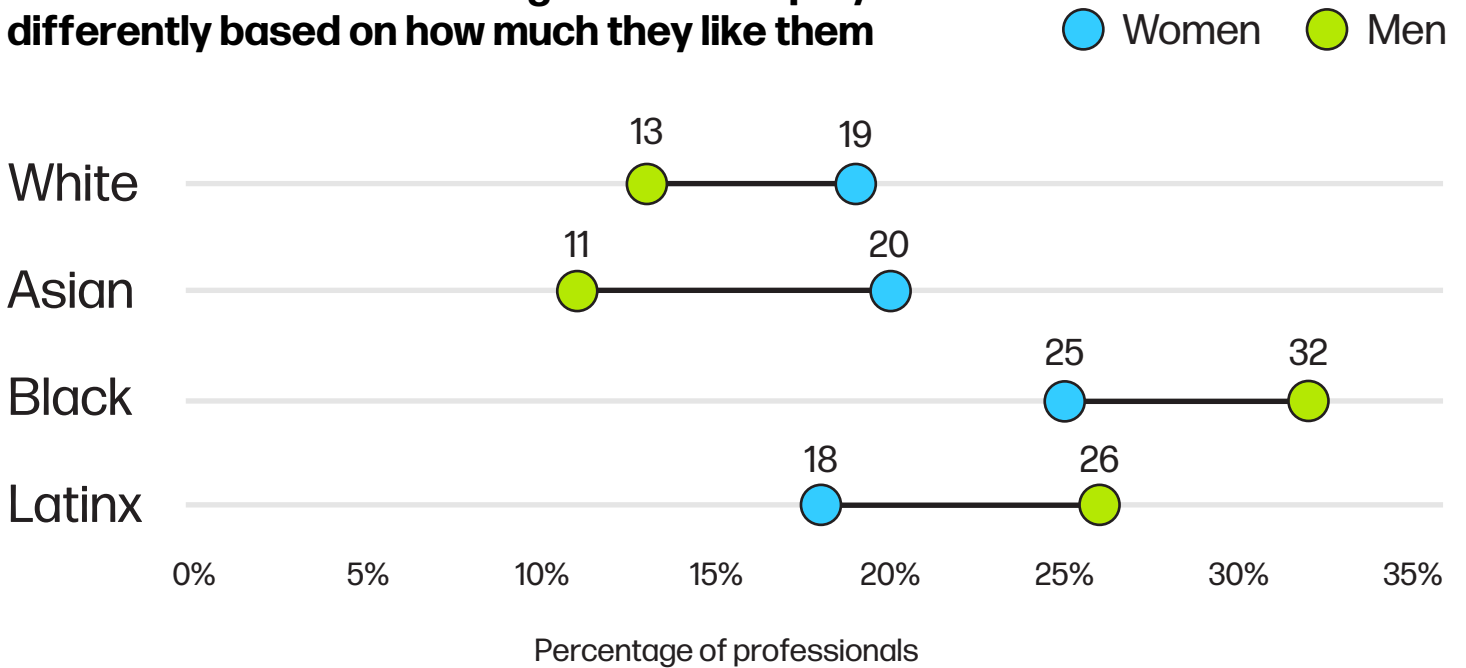
These outcomes emerge from daily inequitable interactions, we find, from the way work is assigned to general favoritism. White men are most likely to feel their work assignments are appropriate for their level, while less than half of all non-White men and Black women say the same. When it comes to playing favorites, Black and Latinx men see the biggest gaps: Black men are nearly 2.5 times as

likely and Latinx men are twice as likely as White men to say that their manager treats employees differently based on how much they like them.

Professionals who consider their work assignments appropriate for their level



Professionals whose manager treats employees differently based on how much they like them



Veterans

Veterans have a nuanced experience, our research suggests. On the one hand, veterans are less likely than their civilian counterparts to say their manager respects them and more likely to think their manager treats employees differently based on how much they like them. But veterans are also more likely to say they experience additional support in their manager's interest in their career advancement.

Compared to civilians, veterans:

Get more support

More likely to say their manager asks them about their career goals

More likely to say their manager gives them opportunities to interact with senior leaders

YET

Face more challenges

Less likely to say their manager respects them

More likely to say their manager treats employees differently based on how much they like them

“If you're Hispanic or African American, it shows up on your skin. Vet doesn't. I had one VP say, 'You should just go in a room and say you're a veteran.' All the other vets in the room were just like, 'That's not what we do. That's not how it works.’”

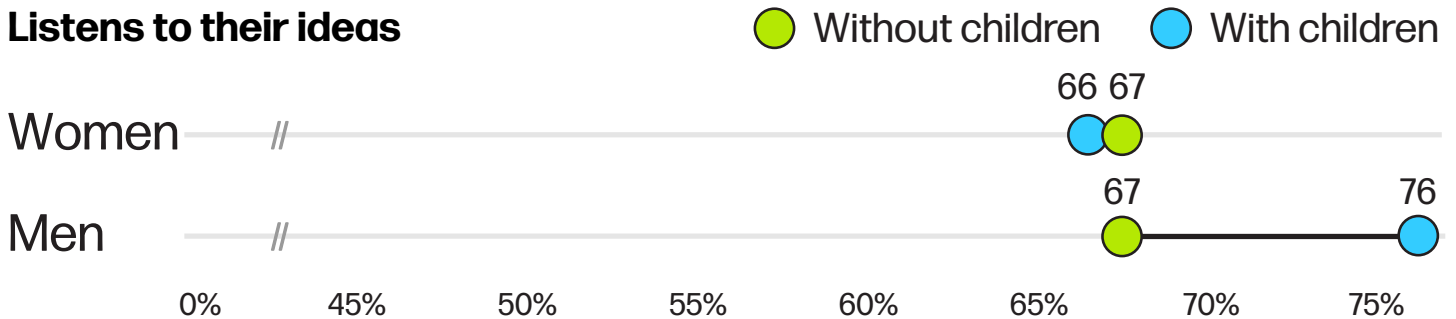
- Hispanic male veteran

Parents

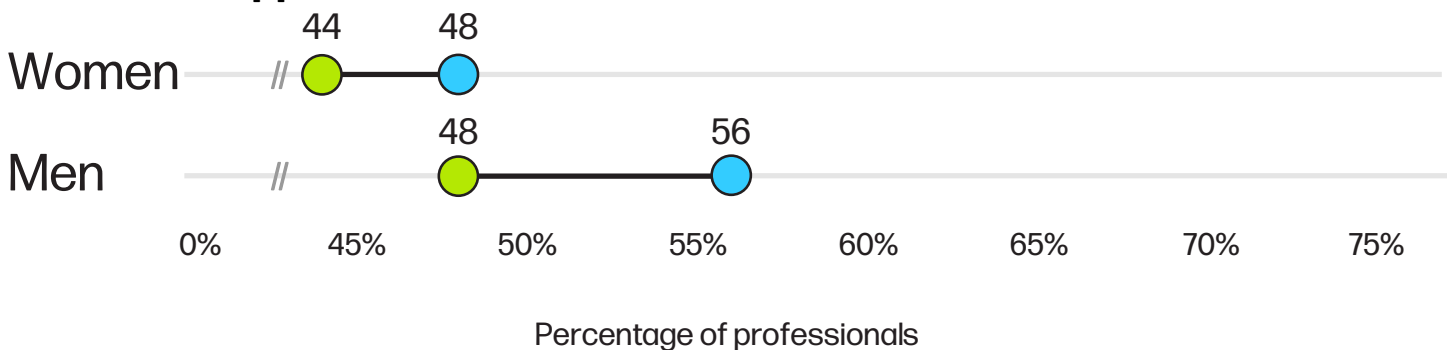
Parenthood impacts professionals' work experiences differently depending on gender, our data shows. Men with children are most likely to say their manager listens to their ideas and gives them opportunities to showcase their skills to senior leaders. Despite the fact that 41% of women with children are the sole or primary earners for their families⁵ we heard in interviews that fathers are more often considered to be leadership material and worthier of coveted assignments that will help them provide for their families, while women are assumed to be secondary earners, and as such, they are less valued.

Professionals who say their manager:

Listens to their ideas



Gives them opportunities to showcase their skills to senior leaders



Team Culture Reimagined

The workplace is rife with unfair treatment. While culture change is ultimately the responsibility of the institution and its leaders, individual colleagues can promote inclusion and influence team culture from the ground up. Inclusive behaviors spread from managers to colleagues, we find, and these individual efforts, when reinforced by organizational policy, can meaningfully contribute to greater equity in the workplace.

Inclusive Colleagues

Through a factor analysis of our data, three types of inclusive behavior emerged: collaboration, advancement, and speaking up on behalf of others.

Collaborate

We work best when we bring our full selves to work, and our peers make that possible. Collaborative colleagues value your contributions, make you feel respected, and support you through difficult situations at work.

“Collaborative contact reduces biases. The more I work with you, the more I know you. Structural solutions must create more opportunities for collaborative interactions between people.”

- Dr. Alexandra Kalev, Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology,
Tel Aviv University

Advance

Inclusive colleagues find ways to help your career. They connect you to senior leaders and other key contacts, provide feedback, and share work opportunities rather than hoard them.

“My colleague encouraged me to apply for an opportunity within the company. She did so because she understood my passion and work ethic. She helped me prepare for the interview, gave great feedback, and I got the opportunity.”

- Black woman

Speak up

Many colleagues know they can benefit when they collaborate or help each other further their careers, but to challenge an exclusive and inequitable status quo, colleagues will need to disrupt bias by becoming an active, outspoken ally. They must be prepared to speak up when they witness injustice at work.



“Colleagues may be more comfortable speaking up on the side, one on one, but there is definitely a benefit to addressing an issue in a broader group in order to set the culture for inclusion.”

- Danny Burrell, Head of Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Enterprise Strategy, Johnson & Johnson

Inclusive Managers

Inclusive managers provide a “speak-up culture” in which all team members feel welcome, supported, and safe to share their perspectives. Coqual’s model of inclusive leadership catalogs six key inclusive manager behaviors that draw out a team’s best performance, we’ve found time and again.⁶

- Ensures everyone gets **heard**
- Makes it **safe** to propose novel ideas
- **Shares credit** for team success
- Accepts and **implements feedback**
- Takes a **collaborative** approach to decision-making
- Provides **constructive feedback** to all direct reports

 When partners and supervisors exhibit inclusive behaviors, then a number of benefits flow to the members of their teams—and to the entire organization. That’s a persuasive argument for change. 

- Arlene Arin Hahn, Partner and Chair, Global Diversity Initiative, White & Case

Extending Inclusion

Inclusivity catches on, our data shows: inclusive manager behaviors are strongly positively correlated with inclusive colleague behaviors. Inclusivity also pays off for individual employees and the business. Employees with inclusive managers are significantly more likely than employees without inclusive managers to say they've been recommended for career development opportunities and for rewards or recognition. Plus, having more inclusive colleagues and a more inclusive manager is associated with an increase in perceptions of fairness at work. And perceptions of fairness are tied to important business outcomes, such as employees' trust in their company and their intent to stay.⁷

Having a more **inclusive manager** is associated with an **18% increase** in perceptions of fairness at work.

Having more **inclusive colleagues** is associated with a **21% increase** in perceptions of fairness at work.

Framework for Change

The institution plays a critical role in embedding and reinforcing inclusive colleague and manager behaviors. Forward-thinking companies have been working on inclusion for years, but these efforts haven't always gained traction. This report lays out a framework companies can use to truly drive inclusion forward with employees, helping to advance equity and fairness at work.

Values

For company culture to genuinely change, an organization needs to infuse inclusion into its mission, vision, and values. Companies must honestly assess where their values differ from company norms, and then determine what stands in the way of inclusion. Employees will feel empowered to act inclusively (and to disrupt bias) when they know their employer values fairness, and their colleagues are prepared to live that value.

Accountability

While many companies tout inclusion or fairness in their values, they rarely attach it to meaningful incentives or consequences for individuals. Companies need to implement deliberate policy and processes to promote accountability for inclusivity. Inclusive behavior should be an expectation for every job, and employees who don't meet the mark on inclusion shouldn't advance to leadership. Leaders who aren't inclusive may not be worth supporting, promoting, or retaining.

Education

Inclusion training is often siloed, signaling to employees that inclusive behaviors are a DE&I goal rather than a universal, core part of their performance expectations. Colleagues need to know what inclusion looks like for peers. Managers need to know what's expected of them as leaders, be given proper resources to get it done, and be held accountable for their inclusive—or non-inclusive—behaviors.

Methodology

The research consists of a survey; *Insights In-Depth*[®] sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups) with over 300 employees; and one-on-one interviews with more than 40 people. The national survey was conducted online in April and May 2021 among 4,410 respondents (2,113 men; 2,268 women; 25 who identify as transgender, nonbinary, or another identity; and four who did not identify their gender; 2,547 identify as White, 557 as Black, 566 as Hispanic, 574 as Asian, 127 as two or more races, and 39 as another race or ethnicity). All survey respondents were at least 21 and employed full time in white-collar professions, with at least a bachelor's degree. Data was weighted to be representative of the US population on key demographics (age, gender, education, race/ethnicity, and census division). The base used for statistical testing was the effective base. Unless specified, the data we reference is from our national survey.

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of Coqual, a nonprofit research organization. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while Coqual conducted the analysis. In the charts, percentages may not always add up to 100 because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses from respondents. Throughout this report, "Latinx" refers to those who identify as being of Latino or Hispanic descent.

Endnotes

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Coqual CEO
Lanaya Irvin

Primary Research Lead
Pooja Jain-Link
Executive Vice President

Secondary Research Lead
Julia Taylor Kennedy
Executive Vice President

Project Team
Anthea Chan
Senior Research Associate

Emily Gawlak
Writer

Kelly Hoffman
Vice President of Research

Angela Qian
Senior Project Manager of Research

Faye Steele
Senior Research Coordinator

Emilia Yu
Research Manager

External Team
Cat Chapman
Researcher

Jessica Herman Goldman
Researcher

Jess Kuronen
Design and Data Visualization

Advisors
Dr. Ifedapo Adeleye
Professor of the Practices of Human
Resources Management, Georgetown
University

Dr. Alexandra Kalev
Associate Professor of Sociology and
Anthropology, Tel Aviv University

Dr. Kellie McElhaney
Professor and Founding Director, Center
for Equity, Gender, and Leadership
(EGAL), Haas School of Business, Univer-
sity of California, Berkeley

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