BEING BLACK IN CORPORATE AMERICA

An Intersectional Exploration

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FOR TALENT
INNOVATION

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Methodology

The research consists of: a survey; in-person focus groups and Insights In-Depth® sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups) with over 150 participants; a qualitative questionnaire with responses from nearly 200 participants; and one-on-one interviews with more than 40 people.

The national survey was conducted online and over the phone in June 2019 among 3,736 respondents (1,398 men, 2,317 women, and 21 who identify as something else; 520 identify as Black, 1,783 as White, 549 as Hispanic, 674 as Asian, 135 as two or more races, and 75 as another race or ethnicity) between the ages of 21 and 65 currently employed full time or self-employed in white-collar professions, with at least a bachelor's degree. Data were weighted to be representative of the US population on key demographics (age, sex, education, race/ethnicity, and census division). The base used for statistical testing was the effective base.

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI), a non-profit research organization. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while CTI 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.

Letter from the CEO

Over the course of 20+ years as a business leader and another ten as a talent management executive, I have accomplished a good deal and learned a good deal more. As we dug into this research on Black professionals, I was humbled to realize just how much more there is to do—and to learn.

I learned that Black professionals are tired of being crowded under the umbrella of "people of color." I learned that many Black professionals feel that White women have been the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action. And I learned that only about one in ten Black professionals believe White women use their power to advocate for other underrepresented groups.

Together, these facts took me back to my time as executive vice president of administration at Time Warner Inc.—to what I might have done differently had I, back then, been equipped with the report you're reading now.

One of my proudest achievements at Time Warner was a first-of-its-kind women's leadership development program called "Breakthrough Leadership." When my team and I first pitched the idea, support from the promising female employees I hoped to reach was mixed. Some didn't want to be singled out; others just didn't see the need. As a woman who benefitted tremendously from informal career development—what I now recognize as sponsorship—throughout my career, I felt I had the authority and the mandate to push forward a program that could give other women the same boost. I made the right call. The program was, I'm proud to say, a success. "Breakthrough Leadership" won me a reputation as a diversity and inclusion (D&I) champion—and a Catalyst Award to boot.

Next, I proposed a leadership development program for professionals of color. This time, when some employees expressed skepticism, I backed down. As a White woman, I didn't feel empowered to push a program through for a group to which I didn't belong. The program never materialized.

I wish I'd had the rich stories and the hard data here to make the case for programs tailored to the specific needs of Black professionals. And I wish I had solicited insight from more Black employees in order to build something specifically for them—in the course of doing that, I may have heard that many Black professionals are watching for White women to step up as vocal allies.

Now, all of us have the opportunity to change our outlooks and our behavior.

In the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI)'s work on sponsorship, we stress that designing diverse, inclusive workplaces begins with strong, trusting relationships across difference. Aware that our research team lacked a Black leader, we engaged an interdisciplinary team of experts to guide us. We are deeply grateful to our advisors and partners who made sure we got this right.

Two of our advisors were long-time collaborators of CTI. Dr. Ella Bell Smith, professor at Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business and co-author of the seminal work *Our Separate Ways*, shaped our hypotheses and interpretation of Black women's experiences. Bell co-authored CTI's *Easing Racial Tensions at Work* report, and in 2016, joined CTI's Board of Directors. Trudy Bourgeois, the founder and CEO of The Center for Workforce Excellence, is a sought-after consultant in the D&I world,

unwavering in her pursuit of more equitable and empathetic workplaces—which guided our solutions framework for this report. We've collaborated with Bourgeois before, as well, on advisory services work and on our *What #MeToo Means for Corporate America* report.

Dr. Adia Wingfield's byline kept popping up as we set out on our literature review; we're honored that the sociology professor from Washington University in St. Louis lent her analytical eye to our findings, especially on networks, seniority, and authenticity. We're also deeply thankful to Dr. Katherine Giscombe for her thoughtful review of our work. Given her focus on Black women at Catalyst, her scope of knowledge is particularly relevant, and she encouraged us to push our analysis in nuanced directions. Last but far from least, Skip Spriggs helped sharpen our focus and provided rich insight into the experience of Black men in corporate America.

In our early findings call, Spriggs told us: "You can't argue with this data."

The report you are about to read is challenging, but crucial to driving progress. It's time for the rest of us to tune in, commit to the work ahead, and get going on it. I hope you will find this research as illuminating as I did—and I hope it will inspire you to action.

All the best,

Pat

Pat Fili-Krushel

INTRODUCTION
A NEW APPROACH

The United States, as a society, has not fully reckoned with its legacy of racism. Why should employers care? Because systems of social prejudice cross the threshold of the workplace—preventing employers from creating the inclusive cultures that allow *all* employees to do their best work, regardless of their race. Instead, a cycle of exclusion keeps talented Black professionals from rising to the leadership positions they are ready to take on. Despite the fact that Black representation in leadership has stayed low for decades, race is still a "third rail"—and rarely gets the frank exploration it merits, leaving White employees largely ignorant of the biased treatment Black employees experience. This study provides that exploration. By examining intersectional experiences within the diverse cohort of Black professionals, we will reveal the rich, multi-faceted elements of Black identity at work today. Then, we will explore how employers can build more equitable, inclusive cultures not only for Black professionals but for all.

"Black people lost ground when 'of color' became the popular thing to say."

Michael C. Bush, CEO, Great Place to Work

Past, present, future

It is a simple but fraught truth: in the United States, race still divides us. In 1995, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and Civil Rights leader Roger Wilkins said, "Blacks have a 375-year history on this continent: 245 involving slavery, 100 involving legalized discrimination, and only 30 involving anything else." The "anything else," though now totaling 55 years, has been as ambiguous as Wilkins's words suggest.[1]

The last century brought with it hopeful milestones: in 1961, an executive order by President John F. Kennedy introduced the term "affirmative action" into the American lexicon.[2] Signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights Act promised a remedy for the nation's false rhetoric of equality in centuries past.[3] Today, as we take measure of these efforts, they fall short of creating racial equity. And as we enter a new decade, further progress seems elusive.[4] The majority of citizens feel that race relations in the US are "generally bad," according to a recent Pew study.[5] Indeed, economist Griffin Sims Edwards and legal scholar Stephen Rushin have found that reported hate crimes have increased significantly since 2016.[6]

Despite the landmark legislation of the Civil Rights Act; despite groundbreaking scholarship published, stories told, and art created depicting and analyzing the systemic racism in our country; and despite billions of dollars spent annually on diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts,[7] representation of Black professionals in the workforce still lags behind Black representation in the overall population.[8] Look to the top: based on rates of college degree completion, the Fortune 500 should have 50 Black CEOs. Today, according to independent tracking from The Executive Leadership Council, there are four—all men.

At the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI), we have long researched, and written about, experiences of Black employees. Within a year of our founding, we released a pair of reports—*Invisible Lives* and *Leadership in Your Midst*—that measured the untapped potential of employees who are underrepresented in leadership.[9] We charted the ambition of Black women in *Black Women: Ready to Lead*; more recently, in *Easing Racial Tensions at Work*, we explored why employees cannot check their race—and the experiences they have outside of work related to their race—at the office door.[10] With this study, we will build on our prior work through standalone analysis of being Black at work, not just by gender or in the context of external racial tensions.

As we set out on our new study, we sifted through the work of countless other researchers who have explored authenticity, entrepreneurship, networks, and motivations for Black employees.[11] Researchers have measured drive—and pressure—to succeed, as well as wage discrimination.[12] They have investigated how Black professionals navigate authenticity in the face of homophily—our attraction to "sameness"—and a majority-White workforce.[13] They have revealed that Black professionals often feel the need to make those in the dominant group comfortable

Based on rates of degree completion, the Fortune 500 should have 50 Black CEOs. Today, there are four.

"I'm surprised. I thought the cohort that came through in the mid-nineties—me, Ken Chenault, Stan O'Neal, Frank Raines— was just the beginning, and that there'd be a lot more. It just didn't happen. There's been dribs and drabs, but not a wave. And I'm not sure why that's the case."

Richard D. Parsons, Former CEO, Time Warner Inc.

with their presence.[14] And they have noted that African Americans represent a fast-growing segment of small business owners.[15] As we reviewed existing literature, we saw that scholars are also wading into the intersectional experience. Expansive collections such as the recently published *Race, Work, and Leadership: New Perspectives on the Black Experience* seek to capture the nuances of the Black experience at work.[16]

In short: we found a powerful body of work—but we also found gaps.

We didn't find comprehensive, intersectional analysis about what Black employees face in the workforce. And as we looked at the corporate human resources (HR) space, in our work with dozens of large employers, we also observed worrying trends that erase Black experiences: in HR and D&I strategy, Black professionals are frequently conflated with all people of color or are depicted as a monolithic group.[17] These approaches flatten nuances across gender, ethnicity, generation, LGBTQ identity, region, and beyond. Frequently, they also lead to one-size-fits-all solutions, or copy-and-paste programs that have worked for other marginalized groups in the workplace— notably White women.

Finally, we saw an unintended consequence at companies that create safe spaces for Black employees through

employee resource groups (ERGs) and affinity groups. While those can be fantastic havens for Black employees, too often the challenges they face are surfaced there... and remain there. As a result, on their daily work teams, Black employees are often asked to explain their experiences and solve their own challenges.

To move towards a more equitable working world, we must also understand the attitudes of *White* employees. We must establish how aware (or unaware) they are of the challenges their Black colleagues face and how they view the solutions available to Black employees. Do White employees understand larger systems of racism and the subtle ways they enact and perpetuate bias? What we do know: according to Pew Research's 2019 poll Race in America, half of White Americans agree with the statement, "There is too much attention paid to race and racial issues in our country these days."[18] And though support for affirmative action is on the rise, according to Gallup, more Americans support such programs for women than for minorities.[19] There is clearly a mandate to understand, and to find new ways to educate.

We conducted this study to fill in the gaps, fielding a nationally representative survey of 3,736 college-educated professionals across races and ethnicities. We spoke to dozens of Black professionals across industries. And we brought together a

team of advisors who lent their professional and academic expertise to our analysis. We found that the stagnant, low representation of Black professionals is a signal flare of persistent racial prejudice embedded in the United States workplace.

In this study, we will highlight the hopes Black employees hold for their careers, their strong motivations to succeed, and the disillusionment they face when they enter inequitable workplaces. We will explore the allure of entrepreneurship and alternative career paths. We will consider what these other employment opportunities provide Black professionals—and why larger employers haven't been able to create those same safe spaces. Once we do so, considering the rich, intersectional experiences within this diverse cohort, we will illuminate the path toward solutions that are neither Band-Aid nor box-checking exercises but instead creative, far-reaching interventions that corporate America needs in order to create workplaces that are fully inclusive and in which Black professionals feel they belong.

"It's embarrassing because there are thousands of [Black] people who are just as qualified or more qualified than I am who deserve the opportunity, but haven't been given the opportunity."

Kenneth Chenault, Former Chairman and CEO, American Express[20]

Why we say "systemic"

Systemic racism, also known as institutional racism, is a term used to describe the way racial inequality is embedded in the foundations of our society. It refers to policies and practices that harm some racial groups and help others, creating disproportionate opportunities for some—and punishing others—due solely to their race.

Not everyone believes in the concept of systemic, or institutional, racism.

But the evidence supports its existence. As we will highlight throughout this report, Black people in the US, compared to White, have lower earning power; higher likelihood of being ticketed, searched, and arrested while driving; and fewer corporate leadership opportunities.[21] We will share, in our new findings, how systemic racism presents itself in the workplace.

There are lots of great online resources out there, from Race Forward to Ben & Jerry's (yes, you read that right), that helped expand our understanding of this form of racism. Check them out:[22]

Race Forward   **University of North Carolina**

Ben & Jerry's   **The Aspen Institute**

What we mean by "intersectional"

When we use the word "intersectional" throughout this report, we're referring to a view of Black professionals that acknowledges the differences in experience shaped by other identities (gender, heritage, sexual orientation, generation, etc.) in addition to race. This view is rooted in the work of legal scholar and civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term. She describes intersectionality as "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects."[23] (For more on Crenshaw's view of intersectionality, watch her TED Talk; a link and more information are on the next page). Merriam-Webster offers another, straightforward definition of intersectionality: "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups."[24]

Why we capitalize Black

Linguists, activists, and academics since W.E.B. Du Bois have argued for capitalizing the official name for the Black race. As author and professor Lori Tharps puts it, "Black with a capital B refers to people of the African diaspora. Lowercase black is just a color."[25] She argues, as do others, that the shared experiences that unite those who identify as Black merit a capitalized, descriptive identifier. At CTI, we follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which allows the author's preference to dictate capitalization of both Black and White. While more extensive literature exists in defense of capitalizing Black than White, in acknowledgment of the "default" status conferred when White identity is downplayed, we have elected to capitalize both.[26] We do so whenever these words are used to describe a person, group of people, or cultural phenomenon that is tied to Black or White identity.

"America is inherently racist, and it's inherently classist."

Black male executive

Resources on racism and antiracism

It would be impossible to capture the full history of race in the US in one report. Thankfully, we don't have to: many brilliant writers and thinkers have turned their attention to this country's construction of race and legacy of White supremacy. Here are just a few pieces of essential reading, watching, and listening. Click the links below to go straight to the resources, or refer to our full resource guide on page 69.

"The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross" on PBS
Henry Louis Gates Jr. wrote and presents this Emmy-winning miniseries that covers the history of African Americans from slavery to present day through interviews, academic debate, and visits to historic sites.

"Seeing White" from Scene on Radio
This podcast series investigates the history of Whiteness: how the conception of a White race formed, how it has transformed, and how it persists as the default.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Coates's novella, written as a letter to his teenage son, gives readers a glimpse into daily life as a Black individual and empowers them with knowledge to confront the present.

"The 1619 Project" by _The New York Times_
1619 marks the beginning of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. _The New York Times_ reports through multimedia on how the US was shaped by the carnage and economic prosperity resulting from slavery.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's TED Talk, "The Urgency of Intersectionality"
For a long time, there was no word to describe layered discrimination, which allowed our justice system to overlook the plight of African American women and women of color. Kimberlé Crenshaw explains the term she coined to bring to the surface the intersection of identities.

Women, Race, and Class by Angela Davis
In a series of essays that stretch back in American history to the abolitionist movement, Davis reveals the way that women's liberation has not only largely promoted the interests of White, middle class women but deliberately excluded the voices of women of color.

Black Stats: African Americans by the Numbers in the Twenty-First Century by Monique W. Morris
Morris's work uses statistics to paint a fuller picture of the lives of African Americans today, challenging commonly held stereotypes through facts and figures on marriage, arts attendance, voting habits, and beyond.

"Race—The Power of an Illusion" on California Newsreel and PBS
PBS's interactive webpage complements California Newsreel's three-part documentary that explores the (not so) basic question: "What is race?"

_13th_ on Netflix
This award-winning Netflix documentary, directed by Ava DuVernay, provides an in-depth analysis of the US incarceration system, which holds a disproportionate number of people of color, and, when you look closely, bears a disturbing resemblance to enslavement.

Stamped from the Beginning and _How to Be an Antiracist_ by Ibram X. Kendi
In his National Book Award-winning work, _Stamped From the Beginning_, historian Kendi unpacks how racism, an intellectually devised construct, is entrenched and shrouded in US society. He explodes the idea of the "post-racial society" many Americans applaud. In his follow-up book, Kendi urges all to move beyond a basic awareness of racism and commit to building an antiracist society.

PART I

A PORTRAIT OF BLACK EMPLOYEES AT WORK

PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Black professionals have the drive—and the dream—to climb to the C-Suite. In this section, we'll dig into their attitudes and aspirations: ambition exceeding that of their White peers, faith in their networks, and strong bonds outside of the workplace. We'll explore the makeup of Black professional networks and why many Black professionals feel the call to pay their success forward, to their families and beyond.
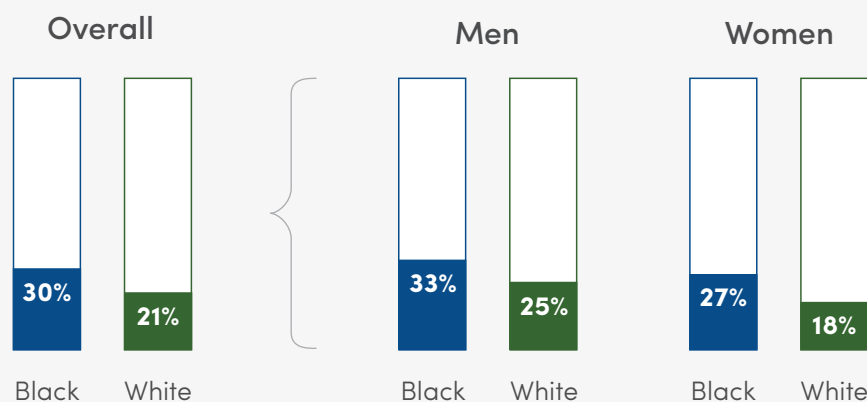
Black professionals are ambitious

Black professionals have their sights on the C-Suite. Nearly one in three Black professionals aspire to hold a top job, compared to about one in five White professionals. And they also have the drive to realize that dream: nearly two-thirds of Black professionals report that they are "very ambitious" in their careers; about half of White professionals say the same. This data builds on the findings from our 2015 report, *Black Women: Ready to Lead*, in which we found that Black women were more likely than their White female peers to aspire to hold powerful positions.[27] When we break down our new data by gender, we find that Black men we surveyed are slightly more likely than Black women to say they are ambitious.

This data on ambition and aspiration proves an invaluable underpinning to our study. Black professionals aren't stopping short of the C-Suite from lack of desire. In recent years, Black women—including, in a viral soundbite, Former First Lady Michelle Obama—have expressed frustration at the call to "lean in,"[28] given the documented ambition they hold. Throughout this report, we'll explore the systemic roadblocks that line the path to the top for Black professionals; but ambition and aspiration aren't standing in their way.

Professionals who are very ambitious in their careers

Overall

Black 65% White 53%

Men

Black 67% White 55%

Women

Black 63% White 51%
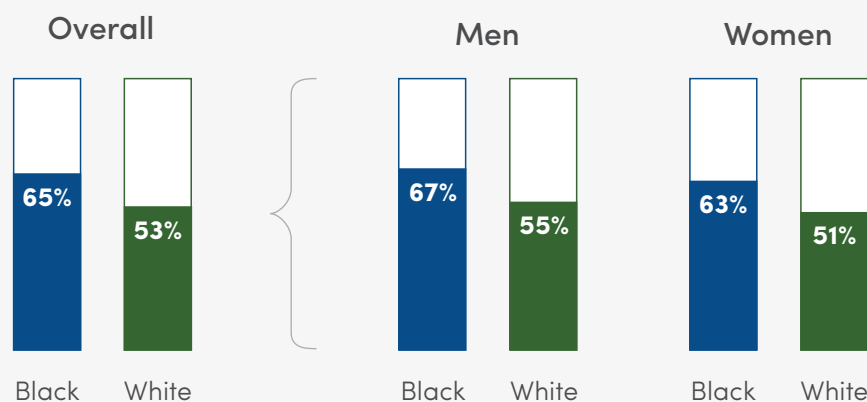
Professionals who aspire to hold a top job

Overall

Black 30% White 21%

Men

Black 33% White 25%

Women

Black 27% White 18%

"When you emerge into more rarefied areas, you begin to realize you're out there on your own and highly visible. You're representing a group of people. You begin to feel, 'This is about more than me.'"

Richard D. Parsons, Former CEO, Time Warner Inc.

What drives success?

When we asked survey takers, "What makes you want to succeed at work?" three factors rose to the top. Regardless of race or ethnicity, we all work to support ourselves and our immediate families, and we strive for excellence. After these shared motivators, however, the story diverges for Black and White professionals.

The factors that round out Black professionals' top five motivators—"being a role model for others" and "making my family proud"—indicate a story of strong communal ties. They also indicate both the pride and the pressure that many Black professionals feel as they move through their careers. We heard in extensive interviews that many Black professionals learn from their families and communities that when they walk into work, they do so not as individual employees but as representatives of their entire race. As President and CEO of The Executive Leadership Council Skip Spriggs told us, the expectation is twofold: Black professionals are asked to lift up other Black colleagues and to show others outside of work what they—and by extension, other Black professionals—can achieve.

Top motivators to succeed at work

ALL PROFESSIONALS

1. Having financial security for myself

2. Being the best at what I do

3. Financially supporting my immediate family

BLACK PROFESSIONALS

4. Being a role model for others

5. Making my family proud

"Your family tells you you're at the forefront: moving the family forward, moving the race forward, moving the community forward. It's not just an individual dynamic."

Dr. Ella Bell Smith, Professor of Business Administration, Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College

Paying it back, paying it forward

In the US, Black families hold $5.04 for every $100 of White family wealth and earn $57.30 for every $100 in White family income.[29] It is unsurprising, then, that Black professionals are often motivated by financial success—and that they are more likely to have broad familial financial responsibility. More than one in five Black professionals, nearly twice the rate of White professionals, provide financial assistance to their parents, siblings, or extended families. As we'll explore later in the "Intersectional Spotlights" section of this report on page 34, Black LGBTQ professionals are even more likely than non-LGBTQ Black peers to share their wealth with extended family members.

External research suggests that providing financial assistance may be more common in the Black community because, as the above numbers starkly show, economic inequality is a persistent reality in the United States. A trove of research, from sociologist Thomas Shapiro's *The Hidden Cost of Being African American* to economist Raj Chetty's expansive *New York Times*-featured study, "Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States," exposes both the earnings gap and the wealth disparity that exist—and persist—across race.[30] These sobering facts show an increased likelihood that a Black professional has relatives with lower incomes, and may support them financially.

Professionals who provide financial assistance to their parents, siblings, or extended family members

Overall

Black	White
22%	12%

Men

Black	White
23%	14%

Women

Black	White
21%	10%
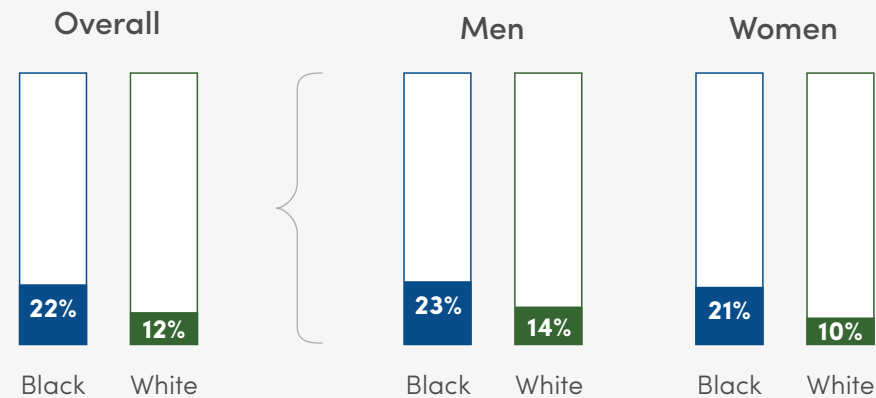
"When you're the first or second or third in your family that gets to go to college and have a healthy career, you have to give back. To your family and to the community."

Black Gen X woman

"For most of my career…I have supported my parents financially. That's been an additional level of stress in my life."

Black male executive

"Many things have motivated me. First and foremost has been a sense of family expectations—wanting to honor both who had come before me and what was expected of me. Second was to make an impact on the African American community."

Black male C-Suite executive

Finding strength in numbers

Black professionals take pride in the networks they've developed. In fact, Black professionals, regardless of gender, are more likely than White professionals to report that their professional networks are strong. Fully 75% of Black men (and 58% of Black women) have strong networks. In interviews, many shared with us why they build networks, often with other Black professionals: to vent and to get advice on how to handle slights and snubs; to compare notes on how t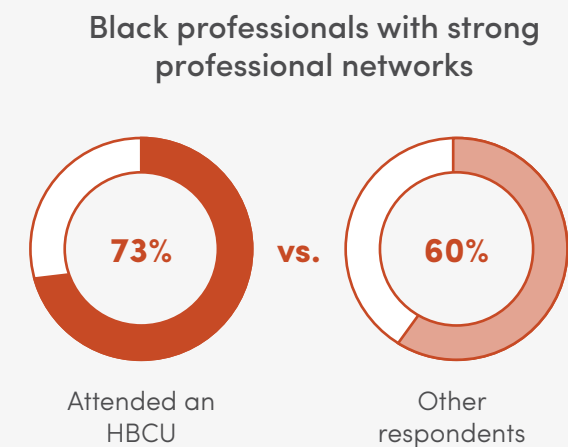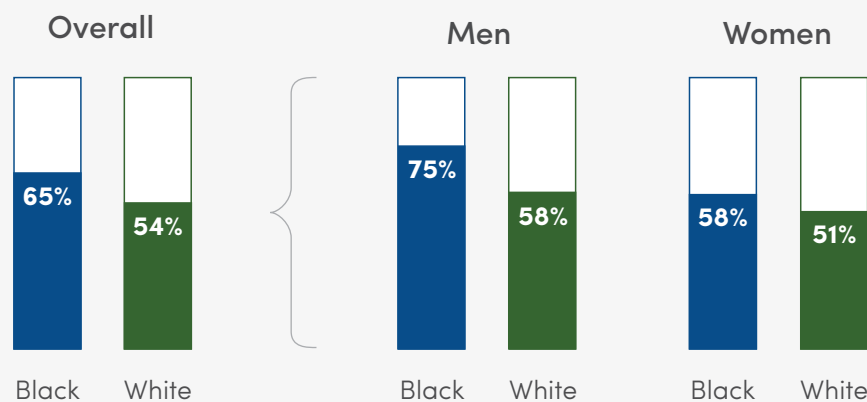o make their accomplishments visible; and to strategize on moving forward in their careers. Prior research has found that Black individuals have more contact with their networks, which are tighter-knit than White networks.[31]

Like Black men overall, we find that 73% of Black professionals who attended a historically Black college or university (HBCU) report having strong professional networks. They were likely able to build strong networks as part of their college and alumni experience.

"I remember getting promoted to VP when I was thirty-two and reading the offer to my mother and grandmother. We all cried. And it had nothing to do with the money—it was, 'There's a VP on the block now, in the neighborhood.'"

Black male executive

Professionals with strong professional networks

Overall	Men	Women
Black 65% / White 54%	Black 75% / White 58%	Black 58% / White 51%

Black professionals with strong professional networks

73% Attended an HBCU vs. 60% Other respondents

Active outside the workplace

For Black professionals, we find these strong networks extend beyond their current employers. Black professionals are far more likely than White professionals to be active in college alumni networks and in fraternities or sororities. But these strong networks don't necessarily translate to career advancement. As sociologist Mark S. Granovetter posited in "The Strength of Weak Ties," the strongest ties are less likely to bring you into contact with other networks, potentially creating missed career opportunities. Weaker ties, which may be less common for Black individuals compared to White individuals, tend to be those relationships that provide avenues to opportunities.[32]

Black professionals know their own potential: they're ambitious, and they cultivate strong connections. Still, they are discouraged. In the next section, we'll dig into Black professionals' views on advancement and explore the all-too-real risk of attrition.

Black professionals are **2.2 times as likely** as White professionals to be an active member of a **college alumni group**

11% 27%
Men

10% 19%
Women
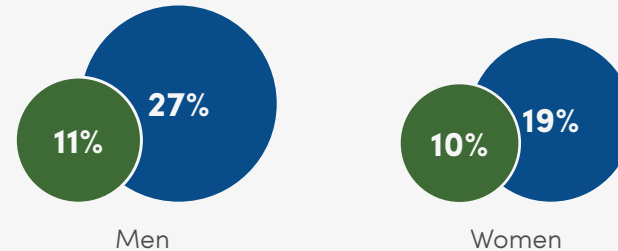
Black professionals are **2.4 times as likely** as White professionals to be an active member of a **fraternity or sorority**

5% 13%
Men

4% 11%
Women

● Black professionals   ● White professionals

"It's not about networking to move up. It's networking to find people that can understand your experience and empathize."

Black male executive

SECTION 2
A STEEPER CLIMB

In this section, we will look at how, despite having strong ambition, career drivers, and networks, Black employees face slow advancement and are more likely to intend to leave. Most Black professionals have a strong a sense of the inequity that slows their career advancement. However, few White professionals see the inequity, creating a tense racial divide. It's understandable, then, that many Black professionals yearn for better opportunities and dream of the day they'll leave their current jobs.

Representation in leadership is uninspiring

As children's rights activist Marian Wright Edelman has long said, "It's hard to be what you can't see."[33] When we look at representation data of Black professionals in corporate America, it's unsurprising that nearly one in five Black professionals feel that someone of their race/ethnicity would *never* achieve a top position at their companies.
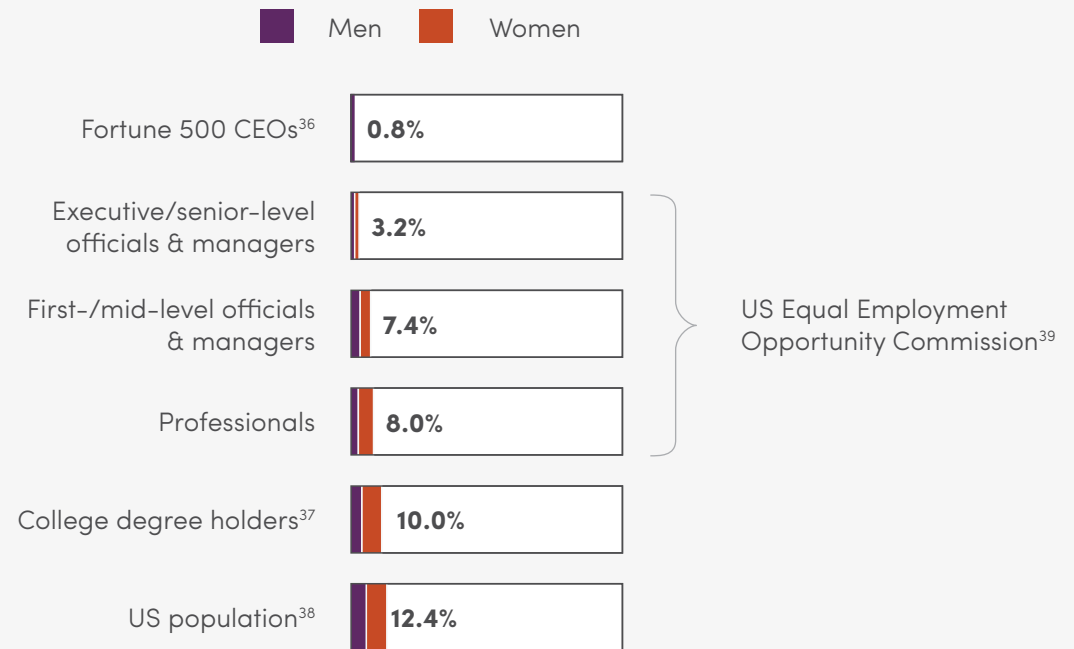
While 8% of professionals are Black (a number that has stayed steady since 2013[34]), their representation falls in the ascent up the ranks, dipping dramatically in the jump between middle management and the executive level.

A 2019 study by the Korn Ferry Institute, in partnership with The Executive Leadership Council, identified a number of extra obstacles that future Black leaders face on their paths to the top: they are asked to take on particularly risky projects to prove their worth; they are asked to do so time and again despite demonstrated success; and their exceptional performance is undervalued in a way their peers' is not.[35]

"There's nobody in the room, or in a senior leadership position, that looks like me."

Black female manager

Representation of Black adults in the US

■ Men   ■ Women

Fortune 500 CEOs[36]	**0.8%**
Executive/senior-level officials & managers	**3.2%**
First-/mid-level officials & managers	**7.4%**
Professionals	**8.0%**

US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission[39]

College degree holders[37]	**10.0%**
US population[38]	**12.4%**

Professionals who feel someone of their race/ethnicity would never achieve a top position at their companies

Overall		Men		Women	
Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
19%	**3%**	**23%**	**5%**	**16%**	**2%**
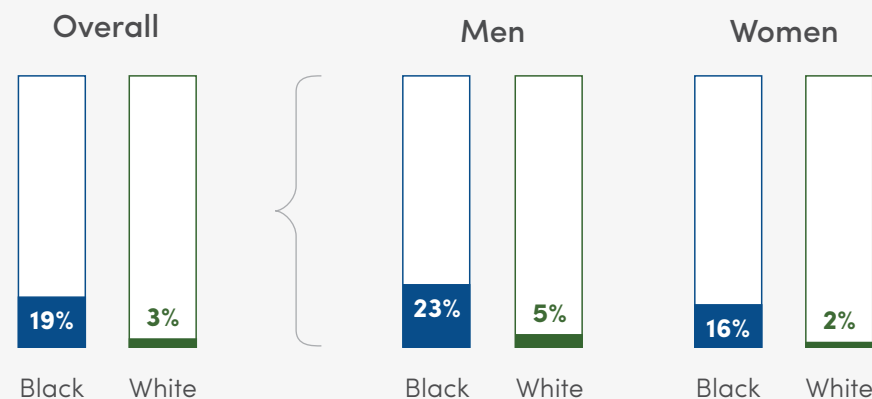
Different views of Black professional advancement

More than three in five Black professionals say that Black employees have to work harder to advance. But fewer than one in five White professionals agree.

This exposes a gaping divide. In interviews and focus groups, we heard over and over that Black professionals are raised with the old adage: "You're going to have to work twice as hard to get ahead." Most White professionals just aren't educated about, or aware of, this reality.

Black professionals not only work harder to advance, but also do so in an environment where most of their White colleagues don't recognize that fact.
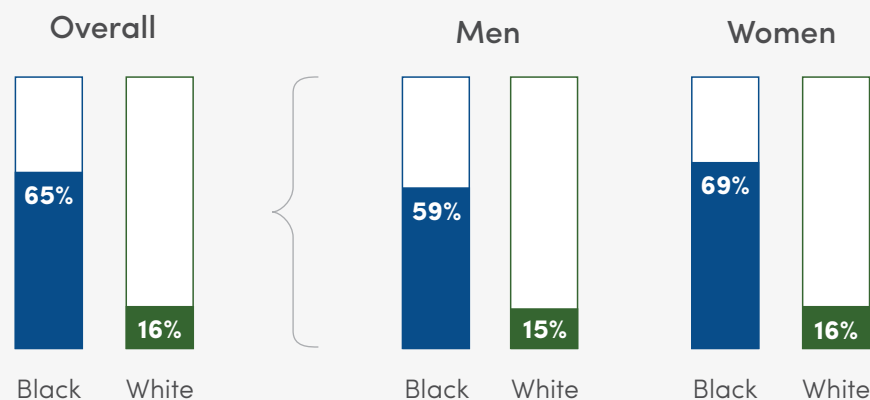
In addition to the racial gap, we uncovered some different views on career advancement within the Black community. Those who attended an HBCU, and those who were the first in their families to attend college, were more likely to say they expected career advancement to be easier. This may be because both groups are shielded, temporarily, from the reality of working while Black. In interviews, we heard that those whose parents had worked in corporate America warned them about the challenges they would face; first-generation college students were not raised with similar conditioning about the disadvantages ahead. We heard, too, that those who attended

predominately White institutions were more clear-eyed about what it would mean to enter a predominately White workplace. Surrounded in college by other Black students, professionals who attended HBCUs may also have been shielded more than others from the realities of being Black in a mostly White workplace.
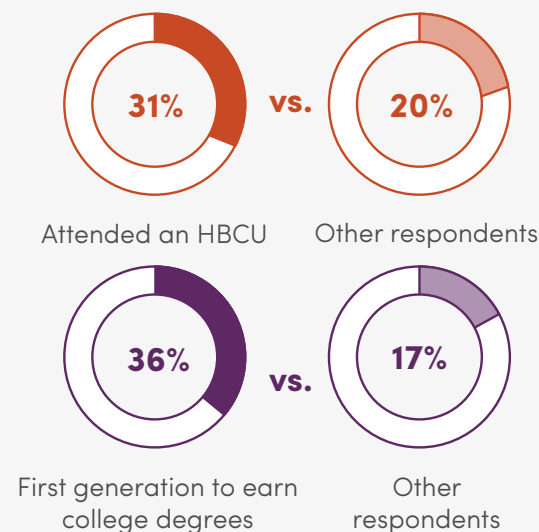
"I was raised by a single mother, and she would always say, 'Don't be late, don't bring your problems to work, dress a certain way. Because we're Black, you've got to work harder than the others.'"

Black Gen X woman

Professionals who feel Black employees have to work harder to advance

Overall

Black	White
65%	16%

Men

Black	White
59%	15%

Women

Black	White
69%	16%

Black professionals who expected career advancement to be easier

31% Attended an HBCU vs. **20%** Other respondents

36% First generation to earn college degrees vs. **17%** Other respondents

The risk of attrition

In addition to low representation and advancement, we also find a risk of attrition: over one-third of Black professionals intend to leave their companies within two years. Black employees are 30% more likely to intend to leave than White employees are.

Why is this a problem for employers? First, it is costly. The Center for American Progress estimates that turnover can cost a company up to 213% of the employee's salary in direct expense, such as recruiting a replacement, and indirect expense, such as lost productivity.[40] Many employers go to great lengths—and great expense—to recruit top talent.[41] Combine that with an imperative to improve diversity, and companies face a steep cost for attrition of Black professionals.

In the next section, we will turn our attention to the underpinnings of the problems we've laid out. We will explore the ways racial prejudice has changed, and how it persists, even at work.

Professionals who intend to leave their current companies within two years

Overall		Men		Women	
35%	27%	33%	26%	36%	27%
Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
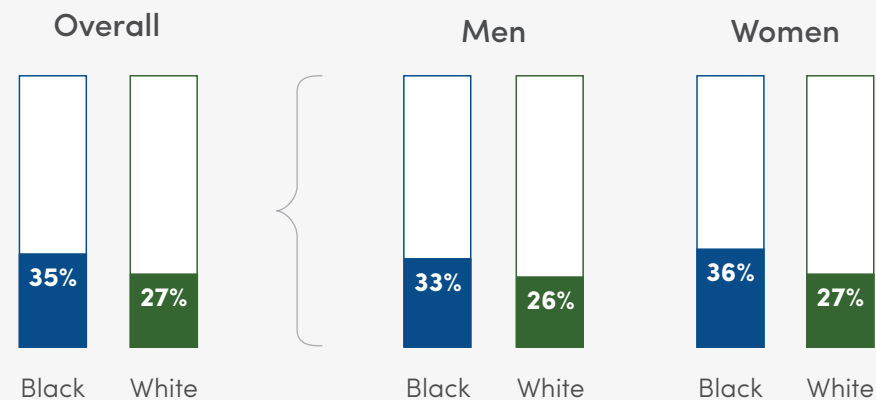
"I think about leaving my current company every day nonstop."

Black LGBTQ woman

"There is a culture that makes me feel, as a Black woman, that I cannot strive without doing the 'dog and pony show' every day. Since joining the company, I went into a state of depression and had to get a therapist. The only reason why I am still here is because I have not yet found another position elsewhere."

Black Millennial woman

"White people get the opportunity to be seen as a person, with the benefit of the doubt that they're probably competent. Black people are seen as incompetent, and have to prove that they are extraordinary."

Black Gen X woman in management

SYSTEMIC PREJUDICE AT WORK

Black professionals enter the workplace with the will to succeed. So what's stopping them? In this section, we'll take a hard look at systemic prejudice, and how it impacts Black professionals. CTI's past work reveals that most Black professionals experience or fear discrimination or bias outside of work.[42] Our new data shows that the United States workplace does not shield employees from prejudice—nor from the inequity embedded in the American experience.
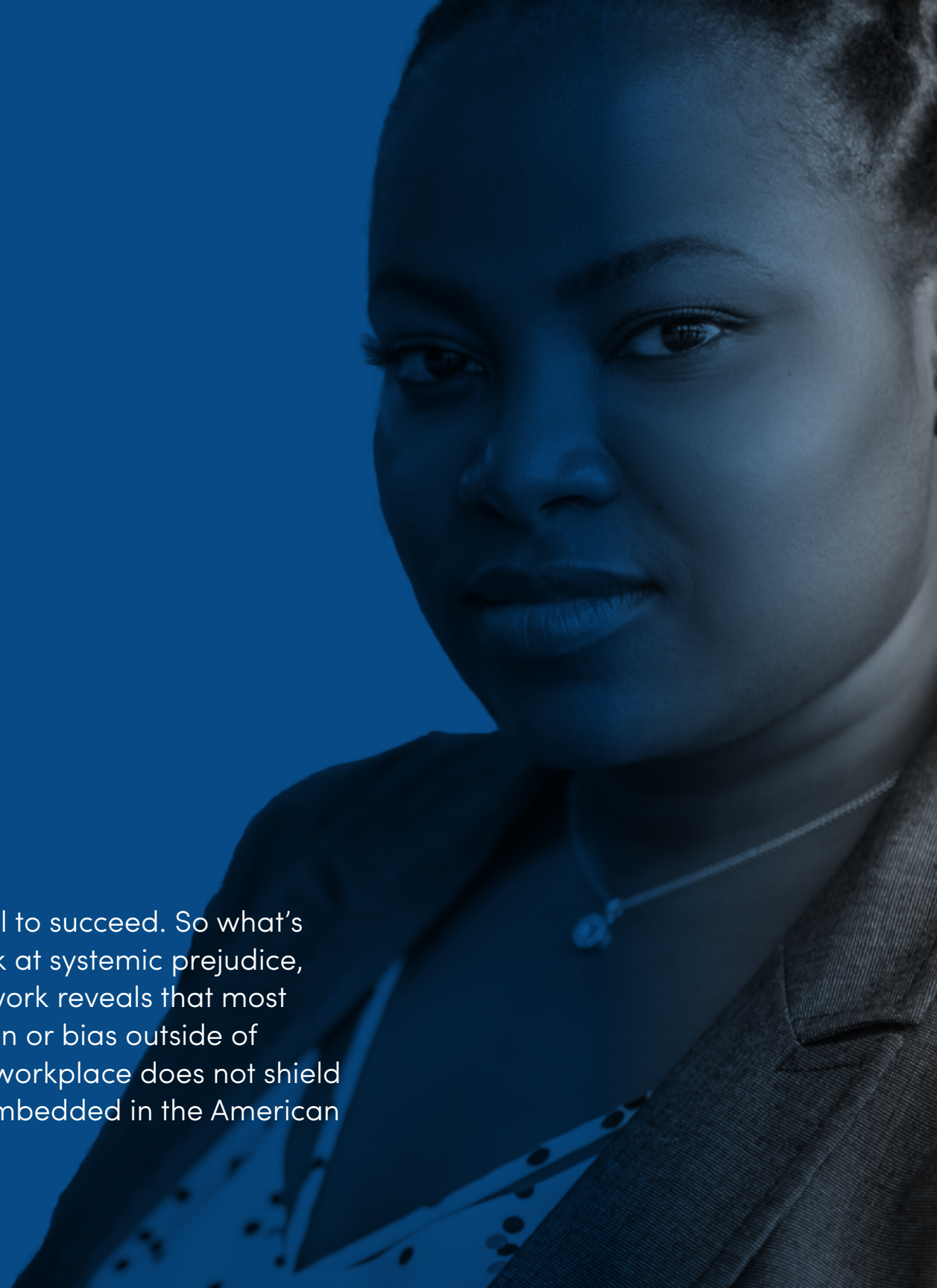
Prejudice at work is the norm

The majority of Black professionals report that they have experienced racial prejudice at work. Unsurprisingly, this cohort is nearly four times as likely to encounter prejudice as White professionals are—but when we compared Black respondents to Latinx and Asian ones, we also found a marked difference. Black professionals are more likely to experiencine racial prejudice than any other racial group we surveyed.

Though the incidence of prejudice is high across the board, certain US regions stand out as hot spots: nearly four-fifths of Black professionals in the Midwest and two-thirds in the West say they've experienced racial prejudice at work. Research shows that when ethnic groups are segregated

from one another, stereotyping and bias rise.[43] Because Black population levels are lower in the Midwest and West, racial prejudice likely rises there as well.[44]

Today, overt forms of racial discrimination are largely deemed socially unacceptable. What, then, does the workplace prejudice that so many Black professionals experience look and sound like? Often, it comes in the form of more subtle microaggressions.
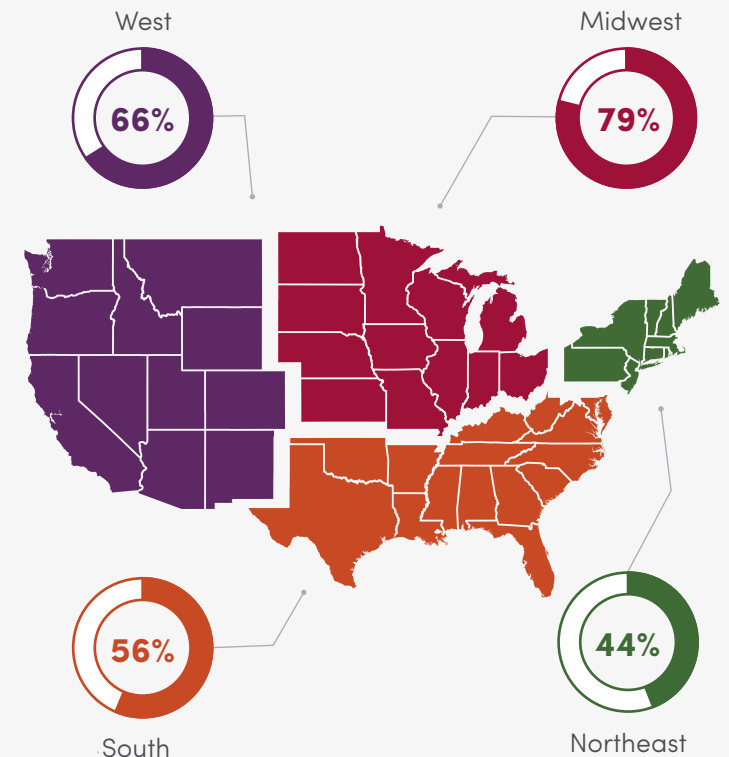
"I remember when I was teaching a class in the Midwest, I was probably the only woman of color in the whole town. The students assumed I was the secretary."

Black female executive
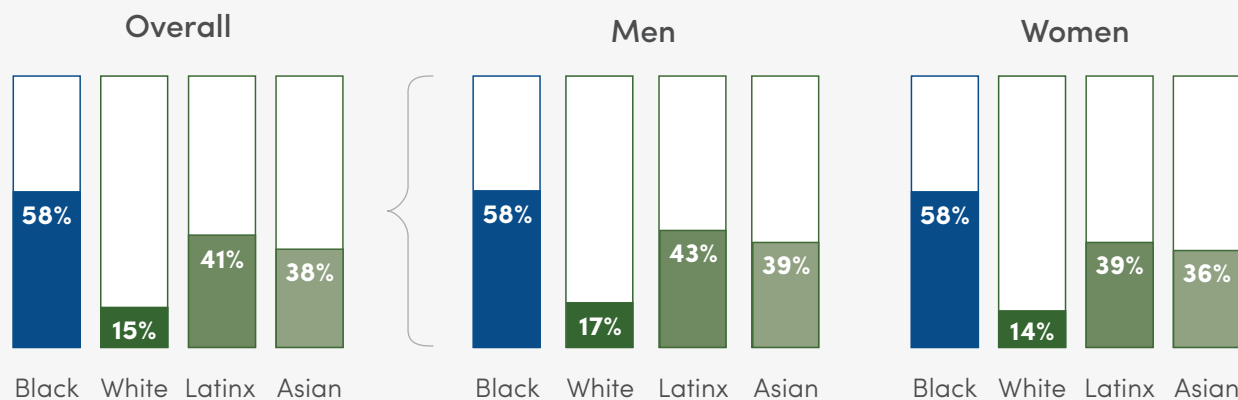
Black professionals who have experienced racial prejudice at work, by US region

West 66%
Midwest 79%
South 56%
Northeast 44%

Professionals who have experienced racial prejudice at work

Overall
- Black 58%
- White 15%
- Latinx 41%
- Asian 38%

Men
- Black 58%
- White 17%
- Latinx 43%
- Asian 39%

Women
- Black 58%
- White 14%
- Latinx 39%
- Asian 36%

Microaggressions stack up

Since the end of the Jim Crow era of legally sanctioned racism in 1965, the public face of discrimination has changed. Americans largely oppose the N-word.[45] They largely accept interracial marriage.[46] Yet, as we demonstrated on the previous page, many forms of prejudice are still prevalent, and still felt by the majority of Black professionals. In 2007, Derald Wing Sue, PhD, and his team of researchers at Columbia University codified how racism has shifted in the past half century. In "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life,"[47] Sue builds on prior scholarship to show that overt racism has largely been supplanted by the more covert, subtle language of "microaggressions," defined as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group."

A particular challenge Sue highlights is the ambiguous, often invisible nature of these "brief, everyday" slights and snubs. As the implicit biases we all carry with us often fuel microaggressions, perpetrators are often ignorant of the harm they cause.[48] They may not only deny any wrongdoing if confronted, but also brush off the impacts, accusing victims of being overly sensitive. Black professionals may, in turn, question their own experiences, the intent of tossed-off comments, and how they should respond.

"Whenever someone says, 'I don't see color, I see people,' it's a problem."

Black Millennial woman in management

"I wish I had a nickel for every time someone told me I 'speak so well,' which I do not view as a compliment."

Skip Spriggs, President and CEO, The Executive Leadership Council

"I gave a speech, and one of my colleagues said, 'That was amazing, did you write it yourself?' I took that as, 'How could you have written that?' I pointed it out to someone else, and they said, 'Aren't you being paranoid? A little sensitive?'"

Black Gen X male executive

"If you walked over and poked someone on the shoulder, it would be mildly annoying. If you walked over and poked them on the shoulder in the same spot every day for thirty years, you would poke them on the shoulder one more time and they would go nuts."

Black female executive

Sue and his team identify three categories of microaggressions: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation.[49]

We asked our survey takers if they had encountered any in a long list of scenarios, informed by Sue and his co-authors' work, and found that Black professionals experience 14 of these microaggressions at a significantly higher rate than other racial groups we surveyed.

Reading this list is exhausting. Our interviewees tell us *experiencing* this list, day in and day out, is not only exhausting but also frustrating and isolating. It means they enter the workplace "othered"—and on guard.

"People want to appear socially desirable. So it makes sense that, in an everyday setting, Black professionals rarely experience microassaults at work. However, we do see more examples of these overt slurs than we did a few years ago, but by and large, people still self-monitor enough not to say microassaults to others at work."

Oscar Holmes IV, PhD, Associate Professor of Management, Rutgers School of Business–Camden

Black professionals experience these microaggressions at a significantly higher rate than other professionals

MICROASSAULTS

Overt forms of racism, such as racial epithets and other deliberately discriminatory actions.

Colleagues have used racially insensitive language around me

MICROINVALIDATIONS

Actions or comments, often unconscious, that dismiss or downplay the lived reality of a person of color

Colleagues have asserted that they are "color blind" (e.g., "I don't see race")

I have to explain what it's like to live as a person of my race/ethnicity

I have been mistaken for someone else of the same racial background

Colleagues have told me they have friends of my race/ethnicity

Colleagues have asserted they're not racist

MICROINSULTS

Often performed unconsciously, microinsults demean their target by showing a lack of sensitivity towards an individual's racial identity

Colleagues have touched my hair without my permission

I have been told I'm "not like others" of my race/ethnicity

I have repeatedly been told that I'm "articulate"

Others have regularly taken credit for my ideas in meetings

I have been excluded from meetings relevant to my job

Others have mischaracterized me as "angry"

I have been excluded or passed over for growth opportunities

My manager has met one on one with others on my team, but not with me

Microaggressions increase at the executive level

Microaggressions are virtually inescapable. Even professional achievements do not shield Black leaders from these daily indignities. On the contrary, in interviews we heard that the further Black professionals climb up the corporate ladder, the more likely they are to experience some microaggressions. This pattern holds in our data for Black professionals, but not for White professionals.

As they rise, we heard in interviews, Black executives are more likely to be the "only," and are trusted insiders, so White executives may feel more comfortable making explicitly racially charged comments around them. Black executives often experience microinsults. Many times, Black professionals are perceived as less capable, leading colleagues to automatically assume those who have reached leadership ranks are more junior in the organization, or to comment, "You're so articulate."

Black women are more likely than men to say they've had someone touch their hair without permission.

Most of our micro-aggressions data held steady across gender, with one difference. Unsurprisingly, Black women are more than twice as likely as Black men to say they've had someone touch their hair without permission. For Black women, hair has long been a battleground.[50] In the summer of 2019, California and New York became the first states to outlaw discrimination based on natural hairstyles.[51] The California bill states: "Hair today remains a proxy for race. Therefore, hair discrimination targeting hairstyles associated with race is racial discrimination."[52]

Black executives are more likely than other Black professionals to have experienced the following at work:

Colleagues have used racially insensitive language around me

**Colleagues have assumed I am more junior in the organization than I am**

I have repeatedly been told that I'm "articulate"

I have to explain what it's like to live as a person of my race/ethnicity

Colleagues have mocked the way I speak

"I could write you encyclopedias of the indignities I've suffered. But, if I wasted time wallowing in that, I couldn't possibly be effective. It's not that I compartmentalize—the frustration is ongoing—I just can't let it derail me."

Black male executive in the Fortune 500 C-Suite
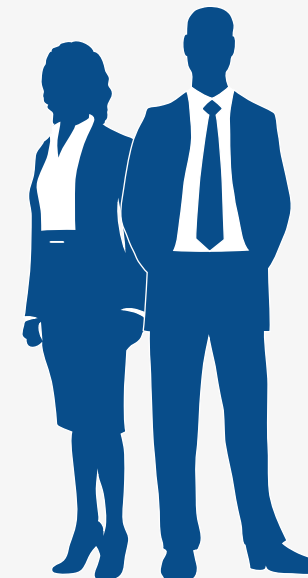
Tired of "angry"

Though both Black men and women encounter many microaggressions on our list at similar rates, the way they experience these slights can differ. One standout example is this microaggression: "Others have mischaracterized me as 'angry.'" Nearly one in five Black professionals said they've experienced that snub at work. In interviews, we heard time and again frustration and exhaustion that wells up when they are accused of being too "angry."

For Black men, "angry" has violent connotations. Black men are often linked to physical presence and threat, heightened by assumptions of criminality; a recent study found that non-Black people perceive young Black men to be more physically threatening than young White men.[53] Because of this landscape, those whose appearance counteracts the stereotype may have an advantage in the workplace. Research into the "teddy bear effect" shows that Black male CEOs with "baby faces" are associated with greater corporate and financial success compared to more mature-faced Black CEOs, while the opposite pattern emerged for White male CEOs.[54] Those who have more mature faces, therefore, often work hard to appear less threatening. In interviews, Black men shared with us that they carefully calculate what they wear to work—from clothing to accessories that "soften" their appearance, like glasses.

For Black women, "angry" is often linked to emotional volatility, the pervasive stereotype of the "angry Black woman."[55]

We heard in interviews that non-Black colleagues are quick to interpret a host of emotions—passion, enthusiasm, conviction, excitement—as anger or aggression. This leaves Black women with the options to either endure this stereotype, or to consciously try to soften their tone to head it off. In the *Iowa Law Review*, Trina Jones and Kimberly Jade Norwood write about the double-bind that accusations of anger present for Black women. Even when a Black woman's anger is fully justified, in the face of overt bias, the focus is often the woman's anger rather than the inciting offense. "[A]ny response to an aggressive encounter," Jones and Norwood write, "immediately risks deflecting attention from the aggressor and placing blame squarely on the target."[56]

> Black men and women are equally likely to have been mischaracterized as "angry" at work.

"As an African American woman, I'm told people are intimidated by me. I hate to hear that, because that's the last thing I am. If I look you in the eye and get serious, now I'm 'intimidating'—that's irritating."

Black Gen X woman in mid-management

"I am always mindful of my attitude. If I'm annoyed or upset about something, I have to be careful about how I present myself. Black women are perceived as angry."

Black Millennial woman

*"I tend to be non-threatening. Maybe that's why I haven't been confronted by overt racism."*

Richard D. Parsons, Former CEO, Time Warner Inc.

Often feeling tokenized

In addition to overt microassaults and more subtle microinsults and microinvalidations, there are other ways Black professionals are made hyperaware of their racial "otherness." One is through tokenization: close to one in five Black full-time professionals says that they are expected to be a representative for their entire race or ethnicity on their primary work teams.

Our data reveals that this tokenization occurs at similar rates for all professionals of color. However, one intersectional difference emerges for Black full-time professionals in particular. Black Millennials, as we'll explore in our "Intersectional Spotlights" on page 29, are more likely than older Black professionals to feel the burden of acting as a representative for their race—a generational pattern that does not exist among Asian or Latinx professionals.

Professionals who are expected to be a representative for their entire race/ethnicity on their primary work teams*

Overall		Men		Women	
17%	5%	19%	6%	16%	3%
Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
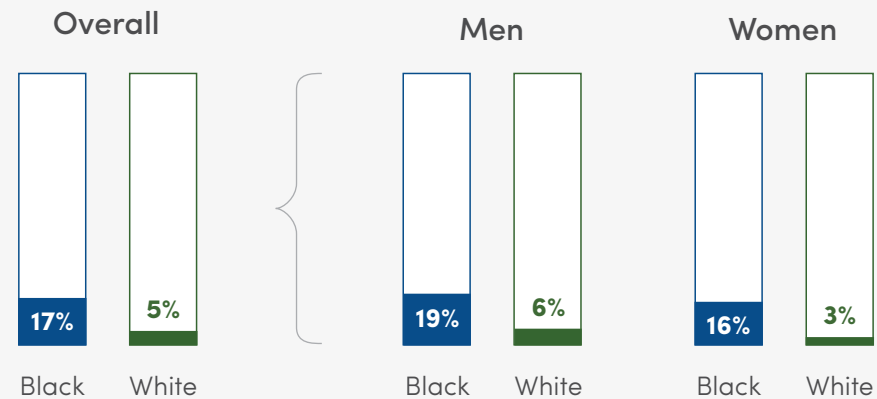
*This question was only asked of full-time employees

"I feel like I'm always a 'token' African American to them. Like I'm not just representing myself, but an entire community, and it's an incredibly heavy burden to shoulder."

Black Millennial woman in management

"Because I'm often the only Black person in the room, I become the Black spokesperson."

Black LGBTQ Millennial man

"Deep in the fabric of most organizations are norms we had no say in creating. We weren't part of the foundation, and when we enter the workplace out of college, we all collectively underestimate how much it will really feel like you're entering a foreign land."

Black female executive
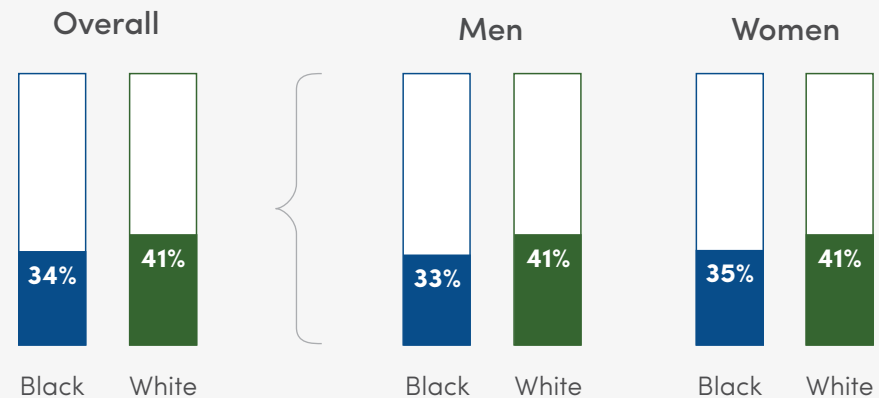
Less likely to have access or support

Many Black professionals have strong networks—especially external networks, as we discussed on page 11. In this section, we zoom out to explore the mechanics behind a dynamic we have long studied at CTI: the transfer of professional power through advocacy-based relationships between a senior-level sponsor and a more junior protégé. When we asked full-time employees if they have access to senior leaders at work, close to half of White professionals told us they did. For Black professionals, finding a line to the top proves more elusive: fewer than one in three Black full-time professionals have access to senior leaders. No wonder, then, that Black professionals are frustrated with advancement—they don't have the same opportunity as their White counterparts to forge relationships with key decision makers.

Black full-time professionals are also significantly less likely than their White peers to say that their managers back their ideas with senior leaders at work or give them growth opportunities. Managers' lack of advocacy for Black professionals begs further study, as existing research suggests that the so-called "frozen middle" can make or break a company's D&I transformation efforts—no matter how vocal and committed the senior leadership.[57]

Professionals who have access to senior leaders at work*

Overall		Men		Women	
31%	44%	34%	49%	30%	40%
Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
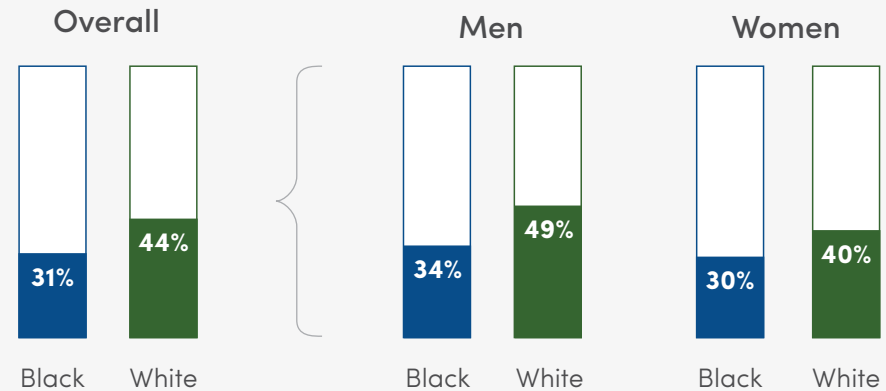
Professionals who have managers that give them growth opportunities*

Overall		Men		Women	
34%	41%	33%	41%	35%	41%
Black	White	Black	White	Black	White

*These questions were only asked of full-time employees

"If I were to say to my supervisor, 'I don't know what I want to do, but I want to change my job'—culturally, for me, that's like saying you don't have it together. But I have White counterparts who say that all the time, and people move mountains to create positions for them."
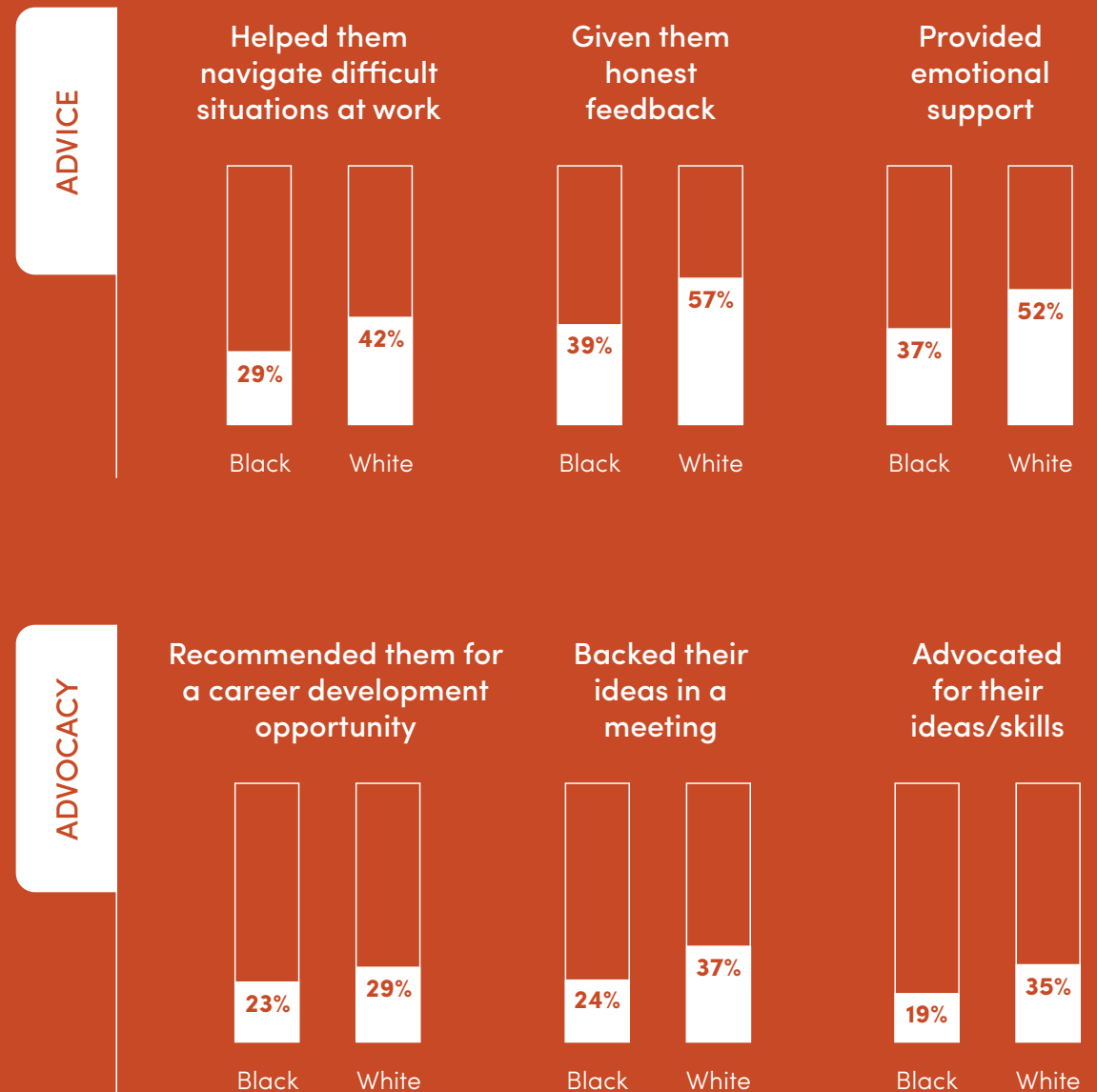
Black Gen X woman in management

Networks differ for Black and White women

When we take a closer look at our data on the professional networks of Black and White women, a disheartening picture emerges. Black women are less likely than White women to receive key career help, through both advice *and* advocacy.

This demonstrates the compounded impact of having an intersectional identity for Black women, who are "othered" at work both for their gender and for their race. In CTI's decade of work on sponsorship, we've long found that White professionals are more likely than professionals of color to have a sponsor—a senior employee who actively advocates for their career. Professionals of color are over-mentored: they have people in their networks ready to lend an ear and offer advice, but not to create concrete career opportunities.[58]

In *Our Separate Ways*, Ella Bell Smith and Stella Nkomo suggest a complicated double-bind that may push Black women to prove—as much to themselves as their colleagues and superiors—that they can succeed independently, without support from others. Bell and Nkomo write, "African American women felt they were held to a higher standard because they were always fighting the stereotype of being incompetent." They argue that in order to avoid triggering this stereotype, and risk seeming vulnerable, African American women hold themselves back from asking for emotional support, feedback, or advocacy.[59]

Professional women who have individuals in their network who have...

ADVICE

Helped them navigate difficult situations at work	Given them honest feedback	Provided emotional support
Black 29%	Black 39%	Black 37%
White 42%	White 57%	White 52%

ADVOCACY

Recommended them for a career development opportunity	Backed their ideas in a meeting	Advocated for their ideas/skills
Black 23%	Black 24%	Black 19%
White 29%	White 37%	White 35%

Finding their way to authenticity

Despite these challenges, most Black professionals find a way to be authentic at work—but it comes at a cost. Black professionals are as likely as their White colleagues to report that they are "very authentic" at work. However, of those who are very authentic at work, Black professionals are 60% *more* likely than their White counterparts to expend a great deal of energy to bring this authentic self to the workplace—energy that would, and should, otherwise be spent on engaging with the work at hand.

For a long time, we, and many other experts in the D&I space, have studied the energy it takes for professionals from underrepresented groups to code switch, "cover," or downplay aspects of their identity.[60] But being authentic, too, can take a great deal of energy, especially for those deemed "different."

As Herminia Ibarra writes, "A simplistic understanding of what [authenticity] means can hinder your growth and limit your impact."[61] Indeed, authenticity in the workplace is a complicated concept for all employees, regardless of their race or ethnicity. Most professionals learn to present a version of themselves at work that is a bit different from the one they present to friends and family. For many Black professionals navigating a majority-White space,

constructing a workplace identity that feels "very authentic" can be an exhausting exercise.

As with many of our findings, not all Black professionals feel that showing up as their authentic self is exhausting. Older professionals, who grew up in a more traditionally buttoned-up work culture, are significantly less likely than their younger counterparts to expend energy on their authenticity. In the next section, we'll look at generation, heritage, and LGBTQ identity, further untangling the threads of intersectional experiences.

"When I started in corporate America, I wore a uniform to fit in: straightened hair, neutral beige suits. Then I decided to be myself. I cut off my relaxer and began wearing my hair natural, bought a red convertible Porsche, and started laughing in the office. It felt odd and uncomfortable in the beginning— feeling different, answering questions about my hair. But in the end, I was freer and happier, and so were my teams. And of course my business performance was even better."

Esi Eggleston Bracey, EVP & COO, North American Beauty and Personal Care, Unilever

Professionals who are very authentic at work

Black 79%
White 80%
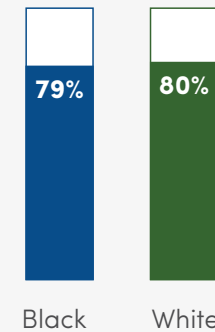
Of these, professionals who spend a great deal of energy to be very authentic at work

Black 24%
White 15%
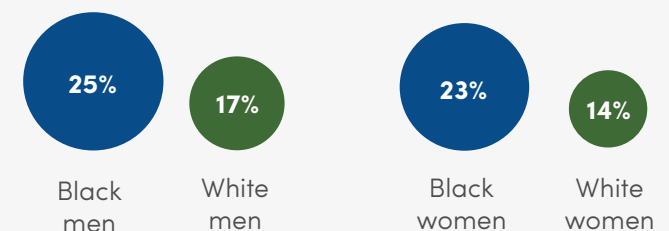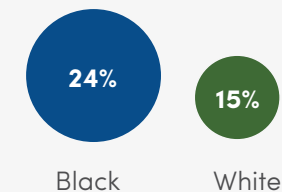
Black men 25%
White men 17%
Black women 23%
White women 14%

INTERSECTIONAL SPOTLIGHTS

Throughout the report, we've called out ways the experiences of Black professionals diverge and dovetail. In this section, we'll explore other identities that intertwine with race: ethnic heritage, LGBTQ identity, and generation. Our intersectional findings—from Africans' entrepreneurial drive to LGBTQ professionals' strong connections to senior leaders—stress the need for employers to understand the many nuanced stories within the Black experience. Those who fail to respond risk consequences: Millennials, who often feel tokenized and tired, may finally be the generation to say, *enough*.

At the intersection: Celeste

Working in D&I, Celeste feels empowered to speak about her experiences at the intersection of race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity. But that doesn't mean all of her colleagues understand what it means to live as a Black queer woman and as an immigrant. "I live intersectionality every single day. I tried to explain to my boss once, 'Listen, I have to think, if it's Black, if it's woman, and if it's gay, what comes first?' For me, Black trumps all of it."

Still, Celeste finds that living with a solid sense of authenticity that holds from home to work helps her build connections with everyone at her company, from entry-level employees to executives. She opens up so that they will get vulnerable with her as well.

Celeste immigrated with her family from Guyana in the mid-'80s, when she was a child. "From the moment I stepped off that plane, into this country, all I knew was that you had to do well," she recalls. "We were told, 'As Caribbean Black children, you have to be better, work harder, be stronger, be seen, be more successful.'"

Celeste absorbed the "work harder" mindset as she watched her single mother—who came to America with an engineering degree—sell encyclopedias door to door. "This attitude, 'It doesn't matter what has

to happen, you have to get it done,' is very much my work approach," she says. With a laugh, she recalls a colleague's introduction of her at a work function: "Celeste is someone who doesn't really ask for permission. She asks for forgiveness. She would walk into our CEO's office and she will say to him a, b, c, d, e, and f is what needs to happen. And while he's contemplating, she's walked out and is getting it done."

Celeste finds her high-energy approach is a better fit at her current company, which, at a few thousand employees, is significantly smaller than her last company. Celeste shares that now, "I can immediately see the fruits of my labor. There's so much less red tape for me to get things done."

This allows Celeste to devote time to supporting others in the work she does, and at home. Because for Celeste, and the friends she grew up with, an immigrant upbringing means that career success isn't just about them. "Our parents didn't make the money that we make now. They didn't have the opportunities that we do now. A lot of our success is driven by seeing that and wanting to do more for them," she explains. "They picked up their lives and came here to create a better space for us. And they kept telling us, 'You have to do well.' Which means you'd have to be prepared to give back."

"I live intersectionality every single day."

28

Generational divides emerge

Black Millennials' workplace attitudes show a significant shift from prior generations'. They expend more energy to be authentic, they're more likely to feel like they're expected to represent their entire race, and they are more likely to be dreaming about leaving their jobs to start their own enterprises.

In our interviews and focus groups with Boomers and Gen Xers, we heard stories of similar barriers, but we also heard a measure of resignation—the attitude that "This is how things are, and I just have to

navigate them." Not so with Millennials. When reviewing our data, intersectional scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw observed, "Millennials seem to be traumatized by what they encounter when they come into the workforce in a way older professionals haven't been."

Black Millennials have been found by other researchers to start conversations about race and to focus on social justice in their social media presence.[62] This lens likely sharpens their awareness and deepens their sense of exclusion when they see
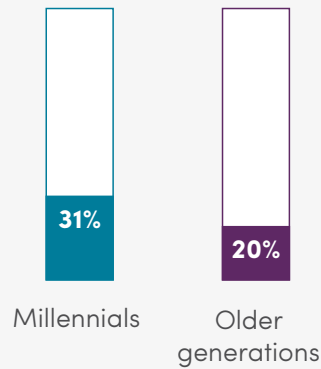
injustices at work. And toggling between a personal identity, social media identity, and workplace "self" likely takes energy for Millennials.

If companies don't show genuine commitment to enact change, and a plan to achieve it, they risk a serious brain drain as this cohort opts out or moves on. Millennials already make up the majority of the US workforce—and they're no longer relegated to entry-level roles. Some Black Millennials are ten or 15 years into their careers, leading organizations, and our data tells a story of deepening frustration among this cohort.
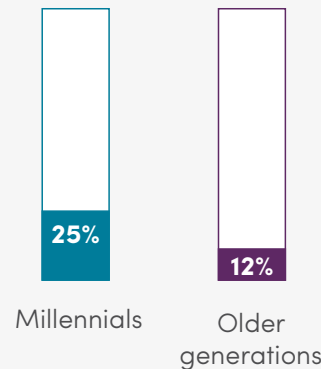
Black professionals who are planning to leave their jobs to start their own ventures*
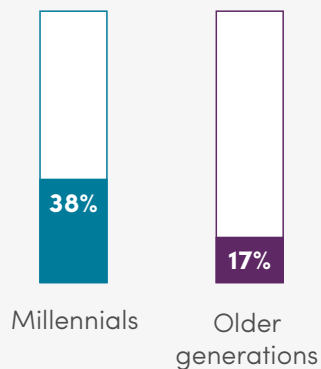
38% Millennials

17% Older generations

Black professionals who spend a great deal of energy to be very authentic at work**

31% Millennials

20% Older generations

Black professionals who are expected to be a representative for their entire race/ethnicity on their primary work teams†

25% Millennials

12% Older generations

*This question was only asked of those who are not already business owners

**This analysis is only of those who are very authentic at work

†This question was only asked of full-time employees

"These young people come into my corner office, but won't go into any of the other corner offices, because they say I'm the only one that can relate. Well, we all told our story to someone who did not look like us at some point, and left knowing, 'That person [is] going to take a chance on me, because I know I left it all on the table.' These younger people don't even have the confidence to leave it all on the table."

Black Gen X male executive

29

Millennial and Black: Kyril

In high school, Kyril got a taste for the C-Suite. During his senior year, students built and ran mock companies, and Kyril stepped up as CEO. "That got me into business," he says. By Kyril's junior year in college, he secured an internship at a major bank, where he gained international expertise. Less than a decade after graduating, Kyril scored a prestigious gig for a large tech company. But Kyril isn't eyeing their executive suite—he's eyeing the door.

Kyril likes some things about his corporate job. He has a good, steady income, which aligns with his goal of providing a good life for himself and, eventually, a family. But the stability that his job offers is not enough to keep him there long term.

As he surveys his prospects in corporate America, he doesn't see much reason to believe he can meet his ambitions. "There are not many senior leaders that look like me," he says. "So how am I going to get to that level, how is there a path for me?" Kyril concludes, "Over three, ten, fifteen years, *maybe* I could be the first one to break through."

That's not a gamble Kyril intends to take. In his quick career rise, Kyril has sought out mentors and sponsors. And he cultivates a strong network of fellow Black male professionals who share his entrepreneurial aspirations. They swap ideas for venturing out together. "Amongst my circle of friends, there is definitely a focus on having our own businesses, and using our skillset for ourselves—instead of for a company we don't run," Kyril says.

At work, he feels a connection with Black colleagues and can speak openly about race with some—but not all—of his coworkers. "Open, honest discussions about race, and how that's affecting me positively or negatively, seems to be much easier with other Millennials," he says. "The times it feels forced [are] when we have senior-level folks talking to Black professionals. It's not as open and honest." Kyril's skepticism extends to corporate America's overall commitment to D&I. "At all of the companies I've worked, diversity has felt like a quota to hit," he reflects. Soon, his company will have to count him out.

"At all of the companies I've worked, diversity has felt like a quota to hit."

Differences in access and entrepreneurship arise by heritage

The Black immigrant population has been on the rise for more than a century, and has increased fivefold since 1980, contributing to increasing diversity in heritage among Black professionals.[63] Though linked together under the construction of "Blackness," individuals who self-identify as having African, Afro-Caribbean, or African American heritage hold different perspectives on what it means to be Black in the United States, and at work.

A social hierarchical construct may be at the root of different experiences. In their article "Black versus Black: The Relationships among African, African American, and African Caribbean Persons," researchers Jennifer V. Jackson and Mary E. Cothran write: "There is a continued rivalry for economic and social advantages among West Indians, African Americans, and Africans in the United States."[64] As multiple other studies have uncovered, White people tend to prefer, and give better opportunities to, Afro-Caribbeans over African Americans.[65] In response, members of these groups might seek to declare and define their unique experiences in order to, in part, put distance between one another. In another sociological study, African immigrants spoke of being encouraged by family to differentiate themselves from African Americans in order to be treated

Black professionals who have had colleagues underestimate their intelligence, by heritage

17%	**25%**	**35%**
African	Afro-Caribbean	African American
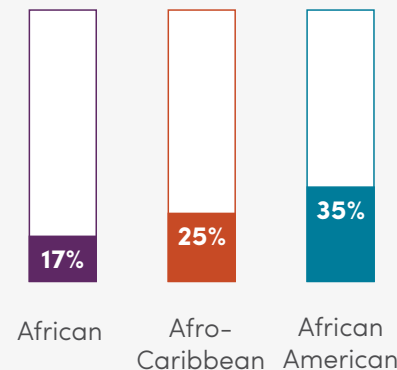
"There is a [foreigner] privilege…If you are an African intellectual, you are not facing the same racism."

Dr. Mukoma Wa Ngugi, English Professor, Cornell University[66]

"My mom and dad went to college in the late sixties, and he was an activist, but she was always hypersensitive in trying to tone down Blackness. They balanced each other out, but she did teach me how to navigate in some aggressively White spaces."

African American woman

"It's knowing that you're not going to be assumed to be confident. And that however many Harvard degrees later, you'll still encounter someone who doesn't see, and have to show them something intellectually challenging that you've cracked."

African American male executive

better by White Americans.[67] Indeed, though people of all ethnicities feel the sting of microaggressions, we find that African American professionals are far more likely than those of African heritage to say, "Colleagues have underestimated my intelligence."

In another signal of social hierarchy, full-time professionals of Afro-Caribbean descent are also more likely than those with African or African American roots to have access to senior leaders.

When we consider professionals of African descent, entrepreneurship becomes salient. Those who are not already business owners are more likely than their African American counterparts to be planning to start their own ventures. This may be related to a precipitous rise in African entrepreneurship since 2008's global recession, when many African professionals left corporate America to start their own businesses in their home countries, markets that have been called "the last frontier."[68]

The variations in our heritage data provide fodder for further study. We realize our inferences bear deeper inquiry—but they do demonstrate that heritage shapes Black professionals' experience of the workplace in profound ways.

Black professionals who have access to senior leaders, by heritage*

African	Afro-Caribbean	African American
22%	55%	34%
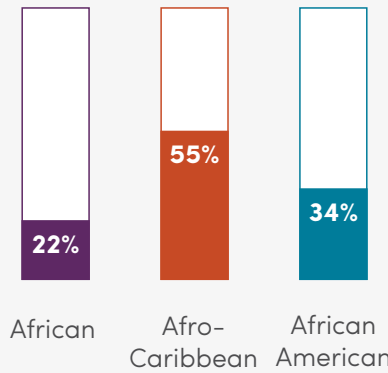
Black professionals who are planning to leave their jobs to start their own ventures, by heritage**

African	Afro-Caribbean	African American
36%	22%	21%
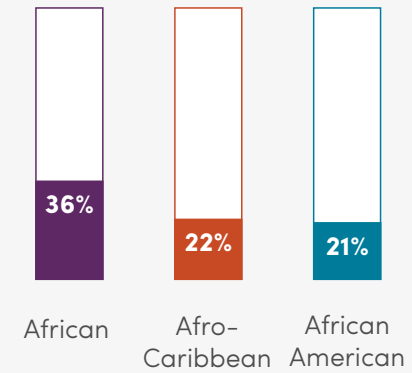
*This question was only asked of full-time employees
**This question was only asked of those who are not already business owners

"There are some inherent challenges that my Ghanaian parents couldn't understand. Growing up, I was judged by the color of my skin and not the content of my character. That's just what America was."

African American woman

"Jamaicans are proud, smart hustlers. I don't think they see themselves as having any barriers to those in power—I've definitely used that access. Compared to someone who may have been in America for ten generations, we are lacking that oppression."

Afro-Caribbean male entrepreneur

"Being born and raised in Nigeria and going through school there… for me, [race] never really mattered."

African man in management

African in America: Otis

Otis came from Nigeria to America in the 1980s to study engineering and to, one day, follow in his father and grandfather's entrepreneurial footsteps. What Otis didn't expect was a crash course in American racism. "I was aware of racial discrimination, the issues America has," he recounts, "but you don't really understand it until you encounter it." Right away, Otis found himself the "only" in majority-White classes in college, subject to strange looks and stranger assumptions. Otis recalls the confusion he felt when a White classmate told him, "You need to go play basketball."

Yet throughout his life, even when the racial aggressions slung at him were vicious or violent—from having a gun pulled on him to being called the N-word—Otis never felt that they were part of his narrative. He refused to let them affect him, or his self-confidence. "Even now, I don't consider racism to be my problem," he says, adding: "There is nothing I can do about it." When a professor told Otis that his team had submitted a group project without him, just weeks from the end of the semester, he submitted another version of the project on his own—and then switched his academic focus to software development, a field where he could work independently and unhitch his success from others. "I grew up in a family of people that

were self-sufficient," Otis shares. "I'm just wired that way."

After graduating, and before building his own company, Otis got a job in a public school system in the Northeast. There, he encountered both overt and subtle prejudice. Colleagues questioned his credentials, and after being repeatedly mistaken for a student, Otis started wearing a tie to work. When he spoke up to his supervisor about a pattern of corruption he documented that had impacted the school system's air quality, he began to get threatening calls. "Monkey, go back to Africa," said one anonymous caller.

Today, Otis owns his own cybersecurity company, a business shaped by many of his experiences forging an independent path and speaking inconvenient truth to power. "Cybersecurity is not an IT headache, it's a business problem," he shares. "You have to be able to stand by the truth." Otis's truth is that he is a proud American citizen, he is an entrepreneur—and he is African, an identity that has shaped his feelings towards race and work in the country he now calls home. "I'm not ashamed of who I am; I am from Nigeria, I am an American citizen, and I integrate myself into the fabric of the community."

"Even now, I don't consider racism to be my problem. There is nothing I can do about it."

Being Black and LGBTQ

Being Black and a member of the LGBTQ community confers a distinct set of advantages and disadvantages. Like all Black professionals, Black LGBTQ professionals are strong network-builders: 85% of LGBTQ Black professionals have strong networks. Unlike other Black full-time professionals, nearly half of LGBTQ Black full-time professionals have strong relationships with executives. In interviews, we heard that many LGBTQ individuals have developed keen community-building skills, in part as a survival instinct. Ernest Adams, Vice President and Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at Danaher, explains, "You have to protect yourself, scan a room for friend or foe. Read people's body language to see where they'll fall if you come out to them."

For gay Black men, one study by researcher David Pedulla suggests that the stereotype of gay men as effeminate counteracts the stereotype of Black men as threatening, conferring professional advantages.[69]

We also find that Black LGBTQ employees are nearly twice as likely as non-LGBTQ Black employees to provide financial support to their extended families. In interviews, experts suggested that's because of the heavy stigma that persists towards LGBTQ individuals in some Black communities.

Black LGBTQ professionals who were supported and shielded from this stigma by their families growing up may feel a particular sense of gratitude or responsibility to give back. We also heard tougher theories—that LGBTQ professionals may offer assistance to prove their worth or to gain acceptance from family members. Or that family may quite literally buy into the stereotype that LGBTQ individuals have more disposable income because they are assumed to be less likely to have children.
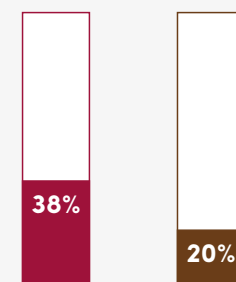
Black professionals with strong professional networks
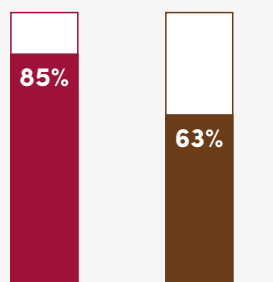
LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
85%	63%

Black professionals who have strong relationships with senior leaders*
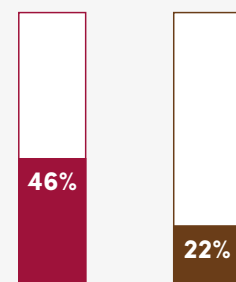
LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
46%	22%

Black professionals who provide financial assistance to their extended family**

LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
38%	20%

*This question was only asked of full-time employees
**Extended family refers to parents, siblings, or other extended family

"We call each other family because so many of us are blacklisted by our own families, so we find our kin in the LGBTQ community."
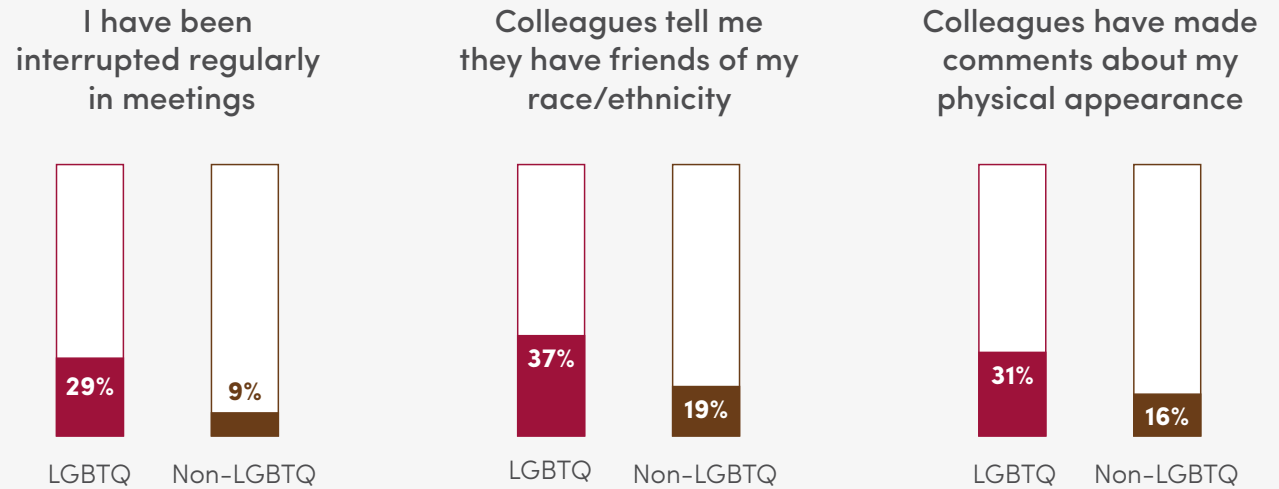
Jasmine Burnett, national organizer and writer[70]

"In my own career, I've always looked at the senior-most person in my reporting structure to develop a relationship with. If I develop a rapport at the top, then I feel protected."

Black LGBTQ male executive

Microaggressions, too, land on the LGBTQ Black community in unique fashion. LGBTQ Black professionals are more than three times as likely as non-LGBTQ Black professionals to be interrupted regularly in meetings, and are almost twice as likely to have their appearance commented on. Colleagues are more likely to tell LGBTQ Black professionals that they "have friends of my race/ethnicity." In qualitative research we heard that, since race is often a more salient characteristic than sexual identity, this may be a clumsy attempt to signal inclusivity and allyship. After all, microaggressions are often unintentional slights by the perpetrator.

Black professionals who have experienced the following at work

I have been interrupted regularly in meetings

29% LGBTQ
9% Non-LGBTQ

Colleagues tell me they have friends of my race/ethnicity

37% LGBTQ
19% Non-LGBTQ

Colleagues have made comments about my physical appearance

31% LGBTQ
16% Non-LGBTQ

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."

Audre Lorde, feminist LGBTQ writer and civil rights activist[71]

"If I wear a normal business suit, me being gay never comes up. If I wear bright blue pants, it's gonna be a thing. There are days I'll wear bright blue pants going in with the CEO, but I'm damn sure that when I put those pants on, my presentation better be ten times as tight."

Black LGBTQ male executive

"Unfortunately, some Black LGBTQ people may feel providing financial assistance to family members could make up for the lower status afforded to their stigmatized identity: 'Even though I'm gay, look at me, I do all these wonderful things—so you have to accept me. You have to love me.'"

Oscar Holmes IV, PhD, Associate Professor of Management, Rutgers School of Business–Camden

Queer and Black: Atabei

For Atabei, growing up as a queer Black girl in a homophobic, predominately White environment meant seeking and finding no one—present, historical, or fictional—who could mirror her experience. "I didn't see myself in anybody I could see. I couldn't project myself onto any biographies I came into contact with," she recalls.

This feeling of isolation followed Atabei as she enrolled in a large university to study biology—the first step towards becoming a doctor. Atabei laughs that the doctor dream was as much her family's as it was hers. Her family expected her to become, she shares, "something respectable, something they could brag about. To make lots of money and come up beyond them."

But the dream clashed with her scientific studies, where she felt she was being weeded out as a woman of color. She eventually found a home in public health, the field in which she would spend the next decade of her career. Whether working on reproductive health or in her second career in crisis communication for a major public interest law firm, Atabei told us that she looked to work where she could feel a powerful connection to both the mission and her colleagues. Recalling the dearth of role models in her youth, Atabei built strong bonds with those above her. She shares, "I learned to adhere to people that I looked up to and make them mentors."

Recently, Atabei was recruited by a large tech company to work on social media and D&I: skills that were not on her resume. She accepted the position because she felt it would be an interesting challenge, the beginning of a new phase in her career. Instead, she feels tokenized; she feels that she's lacking the support and resources to thrive in her new position; and she feels a profound sense of alienation from her coworkers. "I know I'm not just brown and queer. I am also intelligent," Atabei shares. "I have the same needs that everybody else does. I want to show up to work, be good at it, and be connected. But I feel like an accessory, like an ornament."

This extends to Atabei's sense of style—which includes the finishing flourish of a neckerchief. Walking down the hallway a few weeks into the new job, she suddenly tore off her kerchief. "I felt so bad for doing it—as I was doing it! But I felt so out of place," she recalls. This points to the invisible, slippery nature of microaggressions, she points out. "We understand them as something that somebody *does to you*. I don't think anybody has looked at me funny or done anything weird. But sometimes you get inside your own head and you do their work for them."

"I have the same needs that everybody else does. I want to show up to work, be good at it, and be connected. But I feel like an accessory, like an ornament."

PART II

HOW DO WE SOLVE FOR SYSTEMIC RACISM AT WORK?

CURRENT D&I APPROACHES AREN'T WORKING FOR BLACK TALENT

When we dug into attitudes towards D&I, we found that most professionals, of all races and ethnicities, doubt the efficacy of existing programs. There is a race gap when it comes to who benefits from D&I, whether colleagues see bias, and whether they are willing to call it out. Given Black employees' disillusionment toward diversity efforts, it's understandable that they seek a better working culture through entrepreneurship and smaller employers.

Positive attitudes towards D&I are rare

Few think D&I interventions are achieving their intended impact: Only about two in five White full-time professionals say D&I is effective at their companies, and their Black peers are even less likely to say so.

Research lends credence to this opinion. Alexandra Kalev, Frank Dobbin, and Erin Kelly found in their sweeping analysis of over 700 private-sector establishments that employers have latched onto strategies that fail to produce results. Anti-bias trainings for managers are <u>least effective</u> in moving Black women and Black men

into the managerial ranks—yet nearly every company in the Fortune 500 still relies on them.[72]

And though many think D&I is failing to produce satisfactory outcomes, Black employees feel particularly left behind. In focus groups and interviews, we heard exhaustion and cynicism. Black professionals told us that they are often asked to explain, and to solve, racial inequities at work.

"Given the low representation levels in leadership roles in corporate America, and the complementary data on the experiences of historically marginalized groups, it's fair to conclude that traditional HR interventions haven't delivered well."

Heide Gardner, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Interpublic Group

Professionals who say their company has effective D&I efforts*

40%

Black	White	Latinx	Asian
34%	41%	39%	40%
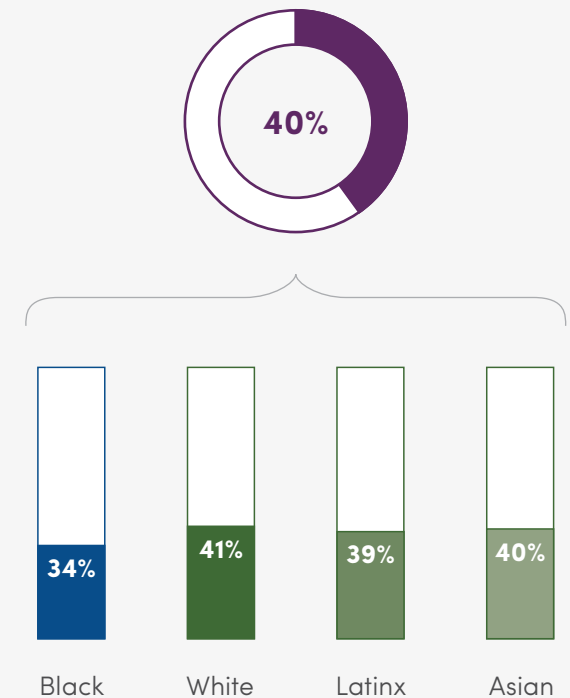
*This question was only asked of full-time employees

"We've got to disrupt the current approaches, because we're not getting to the heart of the problem."

Trudy Bourgeois, Founder and CEO, The Center for Workforce Excellence

"At best, 'best practices' are best guesses. We know a lot about the disease of workplace inequality, but not much about the cure."

Alexandra Kalev, Frank Dobbin, and Erin Kelly, "Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies"[73]

White women not seen as advocating for others

Black full-time professionals find another flaw in D&I design: they are far more likely than White full-time professionals to see White women as the primary beneficiaries of D&I efforts. At CTI, we've heard many times from D&I leaders who tell us that their company has to "solve for women's challenges first" because there are more established solutions there, and it is easier to gain C-Suite buy-in for issues of gender than of race—especially in global companies. In many European companies, gathering gender data is the norm, while data on race remains elusive.[74] Focusing on women first echoes Angela Davis's account of the history of the feminist movement,

in which White women consistently de-prioritized issues of race.[75]

In our recent study, *Wonder Women in STEM*, we called for intersectional solutions, exposing a considerable disparity between the programs that boost the advancement and retention of White women, and those that do so for Black women. Mentorship programs confer an 87% boost for White women in STEM, yet have no impact for Black women in the same fields. ERGs boost the advancement and retention of White women in STEM by 57%—our data suggests they provide no boost for Black women in STEM.[76]

This view of White women's gains in D&I echoes similar views of affirmative action. One study found that Black employees haven't seen the same steady gains that women have in US workplaces.[77]

Meanwhile, very few of our respondents—including White employees—think that White women are using their power to advocate for other underrepresented groups, demonstrating a clear opportunity for better solidarity.

Professionals who believe White women are the primary beneficiaries of diversity and inclusion efforts at their companies*
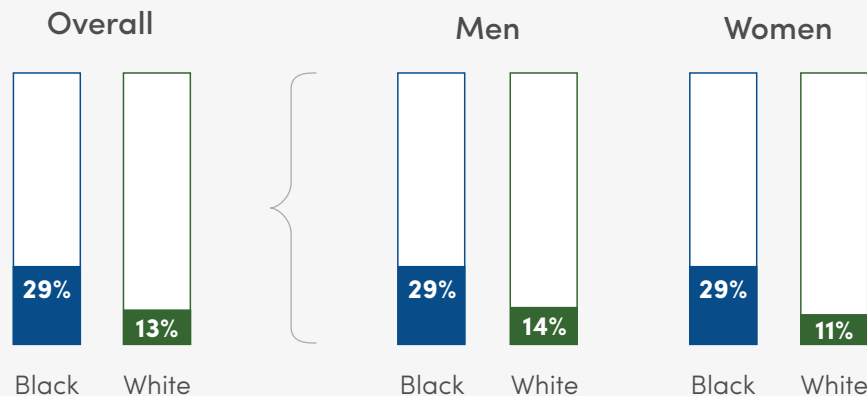
Overall		Men		Women	
29%	13%	29%	14%	29%	11%
Black	White	Black	White	Black	White

Professionals who believe White women use their power to advocate for other underrepresented groups at their companies*

Overall		Men		Women	
12%	12%	14%	9%	11%	14%
Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
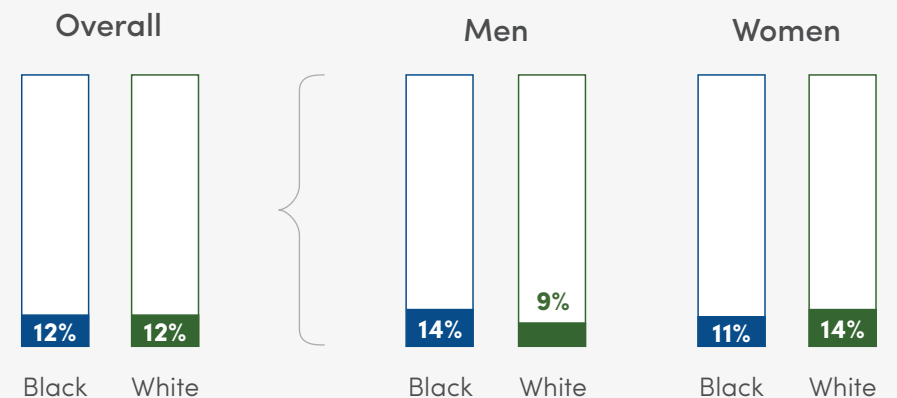
*These questions were only asked of full-time employees

"There was no gender lens when affirmative action was created—that came later. But women's progress has leapfrogged what affirmative action was created to do, which was to level the playing field for racial inequity.

Companies tout their achievements around growing the representation for women, but when you disaggregate the data, you see that you've got one Black female or one Latina.

White women have not had the opportunity to pause, reflect, and recognize the fact they benefited most from affirmative action."

Trudy Bourgeois, Founder and CEO, The Center for Workforce Excellence

"The primary beneficiaries of affirmative action have been Euro-American women."

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor of Law, Columbia Law School[78]

Lack of awareness, lack of action

Half of White Americans agree with the statement, "There is too much attention paid to race and racial issues in our country these days," according to Pew Research.[79] In the workplace, too, White professionals seem less aware of the challenges Black professionals face: White full-time professionals are 31% less likely than Black full-time professionals to say people are aware of bias at work. Black full-time professionals are more likely, however, to say that people are afraid of addressing bias when it occurs. This disparity did not arise for Latinx or Asian professionals in our survey—Black professionals uniquely feel this disconnect. And it's easy to imagine how discouraging this would be for the Black professionals who see it this way: to believe that others see bias, yet still aren't acting to address it.

"Being Black at my company is frustrating—White executives are aware of being 'PC' but it always feels performative, or on their terms."

Black Millennial woman

Professionals who say people at their workplaces are aware bias exists at work*

	Overall		Men		Women	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
	42%	29%	40%	27%	43%	31%
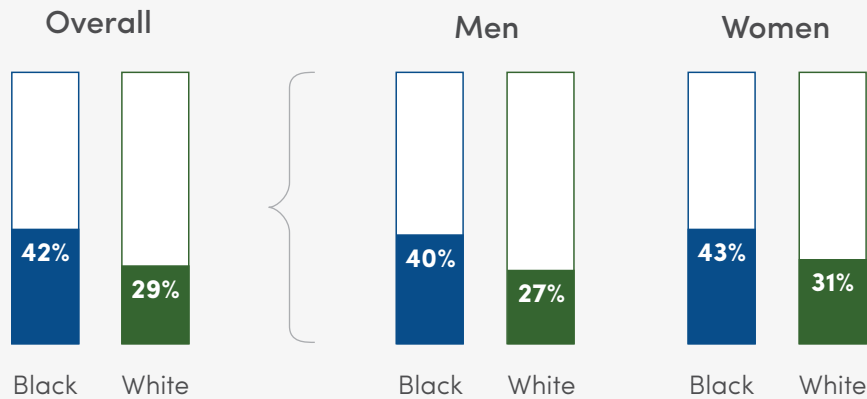
Professionals who say people at their workplaces are afraid to address bias when it occurs*

	Overall		Men		Women	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black	White
	34%	18%	32%	16%	35%	20%
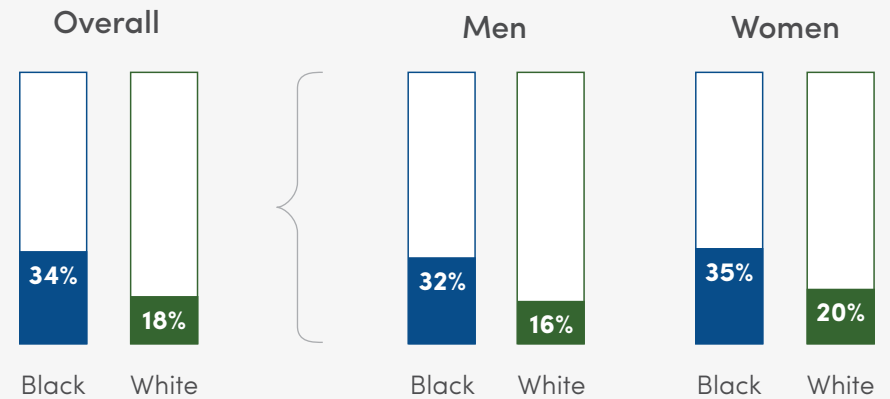
*These questions were only asked of full-time employees

"As long as Whites continue to help each other, yet espouse meritocratic beliefs about making it on your own and thus oppose policies to level the playing field, they are complicit in the reproduction of racial inequality—though they may not acknowledge it and certainly don't think of themselves as racists."

Leslie McCall, Professor of Sociology and Political Science, Faculty Fellow, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University[80]

THE LURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SMALL COMPANIES

What do Black professionals envision when they think about leaving their current employers? In the following section, we will examine the powerful pull of entrepreneurship and small companies. Given the systemic prejudice that holds Black professionals back and pushes them out, and the doubt that diversity programs provide solutions, we'll see why Black employees, particularly Black men, look to entrepreneurship. As business owners, they can gain autonomy over their careers. Working in smaller enterprises, they can find trust, respect, and a sense of belonging.

Planning—and achieving—entrepreneurial goals

Black professionals are far more likely than their White colleagues to be drawn to entrepreneurship. Among those Black professionals who are not currently business owners, many are planning to start their own ventures. This number increases among Black men. Plus, more than two in five Black men have, at some point, actually owned their own business—again outpacing other groups in our sample.

In prior research, CTI has found Black men have a differentiated experience as they move through their professional lives. In our study *What #MeToo Means for Corporate America*, we discovered that Black men were much more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than their White male peers (21% of Black men have been sexually harassed at work, compared to 13% of White men).[81] In *Disrupt Bias, Drive Value*, we learned they face high levels of bias when it comes to their connections and executive presence.[82] For Black men, entrepreneurship can offer an escape from these challenges, as well as a way to unlock authenticity, fully flex their skills, and gain greater autonomy over the work they do.

Black women, meanwhile, are less likely than Black men to dream of entrepreneurship. We heard in interviews that Black women may be less eager to leave the shelter of the corporate world, which offers steady income and benefits.
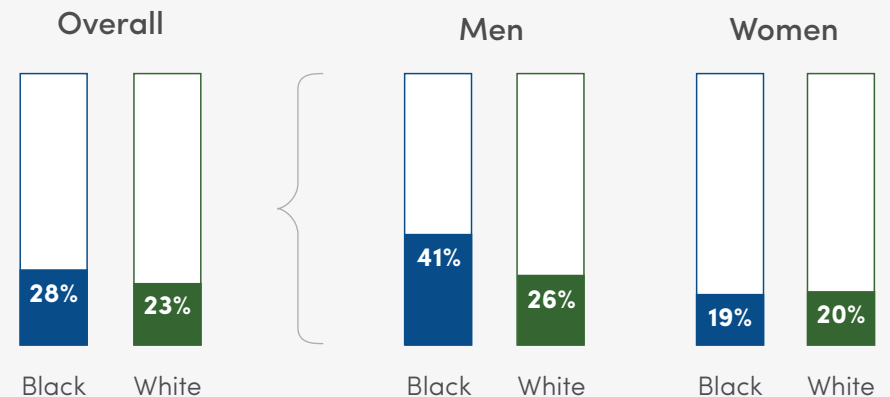
To many Black women, leaving the safety of a corporate career is a risk they are not as interested in taking as their male counterparts.

Still, though outpaced by their male peers, Black women are, increasingly, starting their own ventures. An oft-cited report from American Express found that, as of the most recent US Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners, Black women are the fastest-growing segment of business owners.[83] And we find that Black women are more than three times as likely as White women to be planning to leave their jobs to start their own ventures.

Professionals who are planning to leave their jobs to start their own ventures*

Overall

	Black	White
	25%	7%

Men

	Black	White
	38%	9%

Women

	Black	White
	16%	5%
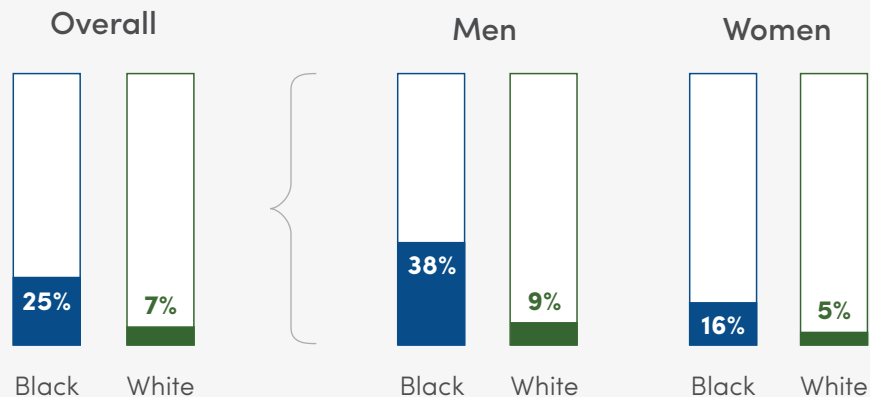
Professionals who own/have owned businesses

Overall

	Black	White
	28%	23%

Men

	Black	White
	41%	26%

Women

	Black	White
	19%	20%

*This question was only asked of those who are not currently business owners

"Generally speaking, the smaller a company is, the more each person is needed. When people are respectfully asked to do more, they have more opportunities to develop and excel. Entrepreneurism is the ultimate setup because the equity provides the sweet freedom to be your beautiful, unedited self."

Michael C. Bush, CEO, Great Place to Work

"I really like this company, and if I have to be here forever, that might be okay. It's good to have that income and not have to worry about not making money. I like the security of a corporate job."

Black Millennial woman

"If I were to leave for a small company or start a business, I would like my work to be recognized and valued. Being valued is motivating."

Black Gen X woman in management

Small companies deliver belonging, trust, and respect

When Black professionals choose to work for large employers, they gain financial stability—but not the acceptance they're more likely to find at small organizations. Unsurprisingly, Black professionals who have worked at both small and large companies find that large employers offer good benefits, higher—and more stable—salaries, opportunities to travel, and perks that make the day-to-day easier.

Small companies offer another kind of value: a sense of belonging, trust, and respect. They also offer more opportunities for Black professionals to be themselves and to access clients. If large corporations can figure out innovative ways to replicate these unmet needs, while delivering on the traditional promises of corporate employment, they can not only slow the attrition, but also create a better working world for Black professionals.

Top five advantages for Black professionals at small companies over large ones*

1. A sense of belonging
2. Ability to implement your ideas
3. Trust with colleagues
4. Respect for your contributions
5. Direct access to clients

Top five advantages for Black professionals at large companies over small ones*

1. Good benefits
2. High income
3. Opportunities to travel
4. Stable income
5. Amenities (e.g., dry-cleaning)

*These questions were only asked of those who have worked at both large and small companies. Small companies have fewer than 100 employees, and large companies have 100 or more employees.

"At a small company, I would expect to have more freedom to innovate and to have more authority and control."

Black Gen X man in management

"When you're in corporate America, you have a level of support around you that you don't have if you're leading your own business, so being able to have that makes a huge difference."

Black female executive

SECTION 7

REDESIGNING D&I FOR BLACK PROFESSIONALS

Redesigning D&I means thinking big. How do you create a company culture with the concrete benefits a large employer can offer, such as salary, benefits, and stability, and also offer the more inclusive, equitable environment Black professionals find in smaller companies? The first step towards an inclusive culture for Black professionals is to mitigate risk: we've analyzed established D&I solutions without which Black employees are rarely likely to stay and be satisfied with advancement. But, as we will explore, it's important to do this risk mitigation in parallel with something more revolutionary: engaging White employees, awakening them to the presence of systemic prejudice at work by tapping into their empathy, and co-creating with employees of *all* backgrounds a far more impactful long-term strategy.
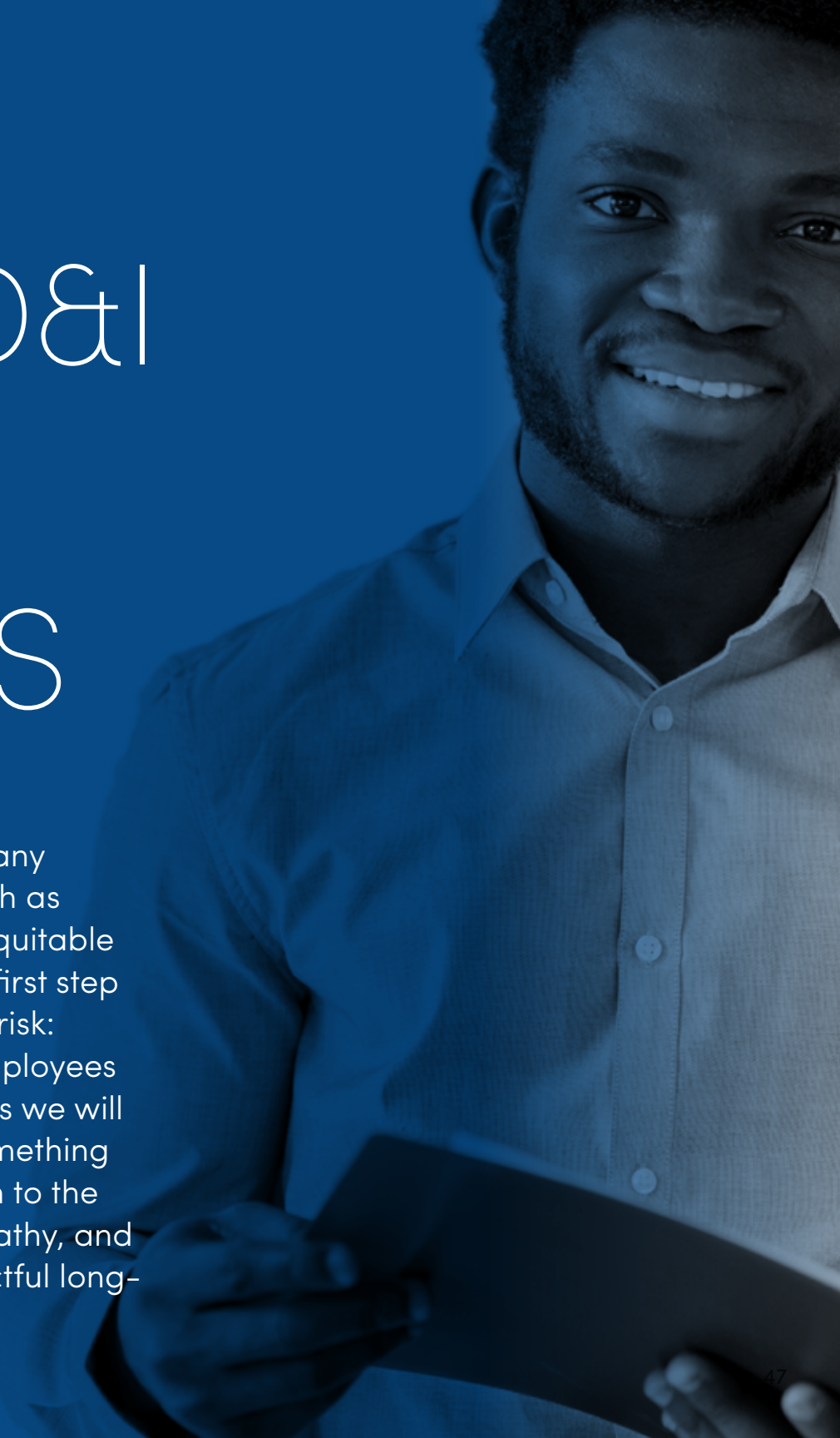
Assessing established solutions and building new ones

As we dig into solutions, we turn first to D&I staples: recognizable programs without which many Black employees would be heading for the door.

In an effort to determine which existing D&I programs stave off attrition and improve satisfaction with advancement for Black professionals, we showed survey respondents a list of common company programs and asked them to select the ones their companies offer. Next, we asked respondents if they feel satisfied with their career advancement, and if they intend to stay at their companies.

This methodology—which we first employed in our *Wonder Women in STEM* report—allowed us to look at the relationship between Black professionals who are staying and satisfied with advancement, and the D&I programs their companies employ. In this dataset, what we saw was *without* certain programs in place, the likelihood that Black employees stay and feel satisfied with their advancement is very low.

We calculated the percent increase in the number of Black professionals who are satisfied with advancement and intend to stay in their jobs at companies *with* a specific program compared to those at companies *without* that program. We call that percent increase the "boost" for Black professionals, since the increase in retention and satisfaction with advancement boosts their career prospects at a given company.

In the next pages, we will look at the top five D&I staples that boost Black men's prospects, and those that work for Black women. Many will be familiar to D&I practitioners. These are table stakes: there's a real risk for companies that don't have them or don't publicize them with employees. Note that there is no overlap between the lists for Black men and Black women—further testament to the fact that this cohort requires intersectional solutions.

"[T]rue diversity and inclusion may be elusive until scholars and practitioners explore the racist history that undergirds contemporary workplace discrimination and subsequently address it in ways that encourage actual change."

Tina Opie, PhD, Associate Professor, Babson College, and Laura Morgan Roberts, PhD, Professor of Practice, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia[84]

"They tell you a metric, you meet the metric, so why didn't I get promoted? Who knows!"

Black Gen X woman in management

# D&I staples that improve outcomes for Black men

For Black male professionals, retention and satisfaction with advancement map to solutions that directly address representation and networks. Many of these solutions are straightforward, but if implemented well, can begin to provide those less tangible small company benefits, such as belonging, trust, and respect. Senior leaders who are people of color, similarly, may lay the foundation for a Black male employee's sense of opportunity at the company. But these solutions only go so far. For example, even when they work at companies that do provide funding to attend external conferences for people of color, only 38% of Black men are staying and satisfied with their advancement.

Black men who are satisfied with their advancement and intend to stay at their companies

38%
14%
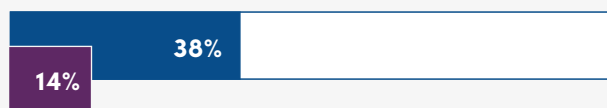
Provide funding to attend external conferences for people of color
In interviews, we heard that community-building and connections with other Black men play a crucial role in learning to navigate the workplace. And Black men do build particularly strong support networks, as we saw on page 11. Conferences held by the National Association of Black Accountants and the National Society of Black Engineers help many Black men find their footing in corporate America. Having this funding mitigates risk: at companies without this funding, only 14% of Black men are staying and satisfied with their advancement.

37%
16%
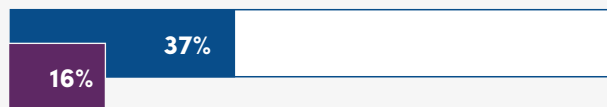
In-person bias awareness training
For many organizations, bias awareness training represents the first effort to bring conversations about race into the workplace. It may be just a first step—but at companies without in-person bias training, only 16% of Black men stay and feel satisfied with advancement. Interesting to note: we also tested the efficacy of online bias awareness training, which didn't make the top-five list. So there is a benefit to holding these trainings in person.

35%
14%
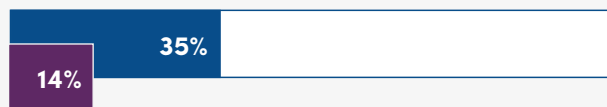
Moderated forums for conversations about race
Black men face a one in 1,000 likelihood of being killed by police in their lifetimes—double the average risk for men overall.[85] In addition, they face the danger of "driving while Black": data from millions of traffic stops in the US shows officers are more likely to ticket, search, and arrest Black drivers than White drivers, and to require lower levels of suspicion to do so.[86] Discussion of these stressors can be healing—but silence about race at work can feel like endorsement of racialized violence and rhetoric.[87] These forums are less common, yet equally crucial—without them, only 14% of Black men are staying and satisfied with advancement at their companies.

33%
11%
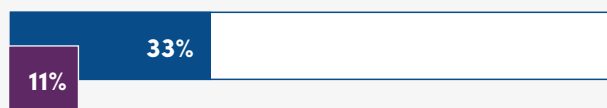
Hire diverse suppliers
Supplier diversity's inclusion on this list may leave seasoned D&I practitioners scratching their heads; after all, many companies have long sought to incorporate supplier diversity, building out both domestic and global programs. For government contractors, it's not a nice-to-have; it's a mandate.[88] According to the "2019 State of Supplier Diversity Report—Supplier Diversity Programs," many programs lack the resources to be effective, and one of the biggest challenges they face is executive support and communication.[89] Companies cannot afford to overlook common initiatives such as these that, when implemented well, can have a serious impact.

27%
12%
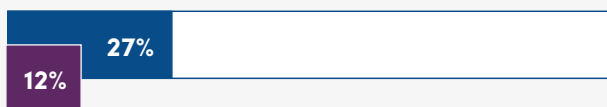
Senior leaders who are people of color
Another solution that bumps retention and satisfaction with advancement for Black men calls to mind the adage, "Success breeds success." Companies that have senior leaders of color are clearly doing the work and getting some results. Yet even at companies with senior leaders of color, only 27% of Black men are staying and satisfied with their advancement. So, those leaders need to engage with up-and-coming talent. Black men need face time, mentorship, sponsorship—and they need to learn the ins and outs of career progression for a Black man at their organization.

■ Black men whose companies DO have this in place
■ Black men whose companies DON'T have this in place

The Executive Leadership Council (ELC): Strengthening the Pipeline (STP)

STP provides high-potential Black leaders with coaching and mentoring to ensure equal opportunity for their advancement, and to increase representation of Black individuals in executive roles.

YEAR CREATED: 2004

CHAMPION: Black CEOs, board members, and senior executives at Fortune 1000 and Global 500 companies who are also ELC members

PARTICIPANTS

Each class is composed of 50 Black senior managers, vice presidents, directors, entrepreneurs, and individual contributors with 6 to 15 years of industry experience. Participants are recommended by ELC members and HR/organizational development leaders, and come from a variety of organizational and geographic areas.

STRUCTURE

The five-day program, which occurs twice a year, teaches participants about leadership with a special focus on enhancing self-awareness, navigating through an organization, leading at an organizational level, and creating a career plan. Participants undergo a 360 assessment (a performance assessment with input from direct reports, peers, and superiors) to pinpoint their strengths and development areas, as well as a "Fundamental Individual Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B)" assessment designed to tease out their interpersonal communication styles. The program also includes sessions with ELC members who talk about their own experiences in the corporate world.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- The program's success has increased demand from ELC's Fortune 1000 member organizations for more classes

- 814 high-potential Black employees have completed the STP program; 10% received promotions within three months of program completion

- 83% of STP alumni said they effectively applied key leadership lessons learned from the program to their role

- 81% of STP alumni said the program helped them cultivate a positive mindset about their overall job experience

- 63% of STP alumni said the program was better than other leadership program they had attended

CUTTING-EDGE ELEMENTS

- The program features top facilitators and career coaches

- Designed by and for Black corporate executives, STP is well-positioned to address the specific challenges Black professionals face

- Participants receive rare opportunities for peer mentoring, coaching, and networking with top corporate executives

"This program is about so much more than leadership. It fosters personal development and awareness and a support community that I will take with me."

STP participant

Danaher: Black MBA Meetups

To improve retention rates for Black MBAs at Danaher, the company's informal MBA meetups bring Black men in Danaher's MBA rotation program together with two senior Black executives, General Counsel Brian Ellis and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ernest Adams. Together, Ellis and Adams field questions and concerns from the MBAs and help them sort through their career challenges while working behind the scenes to advocate on their behalf with other leaders.

YEAR CREATED: 2017   **CHAMPION:** Brian Ellis, General Counsel, and Ernest Adams, Chief Diversity and Global Diversity & Inclusion

PARTICIPANTS

15 Black men per quarter from Danaher's six-year rotational program for MBAs

STRUCTURE

Informal conversations: Every quarter, Ellis and Adams fly participants to Washington, DC, to meet for dinner at a local restaurant and talk candidly about the issues they face as Black men at Danaher. The meetups have no agenda, encouraging participants to share what's on their minds. Ellis and Adams offer mentorship and advice on how to deal with specific situations—often dealing with authenticity, feeling stereotyped, and developing executive presence—based on their years of corporate experience.

Advocacy: Between meetups, Ellis and Adams check in with each participant regularly by phone to continue the mentoring relationship and catch up on any new difficulties they're facing. Often, Ellis or Adams are able to open doors and advocate on participants' behalf (in other words, act as sponsors).

"Whatever degree of success I've had, it's because I've always had a mentor who framed what success looked like and spent the time with me in a safe environment to avoid pitfalls related to being inexperienced and underexposed. That's the impetus for me to do this."

Brian Ellis, General Counsel, Danaher Corporation

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- Since the meetups began in 2017, no Black MBAs have left Danaher

- With participants moving up in the organization rather than taking their careers elsewhere, Danaher will soon have success stories to attract other Black MBAs to the organization

CUTTING-EDGE ELEMENTS

- Participants have access to a member of the Fortune 500 C-Suite—typically unheard of for members of an MBA rotation program—giving them a unique career edge

- Firsthand accounts and individual feedback from two Black men in leadership offers participants invaluable mentorship and learning opportunities they would have difficulty finding at other large organizations

- Having a Black man in the C-Suite uniquely positions Danaher to offer this kind of support to its Black MBAs

KPMG: Leadership Insights Summit

This three-day leadership program is focused on the development, advancement, and retention of high-potential, high-performing Black senior managers, directors, executive directors, and managing directors from all business functions. Participants receive coaching and access to firm leaders and senior executives who share their career-defining moments.

YEAR CREATED: 2014

CHAMPION: Aubrey Harrell, Audit Partner and African American Business Resource Group (BRG) chair; Tandra Jackson, Office Managing Partner and BRG co-chair; Michele Meyer-Shipp, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer

PARTICIPANTS

12 to 15 Black employees at the senior manager, director, executive director, and managing director levels

STRUCTURE

The annual Summit opens with an evening networking reception for participants and partners. Day two offers a full day of leadership development sessions. Topics covered include leading high-impact teams, relationship/market development, and creating a leadership legacy. Day three consists of partner roundtables during the morning, and a firm leader provides closing remarks over lunch.

Selection: KPMG's consolidated nomination process allows business leaders to holistically review the suite of leadership development experiences available and make informed, intentional decisions when selecting participants. As part of ongoing talent review discussions, leaders identify high-performing individuals at the appropriate career stage with the potential and runway to apply enhanced skills at their current and next level.

Leadership coaching: KPMG partners coach participants, educating them on topics like identifying a sponsor, creating a personal board of directors, managing their professional brand, and preparing for the next step in their career.

Networking: The Summit offers many opportunities for participants to network with firm leaders and partners, as well as members of KPMG's African American BRG Leadership Team, which is composed of senior leaders across the firm committed to driving the African American BRG's I&D goals. A reception on the first night and a dinner on the second night provide comfortable environments for attendees to share experiences and ask questions. On the final day, participants split into smaller groups to have one-on-one conversations with partners in their line of business.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Since the program began in 2014:

- 47% of Summit participants have received one level promotion; 12% have received two level promotions

- The Aspiring Leaders' Forum, a new and additional iteration of the Summit, builds on the success of this programming to reach high-potential Black talent even earlier in the pipeline
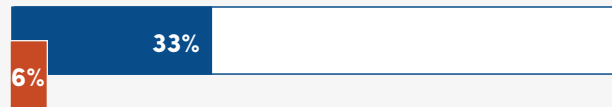
CUTTING-EDGE ELEMENTS

- Sessions are facilitated by KPMG partners and leaders, allowing direct engagement with program participants

- The Summit provides participants with transparency and support around the promotion process to Managing Director and Partner

- Participants share their feedback on KPMG's I&D strategy and help shape future efforts

D&I staples that improve outcomes for Black women

For Black women, retention and satisfaction with advancement are boosted by solutions that foster empathy and equity. Clarity around inclusive expectations and promotion decisions, for instance, hints at Black women's desires to be seen, heard, and understood. Accountability for harassment, meanwhile, speaks to Black women's expectation of respect, but also to their need for trust—in colleagues, and in the organizational culture. Even more than Black men, when these programs aren't in place for them, Black women are very unlikely stay and be satisfied with their advancement.

Black women who are satisfied with their advancement and intend to stay at their companies

33%
6%

31%
8%

31%
9%

25%
6%

25%
6%

■ Black women whose companies DO have this in place
■ Black women whose companies DON'T have this in place

Clear expectations for inclusive behavior
For a company building out, or strengthening, its D&I strategy, clarity is paramount. Black women want to know that "inclusion" is a behavior—not just the name of a department. Past CTI research has demonstrated the benefits (to both employees *and* the business) of inclusive leadership, which is embodied by six key behaviors: ensure everyone gets heard; give actionable feedback; share credit for team success; empower team members to make decisions; take advice and implement feedback; and make risk-taking safe and celebrated.[90]
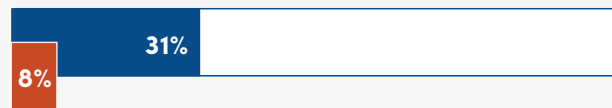
A positive reputation for diversity and inclusion
This is distinct from making a *public commitment* to diversity, which doesn't make the top-five list. If an organization has a positive *reputation* around D&I, it is likely rooted in a combination of other solutions we're discussing in this section. Companies can rest assured Black women will share the good—such as effectively implemented programs featured in this section—but also the bad with other potential hires.
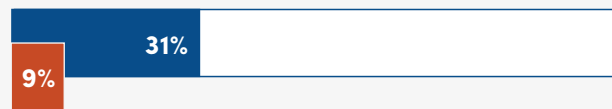
Clear communication of how promotions work
If Black women have the sense that conversations about "personality" and "temperament" behind closed doors make or break their promotability, they will not feel like promotion requirements are clear. Most organizations employ some subjectivity in their promotion practices, but if you aren't transparent about what is being assessed, how, and by whom, then you're missing out on this boost to satisfaction and retention for Black women, who are deeply attuned to the unique biases they face and how those biases creep into assessment.
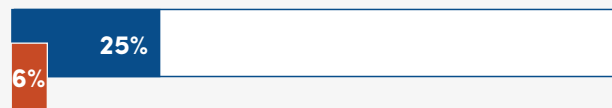
The CEO/President is committed to diversity and inclusion
A CEO or president who is vocal about D&I can confer an important boost for Black women, but the key is authenticity—lip service alone will not indicate true commitment. Leaders should consider showing up to ERG gatherings, sharing personal stories, and taking active roles in executing the organization's D&I agenda. In 2017, we found that barely one in ten professionals' employers responded publicly to shootings of unarmed Black men.[91] If employees hear a genuine message about D&I from the top—especially bold comments about politically charged incidents—it can make a difference in their sense of belonging.
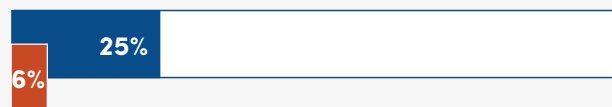
Accountability for harassment, regardless of an employee's seniority or performance
As CTI and others have documented, the #MeToo movement rarely includes the voices of Black women.[92] In our *#MeToo* research, we also heard frustration that seniority and top performance decreased the likelihood that a harasser would be held to account.[93] Given this landscape, it should come as no surprise that Black women at organizations with a strict anti-harassment stance are more likely to be satisfied and staying.

Pfizer Leadership Investment for Tomorrow (LIFT)

LIFT is a year-long training program for Pfizer's female employees globally and employees of color in the US. Participants receive specialized coaching sessions, gain an in-depth understanding of Pfizer's business challenges, and connect with senior leaders to accelerate their career progression. Black and female participants have seen the strongest outcomes so far.

YEAR CREATED: 2012

CHAMPION: Pfizer Colleague Council (PCC), which contains all of Pfizer's ERGs including the Global Blacks Council

PARTICIPANTS

40 to 75 high-potential female employees or employees of color, typically in middle management

STRUCTURE

Leaders from across the organization nominate employees with input from HR partners to ensure a mix of diverse, global, and cross-functional participants. The program includes a variety of learning experiences focused on leadership skills, business acumen, and problem-solving. In addition, PCC leaders match LIFT participants with a mentor from their respective ERG, carefully considering the participant's career progression, interests, strengths, and development needs.

Executive Coaching: Each participant undergoes a series of assessments, then meets with an executive coach to interpret their results and define areas for development. Participants then attend in-person and virtual sessions to review their development areas, such as self-awareness, confidence, and effective communication. Virtual sessions, which consist of computer simulations of specific business problems, provide unique opportunities for participants to learn skills beyond their typical roles.

Action Learning Projects: Participants split into small groups to generate solutions for business challenges over the course of three offsite workshops, each lasting three to five days. Examples of challenges, which often draw upon participants' lived experiences, include finding ways to increase vaccination rates among young adults, or educating health care providers about skin diseases more prevalent among African Americans. The projects culminate in a final offsite "graduation" session, in which cohorts present their solutions to senior leaders.

One example of a recent project sponsored by the Global Blacks Council is a grassroots and digital solution to increasing African Americans' awareness on treatment options for eczema, a dermatological condition for which certain ethnic groups are more at risk. The LIFT team built on existing company efforts and recommended specific actions to promote awareness and improve trial participation. The team focused primarily on generating community engagement through partnerships with experts and digital promotion.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Since the program began in 2014:

- Over 229 Pfizer colleagues have participated in LIFT, 46 of whom are Black members of the Global Blacks Council

- One out of every three participants have either been promoted or transferred to another position in the company

- 96% of Black participants have been retained

CUTTING-EDGE ELEMENTS

- Action Learning Projects prepare participants for business-critical decision making

- The program provides needed visibility to participants looking to move into leadership

Valerie Irick Rainford, JPMorgan Chase

JPMorgan Chase is setting itself apart from other employers by developing Advancing Black Leaders (ABL), a diversity strategy designed to attract, hire, retain, and advance Black employees throughout the pipeline—and to position the multinational organization as an employer of choice for Black professionals. The company has made substantial progress since starting the program four years ago, measuring a 41% increase in the number of Black managing directors and 53% increase in Black executive directors.[94]

ABL was founded by Valerie Irick Rainford, who helped launch the strategy in 2016, and who has deep experience in D&I at JPMorgan Chase and at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. In a blog post, Rainford shares, "It was very clear that the goal was to attract top Black talent and retain the top talent that was already here at the company. The aim is to support our broader company-wide business strategy to have the best diverse talent."[95]

In order to meet the needs of the Black community already at JPMorgan Chase while also drawing in new Black recruits, Rainford partnered with the Operating Committee, senior diversity advisor, and head of Talent Management & Diversity to implement best practices across all levels of the organization, from recruiting talent out of college to building a robust junior talent pipeline. How did she accomplish it? In part, Rainford credits enthusiastic support from the executive team and "clarity of vision from the top down" as she was developing the program.[96] JPMorgan Chase Chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon is known for his outspoken commitment to D&I. Through his vocal support of ABL, Dimon expresses his commitment not only to these principles at large, but also to the specific needs of the Black professional community. "I felt an unwavering commitment to the strategy from every senior leader that I met with [to develop ABL], up to and including the chairman and the board of directors," Rainford recalls.

Because of this full organizational commitment, ABL is, to current and aspiring participants, neither a box-checking exercise nor a program siloed from the larger organization. ABL clearly aligns with the company's broader goals, and embodies the company's values around diversity, inclusion, and belonging.[97] "We know that to be a cut above the rest, we have to think ahead and attract a diverse spectrum of people to work at JPMorgan Chase," says Rainford (who is launching her own consulting practice, Elloree Talent, in 2020). "Creating a diverse talent pool is part of the cultural fabric central to who we are as a company and frankly, it's how businesses today will thrive tomorrow."[98]

"Creating a diverse talent pool is part of the cultural fabric central to who we are as a company and frankly, it's how businesses today will thrive tomorrow."

Transformative solutions

Many of staples we surfaced are baseline for companies looking to support Black professionals. However, few of these solutions—no matter how well executed—are designed specifically for Black employees. And even with a given program in place, the rate of Black men or women who are satisfied with advancement and intend to stay is, at best, less than two in five.

To truly address the prejudice and bias that hold Black professionals back and push them out, employers need to develop new solutions. Those solutions must foster dialogues about race. They must galvanize White employees to understand inequity and work to address it. And they must create, at large companies, those work conditions that currently pull Black professionals towards smaller enterprises: trust with colleagues, respect, and a sense of belonging.

Each company culture is different, and each company's solution set needs to be unique. But to guide the guardians of company culture in HR and D&I, we have developed a three-part framework that will help them develop and implement transformative solutions: Audit, Awaken, Act. We've also given examples of tangible tools to consider in each stage—a culture audit, a retreat with White Men as Full Diversity Partners, and an Imaginal Labs' Innovation Day, just to name a few.

"Everyone gets defensive and tries to confirm that they're not a racist, or homophobic, or sexist, or whatever—but just look at promotion rates for women and minorities."
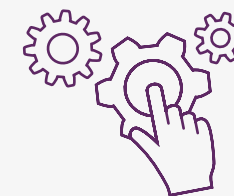
Black LGBTQ Millennial
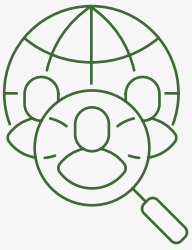in mid-management
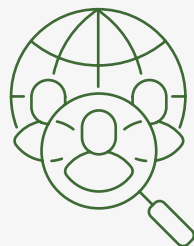
AUDIT
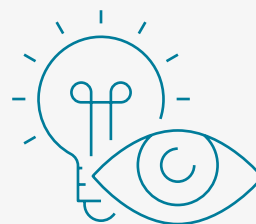
AWAKEN

ACT

Audit

A company must do some organizational introspection before developing effective solutions. An audit—through interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.—will allow all leaders with a stake in the D&I conversation to get an accurate picture of their workforce's understanding of systemic racism, privilege, and Black identity. It will also give you a picture of how Black colleagues are feeling within the culture. And it will allow you to uncover why colleagues mistrust one another or don't feel they belong. When CTI has performed such audits for clients, we often discover big gaps in trust that leaders hadn't realized existed. Finally, regular audits allow you to measure your progress over time. With the results in hand, leaders can begin to talk openly about race and racial bias at work, a crucial next step to building a functioning, inclusive workplace culture.

What can an audit provide?

It can reveal mismatches in perceptions of racial equality
On page 15, we showed that White professionals rarely see the struggles Black professionals so acutely feel. Taking the temperature of White professionals will identify where understanding—and where ignorance—lies.

It can identify populations most open to education
As we'll explore in the next step of our framework, "awakening" to the reality of privilege and systemic racism is a deeply personal journey. Determining which segments of your workforce are most open to new ideas will help you decide where to start.

It can underscore where the "myth of the meritocracy" is most alive
A key myth we must explode as we move forward in this work is the idea that hard work is all it takes to achieve. This is a stubborn idea in the American psyche and can take conscious effort to dislodge.

It can gather honest answers to burning questions or concerns
An audit may reveal uncomfortable truths, but it will reveal the truth about where your workforce stands on issues of racial equity and the realities of your employee experience.

It can spotlight champions
An audit won't only reveal pain points. It can also help you identify individuals in the organization who can help drive your agenda forward, speak up to help socialize the issues surfaced in this report, lead courageous conversations, and engage in the work of allyship.

Awaken through introspection
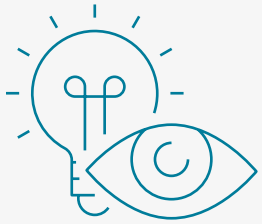
It can take time, space, and energy to truly understand and accept systems of racism and privilege that surround us—for some, this journey takes a lifetime. To bring employees—particularly White employees—up to speed, unlock empathy, and get them on board with transformative workplace solutions, employers must urge education and self-reflection around these tricky topics. By sharing audit and research results—in particular, quotes and stories from employees—leaders can provide the rationale, resources, and space employees need to ask questions and process.

We suggest that awakening through introspection happens on two parallel paths:

REFLECT
Provide space and guidance for those starting their journey to reflect on their own lives and experiences with difference.

ABSORB
To help engender empathy and understanding in your workforce, share our resource guide (page 69), and make sure employees have access to varied resources—some employees might prefer to read, others to watch or listen—that will enable them to absorb information about the historical context of racism and Black identity in the US. Provide funding or onsite opportunities for experiential learning and engagement with antiracist topics.

"Empathy is not simply a matter of trying to imagine what others are going through, but having the will to muster enough courage to do something about it."

Dr. Cornel West, American Philosopher and Professor of the Practice of Public Philosophy, Harvard University[99]

"The onus to solve racial inequity is put on Black professionals, but it should be on the leaders, because they stand to benefit the most financially by solving this issue."

Black Gen X male manager

"We just built a beautiful new house in a beautiful neighborhood, and I'm still trying to figure out how to introduce my son to this neighborhood, so that they know he belongs here. This is a fear—he runs track, he'll go out for a run, someone calls a cop on him, and he doesn't come home. That is not a fear that White parents have. Those are things that are constantly on my mind."

Black female executive

Steps for reflecting

Check your mindset and motivations

The best way to engage with this work is with curiosity and an open mind. Make sure you are starting this journey for the right reasons: seeking to understand; to gain an appreciation for differences and for Black identity. As Ariel Investments' Mellody Hobson guides, can you hold your ideas in an open palm rather than a clenched fist?[100] You should seek to understand. Even if you can't begin the work with this mindset, allow space for your mind to expand as you begin the journey.

Get in touch with your own experiences of "othering"

No matter what race or gender, all of us have experienced the feeling of loss, of rejection, of being different. When did you feel left out in school? When did you feel alone? Connect with your own feelings of exclusion and isolation, and watch the way others might be experiencing them in the workplace.

Assess your own privilege

Consider a resource such as Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" to guide a deep exploration of the privilege Whiteness still conveys today.

Consider the culture you grew up in

What workplace norms are similar to those you grew up with, at home and among your peers? What activities, interests, and media that you were introduced to when you were younger continue to be relevant in your socializing at work? What is your attitude toward others who did not grow up with this same set of cultural touchstones?

Commit to speaking up

Once you begin to understand the unique challenges others face due to systems of discrimination and prejudice, you must be willing and courageous enough to use your voice, to become part of the solution rather than remain a bystander.

Knowledge is power

Connect through media
Workplace book clubs and film screenings allow employees to engage with one another on challenging topics without immediately having to share their experiences—though these offer ways for people to get personal. Start with the materials in our resource guide (page 69), or even with this report.

Host a panel or fireside chat
We observe a "boost" for Black women if they know their CEO/President is committed to D&I. Intimate conversations with executives can offer an ideal forum for leaders to genuinely convey their empathy and interest in building a more equitable workplace.

Bring in an expert
You don't need to know it all. Academics, diversity experts, and racial justice facilitators can speak about as specific a challenge or broad an issue as your organization needs. Talks from our experts at CTI can pair with a culture audit to offer tailored insight for employees.

Morgan Stanley: thinking holistically for the future

Morgan Stanley's approach to D&I relies on supporting underrepresented talent holistically, focusing equally on professional development, connectivity, and social/emotional well-being. That strategy starts with data to ensure that the programs and processes implemented are addressing the specific challenges that Black professionals face.

To ensure long-term advancement for Black employees, Morgan Stanley operates a suite of strategies, including forums for employees of all backgrounds and levels to have candid discussions to build awareness of the experiences of Black talent, professional development programs, and recognition for achievements of Black professionals.

Still, the D&I team at Morgan Stanley recognizes the need to make more progress in removing the roadblocks for Black employees. "One of the greatest opportunities we have is to engage all of our colleagues, not just professionals of color, in the dialogue around race and gender in our industry," says Susan Reid, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Morgan Stanley. "Senior leadership engagement is a critical component of fostering a sense of belonging for diverse employees, and reinforces the firm's

commitment to embracing and elevating colleagues from diverse backgrounds across all levels at the Bank."

A steadfast commitment to measurement and reassessment will help keep Morgan Stanley at the forefront of improving workplace outcomes for Black professionals. "The people who move the farthest are those who take inclusion on as a personal mission," says Reid. "When you embrace inclusion, it moves you from a place of acting out of compliance, to acting because you see both the business and people case for diversity and inclusion. We have many leaders who operate with this ethos, and it is evidenced in our corporate culture: they are engaged, they are driving our efforts, and it's a really powerful way to build a firm in which we all belong."

"The people who move the farthest are those who take inclusion on as a personal mission."

Laying a foundation of understanding

Heide Gardner has served as Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer of the Interpublic Group (IPG) since 2003, so it's fair to say she is herself a seasoned professional on most D&I matters. Still, when she sees a knowledge gap in her workforce, she does not hesitate to turn outside of the traditional organization development and HR toolkits for expertise. "We see these investments in learning opportunities from scholars and thought leaders as essential for catalyzing curiosity and unpacking complexity," Gardner reflects.

The subject matter experts often join as speakers and panelists for all employee webcasts and marquee events, which IPG CEO Michael Roth and members of his executive team also attend, along with top leadership from IPG's subsidiary agencies, including CEOs. "In order to shift from bystander cultures to top-down ally cultures, information needs to be democratized instead of the narrow sharing that can leave out the people who most need it," says Gardner. "Everyone needs to be informed, to be able to discern problem behavior and environments, and have a toolkit for how to intervene or respond."

In recent years, Gardner has convened several thought-provoking conversations and keynotes for IPG employees:

Katherine W. Phillips, Reuben Mark Professor of Organizational Character and Director of the Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. Center for Leadership and Ethics at Columbia Business School, spoke on better supporting Black women.

Eddie S. Glaude Jr., chair of the Department of African American Studies and the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, and **Derald Wing Sue**, Professor at the Columbia Teachers College, explained microaggressions and offered strategies for combatting them.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett, CTI's founder and Chair Emeritus, explained the importance of sponsorship for underrepresented employees and how to get it right.

Scott Page, professor at the University of Michigan and author of *The Model Thinker* and *The Diversity Bonus* presented on the pathway to innovation through critical masses of diversity and the importance of using models to solve problems.

Kenji Yoshino, Chief Justice Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law and director of the Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at the New York University School of Law, discussed the discriminatory impact of overt and subtle demands to downplay or hide stigmatized aspects of identity that have no legitimate bearing on job performance.

"Everyone needs to be informed, to be able to discern problem behavior and environments, and have a toolkit for how to intervene or respond."

Awaken through conversation
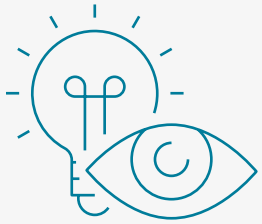
Once individual team members commit to digging deep on their own role in systemic prejudice, bringing coworkers together across race to have meaningful dialogues can further develop empathy and can help move the workforce towards active allyship. In CTI's 2016 report *Easing Racial Tensions at Work,* nearly two-thirds of all employees told us they are currently uncomfortable talking about race relations in the workplace. But about half of the employees who felt that way—39% of Black employees overall and 33% of White employees overall—said they *would* be comfortable under certain circumstances. Employers can help build that comfortable environment. In doing so, they will build a workforce that is more likely to feel that their ideas are heard and recognized—a key step towards innovation.[101]

"Interracial conversations about race are always a bit dangerous, as they unleash emotions that we have all learned to bury. What is most courageous about interracial conversations about race is mustering the strength to facilitate them. Opening up these dialogues when it appears that certain things are much better left unsaid or unspoken is frightening."

Glenn E. Singleton and Cyndie Hays, in "Beginning Courageous Conversations about Race"[102]

"Those topics that are political cocktail conversation to others are really much deeper for me, but I can't say that in a cocktail setting. So how can people learn? They need to have deep conversations that aren't superficial, in a safe space."

Black Gen X female manager

"I've learned that it is important to share my truth…there are teachable moments that I regularly experience, where I can help others grow by understanding what it is like to walk around as a dark-skinned Black woman among a sea of White faces."

Black Gen X female manager

"Eventually, I'd love to see the town hall conversations around the country, where everyone can come together to talk about the truth of what is ripping America apart. We're having conversations about *each other instead of having conversations* with *each other— and it's getting worse by the day."*

Trudy Bourgeois, Founder and CEO, The Center for Workforce Excellence

Build empathy

Ideally, conversations will foster a spirit of awareness and empathy. This must go hand in hand with a practice of acknowledgment. These conversations do not have to lead towards complete consensus all the time—there is a difference between agreement and empathy. The latter requires a focus on recognizing shared emotions rather than looking for shared experiences.

As culture change consulting firm White Men as Full Diversity Partners teaches, we must approach this work with a "both/and" mindset: we do not have to agree with someone, but we can still be respectful and authentically acknowledge the other person's views and experiences.

Set the ground rules

Here are some common operating agreements for hosting a productive, courageous conversation about race:

- Get comfortable being uncomfortable

- Don't interrupt

- Stay engaged

- Use "I" statements

- Speak your truth

There are many great conversation guides out there. Most begin setting ground rules for the conversation with participants. Check out PwC's Color Brave, Catalyst, and Race Forward.

Scale the conversation slowly

Trudy Bourgeois, one of our advisors on this report and a frequent partner of CTI's, has been helping clients engage in challenging conversations about race and racial equity for nearly two decades through her organization, The Center for Workforce Excellence. She shares: "Courageous conversations can happen one on one or in teams, but start by having a conversation at home with your family. Just talk about differences in general. Next, build a relationship with someone across difference, where you can start the exploration process. People of color may have their guard up after bad experiences. If you come to me saying, 'I want to have a conversation with you about race,' and I don't know you, I'll wonder, 'What's your motive?' Ideally, then, people will lead the dialogue with their direct reports. They can become influencers in their organizations."

Go in depth

CTI's *Insights In-Depth®* tool is specially designed to host virtual, anonymous, moderated conversations about race in the workplace. It's a proprietary tool that allows for candid conversations, hosted by trained facilitators that keep the conversation flowing and make sure it remains productive and respectful. *Insights In-Depth®* can lay the foundation for further courageous conversations. It can help you determine next steps for in-person conversations, or continue with periodic virtual conversations.

Unilever: Cultural Immersions – the Black Experience

Unilever's Cultural Immersions series is a set of training programs for employees designed to increase cultural competency within marketing. The Black Experience, the first installment developed for this series, teaches participants about the history and experiences of intersectional Black communities, as well as the complex cultural context in which Unilever operates.

YEAR CREATED: 2018

CHAMPION: Esi Bracey, Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer of North America Beauty and Personal Care

PARTICIPANTS

Immersions are mandatory for all marketing employees at the organization and recommended for employees from other business functions.

STRUCTURE

- **Research and pre-work:** To design the Black Experience Cultural Immersion, Unilever partnered with global consulting firm Language and Culture Worldwide, which conducts intersectional research on effective and ineffective approaches for companies marketing to Black consumers. Unilever also works closely with volunteers from BeU, Unilever's Black employee ERG, who provide input and feedback on the programming. As the initiative enters its third year, Unilever continues to improve the curriculum by incorporating feedback from post-training surveys and focus groups with BeU members.

- **Black Experience Immersion:** The 4.5-hour program, which includes up to 50 participants, starts with an in-depth review of the history and experiences of the Black community in the US. Then, using a broad range of marketing examples from other companies and industries, participants learn how well-intentioned (but poorly informed) marketing can have an adverse effect on audiences. Two facilitators teach the course: an ally who speaks to their own journey with the community and mistakes they have made along the way, and someone who identifies with the community and encourages participants to speak about their experiences. Facilitators also delve into marketing best practices, and employ interactive activities (for example, asking participants to name famous or historical Black figures, and then exploring the overrepresentation of athletes and entertainers in the response) to improve awareness of harmful racial stereotypes. Additionally, participants have access to internal resources to supplement the program.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- Since its launch, 4,000 local and global employees at both Unilever and partner agencies have received training, and sessions are always full

- After the success of Black Experience, the Cultural Immersions program now includes Latinx Experience, LGBTQ+ Experience, and Muslim Experience, with a new Experience being added every year

CUTTING-EDGE ELEMENTS

- Unilever's partnership with Language & Culture Worldwide allows the training to be exported across the globe to Unilever's partner agencies

- Rather than focus generally on anti-Black unconscious bias, the Black Experience uses an intersectional lens to explore Black experiences across gender, heritage, ethnic identity, religion, and more, all within the action-oriented context of marketing well to this population

- The program consistently attracts people from across business functions, demonstrating its value not just to marketers, but as an effective tool for educating on the larger societal context of being Black in the US

Lockheed Martin: Effective Leadership of Inclusive Teams (ELOIT)

The ELOIT program educates participants about US dominant culture at Lockheed Martin through experiential, immersive learning. The components of ELOIT, developed and administered by White Men as Full Diversity Partners (WMFDP), help participants understand the White male norms that form the foundation of US corporate culture, and to halt the exclusion that such norms can create for others in the workplace.

YEAR CREATED: 2007

CHAMPION: ELOIT is endorsed by CEO Marillyn Hewson and championed by her leadership team across the organization

PARTICIPANTS

All White male directors, vice presidents, and senior executives, as well as executives who are White women and people of color. Additional non-executive leaders may also participate.

STRUCTURE

Depending on participants' level, they attend an immersive and experiential learning lab (with about 23 colleagues), and/or attend a larger summit. All sessions cover topics such as insider-outsider dynamics, privilege, and structural racism. The curriculum addresses anti-Black racism in the US, as well as sexism, ableism, heterosexism, and other types of structural inequities. Activities like a partnership walk, in which participants silently identify with statements read out by facilitators, and "fishbowls," in which participants share difficult stories while others listen in silence, build allyship and "connect the head to the heart" through participants' lived experiences.

White Men's Caucus Learning Lab: White male executives (director level and above) are required to attend this experiential learning lab for White men only that creates an environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences, questions, and concerns regarding D&I in the workplace. Over a 3.5-day period, facilitators emphasize the pivotal role White men must play in shifting organizational culture toward inclusion.

Full Diversity Partners Learning Lab: In this lab, men and women across all backgrounds explore D&I together. Over the course of 3.5 days, WMFDP facilitators lead experiential learning exercises among the participants to help them learn how to build effective diversity partnerships at work.

Summit: This 1.5-day summit, which all leaders are encouraged to attend, brings together about 80 colleagues from across the organization to take part in similar exercises on a larger scale.

After ELOIT, Lockheed D&I staff remain in contact with program alumni, providing resources, roundtable discussion, and opportunities to continue learning about being an inclusive leader. Lockheed recently participated in an international WMFDP program that allowed a small group of its international leaders to experience courageous conversations.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- Approximately 11,000 leaders have taken part in one or more of the sessions

- Empowered leaders become proactive in D&I conversations and promote inclusion

- Direct reports of ELOIT participants score higher on every question measuring inclusion in Lockheed's employee engagement survey

CUTTING-EDGE ELEMENTS

- Compulsory participation ensures many leaders take part in ELOIT, embedding its outcomes throughout the company

- A focus on US White male culture gives a new frame for exploring differences and disadvantages of all kinds, without putting participants on the defensive

- WMFDP's experiential facilitation surfaces much deeper conversations and connections than most conversations among work colleagues

Act
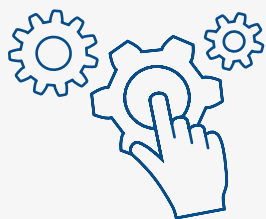
Once you have taken a deep look at the particular challenges facing your organization, and encouraged your employees to heighten their consciousness around race, then you can act. At this stage, the goal is no longer to raise awareness, it is to collaboratively achieve outcomes—co-creating solutions with the influence and insight of White, Latinx, Asian, *and* Black voices. Starting with the findings from the culture audit, and leveraging the awakening you have achieved in the organization, bring all employees together to build solutions and commitments specific to your environment in order to create a sense of belonging, trust with colleagues, and a culture of respect for Black professionals.

"Diversity is simply having representation. Inclusion is when people get invited to be at the table. And belonging…is the emotional connection that people are feeling to each other and to the organization."

Ellyn Shook, Chief Leadership & Human
Resources Officer, Accenture[103]

Ideas for safe creative thinking spaces

- Have an innovation lab—a day-long retreat, run by Imaginal Labs, that features audit findings and drives collaborative strategies.

- Organize a retreat with key stakeholders.

- Host a hackathon or "design-a-thon."

Core components of co-creation

Organizational readiness: top leaders and a substantial community should understand systemic racism and support confronting it at work.

Fair representation: co-creators should be intersectional. Think about representation of identities at the intersections of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and background. Also consider a cross-section of relevant divisions, functions, and levels within the organization.

Mutual respect: set ground rules to ensure everyone feels empowered to speak without fear of reprisal; remind participants not to challenge or invalidate others' experiences.

Divergent thinking: participants should be prepared to hold multiple—even seemingly contradictory—ideas in one's mind when solving problems without simple solutions, and to take a "both/and" (rather than an "either/or") approach to coming up with ideas.[104]

Equality and a level playing field: *all* voices around the table should be accorded *equal value* in a brainstorm.

Sample outcomes of effective co-creation

Outcomes will vary according to company environment and organizational readiness. Examples of the many initiatives, policies, and other outcomes that could be designed in, or result from, co-creation include:

Racial equity network
With a critical mass of non-Black employees engaged in antiracism work, a company can formally organize an ERG and align it with the efforts of Black and other ERGs to further embed and catalyze D&I efforts.

Zero tolerance policy for microaggressions
First, an organization must embed an understanding of microaggressions and the emotional toll they take on their victims. An organization that successfully accomplishes this is mature enough to work towards a no-microaggression norm. This may mean instituting a policy that holds individuals accountable for microaggressive behaviors, the same way they'd be held accountable for overt discrimination.

Evaluation and adjustment of representation on client-facing teams
With an organization-wide appreciation for the ways systemic racism shows up at work, an employer might create ways to ensure diversity in the makeup of its client-facing teams—delivering on a critical value-add offered by smaller companies.

A new approach to encouraging authenticity at work
The concept of "bringing your whole self to work" is starting to come under scrutiny as an unrealistic and unhelpful conception of maximizing one's potential in the workplace.[105] Given our findings—that around 80% of all professionals feel they are "very authentic" at work, but that Black professionals have to expend more energy to be so—a new conception of the privilege associated with bringing one's "full self" to work may be in order. For organizations that have reckoned with the realities of the Black experience in corporate America, a new understanding of this concept may center around expanding organizational norms—everything from styles of dress, to outside-of-work activities, to the types of media and extracurriculars commonly discussed in the workplace—to lower the energy required for Black professionals (and others) to find their way to constructing an authentic identity at work.

Equal sponsorship for Black professionals
As CTI has demonstrated, sponsorship—advocacy by senior leaders on behalf of high-potential talent—is rarer for

Black professionals than for White ones, largely due to senior leaders' unconscious preferences for those most like themselves. We have shown repeatedly that sponsorship catalyzes the careers of all who possess it, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender.[106] Leaders effectively awakened to systems of racism and prejudice should, in their ability to recognize and develop Black talent, deliver their organizations from the pattern of lopsided sponsorship that currently maintains homogeneity at the top.

Culture-specific guides for managers on fostering belonging
With audit findings in hand, and allies at the ready, an organization can generate its own guidelines for remedying major organizational misses in management behaviors and concrete ways for managers to build belonging on their teams. In 2020, CTI will embark on a year-long exploration into the topic of "belonging" to better understand how companies can engage all employees—and empower them to do so.

Conclusion

It is our sincere hope that readers—from the employees who live this reality, to the executives looking to stay on the leading edge, to the D&I practitioners on the front lines of this fight every day—will not walk away from this report with a sense of futility.

These numbers tell the story of a group of professionals who experience the impacts of systemic racism at work—impacts that sometimes deepen with the overlay of their diversity in upbringing, cultural norms, gender, generation, sexuality, and beyond. A group of professionals who lack access and advocacy from middle managers and executives alike. Who seek better opportunities at small companies, or at yet-unformed companies they will launch and run on their own.

But we believe that, equipped with our findings, brave employers can write a new story. They can—and must—write this new story with targeted solutions, not with "best guesses." It will start with programs that are working for Black men and for Black women, and it will continue with solutions that engage White employees, turning them into allies for racial equity. Understanding that many Black employees who leave are finding belonging, trust, and respect, the entire C-Suite can spearhead an effort to co-create those conditions at their own companies.

In this report, we have offered a way for companies to deliberately move forward. It is our hope that, equipped with this information, employers will courageously explore the reality of being Black at their workplace. That they will hold all leaders, not only HR and D&I officers, accountable for delivering outcomes. That they will share their findings with employees. That they will awaken all employees to their own roles in creating a culture where everyone belongs. And, finally, that they will actively include Black employees in ways that are designed specifically for them.

"If you can't fly, run; if you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl; but by all means keep moving."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.[107]

Resource guide

Read

"What Is Systemic Racism?"
from Race Forward

"7 Ways We Know Systemic Racism Is Real"
from Ben & Jerry's

"What Racism Looks Like"
from the Race, Culture, and Ethnicity Committee of the University of
North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

"Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/
Promoting Racial Equity Analysis"
from the Aspen Roundtable on Community Change

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Women, Race, and Class by Angela Davis

Stamped from the Beginning and *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram
X. Kendi

*Black Stats: African Americans by the Numbers in the Twenty-First
Century* by Monique W. Morris

Conversation guides

"Being Color Brave Discussion Guide"
from PwC's Color Brave

"Tool: Engaging in Conversations about Gender,
Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace"
from Catalyst

"10 Ways to Start a Conversation about Race"
from Race Forward

Visit

The National Museum of African American History and Culture
in Washington, DC

The Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice
in Montgomery, Alabama

Watch

"The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross," television miniseries
on PBS

"*13th*," documentary on Netflix

"The Urgency of Intersectionality," TED Talk by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Listen

"Seeing White," podcast series from Scene on Radio

"Code Switch," podcast from NPR

Explore

"The 1619 Project," multimedia project by *The New York Times*

"Race—The Power of an Illusion," three-part documentary series and
companion website on California Newsreel and PBS

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