

# What You Need to Know to Have Happier and More Productive Employees in Uncertain Times



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Contents.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mental Wellness &amp; the Workplace.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Communication.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Diversity &amp; Inclusion in the Workplace.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Workplace Violence.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Black Lives Matter: The Cost of Racism in the Workplace... </b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HR Must Take Action.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>How to Address It.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>16</b>



# INTRODUCTION



The workplace has changed due to the pandemic, and a myriad of concerns have come to the surface. There is a plethora of issues none of us have experienced before, and this has caused a lot of anxiety, no doubt increasing workplace tension and stress. At Transforming Culture Consultants (TCC), we envision A world where employees feel happy, respected, valued and safe.

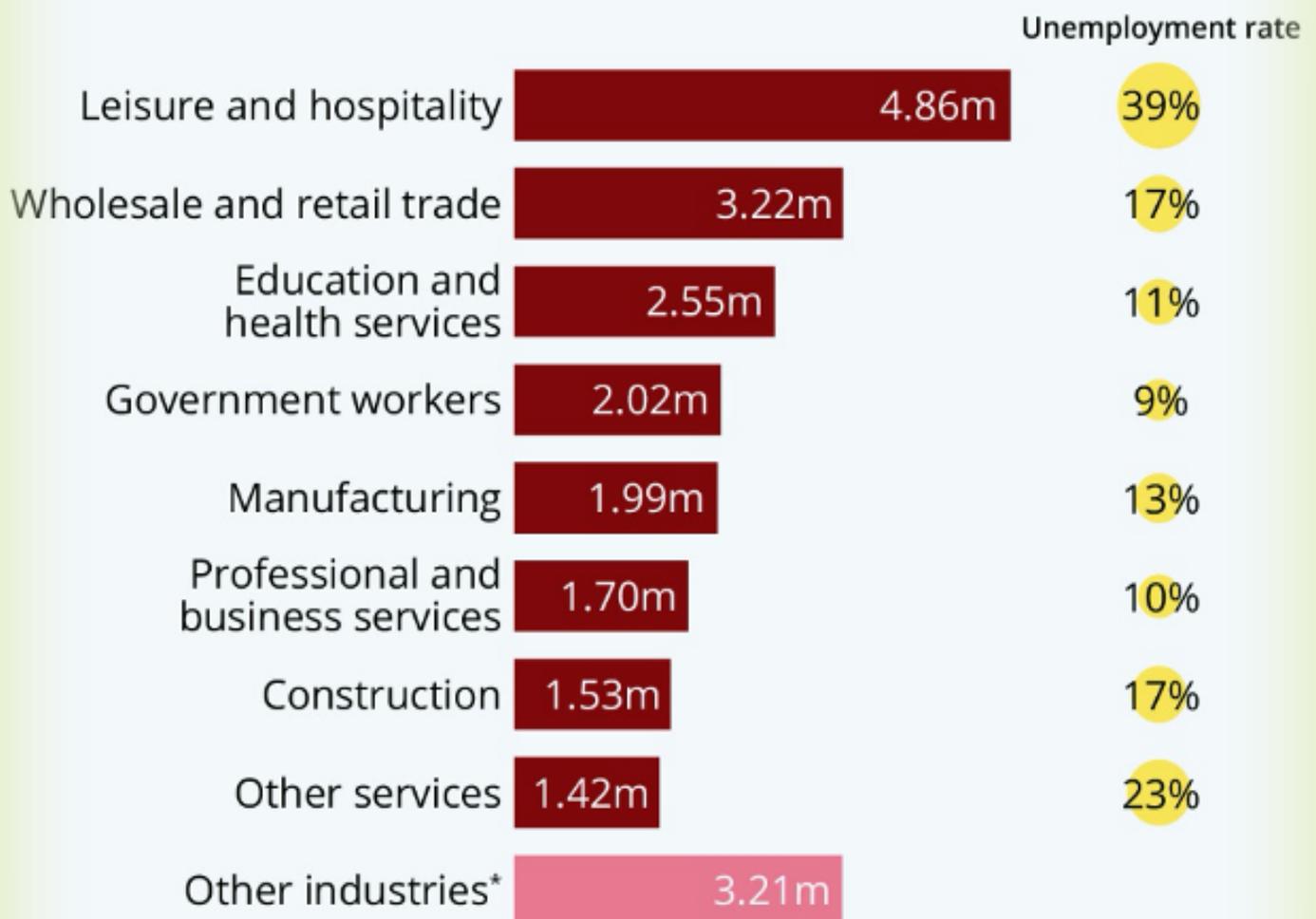
Companies must confront and address issues and concerns within the workplace instead of sweeping them under the rug. At TCC our mission is to support you in creating and sustaining an empowered workplace culture. According to CEO Colin Shaw, an empowered culture is the “type of organization where policies are determined by the people who are encouraged to make their own decisions to create great customer experiences.” TCC can help create an empowered workplace culture.

The result is a happier and more productive workforce. In this free report we will explore some of the issues that can impact having an empowered workplace culture and some steps you can take towards a long-term empowered workplace culture even in uncertain times.

*Isn't it time for a restart?*

# THE INDUSTRIES MOST NEGATIVELY AFFECTED by the COVID-19 JOB CRISIS

Number of unemployed persons aged 16 and over in the U.S. in April 2020, by industry



\* incl. persons with no previous work experience and persons whose last job was in the U.S. Armed Forces

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



# MENTAL WELLNESS & THE WORKPLACE

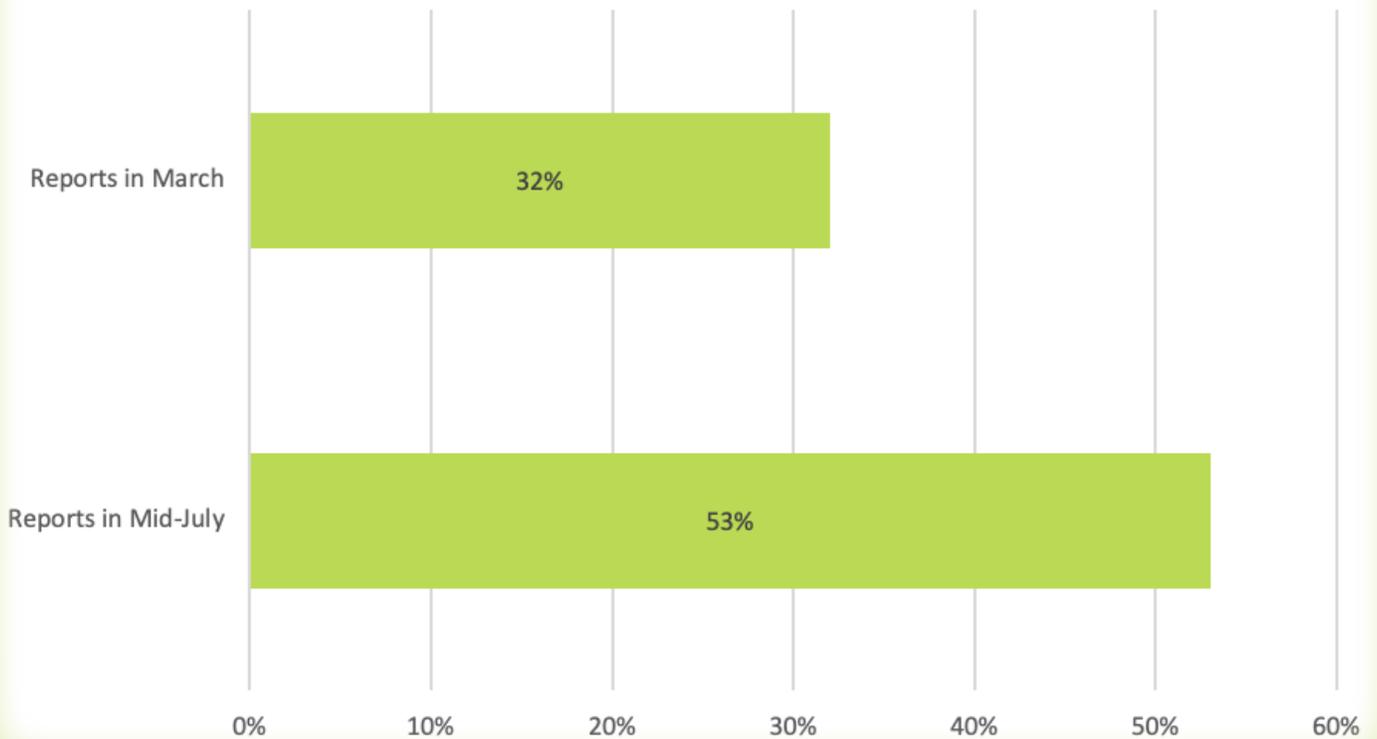
Now, more than ever, mental wellness is crucial. Stressors have radically ramped up with the pandemic, and many have dealt with being terminated, furloughed or have seen their hours reduced. For others, the transition to online work has been difficult. Finally, for those who are returning to the workplace, worries about catching COVID-19 can exacerbate their anxiety, whether it is a co-worker whose mask does not cover their nose or fear of retribution if they call in sick or receive bullying or shaming from other employees who do not believe in COVID-19 protocols.

Nearly 20% of Americans reported a mental illness in 2016 (CDC, 2019), and that number is climbing in the wake of COVID-19, with some experts predicting a mental health crisis in the next year. According to the CDC, mental health issues can impact employee productivity, absenteeism, communication with coworkers, engagement with work, and daily functioning (2018). We know that 70% of employers report that businesses have been affected by prescription drug abuse (Gaul, 2018), and the American Psychiatric Association reports that depression alone costs employers approximately \$44 billion annually in the United States (Glen, 2018).

However, there are steps you can take. According to the 2019 Mind the Workplace Report, there is a positive correlation between “a workplace culture of safe and open communication [and] an employee’s motivation, confidence, and pride,” and “Supervisor communication is correlated with safety in reporting ethical violations and areas for improvement in the workplace” (Mental Health America, 2020). There are a number of steps a workplace can take to empower employees and foster mental and emotional wellness: destigmatization of the discussion of mental health, provision of resources and benefits, and education and workshops on positive mental health practices (Hennebry, n.d.).

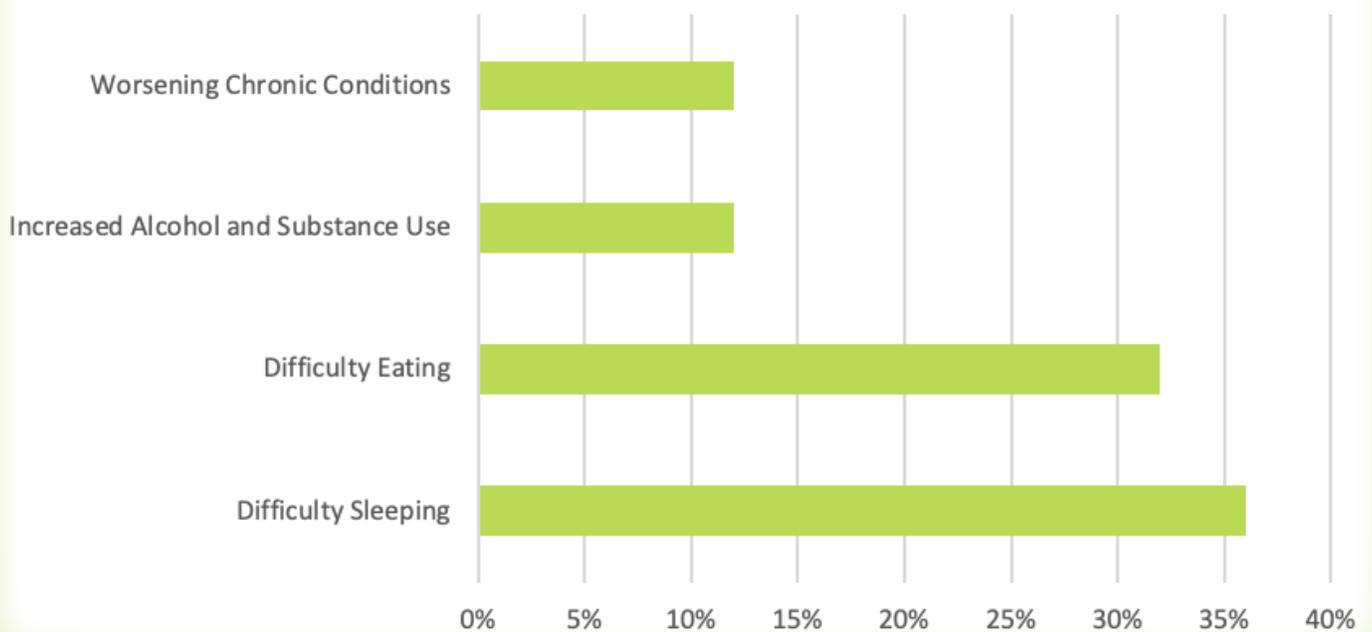
These steps can boost employee productivity, pride in work, and confidence (Mind the Workplace Report), but they can also boost bottom line: according to the World Health Organization, “For every US \$ 1 put into scaled up treatment for common mental disorders, there is a return of US \$ 4 in improved health and productivity” (Mental Health in the Workplace, World Health Organization).

## Adults Reporting Negative Effects on Mental Health Due to Worry and Stress over Covid-19 from March-July 2020



Source: [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)

## Reported Specific Negative Impacts on Mental Health and Wellbeing due to Covid-19



Source: [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)

# COMMUNICATION

Employee productivity and an empowered culture are also enhanced by thoughtful, transparent and regular communication. However, if there have long been barriers to effective communication, there are now new ones. More people are working from home, which has complicated how we communicate, when we communicate, even where we communicate. Virtual interactions have changed how we interact, and protocols have changed as well, whether it is your dog barking during a Zoom meeting or logging on from your front porch. To complicate this, the recent upsurge in Black Lives Matter protests and the robust and necessary national conversations about structural racism have and will continue to create new challenges and opportunities for all of us. HR directors will be at the center of these challenges and opportunities. We can help you navigate these in meaningful, proactive ways that put you at the forefront as a leader in your company and industry.



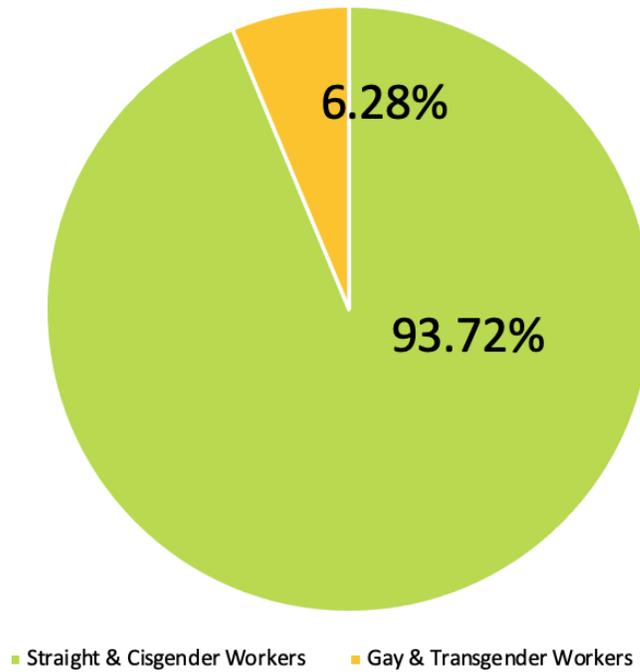
# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

Good communication relies on shared values, goals and perceptions. It asks that we listen respectfully as we build relationships with coworkers and teammates. There are, however, a number of factors which can negatively limit human relations, including homogeneity of a workforce. If most employees in your workplace look alike and share common values, experiences and beliefs, this can be a benefit but also a possible drawback. For instance, more than half of LGBTQ+ employees believe that their gender identity or sexual orientation has slowed their progress at work (Accenture, *Getting to Equal*, 2020) -- but if a majority of employees present as straight, managers and co-workers may not even realize that an LGBTQ+ employee goes home at night feeling stigmatized, demoralized, possibly even targeted. And marginalized employees can feel discounted or disparaged even if their co-workers don't intend to slight or disrespect them.

Overt acts of racism or sexism in the workplace may be relatively rare, but microaggressions occur far too often, due primarily to unconscious bias and to structural privileges based on being white, straight, male, cisgender, Christianity, and nondisabled. To have an empowered work force, we need to understand not just discrimination but also privilege, which most of us take for granted if we have access to it. As author Peggy McIntosh puts it, "White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" (1989). Understanding how structural privilege -- and structural, intersectional oppression -- work and can be challenged is essential if a company wants to truly be inclusive, and most HR managers just don't have the expertise in this area to create comprehensive programs. In our experience, there is a built-in bias when the person conducting live or virtual trainings works in that organization.

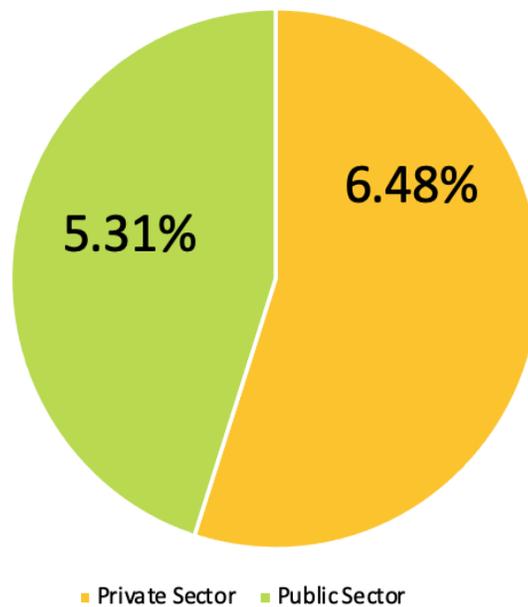
As Emma Hinchcliffe notes in an article about the sexual harassment of women of color in the workplace, "An environment where people congregate not quite by choice or interest, where everyone faces pressure over their livelihoods and career ambitions, and where people from different backgrounds wind up working closely together is ripe for conflict -- including racism." Thus, the workplace is unique in that it brings together people who may have little in common. But we can help employees find common ground across differences to collaboratively create an empowered, inclusive workplace.

Percentage of Gay & Transgender Workers in the U.S. Workforce Compared to the Percentage of Straight and Cisgender Workers in the U.S. Workforce



Source: [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org)

Percentage of Gay & Transgender Workers in the Public & Private Sectors of the Workforce



Source: [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org)



### Percentage of People in the U.S. with a Disability and Their Presence in the U.S. Workforce

26% of adults in the U.S. have some type of disability.

Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

In 2019, 19.3% of persons with a disability were employed.

Source: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

In contrast, the employment-population ratio for persons without a disability was 66.3 percent.

Source: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)



Creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace is the right thing to do, but data also shows that diversity and inclusion foster innovation, can increase profits by as much as 33%, and can make companies more able to adapt to changing situations (Lorenzo et. al, 2018; Strauss, 2018). And while more and more companies are aligning themselves with diversity initiatives, it demands more than lip service or virtue signaling, as the resignation of Adidas’s HR chief reminds us. Despite her public commitment to diversity, she resigned after employee inquiries into and complaints about racist practices.

Diversity and inclusion demand structural change, a potentially thorough re-imagining of policies, procedures and protocol. As Jennifer Brown, author of *Inclusion: Diversity, the New Work Force, and the Will to Change* (2018) put it in an interview, “Diversity is the who and the what,” while “Inclusion is the how” (Arruda, 2016). A workplace that is diverse but not inclusive is usually disempowered, and marginalized employees often have higher turnover rates due to unhappiness at the job (Forbes.com, 2018). Inclusion refers to how a company ensures that all voices are valued and respected. This demands strategies and policies that are concrete, sustained and accessible. Many diversity program initiatives are not even scratching the surface to create any real change or transformation, a mistake that prevents them from having happier and more productive employees.

# WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

In a study by Lower and Associates, 1.8 million workdays are missed by employees each year due to workplace violence which results in more than \$55 million in lost wages. Annual comprehensive costs to businesses' estimated losses' are now \$130 billion in the U.S. compared to only \$36 billion in 1995. Workplace violence has cost employers an additional \$100 billion since 1995.

We tend to think of violence in specific ways -- as visible, physical and overt. But it can also be verbal, implicit and unconscious, and failures of communication can make this worse. With so many people working from home, workplace violence has ebbed, but underlying issues have not gone away.

It is a serious HR Issue. OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) estimates over 2 million employees are annually impacted by workplace violence, defined as "an act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs in the work site." However, 25% of workplace violence goes unreported (OSHA).

*Do your employees feel safe at work?*

Approximately 1 in 7 employees do *not*. (SHRM, 2020). According to a SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management) (2019) survey, close to 50% of HR directors reported at least one incident of workplace violence, up 36% since 2012, and at least 25% report an incident in the last year. Do employees know what to do when they are subjected to or witness workplace violence?

Most employers do not have a plan in place to handle this if and when it should occur. In a SHRM article by Burden (2019), the majority of HR professionals say their organization provides workplace violence training and how to respond to an act of workplace violence, but more than one-third do not provide such training. In addition, SHRM said one-third of employees and nearly 1 in 5 HR professionals say they are unsure or do not know what to do if they witness or are involved in a workplace violence incident.

# Workplace Violence can be Deadly

Shootings accounted for 78% of all workplace homicides in 2010 (405 injuries) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017), and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2017), 800 people died as a result of workplace violence in 2017. In addition, FBI data shows active shooters on the rise over the past 20 years. According to the Gun Violence Archive (2017), there were “418 mass shootings in 2019, compared to 270 in 2014.” And if we break it down by gender, we need to know that women are overwhelming victims at work. Approximately 17% of fatalities are men and 11% are women BUT when it comes to homicide in the workplace, 24% of fatalities are women and 9% are men. 40% of women victims are killed by a relative or domestic partner compared to only 2% of men.

## #MeTOO: Costs of Sexual Assault and Harassment in the Workplace

Returning to our point that violence is not always physical or overt, we need to consider subtler but no less powerful forms of violence. The #MeTOO movement has brought national attention to the problems of sexual harassment and assault, both of which constitute workplace violence, according to the OSHA definition. It is a gendered and racial issue, too. Between 2005-2015, women made 80% of sexual harassment charges to the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) (Frye, 2017).

Among women, Black women were the most likely of all racial and ethnic groups to have filed a sexual harassment charge, and 1 in 17 sexual harassment charges filed with EEOC also alleged racial discrimination (Rossie, Tucker, and Patrick, 2018). Yet only 1 in 10 ever formally report incidents of harassment -- let alone make a formal charge to the EEOC -- out of embarrassment or, worse, fear of retaliation (Frye, 2017). A 2013 SHRM survey found that 16% of organizations have had a domestic violence incident in the last five years, yet 65% of companies don't have a formal workplace domestic violence prevention policy, according to research by SHRM. And this costs companies in terms of higher employee turnover (Chan et. al.; 2008; Fitzgerald et.al., 1997; Sims, Drasgow and Fitzgerald, 2005; & Purl, Hall, and Griffith, 2016); increased employee absences (Khubchandani and Price, 2015); and reduced productivity (Raver and Gelfand, 2005).

The financial costs are vast: domestic and intimate partner violence results in the loss of almost 8 million days of paid work, the consequence of which is a \$1.8 billion loss in productivity for employers (SHRM, 2018).

# BLACK LIVES MATTER: THE COSTS OF RACISM IN THE WORKPLACE

The murder of George Floyd has re-ignited social justice activism and the message that Black Lives Matter, that our nation has deep racial inequalities and inequities, and this needs to change. In a 2020 Glassdoor survey, 42% of U.S. workers reported that they had witnessed or experienced racism at work, and 55% said their companies should do more to address racism (Akhtar, 2020). We know that only three Fortune 500 Company CEOs are Black (.08%) despite making up 12.6% of the population. Racism in the workplace typically manifests as microaggressions (Hirsch, SHRM 2018), and though race claims are filed more often than any other claim in the workplace, they have the worst rate of success, with only 15% receiving some kind of relief (Jameel and Yerardi, 2019).

Ripple effects from George Floyd protests can activate racial issues in companies. Even as companies attempt to integrate diversity and inclusion, “the countervailing force of racism often undermines that effort, creating challenges that HR is often responsible for overcoming” (Hirsch, SHRM, 2018). One solution can be better education, communication strategies, and equity of hiring and promotion policies. At TCC, we provide customized trainings to address these issues in ways that result in a more harmonious workplace culture.



## Percentage of Women and Their Presence in the U.S. Workforce

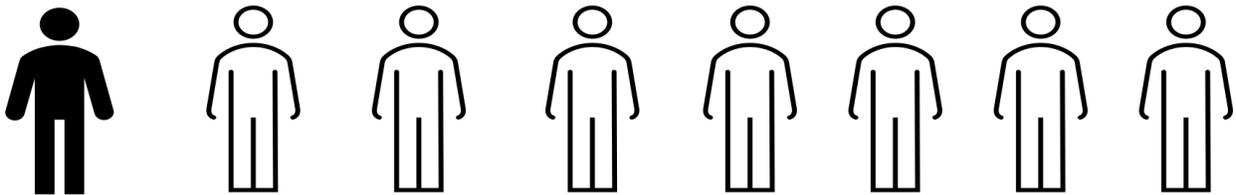
Women account for almost half (48.9 percent) of the overall labor force

However, women do not represent even a quarter (20.2 percent) of board directors across Fortune 500 companies

The situation is even worse for people of color: minority women and men represent only 14.4 percent of board directors.

Source: [www.journals.ala.org](http://www.journals.ala.org)

## Percentage of Black People and Their Presence in the U.S. Workforce



“In 2016, Blacks accounted for nearly 1 out of 8 people in the labor force. The number of Blacks in the labor force is projected to increase from 19.6 million in 2016 (12.3 percent of the 159.2 million total) to 21.6 million in 2026 (12.7 percent of 169.7 million total).”

Source: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

# HR MUST TAKE ACTION

According to an article by Gaul (2018), HR directors need to be at the risk table to have input on these issues in terms of understanding risks. As one CEO stated, "It's no surprise that the biggest and most successful companies in the world have invited HR to sit at the table." What preventative measures is HR taking to mitigate

## HOW CAN TCC HELP YOU ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?

It starts with our assessment and then culture transformation through education and training. Knowing how rapidly things are changing, a first step is to take an objective assessment. An outside firm can help determine the priority issues that are most activated in your workplace culture now. TCC can help determine the priority issues that are most activated in your workplace culture of which you may not be aware, and we offer free in person or virtual consultation for companies. From there, a paid assessment can be done for your workplace to prioritize the specific areas that most powerfully impact your workplace culture to have happier, more productive employees, and that is a win-win for everyone! TCC provides customized solutions and in person or virtual training programs, as well as coaching for all levels of the organization. The goal of TCC is to help create an empowered workplace culture so employees can feel safe in their work environment. A disempowered workplace negatively impacts not only your bottom line but also your company's standing in the community and in your industry.

You can't afford not to address these issues, and the mission of TCC is to help you create an empowered workplace culture that supports a pro-active approach to workplace issues.

We can create a plan that allows you to sleep better at night knowing that you are doing all you can to create and sustain an empowered workplace culture us at [support@transformingcultureconsultants.com](mailto:support@transformingcultureconsultants.com). Want immediate support? go to our website at [www.transformingcultureconsultants.com](http://www.transformingcultureconsultants.com) to sign up for a free virtual consultation.

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