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Paradigm Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update

How the Racial Justice Movement is Reshaping Corporate America

The last twelve months have been a tipping point in the racial justice movement in the United States. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others sparked outrage and mass activism that led more Americans than ever to recognize racism as a big problem in the United States.

Over the course of the following year, the continued murders of Black Americans by law enforcement, the negative disproportionate impact Black and Brown Americans experienced from the coronavirus pandemic, and the increase in anti-Asian hate crimes called attention to what many people, and particularly people of color in this country, already knew — systems, attitudes, and institutions that have formed over centuries often produce unfair, unequal outcomes for people of color.

Our workplaces were not exempt from this national awakening. Many businesses publicly voiced their support of Black Lives Matter, condemned racism, and pledged to make their own companies more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Organizations also found that their employees wanted to discuss what was happening in the world around them at work, and navigated those complex conversations with varying degrees of success.
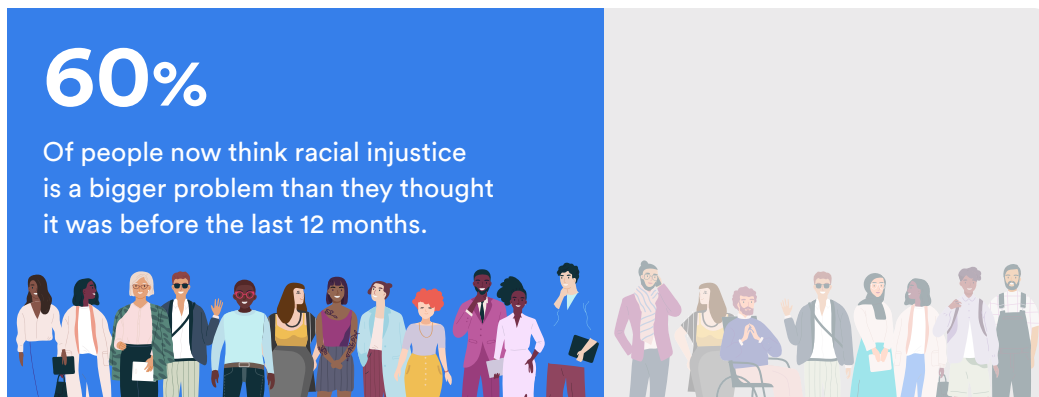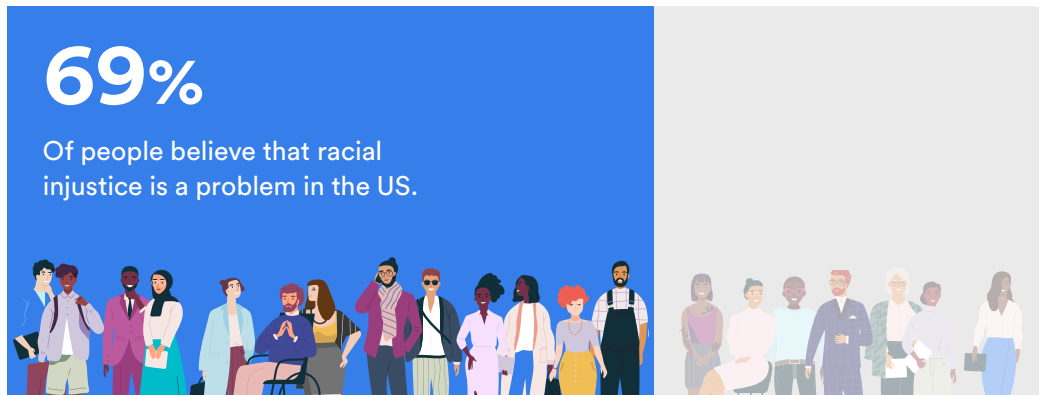
What will these last twelve months mean for the future of corporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts? Over the past year, Paradigm has worked with hundreds of organizations across industries to develop, implement, and measure the efficacy of DEI initiatives. We've also spoken with thousands of employees. To understand whether the trends we were seeing are reflected among the broader American population, we partnered with The Harris Poll in May 2021 to conduct an online survey among more than 2,000 adults.

In the following report, using data from that poll, we'll share how people's views on racial injustice have changed over the past year, what people want from their employers with respect to DEI, and how forward-thinking companies can navigate the evolving landscape to better attract, engage, and retain employees.
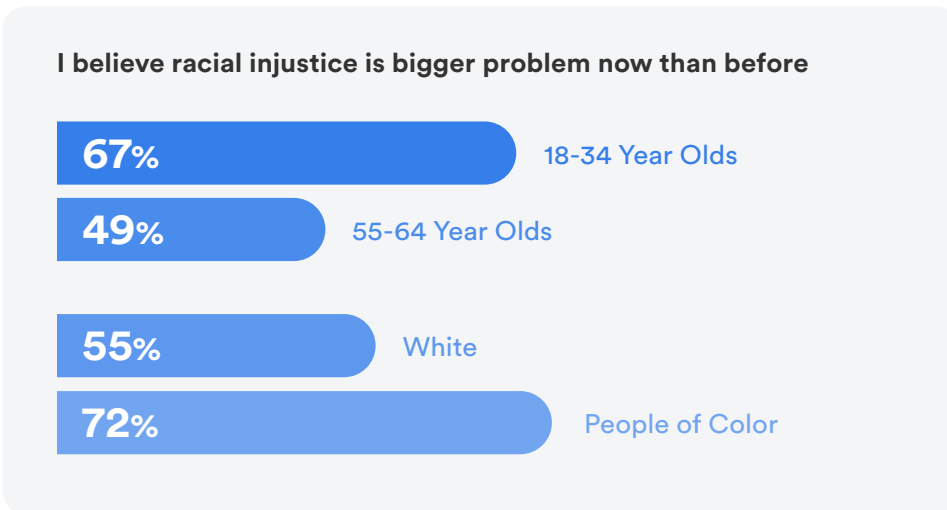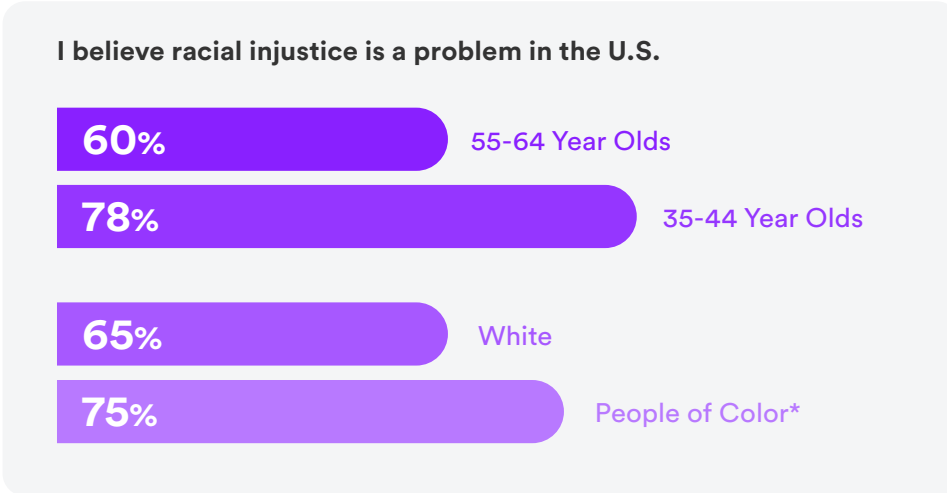
Evolving Views on Racial Injustice

The past year has decidedly increased Americans' awareness of and their desire to support those impacted by racism and racial injustice.

69%

Of people believe that racial injustice is a problem in the US.

60%

Of people now think racial injustice is a bigger problem than they thought it was before the last 12 months.

While a majority of people shared this perspective across all demographic groups, perspectives on racial injustice varied by age and race/ethnicity:

I believe racial injustice is a problem in the U.S.

60%	55-64 Year Olds
78%	35-44 Year Olds
65%	White
75%	People of Color*

I believe racial injustice is bigger problem now than before

67%	18-34 Year Olds
49%	55-64 Year Olds
55%	White
72%	People of Color

Note: Survey respondents included people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. For purposes of statistical analysis for this report, anyone who identified as Black or African American, Hispanic or LatinX, Native American or Alaskan Native, South Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino, Arab/West Asian, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Pacific Islander, or any other race was combined to create the group for "people of color".

Not only are many people aware of racial injustice, that awareness may be motivating them to take action, with some nuance between racial/ethnic groups. Sixty one percent of people said they want to be an ally** to marginalized groups, though people of color were more likely to express that desire (**68%**) compared to white people (**56%**).

Shifting Expectations of Workplaces

Americans aren't just motivated to take individual action, a majority of people want to see organizations do the same — **66%** think that companies should take action on racial justice issues.

As organizations consider what this looks like, we're seeing companies across industries grappling with an increase in workplace conversations about inequity and injustice. Do these types of conversations belong at work? The majority of people believe so — **68%** said we should be able to discuss racial justice issues at work.

While this belief was more prevalent with people ages 35-44, a strong majority of respondents across every age group agreed.

AGE GROUPS	ALL	18-34	35-44	45-54	55+
We should be able to discuss racial justice issues at work	**68%**	**67%**	**78%**	**71%**	**65%**
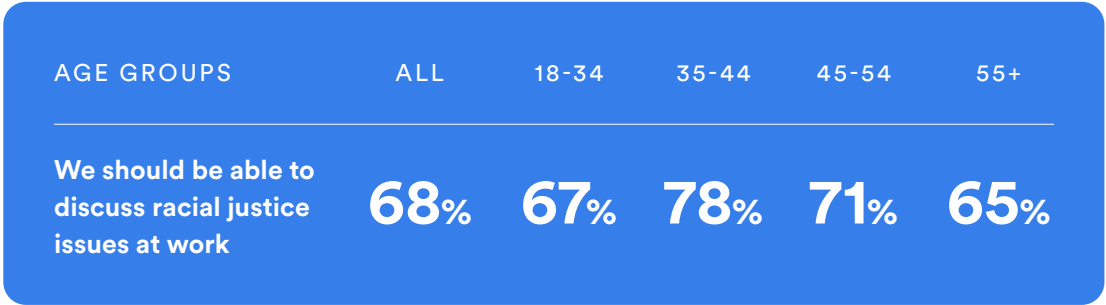
Base: Americans

For a better understanding of people's expectations of their own organizations, we asked employed Americans*** what they want to see from their employers. A majority said they would hold their company accountable if it didn't take a stance on racial injustice, even during a period of economic uncertainty — **54%** said they would consider leaving their company if it didn't speak out directly against racial injustice. This belief was particularly high among employed people ages 18-44 years old, which includes generations that are more diverse and have said that DEI is a requirement when considering career options. Sixty three percent said they would consider leaving their employer if it didn't speak out against racial injustice (as compared to **40%** of those over 45+).

Respondents who would consider leaving their company if it didn't speak out against racial injustice

63% under 45

40% over 45
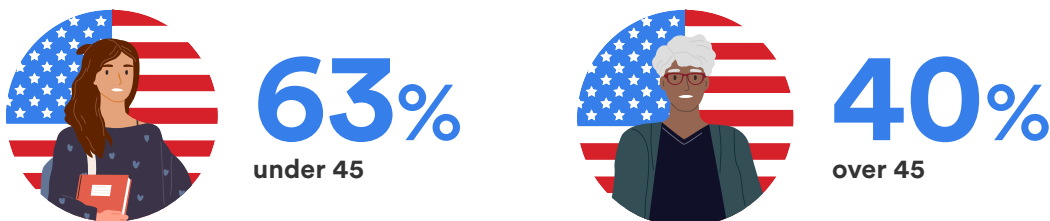
How Do Employees Feel About Their Organizations' DEI Efforts?

Many people don't just want companies to respond to racial injustice in general, they want their own employers to create an inclusive workplace.

72% wanted their employer to invest in creating and support an inclusive work environment.

While there were significant differences among age groups with those ages 35-44 more likely than any other age group to want this, there was no significant difference between racial/ethnic groups.

AGE GROUPS	TOTAL	18-34	35-44	45-54	55+
I want my employer to invest in creating/ supporting an inclusive work environment	72%	69%	84%	71%	67%

Base: Employed Americans

While the call from employees is clear, most organizations still have work to do in creating inclusive environments. **Nearly half of Americans (49%) witnessed or experienced racial bias or discrimination at work during the past 12 months.**

14% experienced bias or discrimination related to their race/ethnicity;

20% experienced microaggressions;

20% witnessed bias or discrimination against others based on race/ethnicity;

17% witnessed microaggressions against a colleague.

*Note: respondents were able to select multiple responses in this question

Additionally, we saw inconsistency in whether and how people who witnessed or experienced racial bias or discrimination took action.

Among the **49%** of people who witnessed or experienced racial bias or discrimination at work in the last 12 months:

23% reported an incident where they were a victim of racial bias or discrimination to management/ human resources;

20% reported an incident of racial bias or discrimination that they witnessed to management/human resources;

15% confronted a person who was being racially biased or discriminatory towards them; 19% confronted a person who was being racially biased or discriminatory towards someone else;

19% told a colleague about an incident of racial bias or discrimination that they witnessed;

17% left a review about an experience of racial bias or discrimination on a job/company review site (e.g., Glassdoor);

7% quit their job after witnessing/experiencing racial bias or discrimination, and 15% of people said a colleague quit their job.

*Note: people were able to select multiple responses in this question

People's desire for more inclusive workplaces is clear, but non-inclusive and even discriminatory behaviors are a significant barrier. And while people want to speak up and take action, they may need help in knowing what to do.

Paradigm Recommendations: How Should Corporate DEI Strategies Evolve?

This polling data supports what we're hearing from employees across industries: the last 12 months have changed many people's perspective on racial injustice, and employees are increasingly expecting not only commitment, but action from their employers. People also want to take action individually, but don't always know how.

How can organizations that want to attract, engage, and retain a diverse workforce take action based on these findings? We have a few key recommendations.

- **Communicate diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies and policies to employees.** The data are clear that people care about this, so it's helpful to let employees know the organization's stance; why racial justice or, more broadly, DEI is important; and what actions the organization is taking. This may sound simple or obvious, but Paradigm works with many organizations who are doing important work that their employees have no idea about. As a part of this effort, organizations should ensure employees know how they can report any incidents of racial bias or discrimination at work — these are still far too common, and many people don't know what to do when they experience or witness something.

- **Give people tools to create more inclusive workplaces, and upskill them on the topics they care about.** People want their employers to create inclusive work environments, they want to take action as allies, and they're striving to support colleagues who experience discrimination and microaggressions. But they need education and skills to support these positive intentions. Consider investing in ongoing DEI learning for your workforce. Sixty three percent of people said they had some form of DEI training during the past year, but in our experience, many corporate trainings are one-off sessions without any plan for sustainability. To make training effective, it's important to have an ongoing strategy.

The last 12 months have changed many people's perspective on racial injustice, and employees are increasingly expecting not only commitment, but action from their employers.

- **Make space for people to discuss racial injustice at work.** A large majority of people across all ages and racial/ethnic identities want to be having these conversations at work, but to have them effectively, it's important to recognize potential challenges. For people of color, these conversations can lead to macro/microaggressions that cause harm. White people may experience discomfort or defensiveness as they contend with topics related to privilege and racism. When organizations don't plan for these types of dialogues thoughtfully, they may ultimately undermine inclusion. By creating dedicated spaces for conversations with explicit norms and guidance, and allowing people to opt-in, organizations can respond to employees' desire to engage in these topics while limiting the risk of harm.

- **Respond to the call to publicly express your organization's desire to combat racial injustice, but don't make it lip service** — employees and the public are increasingly holding organizations accountable. If you are making a concrete commitment, have a plan in place for following through — particularly if you intend to make a public announcement. If you've already made commitments, update key stakeholders on your progress. At a minimum, organizations committed to combating racial injustice should focus internally on how to make the workplace more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Longer-term, once your internal infrastructure is in place, it's helpful to consider the impact your organization has on its community and the world — is there room to set more ambitious goals?

Finally, acknowledge that this will be an ongoing practice for your organization and create opportunities for continued learning and conversation. As the data and our experiences over the past year show, across age groups and races/ethnicities, people are becoming more aware of the realities of racial injustice and they care deeply about their employers' commitment to DEI.

How organizations respond to these evolving views will determine how successful they are in attracting, engaging, and retaining their workforce.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of **Paradigm** between May 4-6, 2021 among 2,035 adults ages 18+, among whom 868 are employed full-time or part-time. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact Nicole Colwell at Paradigm.

*Survey respondents included people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. For purposes of statistical analysis for this report, anyone who identified as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Native American or Alaskan Native, South Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino, Arab/West Asian, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Pacific Islander, or any other race was combined to create the group for "people of color". The relationship between the responses from white respondents and responses from each reported racial/ethnic groups, which included higher-level racial categories like Black or African American, Asian, and Hispanic or Latinx, were directionally similar to that which was reported for "people of color" overall.

**Paradigm defines allyship as an ongoing commitment of people from systematically advantaged groups to advance a culture of inclusion in a group or organization through intentional, conscious, unselfish and courageous action with the sole goal of supporting people from systematically disadvantaged groups.

***Employed Americans is defined as those employed full-time or part-time.

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About Paradigm

Paradigm is a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy firm that has worked with hundreds of companies around the world to build stronger, more inclusive organizations. We design data-driven strategies, implement programs with impact, and train employees and leaders for success.

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