

FINDINGS REPORT

# EXPLORING COVID-19 THROUGH A DIVERSITY & INCLUSION LENS

MAY 2020



**POPE**  
CONSULTING

# CONTENTS

Introduction: Background Information and Demographics

Results

- Individual
- Team
- Manager
- Organization

Conclusions and Recommendations: Now + Re-entry

Impactful Comments

Participant Feedback



# INTRODUCTION

- An anonymous digital focus group was conducted on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 by Pope Consulting. 101 participants joined the session.
- The purpose was to explore the impact of COVID-19 through a Diversity & Inclusion lens.
- Nearly half of the participants were based in the Northeast, with the Midwest region being the next most represented region in the sample.
- There was nearly equal representation of participants who were Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers at roughly 33%, respectively.

INDUSTRY	
Healthcare	13%
Manufacturing	4%
Education	4%
Financial Services	5%
Technology	18%
Hospitality	2%
Other*	54%

GENERATION	
Generation Z (22 & under)	2%
Millennial (23 – 38)	31%
Generation X (39 – 54)	33%
Baby Boomer (55 – 73)	33%
Silent Generation	1%

GENDER	
Males	34%
Females	63%
Non-binary	3%

REGION	
Northeast	45%
Midwest	25%
Northwest	7%
Southeast	13%
Southwest	9%
Outside U.S.	1%

RACE / ETHNICITY	
Asian-American / Pacific Island	13%
African-American	27%
White	49%
Hispanic / Latin X	7%
Mixed Race	4%

POSITION	
Individual Contributor	46%
Front-line Manager	4%
Middle Management	24%
Senior Management	18%
C-Suite	8%

\*Other Industries: Professional Services, Transportation, Energy, & Government and Public Admin.

# RESULTS | THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE

## Mental Health during COVID-19

**7 in 10**

indicated that maintaining mental health has been their biggest challenge during COVID-19

**57%**

have struggled with anxiety during this time

### The specific challenges that have affected mental health included:

- Concern about family members who are elderly, at-risk, or deemed essential employees
- Lack of work-life balance – work hours blending into “non-work” hours
- Isolation from family and friends
- Concerns about loss of income (401K, investments & paycheck)

# RESULTS | THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE

## Mental Health during COVID-19 (Participants selected 4 words that best described their overall feelings since beginning of pandemic)

Cultural and generational differences that emerged from the data:

50% of Asian-Americans have been **sad**

75% of Asian-American have been **anxious**

POLL OPTIONS	
Fearful	47%
Sad	28%
Angry	12%
Confused	17%
Anxious	57%
Bored	20%
Resentful	3%
Calm	12%
Empathetic	42%
Grateful	33%
Hopeful	33%
Skeptical	20%

75% of Asian-Americans and 67% of Blacks reported feeling **fearful**

38% of Asian Americans have been **angry**

50% of Asian-Americans and 45% of all Millennials have felt **skeptical**

# RESULTS | THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE

## Top Concerns about the Future

POLL OPTIONS	
Being laid off	38%
Loss in 401k/financial investments	50%
Reduction in pay	32%
Reduction or loss of benefits	26%
Reduction in training, growth and development opportunities	34%
Reduced cross-functional collaboration	9%
Changing work culture	40%
Increased micro-management	16%
Other	15%

Millennials (**28%**) were the most concerned generation about “Increased micro-management”

Women (**37%**) were more likely than men (**26%**) to be concerned with a “Reduction in pay”

Women (**40%**) were more likely than men (**4%**) to be concerned with a “Reduction/loss of benefits”

# RESULTS | THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE

## Similar Experiences, Not a Common Reality

While we all have shared similar experiences during COVID-19, we don't all share a common reality.

**8 out of 10**

agree that single mothers are facing more challenges

**79%**

said that working women have had double duty  
(work + extra household duties)

*“Expectation from partners and children to do it all. Work as if you don't have a family, yet take care of your family as if you do not work.” - Woman*

## Gender Cut

**2 out of 3 women**

agreed that the pandemic has increased their working time.

### Other gender differences:

- Primary responsibility for being “the teacher” for school-age children has disproportionately landed on women.
- Female participants (**65%**) were more likely to feel a sense of “burnout” than male participants (**50%**).

# RESULTS | THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE

## Similar Experiences, Not a Common Reality

COVID-19 has had a disparate impact on African-Americans, Hispanics and Asian-Americans.

*How many people do you personally know who have been infected with COVID-19?*

POLL OPTIONS	
None	44%
1 – 5	50%
6 – 10	6%
11+	0%

Only **19%** of Black participants selected “none”

**75%** of Black participants indicated that they know “1-5” people who have been infected

**7 out of 10**

agreed that Black and Brown communities are suffering more during this pandemic

**86%**

of Hispanic/Latin X indicated that minority communities have been harder hit due to health inequities

## Race/Ethnicity Cut

Non-Asians were less aware of the additional struggles/fears faced by Asian-Americans due to COVID-19:

**37%** believed that Asians have experienced discrimination

**VS**

**60%** of Asian-Americans – which may explain their feelings of anxiety, anger and skepticism (on page 5)



# RESULTS | THE TEAM

## Major Source of Support during COVID-19

87%

described their interactions with peers as  
being **effective** or **very effective**

Peers have supported each other through...

### Virtual Check-Ins

- Staying connected through virtual coffee breaks, happy hours and “venting” sessions.
- One-on-one conversations that are “real” and beyond the scope of just work.

### Uplifting Content

- Sharing positive, inspiring and/or humorous stories to lift the spirits of team members.

### Enhanced Teamwork

- Demonstrating more patience, empathy and flexibility.
- Stepping up to share and help manage the workloads of teammates when necessary.

# RESULTS | THE MANAGER

## Defining the “Remote-Work” Experience

The quality of the “remote work” experience is defined by the quality of relationship between manager and direct report(s).

*Please indicate the effectiveness of your manager’s interactions during this outbreak.*

POLL OPTIONS	Management	Individual Contributor
Very Effective	35%	52%
Effective	50%	23%
Neither Effective nor Ineffective	5%	13%
Ineffective	0%	6%
Very Ineffective	10%	6%

**75%** of Individual Contributors described their interactions with their manager as **effective or very effective.**

### Employees feel supported and included when managers:

#### Consistently communicate

- Supporting employees through open and transparent communication via team calls/video conferencing.
- One-on-one “check-ins” that focus on personal/family well-being prior to discussing “work” topics.

#### Demonstrate Trust

- Empowering employees through increased flexibility and empathy.
- Resisting the urge to micro-manage or inundate team with excessive virtual calls/meetings.

# RESULTS | ORGANIZATION

## Organizations have responded effectively to COVID-19 so far

**95%**

feel their organization has responded to this outbreak **effectively or very effectively**.

*Please indicate the effectiveness of your organization's response during this outbreak.*

POLL OPTIONS	Management	Individual Contributor
Very Effective	50%	56%
Effective	50%	34%
Neither Effective nor Ineffective	0%	6%
Ineffective	0%	4%
Very Ineffective	0%	0%

**7 out of 10**

hope that their company will continue to be flexible

**65%**

are worried about their business going forward

# CONCLUSIONS + RECOMMENDATIONS

## Now + Re-entry

- Individual
- Team
- Manager
- Organization



# NOW + RE-ENTRY | THE INDIVIDUAL

## NOW | Practice Self-Care

62% agreed that “depression and anxiety” has been one of the biggest challenges faced overall during this time.

### The most popular practices/habits for managing mental health and productivity:

- Exercise/go for a walk whenever possible
- Daily “To-Do” lists

76% agreed that  
“Chucking the To-Do list”  
and just going for a walk is helpful

- Maintain regular work hours as much as possible
- Take breaks when needed

## RE-ENTRY | Empathy + Listening

While we have all shared similar experiences, many have been uniquely impacted due to their gender, race or ethnicity.

When someone shares an experience with you, **LISTEN** and **ASK QUESTIONS** to better understand their reality.

# NOW + RE-ENTRY | THE TEAM

NOW |



Prioritize Teamwork

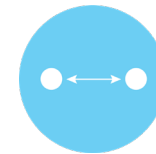
**86%**

identified teamwork and patience as one of the best ways to support one another during this time.

**69%**

agreed that helping one another solve broader problems has been really supportive.

RE-ENTRY |



Practice Social  
Distancing

**90%**

said that practicing social distancing was the **SINGLE** most important thing they would like their peers to do when it is safe to re-enter the workplace.

**8** out of **10**

would like their peers to be considerate of personal space.

# NOW + RE-ENTRY | THE MANAGER

NOW |



Daily Check-ins

**85%**

of Individual Contributors identified daily check-ins as the most important thing their manager has done to make them feel included and supported while “remote-working.”

- Focus on the individual and how they are doing, as opposed to solely concentrating on what work is getting done.

RE-ENTRY |



Holistic Leadership

The people on your team will have different mental, emotional and physical needs as they transition back into the workplace based on their unique experience during this outbreak.

Ask the right kinds of questions to learn how you can uniquely serve and lead the individuals on your team as they re-enter the workplace.

### Questions to Ask:

- In what ways has this pandemic impacted you that I might not be aware of?
- How can I support you during this time?

# RE-ENTRY | THE MANAGER

RE-ENTRY |



Be Flexible

Nearly **9** out of **10**

identified continued flexibility for staff to work from home and/or shift their schedules to accommodate childcare as **SINGLE** most important thing they would like from their manager when it is safe to re-enter the workplace.

- Be prepared to make accommodations for working parents who have childcare concerns as summer camps and daycares continue restrictive guidelines.
- Additional accommodations may be needed for high-risk employees or those who perceive themselves to be at higher risk of COVID-19 infection/complications.

RE-ENTRY |



Re-define Priorities

**78%** agreed that it will be important for managers to redefine individual and team priorities as they re-enter the workplace.

- Agility will be key as organizations consider how they need to pivot in order to thrive in a post-pandemic marketplace.
- Employees will be more resilient and able to contribute more effectively if they are proactively engaged and included in the re-entry process.



# NOW + RE-ENTRY | THE ORGANIZATION

NOW |



Communications

- Continue to deliver consistent and transparent communications/updates.
- Provide insight into short-term mitigation plans to help restore confidence in a post-pandemic future.

RE-ENTRY |



Create new listening forums/channels

*Please indicate if you would like some type of forum in your organization to discuss any negative experiences you have had based on race/ethnicity/gender when you return to work.*

POLL OPTIONS	
Yes	48%
No	19%
Not Sure	33%

- Non-whites (53%) were more likely to be interested in some type of forum/discussion than Whites (42%).
- Fireside chats, pulse surveys & anonymous focus group sessions can provide a vehicle for employees to “speak their truth” as it relates to their COVID-19 experiences.

# RE-ENTRY | THE ORGANIZATION

RE-ENTRY |

PTO

Update PTO & Leave  
Policies

86%

identified the need for peers to stay home while sick as one of the most important things that they would like others to do as they transition back into the workplace.

- Protect the health of all employees by providing more flexibility with PTO and leave policies to prevent employees from having to choose between protecting their co-workers vs. being penalized for missing work.

RE-ENTRY |

EAP

Company-Sponsored  
EAP Resources

With the chaos the pandemic has caused, employees may have forgotten about the valuable resources available through your organization's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

- Encourage employees to take advantage of the resources EAP provides.
- Provide contact information and highlight the key services that are available.
- Recognize that there may be some employees who are grieving the loss of loved ones due to the pandemic.

(If your organization doesn't have EAP, identify resources available in the Community and share this info with employees.)

# IMPACTFUL COMMENTS

- “I am Asian so the negativity here is huge given this group is being singled out as the ‘cause’ of this virus.”
- “I have concerns for the Asian community. While I have not witnessed any direct impact, I continue to read stories and have concerns about what that may mean when we return to the workplace.”
- “I think women, especially mothers, have been impacted more than men as many women and mothers have been tasked with being the professional, the mother, the teacher, etc.”
- “Anxiety. Worrying about my elderly and at-risk family members. I’m immunocompromised, so worrying about my own health. Being unable to say goodbye to people I know that have passed away. Trying to work on top of it all.”
- “Women are primary caregivers in most households. Now they work and care-give 24/7. Many women are exhausted with trying to balance it all and still produce for their jobs.”
- “I think those that are not part of the majority population and had difficulty being ‘invited to the table’ will now have a harder time being noticed and getting growth opportunities.”

# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

- “I appreciate how the platform allowed the safety for transparency.”
- “Easy to participate, fun, informative. Thank you.”
- “It was awesome....What a great way to communicate and gather information.”
- “Very interesting and engaging. I would do it again and recommend to others.”
- “This was a unique/innovative way to conduct a focus group.”
- “Good reminder that we are all going through something but for some, it is worse than others.”
- “It went quickly but it was great to see the perspective of others. Thank you.”
- “Positive based on the goals and time restrictions.”

# THANK YOU

If your organization would like to conduct a similar study on the impact of COVID-19 or any other D&I topics, please contact [merlin@popeconsulting.com](mailto:merlin@popeconsulting.com)

POSITIVE CHANGE STARTS WITH DIALOGUE - LET'S TALK



**POPE CONSULTING**

833.DnI-POPE | 833.364.7673

[www.popeconsulting.com](http://www.popeconsulting.com)