

BE MSP™

A graphic of a target with three concentric circles and a central bullseye, rendered in a light blue color. It is positioned behind the word 'COMMUNITY' in the main title.

COMMUNITY PULSE

RESEARCH FINDINGS REPORT

BE MSP COMMUNITY PULSE

PRESENTED BY GREATER MSP & THE COVEN

Greater MSP and The Coven are inviting BIPOC individuals to participate in a **PAID** virtual discussion about how organizations can be held accountable for advancing racial equity and social justice.

Read on for more details



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Research Design: Executive Summary & Overview

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Unearth & elevate actionable ideas for building accountability into racial equity solutions from BIPOC individuals.

75+ BIPOC individuals were invited to examine organizational actions designed to advance racial equity and share their thoughts about holding organizations accountable. This conversation was focused on examining these actions through the lens of each participant's individual perspective & experience. The conversation explored three dimensions of racial equity work:

1

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Board leadership, hiring, observed holidays, and culture

2

EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Organizations ending contracts with MPD, lobbying, and advocacy

3

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & SUPPORT

Corporate funds and financial support for Black-owned businesses

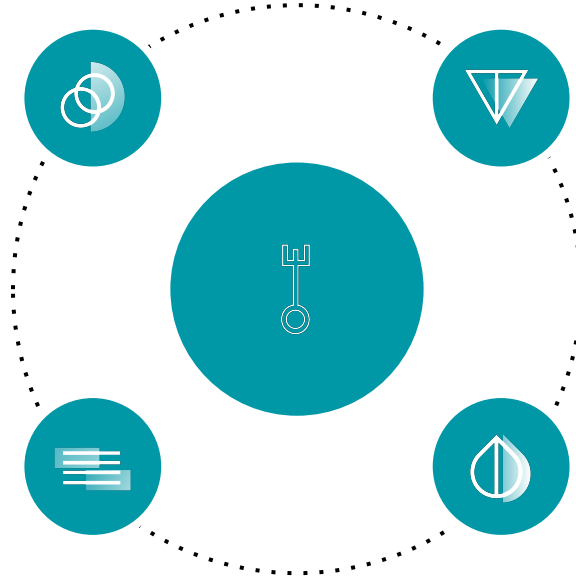
PARTICIPANT MIX

ORGANIZATION SIZE

43% of participants are employed by a large organization of 1,000 people or more while **40% are employed** by small to mid sized organizations of 1,000 people or less.

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

There is a fairly even split among those working in **non-profit organizations (26%)**, **government (20%)**, and **private sector (19%)**.



POSITION

11% of participants are part of an **executive leadership team**, **21%** are in **managerial positions**, and **37%** consider themselves **professional staff**.

AGE & EXPERIENCE

Participants range widely in age and experience, with a well-distributed split among those who've been in the workforce **2-5 years (21%)**, **6-9 years (21%)**, **10-15 years (23%)**, **15-20 years (16%)**, and **21 or more years (16%)**.

The Community Pulse's participant pool reflects a wide range of professional backgrounds and expertise



PARTICIPANT MIX

Recruiting efforts returned a high index of BIPOC identifying women, with above average representation from those identifying as non-binary, genderqueer, queer, or transgender.

RACE

65% of participants identify as Black, while **16% identify as Asian / Pacific Islander** and **15% identify as Hispanic.**

GENDER

Respondents are overwhelmingly **female-identifying (79%)**, while **17% identify as men**, and **7% identify as non-binary, genderqueer, queer, or transgender.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY + KEY FINDINGS

1

ORGANIZATIONS ARE JUST GETTING STARTED

Anti-racist efforts are still early in their formation and many organizations have yet to find their stride, though they're beginning to try.

2

ANTI-RACIST EFFORTS & REPORTING MUST BE CLEAR & ACCESSIBLE

BIPOC employees believe data and transparency should guide all anti-racism efforts in the workplace.

3

ACTION & ACCOUNTABILITY MATTER MOST

BIPOC employees are skeptical about real change but can be convinced through clear actions mapped against timelines that include explicit accountability measures.

4

BIPOC STAFF WANT EXTRA SUPPORT

Advancement opportunities specifically designed for BIPOC employees are still relatively uncommon but would be welcomed.

5

LISTEN TO BIPOC PERSPECTIVES ABOUT ANTI-RACISM FUNDS

Funds dedicated to anti-racism efforts can cause more harm than good if misused, misdirected, or made difficult to access.

Organizations represented in this report are most likely to be in the first two phases

Intent → **Action** → **Accountability**

The missing catalyst that takes organizations from action to accountability is clear plans, timelines, and measurable goals.

Detailed Findings: Internal Organizational Commitments

WHAT MEANINGFUL EQUITY INITIATIVES LOOK LIKE



ANTI-RACIST EFFORTS ARE BEGINNING TO FIND THEIR FOOTING IN ORGANIZATIONS

CEOs & leadership teams are getting involved; starting to align organizational goals and values with anti-racist performance indicators.

The top three activities participants have observed from their organization in relation to racial equity in the workplace include:

1. Having a clear vision for change and personal accountability for delivery from the CEO or highest ranking executives (31%).
2. Active participation in DEI efforts from the CEO and entire executive leadership team (30%).
3. Anti-racist training and principles reflected in employee and organization goals (20%).

ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY MUST START WITH ACTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Participants feel the most important step their organization could take to create a more equitable environment for BIPOC employees include:

- “Immediate actions. Even small. Many organizations have a big talk, but never act.”
- “Promoting BIPOC employees and begin creating an open conversation around race equity. Change the goals of the organization’s future and incorporate the needs of BIPOC members.”
- “Lift up the work of BIPOC employees (authentically, not tokenization) and acknowledge how good we make you look. Don't co-opt our perspectives and work.”

MONEY & TIME-DELINEATED ACTIONS ARE MOST MEANINGFUL

Organizations aren't advancing racial justice on a mass scale just yet, but some are beginning to shift behaviors and priorities.

Though participants were most likely to say they hadn't seen organizations take admirable action towards racial justice, others said they admired organizations that have:

- “Communicated a specific number of dollars towards programming and job positions for BIPOC staff, as well as a timeline of when this would take place.”
- “Created a diverse advisory board within the organization made up of different roles. They were tasked with assisting in recruiting and interviewing, amongst other initiatives like addressing pay, child care, etc.”

IT'S TIME TO HIRE & PROMOTE BIPOC EMPLOYEES INTO POSITIONS OF POWER

BIPOC employees are hungry for representation at every level and want to see employers promoting from within.

When asked what changes participants would personally like to see their organization pursue in relation to racial equity in the workplace, the top two most common responses were:

- “To see more people of color hired in management positions at my company.”
- “To make concentrated efforts in developing the BIPOC employees that they currently have in addition to focused recruiting to BIPOC.”

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH



While many organizations are beginning to step into anti-racist work, only an elite group have a tactical, time-delimited approach prepared

10%

Only 10% of participants said their workplaces have measurable, anti-racist outcomes established against a clear timeline to hold employers, leadership teams, and employees accountable.

Participants are more likely to be skeptical than confident in their organization's current abilities

When asked to evaluate the following statement:

"I am confident in my organization's ability to create a more equitable environment for BIPOC employees."



51%

Somewhat or strongly disagree



42%

Somewhat or strongly agree

EMPLOYEES AREN'T SEEING SUBSTANTIAL & CONSISTENT ACTION FROM THE TOP

For many, the lack of confidence can be clearly traced directly to their leadership teams who've historically been unwilling or unable to create meaningful change.

Diving in deeper, we see participants feel skeptical about their organization's ability for reasons such as:

- “I don't believe the highest levels of leadership are actually comfortable or capable of instituting meaningful change.”
- “I have not seen any numerical change in over 20 years. They keep talking about change but nothing substantial happens. BIPOC are still hitting a concrete ceiling.”

BIPOC EMPLOYEES STRUGGLE TO FEEL SEEN & VALIDATED

Creating healthy work environments centers on leaders recognizing their employees' diverse lived experiences as an asset to be taken seriously.

Participants were asked what advice they would give their organization's leadership about how to create a better environment for BIPOC employees. The most popular responses include:

- “Listen to your BIPOC employees' needs. Validate, don't discredit their insights.”
- “Start to see people of color that have the skill set to lead as leaders and enforce giving them the authority to lead.”
- “[I want] recognition of lack of racial equity and concrete steps toward equity that doesn't use BIPOC employees' energy. I want to see this because Leadership is about transparency and accountability.”

AN UNMET DESIRE FOR TWO-WAY TRANSPARENCY

Employees want to be transparent with their leadership teams without fear of retribution and crave transparency regarding action plans from their executive teams – including the board of directors.

Participants would like to see more leaders of color create an “open door policy.”

“Create an open door policy, letting people know it's okay to be themselves by providing opportunities for affinity groups, employee resources groups, table talks and executive sponsorships.”

EMPLOYEES HAVE A LOT TO SHARE, BUT MAY NOT FEEL SAFE ENOUGH TO DO SO

Imagine you are writing a letter to your organization's leadership about your experiences as a BIPOC team member. What might you tell them, and why?

- “I believe in your intention and commitment, now pay up.”
- “Be curious about me, as I have had to be with you. Look at my diversity as the asset you need. Diversity hire is an imperative, not a pity. Value the inherent thinking that I bring from my experience.”
- “It's not enough to have consultations or say you're invested in DEI, but to name what actions you are willing to take to retain BIPOC folks in your org.”
- “I often keep my mouth shut because I don't want to get fired. I deal with microaggressions daily. Many white staff are racist. My BIPOC colleagues are really struggling here.”

GLIMMERS OF HOPE



THOUGH THERE'S MORE WORK TO BE DONE, SOME ARE FEELING SEEN, HEARD, & HOPEFUL

Organizations able to instill confidence regarding their ability to create equitable environments for BIPOC employees began taking bigger strides more urgently following the uprising in the Twin Cities this past summer.

Those who are noticing a real-time evolution to more equitable work environments shared feedback such as:

- “I feel confident based on the steps my organization has already put into place. We had a strong focus and goals on D&I before but now there is a higher level of accountability and an actionable plan in place.”
- “They just stepped up in a major way and they care. I feel like they ‘SEE’ [us] and hear us, which is HUGE!”

Few organizations are either wholly exceeding or failing to make their workplace more racially equitable

4% vs. 15%

4% of respondents would give their organization an “A” when asked the following question: “If you were to give your organization a grade, A-F, related to their management practices in addressing racial equity, what would you give them?”
Conversely, 15% would give their organization an ‘F’, indicating failure.

Respondents are split among 'B', 'C', and 'D' grades, indicating varying degrees of organizational action and effort.

Organizations are half as likely to receive 'A' and 'B' grades as they are 'C' and 'D' grades with regards to existing racial equity practices (A+B = 28%, C+D = 57%)



24%

'B' letter grade

28%

'C' letter grade

29%

'D' letter grade

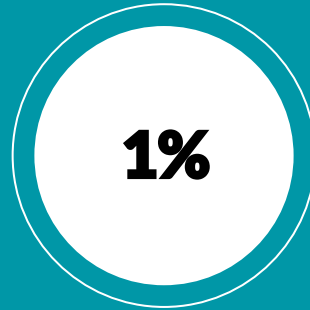
CHIEF DEI OFFICER PERCEPTIONS & FEEDBACK



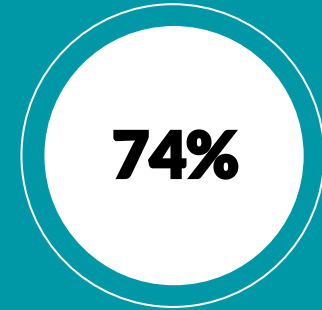
Opinions about Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer roles vary widely.



It's good



It's bad



Mixed feelings

CHIEF EXECUTIVE DEI ROLES ARE A FIRST STEP MORE SO THAN A PERFECT SOLUTION

Though important to have, employees fear the tokenization of these roles, and perceive them as a performative response to addressing real equity issues.

When asked for personal insights, the most popular responses include:

- “It feels like a ‘check the box’ move. Everyone is jumping on the equity train, and this is one of the stops. It does not inherently address racial equity, though it is a step.”
- “A lot of time that person is BIPOC and the white org doesn't trust them, or leaves it all up to that person to ‘fix’ the org’s race issues. If the org is not willing or doesn't like the tone of the DEI officer then the work can’t and won’t happen.”
- “They are doing it because of the moment. They should have done this a long time ago.”

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT



PARTICIPANTS HAVE A PLETHORA OF IDEAS ABOUT ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR BIPOC EMPLOYEES

Employees' ideas varied greatly and were at times contradictory, illustrating the breadth and depth needed to create programs that work for all.

Participants would like to see their organization provide:

- “Training opportunities for growth and responsibilities that allow [employees] to support the organization. This instills a sense of trust early and prepares them for leadership positions in the future.”
- “Hiring BIPOC and create a welcoming environment.”
- “Less ‘mentorship’ or development programs that assume deficits in skillsets; instead recognize and elevate (e.g. Sponsorships, promotions, more days off) BIPOC employees.”

Advancement opportunities specifically designed for BIPOC employees are still relatively uncommon

31%

Report their organization doesn't currently provide access to BIPOC-oriented advancement programs or opportunities.

Advancement opportunities employers are most likely to provide include:



31%

Existing employees are developed and promoted rather than hiring external candidates into management positions.



23%

Clear pathways are made for employees to move vertically and laterally across or outside the organization.

TRANSPARENT DATA & ACTION PLANS



EMPLOYEES WANT MEASURABLE GOALS, TRANSPARENT DATA, & CLEAR ACTION PLANS

When asked how organizations can be held accountable to advancing racial equity, top ranked comments include:

- “Just like there is a performance management in place for employees - there should be a similar one for racial equity.”
- “The company should have clear metrics and check these metrics regularly. If you say you are going to have BIPOC leadership in the C-Suite by 2021, show what you are doing to build skills for current employees to take that role.”
- “Share data status updates on where they are based on goals set. If they are behind on reaching a goal then share a plan on how they expect to meet it/ask for ideas on how to meet it.”

MEASURABLE GOALS, TRANSPARENT DATA, & CLEAR ACTION PLANS (CONTD.)

The single most important next step organizations can take to create a more equitable environment for BIPOC employees include:

- “Immediate actions. Even small. Many organizations have a big talk, but never act.”
- “Promoting BIPOC employees and begin creating an open conversation around race equity. Change the goals of the organization’s future and incorporate the needs of BIPOC members.”
- “Create a transparent culture and real, actionable steps on salary equity and compensation for all that we can go back to it an evaluate fairly. Create metrics for promotion, advancement and mentorship that create action to ensure BIPOC are good.”

**Detailed Findings:
External Organizational
Commitments**

ANTI-RACISM FUNDS

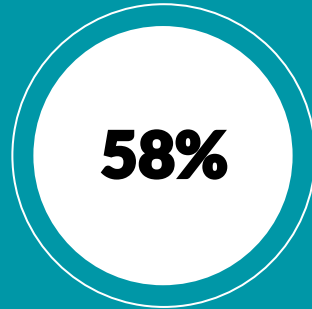


In 2020, a number of organizations have committed large funds to support local anti-racism efforts

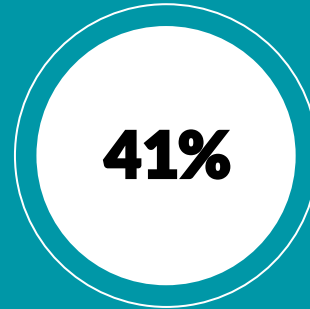
1%

Of participants think organizations committing large funds to support local anti-racism efforts is a bad thing.

The majority of respondents think it's good, though for others it's more complicated.



Think it's good



Have mixed feelings

MISDIRECTED, HARD-TO-ACCESS FUNDS MAY CAUSE MORE HARM THAN GOOD

A deeper look into how funds committed to anti-racism efforts can be responsibly administered illustrates employees' desire to see direct support and education by BIPOC practitioners for BIPOC audiences.

- “They need to research the efforts that are most effective, not just throw money anywhere. Ask BIPOC staff for ideas.”
- “Just don't give it to other white led orgs that ‘know best’ for BIPOC people. It's more of the same and condescending.”
- “I want them to trust the community with these funds! Make accessing these funds easier! Fund after it stops being trendy! These are HISTORICAL inequities. It requires investment for the long haul.”

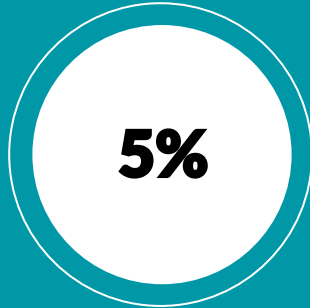
RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE POLICE



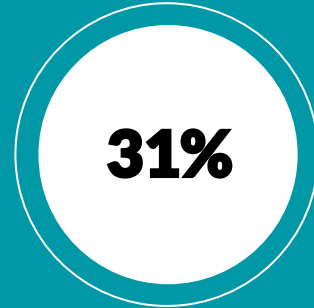
In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, a number of organizations have severed ties with local police departments for contract security work. How do you personally feel about this?



Think it's a good thing



Think it's a bad thing



Have mixed feelings

FEW ARE WHOLLY OPPOSED TO SEVERING TIES, THOUGH A 'PLAN B' IS NEEDED BEFORE DOING SO

How do you feel about organizations severing ties with local police departments?

- “I think it's a good thing because it shows them that we're taking it seriously. Unfortunately, money speaks to them more than people do.”
- “It is reactionary and rooted in white guilt, at best. Most of these companies were well aware of local police actions and may have even resolved suits previously because of police involvement.”
- “It is a little short sighted to immediately withdraw support from police departments without a clearly defined and proven plan b in place.”

Detailed Findings: Community Outreach & Support

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & SUPPORT



ORGANIZATIONS ARE STEPPING UP TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Respondents have noticed organizations taking part in a number of community initiatives since Summer 2020:

- 25% Advance legislation to improve conditions for communities of color
- 24% Matching employee contributions to non-profit organizations doing anti-racism work
- 25% Spending with Black-owned suppliers and local Black-owned businesses
- 21% Partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- 21% Provide grants for social programs in Black communities
- 21% Provides mentorship, management training and financing for Black-owned businesses and professional support Black non-profit CEOs

A majority of participants report seeing some kind of community investment and outreach from their organizations, though a large percentage are still waiting for action.

39%

When asked which of the following represent community initiatives participants have observed from your organization, the most common response is “none of the above.”

PARTICIPANTS WANT DATA & TRANSPARENCY TO GUIDE ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

What role, if any, should communities and individuals play in holding organizations accountable to their racial equity commitments?

- “I would love for real data to be put out there so that communities and other stakeholders can hold these orgs accountable. Just like with the police money talks. If these orgs are poorly performing end contracts and stop spending with them.”
- “They play the role of speaking up and speaking out and withholding funds and other compensation if orgs continue to follow and support racist systems.”
- “Holding town halls and asking for transparency. Orgs should be building relationships because when you have a two-way relationship you can hold each other accountable.”

THE CALL FOR WHITE ALLIES TO GET MORE INVOLVED IS LOUD & CLEAR

What role, if any, should communities and individuals play in holding organizations accountable to their racial equity commitments?

- “In an ideal world... we'd stop spending at those organizations. Supporting those that have been wronged by organizations and publicly calling out those org. on social media etc. Having white allies STEP UP and call people out in meetings, etc.”
- “A very important one. My fellow white citizens specifically need to start holding their peers accountable. they have to be willing to lose friends in the process.”
- “Allies need to step up. Gotta listen better, gotta read more, gotta do better.”

Key Findings

Organizations represented in this report are most likely to be in the first two phases

Intent → **Action** → **Accountability**

The missing catalyst that takes organizations from action to accountability is clear plans, timelines, and measurable goals.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY + KEY FINDINGS

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Anti-racist efforts are still early in their formation and many organizations have yet to find their stride, though they're beginning to try.

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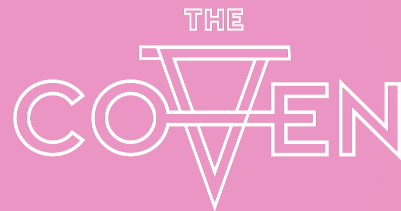
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Questions & Discussion



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