



## What Majority Men Really Think About Diversity and Inclusion (And How to Engage Them in It)

Q&A with Lead Researchers

Julia Taylor Kennedy and Pooja Jain-Link

- **Why did you undertake this study?**

**Julia Taylor Kennedy:** The reality is that majority men still hold most of the power in organizations. But researchers haven't looked closely at their beliefs and involvement in diversity and inclusion to find the barriers and opportunities. If we want to change the way employees of all backgrounds are hired, promoted, and heard at work, organizations need the men at the top to buy in and act.

**Pooja Jain-Link:** Majority men typically don't see themselves playing a role in diversity and inclusion. But they have the power needed to move things forward.

- **Who is a "majority" man?**

**Julia Taylor Kennedy:** Ninety-five percent were straight, cis-gender, white men. And five percent were straight, cis-gender, non-white men who mostly work with people of the same race or ethnicity.

- **Why look at majority men right now?**

**Pooja Jain-Link:** The timing couldn't be better. We hear white male senior leaders grappling with fear and confusion—and at the same time they're really motivated to address racial inequities. They want to be involved in this movement but aren't sure where their place is. Our goal was to find ways to guide them.

- **The survey was conducted in February 2020, before George Floyd's murder and Black Lives Matter protests across the nation. Do you think results would be any different if you surveyed in June?**

**Julia Taylor Kennedy:** Yes. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery awakened many Americans to the plight of Black people in this country, and the generational trauma and pain experienced by this community. As such, I think we'd have even more of the men we call True Believers, who most strongly support D&I.

- **What findings surprised you most?**

**Pooja Jain-Link:** Only one in ten majority men says D&I is not at all important to him. Detractors may speak loudly or receive a lot of attention in social groups or in the media, but they're outnumbered by majority men who consider D&I very important.

**Julia Taylor Kennedy:** We found a great source of hope in the fact that some of the biggest supporters of D&I are senior leaders and Millennials. These are the powerful majority men already at the top of their organizations, or the next generation poised to become leaders in the future. These men who consider D&I very important tended to have a higher sense of [belonging](#) at work. They aren't threatened or frightened or angry about the push for diverse representation.

- **Majority men are categorized into three "archetypes" in the report. What are they and how do they view D&I?**

**Pooja Jain-Link:**

**Detractors** say D&I has no value. These men often feel like outsiders. In focus groups, they said they've been passed up for promotion, their voices were silenced, and their political views weren't accepted at work. None of the Detractors who were managers believed that building a diverse team would boost their leadership skills.

**Persuadables** are on the fence. This group represented 48% of majority men. Nearly half believe D&I leads to innovation, but just 21% have been involved in D&I efforts. They were also more likely than True Believers to say D&I efforts benefit some groups more than others.

**True Believers**, who comprise 42% of the majority men, say D&I is very or extremely important to them. Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) believe D&I can drive innovation. True Believers are more likely than other majority men to have educated themselves on issues of racism and sexism.

- **What new insights did you discover that will help companies advance D&I more effectively?**

**Julia Taylor Kennedy:** One opportunity for growth is that about half of True Believers don't think building a diverse team would make them better leaders or improve their reputations. We also found that just 56% of True Believers have participated in D&I efforts. Those that haven't been involved most often cite being too busy to participate. With so many competing priorities, if they can't see the individual benefit, why find time for D&I in the hectic workday? Organizations must find ways to bake D&I into leaders' jobs and make D&I a part of how leaders are evaluated and rewarded.

Among Persuadables, a large proportion are introverts. They may be hesitant to engage with others across lines of difference. That personality trait is something for D&I practitioners to remember as they plan educational activities and conversations.

Among Detractors, we picked up a sense that they think D&I works against them. They see a limited number of leadership spots in their company and may think D&I promotes reverse discrimination. That's something for leaders to be aware of.

- **What can companies do to foster safe spaces for conversation, where people of color don't have to do the emotional heavy lifting and majority men feel free to open up without fear of rejection?**

**Julia Taylor Kennedy:** It begins with leaders educating themselves about institutional racism. At Coqaul (formerly Center for Talent Innovation), we're running a lot of leadership dialogues to give them context about racial inequity and a place to talk openly with one another. It's crucial that leaders show up for employee listening sessions to hear about their experiences. Leaders can show their vulnerability and good intentions in conversations, too. It's fine to say, *I'm new to this. I might get it a little wrong, but I want to learn.*

**Pooja Jain-Link:** In addition, it's crucial to have a Chief Diversity Officer in conversation regularly with the CEO. This kind of trusting, close advisor can build a leader's confidence, avoid missteps, and keep meaningful action on D&I on the CEO's radar.