



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jodi Davis [jdavis@coqual.org](mailto:jdavis@coqual.org);  
Jeyandini Fernando [jfernando@coqual.org](mailto:jfernando@coqual.org)

## COQUAL RESEARCH STUDY EXAMINES HOW WORKPLACE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN MANAGERS & COLLEAGUES CONTRIBUTE TO INEQUITIES AND UNFAIRNESS

### New Study Finds Bias, Micromanagement, and Favoritism, with Underrepresented Groups Disproportionately Impacted

**NEW YORK, November 16, 2021--** In the summer of 2020, organizations made sweeping commitments to focus on equity as a company value and business imperative. But to create enduringly equitable workplaces, processes and the interactions between individuals need to change, and employees need to be inspired and invested. Coqual's second report in a three-part series published today, "***Equity Calls on Everyone: Managers, Colleagues, and You,***" puts the spotlight on individuals and their behavior at work.

New research from Coqual, a global, nonprofit think tank, investigates the role managers and coworkers play in making equity a workplace reality. The study finds that many employees, especially members of marginalized groups, experience unfair treatment because of their identity. Workplace relationships impact inclusion and contribute to inequities in access to career opportunities and resources for professionals of diverse backgrounds.

"Our Equity research supports the critical role that institutions play in embedding and reinforcing inclusive behaviors for everyone within the organization," said Lanaya Irvin, Coqual chief executive officer. "We hope this data and accompanying recommendations for colleagues and managers help disrupt inequities and serve as a roadmap for companies to create actionable change."

"Equity is created at the organizational and the individual level, so we researched both," said Julia Taylor Kennedy, Coqual executive vice president. "Individuals have the power to shape each other's daily experiences at work. We often leave a leader or a team, not a company, based on unfair treatment."

Coqual's study finds nearly one in three Black professionals feel they're treated unfairly because of their race, one in five women feel they're treated unfairly based on gender, and more than one in six LGBTQ professionals feel they're treated unfairly because of their sexual orientation. Looking at the intersection of race and sexual orientation, the study finds surprising data that Black LGBTQ professionals (51%) are nearly twice as likely as Black non-LGBTQ peers (26%) to describe their company's culture as inclusive.

Both Black and Latinx professionals are aware of the negative stereotypes they face in the workplace, making mistakes even more of a concern. The study finds that 29% of Black and 22% of Latinx professionals worry about how their mistakes might reflect on others who look like them, compared to 13% of White professionals.

Managers influence individuals' career experiences and play a big role in work assignments, success, and career trajectories of their team members. The study finds inequity in work assignments, with White men most likely to feel their assignments are appropriate for their level, while less than half of non-White men and Black women say the same. When it comes to favoritism, the research finds there is a difference in the data along lines of race/ethnicity. According to the study, nearly four out of five White men (78%) say their manager advocates for top performers regardless of race or gender, but Black men are nearly 2.5 times as likely and Latinx men are twice as likely as White men to say that their manager treats employees differently based on how much they like them. Professionals with darker skin are twice as likely as their lighter-skinned peers to say the same.

Micromanagement is another challenge for Black professionals and Latinx men. Coqual finds that 32% of Black men, 28% of Black women and 26% of Latinx men, compared to 17% of White men report that their manager manages with excessive control or attention to details.

The study reveals a contradictory story for veterans who have a more complicated relationship with their managers; they get in-depth support yet face certain exclusions. Compared to 81% of civilians, only 69% of veterans say their manager respects them and are nearly twice as likely as civilians to say their manager treats employees differently based on how much they like them. Despite the stigma many veterans experience at work, they are more likely to say their managers ask about their career goals and give them opportunities to interact with senior leaders.

Parenthood impacts professionals' work experience depending on gender. At work, fatherhood carries cache and benefits. Although research shows that 41% of women with children are the sole or primary earners for their families, Coqual heard in interviews that men with children are more often seen as leadership material and worthier of coveted assignments. Fathers are also more likely than mothers to say their managers listen to their ideas and give them opportunities to showcase their skills to senior leaders.

Coqual finds colleagues can promote perceptions of fairness for one another by engaging in inclusive behaviors of three types:

- **Collaborate** - inclusive colleagues value your contributions, show you respect, and support you through difficult work situations
- **Advance** - inclusive colleagues look for ways to help your career by sharing opportunities and connections
- **Speak up** - inclusive colleagues challenge an exclusive and inequitable status quo and need to disrupt bias

Coqual's research finds that inclusive manager behaviors are strongly and positively correlated with inclusive colleague behaviors. Inclusivity is contagious, spreading down from managers to peers. This research study finds that having a more inclusive manager is associated with an 18% increase in perceptions of fairness at work and having more inclusive colleagues is associated with a 21% increase in perceptions of fairness at work. Coqual's first report in the Equity series finds that perceptions of fairness often affect important business outcomes, such as an employee's trust in their company and their intent to stay.

Additionally, the report lays out the following institutional framework for companies to drive inclusion forward, and advance equity and fairness:

- **Values-** Companies need to infuse inclusion into their mission, vision and values and determine what stands in the way of inclusion. When an employer values fairness, employees will feel empowered to disrupt bias and be more inclusive.
- **Accountability-** Inclusive behavior should be an expectation for every job. Companies must implement deliberate policy and processes to promote accountability for inclusivity. Employees who miss the mark should not be promoted to leadership roles.
- **Education-** Colleagues need to know what inclusion looks like for peers regardless of background. Inclusion training should be offered at all levels and managers need to know what is expected of them as leaders, be given proper resources to get it done, and be held accountable for their inclusive or non-inclusive behaviors.

**Methodology:** The research consists of a survey; *Insights In-Depth*<sup>®</sup> sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups) with over 300 employees; and one-on-one interviews with more than 40 people. The national survey was conducted online in April and May 2021 among 4,410 respondents (2,113 men; 2,268 women; 25 who identify as transgender, nonbinary, or another identity; and four who did not identify their gender; 2,547 identify as White, 557 as Black, 566 as Hispanic, 574 as Asian, 127 as two or more races, and 39 as another race or ethnicity). All survey respondents were at least 21 and employed full time in white-collar professions, with at least a bachelor’s degree. Data was weighted to be representative of the US population on key demographics (age, gender, education, race/ethnicity, and census division). The base used for statistical testing was the effective base. Unless specified, the data we reference is from our national survey.

This survey was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago under the auspices of Coqual, a nonprofit research organization. NORC was responsible for the data collection, while Coqual conducted the analysis. In the charts, percentages may not always add up to 100 because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses from respondents. Throughout this report, “Latinx” refers to those who identify as being of Latino or Hispanic descent.

**Lead Sponsor,** Johnson & Johnson; **Research Sponsors:** AllianceBernstein; Google; Intel Corporation; Pfizer; The Walt Disney Company; and White & Case

**Research Advisors:** Dr. Ifedapo Adeleye, Professor of the Practices of Human Resources Management, Georgetown University; Dr. Alexandra Kalev, Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel Aviv University; Dr. Kellie McElhane, Professor and Founding Director, Center for Equity, Gender, and Leadership (EGAL), Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley.

**About Coqual:** Coqual (formerly Center for Talent Innovation) is a global, nonprofit think tank dedicated to helping leaders design diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces where every person belongs. Founded in 2004, Coqual provides in-depth research, thought leadership, and data-driven, actionable solutions for companies to address bias and barriers to inclusion for underrepresented populations in the workplace. Coqual’s cutting-edge research and Advisory Services focus on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, veteran status and LGBTQ identities, and others—as well as the intersections among these groups. For more information, visit [www.coqual.org](http://www.coqual.org).