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COQUAL'S NEW REPORT REVEALS RACISM, MICROAGGRESSIONS, AND UNFAIR TREATMENT ARE STILL THE NORM FOR BLACK PROFESSIONALS IN THE UK WORKPLACE

Being Black in the United Kingdom Finds More Than Two in Three Black Professionals Have Experienced Racial Prejudice at Work

NEW YORK, July 13, 2022 — Many have downplayed the existence of systemic racism in the UK, but Black professionals who experience daily microaggressions and barriers to advancement in the workplace know it exists. **Coqual**, a global think tank, reported earlier this year that nearly half of Black UK professionals surveyed say race is one of the aspects of their identity that most impacts the way people see or treat them at work. Today, Coqual published a new report, *Being Black in the United Kingdom*, that documents how race shapes the Black professional experience in the UK and uncovers data-backed differences within the diverse Black community along the lines of gender, heritage, social class background, and other layered identities. The new report provides actionable solutions for organizations to build more inclusive workplaces for all.

“For far too long, the voices and experiences of Black professionals have been ignored. This new report sheds light on these experiences while illustrating what’s at stake for companies that choose to ignore the bias and barriers Black employees face,” said Lanaya Irvin, Coqual’s CEO. “Our data and insights reveal that race is a salient and critical factor and provides ways for companies to make real, sustainable changes that will set the course and foundation for Black professionals to thrive in the workplace.”

The new report, which employed a rigorous mixed methodology including a survey of more than a thousand college-educated professionals in the UK and in-depth conversations, focus groups, and interviews, finds that:

- Black professionals are 81% more likely than White professionals to say their companies are “not at all” or only “slightly” fair.
- More than half (52%) of Black women and 46% of Black respondents overall intend to stay at their companies for just two years or less, compared to 34% of White professionals.
- When it comes to their aspirations, 63% of Black professionals surveyed say they are very or extremely ambitious – a higher percentage than any other racial group surveyed.

Coqual finds Black professionals in the UK face a steeper climb than their colleagues recognize. More than three in four (76%) Black professionals surveyed say Black employees have to work harder to advance, while only 30% of White professionals, 42% of Asian professionals, and 52% of mixed-race professionals say the same. According to the survey, Black professionals experience 13 microaggressions more frequently than their White and Asian colleagues do—acts that underestimate, invalidate, and tokenize them, among others.

“Black professionals in the UK are experiencing harsh daily realities,” said Julia Taylor Kennedy, Coqual’s Executive Vice President. “While many companies are having more conversations about race at work, they are not leading to much action – which can be incredibly dispiriting. In our study, we provide a framework for action.”

Prejudiced attitudes and encounters take many forms and show up daily, forcing Black professionals to anticipate and endure negative treatment. Coqual finds more than two in three Black (68%) and more than half (58%) of mixed-race professionals surveyed say they have experienced racial prejudice at their current or former companies, compared to White (28%) and Asian (50%) professionals who say the same.

The experiences of Black professionals in the UK are far from monolithic and corporate leaders need to understand the

differences that exist within the UK's diverse Black community. Coqual's survey uncovers the unique experiences that Black professionals have based on heritage. Nearly half of Black Caribbean professionals (47%) surveyed say their organization is "not at all" or only "slightly" fair, a higher rate than Black African professionals (35%). Black Caribbean professionals are also less likely than their Black African peers to say they can be themselves at work (40% vs. 59%).

Meanwhile, Black African professionals in the UK face microaggressions that label them perpetual foreigners more frequently than Black Caribbeans do. Colleagues mispronounce their names and assume they grew up disadvantaged or are unfamiliar with UK culture. In interviews and focus groups, Coqual heard how these stereotypes serve as signals that Black African professionals do not belong or should not stay in the UK.

To help companies drive sustained, meaningful change, Coqual has developed a framework for action: *Audit, Awaken, Act*. This framework provides steps companies can take to advance their work in the DE&I space and build accountability throughout their ranks. The full report gives company examples, pointers, and pitfalls to avoid in each stage of the framework.

- **Audit-** First, assess the current state. Company leaders need to understand the current state of the Black professional experience and what inequities exist in the way Black professionals are treated, hired, evaluated, promoted, and compensated.
- **Awaken-** Bring those insights to the rest of the organization through thoughtfully designed conversations and resources for the benefit of all employees. Leaders and employees alike need to have open discussions and educate themselves about the barriers Black professionals face.
- **Act-** With the knowledge and understanding developed in the Audit and Awaken phases, companies must build solutions that specifically target dismantling barriers for Black employees and establish accountability at all levels.

Methodology: The research consists of a survey; literature review; virtual focus groups; *Insights In-Depth*® sessions (a proprietary web-based tool used to conduct voice-facilitated virtual focus groups); and one-on-one interviews. Through our qualitative methods, we reached more than 120 experts and Black professionals who are based in the UK or who have expertise on race in the UK.

The survey was conducted online in March and April of 2022 among 1,035 respondents (385 Black professionals, 404 White professionals, 108 Asian professionals, 107 mixed-race professionals, and 31 professionals of other racial groups), who were at least 21 years old and currently employed full time in professional occupations, with at least a bachelor's degree.

The survey was conducted by ORB International under the auspices of Coqual, a nonprofit research organization. ORB International 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.

Research Partner: The Executive Leadership Council (ELC); **Lead Sponsor:** Johnson & Johnson; **Research Sponsors:** Bloomberg LP, Bristol Myers Squibb, Google, Moody's Corporation, Morgan Stanley, and The Walt Disney Company.

Research Advisors: Sophie Chandauka, MBE, Chair and Executive Founder, The Black British Business Awards & Head of Race Equity Group, the 30% Club; Sir Trevor Phillips OBE, Chairman of the Board at Green Park; and Nicola Rollock, Professor of Social Policy & Race at King's College London.

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.