



American Heart Association.

CEO Roundtable

“Driving Health Equity in the Workplace”

Market Research Insights: the employee experience

To better understand the lived experiences and perceptions among employed adults in the U.S., the American Heart Association conducted market research providing both directional and representative insights. These qualitative and quantitative methods were conducted between March and May, 2021.

TOPLINE FINDINGS

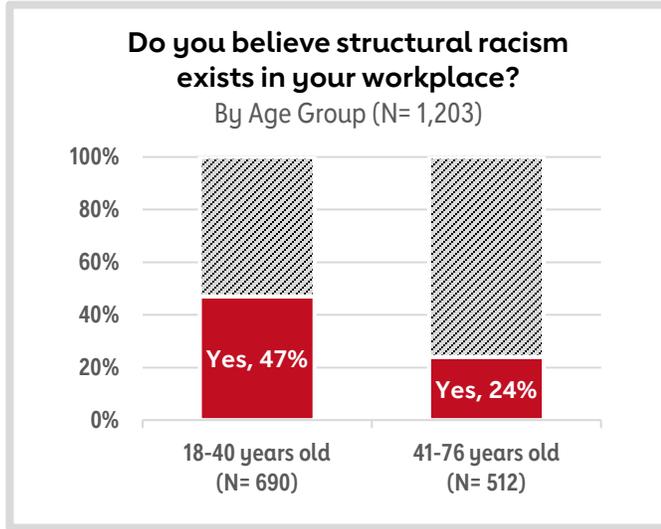
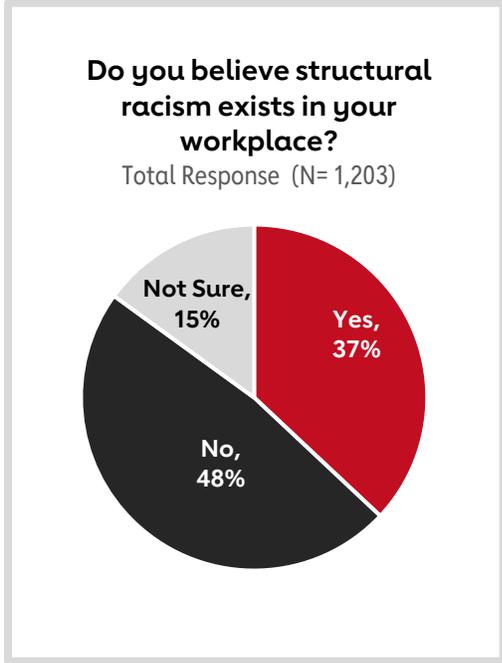
According to a survey of 1,203 employed U.S. adults, we found significant variations in health equity perceptions across race, ethnicity, and other demographic groups. While many respondents felt societal effects of health inequities, most respondents across the board reported a positive work environment where they can bring their true selves to work. Comprehensive benefit plans contribute to health equity, and the workplace is regarded as one that values diversity and inclusion, respondents reported.

There was a noticeable disconnect between white respondents and Black, Asian, and Hispanic respondents, suggesting an opportunity to review and improve organizational practices, promote allyship and increase understanding of health challenges faced.

Findings included:

- Many employees feel the societal effects of health inequities, but most reported a positive work environment where they can bring their true selves to work.
- The perception of health equity at work varied greatly by race, ethnicity and other demographic groups.
- 66% of people of color responded that practices and policies at work negatively impact health and well-being “a great deal or moderately.” 38% percent of white people surveyed agreed with that statement.
- The disconnect between white respondents and Black, Asian, and Hispanic respondents, suggest an opportunity to improve organizational practices, promote allyship and increase understanding of health challenges.
- Across all responses, the least likely reported employer-provided benefits were commuter benefits, child care, and banking or financial services.
- However, these perceptions shift with LGBTQ+ respondents, 59% of whom said their work environments made them feel marginalized and that has had a negative health impact.
- Asked whether they have experienced, seen or heard a number of incidents or perceptions regarding race, ethnicity, culture and feelings of belonging at work, 69% of white respondents said they had experienced none. 36% of respondents of color said they experienced none.

When specifically asked about structural racism existing in the workplace, there is a notable variance in perception based on the age of the respondents.



When asked about challenges to overall health and well-being, responses included:

Top Challenges Cited Among Respondents	
Hispanic Respondents (N= 346)	
Poor mental health	28%
Lack of social support	26%
Low income	26%
Chronic stress	26%
Political climate/ turmoil	24%
Black Respondents (N= 322)	
Racism	28%
Discrimination and bigotry	22%
Low income	20%
Violence against people like me	20%
Asian Respondents (N= 93)	
Physical/ social isolation	28%
Chronic stress	26%
Racism	26%
Political climate/ turmoil	23%
White Respondents (N= 390)	
None of these issues	26%
Chronic stress	24%
Low income	20%
Lack of retirement savings	20%

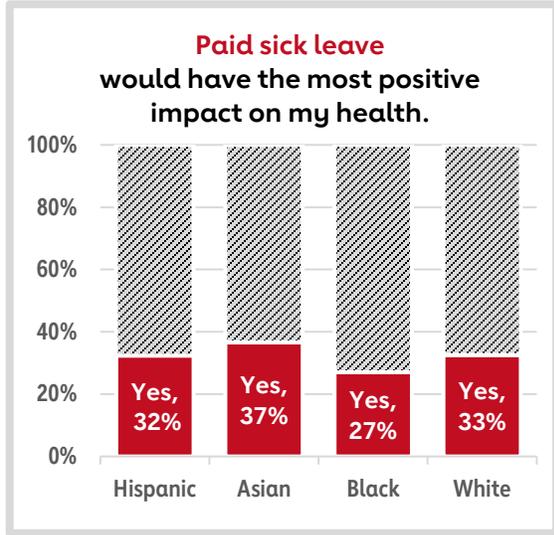
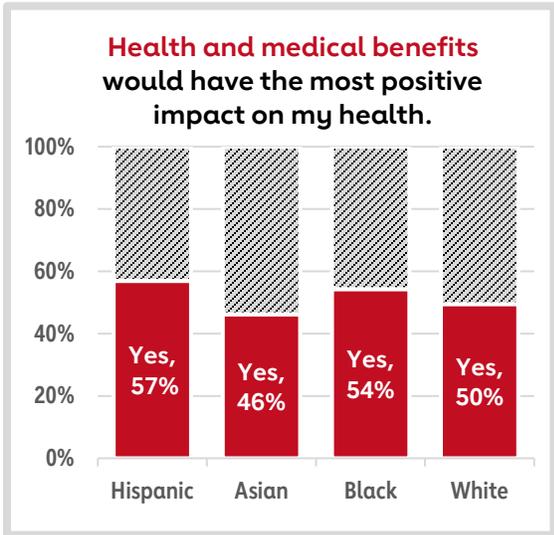
The top challenges to overall health and well-being indicate a wide disconnect in the mindsets of Black, Hispanic, Asian and white employees. While chronic stress ranked high among all employees, the source of that stress may be coming from **very different lived experiences**.

Across all responses, the least likely reported employer-provided benefits were commuter benefits, child care, and banking or financial services.

When asked about which workplace policies would have the most positive impact on health, the responses were:

"I got offered a job at \$35k and the commute would have been \$5k a year. I could not afford to take that position." - Amanda, Asian, Survey Respondent

"I've been really lucky, growing up as a white person, I haven't ever really experienced any problems with feeling included. I've been very privileged." -Kerrie, White, Survey Respondent



After the top two responses, we start to see variations;

Hispanic and white respondents most wanted **paid time off** (31% and 33%)

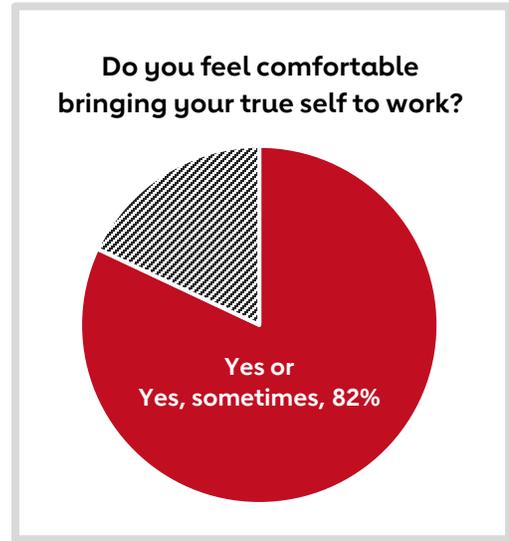
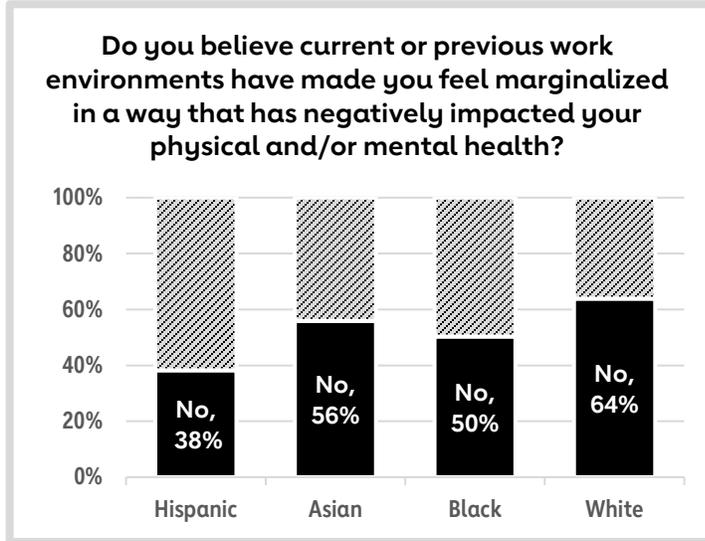
Black respondents wanted access to **mental health services** (28%)

Asian respondents wanted **good work-life balance/integration** (30%)

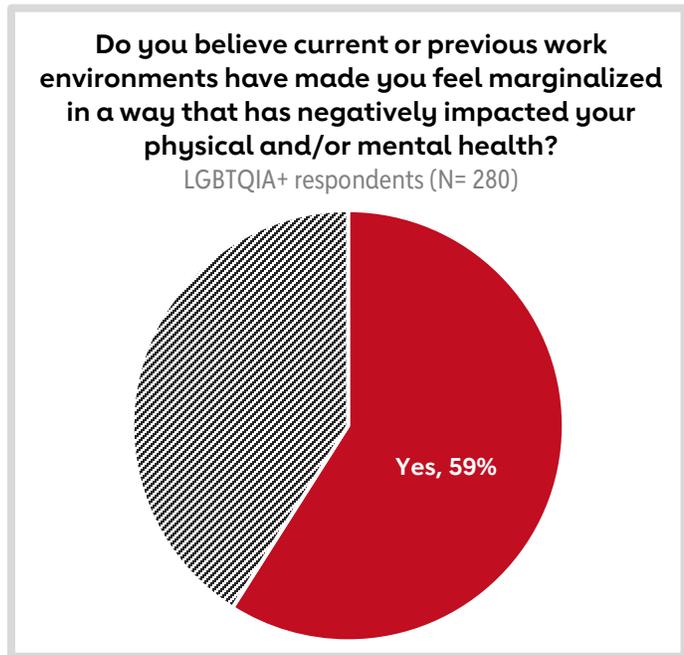
"Yes, I have paid time off but we are negotiating on when I can take those. I wanted to take it two months ago but still waiting. I think preferences might be given to someone else that is not a minority." - Frankie, Asian, Survey Respondent

"Having the flexibility to be with my family and take care of my children is important." - Michelle, Latina, Survey Respondent

While people may not be as optimistic when thinking about factors outside the workplace, employers may provide a safe haven.



However, these perceptions shift with **LGBTQIA+ respondents, 59% of whom said** their work environments made them feel marginalized and that has had a negative health impact. This suggests employers and the workplace culture have room for improvement to ensure LGBTQIA+ employees are not made to feel marginalized.



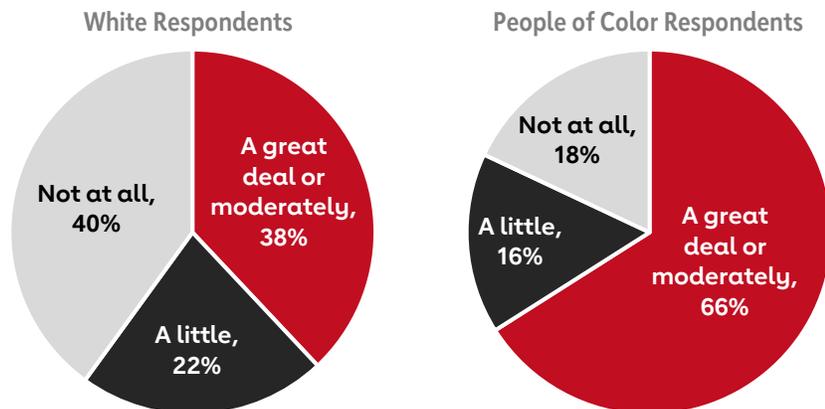
Different lived experiences.

White respondents (N=390) had quite different perceptions than colleagues who identified as Hispanic, Black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (N=803) who said the following were true statements:

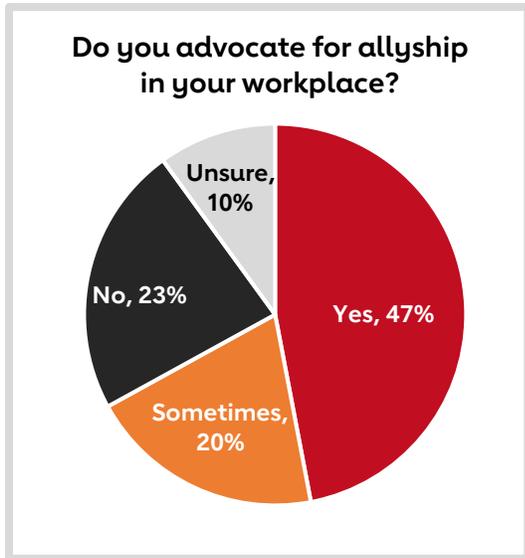
	White Respondents	People of Color Respondents
I have been the target of microaggressions, racism, discrimination, and/or prejudice at my workplace	7%	19%
I have seen colleagues experience microaggressions, racism, discrimination, and/or prejudice at my workplace	13%	25%
My workplace does not acknowledge or understand the importance of my cultural traditions or celebrations	6%	18%
My workplace does not respect my household or family responsibilities or situation/conditions	10%	17%
I feel like I have to hide who I really am when at work	11%	19%
I have felt uncomfortable approaching my boss or supervisor about a particular workplace-related concern because of my race/ethnicity	7%	18%
I do not see people who share my race ethnicity in leadership positions at my workplace	4%	20%
None of these	69%	36%

While generally less than a quarter of "true" responses bodes well for workplace culture, it is notable that employees of color still felt these statements were true twice or more frequently as white colleagues did.

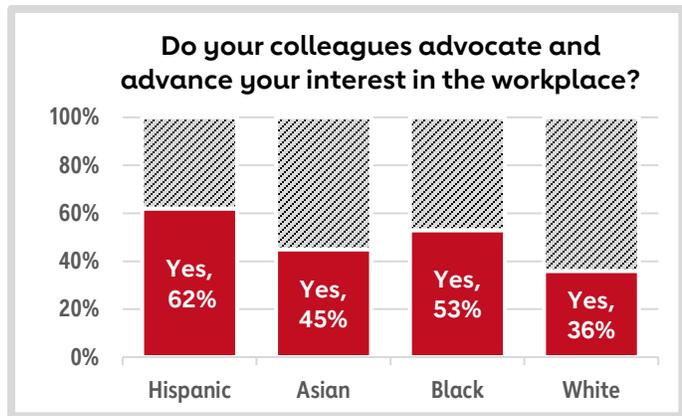
To what extent do you believe unfair policies, practices, and/or programs in your workplace negatively impact the health and well-being of employees?



Allyship is advocating to advance the interest of people of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities.



Interestingly, people of color were more likely to respond positively that they had colleagues who did advocate for and advance their interest in the workplace.



The qualitative research conducted using in-depth interviews and mobile video diaries revealed that many employees learn to use their cultural background as an advantage, like a culture chameleon. One Latino male and another Asian male shared their ability to speak multiple languages helps them at work.

"I think sometimes it helps that I am bilingual, I speak Spanish. I feel that it helps me. It gives me more leeway into representing diversity in the school." - Felipe, Latino, Survey Respondent

"We are encouraging more and more inclusion through trainings, through a change in workplace cultures, taking everyday decisions." - Nataraj, Asian, Survey Respondent

However, the in-depth interviews also revealed experiences with:

discriminatory hiring and promotion practices,

"It happens when you try to apply for jobs, like when you are Hispanic, if I put down my name and apply for a position I usually don't get a call back." - Felipe, Latino, Survey Respondent

"I've seen it before where people of color had a harder time being promoted or moving up the ladder in the workforce." - Adrian, White, Survey Respondent

and policing appearance

"One thing when first hired. They brought up hairstyles. There was a comment about my afro being a little bit long and my hair not being in dress code. That was a shock. If I had to go through with [cutting] it I would have quit. It doesn't matter. Why does that matter?" - Michael, Black, Survey Respondent

Structural Racism seems to manifest in key areas:

**Being Talked
Down To**

"I always feel a bit othered because I'm not white. I feel less than, and sometimes I can tell my managers or colleagues also feel that way...There are always those off-hand comments that are not appropriate. I dealt with it my whole life."

- Emelyn, Asian, Survey Respondent

Reduced to Identity

"I didn't have to be [at work] until 10 a.m., but I used to come in at 9 a.m. to show I'm helping out. I used to also stay late. One time I came in at 10 a.m. and was reprimanded by somebody who wasn't even my supervisor...Then she said something very racist."

- Jean, Black, Survey Respondent

**Feeling that DEI
Efforts are Generic**

"They have done a half-day happy hour for training and let everyone know they appreciate differences... It was generic. One of those 'we can say we did it' -type things. Like an "I voted" sticker."

- Akia, Black, Survey Respondent