

Black and Latinx women in the U.S. don't feel safe or seen at work

As job quality increases, the representation of Black women and men, Latinx women and men, and White women as compared with White men significantly decreases.

Higher quality roles and wages tend to have a higher concentration of White men, who have better roles with higher wages than any other demographic (Biu, 2024).

■ Percent of women of color
■ Percent of men of color
■ Percent of white women
■ Percent of white men

There's a broken rung on the ladder for women of color for promotion to management

For every 100 men promoted to manager:

- 87 women were promoted.
- 73 women of color were promoted, affecting their representation at nearly every rung and their near absence from the C-suite (Field et al., 2023).

Stereotyping and aggression are the tools that render women of color invisible at work

Women experience dismissiveness and aggression based on negative stereotypes and "othering":

- 2x as likely to be mistaken for someone junior.
- 7x more likely to be confused with someone of the same race/ethnicity for Black and Asian women.
- 2x as likely to hear comments on their emotional state (Field et al., 2023).

Women of color typically respond with self-shielding

78% of women code-switch, or tone down how they look or act to blend in to protect themselves. Black women are more than 2x as likely as women overall to code-switch (Field et al., 2023).

Eventually they suffer burnout and quit

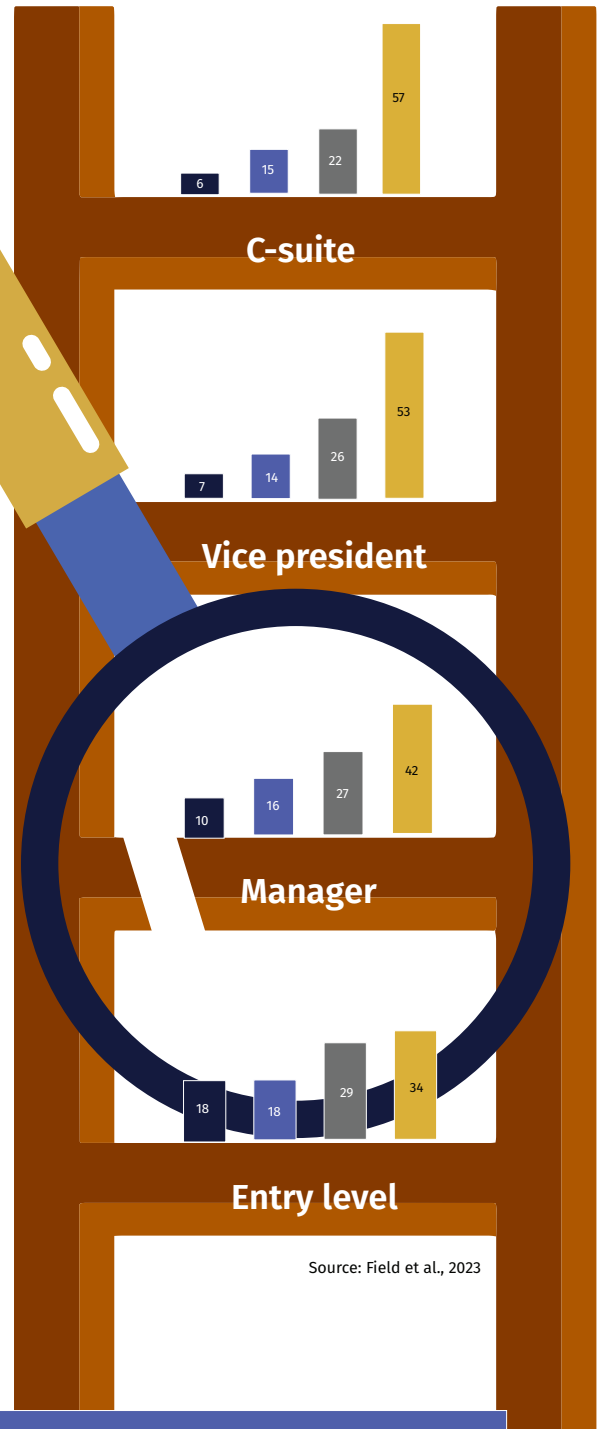
Women who experience aggression are:

- 4x more likely to almost always be burned out.
- 3x more likely to think about quitting their jobs (Field et al., 2023) because more than half said they **didn't feel valued by their organizations or managers or didn't feel a sense of belonging**, especially among women of color (Smet et al., 2021).

The factors that most influence toxic work culture

The more those in power deny women power, the more likely they mistreat them (Sull, 2023).

- **Lack of inclusivity.** Women are more likely to negatively assess their employer regarding favoritism with identity (Sull, 2023).
- **Lack of respect.** Women used these words more frequently: mistreatment, microaggressions, gaslighting, unfair hiring and promotion decisions, misogyny, sexism, sexual harassment, bullying, rude, disrespectful, acting inappropriately, and racist (Sull, 2023).
- **Mistreatment.** Managers or colleagues hurt other employees who lack the power to challenge it (Sull, 2023). Employers most often reinforce reported mistreatment (2021 WBI U.S. workplace bullying survey).



Dr. Amy Edmondson of Harvard says women are less likely than men to speak up without solid data or the conviction they're definitely right about what they'll say. While some may attribute this idea to personality or upbringing, Black women often regulate their tone to avoid the "angry Black woman" stereotype (Tulshyan, 2021).

We do not have protections because we need to pull back the curtain on what's happening and address the root problem.

The promising anti-discrimination laws failed to dismantle social hierarchies, preserving managerial authority dominated by white men, largely due to the courts' shift of focusing on the individual rather than the systemic harm (Berrey et al., 2017).

Anti-discrimination law and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices aren't enough to fix the broken rung

Those in power have designed the system to keep themselves in power.



1964

The early years of anti-discrimination law, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, seemed promising. The Supreme Court held that discrimination could be presumed with certain workplace practices (passing over qualified Black candidates for White candidates, for example) (Berrey et al., 2017).



Late 1980s

Courts limited the likelihood of a discrimination claim getting to trial or proven in court by focusing on intent, a higher threshold. Judges often claimed that employers having any EEO compliance programs in place to prevent discrimination meant discrimination didn't happen and used the same stereotypes against Black and Latinx women, deterring them from using the law (Berrey et al., 2017).



Today, 60 years later

A Rutgers study revealed that "more than a third... of those who reported unfair treatment in the workplace opted not to do anything.... Only 3% said they sued the company or their coworker" (Berrey et al., 2017). DEI programs are often well-intended but don't result in change, though a decrease in DEI efforts may communicate a lack of priority in addressing change. A study shows that "corporate diversity trainings... do not move white women or most people of color into management, and they actually decrease Black women's odds of becoming managers by 7%, perhaps because they can breed resentment" (Berrey, 2015). One in three DEI professionals lost their roles over 2022, higher than non-DEI workers during the same year (Alfonseca & Zahn, 2023).

Workplace abuse rates decrease when countries have laws against it
Government involvement helps to reduce workplace bullying as occurred in the Netherlands (D'Cruz et al., 2023).

We need a law to hold employers accountable for toxic work environments and education about legal rights

Employers need accountability to address the broken rung. The Workplace Psychological Safety Act would:

- Give targeted employees legal recourse for employers creating a toxic work environment with a focus on specific, common behaviors that a reasonable person would deem toxic, strengthening protections for women of color.
- Require employers to acknowledge, monitor, detect, prevent, discourage, and adequately address incidences of psychological abuse.

Sources:

2021 WBI U.S. workplace bullying survey. Workplace Bullying Institute. (2024, February 2). <https://workplacebullying.org/2021-wbi-survey/>

Alfonseca, K., & Zahn, M. (2023, July 7). How corporate America is slashing DEI workers amid backlash to diversity programs. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/corporate-america-slashing-dei-workers-amid-backlash-diversity/story?id=100477952>

Berrey, E. (2015, October 27). Diversity is for white people: The big lie behind a well-intended word. Salon. https://www.salon.com/2015/10/26/diversity_is_for_white_people_the_big_lie_behind_a_well_intended_word/

Berrey, E., Nelson, R. L., & Nielsen, L. B. (2017). Rights on trial: How workplace discrimination law perpetuates inequality. The University of Chicago Press.

Biu, O., Katz, B., Adu-Gyamfi, A., Scott, M. M., Spinner, B., Kates, B., Dallman, A., & Jenkins, W. (2024, January 25). Getting a good job depends more on race and gender than education. Urban Institute. <https://apps.urban.org/features/job-quality-segregation-race-gender/>

D'Cruz P, Mulder R, Noronha E, Beerepoot N, Magala S. (2023, January 1). The changing role of the nation-state and regulation: Workplace bullying legislation in The Netherlands. The Economic and Labour Relations Review. 2019;30(1):77-98.

Field, E., Krivkovich, A., Kugele, S., Robinson, N., & Yee, L. (2023, October 5). Women in the workplace 2023. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>

Smet, A. D., Dowling, B., Mugayar-Baldocchi, M., & Schaninger, B. (2021, September 8). "Great attrition" or "great attraction"? The choice is yours. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

Sull, D. S. and C. (2023, March 14). The toxic culture gap shows companies are failing women. MIT Sloan Management Review. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-toxic-culture-gap-shows-companies-are-failing-women/>

Tulshyan, R. (2021, March 16). Why is it so hard to speak up at work? The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/15/us/workplace-psychological-safety.html#:~:text=Psychological%20safety%20is%20the%20belief,t%20feel%20comfortable%20doing%20so.>

Workplace Psychological Safety Act. (n.d.-b). <https://workplacepsychologicalsafetyact.org/>

Take action

Visit WPSAct.org to find out how to ask your state legislators to support the Workplace Psychological Safety Act.



WORKPLACE
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
ACT
WPSAct.org