16 REASONS

DIVERSE EMPLOYEES FEEL SLIGHTED AT WORK



A recent NEOGOV HR study found that ***diversity and inclusion initiatives are the most important recruiting objective*** *for 2021.*

While this is great news – and perhaps no surprise in the face of renewed attention to social justice and civil rights – **it only partially addresses common diversity challenges that many organizations have.**

After overcoming many obstacles (and for some, more obstacles than others), BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) or otherwise underrepresented employees may start their jobs abrim with self-confidence and faith in the organization, only to find a new wave of discrimination awaits them in the workplace.

To understand how behavior from peers and managers can create a culture of distrust after an equitable hiring process, here are 16 reasons that diverse employees feel uncomfortable, frustrated, or slighted at work.



Being the only person of their identity in the organization.

There's nothing more isolating than realizing no one in the room looks like you or shares the same identity as you. Not only can it be lonely, **it may make the employee question the organization's hiring practices** or, worse yet, create a feeling of Impostor Syndrome that can minimize self confidence and impact productivity.

What is Impostor Syndrome?

A psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their skills, talents, or accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a "fraud".

Not seeing representation in upper management.



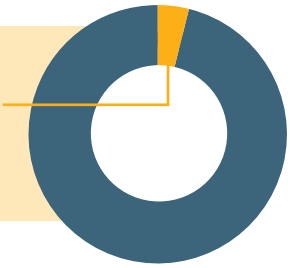
According to recent research by Fortune Magazine, **nearly three-quarters of senior managers are White men**. If you see lots of diversity in your workplace in one particular department or job level, but not reflected in management, it creates a sense that there is a glass ceiling.



Lack of mentors of the same background or identity.

Getting professional guidance from someone who understands your background or identity sends a message to employees that **they are capable of one day reaching that level of success**. However, this can be difficult to achieve if your organization lacks diversity in senior management.

*McKinsey and Company found that only **1 in 25 women of color** holds a senior management position in America.*



Being treated as a token or representative for all underrepresented people.



Diverse employees are often expected to answer questions or weigh in with an opinion that represents their entire race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. They may even be asked questions about other groups that are not represented in the workplace by coworkers simply because they are the token "other." **This can perpetuate stereotypes** that everyone of a particular race or ethnic group thinks the same way.



The responsibility of educating people.

In addition to speaking for all underrepresented groups, diverse employees often feel tasked with educating all of their coworkers about diversity, discrimination, why something is or isn't offensive, and so forth. **That's an emotional burden that no one should be expected to shoulder** unless it is part of the job description.

The expectation of assimilation.

Many times, teams and departments have their own cultures and way of socializing. If everyone on the team, for example is a White man, and the new employee is an Asian woman, she may be expected to **fit into the culture of a team with an inherent White male identity**. Conversely, she may be preemptively isolated because her teammates do not attempt to integrate her because of her differences.





Lack of common ground or interests across identity lines.

The water cooler and after work happy hours are a great opportunity to get to know coworkers. But what if everyone on your team loves a certain band or raves about a specific TV show you've never heard of? **This can make diverse employees more likely to keep their personal interests and tastes to themselves**, which can lead to a feeling of isolation.

Being branded "difficult."

Underrepresented groups, particularly women and especially women of color, are often **branded as difficult for speaking up or being assertive in ways that their male counterparts are not.** This can be about anything from suggesting ideas to voicing instances of poor treatment or discrimination. This breeds a culture of fear and silence.





Fear of retribution.

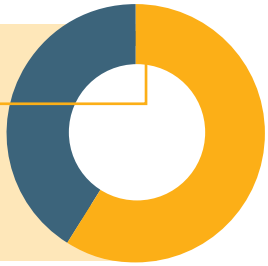
Even if employees from underrepresented groups find the courage to speak up, they may fear that it will **directly or indirectly impact their employment, opportunities to move up, or relationships** with managers and colleagues.

Not being recognized for hard work.



Employees from underrepresented groups – particularly BIPOC employees – may feel that they work **twice as hard to only get half as much** credit for their work, especially if they are one of the few people of their identity at the organization.

*A recent study by Coqual found that **65% of Black employees felt they had to work harder** for praise, compared with 16% of White employees.*





Not being valued in meetings and brainstorming.

Unconscious bias can make others **treat employees from underrepresented groups as less valuable** when it comes to team projects or meetings. Age discrimination, for example, can make employees feel dismissed for being “too young” or “too old” to have valuable input.

Being asked to change their appearance while at work.



A recent study by beauty brand Dove found that Black women were 30% more likely to receive a “grooming policy” than their non-Black counterparts. Additionally, **80% of Black women said they have felt compelled to change their hairstyle** just to fit in more at work.

13



Comments and questions like “You’re so articulate,” “You’re gay? I never would have guessed” or “Where are you from, originally?” may seem harmless or even complimentary on the surface, but are **rooted in bias and can be emotionally draining** for employees from underrepresented groups if experienced frequently.

Being expected to lead the charge for diversity and inclusion, regardless of job title or experience.

14



One of the biggest shortcomings organizations face when attempting to implement diversity and inclusion is relying solely on the work of diverse employees. While BIPOC or other underrepresented identities should be offered the opportunity to contribute, they **should not be expected to project manage the entire organization’s DEI strategy** unless they want to.

15



Diversity programs that focus on legal requirements rather than achieving equity.

How many times have you seen the phrase “XYZ Organization is an Equal Opportunity Employer”? That’s all fine and great, but this **dry legal language usually focuses on the negative implications of not following laws** rather than the positives of hiring a diverse workforce. This check-the-box mentality can make BIPOC or otherwise underrepresented employees employees feel like an organization is more interested in being compliant than genuinely advocating for diversity.

When an organization talks the talk but doesn’t walk the walk.

16



A blurb or an entire webpage dedicated to diversity and inclusion do not make for an equitable workforce. Using stock images of “diversity” rather than pictures of real employees on such pages, **claiming to value diversity but never hiring or promoting diverse candidates**, and a culture rampant with microaggressions or even outright discrimination are all ways in which organizations fail to meet their so-called DEI standards – and drive diverse employees away.

NEOGOV

Designed exclusively for public sector organizations, NEOGOV’s suite of three integrated modules – Recruit, Develop, and Manage – support the unique needs of public sector HR teams and automate the entire employee lifecycle, while providing tools to better support diversity and equity in the workforce. Learn more at **www.neogov.com**.