

Americans are rightly outraged at the killing of George Floyd and are making their voices heard in the streets and online. We have seen a flood of corporate statements across the news media, social media and employee inboxes and they've generated a wide range of strong reactions.

To find out what workers expect from their companies, Brunswick conducted a poll of 1,192 US workers, including an over-sample of 292 black workers, on June 1, 2020. We sought to understand their opinions and perceptions of companies speaking out on racial discrimination in America and what actions companies should take.

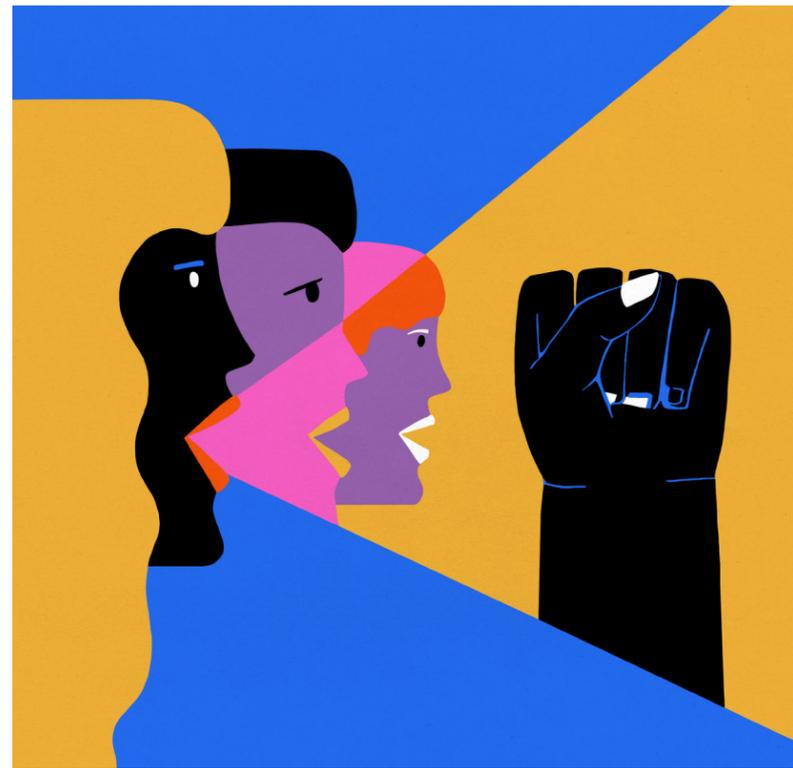
Public polling on issues of racial equality has been taking place since long before the civil rights movement. Our research is intended to collect data on how workers are viewing the statements and actions of their employers. Companies have been expected to speak out on social issues for some time now, and the expectation for them to do so is growing. That is reflected in our results.

TAKE A STAND When we asked workers if they expect their employers to take a stand on social issues, 31 percent said "yes" unequivocally and 41 percent said "yes, but only when the issue directly affects the company's business." Just over one quarter said "no." Black workers are even more likely to expect their companies to take a stand on social issues, even when they disagree with the position taken.

As younger generations enter the workforce, the expectation that companies will address issues of social change and racial justice is likely to increase. Young people are significantly more likely to want to hear from leaders at their own company on George Floyd and racial discrimination: 52 percent of Gen Z want company leaders to address his death and the protest specifically, compared to 29 percent of Millennials, 15 percent of Gen X and just 10 percent of Baby Boomers.

And when companies do speak out, their voices are heard: Workers are paying attention to what companies are saying in response to the killing of George Floyd and the protests, with 68 percent of workers saying they are aware of companies issuing statements expressing support for racial justice.

THE BENEFITS In the eyes of workers, speaking up is much more likely to improve perceptions of a company than to hurt them. Over half (51 percent) of all workers say that speaking out in solidarity with protesters improves their view of a company



The George Floyd Outrage: US WORKERS SPEAK

BRUNSWICK INSIGHT'S poll of employees reveals how they would like their companies to respond.
By **MARA RIEMER.**

compared to 37 percent who say that it would not affect their perceptions. The percentage of black workers who say their perceptions would improve is significantly higher at 70 percent.

With Gen Z and Millennials the impact is overwhelmingly positive: 65 percent of Gen Z and 57 percent of Millennials say it would change their opinion for the better, as opposed to 4 percent and 10 percent, respectively, who say it would change for the worse. Baby Boomers are more evenly split: 36 percent say it would improve their opinion of the company and 22 percent say it would worsen it.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE At the time of this writing, there are many companies that have yet to make a public statement and are wondering: Is it now too late? Will they come off as followers? Will their late

commentary be viewed as inauthentic? While each company must assess its own situation, the general answer is that is not too late. Over 70 percent say that regardless of timing, it is important for companies to let their employees and customers know where they stand.

Gen Z and Millennial workers are even more likely to want to hear from companies on the protests regardless of timing: 82 percent and 70 percent respectively say companies should speak out regardless of timing.

ACTIONS OVER WORDS Importantly, workers want more from corporations than just statements. The data suggests that the next few days and weeks will come with increased expectation of follow-through and commitment. Companies should be having conversations now about the next steps they will take. Workers believe that donating to organizations that fight racism and promoting the use of police body cameras are actions to prioritize.

Notably, nearly one quarter (24 percent) of black workers agreed that companies should allow black colleagues to take mental health days off—nearly twice the rate of white respondents (13 percent), and much higher than the 2 percent of Baby Boomers and 9 percent of Gen Xers who said the same. This indicates that the extent of the daily emotional

toll that these events are taking on the black community remains underestimated by the mostly white, largely middle-aged group that populates most boardrooms.

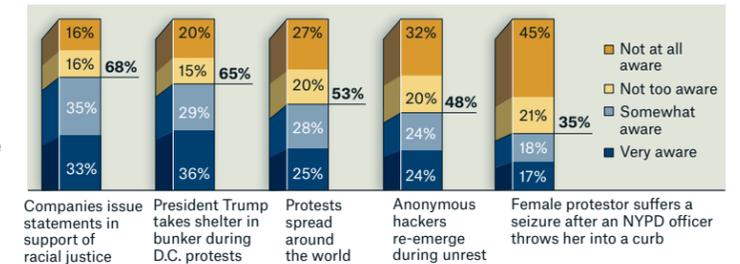
As corporations make decisions on how to support employees through this time when all Americans are feeling the stresses of the pandemic and are exasperated at the brutalities they have witnessed, leaders need to ensure that there are people of color around the table where the decisions are getting made, or risk their own blind spots obscuring the best path forward.

Only when we look back on these times will we know if this was the moment when things really changed. For now, what this means for companies is that they must consider how they fit into the conversation of today and the solutions for tomorrow.

ILLUSTRATION: FRANZISKA BARCZYK. GRAPHS: PETER HOEY

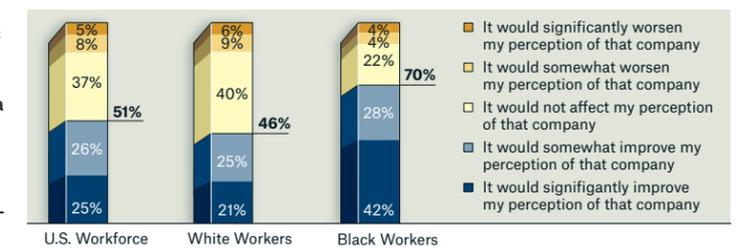
Awareness of COMPANIES SPEAKING OUT is High

Almost seven in 10 US workers are aware of companies issuing statements expressing their support for racial justice—more than any other story we tested.



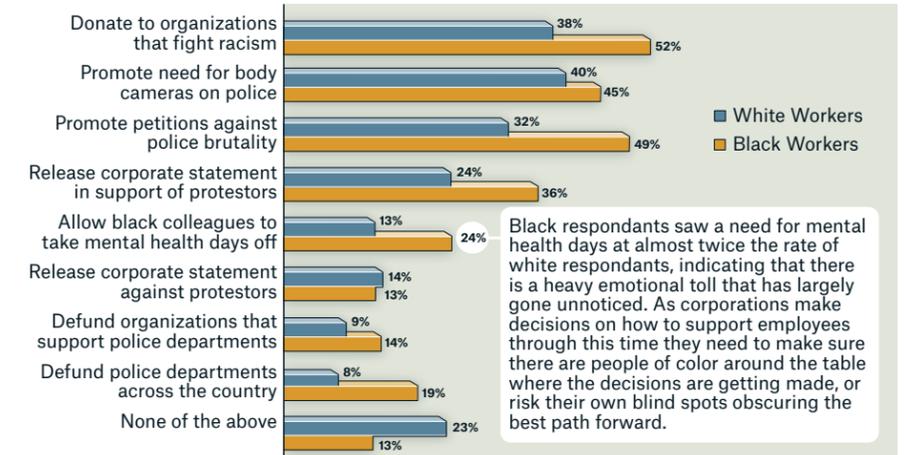
STATEMENTS OF SOLIDARITY Viewed Positively

About half say that their perceptions of a company would improve if the company released a statement expressing solidarity with the protestors. Black workers are especially appreciative of the act.



Black Workers Want MORE ACTION from Companies

Black employees expect more corporate action than white workers. The gap is especially large when it comes to promoting petitions against police brutality. Companies should consider shifting from expressing solidarity with protestors to calling on police to do better.



TOP CONCERNS ABOUT PROTESTORS DIFFER ALONG RACE LINES

Black workers' top concern was for protestors' safety; for whites, it was damage to property. White workers No. 2 concern was worsening the racial divide; this was the lowest concern among Black workers.

