



**Thrive in  
Your Workplace**

Redefining Workplace  
Mental Health

Welcome to Thrive in Your Workplace's Panel:

**“How to Support the Mental Health of Colleagues of Color”**

# About Thrive in Your Workplace

Thrive in Your Workplace is a public-private partnership that **helps local employers integrate mental health support** into the workplace. We work with employers from across sectors **to offer customized workplace mental health recommendations** and implement workplace mental health practices.

Our goals are to **promote employee mental health and access to mental healthcare.**

# Supporting the mental health of colleagues of color

- The current pandemic is disproportionately impacting people of color
- Recent examples of racist violence with the murder of Black people like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor have caused large protests across the nation
- Witnessing and experiencing racism, discrimination and trauma, greatly impact the mental health of employees of color
- Creating a space for social support is one way that employers can promote the emotional wellbeing of colleagues of color during this very difficult time

# COVID-19 inequities disproportionately affect colleagues of color

Communities of color are experiencing disproportionate:

- Mortality<sup>17</sup>
- Household wage and job loss.<sup>18</sup>
- Stigma, rumors and myths, leading to a surge in racially motivated hate crimes involving physical violence and harassment.<sup>17</sup>

In NYC, frontline workers are disproportionately people of color, making up 75% of essential workers<sup>16</sup>

- Being an essential worker increases exposure and infection risk, because they must be at the job site despite outbreaks in their communities<sup>17</sup>
- Less likely to have sick leave or a work culture that allows time off for illness
  - Workers without paid sick leave may be more likely to keep working when they are sick<sup>17</sup>

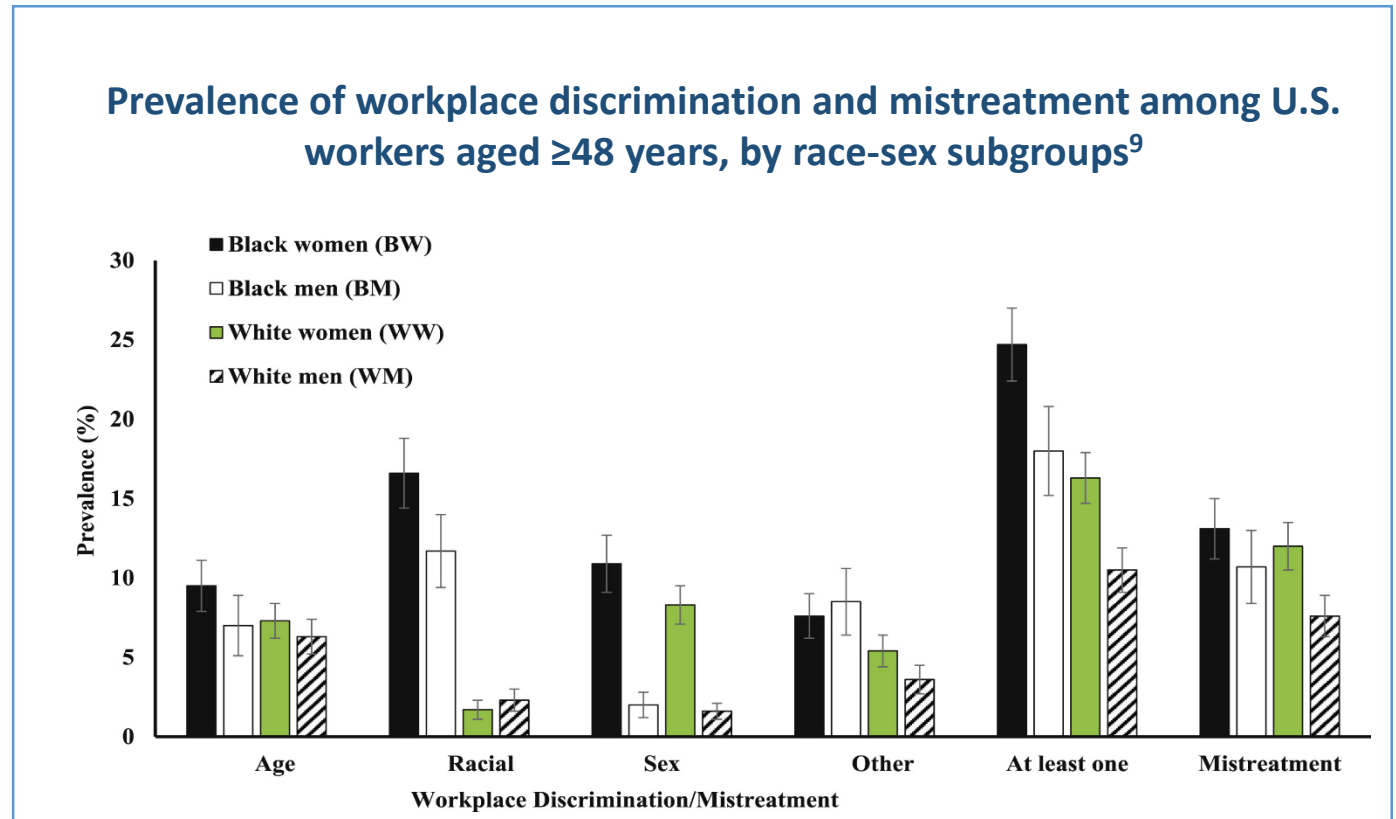
# Racism and its pervasiveness

**Racism** is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks <sup>1-3</sup>:

- **Institutionalized**: e.g., reduced access to housing, employment, medical facilities, over-representation in the penal system
- **Personally-mediated**: e.g., lack of respect, suspicion, devaluation, & racial profiling.
- **Internalized**: e.g., self-devaluation, resignation, & hopelessness.
- **Cultural**: Initiates & sustains racial prejudice & negative racial stereotypes.
- **Racial discrimination**: a combination of racism & social structures and interpersonal behaviors associated with dominance & oppression.
- **Concurrent & can accumulate** over the life course & across generations

# Prevalence of discrimination in the workplace

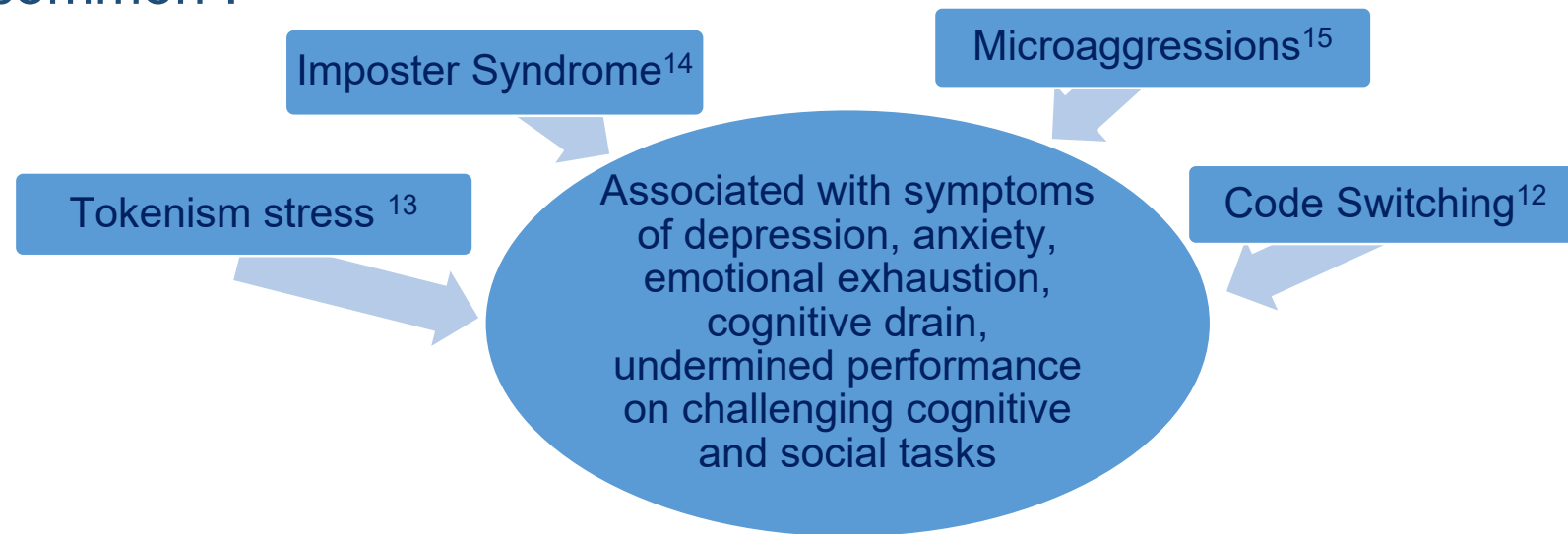
- A recent report<sup>8</sup> found **80,000+ workplace discrimination charges were filed in 2017** in the US (34% race-based), resulting in nearly \$400 million in compensation for victims
- In another study, representing 40 million+ black and white men and women  $\geq 48$  years of age, **workers reported on workplace discrimination and mistreatment based on race and gender**<sup>9</sup>



# Impact of discrimination at the workplace

A recent study found a **strong relationship between perceived workplace racial discrimination, job satisfaction and overall mental health** including<sup>10</sup> mental health symptomology, psychological distress, depression, and anxiety.

Other studies have also shown that certain psychological and behavioral patterns related to race are also common :



# Racism is a stressor that impacts individual health

- Physical Health (e.g., allostatic load/disease risk)
- **Mental Health (e.g., adverse cognitive/emotional symptomology)**

The strongest and most consistent evidence of racism and adverse health is the association with mental health<sup>4-7, 19</sup>:

- Positively associated with depression, anxiety, distress, psychological stress, negative affect, and post-traumatic stress
- Negatively associated with self-esteem, life satisfaction, control and mastery, and wellbeing
- Racial stressors can add up: across intersectional identities (e.g., such as race, sex, gender identity), studies show a positive correlation with higher levels of adverse mental health



# Why focus on Employee Resource Groups today?

Social support and relationships are a key part of maintaining mental health:

- Social support makes us feel loved, cared for, respected, and offers a sense of belonging
- A strong support system can improve or protect mental health and decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Connections between colleagues can also create a sense of purpose and well being, reduce symptoms of burnout, and increase collaboration and innovation

# Employee resources groups (ERGs) as a go-to social support strategy

ERGs are organized groups of employees that are recognized by their employers, and who share concerns about a common topic (i.e. mental health, gender identity). They can:

- Support the recruitment and retention of diverse employees
- Facilitate culturally sensitive product development and processes
- Build an inclusive and engaged workforce

They often provide many benefits to employers:

- Help identify and develop internal leaders
- Help companies recruit underrepresented individuals and develop a talent pipeline
- Lead to higher retention rates

# Our panelists

[Mahu Attenoukon](#) (pronounced Ma-ooH Uh-ten-ah-kon)

- Senior Data Strategist, [Wieden + Kennedy](#)
- Co-Lead, NOIR – Black employee affinity group

[Guishard Revan](#)

- Senior Associate, Learning, Engagement & Inclusion, [Wavemaker Global](#)
- Melanin – Supporting Black & Latinx employees

[Marissa Munoz](#)

- Digital Strategist, Business Strategy & Operations, [Verizon Media](#)
- Somos – Latinx employee affinity group

# Panel Discussion

# Resources

## Interested in learning more about workplace mental health?

Contact us at [twp@thrive.nyc.gov](mailto:twp@thrive.nyc.gov) to schedule a consult and/or visit our website (<https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/workplace>) to access toolkits, training and webinars.

## If you or a loved one are looking for mental health support, help is available:

New Yorkers can visit the [ThriveNYC Resource Guide to Mental Health Services to Access While at Home](#) for regularly updated resources, including services tailored to the needs of aging New Yorkers, veterans, students and young people harmed by violence, crime, or abuse. Follow [@MentalHealthNYC](#) for the latest updates.

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