

**BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY**

Then Now Next:

30 years of Action and Impact Report



Foreword

By Sandra Kerr CBE,

Race Equality Director, Business in the Community



When I joined Business in the Community (BITC) from the Cabinet Office in 2003, I had no idea that over two decades later I would still be immersed in the vital mission of advancing fairness and race equality across UK workplaces.

We dedicate significant portions of our lives to work, and it is essential that our organisations uphold fairness and create environments where everyone feels they belong.

This year, as we mark the 30th Anniversary milestone of BITC's action on fairness and race equality, we have made progress – yet it is disheartening to acknowledge the distance we still must travel.

Recent unrest in parts of the UK serves as a sobering reminder that while meaningful progress has been made, structural inequalities remain unresolved. Yet, amidst these tensions, it is encouraging to witness inclusion allies standing in solidarity in the workplace and in communities, and leaders and employers rallying together in support of peace, dialogue, and unity. Peaceful and dignified responses exemplify the type of collaborative action needed to heal divides and promote togetherness in recovery and repair.

Then, Now, Next offers a moment for reflection, as well as a lens on the future. For businesses, the report is a strategic resource and a call to action for leadership teams determined to embed fairness, transparency, and inclusion into every corner of their operations. Responsible businesses must be at the forefront: shaping policy, championing opportunity, and ensuring fair access for all.

I am grateful to our chairs and leadership teams – business leaders, both past and present, whose insight and commitment have helped shape this movement and build the foundation on which we now stand.

As we look to the years ahead, we must be able to talk constructively about issues, enabling us to unlock the potential £37 billion economic benefits to the UK economy that tackling racial disparities in the labour market can bring. It will also enable us to deliver transformative change together with measurable impact, improving representation, accelerating progression, and reshaping workplace culture in ways that uplift all individuals and strengthen our businesses, our communities, and our country.



I saw the opportunity to step into the role of Chair of the BITC Race Leadership Team in 2017 as one to use my skills and influence to pass on the lessons that had seen me rise through the ranks. The goal was clear: to showcase the value of access to meaningful work and stretch opportunities and access to equitable platforms that allow talent to thrive, regardless of racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic background.

I am proud of our efforts as a Leadership Team that have seen us gather valuable insights that formed the backbone of work to embed diversity and inclusion into supply chains and procurement.

However, we are more than aware that our work to tackle the challenges has only just begun. The next stage demands bolder collaboration with government, key employers, and industry leaders to move from insight to tangible impact. It is vital we continue to discover and tell the stories that inspire action.

Yes, we've made progress. But this journey is far from over. I remain firmly committed to standing alongside the remarkable team at BITC, driving forward the change our economy, and our communities, deserve.

Richard Ifeferenta | *Partner and Vice Chair, KPMG, Chair, BITC Race Leadership Team*



HOW IT BEGAN...

Established in 1995

Established by UK senior business leaders with the support of HRH The Prince of Wales, now His Majesty the King, BITC's Race Equality campaign - originally known as Race for Opportunity - marked a groundbreaking moment in business leadership.

It launched with a visionary network of senior executives who recognised the UK's evolving demographics and the urgent need for inclusive change in workplaces and communities. This early commitment stands today as a landmark example of courageous and principled allyship and solidarity from His Majesty the King, business leaders, and organisations.



1995 – 2004

The Founding Years of the BITC Race Equality Campaign

Supported by business leaders and corporate sponsors, BITC's pioneering research shed light on the barriers faced by Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse individuals across recruitment, career progression, customer service, community participation, and small business and entrepreneurial access to supply chains.

Insight was examined from census data on ethnically diverse demographics captured for the first time in 1991. This data highlighted four places – Birmingham, Bristol, London, and Manchester – with significant representation of ethnically diverse communities.

It was one of the first comprehensive reports of its kind, setting the tone for data-driven action on race equality through fair access to opportunity in business and the labour market.

Business leadership has been a hallmark of the campaign from the start. The campaign's first Chairs were Bob Ayling CBE, British Airways, Lord Charles Allen CBE, Granada TV, and Allan Leighton, Royal Mail, leader for the campaign's 10th anniversary in 2005. That same year, HRH The Prince of Wales hosted a reception at Clarence House to celebrate the campaign's momentum, gathering committed business leaders who had become champions of fairness, equal access to opportunity, and inclusion.



I embraced the role of Chair of the BITC Race for Opportunity board in its formative years, fully aware of the scale of the task ahead: to mobilise more employers around the urgency of race inclusion and the imperative to plan boldly for a fairer future. We built strong local networks of business leaders in London, Bristol, Manchester, and Birmingham, convening regular face-to-face meetings that seeded a shared vision and collective drive.

Our campaign was anchored on four foundational pillars: recruitment, retention, and progression of diverse talent; marketing that recognised communities as valued and profitable consumers; inclusive outreach that placed ethnically diverse beneficiaries at the heart of community engagement; and expanding representation in the supply chain by unlocking opportunities for diverse business owners.

Over the decades, the evidence and insights gathered have consistently affirmed that these were and remain the right priorities. But while we've made progress, the full potential of race equality, fairness, and inclusion in the UK is still ahead of us. We must continue to act, innovate, and lead with courage.

Lord Charles Allen | *BITC Race for Opportunity Leadership Team Chair 1997-2000*



Data-Driven Place-Based Action

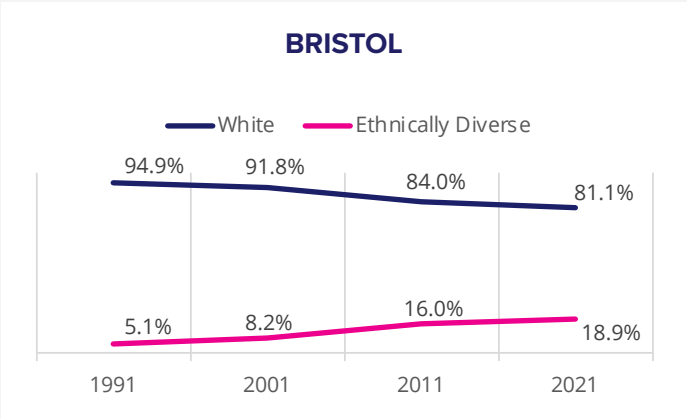
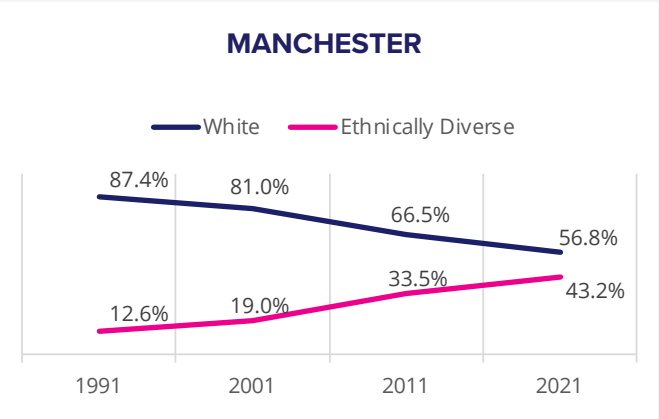
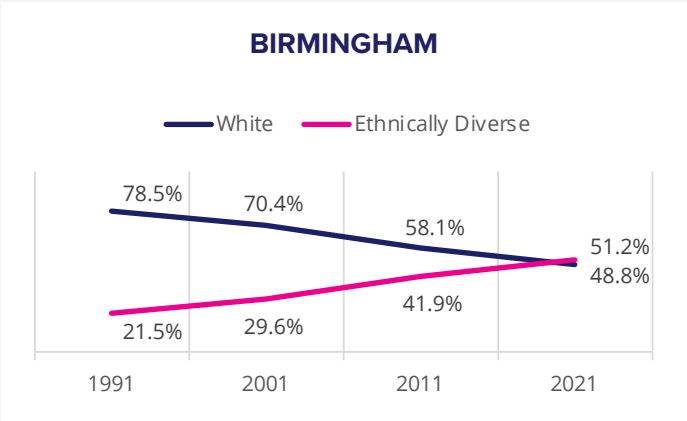
Embedding Race Equality Locally

Leveraging demographic insights from national census records and government sources, the Race Equality campaign was strategically launched in four major cities: London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Bristol. These locations were selected based on the significant and rising representation of Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse communities. Today’s visible increase in representation across these cities underscores the enduring value of ethnicity data collection, and its

critical role in shaping responsive, inclusive, fair, and equitable business practices. Understanding and interpreting local demographic profiles has enabled BITC to deliver tailored interventions, ensuring that services and support are aligned with the specific needs of people in communities. This data-driven approach laid the groundwork for impactful place-based programmes, beginning with the organisation of local workshops, dissemination of best practice, and active outreach to business leaders.

GROWTH OF ETHNICALLY DIVERSE POPULATIONS:

These graphs illustrate the growth of ethnically diverse populations over the last 30 years, in the places where the Race Equality campaign first launched in 1995.



Source: ONS England and Wales Census 1991, 2001, 2011 and 2021.

Today...

BITC continues to build on this foundation by deepening community collaboration and working closely with local stakeholders.

Through place-based programmes, BITC works with local stakeholders and employers to address region-specific challenges in communities across the broader spectrum of responsible business, including employment, education, enterprise, and wellbeing, ensuring that equal access to opportunity and fairness remain at the centre of inclusive growth.

Allan Leighton, as Chair of the Race Equality campaign from 2001-2006, was a strong advocate for the importance of data, insight, and measuring

progress in impact during the first decade of the campaign. He championed employers using self-assessment and diagnostic tools, encouraging employers to capture, monitor, and publicly report on progress through annual benchmarking. BITC used these diagnostic tools to not only foster greater accountability but also helped establish race inclusion as a core metric of responsible business performance. This is now embedded within the BITC Responsible Business Health Check.



As Chair of the Business in the Community Race for Opportunity board, my driving ambition was to inspire UK business and create a culture of accountability, transparency, and learning around race inclusion in the workplace. I know that meaningful change requires more than good intentions, it demands data, benchmarking, and action.

We made annual benchmarking a mandatory exercise, empowering employers to understand where they stood, track progress year on year, and be inspired by what was possible. It was a catalyst for innovation and insight, enabling businesses to share cutting-edge practices, spotlight solutions, and turn aspiration into action.

Our approach focused on three key priorities: increasing the attraction of diverse talent, widening access to opportunities, and recognising the critical link between customers, clients, communities, and fair, inclusive business practices. We created safe, collaborative spaces for responsible businesses to learn from one another, confront uncomfortable truths, and co-create solutions. This wasn't just about metrics, it was about momentum, and a shared commitment to lasting change.

Allan Leighton | *BITC Race for Opportunity Chair, 2001-2006*





THEN...

2005-2014

Pioneering years of campaigns and action



Launch of the UK's first National Race Equality Awards



Launch of the Cross-Organisational Mentoring Circles



Launch of the BITC Youth Advisory Panel



Launch of the Race campaign's first research reports



Seeing is Believing visit, impacting DWP policy

2007-2016

Launch of the Race Equality Awards

In 2007, Mike Fairey, then Deputy Group Chief Executive of Lloyds Banking Group, chaired the campaign and launched the Race for Opportunity Awards, a decade-long initiative recognising exemplary progress, innovation, and action on race equality.

The groundbreaking Race for Opportunity Awards – the first of their kind in the United Kingdom – galvanised employers across sectors to spotlight and celebrate leading practices in race inclusion within the workplace. The awards established rigorous judging panels for each award category comprised of senior business leaders, academics, and community advocates from across the UK. Shortlisted employers presented evidence of their organisational impact, complemented by testimonials from stakeholders who had

personally benefited from innovative and inclusive programmes.

Award categories spanned a wide range of themes, including attraction and outreach strategies, mentoring, progression, retention, leadership, and executive sponsorship.

These awards became a beacon for best practice across UK employers, inspiring others to follow suit and helping embed race inclusion into the fabric of corporate strategy. Running successfully for a decade, the awards became the UK's foremost platform for showcasing race inclusion best practice. These awards paved the way for a new generation of diversity and inclusion recognition programmes, now embedded across UK industries.



I first connected with Sandra Kerr in 2011, during her tenure as Chair of the DWP Ethnic Minority Employer Stakeholder Group, where she was spearheading strategies to close the ethnic minority employment gap. I later joined the group, contributing insights into the barriers posed by psychometric testing in recruitment and selection. My involvement deepened as I became a judge for the BITC Race Equality Awards, serving on multiple panels and witnessing innovative practices from both public and private sectors, hearing many powerful stories of impact on employees' lives. We also had the opportunity to work together on the DfE's Apprenticeships Advisory Group.

In 2023, I re-engaged with BITC through the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS), contributing to the Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chain initiative at a time when Sandra was rightly honoured with a fellowship in recognition of the extensive research and advocacy led by the BITC campaign over the years.

While progress has been made, the journey is far from over. There remains a pressing need for deeper research and sharper insight. I maintain a strong commitment to collaborating and sharing my expertise to drive meaningful change in future projects.

Kathlyn Wilson PhD, CPsychol | Associate Professor in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship,
University of Hertfordshire Business School



2009-2011

Piloting Cross-Organisational Mentoring Circles

In 2009, BITC's Race Equality campaign secured funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government to pilot initiatives, including the development of Cross-Organisational Mentoring Circles (COMC).

The COMC pilot engaged 250 ethnically diverse women over 18 months, offering safe and supportive environments to discuss their aspirations, professional progression, and challenges within the workplace. Its success led to the programme's expansion to include both men and women, ultimately becoming a BITC flagship programme, now in its 13th year.

By 2013, COMC was formally established and continues to thrive. To date:

- Over 100 employers have supported the programme.
- More than 4,000 employees have participated as mentees and mentors across the key places of Birmingham, Bristol, London, and Manchester.
- The 13th cohort launched in 2025, sustaining the programme's legacy of peer learning, coaching, and empowerment to support employees' progression.



As Chair of the BITC Race Equality Leadership Team and Chief Executive of Mitie, I was deeply committed to unlocking the transformative power of mentorship, especially for individuals from lower socio economic backgrounds. I believed in the ripple effect that occurs when business leaders share their journeys and engage in meaningful two-way mentoring.

With government backing, we launched the Cross-Organisational Mentoring Circle pilot (2009–2011), reaching 250 ethnically diverse women across the UK. That pilot didn't just make a difference, it made history. It evolved into a flagship programme that BITC has proudly sustained for over 13 years, now benefiting both women and men alike, and remains active to this day.

My dedication to advancing fairness and race equality led me to conduct the 'Race in the Workplace' review, which uncovered a staggering £24 billion economic opportunity waiting to be realised through closing racial disparities in the labour market. Among the key recommendations was the call for mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting – a proposal I'm proud to see gaining momentum in the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, now under consultation and development.

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE | *BITC Race Leadership Team Chair, 2008 - 2010*



2012

Founding the BITC Youth Advisory Panel

Addressing Youth Unemployment: Listening to Diverse Voices

A profound legacy of the 2008 financial crisis was the sustained increase in youth unemployment across the UK. By 2011, analysis of government labour market data revealed a troubling disparity: while youth unemployment began to ease for many, ethnically diverse young people, particularly young Black males, were not experiencing the same rate of recovery. This enduring gap underscored deep-rooted structural inequalities in fair employment access and progression.

In response to these findings, BITC's Race Leadership Team commissioned a compelling drama-based presentation that vividly illustrated the lived experiences of young Black men, including heightened vulnerability to stop and search, the proximity risks of joint enterprise, accessing and sustaining higher education opportunities, and overcoming stereotypes and barriers to employment. This powerful depiction of the dilemmas prompted a strategic turning point: BITC's Race Leadership Team recognised that no effective solutions could be achieved without young people's voices at the centre of the conversation.



It has been an honour to serve on the BITC Race Leadership team for over two decades from the establishment of the 'Race for Opportunity Awards' in 2007 – on one of the inaugural judging panels.

In 2009, I was a lead mentor on the BITC Cross-Organisational Mentoring Circle pilot for ethnically diverse women, which evolved into a BITC flagship programme for both men and women. For 13 years, this initiative has delivered powerful inspiration to both employers and employees alike.

I vividly remember being the one to pose a critical question: "How can we make decisions about young people without them being part of the conversation?" That moment led to the formation of the BITC Youth Advisory Panel. I was honoured to sit on the recruitment panel that appointed 16 remarkable young individuals. I had the joy of reverse mentoring one of these inspiring voices, someone I remain proudly connected to today.

Progress has been made, and celebrated, but the journey is far from complete. As we navigate new and emerging challenges, the call to act with courage, inclusivity, and ambition remains as urgent as ever.

Carmen Watson | Chair, Pertemps, Member, BITC Race Leadership Team



Being a youth panel member for Business in the Community has had a significant impact on my personal and professional growth. It gave me the confidence to speak to anyone, from peers to corporate leaders, and helped me better understand the social and environmental issues I care about.

I gained valuable insight into how corporations operate at an executive level and learned to think more strategically. Engaging with diverse perspectives deepened my empathy and broadened my worldview.

BITC enabled me to build a strong network of passionate individuals committed to creating positive change across business and society.

Kofi Siaw | BITC Youth Advisory Panel 2012-2016



BITC subsequently launched a national recruitment exercise, seeking young people from ethnically diverse and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Sixteen exceptional individuals from across the UK were selected to form BITC's Youth Advisory Panel, which went on to work closely with the BITC Race Equality Leadership Team for over three years.

Together, the panel and senior leaders co-designed what became the most transformative Seeing is Believing (SIB) visit to date. Focused on youth unemployment disparities, the visit catalysed policy innovation within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus, leading to practical reforms in job search support and employer engagement.

The collaboration also surfaced several systemic challenges that persist today. Chief among them is the lack of feedback provided to young job applicants, a barrier that hinders growth, confidence, and future opportunity. The Youth Advisory Panel elevated this insight, challenging employers to rethink recruitment processes, to find ways to deliver feedback and embed more transparent, supportive practices.



Working with the Race Board and the wider BITC team raised my consciousness of unconscious bias in the workplace whilst equally empowering me with the tools and confidence to speak up for myself and others. I was further encouraged by my Mentor, Gloria, whose unwavering courage and belief in me truly enabled me to not limit my career options. I will eternally be grateful for this mentorship specifically because I could always count on her to give me honest advice and guidance with challenges at work.

Valerie Okoampah | BITC Youth Advisory Panel
2012-2016



Adrian Joseph, BITC Race Equality campaign Chair (2011 – 2016) led a Seeing is Believing visit with the BITC Youth Advisory Panel in 2013 to explore racial disparities in youth unemployment, particularly affecting young Black men in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

This visit catalysed real-world solutions. In 2014, BITC launched the Unemployed Mentoring Circles Pilot with support from 10 leading employers, including Barclays, EDF Energy, Google, Pertemps, and TfL in partnership with the Brixton Jobcentre, and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Of the 90 young people from marginalised backgrounds who participated in the pilot, 70 successfully transitioned into full-time employment within 6 months of participation and engagement with employers leading the circles.

Building on its success, the initiative expanded:

- In 2018, pilots ran across 20 UK locations with the highest numbers of youth unemployment at the time, supporting over 500 young people.
- Participants from all ethnic backgrounds reported increased access to job interviews, enhanced confidence, and stronger connections with employers.

In 2019, Unemployed Mentoring Circles were formally adopted as a recognised policy approach for all young people by DWP and Jobcentres – a lasting example of business-led intervention delivering measurable impact for diverse communities and for all young job seekers and employees from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.



NOW...

2015-2025

Evidence Years of BITC's Race Equality Campaign



**Launch of the Race
at Work research series**



**Expansion of the
Race at Work Charter**



**Launch of the Race at
Work Charter**



**Diverse and Inclusive
Supply Chain Report**

Race Equality Campaign Milestones:

From Landmark Insights to National Impact

2015

20th Anniversary: The Landmark Race at Work Survey

To mark the 20th anniversary of BITC's Race Equality campaign in 2015, BITC, with support from BT, Enterprise-Rent-A-Car, KPMG, Nationwide, and Sainsbury's, partnered with YouGov to deliver the landmark Race at Work survey, which captured an unprecedented 24,457 employee responses.

The scale and depth of this data provided compelling evidence of persistent disparities affecting Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse employees. It served as a catalyst for government intervention, promoting the commissioning of an independent review in 2016 led by Baroness Ruby

McGregor-Smith CBE, a former Chair of the Race Equality campaign.

Published in 2017, the Race in the Workplace Review revealed that addressing race inequalities could potentially deliver a £24 billion annual boost to the UK economy.

These economic opportunities, however, remain constrained by systemic barriers. BITC continues to empower employers to confront those barriers, offering data-informed guidance and peer collaboration to drive sustainable inclusion.

2018

Launch of the Race at Work Charter

In 2018, one year on from the groundbreaking insights from the McGregor-Smith Review, with funding from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), BITC ran a second Race at Work survey with YouGov, reaching 24,310 respondents. Comparative insights from the 2015 and 2018 surveys shaped the development of the Race at Work Charter, launched with the support of Rt Hon Theresa May, then Prime Minister.

The Charter outlined five core actions for employers:

- Senior leadership and executive sponsorship
- Ethnicity data collection and reporting
- Zero-tolerance for bullying and harassment
- Managerial accountability for inclusion
- Support for career progression

Impact has been substantial:

- Senior leadership accountability through appointing executive champions for equality and fairness. Executive sponsorship for large employers rose from 38% (2018) to 55% (2021) and now stands at 61% in 2025.*
- Voluntary ethnicity pay gap reporting increased from 11% (2018) to 19% (2021). This is to become mandatory with the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill announced in the King's Speech in July 2024.
- The Charter has expanded from 85 founding employers from both the private and public sectors in 2018 to over 1,100 signatories, representing 6 million employees – 20% of the UK workforce.

* In previous waves of the Race at Work survey this question read 'Does your organisation have at least one senior leader and/or champion who actively promotes equality, diversity and fairness? In 2025, the term 'diversity' was removed.



When I was first introduced to Sandra Kerr through the Department for Business and Trade in 2017, I could never have anticipated the depth and longevity of the collaboration with BITC that would follow. Leading a cross-disciplinary team of university academics in analysing the Race at Work series, enriched by the lived experiences of over 42,000 individuals, has been both a profound challenge and a rewarding journey. This longitudinal data has helped illuminate the realities faced by countless employees across sectors. I remain steadfast in my belief that true progress depends on leaders, HR Directors, and line managers working in concert to foster equitable access to opportunity, dismantle systemic barriers, and uphold fairness in every decision, especially for those navigating bullying, harassment, discrimination, or any form of injustice in the workplace.

Professor Nelarine Cornelius | *Queen Mary University of London*



2020

25th Anniversary: Race at the Top Revisited and Black Voices Report

In 2020, the Race Equality campaign marked its 25th year with the publication of Race at the Top Revisited, which revealed that less than 2% of senior leadership roles in England and Wales were held by Black professionals, despite a proportional benchmark of 3.5%.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder in the US and subsequent global protests, BITC identified three urgent priorities for employers: bold, inclusive leadership for race equality, authentic allyship across workplaces, and stronger connection to affected communities and employee networks.

The two related reports, Race at the Top 2020 Revisited and Race at Work Black Voices 2020,

were accompanied by webinars attended by over 1,000 employers, sparking meaningful reflection and action.

Also in 2020, a donation from The Prince of Wales Foundation in recognition of the BITC Race Equality campaign's 25th Anniversary supported BITC to commission therapists to co-create two mental health toolkits for ethnically diverse women and their line managers. Released on Windrush Day in June 2021, the toolkits addressed the disparities and mental health impact of the pandemic and offered guidance on self-care, inclusive wellbeing support, and insights for managers to deliver culturally responsive support.

2021

Third Race at Work Survey

In 2021, on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, BITC launched the third Race at Work survey with YouGov, with support from Co-op, KPMG, Enterprise-Rent-A-Car, Sainsbury's, and Shell. This edition garnered 24,638 responses and 24,450 open comments, including 10,000 comments focused solely on allyship.

A thematic analysis conducted by academics from the Universities of Birmingham, York, and Queen Mary University of London provided new qualitative insights into persistent workplace barriers and emerging solutions.

As a result, two new commitments were added to the Race at Work Charter: inclusive allyship and diverse and inclusive supply chain practices.

2023

Tracking Race at Work Charter Employer Progress

In 2023, BITC published its Race at Work Charter survey report, drawing responses from 238 employers across sectors. The findings revealed encouraging progress in organisational culture, with 81% delivering anti-racism training and 62% establishing allyship networks. This reflected a growing emphasis on inclusive leadership and active engagement among workplace allies.

However, the survey also highlighted significant gaps in supplier inclusion. Alarming, only 18% of respondents had signed the Government's Prompt Payment Code, underscoring a widespread lack of progress in embedding diversity within corporate supply chains and procurement strategies.



2024

Academic Insights: Voices from the Race at Work Surveys

In 2024, BITC collaborated with academic partners from Queen Mary University of London and University of York to produce the Voices from the Race at Work surveys report. This comprehensive review analysed over 42,000 qualitative submissions gathered from surveys between 2015 and 2021.

The multi-university teams used thematic analysis to surface lived experiences, structural barriers, and emerging best practices, offering an unparalleled evidence base to inform employer action, policy development, and inclusive workplace transformation.

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It has been a genuine honour to collaborate with fellow academics in reviewing the Race at Work series, examining the powerful qualitative insights and comments gathered over the past decade. I've been especially drawn to the recent findings on building a diverse and inclusive supply chain, and it's been a privilege to support BITC in hosting thematic long table conversations. These dialogues bringing together founders from ethnically diverse businesses alongside leaders from major corporate and public sector organisations are essential. They amplify voices too often overlooked and highlight the persistent systemic barriers that many in the workplace and among small business founders must navigate in order to thrive and succeed.”

Dr Chidozie Umeh (ACIPD, FHEA) | *Assistant Professor in Human Resource Management, University of York*

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NEXT...

2025- Reset the Race at Work Charter



**Build people: employees,
communities, and suppliers**



**Reset the Race at Work Charter:
leaders and employers support
young people's pathways into
good work and enterprise**



**The path ahead: sharing
learning and celebrating
success stories**

Building a thriving economy



We must unlock the full potential of talent across the UK, empowering individuals to progress in work and enterprise as far as their ambition and ability can take them.

Mandatory pay gap reporting is a vital step in the right direction. It helps ensure that fair pay and equal opportunities remain accessible to those who continue to invest in their skills and expertise. As incomes rise, wages grow, and the pay gap narrows, we unlock a powerful opportunity for economic uplift.

Everyone deserves a fair chance to step into meaningful work that motivates, inspires, and fuels innovation and creativity. That is why we must act now, by collaborating, taking bold action, and seizing the £37 billion in potential economic gains that lie ahead.

We are calling on employers to reimagine how they support young people's pathways into the workplace, creating environments where young people can thrive, contribute, and progress.

Together, we can open doors to employment, upskill, and reskill our wider workforce to build a more inclusive and prosperous future for all.

When BITC's Race at Work 2015 survey launched, a key message was that only 37% of employees said that their employers were comfortable talking about race. We have seen this steadily increase over the last decade, rising to 41% of employees agreeing with this statement in 2021. However, in 2025 we have seen this fall dramatically to 33%. This regressive trend must be stopped. It is important to become comfortable to talk about issues if we are ever to become informed, build understanding, and create solutions together.

BITC's Race at Work 2025 survey with YouGov found that 53% of employees say there is at least one senior leader/champion who actively promotes equality and fairness at their organisation. And this increases to 61% of large employers in the UK that have a senior champion. In light of this evidence, inclusive leadership has been embedded into each commitment of the Race at Work Charter.

Driving Recruitment, Retention, Development, and Progression

We want action from inclusive leaders in the workplace to spark a culture that ignites ambition in employees, creates a sense of common purpose, and helps to build futures that look bigger and brighter. The top cited barriers to making the next step in their career remain as a lack of opportunities (30%), lack of confidence (20%), and not knowing what they want from their career (15%). Those who are ethnically diverse are more likely to cite at least one barrier (72% vs. 59% White), though those from a White background are more likely to say they are not looking for career progression now (23% vs. 10% ethnically diverse). Specifically, those who are ethnically diverse are more likely to cite a lack of opportunities (33% vs. 27% White), a lack of training (17% vs. 11% White), and a lack of expertise (13% vs. 9% White). Employees living in the North East are

more likely than average to cite location as a limiting factor (18% vs. 12% of those living in the UK overall), as well as saying their visas/immigration status is a limiting factor (9% vs. 3% of those living in the UK overall).

We need leaders and employers to support young people's pathways into good work and enterprise, including those marginalised from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

The definition of 'good work', defined in collaboration with young people from a roundtable with Youth Futures Foundation in 2024, can provide great insight to employers and stakeholders:



Good work means feeling valued, fulfilled, and supported. It means being respected and treated fairly in a workplace that is diverse and inclusive, where there is open and honest communication and decent pay. Everyone should have a voice. Good work is done to a high standard and gives you a sense of achievement. It happens in a place where you can make change happen. Good work protects your health and wellbeing. You're excited to tell your friends and family about good work, not because they ask, but because you're proud of it.

Workwhile | A vision for good work - see full PDF [here](#)



With this definition in mind, employers can take action on:

- **Recruitment:** Reaching and engaging young people through attractive, inclusive, accessible, aspirational employment opportunities.
- **Retention:** Building trust and resilience through tailored support, mentorship, and supporting employees to volunteer in community-driven initiatives. 49% of ethnically diverse respondents said that they feel they have to leave their current organisation to progress in their career, compared to 39% of White respondents. This trend has seen little change in the last decade.
- **Development:** Equipping young people with the skills, confidence, and mindset needed to thrive in today's marketplace.
- **Progression:** Enabling upward mobility through career pathways, networking, entrepreneurial ventures, and lifelong learning. Overall, the proportion of people who believe it is important for them to progress in their career has increased from 53% in 2015 to 61% in 2025. Since 2015, ethnically diverse employees have been more likely than White employees to agree with this statement (73% ethnically diverse vs. 49% White in 2025) and the gap between the two groups has stayed relatively the same over the years.



I've had the privilege of working in close collaboration with BITC for many years. Over the last five years, I've been deeply engaged with BITC's Race Equality campaign, drawing on the rich longitudinal Race at Work surveys to conduct targeted analysis into employment representation across sector, geography, age, and demographic groups.

This work has led to collaborating with BITC to deliver socioeconomic papers by ethnicity group for employers. I also helped to shape the Diverse Inclusive Supply Chain survey, whose findings I've rigorously examined, and have, in collaboration with officials at the Department for Business and Trade, identified key data sources to inform the calculation of the economic uplift achievable if labour market inequalities were effectively addressed.

Whilst examining the data, it is disappointing to see issues where not much has changed. However, there is an opportunity to take the needed actions now. Looking ahead, I'm keen to continue this work with fresh analysis of the Race at Work 2025 survey data, exploring new insights that can support meaningful change in policy and practice.

Professor Ian Thomson | *University of Dundee*



Driving Local Impact: Empowering Communities Through People and Purpose

Responsible businesses believe in the power of local engagement to create lasting change. By inspiring and activating employees through volunteering and investing in diverse communities, we can build bridges between business and society. Our BITC Race at Work 2025 survey found that half (50%) of respondents feel like their organisation does encourage them to use their skills to volunteer or support young people. Younger generations are more likely to feel that their organisations encourage them in this in comparison to older ones (66% of 18–24-year-olds compared to 34% of 55+ year olds). There is an opportunity for employers to mobilise their wider workforce to engage in sharing their skills through volunteering.

- Employee Resource Groups provide a safe space to harness the passion and lived experiences of our workforce to champion inclusion, include underrepresented voices, and shape culturally responsive initiatives.

- Mobilise employee volunteers to turn purpose into action by empowering employees to contribute their time and skills to causes that matter, locally and nationally.
- Invest in places and commit resources to the diversity of communities. Unlock potential through strategic partnerships, inclusive growth, and place-based innovation using local talent and skills where available. Create opportunities for skills needed for the future to develop and grow.

We can turn corporate responsibility into partnerships for community resilience where every action counts and every person feels included and empowered to make a difference. BITC's Race at Work 2025 survey found the support employees want most from their employer to stand in greater solidarity with ethnically diverse colleagues includes education about key issues (28%), training and workshops (27%), guidance (22%), and empowerment from their employer to support (21%).

Inclusive Supply Chains: Empowering Diverse Founders to Drive Social Value

We can reimagine supply chain ecosystems as engines of economic regeneration in businesses and communities. We can measure the impact of the change. This can be done by engaging diverse business founders, building partnerships, and embedding social value at every stage.

- Engage diverse founders and work with entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds to bring innovation, lived experience, and cultural insight into our supply networks. Supporting diverse business founders will help to increase the volume of visible role models. The Race at Work 2025 survey insights found that those who are ethnically diverse are also more likely to have a career role model than those from White ethnic backgrounds (46% ethnically diverse vs. 26% White). Those who are ethnically diverse are also more likely to agree that a role model needs to be from the same background as them (35% ethnically diverse vs. 27% White).

- Deliver social value and leverage procurement as a force for good. Create jobs, foster inclusion, and strengthen community resilience through every contract and partnership, and track spending to ensure it reaches those who need support. 40% of organisations said they had made a public commitment to delivering social value through the procurement and supply chain process (data from BITC’s Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chain survey 2024).
- Pay fairly because dignity in business starts with fairness. Timely, fair compensation that fuels economic stability, growth, and regeneration for both people and places because it is a commitment to building fair and inclusive economies where opportunity flows through every link in the chain.

NEXT: THREE PILLARS OF ACTION

People and Employees	Communities and Places	Suppliers
<p>Driving inclusive employment: recruitment, retention, development, and progression.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Transforming the futures of young people, including the marginalised NEET (not in education, employment, or training) by creating dynamic pathways into good work and enterprise.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Unlocking potential and fostering long-term progression through targeted recruitment, sustained engagement, and skills development.</p>	<p>Driving local impact: empowering communities through people and common purpose.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Using local engagement to create lasting change in places. Employers can activate employee volunteering to share skills, investing in diverse communities in places.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Building bridges between business and society. Engaging all community voices around the decision-making tables to be part of creative innovative local solutions.</p>	<p>Inclusive supply chains: empowering diverse founders to drive social value.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Reimagining supply chain ecosystems as engines of fairness, economic inclusion, and regeneration of places. Supporting and engaging diverse business founders through partnerships, embedding social value at every stage.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Prompt and fair payment for all being the standard. Unlocking economic empowerment and stability, contributing to small business’ resilience.</p>

Employees, Communities, and Suppliers

People and Employees

Policy Advocacy: Mandatory Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting

The inclusion of ethnicity pay gap legislation in the Draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill marks a pivotal moment in advancing transparency and accountability in UK employment. We will continue to work closely with the Office for Equality and Opportunity to shape the Bill.

Charter Reset: Leaders and Employers Supporting Young People's Pathway to Good Work and Enterprise

Continue to stimulate and inspire action through the Race at Work Charter employers and partnerships with key stakeholders like the Youth Futures Foundation. We want to build a network of employers from within the Race at Work Charter committed to unlocking the talent in young people, especially those marginalised young people who are from Black, Asian, Mixed Race, or other ethnically diverse backgrounds and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) to access and progress in good work.

Communities and Places

Expand on the BITC Race Equality campaign's foundational work in places, sharing the insights into the economic benefits of inclusion to be realised in every region across the UK.



“Then, I was a young voice on the BITC Youth Advisory Panel with lived experience navigating systems not built for me. Now, I sit at decision-making tables, shaping those very systems through roles like Board Member at the Youth Justice Board and Trustee at the Leathersellers federations of schools. Being mentored by a business leader from the BITC Race Leadership Team, showed me how corporate insight can amplify community impact. Next, I'm focused on creating space for the next generation, because progress isn't progress if it doesn't uplift others. The Race Equality campaign has been part of that legacy, and I'm proud to be a product of its vision.”

Jacob Sakil | *Community Link Officer, Lewisham Council, Youth Justice Board Member, Trustee of Leathersellers Federation of Schools*



Suppliers and Supply Chain Inclusion

Through better data and insight into the diverse business founder landscape, improved policy and practice within large organisations, that can be tracked through the Inclusive Procurement Maturity Model, can be achieved as part of the campaign for fair and timely payment for small businesses in the UK.



My tenure with the Youth Advisory Board was indeed a formative period. It offered a valuable opportunity to contribute to initiatives designed to uplift young people. I recall with particular fondness the discussions that steered us towards more inclusive approaches within organisational programmes. While representing young voices at this level was impactful, importantly, it also quietly underscored the reality that our ambitions often surpassed initial expectations, perhaps even those of some leaders who engaged with the Youth Advisory Panel. This experience truly reinforced the profound importance of diversity – a lesson I carry forward with conviction. Thank you for the platform you provided.

Ashleigh Ainsley MBE | *Co-Founder, Colour in Tech*



Fairness, Inclusion, and AI

An increasingly urgent theme is the intersection of AI and racial bias, and the critical role employers must play in addressing it as there is no evidence of significant investment being made to ensure this is eliminated. As artificial intelligence becomes more embedded in workplace systems, from recruitment to performance management, the potential for algorithmic bias poses real risks to fairness and inclusion. Employers have a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to proactively mitigate these risks through thoughtful governance, transparency, and inclusive design.

We will continue to share the insights we have gathered and enrich our decade-long longitudinal study on Race at Work. We will want to continue to explore with employers the opportunity this fresh data provides to shed light on how employees are engaging with AI in their roles, and will open up exciting thematic avenues for exploration, particularly around lived experiences, trust in technology, and the evolving dynamics of workplace inclusion in the age of automation.

The Path Ahead

The BITC Race Equality campaign and business leaders both past and present have been a leading force in shaping credible, data-driven understanding of the persistent challenges faced by Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse individuals in the UK workplace. By generating trusted evidence and working collaboratively with employers and policy makers, we co-create practical solutions that break down barriers, expand opportunity, and create environments where all talent can thrive.

At the heart of this campaign is a bold economic imperative: addressing racial disparities could unlock £37 billion (or 1.44% of UK GDP) in annual value to the UK economy. This figure underscores both the moral and commercial urgency of fairness and race equality, and our determination to make inclusion a lived reality across sectors.

There remains much more to be done, and we are resolute in our mission. Our message will be clear: fairness, access to opportunity, and belonging must be normal responsible business practices in the UK.



Race at Work Charter

Reset Commitments

Leaders and employers support young people's pathways into good work and enterprise.

This includes supporting marginalised young people who come from Black, Asian, Mixed Race, or other ethnically diverse backgrounds and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) to access and progress in good work. This may include offering structured work experience, apprenticeship opportunities, skills development opportunities, mentoring, and coaching support.

Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress.

Capturing ethnicity data is a crucial step towards an organisation reporting on pay and tracking performance on recruitment, access to development opportunities, retention, and progression. This data is important for establishing a baseline to measure progress and impact of policies in the workplace.

Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying.

Leaders at the top commit to tackling racial harassment and bullying with internal and external stakeholders. In BITC's Race at Work survey 2025, one in five ethnically diverse employees (20%) reported having witnessed or experienced racial harassment or bullying from managers. 22% reported this from customers, clients, service users, and contractors.

Inclusive leaders and managers ensure fair access to opportunities and development for everyone in their teams.

Actions should include setting performance objectives for leaders and managers with a responsibility to promote conscious inclusion and fair access to opportunity for all staff. Building teams where the voices of ethnically diverse colleagues and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are included in decision-making and young people entering the workplace can grow and develop new skills.

Inclusive leaders take action that supports Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse employee career progression.

Include fair access to development opportunities, facilitating two-way mentoring, sponsorship, and coaching, especially where this intersects with employee ethnicity, gender, and/or lower socio economic backgrounds. Include developing skills and career progression planning for young and entry-level employees.



Support employees to progress from allyship to solidarity.

Support employees to progress from allyship to active solidarity. Stand with Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse colleagues in the workplace. Promote fairness, equality, inclusion, and belonging in workplaces and in local communities. 52% of employees said they would like support to progress from allyship to solidarity.

Include Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse-led small businesses, founders, and enterprise owners in supply chains.

Employers include diverse-owned businesses, founders, and enterprises in their supply chains, monitoring fair and timely payment and contract value. These actions will contribute to creating role models for young people and the wider community, as well as increase economic inclusion.

CALLS TO ACTION



Commit to the Race at Work Charter reset

Inspire through taking action to support NEET young people's pathways into good work, support employees to progress from allyship to solidarity, where possible include diverse founders in your supply chains, and report on progress. Our analysis of the Race at Work 2025 report findings, alongside a decade of trend data, reveals a powerful insight: employees with access to mentoring consistently express greater optimism about their career progression and development. Their responses to key questions show that mentorship is a support mechanism and a catalyst for confidence, ambition, and upward mobility. We urge employers to embed mentoring into the core of their talent strategies, including development, progression, retention, and career acceleration.

We also recommend integrating mentorship into supply chain inclusion, sustainability frameworks, and partnership initiatives.

You can report progress through our Talent Unlocked commitment and our [**Inclusive Procurement Maturity Model.**](#)



Constructive feedback from employers

Becoming the standard, not the exception, when responding to recruitment applications, promotion requests, and procurement bids. When candidates and suppliers understand what excellence looks like, they are empowered to improve, evolve, and grow. Transparent insight into what makes a successful application or proposal is not just helpful it can be transformative.

For years, this kind of feedback was seen as aspirational but impractical, often dismissed as too labour-intensive or resource-heavy to implement at scale. But that barrier is rapidly dissolving. With the rise of AI-powered tools, employers now have the means to deliver tailored, consistent, and actionable feedback efficiently. What was once a logistical challenge can now become standard good practice raising the bar for fairness, development, and long-term success across every workplace.



Champion and co-create skills development and progression plans for young people and entry-level employees.

Establishing clear, structured progression pathways for young people aged 18-24 and entry-level workers is a strategic investment and a statement of intent to support and develop. Co-create personalised career plans that embed access to mentorship and coaching at critical milestones. These support systems are especially vital for those entering the workforce for the first time, helping to build confidence, capability, and a sense of belonging.

Proactively identify skills gaps and design targeted development plans to close them. Regular, constructive feedback paired with tailored coaching sessions will empower individuals to take ownership of their growth and navigate the full spectrum of progression opportunities within your organisation. Use this as a catalyst for unlocking potential, driving retention, and building a future-ready workforce.



The Race at Work Charter reset, alongside the Talent Unlocked partnership between Youth Futures Foundation and Business in the Community, is a powerful moment of possibility. We have a unique opportunity to galvanise employers into meaningful action – to break down barriers for young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds who are not in education, employment, or training.

This is about more than access, it's about fairness, progression, and lasting change. I'm excited to collaborate with partners and employers to drive tangible outcomes: creating pathways to work, sustainable employment, and career progression for marginalised young people. Just as importantly, we will amplify the voices and stories of success, sharing what works so that others can follow. When we invest in potential, we unlock a future that benefits us all.

Barry Fletcher | *Chief Executive, Youth Futures Foundation*





Business in the Community is the UK's largest and most influential responsible business network dedicated to building a fairer and greener world together, supported by His Majesty the King for over 40 years. We inspire, engage and challenge purposeful leaders to take practical action to mobilise their collective strength as a force for good in society.

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