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COMMUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RACE AT WORK 2025 CHARTER RESET ONE-YEAR ON

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Foreword

A decade ago, when Business in the Community (BITC) launched the first Race at Work survey carried out by YouGov, we uncovered a tough truth: many organisations across the UK were deeply uncomfortable talking about race. Over time, we began to see meaningful progress. Employee confidence in talking about race grew from 37% in 2015 to 41% in 2021, and this shift inspired the creation of the pocket guide *Let's Talk About Race*,ⁱ supporting employers to continue building more open, honest workplaces.

78,931 voices have been captured over the decade, and the 2025 findings remind us that progress is never guaranteed. Only a third (33%) of employees now feel their organisation is comfortable talking about race, returning to levels last seen more than 10 years ago. In 2025, this was even lower for conversations about social class (26%) and socio-economic background (27%).ⁱⁱ The evidence is clear: racial bullying and harassment is still in our workplaces and in employee engagement with customers and clients. This must not simply be condemned; it must be confronted, dismantled, and prevented through visible leadership, measurable action, and collective responsibility.

This moment calls for leadership. Now is the time for employers to reaffirm their values, demonstrate clarity of purpose, and actively show that respect, fairness, and belonging are not negotiable.

All employers must rise to this challenge, champion fairness, open doors to opportunity by increasing the number of work experience placements and creating apprenticeship opportunities, and ensure that ambition meets no artificial ceiling. Let's create workplaces where every individual, regardless of background, feels seen, included as part of the team, supported, and empowered to thrive.

We have shared the voices of young people within this report, as the Charter reset has been designed to inspire employers to ensure that Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse young people, and those from marginalised backgrounds, are included in business actions and initiatives in places across the UK.

I would also like to thank the BITC Race Leadership Team for their unstinting support, leadership, and insights.



Sandra Kerr CBE
Race Equality Director
Business in the Community



Everyone deserves access to good work and the opportunity to fulfil their potential, regardless of their background. Mentorship and sponsorship can play a vital and transformational role, helping to build people's confidence, develop their careers, and allowing them to benefit from advocates who can open doors and facilitate their progression. Employers play a key role in making these opportunities available to everyone.

Richard Iferenta, Chair of Business in the Community's Race Equality Leadership Team, formerly Partner and Vice Chair, KPMG

Executive summary

The 2025 Race at Work Charter Reset marks a critical moment for UK employers. A decade after the first Race at Work survey, the latest evidence shows that progress on race equality is possible but uneven. Executive sponsorship, manager accountability, mentoring, and career role models have strengthened, yet confidence in talking about race has fallen back to levels last seen more than 10 years ago. Racist bullying and harassment remain persistent, and young people aged 18 to 24 report higher levels of both racial and sexual harassment than older employees.

The reset of the Charter embeds inclusive leadership across all seven commitments and strengthens the focus on supporting young people from ethnically diverse, marginalised and lower socio-economic backgrounds into good work and enterprise. The evidence underlines the need for employers to move beyond intention to visible, measurable action: creating structured pathways into employment, collecting and using ethnicity data, preventing harassment, holding leaders and managers accountable, widening access to mentoring and sponsorship, progressing from allyship to solidarity and building fairer supply chains.

Key findings from the report include:

- Only 33% of employees now feel their organisation is comfortable talking about race, down from 41% in 2021.
- 53% of employees say their organisation has at least one senior leader or champion actively promoting equality and fairness, rising to 61% in large organisations.

- Too few employers offer structured entry routes: 35% of employees say their organisation offers formal work experience and 42% say they have at least one apprentice.
- 54% of employees stated that their organisation captured ethnicity data in 2024,ⁱⁱⁱ leaving significant scope to improve evidence-led action ahead of ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting.
- 18 to 24-year-olds are more likely than other age groups to report witnessing or experiencing racist and sexual harassment, and are less likely to know how to report concerns.
- Demand for mentoring, sponsorship and role models continues to rise, especially among ethnically diverse employees and younger employees.

For employers, the message is clear: race equality must be owned across the leadership system, not held solely by HR or employee networks. Organisations should use the Charter as a practical framework for action, combining leadership accountability, transparent data, visible reporting routes, inclusive manager capability and structured development opportunities. Employers should also recognise the role employees can play in supporting young people through mentoring, volunteering, coaching and skills-sharing.

There is an opportunity to increase the number of work experience placements available to young people, regardless of their location. Race at Work 2025 data indicates that access to these opportunities is not yet consistent across locations. The Government can help address this by embedding requirements for work experience provision within its procurement contracts.

Work experience

Access to work experience varies across the UK. Race at Work 2025 data shows that **61% of employees in London** said their organisation offered formal and/or informal work experience for young

people, compared with **42% in Wales**. The table below shows how formal and informal work experience provision varies by region.

Location	Formal work experience	Informal work experience	Overall
London	39%	29%	61%
North West	35%	29%	58%
West Midlands	36%	28%	58%
East of England	37%	26%	57%
South West	37%	28%	56%
South East	33%	28%	55%
Scotland	34%	24%	55%
North East	37%	23%	54%
Northern Ireland	34%	24%	52%
East Midlands	28%	26%	51%
Yorkshire and the Humber	36%	22%	50%
Wales	22%	25%	42%

Source: Race at Work Survey 2025, Q58a, UK employees, weighted.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship provision also varies across the UK. **Almost half (49%) of employees in the West Midlands** said their organisation had at least one

apprentice, compared with **32% in Wales**. The table below shows how apprenticeship provision varies across regions.

Percentage of organisations that have at least one apprentice working for them	Percentage of organisations that have at least one apprentice working for them
West Midlands	49%
North West	48%
North East	45%
Yorkshire and the Humber	43%
South West	43%
East Midlands	42%
East of England	42%
South East	42%
London	38%
Scotland	37%
Northern Ireland	35%
Wales	32%

Source: Race at Work Survey 2025, Q57, UK employees, weighted.

Calls to Action

1. Employers: turn commitments into systemic, measurable workplace action

Embed the Race at Work Charter across leadership, management, and HR practice by creating structured pathways into good work, expanding mentoring and sponsorship, collecting and using ethnicity data, and making reporting routes for harassment clear and trusted.

2. Government: create the conditions for fairer access to work

Set clear national expectations on race equality and fairness in employment, strengthen youth employment pathways, support ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting, and use unspent growth levy funding, skills policy, and procurement levers to incentivise inclusive recruitment, retention, and progression in every place across the UK.

3. Policy makers and local leaders: drive place-based accountability

Use regional labour market data to set targets, agree interventions, support combined authorities and local partnerships to build local employment plans, and track engagement to ensure young people from ethnically diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds can access work experience, apprenticeships, mentoring, and career networks.



Endnotes

i Business in the Community (2023) Let's Talk About Race. Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/lets-talk-about-race/>

ii Response options for this question in the Race at Work survey were updated between the 2021 and 2025 waves. As a result, figures for these years are broadly comparable but not strictly like-for-like and should be interpreted as indicative of the direction of change rather than precise trend estimates.

iii Business in the Community (2024) Leadership, Procurement and Employee Survey 2024. Survey conducted by YouGov.



Business in the Community (BITC) champions responsible business as essential for long term economic growth and resilience. We convene, campaign, and consult with business to tackle society's most pressing challenges—from climate change and place-based regeneration to inequality, workplace wellbeing, and inclusive growth.

Founded by His Majesty King Charles III in 1982, BITC has over four decades of experience in engaging business and delivering measurable impact in both business and in communities through evidence-based interventions. As a trusted partner to business and government, BITC convenes leadership, influences policy, and accelerates action—helping shape a future-ready economy that works for everyone.

Business in the Community

137 Shepherdess Walk
London
N1 7RQ

www.bitc.org.uk

020 7566 8650

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