



BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY

REPORT

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

Executive summary: How to read this report

This report should be read as a practical progression from context to action, covering:

- why the Race at Work Charter was reset;
- what the Race at Work YouGov survey evidence shows across the Charter commitments; and
- what employers can do to turn insight into measurable change.

Each main evidence section follows a simple structure: the key findings and trends, what it means for employers, and the recommended action for impact.

Methodology

Unless otherwise stated, all figures in this report are from Business in the

Community's Race at Work surveys conducted in 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2025. In 2015, 24,457 UK employees aged 16 and over took part, comprising 6,076 respondents recruited through a YouGov panel and 18,381 through a public open survey. Subsequent surveys were conducted online by YouGov Plc, with 24,310 working adults participating between 21 February and 10 April 2018; 24,638 adults between 21 March and 30 June 2021; and 5,526 adults between 4 August and 11 September 2025. Survey results were weighted to be representative of the relevant UK population by ethnicity, business size, working status, and region.

YouGov provided the survey data used in this report. The analysis, interpretation and report were produced by 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

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Why reset the Race at Work Charter?

The Race at Work Charter was reset in October 2025 using insights from the BITC Race at Work survey carried out by YouGov, which included an increased sample of young people, with support from the Youth Futures Foundation. The evidence was used to inform the reset, helping to embed inclusive leadership across every commitment and strengthen the focus on pathways into good work for 18 to 24-year-olds from ethnically diverse, marginalised, and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The reset was also carried out in response to the growing number of young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), and the need to ensure that young people's experiences inform the solutions designed to support them. Following the reset, BITC brought employers and young people aged 18 to 24 years old together through a series of Youth Employment Long Table discussions with professors and academics to explore the barriers young people face in accessing and progressing in good work. Their experiences and perspectives are reflected throughout this report, bringing the survey findings to life and helping to identify practical actions employers can take.

The reset shifts responsibility for each commitment from HR, employee networks, and a single executive sponsor to the wider leadership system.



Youth Voice

"There are skills that you don't have access to, particularly if we're from a marginalised and vulnerable background."

What this tells us

Young people highlighted that access to skills, networks, and opportunities is not experienced equally. This reinforces the need for employers to take deliberate action to support pathways into good work for young people from ethnically diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The seven Race at Work Charter commitments

1. Support young people into good work and enterprise:

Leaders and employers support young people from ethnically diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds to access employment through work experience, apprenticeships, mentoring, coaching, and skills development.

2. Capture ethnicity data and report progress:

Collect ethnicity data to understand and monitor recruitment, retention, development, progression, and pay outcomes, and use it to measure and demonstrate progress.

3. Zero tolerance of harassment and bullying:

Ensure board-level commitment to preventing and addressing racial harassment, discrimination, and bullying involving employees, customers, clients, and other stakeholders.

4. Make leaders and managers accountable for inclusion:

Set expectations and objectives for leaders and managers to promote fair access to opportunities, conscious inclusion, and equitable decision-making.

5. Support career progression for ethnically diverse employees:

Provide equitable access to opportunities for development, mentoring, sponsorship, coaching, and career planning to help employees progress and reach their potential.

6. Progress from allyship to solidarity:

Encourage employees to actively stand with ethnically diverse colleagues, promoting fairness, inclusion, belonging, and action in both workplaces and communities.

7. Build diverse and inclusive supply chains:

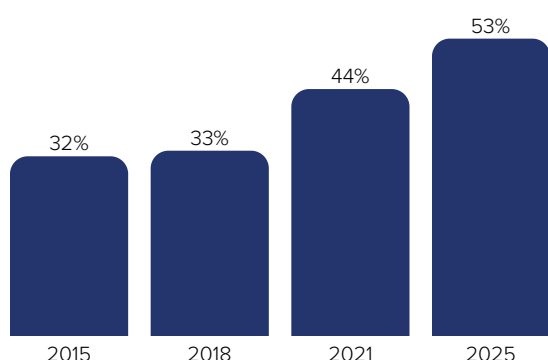
Increase opportunities for ethnically diverse-owned businesses and founders by including them in procurement processes and ensuring fair and timely payment practices.

Action for impact:

Activate the Charter Reset with an advisory group, committee, council or network to embed inclusive leadership into the implementation of reset commitment one and the other six commitments and make responsibility for delivery and progress visible beyond HR and employee resource groups.

Reset: Inclusive and executive sponsor leadership embedded into all seven Race at Work Charter Commitments

Percentage of employees with a senior leader championing equality and fairness, 2015 to 2025



Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2025, Q16. UK employees, weighted.

53% of employees say there is at least one executive sponsor, senior leader or champion who actively promotes equality and fairness in their organisation. This increases to 61% of employees in large organisations across the UK.ⁱⁱⁱ

With 61% of employees in large organisations reporting the presence of an executive sponsor, it was timely to embed inclusive leadership across the Race at Work Charter commitments and to reset the first Charter commitment to focus on supporting young people's pathways into good work and enterprise.

Those in **London** are more likely to have an executive sponsor, senior leader or champion in their workplace who actively promotes equality and fairness (60%) and have their own performance objective to promote equality at work (60%).



Youth Voice

"You were taken seriously and could make the most of the opportunity because everyone cared that you were in the building and appreciated that you were a unique voice."

What this tells us

This reflection highlights the importance of creating workplaces where young people feel valued, heard, and able to contribute.

Action for impact:

Use executive sponsorship to set clear expectations, remove barriers, and hold leaders accountable for progress against targets, goals and measurable socio-economic and race equality outcomes.

Reset Commitment 1: Support young people into good work and enterprise

Employers across sectors should make access routes into work clearer and more inclusive, especially for young people from ethnically diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Recruitment, work experience, apprenticeships, and progression pathways must be visible, accessible, and actively supported.

Too few employers are building structured routes for young talent: **35% of employees say their organisation offers formal work experience and 42% say they have at least one apprentice.** Employers should turn informal access into visible, supported pathways through recruitment, work experience, apprenticeships, and progression planning.



Youth Voice

"Entry roles should be the chance to develop those skills as opposed to expecting applicants to already have them."

What this tells us

Young people consistently highlighted the importance of employers recognising potential and creating opportunities to build skills through employment, work experience, and apprenticeships, rather than expecting applicants to arrive with the skills they have not yet had the opportunity to develop.

Employees in **Wales** were the least likely to say their organisation provides formal or informal work experience for young people. However, 42% still said they do. Other regions varied from 50% (**Yorkshire and the Humber**) to 61% (**London**) of organisations that do provide work experience.



Youth Voice

"We don't have any youth hubs. We don't have any support really. So you're kind of just left on your own and there's no jobs or anything."

What this tells us

Young people also highlighted the importance of local opportunities and support. Their experiences reinforce the need for place-based approaches that address regional disparities and ensure young people can access guidance, development opportunities, and clear pathways into employment regardless of where they live.

No Talent Wasted Report

The Race Equity in Employment Task Force, convened by Business in the Community (BITC) and Action for Race Equality (ARE), ran from May 2025 to May 2026, bringing together employers, experts and stakeholders to identify practical action to address racial disparities in employment.

The Task Force's **No Talent Wasted**^{iv} report, published on 1 July 2026, set out five key recommendations. Increasing access to work experience and apprenticeships, particularly through place-based action, forms an important part of these recommendations.

1. Set a national target to eliminate racial disparities in youth employment by 2035, supported by annual monitoring and transparent reporting.

2. Use Growth and Skills Levy reform to incentivise employers to improve recruitment, retention, and progression outcomes for ethnic minority young people.

3. Back devolved, place-based action by supporting combined authorities and local leaders to develop local race equity employment plans, youth employment zones, regional accountability mechanisms, and targeted interventions linked to local labour market demand.

4. Ensure the Youth Guarantee is responsive to the lived experiences and barriers faced by Black, Asian, and Mixed Heritage young people, including access to mentoring, sponsorship, networks, work experience, and high-quality employability support.

5. Strengthen post-16 pathways into sustainable careers, including apprenticeships, technical education, AI-related opportunities, and routes into future growth sectors.

Youth Voice

"No one in my family is in a professional career, and because of that, they don't really know how to help me and navigate the career systems."

What this tells us

Alongside access to opportunities, young people emphasised the importance of networks, mentoring, and career guidance. For those without professional connections or family experience of navigating career systems, employer support can play a critical role in opening pathways into good work.



There is an opportunity to increase the volume of work experience placements for young people, regardless of where they live. Race at Work 2025 data shows that access to these opportunities varies across the UK, highlighting the need to expand opportunities across places. Government can support this by embedding expectations around work experience and apprenticeships into 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.

Location	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.

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.

Action for impact:

Turn informal access into structured pathways through co-created work experience, apprenticeships, mentoring, coaching, and skills development.

Youth Voice



"Also, not receiving feedback on how to improve has been a challenge, it can feel very hit or miss."

What this tells us

Young people highlighted the importance of receiving constructive feedback, particularly when unsuccessful with an application, to help them understand how to develop and prepare for future opportunities.

Commitment 2: Capture ethnicity data and report progress

Evidence-informed action must remain standard practice. Employers should collect, analyse, and report on ethnicity data across recruitment, retention, development, progression, and pay, then use the findings to remove barriers and demonstrate progress.

In 2024, **54% of employees stated that their organisation captures the ethnicity data** of employees at different levels in their organisation, while 46% stated their organisation did not.^v All employers should focus on capturing better ethnicity and disability data to meet the upcoming changes to ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting, and to demonstrate how they are creating recruitment, training, and development opportunities within the places in which they operate to deliver social value.

In October 2025, BITC revealed the economic benefits of addressing racial disparities in the labour market, finding that **the UK could potentially unlock £37 billion** by doing so.ⁱⁱⁱ There are, of course, challenges and caveats, including the need for better data capture in the UK, but there would be clear gains from increased employment, progression, and proper pay within the labour market. We asked employees across all backgrounds in the UK if they would mind if the government collected ethnicity data on business ownership for analytical purposes, and 65% said they would not mind at all.^v

Fair pay is an important part of understanding whether workplace opportunity translates into fair outcomes. Employers should examine pay alongside recruitment, development, and progression

data to identify where disparities arise and whether all employees are being recognised and rewarded as they progress. Transparency helps to build trust.

Reviewing data by region and within places is the best way to understand the local challenges and opportunities, and track progress on actions that can contribute to unlocking the potential economic benefits for the UK.

Race at Work Charter briefings to support capturing ethnicity data

Capturing and analysing ethnicity data is essential for measuring progress on inclusion, recruitment, retention, progression, and pay equity. The Race at Work Charter briefings emphasise that ethnicity data enables organisations to identify barriers to opportunity, assess the fairness of workplace processes, improve representation at all levels, and build accountability for inclusive outcomes. They recommend combining quantitative measures, such as representation, promotion, retention, and pay equity data, with qualitative insights from employee surveys, focus groups, and exit interviews. They also stress the importance of data quality, transparency, leadership accountability, and communicating progress to employees and stakeholders to drive meaningful and measurable change towards a more inclusive workplace. Employers should ensure that improving data quality is a priority as they prepare for the implementation of ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting.^{vi}

Action for impact:

Increase transparency. Collect, analyse, and report on ethnicity data across the employee life cycle, including recruitment, progression, location and pay, and use it to identify disparities, target interventions as required, and evidence progress.



Evidence-based insight is essential if we are to understand where progress is being made and where challenges remain. Robust data helps organisations focus their efforts, measure outcomes, and continue driving meaningful and impactful change for colleagues from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

***Marc Burrows, Group Chief People Officer
KPMG in the UK.***

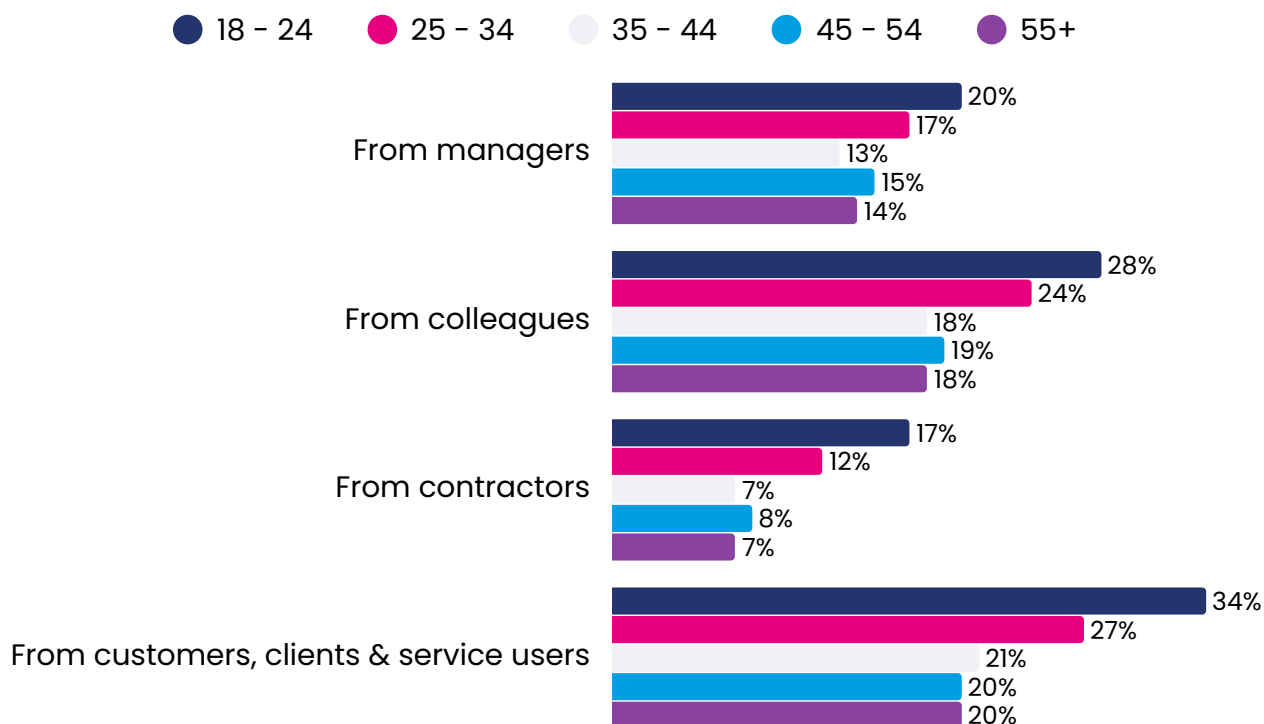
Commitment 3: Zero tolerance of harassment and bullying

Over the past decade, **racist bullying and harassment have remained a persistent issue**. Most employees report no direct experience, but a consistent minority either encounter or witness racist bullying and harassment from both managers and colleagues.

Those aged 18 to 24 are more likely than all other age groups to report having witnessed or experienced racist harassment or bullying in the past two years from managers, colleagues, contractors, and customers, clients, or service users. This is particularly evident for harassment or bullying from customers, clients, or service users, with 34% of 18 to 24-year-olds reporting that they had witnessed or experienced this, compared with 20% of those aged 45 and over.

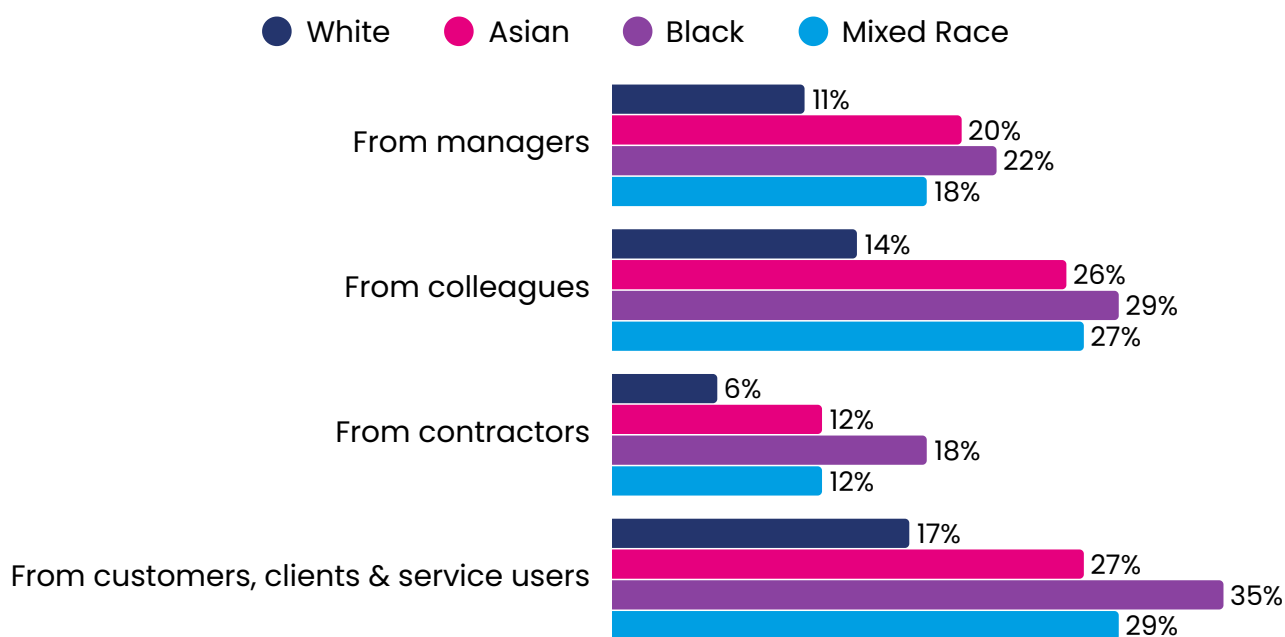


Have experienced or witnessed racial harassment or bullying at work by age (2025)



Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2025, Q330 series, by age. UK employees, weighted.

Have experienced or witnessed racial harassment or bullying at work by ethnicity (2025)



Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2025, Q330 series, by ethnicity. UK employees, weighted.

For the first time, this study also included questions on sexual harassment. The survey found that those aged 18 to 24 are also the most likely age group to say they have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment.

Ethnically diverse employees are also more likely to have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment or bullying in the last two years from managers (13% vs. 11%), colleagues (19% vs. 14%), customers or clients (17% vs. 12%), or contractors (9% vs. 5%).

Overall, **18 to 24-year-olds report higher levels of racial and sexual harassment than older age groups**, particularly from colleagues, and are also less likely to know their organisation's reporting process for racial bullying or harassment (38% of 18 to 24-year-olds do not know it, compared with 25% of those aged 55 and over).

Youth Futures Foundation found that many young people do not report incidents, with 79% choosing not to raise concerns, and **almost three-quarters (73%) who experience discrimination seeking opportunities elsewhere or leaving their sector entirely**.^{vii}

BITC found that over half of employees report that their organisation provides information, advice, or support on calling out racial harassment and bullying, up from 48% in 2021 to 58% in 2025. **Employers should make this support visible** to every new starter and monitor complaints, listening data, and exit feedback to identify patterns early.

While effective reporting processes are essential, employers must also create workplace cultures where young people feel respected, included, and confident that their perspectives are valued.



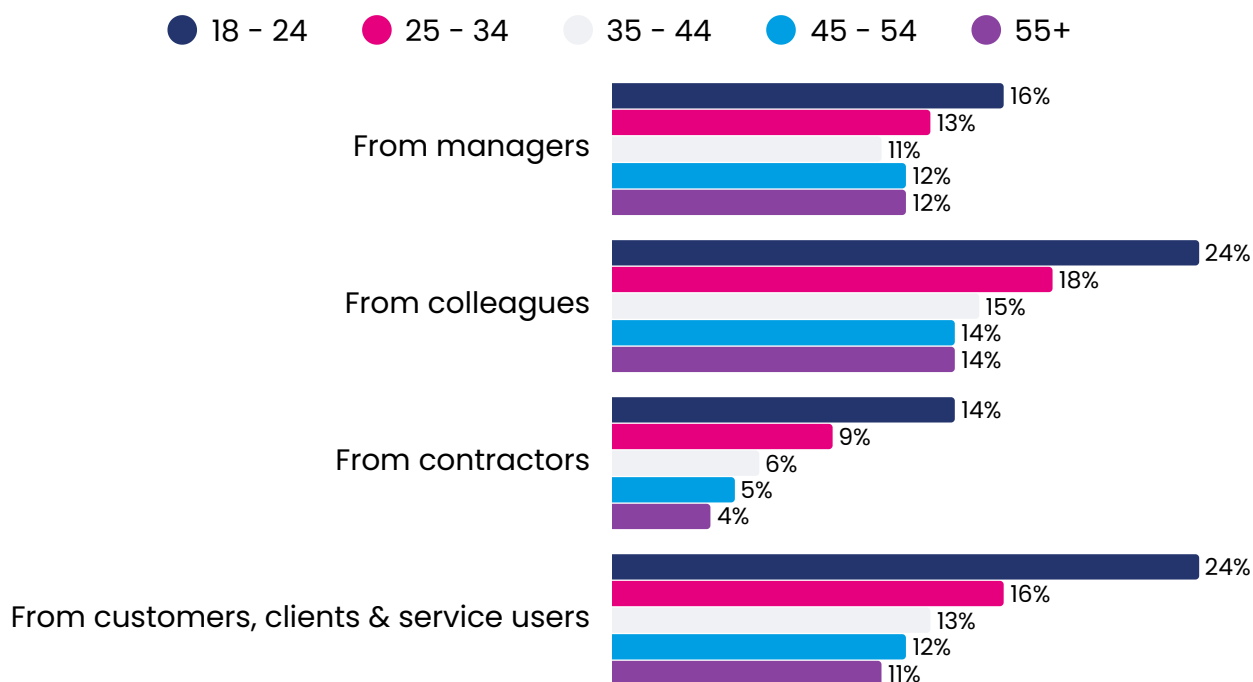
Youth Voice

"nor did I have any sort of person to point me in the direction of where to go."

What this tells us

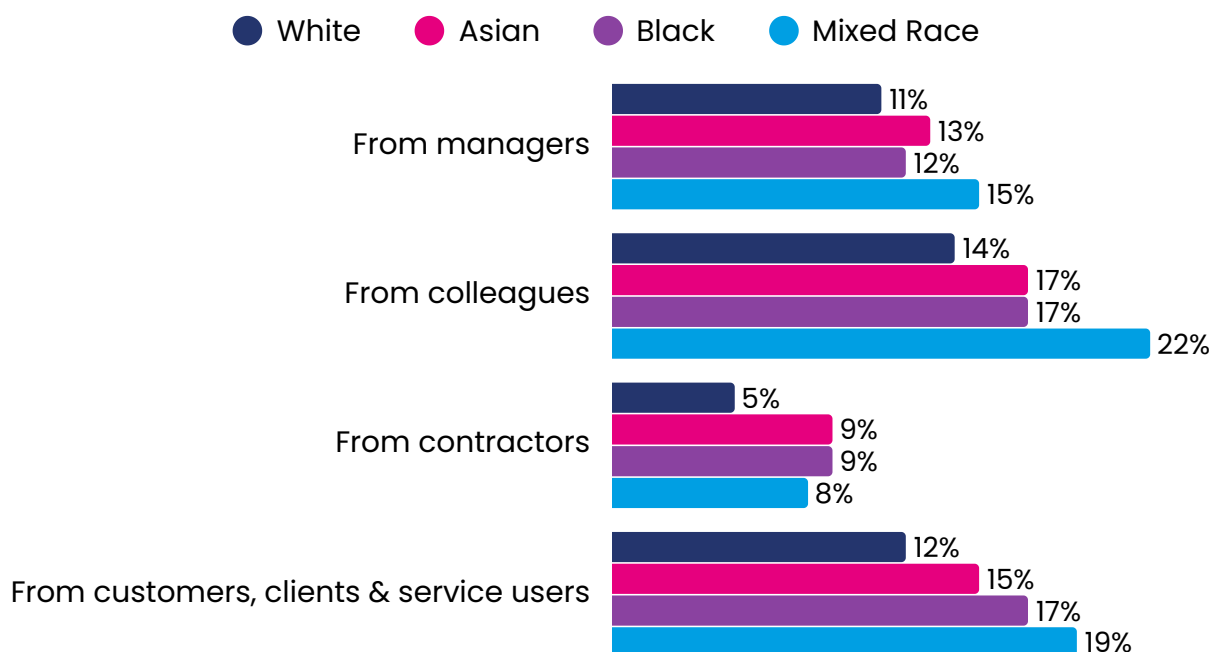
This reflection highlights the importance of employees having a clear and transparent route map as part of their induction, setting out who to speak to and what process to follow should an incident of bullying or harassment occur in the workplace or involve customers, clients or service users. Creating environments where young people feel they belong and are listened to is vital to supporting sustainable careers, enabling them to enjoy their work without their workplace negatively impacting their wellbeing or mental health.

Have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or bullying at work by age (2025)



Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2025, Q330b series, by age. UK employees, weighted.

Have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or bullying at work by ethnicity (2025)



Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2025, Q330b series, by ethnicity. UK employees, weighted.

To help employers ensure that racial harassment is eradicated from the workplace, BITC has produced an updated guide on Tackling Racial Harassment in the Workplace.

BITC's **Tackling Racial Harassment in the Workplace guide** makes a clear case for urgent, sustained action to eliminate racial harassment and bullying from UK workplaces. Grounded in Race at Work insights and aligned with the Race at Work Charter commitment to zero tolerance, it provides employers with a practical framework to move beyond policy statements and create cultures where every employee feels safe, valued, and able to belong. Across six action areas, the guide calls on organisations to strengthen policies, engage leaders, equip managers and employees, communicate expectations clearly, simplify reporting, and use data transparently to drive accountability. Its central message is direct: racial harassment must not simply be condemned; it must be confronted, dismantled, and prevented through visible leadership, measurable action, and collective responsibility.

Action for impact:

Make reporting routes and support visible to every employee, especially new starters and 18 to 24-year-olds, and act early on patterns in complaints and listening data. Review internal trends alongside data on incidents involving customers, clients, and service users to identify emerging issues and areas where further action is needed.

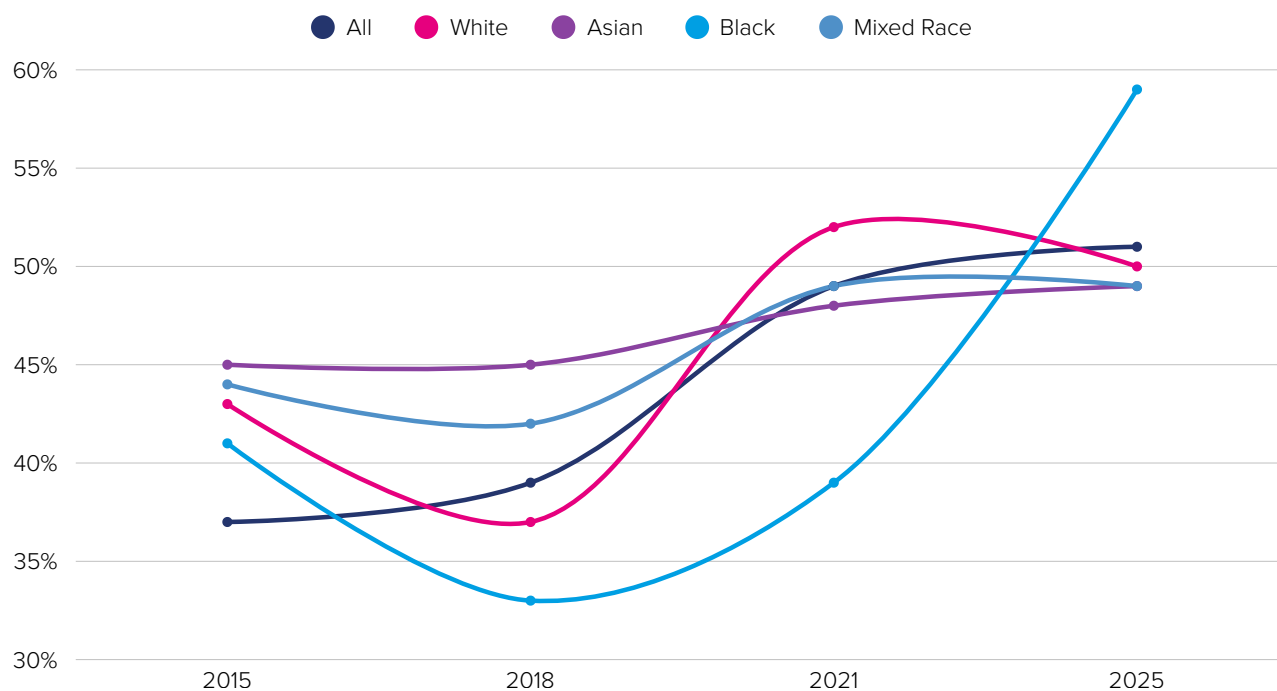


Our research into young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds highlights the barriers that many still encounter when entering and progressing in work. The refreshed Race at Work Charter provides employers with a practical framework for taking action. Evidence-based insight is essential to helping organisations identify where change is needed to break down those barriers.

Nishi Mayor, Director of Employer Engagement & Partnerships, Youth Futures Foundation

Commitment 4: Make leaders and managers accountable for inclusion

Employees who said that managers in their organisation treat all people equally with regard to career progression.



UK Employees	2015	2018	2021	2025
All	37%	39%	49%	51%
White	43%	37%	52%	50%
Asian	45%	45%	48%	49%
Black	41%	33%	39%	59%
Mixed Race	44%	42%	49%	49%

Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2025, Q14 series, net agree. UK employees, weighted.

Managers and fair progression

In 2025, more than half of employees said that managers in their organisation treat all people equally with regard to career progression. This is an upward trend since 2015.

More employees now believe managers treat colleagues fairly in relation to career progression, rising from 37% in 2015 to 51% in 2025. This is a positive uplift over the last decade. Ensuring opportunities are advertised, having transparency around the skills required, the pay range, and issuing development feedback for near-miss candidates are some ways in which employers can embed good practice within their organisations and continue to contribute to this positive trend.

Employers should examine what is driving this shift and use the findings to strengthen manager objectives, accountability, and support for fair pay and progression.

Since 2015, there has been a significant increase in managers with performance objectives linked to promoting equality, rising from 41% in 2015 to 50% in 2025.

Historically, Black and Asian managers have been more likely than White managers to hold such objectives. However, in 2025, we have seen a shift. Black and Black British managers are now significantly more likely to have a performance objective to promote equality than any other ethnic group. Further research would be needed to understand why this is the case.



Youth Voice

"And so feedback is very useful. So we're not doing the same thing of applying to several jobs over and over again to get rejected."

What this tells us

Feedback gives young people the opportunity to learn, improve, and progress, rather than repeatedly encountering the same barriers without understanding how they can develop.



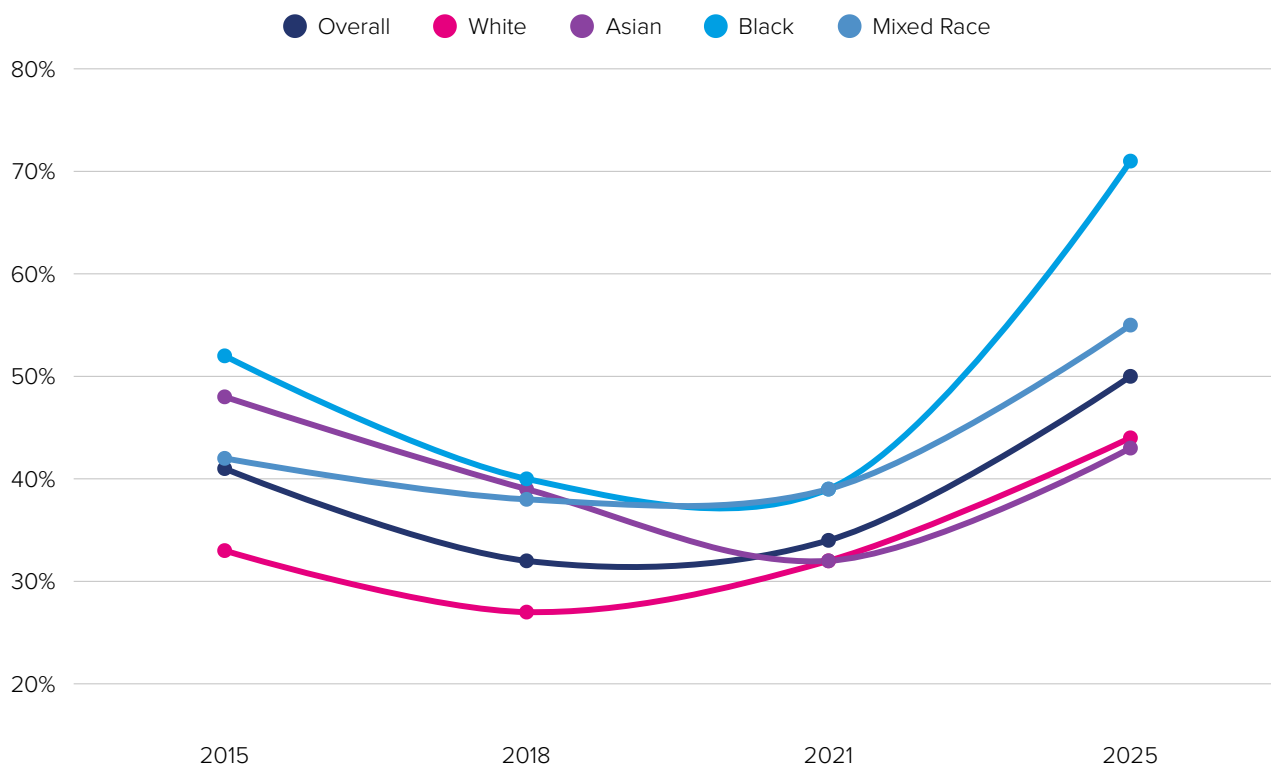
Youth Voice

"I would have definitely appreciated that during my undergrad, so I would have had a clearer idea of how to get to specifically what I want from early on."

What this tells us

Young people consistently highlighted the value of earlier guidance, mentoring, and support to help them understand career pathways and progression opportunities.

Managers who have a performance objective to promote equality at work



UK Employees	2015	2018	2021	2025
All	41%	32%	34%	50%
White	33%	27%	32%	44%
Asian	48%	39%	32%	43%
Black	52%	40%	39%	71%
Mixed Race	42%	38%	39%	55%

Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2025, Q140. UK managers, weighted.

There has been a steady increase in the proportion of employees who agree they have been encouraged to gain the skills needed for more senior roles over the years, rising from **38% in 2015 to over half (51%) in 2025.**

Ethnically diverse employees are more likely to see their development as a shared responsibility between themselves and their managers. Employers should equip managers to provide consistent guidance, coaching, and mentoring, particularly for young people from ethnically diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Line managers are critical to building the skills, confidence, and mindset young people need to succeed. Organisations should invest in manager training and support, especially for hybrid teams, multigenerational workplaces, and AI-enabled processes that must be delivered fairly.



Youth Voice

"Someone who was just helping me figure out what different paths I could take rather than, like, kind of helping you navigate the space of completely different things based on skills."

What this tells us

Young people emphasised the value of managers, mentors, and sponsors who help them explore different career options and navigate progression opportunities. This reflects the important role managers play in broadening horizons, building confidence, and supporting individuals to make informed choices about their future careers.

The **Greater London Authority Workplace Integration Network (WIN)** has published an excellent guide, *Designing for Inclusive Growth*,⁹ which provides great insights for managers within organisations to utilise to ensure their workforces are inclusive and nurturing of diverse talent.

Designing for Inclusive Growth guide

The *Designing for Inclusive Growth* guide is a practical framework from the Mayor of London's Workforce Integration Network, developed through six years of employer-led learning and tested with more than 50 organisations. It helps employers tackle workforce inequalities, unlock underused talent, improve retention, and turn inclusive practice into measurable business outcomes. With inclusive growth offering **a potential £17.4 billion boost to London's economy**, the guide provides clear tools, case studies, and a six-step process to support organisations to move from intention to action.

Action for impact:

Equip all managers with objectives, training, and support so they can make fair decisions on progression, development, and opportunity.

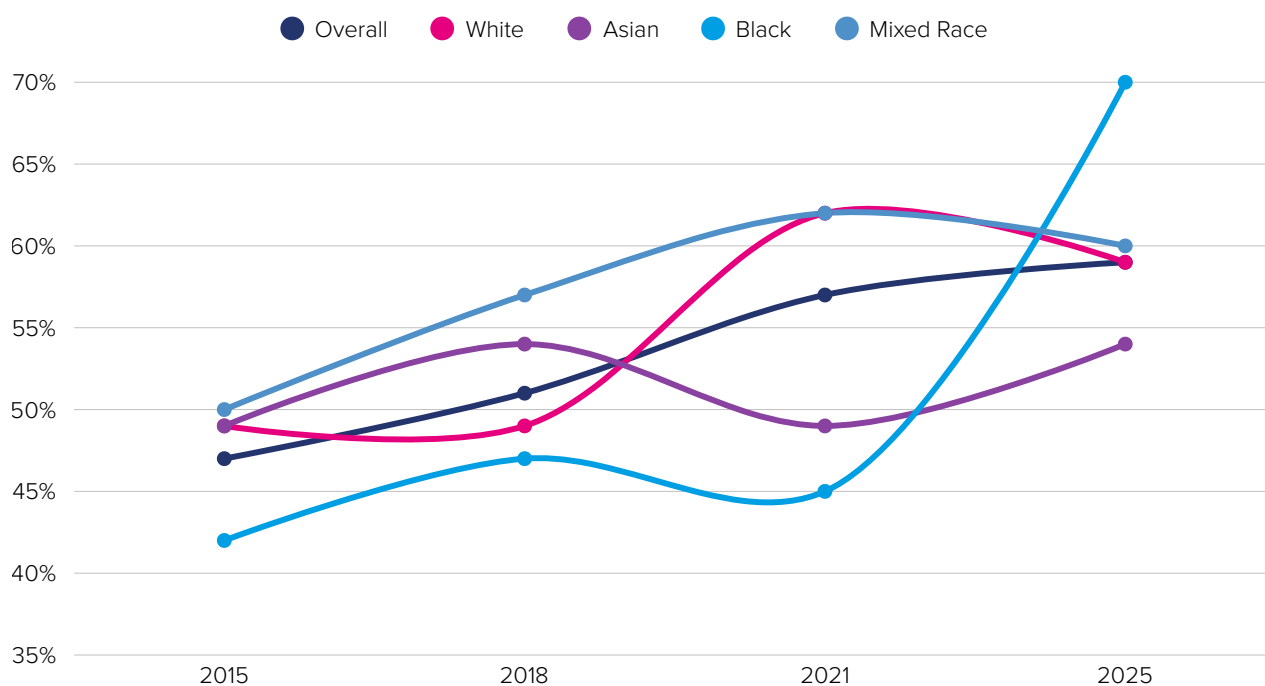


Representation is not just about being present; it is about being included in the rooms where decisions are made and having your voice heard. When organisations actively listen to diverse perspectives and consider them when developing solutions, they make better decisions that help create fairer workplaces and benefit everyone.

Roland Ilube, Senior Vice President Acquisitions & Divestments, Shell, and Member of Business in the Community's Race Equality Leadership Team

Commitment 5: Support career progression for ethnically diverse employees

Employees who believe they have an equal opportunity to advance regardless of personal characteristics or circumstances



UK Employees	2015	2018	2021	2025
All	47%	51%	57%	59%
White	49%	49%	62%	59%
Asian	49%	54%	49%	54%
Black	42%	47%	45%	70%
Mixed Race	50%	57%	62%	60%

Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2025, Q18 series, net agree. UK employees, weighted.

Progression remains a priority for ethnically diverse employees, especially Black African employees, with 91% agreeing that progression is important, compared with 64% of Black Caribbean employees. A lack of opportunity is the most common barrier to progression. Employers should make opportunities transparent, ensure fair access, and check whether training, confidence, and age-related barriers are affecting different groups in different ways.

Demand for mentorship and sponsorship remains high among ethnically diverse employees. Ethnically diverse employees are more likely than White employees to have a mentor (39% vs. 22%) or sponsor (22% vs. 9%), and **demand is strongest among younger employees, with 43% of 18 to 24-year-olds wanting a mentor and 41% wanting a sponsor.**



Youth Voice

"I would say some sort of mentoring scheme or mentorship is important."

What this tells us

Young people were clear that mentoring is one of the most valuable forms of support employers can provide, helping them build confidence, access networks, and navigate career progression.

Employers should expand and embed mentoring, sponsorship, and career planning support, while making opportunities transparent and accessible. Employers should foster a culture where these opportunities are open to all, supporting young employees as well as the wider workforce.

The top cited barriers to making the next step in one's career remain a lack of opportunities (31%), a 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 to career progression (72% vs. 59% of White employees), though those from a White background are more likely to say they are not currently looking to progress (23% vs. 9% of ethnically diverse employees).

Specifically, those who are ethnically diverse are more likely to cite a lack of opportunities (34% vs. 27% of White employees), a lack of training (18% vs. 11% of White employees), and a lack of expertise (15% vs. 9% of White employees).

Those in the **North East** are more likely than average to cite location as a limiting factor (18% vs. 12% UK average), as well as their visas or immigration status (10% vs. 4% UK average).

In 2025, younger respondents cited a lack of opportunities as the top barrier to taking the next step in their career (36% of 18 to 24-year-olds), while older respondents say they face age discrimination (21% of those aged 55 and above).

BITC'S Cross-Organisational Mentoring Circles

Business in the Community's Cross-Organisational Mentoring Circles (COMC) programme, founded in 2013, is a six-month initiative supporting the progression of Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse employees through mentoring, peer learning, and psychologically safe spaces.

The 2025-2026 cohort delivered clear, measurable impact. High confidence among mentees rose from **21% to 65%**, while **88% reported positive career or development outcomes**, including stronger networks, clearer direction, and progression opportunities.

Mentors also strengthened their **inclusive leadership** and understanding of the barriers facing ethnically diverse talent. By combining trusted mentoring, peer learning, and psychologically safe spaces, COMC is helping to **turn confidence into career progress** and build more equitable pathways to senior leadership.



Youth Voice

"But I think the one thing that perhaps would have helped me is a mentor specifically in the area that I'm really interested in."

What this tells us

Young people emphasised the value of tailored mentoring from individuals with relevant experience and knowledge of the career paths they are seeking to pursue.



Employees acting as mentors

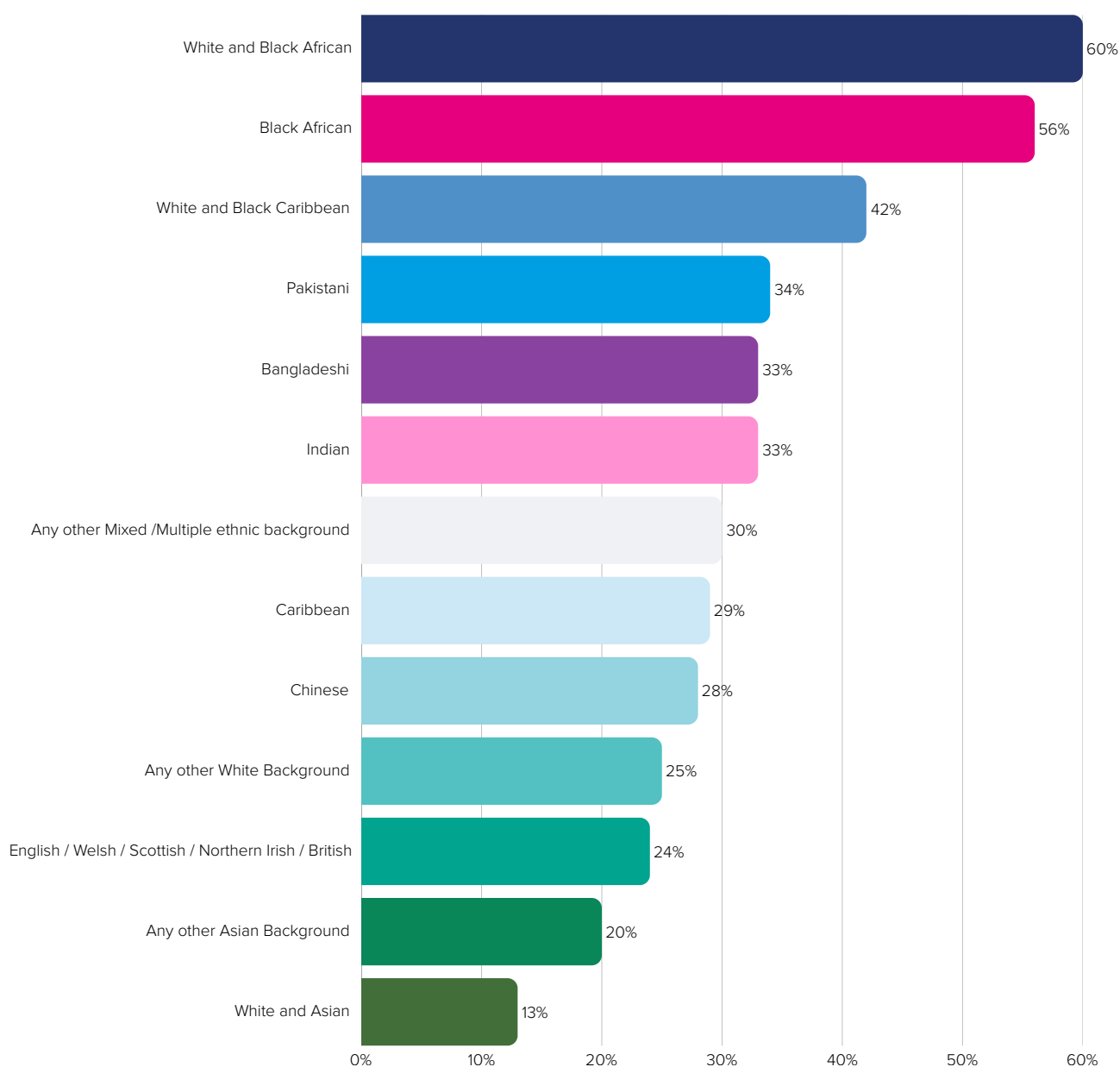
For the first time in 2025, we asked about employees as mentors in the workplace.

Almost one in three (29%) employees say they currently act as a mentor (formally or informally): **10%** through a formal mentoring scheme and **21%** informally. Those aged 25 to 34 were most likely to be mentors (**36%**), compared with **21%** of employees aged 55 and over.

Black African, White and Black African, White and Black Caribbean, and Pakistani employees are among the groups most likely to act as workplace mentors.

Employers should recognise and support this contribution while encouraging more employees to take part in mentoring on a voluntary basis.

Those who are a mentor formally or informally by ethnicity (2025)



Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2025, Q9. UK employees, weighted.

Benefits of mentoring for employees and young workers

Three in 10 (30%) report having a mentor in their workplace, rising to 39% of ethnically diverse employees and 53% of 18 to 24-year-old employees.



Youth Voice

"Like just having someone there to say, you're not going to be perfect, you know, like you've got time to grow, you've got time to develop."

What this tells us

Young people highlighted that mentoring is not only about career advancement. Having access to encouragement, reassurance, and trusted support can play an important role in building confidence and helping individuals realise their potential.

Among those who have a mentor, those who are ethnically diverse are more likely to feel the benefits than those from a White background.

- Three quarters of ethnically diverse employees with a mentor (74%) agree that their mentor actively tells them about opportunities for development that are relevant to their career aspirations, compared with 66% of those from a White background.

- Four in five (81%) agree that having access to a mentor helps them to achieve what they want, compared to 75% of those from a White background.
- Agreement for both statements has also increased among those who are ethnically diverse since 2021 (64% to 74% and 73% to 81% respectively).

Additionally, across all respondents:

- Agreement that mentors actively support employees increased **from 69% in 2015 to 81% in 2025.**
- Agreement that mentors help employees achieve what they want increased **from 65% in 2015 to 79% in 2025.**



Youth Voice

"I knew what career I wanted to do, but the steps to get there weren't clear at all."

What this tells us

Mentors can be a great support for someone trying to navigate an organisation and their career path.

Increasing desire for sponsorship

Demand for sponsorship has increased across all ethnic groups over the past decade and is strongest among employees aged 18 to 24. Employers should make sponsorship more visible, structured, and accessible to those who need advocacy to progress or someone to open a door to new, better connections and profile opportunities.

14% of employees said they act as a sponsor, **6%** through a formal scheme and **9%** informally.

Employees receiving sponsorship

- **16%** of employees reported having a sponsor, 7% through a formal scheme and 9% informally.
- **23%** of ethnically diverse employees reported having a sponsor. 9% of White employees reported having a sponsor.
- Sponsorship increased from **11% in 2015** to **16% in 2025**.

41% of 18 to 24-year-olds reported wanting a sponsor, the highest percentage out of all age groups.

Action for impact:

Make mentoring, sponsorship, and career planning visible, structured, and accessible. Include clear routes into opportunities for ethnically diverse employees. Track progress by demographic group and socio-economic background, gender, age and location.

Mentoring can provide advice, guidance, and confidence. Sponsorship goes further by using influence, connections, and advocacy to create access to opportunities.

Sponsorship can include:

- opening doors to opportunities an individual may not otherwise access;
- talking about and promoting talented employees in rooms they are not yet in;
- recommending people for strategic projects, platforms, and development opportunities;
- introducing employees to people who can provide insight, inspiration, or support;
- helping employees extend their professional connections and networks; and
- actively advocating for someone's progression or promotion.

Sponsorship should not be reserved for senior talent. Leaders and managers at every level can use their influence, networks, and access to increase visibility and create opportunities and open doors for others.



We are committed to attracting talent from the widest possible talent pool and creating a working environment where everyone has the opportunity to succeed. By providing development, support, and clear pathways for progression, we can help everyone reach their full potential and achieve their career goals within our organisation.

***Ryan Johnson, SVP for UK & Ireland,
Enterprise Mobility***

Reset Commitment 6: Progress from allyship to solidarity

Since BITC began tracking allyship in 2021, employees have shown a strong desire for support to stand in solidarity with ethnically diverse colleagues. In 2025, 52% wanted some support, with employees aged 18 to 24 most likely to want it. Employers should avoid assumptions and offer practical options, including training, workshops, and education on key issues.



Youth Voice

“They have a lot of training, employee networks, etc., but these are all superficial and tokenistic and don't deal with the actual issues.”

What this tells us

This highlights the importance of focusing not only on whether race inclusion activity exists, but whether employees experience it as relevant and capable of addressing the issues they see and experience at work.

Employees also highlighted that having opportunities to participate is not enough without the organisational support to enable them to do so.



Youth Voice

“I would like my organisation to provide dedicated time, resources, and training for employees to engage in race and ethnic diversity initiatives, along with visible leadership support.”

What this tells us

This reinforces that solidarity requires organisations to create the conditions that enable employees to participate, rather than relying solely on individual willingness or discretionary time.

There is an opportunity to gain additional insights through a thematic review of the 8,000 responses linked to the 2025 Race at Work survey.

Open text responses to the 2025 Race at Work survey show that employees value existing support such as employee networks, allyship training, cultural heritage activities, and safe spaces for discussion.

However, they also want more **meaningful and practical support** that goes beyond activities perceived as superficial or tokenistic. Employees highlighted the importance of **open and safe conversations** about race and ethnicity, alongside **visible senior leadership** that actively champions inclusion.

Other recurring themes included dedicated time and resources, external workshops, employee resource groups and allyship opportunities, greater representation, and clear anti-discrimination policies.

Together, the responses suggest that progressing from allyship to solidarity requires employees to have the **knowledge, confidence, practical opportunities, and organisational support to turn positive intent into action.**

An important part of solidarity is the confidence to talk about ethnicity and fairness. In 2015, **37% of employees said their employer was comfortable talking about race**; this rose to 41% in 2021 but **fell to 33% in 2025**.ⁱⁱ Employers should rebuild confidence through open dialogue, informed conversations and discussion, and shared action.



Youth Voice

“More ways for us to talk openly about it.”

What this tells us

Young people highlighted the need for open and safe conversations about race and ethnicity, neurodiversity, disability, class, socioeconomic background, religion and wellbeing. Creating spaces where people can ask questions, listen, and learn can help build confidence and support employees to engage more meaningfully in fairness, belonging and inclusion.

Half (50%) of respondents said their organisation encourages employees to use their skills to volunteer or support young people, rising to 66% among 18 to 24-year-olds and falling to 34% among employees aged 55 and over. Employers should mobilise willing employees of all ages to share skills that help young people navigate recruitment, employment, and progression pathways.



Youth Voice

"Having a mentor scheme where they go into schools or colleges and universities and then speak to people, you know, in a particular field."

What this tells us

Young people highlighted the value of hearing directly from employers and professionals about career opportunities and pathways into work. Sharing skills, experiences, and insights can help build understanding, confidence, and aspirations while supporting young people to make informed decisions about their future careers.

Partnership working, mobilising, and incentivising employees through volunteering

For the first time, we asked employees about encouragement from employers to use their skills to volunteer or support young people. This was most common in **London** and the **North West**, with 55% of respondents both answering yes, they receive encouragement. This figure drops to 41% and 40% when you look at the **North East and East Midlands**.

Most valuable skills to support volunteers

Employees said they would be better supported to volunteer if employers recognised volunteering skills in promotion

opportunities and job applications and treated volunteering experience as evidence of additional capability. When asked which skills would help them to be a better volunteer, employees selected:

- 21% – Coaching skills to help young people find and stay in work
- 17% – Resilience and problem-solving skills
- 16% – Project management skills
- 15% – Enterprise and entrepreneurial skills
- 14% – Financial literacy and money management skills

BITC encourages employers to use the Skills Builder Framework to create a shared language for skills across job descriptions, attraction, onboarding, induction, and development.^{xi} Employers should also recognise transferable skills when employees apply for stretch assignments, secondments, and progression opportunities.

Action for impact:

Encourage employees to use their skills to mentor and support young people and recognise volunteering skills as evidence of transferable capabilities and progression opportunities in the workplace. Rebuild confidence in conversations about race and ethnicity, class and social background through practical education, open dialogue, and shared commitment to action.

Commitment 7: Build fair and inclusive supply chains

BITC's **Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chains Insights report 2024**^x provided evidence to further demonstrate that inclusive procurement can transform supply chains from transactional purchasing functions into engines of innovation, resilience, and economic inclusion. Employers that embed fair and transparent procurement practices are better equipped to create long-term business value while expanding opportunities for diverse suppliers and underserved communities.

BITC's research, **Building Fairer, More Inclusive Supply Chains**, and the **Inclusive Procurement Maturity Model (IPMM)**

demonstrate that inclusive procurement is not simply a social value initiative but a business imperative. Organisations that embed fairness, transparency, the delivery of social value, and equal access throughout their supply chains are better positioned to drive innovation, strengthen resilience, improve supplier engagement, and unlock sustainable economic growth. The IPMM provides a clear framework for measuring progress, identifying gaps, and moving from intention to measurable impact, ensuring diverse suppliers have equitable opportunities to participate and thrive within corporate supply chains.

Fair and timely payment is also critical to creating inclusive supply chains. Lengthy payment terms and late payments can create particular challenges for SMEs and smaller suppliers, including ethnically diverse-owned businesses, affecting cash flow and their ability to operate and grow. Employers should review both their contractual payment terms and actual payment performance to ensure suppliers are paid fairly and promptly.

Government can support by providing better data on business ownership by demographic, location and sector. Our Leadership, Employees and Procurement Survey found that 65% of respondents would not mind at all if the government captured ethnicity and diversity data on business ownership.^x Inclusive supply chains can also help create pathways into enterprise. For young people considering entrepreneurship and self-employment, visible role models and access to business networks can help them see enterprise as a viable and accessible pathway, while building connections to the wider supply chain ecosystem in which SMEs and diverse suppliers can participate in partnerships and grow.



Youth Voice

"Get into that creative industry because nobody tells you about it in school or speaks about it. It's kind of something you have to get into yourself."

"I think more career talks in secondary school would have been great. We had a few but they were not very memorable or varied and the exposure (for the most part) stopped at an introductory talk."

What this tells us

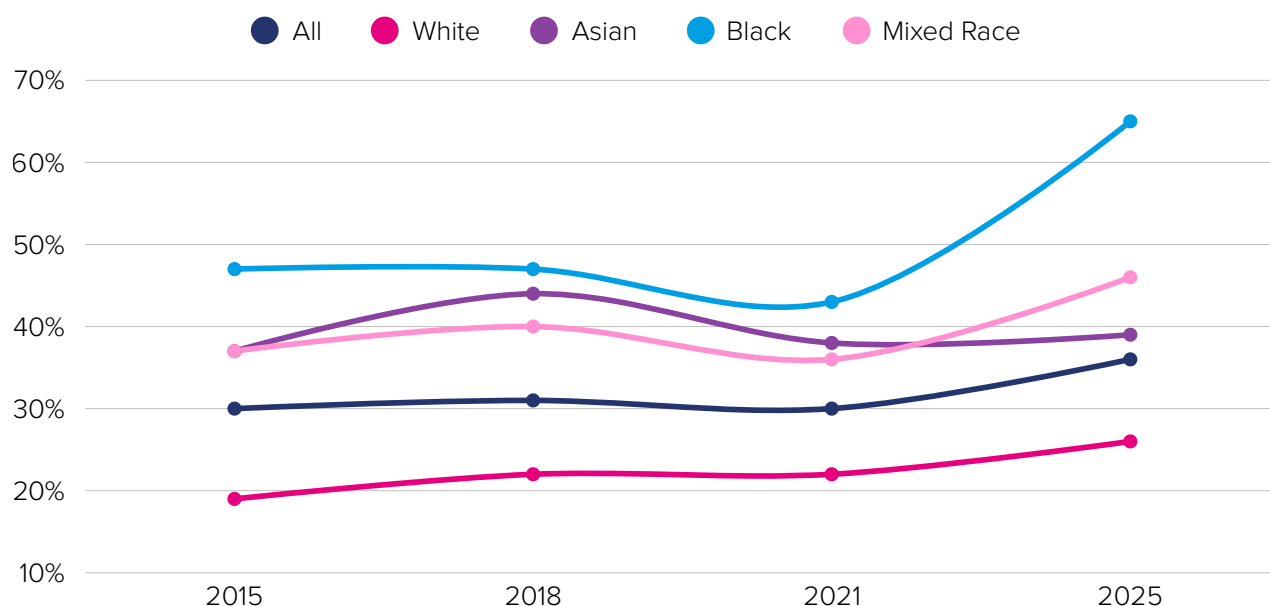
Young people emphasised the value of managers, mentors, and sponsors who help them explore different career options and navigate progression opportunities. This reflects the important role managers play in broadening horizons, building confidence, and supporting individuals to make informed choices about their future careers.

Action for impact:

Ask your procurement teams to complete the Inclusive Procurement Maturity Model, assess current procurement practices and identify areas for improvement. Use the findings to improve fair access to opportunities for diverse-owned businesses and SMEs, review payment terms and performance to support fair and prompt payment, and strengthen pathways into enterprise through access to role models and business networks.

Desire for role models

Percentage of employees who have a career role model



UK Employees	2015	2018	2021	2025
All	30%	31%	30%	36%
White	19%	22%	22%	26%
Asian	37%	44%	38%	39%
Black	47%	47%	43%	65%
Mixed Race	37%	40%	36%	46%

Source: BITC Race at Work Survey 2015, 2018, 2021 and 2025, Q12. UK employees, weighted.

Having a career role model has also **significantly increased** this year

Role models in workplaces and communities

Demand for visible role models has grown over the past decade. Ethnically diverse employees are more likely than White employees to have a career role model, and

more likely to say that a role model should come from the same background.

Employers should broaden the visibility of role models while avoiding a narrow view of who can inspire progression. The increase in desire for role models from Black employees is the highest of all ethnicity groups at 65% in contrast to only 26% of White employees saying this in 2025.

AI, access, and responsible use

AI is becoming an increasingly prominent part of working life, bringing opportunities, risks, and new considerations for workplace inclusion. In 2025, 38% of employees said their organisation was already using AI, with a further 21% saying their organisation was considering or planning its use. Almost half (49%) said they use AI tools at work at least monthly.

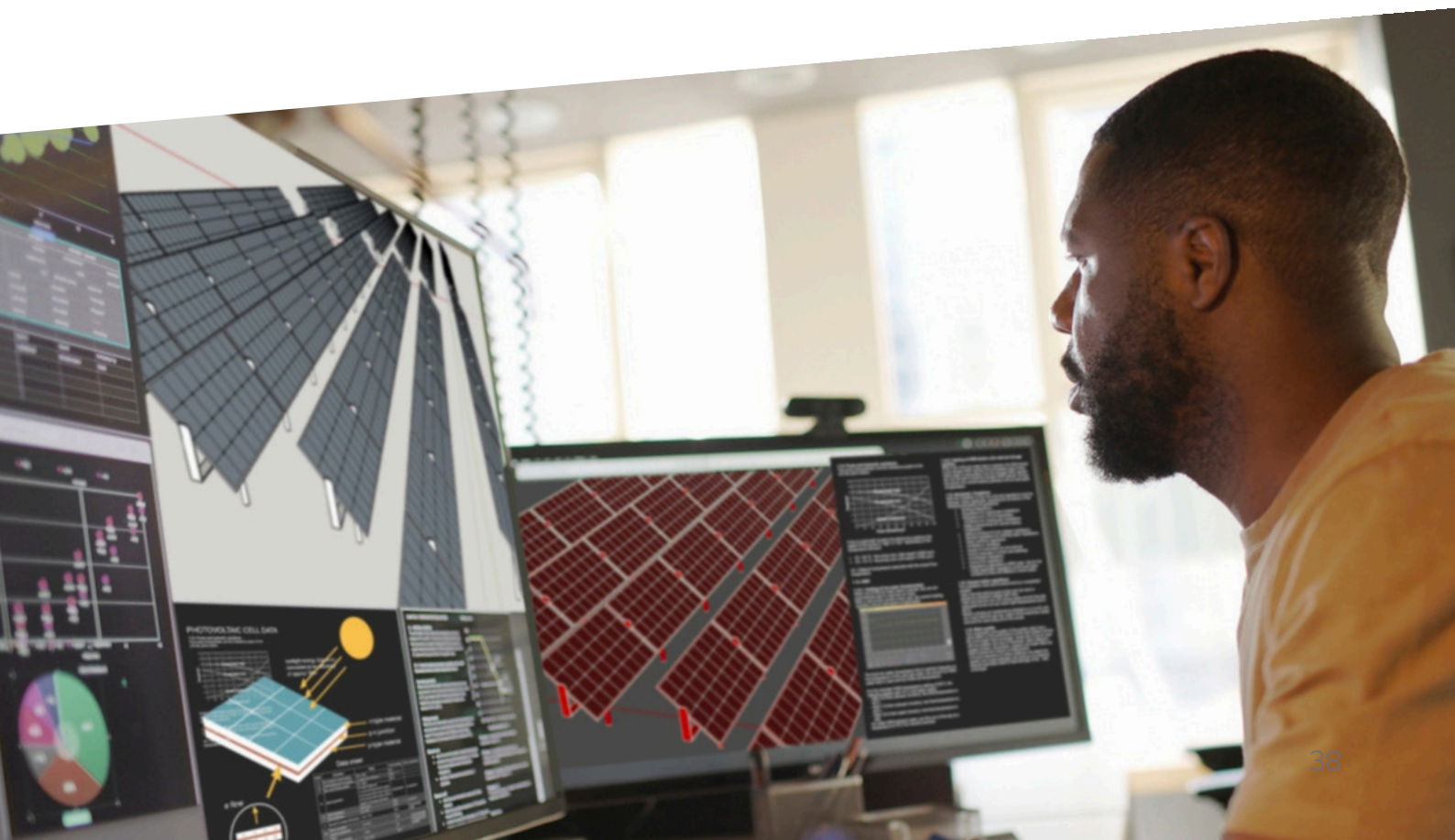
However, access and preparedness are not experienced equally. **AI use ranged from 19% among employees earning under £15,000 to 63% among those earning £70,000 or more**, although this may partly reflect the types of roles undertaken at different income levels. Employees in large organisations were also more likely to report AI use than those in SMEs (44% compared with 29%).

Training has not kept pace with use. Among employees who had used AI tools at work, 60% said their employer had not provided training. As AI becomes more embedded in

recruitment, development, supply chains, and everyday working practices, employers should consider who has access to AI tools and skills and ensure their use supports, rather than undermines, fair and inclusive workplace outcomes. BITC's Responsible AI Framework^{xi} can support employers to take action, with guidance on employment and skills, diversity and inclusion, and the responsible governance of AI.

Action for impact:

Ensure employees have fair access to the skills and training needed to use AI effectively and apply appropriate oversight and governance to support fair and inclusive use.





Creating a workplace where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, contribute and progress really matters. We've made good progress, but we know there's more to do. Our commitment to the Race at Work Charter is about continuing to remove barriers, open up opportunities and make a real difference for our colleagues and customers.

James Holian, Chief Customer and Operations Officer, NatWest

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.

Conclusion

The 2025 Race at Work evidence shows that progress is possible but uneven. Employers have strengthened executive sponsorship, manager accountability, and access to mentoring, sponsorship, and role models, yet confidence in talking about race has fallen, and reports of harassment within the workplace and with customers, clients and service users remain persistently high, particularly among younger employees.

The reset of the Race at Work Charter therefore comes at a critical moment. To turn insight into measurable and systemic change, employers should build clearer pathways into good work for young people, use ethnicity data to track progress, make leaders and managers accountable for fair outcomes, and support employees to move from allyship to active solidarity.

Taken together, these actions can help create workplaces where opportunity is more transparent, progression is more equitable, and every employee has the support needed to contribute, develop, feel they belong, and thrive.

The voices of young people reflected throughout this report reinforce a consistent message for employers. Young people are looking for clearer pathways into good work, access to mentors and role models, constructive feedback, opportunities to build skills and networks, and workplaces where they feel valued and able to contribute. The Charter reset provides employers with a practical

framework to respond to these priorities through meaningful action, helping to create more inclusive routes into employment, enterprise, and progression for the next generation.

Thank you and acknowledgements

Thank you to our contributors, **Enterprise Mobility, KPMG, NatWest, Shell, Eversheds Sutherland, and Youth Futures Foundation**, for their support to deliver the 2025 wave of this milestone longitudinal Race at Work study.

Thank you to Professor Ian Thomson for the examination of longitudinal and ONS data to provide updated insight into the potential economic boost from tackling racial disparities in pay and labour market participation. Thank you to Professor Nelarine Cornelius, Queen Mary University of London and Dr Chidozie Umeh, University of York, for their expertise in a Long Table examination of the thematic insights of young people's voices included in this report.

While some organisations and individuals have contributed to this report, the views or positions it contains may not fully reflect the views of each contributor or participating organisation.

Appendix

Summary of actions for impact

Section	Action point
Charter reset	Embed inclusive leadership into the implementation of every Charter commitment and make responsibility for progress visible beyond HR.
Economic benefits and executive sponsorship	Use executive sponsorship to set clear expectations, remove barriers, and hold leaders accountable for measurable race equality outcomes.
Commitment 1: young people into good work	Turn informal access into structured pathways through work experience, apprenticeships, mentoring, coaching, and skills development.
Commitment 2: ethnicity data	Collect, analyse, and report on ethnicity data across the employee life cycle, then use it to target interventions and evidence progress.
Commitment 3: harassment and bullying	Make reporting routes and support visible to every employee, especially new starters and 18 to 24-year-olds, and act early on patterns in complaints and listening data.
Commitment 4: manager accountability	Equip managers with objectives, training, and support so they can make fair decisions on progression, development, and opportunity.
Commitment 5: progression	Make mentoring, sponsorship, and career planning visible, structured, and accessible, with clear routes into opportunities for ethnically diverse employees.

Commitment 6: allyship to solidarity	Rebuild confidence in conversations about race through practical education, open dialogue, and shared commitments to action.
Commitment 7: inclusive procurement and fair payment	Use the Inclusive Procurement Maturity Model to improve fair access to procurement opportunities for ethnically diverse-owned businesses and SMEs, and support fair and prompt payment.
Skills, role models, and volunteering	Encourage employees of all ages to use their skills to support young people and recognise volunteering as evidence of transferable capability.
AI, access, and responsible use	Ensure employees have fair access to the skills and training needed to use AI effectively and apply appropriate oversight and governance to support fair and inclusive use.

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 (2025) Then, Now, Next: 30 Years of Action and Impact. Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/then-now-next/>

iv Business in the Community and Action for Race Equality (2026) No Talent Wasted: A Roadmap to Ending Ethnic Inequality in Youth Employment. Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/race/no-talent-wasted/>

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

vi UK Government (2026) Government commits to introducing mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for large employers. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-commits-to-introducing-mandatory-ethnicity-and-disability-pay-gap-reporting-for-large-employers>

vii Youth Futures Foundation (2024) Annual Review 2024. Available at: <https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/publication/annual-review-2024-highlights/>

viii Greater London Authority (2026) Designing for Inclusive Growth. Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/designing-inclusive-growth>

ix Business in the Community Education, Employment and Skills. Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/education-employment-and-skills/>

x Business in the Community (2024) Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chains. Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/report/diverse-and-inclusive-supply-chains-insights-report/>

xi Business in the Community (2026) Responsible Business in an AI World: A Practical Framework to Harness AI Responsibly and Drive Inclusive, Sustainable Growth. Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/responsible-ai/>



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.

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