



# RACE INCLUSION REPORTS

Report 3 – Ensuring  
equality of career  
progression opportunities

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The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The registered charity champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has more than 150,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in public employment policy and HR management. It works closely with employers in all sectors, government departments, agencies, professional bodies and associations. The IES is a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets, and HR planning and development. The IES is a not-for-profit organisation.

## Report

# Race inclusion reports

## Report 3 – Ensuring equality of career progression opportunities

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# 1 Series introduction

*Every person, regardless of their ethnicity or background, should be able to fulfil their potential at work. That is the business case as well as the moral case. Diverse organisations that attract and develop individuals from the widest pool of talent consistently perform better.*

**Baroness McGregor-Smith, Race in the Workplace: The McGregor-Smith review (2017)<sup>1</sup>**

*Racism has no place in our society. Businesses must be part of the change we all need, to step up and stamp out prejudice, and to build diverse and supportive cultures of respect and fairness for all.*

**Peter Cheese, CIPD CEO (2020)<sup>2</sup>**

The moral case for fairness in and access to the workplace is self-evident to any people professional. There is also considerable strength in the business case, as evidenced by McKinsey in their 2020 report, *Diversity Wins: How inclusion matters*.<sup>3</sup>

*In the case of ethnic and cultural diversity, our business-case findings are equally compelling: in 2019, top-quartile companies outperformed those in the fourth one by 36 percent in profitability, slightly up from 33 percent in 2017 and 35 percent in 2014. As we have previously found, the likelihood of outperformance continues to be higher for diversity in ethnicity than for gender.*

Despite this, evidence persists of continuing racial injustice and inequalities in UK society and in our workplaces. In employment, according to Baroness McGregor-Smith's review (2017),<sup>4</sup> while one in eight of the working-age population are from a BME background, only 10% of the workforce are BME individuals and only 6% of top management positions are held by people from BME backgrounds.

Recent events such as the Windrush scandal<sup>5</sup> and the Grenfell Tower disaster<sup>6</sup> and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>7</sup> alongside the major 2020 anti-racism protests after the death of George Floyd,<sup>8</sup> have highlighted the range of continuing racial injustice experienced in the UK. The COVID-19 crisis in particular has shown how intertwined economic and social indicators such as low pay, inadequate housing and poor health and wellbeing are with ethnicity and ethnic pay and representation gaps. They have also underlined the need for stronger action to be taken in society and in its workplaces to address these areas and to implement lasting and effective solutions.

Nor is the HR community itself immune from racial inequality: 88% of CIPD members identify as white and this increases with seniority, with only 7% of senior-level people professionals identifying as being from an ethnic minority. This is in line with Office for National Statistics figures showing that only 9.5% of HR professionals come from an ethnic minority background, contrasting with 14% for the general working-age population in the UK.<sup>9</sup> According to a recent *People Management*<sup>10</sup> study, 69% of ethnic minorities in HR felt that their career has been obstructed because of their race, compared with just 6% of white HR professionals. The HR profession urgently needs to take steps to improve its own diversity.

Warm words are not enough – firm action is now needed to tackle race inequality, and the demonstrations of summer 2020 show that there is a groundswell of support for much-needed change. There has already been increased action in this area by employers in 2020, beyond just voicing support for Black Lives Matter, with plans developed by organisations ranging from the English Football League to the CIPD itself. For instance, the BITC *Race at*

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*Work: Black voices* report (2020)<sup>11</sup> states that more than 100 employers signed up for their Race at Work Charter within a six-week window in 2020, bringing the total to more than 400 employers. A petition to government to introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting in summer 2020 rapidly acquired more than 130,000 signatures.<sup>12</sup> More than 80 employers already report the differences voluntarily, including the House of Lords, Barclays, Network Rail, the Met Police, John Lewis and PwC.<sup>13</sup> The CIPD's plans focus on increasing ethnic diversity among people professionals, including mentoring and coaching programmes, as well as continuing its educational and policy activities in support of greater transparency and structural and cultural change in organisations.

However, actual progress in recent years in implementing review findings and action plans has been frustratingly slow. The Parker Review on UK FTSE board composition (2017)<sup>14</sup> set out the voluntary target that, by the end of 2021, no member of the FTSE 100 would lack a person of colour as a director. But its 2020 update<sup>15</sup> found just 11 more of the FTSE 100 companies had a person of colour on their boards and the target looks likely to be missed by a third of them.

Individual employers are in a strong position to make important changes, both for the benefit of the organisation and its employees. The CIPD states in its anti-racism strategy guide that *'employers need to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to workplace discrimination – as is required by the Equality Act 2010 – and commit to planned action'*.<sup>16</sup> It notes that *'race inequality cannot be tackled half-heartedly or by sporadic, one-off, disconnected initiatives; employers' actions need to be well planned, strategic, sustainable and taken seriously. Employers must stand against the cause (racism) and the effect (inequality).'*

As a means of addressing the barriers to change, the CIPD has set out its anti-racism policy, supported by a new anti-racism hub,<sup>17</sup> which includes a host of webinars, FAQs and practical guides. It has commissioned this series of reports on race inclusion, looking at specific barriers to progress. The CIPD continues to call for mandatory ethnicity pay reporting, but also strongly encourages employers to immediately bring further transparency and public scrutiny to ethnic inequality in the workplace by voluntarily reporting their ethnicity pay gaps and their proposed actions to address them.

This series of reports will outline some of the key areas on which employers can act now, rather than waiting for legislative obligation. Supported by literature reviews and survey evidence, they are designed to help the HR community and their employers to act on racism in three key ways:

- **by talking about race at work**, which has been highlighted by our research as a critical barrier and underpinning determinant of progress ([Report 1](#))
- to encourage **ethnicity disclosure and reporting** ([Report 2](#))
- to address **career progression inequities** ([Report 3](#)).

There are, of course, many other areas to tackle before equality of opportunity is achieved for people of all ethnicities. However, making progress on these three vital issues should be within the capability of every employer and should provide a foundation for further, more wide-ranging work and progress.

These three reports are informed by new CIPD research from a survey of **2,102 UK employees**. The research was conducted pre-COVID, between 29 November 2019 and 10 January 2020. Employees were asked for their views on:

- how inclusive they feel their organisation is
- how they feel about talking about race at work
- how employers can promote conversations about race at work

- any barriers to talking about race at work
- the factors affecting whether they disclose their ethnicity to their employer
- their career progression – barriers and enablers.

Given the research is based on a survey of employees' views, not mediated through HR or their employers, it has helped to ensure these reports provide findings and recommendations that are tailored to the problems that employees actually experience in the workplace.

In each report, we:

- describe why the topic is important
- profile the main survey findings and relevant variations within the survey data on the basis of ethnicity
- draw out practical recommendations for both employers and policy-makers.

For more information, see [Report 1 – Talking about race at work](#) and [Report 2 – Encouraging Ethnicity Data Disclosure](#), or access our [anti-racism hub](#).

### **Note on the CIPD's current position on terminology**

We recognise that any one term will not resonate with everyone. As such, we advise employers to be sensitive in the language and terminology used when talking about race and ethnicity, being sure to engage and invite input from both their own staff and external experts.

We follow the [Race Disparity Audit's](#) recommendation, referring to 'ethnic minorities' rather than the terms BME/BAME, which highlight particular groups while omitting others. BME refers to black and minority ethnic, while BAME refers to black, Asian and minority ethnic. But research conducted by the Race Disparity Audit suggests that very few people recognise these acronyms, while few ethnic minorities identify with them.

However, both terms are widely used by government departments, public bodies, the media and other groups when referring to ethnic minority groups in the UK. We therefore reference the terms BME and BAME only in relation to research that has already been conducted using these terms (such as the government review by Baroness McGregor-Smith and previous CIPD research).

People of Colour (PoC) is a term prevalent in the USA and is gaining popularity in the UK. While it lends itself more to common parlance, it shares the issues of defining ethnic groups in relation to the white majority and that of masking issues.

We also recognise that terms like BME and BAME encompass people from a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures and traditions, who will likely be facing different barriers in the labour market, in career progression, and in their experiences at work. The Policy Exchange (Saggar et al 2016)<sup>18</sup> highlights the problem of conflation: *'Each ethnic minority group has its own cultural tradition and history, occupies a certain place on the socio-economic ladder, is on its own distinct trajectory, and sometimes has several internal divisions,'* it says. *'Looking at "BME" or "BAME" alone does nothing to tell us who is making progress and who is falling behind. Moreover, improvements in minority representation could be made by improving the lot of those already doing well rather than increasing the representation of those who need it most.'*

The CIPD wants employers and the people profession to put the spotlight on inclusion, with a continued effort to build diverse talent pipelines. Inclusive organisational culture is essential for attracting, retaining and nurturing diverse talent. The CIPD will therefore use the term 'inclusion and diversity' in all our material going forward.

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## 2 Are career progression opportunities open to all?

CIPD research in 2017<sup>19</sup> found discrimination was a significant issue in career progression: 29% of black employees said that discrimination has played a part in a lack of career progression to date, almost three times as many as white British employees. This was despite the fact that significantly more BAME employees said career progression is an important part of their working life than those from a white British background (25% vs 10%).

According to the BITC in 2020,<sup>20</sup> 31% of black employees feel they have been overlooked for a promotion compared with 23% of white employees. Asked whether 'managers in my organisation treat all people equally with regards to career progression', only 33% of black employees agree, compared with 44% of white, Asian and mixed/multiple ethnic group employees.

There is also evidence from the Government's Race Disparity Audit 2018<sup>21</sup> that people from ethnic minority groups are not reaching the more senior levels of organisations and are more likely to be in lower-skilled occupations. It reports, for instance, that in the public sector workforce, ethnic minority employees are concentrated in the lower grades and, in the NHS, only 7% of very senior managers and 11% of senior managers are from an ethnic minority group compared with 18% of the non-medical NHS workforce as a whole.

The Race Disparity Audit also notes that only around one in four white people who are in work are in the three lowest-skilled occupations, a lower rate than most other ethnic groups. Pakistani ethnicity and Bangladeshi ethnicity workers are more likely than workers in other ethnic groups to be concentrated in these occupations. On the other hand, people of Indian ethnicity in work are the most likely of any ethnic group to work in the highest-skilled occupational groups: over one in ten are in manager, director and senior official roles and more than three in ten are in professional occupations.

Baroness McGregor-Smith found in her 2017 review<sup>22</sup> that *'all BME groups are more likely to be overqualified than White ethnic groups but White employees are more likely to be promoted than all other groups.'*

These differences in access to career progression opportunities and in success achieving progression need to be tackled. Not only because it is morally right that all people in our society have equal access to good career opportunities and to progression at work, but also because it is wasteful for organisations to be leaving barriers in the path of some groups of staff. This reduces the organisation's ability to maximise the talent they have available, prevents them securing the best return on their investments in people, and increases the likelihood of poor motivation, engagement and retention and the accompanying recruitment costs. The CIPD *Resourcing and Talent Planning* report in 2017<sup>23</sup> estimated that the cost for hiring an employee was £2,000, although it is likely that the actual cost to business is much higher if loss of productivity and other impacts of increased turnover are taken into account.

Employers and HR professionals need to analyse and understand where the barriers to career progression lie in their organisation and use this information to enable people from any background or identity to reach their full potential at work.

This report identifies those factors in the workplace that are cited as enablers or barriers to progression. It also explores those areas where the respondents have blind spots in perceptions of different experiences by ethnicity.

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Evidence from a *People Management* survey showed that there is a mismatch between ethnic minority and white people professionals' perceptions of whether opportunities to progress in HR are equal for all ethnic groups. While only 9% of ethnic minority respondents said they are definitely or fairly equal, 42% of white respondents said they are. This is a problem that the disproportionately white profession<sup>24</sup> must address. The HR profession is often the organisational gateway to career progression, whether that is in learning and development provision or development of career progression strategies, and, if HR wrongly believe that their processes are already fair to all, there is a risk that they will not work to improve them and that barriers to progression will remain for those from ethnic minorities.

This third report in the Race Inclusion series follows [Report 1](#), which looked at talking about race, and [Report 2](#), which examined the importance of ethnicity disclosure. This report (Report 3) provides evidence of employee views on career progression and includes recommendations to employers. It focuses on attitudes, enablers and barriers to career progression, looking at:

- satisfaction with career progression, the sense of belonging and the intention to leave
- beliefs about ethnicity and career progression in their workplace
- enablers to career progression
- barriers to career progression.

## 3 Survey data

### 3.1 Summary of key findings

The key findings of the report are outlined below. In this section, for summary purposes, we report at a binary level comparing white British with BAME responses, but we are aware of the pitfalls of doing this and use more detailed breakdowns of responses in the full findings section and data tables (see the [Methodology](#) for a full discussion of the ethnicity groupings and terminology used).

#### **Satisfaction with career progression, the sense of belonging and the intention to leave**

- Just over half (51%) of our employee respondents said that their career progression has met or exceeded their expectations, while 36% felt their career progression has failed to meet their expectations.
- 54% of white British ethnicity respondents said their career progression has met or exceeded their expectations, but this is only the case for 49% of BAME group respondents.
- 71% of those whose career progression has exceeded their expectations feel they belong in their organisation. Only 34% of those whose career progression has failed to meet their expectations feel like this.
- Those whose career expectations have been met and those who feel they belong are more likely to say they still plan to be working for their employer in the next two years.

#### **Beliefs about ethnicity and career progression in their workplace**

- Overall, over half of respondents agree that:
  - 'everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential at work, no matter your racial or ethnic identity or background' (BAME group: 55%; white British ethnicity: 63%)
  - 'if I work hard, I have as good a chance as anyone else to succeed in my organisation' (BAME group: 52%; white British ethnicity: 55%)
  - 'there is equal access to development and progression opportunities for everybody' (BAME group: 49%; white British ethnicity: 60%).



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- The top six factors that employees feel that career progression in their organisation is based on are:
  - the employee's own motivation to progress/put themselves forward for opportunities (BAME group: 35%; white British ethnicity: 42%)
  - a job vacancy becoming available (BAME group: 30%; white British ethnicity: 35%)
  - the employee's talents (BAME group: 30%; white British ethnicity: 35%)
  - the visibility of the employee's work within the organisation (BAME group: 28%; white British ethnicity: 27%)
  - a strong work ethic (BAME group: 28%; white British ethnicity: 31%)
  - who you know/informal relationships (BAME group: 28%; white British ethnicity: 27%).
- 11% of BAME group respondents feel the employee's similarity in cultural/ethnic identity or background to the managers making the hiring decisions or to senior managers/leaders plays a part in career progression in their organisation compared with 2% and 3% respectively for white British ethnicity respondents.

### Enablers to career progression

- For those whose career progression has met or exceeded their expectations, the top four enabling factors are:
  - 'I was in the right place at the right time' (BAME group: 35%; white British ethnicity: 46%)
  - 'the relationships I have built across the organisation(s) I have worked for' (both BAME group and white British ethnicity: 37%)
  - 'benefitted from the opportunity to get involved in different projects which have helped develop my skills' (BAME group: 31%; white British ethnicity: 30%)
  - 'benefitted from good-quality line management from my immediate manager at key points in my career' (both BAME group and white British ethnicity: 30%).
- 23% of both the BAME group and white British respondents said that receiving effective training and development programmes has contributed to their career progression.
- One-third fewer BAME group respondents (14%) than white British ethnicity ones (21%) said that their employer having paid for them to study for a qualification or new skills outside work has contributed to their career progression.
- More BAME group respondents (12%) than white British (6%) said that they participated in an effective graduate programme at the start of their career.
- Around 20% of BAME group respondents compared with only around 10% of white British ethnicity respondents said that the following are important enablers to their own progression:
  - senior leaders questioning the lack of racial diversity in senior roles
  - firm action on discrimination
  - ethnicity pay reporting to highlight inequalities in the organisation.

### Barriers to career progression

- The three key reasons given by those whose career progression has not met their expectations are:
  - 'my skills and talent have been overlooked' (38%)
  - 'experienced poor-quality line management from my immediate manager when I entered work or at key points during my career' (36%)
  - 'was not part of the "in group"' (32%).
- 22% of the BAME group respondents said that their career progression has failed to meet their expectations because they have experienced discrimination compared with 15% of the white British ethnicity respondents.
- BAME group respondents are more likely than white British to say that their career progression has failed to meet their expectations because there are a lack of effective training and development programmes at work (25% vs 18%) or because they received no training or inadequate training when they first entered the workplace (18% vs 12%).



## 3.2 Full survey findings

### 3.2.1 Methodology

In an online survey of a sample of UK employees by YouGov, the CIPD asked a series of questions in relation to employees' views of their workplaces and about issues relating to race at work. The fieldwork for this survey was undertaken between 29 November 2019 and 10 January 2020, so pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic and the surge of activity and awareness around Black Lives Matter in the summer of 2020. The findings are still very relevant as they reflect long-term inequalities rather than being influenced by short-term current events.

The 2,102 respondents were:

- BAME group: 65%; white (British): 22%; white (other): 9%; with the remainder not disclosing their ethnicity – this sample contains a much higher proportion of ethnic minority respondents than the UK population level of 14%
- private sector: 62%; public sector: 27%; third/voluntary sector: 11%
- SMEs: 40%; large organisations: 60%.

The survey asked respondents to select which of the ethnicities listed in the left column of Table 1 they identified with. These options come from the ONS categorisation.<sup>25</sup> The majority ethnic group in the UK is white British, which we use in this report to contrast with other groups to explore differences of views and reflecting the fact that there is disadvantage for any ethnicity group that is not the majority.<sup>26</sup>

Where possible in this report, we have explored the differences by using other individual ethnicity groups in the text and by presenting the full breakdown in the accompanying tables so that all the variations in responses can be seen. It is, however, not possible to present findings from all of the individual groups across all the questions as some of them are too small to be statistically reliable. To ensure these views have been captured, we provide them in combinations, as shown in the second and third columns of Table 1.

**Table 1: Survey ethnicity categories and structure**

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	NET: White British	NET: White (combined)
Irish	NET: White other	
Gypsy or Irish Traveller Any other white background		
White and black Caribbean White and black African White and Asian Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	NET: BAME
Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese Any other Asian background	NET: Asian/Asian British	
African Caribbean Any other black/African/Caribbean background	NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	
Arab Any other ethnic group	NET: Other ethnic group	



We are acutely aware of the limitations and problems of combining disparate ethnicity groups: it is inappropriate culturally to blend groups together and present them as having a single view and, mathematically, doing so also masks some of the bigger differences between the white British majority and some ethnic minority groups. While this blending should therefore not be done in conversations with individuals or in communications with groups of employees, many employers will be in the position of needing to do this for reporting and monitoring purposes because using all the ethnicity categories for reporting and monitoring where an organisation has very small numbers of employees in some groups would result both in individuals being identifiable and also in the risk that any tracking of the success of an initiative will reflect a single individual's experience.

In order to provide benchmarks to employers in this situation, we have contrasted the experience of those in the majority ethnic group (white British) with a combination of those in other groups using the term 'BAME'. Again, we are aware of the challenges of this term and the misunderstandings that can arise about which groups are included or not in it. In this case, the structure of the survey did not allow a comparison between white British and a single combination of all the other groups. This approach is described in the Government's ethnicity facts and figures service guidance on writing about ethnicity.<sup>27</sup> In this survey, BAME does not include 'white other'. As mentioned above, we do present information from as many groups as possible in the tables as well as commenting in the text on differences for this 'white other' group.

It is also important to note that there can be confusion between terms for nationality, a legal status, and our ethnicity terminology, which refers to much broader identity. For instance, the ethnicity grouping 'Chinese' is not limited to people with Chinese nationality but also includes British and other nationals who have Chinese ancestral origin. For clarity, in this report, we therefore refer to Chinese ethnicity respondents and so on.

The order of the categories used is that from the ONS usage for surveys.<sup>28</sup> Employers may wish to consider using these categories in alphabetical order to avoid suggestions of relative importance of the groups.

Another limitation of the survey is that it does not allow reporting on the intersection of gender and race. Prior research shows intersectionality is important when discussing matters of inclusion and diversity (I&D), that is, that different aspects of diversity and of protected characteristics interact and that there is strong evidence that this can multiply disadvantage; for example, if someone is female and also a member of an ethnic minority group.

### **3.2.2 Satisfaction with career progression, the sense of belonging and the intention to leave**

Just over half (51%) of our employee respondents said that their career progression has met or exceeded their expectations, while 36% feel their career progression has failed to meet their expectations.

While 54% of white British ethnicity respondents said their career progression has met or exceeded their expectations, this is only the case for 49% of BAME group respondents and drops further to 43% of the black/African/Caribbean/British group. It was highest at 58% for both those of 'white other' ethnicity and of mixed white and Asian ethnicity (Table 2).

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**Table 2: Career progression expectations, by ethnicity: thinking about your career or working life as a whole, overall, has your career progression to date met, exceeded or failed to meet your expectations? (%)**

	Base: All	Combined 'exceeded' and 'met' my expectations	Failed to meet my expectations	Not applicable - I do not have any career expectations
Total	2,102	51	36	8
Any other white background	133	58	30	6
White and Asian	139	58	30	8
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	116	50	37	8
Indian	202	50	41	7
Pakistani	130	52	34	8
Chinese	111	48	35	5
African	119	45	46	3
Caribbean	103	46	37	12
<b>NET: White British</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>
NET: White other	182	56	31	7
NET: White (combined)	647	55	33	8
NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	404	54	34	7
NET: Asian/Asian British	583	50	38	7
NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	272	43	44	7
NET: Other ethnic group	104	47	39	8
<b>NET: BAME</b>	<b>1,363</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>7</b>

Overall, half (51%) of the respondents said they feel they belong in their organisation (Table 3), but this varies significantly based on the extent to which their career aspirations have been met. Seventy-one per cent of those whose career progression has exceeded their expectations feel they belong in their organisation, while only 34% of those whose career progression has failed to meet their expectations feel they belong.

**Table 3: Sense of belonging and career expectations: when I think about being an employee in this organisation, I feel that I belong (%)**

	Satisfaction with career				Not applicable - I do not have any career expectations
	Total	Exceeded my expectations	Met my expectations	Failed to meet my expectations	
Base: All	2,102	241	832	761	158
Net: Agree	51	71	63	34	42
Net: Disagree	19	7	11	30	22

The survey also showed that both those whose career expectations have been met and those who feel they belong are more likely to say they intend to still be working at their organisation in two years' time (Tables 4 and 5).

**Table 4: Career expectations and intention to stay (%)**

Thinking about your career or working life AS A WHOLE, overall, has your career progression to date met, exceeded or failed to meet your expectations?	Do you plan to be working at your organisation in 2 years?		
	Total	Yes	No
Base: All	2,102	969	550
Combined 'exceeded' and 'met my expectations'	51	63	42
Failed to meet my expectations	36	28	48
Not applicable – I do not have any career expectations	8	7	6

**Table 5: Belonging and intention to stay (%)**

When I think about being an employee in this organisation, I feel that I belong	Do you plan to be working at your organisation in 2 years?	
	Yes	No
Base: All	969	550
Net: Agree	70	31
Net: Disagree	8	39

Analysing the responses by ethnicity, we can see that:

- The feeling of belonging is highest for white British ethnicity respondents (55%) and lowest for Chinese ethnicity and Caribbean ethnicity respondents (both 44%) (Table 6).
- The intention to stay at their organisation is highest for white British ethnicity respondents (55%) and lowest for African ethnicity, mixed white and Asian ethnicity and net: black/African/Caribbean/black British respondents (all 40%) (Table 7).

**Table 6: Belonging by ethnicity: when I think about being an employee in this organisation, I feel that I belong (%)**

	Base: All	Net: Agree	Net: Disagree
Total	2,102	51	19
Any other white background	133	50	21
White and Asian	139	47	24
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	116	55	18
Indian	202	50	21
Pakistani	130	51	15
Chinese	111	44	13
African	119	50	15
Caribbean	103	44	26
<b>NET: White British</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>19</b>
NET: White other	182	54	19
NET: White (combined)	647	55	19
NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	404	53	19
NET: Asian/Asian British	583	49	17
NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	272	45	21
NET: Other ethnic group	104	46	22
<b>NET: BAME</b>	<b>1,363</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>18</b>

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**Table 7: Intention to stay by ethnicity: In two years' time, do you plan to be working at your current organisation? (%)**

	Yes	No
Total	46	26
Any other white background	42	26
White and Asian	40	27
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	48	22
Indian	45	33
Pakistani	48	22
Chinese	41	26
African	40	28
Caribbean	43	34
<b>NET: White British</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>21</b>
NET: White other	46	25
NET: White (combined)	52	22
NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	45	26
NET: Asian/Asian British	44	27
NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	40	31
NET: Other ethnic group	47	25
<b>NET: BAME</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>

Employers should work to build a feeling of belonging for all employees and support them all to achieve their career progression goals by managing their careers fairly. Despite the difference in the perception of belonging not being vast, there is still work to be done in engaging with ethnic minority employees. It is important that approaches to build a sense of belonging and career management policies are operating equally effectively for all ethnic groups and that their perceptions of these processes are equally positive.

### 3.2.3 Beliefs about ethnicity and career progression in their workplace

In order to understand the respondents' beliefs about career progression in their workplace, we looked at their responses to the following statements:

- 'In my organisation, everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential at work, no matter your racial or ethnic identity or background.'
- 'Overall, if I work hard, I have as good a chance as anyone else to succeed in my organisation.'
- 'There is equal access to development and progression opportunities for everybody.'

For all of these, over half of respondents across all ethnicity groups agree that these statements are true in their organisations (Table 8).

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**Table 8: Beliefs about career progression (%)**

	Net: Agree	Net: Disagree
In my organisation, everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential at work, no matter your racial or ethnic identity or background	58	18
Overall, if I work hard, I have as good a chance as anyone else to succeed in my organisation	54	22
	Net: Great/some extent	Not at all
There is equal access to development and progression opportunities for everybody	52	14

Base: 2,102.

Agreement is higher in the private sector and in smaller employers for all of these.

**Table 9: Beliefs about career progression, by sector and size (%)**

		Private sector	Public sector	Third/voluntary sector	SME (2-249)	Large (250+)
In my organisation, everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential at work, no matter your racial or ethnic identity or background	Net: Agree	60	53	58	64	54
	Net: Disagree	16	23	16	14	20
Overall, if I work hard, I have as good a chance as anyone else to succeed in my organisation	Net: Agree	56	50	52	59	51
	Net: Disagree	20	26	21	17	25
There is equal access to development and progression opportunities for everybody	Net: Great/some extent	53	49	53	55	50
	Not at all	13	15	15	14	13

Base: 2,102.

We can also see that responses to these three statements are more positive where trust between employees and senior management is higher and also where the employer has been recognised for their diversity work (Table 10). As discussed in [Report 1](#) and [Report 2](#) in this series, this suggests employers should take steps to build in trust between employees and senior management. It also appears that activities that underlie employers' achievement of diversity recognition are working to make all employees feel more positive about equality of access to career progression.

**Table 10: Beliefs about career progression, by trust and recognition (%)**

		Trust of senior management			Employer recognition for work on diversity and inclusion	
		Total	Net: Strong	Net: Weak	Yes	No
	Base: All	2,102	848	583	386	956
In my organisation, everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential at work, no matter your racial or ethnic identity or background	Net: Agree	58	81	35	72	53
	Net: Disagree	18	6	38	10	25
Overall, if I work hard, I have as good a chance as anyone else to succeed in my organisation	Net: Agree	54	75	32	64	51
	Net: Disagree	22	7	43	16	26
There is equal access to development and progression opportunities for everybody	Net: Great/some extent	52	73	28	70	46
	Not at all	14	5	30	6	19

BAME group respondents agree with each of these questions less than white British ethnicity respondents. There are a range of responses by ethnicity (Table 11), but for each of these questions, African ethnicity respondents agree least while white and mixed/multiple ethnicity respondents are in most agreement.

Looking at the statements ‘Everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential at work, no matter your racial or ethnic identity or background,’ and ‘There is equal access to development and progression opportunities for everybody’, where respondents are being asked to comment on the experience of people in their organisation as a whole, we can see that those from ethnic minority groups agree less that opportunities are equal for all than white British respondents do.

This mirrors the research highlighted earlier about differential views about career progression and its fairness across ethnicities within HR. Given that white people occupy more of the senior positions in organisations and are a higher percentage of the HR profession, it is critical that they have the data to know whether the career progression processes they are creating disadvantage people from ethnic minorities. Data collection across all employees and HR processes is crucial (see [Report 2](#) on ethnicity disclosure for more) to ensure that career progression is fairly offered and supported for all.

Organisations should look at their current career progression and promotion processes to assess how fairly represented the different ethnicities in their workplace are. They should survey all employees on the enablers and barriers they face and then devise career progression and diversity strategies to remove any disadvantages they encounter. We explore specific enablers and barriers later in this report.





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**Table 11: Beliefs about career progression (by ethnicity) (%)**

		Total	Any other white background	White and Asian	Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background	Indian	Pakistani	Chinese	African	Caribbean	NET: White British	NET: White other	NET: White (combined)	NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	NET: Asian/Asian British	NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	NET: Other ethnic group	NET: BAME
	Base: All	2,102	133	139	116	202	130	111	119	103	465	182	647	404	583	272	104	1,363
In my organisation, everyone has the opportunity to achieve their potential at work, no matter your racial or ethnic identity or background	Net: Agree	58	62	63	54	56	52	51	41	51	63	64	63	63	54	44	63	55
	Net: Disagree	18	11	16	20	21	15	15	21	24	14	11	13	17	19	25	18	20
Overall, if I work hard, I have as good a chance as anyone else to succeed in my organisation	Net: Agree	54	56	57	52	52	57	49	45	48	58	57	58	57	53	46	49	52
	Net: Disagree	22	18	23	25	28	15	18	18	33	20	18	19	21	22	26	27	23
There is equal access to development and progression opportunities for everybody	Net: Great/some extent	52	59	53	56	49	54	41	36	45	60	59	60	57	48	39	49	49
	Not at all	14	11	17	17	16	12	13	17	15	12	10	11	14	14	16	15	14

The survey respondents were also asked what career progression in their organisation is based on (Table 12). The top six reasons given are:

- the employee's own motivation to progress/put themselves forward for opportunities (36%)
- a job vacancy becoming available (31%)
- the employee's talents (31%)
- the visibility of the employee's work within the organisation (28%)
- a strong work ethic (28%)
- who you know/informal relationships (28%).

Although there are some variations by ethnicity of respondent, these answers remain the top ones for all groups (Table 13).

It is positive that responses that could indicate bias in career progression such as 'The employee's similarity in cultural/ethnic identity or background to the managers making the hiring decisions' and 'The employee's similarity in cultural/ethnic identity or background to senior managers/leaders' were selected by less than 10% of respondents overall.

**Table 12: On which of the following criteria, if any, do you feel career progression in your current organisation is based? Indicate the five main criteria. (%)**

The employee's own motivation to progress/put themselves forward for opportunities	36
A job vacancy becoming available	31
The employee's talents	31
The visibility of the employee's work within the organisation	28
A strong work ethic	28
Who you know/informal relationships	28
The employee's past work experience	22
Having the appropriate qualifications	20
The employee's similarity to senior managers/leaders (for example in values, approach to work, etc)	20
A manager putting one of their team forward for opportunities	19
The employee's similarity to the managers making the hiring decisions (for example in values, approach to work, etc)	17
How long the employee has worked in the organisation	16
I don't know what criteria career progression is based on in my organisation	11
Keeping your head down and getting on with your work	10
The employee's similarity in cultural/ethnic identity or background to senior managers/leaders	9
Being able to create a new role for yourself	9
The employee's similarity in cultural/ethnic identity or background to the managers making the hiring decisions	9
As a response to the risk of the person leaving	7
Visibility at out-of-hours social events	6
The employee's age	5
Having different perspectives from others in the team or department	5
Having a different identity or background from others at the job level you're progressing to	3

Base: 2,102.

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**Table 13: On which of the following criteria, if any, do you feel career progression in your current organisation is based? (by ethnicity) (%)**

	Total	Any other white background	White and Asian	Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	Indian	Pakistani	Chinese	African	Caribbean	NET: White British	NET: White other	NET: White (combined)	NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	NET: Asian/Asian British	NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	NET: Other ethnic group	NET: BAME
Base: All	2,102	133	139	116	202	130	111	119	103	465	182	647	404	583	272	104	1,363
The employee's own motivation to progress/put themselves forward for opportunities	36	33	42	41	36	22	35	36	36	42	37	40	42	31	35	28	35
A job vacancy becoming available	31	25	32	30	25	25	32	29	37	35	27	33	34	27	32	28	30
The employee's talents	31	32	31	28	34	25	32	21	29	35	35	35	33	29	25	32	30
The visibility of the employee's work within the organisation	28	36	29	36	26	25	23	24	25	27	36	30	33	25	26	27	28
A strong work ethic	28	28	27	25	24	25	27	40	23	31	27	30	29	25	32	29	28
Who you know/informal relationships	28	26	33	26	27	22	29	32	35	27	26	27	27	27	34	27	28
The employee's past work experience	22	18	25	22	24	18	22	25	18	23	17	21	25	21	22	18	22
Having the appropriate qualifications	20	23	22	22	16	12	21	26	20	20	25	21	23	16	24	16	20
The employee's similarity to senior managers/leaders (eg in values, approach to work, etc)	20	20	30	17	16	17	11	17	18	20	21	20	24	17	19	20	20
A manager putting one of their team forward for opportunities	19	17	21	20	19	18	17	24	18	17	16	17	21	19	22	20	20
The employee's similarity to the managers making the hiring decisions (eg in values, approach to work, etc)	17	17	24	24	15	15	10	13	19	14	19	15	21	14	16	25	17
How long the employee has worked in the organisation	16	14	21	17	17	15	18	14	12	15	14	15	19	17	14	13	17
I don't know what criteria career progression is based on in my organisation	11	11	6	11	8	16	10	8	11	14	9	12	7	12	9	12	10
Keeping your head down and getting on with your work	10	7	6	6	10	8	12	14	19	8	7	8	9	10	16	9	11
The employee's similarity in cultural/ethnic identity or background to senior managers/leaders	9	9	11	8	12	12	9	19	17	3	8	5	9	10	19	8	11
Being able to create a new role for yourself	9	13	9	11	8	8	15	10	8	6	14	8	9	9	8	7	9
The employee's similarity in cultural/ethnic identity or background to the managers making the hiring decisions	9	8	12	6	11	8	17	18	19	2	7	3	7	12	18	9	11
As a response to the risk of the person leaving	7	11	5	9	5	5	7	7	6	8	9	8	7	5	6	13	7
Visibility at out-of-hours social events	6	12	6	3	4	9	4	8	9	4	10	6	5	5	9	8	6
The employee's age	5	6	7	6	5	9	1	5	6	5	6	5	6	5	5	3	5
Having different perspectives from others in the team or department	5	8	1	5	7	5	5	7	7	3	6	4	4	5	6	4	5
Having a different identity or background from others at the job level you're progressing to	3	6	5	1	5	4	5	4	1	2	4	3	3	5	3	2	4

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We can see large differences in these responses by ethnicity, with 11% of BAME group respondents feeling these play a part in career progression in their organisation compared with 2% and 3% respectively for white British ethnicity respondents. We also found it is far more of a concern for some groups, with nearly a fifth (19%) of African ethnicity respondents believing that the employee’s similarity to senior managers is a factor and a fifth (19%) of Caribbean ethnicity respondents believing the similarity to the hiring manager is important.

Again, this should be addressed with good career progression and diversity policies that reduce the impact of bias on career progression outcomes, as well as thorough data collection to monitor the effectiveness of these policies over time.

When asked whether there was good representation of people from ethnic minorities at all levels of their organisation (Table 14), only 37% of the respondents said that there is.

There is little difference between BAME respondents (36%) and white (British) respondents (38%), but this masks differences by narrower ethnicity groupings, such as 30% of Chinese ethnicity respondents compared with 47% of Pakistani ethnicity respondents saying there is representation at all levels.

As highlighted in [Report 2](#) in this series, organisations need to ensure that they are collecting and analysing ethnicity data to show their own representation levels and proportions. Organisations also need to use this data to assess whether their processes are fair and do indeed provide career opportunities for all as intended, or if some ethnic groups are disadvantaged in terms of their access to opportunities and likelihood of promotion and career development.

**Table 14: People from ethnic minorities are represented at every level of my organisation in a way that reflects the makeup of the local population (by ethnicity) (%)**

	Base: All	Net: Great/ some extent
Total	2,102	37
Any other white background	133	42
White and Asian	139	42
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	116	34
Indian	202	35
Pakistani	130	47
Chinese	111	30
African	119	32
Caribbean	103	32
<b>NET: White British</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>38</b>
NET: White other	182	43
NET: White (combined)	647	40
NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	404	38
NET: Asian/Asian British	583	38
NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	272	30
NET: Other ethnic group	104	36
<b>NET: BAME</b>	<b>1,363</b>	<b>36</b>



Good representation of people from all ethnicities and at all levels is important for the sake of the individuals who want to be able to progress and so that organisational decisions are made with contributions from employees with as wide a range of experiences as possible. Achieving this would be a key outcome in assessing whether career progression opportunities that drive movement from level to level are functioning fairly.

### 3.2.4 Enablers to career progression

The respondents who said their career progression has met or exceeded their expectations were asked which workplace factors helped this to be achieved (Table 15). The top four factors are:

- ‘I was in the right place at the right time’ (39%)
- ‘the relationships I have built across the organisation(s) I have worked for’ (37%)
- ‘benefitted from the opportunity to get involved in different projects which have helped develop my skills’ (31%)
- ‘benefitted from good-quality line management from my immediate manager at key points in my career’ (29%).

While the feeling of having been in the right place at the right time is not something employers can address, encouraging employees to build relationships and providing opportunities across projects is something they can and should foster through work structures that encourage collaboration between colleagues, creating connections and sharing knowledge.

**Table 15: You said that your career progression to date has met or exceeded your expectations. Which, if any, of the following factors related to the workplace have helped achieve this? (Please select up to five factors that have been most significant.) (%)**

Base: All employees whose career progression has been met or exceeded	1,073
I was in the right place at the right time	39
The relationships I have built across the organisation(s) I have worked for	37
Benefitted from the opportunity to get involved in different projects which have helped develop my skills	31
Benefitted from good-quality line management from my immediate manager at key points in my career	29
The organisation(s) I work/worked for encourage progression and promotion from within	23
Received effective training and development programmes at work	22
The provision of flexible working	22
The organisation(s) I work/worked for support anyone who works hard to succeed	21
Received good-quality training when I first entered the workplace	19
My employer paid for me to study for a qualification/new skills outside work	16
Benefitted from a coach, mentor or buddy when entering employment or at key points in my career	14
Participated in an effective graduate programme at the start of my career	10
A visible senior role model in my organisation who has a similar identity or background to me	8
Benefitted from a tailored talent management programme	5
Took part in an effective apprenticeship programme at the start of my career	5

Three in ten respondents (29%) attributed the fact that their career progression has met or exceeded their expectations to having had good-quality line management at key points during their career. Employers should therefore ensure that there is investment in line management support in their organisation. There appears to be a particular need for this in

the public sector (Table 16), where only a fifth (20%) said they have benefitted from good-quality line management compared with nearly a third (32%) in the private sector. There is also a greater need for line manager development in smaller organisations, where fewer respondents (24%) said that this played a positive role in their career progression than respondents in larger organisations (32%).

**Table 16: You said that your career progression to date has met or exceeded your expectations. Which, if any, of the following factors related to the workplace have helped achieve this? (Please select up to five factors that have been most significant) (by sector and size of organisation) (%)**

	Total	Private sector	Public sector	Third/voluntary sector	SME (2-249)	Large (250+)
Base: All employees whose career progression has been met or exceeded	1,073	674	293	106	432	641
I was in the right place at the right time	39	38	40	42	40	38
The relationships I have built across the organisation(s) I have worked for	37	36	38	43	34	39
Benefitted from the opportunity to get involved in different projects which have helped develop my skills	31	30	26	44	30	31
Benefitted from good-quality line management from my immediate manager at key points in my career	29	32	20	36	24	32
The organisation(s) I work/worked for encourage progression and promotion from within	23	24	23	18	22	23
Received effective training and development programmes at work	22	21	26	19	20	24
The provision of flexible working	22	22	21	25	21	23
The organisation(s) I work/worked for support anyone who works hard to succeed	21	22	20	21	22	21
Received good-quality training when I first entered the workplace	19	20	19	17	20	19
My employer paid for me to study for a qualification/new skills outside work	16	15	18	15	13	18
Benefitted from a coach, mentor or buddy when entering employment or at key points in my career	14	14	15	10	12	15
Participated in an effective graduate programme at the start of my career	10	11	13	1	8	12
A visible senior role model in my organisation who has a similar identity or background to me	8	8	9	8	10	7
Benefitted from a tailored talent management programme	5	5	5	5	5	5
Took part in an effective apprenticeship programme at the start of my career	5	6	2	3	5	5

These top factors are similar across ethnicity groups (Table 17), although BAME group respondents are less likely to say they were in the right place at the same time (35%) compared with white British ethnicity respondents (46%).

Formal training programmes and qualifications were chosen less often as reasons that career expectations have been met or exceeded:

- ‘received effective training and development programmes at work’ (overall 22%)
- ‘my employer paid for me to study for a qualification/new skills outside work’ (overall 16%)
- ‘participated in an effective graduate programme at the start of my career’ (overall 10%).



**Table 17: You said that your career progression to date has met or exceeded your expectations. Which, if any, of the following factors related to the workplace have helped achieve this? (Please select up to five factors that have been most significant) (By ethnicity) (%)**

	Total	Indian	NET: White British	NET: White other	NET: White (combined)	NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	NET: Asian/Asian British	NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	NET: BAME
Base: All employees whose career progression has been met or exceeded	1,073	101	253	101	354	219	289	116	673
I was in the right place at the right time	39	37	46	44	45	37	34	29	35
The relationships I have built across the organisation(s) I have worked for	37	40	37	36	36	39	33	43	37
Benefitted from the opportunity to get involved in different projects which have helped develop my skills	31	30	30	31	31	33	26	36	31
Benefitted from good-quality line management from my immediate manager at key points in my career	29	27	30	29	30	31	29	26	30
The organisation(s) I work/worked for encourage progression and promotion from within	23	22	26	27	26	24	20	22	22
Received effective training and development programmes at work	22	22	23	19	22	22	19	34	23
The provision of flexible working	22	30	20	24	21	21	23	28	22
The organisation(s) I work/worked for support anyone who works hard to succeed	21	28	20	22	20	25	21	23	22
Received good-quality training when I first entered the workplace	19	20	19	23	20	21	19	23	20
My employer paid for me to study for a qualification/new skills outside work	16	17	21	15	19	14	15	14	14
Benefitted from a coach, mentor or buddy when entering employment or at key points in my career	14	15	11	17	13	14	16	15	15
Participated in an effective graduate programme at the start of my career	10	17	6	9	7	14	13	8	12
A visible senior role model in my organisation who has a similar identity or background to me	8	14	7	8	7	8	11	9	9
Benefitted from a tailored talent management programme	5	5	4	2	3	4	7	9	6
Took part in an effective apprenticeship programme at the start of my career	5	6	4	5	4	5	5	7	6

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The responses to these statements show great variation by ethnicity, though.

Twenty-three per cent of both the BAME group and white British respondents said that receiving effective training and development programmes contributed to their career progression, but this is higher for the combined net: black/African/Caribbean/black British (34%) and lower for Asian/Asian British and white other (both 19%).

One-third fewer BAME group respondents (14%) than white British ethnicity ones (21%) said that their employer paying for them to study for a qualification or new skills outside work contributed to their career progression.

More BAME group respondents (12%) than white British (6%) attribute their career progression to having participated in an effective graduate programme at the start of their career. This rises to 17% of Indian ethnicity respondents.

This relatively low importance may reflect that not all employers offer support for training, so a first action would be encouraging provision of high-quality training to all staff. The differences by ethnicity may reflect the extent to which different individuals value the training they have received and then attribute their success to it. It may also be an indication that access to this kind of career progression support is not currently being made for all staff equitably. It is vital that employers provide suitable learning and development to all staff and have monitoring and data collection processes in place to ensure that there are no barriers based on ethnicity to taking advantage of these.

A similar question was asked to all respondents (regardless of whether their career expectations had been met) to understand what sources of support they would value (Table 18). The top three are:

- greater access to progression opportunities (37%)
- greater clarity on career paths (34%)
- mentoring or coaching (32%).

These are the top three across all sectors and sizes of organisation.

**Table 18: Which of the following sources of support, if any, would help you to achieve your potential at work? (%)**

Greater access to progression opportunities	37
Greater clarity on career paths	34
Mentoring or coaching	32
Opportunity to work on cross-organisation projects	27
Training for managers on unconscious bias	25
Having a senior manager or leader as a sponsor or champion	24
Greater appreciation and acceptance of diversity and difference at work	21
Reverse mentoring (a more senior employee is mentored by a more junior one to help them acquire skills, knowledge and understand the workplace from someone else's perspective)	19
Senior leaders questioning the lack of racial diversity in senior roles	18
Firm action on discrimination	15
Ethnicity pay reporting to highlight inequalities in the organisation	14
Black, Asian and minority ethnic network/employee resource group	10

Base: 2,102.



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Respondents who work in organisations that have received recognition for their work on diversity are, in general, more positive about any of the support options than those who do not (Table 19). In particular, they are more likely to say that having a senior manager as a sponsor or champion is important (32% vs 21%) and they are also more likely to say that having a reverse mentoring programme in place (where a more senior employee is mentored by a more junior one to help them acquire skills, knowledge and understand the workplace from someone else’s perspective) would help them achieve their potential (26% vs 17%). This may simply reflect the fact that these are more likely to occur in organisations that are more advanced in their diversity journey and that these organisations are more likely to have the resources to put these types of initiatives in place.

**Table 19: Which of the following sources of support, if any, would help you to achieve your potential at work? (Please select all that apply.) (%)**

	Total	Employer recognition for work on inclusion and diversity	
		Yes	No
Greater access to progression opportunities	37	42	35
Greater clarity on career paths	34	38	31
Mentoring or coaching	32	35	30
Opportunity to work on cross-organisation projects	27	33	22
Training for managers on unconscious bias	25	28	24
Having a senior manager or leader as a sponsor or champion	24	32	21
Greater appreciation and acceptance of diversity and difference at work	21	24	20
Reverse mentoring (a more senior employee is mentored by a more junior one to help them acquire skills, knowledge and understand the workplace from someone else’s perspective)	19	26	17
Senior leaders questioning the lack of racial diversity in senior roles	18	21	17
Firm action on discrimination	15	16	15
Ethnicity pay reporting to highlight inequalities in the organisation	14	16	12
Black, Asian and minority ethnic network/employee resource group	10	11	10
Base:	2,102	386	956

Analysing the response by ethnicity (Table 20), we see the same three reasons are top for all groups except African ethnicity respondents, for whom training managers on unconscious bias is slightly more important than mentoring or coaching.

There are, however, big differences in the weight given to each one; for instance, 51% of African ethnicity respondents would like greater access to progression opportunities compared with 30% of the white British ethnicity respondents, and 46% of the mixed white and Asian ethnicity respondents would like greater clarity on career paths compared with white British ethnicity respondents (31%). Having a senior manager or leader as a sponsor or champion is important for 30% of Indian ethnicity respondents but only 17% of Caribbean ethnicity respondents.

**Table 20: Which of the following sources of support, if any, would help you to achieve your potential at work? (by ethnicity) (%)**

	Total	Any other white background	White and Asian	Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	Indian	Pakistani	Chinese	African	Caribbean	NET: White British	NET: White other	NET: White (combined)	NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	NET: Asian/Asian British	NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	NET: Other ethnic group	NET: BAME
Base: All	2,102	133	139	116	202	130	111	119	103	465	182	647	404	583	272	104	1,363
Greater access to progression opportunities	37	41	40	42	36	34	39	51	36	30	44	34	40	37	45	29	39
Greater clarity on career paths	34	32	46	42	32	26	35	45	34	31	35	32	40	31	40	33	36
Mentoring or coaching	32	36	31	31	31	28	32	40	33	30	34	31	34	29	38	35	33
Opportunity to work on cross-organisation projects	27	29	29	26	27	21	31	35	23	22	29	24	31	26	32	33	29
Training for managers on unconscious bias	25	20	24	26	26	25	20	41	33	16	21	18	28	24	38	27	28
Having a senior manager or leader as a sponsor or champion	24	29	16	28	30	25	23	20	17	21	27	23	26	26	22	28	25
Greater appreciation and acceptance of diversity and difference at work	21	22	22	17	25	28	25	37	25	11	19	14	19	25	32	18	24
Reverse mentoring (a more senior employee is mentored by a more junior one to help them acquire skills, knowledge and understand the workplace from someone else's perspective)	19	19	25	18	18	21	17	21	14	18	17	18	23	19	18	20	20
Senior leaders questioning the lack of racial diversity in senior roles	18	13	17	25	20	25	19	33	25	7	11	8	22	21	32	20	23
Firm action on discrimination	15	10	12	21	16	16	15	30	24	8	9	9	16	16	28	16	18
Ethnicity pay reporting to highlight inequalities in the organisation	14	7	10	14	20	20	16	28	24	5	8	6	14	19	26	13	18
Black, Asian and minority ethnic network/employee resource group	10	-	9	7	15	21	13	31	24	-	-	-	10	16	26	7	16

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A number of the possible survey responses make clear reference to the impact of action on discrimination, diversity or ethnicity in ensuring effective and fair career progression for all, including:

- senior leaders questioning the lack of racial diversity in senior roles (18%)
- firm action on discrimination (15%)
- ethnicity pay reporting to highlight inequalities in the organisation (14%).

These were selected by only around 10% of white British respondents compared with around 20% of BAME group respondents; this was higher for African ethnicity respondents (around 30%), for Caribbean ethnicity respondents (around 25%), and Indian ethnicity and Pakistani ethnicity respondents (both around 20%). Again, this response pattern seems to reflect the fact that white British ethnicity respondents are less affected by these issues than those from ethnic minorities.

There is also support for black, Asian and minority network/employee resource groups to support career progression from African ethnicity respondents (31%), Caribbean ethnicity respondents (24%) and Pakistani ethnicity respondents (21%).

Some key steps employers could take are, therefore, ensuring that:

- access to career progression opportunities is equitable
- employees are provided with guidance on career paths and possible development avenues
- mentoring or coaching is available to all staff.

They should also take more general action on improving diversity, such as:

- robustly tackling discrimination
- ensuring senior leaders demonstrate their buy-in to diversity aims
- having good data collection about ethnicity and ethnicity pay to be able to identify any inequalities and to monitor efforts to counter them.

### 3.2.5 Barriers to career progression

Survey respondents who said their career progression has failed to meet their expectations were asked to select the workplace factors that they feel caused this (Table 21). The top three are:

- 'my skills and talent have been overlooked' (38%)
- 'experienced poor-quality line management from my immediate manager when I entered work or at key points during my career' (36%)
- 'was not part of the "in group"' (32%).

We saw previously the importance of good line management in enabling career progression and this suggests that the converse is also true. Poor line management adversely affects career progression. Employers should ensure that line managers are well trained in line management skills, including how to support the career development of those who report to them. All employees should also have training about inclusion and diversity and their moral and legal duty to avoid discrimination in the workplace – this is particularly important for line managers, as any biases they may have would have a detrimental impact on their team members.

**Table 21: You said that your career progression to date has failed to meet your expectations. Which, if any, of the following factors related to the workplace have prevented you from meeting your career expectations? (Please select up to five factors that have been most significant) (%)**

Base: All employees whose career progression has failed to meet their expectations	761
My skills and talent have been overlooked	38
Experienced poor-quality line management from my immediate manager when I entered work or at key points during my career	36
Was not part of the 'in group'	32
Job vacancies at higher levels than my current role don't become vacant very often	29
Negative office politics	29
Engrained working practices or cultures have made it hard to progress	26
A lack of effective training and development programmes at work	24
Poor performance management at work has meant my achievements are not recognised	24
Did not benefit from a coach, mentor or buddy when entering employment or at key points in my career	21
Experienced discrimination (ie related to age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion/belief or sexual orientation)	20
Lack of role models in my organisation of 'people like me' with a similar identity or background	17
Received no training or inadequate training when I first entered the workplace	15
A lack of flexible working opportunities	11
Was not able to get on an effective graduate programme after completing a degree	9
Was not able to get on an effective apprenticeship programme	2

We see differences in response by ethnicity (Table 22), in particular in relation to a survey question about discrimination. This response does not specify that the discrimination experienced is due to race; it could have been related to another protected characteristic. However, when we look by ethnicity, we do see that almost a third (31%) of net: black/African/Caribbean/black British said that their career progression has failed to meet their expectations because they have experienced one of these forms of discrimination. This is the case for 22% of the BAME group respondents and 20% of the net: Asian/Asian British ethnicity respondents, compared with 15% of the white British ethnicity respondents.

This suggests that there is a need for action by employers to reduce the risks of discrimination in their career management processes and to build positive perceptions and trust in these processes among employees of all ethnic groups. This can be done, for example, through having clear and transparent career development policies, providing training for all staff and monitoring both the operation and outcomes from these processes on different ethnic groups, so that their obligations in relation to equality legislation and non-discrimination are clearly delivered in practice.

The risks of such discrimination can also be addressed by building and promoting the case for diversity with all staff, but particularly among leaders and managers, by celebrating the differences and results diversity can bring and by encouraging conversations about race in the organisation (as outlined in [Report 1](#)). Employers should also be using their own data to understand if any potential discrimination is taking place and to track measures and the effectiveness of remedial actions taken to address this.



**Table 22: You said that your career progression to date has failed to meet your expectations. Which, if any, of the following factors related to the workplace have prevented you from meeting your career expectations? (Please select up to five factors that have been most significant.) (by ethnicity) (%)**

	Total	NET: White British	NET: White (combined)	NET: Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	NET: Asian/Asian British	NET: Black/African/Caribbean/black British	NET: BAME
Base: All employees whose career progression has failed to meet their expectations	761	154	211	138	219	121	519
My skills and talent have been overlooked	38	34	36	43	35	45	39
Experienced poor-quality line management from my immediate manager when I entered work or at key points during my career	36	38	36	36	36	34	37
Was not part of the 'in group'	32	34	34	33	30	34	31
Job vacancies at higher levels than my current role don't become vacant very often	29	33	35	33	25	20	25
Negative office politics	29	25	24	34	31	29	31
Engrained working practices or cultures have made it hard to progress	26	26	26	33	22	23	26
A lack of effective training and development programmes at work	24	18	21	25	24	26	25
Poor performance management at work has meant my achievements are not recognised	24	26	25	22	28	17	24
Did not benefit from a coach, mentor or buddy when entering employment or at key points in my career	21	21	24	22	18	17	19
Experienced discrimination (ie related to age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion/belief or sexual orientation)	20	15	16	16	20	31	22
Lack of role models in my organisation of 'people like me' with a similar identity or background	17	11	13	17	19	17	18
Received no training or inadequate training when I first entered the workplace	15	12	11	12	19	21	18
A lack of flexible working opportunities	11	10	11	14	12	6	11
Was not able to get on an effective graduate programme after completing a degree	9	8	7	10	9	13	10
Was not able to get on an effective apprenticeship programme	2	1	1	2	3	3	3

## 4 Recommendations for employers and for policy-makers

### 4.1 Recommendations for employers

Career progression and talent management processes are key tools that employers and HR professionals have to influence the achievement of their goal to be high-performing, engaging and fair employers and to improve their inclusion and diversity for the benefit of the organisation and its employees. The evidence is that, to date, in too many organisations these processes have themselves been subject to biases so have acted as barriers to their inclusion and progression goals.

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The CIPD states that *'race inequality cannot be tackled half-heartedly or by sporadic, one-off, disconnected initiatives; employers' actions need to be well planned, strategic, sustainable and taken seriously'*.<sup>29</sup> The recommendations below are intended to translate the findings from the survey we have described into recommended actions that employers can take to remove the barriers and strengthen the enablers to career progression within their organisations.

**Collect, analyse and publish ethnicity data across career management and other HR processes in your organisation** (such as recruitment and promotion), as well as pay and bonuses. Transparency is key to creating more equal organisations and such data can act as a basis for better understanding the current position of your organisation on racial equality, as well as for setting and monitoring targets to progress and improve.

Recommendations from the CIPD's *Diversity Management that Works* report<sup>30</sup> include:

- Make sure you have employees' consent when collecting data (especially sensitive personal data).
- Ensure that workforce data is representative.
- Protect collected data in line with legal requirements (explain how it will – and won't – be used and ensure that data categories are suitable).
- Aim to analyse reliable data *throughout* the employee lifecycle.
- Reflect on what data/analysis is needed to progress I&D, and how it can be best collected.
- Review your in-house people analytics capability.
- Make the best use of the data you have and, where data allows, take an intersectional view.
- Disaggregate data (where possible).

### **Build trust and a sense of belonging**

As trust in senior management and having a sense of belonging are big differentiators in whether respondents said they would still be working at their organisation in two years and so are big drivers of retention, it is important that people professionals and employers work on strategies that develop trust across the whole workforce. CIPD resources on employee voice are useful in understanding how organisations might do this.<sup>31</sup>

### **Invest in line manager development**

The survey showed both that good line management is a major factor in achieving career progression and that poor line management has acted as a barrier. Employers should ensure that line managers are well trained in line management skills, including how to support the career development of those who report to them. Specifically, the survey showed that building relationships across the organisation and having the opportunities for project work has helped respondents meet their career progression expectations. Line managers play an important role in facilitating these. More evidence on enabling line managers to play this vital role is available from the CIPD<sup>32</sup> and from the IES.<sup>33</sup>

### **Establish employee network groups**

Running employee resource groups (ERGs) has emerged as a key means of progressing racial equality in this and other similar research studies. In this part of the survey, they were found to be a particular source of support for African ethnicity respondents (31%), Caribbean ethnicity respondents (24%) and Pakistani ethnicity respondents (21%), and they were considered important for all groups as initiators of conversations about race in [Report 1](#). The CIPD has produced guidance on how to set up employee resource groups,<sup>34</sup> with the key recommendations being:

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- Leaders, HR and internal I&D professionals from the majority group should articulate and write down the value, role and importance of black and ethnic minority networks, not just as a support group, but also to the business.
- Identify executive sponsors to formally support the ERG, to help demonstrate its importance and business value.
- Consider the budget and allocate financial resources to the ERG.
- Allocate time for ERG leaders and members to participate in company-supported activities as part of their role – within normal working hours.
- If you set up one ‘multicultural’ network, make sure you recognise any different cultural sub-groups within.
- Look into allying with other stakeholders.
- Create a clear, psychologically safe channel for colleagues to be able to share their lived experiences.
- Consider providing ERG members with guidance on governance and implementation.

### **Tackle discrimination in the organisation**

This is a big topic, but the starting actions are:

- to have clear anti-discrimination policies and accountabilities for managers and staff
- to provide training and support for all staff so that their obligations in relation to the organisation’s diversity goals and equality legislation are clear – this is particularly important for line managers, as any biases they may have would have a detrimental impact on their team members
- to ensure senior leaders demonstrate their buy-in to diversity aims
- to collect data about ethnicity and ethnicity pay to be able to identify any inequalities and to monitor efforts to counter them
- to build the case for diversity, by celebrating the differences and results diversity can bring and by encouraging conversations about race (as outlined in [Report 1](#)) as well as the data tracking points made above and in [Report 2](#).

## **4.2 Recommendations for policy-makers**

These reports are primarily intended as a guide for practitioners rather than policy-makers. Overarching recommendations for policy are made in the executive summary. However, there are some policy recommendations emerging from the findings presented in this report.

### **Make general employee data collection mandatory as part of compulsory reporting of a much wider range of human capital information**

Organisations need to understand the diversity profile of their employees in order to be able to take action to address any inequalities. Making data collection mandatory for organisations would provide the impetus needed to do so. Individual job applicants or employees should retain the right to ‘prefer not to say’; however, it is hoped that communication about why this information is being requested and repeated requests for this information may lead to normalisation and greater willingness to provide it. This wider data collection and reporting could become part of the annual report format alongside more traditional financial measures. Relevant diversity statistics could include application and recruitment rates, promotion data, relative levels of investment in training, and employee turnover rates. These would enable organisations to have a better understanding of their workplace from a diversity perspective.

## 5 Conclusion

Fair access to career progression is vitally important in delivering opportunities and better workplace outcomes for currently under-represented racial groups in many UK organisations. It is important that all employees can achieve their full potential, with all the psychological and material benefits that brings, irrespective of their ethnicity. It is also critical for organisations themselves so that they have better representation at all levels and all the benefits that come with that, as well as ensuring that they maximise their return on investment in recruitment by ensuring everyone flourishes within the organisation.

The events of 2020 have also shown us the wider societal importance of reducing inequality. Employers are in a strong position to spread opportunities across all diversity strands. We hope that the recommendations in this report can support them in doing so by reducing discrimination, training line managers, providing employee network groups, and building trust and belonging with individuals from all ethnicity groups.

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