



# ANTI-RACISM AND ALLYSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE: A GUIDE

There is a new sense of urgency in the fight against racism. This guide outlines the steps individuals in the workplace can take towards becoming an effective ally.

## Race in the Current Climate

Racism is a daily reality for Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse people in the UK.

A recent report published by the Youth Futures Foundation in April 2024 a survey of more than 3000 young people found that workplace discrimination based on ethnicity was the most frequently cited type of discrimination.

### Key findings:

- Three in five (59%) Black respondents said they had faced workplace discrimination due to their ethnicity, compared to half (50%) of Asian respondents, and 48% of those from Mixed/multiple ethnic backgrounds.
- Two thirds of Black respondents reported overhearing racial slurs or jokes at work from a co-worker or supervisor (66%), rising to seven in ten (71%) from a customer, client, or partner.
- One in five (20%) respondents said they had been referred to in a derogatory manner.
- These experiences varied by ethnicity: 46% of those from Mixed ethnic backgrounds reported experiencing racist remarks, jokes, or banter, compared to 36% of Black respondents, 32% of Asian respondents and 24% of those from white minoritised ethnic backgrounds.
- Female respondents reported that they faced a dual discrimination due



**Chair:** Peter Harrison  
**Chief Executive:** Mary Macleod

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to both their ethnicity and their gender.<sup>1</sup>

## Actions for Leaders

Leaders are in a unique position to influence their organisation and have a far-reaching impact on the way people feel at work and subsequently, the productivity and value employees bring to the table.

The below recommendations are not comprehensive. While there are actions all leaders can take, it is important for leaders to think carefully about their individual influence and to take action that responds to the specific needs of their organisation.

### 1. Recognise that there are racial disparities

#### Mental Health Act

- Out of all ethnic groups, Black people were most likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act (March 2022) with 342 detentions per 100,000 people
- The next highest rate of detention was for people in the mixed ethnic group – 228 detentions per 100,000 people

- White people had the lowest rate of detention – 72 detentions per 100,000 people

#### Maternal health

MBRRACE-UK's most recent report was published in November 2022 (using data from 2018–2020) and found that:

- Black women were 3.7 times more likely to die than White women, and Asian women were 1.8 times more likely to die than White women
- 1 in 9 of the women who died during or up to a year after pregnancy in the UK were at severe and multiple disadvantages.<sup>2</sup>

#### Unemployment Rates by ethnicity

(January to March 2024):

- **White:** 3.6%
- **Black:** 8.6%
- **Pakistani:** 10.8%
- **Bangladeshi:** 5.6%
- **Indian:** 5.5%
- **Chinese:** 9.4%
- **Mixed/ multiple ethnic groups:** 7.7%
- **All other ethnic groups combined:** 7.9%
- **Other:** 8.4%

<sup>1</sup> [Discrimination-and-work-report.pdf \(youthfuturesfoundation.org\)](https://www.youthfuturesfoundation.org/discrimination-and-work-report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrance-uk/data-brief/maternal-mortality-2020-2022>





## Source:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusbyethnicgroupa09>

## Stop and Search

In the year ending 31 March 2023:

- There were 529,474 stop and searches in England and Wales (not including vehicle searches)
- There were 24.5 stop and searches for every 1,000 Black people, and 5.9 for every 1,000 white people

**Source:** <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest/>

## 2. Be an ally

Allyship at its core involves using individual influence to actively speak up, challenge discrimination, and create opportunities for marginalised communities.

Being an ally is not an easy task. It requires courage to accept truths that are outside of your lived experience, to reflect on your own biases and speak up when no one else will. You will likely make mistakes. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn and change your approach to ensure your words and actions make a difference.

## 3. Inform yourself at every opportunity

There is a chasm in people's lived experience at work. Our Race at Work 2021 survey found that 39% of white respondents said that they wanted their employer to support them to promote race equality and 26% said they would like more support.

This not only points to existing racial inequalities, but it also highlights why being anti-racist is challenging. The lived realities between white and Black employees are so different that it makes empathising and truly engaging with the issue of racism extremely difficult for people who have not experienced it.

It is challenging to act with conviction without building a foundation of understanding and empathy first.

There are opportunities to learn about race inequality everywhere – not just through countless books, documentaries and podcasts but also through having open conversations with Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse people in your workplace.





As a starting point, we recommend the following resources:

- [Discrimination and Work Report 2024](#)
- [Voices from the Race at Work Surveys Report 2024](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Racism in the Workplace](#)
- [Racism is no laughing banter](#)
- [Racism is not water off a duck's back](#)
- [The customer is always, right?](#)
- [Racism in one word](#)
- [Racism and how it affects the workplace](#)
- [Parker Review](#)
- [McGregor-Smith Review](#)
- [Lammy Review](#)
- [Race at Work Charter one year on Report 2018](#)

**4. Examine your internal policies** and understand that, as Ibram X Kendi wrote in his book *How to be Antiracist* “racial inequity is a problem of bad policy, not bad people”. If the right policies are in place, “bad people” will not have the opportunity to create a racist work environment. Identify the areas where your organisation could be doing better and take action to close that gap.

For example, do you have a lack of representation in leadership roles? Do your colleagues feel as though they can bring their whole selves to work?

Engage the relevant stakeholders for example, employee networks or resource group leads, HR professionals and/or trade union representatives, to take meaningful action against racial disparities in your workplace.

**5. Be an active bystander and anti-racist** by calling out microaggressions in the workplace. An example of a microaggression is if your Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse colleagues are continuously being interrupted. As an active bystander, you can speak up and bring them back into the conversation.

Leaders also have the influence to introduce a zero-tolerance policy to ensure people are held accountable in the event of racism, bullying and harassment.

Our [Race at Work charter](#) sets out seven commitments that businesses can take to make race equality a priority. This was expanded in 2021 to include allyship and inclusive supply chains.

This Charter now has over 1000 employer signatories. In October 2023, our Race at Work Charter survey report found that 81% of employers were delivering anti-racism training to inclusion allies in the workplace.





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## **6. Bring diverse people to the decision-making table**

There is a difference between being invited to the room and sitting at the table. Being in the room means your Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse colleagues have been communicated with and they are aware of your decision-making process.

It is important to listen to their perspectives and demonstrate this has occurred through the follow-up actions.

## **7. Get comfortable talking about race**

In 2021, only 41% of employees said they were comfortable talking about race in the workplace.<sup>3</sup> Allies need to get informed our [Let's talk about Race](#) toolkit is a great starter tool that can help.

## **8. Support the recruitment, progression and leadership of your employees**

Despite Black people making up more than 4% of the population in England and Wales, there has been little success over years in addressing the lack of diverse representation in senior leadership roles.

In The King's Speech 2024, the Draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill was announced. This will bring forward legislation which will require companies with more than 250 employees to publish their ethnicity and disability pay gaps, similar to the requirements around gender pay gap reporting.

Organisations should prepare for this legislation by capturing ethnicity data so that they can be transparent on the representation of employees from Black, Asian, Mixed Race or any other ethnically diverse employees at each level within their organisation and publish action plans to address any disparities.

### **Further information**

For more information on how you can commit to race equality and support your employees in the workplace, visit our [Race campaign](#) page.

<sup>3</sup> Race at Work Charter Survey, 2021

