BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

TREND PAPER

LEADERSHIP: 10-YEAR TREND PAPER 2025

Executive Sponsor and Champions

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF RACE EQUALITY CAMPAIGN

THEN NOW NEXT

Introduction

Business in the Community launched the Campaign 'Race for Opportunity' 30 years ago. To mark this significant milestone, we have updated guidance for Executive Sponsors and are sharing some research data and insight that we have been capturing for more than 10 years.

60% of employers working in large organisations in the UK in 2024 said there was an Executive Sponsor or Champion at the top table leading on fairness and equality and 53% say there is a senior executive focussed on fair procurement and inclusive supply chains. [1]

Executive Sponsorship is key to ensuring an employer tangibly demonstrates its commitment to fairness and equality. We have produced this trend paper and updated guidance and tools to support senior leaders and executive sponsors to do this.

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Our conversation with leaders highlights the importance of mentorship, sponsorship and job coaching - especially for young people and new hires.

There is also a need to continue to convene conversations and create space to discuss key issues and the importance of goals, measurement and tracking.

As leaders continue to engage others and make the case for action, this trend paper, guides and toolkits gives insight to help them to do this and influence the actions the organisation needs to take to ensure the whole workforce experiences the benefits.

Because of the evidence we have captured over the last 30 years we believe that through senior leaders engaging and

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[1] Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chain Report 2024

promoting mentorship, sponsorship and coaching, opportunities can be created to support attraction, recruitment, retention and progression in the workplace. Leaders can:

Identify, open and create opportunities

Facilitate introductions to expand individual networks

Ensure employees receive recognition and attribution of credit for great ideas

A special thank you to the BITC Race Leadership Team for the insights and contribution to the how to guides and frameworks.

Sandra Kerr CBE, Race Equality Director, Business in the Community

Background

Business in the Community's Race Equality Campaign, Race for Opportunity, was launched in 1995 with the support of The King (then the Prince of Wales) and several leading UK business leaders.

Together, they leveraged their influence, voice, and research to highlight the challenges faced by people from Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse backgrounds in the UK, while advocating for change and opening doors to new opportunities.

The pillars for action identified were recruitment and employees, customers and communities and diverse enterprise and small businesses.

This year marks, 30 years of Business in the Community (BITC) campaigning for race equality and the Race Equality Campaign has been tracking insights on executive sponsorship for race and champion leadership on fairness and equality with YouGov since 2015. [2]

The evidence gathered through these surveys highlighted that executive leadership on fairness and equality in the UK workplace in 2015 and 2018 was 33% and there was a significant increase to 44% in 2021, and another shift to 48% has been reported in 2024.

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[2] Race at Work 2015

Overall, there has been a significant 16% increase in employees being aware of visible leaders on fairness and equality in the workplace in the UK over the last 10 years. With 60% of employees working in large organisations saying this in 2024.

Executive Leadership on Fairness and Equality, UK %

2015	2018	2021	2024
33	33	44	48
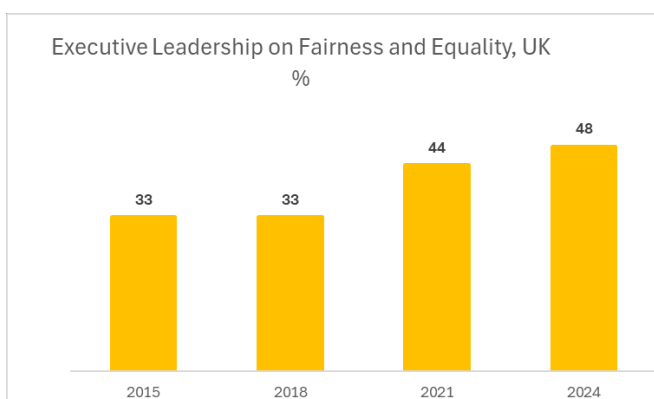
Throughout these 10-year trends, UK employees and employers have said race equality and fairness in the UK workplace matters and that leaders play an important role in setting the tone from the top.

Priority actions for leaders include:

Leading dialogue and discussions to ensure fairness and equality is embedded in any change to work environment and policy.

Facilitating introductions to networks: help the expansion of networks where individuals can make valuable contributions and make connections for the organisation and their own career advancement.

Tracking progress and supporting recognition: ensure that progress is tracked, and individuals receive credit for their ideas, contributions and achievements within the organisation.

"Setting clear targets and measuring progress is critical to driving meaningful change in organisations. Data provides the foundation for identifying where action is needed and tracking progress towards creating a truly inclusive environment.

Executive sponsors play a vital role in ensuring these targets are not just set, but actively pursued—holding leaders accountable, empowering their teams, and driving tangible results that reflect the diversity we aim to see in our organisations and communities." - **Richard Iferenta - Partner and Vice Chair, KPMG, and BITC Race Leadership Team Chair**

Calls to action

"Leadership is not just about setting a vision; it's about empowering others to see, believe, and achieve that vision. True leaders mentor, sponsor, and coach, opening doors and fostering an environment where every individual can reach their full potential and contribute their unique value to the organisation's success." - **Justin Onuekwusi - Chief Investment Officer, St James's Place (SJP) and member of BITC Race Leadership Team**

1. **Enable and empower**: Lead, encourage mentorship, sponsorship and coaching circles. Facilitate sessions, encourage active peer networking within the circle. Encourage participants to create and host mentoring circles of their own with junior employees and or/young job seekers and set goals [3] to see results in progression and representation in your organisation.

2. **Convene/create space for conversation:** Ensuring the

promotion of fairness, diverse senior management representation and including all voices. Promoting inclusive decision-making, encourage allyship and cultivating an inclusive organisational culture. [4]

3. **Track and monitor fair access:** review the organisation's access to good work and opportunities. Create an environment in your organisation where the best talent can thrive and progress because of fair and transparent access to the most dynamic and challenging and inspiring opportunities to demonstrate capability.

"Language shapes culture and defines the way we approach difficult conversations. In the journey towards race equality, fostering open, honest, and respectful dialogue is essential. Leaders must create spaces where conversations around race are not only welcomed but encouraged, allowing for growth, understanding, and meaningful change to take root within organisations." -

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[3] Refreshed Executive Sponsorship – Leadership Goals and Targets toolkit 2025 (name TBC)

[4] Voices from the Race at Work Surveys 2024

Albertha Charles - Partner PWC Global and UK Asset and Wealth Management Leader and member of BITC Race Leadership Team

How to measure progress against the calls to action

1. Reviewing the data on representation at different levels within the organisation and across the key development and delivery work functions. [see BITC How to Guide – the mentorship, sponsorship and coaching framework] The BITC Advisory team is available to help you start the journey and/or in improving data collection and mentorship models.

2. Convene conversations and track and analyse the engagement of your employees from your employee pulse surveys and act to close any gaps identified by demographic group [see BITC How to Guide - being a visible leader on ethnicity]

BITC advisory team can support you and share insights on how employers have identified gaps and drive improvements.

3. Collect data on the representation of teams on key projects, accounts and stretch opportunities. Seek to reflect the workforce all the available talent within the labour market [5]and talent pool. [See BITC How to Guide – Setting Goals and Measuring Progress]

BITC Regional insight factsheets can help you to look at data by location.

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[5] 12-Regional Insights on race factsheets