

The voice of 130 ENGAGE MEMBERS comprised of the UK'S SENIOR EXECUTIVE and BOARD LEADERS from ALL MINORITY ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

NOT A MERITOCRACY

8/10

(82%) believe factors other than merit have hindered their career



7/10

(71%) said their ethnicity/cultural background has been a significant barrier to their progression



1/5

(18%) equally believe that their gender and social background have been barriers



The status quo is more about preference and not merit. We must have a level playing field.

BIAS PART OF THE NORM

63%

believe the unconscious bias of CEOs and leadership teams is one of the leading reasons why there is so little ethnic diversity at board level

38%

believe ethnic bias is part of society's wider culture and 1 in 4 (27%) believe bias and discrimination exist within organisational culture

A Chair of a Board I sit on was looking for a Vice Chair. When challenged about the decision he responded, 'Oh I did not think of you'.

LEADERSHIP TEAMS LACK BUY-IN

OVER HALF

(56%) think CEOs and leadership teams do not see the value of diversity as a strong business case despite the evidence showing that companies with greater ethnic diversity are 35%* more likely to financially outperform their industry's national median.

*Source: McKinsey, Diversity Matters

56%



35%



In 2015, twice as many boardrooms were discussing Talent and Succession than in the previous year, increasing to 47% from 24% in 2014. If organisations are ignoring culturally diverse talent pools, they are failing.

Source: Harvey Nash, Board Research, 2015

NOT PART OF THE CIRCLES AND NETWORKS



2/3

(62%) believe minority ethnic executives are not in the talent pools or networks of the current NEDs and executives or on the radar of executive search firms

HOW TO CLOSE THE GAP

The top 3 measures to increase diversity on boards

1

Target recruiters to include diversity on shortlists

2

Educate CEO and leadership team on the value of diversity

3

Insist on transparency and reporting to include ethnic diversity on boards

ADVICE FOR COMPANIES

"There has to be a will to make it happen. Companies need to recognise achieving diversity will enhance reputation."
Lord (Herman) Ouseley, Equality and Community Cohesion Advocate

"Companies have to make the first step - interview people. If they work on assumptions and do not meet people nothing will change."
Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Journalist and Author

"McKinsey has shown us that harnessing diversity impacts on the bottom line, making business more responsive, resilient and dynamic."
Arnab Dutt, Founder and CEO, Dexo Technologies Limited

ADVICE FOR GOVERNMENT

"We need greater accountability of the composition of Boards including ethnicity."
Lord (Herman) Ouseley, Equality and Community Cohesion Advocate

"Boards need to be more representative of the communities they represent. It's only through this that their credibility and - by implication - their effectiveness increases."
Shrinivas Honap, Non-Executive Director, DVSA

"I have always believed we need more encouragement and positive action, government has a role in this."
Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Journalist and Author

ADVICE FOR INDIVIDUALS

"Plan forward and actively demonstrate you are ready. Raise your profile and alert people of your aspirations."
Shaama Saggar-Malik, Founder of Diversity of Public Appointments, DIPA

"People need to be willing to network. I am reluctant to be stereotyped, however one has to overcome this as one needs to be known."
Linda Dobbs DBE, QC

"Lots of people have the experience but need networks to help share that experience."
Patricia Cumper MBE, Trustee, British Museum

IMPACT OF THE RESEARCH

Insights like this, from this unique group of senior executives and Board leaders from minority ethnic backgrounds, are rare and invaluable. This research makes a critical contribution towards making visible the nuanced diversity-related dynamics at the very top of UK plc.

Dr Doyin Atewologun, Lecturer in Organisational Leadership and Learning, Queen Mary University of London

The quantitative results and qualitative insights from this group of culturally diverse, senior executives are significant, fascinating and disturbing. This substantiates the Prime Minister's views that bias and prejudice are prevalent in UK plc. We must have a level playing field where access to opportunity exists and merit truly trumps preference - allowing UK plc to further prosper from difference.

Dowshan Humzah, Digital Strategy & Business Transformation Director, Executive Ambassador, Board Apprentice