

RACE & GENDER
IN THE WORKPLACE:

How to build a culture that attracts & retains diverse talent

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As a purpose-led bank, we champion potential so the people, families and businesses we serve in communities throughout the UK and Ireland can thrive.

We believe that when we work to benefit society, we will deliver long term value and sustainable returns. At the centre of our approach is the belief that we have a reciprocal relationship with society and the communities where we operate.

We Champion a truly inclusive workforce, and we think this will allow everyone to bring the best of themselves to work. It also helps us to understand and connect with our diverse customers. It's the right thing to do, true to our values and the bank we want to be.

Sponsorship of events and discussions such as this one allows the debate to continue and acknowledges the uncomfortable truth that while we're making good progress, we still have a long way to go.

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INTRODUCTION

2020 saw a real positive shift amongst businesses in their attitudes towards building racially equitable cultures. Following the tragic murder of George Floyd, several organisations made bold commitments, released action plans and pledged vast sums towards racial justice.

These actions align with society's continual movement towards building a more equitable world. But despite the best intentions of business leaders, we still see organisations making several mistakes on the journey towards building cultures where all members, from all backgrounds, can thrive.

In today's world, this has huge consequences. Organisations that fail to build inclusive cultures risk being on the wrong side of history, and are poised to miss out on talent, customers and clients.

For many business leaders, a key challenge is building a culture that attracts and retains womxn from all ethnic backgrounds. To succeed here, organisations must first deeply understand the thoughts, experiences and needs of the next generation of womxn in the workplace.

That's why Flair and Code First Girls have partnered up to conduct an extensive piece of research with the Code First Girls community. We hope this report serves as a powerful guide on how to build a company culture where womxn from all ethnic backgrounds can thrive.



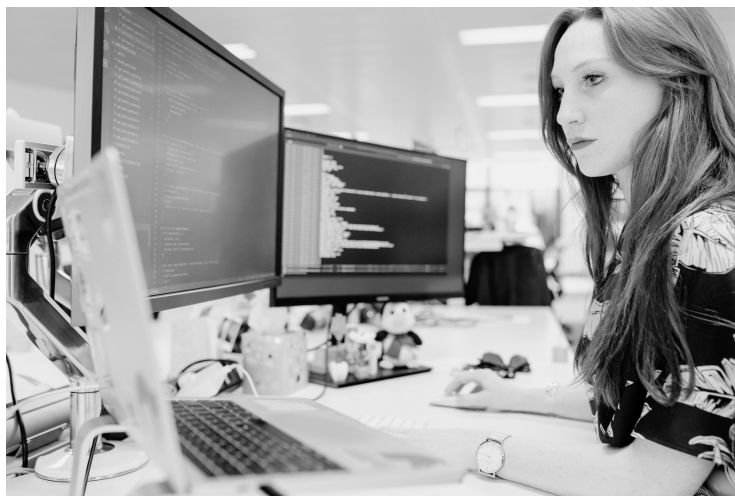
What you'll find in this Report

Through a survey conducted on just under 1,000 members of the Code First Girls community, this report serves as the guide on how to build a company culture that attracts and retains womxn from all ethnic backgrounds.

Using Flair's data analysis tool, along with the lived experience of dozens of womxn from the CFG community, this report will help you to answer the following questions:

- What are the unique racial-inclusion barriers faced by womxn at work?
- How frequently is racism being experienced by womxn at work?
- When it comes to Race & Ethnicity at work, which factors are most important to womxn?
- Which tangible actions can organisations take to create a culture that attracts & retains womxn from all ethnic backgrounds?

Each section is jam-packed with first-hand quotes and *Employer Takeaways* for you to bring back to your organisation. We hope this report provides you with some useful insights.



About Flair

www.flairimpact.com

Flair is a Black-owned people analytics company. Flair helps organisations lead the way in building anti-racist internal cultures, through performance tracking and data-driven solutions.

About Code First Girls

www.codefirstgirls.org.uk

Code First Girls is dedicated to transforming the tech industry by providing the skills, space and inspiration for womxn to become developers and future leaders.

RACIAL INCLUSION-BARRIERS FACED BY WOMXN IN THE WORKPLACE

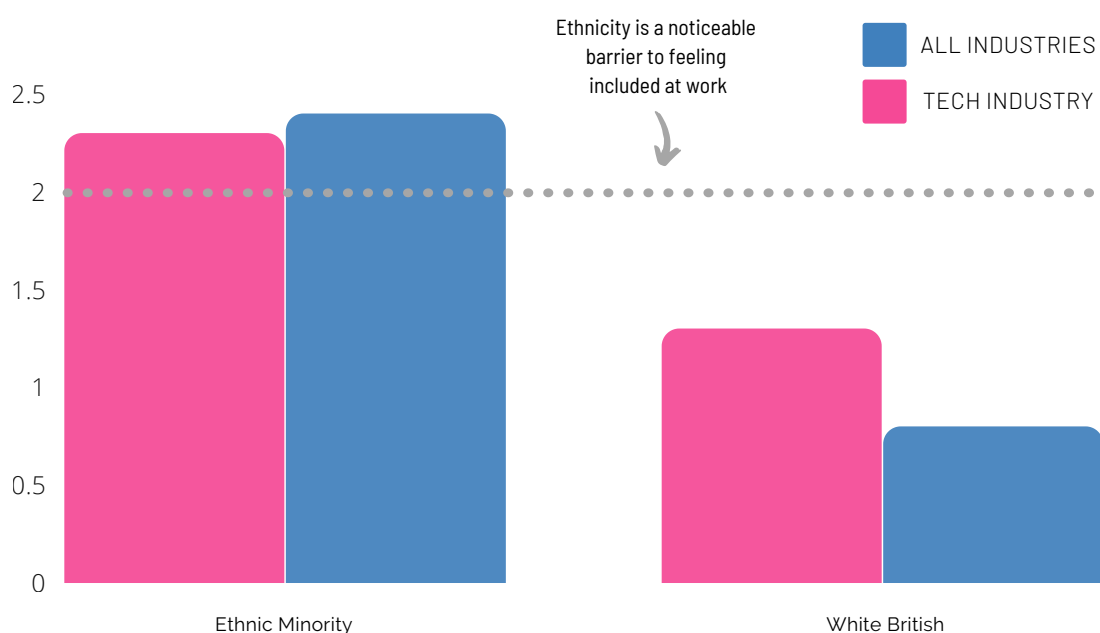
Womxn from ethnic minority backgrounds feel their ethnicity is a “noticeable barrier” to feeling included at work

This first section examines whether womxn from different ethnic backgrounds feel their ethnicity is a barrier to feeling included at work.

In the survey, womxn were presented with Flair’s list of 8 inclusion factors, such as “receiving fair pay” and “receiving promotion opportunities”. Womxn were then asked to indicate if they felt that their ethnicity was a *barrier* to accessing any of these 8 inclusion factors.

Based on these responses, Flair then generated an overall score showing the extent to which womxn from different ethnic backgrounds are facing racial inclusion-barriers at work. The key findings can be found below.

FIGURE 1: RACIAL INCLUSION-BARRIERS BY ETHNICITY






Figure 1 shows the extent to which womxn from different ethnic backgrounds are facing racial inclusion-barriers at work. The more that womxn feel that their ethnicity is a barrier to feeling included at work, the higher the score out of 10.0. Any score above 2.0 is deemed to be a concern area, based on benchmark data from previous surveys conducted by Flair.

As Figure 1 shows, womxn from ethnic minority backgrounds face significantly higher racial inclusion-barriers in comparison to White British womxn. Across all industries, womxn from ethnic minority backgrounds have an average racial inclusion-barriers score of 2.4 compared to an average score of 0.8 for White British womxn. This discrepancy is slightly less pronounced in the tech industry, where womxn from ethnic minority backgrounds have an average racial inclusion-barriers score of 2.3 compared to an average score of 1.3 for White British womxn.

Nonetheless, across the tech industry as well as all other industries, the findings show that womxn from ethnic minority backgrounds feel that their ethnicity is a noticeable barrier to feeling included at work.

“It's difficult to explain the feeling of racial discrimination when it is unspoken, but many of us can just 'tell' when we're being treated differently because of our race or ethnicity in the types of often non-verbal or non-specific reactions or responses of others. It makes me feel always out of place, and like I will never be completely accepted as I'm not part of a 'majority' anywhere.”

Female, 35-44, Chinese





“Generally the most frustrating and emotionally draining aspect of racism is having to prove that it exists, having to justify your experiences as valid.”

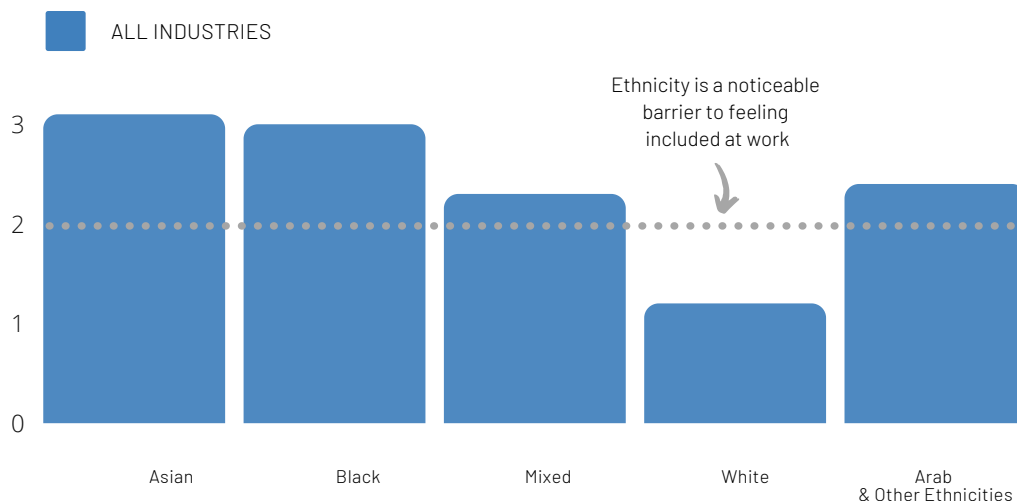
Female, 25-34, Black - Caribbean



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LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK...

FIGURE 2: RACIAL INCLUSION-BARRIERS BY ETHNIC GROUP



**‘Asian’ and ‘Black’
womxn report
facing the most
extreme racial
inclusion-barriers
at work**

Figure 2 examines the extent to which the racial inclusion-barriers faced by womxn at work differs across the 5 ethnic groups used in UK government census data. As is the case in Figure 1, the more that womxn feel that their ethnicity is a barrier to feeling included at work, the higher the score out of 10.0. Any score above 2.0 is deemed to be a concern area, based on benchmark data from previous surveys conducted by Flair.

As Figure 2 shows, ‘Asian’ womxn face the highest racial inclusion-barriers (average score of 3.1), closely followed by Black womxn (average score of 3.0). Across all 5 ethnic groups, ‘White’ womxn face the lowest racial inclusion-barriers with an average score of 1.0. This suggests that ‘White’ womxn, on average, do not feel that their ethnicity is a barrier to feeling included at work.

For the 4 other ethnic groups in Figure 2, the racial inclusion-barriers score is above 2.0. This means that, on average, womxn from these ethnic groups feel that their ethnicity is a noticeable barrier to feeling included at work.

"My experiences with racism are varied, from being told that I'm being combative when raising a concern, to being openly mocked that my braids look like preparation for Halloween (yes the office floor laughed)."

Female, 25-34, Black - African

”



"Mispronouncing names and using play on words to mock names, despite in jest, has been uncomfortable."

Female, 18-24, Chinese

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FIGURE 3: % OF ETHNIC MINORITIES FEELING THEIR ETHNICITY IS A BARRIER TO EACH INCLUSION FACTOR

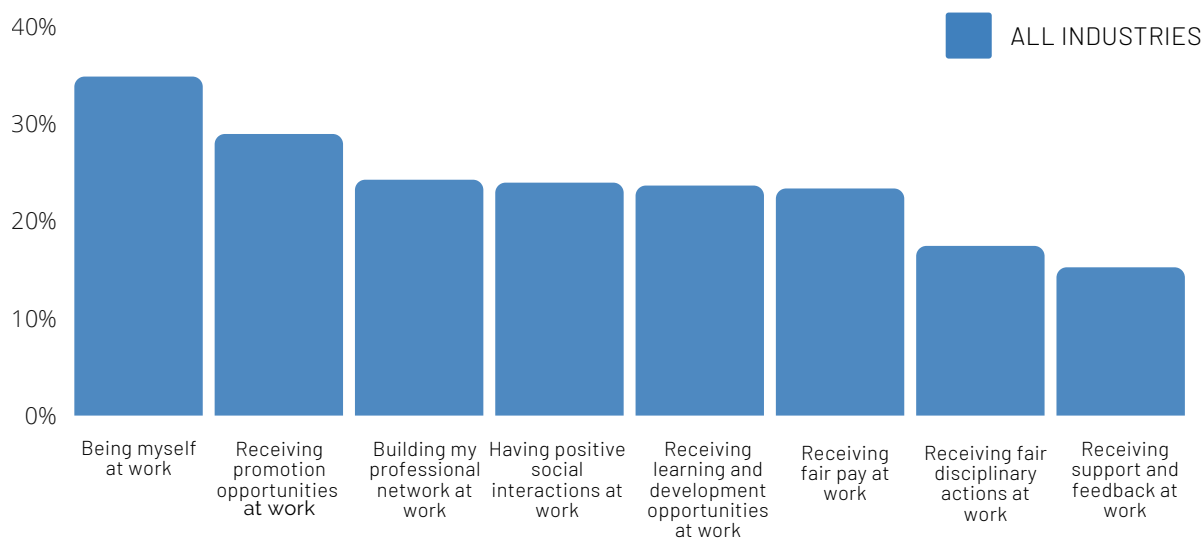


Figure 3 breaks down the percentage of ethnic minority womxn that feel their ethnicity is a barrier to each of the 8 inclusion factors within the survey. The list of inclusion factors has been constructed by Flair, in conjunction with several leading racial justice experts and D&I consultants.

So, ethnic minority womxn feel their ethnicity is a barrier to feeling included at work. What's driving this?

Across all ethnic minority womxn, 35% feel that their ethnicity makes it harder to be themselves at work. This is the most significant racial inclusion-barrier faced by ethnic minority womxn at work. For 'Asian' womxn, this figure is even more concerning, with 45% of 'Asian' womxn feeling that their ethnicity makes it harder to be themselves at work. Qualitative feedback in the survey outlines several factors contributing towards the barrier to being oneself at work, such as regular mispronunciation of names and negative racial stereotyping from colleagues.

Figure 3 shows that the second most significant racial inclusion-barrier faced by ethnic minority womxn at work relates to promotion opportunities. Across all ethnic minority womxn, 29% feel that their ethnicity makes it harder to receive promotion opportunities at work.

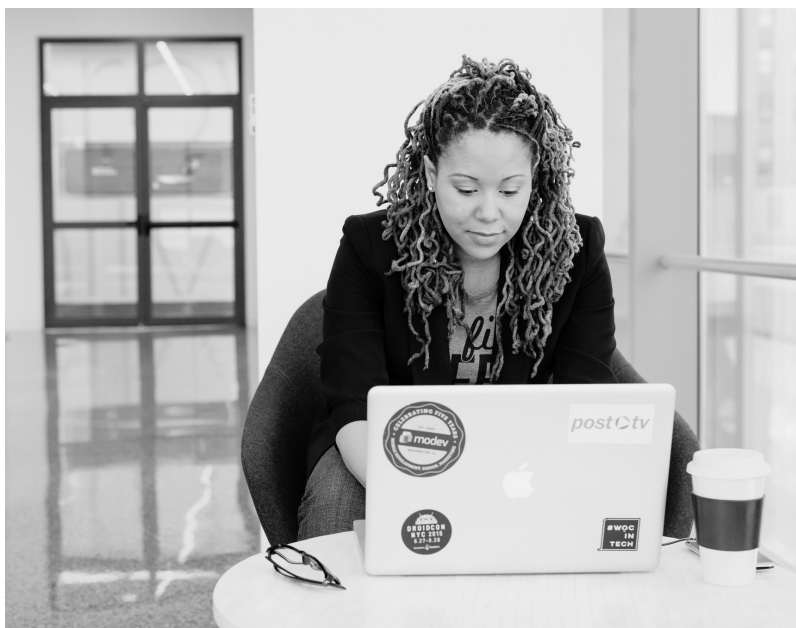
As previously shown in Figure 2, 'Asian' and 'Black' womxn face the highest racial inclusion-barriers of all 5 ethnic groups used in UK government census data. The survey findings show that 'Black' womxn, in particular, experience specific barriers in relation to having positive social interactions. 37% of Black womxn feel that their ethnicity makes it harder to have positive social interactions at work. Qualitative feedback in the survey outlines several factors contributing towards this barrier, such as 'Black' womxn being subjected to racist jokes at work and being labelled as aggressive by colleagues.

45%

of Asian womxn feel that their ethnicity makes it harder to be themselves at work

37%

of Black womxn feel that their ethnicity makes it harder to have positive social interactions at work



“Colleagues on more than one occasion trying to get me to go out and drink and acting like I'm being boring for not drinking or wanting to go clubbing without the drink. Managers not offering opportunities even though I have been more skilled than other team members because they feel like I need to be outgoing and allow their stereotypes to inform their judgement.

Always thinking I'm submissive as an Asian woman so feel it's easier to say no to me for opportunities and other workload requests. Colleagues in general not saying my name correctly or even trying to say my name, some even avoid talking to me as if I'm not there as they are unable to say my name.”

Female, 25-34, Bangladeshi





EMPLOYER TAKEAWAY

The results show that womxn from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly womxn identifying as 'Asian' and 'Black', experience "noticeable" racial-inclusion barriers at work. In particular, ethnic minority womxn report feeling that their ethnicity makes it harder to *Be Themselves At Work* and *Receive Promotion Opportunities At Work*.

To address these challenges within your own organisation, consider some of the following interventions.

Encourage employees to add phonetic pronunciation to their email signature

- Research from Flair shows that mispronunciation of names is one of the key drivers behind ethnic minority womxn feeling their ethnicity makes it harder to *Be Themselves At Work*.
- Adding phonetic pronunciations to email signatures is a practical way to both signal the importance of pronouncing names correctly, and also reduce the frequency of mispronunciations.
- [NameCoach](#) and [NameDrop](#) are 2 organisations that provide tools for adding phonetic pronunciation to email signatures.

Communicate career pathways transparently

- To help ensure that ethnic minority womxn do not feel that their ethnicity makes it harder to *Receive Promotion Opportunities At Work*, ensure that career pathways are communicated transparently to all.
- All employers should ensure that new entrants to the organisation receive a proper induction.
- Basic information should be available to all employees about how the career ladder works in the organisation, including pay and reward guidelines and clear information on how promotions work.

RACISM EXPERIENCED BY WOMXN AT WORK

This section examines the extent to which womxn from different ethnic backgrounds have been recently subjected to different forms of racism at work.

In the survey, womxn were presented with Flair's list of 4 common types of workplace racism, along with definitions and examples for each type of racism. The 4 types of racism were:

- Racist jokes
- Racial microaggressions
- Racial harassment
- Racial discrimination

Womxn were then asked to indicate if they feel that they have been *recently* subjected to any of the 4 types of racism at work.

Based on these responses, Flair then generates a breakdown of the extent to which ethnic minority womxn have been recently subjected to each form of racism at work. The key findings can be found on the next page.



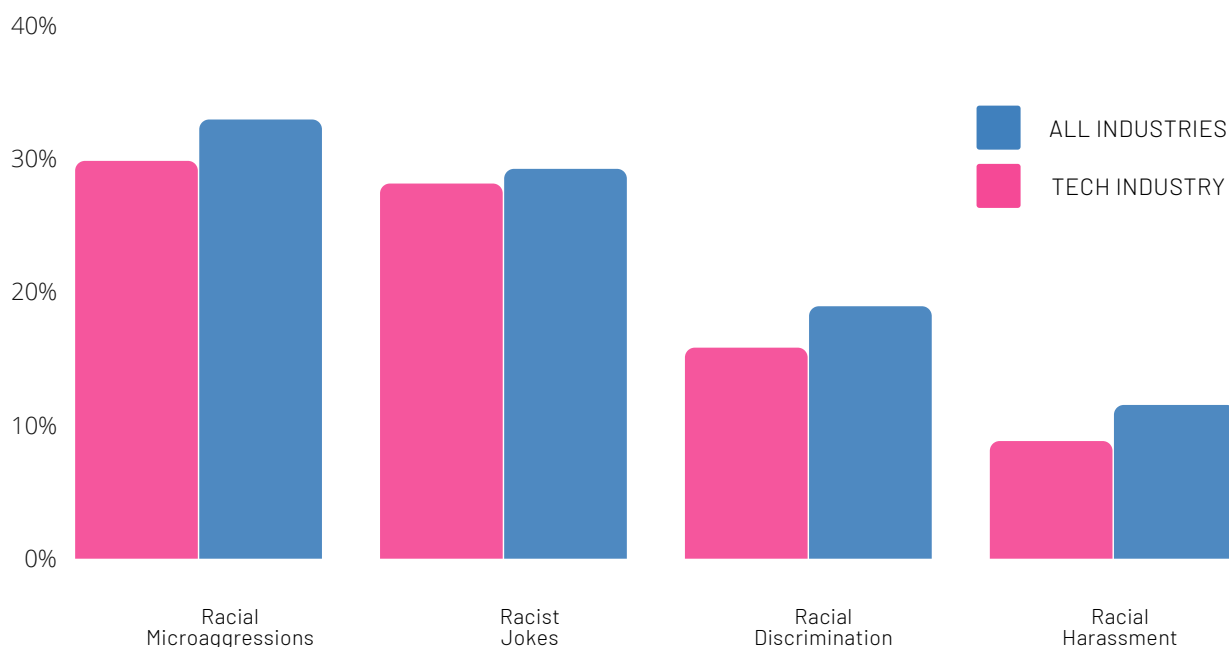
We define **racial microaggressions** as comments and behaviours, whether intentional or not, that undermine, belittle, stereotype, or insult those in ethnic minority groups.

We define **racial harassment** as unwanted conduct on the basis of skin colour, religion, culture or country of origin, which violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

We define **racial discrimination** as decisions made on the basis of skin colour, religion, culture or country of origin. These decisions may relate to: hiring, termination, punishment, scrutinisation, promotion, compensation, job training, or other aspects of work-life.

We define **racist jokes** as remarks that are intended to be funny, on the basis of skin colour, religion, culture or country of origin.


FIGURE 4: % OF ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN WHO HAVE RECENTLY EXPERIENCED EACH TYPE OF RACISM AT WORK



The most common racist behaviours experienced by womxn at work are Racial Microaggressions & Racist Jokes

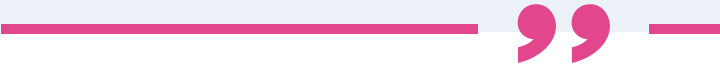
Figure 4 breaks down the extent to which ethnic minority womxn have been recently subjected to each form of racism at work. Across all 4 types of racist behaviour, ethnic minority womxn are most likely to have been recently subjected to racial microaggressions at work, closely followed by racist jokes. Across all industries, 33% of ethnic minority Womxn have been recently subjected to racial microaggressions at work, whilst 29% have been recently subjected to racist jokes at work.

In comparison, 19% of Ethnic Minority womxn have been recently subjected to racial discrimination at work, whilst 12% have been recently subjected to racial harassment at work. For those working in the tech industry, the percentage of womxn that have been recently subjected to each form of racist behaviour is slightly lower in comparison to all other industries.




“Casual joking about racism always gets brushed off but always leads to gradually worse situations.”

Female, 18-24, Mixed Ethnicity




“I resigned from my job in 2019 due to microaggressions and bullying. I was being picked on for being a woman, a black woman, a black woman who is neurodiverse. I became depressed and after being threatened by my manager and trying to go down the appropriate avenues I was told by a white woman in HR that she didn't believe me.



Despite providing evidence to support that this had been ongoing for a while AND several witnesses confirming events had happened. I was made out to be a liar simply because this person felt as though me speaking up for myself made me the aggressor and that I deserved what had happened.”

Female, 25-34, Black Caribbean





"I'm not ready to share my stories. It hurts my feelings to even just think about what happened to me and around me."

Female, 25-34, Asian

”


52%

of Black womxn feel that they've been recently subjected to racial microaggressions at work

"My experience of racism in the UK is that it is covert. I have heard racist remarks being made but it is always behind closed doors where people seem to think it is safe to say these things. I am aware that people who are the subject of racist abuse often experience it away from the eyes of others."

Female, 35-44, White - Irish

”



“For me it's the covert racism that is the most damaging, especially in the workplace, where I feel like I have to 'pick my battles' when considering whether to address something or not.

Recently, even with the increased media coverage and discussions about racism I've had a senior manager, when only talking to me, snap his neck and click his fingers...the stereotype black woman mannerisms... he only does it when we are on a call alone, he doesn't speak to anyone else like that and I definitely don't have those mannerisms so I'm just left wondering, why, why is it so important for you to do this, and it's clearly not a joke because I'm not laughing!

Female, 25-34, Black - Caribbean

”

EMPLOYER TAKEAWAY

The results show that the most common racist behaviours experienced by ethnic minority womxn at work are racial microaggressions and racist jokes. Research from Flair shows that experiencing these behaviours at work can be extremely damaging.

To address these challenges within your own organisation, consider some of the following interventions.

Implement a simple and transparent process to report racist incidents at work

- Without a clear process to report racist behaviours at work, employees are likely to feel less empowered to flag issues when they arise. This can lead to an uncomfortable culture festering over time.
- Make sure that there is a simple method for all employees to report racism at work, and make sure that ethnic minority workers feel confident that complaints will be taken seriously, acted on and dealt with satisfactorily.

Hold a virtual allyship panel with workplace leaders and external speakers

- It is important that the responsibility for handling racial microaggressions and racist jokes at work does not fall onto the shoulders of the ethnic minority staff being subjected to these behaviours. Organisations should consider ways in which the whole organisation can play an active role.
- Consider holding a company-wide, virtual allyship panel with workplace leaders and external racial justice experts. The aim of this should be to provide practical advice on how all employees can address racial microaggressions and racist jokes in the workplace.



WHICH RACE-RELATED FACTORS MATTER MOST TO WOMXN AT WORK?

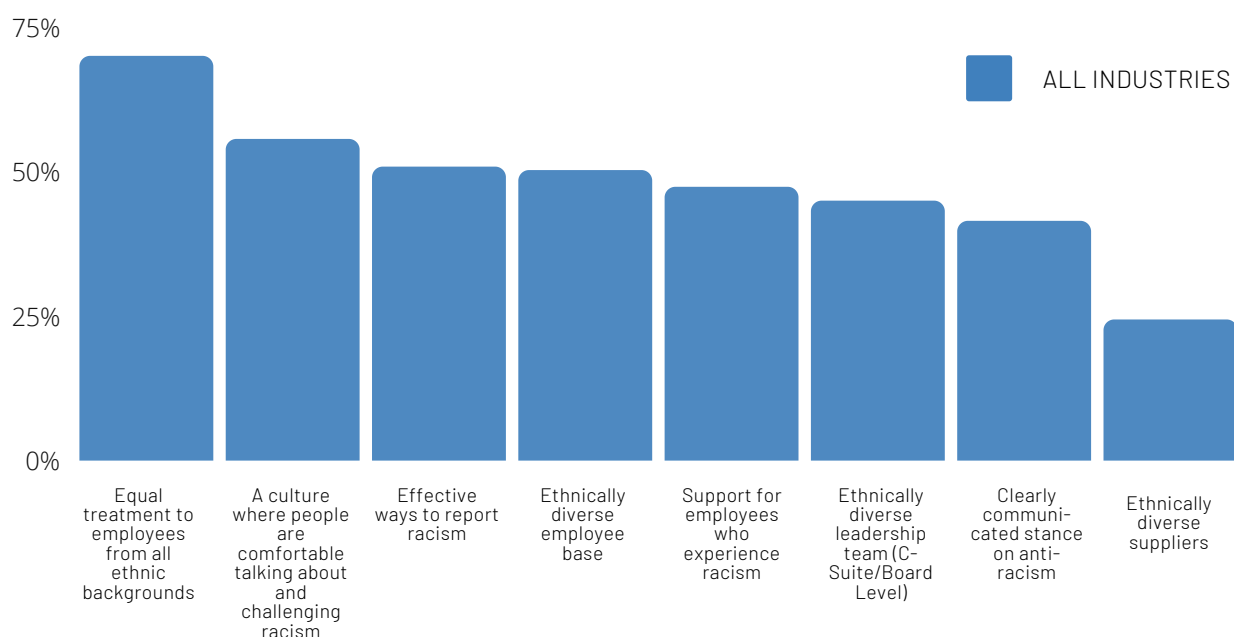
This section examines the race-related factors that matter most to womxn at work.

In the survey, womxn were presented with a list of 8 race-related factors, such as “Working in an organisation that has an ethnically diverse employee base” and “Working in an organisation that has effective ways to report racism”.

Womxn were then asked to indicate which of these factors are *extremely important* to them.

Based on these responses, Flair then generates a breakdown of which race-related factors womxn feel are *extremely important* to them. The key findings can be found below.

FIGURE 5: % OF WOMXN FEELING THAT EACH FACTOR IS "EXTREMELY IMPORTANT" TO THEM

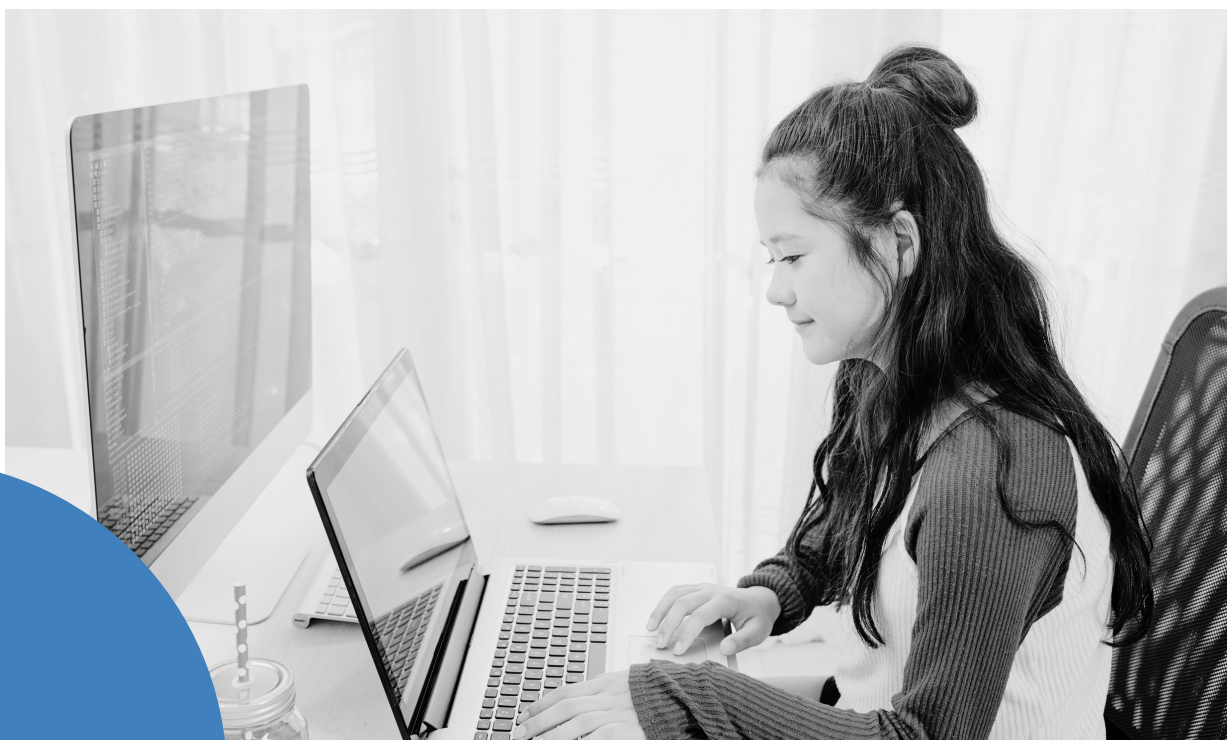



**So, you want to
build a culture that
attracts & retains
female talent?
Well, simply having
a racially diverse
workforce is not
enough**

Figure 5 breaks down the 8 race-related factors that matter most to womxn at work. The survey asked womxn to select the factors that they feel are “extremely important” to them. The list was constructed by Flair, following qualitative research with organisations to understand where they are investing their resources, as well as first-hand interviews with employees across several industries.

The findings suggest that simply having a racially diverse workforce is not enough to attract and retain female talent. Out of the 8 options, working at an organisation with an ethnically diverse workforce ranked as the 4th most important factor for womxn in the survey. Working at an organisation with an ethnically diverse leadership team ranked as only the 6th most important factor.

Across all industries and ethnicities, 70% of womxn feel that working for an organisation that gives equal treatment to employees from all ethnic backgrounds is “extremely important” to them. This is deemed to be the most important factor, followed by working in a culture where people are comfortable talking about and challenging racism – 56% of womxn feel that this is “extremely important to them”.





“As a white person, I find it shocking and abhorrent when I witness racist comments/jokes/abuse. I am trying to educate myself with regard to microaggressions/ignorance and become a better ally.”

Female, 35-44, White



“As a white employee, I brought up that I was uncomfortable with the casual racism against another employee in my previous workplace. I got told that no one had brought it up before, and I had to feel something more than "uncomfortable" to make a complaint, so it wasn't a problem. I left the company. It was a typical environment of middle aged white men, the higher ups were also all white; I'd never been so uncomfortable having to make a complaint and never so shocked with a response.”

Female, 18-24, White



EMPLOYER TAKEAWAY

The results show that the race-related factors that matter most to womxn at work are *Working In An Organisation That Gives Equal Treatment To Employees From All Ethnic Backgrounds* and *Working In An Organisation Where People Are Comfortable Talking About And Challenging Racism*.

To help address these challenges within your own organisation, consider some of the following interventions.

Clearly communicate that supporting racial equality at work is the responsibility of all leaders and managers

- Change won't happen unless you have buy-in from your leaders and managers.
- Actions to encourage accountability may include rewarding leaders who make a significant contribution to advancing anti-racism and publishing anti-racism targets externally.
- As an organisation, be conscious of setting targets around Racial Diversity alone. As Flair's research shows, there are several other factors that womxn deem to be extremely important.

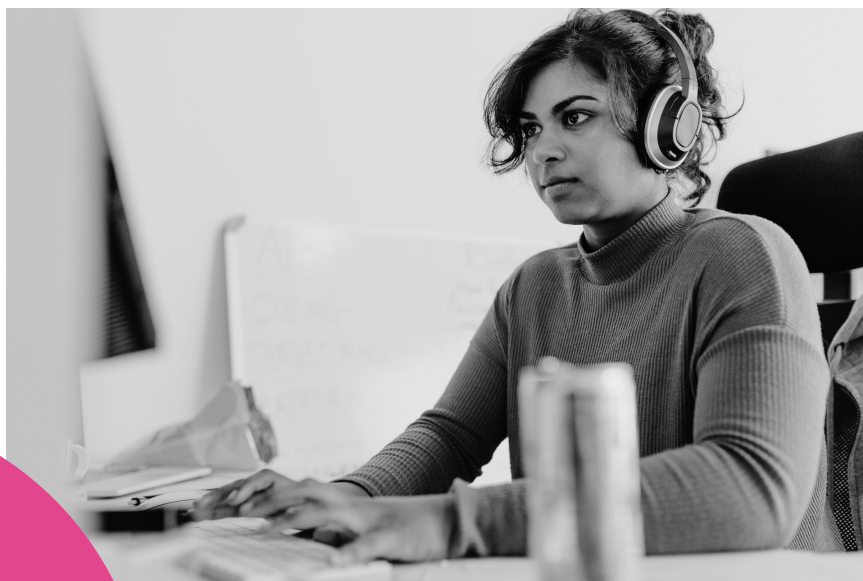
Developing an active safe-space for having conversations about race

- Forming safe spaces can be an effective way of giving people the confidence to have conversations about racism.
- Consider setting up a digital platform dedicated to conversations about racism, using a platform such as Slack. To help maintain engagement levels, ensure that your organisation appoints a leader to oversee the channel.

“I was horribly discriminated against in a previous workplace on the grounds of race - bullying, microaggressions and racial harassment. What made it worse is, I was then treated indifferently by the white leadership team, who didn't even try to understand.

When it impacted my mental health, I was told I couldn't cope with doing the job (even though I had an unblemished work record) and treated very differently to a male white colleague going through something similar. He returned from sick leave with open arms, understanding and support. I was told I have to re-prove myself all over again.”

Female, 35-44, Pakistani



CONCLUSION

In order to build cultures that attract and retain womxn from all ethnic backgrounds, organisations must be aware of the challenges faced by ethnic minority womxn at work. Without this awareness, organisations risk investing heavily into solutions that fail to tackle the underlying problems.

The findings from this report indicate that womxn from ethnic minority backgrounds face several challenges at work. Many feel that their ethnicity is a noticeable barrier to feeling included at work. This is driven by several factors, in particular, ethnic minority womxn feeling that their ethnicity is a barrier to being themselves at work and receiving promotion opportunities. Many ethnic minority womxn also report being recently subjected to racist behaviours at work, in particular racial microaggressions and racist jokes.

When examining which race-related factors are deemed to be “extremely important” for womxn across all ethnic backgrounds, the findings clearly suggest that having a racially diverse workforce is not enough. The data shows that womxn want to work in environments where employees from all ethnic backgrounds are treated equally, and where people are comfortable talking about and challenging racism. In the decade to come, building truly anti-racist cultures will be crucial for organisations looking to attract and retain womxn from all ethnic backgrounds.

We hope that this report has shone a light on some of the challenges faced by ethnic minority womxn at work, and provided practical solutions. However, the work doesn’t stop there. Each organisation is different and faces its own unique set of challenges. If you are a business leader, we urge you to conduct a similar piece of analysis on your own organisation’s culture.

Thank you for reading this report.

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