

A photograph of a young Black man with a beard, smiling broadly and looking off to the side. He is wearing a grey hoodie and a large backpack with red accents. The background is a blurred forest with sunlight filtering through the trees.

# Changing the world from within

---

Understanding what is helping and hindering the environment sector from becoming more ethnically diverse

# Acknowledgements

The research was commissioned by Wildlife and Countryside Link in partnership with Natural England and was conducted by Full Colour. Invaluable input into shaping the methodology was received from the Project Steering Group: Richard Benwell (Wildlife and Countryside Link), Cheryl Willis (Natural England), Nasima Khatun (ClientEarth), and Catriona Corfield (Woodland Trust). The research was devised and conducted by the Full Colour Team: Srabani Sen OBE, Jill Elston, Amelia Woods and Tim Acott. The research fieldwork was organised by Ellen Kruger of Full Colour. This report was written by Srabani Sen.

Thanks to the Project Working Group for their help in encouraging others to take part in the research. Project Working Group members are Kit Stoner (Bat Conservation Trust), Karen Devine (British Ecological Society), Frieda Metternich (Green Alliance), Kelly Jenkins (Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts) plus members of the Project Steering Group. Thanks also to Eleanor Ward of Wildlife and Countryside Link for her help in promoting the opportunity to take part in the research.

This work would not have been possible without the generous support of Natural England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the John Ellerman Foundation.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who took the time to take part in this research. We are particularly grateful to those from a minority ethnic background who shared their experiences with us.

September 2021

Wildlife & Countryside Link <https://www.wcl.org.uk/>

Natural England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>

Full Colour <https://www.fullclr.com/>

# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<a href="#"><u>Executive Summary</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
1 <a href="#"><u>Introduction</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
2 <a href="#"><u>Methodology</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>16</u></a>
3 <a href="#"><u>Quantitative results and analysis</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>23</u></a>
4 <a href="#"><u>Qualitative results and analysis</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>53</u></a>
5 <a href="#"><u>Implications for environment sector route map to greater ethnic diversity</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>73</u></a>



# Executive summary

# Executive summary

## About the research

1. This research is part of a review of ethnic diversity in the environment sector in England, commissioned by Wildlife and Countryside Link, in partnership with Natural England. The research was carried out by Full Colour. For the purposes of this report the “environment sector” is defined as Wildlife and Countryside Link’s members and organisations with which it works closely.
2. The **research will form the basis of the development of a route map** for the sector to help it increase its levels of ethnic diversity.
3. The research covers **England**.
4. The research seeks **to understand what is helping and hindering** minority ethnic people from becoming a greater part of the environment sector.
5. The quantitative research consists of a **survey** which was sent to all members of Wildlife and Countryside Link. The qualitative research consisted of **semi-structured interviews** and small **focus groups**.
6. The **focus** of the research was:
  - a. To find out what **actions and initiatives** sector organisations have taken to date to improve ethnic diversity within their organisations
  - b. To **assess the knowledge, understanding and mindset of leaders** in driving change on ethnic diversity
  - c. To better understand the **culture** of organisations as this might impact efforts to increase ethnic diversity
  - d. To better understand **minority ethnic people’s experience** of working in the environment sector
7. Due to the sensitive nature of the topics explored in the research, anonymity was promised. Therefore, this report does not name individual organisations or quote those that took part in the qualitative research.

## About the people and organisations that took part in the research

8. A total of **2004 people took part in the survey**, most of whom were from member organisations of Wildlife and Countryside Link. Most organisations that took part were not-for-profit organisations although a small number of public bodies took part too.
9. A total of **36 people took part in the qualitative research**, all of whom were from organisations that are members of Wildlife and Countryside Link.

10. Executive leaders, trustees and staff from all Wildlife and Countryside Link member organisations were invited to take part in the survey. The **survey results are dominated by the responses of four of these member organisations**. Of the 61 member organisations invited to respond to the survey, there were 44 organisations from which at least one person responded.
11. Minority ethnic people working in the sector, CEOs, chairs, senior executive leaders, frontline managers and organisational equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) leads were invited to take part in the qualitative research. Most of these participants were drawn from those who indicated in their survey responses that they wished to take part in the qualitative research.
12. Across both the quantitative and qualitative research there was a fairly **even split between large** Wildlife and Countryside Link member organisations (defined as those with a turnover of more than £10m) **and small** Wildlife and Countryside Link member organisations (defined as those with a turnover of less than £10m).
13. Survey responses were further analysed by **organisational readiness for change** on ethnic diversity:
  - a. 1% were at the start of their journey, and had not yet considered ethnic diversity issues
  - b. 84% had considered the issues or had taken some action, but did not have a specific action plan
  - c. 11% had developed or were developing a plan but had not yet implemented it
  - d. 4% had an action plan and were consistently implementing it
14. Of **survey respondents, 5% were from a minority ethnic background, 93% were white and 2% preferred not to say**. Of **qualitative** research participants, **eleven out of the 36 participants defined themselves as being from a minority ethnic background**. For the purposes of this research, when using the term minority ethnic, this refers to people of colour.

### What the research tells us

15. Through the qualitative research, executive and trustee **leaders were asked what they understood by the term “ethnic minority”**. **Every participant gave a slightly different answer. Some struggled with the question**. Different participants spoke of the importance of ethnic diversity in different contexts: some spoke of the need for greater ethnic diversity among their staff and others in relation to the communities with which their organisations engage.
16. Most **leaders** who responded to the survey (**86%**) **felt** that increasing **ethnic diversity should be a top or high priority for the environment sector**, and **22%** of leaders **felt increasing ethnic diversity currently is a priority for the sector**. The importance of increasing ethnic diversity in the environment sector was echoed by qualitative research participants. **62% of leaders** from the survey **felt increasing ethnic diversity should be a higher priority than it currently is**.

17. Most executive and trustee **leaders** who responded to the survey **believed** that **increasing ethnic diversity in the sector** would have either a **“strong positive impact”** or a **“positive impact”**.
- 42% of executive leaders said increasing the ethnic diversity of the sector would have a “strong positive impact”; 33% said it would have a “positive impact”
  - 32% of trustees said increasing the ethnic diversity of the sector would have a “strong positive impact”; 41% said it would have a “positive impact”
18. When thinking of **their own organisations leaders felt that increasing ethnic diversity should be and is a top or high priority**:
- 85% of executive leaders say ethnic diversity should be a top or high priority; 60% say it currently is a top or high priority
  - 81% of trustees say ethnic diversity should be a top or high priority; 44% say it currently is a top or high priority
  - 75% of staff say ethnic diversity should be a top or high priority; 38% say it currently is a top or high priority
19. **35% of leaders** say increasing **ethnic diversity should be a higher priority in their own organisation. 24% of staff say they do not know what the priority should be or what it currently is.** This suggests there is work to do to make more visible internally, the priority organisations are giving to increasing ethnic diversity.
20. When it comes to **their own organisation most leaders felt increasing ethnic diversity would have a “strong positive impact” or a “positive impact”**:
- 30% of leaders said increasing ethnic diversity would have a “strong positive impact”; 40% said it would have a “positive impact”
  - 33% of staff said increasing ethnic diversity would have a “strong positive impact”; 34% said it would have a “positive impact”
21. **When asked what the impact of increasing ethnic diversity would be** during the qualitative research, executive and trustee **leaders** offered **broad suggestions** which **lacked detail or specificity**. Many of the answers assumed diverse people would be able to instigate change, enable better decision making and change the feel and look of their organisations and the sector. Some leaders struggled to answer this question.
22. **Leaders** were asked through the qualitative research to describe **enablers** of change on becoming more ethnically diversity. A **range of answers** were offered including enthusiasm for change, increased awareness due to the Black Lives Matter movement and increased understanding of the link between environmental and social justice.
23. Leaders were asked through the qualitative research about the **barriers** to change on ethnic diversity. The **most frequently mentioned** were the lack of **capacity and resources, competing priorities, the lack of ethnically diverse people studying relevant subjects** and therefore limiting the pool of candidates

and the **lack of a clear organisational articulation of why** improved ethnic diversity matters.

24. Across the full range of qualitative research participants further barriers to progress were raised. These included **insufficient buy-in from boards and senior executive leaders, a fear of getting it wrong leading to failure to act at all, cynicism, the complexity of the issue and practical issues** such as having a rural base in communities with little ethnic diversity.
25. Leaders were asked what actions their organisation had taken to further ethnic diversity. There was a wide variation in responses, and no consensus even between leaders in the same organisation. This suggests that there is **no common understanding within organisations about the actions being taken** on this agenda. This finding was echoed in the qualitative research. When leaders were asked how visible actions to increase ethnic diversity were within their own organisations, responses varied from "quite visible" to "not visible". Some leaders were unclear how visible actions were to their staff.
26. Given the variation in responses from within organisations, for consistency, only CEO responses were analysed on actions taken. **90% of CEOs said they had taken some action**. Most common actions were:
  - a. Identifying barriers
  - b. Consulting all staff on ethnic diversity issues
  - c. Setting objectives
27. The actions cited least frequently by CEOs as being taken by their organisation were:
  - a. Consulting with ethnically diverse staff
  - b. Establishing internal networks for ethnically diverse staffThis may be due to the small numbers of ethnically diverse staff within these organisations.
28. Only a **quarter of CEOs** stated that their organisation has **set aside financial resources** for actions to improve ethnic diversity.
29. Many leaders who took part in the qualitative research placed emphasis on increasing employee diversity. The qualitative research sought to understand the experience of **minority ethnic people** already within the sector to see what lessons could be learned. Most had **joined the sector for reasons similar to their white colleagues**, namely a passion for the environment and tackling climate change.
30. Most **minority ethnic participants** stated that the **biggest barrier to entry** had been their **lack of background or experience within the sector** and their inability to take up volunteering or low paid jobs in order to gain that experience. There was also little or no support for career progression.



31. **Minority ethnic participants were asked whether there is racism in the sector. All participants said yes.** A small number gave examples of **overt racism**, most gave examples of **unconscious bias and covert racism**. By covert racism we mean racism which is subtle but where the person exhibiting this behaviour is aware of what they are doing, even though they may not admit this. Concerns were outlined about behaviour with racist undertones being dismissed and there being a lack of repercussions for those who behaved in overtly or covertly racist ways.
32. When asked what advice they would have for other people of a minority ethnic background thinking of joining the sector, the overwhelming response related to the need to be resilient and persistent.
33. One of the practical issues explored with leaders was that of data. CEOs said their organisations were **most likely to hold ethnicity data about their leaders, trustees and staff**, and far less likely to collect data on other stakeholders such as volunteers, members and supporters. Surprisingly, **50% said they either did not collect or did not know if they collected data on job applicants**. Given the emphasis many organisations have on attracting diverse candidates, this result is notable.
34. **Only a quarter of CEOs whose organisations collect ethnicity data use it regularly to inform decision making.**
35. Unconscious bias is a high-profile issue in the EDI agenda.
- According to survey responses **59% of executive leaders, 54% of trustees and 56% of staff had not taken a recognised unconscious bias test**
  - Use of recognised unconscious bias tests was noticeable **higher in organisations already on the journey** towards greater ethnic diversity (just under 50%); just over 10% of respondents had taken a recognised unconscious bias test amongst organisations starting the journey towards greater ethnic diversity
36. **81% of trustees and 64% of executive leaders** said they were **confident talking about issues around ethnicity**. **74% of trustees and 67%** said they were **confident taking action** on these issues. This is surprising, as **when asked about the extent to which learning on EDI issues was prioritised**, this question received the **lowest scores** compared with other behaviours associated with inclusive organisations (see point 37).
37. **On inclusive behaviours**, leaders were asked to score themselves, and their organisations' demonstration of these behaviours. There was a **range of scores** across leaders' responses. Across all responses, **as an average, leaders consistently scored themselves more highly than they rated their organisations** in demonstrating inclusive behaviours. **Staff rated their organisation consistently lower on inclusive behaviours than their leaders** rated their organisations. Drawn from Full Colour's [Inclusion Framework](#), the inclusive behaviours explored were:
- Bringing out the potential of others

- b. Involving a diverse range of people in decision making and problem solving
- c. Willingness to explore different points of view
- d. Making the most of available talent
- e. Looking for new ways of doing things
- f. Listening to others' ideas
- g. Acting on others' ideas
- h. Asking others to challenge current thinking
- i. Demonstrating an understanding of others' feelings
- j. Prioritising learning on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion

38. Staff were asked about their organisations' approaches to EDI. While the overall number of **minority ethnic** responses to the survey were small, it is worth noting that their **rating of their organisations' approaches to EDI were consistently lower than those of their white colleagues**. The **biggest differences** in scores between minority ethnic and white colleagues' scores were **on there being equal opportunities for all and on understanding their organisations' approaches on EDI**. This last point links to responses from leaders who in the qualitative research noted that the actions their organisations took were not always visible to staff.

39. **Leaders had a clear sense of their own role in driving change**, particularly in relation to signalling the importance of the issue of ethnic diversity within their own organisations.

### Summary of reflections

Throughout the report are reflections prompted by the data. Below is a summary of key reflections.

40. The focus of this review is ethnicity. Given the reality of organisations' approach to EDI, (in that ethnic diversity tends to be one component part), and the limited resources available for EDI work, **how can the sector create the necessary focus and emphasis that would be needed to enable genuine change on ethnicity?**

41. There was a variation in leaders' definition of the term "ethnic minority". Some leaders struggled to define the term "ethnic minority". **If you can't define it, how can you achieve it?**

42. Given the variation in views on the impact of greater ethnic diversity, and the differences between the priority leaders give to the sector and compared with their own organisations in becoming more ethnically diverse, **how can leaders coalesce around the shared understanding that is a prerequisite of change?**

43. Given the lack of shared view of the benefits of increased ethnic diversity, what is the driver of change? **What is the incentive to take action?**

44. There appears to be a lack of shared understanding and effective communications on the work being done to increase ethnic diversity. For

example, different leaders within the same organisation have a different understanding of the top-level actions being taken to address the lack of ethnic diversity. **Without clarity on what is happening now, how can organisations plan for the future?**

45. **Leaders expressed a high degree of confidence in talking about and taking action on ethnic diversity. At the same time, they and their staff consistently rate learning on EDI lowest in terms of their and their organisations' inclusive behaviours. How can both things be true?**
46. **On their confidence in talking about and taking action on ethnic diversity, leaders rated themselves highest on recruitment, yet staff rated organisations on "actively looks for ways to bring in diverse people" lowest in terms of approaches to EDI. What is causing this disparity?**
47. **Given the immediacy and urgency of issues facing the environment, and challenges some organisations face regarding their sustainability, how can leaders keep focused on work to increase ethnic diversity, given this might feel less pressing?**
48. **In reflecting on what would change if the sector were more diverse, many leaders seemed to expect ethnically diverse people to catalyse change within their own organisations. Clearly it is vital for minority ethnic people to be partners in shaping the journey ahead, but it is important that leaders do not inadvertently step away from their responsibility to drive change. Also, these leaders' assumptions fail to take account of:**
- a. **The powerful drive minority ethnic people can feel to assimilate in order to survive and/or thrive.**
  - b. **The inherent power differentials, given many efforts to attract ethnic diversity relate to bringing people into the sector at the early stages of the career pipeline.**
  - c. **Even if minority ethnic people could bring about the scale of change some leaders expect of them, are those leaders themselves ready for the style of leadership needed or have the skills required to manage the tensions and challenges diverse perspectives would bring?**
  - d. **Given the experiences of racism that all minority ethnic participants reported, why would other ethnically diverse people want to join the sector anyway?**
49. **The complexity of the issues surrounding EDI generally and ethnicity specifically, was one of the consistent explanations given for the slow rate of change on ethnic diversity. Given managing complexity is what leaders do, it will be important to establish why leaders are finding it more difficult to deal with the complexity involved in becoming more ethnically diverse than they find managing other forms of complexity.**
50. **There is a lot of activity going on in some organisations aimed at addressing the lack of ethnic diversity. This is to be commended. But how much of this is "busy"**

**work** which distracts from addressing the deep rooted systemic, cultural and mindset issues that can be the biggest barriers to change?

## Implications for developing a route map to greater ethnic diversity in the environment sector

51. There are a number of issues arising from this research that will need to be borne in mind and addressed in developing the sector route map to greater ethnic diversity which forms phase 2 in this review. Some of these are set out in this report.
52. How can we develop a route map that organisations will act on without a sector-wide, **compelling articulation of why it matters** to address the lack of ethnic diversity?
53. The research shows that **there is not a shared definition of the problem the sector is trying to solve**, therefore how do we create a route map that will effectively take the sector forward?
54. **What is the sector?** Without a specific definition of at whom the route map is aimed, it will be extremely difficult to develop a meaningful and practicable journey of change. Given the breadth and complexity of the sector, **is it possible to develop a route map that works for every organisation?**
55. Lack of resources and capacity is a key barrier to addressing the lack of ethnic diversity in the sector. **How can we bring funders into the tent**, to enable a partnership approach which secures the long-term funding needed to create systemic and systematic change on this issue?
56. How do we create a base level of **expertise** on this issue in the sector to equip people to develop effective organisational plans?
57. What work could or should be done **collectively** across the sector, to make the most of efficiencies and economies of scale, and what needs to be done **at organisational level?**
58. The most important question is does the sector truly want change? The theoretical benefits are not contested. However, the reality of what it takes to achieve greater ethnic diversity will involve challenging and changing long held ways of thinking and working. **Organisations will need to change themselves, their culture, their ways of doing things and their mindsets first, before they can hope to attract ethnic diversity at the scale the sector says it wants.**



# Introduction

# 1 Introduction

The oft quoted 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi poet Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi once said: “Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”

The environment sector\* is focused on growing and recovering nature and rolling back the climate crisis. The scale of the crisis facing nature is immense and there is growing recognition that it is essential for all communities to engage in solving environmental challenges.

It has been acknowledged for quite some time, however, that there are significant barriers preventing many people from minority ethnic backgrounds engaging with mainstream environmental and climate change organisations, in joining as paid employees, in volunteering or in partnering with sector bodies in community level initiatives.

The environment sector continues to be chiefly white and has fallen behind most other sectors and wider society in terms of ethnic diversity. The prominence of Black Lives Matter has shone a more intense light on these issues and prompted many within the environment movement to question why the sector has proven so difficult to change. Many organisations also recognise that ensuring equity for people from a minority ethnic background is an issue of social justice linked to the environmental crisis.

Combined, these factors have brought urgency to the need to understand and address the barriers to people from minority ethnic backgrounds engaging with the environment sector. What are the tangible and intangible hindrances they face and how can they be lessened?

In January 2021, [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#), in partnership with [Natural England](#) commissioned [Full Colour](#) to review the state of ethnic diversity in the environment sector. Research from [Policy Exchange](#) from 2017 showed the environment sector to be the second least ethnically diverse sector in England and Wales after farming. Many prominent voices within the sector have expressed concern that little has changed since then, despite sincere efforts by some organisations to attract ethnically diverse people. Wildlife and Countryside Link and Natural England wanted to find out why and what we can do to change.

While some organisations have put considerable effort into attracting greater ethnic diversity, many of those efforts have focused on looking outwards to minority ethnic people and communities and saying “come and join us”. This research looks inwards, and asks “what is it about environment organisations and the sector that is helping and hindering minority ethnic people from joining us?” In other words, how can the sector change from within?

During the “inception phase” of this research, it was recognised that in order to find the data that would best enable the sector to change from within, there needed to

be a focus on understanding what has been done to date by organisations to become more ethnically diverse and also the impact of culture and leadership. The research specifically looks at the actions organisations have taken, the culture within organisations, leaders' understanding of and approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, and the lived experiences of people from minority ethnic backgrounds currently working in the sector.

The focus of this research has been on issues relating to minority ethnic people *working* in the sector. It does not examine community engagement or volunteering.

The eventual output from the review will be the development of a route map to support the sector in moving forward towards becoming more ethnically diverse. The research and the methodology described in the next section were structured specifically to generate data to help inform the development of the route map.

Wildlife and Countryside Link is England's largest environment and wildlife coalition, bringing together 61 organisations to enhance our natural environment, improve animal welfare and increase people's access to a thriving natural world. Wildlife and Countryside Link have led initiatives such as: the establishment of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Forum; online anti-racism training for member organisations; and the publication of a [joint diversity and anti-racism statement](#) with 40 of its members establishing a shared position on this important issue. This research is part of the organisation's continued efforts to address the lack of ethnic diversity in the sector.

Within Wildlife and Countryside Link membership, there is a wide range of organisations. They range from micro-organisations with just a handful of staff to large institutions with many thousands of employees. Some organisations are very new, just a year or two old, others have been in existence for more than a century. Some organisations are focused on single species, others focus on nature and climate as a whole. Some manage land and do practical conservation work, others are focused on law and policy. As a whole, Wildlife and Countryside Link members represent a broad cross-section of the environment movement.

\* In this report we use the term environment sector as a shorthand for Wildlife and Countryside Link members and organisations with which they work closely in England. These organisations together form a significant segment of the sector in England and therefore have the potential to make a sizeable contribution to the solution. We recognise that there are challenges in using the term in this way, but we have chosen to do so for reasons of readability.



# Methodology



## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Project governance

Two groups, a Project Steering Group and a Project Working Group, were established at the start of the research. The Project Steering Group met regularly to:

- Comment on, advise and sign off research methodology
- Support the Full Colour team to develop a greater understanding of the sector to ensure the research methodology was developed appropriately
- Actively champion the research and encourage sector colleagues to take part
- Provide expertise in helping make sense of what the research found

A larger Project Working Group was set up to provide input into thinking and was central in defining the focus of the overall review and therefore the research.

### 2.2 Choosing a focus

The Project Working Group took part in a workshop during the "inception" phase of the review. In this workshop the Project Working Group explored three questions:

- What needs to change as a result of this specific review?
- Who will need to act on the results of this review?
- Why does this specific review outcome matter?

The answers to these questions determined the focus of the research. There was an understanding that a number of reviews and initiatives are underway and it was important to define the distinct contribution of this review.

#### 2.2.1 What will change as a result of this specific review?

The Project Working Group decided that the sector needs a clear route map which sets out:

- What needs to change in leaders' knowledge, behaviour, mindset, and ways of working to enable the sector to be more inclusive and attract ethnically diverse people
- A sequence of milestones to achieve greater ethnic diversity within the sector
- Practical actions people and organisations can take to achieve those milestones

There was an acknowledgement that different organisations are at different stages of their journey towards becoming more ethnically diverse, and also that there are significant variations in capacity and resources between large and small organisations. This understanding, plus the need to develop an effective route map shaped the research methodology.

#### 2.2.2 Who will need to act on the results of this review?

The Project Working Group identified that executive and board level leaders have the greatest ability to drive and influence change in their own organisations and in the sector as whole. Therefore, the research needed to understand leaders'

perspectives and where they are on their personal learning journey on ethnicity, equality, diversity and inclusion. However, the research also needed to hear from others within the sector, specifically people from minority ethnic backgrounds already within the sector and frontline managers.

The lived experiences of minority ethnic people provide essential insight into what is helping and hindering others from entering and progressing their careers in the environment sector. Their experiences and ideas are vital in shaping future plans.

Frontline managers are often the gatekeepers of change. Understanding their concerns and perspectives too is important in shaping a route map, much of which is likely to be their responsibility to implement.

### **2.2.3 Why is this specific review outcome important?**

The Project Working Group thought deeply about how this review needs to be different from what has come before to maximise the chances that it will lead to change. The Project Working Group reached the following conclusions:

- The sector has tried policy and procedure-based solutions before which have not led to the desired change at the desired pace. Therefore, the Project Working Group decided that the research and the route map need to focus on knowledge, understanding, behaviour and ways of working.
- Developing a route map of change in knowledge, behaviour and ways of working will ensure this review avoids a tick box approach to developing solutions.
- Knowledge, mindset and behaviour change will ultimately create better conditions to enable systemic change.
- The route map will provide an accountability tool which will help the sector identify
  - Collectively where the sector is on its journey
  - Where individual organisations are in their journey of change
  - An agreed way of measuring progress at sector and individual organisation level

Each of the points above shaped the research methodology.

### **2.2.4 What do we mean by “minority ethnic”?**

For the purposes of this research, the Project Steering Group chose to focus on understanding the issues facing people of colour, in all its diversity. The definition of “minority ethnic” does not include respondents identified as white minorities. White minority people’s responses are included within the white group in the analysis.

## **2.3 Scope**

The intention of the research was to focus on Wildlife and Countryside Link members and organisations with which it works closely in England. The reasoning behind that choice was firstly that Wildlife and Countryside Link represents a significant proportion of the environmental movement in England and, secondly, that its members are determined to be open and accountable in their progress toward improving their ethnic diversity.

Wildlife and Countryside Link's remit is England; Link organisations in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are undertaking their own significant diversity initiatives. However, with the quantitative research:

- Some Wildlife and Countryside Link's members are UK-wide
  - We did not want to stop people from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from participating if they wished to
  - The volume of responses to the survey from colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were not statistically significant and therefore did not lend themselves to being analysed separately
- The survey was shared beyond those with whom Wildlife and Countryside Link shared it, meaning that 9 organisations who are not members participated in the survey. We are unclear how the survey was shared beyond Wildlife and Countryside Link members. It is possible that survey recipients chose to share the survey link with colleagues in other organisations.
  - The sample size was not big enough to draw conclusions on whether there were discernible differences between the answers of those that were and were not members of Wildlife and Countryside Link.

### **2.3.1 Note about the sector**

The environment sector is very broad in many ways: size, location, mission focus, local/national/UK-wide and stage in the journey towards greater ethnic diversity. Full Colour was mindful of this in designing the research, and also mindful of the fact that rates of response to the survey and take-up of offers to participate in the qualitative research did not reflect the full breadth of the sector. Readers should bear this in mind in making their way through this report. More detail is provided below.

## **2.4 Confidentiality**

The nature of issues explored through both the quantitative and qualitative research are potentially sensitive. We promised participants we would ensure their anonymity to give them as much of a sense of comfort as we could to enable them to contribute freely and openly. On that basis, no organisations are named in this report and no quotes have been used.

## **2.5 Research objectives**

The following research objectives were agreed with the Project Steering Group:

1. To measure existing levels of knowledge and understanding of ethnic diversity and inclusion issues amongst leaders related to their organisations and the sector, and identify where gaps exist
2. To measure to what extent leaders of environmental organisations consistently demonstrate behaviours associated with good practice on inclusion
3. To measure the ability of organisations to collect data around diversity
4. To ascertain what actions organisations have already taken to become more equal, diverse and inclusive
5. To measure staff perceptions of organisational culture

6. To identify key drivers and barriers to change in the sector
7. To identify existing areas of good practice in relation to leadership and explore the extent to which they are effective

## **2.6 Quantitative methodology**

### **2.6.1 Target audience**

The survey was aimed at leaders and staff. Because part of the focus of the research was to understand leaders' knowledge and understanding, different questions were directed at different respondents, depending on whether they were in a leadership role.

Leaders were defined as the CEO of an organisation, staff with senior executive leadership responsibilities, the chair of the board, trustees and non-executive directors.

### **2.6.2 Dissemination**

The survey was communicated via Wildlife and Countryside Link to key contacts within its member organisations and organisations with which it works closely. Additional promotion was carried out by members of the Project Working Group.

All leaders (see above) and staff were invited to complete the survey. Fieldwork took place between 8 April 2021 and 4 June 2021.

### **2.6.3 Limitations of the research**

The lack of available data lists meant that the Full Colour research team relied for survey dissemination on the good will and internal communications of Wildlife and Countryside Link member organisations.

Not all organisations chose to take part in the research, and organisations participated to different extents. Some organisations had recently carried out their own surveys and did not wish to take part in another research exercise. The research was, therefore, partly self-selecting in its responses and does not claim to be representative of the entire sector.

Out of 61 Wildlife and Countryside Link member organisations invited to take part, 44 organisations submitted at least one response. There was significant variation in the volume of responses received from within individual organisations.

Some organisations which were not Wildlife and Countryside Link members did take part in the survey, and their responses have been separated out in the analysis where relevant.

### **2.6.4 A note on the analysis**

Initial analysis looked at the results by role (executive leadership, trustee leadership or staff), organisation size and the ethnicity of respondents. Following the initial analysis, we determined that organisation size was not enough of an indicator of preparedness or action on ethnic diversity. We consequently conducted another

round of analysis by “organisation readiness” to take action on ethnic diversity. Responses were split into four categories of organisation:

- 'Starting the journey'
- 'Willing, but lacking direction'
- 'Planning to take action'
- 'Already on the journey'

Decisions were made on which category to assign each organisation to based on the CEO responses on the steps the organisation had taken (or not) to tackle increasing ethnic diversity. Where a CEO had not responded to the survey, we looked instead at the consensus of answers from other leaders. Not all organisations could be categorised in this way if we lacked sufficient information on the actions the organisations were taking, therefore the base sizes for the analysis by organisation readiness are slightly smaller than for other breakdowns.

NOTE: CEO responses on actions already taken were not always consistent with the answers of other leaders in the same organisation, which is why, for consistency, the analysis focused on CEO responses only in determining actions taken.

## 2.7 Qualitative methodology

### 2.7.1 Target audience

The qualitative research targeted:

- CEOs
- Chairs/ trustees
- Frontline managers
- People from a minority ethnic background working in the sector
- Officers with lead responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

### 2.7.2 Recruitment and selection

Those who were invited to interviews or focus groups were primarily drawn from people who indicated their willingness to take part in qualitative research in their response to the survey (see above).

Based on the survey respondents who had expressed a willingness to take part in the qualitative work, we developed a sampling approach which sought a balance in size of organisation.

Type of participant	Number
Minority ethnic colleagues	11
Board chairs	2
CEOs	9
Senior executive leaders	6
Frontline managers	5

### 2.7.3 Methodology

The qualitative research was a mix of semi-structured 1:1 interviews and small focus groups. All sessions took place over Zoom. For the focus groups, responses typed into the “chat bar” in Zoom were included in the data that was analysed.

Different but related questions were asked of participants. With people from minority ethnic backgrounds the research explored their experience of the sector. With CEOs, trustees, frontline managers and officers with lead responsibility for EDI, questions related more to organisational context and to their work on ethnicity and EDI.

For questions asked in common across all participants, these were analysed for differences between different types of participants, however the sample sizes were small and the differences in response for these questions was not significant.

The scale of the qualitative research was small, and therefore the responses and analysis are illustrative in nature.

Fieldwork took place between 2 and 29 June 2021.



# Quantitative results and analysis

# 3 Quantitative results and analysis

## 3.1 About the respondents

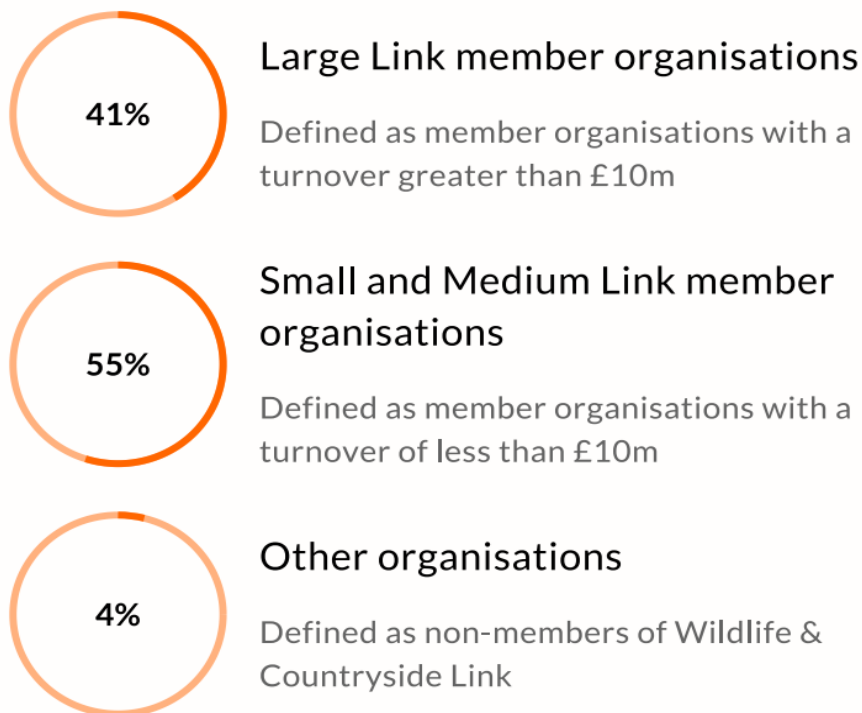
### 3.1.1 Overall numbers

A total of 2004 responses were received. 1919 of these were from Wildlife and Countryside Link member organisations. Four organisations together accounted for 64% of all responses.

### 3.1.2 Respondents by organisational size

#### Respondents by organisational size

Based on 2,004 responses



### 3.1.3 Responses by organisational readiness

Different organisations are at different stages in the journey towards becoming more ethnically diverse. Therefore, some analysis was done on the basis of where organisations are on the journey towards becoming more ethnically diverse.

As mentioned in section 2.6.4, different leaders within organisations provided different answers to questions on actions their own organisation had taken on ethnicity. For consistency, CEO answers were used. Where CEO responses were not available, all responses from an organisation were taken to ascertain organisational readiness.



## Organisational readiness

Based on 1,479 responses

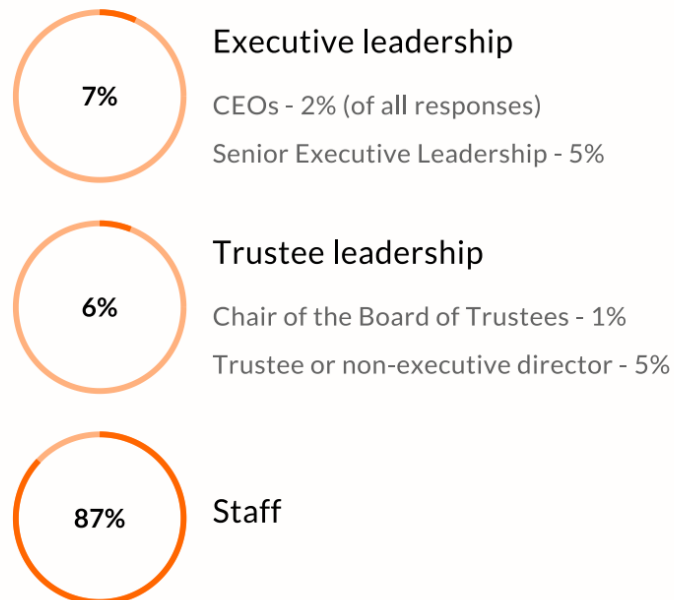


Base: 1479 responses

### 3.1.4 Responses by role

#### Responses by role

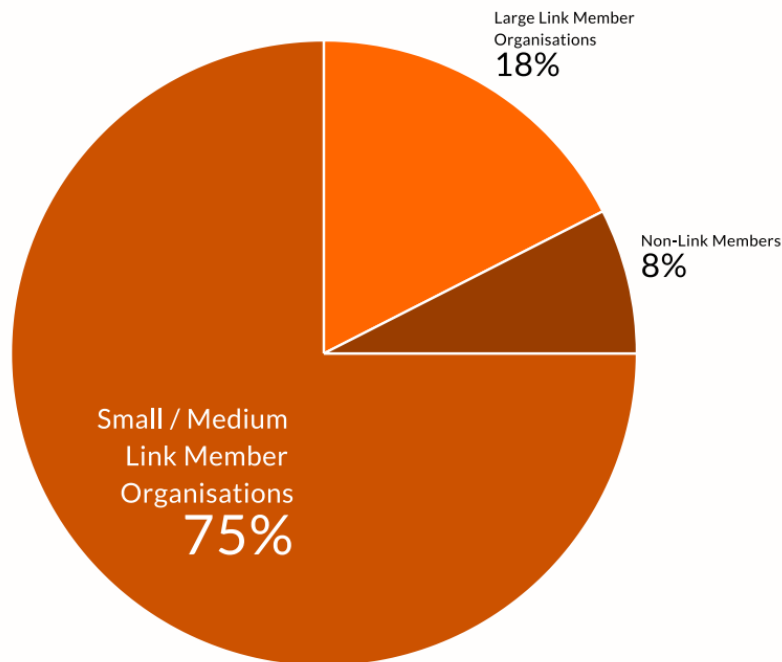
Based on 2,004 responses



2% of respondents were CEOs and 5% were senior executive leaders. 6% of respondents were trustee leaders, including 1% who were chairs. The definition of "executive leader" was challenging as the term means different things in different organisations and is affected by the size of the organisation. Respondents chose how to describe themselves and whether to name themselves as executive leaders.

## CEO responses by size of organisation

Based on 40 responses



Base: 40 CEO responses

### 3.1.5 Ethnicity data

5% of respondents were from a minority ethnic background, which this research defines as people of colour, 93% were white and 2% preferred not to say. This is higher than the percentage of people working in the sector as identified from the [Policy Exchange](#) report from 2017.

Possible reasons for a higher rate of response from minority ethnic people to this research could include the following:

- The self-selecting nature of those who completed the survey could reflect minority ethnic colleagues' interest in the work
- The research has been championed and promoted by those already interested in or working on diversity issues in the environment sector and so could have stimulated a higher level of respondents from people from minority ethnic backgrounds
- The research was targeted at Wildlife and Countryside Link members only, not the environment sector as a whole

## 3.2 How much of a priority is becoming more ethnically diverse within the environment sector?

### 3.2.1 Focus on ethnicity

The focus of this research was on ethnicity. For most organisations, increasing ethnic diversity forms part of wider plans to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across a range of protected characteristics. This made it hard for some respondents to single out how much of a priority their organisation specifically places on increasing ethnic diversity.

#### Reflection

The focus of this research is ethnicity because those who commissioned the review point out that ethnic diversity is one of the areas in which the environment sector has made the least progress. Given the reality of organisations' approach to EDI, and the limited resources available to smaller organisations in particular, how can the sector create sufficient focus on ethnicity within its overall EDI goals? It is important to recognise that the specific actions that might attract ethnically diverse people are unlikely to attract those with a different "protected characteristic", though some people will have more than one form of "difference".

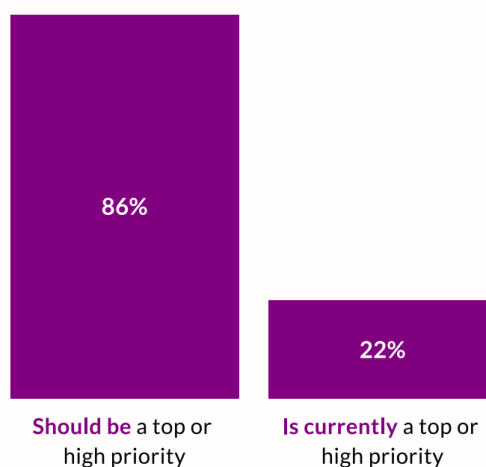
### 3.2.2 Ethnicity as a priority: "should" versus "is"

Leaders were asked what priority the environment sector as a whole should give to increasing ethnic diversity, and also what priority the sector currently gives to ethnic diversity.

Results showed a gap between the ideal scenario, and the current reality. 86% of leaders believe that increasing ethnic diversity should be a top or high priority for the sector; only 22% believe it is currently a top or high priority.

#### Increasing ethnic diversity as a priority for the environment sector: "should be" vs "currently is"

Based on 255 leader responses



These figures are based on leaders who selected “one of the top priorities” or “the most important priority” when asked what priority increasing ethnic diversity should be for the environment sector as a whole.

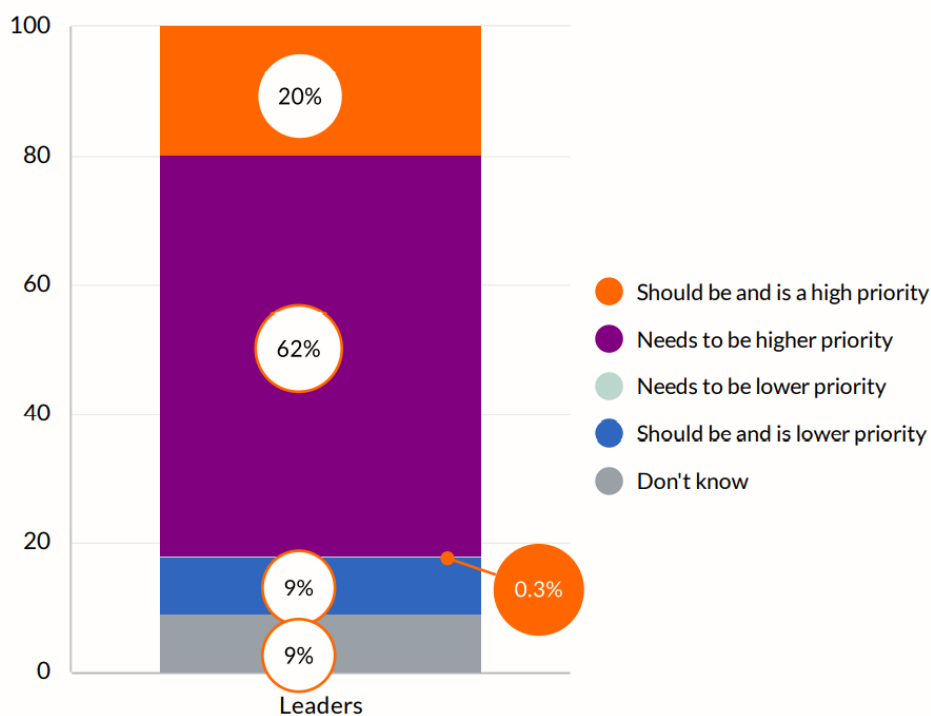
Larger organisations are more likely to think ethnic diversity should be a top priority for the sector than small and medium sized organisations.

When asked about the current level of priority given to ethnicity within the environment sector, a higher percentage of people (8%) answered “don't know” compared with other questions in this section of the survey. Possible reasons for this are that:

- Increasing ethnicity within the sector is not being talked about widely
- People perceive there to be different views across the sector and therefore no one unified sense of priority
- Sector-wide priorities are not being effectively communicated

62% of leaders felt that the priority should be higher than it currently is. 29% in total were satisfied with the current priority level (whether that is high or low priority).

**Environment sector priorities on increasing ethnic diversity:  
“higher” or “lower”?**  
Based on 255 leader responses



**Reflection**

Who sets sector-wide priorities? If there is no unified sense of how much of a priority increasing ethnicity is or should be, how can the sector as a whole plan or

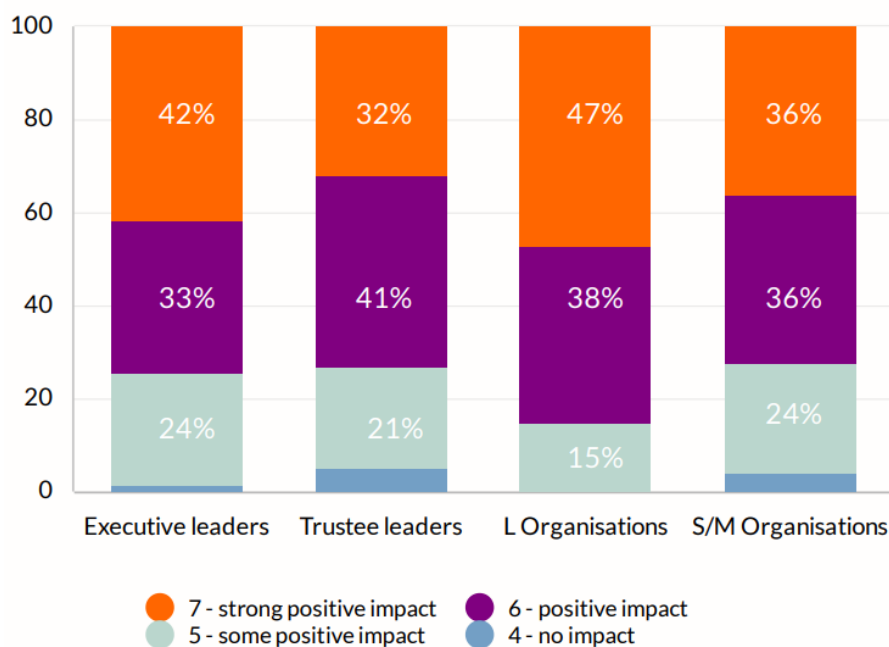
decide on the level of investment to make? How can the sector coalesce and contribute to the collective effort needed to drive change?

### 3.3 Perceived impact of the sector becoming more ethnically diverse

Generally, leaders believe that there would be a positive impact if the sector were to become more ethnically diverse. The graph below draws on two sets of data showing differences in view between executive and trustee leaders, and differences in view by organisational size.

#### Perceived impact of increased ethnic diversity on the sector

Based on 139 executive leaders & 116 trustees; 34 large organisations & 205 small/medium organisations



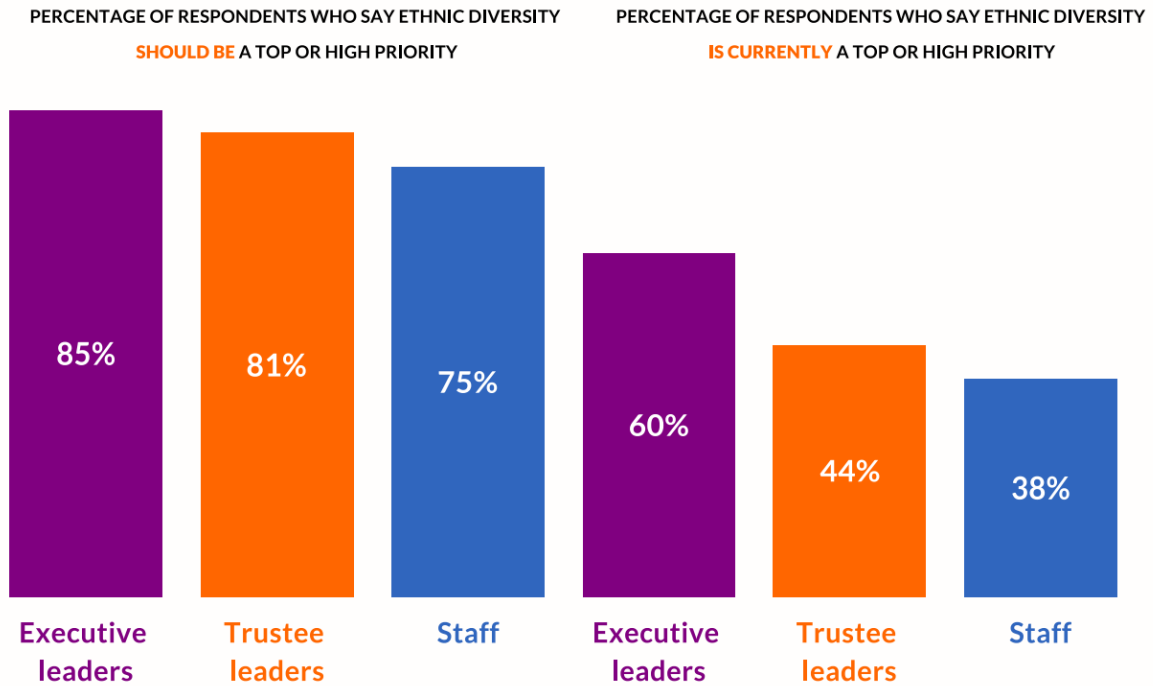
Executive leaders (139 respondents) are more likely than trustee leaders (116 respondents) to think that there will be a strong positive impact. Larger organisations are more likely than small/medium organisations to think the positive impact will be greater.

### 3.4 Importance of becoming more ethnically diverse to individual organisations

In general, respondents agree that increasing ethnic diversity should also be a high priority for their own organisation, as well as for the sector as a whole. However, a small number of leaders feel less sure that becoming more ethnically diverse should be a higher priority for their own organisation. Staff are marginally less convinced than leaders that becoming more ethnically diverse should be a priority for their own organisation.

## Organisation priorities

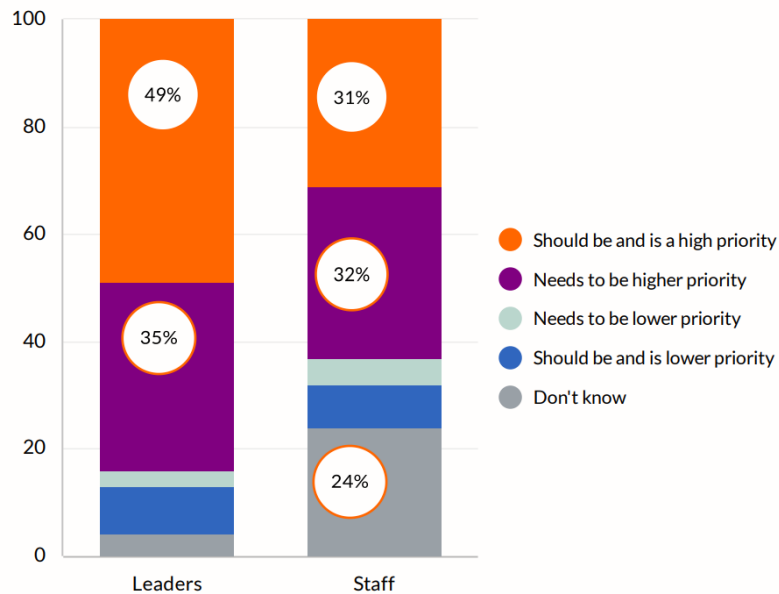
Based on 139 executive leaders, 116 trustees and 1,748 staff



10% of trustee leaders and 21% of staff do not know what priority increasing ethnic diversity is currently for their own organisation, suggesting it isn't being talked about widely. Larger organisations are more likely to see ethnic diversity as a top priority than small and medium sized organisations.

## Organisation priorities on increasing ethnic diversity: what it “should be” vs what it “currently is”

Based on 139 leaders and 1,749 staff



When we compare responses to questions about what priority increasing ethnic diversity should be for an organisation, versus what it is currently, we can see that leaders generally think their organisation is prioritising ethnic diversity and think that this is the right approach:

- 49% of leaders say that their organisation should and does make increasing ethnic diversity a high priority
- 35% of leaders think it should be a higher priority in their own organisation
- 24% of staff do not know either what the priority should be, or what it currently is, suggesting that leaders have work to do to communicate on this priority internally.

Whilst most leaders and staff think ethnic diversity ought to have a high priority within their organisations, leaders are more likely than staff to think it is already given a high priority.

### Reflection

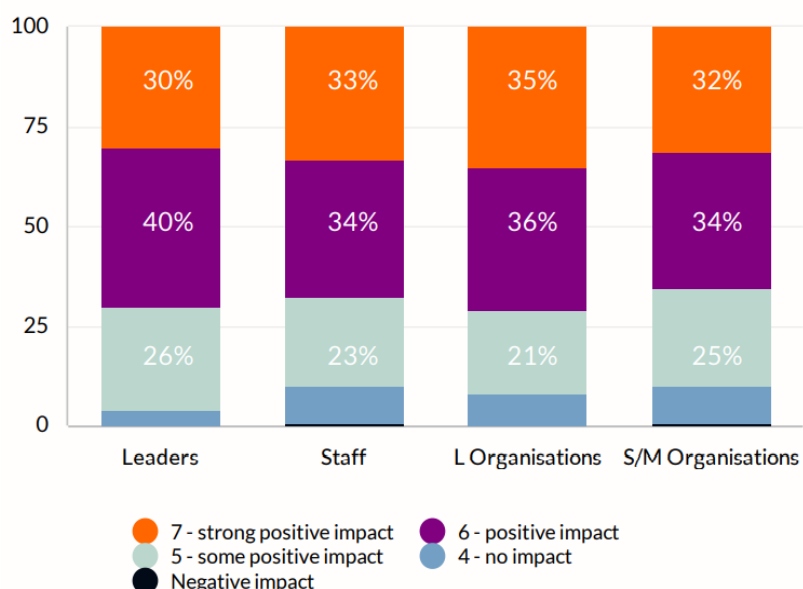
**Given the lack of clarity within organisations on the level of priority being given to becoming more ethnically diverse, and the differences of view on what that priority should be, how can organisations come together around a common view? Without that common view, how can organisations plan the actions and budgets required to move them forward, and how can staff and leaders understand their individual roles and contributions?**

### 3.5 Perceived impact of becoming more ethnically diverse on respondents' own organisations

Leaders are slightly more likely than staff to anticipate that increasing ethnic diversity will have a positive impact on their organisation. Larger organisations are slightly more likely than small/medium organisations to think there will be a positive impact on their organisation.

#### Perceived impact of increasing ethnic diversity on respondents own organisations

Based on 255 leaders and 1,748 staff; 811 responses from large organisations and 1,107 from small/medium organisations



#### Reflection

If there is not a shared understanding of the benefits of increased ethnic diversity to an organisation, where is the motivation coming from to take action?

### 3.6 Action on increasing ethnic diversity

We asked all leaders to report on actions their organisations are taking to tackle the lack of ethnic diversity. The responses showed a wide variation and no consensus about what actions are being taken, even amongst leaders from the same organisation. This suggests there is a lack of understanding or clarity, even internally, about what is being done to tackle the lack of ethnic diversity. In our analysis of this



data, we have taken the CEO responses to what actions are being taken as the “definitive” response for each organisation. Therefore, the questions in this section are reporting only on the responses from 40 CEOs.

### Reflection

**If leaders within the same organisation are unclear what actions are being taken, how can they be showing collective leadership on this issue for their organisations? How can trustees hold executive leaders to account if there is not a common understanding of the initiatives in place?**

90% of CEOs said their organisation had taken some action to address the lack of ethnic diversity, although two-thirds had no clear plan in place. Organisations are typically taking ad hoc actions. The most common actions were:

- Identifying barriers
- Consulting with staff
- Setting objectives

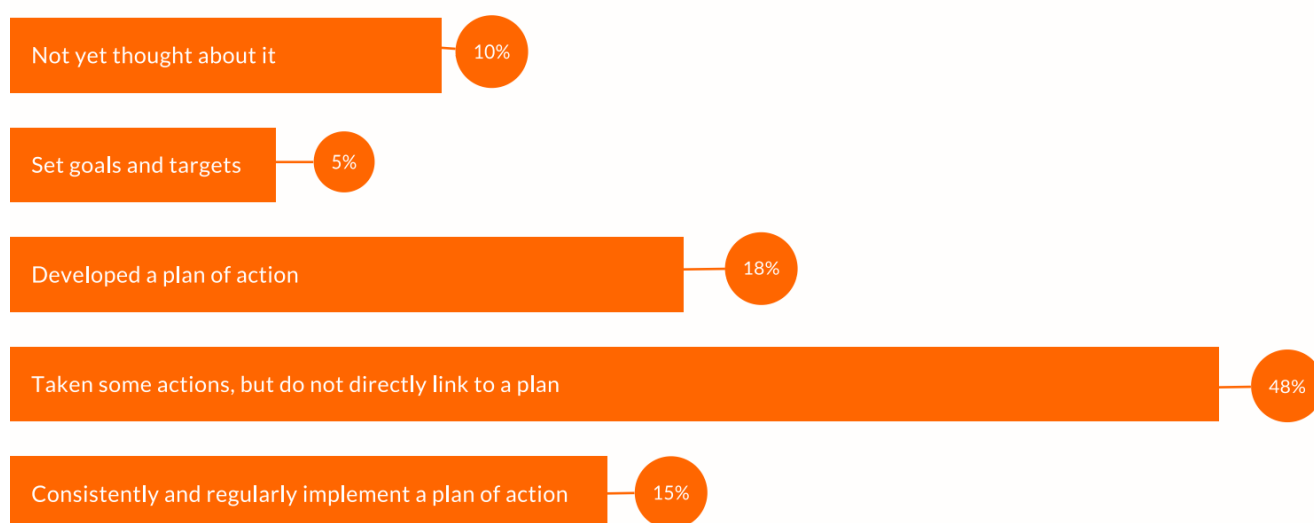
Only a quarter of respondents stated that any financial or budgetary resource has been put behind these actions.

There is a lack of data on ethnicity within organisations, particularly relating to members, volunteers and supporters. Few organisations are using data to inform decision making.

### 3.6.1 Overall approaches

#### Approaches taken to addressing ethnic diversity

Based on 40 CEOs



### 3.6.2 Specific actions

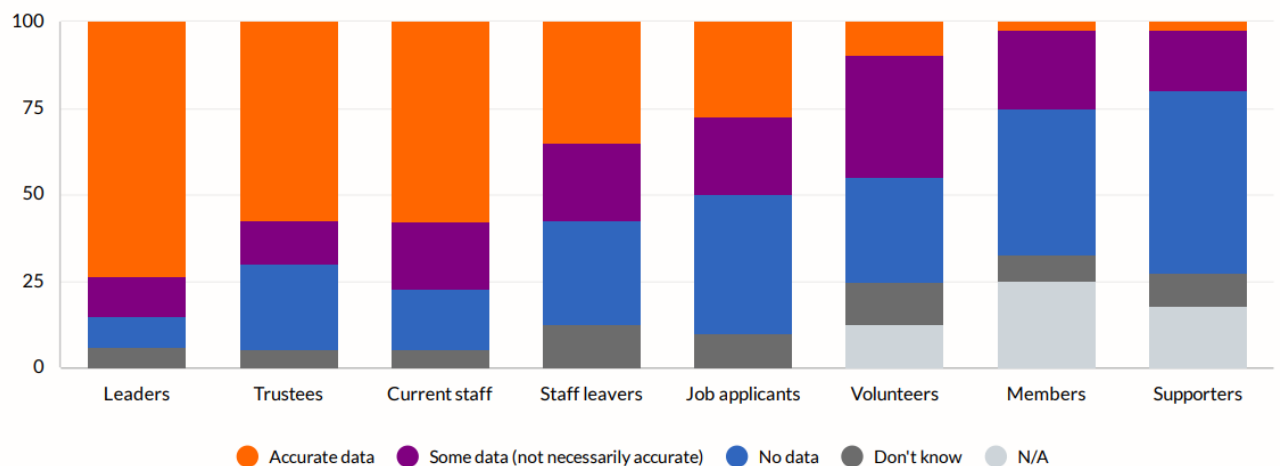
The following graphic sets out the actions organisations have taken.



Base: 40 CEOs

### 3.6.3 Collecting and using ethnicity data

We asked CEOs about the extent to which their organisations hold data on the ethnic diversity of staff and stakeholders. They were most likely to hold data about executive leaders, trustees and current staff but far less likely to understand the ethnic makeup of wider stakeholders.

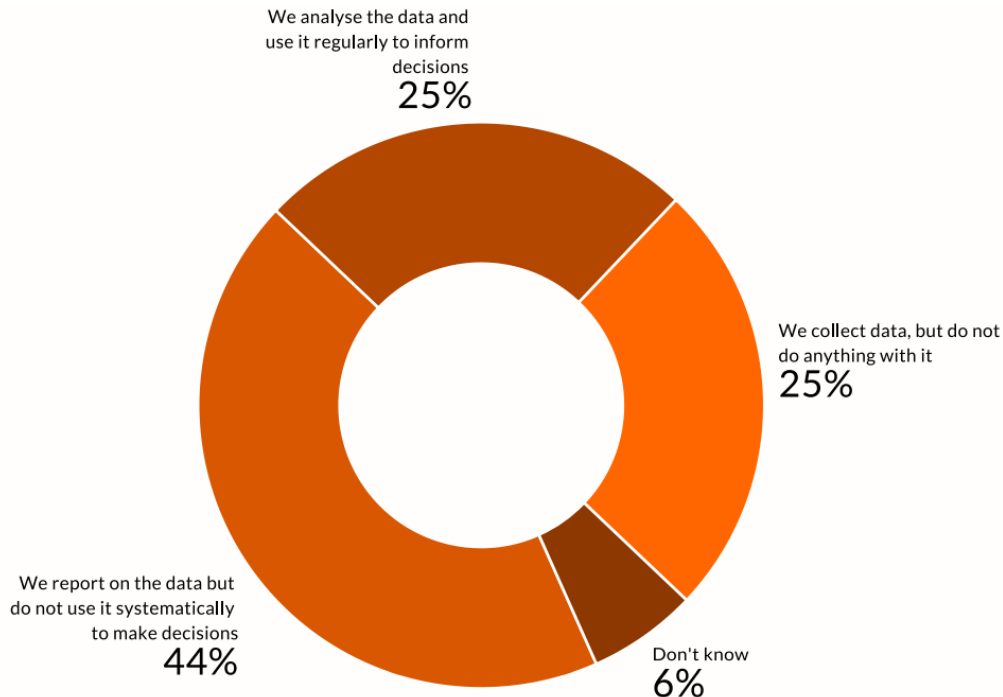


Base: 40 CEOs

Only a quarter of CEOs whose organisations collect ethnicity data use it regularly to inform decision making. Organisations already taking action on ethnic diversity are twice as likely as other organisations to be using the data to inform decision making.

## Use of data

Based on 32 CEOs who say they collect data



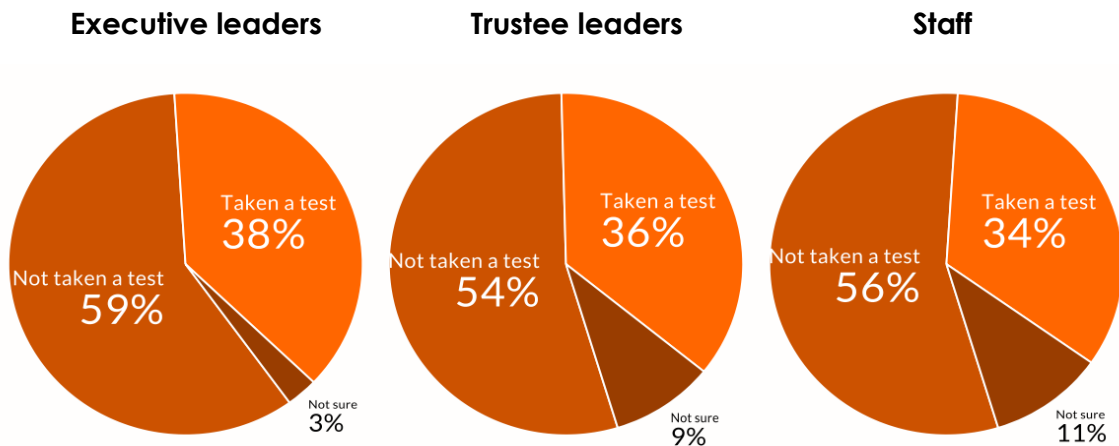
### Reflection

There appears to be a degree of “muddle” in organisations’ approaches to increasing ethnicity, e.g. different people within the same organisation not having a shared understanding of actions being taken. Without clarity on what is happening now, how can organisations plan for the future? How much of the effort is wasted, e.g. collecting data but not using it? And why collect data if this does not inform decision making?

## 3.7 Knowledge and understanding

### 3.7.1 Awareness of unconscious biases

One of the challenges of working on diversity is how pervasive our personal unconscious biases are. While we may not be aware of them, these biases affect our thinking and actions. As part of this research, we asked respondents if they had done a recognised unconscious bias test to surface what their biases might be.

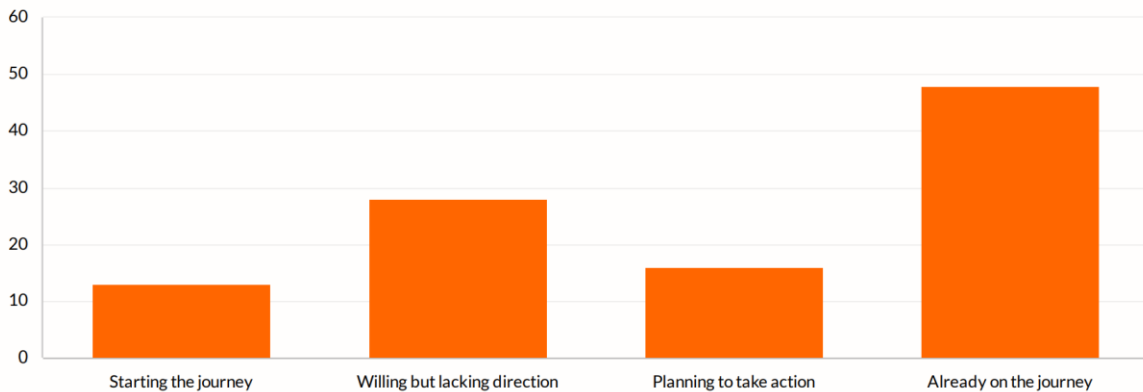


Base: Internal leaders - 139; Trustee leaders - 116; Staff - 1749

Use of unconscious bias tests was noticeably higher amongst those organisations who were already engaged with ethnic diversity issues.

### Percentage of those who had taken unconscious bias tests based on organisational readiness to work on ethnicity

Based on 15\* responses from organisations starting the journey, 1,242 willing but lacking direction, 164 planning to take action, 58\* already on the agenda (\* Caution: sample size small for these categories)



### 3.7.2 Leaders' understanding, knowledge and behaviour

We asked leaders about their confidence in talking about and taking action on ethnic diversity issues and to what extent they personally demonstrate inclusive behaviours. Leaders rated their own knowledge and understanding of ethnic diversity highly, however they felt more confident talking about ethnic diversity in relation to recruitment compared with employee retention and progression.

- 81% of trustees compared with 64% of executive leaders are confident talking about the issues around ethnicity

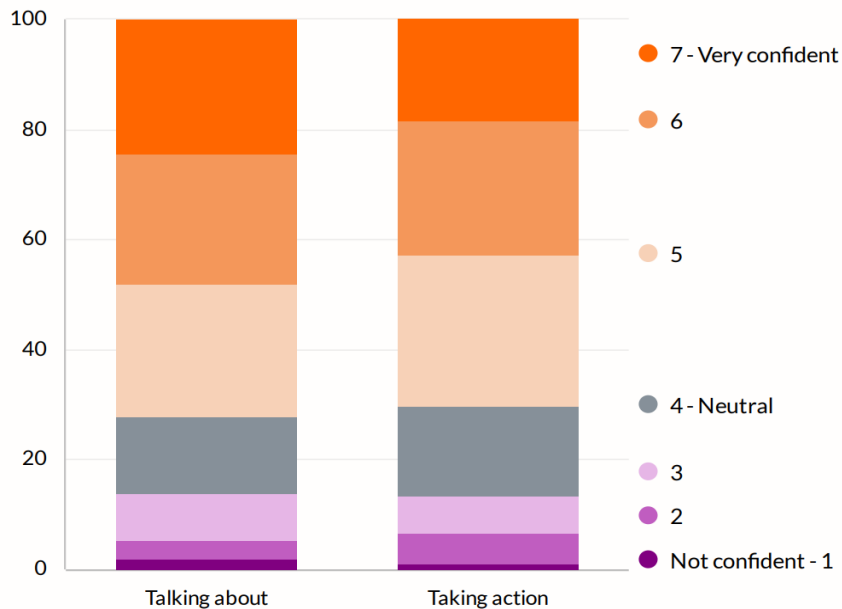
- 74% of trustees compared with 67% of executive leaders are confident taking action on these issues

Leaders in organisations that are already taking action on ethnicity generally rate their own knowledge and understanding significantly higher than those in organisations that have not yet started to think about these issues.

In testing this research with Project Working Group members, the level of confidence leaders expressed in talking about and taking action on ethnic diversity was thought to be surprising. Given Project Working Group colleagues' experience in discussing issues with peers, they would have expected these scores to be lower. It is unclear why the survey results are at odds with colleagues' anecdotal evidence.

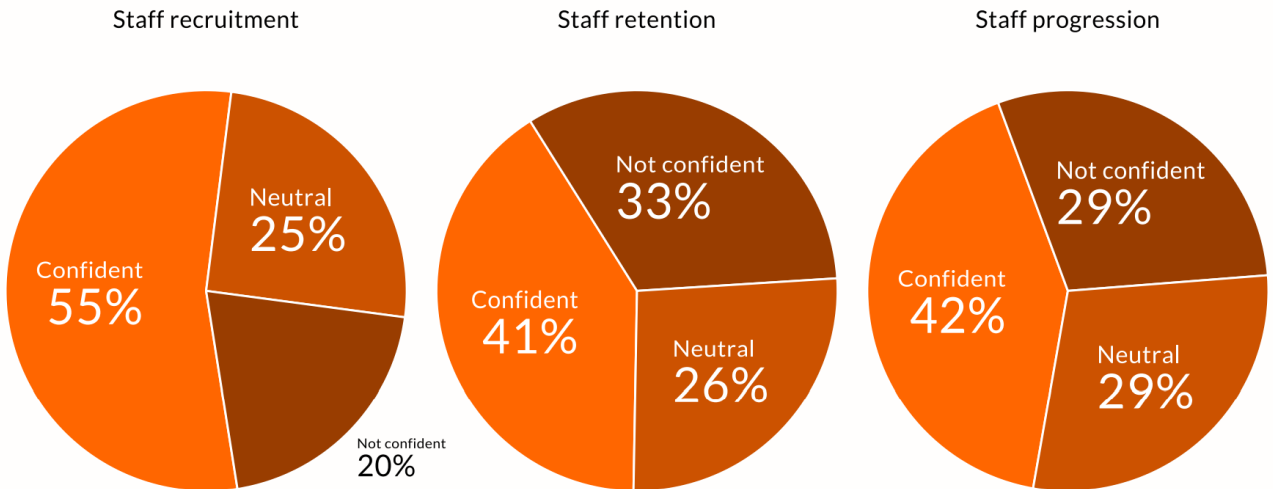
## Leaders' confidence in talking about and taking action on ethnic diversity issues

Based on 255 responses where respondents were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 0-7



## Leaders' understanding of ethnic diversity issues related to staff attraction, retention and progression

Based on 255 responses



### Reflection

Later in the research (see section 3.8.12) we find that prioritising learning on EDI is rated lowest of all the indicators related to organisational culture. In this section leaders have rated themselves highly in their confidence in talking about and taking action on ethnic diversity. Can both things be true?

There is a concept in “learning theory” that acquiring new knowledge, skills and behaviours involves four stages. We begin by being “unconsciously incompetent” (where we don’t know what we don’t know), move through being “consciously incompetent” (where we begin to understand how much we don’t know), then we become “consciously competent” (where we have acquired knowledge but still have to consciously work at a skill or behaviour) before finally becoming “unconsciously competent” (where knowledge, skills and behaviour become second nature).

Are leaders rating their own knowledge from a position of being consciously or unconsciously competent? Or is the reality that leaders in the environment sector are unaware of how much more they have to learn about ethnic diversity?

**Coupled with the data about levels of testing people have done on their own unconscious biases, what does that mean for the level of knowledge among those who are responsible for driving change on EDI and increased ethnicity?**

## **3.8 Organisational culture**

### **3.8.1 About the questions and responses**

Using dimensions of the [Full Colour Inclusion Framework](#), we asked leaders to rate their own leadership behaviours on a scale of 1 to 7 (where 1 indicated they do not demonstrate the behaviour, and 7 indicated they demonstrate it regularly). They were then asked to rate their own organisation on the same behaviours and scale. Staff were also asked to rate their organisation on the same behaviours and scale. The following charts show average scores between 1 to 7 calculated on the responses and excluding any 'don't know' responses.

### **3.8.2 Key observations**

There was a range of responses from different leaders, and it is important to bear this in mind in reading the results below. However, on average, leaders consistently rate themselves as demonstrating inclusive behaviours more often than they rate those behaviours being demonstrated in their organisation. Staff consistently rate their organisation lower than leaders for inclusive behaviours.

"Listening to others" was the cultural attribute which scored highest in relation to leaders perceptions of themselves, and leaders and staff perceptions of their organisations. However, this is also the area where leaders perceive the biggest gap between their own behaviour and that of the wider organisation.

All groups agree that organisations score lowest on prioritising learning on EDI issues. The biggest gap between what leaders think of their organisation and what staff think of their organisation is on involving a diverse range of people in decision making. Staff rate the presence of this cultural attribute in their organisations as being much lower than their leaders rate it.

#### **Reflection**

**It is not unusual for staff to be less positive about the culture of an organisation than leaders. This can be for a range of reasons including:**

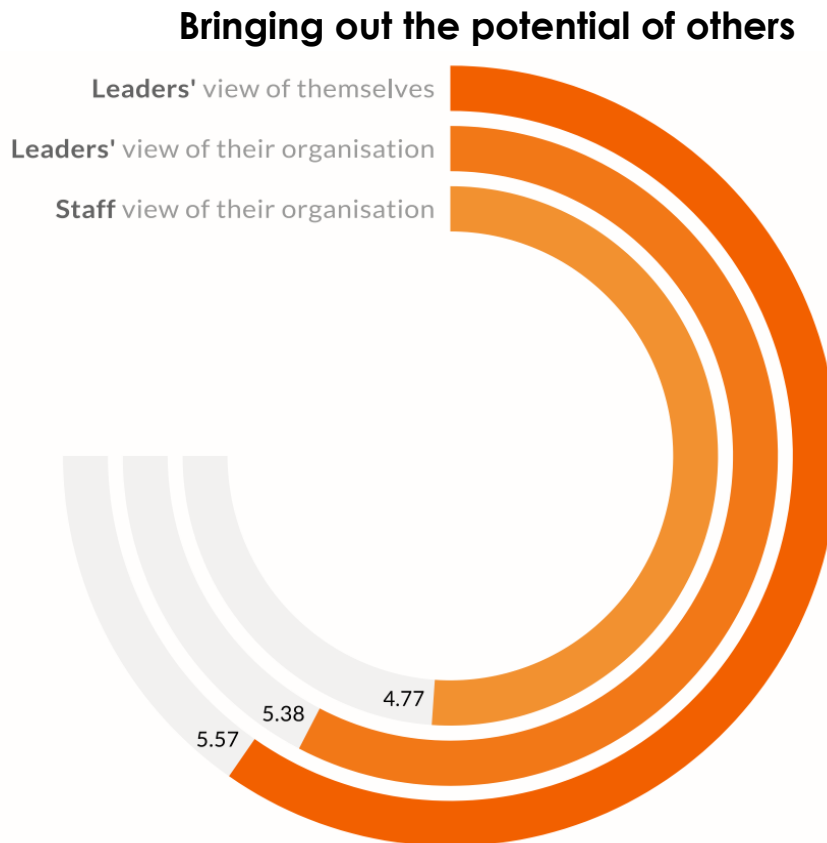
- **What leaders see can be different from staff**
- **Power differentials can mean leaders and staff experience an organisation differently**
- **It could be that these behaviours are more front of mind for leaders, leading them to rate themselves more highly on them**
- **Some leaders could lack self-awareness, leading them to rate themselves more highly than others experience those leaders' behaviours**

- Expectations between leaders and staff on what good “looks like” on these behaviours can differ
- Leaders may not be aware of their own impact on those around them, and on the culture of their organisations

How can leaders and staff coalesce around a common understanding of the kind of inclusive culture that would encourage ethnically diverse people to join an organisation and stay? If the organisation currently lacks ethnic diversity, how can it define the sort of culture that would attract this under-represented group?

### 3.8.3 Bringing out the potential of others

Bringing out others' potential involves investing time and resources. There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher at bringing out the potential of others than they rated their organisation. Staff rated their organisation lower than leaders.



Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.

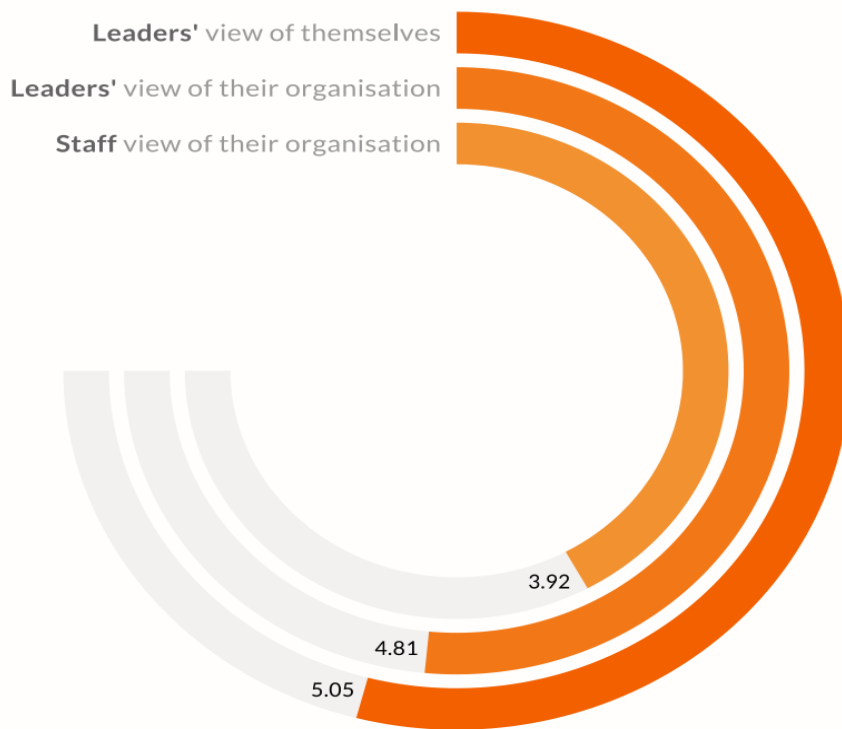


### 3.8.4 Involving a diverse range of people in decision making and problem solving

Having diverse people does not benefit an organisation unless it harnesses that diversity to inform how it makes decisions, solves problems and generates ideas, hence the importance of these indicators.

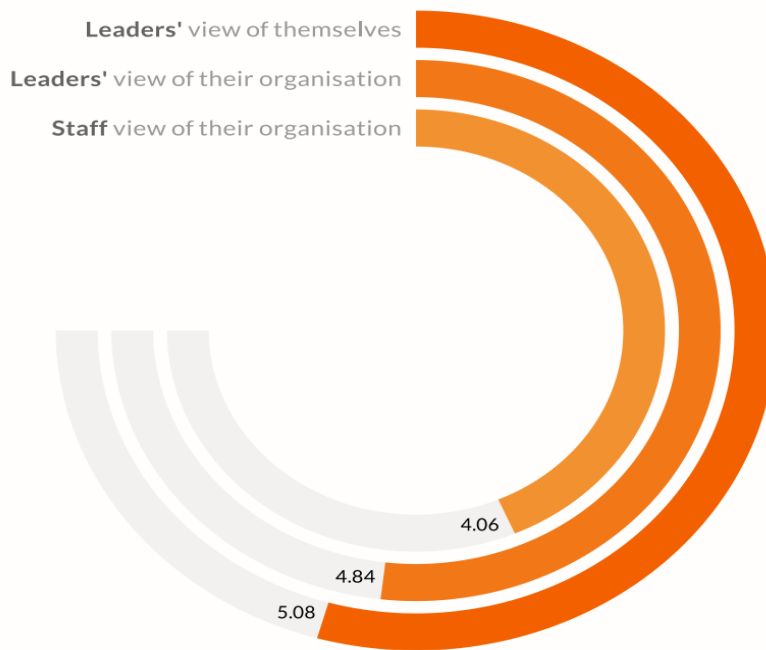
There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher on involving a range of people in decision making than they rated the organisation as a whole. Staff rated the involvement of a diverse range of people in decision making significantly lower. This measure had the largest gap between leaders and staff. On average leaders were likely to rate themselves higher at involving a diverse range of people in problem solving than they rated their organisation. Staff ratings on this issue were lower than leaders.

#### Views on involving a diverse range of people in decision making



Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

#### Views on involving a diverse range of people in problem solving



Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

These diagrams show the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same questions. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.

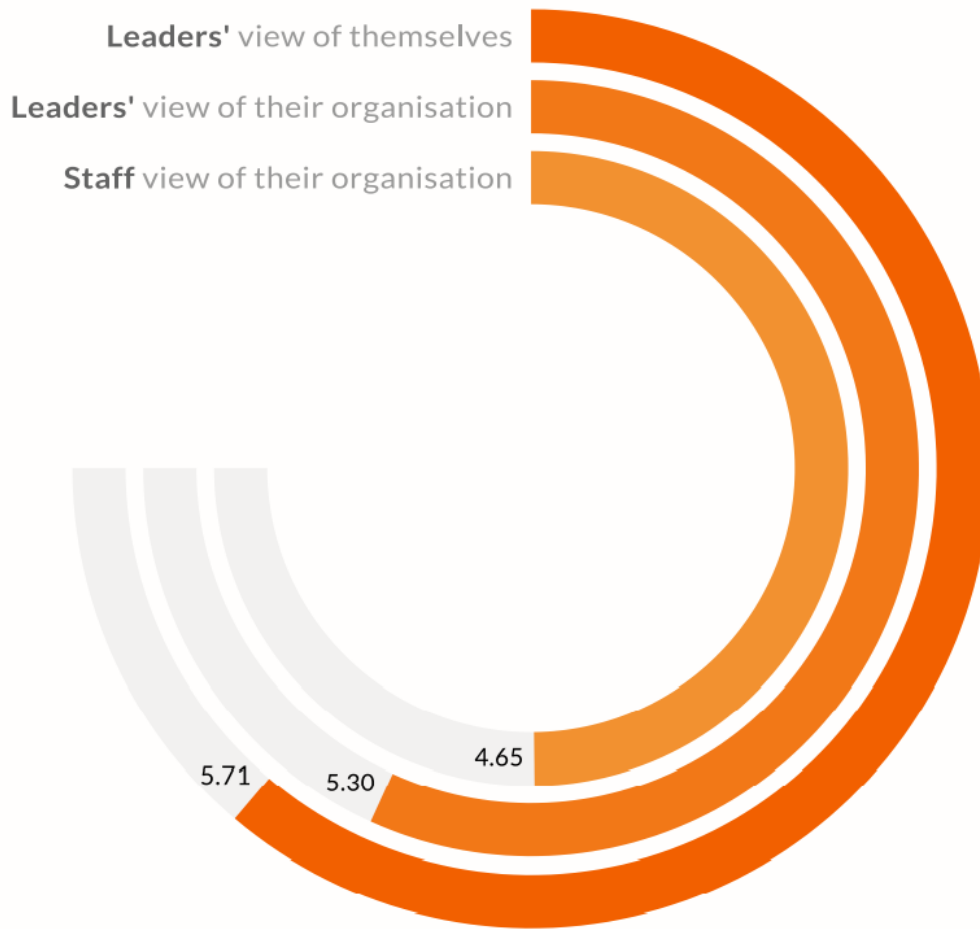
### Reflection

Given the scale of the crisis in nature, if organisations are not optimising their talent in decision making, problem solving and finding new ways of doing things (i.e. innovation – see section 3.8.7) this is more than an impediment to attracting greater ethnic diversity. This is a risk to organisations' mission, and a potential threat to their success or even survival in the volatile times in which we live.

### 3.8.5 Willingness to explore different points of view

This is a core attribute of inclusive cultures. There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher in their willingness to explore different points of view than they rated their organisations. Staff rating of their organisation on this was lower than their leaders.

## Exploring different points of view



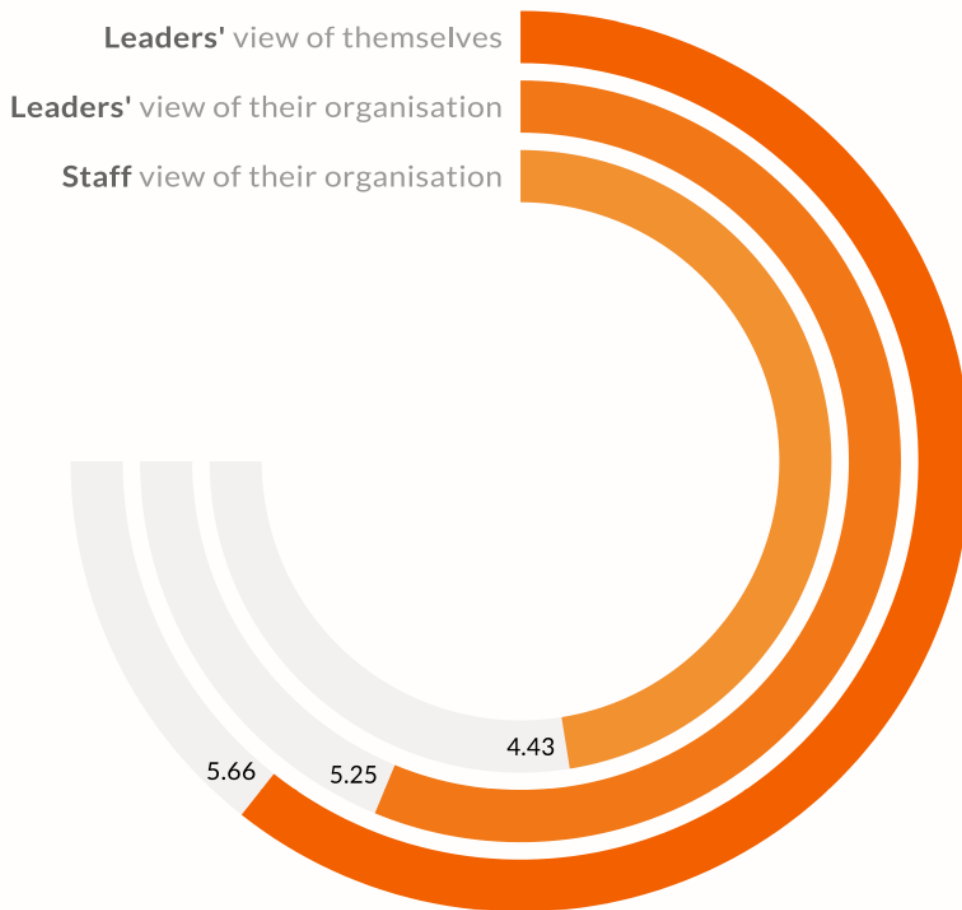
Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.

### 3.8.6 Makes the most of available talent

There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher than they rated their organisation in making the most of available talent. Staff views of the organisation on this indicator were lower than those of their leaders.

## Makes the most of available talent



Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

*This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.*

### 3.8.7 Looking for new ways of doing things

This cultural attribute relates to organisations' ability to innovate. There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher than they rated their organisation in finding new ways of doing things. Staff rated their organisation on this lower than their leaders.

#### Looking for new ways of doing things



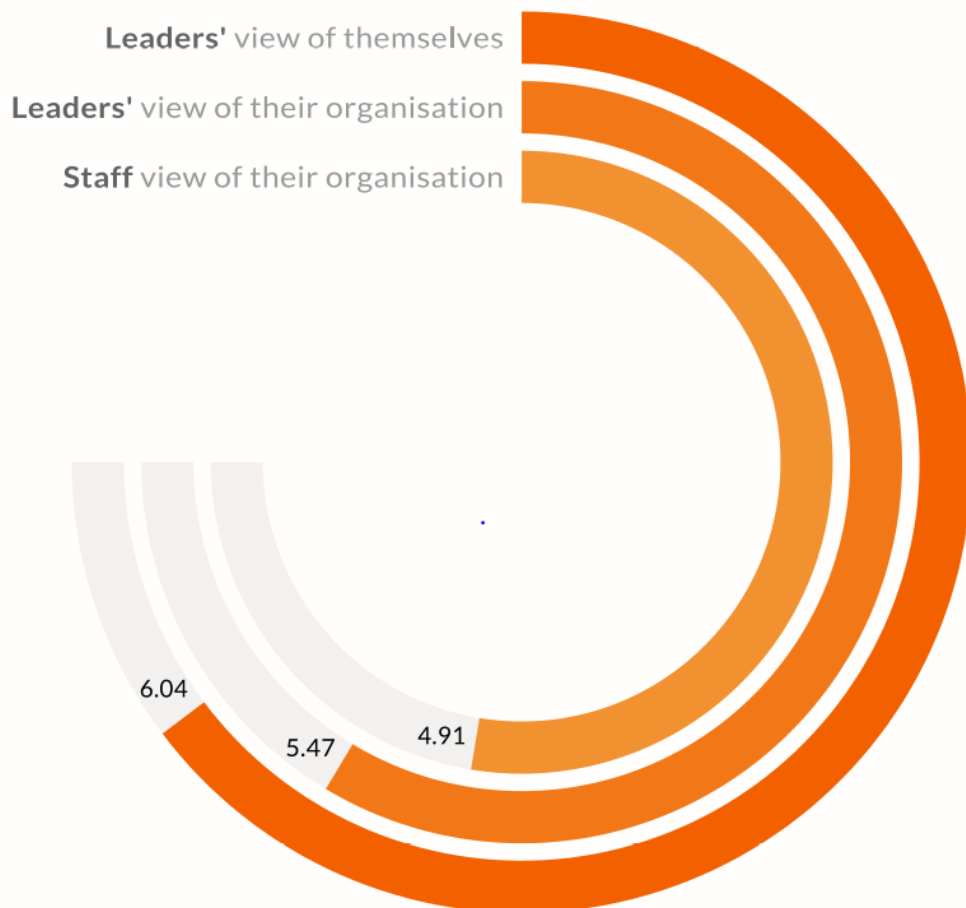
Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

*This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.*

### 3.8.8 Listening to others' ideas

There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher than they rated their organisation in listening to the views of others. Staff rated this lower than leaders. This was the area with the biggest difference in the views of leaders about themselves compared with the organisation as a whole.

#### Listening to the views of others



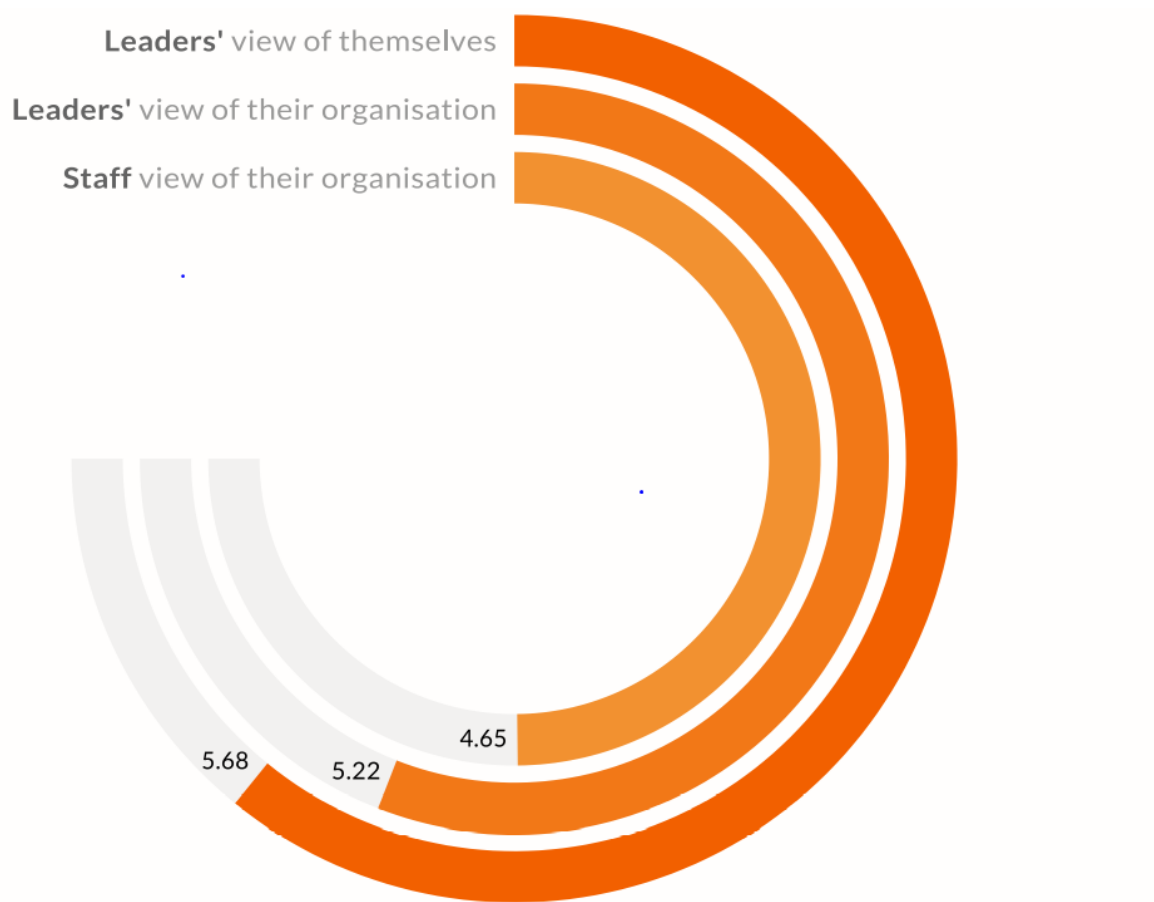
Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

*This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.*

### 3.8.9 Acting on others' ideas

The cultural attribute of acting on others' ideas is about individuals actively seeking out and acting on the suggestions they do not generate themselves. This is key to harnessing diversity within organisations and acknowledges that no one person or group of people in an organisation has the monopoly on good ideas. There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher than they rated their organisations on acting on the ideas of others. Staff rating of their organisation on this indicator was lower than that of leaders.

#### Acting on others' ideas



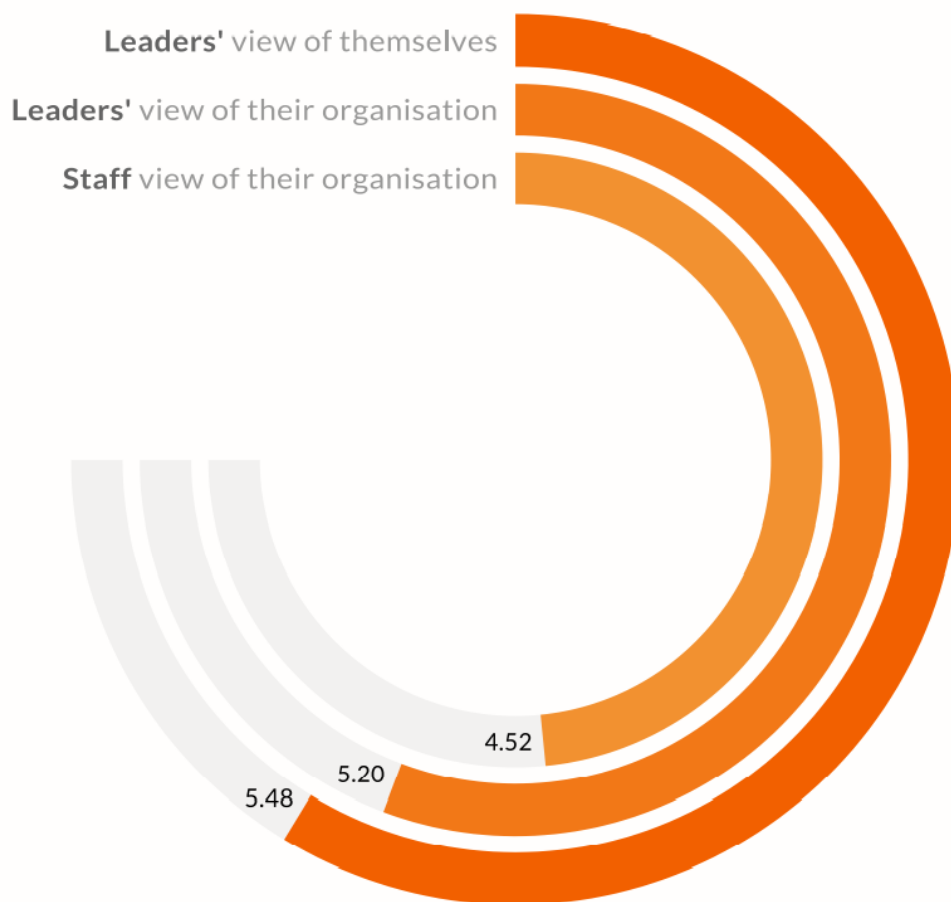
Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

*This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.*

### 3.8.10 Asking others to challenge current thinking

As colleagues progress up an organisational hierarchy, it can leave others less willing to challenge them. Therefore, it is essential for leaders in particular to actively seek out and normalise challenge to their thinking. This is an important way organisations can make the most of diverse thoughts and ideas. There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher than they rated their organisation in asking others to challenge current thinking. Staff rating of the organisation on this indicator was lower than that of leaders.

#### Asking others to challenge current thinking



Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

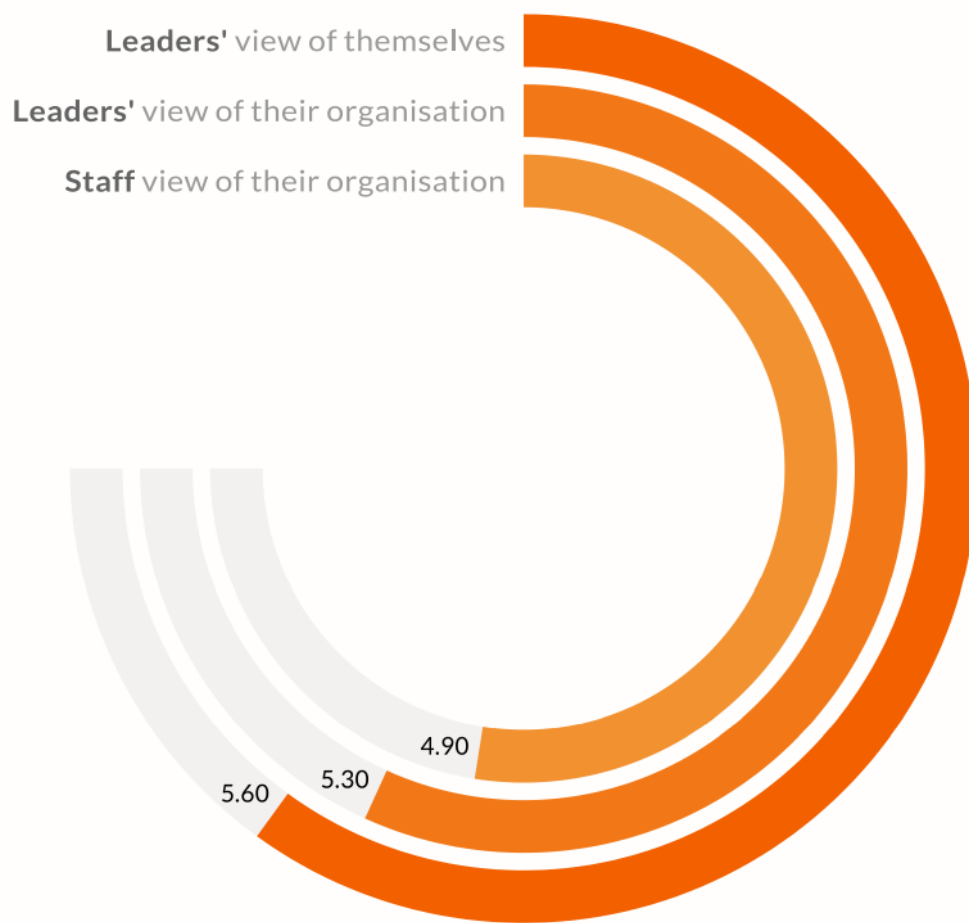
*This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.*



### 3.8.11 Demonstrates understanding of others' feelings

Empathy, particularly for those who are different, is a core cultural attribute for inclusive organisations. There was a variation in scores between leaders, however on average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher than their organisation in their ability to demonstrate understanding of the feelings of others. Staff rating of the organisation on this indicator was lower.

#### Demonstrates understanding of others' feelings



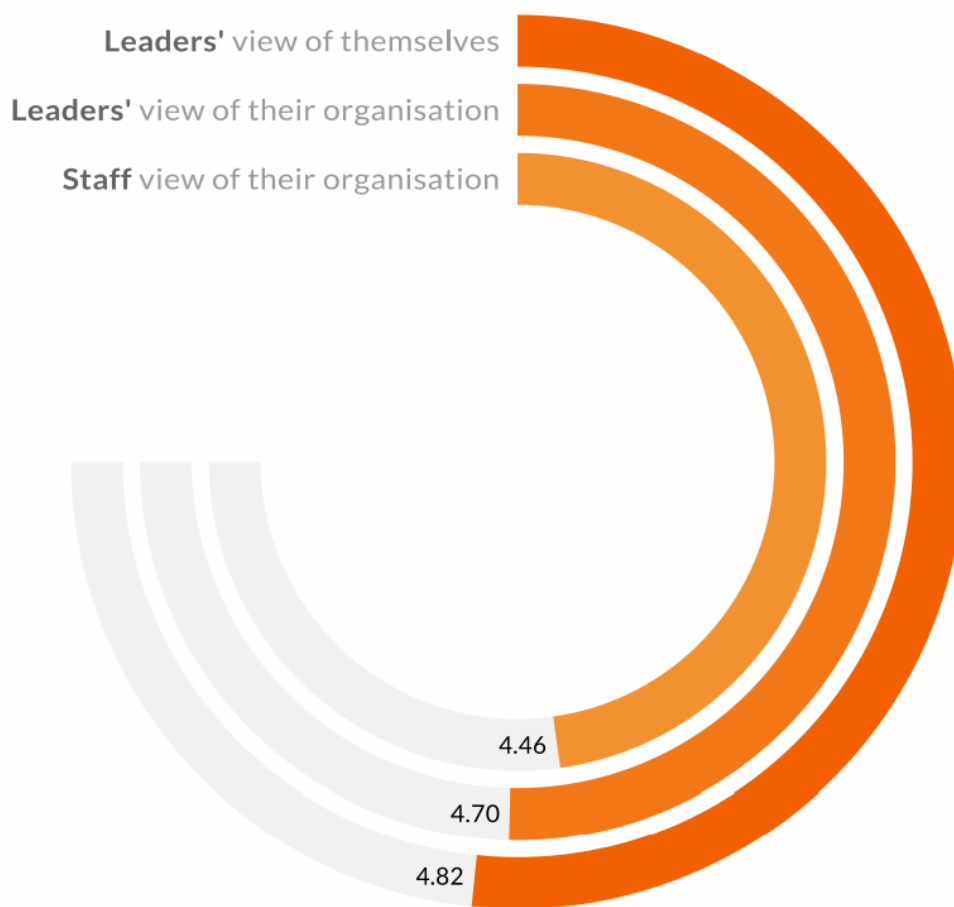
Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

*This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.*

### 3.8.12 Prioritises learning on issues of equality, diversity & inclusion

There was a variation in views between leaders. On average leaders were more likely to rate themselves higher than they rated their organisation on prioritising learning on equality, diversity and inclusion. Staff rated the organisation on this indicator lower than leaders. Of all the inclusion indicators surveyed, learning was the one that all participants rated the lowest.

#### Prioritises learning on equality, diversity & inclusion



Base: Leaders 255; Staff 1749

*This diagram shows the average rating on a scale of 1 to 7. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they (leaders) or their organisation (leaders and staff) demonstrate this behaviour on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely). Staff were asked the same question. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded.*

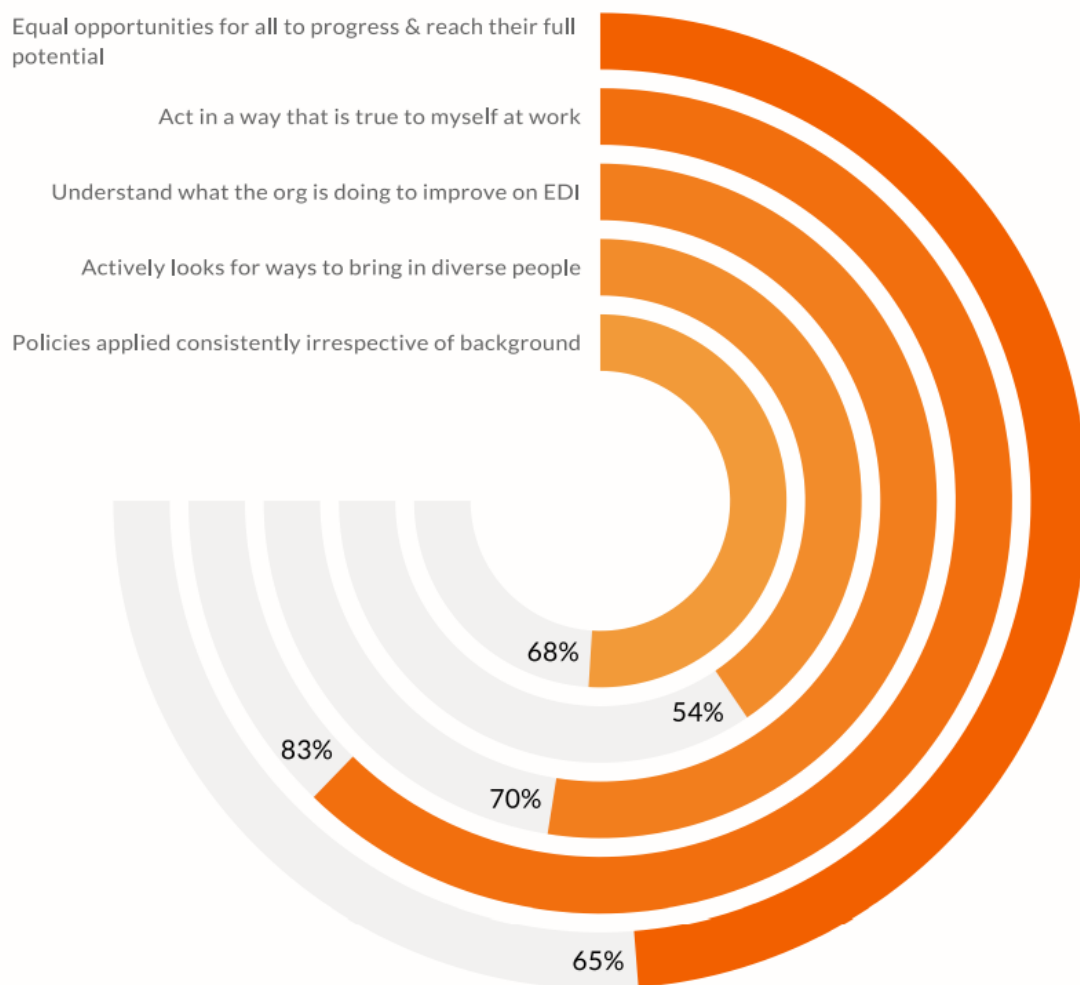
### 3.9 Staff perceptions of equality, diversity and inclusion in their organisations

Staff were offered a range of statements on equality, diversity and inclusion as they relate to their organisations and asked whether they agreed with the statements.

Organisations scored lowest on "actively looks for ways to bring in diverse people". Interestingly only 68% of respondents felt that policies are applied consistently irrespective of background, meaning 32% (nearly a third) did not agree with this statement. 65% agreed with the statement that there are equal opportunities for all to progress and reach their full potential, meaning a third of all respondents did not.

#### Percentage of staff who agree with EDI statements

Based on 1749 staff



## Reflection

On understanding of ethnic diversity issues, leaders rated their confidence in talking about and acting on ethnic diversity highest in relation to recruitment, yet staff rated “actively looks for ways to bring in diverse people” lowest. What is behind this disconnect between leaders’ perception of their own understanding and staff perception of organisational actions? Is it about lack of systems and processes? If so, given leaders perception of their confidence in taking action, what is stopping getting those systems and processes in place?

### 3.9.1 How scores differed between white and minority ethnic people

While the overall numbers of responses from staff from a minority ethnic background were relatively low and therefore need to be treated with caution, it is worth looking at the differences in their thoughts compared with their white colleagues.

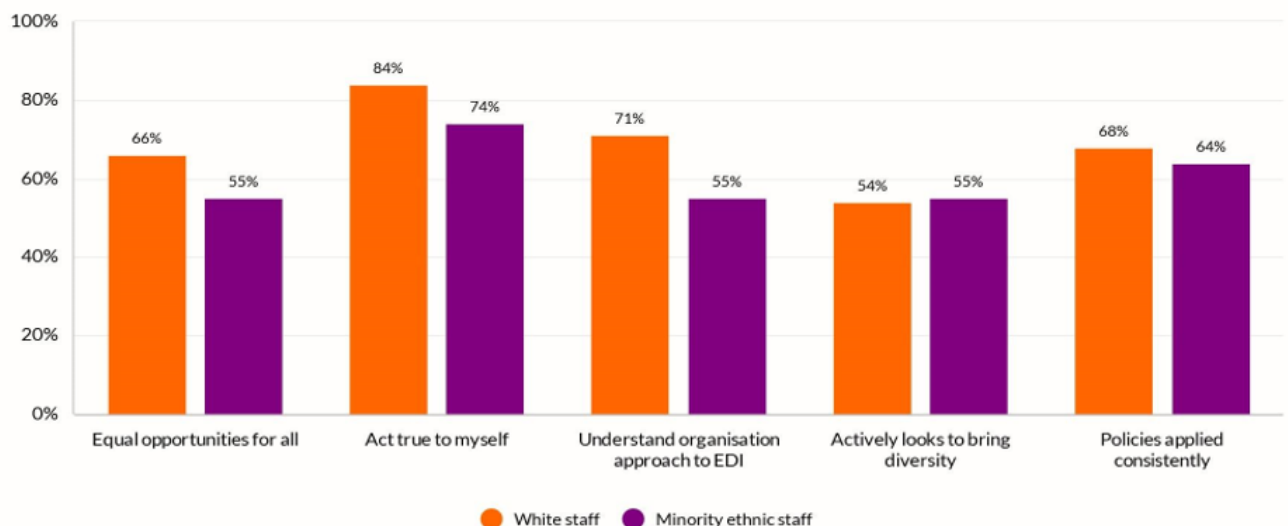
The biggest differences in rating between minority ethnic and white staff were on:

- There being equal opportunities for all to progress and reach their full potential
- Understanding of what their organisation is doing to improve on equality, diversity and inclusion.

On both the issues above, minority ethnic respondents rated lower than their white colleagues, as they did for all indicators bar one. On “actively looks to bring diversity”, 55% of minority ethnic colleagues agreed with the statement compared with 54% of white colleagues.

### Percentage of staff who agree with EDI statements

Based on 1,608 white staff and 98 minority ethnic staff



### **3.10 Further reflections on what the data is telling us**

It is important to understand that minority ethnic people are more than their skin colour. In addition, they may face a number of interlinked barriers to entry to the environment sector, for example their gender, disability or sexuality. However, it is also true that the barriers related to ethnicity will be different from the barriers related to, for example, disability. Therefore, how does the sector address the specific issues facing minority ethnic people?

One solution might be to focus on inclusion, to ensure all people are enabled to participate in the sector, regardless of any particular characteristics they may have. In Full Colour's experience, however, concepts around inclusion are poorly understood, and are often equated only with being friendly or valuing people. Whilst these things are important, defining inclusion this narrowly risks grossly underestimating the systemic barriers related to inclusion that minority ethnic people (and other minoritised groups) face. It also fails to recognise that true inclusion involves seeking out and encouraging challenge. This in turn requires particularly skilled leadership which can balance the tensions that bringing challenge into working life can create, while ensuring positive relationships and workplace atmosphere.

On a different issue, when unconscious biases intersect with organisational cultures which lack the inclusive attributes set out above, this can distort our ability to see what is truly going on and therefore address areas where individual leaders and organisations as a whole can do better. How can organisations develop a true picture of what is happening within their organisations?

### **3.11 In conclusion**

While leaders' commitment to the sector becoming more ethnically diverse is high, there is a lack of clarity of what is actually happening to move this agenda forward, even between leaders in the same organisation.

The data shows significant cultural barriers remain to improving diversity within the environment sector and that understanding and perceptions of what those cultural barriers are vary within organisations, and between white and minority ethnic colleagues.

Until the sector recognises and responds to cultural obstacles and coalesces around a common understanding of the importance and impact of increasing ethnic diversity, progress is likely to continue to be slow.

In the next stage of this review, we hope to address some of these issues in ways that will support the sector, and the organisations within it, on its journey towards greater ethnic diversity.



# Qualitative results and analysis

## 4 Qualitative results and analysis

### 4.1 About the participants

36 people took part in the qualitative research

Type of participant	Number
Minority ethnic colleagues	11
Board chairs	2
CEOs	9
Senior executive leaders	6
Frontline managers	5
Organisational EDI lead officers	3

It should be noted that those who took part in the qualitative research were largely those who have an existing interest in the issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. As set out in section 2.7.2, respondents to the survey were asked if they would like to take part in the qualitative research, and most participants were drawn from these volunteers.

Participants included those:

- From organisations at different stages of the journey towards improved ethnic diversity, equality, “wider” diversity and inclusion
- At different stages of their personal learning journey on the issues
- From a mix of size of organisation

#### 4.1.1 A note on the analysis

Some of the questions explored in the qualitative research were common to all participants. Where this was the case, results were combined from the interviews and focus groups for the purpose of analysis. The sample size combined with the broad range of answers made it difficult to distinguish differences in theme between responses from the different groups.

### 4.2 Understanding organisational context (beyond ethnicity)

Trustees, CEOs and senior executive leaders were asked about their wider organisational priorities so that the context within which they were considering ethnic diversity could be better understood.

Participants described a range of wider organisational priorities. It was also evident that different organisations were at different stages of their “strategy cycle”. Some

were in the process of developing new strategies, some were part way through delivering their strategies. Some of those at the strategy development phase were using the opportunity to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into their overall organisational strategy.

When asked for their wider organisational priorities the following were mentioned by participants:

- Managing organisational change
- Dealing with changes post-COVID pandemic
- Developing and/or operationalising a new strategy
- Generating income and/or growth
- Achieving mission through policy and influence
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Raising organisational profile and ensuring the organisation is heard by political and public policy decision makers
- Addressing an ageing volunteering base
- Organisational learning and culture
- Managing operational pressures

The list above represents all the answers received, and no more than two or three respondents mentioned any one of the above.

### **Reflection**

**Given the immediacy and scale of some of these priorities, how can organisations keep focused on work to increase ethnic diversity, which might feel like a less pressing priority?**

## **4.3 What does the term “ethnic minority” mean?**

The focus of this review is on how the environment sector can become more ethnically diverse. But who exactly do we mean?

Trustees, CEOs and senior executive leaders were asked to define the term “ethnic minority”. A range of responses was received. Some people talked about the ethnicity of staff, others talked about the communities with which they engage and a number struggled to answer the question. No-one referred to particular ethnic groups that they were trying to attract, and it is possible that this will vary anyway, depending on the geographical location of different organisations and how this relates to the ethnicity of the communities around them.

The following answers were received to the question “what does the term ethnic minority mean?”

- Representative of the population
- Representative of the places in which we are based
- Under-represented ethnic groups in the environment sector



- People's sense of their own identity
- People whose parents and grandparents came from elsewhere
- One of the protected characteristics
- Largely it means people of colour
- Reaction against us being a largely white movement
- Don't know

### **Reflection**

**If you can't define collectively what you are seeking to achieve as a sector, how can you achieve it? Many of the suggested definitions were very broad and do not lend themselves to informing targeted plans. There is also a risk that "unsurfaced" assumptions could at best lead to actions which limit organisations' success in becoming more ethnically diverse. At worst they could put off the very people organisations are seeking to attract. Will the same initiatives really be as successful in attracting, for example, working class people of Pakistani origin as they would be with middle-class, second-generation people whose families came from Nigeria?**

**Is it possible to develop a useful definition of the term "ethnic minority"? Given the rural nature of many environmental organisations and initiatives, for example, how can ethnic diversity be defined in a way which is relevant given their surrounding populations? Should there be a sector wide definition of "ethnic minority", or should the definition be left to each organisation? If the latter, do individual organisations have the right skills, knowledge and awareness of their own unconscious biases to define the term appropriately?**

## **4.4 What would change if the sector was more ethnically diverse?**

Trustees, CEOs and senior executive leaders were asked to describe what would change for the sector if it became more ethnically diverse. Some of the answers received were strategic, some more operationally focused. All of the answers were very broad, and therefore difficult to use as the basis of developing precise change plans. It was also difficult for some respondents to think about ethnic diversity in isolation from other forms of diversity, and from equality and inclusion more broadly.

### **Reflection**

**Without clarity about the differing barriers facing people with diverse backgrounds, how can organisations develop effective plans to redress a lack of diversity? Will actions to attract women with caring responsibilities be relevant for people with minority ethnic backgrounds?**

#### 4.4.1 What would change if the sector was more ethnically diverse (strategic responses)?

The following responses were received:

- It would change how people see us (so we wouldn't be seen as being just for white people)
- It would bring credibility
- It would give us the ability to connect/mobilise/communicate in relevant/meaningful ways with diverse communities
- It would bring diverse ideas/perspectives/ways of doing things
- It would change *how* we deliver our mission (not the mission itself)
- It would lead to better decision making and progress towards our mission would be quicker
- Structural racism would ebb away

NOTE: some people said that they didn't know what would change for the sector were it to become more ethnically diverse. There is clearly work to be done at sector level to communicate the value of greater ethnic diversity.

##### **Reflection**

All of the above answers are helpful starting points for thinking about ethnic diversity. However, they are too broad and imprecise to be used as the basis of planning. Are people thinking deeply enough about the issue? Arguably, none of the answers include changes that feel truly urgent to many within the sector, compared with the pressure of short-term financial issues, or the need to respond quickly to legislative opportunities or imminent threats to nature. If there is no urgent answer to the question of why ethnic diversity matters to the sector, what will drive the effort that will be required to change, given other priorities competing for time, resource and focus, and given that many of the issues minority ethnic people face are not experienced by white people who largely make up the sector?

#### 4.4.2 What would change if the sector was more ethnically diverse (practical answers)?

Three answers were offered:

- Boards would be more diverse
- As a small organisation our relationships would be more diverse
- EDI would be more of a priority

##### **Reflections**

If it takes more minority ethnic people to join the sector for EDI to become more of an issue, does that mean in some people's minds EDI is a minority person's issue? It may not be what was meant, but the assumptions underpinning this view may warrant further reflection, particularly by leaders who have a key role to play in driving change.

### 4.4.3 Overall reflections on the question of what would change if the sector was more diverse

#### *Reflections*

Assumptions seemed to underpin some of what was said in answer to the question of what would change if the sector were to become more diverse, most obviously that if the sector was more diverse, this would in and of itself lead to change. This fails to recognise that for many minority ethnic people, the way to survive and thrive is to minimise those aspects of themselves that make them different, and to assimilate as much as possible into the prevailing culture and mindset of those around them. True change is about more than numbers, it is about diverse people having the freedom to express difference and organisational structures and cultures which enable this to happen.

The answers assumed that the sector and leaders within it were ready for the sort of challenge diverse people could bring. Is that truly the case? Such challenge would bring disruption as well as benefits. It would also require a particular set of skills for leaders, so that they could hold the tensions that arise from challenge while creating a working culture which is welcoming and psychologically safe.

The answers also did not take into account power differentials.

- If ethnically diverse people join the sector in junior roles, as is likely given much of the effort to attract diverse people seems to be at the beginning of the career pipeline, would they have the power to change the sector? This is a very big ask of people early on in their professional lives, and who will need to rely on their managers and leaders to support their career progression.
- Even if people's hunt for more ethnically diverse board members are successful, how can one or two diverse trustees be expected to change patterns of thinking and board culture which may have developed over several years? If they are a first-time trustee, how can they stand up against trustees who may have several years' governance experience, which gives their views a status that a new trustee might lack? Even if these diverse candidates tried to offer challenge, without being properly set up for success, how much of this challenge would lead to change, and how much would lead to conflict?

If the desire is to bring ethnically diverse people onto boards, what can environment sector organisations offer that other boards do not? Since the prominence of Black Lives Matter, there has been a particularly active drive from many boards across many sectors to find diverse people to join them.

Some participants' answers seemed to expect "other" people to enter the sector/ their organisations and to drive change. Is this a realistic expectation? Is it even fair to ask? Even if minority ethnic people were able and willing to challenge the status quo, is the sector ready for that challenge and prepared to change as a result? What is stopping the sector and organisations within it from changing now?

It is also important to recognise that while the involvement of minority ethnic people in shaping the journey ahead is crucial, the burden of making that change happen should not lie on their shoulders. It is leaders who have the power to change things, and therefore they should take on the lion's share of the responsibility for that change.

## 4.5 The views of minority ethnic people on what brought them to the environment sector

Sections 4.5 to 4.9 set out the responses of minority ethnic colleagues who took part in the qualitative research. As explained above, the questions asked of them differed from questions asked of leaders. In speaking with minority ethnic colleagues, we sought to understand their journey to and through the environment sector.

### 4.5.1 Why did you join the sector?

Some of the responses will likely resonate with white colleagues. An interest in climate change, the environment and how these issues link with social justice were the most frequent answers given to why minority ethnic people joined the sector. Other answers were:

- Did a relevant degree
- Stumbled into it
- Volunteered, then was offered a short-term contract
- Religious values align with protecting nature

It is interesting to note that some respondents had an urban upbringing with little access to nature, but this did not seem to be a barrier to developing an interest in the environment.

### *Reflection*

**How many of these reasons for wanting to join the environment sector would be similar to those of white people?**

The issue around religious values is an interesting one. Anecdotally, a narrative about why ethnically diverse people don't join the environment sector is because nature, or volunteering (a key route to the sector) is not part of their "culture". This is palpably untrue of, for example, some South Asian cultures and religions, so it is an assumption worth exploring further.

It may be, for example, that the barrier is not so much to do with particular ethnic groups' perspectives on nature, but more to do with the environment sector taking specific approaches or having a distinctive "conventional conservation culture" to which people with different heritages cannot relate. If this is the case, then a wider appreciation of different approaches to environmentalism may be part of the solution.

#### 4.5.2 What helped you to join the sector (enablers)

The responses were:

- Adverts saying the organisation did not want environment sector experience, just passion (these relate to posts that were not related to conservation, climate change etc.)
- Organisation (which enabled entry to the sector) said it was looking for different experience/perspectives
- Realising I had the qualifications/skills they were looking for
- Support from parents

#### Reflection

The first answer (above) may be evidence that some organisations are beginning to think more carefully about being more precise about essential requirements needed when recruiting to posts. However as 4.5.3 (below) shows, one of the big barriers diverse candidates continue face is unnecessary role requirements which they cannot fulfil.

#### 4.5.3 Was there anything that hindered you in joining the sector (barriers)

The responses were:

- Not having a background in environment sector, despite having the skills for the specific role being applied for
- Having to take a pay cut to join the sector
- The need to volunteer or do low paid jobs to enter the sector to gain the experience required to apply for paid roles (which is not possible for people without other means of financial support)
- Not having the confidence or not realising they had the right skills
- Being the only Black person in the organisation
- Intersectional issues, e.g. being a woman working with teams of dominant males can be off-putting

- Not having a car meant the person could not get to interviews

### **Reflection**

**Most organisations need multiple sets of skills to be run successfully. There was a theme from participants that other skills were not valued as highly as expertise or experience in the environment. Do you really need to be a nature conservation expert to be a finance officer?**

#### **4.5.4 What advice would you give others thinking of joining the sector**

The overwhelming theme from the responses was around resilience. The responses were:

- Be prepared for rejection
- Just keep trying
- Do it but be prepared that the sector is not diverse

## **4.6 The views of minority ethnic people on support for career progression**

Most respondents said there was no organisational support for career progression.

### **Reflection**

**This feedback may reflect wider sector issues on the lack of support for career progression common to everyone across the sector. A question for the sector is, if it wants to redress under-representation of certain groups, might it need to consider investing in career progression for those groups to fast track the goal of become more diverse over time?**

Responses to questions on what helped their career progression were:

- Personal drive/pushing for help
- Going above and beyond white colleagues to be recognised
- Organisation being open to training
- Organisation paying for course/qualification
- Line manager support
- Affinity groups

This first two responses are to do with personal characteristics rather than organisational interventions. Affinity groups were cited as a useful source of support in larger organisations. However, participants in smaller organisations remarked that they were often the only minority ethnic person, or one of only a very small handful.

Some participants reported poor practice from their managers, such as training being identified during appraisals but not subsequently actioned.

Some examples shared were clearly poor management practice. With others it was less clear whether people were describing behaviour linked to overt or covert racism (see section 4.8) or unconscious bias. For example, some people mentioned others being promoted when the participant had not been made aware that a new internal vacancy was available. Is this “tap on the shoulder” approach to recruitment poor recruitment practice or a way of promoting “people like us”? Others mentioned pay differentials for similar roles. Is this overt or covert discrimination or a process and policy issue, where pay decisions are not being made transparent, or are not awarded on the basis of transparent criteria? Given the range of other issues related to overt and covert bias that minority ethnic people are facing in the sector (see section 4.8) it is understandable that minority ethnic colleagues are interpreting these practices as further evidence of unconscious bias and overt or covert racism, which indeed they could be.

## **4.7 The views of minority ethnic people on career pathways**

Most respondents did not have a sense of what a career pathway looks like for them. A number mentioned lack of transparency on the promotion of (white) colleagues around them, such as finding out that someone had been promoted to a role that they were not aware was available or being unclear about the basis on which colleagues were being awarded pay rises.

Some discussed the need for mentoring if they come from families where no relatives or friends had worked in similar settings leaving them with no-one to go to for advice. Others talked about the lack of ability to take on volunteering or low paid jobs as a means of exploring what they might be interested in as future career paths.

## 4.8 The views of minority ethnic people on whether there is racism in the sector

When asked whether there is racism in the sector, all minority ethnic participants without hesitation said yes.

- A small number talked about overt racism (examples are not shared to protect anonymity)
- All participants mentioned covert racism\* which took the form of:
  - Microaggressions
  - Appeasing/explaining away unacceptable behaviour/behaviour with a racist undertone
  - Lack of repercussions for poor behaviour, including behaviour with a racist undertone
- Some talked of unconscious bias manifesting in how colleagues interacted with them e.g.
  - Pressure to lead on equality, diversity and inclusion issues within their organisation when they are not an EDI expert, simply because they are from a minority ethnic background
  - “Using” the few minority ethnic people within the organisation to make the organisation appear more diverse than it is (e.g. using their image in publications or on websites in ways which felt exploitative to the minority ethnic person, and sometimes without permission)
- Structural racism/ racism inherent in policies and practices

\* By covert racism we mean racism which is subtle but where the person exhibiting this behaviour is aware to a greater or lesser extent of what they are doing, even though they may not admit this.

### Reflection

The exploration of racism in the sector was not the main focus of this research. The findings above would suggest that further research is needed into the extent and prevalence of racism in the environment sector.

## 4.9 Ethnic minority people’s views on the cultural traits that would help the sector become more diverse

Using the [Full Colour Inclusion Framework](#), participants explored what cultural inclusion attributes would need to be developed for the sector to progress towards greater ethnic diversity. There was no consensus. Most of the feedback centred on organisations and leaders going beyond “lip service”, genuinely listening and being willing to change.

### Reflections

- What can organisations do to learn from the lived experience of ethnically diverse people already in the sector to improve practice?



- Much racism is subtle. Are white majority colleagues even aware of what subtle racism is and looks like?
- How much do minority ethnic people have to assimilate to survive? If they do have to change themselves and assimilate, what's the point of greater diversity?
- If organisations don't change as a result of greater diversity, how will they glean the benefits?
- If there is racism in the sector, why would people of colour want to join it? And if racism is a reason not to join the sector, are the various efforts to attract diverse candidates doomed to fail?

## 4.10 Hopes and ambitions for work on ethnic diversity in the environment sector

All respondents – executive leaders, trustees, EDI leads and minority ethnic colleagues - were asked for their hopes and ambitions for ethnic diversity in the environment sector. There were a few themes in peoples' hopes and ambitions for the future:

- We have achieved ethnic diversity so it is no longer an issue
- We are representative of the country and more ethnically diverse people enter the sector (members, communities, employees, students)
- We are able to engage ethnically diverse people in our mission
- Being diverse becomes core to how we deliver our mission, and it brings new ways of working
- We have a consistent approach and principles
- We see diversity as a strength
- We do not see minority ethnic people as being not as good
- People are judged on performance and nothing else
- We will "capacity build" with those communities most affected by climate change
- We will see ethnic minority people in leadership roles
- Ethnic minority people feel like they belong in the countryside
- There will be an end to white saviourism in climate justice
- There will be greater awareness of cultural differences, not just skin colour
- The urban environment would be greener
- People understand the business case as well as the moral case for greater diversity
- Trustees understand why we are doing this work

### **Reflections**

**There appeared to be assumptions in what some leaders said in relation to their hopes and ambitions for greater ethnic diversity:**

- That ethnically diverse people “should” care about the environment, and it is simply a case of working out how to make “them” see this
- That “they” need to join and help “us” with “our” mission (not necessarily recognising there are other “missions” or causes in the world that diverse people could choose to engage with, or that other people’s perspectives and solutions on climate change and environmental issues might be different/equally legitimate)

Frontline managers were more likely to think of practical things they would like to achieve through greater ethnic diversity. Some minority ethnic participants also expressed practical hopes and ambitions. Practical ideas were:

- Having a route map that is meaningful to our sector
- That we (as minority ethnic people) have a voice in the conversation
- We stop “parachute science” (where white people travel the world, use the expertise and knowledge of local people to create successful initiatives and take the credit for the work)
- There are mentors/champions for minority ethnic people in the sector
- That there are less conversations and more action
- Organisations would be more interesting places to work

### **Reflections**

Only one person talked about changing internal ways of working and ways of thinking. The assumption implicit in many answers was “we’ll bring more diverse people into the organisation that we currently are”. This risks underestimating the scale of internal change needed within organisations and within the sector if it is serious about attracting more ethnic diversity.

There needs to be a compelling reason to do the work required to make the sector more ethnically diverse – why does it matter to your mission? The lack of compelling reasons that feels viscerally important might be one factor that is holding the sector back from greater and faster progress.

One of the ways of creating a compelling answer to the “why does greater ethnicity matter” question is to hook EDI issues into your mission. Do you have a clear sector-wide mission to hook onto?

## **4.11 What are the enablers of change?**

Trustees, CEOs, senior executive leaders and organisational EDI Leads were asked what they felt were factors enabling progress towards greater ethnic diversity in the environment sector. Responses were wide-ranging and included:

- Desire/enthusiasm

- Context of increased awareness e.g. as a result of Black Lives Matter
- For those in the development phase of their strategy there is an opportunity to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into future plans
- Funders are beginning to ask about the diversity of boards
- The link between environmental and social justice is becoming clearer
- Seeing good practice in others
- CEO and senior leader buy-in
- Access to the EDI Group at Wildlife and Countryside Link
- Staff self-mobilising on issues they care about
- Prioritising it
- Getting external help (consultancy)

## 4.12 What are the barriers to change?

### 4.12.1 Strategic barriers

Trustees, CEOs, senior executive leaders and organisational EDI Leads were asked what they felt were factors restricting progress on achieving greater ethnic diversity. Their answers were often organisation specific. Strategic issues cited were:

- Capacity, competing priorities and lack of resources
- Ethnically diverse people not coming up through the education system into subjects that might lead to a career in the environment sector
- It's a societal issue
- Lack of a written down/shared organisational answer to the question "why increased ethnic diversity matters to our specific mission"

The "upstream" issues of ethnically diverse candidates not coming into relevant higher education courses have been known about for a while. This is a topic the sector is grappling with. However, what about other functions? Organisations, particularly larger ones, will be employing people from a wide range of professional disciplines. Why are these functions not attracting more ethnic diversity?

#### Reflection

Full Colour works across a range of different sectors, each of which is seeking to attract more ethnic, as well as other, forms of diversity. This competitive context is something the environment sector may wish to consider in developing future plans.

The issues around the lack of ethnic diversity are long-standing. The visibility of the issues is relatively new. Could this be leaving people on the back foot, shrinking away from the issues due to feeling uncomfortable about the lack of progress that they and their organisations have made in the last two or three decades? Rushing at solutions without taking the time to really think through what would work so that at least they can feel like they are doing something? Is there a tension between

those who have been aware of issues for a long time wanting to move more quickly than those only just waking up to them?

Systemic change is clearly needed, but given systemic change takes time to achieve, to what extent does that give those less committed to change an excuse to go slowly?

#### 4.12.2 Culture and mindset barriers

A theme emerged in interviews about cultural, emotional and mindset barriers to progress. This explains to some extent why previous EDI initiatives have not been as successful as people have desired, given many of these initiatives were focused on process, policy and procedure. The following cultural, emotional and mindset barriers were shared:

- Not enough buy-in (from board and senior leadership teams)
- A feeling of lack of legitimacy as white people to drive change
- Fear of getting it wrong (and therefore experiencing a backlash)
- Fear of being accused of lip service
- Fear of accusations of racism in what you say or do on the issue (making it feel easier to say and do nothing)
- The scale of change needed in mindset is significant
- Some conservationists see people as the problem in relation to the environment, which in turn hampers efforts on equality, diversity and inclusion (which is essentially a people issue)
- How some organisations currently present themselves is a barrier to attracting diverse people
- Cynicism/blinkered views
- Not wanting to put pressure on existing ethnic minority people in an organisation
- Organisational silos (making joined up EDI work hard)
- Low self-awareness about their own lack of knowledge
- The complexity of the issue

#### Reflection

On the issue of complexity as a barrier, isn't complexity what leaders do? Why would complexity around EDI be more of a barrier to action compared to complexity on other important issues? Would leaders not address an unsustainable financial model because it was a complex thing to do?

#### 4.12.3 Practical barriers

A number of practical barriers were also mentioned by participants:

- Unco-ordinated actions/approaches unconnected to a considered plan
- Having a rural base

- Short term funding for EDI work
- Putting EDI in a box (separate from rest of our work)
- No internal driver for change
- Tension between ethnic and other diversity or wider EDI work
- What some participants described as “poor quality” candidates from ethnic backgrounds applying for roles
- Lack of evidence to build on

### Reflections

How much of the perceptions of some respondents about ethnic minority candidates being of a “poorer quality” is:

- **A manifestation of unconscious bias (e.g. related to ethnicity or class)? Numerous studies into recruitment have highlighted the impact of bias on perceptions of candidates.**
- **The result of smaller pools of ethnic minority candidates applying for roles, and therefore making “poorer quality” candidates more visible or seem more prevalent, (and thus in turn confirming recruiters in any biases they may have?)**
- **Due to other sectors competing for minority ethnic talent doing a better job at attracting these candidates?**

**We note that no-one referred to “poor quality white” candidates, or an overall level of poor quality among all those that apply for roles. Does that mean no “poor quality white candidates” apply for roles, or is it that their quality is not linked in people’s minds to their ethnicity?**

Lack of expertise in knowing how to address equality, diversity and inclusion or increase ethnic diversity in the sector was a theme in discussing barriers to change. Responses were:

- Not knowing where to start/ how much effort to put in
- Lack of expertise (passion can outweigh expertise)
- Lack of implementable actions
- Apathy/inability to connect to the issues
- Some staff want to move faster than we are able
- Entrenched practices (e.g. the “tap on the shoulder” approach for board roles)
- Echo chamber - those working on issues of diversity and inclusion tend to be talking to each other and not attracting others into the debate

## 4.13 Organisational actions taken

Readers will note from the quantitative research (section 3) that where more than one leader from the same organisation responded to questions about actions taken, answers differed. This is worth bearing in mind in reading section 4.13 of the report.

Trustees, CEOs, senior leaders and officers with lead responsibility for EDI were asked what actions their organisations had taken to address the lack of ethnic diversity. Some people's answers were confident. Some people's answers were hesitant, and a number of participants were unsure.

The most frequently mentioned actions that organisations have taken were:

- Setting up EDI Advisory Group internally
- Using the Kickstarter programme to bring in early career people with ethnically diverse backgrounds thanks to the establishment of a specific programme called Race for Nature
- Making recruitment more inclusive, e.g. reviewing the use of language in job adverts

### **Reflection**

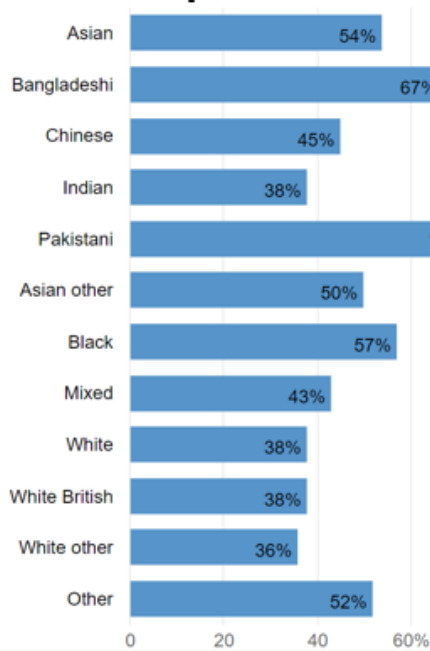
**It is unclear whether the EDI Advisory Groups are made up of people with expertise, or with people who volunteered to take part. If the latter, no-one mentioned work to equip or skill these people to be able to “advise” on EDI. NOTE: EDI Advisory Groups were referred to separately from EDI Officers who have been employed by organisations specially for their expertise.**

**We note that the Race for Nature Kickstarter Programme is a particular initiative aimed at bringing ethnically diverse people into the sector who are aged between 16 and 24, and who are on universal credit . Those who referred to the Programme highlighted this as a useful and much welcomed opportunity to bring ethnic diversity into the sector.**

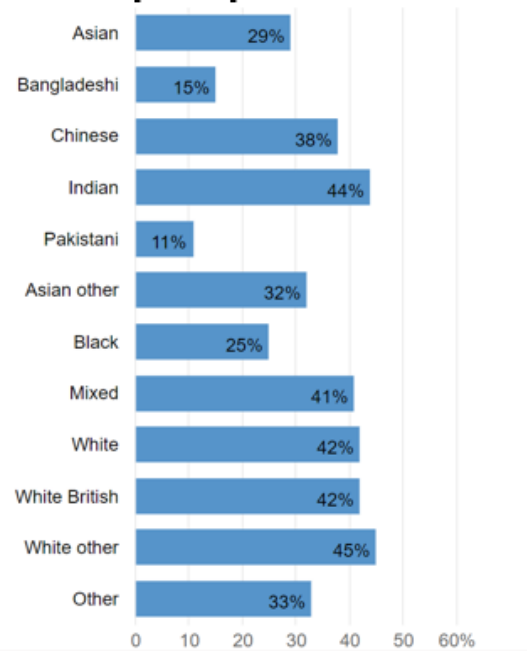
**While unrelated to the main focus of this research, it might be worth sector organisations considering other opportunities, such as the volume of potential donors from a minority ethnic background who could become supporters of the environment and climate change cause. See chart below.**

## **Percentage of households in bottom 2 and top 2 income quintiles (before housing costs), by ethnicity**

## Bottom 2 quintiles



## Top 2 quintiles



Source: UK Government Data, 2020: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/pay-and-income/income-distribution/latest>

Other examples of actions shared were:

- Changing visual representation in external communications
- Employed an EDI officer
- Running targeted membership sessions
- Staff surveys on EDI
- Training staff
- Making the topic a regular staff meeting agenda item
- Researching with communities to understand why we are not reaching them
- Informal staff discussions/sharing lived experiences
- Embedded EDI across organisational strategy
- Developed EDI strategy
- Set up affinity groups
- Collecting data
- Reviewing processes
- Had initial conversation with consultant (not followed up)
- Bringing inclusion into values framework
- Diversifying the partners we work with
- Bursary for early career people from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Sponsoring education places
- Summer schools
- Setting rules about diversity on panels and with speakers at events
- Developing position statement on related topic
- Setting targets for ethnicity
- Holding conversations between leaders and staff from under-represented groups

- Raising awareness within organisation of the issues
- Diversity audit

It is extremely positive to hear about efforts and commitments to embed EDI in organisational strategy. This has the potential to lead to meaningful change.

There is clearly a lot of work going on within some organisations, but answers to previous questions reveal that many actions are not connected to a clear change plan. It is therefore unclear whether the examples of actions shared are having an impact. When asked, most respondents were unable to provide answers to questions about impact. Some who were measuring impact felt it was too early in their journey to provide conclusive evidence of impact.

### **Reflection**

**A question to ponder is how much of the work is “busy” work, which while not unimportant, is distracting from the deep work that would lead to meaningful and sustained change? To what extent are people overestimating the impact of the actions they are taking? E.g. Some cited as examples of success the employment of an EDI Officer. This is a genuine leap forward for some organisations and should be celebrated. However, if EDI officers are low down the hierarchy, without power, with minimal budgets and unable to pull the levers that will lead to change, they can be set up at best for only small-scale success, at worst for failure.**

#### **4.13.1 Visibility of initiatives**

One thing to note is when trustees, CEOs and senior executive leaders were asked how visible these initiatives and actions are within their organisations, answers varied between “quite visible”, “not consistently visible” and “not sure”.

### **Reflection**

**How do you get consistent organisational buy-in if actions are not visible? If minority ethnic colleagues do not see actions being taken, they can be left with the impression that nothing is being done. How do leaders hold themselves accountable for actions if colleagues do not know about them? Communications are a key piece of the scaffolding supporting equality, diversity and inclusion work, and this may need more considered thought in future plans.**

## **4.14 Leaders’ views of their role in increasing the ethnic diversity of their organisations**

Trustees, CEOs and senior executive leaders were asked to describe what they saw as their role in driving change on ethnic diversity within their organisations. The most frequently offered answer was that leaders must talk about the issues and signal their importance. This is a crucial foundation for success.

Other responses were:



- Prioritising the work/make sure it is central to our work
- Asking question on progress/making sure we make progress and challenge if not
- As a CEO, to use my power with board and leadership team to make things happen
- Demonstrating inclusive behaviours myself
- Making sure recruitment processes are open
- Coming up with ideas
- As an EDI lead, managing upwards
- As an EDI lead, be the expert

## 4.15 Do you have an organisational “why”?

Trustees, CEOs and Senior Executive leaders were asked whether their organisations had a clearly developed and well-articulated answer to the question of why increasing ethnic diversity matters to their organisation. Some leaders said they did have an answer but not everyone in the organisation would have the same “why”. Others said they had talked about the question but did not have a clearly defined answer. Others said their organisation did not have an answer to the “why” question.

For those that do have an answer to the “why” question, their answers were:

- We need to engage diverse communities to achieve our mission
- It's morally the right thing to do
- Lack of ethnic diversity means we are missing understanding of how to access diverse communities
- Climate change disproportionately affects poor people of colour
- We need role models to attract future students

These answers are strong. They are also very broad, and don't necessarily help an organisation focus on which actions to take or how to develop a change plan, although they do provide a useful platform to begin the conversation and seek organisational buy in.

For those organisations with no *shared* understanding to the “why” question, there is a risk that even individuals working to affect change will end up pulling in different directions, thus minimising their organisation's potential for success.

### Reflections

- **Different organisations are at different places in their understanding, journey and level of activity. What are the implications of this for developing a sector-wide route map of change?**
- **There is no compelling mission specific “why” to act as a driver for many organisations. Without it, how will they sustain themselves on what is a long journey?**

- For some organisations working to improve ethnic diversity, EDI is “side of desk” work, for others it is part of strategy. What are the implications of this for sector-wide change?

## 4.16 What collective action should the sector take to increase ethnic diversity?

Trustees, CEOs and senior executive leaders were asked about what collective action they believed the sector should take. Responses were:

- Develop a route map
- Get more diverse people through the education system/ into the sector
- Promote the fact that the countryside is for all people (not just white people)
- Connect with different communities
- Proactively lead the conversation across sector
- Commission a sector wide study on cultural perceptions of landscape
- Test/challenge each other
- Set ourselves milestones/targets (note: some people were against targets)
- Board/CEO level sign up to a set of principles
- Tell the true story of indigenous people's work across the globe not just white people's stories
- Develop shared understanding of a baseline from where we are starting
- Share/ develop basic resources e.g. a shared guide to recruitment
- Understand the feelings/experiences of groups we are targeting
- Training
- Pool ideas/learning

### Reflections

- How does the sector as a whole create a base level of expertise to equip individuals working to develop their own organisations' journeys?
- What work could be done collectively and what needs to be done at organisational level?

## 4.17 What resources are needed to support the sector move forward?

Trustees, CEOs and senior executive leaders were asked what resources the sector needs to move forward on ethnic diversity. Some of the answers were about practical resource, some were about learning. Responses were:

- Money/resources
- Time and space to think/discuss
- Expertise/training
- Route map

- Practical actions we can take (make it simple)
- External support/consultancy
- Recognition that challenges are different for different orgs
- Collaboration across the sector
- Tools to call out poor behaviour

## 4.18 Miscellaneous comments

- There is an echo chamber of interested people talking to themselves
- Other sectors are going through the same issues
- We need board buy-in/board diversity
- We need more diversity in the public face of the organisation
- A massive change in thinking and priorities is needed
- It's not just about employees, it's about membership and volunteers
- We need to factor in location and size of organisation
- Ethnic diversity is one kind of diversity organisations are tackling



**Implications for  
creating a route map**

# 5 Implications for an environment sector route map to greater ethnic diversity

The following are reflections which could help inform the development of the route map to greater ethnicity, which is the ultimate goal of this review. This section forms the “conclusions section” of this report.

## 5.1 The lack of a compelling answer to the question of why greater ethnic diversity matters

There needs to be a compelling reason to do the work required to become more ethnically diverse. The journey towards greater ethnic diversity will be a long and at times, an arduous one. A compelling answer to the “why” question will help to sustain you along the journey. It will also help the sector to define a more precise focus around which to plan actions and initiatives.

## 5.2 What is the sector?

To develop a route map, the first thing needed is a clear articulation of who the route map is for. Without clear parameters it will be impossible to plan. Understanding who is meant by “the environment sector” will also give a clearer sense of what the group of organisations that make up the sector have in common in terms of their shared mission. A clear shared mission will give you a strong hook on which to hang the route map.

## 5.3 How do we bring funders into the tent?

A clear theme from the research was the lack of resources and capacity to do the work. A sub-theme was that where funding was available for EDI work, the money was short term, which acts against creating the sustained change that is needed, and which often takes several years to embed.

How can the sector partner with core funders for the long term on what is in reality a long-term change programme?

## 5.4 Expertise and capacity

How do we create a base level of expertise in the sector to equip people to develop their own organisational journeys? For those leaders who are unaware of how much they may need to learn, how do we get them to the level of being “consciously incompetent” so they recognise what and how much they don’t know and so they can plan their personal journeys towards becoming “consciously competent”?

Much of the change will need to take place in the minds and actions of frontline managers and staff as well as amongst leaders, so how do we equip them to take

on their change agent roles? What will we ask them to drop to make the time and space to do the work on ethnic diversity?

For leaders, how will they make the time and space to do the thinking and planning required to create change, and how will they find the resources to make their aspirations a reality? Who will support leaders in their personal change journeys?

More importantly, how can the sector truly realise that doing work on EDI requires specific expertise, which is not automatically embedded in people who happen to have a particular “protected characteristic”?

## **5.5 Collective versus organisational effort**

What work could be done collectively, thus benefiting the whole sector by creating efficiencies and economies of scale, and what needs to be done at organisational level? Who decides this?

## **5.6 How do we make change seem possible?**

How do we make it seem possible to achieve greater ethnic diversity? Some of those we spoke to seem daunted by the scale of the task, and unclear where to start. Some of this was down to lack of knowledge and expertise, some down to a lack of confidence.

The current approach which some organisations are taking of implementing ad hoc approaches is further eroding confidence, as these approaches rarely create change.

## **5.7 The breadth and complexity of the sector**

Individual organisations' needs are very different from each other. Organisations differ in size, geographical footprint, where they are on their journey to greater ethnicity, to name but a few of the differences Full Colour encountered in conducting this research. How can we develop a route map that makes sense to everyone?

## **5.8 Lack of shared definition of the problem you are trying to solve**

For some organisations increasing ethnic diversity is about developing a more diverse staff team. For others it is about engaging with different communities. For others still it is about board diversity. For some it is about all of this. These are all different things requiring different solutions. How can we create a route map that meets everyone's needs? Or will we need to make some choices about priority areas of focus, and recognise that we cannot create a route map that works for every organisation in the environment sector?

## **5.9 The elephant in the room**

There is some evidence in this research that racism - overt, covert - and unconscious bias exists in the sector, though we are unable to say how widespread it may be. Often racism is subtle. Are the white majority even aware that this is happening and

the impact of it on minority ethnic colleagues? In those instances where racism has been brought to the attention of managers and leaders, why are so many minority ethnic people reporting that the issues have been ignored or explained away?

Racism is a difficult thing to tackle in any setting. It takes honest, commitment, courage and persistence to tackle and erase it. How can this be addressed? How can everyone find the confidence and support to lean into the discomfort that will be experienced in tackling racism in their organisations and in the wider sector? How can leaders be held to account for ensuring racism is identified and tackled within their organisations?

Addressing these issues is surely fundamental to ensuring that a route map for change is effective and lasting.

## **5.10 The most important question of all – does the sector REALLY want change**

Becoming ethnically diverse is not about adding an extra layer of people to an organisation as it exists in its current form. True diversity is harnessing what people from different backgrounds bring in a way that changes the way those organisations think and act.

This is not easy. There are overt and under-the-surface vested interests, both practical and to do with mindset, that are strong drivers of the status quo. These drivers would have to be surfaced and addressed if true change is to take place.