



Insight Report

ACHIEVING RACIAL DIVERSITY IN THE EVENTS INDUSTRY 2020

NOVEMBER 2020

EVENT FIRST
STPS



Insight Report

The industry has had a diversity issue for too long, but it has failed to address it explicitly until this year.

George Floyd's death back in May was a powerful catalyst for change, resulting in civil unrest globally, individuals and organisations breaking their silence on equality and a greater reflection on where the issues lay.

Soon after, *C&IT* published an open letter to the industry about racial diversity and was inundated with thanks from the under-represented working across events. Making it clear that more needed to be done.

Then Event First Steps, passionate advocates for diversity and equality within the industry, approached *C&IT* to partner on this research project. The intention being to understand the issue at a deeper level and benchmark the industry so that change can be measured.

Our survey went out to hundreds of event professionals across the UK and the US, and asked about their perceptions and opinions of racial diversity across the MICE industry.

Encouragingly, those that took part in our research weren't just the under-represented voicing their concerns; in fact, 54% were white. Meaning that everyone, even those that aren't directly impacted personally, recognise that there is a problem and want to see change.

A big thank you to Event First Steps for partnering with us on this research, as well as Caroline Jackson from BVEP and Nigel Williams from the University of Portsmouth who helped with the question design, ethics and data analysis.

May these findings be the start of a positive ripple effect.

Yours sincerely,

Calum Di Lieto
Editor, *C&IT*



The Event First
Steps Team



How racially diverse is the MICE industry?

The current perception of racial diversity in the events industry and how it compares to localised census data.

By Caitlin Kobrak

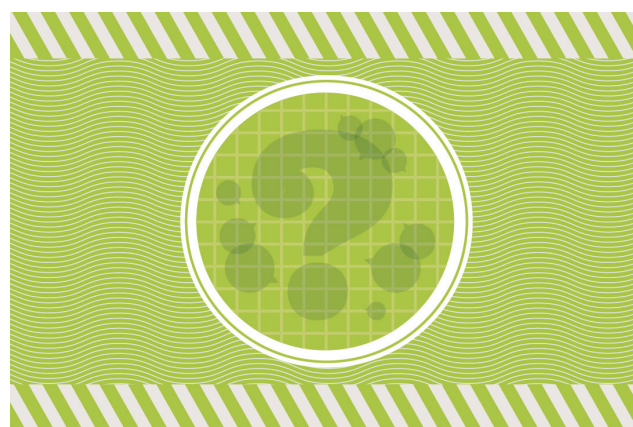
C&IT and Event First Steps surveyed hundreds of MICE professionals in August 2020 about the topic of racial diversity. Of those who took part in the research, 53% describe their ethnic group as white and 71% identify as female. Almost half (47%) have worked in the industry for 10 years or more, while 53% hold a senior-level role. And while this is just a small proportion of the entire events population, it does marry with the perceptions of the industry as a whole.

The research found that 73% of respondents feel that there is currently little or no racial diversity in the industry – 10% of which stating they feel there is “no diversity”. When asked why they had given this answer, a common note from respondents was that the industry is mainly made up of white individuals:

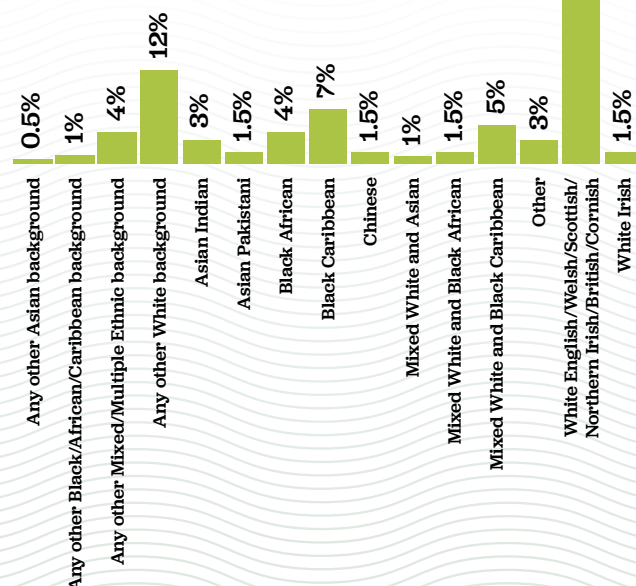
- “The majority of people I know in the industry are white, and most of the events that I attend only have a handful of non-white delegates.”
- “I have often been the only person of colour.”
- “It’s incredibly white, especially at the middle to senior level.”
- “Everyone in positions of power looks the same – white and predominantly male.”

Interestingly, with the 9.5% who answered that the events industry is “somewhat diverse”, a recurring theme was that racial diversity tends to be more prevalent at junior levels:

- “Historic positions are held by older white men but they started the companies. It is quite a mix at the lower levels and this will then filter up hopefully.”
- “I’d say hospitality in general is very diverse. But you find more diversity in lower-level jobs.”
- “Mid-management and below, there is a mix



Which one of these best describes your ethnic group?



of diversity in the hospitality industry. Senior management, I think there isn't much diversity."

To get a better understanding of how racially diverse the events industry truly is, data collected from the survey was compared with current census information of the population of non-white people in the locations of respondents' workplaces.

This showed that smaller event companies (1-10 employees, 32% of survey respondents fell into this category) seem to be most reflective of racial diversity in their local areas, with the discrepancy between survey responses and the census data only being 1%.

Event companies that have between 11-100 employees (34% of survey respondents) showed the highest discrepancy of 19%. For businesses that employ between 101-500 people (19% of survey respondents), there was an employee representation discrepancy of 18%. And for those who work somewhere with more than 500 employees (15% of survey respondents), there was a 13% employee representation discrepancy against the census data.

This is interesting to note, because while there is an under-representation of racial diversity, the discrepancy is not quite as high as some might envision – considering a large proportion of survey respondents felt the industry is lacking diversity.

Key takeaways

3/4

Nearly three quarters (73%) believe there is little or no diversity in the events industry.

NO-ONE AT THE TOP

Those that believe the industry is "somewhat diverse" attribute this to lower-level jobs.

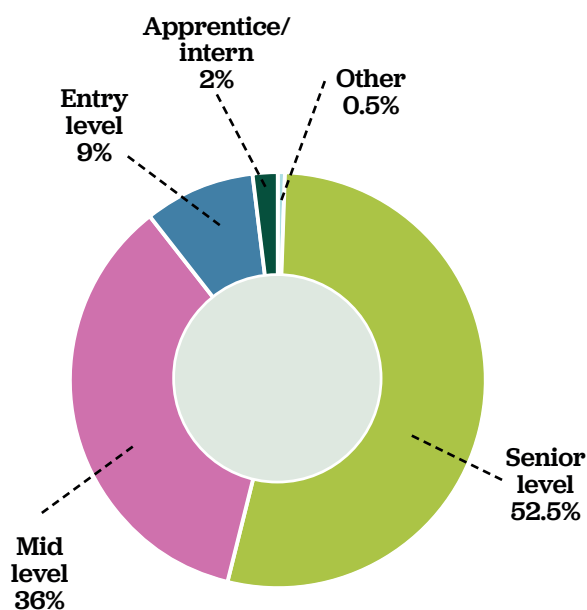
BIGGER PROBLEMS

Smaller event companies (1-10 employees) are more reflective of the racial diversity in their local areas, while larger companies have much higher discrepancy levels.

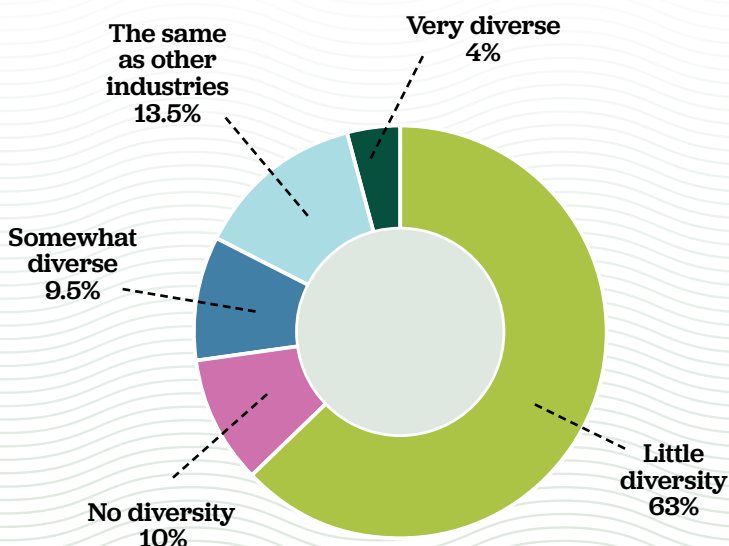
Which gender identity do you most identify with?



How would you define your current/most recent employment level?



What is your current perception of racial diversity in the events industry?



2 Is the events industry attracting enough diverse talent?

How the industry is failing to attract diverse candidates, from entry-level promotion to senior-level role models.

By Priya Narain

From the C&IT survey, conducted with Event First Steps, it was found that nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that working in events is promoted from a young age as a legitimate career. In fact, only 13% of all respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement.

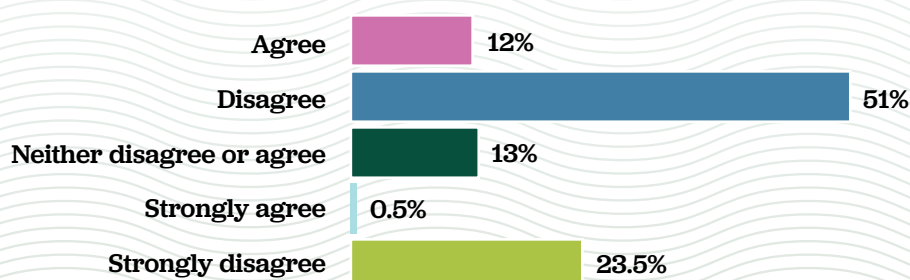
One respondent, who holds a senior-level role within the industry, wrote: “I feel the events industry is really unrepresented in schools and not positioned as a possible career path from an early age... a lot of organisations only recruit from universities, which means that as an industry we are not opening up opportunities to those who can’t go to university.”

And, by limiting the industry talent pool to university graduates, it should be no surprise that employers are naturally going to lack diversity among their applicants. While university education directly correlates with individuals’ socio-economic status, there are also a number of other studies that show that race has an impact on education.

In fact, a recent study by the Equality & Human Rights Commission shows that a higher proportion (76.3%) of white undergraduate students received a First/2:1 degree, compared with ethnic minority undergraduates (60.3%).



Working in events is promoted from a young age as a legitimate career. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?



The gap was particularly high when comparing black male undergraduates (46.2%) to white male undergraduates (73.5%).

And while the entire education system cannot be remedied by MICE employers, when asked what the industry could do to improve diversity, another respondent wrote: “Encourage young BAME students to consider a career in the events industry. Offer them mentorship and the opportunity to have work experience/internships in specialist areas.”

However, it’s a two-way street. And so, not only do these opportunities need to be put in front of a more diverse range of students, but these opportunities also need to be attractive to non-white children. The events industry has to be inviting and feel diverse and inclusive to anyone that might consider it for their future.

This would be helped by the presence of suitable role models. However, 75% of all respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with the idea that there is currently a diverse range of senior role models for the next generation of event professionals to look up to and aspire to be like.

And so, there is a need for strong, visible, diverse role models in the industry, which in turn may then attract more diverse talent into the industry. But while employers can broaden their searches and work on how attractive they are to non-white applicants at entry level, improving diversity at the top level is an even more difficult challenge.

Key takeaways

74%

Seventy-four per cent of respondents believe that the industry is not being promoted from a young age as a legitimate career.

GRADUATES ONLY

A lot of organisations are only recruiting from universities and this is impacting diversity.

3/4

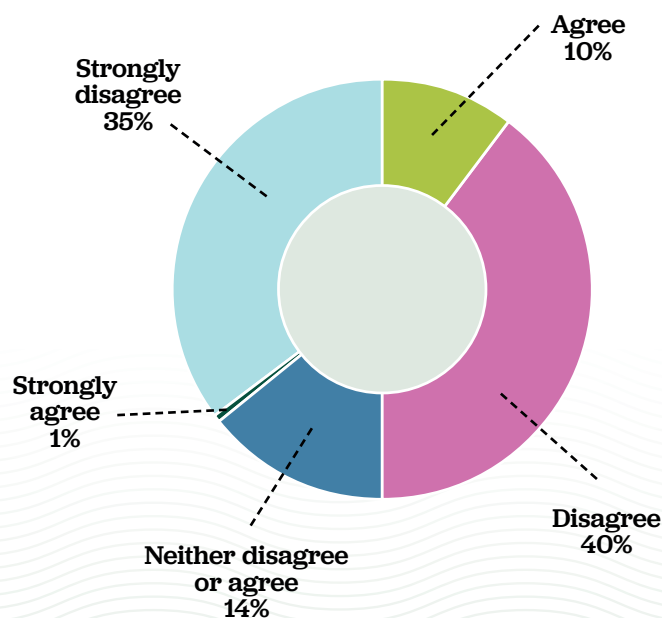
Three quarters of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the idea that there is a diverse range of senior role models in the industry.

What is your educational level?



A-Level/B-Tech or equivalent	11%
Degree	69%
GCSE or equivalent	4%
MA/MSc	13%
Other	2%
PhD	1%

To what extent do you agree that there is a diverse range of role models in the industry?



3

The racial diversity of senior leadership

The current perception of racial diversity at the top and how it compares to the size of leadership teams.

By Elena Clowes

As C&IT and Event First Steps' research shows, lack of visibility and representation is something that respondents feel may deter applicants from diverse backgrounds.

One survey respondent noted: "I think there is a lack of representation in senior positions of people from diverse backgrounds. I think social mobility is a major issue as I believe the industry is focused around who you know, and not what you know, making it harder for those from diverse backgrounds to get jobs in the industry or even an interview."

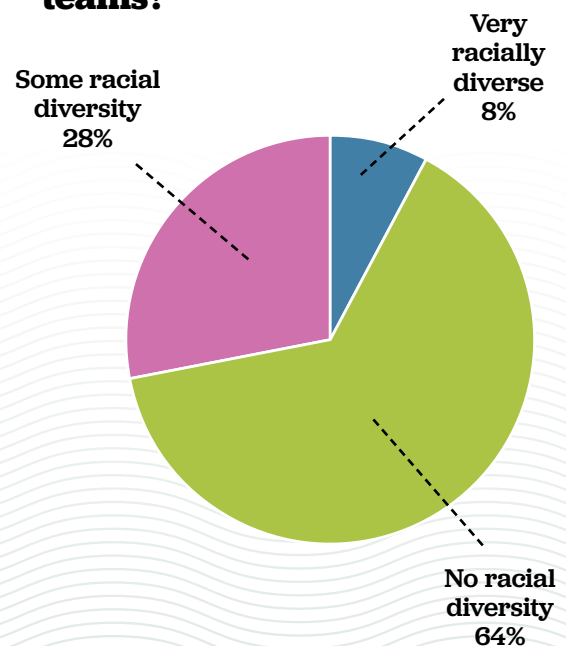
Visibility and representation is important because it allows people to envision themselves in a certain position or company. A workplace with very little diversity among its staff is therefore unlikely to attract a job applicant pool much different to those who already work there.

When asked in the survey about how much racial diversity they saw in their leadership teams, only 8% of MICE professionals said they would describe their senior management teams as "very racially diverse", while more than two thirds (64%) said they saw "no racial diversity" at all. The remaining 28% said their leadership teams have "some racial diversity".

Those taking part in the survey came from varying sized organisations and it is worth noting that company size could have an impact on the amount of racial diversity within leadership teams. For example, with a small family-run events agency, it is likely that the leadership team will be made up of a handful of people that are related to each other. In fact, more than half (55%) of respondents said they worked in businesses with a leadership team as small as one to five people. Meanwhile, 28% said



How much racial diversity do you see in your leadership teams?



their leadership team ranged from six to 10 people, and 17% said their leadership team consisted of 11 people or more.

However, as mentioned earlier in the report, smaller companies when compared with census data were more successful at matching the racial diversity of their local area. But this may not be a positive. It may be that these smaller businesses are based outside of multicultural cities and are located instead in predominantly white rural areas – creating a further hurdle to the acquisition of senior talent.

Key takeaways

WHO YOU KNOW?

The industry appears nepotist and is therefore making it harder for applicants from diverse backgrounds.

64%

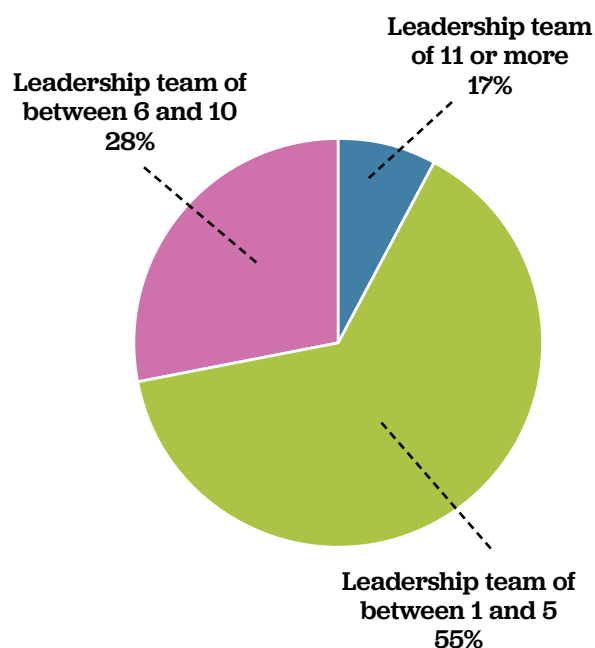
Nearly two thirds (64%) of MICE professionals see no diversity in their company leadership teams.

LOCATION

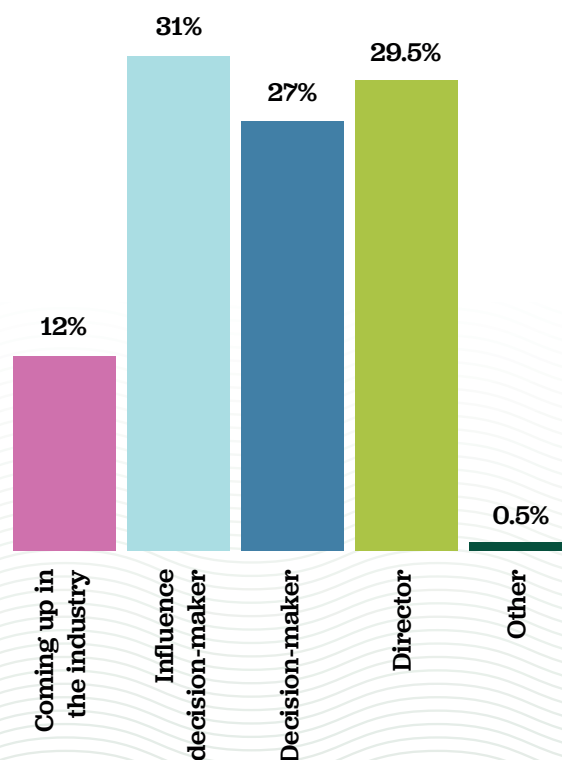
Company size and location may be a contributing factor to the lack of diversity among leadership.

“I think there is a lack of representation in senior positions of people from diverse backgrounds. I think social mobility is a major issue as I believe the industry is focused around who you know, and not what you know, making it harder for those from diverse backgrounds to get jobs in the industry or even an interview”

How many people are in your leadership team?



Which level best describes your decision-making power?





Are event professionals afraid to discuss diversity?

How comfortable are individuals when it comes to talking about racial diversity with their peers and authority figures?

By Caitlin Kobrak

This year, across the world, there has been an increase in conversations around racial diversity due, in part, to the Black Lives Matter protests of the summer. And given the *C&IT* and Event First Steps survey of MICE professionals has established that the events industry isn't as racially diverse as it should be, it's important to understand whether these discussions are happening within the industry or not.

And so we addressed this in the survey, in order to find out whether event professionals face the initial barrier of being afraid to discuss the topic of diversity within the industry. Findings were evenly split with 37% of respondents either "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" that they find it easy to bring up the conversation of racial diversity with peers in the industry. While another 37% of respondents say they "disagree" or "strongly disagree" that they could have these conversations with colleagues.

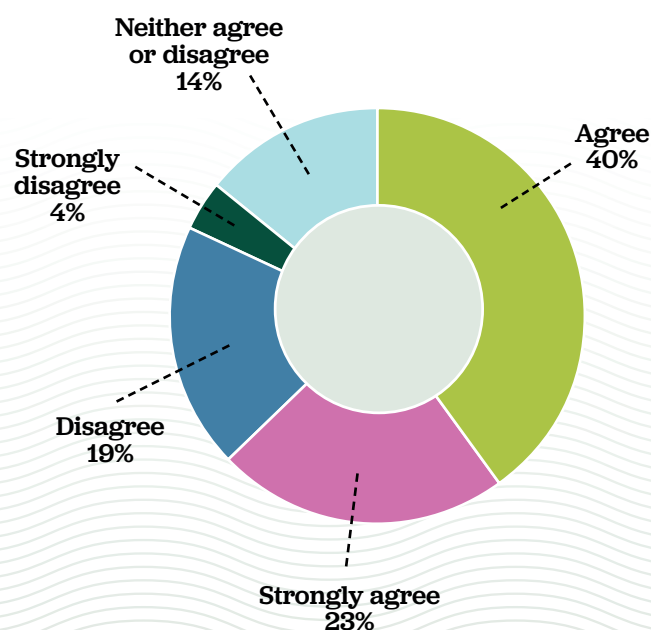
The remaining 26% neither agreed or disagreed with that statement either way, and the majority of that group of respondents were white. This may suggest that if racial diversity doesn't directly impact an individual, they are less aware or less concerned by the need for these important conversations.

When asked if they find it easy to bring up the conversation of racial diversity to authority figures in their workplace, the results again were similarly split. Forty-one per cent of the respondents "agree" or "strongly agree" that they can do so, while 38% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed".

The figures were weighted much more positively when those who took the survey were asked if their workplace has a welcome and open-minded culture for all backgrounds, and 63% said that they did.



My workplace has a welcoming and open-minded culture for all backgrounds.



However, this does highlight a key issue that needs to be overcome. If 63% believe their workplace is inclusive, but only 41% feel they can bring the conversation of racial diversity up with their leaders, and 37% with their peers, it would suggest that approximately a quarter of respondents feel their organisations are inclusive, but are afraid to talk about diversity. But these discussions are crucial in making progress towards a more diverse industry and so it is important that leaders start to have these conversations with their teams in order to foster a culture of communication around the issue.

The majority of respondents in this survey either influence decision-makers or are decision-makers themselves within their company (58%), which means it starts with them.

Key takeaways

50/50

There is an even split between those that find it easy to discuss racial diversity with their peers, and those that don't.

2/3

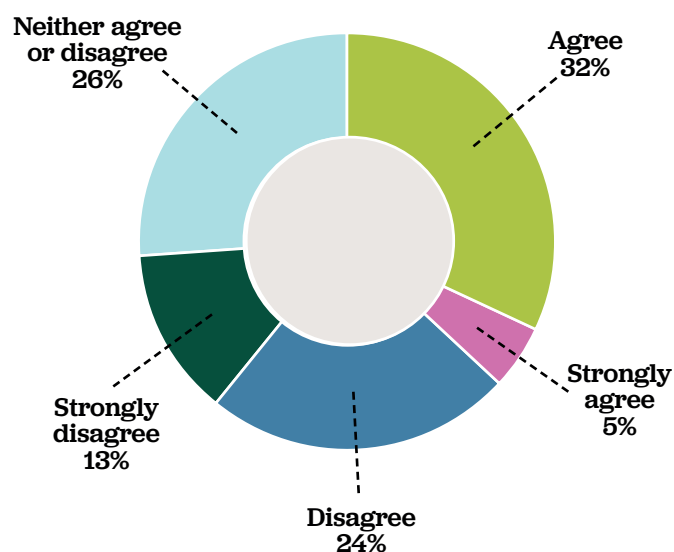
Yet almost two thirds of respondents noted that their workplace has an open-minded culture.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

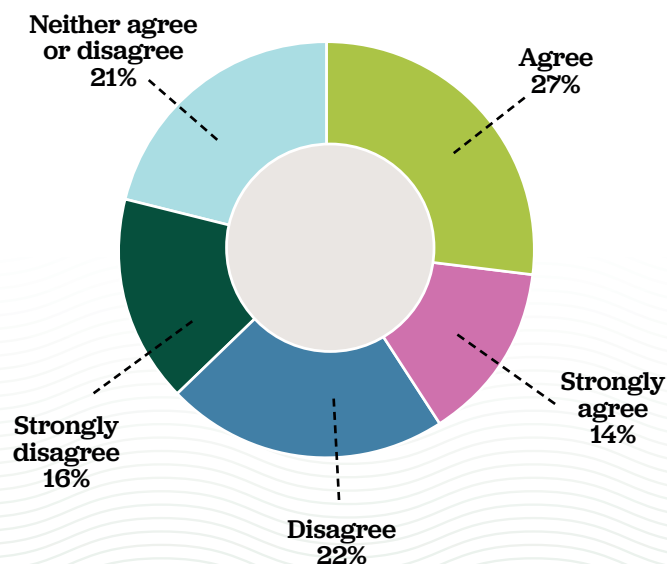
The discrepancy between the perception of inclusion and the confidence to discuss diversity suggests leaders need to lead by example and start these conversations.

“Approximately a quarter of respondents feel their organisations are inclusive, but are afraid to talk about diversity”

I find it easy to bring up the conversation of racial diversity among my peers in my industry.



I find it easy to bring up the conversation of racial diversity to authority figures in my workplace.



5

The lack of formal diversity policies within the MICE industry

What level of policy organisations have in place when it comes to racial diversity and whether employees know of it.

By Priya Narain

A diversity and inclusion policy in the workplace sets out the framework of how companies should demonstrate a systematic approach to developing an inclusive company culture. Diversity and inclusion policies also support the achievement of business goals and objectives, while simultaneously addressing the diverse needs of clients from all backgrounds.

Of all the respondents that took part in the survey, more than a third (36%) stated that their organisation had no written statement or policy on diversity and inclusion, with a further 14% stating that they didn't know if their organisation has a written statement on diversity and inclusion – suggesting that if there is one, it isn't being communicated with all employees effectively.

This indicates that half of MICE professionals have no clear guidance from their organisation regarding diversity and inclusion.

Out of the remaining 50%, 21% stated their organisation has a formal and written statement or policy on diversity and inclusion that is signed by senior employees readily available to everyone internally. A further 16% said that this statement is verbally communicated from top management to all employees.

Only 13% of respondents note that they work in organisations that also clearly state on their policies that racial diversity and inclusion is one of the top core values.

When it came to asking specifically about their company's misconduct procedure for racial discrimination in the workplace, similar figures could be seen. Thirty-four per cent of respondents



stated that their organisation did not have a written statement or policy on racial misconduct, and 17% stated they did not know if their organisation had such a statement in place at all.

It could be argued that companies within the industry don't feel they need to have an explicit misconduct procedure in place because they believe that discrimination isn't happening within their organisations.

However, this would be contradicted by 36% of our survey's respondents, who shared that they have either witnessed or experienced racial discrimination in their workplace.

One respondent elaborated by saying: "I've had to wear my hair in particular styles. I've had to hold my tongue when wanting to speak out in order to not be perceived as an angry black female but my white counterparts could shout and throw a hissy fit and then be treated as if nothing ever happened... I've been called names I wouldn't dare repeat and people have said 'I don't look at all like how you

sound'. I've even been offered jobs on merit and then turned away once they saw me."

Another respondent illustrated the issues within recruitment: "It was clear that the recruiter didn't realise I was a person of colour. The environment changed dramatically and I knew I wouldn't be considered for the role."

"Also, there are lots of microaggressions in this industry. People often don't seem to understand what is offensive and tend to make you feel uncomfortable for even addressing it. When travelling to different countries, colleagues often find it hard to deal with or support you when you experience a racial slur and it's often laughed off as something not substantial enough that would warrant a reaction."

This was summarised neatly by a respondent that said: "I imagine intent has never been to be hurtful but there's definitely ignorance there."

This ignorance and these microaggressions need to be addressed formally through well-communicated policies, but also would be remedied by encouraging

positive and negative conversations around racial diversity within the business – which isn't happening in around two fifths of MICE companies.

Key takeaways

50%

Half of the respondents do not know of any policies or statements in place from their employers on diversity and inclusion.

34%

Thirty-four per cent of respondents work in companies that do not have a misconduct procedure for racial discrimination in the workplace.

36%

More than a third (36%) of people have experienced or witnessed racial discrimination, showing that there is a need for these policies to exist.

Which of the below statements best describe your organisation's diversity policy?

21%

Organisation has a formal and written statement/policy on diversity and inclusion that is signed by senior employees, and it is readily available to everyone internally.

16%

Organisation has a formal and written statement/policy on diversity and inclusion that is signed by senior employees, and it is readily available to everyone internally. The statement/policy is verbally communicated from top management to employees at all locations.

13%

Organisation has a formal and written statement/policy on diversity and inclusion that is signed by senior employees, and it is readily available to everyone internally. The statement/policy is verbally communicated from top management to employees at all locations, and clearly states that racial diversity and inclusion is one of the top core values of the organisation. It is directly monitored and evaluated by top management.

14%

I don't know whether or not my organisation has a written statement/policy on diversity and inclusion.

36%

Organisation has no written statement/policy on diversity and inclusion.



Top tips on improving racial diversity across the industry

A collection of suggested changes businesses and individuals can action to influence racial diversity across the industry.

By Elena Clowes

While the majority of the C&IT and Event First Steps findings illuminate the problems around racial diversity within the MICE, acting as a benchmark for future progress, respondents were also asked to suggest solutions.

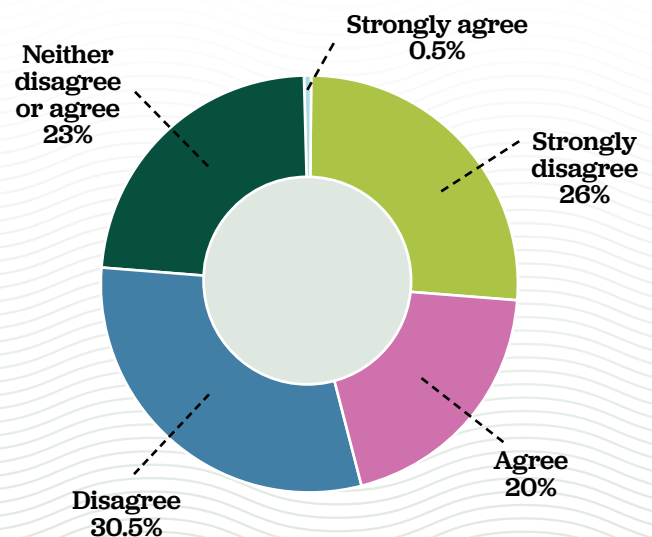
Some of which highlighted that the events industry isn't the only one that struggles with racial diversity, but some of the other sectors are more progressive with their solutions and therefore are good places to look for inspiration. "The finance and tech sectors are equally underrepresented but have significant programmes in place to correct it," one respondent said. While another suggested "looking at STEM education and outreach programmes that work in lower-income schools".

Here is a summary of the top tips respondents suggested in order to improve racial diversity across the MICE industry:

- Ensure that job ads are authentic and reveal more about the company's culture.
- Actively seek out freelancers from different backgrounds.
- Encourage your workforce to have open discussions about race.
- Don't rely on the underrepresented to implement change.
- Actively recruit speakers with different ethnic backgrounds to talk about more than just race.



To what extent do you agree that the rate of pay in the industry makes it easy for all backgrounds to gain experience?



- Commit to educating people on how deep and ingrained the issue is.
- Have those uncomfortable conversations about culture and race.
- Don't provide unpaid internships as these exclude those that can't afford to be supported by their parents while they work for free.
- Work to support underrepresented groups in the full structure of the supply chain and decision-making process – seeking to actively support businesses owned by underrepresented groups.
- Seek to increase the diversity in senior leadership roles but also ensure that they have an equal share of voice.
- Proactively address pay inequality.
- Eliminate the nepotism that excludes so many and builds barriers to entry and progression.
- Ensure mentoring, coaching and leadership programmes are accessible, promoted to and include diverse people.
- Start or join an industry body with commitments to meaningful targets.
- Invest time, money and resources to promote the events industry as a great world to work in and back that up with clear routes in, across specialisms.
- Partner with a local school and make the events world challenging and rewarding for school leavers.
- Listen to the younger members of your organisation – they are likely to have grown up with a more diverse and inclusive mindset.

authenticity break barriers
 talking people diversity
 speakers support listen
 change work
 partner schools events diverse leadership
 business promote
 mentoring pay inequality targets
 communication paid internships confidence

The most common themes in responses to our diversity survey asking how the industry should change.



Insight Report

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Editor **Calum Di Lieto** Art editor **David Robinson**
Group art director **Tim Scott** Group production
director **Michael Porter**