

Ethnicity & Diversity in the Scottish Workforce



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Introduction

Like any economy Scotland needs a diverse workforce. Without migrant workers our working age population will decline and it is a recognised fact that any increases in our population over the next decade will come almost entirely from inward migration.

Migrants and people of different ethnicities come here from other countries and need to be able use the skills and experience they have as well as their qualifications to grow in their chosen path. They need to be fairly rewarded for the work that they do and have the same opportunities open to them as everyone else within Scottish Society.

Scottish businesses need workers, every organisation no matter what sector needs a ready pipeline of capable and motivated potential employees who can take the business forward while learning from those around them. Moreover research shows that diversity drives innovation and leads to increased economic growth.

Given the above it is essential that we make the most of the talent in Scotland and give those doing so, whatever their background, every opportunity to thrive and to contribute to the Scottish economy.

Diversity in the Scottish Workforce

This paper sets out to understand ethnic diversity in the Scottish workplace, to understand what the barriers to true diversity are as well as the impacts of any non diverse workforces on our prospective and actual employees. We aimed to separate the perception from reality and to identify what level of challenge, if any, exists.



The Methodology

To understand more about ethnic diversity in the Scottish workplace we approached it in three ways:

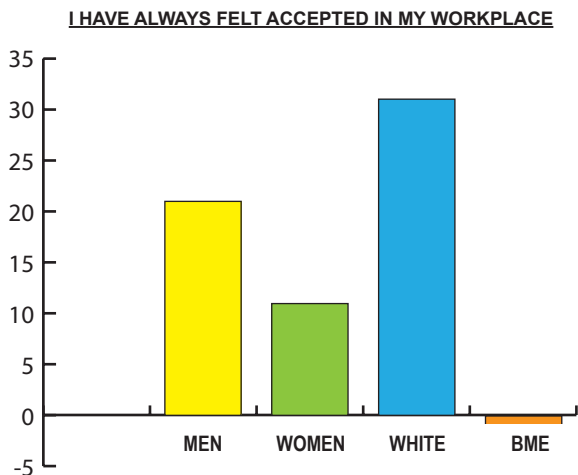
1. A series of workshops were carried out to get the views of those of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. We wanted to understand more about their experiences, how things felt at that time and what views they had on improvements that could be made. These workshops were attended by around 15 individuals and over 250 comments were gathered on the topics discussed.

The output from the workshops is included throughout this paper and we have brought out themes as well as including a few of the verbatim comments from participants.

2. An online survey was conducted to gather views on diversity in the Scottish workplace. This explored views on a number of topics including how accepted people feel at work, whether they had gone through diversity training and whether they thought there were any problems with racism. The survey was open to everyone and nearly 200 people took part with a good spread of ethnic background, age, gender and employment sector contributing.

The survey questions asked for users to select strength of feeling on a range of 1-10.

In analysing the results of the survey we arrived at a net score for each group which represents the difference between the bottom two most negative scores (typically 1&2) and the top two most positive scores (typically 9&10). In this way we can compare views across different genders and ethnic backgrounds.



↩ We compared the number of people who picked the top two most favourable scores with the number of people who picked the bottom two scores.

↩ The difference between these numbers gave us a positive or negative number.

↩ By splitting out the different groups we can see where there are differences of opinion on certain issues.

3. We interviewed two people in depth to find out more about their experiences as they attempted to find work in their chosen field. Those interviews were developed into case studies and can be found on pages 7 (Grace) and 17 (Lisa) of this paper.

Summary of Findings

- Significant barriers to employment continue to exist in Scotland for people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities
- Those from BME Communities often end up in roles that they are overqualified for and are paid less as a result
- Our recruitment processes need updating to reflect diversity
- 'Diversity Blindness' exists in Scotland, particularly among white men who see the problem as being largely solved
- Racism is a fact of life for many people from BME communities, including in their place of work.



Grace is very proud of her children, all three are different and showing their own strengths and weaknesses as they make their way through the school system. She wants them to see that hard work pays off and that getting stuck into your studies sets you up for a better life.

Having worked as an accounts assistant in South Africa Grace moved to the UK in 2001, settling first in London. While there she met her husband, had her first child, and moved to Glasgow a few years later. Grace wanted to make sure she could get a good job and so she completed an HND in Accounting and Finance at Glasgow College, following this up with an Honours Degree in the same subject at Paisley University two years later.

No interviews in 5 years...

Grace is a determined woman who shows tenacity and a willingness to work hard, and so after years without an interview, and in an attempt to mark her out from her peers, she once again went back to Paisley University, this time to do a Masters Degree in Finance and Accounting. Despite the fact that this means she is now a part qualified Chartered Accountant she was still unable to get an interview, either for suitable roles or for those where she was over qualified. Only when an African women's charity she was volunteering with was approached by a prospective employer was she able to secure a role, one which uses some (but not all) of her skills, and one she was invited to accept at 90% of salary because of her lack of relevant experience.

Offered 90% of Salary...

Grace is now in a role she enjoys and progressing well. Organisations in Scotland may well have missed out on years of her accounting skills but at least her children see her applying them and are in no doubt that hard work paid off....eventually.

Grace

Armed with her qualifications and a strong desire for a better life Grace applied for dozens of roles - but was unable to get as much as an interview. After months of trying she received some helpful feedback, she was told that she lacked relevant experience, and so she decided that to get somewhere she would offer to work unpaid provided she could apply the skills she was so well educated in. Even this bold move failed to turn up any interviews.

Scottish Companies are missing out...

So why has a well qualified woman, who applied for up to one hundred roles, not been invited to a single interview over a five year period? We know our workplaces need to be more diverse, and yet Grace believes it is her African name which prevented her from getting a foot in the door to prove her worth. We can never be completely sure if this is correct, but we do know her UK born classmates entered the workplace far earlier.

Pre Employment

As people consider which jobs they want to do, and which jobs to apply for, they are influenced heavily by what they see around them and by information from friends and family already in the workplace.

We asked people to consider the time when they were starting out on their job search and to answer three questions:

What happened, what did you see and hear?

A common theme came through of people being told about a vacancy but when they got to the location they were told it had been filled.

Perceived less than 'perfect' English, both spoken and written was seen as a significant barrier to employment.

Strong perceptions existed that people were discriminated against, even at this early stage, because of skin colour.

"I went to the Restaurant and they were looking for employees but when I got there they said they had no vacancies. I realise now they just didn't want me because of my colour."

"When I was just new to the UK my college teacher told me about the vacancy at a certain restaurant but when I went there they told me they do not have the vacancy. I went back to my teacher to explain it but they just said ok, I could see in their facial expression about the outcome."

"I had heard that being a different colour might make it difficult."

How did this make you feel?

People were initially encouraged because they had qualifications and felt they could put them to good use in the Scottish jobs market.

However, they soon found that discrimination started to hold them back, present barriers and make them anxious at interviews.

"I felt that the mindset towards black people was that they could only do cleaning."

"The body language tells a lot, it makes you feel like going back to your country."

"Wondered if I didn't come across as confident or whether it was because of my colour."

What would make this better for everyone?

People wanted their skills and experience to count in the application process and felt this didn't happen at present.

They also thought more ways to be connected to the right opportunities would help, as it would help to get there.

"Being given the opportunity on Merit."

"Asking for my experience."

"Training in Customer Service."

"Getting told about available opportunities."

"Connecting you to the right opportunity."

"Volunteers to get a bus pass weekly."

By tying the experiences of people together with attitudes in the different ethnic groups we were starting to understand more about the reasons why many workplaces don't actively consider their diversity and the impact any lack of it may have.

We also asked people to consider a time when they were applying for jobs and going through the process and to answer the same three questions:

What happened, what did you see and hear?

It was clear people felt that interviewers were not equipped properly for the process.

People saw the benefit of workplace placement programmes.

There was a general resignation that previous experience was going to count for little if anything.

"From body language I understood that she didn't think I could speak the language."

"Patronising behaviour during the application and interview process."

"At interviews seeing all whites and I am the only BME."

"The programme I did with Radiant and Brighter helped me to understand the requirements of the workplace."

"Less Privileged Jobs, took pay cut, you start at bottom."

How did this make you feel?

People talked about how demotivating it is to be turned down for so many jobs.

They also felt that there was a disconnect between organisations who should be helping.

"When I failed the interview I was sad but it gave me motivation."

"Demotivation as a result of lack of response from job applications."

"Feel very small and useless."

"Universities and councils not on the same page and give conflicting information."

"I wanted money but they offered pizza so I didn't go back"

"It feels like if we have 3 Scottish names applying, I may not get through."

What would make this better for everyone?

There was a strong view that if a company already had BME employees that makes it more attractive.

Help and guidance during the application process would also be appreciated.

"Identify organisations that really have people of colour."

"Try to go to companies that are international and have people from different companies, just walk in and ask."

"Provide support to find jobs."

"Attend workshops (for example R&B) to help you fill in forms."

"Programmes in partnership with employers are helpful"

"Anything about the employer doing something."

So, in summary it is fair to say that BME individuals have various barriers to employment not necessarily experienced by everyone else in Scotland. Key among these barriers is a basic lack of awareness around what those in BME communities have to offer and a lack of role models within the workplace in general.

In the Workplace

We wanted to understand more about the impact diversity, or its absence, has on the workplace. We asked people to consider their experiences, firstly as they started work in a new role:

What happened, what did you see and hear?

Where people saw diversity training, they felt it was a tick box exercise and didn't match up to reality.

Some people experienced a lack of clarity in what was expected of them.

There was also a feeling that other groups get more training.

"It is very annoying how I was treated without proper induction. You are told about diversity etc in the induction but the real experience when you actually start is very different."

"The real interview starts when you meet your colleagues."

"They presume you don't know because you haven't worked in the UK."

"I liked the job but was hassled, Staff gave me mixed instructions"

I was the first black person and youngest so people didn't understand, I had a challenge of mixed information."

"When staff members from Scottish people are recruited they are given all the training and support which we don't get."

"Scottish people who are employed after you get better training."

How did this make you feel?

People feel lonely at times and without a support network in their place of work.

Some talked about the misconception from others that they wouldn't be able to do the job – and the surprise when they can.

"People look at you as if you are from a strange place – it makes you feel small."

"If I ask for clarification they make you feel small."

"Isolated in the work place, they make you feel as if you don't fit in."

"You don't get support to learn so you teach yourself and at certain points they realise you are good but it's not a compliment, it's a surprise to them."

"I was very excited and happy to start but they said "you are learning so quick, you're so clever" as if they are surprised that you are learning."

What would make this better for everyone?

People want to be treated the same as everyone else, to be able to get to know their colleagues and take part in workplace conversations.

It was clear to people that effective education on diversity is required in our workplaces as well as more exposure to BME communities.

"You come to work but not many questions about your background."

"Equal treatment – not many personal questions."

"Diversity Training, understanding that people have differences."

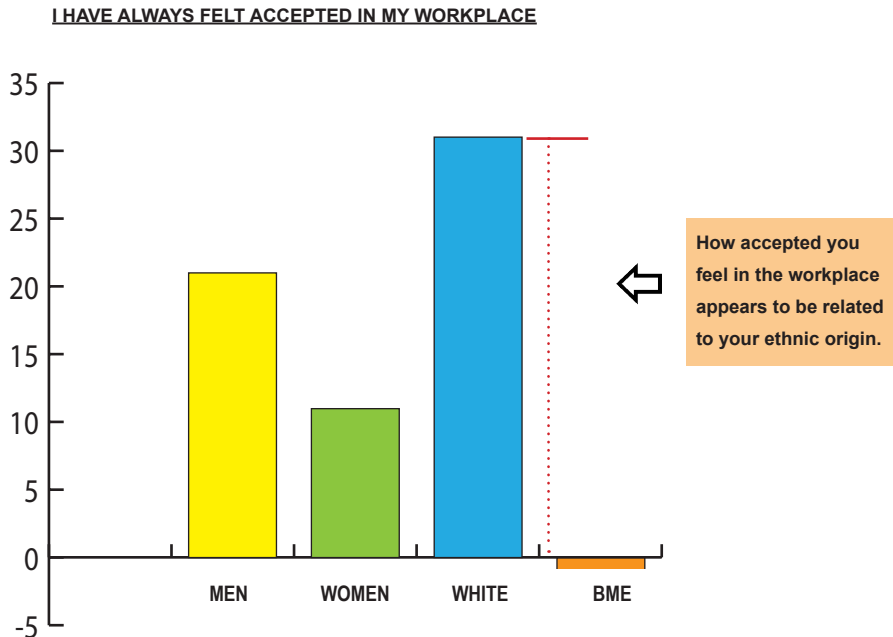
"Appreciation."

"Training."

"Exposure to the BME Community."

"More communication, understanding and appreciation."

When considering how accepted people felt in the workplace our survey found a marked difference in views between people who identified as white and those from BME communities, it is safe to assume that these views are known when others in the same communities are looking to apply for roles.

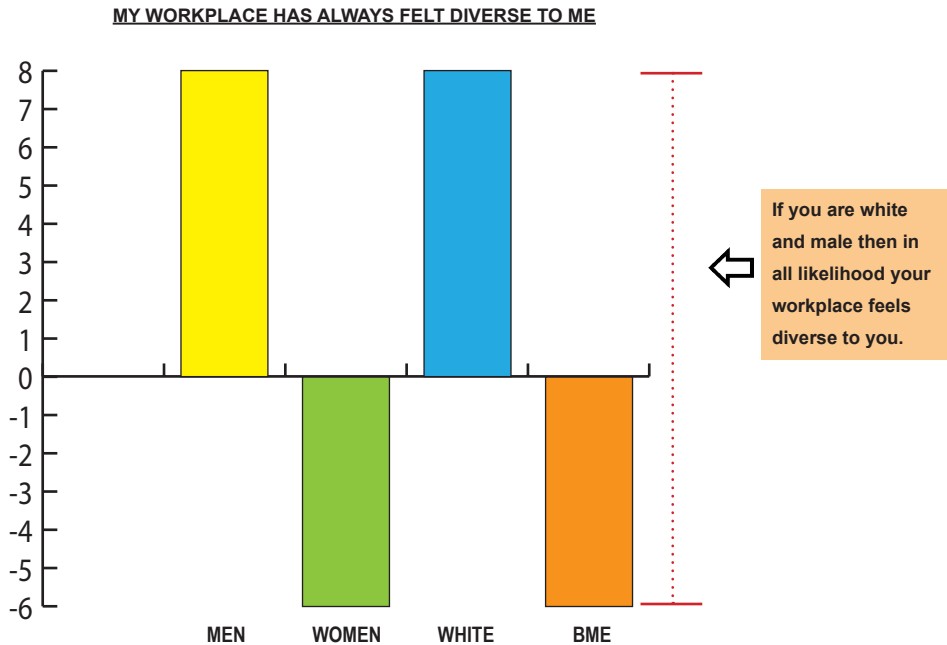


'Other than the cities in the West of Scotland, diversity is not that widespread - or, more accurately, it's not evident. I would welcome (and encourage) people from all cultures to join us across all sectors of employment. It's the only way, in a post-Brexit landscape, that we stand any chance of staying the globally respected nation that we in Scotland are. Multiculturalism is the only future.' **Male, White**

'I feel generally accepted at my work place.' **Male, BME**

'We strongly support I & D in the organisation at which I work. I have worked in England and Australia with my current organisation and workplaces in these countries are far more reflective of the wider community than in Scotland in my opinion.' **Male, White**

Similarly, there are differences in how diverse a workplace feels, both between white and BME groups, but also between male and female.

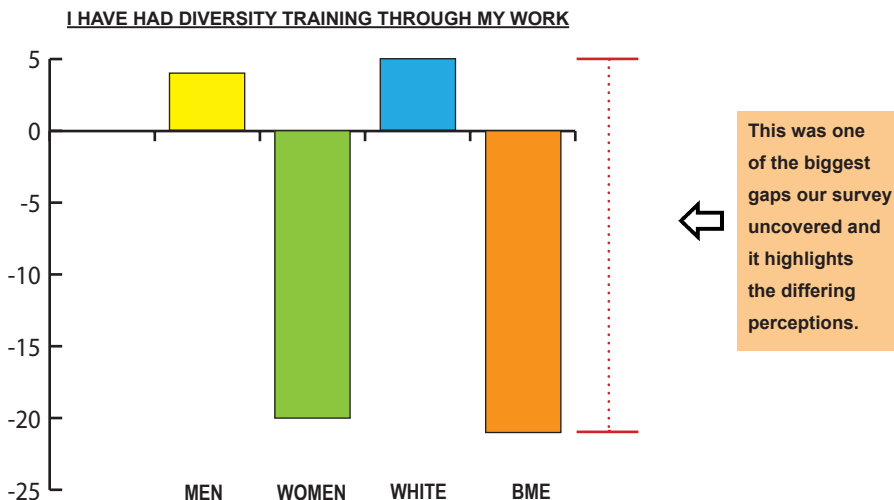


'We have to follow strict quality and diversity policies everyday and are trained to a high level of service and support. It is used everyday to ensure that all people regardless of age, gender, sexuality and nationality are treated fair and equal.' **Male, White**

'I am the only African in the team. There are two other minority ethnic people from Asia. Diversity training has not been discussed although we are sensitive and accommodating in relation to working with diverse communities.' **Male, BME**

'My current employer has a strong Diversity & Inclusion focus. Each area has D&I goals and development items as part of individual performance plans.' **Female, White**

Our question on Diversity Training highlighted a big difference in perception. If you are white, and likely male, then your perception is that you have had Diversity training (and are unlikely therefore to consider a need for more). Those in BME communities, and to a certain extent women, felt they had not received training. The question needs to be asked around who decides if diversity training is a priority, if the answer is 'white men' then (with some exceptions), things are unlikely to change.



'I was never put through any diverse training at my work and from my experience, I don't think the staff I found have a good knowledge about diversity.' **Female, BME**

'The area where I live is predominantly "white". Diversity training was around LGBT issues.' **Female, White**

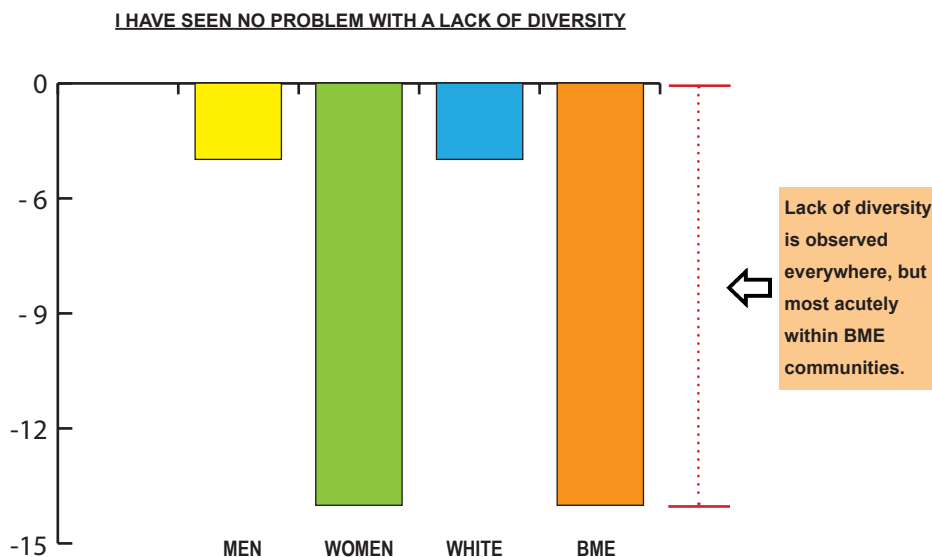
'The only training I got was a short course on diversity on e-learning during my induction' **Female, BME**

'Compulsory for NHS staff to complete diversity training online.' **Female, White**

'Rarely received diversity training, not entirely sure what is meant by the phrase!' **Male, White**

'We have compulsory training courses at my employer, we have not had a diversity course that I can remember. We do have a huge catalogue of online courses though and I would imagine there would be relevant diversity courses in there if we wished to take them.' **Male, White**

In a similar way, when we asked people if they had seen a problem with a lack of diversity there was a difference between white men and BME communities. It should be noted though that more people in every group answered negatively than positively so we can assume that a lack of diversity is causing visible problems in many places.



'It's not taken seriously. Just a box that needs to be checked.' **Female, BME**

'I hadn't really thought about this before but both my work places are predominantly white/British so I think that should bother me.. sometimes we are not aware of these things until filling in this survey it is highlighted. So yes having thought about it would be nice if this could be changed.' **White, Female**

'I think diversity and inclusion is a hot topic at the moment and there is lots of training to support this. However there is not yet the shift in mindsets and behaviours and too much emphasis on filling diversity in quotas and not enough time spent valuing diversity in people.' **White, Female**

'A greater diversity would help; I think it assists in taking fully-rounded decisions. My workplace and lack of racial diversity probably reflects the surrounding area with its lack of racial diversity.' **White, Female**

'A successful business should reflect the communities and clients it serves.' **Male, White**

'I do not think there is a problem here.' **Male, White**

'Ethnic diversity is not valued at the moment.' **Male, BME**

'It's assumed you are not good enough at anything before you are even given the opportunity to do anything.' **Male, BME**

Our final topic of conversation was about the workplace, what it is like to be from a BME background and work in Scotland. Again, we asked the same three questions:

What happened, what did you see and hear?

People reported being subjected to blatant racism in their workplace with this coming through strongly as a theme.

Others had a more positive experience from helpful managers who they felt understood how to get the best out of them.

"Some people don't drink the coffee when I serve them"
*"3 times I served food and they said 'what the ****, monkeys giving us food.'"*
"Customer is number 1 so racism is generally allowed"
"Too many monkeys, we need to teach monkeys how to drive."
"Too many Monkeys."
"Monkeys, Monkeys, Monkeys."
"Some people don't want me to serve them because of my ethnicity."
"Was helped to write letter for housing."
"Manager was very helpful, when I have problems at home I get help."

How did this make you feel?

Some people reported feeling bullied and there were several examples of this.

Some felt they were being sidelined as others were given pay rises or promotions.

"Disadvantaged, I cannot challenge anything, it reminds me of Africa."
"Subjected to institutionalised racism – everyone got a pay rise apart from me."
"Bypassed. No promotion or pay rise in 5 years."
"Bullied – subject to backstabbing."

What would make this better for everyone?

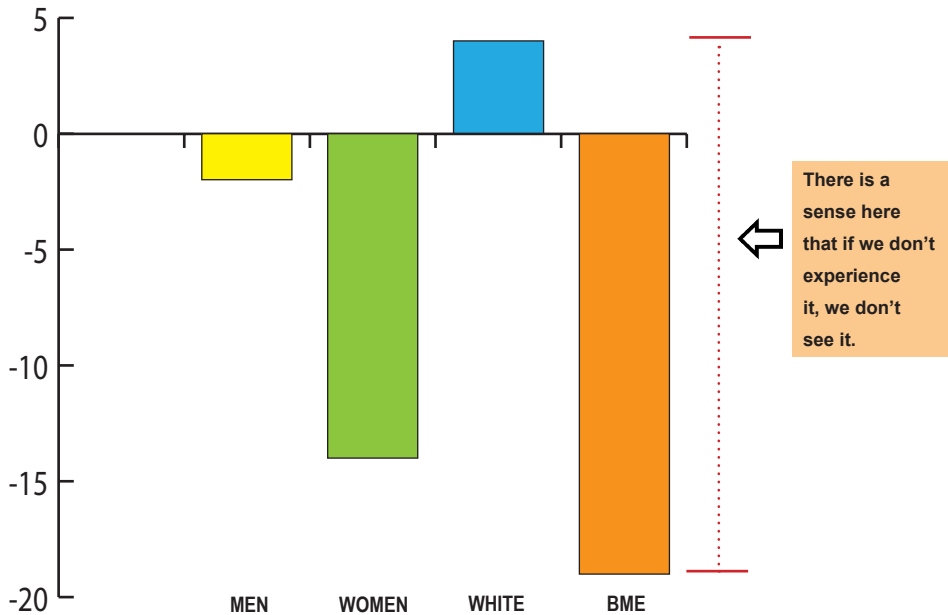
Many wanted to see their managers given training in diversity so that they understand how much BME communities have to offer.

Others felt that managers and supervisors needed to do more to stand up for staff in the face of racism.

"Understanding and knowledge about qualifications of people from ethnic minorities."
"Managers and assistants need to be trained and they need to understand the value and benefit that we bring."
"Managers need to be trained."
"Supervisor should have responsibility for staff when customer is racist."
"In my mind I feel like the supervisor should face the customer and challenge racism."

So it is clear that racism exists in the Scottish workplace, whether it is overt or not. The question to be asked is whether our lack of diversity is directly responsible for that and how much of the answer is in our own hands. Our survey throws some light on the problems relating to racism in the workplace, at a simplistic level it seems that if you don't experience racism then you don't see it, or at least are not aware of it.

I HAVE SEEN NO PROBLEM RELATING TO RACISM



'In my experience agency staff from a wide variety of backgrounds are used but the regular staff are predominantly white/British. I have seen interview screening being done where foreign sounding names are ruled out before the application has been read.' **Female, White**

'We are only employed in low skilled shift work regardless of skills sets and experience.' **Female, BME**

Lisa

Lisa was just 17 when she arrived in London from Zimbabwe in 2001, she joined her mother who had already been in the UK for 4 years at that point. Seeking a better future Lisa made Glasgow her home in 2003 and set out to complete her A level studies at North Glasgow College.

A young mum herself by this point Lisa worked hard for her qualifications, walking over the M8 from her home in Sighthill each day to childcare in Royston then onto college in Springburn – and the reverse at the end of a hard day. That she couldn't get a nursery place for her son locally is another story - 'segregation' is how she describes it herself. Lisa followed up her A Levels with an HNC in Healthcare at Stow College, a place she describes as 'heaven' because there was so much more diversity than other places she had experienced. However, heaven or not the HNC didn't result in a job, or even an interview despite multiple applications.

Lisa is a hard worker, and not to be denied, so she decided to take on further studies to increase her chances of a job, this time going to the University of the West of Scotland to study Health Science. Despite finishing well in May by September Lisa still hadn't had a single interview so she decided to take on a Masters Degree in Public Health at Glasgow Caledonian University between 2011 and 2013. At this time Lisa was able to get some work as a care worker, giving her valuable income, but a job she was overqualified for to say the least.

“..even if I go to school I wouldn't get a job, I mean, how many degrees have you got?”

Realising that experience may be part of the reason for her not getting a job in her chosen field Lisa volunteered, initially at a children's support organisation and then at Glasgow City Council. By 2015 Lisa was still without a job in the UK and so she applied for a job with the World Health Organisation, getting 6 month contract abroad – meaning she had to leave her children behind while she earned income to support them all. On her return Lisa was able to secure a role as a team leader, however this fell way short of her aspirations and is not related to the many studies she has undertaken. Lisa was so frustrated at her lack of progress in health that she started a Masters Degree in Quantity Surveying during 2018 – another departure and not one she would ever have chosen.

600-700
Applications

Lisa estimates that she has applied for between 600 and 700 roles in her chosen field of health and has never received an interview. She currently works in a job that does not fulfil her while she studies for a degree that she should not need.

Lisa now has three children with her eldest approaching 15 and is keen that he do well at school, however he isn't so sure and the normal mum:teenager arguments often come down to the opportunities education brings. Her son shone new light on the problem here recently telling her “..even if I go to school I wouldn't get a job, I mean, how many degrees have you got?”

Conclusion

- Our recruitment is flawed where highly qualified people are unable to even be interviewed, conscious and unconscious bias appears to be at play there and in the workplace when we are surprised at how capable people from BME communities can be.
- Where people from BME communities see no equivalent role models, or any diversification in the workplace, they are put off making an application, this means Scottish businesses miss out on applicable skills and the situation perpetuates again and again.
- Blatant racism exists in our workplaces, is directed at BME communities, and comes from both colleagues and customers. This is rarely challenged by those in management roles.
- People who identify as 'white' can be blind to the lack of diversity around them, and in particular do not see racism at play in our workplaces.
- The Scottish workplace is underutilizing the potential within BME Communities where people are forced to train, and retrain, only to remain unemployed and/or underemployed in many cases.

This does not mean that the people responding to our survey are racist, or are opposed to diversity, it simply means that they need more education in diversity, its benefits and the impact that a non diverse workplace can have. If we consider this group to be representative of others across Scotland it is fair to assume that this need exists across the country.

The long term implications of not getting this right in Scotland are concerning. As stated in the introduction Scotland needs inward migration. We need to make sure that we use the talents and skills that arrive here to their full potential, and right now we are self limiting through a basic lack of diversity – and its knock on implications.

Businesses across Scotland need to raise their awareness of diversity and its benefits. In particular those in recruitment roles, supervisory and management roles need to understand what to look out for and how best to use this rich seam of talent within Scotland's BME communities as well as those coming to our country.

Recommendations

- **Applying Diversity in employment and recruitment processes.** Our interviews and workshops showed that BME employees did not feel fairly or equally treated during recruitment. The lack of diversity appreciation at recruitment level led to BME skills, abilities and qualifications not counting for much. Implementing processes which recognise diversity of skills, also ensuring interview panels and HR teams are diverse at recruitment level can promote good practice and increase diversity awareness.
- **Partnerships between employers and community organisations which have a reach in the community.** BME people reported being considered to be less capable than their white counterparts. For organisations with little or no diversity, such perceptions can be encoded in their work practice. Organisations with meaningful and trusted engagement with BME communities have a vast amount of knowledge and information which can be applied to diversity training, recruitment and inclusion support programs for employers.
- **Investment in Diversity training and awareness programs.** BME people reported racism and perception related issues, while some white people felt that it was not an issue in their workplace. Diversity training was compulsory for some workplaces, yet others reported that it was a 'tick box exercise'. However, it was evident that there were visible problems in the Scottish workplace. To create a better understanding and address issues identified, diversity and Inclusion programs require time and financial investment to train the workforce and increase understanding of diversity for all.
- **Visible and regular communication of commitment to race equality in the workplace.** The survey showed that racism was not adequately addressed in the workplace with BME people experiencing it from both fellow employees and customers. Policies which protect BME employees implemented and translated into everyday practice within the workplace can play a big role in reducing racism incidents. Employer commitment to race equality, communicated at all levels of leadership, in training and in every department has the potential to increase confidence for staff to adequately challenge attitudes and perceptions in a safe environment.
- **Visible role models with lived experience, educational spaces and ethnicity ambassadors.** BME people reported loneliness and a lack of understanding with staff sometimes asking personal questions and presuming you don't know how to do the job. Increasing visibility of BME role models in the workplace and senior roles will create awareness of the value that diversity brings to business and the Scottish economy. Training ambassadors (including senior staff members) from all ethnicities and creating educational spaces in the workplace ought to be considered if we want a more inclusive Scottish workplace.

About Radiant and Brighter

Radiant and Brighter is a Community Interest Company set up to unlock potential within the migrant population in Scotland - for the benefit of the entire community and Scottish society.

Established in 2012 by Pheona and Micheal Matovu, who have lived experience of the issues faced by those they now support, Radiant and Brighter offer a proven and successful suite of services which bring people together and provide practical support, education and a gateway to other relevant services. These services orientate people within their new communities and ultimately integrate them through networks, employment, education, and enterprise.

Radiant and Brighter offer a selection of 5 Ethnicity and Diversity courses which can also be tailor made and delivered to companies for up to 15 staff at a time. The interactive courses look at the nature of the organisation and, in a safe environment, offer insights into diversity needs.

All participants will be challenged to reconsider perceptions and unconscious bias as well as gaining a better understanding of cultural sensitivities prior to, during and post recruitment to attract and sustain diversity in the workplace.



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