



**Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities
Call for evidence: Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK**

About Directors UK

1. Directors UK is the professional association of UK screen directors. It is a membership organisation representing the creative, economic and contractual interests of over 7,500 members — the majority of working TV and film directors in the UK.
2. Directors UK collects and distributes royalty payments and provides a range of services to members including campaigning, commercial negotiations, legal advice, events, training and career development. Directors UK works closely with fellow organisations around the world to represent directors' rights and concerns, promotes excellence in the craft of direction and champions change to the current landscape to create an equal opportunity industry for all.
3. Directors UK welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' call for evidence on ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK. We have responded to relevant questions drawing on insight from TV and film-makers from our Directors of Colour Committee.

Question 1. What do you consider to be the main causes of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK, and why?

Education and Cultural Influences

4. A key issue affecting racial and ethnic disparities in the UK surrounds education, and the historical and cultural influences which inform and shape our understanding of the world around us.
5. There is a lack of education and understanding of Britain's colonial history, and about the diversity of religion and the different ways of life in various communities. This includes learning about and understanding the human rights abuses during the colonial reign, exploring Britain's homegrown racist history such as the case of Stephen Lawrence, the history of the rise of the National Front, the Grunwick dispute and the efforts of protestors fighting for rights amongst immigrant workers etc. Children should be taught from a young age about other cultures, races and beliefs which has often been overlooked in the UK.
6. The impact of a lack of education about Britain's colonial past, the diversity of cultures, races and beliefs in the different communities in the UK has been profound; it has created a sense of otherness around non-white peoples.
7. This has been compounded by the creative and cultural content people are exposed to through mediums such as film and television, which has traditionally been made from a largely white editorial perspective. Film and television present us with reflections of ourselves and provide unique windows into the worlds of others, shaping our understanding of those around us and play a role in creating our national and individual identity. There has been a historic lack of diversity in storytelling, and often the stories of people of colour have been told in terms of how they relate to white people.

Workplace Under-Representation

8. The under-representation of people of colour in key roles in the workplace is also a significant factor affecting diversity of thought and experience, particularly at a senior level. Some of the factors our members felt affect this are:
- Stigmatisation and lack of transparency in acknowledging racism within leading institutions.
 - Unconscious bias in hiring practices.
 - Companies/organisations not addressing ethnic disparities as a priority on a par with, or conducive to, 'profits'.

Under-Representation On and Off Screen

9. Under-representation in the workforce has been especially true in the TV and film sector. In 2018 Directors UK published its second report examining the representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic groups among screen directors working in UK Television. The findings published in our report [Adjusting the Colour Balance](#)¹ showed that only 2.22% of television programmes in the UK were made by a person of colour during the period 2013-2016. This meant that 97.78% of TV shows in the research were made by white directors. The report also found that just 3.6% of UK television directors featured in our dataset were directors of colour.
10. Diversity behind the camera matters because directors are influential storytellers, whose diversity of voice, vision and perspective should reflect that of wider society. Directors' cultural and social influences reach into people's everyday lives, shaping our understanding of those around us. It matters greatly that the people making the television programmes reflect the audience watching them. Historically these stories have tended to be told from an editorial perspective that is predominantly white.
11. UK Public Service Broadcasters have an obligation under their operating licences to represent and reflect the audiences they serve - the UK population is currently made up of 14% people of colour. Broadcasters have responded to the lack of diversity in the industry by publishing inclusion strategies and diversity commissioning guidelines aimed at improving representation in content, and among those making the content; and making efforts to monitor and report on the diversity of those working on their programmes, both on and off screen. But progress is slow and there is still a long way to go.
12. Ofcom, as the industry regulator, has a duty to promote equality of opportunity in relation to employment in the broadcasting sector. For the past four years, Ofcom has held the broadcasting industry to account with annual monitoring reports on its workforce diversity and equal opportunity policies. The most recent report published this month, November 2020² found that, although broadcasters are making efforts to improve the diversity of their workforce, and to create a more inclusive culture in their workplaces, *"progress is still far too slow and too many people are being left behind as some groups remain consistently under-represented."*³
13. They found that *"Minority ethnic people – and particularly Black colleagues – are under-represented in senior management across the industry: 8% of those employed by TV broadcasters in senior management roles are from a Minority Ethnic Group ("MEG") compared with a national workforce average of 12% (which increases to 35% in London and 31% in Manchester). Black colleagues are more underrepresented in senior management than other minority ethnic groups, at 1% (compared with 3% of the working population)."*

¹ <https://directors.uk.com/campaigns/bame-directors>

² https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/207229/2019-20-report-diversity-equal-opportunities-tv-and-radio.pdf

³ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/207229/2019-20-report-diversity-equal-opportunities-tv-and-radio.pdf, p4

14. Ofcom is calling on broadcasters to make a more focused effort, and for “A faster increase in the diversity of crucial decision-makers (senior management, as well as employees in commissioning, content and creative roles), specifically addressing the underrepresentation of Black colleagues”. They are also asking them to set “clear measurable workforce targets and diversity and inclusion objectives, with tangible outcomes”, and to hold themselves and production partners to account for meeting diversity requirements: “Where broadcasters have commissioning guidelines or requirements in place, we expect broadcasters to ensure that there are clear consequences when independent production partners do not follow them. We believe there is a genuine desire to move beyond words to action in this area, but that can only happen if broadcasters take accountability for following up on their public commitments to diversity and inclusion.”⁴
15. We agree that there needs to be an acceleration towards achieving progress, and greater accountability among broadcasters and production companies. Without tangible targets and direct consequences for those not following requirements, progress will continue to be slow.
16. What the Ofcom and Directors UK reports have also highlighted is the lack of monitoring and reporting of the freelance workforce, which is how a large proportion of production teams are employed in the TV and film sector. This lack of knowledge and understanding of this critical part of the workforce is essential to effecting change both on and off screen. It is essential that freelancer data is gathered and monitored, to provide an accurate picture of what diversity looks like for the broadcasters and the productions they commission. The industry’s Creative Diversity Network (CDN) has established a production monitoring system, known as ‘Diamond’⁵. This is a single online system used by the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky to obtain consistent diversity data on the programmes they commission from independent production partners. Whilst we support what Diamond is trying to achieve in gathering, monitoring and reporting freelancer diversity data, we, like many others, have concerns about the level of detail being gathered and shared and how effective that will be in delivering change.
17. Under representation is also true in film, as outlined in the BFI’s 2020 report “Race and Ethnicity in the UK Film industry”⁶ which found that “Black and ethnic minority groups face tremendous levels of exclusion from the film industry”, and that “the presence of Race/ Ethnicity is generally located in what can be described as secondary roles, and there remains a low number of references to Race/ Ethnicity in the lead characters (category A1) and Department Heads (category B1).” If mass-consumed content is not being made by people of colour at representative levels, and they are largely missing from the editorial process, it raises the question of how community understanding of diversity will improve. The BFI has introduced Diversity Standards⁷ and Diversity Targets⁸ for publicly funded films in order to address under-representation.
18. Recognition has also been a key factor in the TV and film sector. Those creatives of colour who do work in the industry are seldom recognised by significant industry awards⁹. By not publicly celebrating the achievements of filmmakers of colour a sense of otherness is reinforced, and few high-profile role models emerge that can encourage and inspire others into the arts. In response to these concerns BAFTA is committing to changing their voting and awards process to facilitate greater recognition of the contribution of under-represented filmmakers.¹⁰

⁴ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/207229/2019-20-report-diversity-equal-opportunities-tv-and-radio.pdf, p45

⁵ <https://creativediversitynetwork.com/diamond/>

⁶ <https://www.bfi.org.uk/industry-data-insights/reports/diversity-reports>, page 18

⁷ <https://www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/bfi-diversity-standards>

⁸ <https://www.bfi.org.uk/inclusion-film-industry/inclusion-targets>

⁹ [Baftas so white: Acting categories don't nominate one person of colour | Metro News.](https://www.metro.co.uk/entertainment/2020/02/25/baftas-so-white-acting-categories-dont-nominate-one-person-of-colour/)

¹⁰ <https://www.bafta.org/about/mission/the-bafta-2020-review>

19. In the Directors UK 2018 report 'Adjusting the Colour Balance'¹¹ we explored possible causes for the persistent under-representation of TV directors off-screen. Drawing on published research and our own members anecdotal evidence we identified the following:

- **Unconscious bias:** Deep-seated behaviours, perceptions and values influence decision-making even if we are not consciously aware of them.
- **A belief that directors of colour are few in number:** The issue here is not necessarily a lack of talent, but a failure by the programme commissioners and producers to search for talent outside their known network.
- **Hiring practices:** In film and TV, freelance recruitment processes are largely informal, most work is secured by personal referral so opportunities often stay within a closed network. Even if jobs are advertised, hiring decisions may be based on a familiarity with a director's credits and not on their actual skills. Working on a well-known programme becomes an influential stepping-stone compared to contributing to a lesser known but more technically challenging show. To compound the problem, references are usually made verbally. They are not recorded or archived, so cannot be checked or queried, and the discussions often cover perceived personality rather than skills. This informal system uses an employer's own network which makes it closed to external opinions and is likely to result in a lack of hiring diversity.
- **Small-scale diversity initiatives cannot create systemic change:** Establishing placements or opportunities for diverse directors can help change perceptions and overcome unconscious bias. But a small-scale deployment of this activity is not enough. It needs to be part of a wider, more strategic plan. Until diverse placements and employment becomes common practice, positive change towards a more representative workforce will be impeded.

20. Research undertaken by Cameo for the BFI in 2018¹² also found that: *"Particularly powerful obstacles to workforce participation are the screen sector's reliance on personal networks for allocating work and business opportunities; a 'white, male, middle class'-dominated industry culture; working conditions characterised by long working hours, flexible and mobile working and income insecurities; and an underlying acceptance of these conditions as diversity unfriendly but necessary and unchangeable"*.

21. The report also found that *"There is some evidence that interventions in the form of training schemes and mentorship programmes can be successful in providing entry routes into the screen sector workforce for limited numbers of women, BAME people and disabled people. There is, however, little to suggest that these interventions have to date had any success at addressing the underlying causes of inequality or the existence of barriers to equal participation."* Clearly training and mentoring initiatives provide important access points, but to effect real change the industry needs to take a more committed and holistic approach if it wants to achieve long term and systemic change in the employment of diverse talent. As Ofcom highlighted in their latest diversity report *"...we asked broadcasters to describe how they evaluated their most successful initiatives and actions. We are disappointed that generally broadcasters did not provide a detailed response to this question, beyond noting outcomes against targets... While we encourage broadcasters to measure outcomes against targets, we also recognise that such evaluation does not guarantee continued success"*¹³

¹¹ <https://directors.uk.com/campaigns/bame-directors>

¹² <https://www.bfi.org.uk/industry-data-insights/reports/workforce-diversity-uk-screen-sector-evidence-review>

¹³ ¹³ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/207229/2019-20-report-diversity-equal-opportunities-tv-and-radio.pdf, p26

5. How can the ways young people (in particular those aged 16 to 24 years) find out about and access education, training and employment opportunities be improved?

22. As mentioned above, a key issue affecting accessibility in the screen sector is that the industry is largely staffed via informal networks and word of mouth recommendations. Young people with existing familial links into the industry are at an advantage over those who do not have those connections. As we also highlighted, the industry is predominantly white, so the mechanism of getting an entry level job through a family connection favours those from white (and middle class) backgrounds. Many entry level jobs are not advertised. Adopting more formal hiring practices and relying less on informal networks, would go a long way to help those from under-represented groups access entry level roles to develop careers.
23. Leading institutions should go out of their way to introduce students to formalised noticeboards or places where opportunities are posted or advertised and not allow opportunities to be offered on an informal "who you know" basis. This is particularly true of the film and TV industry which notoriously relies on informal hiring practices, such as personal contacts, social networks or closed Facebook/social media groups to spread information about training or job opportunities.
24. Within the film and TV Sector, organisations such as ScreenSkills¹⁴, Into Film¹⁵, Discover Creative Careers¹⁶ among others, play a key role in introducing young people to a career in the screen industry. They highlight the many different roles available, ways of accessing the industry and they provide training, mentoring, career access and career development opportunities. What is important is making sure that this information is shared with young people in places where they are, and that they can find and access it. Not only through schools, clubs, and informal and social networks, but through community groups and by improving a wider cultural understanding of the value of these careers and how to access them.

10. Can you suggest other ways in which racial and ethnic disparities in the UK could be addressed? In particular, is there evidence of where specific initiatives or interventions have resulted in positive outcomes? Are there any measures which have been counterproductive and why?

25. Education. British history should be taught from multiple perspectives allowing a broader understanding of the diversity of the UK - the good, the bad and including contributions from other cultures and nations.
26. Initiatives or interventions within industries, particularly film and TV, need to be carefully thought through with long term impact in mind. Often schemes last for a limited period of time and the talent is then left to fend for themselves when the allocated budget has run its course. Access or entry level schemes are often seen as the default solution to diversity problems, with less consideration of mid/late career talent who are beyond entry schemes and have the necessary skills and experience, but simply lack access to opportunities. The industry needs to consider how it is supporting and opening up opportunities that enable the career progression and retention of people working at the mid-level, in order to maintain diversity in the workforce throughout the life-cycle of a career.

**Directors UK
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¹⁴ www.screenskills.com

¹⁵ <https://www.intofilm.org/>

¹⁶ <https://discovercreative.careers/#/>