

# **race in the workplace: embracing Black diversity**

Global Majority Heritage (GMH) employees have an employment rate of 69.4% compared to 77.2% of White workers.

Race discrimination in the UK has been illegal since 1976 and even though Blacks enjoy the same civil liberties as White citizens, biases and discrimination still exist—even in the workplace. In 2022, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) conducted what is believed to be the largest representative study conducted among the UK's 3.9 million GMH workers, which revealed that more than 120,000 UK workers quit their jobs as a result of racism.

Additionally, the same study reported that more than 25% of GMH workers have been subject to racist jokes in the last 5 years.

Even though organisations may feel that they have adequate resources and interventions to support GMH employees, it's important to keep in mind that diversity and inclusion need to be consistently monitored to make sure that everyone is on the same page about the culture of diversity and inclusion of the organisation.



# refocusing on long-term Black diversity this Black History Month

From Black Lives Matter to Black History Month, there are several movements and initiatives that target the rights of Blacks and try to amplify their voices by not just celebrating their victories but also standing up for equal treatment of Blacks.

According to McKinley, organisations that have a robust GMH representation in leadership are 33-36% more likely to outperform their peers.

The numbers don't lie and the majority of studies corroborate that when diversity and inclusion are given prominence, employees are happier and companies tend to perform better.

While it may have started as offering equal opportunities to Black employees, today, the benefits of supporting them have proven to be an asset for organisations.

## supporting your Black employees

Ever asked a Black colleague or employee what you can do to support them? Or have you asked a non-Black colleague what you should do to support your Black colleagues? Whatever iteration of these questions you've been asking, you're making progress.

For GMH employees, not only do they have to grapple with the same workplace problems that everyone faces but they also have the added burden of dealing with the world around them, whether it's a news story about a racist attack, protests fighting for equality and equal representation, or protests fighting for their right to a seat at the table.

Black professionals have a lot on their minds and as organisations, even though there isn't much that can be done in the larger community, there's an obligation to at least create a respectful and equal workplace culture where every employee has the freedom to voice their opinions and perspectives without prejudice or backlash.

If support for GMH employees is on the corporate agenda, there are a few things that must be considered:





## **consider your intentions and avoid insincere allyship**



Ask yourself whether you're trying to support your Black employees because it's something that will look good on your company's social media platforms or if you genuinely want employees to feel safe and supported.

## **educate yourself and your employees/colleagues**



Educating yourself shouldn't just be limited to learning about the best ways to support Black employees. You should ask questions about White fragility and why White employees may consciously or unconsciously discriminate against GMH workers.

## **give Black employees space to experience their feelings**



Start an Employee Resource Group (ERG) and offer Black employees access to therapeutic resources for any trauma. For instance, videos or images of George Floyd, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, or Ahmaud Arbery can be quite traumatic and may not be viewed as isolated incidents by the Black community. These scenarios cause stress, fear, anger, anxiety, and many more negative feelings that need to be dealt with in a supportive environment.

## **support Black employees to grow and upskill**



There are many emotions that the Black community experiences regularly. But even with all these negative emotions and feelings, it's important to help them stay on track with their careers. Whether it's a promotion or the opportunity to work with a cross-functional team, the more opportunities Black employees get today, the more direct the impact will be on where they are tomorrow.

## **why intersectionality cannot be ignored: going beyond the 'women-first' approach**



Intersectionality focuses on different areas of oppression and specifically how they overlap. This is incredibly important as we talk about Black employees because many companies still look at DEI using a narrow lens: 'Let's focus on women first.'

While this approach could be rooted in good intentions, it actually hinders progress. For instance, if you're a Black woman working for an organisation that advocates a 'women-first' approach, it means that they're only considering one aspect of who you are. They are completely overlooking the unique challenges you face as a Black woman.

Many DEI initiatives start off small, but asking employees who are in the minority simply contributes to more inequality. This is why all efforts need to be made intersectional because otherwise 'women-first' will soon become an initiative that supports White women.

Take the pay gap—a topic that has been heavily criticised over the years—as an example. According to a study by The Inclusive Initiative, 70% of Black women in finance, professional services, and big tech believe they are being paid less than their peers and 90% of the respondents also stated that they want more systemic change.

These figures show that there is still much to be accomplished and without clear consideration of factors like intersectionality, the journey to diversity and inclusion for Black professionals will likely be challenged by formidable barriers.

# going beyond Black History Month: keeping up with diversity initiatives year-round



Black History Month is a great starting point for new initiatives or refocusing existing ones to educate about microaggressions and implicit bias while creating a safe space for Black employees to share their experiences.

Many companies—although dedicated to furthering their diversity and inclusion efforts—scale their efforts back once Black History Month has passed to focus on other things until it rolls back around the following October.

Unfortunately, this gives the impression that supporting Black employees is a 30-day initiative that doesn't matter during the rest of the year. This is where organisations need to make a conscious effort to have a year-long plan that celebrates GMH employees throughout the year.

Before you begin making any changes, you need to ask yourself some questions about what your existing workplace is like for Black workers. Here are a few questions to help you get started:

## **'when was the last time I interviewed a Black candidate and what was the role?'**

Understand your recruitment practices and consider how inclusive you are. Do your biases come into play during an interview? Are you asking questions that you wouldn't ask a White candidate?

## **'who are the next generation leaders in the company and are any of them Black?'**

Ask yourself who you're supporting and if you're giving better opportunities to some and not others who may have the same skills, experience, and capabilities.

## **'when was the last time a Black employee was given a high-stakes assignment?'**

Think about the assignments and how they can benefit their careers. Make a conscious effort to give opportunities to everyone with the same chance of succeeding.



# seek guidance from a Kinhub expert



The Kinhub platform offers unlimited access to a host of experts specialising in several fields, including diversity and equality.



meet Erika Brodnock!  
**DEI Expert**

## resources

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/tii/assets/documents/Inclusivity-of-Black-Women.pdf>

Our support is tailored to your employees' unique circumstances, encompassing support for single, multicultural, LGBTQ+, surrogate, adoptive, and cis families, as well as those caring for elderly family members. Supporting employees in areas ranging from fertility to menopause and everything in between, at Kinhub, we appreciate that every individual is different, with various nuances and needs.

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