

Biggest UK companies have no black top executives: study

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Just 1.1 percent of senior executives on FTSE 100 firms are black

Britain's biggest businesses have very few ethnic minorities in the boardroom—and no black top executives, according to research published Wednesday.

Recruitment firm Green Park revealed in its 2021 report that there are no black chief executives, chairs or chief financial officers in FTSE 100 firms for the first time in the six years that it has conducted the annual study.

And only 10 out of 297 executives—3.4 percent—in those top three roles at FTSE 100 companies have other ethnic minority backgrounds.

Despite corporate and government pledges to improve diversity, the proportion of ethnic minority executives has barely budged since 2014 when Green Park began its research.

The percentage of black executive directors and non-executive directors at board and executive committee level on FTSE 100 firms stood at just 1.1 percent, down from 1.3 percent in 2014.

However, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Chinese and East Asian board members over the same period.

Green Park warned that the prospect of a future increase in black representation at the highest boardroom level appeared "slim" due to declining numbers in the leadership "pipeline".

British business 'stubbornly white'

"These figures put some flesh on the bone of last year's protests," said Green Park chair Trevor Phillips.

"We know there is no shortage of qualified candidates to fill these roles if companies are willing to look.

"Yet the snowy peaks of British business remain stubbornly white.

"We cannot go back to business as usual. It is time that shareholders, consumers and employees start questioning whether Black Lives Matter is just rhetoric rather than reality."

He added: "Corporate leaders need to stop telling us how much they care and do something to show us that black lives really do matter."

Various big financial firms, including HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group and NatWest, have already vowed to increase the number of black, Asian and ethnic minority staff in senior roles, amid the protest movement sparked by the killing last year of African American George Floyd.

Floyd's death on May 25, 2020, became a symbol of what many say is systemic racism and abuse of African Americans by police, and sparked worldwide protests that continue under the banner of "Black Lives Matter".

According to 2011 census data, about 87 percent of Britons are white, while 13 percent belong to a black, Asian, mixed or other ethnic group.

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