

## Invisible Leaders

### The Lack of BAME Role Models and the Impact on Global Business



As representatives of diverse senior executives and **champions of diversity and inclusion**, Audeliss recently spearheaded original research to uncover the **lack of business leaders from an ethnic minority background** and highlight the life-changing impact of **visible diverse role models**.

In May 2016 Audeliss commissioned a report that found that [only 4% of FTSE 100 CEOs are not white](#), despite the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) community making up 14% of the UK population. The significant diversity deficit at the very top of Britain's biggest businesses is a problem in itself, but also has potentially harmful repercussions for the next generation of business leaders: the lack of visible role models with an ethnic minority background.

Our latest original research piece surveyed a proportionally representative selection of 2,000 people across white and minority ethnic backgrounds and asked them to name business leaders in the community under a timed environment.

In total, the respondents named 158 business leaders (different respondents named some of the same leaders multiple times). The research revealed a plethora of disheartening but somewhat unsurprising results, including:



**Just 34% of BAME respondents could recall even one role model. In comparison, three quarters (75%) of the Caucasian respondents could name at least one white business leader;**



**On average, those that could name a BAME business leader could only name fewer than two (1.7);**



**Not only were fewer BAME respondents than white respondents able to recall a business leader, but of those who could a third (33%) chose leaders within the entertainment industry.**

BAME Respondents		White Respondents	
The most recalled BAME Business Leaders		The most recalled non-BAME Business Leaders	
1	Lakshmi Mittal	1	Richard Branson
2	Oprah Winfrey	2	Alan Sugar
3	Mukesh Ambani	3	Bill Gates
4	James Caan	4	Phillip Green
5	Jay Z	5	Mark Zuckerberg
6	Aliko Dangote	6	Steve Jobs
7	Ratan Tata	7	Duncan Bannatyne
8	Jack Ma	8	Peter Jones
9	Dr Dre	9	James Dyson
10	Beyoncé	10	Rupert Murdoch

The results reveal a worrying lack of visible business role models for the BAME community. More needs to be done, both to support and create opportunities for talented businesspeople from ethnic minority backgrounds and to increase the presence and recognition of BAME leaders – but how can this be achieved?

### It’s A Man’s World

Female leaders of ethnic minority background are further underrepresented in the research. A miniscule **12% of respondents could cite a single female BAME leader**, with 75% of the named women working in entertainment: Oprah and Beyoncé are the only two women in the top 10 most readily recalled business leaders. Conversely, there are no women in the non-BAME list named by white respondents, with globally-known business leaders Richard Branson, Alan Sugar and Bill Gates claiming the top three positions.

[Recent research commissioned by The Voice](#), the only British national black weekly newspaper operating in the UK, assessed the presence of women with ethnic minority backgrounds across the national print press. The report revealed that when analyzing the Evening Standard **only four images of non-white women appeared in an entire copy of the newspaper**. Of the four women whose images were shown – singers Alicia Keys, Jennifer Lopez, Beyoncé and Eve – all were in the entertainment industry, with no BAME business women depicted. The newspaper showed no images of black British females and no African, Asian or Caribbean females from any country.

Both reports reinforce the lack of visibility of senior business leaders who are both female and non-white, and highlight underrepresentation as just one of the challenges of belonging to more than one minority group. However, whilst the presence of women on the list is sparse, the BAME list is by far the more diverse of the two. The **white respondents’ list did not include white business leaders of any strand of diversity** – all people listed on the white respondents’ list are heterosexual white men in the age bracket of 50+, with only Mark Zuckerberg bucking the trend at 32.

## The Future is Bright – For Some

The research evidences that women from a BAME background have fewer role models overall but a greater number of female role models than their white female contemporaries, and the prominence of successful non-white women can serve as a positive inspiration to all women. However, for role models to truly make a difference to the future leaders of the world, the role models themselves must be accessible: diverse young people need diverse leaders who reflect their backgrounds, their skill sets, their lifestyles and their aspirations.

Real equality can only be achieved with equal opportunities: future leaders are formed early on in life and the majority of career paths require high academic achievement. A recent report revealed that although university graduates come from a variety of backgrounds, black graduates earn far less than their white peers:

- There is a **11.4% difference in earnings between black and white workers** who achieve GCSE-level qualifications;
- There is a **14.3% earnings gap** in black and white employees with A Levels; and,
- The pay gap is highest at degree level, with **black graduates earning 23.1% less** than white peers.

The limited access to opportunities may also factor in the finding that only 55% of BAME employees feel valued in the workplace, compared with 71% of white employees. We need to evaluate our education system and our recruitment and business practices to work out why these damaging discrepancies exist and how we can achieve equality in our workforce. Businesses are missing out on incredible benefits, despite senior talent pools being full to the brim with excellent BAME candidates. **The talent exists – it just needs to be found.**

The visibility of role models is also key to success in the personal lives of BAME individuals. Despite groundbreaking advances in legal equality and proportional representation over the past few decades and even recent years, people from an ethnic minority background still face a multitude of disadvantages and challenges every day: reports of racial hate crimes have soared since the results of the EU referendum, and immigrants and UK citizens of ethnic minority could continue to suffer [increased levels of prejudice, discrimination and racially motivated violence](#).

The visibility of successful diverse people is vital in both challenging negative attitudes towards minorities and increasing the opportunities, confidence and personal wellbeing of young BAME people.

“**The BAME community is full of intelligent, creative and highly skilled individuals, but we need to show younger generations that they can succeed in business.**”

## The Business Case for Diversity

The business case for a visibly diverse organisation is well supported. Research reveals that **70% of the UK population are more likely to buy** products from or use the services of a company that they consider to be inclusive of all minorities and diverse in its approach to employment.

A mammoth **86% of the UK population believe** that it is important for people at the very top of organisations to promote messages of diversity and inclusion.

Diversity also has a direct impact on business success: recent research from McKinsey evidences that **diverse businesses outperform their competitors by up to 35%**.

## Benefits to enhancing diversity and inclusion in the workplace:

- LGBT+ workers who are open about their gender or sexuality to all colleagues are **32% more productive**
- Companies in the US with female Board executives received **investment returns of £373bn** and in the UK £49bn more than those without
- Diverse businesses **outperform their competitors by up to 35%**.

## The Solution



Our **UPstanding** initiative, in partnership with The Financial Times, aims to [champion and support the BAME business community](#) across the UK, US and Ireland.

Executive teams can lead from the top by committing to recruiting, supporting and developing BAME employees in our teams. Diverse role models within an organisation are a powerful tool in attracting and retaining diverse talent. Championing the importance of diversity internally sends the message that differences are celebrated and that people are truly valued for who they are.

**Manjit Wolstenholme, Non-Executive Director at Provident Financial plc** agrees: “This research reflects the urgent need for many more black, Asian and minority ethnic executives on boards to reflect the diversity of our workforce and our customers. Only by continuing to profile, champion and provide a platform for BAME role models, will we create a pipeline of diverse talent within our companies and succeed in diversifying our most senior positions.”

**Suki Sandhu, Founder and CEO of Audeliss** firmly believes that we can increase the visibility of BAME business role models: “The BAME community is full of intelligent, creative and highly skilled individuals, but we need to show younger generations that they can succeed in business. Celebrating the achievements of diverse business leaders is a powerful tool in increasing the visibility of role models for younger people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and therefore helping to support the diverse leaders of tomorrow.”

# Contact Us



0203 405 6910



[Audeliss](#)



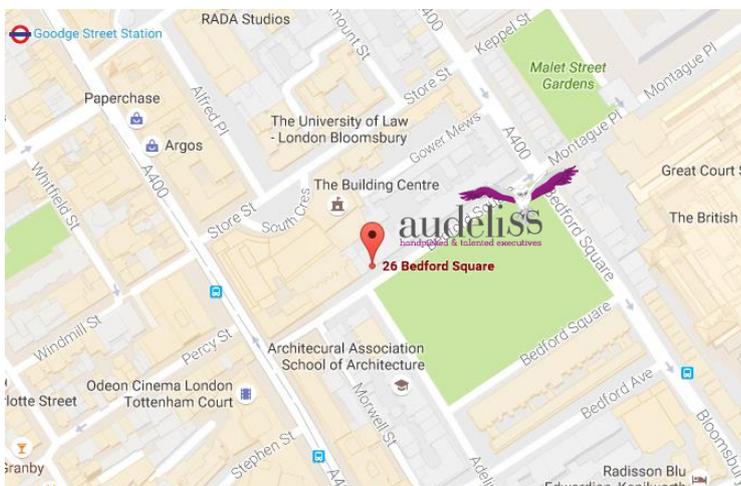
[info@audeliss.com](mailto:info@audeliss.com)



[@audelisspeople](#)



[www.audeliss.com](http://www.audeliss.com)



## Find Us

Audeliss  
26 Bedford Square  
Fitzrovia  
London  
WC1B 3HP