



# Benchmarking our ethnic diversity journey

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Wildlife and  
Countryside



# Benchmarking our ethnic diversity route map journey - 2023

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## Introduction

The environment sector has been one of the least ethnically diverse employers in the country. There has been a welcome recognition within the sector of this as a serious problem, and action has been taken to tackle it, particularly in the last five years. This report aims to benchmark where organisations within the sector are in their progress toward increasing ethnic diversity, from tentative first steps to significant strides for change.

Many organisations have taken considerable action. People of colour now make up [7%](#) of the environmental workforce, compared to just [3%](#) in 2017. There is still a long way to go, with this well below the [14%](#) of the total workforce made up of people of colour. But there is positive progress and experience for the sector to build on together to become the diverse and representative organisations we want to be.

Wildlife and Countryside Link's sector-wide work to increase ethnic diversity among the environmental sector workforce is now into its third year. It continues to be a major focus for the organisation and for our members. In 2021 Link produced [research and analysis](#) into the state of ethnic diversity in the sector and the barriers to, and opportunities for, change. In 2022 we worked with consultants Full Colour to produce an [ethnic diversity route map](#) for the sector, with crucial milestones to be delivered over a 5-year period and a [guidance manual](#) with key advice and practical tips for those starting out their journey.

In 2023 we have sought to deliver practical support, alongside analysis and planning for the next stages of the route map. We have built further on our route map assets by offering workshops, training, practical resources and a peer support network (now known as The Raven Network) to connect and assist colleagues from ethnically diverse backgrounds from organisations across the sector.

Both our research and practical support has been well-received by the sector, with 45 organisations signed up to delivering the route map by 2027.

In spring 2023 we requested that the 43 organisations signed up to the route map at that time take part in a benchmarking survey. This aimed to allow us to track progress across the sector and identify gaps in resource and key areas in which to target support. We achieved a 70% participation rate, enabling us to produce a useful analysis of progress toward greater ethnic diversity and how we can best support further progression.\*

This benchmarking will be repeated annually as a tracker for where the sector is in its progress on ethnic diversity, a vital evaluation tool for the project, and to provide the insight we need to flex our approach and target resources to best suit the needs of the sector.

*\*Unless otherwise stated, the responses in this report are from all 30 organisations who took part, with only two questions from a smaller number of respondents. The respondents consist of 8 large to very large organisations with income over £15m, 14 medium organisations of £1m to £15m income, and 8 small organisations with under £1m income.*

## Key findings

### Closing the aspiration vs action gap

- In 2021 there was an **aspiration vs action gap on ethnic diversity** in environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs). 86% of organisational leaders said increasing ethnic diversity should be a high or top sector priority, but only 22% said it actually was a high priority. This was reflected in the level of organisational readiness that they reported for their organisations.
- In 2023 this action gap has notably reduced, with a **significant proportion of eNGOs having progressed their organisational readiness on ethnic diversity** since 2021.
  - **Only a very small proportion (around 3%) have yet to take any action on improving ethnic diversity.** Of the 97% who have taken action, many more have developed or are developing a detailed action plan compared to 2021.
  - **In 2023 more than half (53.4%), of organisations are developing or have developed an ethnic diversity action plan**, up from just 15% in 2021. 46.7% are progressing or have created an action plan but have yet to fully implement it, while 6.7% have devised a plan and are consistently using it.
  - 50% had also reviewed the diversity route map and identified actions to take.

### Resourcing ramifications

- Financial resource for improving ethnic diversity has increased, with 40% of organisations having dedicated or ad hoc budget compared to a reported 25% in 2021.
- But **overall dedicated financial and staffing resource for increasing ethnic diversity remains fairly low across the sector.** The majority (60%) of environmental organisations don't have a specific budget on ethnic diversity issues. Similarly the vast majority don't have a dedicated staff member on ethnic diversity issues. Only 1 in 10 have a dedicated staff member and for over a third of organisations a staff member has been tasked with taking on extra work on this issue with no reduction in their existing workload.
- **Low resource/capacity, particularly among smaller organisations, means the change process is taking longer than hoped.** It also means that more resource and support needs to be targeted at these smaller organisations.
  - 75% of small organisations do not have an ethnic diversity action plan, this compares to almost two-thirds of medium and large/very large organisations either developing, produced and/or implementing an action plan.
  - 75% of small and 64% of medium organisations say they have no budget for improving ethnic diversity, compared to 37.5% of large organisations.
  - Around half of small and medium environmental NGOs have either no dedicated staffing resource on improving ethnic diversity or have resource only as an add-on to a role with no time freed-up for that staff member.



## Reporting and recruiting for ethnic diversity

- Recruitment and monitoring seem to have significantly improved through:
  - Widespread changes to recruitment practices, including increased ethnicity monitoring, with impact from Race for Nature and New to Nature schemes
  - Sectoral cohesion around The RACE Report as a project and reporting mechanism
  - Individual organisational efforts to be more transparent on their data.
- This benchmarking indicates **many organisations have focused initial efforts around recruitment** processes, recruitment-training and policies, with recruitment-related milestones having the highest action rates. Positively more than half (56.7%) of eNGOs have made recruitment policy, training and practical changes.
- Reporting progress includes:
  - 50% of organisations say they are regularly reporting internally on progress
  - 70% expect to take part in The RACE Report 2023 after 53.3% participating in 2022
  - 36.7% of organisations are now also regularly reporting on their ethnic diversity mix in their annual report, website or other public facing update.
- Impacts reported:
  - 36.7% report an increased number of people of colour applying for jobs
  - Employment changes are very variable and are not detailed comprehensively enough to calculate meaningful averages. The range includes several organisations reporting percentages of staff who are people of colour almost quadrupling, while other small organisations still have no ethnically diverse staff.

## Progress on culture, equity and empowerment and embedding action

- Action has been slower on milestones on wider cultural and practical shifts.
- There are some great examples of senior leaders driving change within their organisations. But **overall more than three quarters of organisations do not have a leader-led vision for increasing ethnic diversity**, nor defined leadership and key staff responsibilities on this issue. There also appears to be an absence of opportunity overall for staff to feed back to senior leaders on their performance on ethnic diversity.
- **Anti-racism is another area where many organisations are earlier on in their journey.** Only 16.7% of environmental groups say that they have a clear anti-racism policy and only 2 in 10 say anti-racism has been defined as an organisational priority, with clear anti-racism practices yet to be in place in the majority of organisations.
- There have been welcome moves to progress equity and empowerment for people of colour from a number of nature employers. **But overall levels of activity to increase the number of people of colour in senior roles remain low across the sector.** Only 1 in 8 (13.3%) are specifically delivering development for people of colour who are already working in the sector, to equip them to take up more senior and leadership roles.

## Recommendations

### Planning and core changes

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of eNGOs developing and/or implementing an ethnic diversity action plan – 53.4% up from 15% in 2021. There is also a healthy proportion of organisations who have delivered other core early-stage actions such as:

- Senior staff consideration of culture change that is needed (46.7%)
- 54% developing or already developed an approach and guidance on EDI and anti-racism terms and definitions, including 7% consistently implementing an approach
- 43.3% have processes and resources to ensure work and recruitment materials are visually and verbally representative
- Four in ten have conducted a staff experience audit on the inclusivity of their organisational culture

However we have found organisations from small to very large still struggling to get off the starting blocks in many areas, with this a particular issue for the smallest organisations with least capacity.

Individual resourcing remains a key issue for both staffing and finances, impacting lower-resourced smaller organisations' ability to deliver change in particular. This demonstrates a pivotal need to provide centralised resourcing to effect change.

### **Planning and core changes recommendations**

- A user-friendly online portal is needed as an effective centralised resource for organisations to navigate the changes needed and how to action and embed them.
- This portal should incorporate learnings and resources from the Link route map research and guidance, alongside resources from other sector initiatives including New to Nature and The RACE Report. This should include practical example materials that organisations can learn from and utilise, such as example policies and guidance, as well as training videos and potentially an image library.
- Targeted support and guidance are needed for those struggling to get past the early stages of change. As small organisations are the most likely to lack capacity and be earliest in their journey, they should be the initial focus for a support package.
- A support package for small organisations should include tailored organisational advice, guidance with 1-2-1s available, and training in core areas. Centralised support and training could be delivered more cost effectively and rapidly than for each organisation individually.

## **Leaders as agents of change**

There are multiple green leaders who have prioritised inclusivity and ethnic diversity action and are visibly and passionately working for change in their organisations. There are some areas (such as consideration of culture change) where our benchmarking shows that many senior leaders have been active. However we need greater action and drive from senior leaders and key staff across a wider range of organisations to deliver effective culture change across the sector.

The majority of organisations report having no leader-led vision for change, defined leadership responsibilities, or opportunity for feedback to leaders on progress around ethnic diversity. While the likelihood is that lack of resource in overstretched organisations is a major factor in these limitations, Link and other organisations have a responsibility to convene and reinvigorate organisational leaders and overcome barriers to action.

### **Leaders as agents of change recommendations**

- Link to convene roundtable(s) and leadership networking among eNGO CEOs and other senior leaders.
- Identification of barriers to action via roundtables and wider networking discussions should then contribute to a range of targeted actions and appropriate measures, these are likely to include:
  - A leaders' section in the online portal with specific guidance on core issues.
  - Tailored training/webinars/learning circles focused on overcoming identified barriers and areas where change is more challenging.
  - Sharing of best practice and example materials via the online portal and joint sessions to best facilitate knowledge-sharing and reduce reproduction of effort.

## **Recruitment and reporting**

Recruitment and reporting are the issues where most organisations have made the furthest progress. With action on debiasing recruitment, updating training, policies and processes for recruiters, and improving monitoring, evaluation and reporting, being delivered in a significant proportion of eNGOs. This has seen a positive effect with almost 4 in 10 organisations (around 2/3 of those who have acted on recruitment processes) reporting an increase in the number of people of colour applying for positions and around 70% expecting to take part in The RACE Report monitoring this year.

Much of this momentum and impact is due to major projects to support the sector in improving in these areas – [Race for Nature](#), [New to Nature](#) and [The Race Report](#).

### **Recruitment and reporting recommendations**

Success from recruitment and reporting projects should be built on further through:

- Effective capture of learnings and resources from these projects and presentation of these in an understandable and usable format on a central online portal. This could include regional level learnings and resources for maximum practical use.
- Repetition of recruitment projects to help further boost ethnic diversity recruitment knowledge and impacts across the sector.
- Recognition of the success of these projects and the need for similar in-depth support and training on other aspects of ethnic diversity transition, including culture change and anti-racism.

### **Training and in-depth support**

There are multiple areas where progress has been slower for most organisations, including action on anti-racism, culture change and equity and empowerment in particular. As detailed above it is highly likely that to see meaningful change in these areas there will need to be a well-resourced programme of support delivered.

### **Training and support recommendations**

As with recruitment and reporting, centralised support projects would be the most effective route to enable organisations to achieve anti-racism, culture change and equity and empowerment milestones, including:

- Anti-racism training and guidance.
- Ethnic diversity leadership training for leaders, managers and HR professionals.
- Inclusivity and culture change training and structured support package.
- A comprehensive equity & empowerment programme to progress the careers of colleagues of colour including supporting their journeys into leadership.



## Evolving culture

Environmental NGOs have taken steps forward in several areas of culture, process and practice that impact on creating the environment and support needed to be inclusive and representative for people of colour.

### **Initial recruitment focus**

Our benchmarking indicates that the majority of organisations have focused much of their initial efforts around recruitment processes, recruitment training and policies, with recruitment-related milestones having the highest action rates.

- 56.7% have reviewed and revised recruitment and development policies and practices ensure they are de-biased (see anti-racism section)
- In 56.7% of organisations anti-bias training is being implemented for leaders, managers and HR practitioners (up from around 40% in 2021)
- Organisations are actively tracking data on recruitment around ethnic diversity. And it is very positive that 36.7% of organisations report that tracked data reveals an increased number/proportion of job applicants who are people of colour.

This demonstrates that the importance of improving recruitment to enable improved onboarding of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds is recognised, valued and has good organisational buy-in. It is probably also highly reflective of the fact there have been two major and well-resourced recruitment-focused projects for the sector. Both the Race for Nature and New to Nature schemes have had wide-ranging take-up in the sector with detailed support for organisations to take part and improve their recruitment.

This is a positive indicator of how high take-up of change can be with the right support. But does also suggest that dedicated support and training on a large-scale is needed to give the confidence to action wider change for many organisations.

While it is really positive that so many organisations have been active in reviewing recruitment policies, training and practice, it is important that shifts are also made more broadly to internal culture, practice, and resource if staff are to be supported and retained.

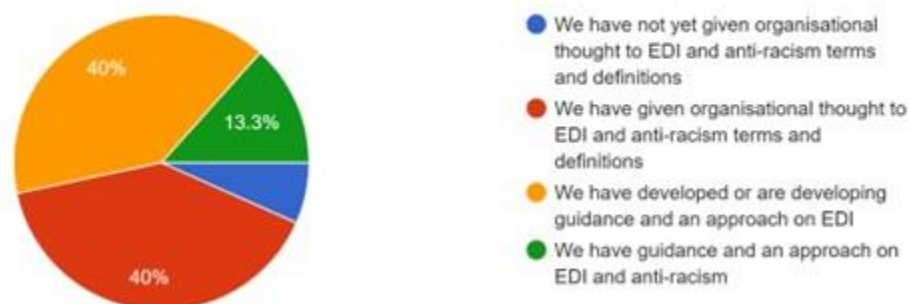
### **Wider culture change**

In almost half (46.7%) of environmental organisations leaders, managers and HR/ Learning and Development Practitioners have worked together to consider potential areas of culture change that may be needed. It is welcome that this assessment has been made by almost half of organisations as an initial step towards developing the culture changes that are specifically needed for their organisation. While there are, to date, relatively low action-rates on several of the key culture change milestones, the fact that this internal review and planning is happening is a positive indicator that we can expect to see follow-on increases in cultural shifts over the next year.

As a basic first step in culture change, the vast majority (93%) of organisations surveyed have undertaken some degree of work on EDI and anti-racism terms and definitions.

1. Have you developed an approach, and guidance for staff, on the use of key EDI and anti-racism terms and definitions?

30 responses



While only 1 in 8 (13%) have a fully developed approach and guidance that they are implementing, a further 80% have made some progress in this area. This consists of 40% having devoted organisational thought to terms and definitions and how these should be incorporated and used, and a further 40% having gone slightly further in starting to think about a consistent approach and guidance but without this yet being actively used internally.

Table 1: Organisational state on EDI & anti-racism terms and definitions	Percentage of respondents 2023 (total)	Percentage of large organisations	Percentage of medium organisations	Percentage of small organisations
We have not yet given organisational thought to EDI and anti-racism terms and definitions	6.7%	0%	0%	25%
We have given organisational thought to EDI and anti-racism terms and definitions but do not have a consistent approach and/or guidance for staff	40%	62.5%	28.5%	37.5%
We have developed or are developing guidance and an approach on EDI and anti-racism terms and definitions but have not yet implemented it	40%	12.5%	57%	37.5%
We have guidance and an approach on EDI and anti-racism terms and definitions that we are consistently implementing	13%	25%	14%	0%

There is a mixed picture across organisations of all sizes – with a perhaps surprisingly high proportion (over 60%) of large and very large organisations only at the giving thought stage. But overall medium, large and very large organisations are proportionally more likely to be further along their journey on developing an approach and guidance around EDI terms and definitions.

Those organisations who are most advanced in their approach and guidance on EDI and anti-racism are equally split between large/very large and medium organisations. No small organisations reported implementing a consistent approach. And similarly it was only small organisations who reported having not been able to give any thought to this issue, all medium and large organisations had at least been able to take some action in this area.

This suggests that organisations of all sizes need support, but that small organisations are most likely to be earlier on in their journey and more needing of support to progress.

### **Senior leaders and key staff as agents of change**

While anti-bias training and consideration of the culture change needed are two areas where leaders and key staff have been active in many organisations, there are many other ‘agents of change milestones’ where the vast majority of organisations have taken no action.

Nearly a quarter (23%) of those surveyed had met none of the ‘agents of change’ milestones. And excepting the anti-bias and consideration of culture change milestones, none of the other actions has had more than 23% take-up.

It is positive that nearly a quarter of nature groups have a comprehensive organisational vision on ethnic diversity from leaders, with some great examples across the sector. But conversely this leader-led vision is absent in more than three quarters of eNGOs. Only 13.3% of organisations have communicated what this means for individual teams and only 1 in 5 have policies and learning opportunities to support an overarching vision from leaders.

Responsibilities have also not been well defined for leaders in most organisations. Only 23.3% have defined inclusive and anti-racist behaviours for leaders, and only 1 in 10 organisations has defined practical roles and responsibilities for leaders, managers and HR leads on increasing ethnic diversity. Only 16.7% have considered how racism manifests and how it should be addressed and prevented.

There also appears to be little in the way of feedback opportunities for staff to highlight any disappointments with the approach of their leaders and key staff. No organisations provide a 360 degree feedback opportunity on ethnic diversity action and performance.

It is vital for organisational change that leaders own, act, and are visible, on the issue of increasing ethnic diversity. This is a key area that needs greater organisational and sectoral drive.

As with the design and implementation of an EDI and anti-racism approach plan, smaller organisations are more likely to be getting of the starting blocks. 85% of organisations that have achieved none of the leaders of change milestones are small or medium, with only 1 large organisation in this position.

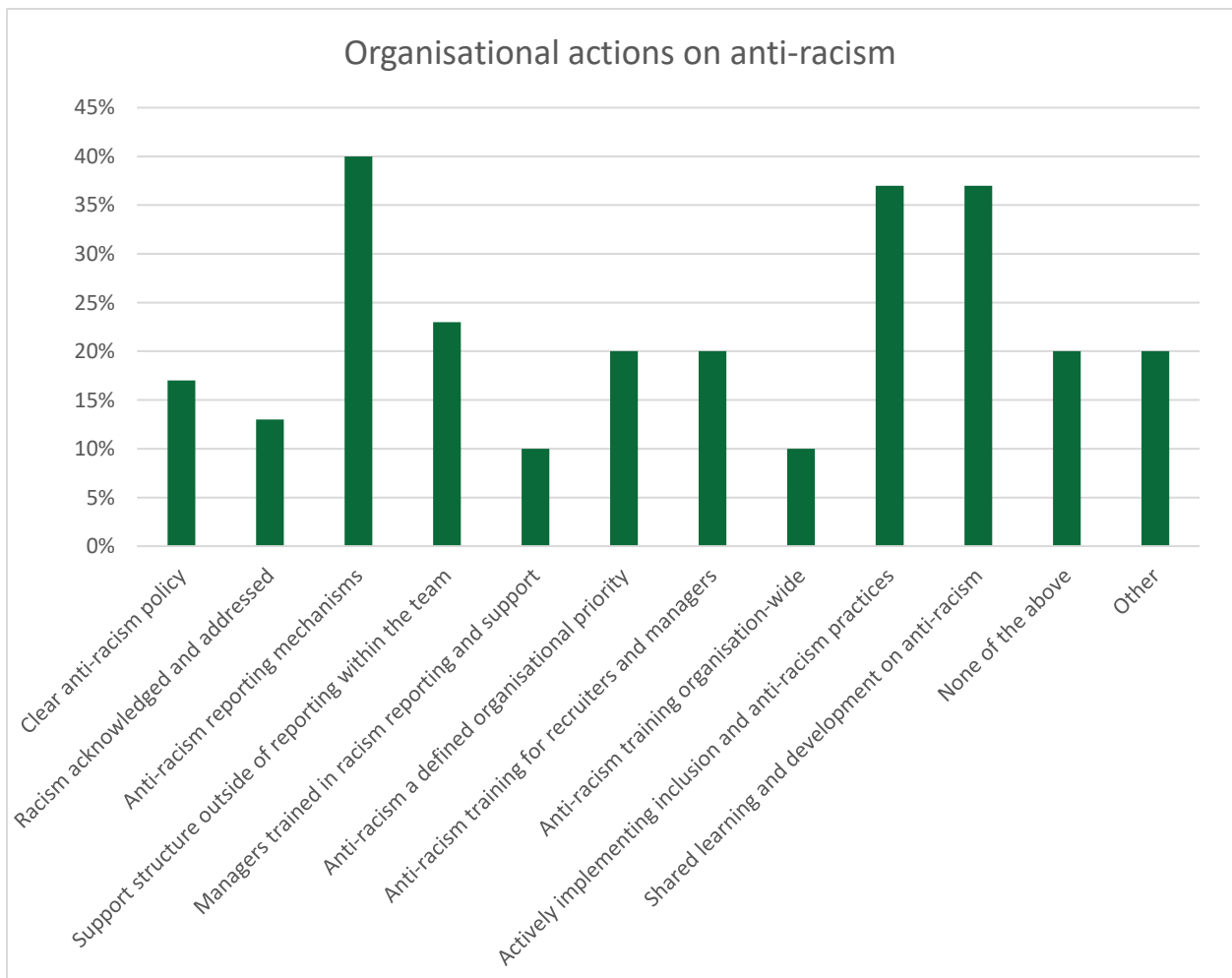
<b>Table 2. Organisational preparedness for leaders and key staff as agents of change</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents 2023</b>
Anti-bias training is implemented for leaders, managers and HR practitioners	56.7%
Leaders, managers and HR/ Learning and Development Practitioners have worked together to consider potential areas of culture change that may be needed	46.7%
Leaders have written a comprehensive organisational vision for ethnic diversity in the organisation and have effectively articulated this organisation-wide	23.3%
Inclusive and anti-racist behaviours expected of leaders, managers and HR professionals have been defined	23.3%
HR and learning directors have established policies and learning opportunities which stem from and support organisational vision for ethnic diversity	20%
Leaders, managers and HR/ Learning and Development Practitioners have worked together to consider how racism manifests and how it should be addressed and prevented within your organisation	16.7%
Managers have considered and communicated what this organisational vision means for their individual teams	13.3%
Established defined roles and responsibilities for leaders, managers and HR practitioners on improving ethnic diversity, which are built-in to organisational practice	10%
An effective structure is in place for colleagues to provide 360° feedback to leaders and managers, on how they are doing personally on embracing EDI and anti-racism	0%
None of the above	23%

## Anti-racism and progression for people of colour

Anti-racism is another area where many organisations seem to be earlier on in their journey. On some of the milestones, a significant number of eNGOs report being active. Around 4 in 10 organisations state that they have core anti-racism mechanisms and support in place:

- 40% say their organisation has anti-racism reporting mechanisms
- HR, leaders and managers are said to be actively implementing inclusion and anti-racism practices in 36.7% of eNGOs
- And similarly 36.7% say learning and development opportunities have been established to equip staff with a shared understanding of, and core knowledge about, the organisation’s vision on EDI and anti-racism

However this seems at odds with the fact that only 16.7% of environmental groups report having a clear anti-racism policy and only 2 in 10 say anti-racism has been defined as an organisational priority. If there isn’t a shared organisational understanding and prioritisation of anti-racism, with clear definition of what it means and what organisational expectations and procedures are on the issue, it is difficult to see how anti-racism reporting and practices can work effectively.





Furthermore only 1 in 10 organisations say managers are trained in implementing racism reporting structures and supporting staff. Wider anti-racism training levels are also fairly low with anti-racism training for recruiters and managers reported in just 1 in 5 organisations and organisation-wide anti-racism training in only 1 in 10.

In our 2021 survey minority ethnic participants were asked whether there is racism in the sector and all those who participated said yes. A small number gave examples of overt racism, and most gave examples of unconscious bias and covert racism. Yet as a sector it seems that there is still much more work to do in accepting and addressing this experience for people of colour. Our 2023 benchmarking shows only 13.3% of organisations have acknowledged experiences of racism in their organisation and are addressing these.

<b>Table 3. Organisational actions on anti-racism</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents 2023</b>
We have anti-racism reporting mechanisms	40%
HR, leaders and managers are actively implementing inclusion and anti-racism practices	36.7%
Learning and development opportunities have been established to equip staff with a shared understanding of, and core knowledge about, the organisation's vision on EDI and anti-racism	36.7%
We have a support structure for colleagues experiencing racism that is outside of reporting within the team	23.3%
We have made anti-racism a defined organisational priority	20%
Anti-racism training is conducted for recruiters and managers within the organisation	20%
Our organisation has a clear anti-racism policy	16.7%
Experiences of racism in our organisation have been acknowledged and are being addressed	13.3%
Managers are trained in implementing racism reporting structures and supporting staff	10%
Anti-racism training is implemented organisation-wide	10%
None of the above	20%
Other	20%

### **Equity and empowerment for people of colour**

As highlighted in the evolving culture findings, there has been welcome progress on recruitment policies, practices and training. With 56.7% of organisations reviewing and revising these and 36.7% seeing an increase in the number of people of colour applying for roles.

However further to this there have been relatively low levels of action on additional equity and empowerment milestones. With three in ten organisations having taken no action on the milestones on equity and empowerment.

There have been welcome moves to progress equity and empowerment for people of colour from some nature employers. But overall levels of activity remain low across the sector. This is another area where further sector-wide support is likely to be needed to deliver meaningful change.

Only 1 in 8 (13.3%) are specifically delivering development for people of colour who are already working in the sector, to equip them to take up more senior and leadership roles. While 1 in 6 (16.7%) report that they are supporting people of colour to identify the role they want to play in driving change.

Most organisations have so far chosen not to set an internal target on increasing the number of people of colour in leadership. Several organisations, in particular smaller eNGOs, have expressed uncertainty about the appropriateness and/or perceived benefit or impact this might create.

<b>Table 4. Equity and empowerment actions</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents 2023</b>
Our recruitment and development policies and practices have been reviewed and revised to ensure they are debiased	56.7%
We have seen (through tracked data) an increased number/proportion of job applicants who are people of colour	36.7%
People of colour within our organisation are being supported to identify the role they want to play in driving change, including identifying resources/ support they need and the influence and decision-making power they will have	16.7%
Development for people of colour who are already working in the sector, to equip them to take up more senior and leadership roles.	13.3%
We have an internal target set on increasing people of colour in leadership	3.3%
Other	3.3%
None of the above	30%

### **Case Study 1: Bat Conservation Trust – delivering innovative training collaboratively**

Bat Conservation Trust has been working with the trainer and consultant Jo Yuen to deliver anti-oppression training for their staff. To make the training more accessible, and to share ideas and discussions beyond their own organisation, Bat Conservation Trust welcomed a staff member from Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC), another Link member, to join them on the pilot set of workshops.

This was such a success that BCT are repeating the process, and have once again invited staff from other organisations to collaborate on another iteration of Jo’s anti-oppression training. Several organisations within the Link EDI network are taking up this opportunity including RSPB, BTO, UK Youth for Nature and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

## Increasing ethnic diversity

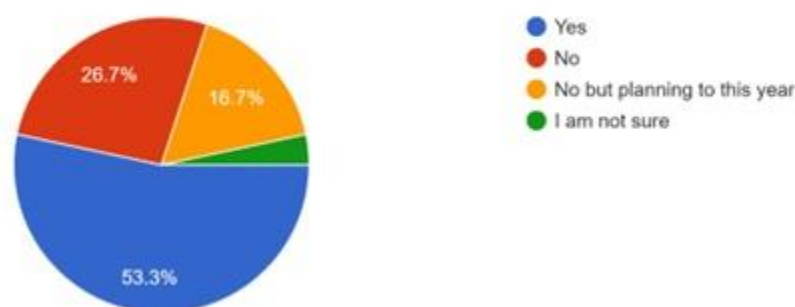
### Ethnic diversity monitoring and reporting

Tracking, utilising and reporting organisational data on ethnic diversity is a critical tool in creating change on this issue. Yet in 2021 50% of CEOs said their organisations either did not collect or did not know if they collected data on job applicants.

While we do not have a directly comparable figure from our 2023 benchmarking, the indication from responses is that monitoring and reporting has increased. In particular this seems to be part of changes to recruitment practices, and sectoral drive as a result of coordination around The RACE Report, but also through proactive organisational efforts to be more transparent in publishing their data. Half of organisations say they are regularly reporting internally on progress, 53.3% took part in The RACE Report last year and a further 16.7% plan to do so next year. While 36.7% of organisations are now also regularly reporting on their ethnic diversity mix in their annual report, website or other public facing update.

#### 5. Did your organisation taken part in the Race Report last year?

30 responses



Monitoring by environment groups of ethnic diversity in recruitment and wider staffing has revealed some positive trends.

Almost 37% of the 30 environment organisations surveyed report seeing an increase in the number of people of colour applying for roles.

Further detail on percentages and/or numbers of staff from an ethnically diverse background was provided by 16 of the 30 organisations. The type of information and way it was reported varied and made direct comparisons and averages difficult – reinforcing the benefits of a uniform reporting structure utilised by The RACE Report.

Simple observations from the reported data were however possible, and these revealed that:

- Several organisations detailed that their ethnic diversity employment rates had almost quadrupled, taking them from well below the 7% industry average reported by The RACE Report 2022, to over this proportion now.

- A quarter of the 16 respondents who gave data on this question had over a 7% employment rate of people of colour, and a quarter had under 3%, with the remaining half falling somewhere between 3-7%.

### **Targets to increase ethnic diversity**

Only just over half of those surveyed, 17 organisations, responded to our question on internal targets to increase ethnic diversity. And of these 17 respondents just 2 have already implemented targets for a percentage of employees to be people of colour, with one setting an ambitious target of 20% (6% over the national average). A further 2 organisations are planning to set an ethnic diversity target. Therefore 23% have current or future targets planned.

Several organisations detailed caution about setting such targets. With reservations outlined including:

- Difficulties with such targets in an organisation with a changing workforce over time
- Concerns that it is not always the most inclusive approach and may not always provide the best experience for underrepresented employees
- Feelings that partnership approaches and improved recruitment is more effective

Link should look further at the reservations and evidence base on these targets, in consideration around including them as part of the route map milestones.

## **Embedding Action**

### **Organisational readiness for action**

Link's 2021 research and analysis found that there was massive sectoral appetite for change on our poor collective record on ethnic diversity. 86% of environmental leaders said tackling ethnic diversity should be a top or high sectoral priority. Yet there was an aspiration vs action gap – as despite the recognition of it needing to be a top priority, only 22% of senior leaders said it actually was.

This aspiration vs action gap was reflected further in organisations' readiness for change. Our 2021 survey showed that of the 44 responding organisations:

- 1% were at the start of their journey, and had not yet considered ethnic diversity issues
- 84% had considered the issues or had taken some action, but did not have an action plan
- 11% had developed or were developing a plan but had not yet implemented it
- 4% had an action plan and were consistently implementing it

Our 2023 benchmarking survey shows a significant proportion of organisations have progressed their organisational readiness since our initial survey. While a small proportion,

(just over 3%) of those surveyed are still not off the starting blocks on progressing ethnic diversity within their organisation, the vast majority (almost 97%) have taken some action, and the majority are more advanced than they were two years ago.

In 2021 a very similar figure of those surveyed (99%) said they had taken some action on increasing ethnic diversity, but of these 84% had not yet started to develop or implement an action plan. Our 2023 benchmarking suggests that around half of these organisations have now developed or are developing an action plan and are in the process of working towards implementing this. Almost half (46.7%) of all those surveyed are at the point of developing or having already developed an action plan. A further almost 7% are also regularly implementing an ethnic diversity action plan. This suggests an increase in the proportion of organisations at this more advanced point, although this is still a small minority.

10. Where would you say you are in the development and use of an ethnic diversity action/change plan:

30 responses

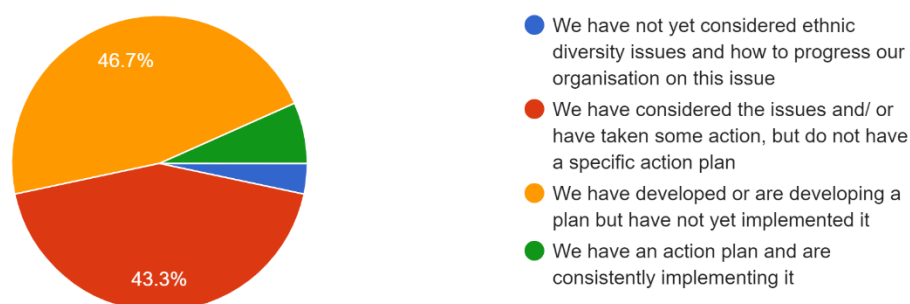


Table 5: Organisational readiness on delivering an ethnic diversity action plan	Percentage of respondents in 2023	Percentage of respondents in 2021
We have not yet considered ethnic diversity issues and how to progress our organisation on this issue	3.3%	1%
We have considered the issues and/ or have taken some action, but do not have a specific action plan	43.3%	84%
We have developed or are developing a plan but have not yet implemented it	46.7%	11%
We have an action plan and are consistently implementing it	6.7%	4%

As developing an action plan is the pivotal measure that all organisational action for change should stem from, this is an important and welcome finding which indicates that sectoral ambition is definitely translating into planning for change.

However, as in other measures that have been benchmarked, smaller organisations are on average less far ahead in developing an action plan. 75% of small organisations surveyed did not have an action plan, nor were they in the process of developing one. Only a quarter of



small organisations were at this stage. This compares to almost two-thirds of medium and large/very large organisations either developing, produced and/or implementing an action plan.

### **Organisational resource for change**

Despite the increase in organisations creating an action plan for change, our survey reveals some continued issues around lack of resource to deliver the organisational shifts needed and to thoroughly embed change.

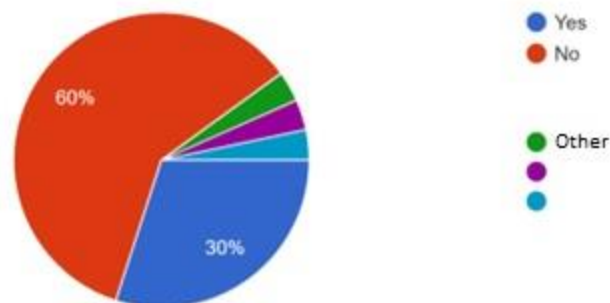
Resource for improving ethnic diversity has shown some improvement within environmental organisations, but the majority are still struggling to provide dedicated staffing and funding.

In 2021 only 25% of environment CEOs stated that their organisation has set aside financial resources for actions to improve ethnic diversity. This has increased in 2023 to around 40% having some form of EDI budget – this consists of 30% having a dedicated budget for improving ethnic diversity, and 10% having some adhoc or EDI consultancy budget.

However despite this rise, the majority of environment organisations – 6 in 10 – still do not have any budget for improving ethnic diversity. The situation is worst among small organisations with 75% saying they have no budget, compared to 64% of medium organisations and 37.5% of large organisations.

#### 8. Do you have a specific budget for action on improving ethnic diversity?

30 responses



There is a relatively similar picture on dedicated staffing resource.

Around 9 in 10 organisations have provided some staffing resource to improving ethnic diversity, with only 1 in 10 having been unable to devote any staff capacity to it. But, for the vast majority of organisations this is an issue covered only on a part-time or adhoc basis.

Only 1 in 10 eNGOs have a dedicated staff member working on ethnic diversity (or EDI more generally). Just over 4 in 10 (41%) have been able to free up some time for a staff member to cover this issue as part of their role (including 3.3% who have also been able to have some specialist agency/consultancy support).

A further 36.7% of organisations have had to ask staff to take on the role of delivering on ethnic diversity issues while being unable to reduce their existing workload in any way.

The fact that for so many organisations there is no dedicated resource, or that it is an extra onto many people’s roles without freeing up capacity for them to deliver, means that inevitably ethnic diversity action will suffer with competing priorities. The lack of resource in overstretched organisations remains an ongoing issue. This is particularly the case for small and medium environmental NGOs, where around half have either no dedicated resource or have resource only as an add-on to role with no time freed-up for that staff member.

Table 6. Staff resource on ethnic diversity issues	Percentage of respondents in 2023
We have a staff member(s) working specifically on ethnic diversity as their main responsibility	6.7%
We have a staff member(s) working specifically on ethnic diversity as their main responsibility, and have support from a paid-for agency	3.3%
We have freed up some staff time and are working with a specialist agency	3.3%
We have freed-up time for one or more staff members work to cover ethnic diversity issues as part of a wider role	36.7%
One or more staff members has taken responsibility on ethnic diversity in addition to their other work, but we are unable to reduce their other workload	36.7%
No staff capacity on improving ethnic diversity	10%
Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not applicable</li> <li>- Wider EDI staff member</li> </ul>	6.7%

### **Key actions to embed change**

Review of the key year 1 route map milestones for embedding change reveals some positive progress.

Around half of organisations are tracking, regularly assessing, and reporting internally, on their performance on ethnic diversity. And by Spring 2023 50% had also reviewed the diversity route map and identified the actions they would take.

More than 4 in 10 have developed resources and processes to ensure visual and verbal ethnic diversity representation in website, social media, organisational and recruitment materials. 40% of eNGOs have also audited how staff perceive the inclusiveness of their organisation.

Public reporting on ethnic diversity performance is being implemented by 36.7% of organisations, alongside improvements to a wide range of internal policies to make them more conducive to improving ethnic diversity and supporting people of colour as staff members. A third of organisations have also support structures in place for those rolling out EDI progress and to tackle any issues that arise.

Areas where fewer organisations have been able to make progress include

- Conducting equality impact assessments of all programmes of work
- Developing an inclusive behaviours framework/organisation culture guidance, and integrating this into staff objective setting and review
- Creating a change plan stemming from the organisational vision leaders have set for increasing diversity

Table 7. Action undertaken to deliver and report on ethnic diversity change	Percentage of respondents in 2023
As part of plans for the next year we have reviewed the diversity route map and identified which actions we will take	50%
Progress on internal diversity is being tracked and assessed regularly internally	50%
We have established regular internal reporting on our performance on improving ethnic diversity	50%
We have developed processes and resources to ensure our web and social media presence and materials around our programme of work and recruitment are visually and verbally representative of diversity.	43.3%
How staff currently experience the organisation's culture and the degree to which it is inclusive, based on their definition, has been audited.	40%
We are reporting on our performance on improving ethnic diversity in our annual reports or another public-facing update	36.7%
Support structures are in place to support staff, managers, HR and leader in navigating EDI challenges that arise	33.3%
We have amended policies which most impact on our ability to become more ethnically diverse, including inclusive and anti-racist recruitment, development, retention and pay policies and practices	30%
We have developed ways to conduct equality impact assessments of our programmes of work	23.3%
We have set an inclusive behaviours framework and/or staff guidance to drive change on culture, which is integrated into staff objective setting and performance appraisals	16.7%
We have created a change plan on how to deliver the organisational vision leaders have set for increasing diversity in our organisation	10%
None of the above	13.3%

We would hope to see a majority (over half) of organisations having undertaken most of these core embedding actions by the next benchmarking. If this threshold is not reached further exploration of the barriers will be needed to create a dedicated support plan to overcome them. Specific guidance and/or training may be needed, for example on equality impact assessments for programmes of work and setting and using an inclusive behaviours framework.

## Case Study 2: The Wildlife Trusts – Bitesize training resources to embed change

The Wildlife Trusts have developed new training resources to help their staff engage with equality, diversity and inclusion in a way that is accessible and easy to incorporate into the working day. The new resources include a monthly EDI podcast and 60 second 'bitesize' training videos on a range of EDI topics.

This complements existing face-to-face EDI training that the Trusts create and deliver to staff. Topics covered range from an introduction to EDI, to digital inclusion, and what woke means. You can see an example of one of the videos here: [EDI Bitesize – What Is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?](#)

The Wildlife Trusts have shared their learnings with the wider Link EDI Working Group, and have offered to share the resources with other organisations too, contributing to efforts to share learning and resources across the sector to enable progress.

## Conclusions

There has been significant progress across the environment sector in the last two years on readying organisations to improve ethnic diversity. This can be seen not only through greater planning (53.4% have or are developing an action plan, up from 15% in 2021) and some shifts in policies, practice and culture (with 56.7% of eNGOs improving recruitment policy, training and practices), but also in people of colour as a proportion of the workforce increasing from 3% to 7% since 2017.

Link's route map is providing a core of support and guidance, with half of the route map participants having already used it to identify actions they will take for their organisation. Participation in, and feedback on, the knowledge-sharing, training and support we have already rolled out also demonstrates this has been highly valued.

But despite the progress from eNGOs, our benchmarking also reveals very clear gaps and barriers to action that remain. This suggests that further resource and support needs to be developed in key areas of the route map, either via building capacity within Link's project or delivery via other organisations on key barriers to change.

Progress is most advanced in the areas where there has been the highest level of external support and guidance, and the greatest sharing of experience and knowledge across the sector - in recruitment, monitoring and reporting. The critical investment that funders like the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Natural England have made in projects such as Race For Nature, New to Nature, The RACE Report, and our route map, have demonstrably increased direction, drive and action in these areas.

Crucially these projects seem to have achieved an increase in confidence and skills through consistent support and training, delivered through dedicated external capacity. That

centralised resource is what has, for many organisations, enabled them to get off the starting blocks and delivering action, and without it change is likely to have been far slower.

What seems evident from our benchmarking is that further centralised resource will be key to getting organisations off the jumping-off point in areas where skills, knowledge and confidence remain lower. Our findings have shown widespread issues with capacity in the sector, with stark figures on the staffing and funding resource available to deliver action on ethnic diversity. Capacity is an issue across organisations of all sizes and purposes, but it is particularly the case among smaller organisations.

Areas which our benchmarking and organisational feedback suggest could be most beneficial to change include:

- **A centralised online knowledge hub** – to deliver a user-friendly compendium that captures learnings and resources from existing projects, and shares knowledge, experience, best practice and materials between organisations. This is crucial to maximise capacity and progress and reduce duplication of effort across the sector.
- **Dedicated support for smaller organisations** - Greater resource is vital for smaller eNGOs who are much more likely to be struggling to get off the starting blocks on many areas of ethnic diversity action. A support package should include tailored advice, bespoke guidance, and training in core areas. It may also be helpful to include a dedicated recruitment scheme for smaller organisations, with targeted support for management and training. A centralised package could deliver change more cost effectively and rapidly than for individual organisations.
- **Tailored training and development:** A well-resourced programme of training and development is essential to achieve meaningful change in areas where progress has been slower for the vast majority of organisations. This would include training and guidance on: anti-racism; ethnic diversity leadership; and elements of inclusivity and culture change; alongside a comprehensive equity & empowerment programme.
- **Support for leaders as agents of change** - Senior leader buy-in and action is critical, but our benchmarking identifies notable action gaps. Through roundtable meeting(s) and leadership networking we can best identify barriers to change and deliver a range of targeted remedies. These would be likely to include: a specific leaders advice section in the online portal; tailored training/webinars/ and learning circles on action blocks; and facilitated knowledge-sharing at a leadership level.
- **Continued recruitment and reporting rounds** – To further widen and embed recruitment and reporting successes, additional rounds of recruitment projects and ongoing funding for The RACE Report would be highly beneficial. It is also vital that learnings and resources from these projects are captured, effectively shared, and made accessible on an ongoing basis, through a central online support hub.





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