



BIRMINGHAM CITY
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Diversity of Senior Leaders in BBC Radio News

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Foreword

This research, funded by the Practitioner Investigating Media Industry Diversity (PIMID) Grant from the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity at Birmingham City University, was conducted in May 2021 and examines the diversity of senior leaders in BBC Radio News. It is led by a Senior Radio News and Current Affairs professional of 17 years who has worked in BBC local, national and international radio and who now runs her own audio production company. This extensive experience across multiple BBC Radio divisions (as well in BBC TV and digital) has provided valuable insights which aid the accuracy and authenticity of accounts provided and sample data collected.

A note on terminology: Senior leaders refers to those job roles which are denoted by BBC pay level bands E and above in posts formerly and currently identified as Assistant Editor, Editor, News Editor, Head of News and Director of News or Head of the region where this oversees radio, Head of Audio, Head of Radio Current Affairs /Long Form Audio. Throughout this report, the abbreviated term for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) is used since this is the acronym used by the BBC in their diversity data. BAME is not a word that either this report's author or the Sir Lenny Henry Centre use as an umbrella term uncritically.

Evidence gathered for this research study, is drawn from a mixture of BBC HR data collated for inclusion in the 2021 BBC Annual Report, data gathered through an FOI request and research conducted into BBC staff profiles publically available online. To further support this, the research also involved extensive interviews with a diverse range of professionals currently or formerly working in BBC senior leadership roles and journalists who are or who have recently worked in Radio News teams, both in BBC local radio and national Radio News departments.

Findings show under representation of BAME professionals, in senior leader roles in Radio News which does not reflect the regional and national population data for the geographical areas they cover. Systemic and cultural barriers to career progression for BAME staff were identified as continuing to restrict the progression of diverse candidates into senior roles in Radio News. These include the existence of a 'BBC type' groomed for management, un-conscious bias in the selection of candidates and other recruitment practices causing structural issues with recruitment and career progression process'.

BBC diversity targets set out by Director General Tim Davie, called for a “gold standard for inclusion at the BBC” (BBC, 2021) to “create an organisation which reflects more accurately the society we serve” (BBC, Tim Davie’s introductory speech as BBC Director-General, 2020). Staff targets denoted as ‘50/20/12’ set out representation in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability.

This refers to a target to achieve a workforce both on and off air as well as in leadership ranks, of 50% women and 50% men, at least 20% BAME and at least 12% disability representation as outlined in the BBC Inclusion Plan 2021-2023 (BBC, Diversity & Inclusion Plan - BBC Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023, 2021). Alongside this, there are plans to build on socioeconomic diversity. Findings from this study show that these targets are “unlikely to be met” for senior leaders in Radio News. The lack of BAME staff in senior leader roles has been found to have had an impact on the tone and coverage of journalistic output.

Executive Summary

- ✘ There are no BAME senior leaders working in Radio News for Scotland.
- ✘ There are no BAME senior leaders working in Radio News for Wales.
- ✘ There are no BAME senior leaders working in Radio News for Northern Ireland.
- ✘ There are no BAME journalists working in the Radio News teams in Scotland: an all-white radio newsroom covering Scotland.
- ✘ There are no BAME journalists working in the Radio News teams in NI: an all-white radio newsroom covering NI.
- ✘ Under representation of BAME journalists working in Radio News teams in Wales (2/41 employees = 4.9%)

There is another all-white radio newsroom in one of England's most diverse cities (exact location not being disclosed to protect the anonymity of research participants). In this English region which has a higher than average percentage of BAME groups and in a city of over 40% BAME population, there are no BAME senior leaders in Radio News, and all staff journalists working on the Radio News team are white.

From a sample of 118 senior leaders identified as working in Radio News across the UK at the BBC, there is a 6% BAME representation of senior leaders in BBC Radio News across the whole of UK, evidence gathered in this research indicates 7/118 BAME senior leaders.

Gender is much more evenly balanced in senior roles in BBC Radio News (48% female).

BBC FOI response shows 6% BAME representation of senior leaders in Radio News across UK Nations and 8% across their News and Current Affairs division.

Socioeconomic data and research interviews indicate there is a lack of representation of individuals from households where a parent is not in a managerial profession and who have not been to university.

Disability data shows there are no senior leaders who have self-declared a disability in Scotland, Wales or NI.

Intersectional diversity data shows that the majority of BAME senior leaders in Radio News are South Asian men (4/7). There are no black men. Mid-career BAME radio journalists are leaving the organisation indicating potential problems for the pipeline of future BAME senior leaders in Radio News.

There is a severe lack of trust in systems of recruitment and progression for BAME journalists with examples of abuse. Journalistic output has been impacted by non-representative newsrooms, examples of coverage lacking cultural sensitivity and nuance detailed.

Introduction

The first anniversary of the death of George Floyd, is a significant moment to assess the existence of racism in BBC Radio News journalism. This is due to a recognition that journalists of colour have been experiencing racism within the field; more than 100 British journalists signed an open letter to stand in solidarity with Omar Jimenez (the CNN reporter detained by police while reporting on Black Lives Matter protests) more than 100 British journalists signed an open letter to stand in solidarity with Omar Jimenez - the CNN reporter detained by police while reporting on Black Lives Matter protests - some of whom were BBC Radio journalists (Ryder, 2020).

The purpose of this report

This research examines a lack of BAME representation at senior levels in BBC Radio News and provides contextual analysis using 2011 census data (ONS, 2011), Ofcom data of the radio broadcasting industry in the UK (Ofcom, 2020) and in-depth interviews with Radio News journalists and leaders. It is crucial to rectify a lack of representation in Radio News journalism teams at leadership level since it is of both practical and symbolic importance in the reflection of news coverage and in the hiring decisions made by those leaders. (Nielsen, 2021). British public service broadcasting has special responsibilities when it comes to representation, as it not only amplifies and reflects society's thoughts, attitudes and actions back upon us, but also has an added responsibility to be representative and serve all of the UK population. This is set out in the BBC's Charter which lists priorities for the corporation's missions and values. Among them is the need to: "reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all the United Kingdom's nations and regions" (BBC, BBC Charter, 2017). We all also of course, pay our license fee and therefore there is a minimum expectation that we should feel our opinions are heard, respected and valued across a wide range of issues. Journalistic output should reflect the hopes and concerns of diverse communities with nuance, authenticity and vibrancy.

Data and interview testimony gathered in this study, show a lack of BAME representation at senior levels in Radio News at the BBC which has had serious repercussions for journalists of colour working in non-inclusive newsrooms. The culture has been described as “hostile” and “toxic” to people of colour, who are made to feel like “outsiders”. Career progression is felt to be closed off, with a perception that journalists earmarked for leadership continue to be a ‘BBC type’ - a term referenced by Tim Davie in his introductory speech. Interviewees in this study define this type as “polished”, “well spoken”, with “received pronunciation”, “an air of self-confidence” and of the correct “cultural fit”, most commonly associated with being white, male, from London/South East and privately educated.

This is partly confirmed by the data gathered in this research which shows that senior leaders in Radio News fall well short of the BBC’s own diversity target for BAME representation (their official target as stated earlier, is at least 20%). There are no BAME senior leaders in Radio News in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland according to official BBC figures obtained for March 2021. These figures also show there are no senior leaders of Radio News in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland who have declared a disability. Gender diversity is more evenly balanced, showing a 50% female/male split of senior leadership in Wales, 80% female in Radio News Scotland and 33.3% female in Northern Ireland which has a multiplatform team working on output which includes radio.

The data for England has been requested through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request and would cover 40 local radio stations and national radio including programmes such as Today, PM, The World Tonight and Newsbeat as well as World Service English news teams. This was requested on May 20 and a response was received on 21st June 2021. Data is given in two sections, one covering Nations and another for News and Current Affairs divisions which gives BAME representation of senior leaders in Radio News as 6% and 8% respectively.

In a sample size of 118 senior leaders in BBC Radio in the UK, evidence gathered in research for this study, indicates that there are 7 people who fall into a BAME category (6%). From these 7 individuals identified, two are under threat of losing their current job, due to the merger and re-location of their jobs from London to Birmingham. Out of these 7 there is very little intersectionality, the vast majority are South Asian men (4/7), no black men were identified at all and some of our interviewees confirmed that currently, there are no black male senior leaders in Radio News in the whole of the UK.

Some journalists of colour interviewed for this study, have described their working environments as non-inclusive, causing them mental health issues and a desire to leave their jobs, either to seek work elsewhere or to leave journalism altogether. Senior leaders interviewed for this study explain the existence of a lack of BAME representation as partly due to the lack of suitable candidates applying for those jobs.

Radio has often been regarded as the “poor cousin to TV” (Crisell, 2002) and in many ways, effort and progress towards diversity has focused on the visual medium. This report hopes to make clear some of the cultural and structural barriers faced by journalists of colour working in Radio News at the BBC by providing detailed data, analysis and an assessment of some of the efforts being made to rectify these issues with concluding recommendations on how to build on current and previous initiatives.

Background

Literature review

Diversity of senior leaders at the BBC is detailed in their Annual Report (BBC, BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts, 2020) which categorises gender, BAME, disability breakdown at leadership level into divisions of the organisation. Finding the diversity data for Radio News requires separating out merged datasets. Radio News is split between Nations and Regions and News and Current Affairs divisions. Nations and Regions division contains all staff working both in Radio News, TV and general programming across 40 local stations as listed on the BBC Sounds list of stations (BBC, Local Stations , 2021); please note that this number does not include the temporary stations set up in Wolverhampton, Sunderland and Bradford. Nations and Regions also includes Radio News staff in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. The News and Current Affairs dataset includes Radio News with TV and online News staff and controversially, World Service News language teams. The inclusion of World Service News radio languages staff has been criticised for masking the true state of representation of BAME journalists in BBC News since the diversity figures are being “vastly inflated ...by people working on programmes broadcast outside the UK” (Albury, 2016). It is acknowledged that the “highest proportion of BAME employees are currently found in the World Service group” (BBC, Reflecting the Ethnic Diversity of the UK within the BBC Workforce, 2018). The inclusion of languages staff was defended by former Head of Diversity Tunde Ogungbesan in 2016 who stated:

“There is a UK weekly audience of 2.2 million people for World Service English and 700,000 for our other World Service languages. World Service journalists now regularly report for the BBC’s domestic news programmes too” - Ogungbesan, 2016

A sensible solution would be to allow separation of data to allow for World Service languages staff be taken out of diversity statistics for the News and Current Affairs division. Another option, which is the one taken by this study, is to include World Service English Radio News only, which also serves a UK audience and where there is the most crossover of staff to domestic news outlets.

As indicated in Table 1 below, the BBC’s latest official data release shows senior leader diversity; 4% of senior leaders in the Nations and Regions are BAME and 11.8% in the News and Current Affairs division are. There is a 39/61 gender imbalance (F/M) among senior leaders in Nations and Regions. The gender split for News and Current Affairs is 46/54 (F/M).

Table 1 - Senior Leaders in Nations & Regions v News and Current Affairs Percentage female and BAME representation

Senior Leaders	Gender % F	BAME
Nations and Regions	39%	4%
News and Current Affairs	46%	11.8%

Data collated from (BBC, BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts, 2020)

Table 2: Senior Leaders in Nations & Regions v News and Current Affairs Religion – actual numbers of individuals

Senior Leaders	Atheist	Christian	Hindu	Sikh	Muslim	Jewish	Religion not specified
Nations and Regions (682 individuals)	79	255	0	0	0	0	348
News and Current Affairs (594 individuals)	94	152	0	0	0	11	337

Data collated from (BBC, BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts, 2020)

Table 2 shows the actual numbers of people counted in each division as 682 senior leaders working in Nations and Regions and 594 individuals in News and Current Affairs. Out of those 682 senior leaders in Nations and Regions, 79 are Atheist, 255 are Christian and 0 self-identify as Hindu, Jewish, Muslim or Sikh. In News and Current Affairs, out of 594 senior leaders, 94 are Atheist, 152 are Christian, 11 Jewish and once again, 0 self-identify as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh.

For the first time the BBC have released socioeconomic data, which 58% of staff have declared. This shows that over a third (34.7%) of senior leaders in BBC News (both TV and Radio) went to an independent/private fee paying school. Just 7% of people in the UK as a whole are privately educated (gov.uk, 2019). 61% of BBC News senior leaders also had a parent with a university degree. 21% of BBC News senior leaders had parents who did routine manual jobs. 68% had parents who were managers/professionals.

This compares with national benchmarks which show that in the UK, according to the Social Mobility Commission, 39% of children have parents who are working class and 37% who are managers/professionals (Commission, 2019) but in another report of British social attitudes, 60% of the UK population considered themselves working class (Evans, 2016).

Table 3 – Five Year comparison of all BBC staff and all BBC senior leaders.

Measure	Unit	2015	2020
BAME	All BBC Staff	13.4%	15.1%
	Senior Leaders	9.2%	11.9%
Disability	All BBC Staff	3.6%	9.4%
	Senior Leaders	2.8%	8%
LGBTQ+	All BBC Staff	Not recorded	8.8%
	Senior Leaders	Not recorded	8.9%
Gender (% female)	All BBC Staff	48.7%	48.3%
	Senior Leaders	41.4%	45%

Data from pg 16 (BBC, Diversity & Inclusion Plan - BBC Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023, 2021)

Table 3 shows diversity data from the BBC over a five year period from 2015 – 2020 for all BBC staff and all BBC senior leaders (not just in BBC News but for the BBC as a whole organisation). The 2015 figure seems to be taken from a BBC Trust observations document, which states that 8.5% of senior leaders at the BBC were classified as BME (2014) and this figure rose to 9.2% the following year (BBC, The Trust’s observations on the current operation and effectiveness of the BBC Executive arrangements for promoting equal opportunities in employment., 2015).

The 2020 BAME figures for senior leaders differs from Pg 229 of the BBC Annual Report which shows Leadership Staff Ethnicity distribution by Division for 31 Mar 2020: (BBC, BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts, 2020). It shows a BAME total percentage for all leadership staff in UK Public Service at 9.9% and BAME Grand Total for all leadership staff including World Service Group to be 12.3%.

Both these percentages differ from the 11.9% detailed in the BBC Inclusion Plan as shown in Table 2. This could be that different leaders from the organisation are included in each of the datasets or slightly different dates. The discrepancy has not been clarified.

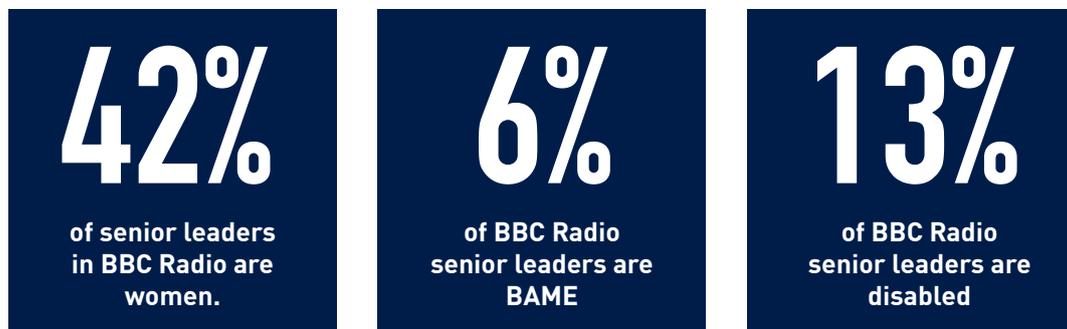
What also is not clarified are the number of senior leader roles in 2015 compared to 2020.

Taking the 2015 figure of 9.2% and comparing to 9.9% in 2020 (for senior leaders in UK) there has been an increase of 0.7% BAME senior leaders at the BBC over a five year period.

Ofcom 2019/20

Diversity data for the radio broadcasting industry as a whole is published by Ofcom in their Annual Report, which for the first time in 2019/20 combined both radio and TV together into one published report but unlike BBC data, the Ofcom report data can be broken down and viewed separately for BBC Radio and figures exclude the World Service.

For BBC Radio as whole in the period 2019-20 the Ofcom report and as shown in Table 3 below:



Compared to 2011 census data on the UK population aged 16-64, gender and BAME figures are not reflective of the UK population and are also below the BBC's own benchmarks (laid out earlier in this report) across all categories except disability (ONS, 2011). The diversity characteristic which is most under represented is ethnic diversity. The percentage of working age adults (16-64) who self-identify as Asian (8.1%), Black (3.4%) and Mixed Ethnicities/heritage (1.8%) total 13.3%, a further 1.1% were from 'other ethnic groups such as Arab 0.4% and any other 0.7%'. This totals BAME UK population at 14.4%. Therefore, under-representation of BAME senior leaders in BBC Radio shows a gap of 8.4% when compared to 2011 UK population data. Given that the BBC's target for BAME representation of their workforce is 20%, BBC Radio's senior leadership has a shortfall measuring 14%.

The difference between percentages of female senior leaders in BBC Radio in 2020, compared to the UK population as a whole, is 5%.

8.4 million working-age adults are reported to be living with a disability, of which 4.4 million are working (Powell, 2021). Disability charity, Scope report that 19% of working age adults are disabled (scope.org, 2020). Compared to this figure, there is a 6% shortfall between BBC Radio senior leaders with disabilities in 2020. The BBC’s own target on disability is to reach 12%. On this measure, BBC Radio senior leaders are meeting their diversity target for disability in 2020.

Table 3 below compares Ofcom diversity data for the UK’s biggest radio broadcasters – BBC Radio is compared to Bauer and Global – these are the radio broadcasters with the largest share of the UK audience - for both their workforce as a whole and their senior management. (Ofcom, 2020)

Table 4 – Diversity data comparison between UK’s major radio broadcasters.

RADIO BROADCASTER	CHARACTERISTIC	ALL LEVELS OF STAFF	SENIOR MANAGEMENT
BBC RADIO	WOMEN	51%	<u>42%</u>
	MULTI-ETHNIC GROUP (MEG)	<u>9%</u>	<u>6%</u>
	DISABLED	<u>9%</u>	13%
BAUER MEDIA GROUP	WOMEN	58%	48%
	MEG	<u>6%</u>	***
	DISABLED	<u>7%</u>	***
GLOBAL	WOMEN	53%	<u>45%</u>
	MEG	12%	<u>8%</u>
	DISABLED	<u>3%</u>	***

Source: (Ofcom, 2020) Pg 12

*** indicates that the numbers are too small to report.

Figures underlined show that they fall below levels representing working age adults in the UK.

This Ofcom data shows that BBC Radio senior management layers are indicative of a wider problem across the radio industry. It is only on gender diversity that Bauer Media senior managers are representative of the UK population. However, both BBC Radio and Global fall short on gender diversity of their senior managers. But it is on BAME and disability representation that the figures are particularly low for senior management. Although Global perform better on BAME representation than both BBC Radio and Bauer Media, it is still only at 8% which still falls short of representing UK working adults. In fact, the figures for BAME and disability representation do not even measure for Bauer Media – indicating there are one or two (if any) senior leaders of colour or with declared disabilities, working there.

Ofcom's 2018 report into radio broadcasting criticised the industry for poor collection of diversity data and noted that;

“Too many broadcasters do not sufficiently understand the make-up of their employees and collect too little or no diversity data.”

- Ofcom, Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Radio, 2018.

This has improved and the BBC is now collecting socioeconomic data, but there has been criticism that BBC has redefined terms such as leadership and separated data for radio over different divisions which makes comparison over the years difficult and also that the BBC refuses to publish programme level diversity data (Albury S. , 2018).

As part of this research, an FOI request was lodged to access a collated list of Radio News programmes and stations to identify senior leaders in the BBC Radio News category. Previously, FOI requests of this nature have been refused on the grounds that it would take too much time to separate out the collated datasets pulled together for the BBC Annual Report. The FOI submitted for this research was requested when the separated datasets were being merged for the 2021 Annual Report and it was indicated that the data would be available for June 2nd 2021. It was received on 21st June 2021.

Slow Progress on BAME representation in the UK radio workforce

Since 2016, there has been little movement on reflecting the population through the BBC Radio News workforce. A BBC diversity plan identified specific problems in these divisions and stated that targeted action plans were required for among other named areas of the BBC, for Radio and newsrooms, to allow for:

“further analysis of divisions with less than 10% BAME representation or poor employee survey results to ensure issues are identified and action plans are put in place including, Radio, Newsrooms, Newsgathering, English Regions and the World Service.” - BBC, Reflecting the Ethnic Diversity of the UK within the BBC Workforce, 2018

Data collated by this study indicates that action plans that may have been put in place, have not yielded desired results since there remains BAME under-representation in Radio News and research interviews indicate employee dissatisfaction for BAME journalists working in BBC local radio news.

Since 2018 too there has also been little movement on reflecting the population in the UK's radio workforce as a whole. In Ofcom's 2018 report, UK Radio employees from an ethnic minority background were under-represented in 2018, comprising 6% of the workforce. The same figure is recorded for Bauer Media all staff in 2019/20. BBC Radio has seen a slight increase to 9% across all staff, but its senior leaders figures remain at 6%. Of the small amount of data provided at board level in 2018, Ofcom found there was no representation by anyone from an ethnic minority background among those who disclosed their ethnicity (Ofcom, Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Radio, 2018).

In 2019, the BBC established a policy, that all senior leadership groups should include at least two BAME staff members. It was noted at that time:

“Several leadership teams have already achieved the target for BAME representation, including the Executive Committee, Radio & Education and Finance, and there is still more to come.” - BBC, Going further in building a creative, inclusive BBC, 2019.

However, 2 years later, the BBC News board came under criticism for failing to stick to its own rules on ethnic representation when it made its only board member of colour, Kamal Ahmed redundant. (Sweney, 2021). It happened when the number of BBC board members was reduced from eleven to eight. Currently there are still no people of colour on the BBC News board.

The BBC board is also yet to appoint two BAME members, currently there is 1 (out of 13), Tom Ilube who has had his appointment extended to 2023 (BBC, About the BBC, 2021).

The BBC's Executive committee currently has two people of colour; June Sarpong and Gautam Rangarajan (out of 10 with one position vacant). Gautam Rangarajan defended the BBC in its court case against Samira Ahmed who ended up winning her dispute over gender pay disparities at the BBC (Riley, 2019).

Radio and Education no longer exists as a department, since it was moved into a new Content division under new Chief Content Officer Charlotte Moore (Radio Today , 2020). Her senior leadership group does not appear to have any BAME staff members listed in a press update which names Patrick Holland, Shane Allen (who announced his recent departure), Rose Garnett, Kate Phillips, Piers Wenger, Dan McGolpin and Fiona Campbell (BBC, 2020).

According to figures outlined above, there was a greater percentage of BAME representation of senior leadership working at the BBC in 2014 and 2015 (8.5% and 9.2% BAME representation for whole organisation) than there are in BBC Radio in 2021 (6%).

Gender Diversity

In 2018, representation of women in radio was measured by Ofcom and found to be in line with the UK population (51%), but women were still under represented at senior levels, where 62% of senior managers were male, rising to 81% at Board level. The reality of gender balance was shown to be more nuanced than first assumed. In a further breakdown of the jobs women were doing in radio, data showed that there were some areas where women were not represented at all. This was most notable in technical and engineering roles which was overwhelmingly filled with men (81%). 46% of women worked in programme production in BBC Radio. Ofcom data also showed for UK Radio as a whole, women made up the majority of roles in marketing (70%), support (66%) and sales (63%) (Ofcom, Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Radio, 2018).

Journalistic Output

There are several schools of thought on how to best ensure diverse communities are represented in the media. The first is to implement targets subject to effective monitoring.

The BBC has been focused on improving on-air portrayal for many years, most significantly in TV, which is much easier to monitor and has a big impact in terms of visible diversity. The intentions to increase on-air portrayals of diversity are, for example detailed in a BBC Equality Report from 2014 which states:

“On air we have set ourselves challenging targets (to increase BAME representation from 10.4% in 2013 to 15% by 2017 and quadruple the on air portrayal of disabled people. New presenters and untold stories have been brought to a wider audience in programmes such as Forgotten Soldiers of Empire - one of the highlights of our WW1 commemorations, and The Invictus Games, both on BBC Two.” - BBC, Equality and Diversity at the BBC - 2014/15, 2015

Current 50/20/12 diversity targets (as set out earlier in this report) as related to on-air portrayal are believed to have been reached by Director General Tim Davie who states:

“We’ve made great strides in terms of onscreen representation, without question, in fact, we’re exceeding many of the targets there.”

- Albury S. “BBC’s Creative Diversity Plan” The Tim Davie/June Sarpong QandA, 2020

Monitoring the output in radio has proven successful in some cases, for example The 50-50 Project has fostered improvements in gender equality across programming output, by co-ordinating a system of voluntary data monitoring of female contributors and guests featured in radio programmes which are completed by producers and then shared centrally via email. Producers are encouraged to undertake these duties by regular emails from the Project’s driving force, BBC World presenter, Ros Atkins. (Aneeta Rattan, 2020)

However, not all voluntary monitoring has been effective. Off screen/off air production has proven much more difficult to monitor and therefore reaching these diversity targets has been problematic. This can be shown in the question asked by Pat Younge, CEO of the TV production company ‘Cardiff Films’ which supplies TV content to the BBC. He asked Director Tim Davie what he was doing to ensure that all independent production companies submit their diversity data on every production they make for the organisation.

Tim Davie’s response did not indicate any check on voluntary monitoring or consequences for failing to live up to an intention to hire a diverse production crew.

“My expectation is everyone provides data. I am definitely of the view that unless you measure stuff, it doesn’t really work. So we, we need to do that. In terms of those of you making programmes for the BBC, that (data) has to be submitted. We have to be able to see that in real terms. Just saying we’ve got good intent or we’re intending to do it will not be enough.” - Albury S. , “BBC’s Creative Diversity Plan” The Tim Davie/June Sarpong QandA, 2020

Another way to improve BAME and diversity representation in journalism, is to employ more BAME journalists, journalists with disabilities and from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. This is widely understood to be a key factor in getting the tone and coverage of news output right, especially when dealing with culturally sensitive topics, but also for allowing for a culturally intelligent, inclusive approach to journalistic output. There are several examples where the BBC has shown that their teams do not have sufficient input from diverse communities in news production – one such example is Stacey Dooley’s Panorama programme (2019) that mistakenly referred to a gesture signifying the ‘oneness of Allah’ as an IS salute, which nobody on the team picked up on. (BBC, Stacey Dooley Panorama: BBC sorry for ‘IS salute’ line, 2019)

Further high profile incidents where the BBC has been criticised for lacking cultural sensitivity on race issues has contributed to a loss of trust and confidence of BAME staff and wider BAME communities.

These include the Naga Munchetty incident (Waterson, 2019) and the use of the N-word by a local BBC TV reporter (BBC, BBC apologises over racial slur used in news report, 2020).

In an Ofcom report on consumption of news in the UK about Covid-19, it was found that white adults (80%) were using BBC services much more than BAME groups (68%). It was also found that 79% of adults from a white ethnic group said they trusted BBC services, compared to 74% for minority ethnic groups (Ofcom, Covid-19 news and information: Results by ethnicity, 2020).

Other approaches accepted as improving output are fostering long term relationships with the community and to always seek out new voices and opinions rather than resorting to lazy stereotypes and “community leaders” who are featured time and again to talk on issues only related to their race. Previous studies have shown journalists have a tendency to use hegemonic sources reflecting dominant hierarchies (Kurpius, 2002). This argument is supported by research interview evidence collected in this study.

Methodology

Desk Research of published data

To be able to leverage available data on diversity characteristics of senior leaders in BBC Radio News, a search of current datasets issued by the BBC, Ofcom and past FOI requests was conducted. The results of this search are shown in the previous section of this report. It allowed for comparison of diversity data between BBC Radio and other large radio broadcasters in the UK. It also allowed for comparison over time of all BBC staff and BBC senior leaders over a five year period. The breakdown to look at Radio News was not possible since the data is spread across Nations and Regions and News and Current Affairs divisions which includes TV, online and World Service language services. As has been discussed earlier, the sample being looked at in this research study, does not include World Service language journalists, since they are not broadcasting to UK audiences and will skew diversity statistics since a large majority of languages staff are likely to be BAME which has been criticised for “inflating” diversity data in BBC News (Albury, 2016). However, the sample for this research does include World Service English News teams where there is much greater crossover of coverage and staff with domestic news outlets.

FOI Request

In a search of previous FOI requests, a similar request was made by Esther Okusaga on 21 April 2021 which asked for statistics on Black journalists across all newsrooms and Black journalists who are senior leaders in BBC News, for which the following response was given by the BBC:

“In order to respond in full to your request we would have to disaggregate all our News & Current Affairs and Nations data by ethnicity, job title, sub division and location as well as separating it out by national, local and regional newsrooms. We estimate that to carry out this search would take BBC staff more than two and a half days. Under section we of the Act, we are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit.” - FOI, 2021

This response informed my own FOI request to the BBC dated 21st May, 2021 by restricting the data to Radio News only and asking for only senior leaders data (Band E and above, denoted by E+) across three main diversity characteristics, Gender, BAME and disability. I also specified that they should collate the results so as to remove any issue of revealing identifying information due to small number sizes in the results. Therefore, rather than providing a breakdown for each local radio station for example, they should provide the data for all of Nations and Regions together, but with a breakdown of Senior Leaders in News only. In my informal discussions with the BBC HR and diversity teams, it was indicated that the data would be available for June 2nd 2021 and indeed the relevant data was sent to a member of the team to look over before release. It was received on 21st June 2021.

Research Sample

A sample of 118 individuals were identified as BBC senior leaders who occupied the Band E + positions in Radio News, as previously stated, this refers to job roles previously referred to as Assistant editor, Editor etc. They were identified through personal connections and through internet searches based on BBC local and national regions. These people were emailed and asked to fill out a diversity form to send back. The form was based on an ACAS standard diversity monitoring form. It was also specified that data collected would comply with BCU ethical and privacy guidelines to signal trust that the data would be handled sensitively and in confidence. I also sought the support of BBC's Creative Diversity partners, by explaining the research project and asking if they would help increase participation in the diversity monitoring exercise by lending their name to add to the email that was sent out. Unfortunately this was not forthcoming since data collection of news and radio were outside their parameters.

As expected the response rate was low and approximately 13 replies were received. The second stage of working through the sample, involved checking the official webpages of the BBC site and validating names and job positions. A number of individuals emailed to let me know that they were no longer in position and the sample was updated to reflect this new information. The individuals identified were double-checked by journalists contacted who worked in the teams or who had recently worked in those teams. Where there were no responses from the individual or from journalists working in the team, a judgement call was made as to whether to include them in the sample or not.

This was based on whether they had recently given any online talks/webinars or had posted any information to their public social media profiles which indicated whether they were still in position. Identification of race works in complex ways and is not always based on skin colour, for example where it has a religious dimension. This study deployed a simple, reductionist but hopefully still relevant and useful code to determine White, BAME and gender categorisation.

Interviews

A total of 8 interviews took place remotely via MS Teams and also on the phone, and ranged from 26 minutes in duration to over an hour. All were granted anonymity and this report has been careful to remove any identifying details for this purpose. Anonymity was important to allow for free conversation without the participant having to be mindful about saying anything that may be damaging to their employer and/or their future career prospects. It was important to ensure an open and honest reflection of the issues explored.

They all took the same semi structured format which allowed for a flexible approach to the interview which was supplemented with follow-up questions, probes and comments. It allowed for the gathering of open ended data and to explore participant thoughts, feelings and beliefs about their experiences of diversity, race and racism and this method is recommended to explore more personal and sensitive issues. All interviews started with an explanation of the personal career journey of the participant, their personal experiences as related to career progression and then there was a section on recruitment and finally a discussion on journalistic output. Please note that as this is practitioner led research, knowledge of internal terminology and structure helped inform prompts, and as an experienced interviewer, due diligence and awareness was given not to influence outcomes.

The interview roster was designed to allow for a regional spread but with a particular focus on three key regions of the UK, chosen for their diverse populations. Participants were selected to provide a balance of perspectives. There is an even spread between male and female. Senior leaders in Radio News both currently doing the job and also to include senior leaders who had recently left in 2021 were selected. This is so that recent experiences can be reflected on, to give an indication of practises and culture currently within the organisation and also to allow a more free and honest look back to being a senior leader in Radio News. White and BAME senior leaders were selected to provide varied perspectives on race related issues. BAME journalists who are currently or who had recently worked in Radio News were also included in the participant sample. This was to ensure the perspective of working journalists were included and to provide a perspective on career progression from a journalist's point of view, this was especially relevant also when it came to questions of journalistic output and the portrayal of BAME communities.

These are the code names used for the eight participants: W denotes White, B for BAME and M for Male and F for Female. 5 senior leaders and 3 journalists. The job role indicates their position and also whether they work/have worked predominantly in local Radio News only or who also have spent a substantial time of their working life also in national Radio News.

Table 5 - List of research participants with coded criteria

Participant	Ethnicity	Gender	Job Role	Currently employed/ Recently left
WM1	White	M	Senior leader (local radio)	Current
WM2	White	M	Senior leader (local radio)	Current
BM1	BAME	M	Senior leader (local radio)	Current
BM2	BAME	M	Senior journalist (local and national)	Current
BF1	BAME	F	Senior leader (local radio)	Recently left
WF1	White	F	Senior leader (local radio)	Recently left
BF2	BAME	F	Journalist (local radio)	Recently left
BF3	BAME	F	Journalist (local and national)	Recently left

Findings

Chart 1 shows there are zero BAME senior leaders working Radio News in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland and the percentage of BAME representation at senior levels in the whole of England is 6.7%, compared to a BBC diversity target to achieve 20% BAME representation.

Chart 1: Percentage of BAME representation in Senior Leadership roles in BBC Radio News across 4 Nations of UK vs BBC Target of 20%

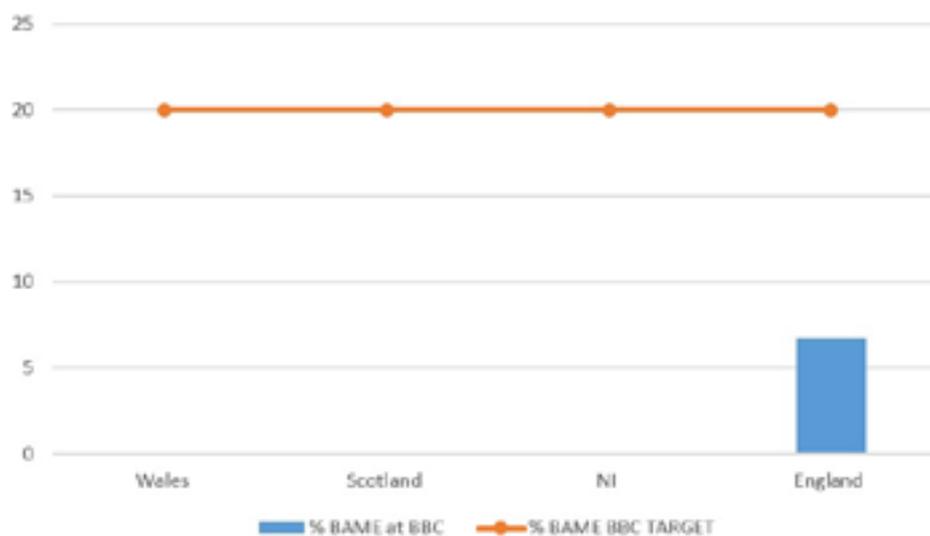


Chart 2: % BAME representation of Senior Leaders in BBC Radio News across 4 Regions of England vs BBC Targets

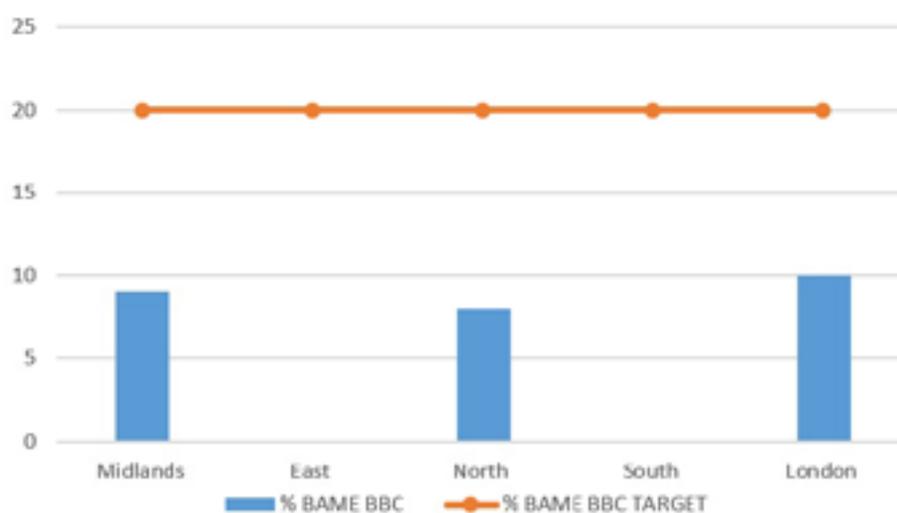


Chart 2 shows that BAME representation of senior leaders in Radio News fall below BBC diversity targets in all regions of England with zero representation measured in the sample gathered in this research in the East or South.

Chart 3: Percentage of females in senior leader roles in Radio News in the UK nations of Wales, Scotland Northern Ireland and England vs BBC gender diversity target of 50%.

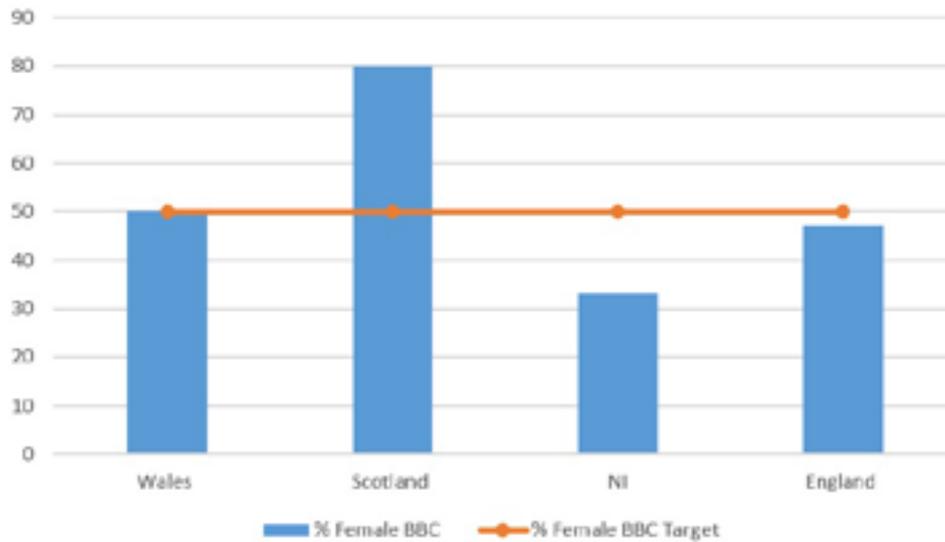


Chart 3 shows the gender of senior leaders in BBC Radio News, compared to the BBC target (orange bar) which is 50%. In Radio News in Wales and England there is an even or near even balance of female and male senior leaders. The largest gender discrepancy in Radio News senior leadership is in Scotland, there are 80% females and 20% males.

Table 6 Diversity data for all staff and senior leaders in Radio News in the Nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Total number of Radio News senior leaders In Wales, Scotland and NI = 14

Total number of Radio News journalist staff In Wales, Scotland and NI = 113

NATIONS	Gender (% Female)	Gender E+ (% Female)	BAME	BAME E+	Disability	Disability E+
	- All radio news staff	- Senior Leaders	- All radio news staff	- Senior leaders	- All radio news staff	- Senior leaders
Radio Wales News	48.8%	50%	4.9%	0	7.3%	0
Radio News Scotland	48.6%	80.0%	0	0	0	0
NI News Multiplatform	54.3%	33.3%	0	0	11.4%	0
TOTAL	50.4% (57/113)	57.1% (8/14)	1.8% (2/113)	0	6%	0

BBC Data for March 2021.

Table 6 shows that there are no BAME senior leaders in Radio News across Scotland, Wales or NI as also illustrated by Chart 1. There are also a very small number of BAME journalists in the 3 Nations, only 2 journalists across a staff of 113.

There are also no Radio News journalists or senior leaders who have declared a disability in Scotland, Wales and NI.

Table 7 - Diversity data for senior leaders in Radio News in England – Research collated for this study

Sample size of senior leaders = 104

ENGLISH REGIONS RADIO NEWS	Gender E+ (% Female) - Senior leaders	BAME E+ (% BAME) - Senior leaders	Disability E+ - Senior leaders
MIDLANDS (22) Radio WM, East Midlands, Leicester, Nottingham, Coventry, Northampton, Hereford/Worcester, Shropshire.	41% (9/22)	9% (2/22)	Not recorded in this sample
EAST (8) Essex, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire.	50% (4/8)	--	Not recorded in this sample
NORTH (25) NE & Cumbria, Tees, Lancashire, Manchester, Merseyside, Leeds, Sheffield, York, Humberside, Salford, inc. Five Live.	52% (13/25)	8% (2/25)	Not recorded in this sample
SOUTH (19) Southampton, Three Counties, Berkshire, Oxford, Kent, Cornwall, Devon, Jersey, Bristol, Gloucester, Wiltshire.	42% (8/19)	--	5% (1/19) from a reply to our diversity monitoring form but all others not recorded
LONDON (30) London, Current Affairs Radio, WS English, Today, Radio 4 News, Newsbeat, Asian Network.	50% (15/30)	10% (3/30)	Not recorded in this sample
TOTAL	47% (49 /104 FE-MALES)	6.7% (7 /104 BAME)	Not recorded in this sample

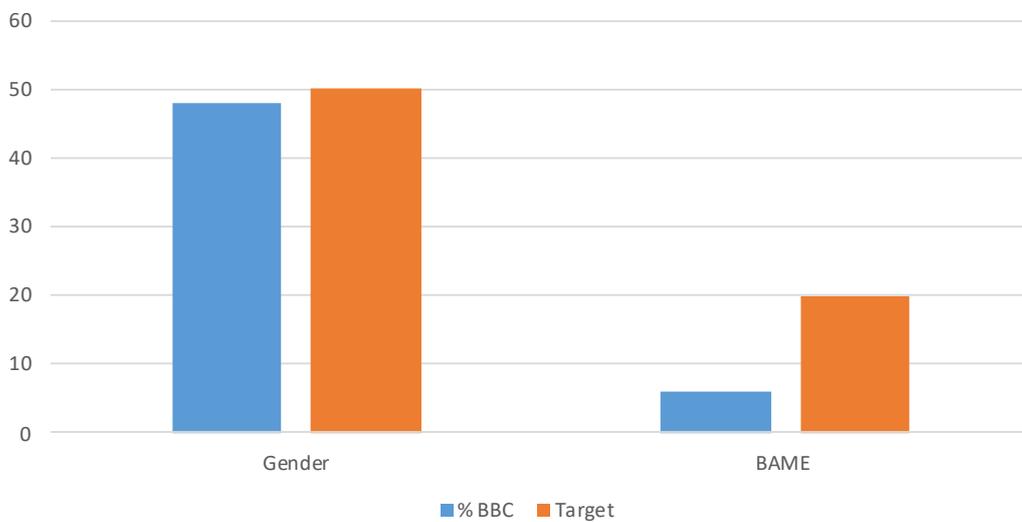
Source: Data collected for this research
-- percentage negligible (below 1%)

Table 8 - BBC Radio News Senior Leaders diversity totals, UK

GENDER (% Female)	48%
BAME	6%
DISABILITY	Not recorded

Table 8 is illustrated in Chart 4 and measures the total percentage females (48%) and percentage BAME (6%) senior leaders in Radio News for the UK. Chart 4 compares the research data collected by this study with the BBC diversity target which for gender is 50% and for the BAME representation is 20%.

Chart 4: Percentage female and BAME senior leaders in BBC Radio News in the UK vs BBC targets for gender and BAME representation.



These findings are similar to the figures released by Ofcom on the diversity of BBC Radio 2019/20 which shows 42% female, 6% BAME and 13% disability figures for all staff in BBC Radio (Ofcom, Diversity and equal opportunities in television and radio 2019/20, 2020). The data for BAME representation is below the levels for the UK population and also below the BBC's own target of 20%. The breakdown of regional figures shows an even greater substantial gap in representation since there are zero BAME senior leaders in the whole of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It was also discovered that in the regional centres where research interviews focused, there were all white newsrooms in some areas with over 40% city BAME populations.

Intersectionality

The term intersectionality was coined by Professor Kimberlè Crenshaw to describe how race, class, gender and other characteristics of a person's identity intersect and the impact of this in terms of the legal discrimination they encounter (Crenshaw, 1989). The experiences a Black woman faces in the workplace will be different to those of a South Asian man for example and a Black woman who is from a working class background will face a different experience to a Black woman who is of high socioeconomic status.

Findings of BAME representation of senior leaders in Radio News in the UK finds that there is very little intersectionality represented. Four out of the seven leaders from an ethnic minority, are South Asian men. There were no Black men and out of the two Black women identified, one of them has lost her job in Radio News due to re-location plans which is moving her job outside London and she has decided not to move, hence her position is being advertised externally. This is also the case for another BAME senior leader who is considering his options given that his job is moving and currently being advertised externally. If these two people are taken out of the numbers, then BAME representation at senior levels in Radio News at a senior level falls back from 6% to 4%.

Table 9: FOI Response Results BBC collated data for Nations and News and Current Affairs divisions for Radio News senior leaders

RADIO NEWS	Gender E+ (% Female) - Senior leaders	BAME E+ (% BAME) - Senior leaders	Disability E+ - Senior leaders
NATIONS	41.9%	6%	14.5%
NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS	48%	8%	7.7%

Source: BBC FOI Data April 2021

The FOI response was received on 21st June 2021 and has separated Nations data which is believed to cover Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is not clear whether England's 40 local radio stations are included here since the division is usually denoted as 'Nations and Regions'. The BBC FOI data includes disability and gender breakdowns. Actual numbers of staff included for the above data was not provided by the FOI response.

Interviews

RECRUITMENT OF SENIOR LEADERS – BBC Types

Director-General Tim Davie referred to a “BBC type” in his introductory speech when he said:

“We must move away from any sense of a “BBC type”, and not hire in our own image. All senior decision-making groups must be diverse. Also, in this area, like others, we should be transparent with our data.”

- BBC, Tim Davie’s introductory speech as BBC Director-General, 2020

All interviewees for this research, understood who the “BBC type” was; a senior manager they all felt familiar describing. WF1 said it was someone who was able to “play by the rules” someone who “talks a good talk”, be “outspoken” and “forthright” in their opinion and who would not necessarily have any proper management skills or experience. These attributes were felt to be more likely to belong to a male but WF1 said that there was much better gender diversity now. WM2 describes the ‘type’ as likely to be part of a London metropolitan elite with an Oxbridge connection. WM2 felt that this was now changing and there were less of these types around the BBC today, but that it would take time to “filter up”.

BF3 explained that to get a senior leadership position at the BBC, you had to be “very good at playing the game” and this was especially needed during the interview process known as “boards” which was an exercise that “some people were very good at, since they have been taught how to do that”. The perception was that it was “middle class” people who were trained for playing this game, which required “saying the right things”, rather than your ability to do the job. In her experience, she had seen managers (currently in position) who were not able to do their jobs or effectively manage people and yet they were rewarded with management positions due to a having a “likeability” factor. BF1 also mentions having likeability as a factor in career progression and thinks it coincides with having the correct “cultural fit”.

WF1 makes reference to her own selection which did not involve any leadership competency testing and believes it can often be based on “reputation” and that there are “types they are looking for”. She believes there are many more women now and she also doesn’t think Oxbridge on a CV is as important as it used to be – but that “it’s easier if you can project yourself in a certain way and that’s usually if you have a certain background”.

“There are no situations where they watch you lead or put you through any leadership course first or put you in different scenarios – it’s just one process [the interview]. I have a good reputation and my boards generally back up my good reputation – I’m known as getting things done but I am also told all the time, ‘I’m too kind’, which I refuse to see as a negative but I fear it very much is when you are moving up the ranks. “

- WF1

BM2 believes there is a “definite BBC type” who is “polished” and has “an air of self-confidence” with their own ideas, which they believe in. BM2 agreed this translated to white, (usually) male and from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds.

Phenomenal v Mediocre

All interviewees were asked to describe their career journey and how they had either experienced selection or seen how candidates were selected and appointed for senior leader positions in Radio News. None of them felt that it had been an easy journey. All had moved up and down between Bands D and E where D was a senior journalist level and E was the move up to senior leader known as Assistant Editor in Radio News. All senior leaders had been given the opportunity to ‘act up’ to Assistant Editor level first – usually informally to cover sick/maternity leave - and then used the temporary experience provided by the opportunity, to then apply for the job permanently. This was the experience for WF1 who came to radio from an online and “techy background”. She was asked to cover a long term sick absence at Assistant Editor level which she was selected for based on an informal email detailing her ideas for the role which she was invited to do (along with others), by the editor at the time. WF1 noted that the editor,

“happened to be one of the very few female editors in local radio at the time” who was “definitely keen on female progression”. - WF1

WF1 filled in that role and was then interviewed for the same job and

eventually got the job permanently.

WM1 felt “frustration” from getting rejections for senior leader jobs and felt that he had to “make his own journey”.

“It was literally my own actions based on the annual appraisal and they were saying to me – you need more experience here or there - so it was a question of just applying.

“I didn’t get certain jobs but by applying for them I got seen and then I was offered an attachment as Assistant Editor off the back of one of those applications. As a result of that I got more experience doing that and was able to apply for other Assistant Editor roles.” - WM1

WM2 also said: “I had to do a lot of it myself”. He thought it had a lot to do with “whose face fits at the time.” He acknowledges:

“I did have Editors who gave me advice and tips. A lot of it depends on who is on the board – so if it’s someone you know well, that did help you.” - WM2

Both BAME senior leaders who contributed to this research (BM1 and BF1) felt they had to go through many more hoops to reach senior leadership than their white counterparts. BF1 said:

“I had two postgraduate qualifications and experience going back 13 years and for some people that just was not enough, I had to keep proving myself on a day to day basis.

When asked if she needed to do more compared to others, BF1 replied:

“Absolutely! Absolutely! There were people who didn’t have degrees in management and leadership like I did. I saw people going ahead of me for years and this sense that they had something I didn’t and I could not see what it was.

“I remember being told that this lad was going to be a News Editor within a year and I remember thinking – why would he – what skills did he have that I don’t?” - BF1

BM2’s journey to senior leadership spanned decades and he recalls one particularly tortuous job application for a senior leadership role at the Asian Network which he applied for with many years of leadership and

experience at Asian Network.

“I didn’t get the job at the Asian Network and the person who got it was a white person, some of the reasons I was given for not getting that job was based on what I didn’t demonstrate however, what I was able to demonstrate, was fantastic knowledge of the language and culture which my white counterpart did not have but that wasn’t taken into account which I felt was astounding.” - BM2

He recalls that at one point, the management structure at Asian Network looked like this:

“The Head of Asian Network was white, the Head of News for Asian Network was white, the Deputy Editor for News was white, Head of Programmes was white. You would never have that kind of management structure in reverse – say at Five Live for example.” - BM2

BF3 says that a BBC colleague (black male) applied for many internal jobs and saw white colleagues with less experience get those jobs over him:

“He realised then, that he would have to be FAR better than everyone else... I had to be phenomenal whereas everybody else is allowed to be mediocre.” - BF3

Hiring in your own image

There is no suggestion of any overt, intentional or conscious bias in the recruitment of BBC journalists by senior leaders to their Radio News teams. This is a point of general agreement from participants who contributed to this report. But it is acknowledged that since staffing in many newsrooms is not diverse, there is work to be done to address structural issues and unconscious bias. Efforts were largely agreed to be needed, to reduce existing barriers and enable better representation within the Radio News workforce.

One of the findings of this research is that there are all white radio newsrooms in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In England, there are currently no staff journalists of colour working on Radio News at a station which covers an extremely diverse region of England, based in a city where over 40% of the population are from BAME backgrounds. All of the senior leaders of this English regional newsroom are also white.

This all-white radio newsroom was raised by BF2 as an issue with the white senior leader:

“I’m the only person that pointed it out – I said, ‘there are no black people working here’ and the response was ‘oh yeah, there aren’t are there?’ And then someone said – ‘do you remember so and so?’

“There isn’t one journalist there who is a journalist of colour in the team. Not one. All white staff. There were 2 people of colour who both worked on temporary contracts and they are not there anymore. Their contracts were not extended.” - BF2

When BF2 asked the news editor why there were not more journalists of colour being employed, she was told that diverse candidates were not applying for the advertised jobs. BF2 herself concluded that there was “unconscious bias” underlying the issue and that “they hire people who are like them.”

A non-diverse pool of candidates to choose from was a common complaint from the white senior leaders interviewed in this study. WM1 said diverse candidates were not applying for advertised jobs since “they don’t engage with the BBC”. He also felt that he had little control over recruitment due to structural issues regarding HR requirements that were controlled separately and out of his hands.

“We have this portal where we are told what the level of experience and skills required for the job are, and they are big hurdles”. - WM1

This was the reason given for why journalists on the team were better educated than the local population and more likely to come from higher

socioeconomic backgrounds.

BF3 makes a similar point that there are recruitment restrictions controlled centrally by the organisation which may make it harder to replace staff and also to bring new people in through less traditional routes. These issues are compounded by staff at risk of redundancy in other parts of the BBC, who are given the opportunity to apply for jobs internally. WF1 notes the restrictions around only being allowed to advertise jobs internally and that staff who were at risk of redundancy from elsewhere in the organisation are a pool of candidates, likely to be less diverse.

WM2 also highlights problems with the pool of labour;

“The problem is more, ‘are the people applying for jobs for us to be able to appoint them?’ The big problem is to widen the pool. We are not trying to recruit in our image now – but trying to find people who are good at the job but who also bring something different to the newsroom.

“Tim Davie is targets driven and they are drilled into you and you are expected to deliver – leaders are actively looking at that in recruitment – but do we have the pool of people? If I want a really good journalist from a diverse background – there are not enough who are hitting the job requirements – one or two will come through and they drown in the job.” - WM2

The interview

From the point of view of the journalists of colour interviewed during this research, they felt there were serious problems with the interview process which prevented them from securing jobs in all or majority white teams and by panels where decisions usually rested with a white senior leader. For BM2 the problem starts at the pre-application stage, where he said it is expected that you go and talk to the hiring manager before making an application and if this was not done, then it was likely your application would be rejected. It was highly unlikely that you would be shortlisted for an interview from a ‘blind’ application and that it was important to “get on their radar”.

The BBC interview process itself involves a series of questions where you are marked on each answer and you:

“have to say a certain phrase or key word to get those marks but it was

never really clear” - BM2

BF3 calls the interview process at the BBC “severely flawed” and felt strongly that, “they hire people who look like them, they give opportunities to people who look like them.”

“It’s all about ticking boxes and some people are very good at that, in particular , middle class people – they have been taught how to do that whereas me, from a working class background, I just say how it is. I have this attitude that as long as I’m working hard enough and doing my job well – I can do the job so I apply for the job, but I notice that for the senior leaders.... it’s more about just talking and saying the right things and I would say it’s more about whether they like you.” - BF3

This is confirmed by WF1 who in her job as Assistant Editor, was on many hiring panels.

“I have hired people and I think everybody has naturally their prejudices, I’m sure they do... I do think some managers will look at people and think – can I get on with them, can’t I get on with them? And usually that has to do with whether they like them or don’t like them.” - WF1

She criticises the selection process for being “simplistic” since “it’s about how well you perform in that one hour – I don’t know if they would even bother reading your CV”. She goes onto say...

“You already know everybody who is going to apply ... and you’ve already got your opinions and ideas of what they can do and then you ask some questions in interview that generally back up what you knew about them from before.” - WF1

BF1 who has also been on many hiring panels and been involved in hiring decisions for her own and other Radio News teams, labels the interview system “not fair”:

“Whilst the BBC gives the impression of equality – the implantation of the system is not equal – they [the senior leaders who are hiring] might design a task that plays to the person’s strengths – I had direct experience of that – it was because they wanted to weed out everyone else ... it’s completely skewed – the way people were marked, there was adjustment going on to get the people they wanted”. - BF1

These concerning practises around recruitment, highlighted in interviews for this study, feed into a much more extensive staff survey conducted by the BBC which is detailed in the BBC Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-23. Two thirds of staff expressed dissatisfaction with the system of recruitment and progression, citing “a lack of consistency and transparency in decision-making” and a “significant lack of trust in the recruitment process”. - BBC, Diversity & Inclusion Plan - BBC Workforce Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023, 2021

Journalistic Output

It is a strongly held and accepted view among the participants of this study, that the diversity of the workforce is integral to producing diverse journalistic output. Greater diversity of journalists on the team, which reflects the local population, better serves the audience and also helps achieve the correct tone and authenticity of output.

This was not always the case in BBC local radio. In 2005, the policy was to think of the audience as ‘Dave and Sue’. These were fictional characters – white, middle-aged approx. 55. Sue was a school secretary and Dave was a plumber or electrician who BF1 explains were part of the strategy for focusing their output towards a particular demographic – these were the people they were told to think of when creating content, rather than trying to serve all license fee payers in the region. (Self, 2005)

Thinking among some senior leaders in Radio News – in regions of the UK with high BAME populations, disagrees with this approach. WF1 says:

“I believe really strongly that the BBC have to provide content for the whole country and the whole country are not all white and middle class.

“If 20% of [a region] is Asian – then a Bollywood film coming out is as important as a new Hollywood blockbuster – or a long established Asian business shutting down is as important as a pub closing down – I think who your staff are, reflect the stories that are going to come in and the stories that will go out.” - WF1

Three previous BAME employees at the local radio station which has an all-white staff newsroom in a very diverse area of England, detailed different incidents where they felt the tone of journalistic output, had fallen

short of expectations and had not served diverse audiences – or diverse staff who passed through – well. BM2 says:

“There was a guy – really good reporter [who was himself Muslim] bringing in some good stories from the Muslim community. He uncovered a story about a local travel agents specialising in Hajj pilgrimages who were swindling their customers – that was driven from him and his contacts but it was just relegated to a 2 minute package – that was the kind of investigation that could have had a lot impact.

Normally those stories would be silo-ed into the ‘Asian show’...

The Editor sent him to cover a nativity play – he was pretty hard-nosed and serious and he wanted to smash open conspiracies and he had to do a radio package about little donkey. He was fuming at the time. He didn’t stay long.” - BM2

Another (white) reporter came in as a freelance journalist but was singled out for her very broad regional accent which matched the accent of the local area. It was commented on by a senior leader in an editorial meeting with journalists present but when she herself was not in the room.

“She was a good journalist but she found it difficult to get on-air because her accent was so broad, which seems silly for a local station – she would make a package and they would say her accent was ‘distracting’ – they said she sounded like an interviewee rather than the reporter.”

- BM2

Other parts of the BBC Radio News network tried to be more reflective of their audiences, in their output. WM2 said that “we got a lot of praise” for an initiative to broadcast from a deprived part of the region on a “massive council estate” where many “white working class people lived”. He said, “we rented a shop and broadcast from there all of our output and invited local musicians, artists and community projects”. WM2 said that “Tim Davie says we need to get out of our offices into the community” and had hence WM2 managed to secure extra funding for the week-long broadcast.

When asked about the diversity of the local Radio News team, WM2 replied:

“Gender is really good, it’s still not there in terms of racial diversity – there are still people there but we are not reflecting the region – partly they are there as freelancers but jobs were not given at the end – there

are 2 or 3 fantastic people from working class backgrounds for me they are really important, I want to hear the perspective of lots of people – I don't want an echo chamber in my teams". - WM2

As a Black female journalist, BF3 felt that her status in the newsroom had ranged from being “completely ignored” to “being put on a pedestal” to be “the voice for all Black people”. She had not felt comfortable with either position. She gave an example of a time when she had challenged the tone of coverage related to the impact of knife crime on young people, which she felt lacked nuance, but without any other Black journalists or white allies in the team, white senior leaders dismissed her concerns.

“There was a [Black] boy who was rapping about knife crime in a positive way – my thing was there are so many young [Black] people impacted by knife crime that have nothing to do with crime or rapping – like my nephew who is 15 and my sister will not let him out – he wants to be a pilot – instead of choosing a kid with stereotypical rap and crime affiliation – why not get a normal Black kid, just being a kid and use him as a case study for how he is effected by violence in his area? It was also stereotyping rap music by connecting it to knife crime – there were too many stereotypical connections in that report. I was saying this is the wrong case study – the narrative was wrong – when I raised that – they said “we don't see it as racist” it got turned back on me – “this is a positive rap” – I literally got ignored.” - BF3

The Pipeline of Future Senior Leaders

For the BBC to increase the diversity of senior leaders in Radio News, in line with the 50/20/12 targets set for 2023 (outlined in the introduction), there would need to be a pipeline of diverse journalists coming up through the organisation. There are efforts to cultivate mid-career journalists at the BBC with various leadership schemes. BM1 says he was selected for one through a “very rigorous” process and was among a cohort of “extremely high calibre people” and spent two years being taught by some fantastic mentors from outside the BBC. When it came to the celebratory drinks at the end of the scheme, he asked the then Director General; “What is the currency of this scheme?” He said that the DG could not give him an answer and asked the Diversity Lead to answer. This Head of Diversity told him that she would hope that 6% of the cohort might make it to senior leadership at the BBC.

“I was like what? What is the purpose of that? Surely you would expect most of them to go onto senior leadership in an organisation that desperately needs diverse senior leaders?? The ambition was so disappointing – we have lots of courses and schemes and apprentices but the BBC doesn’t seem to have any plan on how to then take it forward.” - BM1

BF3 also participated in a scheme to develop her career. She said that most of the people on her scheme, ended up leaving the BBC.

“You have all the skills and mentoring and you are applying for the jobs, but the jobs you keep applying for, you don’t get them and they are telling you why you are not worthy so you pivot, and you apply for other BBC jobs – same story – it gets to a point where you think – let me apply outside and the first thing you apply for, they think you’re amazing and are willing to pay you x amount more money and you leave. That’s what happened.” - BF3

BF1 who also left the BBC this year (2021) as one of the very few remaining senior leaders in Radio News and a woman of colour, who went to a non-traditional university. She detailed a catalogue of problems which took its toll on her mental health, being brought in to manage a non-diverse team and not being supported by the organisation.

“The culture there – I ended up going through a grievance process – which said (on the record) that hostile, entrenched attitudes existed there, that were unlikely to change and it’s not for outsiders to fit in... even though I had been at the BBC for 15 years I was referred to as an ‘outsider’ and that for me related to my race.” - BF1

BF3 explains why the decision to leave was driven by the experience of working in a non-diverse and non-inclusive newsroom under white, ‘BBC type’ senior leaders.

“The diverse people I know – they are TIRED by the time you get mid-career and most of the time you end up thinking, this is not worth my sanity this is not worth my mental health – because of what you have been through.” - BF3

BF3 says that:

“The BBC push Black and Asian people out the door, they create a hostile environment which does not allow us to flourish.”

BM1 believes that the BBC must now change itself if it wants to attract and retain talented, diverse senior journalists who could be potential leaders.

“Up ‘til now BAME people have come in and are expected to change themselves to fit into the BBC and I say now it’s time the BBC changes its culture for people from BAME backgrounds. They need to at least meet them half way.” - BM1

Analysis

Meeting BBC Diversity Targets

All the interviewees in this study expressed scepticism that the BBC was likely to meet their own target on BAME representation, when it comes to senior leader roles in Radio News. Comments made by interviewees for this research include:

“We are not diverse, senior leaders are all male and white – there is no diversity at all well not much. Our teams do have a 50/50 gender split.”

- WM1

WM2 says:

“50 will be ok... I don't really know phew – time is needed to filter through, having a target is good, it's getting better. Things are going in the right direction.” - WM2

Others comments include:

“The BBC has got its work cut out” and “I don't know if it's even a target for senior leadership”.

WF1 says:

“It's going to be hard – there needs to be a long hard conversation about what a leader looks like as there is a lot of emphasis on certain skillsets that are harder if you are not a confident, privileged person.” - WF1

Achieving a 20% diversity target for BAME representation of senior leaders in Radio News by 2023 would require two consecutive years of increasing BAME senior leaders by 7% each year, a jump of 14%. The BBC states in its FOI response that the target is not for 2023 but longer; the targets were issued in Feb 2021 and are to be met “in the next three to five years”. But even with a longer time frame, the targets look unlikely to be met for two main reasons.

Firstly, the progress on BAME representation of senior leaders in the BBC as a whole organisation has advanced at slow rate. As outlined in an earlier section of this report, (Background Literature and Review) the lack of movement of BAME leadership in the BBC was noted from a BBC Trust document for 2014 which indicated that 8.5% of senior leadership was classified as BAME (BBC, The Trust's observations on the current operation and effectiveness of the BBC Executive arrangements for promoting equal opportunities in employment., 2015). In the latest BBC Annual Report pg. 229, the current data on BAME representation at leadership level is 9.9% for UK public service (BBC, BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts, 2020). Although it is hard to make direct comparisons, due to the merging of datasets, changing definitions and Band structure, at an approximate estimate, the progression of BAME representation of senior leaders at the BBC has increased by 1.4% in 6 years. If you take the 11.9% leadership total from the BBC inclusion Plan then the increase in 6 years is 3.4%.

Diversity campaigner Simon Albury, who runs the Campaign for Broadcasting Equality (CBE) calculates that BAME leadership at the BBC has seen a slow rate of change. He states:

“BAME leadership increased by less than 1% in the 3 years from 2016 – 2019, from 8.81% to 9.48%, when the World Service is excluded - as Ofcom does in its reporting on BBC diversity.” - Albury S. , “Diversity: The BBC may fool itself but it won't fool the Lords”, 2019

The second reason why BBC Radio News senior leadership BAME representation is unlikely to reach its diversity target is due to the pipeline of BAME mid-career senior journalists. In the 'Interviews' section of this report, participants outlined the problems they had faced with BBC leadership schemes they had been on. BM1 said there was a lack of ambition in moving talented individuals from the schemes into leadership positions and BF3 talked about not being able to secure jobs due to flawed recruitment practises, which led to many BAME journalists leaving the organisation. This is exacerbated by the experiences of Black and Asian staff who have faced mental health stress like the situation outlined by BF1 who went through a grievance procedure and was not supported in a non-diverse and non-inclusive radio newsroom.

There is evidence that BAME staff are leaving the BBC at a faster rate than their white counterparts.

“In 2016 14.6% of all leavers were BAME, by 2019 this had increased to 18.4%.” - Albury S. , “Diversity: The BBC may fool itself but it won’t fool the Lords”, 2019

Ofcom also state the existence of this trend.

“Given the BBC’s public targets in these areas, the rise in the proportion of minority ethnic employees leaving the BBC in the last year (from 16% in 2017 to 20% in 2018) is concerning. We would have expected to see retention of such employees increasing.” - Ofcom, Review of BBC news and current affairs, 2019

Research participants for this study point to a variety of reasons for why BAME BBC staff are leaving the organisation at an accelerating rate. They highlight frustration with career progression and that having the correct skillset and experience to do the job are not the factors that deliver promotion, but rather other factors are at play, such as “likeability” and “cultural fit”.

In addition, mental stress of experiencing racial bias and the cost of ‘speaking up’ on racial issues may be high. It has been well documented that there are costs associated with being one of the only people of colour in the workplace, either ignored or burdened with being a voice for all Black people (as detailed by participant BF3 in this research). There are additional considerations too, of being typecast or “boxed” into reporting BAME issues which ends up limiting career progression (Douglas, 2021). Black employees may also be asked to help draw up diversity strategies on top of their normal workloads which ends up taking a mental toll if it is ultimately seen as tick-box exercise rather than a genuine attempt to make difficult decisions that result in deeper, structural change.

Ofcom’s Melanie Dawes went even further and suggested that the BBC should try to rectify the problem of BAME journalists leaving the organisation by trying to tempt them back.

“Reaching out into the communities that used to work for the BBC but left, because they knew they would not progress, is a big part of what it has to do as well as ensuring that its own existing staff come up through the ranks at the same rate as others.” - Albury S. , “BBC Ethnic Cleansing – Ofcom CEO tells BBC’s Davie ‘Bring Em Back Alive’ ” says Simon Albury, 2020

The double-disadvantage

Although still limited, the BBC has started to publish data on socioeconomic backgrounds which shows that over a third (34.7%) of senior leaders in BBC News (both TV and Radio) went to an independent/private fee paying school, compared to 7% of people in the UK as a whole who are privately educated (gov.uk, 2019).

Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison in their book, *The Class Ceiling* conduct research inside the media industry in a study that focuses on Channel 4, but contains findings which overlap with experiences of working in BBC Radio News. He finds:

“Many people appear to be penalised both for their ethnicity and class backgrounds. Black British individuals from working class backgrounds, for example earn on average about £6,000 less than their Black British colleagues from privileged backgrounds and over £11,000 less than privileged ...white people.” - Friedman & Laurison, 2020

There is a distinct “double disadvantage” for being working class and BAME in elite professions such as journalism. This chimes with the experiences detailed by participants to this study.

Diversity Monitoring, Targets and Networks

Diversity monitoring and targets are important tools to increase representation if used correctly. An initiative in Germany to increase women in leadership in newsrooms set a 30% voluntary quota and resulted in great success in increasing numbers of women and creating a normalisation of women as senior leaders in news. However, it was found that there was very little intersectionality in the women who were hired (they were largely white, from privileged backgrounds and tended not to have children) and it was a far from easy journey for the women involved. A strong women’s network helped. (Assmann, 2021)

Similarly, the BBC's Global Women in News network (GWiN) is without doubt helping women at the organisation come together in support of female leadership and career progression and has helped to achieve the 50% diversity target among women leaders in Radio News. It was set up by Liliane Landor, a BAME leader in Radio News, she was seen as an inspirational role model for BAME female journalists before her departure in 2016 (she has just announced her return to the BBC in 2021). GWiN has grown to a Facebook group membership of 1,500 and 1,700 membership as a whole. It has a dedicated senior producer who runs the network (currently Natalie Goldwater). They post job opportunities, inspirational news articles celebrating women and member successes and also run their own talks, workshops and masterclasses. It is an active network which has lobbied on issues such as maternity support.

A network for BAME and socioeconomic diversity have also been set up with the same ambition, hoping to emulate GWiN's success. The BBC's BAME group is called BBC Embrace and for socioeconomic diversity is called BBC RAISED. They have much lower membership than GWiN of their respective Facebook groups (411 members for Embrace and 314 members for RAISED). The engagement seems to be less, which may relate to a reluctance/stigma to be visible on race related issues which may be critical of the BBC. Members of BBC Embrace also include (white) senior managers which may also limit engagement on race issues since it may be deemed political and against the BBC's current stance on journalistic impartiality (Frost, 2020).

Two participants of this research detailed the importance of considering inclusion rather than an over emphasis on monitoring of diversity targets. They point to instances of BAME staff being promoted without the necessary experience or support to do the job.

BF1 says:

“It's a blunt instrument and it doesn't force people to think about INCLUSIVE environments – it's a tick box exercise so you have the situation where you have the head of local radio – randomly choosing people who don't have skills and putting them in and not supporting them in difficult places.” - BF1

BM1 also points to this problem, which he thinks is so serious that it risks undermining the policy of diversity targets at the BBC. He thinks the pressure to fulfil quotas, without the necessary structure in place where experienced, trained and skilled mid-career senior journalists are coming though, is dangerous. Since it results in senior leaders, who do not have the ability to spot and develop diverse talent, picking people who are not best suited for the job.

“Say I do not have the ability to find that diverse talent, but I have to meet that target – what am I going to do? I will recruit somebody for the sake of recruiting that person ...so then you are compromising the quality of people you are bringing in and it unfair to good white candidates.

The other problem with that is that it reinforces stereotypes about black and Asian people because if you are bringing in people who are not very good. So then white colleagues will look at that and say, ‘See?? They’re not very good’.

So there is a lot of damage that has been done.” - BM1

Diversity targets, monitoring and networks all have their part to play to increase diverse representation of senior leaders in Radio News. In the establishment of these strategies, genuine inclusion is of the utmost importance. If diversity targets are not implemented correctly – with what BF1 calls “cultural intelligence” and an institutionally white infrastructure remains in place, then these measures will result in diverse staff leaving the organisation and feeling let down by false promises of diversity.

“It’s so easy to believe the pictures which give the appearance of racial diversity. To buy into the well-crafted statements of purpose. To enjoy being invited into the process of change. The role of the ‘bridge-builder’ sounds appealing. Until you realise how often that bridge is your broken back.”

By, Best Selling Author, AUSTIN CHANNING BROWN
‘I’m still here, Black dignity in a world meant for whiteness’ 2018

Conclusion

This research has found that BAME representation at senior levels in BBC Radio News currently stands at 6%. BBC data provided in an FOI response states that BAME representation of senior leaders as part of the Nations division stands at 6% and for News and Current Affairs it is 8%. These figures fall far short of reaching a 20% diversity target for BAME representation by 2023 and even within a five year time frame would be difficult. This is due to the fact there has been very slow progress on increasing BAME representation in BBC Radio News at senior levels for at least the last 3 years. This appears to be as a result of recruitment panels hiring a BBC type, no clear infrastructure to enable progression of current BAME staff into senior leadership roles and a lack of monitoring of evaluation processes.

The BBC outlined the need for specific action plans to address diversity of Radio and newsrooms, 3 years ago under the diversity lead Tunde Ogungbesan who expressed then, that...

“It’s taking too long to see the change that we expect within our workforce.”

He recommended for the BBC to ...

“Develop specific action plans based on further analysis of divisions with less than 10% BAME representation or poor employee survey results to ensure issues are identified and action plans are put in place including, Radio, Newsrooms, Newsgathering, English Regions and the World Service.” - BBC, Reflecting the Ethnic Diversity of the UK within the BBC Workforce, 2018

Tunde Ogungbesan left the organisation in 2019 after 4 years at the BBC. In that time, he put forward workable recommendations including to build a solid pipeline of BAME leaders and his leaving speech emphasised the need for “retention and career progression”. (Ogungbesan, Farewell, 2019).

Research participants interviewed for this study provide insights on the difficulties they have faced in career progression in Radio News and how they have seen a different measure of standards applied to white colleagues. They have spoken of the mental stress of being ignored and also burdened with being a spokesperson for all BAME related issues. They have spoken of the lack of support in toxic and hostile work settings, being labelled as outsiders and not being seen as leadership material, no matter what experiences and skills they accumulate and demonstrate.

Senior leaders in Radio News are currently not representative of the UK population or the regions they are covering and there is evidence that they are hiring in their own image, leading to the existence of all white radio news teams, this is even happening in cities where over 40% of the local population is classified as BAME. One of the participants of this research said:

“Diversity of senior leaders at the BBC, requires white men to stop giving jobs to white men”. - WF1

In the German initiative which resulted in gender diversity in newsrooms under a voluntary quota (Assmann, 2021) one of the turning points in reaching a critical mass of more women into leadership was when (white) women started giving jobs to (white) women.

There are very few people of colour making crucial hiring decisions in BBC Radio newsrooms and accelerating rates of BAME staff leaving the organisation have led Ofcom to comment on these retention rates. (Albury S. , “BBC Ethnic Cleansing – Ofcom CEO tells BBC’s Davie ‘Bring Em Back Alive’ ” says Simon Albury, 2020)

Under-representation of BAME senior leaders is also having a clear impact on journalistic output as case studies outlined in this research detail. This results in Radio News coverage constructing and reinforcing negative representations of BAME communities and contributing to loss in trust.

Close monitoring on a programme and departmental level is needed and results acted upon which require greater transparency of programme level diversity data. Changes to the current appraisal system for managers who are not delivering on diversity targets must come with real consequences. Delivery of diversity targets require genuine inclusion – which is only possible if there exists a senior leadership team with cultural competence. The danger of employing individuals who are not experienced or supported, jeopardises faith in the diversity targets system.

Structural inequalities in recruitment and progression should be urgently addressed. Faith in the current system is very low and a radical plan is needed to change a process which has been widely abused. The time has long passed to get it fixed.

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