

Race for Opportunity

Best Practice Tips for Recruitment Agencies

Ensuring equal access to opportunities for diverse job applicants

Background

Race for Opportunity's (RfO) June 2011 report 'Race to Progress: Breaking down Barriers' highlighted the need to engage with the UK recruitment industry in light of the research's findings on perceptions of casual racial discrimination from some recruitment agencies when dealing with ethnic minority clients. Prior to this report, RfO had already engaged with employers and recruitment agencies in order to work together to find constructive solutions to the issues of diversifying recruitment in general.

In 2011, as part of the Mayoral initiative to support businesses and strengthen their ability to become more diverse, RfO and Diversity Works for London (DWfL) commissioned a piece of research into job seekers experiences of recruitment agencies. The research was carried out by SPA Future Thinking.

The following is a summary of the key research findings from this study of more than 2,500 people who have looked for work in the UK in the last twelve months. It is important to note that the sample is not purely random, it was achieved by RfO member and partner organisations, including a number of key recruitment agencies, sending a link to the survey to the candidates on their contact databases.

Profile of those surveyed were:

Ethnicity	White	BAME*
	2038	580
Gender	White	BAME
	Male / Female	Male / Female
	48% / 52%	42% / 58%

Age group	White	BAME
16-34	35%	47%
35-54	46%	48%
55+	18%	5%

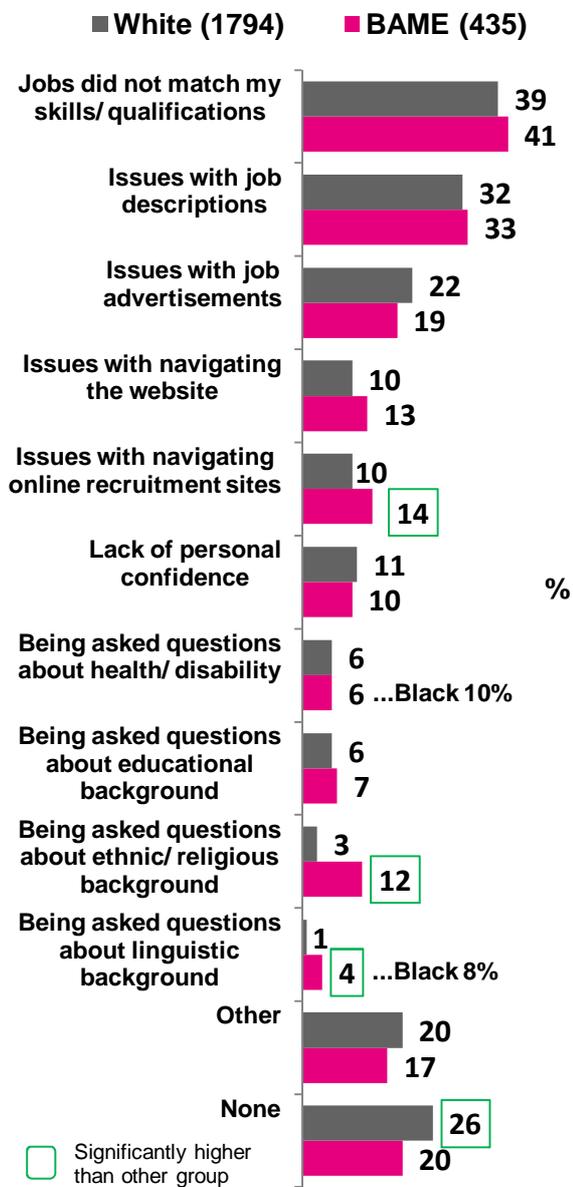
Education	White	BAME
Secondary/A levels	27%	14%
NVQ/Vocational	13%	7%
Diploma	11%	8%
Degree	22%	31%
Post Grad Qual	15%	28%
Professional Qual	9%	10%
Other / Refused	3%	2%

Key findings

- 44% of white candidates were offered a job compared to 29% for BAME candidates. White candidates are also more likely to be invited to interview.
- White applicants were more likely to rate recruitment agencies as 'good' or 'very good' than BAME applicants.
- Areas where BAME applicants particularly rated the service of recruitment agencies lower than white applicants were:
 - Initial contact.
 - Response to queries (particularly black applicants).
 - Overall experience.
- When considering barriers encountered specifically when applying through recruitment agencies, BAME applicants were more likely than white applicants to cite:
 - Issues with navigating recruitment websites.
 - Being asked questions about their ethnic/religious background.

- Being asked questions about linguistic backgrounds (particularly amongst black applicants) (see figure 1).

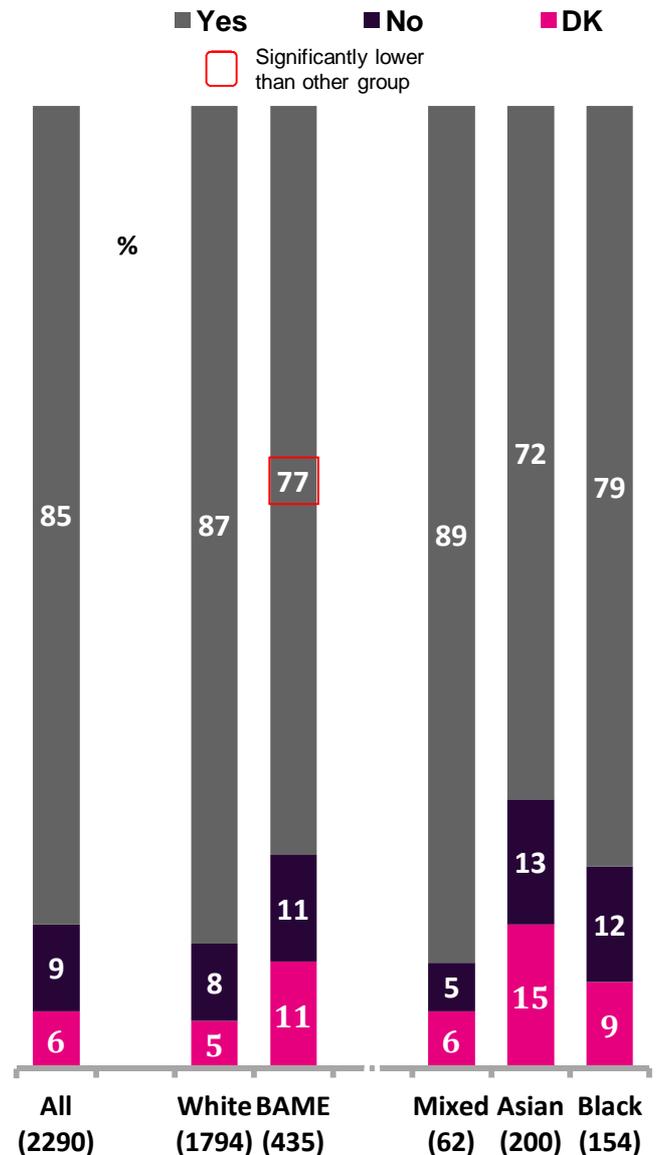
Figure 1: Barriers encountered in getting a job through a recruitment agency



- A significantly greater proportion of BAME applicants also mentioned:
 - Evidence of a diversity policy and practice (particularly black applicants).
 - Help with completing application form (particularly Asian applicants).
 - Diverse role models (particularly black applicants).
 - Provision of adjustments for health, religion and culture.
- Job seekers from BAME communities using a recruitment agency were less likely to consider using one again in the future than white job seekers.

*BAME = Black, Asian and minority ethnic people.

Figure 2: would you consider applying through a recruitment agency again?



Top Tips for Recruitment Agencies

- ✓ Consider 'unconscious bias' training for all staff to raise awareness of attitudes and to ensure job applicants are assessed on merit and not race.
- ✓ Ask job applicants relevant questions relating to the job vacancy and steer away from irrelevant questioning such as the applicants' religion or culture, unless it is clear that they questions are for equality monitoring purposes only.
- ✓ Offer job applicants for which English is not their first language assistance with completing application forms.

- ✓ It is important to respond in a timely fashion to job applicant queries. This will enhance the recruitment agency's reputation and the job applicant will be more likely to use the recruitment agency again and recommend to friends.
- ✓ Openly display your organisations policy on diversity and inclusion in your offices and on the front page of your website.
- ✓ Include testimonials on your website from diverse candidates.
- ✓ Review the navigation of your website and check that it is clearly signposted and easy to read by job applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds. Ask for feedback from candidates to enable you to identify gaps and remedy any issues.
- ✓ All recruitment agencies should review their own internal recruitment and promotion processes for transparency and fairness.
- ✓ Having a diverse workforce will help you to relate quickly to job applicants from diverse backgrounds. Check the racial diversity of the community in which you operate, by using Office of National Statistics (ONS) neighbourhood statistics, and work towards reflecting that diversity within your own organisation.

For more information

For information about Race for Opportunity's work on diversity and inclusion, please see www.bitcdiversity.org.uk

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