

MBS Intelligence

# Inclusion at the core of recovery: the WiHTL 2021 Annual Report

Featuring in-depth research from The MBS Group and highlights  
from the Festival of Inclusion



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# Introduction

**I am delighted to present the fourth edition of the WiHTL Annual Report in partnership with The MBS Group. This year's report highlights the phenomenal commitment demonstrated by leaders in the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) industry to continue to progress on the inclusion journey despite the existential challenges brought about by the pandemic.**

With a community now spanning nearly 3 million employees globally, WiHTL built on the power and resilience of its Collaboration Community and provided supportive and 'safe' spaces for the community to learn and support each other, share resources and experiences, join forces and face challenges together. Togetherness was the key word that inspired our work over the last year and that principle continues to be central to WiHTL's work.

Despite the challenges the industry has faced, we have seen the WiHTL Collaboration Community more than double in size since the beginning of the pandemic. This demonstrates the value organisations experience in collaborating and working together to turn desired outcomes into tangible actions. Our transition to an online presence has enabled us to break down access barriers with over 6,000 people joining webinars, panel discussions, lunch and share, virtual catch ups, research and resources. This has meant people from all around the globe from London to Paris, from Beijing to Sydney, from Atlanta to Manchester have taken part in our various sessions live or watched them on demand.

I am incredibly proud of all that the WiHTL Team, with the wise counsel and steer of our Advisory Board, have accomplished this year and would like to take this opportunity to thank each one of them for their commitment and dedication to the WiHTL Community and our mission.



**Tea Colaianni**  
Founder and Chair, WiHTL

I am also particularly proud of the cross industry development programmes we have delivered to the community in the last few months, including the Global Female Leader Programme (GFLP) and the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme (EMFL). The EMFL is a fabulous example of collaboration in action, the idea for which was borne out of a discussion with one of the WiHTL Members and developed during a meeting with the Race & Ethnicity Committee. The feedback I have personally received from the participants has been moving and I have no doubt that the programme has had a profound impact on many of those who have taken part.

This year's report is richer in content than ever before and a special thanks goes to Elliott Goldstein, Managing Partner at The MBS Group, and his whole team for their continuous support in helping us to bring the WiHTL Community's progress and impact to life in this publication.

# Welcome

**The MBS Group is once again delighted to partner with WiHTL for the fourth edition of this report, examining the state of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sector.**

Since the last edition of this publication, the HTL sector has been disrupted in unimaginable ways due to Covid-19. Despite being faced with no customers, zero revenue and government-imposed restrictions on operations, businesses in our sector acted with pace and determination to ensure their very survival. Now, as we enter the latter phases of the crisis, it is time to reflect on the last period and renew our focus on building back better, with diversity at front of mind.

Encompassing an analysis of the status of D&I in the HTL sector, a look back at how WiHTL has supported leaders over the past year, and highlights from WiHTL's Festival of Inclusion, this report is a true celebration of the commitment to diversity in the sector.

By providing a benchmark for leaders to measure their own company's progress, as well as offering examples of best practice, it is our hope that this report will act as a catalyst for further meaningful change.

After all, achieving D&I is not only right morally, but a commercial imperative. Diversity should not be considered as a 'nice to have', and HTL businesses that fail to prioritise D&I will suffer as they find themselves outrun by their more forward-thinking competitors, whose leadership is fully representative of their customer base.

Despite the turbulence caused by Covid-19, the sector can be proud of the progress it has made to date. Our research has found that the number of D&I strategies in the sector has increased, policies have

become more comprehensive, and greater energy has been poured into data collection efforts, especially around ethnic diversity.

Of course, there is still a long way to go. There remains an alarming gap between representation on the frontline and around the top table, across all areas of diversity including gender, ethnicity, disability, LGBTQ, and social mobility.

I would like to express my thanks to Tea Colaianni and her team for their continued determination to make a difference in the sector. Thanks to WiHTL's efforts, the sector is making great strides and becoming a more inclusive industry. I would also like to thank my team at MBS for their commitment and contribution to delivering these insights.

At The MBS Group, we are proud to have championed diversity in the HTL sector for more than thirty years. It is my hope that this report sheds some light on the current picture of D&I and the actions we can take towards a more inclusive industry, providing guidance for leaders as we enter the latter phases of this most challenging period.



**Elliott Goldstein**  
Managing Partner, The MBS Group

# Executive summary

**This report is a publication in three parts, bringing together a detailed analysis into the state of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sector; a look back how WiHTL has supported businesses during an extraordinary year; and a celebration of the commitment to D&I demonstrated at WiHTL's Festival of Inclusion.**

WiHTL was established to support HTL companies reach the industry-wide Hampton-Alexander Review target, which challenged FTSE 350 businesses to reach 33% female representation at the top three leadership levels by the end of 2020. Today, we are beyond that deadline, and this report reflects on the progress made in the sector – and how far there still is to go.

Based on data captured from over 120 of the industry's leading businesses and conversations with more than 100 Chairs, CEOs and HR Directors, our aim is to provide a benchmark for businesses to measure their progress on D&I.

Alongside the analysis of diversity in the sector, this year's publication provides a year in review of WiHTL's Collaboration Community, looking back at the platform's invaluable contribution to the sector during a period of never-before-seen disruption.

## WiHTL year in review

WiHTL's mission is to make a positive difference to 5 million women and people from ethnic minorities across hospitality, travel and leisure globally by 2025.

During this extraordinary period, WiHTL has more than doubled the size of its collaboration community to span three million employees; delivered cross-industry development programmes for female and ethnic minority leaders; engaged with government to provide guidance on the needs of the HTL sector and how to close the gap; and produced numerous research projects to help guide leaders.

The final section of this report provides highlights from WiHTL's Festival of Inclusion – a two-day event that brought together more than 70 speakers across the whole breadth of the diversity, inclusion and belonging spectrum who shared insights, best practice and case studies. Speakers included CEOs, Chief People Officers, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officers and D&I leading experts. Their insights can be found in the last section of this report.

The case for diverse leadership teams has been made, and businesses in HTL are responding positively, demonstrating real intention to drive up diversity and create inclusive cultures. Encouragingly, we are also seeing tangible action in the sector, as D&I strategies are adopted and developed.

## The data shows sustained progress on D&I, but highlights some red flags

FEMALE REPRESENTATION AT THE TOP THREE LEADERSHIP LEVELS		
Board	29.8%	↑
ExCo	30.7%	↑
Direct Reports	34.4%	↓

On ethnic diversity, we have seen steady improvement over the last three years (Board level representation is down by 0.4%, so broadly flat when compared to 2020). While progress is being made, representation is still far from reflecting the general population, and the pace of acceleration must be increased.

Promisingly, female representation has increased at Board and executive committee level. However, the proportion of women at direct reports level is lower than it was last year. This setback, shrinking the pool of available talent from which to draw Board and executive committee roles, could have a long-term impact on gender diversity in the sector if not addressed.

ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION AT THE TOP THREE LEADERSHIP LEVELS		
Board	6.0%	↓
ExCo	3.8%	↑
Direct Reports	5.5%	↑

## Diversity by Function Pg 14

A clear majority (76%) of HTL businesses have an all-male CEO, CFO and Chair triumvirate. With the understanding that the diversity of the most senior strategic leaders in a business matters, we look at progress made on D&I by function, and explore why gender and ethnic diversity is still woefully low in certain roles such as operations.

## Are we making progress? Pg 16

Encouragingly, the sector has steadily progressed on female and ethnic minority representation over the last three years. By tracking advancements in these areas, plus LGBTQ+, disability, social mobility, we lift the lid on how far the sector has come, and highlight the widening gap between leaders and laggards.

## D&I strategies have matured and broadened since last year Pg 20

Analysing how businesses are approaching diversity and inclusion, we explore the increasing maturity of strategies in the sector, consider how data is being used to drive meaningful change and look at how and why more businesses are adopting strategies to improve on ethnic diversity.

## 2020 had a lasting impact on D&I sector Pg 22

Exploring the extraordinary events of the last period, we look at how D&I slipped down the list of corporate priorities, before being embraced as a core part of business strategy. Specifically, we consider the long-term impacts of the Black Lives Matter movement and how the emergence of flexible working may wave in a new era.

## From subsectors to ownership classes, different businesses have different challenges Pg 24

By undertaking subsector analysis, we look at the nuances that exist within HTL and why company size, offering and ownership structure are key determiners of progress on D&I.

## The Festival of Inclusion

Insights from the Festival of Inclusion, a two-day event which brought together more than 70 speakers across the whole breadth of the diversity, inclusion and belonging spectrum who shared insights, best practice and case studies, can be found later in the report.

Leading through a crisis: Paul Pomroy on prioritising diversity during Covid-19 Pg 46

An opportunity to reset? Leading diverse teams in a post-pandemic future Pg 48

Recruiting and retaining diverse talent Pg 49

Employee inclusion unlocks the value of diversity Pg 50

Making the case for diverse mentors and relatable role models Pg 51

Collect, measure and report: practical advice on how to harness data to drive D&I Pg 52

How is the HTL sector performing on D&I? The response to this year's research findings Pg 54

How to intentionally create an inclusive culture Pg 56

Lessons from the top: global C-suite executives on how they're driving change Pg 58

Integrate diversity and inclusion into the core business strategy, say global chief diversity and inclusion officers Pg 60

Insights from a twenty-year career in diversity and inclusion from Asif Sadiq MBE Pg 62

Reflecting on the past and looking to the future: Tea Colaianni in conversation with Keith Barr Pg 63

Lessons on diversity and inclusion from around the world Pg 64

Eugenio Pirri on how the Dorchester Collection has championed LGBTQ+ rights through the years Pg 66

How to respect difference and drive racial equality: a keynote speech from René Carayol MBE Pg 67

Navigating the journey to becoming an anti-racist organisation Pg 68

"Don't be a bystander": the testimony of Holocaust survivor Mala Tribich MBE Pg 70

Personal best: insights on disability inclusion from a Paralympian Pg 71

The HTL sector can play an active role in driving social mobility Pg 72

Diversifying the Board, when and why diversity improves your Board's performance Pg 74

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FESTIVAL OF INCLUSION

"I'm a champion of the culture that we want – but it's important that people see us making mistakes, learning from them and progressing as an entire business."

**Paul Pomroy**, CEO, McDonald's, UK&I

"We have never had a stronger supply of capable, experienced women in the British workforce. The pipeline of talent is full to overflowing."

**Denise Wilson**, CEO, Hampton-Alexander Review

"I'm already seeing the power that a diverse Board can have in empowering the executive team to make the right decisions."

**Penny Hughes**, Chair, The Gym Group

"I think the most important thing as a CEO is to get involved every single day within your own organisation."

**Keith Barr**, CEO, IHG

"As leaders, we have to listen and learn and then act on what we learn, not on what we think."

**Dominic Blakemore**, CEO, Compass Group

"It's not just about appointing for diversity, it's about including those people when they arrive."

**Debbie Hewitt**, Chair, The Restaurant Group

"Don't be NATO leader, which is 'no action, talk only.' Be a Nike leader... just do it!"

**James Lafferty**, CEO, FHH

## WiHTL: a year in numbers



3,000,000 employees positively impacted



Delivered over 100 webinars with 5,000+ registrations



Launched GFLP and EMFL programmes

130 Participants from 43 companies

100 Mentors

40 Senior Reverse Mentees

40+ presenters



Grew Social Media Followers by 107% with 200,000+ unique impressions



Grew Membership of the Community by 60%

# Research findings

The MBS Group has been championing diversity and inclusion in the Hospitality, Travel & Leisure (HTL) industry for over thirty years and is proud to partner with WiHTL to help move the dial. Since 2018, MBS has been charting progress, providing a mirror for the industry. Again here, in our third year of research, we have combined insight from conversations with over 100 Chairs, CEOs and HR Directors with data collected from more than 200 of the largest businesses in HTL – all collected in the first half of 2021.

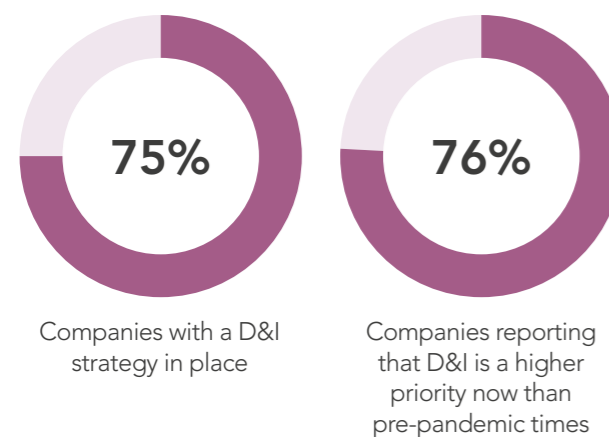
# The headline data – at a glance

A significant proportion of businesses reported to have LGBTQ+ leaders or physically disabled leaders

LGBTQ+ AND PHYSICALLY DISABLED LEADERS		
Companies who report having...	LGBTQ+ leaders	Physically disabled leaders
At Board level	42%	7%
At Executive Committee or Direct Reports level	76%	19%

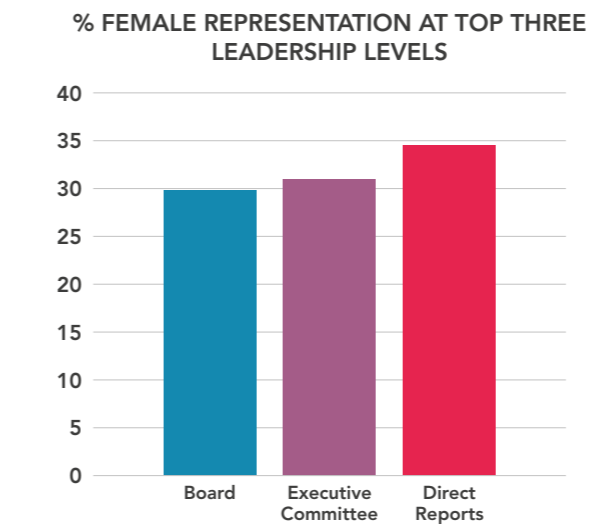
Area of focus	% of businesses including area in D&I strategies
Gender	100
Ethnicity	87
LGBTQ+	58
Social mobility	45
Disability	39
Carers/parents/flexible working	16
Mental health and neurodiversity	16
Culture/nationality	16

D&I is high on the list of corporate priorities

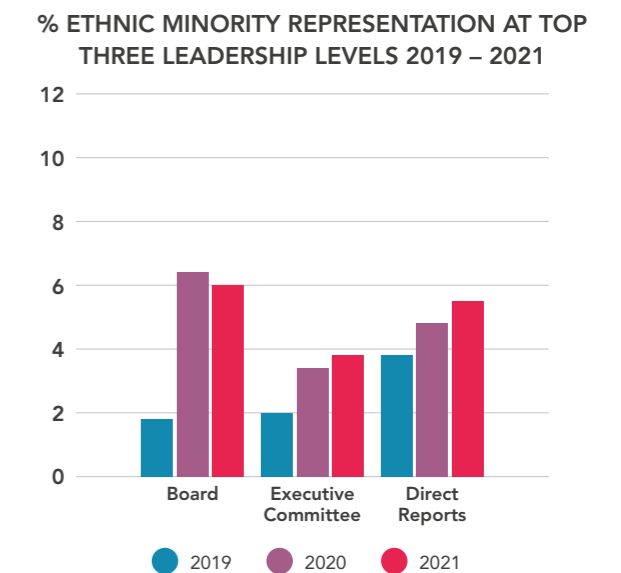
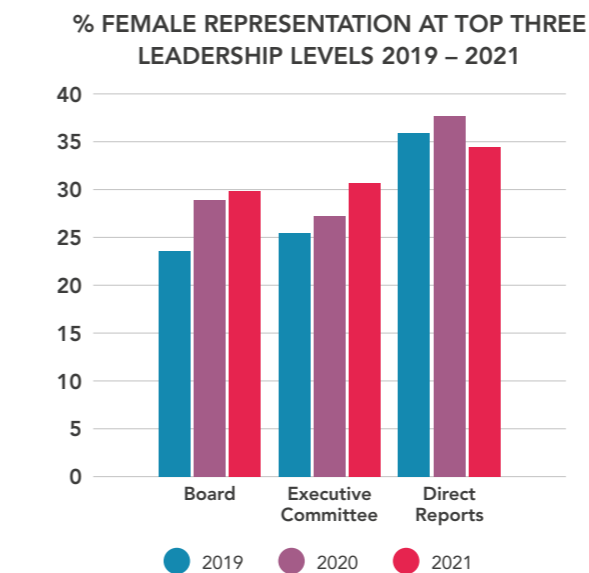


FEMALE REPRESENTATION ACROSS THE WORKFORCE	
Level	% women
Overall workforce	51.9%
Site-level	51.5%
Manager-level	41.1%
Regional/Area Manager-level	25.9%
Operations Director-level	26.8%

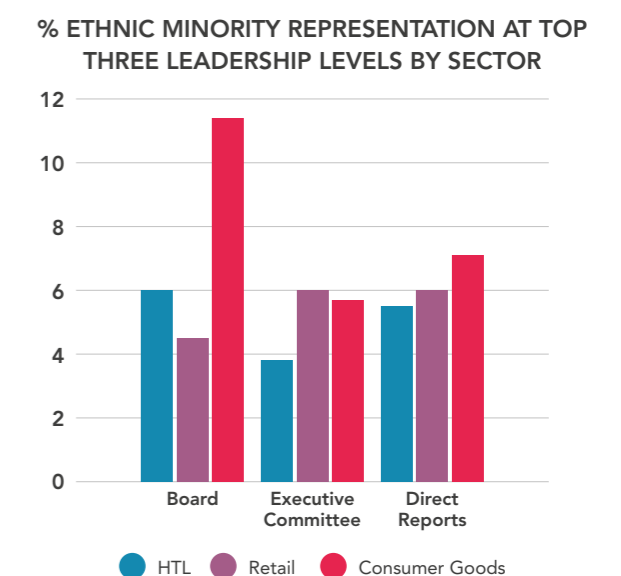
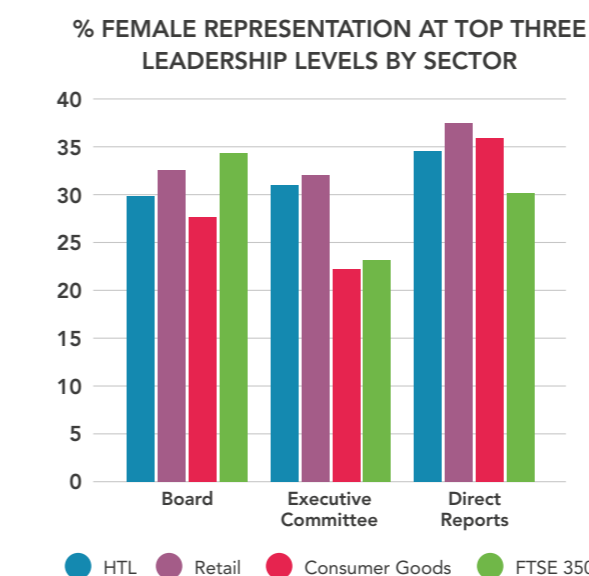
At the most senior levels, there is still a long way to go on both gender and ethnic diversity



However, steady progress has been made over the past three years

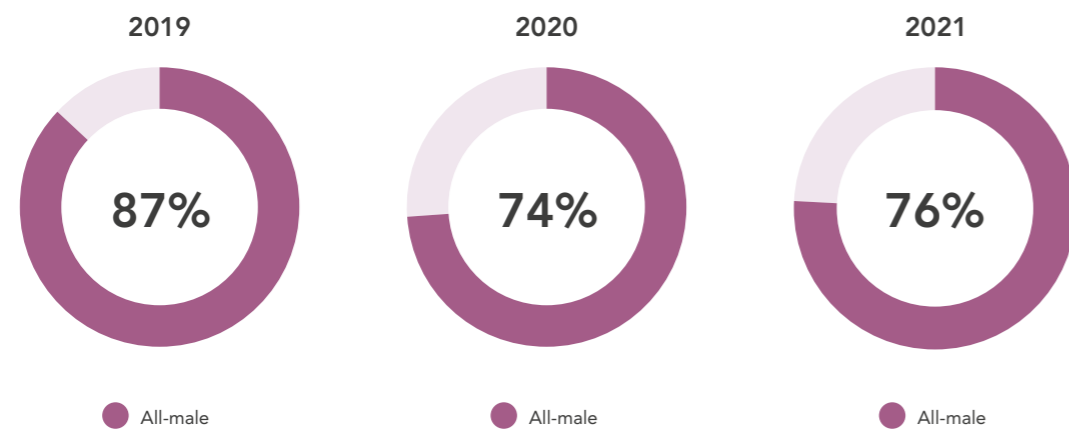


When compared to its adjacent consumer-facing sectors, HTL is falling slightly behind

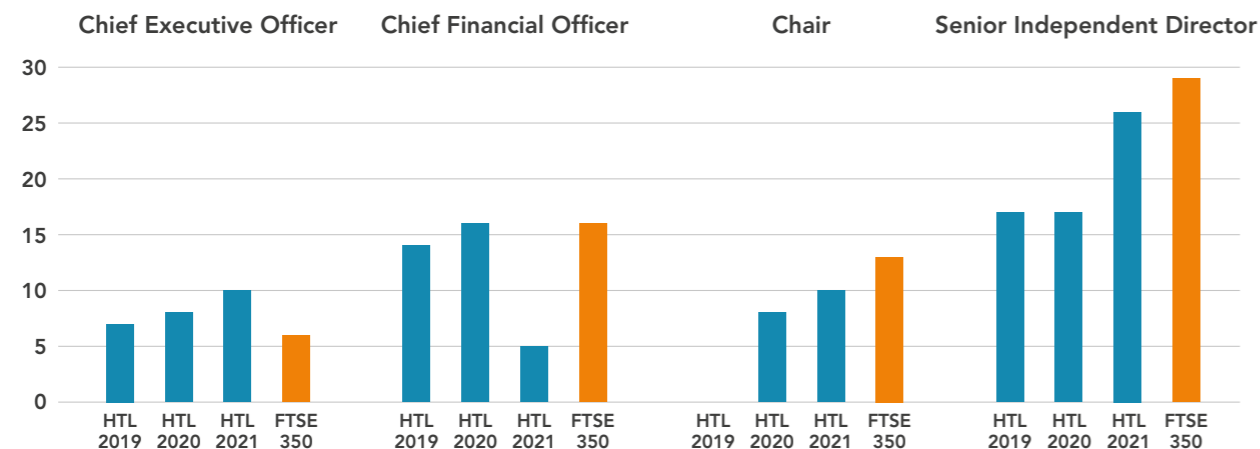


# Diversity by function – in the boardroom and beyond

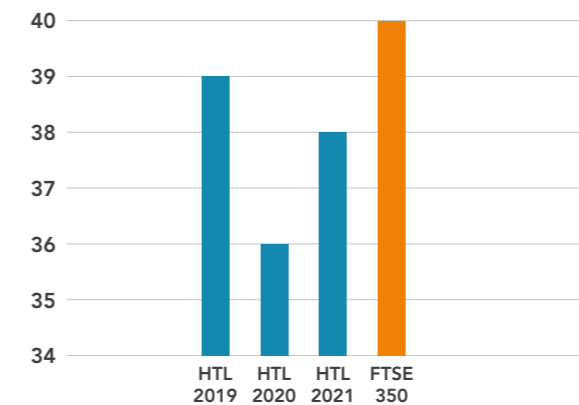
A worrying proportion of HTL businesses still have an all-male CEO/CFO/Chair triumvirate - although progress is being made



% FEMALE REPRESENTATION AT CEO, CFO, CHAIR AND SID LEVEL



% FEMALE REPRESENTATION AT NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LEVEL



\*Note this analysis is based on FTSE 350 Hospitality, Travel & Leisure businesses

## Board

Recognising that diverse leadership teams make better decisions, the makeup of the most senior strategic leaders in a business – the CEO/CFO/Chair triumvirate – matters. In 2019, we noted that 87% of relevant companies in HTL had an all-male leadership triumvirate. Promisingly, this figure has reduced to 76% of companies (though it has regressed slightly from 74% in 2020).

The percentage of women in the CFO role has decreased significantly in this year's data. This dip of 11.2% is a reminder that when levels of representation are low, relatively small changes can have an outsized effect on the overall data. The drop is in part attributable to a small number of individual appointments (where a man has succeeded a woman) and as a result of the regular review of constituents in the FTSE 350. Such small changes would have less of an impact on the figures if the sector was closer to gender parity.

Prior to 2021, the number of women holding Senior Independent Director positions in FTSE 350 HTL companies was showing no signs of progress. This year, there has been a big step in the right direction, with the proportion of female SIDs in FTSE 350 HTL businesses rising from 17% to 26.3%.

As many SIDs go on to become Chairs, this is a critical function for improving the number of female Chairs in the sector. Across the FTSE 350 as a whole, just under a third of SIDs are now women – again, widening the pool of potential future Chairs in HTL.

Among Non-Executive Directors, female representation remains above the Hampton-Alexander Review target of 33% across FTSE 350 HTL companies, and has recovered somewhat from a dip in last year's figures.

However, the number of female NEDs in FTSE 350 HTL companies has dipped below the FTSE 350 average for the first time.

## Beyond the Board

Looking beyond the Board, many of the themes that have come out from the conversations with CEOs, Chairs and HR Directors are familiar. Gender diversity continues to drop off at more senior levels of operations, and functions such as property, facilities, IT, pilots and kitchen roles continue to be dominated by men. Meanwhile, the number of women and the greatest racial and ethnic diversity tend to be found in frontline and the lowest-paid roles.

As more and more companies gather data, for the first time we have asked them to share information on the gender diversity across their workforce. Synthesising that data, the drop off in female representation as colleagues progress through to area and regional management roles is clear to see, as shown in the table below.

Despite Covid-19 forcing businesses to think differently about flexible and remote working in many settings, the broader disruption has made it difficult for businesses to assess and measure the success of pilots and trials they had put in place to improve gender diversity in operations.

Level	% women
Overall workforce	51.9%
Site-level	51.5%
Manager-level	41.1%
Regional/Area Manager-level	25.9%
Operations Director-level	26.8%



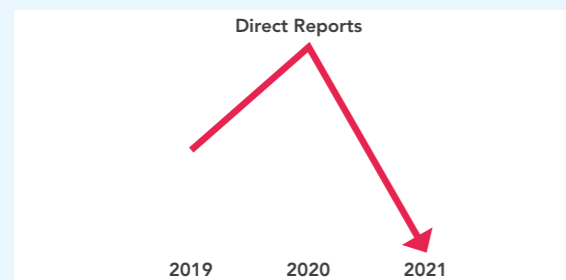
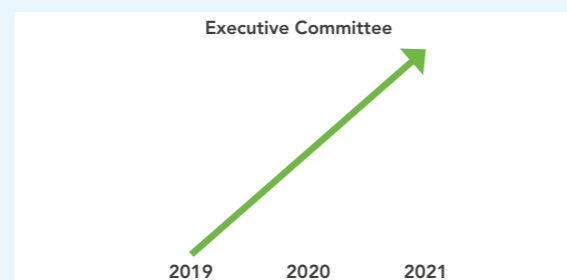
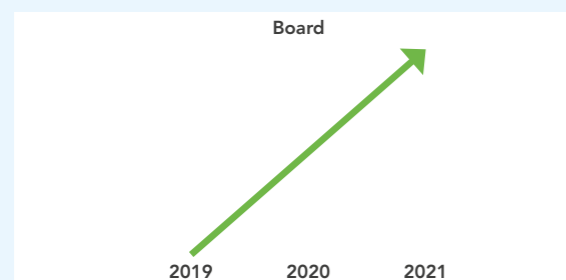
# Are we making progress?

Last year's annual report was called *From Intention to Action*, marking a change of gear in the WiHTL community's drive to improve diversity and inclusion across the hospitality, travel and leisure industry. It recognised a groundswell of meaningful action being taken both across the industry – through a spirit of collaboration – and within individual companies.

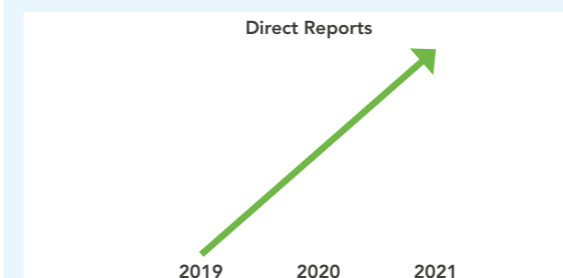
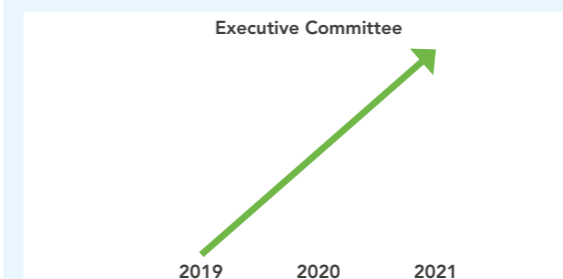
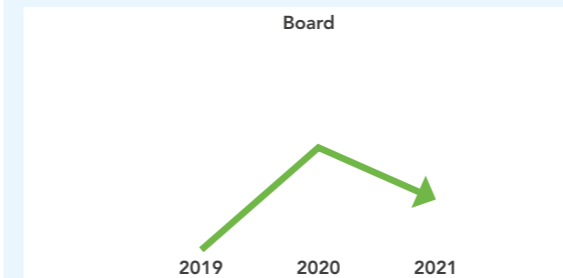
As demonstrated in the richness of content, collaboration and community at WiHTL's first ever Festival of Inclusion – insights from which are captured later in this report – both intention and action across HTL remain clear to see.

However, particularly in a year that has been unimaginably devastating for our industry, is all this effort being reflected in the data? If we look at both the headline figures, and the story behind them, are we making progress?

## Female representation is improving, but there is a worrying dip in the number of women at direct reports level



## Progress has been made on ethnic minority representation at the most senior leadership levels



## The sector is defined by industry vanguards and laggards

While the headline figures give us a view on progress across the industry, we have also been tracking performance at the individual company level since 2019, giving us a picture of how widespread progress is across HTL.

The WiHTL platform, then known as WiH2020, was originally created to support HTL companies reach the industry-wide Hampton-Alexander Review target for all FTSE 350 businesses to reach 33% female representation by the end of 2020 at the three most senior leadership levels: Board, Executive Committee and Direct Reports (into the Executive Committee).

In our last two reports, we looked at how each company is performing against the Hampton-Alexander target, assessing those companies:

- That have already reached the 33% level
- That have the potential to reach 33% (a moving target in each successive year)
- Below the target with little potential to reach it
- With zero women at that leadership level

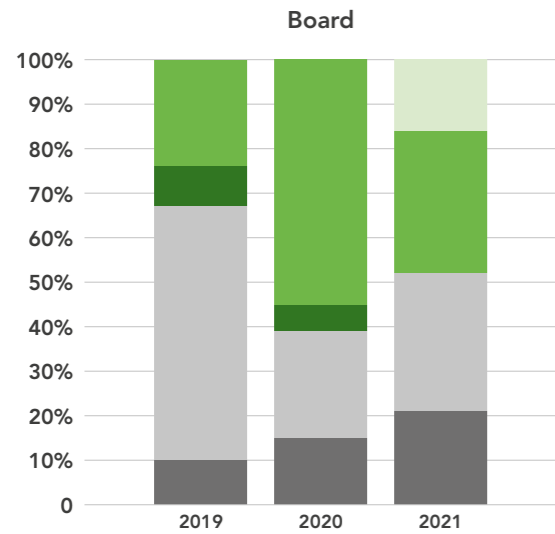
Now that we are beyond the 2020 deadline, we've looked at those companies who have reached the target and those who have not. We have also broken out the percentage of companies at either extreme – those that have more than 50% women at a given level, and those with zero women at that level.

## The sector is heading in the right direction

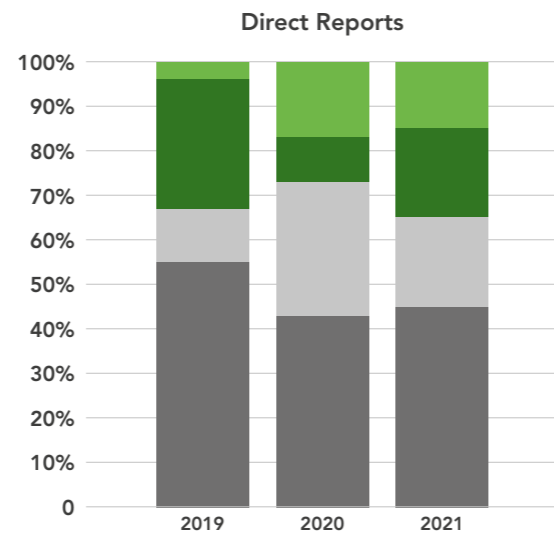
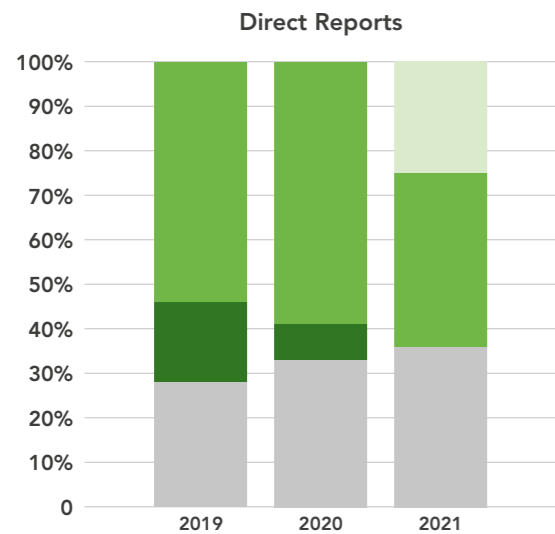
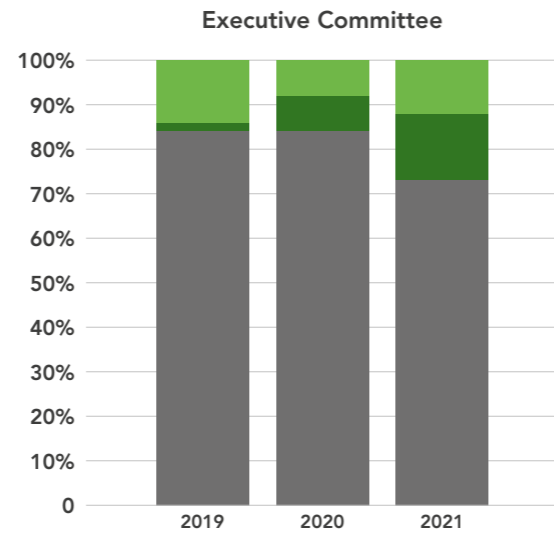
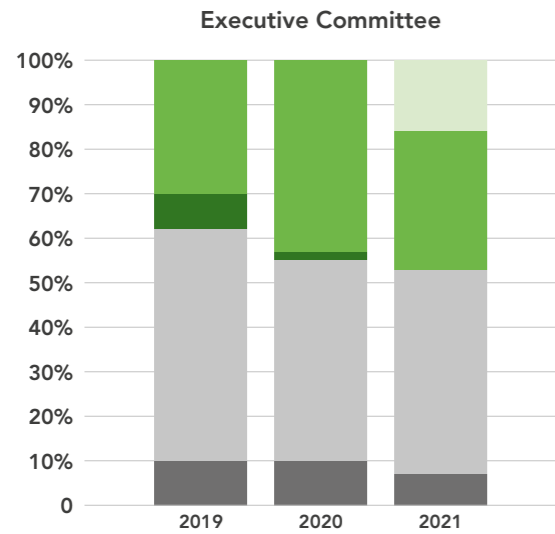
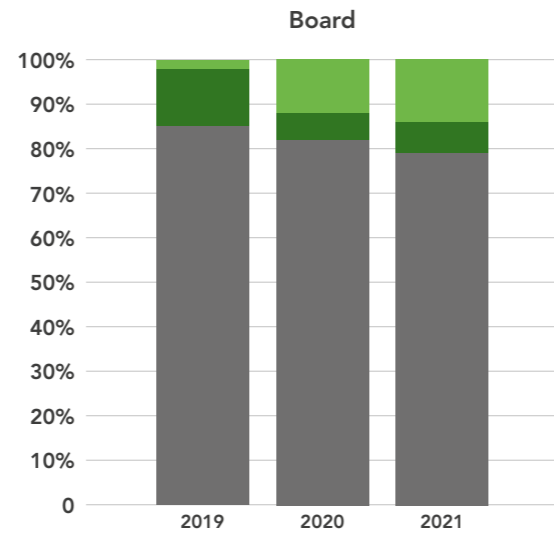
Across almost all the headline metrics we have been tracking over several years, steady progress has been made on D&I. More and more organisations are recognising diversity as a commercial imperative and adopting co-ordinated D&I strategies designed to drive up representation and create an inclusive culture.

% OF BUSINESSES WITH A D&I STRATEGY IN PLACE		
	2020	2021
Yes	80%	86%
No	20%	14%

**COMPANY PERFORMANCE ON FEMALE REPRESENTATION AGAINST 33% TARGET**



**COMPANY PERFORMANCE ON ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION AGAINST 12.5% TARGET**



Legend for Female Representation: Zero (dark grey), Below Target (light grey), Potential (dark green), At Target (medium green), 50%+ (light green). Legend for Ethnic Minority Representation: Zero (dark grey), 0-6.25% (light grey), 6.25-12.5% (dark green), 12.5%+ (medium green).

Without doubt, the data shows that a trend we highlighted in the 2019 Edition of the WiHTL Annual Report has remained consistent: there is a wide gap between companies that are on track (and often continuing to improve) and those companies that are missing the mark (often by a long way). Those companies which fall into this category are therefore dragging down the overall industry numbers.

At Board and Executive Committee level, roughly half of companies have reached the 33% level in our latest data (48% and 47% respectively), while just over half of companies remain below the target.

**Race and ethnicity**

Using the data in the McGregor-Smith Review as a benchmark, we have been tracking the racial and ethnic diversity of HTL leadership since 2019.

Though there has certainly been progress over that period, well over half (65%) of businesses are falling behind average rate of ethnic diversity at leadership level in the UK (6.25%) at the Direct Reports level. This rises to 79% at Board level.

**A worrying setback for gender diversity at the Direct Reports level**

The strength of female representation at the Direct Reports level in the HTL industry has been a source of optimism for a number of years, as this is an extremely important pool of talent from which future Executive Committee and, ultimately, Board roles will be drawn.

Last year, the percentage of women at the Direct Reports level reached 37.7%. This year, however, that figure has dropped to just 34.4%, which is 1.5% lower than we recorded in the 2019 research (at 35.9%).

The setback appears to be broad based too. In 2019, 72% of companies had either already reached the Hampton-Alexander target (33% women), or were on track to, at the Direct Reports level. In 2021, just 64% of companies have reached 33% female representation – though encouragingly, a quarter of companies have reached 50% representation.

Some of the apparent reasons behind this setback are explored in *2020 had a lasting impact on D&I*, pg 22.

It is worth noting that, in the current data, there does not appear to be a similar setback for underrepresented ethnic minorities at the Direct Reports level. In fact, representation has grown modestly here, from 4.8% to 5.5%.

**Slow progress in eradicating zero representation**

On race and ethnicity, the number of businesses with 0% representation of underrepresented groups has steadily fallen. Since 2019, the percentage of such companies has fallen from 85% to 79% at Board level; from 84% to 83% at Executive Committee level; and from 55% to 45% amongst the Direct Reports level.

However, this means that three-quarters to four-fifths of Executive Committee still have no underrepresented minorities at these most senior levels. Meanwhile, even at the most populous level – Direct Reports – almost half of companies have no racial or ethnic diversity.

Clearly, there remains a long way to go, and the pace of change needs to be accelerated. At the current rate of change, for example, it might take more than 25 years before we expect to see no companies with zero racial and ethnic diversity at Board level.

Zero gender diversity is thankfully much rarer. At the Direct Reports level, we have consistently seen that no company is all-male in every year of our research. However, at the Executive Committee level, it has fallen from just 10% to 7% over that time, while the number of companies with no women on their Boards has increased this year from 15% to 21%.

# D&I strategies have matured and broadened since last year

## More businesses have a D&I strategy than last year

% OF BUSINESSES WITH A D&I STRATEGY IN PLACE		
	2020	2021
Yes	80%	86%
No	20%	14%

## Businesses are prioritising inclusion over diversity

For years, the furthest-along businesses in the HTL sector have been actively prioritising inclusion over individual areas of representation. More organisations have adopted this approach since the outset of the pandemic, a time which highlighted the need to listen to employees and recognise them as individuals.

### What's in a name?

As the topic evolves, businesses are choosing terminology that best reflects their priorities. Diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging are just some of the terms used to describe a business' D&I journey.

One company uses the phrase 'conscious inclusion' to reflect the deliberate effort (through role modelling, reverse mentoring and diversity training) that it is making to progress in this area.

## Employee resource groups are helping unlock inclusion

In many organisations, employee resource groups play a critical role in progressing D&I. Such groups can be used as forums for underrepresented groups to discuss specific issues, and to inform future policy. Many companies in the sector established groups following the Black Lives Matter movement, designed to allow Black and other minority ethnic employees to share their views.

However, some HTL companies are moving away from distinct groups in an effort to promote inclusion and belonging in a truly holistic way.

## Now more than ever, companies are rethinking their marketing efforts and employer branding to take D&I into account

Increasingly, consumers and potential employees are paying close attention to companies' values around D&I. As a result, businesses are reassessing their promotional materials and employer brand to ensure that their principles around inclusion are reflected. Our research found that some businesses have undertaken reviews into how their brand is perceived, while others have adapted their promotional materials to include more visible diversity in order to promote inclusion among customers and employees.

## Targets continue to drive meaningful change

Businesses with the most mature D&I strategies are actively setting targets for female and minority ethnic representation. Doing so encourages action, demonstrates accountability internally and externally, and also provides a yardstick against which to measure progress. Those furthest-ahead in their journey are disclosing their diversity targets, with some US-based

businesses even linking executive pay to progress reaching those targets.

However, there remains a debate around the usefulness of targets and quotas. Some leaders we spoke to are opposed to the approach, suggesting that setting targets leads to 'tick the box' thinking, which is at odds with a culture of inclusion and does little to unlock the true value of diversity.

## The most mature companies are collecting employee information beyond gender and ethnicity

Gathering data, from hiring to promotions to returning to work after maternity or paternity leave, can provide insight on details such as when different groups tend to exit the business, as well as how long it takes different groups to progress through the ranks.

This uptick in data collection efforts is a positive step for the HTL sector. Some businesses told us that they used employee engagement surveys as means of communicating with colleagues during the Covid-19.

## Intention has turned into action on ethnic diversity strategies

Promisingly, and largely due to the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement, significant progress has been made on the number and maturity of strategies designed to improve ethnic diversity.

Area of focus	% of businesses including area in D&I strategies	
	2020	2021
Gender	100%	100%
Ethnicity	24%	87%
LGBTQ+	41%	58%
Social mobility	18%	45%
Disability	24%	39%
Carers/parents/flexible working	6%	16%
Mental health and neurodiversity	N/A	16%
Culture/nationality	N/A	16%

At the beginning of 2020, only 56% of HTL businesses gathered data on race and ethnicity, and only 24% of businesses had D&I policies which included ethnic diversity.

This year's research shows that 70% of businesses either collect ethnicity data (37%) or are in the progress of doing so (33%). Moreover, 87% of organisations have strategies dedicated to ethnic diversity.

## D&I strategies in HTL are more common and have a broader reach

Alongside expanding the focus on ethnicity, the past year has called for a greater emphasis within the sector on areas such as employee mental health and carers.

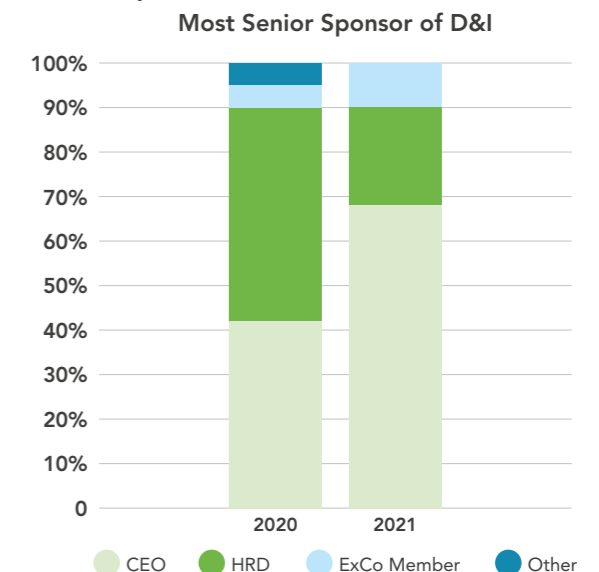
## Companies are prioritising D&I through appointing leaders

As part of cost-cutting measures, many D&I professionals were made redundant or furloughed in the initial stages of Covid-19. Encouragingly, however, our research has showed that a significant proportion (22%) of the businesses we spoke to had appointed D&I leaders in the past year.

## CEOs are stepping up as the most senior sponsors of D&I

Change on D&I should be driven from the very top of an organisation. Promisingly, our research shows that CEOs are not only championing diversity, but are stepping up as their business' most senior sponsor.

The furthest-progressed businesses are those with solid systems in place to ensure accountability on D&I. In organisations with the most mature strategies, pressure on the CEO to drive progress often comes from the Board, which recognises the benefits of diversity.



# 2020 had a lasting impact on D&I

**The HTL sector was disproportionately affected by the economic impact of Covid-19. As a result, it is understandable that D&I initially slipped down the corporate agenda. However, as the year progressed, the Black Lives Matter movement and the emergence of flexible working ultimately accelerated conversations around inclusion.**

## **D&I fell down agenda, but is climbing back up**

Previous research from WiHTL, The MBS Group and PwC found that the pandemic pushed D&I down the list of priorities during 2020. Despite 44% of businesses telling us that D&I became a higher priority during this period, only 15% reported that D&I had been regularly raised at Board meetings.

However, nearly a year on from that research, the topic is once again being prioritised. Of the businesses we spoke to for this report, most said that D&I was within their top three to five priorities. Moreover, businesses have taken tangible action across the sector, partnering with external organisations and hiring D&I leaders – many for the first time.

## **Hiring freezes and furlough programmes had a negative impact on diversity in the sector**

Our previous research found that women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to have been made redundant or put on furlough than their male and/or white counterparts.

There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, existing imbalances in the HTL sector were exacerbated by the pandemic, as male-dominated roles, such as within finance, were retained and positions traditionally occupied by women, such as within marketing, were cut. Women were also more likely to accept voluntary redundancy packages than men due to caring responsibilities, or because they believed their roles

(such as within HR or legal) would be more easily transferrable to other sectors which were less impacted by Covid-19.

Moreover, continued hiring freezes have slowed progress on D&I into 2021. Many businesses in this year's research expressed frustration that things were not moving more quickly, due to the adoption of 'one-in-one-out' hiring following Covid-19.

## **Organisations failed to measure the impact of Covid-19 on diversity in their business**

Most notably, few businesses gathered data on the impact of staffing changes on underrepresented groups in 2020. Our research from last year found that only 15% had measured the impact of temporary actions (such as furlough) on women or employees from ethnic minority backgrounds.

## **D&I budgets were cut during the pandemic**

Cost-cutting measures meant that many of the initiatives designed to champion diversity were cut during 2020. At the height of the crisis, some D&I budgets were cut in their entirety, and many D&I leaders were furloughed or made redundant as part of survival strategies.

However, our conversations have shown that the furthest-progressed companies prioritised spending in certain areas of D&I, including network memberships, diversity consultants and training high-potential employees.

Interestingly, some companies said that cutting the budget actually served to increase their focus on data collection. Given their limited resources, they had to identify the exact areas where money was needed so as not to waste it.

## **Covid-19 may have waned in a new era**

Encouragingly, the pandemic has shown that remote working can be highly effective. As the lack of flexible working policies has historically been a barrier to progression for women, this development looks set to wane in a new era for those with responsibilities such as childcare.

The Black Lives Matter movement has also made a lasting impact on the sector. In many businesses, employee network groups were formed in response to the murder of George Floyd and subsequent protests. In addition, most leaders reported that BLM has fast-tracked conversations around racism in their business. This is especially true in US-based companies, where colleagues and leaders have a greater sensitivity to issues surrounding race and ethnicity.

## **The impact of 2020: in numbers**

A previous publication from The MBS Group, WiHTL and PwC looked at the impact of Covid-19 on D&I strategies in the HTL sector, as well as the effect on women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. The research found that 77% of businesses reported that D&I had either remained a priority or become a higher priority since Covid-19. However:

- Only 15% of businesses reported that D&I had been raised at board meetings since the outset of the crisis;
- PwC research found that a higher proportion of women have been furloughed, put on reduced hours or made redundant (65%) than men (56%);
- PwC research found that 67% of those from ethnic minorities have been furloughed, put on reduced hours or made redundant, compared to 62% of white colleagues;
- Only 15% of businesses interviewed had measured the impact of temporary action (such as furlough) on female or ethnic minority employees, and only 6% had measured the impact of redundancies, or potential redundancies.

## From subsectors to ownership classes, different businesses have different challenges

### **Businesses must work to dispel pre-conceived ideas about certain areas of the sector**

Many businesses face the challenge of how to dispel long-held views about their subsector. Organisations in the bar, nightclub and casino space, for example, are actively working to demonstrate a culture of inclusion where in particular women and those from ethnic minorities feel comfortable.

Specifically, businesses revolved around serving alcohol are grappling with how to attract more ethnic minorities into their business, especially those from a Muslim background who may have concerns regarding the consumption of alcohol. One pub group told us that it is actively trying to understand how to bring more Muslim colleagues into the workplace, and dispel myths that a 'drinking culture' exists in its business.

### **Regional businesses face challenges on ethnic diversity**

Across the HTL sector and beyond, improvement on diversity – most notably ethnic minority representation – is determined by the geographical location of the business. Unsurprisingly, organisations based in cities with lots of ethnic diversity find it easier to employ those from underrepresented groups than businesses in regional locations with predominantly white populations.

Leaders from country pub groups told us that attracting ethnic minority colleagues remains a central priority, with one expressing concern about the whiteness of its customer base.

### **Listed businesses and those backed by large PE-funds are receiving appropriate pressure and support on D&I**

Our research revealed strong links between ownership structure and engagement in D&I. For publicly listed companies, diversity is high on the agenda, largely due to the levels of governance and reporting required from Plcs. One publicly-listed company told us that performing on D&I is a central part of its efforts to attract new investment.

A similar trend can be found in companies owned by large private equity houses, where investors apply pressure to progress on diversity as part of a broader ESG agenda. One company, which is owned by a large multinational PE firm, told us that its owners were providing toolkits and sharing best practice.

### **D&I is less likely to be a priority in family-run organisations and businesses backed by smaller funds**

According to our research, family-run businesses are less likely to have mature D&I strategies, and also often have lower rates of female and ethnic minority representation. These organisations tend to have a low rate of talent turnover, slowing progress on D&I. Moreover, family-run businesses often claim to be 'values driven', but retain a strong culture that is resistant to change and also have no set policy on D&I.

A similar story can be found in businesses owned by smaller PE funds. These firms tend to be more averse to risk, and more likely to require executive leaders with proven experience, which significantly limits the candidate pool and leans towards older white men.



# How does the HTL sector compare?

## The HTL sector is outperforming the cross-industry average on female representation at executive committee and direct reports level

There is a greater proportion of women at direct report and executive committee level in the HTL sector than in FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 businesses. However, HTL is falling behind on board-level representation, largely due to the pressure applied specifically to FTSE 350 businesses to reach the 33% target of women on boards by 2020.

## Comparing HTL to the retail and consumer goods sectors offers a mixed picture

As demonstrated in the tables below, there is no clear 'winner' on D&I between the HTL, retail and consumer goods sector. Perhaps most notably, the HTL sector has lower female and ethnic minority representation at direct reports level than its adjacent consumer-facing sectors, which may be representative of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on businesses in our industry.

## Consumer-facing businesses are facing the same challenges

Organisations in HTL, retail and consumer goods are facing many of the same challenges. Across the consumer-facing space, for example, head office location directly impacts progress on ethnic diversity at leadership level. Similarly, regardless of sector, listed businesses and those backed by large PE firms are more likely to have mature D&I strategies than family-run companies and those backed by small PE firms.

There are also similarities from a functional perspective. In HTL, retail and consumer goods, there continues to be a lack of women in operational positions, especially when the role has travel requirements.

## HTL and retail are ahead of consumer goods on D&I strategies

86% of HTL businesses and 76% of retailers have a coordinated diversity and inclusion strategy. By contrast, only 45% of businesses in the consumer goods space have specific policies to drive D&I.

### FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE HTL SECTOR COMPARED WITH CROSS-INDUSTRY AVERAGE

	HTL	FTSE 100	FTSE 250
Board	29.8%	36.2%	33.2%
ExCo	30.7%	26.5%	21.7%
Direct Reports	34.4%	31.2%	29.7%

### ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION AT TOP THREE LEADERSHIP LEVELS BY SECTOR

	HTL	Consumer goods	Retail
Board	6.0%	11.4%	4.5%
ExCo	3.8%	5.7%	5.8%
Direct Reports	5.5%	7.1%	6.0%

### FEMALE REPRESENTATION AT TOP THREE LEADERSHIP LEVELS BY SECTOR

	HTL	Consumer goods	Retail
Board	29.8%	27.6%	32.6%
ExCo	30.7%	22.2%	32.0%
Direct Reports	34.4%	35.9%	37.5%

# The power of the WiHTL Collaboration Community: a year in review

The past year and a half has been one of the most disruptive the HTL sector has ever seen. During these challenging times, the power of the WiHTL Collaboration Community was truly realised. In this chapter we explore the many examples of how the Community has come together to take action and ensure inclusion is at the core of our sector's recovery.

# The power of the WiHTL Collaboration Community

**2020/21 has been a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the HTL sector. As WiHTL found in a specially commissioned 2020 report produced in partnership with PwC and The MBS Group, women and ethnic minorities in the workplace have been disproportionately negatively impacted by the pandemic, thus further highlighting the need to champion gender and ethnic equality within the HTL industry. During these challenging times the power of the WiHTL Collaboration Community truly came into its own.**

During this time WiHTL has been versatile and adapted to meet the needs of its collaboration community and the wider industry whilst keeping true to its core mission of progressing female and ethnic minority talent in the industry and supporting organisations to become more inclusive for all.

The quick adoption of online tools such as Zoom during the pandemic enabled WiHTL to widen its reach and increase engagement among the Collaboration Community and beyond, for people and global organisations who were looking to drive their inclusion agenda. This can only serve to further enrich the content WiHTL will continue to provide in the future.

The creation and delivery of the cross-industry GFLP and EMFL development programmes has shown the depth of talent there is in the industry and the need to retain and progress them. In particular, the EMFL has been a groundbreaking initiative that demonstrates the power of collaboration in action. The programme has not only provided development opportunities for its participants but has had a ripple effect across the collaboration community through raising awareness, educating and inspiring those involved to make meaningful change within their own organisations.

The future is in many ways still uncertain, however the events of the last year have progressed the focus on D&I exponentially as well as highlighted the importance of Wellbeing and Belonging. Therefore it is vital that this momentum is maintained to move the dial at a greater speed as the lack of progression of diverse talent and lack of diversity at the senior levels of our industry is still undoubtedly an issue.

As the industry rebuilds and reopens the opportunities to make the meaningful change required are ever present and by building working environments that are more inclusive, the more attractive the sector will be to a diverse talent pool of people that are looking to progress their careers in a vibrant and exciting industry.

In this chapter we explore the many examples of how the Community has come together to take action and ensure inclusion is at the core of our sector's recovery.

# WiHTL's governance

**Over the course of 2020, WiHTL created new and strengthened existing committees and groups that support the community to achieve its mission to positively impact 5 million women and people from ethnic minorities by 2025. Each committee plays an important role in enabling WiHTL to understand the needs and requirements of its collaboration community as well as providing a sounding board and platform to explore ideas, desired outputs and, in the case of the Advisory Board and HR Leaders Steering Group, strategic direction.**

## WiHTL Advisory Board

The WiHTL Advisory Board represents all aspects of the sector and includes some of the most influential leaders in the HTL industry. The Advisory Board meets quarterly with the aim of providing insight and guidance on WiHTL's strategic direction, which has been vital during the pandemic. The Advisory Board also provides practical suggestions and access to a wider network to support WiHTL's mission. Over the last year the Board has been strengthened and widened to add greater diversity. WiHTL would like to take this opportunity to thank each of the Advisory Board members for their support over the last year. The full Advisory Board can be seen overleaf.

## HR Leaders Steering Group

The HR Leaders Steering Group meets on a quarterly basis to provide a sounding board on what the current and future needs of the community are in regards to D&I, helping to prioritise areas of focus and co-create tangible solutions and initiatives that help progress the inclusion agenda. The pandemic brought the WiHTL community even closer as HR Leaders have valued the opportunity to share, navigate uncharted territory together, ask questions and support each other as they were shaping and evolving their crisis response and action plans. During this time, WiHTL also widened

its remit to bring experts to the HR Community in topics such as furlough and employment law to support HR Leaders through the continual and changing demands of them and their team.

“WiHTL has become a sanctuary for business leaders in HTL who want access to deep insight, pragmatism and humanity.”

**Oliver Purnell**  
MD at Q5

Over the last few months, the focus of the Steering Group has returned to Diversity and Inclusion, with a particular attention on wellbeing and engagement post the pandemic. However, the networking and collaboration continues beyond the quarterly meetings with a vibrant and active WhatsApp group of over 100 HR Leaders sharing best practice, questions and solutions on a daily basis.

“I don't think the HR community would have managed without the safety net and the amazing community that you created. Your drive and energy is truly inspiring - thank you.”

**ODEON Cinemas Group**



WiHTL Advisory Board members



**Tea Colaianni**  
Founder & Chair,  
WiHTL



**Keith Barr**  
CEO, IHG



**Jane Bentall**  
MD, Haven Holidays



**Dominic Blakemore**  
CEO, Compass  
Group



**Zoe Bowley**  
MD, Pizza Express



**Elliott Goldstein**  
Managing Partner,  
The MBS Group



**Debbie Hewitt**  
Chair, The Restaurant  
Group



**Penny Hughes**  
Chair, The Gym  
Group



**Simon Jones**  
MD, Premier Inn



**Carlo Mocci**  
Chief Business  
Officer, Deliveroo



**Paul Pomroy**  
CEO, McDonald's  
UK&I



**Patricia Page-Champion**  
SVP & Global  
Commercial Director,  
Hilton



**Echo Lu**  
CEO, Haulfryn  
Group



**Jon Terry**  
Former Partner, PwC



**Simon Townsend**  
Former CEO,  
EI Group



**Lynne Weedall**  
NED/REMCO Chair,  
Stagecoach & Dr.  
Martens



**Pauline Wilson**  
VP Product &  
Operations, Virgin  
Atlantic

Engaging with government

On International Women's Day this year, Tea Colaianni, Founder & Chair WiHTL was invited to join a virtual roundtable with Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Tea recommended the following key 8 points to be urgently addressed by government:

1. To identify the hospitality, travel and leisure industry as a priority sector for reskilling and job support schemes
2. To invest in Women Returner's funds and incentivise companies to facilitate the re-employment of women
3. To recognise the 24/7 employment structure within the hospitality sector
4. To establish seven days a week solutions for childcare in terms of affordability and access
5. To enhance flexible and hybrid working, parental benefits and shared parental leave
6. To clearly define and report on gender and ethnic minority pay gaps
7. To set up a government led successor to the Hampton-Alexander review
8. To make gender equality a core pillar of the government's economic recovery plan

Impact analysis for the year

3,000,000 employees positively impacted

Delivered over 100 webinars with 5,000+ registrations

Grew Social Media Followers by 107% with 200,000+ unique impressions

Grew Membership of the Community by 60%

Launched GFLP and EMFL programmes  
130 Participants from 43 companies  
100 Mentors  
40 Senior Reverse Mentees  
40+ presenters



In June 2021, Tea along with WiHTL member Janet Tidmarsh, Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Whitbread, joined a panel discussion chaired by Rt Hon. Anne Milton, Minister of State for Education (2017-19) and Minister for Women (2017-18) on the topic of “The widening inequality gap post-Covid and what it means for access to learning and the labour market. Do we care enough to act now?”.

The conversation was wide ranging and highlighted the devastating and disproportionate impact of Covid on women’s learning, employment and wellbeing. Tea summed it up when she stated: “We need to push the notion that caring for children – and the sick and the elderly – is just as crucial to a thriving economy as any bridge, road, electric grid or transport. We need to invest in human infrastructure and create the conditions for women (and any working parent) to return to the workplace with confidence, skills and the right level of support. We have to normalise flexible and hybrid working patterns and equalise parental leave. Government needs to put women at the core of our economic recovery and focus efforts in particular on the hospitality, travel and leisure industry which continues to be the most affected sector by the pandemic.”

#### HR Leaders in HTL ‘Lunch & Share’ Sessions

In addition to the quarterly HR Steering Group meetings, ‘Lunch & Share’ sessions take place on a monthly basis. The 60 minute sessions are designed for HR Leaders to come together in an informal forum to discuss particular topics, ask questions, network and share best practice.

“There are times in my work life where you find yourself thinking ‘I wish I had a sounding board’ or ‘I haven’t got a clue where to start.’ WiHTL is the place to go. A fantastic group with great experience who are open to sharing their work experiences.”

Pizza Hut UK

#### Race & Ethnicity in HTL Committee

Continuing with its commitment to advance the discussion on racial equality matters, last year we established the seminal Race & Ethnicity in HTL Committee. The Committee meets quarterly with individuals from over 20 companies from across the sector. The aim of the Committee is to support the creation and sharing of best practices, tools, and webinar content as well as advise on how best to raise awareness and improve educational programmes.

The greatest impact of the Committee to date has been the creation of the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme (EMFL). Brought to the agenda by a committee member, the question raised was how does the industry strengthen and progress its pipeline of ethnic minority talent more effectively. Through debate, discussion and research the EMFL was born and a subgroup of the Committee created to shape and develop the programme. The first cohort was launched in January 2021 with 40 Participants from over 25 companies and incorporated over 150 people involved as either Participants, Line Managers, cross-industry Reverse Mentees and Executive Sponsors. The response and impact of the programme are covered in more detail further in this Chapter, and the feedback has been phenomenal and described as ‘career changing’.

#### Data in HTL Group

In the midst of the pandemic, it became very evident to many organisations that they did not have the robust data needed to sufficiently understand their current employee population and therefore make evidence-based decisions that would bring about meaningful change. The Data in HTL Group was created to bring companies together in a ‘safe space’ to ask questions, learn and share best practice in the gathering, analyses and reporting of D&I Data to drive this meaningful change. Recently the group has been focussing on Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting and how to improve employee disclosure rates. The creation of the Group has enabled many companies to accelerate their learning and progress to understand their Ethnicity Pay Gap, a critical mechanism to drive change as well as transparency.

“Thank you for your support in helping us achieve this milestone. I have in particular found the Data Group meetings really insightful in helping to develop my understanding and good practice in regards to voluntary reporting.”

Sodexo

## Research & Resources

#### Guarding Against Unintended Consequences - The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Gender and Race & Ethnic Diversity in HTL - October 2020

In this first-of-its-kind report from WiHTL, The MBS Group and PwC found that Covid-19 will have a long-term impact on Diversity and Inclusion in the Hospitality, Travel and Leisure (HTL) sector. Based on conversations with over 60 of the sector’s leading businesses, as well as a survey of 1,500 HTL employees, the research showed that women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to have been negatively impacted by Covid-19 than their male and/or white counterparts – and that immediate action must be taken to guard against further unintended negative consequences. Significantly, the report found that whilst many leaders in the sector have a good understanding of the risks this presented to their D&I agenda, most leaders had not taken tangible action to mitigate the impact. This was demonstrated by the personal experiences of women who had been impacted by the pandemic and whose stories were featured in the report. Each of the case studies cited a short-sighted view of leaders on dealing with the crisis that would directly impact the female talent pipeline within the industry if no action was taken.

The report concluded with 7 steps for leaders looking to prioritise diversity and inclusion in the next phases of Covid-19 including prioritising and protecting role models and continuing to make Diversity and Inclusion a priority. Although the sector has ‘moved through’ to the next phase of the pandemic, the loss of diverse talent from the industry during the crisis has been hugely significant. The key challenge for the industry is to re-establish trust in a sector that has been arguably the hardest hit in the pandemic and rebuild with Diversity and Inclusion at its core.

#### The Impact of Menopause in the Workplace White Paper

To mark World Menopause Day in October 2020, WiHTL worked in partnership with Lauren Chiren, founder of ‘Women of a Certain Stage’ to publish a white paper on the impact of menopause in the workplace. The white paper included a survey of over 100 women in the industry who shared their personal experiences of the impact of menopause on their careers as well as case studies, best practice and examples of policies from across the sector. The impact of the white paper was to raise awareness of the topic, which is often still viewed as being ‘taboo’, and provide organisations with a framework to support one of the fastest growing demographics within their workforce.

“At Moto our aim is to create a diverse and inclusive culture where all of our 5,500 colleagues feel represented and appreciated. I believe strongly that diversity and inclusion within all of our teams leads to better decision making and greater innovation, as well as helping to keep everyone connected to the business and our customers. It is key to successful business growth.”

Ken McMeikan  
CEO at Moto



# WiHTL Programmes

## Resources

WiHTL continues to produce timely and relevant research for the benefit of the HTL sector.

### Wellbeing toolkit

In Autumn 2020, the mental health impact of the pandemic on those working in the hospitality, travel and leisure (and retail) sector became a top priority for HR leaders in our community. In response, WiHTL used the power of the Collaboration Community to bring together expert advice and real life examples of best practice mental health and wellbeing employee support in action. Contributors included Bourne Leisure, IHG, Let's Reset, The Big Table Group, SAGA and Wickes.

### Imposter Syndrome

There have been many fantastic insights gained from speakers who formed part of our first ever Global Female Leader Programme. Taken from a session led by Rita Clifton CBE, Chair, NED and author of the book 'Love Your Imposter,' WiHTL produced an insightful white paper entitled 'Imposter Syndrome: 7 Ways to Deal With the Imposter.' Whilst imposter syndrome (defined as an internal belief system of not being good enough – despite evidence to the contrary) can affect both men and women, it is more commonly evident in women and ethnic minorities and can lead to a lack of self-confidence and a negative impact on job performance and career progression.

### Interviews with Prominent Industry Leaders

Ahead of WiHTL's inaugural Festival of Inclusion in HTL in May 2021, we interviewed five speakers including Paul Pomroy, CEO McDonald's UK&I, Moni Mannings, NED easyJet, Rt Hon. Justine Greening, Co-Founder

The Social Mobility Pledge, Dominic Blakemore, CEO Compass Group and DeShaun Wise-Porter, Global Diversity and Inclusion Officer Hilton to hear their views on the key actions needed to create more inclusive workplaces. The interviews can be accessed in full on [www.wihtl.com](http://www.wihtl.com).

### Women Supporting Women Article

Women developing closer connections with female colleagues in a culture of support through collaboration and cultivating talent instils positivity, wellbeing and lifts the careers (and corporate spirit) in ways that competitive behaviours don't. This is something WiHTL believes strongly in encouraging and so we gathered together stories from 8 female leaders in HTL to uncover how they use their inherent and mastered skills to bolster female colleagues and ensure women maintain – and improve – their place within senior management.

### Gender Pay Gap Analysis Reporting

Last year the deadline to submit Gender Pay Gap (GPG) reports to the government was delayed to October 2021 due to Covid-19. With the aim of highlighting common themes and practices followed by HTL companies when publishing their data, WiHTL has undertaken an analysis of a number of GPG reports published by WiHTL member companies by 31 May 2021. Data from PwC found that reporting within the HTL sector was significantly below average, at just 19%. The report which is to be published at the end of June 2021 highlights some of the actions taken by the companies that have disclosed thus far to continue to reduce the pay gap despite the challenges of the last year. It also examines ethnicity pay gap reporting.

## Over the last 15 months WIHTL has created and launched 4 key cross-industry development programmes.

The programmes are described in more detail below and their creation are examples of WiHTL responding to the needs of the collaboration community and the sector as a whole. Two of the programmes, the Global Female Leader Programme and the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme, are structured and formal programmes with nominated Participants. In contrast, The Inclusive Leader Programme is a quarterly series of online webinars open to all employees of companies within the collaboration community. Regardless of their structure, at the core of each programme is the aim to build confidence, knowledge and support meaningful change whether on a personal or organisational level.

### **Global Female Leader Programme (GFLP)**

Now in its second cohort, WiHTL's Global Female Leader Programme (GFLP) is a unique, comprehensive cross-industry programme designed to provide a series of experiences and learning opportunities to support career progression for high potential female leaders in the HTL industry. The programme aims to identify the challenges facing women who wish to progress to the highest levels of leadership and provide practical strategies & advice to overcome them. The 10-session programme includes cross industry mentoring where participants are matched with a senior Leader from another organisation, peer support trios, C-Suite roundtables with CEOs from across the industry and learning sessions on various topics including versatile leadership, networking for influence and tackling imposter syndrome.

The feedback from Participants has been hugely positive with many citing a change in their approach and confidence and seeing the benefit in their current roles and also their future careers. As new cohorts of the GFLP take place, the impact of the programme will continue beyond the sessions as an 'alumnae' and a network of senior female leaders continues to grow.

### **Feedback on the GFLP**

"The programme has been a refreshingly open and candid environment to share challenges and successes with other female leaders in the industry. It is a fantastic opportunity to meet other women in leadership roles, gain different perspectives and gather personal feedback from an extended network and a designated mentor. The structure of the programme encouraged me to create and protect time for my personal and professional development."

"The GFLP has given me tools to build my confidence and skills as a female senior leader within my organisation, and inspired me to continue to drive positive change and create further opportunities for myself and other women in our industry."

## Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme (EMFL)

The EMFL was born from an idea brought to the Race & Ethnicity in HTL Committee by one of WiHTL Member companies. The programme was developed and shaped by a subgroup of the committee into a groundbreaking, cross-industry programme. The programme was made available to all in the Community thanks to the support of McDonald's Restaurants and consists of a series of sessions including C-Suite roundtables and learning workshops. It also incorporates a Reverse Mentoring programme and Executive Sponsorship and aims to improve representation in leadership through identifying and investing in high potential ethnic minorities employees and supporting their career progression in the HTL sector. It draws upon the unique power of the WiHTL Community to create a sector specific approach to talent development for ethnic minorities employees. The EMFL also ensures commitment from employers to invest in ethnic minority employees as well as to create race advocates/allies and sponsors to form a truly inclusive working environment. The first cohort launched in January 2021 with 40 Participants from over 25 companies and includes over 150 people involved as either Participants, Line Managers, Reverse Mentees and Executive Sponsors.

The impact and response to the EMFL has reached far beyond its original aims. For example, the inspiration and insight provided by speakers involved in the programme such as world renowned thought leader René Carayol MBE and senior executives from ethnic minority backgrounds from across the industry sharing their experience and insights, has been humbling and inspirational. Many of the Participants have shared how the programme has been career or even life changing for them and those involved as Line Managers and Reverse Mentees have also shared how the programme has changed their perspectives, increased their awareness and are using their new found knowledge to bring change into their teams, functions and organisations.

## Feedback on the EMFL:

"You have further helped me with this programme fulfil the fact that both personally and professionally I feel an overwhelming desire and responsibility to show as many people as possible that being from an ethnic minority background and being a female does not have to be synonymous with a lack of ambition or aspirations."

"This programme has gone beyond setting up a group of like minded people for success, this is real. It is shining a light on complex powerful issues that ethnic minorities face. This programme reminds us that there is a lot of work to do but more importantly reminds us that there is hope. And with hope anything is possible."

"I can honestly say that this programme has had the biggest positive impact on my career trajectory then anything I have done so far. As somebody who was taught to "fit in", this programme has helped me find a voice and empowered me to embrace being different and use it to my advantage."

"I just wanted to reach out to you to tell you how truly amazing the last four months have been. I started the programme having been on furlough for 10 months and I was struggling slightly with imposter syndrome and confidence. Now I feel empowered, have reclaimed my voice and can see myself as a future leader."



## The Inclusive Leader Programme (ILP)

The ILP started in the summer of 2020 and initially incorporated 16 sessions, including sessions focused on race and equality in partnership with Greene King and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the required traits of an 'Inclusive Leader', 'Courageous Conversations' and the 'Power of Data'. To capture the valuable insights from all 16 sessions WiHTL created a synopsis of the entire series, enabling people to explore the programme in a 'bitesized' way before deciding which topics or sessions to focus on first.

The impact of the ILP has been so powerful that we continue to produce new series every quarter with new content and speakers. We have recently focused on the re-engagement of Leaders with their teams after months of furlough as the industry started to reopen and are currently hosting the most recent series called 'The Ethical Leader' exploring the critical role of ethical values in the workplace, why responsible business means good business, and how blind spots can prevent us from making good choices as managers.

## The Furloughed Leader Programme (FLP)

The FLP was an example of WiHTL bringing expertise and insight to its collaboration community at exactly the right time. The 6-session programme covered topics that helped team leaders understand how to remain connected with their people, from sites to entire organisations, and what leadership behaviours were vital to embrace during a time of unprecedented crisis. The programme became a welcome resource for the 400 leaders that joined the programme.

# Webinars & Events

“I wanted to share some feedback on the webinar I attended yesterday – and was really inspired by! Ours is a large company with many different segments – mine is not hospitality facing at all so I wasn't sure if I would take much from the session. How wrong I was! Within about 15 minutes I knew it was going to be a corker – I had made copious notes already.

I've taken away so much on what I can do now in my role as an Exec Board member to help shape better wellbeing practices in our current business, but also lots of great ideas for how I can really embed mental wellness and emotional resilience from the outset in the design of our solutions when bidding for new opportunities. Thank you so much for the session.”

**Attendee**  
The ILP 'Re-engagement Series'

## Webinars

A positive impact of the pandemic was it enabled WiHTL's Masterclass content to transition to an online platform, widening accessibility and reach from a geographic standpoint and creating additional value for its collaboration community. Over the last year, WiHTL has delivered over 100 webinars that incorporated the ILP and FLP programmes but also invited experts and thought leaders to cover a wide range of topics that ranged from personal development and empowerment to supporting organisations to become more inclusive. A particular highlight was the International Women's Day (IWD) celebrations on the 8th March, which across the whole day explored the theme of 'Choose to Challenge'. Collectively WiHTL's webinars attracted over 5,000 registrations and continue to add immense value to the collaboration community.

The IWD session recordings can be accessed [here](#).

Personal Impact Coach, Jodi Goldman led a series of 3 "Face Forward with Impact in 2021" webinars aimed at helping women 'Face Forward' with confidence,

especially within a new 'virtual world' where it is potentially more difficult to make an impact than in person. Over the 3 sessions Jodi demonstrated how it's not what you know, or who you know that makes the biggest difference...it's how you are known. Your confidence, your presence, your communication, your energy is what differentiates you. It's what makes people trust, listen, support, and connect with you. Charisma, magnetism and being impactful isn't something that you're just born with – it's a skill and through her energetic and engaging style, Jodi shared insights and tips on how to develop these skills.

“In just one hour, Jodi delivered a great webinar on impact and influence which was interactive and highly engaging. I found the webinar very insightful and most importantly useful – content that I can use every day at work and outside of work”

**Attendee**  
Face Forward with Impact Series

## The Festival of Inclusion

A highlight of the last year was the inaugural WiHTL Festival of Inclusion, which took place on 12-13 May 2021 and was the first ever event of its kind for the HTL sector. The Festival saw over 70 speakers from across the sector and across the globe, presenting, partaking in panel discussions, sharing insights, best practices and experiences across the whole breadth of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging. Over 1,200 attendees joined WiHTL during the two-day event to learn from CEOs, Chief People Officers, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officers, D&I leading experts and others who are passionate about diversity and inclusion.

The objective of the Festival was to celebrate diversity across the industry, showcase great examples of tangible initiatives that have a positive impact, raise awareness of the benefits of inclusive cultures from employees' and customers' perspectives and the perils of lack of diversity, inspire people whatever their background or circumstances to join and progress within the Hospitality, Travel and Leisure industry.

“To realise the power of inclusion, it's not until you're excluded. Then you realise how important inclusion really is.”

**René Carayol MBE**  
Global Leadership Keynote Speaker

In a first for WiHTL, attendees were afforded the chance to learn about championing the rights of the LGBTQIA community in HTL and learn from a speaker with lived experience on how disability is relative to the task. Holocaust survivor Mala Tribich MBE also provided a vivid reminder about the importance of establishing a truly inclusive environment for all. Feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive.

“I was delighted that this series has 'watch on demand' options which allow those who struggled to attend still to join in. My journey to work each morning has been improved through listening to the Festival of Inclusion sessions on catch up. Thank you for making these sessions accessible to all.”

**Attendee**  
Festival of Inclusion 2021

WiHTL would like to take the opportunity to thank again everyone who participated in the Festival from Speakers to Partners that made it such a successful event.

We have summarised the key themes that emerged from the Festival's discussions in the next chapter of this annual report.



“Extremely well-curated event with incredibly passionate, engaging and inspiring speakers. I have come away from this event feeling so much more connected to others in our shared humanity, despite the lack of social contact due to the pandemic.”

**Attendee**  
Festival of Inclusion 2021

## Women to Watch and Advocates for Change in HTL Index - The Power of Role Models

Against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the documented disproportionately negative impact that it had on women and ethnic minorities, in December 2020, in partnership with The MBS Group, WiHTL launched the second Edition of the Women to Watch and Advocates for Change in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure Index.

The Index highlights the broad, rich, and diverse female talent pool the HTL industry still has. The 100 women profiled were distinguished for their commercial and operational excellence, industry and social impact, achievements, resilience and commitment to the industry. Through telling their stories, it aims to inspire more women to pursue a career within the sector and to progress to reach the most senior levels within their organisation.

For the first time, the Index also identified a group of Advocates for Change, men and women who are passionate about promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace and through their words and actions create the momentum for cultural shift and tangible results across their respective organisation and the whole hospitality, travel and leisure industry.

The virtual launch event saw Keith Barr, CEO, InterContinental Hotels Group, Penny Hughes, Chair, The Gym Group and Sam Seigler, Director – Hospitality, Travel & Leisure, The MBS Group share why they believe profiling female role models and advocates for change in the industry is important.

Keith Barr, CEO, InterContinental Hotels Group said “I’d like to congratulate those colleagues who have been listed by WiHTL, both from across the industry and within IHG. This recognition underlines the importance of female talent to hospitality, and now more than ever we must continue driving progress by making room for current and future talent to thrive at any level of business.”

The launch event also saw an inspirational speech from Hannah Ingram-Moore, daughter of Captain Sir Tom Moore and Co-Founder and Director of business consultancy, Maytrix Group. Hannah shared insights into the challenges she has faced as a woman championing her father’s amazing story and how she has used her skills as a business woman, mother, daughter, and a wife to respond.

Hannah shared “The WiHTL Index is a fantastic initiative which highlights the stories of remarkable female role models and advocates for change. I’m so pleased that WiHTL’s Founder, Tea Colaianni could see in me this incredible story of a woman, not only a daughter, wife, mother, using everything in my skill set to ensure her father’s voice could be heard. It’s been amazing to speak to such an inspiring audience and see first hand the strength and courage of those in the hospitality, travel and leisure sectors at today’s event.”

The Women to Watch and Advocates for Change in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure Index can be downloaded [here](#).



## A Look to the Future

**The events of the last year have indeed been unprecedented and tumultuous for the hospitality, travel and leisure industry. The need to collaborate, share and support each other became even more prominent.**

Despite the continuous uncertainty, we are determined to continue to engage with the wider industry, grow the WiHTL community and achieve our collective ambitious aspirations. We are humbled and energised by the support all our members provide to the community and commit to meet our members’ needs and drive the Diversity and Inclusion agenda across the HTL industry.

Seeing the power of the WiHTL Collaboration Community and its positive impact on the HTL sector led to discussions among the Advisory Board as to how we might expand the reach beyond HTL. The retail sector faces many of the same issues when it comes to gender and ethnic diversity in leadership and so after a number of months of planning, June 2021 saw the launch of Diversity in Retail (DiR) – a sister brand to WiHTL focussing on driving forward meaningful progress in diversity and inclusion in the retail sector.

DiR’s mission is to support companies across the retail industry to create diverse and inclusive environments and positively impact 1 million employees globally by 2025. John Lewis Partnership, Wickes, WHSmith, Sainsbury’s, EG Group, Dr. Martens, Dixons Carphone and Kingfisher have all signed up to be founding members of Diversity in Retail and placed their confidence and commitment to the DiR cause.

We are inspired by their commitment and collective efforts of the Community’s Founding Members and look forward to working together with their senior leaders to expand the reach of the DiR Community and make a tangible difference.

# The Festival of Inclusion

The Festival of Inclusion was a two-day event that brought together more than 70 speakers across the whole breadth of the diversity, inclusion and belonging spectrum. This section provides a summary of the fascinating insights shared by CEOs, Chief People Officers, D&I experts and many more during the event, highlighting best practice and reflecting on how we can move the dial on diversity.

# Leading through a crisis: McDonald's CEO Paul Pomroy on prioritising diversity during Covid-19



**Paul Pomroy**  
CEO  
McDonald's UK&I



**June Sarpong**  
TV presenter, diversity expert  
and award-winning author

**For the past few years, June Sarpong and Paul Pomroy have worked closely together to reflect on and drive up diversity and inclusion at McDonald's.**

**June: The last year has been difficult for many. Could you talk about your experience of Covid-19 as a leader?**

**Paul:** Throughout the pandemic, we stuck to the principle of putting our people first. At the end of March 2020, my team and I made the difficult decision to close the store estate. We knew that it was morally the right thing to do – for the people in our restaurants, our customers, and our franchisees, but also to support the NHS. That was certainly the biggest decision I've made in my career... you're not given any training on how to close 1,400 restaurants, a £1.4 billion-pound supply chain and support 130,000 employees and 30,000 farmers!

**In a situation as profound and as monumental as this, you have two choices as a business. You can either say that things are too difficult to focus on diversity and inclusion, or you can recognise that you might never get an opportunity like this again. Can you talk about what you and your HR team did in terms of D&I during this period?**

We've always known that to be successful, you've got to represent the communities in which you operate, you've got to represent your customers, and you've got to understand your workforce. And I'm pleased that, rather than seeing the pandemic as a barrier, we used last summer as a springboard to move forward and to go after what's possible. I knew that I wanted diversity and inclusion at the core of the company's future.

Practically speaking, this meant increasing communication between senior leadership, employees and customers – we did a lot of listening to both our

customers and our workforce. We also set up D&I programmes, focused on wellbeing and took the opportunity to hire young, diverse candidates into the business.

A lot of great talent became available during that time, and we were able to bring in lots of different people from different backgrounds. A year on, it's a very nice feeling being on a call knowing that the mix of people has changed – there's greater diversity and those from minority groups are more willing to speak up.

I also carried on with my reverse mentoring. I heard a lot of excuses during Covid, about people being too busy to continue with the D&I journey. But I wanted to use the crisis as an opportunity to move forward – so I continued with all of my reverse mentors: Pauline Wilson, from Virgin Atlantic, Hannah Tegnah, who's a junior lawyer at McDonald's and of course, you, June!

**I remember when we first met, one of the things that I loved about your own personal story was the fact that you spoke so honestly about how you had progressed in your own life. Can you tell me what inclusive leadership means to you?**

At the beginning of my career, leaders acted like superhumans who had all the answers and never needed help. But I'm the complete opposite of that, which I think is critical to being an inclusive leader. As a business, I'm very open about where we are and where we need to get better. I'm a champion of the culture that we want – but it's important that people see us making mistakes, learning from them and progressing as an entire business.

For me personally, I'm very curious and I've got lots of great role models around me who give me support and let me ask questions. I'm also not afraid to share my vulnerability – I've been open about things like seeing a psychologist. As a CEO, you have to lead through your people, and you can only do that if they can relate to you.

Another critical part of being an inclusive leader is bravery. If you're brave and bold enough, then people will support you on the journey you want to go on. From a cultural perspective, I was very clear that an inclusive culture meant that we cannot tolerate any form of bias, racism or exclusion.

**I love the idea that if you are not intentionally including, you can be unintentionally excluding. Can you talk about how important that is at McDonald's?**

Much of the excellent progress we've made on gender diversity has been around setting and reaching targets, but when took a similar approach to ethnic diversity we found that we weren't making the progress we wanted. We had programmes in place – but they just weren't connecting. I did some reflecting and realised that in my time as CEO I'd only interviewed one Black person. And I just thought: wow. Sometimes you have to put your hand up as the boss and ask why something's not working.

What we're doing now is being more deliberate about being inclusive, in our franchise and restaurant communities, as well as head office. We're having more open conversations, focusing on role models and changing the way we recruit, to make sure that the language we're using doesn't discourage diverse candidates from applying for roles with us.

**What is one action you've taken at McDonald's that's made a real impact?**

One thing that's made a marked difference is changing the way our employee groups work. We got employees to set up the groups they wanted, rather than establishing networks they needed to join. It was difficult to flip it round – and it felt weird as a boss – but it really empowered people. Now we've got people from a raft of backgrounds, across operations and head office, from different levels, all coming together, because they want to make a difference and use their voice. They come to me once a month and give feedback, and tell me where they need my support to action change.

**I know one of the areas that you're really passionate about is diversifying your franchisee pool to encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to actually set up businesses themselves. Can you talk a bit about that?**

We certainly need the next generation of franchisees to come through – and we want to see younger, more ethnically diverse and more female franchisees. Having role models in the communities is going to be very important.

**Now the world is opening up, do you think it will be more difficult to keep D&I on the top of the board's agenda?**

You can always have an excuse for distraction – so as a leader you have to be deliberate, and make sure you hold yourself to the highest account on issues as important as D&I.

**Who are your role models, past and present?**

When I first joined McDonald's, the CFO at the time George Mackay saw something in me that I didn't even see in myself. He allowed me to make mistakes, tolerated my sometimes silly behaviours and always struck the right balance between guiding me through problems without telling me what to do. As I said before, I'm also very lucky to have role models outside the business and in all of my reverse mentors.

I feel very fortunate to have all these role models, and I know that what I need to do is create role models for young people who are growing up today. They need to be able to look up and see people they aspire to in senior positions, so they can think 'I can do that'.

Obviously, we know that colour can be an enormous barrier. If you can't see someone who looks like you, or who has a similar background to you, then you're not going to feel included.

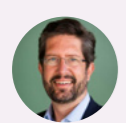
**And what does the future hold? What does success look like on D&I at McDonald's?**

For me, success doesn't come out of a scorecard or a spreadsheet. To me, long-term success means that we don't need networks, forums or groups, or specific focuses on wellbeing or trust. It just means we are representative and have a truly inclusive culture.

Just before Christmas, I saw a young crew member going into Waitrose to get a sandwich for lunch. She had pink hair, fantastic tattoos and was proudly wearing her McDonald's uniform without a jacket on. 15 years ago, you firstly wouldn't have seen the pink hair or tattoos, but you also wouldn't have seen an eighteen or nineteen-year-old proudly walking around in her McDonald's uniform. I was incredibly proud to see that, and I think that's what success looks like: people who are proud to work for McDonald's, who show up, speak out and are representative and inclusive.



# An opportunity to reset? Leading diverse teams in a post-pandemic future



**MODERATED BY**  
**Michael Custers**  
CMO  
SDWorx



**Jennifer Liston-Smith**  
Head of Thought Leadership  
Bright Horizons



**Sarah Dickins**  
CPO  
Bourne Leisure



**Claire Smith**  
Head of Learning and  
Development  
Nando's



**Tariq Zaied**  
Franchisee Consultant  
McDonald's

Progressing on D&I has always required strong leadership from the top. But the impact of 2020 has accelerated change in the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sector, and leaders are now faced with new challenges and exciting opportunities to drive the agenda.

## Covid-19 jump-started positive change in HTL

From fast-tracking digitalisation to proving the benefits of flexible and remote working, the pandemic jump-started significant change in the hospitality sector. Thankfully, much of this will support organisations in their D&I journey. As Sarah Dickins said of Bourne: "We've seen significant changes. Out of the pandemic came a greater sense of purpose, and I think we've almost rolled forward five years in the flexible work opportunities for our team." Michael Custers furthered this point, suggesting that "Covid-19 acted as a pressure cooker to bring work/life balance much further up the agenda."

## The role of the leader has changed

The panel agreed that the human aspects of leadership have come to the fore since the pandemic. Claire Smith noted that: "At Nando's we want our leaders to be advocates – to influence and proactively champion an inclusive environment, in every conversation, every decision and for every individual. But to really create an inclusive culture it requires every individual to adopt an inclusive mindset in that mindset starts at the top with our leaders."

## An opportunity to reset?

Tariq Zaied, who is part of the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders programme, suggested that "we've created new expectations. Whether it's working from home as mental health support or what the working day looks like – there's a chance to rethink how things are approached."

## Focus on: leading and supporting parents and carers

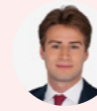
An important segment of leading diverse people is acknowledging life outside work. As Jennifer Liston-Smith described: "Childcare and eldercare are now seen as part of the business infrastructure. In order for people with family commitments to work, care must be in place. It's also an important aspect of levelling the gender pay gap, because caring responsibilities have often fallen disproportionately on women."

There are a number of steps that businesses can take to support parents and carers in their organisations:

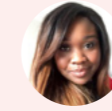
- Providing different forms of care – especially emergency back-up childcare or adultcare for days when arrangements fall through
- Establishing workplace nurseries or nearby access
- Providing online toolkits, coaching and training for managers who lead carers

The biggest step organisations can take is committing to a culture of openness and support, where leaders role model from the top and are upfront about the realities of striking a work/life balance.

# Recruiting and retaining diverse talent



**MODERATED BY**  
**Sam Seigler**  
Director, Hospitality,  
Travel and Leisure  
The MBS Group



**Grace Acquah**  
Talent Attraction Lead  
Amazon



**Theo Smith**  
Author  
*Neurodiversity at Work*



**Janine Chamberlin**  
MD UK  
LinkedIn



**Joel Burrell**  
SEO Manager  
Scott Dunn

**Recruitment – both at a workforce and executive level – plays a critical role in improving D&I. As businesses rebuild their workforces and refresh their senior teams following Covid-19, there is opportunity to do so with D&I at front of mind. For examples of best practice and actionable steps to drive change, read *Recruiting for Diversity in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure*, a practical toolkit by WiHTL and The MBS Group.**

## Leverage technology, but safeguard against built-in biases

Technology can be an invaluable tool for recruiting more efficiently and mitigating the risks of human bias. As Janine Chamberlin commented: "tech allows us to gain immediate access to a very broad pool of talent, which can be incredibly helpful as we're trying to diversify our workforces." However, close attention must be paid when utilising AI: "machines learn from human behaviour," explained Janine. "So if that behaviour in the past is representative of hiring patterns that you do not want to repeat in the future, you need to be incredibly conscious of that." Theo Smith suggested that businesses should "ensure that they have greater accountability across the organisation for decisions made on the basis of technology."

## Broaden what good looks like

"It's too easy to focus in on finding 'candidate gold' without noticing you're passing on 'candidate pearls' and 'candidate diamonds'," said Theo, discussing the need to reassess expectations around hiring. Grace Acquah concurred, explaining Amazon's approach to hiring which involves "not just recruiting students from elite institutions, so as not to restrict the skillsets and backgrounds we bring on board."

## Take an authentic approach

Joel Burrell, who is part of the WiHTL's Ethnic Minority Future Leaders programme, suggested that authenticity comes from reaching out to existing employees on the ground: "Base your priorities on the current challenges you're experiencing as a business, and then articulate those priorities to existing colleagues and potential employees."

## Face up to unconscious bias

The panel agreed that the first step in driving inclusivity in hiring is recognising and eradicating unconscious bias. "There's an inherent bias around what people are told success looks like," said Grace, "so we need to make sure we're upfront about that in the assessment and interview processes."

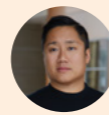
# Employee inclusion unlocks the value of diversity



**MODERATED BY**  
**Tania Holcroft**  
People and Culture Director  
Greene King



**Nichole Viviani**  
Chief People Officer  
Xplor



**Uwern Jong**  
Editor-in-Chief  
OutThere Magazine



**Eve Sukhnandan**  
Chief People Officer  
PureGym



**Alison Henderson**  
Food Service Director,  
Preferred Meals  
Elior

Across the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sector and beyond, the companies with the most mature D&I strategies are actively prioritising inclusion over individual aspects of diversity. While driving up representation is important, the value of a diverse workforce can only be unlocked within an inclusive environment. As Uwern Jong described: “D&I is a science, but it’s also an art – it has to be authentic from the top before it delivers the numbers”. Moderating the session, Tania Holcroft noted that there is a seismic shift taking place in how important inclusion is to business strategy.

## Employee feedback mechanisms provide unparalleled insight

When employees can feed back on their lived experiences through ongoing listening groups, D&I becomes embedded at both ends of the organisation. By understanding how different colleagues see the world, companies’ action plans can be targeted to best support their own teams. “I don’t ever want to stop listening – it’s a constant journey, and the most powerful approach is enabling our teams to educate their peers,” said Eve Sukhnandan of PureGym.

## Make the link between innovation and inclusion

During the pandemic, many businesses in HTL pivoted their offerings, morphing their business propositions at lightning speed. These rapid shifts don’t have to be at the expense of D&I, however: “Innovation is our case for inclusion – the more we innovate, the better service we can produce,” said Nichole Viviani. By explicitly linking innovation and inclusion, companies can bring together people from across all functions to work together with brand values in mind.

## Authenticity comes from listening

Participating in external events such as Pride, International Women’s Day and Black History Month is a great way to celebrate different communities, but only when colleagues from those groups have the opportunity to steer efforts and educate others in the business. For Uwern, authenticity is essential to get everyone in the organisation on board: “I like to think of it as a two-way street: we need to ask ourselves if we’re giving back to the community we’re championing, rather than taking away.”

## Don’t lose sight of the bigger picture

The best businesses respond to the needs of the communities they serve. Companies should go out into the field and ask customers what they think before using their feedback to improve their proposition. It’s a tried-and-tested approach: “At Prepared Meals, we’ve built up trust and participation between us and our communities by paying attention to what the kids want,” recounted Alison Henderson, a member of the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme.

# Making the case for diverse mentors and relatable role models



**MODERATED BY**  
**Hannah Tengahan**  
Legal Counsel  
McDonald’s



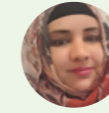
**Jane Bentall**  
MD  
Haven Holidays



**Paul Edgecliffe-Johnson**  
CFO  
IHG



**Simon Jones**  
MD  
Premier Inn



**Yasmin Brant**  
Cinema Experience Manager  
ODEON Cinemas

One of the key barriers to progression on D&I is a lack of diverse role models and relatable mentors. Across the sector, businesses are waking up to the importance of mentoring schemes – including reverse mentoring – and investing in creating diverse role models who can encourage others to progress within the organisation.

## You can’t be what you can’t see

Role models play an enormous part in shaping careers for diverse candidates. As Yasmin Brant, who is part of WiHTL’s Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme, said: “Role models are incredibly important. If you come from an underrepresented group, being able to see someone you can relate to in a senior position can have a powerful impact. That visibility can have a widespread effect and bring about lasting cultural change.”

## What makes a good mentoring relationship?

There is not a one-size-fits all approach to a good mentor – different people need different types of support and guidance. Hannah Tengahan, for example, suggested that informal mentors can be just as valuable role models as those gained through a specific scheme: “sometimes the organic connection and mutual trust you have with someone can bring so much more out of you. Realising someone is taking you under their wing can build real confidence.”

The panel agreed that mentoring relationships work best when stretched over a long period of time. “Committing to building a truly long-term mentoring relationship is one of the most valuable things you can do,” said Jane Bentall. “Having that longevity throughout different points of your career as you develop is hugely important.”

## External networks can test ideas, challenge assumptions and offer new perspectives

While internal company mentors can be invaluable, establishing a network of mentors from external organisations and sectors can bring fresh thinking. As Simon Jones offered: “The big benefit of creating a network of mentors, especially when they’re drawn from different disciplines, is that you get expert input from a range of perspectives. At the moment I get advice from an expert marketer, a strategy consultant, a hotel operator who was actually once my boss, and a leadership consultant.”

## Growing and learning through reverse mentoring

In many businesses, reverse mentoring is a central part of D&I efforts. As Paul Edgecliffe-Johnson explained: “the day you stop learning is the day you should probably retire. For me, reverse mentoring relationships have allowed me to continue to grow and understand some of the features of work that don’t come across my desk every day.”

# Collect, measure and report: practical advice on how to harness data to drive diversity and inclusion



**MODERATED BY**  
**Joanna Aunon**  
Director  
WiHTL



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Director People Consulting  
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CEO & Founder  
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**Janet Tidmarsh**  
Head of D&I  
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**Phil Tysoe**  
Head of Insight & Engagement  
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**Beatrice Hendra**  
Senior Delivery Manager  
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**For years, a lack of data has been a barrier to progress on D&I. While mandatory gender pay gap reporting has forced businesses to take action on gathering data on gender, information remains incomplete on most other areas. With the understanding that what gets measured gets done, organisations across the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sectors should urgently prioritise collecting and understanding data on every area of diversity in their business.**

## Measuring data demonstrates commitment to D&I

Gathering, analysing and reporting on diversity data clearly demonstrates dedication to progressing on D&I. "A big part of what you're doing," said Katy Bennett, "is showing your customers, colleagues and investors that this is something you care about."

Beatrice Hendra, who is part of the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme, seconded this point, suggesting that "for people in an underrepresented group, it is heartening to see your employer taking D&I seriously by collecting data. It brings a feeling of inclusion and proves that the company sees D&I as more than a tick-box exercise."

## Gathering data need not be complicated

The ideal way to gather diversity data is through a centralised digital HR system, agreed the panel. But simple survey mechanisms (that are compliant with GDPR) can also be effective. "It's really all about communication and trust with your employees," said Katy, "make it clear why you want this data, what you're going to do with it and how it links to diversity and inclusion."

## Look beyond gender and ethnicity

"Gathering data on the entire employee lifecycle can be invaluable in understanding where progress is needed," said David Whitfield. "Collecting employee information at every stage of their career – from hiring and promotions to returning to work after maternity or paternity leave – can shed light on where different groups exit the business, and how long it takes different groups to progress through the ranks."

## Employee network groups are invaluable

Speaking on best practice from companies which disclose their diversity data, David highlighted the importance of internal employee networks. "One key measure that really stands out is employee networks," said David. Katy concurred, suggesting that "people within employee networks, who are passionate about diversity and trusted by employees, can be pivotal in communicating the benefits of data collection with the rest of the business."

Beatrice noted that "especially on the topic of potentially sensitive information like ethnicity data, it's important to make sure everybody understands the vision. And feed back your findings to the employees so they know what's being done with the data they're providing."

## Four steps to success on collecting data

- Collect, analyse and disclose your data to create transparency and accountability
- Establish executive sponsorship of diversity-related data collection efforts
- Leverage employee network groups to drive up engagement
- Use data to support progression of specific groups within the company

## Case study: key learnings from Whitbread

Janet Tidmarsh and Phil Tysoe highlighted the role data has played at Whitbread in their efforts to drive greater diversity and champion inclusion – and some of the lessons they've learnt along the way.

### 1. Pay Gap analysis gives actionable insight that drives the D&I strategy

"With gender pay gap reporting, it took companies a couple of years to understand the methodology and get past 'reporting' to 'insight'" said Janet. "In 2020, in Whitbread, we could see some really valuable insights which helped direct our D&I strategy."

### 2. Start collecting data early in the employment journey

Janet told the panel that: "We have our HR system aligned to our recruitment system, so, whilst it is an optional disclosure, ethnicity data is captured very successfully through the recruitment process"

### 3. Be organised

"We had to set ourselves up so we could run the collection and analysis and then repeat it in future years," said Phil. "We used the guidelines and principles from gender pay gap reporting to guide us on ethnicity analysis."

### 4. Disaggregate the data

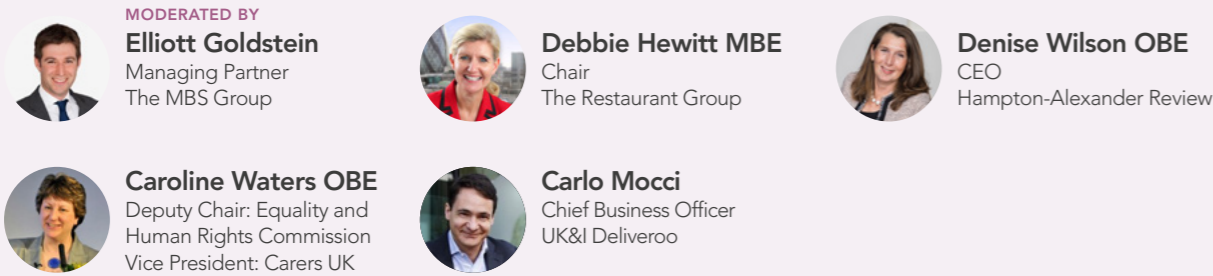
"Separating up the data was important to us," explained Phil. "the more you disaggregate, the more flexibility you have in terms of analysis and lenses to look through. It was critical to us that we didn't homogenise the experiences of ethnic minorities as one group."

### 5. Collaboration is key

"Everything we are doing on reporting and action plans is in conjunction with our networks," said Janet. "It is joined-up with employee networks and steering committees – this helps us to communicate it effectively and meaningfully."

# How is the HTL sector performing on D&I?

## The response to this year's research findings



For the third year, WiHTL and The MBS Group have come together to produce a report looking into the true state of diversity and inclusion in the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sector. During this session, a panel of experts was assembled to discuss a preview of the findings.

### KEY DATA:

FEMALE REPRESENTATION			
	2019	2020	2021
Board	23.6%	28.9%	<b>29.8%</b>
ExCo	25.4%	27.2%	<b>30.7%</b>
Direct Reports	35.9%	37.7%	<b>34.4%</b>

ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION			
	2019	2020	2021
Board	1.8%	6.4%	<b>6.0%</b>
ExCo	2%	3.4%	<b>3.8%</b>
Direct Reports	3.8%	4.8%	<b>5.5%</b>

### Targets and data drive real change

Both in individual businesses and across the sector, data has long been understood as a key tool for progressing D&I. Sector-wide initiatives, such as the Hampton Alexander Review and the WiHTL Annual Report offer the ability to comprehensively benchmark progress. As Debbie Hewitt said of the preview of the findings: "we should really celebrate the fact that we've got a yardstick showing where we are and where we need to get to. The discussions have become more meaningful, moving beyond tokenism to how we can execute real improvement."

Denise Wilson furthered this, pointing to the success of targets on an individual company level. "Targets are an effective way to demonstrate what good looks like," Denise said. "They are the language of business, and no leader wants to see a missed target on their watch."

Speaking on the importance of data, Caroline Waters posed the question: "without data, how can you possibly know whether or not you're really drawing from the widest possible talent pool? Or whether your progression systems are demonstrably fair? Taking the gender pay gap as an example – if reporting on it hadn't made us this transparent we wouldn't be making the progress that we are, and it's taken us 50 years of legislation to do that."

### Covid-19 has slowed progress on D&I in HTL

While the negative impact of the pandemic has been felt keenly across the sector, previous research from WiHTL and The MBS Group found that women and those from ethnic minorities were disproportionately impacted from the effects of redundancies and furlough. Worryingly, this trend has been reflected in the data from this report, with representation of women and ethnic minorities down on last year at direct reports level. However, the pandemic has proved once and for all that flexible working and working from home is more possible than previously thought, which opens up progression opportunities to many including women, carers and those with disabilities.

### There remains a lack of women in the most senior and strategically important positions

Mirroring the rest of the corporate sphere, gender diversity in the HTL sector is far from reflecting the 50/50 split which exists in society. This is especially true in the most senior roles. Discussing the lack of female CEOs, Denise suggested that "we have never had a stronger supply of capable, experienced women in the British workforce than we have today. The pipeline of talent is full to overflowing, but we're just not using it in the way we should be. Generally speaking, there's a lack of knowledge in our in British leadership around the value of diversity, and the benefits that it can bring to a senior team."

Digital roles have long been a key area of focus when it comes to increasing female representation at the most senior levels. Carlo Mocchi noted that "the lack of women in STEM functions and businesses is a core topic, and one which is difficult to solve. It requires working all the way back to university pipelines to give talented women the experience to go for senior technical roles."

### Inclusion over diversity

The most forward-thinking businesses are underpinning their diversity efforts with a culture of inclusion. As Debbie reflected: "it's not just about appointing for diversity – it's about including those people when they arrive. After all, the culture of an organisation is not the mission statement that gets posted on the wall, but the hundreds and thousands of decisions that get executed every day by leaders of the business."

### Spotlight on: carers

A significant proportion of the UK working population balance work with caring responsibilities. One in 8 adults are carers, with two million people a year taking on new caring responsibilities. Despite this high prevalence of carers in the workplace, many organisations do little to identify and support employees with additional responsibilities, with few D&I surveys covering carers. When companies don't track the information, carers are at risk of being overlooked.

This has a disproportionate impact on women, who make up 56% of carers. "There's a great deal of pressure on the so-called sandwich generation," explained Caroline, "who combine caring for elderly relatives with bringing up kids, at what would be the prime of their career. This is a contributing factor to why we don't see more women pushing into the top levels."

For organisations, it is particularly difficult to create generic policies around caring responsibilities due to their case-by-case, and often sudden, nature. A tolerant and agile approach is key: "Carers don't need much; just empathy and flexibility," Caroline advised. "When new caring responsibilities arise, the first six weeks matter – if employers consciously look out for their staff in that critical period, they are more likely to stay".

# How to intentionally create an inclusive culture



**MODERATED BY**  
**Lynne Weedall**  
Senior Independent Director  
Non-Executive Director  
Dr Martens, Treatt, Stagecoach



**Suzie Welch**  
Group Chief People Officer  
ODEON Cinemas Group



**Corneel Koster**  
Chief Customer and  
Operating Officer  
Virgin Atlantic



**Shelly Voecks**  
Chief People Officer  
Scott Dunn



**Timothy Kavi**  
Store Manager,  
Kings College Hospital  
Compass Group

**Difficult to define, and even harder to measure, the notion of inclusion is high on the agenda for businesses today. Lynne Weedall noted that arguments for an inclusive culture lend themselves particularly well to the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sector, which is inextricably linked to bringing people happiness and allowing guests to be the best version of themselves.**

## Inclusion means seeing employees as people first

“It’s about valuing differences and seeing them as strengths – when people have fun bringing their full selves to work, that sense of belonging is priceless. If you want to settle for suboptimal results and missed opportunities by refusing to foster a rich team, go for it – but I don’t think anyone in this industry can afford to do that,” offered Corneel Koster, drawing from his experience working across six countries. Suzie Welch concurred, suggesting that to create a truly inclusive culture, leaders need to value their colleagues beyond their contribution to the business: “we need to think about the value people place on themselves. This isn’t just about people showing up. This is about building something they can be part of and feel successful in”.

“The most important thing is to start the conversation and be comfortable with being uncomfortable”

**Shelly Voecks**

## Inclusion should be built into the brand

For Shelly Voecks, it is key to align internal and external brand values. At Scott Dunn, the journey to inclusion has only just started but has quickly become a strategic priority: “We don’t have all the answers yet, but the most important thing is to get the ball rolling and take

small steps to have a big impact. One of our values is to inspire, so we need that thread running all the way through, from inspiring colleagues to be themselves to creating inspiring holidays for our customers. We’ve started to expand our advertising imagery to highlight a broader range of guests, and we’ve reconsidered our kids’ clubs to better support neurodiverse children”.

“Inclusion isn’t just what you do internally; it’s also about how you act in the wider world”

**Corneel Koster**

For Virgin Atlantic, too, the brand’s mission statement underpins everything it does: “everyone can take on the world”, Corneel explained, “our teams are scouring the landscape for brand images that represent our diverse customer bases, which is not an easy task. The more thoughtful we are, however, the more customers feel understood: one woman even wrote a letter to describe how touched she was to see an advert featuring older models who looked like her. Inclusion isn’t just what you do internally; it’s about how you act in the wider world.” Lynne agreed, noting that even if the battle is uphill, the extra energy spent aligning an inclusive culture with an external message that welcomes customers from all walks of life is worth it, as consumers are drawn to authenticity.

## An inclusive vision for the future

As a member of the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme, Timothy Kavi told us how hearing the struggles and triumphs of role models with similar backgrounds at Compass, as well imparting his own as a reverse mentor, has given him hope and bold goals for the future. “If I were to walk into a boardroom as a senior leader, I would want to be greeted by a panel diverse in age, gender, race and religion. What really matters, though, is that no one sees their uniqueness as a barrier – diversity has no limits, so those individuals should all be conversing together. Inclusion would be built into the foundations of my workplace: when you curate a team of emotionally intelligent, empowered, unique individuals willing to have open conversations, that will just simply work”.

“When you curate a team of emotionally intelligent, empowered, unique individuals willing to have open conversations, that will just simply work”

**Timothy Kavi**

“Inclusion is central to our long-term recovery plan, not just something that sits alongside”

**Suzie Welch**

Looking beyond the pandemic to the future, Suzie agreed that honest communication is the way forward: “As leaders, we didn’t get everything right every time, but we learnt so much about what support and development every individual needed by simply listening properly. I’m most proud of how vulnerable and transparent our teams have been sharing their experiences in a way they never would have done before. Now that we’ve started to build that confidence, we’re adamant that inclusion is central to our long-term recovery plan at ODEON, not just something that sits alongside.”

# Lessons from the top: global c-suite executives on how they're driving change



**MODERATED BY**  
**Sharon Rice-Oxley**  
Partner and Co-founder  
Q5



**James Michael Lafferty**  
CEO  
FHH



**Echo Lu**  
CEO  
Haulfryn



**Patricia Page-Champion**  
SVP & Global Commercial  
Director, Hilton



**Dominic Blakemore**  
CEO  
Compass Group



**Keith Barr**  
CEO  
IHG

**For businesses to succeed on D&I, the agenda must be driven by brave leaders who recognise their own biases and are unafraid to make bold moves. In this session, C-suite executives discussed how they were moving the dial on D&I in their organisations.**

**Sharon Rice-Oxley:** I've been working for over 30 years and never before have I experienced the momentum and focus that the D&I agenda is receiving today in the workplace. Today, it's all about how we drive that agenda on. As leaders, what have you been doing to build inclusion?

**Patricia Page-Champion:** For us at Hilton, we've been very purposeful with our culture and 40% of our board is female. Right across the business, we look to act as role models and advocates for others, embracing our inclusivity and speaking out against prejudice.

We've also launched our Courageous Conversations programme, which is led by our CEO, Chris Nassetta. This initiative has opened up the discussion around D&I like never before, and has been very well attended by team members.

**Echo Lu:** At Haulfryn, we've been focusing on flexible working structures and formats. Being flexible, offering remote working and supporting our employees like this has gone a long way to promote inclusion, and it sends a message that it is okay to explain your personal circumstances.

**On the theme of leadership impact, how have you managed unconscious bias?**

**Dominic Blakemore:** First of all, it's about knowing it's there, and then it's about learning and having conversations to mitigate bias.

Most recently, we worked with a group called The Human Library. It's a not-for-profit organisation which

aims to address people's prejudices by letting them to talk to those they would not normally meet, bringing human stories into a safe space. It was an incredibly powerful intervention which allowed us to reflect on how our biases impact our judgement and decision-making.

**Echo:** Recognising and mitigating bias is especially important if you work with people across different markets. The 'affinity bias' can really get in the way for people who come from completely different backgrounds or cultures and speak very different languages. When I ran the international markets at Holland and Barratt, one of my principles was to hire a local GM for every market, because they understood the region best and could make the right business decisions locally.

**What steps have you taken to be inclusive leaders?**

**Keith Barr:** The CEO sets the tone for the organisation, so I see it as my role to demonstrate that D&I isn't about compliance or governance, but about wanting to be a better company. As a business, 38% of our senior leaders are women, we have gender balance across the organisation and we've been recognised as a good place to work for the LGBTQ community. But it's my role to say: it's still not good enough.

I'm spending time being externally focused and advocating in the industry, but I think the most important thing as CEO is to get involved every single day within your own organisation, and show people that you want to be a better company that can attract and develop the best talent.

**James Lafferty:** For me in the Middle East, it has really been a case of being bold and playing my part as CEO in leading real societal change. In the summer of 2018, for example, we suddenly became able to hire female sales reps as the ban on female drivers was lifted in Saudi Arabia. There was a pretty big revolt among some of the male workers, and I had to fly to Saudi and tell them that if they didn't like the way things were moving, they could leave.

**How can you tell that what you're doing is making a difference and that you've moved the dial?**

**Patricia:** It really comes down to team members, listening to them, understanding what they're saying, and making sure we're integrating their unique perspectives and voices into what we do.

You can tell you're doing a good job from the conversations taking place and the activity you see across the business. We hear inspiring stories of leaders across the globe, how these individuals are driving up engagement and providing opportunities for career progression. There are also obvious signifiers – we're very humbled and privileged to have recently been ranked as number one on DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies for Diversity list.

**Looking ahead, how inclusive and diverse is your succession planning?**

**Keith:** This is something we're thinking about a lot at IHG. Historically, you had to relocate and work all over the world to become CEO. And often the top talent, especially women, just weren't willing to do that, as they had young children or a partner who couldn't move. But now we're thinking completely differently about development plans and experiences for high-potential talent – especially high-performing ethnically diverse leaders. And it's not just the top tier: want to lift people up and round them out earlier on in their working life to prepare them for career progression.

**From a legacy standpoint, what are your main priorities?**

**Dominic:** We employ half a million people in 45 countries. And right now, the vast majority of that workforce is balanced towards women and ethnic groups, but the senior leadership isn't. And so from a personal legacy perspective, I would love to leave this organisation having addressed that imbalance at the most senior level.

Building on that, it's also about rebalancing the communities we serve. Happily, we're seeing a massive shift in our client base. Diversity has been important

for us for years – and now it's becoming increasingly important to our clients, whether they're a football club, a major tech company or a healthcare provider. So we're in a wonderful moment where all the conditions are apparent. As a community, we have to focus on developing our own diverse talent, listening to unlock the barriers and creating a positive environment of opportunity and development.

**How do you measure success?**

**Echo:** For me, it's not about the numbers or governance. The key measures are whether you are attracting diverse, high-calibre people at different levels, and whether the quality of decision making is better as a result of everything you do. I think the most important measure for me is if people are willing to speak their mind, and are happy to be themselves. Whether it's a housekeeping team, a restaurants team or a general manager team – that's the best measure of inclusion.

**What are your views on the impact of leadership from the top?**

**James:** Championing D&I at the top level creates the conditions for change further down the organisation. Within three months of joining Fine Hygienic Holding, we had gone from zero to 30% women on the management board. And then that triggered a huge flow down to the different regional markets because people had role models. After that bold move, we saw real improvement in the grassroots.

## One piece of advice from a CEO

**Patricia Page-Champion:** The responsibility to drive equality shouldn't fall solely on minorities. We all have a responsibility to take our own decisive steps, to call out injustice and to build a more equal society.

**Keith Barr:** You need to be inquisitive about what's driving inequality in your organisation and make sure it's not structural.

**James Lafferty:** Don't be a NATO leader, which is no action, talk only. Be a Nike leader, where you just do it. Make the changes and be bold.

**Echo Lu:** Be curious, kind and brave. Be curious about yourself and about others; be kind when people are different from you; and be brave enough to embrace every developmental experience.

**Dominic Blakemore:** Curiosity and kindness are the most important things. As leaders, we have to listen and learn, and then act on what we learn, not on what we think.

# Integrate diversity and inclusion into core business strategy, say global chief diversity and inclusion officers



MODERATED BY

**Dev Modi**  
Partner  
Equiida



**Reginald J. Miller**  
VP, Global Chief Diversity,  
Equity and Inclusion Officer  
McDonald's



**Melissa Thomas-Hunt**  
Global Head of Diversity  
and Belonging  
Airbnb



**Renae Murphy**  
Director of Employee Experience  
Xplor

**Around the world, businesses are demonstrating commitment to D&I by appointing Chief Diversity & Inclusion officers. In this session, Chief Diversity & Inclusion officers from around the world came together to explore their role in driving positive change in their organisations.**

**Dev Modi: What does it mean to you when we talk about 'moving the dial' on D&I?**

**Reginald J. Miller:** Cultural revolution is already happening across the world, and it won't fit back into Pandora's box. The next generation of workers has different expectations, so the dial is moving regardless – most important is using intentionality to engage your workforce on that journey, so that D&I filters through every process and practice.

**Melissa Thomas-Hunt:** What I always ask is what direction we're moving in. When we take into account our guests, hosts and employees, who come from an array of communities and have unique histories, we have to be mindful of those differences to create the most excellent experience moving forward.

**Renae Murphy:** To me, it means creating environments where differences don't derail us, but instead are leveraged for deeper insights and better ideation. We've made progress when employees feel a sense of belonging in the environments we create, and when they pause to reflect on how to include someone with a different lived experience than their own.

**How do you measure success when it comes to D&I? What changes have you been most proud of?**

**Reginald:** When you're doing the work on diversity, equity and inclusion, there is no end date – there's always further to go along the continuum. I know

I'm making a difference when our employees tell us that the culture feels different, whether inside a restaurant or in an office half way across the globe.

**Renae:** At Xplor, we use our strategy to anchor us. The goals, actions, metrics and behavioral expectations are a roadmap to success, keeping us clear on where we want to go. Actions, however, speak louder than words, so I'm most proud when I see managers disrupting meetings to ask if we've considered the impact on a certain group. It's important that we articulate to leaders what good looks like from a D&I perspective – it's often obvious to us in the space, but we have to be prescriptive on what we expect from executives.

**Melissa:** I'm most proud that we're becoming a community of allies – more caring and inquisitive, and in constant conversation about our lived experiences. The aim is to identify our own privilege so that we can lend our voices to help those who need a boost. Every candidate we hire is subjected to questions around D&I, because we want to signal that this is a core value.

**How do you make sure D&I stays on the agenda?**

**Melissa:** Our resource groups and development programmes have full executive sponsorship, with every leader delivering a personal diversity and belonging plan catering to the needs of their local environment. The accountability modelled by the CEO and ExCo trickles all the way through the organisation.

**Reginald:** As of this year, the key milestones in our long-term strategy are tied to financial compensation for our most senior executives. Like Airbnb, McDonald's senior leaders have communicated their individual action plans and how they're going to implement them so that DEI becomes embedded in the natural course of business.

**How would you describe the role of a Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer?**

**Renae:** I see myself as 'chief reminder' to constantly beat the D&I drum and champion other champions to march alongside me. Although my work is fun and enjoyable, a large part is also being disruptive and challenging the status quo, which isn't always convenient.

**Reginald:** My role is hugely multifaceted – I'm the diversity coach to the CEO, the diversity, equity and inclusion consultant to our senior leadership and Board, and the face of our D&I employee brand values both internally and externally.

**What are some of the biggest challenges to creating diverse and inclusive environments?**

**Reginald:** It's all well and good to broadcast that everyone has a voice, but you can't control what those voices say. You need to have strategies in place to deal with the ones that aren't in alignment with your inclusive vision.

**Renae:** Diversity of thought is even harder to accomplish than diverse representation. To maximise its benefits, leaders have to have a high tolerance for dissenting points of view, to the point that they welcome being challenged. That inherently slows down processes and execution, which seems counterintuitive for many companies.

**Melissa:** Sometimes, when businesses have formal D&I strategies in place, employees feel that they've been let off the hook. Every individual needs to take ownership and keep an eye on the metrics, so we don't risk taking steps backwards.

**What has Covid-19 taught you about the importance of D&I during a crisis?**

**Melissa:** Every member of our employee base has been differently impacted. Not everyone can take advantage of every programme we roll out, so we have to be conscious of keeping D&I front and centre by creating the space to do substantive work.

**Renae:** We're at an inflection point globally on multiple fronts. From a cultural standpoint, a political standpoint and a business survival standpoint, we're all stressed and distracted picking up the pieces from the pandemic. There's a tendency to deprioritise D&I efforts as complementary rather than critical, or standalone rather than integrated. The greatest challenge is communicating that they are an enabler to business success.

# Insights from a twenty-year career in diversity and inclusion from Asif Sadiq MBE



**Asif Sadiq MBE**  
Thought leader in D&I

Asif Sadiq MBE has had a long and rich career in D&I, leading diversity and inclusion efforts at Adidas, The Telegraph, EY financial services and the City of London police. In his keynote speech, he shared his insights from a twenty-year career spanning multiple sectors across the world.

## 1. We need to rethink the concept of D&I...

"No one person is defined by one particular dimension, or 'area' of D&I – there are multiple layers to who we are. In essence, diversity isn't about distinct groups but about every individual being something different."

## 2. ...and focus on the concept of belonging

"We must ask how we can elevate beyond traditional diversity and inclusion, and start to create an environment where individuals have a sense of belonging, where someone can bring their true self to work. When difference is celebrated, new ideas and new ways of doing things emerge, which then lead into more positivity and productivity for the organisation."

## 3. There can be no diversity without disruption

"We spend a lot of money introducing new, fancy programmes. But in many cases, all they're doing is putting a plaster on the issue. What we need to do is positively disrupt – pull back those plasters and look for the root cause of the challenge."

## 4. Data is central to understanding your colleagues

"As companies grow, you need to find out which touch points are actually pain points. To do that, you must view your data. And when you view your data, you must look at it with an intersectionality lens. You need to understand the issues affecting women, women of colour, and women of colour who are part of the LGBTQ community, for example. All these different variations need to be explored to truly understand where the gaps lie."

## 5. D&I should sit at the heart of company strategy

"Don't start a meeting and dedicate five minutes to D&I. Weave D&I into every single thing you do within the workplace. You cannot outsource your D&I efforts – they must be built internally."

## 6. Don't be afraid to show authentic leadership vulnerability

"Employees want leaders who are happy to admit they got it wrong, or that they don't know all the answers. It creates an environment where people can learn and grow together."

## 7. D&I is a business imperative

"If we do not adapt and transform to achieve that true equity and inclusion within our workplaces, we will unfortunately be left behind. For the best businesses – which attract the best candidates – diversity is a given, rather than a challenge."

## 8. It's the simple things that have the biggest impact

"You don't need to spend huge amounts of money on D&I. You don't need to come up with the next great invention. It's simple day-to-day behaviours – like sitting next to someone you don't know during lunch or encouraging everyone to contribute to a meeting – that create inclusion and can have the biggest impact."

# Reflecting on the past and looking to the future: Tea Colaianni in conversation with Keith Barr, CEO at IHG



**Tea Colaianni**  
Founder and Chair  
WiHTL



**Keith Barr**  
CEO  
IHG

Tea Colaianni sat down with long-time WiHTL supporter and Advisory Board member Keith Barr to reflect on the foundation of WiHTL, what D&I means at IHG, and their learnings from the Festival of Inclusion.

**Tea:** When I started on this journey, few CEOs were willing to take a leap of faith and sign up. When I asked you to join the advisory Board, though, you didn't hesitate to say yes. A few years on and we've brought 3 million community members into the narrative. Where do you think the sector will be in 5 years' time?

**Keith:** I think we'll see significant progress in senior leadership, maybe even gender balance. It all comes down to investment: if we focus our resources on getting women into those top roles, the gender pay gap will close itself. There's a bigger gap when it comes to ethnic diversity, but now more than ever society is watching and waiting for us to do the right thing.

**Right from our first state-of-the-nation report, you've told me that the sector needs to collaborate, not compete. Why is that so important to you?**

It's an amplifying effect – if we're all focused on it, the industry will move faster. Without that committed solidarity, the sector as a whole won't be attractive to the great diverse talent we need. We all have parts of the solution but we need to openly share with each other to keep that momentum.

**IHG recently shared an ambitious strategy to drive change for people, communities and the planet. How have your colleagues responded?**

We pledged to champion a diverse culture reflective of our local communities where everyone can thrive. People expect companies to take positions and make a difference, sometimes more so than governments. We need to do what's right for the industry, and our stand has been really well received. At the end of the day, colleagues want to work for a company that believes in them and their future in the world.

**And your shareholders? How important is D&I at the top of the food chain?**

At investor events, I'm bombarded with questions about our exact goals and how we're going to achieve them – that didn't happen three years ago. Part of running a great business is asking ourselves how to raise impact on the E and S of ESG without losing focus on the good governance cementing them. There's more investor pressure than ever before, which hopefully will lead to material progress.



# Lessons on diversity and inclusion from around the world



**MODERATED BY**  
**Jon Terry**  
Advisory Board Member  
WiHTL



**Shelley Roberts**  
Managing Director  
Compass Group Australia



**Vanessa Lefranc**  
HR Development Director  
Elior Group



**Hailing Liu**  
Legal Director  
Clyde & Co



**Hilary Sithole**  
Acquisition & Cross-sell Executive  
Paddy Power Betfair

**A critical element of progressing on D&I is knowledge sharing, and learning lessons from businesses in different sectors, or indeed, international markets. As Jon Terry summarised: “you can be inspired by something happening elsewhere.”**

## Diversity across multiple markets means sharing a global vision

Vanessa Lefranc gave an insight into driving a D&I agenda across a global business, in which different markets have varying priorities. “What’s really important for us at Elior is that we all share a common global vision and ambition on diversity. But in order to get results, every country needs to adapt their goals to suit their situation and challenges.” Practically, this manifests itself in different KPIs for each country, but ensuring that each national unit is sharing its progress to enhance company-wide learning.

## Mentoring is vital, no matter where you are in the world

The panellists agreed that mentoring is an invaluable tool for encouraging open conversation and driving up inclusion. Hailing Liu shared learnings from Clyde & Co: “We have a global mentoring initiative, which is underpinned by a specialist mentor matching software. As part of the initiative, we urge leaders to be mentors – so that they can ‘pay it forward’ and help bring out the best in someone else. We encourage people to be mentees so they can gain clearer guidance and direction on their personal and professional development. For high-potential women in particular, mentoring can be instrumental in their career.”

Hilary Sithole, who is part of the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme, shared his insight on mentoring: “mentoring has allowed me to start thinking differently about my career and start thinking differently about the kind of path that I want to take. It has helped me understand what it takes to get to the most senior levels.”

## There are lessons to be learnt on disability inclusion

In many places around the world, disability is not a high priority for businesses focusing on D&I. However, in international markets, closer attention is being paid to disability inclusion – and there are lessons to be learnt.

Shelley Roberts shared what Compass is doing to drive up disability diversity: “In Australia, one in five people are living with a disability. When you have a team of 11,000 people, that’s a large number of people living with a disability, and we knew we wanted to do more to enhance their experience.” Compass Australia’s efforts were largely influenced by a leader in the business who was personally passionate about disability inclusion. “We thought: let’s acknowledge that we have people in our workplace today who might not be feeling included, and then let’s grow and offer employment opportunity to more people with different abilities. And today we have 200 of our team members who identify as living with a disability and working with a disability. My learning from all that is find someone passionate to drive the change – these things don’t have to be top-down initiatives.”

## Network groups can empower employees to step up and speak out

Employee network groups are a central part of progressing the D&I agenda. Hailing explained how this plays out at Clyde & Co: “We have our gender equality group; our LGBT+ group; a cultural and ethnic diversity group; and a wellness group which covers mental and social wellbeing. As a firm, we encourage these different network groups so that people can find a cause that they most identify with. The idea is that when people can identify a cause and join a community, they empower themselves to speak up, engage and contribute.”

## Focus on: Compass’ Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

In Australia, there is still much work to be done to close the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Compass Group Australia has established the Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan, through which goals and targets are set to continue to drive up equality in the region.

Shelley explained: “When we started out, 3% of our team members were indigenous. Today, we have about 8% of our team who are indigenous.

“One of the most important lessons has been to constantly continue to educate and build awareness in our team. We have days together where we focus on reconciliation, and getting to know each other as human beings – mums, dads, brothers and sisters – as well as celebrating our differences.”

Compass is also focusing on its supply network, and engaging and incubating indigenous businesses. Today, Compass works with 70 indigenous companies all across Australia.

Looking ahead, Shelley shared Compass’ goals for the future: “We’ve set ourselves the target of ending malnutrition in remote communities. Being a food organisation, that’s something we know we can do. So we’re working with our clients and our partners here in Australia to make that happen. It’s a journey – one that has no end, but we continue to make progress.”

## Key takeaways from leaders around the world

**Vanessa Lefranc:** “Don’t postpone diversity because you feel it’s not the right moment. Every moment is the right one for meaningful ambition.”

**Hilary Sithole:** “Never underestimate the power of stories. They are vital in understanding people’s lives and their challenges.”

**Shelley Roberts:** “Inclusion feeds on itself. If you have a bottom-up approach to inclusion, then you add twenty different areas of focus and they will enhance each other.”

**Hailing Liu:** “The most important thing is to create an inclusive community. People need to be comfortable to show that they are different, or articulate that they need help.”

# Eugenio Pirri on how Dorchester Collection has championed LGBTQ+ rights through the years



**Eugenio Pirri**  
Chief People and Culture Officer  
Dorchester Collection

Despite only being founded in 2006, Dorchester Collection is responsible for some of the most iconic heritage hotels in the world. The group prides itself on its diverse workforce: one in five of Dorchester Collection's 3,000 employees identifies as LGBTQ+, with representation at every level of the business. Eugenio Pirri, a Stonewall Global Diversity Champion, has always championed that inclusive culture from the top – even when external challenges threatened the company's values.

Dorchester Collection's D&I journey began a decade ago in 2011, when the first company policy was established. "It really aligned to what our industry is all about – a mix of cultures, nationalities, languages and unique individuals," said Eugenio. "Our strategies link back to our core philosophy of respect". Dorchester Collection worked with the UN Human Rights Code to create actions for all sixteen protected statuses, before redoubling efforts on LGBTQ+ by partnering with Stonewall. Once the charity had audited its policies and processes, in 2019 Dorchester Collection joined the UN Standards of Conduct for Business, which centres on protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in the workplace. As part of the wider D&I strategy, data has been key to turning a philosophy into action: targets, such as gender parity at all managerial levels, provide measurable guidance, while correlating protected characteristics with staff turnover has proved a useful indicator of inclusion.

“Nothing stops you from creating the right culture where people can be themselves”

But despite its internal focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion, Dorchester Collection found itself embroiled in controversy. The group is owned by sovereign wealth fund Brunei Investment Agency, which sparked media attention and a celebrity-led boycott in 2019 when

Brunei implemented the strictest form of sharia law, legislating that 'homosexual acts' are punishable by stoning. Dorchester Collection lobbied and petitioned the government to change their laws, eventually leading to a repeal of the death penalty. "Our own company values were put to the test," recalled Eugenio, "but our ownership structure doesn't stop us from doing the right thing".

“It's one thing to work in an industry, but it's another to grow personally within it.”

The most recent iteration of Dorchester Collection's plan is called 'Education, Communication, Celebration'. The plan focuses on equipping colleagues across the world with training and knowledge about the live issues certain groups face in wider society, while allowing those individuals to tell those stories and celebrating them for being themselves. Every property is required to feed back on these three goals quarterly, but such a formalised approach is a temporary measure: "we hope that by mandating this now, in a few years' time it be a natural part of the culture".

“Networks are important, but the magic happens at that intersectionality.”

# How to respect difference and drive racial equality: a keynote speech from René Carayol MBE



GLOBAL LEADERSHIP KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
**René Carayol MBE**  
Executive Coach and EVP of ESG at Medallia

René Carayol is a world-leading executive coach and keynote speaker, having transitioned from a successful blue-chip executive career to advising some of the most influential leaders of our time on racial equity and inclusion. René shared powerful anecdotes from his own lived experience, and while only he could convey the arresting power of his story, below are some of the key points he raised.

## 1. Diversity is a fact, inclusion is a choice – no matter who you are

Incumbents are the first to feel threatened by D&I initiatives, but without them on board we can't make headway. With senior positions disproportionately filled by white men, it's critical that their voices are listened to so that they feel included in the D&I journey: "Diversity opens the door, but the hard work is making people know they'll be missed if they're not there."

## 2. Unacceptable behaviour should never be tolerated

Every one of us has a responsibility to call out microaggressions when we see them, even if they're not targeted at us. Colleagues who don't belong to underrepresented groups should use their platform to be diplomatic but firm in their workplace advocacy. "Telling short, emotive stories about other people's experiences is really hard-hitting", he suggested as one way to stand up for those who are discriminated against.

## 3. Identify your strengths and play to them

Having coached everyone from Nelson Mandela to Sir Richard Branson, René has learned valuable insights from his experiences with a wide variety of formidable leaders. Every individual is exceptional at something, so focus on finding the best person for the team. No one can be the best at everything, but our differences should complement each other.

## 4. Culture should sit at the top of the agenda

Strategy takes a back seat to culture, which is the real arena where teams and businesses sink or swim. Achieving diversity of thought is hard, but we can enrich our work by celebrating individuality. "Negativity doesn't work – optimism is a force multiplier. If you beat people up, they will never help you again, so we need that sparkling, exciting, positive vision of belonging behind us."

# Navigating the journey to becoming an anti-racist organisation



**MODERATED BY**  
**Jon Terry**  
Advisory Board Member  
WiHTL



**Nick Mackenzie**  
CEO  
Greene King



**Pauline Wilson**  
VP of Products and  
Operations  
Virgin Atlantic



**Nii Cleland**  
CEO and co-founder  
Flair



**Carly McKenna**  
Senior Legal Counsel, EMEA  
Airbnb

**The events of 2020, in particular the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, accelerated global conversations around racism. As part of this, many companies in the hospitality, travel, and leisure (HTL) sector and beyond have renewed their focus on ethnic diversity. Across the sector, businesses are looking to elevate the voices of their own Black and ethnic minority colleagues, and formulate strategies to achieve ethnic diversity.**

## Anti-racist and 'not racist' are not the same

While the law prohibits active discrimination against people due to their race or ethnicity, the deeper-rooted causes and effects of racism can be harder to see and regulate. For example, microaggressions – behaviours such as stereotyping, mispronouncing names and commenting on peoples' appearances – have a significant negative impact on the daily lives of those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

"We need to actively watch out for those tendencies in ourselves, but also call out others when we observe them," commented Nii Cleland on this point. In order to disrupt this pattern of unintentionally harmful practices, individuals and businesses need to become anti-racist. Taking accountability for your own biases is not an easy task, requiring a willingness to be uncomfortable and learn, but it's critical if we want to build a fairer economy and society.

**"It's easy to think of racism as an abstract concept, rather than something ingrained in the structure of our society we all risk contributing to"**

**Carly McKenna**

**"Unless businesses are deliberate in their intention to be inclusive, they become unintentionally exclusive"**

**Pauline Wilson**

## No one gets it right all the time

One reason people avoid discussing race and ethnicity in the workplace is the fear of 'getting it wrong' and accidentally saying something offensive. But when the topic is avoided altogether, employees and leaders from ethnic minority backgrounds may feel a burden to educate their colleagues or, worse, feel as though their identities and lived experiences have been dismissed. "People think it's offensive to ask someone how they identify, but it's actually proof that you're willing to learn and make mistakes," said Pauline Wilson. If employees from ethnic minority groups can see that their colleagues are genuinely trying to learn more about their challenges and how to solve them, it can facilitate a more inclusive and equitable working environment. "The best piece of advice I have been given is 'you're going to get this wrong, but you've got to try anyway,'" shared Nick Mackenzie.

## Make the most of feedback from employee resource groups

Formalised groups in which ethnic minority employees can share their experiences and recommendations can be a key tool in the pursuit of a truly inclusive culture. These groups should be spearheaded by executive sponsors for maximum impact.

"Diversity is the presence of differences in a given setting, but inclusion is the practice of ensuring people feel they belong once they arrive there," said Carly McKenna, who is a participant in the Ethnic Minority Future Leaders Programme. Providing a space to elevate the voices of ethnic minority employees can go a long way to redress imbalances in organisations.

**"Hopefully, these thoughts and conversations will become the norm – it won't be such an audacious or scary topic to talk about"**

**Nii Cleland**

## Data is the backbone of change

While collecting ethnicity data is a challenge in itself, measuring inclusion – particularly around racial issues – is even harder, as employees may be wary of revealing their perspectives if they don't feel their workplace is a safe space.

Data consultancy Flair conducts surveys and situational judgement tests to pinpoint how aware employees are of racial issues, what stereotypes might exist, and how prevalent racism might be in the workplace. By using tools relevant to employees of all ethnic backgrounds, Flair can paint an evidence-based picture of which ethnic groups feel their ethnicity is the biggest barrier to inclusion. Armed with comprehensive data on the ethnic makeup of their organisation, leaders are better placed to create a targeted and goal-oriented D&I roadmap.

**"We were very keen to take our time, learn, listen and put together a proper strategy instead of denying we have a problem"**

**Nick Mackenzie**

## Leaving the past behind: a Greene King case study

Greene King CEO Nick Mackenzie shared his experience of June 2020, when concerns were raised about the pub group's historical links to the slave trade.

"Greene King's founder had been involved in the slave trade," Nick said, "and the business had never been very open about it." The company condemned its history as "inexcusable", pledging to strengthen D&I activity and invest in ethnic minority communities. "I'm sad to say that we needed the jolt, but it forced us to sit down and come up with a truly anti-racist strategy," said Nick. "We can't change the past, but we can influence the future".

Greene King's first step was to bring together a roundtable of stakeholders from the Black community, to form a listening group. A key learning from the roundtable was that it was not enough to simply not be racist.

The company commissioned a full D&I audit and brought in an external consultancy to help educate the executive team. In the understanding that talk requires action, Greene King's leaders took the decision to rebrand four pubs with names that had racist connotations.

Greene King also established employee listening groups. "People from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds have been forthcoming because they've been given a safe platform to talk," said Nick, "my hope is that we continue to be brave in our conversations, and the majority of our people join us on that journey."

# “Don’t be a bystander”: the testimony of Holocaust survivor Mala Tribich MBE



MODERATED BY  
**Paul Flaum**  
CEO  
Bourne Leisure



SPEAKER  
**Mala Tribich MBE**

In this session, Mala Tribich MBE shared her incredible story of living through the holocaust, and spoke compellingly about the need for vigilance and kindness in the face of prejudice. Her testimony was immensely moving, and left the audience reflecting on the power of education in fighting discrimination.

Mala was born Mala Helfgott in 1930 in Piotrków Trybunalski, Poland. When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, Mala’s life completely changed and her family were forced to live in the ghetto.

It was arranged that Mala and her cousin, Idzia Klein, would be smuggled out of the ghetto to pass as Christian children with a family in the city of Częstochowa. After months of hiding Mala was taken back to Piotrków where her father was waiting for her in the attic of a flour mill with Idzia’s father. On seeing Mala he turned white with shock and said, “Where is my daughter?” Idzia was never seen again.

Shortly after Mala’s return to the ghetto, there were further round ups during which her mother and eight-year-old sister were taken. All these people were murdered in the local forest.

Soon afterwards Mala had to undertake the responsibility of caring for her five-year-old cousin Ann Helfgott, whose mother was deported to a concentration camp.

When the ghetto was liquidated, Mala became a slave labourer until November 1944, when the remaining Jews were deported. Mala was separated from her father and brother and together with Ann was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. After about 10 weeks they were transported in cattle trucks to Bergen-Belsen where conditions were appalling, and Mala contracted typhus.

At the time of the liberation by the British army, Mala was very ill. She was transferred to a hospital/children’s home and it was many weeks before she recovered. Three months later she was sent, with a large group of children, to Sweden where she spent nearly two years. Not expecting any of her family to be alive, Mala was surprised to receive a letter from her brother Ben in England, the only other member of her close family to have survived. In March 1947, Mala came to England to be reunited with Ben.

Mala learnt English, attended secretarial college and within a year was working in an office. In 1949, she met Maurice, whom she married in 1950. Whilst her children were growing up, Mala studied and gained a degree in Sociology from the University of London. Today Mala has two children and three grandchildren.

Reflecting on Mala’s journey, Paul Flaum suggested that “The way to really step change inclusion and diversity is through inspiration and education.” Mala concurred, telling the audience that “I tell my story because I want people to be aware of what prejudice and discrimination can lead to.”

Paul asked Mala to share one message with the listeners. “My message to everyone on this call,” she said, “is to be vigilant, be nice to one another and fight prejudice. Don’t be a bystander – life is short so be active and strive to be a good citizen while you can.”

# Personal best: insights on disability inclusion from a Paralympian



**Marc Woods**  
Paralympics Gold Medal Winner  
and Founding Partner at Equiida

Marc Woods has had a more varied career than most. At 17, a bone cancer diagnosis spurred him to become more serious about his competitive swimming, and just 18 months after a leg amputation and chemotherapy he was chosen to represent Great Britain at the Paralympics. 12 Paralympic and 21 World and European championship medals later, Marc considers it his life’s mission to discover his potential and prove wrong those who imposed limits on him. In this session, Marc shared his learnings on resilience, self-reflection and inclusion from a 17-year career in sport.

## 1. Don’t rely on misconceptions

Humans often make baseless judgements – especially about the capacity of people with disabilities. Companies should consciously avoid relying on misconceptions about what those with disabilities can or can’t do.

## 2. Broaden your understanding

One in five of the working-aged population in the UK has a disability, but only half of that group is employed. “Sticking your head in the sand isn’t going to get you anywhere,” warned Marc. Instead, leaders should take time to do their own research and have conversations. Experiences can’t be inclusive for all unless people with disabilities have space to give their input.

## 3. Take a childlike approach to honesty

Marc posited that children are intensely curious and unafraid to ask questions, and that they judge people on what they can, rather than can’t, do. As a business, self-reflection is tough but crucial. “If you have honest conversations with people from diverse groups, rather than justifying the problems away, you can come up with some solutions,” suggested Marc.

## 4. Be completely inclusive

Diversity initiatives can often stop at gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation, with disability often overlooked, or else far lower down the D&I agenda. Moreover, where businesses do have a disability inclusion strategy, they are sometimes not completely inclusive. “It’s too easy to focus on what we can see when it comes to diversity,” said Marc, “but many disabilities aren’t visible.”

# The HTL sector can play an active role in driving social mobility



**MODERATED BY**  
**Tunde Banjoko OBE**  
Founder  
UK Social Mobility Awards



**Meeta Zakharia**  
Head of HR & Inclusion  
McDonald's



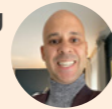
**Hannah Thomson**  
CPO  
Travelodge



**Donna Catley**  
CPO  
Compass Group



**Rt Hon Justine Greening**  
Former Minister for Women  
and Equalities, Founder of  
the Social Mobility Pledge



**Dave Davies**  
Business Development Manager  
Metropolitan Pub Company

**Over the past few years, social mobility has emerged as a key area of focus for diversity in the hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL) sector. This stands to reason: the HTL sector reaches customers from every socio-economic group, and prioritising social mobility can present invaluable opportunities to reflect the customer base and improve the bottom line. Moreover, businesses have the power to incite real change in society and level the playing field for all.**

## Levelling up is a commercial imperative

Put simply, prioritising social mobility allows organisations to better serve their customers, by taking into account varied perspectives and worldviews. This is especially pressing in the hospitality sector, where ability to succeed is not dependent on education or intellect, but rather resilience, grit and interpersonal skills.

In the short-term, focusing on social mobility could provide the solution for the shrinking talent supply to the hospitality industry since Covid-19 and Brexit. As Donna Catley described: "There's a battle for talent going on in hospitality. Many companies will have enjoyed a surplus of relatively low-cost labour from Europe. This is no longer going to be the case, which means we have to up our game and really reach all the corners of the country to ensure we've got the best talent coming into our businesses."

## Businesses can be an engine for social good

The panel agreed that the hospitality sector can play an integral role in levelling the playing field across society. As Justine Greening put it: "I think we're really in the foothills of innovation about just how much companies can do to help this country level up. If businesses think carefully and act smartly, they can be a real force for good."

McDonald's UK & Ireland is in many ways blazing the trail in the UK when it comes levelling up. Through a series of initiatives focused on social mobility, the business is redressing the imbalance that exist in the communities in which it operates. Meeta Zakharia commented that: "all of us can play our part. We've seen some really positive results in our franchise communities. One in five of our franchisees started out on the front-line and has progressed up through the ranks. This sort of development has a real impact within the local communities."

## Small steps have a big impact

There are a number of practical steps businesses can take. The panel identified a few key elements to driving up the social mobility agenda:

- Rethinking recruitment processes to deprioritise previous experience and education and reach as wide a pool as possible
- Focusing on training schemes to upskill new recruits
- Refreshing progression and development schemes to support those who might not put themselves forward for promotions
- Highlighting role models who are an example of social mobility
- Generally fostering an inclusive culture

## Progress on social mobility requires leadership from the top

"It does require leadership," said Justine. "No business can change the whole world, but my advice to leaders is to look at the levelling up goals and identify where you think you can make the biggest difference and which goals tie to what you want to achieve as a company."

Dave Davies agreed, saying that: "This absolutely has to be an executive leader agenda with Board-level commitments. It is not a PR exercise, and not something that can be tackled overnight – the plan has to be long-term, and businesses need to keep going and stick to their plan."

## Making the case for levelling the playing field is a challenge in itself

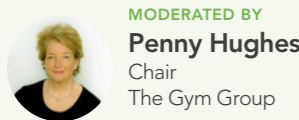
Hannah Thomson suggested businesses can do more to foster a sense of urgency around the need for greater social mobility. "It's about the way we present it," she said, "we need to present the emotional case alongside the data and to show people a vision of the future. We're all thriving businesses now, but unless we focus on diversity and social mobility then we won't be relevant in five or ten years' time. If you really critically appraise where you are currently and your gaps, it will demonstrate for most companies that it's commercially unwise to be exclusive."

## The importance of stories to lift people up

"We have to identify good people to welcome into our organisations, regardless of their background," said Tunde Banjoko OBE. Relatable and personal stories from senior leaders can play a vital role in encouraging people to apply to and progress in a business – especially for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Meeta explained that stories and role models are integral to the levelling-up agenda at McDonald's: "We're really ready to utilise the stories of our own people," she said. "All of our 130,000 employees have their own stories to tell. The more we draw on those stories, especially from leaders who aren't afraid to give insight into their background, the more the barriers fall down and we improve on inclusion."

# Diversifying the Board: when and why diversity improves your Board's performance



**MODERATED BY**  
**Penny Hughes**  
Chair  
The Gym Group



**HOSTED BY**  
**Javier Nieto Vicente**  
CMO  
Xplor



**Wais Shaifta**  
NED  
The Gym Group



**Moni Mannings**  
NED  
easyJet



**Simon Vincent**  
EVP and President EMEA  
Hilton

To round off the Festival of Inclusion, Penny Hughes was joined by an illustrious panel to discuss the benefits of a more diverse Board, and the role of the Board in supporting the D&I agenda.

**Penny Hughes:** For the last 25 years I've been a Board director across 15 different businesses, in different sectors and different geographies. I've seen first-hand the extraordinary power that can be brought by having multiple perspectives around the table. Simon, can you please share your thoughts on the value of diversity?

**Simon Vincent:** As a global business, if you're going to be successful in providing hospitality to customers that are multicultural, and of diverse ethnicity, gender and abilities, then you have to be able to relate and empathise with them.

It's all about connection. Your team members must reflect the diverse customer base that they serve. And that's at all levels in the organisation, from the Board and the executive committee, right the way down to the frontline.

Thankfully, globalisation, education, travel have all led to an increase in aspiration and opportunity, and with this business should put renewed focus on equality and inclusivity. Many of the institutional barriers to diversity have broken down – but as an industry it's important to recognise that there's still a long way to go.

**Moni,** as someone who has championed women and ethnic diversity on Boards, what barriers have you overcome? Can you share your personal journey?

**Moni Mannings:** I'm a portfolio NED across a variety of different sectors, but I'm also a cisgender woman of Pakistani Muslim heritage with a migrant working-class South London upbringing. I arrived in England at the age of eight speaking no English, and was the first person in my extended family to attend a British university. I married relatively young, and I've got two adult daughters – both of whom I raised with my husband, while I was building my career. I mention these things about myself because at almost every stage of my working life, one or more of these elements has been a barrier to progression. When I started out as a lawyer in the eighties, there was an environment where difference was not celebrated. In fact, I had to proactively emphasise my similarities and minimise my differences.

But by the time I started my plural career in 2011, the Davies review on women on Boards had been published and my gender became part of my Board attractiveness. It wasn't that I'd suddenly become cleverer, smarter or more capable, but that Boards started thinking differently about the benefits of gender diversity and that did help me on my Board journey.

The past year has done something similar with ethnicity. Nothing I'd experienced had ever shown me that my ethnicity was useful (or frankly even neutral) in terms of career development. I'd experienced covert racism and microaggressions. But now, the whole conversation about the value of difference has opened up – especially at Board level. It would be naïve to say it's a fully mature conversation... but it's started.

**Wais,** what perspectives can you share about how diversity helps build stronger and more sustainable businesses?

**Wais Shaifta:** I'd echo Simon's point around connection. It's about connecting with your employees, with your customers, with your suppliers, and with the wider society.

I saw this happen when I was working at Just Eat. We were sending in middle aged Caucasian men in suits to restaurants as part of our supply acquisition efforts. But the restaurant base at Just Eat is made up of many different ethnic backgrounds, so taking this approach created an instant barrier.

But then we thought: what if we send a Bengali sales representative into a Bengali restaurant? And once we did that the barrier was instantly broken down, and the supply of our restaurant acquisition grew immensely. This was a powerful moment for us that allowed us to understand the barriers in place – and in the end, we could send a Caucasian man into a Bengali restaurant and it would be successful, because we'd spent years understanding what the barriers were, how to overcome them and how to connect with the restaurant owners. And that really made us understand how diversity can support the whole organisation.

“I'm already seeing the power that a diverse Board can have in empowering the executive team to make the right decisions.”

Penny Hughes

**Absolutely.** I'm already seeing the power that a diverse Board can have in empowering the executive team to make the right decisions. As many people know, we recently appointed Wais and Rio Ferdinand to our non-executive Board, and at our most recent Board meeting, the HR team presented a raft of new and enlightened HR policies. These policies had been bubbling under the surface for a while, but in making our Board more diverse we had indicated what it is we value. This had empowered the executive team to bring these sorts of progressive policies forward.

**Simon,** what practical steps are you taking at Hilton to remain focused on diversity and inclusion?

**Simon:** You've got to keep focusing on the topic at all levels of the organisation. At Hilton, each executive committee member chairs one of our team member resource groups, and insights from these groups are reported directly into the Board.

**Moni,** how can non-executive directors make sure that businesses are not perpetuating bias in their processes?

**Moni:** As non-execs, it's about being curious and asking the difficult questions: why is this an all-male candidate list? Why have they all got a university background? Why do we not know our ethnicity pay gap? Why are we not disclosing it? We have to ask the questions, and then devise ways to get the data to find the answers.

**Wais,** you're a 'next generation' leader, and your Board seat at The Gym Group is your first NED role. Can you talk a bit about the significance of this?

**Wais:** As a man in his thirties I'm really part of the customer demographic that The Gym Group wants to reach. So sharing my stories and my challenges around the Board table can be incredibly valuable. And also from a role models perspective, I'm a 34-year-old from an Afghan background – possibly the first FTSE NED from an Afghan background – and it's important for people to be able to see me in my position on a PLC Board. I think it's critical to relay that story to as many people in the community, and show that if you show up, come to the table and do the work, there's nothing stopping you from getting on the Board.

# About us

## About WiHTL

WiHTL is the most impactful collaboration community of leaders across the Hospitality, Travel and Leisure sector and is devoted to increasing women's and ethnic minorities' representation at all levels and in particular in leadership positions across the HTL sector. We believe that through collaboration we can amplify the impact of individual diversity initiatives, together we can have a bigger, louder voice for the good of the industry. Our mission is to positively impact 5 million women and ethnic minorities globally by 2025.

For more information, please visit [www.wihtl.com/home](http://www.wihtl.com/home)

## About The MBS Group

For more than 30 years, The MBS Group has been a leading sector-specialist executive search firm advising all consumer-facing industries, with a particular focus in the hospitality, travel and leisure industry. Clients consider us to be the partner of choice when searching for critical leadership roles that make a difference. We work at board level and on executive positions across all functions of strategic importance.

For more information, visit [www.thembsgroup.co.uk](http://www.thembsgroup.co.uk)

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# With thanks to the Partners of the Festival of Inclusion



At Xplor we help businesses succeed by giving them the software, payments and commerce-enabling solutions they need to thrive. We know our clients and partners because we once were our clients. We understand their industry, customers and unique goals, so that we can help them overcome obstacles and leave a lasting legacy. Together, we supercharge success.



The MBS Group is one of the world's leading executive search firms operating exclusively in the Retail and Consumer industries, and the most successful sector-specialist firm in the UK. Our unparalleled sector knowledge and global network of contacts, and our passion and commitment to the highest level of client service, enable us to place the very best candidates in companies around the world.



With offices in 155 countries and more than 284,000 people, PwC are among the leading professional services networks in the world. We help organisations and individuals create the value they are looking for, by delivering quality in Assurance, Tax and Advisory services.



HR DataHub is changing the way companies access external benchmarking data. Over 250 companies have now joined representing 1.4m employees covering all major sectors. Our platform provides benchmark data for all areas of HR including Reward, Diversity, Women in Leadership, Employee Relations, Recruitment, Engagement, Talent, Learning & Development, HR Efficiency, and Gender Pay Gap.



Q5 are award-winning experts in organisational change, helping to build better businesses across the world. Born out of the 2009 financial crisis, they believed they could offer something different to help global businesses respond more effectively to the challenges confronting them. Q5 was set up to be nimble enough to work across different sectors and locations around the world and create results based on the specific needs of our clients, not slavishly pushing off-the-shelf solutions.



"If you don't have your health, you don't have anything".

This is a centuries-old truism we take seriously in FHH. We are, first and foremost, a wellness company. We seek to manufacture, market, and distribute superior products that provide not only good value to consumers, but also improve their lives.



SD Worx brings people solutions to life. So companies of any size can turn Human Resources into a source of value for the business and the people in it. Our people solutions span the entire employee journey, from getting people paid to attracting, rewarding, and developing the talent who make your business succeed.



Flair is a black-owned people analytics company, helping organisations measure and build anti-racist cultures. Using Flair's anonymous survey, dashboard and recommendations, their clients are able to gather the correct data on how anti-racist their culture is. This then guides informed decisions to counter racial biases within organisations.



Placed is a mobile-first recruitment app that enables swift, meaningful recruitment at the tap of a button. With a sophisticated matching algorithm, Placed connects forward-thinking employers with go-getter candidates that are aligned with their values and culture.



Clyde & Co is a leading global law firm. With more than 2,500 legal professionals operating from over 50 offices and associated offices across six continents, we offer a comprehensive range of legal services and advice to businesses operating at the heart of global trade and commerce.

Demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the hospitality and leisure sectors, our global hotels, hospitality and leisure team count household names among our clients.



Bright Horizons is proud to have been caring for working families for over 30 years. It is our shared mission to provide innovative work/life solutions that help children, families and employers to work together to be at their very best.

Our services to employers include workplace nurseries, back-up care for children, adults and the elderly, return to work coaching, consultancy and a range of work/life supports.



Equiida is unlocking the power of difference one leader at a time. By integrating our diverse lived experience with our expertise in organisational psychology, executive development, succession planning and cultural evolution, we build leaders, companies and communities that embody, celebrate and leverage difference.

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