

# REPRESENTATION & INCLUSION IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

#AREYOU REPRESENTED



## REPORT



BY THE  
ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP  
FOR TEXTILES AND FASHION

JULY 20TH 2021

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# ABOUT THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR TEXTILES AND FASHION

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Textiles and Fashion (T&F APPG), chaired by Dr Lisa Cameron MP, was re-established in 2018 to promote the UK fashion industry, supporting and championing new design, British heritage brands, fashion manufacturing, retail and creative talent, as well as business development, and trade.

## All-Party Parliamentary Group for Textiles and Fashion Members:

- Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Chair
- Martin Docherty-Hughes, MP
- Helen Grant, MP
- Carolyn Harris, MP
- Sharon Hodgson, MP
- John McNally MP,
- Stephen Timms, MP
- Craig Tracey, MP
- Baroness Uddin
- Baroness Lola Young of Hornsey
- Baron Vaizey of Didcot

# FOREWORDS



As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Textiles and Fashion, I am delighted to see this report, addressing representation and inclusion in the fashion industry. This industry is a fantastic asset to the UK economy, the largest of our creative sector, generating almost 1m jobs pre-pandemic and acting as an important employer across manufacturing, retail and fashion professional roles across the four nations of the UK. From Scottish cashmere, to Welsh denim, from Northern Irish dressmaking, to Savile Row suiting, the UK fashion sector is a global leader, both in heritage brands and sustainable design innovation. I view this APPG as an important voice for industry within the UK parliament and my role as key to raising the reputation and supporting the talent of our brilliant UK designers to parliamentary colleagues. From meetings with Ministers, to raising questions to the Prime Minister, during the course of my Chairship, we have seen a wider appreciation of the value of this industry by parliamentary colleagues and a keen interest in our meetings across manufacturing, exports, design and innovation.

This report into Inclusion & Representation looks at the role of the fashion professional and the impacts that a reported lack of diversity has, not only on the individual, but also the economic impacts on the business revenue of brands and on the wider economy. But this is not just an economic impact, it also has social and wellbeing implications, all of which this paper not only outlines, but offers solutions to address.

It is my hope that this paper is read widely, both by industry and Government, and that our recommendations serve as a roadmap towards an even more inclusive, representative and successful UK fashion industry in the future.

**Dr Lisa  
Cameron MP**  

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**Chair of the  
All-Party  
Parliamentary  
Group for  
Textiles and  
Fashion  
July 20th 2021**



Our quest for beauty has lain at the heart of civilisation for millennia. Creating, showcasing and analysing aesthetic beauty is an intrinsic part of what makes us human. The fashion industry we see today, for all its disparate parts, is the cultural legacy of humanity's obsession with all things beautiful. From the glossy images captured in magazines, to the clothes we wear every day, fashion is about defining beauty, harnessing artistic freedom and seeking empowerment. It's a living celebration of who we are and who we can become.

However, there has been a historical tendency for beauty standards — the very idea of what constitutes beauty — to descend into a realm that's inflexible, oppressive and unattainable. Rather than promoting individuality, fashion has often become a negative force, imposing dictatorial (and sometimes dangerous) mandates on how we must look. Mandates that have traditionally ignored, erased or silenced minority perspectives — in terms of race, ability, gender, age and religion.

As a fashion journalist with a physical disability, I made my first steps into the industry in 2017. A time when conversations around diversity and fashion were starting to effloresce and yield some visible results — in part, precipitated by the arrival of Edward Enninful as Editor-in-Chief of British Vogue, and a wider cultural awakening to the shameful power that unconscious bias has wielded over us.

Through my journalism work, I've reported on topics such as whether diversity in fashion is simply a trend or a long-standing movement, retail accessibility and the rise in adaptive fashion (clothing designed specifically for people with disabilities). I have raised awareness about the importance of inclusion, placing a spotlight on underrepresented issues and fighting the damaging stigmas that still surround disability.

During this time, it's become clear to me that diversity isn't just about who we see in front of the camera. The faces we see in the media and on the

catwalks are, in blunt terms, the tip of the iceberg. We require more diverse voices leading from behind the camera — in positions of creative authority, making business decisions or shaping the way fashion is communicated through the media. We'll see positive change happening organically if there's more diversity at all tiers of the fashion industry. But to achieve this required level of representation entails hard work, support and expert guidance, such as this ground-breaking report by Fashion Roundtable.

Creativity and policymaking are viewed as distinctly separate spheres. They are, ostensibly, seen to be antagonistic forces. After all, why would a free-spirited, creative mind want to be constrained by the rigmarole of legislation? And, on the reverse, why should politicians feel compelled to engage with a domain that is so fluid, and has traditionally been seen as superfluous to public life? It's for this reason, we've rarely stopped to consider the immense value that a collaborative, joined-up approach could bring to each separate domain — building a link between policymakers and an industry which represents £35bn of UK GDP.

For me, the matter extends beyond numbers and commercial incentives. Achieving greater representation in fashion is a moral imperative. We must challenge the systems that tell us, time and time again, that beauty is found in archetypal norms. Through the work of Fashion Roundtable, policymaking can help to facilitate the fashion industry's move towards positive action and establish a unified commitment to inclusion. We are optimistic that this report will offer an essential framework for action — from achieving greater protection for workers and safeguarding against harassment, to laying the foundations for a strong infrastructure that holds businesses accountable for systemic prejudices.

True representation is about authenticity, empathy and collaboration. In fashion and politics, we must do everything to ensure that a full spectrum of identities are heard, valued and showcased in the most creative of ways. This is where real beauty lies.

**Lottie Jackson**  
 Journalist,  
 Disability  
 Activist and  
 Editor, Fashion  
 Roundtable

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Being a part of such an important cause like this, brings me hope.

As the Fashion Director of Fashion Roundtable, it is vital that I totally step up to the cause of inclusion. This has been such an ugly word to the fashion industry for decades and now we have had enough. Inclusion can no longer be ignored in the success and stability of every fashion brand.

Statistics do not lie. We know from the data that the person of colour spends double, sometimes triple the amount of money on clothes. Why? Because they must. We must. We are constantly the most judged on our appearances, which means we have no choice but to look the part, at all times to represent and to be successful. People of colour will be dismissed, ignored, and disregarded for an equal opportunity. I know this, from personal experience.

Meanwhile, because of this social pressure, we spend more on clothes than any other social group. This is business, and if fashion brands continue to ignore this issue of disregarding their biggest consumer they will lose - completely - especially now, that all black owned businesses are on an all time rise.

At the end of the day, just do the numbers!

**Karen Binns**

**British Fashion Council Diversity Steering Group Fashion Director, Fashion Roundtable, Room Mentoring Advisory Council.**

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The fashion industry has enormous power, communicating intended and unintended messages about identity and cultural relevance. As studies show, repetitive proliferation of narrow and unachievable body and beauty ideals found in editorial image, catwalk performance and advertising, creates negative outcomes for audiences young and old across the gender spectrum. Further study can attest that a curated multiplicity of diverse humans presented in our fashion media, delivers many positive benefits.

The same can be said for the teams and leadership groups operating within the industry itself. Despite multiple findings for business efficacy, still the white, androcentric, able-bodied, cis-gender, binary conforming viewpoint dominates. Fashion education, forced to acknowledge the huge contribution of Black culture and style to our industry, scrambles to address the shocking deficit of Black and Brown academics in fashion institutions, (and indeed our industry), nationwide. This disservice to all learners is exposed. Our students ready to purchase a fit-for-purpose degree-level education and scouting for diverse representation amongst university staff, will find a woeful imbalance with nearly 16,000 white male professors compared to well under 50 women of colour occupying the same educational rank.

But what of top-down business responsibility, purpose and integrity? After 40 years in fashion, observing business leaders entrusted with self-regulation, yet choosing to abdicate all moral responsibility in pursuit of quarterly profit return, I conclude that vital pro-social advance must be embedded within corporate governance by stakeholders with vision. As this report makes clear, there are new and untapped sources for business expansion requiring a wider variety of perspectives. Attention to progress and intention to swiftly engage, involves transformational leadership from the highest level. This then poses the ultimate question: Are the leaders currently holding such power – the right ones?

**Caryn Franklin MBE**

**Member of Representation and Inclusion Advisory Committee Visiting Professor of Diverse Selfhood, Kingston School of Art and FACE Council member.**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The T&F APPG embarked on an inquiry exploring diversity and opportunity in the fashion industry in 2019, bringing together an Advisory Committee of business leaders and academics with a combination of expertise across the fashion industry and policy, as well as diversity and inclusion. The Advisory Committee alongside the T&F APPG secretariat, Fashion Roundtable, conducted parliamentary evidence sessions, as well as an online survey, launched at London Fashion Week in September 2019, with 337 respondents, ranging from students, to consumers and the fashion industry. The contributing voices were fashion consumers, fashion creatives (including designers and creative directors, models and model agents, and fashion educators).

The report explores the issues of exclusion, as well as the opportunities for economic, cultural and social inclusion for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and LGBTQ+ communities within the fashion industry, raising the profile of issues that have both direct and indirect impact on the entire sector. The report aims to encourage conversations between parliamentarians and those working and consuming within the fashion industry. It was agreed that the T&F APPG would look at a broad overview of experiences, accepting that it would never be able to cover all aspects or all types of discrimination. Therefore the aim was to set the stage for further and more detailed reports. For the purposes of this paper, references to the 'fashion industry' are specific to fashion professions (including design, creative direction, styling, modelling and agenting) as well as fashion marketing and fashion education; it does not include manufacturing and retail work.

# KEY FINDINGS

The T&F APPG embarked on an inquiry exploring diversity and opportunity in the fashion industry in 2019, bringing together an Advisory Committee of business leaders and academics with a combination of expertise across the fashion industry and policy, as well as diversity and inclusion.

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The report addresses three key areas of diversity and inclusion: disability, race and LGBTQ+, while acknowledging the urgent need for further research on more areas, which will form future work by the T&F APPG's secretariat Fashion Roundtable.

**1 DISCRIMINATION PERVADES THE FASHION INDUSTRY**  
Discrimination and under-representation in the fashion industry is extensive, mirroring wider society in its impacts. This is frequently structural and presents obstacles to people both entering and progressing through the industry. It was depicted to the T&F APPG in wage disparities between ethnic groups, in recruitment, and also through the chain of command. Meanwhile, there is limited data to give an accurate picture of how many people with disabilities are employed within the fashion sector. It is known, however, that in the general population, individuals with disabilities are less likely to be employed than able-bodied people. People with disabilities have an employment rate that is 28.8% lower than that of people who are not people with disabilities - a difference that is referred to as the disability employment gap<sup>1</sup>. Where people with disabilities are employed, they are more likely to work part time, earn less and be under-represented in higher up, senior positions than people without disabilities<sup>2</sup>. The systemic under-representation of minority groups is holding the industry back,

financially, and creatively, and work needs to be done if these issues are to be addressed.

A consistent theme throughout the process of collating this report, was that of the exceptionalism in all of those giving evidence. In order to achieve career or academic success, they all shared details of knowing that they had to work harder than their able bodied, heterosexual white counterparts. This echoes the findings of the government's Ethnicity Pay Gap Report, March 2021, which shows that in 2020, the median ethnicity pay gap, (the difference between the midpoints of the average hourly pay) of BAME and non-BAME staff is 34.8%, while the gap widens in bonus pay to 44.2%<sup>3</sup>. Meaning that while many of the evidence interviewees spoke of having to work harder than their white colleagues, they are not being rewarded for that hard work and those extra hours.

- Discriminatory practices were reported to be ingrained into everyday working life, from the management of working briefs to broader client relationships. It was present in fashion education, from

student experiences, to the challenges that academic staff face in post. It was reported in the structuring of creative jobs and in the allocation of duties.

- There were a large number of examples of institutionalised racism present, from recruitment and progression, right through to the provision for Black, ESEA, Asian or mixed-race models working on shoots or in shows and in creative and managerial roles.
- People with disabilities are under-represented in all sectors. Ableism was reported in the lack of training, and sense of tokenism when people with disabilities were employed (e.g. only being cast for special campaigns).
- Different forms of gender discrimination were also recorded, these are linked to size and body shaming, and also to prejudice against expressions of gender identity other than the gender binary (trans and non-binary).
- Islamophobia was reported in relation to dress practices and how markets identified as Muslim are discussed.

- Across all sectors there came accounts of everyday objectifying, unethical, and damaging treatment of staff that were all linked to their minority status within business or educational relationships.

- **83%** of the evidence submissions believed that the government should play a role in demanding better representation and inclusion in the fashion industry.

- **75.4%** of those surveyed believed that the fashion industry does not represent a spectrum of diverse bodies and identities.

- **88.1%** of those surveyed believed that images produced by the fashion industry do not represent a spectrum of different bodies and identities.

- **87.5%** of those surveyed do not feel represented in advertising campaigns, fashion shoots and on the catwalk

- **94.4%** of those surveyed think it is important to see bodies like their own reflected in media images.

- **90.5%** of those surveyed stated that if a fashion brand has a good reputation for being inclusive (i.e. catering to marginalised people and showing a diverse range of bodies in adverts), then this would motivate them to purchase from those brands.

- **83.7%** of those surveyed stated that if a fashion brand is shown to be non-inclusive, this would impact on their decision to shop with them.

- Whereas **76%** of those surveyed believe that fashion imagery should combine fantasy with real life, only 4% believe that the imagery should be purely fantasy and 16.3% believe that fashion imagery should be based purely on real life, showcasing diverse selfhoods.

- **68%** of those surveyed stated that they had experienced or witnessed discrimination in the fashion industry based on appearance or beliefs, with the largest group of those surveyed saying this was based on body image at 73.4% with ethnicity being the next highest reason at 49.2%, followed by age at 48.6%, disability at 48%, gender at 27% and religious expression at 17.6%.

- **82.8%** of those surveyed believed that the government should play a role in demanding better inclusion and representation from the fashion industry.

## 2 THE INDUSTRY IS MISSING OUT ON POTENTIAL REVENUE.

A recurrent and striking theme that emerged from all levels of the industry, and all sectors, is that many companies are ignoring the opportunities for greater revenue streams from marginalised groups, which in most cases would be considerable. The collective spending power of ethnic minorities in the UK is estimated to be worth £300bn<sup>4</sup>. The spending power of people living with disabilities is £249bn<sup>5</sup>, yet representation for people with disabilities in the fashion industry advertising is just 0.01-0.02%<sup>6</sup>. The industry does not utilise the talent from marginalised professionals, both at entry level and from those who are experienced. A varied workforce would offer a significant contribution as research suggests that more diverse teams are more profitable and would change the quality of the industry if deployed consistently<sup>7</sup>.

### 3 SUSTAINED STRUCTURAL CHANGE IS NEEDED

Attempts at widening inclusion and countering discrimination are present across the industry. There has been some success and this needs to be acknowledged. While many initiatives are indeed celebrated, evidence given suggested that many people in marginalised groups see the 'diversity industry' as being superficial. Despite 'diversity initiatives' and 'unconscious bias training', participants noted that decision-making structures, and the staffing at strategic levels of management ultimately remain unchanged. 'Representation' does not mean recruiting underrepresented people who will be complicit with discriminatory policies.

Negative attitudes to workers with disabilities must be addressed and eliminated. According to the disability charity Scope<sup>8</sup>, 1 in 3 people see people with disabilities as being less productive than people without disabilities. There remain false assumptions about what people with disabilities can and cannot do. Changing attitudes towards workers with disabilities is also vital to mitigating

potential bullying and harassment towards them. 'BAME' (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) as a term has some general applicability, but overall it obscures the effect of different structural and institutional racism. Sustained inclusion is needed and this requires strategic support for change.

It was out of the scope of this inquiry to address national government policy on diversity and inclusion to make recommendations on existing legislation. However over the course of the APPG evidence research the consistent themes expressed highlighted these issues, which while they are out of the scope of this report are highlighted here:

The Government Equalities Office to address specific inequalities under-represented in the fashion industry by:

**a)** Moving away from the categorisation system of BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) to one that recognises the social and economic structures that reproduce and enforce discrimination linked to race and ethnic background. A rethink of equalities is recommended, looking at the particular experience of different ethnic groups and how they experience discrimination individually.

This approach will improve issues of erasure caused by one 'blanket' term and should also be applied to discrimination against gender identities, abilities and social backgrounds.

**b)** Revisiting the Race Relations Act and creating clear legislation to recognise discrimination against ethnicity, especially in relation to appearance in the workplace or within educational institutions.

**c)** Creating clear legislation to recognise non-binary and gender expansive identities through amendments to the Gender Recognition Act (2004).

**d)** Develop separate legislation to protect people with disabilities from discrimination, rather than being reliant on the combined Equality Act (2010). Disability is currently included with other protected characteristics in the Equality Act (2010). The act of merging the original Disability Discrimination Act into a single Equality Act has led to a loss of focus on disability discrimination and a widespread feeling of a loss of rights for people with disabilities.

### 4 THE INDUSTRY IS SEGREGATED

Many of those who gave evidence to the inquiry explained that

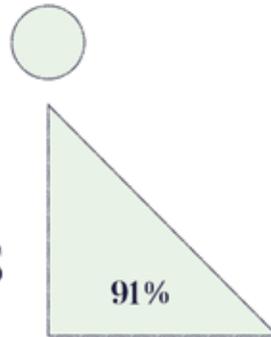
they had to 'go freelance' in order to avoid perceived discriminatory working conditions they experience within companies. This and a lack of promotion or permanent contract positions being offered to those who gave evidence, as a consistent theme of the oral evidence. This means that in some situations not only are larger enterprises relying on outsourcing for any work that speaks to, or which represents, marginalised groups, they are also not promoting the teams within their organisation who could better. This separating out of talent creates an outsourcing culture and reveals a resignation that the situation will never change.

### 5 LEADERSHIP NEEDS TO ACCEPT THE SITUATION AND CHANGE ACCORDINGLY

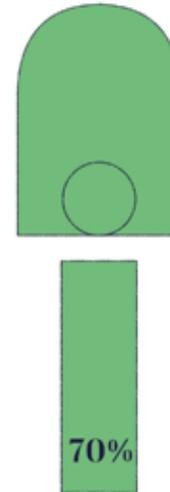
There needs to be a broader recognition, and *acceptance* at the highest levels, as to how racism and discrimination operate within the fashion industry. This will take time, and as the McGregor-Smith Review pointed out, will be challenging<sup>9</sup>. There are, however, agencies and organisations that already exist that can help and assist to manage change here.

# KEY STATS

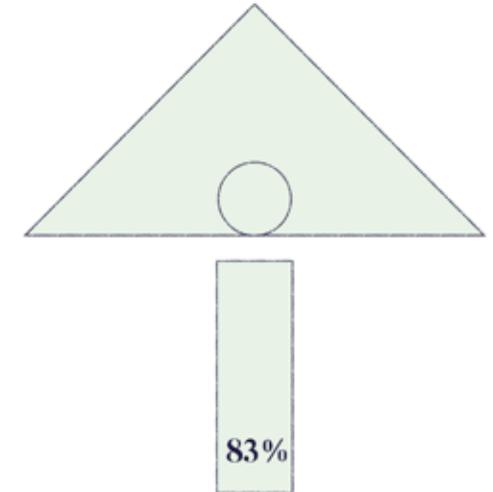
## WHAT THE EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS REVEALED



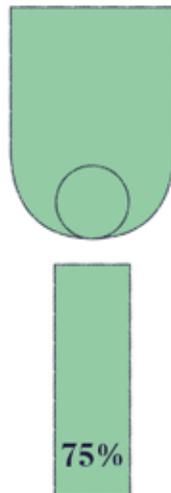
of participants answered that inclusivity within a brand would positively influence their purchasing choices.



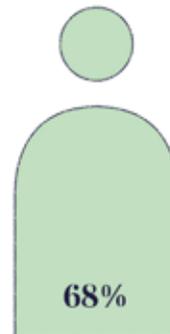
of participants answered that their voting choices would be significantly influenced if government expressed interest in addressing issues of access and representation in the fashion industry.



of participants believe that the government should play a role in demanding better inclusion and representation in the fashion industry.



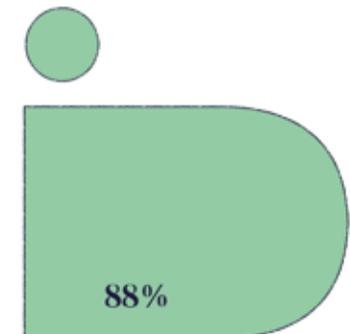
of participants answered that people working in the industry do not represent a spectrum of different bodies and identities.



of participants have experienced or witness belief of appearance based discrimination in the fashion industry.



of participants felt that they were not represented in fashion campaigns, shoots or on the catwalk.



of participants answered that images produced by the fashion industry do not represent a spectrum of different bodies and identities.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations set out span both government and industry. While some can engage with existing policies and practices, others will require organisation, vision and the courage to implement change.

## GOVERNMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The T&F APPG recommends that the government recruits a senior civil servant to coordinate and lead on the UK government's policy on the fashion industry. The role should coordinate the various organs of government currently working on various aspects of the fashion industry and should be the primary contact point for the industry into government.
- 2 The T&F APPG recommends that a Cabinet Minister convenes a roundtable to further discuss the issues highlighted within the report around current education strategies on curriculum development, extended data research and evaluation on diverse sections of society, access to jobs, job retention, diversity in leadership roles and support for people with disabilities into the workforce.
- 3 The T&F APPG recommends that the Government should oversee a review of unpaid Internships and Work Patterns in the Creative Industries by the end of this parliament.
- 4 Government must progress its' promise in the Culture White Paper to work with the Arts Council to understand the barriers that prevent people from minority groups from entering creative industry careers.

## INDUSTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The T&F APPG recommends that the industry convenes a roundtable to address the issues within the inquiry, with a particular focus on how to provide scholarships, grants and training, creating clear targets for underrepresented groups to enable marginalised groups into the workplace.
- 2 The T&F APPG recommends a national fashion education strategy addressing curriculum design that acknowledge the fashion industry's complex relationship to Great Britain's past of slavery and imperialism, with a recommendation that this is reflected in leadership hiring.
- 3 Companies should set out routes into leadership for underrepresented groups. This should be both at entry level but also for established professionals for senior leadership positions across the chain of command. Companies and educational institutions should develop sustainable recruitment practices and avoid zero-hour contract employment ([www.10000blackinterns.com](http://www.10000blackinterns.com) offers a comparative model)<sup>10</sup>. A process of sustained inclusion across all levels is recommended.

# INDUSTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

**4** Companies should publish annual data on recruitment in relation to diversity and disability. Wage data should also be included in these figures.

**5** Companies are encouraged to assess their recruitment profiles across all levels and draw up annual timelines for change. These should be made public.

It is essential that leadership across all sectors of the fashion industry evolves to address the discriminatory practices and environments that many of the respondents talked about in the inquiry.

**6** A new Representation and Inclusion body, or additional scope for The British Fashion Council's Diversity Steering Group, that acts as a monitoring and advisory body (which is representative and filled by a range of stakeholders internal and external) to pool resources and expertise in the area of representation and inclusion. It should be involved in:

- **Research and reflection:** The Representation and Inclusion monitoring body to commission research into gender and ethnicity and employment of people with disabilities within the fashion industry. This would address the lack of data, acknowledge barriers and seek ways to facilitate getting more people with diverse selfhoods into the industry. A clear, far-reaching and creative commitment to

inclusion as a part of company missions and strategic thinking. CEOs and senior staff should receive training to address any of their own biases and find solutions using expertise from external parties. Diversity and inclusion champions assigned to provide mentorship and role models to young individuals with diverse selfhoods looking to work in the fashion industry.

- **The body to offer support and create guidelines when discrimination is taking place (for example, exploring and challenging why a particular client may want Black models, but only for their 'urban' projects, or how they can cast a model with a disability in a campaign that is not designed to directly raise awareness about the issue of disability.)** A discursive practice can be developed in which client confidentiality can be respected.
- **Monitoring:** In tandem with The Fashion Spot's current seasonal diversity reports which looks at catwalk shows, the body could monitor fashion outputs (images as well as shows and campaigns) in relation to representation and inclusion. Their findings should be published and recognition should be given to best practice.
- **Code of Conduct:** Companies should adhere to a professional code of conduct, that specifically aims to prohibit racism, ableism, and discrimination against people who

identify as trans or non-binary as a part of the ethical and respectful treatment of staff. Companies need to ensure that code of conduct is connected to the company's values. The code of conduct should be robust and be used to hold unacceptable behaviour to account.

**7** An overhaul of 'diversity' practices is recommended, within companies and educational institutions, acknowledging structural racism and other forms of structural discrimination within fashion education and the different sectors of the fashion industry.

- a) **Companies and education should overhaul anti-discriminatory thinking and practices.** A move away from categorization methods is recommended, such as using BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) as a measure of inclusion or exclusion. Instead, companies should form policies that address how a company's overarching systems engage with individual and intersecting experiences. Consultation will be required here. In education this should be addressed by working closely with students and staff to identify key experiences of structural racism and the needs of each minority which arise from them, improved approaches can be adopted -particularly in relation to assessment and the so-called 'BAME attainment/awarding' gap.

INDUSTRY  
RECOMMENDATIONS

b) Addressing the different and intersecting forms of discrimination: including ethnic, islamophobia, ableism, transphobia that occur at a structural level. Companies should de-link anti-racist and LGBTQ+ measures from public relations and 'diversity initiatives'. Instead, companies should spend time developing training programmes built from the lived experiences of people marginalized in the industry.

c) It is important for companies to understand that discussions about racism are difficult, but essential – as noted by the McGregor-Smith Review<sup>1</sup>. Senior managers should show leadership in discussing how forms of white supremacy exist in their companies and how it manifests in everyday working life in the industry. This is not easy, and codes of conduct in the workplace need to go beyond 'diversity and unconscious bias training' and instead focus on the legacies of structural inequality that inhabit the fashion industry to this day. A monitoring body (previously mentioned in recommendation 5) could help to develop interventions.

8 There should be acceptance at the strategic level and across the sector, that underrepresented people are legitimate consumers of fashion and employees within the industry. At the grassroots level this means:

a) Accommodating the sizing of clothes and footwear for people who are non-binary and trans.

a) Design of adaptive clothing for people living with disabilities which is viable and fashion aware, acknowledging a need for more fashion images where adaptive clothes are shown on seated models.

c) Changing room spaces that are inclusive (with gender neutral options, seating, accessibility and support accommodations).

d) Following the inclusion of 'Black and Afro hair' in the National Occupational Standards for hairdressing, black hairstyling should be made an industry standard by qualification and awarding organisations align their awards and curriculums with the NOS standards by making the inclusion a compulsory module. Take steps to integrate Black hair styling within the standard hairdressing qualifications (e.g. through City and Guilds and the Hair Council). Hairstylists proficient in Black hair styling should be made available to Black and mixed-race models in the workplace. A database/portal should be set up to replace the reliance on informal structures.

The varied nature of disabilities: for example, the requirements of workers with visual impairments may be entirely different to individuals with autism, means that policy recommendations must be tailored to the specific issues facing each individual on account of their condition.

These industry focused recommendations for people with disabilities include:

9 Reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure job opportunities are accessible to workers with disabilities. From job interviews and recruitment processes, to the physical requirements of a role, a flexible and considerate attitude from employers should be mandatory. For example, when models with disabilities are booked to work on a photoshoot, auditions should be held in accessible venues. There should also be an open dialogue about any further adaptations that will be needed to ensure the job is fully accessible and barriers are removed. This includes the option of flexible working hours and the provision of any additional equipment such as hearing loops or transportation.

10 Greater accountability is needed to increase the representation of people with disabilities. To ensure businesses and employers are not merely paying lip service, more rigorous monitoring and enforcement is required by the body.

# INTRODUCTION

**Following an initial T&F APPG advisory committee consultation process where it became clear that there were a broad range of experiences and perspectives on discrimination within the fashion industry, the APPG decided to conduct an inquiry into representation and inclusion, so that people's voices could be amplified and that recommendations could arise directly from lived experience.**

This is the first APPG inquiry of its kind with a focus on the fashion industry exploring these issues and offering a series of policy recommendations for sector and governmental implementation. It was agreed that the APPG would look at a broad overview of experiences, accepting that it would never be able to cover all aspects or all types of discrimination. Therefore, the aim was to set the stage for further and more detailed reports. The paper addresses three key areas of diversity and inclusion: disability, race and LGBTQ+, while acknowledging the urgent need for further research

on more areas, which will form future work by the T&F APPG's secretariat Fashion Roundtable.

The T&F APPG hosted 5 evidence sessions on fashion marketing, modelling, casting, agenting, and fashion creatives (designers, stylists and creative directors,) and finally fashion education - with 20 participants across all evidence sessions. As well as obtaining this qualitative data, Fashion Roundtable, the secretariat for the T&F APPG, conducted an online survey, launched at London Fashion Week in September 2019, to collate quantitative data with 337 responses from a diverse range of respondents across education, consumers and stakeholders. An anonymised participatory method was used for the inquiry to gather broad and diverse evidence, personal anecdotes and experiences which revealed complex, and often deeply affecting, perceived workplace discrimination. These insiders spoke to the APPG openly and frankly, with the intention of trying to change the industry for the better, for those who work within it.

Although views differed on some points, and some answers were very nuanced and particular (which reflects the complexity of the industry), a number of dominant themes emerged, which are explored in depth. The report endeavoured to consider all the views expressed, in a fair and direct way. These perspectives came from individuals in various areas of the industry – from those in fashion education and those starting out

on their career journeys, right through to those at highest levels of strategic fashion management. In addition, there were also professionals and consumers who wanted to see themselves represented in fashion media.

The competitive nature of all the creative industries means that most people, regardless of their background, physical ability, race, gender identity, education or experience, find it challenging to break into certain aspects of the fashion industry; creative, design, marketing and education. However, from the initial advisory committee consultations and throughout the process, there was a consistent theme expressed of anti-Blackness, prejudice towards, or exclusion of people who identified as trans or as non-binary, people with disabilities, or people who were identified by their faith. Some of the reports were unique to the sector, with its high volume of freelance roles, and the casual nature of how work develops on a job-to-job basis, meaning that many issues were nuanced. On an individual basis, these anecdotes, when taken in isolation, are disappointing and disturbing. However, when repeated, throughout the evidence gathering process, what became more evident was a systemic issue preventing diversity, backing up the numbers in the Creative Industries Industrial Strategy, across career progression within the fashion industry into leadership roles. The reoccurring themes within the consultation process noted repeated and structural discrimination: anti-Blackness, transphobia, ableism, ageism and Islamophobia.

# BACKGROUND

**Within the creative industries, fashion is the largest sector. Pre-pandemic it was the fastest growing sector of the UK economy. Addressing diversity in the fastest growing sector of the UK economy should be a top priority.**

The UK fashion industry generated £52 billion in 2020, a loss of £2 billion on the year before, which experts put down to the pandemic. However, as the market recovers, growth is projected to reach £66.9 billion by 2026<sup>12</sup>. Within the creative industries, fashion is the largest sector, which pre-pandemic was the fastest growing sector of the UK economy<sup>13</sup>. The creative industries are forecast to grow to £150 billion by 2023<sup>14</sup>. In an innovative piece of joint policy, the *Creative Industries: Sector Deal*<sup>15</sup> produced in 2018 by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and a precursor to the government's Levelling Up Fund<sup>16</sup>, found that '9 out of 10 creative industries jobs are occupied by more advantaged socio-economic groups of the workforce', however 'several sub-sectors are not representative of the BAME, disability or gender balance of the UK working population.'<sup>17</sup>

There is an encouraging shift towards more discussion on diversity and inclusion since the hiring of Ghanaian born Edward Enninful as the Editor of British Vogue in 2017 and Kenya Hunt's, Founder of ROOM Mentoring, leadership role as the Fashion

In terms of witnessing structural racism – I knew it was because of my colour. It's the silent racism. So silent. Can I just say, the people who were holding me back were my colleagues whom I got on with. You just suck it up, to get angry would just go against you.

–  
Lecturer

Director of Grazia. These are welcome steps towards a more inclusive front row. Fashion Roundtable's Fashion Director Karen Binns sits on the British Fashion Council's recently formed Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee<sup>18</sup>, a newly formed group seeking to improve diversity in the sector.

The fashion industry is losing money due to a lack of representation at the level of decision-making within firms. Women make up two-thirds of the fashion house employees, but their representation in executive roles in these firms is only a third. The number of black creative directors is even lower<sup>19</sup>. There are few creative directors, such as LA born from Korean parents, designer Carol Lim, formerly co-creative director at Kenzo and currently CEO at brand Opening Ceremony, hired at any of the large fashion houses from an East or South East Asian background. This lack of diverse recruitment is despite economic predictions that China will be the largest global luxury market by 2025 and already accounts for the LVMH's largest market with 34 per cent of total revenues<sup>20</sup>. Academic and market research has shown that diverse companies perform better financially since they are more creative and signal better management practices to investors<sup>21</sup>. For example, LGBT-supportive policies are associated with higher firm value and productivity<sup>22</sup>, and firms with a higher female board representation are more innovative<sup>23</sup>.

A recent market study of 1000 companies from 15 countries found that companies ranked at the top

of gender diversity on executive teams are 25% more likely to have above-average profits than companies at the bottom of this ranking<sup>24</sup>. There is a 48% performance differential between the most and the least gender-diverse companies. The difference in profitability is also associated with a difference in the ethnic and cultural composition of executive teams. Specifically, more ethnically and culturally diverse firms are 36% more profitable than those at the bottom of the diversity distribution<sup>25</sup>. Despite these advantages, gender and ethnic representation in executive teams in the UK and the US in 2019 was only 15 and 13%, respectively<sup>26</sup>. Other studies have also concluded that more diverse firms have a higher return on investment and are less volatile<sup>27</sup>.

At one end of the sector in manufacturing, many of the garment workers are immigrants to the UK from Eastern Europe and Asia<sup>28</sup>, while at the other end of the industry, in terms of creativity, design, PR and marketing, which are the focus of this report, the industry opportunities for inclusive growth are reduced by a failure to acknowledge the opportunities that lie in employing diversely and catering consistently for a varied consumer base, alongside increasing opportunities for diverse leadership within business.

The *McGregor-Smith Review* gives an overview of this situation for the British economy at large, and as a part of its broader argument makes the economic case clear. 'The evidence demonstrates that inclusive organisations which attract and

develop individuals from the widest pool of talent, consistently perform better. That is the business case.<sup>29</sup> For the fashion industry, the advantages of a varied and well-utilized workforce present huge benefits, not just for the fashion industry alone but for society as a whole. This is because of the unique role that fashion plays in society and in people's lives of course, dressing each of us every single day.

**I am a model who uses a wheelchair. One client invited me to a fitting and they had steps leading up to the room! They had already recruited me. Surely that should have been thought of beforehand.**

**- Model**

The two most commonly stated enablers for employment among adults with impairments are access to transport and flexible/reduced working hours. Only one third (34%) of people who work in the private sector think their workplace welcomes people with disabilities, compared to over half (55%) of those in the public sector.<sup>30</sup> Entry jobs in the fashion industry are known for their long hours, low income and precarious nature which makes it difficult for some people with disabilities to negotiate. Networking and travel are often required which can be inaccessible to many individuals with impairments or health conditions. The limited support available and reluctance to make the necessary adjustments for people with disabilities are further barriers to work. It was made clear by evidence givers that a lack of accommodation of their needs

was a common occurrence. Apprenticeships, paid internships and start up schemes, specifically targeted at getting people with disabilities into the fashion industry, are urgently needed. Such opportunities must take into consideration the accessibility requirements of individuals. Especially as the pandemic is widening the disability employment gap nationwide<sup>31</sup>, and ONS data reported a 12.2% pay gap between employees with disabilities and able-bodied employees across the UK in 2018.<sup>32</sup>

Whilst this report is not sharply focusing on retail, one employer known for its recruitment of employees with disabilities is Marks & Spencer. On average, it has 3,000 individuals through its Marks and Start programme per year. It was launched 14 years ago and works to help talented people from all kinds of backgrounds into employment – like single parents, people who are homeless, and people with disabilities or health conditions. Of its 3,000 applicants annually, 35% declare a disability.<sup>33</sup>

Fashion offers a unique opportunity to self-express, whether in a uniform, as a celebration, or as an act of rebellion. The fashion industry is connected to peoples' physical experience, their identities, the industry appeals to the creativity of consumers and employing almost 1 million within the UK in 2018<sup>34</sup> offers a wide range of rewarding and lucrative work opportunities, from the growth of fashion tech, where the UK is a global leader, with the leading online retailers such as FarFetch, YNAP, matchesfashion.com and ASOS all headquartered in

the UK, to the UK's flourishing SME brands, with the UK showing leadership in sustainability, from London Fashion Week with brands such as the Isle of Man's Bethany Williams, winner of the 2019 Queen Elizabeth II Award for Design, whose work embeds social conscience into her designs<sup>35</sup>, to diverse new generation talent, such as RCA alumna Bianca Saunders, 2021 winner of the ANDAM award.<sup>36</sup>

Expressions of self, race and ethnic identity, social class, religious, sexual identity or gender presentation, are all affected by decisions that might appear personal, but which are also impacted by decision making at the macro and micro levels of the industry. Not being catered for by fashion designs, or being misrepresented, or just ignored, can have a detrimental effect on a person's sense of self and on their mental health more broadly. An industry that is able to meet the demands of a modern, multi-ethnic and broadly diverse society can only contribute to a more equal and harmonious society.

The industry needs diverse talent that draws on the creativity and expertise of people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and those from LGBTQ+ communities. A diverse workforce benefits the industry and society in economic, social and personal terms. The stakes and the rewards for both working in, or enjoying, fashion can be very high. McGregor-Smith indicates that in broadest terms, the benefit of 'improved participation and progression, is estimated to be £24 billion a year, which represents 1.3% of GDP'.<sup>37</sup> Every November

the UK celebrates #PurplePound<sup>38</sup>, aimed at highlighting and improving awareness of the spending power of consumers with disabilities. This is worth a staggering £274 billion, estimated to be rising by 14% per year, yet less than 10% of businesses have a targeted plan to access the disability market.<sup>39</sup>

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) in 2019 for their latest report on sexual orientation, saw a growth from 0.7% to 1% of over 65's self-identifying as LGB, with 1 in 15 (6.6%) identified as LGB.<sup>40</sup> There is a downward trend in the UK population self-identifying as heterosexual, from 95.2% in 2015 to 93.7% in 2019.<sup>41</sup> The LGB population is worth £6 billion to the UK economy<sup>42</sup>; however there is within the LGBTQ+ communities a marked difference in the earning power and economic stability of different groups, with 65% of the transgender community feeling not safe to disclose their identity at work, according to a TotalJobs survey.<sup>43</sup> 56% of trans people believe it's harder for them to find a job, 53% think they experience more barriers to progress to senior positions than non-trans people, and 33% have experienced discrimination in job interviews and applications.<sup>44</sup> Evidence given to the T&F APPG highlighted issues within the modelling sphere that many trans models feel brands pit them against one another, clients openly talk about them in a discriminatory way, and that their presence is often tokenised.

In 2013, New York's FIT exhibition A Queer History of Fashion: from Closet to Catwalk curated

**What language is being used by clients: 'too trans', 'not trans enough.' The white straight cis gendered clients will only talk about models in association with their world view. It's not intentionally malicious, but it does the same job nevertheless.**

#### **Model**

by Valerie Steele and Fred Dennis, was the first museum exhibition to explore in detail the significant contributions to fashion made by LGBTQ+ individuals over the past 300 years and won three significant awards.<sup>45</sup> It marked a seismic step in museum curation, acknowledging the legacy of the LGBTQ+ community to the history of the fashion industry and the central role that gay designers across the largest of the global fashion houses, such as Balenciaga, YSL, and McQueen have played in driving fashion business. It also addressed the impact of the Aids epidemic, ending with a celebration of same sex marriage that became law in the UK at different times: 2013 in England Wales, 2014 in Scotland and as recently as 2019 in Northern Ireland.<sup>46</sup>

There are non-binary brands, such as The Phluid Project, a company that produces gender-neutral clothing in the U.S., or Ms A a trans lingerie company based in Pontefract, Wales owned by Bok Goodall and aimed to suit people at every stage of their transition.<sup>47</sup> But all-purpose labels now dominate the market with companies including Gucci, H&M, Nike and Gap all catering for the LGBTQ+ community. ASOS, the British online fashion and cosmetic retailer, is donating 100% of proceeds from this year's Pride collection to GLAAD, the American non-governmental organization working to promote LGBTQ+ representation in the media. LGBTQ+-specific collections are generally released to coincide with the global Pride celebrations, which take place

globally in June, but which many spoken to for this report find problematic, with LGBTQ+ models explaining this became a key time for their bookings just across Pride Month.

Another market within the fashion industry forecasted to grow is the modest wear market, predicted to be worth \$360 billion by 2023.<sup>48</sup> Yet, 86% of surveyed Muslim women say that they feel ignored by the offering from the high street.<sup>49</sup> These valuations reflect an increase in demand and purchasing power of groups that the fashion industry has historically neglected. For example, in the UK, it is estimated that the BAME community has a spending power of £300 billion.<sup>50</sup>

The Victoria and Albert Museum's Fashioned By Nature exhibition in 2018 - 2019 curated by Edwina Ehrman, highlighted the historical impacts of the transatlantic slave trade on the expansion of the cotton industry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>51</sup> It was served by raw materials and revenues arising from Great Britain's slavery economy in the West Indies, imperial expansion and industrialisation. Many of the assumptions made in the industry now about race and ability: at the simplest level, what is considered 'beautiful' and 'fashionable' for example, date back to this period. This was echoed in the relationship to the trade routes to India and China for raw materials such as silk, which became more readily available during this period, normalising problematic concepts of 'ethnic exoticism'.<sup>52</sup>

These concepts continue to this day, with fashion writer Susie Bubble for Vogue US describing the “bamboo ceiling” impacting on East Asian success within the sector<sup>53</sup>, which when combined with a rise in hate crimes towards East and South East Asian communities since the pandemic<sup>54</sup>, has led to the growth of action groups such as ESEA Sisters.<sup>55</sup> These themes of racial segregation and ideas about the body exist in today’s industry, in the working practices and in some of the fashion imagery and products that are produced. This in turn impacts perceptions around hiring, and the reality of career stability, earning ability and leadership roles.

The economic cost of discrimination is large, as it interferes with the optimal allocation of talent. For example, in the UK, it is estimated that the economic cost of gender discrimination is £123 billion, £2.6 billion due to discrimination of ethnic minorities, and £2 billion due to discrimination based on sexual orientation.<sup>56</sup> The GDP would be 7% higher if gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation were eliminated.<sup>57</sup>

Until we are seen as talented individuals we are not going to be as effective as we would like to be.

- Lecturer

The working and physical environment can present significant barriers to underrepresented groups. Many of the people who presented evidence for this report disclosed experiences of how, despite their achievements, their access to the industry, and their progression through it, they

faced difficult challenges. Some of these were insurmountable, others wasted energy that could be better used contributing to the industry itself. Some found alternative ways of triumphing which often meant becoming self-employed or leaving the industry for an adjacent sector.

This report gives an opportunity for a real focus on the lived experiences of people who work in the fashion industry, with government or corporate policy recommendations to promote diversity and inclusion. While there have been reports looking at the gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps across business, this report is the first UK policy report to acknowledge the value of a diverse workforce and consumer group for the growth of the fashion industry; particularly concerning fashion marketing, fashion design and creative direction, modelling and agenting, and fashion education. This means there are currently no measurable targets for improving diversity and inclusion within the industry, which is the main objective this report seeks to advocate for.

Overall, this inquiry presents an opportunity to shape policy and inform a creative fashion industry that reflects the experiences of all participants, particularly the marginalized people who currently work, or who want to work, within it. This report explores how fashion education, business and employment strategies have impacted on these people’s lives. It also looks at the ways in which the images seen on the page and screen can promote a culture of exclusion. Fashion Spot’s Diversity Report notes a very small

increase in non-white models cast for the London Fashion Week (LFW) AW 2021 shows at 53.3%, up from 52% the season before, whilst there was only 1 non-binary model cast for the Osman show at LFW.<sup>58</sup> So while fashion brands may choose to place non-white, disabled, LGBTQ+ and marginalised bodies visibly in their advertising campaigns, without a strategy to increase diversity and inclusion across their businesses, attempts to make more enduring change by addressing structural issues within their businesses across all levels of interaction are limited in their scope and success.

Implementing more inclusive practices across all sectors of the fashion industry will require a shared understanding of this complex industry: from the perspective of governmental, industry policy and strategic decision making, as well as from the perspective of consumers. This report concludes that to be effective, both aims and measures of change need to be transformative and implemented with vision and confidence; utilising the untapped talent that is readily available and nurturing the talent of future generations.

While the McGregor-Smith Review set out a number of recommendations, it did not engage with issues around structural racism and other forms of discrimination at a grassroots level.<sup>59</sup> This is why the recommendations made in this report are pitched at different parts of the industry, from wage transparency and career support to ethical treatment, recruitment and project management.

# THE ECONOMIC COST OF NOT BEING INCLUSIVE

## The T&F APPG research highlighted the economic value of diverse groups.

The average woman in the UK is size 16, the lower end of the plus-size range, and yet the mainstream fashion brands have no or very limited extended sizing.<sup>60</sup> In the UK, the plus-size clothing market makes up for 13% of the overall clothing market and is expected to grow at a five to six% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) between 2017 to 2022, much higher than the 2.9% CAGR of the overall clothing market.<sup>61</sup> Another market within the fashion industry forecasted to grow is the modest wear market, predicted to be worth \$360 billion by 2023. Yet, 86% of surveyed Muslim women say that they feel ignored by the high street fashion brands.<sup>62</sup>

These valuations reflect an increase in demand and purchasing power of groups that the fashion industry has historically neglected. For example, in the UK, it is estimated that the BAME community has a spending power of £300 billion.<sup>63</sup> More generally, young consumers have a higher demand for ethical and sustainable production of apparel. A study by the Harvard College Consulting Group finds that younger people are more likely to want "ethical production, inclusive clothing, and better management practices" from firms.<sup>64</sup> Gen Z (people born between the mid-1990s and 2010)

make up 40% of the global consumers, they are more likely to boycott brands that are not socially aware or are otherwise not committed to sustainability and inclusivity. A 2020 study from McKinsey & Company found that two-thirds of consumers of this age from China, Brazil, the US and Germany are "belief-driven buyers who will choose, switch, avoid or boycott a brand based on its stand on societal issues".<sup>65</sup>

The fashion industry is also losing potential for greater revenue due to a lack of representation at the level of decision-making within firms. Women make up two-thirds of the fashion house employees, but their representation in executive roles in these firms is only a third. The number of black creative directors is even lower.<sup>66</sup> Academic and market research has shown that diverse companies perform better financially since they are more creative and signal better management practices to investors.<sup>67</sup> For example, LGBT+ supportive policies are associated with higher firm value and productivity<sup>68</sup>, and firms with a higher female board representation are more innovative.<sup>69</sup>

A recent market study of 1000 companies from 15 countries found that companies ranked at the top of gender diversity on executive teams are 25% more likely to have above-average profits than companies at the bottom of this ranking.<sup>70</sup> There is a 48% performance differential between the most and the least gender-diverse companies. The difference in profitability is also associated with a

There is a large conversation to be had about modesty fashion and design labels. The market is huge and there is so much room for creativity, but it is so hard to raise it in meetings or touch on anti-Islamic rhetoric for fear of coming across as a terrorist sympathiser. It's that basic.

-  
**Designer**

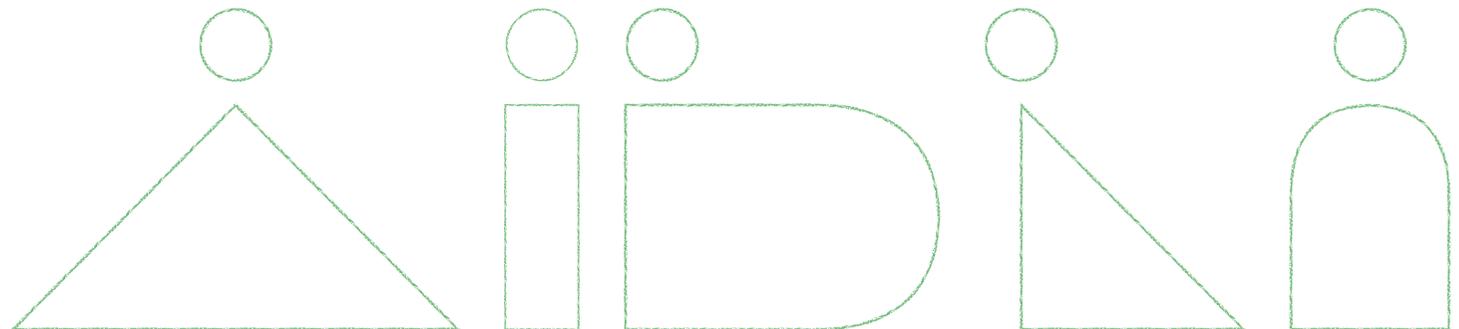
difference in the ethnic and cultural composition of executive teams. Specifically, more ethnically and culturally diverse firms are 36% more profitable than those at the bottom of the diversity distribution.<sup>71</sup> Despite these advantages, gender and ethnic representation in executive teams in the UK and the US in 2019 was only 15 and 13%, respectively.<sup>72</sup> Other studies have also concluded that more diverse firms have a higher return on investment and are less volatile.<sup>73</sup>

Recently, there has been an increase in demand for diversity and inclusivity in firms from investment firms, regulators, and other stakeholders. In 2019, 101 firms that manage assets worth \$1.73 trillion signed a Workplace Equity Disclosure Statement demanding an increase in transparency regarding “policies, practices and outcomes related to workforce composition, promotion, recruitment, and retention rates, as well as pay practices”.<sup>74</sup> Following recent civil rights protests and demands by regulators and big investment firms, companies

have started to make the data on inclusion and diversity public.<sup>75</sup>

The economic cost of discrimination and non-inclusion is even higher when the labour outcomes of the underrepresented groups are considered. The research found that minorities are more likely to leave corporate jobs to become freelancers to avoid discrimination. The Creative Industries Federation estimates that there are more than 660,000 creative freelancers in the UK, and a third of the 2 million people in the sector are self-employed.<sup>76</sup> Freelance work, self-employment, and zero-hours contracts are associated with a lower job and income security and lower career progression. In the UK, those in zero-hours contracts earn £5 less per hour and work 10 hours less per week than the average worker. A large share of zero-hours contract workers holds multiple jobs due to a higher level of income and employment insecurity.<sup>77</sup>

Before the pandemic, the industry was one of the fastest-growing in the UK, contributing to the economy more than the automotive, aerospace, life sciences and oil and gas industries combined.<sup>78</sup> The self-employed, freelancers and those on zero-hours contract have been hit particularly hard from the pandemic, and the government support has not been enough to make up for their losses. Recent research shows that the self-employed continue to work fewer hours and have less income than before, even more than a year after the first lockdown in the UK.<sup>79</sup> 66% of freelancers in the fashion industry said that their financial situation during the pandemic has been unstable due to common issues such as lack of opportunities, lack of contract clarity, poor pay, and uncertainty with late payments. Freelancers are less likely to be a part of a union, thus having limited bargaining power in ensuring job security and protection. Only 3% of the respondents belong to a union, but the demand for a structure that “pay standardization, knowledge exchange, support, working rights and job security” is high at two-thirds.<sup>80</sup>



# CURRENT POLICY LANDSCAPE

Analysing the current social and political landscape around Representation and Inclusion within the fashion industry is a useful place to start when looking into the fashion industry through its *inclusory* or *exclusionary* lenses.

The UK fashion and textiles industry, with an estimated GVA of upwards of this employed over 890,000 people pre-pandemic. However there have been several reports on clear inequalities within the industry from under-representation in employment to discrimination in the workplace.<sup>81</sup> According to a report released by BoF and McKinsey & Company, there are 7 male chief executives for every 1 female chief executive across fashion companies, and consumers are becoming increasingly aware of a lack of representation within the industry.<sup>82</sup>

Government policies have begun to outline ways in which individuals within the public and private sector can increase accountability.

## EQUALITY ACT 2010

The 2010 Equality Act essentially expands upon the UK anti-discrimination legislation mandated in the 1970 Equal Pay act, the Sex Discrimination Act (1976), the Race relations act (1976), the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003). The Act outlines anti-discrimination legislation around race, religion or belief, disability, age, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, and sexual orientation. The government has tasked the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) with monitoring human rights, protecting equality across the above grounds in the UK.

The UK 2010 Equality Act sits within a wider framework of European Union legislation – such as the 2000 EU Council Directive (2000/43/EC) which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin within the workplace, training, education, pertaining to social protection, association and membership, and accessing goods and services. Directive 2006/54/EC addresses ‘the implementation of the principle of equal

opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.’ The EU is yet to revise these binary terms (of just man and woman).

The Laws outlined in the Equality Act seek to ‘protect’ marginalised groups within environments such as: the workplace, in education, as a consumer and when accessing public services. Positive discrimination or ‘Affirmative Action’ is illegal throughout Europe and the United Kingdom, however ‘Positive Action’ is legal (but voluntary) for individuals or organisations who seek to help these protected groups who may be under-represented, disadvantaged or who may have particular needs. An example of positive action is: If there are two equally skilled or qualified candidates for a role, the employer may choose to hire the candidate within a specified ‘protected’ group to make up for an inequality within the company (such as a gender imbalance.)

The Equality Act also recommends that public and private bodies adopt an ‘Equal Opportunities Employment Policy’ in its ‘Code of Practice’ to ensure accountability for all minorities

on the part of employers. The recently announced Equality Data Programme (2020) has been launched by the Government as its 'broadest and most comprehensive' project for equality data. The project aims to improve on equality data reporting in order to better target and implement interventions to tackle inequalities faced geographically and socially in the UK.

The 2020 Policy Paper on Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights references a Spotlight Session (7) held: 'Leaving no one Behind' which allowed personal testimonies from people whose personal identity or affiliation with people whose gender, age, ethnicity or nationality means they 'face specific discrimination' and lack voice or power.<sup>83</sup> Speakers made the case for more inclusive, connected policy and programmatic responses to reaching the most marginalised in society.

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### UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING (UBT)

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Discrimination through terms of employment such as refusing unequal

pay or employment for example, is against UK Law as outlined in the 2010 Act. However, the government has attempted to go further to implement policies designed to address discrimination in the work environment itself by devising 'Unconscious Bias Training' guidelines for both public and private sector organisations. This training was intended to improve Diversity within organisations by analysing the 'implicit bias' people may have towards certain groups, highlighting the issues faced by marginalised groups and promoting positive interactions between diverse groups within the workplace.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has released reports on the effectiveness of diversity programmes, which have ultimately concluded that interventions are ineffective unless programmes are long term and interactive<sup>84</sup> As of 2020, it was announced that UBT courses would be scrapped by MPs due to clear data and research which suggests the courses are unable to produce long term changes to 'implicit bias' and ingrained views at a fundamental level.<sup>85</sup> There have been no replacement plans or announcements thus far.

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### BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BAME)<sup>86</sup>

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Recently released government statistics within the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) report indicate that BAME employees represent just 11% of workers in creative industries (just 8.7 per cent of workers in design and designer fashion specifically).<sup>87</sup> There is a clear acknowledgement of disparities faced by Black, Asian, and ethnic minorities within the fashion industry workplace. The Fashion Minority Report (2020) claims that for employment within UK creative industries to be reflective of the population, BAME employees should account for 17.8% of the total workforce.<sup>88</sup> Efforts towards reaching this end have already been taken. The Government launched the Race Disparity Unit (RDU) which has pledged to:

- Improve the robustness of ethnicity data, particularly for smaller ethnic groups and in relation to particular datasets and topics
- Reduce the number of measures

that use the binary (White/ Other) classification to address issues of masking and erasure.

- Work with government departments to provide data to address some important gaps in the evidence base
- Provide leadership and coordination of cross-government work on the quality of ethnicity data, and provide support and help to analysts in other government departments who are collecting, analysing and disseminating ethnicity data

A recent report by the RDU conducted on the similarities and differences between 18 ethnic groups in the UK, presented very clear social, cultural and economic differences within data between the groups when pertaining to public services.<sup>89</sup> These disparities present intrinsic, cultural, and economic implications. No such study has been conducted to reflect the private sector nor creative industries in particular, despite clear acknowledgement of the erasure caused by 'BAME' interventions and reporting.

For example, the 2019 Ethnicity Pay Gap report released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicated that whilst most ethnic minority groups earn less than White British employees, Chinese, Indian, White and Asian mixed, and White Irish ethnic groups actually earned higher than White British employees on some fronts in 2019.<sup>90</sup> Disaggregation of data also indicated disparities of ethnicity pay gaps between genders, age groups, and geographical locations (such as a 23.8% pay gap in London vs a 1.4% pay gap in Wales).

The government does not currently report on sector or industry-specific ethnicity pay gaps, and ethnicity pay gap reporting is not currently mandatory for employers, but there are clear indications that compulsory reporting may lead to better informed and better targeted government interventions and may also urge organisations to take more mindful approaches to employment. On the 5th September 2020, a government petition to introduce Mandatory Ethnicity pay gap reporting in the UK' closed with over 130,000 signatures – meaning the topic must be debated in parliament. The setting of the debate date has now been pending for over 230 days.<sup>91</sup>

Recently, businesses and unions have joined the call to make this reporting mandatory, in order to tackle racial inequalities at work.<sup>92</sup>

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### RELIGIOUS BELIEF

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Freedom of thought, religion, belief or conscience are defined as a fundamental human right under Article 9 of the 1998 UK Human Rights Act, framed by the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>93</sup>

Under the 2010 Equality Act, Discrimination on grounds of religion or belief is unlawful, as is denying the right for any individual to manifest these beliefs; through prayer, through religious clothing or through the right to celebrate religious holidays, for example. However, under UK Law, these constitute *qualified* rights, meaning they may be interfered with to protect the wider public interest, such as public health.

The 2003 Employment Equality Regulations on Religion on Belief act as a statutory instrument to further outline the details under which employment discrimination on the basis

of religion is unlawful. The regulations also specify that unless any particular breach of rights is towards a legitimate aim, it is not permissible.

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### LGBTQ+

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The LGBT Action Plan (2018) outlines the plans and strategy of the government to mainstream LGBT equality within society.<sup>94</sup> The paper acknowledges that not all sectors have made the same 'great progress' pertaining to LGBT Equality in the workplace. The government has pledged to improve its understanding of non-binary and intersex identifications by building on the LGBT survey and calling for evidence on issues faced by non-binary and intersex people specifically. The year prior (2017) the Equalities Office announced that it will be consulting on the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (which enabled individuals to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) and legally change their gender) to 'see how the legal gender recognition process can be made less bureaucratic and intrusive.' However, non-binary genders are not currently recognised under the law.<sup>95</sup>

The government (through the Equality Office) has committed to improving this across all sectors by working with employers to develop targeted interventions to improve the experiences of LGBT staff in the workplace as well as developing and providing employers with training materials to support inclusion in the workplace.

In the 2019 Policy paper on 'Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change' the government further pledged to build on and accelerate mainstream gender equality by launching a national campaign for employees on gender equality within the workplace.<sup>96</sup> They plan to work with all industries to tailor and target gender initiatives to different industries and their specific workforce needs. Within this strategy, they also pledged to review the gender pay gap reporting metrics to assess their effectiveness in exposing the causes of the pay gap in individual organisations as well as demonstrating employers' progress in tackling them. Any updates to reporting legislation based on this is proposed to be complete at some point this year (2021).

The recent government Equalities Office report on evidence-based actions for employers to close the gender pay gap uses only binary language 'men/women' and does not account for non-binary identities.<sup>97</sup>

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## DISABILITY

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In accordance with the 1996 Disability Discrimination and 2010 Equality Act guidelines as set out by the UK government, employers have a clearly outlined 'duty' to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate employees with disabilities or potential candidates; for example, by ensuring wheelchair access for wheelchair users, or making sure application processes are accessible.

In the 2017 policy paper for work health and disability, the government pledged to create opportunities for one million more people with disabilities in employment (4.5 million by 2027).<sup>98</sup> According to research by Zebedee Management, representation for people with disabilities in the fashion industry is just 0.01%. The government strategy towards improving opportunities and working conditions for people

with disabilities in the UK includes a three-factor approach across welfare, the workplace and healthcare. Key actions include changing culture and attitudes towards people with disabilities through engaging people with disabilities and other stakeholders to develop improved ways to promote awareness and education on the 'capabilities, contributions, and potential' of people with disabilities in the UK to build 'positive perceptions' for a long-term shift in attitudes and outcomes. The paper states that the government will be investing in building evidence around the best strategies for helping people with disabilities and those with health conditions to get into and stay in work to promote inclusion.

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## SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND EDUCATION

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Socio-economic status has a clear impact on the amount of people as well as the types of people who have the ability to pursue creative educations and subsequent careers, such as the inequalities seen amongst individuals who are able to accept unpaid internships. A recent report by the Sut-

ton Trust indicates that up to 70% of internships are unpaid (2018) as this is not technically illegal under UK Law.<sup>99</sup> The *Culture White Paper* specifies the government aim to work with the Arts Council to 'understand the barriers that prevent people from lower income households and under-represented groups from becoming professionals in the arts'.<sup>100</sup>

The 2016 Higher Education White Paper further outlines government plans to promote transparency in higher education by setting up a monitoring public body – the Office for Students (OfS) and a new teaching excellence framework (TEF) in order to promote social mobility.<sup>101</sup> The OfS, described as a 'new market regulator' will be given the statutory duty to assess the quality and standards of higher education with student interest at the regulator's heart. The TEF assessment framework will essentially account for outcomes for disadvantaged groups through judgements made against criteria outlined by an expert peer review panel consisting of both employers and students themselves.

The government will also put a duty on institutions and central

admissions services (e.g. UCAS) to publish application, offer, acceptance and progression rates disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, or disadvantage - such as geographical location (and linked socio-economic status) for improving policy design around social mobility.

Overall, current UK policy has gone a decent way in addressing and acknowledging inequalities and the implicit bias that causes them, however there is most definitely room for improvement on the part of erasure caused by generalisations (such as that of minority ethnic groups in ethnicity pay gap reporting) and the lack of legal recognition of non-binary identities leaving holes in current UK legislation (e.g. legal treatment of trans woman without a GRC as a man.) Similarly, where clear strategies and campaigns have been outlined by the government to tackle issues around LGBTQ+ and gender equality, improved opportunities for people with disabilities in higher education, clear outlined strategies for reducing bias against certain ethnic groups for example have yet to be designed or implemented.

# METHODOLOGY

## EVIDENCE GATHERING AND THE ENQUIRY

The data collection methods consisted of the gathering of written evidence, directed interviews, and finally evidence sessions from an inquiry. Government and company policy and background material were then used in the organisation and analysis of the written and spoken evidence.

An ethics code was drawn up to protect participants and the impartiality of the project:

- **All evidence would be anonymous by default.**
- **All participants would be able to withdraw from the inquiry at any point, no questions asked.**
- **After the evidence sessions, contact details of support services would be made available.**
- **Any recordings and notes would be destroyed after the report is published in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.**

When COVID-19 lockdown measures came in, the evidence sessions moved online and the inquiry method was developed to fit this format.

All respondents had sufficient experience within the fashion industry and these included designers, executives, models, bookers, agents, academics, and consumers.

### 1 SURVEY AND WRITTEN EVIDENCE

The public call for written evidence (hereafter 'submissions') was launched at London Fashion Week in September 2019 and then via Fashion Roundtable's channels. The call stated that anyone who worked in the fashion industry, or who was a consumer of goods and services provided by the fashion industry, was eligible to submit evidence. The questions are outlined in Appendix 1.

Some questions were 'open ended' - offering the opportunity for respondents to write longer answers if they chose to do so. Respondents were also encouraged to send in longer written statements (hereafter 'statements'). A total of 337 survey submissions were received.

### 2 SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Certain individuals were approached and asked if they would like to answer specific questions and give either written evidence, or be interviewed.

### 3 EVIDENCE SESSIONS

Drawing on participants from the

submissions and also from networks and calls on social media, participants were invited to give evidence during the evidence sessions.

The evidence sessions took place in the summer of 2020, and a programme of research was developed using the available resources that focused on three areas: education, training and progression, strategic decisions within the career structure, and finally representation (within companies and in fashion media). These categories would include respondents' narratives on their own terms - particular identities would not be singled out; instead, a picture would emerge from the evidence. This is an intersectional and a best practice approach to working with discrimination with the resources that were available to the Fashion Roundtable team.

The Evidence Sessions were led by the Representation and Inclusion Advisory Committee and chaired by the Chair of the APPG for Textiles and Fashion, with questions asked by the Chair, APPG members, or the Lead Academic for the report. The Committee interviewed different panels of witnesses, classified by their occupation within the Fashion Industry.

WITNESS PANELS		DATE
1	<b>Introductory Session</b>	07 May 2020
	<i>(evidence from different sectors)</i>	
2	<b>Fashion Marketing</b>	28 May 2020
3	<b>Modelling, Casting, Agenting</b>	2 July 2020
4	<b>Fashion Creatives</b>	13 July 2020
	<i>(New Generation designers, stylists, art directors etc)</i>	
5	<b>Fashion Education</b>	17 July 2020
	* Across all sessions, 20 people gave evidence.	

LINES OF ENQUIRY

For the evidence sessions, the questions were developed around the three main themes or 'pillars' mentioned above. Because this report was looking at Representation and Inclusion in the fashion industry, examples of exclusion, experiences of racism, prejudice against disability and against LGBTQ+ communities were selected for analysis and discussion only if they intersected directly with work within the fashion industry and in professional relationships. The questions outlined in Appendix 1 were designed with this in mind. The research themes were:

**1 DEVELOPMENT**  
 Questions about progression, support and education within the fashion industry

**2 STRATEGY**  
 Questions about decisions, management, and implementation of ideas. These questions were aimed at professionals who had experience of working both freelance and/or as a part of larger organisations.

**3 REPRESENTATION**  
 This related to questions about what the consumer sees and identifies with, such as 'are you represented?' These questions were also aimed at recruitment, workplace environments, and how client briefs might be discriminatory.

# FINDINGS AND EVIDENCE

## DETAILED SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**I** A theme that was evident in the evidence given is that entry into the industry, career progression, and job retention, are difficult for the majority of people who enter the industry. But people from minorities experience exponential challenges when it comes to progressing, however. This reflects wider patterns in society at large. Careers in fashion are often acquired through nepotism - 'family connections' or 'networks' that are less extensive for those from underrepresented groups. Structures often prevent individuals from 'succeeding over adversity', particularly when entry level posts and internships are unpaid, precarious, or implicitly hostile to people who do not fit the accepted mould.

**II** It became clear in the sessions that 'diversity schemes' need to be rethought, restructured, and distanced from public relations and buzz words. Effort needs to be put into developing leadership at the strategic level, and to promoting existing talent that is often suppressed. Looking at the quality of anti-discriminatory practices in fashion related

companies there needs to be a rethink: new entries and interns into the industry need to be paid and existing talent need to be allowed to rise and flourish.

**III** Following on from this, the T&F APPG heard that trends in casting Black, Asian and ethnic minority models, trans and non-binary models, and models living with disabilities are not helping to create a more inclusive industry. Whilst some campaign projects do not consider inclusion at all, there is a trend towards inclusion that is tokenistic, occasional, or cyclical (e.g. to tie in with Black History Month, Purple Pound Tuesday, Chinese New Year, or Pride Month). With one evidence giver highlighting that inclusion is 'not just for Christmas'. Sustained inclusion is required.

**IV** 'BAME' was highlighted as a term that tends to lead to huge generalisations and causes erasure by failing to address the very specific challenges each ethnic group faces within the fashion industry. Attention needs to be paid to the ways in which different forms

of discrimination play out within the different sectors of the fashion industry. Phrases such as 'BAME applicants welcome' and the 'BAME Attainment/Awarding Gap' distract from the structural racism that can take place within institutions.

**V** There needs to be a greater understanding of how anti-Black racism permeates the fashion industry. The evidence suggests that in the business workplace, Black people on fashion shoots, on the catwalks for example, are not catered for at the same level as their white raced counterparts.

**VI** The T&F APPG heard accounts that companies need to work closely with the organisations and companies that support marginalised groups within the industry. Agencies and advocacy groups are often happy to assist companies that aim to be more inclusive. At this moment they are underused. These groups need more access to the strategic levels of management in order to create dialogues that offer long term and sustainable solutions on the front line. At the same time, CEOs need

to accept that change needs to happen, that it needs to be both deep and sustained. The culture of position protection must change.

**VII** Many responses in the evidence from freelance, to corporate and academic, drew attention to a climate of position-protection and stagnation within the industry. Leaders were often asked to develop inclusive practices when they lacked the skills, the training, or the commitment to changing the chain of command. Implementing change in the industry has far-reaching implications, but poorly implemented initiatives often have the opposite effects to those intended and reinforce structural racism and broader discrimination.

**VIII** If the fashion industry is to be more inclusive, there needs to be a deeper understanding of how discrimination exists within it, the APPG heard. Leaders and key decision makers across the sector need to understand how structural racism operates within their systems and how fashion images

and products they produce might be alienating and discriminatory, particularly when hair and beauty are concerned.

**IX** A common thread seen throughout submissions to this inquiry is that many professionals, after initially working for companies, would make the move into freelance work in order to avoid perceived discriminatory environments at the workplace, to stabilise wages, or to earn at higher levels. Whilst on the one hand, these individuals can be commended for building sustainable businesses, (which may actually attract other marginalised professionals seeking a better experience within the industry) this may not be the best solution for the ecosystem of the industry. The rise of small to medium enterprises as a response to discrimination and structural racism reflects poorly on the industry as a whole and perpetuates an outsourcing culture that can often maintain the status quo whilst giving an appearance of 'competition'. This requires long term vision to ensure the evolution of the industry into the future.

# ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE

This discussion of the evidence sessions will follow the three main themes or 'pillars' of the inquiry. Examples of exclusion, experiences of racism and other types of discrimination have only been included here if they intersected directly with work within the fashion industry and in professional relationships. The evidence below has been anonymised and edited for context and ease of understanding. Again, the T&F APPG is thankful to participants for their honesty in disclosing what must have been very difficult to discuss in an inquiry session.

# 1 BECOMING A FASHION PROFESSIONAL

**Development: career progression, support and education within the fashion industry.**

- Participants were asked about their career journey into the fashion industry so far and their employment status now.
- They were asked: 'How has your identity, however you might define it, shaped your professional development or the way you work in their sector?'

Responses here were very broad and, as would be expected, accounted for a wide range of experiences. It became quite clear though that marginalised or underrepresented groups did experience very particular obstacles when trying to progress through the industry.

Finding routes into the profession, balancing work experience and internships with earning a basic income was a much-repeated point.

I did a part-time job, whilst going to university full time and also working on multiple catwalk shows. From what I have heard: a lot of people of colour had the same experiences. A lot of the work we have to do to get a step on the ladder means we have to do unpaid work. It's not fair. Pay interns

- **Designer**

Offers of unpaid work affect minority groups adversely and particularly plays into class privilege. The Culture White Paper specifies the government aim to work with Arts Council England to 'understand the barriers that prevent people from lower income households and under-represented groups from becoming professionals in the arts' and while there are guidelines on how the employment of interns should be remunerated, more assistance is needed for companies to both recruit diversely and also to pay the minimum wage.<sup>102</sup>

Working conditions were understood to at times be exploitative, including very long hours on no or low/late pay, and often a deterrent to people who are already struggling to find support systems within the career structure.

A lot of people do not realise that they are being exploited. They work insane hours. On a catwalk show they are working 12 hours and not getting paid, not being fed, not even allowed the time to go and get food. At the same time you are expected to maintain a level of professionalism without even a basic level of training.

- **Designer**

I was working for a luxury brand at the time and interviewing people for unpaid internships. It was very hard and I moved jobs...Discrimination is rife and this is because managers, mine up until my current one, have always been white, and cannot relate to their black and brown employees

who feel that they might lose their jobs if they speak out.

- **Designer**

A lot of black and brown people do not have that opportunity to work unpaid and it is a massive barrier and a systemic one. ...I think there needs to be almost a moderation of what is considered an internship.

- **Designer**

There were also incidents cited on different workload expectations due to identity.

Bosses have told me that I should be working harder as I am British Chinese, we do not need as much as anyone else, as we do not ask for more. The stereotype of being hard working, works against us as being nerdy, uncreative and unsociable, so we do not tend to get leadership roles as we are seen as not having people skills.

- **Written evidence**

The theme of precarious employment and high work-loads was also found in education.

I work as a lecturer in a precarious working situation. I am not paid during the holidays, when there is a huge amount of marking and preparation involved. Students meanwhile are asking questions about race and power in fashion!

- **Lecturer**

This evidence speaks to the bigger issue of zero-hour contracts, not just in the workplace as a whole, but particularly to recruitment in universities. Understandably, the economic effects of the pandemic were raised as exacerbating the social divisions already evident in the industry.

As Covid-19 brings wages down, there will be less money to properly pay assistants and people who work in all aspects of fashion. This will no doubt put pressure on more working classes to enter into the industry and as a result, fashion could see a class divide. This would be

a massive loss as fashion comes from the streets and along with music - some of the strongest and most passionate and resonating cultural tribes are born out of these people and their stories.

- **Designer**

The second main theme in the evidence came from individuals experiencing impenetrable obstacles to their progression within their chosen sector.

My career path was much slower than my white counterparts. I could not work out why. We had the same background and the same degrees. When I moved overseas, the situation became very different. I was in a country that did not know a lot about Black people. But I moved up in my career in a few years from designer level to designer director level...I got back to the UK and was going for the same jobs as I had been doing overseas for a good number of years and was told that I did not have enough experience and that I would have to take a pay cut and go back a level... It was absolutely demoralising...That's why I started working freelance.

- **Creative Director**

The patterns were similar - the lack of progression, the participants were told that they were inexperienced, when they had evidence to the contrary (qualifications, years of time etc).

I was the most qualified person in the fashion department, Two MAs, ten years in the industry. I was more qualified than the course leader on a new degree. I was overlooked for the role of course leader. Four people were given the job before me. They only gave me the job when I was offered a post at a rival institution.

- **Lecturer**

Within the workplace, it can be difficult to pursue grievances, which can be counter-productive in the long term. A large number of reports were about treatment within the profession that was both personal (linked to appearance in the workplace) and also linked to professional conduct or their ability to thrive within post. The first category was complex

and applied particularly to modelling, where models, of differing identities, were forced into competition with each other.

X brand will only use the same [models who are trans] and will battle them against each other. It creates insane and unnecessary competition. Models support one another, but this behaviour is hard to deal with at the beginning.

- **Model**

This is seen as tiring, unnecessary, and often tricky to challenge at the beginning of a career. Challenging the ways companies recruit is hard when models are starting out. There were some statements that spoke of abuse:

The models in the industry are starting to speak up – and then are seen as being difficult. Brands should get training on how to deal with diversity.

- **Model**

There is a massive amount of prejudice. I've had slurs shouted at me at events. There is a huge undertone of violence. ...larger fashion houses are in my opinion getting worse, not better.

- **Designer**

Similar themes were present in education; similar pressures to keep quiet and not to speak out against the experience of injustice:

In terms of witnessing structural racism – I knew it was because of my colour. It's the silent racism. So silent. Can I just say, the people who were holding me back were my colleagues whom I got on with. You just suck it up, to get angry would just go against you.

- **Lecturer**

Following on from this was clearer workplace discrimination against Black people. This would become a recurrent theme across the sessions and different sectors.

I was told at the beginning of my career to come into the meeting on Monday with hair looking 'less African'. I had braids. I wanted to please and got a weave and was told that it was 'a lot better'...I would never do that now.

- **Creative Director**

At university, one of my tutors said: 'You're not going to keep growing your hair, are you?' My hair was still quite short. At the time, I just kind of brushed it off. Completely inappropriate and insulting. Probably okay at the time, but obviously not okay at all. Again, that strategy of having to navigate.

- **Designer/Lecturer**

Incidents like this happen in many other sectors and create a hostile working environment. The Equality Act (2010) does cover workplace discrimination and individual institutions also have their own policies. Unfortunately, the individuals experiencing racism and discrimination are often young and/or concerned about their progression within the job and damage to their prospects should they make an official complaint. Incidents can seem on the surface quite trivial, but they build up.

On the first day of my internship at [a major fashion house], I was mistaken for cleaning staff. The atmosphere of the company meant that a person felt they could just approach me in that way.

- **Designer**

There was also the opposite incidence of people being brought into posts to be 'specialists' on minority issues in a way that compounded discrimination rather than challenging it.

I was often hired by agencies to be, I hate the expression, as 'the token.' I worked for a west London PR agency ... and the brief was to hire someone who was 'urban'. I was the only Black person. Any time anything 'urban' came up, I was wheeled out...I was not doing myself or my community any favours and I left. I started my own agency.

- **Executive**

The so called 'positive discrimination' in recruitment is illegal under the law, being employed to be an 'urban' specialist can be demeaning, and eventually can become an obstacle to career progression.

These accounts were often followed by the decision to 'go freelance' as a way of avoiding racist abuse, more subtle or structural forms of discrimination. The obstacles to development in careers takes a huge toll on individuals.

It's been exhausting being a Black academic. I have to second guess how I will address the room. I have better things to do with my time. Until we are seen as talented individuals we are not going to be as effective as we would like to be.

- **Lecturer**

I finally made Head of Design but the promotion was not well handled...and was never given the support or the official title or salary. I was never invited to senior meetings and at one point had to 'phone in' my ideas into a meeting I had not been invited to. I left after two years of overwork and my replacement, who was a family friend of the CEO, came in at 15K more than me...I watched as my replacement took all the hard work I had put into the place and unravelled it into something mediocre.

- **Designer**

Moving away from individuals to companies, there were accounts of organisations not being seen as legitimate businesses.

Journalists say that 'these brands do not make a business.... [my brand] has been personally attacked in the media. Now we are seeing a slow improvement in the way we are received. We have not been taken seriously business-wise. Organisations seem to want spectacle – that's what they see in us.

- **Business Owner**

Being seen as a novelty within the sector does not allow enterprises to develop sustainable business. There were far-reaching implications that arise from quite fundamental approaches.

We are not accepted as a legitimate business when actually, we are well stocked. This kind of treatment impacts on business. On getting loans, overdrafts. We are not taken seriously. Even at the basic level of putting down your gender on a form and you say that you are non-binary.

- **Designer**

In 2017, the Equalities Office announced that it will be consulting on the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (which enabled individuals to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate and legally change their gender) to '*see how the legal gender recognition process can be made less bureaucratic and intrusive.*'<sup>103</sup> However, non-binary genders are not currently recognised under the law, though a Westminster Hall debate has been promised, no timeline or date has been provided, this area therefore needs to be addressed.

In addition, companies need support while they build their 'credibility' in the face of not being taken seriously.

Companies not taking us seriously is a big problem for us (our models live with disabilities). We went for six months without a booking, now we have over 1000 bookings for our models. We have now launched in the US. Reasons are diverse as to why models seek representation from us. Many recognise the lack of visibility etc. and they want to see people who look like them.

- **Model Agent**

There are clear benefits to allowing people who are underrepresented to thrive in the industry, yet the obstacles to people entering the fashion industry are as extensive as they are for companies that represent minorities. How they sustain themselves until they reach a level of security is the main issue. All internships should be paid to allow individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds to benefit from experiences and opportunities. In addition, working environments are harsh and excluding, or low-key white supremacist. There is plenty of scope for work here.

## 2 STRATEGY, INCLUSION AND THE FASHION INDUSTRY

### Decisions, management, recruitment and implementation of ideas. Participants were asked:

- About their experience of working at management and senior management levels of the industry.
- Questions about their engagement with strategic decisions, in relation to clients, briefs, with getting or offering jobs, how clients or consumer groups were accessed or developed.
- How supported they felt by the decisions of managers or clients.
- Follow up questions about how multi-ethnic or diverse senior management levels were. If they did not feel represented, how did they respond or work within that environment? Had they ever felt misrepresented, stereotyped, forced into working on a project/brief because of their identity? Did their input into a project ever felt odd or skewed etc? What happened? How did you deal with it?
- Model bookers were specifically asked to briefly explain how the process of making a casting/booking takes place and how the topic of race, identity or physical ability come up.

This part of the inquiry presented a challenge in that the participants were aware of speaking out publicly against well-known brands or individuals.

Discrimination was observed to be taking place as a part of key decisions, whether it be highest level or lower down. Overall change is taking place, but the majority of comments stating this invariably noted that the pace was probably too slow.

I worked for 10 years in the fashion department of a leading fashion magazine and regularly saw suggestions for diversity in the models being refused by the editor due to the risk to readership numbers and advertising revenue. I have seen this change in more recent years, but slowly and not enough.

- **Written evidence**

Trends, revenue and readership/sales figures was a reason given in many instances as procedural, economic rationale for discriminatory strategy decisions. Strategic gatekeeping was observed, often combined with tokenism. Companies need to reflect not just on recruitment and approaches to Human Resources, but also on their business models and on how they want to nurture markets in the future. The situation behind the scenes of the industry was summed up by a number of participants.

We all know this is happening and little is being done to fix it, diverse model casting is a start - but behind the scenes we are looking at a very white, young wealthy set, commanded by white gay men - I am one of them. Time for change.

- **Written evidence**

There were a number of examples where individuals were marginalised in decision making:

I got used to being the only Black person in my job. Moved back to London. Decision makers were always the white people on top. Non-white people were grossly underrepresented. I was hardly ever heard.

- **Director**

They were a number of examples that revealed a strategic inadequacy (often covered up or ignored) linked particularly to working on jobs that involved minorities.

One meeting, with a fashion label, I realised that I was probably not meant to be there. They were using inappropriate language to talk about Black people – no-one knew what they were on about, no-one had any authority for the task. I was the only Black person in the room and when I said something, they all turned to me and one person said: ‘who are you?’

- **Designer**

I was one of two black people at the company (based in a predominantly white, rural, part of the country). I was once asked to have a dance-off at the Christmas party with the other black person for everyone’s entertainment. I declined, which resulted in a lot of confused middle-aged white men trying to “figure me out”.

- **Designer**

These situations are common and while much of it comes down to personal conduct, companies need to nurture an inclusive environment, especially in social scenarios. This demands a level of expertise that is not often present in companies. The same applied to experiences of islamophobia in companies.

There is a large conversation to be had about modesty fashion and design labels. The market is huge and there is so much room for creativity, but it is so hard to raise it in meetings or touch on anti-Islamic rhetoric for fear of coming across as a terrorist sympathiser. It’s that basic.

- **Designer**

In other evidence, people who are gender expansive, also experience a top-down culture that excludes them. Sometimes very openly.

I have not found a major house who would give members of my team interviews, these are people who are gender variant, and my company is successful. In major houses you find white, cis, gay men who do not allow gender divergent people to enter. One label did not use non-binary models for a genderless collection. Very superficial, change is on the surface.

- **Designer**

Participants who work in the industry were very aware of how tokenistic their presence in the workplace can be. Outsourcing of talent, while the core of the business structure remains unchanged is unsatisfactory.

Companies will call you in for a finite time. An ongoing conversation needs to happen. It’s not just for Christmas – I used to joke....Change needs to come from high up.

- **Designer**

The theme of superficial strategic measures to challenge exclusion was repeated in fashion education.

Tutors in my college were basically blamed for the BAME attainment gap. We were forced to sit in meetings talking about students from China and no-one was even allowed to talk about the ways that the college discriminated. The manager said it was not relevant. I think they just want to say that we had been in a meeting. It was really demoralizing.

- **Tutor**

Participants who spoke about casting and modelling had a range of anecdotes, where high level decisions have an effect on working practices. This became a significant area in the evidence sessions. Here are examples from the key areas: Firstly, there was an acknowledgement that things have moved on from the situation in the past. The panel were struck by the implications of the following evidence and the working environment it would produce:

Back in the day we had to write on the board for castings: 'no afros'... That is changing a bit now. This comes down to education.

It is important to acknowledge that change has taken place, but at the same time, repeating the awareness found in other sectors, change is too slow.

We have to be inclusive in all areas...in all parts of the decision making. This is a problem, I don't know whether the pace is fast enough.

- **Model Agent**

Despite agents trying to promote a more open approach to casting:

There is ... something kind of sinister when I see the models that do get used and the ones that do not get used. When I do show a black model, that's not what they want.

- **Model Agent**

It can be very difficult in a client relationship to challenge this. Clearly a deep cultural change needs to happen within companies. Another agent wrote:

From my perspective and position, it is very hard to access strategic decisions. We have had some success with a few high street brands who want to feature models with disabilities.

- **Model Agent**

Clients and brands might not intend to be discriminatory, but they end up promoting 'structures' that are limiting. A model who gave evidence said:

What language is being used by clients: 'too trans', 'not trans enough.' The white straight cis gendered clients will only talk about models in association with their world view. It's not intentionally malicious, but it does the same job nevertheless.

- **Model**

Prejudice was understood as being a part of the climate of casting and can appear benign in the first instance.

Some brands think children are cute and they are less likely to be judged. They want to cast children with disabilities, not adults. Or they want adults who have very visible disabilities or prosthetics.

- **Model**

The treatment of Black models was the subject that came up regularly. On the one hand this is a part of the discussion of representation, but the situation described below is the result of strategic decisions:

...when you go to fashion shows and black models backstage are quite often not catered for...They do not have people who can do their hair... or do the bare minimum because they are not trained...and who quite often tell them to do their own hair...as it is too much hassle. Designers, time and time again, hire the same hairdressers who do not look after every single model's hair. (Cont'd.)

This is a form of anti-Black discrimination that appears on the surface as poor organisation, forgetfulness, or just lack of care. It came up repeatedly with different witnesses and is very hard to challenge as it involves a number of directives through the chain of command.

There are enough hairdressers out there who could cover this – that is not a problem. There are countless stories from [high profile models] who are told to 'do their own' hair, to slick it back - whatever...Then they see their counterparts with one, two people working on them....That goes to the brand, who hires the team, the model agencies who do not make sure that their models are looked after with respect.

- **Model Agent**

Thinking more broadly, evidence like this speaks to an enduring vein of racism within the

sector about who is accepted into the deeper structures of the industry, or even more basically, whose beauty is worthy of attention and labour.

Similar themes were found with working with models with disabilities:

I am a model who uses a wheelchair. One client invited me to a fitting and they had steps leading up to the room! They had already recruited me. Surely that should have been thought of beforehand.

- **Model**

Again, these are issues connected to representation, yet the day to day occurrence of poorly thought through processes are a result of leadership.

I go onto the shoot, sometimes they offer me a nurse, but I don't need a nurse. You just need to do some research beforehand. It's not hard – isn't that your job?

- **Model**

Moving on to working in design, one example was striking as it revealed how discrimination forms part of the way that jobs are managed:

I remember when I first started out and I put women of colour in a mood board, which was in keeping with the concept and brief which was 'minimalist and clean'. I showed it to the senior designer whose face said it all and she added that the idea was 'less urban' and more 'minimalist and clean'. I tried to explain that just because I put women of colour into the mood board did not make it any less minimal and clean. And that was a subtle incident. There were others that were less subtle.

- **Creative Director**

One witness made a very good point that companies are losing out on the vast array of dynamic talent that is available to them. Putting aside the social and creative

advantages, discrimination in the workplace, tokenism and obstructing change does not make financial sense.

Just bringing it down to money – we have a lot of talent and a lot to bring to the table. If you included us, in the way that brands are clearly not, you would make more money. The fact that you do not want us in your teams so that you can attract more people like us who want to spend... is just stupid.

- **Agent**

I feel that we are in a position where change is possible. As an agent, I want to do the best for my business. With the pandemic we need to enable clients to be daring and still employ diversely.

- **Model Booker**

The Equality Act does not address every area that has been covered in these statements, such as how client relationships can evolve so that working practices can evolve. There is clearly a need to have more strategic roles occupied by people from underrepresented groups. One aspect clearly evident in the statements is that talent is readily available. People from minorities often choose to work outside larger companies, and often work freelance, in order to avoid discriminatory and racist behaviour. The situation is circular. There is an atmosphere of exclusion at many levels of the industry, with ableist, racist, and gender variance discrimination taking place in particular. Much of it evades equality laws or is hard to pursue by the individuals affected (who often just want to work effectively in peace). This leaves companies and institutions to monitor 'diversity' and put very visible initiatives in place, which do not address structural and strategic deficits, but which give the *appearance* of doing so.

I've been in the industry for 40 years and have seen leaders say: 'Yes, we will, we must step up.' But when? We do not have the right white leaders, they have not done anything. White fragility has to be exposed.

- **Senior Executive**

### 3 REPRESENTATION

Questions in this section had a slightly broader scope in that they touched on issues of representation more broadly.

- These questions sought to find out how participants identified with the industry, in the workplace or catered for by what the fashion industry offers.
- Participants were asked what the word ‘representation’ meant when it comes to their experience of working as a creative or as a consumer of fashion.’
- They were asked for anecdotes, to talk through an experience where they did or did not feel represented.
- Participants who worked with models were asked about casting panels and how representative they were.

Firstly, the idea of tokenism, came up in a number of different sessions. One respondent put it particularly well:

When companies do hire people of colour, they tend to go for the ones who support and implement discrimination. Just because they are brown, doesn't mean they are for me. It is obvious what is going on...

- **Designer**

Employees are often very aware of who is really served by company policy. Representation needs to effect structural change.

Many of the participants stated their love of clothes and fashion, but were also disappointed at how excluded they felt at times.

As a grey haired 49yr old curvy model who is a UK size 14-16, I can see that the fashion industry is not representing or reflecting buyers in real life. I speak to lots of women over 40 who do not feel they are seen or represented in the right way which is not a direct reflection of their spending power. It's the same for people of different sizes. I love fashion but I think there definitely needs to be a better balance of fantasy mixed with reality to move society forward. By not doing so it continues to add to the stigmas under representation creates and enforces stereotypical judgements in society.

- **Consumer**

Participants acknowledged that the situation has definitely improved. The Fashion Minority Report claims that for employment within UK creative industries to be reflective of the population, BAME employees should make up to 17.8%.<sup>104</sup> Efforts towards reaching this end are being taken: the Government's Race Disparity Unit which has pledged to improve the robustness of ethnicity data, particularly for smaller ethnic groups and in relation to particular datasets and topics.<sup>105</sup> But there needs to be a further drive to develop these initiatives.

When I started out in the 1990s – most girls were Caucasian. Girls of colour and did not make it so much. The last couple of years – we have more representation of models in magazines.

- **Model Agent**

Some of the participants raised the important role education plays in companies and institutions. If education is what is required, then this needs to be made available at the strategic level and even as a part of developing client relationships.

It's a very positive change. There is a lot more to do. Re-educate clients – clients can use models of colour and also of any gender. We have to do a lot of educating. It's very new and we need to encourage them.

- **Model Agent**

At the same time participants were very clear about the way that trends seem to dictate representation.

A year and a half ago in September we had the largest cast of trans models...The next season we saw a huge decline for trans and Black models. It is not a trend. When you pat companies on the back for inclusion, they think that they have done it and just move on.

- **Model**

I think a lot of the time brands want to tokenize a trans model.

- **Model**

They want to be seen to be doing the correct thing. Tick box. It is a closed shop outside this. One well-known brand uses black models during Black History Month, but not during their general advertising campaigns. It's tokenism and it does not reach all levels.

- **Model**

The Chinese community as consumers, all of the marketing...is very tokenistic. The industry knows they need to appeal to that massive luxury market, but you see it as very simplistic with no depth, so it only works to a certain extent. So you see it in campaigns, with a Chinese model or a campaign just for the Chinese market with just a focus on Chinese New Year.

- **Written Evidence**

Diversity to be made permanent and mandatory within institutions; e.g. ensuring hiring contracts last a definitive amount of time to avoid temporality and the precocity of the work. There is a need for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of casting every year and that companies would do well to publish reports on their staffing.

Some brands put wheelchair models on the catwalk and say that they are being inclusive, but they are not doing much afterwards....I want to see a wheelchair model as the norm and not seen as a big step.

- **Model**

There were very particular reports from models living with disabilities, which highlights that this area needs work.

Once you are in the door, no-one looks like you. It can be quite intimidating to be honest. Awkward conversations about what to call us. We are not disabled people. We are people first, people with disabilities. You have to educate people on what the situation is. They want to cast in this way and they don't know about the field.

- **Model**

There was a broad range of views in this area, particularly around representation in manufacturing and sizing.

As a disabled woman, I have never seen myself represented. I regularly contact brands asking them to at least include a photo of their

models sitting down, so I can see what clothes may look like on me and only about 5% of brands take that on board - this isn't even asking them to actively include disabled people, just asking to see what an item of clothing would look like on a seated body before I spend money on those clothes. A fashion world where I am included is so far away, I cannot even imagine it.

- **Consumer**

As it stands, however, the situation is very different.

I've never, at a press day/ fashion show etc come across anyone in a wheelchair (I imagine the majority of venues are not wheelchair accessible.) In fact, I've never, in 18 years in the industry, come across anyone anywhere with an obvious disability. ... I think the brands and publishers need to change.

- **Written evidence**

The retail experience for individuals and families living with disabilities was also noted as very challenging and undignified:

Trying to get clothes to fit a child who is sitting in a wheelchair is tricky as her middle section is bigger (things are tight or gape). The changing rooms need more chairs and supports. We have to lie our child on the floor, this is even more difficult for an adult. Shoes that fit over splints are hard to find, we need shoes where the insoles can be removed, and the straps that go across the top (if Velcro) are longer. We don't expect all clothes to be adaptive but they do need to consider that most people are not tall and skinny.

- **Consumer**

To this last point, there was a differing view on specific design interventions that with some investment, could change what a company has to offer.

We need to support brands who want to develop adaptive clothes for different abilities.

- **Model**

Another of the recurring themes throughout this inquiry is that including minorities and widening markets has broad benefits, financial and social:

Many recognise the lack of visibility etc. and they want to see people who look like them. Parents want to see people like their children (who live with disabilities) represented and recognised in the media. It is vital for self-esteem. Being visible is a prerequisite for good mental health.

- **Model Agent**

Change needs to be lasting and, in addition, it needs to change the nature of the fashion offer and the feel of the business. This is probably the biggest challenge that companies face, how to lead these kinds of changes in business, ethics and resource management.

# CONCLUSION

## The T&F APPG report on Representation and Inclusion in the Fashion Industry presents a snapshot of what people who work in the fashion industry have experienced across different sectors.

The recurring themes throughout this inquiry have pointed towards an urgent need for a shift to take place in the fashion industry: not only for financial or economic gain, greater creative success, as well as the higher purpose of fulfilling a fundamental human right. This report highlights the need for access to an inclusive, representative and accommodating environment for every player in the industry: from consumer to senior executive, with a roadmap and methodology on how to achieve this.

The evidence presented gives every reader an overview which acknowledges the sometimes complex and intersecting issues broken down by discrimination type and by fashion sector. Recognition of and work to mitigate against, the deeper institutional and structural barriers at work which greatly impacts the progression of the industry as well as on a personal level impacting the lives of those affected by discrimination..

While the *McGregor-Smith Review* set out a number of laudable recommendations, it did not engage with issues around structural racism and other forms of discrimination at a grassroots level.

Although the recommendation of diverse role models in the industry seems like a good idea initially, it needs to be interrogated. There is very little to be gained if highly publicised appointments, of individuals from underrepresented groups, are unable to effectively contribute to change. Companies need to systematically change, without pressuring individuals to take full responsibility for an organisation to meet its diversity and inclusion targets.

Equally, mentorships need to lead to jobs. Race, disability and class frequently intersect, offering internships to a diverse range of people without support and a clear progression into meaningful, paid work is problematic, as many from working class backgrounds are unable to afford to take the prolonged work experience routes into the fashion industry which are the norm for many within entry level job roles. A report has found that only 16 % of people in creative jobs are from working class backgrounds.<sup>106</sup> The odds of securing a creative job for working class women are five times less compared to men, and the odds for working class people with disability are three times less than those from privileged backgrounds and without a disability.

Therefore, different sections of the industry require different recommendations. From the provision of Black hair-styling, to high-level recruitment for creative director positions at fashion houses and high street retail brands, as well as the development of client relationships for PR and marketing.

I've been in the industry for 40 years and have seen leaders say: 'Yes, we will, we must step up.' But when?

### Senior Executive

The fashion industry, its leaders and stakeholders face a choice whether to ignore the detrimental and poisoning effects of structural racism, ableism, and gender discrimination; to lose potential revenue; and foster stagnation, or to seize this as an exciting opportunity to show leadership by reflecting on and changing internal structures and practices. There are difficult conversations that will necessarily need to happen. Creativity, lateral thinking and adaptation are key strengths in the fashion industry. They can and should be directed to address representation and inclusion. This will require inward evaluation of ingrained mentalities, preconceived notions and biases which may not happen overnight, but with the right education and the right intention, changes can begin to be made which would add value to the UK economy, improve job opportunities for a diverse workforce and create the opportunity for the UK to lead in terms of diversity and inclusion in the workplace post-pandemic across the four nations, in line with the government's levelling up agenda,<sup>107</sup> so that no one and no community are left behind and all citizens, from all backgrounds are able to dream, aspire and thrive.

# GLOSSARY

Here are some key terms and concepts used in this research. Some of them have a long intellectual heritage and generate debate in themselves. For the purposes of this report, aspects that have special relevance to the fashion industry have been emphasised.

## The fashion industry

The various sectors design, production and promotion of goods and services related to dress in all of its forms. We have also included education related to the fashion industry be it practical or theoretical. The industry often engages with different 'norms', sometimes it challenges them, but more often it reinforces them.<sup>108</sup> Due to the constraints of this report, this report has not focused on manufacturing or retail in this work.

## Representation and inclusion

These words relate to whether the fashion industry is staffed, across the sectors we looked at, and at all levels, by a diverse range of ethnicities, body type, abilities, and expressions of gender identity, though this list is

not exhaustive. Representation matters because, at the very simplest level, it indicates who 'counts' in a profession, in an industry, in society at large, even in the idea of the nation. There is a business case for it, there are political and moral arguments for it as well.<sup>109</sup>

## Race

Is the system of pseudo-scientific classification that developed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It categorises people along a hierarchy, where the Caucasian group is placed explicitly or inexplicitly at the top. Over the last two hundred years, communities have adjusted their relationships to both the words and, more importantly, to the systems that enforce racial groupings and the identities that have accommodated them. The categories of race are often arbitrary, and under certain circumstances fluid. In this report 'race' will sometimes be referred to as a verb, as in people who are 'raced as' particularly grouping. Race and the themes underlying the fashion and beauty industries are historically linked.<sup>110</sup>

## Racism

Much of the report gives accounts of different forms of discrimination against people and groups who are not raced as white. This is more than 'name calling' and is more likely to be experienced in the workplace as conditions and situations, rulings and structures that prevent non-white people from advancing in the workplace, professionally or financially.

## Structural racism

Is the term given when the seemingly normal working functions of government, legal systems, or institutional policies combine with the action or inaction of individuals to obstruct the progression (or the very survival) of people identified as non-white.

## Anti-blackness

Is the belief that black bodies are inferior, less desirable or attractive, and therefore less valuable (both to society and within society.) This often manifests in the policing of black bodies, the whitewashing of

black bodies (such as discouraging distinctively 'black' hairstyles) and colourism.<sup>111</sup>

## Gender

The presentation of masculinity or femininity on a continuum. Because what we wear tends to emphasise gender, dress often has a pivotal role in the way that it is expressed, understood, or expected to be. The experience of gender variance has implications for the workplace and for the consumption of fashion and clothes more broadly.<sup>112</sup>

## Non binary

Is a word used to describe gender identities that are not under the category of masculine or feminine or male or female. They are outside of the 'gender-binary'.

## Cis gender

Is a way of understanding gender and means "on this side of", which is a term for people whose gender identity matches the gender that was assigned at birth.

## Trans gender

Is a way of understanding gender and means "on the other side of", which is a term for people whose gender identity differs from the one that was assigned at birth.<sup>113</sup>

## Disability

Is a social or political imposition on a person who experiences an impairment or differing ability of their body or mind. This imposition can present an obstacle to that person experiencing certain activities or how they interact optimally with the world around them. This may present challenges in negotiating the workplace. The potentially visual nature of a physical difference can have relevance to the fashion images, where 'norms' are often reinforced.<sup>114</sup>

## Tokenism

The act of making performative or surface-level efforts for the purpose of avoiding criticism or to present a false image of inclusion.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The T&F APPG received over 337 submissions to this inquiry through an industry survey, written evidence and oral evidence from a range of representatives throughout the industry - from designers and creative directors to models, agents, stylists, fashion students and educators, and fashion consumers.

The APPG would like to thank all the participants: those who submitted written evidence and those who spoke at the inquiry. The T&F APPG was inspired by all accounts and hopes the recommendations made do justice to your experiences.

The Representation and Inclusion in the Fashion Industry report was developed by Fashion Roundtable, secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Textiles and Fashion (T&F APPG), and written by the Fashion Roundtable Team; Dr. Dr. Royce Mahawatte, Academic Lead, Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at Central Saint Martin's, UAL, Davina Appiagyei, Research Assistant, Fjolla Kondiroli, Economics Researcher, Lottie Jackson, Editor, and Tamara Cincik, CEO & Founder.

With thanks to the T&F APPG Chair and members, the office of Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Sally Farr, Jodi Muter-Hamilton, Heather Lafferty, Cozette McCreery, the representation and inclusion

Advisory Committee: Karen Binns, Fashion Director of Fashion Roundtable, Zowie Broach of the Royal College of Art, Claudia Burger, Celia Hensmas of Zebedee Management, Zebedee Models, Jacynth Bassett of the Bias Cut, Lucy Clements of Lucy London, Tolu Coker, Clara Holmes, Rebecca Weef-Smith, Caryn Franklin MBE, Lottie Jackson, Cynthia Lawrence John, Laura Johnson, Alex Pleasants, Hari Prabu, Jamie Windust, Grace Woodward, Meg Ellis, and Michelle Noel.

Thanks also to the Fashion Roundtable Ambassadors, The Creative Industries Federation and the Social Mobility Commission.

## Appendix

# WRITTEN EVIDENCE

## Representation and Inclusion in the Fashion Industry Policy Paper: Submitting Written Evidence

What have your experiences been as a consumer/as someone who works or who has worked in the fashion industry?

- Can you think of a moment when you felt encouraged or limited by the images that you saw?
- Have you witnessed or experienced discrimination in the fashion industry, and how did that make you feel?

It included a few of the following questions:

- Do you feel people who work in the fashion industry represent a spectrum of different bodies and identities? (i.e. sizes, abilities, ethnicities, classes, ages, sexualities, genders)?
- Do you think that images produced by the fashion industry represent a spectrum of different bodies and identities? (i.e. sizes, abilities, ethnicities, classes, ages, sexualities, genders)?
- Do you think fashion represents you in campaigns, in fashion shoots and on the catwalk?
- If a brand has a good reputation

for being inclusive (i.e. catering to marginalised people and showing a diverse range of bodies in adverts), does this motivate you to purchase from them?

- Have you experienced or witnessed discrimination in the fashion industry based on appearances and/or beliefs?
- What type of discrimination happens the most in the fashion industry?
- Do you think the government should play a role in demanding better inclusion and representation from the fashion industry?
- If your local MP candidate was vocal about access and representation in the fashion industry, would it significantly influence your voting choices?
- If government expressed interest in addressing issues of access and representation in the fashion industry, would it significantly influence your voting choices?
- How powerful do you feel fashion and fashion media is as an instrument for social change?

## WITNESS PANNELLS

### SESSION 1 FASHION CREATIVES AND MARKETING

The Advisory Committee Panel is formed of: **Dr Lisa Cameron MP** *Chair of the APPG for Textiles & Fashion, and other members of the APPG*; **Tamara Cincik** *Founder Fashion Roundtable*; **Dr Royce Mahawatte** *Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies Stage Two Leader Central Saint Martins* and other professional creatives in the fashion industry.

### QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWEES

#### 1) Career Progression

Can you tell us briefly about your career journey in the creative industries so far? Has your identity, however you may define it, shaped the way your career has developed? (You might like to tell us whether you are freelance, employed permanently within an organisation, or somewhere in between.)

#### 2) Strategic Decisions

We would now like to talk with you, about how the industry works at the higher level and your engagement with strategic decisions, such as getting or offering jobs; how briefs are shaped; and whether you feel encouraged and empowered

by the decisions of managers or people employing you or those around you.

- How diverse is the senior management in your company/professional network? If it is not diverse, how have you dealt with that? You might want to focus on one incident. You won't be asked to disclose any persons or company names and you may want to change some details here.
- *[Potential follow up question]* At work have you ever felt misrepresented, stereotyped, forced into a creative role because of your identity? Has your input into a project ever felt odd or skewed etc? What happened? How did you deal with it?

#### 3) Representation

We would now like to talk about 'representation'. What does this word mean for you when it comes to your experience of working as a creative? Can you give us an anecdote; talk us through an experience you have had in the workplace, where you did not feel represented? How did you deal with this situation?

#### 4) Is there any area that has been missed out or that you would like to mention?

## SESSION 2 MARKETING & ADVERTISING SESSION

We are interested in hearing about experiences and stories about inclusion and exclusion in the fashion industry in order for us to make policy recommendations. We will be particularly focusing on issues related to discrimination linked to sexism, social-class, ageism, racism and anti-Blackness, homophobia, islamophobia, transphobia and ableism.

The questions will focus on issues of discrimination based around career progression, strategic decisions, and representation. Please feel invited to mention the kind of discrimination that you experienced. You are also not obliged to disclose any persons or company names and you may want to change or generalise any identifiable details. The questions are quite specific and linked to the creative industry. There is a final question that is broader and you can offer further observations and experiences there.

### QUESTIONS

#### 1) Career Progression

Can you tell us briefly about your career journey in marketing and advertising for the fashion industry so far? How did you get to your current position? Has your

identity, however you may define it, shaped the way your career has developed, or the way that you understand and work in your sector? (You might like to tell us whether you are freelance, employed permanently within an organisation, or somewhere in between.)

#### 2) Strategic Decisions

We would now like to talk with you, about how the industry works at the higher level and your engagement with strategic decisions, within marketing and advertising, such as getting or offering jobs; how marketing briefs are shaped; how consumers and clients are understood. How empowered do you feel by the decisions of managers or clients etc?

a) How diverse is the senior management in your company/professional network? If it is not diverse, how have you dealt with that? You might want to focus on one incident. [You won't be asked to disclose any persons or company names and you may want to change some details here.]

b) *[Potential follow up question]* At work have you ever felt misrepresented, stereotyped, forced into working on a project/brief because of your identity? Has your input into a project ever felt

odd or skewed etc? What happened? How did you deal with it?

#### 3. Representation

We would now like to talk about 'representation' in marketing and fashion – either in your professional teams and clients, or with the cohorts that you are targeting in your work. What does this word mean for you when it comes to your experience of working in the sector? Can you give us an anecdote; talk us through an experience you have had in the workplace, where you did not feel represented or became uncomfortable with decisions linked to representation or inclusion? How did you deal with this situation?

#### 4. Additional

Is there any area that has been missed out or that you would like to mention?

## SESSION 3 MODELLING & CASTING SESSION

We are interested in hearing about experiences and stories about inclusion and exclusion in the fashion industry in order for us to make policy recommendations.

We will be particularly focusing on issues related to discrimination linked

to sexism, social-class, ageism, racism and anti-Blackness, homophobia, islamophobia, transphobia and ableism.

The questions will focus on issues of discrimination based around career progression, strategic decisions, and representation. Please feel invited to mention the kind of discrimination that you experienced. You are also not obliged to disclose any persons or company names and you may want to change or generalise any identifiable details.

The questions are quite specific and linked to the creative industry. You will notice that there are lots of little questions that might help you to tell your story? Choose what questions you want to answer.

There is a final question that is broader and you can offer further observations and experiences there.

### QUESTIONS

#### 1) Career Progression

*[For either a model or a booker]*

Can you tell us briefly about your career journey in modelling/casting/booking for the fashion industry so far? How did you get to your current position? Has your identity, however you may define it,

shaped the way your career has developed, or the way that you understand, and work, in your sector? (If you are in casting or booking you might like to tell us whether you are freelance, employed permanently within an organisation, or somewhere in between.)

**2) Strategic Decisions**

We would now like to talk with you, about how modelling or casting works, in your experience, at the higher level and your engagement with strategic decisions.

a. *[For model bookers]* Can you briefly explain how the process of making a casting/booking takes place? Can you say how bookings are developed? How does the topic of race, identity or physical ability, for example come up, if at all? How many people are involved in the process end to end, and what was your role?

b. *[For either a model or a booker]* At work (modelling/casting/booking/producing) have you ever felt misrepresented, stereotyped, fetishized or forced into working on a project/brief because of your identity? Has your input into a project ever felt odd or skewed etc? What happened? How did you deal with it? Did it matter to you (arguably, a job is a job etc)?

**3. Representation**

We would now like to talk about 'representation' in modelling – either in your professional teams and clients, or with what we actually see on the page. What does this word mean for you when it comes to your experience of working in the sector, either as a model or a booker/producer?

- a) *[For either a model or a booker]* How diverse is the senior management involved in the casting process? If you are modelling, you might want to think about agency staff or casting panels. If these are not diverse, how have you dealt with that? You might want to focus on one incident. [You won't be asked to disclose any persons or company names and you may want to change some details here.]
- b) Can you give us an anecdote; talk us through an experience you have had at work, where you did not feel represented or became uncomfortable with decisions linked to representation or inclusion? How did you deal with this situation?

**4. Additional**

Is there any area that has been missed out or that you would like to talk about?

**SESSION 4  
FASHION CREATIVES**

We are interested in hearing about experiences and stories about inclusion and exclusion in the fashion industry in order for us to make policy recommendations. We will be particularly focusing on issues related to discrimination linked to sexism, social-class, ageism, racism and anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and ableism.

The questions will focus on issues of discrimination based around career progression, strategic decisions, and representation. Please feel invited to mention the kind of discrimination that you experienced. You are also not obliged to disclose any persons or company names and you may want to change or generalise any identifiable details. The questions are quite specific and linked to the creative industry. There is a final question that is broader and you can offer further observations and experiences there.

**QUESTIONS**

**1) Career Progression**

Can you tell us briefly about your career journey in the creative industries so far? Has your identity, however you may define it, shaped the way your career has developed? (You might like to tell

us whether you are freelance, employed permanently within an organisation, or somewhere in between.)

**2) Strategic Decisions**

We would now like to talk with you, about how the industry works at the higher level and your engagement with strategic decisions, such as getting or offering jobs; how briefs are shaped; and whether you feel encouraged and empowered by the decisions of managers or people employing you or those around you.

a) How diverse is the senior management in your company/professional network? If it is not diverse, how have you dealt with that? You might want to focus on one incident or on any language that was used. You won't be asked to disclose any persons or company names and you may want to change some details here.

b) *[Potential follow up question]* At work have you ever felt misrepresented, stereotyped, forced into a creative role because of your identity on creative projects? Has your input into a project ever felt odd or skewed etc? What happened? How did you deal with it?

**3. Representation**

We would now like to talk about 'representation'. What does this word mean for you when it comes to your experience of working as a creative? Can you give us an anecdote; talk us through an experience you have had in the workplace, where you did not feel represented? How did you deal with this situation?

**4. Additional**

Is there any area that has been missed out or that you would like to mention?

**SESSION 5  
FASHION EDUCATION**

We are interested in hearing about experiences and stories about inclusion and exclusion in fashion education in order for us to make policy recommendations.

We will be particularly focusing on issues related to discrimination linked to sexism, social-class, ageism, racism and anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia and ableism. The questions focus on issues of discrimination based around career progression, management decisions, pedagogy (the way teaching is understood and delivered) and representation,

both in teams and also through teaching practice and outputs.

Please feel invited to mention the kind of discrimination that you experienced. You are also not obliged to disclose any persons or institutions or company names and you may want to change or generalise any identifiable details. The questions are quite specific and linked to different aspects of fashion education. There is a final question that is broader and you can offer further observations and experiences there.

**QUESTIONS**

**1) Experiences as a student (past or present)**

Can you tell us briefly about your experiences of fashion education? Can you speak about your experiences as a student? Has your identity, however you may define it, shaped the way your learning has developed?

a) *[Potential follow up question]*

As a student did you ever feel misrepresented, stereotyped, forced into a particular position because of your identity, for example through feedback or via gatekeeping, or on work placements etc? Did the tutor's or institution's or your peer group's

response to your work ever felt odd or skewed etc? What happened? How did you deal with it?

**2) Strategic Decisions: for witnesses involved in teaching.**

*[These questions can be divided between different people who work in education.]*

We would now like to talk with you, about how fashion education works at the higher level and your engagement with management decisions, such as getting or offering jobs; how teaching and courses are shaped.

- a) How diverse is the senior management in your institution or professional network? If it is not diverse, how have you dealt with that? Have you seen or witnessed structural racism in your career? You might want to focus on one incident. You won't be asked to disclose any persons or the names of any institutions and you may want to change some details here.
- b) While in your role has your input into a teaching or research programme, or staff development initiative, ever felt skewed etc? What happened? How did you deal with it?
- c) What do you think can be done to

bridge fashion education and industry employment, particularly for students who might be marginalised, e.g. Black or South Asian British, gender diverse or who are living with a disability?

**3. Representation**

*[These questions can be divided between different people who work in education.]*

- a) We would now like to talk about 'representation'. What does this word mean for you when it comes to your experience of working in education? You might want to talk about students or teaching staff or work placements. Can you give us an anecdote; talk us through an experience you have had in the workplace, where you did not feel represented? How did you deal with this situation?
- b) What are your impressions of initiatives for staff development that address issues around race, identity and attainment (e.g. the so-called 'BAME Attainment/Awarding Gap' etc). Do you feel encouraged and empowered by the decisions of managers, or people employing you?

**4. Additional**

Is there any area that has been missed out or that you would like to mention?

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