JENNY GARRETT GLOBAL

DIVERSE Executive Coach Directory

THE STATE OF DIVERSE COACHING in 2026

SURVEYED

31 executive coaches

PUBLISHED

Jenny Garrett Global

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2025, Jenny Garrett Global (JGG) surveyed 31 executive coaches within the Diverse Executive Coach Directory (DECD). The findings offer a candid, data-supported picture of how the coaching landscape is shifting, what leaders are sharing behind closed doors, and where the gap between organisational intent and practice is widest.

THE LANDSCAPE IS CONTRACTING

54.8% of coaches report decreased demand, driven by DEI budget cuts and a broader retreat from 2020 commitments. Meanwhile, the business case has only strengthened: McKinsey reports a 39% increased likelihood of financial outperformance for ethnically diverse executive teams, and the ICF finds an average 7× return on coaching investment.

A CREDIBILITY PARADOX HAS EMERGED

93.5% of coaches were explicitly sought out for their cultural fluency — yet 74.2% report being positioned only as specialists for diverse talent, rarely commissioned for senior leadership, commercial strategy, or board-level work. These are executive coaches first; their cultural fluency deepens their practice but does not define its limits.

WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING MATTERS

100% of coaches reported that coachees from underrepresented backgrounds share experiences they cannot surface elsewhere. 87.1% of coachees explicitly requested a coach who "gets it" — because psychological safety enables the strategic thinking that moves careers and organisations forward.

THERE IS A CLEAR PATH FORWARD

This report includes a practical framework for commissioning coaching equitably, an anonymised case study, and a language guide for making the case internally. The infrastructure exists. The question is whether organisations are ready to commission it to its full potential.

The sample of 31 coaches is self-selecting and drawn from a single directory — not statistically representative of all diverse executive coaches. Where 31 independent professionals working across different sectors describe the same patterns unprompted, the consistency itself is a meaningful signal.

WHO IS SPEAKING

The coaches. The directory. The consultancy.

This report draws on a survey of 31 executive coaches within the Diverse Executive Coach Directory, conducted in late 2025. The DECD is the first and only directory in the UK connecting organisations with qualified executive coaches from global majority and ethnically diverse backgrounds. These coaches work across financial and professional services, public and third sector, technology, healthcare, and education — bringing from 3 to 11+ years of professional coaching experience.

86.1%
bring ethnicity as an identity lens to their coaching work

80.6%
also bring gender as a lens alongside ethnicity

45.2%
have coached professionally for over 11 years

These are not coaches observing leadership from the outside. They sit with leaders during restructures, succession planning, moments of accelerated change, and because of their lived experiences, they occupy a particular vantage point: they see what leaders share when they feel psychologically safe, and what remains unspoken elsewhere.

Jenny Garrett Global is a leadership development consultancy that has spent twenty years partnering with organisations to build the leadership capability they need to navigate complexity, change, and growth. Through that work, Jenny Garrett OBE identified a persistent gap in the market: diverse and culturally fluent executive coaches existed in significant numbers, but there was no credible infrastructure connecting organisations to them consistently. The Diverse Executive Coach Directory was founded to close that gap — not to "add diversity" to coaching, but to make existing expertise accessible.

> *DECD was founded by JGG but operates as a community of independent practitioners. What follows presents their findings: pattern recognition supported by data from coaches working across sectors, corroborated by broader research on leadership and organisational risk. In later sections, JGG offers its perspective on what to do about those findings. The evidence and the response are kept clearly distinct throughout.*

01

THE CONTRACTION

Demand is collapsing. This section examines what's driving the retreat, how coaches are experiencing it, and why the business case has never been stronger - even as investment fails.

KEY FINDINGS

54.8%
report decreased demand vs. two years ago

64%
perceive the 2020 moment as over or never fully embedded

36%
report being asked to reduce rates where a white coach would not

Demand is collapsing

In 2025, 54.8% of DECD coaches who responded report decreased demand for their services compared to the previous two years. Of those, 26% describe the decrease as significant. 29% report an increase in demand.

When asked what has driven this change, the responses are consistent:

- “Budget cuts and pulling back from DEI”
- “DEI being seen as less priority and budget cuts”
- “Cost cutting and DEI backlash”
- “Organisations retreating from diversity work. It being seen as too political and not a business priority”

The data continues. 45.1% of coaches report that DEI budget cuts have directly affected their coaching work - 12.9% significantly, 32.3% somewhat. Another 29% are unsure, which itself signals opacity in how these decisions are being made and communicated.

When asked whether they have been asked to reduce their rates in circumstances where they believe a white coach would not have been, 36% said yes - 10% definitely, 26% suspected so. This is perception, not audited commissioning data, and it is important to name that distinction. Rate negotiations may be driven by blanket budget pressures applied equally across all coaches.

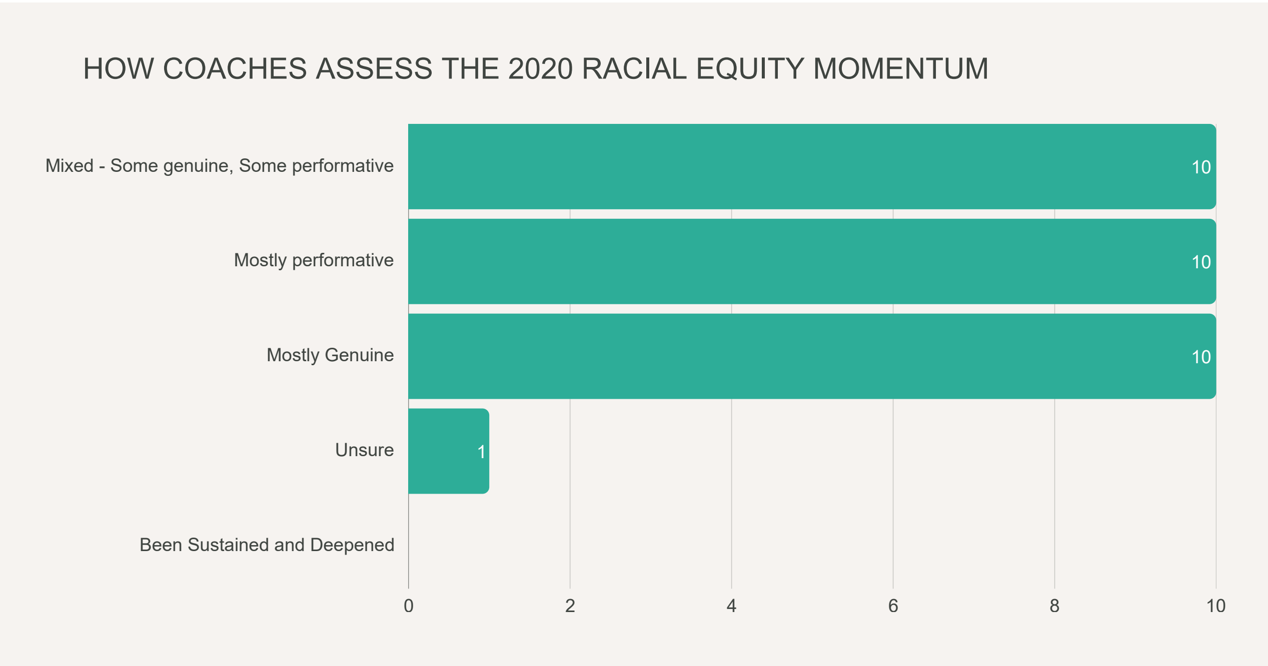
But the perception itself matters: when nearly three-quarters of diverse coaches independently report the same experience, it warrants exploration. Organisations that want to address this can start with a straightforward step: review whether rate negotiations are applied consistently across all coaches on their panel, regardless of background. If they are, the data will show it. If they are not, that is worth knowing.

The 2020 Moment Has Ended

2020 was a significant year for the people industry. The murder of George Floyd triggered a global reckoning with racial injustice that reverberated through every sector. Organisations that had treated diversity as a peripheral concern suddenly made public commitments to change-pledging funding for racial equity initiatives, creating new senior DEI roles, and commissioning coaching and development programmes specifically for global majority talent.

At the same time, the shift to remote working during the pandemic created a parallel surge in demand. Organisations scrambling to keep dispersed workforces engaged and connected invested heavily in professional development, wellbeing, and community-building, and the virtual format lowered barriers to entry, making it easier and more cost-effective to commission coaching at scale. For many in the coaching industry, these converging forces felt like a turning point: a moment when the systemic barriers diverse coaches had long described were finally being acknowledged, and when sustained investment in culturally fluent leadership seemed not just possible but inevitable.

The question was whether that energy would translate into structural change or remain reactive and time-limited. We asked coaches to assess this directly.



In total, 64% of coaches perceive the 2020 moment as either over or never genuinely embedded, and none felt that it had been sustained and deepened.

It is worth noting that this does not mean nothing has changed; many organisations made genuine progress during this period, and many HR and talent professionals continue to advocate for this work under increasing pressure. But the overall trajectory, as experienced by the professionals delivering this work, is one of contraction. For organisations that want to buck that trend, the first step is being willing to look at where things stand honestly rather than optimistically.

When asked whether organisations are genuinely investing in developing diverse talent or operating performatively, over half (58%) describe the landscape as "mixed-some genuine, some performative." Another 13% say it is "mostly performative." Only another 13% believe investment is mostly genuine.

These figures describe a systemic pattern, but within organisations that have pulled back, there are almost always individuals - HR directors, talent leads, L&D managers - who have fought to maintain investment and continue to advocate for this work under increasing internal pressure. What the pattern is revealing, is that the structural conditions under which people who care are operating have become significantly harder. Recognising the difference between systemic retreat and individual commitment is important because the response to each is different: systemic retreat requires structural change; individual commitment requires better tools, data, and institutional support.

Coaches identified which types of organisations are leading and which are retreating.
Those leading: charities, third sector, values-led SMEs, and some public sector organisations.
Those retreating: large corporates, financial services, and organisations cutting DEI budgets or responding to perceived political pressure.

One coach summarised the feeling plainly:

We're tired of cycles of interest and abandonment

Yet the Business Case Has Not Changed

While coaches experience contraction, the research demonstrating the value of diverse leadership and coaching has only strengthened. Organisations continue to invest an estimated $60 billion annually in leadership development worldwide. The market for executive coaching is projected to **grow from $103.56 billion in 2025 to $161.10 billion by 2030.**

More likely to outperform financially

+39%

Companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity on executive teams - McKinsey

Higher innovation revenue

+19%

Organisations with diverse leadership teams. - BCG

Report high ROI from coaching

87%

Average return of 7x investment- ICF

The demand for leadership development is rising. The case for inclusive leadership is established. The coaches who sit at the intersection of both are, by any measure, the obvious answer. This is not a story about the business case weakening — if anything, the evidence has only grown stronger. So the question becomes: *why are organisations pulling back when the evidence points forward?*

Pressure From the Top. Pressure from the Pipeline.

The business case isn't the only force pointing this way. The external environment is moving in exactly the same direction and it's moving there from two sides simultaneously.

Consumer expectations have shifted. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, 68% of consumers expect brands to promote diversity and inclusion. Givsly's 2024 research found that 83% of Gen Z consumers want brands to align with their values, and 76% have stopped buying from companies that don't. The days of brand neutrality are quickly ending.

Generational dynamics are intensifying. Deloitte's 2024 Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey found that purpose and values are top priorities for younger workers when choosing employers. Nearly half would turn down assignments that don't align with their values. Stanford research shows Gen Z prioritises workplace equity and is willing to sacrifice salary for it.

Leadership is being scrutinised more intensely. Boards and executives face heightened accountability for decisions about culture, representation, and equity. AI-mediated decision-making raises new questions about bias and transparency. Political and social polarisation within workforces demands leaders who can navigate difference without defaulting to risk aversion or superficial neutrality.

The evidence points in one direction. Coaching delivers measurable returns. Diverse leadership outperforms. And the external world — from boardrooms to the incoming workforce — is demanding exactly the kind of organisations that have these systems embedded. The retreat from inclusive and diverse leadership support would not be a neutral business decision. It is a dangerous miscalculation made against the grain of every signal available.

And yet the problem runs deeper than whether organisations are investing. It runs through how they are investing, what they're investing in, and who they are trusting to do the work when they do.

02

THE CREDIBILITY PARADOX

When organisations actively seek diverse coaches - and then commission them within a narrow lane. This section examines the gap between being wanted and being trusted with the full breadth of leadership work.

KEY FINDINGS

94%
were explicitly requested because the client wanted a diverse coach

74.2%
are positioned as specialists for diverse talent only - sometimes or often

61%
cite lack of visibility and unconscious bias as the biggest barrier to thriving

“You are Wanted Because you are Diverse”

In the past 12 months, **93.5%** of DECD coaches who responded were explicitly requested because the client wanted a “diverse” or “global majority” coach. Of those, 51.6% report this happened multiple times.

This is, in many ways, exactly what the directory was designed to enable. Organisations recognising that culturally fluent coaching adds value and actively seeking it out is a positive development. The coaches within DECD welcome that demand, and the trend reflects a growing understanding that who delivers coaching matters, and that lived experience enriches the coaching relationship.

The nuance, however, is that these are executive coaches first and foremost. Their core expertise is in leadership development: strategy, transitions, presence, influence, decision-making under pressure. The cultural fluency and lived experience they bring is an additional dimension that deepens their work, but it is not the totality of it. Holding both of those truths at once is important, because the paradox that emerges from this data is not about whether organisations should seek out diverse coaches; **it is about what happens after they do.**

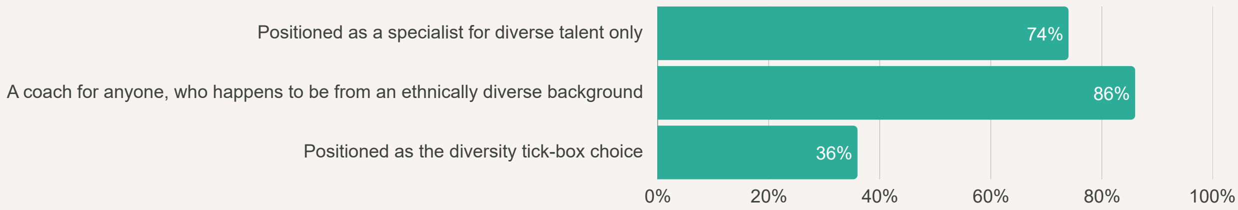
On the surface, the numbers look like progress. But demand and value are not the same thing. Being sought out is not the same as being trusted with the full range of leadership work. And this is where the paradox sharpens – because the same organisations requesting diverse coaches are, in practice, drawing a boundary around what those coaches are commissioned to do.

To be clear: the solution is not to stop seeking diverse coaches. It is to commission them more broadly - for senior transitions, commercial strategy, and board-level work, not only for diverse talent programmes.

“But you are Only Commissioned for Diverse Talent”

When asked how often they are positioned as “a specialist for diverse talent only,” 74.2% of coaches say this happens sometimes or often. When asked how often they are positioned as “the diversity tick-box choice,” 35.5% say sometimes or often.

HOW COACHES ARE POSITIONED BY COMMISSIONING ORGANISATIONS



The gap is not there because the coaches lack the skill to handle executive conversations; it is experienced as a **credibility bias** that operates in the background, through commissioning decisions, scope definitions, and the types of leadership conversations coaches are invited into.

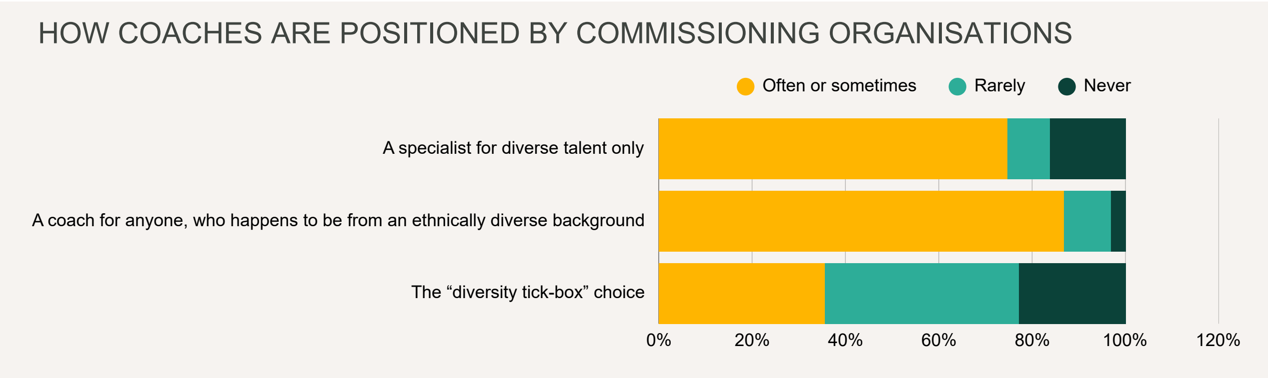
The pattern is clear: coaches are requested because they bring cultural fluency and lived experience. But they are frequently commissioned only within a narrow lane-remedial work, identity-specific programmes, or situations where something has already gone wrong. They are rarely brought into core strategic work, commercial decision-making, or high-status leadership transitions.

This creates a reinforcing loop where coaches who are only commissioned for specialist work do not build portfolios that signal broader strategic capability and become pigeon-holed into the tick-box diversity hire. The lack of opportunity then becomes perceived as evidence of unsuitability.

> *If you are committed to DEI, act like it - commission us for senior leaders, not just diverse talent programmes.*
>
> **DECD COACH 2025**

“But you are Only Commissioned for Diverse Talent”

When asked how often they are positioned as "a coach for anyone, who happens to be from an ethnically diverse background," 87.1% say sometimes or often — and that matters. But set alongside it: 74.2% are also positioned as "a specialist for diverse talent only" sometimes or often, and 35.5% as "the diversity tick-box choice." More striking still, 19.4% say they are rarely or never seen as a coach for anyone at all.



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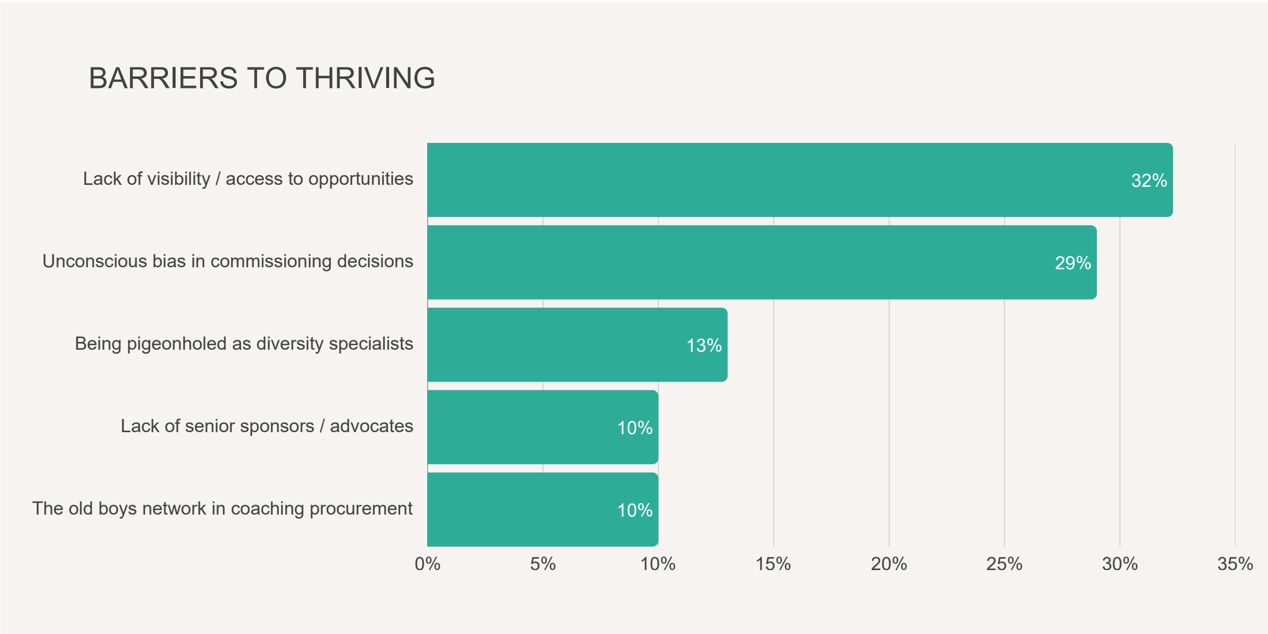
> *If you are committed to DEI, act like it - commission us for senior leaders, not just diverse talent programmes.*
>
> **DECD COACH 2025**

The Infrastructure Problem Persists

When asked to identify the single biggest barrier preventing global majority and ethnically diverse coaches from thriving, the responses point to a consistent structural problem rather than individual capability gaps.



The top two findings — lack of visibility and unconscious bias — point to a barrier that operates even before the commissioning decision is made. These coaches are not failing to perform once in the room. ***They are not reaching the room in the first place.***

Even highly experienced executive coaches — those with over a decade of practice — report systemic barriers: closed networks, opaque procurement, and short-term pilots that never transition to embedded partnerships.

The coaches exist and the capability exists. What seems to not exist is equitable access to the full scope of leadership work. DECD was created to function as connective tissue, a platform that provides organisations with credible access to aggregated expertise, and provides coaches with institutional weight that individual practice cannot always command.

What Coachees are Actually Saying

When asked what clients from underrepresented backgrounds share with them that they might not share with a coach who doesn't share their background, **100% of DECD coaches** referenced the same themes: experiences of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions; feelings of isolation and not belonging; fear of backlash if they speak up; the mental and emotional toll of being "the only one"; and concerns about being misunderstood, stereotyped, or labelled.

IN COACHES' OWN WORDS

> *"The personal impact of racism and microaggression. Career frustrations at being held back due to prejudice. Fear of being labelled aggressive. Loss of confidence and self-esteem"*

> *"How exhausted they are from code-switching and being hypervigilant."*

> *"The trauma of being racially abused at work and the impact on their mental health and career."*

> *"How they can show up authentically and the microaggressions they receive daily"*

This is not an abstract problem, it is what leaders are carrying but cannot surface in performance reviews, team meetings, or development conversations with managers who do not share their experience.

Coachees Explicitly Request This

It also speaks to the calibre of these coaches. Every coachee in these conversations is a professional navigating strategic, commercial, and operational challenges — yet the coaching relationship moves quickly into territory that is deeply human: **identity, belonging, exhaustion, fear**. That transition doesn't happen by accident. It happens because these coaches create the psychological safety for it, and because they have the skill to hold both dimensions at once: the strategic and the personal, the leadership challenge and the lived experience beneath it.

This is the standard of excellent leadership coaching.

The demand for culturally fluent coaching is not being imposed by HR departments or driven by compliance. It is being requested by the leaders themselves, because they recognise that psychological safety enables the kind of honest reflection and strategic thinking that moves their careers or goals forward.

100% of coaches share themes coachees experience that they cannot surface elsewhere

100%

Racism, isolation, exhaustion, fear of backlash - consistent across all 31 coaches

Say coachees explicitly requested a coach who "gets it"

87.1%

41.9% frequently, 45.2% occasionally

Psychological safety is not a soft outcome. It is a necessary condition under which strategic thinking becomes finally possible. These coaches create it consistently, across sectors, seniority levels, and organisational contexts.

03

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

The evidence is in and the coaches have spoken. This section turns to the organisations to name what is within reach, and how to work with both internal and external partners to look at what it would take to close the gap between *knowing* and *doing.*

WHAT THIS SECTION COVERS

Coaches' frank view

What the professionals doing this work would say to HR and talent leaders if they could speak freely

A practical framework

Three tiers of change - auditable, structural, embedded, and budget conscious

A language guide

Reframes for the most common situations where the right words make the difference between a yes and a no.

What Coaches are Seeing

When asked what they would say to senior HR and talent professionals — something frank they wouldn't normally say — the responses were remarkably unified. These were not empty complaints. They were consistent, experience-based observations from professionals who occupy a unique vantage point: they see what is happening inside coaching conversations that no one else in the organisation has access to. That perspective is strategic intelligence, and it deserves to be treated as such.

We understand that many of the people reading this are operating under constraints they did not choose. Budget decisions, political pressure, and organisational priorities are often set above the level of the HR and L&D professionals who care most about this work. What follows speaks to the systems and patterns, not blaming individuals.

COACHES SPEAKING FRANKLY

> *"If you are committed to DEI, act like it - commission us for senior leaders, not just diverse talent programmes"*

> *"Don't see it as a tick box. It's about talent and development"*

> *"Put your money where your mouth is. Don't retreat when it gets uncomfortable"*

A fair challenge to this section is that these are perceptions, not audited commissioning data. These patterns tend to emerge not from deliberate decisions but from inherited procurement habits, unconscious assumptions about expertise, and the way coaching briefs are scoped and circulated. That does not make them less real — it simply makes them harder to see from the inside. When 31 coaches working across different sectors independently describe the same patterns, the convergence itself is worth taking seriously.

The responses pointed not to grand gestures but to practical, structural shifts: f**air pay and transparent commissioning processes**, **access to the full range of leadership work, not just diverse talent programmes, long-term partnerships rather than short-term pilots, and an honest look at whether procurement practices reflect the diversity organisations say they value.**

A Framework for Commissioning Coaching Equitably

The procurement processes, panel arrangements, and development frameworks already exist. The question is whether they're working as equitably as intended, and what it would take to close that gap. The following framework offers a graduated approach, starting with what can be done immediately and building toward long-term change.

1 AUDIT
Can be done now - no budgeting required

- Review your current coaching panel demographics: who is on your panel, by ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions
- Examine who gets commissioned for what type of work — is there a pattern between senior leadership and diverse talent programmes?
- Check whether rate negotiations differ across coaches, regardless of background
- Assess whether procurement criteria inadvertently screen out diverse coaches through affiliation requirements that favour established networks

2 RESTRUCTURE
Next quarter - process changes, minimal budget

- Separate "diverse talent programme coaching" from "executive coaching" in commissioning conversations
- Build panel diversity requirements into procurement frameworks
- Create transparent rate bands that apply consistently across all coaches
- Circulate senior leadership and commercial strategy briefs as widely as diverse talent briefs

3 EMBED
This year - strategic integration

- Establish long-term coaching partnerships rather than one-off pilots
- Include coaching panel diversity in your broader talent strategy reporting
- Measure and report commissioning patterns annually - not just who is on your panel, but who is commissioned, for what, at what rates
- Treat this data with the same rigour you would apply to any other dimension of your talent strategy

04

WHAT IT'S COSTING YOU RIGHT NOW

In a climate of redundancies and shrinking budgets, stepping back from this work can feel like responsible financial management, but it rarely is. Standing still has its own costs that surface in talent pipelines, failed leadership transitions, and a disengaged culture that is expensive to reverse.

THREE COMPOUNDING COSTS

2.5x
higher turnover in organisations with weak inclusion initiatives - Deloitte

50%
of new executives fail or leave within their first 18 months

2.4x
more engaged - employees who feel a genuine sense of belonging - BCG

THE TALENT YOU'RE LOSING

Research from Deloitte estimates that companies with **weak inclusion initiatives face 2.5 times higher turnover rates**. In the UK, the average cost of replacing an employee is approximately £25,000, rising to between £40,000 and £100,000 for specialist and senior roles. For executive positions, replacement costs can reach up to 213% of annual salary.

When your diverse talent pipeline quietly empties because leaders don't have access to coaching where they can be honest about what they're experiencing, the cost isn't visible in a single line item. It surfaces in recruitment spend, in onboarding delays, in the institutional knowledge that walks out the door.

THE LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS THAT FAIL

Research suggests there is roughly a **50% chance that a new executive will fail or leave** within their first 18 months. Harvard Business Review estimates the cumulative cost of a failed executive hire can reach up to ten times the executive's salary. CEB research shows that unsuccessful leadership transitions result in 15% lower performance from direct reports, who are also 20% more likely to disengage or leave.

Now consider what this report's data reveals: 100% of coaches report that leaders from underrepresented backgrounds are carrying experiences of racism, isolation, and exhaustion that they cannot surface elsewhere. If those leaders are navigating transitions without coaching that creates psychological safety, the **risk of derailment doesn't decrease, it compounds.**

THE DISENGAGEMENT YOU CAN'T SEE

BCG's 2024 research found that employees who feel a genuine sense of belonging are **2.4 times more engaged**. When organisations retreat from the infrastructure that supports inclusion — cutting coaching budgets, narrowing commissioning, signalling that this work is no longer a priority — disengagement quietly takes root, lowering productivity, dampening innovation, and eroding team cohesion. Culture Amp's analysis of 10 million UK employees found that **23% plan to leave their jobs in 2025** — and that leadership quality is the most critical factor influencing whether they stay.

SECTION 05 - WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

Leadership Coaching Done Right

This anonymised case study with a long-term partner demonstrates what becomes possible when an organisation commits to commissioning coaching not as a diversity gesture, but as a true leadership investment

SECTOR	SCOPE	APPROACH
Global financial & insurance services	Multi-year, successive cohorts of ~15 leaders	Leadership-first, culturally fluent coaching

THE CHALLENGE

When DEI was recognised as a strategic priority, internal research found that many employees — particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds — were experiencing barriers to confidence, visibility, and progression. Senior stakeholders were aligned that the objective towards resolution was not to run a generic "diversity programme”, but rather to strengthen overall leadership capability, decision-making, and influence across the business. Leadership coaching was selected as the primary intervention, with diversity positioned as a lever for better leadership and connection for the participants.

DESIGNING THE APPROACH

The coaching faculty was intentionally diverse across multiple dimensions — race, gender, professional background, leadership experience, and coaching style. Critically, this was not positioned as a DEI feature for participants. It was positioned as part of delivering high-quality leadership coaching with a variety of lived experiences and backgrounds.

Each participant was offered structured chemistry conversations with multiple coaches before selecting their final coach, a critical aspect in reinforcing agency and ownership while ensuring alignment of coaching style and personality fit. Coaching was explicitly framed around leadership effectiveness: career clarity, confidence and presence, stakeholder management, and personal leadership boundaries.

WHAT THIS LOOKED LIKE IN PRACTICE

WHAT EMERGED

- Increased clarity among participants about their leadership direction and strengths
- Greater confidence and intentionality in how leaders engage with senior stakeholders
- Strong engagement and high completion rates for a voluntary programme delivered alongside demanding roles
- Rich, aggregated insight into leadership challenges that cut across demographic groups: confidence, progression clarity, personal brand, and boundaries

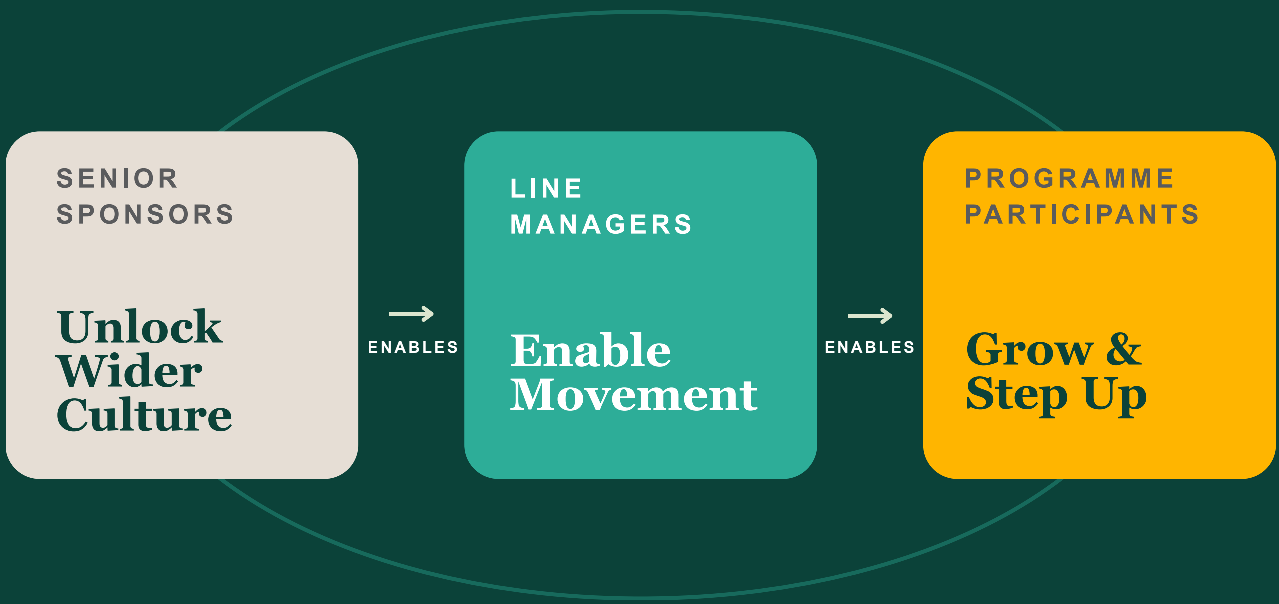
WHY THIS WORKS

This programme succeeded because it avoided several common pitfalls. It did not position diversity coaching as separate from leadership excellence. It did not lower expectations or simplify leadership challenges, and it did not assume that diverse talent needs "fixing."

Instead, it treated diversity as a source of insight, empathy, and challenge — all critical components of effective leadership coaching. And because it is structured as a long-term partnership rather than a one-off pilot, it built momentum, credibility, and cultural impact over time.

Twenty years of building what this work requires

Jenny Garrett Global was founded twenty years ago with a single conviction: that leadership development only works when the systems surrounding leaders move alongside them. That conviction produced the Tri-Level™ approach — developing talent, their line managers, and senior sponsors simultaneously — and a track record of **over 35% of programme participants promoted during the programme itself.**



JGG's work is organised around three interconnected leadership pillars — the conditions without which organisations cannot sustain the kind of leadership this report explores.

01
INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The cultural and structural conditions without which diverse talent cannot thrive and leadership cannot reflect the complexity of the workforce it serves.

02
ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP

The ability to pivot, prioritise, and build long-term strategy under pressure while managing diverse teams through change.

03
AI-READY LEADERSHIP

Equipping leaders to integrate technology equitably - without leaving people behind.

What Working with JGG Looks Like

Every engagement begins in the same place: a diagnostic conversation about depth and breadth. Not a needs assessment designed to confirm a predetermined solution, but a genuine inquiry into where the organisation is, what it is ready for, and where a single well-placed intervention would make the most difference.

The shape of that work varies. Some organisations begin with a keynote: a single session designed to open a conversation at the right level. Others commission a targeted workshop or executive coaching for a specific cohort. Some are ready for a sustained programme that moves across all three levels simultaneously. The entry point is always determined by what the organisation actually needs, not by what is easiest to deliver at scale.

The questions asked at the diagnostic stage are deliberately curious and open. What does progression look like here, and who does it tend to favour? Where are the places people feel they cannot be fully themselves, and what does that cost the organisation? What has already been tried, what worked, and what didn't land the way it was intended to? These conversations surface complexity that generic frameworks cannot reach — and they look different depending on whether the challenge is social mobility, gender representation, racial equity, or the kind of quiet disengagement this report has described.

98%
RECOMMENDATION RATE

Held consistently across every intervention, regardless of scale or format - a reflection of twenty years of bespoke, tailored engagements designed around the organisation in front of us, every time.

Whatever partner an organisation chooses to work with, the same principle applies. Shallow engagement is visible, and it is costly. The leaders experiencing it know the difference between a programme designed around them and one designed around an agenda.

THIS IS WHERE IT GETS *interesting*

The coaches in this report are not a future resource waiting to be unlocked. They are practising right now — across financial services, public sector, healthcare, technology — holding space for leaders navigating the kind of complexity that rarely makes it into a board paper.

93.5% were explicitly sought out for their cultural fluency. **87.1%** of their coachees requested them by name — not because HR required it, but because they knew the difference it would make. **100%** of them are sitting with what their clients cannot say anywhere else in the organisation.

The organisations that have commissioned this work broadly for senior transitions, commercial strategy, and board-level leadership and not only for diverse talent programmes — have seen the impact of what is possible. Leaders who arrive at high-stakes decisions with a fuller understanding of the room they are in. An average **return of 7× on coaching investment**. Not in spite of depth and cultural fluency; because of it.

It is a leadership outcome.

THE COACHES EXIST.

THE CAPABILITY EXISTS.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE EXISTS.

THE PUZZLE PIECES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE

THIS IS SIMPLY THE MOMENT THEY ARE ALL VISIBLE AT ONCE.

APPENDIX A · PRACTICAL TOOL

Coaching Commissioning Equity Checklist

A practical tool for HR and L&D leaders · Jenny Garrett Global & DECD

Use this checklist from section 3 to review how coaching is commissioned in your organisation. It follows a graduated approach: audit what exists, restructure what needs changing, embed for the long term. Each item can be completed without additional budget unless noted.

1 AUDIT
Can be done now - no budgeting required

- [ ] Review your current coaching panel demographics — who is on your panel, by ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions
- [ ] Examine who gets commissioned for what type of work — is there a pattern between senior leadership and diverse talent programmes?
- [ ] Check whether rate negotiations differ across coaches, regardless of background
- [ ] Assess whether procurement criteria inadvertently screen out diverse coaches through affiliation requirements that favour established networks

2 RESTRUCTURE
Next quarter - process changes, minimal budget

- [ ] Separate "diverse talent programme coaching" from "executive coaching" in commissioning conversations
- [ ] Build panel diversity requirements into procurement frameworks
- [ ] Create transparent rate bands that apply consistently across all coaches
- [ ] Circulate senior leadership and commercial strategy briefs as widely as diverse talent briefs

3 EMBED
This year - strategic integration

- [ ] Establish long-term coaching partnerships rather than one-off pilots
- [ ] Include coaching panel diversity in your broader talent strategy reporting
- [ ] Measure and report commissioning patterns annually — not just who is on your panel, but who is commissioned, for what, at what rates
- [ ] Treat this data with the same rigour you would apply to any other dimension of your talent strategy

APPENDIX B · PRACTICAL TOOL

Navigating the Conversation

A resource for HR, L&D and talent professionals · Jenny Garrett Global & DECD

Moving the needle on this work often means navigating resistance before you can make progress. The blockers below are valid, they come up in budget meetings, leadership conversations, and procurement discussions every day. For each one, we offer some context on where it tends to come from, and a few approaches that have helped others find a way through.

"Coaching is too expensive"

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

The coaching market spans an enormous range — from early-career practitioners to senior executive specialists — and without a clear commissioning framework it is hard to know what you are buying. The price variation can feel like a red flag rather than a feature.

APPROACHES TO CONSIDER

- Anchor in return, not cost. The ICF's average 7× return reframes the question from "can we afford this" to "can we afford not to."
- Use the range to your advantage. Strategic commissioning means matching the right level of coach to the right level of leader, meaning you can work with different budgets for the right fit.
- Compare against what you already spend on recruitment, onboarding, and failed leadership transitions. Coaching is rarely more expensive than the problems it prevents.

"We don't have the time, budget, or resource right now"

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

In a climate of redundancies and shrinking budgets, this is often a genuine constraint rather than an excuse. The people saying this may privately agree with you and be frustrated by their own limitations. Arguing against the constraint directly rarely works.

APPROACHES TO CONSIDER

- Name what the constraint is costing. Disengagement and talent loss do not disappear when budgets are cut, they just become harder to attribute.
- Start smaller than you think you need to. A single well-placed engagement can demonstrate impact more convincingly than a large programme cut before it lands.
- Separate "we can't do everything" from "we can't do anything." The audit stage of the commissioning framework requires no budget at all.

"We stay out of political matters"

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

In a polarised environment, organisations are increasingly cautious about anything that could be read as taking sides. This is not always bad faith; it can reflect genuine concern about cohesion, brand risk, or pressure from board level. The instinct is understandable even when the conclusion feels wrong.

APPROACHES TO CONSIDER

- Agree with the principle, then reframe the work. Diverse executive coaching is not a political position, but a leadership and performance investment. Meet them where they are.
- Distinguish between DEI as a public statement and leadership development as a practice. You do not need to make an announcement. You just need to commission good coaching.
- Let the evidence do the work. McKinsey, BCG, ICF are not advocacy organisations. The business case requires no political position.

"We've tried this before and it didn't work"

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

They probably did try something — and it probably did not land. This objection contains real information and deserves to be taken seriously rather than argued away. Dismissing it closes the conversation; getting curious about it opens a new one.

APPROACHES TO CONSIDER

- Get curious before you get defensive. Ask what they tried. Usually what failed was a one-off programme or a pilot that never became embedded practice. It's possible it was a commissioning or communication problem in that instance, and not a coaching one.
- Name the difference between a programme and a partnership. Short-term pilots produce short-term results. The case study in this report shows what sustained engagement makes possible.
- Use their experience as a diagnostic. If it did not work, that tells you where the real gap, challenge, or roadblocks are. Start it as a conversation and continue to understand how you can bring the right solution.

continued on next page

"We don't have a diversity, inclusion, or social mobility etc., problem."

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

This is often a sincere belief, not a deflection. If no one is raising issues and retention looks stable on paper, it can genuinely seem like the work is not necessary. The absence of visible problems is easy to read as the absence of problems.

APPROACHES TO CONSIDER

- Ask how they would know. 100% of coaches in this report say that leaders from underrepresented backgrounds share experiences in coaching that they cannot surface anywhere else in the organisation. Silence is not the same as absence.
- Look at the data they do have: promotion rates, attrition patterns, career stage breakdowns. The pattern is often visible once you know where to look.
- Reframe the question entirely. This is not about whether a problem exists, it is about whether leadership capability is as strong as it could be. That question is always worth asking.

These conversations can carry a weight that others don't — a sense that there is a right way and a wrong way, and that the stakes of getting it wrong are higher than usual. That feeling is worth acknowledging. It is also worth challenging. The strongest organisations are not defined by the absence of complexity but by their appetite for it — they move toward difficult questions, sit with uncertainty, and understand that growth and change are not risks to be managed but the very conditions under which good leadership thrives. They are the architects of that change. Not its audience.

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The Diverse Executive Coach Directory is the first directory in the UK connecting organisations with qualified executive coaches
from global majority and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

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