

2025 update

OUR DIVERSITY TARGETS

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In 2021, we outlined our commitment to improving minority ethnic representation at our firm, publishing our UK ethnicity action plan, which outlined aspirational targets and the actions that we would take to meet them. We followed that with global gender targets at leadership level in February 2022. May 2025 marks the close of these targets. This report outlines our progress and actions as at May 2025, and our next steps.

“When we began exploring diversity targets, the world was reeling from the murder of George Floyd. His death led to widespread reflection on Black and minority ethnic people’s experiences in many countries, including the UK. Like many organisations, it prompted us to have a cold, hard look at the state of racial and ethnic minority inclusion in our workplace. As I told our people at the time, we fell short when it came to ethnic diversity, particularly in relation to the representation of Black people at our firm. We set out to understand the challenges and take meaningful action to attract and recruit ethnic minority colleagues and create an environment in which our colleagues could thrive. We published our UK ethnicity targets, and followed this with global gender targets, which focused on increasing the proportion of women in the partnership. These targets were underpinned by actions to support inclusion.

Our targets represented a challenge for us to meet. We have held ourselves accountable by sharing our progress annually. I am proud of the progress that we have made; we exceeded our ethnicity target at partner level, and though we have fallen short of our gender target, we have made progress towards them.

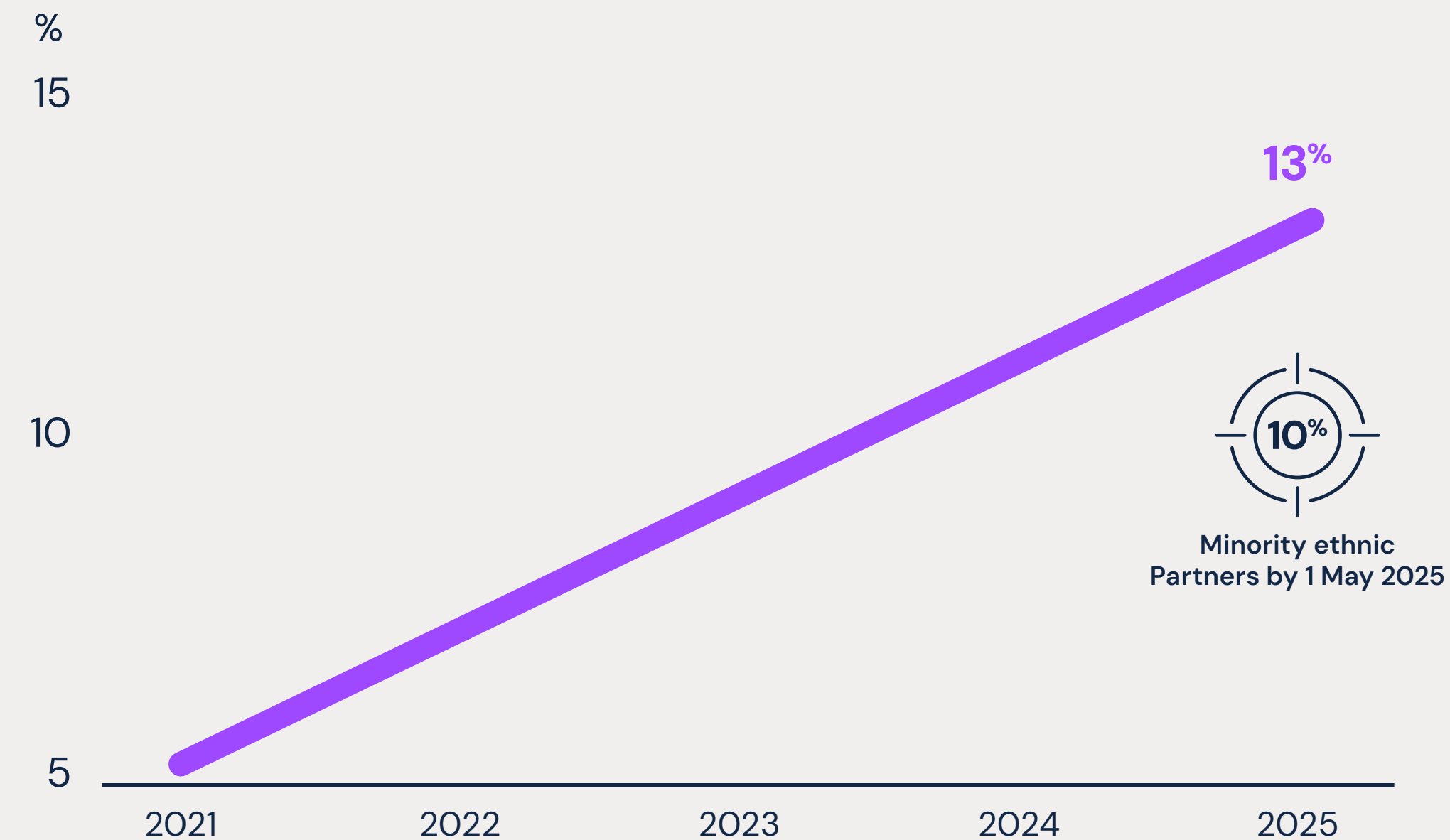
Diversity and inclusion are not boxes to be ticked; this work is a thread that runs through our organisation. We’re working hard to ensure greater diversity, underpinned by an inclusive culture. I remain committed to this work and continue to believe that our organisation, and the way we serve our clients, is richer for it.”



EIFION MORRIS
Chief Executive Officer



RACE/ETHNICITY



All data is as at 1 May 2025, with the exception of the Trainee recruitment data, which covers the recruitment cycle from September 2023 to October 2024.



ACHIEVED

10% minority ethnic Partners by 1 May 2025

Since introducing our targets three years ago, we have seen a steady increase in the representation of ethnic minority Partners at the firm. As at 1 May 2025, 13% of our Partners in the UK are from ethnic minority backgrounds.



ACHIEVED

30% minority ethnic Trainees, of whom 10% would be Black each year

Each year since 2021, we have achieved this goal.



NOT ACHIEVED

Proportional retention of minority ethnic business services professionals

Over the last three years, compared to our White colleagues, a higher proportion of our ethnic minority business services colleagues have left the firm.



ACHIEVED

Proportional retention of minority ethnic lawyers each year

Over the last three years, we have achieved proportional retention of our ethnic minority Associates.

Race/ethnicity

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

- + Announced our race/ethnicity targets.

+ Joined the [Race Fairness Commitment](#).

+ Rolled out [Hemisphere](#), online training to help interviewers to disaggregate potential from polish. This training includes a significant focus on race and ethnicity.

+ Launched our [Black Talent Programme](#), which aims to increase the number of Black Trainees attracted to, and recruited by, the firm.
- + Built race-based hair inclusion into our dress code policy in an effort to ensure that Black colleagues don't experience hair discrimination at work.
- + Participated in Mission Include, a cross-company mentoring programme supporting our high potential ethnic minority business services colleagues with their career development.
- + Began Articles Plus, a programme for first year ethnic minority Trainees, and Trainees from lower socio-economic backgrounds, to assist them with navigating their training contracts. The aim of this programme is to increase retention of colleagues on completion of their training contracts.
- + Expanded our Black Talent Programme to include candidates of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage, two significantly underrepresented groups within the legal sector. Our updated programme, the Ethnicity Pathway Programme, seeks to attract and recruit Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Black heritage students into law.

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

- + Began to monitor pay and promotion decisions by ethnicity so we can identify trends, check progress and take appropriate action. In 2021 we published our [Ethnicity Pay Gap Report](#) for the first time to ensure that our firm is fair and equitable.

+ Joined the Black Lawyers Matter mentoring programme to provide mentors to aspiring Black lawyers and legal professionals. Some colleagues, as well as some of our clients, are mentors on the programme.

+ Began our Stay Programme to support the retention of minority ethnic lawyers and develop their career managers as allies.
- + Launched our Hear My Name campaign – with colleagues adding name badges to their email signatures – highlighting the importance of colleagues making the effort to learn and pronounce names correctly.
- + Launched our [bank holiday exchange policy](#), which offers the opportunity to exchange up to three UK bank holidays for an alternative day. This is a benefit which may be particularly valued by those who observe or celebrate religious or cultural events that are significant to them, or those with family outside of the UK.
- + Ran listening exercises across business services to inform our approach to inclusion in business services.

Race/ethnicity

OUR COLLEAGUES' PERSPECTIVES

“Over the last three years, we have introduced a range of measures to attract and recruit Trainees from a wide variety of backgrounds and support them to navigate their training contracts. Our Black Talent Programme was created to attract and support Black Trainees into the firm, and all our assessors complete training to help interviewers gain an insight into their biases and what they can do to tackle them. More recently, Trainees have participated in the Articles Plus programme, which is designed to assist them to navigate their training contracts and enhance retention. We are committed to building a diverse pipeline of strong performers – from Solicitor Apprentices to Trainees – who will shape the future of our firm.”



NAOMI LEACH

Partner and
Training Principal

“Participating in the Mission Include cross-company mentoring programme was an enlightening and rewarding experience for me. I was initially taken aback but feel honoured to be recognised as a valued and high-performing member of my firm. My mentor match was perfect; he was a remarkable person whose insights from a different organisation and sector offered me a fresh perspective on my own career. He showed genuine interest in my personal life, prompting me to reflect deeply on what I truly want, both personally and professionally, and his openness in conversations helped me step back, reassess my career path, and explore better ways of achieving my goals.”



YATISH VARA

Change and
Adoption Specialist

“When I first joined Stephenson Harwood, I was quite timid. The Articles Plus programme was instrumental in transforming my approach, developing my confidence during my first seat and helping me to build rapport with my colleagues. During the programme, I got to meet peers at Stephenson Harwood and at other firms to collectively discuss how we can make the most out of our first seats and how to ask supervisors about their preferred working style so we can ensure that we tailor our approach to different team members. The coaching session also helped me to have an individual discussion with a qualified coach about how to make sure that my team sees me as a trustworthy colleague, ensuring that I get a chance to experience a variety of work.”



MARC DAI

Trainee Solicitor



GENDER

GENDER

%

35

30

25

2021

2022

2023

2024

2025



Women Partners
by 1 May 2025

32%

All data is as at 1 May 2025.



NOT ACHIEVED

35% women Partners by 1 May 2025

As at 1 May 2025, 32% of our Partners globally are women. We have made some progress, but did not meet our target.

As at 1 May 2025, 55%
of our global leadership
team are women.

Gender

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

+ Expanded our Female Career Progression Programme, which supports associates to navigate their career and strengthen their networks in the firm, to include our colleagues in Paris, Dubai, and Singapore.	+ Announced our gender target. + Launched a range of new and enhanced policies to ensure we are doing all we can to support those on the pathway to parenthood, parents and carers globally.	+ Launched our Women’s Partner Pipeline Programme which supports women who are a few years out from partnership and their Partner sponsors.	+ Continued to increase the number of practice groups with structured work allocation to ensure that work is equitably distributed. In 2024, we introduced this in some of our offices outside London. + Launched the Open Door network which lists a directory of Partners who are on hand to advise, guide and share their experiences and tips regarding career development and progression.
2021	2022	2023	2024
+ Launched our global menopause policy and approach to support anyone experiencing the menopause. + We monitor pay and promotion decisions by gender so we can identify trends, check progress, and take appropriate action.	+ Launched coaching for new parents to support their transition to parenthood. + Introduced a new six-month programme for senior women Associates, to develop, inspire and retain top talent at this level.	+ Ran our ‘Be Amazing’ programme, a three-part webinar series for our women lawyers to develop the tools to be visible in the workplace and own their success.	+ Introduced a parents and carers employee network. + Launched our flexible working series, which showcases our people’s stories of how they work differently to meet their specific personal and professional demands.

Gender

OUR COLLEAGUES' PERSPECTIVES

“Participating in the Women’s Partner Pipeline Programme allowed me to step away from my busy day-to-day responsibilities and dedicate time to reflect on my career achievements, identify my strengths, and consider my career aspirations and how I was going to achieve them. One of the most enlightening parts of the programme was realising that there is no ‘one size fits all’ career path; everyone has the opportunity to make their career path their own and to build a practice that works for them. I enjoyed hearing from women Partners and senior lawyers across the firm to understand how they overcame their challenges and built a successful practice. I have subsequently been able to use the skills that I learnt to share my story to help other women who are starting their legal careers and provide advice and guidance to them, such as how to use the unique opportunities available to them to expand networking possibilities.”



LUCY THORPE

Partner

“The new parent coaching sessions have been incredibly helpful and supportive during a pivotal transition in my career. Before starting my maternity leave, the first session provided guidance on preparing for going on leave, especially in terms of effective communication with clients and managing expectations whilst I’m away. Then, during my leave, the session focused on maximising my ‘keeping in touch’ days and exploring my career goals. It helped me stay connected and began to frame conversations with my manager about my return to work and my long-term objectives. I’m looking forward to my third session, which is scheduled a few months after I return to work where I would like to use the time to reflect on my reintegration and continue to develop my career trajectory.”



JOANNA KATSAOUNI

Associate

Gender

OUR COLLEAGUES' PERSPECTIVES

“During my second year as an Associate, I found myself questioning my abilities and whether my work met the expectations of the Partners. The Female Career Progression Programme arrived at the perfect moment for me, offering me the chance to reflect on my career aspirations and how I want to be perceived as a lawyer. Meeting other women at the same level, who were experiencing similar challenges, was reassuring and allowed me to think critically about my career and personal growth. The FCPP allowed me to pause, evaluate what was working, identify areas for change, and strategically plan my career path. The programme opened the door to deeper self-awareness and allowed me the space to think about what I want to get out of my career.”



OPALE MALET

Associate

“To me, the Female Career Progression Programme is one of the best programmes that our firm offers. It gave me the chance to connect with other women at a similar point in their careers and provided a confidential space to share our thoughts. I found it fascinating to see how different departments function within the firm, especially in terms of women’s representation and how they manage pressures. The programme offered me the time and space to reflect on my professional future. It also equipped me with strategies to define my career goals and approaches to achieve them. Most importantly, it has helped me learn how to voice what I want to achieve in my career.”



PAIGE ACHILLES

Associate



CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

“Our commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond statistics or a particular characteristic. Fostering a truly inclusive environment allows us to celebrate – and benefit from – the unique individuals who make up our firm. Inclusion should permeate everything that we do and shape the way that we work and interact with one another. Our events celebrate and foster inclusion, promote understanding of underrepresented groups in society and our workplace, and enrich our community by bringing colleagues, clients and friends together.”



REBECCA CARTER
London Managing
Partner



What's next

OUR 2028 DIVERSITY TARGETS

Our most recent diversity targets took us to May 2025, but our work and our commitment to diversity and inclusion continues.

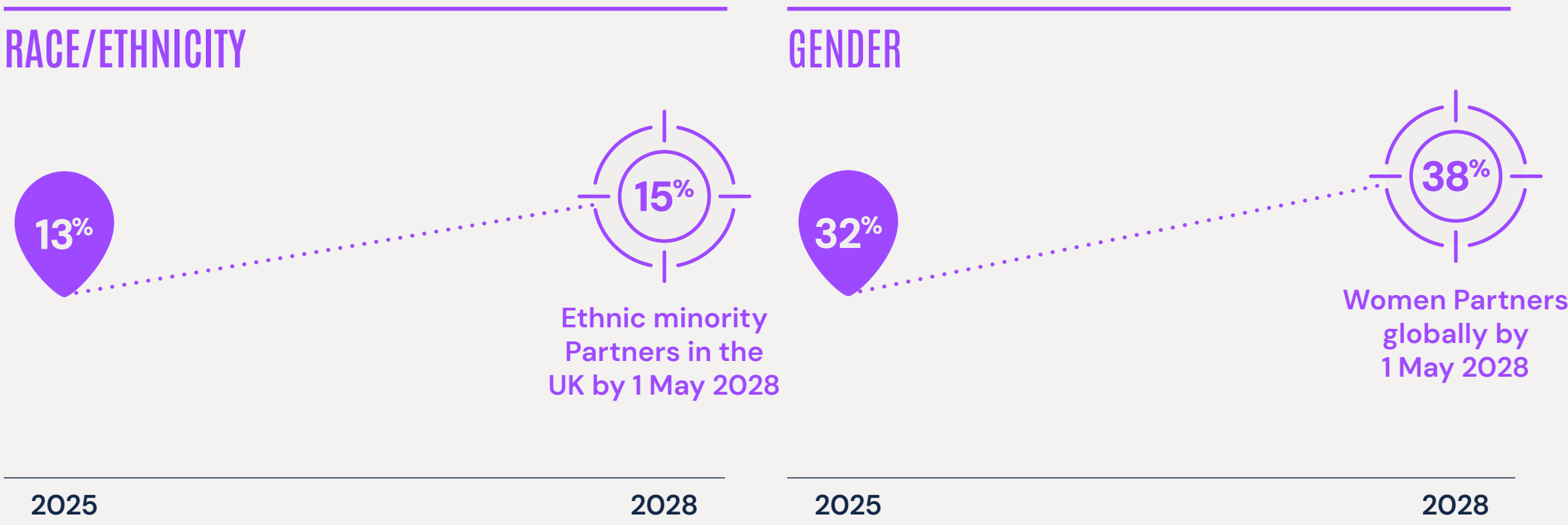
We have set refreshed targets for both gender and ethnicity. Our updated diversity targets will run until 1 May 2028, and we will continue to report annually on our progress and actions towards these each year.

Alongside these targets, we will continue to monitor recruitment, retention and progression across our populations, and take action to understand and address trends.

“As we refresh our targets for 2025 to 2028, our commitment to diversity and inclusion remains unwavering. We aspire to be a truly inclusive and diverse firm where colleagues can be themselves and thrive at work. By again setting clear, transparent goals and outlining the actions we will take to achieve them, we are confident that we will continue to drive meaningful progress and create a workplace where diversity is celebrated, and every person can succeed.”



LIZ COPE
Head of Responsible Business





OUR WIDER INCLUSION COMMITMENTS

Due to smaller population sizes, we don't have explicit targets for some of our other underrepresented communities. However, our commitment to diversity and inclusion extends beyond race, ethnicity and gender.

For more information on our inclusion work, click on the links below.



STEPHENSON HARWOOD

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