

STOP THE TALENT LEAK

Census and industry data indicates that **one in two South Asian lawyers leaves private practice¹ before being promoted to partner**, causing a talent leak. Diverse Talent Networks (DTN) and BCLP surveyed 48 South Asian partners (18% of the UK South Asian partner community) working in practices with more than 75 partners to investigate the experiences of South Asian partners and identify practical measures to stop the talent leak.

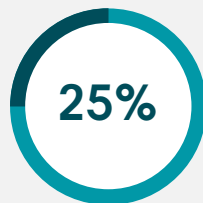


On average, South Asian respondents scored ethnicity at **7 out of 10** as a barrier to success. A larger proportion (45%) of female South Asian lawyers scored ethnicity at 8 out of 10 and above as a barrier.

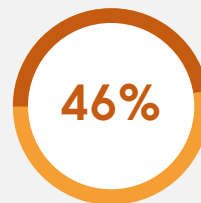
Ethnicity is seen as a barrier to success, negatively impacting many aspects of career progression



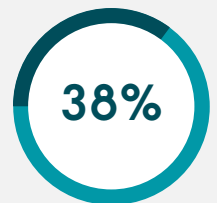
Suffered issues and hostility because of their ethnicity



Felt their ethnicity put them at career disadvantage

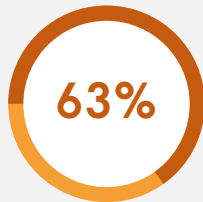


Saw ethnicity slowing down promotion to partner

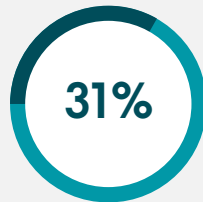


Felt ethnicity affected decisions around work allocation

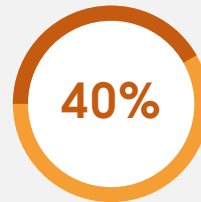
Discrimination is commonplace



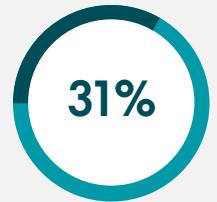
Suffered discrimination in form of microaggressions



Suffered discrimination in form of cronyism



Suffered discrimination over promotions and career opportunities



Suffered discrimination in form of racial slurs

“

Colleagues have "jokingly" labelled me a terrorist or a sleeper agent. I've faced pressure to compromise my religious dietary laws and abstain from alcohol, pivotal aspects of my faith, during social gatherings with colleagues and clients.

”

Almost two thirds (65%) of South Asian partners said they had experienced racial discrimination in career progression.

Two in five (40%) had seen the "goal posts" moved on a promotion or opportunity.

Almost a third (29%) cited being denied a promotion or opportunity that they had deserved on merit, experience and qualification.

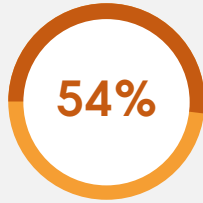
¹ [Solicitors Regulation Authority](#) diversity report shows Asian lawyers accounting for 12% of solicitors. [2021 census](#) shows South Asians account for 6.9% of the population of England and Wales. Only 3.3% of UK partners at the largest firms is of South Asian heritage, a more than 50% underrepresentation, based on [Law Society data](#) and DTN's research, which identified 274 South Asian large practice partners.

“

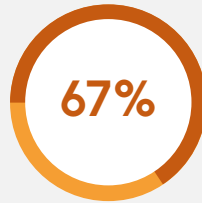
One of the big reasons for leaving [my previous firm] was that I was moving into a department where the head of the team loved drink.

”

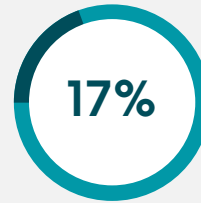
One in three (31%) said a dominant culture of ‘cronyism’ restricts access to networking opportunities



Mentioned an ethnic dimension to networking



Referred to exclusive behaviour



Said people associate with their own background



88% identify with a religion and said drinking culture can be excluding given this background

Almost two thirds (63%) of South Asian partners do not seek redress for discrimination, finding it less stressful to ignore the incident and just carry on with their work.

- Only around one in 20 (6%) said they had moved either to another job or to another company because of discrimination.
- Only one South Asian partner (2%) out of the 48 that completed the survey said they had referred or reported the incident to someone able to address the issues.

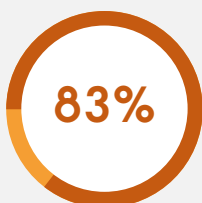
‘Code switching’ has been a career strategy for more than four out of five (83%) of the Asian partners interviewed.

This practice of behaviour adjustment to fit in better with the dominant workplace culture takes many forms and is seen as [having personal and psychological repercussions](#)².

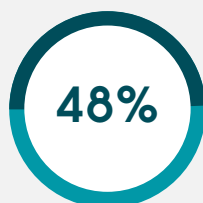
“

What does it mean to be you, what does it mean to be Indian? Are you a “coconut”? There’s that constant pull and pushing away because you don’t want to be seen to be too Indian versus that is my culture.

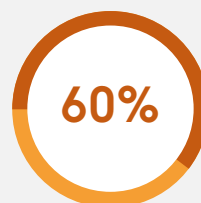
”



Adjusted their behaviour to fit in better



Say they modified their accent



Women said they were more extrovert than normal



Women said they spoke more loudly

“

You’d get those random comments: oh, I’ve never met anyone Asian before, or it’s funny, you don’t smell of curry.

”

² The Costs of Code-Switching (Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith, and Myles Durkee, November 15, 2019)