

# Supporting women of colour in business



**Building a business is something that everyone should have the opportunity to do. But we know that some communities have more obstacles to overcome than others in achieving their entrepreneurial dream.**

Recent research such as the Rose Review has highlighted the challenges faced by women in setting up and growing a business – **the challenges faced by women of colour are less reported.**

Over the last two years we've worked with PRECIOUS and its network of women of colour business founders to understand the unique and specific challenges they face when starting and growing businesses.

We conducted in-depth research with **140 women of colour business leaders** and launched a steering group with **ten founders** to advise on how we can better support this important group of entrepreneurs.

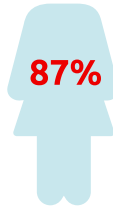
Survey respondents reported on the **biggest challenges** they faced:

Lack of role models



89% stated lack of role models

Unconscious bias



87% stated unconscious bias

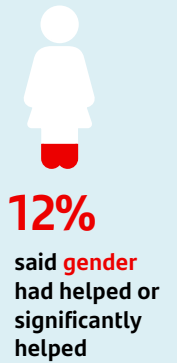
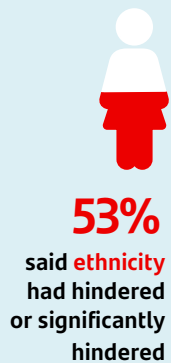


People, who grow up in environments where business is normal have the learned experience of their peers, their mentors, their guidance. I have come from a family that hasn't ever been involved in business, in fact a family that felt that business was a less honourable role to take than say like an engineer or a doctor or whatever. So all of those lessons had to be learnt from scratch.

Survey respondent



**Ethnicity** is a greater challenge than **gender** when growing a business



We asked women of colour whether their gender and ethnicity had 'helped or hindered you personally in starting and scaling your business'

**There is a lack of trust in banks, even when needing finance**

When asked who they would first approach to seek advice or support for finance



**11%** of respondents would first go to a **bank** for financial support



**27%** would go to **family or friends** first

**Banks are almost completely ignored for non-financial support**

When asked who they would first approach to seek advice or support for strategy

1%

Financial institution

12%

Family and friends

40%

Business mentor/coach

29%

Business network

6%

Marketing agency/consultancy

12%

Other



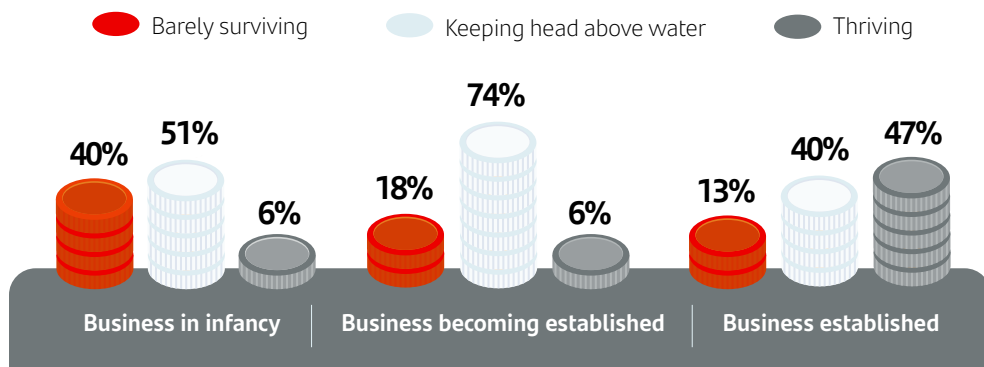
It's never occurred to me to take a loan. I have always just thought 'loans are scary', so I have spent a long time building up the capital myself and then investing it in my business....I feel like my start up phase has taken five plus years where someone else with the capital could have done it in a year.

Survey respondent



**Despite these challenges, respondents said their businesses thrive when they become established**

We asked respondents whether their business was as its infancy, becoming established or established. We then asked whether their business was barely surviving, keeping its head above water or thriving



**70%**

of women of colour entrepreneurs either strongly agree or agree that they should be given tailored business support. Their suggestions include:



Platform to voice and resolve challenges

'There should be a platform for women of colour to vocalise their barriers – be it a network or a website'



Support network

'More networking events for women of colour as an opportunity to meet like-minded individuals'

Skills development

'How to sell yourself as confidently as others'



Funding

'Ensure any promotions are specifically targeted around women of colour needs and not the same old looking loan marketing that's becoming so commonplace from banks'

**Our findings have made us change the way in which we deliver our business support programmes. Working with our steering group of women of colour business leaders we have committed to the following.**

Build trust in financial institutions

Develop specific business support programmes for women of colour, tailored to the challenges that they face and delivered by trusted partners.

There's a need for education and support that targets all life stages – we're ensuring that our Workwise and Moneywise school engagement programmes respond to the challenges this research has raised.

Develop 'Change the Future' - a programme of support aimed at black students and recent graduates supporting education, employability and entrepreneurship.

Promote positive role models

Increase number of case studies we publish featuring women of colour business leaders.

Broaden the diversity of women taking part in our Women Business Leaders mentoring programme.

Ensure that Santander panel events are as representative as possible.

Tackle unconscious bias

In September 2020 we launched our Black Inclusion Plan, which engaged colleagues in inclusion training centred on breaking bias, micro messages and respect.



**The banking industry needs to do more to engage with women of colour. We'll continue working with our steering group and customers to make sure we provide the support needed to help business leaders thrive.**

