

The Race Inclusion Gap



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The highest aim of any leadership should be to align their teams' ambitions and behaviours. But alignment has to rest on a shared understanding of purpose and vision. Our survey of UK leaders and employees shows that when it comes to racial and cultural difference the workforce is far from united.

Addressing these differences is urgent. This report comes five years after the Black Lives Matter movement swept the world, and as the UK government launches a major legislative effort to update racial equality laws.

Our survey reveals – for the first time – a disturbing gulf in sentiment between the C-suite and many on the shop floor; and a deep division between white and non-white employees.

Since 2020 corporate leadership has prided itself on its effort to respond to racial diversity, yet minority employees now see their bosses as complacent in their mindset and tokenistic in their actions. Our largest enterprises show real progress towards integration at board and executive levels, yet the workforce is, if anything, more divided by race than ever.

The gaps revealed by this survey are strong indicators of critical corporate issues: employee flight risk, and productivity in particular, which vary strongly between different cultural and ethnic groups.

The racial inclusion gap could not be more important. It presents a major obstacle to the creation of a united, productive UK workforce. This report reveals both the breadth and depth of that gap and calls for action now.

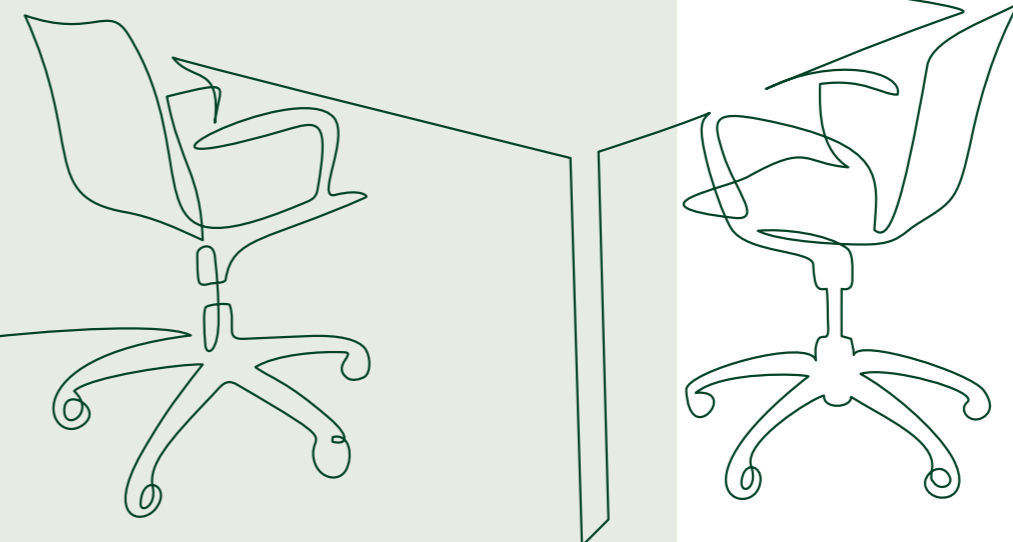
“

If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”

Henry Ford

Contents

- 4 The Message From Our CEO
- 6 The Message From Our Chair
- 8 Executive Summary
- 10 Summary of findings
- 13 Introduction & Research Methodology
- 14 Key Findings & Analysis
- 41 Conclusion



Welcome to our company

The Message From Our CEO

Let's Work Together To Make a Difference!

We know that volatility and asymmetric markets will remain a defining feature of the business landscape. But amid the uncertainty, one thing is clear: Leaders must do more with what they already have.

In the UK, the productivity challenge has a cost-effective, often overlooked solution: higher employee engagement. With increasingly diverse workforces serving diverse customer bases, unlocking inclusion isn't a moral gesture; it's a competitive edge.

But intention alone isn't enough.

As this report shows, even where senior leaders are committed to change, too many still lack confidence in how to drive specific and measurable progress. Trust in leadership remains fragile. And for too many ethnically diverse employees, lived experience falls far short of company promises.

The Race Inclusion Gap isn't just a diversity issue, it's a business risk.

When diverse talent feels excluded, culture weakens, innovation slows, and management energy is wasted. Attrition rises. Decision-making narrows. The bold, distinctive perspectives that fuel growth disappear.

By contrast, organisations that embed inclusion into leadership culture build stronger, more agile teams. They engage and retain more of their workforce. They enhance their reputation. And they grow more sustainably, and more competitively.

At Green Park, we help our clients close this gap. We support leadership teams to make high-impact and future-facing decisions, securing rare, transformational talent, improving retention, and shaping the inclusive cultures they aspire to lead.

Inclusion isn't a tick-box. It's a strategy.

One that helps you build the kind of business the future will reward.



Raj Tulsiani
CEO of Green Park
Chair of Race Equality Matters



The Message From Our Chair

The Race Inclusion Gap: A Business Imperative for Equity and Growth

Of all dimensions of diversity, race and religion are the most divisive in the workplace. They are also the characteristics changing most rapidly in the British workforce. In the next two decades virtually all growth in the UK population is projected to be driven by immigration, much of it from nations like India and Nigeria.

Britain's workforce is certain to become significantly more racially and culturally diverse between now and 2050. Some estimates suggest that by mid century more than half the workforce will either be foreign born or the children and grandchildren of foreign born workers.

Most successful corporate leaders know all too well that this will be one of the great challenges of the 21st century. But far too many also believe that their existing programmes and messages are sufficient to manage their growing diversity effectively.

They are wrong.

This survey shows that corporate leaders are in sore need of a wake-up call – their own perception of progress is at odds with the perception of those who work for them. In particular the gap in sentiment between leaders and their ethnic minority employees can be seen from space. Not all employees see their bosses' behaviours in the same way.

For some, this gap will come as no surprise, though the size of it has never before been measured. What perhaps is more disturbing is the gulf of understanding developing between white and non-white employees. Half a century of anti-discrimination legislation and three decades of diversity training and inclusion programmes may have increased representation at the upper levels of industry, but has done little to create a common outlook between minority and majority ethnic workers.

At Green Park, we believe that every employee deserves a great boss – and being a great boss means, in part, a full understanding of the different ways in which all your colleagues see the world. This report is a contribution to that understanding.



Sir Trevor Phillips OBE
Chairman of Green Park
Chairman of Change the Race Ratio



Executive Summary

Five years ago, the world was shaken by the Black Lives Matter movement. One aspect of the global response was a wave of commitments by corporate leaders to make the workplace more racially equal, with a deeper understanding of the cultural diversity of the workforce.

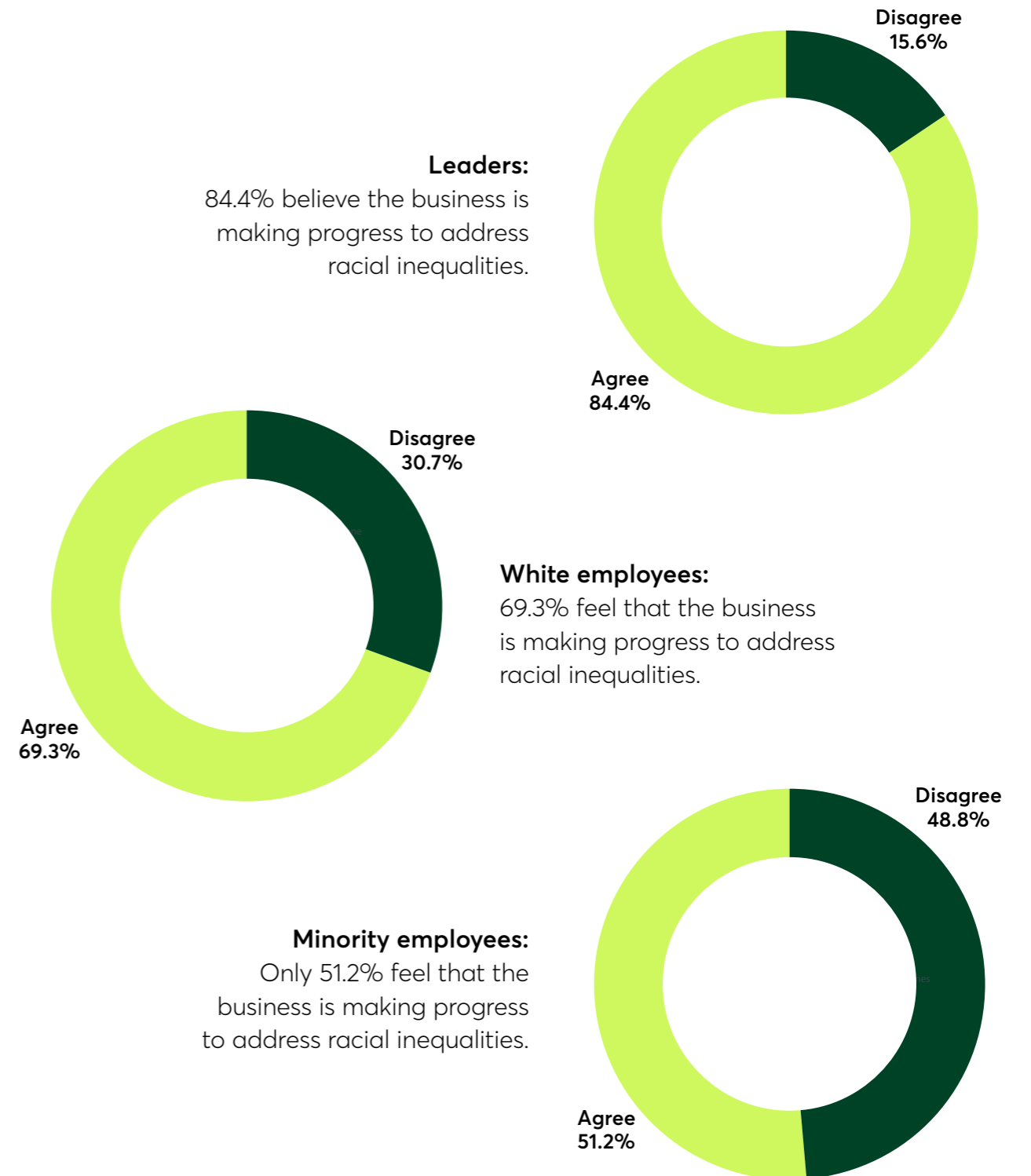
Many billions of dollars have been expended on promoting culture change and racial awareness. In the UK representation at the top of major companies has increased, prompted both by official bodies such as the review of ethnicity on boards led by Sir John Parker and David Tyler, and agitation by ginger groups such as Change The Race Ratio.

Some things have changed. Ten years ago, the majority of the FTSE 100, Britain's largest companies, were led by all-white boards. This year, the Parker Review reported that only five such companies remain in the index.

Yet what is made clear by this survey, the first of its kind in the UK, is that the view of what has changed is not shared by the three key groups in our workforce: leaders, white employees, and minority employees. Tellingly, almost half of the minority employees responding to our survey are unpersuaded that the UK is making progress on equality at work.



Figure 1: The business is making progress on its stated ambitions to address racial inequalities in the workplace



Minority employees are three times as likely to feel that their organisations are making no progress on racial equality as are their leaders, and fifty per cent more than their white colleagues.

This what we call the racial inclusion gap.

Summary of Findings

Our major findings are grouped under three headings:
Leadership, Voice, and Belonging

Leadership

- Corporate leaders are aware of the need to address racial and cultural diversity in the workforce; but their employees, particularly those from minorities see their leaders as complacent and out of touch. Credibility of leaders is strongly related to employee commitment and productivity.
- More than nine out of ten leaders consider that they lead by example in creating an inclusive culture; fewer than half of minority employees agree that their bosses set a good example.
- Most leaders believe that they communicate effectively on matters of race. Their minority employees do not agree: barely a third say that their leaders are confident when speaking about race.
- White and non-white employees are sharply divided on whether race is a topic easily discussed in the workplace; minority employees are more likely to believe that race is a taboo subject at work.
- Corporate leaders are united in the belief that their businesses would never allow racist behaviour to go unremarked and unpunished. Neither their white nor their non-white workers agree; minority workers are almost half as likely as their leaders to say that their workplaces display zero tolerance to racism.

Voice

- Bosses and white workers share a belief that equal opportunities are available to all. Non-white opinion diverges dramatically – minority workers are only half as likely as their white colleagues to see their workplaces as equal.
- Leaders and white workers believe that minority workers have a strong voice in the workplace. Minority opinion disagrees sharply, and are twice as likely as their leaders to say that they are unheard at work.

Belonging

- Leaders and employees from all backgrounds are positive about steps that have been taken to support religious faith in the workplace, broadly agreeing that all faiths are supported.
- However, minority employees are four times as likely feel no sense of belonging to the organisation they work for as do their white colleagues. Crucially this measure is likely to be related to employee loyalty, and attrition with consequent implications for labour costs.
- One third of minority workers say that they have at some point felt that their leaders or white colleagues had stereotyped them rather than treating them as individuals.

Introduction & Research Methodology

Between December 2024 and January 2025, three sentiment surveys were conducted to assess workplace inclusion from the perspectives of leaders, white employees, and ethnically diverse employees.

Participants provided feedback on 15 key inclusion statements, capturing their experiences and perceptions.



**Over 700
respondents**

participated in the survey, providing valuable insights into workplace inclusion. Their feedback, gathered from leaders, white employees, and ethnic minority employees, highlights key disparities in perception and experience.

The sample, though not representative of the entire UK workforce, draws from a large pool of corporate and shopfloor leaders across most industrial sectors.

The results are analysed as a seven point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For clarity they are presented here as a summary of strong agreement and disagreement. Responses by leaders, white employees and non-white employees are analysed by net positive and negative agreement scores.

Disclaimer: This report only represents a sample of the insights, to find out more, get in touch.

Key findings & analysis

Leadership



Central to a great team is a common understanding of the world. Most of our corporate world has yet to build such an understanding.

There is a major gap between leaders and employees, when asked about their confidence discussing racial issues, determination to stamp out bias in the workplace and perception of the diversity of the leadership team. The depth of the divide is greatest between the C-suite and minority employees.

Asked whether senior managers show a lead on creating an inclusive culture by example, the gap between leaders' self-perception and their employees' judgement is startling.

Figure 2: The leadership team lead by example in creating an open and inclusive workplace culture

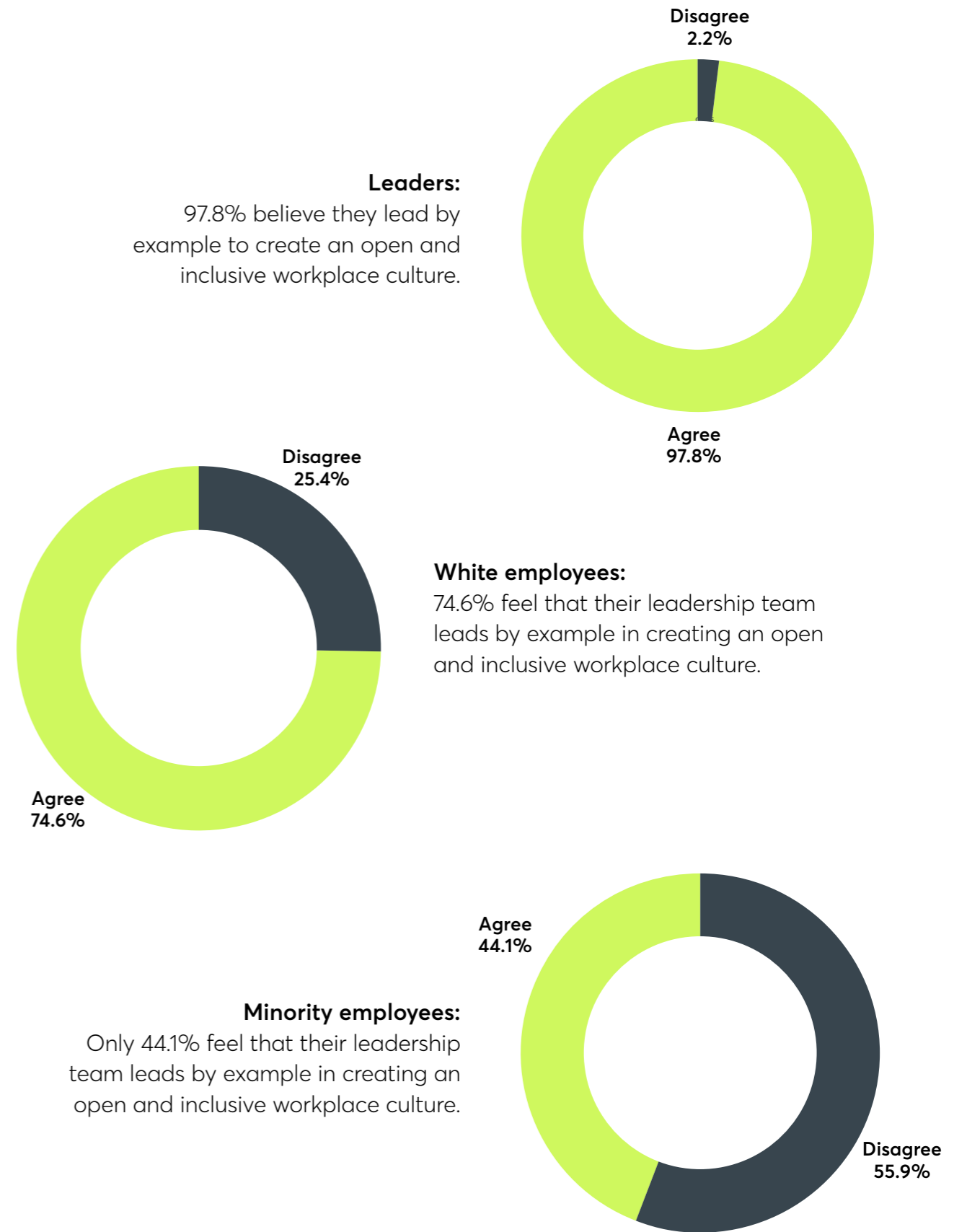


Figure 2: Summary

Leaders, by a net positive score of +95.6% believe that they display a positive example in creating an open and inclusive culture. Their employees disagree. White employees net agreement score is +49.2%; minority employees net agreement is a negative at -11.8% - that is to say, a majority maintain that their leaders' behaviours are anything but inclusive.

Even more extraordinary is the gap in perception between leaders and employees when asked about senior leaders' comfort in talking about race.

Every leader who responded declared themselves confident discussing racial issues. Those to whom they do the most talking give them low marks. Indeed it was on this question that we recorded the largest gap of the entire survey - between leaders and ethnic minority employees.



Figure 3: The leadership team are confident talking about race

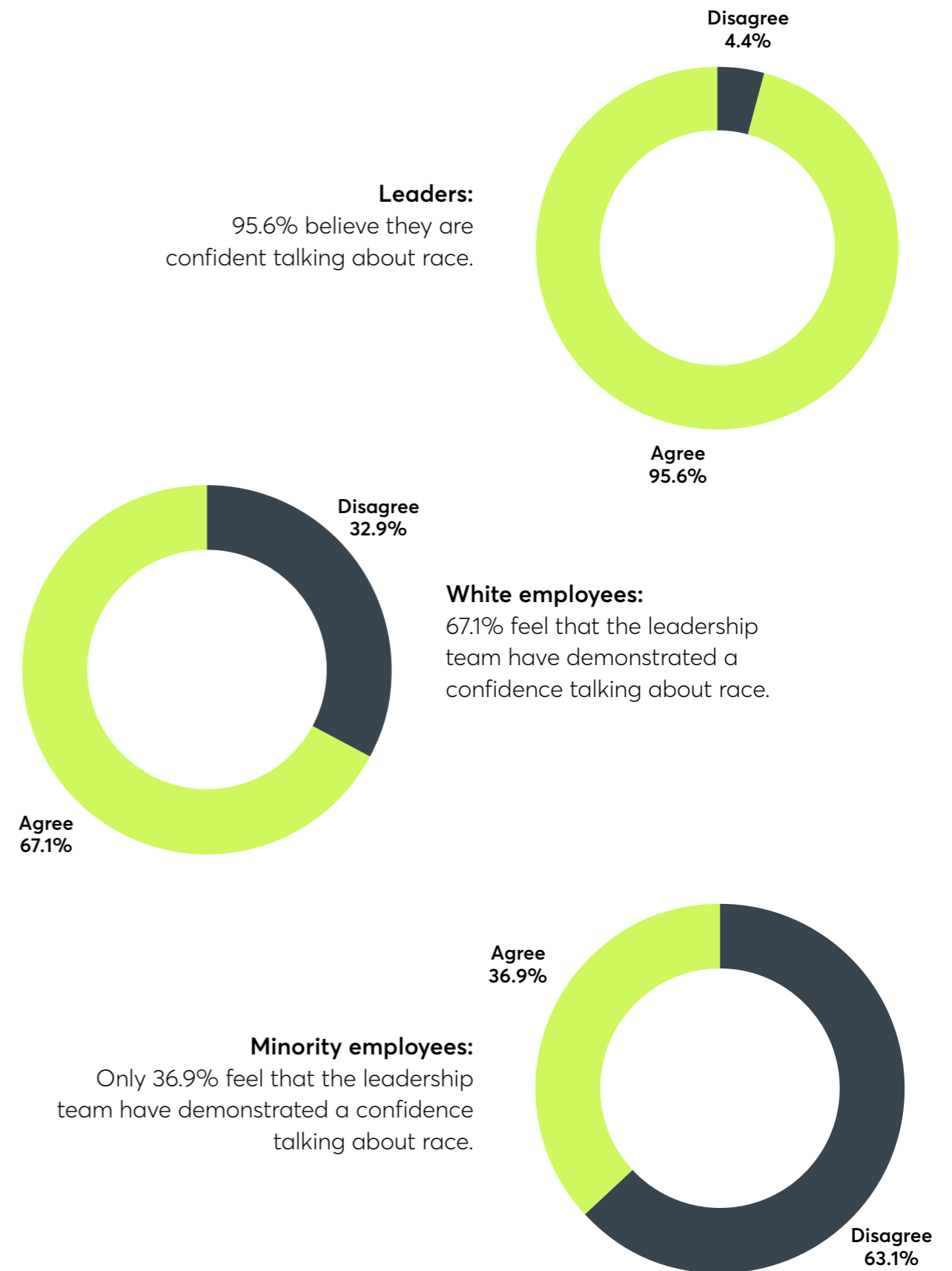


Figure 3: Summary

On this measure, the net score for leaders was a stunningly complacent net positive +100% agreement that they were confident talking about race. Minority employees recorded a net negative score of -27% – many more minority workers saw their bosses as lacking confidence than thought they were comfortable on the topic.

Even white employees were relatively sceptical of their leaders' capability with a net positive agreement of just +34.2% compared to their bosses' +100%.

One explanation for leaders' poor communication on the topic of race is that they don't get much practice. The CEO may feel that he or she encourages staff to speak openly about difficult issues, a notion shared by white workers; to many minority workers the topic has become taboo.



Figure 4: I feel able to discuss issues of race in my workplace

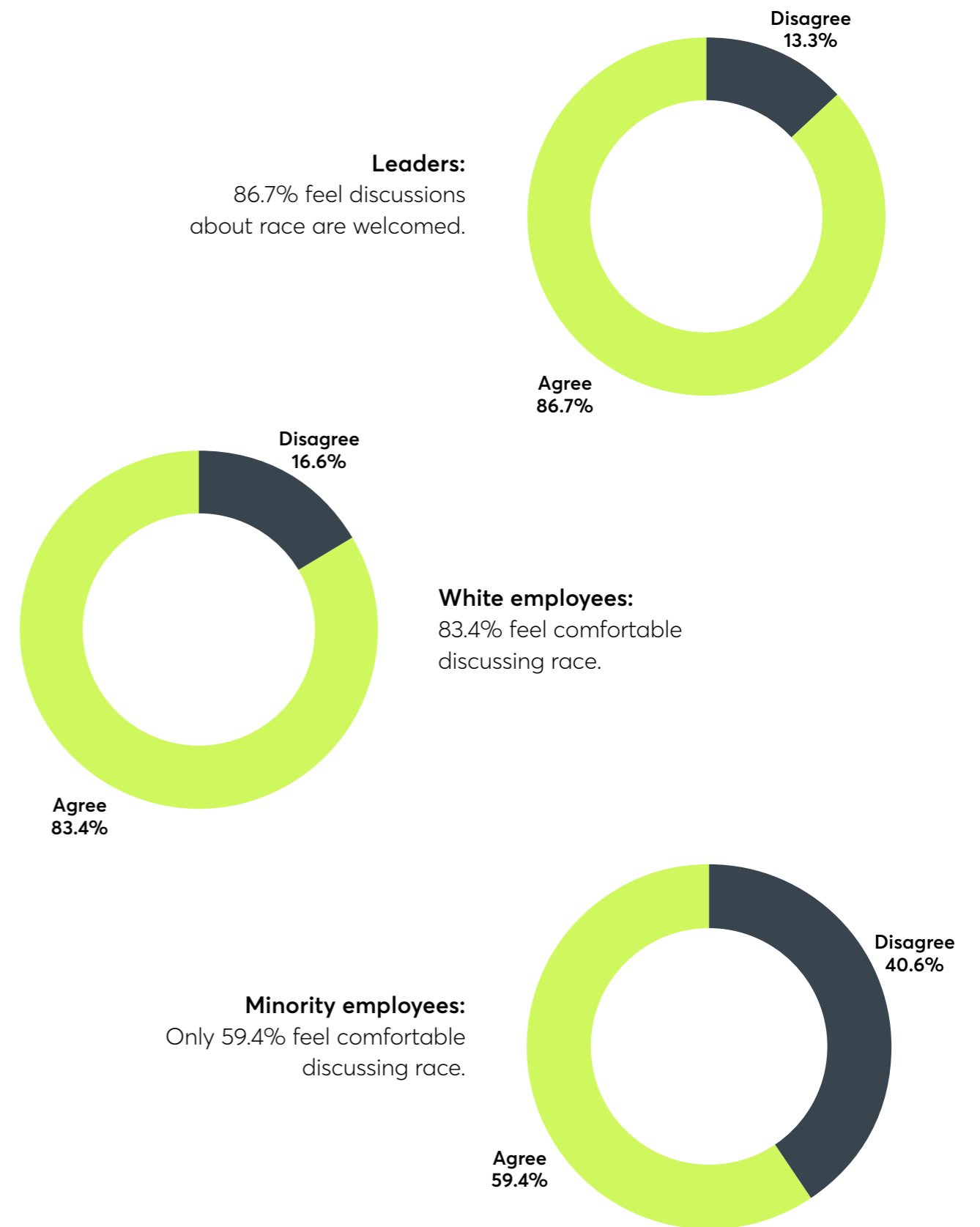


Figure 4: Summary

Leaders (+73.4%) and white employees (+66.8%) are convinced that their colleagues are open-minded enough to entertain honest conversations about race.

But based on the responses from minority employees, such discussions may in fact be rather one-sided; ethnic minority employees, with net score of +18.8% are far less likely to see their workplaces as safe spaces for dialogue on this most touchy of topics.

Dismayingly not only do employees believe that their leaders are unable to speak convincingly about race; neither white and non-white employees share their leaders' conviction that their bosses would act to stamp out racism when they see it.

The promise of zero tolerance of bigotry does not appear to chime with the workforce's real experience.

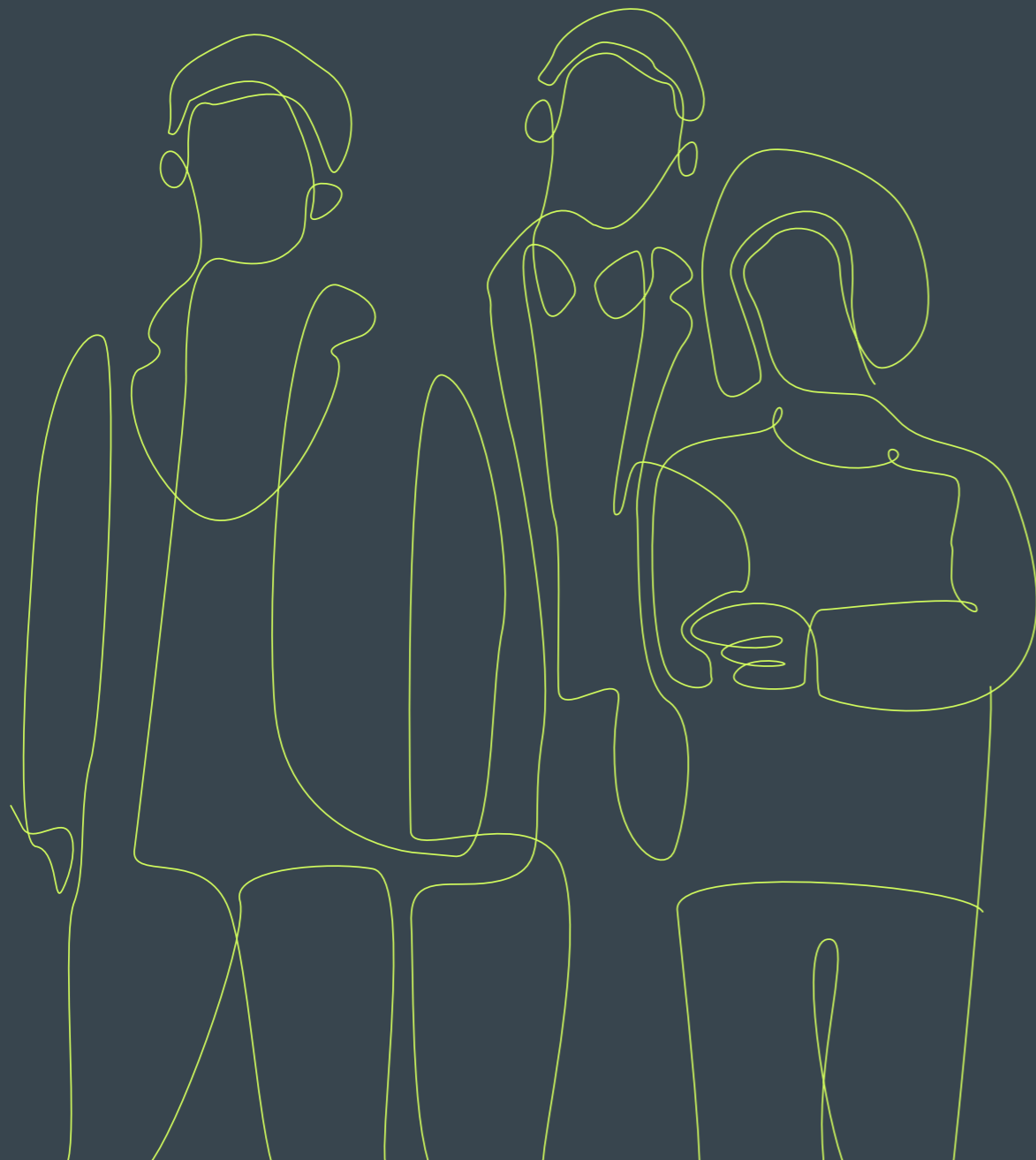


Figure 5: The business demonstrates a zero-tolerance approach to racism

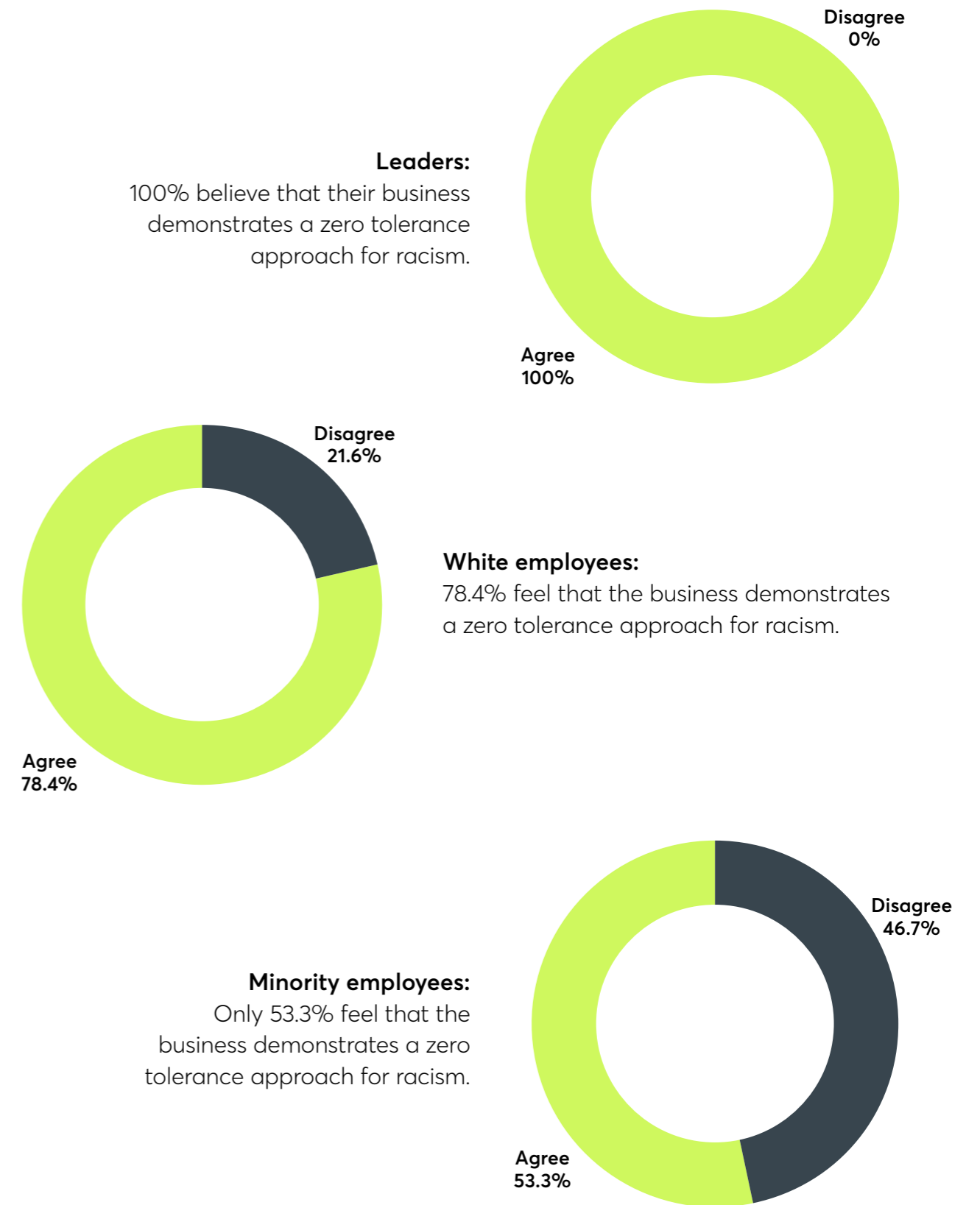


Figure 5: Summary

While leaders show a net positive of +100%, believing their business has a zero-tolerance approach to racism, minority workers return a net positive score of just +7%. White workers, though more positive at +58.6% are nowhere near as confident that their workplaces would never allow racist behaviour to go unremarked and unpunished.

Part of the reason is the complexion of leadership: in the eyes of workers it is far less diverse than those who share the executive washroom imagine.

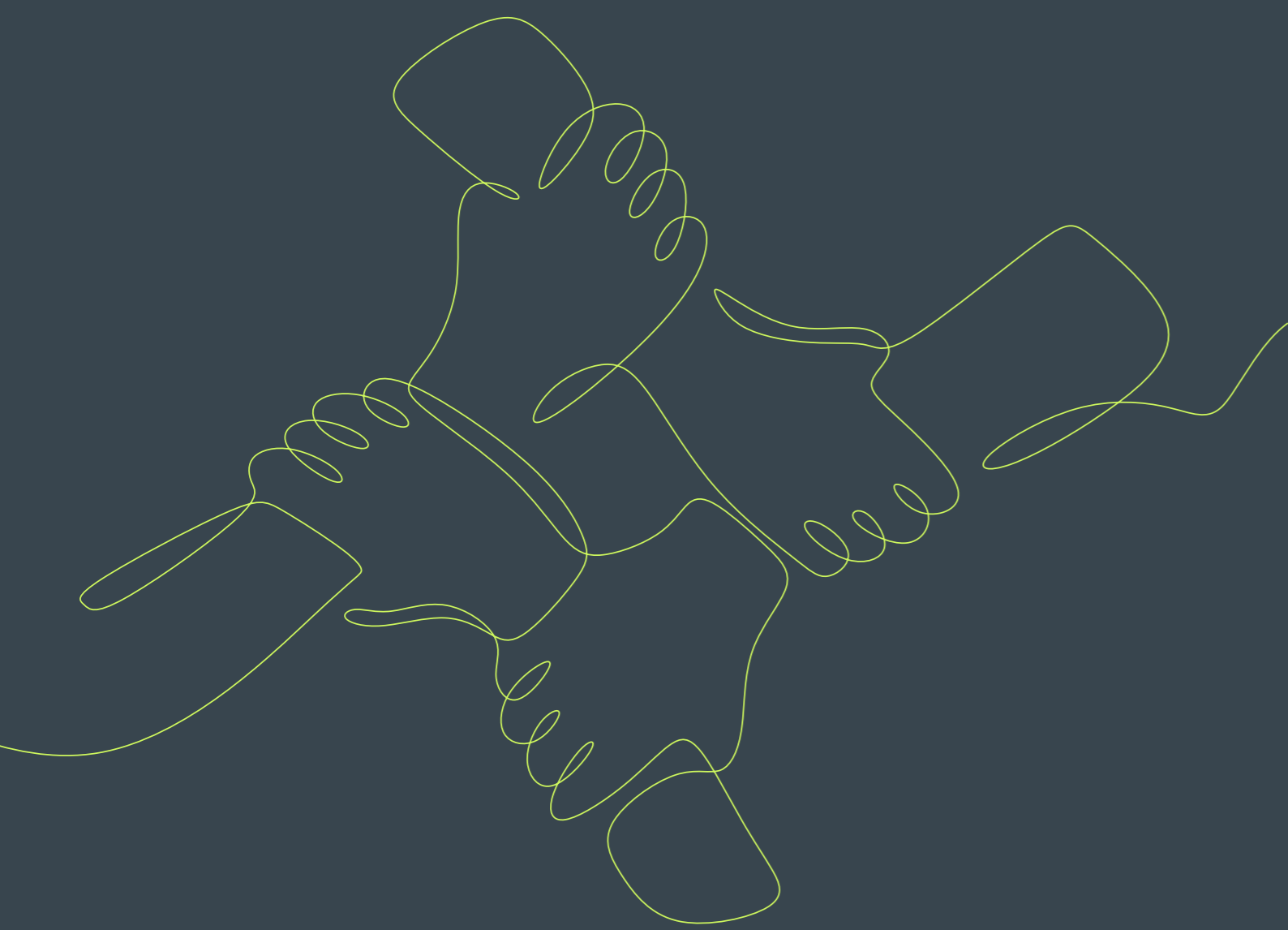


Figure 6: My race, ethnicity and religious beliefs are represented by members of the board and senior leaders' team

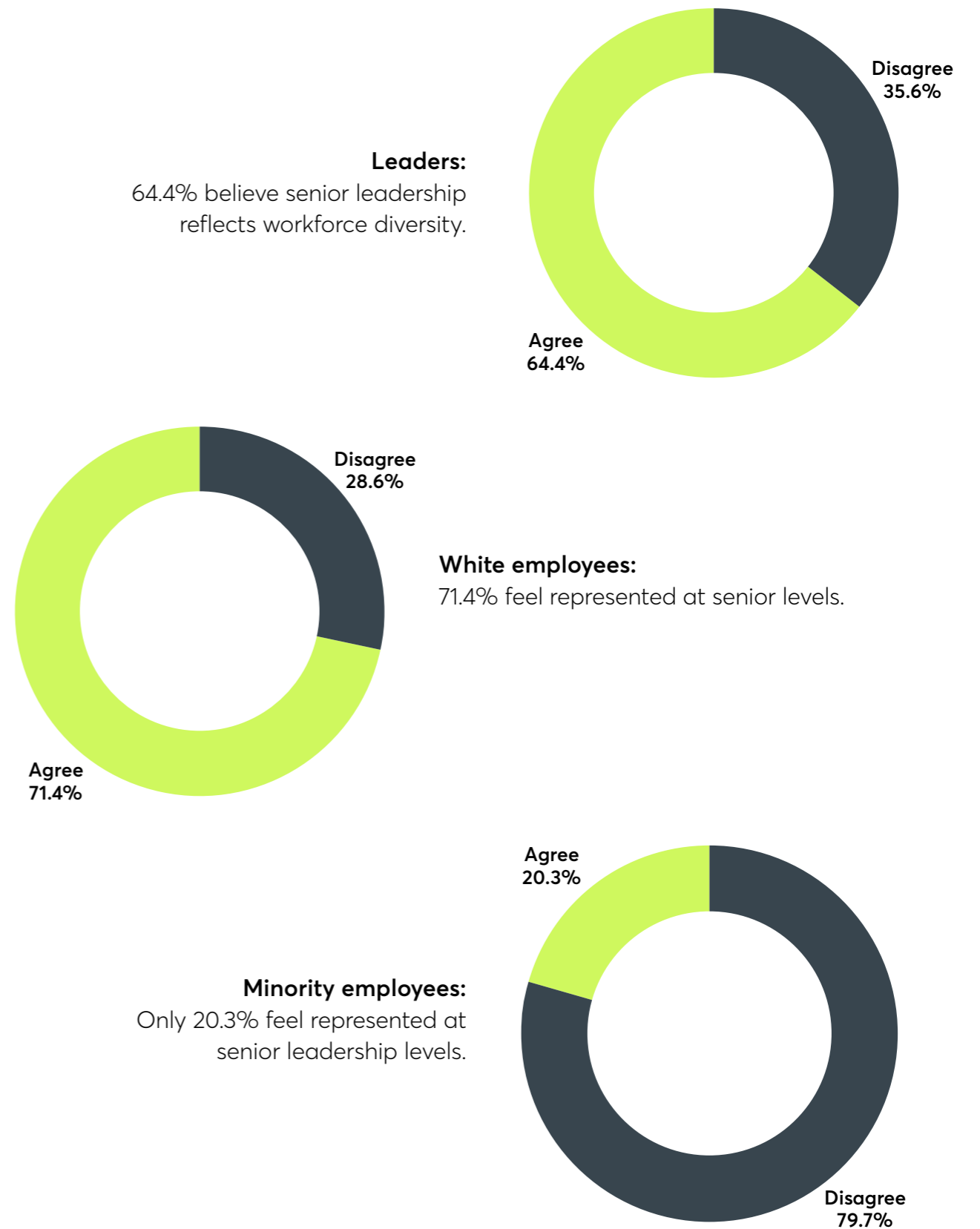


Figure 6: Summary

The leadership cohort in our survey saw their own ranks as representative of their organisation's racial and religious backgrounds with a net positive score of +28.8. By contrast, minority employees disagreed, with a net negative score of -59.4%.



Key findings & analysis

Voice



One clear consequence of the lack of faith in leaders' grasp of racial and religious diversity, is a conviction that not all people are equal within an organisation. There is a significant gap in confidence that opportunities are shared equally.

Figure 7: Everyone has the same access and opportunity to progress

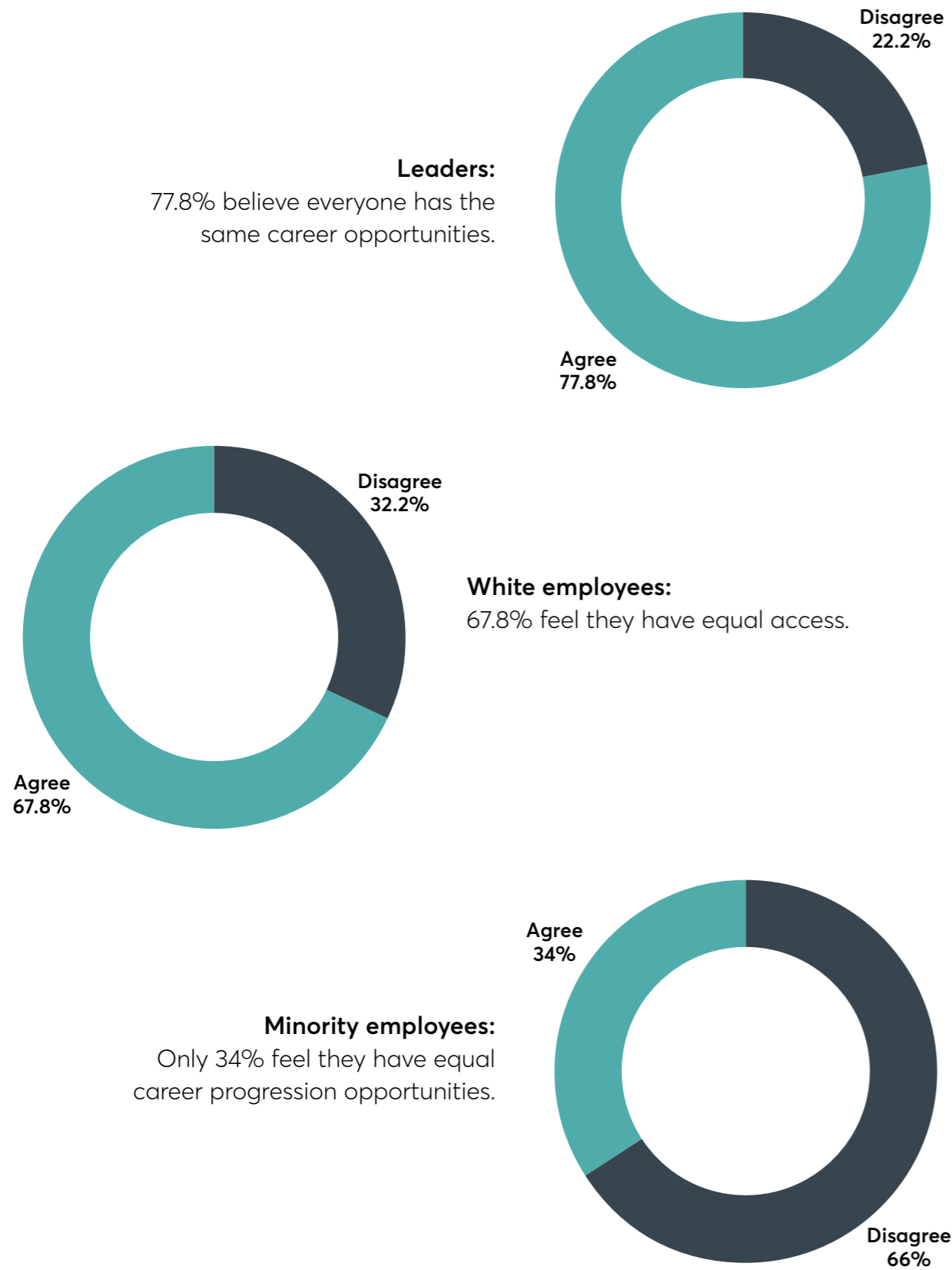


Figure 7: Summary

Here, there is a striking racial divide amongst workers. Bosses and white workers are similar in their agreement that equal opportunities are available with net positives of +55.6% and +45.6%. Non-whites diverge dramatically showing a net negative of -32%.

It is not therefore surprising to find a similar divide in perceptions of who really has a powerful voice at work.

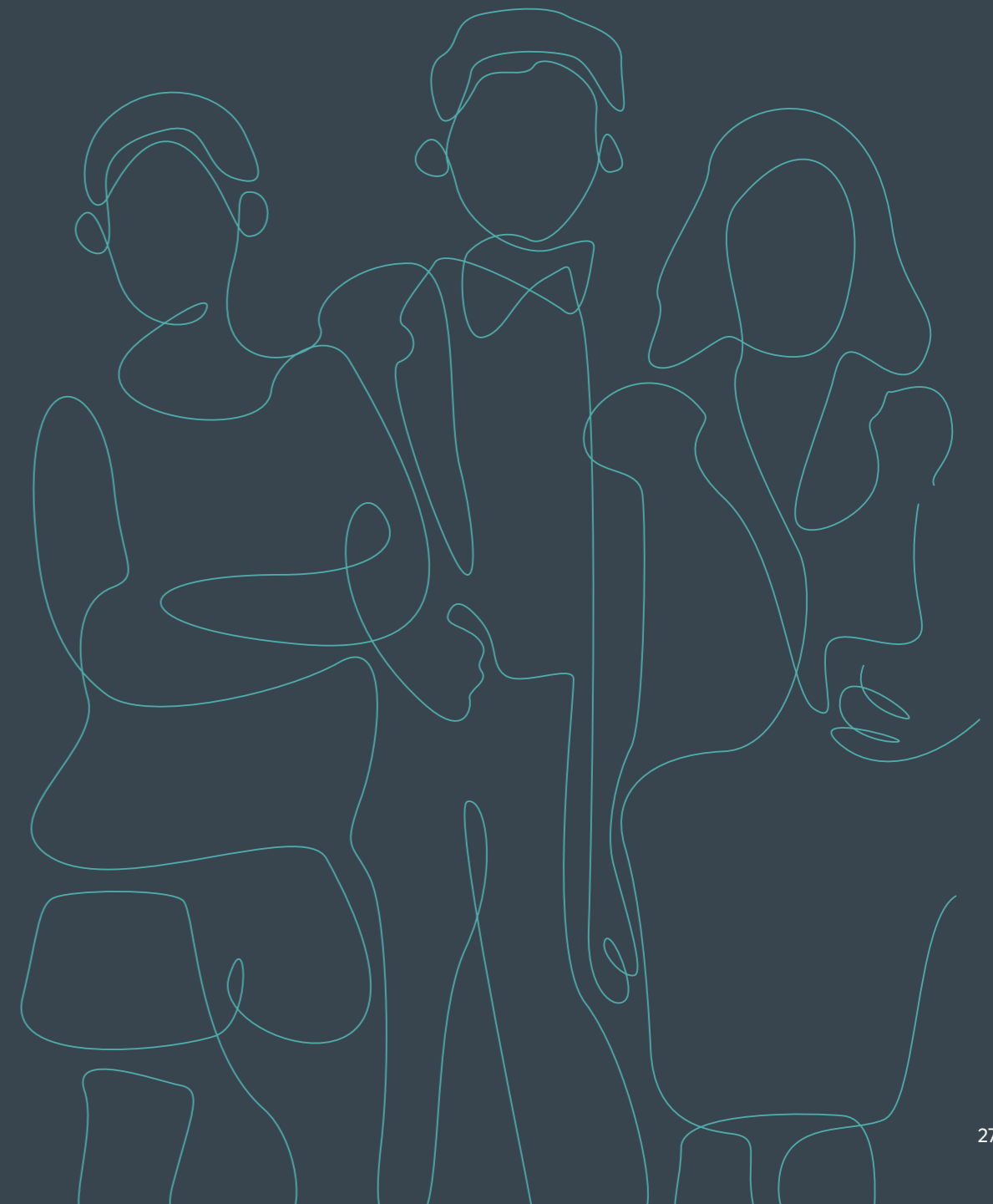


Figure 8: Employees from underrepresented groups have a strong voice in the organisation

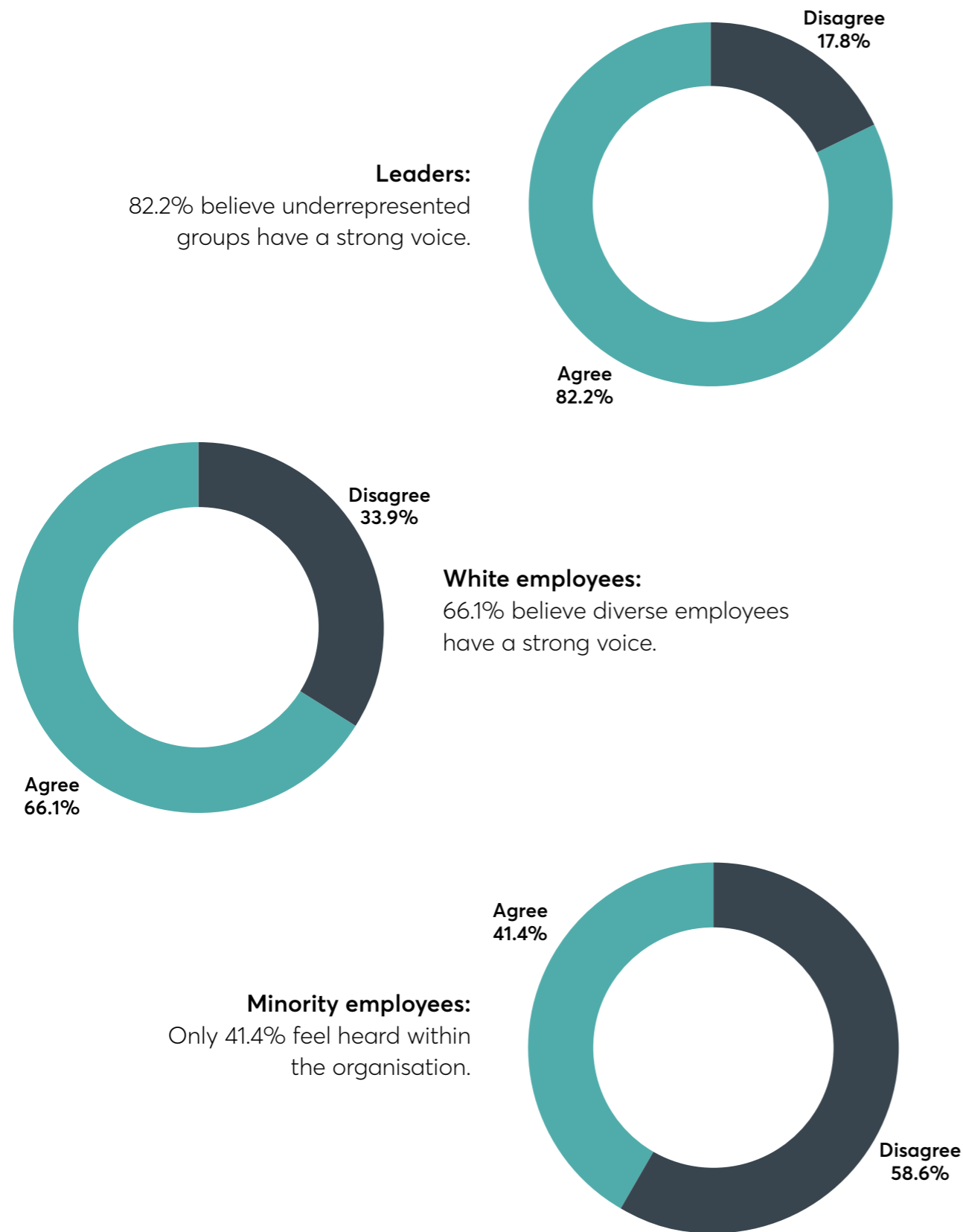


Figure 8: Summary

Both leaders and white employees share a belief that minority employees are given a more than fair hearing for their concerns: they show net positives of +64.4% and 32.2%. That is not the way it sounds to minorities: they show a net negative score of -17.2%.

A mildly more encouraging note is struck when workers are asked about the attitudes of their immediate line managers.

In the eyes of minority workers, the much-maligned middle manager, though far from perfect at least seems to be seen as more likely to stand up to prejudice than his or her bosses. Even here there is a definite division in opinion between minority employees on the one hand, and their leaders and white colleagues on the other.



Figure 9: My line manager champions inclusion and ensures underrepresented voices have influence

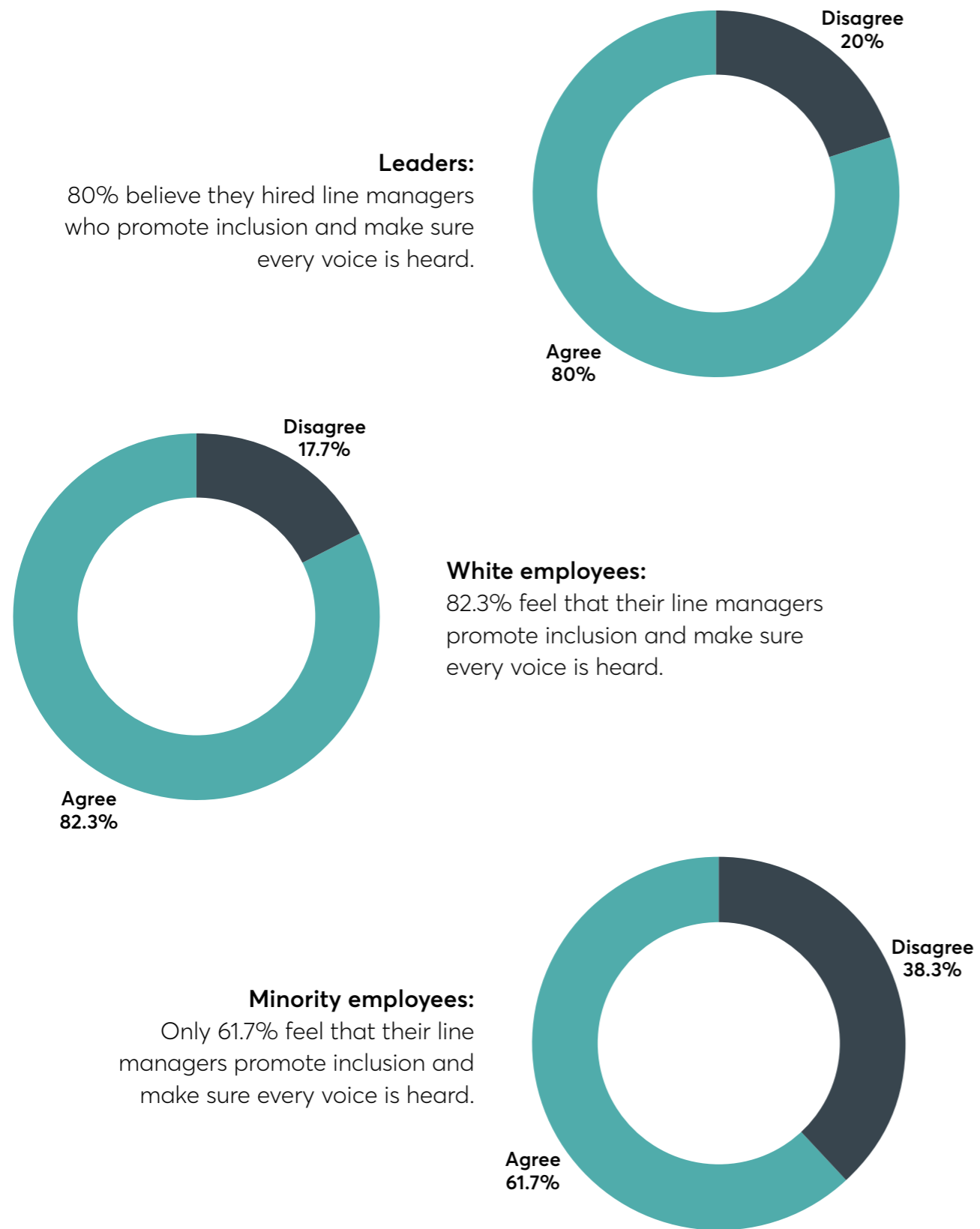


Figure 9: Summary

Leaders, with a net rating of +60% see their line managers as relatively clued up and inclusive; white workers are even more positive – net rating +64.6%. Minority workers on the other hand, though positive, are far less so with a net rating of +23.4%.



Key findings & analysis

Belonging



One strongly positive finding is that religion is not a dividing line in most workplaces.

Leaders and workforce alike share a belief that broadly speaking all religious beliefs and practices are supported at work: leaders (+42.2%), white employees (+53.4%) and minorities (+29.4%) agree to a greater or lesser degree.

Figure 10: All religious faiths and practices are fully supported in my workplace

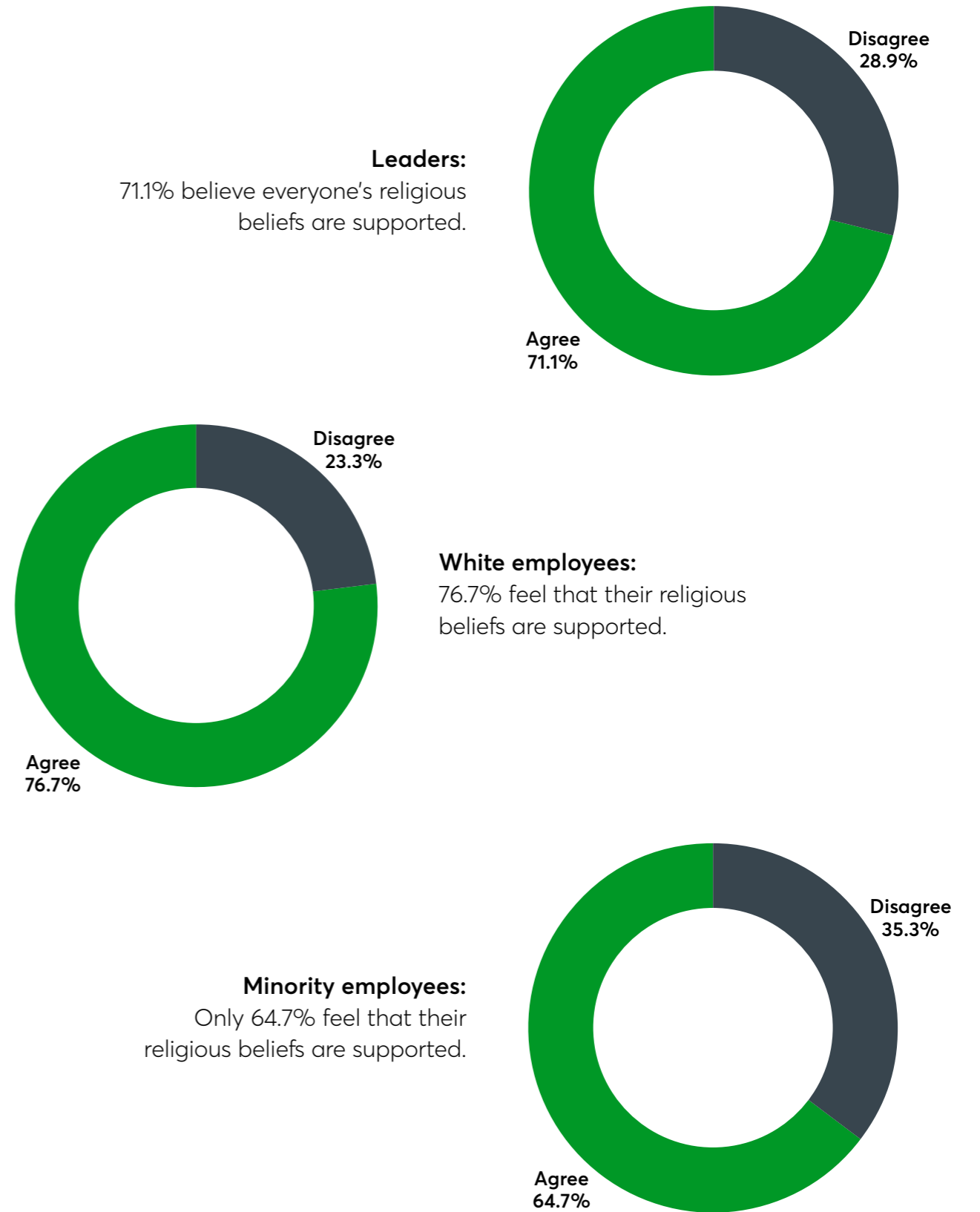


Figure 10: Summary

Most leaders and white employees tend to believe that there are many amongst their coworkers who stand ready to support underrepresented groups. Unfortunately the response of ethnic minorities suggests that in reality, their experience of allyship is nowhere near as positive as their coworkers imagine it to be.

Asked about allyship, leaders and white employees paint a positive picture: +95.6% and +68.2% respectively. Minority employees are nowhere near as enthusiastic about allyship registering a positive, but far lower score of +25.6%.



Figure 11: I feel allies are active in my organisation supporting colleagues from underrepresented groups

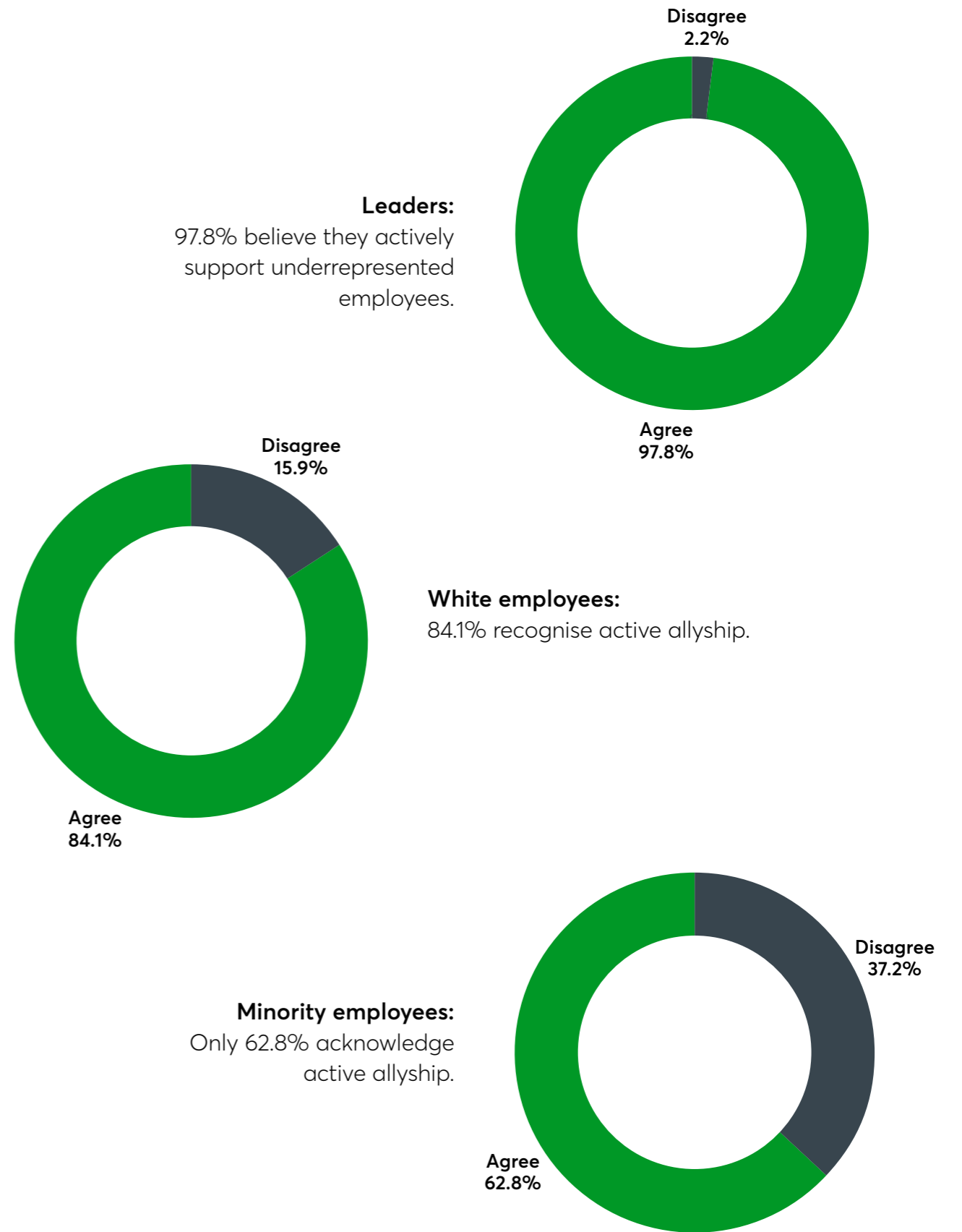


Figure 11: Summary

The evidence is that minority employees still feel themselves out in the cold. They are four times as likely as their white coworkers to feel no sense of belonging to their organisations, a huge gap which appears to go unrecognised by leaders:



Figure 12: I feel a sense of belonging in my organisation

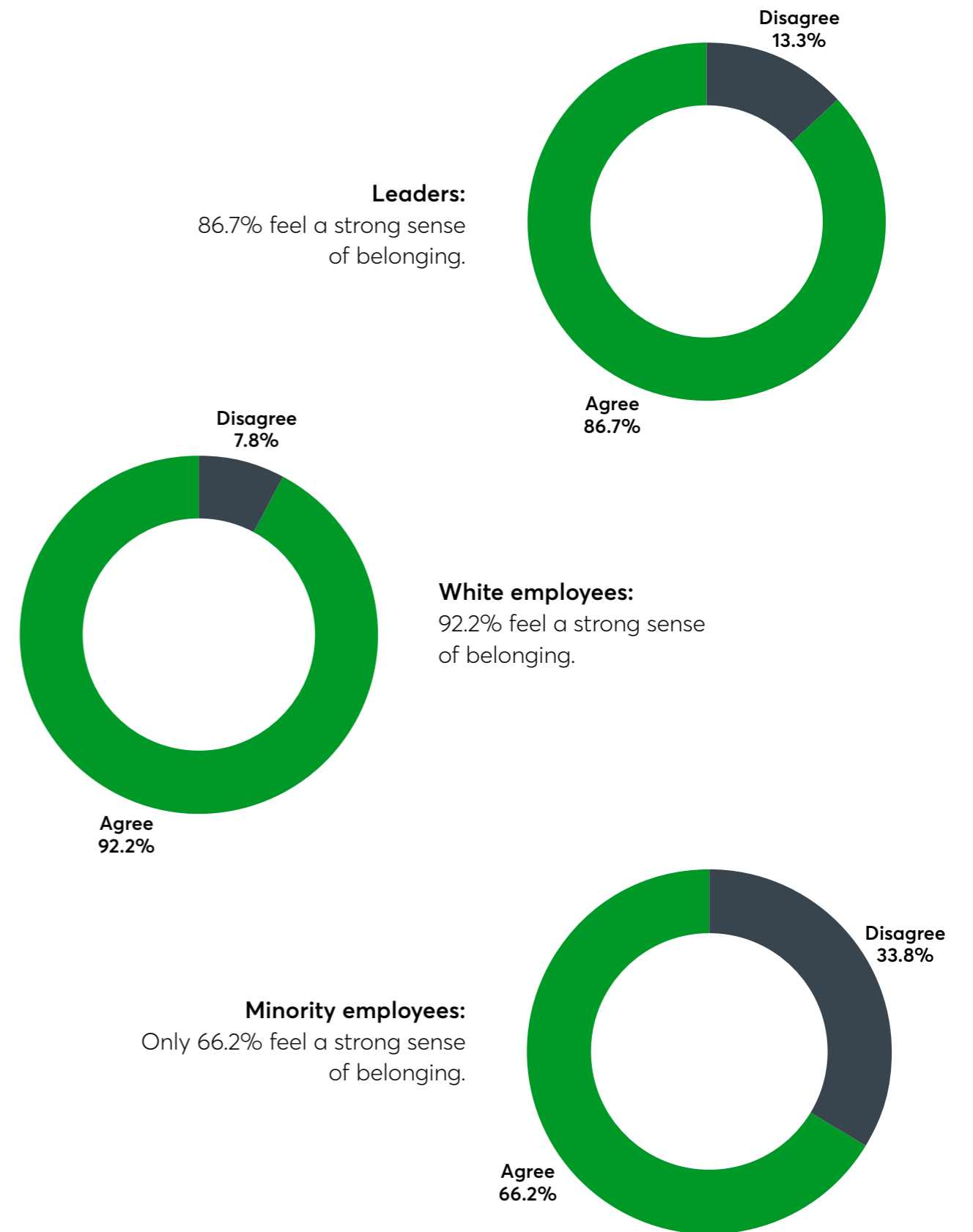


Figure 12: Summary

Leaders and white employees both claim a high sense of belonging (net +73.4% and 84.4% respectively), in stark contrast to the +32.4% rating of the minority cohort.

The sense of alienation amongst minorities is reinforced by a clear belief that they are not recognised as individuals. Asked whether they had ever felt stereotyped, more than a third of minority respondents said they had been. White coworkers were half as likely to feel this way.



Figure 13: I feel that I am treated as an individual, rather than being stereotyped because of my race or ethnicity

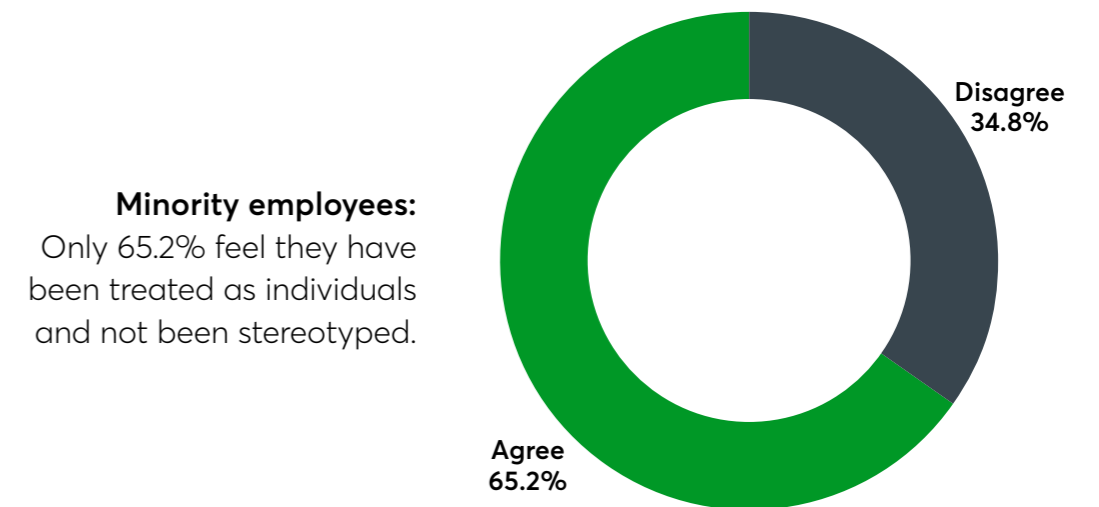
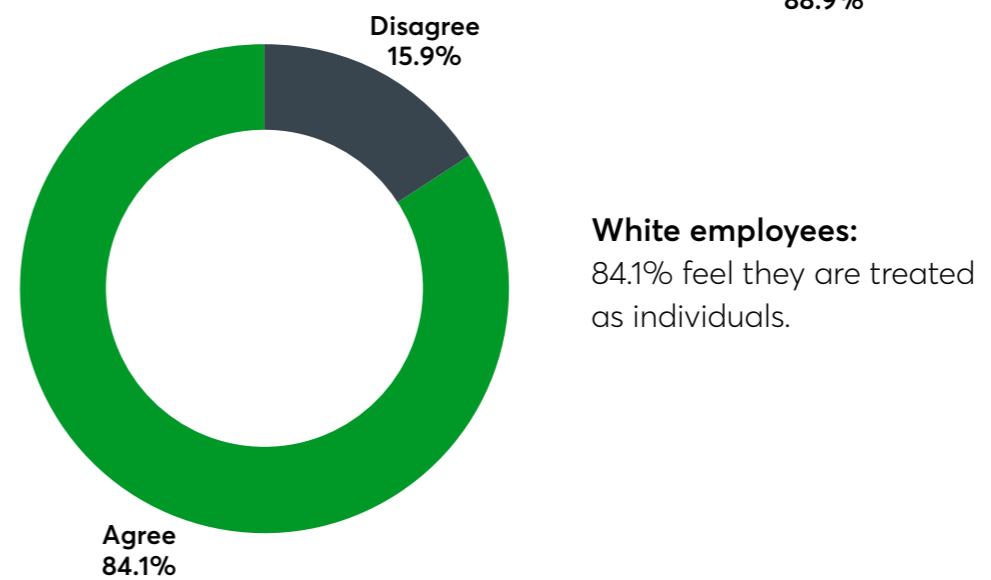
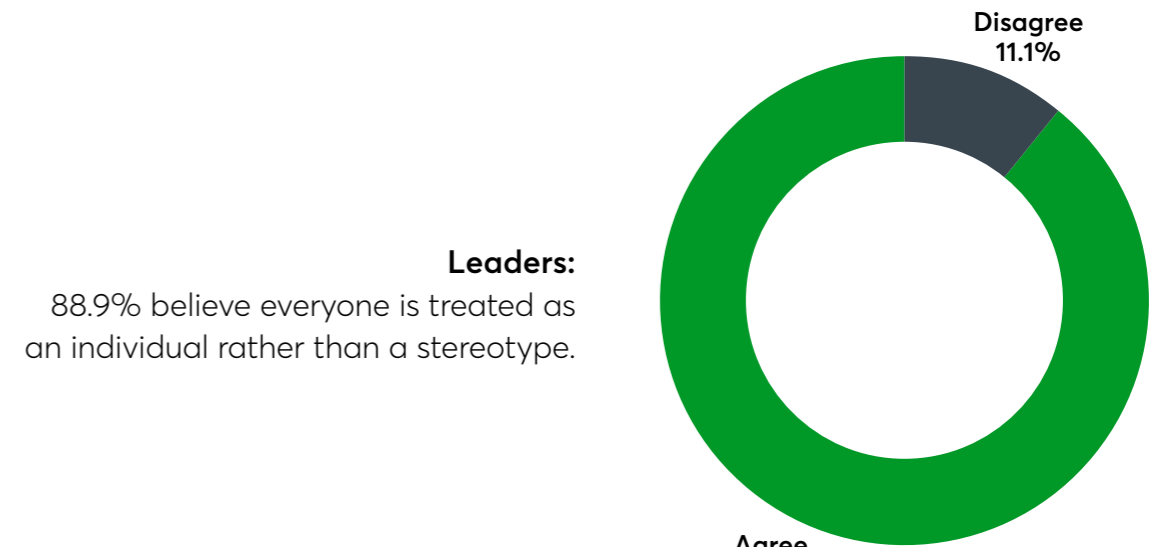


Figure 13: Summary

The disparity in how individuals are treated stems from a gap between leadership's perceptions and the experiences of ethnically diverse employees. While leaders believe everyone is treated as an individual (88.9%), only 65.2% of minority employees feel the same. The gap is driven by systemic biases and lack of inclusive practices, impacting engagement, trust, and innovation.



Conclusion

The Race Inclusion Gap: A Business Opportunity

The Race Inclusion Gap isn't just a D&I challenge – it's a missed business opportunity.

This report reinforces a critical truth: workplace sentiment and business performance are more tightly linked to culture than ever before. Companies that act now to close the inclusion gap will strengthen engagement, spark innovation, and future-proof their performance.

But good intentions won't close the gap – action will. Now is the time to reset how your organisation invests in inclusion. The prize? Unlocking the full potential of your workforce and gaining a cost-effective edge in a tight talent market.

At Green Park, we remain committed to helping organisations build environments where every employee can thrive. Because inclusion isn't just the right thing to do – it's a strategic advantage waiting to be realised.

Our Services: Turning Insight into Impact

Bridging the Race Inclusion Gap requires more than data—it demands decisive action.

Green Park delivers expert-led services that turn good intentions into real outcomes. From executive search and interim leadership to our award-winning Diversity, Inclusion, Culture and Ethics (DICE) consultancy and inclusive talent solutions, we help organisations:

- Build representative, high-performing leadership teams
- Eliminate microaggressions and barriers to progression
- Embed equality into systems, culture, and capability
- Create workplaces where diverse talent is nurtured and retained

Together, we can turn inclusion into impact.



More Information About Us

Green Park: Guiding Strong Leadership Towards a Fairer, High-Performing Future

At Green Park, we believe leadership defines outcomes. And inclusive leadership transforms them.

For nearly 20 years, we've partnered with boards, CEOs and HR leaders to help them attract, retain and develop the kind of talent that builds resilient businesses and the culture they want around them. We don't just place and coach exceptional people—we help our clients shape the conditions where those people, and their organisations, thrive.

We're more than a talent advisory firm. We are a veteran catalyst for systemic change—working across sectors and continents to help organisations:

- **Hire leaders who reflect the future they want**, not just reflect the past
- **Embed culture add into systems, and strategy**, creating conditions for everyone to perform at their best
- **Diagnose the barriers to inclusion** and design practical, commercial solutions that improve engagement, trust, and retention
- **Eliminate bias from recruitment and succession planning** without ever lowering the bar on excellence
- **Turn data into action**, helping leadership teams move faster, with clarity, confidence, and measurable impact



From executive search and interim leadership to organisational consulting and people analytics, our integrated offer is built to deliver results—faster, fairer, and more sustainably.

We help you hire better, lead smarter, and outperform competitors through people.

Because in a complex, high-stakes world, inclusive leadership isn't optional—it's your edge.

Partner with Green Park to build the kind of leadership the future demands.



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