

Black Representation in English Professional Football: A Statistical Analysis

Stefan Szymanski
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Paper commissioned by the Black Footballers Partnership (BFP).
A community interest company established to be a voice and
a support for black professional footballers.



Executive Summary

This year's Szymanski Report March 2023 examines the representation of Black people in English Football at the management level. This follows the 2022 Szymanski Report, commissioned by the Black Footballers Partnership, which compared the representation of Black players in the top four English professional leagues with the representation of Black employees in management positions in football clubs.

The February 2022 and now the March 2023 statistical reports show that while black players represent a very large proportion of all players and footballers with coaching badges, black representation in management remains negligible and shows little signs of improving.

An original feature in this year's report is a focus on new hires between 2021 and 2023 to give a sense of how the various initiatives announced by football institutions are delivering or not on the ground.

These statistics show the new hiring of black employees is remarkably low. This is particularly the case in division one and two and while the numbers in the championship and premier league are better it is only marginally so.

As a recap, in the previous Szymanski Report:

Section 1 revealed that 43% of players in English Premier League (EPL) and 34% in the English Football League (EFL) were Black in 2021. Black players represent an even larger share of the total market value of players in these leagues.

Section 2 showed that only 4.4% of managerial positions usually taken by former players are taken by Black employees. At the level of executive, leadership and ownership positions, only 1.6% are black.

Section 3 argued that while discrimination can be overcome on the pitch, where talent is readily observed, it is much harder to overcome prejudice in managerial positions where assessments are more likely to be subjective and based on limited observation of actual performance.

Section 4 showed that only 8.9% of players who were active in professional English football between 2004 and 2020 and progressed into club managerial or administrative roles usually taken by former players were Black. Former Black players are particularly under-represented in the roles of scouting or junior coaching levels.

Section 5 shows that Black players accounted for 14% of known UEFA Pro Licence holders who graduated under the FA, and 23% of all those Licence holders who were professional players between 2004 and 2020. This suggests that the under-representation of black players in managerial positions is not attributable to a lack of qualifications.

Section 6 suggests three policy conclusions from the research: (i) there is a need for an organization to represent the interest of Black footballers and promote their entry into management (ii) the FA's voluntary code on diversity needs to be replaced by a compulsory code and (iii) Black footballers should be provided training and development advice in order to improve their chances of progressing from playing to management.

With black employees now squeezed at the bottom as well as the top of the new hire pipeline this only serves to undermine opportunities for black players and leads to questions about the effectiveness of the initiatives announced by the game so far.

This is amplified by the dwindling number of black new hires in League Two and League One means black players are even less likely to be able to follow in the footsteps of Sir Alex Ferguson, Sam Allardyce, Jurgen Klopp, Darren Moore and many others who started from the bottom of the pyramid to work their way up.

So, while we appreciate the aims and ambitions of the FA's Football Leadership Diversity Code and its good intentions we do not recognise its optimistic note that it is working, as we detail in section 3. We hope the recently released government white paper to improve the way the game is run and operated, to give benefits to fans and lower league clubs amongst other measures, will also focus minds on the racial equity gap and the need to do more. BFP stands ready to work in partnership to do that.

In 2023, focussing on management positions the findings are as follows:

Section 1 reveals the percentage of management-related positions held by Black employees has risen from 3.7% to 4.4%, or from 49 individual jobs (out of 1338) to 57 (out of 1304). This is an increase of 8 jobs. This percentage increase is within the margin of error which means there is no evidence of significant change in the percentage of management related positions held by black employees.

This is against a background, highlighted in our 2022 report, of black employees making up 43% of Premier League and 34% of Championship players – 43 and 34 in every 100 jobs respectively.

Section 2 shows the percentage of new hires in the previous 12 months who were Black rose from 6.5% to 6.9% or from 21 (out of 325) new individual positions to 26 (out of 379).

The low numbers particularly in league one and two suggests many black employees will not only be squeezed at the top of the football pyramid but they are also less likely to be starting their career on the bottom rung of the ladder to then rise and flourish in ways previously done by Sir Alex Ferguson and others.

Section 3 argues that the Football Leadership Diversity Code (FLDC) is not working in contrast to the optimistic note struck by the FLDC Results for 2021/22 published in October 2022, which claimed that "Clubs continue to exceed the target for recruitment of senior Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage coaches".

Of the 44 clubs hiring at the coaching level, two thirds failed to meet the target (29 of 44). Of the 30 clubs hiring at the senior coaching level, half failed to meet the target (15 of 30). Even those clubs willing to sign up for the Diversity Code are struggling to meet the commitment.

Section 4 considers policy options – at a time when the government appears willing to introduce an independent regulator. It is clear more meaningful research and greater transparency is required. This may help to inform, for instance, an effective fit and proper test for directors and owners'.

For instance, all the figures listed in our report can be identified with named individuals holding specific jobs. The FLDC report data is confidential and cannot be independently verified.

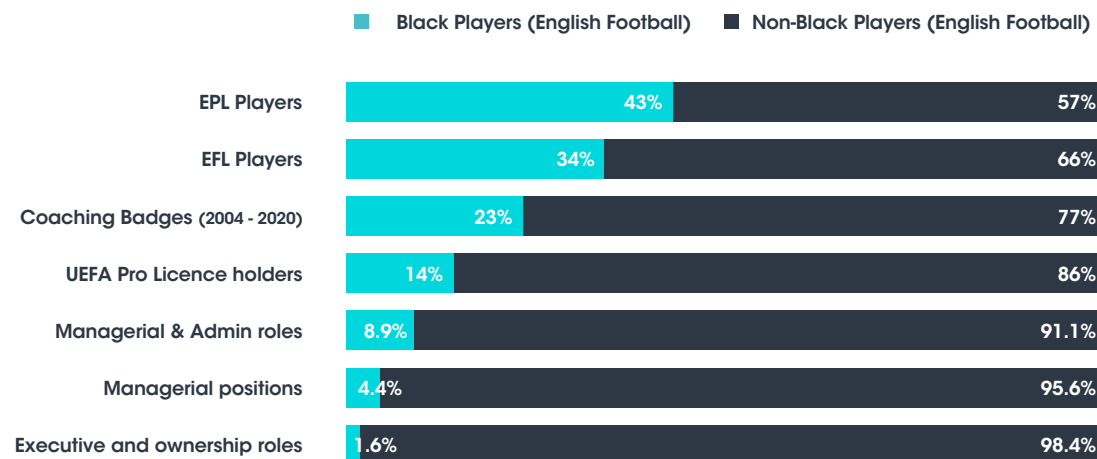
Introduction - Off the pitch representation of black footballers across football sees little to no change.

In February 2022, The Black Footballers' Partnership published a statistical analysis comparing the representation of Black players in the top four English professional leagues with the representation of Black employees in management positions in football clubs.

This report provides an update on the changes in management representation over the last year. The principal highlights are:

- The percentage of management-related positions held by Black employees has risen from 3.7% to 4.4%, or from 49 individual jobs to 57
- This is against a background, highlighted in our 2022 report, where 43% of Premier League and 34% of Championship players are Black.
- The percentage of new hires in previous 12 months who were Black rose from 6.5% to 6.9% or from 21 individual positions to 26
- Each of these increases lie within the margin of error. In other words, there is no evidence of any significant change.
- Comparing across divisions, Black employees are most likely to be found in the Championship, and least likely to be found in League Two. The pattern across divisions seems relatively stable comparing the two periods.
- The lack of significant progress found here is in contrast to the optimistic note struck by the Football Leadership Diversity Code (FLDC) Results for 2021 /22 published in October 2022, which claimed that "Clubs continue to exceed the target for recruitment of senior Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage coaches". All of the figures listed in our report can be identified with named individuals holding specific jobs. The FLDC report data is confidential, and cannot be independently verified.

SZYMANSKI REPORT KEY FINDINGS 2022



Progression from player to manager: black employees face a “grass-ceiling” in league one and two in particular – diminishing managerial ladder from the bottom to the top of the pyramid.

Our original report relied on data from the website Transfermarkt which lists a variety of different managerial positions in football clubs. Most of these are related to coaching, but others relate to executive positions of the businesses.

Transfermarkt is a freely available, crowd sourced database which includes records of over half a million players worldwide, including extensive data on individual performance. In recent years the database has expanded to cover management positions, and currently lists 98 different job titles and 1,304 separate appointments for clubs in the top four English divisions. This represents an average of around 14 jobs per club. Clearly, clubs have many more employees than this, but the Transfermarkt lists represent a significant sample size, enough to gain a representative picture of the club. These are also positions which are likely to involve significant managerial competence.

All but a handful of the individuals list on Transfermarkt can be found elsewhere on the web, including a picture which can be used to identify whether they are Black. Given the very high percentage of professional football players who are Black, and the fact that most personnel in football related management positions are former players, it makes sense to focus on the share of management positions of Black individuals, rather than the broader category of “Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage”. However, where an individual appears to be of mixed heritage that is in part Black, they are coded Black for in the data.

The original data was collected on December 31 st 2021. The updated information was collected on January 31 st 2023. Figure 1 summarizes the data for 2021 and 2023 by league. The blue bar shows the total number of management positions, the grey bars the number of positions held by Black employees. The height of the blue bars for each league changed between the two observation points, apart from the Championship where the sample size remained stable. What is visible to the naked eye can also be supported by statistical testing: the presence of Black employees has not changed significantly and remains negligible. In the Premier League the percentage of positions held by Black employees rose from 2.8% to 3.8%, in the Championship from 5% to 6.4%, in League One from 4.2% to 4.9%, and fell in League Two from 1.9% to 1.7%.

Figure 1 - Black representation in football club management

This table begs the question: why have the lives of black qualified coaches have not increased significantly in football when they hold 14% of known UEFA Pro licences and 23% of other licences between 2004 and 2020?



Blue Bar – total number of management positions. Grey bar – number held by black employees.

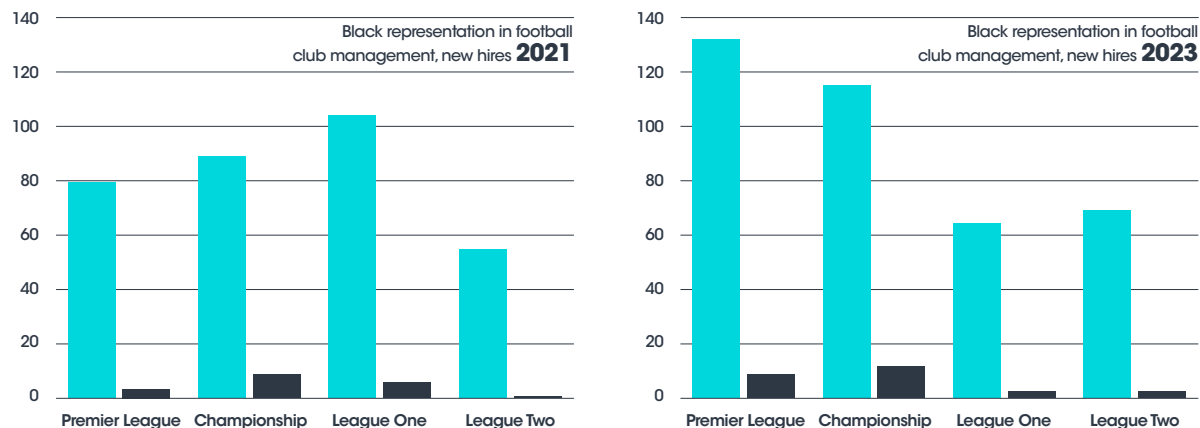
Table 1 - Share of Black employees in football club management positions, 2021 and 2023

There has been barely a shift in the number of black people in management positions. Almost in line with a one in, one out quota system.

2021 League	Number of Positions	Position held by Black employee	Percentage Black	2023 League	Number of Positions	Position held by Black employee	Percentage Black
Premier League	465	13	2.8%	Premier League	584	22	3.8%
Championship	360	18	5.0%	Championship	342	22	6.4%
League One	354	15	4.2%	League One	206	10	4.9%
League Two	159	3	1.9%	League Two	172	3	1.7%
Grand Total	1338	49	3.7%	Grand Total	1304	57	4.4%

Figure 2 - Appointments made in the past 12 months

New hires of black people are not particularly moving from 2021 to 2023, particularly in League One and Two. The opportunities for black employment is squeezed from the bottom up and top down.



Blue Bar - total number of management positions. Grey bar - number held by black employees.

Table 2 - Share of Black employees in football club management new hires, 2021 and 2023

This table begs the question: why have the lives of black qualified coaches not significantly improved in football when they hold 14% of known UEFA Pro licences and 23% of other licences between 2004 and 2020?

2021 League	Number of Positions	Position held by Black employee	Percentage Black	2023 League	Number of Positions	Position held by Black employee	Percentage Black
Premier League	79	4	5.1%	Premier League	132	9	6.8%
Championship	87	9	10.3%	Championship	116	11	9.5%
League One	104	6	5.8%	League One	63	3	4.8%
League Two	55	1	1.8%	League Two	68	3	4.4%
Grand Total	325	21	6.5%	Grand Total	379	26	6.9%

While figure 1 (and Table 1) illustrates the overall distribution of management positions, it takes no account of the date on which the employee was hired. Given the very high rates of turnover in management positions, it is useful to consider appointment made within the previous twelve months. This is illustrated in Figure 2 (and Table 2). Once again we can observe a good deal of variation comparing the 2023 data to the 2021 data. Overall, many more hires are recorded in the more recent period, which could reflect both increased data collection on Transfermarkt and also the emergence from the pandemic.

However, as with figure 1, a pattern of limited change in Black employment is visible. The percentage of Black hires overall is almost unchanged- from 6.5% to 6.9%, given that the numbers are so small - only 21 cases in 2021 and 26 in 2023, drawing any further inferences is hazardous.

Figure 3 - Comparison between black and other employment across job types

Number of black employment remained noticeably stable (with increases offset by reductions, almost one in and one out) across all job types.

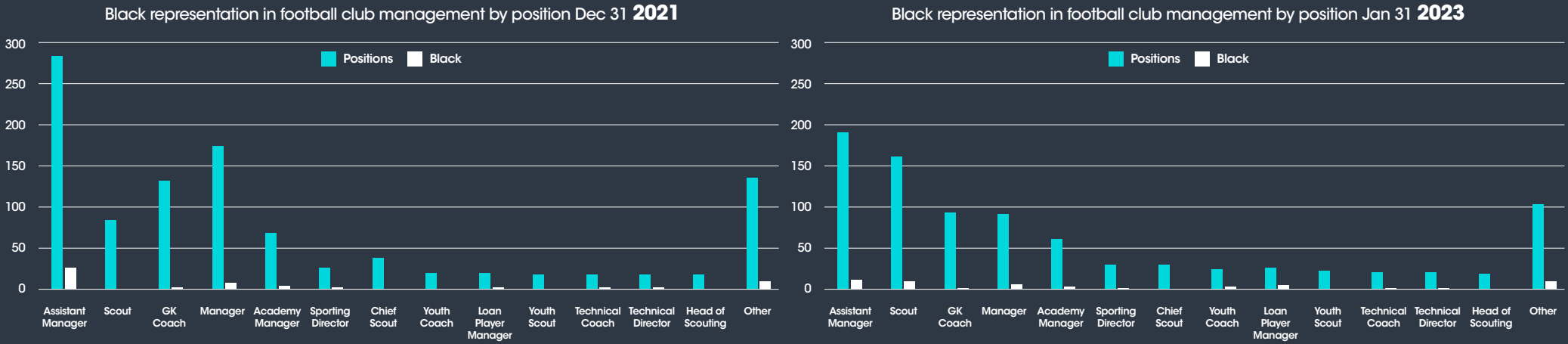


Table 3 - Comparison between job types and hires in English league clubs, 2023 compared to 2021

Black employment increases in scouting but reduced in assistant manager and management roles while others remain stable.

Function	Number of Positions 2023	Black in 2023	Percentage Black in 2023	Number of Positions 2021	Black in 2021	Percentage Black in 2021
Assistant Manager	187	13	7.0%	283	20	7.1%
Scout	161	9	5.6%	83	0	0.0%
Goalkeeping Coach	91	1	1.1%	136	1	0.7%
Manager	90	5	5.6%	174	7	4.0%
Academy Manager	63	3	4.8%	65	3	4.6%
Sporting Director	30	1	3.3%	25	1	4.0%
Chief Scout	29	0	0.0%	37	0	0.0%
Youth Coach	20	3	15.0%	15	0	0.0%
Loan Player Manager	19	5	26.3%	15	1	6.7%
Youth Scout	17	0	0.0%	14	0	0.0%
Technical Coach	16	1	6.3%	14	1	7.1%
Technical Director	15	2	13.3%	12	1	8.3%
Head of Scouting	14	0	0.0%	12	0	0.0%
Other	102	7	6.9%	126	8	6.3%
Total	854	50	5.9%	1011	43	4.3%

Table 3: Job types and hires in English league clubs, 2023 compared to 2021.

FA's Diversity Code claim to "exceed expectations" is based on limited data – the illusion of diversity.

The Football Leadership Diversity Code Report 2021/22 was published last October, claiming that "clubs have, for the second year in a row, exceeded the target for recruiting Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage senior coaches in the men's game." Among the specific claims in the report were the following:

"51 of 311 (16%) of coaches hired in the men's game were from a Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage background.

24 of 111 (22%) of senior coaches hired in the men's game from a Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage background."

These figures seem to be at odds with the numbers presented here. One obvious explanation is the different categorisation. Here we have identified Black and Black/Mixed Heritage personnel – while FLDC has a broader categorization (Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage background). A second possible explanation is "sample selection bias". When a biased sample is selected, the characteristics of the sample may look significantly different from the characteristics of the population as a whole. FLDC data is based on that limited selection of clubs – those which signed up for the programme – this includes only half of the clubs currently in the Premier League and English Football League (47 of the 92). Moreover, not all of the clubs connected to the FLDC supplied data. It is likely that the clubs which voluntarily signed up for the FLDC and supplied data employ a greater proportion of Black managerial staff than those clubs which did not sign up or did not provide data.¹

Black and brown people face an uphill struggle.

Even without allowing for these biases, there is evidence in the data that Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage applicants face an uphill struggle. The report notes that "The 'under represented' groups has [sic] maintained a 36% average of all candidate applications for coaching roles over the 12 months this report covers." (p77). On the FLDC's own figures, this is about twice the rate at which individuals from these groups were hired. By implication, an applicant from an under represented group is about half as likely to get the job compared to someone who is not.

The optimism in the FLDC report seems further challenged by a closer analysis of the recruitment data. Table 4 shows the performance of the clubs enrolled in the scheme in the categories of "coaching" and "senior coaching". The target percentage of hires from "Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage" backgrounds were 25% and 10% respectively. To aid interpretation, cases where the club met or exceeded the target are shown in green, those which fell below the target are shown in red, and those cases where the club either did not hire anyone or did not provide any data are shown in grey. Of the 44 clubs hiring at the coaching level, two thirds failed to meet the target (29 of 44). Of the 30 clubs hiring at the senior coaching level, half failed to meet the target (15 of 30). Even those clubs willing to sign up for the Diversity Code are struggling to meet the commitment.

Table 4 shown on the next page

¹ One response in defence of the FLDC data might be to claim that their data is more reliable because it is based on a larger sample (the figure from Transfermarkt include about 1000 jobs in total in 2023, the FLDC data in total covers over 2,500 hires). However, that would be to repeat one of the most famous errors in the history of statistics. In 1932 the Literary Digest, one of the most popular magazines in the US at the time, conducted a poll of its readers about the forthcoming Presidential election, and concluded on the basis of over one million responses that Alfred Landon, the Republican candidate, would become President. In fact, the election was won in a landslide by the Democrat Franklin Roosevelt. This was reliably predicted by the opinion pollster George Gallup, using a sample of only 50,000 voters. The difference was the selection – the Literary Digest's readers leaned Republican much more than the average American, so their responses were biased. Gallup's sample was representative of all sections of the US population. Size is not the issue in statistics, it is representativeness.

Table 4 - New hires by league clubs

New hires of black people have not increased significantly from 2021 to 2023, particularly in League One and Two. The opportunities for black employment is squeezed from the bottom up and top down.



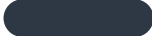
Key	Below Target 		At or Above Target 		No hires or no data 	
	Coaching (Target 25%)	Senior Coaching (Target 10%)	Coaching (Target 25%)	Senior Coaching (Target 10%)	Coaching (Target 25%)	Senior Coaching (Target 10%)
AFC Bournemouth	0%	0%	Lincoln City	0%	0%	
Arsenal	26%	20%	Liverpool	0%	0%	
Blackburn Rovers	0%	0%	Manchester City	0%	0%	
Bolton Wanderers	0%	0%	Manchester United	0%	0%	
Brentford	33%	100%	Newcastle United	0%	0%	
Brighton & Hove Albion	0%	0%	Northampton Town	0%	0%	
Burnley	40%	14%	Norwich City	0%	0%	
Burton Albion	50%	50%	Nottingham Forest	7%	20%	
Cambridge United	0%	0%	Oxford United	44%	0%	
Charlton Athletic	0%	0%	Plymouth Argyle	0%	0%	
Chelsea	0%	50%	Portsmouth	50%	0%	
Cheltenham Town	22%	100%	Queens Park Rangers	45%	67%	
Coventry City	100%	0%	Rotherham United	25%	0%	
Crystal Palace	0%	0%	Sheffield United	0%	0%	
Derby County	0%	0%	Southampton	0%	0%	
Doncaster Rovers	100%	50%	Stoke City	29%	100%	
Everton	20%	20%	Swansea City	0%	0%	
Fleetwood Town	25%	25%	Tottenham Hotspur	17%	8%	
Forest Green Rovers	0%	0%	Walsall	11%	0%	
Fulham	0%	100%	Watford	0%	0%	
Huddersfield Town	0%	0%	West Bromwich Albion	13%	0%	
Ipswich Town	25%	20%	West Ham United	17%	0%	
Leeds United	33%	0%	Wolverhampton	0%	0%	
Leicester City	0%	0%				

Table 4: Hiring rates of Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage coaches in 2022 by league clubs participating in the Football Leadership Diversity Code

A more detailed interpretation of the FLDC data is hampered by the limited transparency that is provided. While some figures in aggregate are provided, mostly the data is presented in the form of percentages. This can be misleading. For example if Club A hires one coach, and that coach is Black, while Club B hires ten coaches and all are white, then average percentage of Black coaches hired across the two clubs is 50%, when in reality 9% of (1/11) hires were Black.

Lack of transparency is an inevitable consequence of a voluntary code. When clubs have the option not to participate, they are able to lay down conditions, and these will always tend to minimize transparency, since organizations represent their own interests first and foremost.

What can be done?

What can be done? Policy recommendations

The representation of Black people in football management positions remain startlingly low. This is against a background where somewhere between one third and one half of all players in the English professional league are Black.

Sadly, the problems seem to be painfully obvious from a reading of the well-intentioned Football Leadership Diversity Code, whose report is analysed in section 3 of this paper. The code is voluntary, and only half of the professional league clubs in England have signed up for it. The data they provide is carefully constructed in such a way as not to reveal the specific identities of individuals hired by clubs.

The analysis of the Transfermarkt data is, by contrast, completely transparent. The data is freely available to anyone, and the identities of individuals employed by each club is listed. The data encompasses all clubs, not just a biased sample of those expressing some commitment to diversity. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the picture painted by this data is less optimistic than that provided by FLDC.

In our first report we highlighted two policy recommendations:

- **The need for a compulsory code**
- **The need for more targeted policies to prepare Black players for a career in management**

These recommendations remain pertinent. A compulsory code could help to provide much needed transparency and accountability for clubs. The accountants Deloitte publish an annual report detailing the revenues, expenses and profits of each club in the English leagues. Similar reporting is required on the employment practices of football clubs if racism – explicit or implicit – is to be rooted out of football management.

Representation is an issue that concerns every level in the employment structure of the industry. Everyone knows that the vast majority of football management positions are taken by former players, and at the same time that a very large fraction of players in the English game are Black. To achieve representation requires the establishment of a path for Black players that leads from junior to senior management comparable to the path that exists for everyone else.

A small, but essential first step is to accurately document the player to management path in English football. This is in fact achievable given the preponderance of information on individual players from sources such as Transfermarkt. However, completion of this task requires that the information be collated and analyzed, which will require a modest financial commitment. Armed with this analysis, policy formulation to address the fundamental problem will be much easier.

Further, with the Government's proposal to introduce an independent regulator there is now an opportunity to ensure black under-representation in the game is tackled as a priority – particularly when considering the effective use of the fit and proper tests for owners and directors and how monies is distributed from the top to the bottom of the pyramid where opportunities for black employees are far more limited.

The problems highlighted in this paper are not insurmountable. However, addressing them requires a systematic, honest and transparent approach.

Table A1: Self-reported ethnicity, England and Wales, 2021 Census

How individuals perceive themselves and how others see them can differ widely. Racial prejudice and discrimination, by definition, operate through the perceptions of others. For the purposes of identifying Black players in this research, I relied on the classification provided to me by BFP which in turn is consistent with the groups identified under Black, Mixed White/Black African and Mixed White/Black Caribbean in Table A1. Thus it does not include the different Asian or Arab heritages defined in the Census.

It is obvious that people with these ancestries are significantly underrepresented as player in English professional football. This presents another, different set of issues in relation to discrimination and prejudice, which deserve to be given their own treatment rather than simply lumped together with the issues discussed in this report.

ETHNICITY	NUMBER	%
Asian	5,515,455	9.3
Bangladeshi	644,900	1.1
Chinese	445,646	0.7
Indian	1,864,304	3.1
Pakistani	1,587,822	2.7
Asian Other	972,783	1.6
Black	2,409,283	4.0
Black African	1,488,387	2.5
Black Caribbean	623,115	1.0
Black other	297,781	0.5
Mixed	1,717,977	2.9
Mixed White/Asian	488,228	0.8
Mixed White/Black African	249,593	0.4
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	513,040	0.9
Mixed Other	467,116	0.8
White	4,869,9231	81.7
White British	44,355,044	74.4
White Irish	507,473	0.9
White Gypsy/Traveller	67,757	0.1
White Other	3,667,993	6.2
White Roma	100,964	0.2
Other	1,255,632	2.1
Arab	331,856	0.6
Any other	923,776	1.6
All	59,597,578	100.0

About the author

Stefan Szymanski is the Stephen J. Galetti Professor of Sport Management at the University of Michigan. Prior to moving there in 2011, he was a professor of economics at London Business School, Imperial College Business School and Bayes Business School. He has authored over 100 academic papers in peer reviewed journals, mainly on topics relating to the economics and business of sports. He has published ten books, including the international bestseller, *Soccernomics* (with Simon Kuper). He has provided policy advice to government on sports policy in the UK, France, Norway and at the EU. He also advised governing bodies such as UEFA, the FIA (motor sport) and ICC (cricket). He has also testified in court as an expert witness on sports matter in the UK and US.

A portrait of Stefan Szymanski, a man with glasses, wearing a suit and tie, looking slightly to the left. The image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent filter.

Stefan Szymanski



Black Footballers Partnership (BFP):

Founded in 2021, BFP is a community interest company established to be a coordinated and strategic voice and support for Black men and women professional footballers who are standing together for practical and measurable change across football. Fairness, inclusion and growth for black players and vulnerable communities drives our passion for change. BFP is the strategic evolution of Football's Black Coalition which is a group of black players, coaches and administrators from across the game formed during the pandemic and in the aftermath of George Floyd's death. BFP's priorities include representation, education and supporting diverse and disconnected communities.

Eartha Pond - An Independent member of the FA Women's Board and former player for Chelsea, Everton, Charlton and Tottenham Hotspur.

Michael Johnson - England U21 coach and former player for Birmingham City and Derby County. He co-founded Football's Black Coalition.

Delroy Corinaldi - A football supporter and social entrepreneur who works with a number of organisations to deliver impactful change. He co-founded the Financial Inclusion Centre and sits as trustee for national charities.