

A photograph of a busy city street at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong orange and yellow glow that silhouettes the pedestrians walking across the street. A red traffic light is visible in the foreground. The background shows modern buildings and a street sign that reads 'LIME STREET EC3'.

Aon's I&D at work

Attracting and retaining ethnically diverse talent to the insurance industry

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Foreword



Mary Alade
Chief Strategy Officer



Dominic Christian
Global Chairman
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Last year, as well as navigating the challenges brought about by the pandemic, global businesses faced a renewed sense of urgency around racial equity as momentum built around the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM).

The series of international protests that followed the death of George Floyd in May 2020 brought home the plight of people from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse communities and backgrounds and propelled the issue of workplace diversity, equity and inclusion up the corporate agenda.

In UK businesses, a lack of racial and ethnic diversity persists across all levels – from graduates to senior management and board – in almost every sector.

A 2020 update to the Parker review – a 2017 report that looked at ethnic diversity on British boards – revealed that 37 percent of FTSE 100 companies still do not have any ethnic minority representation and 69 percent of FTSE 250 companies have no ethnic minority representation at all at this senior level.

The business imperative to improve upon this is well documented and rooted in data. Diverse companies are better companies and boards that have racial and ethnic diversity outperform. McKinsey & Company data shows that companies in the top quartile of ethnic and cultural diversity were 36 percent more profitable than those in the fourth quartile.

At Aon, we believe that closing the ethnicity and race diversity gap begins with the recruitment and retention of young talent and we're focused on enhancing our ethnic minority representation from the ground up, with the aim of becoming an employer of choice.

We work with a broad demographic base of clients, yet our own organisational makeup lacks the diversity of the communities we serve.

Focusing our approach on enhancing our ethnic minority representation through Early Careers programmes, which includes internships, placements, apprenticeships and a graduate programme, and driving positive change at the entry level of our organisation has, over the past two years, seen ethnic minority representation rise. In 2020, 35 percent of our UK Graduates and 42 percent of our UK Apprentices were from ethnically diverse groups.

While we're proud of the advances we have made in this area in recent years, a lot of work remains. We're striving to break down barriers, encourage greater diversity and create a truly inclusive culture within our business and the wider industry, and racial and ethnic diversity is one facet of our broader Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) and Early Careers work.

This report highlights how we have successfully attracted, recruited and championed ethnically diverse talent to the insurance and reinsurance, (also called (re)insurance, meaning both the insurance and reinsurance industries), sector and should serve as a calling card to other organisations across our sector.

Our hope is that by sharing our journey so far, we will encourage other firms to develop strategies to improve ethnic minority representation from entry level upwards.



**Diversity in the
insurance sector:
the challenge**

Increasing diversity within the (re)insurance sector is an urgent priority given the extent to which ethnic minority representation lags behind the UK average.

A 2019 Insurance Census, carried out by the Insurance Post, showed a decline in industry diversity between 2017-2019 with fewer than two-fifths of respondents reporting that diversity in their company had improved. The number of Asian employees increased slightly but just seven percent were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) employees. Across the UK more broadly the government puts BAME employees at 15 percent of the workforce total showing how much room for improvement there is within the (re)insurance sector.

Part of the problem appears to lie in the sector's ability to attract a diverse cohort of job applicants from entry level upwards. In 2018, Mary Alade commissioned a social media survey among ethnically diverse students to find out how much they understood about the (re)insurance industry as a whole, to ascertain whether or not it was a sector they were considering seriously among their career options. At a graduate level, there is a distinct lack of awareness around careers in (re)insurance.



"[We] recognise that our sector still has work to do in terms of diversity and inclusion and it is something that the British Insurance Brokers' Association is actively addressing as part of our commitment to help our members to understand the value and importance of diversity and inclusion."

Steve White, CEO at Biba



Mary Alade, Chief Strategy Officer in Aon's Reinsurance business, spearheaded the survey and has since been instrumental in Aon's ethnic minority recruitment initiatives.

"The City of London lacks young diverse talent," she said. "This was something I noticed when I started working in (re)insurance but gradually it became more apparent as my career progressed. I started thinking of ways that young professionals could understand more about the world of risk and how the (re)insurance industry could gain better access to the talent it needed."

Mary canvassed opinion through her own personal and professional network and developed a survey designed to target young people (aged 15-25) through WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Facebook and other networking groups. Of the 278 participants, 94 percent were from ethnically diverse groups.

While just over half (57%) said they knew of a few insurance companies, almost three quarters (74%) referenced 'car, house and phone' against the word insurance, highlighting a lack of knowledge among young people about the wider risk sector.

Almost half believed they needed an insurance-related or financial qualification to enter an insurance profession and less than half (44%) said they would consider working in an insurance company or within the insurance industry if they knew more about it.

It was clear that practical steps would be necessary to educate, attract and retain young and diverse talent and the survey was a catalyst for a new programme of Aon events aimed at breaking down these barriers to entry within the industry.



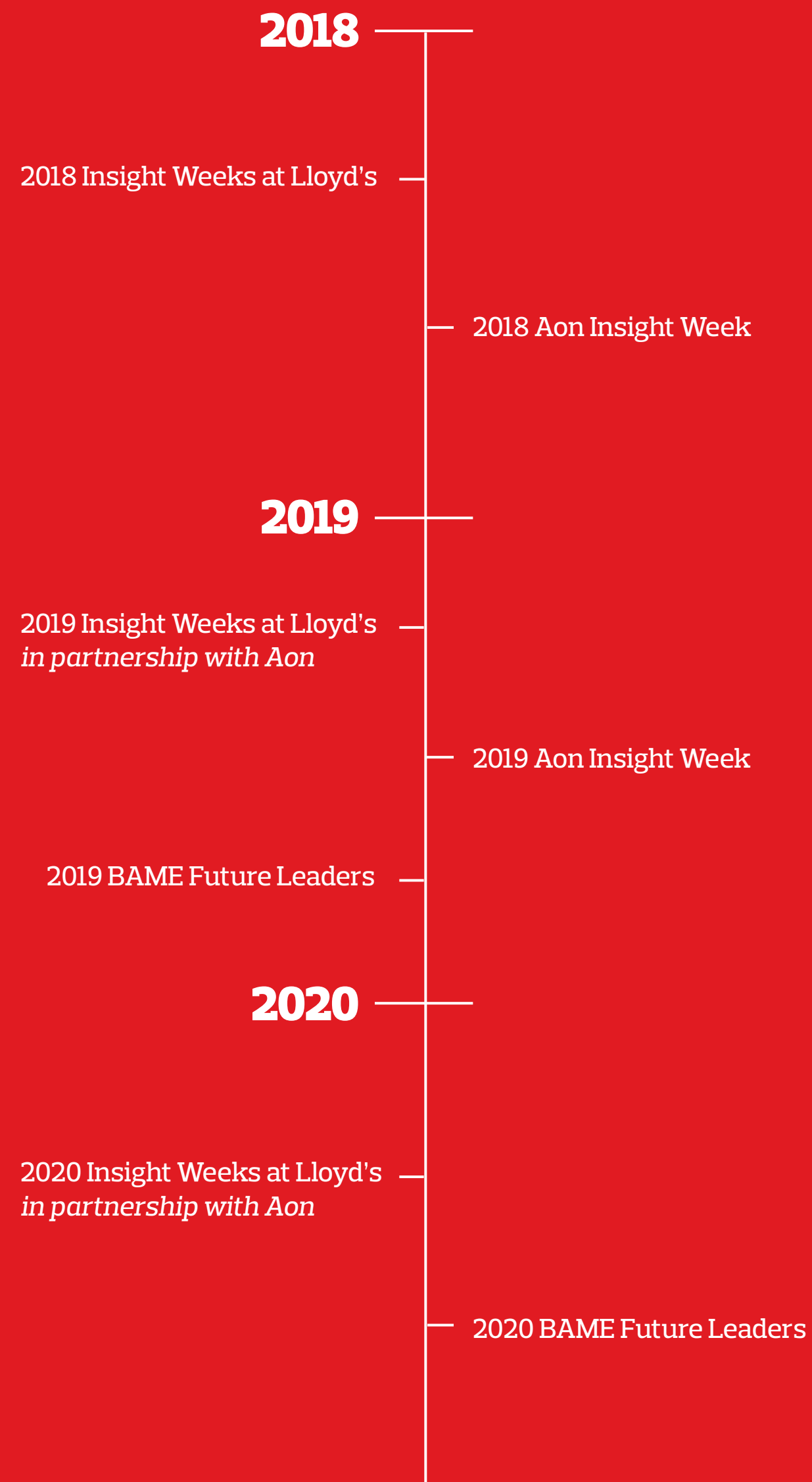
The Aon response:
2018–2020

The social media survey informed the development of a series of events that now form part of Aon's broader Early Careers efforts.

"Insight Week is an alternative to traditional 'work experience', which so often relies on personal contacts, and offers a previously hard-to-reach community direct access to the world of risk before they make their first career choices. The candidates receive a comprehensive overview of the industry and it opens the door to those interested in a career in (re)insurance. As well as benefiting these individuals by educating them about new career paths, it gives the insurance industry access to the wider pool of talent it so desperately needs."

Mary Alade





Case Study: Abigail Odubanjo

Abigail had been considering a career in accounting before she attended the 2018 Insight Week. This gave Abigail an introduction to the Insurance Industry and provided great networking opportunities. She then went on to gain some experience in a smaller insurance organisation and shortly came back to Aon, working as a Broker Technician within Aon's Global Broking Centre in Commercial Risk Solutions and is currently working towards achieving her ACII Qualification.

2018

2018 Insight Weeks at Lloyd's

In 2018, Aon supported the launch of [Insight Weeks at Lloyd's](#). The week-long workshop was aimed at GCSE and A Level students, from low socio economic backgrounds, with an intentional focus on students from ethnically diverse communities.

2018 Aon Insight Week

In July 2018, Aon launched its own Insight Week targeted at students aged 18-25. Unlike the Insight Weeks at Lloyd's, this event was designed specifically to attract ethnically diverse talent into the (re)insurance industry. 11 students attended and spent the week learning about inner workings of the (re)insurance industry. The students had the opportunity to shadow Lloyd's of London underwriters to see what their job entailed and learn about the relationship between an underwriter and a broker. They had meetings with Aon HR colleagues to gain insight into the graduate scheme and apprenticeship programme.

2019

2019 Insight Weeks at Lloyd's in partnership with Aon

Following the success of the 2018 Insight Weeks at Lloyd's, Aon and Lloyd's decided to deliver these events in partnership going forward. This would give Aon access to a broader talent pool, and enable Aon to support social mobility across all communities.

2019 Aon Insight Week

The 2019 event grew in size and scope and attracted 14 students, of which 92 percent were ethnically diverse and eight percent white. From this group, two students were offered a position at Aon.

"The Insight Week dramatically improved my commercial awareness and sparked my interest to pursue a career in commercial insurance broking. It gave me the opportunity to build relationships with Aon colleagues and the wider Lloyd's network."

Louis Stephen
2019 Insight Week Attendee

Case Study: Tye McAllister

“I thought that the event was great for providing a broad overview of the insurance industry and life at Aon. I had not considered a career in (re)insurance prior to the Future Leaders programme, so I found it very informative and it changed my view of the industry. I feel that the presentations and the opportunity to talk to Aon colleagues across different areas of the firm put me in a good position to prepare for the assessment centre.”

2019 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Future Leaders

Building on the success of Aon’s first Insight Week, the BAME Future Leaders Programme was launched as a tailored two-day workshop for 24 students to hear from Aon employees and leaders about various career paths within the firm. The event equipped the candidates with the knowledge they needed to progress to the Internship and Graduate Scheme Assessment Centre. Five graduates went on to secure roles at Aon and four attendees were successful in gaining an internship; three of those later progressed on to the Aon Graduate Scheme.

2020

2020 Insight Weeks at Lloyd’s in partnership with Aon

In August 2020, Aon and Lloyd’s delivered a virtual Insight Week owing to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This allowed more participants, with a total of 43 attendees, of which 65% GCSE students and 70% A Level students were from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

“I learnt that the insurance industry is a dynamic sector and is currently embracing new techniques and technologies to make them traditional underwriting and brokering process more efficient.”

2020 Insight Weeks Attendee



Case Study: Bamiyo Oladipupo

“My time at Aon’s Future Leaders programme completely shifted my perspective towards the insurance industry and ultimately, my career path as a whole. All the colleagues I spoke to were incredibly helpful and it was very easy to settle into the new corporate environment. After a positive summer internship at Aon, I successfully applied for the Graduate scheme and will be starting my career at Aon this year.”

2020 BAME Future Leaders

The 2020 event attracted 42 students from 23 different universities across England, Scotland and Wales. Ten students received Early Careers offers from Aon after the event; eight on the 2020 Graduate Scheme and two Summer Interns.

Q&A



Mary Alade, Chief Strategy Officer in Aon's Reinsurance business, recognised a lack of diverse talent coupled with a desire among Aon leaders to recruit more young

people from a range of backgrounds. Through her own networks she conducted an in-depth study to assess what young people knew about careers in the (re)insurance sector and, from there, Insight Week was born to educate young ethnically diverse people about the career options available to them at Early Career and Graduate level and beyond. Three years on, she shares her views on what other companies can do to build successful I&D events that attract and retain ethnically diverse talent.

How did the idea for Insight Week and, subsequently, the BAME Future Leaders programme, come about?

When I first started working in the industry in 2010, I realised there weren't that many women and not a lot of [ethnic] diversity. By 2018, I had spent eight years in (re)insurance and young people I knew were asking me about what I do and wanted to know what an insurance career was about. I also started to see that the (re)insurance industry was crying out for diverse talent and didn't know how to access it. Clearly there was a missing link.

I liaised with Aon senior leadership to bring this idea for Insight Week to life. We wanted to get diverse talent from black communities and tell them about what we do and what Aon is about. That's how we started and, after the first Insight Week in 2018, we wanted to formalise something similar for the Aon graduate recruitment programme and that's how BAME Future Leaders came about. Once you engage with the community you want to attract, you need to give them a tangible opportunity to access the organisation.

What are some of the changes you've seen since 2018?

I've seen major step changes since we began and, in the office, you can physically see more diversity, which just wasn't apparent when we started out. In setting up BAME Future Leaders we've injected Aon with diverse talent and seen positive change.

Students thank us for the programme and they want to bring their friends in for future schemes. It's really helped establish awareness of Aon among young people.

How has the percentage of ethnically diverse talent within the UK business changed in the last few years?

In 2020, 15 percent of our graduates came through our 2019 and 2020 BAME Future Leaders programmes. Overall, 35 percent of our 2020 graduates and 42 percent of our 2020 Apprentice hires were from ethnically diverse backgrounds and this places Aon ahead of other recruiters.

What advice can you offer other organisations?

I would say that if an organisation wants to truly be more diverse then they should make every effort by dedicating enough resource, time and attention. Then change can happen.

Young, diverse communities are seeking opportunities for this kind of employment but first they have to know about it, so organisations need to close that disconnect. Companies must put themselves out into ethnically diverse communities more actively and invest time and resources to attract diverse talent.

Through this report, our hope is that other organisations can see that progress is possible. Hopefully in a couple of years they can say they've hired 'X no of ethnically diverse employees', build a diverse talent pipeline and get the industry moving in the direction it needs to overall.

How are you expanding Aon's ethnic diversity programmes within wider I&D initiatives?

It's about building ethnic diversity into the bigger I&D picture and we can use what we've learned here to solve other issues so to speak – social mobility and gender diversity, for example.

It's about the overall picture about talent acquisition in the (re)insurance industry, rather than ethnic minority issues in silo. We've also combined our efforts into one Insight Weeks event in partnership with Lloyd's, opening it up to a wider audience, so Insight Week is for young people but not just ethnic minorities. I want to get to a point where the industry is looked at favourably and people are attracted to the (re)insurance industry and proactively choose it. We need to change the 'I fell into it' narrative.

One of the next big challenges is around talent retention, development and progression, but that's a separate conversation. We want to recruit diverse young people, but we also want them to stay and thrive, so I'm working with HR Leadership and Talent Development to understand how we can support and nurture our diverse talent and understand when people leave, why they leave and what we can do about it.



A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, smiling broadly. He is wearing a white button-down shirt. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a kitchen or dining area with a wooden bowl hanging on the wall.

Positive progress:
what have we
achieved so far?

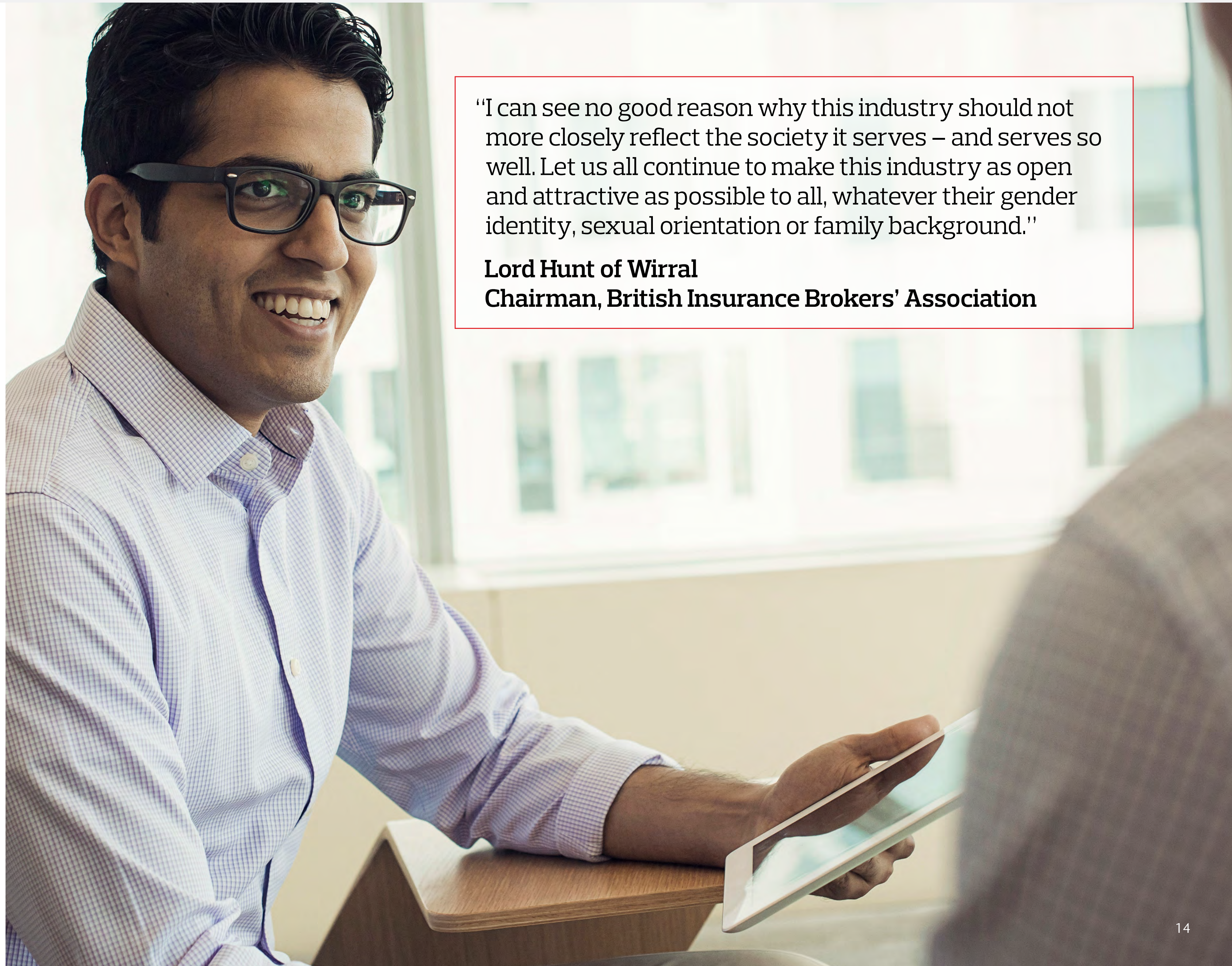
Through our interactions with participants in our initiatives we came to understand that the lack of diversity in our industry exists because ethnically diverse groups have never been targeted in a strategic way.

Insight Week and BAME Future Leaders offered young, diverse talent access to the world of risk by:

1. Educating them about the Reinsurance sector
2. Providing them with tangible opportunities to join our sector
3. Changing their perception about a career in (re)insurance

Testimony to the success of the events, 35 percent of Aon UK early careers hires were from ethnically diverse groups in 2020 and we have proven that they are interested in careers in Reinsurance and that they are an accessible group.

We are committed to changing the demographic of our whole workforce to more accurately reflect the UK workforce population, working towards creating demonstrable differences in our business and across the industry as a whole.



"I can see no good reason why this industry should not more closely reflect the society it serves – and serves so well. Let us all continue to make this industry as open and attractive as possible to all, whatever their gender identity, sexual orientation or family background."

Lord Hunt of Wirral
Chairman, British Insurance Brokers' Association



What's next at Aon

- **Virtual Insight Weeks 2021:** due to social distancing restrictions we will maintain the virtual format this year, which allows us to reach even more young people
- **BAME Future Leaders Programme:** hosting over 30 students on a two day virtual event in February. Once our 2021 hiring is complete we look forward to seeing the continued positive results of this now and into the future
- **Aon Insight Week 2021:** given the strong focus on attracting ethnically diverse talent through our Insight Weeks at Lloyd's and BAME Future Leaders programme, this year we are planning an Aon Insight Week open to all students from GCSE level to Graduates. Unlike the workshop format of our other programmes, this will be delivered as a virtual seminar, where students can learn about the (re)insurance sector
- **Insight Weeks at Lloyd's in Partnership with Aon:** We will be continuing our partnership with Lloyds to run virtual insight weeks offering GCSE and A level (or equivalent) students with the opportunity to learn about our industry and develop skills to progress
- **Retention Projects:** We're keen to retain the diverse workforce that we have attracted and are working to ensure we are offering inclusive development opportunities so our talented colleagues can progress and thrive



Changing the narrative:
how the industry can
take action

In the future, we would like to see consistent recruitment of a diverse cohort of individuals who come into the industry through choice. As evidenced through our series of events, progress is possible, but it requires the support and sponsorship of individuals at board level, business leaders and external organisations.

Three top tips for success

- 1. Focus on impact:** when designing our BAME Future Leaders programme we considered what success looked like – which was increasing the diversity of our graduate and intern hires
- 2. Focus on accelerating change and removing barriers:** we gained senior leader sponsorship to remove barriers e.g. additional resources, which were needed to deliver our programmes, so we could implement change quickly
- 3. Engage internal networks:** we engaged our Business Resource Groups and diverse internal role models to support and be part of delivering the change. This not only helps to spread the workload but also enables you to connect internal diverse role models with diverse candidates

What can you do?

If the content of this report has inspired you to explore new I&D initiatives or expand on existing programmes, it's important to engage your key stakeholders:

Internal stakeholders

- **Get senior leader buy-in:** find an executive that is keen to support
- **Engage your HR Talent Acquisition teams:** HR are essential supporters of this programme, engage especially with the early careers team if you have one
- **Utilise internal network:** Business Resource Groups or employee networks can help build connections with different communities
- **Internal communicators:** share your vision with your communications team and get their help in engaging all colleagues
- **Speak to your I&D lead:** if you have an I&D Lead, get them to help you articulate the business case for diversity

External participants

- **Industry partners:** engage other firms in your sector and regulatory bodies to expand the scope and content of your events
- **Higher education institutions:** nurture your network of schools and universities to promote events
- **Personal networks:** Enlist the support of existing ethnic minority talent within your organisation via employee networks to spread the word through their own communities

Organisations must intentionally take steps to bridge the talent gap and provide tangible opportunities for ethnically diverse entrants. We are committed to leading this change across the industry and would welcome opportunities to collaborate with other organisations who share our vision – for a more diverse and inclusive (re)insurance sector.

About Aon

Aon plc (NYSE:AON) is a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions. Our 50,000 colleagues in 120 countries empower results for clients by using proprietary data and analytics to deliver insights that reduce volatility and improve performance.

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