YOUNG BLACK PERSPECTIVES ON THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY

August 2020

ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH

Ogilvy

Introduction

When it comes to racial injustice in our society, businesses have an important job to do. Committing their resources to influence positive societal change is an obligation. For advertising agencies, that job is all the more important. Our industry stands at one of the most powerful connection points between community and business. We work to shepherd companies into the conversation of the day and bring relevance to brands through that cultural connection. While our objectives are ultimately in service to sales, we're also creating platforms that offer us an opportunity to influence social perceptions of what's normal and what's expected.

So the conversation about diversity in advertising and in the hallways of ad agencies is not new. Many marketers and creatives have been working to reflect the richness of our diverse continent in our work for years. Yet our businesses continue to struggle to employ those who best know how to do that. And, while it's always been a problem, for many of us, the need to address systemic racism in our industry recently snapped into sharp focus. Another tragic death in the US and the social action that followed set off a flurry of inflection, new strategies and tactics designed to inspire Black people and people of colour to join our ranks. As we all look to tear down the barriers that impede Black youth from entering and prospering within our industry, we felt it was important that we better understand the real problems we're trying to solve.

With this report we set out to uncover how our industry is perceived by young Black men and women at the threshold of their careers. We sought to understand how they see their prospects in our industry, what is standing in their way and, most importantly, how we can collectively eliminate those barriers and entice more Black people into an advertising career.

We began this journey with a number of hypotheses, some of which proved accurate and many of which turned out to be completely wrong. For example, we anticipated many Black respondents would feel underrepresented in advertising – they did. We also predicted they would be less inclined toward careers in advertising and would have fewer contacts within the industry to whom they could reach out. Both proved untrue.

Our intent is that this research will inform and compliment many of the initiatives that are underway and the many more that are still to come. The better we understand the problem, the more equipped we are to create effective solutions. With that in mind, in addition to this report we are also sharing our full data table in the interest of transparency and collaboration with all of you.

We're hopeful our colleagues across this close-knit industry will learn from the work here, as we did. We've provided some initial recommendations, many of which we are committing to ourselves. We hope this research will make a positive impact not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because it will make our industry stronger and it will ultimately make the work we do better.

John Killam
CEO, Ogilvy Canada

01

METHODOLOGY

To meet the research objectives, a quantitative online survey was conducted between July 3 and July 15, 2020, among 815 Canadian youths aged 17-22 years old, regarding their level of interest in advertising as a career option. The survey was approximately 7 minutes in length and explored what drives the interest in pursuing a career in advertising among young Canadians with different ethnic backgrounds.

We also conducted a pair of 60-minute focus groups for seven young Black and biracial participants. We explored their answers to the survey in depth as well as some deeper conversations around advertising.

ETHNICITY GROUP	SAMPLE SIZE
White	206
Black /African or Caribbean	301
Native /Indigenous	16
Asians	181
Middle Eastern or North African	25
Multi-ethnic	65
Others	21
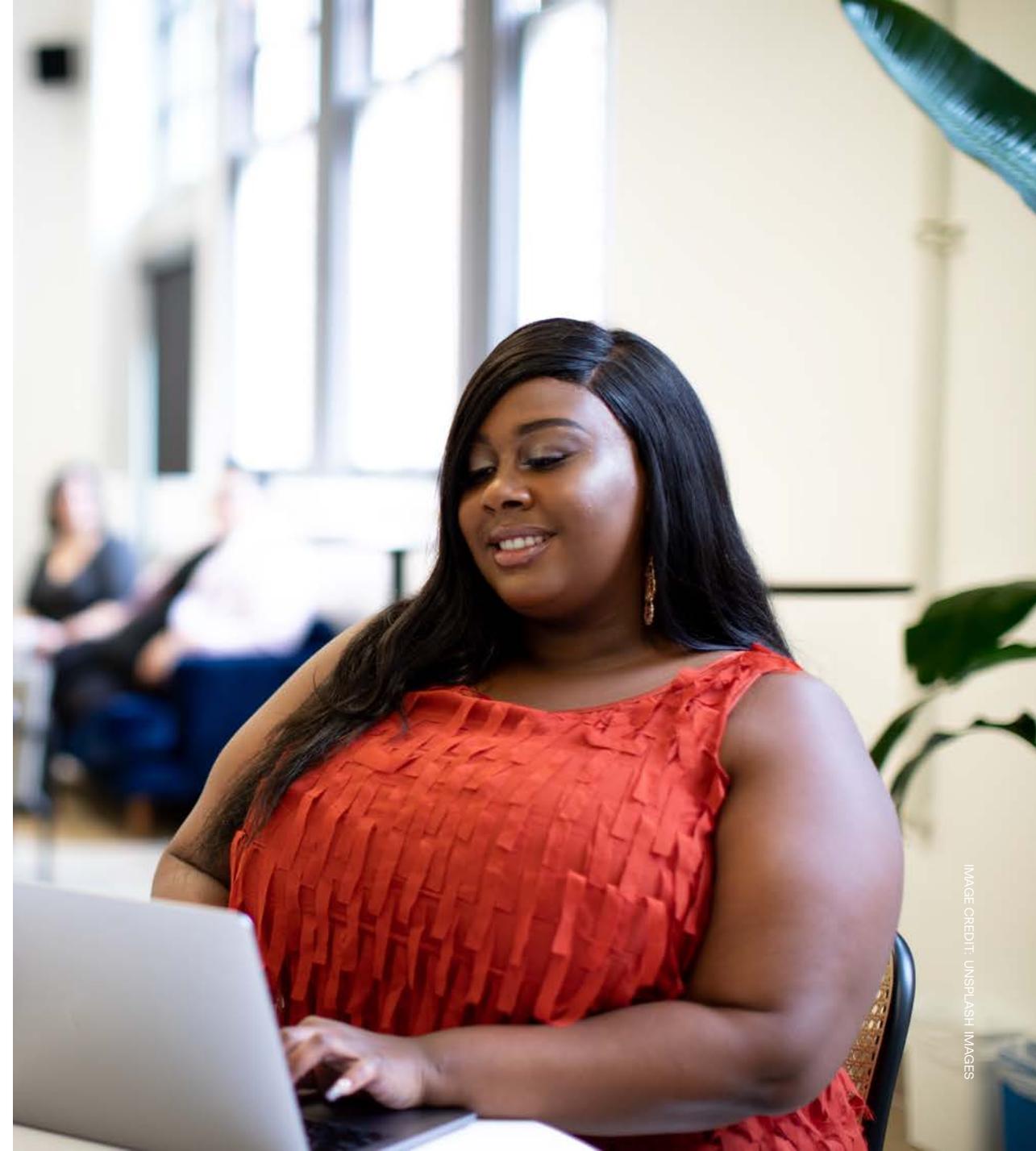
Key Findings

1. Young Black Canadians are extremely interested in advertising. Black participants were far more likely than their peers to express interest in advertising as a career path. They were also more likely to know someone in the industry, giving them a better perception of it as a solid career option.

2. They think highly of the industry and prospects of succeeding within it. Black participants significantly over-indexed in believing the advertising industry had a positive impact on society. With regards to their prospects, roughly two thirds of Black participants believed that they could be successful in the advertising industry. In person, several participants discussed the need for hard work and smarts as characteristics that drove success in the field

3. But there are some key barriers that need to be addressed. 68% of Black participants indicated they believed they would have a hard time breaking into the industry. The potential for racial bias in hiring as well as concerns about fitting in with the "image" of an advertising professional were cited as barriers to entry in the field.

Recommendations

Our research found that for the most part awareness and consideration of the advertising industry was high and that our primary challenges lie in conversion. As such, we recommend addressing inherent biases, active outreach, accessibility, networking and engagement with students and young professionals interested in the industry.

1. **Embrace young Black peoples' enthusiasm for advertising to draw them into the field.**

2. **Acknowledge and address lookism bias across hiring practices as well as throughout internal culture.**

3. **Implement active BIPOC outreach when filling roles, specifically in output influencing roles like strategy and creative.**

4. **Build your workplace as a safe space where open conversations and inclusivity are organic.**

5. **Stay accessible and generous with time, specifically to BIPOC trying to break into the industry.**

02

PERCEPTION
TOWARDS
ADVERTISING
INDUSTRY

■ Yes ■ No
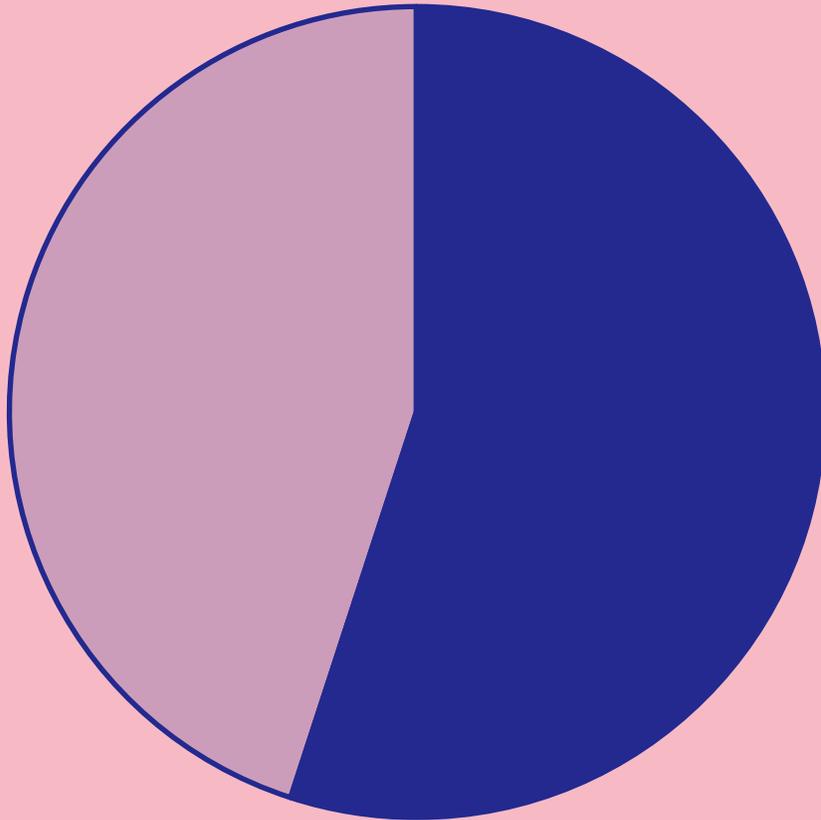
While almost half of Black respondents felt they weren't properly represented in advertising overall, they perceived improvement in recent years.

In speaking to focus groups, we found that there was a perceived improvement in recent years, citing brands like Dove* and Nike as leaders in this space. They also felt that this trend was likely to continue to improve as brands embraced more progressive social values and continued to understand the importance of inclusivity to young people.

Just over 50% of all respondents felt represented in advertising as a whole. Asian respondents felt the least represented at 61% feeling they weren't represented.

Dove is a client of Ogilvy in Canada and globally.

Q6. Do you feel like you are properly represented in most of the advertising you see? n=815.

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> "
>
> *Everyone has that blurb, like 'we are committed to anti-racism, we are an anti-oppressive workplace, we hire, blah blah blah.' Everyone's saying it but are you really doing it in practice?*
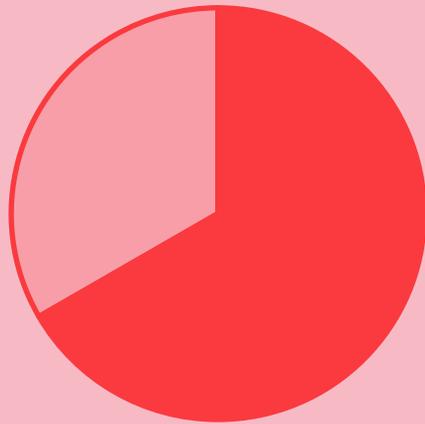>
> Female, Age 21, employed
>
> "

66%

of Black respondents believed that advertising has a positive impact on society.

Increasing representation in commercials and brands' renewed focus on social values were both cited in focus groups as reasons for advertising having a positive impact on society.

■ Black ■ White

■ Postive Impact on Soceity Agree
□ Postive Impact on Soceity Disagree

■ Postive Impact on Soceity Agree
□ Postive Impact on Soceity Disagree

Q7. What impact do you think the advertising industry has on society? N=815
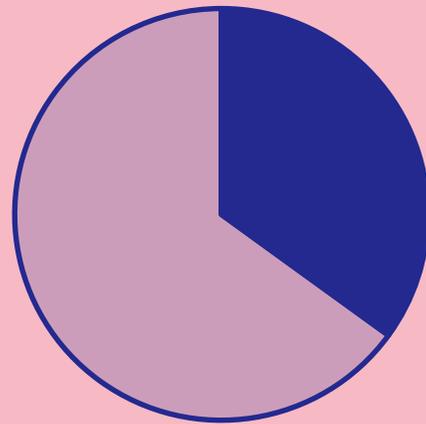
Increased representation and brands' effort in embracing social values helped Black participants feel optimistic about advertising's impact on society.

Black participants overwhelmingly feel that advertising has a positive impact on society versus their peers. Almost twice as many Black participants felt this way versus their white peers. This is likely due to increasing representation and the push brands are making into the social justice space. Brands like Dove* and their brand purpose of Real Beauty were mentioned alongside Nike, Knix and Fenty Beauty.

Brands embracing gay couples in commercials as well as the presence of BIPOC in advertisements were factors in Black people feeling that advertising was having a positive impact on society by normalizing and celebrating diversity.

Participants talked about their hope that diversity in advertising would push more diversity in employment, ideally creating a self-propelling cycle of diversity and inclusion improvements.

* Dove is a client of Ogilvy in Canada and globally.

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Strongly agree

Chart axis labels:
- 40%
- 35%
- 30%
- 25%
- 20%
- 15%
- 10%
- 5%
- 0%

Categories: White | Black / African or Caribbean | Native / Indigenous | Asians | Middle Eastern or North African (Persian, Arab, etc.) | Multi ethnic

Q8. Does advertising seem like an industry you could see yourself rising to the top of? n=815.

Black participants were almost twice as likely to believe they could rise to the top of the advertising field.
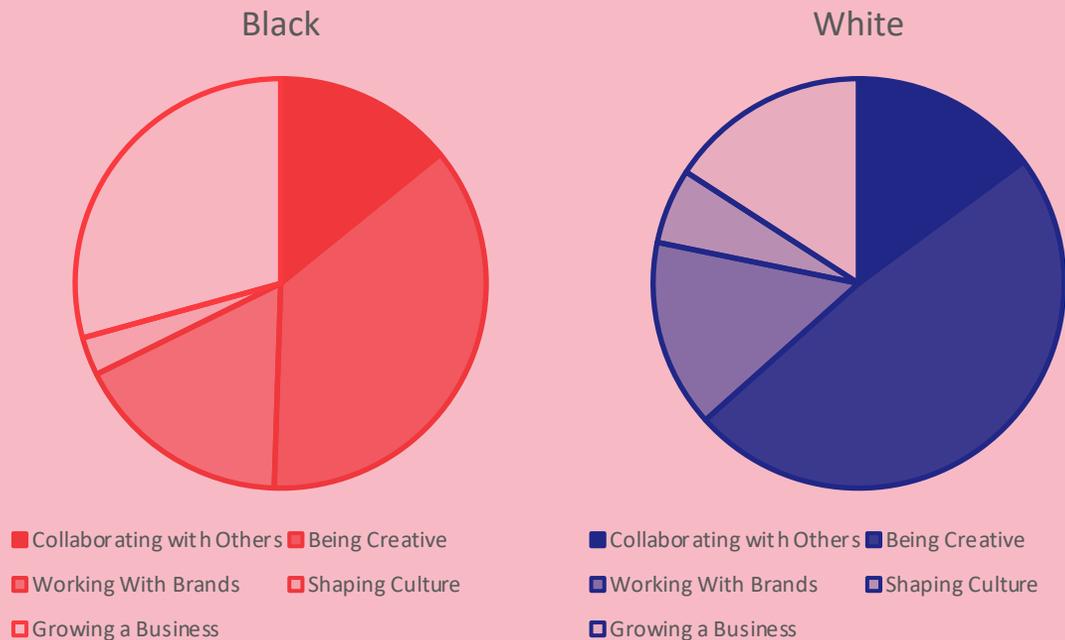
They also over-indexed on "knowing someone who works in the industry". Even accounting for the fact that more black people tend to live in cities where advertising agencies are located.*

We know that a key driver of interest in any field is familiarity and knowing someone drives familiarity. Beyond that, seeing people they know succeed could also drive the belief that they could succeed. Especially if that person is from their ethnic group.

In our focus groups, participants mentioned that advertising must be "highly competitive" and that you'd have to "defend your ideas" against other ideas in order to be successful, and that was something many felt they would be comfortable doing. Many also cited growing a business as a key activity in advertising that they thought they were capable of, while others "hadn't really thought about the business side of things" and considered creativity the key to success.

*https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019002-eng.htm

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Motivating Factors for Entering Advertising

Black

- 🟥 Collaborating with Others
- 🟥 Being Creative
- 🟥 Working With Brands
- 🟥 Shaping Culture
- 🟥 Growing a Business

White

- 🟦 Collaborating with Others
- 🟦 Being Creative
- 🟦 Working With Brands
- 🟦 Shaping Culture
- 🟦 Growing a Business

Q15. What aspects of the advertising industry would you find most appealing?. n=815.

A big motivator for Black participants entering advertising was the opportunity to grow a business versus creativity.

As a group, participants cited 'being creative' as the driving interest in wanting to work in advertising. But Black participants mentioned creativity far less than their peers (13% less than white participants for example). In our focus groups we realized that many Black participants considered creativity to exist more in fields such as music, entertainment, architecture, and graphic design. They didn't see advertising as the most creative field.

Conversely, they were more likely than their peers to see the opportunity to grow a business as a more interesting aspect of advertising.

This could be an effect of some of Black participants focusing more on the business aspects of advertising, and mapping back to their motivators for jobs more holistically (salary, prestige, and opportunity to advance).

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03

LEVEL OF INTEREST IN ADVERTISING

Black respondents were 3x more likely to rank "advertising" as a number 1 choice for a career prospect versus white respondents.

Advertising was ranked right alongside Tech and Startups as a desirable industry to pursue. Though higher prestige jobs, such as medicine, were still the top industries.

Participants we spoke to were fascinated by the process of creating advertisements and were attracted to the idea of seeing tangible results of your work.

Q2. Rank order the below industries from the one you would most like to pursue a career in, to the least. n=815.

■ Total ■ Black

Bar chart comparing Total (blue) and Black (red) responses across three factors:
- Prestige: Black ~34%, Total ~24%
- Opportunity to progress quickly: Black ~51%, Total ~40%
- Salary: Black ~64%, Total ~54%

Q1. How important are the below to you when considering a field of work in which to start a career?

Prestige, salary and opportunity to progress were the key factors that motivated career choice for Black participants.

Black participants over-indexed on prestige, salary, and opportunity to progress as factors that motivated career choice. When we spoke to participants, we found that only two of these factors were relevant to advertising – salary and opportunity to progress.

For first generation immigrants, a career choice is a high involvement decision that takes careful consideration. They tend to place importance on all factors compared to other subgroups who focused in on a few key factors.

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Lack of educational barriers compared to more prestigious careers likely made advertising appealing.

Advertising was not seen by any group as a "prestigious" industry, but it wasn't looked down upon either. Doctor, lawyer and engineer were considered jobs that were "prestigious". Advertising was thought to be the type of industry that "anyone could work in" and didn't require special training. Though some participants were aware of the particular skills creatives needed to master in order to break into the field, many felt they were things that you could "learn on the job". In some cases, this lack of prestige could dissuade them from pursuing a career in advertising, particularly for first generations people.
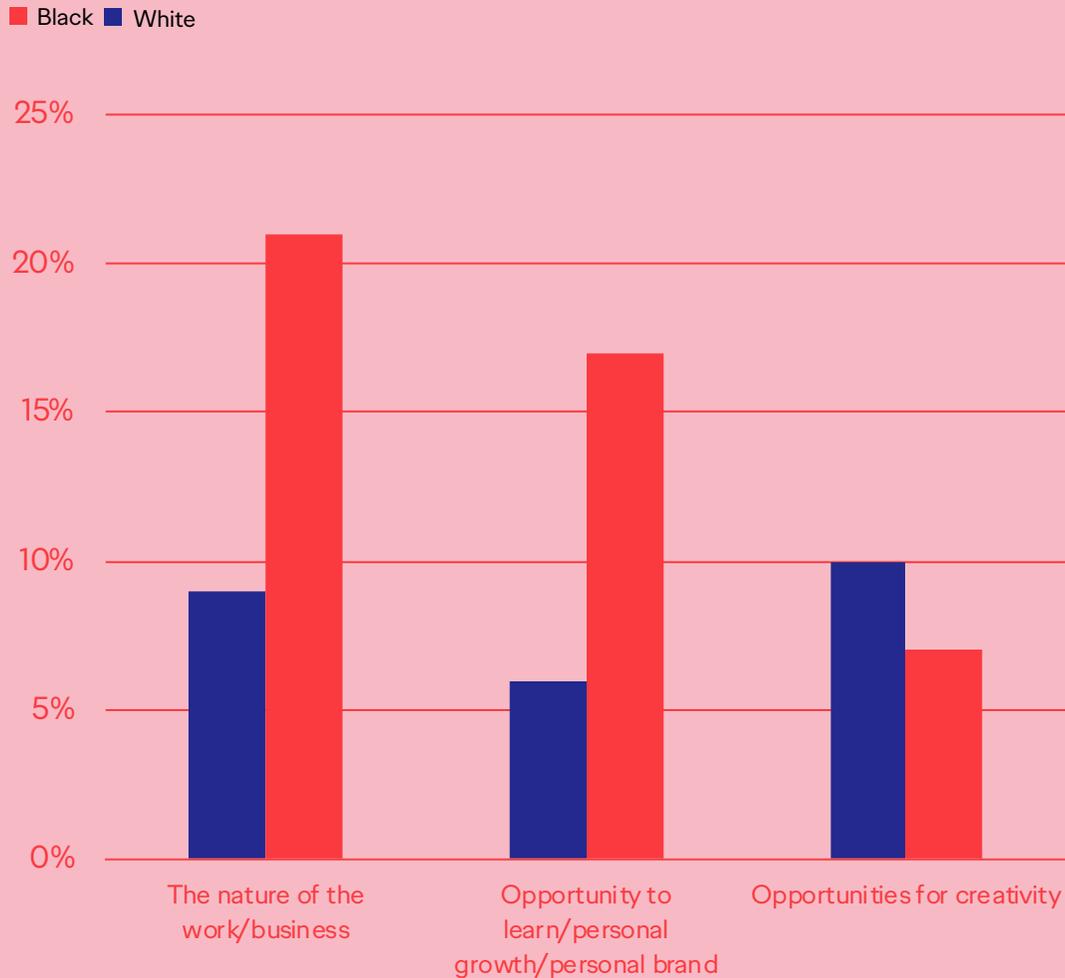
"

I like the thought of bringing my ideas to life and doing something that will attract all sorts of people from different places and different cultures to the same product.

Female, Age 19 , student

"

Driving Interest in Advertising

Legend: ■ Black ■ White

Chart axis: 0%, 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25%

Categories:
- The nature of the work/business
- Opportunity to learn/personal growth/personal brand
- Opportunities for creativity

Black participants cited the "nature of the work" as a key driver of interest in advertising versus their white peers.

In groups while discussing "Nature of the work" some were drawn to the creative side of the business. The ability to think of an idea and see it through into the world was seen as quite attractive. "Making something" was also mentioned by participants, the idea that it's much more satisfying to make a thing that people see as opposed to working in an industry, like finance for example, where your hard work is mostly done behind closed doors.

Other participants spoke about the business side of advertising and thought they would enjoy the hustle of advertising and growing a business. This likely stems from what they perceive about advertising from pop culture, the idea of pitching business and ideas was interesting to them. They also thought that advertising would be a field that they could learn in and grow their personal brand.

Q4.   Why are you interested in pursuing a career in advertising? n=815.

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Lookism bias emerged as a significant barrier to Black participants pursuing advertising as a career.

On the other hand, those who weren't interested often cited their 'experience, personality or qualifications' as reasons they may not be interested.

When we delved into this response in the focus groups, a few participants mentioned that advertising seemed competitive, intense, stressful and difficult, imagining being "stuck in a boardroom, pitching ideas".

Another insight that emerged was that some people felt advertising seemed "very image conscious" and that advertising companies may not be interested in hiring people who didn't fit "the look." Citing "hip fashion", "dark frame glasses" and even "being slim" as attributes that most advertising people had, and they felt like they didn't have. They worried that "fat phobia", racism and lookism would be barriers for them.

Lookism bias is discrimination based on a person's superficial aesthetic and look. While it's not unique to Black people or advertising, the students found it to be especially prominent in their impressions of advertising and the type of people that worked in the industry.

> " *You could be discriminated against based on your image. Like, 'these are the kinds of people we want in our agency and you don't fit that image'. It could include race and identity, but it could also just be the way you look. You're not aesthetic enough.* "
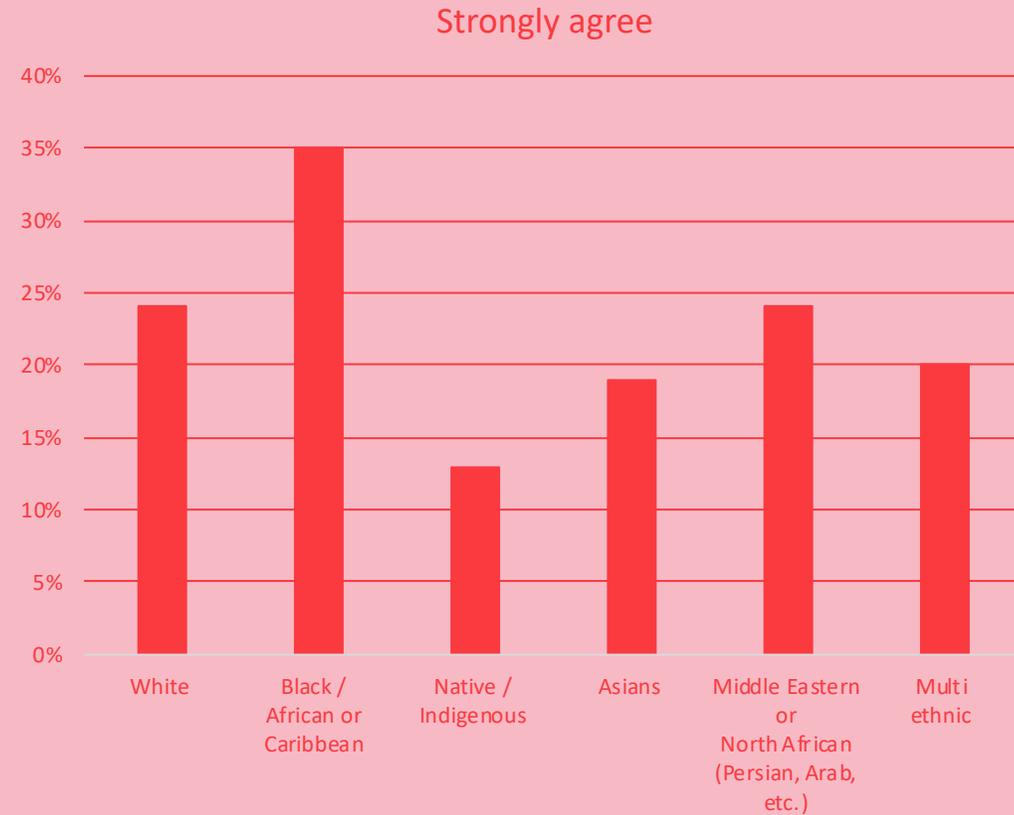
Female, Age 21, employed

04

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO A CAREER IN ADVERTISING

Difficulty Starting Out

Strongly agree

40%	
35%	
30%	
25%	
20%	
15%	
10%	
5%	
0%	

White · Black / African or Caribbean · Native / Indigenous · Asians · Middle Eastern or North African (Persian, Arab, etc.) · Multi ethnic

Q10. Does advertising seem like an industry you would have a hard time breaking into?. n=815.

Advertising is considered difficult to break into, especially by Black participants.

Given the lackluster economy and the COVID-19 crisis, getting into any field is difficult. That might be especially true for young Black people looking to get started in advertising.

Despite being more likely to know someone who works in the industry, Black respondents over-indexed on strongly agreeing that advertising seems like an industry that would be difficult to break into.

Reasons cited in focus groups were things like not fitting the perceived image of what agencies look for (lookism bias), the balance of hard and soft skills required to make it in the industry and "competition for the jobs" in the field. Race was cited by almost every focus group participant as a perceived barrier to entry in the advertising field.

Participants discussed how racial bias may persist even after they land a job – especially in industries known to lack representation. They noted they might not feel comfortable sharing any on-the-job experiences of racism, as it could be frowned upon and could hurt employment stability.

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> " I've gone into interviews and been asked if I could speak English properly just because I don't have a white passing name.
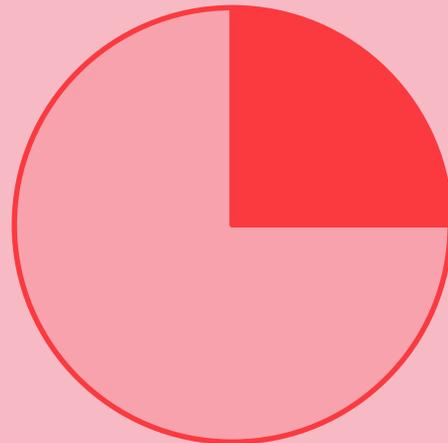>
> *Male, Age 21, employed*
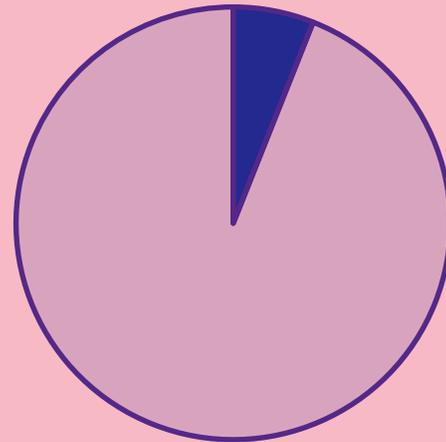
Getting a Foot in the Door

■ Black ■ White

Meeting more senior people who might be able to mentor me is most important

■ Yes □ No   ■ Yes □ No

Q16. What of the following might make you more inclined to pursue a career in advertising industry? n=815.

Getting to know senior professionals, especially Black professionals, would help open doors.

For young Black participants, the role of senior leadership in the mentor space was seen as most desirable. In fact meeting senior people was important to nearly 5x as many Black participants as white participants. In focus groups, the desire for mentorship from senior people was reiterated, citing the need to meet somebody experienced in the field to help them understand the skills required and a typical career trajectory.

Participants in groups mentioned that in an ideal scenario they would be able to connect with a junior person to "give them the straight facts" as well as a more senior person who would give them the benefit of a powerful ally, a longer term view of what a career might look like and proof that people like them could succeed in advertising. They also discussed how much more powerful it would be if those industry professionals were Black.

School visits from advertising professionals were mentioned, as was the potential for a "ride along" or "job shadowing" of younger people in the industry as activities they would benefit from while they were thinking about a career.

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05

FIXING
THE SYSTEM

Embrace young Black peoples' enthusiasm to draw them into the advertising field.

What We Heard
Black people are 3x as likely as other ethnicities to be interested in advertising. While they didn't feel advertising was prestigious, it wasn't looked down upon either. A lack of educational barriers were mentioned, that likely made it appealing as a career.

What We Need to Do
As an industry we need to take steps to convert this enthusiasm into actual jobs:

- Connect with young Black people at secondary schools and showcase the different opportunities available
- Help Black students understand the tangible skills required and work with them to develop those skills
- Carry out active outreach with student and professional groups that represent Black people

IMAGE CREDIT: UNSPLASH IMAGES

Acknowledge and address lookism bias across hiring practices and showcase a more inclusive culture.

What We Heard
Some participants felt that due to its client-facing roles, advertising put a focus on being "image conscious". When probed further, they felt that not fitting into societal beauty or style standards would work against them when pursuing a career in advertising. "Fat phobia" and "race" were cited as potential barriers. One participant mentioned: "It could include race and identity, but it could also just be the way you look. You're not aesthetic enough."

What We Need to Do
Accepting that Lookism bias exists is a great start.
Then, we need to:

- Host workshops on Lookism bias to better understand how it plays a role in our daily lives and hiring
- Audit our hiring practices to address any gaps around lookism bias
- Showcase our authentic culture on social rather than prioritizing a specific aesthetic

IMAGE CREDIT: UNSPLASH IMAGES

Implement active BIPOC outreach when filling roles in strategy and creative.

What We Heard

Black participants over-indexed in feeling like they could succeed in advertising but were more drawn to "growing a business" as a key activity in advertising that they would be interested in and capable of. In focus groups, they cited music, entertainment, architecture and graphic design as purely creative careers.

What We Need to Do

As an industry, we create and reflect culture. Our work is often initiated with consumer insight from the strategy department and realized by the creative department. Populating these departments with diverse perspectives could have a huge impact on how BIPOC are represented in advertising and help our creative output be more relevant to our audiences in general.

- In outreach programs, showcase creative and strategy as areas of interest and help people picture themselves in those parts of the ad community
- Connect with student groups and industry groups to specifically find Black creatives and strategists through active outreach, rather than passively posting a job application

Build welcoming spaces at work.

What We Heard

Black respondents were more likely to believe that advertising seemed like a difficult industry to break into. Race was cited by every single focus group participant as a barrier to entry. Participants also discussed how diversity statements were common, but action was much less common. They worried about racial bias persisting after landing a job, too.

What We Need to Do

Advertising agencies need to go out of our way to make our workplaces feel like safe spaces.

- Treat racism as a 365-24-7 problem rather than a trend to capitalize on
- Senior leadership to have active, open conversations around racism with agency teams, making it safe for BIPOC to share their lived experiences
- Showcase a culture of safety and inclusivity on social channels
- Regular workshops to acknowledge and address racism in the workplace

IMAGE CREDIT: UNSPLASH IMAGES

Stay accessible – both as individuals and agencies.

What We Heard

Meeting senior people was important to 5x as many Black participants as white participants. Focus group participants reiterated the need to meet and be mentored by senior people in the industry. They also felt job shadowing would give them a better understanding of the day to day of the job.

What We Need to Do

Commit to accessibility on company and personal levels:

- Commit senior leadership time towards active outreach and mentorships both internally and externally
- Partner with industry organizations as well as student organizations to offer and develop job shadowing programs
- On a personal level, keep your network and inbox open to BIPOC who are interested in advertising and might be particularly in need of help

About
Ogilvy

Ogilvy has been producing iconic, culture-changing marketing campaigns since 1948 and in Canada since 1968. It is an award-winning integrated creative network that makes brands matter for Fortune 500 companies as well as local businesses across 132 offices in 83 countries.

Ogilvy Canada ranks #1 on the Canadian Effies Index for advertising effectiveness, and #4 in North America. We operate in Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City.

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About

ENVIRONICS
RESEARCH

Environics Research provides organizations with actionable, evidence - based solutions to real business problems. Founded in 1970, Environics Research delivers solutions and insights to clients working in a range of sectors and industries.

Our team is drawn from many disciplines – from business and marketing, to sociology and urban affairs. This mix makes Environics Research a creative and intellectually vibrant research and consulting firm, where methodological rigour and unrivaled analytical capabilities come together. To download data tables from this study please visit:

https://environicsresearch.com/insights/young-black-perspectives-advertising-industry/ .

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