SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL

ENERGY. CLIMATE.
DEVELOPMENT.

Overview of the Black people in the Global energy workforce

FEBRUARY 2025

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Purpose of the Report

- Evaluate Black representation in the global energy workforce.
- Identify data gaps and challenges in workforce diversity and inclusion.
- Examine disparities in Black leadership, ownership, and funding within the energy sector.
- Explore pathways for improvement, including leveraging Mission 300, to enhance Black representation in a just and equitable energy transition.

Key Findings

Workforce diversity data is inconsistent and lacks standardization across countries, making it difficult to accurately measure, compare, and report progress.

Energy workforce representation is primarily assessed through self-identification or digital tools, both influenced by historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Black workers remain underrepresented in the energy workforce, particularly among clean energy and leadership roles.

Black workers constitute only 8% of the U.S. clean energy workforce, 1.5% of the UK energy sector, and an estimated 1% of the global renewable energy workforce. **At SEforALL, 24.8% of our staff globally identify as Black African.**

Black-owned businesses face persistent underrepresentation and limited access to investment and global funding, including for Black women-owned SMEs.

Efforts should focus on expanding funding opportunities and scaling Black-owned firms to enhance their representation and impact in the industry.

Mission 300 300 provides a platform to drive job creation and improve energy access while fostering diverse employment opportunities that reflect local populations.

M300 provides a pathway to increase Black workforce representation and engage industry associations and data custodians to develop standardized frameworks for reliable tracking and accountability, ensuring measurable progress in workforce diversity and inclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

Counting the Black Energy Workforce

Definitions & Methodologies

Workforce diversity data is most commonly collected through self-identification and digital tools, but methodological limitations—such as biases, inconsistencies, and cross-country differences—impact accuracy and comparability.

DEFINITION OF 'RACIAL OR ETHNIC ORIGIN'

- "A generic statistical (analytical) category that allows for disaggregation of any data, to assess the state of equality in society,
- An aspect of a person's self-identification and ethnic attachment, that is, as a personal characteristic."[1]

SELF-IDENTIFICATION

- Individuals typically report their race or ethnicity through surveys and administrative forms in national statistics.
- Data is often collected by censuses (e.g., the U.S. Census Bureau classifies race into five categories).
- Racial classifications are shaped by historical and social contexts, influencing data interpretation.[2]

USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS

- In the energy sector, digital tools are sometimes used to assess workforce diversity beyond self-reporting.
- Methods include algorithmic classification of names (e.g., web scraping for demographic analysis).
- Risks include digital discrimination, developer & information biases.[3]

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

- Self-reporting inconsistencies across individuals and contexts.
- AI and algorithmic biases, which can reinforce systemic inequities.
- Cross-country comparison challenges, due to different classification systems and cultural contexts (e.g. only 8 of 41 countries surveyed by the OSCE collect official statistics on race).[4]

SOURCES: European Commission; Guo, G., et al.; Sustainable Energy for All; Stillwell, D.

Estimates & Available Statistics

Race-based data in energy is scarce, with Black workers underrepresented, especially in leadership. Greater transparency and targeted initiatives are needed to improve diversity.

United States

- Black workers represent 9% of the energy workforce and 8% of the clean energy workforce (compared to the national standard at 13%).[5]
- Black workers make up 8.5% of solar jobs, 8% of wind jobs, and 6% of EV jobs; they exceed the national standard only in natural gas distribution (15%).[6]
- Leadership representation is low, with only 17% of Black energy workers in executive roles (2% in the solar industry).[7]

United Kingdom

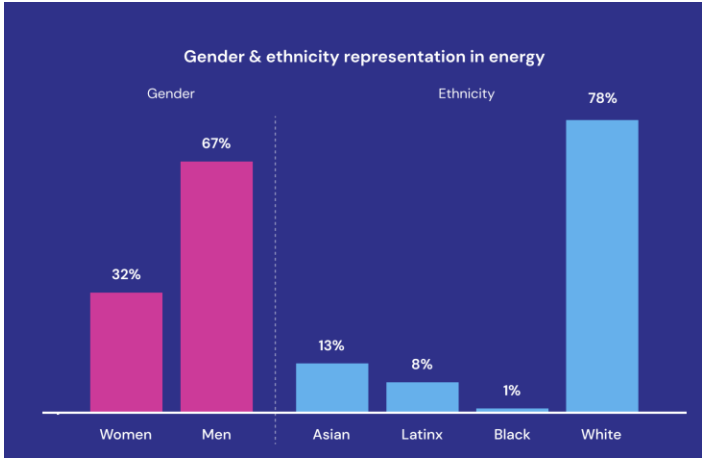
- The energy, gas, and steam distribution sector has 1.5% Black workers, well below the national workforce proportion (3%).[8]
- The energy & utilities sector has reached an ethnic minority record of 8%, with gradual improvements over recent years.[9]

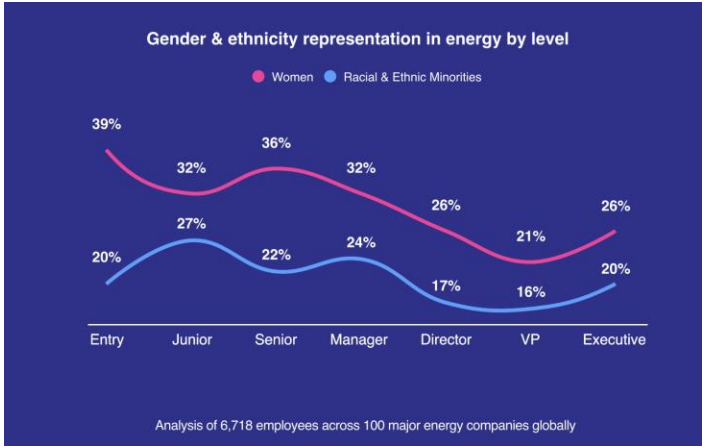
Canada

- 20% of energy workers identify as a visible minority, though no specific breakdown for Black workers is provided.[10]

Global

- Data is scarce, but reports indicate that 11% of employees in renewables are non-white. However, racial representation in broader energy sectors worldwide remains largely untracked.[11]
- Estimates place the Black population at 1% of the energy workforce.





SOURCES: IRENA; E2; IREC; NASEO; Catapult Network; Energy & Utility Skills; Canada; EqualBy30

CHAPTER TWO

The Global Energy Market

The Underrepresentation of Black Businesses

Black-owned businesses are underrepresented in the global energy sector and face market access barriers, but growing demand for energy is driving an increase in Black-owned enterprises.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKET: The global energy market is vast and complex, making it difficult to quantify the exact share of Black-owned businesses. However, Black-owned enterprises remain underrepresented, particularly in clean energy. Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) make up 90% of firms worldwide and contribute approximately 50% of global GDP.[13]

AVAILABLE STATISTICS FROM THE UNITED STATES: Black ownership in clean energy businesses remains low.[14] According to Pew Research (2021), Black-owned businesses made up only about 3% of all U.S. firms that were classifiable by the race and ethnicity of their owners. In 2021. Black-owned businesses account for 13.9% of professional, scientific, and technical services, and only 0.05% of utilities, 1.3% of manufacturing, and 0.02% of mining, quarrying, and coal and natural gas extraction.[15] This highlights a significant underrepresentation of Black-owned enterprises in the energy sector relative to their share of the workforce.

THE AFRICAN ECOSYSTEM: Africa is home to 125 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), both formal and informal, accounting for 25% of global SMEs. In many African nations, SMEs represent 90% of businesses, provide 80% of jobs, and contribute between 20-40% of GDP, making them a crucial driver of economic growth.[16]

CHALLENGES & GROWTH POTENTIAL: Black ownership in clean energy businesses faces persistent barriers, including limited market access in global supply chains. However, initiatives like the Global Black Impact Summit (GBIS) aim to address these disparities by increasing representation and expanding funding opportunities for Black-owned firms in the energy sector.[17]

SOURCES: IFC; E2; Pew Research Center; MIT Sloan School of Management; Global Black Impact Summit

Underfunding of Black-Owned Businesses

Grant and investment funding for Black-led energy businesses remains limited, with significant barriers to capital access despite growing initiatives to improve representation and support.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKET

Venture capital investment in clean energy startups surged from **$1.9 billion in 2019** to **$12.3 billion in 2022**,[18] reflecting a growing interest in the sector. However, SMEs still face a massive **financing gap of $5.7 trillion**, which rises to $8 trillion when including informal enterprises.[19]

AVAILABLE STATISTICS FROM THE UNITED STATES

Black founders receive less than 1.5% of the $330 billion in U.S. venture capital funding.[20] Additionally, only 1.6% of federal small business contracting dollars are awarded to Black-owned businesses, highlighting significant disparities in access to funding and opportunities.[21]

THE AFRICAN ECOSYSTEM

Around **$110 billion** is expected to be invested in Africa's energy sector in 2024, with **only $40 billion allocated to clean energy technologies.** Energy investments in Africa make up **just 2% of the global total**.[22] Many SMEs in Africa struggle to access clean energy investment, limiting their growth potential. **Women-led businesses face a $42 billion financing gap**, further restricting economic opportunities.[23]

CHALLENGES & POTENTIAL GROWTH

Despite targeted initiatives, the share of **investment and grant funding for Black-owned businesses remains disproportionately low worldwide**.[24] Continued efforts are essential to ensure equitable capital access, particularly to drive economic growth and clean energy expansion in Africa.

SOURCES: Energy Network Media Group; IFC; Business Insider; Third Way; IEA; African Development Bank; World Economic Forum

CHAPTER THREE

SEforALL's Workforce

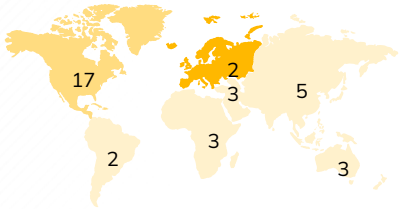
Strengthening Diversity & Inclusion at SEforALL

SEforALL has significantly expanded its workforce while increasing global representation and maintaining gender balance, reinforcing its commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce to advance the just energy transition.

JANUARY 2020

Number of nationalities 24

Geographical distribution of staff nationalities



Percentage of African staff 8.5%

Gender

M 39.6%

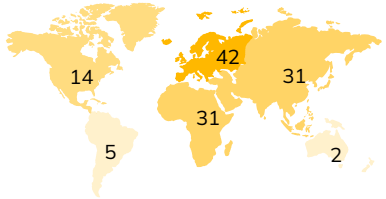
F 60.4%

OVERALL

JANUARY 2025

Number of nationalities 42

Geographical distribution of staff nationalities



Percentage of African staff 24.8%

Gender

M 47%

F 53%

OVERALL

- **SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN WORKFORCE:** The organization has more than doubled its workforce, reflecting its growth and expanding impact.
- **STRONGER REGIONAL DIVERSITY**: Staff from Africa (from 3 to 31) and Asia (from 3 to 31) saw substantial increases, improving geographic representation. European staff also saw a major rise, reflecting a more balanced global presence.
- **SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN AFRICAN STAFF**: SEforALL's commitment to enhancing global inclusivity is evident in the substantial growth of African staff, increasing from 8.5% in 2020 to 24.8% in 2025, and in the strategic focus on bolstering staff presence in regions most affected by energy poverty.
- **IMPROVED GENDER DIVERSITY**: The narrowing gender gap among all staff—from 39.6% male/60.4% female in 2020 to 47% male/53% female in 2025—underscores how essential gender diversity in the energy sector is for driving innovative and inclusive solutions for clean energy transitions globally.

CHAPTER FOUR

About SEforALL

Diversity is at the Heart of a Just Energy Transition

At SEforALL, diversity, equity, and inclusion are not just internal commitments—they are embedded in the very fabric of our work. We believe that a just energy transition can only be achieved if it is truly inclusive, ensuring that no one is left behind. Our programs and initiatives are designed to empower underrepresented voices, support women and marginalized communities, and foster regional and global diversity in leadership, workforce, and economic opportunities.

From scaling renewable energy manufacturing in Africa to streamlining gender and youth, we integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion across all aspects of our work.

PROGRAMME SPOLIGHT

Gender & Youth Programme

As of April 2024:

- 486 women supported through our mentorship and technical training programmes
- 196 youth supported through our mentorship and technical training programmes

Africa Renewable Energy Manufacturing (AREMI)

These four programs aim to establish:

- 10 scaled RE factories
- Train 3,000 RE technicians, and develop 500 future leaders
- Facilitate financing and investments for green manufacturing in Africa

Gender & Youth Programme

Despite making up 39% of global labour force, women only account for 22% of the traditional energy sector. Meanwhile, according to the IEA's Net Zero by 2050 scenario, 14 million green jobs will need to be created by 2030, with another 16 million workers shifting to new roles involving clean energy.

Ensuring that women and youth have access to and are equipped for these opportunities will help reduce inequalities.

Our Gender and Youth Programme is dedicated to promoting the inclusion of women and youth in the energy transition. We achieve this through initiatives such as the STEM Traineeship, Women in Clean Cooking Mentorship, Youth Ambassador Programme, Open Africa Power, and Energy Planning Training.

Gender & Youth activities include:

- Gender & Youth Mainstreaming – Setting industry KPIs & raising awareness;
- Professional Development – Training & mentorship;
- Advocacy – Representation & coalition building;
- Data & Evidence – Research & policy tools.

Africa Renewable Energy Manufacturing Opportunity (REMI)

Africa REMI aims to synergize resources from South-South Cooperation to accelerate the creation of green manufacturing capacity in Africa as an enabler of the transition; as well as income generation. This will be achieved through capacity building, knowledge transfer, policy dialogues, advocacy as well as pilot projects – to empower African nations to achieve low-emission development and carbon neutrality in the long term..

These four programs aim to establish:

- 10 scaled RE factories
- Train 3,000 RE technicians, and develop 500 future leaders
- Facilitate financing and investments for green manufacturing in Africa

CHAPTER FIVE

Concluding Remarks: Ways Forward

PERSISTENT UNDERREPRESENTATION: Black workers continue to be significantly underrepresented in the global energy sector —especially in leadership roles—even as renewable energy employment expands. This underrepresentation not only limits career opportunities but also undermines the diversity of perspectives needed to drive innovation and equitable progress in energy transformation.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR DATA TRANSPARENCY: Accurate, disaggregated data (by sex, age, race/ethnicity, nationality, economic status, and disability) is critical for identifying and addressing disparities. Current data gaps obscure true workforce diversity, making it difficult for governments, companies, and stakeholders to track progress and implement targeted interventions. There is a clear need to develop standardized, disaggregated data definitions and collection across demographic (e.g., race, ethnicity, sex, age) and sector-specific (e.g., on-grid, off-grid, distribution) categories, to measure impact and progress toward a just, inclusive energy transition.[25]

SEforALL's 2024 REPORT: ***Improving Energy Data to Enhance Gender Equality*****:** While focused on gender, the report highlights the critical need for sex-, age-, and race-disaggregated data to identify gaps in workforce participation and leadership. The absence of standardized & disaggregated racial/ethnic data in energy workforce tracking obscures disparities & prevents data-driven decision-making. Governments and corporations must adopt transparent reporting on hiring, retention, and promotion by demographic group.

MISSION 300: RAISING INITIATIVE AND INVESTMENT: Led by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank Group, with the support of Rockefeller Foundation, Global Energy Alliance for People and Plant (GEAPP) and SEforALL, Mission 300 aims to transform lives by providing electricity. M300 has the opportunity not only to transform energy access by connecting communities but also to create diverse job opportunities that reflect the population's makeup.[26]

SOURCES: Sustainable Energy for All

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