

DIVERSITY IN TRAIL RUNNING: UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERREPRESENTED EXPERIENCE

No sport or industry is above structural racism and white supremacy. The **Running Industry Diversity Coalition** (RIDC) believes that racial justice in running is a necessary pursuit as we sprint toward a world in which all people of color are welcomed, valued, and amplified.

Runners of color carry core concerns regarding trail and road running and racing that include barriers to access, safety and inclusion during trail competitions and unorganized participation, unaddressed product needs, and comparisons to road running experiences.

The Starting Line

RIDC initiated a baseline qualitative and quantitative exploration of runners in the US. Out of 1,138 total respondents, 79% were people of color. Overall, survey respondents enjoy trail running but find it to be exclusionary. For example, the majority of respondents described the experience as “fun,” but white runners frequently describe the field as “inclusive” while runners of color rarely used that label.

By the Numbers

These data points are the baseline for measuring progress and change — and they’re a catalyst for true action.

- 47% of Black and brown trail runners engage in the sport for the functional benefits (e.g., improving or maintaining physical health) while white runners are more concerned with the emotional advantages with 21% elevating “connecting with nature” as their primary reason
- Runners of color have a greater sense of safety on trails than they do on roads: (“Predators on roads are humans, predators on trails are animals.”)
- However, these runners report feeling significantly less safe than white runners during trail and road races; 56% of Black and brown runners always feel safe at trail races compared to 80% of white runners
- Runners of color express unmet needs across product relevance and function; 16% of survey respondents indicated that current footwear offerings on the market are not meeting their overall trail running needs, and 23% said the same for current apparel offerings

The Path to Liberation

We all deserve the #FreedomToRun. Unfortunately, there are clear disparities in how running events are planned and executed that further exclude and isolate runners of color. As we embark on the path to racial equity and inclusion — across all sectors of the running industry — this factsheet and [accompanying report](#) provide key first steps.

Through intentional racial equity work, the running industry can lead major industry breakthroughs that ultimately help break the cycle of societal injustice. This necessitates centering the experiences of people of color and measuring and tracking DEI progress. Some considerations:

- How can companies become more relevant to Black and brown runners? How are brands engaging these runners in product development and product testing and, more importantly, rectifying for unmet product needs that currently exist?
- How can you change the narrative on what it means to be “outdoorsy” and who gets to be “outdoorsy”?