

Sir Lewis Carl Davidson Hamilton MBE HonFREng (born 7 January 1985) is a British racing driver currently competing in Formula One, driving for Mercedes. In Formula One, Hamilton has won a joint-record seven World Drivers' Championship titles (tied with Michael Schumacher), and holds the records for the most wins (103), pole positions (104), and podium finishes (196), among others.

Born and raised in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, Hamilton joined the McLaren Young Driver Programme in 1998. This led to a Formula One drive with McLaren from 2007 to 2012, making him the only black driver to race in the series. In his inaugural season, Hamilton set numerous records as he finished runner-up to Kimi Räikkönen by one point. The following season, he won his maiden title in dramatic fashion—making a crucial overtake on the last lap of the last race of the season—to become the then-youngest ever Formula One World Champion. After six years with McLaren, Hamilton signed with Mercedes in 2013.

Changes to the regulations for 2014 mandating the use of turbo-hybrid engines saw the start of a highly successful period for Hamilton, during which he won six further drivers' titles. Consecutive titles came in 2014 and 2015 during an intense rivalry with teammate Nico Rosberg. Following Rosberg's retirement in 2016, Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel became Hamilton's closest rival in two championship battles, in which he twice overturned mid-season point deficits to claim consecutive titles again in 2017 and 2018. His third and fourth consecutive titles followed in 2019 and 2020 to equal Schumacher's record of seven drivers' titles.

Hamilton has been credited with furthering Formula One's global following by appealing to a broader audience outside the sport, in part due to his high-profile lifestyle, environmental and social activism, and exploits in music and fashion. He has also become a prominent advocate in support of activism to combat racism and push for increased diversity in motorsport. Hamilton was listed in the 2020 issue of Time as one of the 100 most influential people globally, and was knighted in the 2021 New Year Honours.

Hamilton was born on 7 January 1985 in Stevenage, Hertfordshire.[2] His father, Anthony Hamilton, is black and is of Grenadian descent, while his mother, Carmen Larbalestier, is White British, and from Birmingham,[7] making him mixed-race;[8] Hamilton has identified as black.[9] Hamilton's parents separated when he was two, after which he lived with his mother and older half-sisters, Samantha and Nicola, until he was twelve.[10] Hamilton then lived with his father, stepmother Linda, and his half-brother Nicolas, who is also a professional racing driver.[11][12] Hamilton was raised a Catholic.[13]

Hamilton's father bought him a radio-controlled car when he was five.[14] Hamilton finished second in the national BRCA championship the following year against adult competition.[15] Being the only black child racing at his club, Hamilton was subjected to racist abuse.[14][16] Hamilton's father bought him a go-kart for Christmas when he was six and promised to support his racing career as long as he worked hard at school.[17] To support his son, Hamilton's father took redundancy from his position as an IT manager and became a contractor, sometimes working up to four jobs at a time including employment as a double glazing salesman, dishwasher, and putting up signs for estate agents,[18] while still attending

his son's races.[19] Hamilton's father later set up his own IT company.[20] He continued to be Hamilton's manager until early 2010.[21][22]

Hamilton was educated at The John Henry Newman School, a voluntary aided Catholic secondary school in Stevenage.[23] Hamilton has said that at the age of five he took up karate to defend himself as a result of bullying at school.[24] He was also excluded from school for a period when he was mistakenly identified as having attacked a fellow student who was treated in hospital for his injuries.[25] In addition to racing, he played association football for his school team with eventual England international, Ashley Young.[20]

Hamilton, an Arsenal fan, said that if Formula One had not worked for him, he would have been a footballer or a cricketer, having played both for his school teams.[26] In February 2001, he began studies at Cambridge Arts and Sciences (CATS), a private sixth-form college in Cambridge.[27]