
RACE RESEARCH FOR THE FUTURE
MINORITY ETHNIC PARTICIPATION AND
ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND THE
LABOUR MARKET

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Introduction

This brief summarises the main findings of the Minority Ethnic Participation in Education, Training and the Labour Market report commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment. The report brings together for the first time all available statistics on ethnicity in the fields of education, training and the labour market. Its purpose is to provide an up-to-date picture of the experience of ethnic minority groups throughout the life course.

The main data sources used in compiling the information presented in this report were of three basic types, sample surveys and administrative records, 1991 Census. Some of the information has been published previously in individual statistical bulletins, but few of the statistics will have appeared in the context of studying ethnicity specifically. This report provides an insight to the position of minority ethnic groups across the broad spectrum of DfEE interests, and also serves as an accurate 'benchmark' for future studies.

Key Findings

- The experience of minority ethnic groups is not uniform, the accepted picture of minority disadvantage ignores the evidence of considerable progress and achievement by people from some minority ethnic groups in examination results, job creation and career progression
- Minority ethnic groups are projected to account for more than half of the growth in the working age population over the next ten years.
- White students perform better than those from minority ethnic groups overall, but fewer achieve 5 or more passes at GCSE grade A* to C than those from Indian and "Other" ethnic groups.
- Economic activity rates are higher for people aged 25 to 44 than for younger and older people. Differences in participation rates between ethnic groups are least in this age group. Amongst the older age groups differences in participation rates become more apparent. The economic activity rate for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men in the 45-64 age group is 62% and 40% respectively. In comparison the economic activity rate for white men is 78%.
- White women earn more than women from minority ethnic groups in London, but outside London, women from Chinese and Other ethnic groups have highest earnings. Men also display a similar earnings pattern.
- Minority unemployment rates are usually at least twice as high as those for white people, and highest for Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black-African people. However, Indian and Chinese people tend to experience relatively low unemployment rates.
- Bangladeshi groups appear to benefit most (with the exception of the Chinese ethnic group) from the New Deal programme. 27.8% of Bangladeshi's entered unsubsidised employment as their immediate destination in comparison to 25.6% of White's and 22.9% average for all minority ethnic groups.
- There has been steady progress among all ethnic groups towards meeting the adult National Learning Targets (data for younger age groups is not available). All minority ethnic groups (with the exception of Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups) are exceeding achievement among white people. Qualification levels among Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups remains very low. (37% at level 3 compared to 46% for the White group and 20% at level 4 compared to 26% for the white population.)

The Demographic background

The experiences of ethnic minorities in education and the labour market is increasingly becoming more important, not just in terms of equal opportunities issues, but for the national labour market as well. Minority ethnic groups are projected to account for more than half of the growth in the working age population over the next ten years. This rapid growth is a consequence of relatively large number of births in the UK, due to the very youthful age structure of most minority ethnic groups.

The minority ethnic group population of Great Britain has continuously grown since the late¹ 1940s. It reached more than 3 million by 1991. The quarterly Labour Force Survey has recorded further growth during the 1990s. The minority ethnic group population is believed to have reached 3.8 million in 1999 constituting 6.7% of the British population.

According to the 1991 Census the ratio of white males to females was, 95:100. In contrast the greatest excess of males occurred for Bangladeshi groups with 1113 males per 1000 females. (ratio of 113:100)²

Minority ethnic groups as a whole account for 11.6% of pre-school children, approximately 11% of children of compulsory school, 9.1% of 16-24 year olds and 7.5% of 25-44 year olds³.

Minority ethnic groups remain highly geographically concentrated in urban areas. In Greater London alone contains half of all people from minority ethnic groups living in Britain, and two-thirds of all people from Black ethnic groups.

Participation and attainment in compulsory education

Ethnic minority pupils comprised 11.8% of primary school pupils and 11.5% of secondary pupils in January 1999. There is a lot of regional variation with the greatest concentration of minority ethnic pupils in London, particularly in Inner London where more than 50% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. This diversity is not confined to geographic location only, there are wide variations in the level of ethnic achievement in education.

Indian students display the highest rates of success, with well over 90% achieving 5 passes. In comparison the lowest rate of success is displayed by Pakistani and Bangladeshi students with close to 83% achieving 5 passes⁴.

White students perform better than those from minority ethnic groups overall, but fewer achieve 5 or more passes at GCSE grade A* to C than those from Indian and "Other" ethnic groups.

The most common level of achievement for Black males is 5 or more passes at grade D to G while two fifths of Black females achieve 1 to 4 GCSEs at grade A* to C (compared with an average of just over a quarter for males and females from all ethnic groups.)

Across all ethnic groups, 69% of students with a father in a managerial or professional job achieve 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, nearly twice as high a percentage as that for students with a father in a manual occupation, 36% of which achieve grade A*-C passes. Analysis of attainment data shows a strong relationship between performance and socio-economic disadvantage, pupils from ethnic minority groups tend to be over-represented in these areas.

Activities of 16-19 year olds following compulsory schooling.

Ethnic groups are likely to experience differential outcomes during the transition from school to the labour market. Over the past decade the most notable trend has been the increase in the number of young people staying on in full time education:

- Young people from minority ethnic groups are more likely to remain in full-time education than their white peers who are more likely to enter full time employment. Analysis of data from the Youth Cohort Study and the Career Activity study for 1998 revealed that four-fifths of all young people from minority ethnic groups remained in further education. Whereas just over two thirds of white young people remained in the education system.
- Among those with the poorest GCSE examination performance, the percentage who remained in full-time education was almost twice as high for young people from minority ethnic groups (71%) than for their white counterparts (37%)⁵.

A tenth of all students and about 15% of full-time students in the further education sector are from minority ethnic groups. South Asian students form a large percentage of the full-time students and have a very youthful age profile, whereas students from white and Black-Caribbean ethnic groups tend to be older.

Participation in higher education

Students from minority ethnic groups are overall comparatively well-represented in higher education in Great Britain. In 1997/98 minority ethnic groups comprised nearly 13% of students at first degree-level in Great Britain, which is considerably higher than the minority ethnic share of the population of young people. (Minority ethnic groups represented 8.3% of those aged 19-24 in 1998.) However minority ethnic students tend to be concentrated in post 92 universities, and some groups are more likely to be mature students. Furthermore in line with all other aspects of Education there are marked differences between the ethnic groups⁶.

Ethnic groups highly represented in higher education are:

Indian people (4.1% of first degree, ethnicity known students in 1998/99)

Black-African people 1.9% (first degree, ethnicity known students in 1998/99)

The highest percentage of students attending post 92 in

¹ Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 1999 to Winter 1999/2000 (Crown Copyright)

² Source: 1991 Census of Population (Crown Copyright)

³ Source: DfEE's Annual Schools Census, January 1999

⁴ Source: Youth Cohort Study 9 sweep 1 (1998)

⁵ Source: Youth Cohort Study 9 sweep 1 (1998)

⁶ Source: HESA (DfEE)

1998/99 were from the Black-African ethnic group (68.6%) this is a much greater proportion than the 37.7% from the white ethnic group.

The Chinese ethnic group, has the highest percentage of students in 'Old Universities' 47.1% as compared to 40.5% of white people and 20.1% of Black Caribbean students.

Black undergraduate entrants are disproportionately likely to be mature students (only a fifth are aged under 21 compared to nearly half of white undergraduates and over half of Black undergraduates are aged over 25 compared to just over a third of their white peers). This tendency is true for both Black Caribbean and Black African students. In particular, about 60% of Black African male and Black Caribbean female students start their degrees aged over 25.

53.1% of White Graduates achieve a first or an upper second compared to 50.1% for all groups. In contrast Black African students are least likely to obtain higher classes in their degree (25.1% achieve a first or upper second).

Patterns of labour market participation

Studies of the labour market reveal that unemployment rates for minority ethnic groups have been consistently higher than those for white people. Minority ethnic participation in the labour force is also lower than that of the white population. Not unlike the field of education, there are marked differences in the performance and experiences of minority ethnic groups in the labour market. Moreover minority ethnic groups are not represented proportionately in all industries (this may be one of the factors that contributes to the higher unemployment levels amongst these groups).

- White economic activity rates are well above those for people from minority ethnic groups as a whole. 85% of white men aged 16-64 are economically active compared to 77% for all minority groups. The difference is even more marked for women with 74% of white women of working age being economically active compared to 56% of minority ethnic women.⁷
- Economic activity rates are higher for people aged 25 to 44 than for younger and older people. Differences in participation rates between ethnic groups are least in this age group. Amongst the older age groups differences in participation rates become more apparent. The economic activity rate for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men in the 45-64 age group is 62% and 40% respectively. In comparison the economic activity rate for white men is 78%.
- White people experience the lowest rates of unemployment (6%)⁸, with minority ethnic group unemployment rates more than twice as high for men (13%), and over 2.5 times as high for women. (5% unemployment rate for white women compared to 13% for minority ethnic groups.)
- However Indian (8%) and Chinese (10%) people tend to experience relatively low unemployment rates

in contrast the highest rate of unemployment is found amongst the Bangladeshi (24%) and Black Other groups (19%).

- In general, men from minority ethnic groups are more likely to work in the service sector than white men. (76% and 59% respectively) Bangladeshi and Chinese men in work are still highly concentrated in the distribution sector (which includes restaurants).
- Public sector² services are a particularly important source of work for women from minority ethnic groups. (55% of Black-Caribbean women and 47% of Black-African women work in this sector)

Earnings

Earnings are difficult to compare between ethnic groups and between men and women, due to the numerous variables such as hours worked, locality, and status of employment.

White women earn more than women from minority ethnic groups in London, but outside London, women from Chinese and Other ethnic groups have highest earnings. Men also display a similar earnings pattern⁹.

The New Deal

A common characteristic of the New Deal and the labour market is the variations of experience by ethnic groups. The proportion leaving the New Deal Gateway for an unknown destination was higher for all minority ethnic groups in aggregate (24% for all leavers) and for each of the individual ethnic groups than for the White Group (15% of all leavers).¹⁰

- Those from the Black groups are least likely to enter unsubsidised employment: 17% of the Black-African groups left the Gateway for unsubsidised employment, compared with 23% from all minority ethnic groups and 26% for the White group. In contrast, 30% of the Indian group had an immediate destination in unsubsidised employment on leaving the Gateway.
- Bangladeshi groups appear to benefit most (with the exception of the Chinese ethnic group) from the New Deal programme. 27.8% of Bangladeshi's entered unsubsidised employment as their immediate destination in comparison to 25.6% of White's and 22.9% average for all minority ethnic groups.

Skill and Work-Related Training

Work Based Training for Adults (WBTA)

The number of participants in England and Wales declined from around 145,000 in 1992-3, and dropped further to 35,000 in December 1999.¹¹ Despite substantial changes in numbers, there was little change in the ethnic group profile of participants between 1995-96 and 1998-99. A slight rise in the proportion of Black/African Caribbean

⁷ Source: Labour Force Survey, mean of Spring 1999 to Winter 1999/2000

⁸ Source: Labour Force Survey, mean of Spring 1999 to Winter 1999/2000 'Unemployment rates by ethnic group and gender (all persons aged 16 and over) 1999.

⁹ Source: Labour Force Survey, mean for Spring 1998 to Winter 1998/99 not seasonally adjusted.

¹⁰ Source: DfEE Statistical First Release 'Position of individuals on 18-24 New Deal by ethnic group, at end of January 2000.

¹¹ Source: Statistical First Release, March 2000

rainees is evident from 6% in 1995-96 to 9% in 1998-99.¹²

Entry into a job, further education or training on leaving a programme is recorded as a 'positive outcome'. Minority ethnic groups have tended to fare less well than white people on this indicator. In 1998-99, 43 per cent of Black/Afro-Caribbean's had 'positive outcomes', compared to 45 per cent for all leavers¹³.

In 1998-99 only 28 per cent of Asian trainees gained a full qualification, compared with 40 per cent for all trainees. Black/Afro-Caribbean and "Other" ethnic origin trainees also had qualification attainment levels significantly lower than those of white trainees.

The patterns for outcomes and qualifications for all leavers varied between regions. London, which had the highest concentration of non-white trainees, had a significantly higher proportion of completers (77%) than the national average (73%).

Work Based Training for Young People (WBTP)

For WBTP as a whole, the number of starts per financial year rose steadily from 244,100 in 1990-91 to 309,700 in 1996-97, before falling to 243,500 in 1998-99.¹⁴

Those from minority ethnic groups were less likely than their white counterparts to enter employment; The proportion of white trainees entering a job on leaving the programme was 64 per cent in 1995-96, rising to 66 per cent in 1998-99. The comparable percentage for Black and Afro-Caribbean people was only 40 per cent in 1995-6, increasing to 42 per cent in 1998-99.

Young people from minority ethnic groups fall behind white participants in terms of achieving a 'positive outcome', whereby in 1998-99, 78 per cent of white participants achieved a 'positive outcome' compared to 67 per cent Black/African Caribbean, 68 per cent Asian and 70 per cent of 'other' ethnic minority leavers.

Lifelong Learning

Different sub-groups of the population display different propensities to participate in learning activities.

There has been steady progress among all ethnic groups towards meeting the adult National Learning Targets (data for younger age groups is not available). All minority ethnic groups (with the exception of Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups) are exceeding achievement among white people. Qualification levels among Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups remains very low. (37% at level 3 compared to 46% for the White group and 20% at level 4 compared to 26% for the white population.)¹⁵

The Black adults have a higher attainment at NVQ

level 3 (49%) than the cohort as a whole (46%). This pattern of higher attainment was repeated at NVQ level 4: 31% for the Black group contrasting with 27% for all economically active adults.

The Indian group also displayed higher attainment at NVQ level 3 (49%) than the cohort as a whole, and the highest attainment levels at NVQ level 4 (33%).

The Pakistani/Bangladeshi group displayed significantly lower attainment levels than the other groups: with 37% of economically active adults qualified at NVQ level 3 and 20% at NVQ level 4.

The proportion of minority ethnic people with no qualifications remained higher than that of whites (20%, compared to 17% in 1999).¹⁶ Amongst non-whites, those in the Pakistani/Indian/Bangladeshi group consistently displayed a higher average share of economically active adults with no qualifications (26% in 1999, compared to 20% for the non-white group as a whole).¹⁷

Levels of attainment vary markedly between minority ethnic groups. To some extent the patterns of variation in attainment by ethnic group differ according to the level of attainment considered. At a broad level NVQ levels for the non-white population were only significantly lower than the white population at Level 3.

Copies of the full report (RR225) – priced £4.95 – are available by writing to DfEE Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 0DJ.

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Further information about this research can be obtained from Shelly Pathak, Room 101, DfEE, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA.

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¹² Source: WBTA Starts Database, DfEE 1999

¹³ Source: WBLA Follow-up Survey, DfEE-WBLA Quarter Three Report

¹⁴ Source: DfEE Starts and Leavers Databases March 2000

¹⁵ Source: Labour Force Survey, mean of Autumn quarters, 1996 to 1999.

¹⁶ It seems likely that there may be important variations by gender in the proportion of persons with no qualifications but small sample sizes limit the scope for provision of robust estimates for smaller ethnic groups.

¹⁷ This amalgamation of three South Asian groups is likely to disguise differences between the constituent ethnic groups.