

Narrowing the gap:
tackling ethnic disparities
in youth employment



Foreword

Youth Futures Foundation was established in 2019 with a focus on narrowing the employment gap for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, following the findings from the 2017 Race Disparity Audit. The pandemic compounded these disparities as the fall in employment was significantly higher for young Black and Asian people.

As co-chair of the Youth Employment Group (YEG), we launched the Ethnic Disparities subgroup bringing together researchers, practitioners and policy experts from over 40 organisations to tackle systemic racism and discrimination faced by young people in the labour market.

In this booklet we've summarised the findings of a rapid evidence review, commissioned by the subgroup, examining the impact of government policies. We also share the alarming findings from data for over 2,296 young people from minority ethnic groups from our recent survey. It reveals that 70% have experienced some form of discrimination at work, two in five have experienced it when applying for a job and two in five say their mental health has suffered as the cost-of-living crisis takes hold. You can find out more on our website.

As a What Works Centre, we find, design, fund and evaluate the most promising frontline delivery and systemic change initiatives, so that we can scale up what we learn at a national level. Already, we have targeted £8.4m to 58 organisations that support ethnic minority young people. We are pleased to announce our intention to target £5m from our Connected Futures programme to develop partnerships in three places with high levels of unemployed young people with Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage.

We will continue to work through the subgroup to drive policy change and identify what works to narrow the gap. To that end, we call on government to deliver an Opportunity Guarantee for all young people offering an education place, apprenticeship or job when they leave school, college or university and we stand ready to support this.

We believe that our combined efforts offer hope that things can be different, and that the potential of all our young people can be realised.



Lord Simon Woolley, Youth Futures Foundation Non-Executive Director, Founder and Director of Operation Black Vote, the Chair of the Advisory Group to the Race Disparity Audit and a former Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

What does the evidence tell us?

Our rapid evidence review looked at how government policies over the past fifteen years have impacted on young people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely than their white peers to be in low-paid or insecure employment, to be on a zero-hours contract, or to have more than one job. The barriers they face include the culture and practices of some workplaces, lack of access to opportunities for development and progression, and socio-economic factors, as well as discrimination and stereotyping. Personalised, flexible provision, holistic employment support, and access to learning or paid work experience can all help overcome these challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated some existing ethnic inequalities in employment.

Policies in areas such as housing and welfare are also associated with ethnic inequalities. For example:

- People from ethnic minority backgrounds have higher levels of poverty, so are more likely to be negatively affected by cuts to benefits.
- These cuts may also reinforce some patterns of low-paid and insecure employment for women from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Young people from some ethnic minority groups are more likely to receive benefit sanctions than white people who receive benefits.
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to lack sustainable housing, which in turn makes it harder to access good quality work or training.



What does the data show?

Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds have long experienced higher unemployment and lower wages than their white peers.

For the 16-24 age group, young white people are the most likely to be employed and the least likely to be in education or training. Rates of employment and education vary substantially for different ethnic minority groups. There are also big differences within ethnic groups, including gender (see Figures 1 and 2).

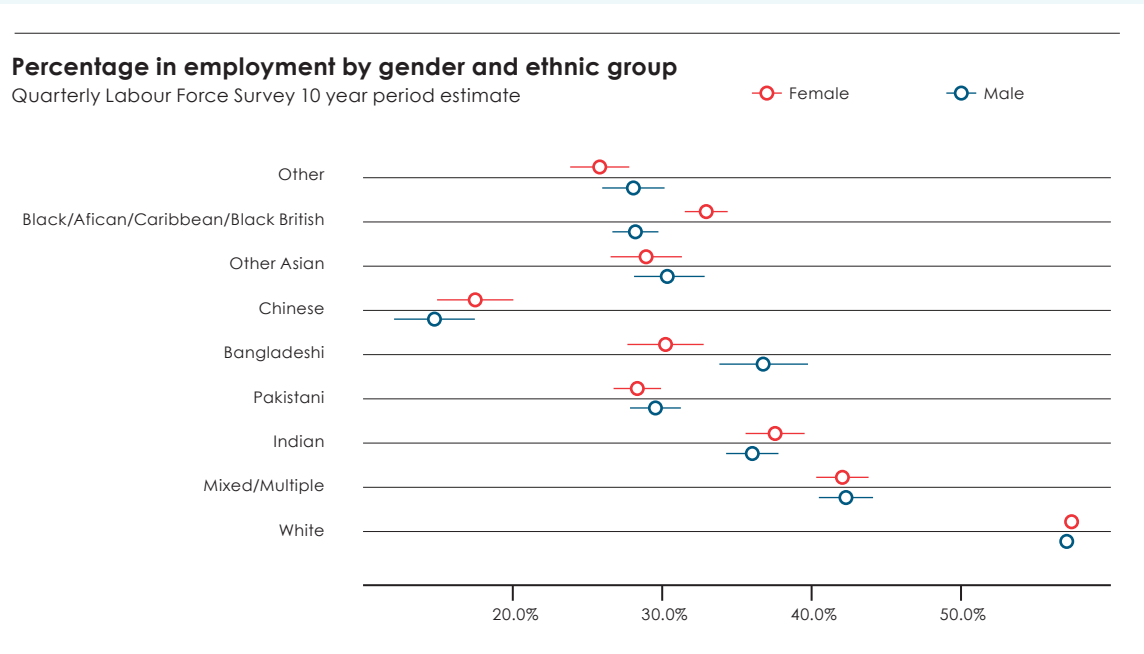


Figure 1: Employment rate by ethnic group and gender, for people aged 16-24 over 10 years to 2020

Percentage in education by gender and ethnic group

Quarterly Labour Force Survey 10 year period estimate

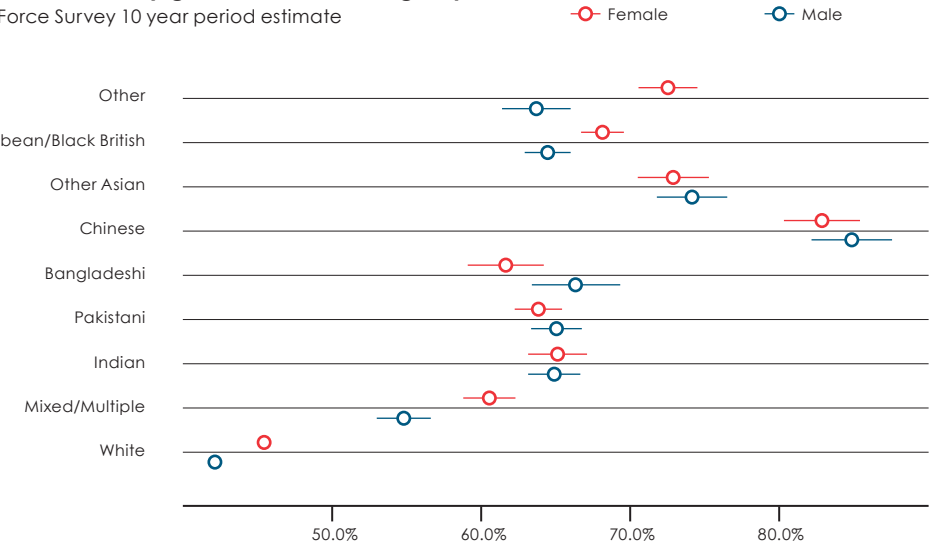


Figure 2: Education participation rate by ethnic group and gender, for people aged 16-24 over 10 years to 2020

Our analysis also found differences between ethnic groups in pay, hours worked, and occupations in different sectors.

There are data gaps that make it difficult to track trends and issues. Many surveys do not include information on enough people from some ethnic sub-groups. Also, experiences of discrimination at work or when trying to get a job, are not explored in detail. We commissioned our rapid survey of young people to address these questions.

What do young people experience?

We recognised the need for understanding the impact of discrimination at work for young people from an ethnic minority background.

According to our independent survey of 2,296 ethnic minority young people, seven in 10 (71%) have experienced some form of workplace discrimination. Almost half (46%) of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds have experienced discrimination when dealing with customers or clients at work, while two in five have experienced it when applying for a job (37%) and/or at a job interview (36%).

Other highlights include concerns about how a young person's ethnicity affects them in their workplace. Young people told us that:

- With the cost of living crisis taking hold, two in five (40%) say their mental health has suffered
- A quarter (24%) have struggled to pay for essential goods and service
- More than 8 out of 10 (84%) are worried about barriers or challenges to do with their ethnicity or background when it comes to work/employment
- More than half (55%) of young Black people feel that employers underestimate their abilities because of their ethnic background
- Two in five (38%) say employers/investors do not take them seriously or treat them differently
- Two in five (42%) feel they will be, or have been, paid less than people from other ethnic backgrounds
- Two in five (42%) say people don't think they act or speak the 'right' way



"I don't think I could ever thank my coach enough. I had so many anxieties about what I wanted from my life. My coach helped me focus on what made me great on days that it was difficult to remember. I'm so proud of what I've achieved since getting involved with Young Women's Trust and I now have a job I love in the civil service."

Mariam, beneficiary of Young Women's Trust's Inspiring Futures programme funded by Youth Futures

"Switch Up and Youth Futures helped me turn my life around. Now I want to help others do the same."

Enoch, beneficiary of Switch Up's employability programme funded by Youth Futures



What works?

As an established What Works Centre, we are interested in finding out what works to support young people into good jobs, and why. Our What Works Programme seeks to develop clear and robust evidence by evaluating promising or established services that support young people aged 14-24 to overcome multiple barriers into quality employment.

Our approach builds on the Treasury's Magenta Book, guided by realist insights and programme theory so that at every opportunity, we can start to understand the causal drivers of change.

We have four grant types in our programme:

- 1** Capacity-building, for early-stage programmes requiring bespoke support
- 2** Development, for promising programmes requiring refinement to become ready for impact evaluation
- 3** Impact pilot, for observational pilot and feasibility studies
- 4** Impact efficacy, for programmes ready to undertake a high-quality impact evaluation

Who do we fund?

We understand the importance of lived experience in the leadership teams of the organisations we fund. Of the organisations we fund in our What Works Programme, 35% have more than 30% ethnic minority representation on their leadership team. On our Infrastructure grant programme, 38% of organisations are led by an ethnic minority CEO or MD.

“So many different ethnic minority communities live in Newham. Like me, a lot of the young people we work with are the children of first-generation immigrants. We open up networks, joining the dots between primary school, secondary school, work readiness and local businesses.”

Sug Sahadevan, Chair, 15billionebp



Who do we partner with?

£8.4m to organisations that support ethnic minority young people

National

The Traveller Movement
Action for Race Equality
(formerly known as BTEG)
UpRising

London

Making The Leap
15billionebp
PLIAS Resettlement
St Giles Trust
Hackney CVS
Lewisham Council
and partners
Young Brent Foundation
and partners
The Ubele Initiative

East Midlands

PATRA
Switch Up

West Midlands

Money4YOU

South West

Babassa
Jacari

South East

Damilola Taylor Trust
Friends, Families and
Travellers
Society for the
Advancement of Black
Arts

Yorkshire

BEAP
Bradford College
Ellesmere Youth Project
Football Unites, Racism
Divides
Globalmama
Health for All
Toranj Tuition

North West

FACE - Family and
Community Enterprise
The Calico Group and
partners



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“As Co-Chair of the YEG’s Ethnic Disparities sub-group, I want to uncover what influences the employment prospects of young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Currently, we are identifying how evidence is informing policy and practice in this area, as well as pinpointing gaps in knowledge.”

Kahiye Alim, Director, Council of Somali Organisations

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Our Inspiring Futures pandemic response programme, delivered in partnership with BBC Children in Need, funded 44 organisations that support young Black, Asian and ethnic minority people.

We partner with 46 organisations through the Youth Employment Group Ethnic Disparities sub-group. The group’s aim is to fill evidence gaps and find solutions to race inequalities.



Scan the QR code to view reports:



How to get involved:

To join the YEG's Ethnic Disparities sub-group, email:
partnerships@youthfuturesfoundation.org

Sign up for our newsletter:

www.youthfuturesfoundation.org

Let's connect:

 @YF_Foundation

 [company/youthfuturesfoundation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/youthfuturesfoundation)