

# THE PAY AND PROGRESSION OF WOMEN OF COLOUR

A Literature Review by Monica Dey,  
Caroline White & Sanmeet Kaur



## About Us

### **The Fawcett Society**

The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading membership charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights at work, at home and in public life. Our vision is a society in which women and girls in all their diversity are equal and truly free to fulfil their potential creating a stronger, happier, better future for us all. We publish authoritative research to educate, inform and lead the debate; we bring together politicians, academics, grassroots activists and wider civil society to develop innovative, practical solutions and we campaign with women and men to make change happen.

### **The Runnymede Trust**

The Runnymede Trust is the UK's leading independent race equality think tank. We generate intelligence for multi-ethnic Britain through research, network building, leading debate, and policy engagement. Since 1968, the Runnymede Trust has strived to build a Britain in which all citizens and communities feel valued, enjoy equal opportunities, lead fulfilling lives, and share a common sense of belonging. The Runnymede Trust believes in working alongside civil society, policymakers and MPs to address the very real blight of racism and discrimination in Britain today.

## Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful for the support from colleagues at the Fawcett Society and the Runnymede Trust: Molly Mayer and Alba Kapoor, whose insight and ideas were invaluable for the fruition of this report.

We thank Julie Rose for her initial voluntary scoping work and Fawcett colleagues Sana Mohmed, Alison Henderson and Catherine Marren for their hours of proofing and editing. We are also indebted to our advisory group for helping to shape this report.

We thank Vedanshi Harlalka Hewavidana, who brought this report alive through her visualisations and designing.

Lastly, we thank the Smallwood Trust, of which without their generous support and funding, this report and project would not be possible.

**SMALLWOODTRUST**

Enabling women to be financially resilient

# Contents

<b>A Note on Language</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Literature Review</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Women of Colour in the Job Market</b>	<b>20</b>
• Employment Rates	20
• Pay Gap	22
• Intersecting Factors that Affect the Employment and Pay Gap	25
• COVID-19, Ethnicity and Employment	27
<b>Context – Empire, Migration and Legislation</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Moving into Work – School</b>	<b>31</b>
• Secondary School	31
• Further Education	34
• Careers Advice	35
<b>Moving into Work – University</b>	<b>36</b>
• Access to Higher Tariff Universities	37
• Attainment Disparity	38
• Drop-Out Rates	38
<b>Entry to the Workplace</b>	<b>40</b>
• Discrimination	40
• Bias and Stereotypes	42
• Overqualification and Prolonged Period of Unemployment Following Graduation	42
• Migrants and Entry into the Workplace	44
<b>Progressing at Work</b>	<b>47</b>
• Lack of Promotion, Training and Opportunity	47
• Stereotypes	49
• Sector Specific Research	49
<b>Leading at Work</b>	<b>55</b>
• Why are Women of Colour not Progressing to Senior Roles?	57
• Perception of Leadership Style and Labelling	57
• Lack of Opportunity, Advice and Confidence	58
• Lack of Recognition	58

<b>Going it Alone – Self-Employment</b>	<b>60</b>
• Why do Women of Colour Choose Self-Employment?	60
• Discrimination	61
• Support and Financial Services	61
<b>Low-Paid, Informal and Precarious Work</b>	<b>62</b>
• Overrepresentation in Low-Paid Sectors	62
• Insecure Employment	62
• Austerity	63
<b>Solutions – what does the literature suggest?</b>	<b>64</b>
• Moving into Work – School	65
• Moving into Work – University	68
• Entry to the Workplace	71
• Progressing at Work	74
• Leading at Work	77
• Going it Alone – Self-Employment	79
• Low Paid, Informal and Precarious Work	81
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>84</b>

## A Note on Language

In the UK, there are a number of terms used to describe a person's race and ethnicity. The most common terms used to describe all those who are non-White British are 'BME' and 'BAME'. Both terms are widely used in the UK by government, public bodies and the media, when referring to ethnic minority groups.

BME stands for Black and Minority Ethnic and BAME stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. When used in statistics like the census, these umbrella terms are broken down into smaller groupings, such as into the following: Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, Indian other, Chinese, Asian other, Black African, Black Caribbean, other Black background, White and Asian mixed, White and African Caribbean mixed, other mixed background and other ethnic background.

These terms can be useful in ensuring consistency in data; however, they have limitations, including:

- They imply that BME/BAME individuals are a homogenous group
- They mean that all ethnic groups are often lumped together in research, with the result being that we are unable to understand how issues affect individual ethnic groups in different ways
- They ignore the fact that Black, Asian and other visible ethnic minority groups in the UK are actually a global majority

In recent years, the term 'people of colour' has been popularised in the UK. The category was formed in the late 1970s as a purposeful claim to a common group identity. It was posed as a positive alternative to 'non-white' which, it was argued, perpetuates a deficit account of other races. The term was also seen as a useful way to develop understandings of race beyond the Black-white binary.<sup>1</sup> The term 'women of colour' (derived from 'people of colour') reflects a trend in the US that surfaced in the late seventies to unify all women experiencing multiple layers of marginalisation with race and ethnicity as a common issue.<sup>2</sup> When explaining the history of the phrase 'people of colour', feminist activist Loretta Ross outlines how it was coined by activists, "We self-named ourselves. This is a term that has a lot of power for us".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stevenson, J., O'Mahony, J., Khan, O., Ghaffar, F., & Stiell, B. (2019). *Understanding and overcoming the challenges of targeting students from underrepresented and disadvantaged ethnic backgrounds*. Report to the Office for Students.

<sup>2</sup> Wocninc.org. (2021). *About – Women of Color Network, Inc.*. From <https://wocninc.org/about/>

<sup>3</sup> Wade, L. (2011). *Loretta Ross on the Phrase "Women of Color" - Sociological Images*. TheSocietyPages.org. From <https://thesocietypages.org/sociimages/2011/03/26/loretta-ross-on-the-phrase-women-of-color/>

However, the terms ‘people of colour’ and ‘women of colour’ also have their limitations. Given they are ‘catch-all’ terms, they risk homogenising the experiences of a diverse group of people and can risk erasing the experiences of specific groups. For example, the term ‘women of colour’ has been used to describe experiences specific to particular groups, such as in the example of anti-Blackness which is unique to Black people.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it is important to be mindful of these nuances in the language we use and, where possible we describe which specific ethnic group(s) research studies sampled.

There is no agreed consensus on the appropriate terminology to use, and we respect that people have different preferences when it comes to racial terminology. For the purpose of this project and, where the data and research allows, we have chosen to use the term ‘women of colour’ to identify the women who will be the focus of this project, because it is used more frequently by the group to which it refers. Only where studies cited use “BME/BAME” will we use this term to remain accurate in reporting on their research and methodology. This means that the terms used in the literature review will differ throughout – we use women of colour as our default and where “BME/BAME” is used, it is because the original source reference have used these acronyms.

Much of the data we use comes from research which, in order to draw conclusions from surveys about the wider population, requires us to group people together. In some cases, this results in categorisations

which feel like they make some sense – for example, among Black Caribbean women there will of course be huge individual differences between women, but also, for some women, a shared narrative and shared experiences. But in other cases, like the ‘Asian other’ categorisation which includes women from places as distant and incomparable as the Philippines and Mongolia, Japan and Nepal, it is less helpful. With hugely different stories about their experience of migration to and life in the UK, data on this category is harder to interpret.

While we do utilise some research that groups people together, where we can, we refer to studies that explore the experiences of specific groups of people of colour in the UK. Their experiences are both important and varied - which overarching categorisations can fail to capture.

Lastly, throughout this report we capitalise ‘Black’ and not ‘white’. This is in keeping with other reports put out by leading UK race equality organisations and academics in this field. It stands in line with decisions made recently by the Associated Press in America, which changed its influential style guide to capitalise the “b” in the term Black in June 2020 and keep the “w” in white lower case. The Associated Press highlighted that capitalising the “b” in Black was “an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black”.<sup>5</sup> This capitalisation serves as empowerment for those who have previously been excluded from categorising themselves. We only capitalise ‘white’ when referring to a ‘White British’ research category.

<sup>4</sup> White, B. (2019). *Stop Saying “Women of Color” If You’re Actually Discussing Black Women*. HelloGiggles. From <https://hellogiggles.com/lifestyle/problem-with-saying-women-of-color-specifically-discussing-black-women/>

<sup>5</sup> Associated Press., (2020). *Explaining AP style on Black and white*. From <https://apnews.com/article/archive-race-and-ethnicity-9105661462>

# **Executive Summary**

## Executive Summary

Women of colour are almost invisible from positions of power across both public and private sectors. They are overrepresented in entry-level and junior positions and virtually disappear the higher up we go into management and senior leadership. This does not happen in a vacuum – it is the result of structural racism and barriers faced at each stage in a woman of colour's career pipeline. The barriers experienced generate a cumulative impact and result in the erasure of women of colour at the highest levels.

The literature highlights that the unfair biases and discriminatory treatment that women of colour are faced with start at school and university. These early experiences are crucial as they have the power to shape not just quantitative outcomes like grades but are pivotal in moulding the confidence, self-esteem, and the beliefs about oneself that underlie wellbeing, progression and attainment. These factors go on to affect entry to employment which, for women of colour, is already disproportionately harder compared to their white peers. This review highlights a number of biased and racist recruitment practices that make the labour market impenetrable for people of colour. And, even once having entered, progression and promotion opportunities within the workplace are systematically lower for women of colour so that by senior leadership stage, they become seriously underrepresented.

This review, for the first time, brings together a broad view of the existing research highlighting the barriers that exist for women of colour regarding employment, and maps out their various iterations at different stages of the career pipeline. We also collate the different recommendations, solutions and initiatives proposed in the literature, to form a pool of ideas that could tackle these barriers stage by stage.

This literature review is part of the Fawcett Society's wider Pay and Progression of Women of Colour project in partnership with the Runnymede Trust. This project seeks to finally centre the voices of women of colour in pay and progression discourse. Following the literature review, the project will consist of primary qualitative and quantitative research, engagement events and advocacy based on the views and opinions of women of colour.

## Women of Colour in the Job Market

*Compared with white women and white men, women of colour earn less and are less likely to be in paid work. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, with ethnic minority women and men absorbing the economic shock through job losses and earnings.*

- **Women of colour are less likely to be employed than White British women**, with Pakistani and Bangladeshi women having the lowest employment rate (39%).<sup>6</sup>
- **Compared with White British men, women of colour consistently earn less per hour** with pay gaps ranging from 10% for Indian women to 28% for Pakistani women.
- Intersecting factors affect pay gaps and employment rates such as location,<sup>7</sup> unpaid caring responsibilities,<sup>8</sup> occupation<sup>9</sup> and contract-type.<sup>10</sup>
- **Even when like-for-like backgrounds and job profiles are accounted for, significant pay penalties still exist for women of colour.**<sup>11</sup> Controlling for age, location and occupation, Black graduate women would still have a 7-11% pay gap, and Bangladeshi and Pakistani graduate women an 8% pay gap with white women.
- In July 2020 during COVID-19, BAME workers had suffered an average

**drop in earnings of 14%** from February compared to a 5% drop for white workers.<sup>12</sup>

- **During COVID-19, BAME mothers had been furloughed at a higher rate** (48%) compared to white mothers (34%) and nearly half of BAME mothers had lost working hours or their jobs compared to a third of white mothers.<sup>13</sup>
- We provide a brief contextual and historical exploration, showing that this story has not changed since waves of migration following World War 2, where workers of colour were concentrated in lower-paid work with poor conditions.<sup>14</sup>

## Moving into Work

*Inequalities at school and university start the unequal pipeline towards progression for women of colour. Early educational experiences can affect both short term outcomes, such as which universities students of colour will have access to, and subsequent longer-term employment outcomes, as employers may filter for students with specific educational backgrounds.*

### School

- Whilst regular reporting practices show considerable improvements in educational outcomes for BME pupils,<sup>15</sup> a closer look at the figures show there are still discrepancies. For example, **Black Caribbean girls are still lagging behind their white counterparts at GCSE stage.**<sup>16</sup>

<sup>6</sup> GOV UK WEBSITE (2021) *Work, pay and benefits – Employment – By ethnicity and gender*. From, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest#by-ethnicity-and-gender>

<sup>7</sup> Jivraj, S., & Khan, O. (2013). *Ethnicity and deprivation in England: How likely are ethnic minorities to live in deprived neighbourhoods*. Manchester: CoDE, University of Manchester.

<sup>8</sup> Breach, A., & Li, Y. (2017).

<sup>9</sup> Henehan, K., & Rose, H. (2018). *Opportunities Knocked? Exploring Pay Penalties among the UK's Ethnic Minorities*. Resolution Foundation.

<sup>10</sup> Judge, L., & Tomlinson, D. (2016). *Secret agents. Agency workers in the new world of work*. The Resolution Foundation.

<sup>11</sup> Henehan and Rose (2018).

<sup>12</sup> Bracke, P., Croxson, K., Leary, J., & Wood, J. (2021). *Covid-19 and the UK's BAME communities – an economic perspective*. FCA Insight.

<sup>13</sup> Women's Budget Group, Fawcett Society, Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group, Women's Equality Network Wales, Close the Gap, & Engender. (2021). *Pushed to More Precarity: The uneven impact of lockdowns on mothers and low-income parents*. Wbg.org.uk.

<sup>14</sup> Khan, O. (2020). *The Colour of Money*. The Runnymede Trust.

<sup>15</sup> Strand, S. (2015), *Ethnicity, deprivation and educational achievement at age 16 in England: trends over time*, Department for Education

<sup>16</sup> Strand, S. (2015) See p.27: Figure 4: Percentage 5+ GCSE A\*-C or equivalent by ethnic group and gender: 2003-2013.

- Black Caribbean students experience **lower academic expectations** by their teachers<sup>17</sup> and ethnic minority Muslim students are **placed in lower sets**<sup>18</sup> than warranted by their ability.
- Research suggests there is a **racist bias in school disciplinary regimes**. For example, Black Caribbean students are subject to an over-reaction by teachers to low level-disruption.<sup>19</sup>
- Blake and Epstein find that **teachers see Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like, known as 'adultification bias'**.<sup>20</sup>
- **Black girls are twice as likely to be permanently excluded from school** compared with their white female peers.<sup>21</sup>

### Further education

- The **number of students achieving three A grades or better is still lower in ethnic minority groups** compared to white groups.<sup>22</sup>
- **Inadequate careers advice** impacts the transitions from school to HE and the labour market, disproportionately affecting girls and ethnic minority students.<sup>23</sup> This is partially because **ethnic minority students rely on official routes of careers guidance more than their white peers**.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Gillborn, D., Rollock, N., Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2012). 'You got a pass, so what more do you want?': Race, class and gender intersections in the educational experiences of the Black middle class. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 15(1), 121-139.

<sup>18</sup> Stevenson, J., Demack, S., Steill, B., Abdi, M., Ghaffar, F. and Hassan, S. (2017). The social mobility challenges faced by young Muslims. Project Report. London, Social Mobility Commission.

<sup>19</sup> Gilborn et al. (2012).

<sup>20</sup> Blake, J.J. and Epstein, R. (2019). *Listening to Black Women and Girls: Lived Experiences of Adultification Bias*. Georgetown Law Centre on Poverty and Inequality.

<sup>21</sup> Department for Education and Skills. (2006). *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals in England 2004/05*, SFR 24/2006 London: DFES.

<sup>22</sup> GOV UK Website. (2021). *Ethnicity Facts and Figures – Students getting 3 A grades or better at A-Level*, from <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/a-levels-apprenticeships-further-education/students-aged-16-to-18-achieving-3-a-grades-or-better-at-a-level/latest>

<sup>23</sup> Moote, J. and Archer, L. (2016). *Failing to deliver? Exploring the current status of career education provision in England*. *Research Papers in education* 33 (2) pp 187-215.

### University

- The number of UK students of colour starting first degrees increased by 34% from 2010-2016<sup>25</sup> and, in 2019, 60% of women of colour in the workforce had a degree or HE qualification, compared to 50% of white women.<sup>26</sup> **However, significant inequalities persist.**
  - Students of colour **are less likely to attend higher tariff universities**.<sup>27</sup> All **ethnic minorities applying to Russell Group universities in 2016 faced significantly lower odds of receiving an offer** compared to white applicants,<sup>28</sup> even after accounting for prior attainment.
  - Once at university, **BAME students are 13% less likely to get a first or upper-second degree** than white students.<sup>29</sup>
  - **Black students are almost one and a half times more likely to drop out** compared to white and Asian students,<sup>30</sup> which may relate to 'cultural detachment' – feelings of not belonging in what is constructed as a predominantly white space.<sup>31</sup>
- <sup>24</sup> Beck, V., Fuller, A., & Unwin, L. (2006) *Safety in Stereotypes? The impact of race and gender on young people's perceptions of their post-compulsory education and labour market opportunities*. *British Education Research Journal* 32 (5) pp667-686.
- <sup>25</sup> Universities UK and NUS. (2019). *Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK Universities: Closing the Gap*. Universities UK and National Union of Students.
- <sup>26</sup> Amadjarif, Z., Angeli, M., Haldance, A., & Zemaityte, G. (2020). *Understanding Pay Gaps*, Bank of England Staff Working paper No. 877.
- <sup>27</sup> Higher tariff universities are those which have higher entry requirements. OFS. (2019). *Topic briefing: Black and minority ethnic (BME) students*. Office for Students.
- <sup>28</sup> Boliver, V. (2016). *Exploring Ethnic Inequalities in Admission to Russell Group Universities*. *Sociology* 2016, Vol. 50(2) 247–266.
- <sup>29</sup> Universities UK and NUS (2019).
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Shaw, B., Menzies, L., Bernardes, E., Baars, S., Nye, P., & Allen, R. (2016). *Ethnicity, gender and social mobility*. London: Social Mobility Commission.

## Entry to the Workplace

*The point of entry into the workplace sets the tone for future progression and opportunities. Women of colour are likely to enter the workforce into low-paying roles, jobs they are overqualified for and experience a delay post-graduation in entering employment.*

- **Ethnic minority people had to send 60% more job applications to receive as many call backs** as White British people.<sup>32</sup>
- Women of colour may be disadvantaged by **'affinity bias'**<sup>33</sup> whereby they are perceived as dissimilar from white interviewers.
- Ethnic **minority graduates are much less likely to obtain employment six months after graduation** compared to white graduates<sup>34</sup> which may be partially due to **a lack of networks and support.**<sup>35</sup>
- For graduates, **early unemployment is associated with 20-25% lower earnings per year** when employed.<sup>36</sup>
- **Overqualification is prevalent among ethnic minority groups**, both those born in the UK and in particular, migrants of colour working in lower paid jobs below their skill-level.<sup>37</sup>
- Research suggests ethnicity is a better predictor of discrimination in the

workforce than immigration status, as **ethnic minority applicants tend to be discriminated against regardless of whether they are foreign born or UK-born.**<sup>38</sup>

## Progressing at Work

*Even once having entered employment, women of colour face barriers within the workplace which impact on their career development, progression, and chances of promotion.*

- Trades Union Congress (TUC) research finds that almost **one-third (31%) of BME women reported being unfairly passed over for or denied a promotion** at work.<sup>39</sup>
- Just under one-third of **BME women reported that they had been unfairly denied access to training and development opportunities** which would enable promotion, rising to more than half of disabled BME women (52%).<sup>40</sup>
- Ethnic minority Muslim women experience **a lack of confidence, careers advice and opportunity** as major challenges to career progression.<sup>41</sup>
- US Black women suffer from **harmful stereotypes from supervisors about them being incompetent and intellectually inferior** which impedes their progression.

<sup>32</sup> Di Stasio, V., & Heath, A. (2019). *Are employers in Britain discriminating against ethnic minorities*. Centre for Social Investigation, 1-10.

<sup>33</sup> Turnbull, H. (2017). *The Affinity Bias Conundrum: The Illusion of Inclusion Part III* from <http://www.diversityjournal.com/13763-affinity-bias-conundrum-illusion-inclusion-part-iii/> and Snowy peak syndrome: why UK organisations remain white at the top", The Guardian.

<sup>34</sup> Zwysen, W. and Longhi, S. (2017). *Employment and earning differences in the early career of ethnic minority British graduates: the importance of university career, parental background and area characteristics*. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Vol 44, Issue 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Zwysen, W., & Longhi, S. (2016). *Labour market disadvantage of ethnic minority British graduates: university choice, parental background or neighbourhood?* (No. 2016-02). ISER Working Paper Series.

<sup>37</sup> Wood, C., and Wybron, I. (2015). *Entry to, and progression in, work*. York: Joseph Roundtree Foundation.

<sup>38</sup> Fernández-Reino, M. (2020). *Migrants and discrimination in the UK*. The Migrant Observatory at the University of Oxford.

<sup>39</sup> TUC. (2020). *BME women and work: TUC equality briefing*. From <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bme-women-and-work>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Bi, S. (2020). *Empowered Employment: Unlocking the Workplace for Muslim women*. Muslim Women Connect.

- Sector specific research shows that the systematic barriers to progression discussed above can be seen in teaching,<sup>42</sup> police services,<sup>43</sup> the legal sector,<sup>44</sup> HE<sup>45</sup> and the medical sector.<sup>46</sup>
- Across all sectors, **there is a higher percentage of people of colour in low-grade positions, reducing in proportion the higher up the career pipeline we go.**

### Sector Specific Statistics

- Compared to White British headteachers, which make up 92.7 of headteachers, just 0.1% of headteachers are Bangladeshi, 0.4% Pakistani and 0.2% Black African.
- One in nine white academic staff (11%) are professors, whereas just one in 33 Black academic staff (3%) and one in 15 (7%) Asian academic staff are professors.
- Whilst 16% of junior barristers are BAME, this falls to 9% at Queen's Counsel level. Likewise, whilst 10% of BAME chartered legal executives were fellows, only 4% were partners.
- The percentage of female BAME officers being promoted remained at 1.7% from 2014-2017 compared to the promotions of white female officers almost doubling during the same period.
- While 3.4% of junior doctors are Chinese and 7.1% are Black, this reduces to 1.9% and 3.6% respectively at senior doctor level.

### Leading at Work

*The negative impacts of the inequality experienced at each stage, including the erosion of confidence, self-esteem and motivation, mean that by the time women of colour reach senior positions, many experience what they describe as 'the ten years later syndrome'.<sup>47</sup> This is where they take much longer than their white counterparts to progress the same distance due to the cumulative impacts of structural discrimination faced throughout the whole pipeline to progression. Even if women of colour can overcome all of the above, they face further barriers in getting into senior roles.*

- Analysis by Operation Black Vote found only 6% of MPs in the House of Commons were women of colour in 2019.
- Women make up 6% of CEOs of FTSE 100 companies,<sup>48</sup> 21% of the civil service board and 35% of civil service permanent secretaries,<sup>49</sup> **but none of these are women of colour.**
- This is not due to a lack of ambition – six in ten (64%) BAME people are ambitious in the workplace compared to four in ten (41%) white people.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Haque, Z. and Elliott, S. (2019). *Barriers Report: Visible and Invisible Barriers: the impact of racism on BME teachers*. The Runnymede Trust/NEU.

<sup>43</sup> Hasan, M. (2019) *Bullying and Harassment of Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) women within the Police Services in England: Race, Gender and Police Culture*. Doctoral thesis, University of Northumbria.

<sup>44</sup> Collins, T. A., Dumas, T. L., & Moyer, L. P. (2017). *Intersecting disadvantages: Race, gender, and age discrimination among attorneys*. *Social Science Quarterly*, 98(5), 1642-1658.

<sup>45</sup> Leathwood, C., Maylor, U., & Moreau, M-P. (2009). *The experience of black and minority ethnic staff working in higher education: Literature review*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

<sup>46</sup> Bhatt, W. (2013). *The little brown woman: gender discrimination in American Medicine*. *Gender and Society* 27 (5) pp 659-680.

<sup>47</sup> Lim, R., and Campayne, P. (2007). *Different Women, Different Places*. The Diversity Practice Ltd.

<sup>48</sup> Kaur, S. (2020). *Sex & Power 2020*, The Fawcett Society.

<sup>49</sup> TUC (2020).

<sup>50</sup> The Prince's Responsible Business Network. (2015). *Race at Work*: 2015. BICT.

- BME women in high-profile roles suggest **the image, leadership and communication styles of white women are more positively perceived** compared to their own and nearly 45% cite race as the biggest hurdle towards progression and leadership.<sup>51</sup>
- Women of colour report having to change to fit into the organisational culture of the workplace to gain seniority.<sup>52</sup>

## Going it Alone – Self-Employment

Self-employment can be an empowering route, but research suggests that some women of colour enter self-employment to escape the barriers and discrimination that exists in traditional employment. Here too they face obstacles in building a career as an entrepreneur.

- A TUC analysis reveals **that self-employed BME women (60%) are more likely to be low paid** compared to white women (48%) and white men (42%).<sup>53</sup>
- BAME female entrepreneurship is **clustered in areas of multiple deprivation**, suggesting ‘employment substitution’ is taking place with low-paid work being sub-contracted to BAME self-employed women.<sup>54</sup>
- Self-employed women of colour **face discrimination and do not have the right support or access to finances** for their business.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Lim, R., and Campayne, P. (2007).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> These figures come from analysis of data for 2018/19 (the most recent available) in the Family Resources Survey and were commissioned by the TUC from Landman Economics. Cited in TUC 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Prowess Women in Business (2019). "Facts About Women in Business", from <https://www.prowess.org.uk/facts/>

<sup>55</sup> Davidson, J, M., Fielden, S, L., & Omar, A. (2010). *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic female business owners: Discrimination and social support*. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research 16(1).

## Women of Colour in Low-Paid, Informal and Precarious Work

*Women of colour are overrepresented in low-paid and insecure sectors. The barriers to progression discussed in this report may impact them, but in some cases, there is simply a lack of options to earn more, which is an issue for wider economic reform. As this falls out the scope of this report, we briefly discuss the issues below, but this is by no means comprehensive.*

- Women of colour are overrepresented in low paying occupations such as sales, catering, elementary personal services, textiles and hairdressing.<sup>56</sup>
- BME women are **twice as likely (12.1%) to be insecurely employed** compared to white women (6.4%) and take home a third less in pay than those on permanent contracts.<sup>57</sup>
- In these jobs, they **lose out on basic rights** such as sick pay, right to paid leave and even their own safety, with many being denied PPE in the COVID pandemic.<sup>58</sup>
- Choice of employment is linked to austerity with **women of colour disproportionately affected by cuts to benefits and tax credits**.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, Ian. (2015).

<sup>57</sup> TUC. (2020).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Runnymede Trust (2017) *Intersecting inequalities: The impact of austerity on Black and Minority Ethnic women in the UK*. The Runnymede Trust.

## Solutions – what does the literature suggest?

*Women of colour face different barriers at each stage of the pipeline, which need to be tackled by policymakers, employers and educators. The nuanced and cumulative nature of the barriers women of colour face regarding pay and progression requires tailored solutions to specific problems. The literature suggests that solutions should address not just how to support women of colour into stable and well-paid employment, but also highlights the systematic anti-racist work required to change the education and employment infrastructure for them to progress. Below we set out some of the ideas for change explored in the existing literature: which is covered in detail in the full body of the report. Over the course of the project, we will test these ideas with women of colour to influence our advocacy.*

### Moving into work

#### School

- Literature highlights the **need for teacher training<sup>60</sup> to be improved** to include topics and tools on interrogating racial biases, expectations of students and cultural competency.<sup>61</sup>
- Schools need to examine their processes for bias to **prevent students of colour being disadvantaged by unfair setting, streaming and GCSE tiering practices.**<sup>62</sup>
- Researchers have argued that the Department for Education should **introduce a quality standard for the provision of school careers advice,** given the greater reliance on these services by students of colour.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Brentnall, J. (2017). *Promoting Engagement and Academic Achievement of Black and Mixed-Ethnicity Pupils in Wales*, OGL.

<sup>61</sup> Alexander, C., Weekes-Bernard, D., & Arday, J. (2015). *The Runnymede School Report: Race, Education and Inequality in Contemporary Britain*, Runnymede Trust.

<sup>62</sup> Brentnall, J. (2017).

<sup>63</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, I. (2015).

<sup>64</sup> OFS. (2019).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

#### University

- Universities have been working to raise awareness and aspirations in BME students and **providing information, advice and guidance which specifically targets BME students.**<sup>64</sup>
- Some universities have been **raising awareness of the attainment gap** among tutors and providing resources to help tutors address the issue.<sup>65</sup>
- Some **universities have been providing opportunities to disadvantaged graduates to secure paid internships** to support in progression from HE to employment.<sup>66</sup>
- Authors state educational disparities need to be acknowledged **as racial inequality and not simply viewed through a wider lens of inclusivity** and diversity, and that university leaders must take responsibility for change.

### Entry to the Workplace

- The McGregor-Smith Report recommends that **employers should ensure staff at all levels undertake bias training,**<sup>67</sup> to prevent good quality job applications and interviews by ethnic minority candidates being overlooked.
- Employers should **reject non-diverse shortlists,**<sup>68</sup> draft job specifications in a more inclusive way, have **diverse interview panels<sup>69</sup>** and **remove unnecessary data including name and race, from longlists and shortlists** until interview stage.
- The Jobcentre Plus should provide **free access to the National Recognition Information System** to help migrants of colour prove their overseas qualifications.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017). *Race in the Workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review*. Assets Publishing Service.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid – targets like this should allow for local circumstances too.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, I. (2015).

## Progressing at Work

- **Employers should provide in-work mentoring to BAME women,**<sup>71</sup> to support with informal work practices and learning the 'internal ropes' of an organisation.
- The **Government** should boost this by **promoting mentoring as a developmental skill**, and offer guidance, resources and external training to support mentors.<sup>72</sup>
- Employers should **make progression routes more transparent** and accessible by issuing explicit detail on what is required for progression and pay rises.<sup>73</sup>
- There needs to be **institutionally embedded promotion targets to make promotion processes fairer.**<sup>74</sup> The employer EY use proportional promotion processes where, if 20% of managers are BME, they also expect 20% of promotions to senior managers to be BME.<sup>75</sup>

## Leading at Work

- The Different Women, Different Places report<sup>76</sup> **calls for policy makers and employers to acknowledge the positive attributes, capabilities and added value that BME women leaders can bring** to the workplace.
- Training for **junior managers to reach the top of an organisation** should be offered to women of colour. The British

Council tackles management-level barriers through masterclasses for BAME managers.<sup>77</sup>

- There is a lack of research and initiatives to support women of colour to and in senior leadership positions which highlights a significant gap in knowledge and best practice.

## Going it Alone - Self-Employment

- To support self-employed women of colour, research<sup>78</sup> suggests **providing additional support with accessing self-employment programs** and training to address the specific needs of self-employed women of colour.<sup>79</sup>
- **Financial services should seek to gain the trust of women of colour.** Santander are creating tailored programs for women of colour to be delivered by trusted partners.<sup>80</sup>

## Low Paid, Informal and Precarious Work

- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests that **ethnic minority status should be reinstated as one of the priority groups for the National Careers Service.**<sup>81</sup>
- **Jobcentre staff should work to become more culturally aware of ethnic minority groups** and their barriers to employment.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Turkmen, H. (2019).

<sup>72</sup> Wood, C., and Wybron, I. (2015).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> In the UK, positive action has been legal since April 2011 to ensure measures are taken to support the recruitment and promotion of underrepresented minorities. In deciding who to hire or promote between top candidates with equal qualification, an employer can choose an individual from an underrepresented group as long as they are qualified and fit for the role as the other applicants. See [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85014/positive-action-recruitment.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85014/positive-action-recruitment.pdf) for more information.

<sup>75</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017).

<sup>76</sup> Lim, R., and Campayne, P. (2007).

<sup>77</sup> CIPD. (2017). *Addressing the barriers to BAME employee career progression to the top*, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

<sup>78</sup> Turkmen, H. (2019).

<sup>79</sup> Davidson, J.M., Fielden, S.L., Omar, A. (2010).

<sup>80</sup> Santander (2011). *Supporting Women of Colour in Business*. Santander.

<sup>81</sup> Wood, C., and Wybron, I. (2015).

<sup>82</sup> Smith, Y., Pickard, L., & Atkinson, B. (2019). *Interventions Supporting Ethnic Minority Labour Market Participation: Part 1*, Department for Work & Pensions, GSR.

- The 2020 Race Inequality in the Workforce report<sup>83</sup> urges **the Government's Good Work Plan** to identify specific priorities and actions to **address the overrepresentation of BAME groups in low-paid, insecure and precarious work.**
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommends the Government's industrial strategy should seek out deals with low-paid sectors to improve management quality, skills, training and new technologies to support low-income BME workers.<sup>84</sup>
- **This is crucial when supporting BME workers to progress out of low-paid work could add £24 billion a year to the UK economy,** according to the McGregor-Smith report.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Bowyer, G., Henderson, M., White, D., & Woolley, S. (2020). *Race Inequality in the Workforce: Exploring Connections between Work, Ethnicity and Mental Health*, Carnegie UK Trust, UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies and Operation Black Vote.

<sup>84</sup> Weekes-Bernard, D. (2017). *Three Solutions to the challenges faced by ethnic minorities in the labour market*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>85</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017).

# Literature Review

## Introduction

Women of colour are almost invisible from positions of power across both public and private sectors. However, this does not happen in a vacuum - women of colour face barriers at every point and transition in their career pipeline which results in their erasure at the highest levels. These structural inequalities, while changing form, start from school and continue into higher education (HE), through entering employment, progressing at work and at senior leadership stages.

This review, for the first time, brings together a broad view of the existing research highlighting the barriers that exist for women of colour regarding employment, and maps out their various iterations at different stages of the career pipeline. It also provides a collation of literature-based recommendations, solutions and initiatives that seek to tackle these barriers stage by stage.

This literature review is part of the Fawcett Society's wider Pay and Progression of Women of Colour project in partnership with the Runnymede Trust. This project seeks to centre the voices of women of colour and asks why women of colour, regardless of their qualifications and credibility, are so underrepresented in the highest positions across the workforce. The aim of this review is to inform the later stages of the research, to ensure we fill in knowledge gaps and to avoid replicating the limitations from existing research in this area.



Such limitations of the existing research include homogenising all groups of women of colour as one and assuming universality in their experiences. Our work will disaggregate ethnic groups wherever possible and acknowledge that not only are experiences of pay and progression different between groups, but there will be differences within groups too. Individual differences including age, class, disability status, area of residence, education and sexuality

mean two women of the same ethnicity may have very different experiences in the workforce. We do use some studies in this review where groups have been aggregated for the purposes of providing a thorough collation of findings, with this caveat in mind. Where there are no disaggregated UK studies in understanding specific barriers or a time point in the career pipeline, we extrapolate from US-based research.

Despite the limitations in some of the existing research and literature, this review has pulled together extensive evidence of barriers through the career pipeline for women of colour. We believe this provides us, and others who would like to conduct similar work, with a solid foundation and is the right first step in finally placing the issues of women of colour's pay and progression front and centre.

## Women of Colour in the Job Market

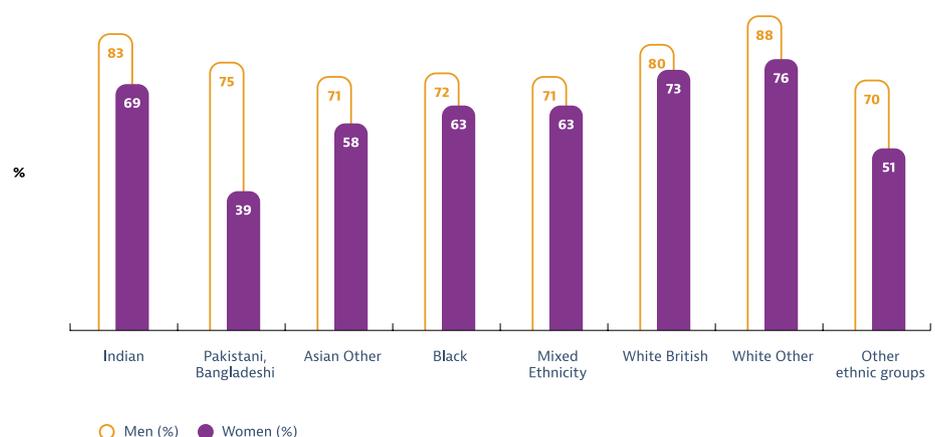
Before discussing the barriers women of colour face in the labour market, it is important to illustrate the pay gap and employment gap between women of colour and white men and white women.

### Employment Rates

Women of colour make up 15% of the UK workforce. They are, in each of the different ethnic groups for which data is available, less likely to be employed than White British women.<sup>86</sup> Data from the Race Disparity Unit's 'Ethnicity Facts and Figures' (Figure 1) portal shows that in 2018:

- White British women aged 16-64 were employed at a rate of 73%
- Indian women at a rate of 69%
- Black women and women with mixed ethnic backgrounds at a rate of 63%
- women in the 'Asian other' group at a rate of 58%, and
- Bangladeshi and Pakistani women had a far lower employment rate at 39%.

**Figure 1: Employment rates and population percentages for 16-64 year olds, by ethnicity and gender**



Data drawn from GOV.UK Ethnicity Facts and Figures, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest#by-ethnicity-and-gender> which uses the Annual Population Survey data for 2018

<sup>86</sup> GOV UK WEBSITE. (2021). *Work, pay and benefits – Employment – By ethnicity and gender*. From <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest#by-ethnicity-and-gender>

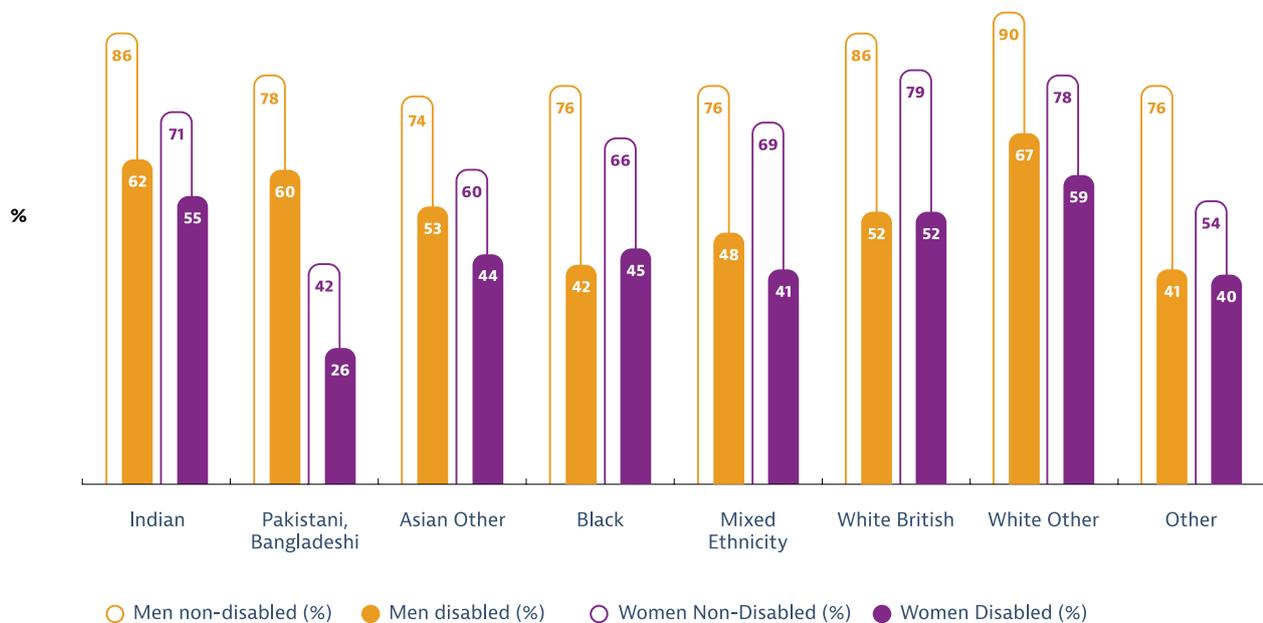
This data does not differentiate between the backgrounds of Black women, obscuring the difference between Black Caribbean and Black African women. The 2011 Census found significant differences in the data between women who identified as Black African, compared to Black Caribbean women. Black African women were three times more likely to be unemployed (9%) than white women (3%), while Black Caribbean women were twice as likely (6%).<sup>87</sup>

The intersection of race and gender with disability also has varied impacts on employment. The employment rate of disabled women of colour is lower among all ethnicities (except among disabled Indian women) than disabled White British or White Other women (Figure 2). Only one quarter (26%) of disabled Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are employed, compared with six in ten (60%) of disabled Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and half (52%) of

disabled White British women.<sup>88</sup> Disabled Black women have slightly higher rates of employment than disabled Black men at 45% compared with 42%, but lower than white women; while disabled Indian women have slightly higher rates of employment at 55%.

Behind these top-line differences in employment rates lie other differences in the kinds of unpaid work or other economic activity that women of colour do, including unpaid care and education. In 2018, women from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds in Britain were more than four times likely than White British women to be out of paid work because they were looking after their home or family (at 38% and 31% respectively compared with 7%), and Indian women were almost twice as likely (13%).<sup>89</sup> In 2011, a third of Chinese women (32%) and a quarter (24%) of Black African women in Britain were students, either in or out of work, compared to 6% of White British women.

Figure 2: Employment rates and population percentages for 16-64 year olds, by ethnicity, gender and disability



Data drawn from GOV.UK Ethnicity Facts and Figures, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest#by-ethnicity-and-gender> which uses the Annual Population Survey data for 2018.

<sup>87</sup> Breach, A., & Li, Y. (2017). *Gender Pay Gap by Ethnicity in Britain*. Fawcett Society.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> ONS. (2019). *Ethnicity pay gaps in Britain: 2018*, Office for National Statistics. From <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2018>

The data above draws a sharp distinction between employment and unemployment, but often the truth is more blurred. The Trade Union Congress (TUC) has identified that BAME employees as a whole are more likely to be 'under-employed', at 15.3% of the workforce in 2016 compared with 11.5% of white people.<sup>90</sup> Underemployment refers to both wanting more hours and not being able to get them and also an employee's full skill-set and attributes not being utilised at work.

## Pay Gap

Before discussing pay gaps by gender and ethnicity, it is useful to briefly discuss the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap is the average difference in hourly pay between men and women and is the headline statistic for representing women's economic inequality.<sup>91</sup> In 2020, the mean gap for full-time men and women was 7.4% and for all men and women (including part time workers) is 15.5% in Britain, according to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.<sup>92</sup>

The overall gender pay gap is caused by a combination of factors: the unequal impact of caring roles and a lack of support for mothers' career progression; a divided labour market in terms of skills and occupational segregation of women into more low-paid work; outright discrimination against women; and the overrepresentation of men at the top of the pay scale and women at the bottom.<sup>93</sup>

All of these factors, due to varying kinds and degrees of direct and indirect discrimination, alongside cultural norms, in turn shape

the different ethnic gender pay gaps for different groups. However, unlike the gender pay gap, there is not one single figure for the ethnicity pay gap for all ethnic minority groups. Responding to a lack of up-to-date information on this very intersection, Fawcett produced data on earnings by gender and ethnicity in 2017.<sup>94</sup>

Similar analysis has been released by others since, which we explore below. As one study notes, the picture when it comes to wage inequality for women of colour is more complex compared to men of colour where most groups earn less than White British men.<sup>95</sup> The Bank of England indicated that this complexity renders talking about a single "ethnicity pay gap" less useful.<sup>96</sup>

The data in Figure 3 below, drawn from the ONS release in 2018<sup>97</sup> shows that women earn less than men within almost all ethnic groups. The largest differences are among Indian and Chinese people, where men earn high hourly wages on average. Among people from ethnic groups who are paid less overall, gaps between women and men are smaller, with Bangladeshi women earning slightly more than Bangladeshi men. Looking at data across the 2010s as a whole, Fawcett's research found a negative gender pay gap among Black Caribbean people in the UK.<sup>98</sup> A negative gender pay-gap means that, on average, women's gross hourly earnings are higher than those of men.

<sup>90</sup> TUC. (2016). *BAME workers a third more likely to be underemployed, finds TUC report*. Tuc.org.uk. From <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/bame-workers-third-more-likely-be-underemployed-finds-tuc-report>

<sup>91</sup> Breach, A., & Li, Y. (2017)

<sup>92</sup> ONS. (2020). *Gender pay gap in the UK: 2020*. Office for National Statistics. From <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2020>

<sup>93</sup> See Fawcett's work on the gender pay gap for more information <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/policy-research/the-gender-pay-gap/>

<sup>94</sup> Breach, A., & Li, Y. (2017).

<sup>95</sup> Apart from Indian, Chinese and British-born Black African men who earned similar amounts. Longhi, S., and Brynin, M. (2017). *The Ethnicity Pay Gap*, Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 108.

<sup>96</sup> Amadxarif, Z., Angeli, M., Haldance, A., and Zemaityte, G. (2020). *Understanding Pay Gaps*, Bank of England Staff Working paper No. 877.

<sup>97</sup> ONS. (2019). *Ethnicity pay gaps in Great Britain: 2018*. Office for National Statistics, from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2018>

<sup>98</sup> Breach, A., & Li, Y. (2017).

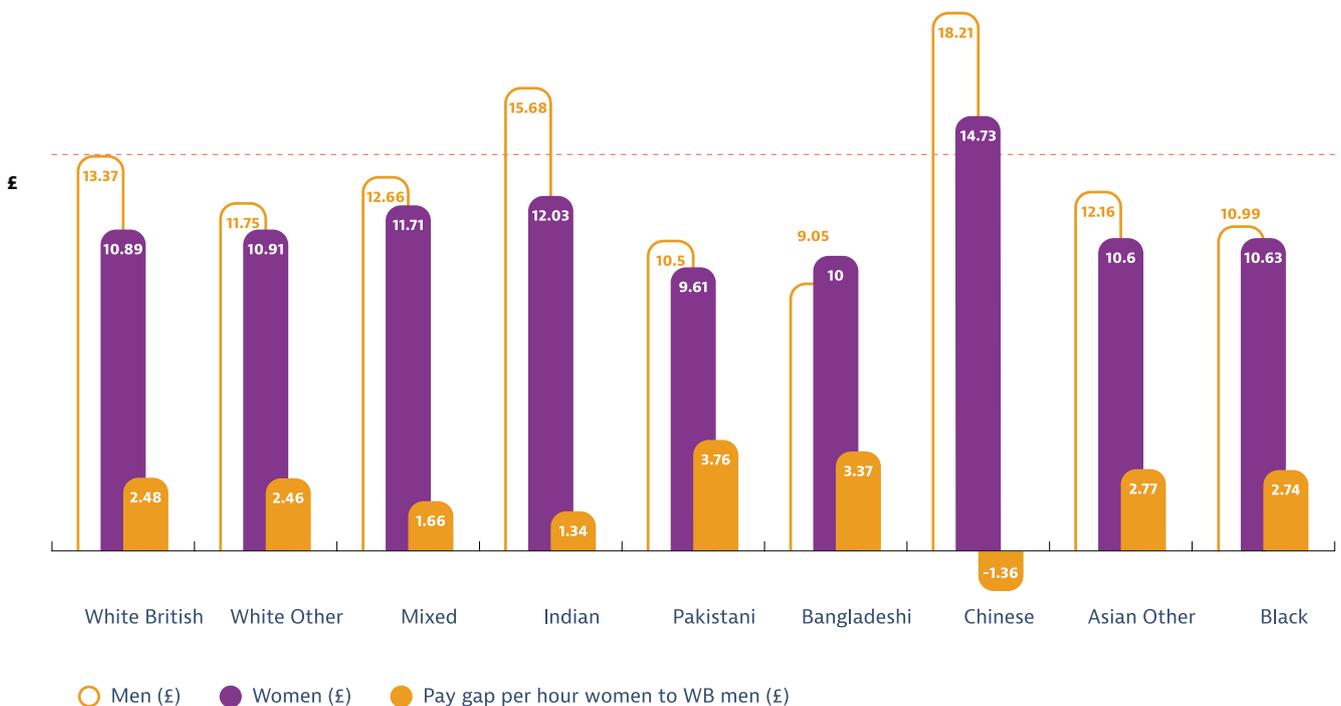
Compared with White British men, women of colour almost consistently earn less per hour, with pay gaps ranging from 10% for Indian women to 28.1% for Pakistani women. Only Chinese women earn more, on average, than White British men. Looking at the mean average, rather than the median shown above, women from all ethnic minority backgrounds, both born in the UK and abroad, earned less than White British men between 2011-2014.

When comparing women of colour with White British women, differences in pay vary. Women of colour from a Mixed ethnicity, Indian, or Chinese background earn more on average, Black women and women in an 'Asian other' category earn broadly the same, and women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds earn less. This aligns with the trends seen in other research, including that from 2011-2014 35% of Pakistani and 39% of Bangladeshi women earned less than the real living wage.<sup>99</sup>

This ONS data unfortunately also combines groups of Black African and Caribbean women, which masks the real picture. In Fawcett's 2017 report we found that Black Caribbean women earned on average the same as Black Caribbean men, and 8.8% more for full-time work, and that they had a decreasing pay gap with white men over time. Black African women however had a 7.7% pay gap with Black African men, and a pay gap with white men which had not closed at all since the 1990s.<sup>100</sup>

While the above shows there are quite stark differences between different ethnic groups, it is also important to note that there are meaningful differences within-groups too. For example, Mok and Platt<sup>101</sup> used data from the Labour Force Survey to break down the 'Chinese' category, who are often viewed as a 'model minority', given the higher wages evidenced above. They show how different groups of 'Chinese' migrants to the UK including refugees from Vietnam in the 70s and mostly higher-qualified or student migration from Mainland China in the last decade, have different wages and employment outcomes.

Figure 3: Median gross hourly earnings and pay gaps for all employees by ethnicity and gender, Great Britain



Data from ONS (2019), *Ethnicity pay gaps in Great Britain: 2018*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/ethnicitypaygapsingreatbritain/2018> which uses the Annual Population Survey

99 Ibid.

100 Breach, A., & Li, Y. (2017).

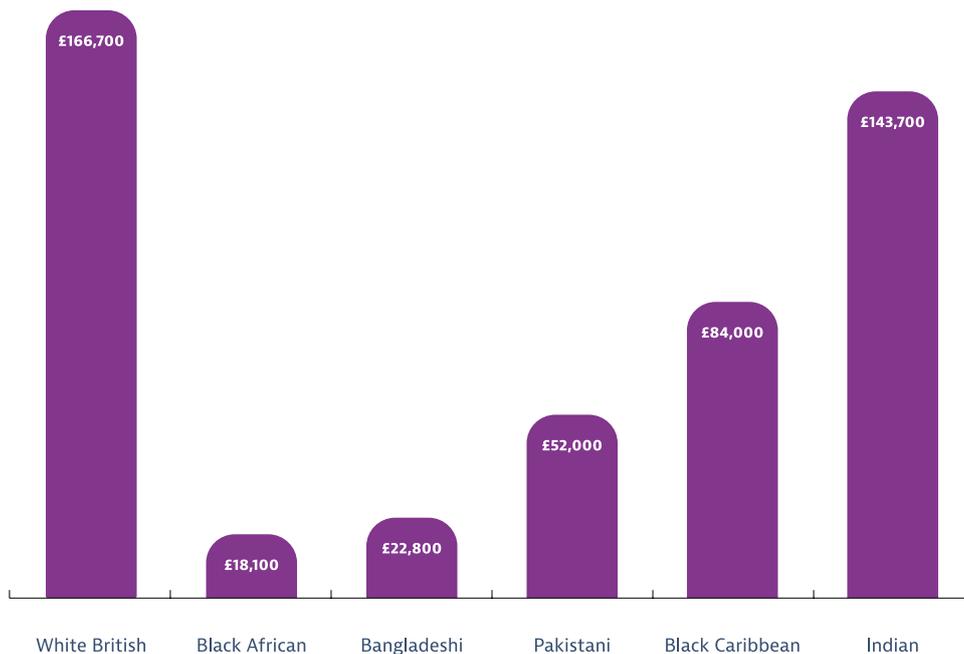
101 Mok, T. M., & Platt, L. (2020). *All look the same? Diversity of labour market outcomes of Chinese ethnic group populations in the UK*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(1), 87-107.

Controlling for education, ‘Chinese’ workers from three backgrounds faced wage penalties compared with white majority workers, albeit to different degrees – Vietnamese (18%), Hong Kong (14%), and Mainland China (11%). In contrast, British-born ‘Chinese’ people earned the same as white majority workers while ‘Chinese’ people originating in Taiwan, Malaysia or Singapore had a positive gap of 9%. This reminds us to remain mindful of the fact that even when in the same ethnic grouping or research category, the experiences of women of colour are likely to vary.

Lastly, the differentials in earnings we see here are reflected in much lower concentrations of wealth in the hands of

people of colour of which data for women specifically was not available. In 2018, White British people had a median average of £166,700 in total wealth, including housing and pensions. This is over nine times the average of Black African people (with an average wealth of £18,100), seven times the average of Bangladeshi people (£22,800), three times the average of Pakistani people (£52,000), and twice the average of Black Caribbean people (£84,000). The wealth gap between White British and Indian people was the smallest, but still a difference of £23,000 (Figure 4).<sup>102</sup> This impacts the outcomes for those entering the labour market without intergenerational financial support, and heavily influences social mobility.

Figure 4: Median individual wealth by ethnicity



Data from ONS (2020): Individual wealth by ethnicity, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/adhocs/11095individualwealthbyethnicitygreatbritainjuly2010tojune2016andapril2014tomarch2018>

<sup>102</sup> Office for National Statistics (2020) *Individual wealth by ethnicity: Great Britain, July 2010 to June 2016 and April 2014 to March 2018*. From <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/adhocs/11095individualwealthbyethnicitygreatbritainjuly2010tojune2016andapril2014tomarch2018>

• Pay Gap per hour to White British Men •



### Intersecting Factors that Affect the Employment and Pay Gap

The employment rates and pay gaps of women of colour are also affected by other intersecting factors. These include both an individual's personal compositional factors, such as age and location, and job-related factors such as occupation and type of contract. While it is out of the scope of this report to explore all these intersections in relation to the pay gap in depth, we briefly discuss them in this section. It is important to note that none of these factors can justify the employment and pay gaps experienced by women of colour and there is much left unexplained. The intersectional factors themselves, such as area of residence or occupation in a low paid sector, should be seen as indication of other social disadvantages and systemic inequality.

### Location

The first personal compositional factor that affects the pay of women of colour is location. Where ethnic minority women live will have an impact on their employment opportunities and pay rates. For example, although not separated by gender, Catney & Sabater<sup>103</sup> found that Pakistani groups have higher unemployment rates across parts of the West Midlands including in Birmingham whereas Caribbean individuals are at a higher risk of unemployment if they live in London boroughs such as Hackney than in other places in England.

While ethnic minorities are more likely to live in major metropolitan areas such as London with higher-than-average median hourly pay at £18,<sup>104</sup> they are also more likely to live in deprived neighbourhoods compared to the White British majority.<sup>105</sup> Jivraj & Khan used

<sup>103</sup> Catney, G., & Sabater, A. (2015). *Ethnic minority disadvantage in the labour market*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>104</sup> Henehan, K., & Rose, H. (2018). *Opportunities Knocked? Exploring Pay Penalties among the UK's Ethnic Minorities*. Resolution Foundation.

<sup>105</sup> Jivraj, S., & Khan, O. (2013). *Ethnicity and deprivation in England: How likely are ethnic minorities to live in deprived neighbourhoods*. Manchester: CoDE, University of Manchester.

Census data from 2011 to show that ethnic minorities are concentrated in the poorest parts of the country. For example, one in three Bangladeshi and Pakistani individuals lived in a deprived area compared to one in twelve White British individuals.<sup>106</sup> This “double disadvantage” – an aggregate of individual and neighbourhood disadvantage – is an important intersection to consider as ethnic minority women's employment and pay may be restricted by being more likely to live in areas with less opportunity.

### Age

The second intersectional factor is age. Ethnic minorities, with the exception of Black Caribbean immigrants and Chinese immigrants are on average younger than White British people.<sup>107</sup> For example, the median age for Bangladeshi men and women living in the UK was 25.5 compared to 42 for the white population in 2016-17.<sup>108</sup> Authors suggest that, because pay increases with age, ethnic minorities are likely to be paid less on average due to their younger demographic.<sup>109</sup>

### Unpaid Care

Women of colour are also more likely to be engaged in unpaid care in the home – the third intersectional factor impacting the pay of women of colour. Breach & Li<sup>110</sup> found that, while only 14% of economically inactive White British women do unpaid care, almost half (49%) of Bangladeshi women and Pakistani women (47%) and a quarter (25%) of Somali women are engaged in this work. In addition, almost nine in 10 (89%) of white parents use the Government's free 3-4-year-old childcare places compared to less than three quarters (73%) of Black parents and 64% of Bangladeshi parents.<sup>111</sup> These figures highlight that ethnic minority mothers are doing a larger share of the childcare among

other types of unpaid care. Therefore, it is possible that, because mothers from certain ethnic groups are more likely to exit the labour force while their children are young, they are more likely to face the “motherhood penalty”, exacerbating the pay gap among these groups.

### Job-Related Factors

In addition to personal demographic characteristics, there are also job-related factors that contribute to the pay gap. Ethnic minorities are more likely to be concentrated in lower paid sectors. In England, 41% of Black Caribbean and 47% of Black African immigrants work in low paid roles in the health sector, compared to just 20% of White British people.<sup>112</sup> In Scotland, high proportions of individuals from Pakistani (50%), Polish and Gypsy/Traveller (32%) and Indian (30%) backgrounds work in restaurants or hotels.<sup>113</sup>

In relation to women, Henehan & Rose find that more than a quarter of the 22 to 64-year-old population of economically active Black women are in low-paid caring or personal service roles.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, that the proportion of Black women (39%) in low-paying health and social work is significantly higher than that of white women (23%). Longhi and Brynin also find that much of the 11.5% pay gap Pakistani women born abroad face is due to them being more likely to work in elementary occupations and having limited job tenure; while for Bangladeshi women born abroad their concentration in caring roles were among the greatest drivers of an 11.8% pay gap.<sup>115</sup>

Not only are they concentrated in low-paid sectors with little opportunity for progression, but Black men and women are more likely to have temporary contracts and be in precarious employment compared to

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Longhi, S., and Brynin, M. (2017).

<sup>108</sup> Henehan, K., & Rose, H. (2018).

<sup>109</sup> Longhi, S., and Brynin, M. (2017).

<sup>110</sup> Breach, A., & Li, Y. (2017).

<sup>111</sup> Butler, V. (2012). *Ethnic Minority Female Unemployment: Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Heritage Women*, All Party Parliamentary Group on Race and Community. Runnymede Trust.

<sup>112</sup> Dustmann, C., and Fabbri, F. (2005). *Gender and Ethnicity – Married Immigrants in Britain*, Oxford Review of Economic Policy, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 462-84.

<sup>113</sup> Kelly, M. (2016) *Poverty and ethnicity: Key messages for Scotland*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>114</sup> Henehan, K., & Rose, H. (2018).

<sup>115</sup> Longhi, S., and Brynin, M. (2017).

other groups.<sup>116</sup> The same report also finds that Black men and women are twice as likely to be working for an employment agency compared to white women, which carries with it a 22p per hour penalty.<sup>117</sup> A recent UCL Institute of Education (IOE) report revealed that BAME millennials are 47% more likely to be on zero-hour contracts, which carry with them a significant pay penalty.<sup>118</sup>

However, even when like-for-like backgrounds and job profiles are accounted for, significant pay penalties still persist between different ethnic minorities and the white population.<sup>119</sup>

---

The Resolution Foundation report finds that even after controlling for factors such as age, location and occupation, **Black graduate women would still have a 7-11% pay gap with white women.** They also find that while the pay penalty for Bangladeshi and Pakistani graduate women would reduce, it is still substantial and significant at 8%, compared with white women.

---

These figures represent the residual unexplained pay gap that still exists even after other intersecting factors are accounted for. This residual pay gap may represent other factors that were not taken into account in the study or, more likely they reflect the discrimination and disadvantage experienced on the basis of race and ethnicity.

Lastly, it is also important to consider that women of colour are significantly less likely to be in positions of senior leadership and management in their workplaces (or their sector equivalent), which are higher paid positions. A TUC equality briefing highlighted that, while occupational differences appear across all levels of seniority within the

labour market, they are the starkest in highest paid leadership roles.<sup>120</sup> This will be discussed in depth in our “Leading at Work” section, however recognition should be given to the fact that this is an issue across both public and private sectors.

For example, there is not a single BME woman in the Civil Service Board or in the role of a permanent secretary<sup>121</sup> and similarly, there are no BME women represented as chief executives of FTSE 100 companies.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the fact that BME women are less likely to be in higher-paid roles is likely to explain some of the pay gap between women of colour and white men and women. And, while we do have disaggregated data by ethnicity and gender in lower paid roles and sectors, the same is needed to understand which specific groups of women of colour are faring worst in higher paid sectors and roles.

## COVID-19, Ethnicity and Employment

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, with women and ethnic minorities particularly vulnerable to absorbing the economic shock of the crisis. Not only are the rates of infection and mortality significantly higher among BAME people<sup>123</sup>, but they have also fared the worst in employment outcomes.

A Guardian analysis shows that the numbers of BAME workers in employment has dropped 26 times more than white workers over the same period.<sup>124</sup> In July 2020, they had also suffered an average decline in earnings of 14% from February 2020, compared to that of a 5% decline for white workers.<sup>125</sup> The same report subdivided findings for different groups and found the Asian group to have suffered the most significant loss of earnings at 20%. These findings remain unchanged even when controlling for a wide-ranging number of personal factors such as age, education and sector of work.

<sup>116</sup> Judge, L., & Tomlinson, D. (2016). *Secret agents. Agency workers in the new world of work*. The Resolution Foundation.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> UCL. (2020). *BAME millennials at greater risk of being in unstable employment*, from <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2020/mar/bame-millennials-greater-risk-being-unstable-employment>

<sup>119</sup> Henehan, K., & Rose, H. (2018).

<sup>120</sup> TUC. (2020). *BME women and work: TUC equality briefing*. From <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bme-women-and-work>

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> ONS. (2020). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by ethnic group, England and Wales: 2 March 2020 to 10 April 2020*, Office for National Statistics.

<sup>124</sup> Inman, P. (2021). *Black, Asian and minority-ethnic UK workers hit worst by Covid job cuts*. The Guardian. From <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/19/black-and-minority-ethnic-uk-workers-hit-worst-by-covid-job-cuts>

<sup>125</sup> Bracke, P., Croxson, K., Leary, J., & Wood, J. (2021). *Covid-19 and the UK's BAME communities – an economic perspective*. FCA Insight

A recent Government briefing paper for the period July–September 2020<sup>126</sup> looked at both gender and race in unemployment rates. It found that among people from ethnic minority backgrounds, the unemployment rate was higher for men (6.8%) than for women (6.5%), compared to white men (3.7%) and white women (3.1%). The report explains that the unemployment rate is higher for men than for women because women are more likely than men to be economically inactive – in other words, not in work and not looking for work. Notably, the unemployment rate was highest for women from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi ethnic background at 10%, compared to the overall female unemployment rate of 3.5%.<sup>127</sup> The combined Guardian and Government findings indicate that, on average, people of colour are feeling the brunt of economic hardship through loss of jobs and earnings in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, data from the HMRC shows women were more likely to be furloughed – 133,000 more women were furloughed than men across the UK.<sup>128</sup> As the furlough scheme only covered 80% of earnings, more women than men have taken a pay cut in 2020–2021.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, more than half (52%) of women working in routine or semi-routine employment have been furloughed, compared with less than two out of 10 women (15%) in professional or managerial roles.<sup>130</sup> And with BAME women being twice as likely to be in low-paid work (or routine

work), we can reasonably assume that their employment experiences and outcomes will be disproportionately affected by the furlough scheme. This is corroborated further by the recent *Pushed to More Precarity* report<sup>131</sup> which found almost half (48%) of BAME mothers had been furloughed from March–December 2020 compared to a third of white mothers (34%). It also found that nearly half (47%) of BAME mothers had lost working hours or their job compared to a third of white mothers (31%).

Not only have women of colour been disproportionately affected by the furlough scheme, but Fawcett's 2020 survey finds that they have been negatively impacted in many other ways too.<sup>132</sup> For example, 65.1% of BAME women working outside of the home during the pandemic have experienced work-related anxiety compared to 60.9% of white women and 52.9% of white men. Of those who were working from home, 41% of BAME women reported working more than they did before the pandemic compared to white women (29.2%) and white men (28.5%). Nearly half of BAME women (45.4%) reported that they were struggling to cope with the different demands introduced by the pandemic. This means it would not be unreasonable to expect that the barriers to pay and progression for women of colour will be further exacerbated due to and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, but further research is needed to elucidate this.

<sup>126</sup> Foley, N. (2020). *Unemployment by ethnic background*. House of Commons Library. Briefing Paper Number 6385

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> GOV UK WEBSITE. (2020). *Official statistics – Coronavirus Retention Scheme Statistics: October 2020*. From <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-october-2020>

<sup>129</sup> Women's Budget Group. (2020). *HMRC data prompts concern of gender furlough gap*. From <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Gender-furlough-gap.pdf>

<sup>130</sup> Warren, T., and Lyonette, C. (2020). *Carrying the work burden of the COVID-19 pandemic: working class women in the UK*, Nottingham University Business Schools, Warwick Institute for Employment Research, Women's Budget Group.

<sup>131</sup> Women's Budget Group, Fawcett Society, Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group, Women's Equality Network Wales, Close the Gap, & Engender. (2021). *Pushed to More Precarity: The uneven impact of lockdowns on mothers and low-income parents*. Wbg.org.uk

<sup>132</sup> Fawcett Society. (2020). *Coronavirus: Impact on BAME Women Briefing*, The Fawcett Society.

## Context – Empire, Migration and Legislation

The discrimination faced by women of colour in the workplace relating to pay and progression has not happened in a vacuum. It is the result of histories of prejudice, systemic unfair treatment and legislation. We briefly map out some key historical and legislative points for equality in employment to better illustrate how the experiences of people of colour now cannot be severed from past historical struggles and oppression.

Waves of migration following the second world war came in response to demand for a labour force from Britain's industrial sector.<sup>133</sup> While there has been migration and ethnic minority presence for millennia, the arrival of Commonwealth migrants - in particular the HMT Empire Windrush which docked in Tilbury in 1948 - is viewed as a pivotal moment in race relations in Britain's history, during which there was mass migration to the UK. As highlighted by Khan, in the two decades following the arrival of the HMT Windrush, workers of colour were concentrated in lower-paid work with poorer conditions than their white counterparts.<sup>134</sup>

Commonwealth migrants were also subject to unfair treatment in the labour market facing 'colour bars' in some workplaces, where people of colour were systematically excluded from employment – including the UK railways and bus industries. For example, in 1963, the Bristol Bus Omnibus company's decision to not employ Black or Asian bus crews led to the famous Bristol Bus Boycott that paved the way for the introductory legislation to outlaw discrimination in employment.

Legislation to tackle racial inequalities in the labour market was first brought in as part of the 1968 Race Relations Act. However, this legislation failed to adequately protect BME workers from discrimination from their employers, as workers had to prove their employers' intent to discriminate. In response to this, the 1976 Race Relations Act introduced the concept of indirect discrimination by employers and public bodies.<sup>135</sup>

After the tragic murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry was established and led by Sir William Macpherson. It concluded that the police response to Stephen Lawrence's murder was 'institutionally racist', defining institutional racism as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin".<sup>136</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Khan, O. (2020). *The Colour of Money*, The Runnymede Trust.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> MacPherson, W. (1999). *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*. Report of an Inquiry. United Kingdom: The Stationary Office.

Following the Macpherson report, amendments were made to the 1976 Race Relations Act, which outlawed racist discrimination in all aspects of policing and the functions of public authorities. The amendments created a race equality duty, which committed public authorities to have due regard to “the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination” in all of its functions.<sup>137</sup> As a result, it put more onus on policymakers to consider any indirect discrimination in proposing measures that would impact the lives of ethnic minority groups, including in relation to employment.

These provisions were replaced by the Equality Act in 2010, which provided a robust legal framework to protect workers from discrimination on the basis of race, sex and sexual orientation, age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. The Act includes important anti-discrimination measures, including forbidding treatment that has a discriminatory impact even without intention. But despite its strength on paper, it has been significantly weakened by failures in its implementation and enforcement.

This includes failures to bring important provisions of the Equality Act into force, including Section 14 of the Act on dual discrimination and Section 1, the Public

Sector Duty on Regarding Socio-Economic Inequalities. Both provisions would have important roles in eradicating inequalities for people of colour. For example, bringing Section 14 into force would protect victims against discrimination that they have experienced on the basis of their dual identity. Not commencing this section means that, for example, it is currently not possible for a Pakistani woman to claim she has been discriminated against on the basis of both her gender and ethnicity, but only one element of her identity. The legislation as it stands thus does not respond to the reality of people’s lives and identities<sup>138</sup> and allows for widespread problems with racial discrimination in the labour market to continue.

Thus, unenforced legislation and histories of institutional discrimination continue to combine to harm people of colour.<sup>139</sup> Glaring disparities for ethnic minority groups exist across all areas, including education, healthcare and the criminal justice system and these disparities cannot be separated from inequalities in the labour market facing workers of colour. These inequalities continue to impact women of colour in the workplace in the UK today and the racialised history of employment must be acknowledged in any discourse about present day pay and progression inequality.

<sup>137</sup> Race Relations Act. (1965). From [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1965/73/pdfs/ukpga\\_19650073\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1965/73/pdfs/ukpga_19650073_en.pdf)

<sup>138</sup> Breach, A., and Li, Y. (2017).

<sup>139</sup> Lingayah, S. (2021). *It takes a system – the systemic nature of racism and pathways to systems change*, ROTA.

## Moving into Work - School

Pay gaps and lower employment rates only portray the very surface of the experiences of women of colour in the workforce. The following sections of this report: Moving into work; Entry into the workplace; Progressing at work; Leading at work and Going it alone – self-employment, provides a detailed exploration of the lived experiences of women of colour and the barriers they face.

### Secondary School

In order to consider the pay and progression of women of colour in more detail, we will look at their educational experiences and attainment at 16, as an essential part of the pipeline towards work. Research into the school experiences and outcomes of women of colour suggests that inequalities start to set in during their time in school, long before they enter the labour market.

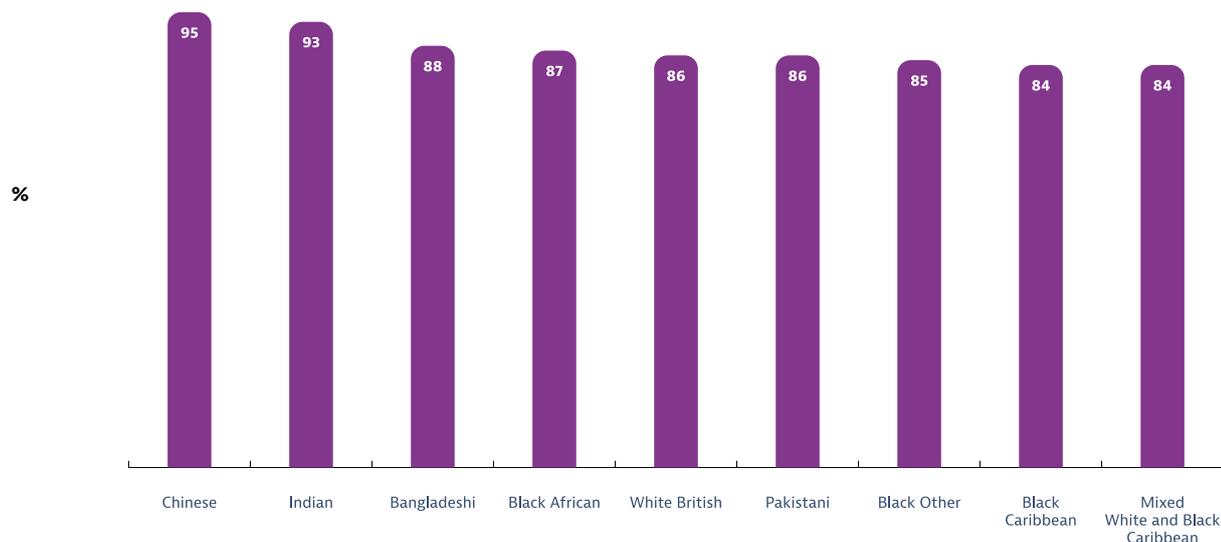
The latest available in-depth analysis of educational achievement in England from the Department for Education<sup>140</sup> reports considerable improvements in educational outcomes for BME pupils generally between 2004 and 2013. On the measure of pupils achieving five A\*-C grades including English and Mathematics (5EM), between 2004 and 2013, Bangladeshi students went from below to above the White British average, Black African students closed the gap entirely, and Black Caribbean, Mixed ethnicity, and Pakistani students closed gaps significantly, although gaps remained. Indian and Chinese students continued to have twice the odds of achieving the 5EM measure compared to the White British average. Looking at gender differences generally, in 2013 the proportion of girls achieving the 5EM measure was around 10% points higher than for boys and broadly consistent across all ethnic groups.

Thus, this regular practice of reporting the educational performance of ethnic minorities measured against the White British average showcases apparent evidence of equality in educational outcomes. However, a closer look at the figures<sup>141</sup> reveals a different picture. For example, although Black Caribbean and Mixed White Caribbean girls were performing better than their male counterparts and White British boys in 2013, both groups were around three percentage points behind White British, Black African and Pakistani girls. Similarly, White British, Black African and Pakistani girls were two percentage points behind Bangladeshi girls, seven percentage points behind Indian girls and nine percentage points behind Chinese girls (Figure 5).

<sup>140</sup> Strand, S. (2015), *Ethnicity, deprivation and educational achievement at age 16 in England: Trends over time*. Department for Education.

<sup>141</sup> Strand, *ibid.* See p.27: Figure 4: Percentage 5+ GCSE A\*-C or equivalent by ethnic group and gender: 2003-2013.

Figure 5: Five A\*-Cs achieved by girls at GCSE by ethnicity (%)



Data drawn from Strand (2015). See: p.65: Appendix 4: GCSE 5AC by ethnic group and gender: 2003-2013, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/439867/RR439B-Ethnic\\_minorities\\_and\\_attainment\\_the\\_effects\\_of\\_poverty\\_annex.pdf.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439867/RR439B-Ethnic_minorities_and_attainment_the_effects_of_poverty_annex.pdf.pdf)

More recent figures published in December 2020<sup>142</sup> show that this picture broadly persists. This analysis used a different measure of achievement– ‘Attainment 8’, which measures achievement in English and Maths and six different subjects and found that gaps remained between ethnic groups. To illustrate, Black Caribbean girls’ scores were lower at 43.2 and Mixed White/Black Caribbean at 44.4 compared to White British girls’ score at 48.9. This compares to Black African girls’ score of 51, Pakistani girls at 48.9, Bangladeshi girls at 53, Indian girls at 60 and Chinese girls at 65.9, with an average overall Attainment 8 score of 49.5. These more recent analyses suggest that usual reporting practices into educational outcomes may be masking race inequality in achievement through aggregating data on all ethnic groups. This data suggests ethnic groups, specifically Black Caribbean, are still behind their peers.

There is a gap in research into the lived experiences of women of colour in the English school system which would enable us to explore the reasons behind these figures. Most research focuses on the

underachievement of white working-class boys and Black Caribbean boys. Heidi Mirza<sup>143</sup> argues that dominant policy discourses of boys’ underachievement, for example the disaffection of Black boys, alienation and separatism for Muslim boys, and low self-esteem for white working-class boys, masks the real educational difficulties faced by girls from white working class, Muslim, Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Similarly, Nicola Rollock<sup>144</sup> argues that concerns about the educational attainment of Black Caribbean boys by policy makers and practitioners should not overshadow equally important educational issues surrounding Black girls. She argues comparing the educational attainment of Black girls solely with Black boys over-emphasises Black girls as ‘successful’ when this should be relative to the already well-established low attainment of their male counterparts. The limited research available suggests that, despite significant improvements in educational outcomes for ethnic groups,<sup>145</sup> the experiences and barriers of girls of colour in the school system still need to be explored.

<sup>142</sup> GOV UK WEBSITE. (2020). *Ethnicity Facts and Figures*. ‘GCSE Results – Attainment 8’. From <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/gcse-results-attainment-8-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest#data-sources>

<sup>143</sup> Alexander, C., Weekes-Bernard, D., & Arday, J. (2015). *The Runnymede School Report: Race, Education and Inequality in Contemporary Britain*, Runnymede Trust.

<sup>144</sup> Rollock, N. (2007). *Why Black girls don’t matter: exploring how race and gender shape academic success in an inner-city school*. *Support for Learning* 22(4):197–202.

<sup>145</sup> Strand, S. (2015).

## Teacher Biases

One possible factor impacting on achievement by Black Caribbean boys and girls is racism in the form of lower expectations from teachers. For example, Gilborn et al,<sup>146</sup> found that teachers tended to have systematically lower academic expectations than warranted by their performance in class for Black Caribbean children. This finding remained consistent regardless of the children's social class and, although a particular concern for male students, the data suggests that this is also affecting girls.

Fawcett's Unlimited Potential Report<sup>147</sup> found that BAME practitioners appeared to be more attuned to differential treatment of children compared to white practitioners. Almost half (46%) of BAME practitioners said they had often witnessed children being treated differently based on their ethnicity, with this being lowest for white girls and highest for Black boys, compared to only a quarter (25%) of white practitioners. This shows white practitioners are less aware of differential treatment based on ethnicity, which is concerning when this can affect students' grades, settings and self-perceptions.

Stevenson et al<sup>148</sup> suggests similar experiences exploring social mobility challenges faced by young Muslims from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds including Pakistani, Nigerian, Somali, Bangladeshi, Sudanese and Moroccan.<sup>149</sup> The report found that young ethnic minority Muslims experienced racism in the form of lower expectations from teachers through being placed in middle or lower sets and a lack of encouragement to take challenging subjects.

<sup>146</sup> Gillborn, D., Rollock, N., Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2012). 'You got a pass, so what more do you want?': Race, class and gender intersections in the educational experiences of the Black middle class. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 15(1), 121-139.

<sup>147</sup> Fawcett Society. (2020). *Unlimited Potential: Report of the Commission on Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood*. The Fawcett Society.

<sup>148</sup> Stevenson, J., Demack, S., Steill, B., Abdi, M., Ghaffar, F. and Hassan, S. (2017). *The social mobility challenges faced by young Muslims*. Project Report. London, Social Mobility Commission.

## Racist Disciplinary Regimes

Furthermore, some studies suggest that a racist bias in school discipline regimes might be impacting on ethnic groups' school experiences and engagement with learning. Gilborn et al<sup>150</sup> found that Black Caribbean students were subject to heightened disciplinary scrutiny and criticism - for example, an over-reaction by teachers to low-level disruption. Moreover, students' middle-class status provided no protection from the cumulative damage suffered from repeated unfairness.

Two US studies support the notion of racist bias in school discipline. One large US quantitative study<sup>151</sup> focuses on the over-disciplining of African American girls. Using a longitudinal data set of school discipline records, the study found that Black girls were three times more likely than white girls to receive a discipline referral. The authors suggest that teachers over-disciplining African American girls were showing unintentional, implicit racial and gender bias. For example, by misjudging the behaviour of African American girls as misbehaviour because it breached their assumptions of standard femininity. Like Gilborn et al,<sup>152</sup> the study highlights that, although the reprimands Black girls received may seem relatively minor, these can accumulate over time and lead to ambivalence toward school or perceptions of personal deficiency, affecting later employment outcomes.

In another US study, Blake and Epstein<sup>153</sup> found that teachers and other authority figures saw Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like, known as 'adultification bias', than their white peers which can lead to harsher consequences for behavioural

<sup>149</sup> It is important to note here that a Muslim identity should not be conflated with that of a South Asian identity as it often is, as only 53% of Britain's Muslims are Pakistani or Bangladeshi. We use this research to highlight how the intersection between ethnicity and religion is also an important one.

<sup>150</sup> Gillborn, D., Rollock, N., Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2012).

<sup>151</sup> Morris, E.W., and Perry, B.L. (2017) *Girls Behaving Badly? Race, Gender, and Subjective Evaluation in the Discipline of African American Girls*. *Sociology of Education*. 2017;90(2):127-14.

<sup>152</sup> Gillborn, D., Rollock, N., Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2012).

<sup>153</sup> Blake, J.J. and Epstein, R. (2019). *Listening to Black Women and Girls: Lived Experiences of Adultification Bias*. Georgetown Law Centre on Poverty and Inequality.

incidents in school. Rayvenn Shaleigha D'Clark<sup>154</sup> defines adultification as a form of dehumanisation, robbing Black children of innocence. She states that adultification contributes to a false narrative that Black youth's transgressions are malicious instead of the result of immaturity, a key characteristic of childhood. This means Black students are not being afforded the same opportunity to make mistakes and grow from corrections to the same degree as white children. And, while more research is needed

on this in the UK context, we do know that Black girls are approximately twice as likely to be permanently excluded from school compared with the total school population and their white female peers,<sup>155</sup> of which adultification bias may play a part in this harsh disciplinary response. More research is needed in this area in the UK context to explore how racist biases and disciplinary regimes may lead to adverse future outcomes for ethnic minority groups.

**Black girls are approximately twice as likely to be permanently excluded from school compared with the total school population and their white female peers.**

## Further Education

There is a lack of research into achievement and outcomes of different ethnic groups in further education. This is particularly concerning as it is a crucial 2-3 years before the transition to Higher Education with the potential to influence future outcomes, for example, which university and subject ethnic minority girls may choose.

However, in a similar fashion to other education data, we do see that the participation in further education for all ethnic groups has risen from 2011-2019.<sup>156</sup> Specifically, it has gone from 8.4% to 9.6% for the Asian group, 6.5% to 6.8% for the Black group and 2.5% to 3.4% for the Mixed group.

Although participation has risen, the number of students achieving three A grades or better is still lower in ethnic minority groups compared to white groups.<sup>157</sup> For example, 20.4% of white students achieve three A grades or better, compared to only 14.7% of Bangladeshi, 12.4% of Pakistani, 12.7% of Black African and 9.1% of Black Caribbean. Chinese students achieve above the rates of white students with 37% of them attaining three A grades or better at A-Level (Figure 6).

It is important to note that this data is not broken down by gender and that there is currently no research explaining the lower achievement rates of some ethnic groups in further education. It is possible that similar issues from school continue in

<sup>154</sup> D'Clark, R.S. (2019). *Infantilising White Women and Adultifying Black Girls*, Shades of Noir. From <https://shadesofnoir.org.uk/infantilising-white-women-adultifying-black-girls/>

<sup>155</sup> Department for Education and Skills (2006). *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools and Exclusion Appeals in England 2004/05*, SFR 24/2006 London: DFES.

<sup>156</sup> GOV UK WEBSITE. (2020). *Ethnicity Facts and Figures - Further Education Participation*, from <https://www.ethnicity-facts->

[figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/a-levels-apprenticeships-further-education/further-education-participation/latest](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/a-levels-apprenticeships-further-education/further-education-participation/latest)

<sup>157</sup> GOV UK WEBSITE. (2021). *Ethnicity Facts and Figures – Students getting 3 A grades or better at A-Level*, from <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/a-levels-apprenticeships-further-education/students-aged-16-to-18-achieving-3-a-grades-or-better-at-a-level/latest>

further education. For example, authors argued that in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and A-level exams being replaced with teacher assessments, ethnic minority students would score lower than their white peers due to unconscious bias.<sup>158</sup> More research is needed to explore these concerns in further education.

### Careers Advice

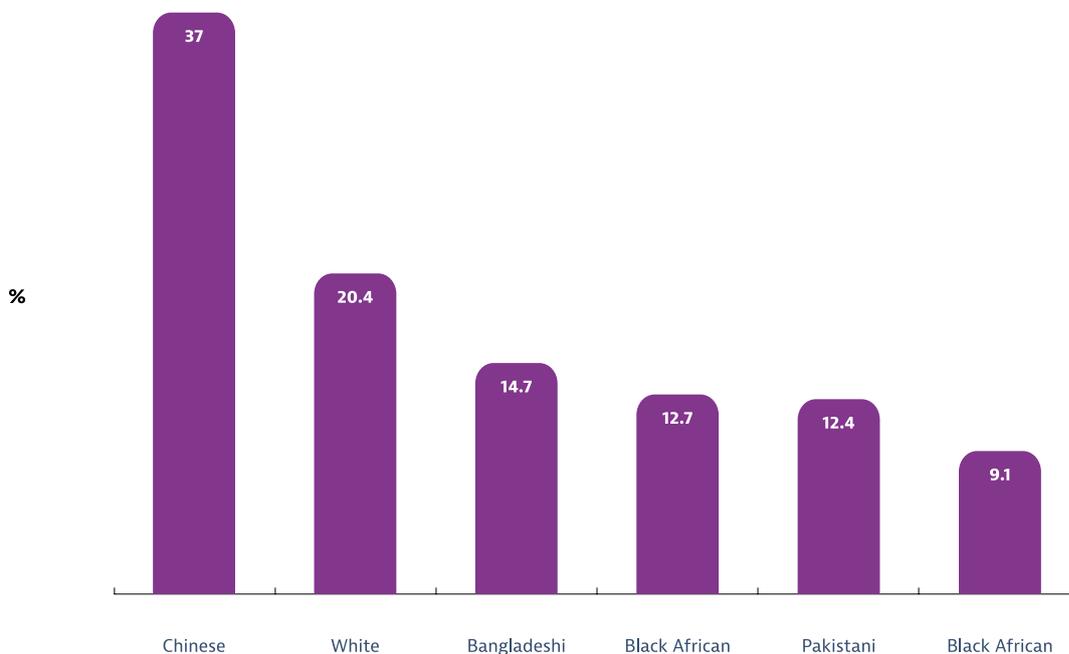
Some research highlights the impact of inadequate careers advice on the transitions of ethnic young people from school to the labour market and HE.

Drawing on a five-year longitudinal study, Moote and Archer<sup>159</sup> examine Year 11 students' perceptions of careers advice provision. The study found that careers provision was failing to reach those most in need, including girls and ethnic minority students. For example, the 'self-referral' approach

to accessing careers advice disadvantaged girls and ethnic minority students as they were less likely to self-refer due to a lack of confidence or a feeling that available provision was not meeting their needs.

The authors highlight their concerns over the quality of careers education in schools following funding cuts in 2010. They suggest that inadequate careers advice in schools might be reinforcing inequalities relating to gender, ethnicity and social class rather than promoting diversity and social mobility. The study cites research showing that young people's aspirations and educational and occupational choices tend to be patterned by ethnicity, gender and social class. For example, research has found that young people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to express aspirations for particular career routes<sup>160</sup> often following 'safe', pragmatic routes into 'known' areas of employment.<sup>161</sup>

Figure 6: 3 A grades or higher (%) at A-Level by ethnicity



Data drawn from GOV.UK Ethnicity Facts and Figures Portal, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/a-levels-apprenticeships-further-education/students-aged-16-to-18-achieving-3-a-grades-or-better-at-a-level/latest>

<sup>158</sup> Katwala, A. (2020). *Results day is a diversity disaster*. Wired, from <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/results-day-exams-bias>

<sup>159</sup> Moote, J. and Archer, L. (2016). *Failing to deliver? Exploring the current status of career education provision in England*. Research Papers in education 33 (2) pp 187-215.

<sup>160</sup> Hutchinson, J., Rolfe, H., Moore, N., Bysshe, S. and Bentley, K. (2011) *All Things Being Equal? Equality and Diversity in Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance*. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

<sup>161</sup> Archer, L., & Francis, B. (2006). *Understanding minority ethnic achievement: Race, gender, class and 'success'*. London: Routledge.

This demonstrates the particular need for good quality careers advice to support ethnic minority women to make more informed choices about their future that are not rooted in stereotypes surrounding gender and ethnicity. This is particularly important whereby stereotypically “female” or “minority” occupations are based in lower paid work.

Additionally, Beck et al,<sup>162</sup> found that the nature of available careers guidance in schools was “patchy”, with students citing being given leaflets as their only resource to make decisions. This is particularly concerning given that ethnic minority students rely on official routes such as careers guidance more than friends and families for their labour market knowledge compared to their white counterparts. Due to this increased reliance on careers service, poor and unsatisfactory careers advice will disproportionately affect ethnic minority students, potentially having a direct knock-on effect on career aspirations, access to further education and future pay and progression. The effects of poor careers advice on students of colour needs to be further investigated.

## Moving into Work - University

The number of UK-based students of colour starting first degrees increased by 34% between 2010-11 and 2015-16.<sup>163</sup> Most up-to-date HESA data<sup>164</sup> reports that, across all ethnic groups, more women enrolled on first degrees at university than men from 2014/15 to 2019/20 (Figure 7). Earlier HESA data from 2013<sup>165</sup> provides data on percentages of domiciled ethnic groups in UK universities (Figure 7). Across the UK, 18.8% of UK domiciled students were BME, including Asian (7.9%), Black (6%), Mixed Ethnicity (2.9%), Other ethnic groups (1.1%) and Chinese (0.9%). Across all ethnicities, women outnumber men.

In 2019, around 60% of women from ethnic minority backgrounds in the workforce had a degree or higher education (HE) qualification, up 31% points since 1994.<sup>166</sup> This is compared to around 50% of white women in

### Key Facts

- Ethnic minority students are less likely to enter higher tariff universities. For example, while 16% of White British students enter higher tariff institutions, only 11% of Black Caribbean do so.
- Ethnic minorities applying to Russell Group universities faced substantially lower odds of receiving an offer compared to white applicants.
- There is a significant underrepresentation of ethnic minority students in Oxbridge with only 1.7% of Oxford undergraduates starting in 2017 being Bangladeshi or Pakistani and 1.9% being Black.
- BAME students are 13% less likely to get a first or upper-second-class degree than white students.
- Non-continuation rates for Black Caribbean first degree entrants are the highest of all ethnic groups at 12.5% of 2012-13 entrants, compared with 6.5% of white entrants.

<sup>162</sup> Beck, V., Fuller, A., & Unwin, L. (2006). *Safety in stereotypes? The impact of gender and 'race' on young people's perceptions of their post compulsory education and labour market opportunities*. British Educational Research Journal, 32(5), 667-686.

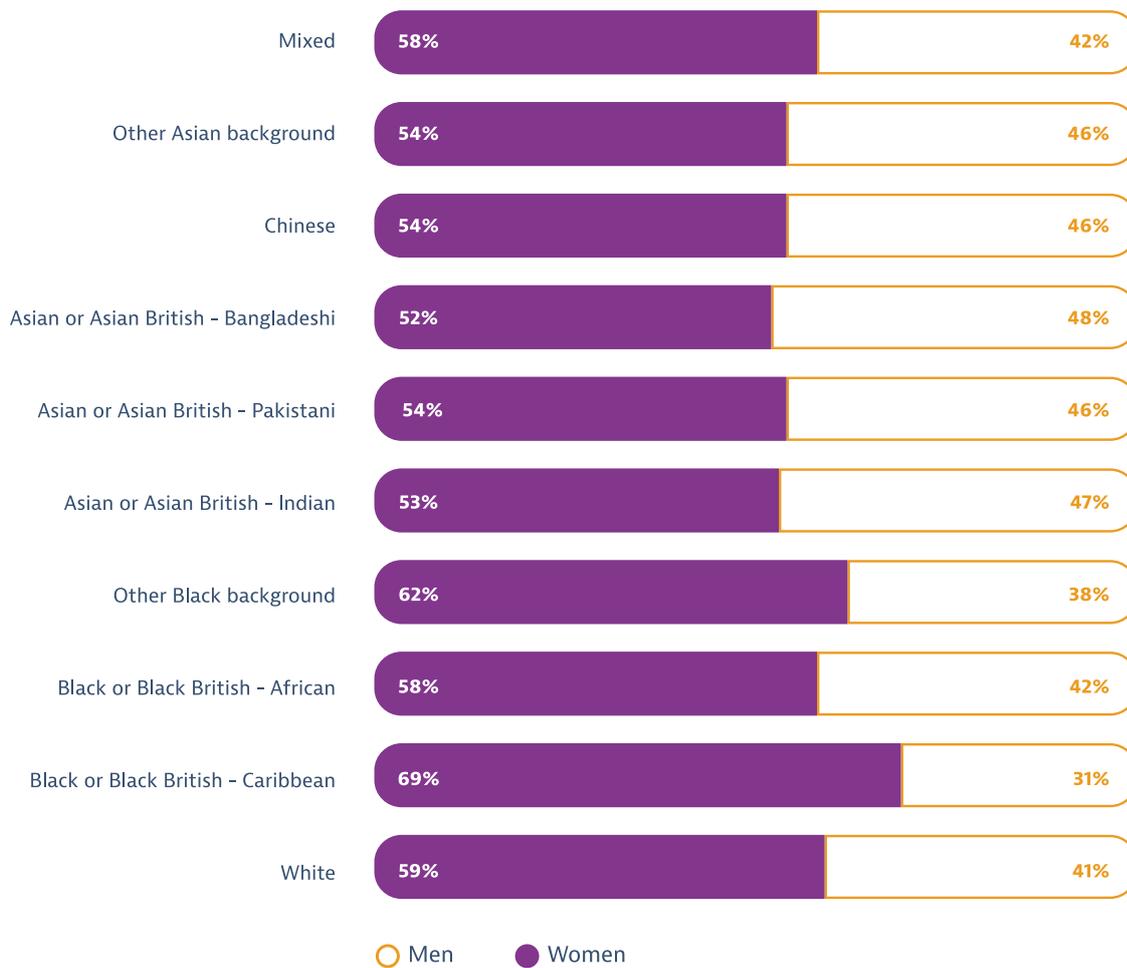
<sup>163</sup> Universities UK and NUS. (2019). *Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK Universities: Closing the Gap*. Universities UK and National Union of Students.

<sup>164</sup> HESA website (2021). Table 14 - UK domiciled student enrolments by ethnicity and sex 2014/15 to 2019/20. Available: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-14> Accessed 07/07/2021.

<sup>165</sup> Equality Challenge Unit. (2013). *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2013: Part 2 Students*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

<sup>166</sup> Amadjarif, Z., Angeli, M., Haldance, A., and Zemaityte, G. (2020).

Figure 7: UK domiciled student enrolments by ethnicity and gender, academic years 2014/15 to 2019/20



the workforce who had a degree or a HE qualification, up around 25% points since 1994. Despite these encouraging statistics, several studies point to a less than rosy picture behind the numbers. Unfortunately, most of this research does not intersect with gender so more research is needed to explore women of colour’s experience in HE. We explore challenges faced by ethnic minority groups in the university system below and use research that focuses specifically on women of colour where we can.

### Access to Higher Tariff Universities

There are significant variations in the proportion of students from different ethnic groups currently entering HE, and in particular ‘higher tariff’ universities.<sup>167</sup> Higher tariff universities refer to those which are ‘prestigious’ with stringent entry requirements. For example, while 16% of White British students enter higher tariff institutions, only 11% of Black Caribbean do so. Students from other ethnic groups are more likely to enter university at higher tariff institutions, such as Indian (30%) students.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Higher tariff universities are those which require higher entry requirements. OFS. (2019). *Topic briefing: Black and minority ethnic (BME) students*. Office for Students.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

Using data supplied by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), Boliver<sup>169</sup> found that all ethnic minorities applying to Russell Group (high tariff) universities faced substantially lower odds of receiving an offer compared to white applicants, especially those from Black Caribbean (0.76 to 1), Black African (0.54 to 1), Pakistani (0.64 to 1) and Bangladeshi (0.74 to 1) backgrounds. This is after controlling for prior attainment and course competitiveness.

Likewise, there is a significant underrepresentation of ethnic minority students in Oxbridge (University of Oxford and University of Cambridge). For example, between 2015 and 2017, the think tank Fullfact found that white applicants were on average twice as likely to be accepted into Oxford than Black applicants.<sup>170</sup> For degrees in medicine at Oxford in 2017, Black applicants had an offer rate of 9% with 8% admitted, compared to an offer rate of 22% with 20% admitted for white students. Among ethnic minority students, certain groups are more underrepresented than others with only 1.7% of Oxford undergraduates starting in 2017 being Bangladeshi or Pakistani and 1.9% being Black. This unequal access to higher tariff universities, especially Oxbridge, for students of colour may impact on future employment outcomes, with employers likely to seek out students from these specific universities.

## Attainment Disparity

Once students of colour are at university, they face disparities in the grades they receive. BAME students are 13% less likely to get a first or upper-second-class degree than white students.<sup>171</sup> Rafferty<sup>172</sup> suggests that part of the reason why some minority ethnic groups are less likely to attend more prestigious institutions or are less likely to

achieve first or upper second-class degrees relates to lower prior attainment at A-Level. He attributes much of this to socio-economic disadvantage and the greater risk of poverty among ethnic minority and immigrant households which might impact on a learner's development, health and available resources. However, Rafferty argues that socio-economic factors do not fully explain ethnic differences in educational achievement and suggests that lower prior achievement might be connected to institutional racism within the education system or low teacher expectations (as discussed in the section 'Moving into work - school' above).

Furthermore, Shaw et al in their report for the Social Mobility Commission<sup>173</sup> found that, although attainment gaps develop earlier in the education system, ethnicity attainment gaps persist in HE even after prior attainment is controlled for. More research is needed to explain both what happens to students of colour in their educational experiences prior to attending university and their experience once they are in that leads to disparities in grades. This is important in the context that many top employers have grade requirements just to make an application to a job.

## Drop-Out Rates

University drop-out rates vary significantly by ethnicity, with Black students almost one and a half times more likely to drop out than white or Asian students.<sup>174</sup> HEFCE data shows that non-continuation rates for Black Caribbean first degree entrants are the highest of all ethnic groups at 12.5% of 2012-13 entrants, compared with 6.5% of white entrants.<sup>175</sup> Black students are also particularly likely to drop out of HE after a year.<sup>176</sup> Concerningly, the EHRC found that

<sup>169</sup> Boliver, V. (2016). *Exploring Ethnic Inequalities in Admission to Russell Group Universities*. *Sociology* 2016, Vol. 50(2) 247–266.

<sup>170</sup> Reland, J. (2018). *Black and ethnic minority students at the University of Oxford*, Fullfact, from <https://fullfact.org/education/bme-students-oxford/>

<sup>171</sup> Universities UK and NUS. (2019).

<sup>172</sup> Rafferty, A. (2012). *Ethnic penalties in graduate level over-education, unemployment and wages: evidence from Britain*. *Work, employment and society*, 26(6), 987-1006.

<sup>173</sup> Shaw, B., Menzies, L., Bernardes, E., Baars, S., Nye, P., & Allen, R. (2016). *Ethnicity, gender and social mobility*. London: Social Mobility Commission.

<sup>174</sup> Universities UK and NUS. (2019).

<sup>175</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017). *Race in the Workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review*. Assets Publishing Service

<sup>176</sup> Shaw, B., Menzies, L., Bernardes, E., Baars, S., Nye, P., & Allen, R. (2016).

one in 20 students who responded to their call for evidence said racial harassment caused them to leave their studies.<sup>177</sup>

Writing in the Guardian, Alex Mistlin,<sup>178</sup> a recent Black British Cambridge university graduate, provides insights into why Black students might disengage with HE. He describes his feelings of cultural detachment in the predominantly white environment, such as food served in the college great halls and being able to wear their hair in a certain way. He suggests small changes to make the university more inclusive for when Black students arrive. For example, hiring more Black academics and doing more to highlight the contribution people of colour make to the intellectual life of the university.

Research supports this notion of cultural detachment. Shaw et al<sup>179</sup> highlight the impact of low levels of diversity and representation in academic staff on BAME students' sense of belonging and perceptions of the possibility of pursuing a career in academia. Furthermore, Stuart et al<sup>180</sup> found that minority ethnic students, no matter which class position they held, did not enjoy the same sense of entitlement as their white counterparts. This manifested itself in self-reliant, less collaborative approaches to study

and greater reluctance to seek peer support.

In one of the few studies exploring intersections of gender, Scandone's study of the experiences of 21 British-born Bangladeshi young women studying at a range of different universities in London<sup>181</sup> revealed that participants from working class backgrounds found it harder to 'fit in' at institutions where the predominant intake did not match their social class and ethnicity. Scandone also highlights how prevalent assumptions that universities with a large number of ethnic minorities have lower standards than predominantly white-middle class institutions have a profound impact on women of colour's self-perception and experiences.

## Summary

All the factors in the educational institution that we have discussed above – including teacher biases, racist disciplinary regimes, lower chances of getting to a high tariff university, attainment disparity and cultural detachment – have the ability to shape a young woman of colour's future, prospects and progression. Therefore, it is important to recognise the role of education as an important timepoint for future employment outcomes.

**Concerningly, the EHRC found that one in 20 students who responded to their call for evidence said racial harassment caused them to leave their studies.**

<sup>177</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2019). *Tackling racial harassment: universities challenged*. First published, Equality and Human Rights Commission.

<sup>178</sup> Mistlin, A. (2019). *Want black students to feel at home? Don't ignore the little things*, The Guardian, from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/may/21/what-deters-black-students-from-applying-to-cambridge-the-little-things-do-matter> (Accessed 18 December 2020).

<sup>179</sup> Shaw, B., Menzies, L., Bernardes, E., Baars, S., Nye, P., & Allen, R. (2016).

<sup>180</sup> Stuart, M., Lido, C., and Morgan, J. (2011) *Personal stories: how students' social and cultural life histories interact with the field of higher education*. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 30(4), 489-508.

<sup>181</sup> Scandone, B. (2017). *Social class, ethnicity and the process of 'fitting in'*. In R. Waller, N. Ingram & M. R. Ward (Eds.). *Higher Education and Social Inequalities: University Admissions, Experiences, and Outcomes*. Routledge.

## Entry to the Workplace

When we talk about the pipeline to progression, the point of entry into the workplace is key to understanding unequal opportunities in the pay and progression of women of colour. It sets the tone for future employment outcomes – just as youth unemployment can be ‘scarring’ of people’s future wages,<sup>182</sup> so can periods of lower paid work,<sup>183</sup> especially for graduates.<sup>184</sup> Women of colour are likely to enter the workforce on low-paid jobs they are overqualified for and experience a delay in entering employment post-graduation. All these factors have the potential to set them up for lower pay and progression throughout their career. Below we discuss several reasons as to why this is happening.

### Discrimination

The GEMM project<sup>185</sup> was a large-scale experiment conducted with applications to real jobs using CVs that are identical to the CVs of White British people other than using ethnic minority names. It found that people from ethnic minority backgrounds had to send 60% more job applications to receive as many call-backs as White British people. For Pakistani and Nigerian people, this rose to 70% and 80% more applications for the same result.

Furthermore, for Pakistani and Nigerian people, HE did not seem to be a leveller: for example, Nigerians with a university degree and relevant work experience still had to send twice as many applications as the majority group to be considered for software engineering and marketing assistant jobs. The study did not find a significant difference between women and men of colour overall, although for some ethnic groups there was a difference; the lowest call-back rates relative to White British women were for South American and Caribbean women, who had to send 130% more applications.

The study suggests that this discrimination is based on an aversion to hiring people with ethnic minority-sounding names, as opposed to any assumptions about the productivity of employees of colour, as adding information about past job performance on their CVs did not reduce discrimination. In other words, it seems that employers simply read no further when they saw a South Asian-sounding, Middle Eastern-sounding or African-sounding name. Concern about poor English language fluency or foreign qualifications cannot explain these findings as all participants

<sup>182</sup> Gregg, P., and Tominey, E. (2004). The Wage Scar from Youth Unemployment, CMPO Working Paper Series No 04/097.

<sup>183</sup> Brunner, B., and Kuhn, A. (2014). *The impact of labour market entry conditions on initial job assignment and wages*, Journal of Population Economics 27.

<sup>184</sup> Mosthaf, A. (2014). *Do scarring effects of low-wage employment and non-employment differ between levels of qualification?* Scottish Journal of Political Economy 61(2).

<sup>185</sup> Di Stasio, V., & Heath, A. (2019). *Are employers in Britain discriminating against ethnic minorities?* Centre for Social Investigation, 1-10.

were either British-born or had arrived in Britain at the age of six and had obtained all their education and training in Britain. This information was clearly signalled in the resume and stressed in the cover letter. These findings are particularly disturbing and point to the fact that discrimination in the workplace begins even before ethnic minorities manage to set foot into an interview.

The report authors looked at past, similar field experiments and found that there had been virtually no change from the 1970s in the level of discrimination faced by Pakistani-origin people in Britain. They also found that discrimination was worse overall in Britain than in the four other European nations studied (Germany, Netherlands, Norway, and Spain).<sup>186</sup> In response to this issue, organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry have called for companies to remove names from all applications, sometimes referred to as a 'name blind' process.<sup>187</sup>

## 60% MORE

**JOB APPLICATIONS COMPARED  
TO WHITE BRITISH PEOPLE**



### Key Facts

- People from ethnic minority backgrounds had to send 60% more job applications to receive as many call-backs as White British people. For Pakistani and Nigerian people, this rose to 70% and 80% more applications for the same result.
- Muslim women report being questioned about their intentions towards children and marriage in interviews and are up to 65% less likely to be employed than are White Christian women of same age and qualifications.
- Ethnic minority graduates are much less likely to find employment six months after graduation than white graduates and this was particularly the case for female ethnic minority graduates.
- For graduates, early unemployment significantly reduces the employment probability three and a half years after graduation by 5-8% and is associated with 20-25% lower earnings per year when employed."

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> CBI. (2016). Time for Action. CBI, from <https://www.realestatebalance.org/media/1212/2-cbi-business-case-for-inclusive-workplaces-2016.pdf>

## Bias and Stereotypes

There are other types of bias and discrimination that may not have quick fixes such as the “name blind” process. Many commentators refer to a form of discrimination called “affinity bias”.<sup>188</sup> According to this theory, employers are likely to select employees who are similar to themselves, which means that the dominant gender (male) and ethnic background (white) within the management team will reproduce itself by appointing people from the same gender and ethnic background. This means that the lack of diversity in senior roles and in recruitment panels may act as a barrier to women of colour entering the workplace, who could be perceived too dissimilar or different to their interviewers.

Taylor and Stanton<sup>189</sup> provide some initial evidence to support affinity bias. They asked participants to order resumes of 24 different avatars that varied in gender, skin tone and competency under the pretext of choosing the avatars to be teammates. They found that while competency was important, avatar appearance generated an affinity bias in resume sorting. Notably, participants rated avatars with a similar skin tone to their own as their top-8 resumes compared to resumes they placed in their bottom-8. This suggested that individuals preferred to work with avatars that are self-similar. While we need to be careful in applying these results to real life and further in-field research is needed, it does suggest that the lack of non-white interview panels, HR managers and senior leaders may act as a barrier for women of colour attempting to enter employment.

Shaw et al<sup>190</sup> also cites evidence that stereotypes relating to ethnicity disproportionately affects women. For example, a number of studies found discrimination experienced by ethnic minority Muslim women, particularly those who display symbols of their religion, such as the hijab. A qualitative study exploring the multi-layered challenges faced by South Asian Muslim women in the pursuit of employment<sup>191</sup> suggests that negative stereotypes about Islam in the aftermath of the bombing of the World Trade Centre in the United States in 2001, result in job discrimination that is worse than for any other ethnic minority group. Specifically, in relation to ethnic minority Muslim women, active stereotypes and discrimination has been highlighted at recruitment and selection stage. Muslim women reported being questioned about their intentions towards children and marriage in interview<sup>192</sup> and are up to 65% less likely to be employed than are White Christian women of same age and qualifications.<sup>193</sup>

## Overqualification and Prolonged Period of Unemployment Following Graduation

Although people of colour in the UK are more likely to go to university, once they graduate, they often experience worse outcomes compared to their white peers in terms of employment prospects and pay. Drawing on HE destination data, Zwysen and Longhi<sup>194</sup> found that ethnic minority graduates are much less likely to find employment six months after

<sup>188</sup> Turnbull, H. (2017). *The Affinity Bias Conundrum: The Illusion of Inclusion Part III* from <http://www.diversityjournal.com/13763-affinity-bias-conundrum-illusion-inclusion-part-iii/> and Snowy peak syndrome: why UK organisations remain white at the top”, *The Guardian*.

<sup>189</sup> Trainer, T., Taylor, J. R., & Stanton, C. J. (2020). *Choosing the Best Robot for the Job: Affinity Bias in Human-Robot Interaction*. In *International Conference on Social Robotics* (pp. 490-501). Springer, Cham.

<sup>190</sup> Shaw, B., Menzies, L., Bernardes, E., Baars, S., Nye, P., & Allen, R. (2016)

<sup>191</sup> Tariq, M., and Syed, J. (2017). *Intersectionality at Work: South Asian Muslim Women's Experiences of Employment and Leadership in the United Kingdom*. *Sex Roles* 77, 510–522.

<sup>192</sup> Wallis, H., & Robb, S. (2013). *Workplace discrimination prompts 'Whitened' job applications*. BBC News, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20608039>

<sup>193</sup> Dobson, R. (2014) *British Muslims face worst job discrimination of any minority group, according to research*. In *The Independent*, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-muslims-face-worst-job-discrimination-any-minority-group-9893211.html>

<sup>194</sup> Zwysen, W., and Longhi, S. (2017). *Employment and earning differences in the early career of ethnic minority British graduates: the importance of university career, parental background and area characteristics*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Vol 44, Issue 1.

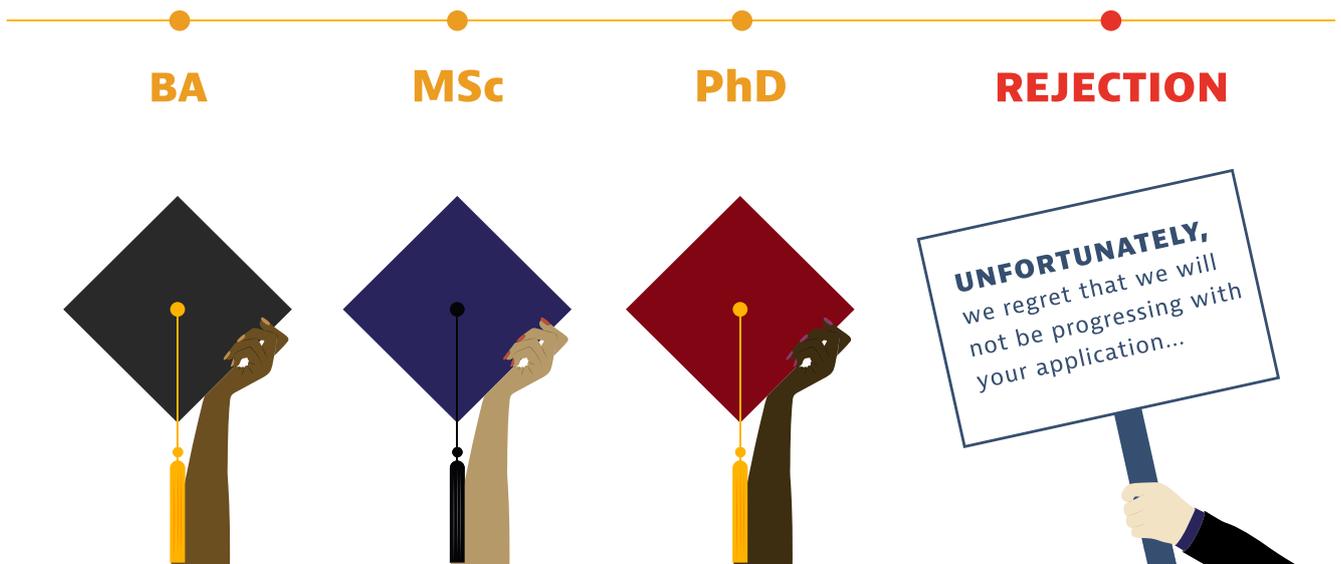
graduation than white graduates and this was particularly the case for female ethnic minority graduates.

Considering that early unemployment significantly reduces the employment probability three and a half years after graduation by 5-8% and is associated with 20-25% lower earnings per year when employed,<sup>195</sup> these findings are concerning.

The study<sup>196</sup> found that graduates' local area and parental background were important factors. The authors suggests that part of the ethnic differences in finding employment are due to a lack of networks and familial support which could help facilitate the transition to the labour market. For example, ethnic minority graduates are less likely to come from a high social class parental background which may mean they do not have access to the same financial or social resources as White British graduates.<sup>197</sup> Parents with these social and financial resources are able to provide the right contacts to gain employment, can support

in finding a good job and also allow their children to be more selective in accepting employment and unpaid internships. Indeed, Zwysen and Longhi<sup>198</sup> found that resources through the family are important in determining labour market outcomes of ethnic minorities. They observed large ethnic earning and employment gaps for ethnic minority graduates from a low parental background compared to White British graduates, whereas minorities with better off parents had similar or even higher earnings compared to White British. They also found that ethnic minorities were on average less likely to have found their job through social contacts than White British people. This suggests that a lack of information and resources available via family is a barrier to employment post-graduation for ethnic minorities whose parents are likely to occupy a low social class background.

Moreover, not only is it harder for ethnic minorities to enter employment after graduation, but, as seen in the "Pay Gap" section, they also earn less once in the labour market. Rafferty<sup>199</sup> suggests that the graduate pay penalty might be explained



<sup>195</sup> Zwysen, W., & Longhi, S. (2016). *Labour market disadvantage of ethnic minority British graduates: university choice, parental background or neighbourhood?* (No. 2016-02). ISER Working Paper Series.

<sup>196</sup> Zwysen, W., and Longhi, S. (2017).

<sup>197</sup> Zwysen, W., & Longhi, S. (2016).

<sup>198</sup> Ibid

<sup>199</sup> Rafferty, A. (2012).

by the tendency for ethnic minorities to go to newer, less prestigious universities (as discussed in the University section above). However, research from the Runnymede Trust contradicts this theory. It found that ethnic minority graduates, and women in particular, from Russell Group Universities earn less and are more likely to be unemployed than White Graduates, with the exception of Indian and Black African groups.<sup>200</sup>

Finally, and crucially, Shaw et al<sup>201</sup> highlight the 'broken mobility promise' for South Asian Muslims, particularly women. Young people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds are more likely than ever to succeed in education and go on to university, girls even more so than boys. However, these outcomes do not yet translate into labour market returns with unemployment particularly prevalent among Bangladeshi women.

## Migrants and Entry into the Workplace

In 2020, about half of all people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK were born abroad, and half were born in the UK.<sup>202</sup> It is thus important to discuss issues that will specifically affect migrant women of colour's entry into employment. Of course, many women of colour born abroad will have come to the UK as children, and their experience of the UK workplace may not differ much from UK-born women of colour; but, for many women of colour in the UK, their story is one of migration as working-age adults. In 2019, women born in all regions except the EU were less likely to be employed, on average, than UK-born women, and overall non-UK born workers were more likely to be under-employed, in temporary work, and working night shifts.<sup>203</sup>

Fernández-Reino<sup>204</sup> points to research showing that migrants living in the UK face discrimination in the labour market for multiple reasons, some of which might be shared with UK-born ethnic minorities such as ethnicity, skin colour or religion while other factors might include language proficiency or accent. Labour market field experiments in recent decades have found that ethnic minority applicants tend to be discriminated against regardless of whether they are foreign born or have a foreign nationality, or children of migrants with UK credentials with no language issues. While this suggests that ethnicity tends to be a better predictor of discrimination than immigration status, it is still important to consider the specific barriers migrants face in attempting to enter the labour market.

## Migrants and Qualifications

Research drawing on the Labour Force Survey between 1993 and 2003 found that new migrants to the UK, as well as people of colour who were born here, are more likely to be 'over-educated' for their job role. This is especially the case for Africans and Indians of both genders along with Pakistani/Bangladeshi women. At the time of this research, this was particularly true for new migrants when they first arrived with the effect then diminishing over time.<sup>205</sup> More recent research has found that migrants, particularly if they have foreign qualifications, are still more likely to be over-qualified. Working in the public rather than private sector appears to significantly reduce this effect.<sup>206</sup>

According to a Joseph Rowntree report,<sup>207</sup> over-qualification is prevalent among ethnic minority groups on entry to the workplace, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi

<sup>200</sup> Runnymede Trust. (2014). *When education isn't enough: Labour market outcomes of ethnic minority graduates at elite universities*. London: Runnymede Trust.

<sup>201</sup> Shaw, B., Menzies, L., Bernardes, E., Baars, S., Nye, P., & Allen, R. (2016).

<sup>202</sup> Analysis of ONS Annual Population Survey data via [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

<sup>203</sup> Fernandez-Reino, M., and Rienzo, C. (2019). *Migrants in the UK Labour Market: An Overview*. Migration Observatory

<sup>204</sup> Fernández-Reino, M. (2020). *Migrants and discrimination in the UK*. The Migrant Observatory at the University of Oxford.

<sup>205</sup> Lindley, J., and Lenton, P. (2006). *The over-education of UK immigrants: evidence from the Labour Force Survey*, Sheffield Economic Research Paper Series 2006/001

<sup>206</sup> Zwysen, W., and Demireva, N. (2018). *An examination of ethnic hierarchies and returns to human capital in the UK*, Social Inclusion 6(3) 6-33

<sup>207</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, I. (2015) *Entry to, and progression in, work*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

groups, meaning they are working in lower paid jobs below their potential. This may be partially explained by the complex process of interpreting the equivalence of overseas qualifications against the UK qualifications framework. Individuals can contact the National Recognition Information System (NARIC) to access an international database of qualifications linked to UK equivalents. In Northern Ireland this service is free, with individuals able to go to local benefits offices and have the staff access the NARIC database. However, in England, there is no such process and individuals have to contact the NARIC agency directly, sending through their relevant documentation, and paying for access in order to be issued with the appropriate equivalency certificates. This creates yet another financial and knowledge-based barrier for migrant women of colour trying to enter the workplace.

Chwarae Teg<sup>208</sup> who conducted focus groups with BAME women corroborates the above, where BAME women stated that a failure to gain recognition for existing qualifications is a significant barrier to first generation BAME women entering and participating in the labour market and sustaining an independent life. Furthermore, a large project exploring ethnic minority British Muslim women's experiences of work and career development<sup>209</sup> points to a shortage of English As an Additional Language provision in further education colleges which also hampers British Muslim women's chances of employment.

## *Migrants and Exploitation*

According to Radu, Hudson and Philips,<sup>210</sup> migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in part-time or temporary low-paid work. Research evidence points to migrants' increasing occupational segregation in the low-pay labour market, with gender contributing to their vulnerability. For example, according to Kofman et al,<sup>211</sup> female migrants are more likely to work in traditional labour market divisions such as the 'caring' sectors of employment and have increasingly populated temporary, casual roles brought about by the privatisation of the Care sector.<sup>212</sup> New migrants may also face pressure to accept lower quality work due to limits on benefits, or due to visa requirements.<sup>213</sup>

Moreover, a Channel 4 Dispatches investigation<sup>214</sup> in 2010 revealed that thousands of migrant domestic workers are enduring conditions that campaigners say amount to modern-day slavery. According to Chwarae Teg,<sup>215</sup> lack of knowledge about employment rights, lack of support networks and access to legal advice and trade unions make migrant workers considerably more vulnerable in the workplace.

Crucially, a 2020 TUC equality briefing<sup>216</sup> states the UK government's hostile environment policy, which aims to make staying in the UK as difficult as possible for migrants, has left many BME workers with no recourse to public funds. These policies include provisions to make it illegal for undocumented migrants to work, reside

**208** Turkmen, H. (2019). *Triple Glazed Ceiling: Barriers to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Participating in the Economy*. Chwarae Teg

**209** Bi, S. (2020). *Empowered Employment: Unlocking the Workplace for Muslim women*. Muslim Women Connect.

**210** Radu, D., Hudson, M., & Philips, J. (2011). *Migrant workers' interactions with welfare benefits: A review of recent evidence and its relevance for the tax credits system*. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

**211** Kofman, E., Lukes, S., D'Angelo, A. and Montagna, N. (2009) *The Equality Implications of Being a Migrant in Britain*. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report 19

**212** Datta, K., McIlwaine, C., Evans, Y., Herbert, J., May, J., & Wills, J. (2010). *A migrant ethic of care? Negotiating care and caring among migrant workers in London's low-pay economy*. *Feminist Review*, 94(1), 93-116.

**213** Anderson, B. (2010). *Migration immigration controls and the fashioning of precarious workers*, *Work, Employment and Society*.

**214** Hill, M. (2010). *Many migrant workers in UK are modern-day slaves, say investigators*. *The Guardian*, from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/aug/30/migrant-workers-modern-day-slavery>

**215** Turkmen, H. (2019).

**216** TUC. (2020)

or access public services in the UK. Recent Citizens Advice research<sup>217</sup> revealed that nearly 1.4 million people in the UK have no recourse to public funds<sup>218</sup> and, of the cases seen in 2019, 82% were BME. This means no recourse to public funds disproportionately harms BME groups and that many BME migrant women have no choice but to enter low-paid insecure work, often in multiple precarious jobs.

## Summary

People of colour experience a number of barriers even before they are able to set foot into the labour market. Namely, intense discrimination at application and interview

stage and racial biases in recruitment processes that lead to delays in entering employment, especially for graduates. They are also likely to be overqualified for the roles they occupy when they first enter the labour market, which is a particular problem for migrants of colour. More research is needed to understand how these barriers specifically affect women of colour, however, from existing research, we can extrapolate that this is a fundamental timepoint in the pipeline. These early unemployment spells cause further obstacles, reducing the employment probability three and a half years after graduation by 5-8% and being associated with 20-25% lower earnings per year when employed.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>217</sup> Citizens Advice, (2020). *Citizens Advice reveal nearly 1.4 million people have No Recourse to Public Funds*. From <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/about-us1/media/press-releases/citizens-advice-reveals-nearly-14m-have-no-access-to-welfare-safety-net/>, cited in TUC 2020 *ibid*.

<sup>218</sup> Many migrants in the UK have no recourse to public funds, which means they cannot access mainstream benefits and housing assistance, <https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/resources/no-recourse-public-funds-nrpf/>

<sup>219</sup> Zwysen, W., & Longhi, S. (2016).

## Progressing at Work

Even once having successfully entered employment, Women of Colour face a raft of barriers within the workplace which impact on their progression, career development and chances of promotion. The discrimination they face is both racial and gendered, combining the specific gendered barriers reported by women more generally and barriers that BAME people experience at the same time.<sup>220</sup> This section explores some of the main barriers to progression that the available literature suggests women of colour face, before moving onto explore the way these barriers are present in specific sectors.

### Lack of Promotion, Training and Opportunity

A recent TUC equality briefing<sup>221</sup> drawing on evidence involving 1,250 BME workers found that a 'toxic combination' of both racism and sexism in the workplace was impacting on BME women participants' career progression at work. Almost one third (31%) of BME women participants reported being unfairly passed over for or denied a promotion at work, which rose to nearly half of disabled BME women (45%). Close to half (45%) of BME women said they have been singled out for harder or unpopular tasks at work compared to their white counterparts. More than one in three (34%) BME women had experienced racist jokes and so-called banter at work and 30 per cent had experienced verbal abuse. The report argues that the institutionalised nature of racism and sexism at work can undermine BME women's careers and leave them feeling isolated from colleagues at work, further limiting their opportunity for progression.

Just under one-third of BME women participants said they had been unfairly denied access to training and development opportunities which would enable promotion. This rose to one in two BME disabled women (52%) and 38% of BME women aged 25 to 34. Moreover, BME disabled women also reported significantly higher levels of unfair and discriminatory treatment. For example, half (51 per cent) said they had had requests for training or development opportunities turned down compared to a quarter of non-disabled BME women (25 per cent). And in turn, BME workers are more likely to say unfair treatment and discrimination at work negatively impacts their career prospects and pay than white workers (19% and 11% respectively). This shows women of colour are likely to be shot down when they attempt to progress in their career through training and development opportunities. As this is the only large-scale study that investigates the promotion rates of women of colour, more research is needed to understand the true scale of the problem.

<sup>220</sup> Turkmen, H. (2019).

<sup>221</sup> TUC. (2020).

## UNFAIRLY DENIED PROMOTION

31%

BME women

45%

disabled  
BME women

## TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### Unfairly denied access

JUST UNDER  
1-IN-3

BME women

38%

BME women  
aged 25 to 34

52%

disabled  
BME women

### Requests turned down

25%

BME women

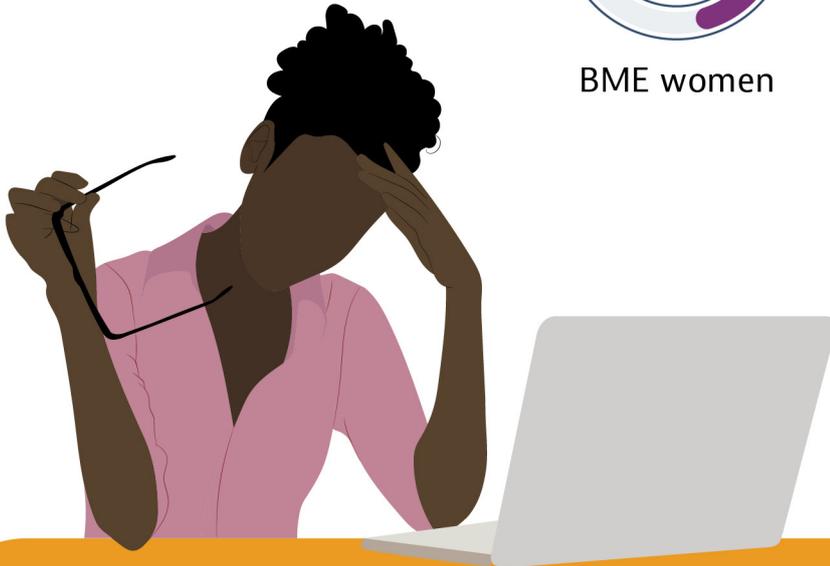
51%

disabled  
BME women

singled out for tasks that were  
**HARDER OR UNPOPULAR**

45%

BME women



**MORE THAN  
1-IN-3  
BME women  
experienced  
RACIST JOKES**

Statistics taken from TUC. (2020). BME women and work: TUC equality briefing. From <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bme-women-and-work>

Due to all of the above, BME workers are in turn more likely to say that unfair treatment and discrimination at work **negatively impacts their career prospects and pay**

11%

white workers

19%

BME workers

A large study exploring British Muslim women's experiences of work and career development<sup>222</sup> provides a detailed picture of the multiple manifestations of direct and indirect discrimination that ethnic minority Muslim women experience. The participants were involved in a wide range of industries including education, healthcare, charity services, administration, management, government and business. The study found that the top three major challenges to work and career development across all women included: a lack of confidence (chosen by 54.3% of participants); a lack of career advice (47.8%) and the lack of opportunity (43.5%).

## Stereotypes

The same study<sup>223</sup> also found that the women were subject to aggressive behaviour and cultural stereotypes from male colleagues and/or superiors. Stereotypes included the belief, that once pregnant, Muslim women would place a greater value in maintaining a family life than a career. Muslim women were also seen as less competent than their male counterparts. The study thus suggests a plethora of factors that stunt Muslim women's progression at work. Comparable research is needed like this to understand workplace discrimination and barriers to progression for different groups of women of colour.

One US study focusing on Black women<sup>224</sup> in the workplace is also useful due to the absence of research in the UK for this ethnic group. This qualitative study involved focus groups from multiple sites to collect data from Black women who had jobs with clearly defined career paths, such as real estate agent, financial planner, college professor, engineer and health educator and most expressed a fair amount of autonomy and flexibility in their roles. Despite participants being professional

and on a positive career trajectory, they still experienced discrimination. Participants describe being stereotyped as incompetent and intellectually inferior by their colleagues. One participant described feeling as though she was constantly under a microscope; that supervisors and co-workers were always looking for behaviours that would confirm their stereotypical beliefs about Black women in the workplace.

Participants describe how they negotiate discrimination through 'shifting' - for example by altering speech patterns and behaviours to ensure they do not live up to stereotypical beliefs held by supervisors and colleagues. Participants describe how shifting involves having to act differently in two worlds – the world of their own identity/ethnic group on the one hand, and the company of their colleagues in the workplace on the other, so they can be seen in the workplace, as one participant described it, as 'a white person in a Black person's body'. The study highlights that the process of shifting chips away at a Black woman's sense of self and can be costly physically and mentally, compromising not only employment outcomes, but the health and well-being of Black women.

## Sector Specific Research

While there is a lack of comprehensive research across sectors, a number of sector specific studies provide more detail about the range of challenges women of colour face to progress in their careers. All sector specific studies suggest that the percentage of women of colour decreases as the career pipeline increases, with a gross under-representation in senior roles. The barriers discussed above, including being denied promotion and training, a lack of support and opportunity, being stereotyped and discriminated against, appear across-sector.

<sup>222</sup> Bi, S. (2020).

<sup>223</sup> Ibid

<sup>224</sup> Hall, J. C., Everett, J. E., & Hamilton-Mason, J. (2012). *Black women talk about workplace stress and how they cope*. *Journal of black studies*, 43(2), 207-226.

## Key Facts

- Compared to White British headteachers, which make up 92.7% of headteachers, just 0.1% of headteachers are Bangladeshi, 0.4% Pakistani and 0.2% Black African.
- One in nine white academic staff (11%) are professors, whereas just one in 33 Black academic staff (3%) and one in 15 (7%) Asian academic staff are professors.
- Whilst 16% of junior barristers are BAME, this falls to 9% at Queen's Counsel level. Likewise, whilst 10% of BAME chartered legal executives were fellows, only 4% were partners.
- The percentage of female BAME officers being promoted remained at 1.7% from 2014-2017 compared to the promotions of white female officers almost doubling during the same period.
- While 3.4% of junior doctors are Chinese and 7.1% are Black, this reduces to 1.9% and 3.6% respectively at senior doctor level.

## Teaching

BME teachers state there is an invisible glass ceiling and a widespread perception in school senior leadership teams that BME teachers “have a certain level and don't go beyond it”.<sup>225</sup> Indeed, latest figures show that just 14.3% of teachers are from a BME group with this reducing to 4% of headteachers.<sup>226</sup> Compared to White British headteachers, which make up 92.7% of headteachers, just 0.1% of headteachers are Bangladeshi, 0.4% Pakistani and 0.2% Black African. In an NEU-commissioned mixed methods study looking at the experiences of BME teachers in England and Wales,<sup>227</sup> focus group participants spoke of a range of systematic barriers impeding their career progression and impacting on their confidence and self-esteem. For example, BME teachers from all ethnic groups stated they were given stereotypical responsibilities (e.g., behaviour responsibilities or preparing lessons for Black History Month) instead of challenging intellectual roles.

The survey and interviews revealed that barriers to career progression were particularly marked for Black Caribbean and Black African teachers in comparison to other minority ethnic groups. Moreover, despite the higher proportion of BME women than men in teaching, women were still less likely to progress to senior leadership roles compared to all male teachers (BME and white).

## Higher Education

An Equality Challenge literature review<sup>228</sup> exploring the experiences of Black and minority ethnic staff in HE reports that, despite the development of equality and diversity policies in the HE sector since the Macpherson report in 1999, BME staff remain significantly underrepresented in more senior positions. While the proportion of BME staff showed a slow but steady increase in all academic grades between 1995-2007, the higher the grade, the lower the proportion of BME staff. For example, BME staff constituted only 4.8% of

<sup>225</sup> Haque, Z., and Elliott, S. (2019). *Barriers Report: Visible and Invisible Barriers: the impact of racism on BME teachers*. The Runnymede Trust/NEU.

<sup>226</sup> GOV.UK WEBSITE. (2021). *School teacher workforce*. From <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/school-teacher-workforce/latest#by-ethnicity>

<sup>227</sup> Haque, Z., and Elliott, S. (2019).

<sup>228</sup> Leathwood, C., Maylor, U., and Moreau, M-P. (2009). *The experience of black and minority ethnic staff working in higher education: Literature review 2009*. Equality Challenge Unit.

professors and heads of departments.<sup>229</sup> UCU analysis<sup>230</sup> also found that while one in nine white academic staff (11%) are professors, just one in 33 Black academic staff (3%) and one in 15 (7%) Asian academic staff are professors. The barriers are also evident when attempting to get on the academic ladder, with just 1.2% of the 19,868 studentships awarded by all UKRI research councils over a three-year period going to Black or Black mixed students.<sup>231</sup> This shows stark inequalities in progression for people of colour in HE higher education and more gender-disaggregated analysis is needed.

In terms of lived experience, the Equality Challenge report<sup>232</sup> found that BME staff encounter a range of barriers to promotion in the Higher Education sector. Black colleagues reported receiving unfair poor appraisals, being overlooked for promotion and being unfairly overloaded with administrative responsibilities. They were also expected to act as informal support and counselling services to Black students without receiving extra workload credit and experienced their scholarship, knowledge and ability called into question by white colleagues.

Additionally, the review cites a study<sup>233</sup> which found that Black female academics felt the types of tasks and the level of responsibilities given to Black women academics undermined their progression opportunities and ability to be perceived as legitimate academics. This view is supported by Professor Mirza<sup>234</sup> who states that Black academic staff in HE in the UK are subjected to a process of 'infantilisation' whereby Black academics are 'seen as less capable of being in authority.

A recent UK study by Rollock focusing on the career experiences of Black female academics and their efforts to reach professorship<sup>235</sup> found that Black female professors experience a messy, convoluted and protracted path to professorship that is characterised by a lack of transparency and fairness. Specifically, respondents reported being overtaken by less qualified and less experienced white female colleagues in appointments to new posts, receiving feedback on unsuccessful applications which lacked detail about what respondents needed to improve in future applications, and being asked repeatedly to provide further evidence in support of applications for promotion. Some respondents delayed applying for promotion as a result of unsupportive or bullying Heads of Department. One respondent described waiting at least 10 years before applying because of the obstacles presented by her Head of Department.

Furthermore, Rollock reports that a culture of explicit and passive bullying persists in HE along with racial stereotyping and microaggressions. Respondents shared accounts of being ostracised by colleagues (including Heads of Departments) during meetings and social events and, unlike their white counterparts, of needing to go out of their way to demonstrate their competence, experience and knowledge. Respondents developed a range of responses to help them cope with and navigate HE were exhausting and stressful. For example, feeling the need to over-prepare for meetings, spending time accruing additional outputs as evidence of their suitability for promotion, and forensic-like analyses of situations with white peers to avoid or manage undesirable or challenging workplace behaviours.

<sup>229</sup> Connor, H. (2008) *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2008*. Equality Challenge Unit, London.

<sup>230</sup> UCU. (2019). *Black academic staff face double whammy in promotion and pay stakes*, Universities and Colleges Union. From <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10360/Black-academic-staff-face-double-whammy-in-promotion-and-pay-stakes>

<sup>231</sup> Williams, P., Bath, S., Arday, J., and Lewis, C. (2019). *The Broken Pipeline: Barriers to Black PhD Students Accessing Research Council Funding*. Leading Routes.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid

<sup>233</sup> Jones, C. (2006). *Falling between the cracks: what diversity means for black women in higher education*. *Policy Futures in Education* 4(2): 145–59

<sup>232</sup> Mirza, H.S. (2009). *Race, gender and educational desire: why black women succeed and fail*. Routledge, London.

<sup>234</sup> Mirza, H.S. (2009). *Race, gender and educational desire: why black women succeed and fail*. Routledge, London.

<sup>235</sup> Rollock, N. (2019). *Staying Power: The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors*. UCU.

### Police Services

Similarly, research exploring the experiences of BAME women within the Police Services in England<sup>236</sup> illustrates the unequal levels of promotion and progression of BAME officers against their white counterparts. While the percentage of female BAME officers being promoted remained at 1.7% from 2014–2017, the promotions of white female officers almost doubled during the same period. And, despite the Macpherson Inquiry and the push for BAME police recruitment and progression objectives, there was little or no increase in the numbers of BAME female officers promoted during the 10 years before 2019.

Additionally, this study found that compared to the higher rate of normal retirements among white officers, voluntary resignations and dismissals were higher among BAME officers, speaking to the disproportionality in the way BAME officers are treated by internal disciplinary procedures.<sup>237</sup> The study also reports that BAME participants felt undervalued and undermined by their white colleagues who viewed them as incapable of holding supervisory rank. While BAME women in the Police Services in England may be located in the Police Services in England, they are at the same time outsiders who occupy a tenuous position.

### Legal Sector

A Ministry of Justice<sup>238</sup> report provides statistics from 2020 and shows that, for barristers, solicitors and chartered legal executives, BAME individuals constituted a smaller proportion of individuals at higher seniority levels compared to lower seniority levels. For example, while 16% of junior barristers are BAME, this falls to 9% at the

Queen's Counsel level. Likewise, while 10% of BAME chartered legal executives were fellows, only 4% were partners. While this report does not break down by gender and provides no comparison data to white counterparts, it does indicate that people of colour are not representatively progressing to the top positions in the legal sector. More research is needed to understand the promotion rates of women of colour in legal professions.

While we have some quantitative data, there is an absence of qualitative research on the experiences of women of colour lawyers in the UK. However, one US study provides insight into the barriers they may be facing.<sup>239</sup> A survey of 2,000 US attorneys found that women of colour attorneys face significant disadvantages in advancement as they are not fully incorporated into all facets of the profession. For example, they may face bias and scepticism from white attorneys when trying to develop rapport and mutual trust during negotiations. As these qualities are needed for successful negotiations, attorneys who lack this rapport and mutual trust may find it more challenging to secure a favourable outcome for their clients.

The study also suggests that men dominate the rank of partner in law firms due to affinity bias, namely that the allocation of rewards and opportunities increase in likelihood for individuals who are similar in important respects, including gender and ethnicity to gatekeepers and leaders. UK research on women generally in the legal sector<sup>240</sup> points to the same issues: white men still account for the vast majority of senior positions, even though women have been present long enough to be part of the selection pools when vacancies for senior positions arise.

<sup>236</sup> Hasan, M. (2019) *Bullying and Harassment of Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) women within the Police Services in England: Race, Gender and Police Culture*. Doctoral thesis, University of Northumbria.

<sup>237</sup> Morris, W., Burden, A. & Weekes, A. (2004) *The Report of the Morris Inquiry. An independent inquiry into professional standards and employment matters*, The Morris Inquiry, London.

<sup>238</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2020). *Diversity of the judiciary: Legal professions, new appointments and current post-holders*. GOV.UK.

<sup>239</sup> Collins, T. A., Dumas, T. L., & Moyer, L. P. (2017). *Intersecting disadvantages: Race, gender, and age discrimination among attorneys*. *Social Science Quarterly*, 98(5), 1642–1658.

<sup>240</sup> Guyard-Nedelec, A. (2017). *Discrimination Against Women Lawyers in England and Wales: An Overview*. *Gender Forum*, Issue 17.

## Health and Medical Sector

Recent government data provides 2021 NHS workforce statistics.<sup>241</sup> The same patterns emerge as above, with there being a higher percentage of people of colour in lower positions, reducing the higher up the career pipeline. While 3.4% of junior doctors are Chinese and 7.1% are Black, this reduces to 1.9% and 3.6% respectively at senior doctor level.

Additionally, among non-medical staff, there was a higher percentage of people from Asian, Black and Mixed ethnic backgrounds in 'support' and 'middle' grades compared with 'senior' and 'very senior manager grades'. For example, within 'non-medical staff' there are 1,143 Band 1 Asian staff and 764 Band 1 Black staff which reduces to 73 at Band 9 for Asian staff, and 28 for Black staff (the higher the band, the higher the seniority). This is in comparison to 1,922 white members of the NHS workforce who sit at the highest Band 9. These figures once again suggest there are halts to progression once in the workforce for people of colour. Future research should seek to disaggregate statistics along gender axis too.

A survey exploring job grading within the UK NHS nursing profession carried out by the Policy Studies Institute for the Department of Health<sup>242</sup> using survey data from 1994 found significant differences in speed of promotion between ethnic groups. For promotion to grade E (enhanced rate for specialists), the difference was in the range of four months to a year or more for Black and Asian groups compared to white groups. At grade F (enhanced rate for specialists with extra experience and/or qualifications) the difference was around two to six years, with larger estimated differences for females (no extra detail on this provided in the report).

<sup>241</sup> GOV.UK WEBSITE. (2021). *Workforce and business – NHS workforce*. From <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/nhs-workforce/latest>

<sup>242</sup> Pudney, S., & Shields, M. (2000). *Gender, race, pay and promotion in the British nursing profession: estimation of a generalized ordered probit model*. *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, 15(4), 367-399.

---

At the highest-grade G (enhanced rates for 'in-charge' responsibilities) ethnic differences are so great for women that **Black and Asian women are predicted not to achieve promotion within the length of a normal career**.

---

However, as this study is now considerably out-of-date, it should be treated with caution and a more up-to-date study is needed not only to verify these findings but explore why promotion within the NHS is so much slower for women of colour.

A US study exploring the experiences of Indian physicians in the US<sup>243</sup> is potentially useful as it is supported by a small amount of UK research into racism in Medicine.<sup>244</sup> Both men and women Indian physicians in the US study<sup>245</sup> reported substantial gender discrimination from supervisors and co-workers in the workplace. They described how discrimination shaped each step of their careers, from applying for residencies, to jobs and promotions. For example, supervisor physicians and fellow colleagues tried to steer Indian women physicians away from opting for competitive procedure-oriented specialisms like general surgery and orthopaedics and more towards "less demanding specialisms" such as psychiatry, paediatrics, and family medicine. These branches paid less and were less competitive. The study found that this discrimination partly stemmed from an assumption that motherhood could limit commitment to a role, but largely stemmed from an assumption that women are inherently less capable and hardworking than men.

An article published in a BMJ special edition on 'Racism in Medicine',<sup>246</sup> reports that doctors from ethnic minority backgrounds

<sup>243</sup> Bhatt, W. (2013). *The little brown woman: gender discrimination in American Medicine*. *Gender and Society* 27 (5) pp 659-680

<sup>244</sup> UCL. (2020). 'Opinion: Doctors from ethnic minorities face systemic disadvantages'. From <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2020/feb/opinion-doctors-ethnic-minorities-face-systemic-disadvantages>

<sup>245</sup> Bhatt, W. (2013).

<sup>246</sup> UCL. (2020)

face disadvantage throughout their careers. Despite being selected for high academic achievement, medical students from ethnic minority groups end up performing worse on average than their white counterparts during education and training. As a result, ethnic minority graduates of UK medical schools have worse outcomes during recruitment for foundation, specialty training, and consultant posts; are more likely to fail examinations; and progress more slowly through training even when exam failure has been accounted for. The paper does not present any reasons for the findings but hints at discrimination at medical school, for example, biased examiners marking down ethnic minority candidates and less supportive social and learning environments for ethnic minorities. More research is needed in the UK to explore the intersection of gender and ethnicity for medical professionals of colour.

## Summary

In summary, through both sector-specific and more comprehensive wide-range studies, we note that women of colour in the workplace face a number of stressors and barriers in career progression. This is particularly illustrated through high proportions of ethnic minorities in junior positions with numbers reducing drastically in more senior positions across all sectors. Barriers faced by women of colour include being denied training and development opportunities, being subject to cultural stereotypes, having their competency questioned, and a lack of careers advice and networks to support them in the backdrop of a gendered and racialised work environment. More research is needed to understand how these macroaggressions and microaggressions specifically impact different groups of women of colour, their self-identity, their ambitions and importantly, their progression.

## Leading at Work

As a consequence of the barriers discussed in the 'Progressing at Work' section, women of colour are seriously underrepresented in senior roles. According to a TUC equality briefing,<sup>247</sup> occupational differences appear across all levels of seniority within the labour market but are starkest in the highest paid, leadership roles. Across the public and private sector just 1.5 per cent of the 3.7 million business leaders are from an ethnic minority background. Moreover, while 21 per cent of the Civil Service Board and 35% of permanent secretaries are women, there is not a single woman of colour in these roles. In terms of politics, there is also an alarming lack of women of colour in the highest levels. Analysis by Operation Black Vote found that in 2019, only 2% of peers in the House of Lords were women of colour<sup>248</sup> and 6% in the House of Commons.

Similarly, women make up just more than one in 20 CEOs of FTSE 100 companies (6%) but none of these CEOs are women of colour.<sup>249</sup> According to a recent review of the gender and ethnocultural diversity of FTSE 100 leadership in 2019,<sup>250</sup> while women generally have doubled their share of Top 3 level roles of Chair, CEO and CFO since 2014, almost half of companies surveyed had no BAME representation (male or female) at board level.

FTSE 100 Top 20 level jobs are the next level down from board membership and represent the internal 'pipeline' to Senior Executive roles. These roles include "Department Head", "Executive Vice-President" and a range of "Director" and "Vice-President" related job titles. Both BAME men and women made some progress from 2014, albeit from a low base, but have recently fallen back to 2017 levels, reversing the modest gains made in 2018. Since 2014, BAME representation has risen from 6.2% to 10.7%, while women generally have increased their share of roles from 23.8% to 28.9%. The least represented group are Black staff at 1.4% (up from 0.3% in 2014). There is a dearth of detailed data about women of colour representation in these roles.

There is also limited data reporting women of colour representation in senior roles in the general workforce. A 2007 study<sup>251</sup> reported that, although there was an increase in the number of BME women employed in management, they were lagging behind their white counterparts. Among White British women, 11% were managers or senior officials, compared to 9% of Black Caribbean and Pakistani women and only 6% of Bangladeshi women.

<sup>247</sup> TUC. (2020)

<sup>248</sup> House of Commons. (2019). *Ethnic diversity in politics and public life*. House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper

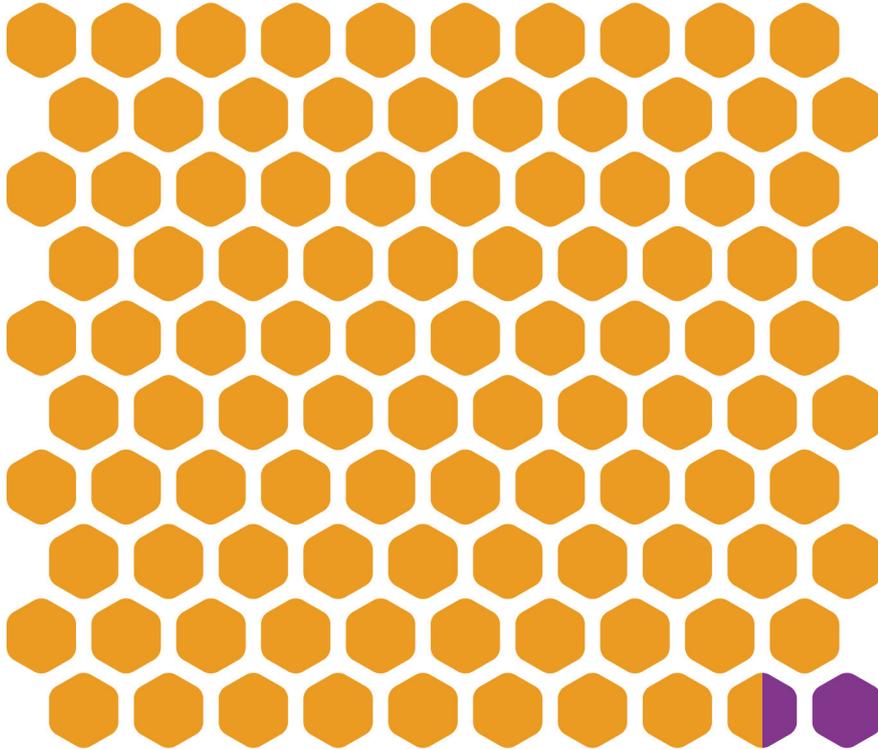
<sup>249</sup> Kaur, S. (2020). *Sex & Power 2020*, The Fawcett Society.

<sup>250</sup> Green Park. (2019). *Leadership 10,000 2019. A Review of Gender and Ethnocultural Diversity of FTSE 100 Leadership*. From <https://www.green-park.co.uk/insights/green-park-leadership-10-000-2019/s94929/>

<sup>251</sup> Lim, R., and Campayne, P. (2007). *Different Women, Different Places*. The Diversity Practice Ltd.

# 3.7 million

business leaders across public and private sector



## ONLY 1.5%

from an ethnic minority background



Women of colour in the House of Lords



Women of colour in the House of Commons



Men Women



**NOT A SINGLE WOMAN OF COLOUR IN THESE ROLES**

## Why are Women of Colour not Progressing to Senior Roles?

Research studying the barriers for women of colour into senior leadership is quite limited. However, a lack of progression opportunities for women of colour to senior roles is likely a compounding effect of all factors cited throughout this review, with the existing literature substantiating this. Below, we also highlight some additional barriers that exist specifically at senior stage, including perception of leadership style, labelling and a lack of recognition.

Before discussing barriers, it is useful to note that a small amount of available research highlights that the lack of women of colour in senior leadership is not due to lack of ambition. The 2015 Race at Work report,<sup>252</sup> drawing on YouGov panel data (6,076 respondents), found that in the UK more than six in 10 (64%) of BAME employees are ambitious<sup>253</sup> in the workplace compared to four in 10 (41%) white people. Data for women of colour was not included in this report but, in the US, an article in the Washington Post in 2015<sup>254</sup> highlighted that, although there is only one female African American chief executive among top businesses, 22% of African American professional women said they aspired to a powerful position with a prestigious title, compared with just 8% of white professional women. This suggests people of colour have the drive, desire and motivation to enter senior leadership, but the supportive infrastructure to be able to do this does not exist for them.

<sup>252</sup> The Prince's Responsible Business Network (2015) Race at Work: 2015. BICT

<sup>253</sup> They measured this in their survey by asking respondents how likely they were to agree that progression is important to them

<sup>254</sup> The Washington Post Website. (2015). 'Among professional women, African Americans are most likely to want top executive jobs, report says', from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2015/04/22/among-professional-women-african-americans-are-most-likely-to-want-top-executive-jobs-report-says/>. (Accessed 15th January 2021). Drawing on the book: Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Tai Green (2015). Black Women: Ready to Lead. Center for Talent Innovation

## Perception of Leadership Style and Labelling

A 2007 UK study, 'Different Women, Different Places'<sup>255</sup> interviewed 20 BME women in high-profile roles, senior positions of leadership and/or unique career histories. Participants thought that the image and presence, leadership and communication styles of white women are more positively perceived in the workplace compared to their own. Furthermore, participants felt that the "glass ceiling" preventing them from rising through the ranks was "reinforced by concrete", reflecting the huge difficulties they experienced progressing to the top echelons of organisations.

This is supported by a study focusing on the career advancement status and experiences of thirteen women of colour in US corporate management.<sup>256</sup> The study found that women of colour were caught between different biases ranging from being considered too passive to be successful to then criticised for being too aggressive in their leadership style. This view has been voiced more recently by Harts, in her book "What Women of Colour Need to Know to Secure a Seat at The Table".<sup>257</sup> She explains that women of colour are often labelled as the "angry Black woman" or "docile Asian" before they've even had a chance to introduce themselves in the workplace as competent, valuable and inspiring leaders.

Moreover, a number of studies suggest that women of colour are disadvantaged in progressing to leadership positions because

<sup>255</sup> Lim, R., and Campayne, P. (2007).

<sup>256</sup> Giscombe, K., & Mattis, M. C. (2002). *Leveling the playing field for women of color in corporate management: Is the business case enough?* Journal of Business Ethics, 37(1), 103-119.

<sup>257</sup> Forbes Website. (2019). *Why Leaning In Doesn't Apply To Women Of Colour*. From <https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2019/03/23/why-leaning-in-has-not-worked-for-women-of-color/?sh=1bd312bf1e41> (Accessed 17th January 2021).

they are perceived by employers as outside of the cultural norm of the workplace. Participants in the 'Different Women, Different Places' study<sup>258</sup> reported being asked to "change to fit into the workplace". For example, one Asian-Indian woman was told during an appraisal interview that in order to fit in she needed to act differently to be more acceptable to the firm's culture. Another was overlooked for promotion, and when they asked for an explanation, they were told they were a "misfit" with the client's needs and expectations.

---

The negative impact of this discrimination included a loss of confidence, self-esteem and motivation, which had led to a number of participants holding back from applying for positions of increased responsibility, resulting in what they described as "the 10 years later syndrome" – taking much longer than their white female colleagues to progress the same distance.

---

## Lack of Opportunity, Advice and Confidence

Participants from the same study<sup>259</sup> were asked to rate a list of factors in order of their implications for career success. Participants cited race and organisational culture and style as the biggest hurdles. Lack of recognition, limited access to growth and development opportunities and lack of career planning and advice were also felt to be significant barriers to success.

A UK study drawing on in-depth interviews with 20 South Asian Muslim women in managerial or leadership positions<sup>260</sup> had similar findings. A key challenge that participants faced while trying to progress in their careers was the lack of access to network and mentoring support within and outside the workplace. The study also

found that many Muslim women still lack self-confidence and self-esteem. Even those who are well-educated and articulate found it uncomfortable to apply for senior or leadership roles within organisations because they consider themselves lacking in skills and expertise to become successful leaders.

## Lack of Recognition

Tinkler et al<sup>261</sup> explains why women of colour aspiring to be leaders might become invisible in the workplace, hampering their chances of being noticed for their leadership potential. According to Tinkler et al, workplaces are a hegemonic construction reflecting dominant groups in society, in which white people represent the dominant racial 'standard' by which others are contrasted - in other words the prototypical man and woman. Cognitive social psychologists have shown that the extent to which an individual appears prototypical of their group affects perceivers' processes. This means that those not conforming to the prototype are often overlooked. Therefore, women of colour's achievements, contributions and work are less likely to be noticed, remembered or applauded, due to being different to the "prototypical group" on both race and gender, which in turns affects their chances of being promoted to a leadership role.

Finally, a Diversity UK paper<sup>262</sup> suggests that the UK government's 'colour blind' gender equality framework for corporate Britain, and a failure to include race as a crucial factor in the gender diversity discourse, has benefitted white middle class women while women of colour, especially Black women have been relegated to the background as invisible. Through legislating a one-size-fits-all approach to diversity, organisations ignore race when addressing gender inequality. This means the 'power structure that is vacated by men is being substituted by white women relative to women of colour'.

<sup>258</sup> Lim, R., and Campayne, P. (2007).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid

<sup>260</sup> Tariq, M., and Syed, J. (2017).

<sup>261</sup> Tinkler, J., Zhao, J., Li, Y., & Ridgeway, C. L. (2019). *Honorary whites? Asian American women and the dominance penalty*. *Socius*, 5, 2378023119836000.

<sup>262</sup> Sule, A., and Keenan, M. (2018). *Has Corporate Britain Eclipsed Women of Colour and Endorsed White Matriarchy in The Quest of Gender Diversity?* Diversity Uk.

The authors argue that in an attempt to rebalance the underrepresentation of women in the highest levels of the corporate Britain, any gains have become asymmetrically distributed along racial lines.

This position is in line with all the findings we have mentioned throughout the 'Progressing at Work' and 'Leading at Work' sections which shows where women do hold positions of influence, they are predominately white.

## Summary

In summary, even if women of colour can get through the biased education system and discriminatory employment practices in the early stages of her career, the evidence shows they face almost insurmountable barriers – a negative perception of their leadership style, a lack of opportunity, advice and confidence and a lack of recognition - in getting to the highest echelons of their sector. This is substantiated by the fact that women of colour are almost invisible at the highest levels across all public and private sectors.

## Sector-Specific Research

Sector-specific data is scarce – and intersectional data on gender and ethnicity is even more limited; however, we are able to draw on a few UK and US studies to illustrate what is happening at the top levels of employment. The Race Disparity Audit<sup>263</sup> provides information about ethnic minority representation in the NHS. In 2016, 18% of the non-medical NHS workforce (all staff excluding doctors and dentists) were from an ethnic minority group while only 7% of very senior managers and 11% of senior managers were from an ethnic minority group. Furthermore, 93% of NHS board members in England are white.

A US, multi-year analysis (2007–2015) of the Equal Employment Opportunity database for San Francisco Bay Area technology companies<sup>264</sup> found that, contrary to a widely-held notion of Asian executive success, there were no major shifts in upward mobility for racial minorities in climbing the management ladder to become executives. By 2015, white men and women were twice as likely as Asians to become executives and held almost three times the number of executive jobs.

Whilst this study was not conducted in the UK, it has a particularly interesting finding in that ethnicity and not gender was the more important factor in limiting minority women in the pipeline to executive roles from 2007 to 2014. In general, although minority women faced both racial and gender gaps, the racial gap was larger. For example, Asian women had a 246% racial gap versus white women in 2014 compared to an 85% gender gap versus Asian men. Similarly, the racial gap for Black women was 5.35 times the gender gap in 2014.

Rollock<sup>265</sup> also cites latest figures from Advance HE<sup>266</sup> showing that white academics are almost two and a half times more likely to be professors than their Black counterparts, and links this to findings from the UCU<sup>267</sup> that white academics are approximately three times as successful in their applications for professorship when compared with their peers from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

<sup>263</sup> Race Disparity Audit. (2017 - revised 2018). Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. Cabinet Office.

<sup>264</sup> Gee, B., & Peck, D. (2017). The illusion of Asian success: Scant progress for minorities in cracking the glass ceiling from 2007–2015. Ascend Pan-Asian Leaders. October.

<sup>265</sup> Rollock, N. (2019).

<sup>266</sup> Advance HE. (2018.) Equality in higher education: staff statistical report 2018. London: Advance HE

<sup>267</sup> Universities & College Union. (2016). The experiences of Black and minority ethnic staff in further and higher education, London: UCU

## Going it Alone – Self-Employment

### Why do women of colour choose self-employment?

Some women choose to enter self-employment - working for oneself rather than an employer. A limited amount of research explores the reasons why women of colour decide to go it alone and enter self-employment. A recent literature review by Chwarae Teg<sup>268</sup> found that women of colour are likely to choose self-employment as a career path if they have difficulty entering or retaining employment or need flexible work to allow for caring responsibilities. The report also cites evidence that avoiding discrimination in the workplace could be a driving reason for BME women taking the self-employment pathway. For example, a Chwarae Teg study with young women<sup>269</sup> found that some Muslim participants considered self-employment due to the workplace discrimination they experienced as a result of their religious clothing or being unable to practice their religion due to a lack of facilities.

Furthermore, the recent TUC equality briefing<sup>270</sup> hypothesised that many BME women only take self-employed work because they are unable to find good quality employed jobs that provide the stable employment they want. The briefing also states that the growth of self-employment is taking place at the expense of more secure employee jobs. The report found that many newly self-employed workers do the same work as employees but with less job security and often less take-home pay. Furthermore, it cites TUC<sup>271</sup> analysis revealing that 60 per cent of self-employed BME women are low paid, compared to 48 per cent of white women and 42 per cent of white men. This theory is supported by the Prowess Woman in Business website<sup>272</sup> which reports that BAME female entrepreneurship is clustered in areas of multiple deprivation, suggesting that 'employment substitution' is taking place with low-paid work being sub-contracted to BAME self-employed women.

One small qualitative study of 40 BAME women in the North West of England<sup>273</sup> exploring the discriminatory experiences of BAME female small business owners supports a number of these findings. The study investigated 'push' and 'pull' factors motivating participants to enter self-employment, finding three main reasons. One group were motivated by 'pull' factors,

<sup>268</sup> Turkmen, H. (2019).

<sup>269</sup> Turkmen, H. (2018). *Bright: Young Women's Career Aspirations*. Chwarae Teg.

<sup>270</sup> TUC. (2020).

<sup>271</sup> These figures come from analysis of data for 2018/19 (the most recent available) in the Family Resources Survey and were commissioned by the TUC from Landman Economics. Cited in TUC 2020, *ibid*.

<sup>272</sup> Prowess Women in Business. (2019). "Facts About Women in Business", from <https://www.prowess.org.uk/facts/>

<sup>273</sup> Davidson, J. M., Fielden, S. L., & Omar, A. (2010). *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic female business owners: Discrimination and social support*. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research* 16(1).

for example that they had always been interested in self-employment. Another group motivated by the 'push' factor of the 'flexibility' of self-employment. These women – most of whom were married with children – saw entrepreneurship as a means of accommodating and managing their dual responsibilities of work and family. Finally, another group had been driven to self-employment by the 'glass ceiling' or dissatisfaction with salaried job effects. According to these women, paid employment was 'stressful' because they were not given 'challenging jobs' or felt 'undervalued' and 'unappreciated'. As the sample size in this study was small, more research is needed to understand the extent to which these push and pull factors are present in women of colour's decisions to enter self-employment.

## The Experience of Self-Employed Women of Colour

There is limited research into the experience of self-employed women of colour. The existing research, however, highlights two key challenges that entrepreneurial women face: discrimination and access to support and financial services.

### Discrimination

There is an absence of literature exploring discrimination experienced by women of colour in business and self-employment. According to participants in Davidson et al's study of highly educated BAME female small business owners in the North-West of England,<sup>274</sup> discrimination was the most significant barrier they faced in running their businesses. They stated they had to constantly prove their worth, capability and credibility in systems "that are designed by men for men". Participants also mentioned having to deal with negative prejudices such as people thinking they were not educated due to the colour of their skin. Black British women further described of having to deal with the stereotypical image of the 'Black

mama', while the Asian women were assumed to be a 'timid Asian flower'. For some of the Muslim women, Islamophobia had further intensified prejudices against them.

## Support and Financial Services

The women in Davidson et al's study<sup>275</sup> also mentioned that finding the right support and networking group to support their businesses was almost impossible. They said this was mainly due to mainstream business support services being culturally insensitive and failing to disseminate information about their existence and services on offers.

In terms of financial backing, some psychological research<sup>276</sup> suggests that ethnic minority business owners may be rejected for loans on the basis of cultural stereotypes by lenders. Furthermore, Davidson et al's study<sup>277</sup> found that the participants' access to financial assistance was hampered by lack of information on the options available for small and micro businesses. A group of women indicated that they were reluctant to approach banks and building societies because they feared that their applications would be rejected. These women generally believed that most of the financial services on offer did not suit them, as they were designed for white business owners by white service providers. The authors suggest that the absence of 'culturally sensitive' financial services forced these women to rely heavily on their families for financial support.

## Summary

This section has set out evidence that women of colour may enter self-employment to avoid discrimination in the workplace and/or after facing barriers to progression. However, even within self-employment, women of colour face barriers to success: namely, discrimination and a lack of access to support and financial services. This is an under-researched area and a greater understanding of the experiences of women of colour entrepreneurs is needed.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid

<sup>275</sup> Ibid

<sup>276</sup> Harkness, S. (2016). *Discrimination in lending markets: status and intersections of gender and race*. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 79 (1) pp 81-83

<sup>277</sup> Davidson, J, M., Fielden, S, L., & Omar, A. (2010).

## Low-Paid, Informal and Precarious Work

While this report has focused primarily on women of colour in secure employment attempting to progress, we recognise this is only half the story. Women of colour are overrepresented in low paid, informal and insecure sectors. This is in the context of all the barriers discussed throughout this report including discrimination, biases, stereotypes and a lack of recognition of qualifications. However, they also experience extremely nuanced barriers whereby access to wider housing, welfare services and financial problems cannot be detached from their experience in the workplace. We acknowledge these women, and their barriers must be heard, however lengthy investigation of this falls outside the remit of this specific review. Below we discuss this briefly, however this is by no means comprehensive.

### Overrepresentation in Low-Paid Sectors

Ethnic minority groups tend to be overrepresented in low-paying occupations such as in sales, catering, elementary personal services, hairdressing, textiles and clothing.<sup>278</sup> The proportion of female employment in low-pay occupations is greatest for Bangladeshi, and other Asian and Pakistani groups, and least for Indian and Chinese groups.<sup>279</sup> Gender segregation is associated with lower earnings for women since jobs with comparable educational requirements in male dominated sectors tend to attract higher pay than female dominated sectors. This is because the jobs that women tend to do – care work, beauty and retail, are less valued than jobs men to do in construction, manufacturing and sciences. Segregation by ethnicity affects some ethnic groups more than others, with the highest levels of occupational segregation found among African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups.<sup>280</sup>

### Insecure Employment

Not only are people of colour overrepresented in lower-paid sectors, but a recent TUC equality briefing<sup>281</sup> reported that BME women (one in eight, 12.1%) are more likely to be insecurely employed compared to white women (one in sixteen, 6.4%). BME women in insecure work often have little control over the hours they work and how often and take home in pay typically a third less an hour than for those on permanent contracts.

<sup>278</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, I. (2015)

<sup>279</sup> Turkmen, H. (2019).

<sup>280</sup> Shaw, B., Menzies, L., Bernardes, E., Baars, S., Nye, P., & Allen, R. (2016).

<sup>281</sup> TUC (2020)

Worryingly, women of colour working on zero-hours or agency contracts lose out on basic rights at work such as the right to sick pay, right to paid leave and protection from unfair dismissal. The report<sup>282</sup> highlights that such protections are vital during times of national crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic which added a more deadly aspect to a lack of rights at work. BME short-term contracted workers told the TUC they are frequently denied access to PPE and to appropriate risk assessments. Moreover, the report highlights the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on many BME women who had to work multiple precarious jobs in order to make up the level of income they need.

### Austerity

Moreover, choice of employment and how much one can progress is linked to austerity, which disproportionately impacts low-income women of colour. An on-going project analysing the impact of government budgets since the start of austerity in 2010<sup>283</sup> found that BME women are more likely to have been affected by cuts to benefits and tax credits. This is due to them being more likely to be living in poverty, be living with dependent children and living in large families.

This 2017<sup>284</sup> report predicted that, due to austerity measures, Asian women in the

poorest third of households would lose on average 19% of their income by 2020 (more than £2,200 a year) and that Black women in the poorest households would lose on average 14% of their income (more than £2,000 a year). Furthermore, Black and Asian lone mothers were predicted to lose £4,000 and £4,200 a year on average by 2020, which is about 15% and 17% of their net income respectively. To further understand the experience of women of colour in employment, we also need more research into women of colour's interactions with the benefit, welfare and housing systems.

### Summary

The above research highlights that, for women of colour who fall into low-paid sectors, they face significant barriers in terms of access to employment rights, fair pay, safety at work and insecure hours, before progression can even be thought about. Urgent work is needed which looks into how to support women of colour out of low-paid precarious work and which provides analysis of the structural barriers that they face. However, an in-depth investigation of this falls outside the scope of this review, which seeks to focus on progression within more secure and high-paid employment. However, it is imperative that we remember that this type of progression is only half the story in relation to women of colour.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid

<sup>283</sup> Runnymede Trust (2017) *Intersecting inequalities: The impact of austerity on Black and Minority Ethnic women in the UK*. The Runnymede Trust

<sup>284</sup> Ibid

## Solutions – what does the literature suggest?

As shown through this review, women of colour face a whole host of barriers in the pursuit of employment and progression. The nuanced nature of these barriers means that solutions cannot be generic in their approach and must be tailored to the specific problem and different time points. Since the inequalities begin in the schooling system, long before women of colour enter employment, initiatives to support women of colour must also start here. This section reviews the solutions currently proposed by the available literature.



## Moving into Work – School

### Teacher Biases

As we saw earlier in the review, teachers have biases which mean that: 1) ethnic minority students are placed in sets largely below their potential; and 2) receive harsher disciplinary measures and low expectations. Although this seems distant from the world of work, these early experiences shape young people's self-confidence and self-belief, which are imperative for success in later life and thus must be tackled.

At present, teacher training does not challenge stereotypes about different ethnic groups.<sup>285</sup> An acute awareness of the diverse range of ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of pupils is absent from teacher training. The Runnymede School Report argues that teacher training places more emphasis on not undermining 'British values' rather than helping teachers develop the skills to educate children in a multi-ethnic society.<sup>286</sup> Fundamentally, teacher training needs to include modules on interrogating racial stereotypes and biased perceptions of students of colour and specifically that of Black students.

The Welsh Government commissioned a report on the issues and needs of Black and Mixed ethnicity pupils and found that the need for better teacher training was a recurrent theme.<sup>287</sup> Practitioners from the education sector in Wales stated there was a need to train teachers in diversity and equality, strategies for raising the attainment in and expectations of ethnic minority students to counteract myths and stereotypes and provide tools for sensitive behaviour management.

The report stated that Initial Teacher Training needs to move away from being tokenistic so that teachers can start their careers with a more than cosmetic understanding of race. This author recommends that schools can start to tackle this issue through providing training for all teachers in a way such that they can communicate high expectations of ethnic minority students, draw on aspects of pupil's identity to make them feel included and valued and learn how to handle matters of behaviour with understanding and sensitivity.

Moreover, it is not just educators/teachers that express these views: the Runnymede School Report found that 14–18-year-old students highlighted the need for teachers to become more culturally aware of the issues that young Black people

<sup>285</sup> Alexander, C., Weekes-Bernard, D., & Arday, J. (2015)

<sup>286</sup> Ibid

<sup>287</sup> Brentnall, J. (2017). *Promoting Engagement and Academic Achievement of Black and Mixed-Ethnicity Pupils in Wales*, OGL.

face in school.<sup>288</sup> As a solution, this report recommended that development opportunities and inset days within schools should have a designated number of workshops around race and cultural awareness facilitated by external providers in attempting to make in-service teachers more culturally aware.

Also, in relation to bias, Blake and Epstein<sup>289</sup> asked Black girls how adultification bias – the way in which Black girls are seen as older and less innocent leading to harsher outcomes, could be solved. The input from focus group participants was wide-ranging, but the main theme was that training in awareness of the adultification bias would not be enough. They recommended that meaningful reforms were needed including training in cultural competency and improved communication skills. They asserted that better communication skills would lead to more accurate interpretations and understanding between teachers and students which could help to avoid disproportionate disciplinary responses.

Literature thus highlights the alarming need for teacher training to be improved to include topics and tools on interrogating racial biases, stereotypes, expectations of students, cultural competency, empathy and sensitive behaviour management. However, Remi Joseph-Salisbury<sup>290</sup> argues that, even with any changes to formal teacher training, schools must be radically reimagined to place anti-racism at its core. He states that racial literacy, which is understanding the ways race and racism work in society, needs to be placed at the centre of teacher training. It should not be a tick-box skill but a constant journey as part of continued professional development and should be encouraged at all levels including the Department for Education, local authority level and school level.

## Being Placed in Lower Sets

While improved teacher training and racial literacy may help to dismantle biases and stereotypes leading to students of colour not being placed in sets below their ability, more actions are needed to support this. For example, it is recommended that schools are to examine whether or not Black and Mixed Ethnicity students are being disadvantaged by the schools setting, streaming and GCSE tiering practices and, if so, take action to change them.<sup>291</sup> The same Welsh Government commissioned report<sup>292</sup> highlights that the Government should:

1. Put in place a step in the procedures for national test production to assess content and style for potential cultural bias and disadvantage to pupils of colour.
2. Evaluate the implementation procedures for national tests to identify if any aspects of the process disadvantage pupils of colour and to determine whether any improvements can be made.
3. Promote the need for holistic developmental assessment profiles for each child in schools and support schools to use a broad range of information to inform placings.

As the setting can determine which tier of exams you are entered into and thus your grades, it is imperative that this is given priority to allow students of colour to achieve their potential.

## Poor Careers Advice

Students of colour are more likely to rely on formal careers advice than personal networks, and thus the poor quality of the careers advice must be addressed.

<sup>288</sup> Alexander, C., Weekes-Bernard, D., & Arday, J. (2015)

<sup>289</sup> Blake, J.J. and Epstein, R. (2019).

<sup>290</sup> Joseph-Salisbury, R. (2020). *Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools*, Runnymede Trust.

<sup>291</sup> Brentnall, J. (2017)

<sup>292</sup> Ibid

Since 2012, schools have had a duty to provide independent and impartial careers advice.<sup>293</sup> The delivery of guidance was to be more responsive to the needs of pupils and encourage schools to liaise with local employers.

However, in January 2013, MPs on the Education Committee expressed concern about the ability of schools to meet the requirements.<sup>294</sup> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommends<sup>295</sup> that to tackle this the Department for Education should introduce a quality standard for the provision of school-based careers advice. This should be mandatory and introduce the recognition of the needs and interests of a diverse school population. This would support students of colour as it would mean that not only does the school have a duty to provide access to advice, but that this advice was of good quality to help them in their career choices too. The report also recommends that inviting speakers who can raise aspirations, challenge stereotypes and be role models to pupils for ethnic minority groups should be part of the mandatory minimum standard.<sup>296</sup>

They also suggest that alongside these mandatory quality standards incentives should be given to schools to make careers advice more effective. This should include making longer-term destination data compulsory. The current destination data published in 2014 only looks a year immediately after pupils have completed Key Stage 4 or 5 where they are normally

continuing in education. Data should be captured over a far longer period to include work records and earning. This would allow schools to track their performance but, most importantly, hold them to account regarding their ability to ensure students secure sustainable employment. Making these changes is vital in the light of the extent to which students of colour rely on career advice services.

## The Overall Culture

Whilst all the above would be a welcome move in the right direction, a wider cultural shift within the education system is also needed. For example, there is need to move from “diversification” of a curriculum to an anti-racist curriculum. This means moving beyond representation and the pitfalls of tokenism<sup>297</sup> to schools being proactive in tackling racism. School policies should include much clearer and stronger anti-racism policies that set out how schools plan to centre an institutional commitment to anti-racism. Remi-Joseph Salisbury recommends that all existing policies should be reviewed through consultation with anti-racist organisations to tackle implicit and normalised racisms within the schooling system.<sup>298</sup> Moreover, school governing bodies should clearly communicate to the school community their stance on race equality and ensure that the whole school fulfils its equalities duties.<sup>299</sup>

<sup>293</sup> Young Women's Trust. (2014). *Scarred for Life? Literature Review*. Young Woman's Trust

<sup>294</sup> Ibid

<sup>295</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, I. (2015)

<sup>296</sup> Ibid

<sup>297</sup> Joseph-Salisbury, R. (2020).

<sup>298</sup> Ibid

<sup>299</sup> Jonathan Brentnall (2017)

## Moving into Work – University

While there is a lack of research on women of colour in HE, a review of research of ethnic minority students has shown there are inequalities at this stage too. While ethnic minorities are attending HE in larger numbers, they are less likely to be accepted into higher tariff universities, less likely to achieve a 2.i or a First and more likely to drop out compared to white students. This is linked to issues of institutional racism, discrimination, cultural detachment and a lack of tailored support. Any initiatives to tackle these problems must encompass the whole student lifecycle including access to, succeeding in and progression from HE.

### Lack of Information and Access to Higher Education

Many providers have increased the scope of their work with ethnic minority students in their access agreements. An access agreement sets out how a provider plans to sustain or improve access, student success and progression among people from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.<sup>300</sup> For example, half the universities<sup>301</sup> as part of the OFS Black and Minority Ethnic Students briefing said they were committed to increasing access for BME students.<sup>302</sup> Twenty five percent of those universities stated they were doing things to raise awareness and aspirations in BME students. For example, Leeds Beckett run their “Larkia Programme” which raises confidence and motivation of young Asian girls through a 3-day residential focusing on creative arts.

To tackle the lack of access to information, 12% said they were providing information, advice and guidance which specifically targets BME students.<sup>303</sup> For example, Bolton University works collaboratively with the Bolton Muslim Welfare Trust to offer advice on courses, careers and HE funding. Moreover, 14% said they do long-term outreach work with secondary school pupils such as Aston University, who deliver a long-term mentoring program to secondary school learners in deprived wards where there are low rates of progression into HE for BME pupils. Future work should measure and report on the effectiveness of these programs. A concerted effort from more university providers to increase their access initiatives coupled with better practices in the schooling system would be a good start in supporting BME students with access to HE and in specific, to higher tariff universities.

<sup>300</sup> OFS: Access agreements. From <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-agreements/>

<sup>301</sup> This report does not state how many providers were sampled

<sup>302</sup> OFS. (2019). *Topic briefing: Black and minority ethnic (BME) students*. Office for Students.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid

## Attainment and Degree Outcomes

While in recent years there has been a visible increase in access initiatives there is less focus on supporting ethnic minority students once they actually arrive at university. For example, in the same OFS briefing paper, less than 40% of providers discuss tackling the attainment gap between BME and white students.<sup>304</sup> However, of the ones which do, there are examples of solutions that could be taken on by more universities. For example, 9% of providers provide staff training to help staff better support BME students. The University of Nottingham raises awareness among personal tutors of the attainment gap and is providing resources to help tutors address the issue. This includes incorporating diversity awareness into personal tutor training.

Additionally, we discussed earlier that ethnic minority students have a lower sense of belonging at university which has been linked to the attainment gap. To combat this, 8% of providers have activities designed to foster a sense of belonging for BME students. For example, Roehampton University found that male BME students from lower socio-economic groups living off campus have a greater risk of non-continuation than other students. To mitigate this, they are designing student timetables in a way that builds academic friendship groups and peer support to foster a greater sense of belonging. Part of the solution also includes efforts to create environments that are racially diverse and fully inclusive. For example, Brunel University held a screening of the film “Dear White People” with a panel discussion featuring the Chancellor of The University of Manchester.<sup>305</sup> It is vital that more universities deliver programmes that address the poor sense of belonging among students of colour. Solutions for supporting ethnic minority students while at university are just as important as getting them a place there.

## Progressing from Higher Education

Of the 154 targets in the 2017-2018 access agreements, only 8% of these targets related to progression from HE into employment.<sup>306</sup> When we know that BME students are less likely to be employed compared to white students six months after graduation, more effort needs to be placed in supporting this point of the student lifecycle.

There are several good practices that have been identified and could be employed on a larger scale. For example, Liverpool Hope University’s Internship Programme provides opportunities to recent graduates to secure graduate-level, paid three-month internships. They have built in specific provisions into the program to attract participants with protected characteristics and ensure that a minimum of 15% of participants are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Additionally, 10% of universities say they provide careers advice and guidance specifically for BME students. For example, the University of Birmingham introduced a dedicated mentoring program for female BME law graduates after their analysis of employment data highlighted an employment gap. While effectiveness data is not yet available, these initiatives are setting out the right first steps and paving the way for more institutions to follow.

As positive as it is to see institutions acknowledging the specific barriers ethnic minority students face in HE, there is still room for improvement. Firstly, many of the initiatives above need to be made standard practice by Government. Secondly, in universities’ access agreements there was not a single target relating to specific sub-groups of BME students.<sup>307</sup> Providers should work to disaggregate BME students by ethnicity and gender to gain a deeper understanding of the specific issues and needs from group to group. Lastly, while different universities

<sup>304</sup> Ibid

<sup>305</sup> Universities UK and NUS. (2019). *Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK Universities: Closing the Gap*. Universities UK and National Union of Students.

<sup>306</sup> OFS. (2019).

<sup>307</sup> Ibid

have support for specific time points, there needs to be a move towards programs supporting the whole student lifecycle. For example, Brunel University London appointed a Student Success Project Manager to oversee an unrestricted range of activities including awareness, curriculum, assessment, retention and support. Through this holistic approach, they managed to reduce the attainment gaps in degree outcomes from 22% in 2014-2015 to 17% in 2015-2016.

## The Overall Culture

Furthermore, these solution-based initiatives need to be underpinned by strong leadership, with university leaders at the highest level leading by example and taking responsibility for change. For example, King's College London (KCL) started a formal development program in 2018 for its 35 most senior leaders and decision makers within academic faculties and professional services.<sup>308</sup> This included training sessions, coaching and masterclasses to assist senior leaders in identifying and addressing racial inequality in both the institutional environment and their specific areas of work. KCL have also created KPIs within strategic plans to hold senior leaders to account for the BAME attainment gap, opposed to just publishing separate diversity policies. To further reinforce their commitment, they provide yearly updates on the attainment gap for staff and students.

Tackling racial inequalities in HE should not just lie in the hands of EDI teams but also should be embedded into institutional structures, as KCL have showcased.

We also need to make sure we are changing the culture of talking about race – it is imperative that “difficult” conversations about race, racial stereotypes, microaggressions and biases are being held throughout universities, regardless of unease. The NUS<sup>309</sup> found through their engagement with the sector, universities commonly react to the unease by discussing the attainment gap in relation to wider diversity and inclusion policies. Ahmed<sup>310</sup> suggests this is at times to avoid difficult conversations about race specifically and by itself this approach does not go far enough. The BAME attainment gap needs to be acknowledged as a racial inequality and not simply viewed through a wider lens of inclusivity and diversity.

Lastly, more in-depth and critical data collection and analysis needs to happen to tackle attainment, success and progression gaps to inform university leaders, academics and practitioners. This could well require granular, programme-level attainment gap data being made available to all academic staff. The evidence base could be strengthened further if data is intersectional and disaggregated by ethnic group and gender.<sup>311</sup>

<sup>308</sup> Universities UK and NUS. (2019).

<sup>309</sup> Ibid

<sup>310</sup> Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press

<sup>311</sup> Universities UK and NUS. (2019).

## Entry to the Workplace

As shown, the barriers for people of colour do not halt after they leave the education system. Research discussed earlier showed that people of colour had to send up to 60% more CVs to gain an interview, experienced discrimination in the interview process and were often overqualified for the jobs they entered. In particular, the overqualification problem is exacerbated for migrants due to employers not being aware of how foreign qualifications convert over to the UK. There are a number of solutions and good practices evident through the literature trying to address bias and discrimination at the point of entry to the workplace.

### Bias

To start, the McGregor-Smith Review recommends several things to tackle biases in recruitment processes.<sup>312</sup> It states that, where individuals are involved directly in the recruitment process or have leadership roles, targeted training should be delivered to ensure that they are fully aware of how bias affects their decision making and how to counter it. Moreover, all employers should ensure staff at all levels undertake unconscious bias training to address behaviours and attitudes preventing a more inclusive workplace. For example, RBS committed to rolling out unconscious bias training across the whole bank in 2015 and to date, 40,000 employees have undertaken the training.<sup>313</sup> This has shown promise to result in change 97% reporting they will 'do their job differently'. Some tangible ways they have done this is through requiring more diversity on all shortlists and considering more non-traditional candidates for certain roles. The Government should also seek to support employers in making these changes, for example, through creating free resources including high quality unconscious bias training.

### Recruitment processes

While challenging biases through training is a good start, there needs to be critical examination of recruitment processes and practices that prevent qualified people of colour getting one foot in the door. HR directors should reject non-diverse shortlists,<sup>314</sup> draft job specifications in a more inclusive way and have diverse interview panels.<sup>315</sup> To combat the name-discrimination in CVs and applications, employers should remove unnecessary data including name and race, from long lists and short lists until

<sup>312</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017). *Race in the Workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review*. Assets Publishing Service

<sup>313</sup> Ibid

<sup>314</sup> Ibid – targets like this should allow for local circumstances too.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid

interview stage. This will ensure that ethnic minority individuals have an equal chance of gaining an interview and help in reducing bias. A number of employers including the Civil Service have adopted name-blind recruitment practices to improve diversity at interview.

However, the McGregor-Smith review introduces a caveat with the finding that name-blind processes can sometimes lead to greater bias in interviews.<sup>316</sup> This means that the interview process also needs to be examined in all organisations to ensure it fairly gives candidates the best opportunity to show their potential. The review suggests that where interview panels are used, these should be as diverse as possible to prevent biases affecting selection. This may also help to offset the “affinity bias” discussed earlier, where people perceive individuals similar to them in a more positive light.

While literature asking women of colour their views on solutions are scarce, Chwarae Teg’s<sup>317</sup> focus groups with BME women corroborates the above. This research found that achieving diversity in recruitment panels is commonly voiced among the recommendations of BME women. Another suggestion regarding recruitment panels is to have an independent panel member to monitor and observe the process.

Lastly, the Government should support employers in making these changes which could include creating a Top 100 Ethnic Minority employers list, to celebrate the success of employers tackling their diversity problems head on. The Government already uses similar incentives, for example, they have a ‘Top 50 UK Employers for Social Mobility’<sup>318</sup> and the ‘Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers’<sup>319</sup> which announces the top UK employers who have taken the most action to improve social mobility and apprenticeship quality respectively in the workplace.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid

<sup>317</sup> Turkmen, H. (2019).

<sup>318</sup> GOV.UK WEBSITE. (2017). *Community and Society – The Top UK employers for social mobility*. From <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/top-50-uk-employers-for-social-mobility>

<sup>319</sup> GOV.UK WEBSITE (2020). *Apprenticeships, traineeships and internships – Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers announced*. From <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/top-100-apprenticeship-employers-announced>

## Migrants

There are some barriers, such as qualification recognition and language difficulties, that make entry into the workplace particularly difficult for migrants of colour.

As discussed earlier, migrants are often forced into work that does not reflect their level of qualification due to issues in proving the equivalence of their overseas qualifications. A straightforward solution would be for Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to provide free and ready access to the National Recognition Information System (NARIC)<sup>320</sup> and support jobseekers through access via on-site computers in JCP offices. JCP should also raise awareness of the database among jobseekers, employees and employers. This promotion is vital so that, when jobseekers put their NARIC equivalents on their CV, employers understand the eligibility of the qualification. With extra funding, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggest following the Northern Irish example, where the Department for Education and Learning pays for an organisation subscription to NARIC to allow access to ethnic minority jobseekers.<sup>321</sup> This simple move would allow more ethnic minority individuals to enter the labour market and utilise their skills.

The same report also suggests that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) should reintroduce funding for workplace-based English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to support ethnic minority migrants who may not be proficient in English,<sup>322</sup> offer matched employer funding, and promote ESOL to employees. This is imperative if we want to reduce the 17-percentage point employment rate gap between those with low English proficiency and those who are fluent English speakers.<sup>323</sup> To ensure ‘buy-in’ from employers, the government’s ESOL strategy should highlight the benefits of ESOL to employers in terms of productivity and staff retention.

<sup>320</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, I. (2015)

<sup>321</sup> Ibid

<sup>322</sup> Ibid

<sup>323</sup> Dustmann., C. and Fabbri, F. (2003). *Language proficiency and labour market performance of immigrants in the UK*, Economic Journal, Vol. 113, No. 489, pp. 695– 717

Lastly, research by Chwarae Tag<sup>324</sup> hearing from BME women themselves underlined that the complicated procedure to achieve skills conversion and recognition makes it difficult for migrants to participate in the labour market. They agreed that providing language courses and supporting them to attain additional/converted certificates would allow them to put their skills to use and enter the job market.

324 Turkmen, H. (2019).

## Progressing at Work

Even after entering the workplace, this review has shown that women of colour are disproportionately passed up for promotions and training opportunities. A lack of support, careers advice and harmful stereotypes has been shown to hinder their career development. These problems cut across sectors whether that be teaching, law or medicine. Arguably, initiatives for progression at work for people of colour has been less focused on with the exception of the recent McGregor-Smith review. More needs to be done to tackle issues not only around supporting women of colour into good employment, but also ensuring that the necessary anti-racist infrastructure is there to aid them in progression.

### Lack of Mentors, Information and Advice

One such solution would be in-work mentoring to give BAME women the support to develop their career pathways, overcome barriers and provide access to networks.<sup>325</sup> Ethnic minority groups may have an unequal access to progression opportunities when for many organisations information on procedures for advancement are often delivered internally. This is an issue as some ethnic minority groups may have less straightforward access to this information depending on, for example, their integration with social circles in the workplace.

In relation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommend that employers encourage workplace mentoring to help ethnic minority employees better grasp informal work practices and learn the 'internal ropes' of an organisation.<sup>326</sup> They also suggest that these mentors could be of the same ethnic background as mentees. However, the shortage of ethnic minorities in some sectors may make this impractical<sup>327</sup> and a note should be made that mentoring can still be effective with different backgrounds.

Moreover, this distribution of knowledge and advice should not just fall into the hands of ethnic minorities and needs the whole organisation to be invested. Employers could designate members of senior staff to help encourage progression of underrepresented groups. This responsibility should be promoted as a development opportunity itself, a sought-after work skill and be integrated into their performance review.<sup>328</sup> The Government could boost this by promoting mentoring as a developmental skill, highlighting the productivity gains and offer guidance, resources and external training to help would-be mentors.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid

<sup>326</sup> McCabe, A., Gilchrist, A., Harris, K., Afridi, A., and Kyprianou, P. (2013) *Making the links: Poverty, ethnicity and social networks*. York: JRF

<sup>327</sup> Wood, C., and Wybron, I. (2015)

<sup>328</sup> Ibid

There is evidence to show that this approach does work. The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) supports BME staff in Further and Higher Education into senior positions through a mentoring project.<sup>329</sup> This scheme included training and peer mentoring as well as a recognition from senior management within organisations that BME workers are overrepresented in the lower grades. Of those who took part, 73% reported an increase in personal confidence, 64% reported an increase in job confidence and 54% felt that participation had helped them develop professionally. Moreover, 60% had applied for new roles in further and HE institutions. Lastly, although most research does not disaggregate by ethnicity and gender, research by Chwarae Teg<sup>330</sup> found that a strong recommendation from BAME women was to improve existing and create more mentoring schemes for BAME women.

### Informal Nature of Progression

However, while teaching women of colour the 'internal ropes' through mentoring could prove beneficial and is important, it points to a wider problem of the informal and opaque nature of in-work progression found in some workplaces and sectors.<sup>331</sup> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommends employers make progression routes more transparent and accessible by issuing explicit detail on what is required for progression and pay rises without reliance on informal information and advice. For larger organisations, 'career ladders' could be created for established and readily adopted pathways to progression.<sup>332</sup> These practices could help ethnic minority groups be aware of how their skills map onto new opportunities, have the confidence in applying for openings and even seek higher levels of pay. Overall, this would create a greater understanding of set processes for progression not just for ethnic minorities, but for all employees.

<sup>329</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017).

<sup>330</sup> Turkmen, H. (2018).

<sup>331</sup> Wood, C., and Wybron, I. (2015)

<sup>332</sup> Owen, D., Gambin, L., Green, A., and Li, Y. (2015). *Projecting employment by ethnic group to 2022*. York: JRF and Philpott, J. (2014). *Rewarding work for low paid workers*. York: JRF

<sup>333</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017).

### Denied Training and Promotion Opportunities

While mentors and transparent, formal structures for progression would support women of colour, they may not address the fact that they are more likely to be denied those very promotions and training opportunities they would come to learn about. So, as well as making promotion processes more transparent, there needs to be institutionally embedded promotion targets to make the promotion process fairer. A good example of a solution comes from EY, a professional services network, which has committed to a proportional promotion process.<sup>333</sup> For example, with 20% of managers being BME, they also expect 20% of promotions from manager to senior manager to be from ethnic minorities. They operate using a comply or explain basis: if a business unit fails to achieve the target, the HR team will ask for feedback from leaders making promotion decisions on why eligible candidates were unsuccessful. They will then use this feedback to work out why the target is not being achieved and put actions in place to improve the likelihood of success.<sup>334</sup> This model aims to make promotions as fair as possible by challenging leaders to make decisions based on employee's actual skills and potential opposed to what the traditional model of a 'good employee' looks like. Since EY started this process two years ago, promotions have been more representative with 8% of partners being BME, compared with 3% in 2011. More employers could benefit from including practices like this in their EDI policies. Additionally, in recognising women of colour have barriers in relation to training and progression, tailored career progression training programs should be provided. For example, the STUC runs training schemes for BME workers to support career progression in workplaces across Scotland.<sup>335</sup> The

<sup>334</sup> In the UK, positive action has been legal since April 2011 to ensure measures are taken to support the recruitment and promotion of underrepresented minorities. In deciding who to hire or promote between top candidates with equal qualification, an employer can choose an individual from an underrepresented group as long as they are qualified and fit for the role as the other applicants. See [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85014/positive-action-recruitment.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85014/positive-action-recruitment.pdf) for more information.

<sup>335</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017).

STUC Black Workers Committee, with the support of GMB Scotland and Scottish Union Learn, has been running “Moving into Management” courses specifically for BME workers. This course combines providing skills for advancement including building networks and resilience with peer mentoring. More employers in England could adopt this tailored approach to level the playing field for women of colour.

There is much untapped potential in women of colour in the workforce, and the above suggests that a head-on approach of support through tailored mentoring and training married up with interrogating biases is a good start to unlocking their potential through progression.

## Leading at Work

There is little to no literature or research in regard to what, if anything, is being done to support people of colour to the highest positions of senior leadership. If all the above was to be implemented, we should hope to see more parity by this point in the pipeline, as there are some similar barriers at this transition point. For example, research discussed earlier found that South Asian women in leadership positions struggled with a lack of mentoring on their ascendance to top positions. However, we have also seen that there are specific issues women of colour face in senior positions including being boxed into harmful tropes, having to change themselves to “fit in” to the workplace culture and their leadership styles not being positively perceived.

### Acknowledging the Potential in Women of Colour

The Different Women, Different Places report<sup>336</sup> calls for policy makers and employers to acknowledge the positive attributes, capabilities and added value that BME women leaders can bring to the workplace. For example, they state Different Women (women of colour) bring a diversity of ideas and thinking into their organisations. These different perspectives are shaped by their identity and experiences which may include challenges and struggles that can lead them to develop an invaluable empathetic leadership style.

Moreover, this study found that many of these women of colour are involved in community leadership ranging from leading churches to sitting on committees of community-based organisations. These unique activities provide skills that are of high value in the workplace and add to their cultural capital including relationships and networks outside of work and access to diverse communities. This report calls for organisations to finally notice and acknowledge all the strength in difference that BME women bring as significant contributors to organisational success. It is time to stop telling women of colour they need to change to become a leader and embrace their potential as it comes.

In addition to this, women of colour’s contributions are less likely to be acknowledged and remembered. As a solution, the Different Women, Different Places report<sup>337</sup> calls for a reshaping to talent management: appropriate systems should effectively identify women of colour, their progression and log their contributions to the organisation and external profile. Their achievements and contributions should be publicised through internal communication vehicles.

<sup>336</sup> Lim, R., and Campayne, P. (2007).

<sup>337</sup> Ibid

## Training

While training has been discussed throughout the solutions section, there is lack of literature on training practices to support people of colour into the highest levels of an organisation.<sup>338</sup> An exception to this comes from The British Council who provide masterclasses for junior managers to reach the top of an organisation. They identified three specific barriers toward progression and designed masterclasses to address these.

Firstly, they support BAME employees in “finding their public voice” as being able to speak effectively to different audiences is a necessary skill for progression and leadership, through presentation tasks, panel discussions and Q&As. Secondly, participants were supported in understanding strategic thinking. Lastly, issues in networking for progressing in their career were considered and thus workshops taught participants effective networking, how to make follow up contacts and invited senior managers and leaders to meet the group. This has proved effective with a number of masterclass

attendees having progressed in their career and line managers reporting on the positive impact of the classes. More training like this could be created in specific relation to women of colour.

The lack of research and literature focusing on not just women of colour progressing but getting to the top echelons of organisations and businesses highlights a huge gap in knowledge and best practice. This may be due to the fact that employers require better workforce data to be able to understand their pay and progression gaps to make sustainable change happen. In relation, The McGregor-Smith Review<sup>339</sup> recommended that the Government legislate to make larger businesses publish their ethnicity data. The Government consulted on this in 2018-19 but have not yet published the results. The CIPD report also recommends providing practical support for race pay gap reporting as with each transition point discussed, employers and policymakers need to understand the factors keeping inequalities in place to be able take informed action to address and remove them.<sup>340</sup>

<sup>338</sup> CIPD. (2017). *Addressing the barriers to BAME employee career progression to the top*, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

<sup>339</sup> McGregor-Smith, R. (2017).

<sup>340</sup> Ibid

## Going it Alone - Self-Employment

It is suggested that some women of colour may enter self-employment as a result of bias and discrimination faced in traditional employment. However, they too are not without significant barriers to a successful business. To support self-employed women of colour, solutions should seek to address the lack of support, lack of access to networks and financial services, dealing with prejudicial attitudes and communications barriers that inhibit the success of self-employed women.

### Support Services and Training

Research by Chwarae Teg<sup>341</sup> focusing on BAME women provides some recommendations to support women of colour in self-employment. The participants recommended that BAME women need additional support in accessing self-employment support programs, as current support programs are inaccessible for BAME women. It states it is crucial to improve these programs with an intersectional lens including simplifying access to them and reaching out to community organisations to make them aware and comprehend their resources. For example, although not an example for people of colour, the Siema Biz Polish Business Forum in Wales offers tailored business support to the Polish community in their own language through bespoke sessions and group workshops.<sup>342</sup>

Moreover, Davidson et al<sup>343</sup> found BME women interviewees suggested training provisions that cater for the specific needs of BME women could encourage and support participation in entrepreneurship. A group of participants believed training in accounting, book-keeping and cash flow management would be beneficial. Another group would welcome general business management training and IT training. This underlines the evidence above in that if barriers to self-employment for women of colour are to be broken, business support systems must be sensitive to the specific needs and expectations of a heterogeneous business population.

Davidson et al<sup>344</sup> also found that the participants perceived the existing support services to be designed for white men and white women. This report thus recommends that service providers must adopt a more proactive approach in marketing their services and themselves. Any awareness programs should seek to breakdown stereotypical images of service and training providers as white provisions only.

<sup>341</sup> Turkmen, H. (2019)

<sup>342</sup> Ibid

<sup>343</sup> Davidson, J. M., Fielden, S. L., & Omar, A. (2010). *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic female business owners: Discrimination and social support*. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research 16(1).

<sup>344</sup> Ibid

## Financial Services

There are also barriers to financing for women of colour, who experience mistrust in banks<sup>345</sup> and a lack of awareness of what sort of financial help is available, what they should do to get financial help and the qualifications needed to apply for financial help.<sup>346</sup> BAME women interviewed by Davidson et al<sup>347</sup> strongly recommended that financial service providers, as well as the local council, be more proactive in detailing the services that are available for BAME entrepreneurs and in disseminating the needed information.

Santander are an example of good practice by its creation of a full programme of financial support for women of colour.<sup>348</sup> They teamed up with PRECIOUS to conduct in-depth research with 140 women of colour business leaders and launched a steering group to advise on how they could better support this group. They found that 70% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed that they should be given tailored business support including a platform to voice and

resolve challenges, a support network and for funding to be specifically targeted at women of colour and skills development. Moreover, only 11% of respondents said they would go to a bank first for financial support as opposed to a mentor.

As a result of their findings, the bank updated their business support program and committed to building trust in financial institutions for women of colour. This includes a commitment to develop tailored programs for women of colour delivered by trusted partners. They have also developed "Change the Future" – a programme aimed at Black students supporting their education, employability and entrepreneurship. Additionally, they will be increasing the number of published case studies featuring women of colour business leaders, ensure panel events are representative and diversify their women business leaders mentoring program. Through doing this, Santander will contribute to filling in the knowledge and trust gaps, and this model could be taken on by more financial institutions.

<sup>345</sup> Santander. (2011). *Supporting Women of Colour in Business*, Santander.

<sup>346</sup> Davidson, J, M., Fielden, S, L., & Omar, A. (2010). Black

<sup>347</sup> Ibid

<sup>348</sup> Santander (2011)

## Low Paid, Informal and Precarious Work

While this report has focused on women of colour in secure employment in higher-paid sectors, we recognise this is only half the story. Women of colour are overrepresented in low paid, informal and insecure work, whereby access to housing, welfare services and financial problems cannot be detached from their experience in the workplace. Although it is outside the scope of this review, we briefly discuss some solutions for women of colour in low-paid work below, but this is by no means comprehensive and warrants its own specific review.

### Services

As low-income ethnic minority employees are overrepresented in occupations with limited opportunities for progression, access to advice in looking beyond the existing workplace and using transferable skills is crucial.<sup>349</sup> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests this needs to be provided by the National Careers Service<sup>350</sup> as there is evidence to suggest information and advice can be effective to improve retention of and improve access to higher paying jobs for lower earners<sup>351</sup> and disadvantaged people, including ethnic minorities. They suggest ethnic minority status should be reinstated as one of the priority groups for the National Careers Service considering the barriers this group face in progressing out of low-paid, insecure work.

However, ethnic minority individuals may struggle to feel that they can use services such as the National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus, due to cultural insensitivities. The DWP, as part of their analysis of the Race Disparity Audit, found several good practices in job centres to tackle this.<sup>352</sup> Through interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, they found that job centres who made links with local ethnic minority communities provided a number of benefits. This included Jobcentre Plus staff becoming more aware of the culture of ethnic minority groups and their barriers to employment. Through these community links, they provided ethnic minority groups with information about courses and other interventions to specifically support their progression in the labour market. They also had initiatives to encourage ethnic minority groups to use job centres and feel more confident in doing so. For example, one job centre held events specifically for ethnic minorities whereby all the different provisions that exist were discussed. Members

<sup>349</sup> Wood, C. and Wybron, I. (2015).

<sup>350</sup> Ibid

<sup>351</sup> Barnard, H. (2014). *Labour Party work and prosperity review: Submission by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. York: JRF

<sup>352</sup> Smith, Y., Pickard, L., & Atkinson, B. (2019). *Interventions Supporting Ethnic Minority Labour Market Participation: Part 1*, Department for Work & Pensions, GSR.

of ethnic minority groups, including leaders of local mosques and community groups were invited to talk directly with providers, which was said to positively impact customers knowledge.

Additionally, interviewees in the research commonly mentioned that there was a need to upskill work coaches.<sup>353</sup> They considered that this should be around developing more of an understanding of the culture and needs of ethnic minority people which may enhance delivery. One Jobcentre area, which has a high proportion of refugees have taken part in up-skilling. This included presentations from the Refugee Council and Jobcentre staff who have experience of working with refugees. This provided staff with an overview of some cultural issues – for example, women not being comfortable coming into the jobcentre and previous negative experiences of authority which may affect how they view the jobcentre. Being culturally aware and tailoring some provisions to ethnic minority groups is imperative to ensure low-income ethnic minority individuals feel that they can use the job centre among other services to aid them.

## Wider Policy and Overall Culture

Improvements to ensure services that focus on supporting low-income workers are more inclusive of ethnic minorities should be combined with government action to address the disproportionate representation of BAME groups in precarious forms of employment.<sup>354</sup> The 2020 Race Inequality in the Workforce<sup>355</sup> report states BAME representation throughout all types and levels of employment must be seen as a prerequisite to ensure policy plans meet the needs of intended recipients. They urge the Government's Good Work Plan to be further developed to identify specific priorities and actions for addressing the overrepresentation

of BAME groups in low-paid, insecure and precarious work. The plan, to ensure good quality work for all, must provide new legislation to improve clarity on employment status, make Statutory Sick Pay a basic employment right and introduce a set of metrics to measure success.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation also recommend that the Government should devolve responsibility for employment support to local areas to help in shifting the national focus away from simply moving people off benefits and towards access to good jobs and progression.<sup>356</sup> Additionally, they recommended that the Government's industrial strategy white paper should include plans to seek out deals with low-paid sectors in improve management quality, skills, training and new technologies to support low-income BME workers. This is crucial when supporting BME workers to progress out of low-paid work could add £24 billion a year to the UK economy, according to the McGregor-Smith report.<sup>357</sup>

And as broader structural inequalities impact low-paid workers, The Runnymede Trust have called for action to rebuild the safety net at work to support low-paid BME workers by reinvesting in public services. This means ensuring the introduction of a genuine living wage, as well as action to adopt the Institute of Employment Rights' 'Manifesto for Labour Law' to improve the security, pay and conditions for workers.<sup>358</sup>

## Summary

As the barriers women of colour face to pay and progression are not one-dimensional and exist at every time-point in their career pipeline, this report has sought to provide a comprehensive overview of the solutions currently proposed. We have highlighted the recommendations of what has/can be done to achieve more equality in outcomes for

<sup>353</sup> Ibid

<sup>354</sup> Bowyer, G., Henderson, M., White, D., & Woolley, S. (2020). *Race Inequality in the Workforce: Exploring Connections between Work, Ethnicity and Mental Health*, Carnegie UK Trust, UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies and Operation Black Vote.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid

<sup>356</sup> Weekes-Bernard, D. (2017). *Three Solutions to the challenges faced by ethnic minorities in the labour market*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>357</sup> McGregor-Smith, R (2017).

<sup>358</sup> Snoussi, D., and Mompelat, L. (2019). *We Are Ghosts – Race, Class and Institutional Prejudice*, The Runnymede Trust and CLASS.

women of colour in the education system, entry to employment, progression, achieving seniority and in self-employment. We have also briefly discussed recommendations to support low-paid women of colour.

It is encouraging to see examples of good practice and desire from institutions and organisations to make change. However, it should be noted that in many cases, these

are exceptions and mass-implementation of these initiatives by employers and Government are needed across the career-pipeline to make a real difference. Additionally, further research is needed in evaluating potential solutions to determine what is most effective in supporting the pay and progression of women of colour, of which the views of women of colour should form a crucial part.

## Conclusion

This review provides a timeline of barriers to contextualise and explain why women of colour are invisible in the highest levels of the workforce according to the current literature available. The fact that there are few to no women of colour in the Civil Service Board or acting permanent secretaries (0%), who are CEOs of FTSE 100 companies (0%) or who are peers in the House of Lords (2%) is not justifiable. However, it is more decipherable when we consider the range and number of barriers women of colour are faced with throughout their school and working lives.

And when women of colour do exist in these positions of influence and power, it is a testament to their sheer strength and resilience. The literature highlights that the unfair biases and discriminatory treatment that women of colour are faced with starts at school and university. These early experiences are crucial as they have the power to shape not just quantitative outcomes like grades but are pivotal in moulding the confidence, self-esteem, and the beliefs about oneself that underlie wellbeing, progression and attainment.

These factors go on to affect entry to employment which, for women of colour, is already disproportionately harder compared to their white peers. This review highlights a number of biased and racist recruitment practices that make the labour market impenetrable for people of colour. And, even once having entered, progression and promotion opportunities within the workplace are systematically lower for women of colour so that by the stage of senior leadership they become seriously underrepresented.

While the existing literature and research has been pivotal for this review, there are a number of gaps that need addressing. Currently, barriers are seen in isolation, for example, being placed in lower-ability sets is seen only as a barrier in the stage of school. However, we need to develop a far more comprehensive understanding of the cumulative nature of barriers and how they transcend and carry over to different stages in the career pipeline. For example, understanding how discriminatory experiences at university affect women of colour's confidence when entering employment for the first time needs to be better understood and addressed. Future research should seek to understand the varying barriers at different time points as cumulative and intertwined, as opposed to rigidly separate.

Additionally, much of the research cited aggregates all groups of women of colour together, categorised as "BAME" or "BME". Any future work should seek to understand the experiences of different groups of women of colour. For example, understanding how the experiences of entering employment for a Black-African woman may differ from that of a Bangladeshi woman. While there are some shared experiences, women of colour are not homogenous and should not be treated as such by research.

Finally, within the research, women of colour are rarely asked to voice what they think employers and government should do to remove the barriers they face in the workplace. Researchers that have the privilege to learn from women of colour through interviews, focus groups and surveys should endeavour to always provide them with the space to discuss solutions. Indeed, women of colour experiencing these barriers are in many ways best situated to state what would support them in overcoming them.

While this review has highlighted just how large the issue of pay and progression is for women of colour, there is space for hope and change as shown through our 'Solutions' section. Schools, universities, and employers have started to implement initiatives to tackle these racial and gendered inequalities in employment. However, this is very much the beginning and as this is a systemic and structural problem, the UK Government needs to provide support, funding and backing for these initiatives. If they do, and thereby unlock the potential of women of colour, they could add £24 billion a year to the UK economy.<sup>359</sup>

Designed and illustrated by:  
**Vedanshi Harlalka Hewavidana**  
[www.itsvedanshi.com](http://www.itsvedanshi.com)  
[be.net/itsvedanshi](http://be.net/itsvedanshi)

© Copyright The Fawcett Society 2021.  
Registered charity No. 1108769

Limited company registered in  
England and Wales No. 04600514

Any enquiries can be sent to:  
[monica.dey@fawcettsociety.org.uk](mailto:monica.dey@fawcettsociety.org.uk)

**Fawcett Society**  
Studio 222  
China Works  
100 Black Prince Road  
London, SE1 7SJ

[www.fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk)