

The impact of COVID on learning and employment opportunities for people from BAME backgrounds

Evidence report

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The impact of COVID on learning and employment opportunities for people from BAME backgrounds

Overview

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected people from minority ethnic backgrounds, exposing longstanding inequalities for minority and marginalised communities, according to the [BMJ](#). These disparities have been particularly evident in the UK, where Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are bearing the brunt of the pandemic in terms of their health. An [official inquiry commissioned by the UK government](#) identified that the risk of dying from COVID-19 is substantially higher in people from BAME groups than those from White ethnic groups, with the highest mortality rates seen among people from Black and Asian backgrounds. Emerging [analysis](#) suggests an intersection with geographical areas of poverty and social deprivation as the communities most affected often reside in densely populated parts of towns and cities.

A range of structural factors are at play that have led to worse economic outcomes for BAME groups during the pandemic, including the likelihood of being engaged in frontline work, more precarious employment conditions, lower economic resilience, fewer employment rights and are less likely to have had the flexibility afforded by working at home, according to the [TUC](#).

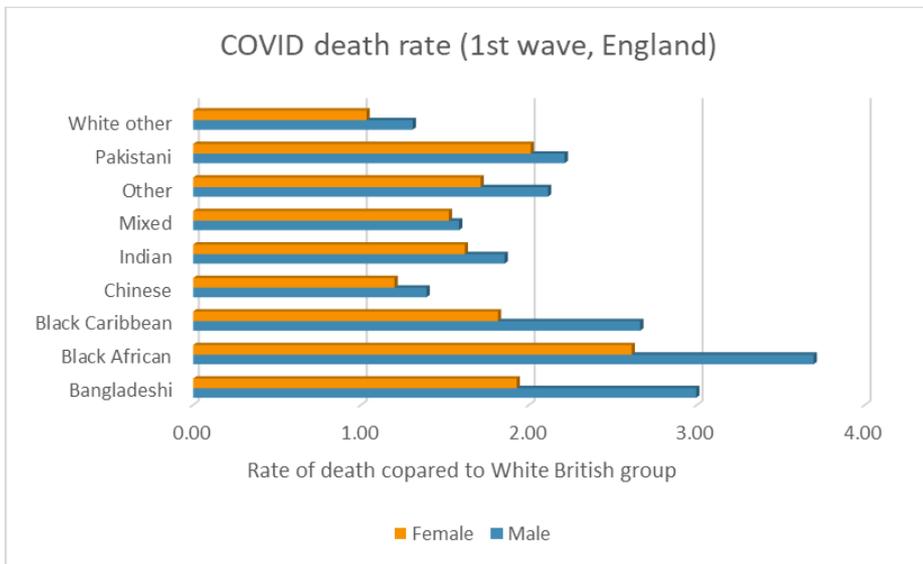
The term 'BAME' is used throughout this paper to describe all ethnic groups residing in the UK other than White British people. It is acknowledged that use of this term can be problematic as it can be seen to exclude, in terms, some ethnic groups. The data excerpts in this paper come from a range of sources, some of which use definitions of BAME or other labels interchangeably; where the term 'BAME' is used in the data, every effort has been made to make clear which groups are included. Where data for particular ethnic groups have been pulled out separately this is generally because it is significant and has therefore been highlighted.

Analysis

Health impacts of COVID for BAME individuals

[ONS data](#) shows during the first wave of the pandemic (to September 2020), people in almost all BAME groups had higher rates of death with COVID compared with to White British population. In comparison with the White British group, the rate of death was highest for the Black African group, followed by Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Pakistani) ethnic groups.

In the second wave of the pandemic (September 2020 onwards), the differences in mortality compared with the White British population increased for people of Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds; the Bangladeshi group had the highest rates, 5.0 and 4.1 times greater than for White British males and females respectively.

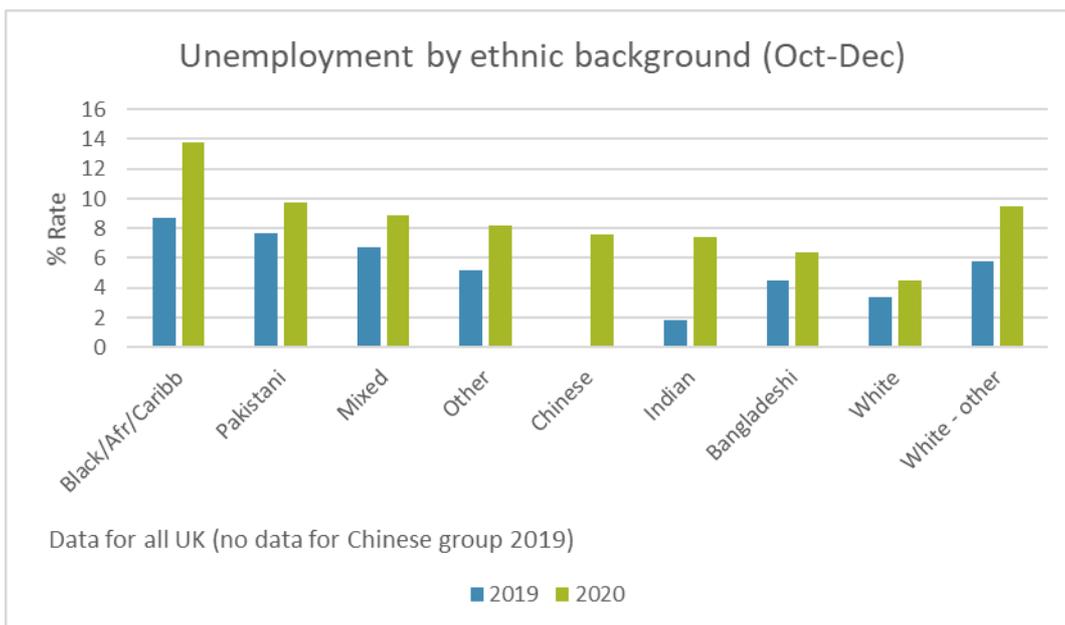


Graph 1: ONS Data

A report from [Public Health England \(PHE\)](#) found individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to work in occupations with a higher risk of exposure to the virus, 15% of workers in the sectors most affected by the pandemic are from a minority ethnic group, compared to 12% of all workers.

How the pandemic has affected unemployment rates

Workers from a minority ethnic backgrounds have been most negatively impacted by the pandemic in respect of unemployment. ONS data shows the unemployment rate for people from all minority ethnic background was 8.9% in January-March 2021, up from 6.3% in the same period the year before. By comparison, the unemployment rate for people from White ethnic backgrounds rose, from 3.9% to 4.7%, an increase of 0.6%. Broken down by group, there are significant differences in unemployment growth from 2019 to the same period in 2020.



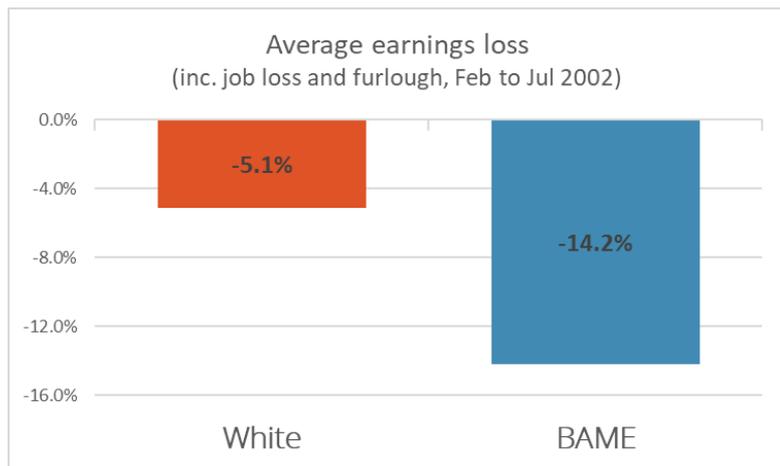
Graph 2: ONS data, 2021

In the 12 months to September 2020, the unemployment rate was highest for people from a Pakistani (9%), or Black (9%) ethnic background. The unemployment rate was lowest for

people from a White, Indian (4%), or Chinese (5%) ethnic background. According to analysis by the House of Commons Library.

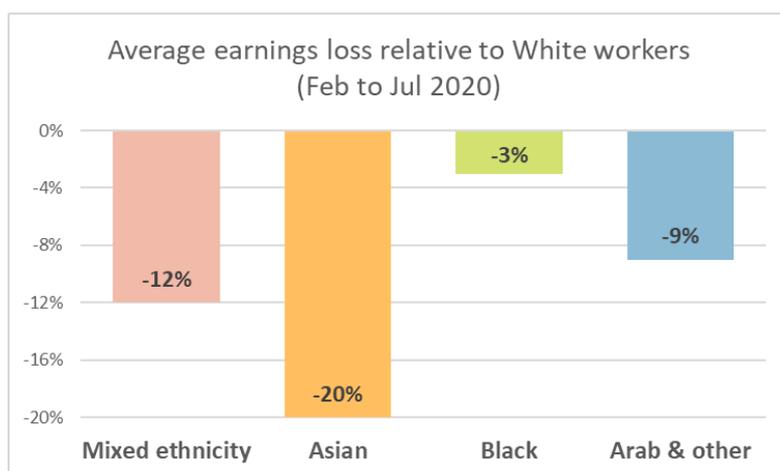
Loss of earnings caused by the pandemic

[Analysis by the Financial Conduct Authority](#) (FCA) looked at the number of ways earnings have been impacted. Using a simple measurement (loss of earnings due to redundancy or reduced earnings due to furlough or fewer working hours) the FCA found that whilst all ethnic groups saw an average drop in earnings, BAME workers incomes dropped 9.1% more on average than White workers. A difference that remains substantially unchanged even when controlled for other characteristics such as age and education level.



Graph 3: FCA Analysis

Looking at some BAME subgroups in more detail, (Asian, Black, Arab, Mixed ethnic group and others) the chart below shows the Asian group had a disproportionately large and statistically significant loss in average earnings compared to the White group.



Graph 4 (FCA Analysis)

Access to government support schemes: Self-employment, zero-hours contracts, and economic resilience

Pre-pandemic labour market inequalities for BAME groups may have exacerbated the impact of the pandemic. In December 2020, evidence presented to the [Parliamentary Select Committee for Women and Equalities](#) highlighted a range of reasons why BAME workers may have had a lower rate of take-up for Government support schemes.

A 2020 [report by the Black South West Network](#) shows certain BAME groups are over-represented in low income self-employment. Notably 25% of Pakistani men are self-employed compared to a UK average of 15.1%. (More about this in this [IFS study](#)). The Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) put in place to enable self-employed individuals to claim a taxable grant has a lower take up and is said to be “less well-understood” than the Job Retention (‘furlough’) Scheme according to [The Resolution Foundation](#).

BAME workers have less employment security than their White colleagues. In the context of the pandemic, being in insecure work is problematic; many workers on short-term or zero-hours contracts do not meet the eligibility criteria for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). The [TUC](#) in a report found “1 in 13 BAME employees are in insecure work, and 1 in 8 Black employees are in insecure work, the national average is 1 in 17”.

Workers in insecure employment are unlikely to have an economic safety net and therefore less resilient to short-term economic crises. A [Runnymede Trust](#) report from April 2020, found that while Indian households have 90–95p for every £1 of White British wealth, Pakistani households have around 50p, Black Caribbean households have around 20p, and Black African and Bangladeshi households approximately 10p.

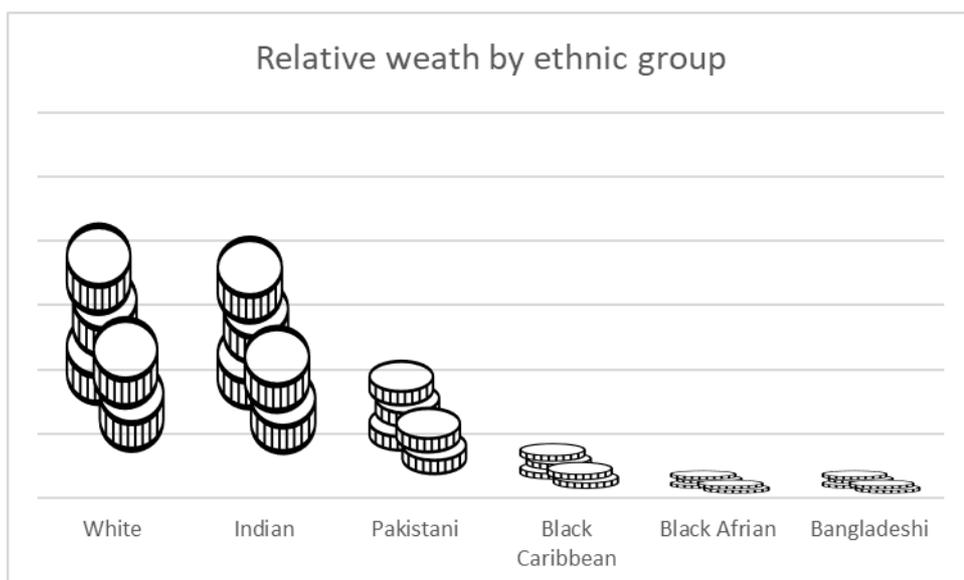


Figure 1: Source Runnymede Trust

BAME young people

Across all ethnic backgrounds, unemployment rates are higher for young people than for older age groups. Among people aged 16-24, unemployment rates were highest for people from a Black (29%) or Bangladeshi or Pakistani (27%) ethnic background in October 2019-September 2020. This compared to a rate of 11% for people from a White ethnic background.

Table 1: Unemployment rates by age and ethnic background (period to Sept 2020)

	16-24 (%)	25-49 (%)	50+ (%)	Total (%)
White	11	3	3	4
Black	29	7	6	9
Bangladeshi/Pakistani	27	5	5	9
Indian	17	3	2	4
Other ethnic groups	16	5	4	7
Total	12.4	3.1	2.7	4.1

Source: ONS/House of Commons Library

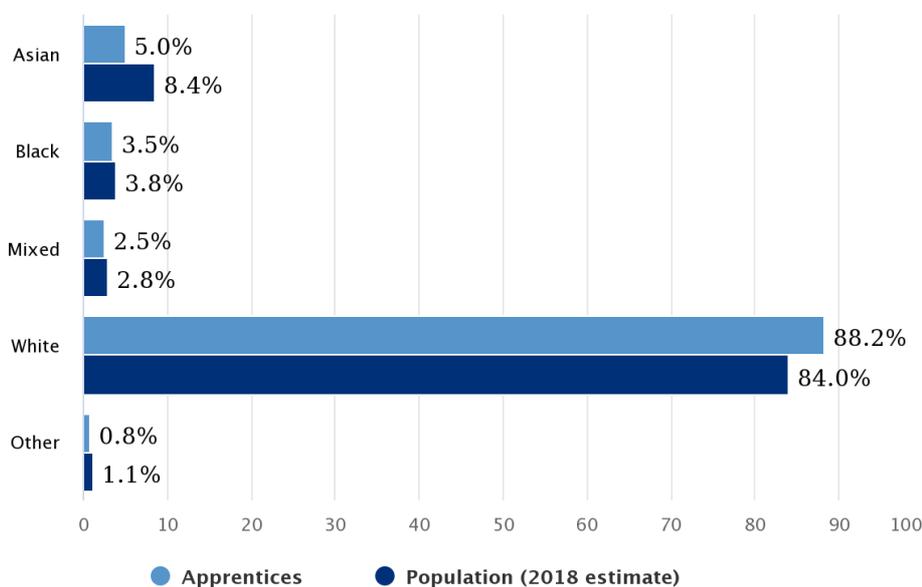
BAME women

[Survey analysis](#) carried out by the Fawcett Society in 2020 showed indicated that BAME women were particularly likely to suffer economic and social impacts of COVID; as women’s likelihood to be a frontline worker collided with the ‘deep seated structural racism’ which was already impacting the increased infection rate of some ethnic groups.

Apprenticeship participation

In the 8 years to July 2019, the percentage of apprentices from Asian, Black, Mixed and Other backgrounds went up from 9.7% to 11.8%; but BAME apprentices are still underrepresented as a percent of the population as a whole. (

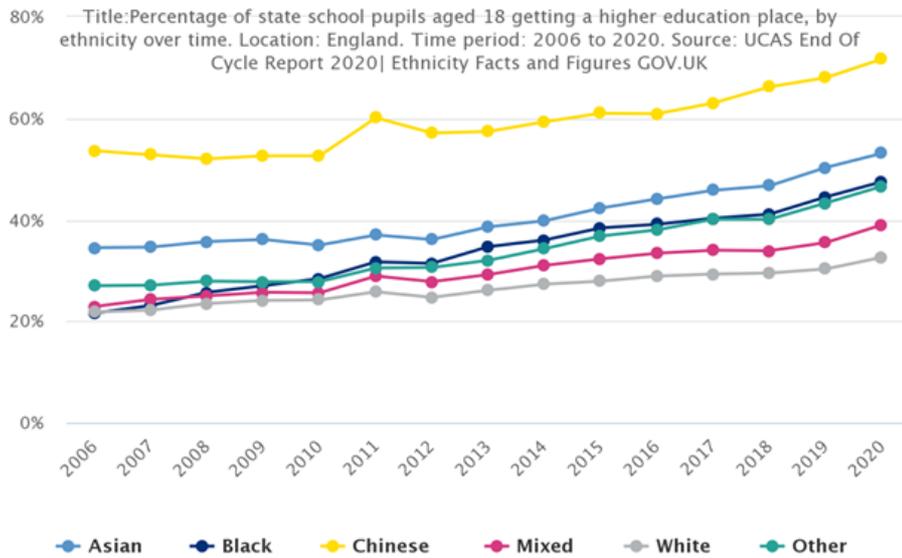
Title: Percentage of people on apprenticeships, and percentage of the overall population, by ethnicity. Location: England. Time period: 2018 to 2019 academic year. Source: Apprenticeships and traineeships data | Ethnicity Facts and Figures GOV.UK



Graph 6 Source: UK Gov data

HE: Participation rates continue to rise but the attainment gap persists

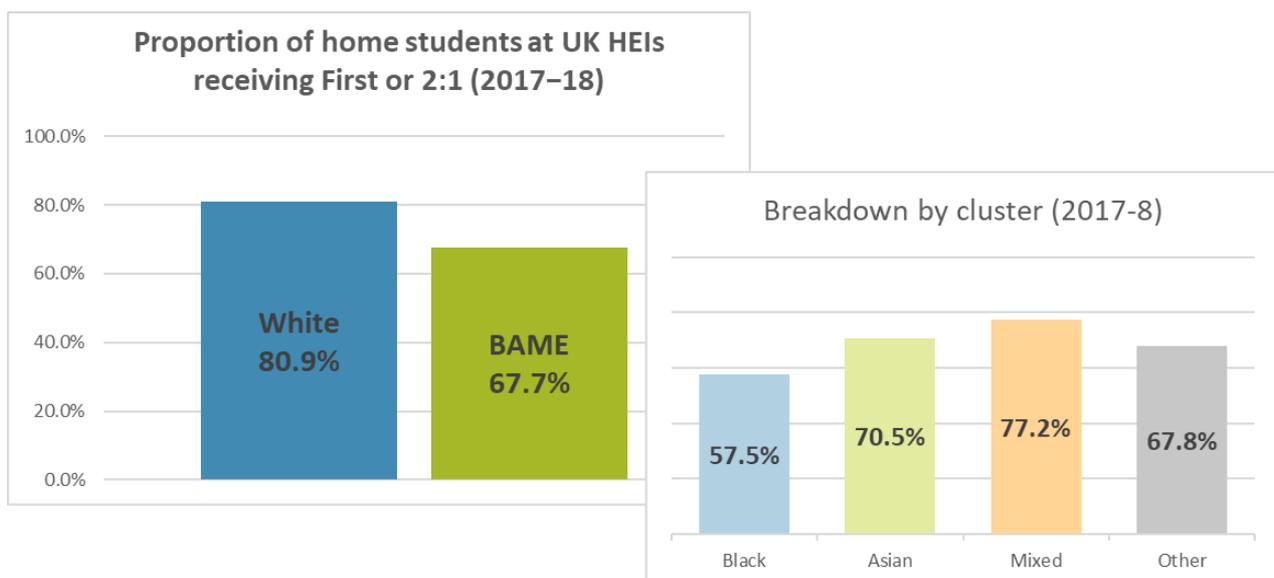
[Government analysis](#) shows HE entry rates for most ethnic groups continue to rise at a faster rate than White students. In 2020, 71.7% of pupils from the Chinese ethnic group got a higher education place in the UK, the highest entry rate out of all ethnic groups. 32.6% of White pupils got a higher education place, and had continuously, the lowest entry rate since 2007.



Graph 5 Source: Government analysis

Entry rates for all ethnic groups were higher than in the previous year – they were also higher than in 2006 (the first year covered by this data). Between 2006 and 2020, Black pupils had the biggest entry rate increase out of all ethnic groups, from 21.6% to 47.5%.

[UniversitiesUK](#) analysis shows proportionately more students from BAME backgrounds receive a lower degree classification with some groups such as Chinese and Indian bucking the trend with 76.6% and 70.5% of higher degree classifications respectively.



Graph 75 Source: HESA