

Moving on up? Ethnic minority women and work

Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean women and employment survey: aspirations, experiences and choices

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Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

About the investigation

In October 2005, the Equal Opportunities Commission launched '***Moving on up? Ethnic minority women at work***', a GB wide investigation into the participation, pay and progression of ethnic minority women in the labour market. The overall aim of the investigation is to understand more about the diverse experiences and aspirations of ethnic minority women in relation to work, including barriers to progress, so that effective action can be taken to improve their labour market prospects. The focus is on women, as there is insufficient labour market evidence available that seeks to understand how gender, race and faith intersect in the labour market. The investigation focuses particularly, though not exclusively, on Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean women. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are included because they have the lowest rates of employment of any other ethnic group, and Black Caribbean women because they are under-represented in senior level jobs, despite being more likely than white women to work full-time. A focus on these three groups has meant that resources can be channelled more effectively for depth research and analysis, and in order to avoid over generalisations about ethnic minority women.

The EOC has commissioned new research and analysis to support the investigation, including the voices of women at every stage.

Moving on up? is a statutory investigation under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The legislation gives the EOC the power to undertake general formal investigations into deep-seated issues of gender inequality or discrimination, and to make recommendations to those in a position to make changes, including Government.

This report is one of a series of research reports commissioned for the ***Moving on up*** investigation, which is supported by the European Social Fund. We will publish all the research on our website at www.eoc.org.uk. Please email bme@eoc.org.uk or phone our helpline if you require a printed copy of the interim report.

For more information on the investigation visit our website www.eoc.org.uk/bme

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1. Introduction

For its General Formal Investigation into ethnic minority women and employment called *Moving on Up*, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) commissioned a new survey of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and White British women. The fieldwork was carried out in August and September 2005, by Connect Research for the EOC¹. The survey was conducted in London, Birmingham, Bradford and Leeds. Interviews were face to face and interviewees were screened so that those answering all questions were in work, aged 16-34 and not unemployed, inactive or students.

Sample

The final sample for the survey included 201 Bangladeshi, 205 Pakistani, 202 Black Caribbean and 204 White British women. The sample findings should be read as indicative not representative. The sample achieved parity across the ethnic groups in that women were employed full-time and part-time in similar proportions. Equally, women were in similar proportions of jobs at different levels. In each ethnic group, 10-14% were women working in associate professional, or above level occupations. 42-45% in each group (the largest proportion) were working in administrative/secretarial level occupations. 11-16% in each group were working in personal service/sales level occupations, and the remainder in elementary type jobs. At this level, Black Caribbean women were slightly over-represented. When matching the overall sample to women aged 16-34 in Great Britain by ethnic group who are employed, the survey includes slightly lower proportions of women with degrees and more women with qualifications below A level. Slightly lower proportions of women working full-time were included in the sample than national averages and the women were more likely to be employed in the public sector.

Survey themes

Previous qualitative research by the EOC and a range of other literature (e.g. Ahmad, Modood, and Lissenburgh, 2003; Bhavnani, 1994; Mirza, 2003.) suggested that ethnic minority women were facing forms of disadvantage, discrimination and stereotyping in employment because of their gender and race. This survey was unique in attempting to quantify a range of those issues, in order to triangulate findings from existing qualitative research and reports from secondary analysis of datasets.

¹ Connect Research is an independent market research agency, which specialises in researching diversity issues related to race and gender equality. The company was founded in 2000 and was a nominee for 'Emerging Company of the Year' at the 2005 Black Enterprise Awards. The Connect team comprises members of the Market Research Society and the Association for Qualitative Research.

The survey investigated 3 themes:

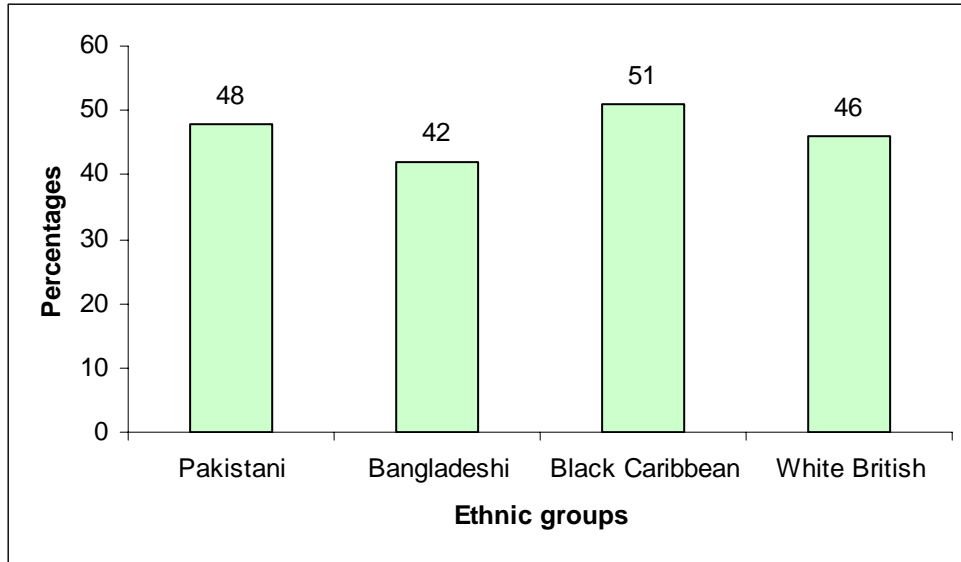
1. Aspirations
2. Experiences
3. Choices

2. Aspirations

Aiming for promotion in the near future

Similarly high proportions of women (42% to 51%) in each ethnic group² were aiming for promotion in the near future (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Women seeking promotion in the near future



Women in each of the ethnic minority³ groups were more likely⁴ to be seeking promotion if they worked in the public sector, than the private sector and if they were educated to A level standard and above, compared to GCSE level and below. This distinction did not apply to White women.

Similarly high proportions of women in all of the ethnic groups (54%-61%) working full-time were seeking promotion. They were more likely to be seeking promotion than women working part-time (27%-40%).

² Where 'each ethnic group' is stated, this means White British, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean women aged 16-34 throughout the document.

³ Where 'ethnic minority groups' is stated, this means Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean women aged 16-34 throughout the document.

⁴ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

White British and Bangladeshi women with no dependent children were more likely⁵ to be seeking promotion than their counterparts with dependent children. Black Caribbean and Pakistani women were likely to be seeking promotion whether they had dependent children or not. This finding goes some way to disprove generalised assertions about ethnic minority women's attachment to the labour market and their choices about work and family.

Willing to undertake certain actions in order to achieve that promotion

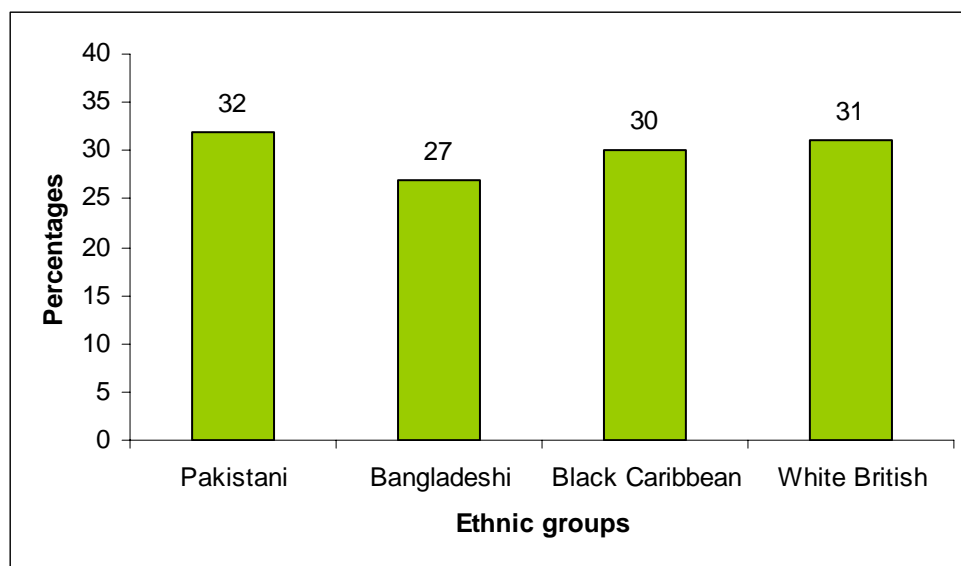
The vast majority of women in each of the ethnic groups were willing to train, or study for additional qualifications and take on extra responsibilities in order to achieve promotion.

The majority of women in each of the ethnic groups were willing to work longer hours, and change jobs to achieve promotion, though these actions were less popular than those previously identified.

Women in all ethnic groups (50% and below) were divided about their willingness to work away from home for short periods, or move to a new location in order to achieve promotion.

Aspiration to achieve senior positions in the course of working life

Figure 2 Women aspiring to senior management/senior professional positions



⁵ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Similar proportions of women (27% to 32%) in each ethnic group aspired to senior positions (senior management and senior professional) in their working life (see figure 2). 2001 Census data on proportions of women by ethnic group and senior management official positions suggests that at least half of these women will hit 'glass ceilings' and will not achieve at this level, if current trends continue.

Ethnic minority women were more likely⁶ to aspire to a senior position if they worked in the public sector, than the private sector. This distinction did not apply to White women.

Women in all ethnic groups with A levels and above were twice as likely⁷ to aspire to senior positions, compared to their counterparts with GCSEs or below.

Having dependent children did not make a difference to the percentages of women aspiring to senior positions in each of the ethnic minority groups. However, White British women with dependent children were less likely⁸ to aspire to senior positions.

Aspiration to achieve middle management type positions in the course of working life

Similar proportions of women (22% to 27%) in each ethnic group aspired to middle management⁹ type positions in their working life (see table 1).

Aspirations to be own boss in the course of working life

Ethnic minority women are more likely to want to set up or run their own business than White women. Almost twice¹⁰ as many Pakistani (20%) and Bangladeshi (20%) women aspire to be their own boss compared to White women (11%) (see table 1). This finding chimes with official data on women and self employment, though the figure for White women is higher than current statistics suggest.

Given the higher proportions of ethnic minority women who aspire to be their own boss, and significant minorities of all women who aspired to 'none of these', it is valid to calculate the proportions of women aiming for senior positions if these two categories are removed. Of the remainder about 40 per cent of all the groups aspire to be senior managers or senior professionals, although it is notable that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are more likely to aspire to the latter and Black Caribbean and white British

⁶ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

⁷ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

⁸ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

⁹ For this purpose, the middle management figure has been derived from adding 'middle management/supervisor and team leader.'

¹⁰ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

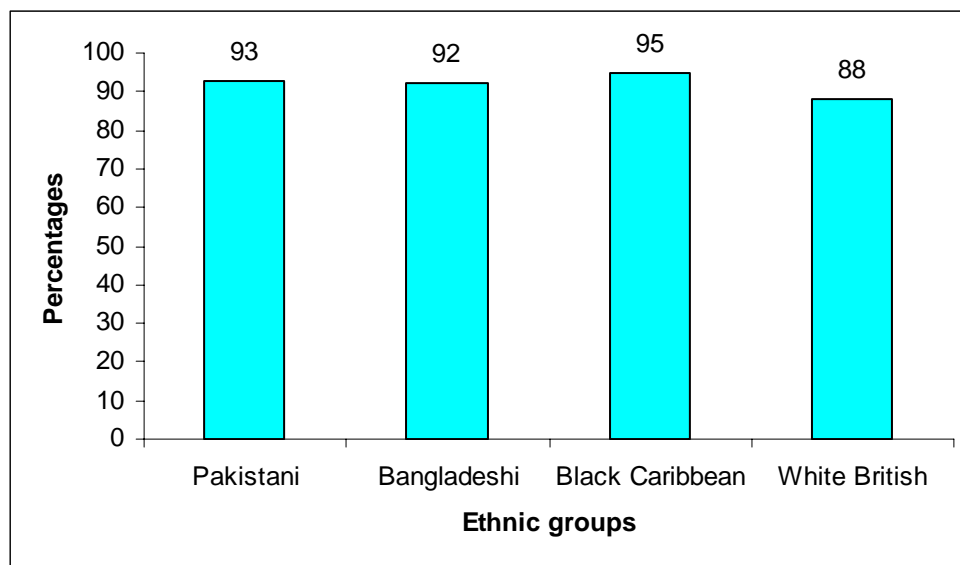
women to the former.

Table 1 Positions aspired to in working lives

Position aspired to	White British (per cent)	Black Caribbean (per cent)	Pakistani (per cent)	Bangladeshi (per cent)
Senior management	25	23	17	15
Middle management	13	11	9	14
Senior professional	6	7	15	12
Professional/tradesperson ¹¹	17	18	14	17
Supervisor/team leader	14	13	13	10
Own boss	11	17	20	20
None of these	14	10	12	11
Aiming for promotion in near future	46	51	48	42

Opportunities for progression

Figure 3 Proportions of women who see opportunities for progression as important when choosing a job



¹¹ The full description was 'fully qualified professional or tradesperson'.

Opportunities for progression are important to all women regardless of ethnic group. Around 90% of women in the survey said that opportunities for progression were important to them when choosing a job (see figure 3).

Ability to speak a range of languages fluently

In addition to English, ethnic minority women are able to speak a range of other languages fluently, a valuable skill, and potentially untapped resource for business. 36% Pakistani, 44% Bangladeshi, and 20% Black Caribbean women spoke 1 other language fluently, compared to 12% White British women. A further 45% of Pakistani and 42% Bangladeshi women, spoke 2 other languages fluently, in addition to English.

Those not in work who would like to find paid work

A sample of women not in work¹², were asked if they would like to find paid work. Similar percentages of women from each ethnic group not in work, would like to find paid work (Bangladeshi 26%, Black Caribbean 21%, Pakistani 25%, White British 28%). This finding is similar to an analysis of the Spring 2005 Labour Force Survey which shows that 23% of all Pakistani and Bangladeshi women aged 16-34 who are not in employment are either seeking or would like to find work.

¹² This question was asked to a sample of 6040 women, 1674 Bangladeshi, 1447 Black Caribbean, 1628 Pakistani, and 1291 White British women not in work, before they were screened out of the final questionnaire. The final questionnaire only applied to women currently in work.

2. Experiences

Difficulty in finding a job

Around half (5 out of 10)¹³ of the ethnic minority women in the sample reported they had *often/sometimes* had difficulty finding a job, compared to a third (3 out of 10) of White women (see figure 4).

Figure 4 Women who had often or sometimes had difficulty finding a job

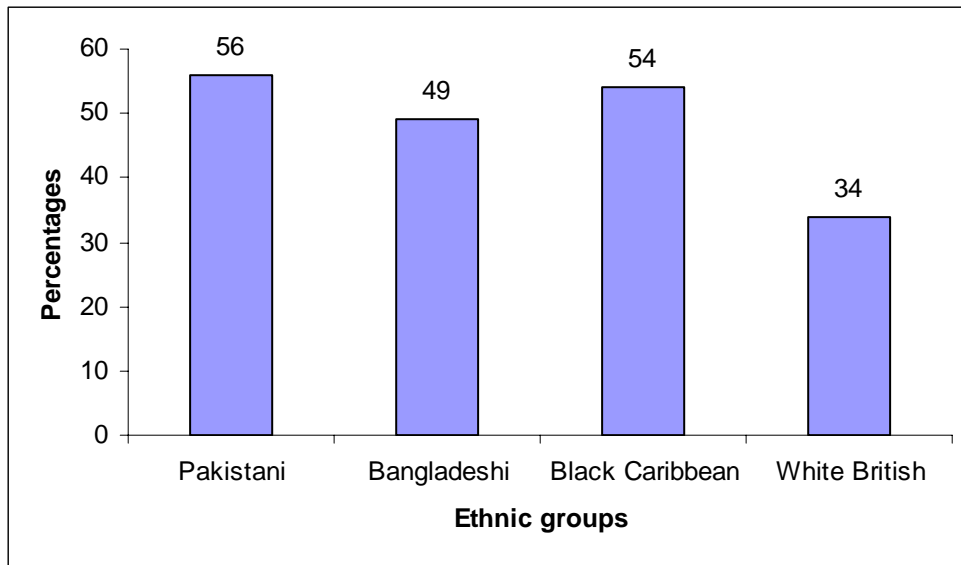
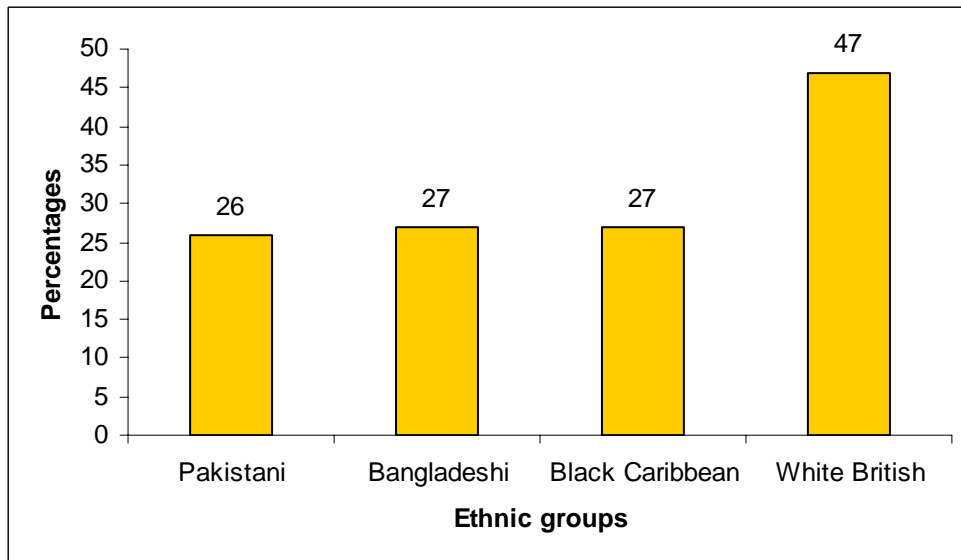


Figure 5 Women who had never had difficulty finding a job



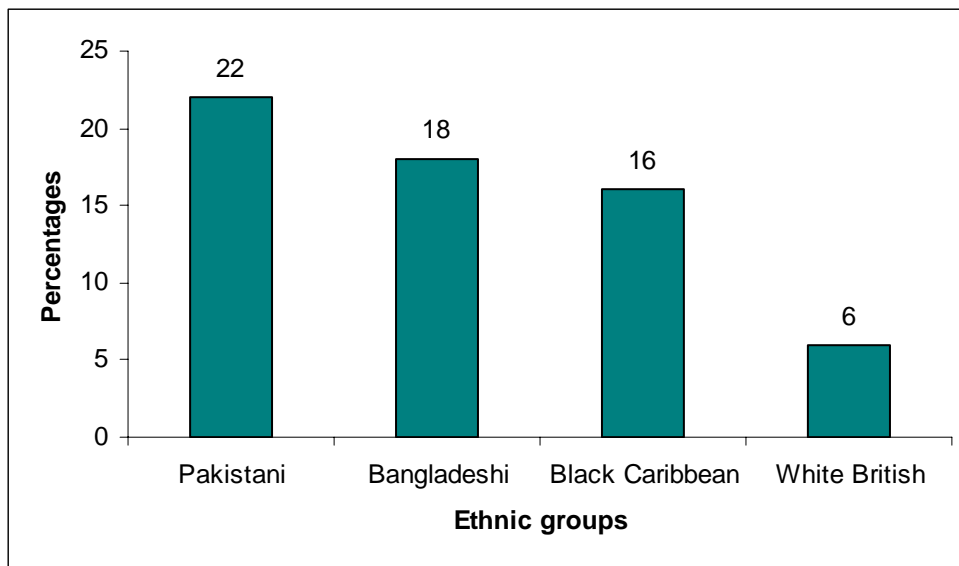
¹³ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Furthermore, around a quarter of ethnic minority women had *never* had difficulty finding a job compared to half of white women (see figure 5). This resonates with official unemployment statistics and analysis identifying persistent employment disadvantage in accessing jobs for ethnic minorities (see Heath, 2005).

Taken a job at a lower level than qualified for

The ethnic minority women in the sample were 3 or 4 times more likely¹⁴ than white women to have *often* taken a job at a lower level than they were qualified for (see figure 6). This equates to around 1 in 5 ethnic minority women (compared to well under 1 in 10 White women) often working in a job below their potential because no one would employ them at they level they were qualified for.

Figure 6 Women who had often taken a job at a lower level because no one would employ them at the level they were qualified for



Seen less experienced/qualified people promoted above them

The ethnic minority women in the sample were more likely¹⁵ to have *often/sometimes* seen less qualified/experienced people promoted above them, but this was particularly the case for around a third of Pakistani/Black Caribbean women, compared to one fifth of White women (see figure 7). Overall, 56% Pakistani, 54% Bangladeshi and 50% Black Caribbean women had *ever* seen less qualified/experienced people promoted above them. The inference here is that Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean

¹⁴ Statistically significant at p<.05.

¹⁵ Statistically significant at p<.05.

women feel they have been passed over for promotion regardless of their experience and qualifications.

Figure 7 Women who had often or sometimes seen less experienced or qualified people promoted above them

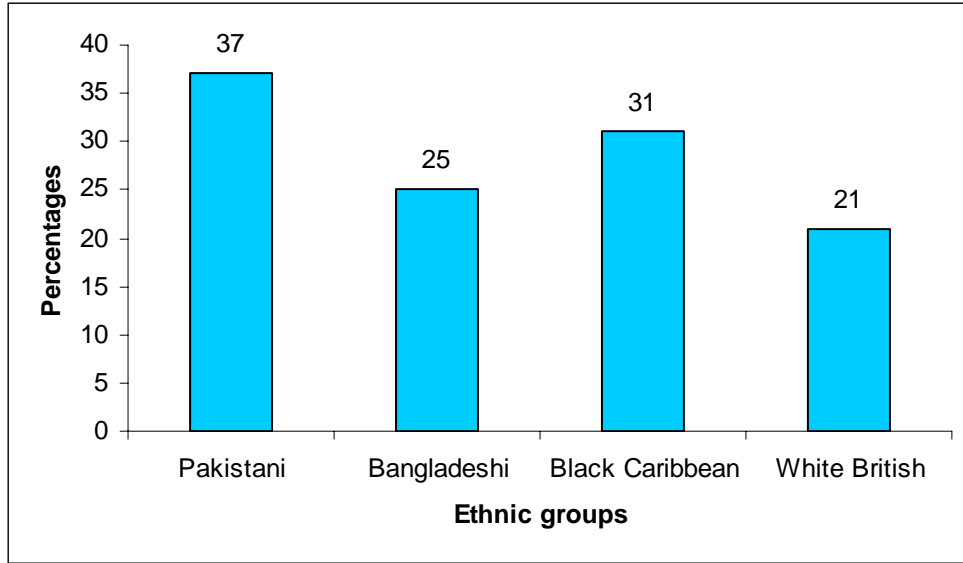


Figure 8 Women who had never seen less experienced or qualified people promoted above them

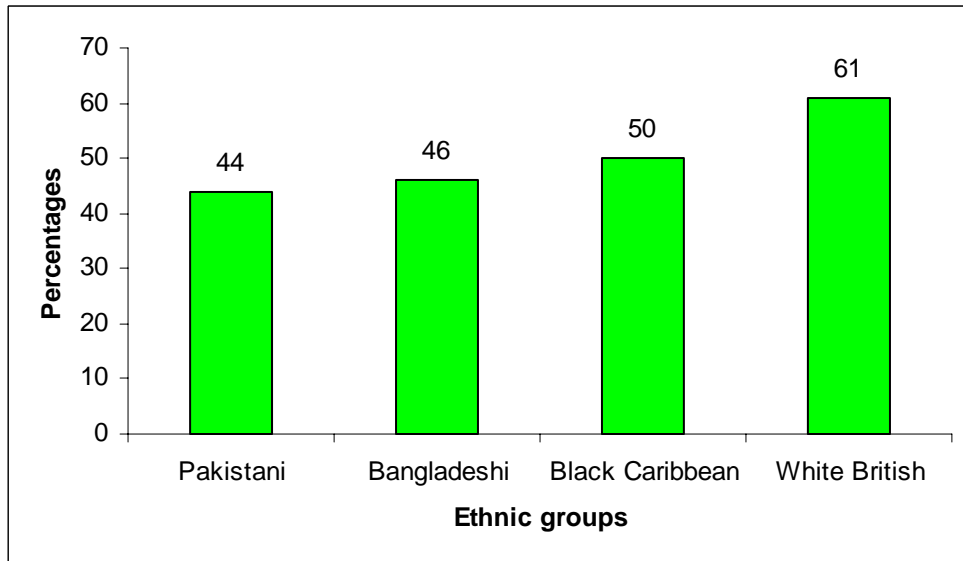


Table 2 summarises the degrees of difficulty experienced by women aiming to enter or progress in the labour market according to their potential. The proportions of young Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women employees experiencing various

difficulties is far greater than that of young White British women employees. 7 in 10, Black Caribbean/Pakistani women, and 6 in 10 Bangladeshi women have experienced at least one of these difficulties often or sometimes.

Table 2 Difficulties experienced by women related to labour market entry/progression

Difficulties experienced	Experienced often (per cent)				Experienced often or sometimes (per cent)			
	WB ¹⁶	BC	B	P	WB	BC	B	P
Difficulty finding a job	16	24	27	24	34	54	49	56
Taking a job at a lower level because no one would employ you at the level you were qualified for	5	16	18	22	26	35	36	41
Seen less experienced/less qualified people promoted above you	5	15	8	17	21	31	25	37
<i>Any of above three</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>69</i>

Experienced negative attitudes at work for wearing religious dress

1 in 5¹⁷ Pakistani and Bangladeshi women had *often/sometimes* experienced negative attitudes at work for wearing religious dress. Given that over 90% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are Muslim, and some wear the hijab, we can infer that some negative attitudes apply to this form of religious dress. This is an extra layer of difficulty faced by some Pakistani and Bangladeshi women on the basis of their faith.

Asked about plans for marriage/children at interview

Between a fifth and a quarter¹⁸ of ethnic minority women in the sample had *often/sometimes* been asked about their plans for marriage/children at interview compared to 14% of White women. Whilst such questions are not in themselves illegal, allowing the answers to influence the decision to make a job offer would amount to

¹⁶ From this point the following abbreviations mean: WB = White British; BC = Black Caribbean; B=Bangladeshi; P=Pakistani.

¹⁷ Statistically significant at p<.05.

¹⁸ Statistically significant at p<.05.

illegal sex discrimination. Such questions are not relevant to the woman's ability to do the job. The results suggest that employers are more likely to make discriminatory assumptions about young ethnic minority women than they are of White women.

Asked by employer what partner/family think about you working

Pakistani (24%) and Bangladeshi (19%) women were more likely¹⁹ to have been *often/sometimes* asked by their employer what their partner/family thought about them working, compared to Black Caribbean (17%) and White (14%) women.

Racist comments

Around a fifth of Pakistani/Bangladeshi women, and a third of Black Caribbean women had *often/sometimes* experienced racist comments at work, either directed at themselves or others, compared to around 10% of White women.

¹⁹ Statistically significant at $p < .05$.

3. Choices

Ethnic minority managers

Ethnic minority women were more likely to work in establishments where at least one of the managers was from an ethnic minority. Around three quarters of Pakistani/Bangladeshi women and two-thirds of Black Caribbean women worked in an establishment where at least one of the managers was from an ethnic minority, compared to half of White British women. We don't know if ethnic minority women are more likely to be employed if at least one of the managers is from an ethnic minority, but recent EOC research (Adams, 2006 forthcoming) suggests there is a connection between employing ethnic minority women at the level of the local labour market and there being at least one ethnic minority woman in senior management.

Importance of representation of ethnic minority women in workforce and senior management

Ethnic minority women were more likely to stress the importance of the presence of ethnic minority women in the workforce and senior management when choosing a job than White British women.

Figure 9 Importance of presence of ethnic minority women in workforce when choosing a job

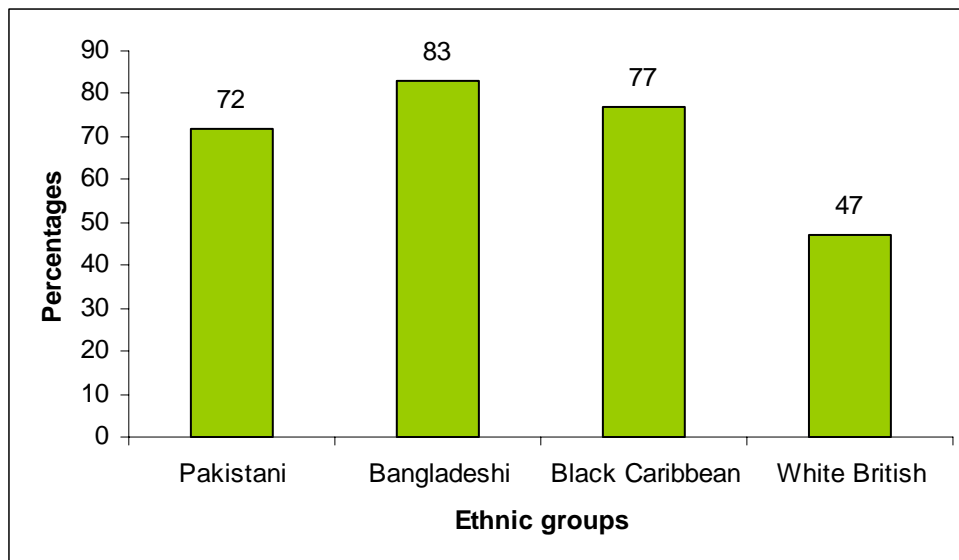
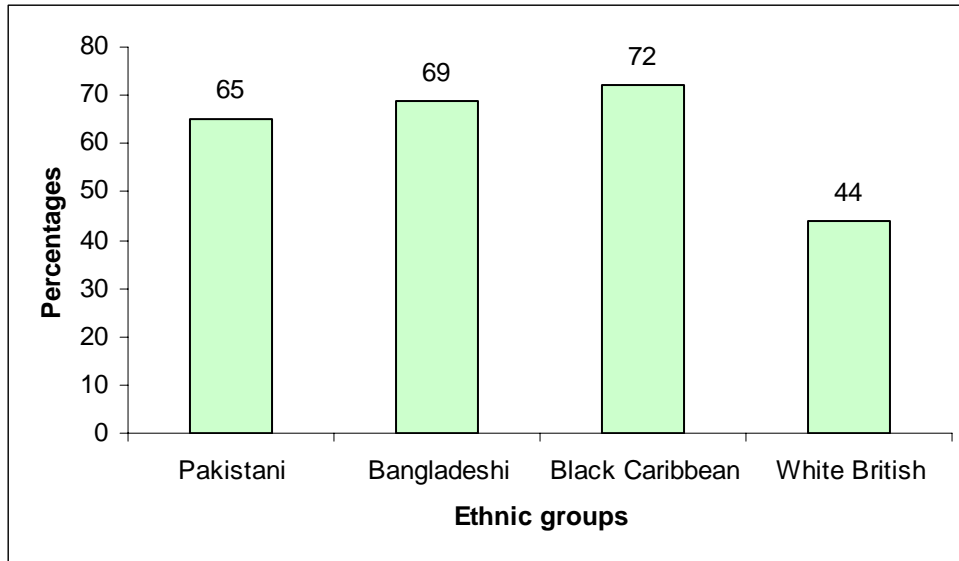


Figure 10 Importance of presence of ethnic minority women in senior management when choosing a job



Importance of presence of women in senior management

Ethnic minority women (67-74%), more than White women (60%) were likely to stress the importance of the presence of women in senior management, as an important factor when choosing a job.

The employer makes it clear they welcome applications from ethnic minority groups

Whether or not, an employer makes it clear they welcome applications from ethnic minority groups is very significant to ethnic minority women when choosing a job. This mattered to 8 or 9 out of 10 ethnic minority women. 6 out of 10 White British women also thought this was important. This finding is corroborated by recent EOC research with 16 year olds (Bhavnani, 2006 forthcoming), in that 8 or 9 out of ten ethnic minority girls and 8 out of 10 White girls, said that whether an employer welcomes staff from a range of ethnic backgrounds is important to them when choosing a future job. An overt commitment to diversity and equality of opportunity from employers is very important to young ethnic minority women.

Flexible working conditions

The availability of flexible working conditions is vitally important to all women, regardless of ethnic group. Over 90% of all women in the survey said that flexible working conditions were important when choosing a job. It's interesting to note that flexible working conditions are 'very important' to higher proportions of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean women than White women.

Table 3 Important factors when choosing a job

Factors when choosing a job	Very important (per cent)				Very/Fairly important (per cent)			
	WB	BC	B	P	WB	BC	B	P
Pay	63	75	73	73	97	96	96	95
Flexible working conditions	60	69	70	68	91	95	97	96
Opportunities for progression	56	68	64	68	88	95	92	93
Proximity to home	40	44	61	50	81	79	93	86
A job that people look up to	30	48	57	49	72	81	86	86

Pay and flexible working conditions are the most important factors for women when choosing a job across ethnic groups, but opportunities for progression register as particularly important to Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean women. Proximity of work to home is a particularly important issue for Bangladeshi women.

Conclusions

Young Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in employment are as motivated to succeed as White women. White women with children are significantly less likely to aspire to senior positions compared to Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean women with children. Equally, significant proportions of ethnic minority women not in work would like to find paid work.

Yet, ethnic minority women in this research have encountered far greater difficulties than White women when aiming to enter or progress in the labour market according to their potential. There is also evidence here of greater incidences of certain types of sex discrimination suffered by Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women compared to White women.

There is a need for more research to understand about how young Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women continue to be aspirational and motivated in the face of such adversity, and what happens to the lives and careers of those women who cannot evolve the requisite strategies for success in such an 'uneven' labour market.

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