

NORTH EAST **RACE EQUALITY** FORUM RESEARCH BRIEFING No. 16



Race inequality in the workplace

BACKGROUND

The *Race inequality in the workplace* report is a joint initiative by Carnegie UK Trust, Operation Black Vote and UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies. Together we recognise the changes taking place in the world of work, the growing ‘gig economy’ and the drive amongst policy organisations and campaigners to push forward changes which would better protect people’s wellbeing in circumstances where it may be compromised [report link below].

<https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/race-inequality-in-the-workforce/>

Recognising and being concerned about the over-representation of ethnic minority groups in the ‘gig economy’ and forms of precarious work more broadly, we saw potential in using the Next Steps data to find out more about these issues. Next Steps, described in detail in the full report, is an extensive longitudinal cohort study collecting data from a cohort of more than 7,000 young people about many areas of their lives. Given the over-representation of ethnic minority groups in Next Steps, this data set is a particularly robust source for this piece of work.

CONTEXT

Alongside the academic task of drawing new learning from Next Steps, this report offers some contextual summaries on the topics of race inequality in the UK, changes in the world of work, progress in advancing the ‘good work agenda’ and the experience of ethnic minority groups using mental health services. These are serious and complex topic areas which are not covered in full here;

however we have attempted to draw the reader's eye to some of the key opportunities and challenges in the areas where work, mental health and ethnicity intersect and deeply impact one another.



Key contextual points to note are that:

- Racial inequalities remain a critical issue in the UK workforce.
- Progression towards 'good work' policies in some areas are positive, but underlying fundamental problems remain around the availability of good work and the rising numbers of people in low-paid employment.
- The 'Millennial Generation' face a series of unique challenges, particularly in how they have entered and progressed through the labour market.
- There are well-reported but largely unaddressed issues around how ethnic minority groups access and experience mental health services.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) young adults continue to be at a greater risk of being unemployed than White young adults.
2. BAME groups are more likely to be in some form of precarious work.
3. Despite a focus on the precariousness of this generation's employment, the probability of having a permanent contract is over 80% for all ethnic groups.
4. There are significant links between employment status and mental health.
5. Some ethnic minority groups report more mental ill-health than the White group, whilst other ethnic groups report less.
6. Those who reported symptoms of mental ill health at age 14 or age 16 are more likely to report mental ill health at age 25.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings highlight that there is an important race equality dimension to labour market participation and experiences for 25 year-olds in the UK.

Millennials from BAME backgrounds were 58 per cent more likely to be unemployed than their White counterparts; 47 per cent more likely to be on a zero-hours contract; 10 per cent more likely to be working in a second job; 5 per cent more likely to be doing shift work; and 4 per cent less likely to have a permanent contract.



As well as strongly advocating for steps to tackle these inequalities, this report demonstrates that a detailed understanding of the different labour market experiences of different BAME groups is essential. For example, although 25-year-olds from Pakistani, Black African, Other (which includes Chinese, Arab and any other Asian group) and Mixed-race backgrounds were more likely to be unemployed than their White peers; Indian, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean adults were no more likely to be out of work. Pakistani millennials were more likely to be on a zero-hours contract, less likely to have a permanent job or be working shifts than their White peers. However, Indian and Black Caribbean workers were no more likely than their White peers to be in these types of employment. Black African and 25-year-olds whose ethnic group is classed as 'Other', had lower odds of being in a permanent role and were more likely to be doing shift work than White workers of the same age. But Mixed-race, Indian and Black Caribbean millennials had similar chances of being in these types of jobs. Only Black Caribbean 25-year-olds were more likely than their White peers to be working a second job. The findings hold even when other factors that could affect labour market success were taken into account, including gender, family background and educational attainment.

Interestingly the data show that although BAME young people are at greater risk of being in precarious work, there is no additional advantage or disadvantage in terms of reported mental health for ethnic minorities at age 25 who are in precarious work compared with White adults in precarious work. More broadly, the data show that some ethnic minority groups in the Next Steps cohort are less likely to report having mental ill-health symptoms compared to the White group; but higher rates of mental ill-health are reported among Mixed Heritage, Black Caribbean and Other ethnicity groups at age 25, compared to their White peers.

The report's findings suggest that the link between precarious work and poor mental health is a concern for all, rather than having a specific ethnicity dimension, at least at age 25.

Indeed, the evidence suggests that adolescent mental ill-health is a strong and significant predictor of mental ill-health

in early adulthood. However, it is important, when considering these findings to do so in the context of the recognised difficulties in comparing mental health between different ethnic groups; and the very particular, significant and well-documented challenges that BAME communities continue to experience in relation to access and engagement with mental health services.

Based on the research findings, this report makes a series of recommendations for UK Government, mental health services and employers. These can be found on page 7 of the full report.



Contact: For further information, back copies of Information Briefings or Research Briefings, or to join the Network, email gary.craig@galtres8.co.uk

The North East Race Equality Forum is a Network of around 300 individuals and organisations in the North East Region committed to promoting racial equality in the context of social justice. No one organisation is necessarily committed to every idea published in the name of the Forum. The Forum is supported by the 'Race', Crime and Justice Regional Research Network, which includes researchers from each University in the region.