Ethnic Inequalities in Employment
1991 - 2011

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Book chapter: *Have ethnic inequalities in the labour market persisted?*  
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Background

• Ethnic minority groups have a history of higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of employment than the White majority group.

• There has been significant policy concern in this field, although policy implementation has been inconsistent and partial:
  • Minority Outreach;
  • Specialist Employment Advisors;
  • Ethnic Minority Employment Stakeholder Group.

• But much policy concern has focused on specific minority cultures:
  • Muslim women and labour market participation;
  • Black youth and unemployment.

• Racial and religious discrimination in job application process & workplace
• To what extent have these issues persisted into the 2010s?
Data and Methods


• Comparisons over time use an abbreviated (seven groups) ethnic categorisation that is reasonably consistent across Census years.

• Focus on two age groups
  – 25-49 years
  – 50-74 years (N.B. people at higher end of this age group more likely to be retired)

• More detailed categories are used in analysis that only focus on 2011 (i.e. White Gypsy or Irish Traveller group, Arab group, White minority groups, mixed groups).

• Examine men and women separately.
Employment Outcomes

- **Economic activity:** In employment or actively looking for work i.e. employed, self-employed or unemployed. Those who are retired, students, looking after the home, or long-term sick or disabled are classed as economically inactive.
- **Unemployed:** Not in employment and either actively looking for work, or waiting to start work already obtained.
- **Self-employed:** People who operate their own businesses or work freelance, with or without employees.
- **Full-time employment:** Working 31 or more hours per week in a main job, but (for this analysis) not self-employed.
- **Part-time employment:** Working 30 or less hours per week in a main job, but (for this analysis) not self-employed.
Economic activity in younger workers
1991-2001-2011

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Persistent ethnic inequalities in unemployment 1991-2001-2011

Men (aged 25-49)

Women (aged 25-49)
Growing ethnic inequalities in part-time employment

![Graph showing part-time employment rates for different ethnic groups in 1991, 2001, and 2011 for men and women aged 25-49. The graph shows an increasing trend in part-time employment for all ethnic groups, with significant growth for Bangladeshi and Black African groups.]
Changing ethnic pattern of self-employment

[Diagram showing changes in self-employment rates for different ethnic groups (Bangladeshi, Black African, Pakistani, Black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, White) for men (aged 25-49) and women (aged 25-49) from 1991 to 2011.]

- **Bangladeshi**: Steady increase for men and slight decrease for women.
- **Black African**: Significant increase for men and slight decrease for women.
- **Pakistani**: Steady increase for men and slight decrease for women.
- **Black Caribbean**: Steady decrease for both men and women.
- **Chinese**: Steady decrease for both men and women.
- **Indian**: Steady decrease for both men and women.
- **White**: Steady increase for both men and women.

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**Men (aged 25-49)**

- 1991: [Value]
- 2001: [Value]
- 2011: [Value]

**Women (aged 25-49)**

- 1991: [Value]
- 2001: [Value]
- 2011: [Value]

Men (aged 50-74)

Women (aged 250-74)
Ethnic patterning of inability to work due to sickness, 1991-2001-2011
Economic activity, 2011, younger & older men
Economic activity, 2011, younger & older women

- White Irish
- Black Caribbean
- White British
- Other White
- Indian
- Mixed White and Asian
- Other Mixed
- Mixed White and Black African
- Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- Other Black
- Chinese
- Black African
- Other Asian
- Other
- Pakistani
- White Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Bangladeshi
- Arab

Women 50-74 vs Women 25-49
Economic activity: Arab & White Gypsy or Irish Traveller groups

• Very low economic activity rates in White Gypsy or Irish Traveller and the Arab groups, for both men and women.
  • Around 40% for Arab and White Gypsy or Irish Traveller women compared with over 80% for the White British women.
  • Around two-thirds of Arab and White Gypsy or Irish Traveller men, compared with over 90% for the White British men.
• For the Arab group this, in part, reflects high rates of participation in full-time education:
  • 13 times higher than the national average for men;
  • 8 times higher than the national average for women.
• For the White Gypsy or Irish Traveller group this reflects very high rates of sickness or disability:
  • More than 3 times the national average for both women and men.
Ethnicity & full-time employment:
men aged 25-49 in 2011 compared with White British

Further away from the White British rate of full time employment

-50  -40  -30  -20  -10   0

Percentage point difference from White British men

White Gypsy or Irish Traveller
Bangladeshi
Arab
Pakistani
Other
Other Black
Mixed White & Black
Black African
Other Asian
Mixed White & Black African
Black Caribbean
Chinese
Other Mixed
Mixed White & Asian
White Irish
Indian
Other White

Full time employment rate, all
Full time employment rate, economically active
Ethnicity and full & part-time employment: women aged 25-49 in 2011 compared with White British

[Bar chart showing percentage point difference from White British women for various ethnic groups.]

Further away from the White British rate of full time employment.
Summary

• Advantage of White men and women compared with other ethnic groups.
• But some convergence over the 20 years for Indian and Chinese people (particularly men) in relation to unemployment and self-employment.
• Although two of the most disadvantaged groups – Pakistani and Bangladeshi people – have seen some improvements, they continue to experience substantial inequalities.
• Inequalities faced by Black Caribbean and Black African people are consistent over the twenty years studied.
• Those in mixed groups are close to their non-mixed minority counterparts.
• The most substantial disadvantage is experienced by those in the White Gypsy or Irish Traveller group, with very low rates of economic activity and high rates of unemployment.
• Those in the Arab group also experience considerable inequalities.
Possible explanations

• The context of migration and evolution of contexts is important (region, occupational structures, economy, education, and processes of racialisation).

• Consistent age group, so not the same generation studied over the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Census periods: composition, generation and period differences are at play.

• The importance of geography: deprivation, schooling, and concentration in particular industries and occupations.

• Education important for all groups, but not sufficient to offset the large ethnic penalty of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people across generations.

• Institutional and interpersonal discrimination, ethnic penalty.

• Far-reaching, national response needed to tackle persistent inequalities