

Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes

in a Changing Britain

Ethnic inequalities on the eve of the pandemic

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SPDO research brief 1

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This research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, evaluated the impact of changes in social policies on inequalities since 2015 up until the eve of the pandemic. This briefing focuses on the findings that relate to ethnic inequalities across different policy areas.

- Ethnic inequalities have narrowed for some ethnic groups but increased for others in the number of children achieving good development as measured by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.
- Ethnic inequalities in education have increased at GCSE and A Level for students from most ethnic backgrounds compared to Chinese and Indian students who have the highest achievement rates.
- Gypsy Roma students stand out as having the lowest educational attainment and also the highest permanent exclusion rates.
- Despite White students having the lowest rates of participation in higher education, White graduates have the highest rates of being in high skilled employment whilst Black graduates have the lowest rates.
- In employment overall, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people have the lowest rates of employment, and face the highest ethnic pay gaps and highest rates of in-work poverty.
- Bangladeshi and Pakistani households also have the highest poverty rates, across relative, anchored and child poverty measures, and these inequalities have widened since 2015.
- Ethnic inequalities in reported experiences of access to cancer care have narrowed since 2015, though Black patients continue to have the worst access based on the number of GP visits before referral to hospital.
- In 2018/19 Black people were over four times as likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act than White people.
- In adult social care, Black and Asian service users continued to have the lowest rates of satisfaction with their experience of care.
- Ethnic inequalities in stop and search have continued to increase. In 2019/20 the rate of stop and searches per 1,000 of the population was 54 for Black people compared to 6 for White people.

1. Ethnic inequalities in education persist

In early childhood gaps in the number of children achieving good development as measured by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) have increased for children from **Black**, **Mixed** or **White** families compared to children from **Indian** families, but narrowed for children from **Bangladeshi** and **Pakistani** families. However, children from **Pakistani**, **Bangladeshi** and **Black** ethnic backgrounds still have the lowest rates of good development, and children from an **Indian** or **Chinese** ethnic background have the highest rates.

At GCSE (5 A*-C by 19) and A Level (2 or more A Levels by 19) inequalities increased for students from most ethnic groups compared to the highest achieving groups (**Chinese** and **Indian** students). **Gypsy Roma** students and **Travellers of Irish Heritage** stand out as being the most disadvantaged in education: in 2019 just 24% of **Gypsy Roma** students achieved 5 GCSEs (A*-C), compared to 95% of **Chinese** students and 81% of **White British** students. **Gypsy Roma** students also had the highest rates of permanent exclusion in 2019. In higher education **Chinese** students continue to have the highest participation rates, and **White** students have the lowest (79% compared to 38% respectively in 2018/19). The participation rate for **Black** students was 59% in 2019.

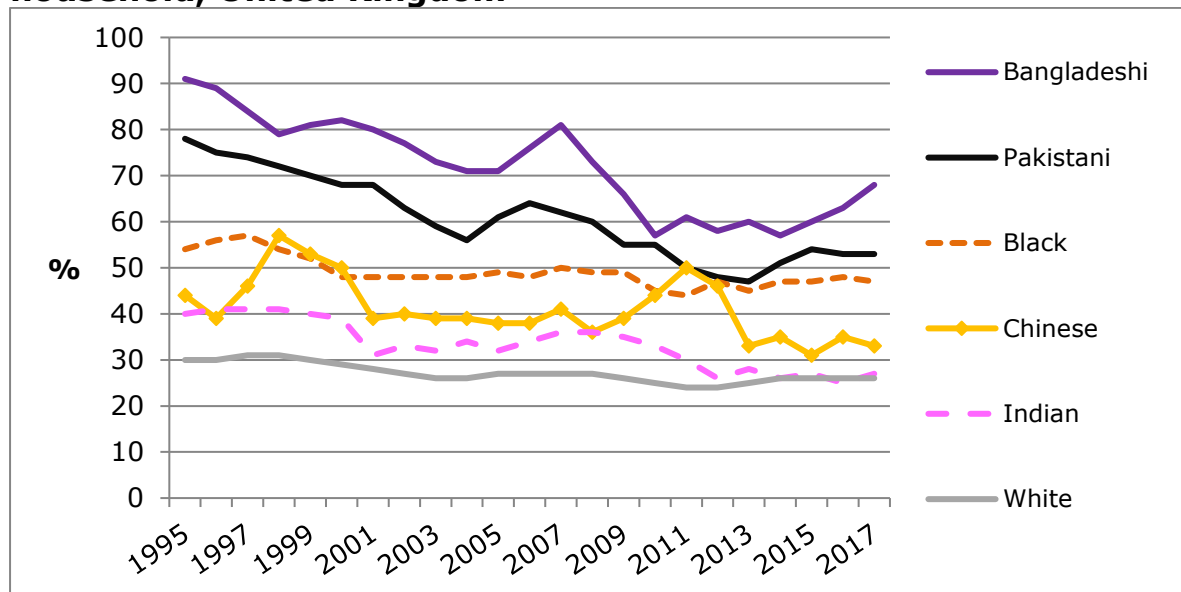
2. Higher education participation has not translated into benefits in the labour market and inequalities in poverty are stark

These patterns in higher education participation have not carried over into the labour market where **White** graduates have the highest rates of being in high skilled employment (60% in 2019) despite having the lowest participation in higher education and **Black** graduates have the lowest rates (38%) of high skilled employment, with this employment gap increasing since 2015. These findings are consistent with findings from other work in this programme on social mobility, which goes beyond raw differences by ethnicity, controlling for other factors. Macmillan and McKnight (forthcoming) find that **Black African** men and women, and **Black Caribbean** men are less likely to be upwardly mobile and more likely to be downwardly mobile than other ethnic groups.

Overall employment levels are highest for **White** people and lowest for **Bangladeshi** and **Pakistani** people. **Bangladeshi** and **Pakistani** workers have the highest ethnic pay gaps (comparing pay to **White** workers). **Bangladeshi** and **Pakistani** workers also face the highest rates of in-work poverty (34%), followed by **Black** workers (28%), whilst **White** workers have the lowest rate (11%) in 2016-19 (pooled years).

Unsurprisingly these ethnic inequalities in pay are echoed in poverty rates. Ethnic inequalities in poverty have widened across multiple poverty measures. Relative poverty, anchored poverty and child poverty (all after housing costs) are still highest for **Bangladeshi**, **Pakistani** and **Black** households.

Relative Child Poverty (after housing costs) by ethnicity of head of household, United Kingdom



Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data. With thanks to the HBAI statistics team for sharing unpublished data. Note each year represents three financial years combined, centred on the year stated. Thus "2017" represents "2016-17", "2017-18" and "2018-19".

3. There has been some narrowing of ethnic inequalities in access to cancer care

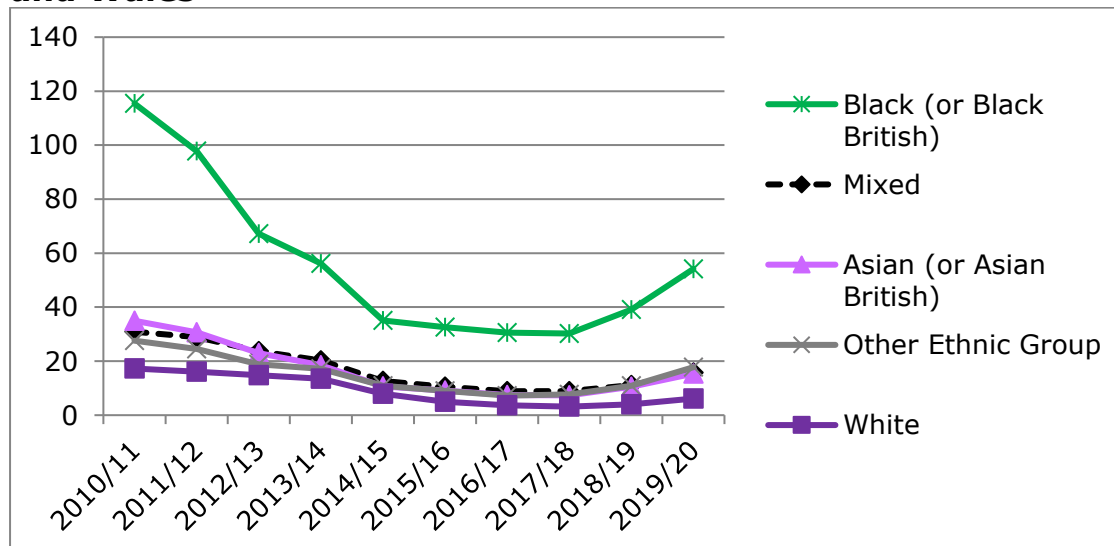
Inequalities in access to cancer care narrowed based on the proportion of people who saw their GP three or more times before being referred to hospital, which reduced for all ethnic groups at a steeper rate than for **White** patients. However, in 2018/19 **White** patients continued to be least likely and **Black** patients continued to be most likely to have three or more GP visits before referral. In adult social care, **Black** and **Asian** service users continued to have the lowest rates of satisfaction with their experience of support and care. In relation to mental health people from a **Black** background were over four times as likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act compared to people from a **White** background in 2018/19.

4. Ethnic inequalities in stop and search have continued to increase since 2017/18

Those from a **Black** background have experienced the largest increase in stop and search since 2014/15 and already starting from much higher rates in the previous period. In 2019/20 the rate of stop and searches per 1,000 of the population was 54 for **Black** people compared to just 6 for **White** people. Rates of stop and search for people from a **Mixed** or **Asian** ethnic background were 16 and 15 per 1,000 of the population respectively. Inequalities in risk of violence narrowed but people from a **Mixed** ethnic background still experience more than double the rate of violence experienced by **White** people. Breakdowns by age and gender

reveal that young **Black** women experience the highest rates of violence (Cooper and Obolenskaya, *forthcoming*).

Stop and searches per 1,000 population by ethnicity in England and Wales



Stop and search statistics data tables, police powers and procedures year ending 31st March 2020

Summary: Unequal for whom, and in which areas of life?

Whilst there are clear patterns of ethnic inequalities being repeated across related outcomes, there is also evidence that relative advantages of some ethnic groups do not confer advantages in other outcomes as expected.

- **White** students rank in the lower half of achievement rates for GCSE (5 A*-C by 19), A Levels (2 or more A Levels by 19) and permanent exclusions, and have the lowest higher education participation rates. Nevertheless **White** graduates have the highest rates of high skilled employment and **White** adults in general have the highest employment rates.
- In education **Gypsy Roma** students and **Travellers of Irish Heritage** continue to be the most disadvantaged.
- **Indian** and **Chinese** students remain the most advantaged ethnic groups across educational measures and on average earn more than **White** workers.
- **Bangladeshi, Pakistani** and **Black** ethnic groups stand out as being particularly disadvantaged across multiple measures of employment, pay and poverty.
- Those from a **Black** ethnic background also experience the greatest inequalities in terms of stop and search, number of GP visits before referral for cancer care and likelihood of being detained under the Mental Health Act.

With thanks to the Nuffield Foundation for funding the research. More information on the *Social Policies and Distributional Outcomes* research can be found on the website at <https://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/new/research/spdo/default.asp> and @CASE_LSE For details of data sources and measures used in this briefing please see the [SPDO Overview Paper](#) and SPDO [online spreadsheets](#).