# Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education: Interim Report

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Institute for Employment Studies
with contributions from Tariq Modood, University of Bristol

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# The Institute for Employment Studies

The Institute for Employment Studies is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in human resource issues. It works closely with employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors, government departments, agencies, professional and employee bodies, and foundations. For over 30 years the Institute has been a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets and human resource planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation which has a multidisciplinary staff of over 60. IES expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy, publications and the Internet.

IES aims to help bring about sustainable improvements in employment policy and human resource management. IES achieves this by increasing the understanding and improving the practice of key decision makers in policy bodies and employing organisations.

## Acknowledgements

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# Glossary

**The following general terms are used in this report:**

The coverage is **Undergraduate Students** rather than all Higher Education (HE) students. These are studying on courses leading to a first degree as well as a range of other undergraduate qualifications — DipHE, HND, HNC and other qualification/modules at undergraduate level in HEIs (*eg* a variety of professional and technical studies above A level/Scottish Higher/ONC/OND levels). It also includes undergraduate level students in FE colleges – defined there as at level 4 and above.

Both full- and part-time undergraduate students taking HE in FE colleges as well as in HE Institutions (HEIs), including the Open University, are included in totals, unless otherwise stated. However, the main focus is on students at HE institutions (excluding the Open University).

Where students are studying on honours first degree courses they are referred to in this report as **degree students.** All other students on other undergraduate programmes/qualifications, classified in the HESA students statistics as 'other undergraduate' students, are referred to here as **sub-degree** students. It includes students taking undergraduate modules at the Open University which count as credits towards honours degrees.

The **ethnicity** classification mainly used in this report is the 1991 Census classification. For further discussion see section 1.3 and Appendix C Figure C1. The main **ethnic groups** referred to are:

- Black: Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other
- Asia: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Asian Other
- White, and Other (including mixed groups).

Unless otherwise stated, the geographical coverage is undergraduate study in **England** and **UK (*ie* home) domiciled students** only (not foreign students from minority ethnic groups, from either the EC or overseas who are classed as foreign for fee-paying purposes).

**Pre-1992 Universities** are referred to as **old universities** and **Post-1992 Universities** as **new universities.**

# Executive Summary

This report is about research in progress on the flows into, through and out of higher education (HE) of minority ethnic groups. The focus is on undergraduate study in England. The report presents interim findings of the research programme, from the stages completed to date. These are: an initial assessment of existing research evidence on minority ethnic groups in HE; and a national survey of undergraduate students undertaken in Spring 2002. The survey explored their choices of HE study, experiences to date, financial issues and job/career plans. Other stages of the research programme currently in progress or planned for 2003, are surveys of potential students, of parents of current students and of graduates (follow-up one year later of final year students), and case study interviews with employers (see Appendix A). The findings of these stages will be presented in the final report on the project, due for completion in early 2004.

The student survey comprised face-to-face interviews with a sample of over 1,300 UK-domiciled undergraduate students, including over 700 from minority ethnic groups, at 33 institutions in England. In addition, more in-depth interviews were undertaken with 30 survey respondents, and representatives from the HE institutions covered in the sample were also interviewed. The survey was designed to provide results for a representative sample of all undergraduate students in England, and also for a sample comprising a large cross-section of minority ethnic students, so that comparisons could be made between minority groups (and sub-groups, *eg* by age, gender), see Appendix B.

A key theme to emerge in the research has been the diversity of the minority ethnic student population in HE study, and the way patterns of participation, experiences within HE and outcomes, vary substantially between the different minority ethnic groups. Crucially, issues can have much more significance for certain groups than others, often because of their different personal and educational profiles, in particular their family and social backgrounds and entry routes into HE study. Frequently, when these are taken into account, many of the differences evident between ethnic groups diminish, indicating that these other factors may be at least as, if not more, important than ethnicity as an explanatory variable. Thus the focus of the analysis on minority ethnic students in HE study has to be undertaken at a disaggregated level, otherwise there is the danger that key points

of difference between minority ethnic groups are glossed over. However, the need to analyse at a detailed level can cause problems in terms of reliability of findings, as some groups, such as Bangladeshi and Chinese, are small in number. This needs to be borne in mind when reading this report.

The main points to emerge from the research programme so far are:

## On participation in HE study ...

- Minority ethnic students form a growing share of undergraduate students, currently representing 15.2 per cent of the total. No minority ethnic group is likely to be under-represented in undergraduate study in HE institutions relative to their position in the working-age population in England (section 2.1). But some groups are clearly much better represented, in percentage terms, than others, in particular Indian, Chinese, Black African, Asian Other and Other (non-White, including mixed) groups. It seems likely that some groups, Black Other, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, are under-represented when compared to their position in the young population (16-24 year olds). Because of some uncertainty in the available data for calculating 'representation rates' for different ethnic groups and sub-groups, especially when disaggregating by age and gender, care has to be taken in drawing firm conclusions about over- or under-representation in higher education.

- Minority ethnic students are distributed unevenly across the HE sector (section 2.2). In aggregate, they are better represented in undergraduate level study at the new (post-1992) university sector, in certain subjects (the more vocationally/ professionally orientated ones such as medicine, IT, business studies and law), in Greater London (especially the new universities there), in degree than sub-degree programmes (*eg* HND, professional/technical qualifications), and in undergraduate level study at universities than at FE colleges. There are a number of pockets of very low representation in some subjects (notably education), in some old universities, specialist colleges and the Open University, and in some, mainly the more rural, regions.

- There are distinctive and contrasting patterns of participation in HE study by minority ethnic groups, in particular, contrasts between Asian and Black groups, and contrasts within these broad groupings. There are important variations in the representation of minority ethnic groups on different types of study (degree/sub-degree, full-time/part-time), types of institution and subjects. For example, it is Asians, and especially Indians, that have relatively high representations on many of the subjects more popular with minority ethnic students, such as medicine/dentistry and IT. Black Caribbeans

have relatively low representations in these subjects (section 2.2.1). Black, and particularly Black Caribbeans, are better represented in 'subjects allied to medicine'. The Chinese and Asian Other groups have a much more equal distribution between the pre- and new university sectors, than other groups, especially Black students, who are much more concentrated in the new sector (section 2.2.3).

- This diversity in participation patterns of the minority ethnic groups in HE study becomes even greater when the differing personal characteristics of the groups are also taken into account, and produces a very complex picture (section 2.3). The most significant differences between minority ethnic groups are in:

  - age profiles (notably the much older average age of Black, and in particular, Black African, students) (section 2.3.2)

  - entry qualification and routes into HE (in particular the much higher proportions of some groups, notably Black students, coming into HE with non-traditional entry qualifications, and also higher 'A' level points of some groups of applicants, in particular Chinese and Asian Other groups) (section 2.3.3) and

  - social class profiles (measured by parental occupation, but more significantly by type of previous educational establishment, especially proportions from independent schools) (section 2.3.4).

These differences help explain the variations in HE participation levels, and also patterns of HE study, of the different groups. But some of these variables are inter related, and there are other reasons for higher participation levels among some minority ethnic groups.

Taking all the available evidence from previous research and this research into account, there are two sets of factors that stand out as being main 'drivers' of HE participation for minority ethnic students (section 3.2):

- prior attainment and educational experiences (including pre-16 school experience, GCSE attainment, post-16 decisions about staying on/leaving school or going to college, and qualifications/attainment post-16) and

- aspirations in and attitudes towards education (including encouragement from parents to gain qualifications, and perceived economic benefits of going on to HE).

These are of course often linked, and formed by a range of cultural and social influences. The importance of parental experience of HE, and more so in some cases siblings with HE experience, has been identified; another key factor is likely to be 'generation' (though this also relates to social class); a third key factor is the

importance of religion. These social/cultural factors have been identified more in some groups than in others, and are being investigated further in other stages of the research.

A number of other factors can influence decision making about what and where to study at the time that actual choices are being made (section 3.6). While minority ethnic students tend to take account of a similar range of factors as White students when making course or subject choices, on the whole, job/employment considerations and views of family members have more influence for minority ethnic students, than White students (though again this varies by minority ethnic group, and parental influence was more evident among Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Black African groups, see section 4.3.3). Institutional choices of minority ethnic students as for potential students in general, are determined mainly by their preference for a particular type of course or subject on offer. The relative importance of subject and course type in the choice of institution varies between minority ethnic groups (section 4.3.5).

In addition to these individual choice factors, previous research has indicated that some discrimination against minority ethnic students exists in the student application and admission process at old universities, and that this is a cause of the uneven distribution of minority ethnic students in the HE sector (section 4.2). There was little evidence in the student survey on perceptions of any racial discrimination in the application/admissions process (however, only some of our minority ethnic sample are likely to have applied to an old university), (section 4.3.2). Nor was there any evidence that there were any significant problems for minority ethnic students in accessing information about HE to help them make their choices about HE institutions and courses. But variations between ethnic groups in their use of different information sources, in particular the influence of parents in HE choices (section 4.3.3) was evident, and this is being explored further in other stages of the research programme.

**Progress within HE also varies …**

In aggregate, the national student statistics show that Black students are likely to have higher early leaving rates than Asians from full-time degree courses, and the rates for both groups are higher than for White students on average (section 5.1.1). But once allowances are made for the variations between groups, in particular by entry qualification but also by age, gender and subject, the differences reduce markedly. There are no comparable statistics available for other types of courses, nor at a more disaggregated level (*ie* for individual minority ethnic groups).

A range of other factors can cause early leaving (section 5.1.2), such as dislike/wrong choice of course, financial pressures and course specific difficulties, but there is no existing conclusive

evidence about their differential effect on minority ethnic groups. Our survey was not able to investigate this (as it was on current students), and although we asked questions to identify factors which might put students more at risk of not completing their course, no consistent pattern was evident to help explain the different retention rates. This is an area which requires further attention in future research.

## And achievement varies too …

All minority ethnic groups achieve lower classes of degrees, on average, than White students (section 5.2.1). Black, and especially, Black African students come out as the lowest achieving group (Table 5.3).

The key factors affecting degree outcomes in general are entry qualifications and prior education (section 5.2.1), and as these vary considerably between ethnic groups, they help to explain much of the observable difference in degree outcomes. Other likely explanations put forward by previous research on specific groups of students have been racial bias in assessment at some institutions, and negative impact of term-time working. Our student survey could not look at variations in actual degree outcomes, but instead highlighted a number of problem areas which students identified as having an impact on their academic performance to date (section 6.1). The main ones (among a wide range of problems reported) were: financial difficulties, effects of term-time working, lack of support or encouragement from lecturers, and course/facilities-related issues. On the whole, minority ethnic students were more likely than White students to report most of these main problem areas, but there was a significant amount of variation in how they had affected individual minority ethnic groups. This is also an area which would benefit from more research attention.

## Financial arrangements vary …

Previous research has highlighted some differences between minority ethnic groups in the way they finance their studies, though this evidence is quite limited (section 6.2). The student survey provided a more up-to-date perspective and showed that:

- Student loans and other borrowing were less likely to be one of the main sources of income for minority ethnic students, who were more likely to get parental contributions or rely on income from term-time working (section 6.2.1).

- However, this overall pattern varied markedly between minority ethnic groups, and also other variables, especially age. In particular, Asians were more likely to get parental contributions (Table 6.4). This is likely to be partly age-related.

- Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian students were more likely to be living at home during term-time.

- The amount of time spent in paid work varied between groups. White and Indian students spent the least, Black students the most (section 6.3).

- Minority ethnic students at new universities were more likely to be working longer hours than White students, but at old universities there was little difference.

- Black Caribbean and Black Other students were more likely to report having debt. The extent of debt varied considerably between ethnic groups, and sub-groups. White students appeared to have more debt than Black or other minority ethnic groups on average (section 6.2.3).

## Had they made the right choice?

Despite raising a number of negative issues about their HE experiences to date, students were on the whole highly satisfied with the choices they had made about courses and institutions, and this applied almost equally to minority ethnic and White students (section 6.5).

## And finally, on graduate outcomes ...

At this stage in the research we can report only the existing statistical evidence and previous research on minority ethnic graduate outcomes, and how final year students in the survey were approaching the job market. More evidence on the transition to the labour market of minority ethnic groups will emerge from the next stages in the study.

The evidence presented in this report shows that:

- Initial unemployment rates for minority ethnic full-time degree graduates from HEIs are higher than for White graduates, and higher in particular for Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (Table 7.1).

- Minority ethnic degree graduates are more likely to go on to postgraduate study or further training.

- A range of factors can affect initial employment outcomes (including type of institution, subject, course, age, *etc.*) and when these are taken account of in the dataset, differences between groups reduce markedly, suggesting that the effect of ethnicity alone may be comparatively small (end of section 7.2). This will be investigated further in the research to come, along with how the quality of graduates' jobs varies.

- The evidence on longer-term outcomes of graduates also suggests that initial differences between groups in employment

rates reduce over time, and tend to equalise out after about two to three years (section 7.3).

From our survey of students, it was evident that career plans and job search behaviour in the final year vary between minority ethnic groups of students (section 7.5). Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were much more likely to have secured a job earlier than others; while Chinese/Asian Other students were more likely to be seeking a job overseas. On the whole, minority ethnic students were more likely than White students to use informal sources of information about jobs and careers, or more independent approaches to finding jobs (in particular using the Internet and taking advice from family and friends rather than the university careers staff), but yet again, this varied between groups.

These issues, and others relating to the transition to the labour market, are being explored further in other stages of the research programme.

# 1. Introduction

This is the interim report of a large scale project in progress at the Institute for Employment Studies, which is exploring the flows of minority ethnic students into, though and out of higher education (HE) and into the labour market.

The research was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in December 2001. The first stages of the work, a desk-based review of existing data and research evidence, interviews with HE staff and a survey of undergraduate students, were undertaken during 2002. The main results are presented in this interim report. The remaining stages, which are targeting particular groups (potential students, parents of students, graduates and employers), are currently in progress or are planned to take place during 2003. Further details of these are given in Appendix A, and also on the project's website: www.ies.ac.uk/ethnicminoritystudents. The project is due for completion in early 2004.

## 1.1 Project aims

The main aims of the study are to:

- identify the various factors which encourage or inhibit participation, retention, and progression in HE and transition to the labour market by minority ethnic students. Particular reference is being given to the impact of student financial arrangements, type and location of institution, and subject preference of students.
- assess the relative importance of these various factors for different groups of minority ethnic students, including sub-groups within, as well as between, different student groups (*eg* gender, age, family background, entry qualification)
- draw out appropriate policy implications.

## 1.2 Background to the study

Minority ethnic groups currently make up eight per cent of the UK population (according to the national Census 2001) and are expected to contribute at least half of the growth in the working

population in the ten year period 1999-2009. Although there have been significant improvements in the overall levels of achievement of minority ethnic groups in the UK over the last two decades, there still remain areas of serious disadvantage. On average, they are less skilled, and are more likely to be working in lower level occupations, have lower earnings and higher unemployment levels than their White counterparts. However, this aggregate picture hides important variations. As the recent *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market* report from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit put it: 'the old picture of White success and minority ethnic underachievement is now out of date' (March 2003, see Executive Summary, p. 8). Some minority ethnic groups, for example Indian men, Chinese and some UK-born groups appear to experience much less labour market disadvantage in various respects and are making faster progress in educational and occupational attainment than other groups. Some groups are doing better than their White counterparts, notably Indian and Chinese, in schools and in the labour market, while others, notably some Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbeans, are doing less well.

Overall, minority ethnic students are well represented in degree and sub-degree programmes in the higher education (HE) sector as a whole, and this has been the position since at least the early 1990s (see Modood, 1993). A little over 15 per cent of English, and almost 14 per cent of all UK-domiciled students at UK higher education institutions, are from a minority ethnic group (HESA, 2002), a much higher figure than the eight per cent in the 2001 population. But the aggregate picture masks variations in levels of enrolment of different minority ethnic groups (and sub-groups, *eg* by gender or age) and also their uneven distribution across the higher education sector, being clustered in particular institutions and subjects. Variations also exist in outcomes for example, in terms of class of degree and in initial graduate labour market destinations. In particular, initial unemployment is higher among some minority ethnic groups compared with White graduates, while some minority ethnic groups have a greater tendency to take postgraduate study than White graduates.

To some extent, these variations relating to HE study reflect some of the general themes of relative disadvantage in the labour market of minority ethnic groups. This is because of the way achievement at higher levels is dependent on earlier attainment. But the picture is a complex one, likely to be affected by a range of other factors, including social class, family and cultural attitudes, income levels and possible discriminatory practices. Some earlier research has explored this (see in particular Modood and Shiner, 1994; Modood and Acland, 1998; Owen *et al.*, 2000, Chapter 4; Connor *et al.*, 1996) but the picture is still rather sketchy in places and not up to date. In particular, further research is needed, focused more on differences between minority ethnic groups, rather than between minority ethnic students in aggregate and

White students; and also research which takes account of recent developments in the HE sector (such as changes to the student finance arrangements, and widening participation) and trends in the graduate employment market.

## 1.3  Definitions and scope

This report focuses on the main variations between the *visible* minority ethnic groups in Britain today, that is, those identified in the main student and other national datasets as 'non-White'. These include Black Caribbean, Black African and Black Other groups; Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Asian Other groups; and an Other (including mixed ethnic origins) group.

It is recognised that there are complicated issues in defining ethnicity, and that differences in terminology exist. For example, the recent report from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (see above) highlights the significant differences in the labour market between first- and second-generation Black and Asian immigrants; Modood *et al.*, (1997) in the report on the *Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* identifies African Asians separately from those coming directly from the Asian sub-continent because of their different characteristics; religion can be another distinguishing variable such as seen between Sikhs and Muslims and Hindus, (Brown, 2000); and there are important new immigrant groups, such as those from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and asylum seekers, who are outside of the categorisation we have in place in the UK for defining and measuring ethnicity. Furthermore, categorisations can change over time, as happened between the 1991 and 2001 national Censuses (the two classification systems are shown in Figures C1a and 1b in Appendix C).

In this report, we have used mainly the 1991 classification, because that was in use in the HE student datasets (HESA) in 2000/01, which formed the basis of our survey sample design, and so for consistency we have kept to it when comparing survey data with national population data. Also, when we began the survey in early 2002, the 2001 Census data were not available. The new 2001 ethnicity classification (in use in HE datasets and other national surveys such as the Labour Force Survey, from 2001) brings in more of the 'cultural heritage' dimension: it identifies the Irish as a separate White group and introduces the term 'Black or Black British' and 'Asian or Asian British' as well as several mixed ethnic groups (*eg* White/Asian). At this level, data using the two classification systems are not directly comparable.

In places, we have had to combine the ethnic groups because there are too many to handle where numbers get small (mainly in the analysis of sample survey data). Where possible, we have avoided using the broad groups which have traditionally been used (*ie* Black, Asian, Other, White) and instead have grouped them in a

more meaningful way which puts similar minority ethnic groups together and keeps separate those which have increasingly separate identities, *ie*:

- Black Caribbean has been kept separate from Black African (which have been combined with Black Other).

- Indian has been separated from Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

- Chinese, though distinctive on its own, has had to be combined with Asian Other, because of small numbers.

- Other has been kept as a separate category, or not shown where it is a very small and disparate group.

However, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that despite undertaking some aggregation of the groups, the small numbers in some of them in the population (*eg* when broken down further by gender, age or education background) have inevitably limited the amount of analysis that can be undertaken.

We have sought to use a consistent term throughout — 'minority ethnic group' rather than 'ethnic minority group' or 'ethnic minorities' — because of its increasingly more common usage and acceptability. 'White' is a general label used, though it is recognised that there are distinctive ethnic groups within it (*eg* Irish, some other Europeans, some South Africans).

(For further details on terms used, see Glossary at the front of this report.)

# 1.4 Methodology

This interim report presents key findings to date from the project. These come from:

- a review of relevant population statistics and research studies. Most of this was undertaken in 2002. A few additions and minor updates have been made in the intervening period.

- a national survey of undergraduate students in HE and FE institutions. This was undertaken between March and May 2002. Its main purpose was to collect information from minority ethnic, and White, students, on a comparable basis, on:

  - their motivations for entering HE and factors influencing choice of subject, institution and qualification/mode of study

  - their experiences within HE study, including any changes made in course/institution, problems experienced, satisfaction with choice of study, and financial support

  - their job and career plans and expectations, and any job search activity undertaken to date

- further insights on personal characteristics, including some not known about in the available student statistics (*eg* religion, family influence, migration to UK).

The survey was undertaken by face-to-face interviewing by MORI Social Research, on campuses at a sample of 29 English HE institutions, plus four further education (FE) colleges, using quota sampling. The achieved sample comprised a total of 1,319 students, made up of three component groups:

- a sample of 535, designed to be a representative sample of the student population, and so enable comparisons to be made between minority ethnic and White students

- a booster sample of 517 minority ethnic students, chosen to reflect the different distributions of minority ethnic groups across the HE sector

- a booster sample of 267 final year students, selected to be representative of the HE student population at the institutions sampled.

The main reason for boosting the sample with final year students was to enable us to have sufficient numbers to follow up one year after completing their courses, to investigate their labour market entry and experiences. This is planned for May 2003 (see Appendix A for details of this and other stages in the study).

The sample data needed to be weighted slightly in the analysis to adjust for under-representativeness of some types of students (*ie* mainly over 21 year olds, but also 'part-time other' (*ie* sub-degree) undergraduates, where quotas could not be met). This was done separately for each of the three sample components.

Because there was a need to over-sample minority ethnic groups (in order to have sufficient sample numbers in some groups), the total sample of 1,319 (comprising 54 per cent from minority ethnic groups in total) is, of course, far from being a reflection of the population, where only around 14 per cent in total are from minority ethnic groups. It is not appropriate to undertake analysis of the total sample of 1,319 to look at differences between minority ethnic students and White students as it is not a representative reflection of the student population. Analysis has therefore been undertaken using various subsets of the sample in order to make valid comparisons between minority ethnic groups, and between them in aggregate and the White group. The two main subsets analysed are:

- **A: a representative sample** of 535 undergraduates in 'correct' proportions of White and minority ethnic students, and

- **B: a minority ethnic sample** of 715 students in approximate proportions by ethnic group to their distribution in the population. This was made up of the minority ethnic booster

(517) plus the minority ethnic groups in the final year booster (198).

Further details of the survey design and sampling methodology are given in Appendix B, together with further details of the sample characteristics of the main sample subsets.

- In addition to the quantitative element of the survey, a small number of case study interviews (30) were conducted with survey participants to explore issues further. They cover most of the minority ethnic groups (details in Appendix B).

- A small number of interviews were also undertaken at each of the 29 HE institutions in the survey sample, as part of the process of gaining their participation. These gave insights into the distribution of minority ethnic students at individual institutions, and current institutional policies and issues.

## 1.5  Structure of this report

The main purpose of this interim report is to provide an overall assessment of what has been found out in the study to date. It combines evidence from the existing sources (in the literature and national statistics) and from our current student survey, where appropriate. The main focus of this interim report is on entry to, and progression in HE. In the next stages of the work we will be investigating outcomes, and, factors influencing them.

The report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 'unpacks' the student population statistics on the participation by minority ethnic groups in HE study, and highlights important points of difference within and between ethnic groups.

Chapters 3 and 4 present evidence from the research literature and our survey on why HE participation differs between minority ethnic groups, and factors which shape their distribution across the sector.

Chapters 5 and 6 then move on to discuss the progress and achievements of minority ethnic groups in HE study and their experiences to date, including factors which may affect their outcomes.

Chapter 7 then looks at the next steps — the job and career plans of final year students in the survey. It also includes a brief review of the main statistical evidence on minority ethnic graduate outcomes.

Chapter 8 provides a summary of the main findings and draws some conclusions.

Appendix A describes each work package in the study and their progress.

Appendix B provides further details of the student survey methodology and sample characteristics.

Appendix C includes some detailed tables on students and graduates, mainly from HESA and UCAS datasets.

# 2. Participation of Minority Ethnic Groups in HE

In this chapter, we 'unpack' the available statistics on students in order to map out the current position regarding the representation of minority ethnic groups in higher education (HE). This provides a context for the whole project, and flags up straight away some of the key differences between the groups which are being investigated in the different elements of the research.

- It provides an assessment of the representation of the various minority ethnic groups in the sector as a whole.

- It highlights differences relating to the choice of HE study by minority ethnic groups compared with White students, *ie* qualifications taken, mode of delivery of courses, subjects studied and institutions attended.

- It shows how the different participation patterns observed relate to other factors, including gender, age and prior education and social class.

This chapter makes use of available data from national sources, mainly HESA and UCAS. The main coverage is UK-domiciled students in undergraduate study in England (for further explanations of coverage and definitions used, see glossary at front and section 1.3). Note that the data presented here from HESA relate to enrolments reported by HE institutions in England, and do not cover enrolments in FE colleges (where some level 4+, *ie* HE equivalent level, courses can be taken). The main year of student data used is 2000/01. This is the last year in which the 'old' (91 Census) ethnicity classification was used by HESA on their student record, and we have used this rather than later years, for consistency with our student survey shown in later chapters (whose sample design had to be based on earlier HESA data because of timing, and thus the 91 Census ethnicity classification). Where UCAS data have been presented, they relate to English applicants and accepted applicants, to full-time undergraduate courses only (degree and HND) at universities and colleges ('acceptances to a course' are not necessarily 'student enrolments on that course'). The HESA data includes both full- and part-time students, and are not directly comparable with UCAS data.

# 2.1 Representation in undergraduate study

Table 2.1 shows the number of minority ethnic undergraduate students at English HE institutions in 2000/01, and the relative significance of the different groups. It also provides comparative data of their distribution in the population.

- a total of almost 167,000 students (in HEIs and the OU) were from minority ethnic groups, representing 15.6 per cent of the total (Note this is for England and is higher than the overall UK figure, quoted in Chapter 1). If HE in FE colleges is added in, the total is 182,000 representing 15.2 per cent of the total undergraduate population in England (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Participation of minority ethnic groups in Higher Education in England, and comparative estimates of the population**

| Ethnic group | Total estimated no. of undergraduate students in HEIs, OU and FECs (00/01) | Percentage of total undergraduate students (00/01) | Working-age population (2000) | 16-24 year old population (2000) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 1,015,683 | 84.8 | 91.8 | 88.0 |
| All minority ethnic | 181,815 | 15.2 | 8.2 | 12.1 |
| Black Caribbean | 17,479 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| Black African | 28,049 | 2.3 | 1.0 | 1.4 |
| Black Other | 9,021 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.9 |
| Indian | 46,836 | 3.9 | 2.1 | 2.7 |
| Pakistani | 24,024 | 2.0 | 1.2 | 2.3 |
| Bangladeshi | 7,081 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 1.0 |
| Chinese | 11,064 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.7 |
| Asian Other | 15,655 | 1.3 | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| Other | 22,606 | 1.9 | 0.9 | 1.3 |
| *Total (known ethnicity)* | *1,197,498* | *100.0* | *31,748,384* | *5,325,303* |

Notes:

1: Percentages based on totals of 'known ethnicity' (Total undergraduates = 1,326,844 which includes 129,346 where ethnicity was not recorded, *ie* 90.3 per cent gave their ethnicity).

2: Total Undergraduate students include all 'UK domiciled' students on degree and other undergraduate level courses at all English HE institutions and all level 4+ students at FE colleges (part-time and full-time), and including the Open University (OU). The OU accounts for around 97,000 of the total shown, and is included as an English institution in HESA data, though some students will be based in other UK countries. The HE students in FE colleges account for 130,000 of the total. The source of the data on ethnicity for HE students in the FE sector is the ISR, and not HESA, which only collects such data from HEIs (though some may be studying partly on franchised courses in FE colleges). Because there is some difficulty in enumerating accurately the totals across the two sectors (because of franchising and other HE/FE partnership arrangements) this aggregate figure should be treated as a best estimate. Further breakdowns by type of institution are shown in Appendix Table C3.

3: HESA data on students is the Standard Registered population — *ie* those registered for a qualification across the whole reporting year. ISR data are student numbers.

*Source: HESA, 2001; ISR (LSC), 2001; Labour Force Survey, Dec-Feb 2000*

- the largest individual group is Indian (four per cent)

- the smallest groups are Chinese, Black Other and Bangladeshi, each representing less than one per cent of the total undergraduate population in England

- the four largest groups, Indian, Black African, Pakistani and Black Caribbean, taken together, account for almost two-thirds of the total minority ethnic students in England.

When compared with the distribution in the population (England 2000), minority ethnic groups in aggregate appear to be over-represented in undergraduate-level study in HEIs/OU/FECs (15.2 per cent, compared with an estimated 8.2 per cent of the working age population [16-64 year olds]). All individual minority ethnic groups are over-represented, but some, especially Black African, Indian, Chinese, Asian Other and Other (*ie* mixed or others not specified elsewhere) are much better represented, in percentage terms, than others (Table 2.1). A better comparison though, is with the younger population, as it is from here that the vast majority of HE entrants are drawn. Also, minority ethnic groups tend to have a younger age profile than White people in England. Here too, minority ethnic groups in aggregate are over-represented in all undergraduate-level study (the 15.2 per cent figure is higher than the 12.1 per cent estimate for the 16-24 year old population). However, while some groups still show over-representation (in particular Black African, Indian, Asian Other and Other), the Pakistani, Black Other, but especially Bangladeshi, groups, appear to be under-represented when compared to their position in the young population.

Some caution is needed both with these comparisons and in being conclusive about 'HE participation rates' for individual minority ethnic groups. This is because of some uncertainties about the population data, especially for the smaller minority groups and the disaggregation by age within ethnicity, as shown in Table 2.1. We have used the best available comparable population data relating to 2000 for England, which is taken from the Labour Force Survey, but new Census of Population 2001 data have recently become available, and these provide a more accurate estimate of the current population (as stated in Chapter 1). When writing the interim report, we have not been able to obtain an age and ethnicity breakdown for England from the new Census data, and as the ethnicity categorisations used in the Census 2001 are not directly comparable with those used in the HESA undergraduate statistics for 2000/01, we felt it would cause confusion to show them here for the whole population. In our final report (in early 2004), further Census and HESA data will be available, and it will then be possible to make a more accurate assessment of HE participation rates for individual minority ethnic groups of different ages.

**HE in FE**

Around one in nine of all HE students are enrolled in FE colleges in England. The majority of them are in part-time study on sub-degree programmes. Data on undergraduate students in FE institutions are not collected by HESA, and there can be problems which affect the quality of the data on HE in FE (for reasons related to franchising and definitions, discussed further in Parry and Thomson, 2002). It is not possible to get directly comparable data on HE students in FE, and so they are not included in the main tables in this chapter that relate to participation in HE at HEIs, though they have been included in Table 2.1 to provide an aggregate total. This ethnicity data came from the Individualised Student Record (ISR) for the college sector, on students at broadly undergraduate level in FE colleges in England (*ie* on programmes at level 4 and above, including those funded by HEFCE, and also a number of non-prescribed programmes, mainly technical/ professional courses). Out of a total of 149,000 such students in 2000/01, 87.4 per cent (130,221) have ethnicity recorded, which is only slightly lower than the response in the HESA dataset . Of these, 11.6 per cent are from a minority ethnic group (15,000). This is lower than the percentage in HEIs (including OU) at 15.6 per cent. The largest group is Indian (2.3 per cent), followed by Pakistani and Other (both 1.7 per cent), Black Caribbean (1.6 per cent) and Black African (1.5 per cent), see Appendix C, Tables C3 and C10.

**Trends**

It is likely that the share of minority ethnic students in the undergraduate population has been growing over the last decade, though changes within the sector and in the data system from year to year, make it difficult to measure trends accurately for small groups (such as some of the minority ethnic groups). In 1994/95, the aggregate minority ethnic percentage of undergraduates in HEIs (including OU) was lower than it is today (at just under 12 per cent, across the UK). Although the number of undergraduates in total has been steadily growing, the minority ethnic population in higher education institutions has been growing at a faster rate to almost 14 per cent of UK total.

## 2.2 Participation in different kinds of undergraduate study

The inclusion of the Open University (OU) in the aggregate undergraduate totals can cause confusion because of the way that their part-time students (taking undergraduate modules towards a degree) are classified in the HESA data (*ie* as 'other undergraduates', which we are calling here 'sub-degree', see glossary and section 1.3); and also, although the OU is classified in the HESA dataset as an English institution from its address, some

**Table 2.2: Undergraduates at HEIs by level and mode, England**

| Level/mode | All minority ethnic students | % | All students | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Full-time first degree | 113,210 | 69.8 | 632,277 | 65.2 |
| Part-time first degree | 12,623 | 7.8 | 71,193 | 7.3 |
| Full-time sub-degree | 17,823 | 11.0 | 82,323 | 8.5 |
| Part-time sub-degree | 18,436 | 11.4 | 184,150 | 19.0 |
| *All* | *162,092* | *100* | *969,943* | *100* |

Note: OU students are excluded (all 97,000 undergraduate students are classified in HESA as part-time 'other undergraduate', see Table C3 Appendix C)

*Source: HESA, 2001*

of the students will be studying outside England. Because of this, OU students have been excluded from the totals in the main tables and charts in the rest of this chapter, unless otherwise indicated.

Excluding OU students reduces the total number of minority ethnic students at HE institutions in England by just 4,600, to just over 162,000 in 2000/01, or 16.7 per cent (of the 970,000 undergraduates).

The percentage of minority ethnic students on undergraduate study at the OU is comparatively low, at just five per cent (though here there is a relatively high percentage of 'ethnicity unknowns' in the total, almost 24 per cent, which makes the figures less reliable).

## 2.2.1 Distribution by mode and level of study

Almost 70 per cent, of minority ethnic undergraduate students in HEIs in England (*ie* excluding OU students) are on full-time first degree programmes, and this proportion is slightly higher than the 65 per cent for all undergraduate students (Table 2.2). Minority ethnic students are also slightly more likely to be on full-time sub-degree programmes, but considerably less likely to be on part-time sub-degree programmes (sub-degree programmes are shown in the HESA data as 'other undergraduate level programmes': see note on definitions used in the report in the Glossary and in section 1.3). This pattern can be seen also in Table 2.3, which shows the ethnic distribution as percentages of totals in each of the different level/modes of study.

It is worth noting that age is generally a factor relating to the take-up of part-time study (more mature students study part-time), and may also be relevant here (and in particular to OU participation). Also part-time sub-degree provision is made up of a variety of different programmes — from the more established HNCs, DipCerts, to the newer foundation courses, plus a wide range of technical and professional courses of varying lengths, including some non-prescribed HE courses (*ie* not funded by HEFCE). These are aimed at different student sub-markets. The

**Table 2.3: White and minority ethnic undergraduate students, by level and mode, in each ethnic group, England HEIs, excluding OU (percentages of total known ethnicity)**

| Ethnic group | First degree | | Sub-degree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time |
| White | 82.1 | 82.3 | 78.3 | 90.0 |
| All minority ethnic groups | 17.9 | 17.7 | 21.7 | 10.0 |
| Black Caribbean/Other | 1.2 | 3.0 | 2.3 | 1.7 |
| Black African | 2.1 | 4.3 | 6.6 | 2.0 |
| Black Other | 0.7 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.6 |
| Indian | 5.5 | 3.1 | 4.5 | 1.5 |
| Pakistani | 2.6 | 1.7 | 2.8 | 0.8 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.2 |
| Chinese | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.5 |
| Asian Other | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Other | 2.2 | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.6 |
| *Total known ethnicity (N)* | *632,277* | *71,193* | *82,323* | *184,150* |
| *% with known ethnicity* | *95.3* | *89.3* | *92.6* | *84.0* |
| *Total all (N)* | *663,428* | *79,676* | *88,825* | *219,142* |

*Source: HESA,2001*

LSDA has recently commissioned research to investigate the nature and role of vocational HE in HE and FE institutions, which mainly covers this sub-degree provision, and it is hoped some further insights will be provided from it as to the reasons for the lower participation of minority ethnic groups in the part-time sub-degree area.

By individual ethnic group, the key points to note in Table 2.3, also shown in Figure 2.1, are:

- Numerically, all minority ethnic groups are much more likely to be in full-time degree study than any of the other three modes/levels (Figure 2.1). In particular, over three-quarters of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese undergraduates are on this type of course (considerably higher than the 64 per cent of White undergraduate students and 63 per cent for all undergraduate students). By contrast, much lower proportions of Black Caribbeans and Black Africans are taking full-time degrees (around 52 per cent of both these groups are on this type of course).

- The percentages of each minority ethnic group in degree study are higher for most Asian groups in full-time than in part-time study, but for Black groups, the reverse situation is found, with a higher percentage in part-time than full-time degree courses (Table 2.3).

**Figure 2.1: Participation of minority ethnic groups by level and mode of undergraduate study, England, at HEIs (excluding OU)**
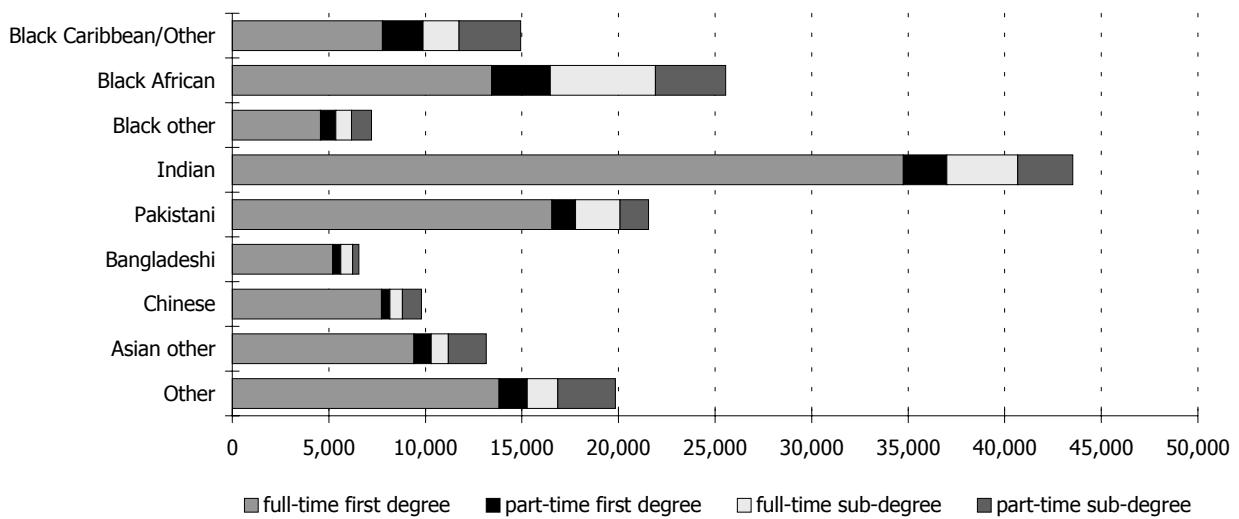


Note: For reasons of scale, White students are not shown. Their numbers are: 520,000 full-time degree, 59,000 part-time degree, 65,000 full-time sub-degree and 166,000 part-time sub-degree.

*Source: HESA, 2001*

- In full-time degree study, Indians are clearly the dominant minority ethnic group, accounting for almost one in three of the minority ethnic total (Table 2.3).

- In full-time sub-degree courses, there is a much higher representation of Black African students than on any of the other three levels/modes; and they are the dominant minority ethnic group in full-time sub-degree programmes, accounting for almost one in three of the minority ethnic total.

- Bangladeshis have consistently low percentages in all four modes/levels (under one per cent).

## 2.2.2 Subject distribution

As well as differences by level and mode, there are significant differences between minority ethnic groups in the subjects being studied in higher education.

On first degree courses, minority ethnic students are much more likely to be studying:

- medicine/dentistry, and computer science (accounting for 35 per cent and 38 per cent respectively of total undergraduate students at HEIs in England, [excluding OU]).

- law (31 per cent), business and admin studies (24 per cent), mathematical sciences (22 per cent) and engineering/ technology (21 per cent).

Minority ethnic students are much less likely to be studying:

Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education

- veterinary science or agriculture (less than five per cent), education or humanities (both six per cent), physical sciences or creative arts/design (both under ten per cent).

The relative importance of subjects for minority ethnic groups in aggregate on degree study in English HEIs (excluding OU) is shown in Figure 2.2 (and in Table C1, Appendix C).

Looking at individual ethnic groups, it is generally the Asian groups, especially Indians, rather than Black students, that are comparatively well represented in the subjects most popular with minority ethnic students overall, for example:

- In medicine and dentistry, Indians (16 per cent) with Pakistanis and Asian Other (five per cent each), make up over two-thirds of all the minority ethnic degree students in English HEIs (excluding OU).

- By comparison, Black Caribbean students are poorly represented in medicine and dentistry (comprising only 0.3 per cent of the total, less than their average across all degree subjects, 1.4 per cent). Although Black Africans are slightly better represented than Black Caribbeans (1.5 per cent), this

**Figure 2.2: Minority ethnic degree students (in aggregate) as percentage of total in each subject, England, at HEIs (excluding OU), 2000/01**
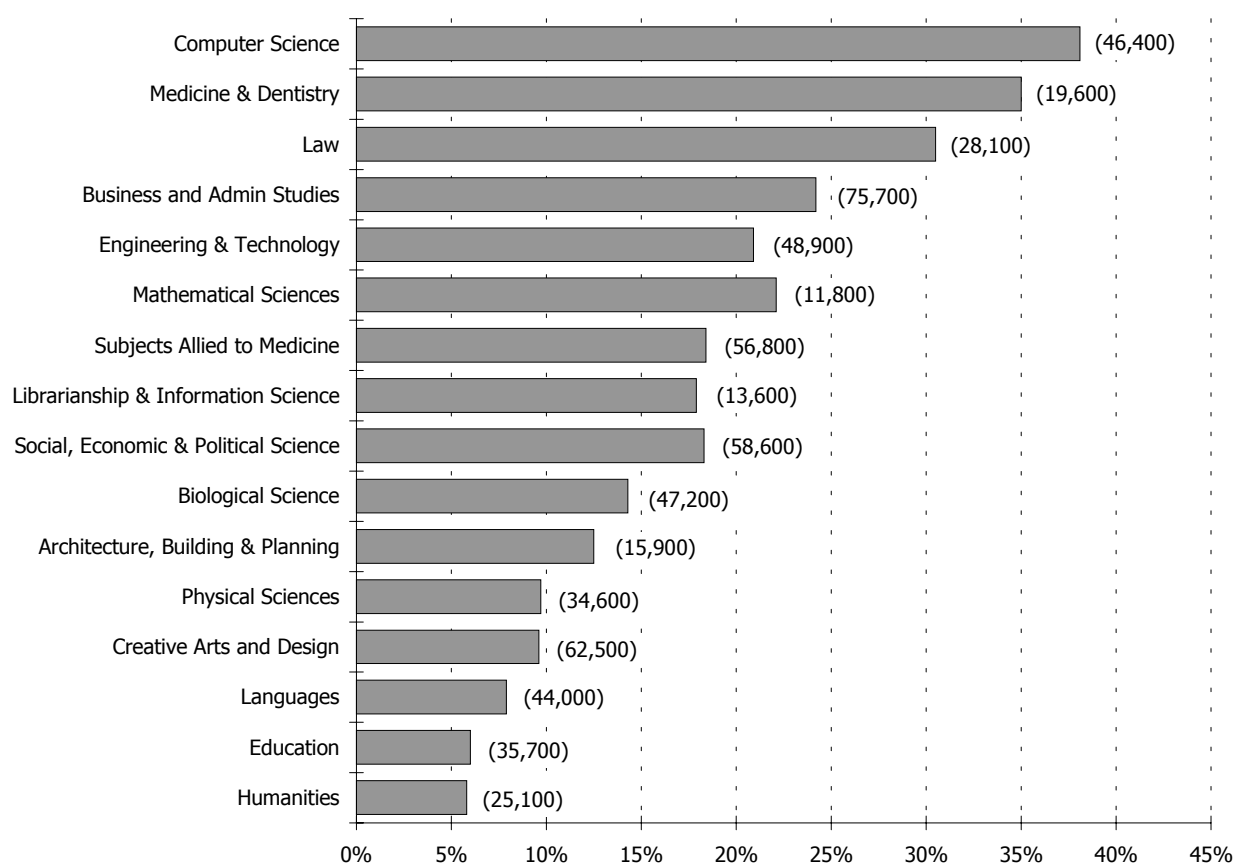


Figures in brackets are total numbers of students of known ethnicity in each subject (for further details, see Table C1).

*Source: HESA, 2001*

figure is also below their average for all degree subjects (2.3 per cent).

- In computer science, Indians make up almost 14 per cent and Pakistanis, 7.5 per cent, with Black Africans accounting for a further five per cent of the total. Together these three groups account for two-thirds of the minority ethnic total.

- In law, Indians, Pakistanis and Black Africans also have the strongest presence, with between five to eight per cent of the total each. Indians are also the dominant minority ethnic group in business/admin studies (eight per cent).

- Black groups, especially Black African, tend to be better represented in 'subjects allied to medicine' than in many other subjects.

- Although education as a degree choice is less popular overall with minority ethnic groups, it is more likely to be taken by Black Caribbean students than other groups, though the percentage is very small (just over one per cent).

It should also be noted, that although some subjects have much higher representation of particular ethnic groups, there are not necessarily more students studying in these subjects. For example, medicine/dentistry has a very high proportion of minority ethnic students, especially Indian students, but it is a relatively small subject compared to others, and there are actually fewer Indians studying for medicine and dentistry degrees (around 3,000) compared to business and admin studies (around 6,000). Further details of the subject profiles of minority ethnic groups on degree study are shown in Table C1, Appendix C.

At sub-degree level, the overall subject distribution is different from that of degree provision, with a greater emphasis on a relatively small number of more vocationally-orientated subjects, including business studies, biological and physical sciences, subjects allied to medicine, engineering and computer science. In particular, there are large numbers taking nursing qualifications within the largest subject area 'subjects allied to medicine' (which accounts for one-third of the total sub-degree provision). The highest percentage of minority ethnic students are found in computer science (almost 29 per cent) and business studies (23 per cent). Looking at the distribution of individual minority ethnic groups between subjects at sub-degree level:

- The largest groups of minority ethnic students studying sub-degree programmes in computer science are Indian (nine per cent), Pakistani (seven per cent), and Black African (four per cent).

- In Business Studies, Indians, followed by Black Africans and Pakistanis, also form the largest groups.

- In 'subjects allied to medicine', Black Africans comprise the largest group of minority ethnic students (5.4 per cent out of a

total minority ethnic percentage of 12.8), followed by Black Caribbean (2.3 per cent).

- Black Caribbean students are also better represented here than in other subjects, and Black groups on the whole are also better represented than Asian groups in social, economic and political studies.

### 2.2.3 Type of institution

Another striking feature of the undergraduate student data on ethnicity is the uneven institutional distribution of minority groups. Minority ethnic students in aggregate are clustered in a relatively small number of institutions, mainly new universities in London and, to a lesser extent, in other big cities, where over 30 per cent of their undergraduate populations are minority ethnic students. By contrast, the majority of HE institutions have a fairly low minority ethnic student population, generally under ten per cent (for home domiciled only). At the extremes, there are a handful of HE institutions where the minority ethnic student population is over 50 per cent of the total student population, and around 15 institutions, where the population is under three per cent.

To look more closely at the distribution by type of institution, we have grouped the HE institutions into the three most commonly used categories — new (or post-1992) universities, old (pre-1992 universities), and HE colleges (which includes a range of specialist and general HE colleges). The data are shown in Table C3, together with data from the ISR on HE in FE colleges.

- The highest minority ethnic representation, 21 per cent of all home-domiciled undergraduates, is in the new universities, compared with 14 per cent for the old university group.

- The lowest on average is at HE Colleges (nine per cent), and the Open University (five per cent). The lower percentages reported at the OU may be partly a result of lower ethnic reporting (see beginning of section 2.2), giving less reliable data.

- Minority ethnic representation in HE level study at FE colleges is just under 12 per cent.

There are more undergraduates in total at new than old universities in England (44 compared to 35 per cent), but there are almost twice as many minority ethnic undergraduates at new than old universities (59 compared to 32 per cent). For some individual minority ethnic groups, this bias towards the new university sector is much stronger — *eg* Black Caribbeans (almost four times as many at new than old universities), Black Africans (three times as many at new than old universities.

- Black Caribbean undergraduate students are slightly more likely to be found at FE colleges than at old universities, but less likely than at new universities.

- All minority ethnic groups have low representation at the Open University, and the percentage shares for Chinese, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are very low (0.1 to 0.2 per cent).

- Black Caribbean and Black Other students have a higher representation in the undergraduate populations of HE colleges than old universities, though as the overall numbers in colleges are much smaller, they are still more numerous in old universities. All other groups have lower representation in HE colleges than in old universities.

There is an association between type of provision, subject and type of institution (*eg* more new universities have more sub-degree students on vocational type courses than old universities). This partly explains the institutional distribution of minority ethnic groups, but it is a more complex pattern than this. As shown earlier, overall minority ethnic students were more likely to be taking degree than sub-degree courses. There are other factors relating to students institutional choices which are also likely to be relevant including: location, history, commitment to widening participation, and entry requirements of different institutions. These are discussed further in Chapter 4.

### 2.2.4 Location

The geographical distribution of minority ethnic students shows them as being more clustered than undergraduates as a whole, in particular in London and other large cities. Almost half of (home domiciled) minority ethnic undergraduate students at English institutions are studying in Greater London (49 per cent); this compares with one-fifth of all undergraduate students (with known ethnicity). The West Midlands has a slightly higher share of the total minority ethnic undergraduate student population in England, (11 per cent), than its share of all undergraduate students, (ten per cent). But in all other English regions, the minority ethnic percentage is lower, and in some regions very much lower (*eg* Southwest and Northern England, where just two per cent are minority ethnic students; and East Anglia, where it is less than one per cent), than the region's percentage share of all English undergraduates (Table 2.4, and Table C4 in Appendix C).

For full-time first degree study only, the concentration of minority ethnic students in Greater London is also high (46 per cent), but slightly lower than for full-time sub-degree students (49 per cent). It is highest of all for part-time degree students (64 per cent), and also higher for part-time sub-degree students (56 per cent).

Looking more closely at where individual minority ethnic groups are more likely to be studying (see Table C4):

**Table 2.4: Regional distribution of minority ethnic and all undergraduate students, as percentages of totals at English HE Is (excluding OU), 2000/01**

| Region | Minority ethnic | All (known ethnicity) |
|---|---|---|
| Gtr London | 48.8 | 19.3 |
| West Midlands | 11.4 | 10.1 |
| South East | 12.1 | 17.8 |
| North West | 8.2 | 13.7 |
| Yorks and H'side | 7.1 | 13.0 |
| East Midlands | 7.2 | 8.7 |
| South West | 2.3 | 17.8 |
| Northern | *2.0* | *6.2* |
| East Anglia | 0.9 | 2.6 |
| *England total* | *162,092* | *807,851* |

*Source: HESA, 2001*

- Black groups, and Black Africans in particular (72 per cent of their total), and also Bangladeshis (58 per cent), are more likely than Indians (39 per cent) and Pakistanis (32 per cent) to be studying in Greater London.

- Pakistani students are more likely to be studying in Yorkshire and Humberside, and North West England (both 16 per cent of their total), than any other group (compared to seven per cent of all minority ethnic students for Yorkshire and Humberside, and eight per cent for North West England). They are also more likely than White students to be studying in these regions (14 and 15 per cent of White students respectively).

- Chinese students are also better represented in the North West than many other minority ethnic groups.

- Indians are more likely to be studying in the East Midlands (12 per cent) than other groups.

- Indian and Pakistani students are more likely to be studying in the West Midlands (each just over 16 per cent) than any other group, but Black Caribbean students are also well represented in this region (14.5 per cent of them study here).

To some extent, these distributions are not surprising, as they mirror the regional concentrations of different minority ethnic groups across England, and also where there are very low representations of minority ethnic students, these are regions with relatively small minority ethnic populations. The South East is a more cosmopolitan region than, say, the South West. Minority ethnic students may be more likely than White students to be studying in their home region, or may be attracted to regions with higher concentrations of minority ethnic students, or higher general populations. As with other aspects of HE participation,

individual mobility patterns are likely to vary both within and between ethnic groups. However, there is some evidence from UCAS data on UK students accepted to full-time undergraduate courses, that minority ethnic students are more likely on average to stay closer to home:

- All minority ethnic groups accepted to first degree courses in 2000 were more likely to travel less distance, on average, than White students. Bangladeshis had the shortest travelling distance (22.5 miles average) and Chinese the furthest (55 miles average), but this was still lower than the 69.7 miles travelled on average by White applicants.

- Applicants accepted to full-time degree courses travelled further on average than applicants accepted to HND courses, but the same pattern was evident between ethnic groups on HND courses as those on degree courses (*ie* shorter distances travelled on average for minority ethnic groups than White students).

## Greater London

It is important to note the concentration of the minority ethnic student population in London, as this may be having an effect on other patterns of participation, type of course and subject, and also future job/career outcomes. Looking at the data on full-time undergraduate students at Greater London institutions:

- On the whole, minority ethnic undergraduates in Greater London choose to study a similar range of subjects as other undergraduates, but there are some subject differences: minority ethnic students in Greater London are more likely to be studying computer science and business studies (15 and 16 per cent respectively of minority ethnic students studying in Greater London, compared to nine and 12 per cent of all undergraduates there); and they are less likely to be on creative arts and design courses (just four per cent of minority ethnic groups compared to ten per cent of all undergraduates studying in Greater London), and Education (one per cent compared to three per cent). This implies that many of the subjects popular with minority ethnic groups nationally (see section 2.1), are even more popular in London, and vice versa.

- Minority ethnic students are more concentrated at new universities in London: they make up over 60 per cent of the full-time undergraduate population at these universities, compared to 36 per cent of the total at old universities. In other words, minority ethnic groups are one and a half times more likely to be studying on full-time courses in the capital at a new university than an old university (58 per cent of the total minority ethnic students in Greater London are at a new university and 36 per cent at an old university). This is a larger differential than exists for study outside London. In particular,

Black Caribbean full-time undergraduates studying in London are almost four times as likely to be at a new university than an old university, and Black Africans are about three times as likely. By contrast, Chinese and Asian Other full-time undergraduates in London are more likely to be at an old university than a new one, while Indians are only slightly more likely to be studying at a new university than an old university. It is likely that these institutional patterns are a reflection of different subject choices made by different groups, and also mode of study, as well as differences in their entry qualifications to HE, and other characteristics.

We now turn to look at the different characteristics of minority ethnic students and how they compare with White students.

## 2.3  Student characteristics

### 2.3.1 Gender profiles

Women slightly outnumber men among minority ethnic undergraduates overall in England (HEIs, excluding OU) (53 per cent are women). However, this proportion is lower than the proportion of women in the English undergraduate population as a whole (58 per cent, of total students in England, of known ethnicity, are women). This means that women are less well represented among minority ethnic students in aggregate than in the undergraduate population.

The gender balance varies by individual ethnic group:

- Among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, women are outnumbered by men (44-45 per cent of students are female), the only groups where this happens.

- The highest female percentage is in the Black Caribbean student group (69 per cent). The proportion of females is also higher in the Black Other group, where 64 per cent of students are female.

These gender differences reflect partly gender imbalances in the general population. Bangladeshi women also form a minority of 16-34 year olds (47 per cent: see LFS, 2000), so the imbalance is slightly greater in HE. But for Pakistanis and Black Caribbeans, there is no such gender imbalance in the 18-34 population (around 50:50). This would suggest that there are some other factors affecting access to HE or in their motivations to enter, or both, which produce different participation patterns for males and females in minority ethnic groups. The overall gender imbalances may also be related to choices of particular courses and subjects made.

**Table 2.5: Representation of minority ethnic students among male and female undergraduate students taking different mode/level courses, at HEIs (excluding OU) England, 2000/0. (Minority ethnic students expressed as a percentage of men and women at each mode/level)**

| Level/mode | Women | | Men | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % minority ethnic | N | % minority ethnic | N |
| First degree, full-time | 17.3 | 337,358 | 18.6 | 294,919 |
| First degree, part-time | 15.4 | 43,376 | 21.4 | 27,817 |
| Sub-degree, full-time | 18.4 | 52,293 | 27.6 | 29,030 |
| Sub degree, part-time | 9.0 | 126,874 | 12.3 | 57,276 |

*Source: HESA, 2001*

- Women outnumber men on both part-time and full-time undergraduate study in general, but the bias towards women is greater in part-time than full-time study, both at degree and sub-degree levels. This also applies to minority ethnic groups in aggregate.

- However, as Table 2.5 shows, when percentages are compared, the minority ethnic percentage of men is higher than that of women for all levels/modes.

- and it is particularly high in full-time sub-degree study — over a quarter of male students are from minority ethnic groups compared to less than a fifth of female students (Table 2.5, and also Table C5 in Appendix C).

When these data on gender differences by individual minority ethnic group (according to level and mode of undergraduate study) are examined, it is evident that there are, once again, considerable variations between the groups (Table C5 shows more detailed analysis):

- 37 per cent of Bangladeshis on part-time degree study are female, compared to 46 per cent on full-time degree study. Pakistanis and Black Africans also have lower percentages on part-time than full time degree study.

- The representation of Black groups (Black students as a percentage of all students) is much higher among female part-time degree students than their full-time counterparts; but the opposite is the case for most Asian groups, especially Indian women (where the percentage in female part-time study is 2.5 per cent compared to 5.1 per cent in female full-time study).

- Looking at male students, the same differences are also evident for Black groups: a substantially higher percentage exist in male part-time degree than male full-time degree study. There is little variation for the Asian groups here.

In general, there are distinct gender differences between subjects, and this also holds true for minority ethnic groups. For example:

- Computer science, a more popular subject choice for men than women in general, and the most popular degree subject choice for minority ethnic students (see Figure 2.2), is also more popular with male than female Indian and Pakistani students.

- Law, also a popular subject with minority ethnic students, especially Indian, Pakistani and Black African students, and more popular generally with women than men, is more popular among female than male students in these groups, especially with female Pakistani students.

- Another subject group with relatively strong representation of female minority ethnic groups is 'subjects allied to medicine'. These courses are more popular among female Black students than White students or other minority ethnic female students.

- Medicine and dentistry degrees, also a popular choice for minority ethnic students, especially Indians, and also slightly more popular with women than men, has fewer female minority ethnic students than male minority ethnic students (and also fewer Indian women than Indian men).

- Business and administration studies also has strong representation of most minority ethnic groups. In this subject there is a more equal balance between the genders in general, but in the Indian and Chinese groups, it is more popular with women than men. Social, economic and political science is more popular with female Black Caribbean, Black Other and Bangladeshi than other female students.

### 2.3.2 Age profiles

There is little difference overall in the age profile of minority ethnic and White undergraduate students in HE institutions (excluding OU) in England (54 per cent of minority ethnic undergraduates are aged 21 or over, compared to 53 per cent of White undergraduates). However, there are significant differences between individual minority ethnic groups: Black students are much more likely to be older (over 70 per cent aged 21 years or over). Asian students are generally younger, particularly Indians (only 39 per cent are aged 21 years and over). Also, mature students aged 25 year or more are much more likely to be found among the Black undergraduate groups.

Owen *et al.*, 2001 (a statistical review of minority ethnic achievement in education, training and the labour market for the DfEE) showed that the age profile of minority ethnic undergraduate students in the UK has been getting slightly younger over time, while the White student group has changed little in this respect. In particular, the Black Caribbean and Black African groups (who have the oldest age profiles) have been getting younger: the percentage of under 21 year old Black Caribbean students increased from 18.2 to 21.4 per cent from 1994/95 to 1998/99, and the percentage of under 21 year old Black

African students from 15.1 to 20.1 per cent (*nb* these figures in Owen *et al.*, 2001 are for all UK, including Open University).

As part-time students are more likely to be older on entry, it is more relevant to look at age differences by ethnic group only for full-time undergraduate entrants, to see what influence age has. These are shown in Figure 2.3 for students at English HEIs (excluding OU) (*nb* age differences discussed above are on current ages, but Figure 2.3 is age on entry). This shows that around half of the Black group (and slightly more of Black Africans in particular) are aged 21 or more on entry to full-time degree courses at English HEIs, compared to the minority of other groups, where it is 25 per cent or less in most cases.

More students enter sub-degree courses at HE institutions in England at an older age, but here too the Black groups are the oldest to do so. Over 80 per cent of Black Africans enter sub-degree courses at HE institutions in England aged 21 or over, compared to around 55 per cent of White students and 30-40 per cent of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese students.

It would seem likely then, that age is a key factor of influence on the entry to HE of minority ethnic groups. The groups with the lowest participation overall, Black students, are older on average on entry, and vice versa, those with the highest participation, Indian students, are the youngest. It seems that more of the Black students may be delaying their entry to HE, which could either be because it takes them longer to get the necessary qualifications, or

**Figure 2.3: Percentage of older undergraduate entrants (aged 21+) in each minority ethnic group, by level of study (excluding OU), England**



*Source: HESA, 2001*

Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education
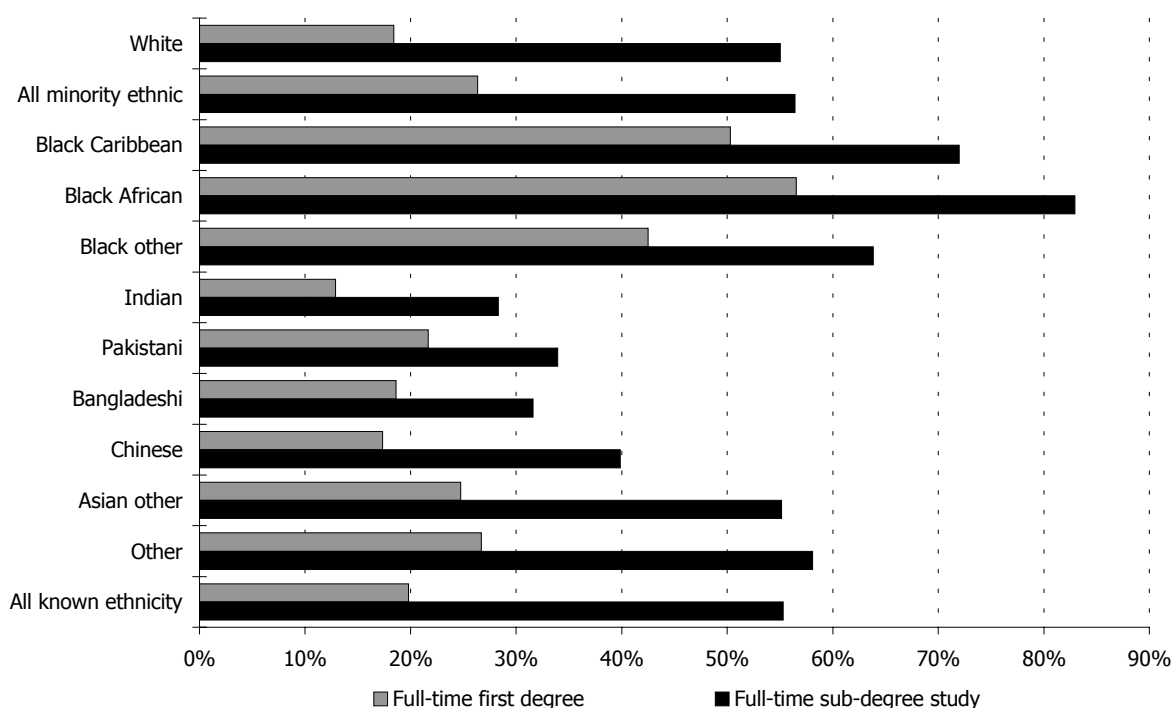
because they are doing something else before going on to HE. (This is explored further in Chapter 3, in the student survey).

We also looked at age and gender together to see if there were any further noticeable patterns in the data. This showed that the age profiles of men and women were similar for most minority ethnic groups, with women generally younger on average in most groups in full-time degree study, but men younger on average at sub-degree level.

### 2.3.3 Prior education

As well as age and gender differences, there are also differences between minority ethnic groups and White students in their entry routes into higher education: Black students are more likely to enter higher education with non-standard qualifications (*ie* not 'A' levels) than White, Asian or other minority ethnic groups.

Among students on *full-time* degree study at English HEIs:

- the vast majority entered in 2000/01 with 'A' levels, Scottish Highers or GNVQs (in combination) as their highest entry qualification (71 per cent, of total known ethnicity). Among minority students, this was slightly lower (65 per cent). However, among Indians it was much higher (77.5 per cent) and also higher for most other Asian groups (71-74 per cent), but much lower for Black Africans (only 37 per cent), Black Caribbeans (43 per cent) and Black Other (49 per cent).

- Black students were much more likely than any other group to enter degree study with Access course qualifications (around 12 per cent), or with HND/HNC, GCSE qualifications, or as mature students with previous experience but no formal qualifications (each accounting for only three to five per cent of the total). For White students and other minority ethnic groups these other qualifications were held by fewer students (under three per cent in most cases).

- This difference in entry qualifications between groups is likely to be due, in a large part, to age differences (see discussion above about older age profiles of Black groups in particular). If only under 21 year olds on entry are considered, the percentage with 'A' levels, Scottish Highers or GNVQs (in combination) is much higher (84 per cent overall and 81.5 per cent for minority ethnic students); and the gap between the lowest and highest figure is much narrower — 84 per cent among young Indian entrants compared to 72 per cent among young Black African entrants.

The vast majority of students on first year *part-time* degree courses at English HEIs (excluding OU) (who are mostly mature students) did not have 'A' levels, though Pakistani and Bangladeshi students were more likely than any other groups to have them.

Overall, a higher proportion of part-time degree students already held a degree (17 per cent), than full-time students (very few did); and this proportion was even higher among Chinese students (25 per cent, but note numbers here small).

Further insight on the entry backgrounds of students can be got from analysis of UCAS data. This data covers entry to full-time courses, both degree and HNDs (but only on students who apply via UCAS and not directly to a university that they prefer. UCAS data undercounts mature students as they are more likely to apply directly, *eg* via Access courses, and the data are not fully compatible with the HESA data, though the overall pattern is similar. Note also that 'accepted applicant' does not mean that the student actually entered HE that year).

We have extracted data for accepted applicants from England for the 2000 entry year, as this was the last year where UCAS used the 'old' classification (*ie* based on 1991 census) on ethnicity, and so the data are consistent with the HESA data shown elsewhere in this chapter (2001 entry data are available from UCAS but the main patterns in the data are unlikely to have changed much). The UCAS data shows a similar pattern to the HESA data above on entry qualification, but presents the details slightly differently. It shows that:

- The majority of UCAS English accepted applicants to degree courses in 2000 (64 per cent) had two or more 'A' levels as their highest qualification, but this was lower for minority ethnic groups as a whole (57 per cent) and much lower for Black students, especially Black Africans (35 per cent). The Chinese, Indian and Asian Other groups had similar proportions to White students, with two plus 'A' levels (Table C6 Appendix C).

- Vocational qualifications (BTEC and GNVQ) were more likely to be held by minority ethnic English accepted applicants (22 per cent) than White accepted applicants (13 per cent). Access qualifications featured more prominently among Black than among other groups. (NB because UCAS applicants data undercounts mature entrants, it is likely that more of the Black group are missing for these UCAS totals than other groups who are younger on average).

Looking at 'A' level scores of English accepted applicants (those with two or more 'A' levels), further substantial variations between minority ethnic groups are evident (Table C7, Appendix C). Overall, 45 per cent had 21+ points, but this fell to 37.5 per cent of minority ethnic accepted applicants. The highest achieving 'A' level group was the Chinese (50 per cent with 21+points), next came White accepted applicants (46 per cent) and Asian Other (45 per cent). The lowest achievers at 'A' level were Black students, but this was higher for Black Africans (28 per cent) than Black Caribbeans (19 per cent).

## 2.3.4 Social class

Overall, 27 per cent of UCAS accepted English applicants to degree courses in 2000 came from the lower social class groups (IIIm-V), but more from minority ethnic groups as a whole did so (40 per cent). Among some Asian groups, this was considerably higher: Bangladeshis (55 per cent from social classes IIIm-V) and Pakistanis (54 per cent), but fairly high also among Indians (44 per cent). There were differences between Black Caribbean (36 per cent) and Black African applicants (27 per cent in social classes III-V). By contrast, White students were more likely than most minority ethnic groups to come from the top end of the social class range, as were Asian Other (both around 60 per cent in social classes I and II), see Table C8.

This social class distribution may seem a little unexpected in relation to some groups (*eg* Indians, Black students) and does not fit as neatly with the main social imbalance within HE (*ie* lower participation generally among low social classes, especially at old universities). Certainly, the Black student figures may be affected by the exclusion of some mature students in the UCAS data. Another indicator of 'social class' is the type of school or college last attended, especially the proportion coming from the independent sector. Analysis of the UCAS data for English accepted applicants also shows wide variation between minority ethnic groups in previous educational establishment (see Table C9). Overall, 13 per cent (of known ethnicity) came from independent schools, but this drops to 8.5 per cent for minority ethnic accepted applicants in England. However, Chinese and Asian Other accepted applicants were much more likely to have been at independent schools (23 and 18 per cent respectively), and also Indian (13 per cent) than Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black accepted applicants (each around six per cent or less). The comparable figure for White applicants was 13.5 per cent. However, looking at both the grant-maintained and independent sectors together, Indians had a higher combined percentage (28 per cent) and similar to the White group (26 per cent), but this was still below the Chinese group (36 per cent).

As might be expected from the entry qualification data, more minority ethnic students (56 per cent) than White applicants (43 per cent), were likely to have been at a FE or HE institution prior to taking up their place in HE but this was much higher among the Black group (over 65 per cent), especially Black Caribbean (74 per cent) and also Pakistani and Bangladeshi students (each over 60 per cent). The relative proportions coming from FE/HE and maintained school sectors, are shown in Figure 2.4.

These results illustrate the significance of prior education, and linked to that, social backgrounds, as key influences on HE participation, and also, obtaining places at particular types of universities. The minority ethnic groups with the highest 'A' level qualifications, and also higher social class profiles based on type

**Figure 2.4: Percentage of UCAS accepted applicants who come from maintained schools and FE colleges/HEIs, England**
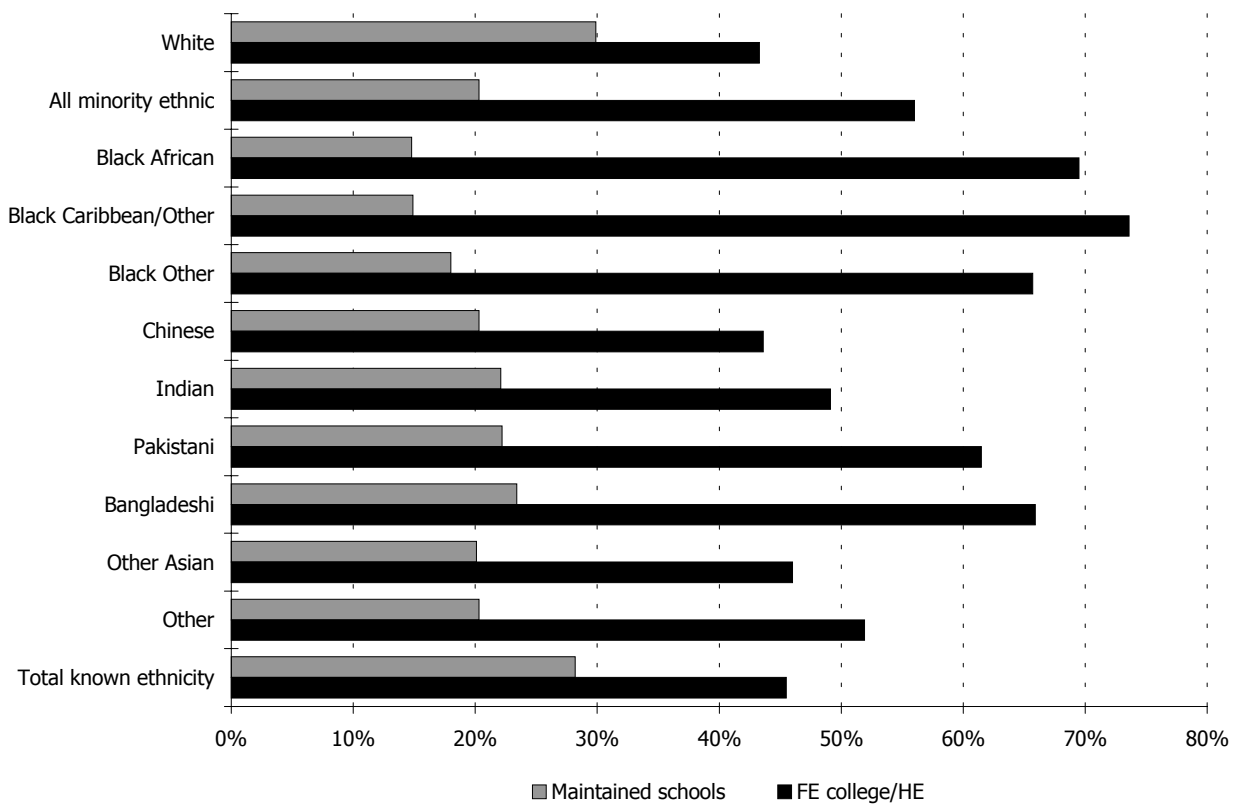


*Source: UCAS (see Table C9)*

of previous educational establishment — Chinese, Indians, Asian Other, — have the higher HE participation rates, and are also more likely to be at old universities. This supports other research studies which have investigated variables such as prior education and social class as being strong predictors of participation in HE by non-traditional groups (see Hogarth *et al.*, 1997). In the next chapter we look in more detail at the other research evidence, and also the results of our students survey, to get a better understanding of the factors which are influencing the participation patterns of minority ethnic students shown here in the statistics.

## 2.4  Summary

This chapter has presented statistical evidence on the participation of minority ethnic groups in higher education, focusing on undergraduate study in England. It has aimed to unravel what is quite a complex picture at individual minority ethnic group level, as a range of variables have been shown to be of varying significance for different groups. These can impact on their decisions about applying to HE and their choices of what, and where, to study.

Minority ethnic students form a growing share of the under-graduate student population at HEIs in England, representing 15.2

per cent of the total. Overall, they are not an under-represented group in undergraduate study as a whole, relative to the working population, nor relative to their position in the young population (16-24 year olds). Nor does any individual minority ethnic group appear to be under-represented at an individual group level overall, compared to the working-age population. But there is likely to be some under-representation, notably of Bangladeshi and also, but to a lesser extent, Pakistani, and Black Other groups, when compared to their positions in the young population. Some groups, notably Chinese, Indian, Black African Asian Other and the Other group, are much better represented in undergraduate study than other groups. However, there is some uncertainty with the available population data for some small groups, and so these conclusions need to be treated with caution.

There is also variation in the level of representation of minority ethnic students in aggregate, and individual minority groups in particular, in certain parts of the sector. Different minority groups, and sub-groups (*eg* female/male, young/mature) display different patterns of participation in HE — by mode of study, qualification, subject, type and location of institution. Although the overall picture is quite complex it is clear that minority ethnic students in aggregate have higher representation:

- on degree than sub-degree programmes

- on full-time rather than part-time sub-degree programmes

- in certain subjects, especially medicine and dentistry, computer science, law and business studies

- at new (rather than old) institutions, especially in Greater London, and at universities rather than FE colleges.

There are some pockets of very low representation in:

- several subject areas — in particular, education, humanities languages, creative arts and design, and some sciences

- in some institutions — a small number of the old universities, and in the Open University

- in some regions — the South West, the North, and East Anglia.

Looking at individual minority ethnic groups in the data reveals a picture full of contrasts, between Asian and Black groups, but more often than not between Indian, Chinese and Pakistani/ Bangladeshi students and between Black African and Black Caribbean students (though there also are areas of similarity between them). Particular points to note here are:

- The much higher representations of Asian groups on full-time first degree courses (over three-quarters of their totals), than White students (just under two-thirds), which is higher than

for Black Caribbean and Black African groups (just over half of their totals).

- In contrast, Black Africans have much higher representation on full-time sub-degree programmes (in terms of percentages of total students) than on any other mode/level combination, while this variation is less pronounced for other minority groups.

- By subject, it is the Asian groups, and especially Indians, rather than Black students, who are the better represented minority groups on medicine/dentistry, IT and business studies, while on law, also a more popular subject with minority ethnic students, the minority groups are more evenly balanced, and on 'subjects allied to medicine', Black, in particular Black African, students, have higher percentages than on other subjects.

- All of the minority ethnic groups are more likely to be in new than old universities, but the bias towards the new sector is greatest for Black groups.

- Black students, and in particular Black Africans, but also (the much smaller number of) Bangladeshi students are more likely to be studying at a HE institution in Greater London than Indian or Pakistani students.

By personal characteristic and background, the most significant points of difference are:

- **gender imbalances**: women are slightly in the minority among Pakistani and Bangladeshi students, but men are very much in the minority among Black Caribbean students. There are also gender imbalances at subject and course level by ethnic group.

- **older age profiles:** Black students are more likely to be older than the average, and older than other minority groups (over half of Black Africans are 21 years or over on entry to full-time degree programmes).

- **entry qualifications differ:** Black accepted applicants via UCAS are more likely to have vocational than academic (*ie* 'A' level) entry qualifications, and also more likely to have lower 'A' level points, than other minority ethnic groups and White applicants. Chinese accepted applicants have higher 'A' level scores than White accepted applicants via UCAS.

- **entry routes differ:** Black students, and in particular Black Caribbean, and Pakistani and Bangladeshi students, are more likely to enter full-time courses in HE from colleges than from schools.

- **variation by social class:** Bangladeshi and Pakistani students are likely to have the lowest social class profiles. Chinese and the Asian Other group are much more likely to have been to independent schools.

The different personal and background profiles of minority ethnic student groups help to explain many of the differences in their participation level overall and in different parts of the sector. In particular, the older age of many Black students and their different entry qualifications and routes into HE are likely to mainly explain their higher representation on part-time courses and also on full-time sub-degree programmes and at new universities, which tend to have a higher share of mature students. Generally linked to education background is social class background, and although variations between groups were evident, there seems less of a direct link between differences in HE participation rates of minority ethnic groups and their social class (as indicated by parental occupation status). Of more relevance seems to be the school background, and the greater likelihood that groups with higher participation rates, and higher representation in old universities in particular, will have been to an independent or grant-maintained school (this links with them having higher 'A' level entry qualifications too). These, and other factors affecting participation, which have been explored in the research literature and our student survey, are discussed further in the following chapters.

# 3. Factors Influencing HE Participation

The previous chapter has presented evidence from the available student population statistics (mainly HESA and UCAS), which show how participation in undergraduate education in England varies by minority ethnic group, and also within different parts of the sector. They show how personal and background variables, especially age, prior education and social class, help to explain some of the different participation patterns shown. These include the higher representation of minority ethnic students, and some groups in particular, in certain subjects, courses and institutions. Here, we explore these and other possible explanations further, using evidence from the research literature and our survey of current students, undertaken in Spring 2002 (for further details see section 1.3 and Appendix B).

In this chapter, we focus on the factors influencing minority ethnic participation in higher education, in particular decisions about entry, and in Chapter 4, we discuss the factors which affect their pattern of participation (*eg* choice of subject, institution).

## 3.1  The evidence base

Although we have been able to disaggregate the HESA and UCAS datasets at an individual minority ethnic group level, and so analyse ethnicity by other variables recorded there (see Chapter 2), much of the research work in this area does not provide this level of detail, either at a within-sector level (*eg* distinguishing between degree and sub-degree study) or an individual minority ethnic group level. This is generally because most of the research on minority ethnic students has been based on samples of the population, and the data produced are insufficient to undertake such detailed breakdowns and give reliable results. This is disappointing for our purposes here, because as has already been indicated in the last chapter, it is only at a more detailed level of analysis that the relatively complex picture of minority ethnic participation in higher education can be better understood.

In our survey of current students, we were asked by the DfES to cover the full range of HE undergraduate study in England, both degree and sub-degree level, full-time and part-time mode, HE and FE sectors, and all subjects. However, it was not expected that

we should analyse all of the different sectoral variables for all ethnic groups (the size of sample required would have been be far too large and costly). Where possible though, we have focused on differences between minority ethnic groups, and between White and all minority ethnic students, drawing out key variations by sub-group where the data allow us to do so. Also, although the coverage of much of the analysis is all undergraduate study, in places we have focused on full-time degree students only, as they make up by far the largest group (and almost 70 per cent of minority ethnic students in English HEIs).

This chapter is in two parts. We start by looking at the existing research evidence on factors affecting HE participation, drawing out specific evidence on minority ethnic students, and then provide further insights from our student survey.

## 3.2  Factors affecting participation in higher education

Beginning with the more general evidence, a number of studies and reports over the years have investigated participation in higher education and the factors of importance in increasing participation rates for under-represented groups. These are probably best summarised in the 'Dearing report' (NICHE, 1997) and also *Access for all?* by the Education and Employment Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1998/99, the HEFCE study on participation by non-traditional students (Hogarth *et al.*, 1997), and the recent NAO report on widening participation in higher education in England. The main conclusions drawn from these are that:

- **Education attainment** for HE entry, especially obtaining traditional 'A' levels, is a key factor of influence on HE participation. It is likely that around nine out of ten of young people who achieve two 'A' levels by 18, go on to HE by the age of 21 (see Youth Cohort Survey [YCS] of 21 year olds, Autumn, 2000). Also, looking back to the last period of major student growth, the early 1990s, this coincided with a period of growth in attainment levels post-16, and staying-on rates at 16 (see Hodgkinson and Spours, 2000).

- Linked to attainment is **'affluence'**, with less affluent sections of the population showing persistently lower entry rates (*ie* the continuing 'social class' gap in the HE sector). Importantly, the less affluent are likely to be under-represented across all types of post-16 learning, and this has been linked to lower levels of prior academic achievement.

- **Family background**, especially parental experience of higher education, and family influence on earlier educational performance and aspirations, as well decisions to stay on 16, are other factors influencing participation. In particular, entrenched negative attitudes to learning among those who have not historically participated, and the reverse, a belief in

the value of education, can act as strong factors of influence among different groups.

- **Issues surrounding student finance**, including concerns about costs of higher education, financial support, likely indebtedness, and the desire to start earning earlier and become independent, can act as discouragements, especially for less affluent groups, while perceptions of the economic benefits of entering HE is a major encouragement.

- **Poor information about higher education** to help make choices, and misconceptions about likely costs and financial support available, can also act as disincentives (see Connor and Dewson, 2001).

In addition, the substantial expansion and broadening of the HE sector, especially the growth in the ex-polytechnics in the early 1990s, has played a role in increasing the diversity of the HE student population, and in particular in increasing the representation of some previously under-represented groups (*eg* women, mature students). Structural changes in the labour market during the 1990s have generated higher employer demand for higher-level skills and educational qualifications, thus also acting as an encouraging factor in general to get a higher education qualification.

These factors all make a contribution in various ways to increasing the likelihood that individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds will participate in higher education in the UK, as a young person or later, and to the participation patterns that we have today. In the research literature, the most significant factors identified for minority ethnic groups appear to be 'attainment' and 'aspiration'. They are of course linked, as attainment can be affected by aspirations, which in turn can be formed by a range of cultural, social and economic factors. These are discussed further below.

## 3.3  Attainment pre-16 and aspirations

A number of studies have shown wide variability of educational performance pre-16, both between and within minority ethnic groups in the UK (Modood, 1997a; Owen *et al.,* 1999; Drew, 1995; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn 1998):

- Asian students, especially Indians, perform better on average than the Black Caribbean group, but each is internally differentiated, by variables including gender, social class and generation.

- Some Asian groups, in particular Pakistani and Bangladeshi, perform less well earlier in education (often because they come from homes where English is not the first language spoken), but catch up more through secondary schools.

- Black Caribbean and White groups perform similarly at earlier stages, but Black Caribbean pupils drop behind at later stages.

By the time GCSEs are reached, minority ethnic pupils in aggregate perform less well than White pupils. However, Indians perform better than White pupils, and Black groups, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis perform considerably worse. Although there has been an increase in attainment levels by all ethnic groups over time (especially second and third generation immigrants), the gap between the highest and lowest achieving ethnic groups has widened, with average attainments by some groups, especially Black Caribbean males, falling further behind.

What causes these differences? Research suggests a combination of factors, but there is no consensus on why the differences between ethnic groups should be so great. Cultural background, peer and teacher influence, school effectiveness, curriculum issues, neighbourhood and social class have all been identified, but no definitive conclusions have been drawn about the relative significance of them (see Pathak, 2000; Modood, forthcoming). Much of the evidence about negative experiences in the crucial years of secondary school focuses on young Black Caribbean boys in particular. Parents' social class is seen as a key variable, it accounts for the largest part of exam variance between school pupils in general. Because minority ethnic pupils are over-represented in lower socio-economic groups, this has been shown as partly explaining their lower levels of attainment (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). Social class differences manifest themselves in various ways in early education, including choice of schools for their children, involvement of parents in their school work and aspirations they have for them. As discussed at the end of Chapter 2, independent and grant maintained schools are much more likely to have been attended by certain groups of accepted applicants to full-time HE courses, *ie* the groups with the higher HE participation rates on the whole (Indian, Asian Other and Chinese, and White). These groups also outperform others at GCSE level on average. Bangladeshis have the lowest social class profile of all minority ethnic groups, and Bangladeshi pupils are outperformed by others at GCSE, in particular by Indians (Bangladeshis also have one of the lower HE participation rates).

However, it may be wrong to draw too close a link between ethnicity and social class in pre-16 school educational attainment, as several studies have shown that young people from low social class backgrounds, from some Asian groups in particular, had parents with very high aspirations for them, which influenced their attainment levels at school and post-16 choices. Views on the value of education are held more positively by minority ethnic groups than by White people as a whole, in particular the view that education forms the basis of upward social mobility (see HEIST's 1995 study reported by Allen in, and also Conclusions Chapter 12 of, Modood and Acland, 1998). There is little doubt

that a strong minority ethnic drive for qualifications exists, and once they begin to acquire qualifications, they seek more. These are associated with ambitions of economic migrants to *'better oneself and one's family'*. Generation is also likely to be a key variable (as shown by Modood, 1997a, and others). Most minority ethnic groups have been shown to have a greater tendency to obtain higher qualifications than their parents, and the second generation of minority ethnic groups (from the same birth cohorts) are far more likely to have qualifications than the first, for all ethnic groups and both genders.

# 3.4 Post-16 choices

Though the majority of young people now stay on in full-time education post-16, a higher proportion of minority ethnic groups in aggregate do (over 85 per cent) than White young people (67 per cent) (YCS, 2001). However, there is marked variation between minority ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and Black Other staying on rates are lower than White staying on rates, whereas Chinese and Indian are higher. There is considerable variation by gender within minority ethnic groups: higher staying on rates for Black and Chinese girls than Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi girls.

At 17 years, the differences in main activities of ethnic groups are also marked: while 62 per cent of White young people are in full-time education, this contrasts with 84 per cent of minority ethnic young people in aggregate, including 84 per cent of Black and 89 per cent of Indians and Asian Other, but a lower proportion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, 70 per cent (YCS, 2000). It is not possible (due to small sample numbers) to break down the Black figure between groups, but an earlier Careers Activity Survey (1998), based on a much larger sample, showed that Black African 'Year 11 completers' (*ie* mostly aged 16/17) were more likely than Black Caribbean or Black Other groups to be in full-time education (79 per cent compared with 72 and 71 per cent for the other two Black groups respectively). The pattern for other minority groups is consistent with the YCS findings above (see Figure 3.1).

Again, several possible explanations for this have been identified in previous research:

- Higher expectations of certain minority ethnic groups and higher motivations to continue in education and gain higher qualifications rather than enter jobs or work-related training at this stage (the 'higher aspirations' argument above, see evidence in Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, Interim Report 2002).

- A possible catching up on poorer performance earlier on (reviewed in Owen *et al.,* 2001), or a tendency to take longer to achieve qualifications (Modood, 1997).

**Figure 3.1: Percentage of Year 11 completers staying on in full-time education**
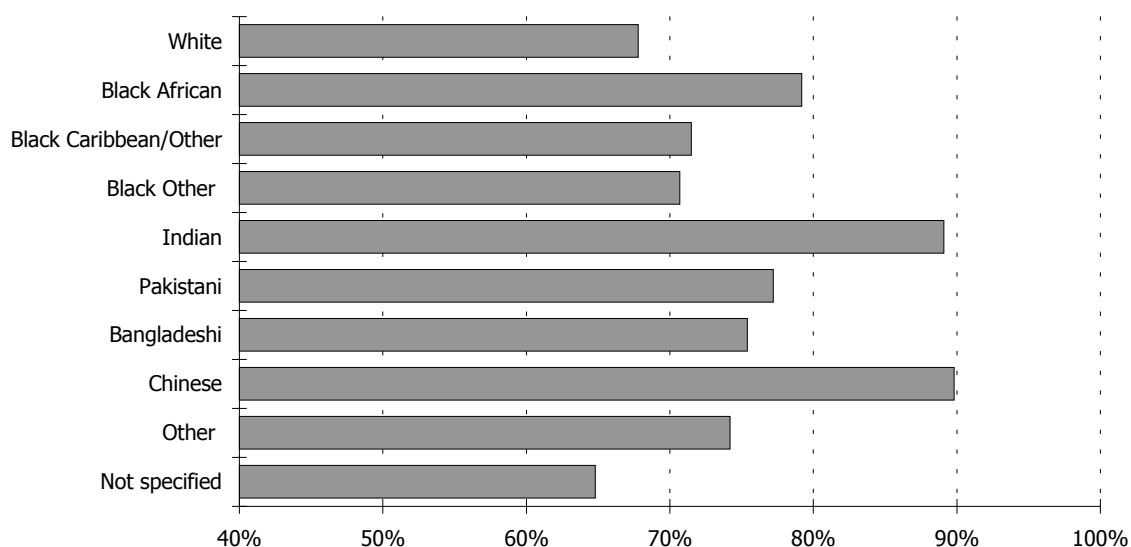


*Source: Careers Activity Survey (in Owen et al., 2000)*

- The expectation that better qualifications may reduce the impact of expected discrimination in the labour market (Pathak, 2000).

- The role of the careers service and the influence of parents, peers and school teachers on post-16 and earlier decisions. Muslim girls in particular are likely to be influenced by their parents and family about what is an appropriate choice.

The relationship between social class and post-16 destinations, though still evident here, appears weaker for minority ethnic young people than for White people, and weaker than that shown in GCSE exam performance. The greater value put on post-compulsory education by young people and their parents from minority ethnic groups, almost regardless of social class, may be a more important influence. This has been attributed to cultural differences and different parental qualification levels (see Modood, 1998). There is some evidence, albeit fairly limited and linked more to Asian than Black groups, that minority ethnic groups are more likely to stay on in education for positive reasons than White young people, to access more high status and highly paid jobs in the future (after 'A' levels or university) and improve their social standing (Hagell and Shaw, 1996).

Another important distinction is that the pattern of post-16 education differs by minority ethnic group. Those that stay on are more likely to go into further education than stay at school if they come from a minority ethnic background than from a White background. Several reasons for this have been suggested from research, but again, no clear consensus exists, because of a lack of sufficient statistical evidence (Brooks, 1998). Geographical factors come into play, as provision available post-16 varies across the country. So too does choice of subjects to study post-16: some

vocational subjects are more available at colleges than schools (*eg* business studies, computing) and are more popular among minority ethnic, and also working class, groups (Foskett and Hesketh, 1997). Negative experiences of school, including experiences of racial discrimination, may be another factor attracting them into a local FE college rather than staying on at school.

The current research evidence is not sufficient to draw firm conclusions, and we are obtaining further insight on this subject from our survey of potential entrants as part of this project (currently in progress, see Appendix A). There is also a new Longitudinal Study of Young People being planned by the DfES, which will have a minority ethnic booster sample, and will help to shed more light on this subset.

# 3.5 Qualifications at 18-19 years

As highlighted in section 3.1, obtaining entry qualifications (*ie* at level 3) has been shown to be a key factor affecting HE participation in general. White people are slightly more likely than minority ethnic groups in aggregate to have at least a level 3 qualification at aged 18 years (38 per cent as against 35 per cent), but by aged 19 years there is hardly any apparent difference (both around 47 per cent) (see YCS, 2001). Analysis by ethnic group is limited because of small sample numbers, but among the broad Asian group, Indian people are far more likely, and the Pakistani and Bangladeshi combined group less likely than White people, to hold at least a level 3 qualification by age 18. But by age 19, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi combined groups, as well as Indians, are far more likely than White people to hold at least a level 3 qualification. Unfortunately there are insufficient numbers in the Black groups to analyse separately, as Table 3.1 shows.

It is also worth noting that the type of qualification differs by ethnic group: the vast majority of the level 3+ qualified 18 and 19 year olds, are holding 'A'/'AS' levels, but this is more likely among White than minority ethnic 18 or 19 year olds. Indians and Asian Others are more likely than White 19 year olds to hold 'A'/'AS' level and Advanced GNVQs, but Indians are less likely than White people to hold NVQs or equivalent, and Pakistani/ Bangladeshi/other Asians (*ie* excluding Indians) are more likely to hold these qualifications.

These differences in qualifications are likely to be related to different post-16 options, highlighted above, and the greater likelihood for minority ethnic students to go into further education colleges than stay on at school. While most school students age 16+ are studying for 'A' levels, this is not the case in FE colleges, where generally, a wider range of qualifications are on offer. Minority ethnic students, especially Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, are more likely than White students to be

**Table 3.1: Qualification level of 18 and 19 year olds, 2000/2001: percentage of all and in each ethnic group holding at least level 3 qualification, and percentage holding each type of level 3 qualification**

| | All Level 3+ | 'A'/'AS' level | Advanced GNVQ | NVQ or equiv. | (Weighted sample) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **18 year olds (Spring 2000)** | | | | | |
| All | 37 | 28 | 4 | 6 | (6,304) |
| White | 38 | 29 | 4 | 6 | (5,604) |
| All minority ethnic groups | 35 | 26 | 4 | 7 | (625) |
| Indian | 42 | 33 | 6 | 4 | (200) |
| Pakistani/Bangladeshi | 28 | 17 | 3 | 10 | (152) |
| **19 year olds (Winter 2000/01)** | | | | | |
| All | 47 | 31 | 6 | 11 | (4,806) |
| White | 46 | 31 | 6 | 11 | (4,283) |
| Indian | 65 | 45 | 17 | 4 | (150) |
| Asian Other | 59 | 34 | 13 | 15 | (167) |

Note: Smaller numbers of respondents in the 19 year olds survey meant that ethnic groups had to be amalgamated, and no separate figures were published for all minority ethnic groups

*Source: Youth Cohort Surveys, in DfES, 2001*

studying for Advanced GNVQs (Owen *et al.*, 2001). The different qualifications held by aged 18 and 19 may also be explained by the length of time different ethnic groups take to achieve the same qualifications. Berthourd (1999) shows that when comparing qualifications gained by groups who stay on in education, minority ethnic groups take longer to achieve them than White people. In particular, Pakistani and Bangladeshi young men spend considerably longer than Indian or Black men, and on average, men spend longer than women, in all minority ethnic groups except the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group.

Other factors relating to the student decision making process of potential applicants (*ie* those who have or are likely to be qualified to enter HE) are also likely to have a role, and these are discussed next.

## 3.6 Decision making about going to HE

As highlighted in section 3.1, among the range of factors which can affect decision making about going on to HE study and the choice process, is the extent and quality of information provided to potential applicants and their 'influencers' (see also Connor *et al.*, 1999). Decisions about higher education can be made early in the education process (before year 11), and in the past for many, have been based on a relatively limited amount of information about HE.

Within the research on factors affecting decisions made by potential HE applicants (see for example Callender, 1997; Connor and Dewson, 2001; Davies *et al.*, 2002), there is only a small amount of evidence pertaining specifically to minority ethnic groups (mainly because of small numbers of minority ethnic groups covered by these more general surveys) which suggests that:

- there is frequently a stronger positive influence on labour market and economic outcomes on minority ethnic young people (in general), compared to White young people. One study (Connor and Dewson, 2001), showed Asian students, from a range of social class backgrounds, and Black students, from lower (but not higher) social classes, put more emphasis than White students (from all social classes) on improved employment outcomes as the main encouraging factor for going on HE.

- parents, siblings and friends, have a stronger influence on decisions about going to higher education of potential minority ethnic than of White students. In particular, parents of minority ethnic students are more likely to encourage their offspring to go on to HE study, in the belief that gaining higher qualifications will improve their employment prospects, than parents of White students. Although some parents may have a negative influence, in overstepping the line a little in encouraging their children to apply to HE when they really would prefer not to go, thus leading to a stressful and unsatisfactory situation (shown up later as affecting non-completion or lower achievement), research has not identified this as unique to minority ethnic families.

There has also been found to be different views about student finance between minority ethnic groups, in particular differences in attitudes to debt and borrowing among different religious and cultural groups (reported in Watts, 2000), which may have a negative influence on decisions to go on to HE. In a recent survey of potential entrants, Callender (2002) found that among those most anti-debt were minority ethnic groups in aggregate, and Muslims and Pakistanis in particular. However, as with other research, this study found that financial disincentives work alongside other factors, such as attitudes to the labour market, awareness and knowledge of student financial arrangements and funding and family support.

## 3.7 IES student survey

We now turn to the survey of students to see where the results can add to the existing research evidence presented above. Firstly though, some details of the sample characteristics are presented.

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### 3.7.1 Student personal characteristics and prior education

When analysed by ethnic group the students' personal characteristics were generally in line with the pattern in the population statistics, for age, gender and prior qualification/entry route, shown earlier in Chapter 2, and so are not discussed further here in detail (but the data are shown in Tables in Appendix B). However, it is worth pointing out a few important features of the sample which are likely to affect their participation in HE, and have relevance to some of the data that follows here and in the next chapters.

Firstly, comparing the White and minority ethnic (aggregate) groups in the representative sample (shown as sample sub-set A in the tables in this chapter, see further notes at foot of Table 3.2):

- Age and gender profiles overall were fairly similar, but minority ethnic groups had a slight bias towards males than females (which is the reverse for White group), and were slightly less likely to be under 21 years on entry.

- Minority ethnic students were slightly more likely to have vocational qualifications as their highest entry qualification than White students (54 v. 48 per cent), and more likely to have lower average 'A' level points.

- Minority ethnic students were more likely to have attended a FE or other college, and less likely to have been at comprehensive school, but more likely to have been at an independent school (13 v. 8 per cent).

(Note none of these were statistically significant differences.)

Next, looking at differences between individual minority ethnic groups (by looking at the minority ethnic sample, shown as sub-set B in the tables in this chapter, see footnote at bottom of Table 3.2):

- Males considerably outnumbered females in the Pakistani/ Bangladeshi group (by ratio of 2:1) and are slightly in the majority in all other groups, except Black Caribbean where females have the majority share (55:45).

- The Black groups are more likely to have an older age profile, especially Black Caribbean/Black Other (74 per cent 25 years +).

- Asian students were more likely to have academic than vocational qualifications as their highest qualification on entry, but the reverse was true for the Black groups (over 60 per cent were vocationally qualified). Chinese and Indians, and also Black Africans, had the highest average 'A' level scores.

- Black groups were more likely to have attended a FE or other college; Chinese were the most likely to have attended an independent school.

### 3.7.2 Family experience of HE

We asked students if any member of their families had experience in HE, as this can be a factor of relevance in decisions about going as can earlier educational attainment (not in student statistics in Chapter 2, but mentioned in research literature above). It can also provides an indication of 'class' (Note: We did not ask a question on social class via parental occupation information, as we obtained a low response to this question in the pilot, only 30 per cent, and also because of problems experienced in other surveys of students in accurately coding this from poor or partial job information, which casts doubt on its reliability).

The results for the representative sample showed that:

- Minority ethnic groups were less likely (but not significantly so) to have no family (either parents or siblings) experience of HE than White students (26 v. 34 per cent). However, they were more likely to have sibling experience only, and this was a statistically significant difference.

In the minority ethnic sample:

- Most of the groups had relatively high proportions with family experience of HE (over 75 per cent), the exception being Black Caribbean/Other. Here, one-third had no family experience (neither parent nor sibling). This compares with just 13 per cent of Black Africans.

- Interestingly, having sibling experience only tended to be higher than having sibling *and* parental experience for the Black Caribbean/Other group (33 v. 28 per cent) and particularly for the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group (43 v. 26 per cent), but for all other groups it was the other way around, see Table 3.2). (This was also higher for the minority ethnic group than the White group in the representative sample).

### 3.7.3 Main religion

In the survey, we asked students for some further details relating to their ethnicity, which might help us in our analysis of the relevance of cultural factors. Religion has been suggested as a factor influencing labour market disadvantage, though it may simply be a proxy for other factors such as education and fluency in language (see Brown, 2000). But there is comparatively little information from other research about religious affiliations of undergraduate students and its influence on participation in HE, though is mentioned in discussions about family influences and student finance/attitudes to debt (see above).

**Table 3.2: Family experience of higher education, (percentages in each ethnic group)**

| | A: Representative sample | | B: Minority ethnic sample | | | | |
| | **White** | **Minority Ethnic** | **Black Caribbean/ Other** | **Black African** | **Pakistani/ Bangladeshi** | **Indian** | **Chinese/ Asian Other** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Both sibling and parent | 35 | 30 | 28 | 53 | 26 | 35 | 39 |
| Parent only | 15 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 11 | 11 |
| Sibling only | 16 | 33 | 30 | 25 | 43 | 33 | 37 |
| Neither | 34 | 26 | 33 | 13 | 25 | 22 | 13 |
| *Base* | *465* | *70* | *127* | *167* | 129 | *172* | *90* |

Notes: 1) Here and in most of the survey tables that follow, the individual minority ethnic groups have been combined because of small numbers in some groups, as discussed in section 1.3; also survey data are shown separately for the two sub-samples: A = the representative sample (*ie* where minority ethnic students are represented according to their position in the undergraduate population; and Sample B = the minority ethnic sample, where individual minority ethnic groups are represented in line with their representation in the minority ethnic student population. For further details on the sample see Appendix B.

2) In sample B, the 'other' group (*ie* those who did not state they belonged to any other specified groups) is too small (n=28) for showing percentages, so has been omitted from this table (and also most others which follow).

3) Here and in other tables, percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

When asked what was their main religion:

- Christians and Muslims were the most common religious groups amongst minority ethnic students, followed by Hindus and Sikhs. Only a very small number considered themselves to be Jewish. Less than ten per cent of minority ethnic students felt that they did not have a religious affiliation.

- The results are quite different for the White students, where over 40 per cent considered themselves to have no religion whilst over half said that they were Christians (see Figure 3.2).

Looking at each ethnic group individually:

- Around three-quarters of Black Caribbean/Black Other students said they were Christian, a further 15 per cent consider themselves to have no religion, and four per cent were Muslim.

- Black African students were likely to be either Christian (75 per cent) or Muslim (21 per cent).

- Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were overwhelmingly Muslim (98 per cent).

- Indian students had three main religious affiliations: 35 per cent Hindu, 35 per cent Sikh, and 21 per cent Muslim.

- Chinese/Asian Other students were the most likely group (but still less likely than White students) to state that they have no

**Figure 3.2: Student religion**
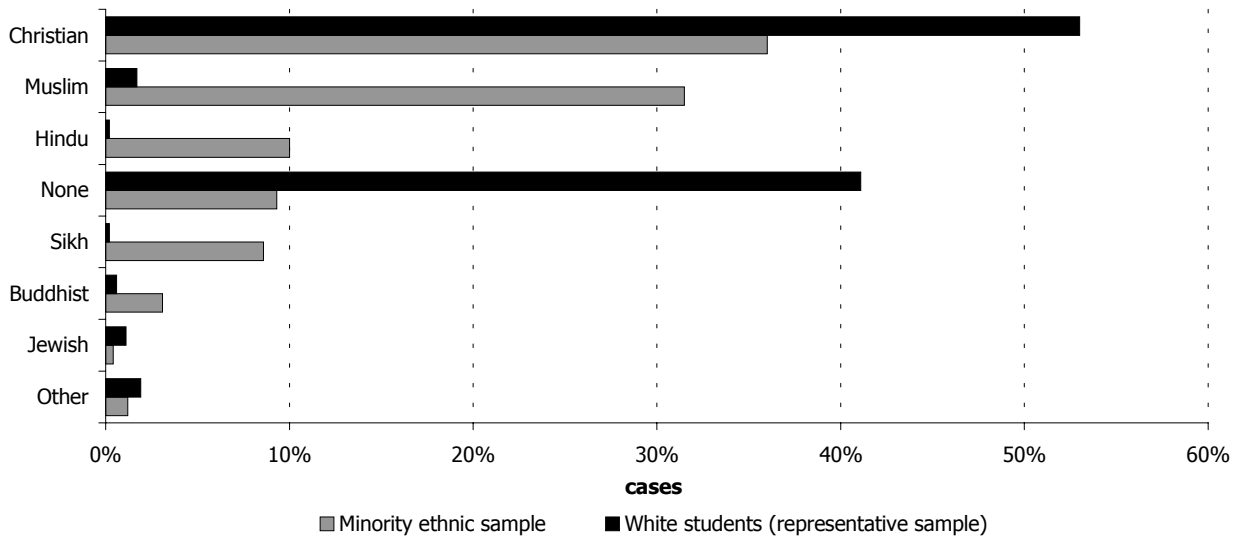


Note: The figures for White students have been taken from the representative sample

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

religion (30 per cent); those that did gave a wide range of religious affiliations.

These results show that religious affiliation differs greatly amongst students from different ethnic groups. It is noticeable that some minority ethnic groups are virtually 'uni-religious' (*eg* Pakistani/Bangladeshi). Differences between Asian student groups are particularly marked. Some of the results are in line with what we might expect from the population estimates (in Modood *et al.*, 1997), in particular the religious affiliation pattern of Black Caribbeans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Indian students in our survey were less likely to be Sikhs than in the general Indian population in Britain (where 50 per cent are Sikhs) and more likely to be Muslim (only six per cent in British population), but the proportion of Hindus was similar to the population estimates. This suggests that Indian Sikhs are less likely to participate in HE, but Indian Muslims more likely. However, this finding may be more a consequence of the institutions in our sample, and their locations within different local religious/ minority ethnic communities, which needs further exploration. There is no Black African comparative population data.

These findings on religious affiliation are interesting, but can only be tentative because of the small sample. However, they do indicate another dimension of minority ethnic participation in HE, which can be explored further in other studies.

### 3.7.4 Migration into the UK

The survey also collected data on whether the individual and/or their parents were born in the UK, or entered the country later. Other research has shown how generation can have a major

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impact on educational attainment and also economic and social position, and thus may be an important factor influencing HE participation for some minority ethnic groups.

In our minority ethnic student sample:

● Almost 60 per cent were born in the UK, and a further 18 per cent entered the UK before the age of 16, hence experiencing at least some statutory education in the UK. This leaves 23 per cent who entered UK after age 16, who are therefore fairly recent immigrants. They will have received all or most of their school education abroad.

● Black African and Chinese/Asian Other students were the most likely not to have been born in the UK (over half born overseas), and Indian and Black Caribbean the most likely (over 70 per cent) to be born in UK. Black Africans were the most likely to have come here after the age of 16 (43 per cent), *ie* the most recent immigrants (see Figure 3.3).

The comparative figure for the population is that just under half are born in the UK, see Modood *et al.*, 1997. This suggests, as might be expected, that second generation minority ethnic groups are more likely to participate in HE than first generation groups, but only slightly so.

● The vast majority of minority ethnic students had at least one parent not born in the UK, and only three per cent had both parents born here. This percentage, of third generation minority ethnic groups, is perhaps surprisingly small. It also indicates that parental experiences of education for many of the students were likely to be outside the UK.

**Figure 3.3: UK births and migration into the UK**
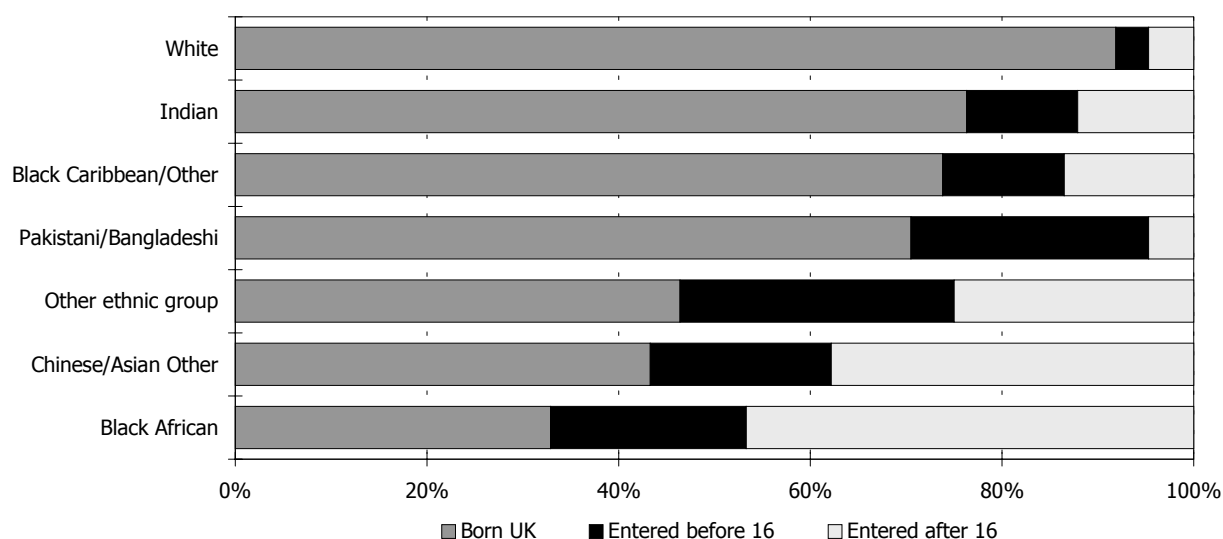


Note: The figures for White students has been taken from the representative sample

*Source: IES/MORI 2002*

- The countries of parents' birth ranged very widely. The main countries named were African, with 28 per cent of students having a mother, and around 25 per cent a father, born there. For India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, around 15-18 per cent of students had a parent born there (*nb* It is likely that some African born parents will be Asians by family origin). Around ten per cent had mothers born in the West Indies/other Caribbean, but just three per cent of fathers born there.

### 3.7.5 Students' activity at the time of applying

Students were asked to outline their main activity at the time when they applied to do their current HE course. This could be different from their previous education establishment (reported in UCAS data, but for full-time students only, see section 2.2.3), as some may have taken a gap between leaving full-time education, *eg* to work, before coming to higher education, or may have been studying part-time for their entry qualifications, or be in some other activity which could have an influence on their decisions about HE participation.

Overall, White students were more likely than minority ethnic students to be studying at school, and less likely to be at a FE, sixth form or other college, or in work, at the time of applying. As might be expected, there were variations in the pattern of activity between individual minority ethnic groups, in particular: over half of Black Caribbean/other students were in a job at the time of their application to higher education, compared to one-third of Black African, and less than one-fifth of Asian students. This reflects mainly their older age profile (see Appendix B for sample profile tables). However, the sample contained a number of students on part-time study (109 out of the total of 1,319) and most of them were in a job, or were not in education at the time of applying.

Focusing on entry to full-time undergraduate courses (which represents the vast majority of the sample):

- Minority ethnic groups in aggregate were less likely than White students overall to apply to university from schools, and more likely to apply from a college or from employment (see representative sample: shown as sub-set A in Table 3.3).

- Black Caribbean/other students were by far the least likely to have applied from schools, and most likely to be in a job at the time (over half of them said a job was their main activity at time of applying for a place on their course).

- All minority ethnic groups were less likely than White students to have been at school when applying.

- Indians, Pakistani and Bangladeshis were the most likely to have been at a sixth-form college, and much less likely than Black students, especially Black Caribbean/Other students, to

**Table 3.3: Activities of full-time students at time of application to HE (percentages in each ethnic group)**

| | A: Representative sample | | B: Minority ethnic sample | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | **White** | **Minority ethnic** | **Black Caribbean/ Other** | **Black African** | **Pakistani/ Bangladeshi** | **Indian** | **Chinese/ Asian Other** |
| At school | 18 | 10 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 12 |
| At sixth form college | 21 | 19 | 18 | 26 | 42 | 39 | 31 |
| At FE/other college | 16 | 21 | 17 | 23 | 22 | 21 | 25 |
| In a job | 30 | 36 | 51 | 30 | 19 | 19 | 15 |
| Other* | 15 | 14 | 13 | 14 | 7 | 9 | 17 |
| *Base* | *385* | *67* | *90* | *120* | *92* | *137* | *65* |

* 'other' activities, include caring for a child or relative, taking a gap year to travel, and unemployed/looking for work

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

have been in work at that time. Chinese students were the least likely to have been in work when applying for their HE place.

The results are consistent with other data (from HESA and UCAS datasets, see Chapter 2) which show that minority ethnic students, and Black Caribbean students especially, are more likely than White students to not come into higher education via the school route (*ie* more likely to enter via a FE or other college). But the survey data give a better indication on how applicants choices are likely to be influenced at the time of application through their main education or other activity.

Looking at these data further for those in employment, the likelihood of being in work at the time of applying increases with age for the Black groups (*ie* those over 25 years are the most likely to be working by far) but not for the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, where the profiles are different (Figure 3.4). The most likely age group to have been working pre-entry is the 21-24 year old group. The older ones (25 years +) and younger ones (under 21) are less likely to have been working. Also, while overall, Black students were much more likely to have been working at the time of applying (see Table 3.2), this mainly applies to over 21 year old Black students. Although the Asian groups were less likely to be working overall, under 21 year old Asians were more likely than similarly aged Black students to be working (as were 21-24 year olds).

Caution is needed when interpreting these results, as some of the numbers get very small, but it does illustrate another aspect of how the behaviours of individual minority ethnic groups vary, and how analysis can turn out to be quite complex at a detailed level. There are several possible explanations for the results we

**Figure 3.4: Full-time undergraduate students in a job prior to their entry to HE by ethnic group, for each age band (percentages)**
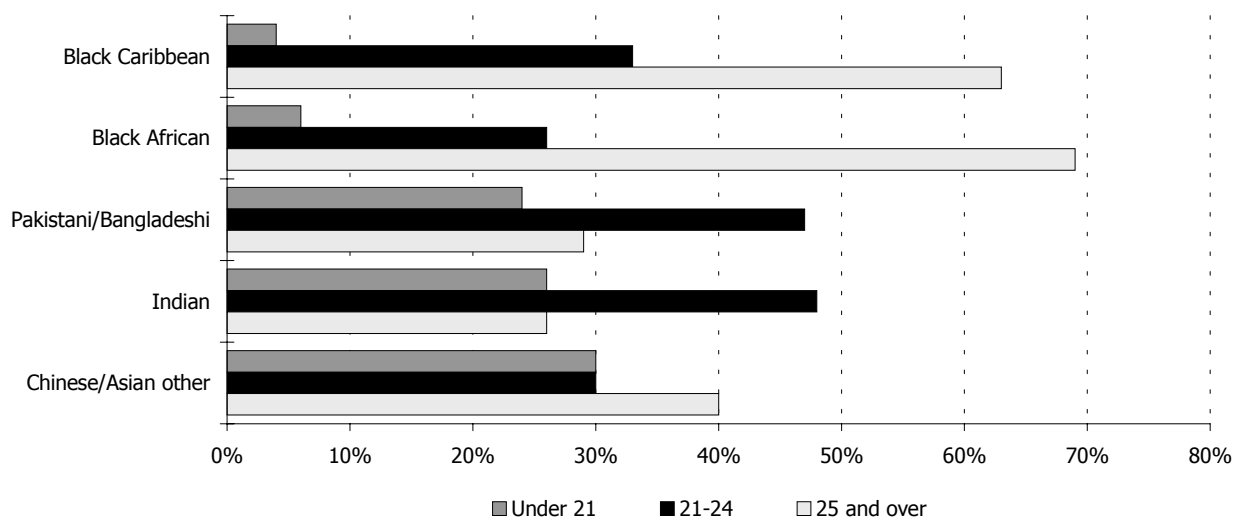


*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

have found — it may be that some Asian mature students are less likely to have gained earlier entry qualifications, and are returning to education to do so in their early twenties, or that Black students are more likely to have already gained sufficient entry qualifications earlier and were more likely to take some time out to work (and earn) before entering HE study. There may also be gender differences which we could not explore further due to insufficient numbers in some age groups. There are implications here for policies which might be used to encourage older people from different minority ethnic groups to enter higher education at different ages. There are also implications for universities in how they support and help entrants who have been away from full-time education for some time and may need additional support to settle in.

We also asked those who had been working at the time of making their HE application if they had given up their job to start their higher education course. Just over half had done so, and there was little variation between the minority ethnic groups, or between White and minority ethnic students.

### 3.7.6 Making the decision to enter higher education

The students who were interviewed as case studies provided further insight into the decision making process about entry to higher education. These were all with minority ethnic students who had taken part in the survey (30 in all, covering a range of institutions, year of study, courses, minority ethnic groups and ages, see Appendix B). We decided not to ask questions in the survey about reasons for coming into HE as we felt that there was sufficient quantitative evidence on this from earlier research, which identified the main encouraging factors (see section 3.5). The case study students were from a variety of backgrounds and

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stages in their lives, and so could provide better insights into how different backgrounds and entry routes affected attitudes towards HE participation.

An important general finding was that students' prior activities usually played a large part in determining their motivations to go on to higher education, and their subsequent decisions. For example: a number of students said that going on to university and higher education had always been an aspiration, sometimes due to strong parental or sibling influences, and/or because that was what their schools had encouraged.

> *'It was expected by my school, family and friends. Everyone from school applied at the same time, there was a strong focus on it, how you should decide where to go and what course to do.'* (Black African woman, aged 23, final year)

The pivotal role of families were clearly evident, helping them to see the bigger picture about the long term benefits that having a degree would bring.

> *'My family had always encouraged me to go to university, not just for the academic side, but for the social and personal development that university can bring.'* (Indian man, aged under 21, final year)

Others had thought about higher education options later, for example, when they were in the sixth form or studying at college. Friends who had been to, or were at university, had encouraged them, opening their eyes to the possibilities of furthering their education, improving their employability, and, in some cases, having a good time socially while they were there. A few mentioned that they would be missing out on a valuable life experience if they did not go to university, and a couple felt that they were not yet ready for the world of work, preferring to gain more qualifications first.

A third group were not sure when they had first thought about going on to HE, or the career that they wanted to follow, but they felt that having a degree was important in order to 'get on'. They often chose their subjects out of interest, and mentioned the value of education more generally:

> *'Education, to me, is very important.'* (Black Caribbean/Black Other woman, aged over 30, first year)

Some of the older students saw their degree as being instrumental in helping them to change their career, or in allowing them access to a particular profession which they had already decided upon. Several people said that prior to studying, they had been working full-time in jobs they were dissatisfied with, and they went to university to enable them to change direction, and raise the level of their career. They felt that they were capable of more than they were currently doing, and wanted to work towards realising their full potential.

*'The reality of the situation hit me... I realised the value of having a degree. I kept comparing how life would be with and without a degree.'*
(Indian man, aged 25-29, final year)

A small minority of students said that no-one had influenced their decision to pursue higher education; they were mainly, or entirely, self-motivated, both in their decision to go, and in what and where to study.

These findings are consistent with other research described above (see section 3.5), which shows that while individuals choose to go to higher education for different reasons according to personal circumstances, the majority of people see higher education as bringing economic benefits of one kind or another, as well as other personal benefits. They also show the importance of family influence. It was not possible from the interviews to draw any firmer conclusions about some minority ethnic groups being more likely to be motivated by certain factors (*eg* expected economic outcomes) than others.

### 3.7.7 Delaying entry to HE

Following on from the discussion above about age differences between minority groups, we sought to explore this further in the survey — why are some students from minority ethnic groups considerably older on entry than others? How important are the various possible reasons for delaying entry to HE by young people, such as the desire to work and earn money, or length of time taken to achieve entry qualifications?

We focused on the likelihood of some being qualified already, but delaying entry, and asked them whether or not they had entered higher education as soon as they had gained a qualification which allowed them to do so. The results were that:

● Older students, in all ethnic groups, were more likely to take 'time out' than younger ones, as might be expected.

● Among younger students (under 21 on entry), around one-fifth had delayed entry, and this was only slightly less for minority ethnic students.

● Among full-time students, the Black Caribbean/other group of students were the most likely to take time out (see Figure 3.5), but then they did have the oldest age profile (insufficient data to look at age separately for older full-time students), and were most likely to be in a job at time of application.

Those taking at least a year out were asked about the reasons for this delay. Students were free to give as many reasons as applied to them. Overall, the most popular response for all ethnic groups on full-time courses was that they wanted to work and earn some money first, and this was particularly the case for those Pakistani/ Bangladeshi and Black African students who took time out before

**Figure 3.5: Full-time minority ethnic students who had taken a gap year of at least one year**
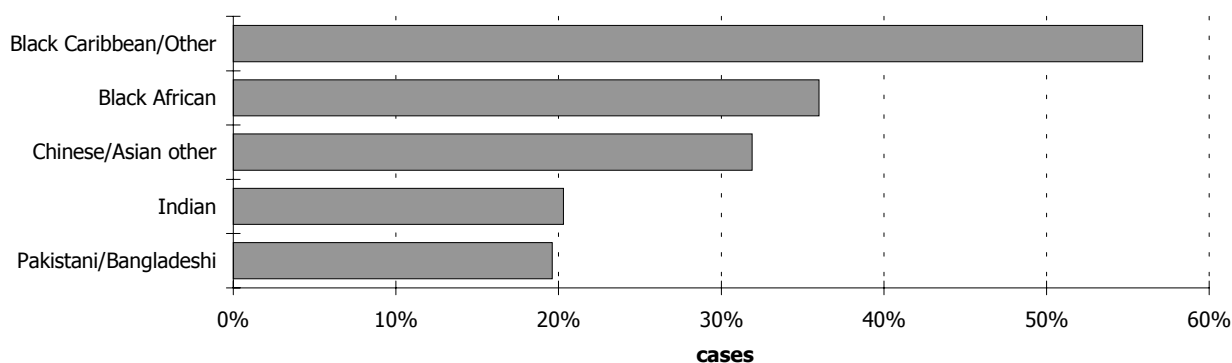


Source: IES/MORI, 2002

entering full-time courses (68 per cent and 61 per cent respectively). In contrast, 42 per cent of White students on full-time courses stated this as one of their reasons, which, whilst still the most popular reason for this ethnic group, shows some differences in motivations for the observed behaviour. The other most popular reason for White full-time students was taking a 'gap year' (*ie* typically for travelling/voluntary activities/*etc.*). This applied to around a quarter; and it was as popular a reason among Indian and Chinese as White full-time students, but less popular among other groups. Very few mentioned taking resits of 'A' levels.

## 3.8 Summary

From the research literature, the main factors suggested as influencing participation in HE of minority ethnic groups are 'attainment' and 'aspiration'. They can often be linked, and it is also evident that there are a range of other social and cultural factors of influence, many acting in combination with each other, and also affecting the two main identified factors of influence. Earlier education performance and school experiences (pre-16) and GCSE attainment are important, but more crucial seems to be school leaving decisions at 16. These in turn are affected by family background and parental influences — 'the drive for qualifications' and parental aspirations of their children. It is the lower HE participating groups (the Black groups, and also Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) who are identified as doing less well than the higher HE participating groups, eg Indians, at GCSE. Social class/choice of school is linked closely to this also (something also evident in the UCAS data on HE participation levels of different minority groups, see Chapter 2). Our survey of potential entrants, currently in progress, will hopefully shed further light on prior education experiences and their influence on entry.

The survey explored some of the possible factors of influence less well covered in previous research. These included:

- **Family experience of HE:** while most of the minority ethnic groups had relatively high proportions with family experience of HE, the exception being Black Caribbean/Other, where the percentage was lower (around two-thirds), it was more likely that this was sibling rather than parental experience, and more likely to be the case for minority ethnic students than White students. Having only siblings with HE experience (rather than siblings and/or parents) was more likely among Pakistani/Bangladeshi students in particular. The interviews also highlighted the role of family and friends in encouraging minority ethnic students to go on to HE study. The influence of parents is being investigated in more detail in a separate stage of the project.

- **Religion:** It is likely that religion may be a factor for some minority ethnic groups, in particular Indians, where there was lower participation for Hindus, and higher for Muslims, than their representation in the British population. However, this needs to be investigated more in any future research.

- **Generation:** The survey evidence showed that more second than first generation minority ethnic groups are participating in HE, but very few third generation.

The survey and interviews confirmed the significance of the entry route into HE and obtaining entry qualifications as a factor affecting participation of minority ethnic students, identified in also in other research studies and student statistics. The survey focused on the previous activity of students at the time of decision making and applying for a place, rather than previous education establishment, which showed up differences between minority ethnic groups. Black Caribbean/other groups were much more likely to apply from employment than from an educational establishment than other groups, many of which were less likely to do so than White students. There were clear differences in the age profiles of minority ethnic groups which seem to come about for different reasons, some (particularly Black students) choosing to delay entry to HE, to work and earn first, others (in particular some Asians) choosing to work first and then come back to study to gain entry qualifications in their early twenties. The entry of mature students from different minority ethnic backgrounds, and the factors affecting their decisions to go to HE or not, is an area which would benefit from further research.

The interviews gave insights into reasons for going on the HE study, but as found in other research, they were very varied. The influence of family and friends played an important role, as did the perceived economic benefits.

# 4. Factors Shaping HE Choices and Destinations in HE

We now turn to look at factors shaping the choices and destinations of minority ethnic groups within HE, rather than their HE participation itself. As discussed in Chapter 2, minority ethnic groups have a very uneven distribution across HE, especially by type of institution and subject.

## 4.1 Student choice

The research literature on student choices shows that a range of factors can influence potential students' choices of what and where to study in HE, and a range of people (teachers, parents, friends, university staff and students) can also have an influence. The main issues that have been identified, from a large scale study on choices of UCAS applicants in 1998, were (see Connor *et al.*, 1999):

- The range of issues that applicants take into account when deciding where to study, varies only slightly between students by type of background.

- For the vast majority, subject choice is the overriding factor when choosing their institution, but this choice is usually made with other factors in mind, in particular, location (especially whether to stay at home or not) perceived quality of the course, employment prospects, and various aspects of cost of study.

- Many students have difficulties making 'the right choice', and find the process fairly relatively difficult.

A small amount of analysis by ethnicity was undertaken which found that minority ethnic students were more likely than White students to choose certain subjects, especially professional/vocational subjects in HE.

In general, interest in the course is the primary reason given for choice of subject, though its ability to increase job prospects often comes a close second (see, for example, Connor *et al.*, 1999). The Connor *et al.* study suggested that the greater proportion of minority ethnic students taking vocational subjects (shown in section 2) is related to the greater influence of labour market

prospects (especially expected economic gains) on their motivation to enter HE, also their type of entry qualifications (more likely to be vocational, more likely to enter HE from colleges), and their clustering in more vocationally-orientated universities and colleges (see section 2.1.3). Parental and family influence, already alluded to in the previous chapter, may also be a more significant factor for some minority ethnic students than for White students in their choice of course, where parents encourage children towards professional careers and to take subjects such as medicine or law at university (see for example Connor and Dewson, 2001). But there is also evidence which does not support this fully (see for example HEIST study by Adia *et al.*, 1996 where very few students in any ethnic group said that their family chose their subject for them).

Turning to specific institutional choice factors, minority ethnic applicants, in aggregate, have been shown to be more likely than White applicants to be influenced in their choice of institution by the following factors: academic quality, graduate employment prospects, distance from home, support facilities and opportunities for work placement (Connor *et al.*, 1998). Also, Asians were more likely than other ethnic groups, including White applicants, to be influenced by graduate employment prospects and entry requirements. Wanting to stay close to home has been highlighted by other research (see Adia *et al.*, 1996), and it is suggested that this factor contributes to the clustering of minority ethnic students at institutions in areas with minority ethnic local communities. Other factors, including the image that an institution projects to applicants, their historical development, range of subject provision and specific targeting activities, have also been shown to be likely explanations. In the latter, many universities will have had an influence through their widening participation activities (*eg* summer schools, compact schemes), especially those in localities with high concentrations of minority ethnic groups. Although mainly targeting low social class groups and low participation neighbourhoods in these initiatives, there are some that are specifically targeted at minority ethnic groups (see for example, schemes at Bradford, London Guildhall, as shown in the UUK report, 2002).

## 4.2 Admissions bias?

A second likely explanation for the variation between ethnic groups by institution and subject, is some bias in admissions. Research which has investigated the admissions process itself as a factor, is fairly sparse, in particular research into how decisions are made about offers to applicants. As already shown, there are substantial differences in 'A' level scores of applicants between ethnic groups (see Table C7, Appendix C, and also in survey data, section 3.6.1). The different rates of admission of minority ethnic students to particular universities or types of universities and

courses, have been linked to different standard entry requirements of universities. Though qualifications, entry route and social background are all certainly likely to explain much of the difference in entry rates to different types of institutions by ethnic group (especially the low entry rate of minority ethnic students to the more prestigious, academic universities), recent research (Shiner and Modood, 2002) has shown that there are other factors at play. In their research, when entry qualifications and other socio-demographic characteristics were controlled for in analysis of UCAS application and acceptance statistics, minority ethnic candidates had less chance of success in gaining a place at an old, but not a new, university. But differences were evident between groups — in particular, Black Caribbean and Pakistani groups were much less likely than White students to have gained admission to a old university, but Chinese and Asian Other were more likely to have done so. Minority ethnic candidates were one and half to two and a half times more likely than White students to gain admission to university through clearing. Another study, focusing on medical schools in the early 1990s (McManus *et al.*, 1995), found that applicants from minority ethnic groups were 1.46 times less likely to be accepted, even when qualifications and other factors were taken into account. In this study, evidence of some direct discrimination arising from the treatment of non-European surnames by admissions tutors was found. Since then, admissions practices have been changed, including less weight being to high predicted grades given in the selection criteria (see McManus, 1998).

It is very likely that there may be some ethnic disadvantage built in to the process of admitting students from some minority ethnic groups at some universities. This is reinforced by the amount of discretion known to be given to admissions staff, and also from other studies on student selection criteria (see *Fair Enough?* study, UUK, 2003).

# 4.3  Survey evidence

Turning to our student survey, we were interested in exploring in more detail, what factors had influenced decisions by students in their choice of institution and course. But firstly, we wanted to establish whether they were still on the course they had initially entered (*ie* their original choice) or had switched courses, and also how they had entered HE (*eg* how many came through clearing?).

## 4.3.1 Initial choices and switching

Around one in six of the representative sample had changed institutions, and this was only slightly higher for the minority ethnic sample as a whole. Differences between minority ethnic groups were also fairly small. Most of those who had made a

change from their initial choice, had changed both their course and institution.

The main reason for leaving their chosen course (apart from those on shorter courses who had completed by this stage, *eg* two year HNDs) was that they 'did not like it'. There was no significant variation found in reasons for leaving by ethnicity. Although Clearing, along with not liking a course, are among the main reasons identified by other research for students leaving undergraduate courses early (see Yorke, 1999), Clearing made little difference to our respondents as to whether students had stayed or left early (in fact those coming through clearing were less likely to have left their initial choice course). Minority ethnic groups were more likely overall to have entered via Clearing than White students (as other research has shown, see previous section), and for some groups it was more common than others: over 25 per cent of Black Africans, Indians and Pakistanis/ Bangladeshis had entered HE via clearing, compared with 18 per cent of White students overall.

## 4.3.2 Applications and admissions process

When first year students were asked their experiences of applying and the admissions process, in a question designed to identify whether or not they had experienced any discrimination of any kind, very few mentioned any (only two said yes, they had experienced some 'racial discrimination', four some religious, and three some age discrimination).

From the case study interviews, there seemed to be a difference between those who applied for a university place from school or college, who found the process relatively straightforward, and those who were outside of an educational establishment at the time of applying (*eg* in work, looking after families), who found the application process more problematic or more bewildering (though not all of the latter found it difficult). The former spoke of having particular support from teachers or careers tutors, and also often had family members with experience of universities who could help, which the latter commented on as being missing. Having good support and encouragement from individuals (*ie* in mentoring roles) has been identified in other research (*eg* on participation in HE by lower social class groups, see Connor and Dewson, 2001).

Thus, neither the survey nor the interviews provided much evidence of individuals experiencing any direct racial discrimination, which has been highlighted as possibly existing in the admissions processes of some universities.

### 4.3.3 Sources of advice and information

Another area of interest we explored in the survey, was the extent to which different ethnic groups utilise and value different advice sources in making their decisions. First year students only were asked to respond to questions regarding their higher education choices (partly to reduce the length of the interview, but also because their experiences of applying were more recent, and so likely to be recalled more easily), so sample numbers are smaller.

As in other, larger student surveys which have asked similar questions (see for example work on student choice, Connor *et al.*, 1999), a range of people acted as sources of advice about HE for our respondents, and most were considered either very or fairly helpful (in most cases by over two-thirds of the sample). Staff at HE institutions were more likely than others to be viewed as a helpful source, and they had more support from most minority ethnic groups in this respect, particularly Black students (95 per cent found this source to be helpful). School and college career staff had the least support overall in terms of helpfulness, but Pakistani/Bangladeshi students gave them a much higher rating than any of the other ethnic groups.

The influence of parents was more clearly seen amongst Pakistani/Bangladeshi, Indian and Black African students, where much higher proportions thought they had been helpful than other groups, especially Chinese/Asian Other students (only 50 per cent thought parents had been helpful). This may relate to parental experience of higher education for some students: Chinese/Asian Other and Black African students were the least likely to have some parental experience of this kind, so this may be a factor for these students in their ratings of parental advice, but not for Black African students (though the fact that they are more likely to be a recent immigrant group may mean that, although their parents were likely to have experience of HE, it was not of the UK HE system).

### 4.3.4 Reasons for specific HE choices

**Mode of study**

The vast majority of students in our sample were studying full-time rather than part-time (the percentage of part-time students ranged from 15 to 27 per cent across minority ethnic groups, but was smaller among White than minority ethnic students overall, and highest among Black Caribbean/Black Other). As has been shown earlier, in section 2.3, there is variation in mode of study by age, gender and level, within ethnic group (especially by age), and our sample reflected this overall pattern to a great extent.

Most of our part-time students were at new universities or colleges, and most part-timers had vocational rather than

academic entry qualifications. One interesting exception to this general rule were Black Caribbean/Black Other students, where the reverse was true (nine out of ten with vocational qualifications on entry had chosen full-time study). This may be due in part to their older age profile, as more older students have vocational qualifications on entry, and also to their greater tendency to go to college post-16 rather than stay at school, but the reasons are not entirely clear from the data.

More of the students in our sample who were studying part-time (of all ethnic groups), were studying for sub-degree rather than degree qualifications (also a general trend), and so possibly the type of qualification chosen may have affected the choice of mode. The numbers studying part-time were too small to ask why they had chosen a part-time course in HE, but it is likely that factors (such as ease of access, ability to work and study, *etc.*) found in other research would apply here too.

## Qualification aim

Degrees were the more common qualification aim in our sample. There were slight differences in the balance between students on degree and sub-degree programmes by ethnic group: Pakistani/ Bangladeshi students were the most likely to be studying for a sub-degree course (28 per cent), whilst the least likely were Black African students (19 per cent). The White group fell in the middle of the range, around 22 per cent. The most important factor in predicting whether an individual chose a degree or other course, was their highest qualification. For all ethnic groups in the minority ethnic sample, individuals with a vocational/access qualification were more likely than their counterparts with an academic qualification to take a sub-degree course. Again the numbers were too small here to analyse any further useful information about the choice of sub-degree over degree programmes by ethnic group.

## Subject

As highlighted earlier, subject choice varies significantly by ethnicity, as well as by other factors, such as gender. This was also seen in the survey sample, where a statistically significant difference was evident between White and minority ethnic students in Maths/IT courses and business studies (minority ethnic students were between two and three times more likely to be studying these courses respectively than White students in the representative sample). In the minority ethnic sample, a number of differences were evident (again in line with the population trend, see section 2.1.2): Black students were more likely to be studying a course related to science, whilst Asian students were more likely to be studying a course in Maths/IT. Chinese/Asian Other students were more likely to be studying arts/humanities/languages.

It was noticeable that gender was a factor in the choice of course (as in the general population student data) across all minority ethnic groups. Interestingly, female minority ethnic students were more likely than male students to be studying science. This effect was most marked amongst Black African students, where less than ten per cent of males had chosen science, versus over 40 per cent of females. However, on closer inspection, 'science' was the broad subject category which included medicine and health/ nursing related subjects, as well as a range of biological and physical sciences, and a closer breakdown shows that only a minority of females were on physical science courses, the majority being on the more health/biologically related courses. Gender imbalances (but this time towards males) were evident in IT/ maths for most groups, except Pakistani/Bangladeshi students, where the two sexes were relatively similarly represented. Other subjects had more mixed gender/ethnic patterns.

Another factor affecting subject choice was entry qualification. This affected science more than other subjects, with those with academic qualifications as their highest qualification more likely to be studying science across the ethnic groups. In the social sciences, the reverse was evident with more holding vocational qualifications in general. Some variation in this pattern was evident by ethnic group, but no consistent pattern.

When asked why they had chosen this subject course, the students in the survey tended to cite personal liking or interest, rather than any other reason. This is in line with most other research (see for example Connor and Dewson, 2001). The next most popular reason given overall was to get into a particular course or career. In the representative sample, and taking full-time students only, minority ethnic students were less likely than White students to state a liking or interest in the subject (33 v, 46 per cent). But they were equally likely to say they chose their subject with a particular job or career in mind (around one-third of both groups). The minority ethnic students were considerably more likely to state that they chose their course because it offered good employment prospects than White students (18 v 6 per cent). The different reasons given are shown in Figure 4.1a and b.

This supports other research discussed above, showing minority ethnic students are likely to be more interested in employment factors when making their choice of study at HE.

When the minority ethnic sample was analysed, only small differences were evident between ethnic groups in respect of the main reasons given for choice of course. Black Africans were slightly more likely than other groups to choose their course because they had a particular job or career in mind, but otherwise little difference was found.

**Figure 4.1a: Reasons for choosing particular course (White students — full time)**

Liked/was interested in subject 46%

Only offer available 1%

Other 6%

Good employment prospects 6%

Did subject at lower level 7%

To get into particular job/career 34%
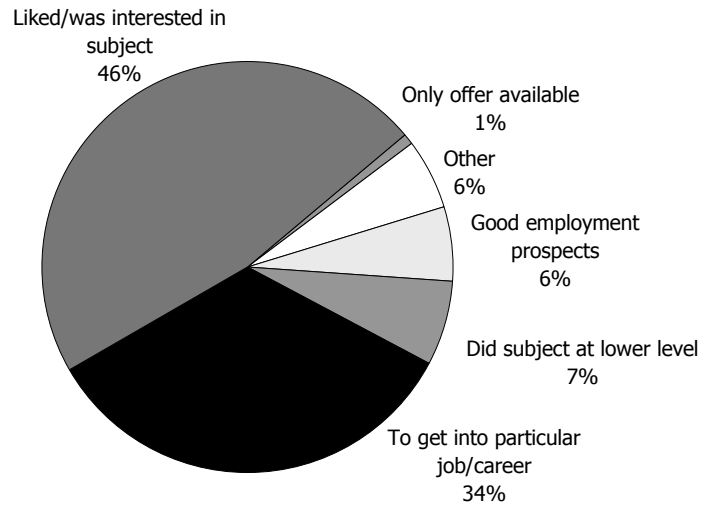
*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

**Figure 4.1b: Reasons for choosing particular course (minority ethnic students — full time)**

Other 6%

Liked/was interested in subject 33%

Did subject at lower level 11%

Good employment prospects 18%

To get into particular job/career 32%
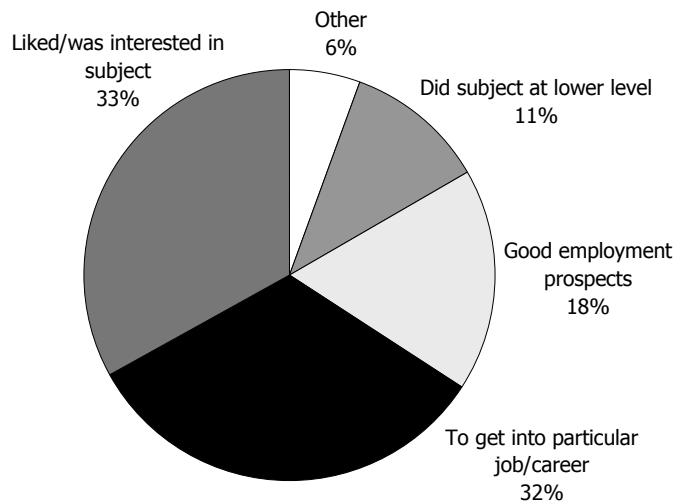
*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

### 4.3.5 Institution type

It is evident from the student statistics that the type of institution students attend differs according to their ethnicity. Certainly, the uneven distribution of minority ethnic students, with clustering in a relatively small number of new universities, and mostly in London, would suggest that particular factors are at play. Suggestions of bias against some minority ethnic groups in admissions processes have some support from statistical analysis work (see above). However, there are likely to be a number of reasons related to location, subject choice, entry qualifications, perceived quality and suitability of the course, and so on.

Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education

**Table 4.1: Students choice of institution (percentages in each ethnic group)**

| Institution type | A: Representative sample | | B: Minority ethnic sample | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | White | Minority ethnic | Black Caribbean/ Other | Black African | Pakistani/ Bangladeshi | Indian | Chinese/ Asian Other |
| Old university | 33 | 17 | 9 | 13 | 16 | 21 | 24 |
| New university | 43 | 59 | 86 | 84 | 62 | 60 | 68 |
| College of F/HE | 24 | 24 | 6 | 4 | 22 | 19 | 8 |
| *Base* | *465* | *70* | *128* | *168* | *130* | *173* | *90* |

*Source: IES/MORI 2002*

In the survey, the sampling method for institutions involved the selection of some institutions with higher concentrations of minority ethnic students, in order to reach overall targets for ethnic groups. Thus, the minority ethnic sample is somewhat biased towards new institutions in larger cities, compared to the population in English institutions. This should be borne in mind when looking at the distribution of the students, as presented in Table 4.1.

As can be seen, the probability that minority ethnic students will be at an old university in this sample is much lower than for White students, and the most likely minority ethnic group to be there are Chinese/Asian Other students. In contrast, Black students within this sample were the least likely to be attending a old university. Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Indian students were the most likely to have chosen to attend a college of further or higher education.

When students were asked their reasons for choosing their institution, a variety of reasons were given, but the main ones related to their course preferences — 'wanted to do a part time

**Figure 4.2: Two main reasons given for choosing to study at a particular institution**
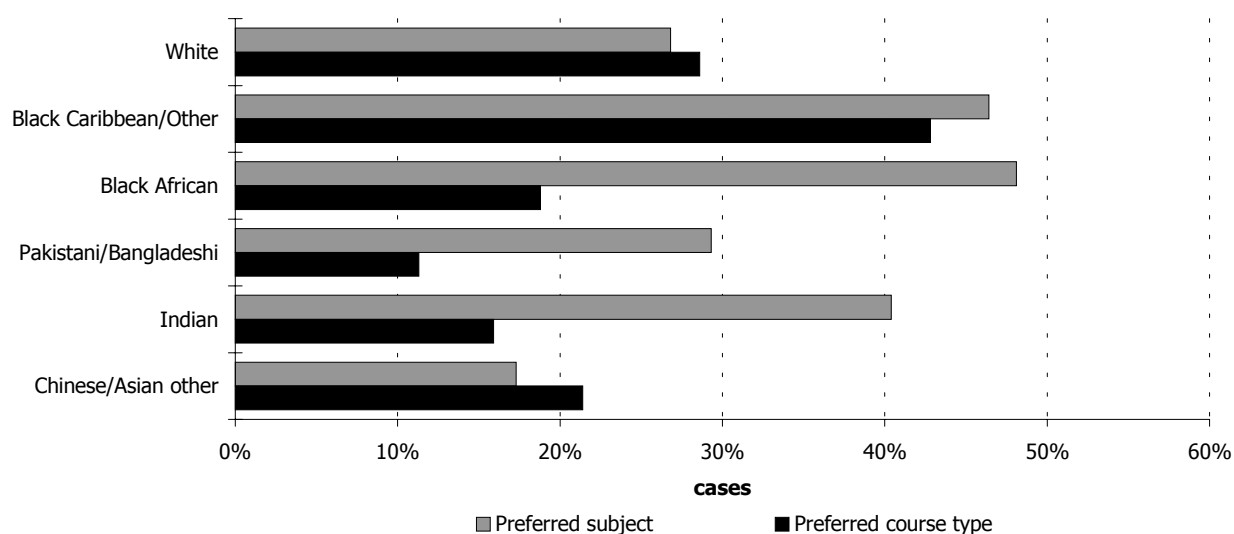


*Source: IES/MORI 2002*

course' or 'course offered a sandwich element', and subject 'offered a particular subject or subject modules'. The results for these reasons are presented in Figure 4.2, summarised as 'preferred subject' and 'preferred course type' by ethnic group (*nb* although these were the reasons that came up most frequently, the numbers are quite small). For some groups, the differences between these two reasons are small, but for other groups, such as Indians and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis and also Black Africans, 'preferred subject' was much more important than 'preferred type of course'. The higher number of Black students giving 'preferred course type' as their main reason for choosing their institution, is likely to relate to the higher number choosing to study part-time and being older in age on the whole, thus less mobile, both of which can restrict choice of institutions. When only full-time students are looked at, the importance of preferred course diminishes considerably.

The data were also examined to determine whether the type of institution chosen related to the reasons given for choosing it. The results are presented in Table 4.2, though it is only possible to compare the whole minority ethnic sample with the White group in the representative sample (because numbers are too small to break down further). Despite these limitations, it is clear that students at old universities, both White and minority ethnic in similar proportions, were far more likely to cite the academic reputation of the institution as influential in their decision making, than students at other types of institution. Interestingly, ten per cent of minority ethnic students at new (*ie* post-'92) universities said that 'feeling I could fit in' here was one of the reasons for choosing that institution (though only by ten per cent), compared to 15 per cent at an old university (though the base numbers are very, small so caution is needed when comparing percentages).

The individual circumstances of students have a significant impact on the amount of choice that they have about where to

**Table 4.2: Main reasons given for choosing institution by institution type**

| Reason given for choice | White students (from representative sample) | | | Minority ethnic sample | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Old university | New university | HE/FE college | Old university | New university | HE/FE college |
| Preferred subject | 25 | 26 | 31 | 46 | 38 | 34 |
| Preferred course type | 25 | 20 | 33 | 23 | 23 | 14 |
| Good academic reputation | 36 | 8 | 17 | 32 | 12 | 9 |
| Liked it when came for interview | 8 | 23 | 23 | 5 | 22 | 10 |
| Felt I could fit in | 5 | 9 | 4 | 15 | 10 | 4 |
| *Base* | *53* | *88* | *61* | *33\** | *148* | *57* |

\* small base, so treat with caution

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

attend, which is why it is difficult to show clear patterns from the survey data. This was evident in some of the case study interviews (30 were undertaken, from a range of minority ethnic and other backgrounds).

## Case study interviews

Some of the students interviewed said that they chose their HE Institution mainly because of the perceived quality of a particular course that was offered. A few of those, with relatively free reign in terms of where they were able to apply, found the number of options open to them in terms of courses and institutions, rather bewildering. But quite a few of the students interviewed said that they already knew people who had attended their institution. Firstly, this meant that they were able to ask about what it was like to study at that institution, and what to expect if they also decided to choose to go there themselves, and felt that they would receive honest answers. If their friends or relatives were still studying, they felt additionally reassured that they would already know people when they started their course. The fact that a good proportion of other students there were also of the same ethnic background, or that the student body was culturally diverse, was occasionally mentioned, particularly by students of Asian origin.

Others needed or wanted to study close to home, and so that heavily influenced their choice of where to study. Some needed to study close to home, as they had family commitments, others due to the need to save money by living with parents. Others were older students with their own families, and were almost always tied to studying in their home town.

> *'I considered only two institutions, but decided that (one) would be too far away and would be too exhausting to manage with my job (she works nights) and family responsibilities.'* (Black Caribbean/Black Other woman, aged over 30, first year)

> *'It was the closest university to where I lived, it was really that simple.'* (Black African man, aged over 30, final year)

> *'I was attracted to the University of X because I live here (in this city) but I wanted to study there too. It meant that I could stay living at home with my parents and wouldn't have to pay any rent or bills. Also, I have a part-time job in a call centre and if I stayed here I could continue working there.'* (Bangladeshi woman, 19 years, first year)

Occasionally, personal recommendations about a particular institution seemed to have taken precedence (within the confines of the constraints of personal circumstances, such as not being able to move away from where they lived) over all other sources of information. A few, like the person quoted above, mentioned that they had part-time jobs which they wanted to be able to continue with, to help them financially whilst studying, which usually meant choosing a local provider. One person, a 21 year

old Pakistani women, said that the introduction of fees had obliged her to stay in her home town for cost reasons.

People who had been brought up in London, or had lived there for some time, often reported wanting to stay there to study. London also attracted people who had lived outside the city:

*'I went to a provincial school (in Croydon) and I had had enough of that, I got bored with that environment. I had always wanted to go to one of the London universities.'* (Black African woman, aged under 21, first year)

*'It was on a very shallow basis, mainly on the city (London) as all medical courses are pretty much the same. I'd lived in London before and knew and liked the city.'* (Pakistani man, aged under 21, first year)

Others based their decisions on the open days that they attended, and whether they liked the 'feel' of the place.

*'Compared to the other open days I'd attended, the one at (an old university) had a really nice mix of people from all sorts of different backgrounds and cultures. There was a good atmosphere, something that had been lacking at the other open days I'd been to.'* (Black Caribbean/Black Other man, aged under 21, final year)

## 4.4  Ethnicity and widening participation

As outlined in section 1.4, as part of our survey set-up work, we undertook a number of interviews in HE institutions in our survey sample, to get an institutional perspective on the research issues. From these interviews it was fairly clear that most HE institutions are not actively pursuing policies to increase the representation of minority ethnic groups in their undergraduate intakes, but were pursuing policies for identified low participation groups (such as low social class/low income groups). However, this did not mean that minority ethnic groups were not included in widening participation and access programmes at an institutional or course level, as some would be part of targeted groups (*eg* from particular 'low participation schools or colleges, or certain neighbourhoods) being encouraged to apply to HE. Also, a few universities had specific outreach schemes focused on local minority communities. There was no evidence available on outcomes to judge the extent to which widening participation and fairer access programmes of institutions had any particular impact on choices made by different groups of minority ethnic students.

## 4.5  Summary

Where students choose to go to study within HE (*ie* their course, institution *etc.*) can be influenced by a number of factors relating to the institution, but also to their backgrounds. It can also be result of how successful they are in achieving their preferred

choice, *ie* in the admissions process itself. Firstly, it is clear from previous research that applicants take account of a range of factors when choosing what and where to study (though some may have decided much earlier on). It is suggested that minority ethnic students are more likely than White student in general to be influenced by labour market factors or economic outcomes and by family views in their choice of subject or courses, though the evidence is not clear-cut. This is probably due to the diversity of the student population and the relative importance of some factors (*eg* getting a particular course) to some individuals. Gender, in particular, is a factor in subject choice, as is age and entry qualifications, which as we have seen already, differ between minority ethnic groups and affect their destinations (see statistics in Chapter 2).

The survey results support much of this research evidence on choice, showing in particular that a liking/interest in the subject, and preference for a particular course related to a job/career, were the main reasons given for choice of course by the minority ethnic sample. But like/interest in course was of less importance to minority ethnic than to White students overall; and employment prospects featured more in the minority ethnic responses.

When it comes to institutional choices, previous research has shown that subjects and courses offered by institutions are key factors for all applicants, almost regardless of background, but minority ethnic groups, and Asians in particular, are more likely to be additionally influenced by the graduate employment record of the institution, and also by wanting to stay closer to home. It is recognised that a range of other factors also have an influence on individual decisions, and this was clear from our survey results and interviews. Although we found similar results to previous studies in the range of factors influencing institutional choices (mainly subject, type of course) by our survey respondents, subject preference had a stronger influence on Black and Indian students, on the whole, than other minority ethnic or White students. Employment prospects and location were mentioned in the interviews as one of the reasons for choosing their institution, but relatively few gave it as one of their main reasons in the survey.

Not all of the students in the sample had made 'the right choice', and a small proportion had changed their minds about their course and institutions. There was little difference between the different ethnic groups in the amount of 'changing' that took place and the reasons for it.

The questions relating to their experience of the application and admissions process, and the use made and helpfulness of information sources and their various 'advisers', did not highlight any major problems. Again, the influence of parents in terms of being seen as a helpful source of information was more evident

among minority ethnic students, more for some groups than others (mainly Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Black African).

Most found the HE application process fairly straightforward, though students coming into HE from jobs rather than schools or colleges (which minority ethnic students were more likely to do) were more likely to find difficulties. Few reported any experiences of direct racial discrimination in the application process.

This leads on to the other possible explanation for the uneven distribution of minority ethnic groups in the HE sector. Research has shown that some discrimination in the process of admitting students from minority ethnic groups is likely to be taking place at old universities, and this is a factor in the low representation of most minority ethnic groups at many old universities (as well as other factors, such as entry qualifications), and consequently the higher representation at new universities. However, it is recognised that the admissions process needs more research in general, and needs to be monitored more extensively. We did not ask any specific questions about admissions to certain universities (and the sample is biased towards new universities), but did ask about their experiences of any discrimination in the application process generally. This was not perceived to be an issue by the sample.

# 5. Progress and Achievements in HE Study

In this chapter and the next, we move on to look at experiences of students within higher education, first presenting, as in other chapters, the available statistical and research evidence, and then our new survey and interview data. The main focus in this chapter is student progress and achievement, while the next covers their experiences within undergraduate study, including any difficulties experienced, financial arrangements and overall satisfaction.

## 5.1 Early leaving

In general, there has been much less research and analysis undertaken on students' progress in HE study in the UK compared to that about HE entry and participation. There is even less which focuses on individual minority ethnic student groups. This is mainly due to difficulties with the quality of the available data in the national student statistics at a detailed level of analysis, which make them less reliable; and most research studies that have been undertaken on retention are either based on relatively small sample surveys, and so do not provide sufficient data at an individual minority ethnic group level, or below, or have been more qualitative in nature.

In recent years, HEFCE has undertaken systematic analysis of HESA student records as part of the development of Performance Indicators (PIs), which has considerably improved the statistical evidence on achievement and outcomes. In particular, it has improved our understanding of the relationships between variables, including ethnicity (though this has been mainly limited to broad, rather than individual, ethnic groups). We have drawn off the results of this analysis where relevant, though some work is still in progress and only preliminary results can be presented here.

### 5.1.1 Continuation rates

Overall, continuation rates in UK higher education are relatively high, and compare favourably with those of other countries (see NAO report, 2002b). Only around one in ten full-time first degree students at HE institutions do not complete the first year and continue into their year after entry (additionally most institutions also lose some newly enrolled students in the first few weeks of

term). Younger students are more likely to continue than older students (92 compared to 84 per cent). The vast majority of students who enrol on full-time first degree courses in England (around 75 per cent overall) achieve a degree at the institution they started at. Only a small number transfer or gain a lower qualification, *eg* HND, and around one in six 'drop out' altogether. Most 'early leavers' leave in the first year, but around one in five of them return within a year.[1]

Most analysis of non-continuation shows that the main factor of influence is prior entry qualifications, in particular 'A' level grades. Those who come through clearing also have higher non-continuation rates in general, as do older entrants. There is also a correlation with social class, though this can be explained by differences in prior academic performance (see HEFCE submission to House of Commons Education and Employment Committee, 2001; NAO, 2002b). These findings go some way to explain the lower retention rates at institutions with high numbers of non-traditional students, though it is generally recognised that the mix of subject and course offerings also makes a contribution (as recognised in calculation of institutions' benchmark PI figures). Many of the institutions with low overall retention rates are institutions with high representation of minority ethnic students.

The published PIs for the HE sector (by HEFCE) on retention, do not include a breakdown of statistics by ethnic group. But HEFCE has carried out some preliminary analysis of the continuation rates from year of entry, which show that minority ethnic full-time first degree students exhibit slightly higher non-continuation rates than the ten per cent average for all such students. Black students have a higher non-continuation rate than Asian or other minority ethnic students, and the differences between ethnic groups are greater among the young (under 21 on entry) than the older students.

But when allowances are made for differences by subject, entry qualifications and age (*ie* the usual HEFCE 'benchmark' variables), young minority ethnic students appear to do slightly better than expected (*ie* have higher benchmark than raw figures), but mature students do less well. This suggests that there are other factors, both positive and negative ones, which impact on the likelihood of students from different minority ethnic groups completing their degree studies. No similar analysis has been undertaken for sub-degree students.

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[1]  These figures relate to students in HE institutions, and are estimates from HESA student records. It is worth noting that there are a number of difficulties in accurately estimating retention rates. We have not been able to obtain comparable reliable data for other HE students (*ie* at FE colleges, or taking part-time degree or other undergraduate courses).

### 5.1.2 Reasons for early leaving

A few research studies have sought to find out more about the various factors which may cause 'early leaving' of undergraduate students. The main ones identified are: that expectations are not met; they find they have made the 'wrong' choice of course; and a lack of commitment to the subject chosen. A number of others can also be relevant, but are generally of lesser importance overall (at least by themselves), including: financial difficulties (usually greater than anticipated, or unexpected ones); experiencing poor quality of teaching; feeling of hostility in academic culture or isolation; demands of the work and other commitments (*eg* at home, at work, *etc.*); and a lack of preparedness for the style of learning in HE (*ie* more individual/self-managed) (see Yorke, 1999; NAO, 2002b; Select Committee Report, 2001; and most recently, the DFES research report on non-completion by IER, 2003). In only a few places is there specific mention of minority ethnic groups.

One study (Yorke, 1999) shows that Black leavers from undergraduate courses (degree or HND studies) are more likely than students from other ethnic groups to report financial problems, and also problems with their relationships with others (students and/or staff) as reasons for early leaving. They also had greater relative dissatisfaction with staff support. Other evidence from studies of Black access students (see Rosen, 1993) supports the suggestion that they are more likely to have more problems initially, in making relationships with other students, in getting support from staff tutors and with their personal confidence in coping with their new student life, as well as some feeling of direct racism (though the research does not make a direct link between these 'problems' and early leaving). Yorke's study also reported tensions (which could lead to early drop out) caused when students found themselves in a group of people from considerably, different social backgrounds. Other researchers in the past (see Bird *et al.*, 1992) have highlighted negative experiences of many minority ethnic students due to feelings of isolation. In another, albeit small scale study (by HEIST, see Adia *et al.*, 1996), loneliness, feeling homesick and missing their family were problems repeatedly identified by first year students, and there was a greater tendency for minority ethnic students to experience difficulties coping with the transition between school and HE than for White students. However, few of these studies make a direct connection between such negative experiences (especially initial ones) for minority ethnic students and causes of early leaving, and there is very little in the research literature on this.

In light of the lack of much specific evidence, there is some relevance in identifying characteristics associated more with particular reasons for early leaving in the general research literature (see above, for example in Yorke, 1999; and also Davies *et al.*, on mature students) which are likely to be more important

for some minority ethnic groups than others, because of their characteristic make-ups. These are:

- **Age**: Older undergraduates are more likely to report the impact of financial problems, the needs of dependants, emotional difficulties, lack of support from their families and travel difficulties as reasons for early leaving. They are also associated more with issues of fragility and 'risk' in decisions to participate in the first place. Younger undergraduates on the other hand, more often feel they have made the wrong choice of course or field of study or it is not how they expected, are less committed and less happy with the way it is taught, or less happy with their environment.

- **Gender**: Male students are more likely than female students to leave because they are unhappy about the academic aspects of their studies (*eg* more difficult than expected, a lack of study skills), and older women are more likely to leave for family reasons than older men or younger women.

- **Social class**: Students from lower social class groups are more likely to leave for reasons relating to financial problems.

The low levels of minority ethnic staff in many institutions (see Chapter 1, and in particular research by Carter, Fenton and Modood, 1999) may also be a factor leading to cultural mismatches and feelings of isolation for minority ethnic students. If faced with academic problems, students are likely to wish to be counselled by an academic with specialist knowledge, and the lack of representation of minority ethnic groups among staff at institutions or in subjects where there are large numbers of minority ethnic students may be an issue. Alienation of aspects of their course syllabus because it is perceived as 'White-centric' and their complaints being ignored, has been identified by researchers (see Allen, 1998). The HEIST 1996 study showed that minority ethnic students were less likely than White students to use formal channels of advice (*eg* student counselling service) with a personal problem (Adia *et al.*, 1996).

English language has been identified by institutions as an area where some minority ethnic students are more likely to need more ESL or literacy support generally, mainly in the first year. However, there is little evidence that any lack of support here contributes to higher non-completion, though some institutions believe it is an issue affecting retention and are giving special attention to it (for all their students).

Another issue can be the difficulties many students face in trying to secure good work placements during their courses. Again, the evidence is thin and rather old, but there is some that shows greater difficulties experienced by minority ethnic students in this respect (Singh, 1990; Brennan and McGeevor, 1990). A possibility of employer discrimination here is a real one.

### 5.1.3 Survey and case study interviews

All of the students in our survey were still in HE, and so we have no additional evidence from this source about actual retention or reasons for leaving their courses. A number of them, however, did appear to have made some false starts already. As already highlighted in Chapter 4, some students had re-evaluated the suitability of their choice of HE course, and around 16 per cent had changed institutions. Minority ethnic students were only slightly more likely to have done this than others. The main reasons for making the change were that they did not like their course, and they had completed the course or obtained a qualification. There was little variation between ethnic groups in main the reasons given.

This overall figure is higher than the one given in HESA statistics on 'transfers', but it includes all undergraduates (not just first degree full-time students). It includes some who also changed course/subjects (a more common switch to make than changing institution). Only eight per cent had only changed their institution but stayed with the same subject. The survey figure may have also included a number of people, such as those on franchised degree courses, who started the first stage of their course at a college and later transferred to a university, and also some who transferred to degree courses after completing HNDs. This was not possible to fully unravel from the information given (but instances of the latter were quite small).

From the 30 case study interviews, there was evidence of some good and bad starts on their HE studies. Some found their first experiences of being at a university or college of HE were disappointing or bewildering.

> *'I felt a bit alienated by the university, and the course and the teaching were very impersonal',* (Pakistani man, aged 21, first year).

> *'The first term was below what I expected, you only have time to do one thing at a time and it all seemed very confusing. It was a bit intimidating to be honest',* (Asian Other man, aged under 21, first year).

Comments were made about poor organisation of courses, meaning settling in had been difficult until initial administrative problems had been sorted out. Others felt that there were too many students for the limited number of tutors for effective working, and that while this had been an initial impression, it had continued throughout the rest of their time there.

> *'The tutors were quite helpful if you made an appointment with them, but basically there aren't enough tutors to go round all the students',* (Pakistani woman, aged under 21, first year).

On the other hand, some students had very positive first impressions, feeling that they had been made to feel welcome by

the lecturers, and that their courses were well resourced and organised.

In the survey, we asked the students (second year and above) whether they had considered leaving early, to get an indication of whether students in some groups of minority ethnic groups in our sample had been more at risk of leaving, and also to explore the reasons behind this. It also gave an indication of those problems experienced by students which had been sufficiently serious to bring them close to a leaving decision.

Almost one-third overall (*ie* of the representative sample, see Appendix B for more details of the survey samples), 29 per cent, had considered seriously, on at least one occasion, leaving their course early, but slightly more of the minority ethnic (33 per cent) than White students (28 per cent) had (but this is not a significant difference). When data from individual minority ethnic groups were analysed (from the minority ethnic sample), Black African students were the most likely (38 per cent), and Indian students the least likely (26 per cent), to have seriously considered dropping out at some time, though here too the differences between groups were relatively small (Table 5.1). Black African students were also by far the most likely to have often, rather than occasionally, considered dropping out (20 per cent). Chinese/ Asian Other students are less likely than either of the Black groups to have considered leaving (either occasionally or often), but are more likely than Black Caribbean/Black Other students to have thought about this often. In contrast, a minority of Black Caribbean/Black Other students had thought about it often, but around one-third had considered dropping out occasionally.

Overall, men were more likely than women to have considered leaving early, and male minority ethnic students in aggregate more than female minority ethnic students, but this trend was reversed for Black African students. There were significant differences amongst women as a result, with almost half of Black African women in our sample having considered dropping out. However, the exception is South Asian women, of whom (in contrast to the Black African women) only around 20 per cent had considered leaving higher education before completing their course (for details see Table 5.1). When the sample is divided in this way (by both gender and ethnicity) the numbers reporting having seriously considered dropping out are small in many groups (especially the minority ethnic part of the representative sample), so care needs to be taken with this.

It is not entirely clear why some groups, such as the female Black African students, should have high figures. While some of the survey results support the HEFCE analysis on non-continuation (*eg* that older students and those with non-traditional entry qualifications more likely to leave early, which is in line with our

**Table 5.1: Students who had, or had not seriously considered dropping out; percentages of men and women in each ethnic group**

| | A: Representative sample | | B: Minority ethnic sample | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | **White** | **Minority ethnic** | **Black Caribbean/ Other** | **Black African** | **Pakistani/ Bangladeshi** | **Indian** | **Chinese/ Asian Other** |
| **Male** | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 21 | 36 | 43 | 30 | 33 | 31 | 36 |
| No | 79 | 64 | 57 | 70 | 67 | 69 | 64 |
| *Base* | *155* | *22\** | *37* | *66* | *43* | *58* | *39* |
| **Female** | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 36 | 29 | 30 | 48 | 20 | 23 | 21 |
| No | 64 | 71 | 71 | 52 | 80 | 78 | 79 |
| *Base* | *135* | *17\** | *44* | *50* | *30* | *46* | *28\** |
| **All** | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 28 | 33 | 36 | 38 | 27 | 26 | 24 |
| No | 72 | 67 | 64 | 62 | 73 | 74 | 76 |
| *Base* | *290* | *39* | *81* | *116* | *73* | *104* | *67* |

Note: when split into ethnic groups, the 'other' group becomes too small for analysis on this variable so has been omitted from this table. Also, note the 'minority ethnic group' in the representative sample becomes very small when broken down by gender (\* = small base)

*Source: IES/MORI 2002*

higher incidence of likely leaving among male Black Caribbeans who are older on average), but others do not.

A number of other factors may be of relevance to help explain the female Black African result. For instance, they are more likely to be on 'other undergraduate studies' than other female groups, and in certain subjects (*eg* health related) which may be significant (and HEFCE data only covers degree study). However, this needs to be explored further.

When students were asked the reasons why they had considered leaving their course early, a wide range of reasons were provided, most by relatively small numbers, too small to analyse by individual ethnic group. The data presented in Table 5.2, therefore, shows the main reasons given for the White students in the representative sample, compared to all of the minority ethnic sample (not the minority ethnic students in the representative sample only, as there is too small a number). Overall, the main reason given was financial difficulties, followed by academic pressure, and a dislike of the course they were on. Slightly more minority ethnic 'potential early leavers' gave financial reasons and problems with family/childcare (but cell numbers in places are very small).

**Table 5.2: Main reasons given for considering leaving early (White students and minority ethnic sample): percentages of White and minority ethnic sample**

|  | White | Minority ethnic sample |
|---|---|---|
| Financial difficulties | 29 | 36 |
| Academic work too hard/too much pressure | 22 | 26 |
| Don't like course/bored/not interested | 12 | 11 |
| Part-time job makes me tired/miss lectures | 11 | 13 |
| Problems with childcare | 2 | 10 |
| Problems at home/with family | 9 | 10 |
| Not enough academic support from staff | 7 | 10 |
| *Base* | *80* | *140* |

Note: Respondents could give more than one reason

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

In conclusion, this survey evidence, albeit on those who had considered leaving but decided to stay rather than those who left, supports much of the existing research evidence. It confirms that minority ethnic students are slightly more likely to be subject to 'early leaving' pressures than White students, but not significantly so. It suggests more variation in the propensity to leave early between individual ethnic groups than shown by other research, and also more variation by sub-group (*eg* by gender). Some of these differences would benefit from further exploration than can be done from this survey (*eg* through more focus on specific groups). Also, it confirms that a range of factors, both personal and academic-related, usually lie behind decisions to leave courses before completion, many acting in combination, and affecting some minority ethnic groups more than others.

# 5.2 Achievement

Turning now to look at the evidence on outcomes in terms of academic achievements, the only real measure we have available from the national statistics is 'class of degree'.

### 5.2.1 Class of degree

Minority ethnic students appear to be less successful in terms of achieving an upper second or first class of degree than White students (according to the HESA qualifications dataset). For all first degree graduates (excluding medical students, but including full and part-time study), 53 per cent of White graduates from UK HE institutions obtained a first or upper second class of degree in 1998/99, compared to less than 30 per cent of Black, and around 36 per cent of Asian graduates (Table 5.3). There is little difference in the attainment profile within the Black group, though Black

**Table 5.3: Class of degree obtained by full-time and part-time students, 1998/99**

| Ethnic group | First class | Upper second | Lower second, undivided second | Third or lower, unclassified | Total (n) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 8.1 | 45.0 | 33.6 | 13.2 | 184,708 |
| Black Caribbean | 1.4 | 28.5 | 51.6 | 18.5 | 2,186 |
| Black African | 2.3 | 22.8 | 50.4 | 24.5 | 3,070 |
| Black Other | 2.8 | 29.2 | 50.2 | 17.7 | 917 |
| Indian | 4.5 | 33.7 | 43.6 | 18.3 | 7,312 |
| Pakistani | 3.9 | 28.1 | 45.1 | 22.9 | 3,365 |
| Bangladeshi | 4.5 | 30.9 | 44.0 | 20.7 | 964 |
| Chinese | 6.1 | 35.2 | 39.6 | 19.0 | 2,003 |
| Asian Other | 5.5 | 34.9 | 38.0 | 21.7 | 2,254 |
| Other | 7.0 | 38.9 | 38.1 | 16.0 | 3,000 |
| *All* | *7.7* | *43.1* | *34.6* | *14.6* | *229,339* |

Africans appear to do the worst. Within the Asian group, all do better than Black students, and Chinese do the best.

Another source of evidence on academic achievement of minority ethnic students, comes from a small scale follow-up survey of matched samples (by type of institution) of 1993 minority ethnic and White graduates (from four institutions, Connor *et al.*, 1996). This also showed that minority ethnic graduates were considerably more likely to gain a lower class of degree.

Some preliminary analysis has been done by HEFCE on the HESA qualifications data, which shows that some of the under-achievement of minority ethnic groups can be explained by differences in personal characteristics *eg* age, subject profiles, and in particular, entry qualifications, both for young and mature students, and for both Black and Asian groups. But when controlling for these variations, there remains some unexplained difference in the proportions of graduates with upper seconds and firsts between the broad ethnic groupings, which means that other factors not captured in the dataset are having an influence (*eg* other social/cultural differences, or possibility some direct racial discrimination within institutions). It is worth considering also, that a higher proportion of minority ethnic groups experience HE study than White students, and there are different HE entry rates by ethnic groups (see Chapter 2). This context may be important in understanding more about the reasons for their different relative achievement within HE.

There are a few research studies which have sought to find explanations for the differences in degree results between minority ethnic and White students, though, as with research on early leaving (see above), they are mostly small scale or qualitative studies. The Connor *et al.*, 1996 study supports the

HESA/HEFCE evidence that some of the difference may be due to different prior education experiences, and also different experiences of minority ethnic students, but it also reported on examples of some institutional issues. It showed a lack of awareness, in places, of possible racial discrimination taking place, and institutions failing to take any action, though actual incidences of blatant discrimination were rare. There are also some indications of racism appearing in the research literature about HE student attainment. One relates to the assessment process (*nb* most publicised cases on racism have been in admissions, and subject specific, *eg* medical schools), where formal complaints from groups of students, for example dental, medical and law students, have been made about discrimination in academic assessment. McManus *et al.,* (1995) found that the poorer average performance of UK non-White medical students in final undergraduate exams could not be explained only by differences in prior educational background, study habits or clinical experience, and that racial discrimination of some kind was likely to exist in the marking of some papers. Esmail and Dewart, (1998) suggest racial bias in face-to-face clinical assessments of medical students, which could explain the higher failure rate of Asian finalists referred in their study. Also, Van Dyke, (1998) found that written examinations yielded high scores for Asian students and low scores for Caribbean students, in a London University.

However, in our survey and interviews we found relatively little reporting of instances of racial discrimination or harassment, from an unprompted question about factors which have affected their academic performance. The main ones reported were financial difficulties, problems with balancing part-time working and study, problems with facilities and getting sufficient support from staff, and among minority ethnic groups, comparatively few incidents of racial discrimination or harassment came up (this question is discussed further in Chapter 6, on the student experience). To a direct question about experiences of discrimination or harassment on their course, a small proportion (seven per cent) of minority ethnic students felt there had been some, slightly more for Indian (nine per cent) and Black Caribbean/other (11 per cent) than other groups. This low level of reporting may underestimate the true level, because in a survey of this kind, the sensitivities of the issues involved can lead to under-reporting, but nevertheless, there is not evidence from the survey that this is a major problem in higher education.

One aspect of student life that has recently been given more attention, and which may be a factor relating to under-achievement, is term-time working (see for example, Metcalf, 2001, and work currently in progress at UUK). On the other hand, studies have shown some positive benefits in students getting work experience and developing work-relevant skills (see Elias *et al.,* 1999). The main negative impact of term-time working is on

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non-specific study time and on time spent doing projects or assignments. Pressure also occurs when trying to balance term-time work and study. Metcalf's study identified a link between those experiencing financial difficulties and term-time working, and that women, and particularly minority ethnic women, are more likely to be working during term-time than male students on average (specific ethnic groups were not analysed separately). The current UUK study of term-time working will hopefully shed more light on these issues, especially the actual effect of term-time working on degree results, but because of the sample size and design, we understand, this study is unlikely to provide any specific evidence relating to minority ethnic groups.

## 5.3  Institutional policies and practices

Retention and achievement are areas of concern for all institutions, primarily due to them being associated with HEFCE performance indicators and league tables. A range of strategic responses have been made by institutions to help improve retention rates, involving a number of activities. Many are focused on improving student support, including the personal tutor system, as we found in the sample of institutions we contacted as part of the student survey (see section 1.3). This is particularly concentrated in the first year, with the aim of minimising early drop-out among non-traditional entrants. Although several institutions we spoke to provided additional support in the use of English language and study skills, this was not specifically aimed at minority ethnic students. In general, we found no evidence from our sample that retention was seen to be a significant enough problem for minority ethnic students to warrant a specific approach.

## 5.4  Summary

On measure of progress, there is some evidence, though of a preliminary nature, which shows that Black students on average have higher early leaving rates than Asians, who in turn have higher rates than White students. But when comparisons are made like for like — to take account of the diversity of the student population — most, but not all, of this ethnic disadvantage disappears, and some groups, *eg* young minority ethnic students, seem to do marginally better than young White students. Of all the factors likely to affect early leaving, the key one, overall, appears to be entry qualification. There is little in the general research literature which explores the causes of early leaving for different student groups, and for minority ethnic groups in particular. The available evidence points to a range of reasons, some relating to social/culture issues (*eg* problems with relationships with staff and other students, personal/family problems, feelings of cultural isolation, problems with English

language) and others of a more general kind (*eg* not liking the subject/course chosen, financial problems).

Our survey could not research actual leaving, but rather 'risk of leaving'. It showed that some groups were more likely to have seriously considered leaving at some stage than others, *ie* were at more 'risk of leaving': male minority ethnic groups more so than female minority ethnic groups; and older students more so than younger students. By ethnic group, Black Africans were the most likely, and Indians the least likely. However, there were gender differences evident within each minority ethnic group, for example female Black Africans were more likely to have seriously considered leaving early (which went against the general female pattern), as were male Black Caribbeans (higher mainly, we think, because of their older age profile). Various reasons were given by the students for considering early leaving, the main one being financial problems, followed by academic pressures. Both of these affected minority ethnic students more than White students.

Turning to achievement, the only statistical measure available is 'class of degree'. This varies significantly between minority ethnic groups: all minority ethnic groups are less successful than White students in obtaining a first or upper second class of degree, and the least successful group of all are Black students. It is likely that these differences are caused by variations between groups in personal profiles, entry qualification, subjects, institutional spread *etc. (*shown generally as key factors influencing achievement), but even when controlled for in analysis, the differences in degree class between minority ethnic broad groupings and White students, do not disappear, but do reduce somewhat. This suggests that there are some other 'unexplained' factors. Research studies have tried to identify these factors and have shown them as likely to include aspects of racism or racial bias within institutions, negative impact of term-time working on study, and factors related to different entry routes (not just entry qualifications). However, the survey and interviews did not uncover any major evidence of racial discrimination in institutions. The context of higher participation rates among particular groups is also a possible factor to consider (*ie* digging deeper into natural pools of talent of some groups).

# 6. Students Experiences Within HE

We next consider evidence on the student experience, drawing mainly from the student survey and interviews. The specific issues covered were:

- problems or difficulties experienced which had affected their academic performance to date

- financial support and views on their financial position

- how they spent their time, and in particular the balance between academic study and paid work

- experiences of discrimination or harassment of various kinds

- overall satisfaction with their HE choices.

## 6.1 Do minority ethnic groups experience more difficulties in their HE study?

The students were asked to outline any problems or difficulties they had experienced personally, which they felt had affected their performance (*ie* stopped them from doing better than they would have liked or from achieving more in exams/class of degree. First years were excluded as they had not yet had their first round of end of year exams. Students gave their answers without prompting or the use of a list of pre-coded options, and were free to outline as many difficulties/problems as they felt applied to them. A very wide range of responses were given, and the main results are presented in Table 6.1.

Firstly, looking at the representative sample, minority ethnic students were slightly less likely than White students overall to say they had experienced any problem or difficulty (60 per cent compared to 73 per cent). However, the minority ethnic base is very small, so some caution is needed in interpretation, and the differences are not significant. When looking at the minority ethnic sample, considerably more (around four-fifths to three-quarters) of each minority ethnic group said they had experienced a problem or difficulty of some kind. Black Africans were the most likely to have experienced problems, and Indians and Chinese the least likely.

**Table 6.1: Main Problems/difficulties experienced that have affected academic performance, 2nd and later years (percentages in each ethnic group)**

| Difficulty | A: Representative sample | | B: Minority ethnic sample | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | White | Minority ethnic | Black Caribbean Black Other | Black African | Pakistani/ Bangladeshi | Indian | Chinese/ Asian Other |
| I experienced no problems | 27 | 40 | 21 | 17 | 25 | 24 | 25 |
| Financial difficulties | 23 | 14 | 29 | 39 | 25 | 15 | 18 |
| Part-time job makes me tired or miss lectures | 15 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 16 | 6 | 17 |
| Problems access study facilities | 13 | 1 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 14 | 14 |
| Academic work too hard | 10 | 15 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 17 | 10 |
| Not enough academic support from staff | 10 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 12 | 14 | 21 |
| Not enough encouragement from lecturers | 5 | 11 | 11 | 3 | 13 | 18 | 9 |
| *Base* | *290* | *38\** | *80* | *118* | *73* | *103* | *68* |

Note: when split into ethnic groups, the 'other' group becomes too small for analysis on this variable so has been omitted from this table. (* denotes small base so caution needed)

*Source: IES/MORI 2002*

Financial difficulties was the most frequently mentioned type of problem, for White students and also for Black and Pakistani/ Bangladeshi students, but not for Indian or Chinese/Asian Other. Financial difficulties was particularly a problem area for Black African students. It was noticeable that fewer Indian students mentioned part-time working problems (only 6 per cent) than any other group, and they were also the only group more likely to raise problems about finding academic work too hard than about financial difficulties. They were also more likely than other groups to mention not getting enough encouragement from lecturers. Lacking enough support from academic staff was the main problem area for Chinese/Asian Other students, and this was more likely to be mentioned by them than other groups. Further analysis showed that these academic-support type issues were evident in both post- and old institutions.

The case study interviews we undertook gave some further insights into how minority ethnic students felt about their achievements to date. Most of the students were fairly satisfied with the way that they had performed during their studies, although some felt they could have done a little better. In some cases, students mentioned personal circumstances, such as periods of illness or family problems, as having had a negative influence on their academic performance. Others felt that disorganisation on the course had affected them adversely. Part-time work was sometimes mentioned as having possibly hindered performance,

as in the quote below, and those with families also tended to allude to this.

*'I probably haven't done that well, I wasn't very motivated in my final year and this wasn't helped as my employers wouldn't give me time off work in the run up to my exams to revise.'* (Black Caribbean/Black Other man, aged 21, final year)

Lack of financial support causing problems was also suggested by students who felt they had not done as well as they might have.

A wider range of views were expressed in the interviews revealing contrasts, both positive and negative experiences for individual minority ethnic students in HE, relating to:

- **Teaching and learning experiences**: Some of the students highly praised the lecturers and tutors, and the teaching and other support that had been available to them. However, amongst others, there was some dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning at the HEIs, including inconsistent quality of the lecturers, the worst of whom were reported to be dull, hard to understand, confusing, *etc.*

- **Staff support**: the lack of one-to-one support available from personal tutors *etc.* was often highlighted as being an issue of concern, though others saw no reason to be concerned about it. Some, who had had to make significant adjustments to their lives to attend their HEI, felt they would have benefited from more one-to-one support. The lecturers and tutors often seemed to have too many students to deal with, and too little time to give each student adequate time and attention.

*'Some of the staff are very good, you can go and ask for help any time. Others have office hours once a week and you need to make appointments, but sometimes that wasn't enough, you had to wait too long to see someone, or the slots got booked up.'* (Black African woman, aged under 21, final year)

- **Facilities and equipment**: Libraries not being well resourced was a common concern, for example the lack of enough core course books to go around, or many books that should have been available being missing. Other complaints were mainly regarding the lack of computing facilities, the fact that they were not adequately maintained, or that equipment was old and out of date.

- **Socialising**: Many of the students spoke very positively about the social side of studying (*eg* met lots of new people, enjoyed themselves as well as having worked hard).

*'I was in halls of residence, so it was easy to make friends that way. Also, the practical sessions made it easy to get to know people as we had to work in groups.'* (Bangladeshi women, age 31, first year)

*'We help each other, even if we are not good friends, you can go and ask anyone on your course and they will try to help.'* (Black African woman, aged under 21, final year)

On the other hand, some of the minority ethnic students said they had not had much time for socialising, as they were either busy studying, or working part-time to support themselves. This was particularly evident for mature students with families to look after (often not that interested in socialising with other students anyway). Some students felt that their friends who did not have to work to provide extra income, had advantages both in terms of their study and their social life — they had less to juggle and less pressure on them generally.

> *'It was not as important to me to make lots of friends, and as I was doing the course part-time I didn't get as much chance to interact with the others. But I never felt isolated, I got to know a few people on the course, and always felt relaxed in lectures.'* (Black African man, aged over 30, final year)

> *'There is no social side for me, I'm not a particularly outgoing person . . have a lot of outside support from friends.'* (Black Caribbean/Black Other woman, aged over 30, first year)

This was in direct contrast to the experiences of a student at a London university:

> *'I've met people from all over the place. As far as I know I've never been on the receiving end of anything like that (discrimination) from anyone. In fact, I think in London you're unlikely to encounter that — half the people are foreigners anyway.'* (Black African woman, aged under 21, first year)

A few students pointed out that there was not always very much mixing between the ethnic groups, people tended to stick with people very similar to themselves, and some felt that this was a shame. Others said that they themselves found it hard to mix with people from different ethnic backgrounds to themselves.

> *'There is a bit of natural segregation between students by ethnic groups — they all hang out with each other.'* (Pakistani man, aged under 21, first year)

One Asian woman reported that in addition to this, she also found it hard to mix with others from the same ethnic background as herself:

> *'Many of the Asians I come into contact with here are 'down to earth' Asians — more traditional than I am, and they expect me to be as traditional as they are, so that can be difficult.'* (Pakistani woman, aged under 21, first year)

- **Additional support needed**: The majority of interviewees had no negative comments about the levels of support they needed on their courses, both academic and personal. Some students praised the facilities/services such as the careers service, the student union, or the undergraduate office, in providing them with specific help and support. Greater financial support and additional one-to-one support were the most commonly

mentioned requests. More flexibility about deadlines or exam re-sits were also mentioned by some, particularly those with additional work or family commitments, or other demanding circumstances.

# 6.2  Student finance

The financial landscape has changed dramatically for students over the last few years, in particular the way students are financially supported through public funds. This survey came at a time (in early 2001) when students are more likely to be borrowing and to come out with more debt than in the past (from Student Loans and other credit). The taking up of a paid job while studying to supplement income is more common (see Callender and Kemp, 2000; Connor and Dewson, 2001), and there are concerns about rising levels of student debt (Callender, 2003). Dealing with financial issues has become more part and parcel of student life today. However, as the survey showed above, it was a small minority of the students we surveyed who felt that financial difficulties had been a problem that had affected their academic performance to date, and as shown in the last chapter, while finance was the main reason why some students had seriously considered leaving early, it was one of many given.

In view of these changes in student finance and policy interest in student funding, and in particular its potential impact on participation and progression in HE, one of the objectives of the research was to find out more about the financial situation of minority ethnic students. Previous research has suggested some variation in their financial support arrangements: Black first year students are less likely to have financial support from parents than White or Asian students, and Asian students are least likely to have borrowed from a bank or have an overdraft (Connor and Dewson, 2001). The 1998/99 Student Income and Expenditure Survey showed that minority ethnic students, and especially Asians, are less likely to take out a Student Loan. It has been suggested also that differences exist in their student lifestyles: minority ethnic groups spend less on entertainment and are more likely to stay at home (Callender and Kemp, 2001). There have also been shown to be religious and cultural differences in attitudes to student debt (Watts, 2000).

## 6.2.1  Main sources of income

Survey respondents were asked what their main two or three sources of income were. Most of the White students on full-time study (80 per cent) reported Student Loans, higher than among minority ethnic students (60 per cent). Other sources identified were paid employment, other loan or overdraft, and parental contribution, but each by around 40 per cent or less of both White and minority ethnic groups. After Student Loans, came other loans/overdrafts for White students (43 per cent), but for minority

ethnic groups, after Student Loans came parental contributions (35 per cent). Differences were generally small between the two groups in these other forms of financial support to students.

As might be expected, the patterns are very different for full- and part-time students. In comparison with their full-time contemporaries, part-time students were unlikely to receive student loans; they were also older in general, less likely to receive parental support and more likely to be in work. This applies across all ethnic groups (though sample numbers were small, so caution is needed).

Looking at the minority ethnic sample for differences between groups of full-time undergraduate students (who made up the vast majority of the sample), shown in Table 6.2, the key points are:

● Black students (both groups) were slightly more likely to have a Student Loan than Pakistani/Bangladeshi students, who in turn were more likely than Indian and Chinese/Asian Other students

● Chinese/Asian Other were the least likely to be working in a paid job during term time (24 per cent). Black Africans were less likely than Black Caribbeans/Black Other students, who were the most likely (46 per cent in paid work).

● The most significant difference was in parental contribution, where very few Black Caribbeans/Black Other students had this support (eight per cent), compared to around a quarter of Black Africans and almost half of Indians. In aggregate, Asians were more likely than either Black or White students to have parental contribution as one of their main income sources.

We would expect age to have an impact on the availability of parental support. Analysis by age shows that there is a marked

**Table 6.2: Main sources of income by ethnicity, full-time students only (percentages in each ethnic group)**

| | A: Representative sample | | B: minority ethnic sample | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | White | Minority ethnic | Black Caribbean/ Other | Black African | Pakistani/ Bangladeshi | Indian | Chinese/ Asian Other |
| Student Loan | 81 | 60 | 70 | 71 | 68 | 61 | 61 |
| Paid work during term time | 30 | 31 | 46 | 37 | 44 | 42 | 24 |
| Other loan/overdraft | 43 | 31 | 28 | 19 | 19 | 26 | 23 |
| Parental contribution | 36 | 35 | 8 | 24 | 35 | 46 | 42 |
| Savings | 16 | 21 | 13 | 10 | 9 | 13 | 15 |
| *Base* | *392* | *67* | *93* | *125* | *97* | *143* | *69* |

Note: A range of other sources were mentioned but the numbers in these cases were too small to report. Also, the 'other' group has been omitted as too small base (n=21)

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

contrast in the extent to which parental support is available, and this is the case across all ethnic groups, younger full-time students being more likely to receive parental support. However, there are still differences according to ethnic group when age is controlled for. Although numbers are relatively small, so some caution is needed. Over half of younger (under 21) Indian students received support from parents (55 per cent, the highest figure across ethnic groups), compared to only 22 per cent of young Black Caribbean/Black Other students (the lowest across all ethnic groups). Age also had an effect on take-up of Student Loans, but less so: older students (21+) in most ethnic groups were slightly less likely to rely on Student Loans, the exception being Pakistani/Bangladeshi students, where the reverse was true, and Black Caribbean/Black Other students where there was no difference. Looking closer at Black Caribbean/Black Other students, those in the 21-24 year old age group are the most likely to take on these debts, which appears likely to connect with the fact that this group are unlikely to receive parental support.

As mentioned above, the literature suggests that student attitudes towards taking on debt are affected by cultural differences, and some research has specifically highlighted the different attitudes to debt of religious groups, notably Muslims (see Callender and Kemp, 2000). However, when this was examined for the minority ethnic students in the sample, differences were relatively small (Table 6.3). Muslims were the least likely to report having a Student Loan (64 per cent), but only slightly less so than Hindu or Sikh groups (66 per cent). However, they were much less likely than other groups to have another kind of loan or overdraft (but almost one-fifth did). Sikhs and Hindus were the groups most likely to have parental family contributions.

We also looked at 'generation' to see whether any differences were apparent between those who were first or second generation minority ethnic groups. The main finding was that second generation minority ethnic groups were more likely to take advantage of all the sources of income than first generation, in

**Table 6.3: Main sources of income by religious affiliation, full time students, minority ethnic sample (percentages of each religious group)**

|  | None | Christian | Hindu | Muslim | Sikh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student Loan | 68 | 69 | 66 | 64 | 66 |
| Paid work during term time | 30 | 41 | 39 | 41 | 43 |
| Other loan/overdraft | 25 | 25 | 26 | 19 | 27 |
| Parental contribution | 26 | 20 | 43 | 39 | 43 |
| Savings | 15 | 10 | 16 | 11 | 6 |
| *Base* | *63* | *187* | *64* | *161* | *50* |

Note: 'other' group has been omitted as base numbers very small (n=21)

*Source: IES/Mori Survey, 2002*

particular they were much more likely to take out a Student Loan (72 per cent of '2nd' v 57 per cent of '1st' generation) and borrow from other sources (28 per cent v 16 per cent).

## 6.2.2 Family financial assistance

Looking more closely at what kind of financial assistance was being provided by the families of students (parents and other family members), White students were only slightly more likely than minority ethnic students to report that their families were making a fee contribution, 43 per cent compared to 37 per cent (full-time students only included here, as part-time students fee arrangements are different). In the minority ethnic sample, Indians are the most likely to have family fee contribution, and Black Caribbean/Black Other the least likely (Figure 6.1). It is important to note that not all students are required to pay tuition fees, some only make a partial contribution, and the level of assessed contribution depends on parental income (if the student is deemed dependent on their parents) or their partners income (if they are deemed independent). The level of contribution parents make to fees as a function of ethnic group may reflect differences in average income, and thus differences in the level of fees that parents have been means-tested to pay. It may also reflect differences in the age profiles of different ethnic groups, students that are over 25 are deemed independent of their parents, who are thus not required to make a contribution to their fees. It could also reflect parents' willingness to pay the contribution to fees that they have been means tested to make so that this cost falls to the student. These factors should be considered when interpreting these results, and those in Figure 6.1.

Respondents were also asked what other types of financial assistance their family provides (Table 6.4). This is not a straightforward set of responses to interpret, partly because of the way family contribution to living costs is means-tested through the Student Loan system, and other differences between parents in

**Figure 6.1: Percentage of students whose family makes some kind of contribution to tuition fees (minority ethnic, and White students from representative samples, full-time students only)**



*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education
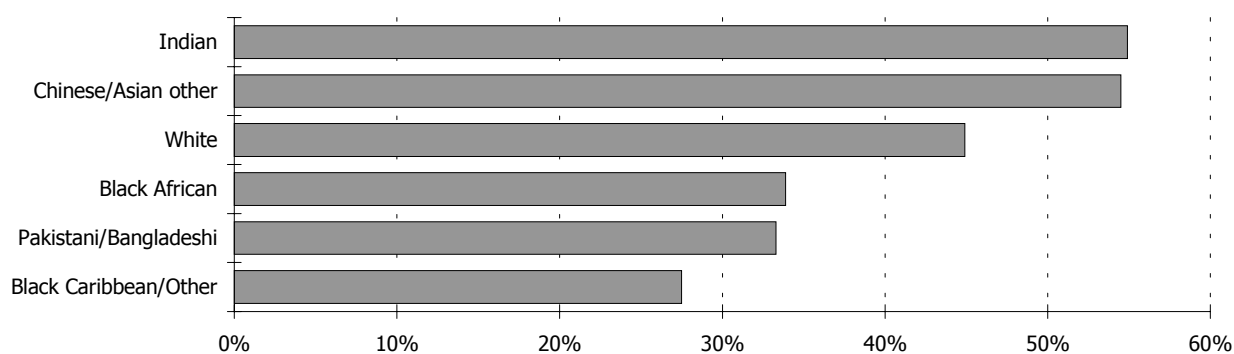
**Table 6.4: Other sources of financial assistance from family representative and minority ethnic samples full-time students only (percentages in each ethnic group)**

| | A: Representative sample | | B: Minority ethnic sample | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | White | Minority ethnic | Black Caribbean/ Other | Black African | Pakistani/ Bangladeshi | Indian | Chinese/ Asian Other |
| Food & living expenses | 42 | 46 | 27 | 39 | 58 | 59 | 50 |
| Rent | 37 | 34 | 16 | 32 | 22 | 34 | 41 |
| Helping out in a crisis | 32 | 38 | 23 | 28 | 36 | 38 | 36 |
| Books, materials for the course | 25 | 36 | 10 | 35 | 35 | 39 | 41 |
| Living at home during term time | 22 | 42 | 22 | 27 | 54 | 47 | 31 |
| Buying clothes | 17 | 29 | 8 | 22 | 32 | 31 | 26 |
| Travel to and from university | 17 | 27 | 10 | 23 | 34 | 36 | 35 |
| Holidays | 15 | 27 | 9 | 25 | 26 | 31 | 34 |
| None of these | 28 | 35 | 53 | 44 | 21 | 15 | 24 |
| *Base* | *392* | *67* | *93* | *125* | *96* | *142* | *69* |

*Source: IES/Mori, 20002*

the level of financial support expected of them (also different 'rules' for over 25 year old students). Bearing these points in mind, the survey question showed that:

- For all minority ethnic groups (of full-time students), the most common type of familial assistance was contributions to 'food and living expenses'. However, only a quarter of Black Caribbean/Other students, and almost two-fifths of Black African students were helped with their 'food and living expenses, as compared to over half of the Asian groups.

- Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Indian students were by far the most likely to report 'living at home during term time' as one of the main types of financial assistance they receive from their families, as opposed to all other ethnic sub-groups. These living arrangements could mean that Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Indian students save money on both housing and food cost (meals at home).

It is also worth noting from Table 6.4, that just over a quarter of White students, but nearly half of Black students, said they received no financial assistance from their family. Asian students, and in particular Indians, were the most likely to receive some kind of financial assistance from their family (less than one-fifth said they did not).

Students were also asked which family member gives them the most financial help. Overwhelmingly, for students from all ethnic groups, parents were the most likely to give the most financial

assistance. However, there were a couple of groups where other family members and partners were mentioned:

- Nearly ten per cent of Black Caribbean/other students reported other family members, not parents, as giving them the most financial help.

- Nearly one-third of Black African students cited partners as giving them the most financial help.

As for much of this analysis on financial support, age was an important factor. For all ethnic groups, assistance from parents was overwhelmingly considered the most important source of support by those in the under 21 age group (over 90 per cent for each ethnic group). For individuals aged 21 to 24, other family members become slightly more important, but these differences are slight. The most marked difference is amongst students over the age of 25, over half of whom received support from non-parental sources. This pattern is true for both White and minority ethnic students. The extent to which students rely on the support of their partners is also affected by their gender, with female students more likely, for all ethnic groups, to receive support. This is particularly true for Black African women, over 40 per cent of whom receive support from partners.

### 6.2.3 Student's overall financial position

Lastly, respondents were asked to describe their current overall financial position.[1] As Figure 6.2 shows, Black Caribbean/Other full-time students were the most likely of any minority ethnic group to be in debt, but similar to the White students, in this respect. All the Asian groups were less likely than Black students to report some indebtedness (*ie* being very or slightly overdrawn/in debt), and Indians were the least likely to say they were very overdrawn/in debt.

In order to ascertain any further differences between the minority ethnic groups, the data was grouped into 'overdrawn/in debt' and 'not overdrawn/in debt'. Other factors were also considered alongside their particular ethnic group, for full-time students only (*nb* part-timers too small a subset to look at this way). The results that emerged here were:

- significant variation by gender within ethnic group: for example, among Black Africans, it was women rather than men that were more likely to report being in debt, while for South Asian groups it was men rather than women. In the Black Caribbean/Black Other group, the pattern was similar

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[1]  Students were not prompted to include or exclude their student loans in their overall financial position, so this data is a generic measure of their situation in their own terms.

**Figure 6.2: Overall current financial situation (minority ethnic sample, White students from representative sample, full-time students only)**
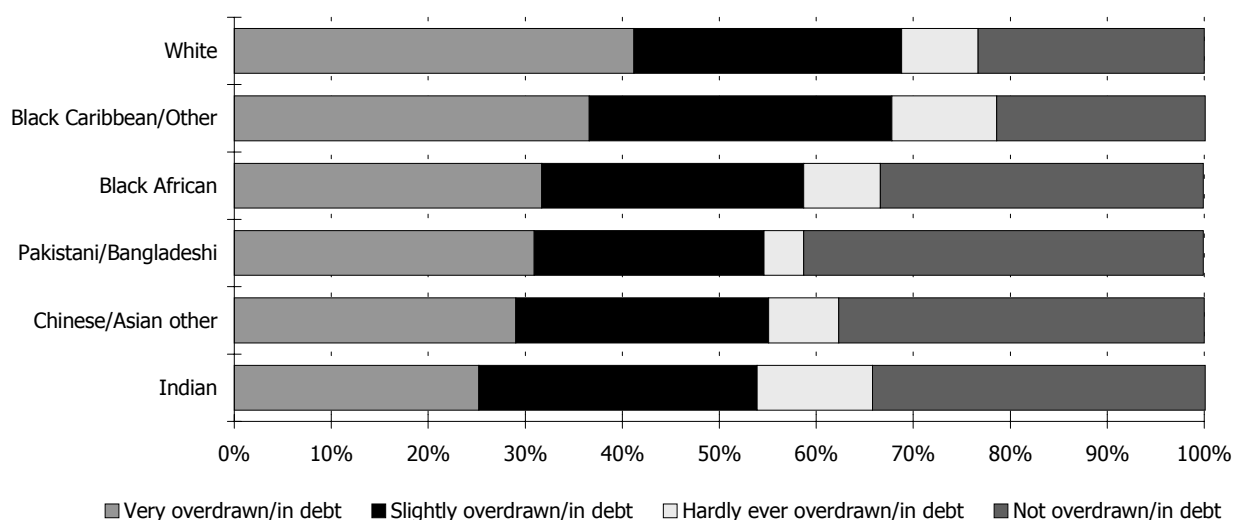


*Source: IES/MORI Survey, 2002*

for men and women. Of all the ethnic/gender splits, Black female students were the most likely to be overdrawn or in debt (around 70 per cent).

● Younger students (age on entry under 21, and 21-24) had higher proportions overdrawn/in debt than older students (25+) for all ethnic groups. Propensity to be in debt was greatest for young Black students compared to young Asian groups, but for older students, the picture was more complex, and a less consistent pattern could be seen between the ethnic groups according to age.

● Little difference was evident by religious affiliation, and contrary to general perceptions, Muslim full-time students were not any less likely to be in debt than other groups.

● Little difference was also evident in this respect between first and second generation minority ethnic students (*ie* whether born in UK or not).

### 6.2.4 Views of the case study participants on student finance

Finance, together with concerns over academic performance, was clearly the main concern and perceived barrier to HE prior to entry cited by the students we interviewed (see Chapter 3). However, once in HE study, the extent to which finances were affecting these students varied greatly. Some had clearly struggled, while others had had sufficient support from their families and had not had to work at all whilst they studied. Students occasionally reported having considered leaving their course due to financial difficulties. A number suggested that careful budgeting was essential.

There were examples of some students having to, or having had to, work on a part-time basis (occasionally approaching full-time hours) whilst studying. Those who had left full-time jobs to pursue higher education usually reported that the adjustments to a much lower income were particularly difficult, even when also continuing to work part-time. Similarly, a minority who had moved to study in London from elsewhere, mentioned how hard it was adjusting to everything being more expensive:

> *'It has cost my parents twice what it cost to send my brothers and sisters. The students here are very rich, ex-public school types and its difficult to keep up with them financially as money is no object.'* (Pakistani women, aged under 21, final year)

Many who were still living with their parents, had opted to study in their home towns to save money on rent and bills, and/or to enable them to continue with the part-time job they already had. As reported earlier, this had played a major part in their choice of where to apply. Some mentioned having taken out student loans and extending their overdrafts.

There were others for whom money did not seem to be an issue, and this usually seemed to be due to financial support from their parents.

> *'My dad is happy for me to go to university, and so I don't need to work part-time while I'm studying.'* (Pakistani woman, aged under 21, first year)

## 6.3  How do students spend their time?

We also explored how students spent their time, that is, how their balance of time was divided between paid work and formal and informal study. Several research studies have pointed to the impact of term-time working on academic attainment (as discussed in the previous chapter), and we wanted also to explore whether some ethnic groups (through choice of subject, type of course or other factors) spend more or less time in informal or independent study than others.

The balance of hours (mean number per week) spent in lectures/ tutorials, independent study and paid work, for each of the ethnic groups, is presented in Figure 6.3, for full-time students only (part-time students have been excluded as most of them are working anyway). As this demonstrates, the amount of time spent in paid work varies between minority ethnic group, more so than the average amount of time in formal study (*ie* lectures/tutorials) per week. Black full-time students have the longest working week on average (over 45 hours), and spend the most time in paid work (13 hours). White and Indian students have the shortest working week (38-39 hours), spend the least hours in paid work on average (under ten hours). Black African students spend the most time in independent study, and Pakistani/Bangladeshi the least.

**Figure 6.3: Balance between paid work and study (minority ethnic sample and white students from representative sample — full-time students only). Mean number of hours/week in each activity**
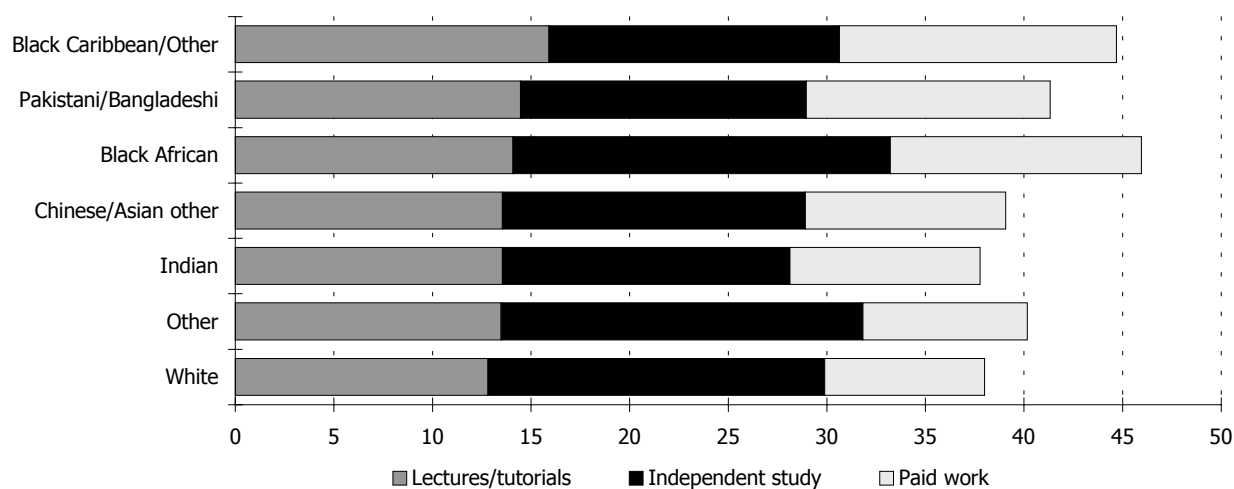


*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

As shown above (see Table 6.2) almost half of Black Caribbean/ Black Other and Black African, and slightly fewer Indian, students, reported paid work during term time as one of their main sources of income as compared to almost one-third of White students, and a quarter of Chinese/Asian Other. This seems to fit broadly with the pattern of working (shown in Figure 6.3) for most groups, the exception being the Indians in our sample. They relied more on paid work as a source of income but, actually worked less hours than others.

There is little variation by age amongst White students in terms of whether they have a job during term time. However, for minority ethnic groups the pattern is more complex, although those in the oldest age group (25+) are the least likely to be working, for most ethnic groups. However, amongst Indian students this pattern is reversed.

There was some variation by subject, both in terms of total mean hours making up the 'working week', and the balance of hours spent on different activities for the whole sample. Engineering and technology students had the longest (mean) working week, and, along with business studies, spent the most time in paid work. The numbers for minority groups within subjects were too small to draw conclusions, but it was evident that there was considerable variation by subject within minority ethnic groups in how students spend their time, suggesting that subject studied is also a contributing factor to the varied pattern observed in Figure 6.3.

The survey showed that minority ethnic full-time students in paid work, were almost twice as likely to be working for 15 hours or more per week than White students (a level that other studies suggest starts to have a serious effect on academic study, see

current UUK study on students and paid work). In the representative sample, 49 per cent of minority ethnic students, compared to 27 per cent of White students, were working in paid jobs for 15 hours or more per week. In the minority ethnic sample, it was clear that it was only the Black Caribbean/Black Other group who were the ones obviously working longer (half worked more than 15 hours per week), while only around one-third of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students worked 15 hours or longer (only slightly more than the average for White students). This may partly be a function of age as older students overall (over 25 years) were more likely to work longer, though not necessarily more likely to be in term-time paid work (see above), but the data are too small in some cells to draw clear conclusions. Gender may also be an issue, as male students across all ethnic groups, were more likely to be working longer hours. The highest percentage of all working more than 15 hours was Black male students (57 per cent).

It was also noticeable that students in old universities (pre-1992) were much less likely to be working long hours, and there was little difference in the percentages working 15 hours or more between the White and minority ethnic group at these types of institutions (both around 13 per cent). By contrast, the figure was much higher for students at new universities, and a difference opened up between White students (37 per cent working 15+ hours) and minority ethnic students (55 per cent) overall. We also looked to see if there was a 'London effect' (because of the concentration of minority students studying in London, where students were more likely to have more opportunities to obtain part-time work), but there was only a slightly greater likelihood of students in London across all ethnic groups to be working for 15 hours or more per week, than if they were at university elsewhere in England.

## 6.4  Experiences of racial discrimination or harassment

As already highlighted in the previous chapter, very few instances of racial discrimination came up in the 'unprompted' question about difficulties experienced which might affect their academic performance, and slightly more in answer to a direct question about any experiences of discrimination and/or harassment on their course. Students were most likely to report having experienced discrimination as a result of their race, than any of the other possible issues listed (*eg* disability, gender), but it was only seven per cent of the minority ethnic sample who reported experiencing any racial discrimination on their course. It was more likely among Black Caribbean/Black Other students (11 per cent) and Indian students (nine per cent). However, actual sample numbers are very small to generalise from, and also there may be some under-reporting in a survey of this kind, because of the sensitive nature of the issues concerning individuals.

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It is noteworthy that students were more likely to experience discrimination whilst at university than they were through the application process (see Chapter 3).

**Case study interviews**

In the case study interviews, only a few students made any comments about possible racism in their institution. Some felt that they would have preferred to study at institutions which were more culturally diverse, and there were also isolated reports of racist behaviour amongst students, and amongst people in the towns in which they were situated (all of these instances were outside London).

> *'Don't come here — I like multicultural cities and (this location) is White and rich. No one has the same taste as me. I sometimes feel I can't say anything because everyone is laughing at me.'* (Other Black woman, age 26, final year)

One student, studying in a relatively small city outside London, reported that her first impressions were not good, as she was shocked by the incidents of racism that she witnessed, although these were not within the university itself, and it seemed that the protagonists were not students.

However, a number had concerns relating to their culture or religion and socialising with students. For example, a couple of students said that due to their religion, they were not able to go to the pub or socialise in nightclubs, but instead had got together with others in their position and done different things. Although discrimination was not mentioned, there was sometimes a feeling that academic departments could have done more to include everyone (*eg* a cheese and wine party was not appropriate for all) and that 'there was no big effort made to get people from different cultural backgrounds to mix'.

> *'I'm Muslim — so I don't share in the pubs and clubs culture of a lot of the students — that made it hard, I had to say no to social invitations as I don't drink alcohol … (however, he was able to meet some people with similar religious/cultural beliefs) … we did other things, like playing pool and going to the cinema.'* (Asian Other man, aged under 21, first year)

## 6.5  Overall satisfaction with choices made

Finally in this chapter, we look to see how satisfied students were with their choices made. Having deliberated about where and what to study in HE, successfully managed the transition process into HE, and overcome any difficulties encountered on their chosen course, an important issue is the extent to which students are satisfied overall with the choice they made. We asked students about their levels of satisfaction in relation to both their choice of institution and course.

### 6.5.1 Institution

Students were asked to indicate, on a scale of one to five (one being very dissatisfied and five being very satisfied), how satisfied they have been overall with their choice of institution. Encouragingly, most students appeared satisfied with this choice, as the mean satisfaction score for each ethnic group was somewhere around 4.0, indicating that, on average, they were 'fairly satisfied'. This is very similar to the results of a major follow-up study on student choice in 2001, sponsored by UUK (see Connor *et al.,* 2001), which asked a similar type of question.

Overall, White students were slightly more satisfied with their choice of institution (score of 4.2) than any other ethnic group, although differences between groups were small. The least satisfied with their choice of institution were Pakistani/ Bangladeshi students with a mean score of 3.8.

Looking in more depth:

- students from old universities (regardless of their ethnic group) were the most likely to be satisfied with their choice of university. There was one exception, though, and that was Black African students at old universities, who were the least likely to be satisfied with their choice of institution.

- Chinese/Asian Other, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and White students from new universities/HE colleges, were the least likely to be satisfied with their choice of institution.

- Older students, in general, were more satisfied with their choice of institution than younger students, except in the case of White students, where the reverse was true.

- Male Chinese/Asian Other students were the least likely to be satisfied with their choice of institution.

There were other differences within ethnic group, by gender, age, and whether or not their parents had experience of HE, but no discernible pattern emerged.

### 6.5.2 Course

Students were also asked to rate their overall level of satisfaction (again on a five-point scale) with the course they had chosen. Again, students appeared, on the whole, satisfied with the choice of course they had made, with a mean satisfaction score of over 4.0 indicating that they were mostly 'fairly satisfied'. This is also similar to the results in the 2001 Student Choice follow-up study. Chapter 4 has already identified the choice of course as a major determinant of the actual institution chosen, so the degree to which students are satisfied with their course is an important issue.

Firstly, examining solely ethnic group, there is a greater clustering of mean scores than for institution, with White, Black African and Pakistani/Bangladeshi students having the highest score, and so were the most satisfied with their choice of course (score of 4.2) and Chinese/Asian Other the least (but still with a score of 4.0). The differences between the groups are therefore very small.

There were some further differences between the minority ethnic groups, when other characteristics were considered:

- Students from old universities were the most satisfied overall with their choice of course for all ethnic groups apart from Black African students, who were the least satisfied (the same pattern as for institution).

- Older students were also the most satisfied with their choice of course (age at entry 21-24 and 25+) for all minority ethnic groups.

- Students whose family had no previous experience of HE were the least satisfied with their course, for all ethnic groups except Black African students.

Again there were other differences in satisfaction levels between sub-groups, but not any real clear pattern.

# 6.6  Summary

This chapter has focused on specific student issues and aspects of their experiences within HE. Its draws mainly from the student survey and interviews, and so presents new findings, because there is very little discussed in the research literature on student experiences within HE which distinguishes between minority ethnic groups.

When students were asked about problems or difficulties that they felt had affected their academic performance, the main ones mentioned were financial difficulties, the effects of part-time working, and various specific academic work/study/support/ facilities issues. Not all students reported problems, but more minority ethnic students (and in particular, Black African students) were likely to report a problem than were White students on average. Indians were the least likely to report experiencing any financial problems, but more likely to report academic type problems than most other minority groups. Black Africans were the mostly likely group to have had part-time working problems. Individuals interviewed gave contrasting views about a number of areas affecting their studies: quality of teaching, staff support, facilities, socialising and part-time working, indicating the diversity of minority ethnic students and their experiences in higher education.

Few instances of direct racial discrimination or harassment were reported by minority ethnic students, though seven per cent said that they had suffered some experience of this kind.

Financial issues were put under the spotlight, and once again, the diversity in the student population was evident. A key issue was that the extent of parental support differed by minority ethnic group, with most Asians more likely to get more parental support than Black students, and, on the whole, minority ethnic students getting more parental support in various ways than White students. Some of this is likely to be age related (and parental support to HE students is being investigated further in another stage of the project).

The student survey also showed different views on Student Loans as the main source of income, with minority ethnic students, and in particular, Indian and Chinese/Asian Other students, less likely than White students to have a Student Loan as one of their main sources of income. Chinese/Asian Other students were much less likely than other ethnic groups to rely on part-time working during term-time as a main source of income, including White students. Borrowing from other sources was less important to most minority ethnic groups than White students, and especially Pakistani/Bangladeshis and Black Africans. Pakistani/Bangladeshis, and Indians were the most likely to be living at home during term time, and more likely on the whole to get other kinds of financial assistance, also from their families (*eg* travel to and from university, buying clothes). Although the Chinese/Asian Other group were less likely to be living at home than Pakistani/Bangladeshi group, they were more likely than them to see parental contribution as one of their main income sources.

There were other differences in the way studies were being financed — between religious groups (as expected, Muslims were less likely to be borrowing funds) and also 'generation' (second generation immigrants were more likely to take a Student Loan).

Students' overall assessment of their current financial situation varied: Black Caribbean/other students were more likely to be in debt than any other minority ethnic group (and also most likely to report financial difficulties, see above), but were similar to White students in how severe their debt was, while Asians, in particular Bangladeshis/Pakistanis (who were predominantly Muslim) were the least likely to say they were in debt (but one-fifth of them actually were in debt, and differences between religious groups for the whole minority ethnic sample were slight). Younger students, except young Indians, were the most likely to be in debt.

The time that full-time students spend in three main activities — lectures/tutorials, independent study and paid work — was investigated, as it can be an issue affecting outcomes, especially the time students spend in paid work. The balance of time in the

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different activities varied between groups, but most of this variation was in time spent in independent study and paid work rather than lectures/tutorials. Black students had the longest week and also spent more time in paid work; White and Indian students had the shortest week and spent the least hours in paid work. Pakistanis/Bangladeshis spent the least time in independent study. The different time allocations reflect, in part, the different subjects taken (which needs investigating further) but also a number of other factors such as students 'need to earn'.

Minority ethnic students were much more likely to be working longer hours than White students (over 15 hours per week). This may be a factor influencing their overall poorer attainment (as other research has suggested, discussed in previous chapter, but we could not link the two directly here to draw firmer conclusions). Black Caribbean/Other students were more likely to be working longer hours than others, especially some Asian groups. Minority ethnic students at new (post-1992) universities were more likely to be working these longer hours than White students, but there was little difference in this respect at old (pre-1992) universities. This may reflect the different levels of participation of individual minority groups at old universities (*ie* fewer Black students at old universities) or other factors, such as different timetabling/organisation of teaching, different pressures 'not to work', different levels of student affluence, in the two sectors.

Between almost one-fifth and two-fifths reported having no problems at all that had affected their performance. Despite the difficulties reported above, there were high levels of satisfaction with the choices they had made. There was little difference between minority ethnic groups in aggregate and White students in this respect. The minority ethnic group least satisfied with their choice of institution was the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group, while Chinese/Asian Other were the most satisfied with choice of institution, but differences generally were quite small. It is not obvious why these groups came out worse, as they were not the ones that seemed to have more problems or had poorer experiences in other respects.

Student at old universities were more satisfied overall than those at new universities, almost regardless of ethnic group. This may reflect the different expectations of individuals in these sectors and their different backgrounds, or different experiences once in university (the data does not enable us to identify the main causes of dissatisfaction). Further breakdowns by other variables (such as gender, age) showed other patterns, but no clear conclusions.

# 7. Transition to the Labour Market

Having discussed the participation, progression and achievement of minority ethnic students in HE, we now move on to their labour market outcomes. This part of the project is less well advanced, and so we cannot give it as much attention in this interim report as we will in the final report on the project. By then, we will have the results of our survey of graduates and discussions with employers, planned for 2003. For now, we present here a brief review of the evidence we have on minority ethnic graduates in the labour market, followed by our survey results on the views and job/career plans of the final year students.

The first part of the chapter covers the existing evidence and statistics relating to:

- minority ethnic groups and labour market disadvantage in general
- first destinations of graduates
- longer-term graduate outcomes
- employers policies and views.

The second part presents findings from the student survey on career/job intentions, the extent to which they have got/are seeking employment, and use made of the various careers information sources/activities to help in looking for employment. It also includes some views of a small number of interviewees.

## 7.1 Minority ethnic groups and labour market disadvantage

Before discussing minority ethnic graduates, it is worth providing some context in terms of the general position of minority ethnic groups in the labour market.

A series of studies throughout the 1980s, showed serious labour market disadvantage for people from minority ethnic groups, and that important variations continue to exist between and within ethnic groups (a substantial amount of evidence is summarised in Owen *et al.*, 2000, in particular his analysis of data from Labour

Force Surveys for Great Britain, and also in the report on the Fourth National Survey of minority ethnic students, in Modood *et al.*, 1997). Most recently, the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit has reviewed, in detail, the evidence on trends and the main 'drivers' of these trends (see their 2002 interim report, which analyses evidence, and their more recent final report, March 2003). Though improvements have occurred over time, differences continue to exist between minority ethnic people and White people in terms of unemployment and occupational attainment, and also, but to a lesser extent now, earnings. Overall, taking all the evidence together, Indian men are considered to be the least disadvantaged among minority ethnic groups in the population, and Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black men and women the most. Key points of note relating to the context of this study are:

- Economic activity rates for the White working-age population are well above those for the minority ethnic population, but these average figures mask wide variations between groups. Black Caribbean, Indian, Asian Other and 'Mixed' male groups have the highest economic activity rate among individual minority ethnic groups, at around 80 per cent, close to that for White males (85 per cent, Summer 2002, LFS). Black Caribbean women also have higher activity rates (71 per cent) compared to other minority ethnic groups, and only slightly lower than White women (75 per cent). Bangladeshi and Pakistani women have the lowest rates (22 and 36 per cent respectively), around half or less than that of Indian women (69 per cent).

- Unemployment levels in the population are around twice as high among minority ethnic people on average than White people (12 compared to five per cent, Summer 2002, LFS). Bangladeshis and Black Africans have the highest unemployment rates among men (21 and 19 per cent respectively); Indian people tend to experience lower unemployment rates than other minority ethnic groups (six and eight per cent respectively for men and women).

- Self-employment is slightly more common among minority ethnic (17 per cent) than White groups (15 per cent), but is most common among some Asian groups (especially Indian men, 19 per cent). By contrast, the percentage of Black self-employed people is much lower (12 per cent of Black men).

- The proportion of minority ethnic groups in higher status occupations (managerial/professional) has been increasing over the last decade (and this holds for all ethnic groups). But minority ethnic groups in aggregate continue to be under-represented at this level, and there has been minimal change in the gap between White and minority ethnic men here (see analysis of LFS 1992-2000, in Strategy Unit Interim report, 2002, p. 48).

- However, this does not hold true for certain groups: Indian and White men have broadly similar rates of higher occupational attainment (around 25 per cent, in 2000). Also, the highest increases in representation at this higher level have occurred among Chinese and Bangladeshi male groups (but population numbers here are very small).

- In the case of women, a similar pattern exists overall in terms of overall growth in higher level occupations, but certain groups, such as Indian and Black Caribbean women, have made more rapid progress than others in gaining entry to professional/managerial jobs. Here, it is Black Caribbean women who have almost reached equity with White women in the higher status occupations (13 and 15 per cent respectively).

- The services industries are a more likely employment sector for minority ethnic than White men overall, in particular restaurants and retail businesses, and especially Bangladeshi and Chinese men (over 88 per cent have jobs in services industries). This concentration in services sector employment, and a few industries in particular, is even more marked for women. Minority ethnic groups also tend to be over-represented in small private sector businesses as a whole, but under-represented in large corporations.

Various explanations for ethnic group differences in labour market achievement have been put forward. These relate to a combination of cultural, economic, social and geographical factors, in particular, the variables: gender, generation and region/locality; 'human capital' and also general economic and employment patterns and trends (see further discussion of 'drivers' in Strategy Unit interim report, 2002).

## 7.2 Minority ethnic graduates — initial destinations

The main evidence on minority ethnic graduate outcomes, in terms of their initial employment destinations, comes from the annual survey of graduates' initial destinations (known as the FDS — the First Destinations Supplement of the HESA Student Record). This provides an early snapshot only. There have also been a few, mostly small-scale, research studies (*eg* Connor *et al.,* 1996). The main message from these is that the position of minority ethnic graduates in the labour market overall appears less favourable than it is for their HE participation. Minority ethnic graduates, on average, suffer some of the labour market disadvantage which is seen in the general population (see above). But, as has already been shown for aspects of HE participation and attainment, considerable differences exist between minority ethnic groups. When various factors relating to background, choice of HE course and institution, *etc.* are taken into consideration (*ie* comparing like-for-like), there is much less

variation in outcomes by ethnicity. There is also evidence that some minority ethnic groups are doing at least as well as White graduates in the 'quality' of jobs they obtain. The FDS, after all, mainly measures the speed at which a graduate finds employment. This is discussed further below.

Research in the 1980s (see Brennan and McGeevor, 1990) first suggested that some minority ethnic graduates experienced disadvantage, and that this was occurring right from the outset of their careers. At that time minority ethnic graduates were more likely to be unemployed 12 months after graduation, and they perceived greater difficulties than White graduates in gaining employment. These differences remained when controls for gender, class of degree and course of study were applied. However, the Brennan and McGeevor study had a relatively small number of minority ethnic graduates in their total sample of graduates studied, and it covered only CNAA first degree courses (mainly the polytechnics at that time), so little disaggregation by minority ethnic group was possible. But in a later survey of 1993 graduates by IES, (Connor *et al.*, 1996) similar results were found, again though, based on a relatively small sample of minority ethnic graduates (136). Here, it was matched in the analysis to a similarly sized sample of White graduates, by age, gender, new/old university and subject. The IES study found that minority ethnic students were more likely than the White graduates to be unemployed, took longer to secure their first job, had to make more job applications and had lower initial earnings. However, when class of degree was also controlled for (*ie* in addition to these other variables which can affect graduate outcomes), many of the apparent differences reduced, and lost their statistical significance.

These studies were relatively small scale, and relate to graduates in the mid 1990s and earlier. The discussion in this chapter needs to be viewed against the much better database that now exists on graduate employment outcomes for the whole HE sector (via HESA), and the changes that have taken place in the graduate labour market during the last decade. In particular, we now have an expanded and more diverse graduate output and a larger, broader, and also more diverse, employer demand for graduates (see IES Graduate Reviews, *eg* Pearson *et al.*, 2000). Also, many large companies, the traditional core of graduate recruiters, have developed flatter organisational structures, as they have striven for greater efficiency, which has altered the traditional career paths of many graduates, while more small companies are seeking more graduate recruits, offering different types of experiences and careers to graduates than the traditional, larger ones.

Since 1996, statistical evidence on initial destinations of graduates from minority ethnic groups has been available from the HESA First Destinations Supplement. This annual graduate employment survey covers all full-time graduates leaving HE institutions each

year, and provides information of known destinations at approximately the six month stage. A breakdown by ethnic group is available from HESA, though available not as part of the general published reference volume on First Destinations of graduates (the green books) but via specific datapacks and direct data requests. The HESA data provide much better insight into the labour market outcomes of minority ethnic graduates, though are limited by coverage to only full-time course at HE institutions, and also only to the first six months or so after completing undergraduate courses.

The main destinations of full-time first degree UK graduates (home domiciled, and of known destination), based on the HESA statistics, are shown in Table 7.1. They confirm that some initial disadvantage, highlighted by the earlier research, in terms of higher initial graduate unemployment levels of minority ethnic graduates as a whole, continues to exist. Unemployment is higher for minority ethnic graduates in aggregate (almost nine per cent) compared to White graduates (five per cent), and highest of all for Black Africans, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis (10-12 per cent). All minority ethnic groups' unemployment levels are above that of the White group.

**Table 7.1: First destinations of full-time first-degree (home domiciled) graduates from UK HEIs, 1999/00 (percentages shown are based on all graduates with known destination)**

|  | UK paid work | Overseas work | UK Self-employed | Study or training | Unemployed | Other | Not available for employment or training | Total number |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 63.3 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 18.6 | 5.0 | 4.4 | 6.1 | 144,278 |
| All minority ethnic groups | 56.9 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 23.5 | 8.7 | 3.8 | 5.1 | 17,518 |
| Black Caribbean | 62.8 | 1.1 | 2.3 | 16.1 | 8.6 | 3.3 | 5.9 | 1,195 |
| Black African | 51.9 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 24.8 | 12.0 | 4.1 | 4.7 | 1,546 |
| Black Other | 62.3 | 1.2 | 1.9 | 18.4 | 6.7 | 3.8 | 5.8 | 583 |
| Indian | 60.9 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 23.0 | 7.8 | 2.8 | 4.2 | 5,663 |
| Pakistani | 53.0 | 1.4 | 0.5 | 26.6 | 10.2 | 3.3 | 5.0 | 2,431 |
| Bangladeshi | 56.8 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 24.4 | 11.1 | 2.3 | 3.7 | 694 |
| Chinese | 50.3 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 26.9 | 8.8 | 6.8 | 5.8 | 1,492 |
| Asian Other | 58.4 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 23.8 | 6.8 | 4.1 | 5.0 | 1,611 |
| Other | 53.8 | 1.3 | 1.7 | 23.1 | 7.9 | 5.3 | 6.9 | 2,303 |
| All (known ethnicity) | 62.6 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 19.2 | 5.4 | 4.3 | 6.0 | 161,796 |

*Source: HESA, 2000*

However, the HESA statistics show that the overall outcome pattern differs somewhat by ethnic group:

- The proportion going into further study is higher for minority ethnic groups (just under a quarter) than for White graduates (just under one-fifth).

- Black Caribbean and Black Other graduates are the least likely of all minority ethnic groups to go on to further study or training, and less likely than White students. However, they are the most likely of all minority ethnic groups to go into paid work.

- More Black, and especially Black Caribbean, than White graduates are likely to go into self employment, more so than Asian graduates overall, though the proportions are small, one-two per cent (nb. this is contrary to the situation in the general population, see section 7.1 above, but is likely to be caused by differences in the nature of self employment for highly qualified compared to less qualified people).

- The proportions of graduates going into paid work in the UK varies, from 50-52 per cent of Black African and Chinese graduates, to 61-63 per cent of White, Black Caribbean, Black Other and Indian graduates. This latter statistic suggests much less apparent disadvantage for some minority ethnic groups compared to White graduates than the unemployment statistics suggest.

If those graduates who went into further study or training are excluded from the base totals, the unemployment percentage for minority ethnic graduates in aggregate rises to 11.3 per cent, compared to 6.2 per cent for all White graduates. The unemployment percentage calculated in this way is higher by over two percentage points for most minority ethnic groups compared with the figures shown in Table 7.1, and in particular is much higher for Black African (16.0 per cent), Bangladeshi (14.7 per cent) and Pakistani (13.9 per cent) graduates. We will be investigating the extent to which some minority ethnic graduates choose to take further study to improve their employment opportunities or to reduce the risk of initial unemployment, in other stages of the research (follow-up student survey, see Appendix A).

There is also some evidence that 'quality' of initial jobs taken up by graduates differs, in terms of sector and occupation, by ethnic group. For example, the HESA FDS show that minority ethnic groups are slightly more likely to go into managerial/professional level jobs (almost 48 per cent) than White graduates (just over 44 per cent of those who enter UK employment). Although this proportion is lower for some minority groups than White graduates (for Black groups, at a little over 40 per cent) it is highest for Indian, Pakistani (where unemployment levels were highest) and Asian Other groups (both 49 per cent). Other

research shows that some minority ethnic groups appear to be doing at least as well as, and in some cases, better than, White graduates in gaining access to particular 'graduate level' jobs (see CHERI study by Brennan for HEFCE on employability of disadvantaged graduates, 2002, and discussed further below).

Thus, it would seem that simply looking at unemployment figures for graduates provides just one indicator of the differences between ethnic groups in their initial success in the labour market. Furthermore, differences between minority ethnic graduates in their personal characteristics, background, choice of courses and experiences in HE are all likely to affect labour market outcomes and so also need to be considered.

Where some analysis of the FDS has been undertaken at a disaggregated level, for example in work by HEFCE on developing Performance Indicators on Employment, (see HEFCE 01/21, 2001), significant differences in overall graduate outcomes have been found (by subject, gender, age, institution, social background, prior education, location and degree performance). As there are considerable differences between minority ethnic group profiles in many of these respects, these variables are likely to explain many of the differences highlighted above in initial graduate outcomes. But as with other modelling work mentioned elsewhere (see Chapter 3 on degree outcomes), when it has been tested out, it has not been found to explain all of the difference observed. There would seem to be other factors contributing to the higher unemployment rates among some minority ethnic than White graduates.

Since it is the same ethnic groups who have the highest unemployment levels for graduates as in the general population (*ie* Black African and Bangladeshi, see section 2.1 above), and also some of the lowest (*eg* Indians), it seems probable that some of the factors which produce overall higher unemployment levels among minority ethnic groups, also have some influence on graduates. The most obvious of these are aspects of discrimination in recruitment, but there are likely to be others, also not easy to quantify (*eg* culture/religious factors, degree of assimilation, local factors). There may also be some factors of influence which relate specifically to graduates' educational experiences, not captured by the HESA data (*eg* racial discrimination within institutions, or specific skills gained/personal development). The recent CHERI report, mentioned above, which has analysed factors affecting employability of 'disadvantaged' students, has shown that the main background variables which have a direct effect on employment outcomes include ethnicity, as well as socio-economic background and age, but that there are also a number of indirect effects, which can be linked to the direct effects, including parental education levels and gender, subject studied and institution attended.

Because of the small numbers in many of the groups, there are obvious difficulties in undertaking more detailed analysis of the FDS dataset at an individual ethnic group level to investigate further which student or institutional variables matter the most in explaining differences in labour market patterns. There is not much scope for analysis of the Labour Force Survey either, also because of reliability problems when numbers get very small. We have not analysed the FDS data on minority ethnic students at a disaggregated level (*eg* by gender, age, subject) but will look at it further in the next stage of the project, to see what kind of analysis would be most beneficial. We also want to look further at other research that has sought to identify factors that explain the observed different labour market outcomes of different groups of graduates, to see what can be found which is relevant to minority ethnic students.

## 7.3  Longer-term outcomes

It is not appropriate to focus mainly on the evidence from the FDS to asses graduate labour market prospects, because the annual survey is based on only an early snapshot of graduate destinations and can underestimate the true labour market situation of graduates. Various follow-up surveys have shown this, although most have been relatively narrow in scope (see for example, Connor *et al.*, 1996; Bellfied *et al.*, 1997). The large scale *Moving On* survey was the first major piece of work in recent times to follow up a large sample of graduates (see Elias *et al.*, 2000). It showed that the proportion of 1995 graduates in employment increased from around 65 per cent, straight after graduating, to 90 per cent three years later. The research established a range of different career paths for graduates with different personal characteristics and degree courses. Indeed, gender, subject of study, prior qualifications, and type of institution attended were all important determinants of longer-term graduate outcomes. To this extent, it might also be surmised that the career paths of minority ethnic graduates would be so determined, though the analysis did not focus on them in any major way. It is likely that the samples for individual ethnic groups were too small, or not reliable enough, to enable such analysis to be done.

However, some evidence does exist there in the *Moving On* survey relating specifically to unemployment levels of minority ethnic graduates over time. Although their initial levels are much higher (compared with their White counterparts), they are almost equalised for all ethnic groups about two years after graduation, and no significant differences were apparent in the rate of joblessness experienced by different ethnic groups (Elias *et al.*, 1999). This supports, to some extent, earlier research on a much smaller sample (Connor *et al.*, 1996) which showed that although at every stage in their early careers, minority ethnic graduates were more likely than their White peers to be unemployed, when

differences by age and type of institution were controlled for, most of these differences disappeared. It is also evident from comparisons with the general labour force statistics, that the prospects of graduates from minority ethnic groups suffering unemployment is much lower, and different, from that of non-graduates.

One interesting point made in the *Moving On* survey (and also shown in other research, such as the Sussex graduates follow-ups, see Connor and Pollard, 1996) is that the likelihood of graduates suffering periods of unemployment in the first few years after leaving university, and also not securing 'graduate' jobs by the three year stage, is related to being initially unemployed (*ie* at the six month stage). Graduates who are unemployed at six, 12 or 18 months after graduation, have overall poorer employment prospects over the first three and a half years of their careers. A further outcome was that even where they had secured employment subsequently, they were more likely to be in non-graduate jobs. This is an indication of how crucial the early period after graduation, and the transition process, can be on graduates' longer-term success in the labour market.

All in all, though, there really is very little evidence on longer-term outcomes for graduates from different ethnic groups. It is unlikely that the forthcoming 'repeat' survey to update the *Moving on* figures will have enough minority ethnic graduate numbers in the sample, but we understand that it is planned that insights will be obtained through interviews with sub-sets of the sample

## 7.4  Employers' views and practices

For policy makers especially, the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, in particular its focus on institutional racism, has resonance for urgent efforts to improve HR practices within employing organisations. This includes giving specific responsibilities to HE institutions to review their policies for staff and students.

Recent research has focused on the initiatives taken by employers to improve representation of minority ethnic employees within organisations, as one of the ways of addressing this problem (Kandola and Keane, 1998; Scott and Kwistkowski, 1998). The emphasis of such effort has been on improving the opportunities to access in the organisation, *ie* recruitment initiatives. Although employing organisations are often not short of minority ethnic applicants, there seems to be some issues about converting them to job offers. For example, the Connor *et al.*, study in 1996 showed that more minority ethnic applicants, compared with White applicants, failed to get through each successive phase of the recruitment process of the employers they surveyed. The study highlighted some of the recruitment practices of the larger

companies which contributed to the lack of success of minority ethnic applicants. In particular, where large corporations continue to use pre-university academic qualifications as a criterion for selection, some minority ethnic groups are disadvantaged because they are more likely to have either lower entry or non-traditional entry qualifications. An even more significant source of disadvantage for the employment prospects of minority ethnic students is many large employers' preference for graduates from pre-1992 universities; another is having a lower degree class. (*nb* this refers mainly to the larger corporations specifically seeking graduates for highly paid graduate entry schemes to management; it applies less to smaller employers who, nowadays, take a larger share of the graduate output.)

There is some evidence that employers are beginning to redress this imbalance by relying more on competence-based criteria for shortlisting and selection. Their use is intended to make pre-selection 'colour-blind', but at the same time more relevant to the jobs people will be expected to do. A number of projects have been run at universities with employers over the last few years, where various programmes aimed at improving employment prospects for 'Black and Asian students' have been set up (*eg* MERITS, IMPACT, Careers Focus). They include: mentoring, work shadowing, skills development programmes, and direct marketing of minority ethnic graduates to employers. There is also a national Mentoring Programme, which has been running for some time, involving a number of large corporate employers and public bodies, and there are some specialist career websites targeted at minority ethnic students. A current project, *Access to what?*, is exploring ways of targeting careers services activities better at particular disadvantaged groups, and also exploring which kinds of interventions work better (including work experience, extra-curricular activities, improving techniques of job search).

Increasingly, too, it is being recognised that improving representation is only part of addressing inequalities in the labour market outcomes of minority ethnic students. Employing organisations also need to address the experiences of minority ethnic groups after they have been recruited, and tackle potential 'treatment' discrimination once they are in employment. This is particularly important in order to address the lack of minority ethnic representation at senior management level in some of Britain's largest corporations. A recent study by the Runnymede Trust (2000), found a lack of minority ethnic people in senior positions in 100 FTSE companies, with representation falling with grade. In particular, minority ethnic professionals and managers felt excluded by what they perceived to be subtle, non-overt discrimination.

# 7.5  Student survey results

We will be exploring further the outcome of minority ethnic graduates and their transitions into the labour market in the planned follow-up survey of final year students, as well as the views and policies/practices of employers, which are elements of the remaining stages of the project this coming year. From the student survey undertaken in early 2002, we have some evidence about how students view their employment prospects and actions taken to date on jobs/careers. These data will be of most interest when following them up (a year after graduation) in the next phase of this survey in 2003.

The analysis presented in this section is based on all final year students, unless otherwise stated. The sample was made up of a total of 530 students, drawn from across the three sample elements: the representative sample, the minority ethnic booster and the final year booster (see earlier discussion in Chapter 1, and also in Appendix on survey methodology). As the number of minority ethnic students in their final year is somewhat smaller than the minority ethnic sample used in the main analysis (and presented in other sections), it is not possible to report on the various sub-group differences in as much detail, however there remain some interesting differences by ethnicity.

The final year students are made up of 282 minority ethnic students, approximately 52 per cent. In most respects, the differences in the composition of the minority and White groups by personal characteristics is very similar to those already highlighted in the main samples. The minority ethnic final year student group:

- has a higher proportion of men than the White group

- is slightly older in age profile (more likely to be in 21-24 age range) than the White group

- is more likely to have entered HE via FE or sixth form college than school, and with lower 'A' level points than the White group

- is more likely to be at a new, *ie* post-1992, university.

The main issues covered in the student survey were:

- what students intend to do when their course finishes

- actions that individuals have already taken in getting a job/ career

- careers advice and information accessed whilst at HE

- any discrimination encountered when job hunting.

### 7.5.1 Intentions when course finishes

A factor that all students have to consider when completing their HE qualification, is what they would like to do next. Although the focus of this section is on final year students, we asked *all* students in our survey what they plan to do once they complete their course, but asked final year students more about their job plans.

Overall, the most popular planned option when we asked *all students* was to take up/remain in a paid job with an employer (around 50-60 per cent), with postgraduate study the second most popular choice (around one-third — *nb* 'Other' included going into family business, setting up new business, but the numbers were very small). Minority ethnic students overall were almost equally likely as White students to be planning to start a paid job, but much less likely to take a year out, and more likely to take a postgraduate course/further study. When broken down by ethnic group, a number of differences emerge:

● Chinese/Asian Other students were the most likely minority ethnic group to be seeking a paid job with an employer (71 per cent). Indians were also above the average (65 per cent). These were both higher than the average for White students (55 per cent), and the 'other' ethnic group were also around this level.

● White students were more likely than most minority ethnic groups to be taking a year out (to travel *etc.,* 12 per cent).

● Black African students were the most likely to be planning to take a postgraduate course/further study'(38 per cent).

These results were very similar to those of just *final year* students (*ie* using the final year sample only). These are shown in Figure 7.1 for minority groups, but we have focused on *full-time students only* (for consistency with the FDS). This pattern is very similar to the above discussion, though the percentages change slightly between the destination activities. There are slightly higher numbers overall planning to take a postgraduate course, and slightly less in most groups planning on starting in a job. However, the Chinese/Asian Other group is still one of the most likely to want to take a job rather than postgraduate study, yet in the FDS they are one of the more likely groups to go on to further study or training. It may be a bias in our sample, or the way the students interpreted the question, but we will need to wait till our follow-up to explore these plans further.

Ethnicity does, therefore, appear to impact on an individual's immediate job/career plans, with White and Black African students the most likely to be deferring entering the labour market immediately after completing their current courses in HE. But as other studies have shown (see Purcell and Pitcher, 1996) there is considerable variation according to subject of study in students' career plans. A considerably higher proportion of engineering, maths/computing and business studies graduates seek to enter

**Figure 7.1: Student plans after completing course, by ethnicity (full-time final year students)**
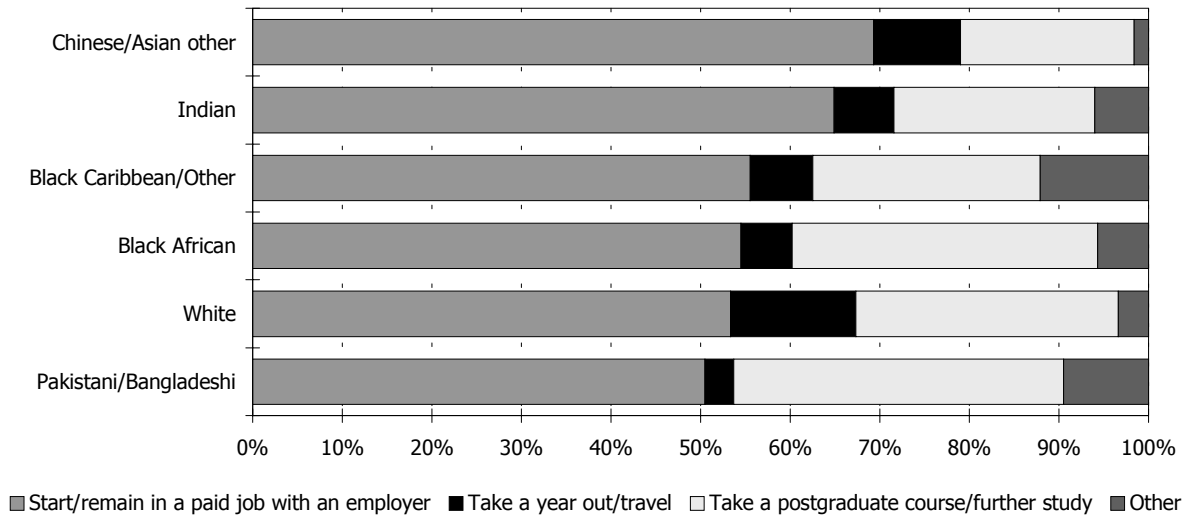


*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

employment on graduation, and this is likely to be part of the explanation why the proportion of Indians and Chinese in our study planning to follow this route is higher than for other groups (as more from these ethnic groups are found in these subjects, see Chapter 2). Male graduates in general are also more likely to plan to enter employment on graduation, and so gender differences are likely to be another factor.

### 7.5.2 Actions taken about getting a job/starting a career

The survey asked a range of questions specifically designed to find out about job searching behaviours, and actions already taken to find a job/start a career by final year students. It was clear that there was considerable variation in the job search behaviours of students and the use of institutionally-based careers advisory services (which other studies of graduates have also found).

Final year students were initially asked whether they had already obtained a job with an employer. As would be expected, the majority had not — only a quarter of all final year students had already obtained a job by the time of the survey, April/May 2002. A noticeable exception were Pakistani/Bangladeshi students, of whom nearly half reported that they had already obtained a job. When this was investigated further, it was found that male Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were the mostly likely to have already obtained a job with an employer (62 per cent).

When only full-time students were considered, this pattern changed slightly (see Figure 7.2). The proportion who had already obtained job dropped to around one-fifth on average. The Pakistani/Bangladeshi figure dropped considerably, to one-third, but was still higher than any other minority ethnic group (next

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**Figure 7.2: Have you already obtained a job with an employer? (percentages of final year, full-time students in each ethnic group who had obtained a job)**
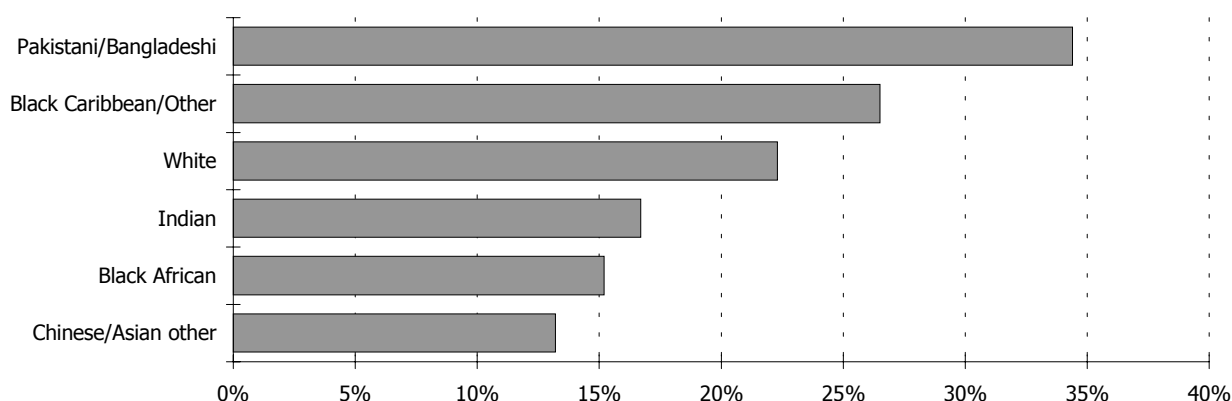


*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

highest was Black Caribbean, 27 per cent). The comparative White student figure was 22 per cent.

Next, we asked students about the area in which they were looking for a job (or had already got one). Almost half of the sample of final year students (48 per cent) were planning to stay locally, in the region or city of their institution. When only full-time students were included, this figure dropped slightly, to 43 per cent. A similar percentage would look more widely (across the UK) and one in eight were looking to go overseas. Among ethnic groups in full-time study:

● Black Africans were the most likely to stay locally (55 per cent), followed by Pakistanis/Bangladeshis (50 per cent)

● White students were the least likely to want to stay locally (37 per cent)

● nearly one-fifth of Chinese/Asian Other students would like to get a job abroad, considerably higher than any other group.

We looked more closely to see if there was a London effect, as a high proportion of minority ethnic students are studying in London. Overall, the majority of those in London wanted to stay working in London (55 per cent), compared to one-third of those not in London, who wanted to stay locally, in the same city or region. This is likely to be part of the explanation of why the majority of the Black African group said they wanted to work locally, as a high proportion of them are at London institutions.

We went on to ask all those students who had not yet obtained a job (the vast majority, four-fifths of the final year students), whether they had started seriously looking for employment. Only around two-fifths of them had started seriously doing so. This means around half of all of the final year sample had not started looking for nor secured employment by this time, April/May of final year.

**Figure 7.3: Have you seriously started looking for a job? (percentage of final year, full-time students, not already secured a job)**
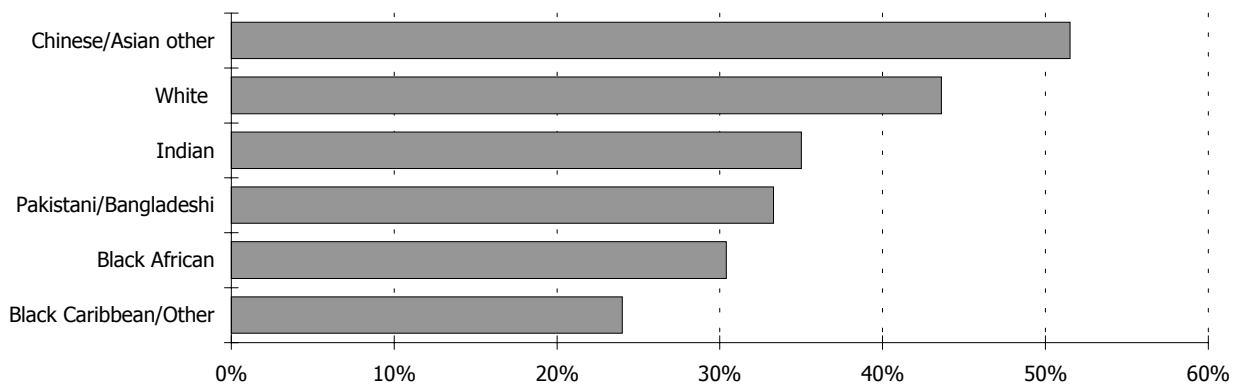


*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

Of those who had not secured employment, the Chinese/Asian Other group were the most likely to have seriously started looking for a job (50 per cent), whereas Black African, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Other students were the least likely to have started looking for a job (31 per cent, 33 per cent and 20 per cent respectively). Again, focusing on full-time students only, we find the pattern is similar (see Figure 7.3).

Most had not been looking for employment for very long. Less than one in three of final year students started their search for employment before their final year (*ie* September 2001), and a half since January 2002. Black Caribbean/Other students and Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were the most likely to have started their employment search before then (46 per cent and 48 per cent respectively), although this data includes those who have a job already, which may account for the earlier job seeking amongst Pakistani/Bangladeshi students.

Of those final year students who had not yet started looking seriously for employment, one-third said that they would start immediately after their exams, and a further quarter in Summer 2002. The rest said they would start to look for a job once they had finished their postgraduate course/further study, or when they returned from travelling. Numbers were too small in this category to discern any pattern by ethnic group.

These differences in timing of job search will be looked at further once we have more information about their actual outcomes from the follow-up survey.

### 7.5.3 Careers advice and information/job search activities

We were interested to find out the extent to which students from different ethnic groups accessed the institution-based careers advisory and information services or used other sources, as this is

**Table 7.2: Careers/employment search actions taken (percentage of final year, full-time sample, base = 383)**

| Action taken | % |
|---|---|
| Used the Internet to look up organisations | 68 |
| Looked at careers information websites | 52 |
| Got advice about jobs/careers from friends/family | 49 |
| Visited the university/college careers office | 48 |
| Bought job vacancy newspapers or magazines | 39 |
| Used careers publications | 34 |
| Had an interview with a university/college careers adviser | 28 |
| Registered with a recruitment agency | 22 |
| Used employer/organisational directories | 21 |
| Got advice/information from professional body | 14 |
| None of these | 8 |

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

thought to have an impact on successful transition to the labour market. The vast majority of final year students had accessed some type of careers advice/information relating to finding a job/career on completion of their current course. Overall, the most frequent action taken/information accessed was that of 'using the Internet to look up organisations' (64 per cent of all final year students, slightly more among full-time students, 68 per cent). The use of the Internet in this way was the most popular medium, and over one-third of students had used this as a source of information about employers. The next most common action/activity was also IT related – 'looking at careers information websites' (48 per cent). (Note, this was a multi-response question, so respondents could give more than one information source/activity). However, nearly half of all final year students also reported that they had used a non-IT source (*ie* 'got advice about jobs/careers from friends or family'). A similar proportion, 43 per cent, had visited their university/college careers service', but this increased to 48 per cent among full-time final year students. However, almost half of them, 28 per cent, had had an interview with a careers adviser at their institution.

There were some differences according to ethnic group, most notably (for all final year students):

● Indian students were the most likely to have used the Internet to look up organisations (70 per cent), slightly more than the average for White students, and Pakistani/Bangladeshi the least likely (51 per cent), and were also the least likely to use careers information websites (33 per cent).

● Most ethnic groups, except the Black Caribbean/Black Other group, were at least as likely or almost as likely, to have made a visit to the institution's careers office, but all minority ethnic

groups were less likely than White students to have had an interview with a university/college careers adviser. Black Caribbean/Black Other and Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were the least likely to have had an interview with a university/college careers advisor (22 per cent and 21 per cent respectively).

Part-time students were less likely across all ethnic groups to have used the careers services of their institution.

Among full-time students, it was particularly noticeable that Indians were almost twice as likely to have had an interview with a careers adviser than Pakistanis/Bangladeshis (30 per cent compared to just 16 per cent), though they were almost equally likely to have made a visit to the institution's careers office. Subject differences are likely to be part of the explanation of why students use different job search activities, and also the minority ethnic differences found above: for example Maths/IT graduates were the most likely subject group to take most of the actions, in particular visiting the university careers service, using the Internet and registering with a recruitment agency. They are one of the subject groups where graduates are most likely to go directly into the labour market after degree studies; and it is also a very competitive recruitment market at present. By contrast, business studies graduates, also a popular subject area with minority ethnic students, were the least likely to do many of the career search activities, in particular to not have an interview with a careers adviser in their institution. It may be that more of them take a more relaxed attitude about the labour market, or have less firm career plans than the maths/IT graduates. These issues will be explored further in the follow-up interviews, as well as cultural or other factors which may have relevance to making a successful transition to the labour market.

As well as being the most popular information source/ employment search activity, looking up employers on the Internet was also considered to be the most useful. Twenty-five per cent said it was the most useful of all the sources/activities engaged in (this question was not multi-response). This reflects, to some extent, the major shift that has taken place in graduate recruitment over the last few years, with an increasing number of employers, now the majority of the major recruiters, not only advertising vacancies on the web but considering it the most useful recruitment source, and moving over to online applications. A further 12 per cent of students had used web-based careers information sources.

Apart from the Internet, families and friends are still seen as useful sources when searching for employment — 15 per cent found 'advice about jobs/careers from friends/family' the most useful. As Table 7.3 shows, many of the others had low levels of support, including visits to careers office (11 per cent) and

**Table 7.3: Career actions found useful (percentage of final year, full-time students, base=378)**

| Action taken | % |
| --- | --- |
| Used the Internet to look up organisations | 25 |
| Got advice about jobs/careers from friends/family | 15 |
| Looked at careers information websites (*eg* Prospects) | 12 |
| Visited the university/college careers office | 12 |
| Bought job vacancy newspapers or magazines | 8 |
| Had an interview with a university/college careers adviser | 8 |
| Registered with a recruitment agency | 5 |
| Used careers publications | 5 |
| Got advice/information from professional body | 5 |
| None of these | 5 |
| Used employer/organisational directories | 2 |

*Source: IES/MORI, 2002*

interview with careers adviser (just seven per cent). Again, there were a few interesting differences between the ethnic groups, namely:

- Nearly one-fifth of both White and Indian students reported 'advice about jobs/careers from friends/family' as the most useful, much higher than for other groups. This may reflect their higher social class backgrounds, and also higher likelihood to have a parent or member of their family who was a graduate.

- Black African students were the most likely to have reported 'Used the Internet to look up organisations' as the most useful (32 per cent).

It appears from this, that students prefer more of an independent approach to job hunting, such as using the Internet and asking advice from friends, as opposed to sources of professional input *eg* advice from institutional careers advisers, professional bodies *etc.* Among the minority ethnic groups, Chinese/Asian Other, Black African and Indian students appear to most favour this approach.

We looked to see whether background made much difference to students' views of the most useful source of jobs/career information, by analysing the question by level of parental education. We found that those who came from families where a parent had experience of HE, were slightly more likely to think the Internet was the most useful source, but much more likely to favour getting advice from family or friends (56 v 42 per cent) than those which did not, but in other areas of information/advice, differences were small.

### 7.5.4 Any experiences/perceptions of racial discrimination?

A very small minority (21 cases) felt that they had experienced some form of discrimination whilst job hunting. Black Caribbean/ Black Other females were the most likely to be included in this group (though only six were included, so some caution is needed). However, it was noticeable that a number of White older students (age on entry 25+) were the most likely to report that they had encountered some form of age discrimination when they were job hunting. Again, this only relates to six cases, so the same caveats apply.

### 7.5.5 Career plans of the case study interviewees

It was clear from the interviews with the case study final year interviewees (15) that many are still undecided about jobs by the end of their final year, and the extent to which plans had been 'firmed up' by then ranged widely. The final year interviewees were a broad ranging group — approximately half were female, half aged over 21, most were studying full-time, around half were at a new university, and most were on degree courses.

Some of those interviewed had exact careers in mind, others knew the area they wished to work in but were not yet sure of specific careers. Yet others still had little idea of their eventual aspirations and were deferring this decision until later in their study, or after they had graduated. Mature students most usually had particular careers in mind, but so did a good proportion of the younger students.

Some felt that careers advice during the course would have been helpful in firming up career plans.

> '*You get to the final year and you don't know what to do — it would have been helpful to get careers information earlier on the course.*'
> (Black African man, aged 25-29, final year)

Examples of relatively vague career plans included 'to work in the social sciences'. Others were hoping to spend some time working abroad, most particularly those who had studied languages. Another student felt that he would possibly like to go into teaching.

There were some who had very clear ideas of what they wanted to do eventually, and how they were going to achieve this, *eg* a woman studying for a nursing qualification intended to enter nursing as soon as she could; a couple of students wanted to be lawyers, and were planning to do bar vocational work and then barrister training. Another woman wanted to be a commercial pilot, and planned to get her private pilots license whilst still at university, to help support this aspiration. One student was studying medicine and wanted to go into NHS plastic surgery.

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This meant a six year degree followed by time as a pre-registration house officer, which would qualify him to practise as a doctor.

Included in the sample were a few students who were planning to continue with postgraduate studies. This was either because it was required for their chosen job, or would help them with their chosen career, or because they wanted to continue with their education to give them an edge that others didn't have.

# 7.6 Summary

There are a number of differences in labour market achievements overall, between minority ethnic and White people. These relate to a range of cultural, social and economic factors, and also geographical factors. At the higher occupational levels, minority ethnic attainment has been growing, and although there is still a gap between White and minority ethnic attainment overall at this level, some minority ethnic groups have reached parity with the White population (in particular Indian men with White men; similarly Black Caribbean women and White women). However, the structure of employment of minority ethnic people continues to differ, with more employment of minority ethnic students in services industries, and less in large corporations.

This provides a context for graduate employment, and many of the themes in the general labour market seem to be present here, but there are also some specific issues and differences.

Early indications of graduate employment outcomes, from the FDS, show slight variations in the types of employment taken up by minority ethnic and White full-time first degree graduates. Much greater differences are apparent though, in the take up of further study or training, and also in unemployment rates. In particular, initial unemployment levels are higher for all minority ethnic groups than for White graduates. Most minority ethnic groups are more likely than White graduates to take up further study than go initially into jobs. These different outcome patterns have been shown to reflect, in part, differences in student characteristics and choice of subjects and institutions by minority ethnic student entrants, highlighted earlier. When these are taken into consideration, some of the differences in unemployment levels between ethnic groups reduce considerably. However, some small differences remain that cannot be explained wholly by these variations, and it is likely that other, less quantifiable factors, come into play. These have so far been relatively unresearched.

There is also some evidence that, although employment levels are lower for some minority ethnic graduates, the 'quality' of the jobs taken up by some minority ethnic groups is better on average than those of White graduates, *ie* more go into 'graduate-level' jobs.

Looking more long term, it is evident that minority ethnic graduates take slightly different labour market routes from White graduates. But, yet again, there is also considerable diversity within ethnic groups. After several years, the existing evidence (from several follow-up surveys) suggests that initial differences in unemployment rates tend to equalise.

There is a growing awareness among employers of the need to take action to try to increase their representation of minority ethnic students. This includes improving their graduate recruitment and selection processes, and also engaging more with HE institutions.

The survey has confirmed that differences exist between minority ethnic groups in their likely job/career outcomes, though the students surveyed had not actually finished their studies, and so the survey reported on their plans and actions taken to date to find a job. This showed that:

- Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were more advanced in their job search — one-third of full-time final year students had already got a job before the end of their final year; Chinese/Asian Other were the least likely, less likely than White students.

- Minority ethnic students were more likely than White students to be looking locally for employment, and Black Africans were the most likely.

- Most final year students made use of a wide range of sources of information about employers or jobs by this time, often via the Internet.

- Maths/IT graduates were more likely than other groups to have accessed more information sources, including the institution's careers office and recruitment agencies, and not surprisingly the Internet, while business studies students had done less in accessing sources of information for their job search at this stage.

- Indian students were the most likely group to have used the Internet in their job/employer search (likely to be subject related, as this group is strong in maths/IT), more likely than White students Pakistani/Bangladeshi students were the least likely.

- Minority ethnic groups were almost equally likely to have visited their institution's careers service, but less likely than White students to have had an interview with a careers adviser. In some minority ethnic groups, less than one in four had had an interview.

- Informal sources of advice — often from families and friends — were widely used, particularly by White and Indian students (and found to be more useful by students with parents with HE experience than those without), and many

students appeared to favour taking a more independent approach to job hunting.

- Though most had started their job search, many final year students were still undecided about jobs.

The intention is to follow up the final year students to find out more about their initial experiences in the labour market, and how their plans actually worked out. From this, we will have a better assessment of the employment outcomes of minority ethnic graduates, and where any difficulties are being experienced.

# 8. Summary and Conclusions

This interim report has presented findings on the research undertaken in the first stages of the project, which is about the flows into, through and out of higher education (HE) by minority ethnic students. There is less discussion here on outcomes and flows from higher education into the labour market than on entry and experiences within HE, but these will be covered in more depth in the final report, due in March 2004, when findings from all of the stages in the research will be reported.

This interim report mainly draws from a review of the existing statistical and research evidence, and a large survey of current students (sample of 1,319 students at 33 institutions), plus 30 case study interviews, undertaken by IES and MORI in Spring 2002.

In this final chapter, we summarise the main findings and draw conclusions from the research evidence so far.

## 8.1 Aims, scope and limitations

As set out in Chapter 1, the focus of this project is on the main variations between the *visible* minority ethnic groups in the UK-domiciled undergraduate population at English institutions, and their likely causes. By undergraduate, we mean both degree and sub-degree students (*eg* HND/HNC, DipHE), in full-time and part-time study. By minority ethnic group we mean Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and Asian Other groups. Though these minority ethnic groups have been mainly used in ethnicity research and analysis of the British population (and were the 91 Census ethnicity categories), there are recognised complicated issues in defining ethnicity, and differences in terminology used. This can make it difficult to 'unpick' all of the many distinguishing features and patterns in the minority ethnic population, which is very heterogeneous. However, they do help to explain a large part of them, and as shown in this report, are the most commonly used minority ethnic student groups in research on their participation in higher education (*nb* from 2001/02, the new 2001 Census ethnicity categories have replaced these in the HE student statistics, which have some variations in their definitions from those used previously. We have not used them in

this report, mainly for the sake of consistency with available data and with research work undertaken prior to 2001.)

As seen in the report, there exists a range of quantitative evidence on minority ethnic students in higher education, mainly from the national student population statistics. But there are limitations in the amount of analysis that can be undertaken at an individual minority group level (in particular by qualification and mode of study), as numerically, some of the minority ethnic student groups are small, and also diverse. Often, the data are combined into larger groupings to explore differences by certain key variables (*eg* age, gender) for the whole undergraduate population, but this has the disadvantage of not being able to see clearly where some of the significant differences actually lie and, even at a more aggregated level, there are still some difficulties with the reliability of some of the data that can be produced. This has been highlighted in the report. Also, it is the main reason why much of the analysis in the report focuses on the largest sub-set of the undergraduate student population, those on full-time degree study, who make up the majority of undergraduates.

Our large scale student survey, undertaken by face-to-face interview, aimed to supplement the available quantitative evidence, especially that on social/cultural issues likely to be of particular relevance to some minority ethnic groups (and which are not covered much in the national student population statistics). It also aimed to provide an up-to-date insight into factors influencing entry to undergraduate study, and the subsequent experiences of minority ethnic students. The latter is a comparatively under-researched area, where existing evidence is based mainly on a few small scale, and mainly qualitative, studies. A relatively complex sampling methodology had to be employed in the survey to meet the objectives of providing a robust set of data, that was representative of the whole student population and also could enable analysis to be undertaken at an individual minority group level, and also sub-group level (*eg* ethnicity and gender). It was necessary therefore, to over-sample some groups by quota setting. We also over-sampled final year students to ensure that we had sufficient numbers to provide a follow-up cohort of graduates (which will be surveyed this year). Despite the use of over-sampling of minority groups, some of the sub-groups in the achieved sample are inevitably fairly small, and so some caution is needed in the interpretation of results concerning them. Nevertheless, we believe the survey has produced a sample dataset which, although complex to analyse and present because of its various component parts, provides a wealth of new and interesting insights on the views and behaviour of various groups that make up the minority ethnic undergraduate student population. We have confidence in the reliability of most of the results of the 'representative' part of the sample, and also of those in the 'minority ethnic' part, as they cover a good cross-section of various groups of students.

# 8.2  How does participation differ?

Chapter 2 'unpacks' the available statistical evidence on partici-
pation, from HESA and UCAS datasets for 2000/01 in England. It
focuses on key themes overall and, in particular, on differences
between individual minority ethnic groups in their participation
in undergraduate study and in different parts of the HE sector. It
also identifies a number of key personal and background variables
as likely determinants of the HE participation patterns of study of
minority ethnic groups. The main messages are:

Firstly, on overall representation (section 2.1):

● Minority ethnic students make up a growing share of
  undergraduate students in England, currently representing
  15.2 per cent of the total (of all UK-domiciled undergraduate
  students, *ie* in HE institutions, including the Open University
  and FE colleges). Minority ethnic students at level 4+ in FE
  colleges currently represent 11.6 per cent of the total of these at
  that level, compared to 15.6 per cent of undergraduate
  students at HEIs, and 4.7 per cent at the OU.

● In aggregate, minority ethnic groups are not under-
  represented in undergraduate education overall, relative to
  their position in the working-age population in England, and
  no individual minority ethnic group is under-represented
  either. However, some groups are much better represented
  than others, in particular Chinese, Indian, Black African, Asian
  Other and Other (which includes some 'mixed ethnic' groups).

● When compared against their position in the young
  population (16-24 year olds), minority ethnic students, in
  aggregate, are not under-represented either, but this is not the
  case with all individual minority groups. Bangladeshi, and
  also Pakistani and Black Other groups, are likely to be under-
  represented when this comparison is made.

● It is likely that there are other variations in undergraduate
  representation when the data are more finely broken down
  (for example by both age and gender for each group),
  including some other pockets of under-representation (*eg*
  young male Black Caribbeans possibly), but this has not been
  confirmed in our data analysis to date, because of insufficient
  comparable population data (but will be looked at when the
  full population data come available from the 2001 Census).

Then, secondly, looking at their representation in parts of the HE
sector (section 2.2):

● Variation can be seen in a number of ways (by qualification
  level and mode, subject, type of institution and location) both
  between minority ethnic students in aggregate and White
  students, and between individual minority ethnic groups.
  Some differences are evident at a broad ethnic group level,
  between White, Black and Asian groups, and some are evident

within these groups, often (but not always) between Indian and Chinese and other Asians, compared with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and Black Caribbean compared to Black African groups (but here too, there are some similarities). This produces an overall picture of participation that is complex in places and difficult to generalise about.

- At an aggregate level, minority ethnic students are more likely:

  - to be on degree than sub-degree programmes than are White students

  - to be found on full-time than part-time sub-degree programmes at HE institutions

  - to be better represented in certain subjects, in particular medicine/dentistry, computer science, law and business studies at HE institutions (section 2.2.2)

  - and be better represented at new rather than old universities and HE Colleges, in particular new universities in Greater London (section 2.2.3)

- Despite not being under-represented overall in the higher education sector, there exist pockets of very low representation of minority ethnic students at undergraduate level, in particular:

  - in some major subject areas of HE — education, humanities, languages, creative arts and design and physical sciences

  - in some old universities, though not in all subjects (medicine is often an exception), in some specialist Colleges of HE, and in the Open University

  - in some regions outside London, in particular South West, Northern and East Anglia (section 2.2.4)

- At an individual minority ethnic group level, the most significant points of difference are:

  - A higher representation of most Asian students, in particular the Indian and Chinese groups, are on full-time first degree than other mode/level combinations (*ie* part-time degree, full or part-time sub-degree) at HE institutions compared to White students. In turn, White students have higher representation there than Black students (though full-time first degree study is still the majority study option for Black students). In contrast, Black Africans are particularly well represented, compared with other minority groups, on full-time sub-degree programmes at HE institutions.

  - In some of the more popular subjects with minority groups, some Asian groups have, comparatively speaking, very high levels of representation (*eg* Indians represent almost 16 per cent in medicine/dentistry, 14 per cent in computer science, eight per cent in business studies and

almost eight per cent in law; and a further 7.5 per cent in computer science and five per cent in law are Pakistanis)

- The new university sector attracts a much higher proportion of Black students than the old university sector, while for Chinese and Asian Other groups, the bias is only slightly towards the new sector.

Thirdly, looking at differences by personal characteristics and background (section 2.3):

- Women slightly outnumber men in the minority ethnic undergraduate population at HE institutions (as is the case among White students). However, women are slightly under-represented among Pakistani and Bangladeshi students, while men are highly under-represented among Black Caribbeans (section 2.3.1). These gender/ethnicity patterns vary by different areas of HE study.

- Although the age profiles of White and minority ethnic students are similar overall, Black students, and Black Africans in particular, are far more likely to be older on entry to full-time first degree courses than others; while most Asian students are around, or only slightly older than, the average (section 2.3.2).

- Minority ethnic students on full-time courses are more likely than White students to enter with vocational qualifications, and also to have lower average 'A' levels (section 2.3.3). In particular, Black students are more likely to be vocationally qualified than Asian students, and more likely to have lower academic qualifications, according to UCAS data. On average, Chinese and Asians Other are more highly qualified academically than White accepted applicants.

- Minority ethnic students entering full-time courses are considerably more likely to come from the lower social classes (IIIm-V) than White students. Bangladeshi and Pakistani students have the lowest social class profiles of all the minority ethnic groups. Black African, Chinese, Asian Other and Other groups are more similar to the overall (and to the White) pattern. Interestingly, the Indian group, who with these latter groups also, has one of the higher overall HE participation rates (see above), has a lower social class profile than them. This suggests that the link between social class (as measured by parental occupation) and HE participation in general, may not be so directly applied to some groups, such as Indians. Of more importance as a factor determining HE entry may be school type (though of course this is often linked to social background).

For a summary of the key differences between different minority ethnic groups, identified from the analysis of national datasets in Chapter 2, see Table 8.1.

Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education

**Table 8.1: Student profiles of ethnic groups, showing selection of indicators of personal characteristics and backgrounds (per cent) (England, 2000/01)**

| Ethnic group | % of all undergraduate students[1] | % on FT first degrees[1] | % on FT sub-degrees[1] | % aged 21+ on entry, to FT first degree[2] | % at new universities[2] | % of FT undergraduates studying in Greater London | % entry with 2+'A' levels[3] | % in social class IIIm-V[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 84.4 | 82.1 | 78.3 | 76.2 | 78.9 | 53.4 | 86.7 | 76.3 |
| All minority ethnic students | 15.6 | 17.9 | 21.7 | 23.8 | 21.1 | 46.6 | 13.3 | 23.7 |
| Black Caribbean | 1.4 | 1.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 2.3 | 4.1 | 0.6 | 1.4 |
| Black African | 2.5 | 2.1 | 6.6 | 6.1 | 3.9 | 10.0 | 0.9 | 1.6 |
| Black Other | 0.8 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 0.4 | 0.8 |
| Indian | 4.1 | 5.5 | 4.5 | 3.6 | 5.5 | 11.4 | 4.6 | 8.8 |
| Pakistani | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 4.6 | 2.0 | 4.9 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 2.6 | 0.7 | 1.5 |
| Chinese | 0.9 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 2.5 | 1.1 | 1.4 |
| Asian Other | 1.3 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 1.9 | 1.4 | 4.1 | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| Other | 1.9 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 5.3 | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| *N (known ethnicity)* | *1,067,277* | *632,277* | *82,323* | *125,328* | *467,361* | *130,994* | *174,396* | *58,292* |

[1] HEIs but includes the OU

[2] all undergraduates, HEIs excluding OU

[3] UCAS accepted applicants to ft courses

*Source: HESA, 2001 (England, students), UCAS, 2000 (English accepted applicants), 2001*

## 8.3  Why does participation differ?

It seems likely that the different personal and background profiles of minority ethnic groups of students, clearly evident from the analysis of the national population statistics (and data in Table 8.1), help to explain much of the variance in their overall HE participation rates and also in some of the observed patterns of study. In particular, age and entry qualifications/entry routes into HE appear likely as key determinants. These can be closely related to social class, and family and cultural backgrounds. Chapter 3 examines further the likely causes of the different participation levels and patterns of study, through a review of relevant research literature and analysis of our student survey.

Though a range of likely factors have been identified in the research literature, 'attainment' and 'aspirations' are considered to be the most significant for explaining the higher minority ethnic participation in HE overall, and also the differences between individual groups in particular (see sections 3.2 – 3.5). These are often linked, and formed by a range of cultural and social influences. In particular, the existing research evidence points to the main influences on HE entry as:

● pre-16 school experiences and attainment

● GCSE attainment

● decisions at 16 about leaving school, going to college or staying on

● positive encouragement of parents

● family social and economic background

● expectations about benefits, especially economic gain.

The student survey and case study interviews gave support to the importance of prior attainment, and also the patterns seen in the national statistical evidence, relating to age and entry route. In particular, the positive influence of family and friends and the 'pull' of expected economic benefits of HE participation were highlighted. It also yet again showed the extent of variation between minority groups according to their individual circumstances. The main points brought out from the survey and interviews were that:

● Members of families with HE experience (parents and/or siblings) have a role in encouraging HE participation. In particular, a lower proportion of Black Caribbean/Black Other students surveyed (a group with lower HE participation levels) had family experience of HE themselves (either parents or siblings). For Pakistani/Bangladeshi students, having only siblings with HE experience (rather than parents) was more likely (section 3.7.2).

- Religion may be a factor of influence for some groups, as the representation of some religious groups among ethnic groups differed from the position in the general population, in particular among Indians (section 3.7.3). The findings need to be given further research attention.

- Generation is also likely to be a factor, as more second than first generation groups were among our student sample (but this is likely to relate to social class and other factors) (section 3.7.4).

- Prior activity *ie* what doing when making decisions about applying or not (*eg* in school, college, work *etc.*) is an important variable (as well as previous education establishment already identified in the national statistics). In particular, Black Caribbean/Black Other groups were much more likely to apply to HE from employment than an educational establishment, compared to other minority groups (3.7.5).

- Significant numbers of minority ethnic students, in particular Black students, are older on entry. Some, especially Black, students are more likely to delay entry to HE to work first, while others, especially Asians, choose to work earlier and come back to study in their early twenties, to get or improve, their qualifications needed to get a place (section 3.7.7).

## 8.4 Why do participation patterns differ?

A similar set of student variables which determine overall participation of minority ethnic groups (for example age, gender, entry qualification, social class), also affect the different patterns of participation, in particular at different qualification levels, subjects and types of institution. This is evident from the national statistics of participation, discussed in section 8.2. Chapter 4 of the report focuses on this, and in particular factors shaping choices and HE destinations of different minority ethnic groups, evident from the existing research evidence and investigated in our student survey. Previous research has identified two main causes:

- The first is that different factors are of relative importance in the student choice and decision making process to different groups of students (section 4.1). Minority ethnic students take account of a similar range of issues to White students in deciding where and what to study in HE (though for some these decisions may have been taken earlier than at the application stage). However, they appear to be more influenced in choice of course/subject area by job/ employment considerations and families, than White students on average. As to choice of institution, graduate employment prospects, distance from home, perceived quality of the course, entry qualification needed and 'fitting in' have been shown in previous research studies to be more important influences for minority ethnic students, than for students on

average. In particular, wanting to stay close to home, and graduate employment prospects, have been identified as more important factors influencing choices made by Asian students. However, the evidence from the existing research literature is not conclusive. Gender is an important variable in subject choice in general, and age and entry qualifications on subject and also institutional choice, and these all vary by ethnic group.

● The other likely cause is racial discrimination in the admission process (section 4.2). Research on student application and admission statistics has provided evidence suggesting the existence of discrimination against minority ethnic students at old universities, but not at new universities. This is also thought to be part of the explanation for the low representation of minority ethnic students at old universities. Some discriminatory practices have been found in admissions to certain subjects (*eg* medicine) in the past also.

Our student survey supports much of the existing research evidence in general on student choice, though here again, the diversity of the minority ethnic student groups makes generalisations less useful. Overall, employment prospects were given more attention by minority ethnic than by White students in their choice of course/subject, another indication of the greater interest of minority ethnic students in outcomes and its effect on participation (see summary of Chapter 3 above). On institutional choices, the survey results indicated graduate employment prospects and location as factors likely to be of more importance to minority ethnic groups, but less so than previous research has implied. These factors tended to come much lower down the list of factors of importance in choosing institutions for all students, regardless of ethnicity (*ie* offering the right subject and type of course were the most important by far, and relatively few gave employment prospects or location as their main choice factor).

The survey was not able to provide much evidence on perceptions about any racial discrimination in admissions, to back up previous research related to old universities, but that maybe partly because many of our minority ethnic sample were likely to have applied mainly to new rather than old universities. Neither did it suggest that minority ethnic students were more likely to take up places on the 'wrong' courses/institutions for them, as they were almost equally likely as White students to have made a 'false start' of some kind on their HE studies. But this 'wrong choice' did not seem to arise from receiving significantly less information on HE to help decision-making about HE choices, or them experiencing more problems with the application process, than White students, as most found the application process relatively straightforward. Parental influences on choice of HE, yet again, were more evident among minority ethnic than White students, more so for Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Black African students. Our survey of prospective students is currently investigating influences on

choice of HE and will be able to provide a better insight into some of these issues.

## 8.5 How does progress within HE differ?

Moving on to look at experiences and progress of minority ethnic groups once they have started their HE programmes, Chapter 5 shows statistical evidence (based on the national student statistics, HESA) and also research on continuation and achievement.

The main evidence on progression is:

- Black students, in aggregate, have higher early leaving rates from full-time degree courses than Asian students, who in turn have higher rates than White students (see section 5.1.1). There is no further analysis available of the statistics by individual minority ethnic group, mainly because of data reliability issues, nor for sub-degree students, or part-time students.

- Once allowances are made for the variations between minority ethnic groups in their compositions, such as age, gender, subject and in particular their entry qualifications, most of the difference between these broad ethnic groups in early leaving rates disappears. The 'unexplained part of the variation could be home/culture factors, or other external factors (*eg* relating to their financial situation and pressures of working while studying), or internal (course related or institutional) factors, which are not covered well enough by the HESA data sets.

- The relatively small amount of research done on student retention supports the statistical evidence that prior education and background are main explanatory factors. It identifies inappropriate choices made/dislike of study choice, financial/personal problems and various course-related difficulties as main reasons for early leaving. But there is little of a substantive nature that focuses specifically on explanations of early leaving of minority ethnic students (section 5.1.2).

- Our survey of current students showed male and older students to have been more 'at risk' of early leaving than others (they had seriously considered leaving in the past). But there was no consistent pattern evident within individual minority groups according to these personal variables, though Black Africans overall were the more likely to have seriously considered leaving (section 5.1.3). The main reason students gave for considering leaving was financial difficulties. This was followed by academic pressures of various kinds (*eg* failing exams, missing essay deadlines, *etc.*). Minority ethnic students were more likely than White students to mention both of these types of reasons for seriously considering 'early leaving'.

The overall conclusions that can be drawn from this evidence are that personal factors, in particular age and entry qualifications, are the more important factors of influence on retention of groups of minority ethnic students, but that other factors can have a role to play, including financial and academic work pressures. There seems little difference between minority ethnic and White students in these respects. There is insufficient evidence available at present to draw firm conclusions, at an individual minority ethnic group level, about who are more likely to leave early, nor whether any specific factors are more likely to affect some groups more than others.

Turning to achievement, the statistical evidence (from HESA student records) shows that:

- class of degree varies between minority ethnic groups, but with all minority ethnic groups achieving lower class degrees on average compared with White students. Female Black students fare the worst (section 5.2.1)

- again, much of this variation can be explained by the effect of other student variables, in particular different entry qualifications and education background, and so the effect of ethnicity alone on class of degree appears to be relatively small on the whole.

Other explanations put forward from the research literature as to why minority ethnic students do less well in degree performance overall suggest negative effects of racism in assessment, and negative effects of term time working, but there is insufficient evidence of these at a national level to draw firm conclusions.

## 8.6 Are their experiences within HE study different?

The survey could not look at actual degree outcomes (as they had not completed courses yet; but we will be doing this in the follow-up survey of final year students planned for 2003), but it showed up a number of problem areas impacting on their academic performance to date, which may contribute to explaining the lower attainment rates achieved by minority ethnic students, shown above. These were mainly financial difficulties, effects of term-time working, lack of support or encouragement from lecturers and various problems relating to their course/study facilities, among a very wide range of problems or difficulties reported (Table 6.1). More minority ethnic than White students reported most of the main kinds of problems given, but reporting levels varied both between and within minority ethnic groups, and also among White students. Only a small number (around one in eight of the minority ethnic students) reported any experience of racial discrimination or harassment (section 6.4).

Because of the increasing importance of financial issues to many students, we asked specific questions about their financial support

arrangements and overall financial position. Financial difficulties has been linked in other research to early leaving and, as mentioned above, was one of the main problem areas highlighted by students in our survey. There were some important differences evident both between minority ethnic and White student groups, and between individual minority ethnic groups, in particular:

- Student loans were most often mentioned as a main income source, regardless of ethnicity, though were not as important for most minority ethnic groups compared to White students (section 6.2.1).

- Minority ethnic groups, and especially Asian, students were more likely to get parental contributions, than White students on average.

- Minority ethnic groups overall were more likely to be relying on income from term-time working than White students, with the exception of Chinese/Asians Other, who are the least likely.

- Borrowing from other sources was a less significant income source for minority ethnic groups than White students, especially Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Black Africans.

- Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians were the most likely to be living at home during term-time (section 6.2.2).

- Other factors, including religious affiliation and 'generation' are likely to influence the way students finance themselves, but of more significance on all groups was the effect of age.

- The extent of reported debt varied by ethnic group; most in debt were Black Caribbeans overall; but there were some people within other groups also more affected, in particular younger students (section 6.2.3).

- Minority ethnic students were more likely to be working a longer week, and more likely to be working longer hours in paid work. Black students had the longest week and also spent more of their time in paid work, while and Indian and White students had the shortest week and spent less of their time in paid work (section 6.3).

Although a wide range of issues affecting their study in HE were raised in the survey, students on the whole were highly satisfied with the choices they had made (but these were the ones that were still there, *ie* who had not left early due to poor choice). This applied almost equally to minority ethnic and White students, and also differences between minority ethnic groups were small. Students at old universities were on the whole more satisfied than those at new ones, and there was little variation between minority ethnic groups in this respect (section 6.5).

# 8.7  What are their graduate employment outcomes?

Finally, in Chapter 7, there is a discussion on graduate employment and job/carer plans of final year students.

It first provides a context for minority ethnic graduate employment, by showing statistics on the position of minority ethnic groups in the labour market generally. It is clear that although improvements have occurred, minority ethnic disadvantage overall still exists. There is also ethnic disadvantage in accessing high level jobs, especially for particular groups, such as Black groups and also some Asian groups (section 7.1).

To some extent this disadvantage is reflected in the main indicator of graduate employability, the initial unemployment rates of graduates, taken from the First Destinations Return (for full-time degree students), as shown in Table 7.1. But this is recognised generally as being only an early snapshot, and graduates take variable lengths of time to settle into the labour market (also many go on to postgraduate study). Also, it does not take account of 'quality' of jobs, and there is research evidence suggesting that this is higher for some groups of minority ethnic graduates (*eg* more taking up 'graduate level' employment), higher than for White graduates (section 7.2). Furthermore, as with other statistics on 'performance' reported above, many factors, including type of institution, subject, location, age, gender and prior education, can affect graduate 'employability'. When such variables are considered alongside ethnicity in the graduate unemployment statistics, most of the difference between minority ethnic groups disappears, leaving only a small residual that is likely to be linked to specific ethnic or cultural factors.

Looking more long term, there is a small amount of research on graduate careers that suggests that unemployment rates of different minority ethnic groups tend to equalise out after about two to three years (section 7.3).

Our survey was too early to explore graduate destinations (this will be covered in our follow-up survey), but it did explore plans, attitudes to jobs and activities undertaken to secure jobs among final year students section 7.5). The main messages are:

- Career plans varied between minority ethnic groups, though the most popular option for all groups was to find a job (over half). Minority ethnic groups were equally likely to be planning to start jobs, but more likely than White students to be planning to take postgraduate study (section 7.5.1). This pattern mirrors the actual destination pattern of new graduates in the First Destinations Survey.

- Geographical mobility also varied: minority ethnic groups, in particular Black Africans, were more likely than White students to be looking for, or had already found, a job in their

local area (*nb* minority ethnic students were also more likely to be studying closer to home, a further indication of being less geographically mobile). Some groups, such as Chinese/Asian Other, were much more likely to be seeking a job overseas (section 7.5.2).

● There were differences between minority groups in timing of job search activities: Pakistani/Bangladeshi full-time final year students were much more likely to have already secured employment than others, *ie* before the start of their final term (section 7.5.2).

● There were differences in how and what careers information/ advice was accessed to help them in job/career planning and getting jobs: overall, minority ethnic groups were more likely to have used informal sources or more independent approaches (section 7.5.3). In particular, some groups were much more likely to have used IT and Internet websites, and taken advice from family and friends than from careers staff, and generally these sources were found to be the most useful by most groups, including White students. These differences may reflect different student attitudes on the value to them of the career advisory/information services at institutions, or the differences between institutions in the services they offer, especially to non-traditional students.

These, and other employment issues, are being explored further in the follow-up survey of final year students, planned for 2003, as are the interviews with graduate recruiters, which will aim to find out more about their attitudes to recruiting and employing minority ethnic graduates.

# Appendix A: The Research Project

This is a two and a half year research study, funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DfES). It is being undertaken by a team of research staff at the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), in partnership with MORI Social Research, and with Professor Tariq Modood, Director of the Centre for Ethnicity and Citizenship at Bristol University. It started in December 2001 and is due for completion by March 2004.

The main objectives of the study are to asses the relative importance of various factors which encourage or inhibit the participation, retention and progression of minority ethnic students in higher education (HE) and, in particular, their transition to the labour market. It is exploring factors affecting individual ethnic groups, giving particular attention to, their educational and social background, the impact of student financial arrangements, choice of HE course and institution, and problems experienced in accessing HE study and higher level occupations. The research findings will be put in a policy context and appropriate recommendations made to the DfES.

This is a complex study, which is required to gather information and views from a number of sources including potential, present and past students, families of students, HE institutions and staff, employers of graduates, as well as making use of national statistical databases, and in a comprehensive and integrated way. Because it has many components, the research work has been divided into a series of work packages (WPs) as follows:

## WP1 — Literature and data review

The main aim of the review of literature and data is to draw out key themes of relevance to the study. This provides a contextual background for our work, and helps to identify issues for further investigation. This is not an in-depth review, but rather a check on the existing research evidence to ensure that all the current issues are being covered and to identify where there are important gaps in existing knowledge. A bibliography has been assembled. Relevant statistics on students have been obtained from HESA (via the DFES) and HEFCE, and on applicants from UCAS. The bulk of the work was done between February and May 2002, and reported in the first Working paper on the project (June 2002) but

we are continuing to identify relevant material in the course of the project.

# WP2 — Institutional sample

The overall sample design for the student survey was agreed with DfES, and the initial sample of institutions selected in March 2002. Institutions were selected from databases provided by HESA and LSC/FEFC (for HE in FE), accessed via DFES.

We received permission to conduct student interviews at 29 HEIs and four FE colleges.

In addition to participating in the student survey, representatives in the sample of institutions were interviewed to provide some context to the survey, in particular on their participation patterns by minority ethnic groups, and their policies and practices regarding minority ethnic students (*eg* Where do minority ethnic groups fit into their widening participation and strategies and targets? Are there any special services/issues/initiatives for minority ethnic students (*eg* mentoring, careers fairs?).

# WP3 — Student survey

The current student survey took place between March and early May 2002. Its purpose was to investigate the factors influencing participation and experiences of minority ethnic students in HE study. It used a quantitative approach based on face-to-face interviews with students on campuses. The survey was designed to produce a representative sample data set, and at the same time provide sufficient data of a robust nature to enable comparisons to be made between minority ethnic groups and White students, and also within some groups.

Interviews were conducted by trained MORI interviewers at a sample of 33 institutions in England, using quota sampling. Quotas were set according to ethnicity, gender, age, mode and type of study. Further details of the survey methodology are in Appendix B. The number of interviews conducted at each HE institution varied from around 30 to 80, plus ten at each of the FE colleges. Only UK-domiciled undergraduate students were included in the student sample.

A total of 1,319 students were interviewed, which exceeded our target of 1,250. The MORI interviewers were successful in achieving their quotas across a range of variables, including ethnic group. The main difficulty lay in obtaining sufficient numbers of part-time students, and achieved quotas were lower here. In addition, 30 in-depth interviews with were undertaken by IES staff as case studies.

The initial analysis and report writing on this phase took place over the summer of 2002, and the results formed the second working paper of the project, submitted to DfES at the end of September.

# WP 4 — Survey of potential students

Work began on this phase in September 2002, in partnership with the survey organisation, Employment Research. Its purpose is to investigate intentions of minority ethnic students regarding HE entry, factors affecting their decisions about choice of institution and course, and experiences to date. It focuses on Year 13 (and equivalent) students, *ie* people who are likely to be applying for HE places next year (2003 entry).

A sample of 19 schools and colleges in England are taking part. These are schools and colleges which are known to have an above average proportion of minority ethnic students. Thus, it is a purposeful sample that will provide data on students (White and minority ethnic groups) from these types of education backgrounds, rather than a nationally representative sample (which would be impossible to achieve in these circumstances).

A total of 2,200 questionnaires have been sent out, for self-completion by students in the target group, in November 2002. The target is to achieve at least 1,000 returned, and we are well on our way to this. The aim is to close the survey in early February. In addition, there is a qualitative element, and interviews and focus groups are currently in progress at four colleges and schools.

The aim is to deliver a report on this stage of the research by the end of March 2003.

# WP 5 — Graduate survey

This is a follow up survey of past students, and is based on the final year student sample in Work package 3. A database has been set up with student contact details and re-contacted in June/July 02. The plan is to re-contact them in March 2003 by telephone, to find out about their initial experiences in the labour market or elsewhere (*eg* postgraduate study).

# WP 6 — Parent survey

This is being undertaken in conjunction with the student survey. The aim is to obtain views of parents of minority ethnic and White students to explore their influence on decisions by their sons and daughters to go on to HE study, and the support they are giving them. In particular, it will provide us with further information

about parental characteristics, which are likely to have a greater effect on students from some ethnic groups than others.

A sample of parents was obtained via the HE students who were interviewed in Work Package 3. This sample proved to be smaller in size than had been planned, which meant that the original design of the follow-up had to be revised. The research now comprises a combination of a smaller telephone survey, focusing on parental characteristics, with more in-depth face to face interviews with a sub-set, focusing on their attitudes to HE study.

MORI completed the telephone survey, with 80 parents, in November. This includes 23 parents from an minority ethnic group. These are now being followed up for further interview.

The aim is to match the parent data from the telephone survey to some of the student data, in order to create a linked file for analysis.

# WP 7 — Graduate recruiters

This package involves interviews with a cross section of recruiters of minority ethnic graduates. We are aiming to include around 20 organisations drawn from a range of sectors. They will be identified from the graduates themselves (see WP5) and from databases containing details of employers which recruit minority ethnic graduates. We hope to conduct up to three interviews with each employer. This stage is planned for May-July 2003.

# WP 8 — Reports and dissemination

A series of working papers are being prepared, providing initial findings from each of the work packages. The main outputs for wider circulation are an interim report, due early 2003, and a final report, due in draft in December 2003, and finalised by March 2004. The project has a website (www.ies.ac.uk/ethnicminorites) which aims to provide further details of progress on each of the stages and also invites contributions from other researchers.

# Appendix B: The Student Survey Methodology

## Survey approach

A quantitative approach, based on an interview survey on campus, was chosen as the most appropriate methodology for this study. From our experience of undertaking large scale student surveys, we believed it had many advantages over other methodologies (such as postal surveys, telephone interviews, or Internet-based surveys based on selecting students via institutional records) in terms of:

● an effective way to ensure a high response rate, as the interviews would be completed on-the spot and in person

● a high quality and representative sample, avoiding problems of non-co-operation by institutions and confidentiality issues regarding drawing samples from student records

● high quality quota controls can be enforced and quotas can be carefully monitored during the fieldwork

● the ability to incorporate questions to allow respondents to provide verbatim responses (copy of questionnaire is available on request to IES)

● interviewers are able to probe where relevant.

We set out to achieve a total of 1,250 face-to-face interviews, to be conducted by a trained MORI fieldforce, at a sample of HEIs and FE colleges in England. Interviews were to take place on the university/college campus, lasting for 15-20 minutes each on average.

## Sample design

The specification for the survey design was such that:

● It should produce robust findings which would be generalisable to the population, *ie* be representative of its target population: full- and part-time HE students in institutions within England who are usually resident in the UK (and therefore paying the 'home' student fee).

● At the same time it should provide sufficiently robust data about the different minority ethnic groups, to enable

comparisons to be made between them and a 'control' group of White students, and also compare sub-groups (*eg* gender and ethnicity together).

This was not straightforward to achieve because of the relatively small proportion of minority ethnic undergraduates overall (only around 15 per cent in English HEIs) with the largest single group, Indians, about four per cent and the smallest, Bangladeshis, fewer than one per cent; and also their very uneven distribution across the HE sector, especially by institution and geography. We also had to ensure that there were sufficient numbers of final year students in the sample to provide a follow-up graduate sample (see Appendix A, Work Package 5).

To achieve this, there were three elements to the survey design, a main sample and two booster samples:

- the main sample, designed to be a representative sample, with a target of 500 students. Ethnicity quotas for these interviews were set on the basis of broad White/non-White categories.

- a booster of 500 minority ethnic students, with ethnicity quotas set by detailed ethnic categories in order to permit sub-group analysis

- a booster of 250 final year students. We needed to boost the number of final year students so that we could generate a large enough sample to 'track' once they graduated and started looking for work.

The sampling strategy consisted of a threefold process: sampling institutions, recruiting institutions, and sampling students.

## Sampling institutions

First, a random sample of HE institutions (excluding the Open University) was selected, with probability of selection proportionate to size (number of students), and stratified by region and institution type (pre-1992 university, post-1992 university, and 'other'). The sampling frame comprised all HEIs in England, including universities and HE colleges. We calculated that a sample of 23 HE institutions, providing 20 interviews at each, which would form most of the 'representative sample' of undergraduate students. The distribution of students within the sampled HE institutions was compared to the national profile by region and type, to ensure that it was representative. It was also necessary to include HE students in FE colleges as part of the 'representative' sample (they make up six per cent of full-time equivalent [FTE] undergraduates), but a separate sample design had to be employed because there were no comparable data for the FE sector on which to base a sample design. Instead, we chose four colleges, two in the north and two in the south of England, with large numbers of HE students (for pragmatic reasons so as to

make quota selection and interviewing as cost effective as possible). They each contributed ten (total 40) interviews, mainly to the 'representative' sample.

For the booster of minority ethnic students, an additional six colleges had to be selected on the basis of their high representation of minority ethnic students (*ie* to allow the collection of sufficient data from minority ethnic students). Institutions with more than 25 per cent minority ethnic representation (not already selected for inclusion in the representative survey) were sampled on a random basis to provide much of this booster. The minority ethnic booster sample also included the representative survey institutions.

The final year booster covered all of the 33 sampled institutions.

## Recruiting institutions

Once the sample of 33 institutions was selected, the process of obtaining permission to conduct on-campus interviewing began. Letters signed by the Project Manager at IES, explaining the aims of the research, were sent to institution vice-chancellors or principals. Fax-back forms were included with these letters, to enable institutions to 'opt-in' and nominate a named contact person, with whom the research team could liase about institution-specific issues such as dates to avoid interviewing (such as exam periods), the best places to stand in order to recruit students, and the distribution of students doing different degree subjects around the university. Only two of the selected institutions refused to participate in the research, and were replaced by similar institutions, in terms of region, size and institution type.

Table B1 shows the breakdown of the type of institutions participating in the study by broad region. As can be seen, there is a higher proportion of institutions in London, which is due to the ethnic clustering in this area.

**Table B1: Type of institution within broad region**

| Govt region | Old university | New university | HE/FE colleges | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| London | 4 | 5 | 1 | 10 |
| Rest of South | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| Midlands | 2 | 4 | 1 | 7 |
| North | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| *Total* | *12* | *14* | *7* | *33* |

*Source IES/MORI, 2002*

Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education

**Student sample design**

MORI devised a sample design for the number of students to be interviewed at each institution, and also for the main and booster samples:

- Firstly, for the main (*ie* representative) sample, a minimum of 20 interviews needed to be carried out at each HE institution. In addition, a further 30 of our target 500 representative interviews should be at FE colleges providing HE.

- For the minority ethnic booster, the sample was sourced from the additional six institutions selected (*ie* those which had more than 25 per cent of their total population from minority ethnic students) and the representative sample. Institutions in the main sample were given additional ethnic booster targets, and around 200 of the overall 500 in the booster came from the institutions in the representative survey. This ensured that this booster sample included numbers of minority ethnic students in line with the numbers at their institution, including those with both high and low minority ethnic representations.

- The final year booster sample was made up of students from all sampled institutions.

Sample targets were set for the main and booster samples for each institutions, and then summed together to give a total target number of interviews at each institution. This ranged from 27 to 83.

Quotas were set for interviewers at each institution. The method of face-to-face interviewing allowed for quotas to be set on a range of key characteristics, in order to generate a sample of students that was representative of the institutions participating in the research. Quotas were set based on *institutional* profile data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and covered the following characteristics:

- sex
- subject of study (broad categories)
- ethnicity
- type of student (full-time/part-time)
- year of study (first year/final year/other)
- age on entry to current course (characterised as under 21, and 21 or over).

# Achieved sample and weighting

In total, our target of 1,250 was exceeded and 1,319 interviews were carried out. For analysis purposes and presentation of results we divided the sample into two main groups:

- **Subset A, the representative sample**: 535 undergraduate students (all years), comprising 465 White students and 70 minority ethnic students, drawn from the 23 sampled HE institutions plus the four colleges. This was checked for representativeness against the population (but only on HEIs in England, as all that was available at the time, *ie* not HE in FE) for a number of variables (gender, age, on entry, mode of study, year of study, subject and qualification aim). It was generally well matched except for age on entry, where it under-represented older students (only 34 per cent of the sample were 21 or older, whereas 57 per cent of the total population are of this age). Weights (*ie* multipliers) were given to individual records to adjust the sample to 'match' it to the population for this variable. There were also slight under-representations of part-time study and other sub-degree students and final years, where a similar procedure was carried out. The resulting 'weighted' sample is shown in Tables B2 to B4.

- **Subset B, the minority ethnic sample**: This comprised a total of 715 students, drawn from across all 33 institutions. It combined the minority ethnic booster with the minority ethnic students in the final year booster to reach this total. We followed a similar procedure as for sample subset A for comparing the sample with the population, in this case the minority ethnic student population in the HE sector. We also found a similar under-representation of younger students, and also part-time and sub-degree students (*nb* this is not unexpected from quota sampling methods, because part-time students are less likely to be found on campuses and more part-time students are older, also more are studying on sub-degree programmes). Again, a 'weighting' process was undertaken to address this.

- Of the 715 students in the minority ethnic sample, the largest groups were Indian (24 per cent of total) and Black African (23 per cent). Black Caribbean students made up 14 per cent, and they have been combined in the analysis with the much smaller group of Black Other (four per cent). Pakistani made up 14 per cent and they have been combined with the small group of Bangladeshi students (under four per cent). Chinese students comprised four per cent and a further 8.5 per cent had other Asian backgrounds (*eg* Malaysian). A further four per cent were grouped as 'Other' (including a range, *eg* American, Middle Eastern, Africans and mixed ethnic origins) — *nb* these groupings were constructed after taking expert advice, and based on similarities evident between some groups in the data on educational participation).

We also analysed some of the questions only for final year students (mainly reported in Chapter 7 on job/career plans). We had 530 final year students in total, drawn from across the total sample (*ie* from main sample and boosters). Though it is not

representative on ethnicity (54 per cent minority ethnic students) it was checked for representativeness on other characteristics, and similar small adjustments needed to be made as above, by age, mode of study, and qualification aim.

The following tables give further breakdowns of the achieved representative sample and achieved minority ethnic sample. Note, some of the percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding, and on some variables there are missing data where respondents refused to give a response, which is not shown.

**Table B2: Representative sample: ethnic breakdown**

| Ethnic Group | % | N |
|---|---|---|
| White | 87 | 465 |
| (All minority ethnic students) | (13) | (70) |
| Black Caribbean/Black Other | 2 | 11 |
| Black African | 2 | 12 |
| Pakistani/Bangladeshi | 3 | 17 |
| Indian | 3 | 16 |
| Chinese/Asian Other | 2 | 12 |
| Other | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 535 |

*Source IES/MORI, 2002*

**Table B3: Representative sample: personal characteristics of White and minority ethnic groups**

| Characteristic | White | | All minority ethnic groups | | All | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Male | 48 | 224 | 53 | 37 | 49 | 261 |
| Female | 52 | 241 | 47 | 33 | 51 | 274 |
| **Age on entry** | | | | | | |
| Under 21 yrs | 44 | 203 | 41 | 29 | 44 | 232 |
| 21 to 24 yrs | 20 | 91 | 29 | 20 | 21 | 111 |
| 25 yrs or older | 37 | 171 | 30 | 21 | 36 | 192 |
| **Activity prior to HE entry** | | | | | | |
| School | 16 | 73 | 10 | 7 | 15 | 80 |
| Sixth form college | 19 | 85 | 20 | 14 | 19 | 99 |
| FE/tertiary/other college | 15 | 67 | 20 | 14 | 15 | 81 |
| Working | 35 | 159 | 37 | 26 | 34 | 185 |
| Gap year/travel | 6 | 26 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 29 |
| Unemployed | 3 | 15 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 19 |
| Caring for child/relative | 4 | 17 | – | – | 3 | 17 |
| Other | 3 | 15 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 17 |

*Source IES/MORI, 2002*

**Table B4: Representative sample: Educational characteristics of White and minority ethnic groups**

| Characteristic | White | | All minority ethnic groups | | All | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Highest qualification** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** |
| Academic | 53 | 157 | 46 | 17 | 52 | 174 |
| Vocational/access/other | 48 | 142 | 54 | 20 | 48 | 162 |
| **'A' level points** | | | | | | |
| 15 or less | 35 | 107 | 38 | 13 | 36 | 120 |
| 16 to 25 | 42 | 126 | 44 | 15 | 42 | 141 |
| 26 or more | 23 | 70 | 18 | 6 | 22 | 76 |
| **Place gained highest qualification** | | | | | | |
| Comprehensive school | 18 | 81 | 6 | 4 | 17 | 85 |
| FE/tertiary/other college | 26 | 113 | 42 | 28 | 28 | 141 |
| Grammar school | 8 | 35 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 37 |
| Private/independent school | 8 | 34 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 43 |
| Sixth form college | 23 | 102 | 22 | 15 | 23 | 117 |
| University | 12 | 52 | 12 | 8 | 12 | 60 |
| Other | 6 | 26 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 27 |
| **Type of HE institution** | | | | | | |
| Old university | 33 | 153 | 17 | 12 | 31 | 165 |
| New university | 43 | 201 | 59 | 41 | 45 | 245 |
| HE in FE | 15 | 68 | 20 | 14 | 15 | 82 |
| HE in HE college | 9 | 42 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 45 |
| **Qualification studying for** | | | | | | |
| Degree | 78 | 363 | 73 | 51 | 77 | 414 |
| Sub-degree | 22 | 102 | 27 | 19 | 23 | 121 |
| **Year of study (within HE)** | | | | | | |
| First year | 37 | 171 | 46 | 32 | 38 | 203 |
| Final year | 33 | 153 | 33 | 23 | 33 | 176 |
| Other years | 30 | 141 | 21 | 15 | 29 | 155 |

*Source IES/MORI, 2002*

**Table B5: Minority ethnic sample: Personal characteristics of each minority ethnic group**

| Characteristic | Black Caribbean/ Black Other | | Black African | | Pakistani/Bangladeshi | | Indian | | Chinese/Asian Other | | Other | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** |
| **Gender** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 45 | 57 | 56 | 93 | 64 | 82 | 53 | 92 | 58 | 52 | 30 | 8 |
| Female | 55 | 70 | 44 | 74 | 36 | 47 | 47 | 82 | 42 | 38 | 70 | 19 |
| **Age on entry** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 21 yrs | 21 | 27 | 24 | 40 | 53 | 69 | 57 | 98 | 47 | 42 | 43 | 12 |
| 21 to 24 yrs | 21 | 27 | 40 | 60 | 29 | 38 | 25 | 43 | 28 | 25 | 11 | 3 |
| 25 yrs or older | 58 | 74 | 40 | 67 | 18 | 23 | 18 | 31 | 26 | 23 | 46 | 13 |
| **Activity prior to HE entry** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| School | 1 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 17 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 2 |
| Sixth form college | 13 | 16 | 20 | 31 | 37 | 45 | 34 | 57 | 23 | 20 | 33 | 9 |
| FE/tertiary/other college | 22 | 27 | 23 | 36 | 23 | 28 | 19 | 32 | 20 | 17 | 26 | 7 |
| Working | 55 | 69 | 39 | 62 | 21 | 25 | 27 | 46 | 30 | 26 | 22 | 6 |
| Gap year/travel | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 14 | 12 | 7 | 2 |
| Unemployed | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | – | – | 1 | 2 | – | – | – | – |
| Caring for child/relative | 6 | 7 | 5 | 8 | – | – | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| *Other* | *1* | *1* | *4* | *6* | *5* | *6* | *4* | *6* | *1* | *1* | *–* | *–* |

*Source IES/MORI, 2002*

**Table B6: Educational characteristics of minority ethnic sample**

| Characteristic | Black Caribbean/ Black Other | | Black African | | Pakistani/Bangladeshi | | Indian | | Chinese/Asian Other | | Other | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** |
| **Highest qualification** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Academic | 35 | 24 | 41 | 39 | 53 | 40 | 54 | 53 | 56 | 34 | 71 | 10 |
| Vocational/access/other | 65 | 44 | 60 | 57 | 47 | 35 | 47 | 46 | 44 | 27 | 29 | 4 |
| **'A' level points** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 or less | 49 | 21 | 26 | 18 | 54 | 37 | 39 | 42 | 33 | 19 | 61 | 11 |
| 16 to 25 | 44 | 19 | 63 | 44 | 34 | 23 | 47 | 51 | 51 | 29 | 28 | 5 |
| 26 or more | 7 | 3 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 8 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 9 | 11 | 2 |
| **Place gained highest qualification** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Comprehensive school | 7 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 13 | 9 | 15 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| FE/tertiary/other college | 47 | 57 | 47 | 77 | 35 | 44 | 37 | 61 | 24 | 21 | 41 | 12 |
| Grammar school | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 2 | – | – |
| Private/independent school | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 10 | 14 | 4 |
| Sixth form college | 26 | 32 | 26 | 43 | 37 | 46 | 34 | 57 | 30 | 26 | 38 | 11 |
| University | 16 | 19 | 12 | 19 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 19 | 16 | – | – |
| *Other* | *3* | *4* | *7* | *11* | *2* | *2* | *3* | *5* | *6* | *5* | *3* | *1* |
| **Type of HE institution** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Old university | 9 | 11 | 13 | 21 | 16 | 21 | 21 | 37 | 24 | 22 | 15 | 4 |
| New university | 86 | 110 | 84 | 141 | 62 | 81 | 60 | 104 | 68 | 61 | 82 | 22 |
| HE in FE | 5 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 20 | 27 | 17 | 30 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| HE in HE college | – | 1 | 2 | 4 | – | – | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | – | – |
| **Qualification studying for** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Degree | 80 | 102 | 83 | 139 | 71 | 92 | 72 | 125 | 79 | 70 | 82 | 23 |
| Sub-degree | 20 | 25 | 17 | 29 | 29 | 37 | 28 | 48 | 21 | 19 | 18 | 5 |
| **Year of study (within HE)** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First year | 36 | 46 | 29 | 48 | 43 | 55 | 38 | 66 | 23 | 21 | 25 | 7 |
| Final year | 32 | 41 | 44 | 74 | 34 | 44 | 36 | 62 | 49 | 44 | 50 | 14 |
| *Other years* | *32* | *41* | *27* | *45* | *23* | *30* | *26* | *45* | *28* | *25* | *25* | *7* |

*Source IES/MORI, 2002*

# The case study participants

A total of 30 interviews were conducted as case studies. They were all with minority ethnic students, but were chosen to represent the broad range of students in HE study:

- 16 were men, 14 were women

- they had a wide age profile: 15 were aged under 21 at the start of their higher education course, six were aged 21-24, five were aged 25-29 and four were 30 years of age or more at that time

- most (28) were studying on a full-time course

- 18 attended a 'new'(post 1992) university, ten attended an old university, a further two attended college of HE

- 26 were on degree courses, one was an HND student, one an HNC student and two were studying for 'other' qualifications, *eg* Dip HE.

Half of the interviews (15) were with students who had recently completed their first year of study, and half were with final year students.

# Appendix C: Student Tables

## Figure C1: Ethnicity classifications

**1a): HESA/UCAS statistics, up to 2000 (based on 1991 Census ethnicity groups)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **White** | White | | |
| **Black** | Black Caribbean | Black African | Black Other |
| **Asian** | Indian | Pakistani | Bangladeshi |
| **Other** | Chinese | Asian Other | Other (incl. mixed) |

**1b): Census 2001 question**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **White** | British | Irish | Any other White background | |
| **Mixed** | White and Black Caribbean | White and Black African | White and Asian | Any other mixed background |
| **Asian or Asian British** | Indian | Pakistani | Bangladeshi | Any other Asian background |
| **Black or Black British** | Caribbean | African | Any other Black background | |
| **Chinese or other ethnic group** | Chinese | Any other | | |

Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education

**Table C1: Minority ethnic and White students in degree study at HEIs (England, excluding OU), by subject area, 2000/01. Percentages of total in each subject**

| Ethnic group | Medicine & Dentistry | Subjects allied to medicine | Biological science | Physical sciences | Mathematical sciences | Computer science | Engineering & technology | Architecture, building & planning | Social, economic & political science |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 65.0 | 81.6 | 85.7 | 90.3 | 77.7 | 61.9 | 79.1 | 87.5 | 81.7 |
| All minority ethnic | 35.0 | 18.4 | 14.3 | 9.7 | 22.1 | 38.1 | 20.9 | 12.5 | 18.3 |
| Black Caribbean | 0.3 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 1.8 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| Black African | 1.5 | 3.2 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 2.0 | 4.7 | 3.3 | 2.1 | 2.6 |
| Black Other | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.1 |
| Indian | 15.9 | 5.6 | 3.8 | 2.8 | 7.8 | 13.8 | 5.2 | 2.4 | 4.7 |
| Pakistani | 4.8 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 7.5 | 3.2 | 1.3 | 2.4 |
| Bangladeshi | 1.4 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 1.0 |
| Chinese | 2.2 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 2.9 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 0.8 |
| Asian Other | 5.3 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Other | 3.4 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 1.4 | 2.1 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 1.6 | 2.3 |
| *N (known ethnicity)* | *19,637* | *56,844* | *47,165* | *34,628* | *11,803* | *46,410* | *48,863* | *15,862* | *58,663* |

**Table C1 (cont'd)**

| Ethnic group | Law | Business & Admin studies | Librarianship & information science | Languages | Humanities | Creative arts & design | Education | Combined | All subjects |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 69.5 | 75.8 | 82.1 | 92.1 | 94.2 | 90.4 | 94.0 | 82.6 | 82.1 |
| All minority ethnic | 30.5 | 24.2 | 17.9 | 7.9 | 5.8 | 9.6 | 6.0 | 17.4 | 17.9 |
| Black Caribbean | 2.6 | 1.8 | 3.1 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| Black African | 5.5 | 3.6 | 3.2 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 2.4 | 2.3 |
| Black Other | 1.3 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Indian | 7.8 | 8.1 | 3.8 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 1.3 | 4.9 | 5.3 |
| Pakistani | 5.4 | 3.2 | 1.2 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 2.2 | 2.5 |
| Bangladeshi | 1.5 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Chinese | 1.0 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| Asian Other | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.3 | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| Other | 3.2 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 1.6 | 2.2 | 1.0 | 2.3 | 2.2 |
| *N (known ethnicity)* | *28,129* | *75,718* | *13,584* | *44,066* | *25,092* | *62,475* | *35,734* | *71,873* | *703,470* |

Note: subjects with very low representation of minority ethnic groups, less than 5% (vet science and agricultural studies) have been omitted

*Source: HESA, 2001*

**Table C2: Minority ethnic and White students in sub-degree study at HEIs (England, excluding OU), by subject area, 2000/01. Percentages of total in each subject (main subjects only)**

| Ethnic group | Subjects allied to medicine | Languages | Creative arts/design | Education | Computer science | Engineering & technology | Business & admin studies | Social, economic & political science | Combined | All subjects |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 87.2 | 88.8 | 89.2 | 94.1 | 71.1 | 86.7 | 77.4 | 85.9 | 91.5 | 86.4 |
| All minority ethnic | 12.8 | 11.2 | 10.8 | 5.9 | 28.9 | 13.3 | 22.6 | 14.2 | 8.5 | 13.6 |
| Black Caribbean | 2.3 | 0.9 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 2.2 | 3.6 | 1.0 | 1.9 |
| Black African | 5.4 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 4.4 | 2.3 | 4.0 | 2.2 | 1.6 | 3.4 |
| Black Other | 0.6 | 0.7 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Indian | 1.1 | 1.3 | 1.9 | 1.0 | 8.6 | 3.4 | 6.3 | 2.2 | 1.2 | 2.4 |
| Pakistani | 0.4 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 6.6 | 1.8 | 3.1 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.4 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Chinese | 0.5 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 0.2 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| Asian Other | 1.0 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.1 |
| Other | 1.5 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 1.1 | 2.2 | 1.5 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 1.7 |
| *N (known ethnicity)* | *95,312* | *8,626* | *8,582* | *13,486* | *19,264* | *10,220* | *28,938* | *14,163* | *42,791* | *266,473* |

Note: Subjects with very low numbers of students (under 5,000) or very low representation (under 5%) of minority ethnic students not shown

*Source: HESA,2001*

**Table C3: Minority ethnic and White undergraduate students in English institutions including the Open University, and Level 4+ students at FE colleges 2000/01 (percentages of total at each type of institution)**

| Ethnic group | OU | Old University | New University | HE Colleges | All HEIs/OU | FE Colleges |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 95.3 | 86.1 | 78.9 | 91.4 | 84.4 | 88.4 |
| All minority ethnic | 4.7 | 13.9 | 21.1 | 8.6 | 15.6 | 11.6 |
| Black Caribbean | 0.5 | 0.7 | 2.3 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.6 |
| Black African | 0.6 | 1.5 | 3.9 | 1.2 | 2.5 | 1.4 |
| Black Other | 1.1 | 0.4 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| Indian | 0.3 | 4.1 | 5.5 | 1.8 | 4.1 | 2.3 |
| Pakistani | 0.2 | 1.8 | 2.9 | 0.9 | 2.0 | 1.7 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.3 |
| Chinese | 0.2 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Asian Other | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 1.3 | 1.1 |
| Other | 0.6 | 2.0 | 2.2 | 1.5 | 1.9 | 1.7 |
| *N (known ethnicity)* | *97,334* | *379,036* | *467,631* | *12,3276* | *1,067,277* | *130,221* |

*Source: HESA,2001; ISR (LSC), 2000/01*

**Table C4: Regional\* distribution of minority ethnic and White undergraduate students, England (row percentages)**

| Ethnic group | Northern | Yorks & Hum | E Mids | East Anglia | South East | Gtr London | South West | W Mids | North west | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 7.0 | 14.2 | 9.0 | 2.9 | 18.9 | 13.4 | 9.9 | 9.9 | 14.8 | 807,851 |
| All minority ethnic | 2.0 | 7.1 | 7.2 | 0.9 | 12.1 | 48.8 | 2.3 | 11.4 | 8.2 | 162,092 |
| Black Caribbean | 0.5 | 4.4 | 5.8 | 0.4 | 11.3 | 56.9 | 1.9 | 14.5 | 4.2 | 14,934 |
| Black African | 0.9 | 2.9 | 2.8 | 0.4 | 11.9 | 72.3 | 1.3 | 4.1 | 3.4 | 25,550 |
| Black Other | 1.4 | 9.8 | 5.3 | 0.5 | 11.9 | 50.7 | 3.0 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 7,199 |
| Indian | 1.5 | 7.4 | 12.8 | 1.0 | 11.2 | 39.3 | 1.9 | 16.5 | 8.3 | 43,520 |
| Pakistani | 2.7 | 16.2 | 6.4 | 0.4 | 8.7 | 32.2 | 1.0 | 16.2 | 16.2 | 21,550 |
| Bangladeshi | 2.1 | 5.1 | 3.5 | 0.7 | 9.9 | 58.4 | 1.4 | 10.5 | 8.4 | 6,554 |
| Chinese | 3.4 | 7.4 | 6.2 | 2.6 | 15.3 | 41.4 | 4.8 | 7.9 | 11.1 | 9,792 |
| Asian Other | 1.8 | 5.1 | 5.8 | 1.4 | 14.3 | 53.8 | 3.3 | 8.2 | 6.4 | 13,153 |
| Other | 4.1 | 5.4 | 5.6 | 1.6 | 16.2 | 48.0 | 4.1 | 6.8 | 8.1 | 19,840 |
| All (known ethnicity | 6.1 | 13.0 | 8.7 | 2.6 | 17.8 | 19.3 | 8.6 | 10.1 | 13.7 | 969,943 |

*Source: HESA, 2001   \*Region of HEI attended*

**Table C5: Minority ethnic and White undergraduate students at HEIs (excluding OU), by gender and mode, England (percentages of total in each gender/mode/type of study column)**

| Ethnic group | First degree Full-time | | First degree part-time | | Other undergraduate full-time | | Other undergraduate part-time | | All under-graduates | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| White | 81.4 | 82.7 | 78.6 | 84.6 | 72.4 | 81.6 | 87.7 | 91.0 | 81.4 | 84.7 |
| All minority ethnic | 18.6 | 17.3 | 21.4 | 15.4 | 27.6 | 18.4 | 12.3 | 9.0 | 18.6 | 15.3 |
| Black Caribbean | 0.9 | 1.5 | 2.3 | 3.4 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 1.3 | 1.9 | 1.1 | 1.9 |
| Black African | 2.2 | 2.1 | 5.7 | 3.4 | 6.6 | 6.6 | 2.7 | 1.6 | 2.8 | 2.5 |
| Black Other | 0.6 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| Indian | 5.9 | 5.1 | 4.1 | 2.5 | 6.8 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 1.3 | 5.3 | 3.9 |
| Pakistani | 3.1 | 2.2 | 2.6 | 1.2 | 5.1 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 3.0 | 1.7 |
| Bangladeshi | 0.9 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.9 | 0.5 |
| Chinese | 1.3 | 1.1 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 0.9 |
| Asian Other | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.6 |
| Other | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.0 |
| *Total known ethnicity (N)* | *294,919* | *337,358* | *27,817* | *43,376* | *29,030* | *53,293* | *57,276* | *126,874* | *409,042* | *560,901* |
| *Percentage with known ethnicity* | *95.0* | *95.6* | *88.4* | *90.0* | *92.1* | *92.9* | *82.0* | *84.9* | *92.3* | *92.2* |

*Source: HESA, 2001*

**Table C6: Main qualification of minority ethnic and White accepted applicants from England to degree courses (a range of other qualifications are included in total but not shown), 2000 UCAS entry (percentages with each as main qualification)**

| Ethnic group | Number of applicants | 2+ 'A' levels | GNVQ/BTEC quals | Access quals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 222,046 | 68.1 | 13.2 | 3.3 |
| All minority ethnic | 41,021 | 56.6 | 22.3 | 5.1 |
| Black Caribbean | 2,609 | 39.7 | 26.7 | 16.6 |
| Black African | 4,604 | 35.4 | 22.0 | 13.8 |
| Black Other | 1,697 | 43.7 | 25.0 | 12.1 |
| Indian | 12,253 | 64.9 | 23.0 | 1.0 |
| Pakistani | 6,486 | 52.6 | 28.2 | 2.3 |
| Bangladeshi | 2,051 | 56.9 | 27.1 | 2.9 |
| Chinese | 2,746 | 68.5 | 15.8 | 2.1 |
| Asian Other | 3,453 | 64.8 | 14.3 | 3.7 |
| Other | 5,112 | 61.9 | 16.5 | 5.9 |
| *Total (known ethnicity)* | *263,057* | *64.4* | *14.6* | *3.6* |

*Source: UCAS, 2000*

**Table C7: High achieving minority ethnic and White UCAS accepted applicants to full-time degree courses, from England, 2000 entry (percentages of 2+ A-level holders with 21+ points)**

| Ethnic group | Number with 2+ 'A' levels | % with 21+ points |
|---|---|---|
| White | 151,157 | 45.6 |
| All minority ethnic | 23,239 | 37.5 |
| Black Caribbean | 1,037 | 19.4 |
| Black African | 1,634 | 28.0 |
| Black Other | 742 | 24.1 |
| Indian | 7,959 | 40.0 |
| Pakistani | 3,413 | 29.3 |
| Bangladeshi | 1,168 | 26.2 |
| Chinese | 1,882 | 50.0 |
| Asian Other | 2,238 | 45.3 |
| Other | 3,166 | 44.8 |
| *Total (known ethnicity)* | *174,396* | *44.6* |

*Source: UCAS, 2000*

**Table C8: Social class breakdown of minority ethnic and White UCAS accepted applicants, from England, to full-time degree courses, 2000 entry (percentages from each social class background)**

| Ethnic group | Social class | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | IIIm-V | III-n | I-II | N (known social class) |
| White | 24.9 | 13.3 | 61.8 | 178,809 |
| All minority ethnic | 40.2 | 16.8 | 42.9 | 35,941 |
| Black Caribbean | 35.8 | 24.9 | 42.3 | 2,461 |
| Black African | 26.5 | 23.2 | 50.2 | 3,609 |
| Black Other | 29.8 | 21.9 | 48.4 | 1,499 |
| Indian | 43.7 | 13.5 | 42.7 | 11,781 |
| Pakistani | 54.4 | 12.0 | 33.6 | 5,216 |
| Bangladeshi | 54.9 | 20.1 | 24.9 | 1,609 |
| Chinese | 36.5 | 22.5 | 41.0 | 2,286 |
| Asian Other | 23.7 | 16.3 | 60.0 | 2,965 |
| Other | 26.0 | 15.7 | 58.3 | 4,515 |
| *Total (known ethnicity)* | *27.1* | *14.0* | *58.9* | *214,750* |

*Source: UCAS*

**Table C9: Previous educational establishment of minority ethnic and White accepted applicants to full-time undergraduate courses, from England, 2000 entry (percentages from each school/college sector)**

| Ethnic group | Accepted Applicants* | Independent | Grant Maintained | Maintained† | FE college/HE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 163,586 | 13.5 | 12.8 | 29.9 | 43.3 |
| All minority ethnic | 35,867 | 10.9 | 11.8 | 20.3 | 56.0 |
| Black Caribbean | 2,234 | 2.9 | 6.8 | 14.9 | 73.6 |
| Black African | 3,342 | 6.0 | 8.3 | 14.8 | 69.5 |
| Black Other | 1,380 | 5.9 | 8.8 | 18.0 | 65.7 |
| Chinese | 2,388 | 23.3 | 12.3 | 20.3 | 43.6 |
| Indian | 11,689 | 12.8 | 15.3 | 22.1 | 49.1 |
| Pakistani | 5,776 | 5.3 | 9.6 | 22.2 | 61.5 |
| Bangladeshi | 1,952 | 4.6 | 5.6 | 23.4 | 65.9 |
| Asian Other | 2,846 | 17.6 | 15.8 | 20.1 | 46.0 |
| Other | 4,260 | 14.1 | 12.8 | 20.3 | 51.9 |
| *Total (known ethnicity)* | *199,453* | *13.1* | *12.7* | *28.2* | *45.5* |

* excludes 'unknown education establishment'

† includes state comprehensive, grammar and sixth form centres

*Source: UCAS*

**Table C10: Minority ethnic and White students taking different qualifications at level 4+ at FE colleges (England), 2000/01 (numbers of students from each ethnic group and percentage of minority ethnic students)**

| Ethnic group | Degree | HNC | HND/DipHE* | NVQ | Other† | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White | 12,675 | 28,462 | 18,149 | 17,008 | 38,815 | 115,109 |
| All minority ethnic | 1,904 | 2,634 | 3,444 | 1,156 | 3,750 | 12,888 |
| Black Caribbean | 241 | 618 | 393 | 244 | 605 | 2,101 |
| Black African | 195 | 537 | 497 | 210 | 447 | 1,886 |
| Black Other | 134 | 200 | 185 | 61 | 217 | 797 |
| Chinese | 321 | 504 | 905 | 298 | 974 | 3,002 |
| Indian | 615 | 350 | 635 | 102 | 538 | 2,240 |
| Pakistani | 45 | 89 | 137 | 36 | 132 | 439 |
| Bangladeshi | 208 | 93 | 338 | 78 | 321 | 1,038 |
| Asian Other | 145 | 243 | 354 | 127 | 516 | 1,385 |
| Other/unknown‡ | 2,229 | 4,529 | 4,542 | 2,245 | 7,348 | 20,963 |
| *Total* | *16,878* | *35,625* | *26,135* | *20,409* | *49,913* | *148,960* |
| *Percentage of minority ethnic (of total less other/unknown)* | *13.1* | *8.5* | *15.9* | *6.4* | *8.8* | *10.1* |

\* Mostly HND (only 533 DipHE)

† 'Other' includes a wide range of qualifications, mostly non-prescribed HE (NPHE)

‡ It has not been possible to separate 'other ethnic' from 'unknown ethnicity' in this breakdown, but likely to be very small (in total the 'unknowns' account for most of them: 18,739 out of 20,963)

*Source: ISR, 2000/01*

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