



HOW CAREER SATISFACTION AMONG GRADUATES VARIES BY ETHNICITY

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To date, much of the research on outcomes from higher education has focused on earnings and whether or not a graduate secures highly skilled employment. It is widely acknowledged, however, that the advantages of obtaining a degree are likely to extend beyond such measures. Other benefits could range from better health and a more rewarding career for the individual to greater civic participation across society as a whole. Furthermore, a principal aim of higher education policy is to ensure that individuals from all backgrounds are able to realise their potential and ambitions after completing their course. A research team from HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) has therefore explored how graduate career satisfaction varies by ethnicity three and a half years after graduation.

KEY FINDINGS

After accounting for a wide range of factors that are correlated with both ethnicity and career satisfaction (e.g. subject/provider of study, prior qualifications, degree attainment, etc), we find that:

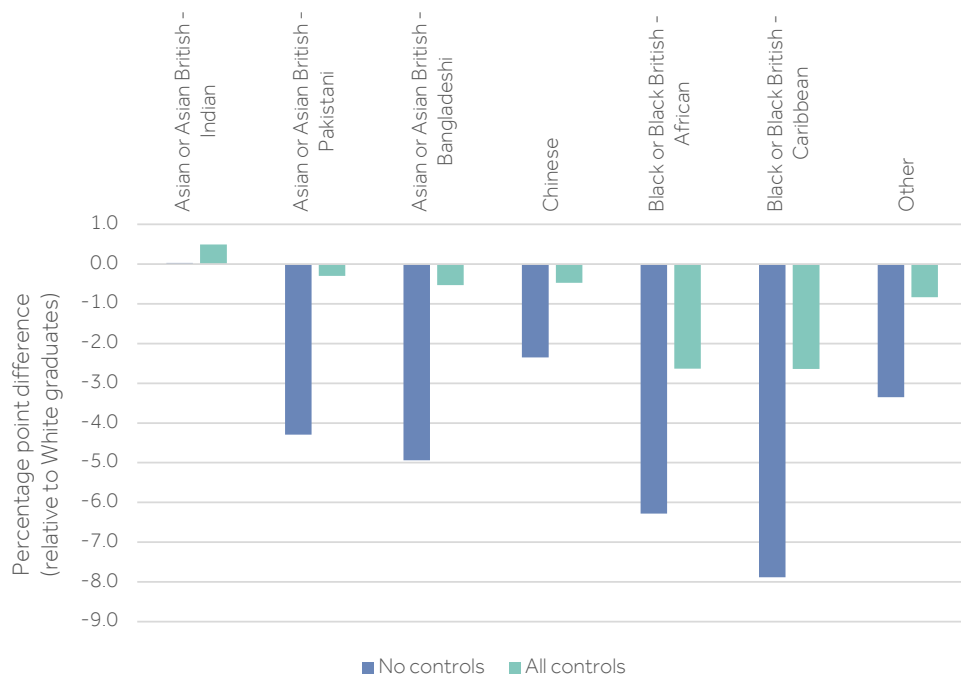
- Both Black Caribbean and Black African graduates aged 25 or under at the time of entering higher education are 2.6 percentage points less likely to report being satisfied with their career relative to White graduates in the same age group.
- Both Black Caribbean and Black African graduates aged 26 or over when beginning their degree are approximately 9 percentage points less likely to report being satisfied with their career relative to White graduates in the same age group.

On the basis of our study:

- We recommend that a further piece of qualitative research is undertaken to enable a more detailed examination of the factors that may explain why we observe these differences.
- Examples of the types of topics that could be covered in such work include access to careers advice before and during university, the role of family circumstances and higher education financing.

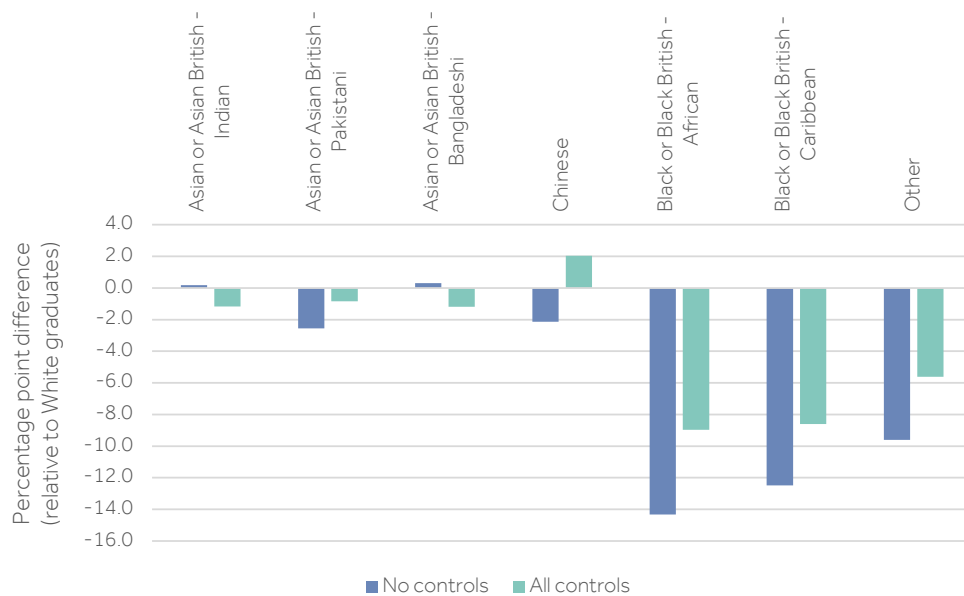
Ethnic differences in career satisfaction - age 25 or under

Sample: UK domiciled first degree graduates who participated in LDLHE 2010/11 or 2012/13



Ethnic differences in career satisfaction - age 26 or over

Sample: UK domiciled first degree graduates who participated in LDLHE 2010/11 or 2012/13



INTRODUCTION

Recent discussions around the value of higher education have noted that the advantages of studying at university are not just financial in nature. Indeed, students and graduates themselves have highlighted aspects such as interest in a particular subject and building towards a meaningful career as key reasons for pursuing a degree. Alongside this, a key focus of policy within the sector at present is ensuring individuals from all backgrounds have the opportunity to go to university and subsequently work towards their aspirations after graduation. Previous research has highlighted differences in degree attainment and employment outcomes by ethnicity. In this study, we analyse whether such variations are also evident when examining graduate career satisfaction.

DATA AND RESULTS

We draw upon the Longitudinal Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (LDLHE) survey linked to the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DLHE) and the HESA student record. LDLHE was a biennial survey administered by HESA, which aimed to capture outcomes three and a half years after graduation. Those who qualified in the academic year 2002/03 were the first to participate, with the final collection taking place among 2012/13 graduates. Only those who had responded to the original DLHE survey (run six months after graduation) were eligible to participate. Given the greater breadth of questions asked in the 2010/11 and 2012/13 questionnaires, it is these two years of data that we focus on for our analysis. After linking to DLHE and HESA records, our sample comprises 111,950 observations.

There are likely to be a number of factors that are correlated with both ethnicity and the career satisfaction of graduates. These include personal/study characteristics (e.g. socioeconomic status, subject studied, etc), degree attainment, activities after graduation, periods of unemployment and an individual's experience of higher education. In investigating the relationship between ethnicity and career satisfaction, it is therefore important to control for such variables. Linking LDLHE to DLHE and the HESA Student record allows us to do this.

Once we account for these factors, we find that differences remain in the levels of career satisfaction by ethnicity. Among those aged 25 or under at the time of entering

higher education, we find that Black African and Black Caribbean graduates are 2.6 percentage points less likely to be satisfied with their career than White graduates in the same age group. The discrepancies are greater among those who begin their degree aged 26 or over, with Black African and Black Caribbean graduates approximately 9 percentage points less likely to be satisfied with their career than White graduates.

FUTURE RESEARCH

There are various other factors that we have not been able to account for in our analysis that could help to explain the disparities we see in career satisfaction by ethnicity. These include the quality of the careers information available before and during university, as well as higher education financing. Family circumstances may also have a role to play and this may be particularly relevant for older students, among whom the differences in career satisfaction by ethnicity were particularly pronounced. Our recommendation would be for a piece of qualitative research to be undertaken to explore these matters in greater detail. This study represents one of the first instances in which HESA have utilised a more disaggregated version of the ethnicity variable in conducting analysis. Where sample size allows, we will continue with this approach in forthcoming research we undertake (for example, using the Graduate Outcomes survey). Collectively, we will use our findings to assess how we can improve our Official Statistics publications, as well as the Graduate Outcomes questionnaire.

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