

Black And Minority Ethnic Women 'Discriminated Against At Every Stage' Of Recruitment Process

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People from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are twice as likely to be unemployed than white women - and are reporting having to 'Westernise' their names or removing hijabs to improve their chances of getting a job.

The news comes in a Runnymede Trust report for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Race and Community, which finds that 25% of the unemployment rate for black and Asian men and women is because of "prejudice."

The report found women from ethnic minorities face discrimination at "every stage" of the recruitment process.

The unemployment rate for ethnic minority women in 2011 was 14.3%, and 6.8% for white women.

In a video made by the Runnymede Trust one woman with a British name, Louise James, tells of a job interview where someone's face "dropped" when they realised she was black.

"The woman called my name. There was me and a white person sitting down. She looked directly at the white girl and said 'Louise James.' I said to her 'No, I'm here actually,'" she said.

"She just kind of looked at me and her face dropped. From there the interview was very cold, very distant and obviously I never got the job from it."

Another woman, who preferred to remain anonymous, said she had legally changed her name to make it sound "less typically Muslim" to find a job. "Being half Bangladeshi and half Arab, in person my ethnic background has often been difficult to guess for employers.

"As I knew there was a particular stigma attached to being a Muslim woman, I decided to therefore change my name slightly to make it seem less typically Muslim sounding. This resulted in a clear increase in interview offers, and I managed to secure a position at a government department. Having seen this effect, I legally changed my name by deed poll."

The report found the situation had not improved since the 1980s for black women and was worsening for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. "With 17.7% of Black women and 20.5% of Bangladeshi and Pakistani women looking for work being unemployed compared to only 6.8% of white women, the inquiry found that this gap has remained constant for Black women since the 1980s, and has actually worsened for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women since 2004," it said.

Zamila Bunglawala, of the Young Foundation said the situation made a "mockery" of the education system. "If there are no policy interventions then we anticipate that the high level of unemployment among Pakistani and Bangladeshi women will just continue.

"That is not the society that we want in the UK that is not an inclusive society, it's not making the best of our young people and it makes a mockery of our education system. What is the point in going to university if you cannot get a job at the end of it and you cannot give back to society?"

David Lammy, the APPG's chairman, said it was clear women from ethnic minorities were facing a "greater challenge" to enter the labour market.

"Despite the overwhelming evidence, the unnaturally high unemployment rates of women in black and minority ethnic (BME) communities has been given fleeting attention.

"This has massive implications for families and society as a whole – particularly given the large numbers for Black families where the mother is the sole breadwinner and the high poverty rates of Pakistani and Bangladeshi families."

Unite's Collette Cork-Hurst, responding to the report called for ministers to take "urgent action." "Particularly the monitoring of redundancies by gender and ethnicity combined, and do more to tackle the labour market barriers faced by black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, including racism."

[The entire report can be found here.](#)