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## **Research Report Summary**

# **Relationships Between Demographic Characteristics, Job-Seeking Behaviours and Job-Seeking Outcomes Among New UK Graduates**

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This document summarises the second in a series of three research reports resulting from a project funded by the European Social Fund and the University of Bolton which sought to provide information of use in reducing the difference in post-higher education employment rates between White British and ethnic minority UK graduates. The first report deals with the analysis of a large data set concerning differences in factors which may have an influence upon peoples' job-seeking activities and the types of job that they are likely to target. The report summarised here concerns graduates' job-seeking behaviours and their outcomes, and details how some of the factors considered in the first report relate to these behaviours and outcomes. Both the first report and the report currently summarised are largely quantitative in nature. However, in a third report we take a more qualitative approach, presenting a small number of case studies viewing things from the employer's perspective. In all three reports discussion of theoretical issues is limited, priority being given to the reporting of data.

The data considered in the report summarised here was obtained from a sample of 140 UK students graduating from English and Welsh universities in 2004 and 2005 who, shortly before their graduation, provided data via paper questionnaires and, for some participants, via the Internet, relating to their demographic characteristics, their perceptions of the difficulties that would be experienced by people of their ethnicity in obtaining various jobs, and their occupational values. People were also asked to complete a structured diary about their job-seeking activities for up to six months after their graduation.

It was found that a six percentage-point difference exists whereby ethnic minority graduates were less likely to have found jobs six months after graduation. This mirrored the national statistics. However, ethnic minority graduates who did find a job were more likely to have obtained a graduate-level job than the White British graduates, this suggesting that although the headline statistics show an ethnic minority disadvantage in post-HE job-seeking outcomes with respect to employment rates six months after graduation, the picture may not be as discouraging for ethnic minority graduates when quality of job-seeking outcomes for those finding employment is considered.

White graduates were found to make greater use of Job Centres when applying for jobs, and greater use of Job Centres was found to be associated with a lower likelihood of obtaining a graduate-level job. However, despite these two findings, ethnic differences in Job Centre usage were not found to explain the ethnic difference in success in obtaining graduate-level jobs.

While in our first report we found that ethnic minority graduates perceive it as more difficult for someone of their own ethnicity to obtain jobs than White graduates, in the present analyses we found little evidence that perceived difficulties in obtaining jobs had an influence on either job-seeking success or job-seeking methods used. Thus, there was no self-fulfilling prophecy effect whereby perceptions of difficulties led to poorer job-seeking outcomes. Therefore greater ethnic minority perceptions of difficulties do not appear to lead to disadvantage. Also, there was little evidence that ethnic minority graduates were more likely to use their friends and family and / or local community contacts to obtain jobs because of fears of discrimination if they competed more widely in the job market. However, although such evidence was statistically unreliable, there was a small amount of evidence that where ethnic minority graduates do use personal contacts this may result in a disadvantage in terms of status of job obtained compared to similar usage by White graduates. Nevertheless, given that ethnic minority graduates' job-seeking resulted in a greater likelihood of obtaining a graduate job relative to White graduates, any such effects were more than counterbalanced by other factors.

The data did not bear out the notions that women graduates are likely to enjoy less success in the graduate job market because they fear they will experience gender discrimination in applying for higher status posts or because they stereotype such posts as

being more suitable for men. Indeed, in general, few statistically reliable gender differences were found. Thus, for example, although there appeared to be a large amount of Internet usage in making job applications such usage did not vary very much across gender and ethnic boundaries. This suggests that although females have often been shown to be less positively disposed towards using computers than males, and ethnic minority graduates may be disproportionately likely to come from less wealthy social backgrounds and therefore may have less ready access to computers, neither of these differences seems to be having a negative impact upon these demographic groups' use of the Internet for job-seeking. Rather, it is concluded that the increasing tendency of companies to use the Internet for recruitment may actually be helpful in resolving inequalities in access to jobs.

A large number of other findings are discussed in the report, and as concrete illustrations of job-seeking behaviours, descriptions of the job-seeking processes engaged in by four ethnic minority graduates are presented in an appendix.