



BRIEFING PAPER

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Unemployment by ethnic background

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1. Unemployment rates

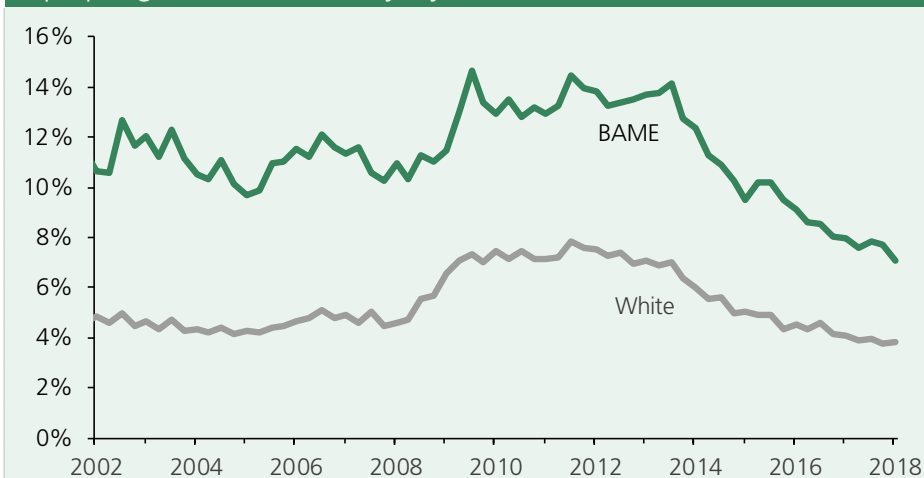
The UK unemployment rate (the proportion of the economically active population who are unemployed) was 4.2% in January-March 2018. The unemployment rate was **3.8% for the White ethnic group** compared to **7.1% for people from a BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) background**, although the rate varied between different ethnic minority groups.

Both these figures have decreased over the past year. In January-March 2017, the unemployment rate was 4.1% for the White ethnic group and 7.9% for people from a BAME background.

Following the recession unemployment rates increased, up to 7.8% for people from a White background and 14.7% for people from a BAME background. The rate for people from a BAME background only fell below the post-recession high for people from a white background in the last year.

Unemployment rate by ethnic background: UK, 2002-18

All people aged 16+, not seasonally adjusted



Source: ONS Labour Market Statistics, May 2018, Table A09

Unemployment figures are survey based. Smaller numbers of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds mean that unemployment estimates for ethnic minorities are more volatile than estimates for the White ethnic group. The volatility in the data can be seen from the jagged line on the graph.

2 Unemployment by ethnic background

A summary of unemployment data for January-December 2017 by ethnic background is displayed in the table below. The unemployment rate is highest for people from a Bangladeshi background at 12%, followed by those from a Pakistani or Black background (both at 10%).

Unemployment by ethnic background, UK January to December 2017

	Total (16+)	
	000s	Rate
White	1,140	4%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	90	9%
Indian	50	6%
Pakistani	50	9%
Other ethnic group	40	8%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	30	7%
Bangladeshi	30	12%
Any other asian background	30	6%
Chinese	10	4%
Total	1,460	4%

Source: ONS *Annual Population Survey* microdata

Notes: All numbers rounded to nearest 10,000 and may not sum due to rounding. Estimates based on survey responses so subject to sampling error.

1.1 Estimates by age group

More detailed labour market data by ethnic group are available for twelve month periods from the ONS Annual Population Survey, including data by age:

Unemployment by ethnic background and age: UK, January to December 2017

	16-24		25-49		50+		Total (16+)	
	000s	Rate	000s	Rate	000s	Rate	000s	Rate
White	420	11%	470	3%	250	3%	1,140	4%
Black	30	23%	50	8%	<10	6%	90	9%
Bangladeshi/ Pakistani	30	25%	40	7%	<10	8%	70	10%
Indian	<10	15%	30	5%	<10	4%	50	6%
Other ethnic backgrounds	30	16%	60	6%	<10	5%	110	7%
Total	530	12%	640	3%	290	3%	1,460	4%

Source: ONS *Annual Population Survey* microdata

Notes: All numbers rounded to nearest 10,000 and may not sum due to rounding. Estimates based on survey responses so subject to sampling error.

Other ethnic background includes those who responded Chinese, other, other Asian background and mixed/ multiple ethnic groups

For all ethnic groups shown in the table the unemployment rate was higher among 16-24 year olds than for other age groups.

The unemployment rate for Bangladeshi and Pakistani people aged 16-24 was the highest at **25%** in the year to December 2017. This compared to youth unemployment rates of **11%** for the White ethnic group (the lowest) and **23%** for people from a Black ethnic background (the second highest).

The White ethnic group had the lowest unemployment rate in all age categories.

1.2 Estimates by gender

The overall unemployment rate for males in the UK is slightly higher than that for females. In the year to December 2017, the male unemployment rate was **4.5%** compared to a

female unemployment rate of **4.2%**. However, this hides some differences across ethnic groups.

Among people from a White and “Other” ethnic background, the unemployment rate was similar or slighter higher for men than for women.

Women from a Bangladeshi or Pakistani background had the highest unemployment rate of **14%**, which was 6 percentage points higher than that of Bangladeshi or Pakistani men (9%).

Unemployment by ethnic background and gender: UK, January to December 2017						
	Male		Female		Total	
	000s	Rate	000s	Rate	000s	Rate
White	650	4%	500	4%	1,140	4%
Black	40	8%	50	10%	90	9%
Bangladeshi/ Pakistani	40	8%	40	14%	70	10%
Indian	20	4%	30	7%	50	6%
Other ethnic backgrounds	60	8%	40	6%	110	7%
Total	800	4.5%	660	4.2%	1,460	4%

Source: ONS *Annual Population Survey* microdata

Notes: All numbers rounded to nearest 10,000 and may not sum due to rounding. Estimates based on survey responses so subject to sampling error.

Other ethnic background includes those who responded Chinese, other, other Asian background and mixed/multiple ethnic groups

2. Sources and notes

Data for calendar quarters are taken from the Office for National Statistics’ monthly [Labour Market Statistics](#) bulletin, Table A09. New data are published four times a year, in February, May, August and November. Estimates are not seasonally adjusted, meaning they do not take into account changes that would usually be expected to occur within the course of the year.

More detailed data can be obtained for twelve-month periods from the Office for National Statistics’ Annual Population Survey. Results by ethnic group are not routinely published but may be obtained via analysis of the underlying survey microdata, as has been done here.¹

All figures are survey-based and are therefore subject to sampling error. Estimates for ethnic minority groups are more volatile than estimates for the population as a whole, since estimates are based on smaller numbers of survey respondents. Some of the reported differences between groups may simply be down to statistical ‘noise’ rather than genuine differences.

Further information on youth unemployment is available in the Library’s note on [Youth unemployment statistics](#). A summary analysis of labour market statistics and trends is available in the Library’s monthly paper, [People claiming unemployment benefits by Constituency](#).

¹ Office for National Statistics. Social Survey Division. (2017). *Annual Population Survey, June 2016 – July 2017*. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 8160, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8160-1>

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