

Ethnic minority students get fewer university offers, research shows

Pakistani students are least likely to be selected, according to a study of 50,000 applicants conducted by the LSE

[Datablog: White British more likely to get university offers than other ethnicities](#)

Abby Young-Powell

theguardian.com, Wednesday 23 July 2014 09.55 BST



Even after researchers took into account academic attainment, ethnic minority groups were less likely to be offered a place at a full range of institutions. Photograph: Alamy

Students from black and ethnic minority backgrounds are less likely to receive conditional university offers than comparable white British applicants, research from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) has shown.

The research, the most comprehensive study of its kind, looked at 50,000 Ucas applications and found that applicants from non-mixed race minority groups were significantly less likely to be offered a university place than white applicants.

Even after researchers took into account academic attainment, family social class background, sex and the type of school attended, ethnic minority groups were less likely to be offered a place across the full range of institutions that received applications in

2008.

The findings differ from previous studies, which has only found disparities in more elite, older institutions.

Dr Michael Shiner, associate professor at LSE who conducted the research, says: "Our data covers the full range of institutions and offers a full picture. It raises concerns about the fairness of the admissions process.

"We would encourage universities to look at the findings and to think about how the system disadvantages students from some backgrounds and to eliminate that disadvantage."

On average, Pakistani candidates received seven fewer offers for every 100 applications, and Bangladeshi and black African candidates received five fewer offers than equivalent white British students.

Applicants from other groups, including Indian, Black Caribbean and Chinese were also less likely to receive offers than white British candidates. However, the applications of mixed-race students were not affected.

In response to the research, David Lammy, Labour MP for Tottenham, who is investigating the under-representation of British ethnic minority students in higher education, says universities can't continue to be "so unreflective of wider society".

Lammy says: "This research raises yet more questions about the diversity of our universities and the processes that determine who is given the opportunity to attend them."

Jeremy Crook, director of the Black Training and Enterprise Group, says that the research is worrying and has called for Ucas to consider a nameless application process.

He says: "[The research] suggests that there is an element of conscious or unconscious racial bias in the application process. Given these ethnic disparities, Ucas should now consider introducing a nameless application process."

The research follows the recent publication of admissions data for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which showed that British ethnic minorities are significantly less likely than their white British peers to be offered places at the two institutions.

Dr Wendy Piatt, director-general of the prestigious Russell group of research-intensive universities, says her members "work very hard to encourage students from a wide range of backgrounds to apply".

She says: "There are other factors aside from academic achievement, including the number of A-level options offered to students at some schools, that affect the chances of students from black and minority ethnic groups getting on to their preferred course. We also know that some groups of students are more likely to apply for the most

oversubscribed courses."

Shiner, however, criticises the group's response, labelling it "disappointing" and "defensive", and calls on universities to look further into the findings.

The [National Union of Students \(NUS\)](#) has also called on universities to make changes to their admissions processes.

Malia Bouattia, black students' officer for the NUS, says: "We have a long way to go to close the gap for black students in education and if universities are truly opposed to discrimination they should make some serious changes in admissions and procedures."

More from the guardian

[Peaches Geldof inquest to begin](#) 23 Jul 2014

[The first world war and the colour of memory](#) 22 Jul 2014

[Manchester United's Wilfried Zaha ready to impress Louis van Gaal](#) 23 Jul 2014

[The Secret Life of Students isn't an accurate portrayal of student life](#) 18 Jul 2014

[Birmingham schools 'feel like the Balkans', says Labour](#) 22 Jul 2014

© 2014 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.