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BARRIERS TO BLACK,  
ASIAN AND MINORITY  
ETHNIC (BAME) WOMEN  
PARTICIPATING IN THE  
ECONOMY

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# BARRIERS TO BLACK ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BAME) WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN THE ECONOMY

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Since Chwarae Teg was established, much progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in Wales. However, the picture of progress towards equality changes dramatically when we focus on the intersectional experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women living in Wales.

BAME women are increasingly marginalised; they are further away from the labour market, under-represented in positions of power and influence, and are more likely to be living in poverty. While BAME women experience the well-documented gendered barriers to the workplace, such as access to childcare, they face additional racial inequalities and biases that make it increasingly difficult to access, enter and progress in work.

However, the experiences of BAME women are not homogenous; they vary significantly on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, age, religion and migration status as well as other factors of identity. Therefore a one-size fits all approach to addressing barriers faced by BAME women will not work. It is crucial that the voices and experiences of different BAME women are heard, and used to inform policy and practice at Government level, in business, in trade unions and in wider civil society. These institutions should be more diverse, with fair representation of BAME women to ensure they are able to serve everyone equally.

To date, the experiences of BAME women have largely been overlooked in research, particularly in a Welsh context, with a lack of disaggregated and regularly collected data making it difficult to measure progress. This research aims to begin to correct this gap in knowledge about the experiences of BAME women in the Welsh economy, and start a discussion based on their own recommendations for Wales.

The current climate makes this research particularly pertinent. Repercussions from the 2016 European Referendum have affected communities and resources in Wales. Threats to funding pose a particular risk to BAME women who often depend on these community groups, services and programmes promoting equality. Political divisions are also having a significant impact on BAME women, often exacerbating existing racial tensions and biases, and recent years have seen a sharp increase in hate crime incidents. It is important that during this volatile time we listen to the voices of BAME women to inform how we progress equality and create cohesive communities.

With this research we set out policy recommendations for Government, Business, Trade Unions and other agencies in order to address some of the barriers that BAME women face to employment. We also aim to spark a wider conversation about the role of BAME women in the Welsh economy, to ensure that their voices are heard and that they are able to achieve their potential. The key findings and recommendations are specified in this Summary Report, but a more detailed understanding and analysis can be found in the substantive report.

We are extremely mindful in publishing this research that it is never possible to speak for all women, and we are conscious of our position at Chwarae Teg and how we use it to ensure that the experiences and interests of all women are considered, represented and empowered as we strive to be a truly equal Wales. Many of our findings and recommendations will be clearly felt and understood by BAME women themselves, but should be illuminating for others. We commit to using our position and influence for all women.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This research aims to understand the experiences of BAME women in employment in Wales. The research asks:

**What are the experiences of BAME women in accessing and progressing in work/the Welsh economy?**

In order to establish this, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1 What does the statistical evidence demonstrate about BAME women's participation in the Welsh economy?
- 2 What are the barriers that BAME women experience to participating in the economy?
- 3 How accessible and inclusive are employability and careers support programmes for BAME women?
- 4 What changes would BAME women in Wales suggest are needed to tackle the barriers they experience?

The research prioritises and uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data aims to demonstrate the current condition of BAME women's employment based on existing statistical data sets, such as the Annual Population Survey and Census 2011. However this information is limited, as there's an absence of recent, Welsh-specific, gender-disaggregated statistical data broken down by ethnicity. Certain sets of statistics also use different classifications of ethnic groups, with some grouped together.

Given these limitations, qualitative evidence is crucial to truly understand the experiences of BAME women and to understand what is causing the inequality seen in the statistics. The primary qualitative evidence for this report was collected through eighteen semi-structured interviews with organisations working with BAME women in Wales. Participatory observations were also carried out at a number of events and a roundtable was convened in the final stages of the research to discuss the recommendations of the report.

This Summary Report highlights the key messages and recommendations identified through the research, but the detailed analysis can be accessed through the substantive report.



### 3 DIVERSITY IN BAME COMMUNITIES

It is a misconception to consider BAME individuals as a homogenous group. Experiences of BAME women vary significantly based on other factors of their identity. In analysing the experiences of BAME women, we need to consider other intersectional factors to understand these differentiated experiences. These include:

#### Religion

For example, the growing issue of Islamophobia in the UK affects the experiences of Muslim Women. Despite being the second largest religion in the UK, there are also significant gaps in data about Muslim women's position in the economy and participation in public life.<sup>1</sup>

#### Migration status

This affects the employment and welfare rights of women, as well as women's vulnerability due to having no recourse to public funds.<sup>2</sup>

#### Age

While there are some universal experiences, there are also noticeable differences between first and second generation ethnic minority people, with research



<sup>1</sup> Miaari, S. Khattab, N and Johnston, R. (2019) Religion and ethnicity at work: a study of British Muslim women's labour market performance, Qual Quant vol. 53, issue 1, pp 19-47.

<sup>2</sup> No recourse to public funds is a condition imposed on someone due to their immigration status. If someone is subject to immigration control, they will have no recourse to public funds – this means that while they might have a permit that allows them to live in the UK, they have no access to benefits, tax credits or housing assistance that are paid by the state.

<sup>3</sup> Miaari, S. Khattab, N and Johnston, R. (2019) Op cit.

<sup>4</sup> Ethnic Minority Disadvantage in the Labour Market, Catney, G. and Sabater, A. (2015) JRF. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/ethnic-minority-disadvantage-labour-market> Access: September 2018.

highlighting that those who are second generation often have a better ability to bridge the gap in terms of differing experiences.<sup>3</sup>

#### Geography

The BAME population varies across Wales and is concentrated in Wales' largest cities, there is also regional variation in employment rates between different local authorities.<sup>4</sup>

Other factors include **nationality, disability, skin colour** as well as **class** and **socio-economic status**.

We use the term BAME throughout this report with acknowledgement of the diversity within BAME communities, and interpreting the term BAME as groups and people who identify themselves as other than White British. We analyse and are concerned with the differentiated experiences of women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and it is crucial to recognise that a one-size fits all approach will not work in tackling the barriers faced by BAME

### 4 BAME WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN THE WELSH ECONOMY

Evidence suggests that compared to the White population, most ethnic minority groups are economically disadvantaged; due to their position of disadvantage in employment, pay penalties like the gender and ethnicity pay gap, and a higher rate of persistent poverty among BAME households.<sup>5</sup> While all women have been hit disproportionately by austerity and welfare reform, with an estimated 80% of savings coming from women's pockets, analysis has shown that BAME households have been particularly hard hit, especially BAME women.<sup>6</sup>

Within certain ethnic groups, in particular Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African/Caribbean, BAME women are twice as likely to be in poverty as White British women. In 2015/16, 50% of Bangladeshi households, 46% of Pakistani households and 40% of Black African/Caribbean households were living in poverty, compared to 19% of White British

households.<sup>7</sup> JRF research found that persistent poverty was most prevalent among the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, with 37% of Pakistanis in poverty for two consecutive years, and 14% in poverty for three consecutive years.<sup>8</sup> While Black African/Caribbean groups didn't have as high rates of poverty, they had high rates of persistent poverty; 31% for two years and 23% for three years. Of the White population, nearly 73% were never in poverty, with 13% in poverty for two years, and 5% over three years in which they were observed.<sup>9</sup> Chinese and White Other groups have similar experiences to the White majority, and Indians experience slightly higher persistent poverty rates (16%) but a similar proportion was poor in all three years (6%).<sup>10</sup>

In Wales specifically, 39% of non-White households are in relative income poverty, compared to 23% of White households.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Poverty across Ethnic Groups through Recession and Austerity. Fisher, P. and Nandi, A. [2015]. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-across-ethnic-groups-through-recession-and-austerity> Access: September 2018

<sup>6</sup> Chwarae Teg, State of the Nation 2019, [https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SOTN2019\\_english.pdf](https://chwaraeteg.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SOTN2019_english.pdf) / Intersecting Inequalities: The impact of Austerity on Black and Minority Ethnic Women in the UK, Runnymede Trust. [https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/PressReleases/1%20bme\\_executive\\_summary-A3-01.pdf](https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/PressReleases/1%20bme_executive_summary-A3-01.pdf) Access: February 2019

<sup>7</sup> Intersecting Inequalities: The impact of Austerity on Black and Minority Ethnic Women in the UK, Runnymede Trust. Op cit.

<sup>8</sup> Poverty across Ethnic Groups through Recession and Austerity. Fisher, P. and Nandi, A. [2015]. Op cit.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Here we refer to non-white households as households where the head of the household is from a non-White background.

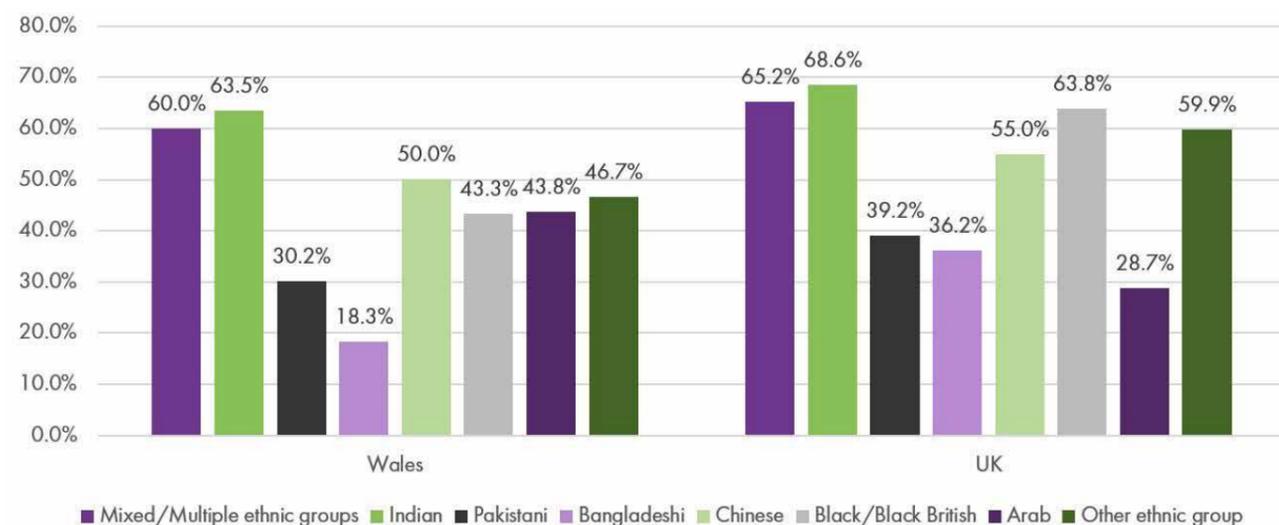
## 4.1 IN EMPLOYMENT

BAME individuals face difficulty entering the labour market, and within the labour market. They are over-represented in low-paid, precarious jobs, underrepresented in senior positions, and more likely to be overqualified than White British counterparts.

BAME women experience critical differences to men within ethnic groups – with low-pay occupations accounting for more female than male employment – but experiences also vary between ethnic groups.

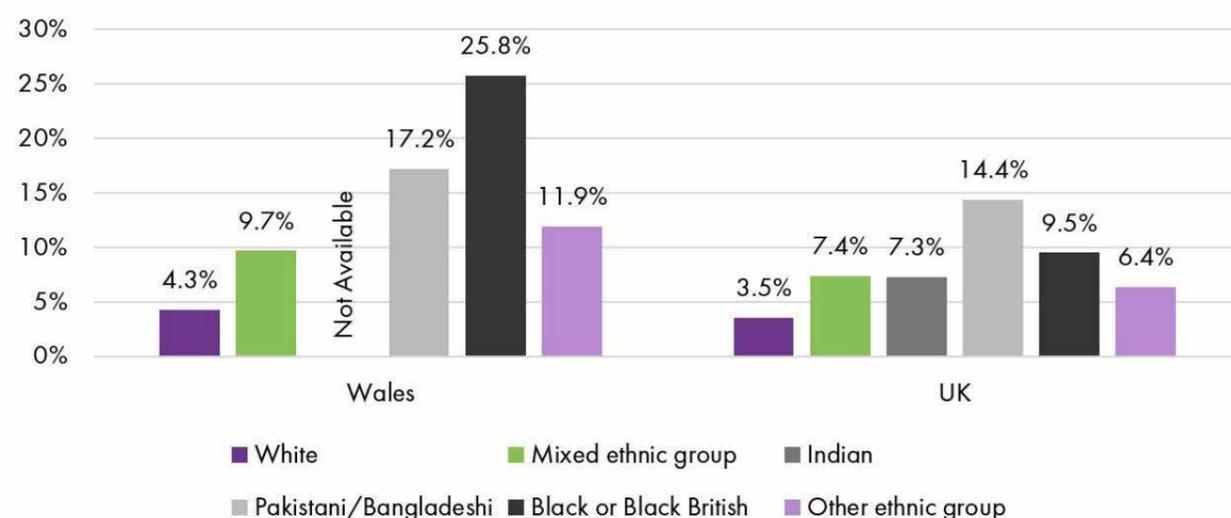
The proportion of female employment in low-pay occupations is greatest for Bangladeshi, any other Asian and Pakistani groups, and least for Indian and Chinese groups.<sup>12</sup> Analysis of Census data also highlights that women's unemployment rates were lowest for all White groups and relatively low for Chinese, Indian and Mixed White-Asian women, in contrast to the high rates for Bangladeshi (20%) and Pakistani (17%) women.<sup>13</sup>

### EMPLOYMENT RATE OF WOMEN AGED 16-64 BY ETHNICITY



1 Source: APS, June 2017-July 2018 estimates. Retrieved through NOMIS, January 2018

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF WOMEN AGED 16+ BY ETHNICITY



2 Source: APS, June 2017-July 2018 estimates. Retrieved through NOMIS, January 2018

<sup>12</sup> Projecting Employment by Ethnic Group to 2022, Owen, D. and gambin, L. et al (2015) Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/projecting-employment-ethnic-group-2022>. Access: September 2018

<sup>13</sup> Ethnic Minority Disadvantage in the Labour Market, Catney, G. and Sabater, A. (2015) . Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) p.23. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/ethnic-minority-disadvantage-labour-market>. Access: September 2018.

A YouGov and Business in the Community (BITC) survey conducted in 2015 found that both BAME and White British women see previous work experience as the most significant factor in finding a job, however there are differences in the value placed on this within BAME groups. 85% of Black Caribbean as well as White women rate previous work experience as the most significant factor in finding work, compared to just 55% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi women.<sup>14</sup> BAME women are also more likely than White women to apply for a job through a recruitment agency, at 57% compared to 46%. This increased use of recruitment agencies can be a result of a lack of networks, or an attempt to avoid unconscious bias in the application process.<sup>15</sup>

BAME women's experiences of intersectional inequality in the economy compound, meaning that women from almost all minority ethnic groups experience the gender pay gap, which is shaped by racial inequality.<sup>16</sup> Organisations like the Resolution Foundation have calculated BAME gender pay gaps, with the Foundation placing the figure at £3.2bn.<sup>17</sup>

However, it is difficult to generate a single figure for the gender and ethnicity pay gap due to the significant variations between ethnic groups. Within ethnic groups, there is a gender pay gap between men and women, but there is also a gap between ethnic minority women, compared to White British men. Fawcett Society analysis demonstrates these varying pay gaps and reveals that the full-time gender pay gap can range from a reversed pay gap of -5.6% for Chinese women, to 19.6% for Black African women in comparison to white men.

This table demonstrates the importance of understanding the varied experiences within BAME communities and amongst BAME women. Only with this detailed understanding of the unique experiences of BAME women are decision-makers able to effectively break down the barriers. It is crucial that any proposed solutions for achieving gender equality in workplace should be considered through an intersectional lens which accounts for and addresses the varied experiences of BAME women.

### FULL-TIME MEAN GENDER PAY GAP BY ETHNICITY IN 2010

	Internal GPG (within the given ethnic group)	External GPG (with White British men)
White Irish	-3.7%	-17.5%
White Other	12.1%	14.0%
Indian	16.1%	6.3%
Pakistani and Bangladeshi	5.5%	18.4%
Black African	5.4%	19.6%
Black Caribbean	-8.8%	5.5%
Chinese	11.5%	-5.6%

(Source: Gender Pay Gap by ethnicity in Britain, Fawcett Society, 2017)

<sup>14</sup> The survey was implemented in 2015 across the UK. 1496 BAME women and 1478 white women were weighted as a panel for the survey. Race at Work 2015-2017 Survey Results: BAME Women at Work; BITC, 2018. [https://race.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/bame\\_women\\_at\\_work\\_2017.pdf](https://race.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/bame_women_at_work_2017.pdf). Access: September 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Race At Work: The Scorecard report 2018; BITC, 2018 in collaboration with YouGov and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/746970/BITC\\_Race\\_At\\_Work\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/746970/BITC_Race_At_Work_Report.pdf) Access: January 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Seeing Double: Race and Gender in Ethnic Minority Women's Lives, Moosa, Z. (2008), Fawcett Society, [http://www.academia.edu/2908433/Seeing\\_Double\\_Race\\_and\\_Gender\\_in\\_Ethnic\\_Minority\\_Women\\_s\\_Lives](http://www.academia.edu/2908433/Seeing_Double_Race_and_Gender_in_Ethnic_Minority_Women_s_Lives); / Black and Minority Ethnic Women in the UK, Brittain et. al (2005), Fawcett Society – quoted in "Gender Pay by Ethnicity in Britain" (2017) <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=f31d6adc-9e0e-4bfe-a3df-3e85605ee4a9>. Access: January 2019.

<sup>17</sup> The research combining individual pay penalties with the number of workers affected based on the data collected between 2007 and 2017 to figure out the 'lost pay' facing BAME workforce.

Black and ethnic minority workers face a £3.2bn annual pay penalty. 27.12.2018, Resolution Foundation. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/press-releases/black-and-ethnic-minority-workers-face-a-3-2bn-annual-pay-penalty/> Also see, The Guardian, "£3.2bn UK pay gap for black, Asian and ethnic minority workers" <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2018/dec/27/uk-black-and-ethnic-minorities-lose-32bn-a-year-in-pay-gap> Access: January 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Gender Pay by Ethnicity in Britain, March 2017, Fawcett Society. <https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=f31d6adc-9e0e-4bfe-a3df-3e85605ee4a9> Access: January 2019.

## 4.2 IN SELF-EMPLOYMENT

BAME women are more likely to be self-employed than White British women, and more likely to choose self-employment as a career path if they have difficulty entering or retaining employment.

The number of self-employed women has continued to rise in recent years in the UK; approximately 1.62 million women were self-employed by the first half of 2018, of which 11% were BAME.<sup>19</sup> In Wales, only 8% of economically active women are self-employed; but this number is higher among women from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and other Asian ethnic groups demonstrating the appetite for self-employment among BAME women.<sup>20</sup>

Women are likely to choose self-employment as a career path if they have difficulty entering or retaining employment.<sup>21</sup> In our own recent research with young women, some Muslim participants stated that they consider self-employment due to discrimination experienced in the workplace.<sup>22</sup>

Research participants reinforced the view that there is an appetite among BAME women for self-employment. However, while many BAME women would like to set up their own businesses, there was agreement about insufficient support for BAME women in self-employment. Barriers included the complicated paper work, processes and understanding rules and regulations around self-employment. Organisations which are set up to help those starting their own businesses are not always seen to provide enough support to BAME women:

*To set up a business requires creating a business plan, which is a very complicated piece of work. We have experience of using Business Wales services in Cardiff for getting people into self-employment, however this service doesn't provide interpretation services to support women, to articulate their business plan and to get help in completing one... Business*

*Wales require them to go and set up a business plan, or create a cash flow, all the things that they need to do before they actually can set up a business. But they are not supported throughout this process. And basically, it is so complicated that they just give up on that idea.<sup>23</sup>*

Some organisations working with BAME women try to support them throughout this process by providing interpretations of key information and resources, but the support they're able to offer is limited due to their lack of professional expertise about business support. While these organisations can do what they can to help, they lack the professional capacity to provide specific expertise, and BAME women should not lose out because professional business support services do not provide translation or aren't accessible to BAME women.



<sup>19</sup> APS, July 2017-June 2018 release. The proportions of BAME women in self-employment for Wales cannot be estimated due to the small sample size.

<sup>20</sup> APS July 2017-June 2018. The full graph to show these statistics, retrieved from Census 2011, can be found in the full report. The proportion of economically active women in these ethnic groups is small, therefore it is not statistically viable to make a comparison between different ethnic groups.

<sup>21</sup> Working Patterns in Wales: Gender, Occupations and Pay, Parken, A., Pocher, E. and Davies, R (2014) Women Adding Value to the Economy (WAVE) [https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0014/104603/Working-Patterns-In-Wales.pdf](https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/104603/Working-Patterns-In-Wales.pdf) Access: September 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Bright: Young Women's Career Aspirations. Turkmen, H. (2018). Chwarae Teg. <https://chwaraeteg.com/research/bright-report/>

<sup>23</sup> Displaced People in Action (DPiA) interview.

## 5 BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY BAME WOMEN IN THE WELSH ECONOMY

### 5.1 INTERSECTIONAL BARRIERS IN THE WELSH ECONOMY

BAME women experience disadvantage in the labour market due to their exposure to both gender and race inequalities, and the way this affects their career advancement and progression. The Chief Executive Officer of Race Council Cymru, Uzo Iwobi (OBE) described the experiences of BAME women as like a 'triple glazed' glass ceiling:

*They talk about a glass ceiling [for women]. I talk about it [for BAME women] double glazed, triple glazed, black glass ceiling, which is even more difficult to break through.*

#### Gendered Barriers

Before considering the differentiated experiences of BAME women, it's important to note the many barriers experienced by women more broadly that are ultimately shared by, and are still a significant factor in shaping the experiences of, BAME women. Childcare and other caring responsibilities were stressed throughout our research as a major barrier to BAME women in participating in the economy and public life.

Childcare responsibilities in particular can have a stronger impact specifically on BAME women's career development and progression for varied reasons with many experiencing a 'double bind'. These can include the traditional cultural emphasis placed on the role of women as carers within some BAME communities, as well as the increased likelihood that BAME women are more likely to live with dependent children and in larger families.<sup>24</sup> BAME women might not have access to support from extended family and social networks for childcare, which is a significant barrier particularly for migrant women. Beyond cultural and family patterns, unaffordable childcare is a more significant barrier to BAME women due to the relatively higher rates of income poverty for BAME households and their prevalence in low paid work. A lack of childcare provision and crèches at sites offering support for BAME women to develop their

skills (such as ESOL classes) can also prevent women from being able to access these services.

#### Ethnicity and Religion

Faith is one of the key factors of discussions around equality and race, particularly the discrimination against Muslim women, which was raised to a greater extent by research participants as a serious risk to BAME communities. One participant said that in the contemporary political environment; "Islamophobia is seen as the new racism of the present."<sup>25</sup>

#### Age

The barriers experienced by BAME women from the younger generation differ to the experiences of older generations:

*BAME women have, particularly of my generation, suffered from lack of confidence. Also they're not very good with communication skills, and those two things could also be barriers to employment. (...) [The younger generation] have confidence, they have excellent communication skills, and they do not speak with this accent so they don't have language barriers. Their skin colour may look different but they dress up like the European people. (...) But, [still] they cannot change their inherited appearance.<sup>26</sup>*

Participants also noted the increased likelihood for older BAME women to be isolated by the burden of household responsibilities, while the younger generation have a different attitude to household responsibilities.

The divergence between generations differentiates their experience in the labour market in terms of confidence levels, language proficiency, access to education and training and access to wider social networks, all factors which affect the economic activity of BAME women.

<sup>24</sup> Intersecting Inequalities: The impact of Austerity on Black and Minority Ethnic Women in the UK. Op cit.

<sup>25</sup> Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) interview.

<sup>26</sup> Ethnic Minority Welsh Women Achievement Association (EMWWAA) interview.

## Nationality and Immigration Status

Nationality and immigration status determine not only working rights, but also access to the welfare system and social services. This is demonstrated by the differentiated experiences of migrants from European countries, overseas, refugees and asylum seekers. Asylum seekers do not have the right to work until they attain their refugee status, and they do not have access to public services, such as childcare offers.<sup>27</sup>

## Geographical Differences

Accessibility of services in different areas of Wales is varied, therefore BAME women across Wales cannot access the same support.

*Cardiff is a capital city, it's relatively well resourced in terms of colleges, in terms of free English classes, in terms of volunteering opportunities, employment opportunities. Whereas all the areas that I have been working in, are all convergence areas. They are areas of low GDP, relatively low economic activity. You have got some employers but they are really quite deprived parts of Wales. (...) There are huge challenges to just resettling, because all of these local authorities have only resettled a handful of [refugee] families each. So you have just got maybe three families in an area that is already deprived, that doesn't have a huge migrant population, so doesn't have any migrant organisations...<sup>28</sup>*

Developing social networks, access to training (including English classes) and public and voluntary support with finding a job are varied between different geographical settings.



<sup>27</sup> Refugee Council Wales interview

<sup>28</sup> Refugee Council Wales interview

## 5.2 BIAS, DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

BAME people experience discrimination and bias at every stage of their career, even before it begins. They are more likely to perceive the workplace as hostile, less likely to benefit from networks, to apply for and be given promotions and more likely to be judged or disciplined harshly.<sup>29</sup> Bias and discrimination don't only affect women's participation in the economy, but also their day-to-day life and wellbeing.

*Every single day people say, go back to your country. People say, you're not wanted here, you live in the jungle, go back to the jungle where you came from, you come here to take our jobs and our money. I say, actually, the British came to Nigeria first, colonised Nigeria and made us part of the Commonwealth. I am here because you came. And this is my home, I'm sorry, I'm not going to go anywhere.<sup>30</sup>*

Participants raised the increase in reported incidents of discrimination and racism, in particular the significant spike in hate crime since the European Referendum 2016, and their everyday experiences of racism.

*I remember that the next day after the referendum, I reported four different cases of hate incidents. (...) They broke the chairs [in the Portuguese café].<sup>31</sup>*

Discrimination against Muslims in particular was emphasised in our research. Participants widely viewed it as one of the most harmful forms of racism currently on the rise. Despite this increase however, there is no accepted definition of islamophobia.<sup>32</sup> Our participant told us that those who conduct Islamophobic attacks do not want to see Muslim women participating in public life.

*The last thing they want to see is a Muslim woman participating in public life. All they want me to do is stay in the kitchen (...) I think that's what motivates me. If that's what they want to achieve, then I will even*

*participate even more in public life and I will get more women to do that, to normalise the presence of women in the public sphere, especially the political sphere, because otherwise they just get excluded from it.<sup>33</sup>*

## Entering work

Non-anonymised job applications and non-blind recruitment processes reveal the bias within organisations, and create barriers to BAME women accessing work; "Your surname gives away the religion, background, culture."<sup>34</sup> One participant's experience reveals the layers of discrimination:

*I stated my experiences in my CV, my degree, my Masters...a lot of the information in my CV is related to the Muslim community... I put a long list of that, and I wasn't getting anywhere... I put my CV to one of my mentors who is Hindu, and asked for her advice, and she said "Look, I share your problem, because I am a woman of faith... your CV will not get anywhere because it's too Islamic". So, I had to remove everything Islamic from it... It wasn't right but I needed to get a job and I straight away got shortlisted. It shows... the biased subconscious people might have. I went for the interview, and, I remember in the panel there were two white individuals, and one Muslim woman of colour, I can't explain how relieved I was when I saw the Muslim woman there... And I got the job indeed, I was wearing the face veil, so I didn't have to take it off or anything, but then I was told later that the White man in the panel didn't want me. So, the White woman and the Muslim woman, they had to challenge the White man on the panel for me to be accepted and get the job. Other women do face misogyny in the work place, they face discrimination, and it was good to see their collaborative work let me get the job.<sup>35</sup>*

<sup>29</sup> Race in the Workplace: McGregor-Smith Review. (2017) p.3 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf). Access: September 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Race Council Cymru interview.

<sup>31</sup> Portuguese Speaking Community Rep interview

<sup>32</sup> The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) definition was proposed in November 2018 and has since been adopted by the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the London Mayor's office. However, in a letter to the prime minister, the head of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) said they have some concerns about the definition and the change could "undermine many elements of counterterrorism powers and policies" and they also concern about the "free speech". APPG and Muslim groups are rejects these claims and has called for the UK Government to accept the definition of Islamophobia, however, the Government has rejected it. (Independent, 15.05.2019, Proposed Islamophobia definition 'would undermine counterterror operations and threaten free speech', police tell prime minister. BBC, 15.05.2019, Government rejects Islamophobia definition ahead of debate)

<sup>33</sup> MEND Interview.

<sup>34</sup> EMWWAA Interview

A number of participants raised concerns that low levels of success in securing good quality jobs in Wales is causing a “brain drain” as young BAME people leave Wales to find secure, quality jobs in which they feel welcome and able to progress.<sup>36</sup> They argued that the problem is not due to the lack of job opportunities, but the discrimination that BAME individuals experience.

## Exploitation

The urgent need for an income and difficulty accessing good quality jobs can push some workers into precarious and exploitative work. This is a particular concern for migrant women, illustrated by an example from a participant who works with migrant communities in North Wales:

*There is this shift pattern... It starts at 6 o'clock finishes at 2pm. All the British workers go home, but they force the rest to stay. They simply say, if you don't stay, don't come tomorrow. There are people who do two shifts, and some of these people are over 60. They are still working because they need the money, or because of their family... And the police know this... but it is very difficult to do anything about it because... There isn't any legal aid at all.<sup>37</sup>*

Communication about potential work via recruitment agencies can also pose challenges, particularly for migrant workers who are often recruited in their country of origin based on promises of good quality work, good hours and accommodation when they arrive in the UK. One participant had experienced this herself, having been promised a placement with a supermarket in London by a recruitment agency, but ending up in Wrexham:

*P: As soon as we arrived, there was a bus there. It was 50 of us. And they start dropping people on the way, but they didn't even stop for 10 minutes in London. The bus went for 6 hours, then we stopped to go to the toilet, but I didn't have a clue. When I woke up the next day, I was like... where am I?*

**I:** Did you complain to the recruitment agency?

*P: I did. But they sent me a letter saying they don't know me! (...) They don't need me anymore.*

The lack of knowledge about employment rights, lack of support networks, and lack of access to legal advice and trade unions leaves migrant workers more vulnerable in the workplace. Even though trade unions can help with these issues, unionisation is not common among BAME women, particularly among migrant workers.<sup>39</sup>



<sup>35</sup> MEND interview.

<sup>36</sup> Chinese Association in Wales, Race Council Cymru, Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC), Trade Union Congress (TUC)/Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union, Hayaat Women Trust, Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel (SSAP) interviews.

<sup>37</sup> Portuguese Speaking Community Rep interview.

<sup>38</sup> Portuguese Speaking Community Rep interview.

<sup>39</sup> TUC/PCS interview.

## 5.3 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND LACK OF QUALIFICATIONS

English language proficiency was raised by all research participants as a significant barrier, not only to participating in the economy, but also to accessing support programmes and understanding and navigating systems like benefits, health and education.

*The concept of a language barrier in itself can become a barrier. It is not only the language, but I have known people to be looking for work, and then they go to the Jobcentre. The Jobcentre says, “Well first you need to improve your English.” So, they go to the college, and they do as many hours as are available through there, but still the Jobcentre says, “Well you need to improve your English before you find work.” And they go to employers, and they say, “Well you need to improve your English.” But sometimes this person might have a relatively good level of understanding and fluency, not perfect grammar... The perception of their English level is lower than it actually is... it is a linguistic discrimination, to the extent that it is actually feeding into the underemployment of the refugee population.<sup>40</sup>*

### Access to training and employment support programmes

Access to training and support is critical to BAME women, with a lack of previous work experience or employment history acting as a particular barrier to work. Cuts to the number and capacity of programmes supporting women to gain work experience have had a substantial negative impact, and the cost of classes also pose barriers.

Another issue is lack of awareness of available programmes due to them not being promoted in ways BAME women easily access:

*[BAME women] don't know about programmes. Unless somebody did it, they wouldn't know. The leaflets, the posters don't seem to be effective. It's rather the relationship and word of mouth, I believe the Welsh Assembly and many other institutions are deficient at. We need to use a language that BAME women understand and they find accessible.<sup>41</sup>*

<sup>40</sup> Refugee Council Wales interview.

<sup>41</sup> MEND interview.

<sup>42</sup> Refugee Council Wales interview.

<sup>43</sup> MEND Interview.

<sup>44</sup> North Wales Association for Multicultural Integration interview.

<sup>45</sup> Siema Biz Forum interview.

A lack of childcare provision at these classes can also prevent some women from attending:

*Colleges don't offer free childcare, universities don't offer free childcare, it makes it very difficult for people to go and train, especially if they are single parents, or to requalify... It goes across the board, childcare is really expensive.<sup>42</sup>*

### Under-utilised skills and qualifications

Research participants also highlighted that BAME women who were born elsewhere are often over-skilled, but their qualifications and previous experience are not recognised, or do not allow them to progress in their career.

*I really think that they [BAME women] are over qualified for most of the jobs, but they do it anyway because they need to survive. They think of it as a stepping-stone for something big, but the ceiling is quite high.<sup>43</sup>*

*They have to start from the beginning in a very low paid job... Some people are very determined, and some people lose their faith in it and just give up and then people are working in low paid jobs for their entire career.<sup>44</sup>*

*Some people working in factories, they have a few degrees, if not just one, and they have loads of different qualifications and skills... However, they can't execute them because there is no one clear transparent way of transferring these qualifications here.<sup>45</sup>*

These barriers are perceived to have a greater impact on BAME women than men:

*When the Welsh Government decided to integrate the doctors... They looked at the doctors among the refugees and helped them go through the costs that they need to get a certification and they came into the job market in Wales. But, not so much for the women.<sup>46</sup>*

It was highlighted that women are often overlooked in the process of recognising qualifications as they are viewed as dependants, and men are prioritised in JobCentres. Some participants referenced specific cultural barriers with men not wanting their wives to access work, which hinders their economic participation.

Participants also observed how programmes designed to get people into work, such as JobCentres, aren't always equipped to recognise skills and provide adequate support for BAME communities, particularly for refugees. Refugees are registered to the JobCentre, which is the main agency collecting data about their skills, but access to career and employment advice is limited due to capacity and resource. Staff do not always have the time and professional development to understand the specific experiences and needs of refugees, therefore BAME women are often left working in jobs that are not suited to their skills or seeking further support.

*One of the big issues has been the sense of responsibility. Who is responsible for getting these people into work? At the moment, there doesn't seem to be any clear guidelines... It has just been a kind of guideline from the Home Office that they should be financially independent within so many years, with very little forethought as to how that's actually done. Are we going to... assess people's skills and then match them to local jobs? None of that has happened. There hasn't been that comprehensive data gathering exercise on who is coming or what their skills are and how those can be developed in the UK. And so what you have been getting are usually, all the refugee families being assigned to one single point of contact in the Jobcentre, who has then to take on their cases, as well as all their other cases. But this person has never necessarily supported a refugee family, or a migrant family, necessarily. (...) They [Job Centre staff] don't have time, on top of all their other cases, to really dig down into what the issues are for these people. They have just got to try to help this person get a job, or get off benefits, that's really their remit. The person has to get themselves a job. But they don't have time to offer any sort of further support or training.<sup>47</sup>*



<sup>46</sup> SSAP interview.

<sup>47</sup> Refugee Council Wales interview.

## 5.4 LIMITED RESOURCES AND ACCESS TO SOCIAL NETWORKS

When accessing support, finding jobs and navigating government agencies and systems, participants stressed the importance of social networks for BAME women. Voluntary organisations like Women Connect First and Hayaat Women's Trust that provide this kind of informal support are invaluable to BAME women. Due to the informal and less bureaucratic nature of these services, as well as the level of cultural understanding, many BAME women favour these networks over formal agencies like the Citizens Advice Bureau, as there is a perception that the professional organisations aren't as accessible:

*They [other service providers] are not as flexible as ours. They are not targeting particular people. What they do is just a drop in session; sometimes you have to sit there for a long time. Sometimes you make an appointment, and you talk about certain things. But over here, it can be anything. Of course, we are not specialised in all these areas, but they will come here, and then without going to different places, we do the referrals here.<sup>48</sup>*

When these social and informal networks aren't available, BAME women can face additional barriers, for example a lack of support with childcare:

*As soon as we have a child, we are not able to do anything for the next ten years; because there aren't any childminders open during factory times. Even now, we have three Portuguese childminders looking after mainly Portuguese and Polish children. They start picking up children at 6am. No one else would do that! They do that because they know how difficult it is for mothers to work if they need to wake up at 4 o'clock in the morning and start at work at 6 am.<sup>49</sup>*

Some migrant families bring their parents with them to Wales to support with childcare, but this is not an option for all migrants. These barriers around childcare also extend to accessing support programmes and training for those out of employment.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers face additional barriers due to their immigration status, which further demonstrates the importance of informal networks and voluntary opportunities in helping BAME women to improve their skills.

*[Provide] more opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to use their existing skills, as well as help them to gain additional skills that are relevant to the labour market and to their ambitions and aspirations. Find out what they want to achieve, and enable them to get into employment or education, where they could actually provide a better outcome for their families, for their children, and they feel part of the community they live in... I think more resources need to be deployed to achieve this. At the moment, we haven't got these resources needed to up-skill refugees and asylum seekers, so they will be job-ready when they are able to work.<sup>50</sup>*

While research participants emphasised the importance of voluntary work for asylum seekers, this does not diminish their calls for the UK Government to give asylum seekers the right to work to sustain their lives.<sup>51</sup>



<sup>48</sup> Hayaat Women's Trust interview

<sup>49</sup> Siema Biz Forum, Portuguese Speaking Community Rep interviews.

<sup>50</sup> DPiA interview.

<sup>51</sup> DPiA, Refugee Council Wales interviews.

## 5.5 CONFIDENCE AND LACK OF ROLE MODELS

Confidence, recognition and acceptance are all barriers to BAME women's career development.

*The problem is that a lot of women don't have the confidence. They may have the skill set, and I know so many BAME women that are so highly qualified but they just don't have the confidence.*<sup>52</sup>

Confidence was cited in a recent piece of Chwarae Teg research as one of the most significant barriers to women's career development, and this is even more prevalent among BAME women.<sup>53</sup> Factors such as language barriers, discrimination and bias, and lack of networks have a cumulative impact on the confidence of BAME women. Isolation can also affect women's confidence, particularly among older BAME women.

*Many of these women don't even apply (...) when they are invited... they do not put themselves forward mainly because of lack of confidence. (...) First is the*

*(lack of) confidence, second is, we give these awards by interview, and they may feel, "okay, I may be very good in what I'm doing but I may not interview well and that could be embarrassing".*<sup>54</sup>

Underrepresentation of BAME women in the workforce, in public life and politics and the lack of visible role models across these spheres can also pose a barrier to BAME women, particularly affecting their confidence and resilience in tackling other barriers. Participants agreed that facing challenges as BAME women is exhausting, and having role models that you identify with can motivate you to achieve. For young BAME people in particular, role models can shape and inspire their career aspirations.<sup>55</sup>

*I think, for the younger generation, it really puts them off to see people who have graduated and are unemployed or going for a taxi or doing other lower paid jobs. Career aspirations are determined by where they see BAMEs.*<sup>56</sup>

## 5.6 WORKPLACE POLICIES IN PRACTICE – IMPLEMENTATION GAPS

*Part of me sometimes wonders whether it is because it's quite complicated, and because of the intersectionality factor. Maybe people either don't know how to deal with things, or whether we need something bigger.*<sup>57</sup>

Equality and Diversity policies are commonplace in most workplaces, however there is often a gap in implementation of these policies. Participants claimed that these policies 'look good on paper' but aren't having meaningful enough effects on the lives of BAME women, and are not strong enough to eliminate subtle discrimination.

One of the reasons suggested for this gap was the lack of communication and consultation with groups who are affected by these policies in their preparation

Participants think that Wales needs to take a more serious approach to tackling race inequality, suggesting that a wealth of evidence already exists, but this evidence isn't necessarily acted upon. They are of the view that not enough is being done to ensure these standards. Suggestions were made for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to deal more firmly with discrimination.

*I think that the Equality and Human Rights Commission needs to step up its game. It's a regulator and its core role is to robustly challenge organisations that are not working in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, across the protected characteristics. But I have not heard them declare an investigation into serious inequality and racism in schools in Wales.*<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> TUC/PCS interview.

<sup>53</sup> Bright: Young Women's Career Aspiration (2018) Op cit.

<sup>54</sup> EMWWA interview.

<sup>55</sup> Bright: Young Women's Career Aspiration (2018) Op cit.

<sup>56</sup> SSAP interview.

<sup>57</sup> TUC/PCS interview.

<sup>58</sup> Race Council Cymru interview.

## 6 THE CHANGES BAME WOMEN WANT TO SEE

BAME women experience many of the gendered barriers to the workplace faced by women more broadly, but often to a worse extent.

Underlying any solutions, an intersectional approach to tackling barriers, which recognises the multi-layered inequality that BAME women face is crucial. These solutions must take into account the varied experiences within different ethnic groups, particularly around tackling challenges like childcare.

By intersectionality, we mean recognising the way in which power structures based on factors such as gender, race, sexuality, disability, class, age and faith interact with each other and create inequalities,

discrimination and oppression. Crucially, it is about understanding the way in which characteristics interact and produce unique and often multiple experiences and disadvantage in specific situations.

Throughout our research, participants made direct calls to action and suggested changes they would like to be taken up by Government, Business, Trade Unions and Civil Society. In the full report, these recommendations are expanded upon with more detailed qualitative data. These recommendations are divided into the areas where BAME women experience barriers and where improvement is needed.

### 6.1 TO TACKLE BIAS, DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

*There was one particular case I had to deal with... What I did was I sent an email to their human resources. They were horrified so somebody rang me up straight away, and they were like how can we work with you, how can we improve this, we must speak to the person etc. Everything was sorted in the end. I just needed to raise awareness that this was happening on the ground. (...) it's the employers as well that need education.*<sup>59</sup>

- Policies and strategies to prevent and tackle inequality experienced by BAME women should be created in consultation with the communities and individuals affected. Policy makers should listen to communities and ensure their voice is at the centre of the process.
- Bringing together people from different backgrounds and promoting and celebrating the advantages of diverse workforces can help challenge negative stereotypes.
- Recruitment practices should be overhauled to ensure the use of blind applications and CVs, diverse recruitment panels and make unconscious bias and equality and diversity training commonplace. Businesses should bring in external interview panel members where necessary.
- Action should be taken to raise awareness of bias, discrimination, and hate crimes. Reporting mechanisms need to be more visible and accessible, ensuring that victims can access sustainable support.
- Police forces should have more training on the nature of hate crime in Wales and adopt stronger definitions for hate crime and islamophobia. Consideration should be given to a restorative justice approach, similar to speed awareness courses.
- Legal aid provision must be improved.
- Trade unions should be more accessible to, and more representative of BAME communities and women in particular to ensure there are different levels of support for BAME women in the workplace.
- Employers who claim they are equal opportunities employers should have to demonstrate and provide evidence of how they are implementing and monitoring the results of their policies, and what impact they are having on their workforce.

<sup>59</sup> Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) 1 interview.

## 6.2 TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

...it has to be done on a one-to-one basis. Somebody will go to their house and say, "look, have you considered coming to this course, this is very good course, so and so is going to be attending, it will be good if you can come as well."<sup>60</sup>

- ESOL provision must be improved through greater outreach work, improved accessibility and flexibility, alternative and informal learning settings and online options.
- Provide accessible opportunities like scholarship and subsidised courses, or funding opportunities for BAME women to access training and education.
- Improve awareness of training opportunities by using more effective means of advertising and promotion informed by BAME communities, including more direct approaches, and community engagement.
- Training and employment support programmes should have clear, measurable diversity targets that are regularly monitored and reported on.
- Provide interpretation services to assist BAME women to navigate social security and welfare systems.

## 6.3 TO IMPROVE SKILL CONVERSION AND RECOGNITION

One [apprenticeship] provider shared the story with me of a female worker, working with a very big organisation... The manager was struck by how articulate this woman was; because this woman was a cleaner, so asked her about her background and asked where she came from (...) She told her what she did when she was in her country, and the manager gave her the opportunity to do accountancy, and she did an apprenticeship.<sup>61</sup>

- Simplify procedures for skills conversion and recognition of migrants' previous experience and qualifications; with easier language access and sustainable support that allows migrants to contribute to the Welsh economy and plug the skills gap.
- Better communication and promotion of the relevant pathways to access skills conversion and recognition.

## 6.4 TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO AND SUPPORT FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT

This might be training, the support system, regular support systems... Regular but also informal. So that they don't have to attend, they may attend brief classes about women and entrepreneurship but then after that there is a need for ongoing support about filling forms, microfinance, and book keeping.<sup>62</sup>

- Bring an intersectional lens to programmes supporting women in self-employment to ensure they are also accessible and attractive to BAME women
- Welsh Government and Business Wales' efforts to improve support for women in self-employment should ensure that BAME women's voices are heard and they are developing tailored programmes for BAME women. Outreach methods should be improved to include more direct community engagement and collaboration.

<sup>60</sup> EMWWAA interview.

<sup>61</sup> National Training Federation Wales (NTFW) interview.

<sup>62</sup> SSAP interview.

## 6.5 TO SUPPORT BAME WOMEN

When the person comes [to Hayaat], you realise that this is the tip of the iceberg... we will give them the time. We support them in a culturally appropriate way to make them feel valued, to make them feel that they are not just a statistic, we are not just filling boxes.<sup>63</sup>

- Recognise the invaluable contribution of women's organisations supporting BAME women like Women Connect First and Hayaat Women's Trust, which act as a bridge between public and private sectors and BAME communities. Their work to provide support and advice, and create networks for BAME women in more informal and community-focused ways should be valued and supported.
- Improve provision of basic and accessible guidance and information to migrant and asylum seeker women in appropriate languages and formats to support them to integrate and understand their rights. Provide volunteering opportunities for BAME women to gain experience, particularly for asylum seekers who do not have the right to work until they achieve refugee status.
- Make these support services sustainable. Provide core funding for their services, and strengthen their links with Government and Business so their guidance and expertise can inform approaches to better engaging with BAME women and ensuring that Government and Business opportunities are inclusive.
- Strengthen and make sustainable existing mentoring schemes and create more for BAME women across different sectors.
- Provide support and networking opportunities in more informal settings that are sensitive to cultural needs like prayer facilities, and other barriers such as childcare.
- Introduce specific quotas to improve the representation of BAME women in the economy and public life, particularly in relation to public appointments and the civil service.
- Organisations should work together and do more to recognise, promote and celebrate the achievements of BAME women in order to improve their confidence and raise their aspirations.

## 6.6 TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH BAME WOMEN

I think it's a poor excuse in 2018 to say that we don't know how to engage with BAME communities or with people with disabilities. There are so many equality and diversity practitioners who want to engage with employers to do better.<sup>64</sup>

- Develop understanding and effective methods of communication between BAME women and prospective employers and businesses. The onus should be on businesses, Government and organisations to understand and cater to the cultural and faith related needs of BAME women, rather than on BAME women to make specific requests to their organisations and face ignorance or prejudice.
- Develop stronger links between employers and BAME communities to increase awareness and understanding of the priorities of BAME women for the workplace.
- Ensure public documents reflect the diversity of Wales as standard.

<sup>63</sup> Hayaat Women's Trust interview.

<sup>64</sup> NTFW interview.

## 6.7 TO IMPROVE GOVERNMENT AND WORKPLACE POLICY-MAKING FOR BAME WOMEN

*If you've got a policy and if you've got things that are going to make a difference, don't only shout it to the policy makers and the funders, let the target community know you are doing it. You know, sometimes you have to click many times to find that what people's policy is. "We welcome opportunities to work with BAME community", that should be on front page, that should be on all your pamphlets, people shouldn't have work to find that.<sup>65</sup>*

- Policy should be created in consultation with BAME communities to understand what barriers they face and how best to respond to the needs of the community.
- The Welsh Government's Fair Work agenda could have a significant impact on BAME women through public procurement and the restriction or elimination of harmful practices like zero-hour contracts and other factors that affect the working conditions of BAME women.
- Ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are conducted through an intersectional lens, and carried out at the beginning of policy development. Government should then also ensure that findings of EIAs inform policy implementation, and where necessary, changes are made to ensure the policy delivers for all.
- Measurable targets and mechanisms to monitor the implementation of policies should be improved and made accessible to ensure that policies are delivering, and if not, decision-makers can understand why and make the necessary changes.
- Positive action should be considered within Government and Businesses' diversity targets in order to address imbalance in opportunity or advantage.



<sup>65</sup> NTFW interview.

## 7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter summarises the findings of our report and expands on and supports the calls to action made directly by participants in the previous chapter. It also includes some of our own recommendations based on quantitative and qualitative data, the literature review in the substantive report and our previous work. We have divided these recommendations into key actors and decision makers so they are able to take the action necessary to improve BAME women's access to and experience within the Welsh economy.

This research reveals the extent of discrimination and inequality experienced by BAME women, who face barriers to the labour market shaped not only by gender, but also racial inequality and ethnic segregation. The significant impact this has on BAME women's representation in the Welsh economy is stark, and there are challenges to overcome to ensure BAME women in Wales can achieve their potential. We need action across business, government, Trade Unions and other civil society organisations to tackle the barriers BAME women face, with the voices of BAME women at the centre of progress in order to prevent the inequality and discrimination they experience.

BAME Women experience greater disadvantage in the Welsh economy than is experienced by White women or BAME men, as a result they are often in more precarious work, unemployed and at a greater risk of poverty. Self-employment rates are higher among BAME women, often as a result of difficulty entering the labour market or to avoid discrimination; it is also important to recognise that BAME women face additional barriers in setting up or accessing support for their own businesses too.

This low level of success in finding good quality jobs in Wales is causing a 'brain drain' as young BAME people leave Wales in order to find work. This is not only due to the lack of job opportunities, but also the experiences of discrimination in the workplace.

The lack of specific training and support for BAME women which is tailored to their needs and circumstances is also a significant barrier. Cuts to the number and capacity of programmes supporting BAME women accessing and progressing in employment have had a substantial negative impact and need to be rectified.

Additional challenges include language barriers, a lack of social and professional networks, the minority of visible BAME role models and the implementation gap within some policies designed to support BAME women. All of these factors compound and result in BAME women being further away from the Welsh labour market, and unable to fulfil their potential.

Difficulties also remain in gaining a full and accurate assessment of the experiences of BAME women due to the substantial gap in disaggregated and regularly monitored data. This research has attempted to correct some of these gaps in knowledge with qualitative data and evidence from BAME women and the organisations that are working to support them. Data also does not often reflect the barriers experienced in a Welsh specific context, which is crucial in our understanding of these issues and how to tackle them in the Welsh economy.

Bias, discrimination and racism form some of the most significant barriers experienced by BAME women. These issues are particularly pertinent within the current political climate where heightened tensions and divisions have led to an increase in incidents of hate crime and discrimination in recent years. There was a clear call from participants that in order to address and counter this damaging narrative, we need a strong collective message across the public sector, private sector and civil society about the benefits of diversity, and a zero tolerance approach to racism and hate crime.

Throughout our research there was a clear message that the onus should be on those in positions of power to reach out to BAME women and ensure that they are represented, able to fully participate in the economy and public life, and that their contributions are recognised and valued. There is no such thing as 'hard to reach' communities, and we all need to be ready to change our approach to ensure that services and policies are accessible to and delivering for everyone in our communities.

Coordinated action is needed from decision-makers across Wales to address the significant challenges that BAME women face, and ensure that all women are able to fully participate in the Welsh economy and public life.

## 7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

### For UK Government

- 1 Improve provision of Legal Aid and access to free, professional legal services
- 2 Skills conversion and recognition procedures should be improved and simplified. Government should work with universities to do this, and ensure that support agencies like Job Centre Plus are able to advise about professional pathways correctly.
- 3 Job Centres should be adequately resourced and provided with ongoing training and professional development, particularly around unconscious bias and intersectionality.
- 4 Legislation regulating the status of asylum seekers should be revisited, and changes in their right to work should be considered.
- 5 Reporting of hate crime should be simplified, victim support should be provided throughout the process and charges for offenders should be reconsidered. Online abuse and harassment should not be tolerated. Awareness raising and training about hate crime and hate incidences should be carried out in all departments of the state institutions.

### For Welsh Government

- 6 Lead by example and prioritise improving diversity within its workforce and public representatives.
- 7 Commit to evidence-based policy-making through an intersectional, gender lens. Engagement and consultation with diverse communities should be prioritised to strengthen the evidence-base and plug gaps in quantitative data.
- 8 Recognise the value of voluntary organisations providing informal support to BAME women and the significant impact they have. These services should receive sustainable funding.
- 9 Review the eligibility criteria for the new childcare offer to ensure it will deliver for BAME women who want to access and progress in work.
- 10 Increase the number and capacity of ESOL classes available across Wales particularly in high demand areas. These classes should be prioritised in community locations, accessible by public transport and where possible have childcare facilities so BAME women are able to attend.
- 11 Extend and reinforce its commitment to equality and diversity through procurement and other spending powers, placing requirements on businesses who are recipients of Welsh Government funding and purchases. Suppliers of Welsh Government services should have an equality accreditation.
- 12 Ensure that support for business, both directly and through Business Wales and Development Bank of Wales, is accessible to BAME women, and provided in a way that meets their needs. As the outreach services of Business Wales have proven successful, we recommend developing more community engagement to achieve accessible support programmes to BAME women.
- 13 Welsh Government should put in place a strategy for tackling poverty that recognises the way gender and ethnicity shape risk and experience of poverty. This strategy should include clear indicators against which progress can be measured.

- 14 To overcome the data deficiency, Welsh Government's Statistics and Research department might consider different means of collecting data including improving regional and geographically focused data collection and more qualitative research.
- 15 Welsh Government should consider how to integrate equality and diversity into its auditing, inspection and regulation roles,

### For Businesses

- 17 Set diversity targets, across a range of levels, alongside a clear action plan. This should include regular monitoring and reporting on progress.
- 18 Equality & Diversity and unconscious bias training should be delivered widely to employees across the private sector, and this should be mandatory for those in public facing and senior roles, particularly those involved in recruitment.
- 19 Job advertisements and recruitment processes should be reviewed in order to become more attractive to diverse candidates; businesses should make explicitly clear their commitment to equality and diversity and blind shortlisting should take place as standard practice.
- 20 Work with organisations supporting BAME communities to ensure roles are fairly advertised and ensure visibility within BAME communities.
- 21 Take steps to ensure diverse recruitment panels, and consider independent or external panel members where needed.
- 22 Develop clear equality and diversity policies, in conjunction with employees, which are keenly and consistently communicated in the workplace.
- 23 Clear and confidential reporting mechanisms should be developed to report incidences of discrimination, harassment and abuse. Businesses should collaborate with trade unions and organisations tackling hate crime to set up clear reporting mechanisms.
- 24 Mentoring and professional networks should consider how they can be more accessible to BAME women, and ensure opportunities are being promoted widely.

### For third sector, trade unions and other organisations

- 25 Trade unions should diversify their membership and ensure that BAME women are fairly included and represented.
- 26 Trade Union representatives should receive unconscious bias training and ensure that all reported incidents which are related to racial bias or discrimination are taken seriously.
- 27 Organisations promoting and delivering support programmes such as mentoring, training and career development schemes should ensure they are widely accessible and advertised within BAME communities.

promoting the adoption of effective policies and the need to evidence how they have contributed to improved outcomes.

- 16 Government should adopt the recommendations in the upcoming Gender Equality Review Phase 2 to ensure that models of policy-making work to advance equality and support all women.

# Chwarae Teg



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