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Pay gap between whites and non-whites doubles, research finds

The gap between the hourly pay of white people and those from ethnic minorities more than doubled in the 15 years to 2008, new research says.

Researchers from the University of Essex found that in 1993 white people earned an average of 18p an hour more than non-whites, but by 2008 the gap had risen to 43p an hour. This was around 7.5% of the minimum wage for those over 21 in 2008, or 3.6% of median hourly earnings.

In an article published in the latest edition of the journal *Work, employment and society*, Dr Malcolm Brynin and Dr Ayse Güveli analysed more than 650,000 results from UK's large-scale quarterly Labour Force Survey.

They say that most of the gap between whites and non-whites was caused because non-whites found it harder to get into well-paid professions and trades.

"The analysis shows not only that the ethnic pay gap varies considerably by ethnic minority but that it is in large measure the result of occupational segregation," they say.

However, even where the two groups worked in the same profession or trade, there was a gap in pay – by 2008 whites were earning an average of 18p an hour more than non-whites doing the same type of work. This compared to 1993 when non-whites earned an average of 3p an hour more than whites in the same profession or trade.

Dr Brynin and Dr Güveli found that the overall gap had widened despite the fact that the proportion of people in most ethnic minorities groups working in managerial jobs was about the same as whites by 2008 - around 45%. This was probably because non-whites tended to be in lower levels in the job hierarchy.

Dr Brynin works at Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex, and Dr Güveli in the Sociology Department.

"In Britain white people earn more than people from ethnic minorities on average," they say.

“However, this gap is generally less when the pay of white people is compared to that of ethnic minorities within occupations.

“The wage gap therefore derives in significant measure from occupational segregation. Where a negative pay gap occurs it is because ethnic minorities tend to cluster into low-paying occupations.

“This sorting is due in part to personal factors such as education...but some is almost undoubtedly because minorities find it harder to enter better paid occupations.

“When we try to understand the determinants of wages controlling for a range of factors, it is clear that on this basis most ethnic minorities earn consistently less than white people, if not always by much. One implication...is that some minorities do not earn as much as their education would warrant.”

Work, employment and society is published by the British Sociological Association and SAGE.

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Notes

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