

Research finds ethnic minority low paid workers face more barriers to promotion

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Heriot-Watt academic Gina Netto is one of the lead authors of a report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which shows that promotion possibilities for low paid workers are generally limited, and that ethnic minorities especially face multiple problems in getting promoted. Their difficulties include unequal access to opportunities for development; unclear information about training opportunities; and stereotyping. This is resulting in persistent in-work poverty, and a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities in low-paid work.

'In-work poverty, [ethnicity](#) and workplace cultures' found that while many organisations support career progression, informal workplace practices trap some people in low-paid work. These practices undermine equal opportunities policies and disproportionately affect ethnic minorities.

The role of workplace cultures

The report's lead authors, Gina Netto, Reader in Heriot-Watt's School of the Built Environment, and independent consultant Maria Hudson, call for better understanding of the role of workplace cultures in routes out of poverty for people of all ethnicities.

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Gina Netto said, "Opportunities to progress to better paid [jobs](#) and to develop should be equally accessible to all employees. It is important that organisations take steps to ensure that all levels of their [workforce](#) reflect the multi-ethnic nature of UK society."

Maria Hudson said, "Managers who provide regular, constructive feedback and offer [encouragement](#) to employees to develop tend to be the exception rather than the norm. We found many examples of unsupportive management that was holding back staff from career progression. "

How to address the issues

The study identifies a number of ways that employers can address the issues, including:

- Taking a strategic approach towards developing the skills of low-paid workers.
- Including staff-development opportunities in managers' objectives.
- Monitoring not only recruitment but also development activity and progression.

The report also highlights the need for DWP, Work Programme providers and Jobcentre Plus to focus on the issues of low skills and low pay if they are to successfully tackle in work [poverty](#) and make Universal Credit work.

Provided by Heriot-Watt University

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