

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

**Skilled Voices Panel
Ethnically Diverse Skilled individuals
Edinburgh**

March 2026

Prepared by Capital City Partnership
Author: Nadia Aslam



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scotland continues to face persistent skills shortages alongside demographic change and an ageing workforce. At the same time, many highly qualified individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds remain unable to access employment that reflects their education, professional expertise, and experience. This mismatch represents both a significant equality challenge and a loss of economic potential.

Photo: Whole Family Equality Project 2026 Celebration



This report, prepared by Capital City Partnership (CCP) examines the structural barriers experienced by skilled ethnic minority individuals seeking meaningful employment in Edinburgh. The findings are grounded in lived-experience evidence gathered through facilitated discussions and reflective surveys with a panel of 11 highly skilled participants from 9 nationalities who are underemployed.

Across all participants, barriers to employment were consistently reported, demonstrating that challenges are systemic rather than individual. The evidence highlights how policy frameworks, recruitment systems, organisational practices, and workplace cultures interact to restrict access to employment, progression opportunities, and long-term career stability.

Key Barriers Identified

1. Data and Accountability Barriers

Recruitment and progression processes were widely perceived as lacking transparency. Participants reported unclear selection criteria, limited communication, and little or no feedback following applications or interviews. The absence of disaggregated workforce data further limits accountability and the ability to identify unequal outcomes.

2. Policy and Legal Barriers

Immigration rules, sponsorship requirements, and rising visa salary thresholds restrict access to skilled employment and discourage employer investment. Overseas qualifications and professional experience were frequently undervalued, contributing to persistent underemployment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. Organisational Barriers

Automated recruitment systems, agencies, and informal hiring practices often acted as gatekeepers. International experience was insufficiently recognised, interview panels lacked diversity, and access to training and progression routes was frequently limited, particularly for mature entrants.

4. Cultural and Workplace Barriers

Accent- and name-based bias, unspoken workplace norms, and assumptions about professionalism affected recruitment and progression. Limited accommodation of cultural and religious practices further undermined workplace inclusion and retention.

5. Socio-economic Barriers

High costs of certification, weak professional networks, and immediate financial pressures pushed some participants into lower-skilled roles, reinforcing cycles of underemployment and delaying career progression.

Strategic Recommendations

Addressing these interconnected barriers requires coordinated action across government, employers, and employability systems. The report recommends a shift from short-term employability interventions toward systemic reform focused on transparency, fairness, and inclusion.

Key priorities include:

- Strengthening recruitment transparency and accountability through structured feedback, masked shortlisting, competency-based assessment, and monitoring of recruitment and progression outcomes using disaggregated data.
- Improving recognition of overseas qualifications and experience via accessible benchmarking routes, skills-based assessments, and bridging pathways that enable adaptation to UK standards without unnecessary retraining.
- Expanding paid pathways into skilled employment, including internships, work placements, apprenticeships, and time-limited “try-and-fit” roles open to applicants of all ages and linked to clear progression opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key priorities continued:

- Reforming organisational recruitment and progression practices by reducing over-reliance on automated screening, diversifying interview panels, and ensuring equitable access to training and advancement.
- Embedding inclusive workplace cultures, supported by mandatory cultural competency training and clear accommodation of religious and cultural practices.
- Reducing socio-economic barriers through mentoring, professional networking support, and financial assistance mechanisms that enable participation in training and employment transitions.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that Scotland's employment inequalities are not the result of skills deficits but of structural barriers that prevent talent from being fully utilised. Without coordinated and sustained action, these barriers will continue to drive skills waste, underemployment, and widening inequality.

Unlocking the potential of skilled ethnic minority communities is therefore both a fairness imperative and an economic necessity. Delivering on these recommendations will translate equality commitments into action, enabling Scotland to better utilise skills, reduce labour shortages, and strengthen workforce resilience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Key Employment Barriers	6
Key Recommendations	8
Background	9
Barriers to Employment	11
(A) Data and Accountability Barriers	11
(B) Policy and Legal Barriers.....	12
(C) Organisational Barriers.....	13
(D) Cultural and Personal Barriers.....	15
(E) Socio-economic Barriers.....	17
Recommendations.....	18
Methodology	21
Conclusion	23
Participant Details	24
Bibliography	26

KEY EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

Data and Accountability

Data and accountability barriers were the most consistently reported. Participants described recruitment processes as unclear, with limited transparency around shortlisting and selection decisions. Meaningful feedback following applications or interviews was rarely provided, leaving candidates unable to understand rejection outcomes or improve future applications.

Policy and Legal Barriers

Visa restrictions, sponsorship requirements, and frequent changes to immigration policies discouraged employers from recruiting or investing in skilled candidates who require sponsorship. Recent increases in visa salary thresholds further exclude participants from entry-level and early-career roles. Due to this barrier overseas qualifications and professional experience were frequently undervalued or dismissed, forcing many participants into lower-skilled or temporary work despite having relevant experience from their country of origin.

Organisational Level

At the organisational level, recruitment agencies, automated screening systems, and informal hiring practices acted as gatekeepers, limiting access to interviews and progression opportunities. Participants highlighted a lack of ethnic diversity on interview panels and a gap between organisations' stated equality commitments and everyday practice. Access to training, apprenticeships, and development opportunities were often restricted by age limits, and eligibility criteria constraining access and progression.

KEY EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

Cultural and Personal Barriers

Cultural and personal barriers further shaped recruitment and workplace experiences. Participants reported accent- and name-based bias, unspoken workplace norms, and assumptions about professionalism linked to communication style or appearance. Cultural and religious practices, particularly around dress codes and prayer time and space, were often insufficiently accommodated.

Socio-Economic Barriers

Socio-economic barriers compounded these challenges for some participants. High upfront costs for mandatory training and certifications and limited professional networks created financial pressure and restricted access to employment. In several cases, participants felt compelled to accept lower-skilled or temporary roles to meet basic living costs, reinforcing cycles of underemployment.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To address these barriers, the report proposes a coordinated set of actions focused on improving transparency, fairness, and inclusion across the employment system:

Strengthening transparency and accountability in recruitment by providing structured feedback system, using masked shortlisting, applying structured and competency-based assessment, and monitoring recruitment and progression outcomes using disaggregated data.

Recognition of overseas qualifications and experience through low-cost benchmarking routes, skills-based assessments, and bridging opportunities that support adaptation to UK standards without forcing skilled individuals to retrain from scratch.

Expand paid pathways into skilled employment by increasing access to paid work placements, internships, apprenticeships, and short-term “try-and-fit” roles, without age restrictions and linked to clear progression routes.

Reform organisational practices by reducing over-reliance on automated screening and recruitment agencies, diversifying interview panels, recognising actual contributions in progression decisions, and ensuring access to training and development for mature workers and newcomers.

Embed inclusive workplace cultures through mandatory cultural competency training, clear accommodation of religious and cultural practices, inclusive communication of workplace norms, and robust mechanisms to address discrimination and exclusion.

Reduce socio-economic barriers by supporting network-building through mentoring and networking initiatives and providing practical support to reduce financial exclusion during early employment.

BACKGROUND

The integration of skilled ethnic minority individuals into Scotland's labour market is an urgent policy issue, particularly against the backdrop of persistent skills shortages, demographic change, and ambitions for inclusive and sustainable growth. Although many ethnic minority residents hold higher-level qualifications and substantial professional experience, a significant proportion remain unable to secure work that matches their skills.

Evidence consistently shows higher unemployment, greater overqualification, and poorer employment outcomes for ethnic minority groups compared with the white majority, even when qualifications and experience are equivalent (Heath and Cheung, 2007; Li and Heath, 2016; Walsh, 2017). These patterns highlight structural labour-market barriers rather than individual shortcomings.

In Scotland, the employment gap between white and minority ethnic groups was 13.8% in 2023 (Scottish Government, 2024a, p. 8), and local data shows that meaningful employment outcomes for ethnically diverse groups in Edinburgh remain disproportionately low (CCP, 2023; 2025).

Addressing these inequalities is increasingly important as Scotland faces an ageing population, low population growth, and projected labour shortages in sectors such as health and social care, engineering, and education. Migration and ethnic diversity are therefore central to sustaining the workforce and supporting economic growth.

Reflecting this, commitments to fairness and inclusive growth are embedded in national policy frameworks such as the Fair Work agenda and the National Performance Framework. Based on census data, Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups now represent around 7.1% of Scotland's population, largely concentrated in urban labour markets (Scottish Government, 2025a).

Despite high levels of educational attainment, labour-market inequalities persist. The employment rate for BME groups is 62.0%, compared with 75.8% for white groups (Scottish Government, 2025a). Ethnic minority workers are also more than twice as likely to be in insecure employment and significantly more likely to be underemployed, including working below their qualification level.

BACKGROUND

These disparities endure even when skills and experience are comparable, illustrating that qualifications alone do not secure fair access to skilled, secure employment.

This report, prepared by Capital City Partnership (CCP) as part of the Whole Family Equality Project, examines the employment barriers faced by highly skilled individuals from ethnically diverse minority communities in Edinburgh. Using a lived-experience approach, it draws on insights from 12 participants, men and women from their twenties to sixties, all degree-qualified with professional experience from their countries of origin. Participants included both recent arrivals and long-term residents from African, East Asian, Southeast Asian, and Middle Eastern backgrounds.

The findings identify persistent structural barriers and provide practical recommendations for employers and policymakers. The report aims to inform policy and practice to improve access to, retention in, and progression within meaningful employment for skilled ethnic minority individuals in Scotland.



Picture: SVP Meeting February 2026

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

(A) Data and Accountability Barriers: Access to Employment and Progression

The lack of transparency and accountability within recruitment and progression processes emerged as one of the most consistently reported barriers. Nearly all participants (9 out of 11) identified issues related to limited feedback, and the absence of data-driven systems to support fair recruitment and progression.

“

A lack of transparency and accountability in recruitment and progression data makes it difficult to understand how decisions are made or to identify fair opportunities for advancement

”

Participants described recruitment processes in which job adverts were often mentioned as vague, and selection criteria as poorly communicated, leading to perceptions that outcomes were predetermined or that internal candidates were informally prioritised despite formal commitments to equal opportunities.

Following unsuccessful applications or interviews, participants reported that meaningful feedback was rarely provided.

This lack of structured feedback left individuals unable to understand why they were unsuccessful or how to improve future applications, reinforcing a sense of exclusion from fair competition.

“

After receiving a rejection email, no feedback was provided that would help me understand what was missing or how to improve.

”

The absence of disaggregated data on ethnicity, progression, and promotion was also identified as a critical accountability gap. Participants noted that without transparent and accessible data, it is difficult to identify patterns of unequal outcomes, challenge potentially discriminatory practices, or ensure that progression and promotion are based on merit.

In some cases, participants highlighted the lack of mechanisms to track or recognise internal contributions, meaning that promotions did not reflect actual performance or workload.

Together, these issues undermine trust in recruitment and progression systems and contribute to perceptions that advancement is not fair, transparent, or merit-based.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

(B) Policy and Legal Barriers: Access to employment and progression

Policy and legal frameworks, particularly those linked to immigration and visa regulations, emerged as a significant barrier to accessing and progressing in skilled employment. Over two-thirds of participants identified visa restrictions, sponsorship requirements, and frequent policy changes as major obstacles shaping their employment opportunities and professional pathways.

“

I was successful in interviews but placed on a waiting list because my visa was close to expiry and the organisation could not sponsor me

”

Participants consistently reported that UK visa conditions create uncertainty for both candidates and employers. Short visa durations, expiry timelines, and frequent changes to immigration rules were described as discouraging employers from recruiting or investing in workers who may require future sponsorship.

Several participants recounted being successful at interview and receiving positive feedback, only to be placed on waiting lists or declined roles because employers were unable or unwilling to sponsor visas.

This uncertainty was reported to create ongoing stress, limit mobility, and significantly constrain long-term career planning.

“

I have time left on my visa, and constant rule changes make employers hesitant to hire people like me who may need sponsorship in future

”

Recent increases in visa salary thresholds were highlighted as a particularly acute barrier. Participants noted that many entry-level, graduate, or early-career roles in their fields now fall below the new introduced salary threshold, making sponsorship impossible even when candidates meet all other job requirements and possess relevant UK experience.

As a result, participants described being locked out of appropriate career pathways despite holding suitable qualifications and professional experience. The non-recognition of overseas qualifications, and professional experience further compounded these barriers.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

(C) Organisational Barriers: Access to employment, progression, and retention

At an organisational level, recruitment and workplace practices were widely reported to disadvantage skilled ethnic minority individuals. Two-thirds of participants (8 out of 11) identified organisational barriers as a significant constraint on accessing, sustaining, and progressing in skilled employment. These barriers were evident across recruitment processes, workplace cultures, and internal progression structures.

“

Overseas qualifications are simply dismissed without any proper assessment process.

”

Recruitment agencies and automated recruitment systems were frequently described as gatekeepers, preventing otherwise qualified candidates from progressing to interview stages. Participants highlighted the use of applicant tracking systems (ATS), rigid CV formats, and keyword filtering as mechanisms that exclude candidates with international experience or non-UK work experience.

Informal recruitment practices were also reported as a factor that advantaged locally connected candidates.

Employers' reliance on professional networks contributed to this advantage. Together, these practices further limited access for skilled migrants and ethnic minority applicants.

International qualifications and overseas professional experience were often undervalued or dismissed without any formal assessment process. Several participants reported being labelled as “overqualified”, resulting in rejection from roles. These practices contributed to persistent underemployment and limited opportunities for progression, even where individuals were already performing higher-level work.

Participants also described interview panels as frequently lacking ethnic diversity, reinforcing perceptions of biased decision-making. While many organisations publicly promote commitments to equality and diversity, participants identified a clear gap between formal policies and everyday practice. This disconnect was seen to undermine trust and limit confidence in fair treatment within organisations.

Participants also described interview panels as frequently lacking ethnic diversity, reinforcing perceptions of biased decision-making.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Organisational Barriers: Access to employment, progression, and retention

While many organisations publicly promote commitments to equality and diversity, participants identified a clear gap between formal policies and everyday practice. This disconnect was seen to undermine trust and limit confidence in fair treatment within organisations.

“

Most organisations use ATS which does not give qualified applicants the opportunity to be shortlisted because of the programme keywords for applications.

”

Access to funded training, apprenticeships, and skills development opportunities was further constrained by age limits and eligibility criteria that exclude mature workers and newcomers. Participants noted the absence of organisational strategies to support the integration, recognition, and upskill of internationally trained staff.

Collectively, these organisational barriers restrict access to skilled roles, limit career progression, and, in some cases, undermine retention by limiting long-term development opportunities.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

(D) Cultural and Personal Barriers: Access to employment, progression, and retention

Cultural and personal barriers were identified by over half of participants (5 out of 11) and were closely intertwined with organisational practices and workplace cultures. These barriers operate through unspoken norms, implicit bias, and limited cultural competency, shaping both recruitment outcomes and everyday workplace experiences for skilled ethnic minority individuals.

“

Not having the 'right' accent doesn't progress most applicants past the first initial conversation.

”

Participants described how accents, pronunciation, dress code, and communication styles were frequently judged during recruitment and workplace interactions, often outweighing assessments of skills and experience. Not having the “right” accent was reported to prevent candidates from progressing beyond initial conversations or interviews. Several participants also highlighted name-based bias, noting that altering or shortening their names on applications increased their chances of being shortlisted.

A lack of familiarity with informal UK labour market norms created additional challenges for newcomers.

These norms include expected interview behaviours, communication styles, and networking practices.

These expectations were rarely made explicit, yet failure to meet them resulted in negative judgements. Differences in communication styles were often misinterpreted as a lack of confidence, professionalism, or respect, rather than understood as part of adaptation to a new cultural and professional context. Over time, these experiences contributed to reduced confidence and self-doubt.

Religious and cultural practices were also reported as insufficiently accommodated within workplaces. Participants described limited flexibility around dress codes and prayer, with religious practices often viewed as inconvenient or disruptive. In some settings, individuals were required to use their breaks to pray, travel long distances within workplaces to find suitable spaces, or forego prayer altogether. Such practices were experienced as exclusionary and indicative of a lack of institutional understanding or support.

“

When I shorten my name on job applications, I get more interviews.

”

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Cultural and Personal Barriers: Access to employment, progression, and retention

Participants also reported experiences of subtle and indirect discrimination, including inappropriate comments about their English proficiency or explicit statements questioning their suitability for leadership roles. Many participants felt that employers prioritised candidates who were perceived to “fit” existing organisational cultures, reinforcing exclusion of culturally diverse staff.

Where cultural competency or inclusion training had been provided, it was described as effective in improving understanding, communication, and workplace inclusion. Participants highlighted positive examples of compulsory, organisation-wide diversity training that treated all staff equally and created shared learning environments across roles and seniority.

“

While it may not seem obvious to outsiders, in practice the negative attitudes towards the hijab are very clear in the workplace. I was receiving frequent comments from colleagues that made the environment feel unwelcoming and uncomfortable. Wearing the hijab becomes an issue in certain work settings, even though no written policies or official requirements mention it.

”

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

(E) Socio-economic Barriers: Access to employment and progression

Socio-economic barriers were identified by a smaller but significant group of participants (3 out of 11), with impacts that cut across access to employment and opportunities for progression.

Participants described the high cost of professional courses, mandatory certifications that can help them secure employment, and sector-specific requirements as a major obstacle. In many fields, including construction, project management, and health and safety-related roles, applicants are required to pay for certifications before they can even be considered for employment.

“

You need UK qualifications or certificates to get work, but you need work to afford the qualifications.

”

Age restrictions on internships, placements, and entry-level programmes were also identified as exclusionary. Participants noted that many opportunities are limited to those aged 16–24 or 25, effectively excluding skilled adults seeking to retrain, gain UK experience, or re-enter professional employment.

Limited professional networks further compounded these socio-economic barriers. Participants highlighted the difficulty of building local networks without prior connections for newcomers, and developing trusted professional relationships was described as a slow process, often taking many months before networks could meaningfully support job applications. In the absence of such networks, participants felt disadvantaged in accessing opportunities that are often filled informally.

Immediate financial pressures also shaped employment choices. Some participants reported feeling compelled to accept lower-skilled or temporary roles simply to meet basic living costs, even when these roles were misaligned with their qualifications and long-term career aspirations. While such roles provided short-term stability, they often limited time and resources available for job searching, training, or networking.

“

Limited professional network and ways to build them up is a major barrier for newcomers like me.

”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations draw directly on participants lived experiences and are structured around the key barriers identified in this report. It intend to support employers, policymakers, and delivery organisations to take practical, evidence-based action to improve access to, progress within, and retention in meaningful employment for skilled ethnic minority individuals in Scotland more widely.

Transparent Recruitment, Feedback, and Accountability

- Structured feedback standards for shortlisted and interviewed candidates, such as brief scoring summaries against essential and desirable criteria, to support learning and transparency.
- Monitor recruitment and progression outcomes using disaggregated data (e.g. ethnicity, gender, migration status where appropriate) and publish headline findings annually to strengthen accountability.
- Adopt masked shortlisting by removing names, and nationality indicators to reduce unconscious bias.
- Use structured, competency-based scoring tools for shortlisting and interviews, and retain records for internal review and audit.
- Improve applicant communication through standard post-interview feedback emails that clearly identify areas for development.

Skills Recognition and Fair Access to Routes into Employment

- Create a streamlined, low-cost qualification benchmarking route (free or sponsored for priority groups) to assess overseas qualifications against UK standards and provide clear guidance to employers.
- Expand alternatives to “local experience” through practical skills assessments, short technical tasks, portfolio reviews, and consideration of transferable skills.
- Reduce age-based exclusion by removing age caps on employability routes where possible, or ensuring equivalent pathways exist for mature applicants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Paid Pathways into Work and Progression

- Provide paid 6–12 month structured work placements for skilled ethnic minority candidates, with clear learning outcomes and progression plans.
- Expand access to paid internships, returnships, apprenticeships and work experience across sectors.
- Pilot short-term “try-and-fit” employment schemes that allow both employer and employee to assess fit and performance without long-term commitment.

Inclusive Organisational Practice

- Ensure diverse recruitment panels and Black and minority ethnic representation in decision-making roles.
- Make cultural competency training mandatory, particularly for HR staff, hiring managers, and interview panel members, with regular refreshers.
- Close the gap between EDI statements and practice by linking inclusion commitments to measurable actions, targets, and leadership accountability.
- Challenge poor hiring shortcuts, including the routine use of “overqualified” as a rejection rationale, by requiring evidence-based justification.

Workplace cultural Inclusion and Religious Accommodation

- Implement clear religious accommodation policies, including reasonable access to prayer space and time, and flexibility around dress codes.
- Ensure uniforms are inclusive, with safe and appropriate options compatible with religious dress where feasible.

Networking, Community Support, and Intercultural Engagement

- Provide travel or participation support for jobseekers where cost is a barrier to networking and professional events.
- Promote intercultural activities and workshops that support mutual understanding and trust between employers, local workers, and newcomers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Networking, Community Support, and Intercultural Engagement (Continued)

- Support sector-specific networking infrastructure, including council-, employer-, and third-sector-led events (online and in-person).
- Resource community-led mentoring and peer support, reducing isolation and accelerating access to labour market knowledge.

System Coordination and Employer Engagement

- Strengthen coordination between local authorities, employability services, colleges, professional bodies, and employers to align training with real vacancies.
- Reduce reliance on recruitment agencies where they act as restrictive gatekeepers, particularly in priority and shortage sectors.
- Make recruitment processes more human-centred by reducing over-automation and ensuring capable candidates are not excluded by rigid filters.



Picture: SVP first meeting October 2025

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods of study design combining focus group discussions with reflective surveys to explore barriers to accessing, sustaining, and progressing in meaningful employment among skilled ethnic minority individuals in Edinburgh. This approach enabled in-depth exploration of lived experiences while also allowing for structured capture and validation of key themes across participants.

Data Collection

Data was collected over a six-month period, from September 2025 to March 2026. Engagement took place through monthly in-person sessions, complemented by one online session to ensure accessibility and continuity of participation. Each session included facilitated focus group discussions focused on barriers to employment. Following the discussion, participants completed reflective surveys to record individual perspectives, prioritise key barriers, and validate themes emerging from the group discussions. This combination of methods enabled triangulation of data and strengthened the robustness of the findings.

Participants

The study involved 11 participants aged between twenties to sixties, comprising of eight women and three men. All participants identified as belonging to ethnic minority backgrounds and held qualifications ranging from undergraduate to PhD level, obtained both within and outside the UK. Professional backgrounds were diverse and included engineering, medicine, nursing, teaching, and literacy, with experience spanning mid-level to senior professional roles in participants' countries of origin.

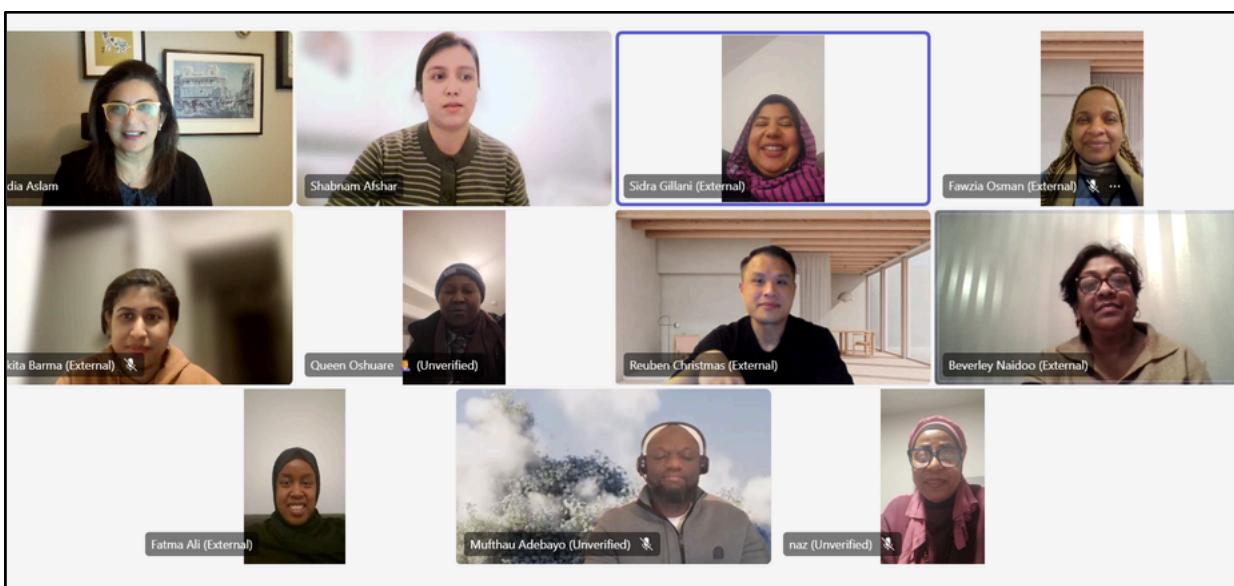
METHODOLOGY

Participants (Continued)

Despite their qualifications and experience, participants were currently underemployed in Scotland working in low- to medium-skilled roles such as store assistants, fast-food shop workers, volunteer administrators, and teaching assistants or some actively seeking employment aligned with their professional expertise. Length of residence in Scotland ranged from less than six months to several years. Immigration status varied and included British passport holders, permanent residents, and individuals on time limited visas.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the skilled voice panel was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. To protect confidentiality, all data were anonymised for reporting purposes. Given participants' varied immigration statuses and employment precarity, trauma informed care and practice was adopted to create a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for discussion.



Picture - SVP meeting December 2025

CONCLUSION

This report shows that highly skilled ethnic minority individuals in Edinburgh face persistent and overlapping barriers to accessing, sustaining, and progressing in meaningful employment.

Despite holding high qualifications and professional experience, participants encountered systemic obstacles across recruitment processes, policy and legal frameworks, organisational practices, and workplace cultures.

These barriers are structural and addressing these challenges are critical not only for advancing equality and fairness, but also for ensuring that Scotland makes full and effective use of the skills and experience available within its diverse population.

Without coordinated action, these barriers will continue to contribute to underemployment, skills waste, and inequality, undermining both social justice and economic growth.



PARTICIPANT DETAILS



Aadil Sayed

Aadil Sayed is a project management professional with international experience across India, the UK, and Dubai. With a Bachelor's in Civil Engineering and an MSc in Construction Project Management, he quickly secured a project management role in Dubai, reflecting his adaptability and global employability.



Ankita Barma

Ankita Barma holds a Master's degree in English and has over four years of experience as an English teacher in India. Originally from India and now based in Edinburgh, she is navigating a career transition within the UK job market. She aspires to build a stable and meaningful professional path while contributing to more equitable and inclusive employment opportunities.



Beverly Naidoo

Beverly Niado is an IFCA-recognised Compliance Practitioner with a Postgraduate Diploma in Compliance (cum laude) and a Bachelor of Commerce in Risk Management. A certified Work Experience Assessor and Moderator in Compliance, she has 35 years of banking experience, including 13 in compliance. British-born, she grew up in South Africa, where she built her professional career.



Sidra Gilliani

Dr Sidra Gilliani holds a BSc, an MBBS with Distinction in Obstetrics and Gynaecology and overall Merit, the PLAB qualification, MRCS Part 1 with Distinction, and a PG Diploma in Anatomy with Merit. She has more than ten years of experience working as a junior doctor within the NHS. Originally from Pakistan, Dr Gilliani now aims to return to the medical field and continue her professional development.

PARTICIPANT DETAILS



Fatoma Ali

Fatoma Ali, a Somali born and raised in Kuwait, holds a BSc in Microbiology and has 15 years of experience as a biomedical scientist with Kuwait's Ministry of Health. She is now in the UK completing a master's in Medical Biotechnology at Edinburgh Napier University and aims to apply and grow her scientific expertise to support community well-being.



Fawzia Osman

Fawzia Osman is a Clinical Drug Development specialist and community leader. She chairs the Sudanese Community in Edinburgh, directs the Network of Advisory and Support Organization, and founded Alfonj Scouts. Active in Craigmillar and on the Gymnastics Scotland EDI Committee, she combines scientific expertise with leadership to drive community impact.



Mufthau Adebayo

Mufthau is a Civil Engineer with a BEng from Nigeria and an MSc in Advanced Structural Engineering from Edinburgh Napier University. He has over 12 years of experience in infrastructure and water projects and holds SMSTS, FAW, and CSCS certifications. Now working in the UK construction sector, he aims to achieve chartership and contribute to inclusive engineering and skills development.



Nazik Siraj

Nazik Siraj is an architect, interior designer, and fashion designer who blends creativity across spaces and style. Recently displaced by war, she brings resilience and hope as she rebuilds her life. A committed community committee worker, Nazik is dedicated to uplifting others and shaping environments that inspire strength, dignity, and positive change.

PARTICIPANT DETAILS



Reuben Christmas

Reuben Christmas is a First Class Honours Electrical and Electronic Engineering graduate with over ten years' experience across engineering, operations, and leadership. Originally from Malaysia, he managed a local F&B franchise before moving into Electronic Security/ELV solutioning in Singapore. Now in Edinburgh, he aims to progress into strategic leadership and deliver sustainable, high-impact solutions.



Sepideh Daghandan

Sepideh Daghandan, originally from Iran, is an Applied Linguist with over a decade of teaching, research, and project coordination experience in the UK and internationally. She holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh and specialises in second language acquisition, corpus linguistics, and academic English. She aims to advance research-informed, learner-centred innovation in higher education.



Oshuare Rosemary Imafoje

Oshuare Rosemary Imafoje completed her MSc in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support at Queen Margaret University 2024, her first degree is in English Language. She has worked as a support worker and as an English & French teacher in Nigeria - has several years of experience in the UK's healthcare sector. Currently, she is a Tax Compliance Officer with the UK government, while she seeks to find a fulfilling position in her trained field of Mental Health.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Capital City Partnership (2023). Employability and ethnicity in Edinburgh: Synopsis of data. Edinburgh: Capital City Partnership. Available at: <https://www.joinedupforjobs.org/uploads/store/mediaupload/547/file/Ethnicity%20and%20Employment%20-%20recent%20data%20Oct%202023.pdf>

Capital City Partnership (2025). Exploring barriers to employment for New Scots and Ethnically Diverse Candidates. Edinburgh: Capital City Partnership.

Heath, A. and Cheung, S. Y. (2007). Unequal chances: Ethnic minorities in Western labour markets. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Li, Y. and Heath, A. (2016). 'Class matters: A study of minority and majority social mobility in Britain, 1982–2011', *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(1), pp. 162–200.

Scottish Government (2024a). Scotland's labour market insights: April 2024. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-insights-october-2024/>

Scottish Government (2025). Poverty and income inequality in Scotland, 2020–2023. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Available at: <https://data.gov.scot/poverty/index.html>

Walsh, J. (2017). 'Discrimination in recruitment: Evidence from field experiments', *Sociology Compass*, 11(7).



CAPITAL CITY PARTNERSHIP

Barriers to Employment Report 2026

A comprehensive analysis of the structural barriers affecting skilled ethnic minority individuals seeking employment in Edinburgh.

© 2026 Capital City Partnership. All rights reserved.

CONTACT US

 14 Links Pl, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 7EZ

 eepem@capitalcitypartnership.org

 capitalcitypartnership.co.uk