



BAR  
STANDARDS  
BOARD

REGULATING BARRISTERS

# An analysis of the backgrounds of BPTC applicants in 2009/10

The General Council of the Bar of England and Wales

Statistical report on BPTC applicants

June 2011

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# 1. Introduction

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This paper presents the profile of applicants to the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) who applied in October 2009 to January 2010. This includes the equality and diversity strands monitored and socio-economic background of applicants.

## 1.1 Bar Professional Training Course

The BPTC is the second stage of academic training to become a barrister; students must have completed (or expect to have completed by the following September) a law degree or any undergraduate degree and the Common Professional Examination (CPE) which is a law conversion course in order to apply for the BPTC. Competition for a place on the BPTC is quite strong. There are approximately 3,000 applicants each year for the BPTC and approximately 1,800 of these applicants are successful. The BPTC costs students between £10,000 to £15,000 to complete, varying between providers.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the BPTC is to ensure that students intending to become barristers acquire the skills and knowledge, attitudes and competence to prepare them for pupillage and a career at the Bar. The full-time BPTC runs for one academic year and the part-time course runs for two years. The main skills that the BPTC teaches students are case work and legal research, general written skills and giving written advice as well as interpersonal and conference skills (interviewing clients), resolution of disputes out of court and advocacy. The main subject areas taught on the BPTC are civil litigation and remedies and criminal litigation and sentencing, evidence and professional ethics as well as two more optional subjects from a choice of six. All students are required to be admitted to an Inn of Court<sup>2</sup> before registration on the BPTC. The Inns are the sole institutions in Britain able to Call students to the Bar and grant rights of

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<sup>1</sup> The BPTC providers are BPP Law School – London & Leeds; Cardiff Law School; The College of Law-London & Birmingham; The City Law School; Kaplan Law School; Manchester Metropolitan University; Nottingham Law School; The University of Northumbria at Newcastle & University of the West of England at Bristol

<sup>2</sup> The four Inns of Court are Lincoln's Inn; Inner Temple; Middle Temple and Gray's Inn.

audience to the superior courts of England and Wales. The Inns provide facilities such as libraries, common rooms and dining facilities. The Inns also organise qualifying sessions (previously known as 'dining sessions') which are educational and networking activities which prepare students for practice. These may feature training talks and workshops; students must complete 12 qualifying sessions in order to be Called to the Bar.

## **1.2 BPTC application process**

All applicants must apply for the BPTC through the Bar Standards Board (BSB) centralised application system 'BPTC Online', whether applicants are successful is decided by the BPTC providers. Applications are made between October and January of an academic year for the following September; offers from first round applications are made in March and clearing takes place from April to September and applications must also be made for membership of an Inn by May.

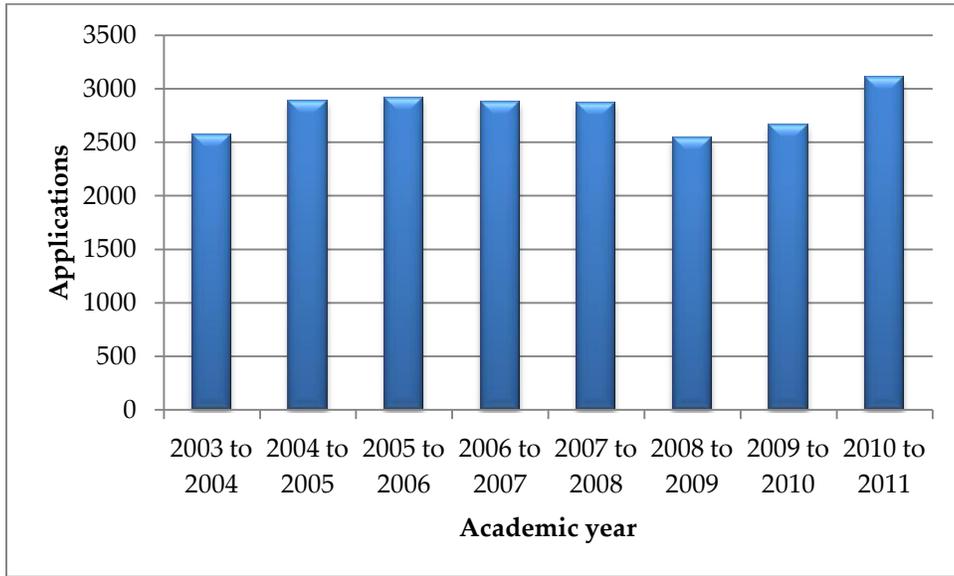
The application process includes a separate equality and diversity monitoring form which enables the Bar Council and BSB to meet their various equality, diversity and fair access objectives as well as the BSB's regulatory duties. While this data is collected in the application process, it is separate to the application form which goes to BPTC providers and the monitoring form goes to the BSB. The monitoring form is anonymous and identification of applicants is not possible.

Applicants do not have to respond to any or all of the monitoring questions. This paper includes the missing data or non responses when reporting on the equality strands monitored at BPTC application. This is because monitoring equality and diversity in the profession is the primary aim of this paper and to ensure that equality and diversity data is represented clearly and that data cannot be misinterpreted.

Applications for the BPTC have risen steadily since 2003/2004 despite a dip in applications made for the 2008/2009 application year. The applications shown on Figure 1 below refer to applications made for that academic year, i.e. 2010 – 2011 refers to applications made in October

2009 to January 2010 for the 2010/2011 academic year. Applications have increased by 529 (20.6%) since 2003/2004. In 2010/2011 there were 3,099 applications for the BPTC.

**Figure 1 BPTC applications**



## 2. Summary

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- In 2009/2010 there were 3,099 applications made for the BPTC, this is an increase of 442 (16.6%) applications on 2008/2009.
- Females constituted 47.3% of applicants, males were 47% and 5.6% did not respond.
- Black and Minority Ethnic applicants accounted for 60.1% of applicants and white applicants accounted for 36.8%, 3.1% did not respond.
- There were 131 (6.6%) applicants who considered themselves to have a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act.
- The age of applicants ranged from 16 to 70 years; majority were aged less than 25 years.
- Approximately half of applicants were UK nationals; 3.5% were EU nationals and 44.2% were international.
- The majority of applicants had a parent or guardian who was working as a 'manager, director and senior official' or as a professional.
- Amongst applicants, 55.3% were from state schools, 42.5% were from fee paying schools and no data was collected for 4.2% of applicants.
- The majority of applicants expected to be in some level of debt upon completion of pupillage and 42.5% expected to be in no debt.

### 3. Equality and Diversity Strands

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This section describes the profile of BPTC applicants by the equality and diversity strands monitored in the application process. These include the protected characteristics of gender and ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation as well as religion and age. Data was not collected on maternity or gender reassignment but will be collected in forthcoming years, these are also protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of monitoring this information is to ensure that entrance into training for the Bar is accessible and attracts the best candidates regardless of background. The nationality of applicants is also discussed in this section. Applicants were compared to practising barristers as recorded in *Bar Barometer Trends in the Profile of the Bar* for gender and ethnicity.

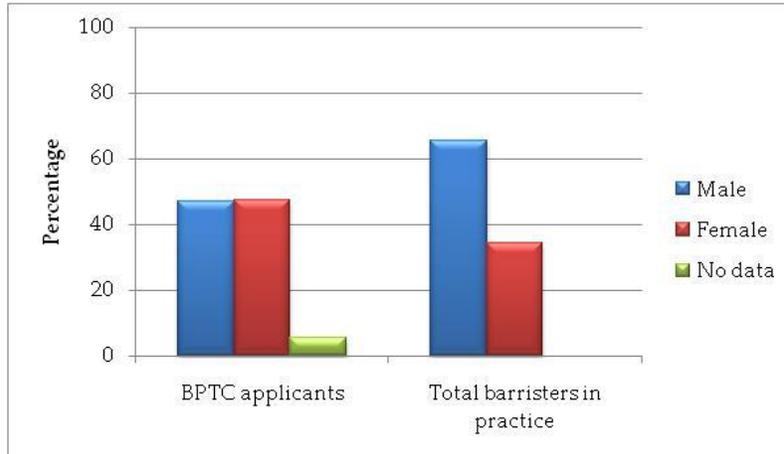
Additionally applicants were compared to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data on the gender, ethnicity and disability status of UK postgraduate students in their first year of registration. This subset of the student population was chosen because the BPTC is also a post graduate qualification and all students who registered as first year postgraduates for 2009/10 were considered more comparable than the whole postgraduate population and the whole student population. As the HESA data refers only to postgraduates who are domiciled in the UK, a comparison is made only between UK BPTC applicants with the HESA data. There were 208,170 HESA postgraduate students registered for their first year of post graduate study in the 2009/2010 academic year. For a full explanation of HESA methodology, please see Appendix 1.

#### 3.1 Gender

3.1.1 Of the 3,099 applications for the BPTC; there was an almost even proportion of male and female applicants. Female applicants accounted for 1,467 (47.3%) of applicants in comparison to 1,458 (47%) male applicants. There were 174 (5.6%) missing cases in this

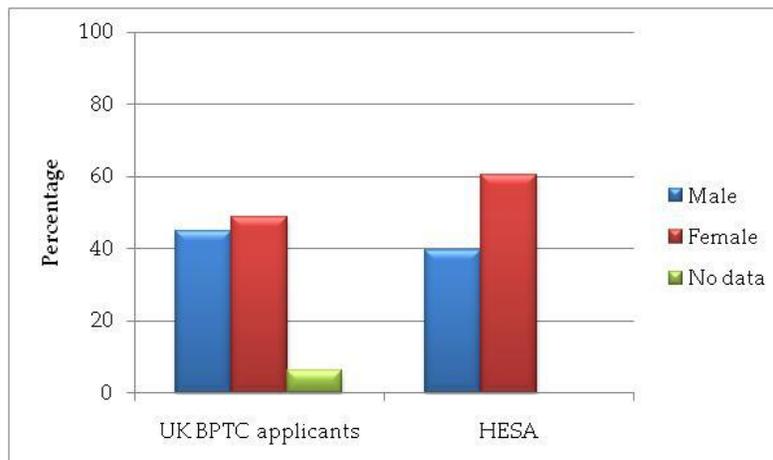
category. As shown on Figure 2, there were a substantially higher proportion of women applying for the BPTC than currently present in the profile of the profession as a whole.

**Figure 2 BPTC applicants gender composition**



3.1.2 When considering UK BPTC applicants, there was a slightly higher proportion of female applicants than amongst EU/international applicants. There were 1,618 UK BPTC applicants composed of 790 (48.8%) female applicants and 727 (44.9%) male applicants. There was no response to this query from 101 (6.2%) of UK BPTC applicants. In comparison amongst HESA postgraduates (N=208, 170), there were 60.5% female applicants and 39.5% male applicants. This is shown on Figure 3 below.

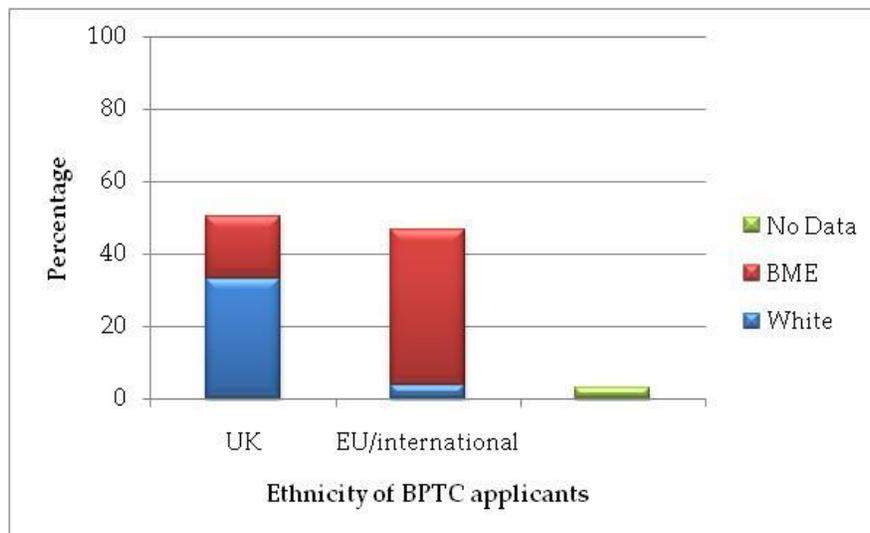
**Figure 3 UK BPTC and HESA gender composition**



### 3.2 Ethnicity

3.2.1 The BPTC online received 1,862 (60.1%) applications from Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) applicants compared to 1,140 (36.8%) from white applicants. However 97 (3.1%) did not declare their ethnicity. There were 1,371 (44.2%) applications to the BPTC from international students and 109 (3.5%) from EU applicants, the majority of international applicants were BME. This is shown on Figure 4. The proportion of BPTC applicants from a BME background was also higher than that of total barristers currently in practice of whom 10% are BME.

Figure 4 BPTC applicants ethnic composition

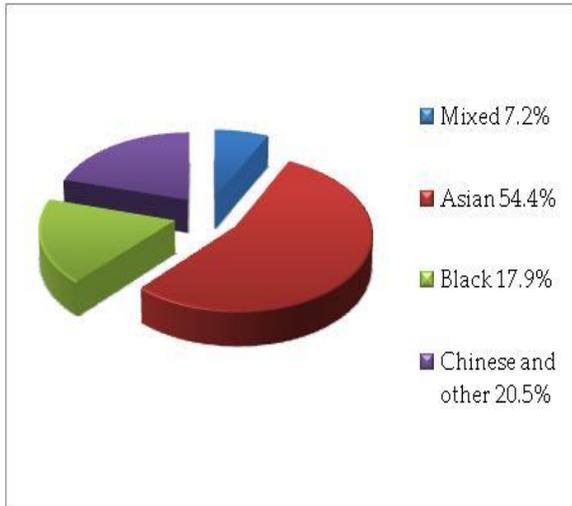


3.2.2 The majority of BME BPTC applicants, 1,013 (54.4%), were from an Asian background. Applicants from a black background comprised 334 (17.9%) of applicants and applicants 381(20.5%) were Chinese or from 'other' ethnic groups. A small minority, 134 (7.2%), were from a mixed ethnic background. This is displayed on Figure 5.

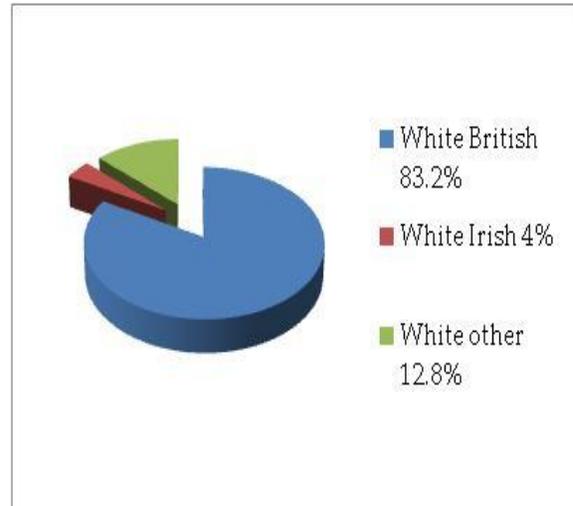
Amongst Asian applicants, the majority were Bangladeshi followed by Pakistani, Indian and 'other' Asian. Amongst black applicants, the majority were black Caribbean followed by black African and other black. Amongst 'mixed' there were a majority of 'other' mixed followed by white and black Caribbean, white and Asian and white and black African. Within 'Chinese and other' the majority were Chinese. Amongst white

applicants, the majority were white British, followed by 'other' white and white Irish. This is shown on Figure 6 below.

**Figure 5 BME ethnic breakdown**

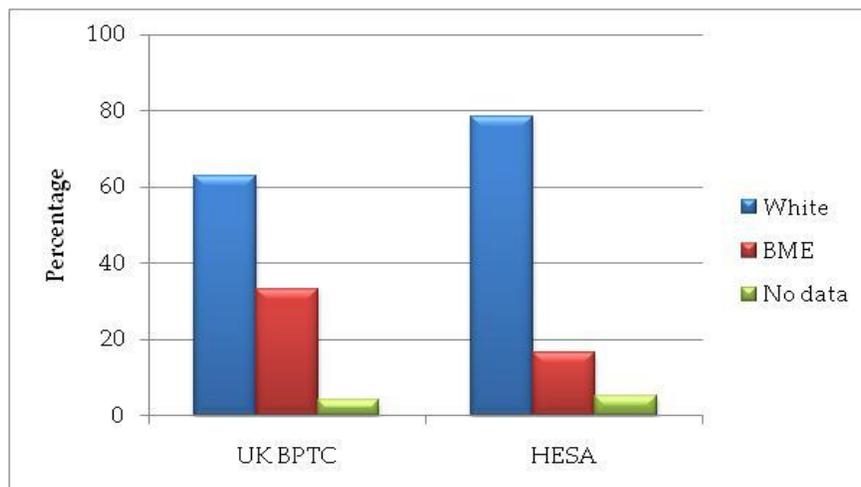


**Figure 6 White ethnic breakdown**



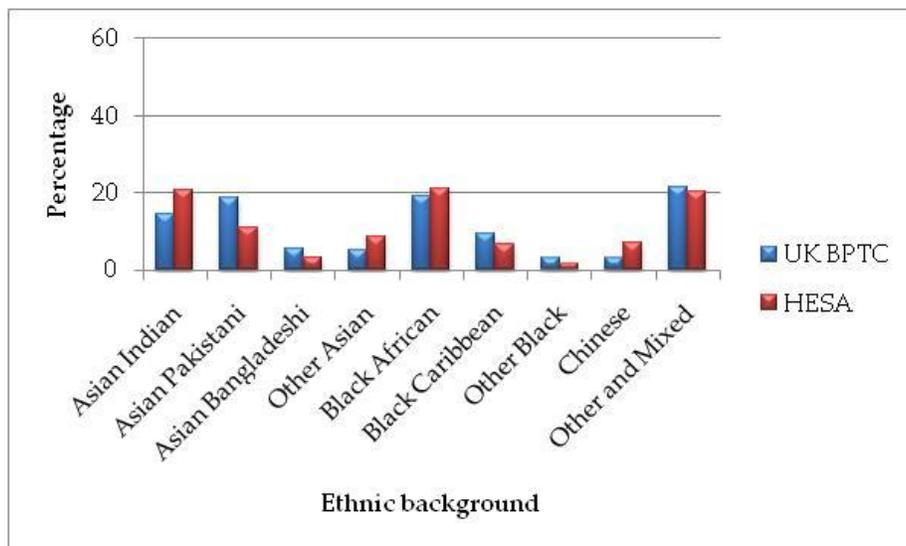
3.2.3 The ethnic breakdown of UK BPTC applicants was compared to that of HESA postgraduates. BME applicants comprised 534 (33%) of UK BPTC applicants and BME students comprised 16.5% of HESA postgraduates. There were 4.1% and 5.1% non responses for the UK BPTC applicants and HESA postgraduates respectively. This is illustrated on Figure 7.

**Figure 7 UK BPTC and HESA ethnic composition**



3.2.4 There were no large differences in the composition of the BME population between UK BPTC applicants and HESA students. HESA combined the subgroups within the ‘mixed’ and ‘other’ categories and this was also done with the UK BPTC data in order to make it comparable. There were higher proportions of Asian Pakistanis, Asian Bangladeshis and Black Caribbean, other black and ‘other and mixed’ amongst UK BPTC applicants in comparison to HESA postgraduates amongst whom there were higher proportions of Asian Indians and other Asians, Black Africans and Chinese. This is shown on Figure 8.

**Figure 8 UK BPTC and HESA BME composition**



### 3.3 Sexual Orientation

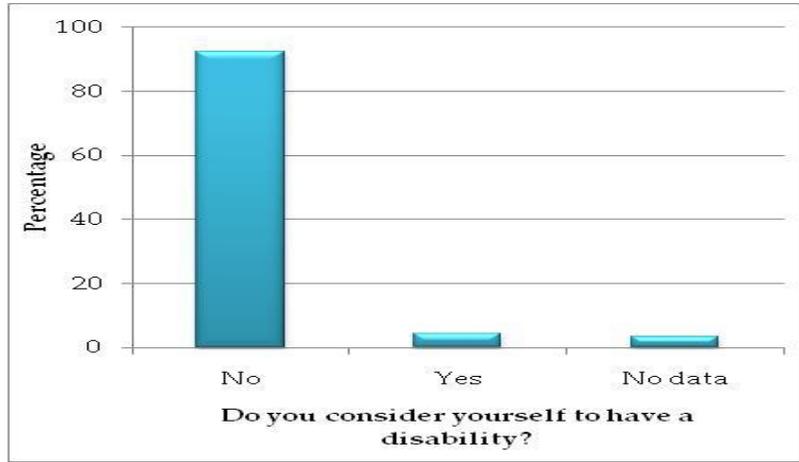
The majority of BPTC applicants, 2,729 (88.1%) were heterosexual, 36 (1.2%) were gay and 61 (2%) were bisexual. There were also 273 (8.8%) missing cases for this question.

### 3.4 Disability

3.4.1 The proportion of BPTC online applicants declaring themselves as having a disability was 131 (4.2%); 2,863 (92.4%) responded that they did not have a disability. There were 105 (3.4%) non responses to this question. The monitoring form referred specifically to whether applicants consider themselves to have a disability as defined by the Disability

Discrimination Act<sup>3</sup> (DDA); BPTC applicants classified as having a disability in this paper are those who considered themselves to have a disability within this definition. This is shown on Figure 9.

**Figure 9 BPTC applicants by disability**

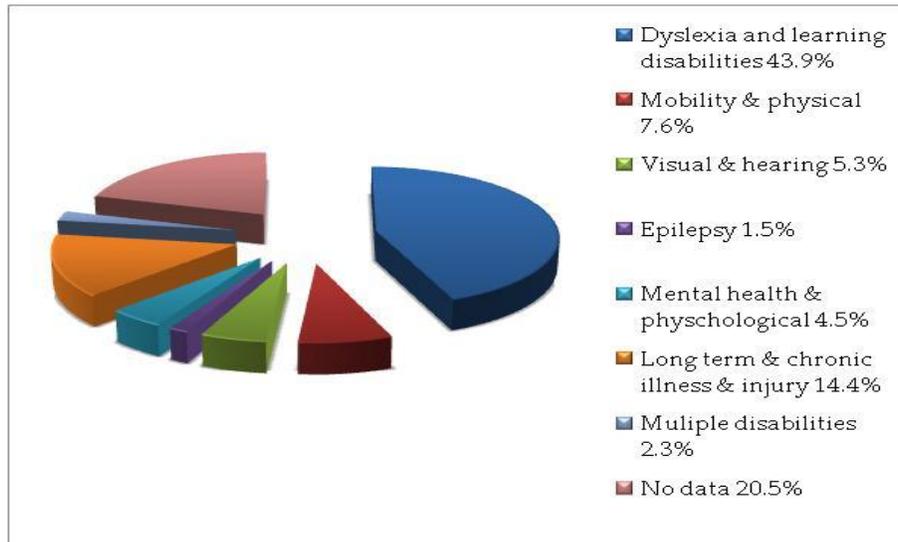


3.4.2 Amongst the 131 disabled applicants, the largest proportion of applicants with a disability cited having dyslexia or a learning difficulty followed by those with a long term or chronic illness. Negligible proportions had epilepsy, multiple disabilities and mental health issues. No information on the nature of their disability was supplied by 20.5% of applicants with a disability. This is shown on Figure 10 below.

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<sup>3</sup> The Disability Discrimination Act defines a person as having a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial long term, adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long term means 12 months or more. This has been replaced with The Equality Act 2010.

Figure 10 Types of disability



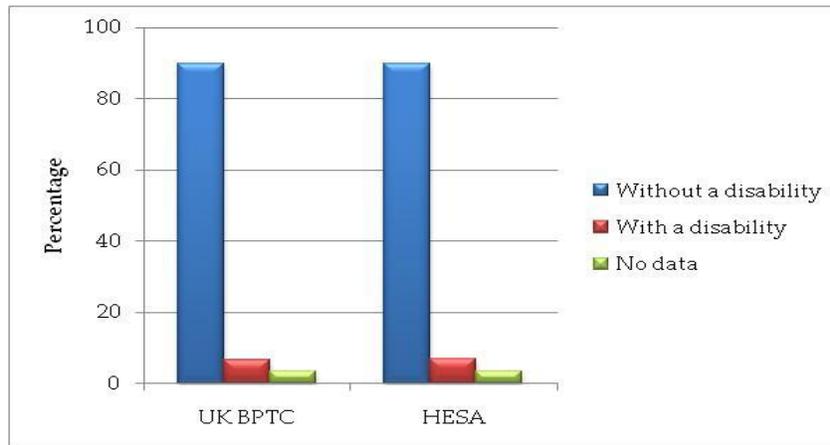
3.4.3 Rates of UK BPTC applicants with a disability and HESA postgraduates with a disability were almost the same at 6.6% and 6.8% respectively. Each had non responses to this query from 3.5% of their respective populations. Despite the differences in the definition of disability, there was a similar positive response rate for both surveys.<sup>4</sup> This is shown on Figure 11.

3.4.5 Additionally similar proportions of both the UK BPTC applicants and HESA postgraduates who consider themselves to have a disability cited having dyslexia or a learning disability, visual and hearing disabilities and mental health issues.

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<sup>4</sup> The HESA definition of disability for monitoring purposes is based upon self assessment and students are not obliged to report disability. In the BPTC, students are also not obliged to report disability but disability is defined as whether one considers one's self to have a disability as defined in the DDA. While these measures are similar in that both are reliant upon self assessment, HESA does not refer to the DDA. The BPTC questionnaire provides a definition of the DDA which may prompt more in depth consideration of the question and possibly encourage applicants to respond positively due to this. However it could also be argued that the DDA excludes those who considered themselves to have a disability but one which is not covered by the DDA.

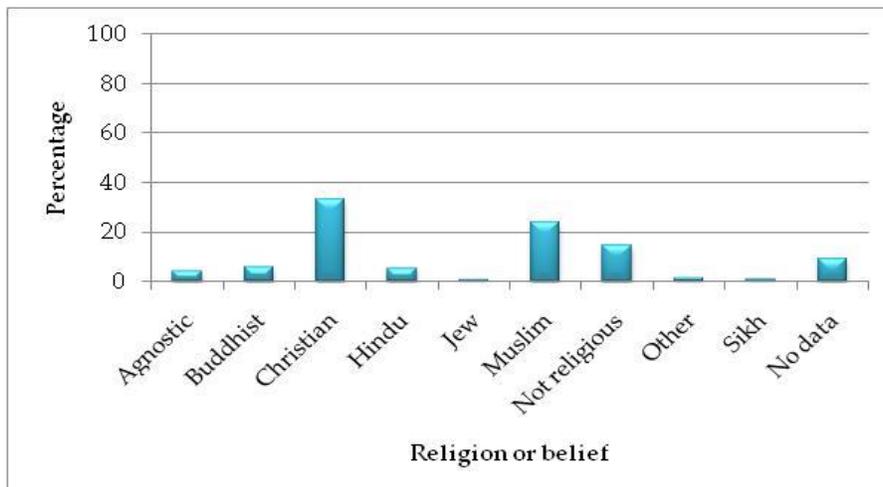
**Figure 11 UK BPTC and HESA by disability**



### 3.5 Religion

3.5.1 The most frequently reported response of applicants was to describe themselves as Christian; 1,037 (33.5%) were Christian. They were followed in size by those who described themselves as Muslim accounting for 748 (24.1%) applicants. Those who described themselves as ‘not religious’ comprised 459 (14.8%) of applicants. There were 135 (4.4%) who described themselves as agnostic, 39 (1.3%) who cited ‘other’ as a religion and there were 160 (5.2%) who described themselves as Hindus. There were low proportions of applicants who considered themselves Buddhists (5.7%), Jewish (0.7%) and Sikhs (1.1%). Additionally 288 (9.2%) applicants did not respond to this query. This is shown on Figure 12.

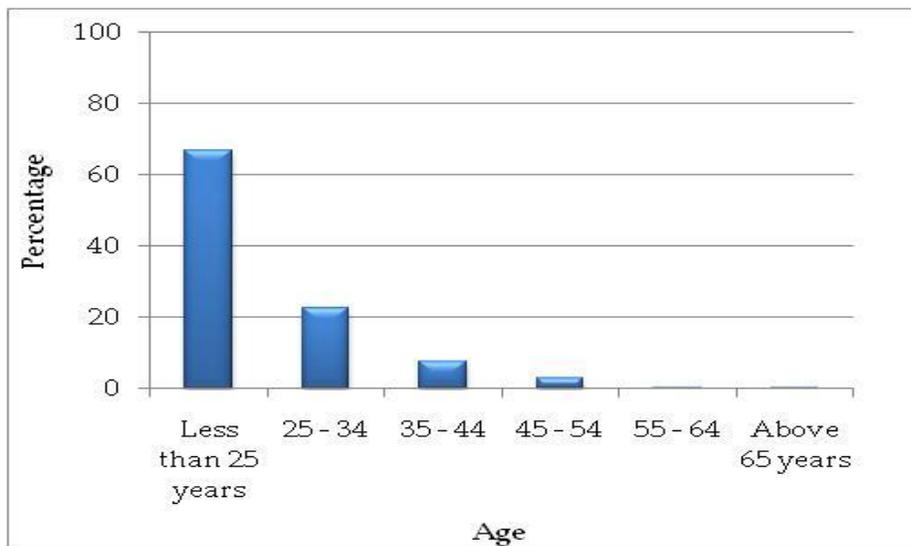
**Figure 12 BPTC applicants by religion**



### 3.6 Age

3.6.1 The ages of applicants ranged from 16 years to 70 years. The most common age of applicants or the mode response was 21 years. The average age of applicants was 25 years; the average age was higher than that of the majority of applicants because there were people aged up to 70 years of age in the BPTC applications which skewed the average. Overall the age distribution of applicants was younger; half of applicants were aged 23 years and younger. There was only 1 non response for this query. The age distribution of BPTC applicants is shown on Figure 13 below.

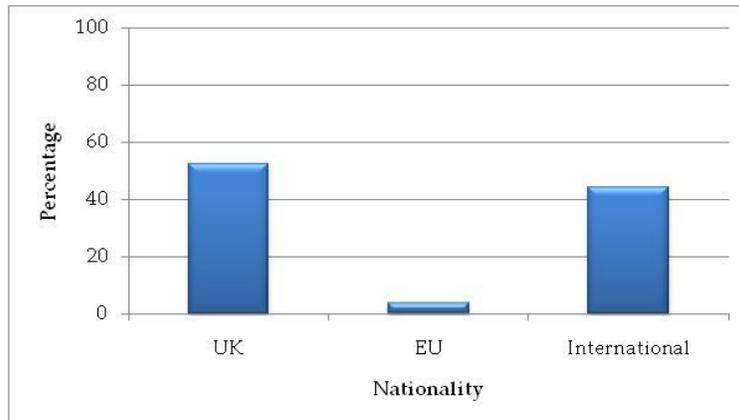
Figure 13 BPTC applicants by age



### 3.7 Nationality

3.7.1 Over a half of applicants, 1,618 (52.2%) were UK nationals, 109 (3.5%) were EU nationals and 1,371 (44.2%) were international. There was only 1 non response to this query. This is shown on Figure 14. Amongst international students; Bangladeshi's constituted the largest proportion of students followed by Malaysian and Pakistani students. Amongst EU students the majority were Cypriot followed by Irish students.

Figure 14 BPTC applicants by nationality



## 4. *Socio – economic background*

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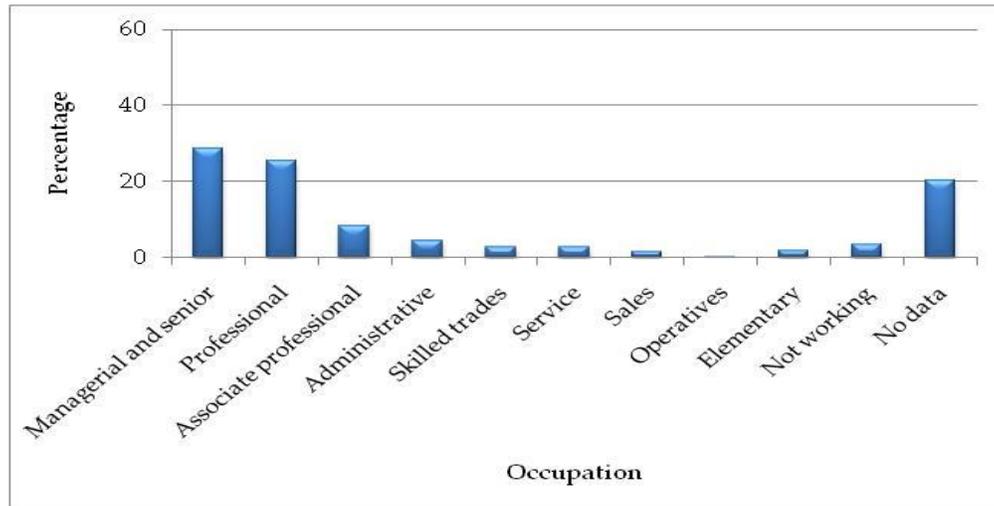
This section presents some indicators of the socio-economic background of BPTC applicants; none of these measures are effective as a standalone measure of socio-economic background but in this context give a limited indication of this. This section discusses parental employment, applicant's educational background and their expected level of debt. Additional socio-economic indicators will be added for forthcoming years to enable improved measurement of socio-economic status.

### 4.1 Parental Employment

- 4.1.1 Applicants were asked to name the job title and area of business of the highest earner of their parents or guardians. This allowed for their responses to be classified according to the Standard Occupational Classification unit groups (SOC 2010) which is developed and used by the Office of National Statistics. In order to fully measure social class as based upon occupation more details would have to be gathered which was beyond the scope of this survey. The occupational data does however provide an insight into the social background of BPTC applicants. There are nine major categories; managers, directors and senior officials; professional occupations; associate professional and technical occupations; administrative and secretarial; skilled trades and occupations; caring, leisure and service, sales and customer service; process, plant and machine operatives; and elementary occupations. Those whose parents were not working; not working due to disability and returned to education were also included in a separate category; 'not working' for this report.
- 4.1.2 There was a very high amount of missing cases; 632 (20.4%) due to non response and due to unclear responses which prevented accurate classification. The highest proportion, 887 (28.6%), of applicants had a parent working in the 'manager, director

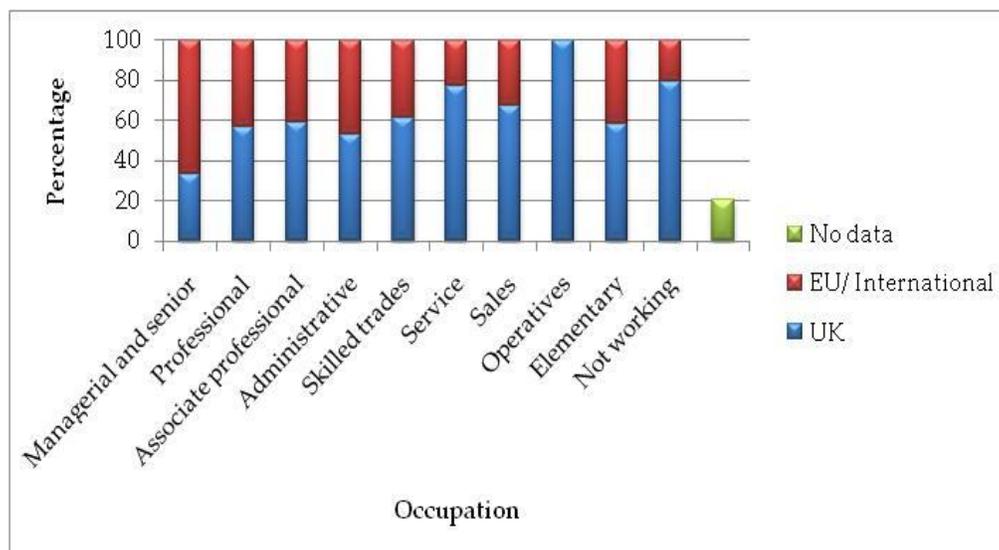
and senior official' category, followed by 790 (25.5%) working as professionals. Within the professional category; 200 (25.3% of professionals or 6.5% of the entire sample) were legal professionals. Smaller groups of applicants' parents worked in associate professional and administrative occupations; 262 (8.5%) and 141 (4.5%) respectively. There were a small proportion of the applicant's parents working in the remaining occupations of trade and service, sales and operatives as well as elementary occupations and those who were currently unemployed. This is shown on Figure 15.

**Figure 15 BPTC applicants by occupation of highest earning parent/guardian**



4.1.3 There were significant differences between UK and EU/International students. EU/international students were significantly more likely to have a parent working in 'manager, director and senior official' categories than UK students, while UK students were more likely to have parents working in all other categories. This is shown on Figure 16.

**Figure 16 Parental occupation of BPTC applicants by nationality**

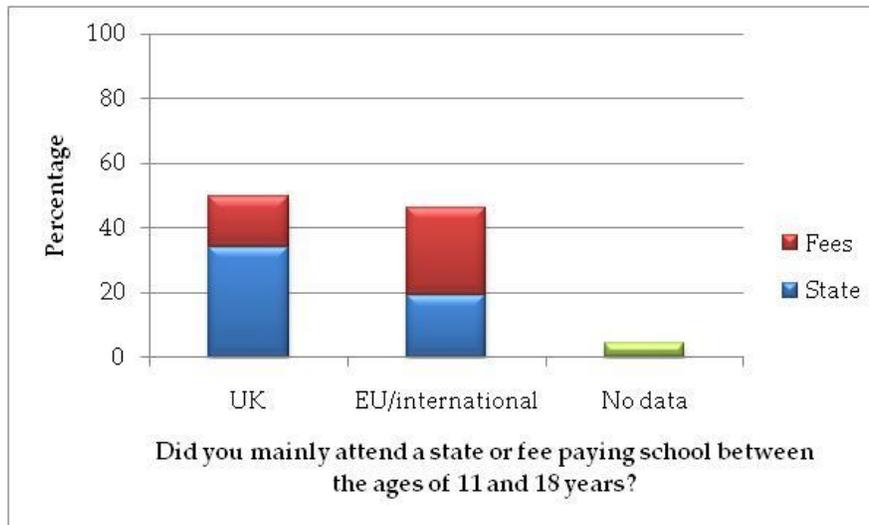


## 4.2 Applicants educational background

4.2.1 Whether applicants attended a fee paying school or a state school was the only query on applicants’ educational background. The majority, 1,651 (55.3%) of BPTC applicants were educated in state schools and 1,318 (42.5%) applicants were educated in fee paying schools, there was no data collected for 130 (4.2%) applicants.

4.2.2 There was a disparity between UK and EU/international applicants regarding the type of school that they attended; the majority of applicants who went to a fee paying school were EU/ international students 841 (63.9%) of fee paying students while UK applicants formed the majority of those who attended a state school 1,059 (64.1%). This is shown on Figure 17. However the proportion of UK students from fee paying schools is higher than that at population level.

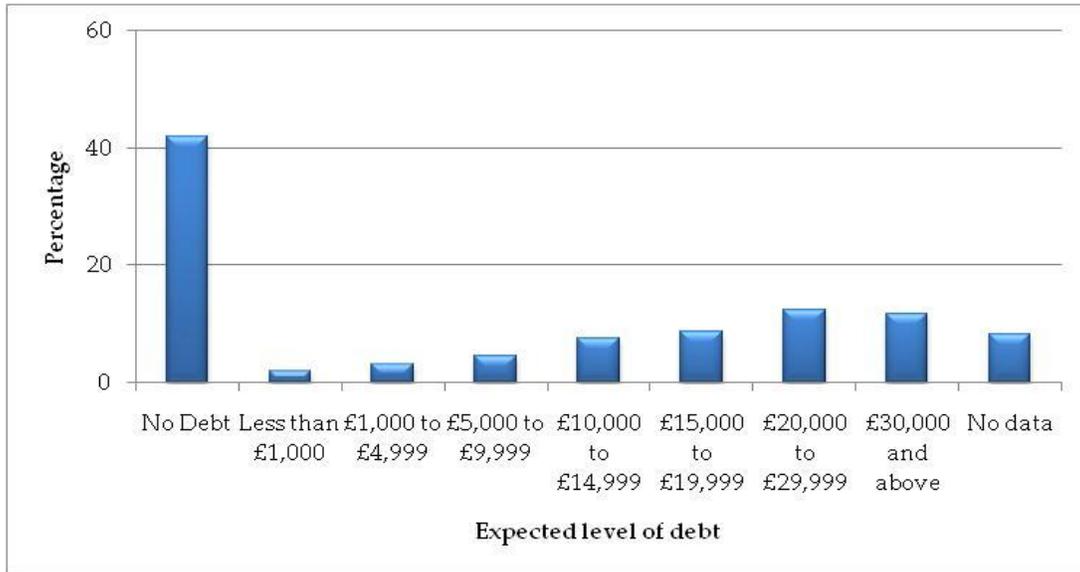
Figure 17 BPTC applicants by type of school attended



### 4.3 Estimated level of debt on completion of pupillage

4.3.1 Applicants were asked to estimate their expected level of debt upon completion of pupillage; this gave an indication of the costs of academic and practical training for pupils as well as giving an indication of their socio-economic background. There were 252 (8.1%) applicants who did not respond to this query. Overall more applicants expected to be in some form of debt, however the mode or most common response was to expect no debt upon completion of pupillage, 1,300 (41.9%) applicants stated they expected no debt. Negligible proportions of applicants stated that they expected less than £1,000 of debt, between £1,000 and £4,999 or between £5,000 and £9,999 of debt. There was 234 (7.6%) expecting £10,000 to £14,999 of debt and 268 (8.6%) expecting £15,000 to £19,999 of debt. The larger amounts of debt of £20,000 to £29,999 and £30,000 and above were expected by 383 (12.4%) and 359 (11.6%) respectively. This is shown on Figure 18.

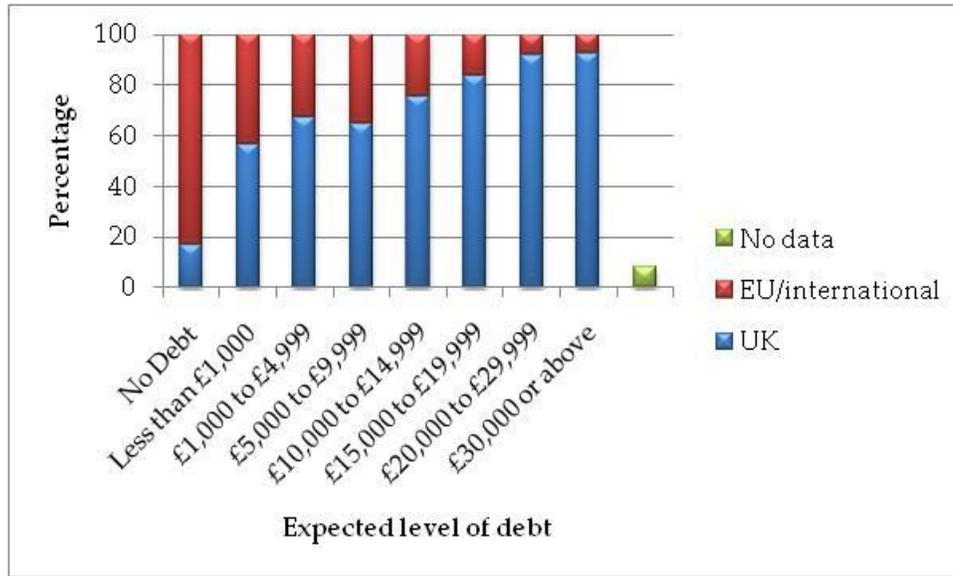
Figure 18 BPTC applicants by expected level of debt



4.3.2 Expected level of debt was significantly related to a number of other characteristics measured in the monitoring form. The strongest relationship was between expected level of debt and nationality. There was also a significant relationship between expected level of debt with the following characteristics listed in the order of their strength of relationship; type of school attended and gender, parental occupation and ethnicity. On initial analysis, ethnicity was strongly related to expected level of debt, however due to the connection between ethnicity and nationality, the relationship between ethnicity and expected level of debt was examined separately for UK and EU/international applicants. There continued to be a relationship between ethnicity and expected level of debt, however it was much weaker.

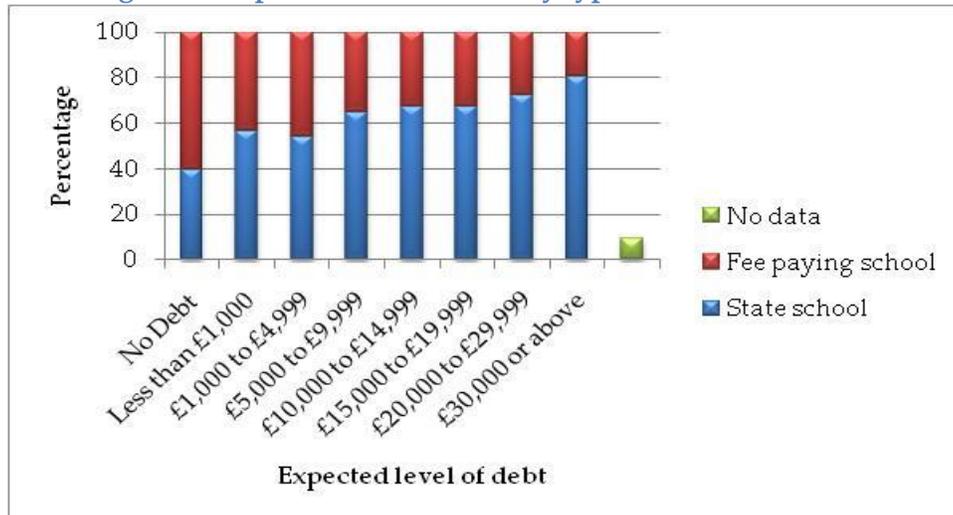
4.3.3 EU/international applicants were significantly more likely to expect to have no debt while UK applicants were more likely to expect to be in debt. Additionally UK applicants were found in larger proportions amongst those who expected larger amounts of debt. UK applicants comprised 218 (16.8%) of those expecting no debt and 332 (92.5%) of those expecting to be in at least £30,000 of debt. This is shown on Figure 19.

**Figure 19 BPTC applicants expected level of debt by nationality**

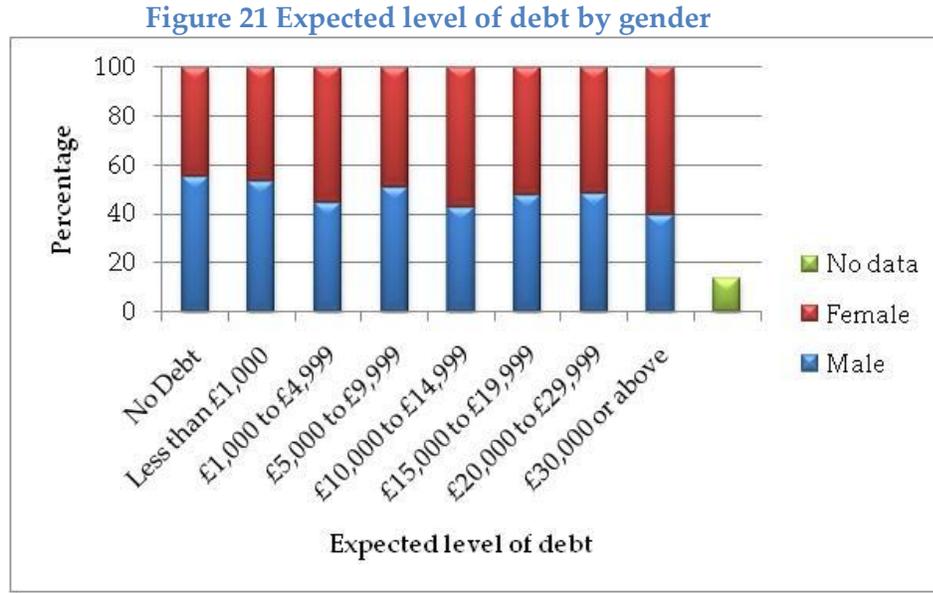


4.3.4 Applicants who attended a fee paying school were more likely to be in debt, to be in higher levels of debt and less likely to expect no debt. This may indicate the relationship between type of school attended and socio-economic background. Applicants expected level of debt by the type of school that they attended is shown on Figure 21.

**Figure 20 Expected level of debt by type of school attended**

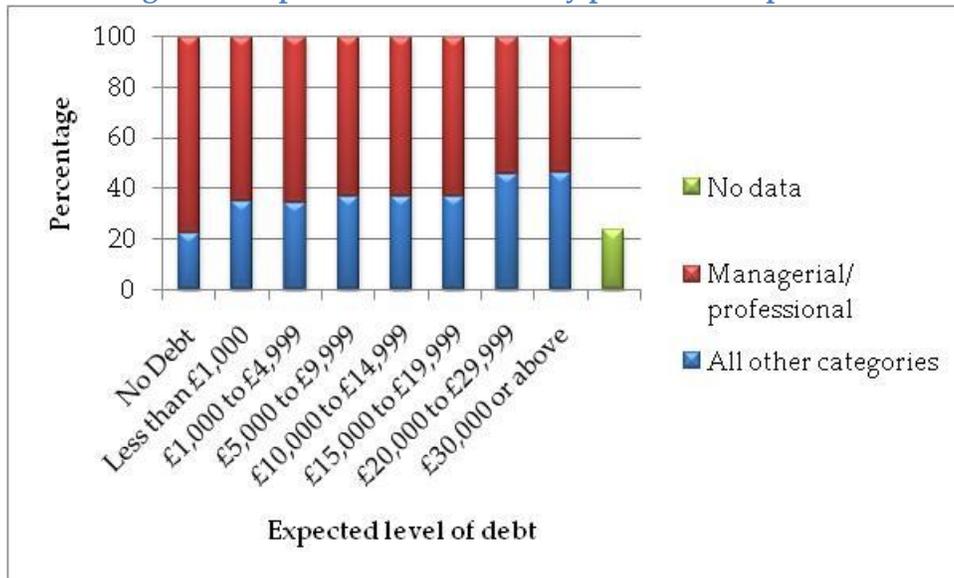


4.3.5 There was a significant relationship between expected level of debt and gender. Females were more likely to have higher levels of debt than males and less likely to expect to have no debt. This is shown on Figure 20.



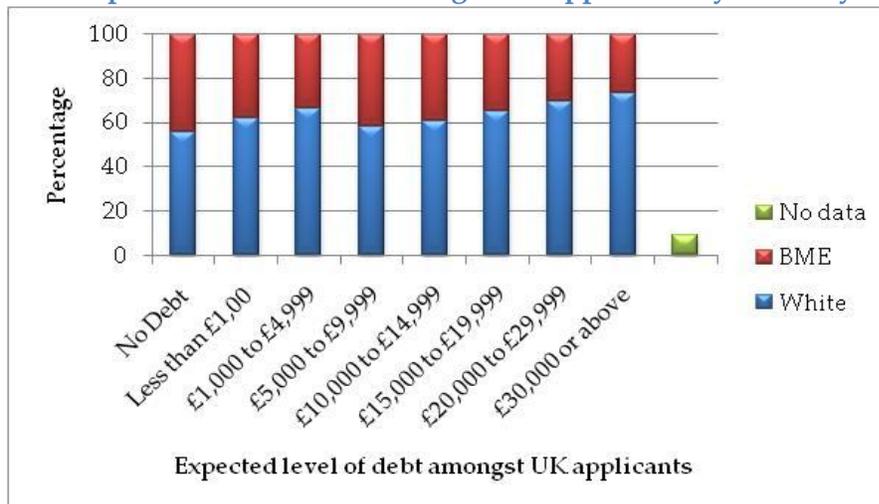
4.3.6 Applicants who had a parent working as a ‘manager, director and senior official’ or as a professional who more likely to have no debt or lower levels of debt than all other employment categories. The categories of associate professional and administrative/ clerical, trade and service, sales and operatives as well as elementary occupations and those who were currently not working were combined as the number of applicants within each expected level of debt and employment category became too small to allow for statistical analysis. The relationship between these characteristics is represented on Figure 22.

**Figure 22 Expected level of debt by parental occupation**



4.3.7 Amongst UK applicants, BME applicants were more likely to have no debt and less likely to be in debt or have higher levels of debt. This is represented on Figure 23

**Figure 23 Expected level of debt amongst UK applicants by ethnicity**



The relationship between expected level of debt and ethnicity was also significant amongst EU/international applicants and was slightly stronger than amongst UK

applicants. BME EU/international applicants were more likely to have no debt and less likely to have debt or higher levels of debt. The categories of 'less than £1,000' and '£1,000 to £4,999' were combined due to both response categories receiving few responses. This is shown on Figure 24.

**Figure 24 Expected level of debt amongst EU/international applicants by ethnicity**

