



Diversity Analysis of Interior Design Students at UK institutions



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Executive Summary

This analysis examines interior design students at UK higher education institutions, and in particular considers four markers of diversity: gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity and disability. Here are the key findings.

Gender

The majority of students on interior design and other design courses were female (83%). Females on interior design courses were more likely than males to get a first.

Socio-economic group

This group is assessed by examining a student's school type, their parents' education, and their parents' employment category.

- Interior design students were less likely than average to have been to private school (5%, compared to the average UK student 9%).
- Their parents were just as likely to have a degree as the parents of other UK student.
- If we divide employment type into three categories, then the parents of interior design students were more likely than average to be in employment category C (routine, semi-routine or long-term unemployed) and less likely to be in employment category A (higher managerial or professional).
- In all, interior design students were less likely than average to come from privileged backgrounds.

Ethnicity

Interior design students were more likely than the average student to be from ethnic minorities (29%, compared to 23% for the average UK student).

- Across the sector there was an 'attainment gap' for ethnicity. Ethnic minorities students were less likely to get a first than white students. The ethnicity attainment gap was larger than average on interior design courses: 13% of ethnic minority students attained a first, compared to 28% of white students.
- This isn't attributed to socio-economic factors. White students whose parents were in a lower category for socio-economic background still outperformed ethnic minority students whose parents were in the highest category.

Disability

Around 13% of interior design students reported a disability (compared to 12% across all UK students). The attainment gap for disabled students was about the same as the UK average. The data did not provide any further information on the nature of students' disabilities, for example whether these are mental or physical.

Comparison courses

This analysis also compared students on interior design courses with two other related course types: those on architecture and planning courses, and those on creative art and design courses.

- As a cohort, interior design students were very different from architecture students. The latter were more likely to be male, and to have parents from educated and professional backgrounds.
- Interior design students also differed from creative arts & design students. For the latter the picture was mixed as to their socio-economic background, but they were predominantly more likely to be white and were more likely to report a disability.

The key demographic figures on students are summarized in graphical form in Figure 3.1.



Introduction

The British Institute of Interior Design is the UK's professional institute for interior designers. It assesses the competence of its members, offers training and development opportunities and works to raise professional standards in the wider interior design profession. However, the BIID currently has very limited data on UK interior designers, design practice and design students. In particular, there has been a concern that interior design as an occupation might not be open to a wide range of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

This analysis aims to go some way to rectify this missing data by analysing university students undertaking courses in interior design. The key research question is to find out (a) what the key characteristics are of interior design students; (b) what diversity issues subsequently arise. The data allows analysis of four key characteristics: gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, and disability. For each of these, interior design students are compared with other students to find how the group differs.

The intended outcome is to assist the BIID in understanding young people's paths towards interior design as a career, and to help them focus on particular sub-groups where necessary if this can help improve diversity.

This analysis uses data provided by the Higher Education Statistics Authority (hereafter HESA)*, comprising information on every higher education student in the UK. This data has a large number of variables on their course and stage of study, as well as certain demographic variables which are the focus here.

The approach taken here has been to compare the characteristics of the 'average' UK student with those on interior design courses. 'Average' in this sense is taken across the dataset; for example for Figure 3.1, 57% of all students in the dataset were female. This can then be compared with the set of interior design students, of whom 83% are female, in order to get a picture of how far the interior design students differ from average. For comparative purposes, Sections 4 to 7 also looks at students on two related sets of courses, namely (a) architecture, building and planning courses; (b) creative arts and design courses. The analysis will show that architecture students in particular are very different from interior design students.

The dataset presents student records over a five-year period, from 2014/5 to 2018/9. A bald statement such as "83% of interior design students in the dataset were female" begs the question as to whether there were any differences in different years, or marked trends over the period in question. This was checked for each of the four demographic facets in question (gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, disability). No year was atypical and there were no obvious trends, so there is no difficulty in taking the average of all five years as indicative.

Graphs are presented in this analysis regarding the attainment gap for the different demographics considered. Attainment gap can be measured in various ways, for example the difference between those with a 1st and those who get a lower classification, or the difference between those who graduate and those who fail to do so. Here it is measured in terms of those recorded as getting a first on the dataset. For example, the proportion of people recorded with a disability who get a first (20.5%) is lower than the proportion for those who do not record a disability (23.5%). The attainment gap for disability is the difference between these two numbers (3.0 percentage points).

Finally, as a caveat it should be mentioned that all the variables which were used for analysis have limitations. These will be discussed in the relevant sections (for example, limitations on the variable for disability will be discussed in section 7 where disability is discussed).



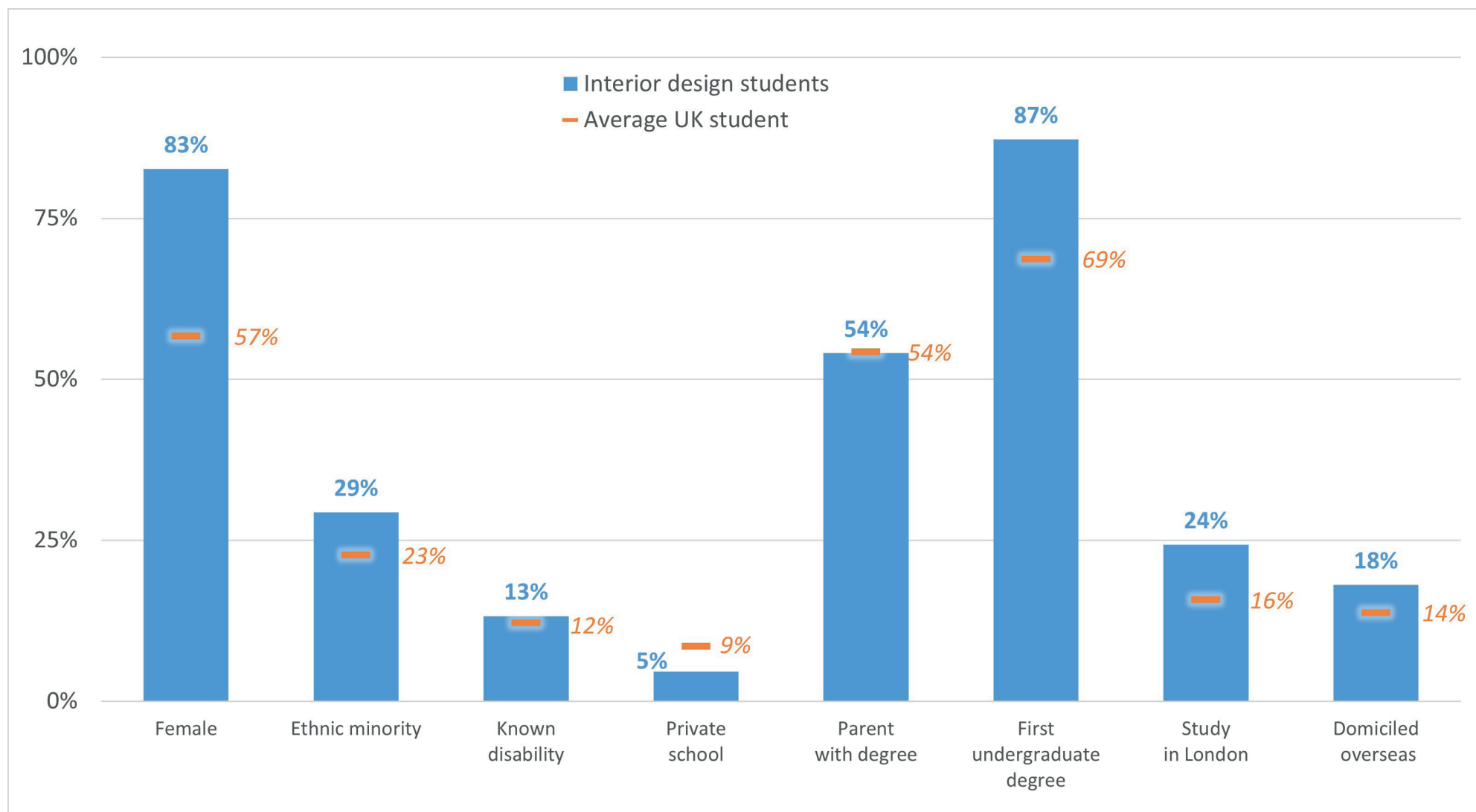
UK interior design students

Over the last five years there have been around 2,700 new students each year studying interior design. Of these the majority (87%) were doing their first undergraduate degree; the rest were on other levels of study, such as post-graduate or second undergraduate degrees. For full figures, see Annex, Figure 9.1.

Figure 3.1 on the next page illustrates the characteristics of interior design students on the dataset, and compares them with the UK average. The graph shows that there were striking differences between interior design students and the average student for certain characteristics; for example, 87% of interior design students were undergraduates (compared to a national average of 69%), and they were more likely than average to study in London and to be from a domicile outside the UK.

The first four characteristics in the graph (gender, socio-economic group, ethnicity, disability) will be examined in more detail in Sections 4 to 7 of this document.

Figure 3.1: Characteristics of interior design students (where known), 2014/15 to 2018/19





Gender

Summary

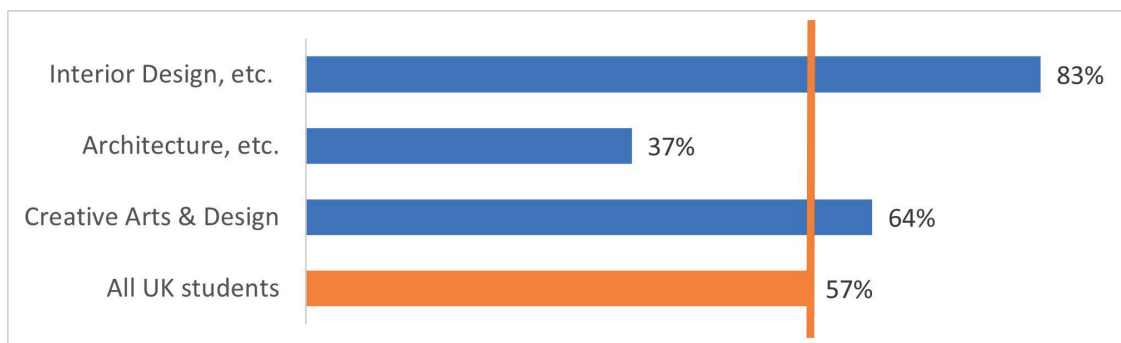
Most students on interior design and other design courses were female (whereas architecture courses were more predominantly male). Females were more likely than males to get a first for interior design courses.

The dataset records some students whose gender is 'other'. However, not all universities record this information. Moreover the sample was extremely small, so results are not generalizable. Therefore this group is not included in the analysis.

Gender figures

Figure 4.1 shows that around 57% of UK students were female. By comparison, interior design courses were overwhelmingly female. Nearly two-thirds of creative arts students and more than four-fifths of interior design students were female. Conversely, architecture and planning students were more likely to be male.

Figure 4.1: Proportion of students who are female, 2014/15 to 2018/19

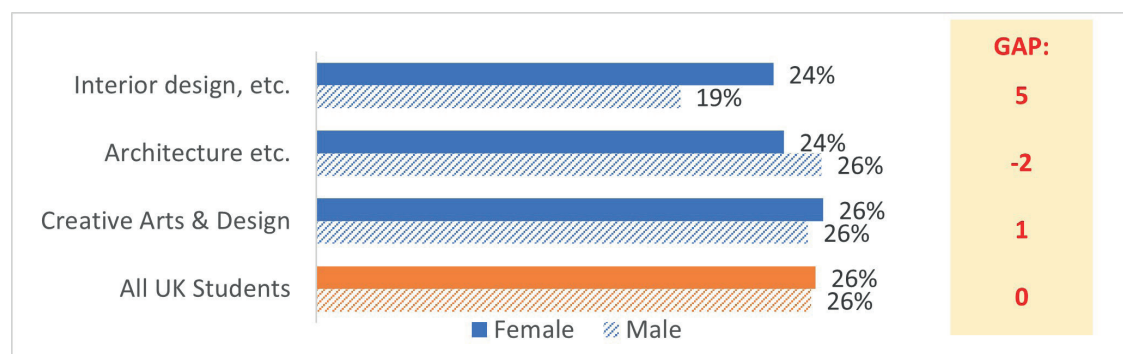


Notes: Vertical orange line emphasizes the percentage for all UK students.

Gender and attainment gap

Overall in the UK, female students were just as likely to get a first-class degree as male students. However, females did better on interior design courses (conversely, males did better on architecture courses). See Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Proportion of students who gain a first-class degree by gender, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Notes: (a) The yellow box indicates the difference between the proportion of female students with a first and the proportion of other students with a first.
 (b) Totals may not sum due to rounding.



Socio-economic background

Summary

This section studies the socio-economic background of interior design students using three variables found on the HESA dataset: parental education, parents' employment category, and school type.

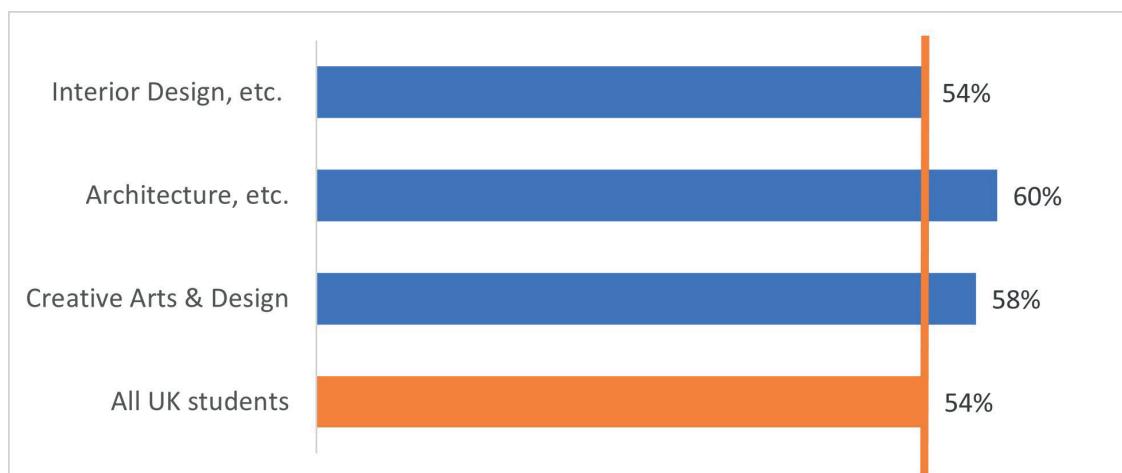
The finding was that overall, interior design students were less likely to come from privileged backgrounds. Their parents were just as likely to have a degree as the parents of other UK student, but their parents were more likely than average to be in employment group C (routine, semi-routine or unemployed) and less likely to be in employment group A (higher managerial or professional). Further, these interior design students were less likely to have been to private school.

These students therefore had a very different profile from architecture students, who were more likely than average to have parents with a degree or in a higher professional occupation, and who are more likely to have been to private school.

Parental education

One variable indicates whether students have a parent with a higher education qualification. See Figure 5.1. The graph shows that Interior Design students were much the same as the average UK student: around 54% of them had at least one parent with a degree or equivalent. However, architecture students and creative arts students were more likely to have at least one parent with a degree.

Figure 5.1: Proportion of students whose parents have a higher education qualification (where known), 2014/15 to 2018/19



Parents' employment type

The second indicator of socio-economic background is the highest employment type of either parent. For more details on how this is broken down, see Figure 9.2. For current purposes this is divided into three categories:

- (A) Higher managerial & professional occupations;
- (B) Intermediate (lower managerial and technical occupations), or small employers;
- (C) Routine and semi-routine occupations and long-term unemployed.

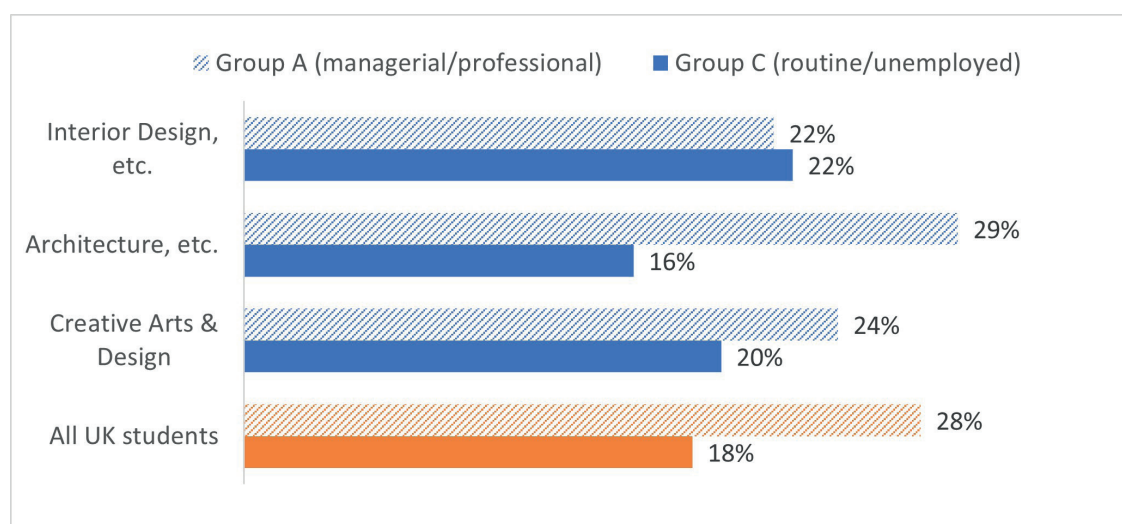
The results can be seen in Figure 5.2. Parents' employment is only recorded for students up to age 20, so the graphs omit students aged 21 or over.

The hashed bars in Figure 5.2 examine students with a parent in the employment group A ('higher managerial & professional occupations'). They show that 28% of all UK students had a parent in group A. Students studying interior design or creative arts courses were less likely to have a parent who is 'higher managerial or professional'. On the other hand, architecture students were more likely than average to have a parent in group A.

The solid bars in Figure 5.2 show students with parents in employment category C ('routine/semi-routine, or long-term unemployed'). Interior design students were more likely to have parents in group C, whereas architecture students were more likely not to.

In summary, interior design students were more likely to have parents from lower employment categories, whereas architecture students had parents who are more likely to be 'higher managerial or professional'.

Figure 5.2: Proportion of students with parents in employment categories A and C, where known, 2014/15 to 2018/19



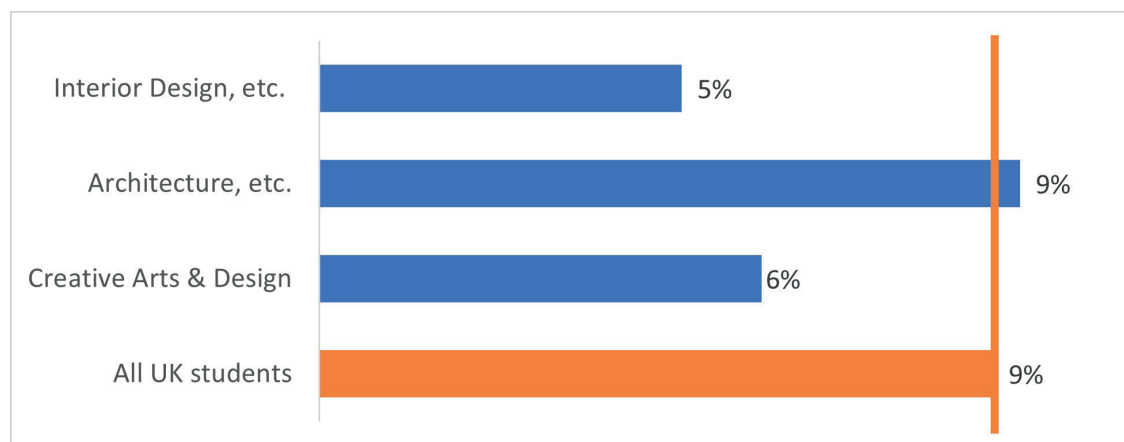
Note: This graph includes only those students aged 20 or under when starting their degree

Private school marker

The third way of assessing students' socio-economic background is whether they were at a state or private school. This variable is ambivalent; for example children from advantaged backgrounds may go to state schools, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds may have bursaries to private schools. Nevertheless, when aggregated it is a useful preliminary marker in assessing advantage across a cohort.

Graph 5.3 shows that overall 9% of UK students were at private schools. Interior design and creative arts students were less likely to have been at private schools, whereas architecture students were slightly more likely to have been at private school.

Figure 5.3: Proportion of students who were at private school, where known, 2014/15 to 2018/19



Note: Bars indicating "9%" are not quite even due to rounding. 8.8% of architecture students were at private school compared to 8.5% of all students.

Ethnicity

Summary

Interior design courses had a higher proportion of ethnic minority students than the UK average course. However, ethnic minority students were underrepresented on creative arts & design courses.

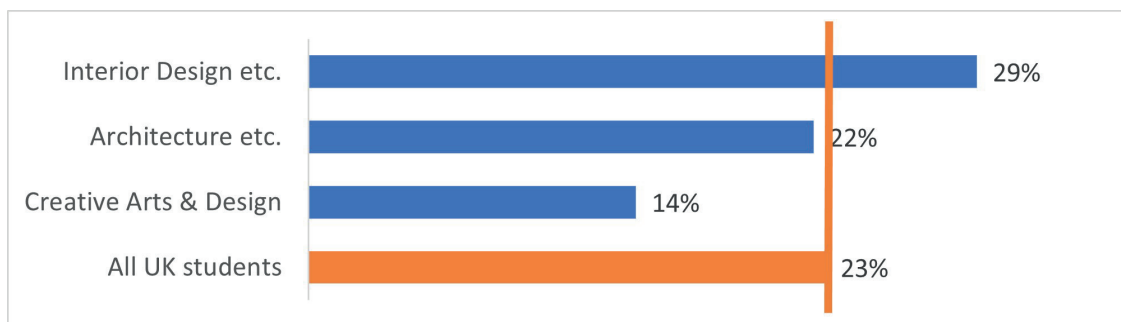
For all three course groups studied here, ethnic minority students were less likely to get a first than white students. Moreover, the 'attainment gap' between ethnic minority and white students for these subjects was larger than the national average. The attainment gap exists regardless of socio-economic background.

Ethnicity figures

Students on Interior Design courses were more likely to be from an ethnic minority background, whereas those on Arts & Design courses were less likely to be.

Design students differed considerably from the UK average. For architecture, the proportion of ethnic minority students was not much different from the 'average' UK course.

Figure 6.1: Proportion of ethnic minority students, where ethnicity is known, 2014/15 to 2018/19



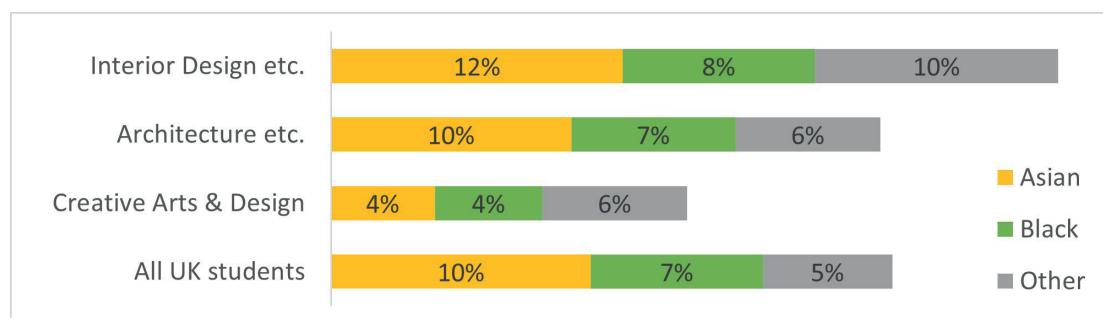
Note: Vertical orange line emphasizes the percentage for all UK students (here, 23% were ethnic minority).

Figure 6.2 shows the same bars as Figure 6.1, but this time subdivided into three categories: Asian, Black and Other**.

All ethnic groups were more highly represented on interior design courses than on the average UK course. This is particularly the case for students in the Other category.

Creative Arts & Design courses were disproportionately white: all categories of ethnic minority students were underrepresented. Architecture and planning courses represented the overall student population fairly well in terms of ethnicity.

Figure 6.2: Proportion of students who are ethnic minority, 2014/15 to 2018/19: subdivided by ethnicity group



Ethnicity and attainment gap

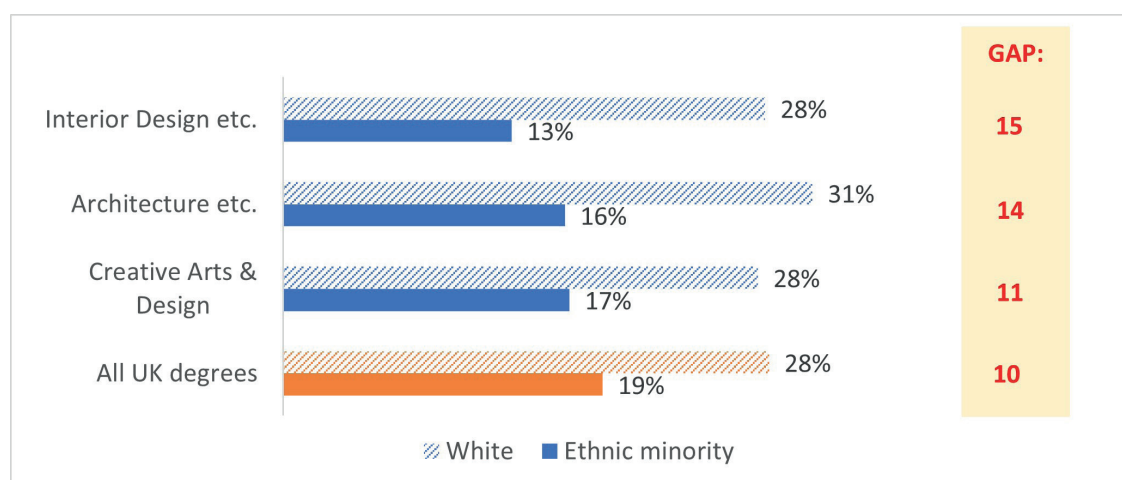
Ethnic minority students studying interior design were less likely to get a first than white students, which may affect whether they continue in the field.

This can be seen in Figure 6.3, which compares the proportion of white students with a first with the proportion of ethnic minority students with a first. For example, 28% of white students achieved a first in interior design courses, compared to only 14% of ethnic minority students. The difference between them is the attainment gap; for interior design there was a difference of 15 percentage points between white and ethnic minority students. (The numbers presented do not add up exactly due to rounding; the difference in this case is 14.5, which rounds to 15).

For UK degrees as a whole, the attainment gap was 9 percentage points. All three types of course studied here (interior design, architecture, creative arts) had a larger attainment gap than the UK average. This could be for a wide variety of reasons, which are best investigated by surveying and/or conducting focus groups with the individuals concerned and the universities offering the courses.

The attainment gap is not presented here for individual ethnic groups due to small sample sizes. Although the sample is small, it appears Black students were particularly disadvantaged in attaining firsts. However, all ethnic minority groups were less likely to get a first compared to white students.

Figure 6.3: Proportion of students receiving a first-class degree, by ethnicity, 2014/15 - 2018/19



Notes: (a) Number in the yellow box indicates the difference between the proportion of white students with a first and the proportion of ethnic minority students with a first.
(b) Totals may not sum due to rounding.

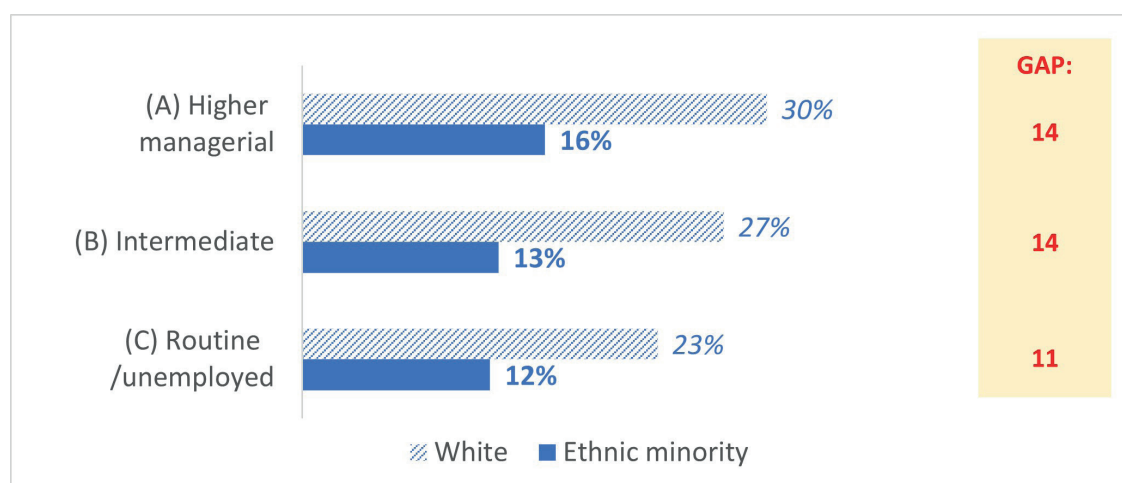
Attainment gap: ethnicity and socio-economic group considered together

The attainment gap persisted at every socio-economic level, and was marked: white students with parents in the lowest employment category were more likely to get a first than ethnic minority students with parents in the highest employment category (23% compared to 16%). See Figure 6.4, which only considers interior design students.

Figures for other course types may be found in the Annex, Figure 9.3; this table shows that interior design had a larger attainment gap than the average UK course. Indeed, for some socio-economic groups the ethnicity attainment gap for interior design students was more than twice the UK average.

In conclusion, the attainment gap for ethnic minority students cannot be explained by socio-economic status. This is true for all UK students, but is higher for those on interior design courses. Further research and investigations will need to be conducted to ascertain what other factors, could be impacting the performance of ethnic minority students.

Figure 6.4: Interior design students receiving a first-class degree, by ethnicity and socio-economic group of parents, 2014/5-2018/19



Notes: (a) Number in the yellow box indicates the difference between the proportion of white students with a first and the proportion of ethnic minority students with a first. (b) Totals may not sum due to rounding. (c) Totals do not quite match those of Figure 6.3 because this graph only includes those where parents' socio-economic group is known.

Disability

Summary

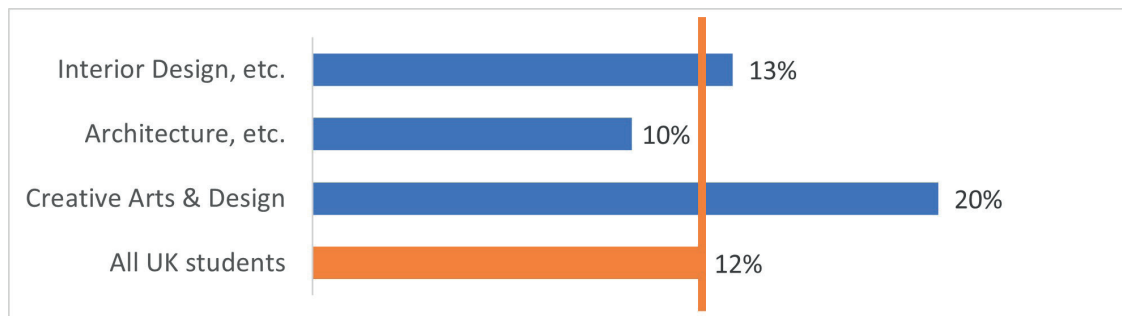
Interior design courses were fairly similar to the UK average in the proportion of students with a declared disability. They were also fairly similar to the UK average for attainment gap. There were more students with declared disabilities on creative arts courses.

The student dataset only contains one marker for disability, indicating whether students are known to have a disability or not. There is not sufficient information to know the nature of the disability, for example whether it is mental or physical; nor do we know how many students have omitted to declare a disability or have developed one over the time of the course.

Disability figures

Figure 7.1 shows that 12% of all students declared a disability to their university. Students on interior design courses were slightly more likely to have declared a disability at 13%. Creative arts students were considerably more likely to have declared a disability. On the other hand, architecture students were less likely to have declared a disability.

Figure 7.1: Proportion of students known to have a disability, 2014/15 to 2018/19

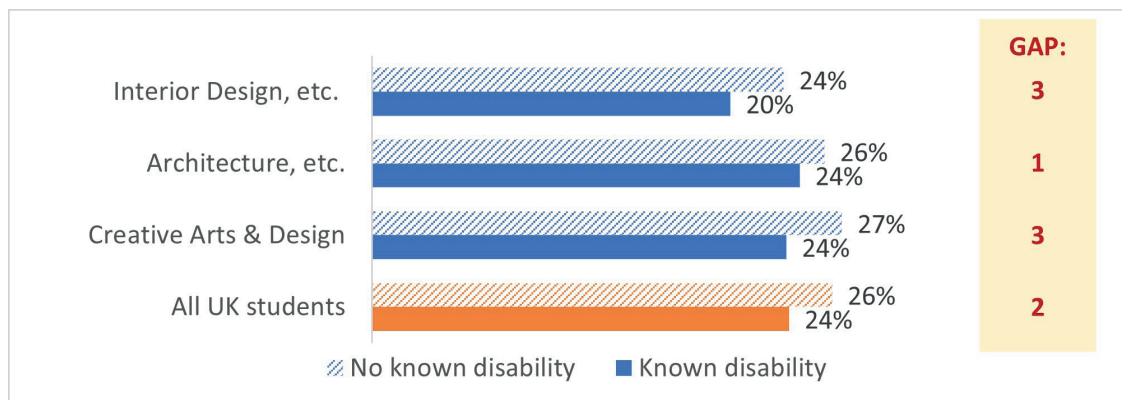


Disability and attainment gap

Figure 7.2 shows how many students achieved a first-class degree. Overall, 24% of UK students with a disability attained a first, compared with 26% of UK students without a disability. This gives an attainment gap of 2 percentage points for UK students as a whole.

Compared to this, interior design courses had an attainment gap of 3 percentage points for disability. This is not a considerable difference (unrounded the figures are 3.04 percentage points for interior design compared to 2.46 percentage points for the UK as a whole). Thus, interior design courses had about the same attainment gap for disability as the UK.

Figure 7.2: Proportion of students receiving a first-class degree, by disability, 2014/15
- 2018/19



Note: totals may not sum due to rounding.



Closing comments

The analysis above has confirmed that there are a variety of diversity issues faced by interior design students. In particular the attainment gap in ethnicity could result in fewer ethnic minority individuals further pursuing a career in interior design; BIID can also consider whether the large gender differential is a cause for concern.

A number of further analyses are possible with this rich dataset. In particular, the HESA data contains information from the Graduate Outcomes survey, which assesses employment destinations of recent graduates. Therefore analysis of the Graduate Outcomes survey is here recommended as a useful next step for BIID to consider.



Annex

Figure 9.1 New cohorts (number of first-years) on UK courses, average 2014/15 - 2018/19

	Postgraduate	First Degree	Other Undergraduate	All
Interior Design, etc.	380	2,172	140	2,692
Architecture, etc.	9,573	10,436	2,034	22,044
Creative Arts, etc.	14,744	49,959	3,702	68,405
All UK students	341,185	546,709	122,166	1,010,060

Note: 'Architecture' and 'Creative Arts and Design' both designate catch-all categories.

Figure 9.2 Categories used in this analysis for socio-economic groups

Name of category in this analysis	Census category
(A) Higher managerial & professional	Higher managerial & professional occupations
(B) Intermediate	Lower managerial & professional occupations
	Intermediate occupations
	Small employers & own account workers
	Lower supervisory & technical occupations
(C) Routine / unemployed	Semi-routine occupations
	Routine occupations
	Never worked & long-term unemployed

Figure 9.3 Proportion of students with a first, by ethnicity, where known

Course	Parents' employment category	White	Ethnic minority	Attainment gap (percentage points)
Interior Design etc.	(A) Higher managerial	30%	16%	14
	(B) Intermediate	27%	13%	14
		23%	12%	11
Architecture etc.	(A) Higher managerial	30%	20%	10
	(B) Intermediate	28%	16%	12
	(C) Routine /unemployed	26%	15%	11
Creative Arts & Design	(A) Higher managerial	31%	23%	8
	(B) Intermediate	28%	18%	10
	(C) Routine /unemployed	23%	14%	9
All UK degrees	(A) Higher managerial	31%	25%	6
	(B) Intermediate	28%	20%	8
	(C) Routine /unemployed	24%	18%	6

***Sources:**

HESA Student Record 2015/16; HESA Student Record 2014/15; HESA Student Record 2016/17; HESA Student Record 2017/18; HESA Student Record 2018/19. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited. Neither the Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited nor HESA Services Limited can accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived by third parties from data or other information supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited or HESA Services Limited.

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****Ethnic backgrounds included in ethnic groups:****Asian**

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background

Black

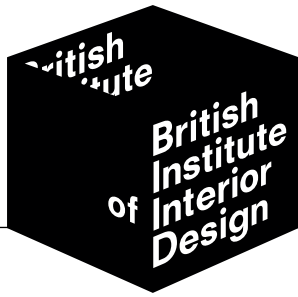
- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background

Other

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background
- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

White

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background



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