

Diversity application data for UK Early Career Fellowship Programmes

Introduction

The Royal Society is committed to increasing diversity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) by actively seeking out participation from underrepresented groups. As part of this effort, the Society commissioned the Careers Research Advisory Centre (CRAC) to analyse HESA data to determine the diversity profile of postdoctoral researchers in the UK, eligible for the Royal Society's early career fellowship programmes¹: University Research Fellowship (URF), Sir Henry Dale Fellowship (SHDF) and Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship (DHF) schemes.

This profile ('eligible pool') has then been used as a benchmark for the Society to consider the ethnicity and gender diversity of its own early career research fellows, specifically individuals who applied between 2018 – 2020 for these schemes.

Key messages

- The data show that the applicants for these three UK early career fellowship schemes are not fully representative of the ethnicity and gender profile of the potential pool of eligible postdoctoral researchers in the UK.
- The low representation from Black, Asian and multi-ethnic groups is particularly striking for UK nationals in both the 'eligible pool' and applicant data.
- There is no or very low participation of Black postdoctoral researchers to these schemes.
- The Society is keen to address these concerning trends, in particular the very low participation of Black researchers. It acknowledges that more needs to be done to broaden the pool of talented individuals and this data highlights the potential to increase the gender and ethnic diversity of applications to the Society's early career fellowship schemes.

1. Aimed at supporting eligible researchers establish their independence and lead their own research programme in the UK (<https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/career-pathway-tracker/>)

Next steps

Building on its ongoing efforts, The Society is committed to taking action to broaden participation of talented individuals from diverse backgrounds to its early career fellowship schemes. This will include:

- **Sharing approaches and continued working with other funders and partners:** The Society will convene a funders' forum to share the information and approach on relevant pool and 'benchmark' data, with the aim of working collaboratively to broaden participation from underrepresented groups.
- The Society will continue to **use this data** on the gender and ethnicity of the 'eligible pool', in future Royal Society annual diversity data reports to benchmark the diversity of applicants and awardees for these early career fellowships.
- **Continued working with academic institutions:** The Society will meet with institutions collectively and individually to share data and encourage them to support a broader range of talented candidates to apply.
- **Mentorship and workshops:** Working with relevant organisations the Society will deliver workshops and/or webinars on planning and applying for early career fellowships for potential eligible and future applicants (such as final year PhD students) from ethnic minority backgrounds and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. It will also organise webinars and networking events for potential applicants from underrepresented groups, institutions or departments to explain more about the early career fellowships, dispel the 'myths' that exist about applying and provide general guidance on how to apply for these schemes. The Society will facilitate and encourage peer to peer support for applicants, including from existing grant holders who might be best placed to provide advice and support.
- The Society will **develop initiatives** (subject to funding) to contribute to efforts to support talented individuals from under-represented groups to pursue careers in STEM.

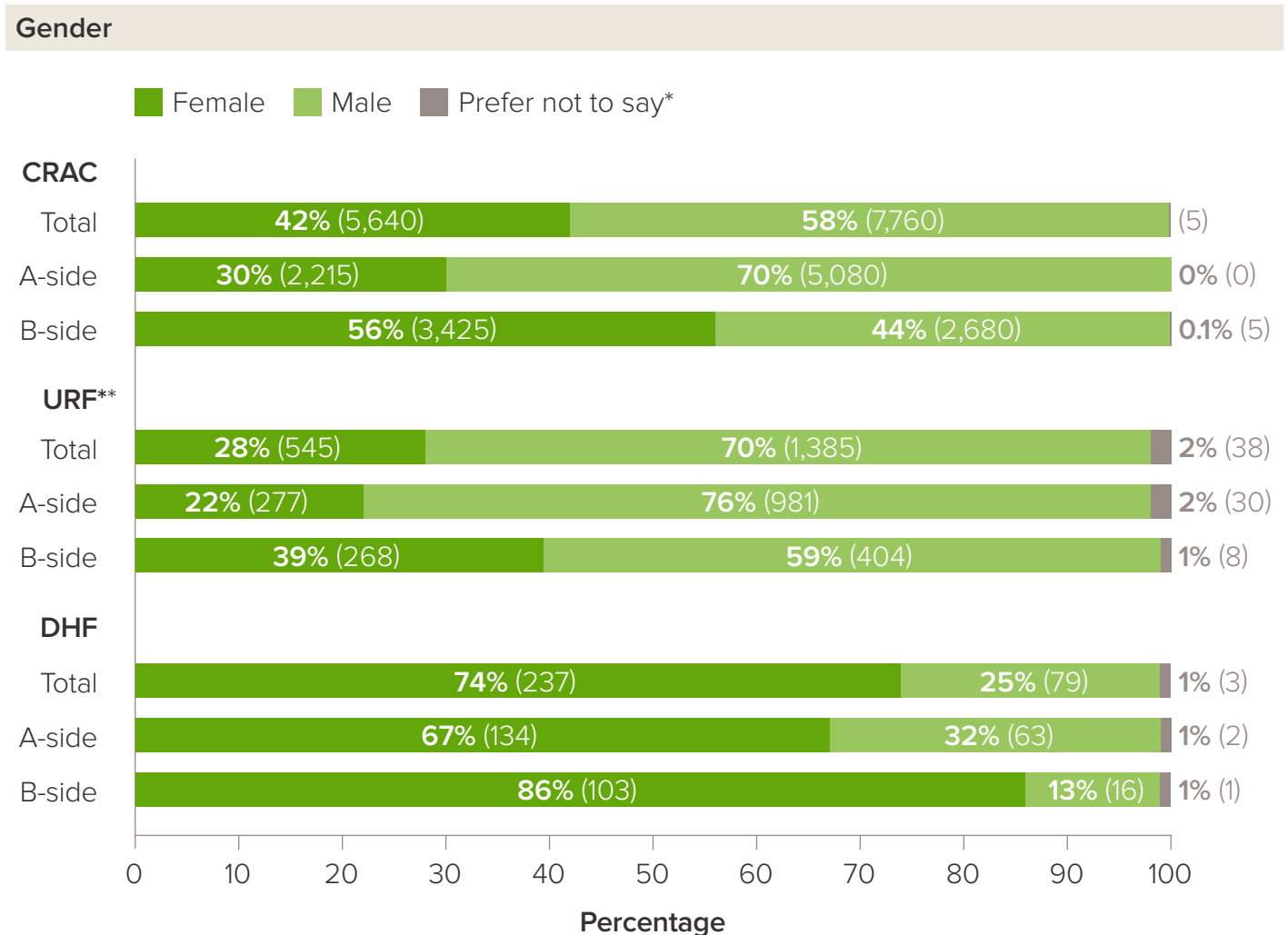
Data considerations

- The Grants application diversity data shown in this report is gathered as part of the ongoing diversity programme agreed by the Council of the Royal Society and are based on data that are explicitly and voluntarily declared by respondents. The data is collected via the Society's grant application system, Flexi-Grant®, when an individual applies for a Research Fellowship. Whilst the Society's online data collection methods make completion of the questions on the diversity form mandatory, all questions contain an option of 'prefer not to say' and not all respondents choose to provide their diversity information.
- In the instances where a data set is too small to be meaningfully representative, or there is the risk that an individual might be identifiable, the breakdown for that particular group is not shown.
- Application data for the last three years (2018 – 2020) has been amalgamated and the aggregate for each scheme used in the comparative analyses.
- Limitations – the Sir Henry Dale Fellowship data shows numbers of full applications, which are submitted on invitation only following a triage of preliminary applications submitted for each round.
- Royal Society subject remit: natural sciences, which includes but is not limited to biological research, chemistry, engineering, mathematics and physics².
- Where there were differences between 'A-side' ('physical sciences') and 'B-side' ('biological sciences') remits these are shown. For the purposes of the comparative analysis, to denote the RS 'B-remit' for the URF scheme, the numbers shown include applications for the 'B URF Panel' (biological sciences excluding biomedical sciences) and Sir Henry Dale Fellowship ('biomedical sciences').
- The proportion of applicants is given in percentages, with the number of individuals in brackets.

2. <https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/grants/subject-groups/>

Main findings of comparative analysis

Applicant gender profile is not representative of the eligible pool of UK postdoctoral researchers for URF/SHDF and DHF.

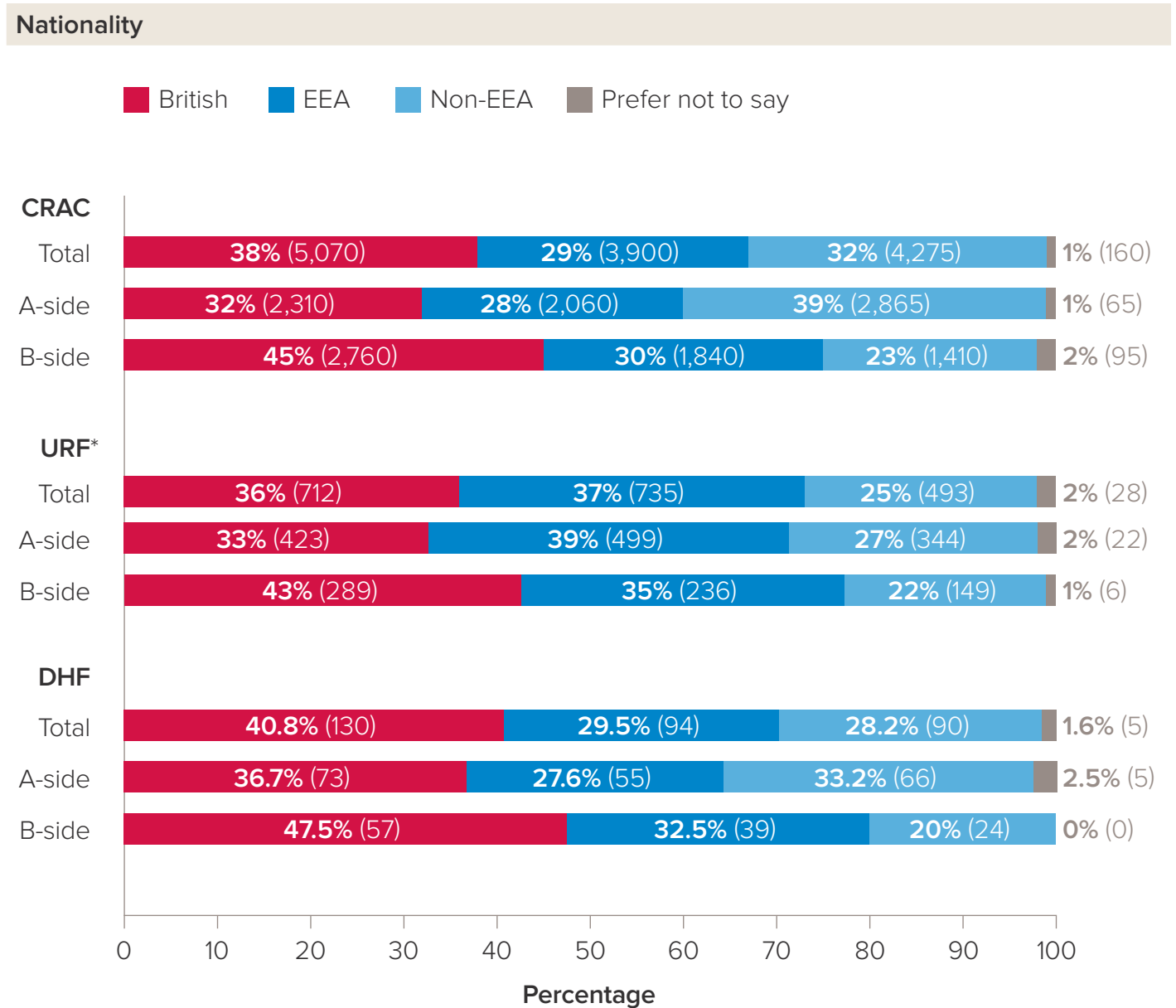


* This category includes people who selected 'other gender'.

** Includes Sir Henry Dale Fellowship (SHDF) application data (included as part of B-side).

- 28% of applicants (2018 – 2020) for the URF scheme were women compared to 42% in the 'eligible pool'. This under-representation against the 'eligible pool' was seen in both 'A-side' and 'B-side' remits.
- In contrast, 74% of applicants overall for DHF scheme were women which may be in part due to the established reputation of the scheme in offering flexibility, for reasons such as caring responsibilities, from the start of the fellowship award.
- The gender diversity of award holders is similar to the gender diversity of applicants.
- In the last three years (2018 – 2020), URF award rates for women have been consistently and slightly higher than for men. The small numbers in each year have meant a statistical comparison has not been made.

A higher proportion of EEA³ applicants applied for the URF scheme relative to the eligible pool of UK postdoctoral researchers for RS early career fellowship schemes.

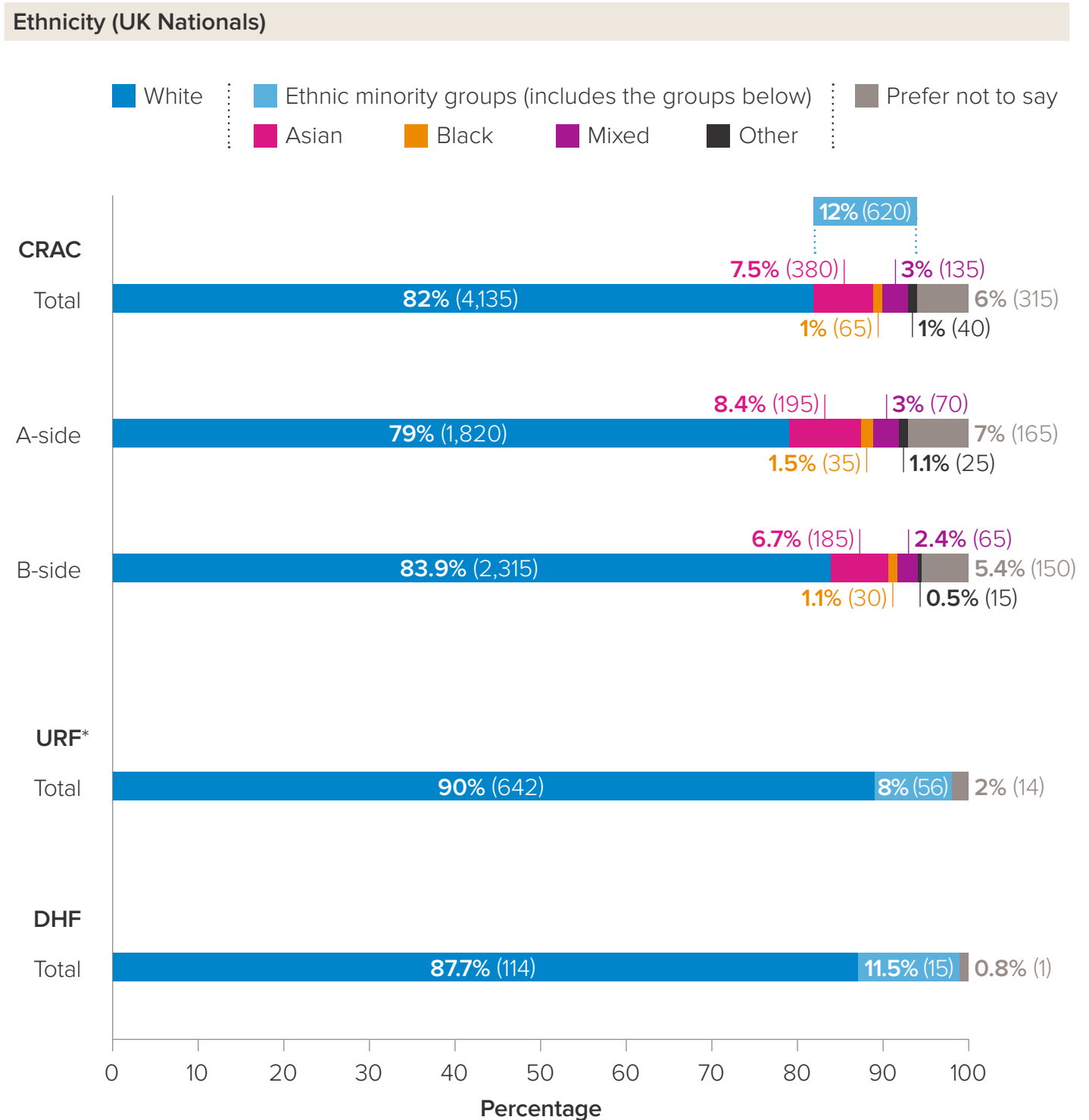


- Similar levels of British and non-EEA nationals to the ‘eligible pool’ applied to all the early career fellowship schemes.

- There was a higher proportion of EEA applicants to the URF scheme relative to the eligible pool.

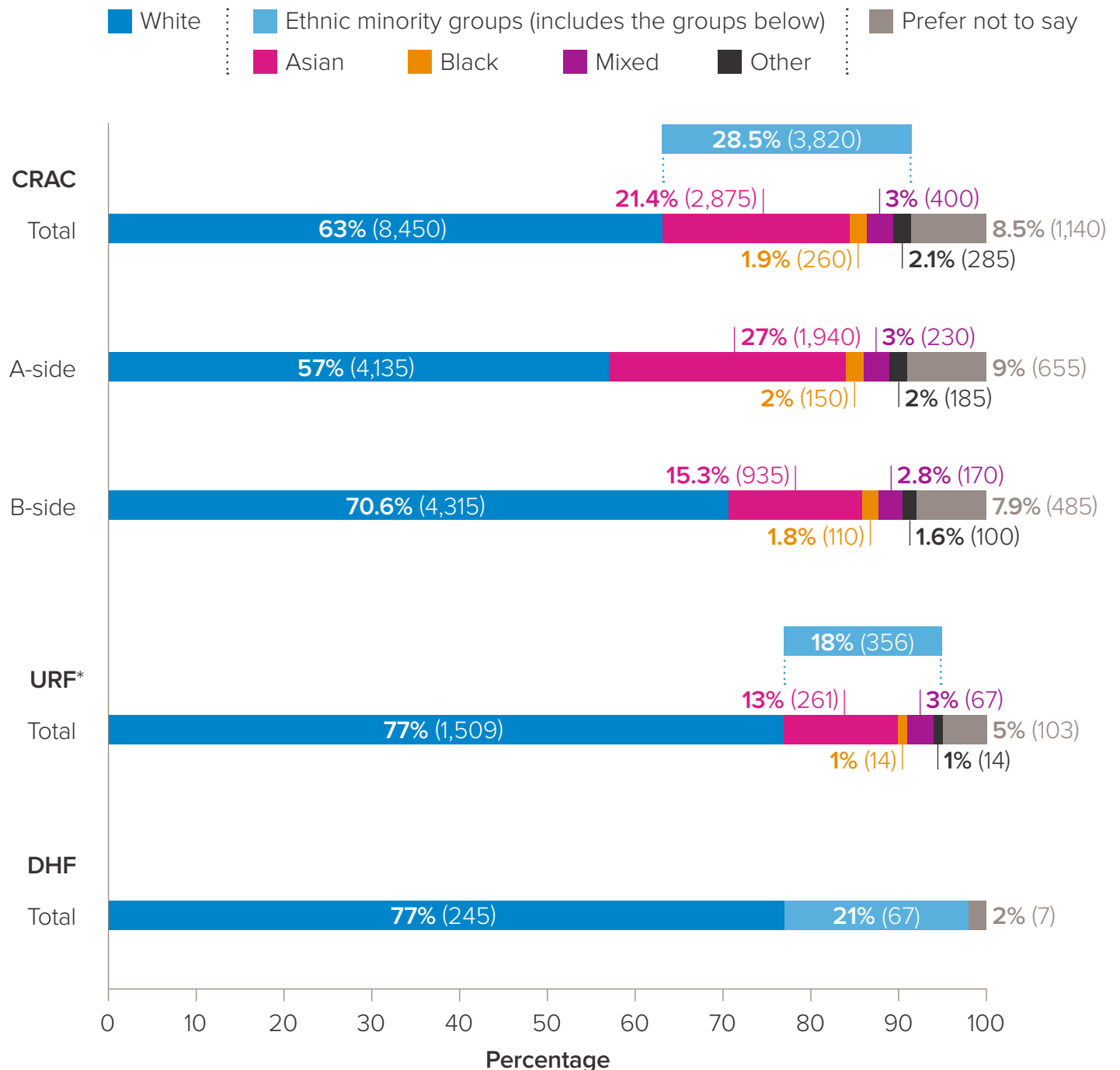
3. Please note all self-declared and does not account for dual nationality. EEA = European Economic area and includes Norway, Swiss citizens and Iceland.

Applicant ethnicity profiles for URF and DHF schemes are not representative of the eligible pool of UK postdoctoral researchers for RS early career fellowship schemes.



* Includes SHDF application data (included as part of B-side).

Ethnicity (of all nationals)



* Includes SHDF application data (included as part of B-side).

- The ‘eligible pool’: the proportion of individuals who identified themselves as from an ethnic minority background was lower for UK nationals (12%) compared to all nationalities (28.5%). The largest proportion were from an Asian background, especially in the physical sciences ‘A-side’ for all nationalities as noted in the CRAC report.
- Applicants for the early career schemes, from Black, Asian and other multi-ethnic backgrounds are all under-represented when compared to the ‘eligible pool’ of ‘all nationalities’ and ‘UK nationality’.
 - Overall for ‘ethnic minority’ this was: 28% for all nationalities vs 18% URF and 21% DHF and
 - UK nationals 12% vs 8% URF & 11.5% DHF.
 - Similar patterns were seen for URF ‘A-side’ and ‘B-side’ remits.
- In the last three years (2018 – 2020) there were no applications from Black UK nationals to the URF scheme in the physical sciences and biological sciences remits (excluding SHDF).
- There were no Black applicants to the DHF scheme in the biological sciences remit.
- The ethnic diversity of award holders (with one or two exceptions) is similar to the ethnic diversity of applicants.
- The award rate for UK-based applicants from all ethnic minority groups (amalgamated figures for Black, Asian and multi-ethnic backgrounds) has been similar (slightly higher) to white applicants in 2018 and 2020. The small numbers have meant it has not been possible to make detailed analysis of individual ethnic groups, however the Society will continue to carefully monitor the ethnicity diversity grant data.

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Issued: March 2021 DES7211