



Civil Service
Human Resources

Civil Service Fast Stream: Annual Report 2013



Foreword

For more than 65 years the UK Civil Service has been recruiting some of the country's brightest graduates and turning them into successful public servants motivated by the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and impartiality. The Fast Stream Development Programme and its forerunners have always been central to this effort, building on graduates' innate intellectual ability by equipping them with the skills, knowledge and experience they need to become senior leaders in the Civil Service.

2013 saw the latest stage in the evolution of the Fast Stream: the successful launch of a radically redesigned programme for our largest scheme, the Corporate Fast Stream. It is described in this Annual Report. The Civil Service is currently going through a period of far-reaching reform intended to make it a more digital, versatile, unified organisation. All the Fast Stream schemes have a part to play in this transformation, but the new Corporate Fast Stream gives expression to the spirit of reform.

This Report looks at our 2013 entrants from the points of view of educational background, gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic status.

The Report is an opportunity to describe how we manage the Fast Stream, what Fast Streamers do after they are recruited, and the contribution they make to our government. It is a measure of the success of the Fast Stream that its members are increasingly to be found in roles which bring them into direct contact with the public. The insight this gives them is an invaluable part of their personal development, enabling them to see at first hand how a policy is received by their fellow citizens and the impact it makes on their lives.

A Report like this can only hint at the quite extraordinary range of personal development opportunities offered by the Fast Stream. But I hope that, by including contributions from some past recruits, and by explaining how I and my team try to maximise the Fast Stream's effectiveness as a source of talent for the public good, you will gain some insights into this long-standing and prestigious development programme.

Gillian Smith
Head of the Civil Service Fast Stream



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INTRODUCTION

The Fast Stream is the Civil Service's graduate development programme, designed to equip some of the country's brightest graduates with the knowledge, skills and experience they need to be leaders in future. It is an investment in talent, intended to ensure that present and future governments are supported by an efficient and effective Civil Service with the right skill set and the versatility to respond to changing priorities. It was expressly exempted from the current freeze of recruitment into the Civil Service.

Fast Streamers' personal development is achieved through a programme of carefully managed contrasting postings, supplemented by formal learning and other support such as coaching and action learning.

The Fast Stream is managed by a dedicated team in Civil Service Resourcing which reports to the Minister for the Cabinet Office.

THE FAST STREAMS

- **Graduate Fast Stream** (consists of the Corporate Fast Stream (essentially the Home Civil Service), the Houses of Parliament, the Diplomatic Service and Science and Engineering). Because the Graduate Fast Stream accounts for such a large proportion of each year's intake, the Report focuses on it separately as well as on the Fast Stream as a whole.
- **Economist Fast Stream**
- **Statistician Fast Stream**
- **Social Research Fast Stream**
- **Operational Research Fast Stream**
- **Technology in Business Fast Stream**
- **Human Resources Fast Stream**
- **Northern Ireland Fast Stream**
- **European Fast Stream**

For more information about the different Fast Stream programmes, visit <http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk>.

THE FAST STREAM SELECTION PROCESS

The Civil Service recruits to the Fast Stream strictly on the basis of fair and open competition and selection on merit.

Civil Service Resourcing, in partnership with Parity plc, managed the development and delivery of the 2013 competition. As always, our priority was to recruit the best talent available to us, while building on past achievements to make Fast Stream recruitment as fair, inclusive and efficient as possible.

Fairness and objectivity The Civil Service maintains, and must be seen to maintain, the highest standards of open and fair recruitment. The Fast Stream selection process is subject to a thorough annual check on compliance with the Civil Service Commissioners' Principles of merit, fairness and openness. We do everything possible to ensure that our assessment methods are scientifically robust, psychometrically valid, objective and capable of withstanding close scrutiny.

Efficiency and best practice We use the latest online selection technology, and seek constantly to develop it and maximise its effectiveness. We aim to complete the selection process in the shortest possible time, and to make job offers to the best candidates as quickly as possible. By ensuring that key stages are online, we achieve greater transparency and objectivity, while allowing candidates to drive themselves through each stage of the process using a personalised management support system.

In 2013 the selection process consisted of the following stages:

- Registration on Fast Stream website
- Online self-assessment
- Application and online tests
- Invigilated in-tray exercise (the "e-Tray")
- Fast Stream Assessment Centre

The Economist, Statistician, Social Research and Operational Research Fast Streams also test professional aptitude in a separate assessment centre. But no-one enters any Fast Stream option without passing the generic Fast Stream Assessment Centre.

All Graduate Fast Stream options except the Corporate Fast Stream apply some form of final selection procedure after the Assessment Centre before deciding whom to recommend for appointment. However, all candidates who achieve the pass mark at the Assessment Centre have reached the required standard and are guaranteed a place in the Corporate Fast Stream if they want it.

Candidates are ranked in order of merit, based on a final mark awarded at the Assessment Centre. All candidates receive detailed feedback on their performance at the Assessment Centre.

The Fast Stream competency framework

In 2013, for the last time, candidates were assessed against the old Fast Stream-specific competencies, spread across three skill sets of Delivery Skills, Intellectual Capacity and Interpersonal Skills. With effect from the 2014 Fast Stream competition, candidates are being assessed against the competency framework now in general use throughout the Civil Service.

CASE STUDY – Craiger Solomons

Hi, I'm Craiger. I have been working at the Welsh Government on the Analytical Fast Stream for over a year. I was attracted to the Government Statistical Service because I was interested to see how statistics were used to support our government and make decisions. Being honest, I can't say it was a passion for the politics that drew me, although it does get quite exciting, and I do find myself watching Sunday Politics now!

Since working in the Welsh Government, I have had the opportunity to work on some really interesting topics, including housing legislation, developing the evidence base for Gypsy and Traveller site provision. This gave me the opportunity to have input into the content of the Housing Bill, whilst also producing statistical releases that were highlighted in the national news. Yes, that does mean I am an accredited author!

Currently, I am working on deprivation and poverty statistics. It's a really complex and interesting topic, which spans most policy areas. One of the first roles I had was to manage the analytical input for the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. A large part of this role was collaborating with policy colleagues to ensure that they were using available statistics to effectively target and measure their programmes.

I am currently a key member of the team responsible for developing and producing the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, which is due for publication in 2014. This high profile work includes a lot of direct involvement with users of the Index as well as statistical groups such as the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee. My next step is to run consultation events, to ensure that our users, including Ministers, are being included in the process. Following this, I will be starting the construction of the Index in 2014.

Working in a devolved government has allowed me to easily get involved in multiple topic areas, and to work with colleagues from a range of different departments. The Welsh Government has changed significantly over the last few years, with the introduction of law making powers, and more recently the recommendations from the Silk Commission. It's an interesting perspective and an exciting time, and I'm learning a lot about the machinery of government.

THE FAST STREAM IN 2013: A SNAPSHOT

On 31 March 2013, there were 2,152 Fast Streamers in total, accounting for about half of one per cent of the Civil Service.

Of this total, 48.8 per cent were women, 11.5 per cent were from an ethnic minority and 11.9 per cent were disabled.

About 45 per cent of Fast Streamers were occupying policy posts. More than half (54 per cent) were in the largest programme, the Graduate Fast Stream.

The largest employers of Fast Streamers were, in the following order, The Department for Work and Pensions, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence.

The attrition rate in the year ending 31 March 2013 was 2.9 per cent, compared with 4.8 per cent in the previous year.

CASE STUDY – Tabitha Gillan

I joined the Fast Stream in 2010, and have had three roles within Defra lasting roughly a year each: sponsorship of the Marine Management Organisation, policy development for the Green Food Project, and negotiating the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The Fast Stream has definitely lived up to my expectations. I have now worked in several interesting roles, exposed to new situations and challenges, and been encouraged to take on increasing responsibility. Best of all, I have worked on things that people care about, and have experienced the excitement of hearing things I am working on discussed in the news.

I am currently on a nine month secondment at the Fairtrade Foundation, which works to improve the trading position of producer organisations in the South and deliver sustainable livelihoods for farmers, workers and their communities. The Foundation is relatively small, but has a large network of stakeholders and supporters around the country. It doesn't have the same policy levers as Government, and has to think creatively about how to influence and show thought leadership. It engages with a variety of stakeholders, from businesses to school children, and must balance the relationships and needs of its customers with ensuring that the system delivers real benefits for producers and workers.

It is really interesting to be on the other side of Government policy making, but I am also looking forward to taking what I have learnt back to the Civil Service. When I return, I will have a better appreciation of the resourcing pressures that charities and companies can face when engaging with policy making across a number of departments and institutions. This will help me build relationships with stakeholders and foster the transparency and trust that is so important in the modern Civil Service. I am also gaining insight into how another organisation operates, and am picking up experience of good practice that I can take back. Finally, I am continuing to develop my own skills; learning how to commission research, present information, manage projects and produce balanced policy analysis. These will all be crucial in the years ahead as I look to progress in the Civil Service.

THE NEW CORPORATE FAST STREAM

In 2013, following a radical rethink, we introduced a completely restructured programme for the largest Graduate Fast Stream option, now known as the Corporate Fast Stream.

Corporate Fast Streamers (and Science and Engineering Fast Streamers) now follow a defined four-year programme, the first two years of which give breadth of experience, and the second two depth. During the first two years, they have four different postings, each lasting six months. These cover at least four of the following business areas, considered to be the most important as a foundation for future leadership:

- operational delivery (providing front-line services direct to the public)
- policy development (such as work in a Bill team, or in a minister's private office)
- corporate services (to help the Civil Service function efficiently as an organisation)
- people management
- commercial awareness
- financial management
- project and programme management
- change management
- digital development and delivery

These postings are in at least two government departments, and might well be in different parts of the country. A secondment to the private sector or to a charity is another feature of the programme. This frequent change of roles is a crucial part of Fast Streamers' personal development, because it requires them to adjust continually to new challenges and learn from contrasting situations and objectives.

During their remaining two years, the Fast Streamers gain more in-depth experience in two 12-month postings. They have then completed the programme and, subject to a final assessment, they graduate from it.

Postings are complemented by phased formal learning in a new Fast Stream Learning and Development Pathway, delivered by Civil Service Learning and designed for the different needs of new entrant, mid-term and senior Fast Streamers. At the same time, Fast Streamers may study for a postgraduate qualification in public or business administration. They also benefit from less formal learning, an example being The Fund, a corporate challenge in which groups of Fast Streamers collaborate to devise and implement ways of raising money for different causes.

All Corporate Fast Streamers, regardless of where they actually work, are employed centrally by Civil Service Resourcing on the same terms and conditions.

We believe these changes will ensure more consistency and help transform the Fast Stream into a truly corporate resource for the whole Civil Service.

The other Fast Stream options are unchanged for now. They tend already to have quite well defined career paths, and also some central management of their Fast Streamers' careers. In the longer term, however, some other options might align themselves with the new model. One has already decided to do so, as we explain later.

At the time of writing, the first intake of Corporate Fast Streamers have been in the programme for nearly a year and are now well into their second six-month posting.

CASE STUDY – Danyal Suleman

After graduating in 2012, I participated in the Fast Stream's Summer Diversity Internship Programme (SDIP), working in the Cabinet Office with the team coordinating preparation for the 2014 Scottish Referendum. I was delighted to be working on such a high profile policy, and to be encouraged to take an active role within the team, leading on communications and areas of research - experience which would prove valuable later. When comparing my internship with those of university acquaintances within the private sector, it was clear that the SDIP was unique in providing me with tangible early responsibility – not only was I being given a firm foundation for the working world, the public sector and the Civil Service; my skills were being supported and developed. I had the opportunity to meet with interns and Fast Streamers from other departments and from different schemes. All this confirmed my desire for a career in the public sector and I applied for the Fast Stream.

Fortunately, during the SDIP I had been selected for intensive coaching designed to train interns for the Fast Stream selection process. My application was successful and I joined the Fast Stream in 2013 as part of the new Corporate Fast Stream. My first placement was in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, working on the implementation of a package of commitments made at the G8 to tackle the misuse of company ownership structures. I led on the development for one of the policies and some elements of a major new policy. I had a series of fantastic and very developmental experiences – for example, I negotiated at an EU council meeting in Brussels; briefed No.10 for a major policy announcement; chaired meetings with senior business stakeholders and drafted an impact assessment and policy instructions for legislation.

One of the merits of the new Corporate Fast Stream is its focus on developing competencies and skills in different departments and work areas in order to become a proficient generalist, able to take up a variety of different roles and positions as our careers advance. My second post is developing my financial skills as the benefits realisation manager for the implementation of the revised Common Agricultural Policy at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

I am thoroughly enjoying my experience on the Fast Stream, and would recommend it to those who wish to develop personally in an environment that allows you to make a real contribution to society.

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE APPLY TO THE FAST STREAM?

A recent survey of the Fast Stream carried out by the Fast Stream Forum (a self-constituted organisation of Fast Streamers within the Civil Service) found that among the commonest factors which originally motivated them to apply to the programme were early challenge (95 per cent of respondents) and work which benefits society (91 per cent of respondents). As for whether those expectations were fulfilled, over 70 per cent of respondents agreed that the Fast Stream has given them the chance to make a positive impact on society and to work on topical issues. This confirms what candidates for the Fast Stream continually tell us: that they want to make a difference to people's lives.

LOOKING AHEAD

The e-Tray goes online

With effect from the 2014 entry competition, which opened in September 2013, the e-Tray stage of the selection process, previously invigilated, has been online. This saves money on invigilation, test centre accommodation and reimbursal of candidates' travel expenses; gives candidates themselves more control over when and where they take the test; and enables us to further speed up the recruitment process without compromising its integrity.

A new European Fast Stream

As mentioned above, one specialist Fast Stream option has already decided to follow the example of the Corporate Fast Stream and adopt a more structured learning and development programme. With effect from 2014, European Fast Streamers will follow a four-year programme of both domestic and EU experience. The latter includes a secondment to the European Commission, after which they will decide whether they wish to aim for a permanent career in the EU institutions or to become EU specialists in the UK Civil Service. Their learning and development will then be tailored accordingly.

CASE STUDY - Rand Alhashimi

I applied for the Fast Stream because I wanted a job with a lot of variety and which I felt made a difference. I graduated with a law degree and was unsure of which direction I wanted my career to take. The Civil Service appealed to me for several reasons. The focus was on public service, and not ultimately about making money. The range of different roles, both internationally and domestically, was vast, as was the business of each department. The work was at the heart of government, providing challenge in the subject matter as

well as the political landscape. The opportunity to move around and experience different parts of government easily also appealed to me.

Once I'd decided that I wanted to work for the Civil Service, I looked at the Fast Stream, as that seemed the best access point for me as a graduate. I decided to apply for the HR Fast Stream as I was fascinated by how organisations work and how to make them as effective as possible; I also wanted a professional anchor, which allowed me to work in any industry.

Since joining, I have had a diverse range of jobs. I have worked across a range of areas in HR, specialising in Organisational Development and Design. While on the Fast Stream I evaluated the impact of the performance management system in UK Border Agency, worked on a restructure of the Home Office, a department of nearly 30,000 people at the time, and implemented part of a cross Civil Service change programme to redesign how HR is delivered.

Since graduating from the Fast Stream in 2012 I have been promoted twice. In my first role I worked with the most senior judges in England and Wales to develop their leadership capability. I am currently a Senior HR Business Partner in the Department for International Development. I have a large portfolio which includes West Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and humanitarian crises. I support my Director General clients on change, capability, leadership and organisation design amongst other things.

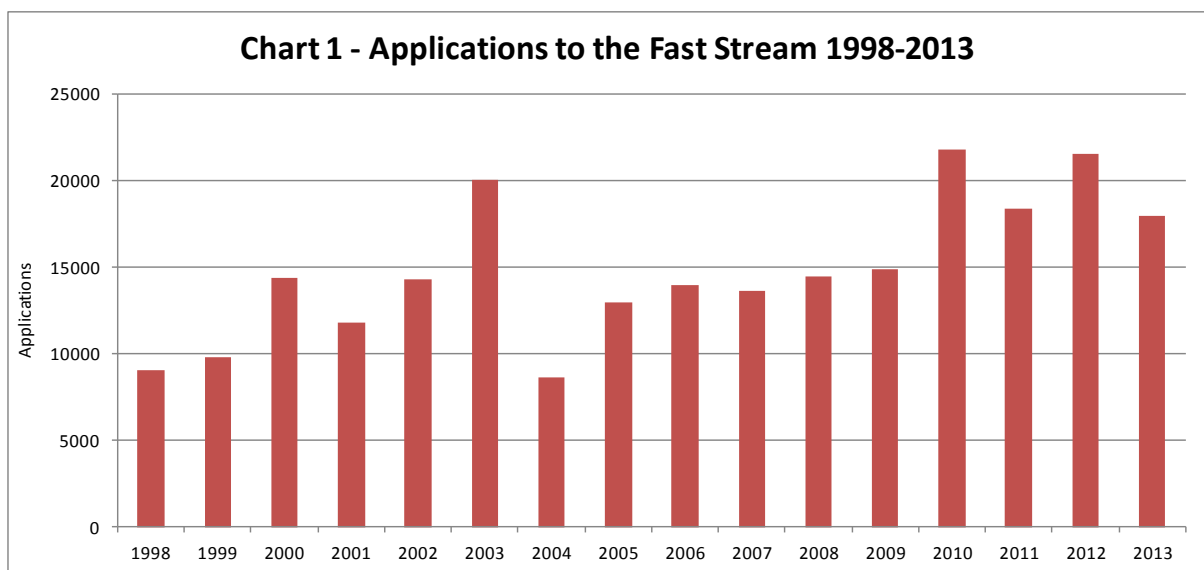
Both my roles since completing the Fast Stream have been very challenging. I think the Fast Stream prepared me well as I was in at the deep end from the start. The placements I had were high profile, with pressurised timescales, and I was expected to deliver. Support and challenge were balanced appropriately, which taught me to work with ambiguity and to be accountable. It was from the work itself that I learnt the most and I think this is where the Fast Stream differs from other graduate schemes: the work is challenging from the start. But I also profited from other development, including an MSc and chartered membership, which allowed me to extend my professional expertise. In addition I worked with some very talented people, who taught me a lot, in particular my mentor.

FAST STREAM RECRUITMENT IN 2013: HEADLINE FIGURES

APPLICATIONS

The number of registrations (ie initial expressions of interest) on the Fast Stream website was up by 15.5 per cent compared with 2012 (from 29,906 to 34,550). The number of actual applicants (we define an applicant as someone who takes the online tests) fell from 21,542 to 17,966.

Chart 1 shows the number of applications submitted to the Fast Stream each year since 1998. The fall in 2004 reflects the introduction of online self-assessment to discourage unrealistic applications. The Fast Stream remains a popular career choice.



DIVERSITY

The role of the Civil Service is to serve the Government and we must have the best people to provide the best possible service. A longstanding core principle of the Civil Service is that recruitment must be based on merit, regardless of background. We already employ many of the country's brightest and best and it is therefore inevitable, and right, that many of these civil servants come from our best universities.

If the best people, recruited on merit, do not reflect society at large then we need to look to our education system to provide more support for younger generations to ensure they have the opportunity to become our future leaders. The Government has introduced significant reforms to education, and is working across departments to make important changes and provide services that will help improve social mobility. We will continue to work with organisations outside of government, including schools, further education colleges, universities, businesses, professional bodies and a wide range of

third sector and voluntary organisations to help make opportunities open to everyone – creating a fairer society.

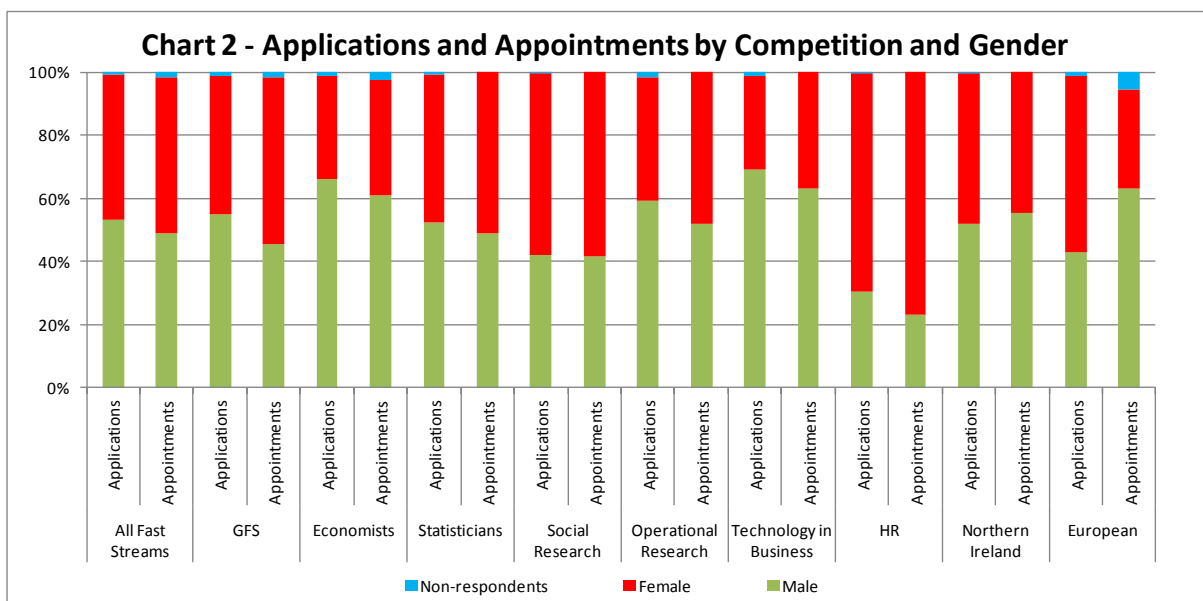
As we say in our recently published *Talent Action Plan: Removing the barriers to success*, we must ensure that every talented, committed and hard-working person has the opportunity to rise to the top, whatever their background and whoever they are. We don't want departments full of employees who think and sound the same. That is why we announced in the Talent Action Plan the commitment that all managers will be required to complete unconscious bias training. An open and inclusive culture must be driven from the top, so our leaders must look beyond bias and relentlessly seek out merit.

It is also why we have also announced that we will double the size of our Fast Track Apprenticeship Scheme, launched last year, so young people who leave school can go straight into the world of work. It has been wonderful to see new energy and fresh ideas enter the Civil Service over the last year and we hope that some of these apprentices will, in time, fill the very highest posts. We are determined to reach out further to sections of our society which are not proportionately represented in the Fast Stream. In particular, we invest considerable effort in attracting and recruiting graduates from ethnic minorities, from lower socio-economic groups, or with a disability. Fast Streamers themselves play a major part in our outreach work.

Tables showing the diversity of the Fast Stream intake every year since 1998 are in the main statistical analysis at the end of this Report. The following are headline figures from the 2013 competition, including comparisons with 2012.

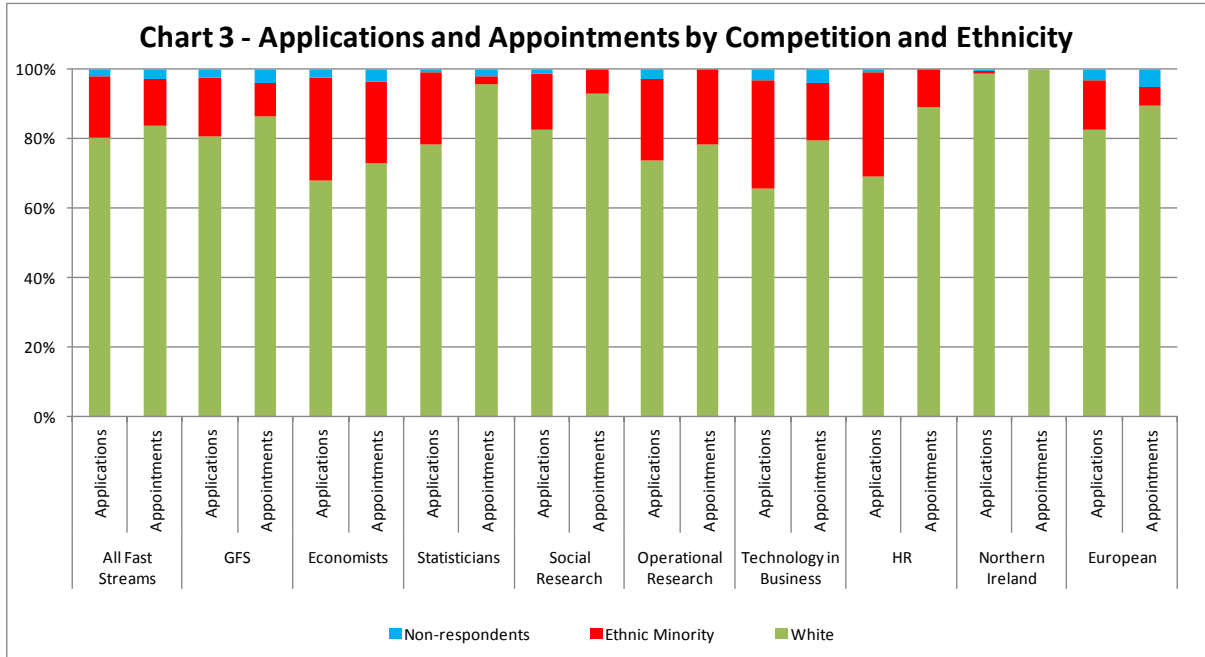
(i) Gender

In 2013 the proportion of applications from women fell very slightly to 45.8 per cent, from 47.2 per cent in 2012. The proportion of successful women applicants also fell slightly to 49.4 per cent, from 51.1 per cent in 2012. Successful male applicants accounted for 49.2 per cent, meaning that our intake was almost exactly balanced between male and female graduates (see Chart 2). 5.2 per cent of female applicants, and 4.4 per cent of male applicants, were successful.



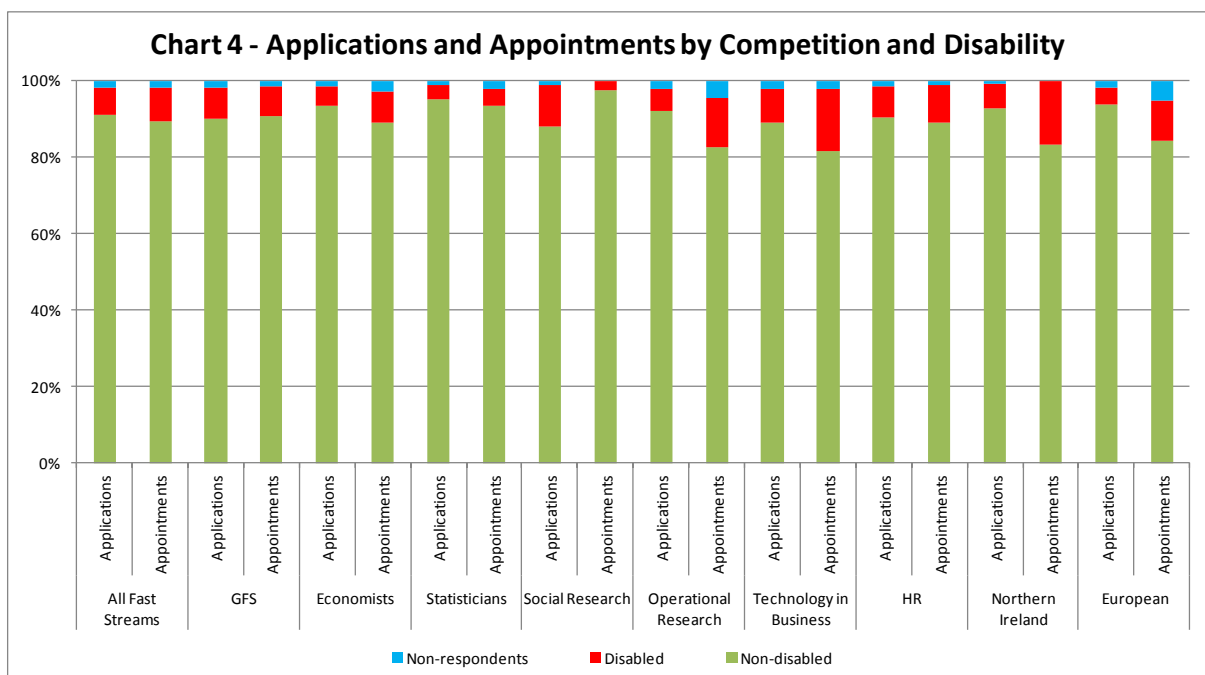
(ii) Ethnicity

The proportion of applications from ethnic minority groups rose to 17.6 per cent, from 16.5 per cent in 2012. The proportion of successful applicants from ethnic minority groups also rose, to 13.2 per cent from 12.5 per cent in 2012. This proportion, representing 114 graduates from ethnic minority groups, is the highest we have ever achieved (see Chart 3). 3.6 per cent of ethnic minority applicants were successful, compared with 5 per cent of white applicants.



(iii) Disability

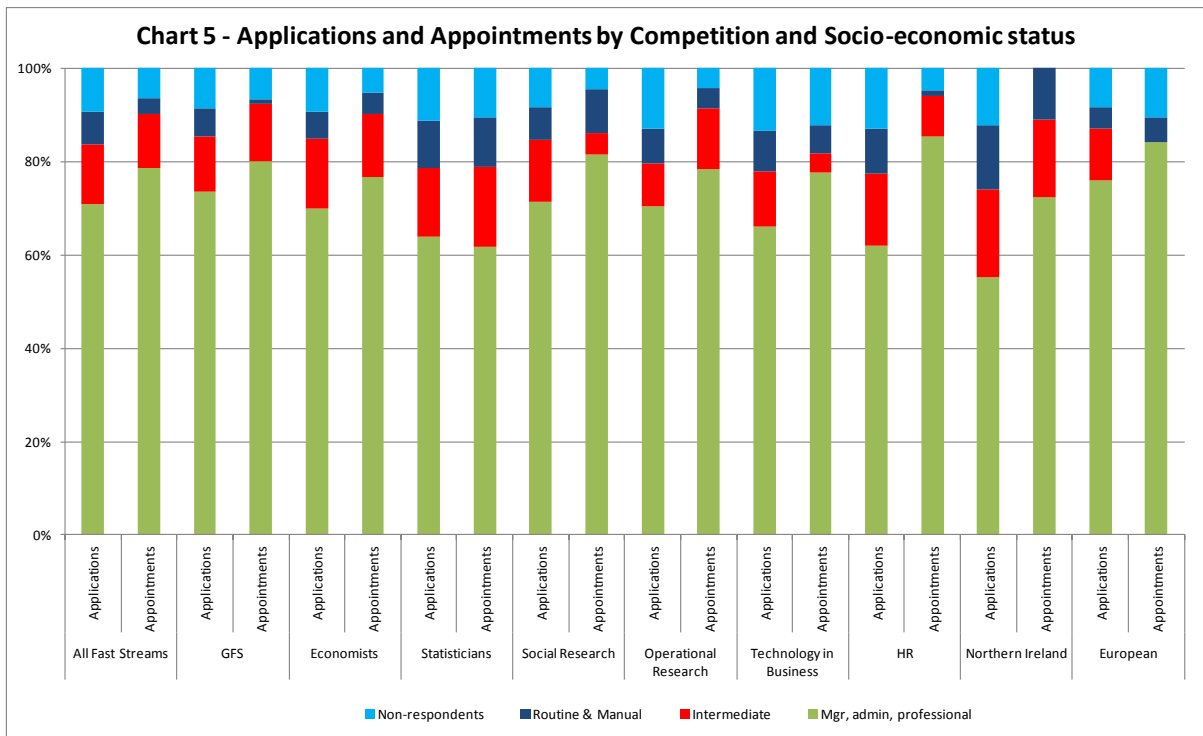
The proportion of applicants with a disability increased to 7.4 per cent, from 6.6 per cent in 2012. However, the proportion of successful applicants with a disability fell to 8.6 per cent, from 13.5 per cent in 2012 (see Chart 4).



We believe this fall is largely explained by the introduction in 2013 of the Competency Questionnaire (one of the online tests) as an assessment filter for the disabled group. This questionnaire is already used for non-disabled candidates, and it was considered desirable to require disabled candidates to take it as well so as to ensure that the very best people are selected from the total field of candidates. 5.6 per cent of disabled applicants were successful, compared with 4.7 per cent of non-disabled applicants.

(iv) Socio-economic status

Monitoring of the socio-economic status of applicants to Fast Stream began in 2011, using as its basis the occupational background of applicants' parents. In 2013, the proportion of applicants from the *routine and manual* occupational background was 6.9 per cent, compared with 7.1 per cent in 2012. See Chart 5. The proportion of successful applicants from this group was 3.5 per cent, compared with 3.8 per cent in 2012. 9.5 per cent of applicants declined to provide information about their parents' occupation.



This year, for the first time, we are including in the Report information about the school background of applicants. It shows that three quarters (74.3 per cent) of successful applicants went to state schools or to schools abroad.

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Applications for the 2013 Fast Stream competition came from graduates or prospective graduates at 152 degree-awarding institutions in the UK. Successful candidates came from 75 different institutions.

Applications from Oxford and Cambridge Universities rose slightly to 10.1 per cent, from 9.6 per cent in 2012. However, the proportion of successful candidates from those Universities fell to 22.2 per cent from 26.6 per cent in 2012.

The most common degree disciplines amongst successful candidates were Humanities (22.7 per cent) and Social Sciences (20.3 per cent).

DETAILED ANALYSIS

[see annexed data tables]