



## **‘Black people, racism and human rights’ - Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry 2020**

### **1. About Runnymede:**

The Runnymede Trust is the UK’s leading race equality think tank. We were founded in 1968, to provide evidence on racial inequalities, to inform policymakers and public opinion about the reality of those inequalities, and to work with local communities and policymakers to tackle them.

We hold the secretariat for the APPG on Race and Community, chaired by Rt. Hon. David Lammy MP, and publish reports, briefings and research on race equality issues. Most recently, we launched a new book with the [University of Manchester, State of the Nation: New comprehensive analysis on race in Britain.](#)

### **Health**

#### **Background and Context:**

The Marmot Review (Marmot et al. 2020), and Runnymede’s Colour of Money report, published before the COVID-19 crisis hit Britain, illustrated that people from deprived areas and those from a Black and minority ethnic (BME) background were not only more likely to have underlying health conditions but also to have a shorter life expectancy as a result of their lowered socio-economic status. Race as a social determinant of health was already evidenced prior to Covid-19<sup>1</sup>. In spite of this, there has been worryingly little policy development on ethnic inequalities in health over the past decades.

Whilst there have been a handful of NHS policies since 2000, including the Public Health Outcomes Framework launched in 2010, there has been little focus on addressing social and economic injustices impacting BME communities. Instead, policy approaches have tended to focus on essentialising ethnic differences rather than looking at the impact of racism, discrimination or poverty on health inequality.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **Publish a timeline of its response to PHE’s Review:**
  - The Minister for Equalities, and the Cabinet Office’s Race Disparity Unit must immediately publish a timeline of its work to take forward *Public Health England’s Work Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of Covid-19 on*

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<https://library.open.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/22310/9781447351269.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>

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*BAME groups*, and implement the recommendations published in Public Health England's report.

- **Publish plans to protect BME lives in the event of a second wave:**
  - Minister for Equalities and the Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Unit must urgently publish a strategy to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on BME communities in the event of a second wave of infections.
- **Outline plans to tackle hate crime, stigma and discrimination faced by BME communities:**
  - The Home Secretary must urgently outline plans to tackle hate crime, stigma and discrimination faced by BME communities in the aftermath of emergency lockdowns in majority BME areas.
- **Carry out and publish Equality Impact Assessments on Covid-19 policies:**
  - There has been little to no equality impact assessment of the emergency social and economic measures rolled out by the UK government during COVID-19. This includes urgently publishing Equality Impact Assessments on the Government's Coronavirus Recovery Strategy, and the impact of ending the furlough scheme. The Government must also urgently act to disaggregate data on the number of people furloughed and made redundant as a result of Covid-19 according to ethnicity.
- **Provide PPE for BME frontline workers:**
  - Findings from our own survey, the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing have shown worrying difficulties in accessing PPE on the frontline of this crisis. Employers should ensure that all key workers in public-facing roles have access to adequate PPE
- **Establish a Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support programme:**
  - The government should establish a tailored Find, Test, Trace, Isolate and Support (FTTIS) programme which ensures that marginalised and BME communities who are more vulnerable to the coronavirus are identified and supported. This should include working closely with local authorities and local public health teams, including GPs, who are familiar to and have trusted relationships with local populations.
- **Provide temporary housing to facilitate effective self-isolation of those with symptoms.**
  - This has implications for their ability to self-isolate and shield from coronavirus transmission. Temporary housing, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, and community shelters, should be made available to individuals to facilitate self-isolation of symptomatic individuals.
- **Develop a National Cross Governmental Strategy for action on social determinants of health injustices**

- The government must also develop a national cross-governmental strategy for action on the social determinants of health, with a specific focus on deprived and black and minority ethnic communities, as recommended in the Marmot Review (Marmot et al., 2020). This will address important questions about why different racial and socioeconomic groups were particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. The government must also improve prevention, access to health services, and treatment for long term conditions among black and minority ethnic communities.

### **The COVID-19 crisis:**

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated and amplified pre-existing health inequalities among BME communities. Nearly all analyses of COVID-19 hospital cases and deaths show a disproportionate impact on Black Britons, who according to the ONS are four times more likely to die of COVID-19<sup>2</sup>.

Runnymede Trust's survey, published in June 2020, confirmed that BME groups are more likely to have been hospitalised with COVID-19, compared to white counterparts. Our survey found that 19% of people from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds know someone who had died of the virus<sup>3</sup>.

Our findings suggest that one of the main reasons BME groups are more at risk of dying of COVID-19 compared to white groups is that they have been over-exposed to the coronavirus. BME groups are more exposed because they are more likely to be working outside of their home, more likely to have jobs on the front line (40% of BME people were working in health and social care compared to 30% of white British people) and less likely to be protected with adequate PPE, whilst more likely to be living in multi-generational housing and have much lower levels of pre-existing savings to buffet the economic impact of Covid-19.

Our data shows that people living in the most deprived areas are two times more likely to contract and die of COVID-19 than those living in the least deprived areas. A report by the Social Metrics Commission (2020) found that BME households in the UK were over twice as likely to live in poverty (and more likely to live in 'persistent poverty') compared to white British households. Our survey found that BME groups were more likely than their white counterparts to have applied for (or tried to apply for) Universal Credit.

### **Detention – The impact of Stop & Search on BME communities:**

#### **Background and context:**

The Coronavirus Act 2020 is a key tenet of the Government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak over the next two years. Police forces and immigration officers throughout the UK have been granted increased powers under Schedule 21 of the Act to fine or detain anyone who could be infectious.

We are extremely concerned about the impact that these increased powers are having on BME communities, who are disproportionately more likely to face penalties and be stopped and searched. Analysis by Liberty Investigates illustrates that police were up to seven times more likely to fine black people for breaches of the lockdown than white people<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/07/black-people-four-times-more-likely-to-die-from-covid-19-ONS-finds>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Runnymede%20Covid19%20Survey%20report%20v3.pdf>

NPCC data demonstrates that in the period between 27 March to 11 May, 22% of fines went to people of colour in England - whilst only 15.5% of the population is BME.

The number of Black people being stopped and searched has increased dramatically. During the coronavirus lockdown, young Black people were stopped and searched in London more than 20,000 times – this figure is equal to more than a quarter of all Black 15 - 24-year olds in the capital<sup>5</sup>.

### Recommendations:

- **Scrap the Coronavirus Act 2020**  
There is no end date for measures under the Coronavirus Act 2020. This means police powers to detain & fine potentially infectious people could be triggered again and could continue indefinitely.
- **Re-introduce collection of ethnicity-related data for traffic stops**
  - 'Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme' (BUSSS) was announced by Home Secretary Theresa May in 2014 and promised to "**collect more data** about stop and search and to monitor its **impact on black and minority ethnic groups and young people**" as well as improve stop and search outcomes, introduce greater transparency and engage community
  - There already existed the political will for this to take place and identification of the urgency of ethnicity-related data collection by a formerly sitting Cabinet member
- **Scrap section 163 (allows police to stop any vehicle without reason or justification)**
  - Both Liberty and StopWatch recommend that section 163 be limited to road safety and traffic control purposes, such as halting traffic after an accident or highlighting a vehicle defect."
  - There **already exist powers for the police** to stop vehicles with suspicion of drug, firearm or offensive weapons
- **Scrap section 60 (stop and search)**
  - BUSSS (the reform to add transparency to stop and search), and its 2016 predecessor BUSSS 2.0, has not been mandated for implementation and is currently set as a voluntary opt-in for police
- **Scrap use of tasers in all circumstances**
  - "Figures released by the Home Office showed that 12 per cent of incidents involving the use of force that were recorded by police were against black people, who make up only 3.3 per cent of the population."
  - "Black people were involved in proportionally more incidents that involved armed police using guns, at 26 per cent, and 20 per cent of people involved in Taser incidents were black in 2017-18."

### Democracy

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<sup>4</sup> <https://libertyinvestigates.org.uk/articles/bame-people-disproportionately-targeted-by-coronavirus-fines/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/jul/08/one-in-10-of-londons-young-black-males-stopped-by-police-in-may?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/jul/08/one-in-10-of-londons-young-black-males-stopped-by-police-in-may?CMP=share_btn_tw)

With respect to voter turnout and registration in the United Kingdom, there exist disparities in electoral participation along the lines of race. In the 2019 general election, almost half (47%) of the Black and minority ethnic (BME) electorate did not cast a vote<sup>6</sup>.

According to the Electoral Commission, 84% of people from a white ethnic background were registered to vote, while 62% of people from “other” ethnic backgrounds were registered<sup>7</sup>. Voter registration among Asian and Black ethnic backgrounds sat at 76% and 75%, respectively, and 69% of those from mixed backgrounds were registered.

Additionally, 25% of first-generation migrants and 20% of second-generation migrants who are eligible to vote are not registered<sup>8</sup>.

The Conservative Party's recent push for the introduction of legislation requiring the electorate to present a photo ID to vote represents a discriminatory affront to our participatory democracy. According to the Electoral Commission, there was only one single instance of voter personation in the 2019 general election that would have been prevented with voter IDs<sup>9</sup>.

The government's own data shows that white people are most likely to hold one form of photo ID – 76% hold a full driving licence. But 38% of Asian people, nearly a third of people of mixed ethnicity (31%), and more than half of Black people (48%) do not<sup>10</sup>. Of the 11 million people in the UK who do not hold a form of photo identification, they are disproportionately of BME background and are largely constituted in the multi-racial working class.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Automatic voter registration of all British citizens (in the British Isles and abroad) once they reach 18 years of age, as well as all eligible foreign nationals residing in the UK:** Collation of publicly held data can better identify non-registered voters to ensure all who are able to participate in elections can vote.
- **Institute a bank holiday for general election day:** Provision of a statutory holiday to coincide with the general election could prove to be one solution to increasing voter turnout.
- **Immediately halt plans to institute mandatory ID checks at polling stations:** The government plans to make it more difficult to vote, rooted in unfounded assertions of voting fraud, are an attempt to import American-style voter suppression into our democracy.

### **Immigration**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/how-britain-voted-2019-election>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/accuracy-and-completeness-electoral-registers/2019-report-2018-electoral-registers-great-britain/completeness-great-britain>

<sup>8</sup> <https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199656639.001.0001/acprof-9780199656639-chapter-7>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/oct/14/jeremy-corbyn-condemns-clearly-discriminatory-voter-id-plans>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/equality-groups-sound-the-alarm-about-us-style-voter-suppression-potentially-coming-to-the-uk/>

The pandemic highlighted to society the key role that 'key workers' play, and that they are disproportionately BME people. Paradoxically, at a time when the contributions of the migrant workforce are being highlighted by the government, media and larger society, Britain continues to maintain a hostile environment for these very same key workers.

According to the Immigration Bill which was voted through parliament in May, our 'low-skilled' workers, who are unlikely to meet the salary thresholds that greet both EU and non-EU citizens after Brexit, are the very people who have kept the country moving, fed, cared for and in many cases alive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Migrants represent 23% of the cleaning and domestic work staff in the UK, compared to 17% of foreign-born workers throughout the remainder of the labour market. In London alone, migrant workers constitute 68% of cleaning staff<sup>11</sup>.

If cleaners, domestic workers or care workers on zero-hour contracts were to contract the virus or were to self-isolate to prevent possible transmission onto clients, they would be left to survive on the statutory sick pay of £95.85 per week<sup>12</sup>.

Many in the cleaning and domestic work industry are on restrictive visas or are undocumented, which bars them from receiving government-backed compensation, as their status stipulates that they have 'No Recourse to Public Funds.'

### **Recommendations:**

- **Scrap 'No Recourse to Public Funds':** The government's 30 July 2020 adjustment to their 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) policy is welcomed by the Runnymede Trust, where the barring of individuals can be "lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances." However, an application introduces unnecessary bureaucracy to the process and will fundamentally act as a barrier for those who desperately and immediately require public funds to survive. We recommend that NRPF is suspended through the duration of the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Scrap the Hostile Environment policy:** The introduction of the far-reaching enforcement powers of the Home Office into statutory bodies, like the NHS and local authorities, represent a cruel and inhumane triangulation of publicly held data to prevent people from accessing necessary and crucial services. The policies enacted to create a 'hostile environment' must be scrapped immediately.
- **Ensure that asylum seekers and refugees** have access to safe and decent accommodation, which enables access to healthcare services and testing.
- **Release all immigration detainees**, many of whom are at serious risk of Covid-19 infection as a result of poor conditions and overcrowding.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bache.org.uk/resources/Pictures/1701%20BCC%20Industry%20Trends%20Report%20v1.3.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hsj.co.uk/exclusive-deaths-of-nhs-staff-from-covid-19-analysed/7027471.article>