

## The murder of George Floyd, two years on – has anything been done to ensure that black and ethnic minority lives matter in the UK?

In the aftermath of 2020's Black Lives Matter protests, former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson pledged to work to “[defeat racism and discrimination wherever we find it](#)”. But two years on from George Floyd's murder, the reality is that words have not been matched by actions.

### What steps have been taken?

Amidst widespread demands for racial justice, the government established a ‘[Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](#)’ in June 2020. Its findings were published in March 2021's ‘Sewell report’, which was [immediately and widely condemned](#) by race equality campaigners.

### Particular criticisms included that the report...

- played down the existence of institutional racism
- included a positive story about slavery
- failed to properly consult and represent expert opinion.

There are concerns that by failing to accurately diagnose the causes of ethnic and racial inequalities, the report will severely [set back the fight](#) against racism in the UK.

### The policy context – racist practices, under different names

In a troubling and cruel irony, the second anniversary of George Floyd's murder fell a decade to the day from Theresa May's [introduction](#) of the ‘hostile environment’ policy.

This strategy was later rebranded as the ‘compliant environment’. But former Home Secretary Priti Patel's [promise of a more compassionate Home Office](#), in the wake of the Windrush scandal, has not been realised.

### Windrush – a continued legacy of betrayal?

In 2022, a report by independent expert Wendy Williams [expressed disappointment](#) at “the lack of tangible progress or drive to achieve the cultural changes required” in the Home Office. Williams' report also found that only 8 of the 30 recommendations she had made in 2020 had been implemented.

### Facing the facts: the long wait for justice facing many Windrush victims

**25%**

Just a quarter of those who applied to the Windrush compensation scheme [have received compensation](#)

**7%**

With potential applicants facing delays, insensitivities and complex bureaucracy, **only 7% of those eligible** have received compensation.

**23**

Tragically, **at least 23 people** have died without receiving the compensation they were due.

## Deeply harmful legislation

Contrary to the former Prime Minister's promise to tackle racism, the government has continued to push forward divisive and discriminatory legislation. Since George Floyd's murder in 2020, a number of bills have been passed which hold alarming consequences for racial equality and ethnic minorities.

- ***The Nationality and Borders Act***

Despite the backdrop of the Windrush scandal, this act grants the Home Secretary powers to remove an individual's citizenship **without prior notification**. Up to six million people of mainly ethnic minority or migrant background, including the UK's Jewish community, could have their citizenship jeopardized by this policy.

The Act also leaves open future options for offshore processing of those forced into dangerous, irregular journeys to safety in the UK. In practice, this would likely mainly affect asylum seekers of Asian and African descent, who make up the majority of those crossing the Channel in small boats.

- ***Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act***

**This draconian legislation** threatens to have further wide-ranging and alarming impacts on already marginalised communities. It will extend stop and search powers, despite the government's own **equalities impact assessment** admitting such measures will disproportionately impact black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Even prior to the bill's enactment, black people were **seven times more likely** to be searched than those from a white ethnic group.

Furthermore, by changing the act of 'trespass' from a civil to criminal offence, the Act will have a disproportionate and discriminatory impact on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) people. Regardless of the **severe lack of suitable sites** for the UK's GRT community, the new law means adults forced to live outside of legal stopping places could face fines, and **up to three months' imprisonment**.

## What are the main issues facing ethnic minority communities in the UK?

### Poverty, which particularly impacts children

- Although there is variation between different groups, **ethnic minority children** face high poverty rates, which have increased in recent years.

In 2019-20, more than half of Bangladeshi (61%), Pakistani (55%) and black African or Caribbean or black British (53%) children were living in poverty.

- Recent analysis from the Runnymede Trust has also found that black and ethnic minority people are **now more than twice as likely** to face 'deep poverty' than white people.

## Workplace inequality and discrimination

Research has shown that ethnic minority workers earn around **16% less** than their white colleagues and peers. Appallingly, a recent study from the Runnymede Trust found that **75% of women of colour** have experienced racism in the workplace.

While there are significant differences between different ethnic groups, in January-March 2022, ethnic minority groups' unemployment rates (7.1%) were **more than double** those of people from White ethnic backgrounds (3.1%). And despite **some improvements** in the business sector, with 89% of FTSE 100 companies now having an ethnic minority background board member, just six companies had an ethnic minority CEO.

## Disparity in educational outcomes

- Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are **far more likely to be excluded** from schooling.

Temporary exclusion rates were more than three times greater for White Gypsy and Roma pupils (21.3%) than White British pupils (6%). Black Caribbean (10.4%) and Irish Traveller (14.6%) pupils also faced far higher rates.

## Housing and homelessness

Ethnic minority households are **far more likely to be overcrowded** than White British households. 24% of Bangladeshi, 18% of Pakistani and 16% of Black African households in 2019/20 were overcrowded – this compares to just 2% of White British households.

Furthermore, Black people are **disproportionately at risk** of homelessness in the UK. Despite only making up around 3% of the population, in 2020/21, around **10% of homeless people** were black.

## Health, including the Covid-19 pandemic

- Earlier this year, a review found that **vast and widespread race inequalities** exist across the health service.
- Shocking figures show that black women are **four times as likely**, and Asian women twice as likely, to die during childbirth than white women in the UK.
- In a further risk to their health, migrant and asylum seeking women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) have **recurrently faced up-front charging** for maternity care.
- And throughout the pandemic, many ethnic minority groups, including British Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and black communities, have suffered **higher Covid-19 mortality rates** than white Britons.

## Hate crimes and police targeting

In the year ending March 2022, a [record 155,841 hate crimes](#) were recorded. Of these, almost three-quarters (70%) were racially motivated.

Deeply alarming figures also show that [two-thirds of children](#) who have been strip searched by the Metropolitan Police since 2019 were of ethnic minority backgrounds. Between 2019-21, [75% of children](#) who had been strip-searched nationally were ethnic minorities.

## What should the government do?

- Act on the 589 recommendations made by 13 previous reports, which have so far been ignored.
- Systematically tackle poverty, including hunger.
- Implement a serious race-equality strategy, led by a respected individual.
- Make appropriate appointments to organisations like the EHRC.
- Scrap discriminatory and divisive legislation, like the Nationality and Borders Act.

## Why should the Jewish community act?

As Jews, we know all too well the results of others standing by and doing nothing. Working together with other communities is the best way to tackle prejudice and discrimination – and showing solidarity and taking action is critical for enhancing inter-communal relations. Efforts to tackle antisemitism and racism are deeply connected, and must be a shared struggle.

It is also important to remember that the modern ‘Hostile Environment’ policy has historic roots in the 1905 Immigration Act, which sought to control numbers of Jewish refugees and migrants entering the UK. Jewish refugees and migrants have historically face high levels of discrimination, criminalization and antisemitism from the media and politicians. It is critical that we stand with those facing similar levels of marginalisation today.

## Questions to consider

- More than two years on from George Floyd’s killing, what have we learned, and what has changed?

## What can we do to stand up against racism today?

- Take action within our own community. Ensure that communal spaces are safe and inclusive for black Jews and Jews of Colour, teach Jewish children about black history and experience and call out racism wherever we find it.
- Push for change in our workplaces.
- Back the campaign for a memorial for victims of the transatlantic slave trade.
- Campaign for justice for Windrush victims, against the punitive No Recourse to Public Funds policy and call for the appalling Rwanda plan to be scrapped.
- Speak out against racist and divisive legislation like the Police, Crime and Sentencing Act, and take action to defend the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.