

A universal value of human rights is the principle of equality and non-discrimination. Every person should be equal in the eyes of the law, regardless of age, ethnicity, or anything else. However, research shows that various systems in society treat people from marginalised ethnic groups differently.

For example

In the criminal justice system:

- Over one quarter (27%) of people in prison are from a racialised ethnic group, despite making up 14% of the total population.¹
- The odds of receiving a prison sentence for drug offences are around 240% higher for Black and Global majority people than non-Black and Global majority people.²

In the education system:

- Black Caribbean, and mixed white and Black Caribbean children were twice as likely to have been permanently excluded from school in the 2019/2020 academic year compared to their white peers.³

Mental health:

- People from racialised groups, particularly those in Black groups, are over-represented among those with a diagnosis of severe mental illness, are more likely to have adverse pathways into care, more likely to receive compulsory treatment (to be sectioned) and more likely to experience adverse outcomes of care.⁴



¹ Offender management statistics quarterly: April to June 2020. Table 1.4, 2020 | Ministry of Justice

² Colahan et al. (2016) Associations between ethnic background and being sentenced to prison in the Crown Court in England and Wales in 2015, London: Ministry of Justice

³ National Statistics. (2021). Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England and Wales.

⁴ Ethnicity, Race and Inequality in the UK: State of the Nation (2020)

Physical health:

- Black and Global Majority people report less good experiences than White British people of almost every dimension of General Practice (GP) services. And Black and Global Majority people who had been diagnosed with a cancer saw their GP several more times than White British people before they were referred to a hospital.⁵

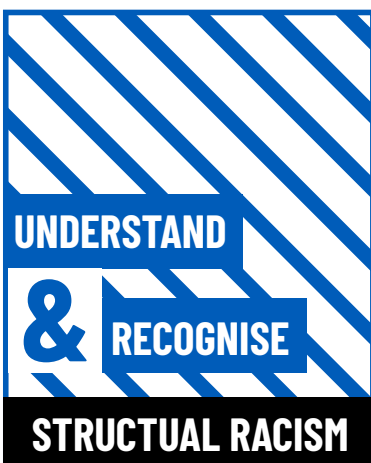
- The UK has one of the lowest maternal mortality ratios in the world. There are, however, glaring and persistent disparities in outcomes for women depending on their ethnicity. Maternal mortality for Black women is currently almost four times higher than for White women. Significant disparities also exist for women of Asian and mixed ethnicity.⁶

Social Care:

- Black children are over-represented in children in need registers and among children who are looked after.⁷

Unemployment:

- Around 1 in 10 adults from a Black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Mixed background were unemployed compared with 1 in 25 White British people.⁸



This disparity is termed disproportionality. It means ethnicity is over-represented compared to the proportion of that group within the general population.

The explanations for disproportionality throughout many institutions and systems in society are varied and complex. The presence of bias, structural racism and discrimination are to be considered alongside other contributing factors when examining causes for racial disparities.

It is important that practitioners have an understanding and recognition of structural racism, and that organisations and institutions develop and implement an anti-racist strategy and approach to tackle discrimination.

⁵ Ethnicity, Race and Inequality in the UK: State of the Nation (2020)

⁶ HoC, Women and Equalities Committee, 'Black maternal health' (2023)

⁷ The Child Welfare Inequalities Project: Final Report (2020)

⁸ Resolution Foundation report 'Opportunities Knocked?' (2018)

