BLACK BRITISH VOICES PROJECT

REPORT AUGUST 2023
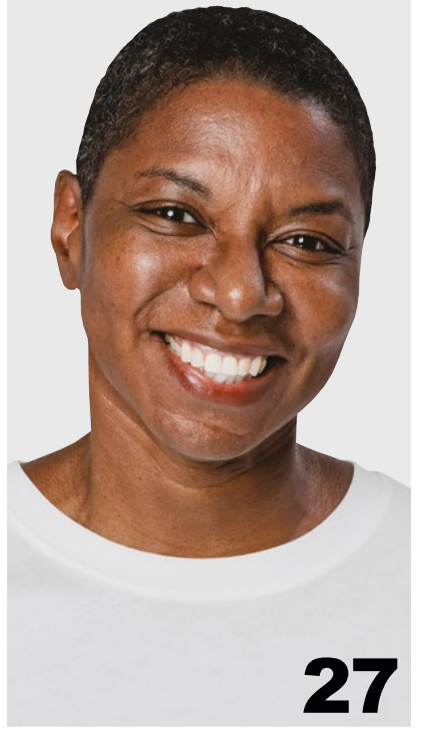
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When I heard about the project, I just thought what a great opportunity to get involved. We've just had the census, which clearly our government sees as important to get a wide scale quantitative data set of Britain, but I feel like some voices are very often marginalised within that. So I thought what an opportunity to say my piece and be part of a project that I genuinely think would be historic, because once it's done, I feel like it would just inspire so much more research off the back of it into specific areas. So, I just want to jump on the bandwagon and get involved.

BBVP Participant

80

45

92

27

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FOREWORD

This unique collaborative project began its life in the Spring of 2020, when the possibility of a major research initiative specifically focused on Black British experiences, views and concerns brought together the three principal teams who have designed and led this project. We shared a vision of a transformative, data-driven, large-scale research exercise created by, with and for British people and communities who identify as Black. It would have a wide and inclusive reach but also dig more deeply into the specific issues that matter most to Black Britons, exploring the questions of why these issues matter and what actions are needed to address them.

Within only a few months of our first meeting the worldwide emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement brought an even sharper focus to our efforts and in the autumn of 2020, despite having lost our initial funding, we committed ourselves to an ambitious agenda. The Black British Voices Project quickly acquired enthusiastic support, assistance, and resources to launch our national campaign to complete the largest survey ever undertaken by Black Britons. To ensure our study's success we conducted extensive interviews, focus groups and consultations nationwide both before and during our survey. After taking longer than we expected to complete our analysis of results, but with ever increasing respect and gratitude for the support of the many thousands of participants who have shared their views and concerns with us for this important and timely project, we are confident this report indeed breaks new ground and demonstrates the irreplaceable value of lived experience as a guide to effective social, economic and political change.

Much of what is presented in this report, and even many of its starkest findings, will not surprise Black British audiences. However the sheer scale of the participation in this project, the commitment more than 10,000 respondents made to completing a survey with more than 100 questions – sometimes for more than an hour – confirms our original sense that this work is vital. Moreover, despite the fact that many of the disappointing statistics and findings are all too familiar, the unprecedented scale of this study gives many of its findings even greater weight. Most important of all is the cumulative effect of the dataset as a whole. Never before has a clearer message been delivered that Britain needs to have a serious national conversation about anti-Black racism, why it is still so embedded and persistent, and why more is not being done to challenge and eradicate it. This needs to be a conversation everyone takes part in, and in which the lives, experiences, testimony and insights from Black Britons themselves play a leading role.

We hope you will join us in using the content of this report to drive forward the much-needed awareness of why – in every sector of public, private, political and professional life -- the historic burden of racial injustice must be lifted. This report, and the research infrastructure it establishes for future research, are especially vital in showing how the changes we need to eliminate systemic racism can be implemented – by everyone, and for the betterment of all.

Maggie Semple, I-Cubed
Paula Dyke, The Voice
Kenny Monrose, University of Cambridge

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Black British Voices Project (BBVP) was launched in March of 2020, bringing together a committed team from the media, consultancy, and the private sector who have worked with academic researchers to deliver a wide-ranging, detailed and up-to-date portrait of the issues that most concern Black Britons today.

Our nationwide survey, completed by more than 10,000 Black Britons and backed up by in-depth qualitative data, unsurprisingly confirmed that systemic racism remains an obstacle in every sector we studied. Among the most concerning statistics contained in the 16 sections of this report are that:

41% of survey respondents identify racism as the biggest barrier to young Black people's educational attainment.

95% believe the national curriculum neglects Black lives and experiences.

Fewer than 2% believe educational institutions take racism seriously.

98% feel they have to compromise who they are in their workplace.

90% of young Black people expect to experience racial prejudice as adults.

87% of Black Britons distrust the criminal justice system.

90% object to anti-Black stereotyping on TV.

95% feel not enough is being done to combat racism in sport.

Fewer than 1 in 60 respondents felt fairly treated by the health system.

96% perceive financial literacy to be critical to their future security.

3 out of 4 believe Black business are treated unfairly.

94% believe the government is not taking sufficient action on behalf of Black Britons.

One in six Black Britons do not consider themselves to be British.

Our headline conclusions are that:

- Much more needs to be done to overcome unacceptably high levels of racial discrimination in too many sectors of today's society.

- The complacency that allows such persistent patterns of prejudice to be tolerated is one of the main obstacles to change.

- The means to deliver better and fairer social institutions are available, but they require that the full extent of the problem be acknowledged.

- Band aid solutions are not only bound to fail, but their repeated failures make matters worse by reconfirming a lack of will to deliver real change.

- The failure to adequately acknowledge the depth and complexity of the causes of racial injustice in Britain today is a major contributing factor to their continuation.

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In specific areas, our study found that:

BRITISHNESS

The number of Black Britons who understand themselves as British (81%) is significantly higher than the number who consider themselves 'proud to be British' (49%).

Englishness is a more difficult identity than Britishness for many Black Britons.

Although a significant majority (81%) of Black Britons understand themselves as British, roughly one in six do not.

BAME

This category is more favourably viewed by a minority respondents (21%) who recognise its historic role in data collection, but who nonetheless see it as dated.

75% of respondents overwhelmingly feel this category is reductive and homogenising.

Interview data suggest that BAME is perceived as both a sign and symptom of band-aid approaches and thus of failure.

BAME consequently signals both misperception and underestimation of the problems of systemic racism it is intended to address.

LGBTQ+

A majority of respondents (56%) feel that acceptance of Black LGBTQ+ people has improved over the last 10 years.

Interview data confirm that religious intolerance of LGBTQ+ people remains a significant obstacle to greater acceptance.

85% of participants perceive that LGBTQ+ people continue to experience discrimination within Black communities.

59% of those surveyed believe that Black LGBTQ+ individuals face additional layers of discrimination due to the combination of their sexual orientation and race.

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

84% of respondents described themselves as religious and/or spiritual.

There is evidence too that both religion and the church may play a particularly important role as a sources of refuge and solace in a society that may feel especially hostile at times to many Black Britons.

Despite their significant importance to the lives of Black Britons, only 7% of survey respondents reported that their religion was more defining of their identity than their race.

Some LGBTQ+ respondents to the survey, and in interviews, were particular critical of religious intolerance within institutions such as the Catholic Church.

EDUCATION

94% of BBVP participants believe Black students suffer from lower educational attainment expectations from educators compared to non-Black students.

Ten times as many respondents (41%) perceive racial discrimination to 'definitely' be the 'biggest barrier' to young Black people's academic attainment as those who think this is 'definitely not' the case (4%).

95% of participants perceive the British national curriculum to inadequately accommodate Black history-related subjects.

Fewer than 2% of survey respondents believe that British educational institutions are taking the issue of racial difference seriously.

The sense that more Black teachers and more focus on Black lives and histories would help is offset by a deep distrust in British educational institutions to serve the needs of Black British children.

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THE WORKPLACE

88% of BBVP participants report experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace.

98% of respondents indicating they 'Always' (46%), 'Often' (38%), or 'Sometimes' (14%) had 'to compromise who they are and how they express themselves to fit in at work'.

Black Britons often face protracted and non-linear career progression, encountering obstacles to promotion and being accused of benefiting from tokenism when they do advance. 'Fitting in' is considered to be the major source of discrimination and was ranked by survey respondents higher than unequal pay as the primary workplace obstacle.

Efforts by employers to address racial discrimination at work are often experienced as superficial or even perceived to make matters worse.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE

90% of the young people who participated in the survey expect to experience racial prejudice in the UK as adults.

93% do not feel supported by the Government in relation to the challenges they face, compared to only 3% who do.

87% do not feel employers and businesses are doing enough to address the employment gap for young Black people in contrast to only 5% who do.

Responses by young Black Britons to questions about their future were 20 times more negative than positive.

45% of respondents saw Britain as their permanent home, compared to 39% who expressed a desire to live elsewhere.

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE

20 years after the MacPherson report, the British criminal justice system – including the courts as well as the police and the penal system – remain highly distrusted by Black Britons.

87% of BBVP participants reported that they do not trust Britain's criminal justice system. Racial profiling along with stop and search laws continue to play an outsized role in fueling tensions between the police and Black communities.

79% of respondents believe that stop and search is used unfairly against Black people.

Views on whether the police can be improved by the recruitment of more Black police officers remain deeply divided.

MEDIA AND THE ARTS

Black British perceptions of British media institutions suggest widespread disappointment with what are perceived as entrenched patterns of systematic exclusion.

Fewer than 10% of BBVP participants believe theatres and publishing houses are doing enough to encourage Black participation in their sectors.

96% of respondents thought Black men and 93% believe Black women are negatively stereotyped in the mainstream media.

90% of survey respondents object to negative stereotyping of Black women and men on TV.

61% felt that Black theatre productions were either 'somewhat' or 'definitely not' embraced by mainstream theatres.

SPORT

Racism within sport is seen to reflect deeply-rooted and persistent anti-Black prejudices that should not be tolerated in today's society but nonetheless are often ignored or even implicitly condoned, and thus allowed to persist.

93% of BBVP participants believe British sporting authorities have failed to do enough to combat racism in this sector.

63% of respondents believe that racism in sport has increased in recent years.

95% of respondents felt that social media companies are not doing enough to prevent online racial abuse of Black athletes.

Many respondents shared the view that initiatives aimed at tackling racism in sport are too shallow and superficial, thus trivialising and marginalising a problem that in should be taken much more seriously.

HEALTHCARE

Fewer than 1 in 60 respondents felt they were fairly treated within the healthcare system, which was largely depicted in the BBVP data as a hostile environment.

87% of respondents reported that they expect to receive a substandard level of healthcare because of their race.

Interview data foregrounds the multiple effects of social inequality on health, including not only poverty, unemployment, poor nutrition and inadequate housing but also the stresses caused by everyday forms of racial discrimination.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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MENTAL HEALTH

Black Britons have become more willing to speak about mental health than in earlier generations.

81% of participants considered mental health provision for Black people in Britain to be inadequate.

87% of respondents believe there is a problem with misdiagnosis, over-medication, or unfair treatment towards Black people in the provision of mental health care.

DISABILITY

71% of respondents describe themselves as aware of the challenges faced by Black people living with disabilities.

41% of respondents feel that people with disabilities face greater challenges today than 10 years ago, as opposed to 39% who perceive the challenges as the same or less.

Despite improvements, 75% of BBVP participants believe the needs of Black disabled people in Britain remain inadequately considered by other people.

72% of respondents believe that Black people with disabilities are treated differently from Black non-disabled persons.

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

92% of respondents perceive a generational wealth gap in Black communities compared to other racial groups.

96% of BBVP participants consider financial literacy to be a 'critical component' in the effort to secure greater financial security for Black British people in the future.

56% of respondents feel they do not have enough knowledge about financial management.

BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE

41% believe lack of access to funding from financial institutions is the biggest obstacle faced by Black-owned businesses.

3 out of 4 survey respondents expressed the view that Black businesses and business people are treated unfairly by investors and financial institutions.

Black business owners experienced pressures to 'fit in' with white standards of both self-presentation and business strategy in order to secure the financial resources necessary to establish themselves.

Community support for Black owned businesses is viewed positively, but seen as a limited means of redressing entrenched racial disparities.

POLITICS

Three out of four BBVP survey respondents describe themselves as interested in UK politics, although 94% of BBVP participants believe the UK government is not taking sufficient action on behalf of Black Britons.

Six times as many respondents do not believe local politicians are responding to the issues facing Black people as those who do.

A low but significant percentage of 20% of survey respondents feel Black politicians can address the needs of Black Britons effectively, but at the same time encourage the British government to reduce spending on enquiries and reports on race that generate findings interpreted by Black Britons as largely unrepresentative of their own experiences.

Despite the low expectations expressed about British politics and politicians, as well as political parties, BBVP participants nonetheless expressed significant interest in British politics. Six times as many survey respondents described themselves as 'somewhat' or 'very' interested as those who claimed to be either 'not really' or 'not at all' interested in UK politics.

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CONCLUSIONS

The time has come for a serious national conversation addressing the deep-rooted sources of anti-Black racism in the UK and how these can be eradicated. A first step in launching this national dialogue has to be genuine acknowledgement of the extent and seriousness of the problem, and the historic failure to fully confront its scale, cost and severity. A second crucial element must be acknowledgement of the lack of will that has fueled the stark and persistent failure to overturn racial injustice. Much greater and more serious attention needs to be paid to the unacceptability of racial injustice in any sector of society. The widespread complicity of negligence that allows this injustice to remain unchallenged must end.

In order for racial injustice to be genuinely acknowledged, confronted, and ended, it will be necessary for data-driven studies such as this one to put plain facts on the table and hold key leaders and stakeholders to account. Mainstream Britain has to ask itself why so many people of African and Caribbean descent do not feel included in British society? Why nearly 40% of young Black Britons do not expect to remain in Britain? Why nearly 20% of Black Britons do not even consider themselves to be British and why 94% believe the government is not doing enough on their behalf?

Finally, this conversation needs to be both data-driven and to have Black British voices at its centre. A key question for readers of this report, whether or not they identify as Black or British, is why so many of the most concerning statistics revealed by this survey – such as the facts that 90% of young Black Britons expect to experience racism as they grow up, that 94% or survey respondents lack faith in the criminal justice system, and that fewer than 1 in 60 trust they will not be discriminated against in the healthcare system – will not come as a surprise to most Black Britons?

As a first step in launching the overdue conversation about why much needed changes have not been implemented despite hundreds of reports similar to this one, our goal is not only to put hard facts on the table, but to share them widely and to engage them seriously. We aim to establish a national platform for data gathering that will continue to identify key areas where change is needed, and key insights into how the necessary changes can be implemented. We aim to expand our efforts and further explore key areas that remain under-researched. Our goal of catalysing and facilitating a more informed, effective and genuine engagement with the legacies of racial injustice in Britain is intended to reach every corner of the country and we welcome the opportunity to work with an increasing range of partners, stakeholders, organisations and communities to realise this ambition.

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from the largest study ever conducted by and for Black people in Britain and tackles the question '*what does it really mean and feel like to be Black in Britain today*'? Although there have been innumerable reports and surveys that include the voices of Black Britons, few have been specifically focussed on the Black British experience, and even fewer exclusively so. Those studies which have looked in detail at Black British experiences, moreover, tend to be focussed on specific sectors and issues. Such reports are vital, and recent examples include the series of reports on Black maternity experiences demonstrating that Black and mixed-Black women in the UK suffer morbidity and mortality rates that are up to five times higher than their white counterparts.[1] Similarly, a 2022 TUC report on the ongoing costs of structural racism for Black workers in the UK found that more than a quarter of Black British workers continue to experience racist jokes and banter at work which led to over a third of respondents feeling less confident in their places of employment.[2] Other recent TUC research has shown that Black workers are twice as likely to be in low paid and insecure employment – a persistent pattern echoed in the TUC data confirming that unemployment rates for Black British workers have remained between two and three times as those of white workers for the past two decades.[3]

> **Many of the statistics tell a story of profound disappointment in core sectors of British society.**

Even if the many well-documented and soundly-justified recommendations of such reports were to be implemented by the government in full, however (which they rarely, if ever, are), it is unlikely either policy change or even legal sanctions would in and of themselves be sufficient to tackle the deeply embedded legacies of systemic racism that are baked into the economy, as well as every sector of society. Our study therefore aimed to be both exclusively focused on Black British experiences but broadly cast in order to capture a 360 degree view of today's society.

In the wake of so many studies documenting the costs and the causes of ongoing racial discrimination, some might say we do not need more evidence of their existence, or origins, but simply more determination and commitment to eliminate them. There is understandable frustration at the lack of change, and justifiable scepticism as to whether yet another report is needed. Yet for these very same reasons – that the problems are so persistent – the value of accurate, up to date observations, testimony and contributions from the individuals and communities most affected by systemic racism continue to play a vital role in the effort to bring about change. This project was conceived so that an authentic, self-directed and autonomous account of the viewpoints, experiences, concerns, stories and opinions of contemporary Black Britons could be collected and made more widely available, and a new platform for data sharing established that might play an important role in overcoming the ongoing legacies of racial injustice. The Black British Voices Project is designed to create an interactive space for dialogue, and to encourage active engagement with the serious ongoing problem of racial injustice, because it is only through such combined efforts that real and meaningful change will take place over time. The Project is consequently dedicated not only to providing robust, large-scale data and findings and analysis, but also to sharing these research outcomes and building an enduring platform for ongoing research, dialogue and outreach that will deepen our collective understandings as a society of where racism comes from and how it can be most effectively challenged and eliminated.

Our report presents findings that may be surprising to some readers, but are unlikely to be so for most Black Britons. Many of the statistics tell a story of profound disappointment in core sectors of British society, including the media, education, politics, sports, the entertainment industry and the workplace. Interview and focus group data show that this disappointment is accompanied by a sense of frustration that not enough is being done to draw a line under unacceptable behaviour, such as racist responses to Black British footballers on social media. There is, in addition, a perception that the failure to respond to such misconduct more robustly implies a tacit acceptance of everyday racism and a sense of inevitability about its persistence.

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[1]House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee Black Maternal Health April 2023

[2]TUC, Still Rigged: Racism in the UK Labour Market 2022, August 2022, www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/still-rigged-racism-uk-labour-market

[3]TUC, Insecure Work, July 2022, and see also www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/bme-workers-zero-hours-contracts

INTRODUCTION

Crucially, however, this cynicism is not shared by many of the participants in the Black British Voices research project, whose voices together reject the assumption that racial injustice is either inevitable or unpreventable. Alongside the headline finding that not enough is being done to combat unacceptable levels of persistent racial discrimination is the clear message that it can, and must, be eliminated for future generations – and that it will be.

In both conducting our research and writing our report, we have continued to reflect on the enormous amount of prior research that has documented and analysed the extent, causes and costs of anti-Black racism in the UK. No one working with this extensive literature can fail to be at once inspired and dismayed by the enormous number of scholarly publications and reports that document the ongoing realities of systemic racism for Black Britons in virtually every area of life - from health and education to sports and entertainment, and in terms of economic opportunity, criminal justice and employment. Even in the relatively short period since we began our research, several major new studies (including those we mention above) have been published confirming many of the same findings and patterns we report here. The Black Equity Organisation, for example, published two studies in 2022 offering and in-depth portrait of the concerns of the Black British population and how these are shaped both by experiences of race and of racism. As in the BBVP data, the BEO research found that a majority of Black Britons do not perceive significant systemic change even within the primary institutions that discriminate against them, and that they were more likely to look to their own communities for support and alternatives in areas such as health, education, employment and housing.

In 2021-2 another major study conducted by the Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) at the University of Manchester also used a large scale survey to explore the questions of what a racially just society would look like, and how close Britain is to achieving this goal. The Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) examined racial inequalities across all ethnicities and also examined the effects and consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic on these patterns. A key argument in this team's highly detailed publication (2023) is that the conclusions of the UK government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which was tasked with investigating the severely disproportionate effects of the pandemic for ethnic minorities, are wholly unsupported by any existing evidence. For example, the claim by the Chair of the Commission, Tony Sewell, that racism does not play a major role in perpetuating racial injustice (2021) is entirely unsupported by the large body of evidence collected over the past half century demonstrating that racism plays a primary role in maintaining and perpetuating racial inequalities across all of the major sectors of society – including all of the areas covered by this report. In her Foreword to the government's enthusiastic endorsement of the findings and recommendations of the Sewell Report, entitled 'Inclusive Britain', the new Minister for Equalities, MP Kemi Badenoch, praised the report's 'compelling message' that 'very few' of the racial disparities that continue to exist in the UK 'are directly to do with racism' (2022). She also claimed that prior to the Sewell recommendations, the Conservative-led UK government had conducted 10 different reviews related to specific policy areas and implemented over 100 specific recommendations that would 'benefit ethnic minorities' and 'improve ethnic minority outcomes' in areas such as education, employment and housing (2022). This claim, however, is unsupported by any evidence of actual changes or benefits resulting from these reports and policies, and ignores the extensive research documenting not only the persistence of systemic racism as a primary cause of racial injustice but the reluctance of governments and leaders of other institutions to acknowledge such findings.

Badenoch's fulsome welcoming of the message that racism has very little to do with racial inequality, and that the government is actively addressing what few areas of policy are in need of revision in order to bring greater benefit to Black and ethnic minority Britons, is particularly unconvincing given how many of the recommended changes from reports on racial injustice have been repeatedly side-lined and neglected by the current government. These include both the recent Inquiries into the aftermath of the Grenfell fire and the Windrush scandal, among others. As David Lammy commented in a Radio 4 broadcast in June of 2020 in response to the commissioning of the Sewell inquiry, there is already a long list of specific recommendations from several high-level Committees of Inquiry addressing issues of racial injustice which the government has failed to implement, including 35 from his own 2017 report into the criminal justice system, 110 from the 2017 Angiolini review into deaths in police custody, and 35 from the Windrush 'Lessons Learned' report of 2020. As Anoosh Chakelian noted in a New Statesman piece echoing Lammy's complaint, more than 375 recommendations from government-commissioned reports into race-related matters have not been taken forward and instead have been 'ignored or shelved'.

Summarising 40 years of policy-orientated research addressing racial inequality in his 2021 review for the Stuart Hall Foundation, Dr Stephen Ashe identifies 589 recommendations dating back to the 1980s that consistently return to key themes, the first of which is consistent gap between legislation and enforcement or follow through. This failure to deliver on promised reforms is in turn is caused by four key shortcomings, including:

- The lack of more coordinated government responses within government and between government agencies and the wider society;
- The need for further research, better data and more effective data collection;
- Inadequate accountability and responsibility at organisational and leadership levels;
- Ineffective oversight, investigation and review.

Taken together, the failure to make more rapid progress overcoming persistent racial disparities in key areas that is exacerbated by the lag in implementing specific recommendations designed to accelerate this process, suggests that the failure to achieve more rapid reduction of racial disparities derives less from inadequate knowledge, and more from inadequate commitment.

Since its publication in 2021, the Sewell report has been highly criticised for decreasing rather than improving the possibility of more effective changes resulting from government efforts. The report lays much of the blame for both the failures of the criminal

justice system and the lack of greater equality in key sectors such as employment and education with Black and minority ethnic communities, families and attitudes. The report claims, for example, that race and ethnicity are less responsible for issues such as low pay and poor housing within the Black community than social class – and that children of families headed by Black single mothers are less likely to be able to overcome these obstacles due to 'family breakdown' (p. 41). They recommend that 'more complex understandings of fatherhood' should play a role in redressing this imbalance. However, these and other recommendations do not reflect the consensus findings of research on the role of family structure in the reproduction of social inequality because they do not take into account either the root causes of family 'breakdown' or the extensive evidence that class, race, social deprivation and social exclusion are the deeply interwoven structural effects of a highly stratified society – not independent variables that can be neatly separated. The government's claim that the Sewell Report's findings are based on 'an extraordinarily wide range of data' that extends much wider in scope than previous reviews is not only false but audaciously misleading. Other than hearing testimony from a small number of hand-picked individuals and 'advisors', the Sewell committee did not collect or provide any new evidence – instead offering a consistent refutation of the perceived causal connection between systemic racism and racial injustice that is self-evidently more ideological than scientific.

> **Our goal is to establish a research platform that can be used creatively, collectively, individually in the struggle to end racial inequality.**

Better data is clearly not enough by itself to drive better policy, not only because data can be ignored but because messages have to be genuinely received in order to be meaningfully implemented. A government that is determined to assert that racism is not a major social issue is unlikely even to acknowledge the legitimacy of reports that contradict this claim. This does not mean that documenting the effects of racism and racial inequality are either unhelpful or unnecessary, however. Indeed, properly collected data is a powerful force for change whether or not government Ministers turn a blind eye, or pretend it does not exist. Our study was designed to provide an independent and freely available source of data to serve a wide variety of purposes – from research and education to social activism and community organising. Our goal is to establish a research platform that can be used creatively, collectively, and individually in the struggle to end racial inequality. Much of our research prioritises perceptions of change – where it is needed, why some efforts have failed, how inequalities are reproduced and what alternatives can be created. Often based on personal and intergenerational experiences, the accounts of anti-Black racism in Britain at the core of this research reveal the complexity of overcoming deeply entrenched patterns and prejudices. The findings presented here provide both a map and a toolkit for change. They confirm the fallacy of simplistic and superficial answers to the challenges posed by the persistent racial stratification that still characterises British society today – and they offer a powerful set of resources to make the changes that are needed to bring greater equality.

Together, the two headline findings from this research deliver a clear message: much more needs to be done to overcome unacceptably high levels of racial discrimination in too many sectors of today's society, and the complacency that allows such persistent patterns of prejudice to be tolerated has to end. Another equally important headline finding is that the means to deliver better and fairer social institutions are available, but they require that the full extent of the problem be acknowledged. The view from BBVP participants, time and again, when asked about the causes of persistent racial inequality, in the third decade of the twenty-first century, in core areas of social life in Britain such as education, employment and healthcare, is not only that simple band-aid solutions are bound to fail, but that their repeated failures make matters worse, by oversimplifying and underestimating the problems that need to be solved. Put succinctly, the failure to adequately acknowledge the depth and complexity of racial disparities in Britain today is a major contributing factor to their continuation.

As the sophisticated and nuanced accounts of the causes of everyday racism in this report demonstrate, accumulated wisdom is an excellent guide to building better social institutions for everyone. Some of the most hopeful sections of our report build on the knowledge accumulated through generations of surviving and innovating in the face of anti-Black racism to point the way toward ending the persistent racial disparities that still characterise too many areas of British life.
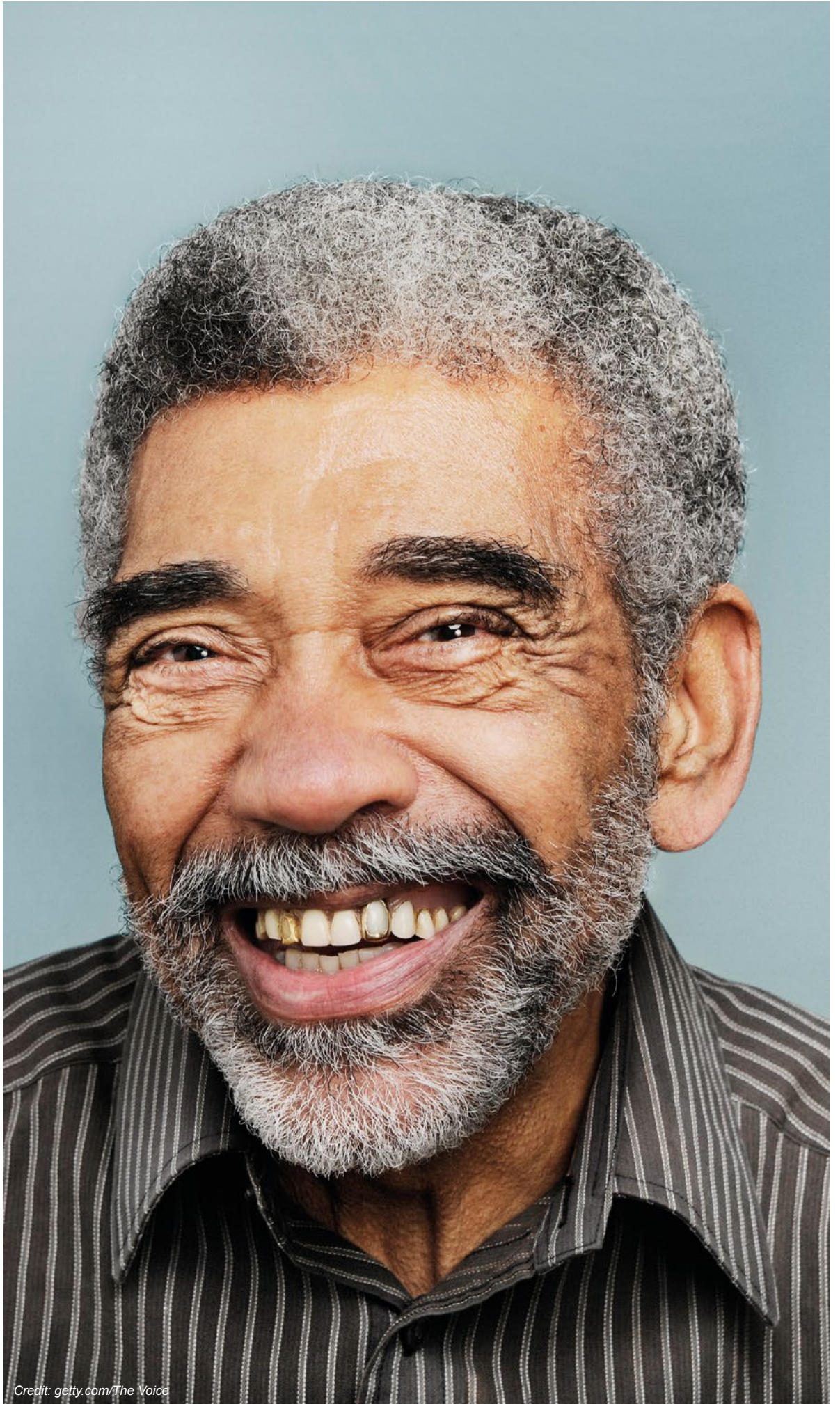
Credit: getty.com/The Voice

METHODOLOGY

To fully engage with the experiences of Black people in Britain, we need to learn to listen to their life stories and acknowledge their lived realities. Listening to these stories and showing an appreciation of their deep roots in actual experience provides us with the insights needed to inform and deliver change. For this to be achieved, we need more and better baseline data about how Black individuals and communities view their lives in the UK today. This data enables better understandings of the issues that matter to Black Britons – including both *what they are and why they are important*. To answer these questions, we need to apply rigorous methodologies that can reveal the complexity of the dynamics associated with being Black and British in the midst of the substantial socio-political changes affecting both of these identities. Above all, we need to listen.

Our research process was carefully crafted in partnership with a wide range of key thought leaders with an intimate knowledge of Black British communities. Our aim was to win trust, build better dialogue, and deliver reliable data by continuing to refine our methods and incorporate feedback into our research process in order to create an unparalleled platform for ongoing dialogue about the priority issues facing Black people in Britain today. Beginning with focus groups designed by the lead project researcher, Dr Kenny Monrose, we identified the key themes that informed our large quantitative survey. These themes were further explored in a series of 40 in depth personal interviews which provided the basis for a series of articles in *The Voice* to announce and publicise the *'Tick it to Change It'* campaign that was developed in collaboration with M&C Saatchi. The data collection for the project took place between January 2020 and March 2022 in three interconnected phases.

> **More than 10,000 Black Britons participated in the BBVP survey.**

PHASE ONE

Phase one consisted of eight focus groups including 50 participants who varied in age, educational attainment, religion, ethnicity, gender and profession. These focus groups were conducted online via Zoom, as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, and lasted for approximately three hours each. An interview guide was used with open ended questions on a number of pre-selected themes that the Principal Investigator Dr Kenny Monrose and Paula Dyke from *The Voice* had prepared. Emergent themes drawn from the focus groups were then used to refine the framework for the second and third phases of data collection: an online survey and in-depth personal interviews. The focus groups took place over eight months between March and October 2020.

PHASE TWO

Qualtrics, a survey software licensed by the University of Cambridge, was used to conduct the online survey. The survey consisted of multiple choice questions, some of which utilised a Likert scale to collect responses along a graded continuum indicating levels of agreement or disagreement. Likert scales cover a full range of possible answers, including more or less positive or negative and neutral, as well as 'Don't Know' and 'Prefer Not to Say'. Two key requirements of survey participation were identified. The first was that participants were required to confirm they were over 16 years of age in order to meet ethical and safeguarding guidelines. The second was that all participants self-identified as being Black and a UK resident. The survey took place over 11 months and resulted in the largest response ever received to a research initiative of this kind. More than 10,000 Black Britons participated in the BBVP survey between November 2021 and March 2022.

PHASE THREE

A total of 40 in-depth qualitative interviews were carried out in the third and final phase of the data collection process. These interviews were recorded anonymously and in accordance with the approved ethical considerations granted from the University of Cambridge (whose Ethical Research Committee also reviewed the entire project). A broad range of participants were interviewed. Some approached *The Voice* in response to a call to be interviewed. Some interviewees who were considered thought leaders in specific areas were approached and others took place via chain referral. All interviews were conducted by the Principal Researcher, Dr Kenny Monrose, and lasted between 90 and 360 minutes.

METHODOLOGY

The final phase of data analysis and writing up lasted 6 months, from June to December 2022. Preparation of the final report was completed early in 2023.

The methods we chose have strengths and weaknesses that are reflected in the final data set. In-depth qualitative data gained through personal interviews are neither comprehensive nor representative. They give rich and highly textured snapshots of individual perspectives and viewpoints. A key benefit to interviews is that people can elaborate in depth as to why they understand and perceive things the way they do. The interviews were especially helpful, for example, in eliciting detailed accounts of social interactions and experiences that can't be depicted in surveys. Data from interviews is indicative rather than representative: this kind of data is especially helpful in adding texture, depth and subtlety to quantitative data, such as surveys. The big advantage of survey data is of course its scale. Not all survey data is representative, and 'statistically representative' can mean different things depending on how the numbers are weighted and calibrated. In the tables created for our report we use a very simple method of tabulating the number of responses (n) for each question and then the percentage (p) of respondents' answers to each question. So for example of the 9903 respondents who answered Question 15 asking whether they are comfortable with the term 'BAME', the number of people (n) who answered 'Definitely yes' is 594, which is 6% (p). We can read the overall percentages in several ways. Each of the 4 Likert scale options for this question has its own percentage: 'Definitely Yes' (6%), 'Somewhat yes' (15%), 'Somewhat no' (19%), and 'Definitely not' (55%). We can also combine totals to suggest that whereas 21% answered this question 'positively' (with some version of 'yes'), 74% answered 'negatively' (with some version of 'no'). All of our data is presented in the report in bar charts for each answer, and in some sections we also use pie charts to contrast positive and negative totals. It is also possible to contrast totals against each other, for example by claiming that that nearly ten times as many

respondents answered 'Definitely no' than 'Definitely yes', or that the number of negative responses to this questions was more than three times higher than the positive responses.

Likert scales allow people to answer either 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say' and some questions elicit higher and lower levels of either uncertainty or reluctance to answer – or both. The total number of answers to each question also varies, as it is common for respondents either intentionally or unintentionally to skip some questions – and we therefore do not know if they did not know, preferred not to say or simply didn't think the question applied to them. Question 27, for example, asking whether the history and culture of Black people is sufficiently represented in the national curriculum received only 2416 answers, suggesting that at least twice as many respondents chose not to tick any of the boxes, including both 'Don't know' and 'Prefer not to say'.

In general between 8000 to 8500 respondents answered each question across the entire survey, which is a comparatively high response rate, especially given the survey would normally take at least half an hour to complete, and in many cases closer to an hour. In assessing our survey's 'representativeness', we need to take account of the composition of the pool of respondents, about which we collected some data at the start of the survey. It is worth noting, for example, that 75% of our the survey participants were female, and that a majority were between the ages of 45 and 55. Fewer than 5% were younger than 25. Younger people and in particular younger men, therefore, are under-represented in our data and although we cannot say what implications this has for our findings with any level of precision, we can nonetheless take this imbalance into account as a precaution. An overwhelming percentage of our survey participants came from England (98.7%) as compared to the rest of the UK, and although this is not significantly inconsistent with residence patterns for Black Britons it is nonetheless an important characteristic of the respondent pool to keep in mind. Our pool of

A more detailed description of the methodology is provided as an Appendix.

Credit: freepik.com

survey respondents was also comparatively well educated: 38% had a university degree and 27% had earned a higher degree, such as a PGCE, MA or PhD. More than 80% were employed, 9% were retired, 4% were unemployed and 4.4% were in education or training. Roughly 27% of survey participants were from low income households earning less than 25k per annum. 40% were in the median level income category of 25 – 50k, and 32.5% earned above the median, with 5% in the highest household income bracket of over £100k. Of the 7835 people who answered this question (which did not have a 'prefer not to say' option), 195, or 2.5%, had a household income of over £150,000. Finally, a higher-than-average percentage of our respondents – nearly 85% -- identified as religious, spiritual or both. Overall, then, our survey sample is not statistically representative of the Black British population across the nation as a whole, although by weighting the data carefully it would be possible to generate a closer match.

Between 8000 to 8500 respondents answered each question across the entire survey.
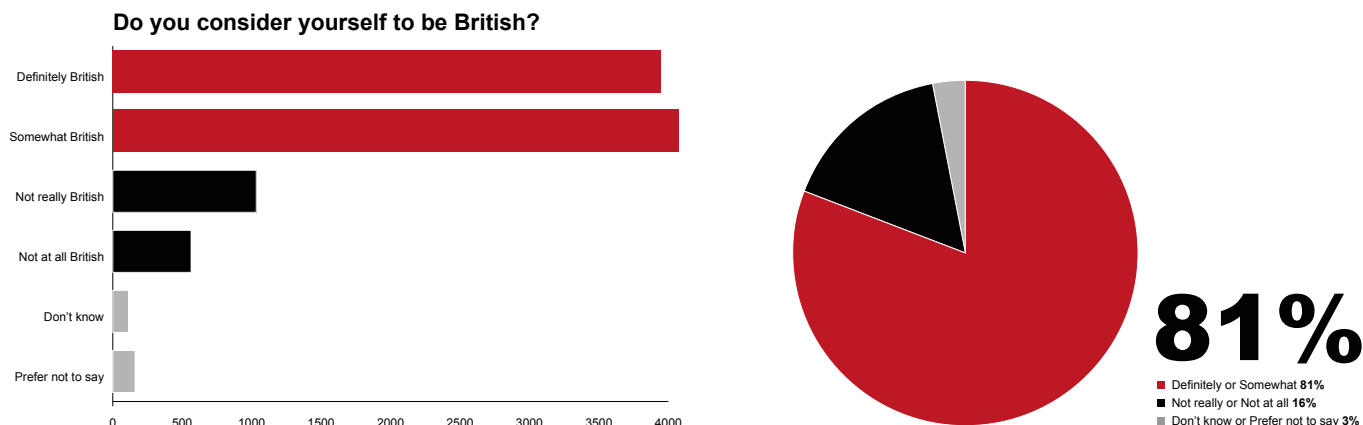
This, however, is not the approach we have taken in presenting the data, which instead is presented in its 'raw' state. This is sufficient for the purpose of identifying general trends and patterns, and in particular for discovering areas that would benefit from further research. We hope you enjoy reading the result of our efforts and that you will use this report to generate discussion of the many issues it raises in as many contexts as you can. So far as we are aware, no other research effort has used a large scale survey to document responses to such a broad range of issues important to Black Britons. To the extent we have created baseline data that will serve to inform and inspire other researchers, as well as journalists, educators, community and church leaders, and policy makers, we have achieved our goal. Please make sure you visit our website (bbvp.org), and contact us with your thoughts about this report. Your feedback, after all, is what it's all about.

01
IDENTITY

If Britishness defines elements of the national story, then I'm expanding the national story. So it's a continuum. Britishness is a continuum, it's growing, it's changing, it's embryonic it's never static. Therefore, I'm part of this continuing proliferation and the growth of it. I'm in Britain, I'm born in Britain, but I'm a certain type of way of being British.

BBVP Participant

1.1 BRITISHNESS

Do you consider yourself to be British?

81%

- Definitely or Somewhat **81%**
- Not really or Not at all **16%**
- Don't know or Prefer not to say **3%**

Exploring concepts of Black Britishness proved to be one of the most popular and engaging topics to emerge over the course of our research and resulted in a diverse range of responses that can be interpreted in several ways. More respondents answered the questions in this category than any other, and the results were mixed. For many Black Britons, 'Britishness' is an identity they both do and do not want to claim for a wide variety of reasons. Our data reflects and reveals these divisions at several levels. They suggest, for example, that 'Englishness' is a much more difficult identity than 'Britishness' for many Black Britons to embrace. The data also reveal that while a very significant majority of 81% describe themselves as either 'definitely' or 'somewhat' British, a much smaller but still significant proportion of respondents described themselves as either 'Not really' or Not at all' British.

In both our survey and through interviews, we invited BBVP participants to reflect on what the concept of "Britishness" means to them and we found a substantial majority of 81% describe themselves as either 'definitely' or 'somewhat' British. A much smaller proportion of respondents described themselves as either 'Not really' or 'Not at all' British (16%).

We interpret this picture as being classically ambivalent: strong 'push' and 'pull' factors are simultaneously present and differently navigated by individuals according to context. Documenting these push-pull factors in more detail through interview and focus group data provides unique insights into the ways in which Black British identities combine multiple and often conflicting elements that exist in constant flux. While this is true of all identities, which are always situational and structural as well as individual and personal, it is clear that Black British definitions and perceptions of national belonging are undergoing significant and rapid social change.

"

I don't feel 100% British, I'm Black British. I class myself as a Black British woman. I don't really follow cricket, per se, but if England are playing the West Indies, I'm going to support the West Indies because there's that connection, it's a spiritual connection. Knowing that we share that St Lucian heritage, there's so much joy. When I hear that St Lucian accent, straightaway boom! I'm Black British, but my heritage, my soul, emotional, spiritual, is St Lucian.
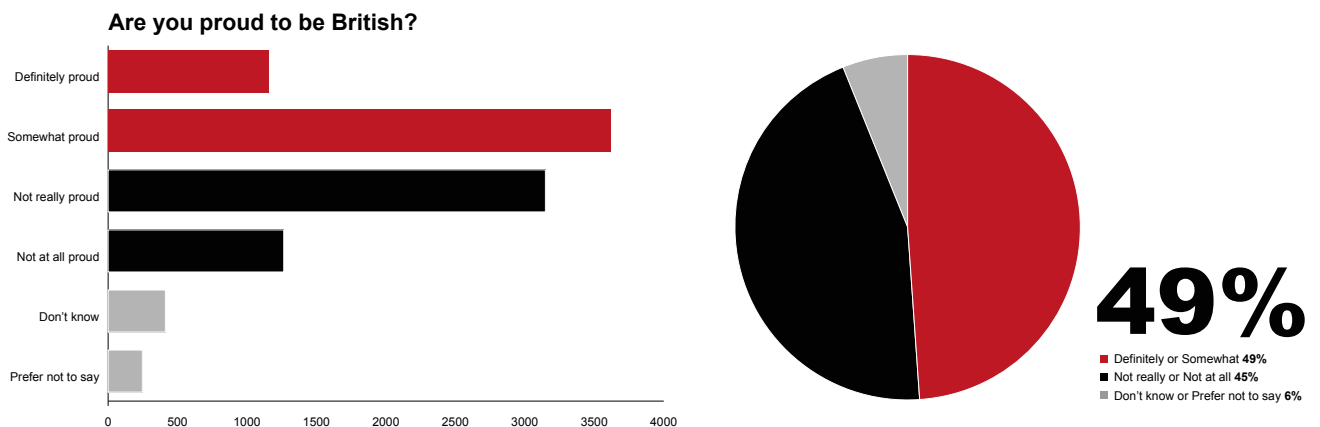
I think having that Black British stamp means that you don't have to leave, you don't have to change who you are, you don't have to change your accent or anything, you can be from here and still be the same. So, I think being Black and British creates a new lane for us and is why I'm happy to take on that Black British title. And I think identity is a journey, it's not a destination.

The current official narrative about what Britishness is completely alienates me and whether that's represented by our government, our monarchy, our class system, none of these are things that I'm proud of.

BRITISHNESS

For the majority of Black Britons who were surveyed and interviewed for this research, 'Britishness' remains an intrinsically problematic concept to unpack, particularly in terms of recognition and belonging. The extent to which questions of patriotism and nationalism have become highly contested in recent decades, not only in Britain and Europe, is linked both to deep divisions over topics such as immigration, and the explicit use of racialised fearmongering by politicians. Whilst many contemporary Black Britons feel more British than those in previous generations, they remain equivocal about many of the traditional signs and symbols of both 'Britishness' and 'Englishness'. Far fewer Black Britons are likely to identify as 'English' than British – or in Afua Hirsch's apt phrase, 'Brit-ish' (Hirsch 2018). Inferences can be drawn from the interview data that this disidentification can be attributed to the lack of inclusion within broader notions of the English narrative, symbolism and national imaginary, and that the concept of 'Englishness' for some Black Britons has become much more strongly tied to the protection of whiteness in the wake of Brexit.

Are you proud to be British?

49%

Definitely or Somewhat **49%**
Not really or Not at all **45%**
Don't know or Prefer not to say **6%**

"

I'm proud to be a Black British man. Yeah absolutely, I embrace it. I'm born here. I work here. I pay my taxes here. I bought my house here. Why should I not embrace it?"

I don't I don't feel much pride in being British. I don't feel a part of it. I was born here and raised here. So that's about as British as I will get.

I look back and think why do we want to be British so bad? There's something to unpack there. Like, why do we want legitimacy in this country that badly, why do we want to be accepted into this label?

I'm proud of who I am. There's a lot that I've benefited from, being born and brought up in this country. There's things I don't like about this country. But I that's pretty normal. I don't tend to use the words 'pride' or 'proud' because they have too close a connotation with xenophobia and ultra-patriotism that I feel very, very uncomfortable with.

I wouldn't say I was a flag-waving Brit at all but I'm kind of proud of being British.

Am I proud to be British? Yes, sometimes I do say that. I've been around the world with my work to so many different countries with the NHS which is obviously a really British thing that we have.

I'm yet to see a version of Britishness in which I see myself. I'm proud of being a Londoner. I think I'm proud of being Black, a Black British person, and that's because there's a culture in London that I feel part of, there's a culture in Black Britishness that I feel part of. So those things I can relate to. I see myself reflected and I see the kind of joy and innovation of those cultures that are the things that I want to celebrate.

ASphotofamily – freepik.com

Respondents to our survey expressed mixed opinions in response to being asked if they were 'proud' to be British. This question split the BBVP respondents roughly in half.

Whilst just under half the respondents (49%) indicated that they felt 'somewhat' or 'definitely' proud to be British, a very similar percentage (45%) expressed the view that they were 'not really' or 'not at all' proud to be British. Interviewees who expressed pride in being British often gave examples of activities or institutions that have enabled them to successfully participate in British society (e.g. being 'a Londoner', home ownership, working for the NHS, etc.), whereas respondents who said they were not proud to be British cited negative factors such as colonialism and historically racist immigration policies as reasons contributing to their responses.

BRITISHNESS

"

I've been to Scotland, I've been to Wales, I haven't been to Northern Ireland and I think that's going to be even more different than the others. And you know, if I'm honest, I'm kind of Black English, but the thing about being English is that you know, it comes with a lot of baggage in terms of history, in terms of attitudes, in terms of general outlook. Its lots of lots of things. For me the kind of like underlinings of a festering underbelly of racism really comes from Englishness.

If you ask if I consider myself as English, I'd probably say no. I can't tell you what the difference is, but it just feels different. Like when I see like the Red Cross (St George's flag) hanging out the window, I'm crossing the road. I don't feel safe. It's like there's an immediate threat of a racist somewhere, which saying that aloud is crazy because it's literally just a flag. But it's not just a flag it's a sign. A very specific type of person that holds on to that. I don't think they understand that to us it's a symbol of fear and racism.

The cross of St George, you know, it's the cross of the Far Right to a large extent. So, it's difficult to associate yourself with being English.

I have the great joy and fortune being Nigerian. I embody the culture of Nigeria, and of course I speak English because that's the lingua franca in Nigeria. I arrived to this country when I was 14 and from the moment I stepped off the plane, I will never forget, I was considered Black. It took a very long time to get used to that. It was an incredibly difficult concept for me to understand as I was a Nigerian, but on arrival to Britain became Black. My culture as a Nigerian no longer mattered.

I mean… culturally on the streets of London was the first time that also someone told me that I'm Black. No one ever told me that I'm Black in Ghana. So it's never a conversation.

Please select the country in which you ordinarily reside:

99%

- England 98.69%
- Wales 0.54%
- Scotland 0.63%
- Northern Ireland 0.13%
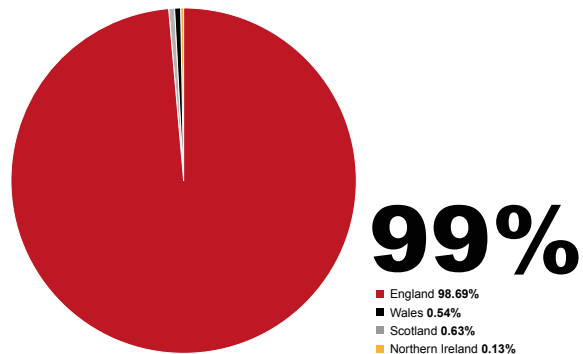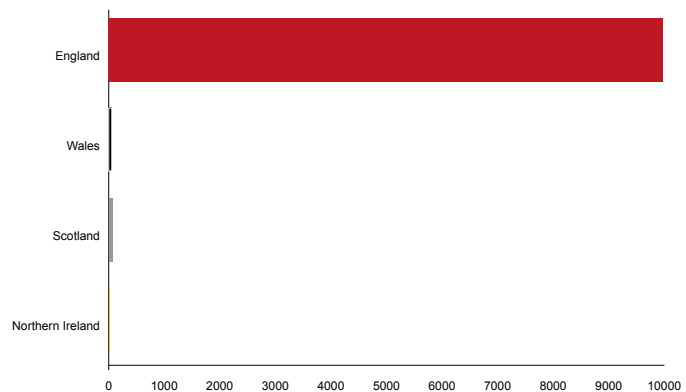
The vast majority of Black British people live in England, and we sought to investigate what, if any, effect on Black national identities might result from living in other parts of the United Kingdom. Do Black people in Scotland feel Scottish, and do Black people in Wales define themselves as Welsh? Are these identifications any different from feeling Black and (not) English? Our data were too inconclusive to answer this question, but the strength of concern about the unwelcoming symbolism of Englishness emerging from the interview data makes this an important question to pursue further.

As noted earlier, descriptions in interviews of the strength of feeling around the concept of 'Englishness' – whilst containing both positive and negative elements – often invoked national symbols, such as the flag of St George, and its 'association with the far right', as well as its use as 'a symbol of fear and racism'.

As a result of increased global migration, the concept of 'becoming Black' is also a potent emerging theme, evident for example in reflections from survey participants who relocated to Britain from countries such as Nigeria (where the idea of being 'Black' is not part of the local vernacular).
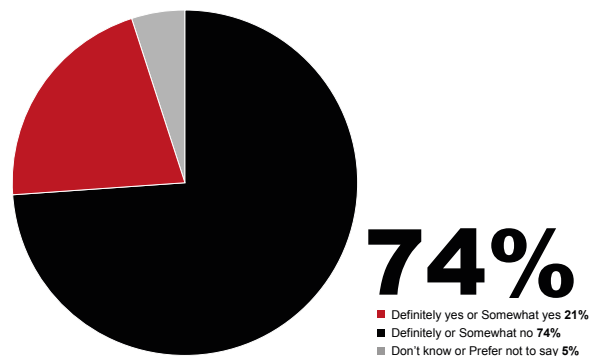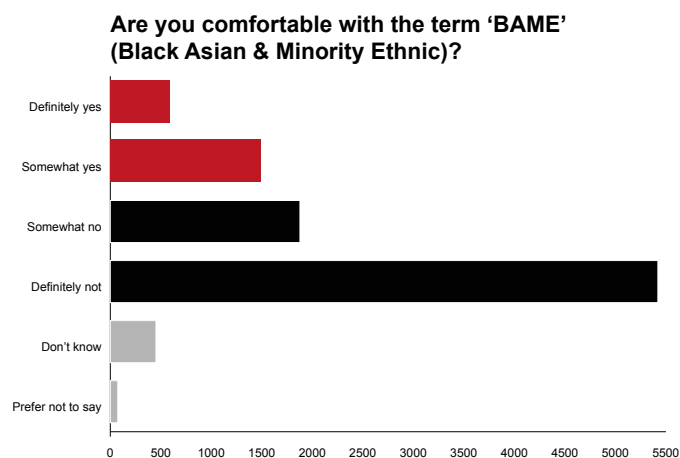
Credit: freepik.com

SUMMARY

The Black Britons interviewed and surveyed for the BBVP had extensive views and opinions about nationalism and national identities, especially Englishness and Britishness. While the latter has come to be seen as a more inclusive category, the former remains – or has possibly become even more – associated with white ethno-nationalism, the Far Right and the history of anti-Black racism in the UK. The distance between these two sets of findings is expressed again somewhat differently in the nearly 50-50 split between those Black Britons who are at some level not only willing, but proud, to identify as British, and those do not feel they can identify in this way. Looking at the high levels of BBVP survey respondents (81%) who described themselves as 'definitely or somewhat British', and the much lower level (49%) of those who describe themselves as 'definitely' or 'somewhat' proud to be British, it is clear this is a question worth exploring in more depth. ■

1.2 'BAME'

Are you comfortable with the term 'BAME' (Black Asian & Minority Ethnic)?

74%

- Definitely yes or Somewhat yes **21%**
- Definitely or Somewhat no **74%**
- Don't know or Prefer not to say **5%**

Unsurprisingly, a large majority of BBVP participants perceive the term 'BAME' to be an unhelpfully homogenising way to classify Britain's hugely diverse non-white population. Instead, participants call for better means to define themselves in ways that do not reduce their multidimensional identities to a single category or label. Participants' responses to the question of racial classification – like their responses to questions concerning national and religious identities – revealed a highly complex set of perspectives on the function, meaning and unwelcome persistence of racial categorising in contemporary British society. Their answers speak directly to the quality of the conversation occurring at all levels about race, racisms and racialisation in the UK.

For this section, we invited BBVP participants to reflect on the use of the term 'BAME' (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) to refer to members of Britain's Black communities. Our survey showed that 74% of participants felt 'somewhat' or 'definitely' uncomfortable with this label. Interview data suggest various reasons for this discomfort, including the inevitable tendency of this term to obscure the many variations and significant distinctions that exist within non-White communities. The data also suggest that the problem of the over-generalised umbrella term 'BAME' is not always separable from the specific ways this term is incorporated into problematic procedures and policies. Hence, the problem is both with the term itself and how it is used, but the data suggest these are sometimes viewed as distinct and somewhat separate problems.

Analysing the many answers we received to this question in both our survey and interviews, we found that many participants shared the view that the BAME category masks rather than mitigates the specific disadvantages that Black people face, thus unhelpfully obscuring one of the most important British populations that the term is intended to protect. Whilst a significant cohort of participants (21%) feel comfortable with the term, interview data suggest this is largely due to its established bureaucratic uses and 'routine' function in data collection. We noticed, for example, that older interviewees were used to Black people being labelled differently over the years and were less bothered by the latest terminology, as it would undoubtedly be changed again. Interview data also confirm that the strongest objections to 'BAME' result from the increasing sense of urgency for Black people in Britain to be granted the autonomy and agency to define themselves for and by themselves, as opposed to being labeled with acronyms designed by those with minimal exposure to their lived realities. Younger respondents most adamantly supported the call to rescind the term 'BAME' and replace it altogether, because it lacks clarity and does not go far enough to acknowledge the plethora of ethnic and cultural distinctions entwined with Blackness.

Credit: rawpixel.com

Whilst just over a fifth of the survey population expressed the view that they feel 'definitely' or 'somewhat' comfortable with the term 'BAME', what is clear from the collected data is that the large majority of BBVP participants understand 'BAME' as a reductive and stigmatising label used to 'lump' Britain's non-White communities together.

Concern about the 'BAME' label usefully revealed several other linked concerns about how society should deal with ethnic and racial inequality. For example, as the above comments illustrate, the very ability to introduce a single label to categorise all of Britain's non-White people is considered by some to be itself an expression of racial privilege and social power. Likewise, the irony that 'BAME' is intended to help combat discrimination – but is itself a crude and misleading label – confirms that 'BAME' can come across as an uncaring as well as an unhelpful basket category. These views were amplified by other interviewees who argued, among other things, that the 'BAME' label could be misused, that it is divisive as well as vague, and that for these and other reasons 'BAME' is an overgeneralisation that has itself become a euphemism for 'diversity' – rather than an actual plan.

I'm not comfortable with this term ['BAME']. We don't need to be lumped into that because you know, we are black people. That's a term that's just been lumped onto us you know, but when you're in a position of power, you can lump terms onto people without any recriminations.

I'm not BAME, I'm Black. My needs are different to those of someone who's Asian, who's a minority ethnic, who's a Traveller, who's European. My needs are different. So, no, I'm not going to be lumped with you. But, you know, I understand that the one thing we have in common is that we are discriminated against.

On 'BAME' as a classification: "I hate it. I've always hated it, because it's not an identity, and you know, you don't look in the mirror in the morning and see a BAME person staring back at you. I think I actually understand the need for a term that encompasses minorities from a data collection perspective, and I think this is a shame, right?

"

So I think from a political point of view, from organisations and companies, just say what you mean! Is it that you're saying that you need more Black people in the organisation? Is it that you need a gay person in your organisation? Do you need a South Asian person in your organisation? So, for me, I don't think it serves any purpose.... Do you mean, you know, white Gypsy person, white Roma person, which is another group that gets discriminated? It's absolutely shocking. So, I think we need to have that level of clarity. Because we are still, even with having that BAME title, there's so many disadvantages that's happening, and people are getting away with using it from a political point of view.

And now, it's been BAME, Black and Minority. So, if that's the case, yes, we make up a small minority in an overall majority of white people. But, at the end of the day, we are all human beings. And it's just a way of causing fragmentation, in my opinion, its division of people, division of races, and I don't think it endears or enhances the community.

If you accept that you need that phrase, that's one thing, but because we haven't been having a sophisticated discourse about race, we've kind of like slapped that term, on top of our pre-existing misunderstanding. So it gets abused, and people end up calling you a BAME person. That's never what the phrase is meant to be and it's not how it should be used. So I think my issue is more that the underlying reasons why it's used badly, rather than the phrase itself.

Someone once said to me, "you know, as a diverse person, what do you think about this new idea?". The idea that I am a diverse person is so offensive, but you can just see in this person's mind. Diversity basically means like having black people around. So there's a diverse person, which I just think speaks volumes about where we are in this country, which is at a very basic level.

In these, and many other comments on the term 'BAME' it is clear that there is a sense of circularity that is both historical and sociological. It is because racialised identity terms can be stigmatising and discriminatory that language needs to take account of their consequences, which can, as one interviewee notes, be 'absolutely shocking'. On the other hand, the tendency for both the new words and new practices such as 'diversity' and 'BAME' to become means of reproducing the same old patterns rightly causes dismay ('people are getting away with using [the 'BAME' label] from a political point of view'). The fact that the 'BAME' label can itself facilitate discrimination, and cause further fragmentation, is seen as a sign both of a lack of clarity about the kinds of changes that are needed, and a lack of an adequate vocabulary to address them. The views expressed by interviewees that 'we haven't been having a sophisticated discourse about race' and that the conversation is instead 'at a very basic level' confirms that as well as being in it of itself stigmatising and impractical, the 'BAME' label is perceived both as a sign and a symptom of a failure to more effectively address the entrenched legacies of racial divisions and discrimination.

SUMMARY

Three quarters of the respondents to the BBVP survey felt 'somewhat' or 'definitely' uncomfortable with the category 'BAME'. Although this is in many ways a predictable finding, the reasons why respondents dislike 'BAME', as spelt out in the interviews, offer a detailed diagnosis of the familiar problem that many of the measures taken to ameliorate, mitigate or eliminate racial discrimination can all too easily become mechanisms for its perpetuation. This too is a familiar problem, and a fifth of the BBVP survey respondents were more sympathetic to use of the 'BAME' label for data collection purposes. Our research thus confirms that the sophisticated critiques of the 'BAME' from interview data offer a detailed map of the more entrenched dynamics and challenges of overcoming anti-Black racism and discrimination. They also confirm the point many interviewees made themselves, namely that people closest to a problem often have the most sophisticated understandings of the challenges involved, and the danger of 'slapping on' solutions. 'BAME', then, is perceived both as a problem in and of itself, but also as a symbol and a symptom of how the 'problem' of racial discrimination is defined, and who is in a position to define it. ■

Credit: freepik.com

1.3 LGBTQ

Conversations about LGBTQ+ identities are less uncommon today than for previous generations, and a majority of respondents feel acceptance of LGBTQ+ people has improved over the last decade. However 84% of survey respondents agreed that Black LGBTQ+ people continue to experience discrimination from within Black communities. Black LGBTQ+ Britons today feel more empowered to express their own views and needs publicly. Still, racial discrimination persists in LGBTQ+ organisations and social spaces, while homophobic/transphobic stigmatisation continues within LGBTQ+ communities. Our findings also reinforce a perception that LGBTQ+ culture is predominantly white and contains many of the same forms of anti-Black racism as dominant British culture. We nonetheless discovered a confident sense of optimism about future progressive change for Black LGBTQ+ people in Britain.

Our survey explored questions about LGBTQ+ identities, and these generally yielded data very similar to the patterns described earlier in relation to national, religious and racial identity. This shared pattern of a mixed and multi-faceted picture with some tendencies, images or messages that stand out is the same for the LGBTQ+ area. Conversations about same-sex relationships, marriage equality, and 'rainbow families' within Black British communities have become more common over the past decade. Building on less known work of earlier generations, books, films, blogs and award-winning films now explore Black British LGBTQ+ life and its rich histories. Sexuality-related topics previously viewed as too taboo for public deliberation are now increasingly acknowledged as normalised aspects of Black British life. 56% of respondents expressed the opinion that acceptance of the Black LGBTQ+ community has improved compared to 10 years ago. 15% respondents perceived acceptance of the Black LGBTQ+ community to be the same. 7% reported acceptance as having got worse. 59% of those surveyed felt that Black LGBTQ+ people face additional layers of discrimination by virtue of their sexual orientation in conjunction with their race.
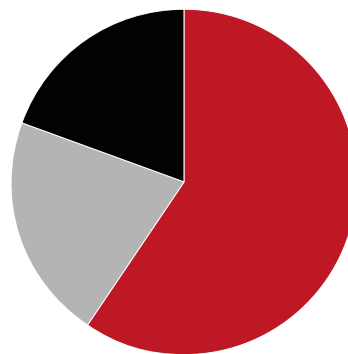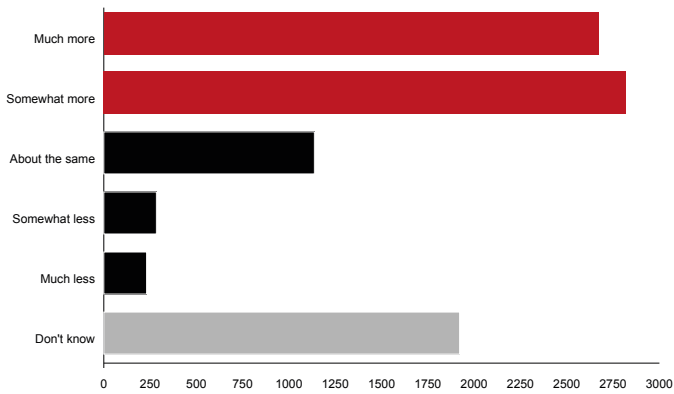
Is acceptance of the Black LGBTQ+ community better or worse compared to 10 years ago?

56%

Definitely or Somewhat better **56%**
About the same or worse **22%**
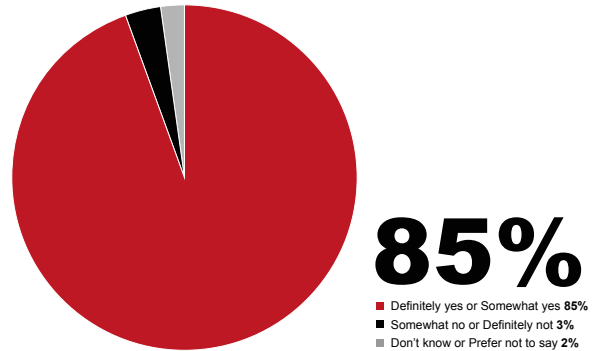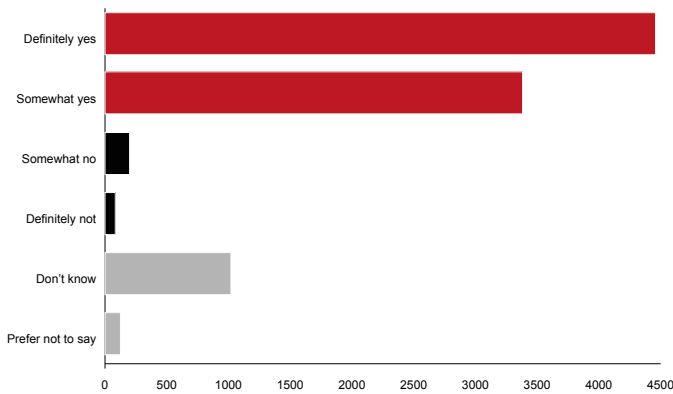Don't know **22%**
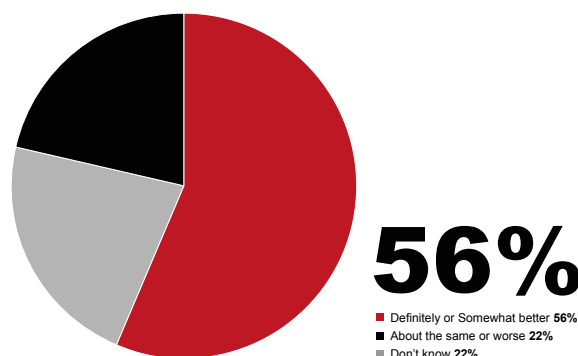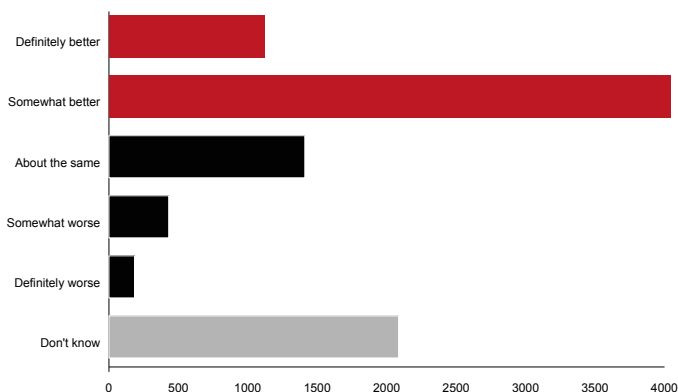
Credit: getty.com

Generally speaking, do you think Black LBGTQ+ people face more discrimination than Black heterosexuals?

59%

■ Much or Somewhat **59%**
■ About the same or less **19%**
■ Don't know **21%**

LGBTQ+

Do you feel Black LGBTQ+ people experience discrimination from within Black communities?

85%

- Definitely yes or Somewhat yes **85%**
- Somewhat no or Definitely not **3%**
- Don't know or Prefer not to say **2%**

Our interview data for this area is limited but nonetheless indicative of important trends, as well as lessons about identity, community, leadership and resistance. Interview data explored Black British LGBTQ+ experiences both in Britain and in other home countries such as Nigeria. These interviews emphasised the ongoing difficulty of disclosure for Black British LGBTQ+ people and the fear, loneliness and rejection this can cause due to prejudice from society, the church, and the white LGBTQ+ community.

A strong theme, in additon to intolerance from home and the church, is the racism present within the white LGBTQ+ community.

Rejection from the Church, family, and mainstream LGBTQ+ culture can be compounded by rejection from within Black communities itself.

"

I couldn't share my emotional trauma around my sexuality with anyone in Nigeria. I couldn't share it with anyone, and when I came to England especially with all the new obstacles associated with my racial identity I felt I was alone as a gay Black man.

When I discovered Leviticus that says that if a man has sex with another man it's an abomination, and that, you know, at least for a good, almost 15 years of my life, you know, it bothered me a lot. It bothered me that this is so true about my sexuality. But as someone who's Black and gay, and has reconciled my faith and sexuality, I just think that, you know, a literal interpretation or understanding of those scriptures is dangerous for young people to read or see.

I mean, when the church found out, you know, I was excommunicated from the church. Because I was subjected to many questions. And of course, the elders of the church also came around to the home to change the locks. So I was put out of the home. I mean, I literally have to find somewhere to live in matter of hours, if not days.

On going to gay spaces: And I think I find myself going to one or two of those venues and feeling very scared and feeling completely isolated. Because when I went to those spaces as well, it reminded me that, you know, gay people are white, because I couldn't find black people. I couldn't find Black queer people.

I don't think that the LGBTQ community is even for Black people because when we are in that space we encounter racism like any other black person. Black gay people, who go to find a home within the LBGTQ community, have problems because we're Black. We then go back home to our Black people and still get rejected for being gay."

When we started 14 years ago, there were so many attacks on the organisation and on myself, that we were told we will not last a day, we won't last a week but 14 years later, you know, the organisation is flourishing, to the point that you know, with great respect and humility.

Credit: unsplash.com

Black LGBTQ+ people report the 'double-trouble' of being targeted as Black in the gay community whilst simultaneously being rejected as gay in Black communities. The persistence of these patterns, and their visibility to non-LGBTQ+ people as well as LGBTQ+ people themselves is confirmed by the responses to questions concerning attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people from within Black communities. Significantly, in contrast to the high levels of 'Don't Knows' (over 20%) in response to the two questions above, only roughly half as many respondents (11%) felt uncertain about their answers concerning the attitudes of their own community.

Although one of the strongest messages from the data is the comparative certainty with which survey takers confirm that LGBTQ+ people continue to experience discrimination from within Black communities (3% felt they do not, 85% felt they did), there is nonetheless a significant note of optimism in many of the interviews about the future of change in this area.

There is also a sense that the lessons learned, for example by churches, in relation to LGBTQ+ people can provide core lessons for the entire community.

SUMMARY

Like the other issues of identity discussed in this section, the lives and experiences of Black British LGBTQ+ people, and the changing attitudes toward their place in Black communities, combine a picture of intransigent patterns of discrimination and stigmatisation with important lessons about driving forward change. Although it is concerning that 85% of BBVP respondents perceive stagnation within their own community concerning greater acceptance of LGBTQ+ people, this perception accurately parallels the views of LGBTQ+ Black Britons themselves. We can see in the affirmative extracts from interviews from LGBTQ+ leaders that precisely the links between, for example, ending religious intolerance of LGBTQ+ people and enabling the Church to have a wider and more welcoming role for all links together race, sexuality, religion and community in ways that show how these identities overlap, and work in and through one another. ■
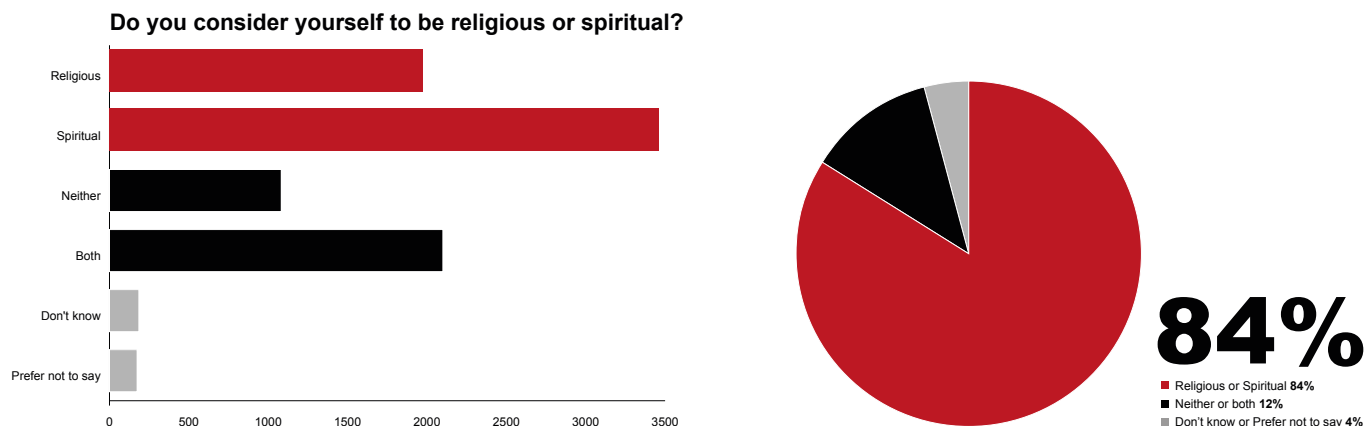
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I see the future because some of the things also that I've also discovered now is that, you know, the Black LGBT community are also training themselves to be therapists, you know, counsellors. So that we can pick up, you know, we can, we can respond to the LGBT people that need our help in the most sensitive way, the most cultural and traditionally acceptable way for Black people.

My agenda is to occupy. My agenda is to be myself as a Black queer [professional], in one of the largest [organisations] and in the world. Do you know, I don't see myself giving up. I see myself strengthening my position, you understand me? I mean, there are things that I need, I think I need to do to ensure that I strike a balance. But I believe that God is calling me, you know, to destabilise homophobia.

I think the future for Black LGBT people in Britain is in our own hands to change the narrative. I think that the future is hopeful, because we can attend leadership, we can be visible in politics and in entrepreneurship and we can be visible in the church.

1.4 RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Do you consider yourself to be religious or spiritual?

84%

- Religious or Spiritual **84%**
- Neither or both **12%**
- Don't know or Prefer not to say **4%**

Faith matters more to Black British communities than across the British population as a whole, but BBVP participants were more likely to consider themselves spiritual than religious. Our data reveal a wide array of religious beliefs and practices within Black British communities, in which church life features prominently, confirming that Black Britons play an increasingly significant role in shaping the UK's religious life.

Historically, religion and spirituality have both played key roles in shaping the Black British experience – often both extending and overlapping with other familial, regional, diasporic and cultural influences. Our data confirm that religion and spirituality remain strong anchors of identity, belonging, and community. Although, as noted in the Introduction, our pool of respondents was more religious/spiritual than average, many of the findings are nonetheless valuable for the insights they offer into the role of religion as a component of Black British lives, identities and communities. Interview data also clearly suggest, for example, that church communities are often perceived and valued as places of safety as well as sources of support, often in contrast to other social contexts – such as work or education -- that our data suggest are often experienced as less welcoming, or hostile, environments by many Black Britons. This perception of Black community churches as places of safety, however, was less often shared by Black LGBTQ+ individuals.

As noted earlier, seven times more participants in the BBVP survey (84%) described themselves as religious and/or spiritual than those who identified as neither (12%). This is one of many findings in our study that would repay further and more targeted research – not only to determine if it is an artefact of the survey sample, but to explore further the role of religious and spiritual identity in combination, for example, with national, regional and professional identities. Perhaps precisely because it is more representative of religious and/or spiritual viewpoints, the data collected for the survey would repay deeper investigation. The high value placed on religious and spiritual identity reported in the research for the BBVP project is multi-faceted, and the variety of its meanings and importance to individuals are helpfully elaborated in the interview data, which illustrate how religion can provide structure, purpose and direction as well as a sense of safety, community and solace.

For some, religious affiliation, churchgoing and/or a spiritual orientation are continuous with past tradition, family of origin or received culture. For others, religion can become newly significant as a source of education, personal transformation and continuity with the history of Black liberation movements.

According to some interviewees, institutionalised religion can be an impediment to deeper spiritual goals.
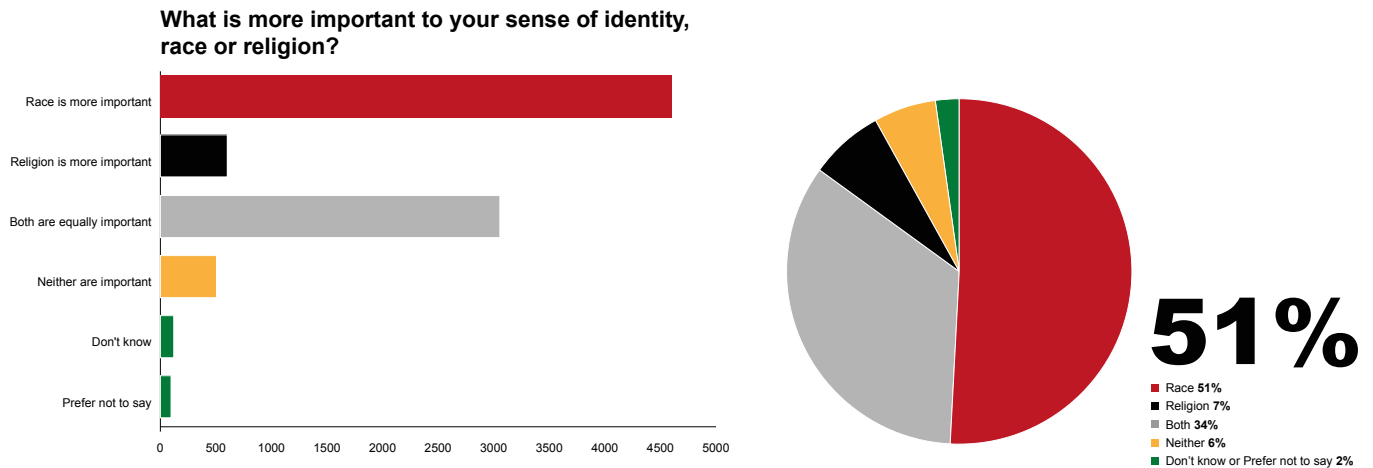
Credit: freepik.com

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I'm a practicing Christian. I've realised that having an individual relationship with God is the most important thing. So praying really relieves me. It's always good to have a central spirituality as well. Because you understand that the universe may work a certain way. But you always understand that everything happens for a reason, and that can help you to stay focused, it can encourage you even more, so it's helped me quite a lot.

It Church gave me a sense of purpose. It was a safe place for Black people to be quite honest.

I entered prison as a Muslim, and realised how much of the population were actually Muslim. I've done a bit of ground work on a religion, what it's about, what Black people have been ambassadors for the religion and stumbled upon Malcolm X. I've read a bit of his book and he's a proper guy. I watched a couple short films about him and documentaries and, rah! You know what I'm saying? Like a proper serious man, you know what I'm saying? So it was him that make me take my Shahada in witness of my uncles.

I don't believe in a god. I think if I categorise myself as anything, I would say I was a humanist. Because I think its people, the world is made up of. I struggled as a child and early teenage years to believe in a God because I was indoctrinated with Catholicism."

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

What is more important to your sense of identity, race or religion?

51%

- Race **51%**
- Religion **7%**
- Both **34%**
- Neither **6%**
- Don't know or Prefer not to say **2%**

The survey data confirms that the effects religion and spirituality have on the lives of Black Britons exist on a wide and diverse spectrum. This spectrum ranges from religion and spirituality providing a sense of social community, mental and emotional relief, and safe spaces for Black people to express their distinctive frustrations in ways that make them feel that their opinions and feelings are valued, to religion and spirituality being perceived as irrelevant and unimportant. Christianity was the most popular faith practiced by BBVP participants – again in contrast to the national pattern which shows Christianity generally declining in importance, and for the first time in 2021 being selected as a religious preference by a minority of census respondents. Christian denominations represented in this data included Roman Catholicism, Methodism, Baptist, Pentecostalism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Adventist. After Christianity, Islam and Rastafarianism represented the second and third most popular faiths mentioned by respondents, respectively. A minority of BBVP participants identified as agnostic, atheist, or humanist.

Respondents expressed the belief that Islam and Rastafarianism provided more supportive spaces for race and social justice issues to be debated when compared to their experiences within Christianity. Some LGBTQ+ respondents to the survey, and in interviews, were particular critical of religious intolerance within institutions such as the Catholic Church. Moreover, the religious choices of Black British youth often differed to those of their elders, as they felt that places of worship had become less racially exclusive and significantly more accessible in previous decades. A key emergent theme emerging from the data is an apparent shift away from more established, organised religion toward more personalised definitions of spiritual meanings and

values – especially among younger respondents. We noted, for example, that nearly twice as many BBVP participants preferred to describe themselves as spiritual rather than religious. For many the term spiritual offered a more suitable definition of their faith-related beliefs and behaviours, and this trend is partially explained by the perceived institutional and restrictive connotation of the term religious.

Religious instruction was recognised as a cultural emblem of upbringing to varying degrees. This was manifested in three ways: family, education or personal conviction. This pattern also held for those who considered themselves as agnostic, atheist or humanist.

Another angle we took on the question of religion was to ask, explicitly, whether religion or race were 'more important' to individual's identities. The objective here was to see if these variables disaggregated in any significant manner and we found that indeed they definitely do for well over half of the survey respondents.

This finding is significant for several reasons. For example, despite the significantly higher than (the national) average number of Black British respondents who place a high value on their religious and spiritual identities, as well as the positive role of churches in communities, only a very small minority of 7% of survey respondents described their religious identity as 'more important' than how they are defined racially.

In contrast, the view that religion is an optional choice – or 'add on' – but that race is an inescable and visceral everyday reality was substantially over-represented in responses to the survey, and also a strong theme in the interviews.

Overall, both the survey and interview data suggest that Black Britons understand race as a crucial contributor to their sense of religious identity, and vice versa – although with significant differences in how both of these identities are experienced at an everyday level. Somewhat in contrast to the manner in which race and religion are seen to combine at a personal level, however, is the somewhat unexpected finding that seven times as many respondents cited race as more essential to their sense of identity than religion than the reverse (although a notable percentage of respondents cited race and religion as equally important). An important question that would repay further investigation, is whether it is mainly external perceptions – or how they are seen by others – that lead so many BBVP participants to understand race as a more significant than religion in how they define themselves.

SUMMARY

Although undoubtedly influenced by the high percentage of respondents identifying as either religious or spiritual, responses to the BBVP survey suggest that contemporary Black Britons see the Church as playing a positive role in their community. Compared to other social institutions, churches are seen as more welcoming, safer and as places where people can find purpose, solace and support. At the same time, a majority of respondents perceived their racial identity to be more identity-defining than religion. The contrasting finding that around a third of respondents interpret race and religion as equally important to their identities presents the opportunity to explore in more depth the shifting valences of these key elements in Black British life today. These findings present a number of questions that would benefit from further investigation and more detailed data collection. ■

I used to go to church when I was young. But I kind of fell off any religion. I'm a spiritualist. So I take bits out of each book and I just believe and do me and do good. Because yeah, all religions they all talk about love thy neighbour and respect for another. So as long as I have that in my heart and I live by the morals, I don't really need religion.

Honestly, I would say my race, because people when they look at me, they see a Black man before they see a Christian.

I can't turn off my race. Whereas I can go a day without talking about sort of God publicly but I can feel my Blackness when I enter a room sometimes, so I can't avoid it so I guess my race is at the forefront of my mind a lot more. But at the same time, I would love my faith to be a priority in my life, if that makes sense. I would much rather that be a priority.

Faith is such a... it's such an individual thing, isn't it? But you can't run from your race..., it is what it is. Faith, you can choose. You can choose to be a Catholic; you can choose to be a Christian. Race is just 100%. It's what you live, you breathe, you are, every single day of your life. You know, your faith is a bit like an add on. So, you know, you choose to do that if you want to, but race for me is just 100%.

My race defines me at a glance. You wouldn't know what religion I am. You know, until I tell you.

My race is far more important than my religion, because with my race, I can embody religion. My race is more important because without my race, there is no religion.
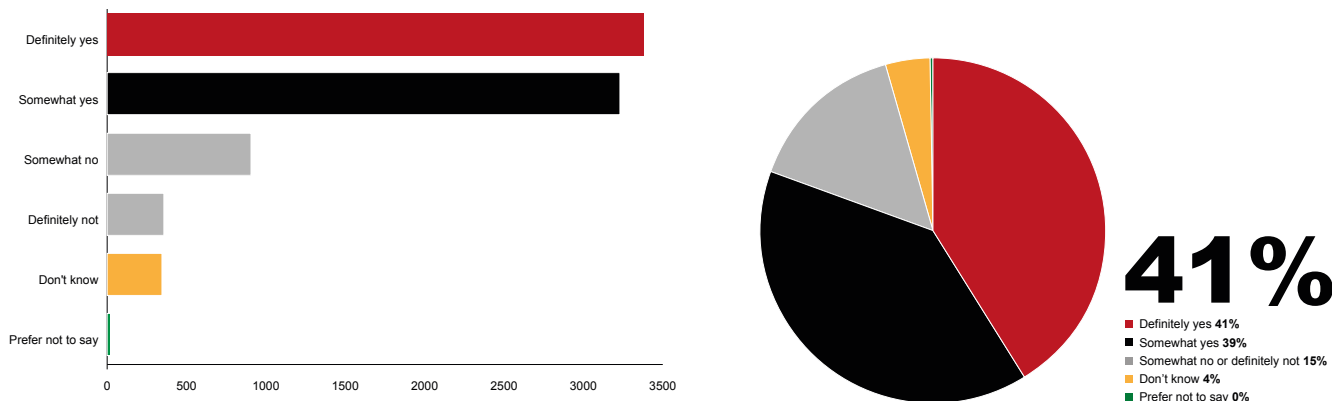
02
BUILDING A LIFE

2.1 EDUCATION

Do you think racial discrimination is the biggest barrier to young Black people's academic attainment?

41%

- Definitely yes **41%**
- Somewhat yes **39%**
- Somewhat no or definitely not **15%**
- Don't know **4%**
- Prefer not to say **0%**

94% of BBVP participants believe Black students suffer from lower educational attainment expectations from educators compared to non-Black students. Ten times as many respondents (41%) perceive racial discrimination to 'definitely' be the 'biggest barrier' to young Black people's academic attainment as those who think this is 'definitely not' the case (4%). 95% of participants perceive the British national curriculum to inadequately accommodate Black history-related subjects. BBVP Participants recommended the hiring of more Black teachers and major reforms of British educational institutions to address these longstanding shortcomings.

In both our survey and our interviews we invited BBVP participants to reflect on the nature of educational opportunities and quality of treatment extended to Black British students. Of the 16 areas of social life included in this study, this section offers some of this project's most conclusive findings. 94% of survey participants expressed the view that Black students remain subject to lower educational attainment expectations from educators. This viewpoint correlates to diminished levels of trust among Black Britons in the British educational system. 95% of participants perceive the national curriculum and the inclusion of subjects specific to Black British history as well-intentioned but inconsistently delivered and inadequately tailored. For example, interlocutors felt that the repeated practice of "Americanising" Black history distracts attention from the Black British experience, which for Black British students is more important. One possible implication of this finding is that West Indian and African contributions that extend beyond the distinctive confines of entertainment, sport, and migration would be welcomed as ways to promote Black British excellence in all fields and disciplines.
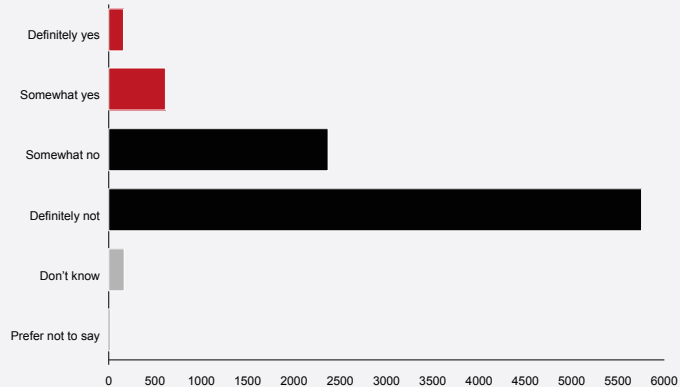
EDUCATION

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Having a Black teacher is always positive. It's just a sense of familiarity really, it's just good. It's good to see. Because you can just be more relaxed, you kind of get that connection that is always friendly. And it's not always like, you're trapped. Really, it's not always like you have to prove yourself. You don't have to prove that you're not a bad student; you don't have to prove that you don't have an attitude problem, or you're not always angry. It's just you just feel much more comfortable. And the Black teachers I've had have been quality- it's been amazing.

I had a Black professor and, it just changed something in me, it helped me realised that this was a world in which I had a legitimate place. It gave me access to somebody who I just felt related to me in a different way. It's probably hard to measure because so few people have had that experience, because there are so few Black professors, but it was it was a really big deal for me, and I, I wish I could have been taught by more Black professors, and I hope that future generations will be able to.

Although we did have a few Black teachers who were really nice, there weren't enough of them to make any kind of like meaningful change.
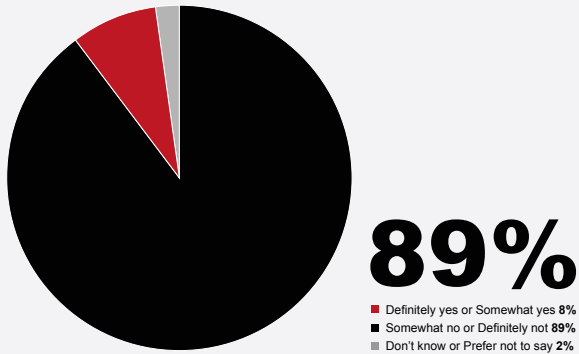
I'm disappointed to the point where it makes me slightly emotional to talk to you right now, that not more has been done to encourage Black male teachers to go into secondary schools and also to become, you know, leaders, to take up senior management positions, not just in inner city, difficult London or Birmingham schools, but in the elite, you know, private sector.

Do you trust the British Education system to adequately sup the educational needs and aspirations of Black students?


Education is clearly one of the most important social institutions for many Black British families, communities and individuals. At all levels, from pre-school education to the pursuit of a university degree, education matters profoundly to Black Britons. Our survey results reveal that 41% of respondents to the BBVP survey 'definitely' perceive racial discrimination to be the 'biggest barrier' to young Black people's academic attainment as compared to only 4% who think this is 'definitely not' the case. Another 39% of respondents agreed 'Somewhat yes' to this question. Perceptions of the poor quality of schooling for Black British children were so high that fewer than a quarter of respondents answered 'definitely not' to the question 'do you consider home schooling a better option for your children'.

The feelings, experiences and viewpoints that inform these negative perceptions are helpfully elaborated in the interview data. For example, 'education' is an abstract quantity: teachers can be very memorable people. A key finding from the survey and interview data is the difference Black teachers can make – even simply by their very presence in the classroom. For all students, feeling comfortable to be themselves, having a 'friendly connection' in school environments, and feeling a sense of familiarity with their teachers is important. For Black students who have experienced feeling 'trapped', undervalued, misjudged or stereotyped it can be especially important to feel safe in the classroom.

89%

- █ Definitely yes or Somewhat yes **8%**
- █ Somewhat no or Definitely not **89%**
- █ Don't know or Prefer not to say **2%**

Historically, educational attainment has been acknowledged as one of the most prominent mechanisms that Black people believe can spur social change and prompt social equality. A key finding that emerges from the collected data is a sense of urgency to increase the number of Black teachers. Numerous respondents cited what they viewed as the positive benefits of having been taught by Black educators.

Although more than 84% of survey respondents agreed that 'recruiting more Black teachers in schools will help to improve educational outcomes of Black students', this aspiration was somewhat countered by the profound lack of confidence in the ability of educational institutions to change which also emerges from the survey. Fewer than 2% of survey respondents, for example, felt that 'British educational institutions are taking the issue of racial difference seriously' (Q30). In order to overcome the culture and structure of educational institutions in Britain that prevent it from becoming more fully inclusive in policy and in practice, it is clear that greater trust in the educational system from parents has to be restored. As the nearly 90% of negative responses from over 9,000 respondents to the question 'Do you trust the British Education system to adequately support the needs and aspirations of Black students' indicates, schooling is not only an area of widespread disappointment within the Black British comunity, but of substantial distrust.
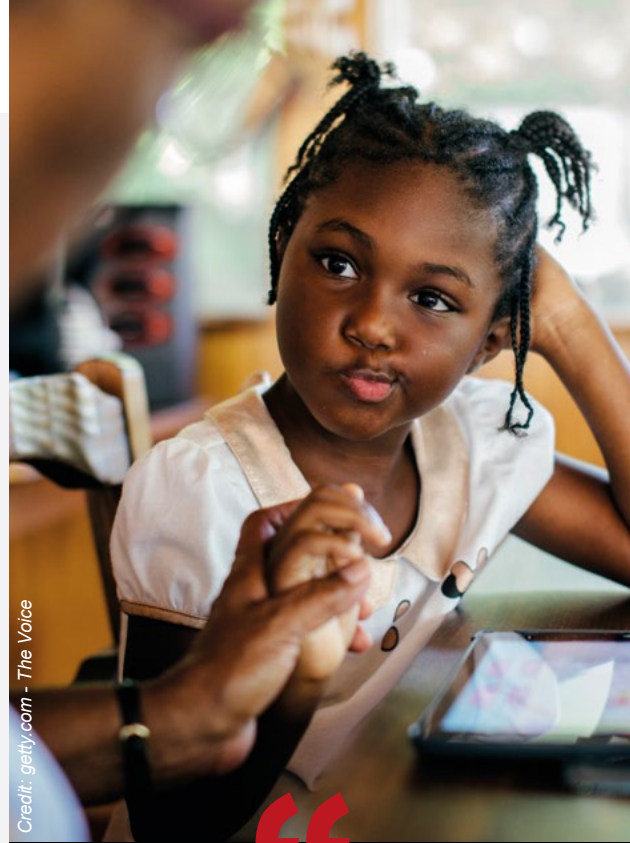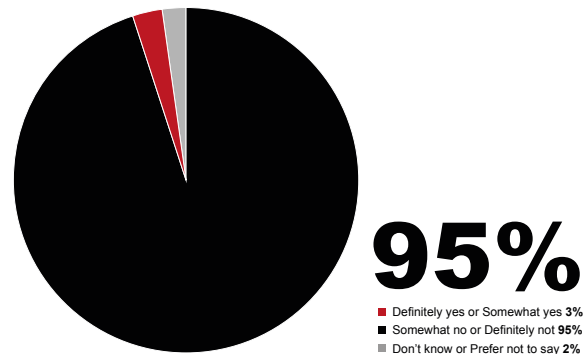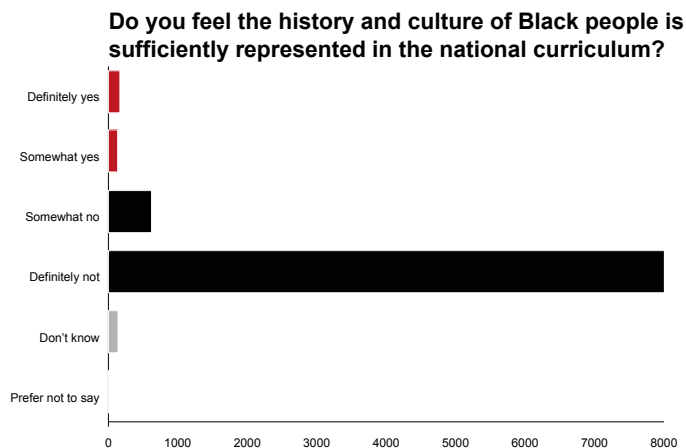
In respect of recruiting more Black teachers, they've had the same thing since I remember way back about recruiting more Black police officers. But yet, the problems, the underlying problems, are still there.

A boy in year nine[...]we connected him with a boy, second year at that college, a Black guy who did English. And he put the robe on him and said to him, "the only way you don't get into Cambridge is if you don't apply." And then on the way back from East London back to school, he said, "Sir, you know what? It's true what he said you know." And he was so excited in a robe, they put the robe on him! it was like, to see someone who looked like him who understood him, and someone who almost gave him his position. On the way back he's like, you know, I might consider Cambridge.

EDUCATION

Do you feel the history and culture of Black people is sufficiently represented in the national curriculum?

95%

- Definitely yes or Somewhat yes **3%**
- Somewhat no or Definitely not **95%**
- Don't know or Prefer not to say **2%**

Significantly, Q.29 concerning BBVP survey respondents' levels of trust in the British education system is also one of the questions with the lowest percentage of either 'Don't Know' or 'Prefer not to say' answers across the entire survey. And although, as mentioned above, fewer than 2% of respondents to Q.30 concerning the issue of whether 'British educational institutions take the issue of racial difference seriously' answered 'definitely yes', the number who were more equivocal was higher (36%) and the percentage who answered 'Definitely not' was roughly 10% lower than in the same categories for Q.29 concerning trust. Although weakly, these results suggest there is a 'directional' indicator of residual belief in the possibility of improvement that could play an important role in delivering changes that build trust in the years ahead.

Improving the representation of the history and culture of Black people is another area, alongside the recruitment of more Black teachers, that strikes a chord with BBVP respondents – more than 88% of whom felt this was an area where the British educational system was 'Definitely Not' delivering 'sufficiently'. This was also a question for which the percentage of respondents answering either 'Don't Know' or 'Prefer Not to Say' was among the lowest recorded.

The strength of feeling on the subject of being provided with more educational resources and teaching related to Black peoples' lives and histories, including African culture, and the legacies of empire had several different dimensions that were recorded in interviews. These ranged from a sense of discovering in later life how much education had let them down, to a sense that everyone is missing out when the curriculum is too narrowly focused.

Other interviewees pointed out the importance of learning about histories of empire, colonialism, enslavement and the histories of Black and African cultures for white as well as Black students.

Others pointed to specific areas in need of more attention and improvement, such as the STEM subjects.

SUMMARY

The topic of Education elicited some of the strongest responses in both the survey and the interviews for this project. Feelings of disappointment, distrust and disillusionment featured prominently in the data set. Reasons for these negative responses ranged widely and included not only personal experiences or observations of how other Black students were mistreated but a sense that everyone is losing out if the curriculum is too narrow, or too rigidly taught. School for many Black children introduced them to negative stereotypes that affected their self-esteem, and/or made them feel unsafe. The sense that more Black teachers and more focus on Black lives and histories would help is offset by a deep distrust in British educational institutions to serve the needs of Black British children. ■
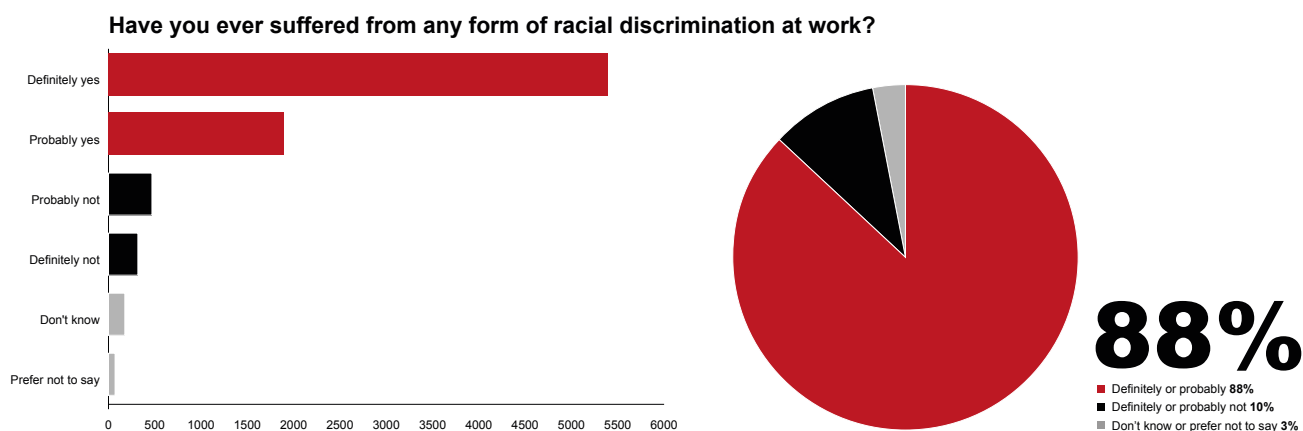
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My mum talked to us about our history and about certain people and just gave us a bit more than we were getting at school, which was zero. (I) got all (my) education in terms of Blackness from my Mum.

I love learning about my heritage. Because especially when you look at African tribes, for instance you've got different tribes and then you've got different groups within that tribe. You've got different languages, different types of music, different ways to dress, different behaviours it fascinates me, honestly, and it's always fun to look at, because you can never really run out of history. I'm constantly learning new things that weren't really taught to me as history because when I was learning history in school, we would learn about Henry the 8th, Shakespeare and white British figures of history, but they'd never tell us about the Ibo people, the Yoruba people, we didn't really delve into the slave trade, because I wasn't really made aware of a lot of what happened during slavery. In school, it wasn't really until after I've kind of left I wanted to know why I'm here and stuff like that. So I just took it upon myself to just delve deeper into it. And I found out very interesting things.

If a fucking grown ass white person can still be asking Chimamanda Adichie whether you've got libraries in African countries there's something missing in their education. A library? As though books did not exist before the colonial master came to our shores? I mean, even in schools some children think that African countries are full of huts and that Africa is a country, not a continent! So yes we must start decolonising our curriculum properly not just a measure to promote African Americans.

I feel like opening up youth centres and offering more avenues such as STEM, for instance. I feel like STEM is extremely underrepresented in Black communities. It wasn't really until high school that I was introduced to stem then I really realised I really liked biology. I had no clue about it before then. So I feel like teaching, especially in areas that are more diverse areas such as STEM and music. I feel like these initiatives should be targeting the younger generation will really show them that there's so much more out there.

2.2 THE WORKPLACE

Have you ever suffered from any form of racial discrimination at work?

88%

- Definitely or probably **88%**
- Definitely or probably not **10%**
- Don't know or prefer not to say **3%**

88% of BBVP participants report experiencing racial discrimination in the workplace. Black Britons encounter higher levels of nonlinear and protracted career progression and when they do experience promotion often feel perceived by coworkers as benefitting from tokenism. Growing numbers of Black Britons have turned to self-employment and entrepreneurship in order to avoid the racial tensions of the corporate workplace.

Like their experiences in formal educational settings, the workplace is often where Black Britons both experience significant amounts of racial discrimination and develop more strategic understandings of anti-Black racism. These are also contexts in which many Black Britons acquire more complex understandings of the structural and causal links between individual racist behaviour and the often more subtle and indirect way in which institutionalised discrimination is perpetuated over time. Our survey results reveal that 88% of respondents reported 'definitely' or 'probably' having been subject to racial discrimination in the workplace. In contrast only 9% reported 'definitely' or 'probably' not having shared these experiences. Discrimination is not limited to pay gaps but applies to a wide range of issues including recruitment, appointment, retention, and promotion. Survey participants suggested that initiatives such as Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) workshops are often

somewhat paradoxically orientated more substantially toward the needs of the dominant group and often feel most uncomfortable for those employees whose exclusion they are allegedly designed to remediate. Feeling 'comfortable to be yourself' at work is both an unevenly distributed privilege and perceived to be an option only if you already conform to established conventions of self-presentation including clothing, speech and hairstyle. Criteria used in job recruitment and appointment procedures, such as prospective employees being "a good fit", are perceived as common but unhelpful euphemisms that are both consciously and unconsciously used to exclude particular groups on the basis of workplace culture.

For some interviewees the experience of discrimination at work was not a surprise, indeed something they had been brought up to expect.

For others, the workplace brought them face-to-face with new experiences of racial discrimination which they found difficult to comprehend.

Moreover, many interviewees described workplace efforts to address discrimination and race to be superficial and unhelpful.

"

Okay, In London, there's a 23.8% ethnicity pay gap. Listen, in 2018 this was what shocked me and gave me heart palpitations, they said there was a 3.2 billion pound ethnicity pay gap. I'll say that again. 3.2 billion pounds. And that figure alone tells me that people need to take this seriously. And somebody else recently said, actually that figure is probably bigger than that!

My dad secured a job with [the local] Council. I can always remember, he always seemed to feel that there was this 'them and us' culture. The workers, and those that were in the positions of power, seemed to have this attitude towards Black people as if they were not supposed to be there. It's as if Black people had gained some sort of privilege, or they had been given some sort of favour that they should actually be eternally grateful for.

I would say I've been a very confident person, I've tried to be a confident person all my life, but I can say the effects of racism when I was in employment brought to tears to my eyes as a grown man. I'm not ashamed to admit it. I thought that why am I being subjected to this treatment? And I know the only reason is because I'm of a different skin colour."

At work we are encouraged to do these diversity and inclusion workshops that on the surface sound great, but race isn't really included and spoke about properly because they're normal run by one of these fragile middle class white people who haven't got a clue how race works.

THE WORKPLACE

Do you believe that Black employees have to compromise who they are and how they express themselves to fit in at work?

98%

■ Always, Often or Sometimes **98%**
■ Rarely or never **2%**
■ Don't know **0%**
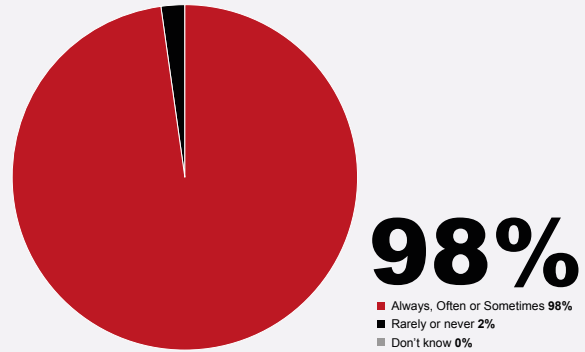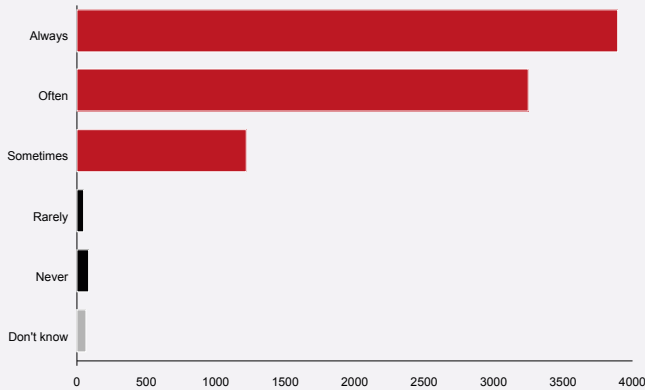
Ironically, 'EDI' (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) workshops were experienced as exclusionary and seen to reinforce the same focus on whiteness they were intended to mitigate.

As in comments from the previous section about successful application to enter elite universities, followed by clear messages they were either unsuitable or insufficiently prepared for such environments, job interviews could reveal harmful anti-Black stereotypes that all but ruled out entry to certain professions, even for clearly qualified applicants.

In other cases, successful entry to workplaces for Black employees could subsequently be discredited as tokenism by white colleagues. In the following quotation the interviewee describes such an experience, as well as the reversal of (white) privilege such racial stereotypes rely upon.

Entering the workplace led some BBVP participants to experience the high cost of underestimating Black talent, which engenders the pattern of Black employees feeling they have to work harder than their white colleagues and thus facing additional hurdles that can lead to overperforming, burnout and stress.

Career progression for Black Britons is far from linear and frequently protracted. Interlocutors note that when they do experience promotion, it is rendered suspicious in the context of race equality programmes. Poorly thought through 'inclusivity' practices place additional strain on Black employees who often feel the need to over perform to justify their own presence, or act as the go to person when matters of race are raised. As a result, a number of participants, especially men, communicated that they view the only remedy to escape these obstacles is to be self-employed because they perceive academic attainment and experience as doing little to increase chances of gaining full-time and well-paid employment in the established professional sectors relevant to their expertise.

For other Black employees, successful entrance to a profession marked the beginning of a difficult process of 'fitting in'. Here too the survey findings were heavily one-sided, with 98% of respondents indicating they 'Always' (46%), 'Often' (38%), or 'Sometimes' (14%) had 'to compromise who they are and how they express themselves to fit in at work' in contrast to only 2% who said they 'Rarely' (1%) or 'Never' (1%) had to compromise themselves at work in this way.

Examples given of 'fitting in' included altering clothing and hairstyles, speech patterns and being expected to join workmates at the pub after work.

One interviewee described changing her given name to make it easier for white colleagues to pronounce. Others described feeling their physical appearance made them stand out as different, thus making it harder to feel comfortable at work.

When asked how workplace discrimination was manifested, more survey respondents cited 'different/unfair treatment' (45%) than any other variable, including pay (21%) or 'Lack of promotion/opportunities for development' (40%). 19% cited appearance and cultural background as factors influencing racial discrimination at work.

Our survey question about fair pay elicited a similar picture of workplace dissatisfaction, with roughly half the participants responding they are either 'definitely' or 'probably not' paid fairly in comparison to their colleagues (Q.75).

SUMMARY

Like educational settings, the workplace is experienced by many Black Britons as both a site and a symptom of persistent racial iniquities. Unsurprisingly, the workplace is perceived as a microcosm of wider society in terms of the three major challenges it presents: gaining entry, 'fitting in', and overcoming obstacles to progress at the level of pay, promotion and entry into management and leadership positions. For all of these reasons, some interviewees described self-employment as the only way to avoid the 'racial crucible' of the office. A desire to see workplace behaviours change in order to create more welcoming and comfortable places of employment for Black Britons – as well as achieving greater fairness and equity in terms of pay and promotion – is countered by the sense that many Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) measures are themselves part of the problem. ∎

"

These EDI workshops are for white people to talk to other white people about race so they can tick a box and be seen as 'woke'. Black people are not included in these conversations.

I went for the interview as a fireman and when I got there, I'm the only Black face – cool no surprises with that. I passed all the tests and got called in for a second interview. The bloke interviewing me was so sarcastic, and said 'I'm not sure this job is quite the right thing for you because there's lot banter around and I'm not sure that you're going to feel comfortable to last 16 hours in a Fire Station on a shift'.

If people say to me you only got that position because you are Black, I say well you only got that job because you are white and stopped a Black person who is more qualified and experienced than you from getting the job you're doing. They shut up because more times than not it's the truth.

I think there's this overriding belief that Black people cannot deal with responsibility, and we lack leadership skills. It's been perpetuated over the years. So if a Black person is given a managerial role, its felt as if the performance is going to dwindle, it's not going to be as good as if their white or brown counterpart was managing the same position, then things would be would run much more smoothly. Things like this make Black people go over and above and ultimately can lead to burn out or other stress related ailments. Employers need to recognise this and be more aware of the additional challenges that their Black employees face.

The expectation is that we have to go down the pub and have drink with workmates to show that were trying to fit in. Many of us are single parents and don't have time to do these things and besides in my case it's not part of my culture.
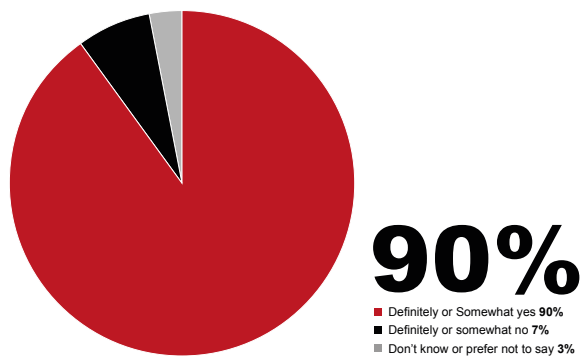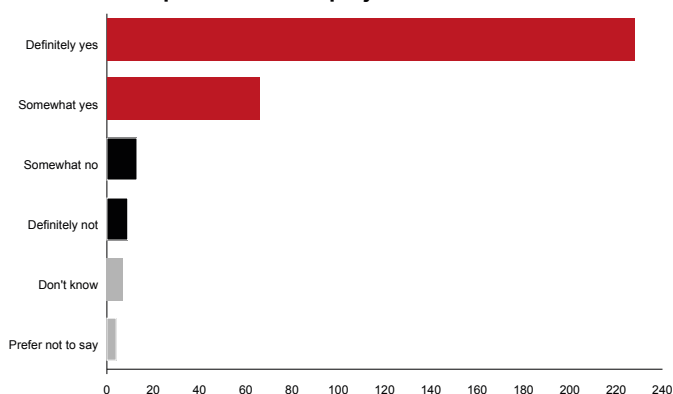
They only see my hair and not me as a person.

2.3 YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE

Our survey was completed by too few young people to draw any definitive conclusions: fewer than 500 respondents comprising less than 5% of the survey sample were under 25. Nonetheless, we felt the findings are worth including in our report as they clearly suggest avenues of further inquiry that would benefit from more detailed and robust investigation. For example, the roughly 500 Black Britons under 25 who completed the survey strongly believe that racial discrimination will heavily influence their future life prospects in Britain. Many young BBVP participants report feeling estranged from wider British society despite having been born and raised in Britain. Opinion among the BBVP respondents who contributed to this section is largely divided between those who believe racial discrimination will always be part of British society and those who optimistically believe that challenges distinctive to Black British communities will be overcome over time.

For this section, we invited BBVP participants to respond to questions about how Black young people make sense of their future life prospects in Britain. The findings from the survey, focus groups and interviews suggest that the experiences of young Black people in Britain are heavily influenced by fear and defined by several overlapping layers of racial discrimination. There is a reluctance amongst young Black Britons to acknowledge Britain as their 'home', with the main reason for this being what interlocutors frequently describe as a lack of feeling that they belong or are welcome here, despite having been born British and in Britain.

Our data is limited, since only 327 survey respondents answered question 96 asking whether 'as a young Black person' they grew up 'expecting to experience racial prejudice and discrimination'. Nonetheless, and as the following table illustrates, the resulting responses, even if only from a few hundred participants, clearly point to important themes in the data that we also see elsewhere.

As a young Black person in the UK, did you grow up expecting to experience racial prejudice and discrimination?

90%

- Definitely or Somewhat yes **90%**
- Definitely or somewhat no **7%**
- Don't know or prefer not to say **3%**

Credit: getty.com - The Voice

Our survey data for Question 96 confirms that 90% of the young people who answered this question expected to experience racial prejudice as adults, compared to only 7% who did not share this expectation. Since most young people live at home, and for many Black people home and family can be a refuge from the many forms of racism they are likely to experience elsewhere in society, it is worth paying close attention to the finding that such a large percentage of young Black Britons anticipate that their lives will become more difficult when they leave home to pursue higher education or enter the workplace.

These results are closely matched by those in response to a similarly general question (Q.93) asking respondents to agree or disagree whether 'young Black people feel supported by the Government in the challenges they face'. Again, 93% answered negatively, selecting options 'definitely not' or 'somewhat no' to this question in contrast to 3% of respondents who answered positively by selecting 'definitely or somewhat' yes.

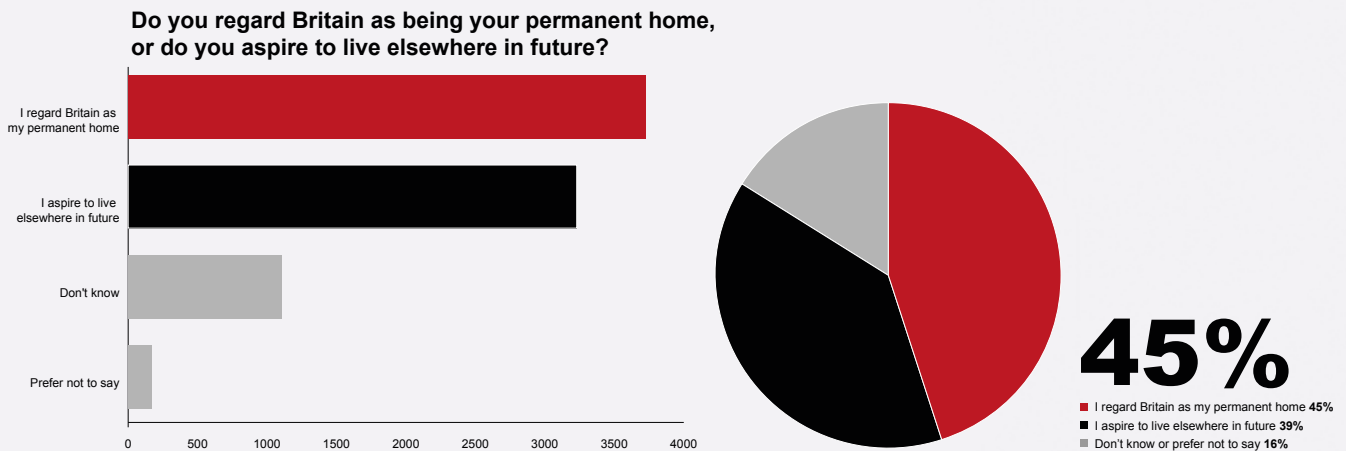**Do you believe young Black people feel supported by the Government in the particular challenges they face?**

87%
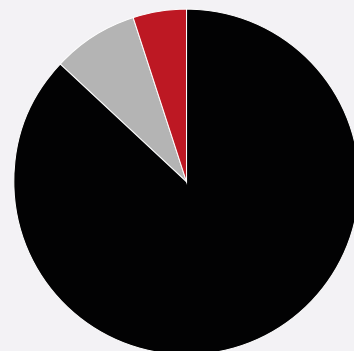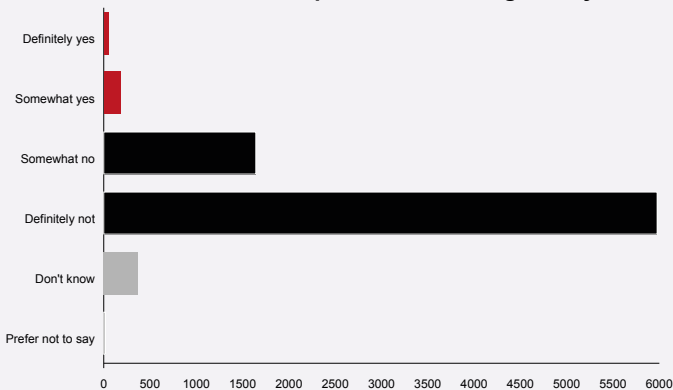
■ Definitely or Somewhat yes **5%**
■ Definitely or somewhat no **87%**
■ Don't know or prefer not to say **8%**

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE

Do you regard Britain as being your permanent home, or do you aspire to live elsewhere in future?

45%

■ I regard Britain as my permanent home **45%**
■ I aspire to live elsewhere in future **39%**
■ Don't know or prefer not to say **16%**

Continuing this same pattern were the responses to questions about future employment for young people. In response to being asked 'Do you think employers and businesses are doing enough to address the gaps in employment for young Black people' 87% cent of respondents answered either 'Definitely Not' or 'Somewhat no', in contrast to only 5% who answered 'definitely' or 'somewhat' yes. By a similarly high ratio, then, respondents' answers to all three questions about future prospects for young Black Britons were negative roughly 20 times more often than positive.

SUMMARY

The findings of this report concerning young people are very limited since we neither had extensive interview or focus group data, nor large survey responses from study participants under 25. Nonetheless, an important suggestion from the data is that opinion among Black British youths about their future prospects remains divided and varies greatly. Some respondents expressed the view that the challenges that Black people face cannot be eradicated, and that racial bias and discrimination will always be part of British society. Others voiced more optimistic responses which expressed the belief that it will take time for Britain to tackle challenges distinctive to its Black communities, but that over time these challenges will be overcome. In regards to Britain being a permanent home, the responses collected are again varied. 45% of respondents saw Britain as their permanent home, compared to 39% who expressed a desire to live elsewhere. Of the small number who were interviewed, some who arrived in Britain during their formative years expressed a desire to return "home" because they sense a lack of belonging in UK. Others cite economic constraints and hardships as reasons for relocating. The finding that 90% of Black young people grow up expecting to experience racial discrimination in some form and expressed fear about the future is one of several in this report that would benefit from more careful investigation. ■

Credit: freepik.com

03
CHALLENGES

3.1 CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Mistreatment by law enforcement agencies is one of the major challenges affecting Black communities in Britain. 87% of BBVP participants reported that they do not trust Britain's criminal justice system. Racial profiling along with stop and search laws continue to play an outsized role in fueling tensions between the police and Black communities. Nonetheless, it remains the case that for a significant number of Black Britons the problem is not policing per se so much as 'bad policing'. Black Britons not only call for an end to criminal injustice and the 'blind eye' approach to police misconduct. Many seek a better relationship with police and the criminal justice system, more broadly. A key message from Black communities suggested by the research for this project is that in order to improve their relationship to police and policing, British law enforcement agencies must take much more effective, persuasive and decisive steps to tackle the racism within their own ranks.

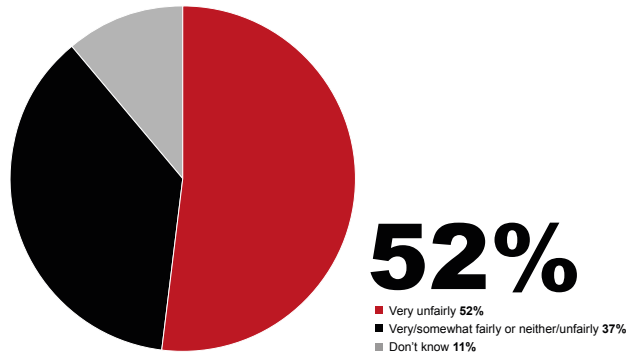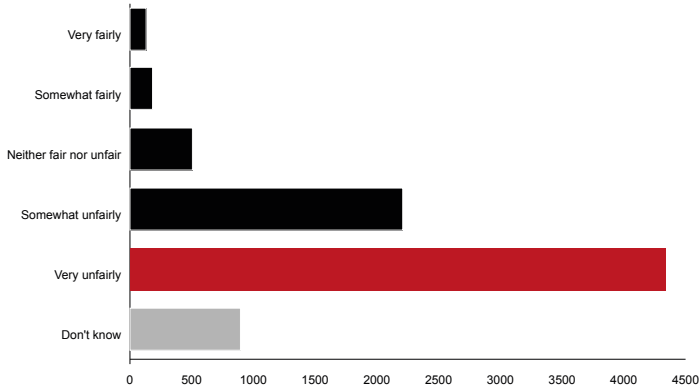**Do you trust the criminal justice system?**
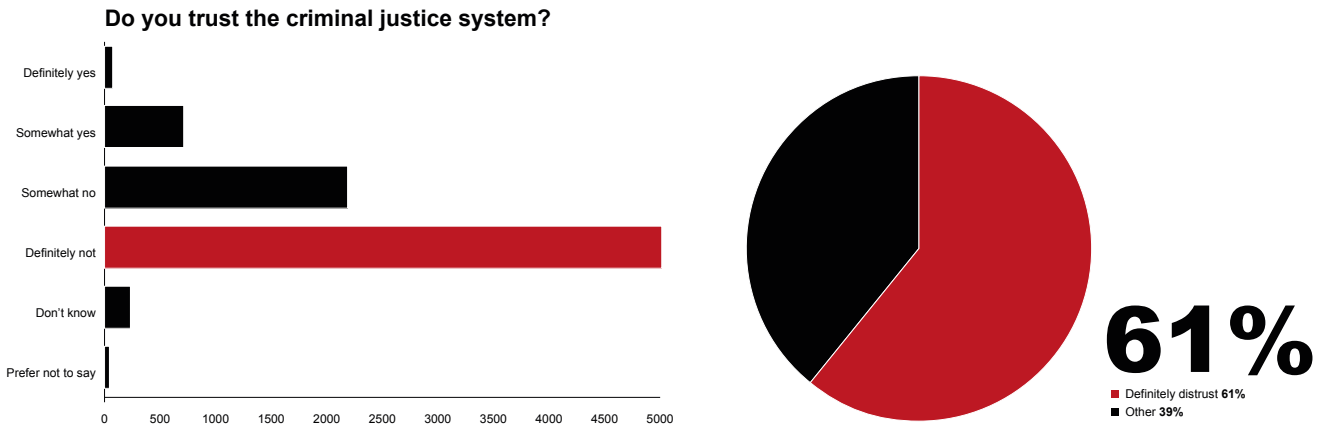
Historically, the relationship between the criminal justice system and Black British communities has been one of mistrust, strain, and conflict. In interviews as well as focus groups, and in our survey, we invited BBVP participants to share their views on Britain's criminal justice system today. Institutional racism and racial discrimination within the British criminal justice system and law enforcement services have consistently been challenged in a long list of high profile reports, reviews and enquires dating back decades (Scarman,1982; Macpherson,1999; Young, 2010; Lammy, 2017; PSI,1983, Holdaway, 1997). This study examined these issues from a range of angles and found that in addition to the headline message of the need for radical and convincing changes to the law enforcement system, there are many complex nuances and variables in terms of how both policing

and criminal justice are seen to be affecting Black British communities. As with other areas of the research, we also found that divided opinions among study participants reflected a shared view that the problems of institutionalised racism within the police force and legal system are difficult to solve and unlikely to be rooted out in the absence of substantial change both within and beyond the criminal justice system.
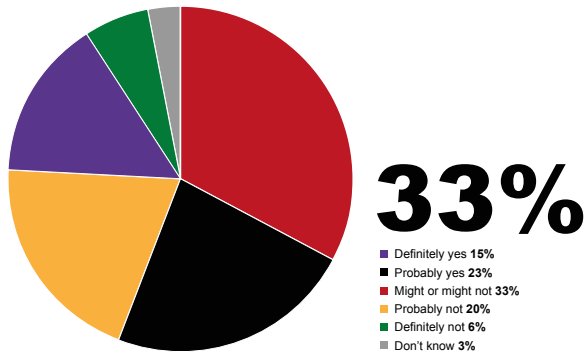
Although as noted above 87% of respondents to the BBVP survey reported 'definitely' (61%) or 'somewhat' (27%) distrusting the criminal justice system, these results can also be interpreted to show that 39% of respondents do not 'definitely' hold this view.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Is Stop & Search being used fairly?

52%

- Very unfairly **52%**
- Very/somewhat fairly or neither/unfairly **37%**
- Don't know **11%**

Would the recruitment of more Black police officers improve trust between the police and Black communities?

33%

- Definitely yes **15%**
- Probably yes **23%**
- Might or might not **33%**
- Probably not **20%**
- Definitely not **6%**
- Don't know **3%**

In other words, it is potentially important that roughly a third of those reporting distrust of the criminal justice system qualify this statement, albeit minimally, by selecting 'somewhat no' instead of 'definitely not'. In our pie chart we have somewhat amplified this distinction not only as a means of foregrounding a degree of ambiguity and ambivalence that may well repay further study, but because this ambivalence is also evident in other aspects of the overall data set related to this topic. In particular, we noticed shifting valences between the view that policing merely reproduces institutionalised racism toward Black people and communities, and the view that 'bad policing' could be made fairer through reform of law enforcement services. This distinction, for example, occurs in the following comment about how the Crown Prosecution Service relies on its own self-assessment for scrutiny.

This distinction, between the enforcement and scrutiny of policing 'rules' and 'the impacts of bad policing', came up time and again. A significant number of interviewee comments focused, for example, on a perceived over-tolerance of unacceptable police behaviour, and the apparent reluctance of the police to either take such matters seriously or implement more effective measures to deal with them.

In contrast to the view that law enforcement agencies have to enforce their own internal codes of conduct more rigorously, other interlocutors perceive the entire purpose of policing to have become contaminated by institutional racism.

This 'split' between perceptions of the police as irredeemably racist, and the contrasting view of 'bad policing' being something that can be rooted out with more effective sanctioning of unacceptable behaviour, also characterises perceptions of police stop and search.
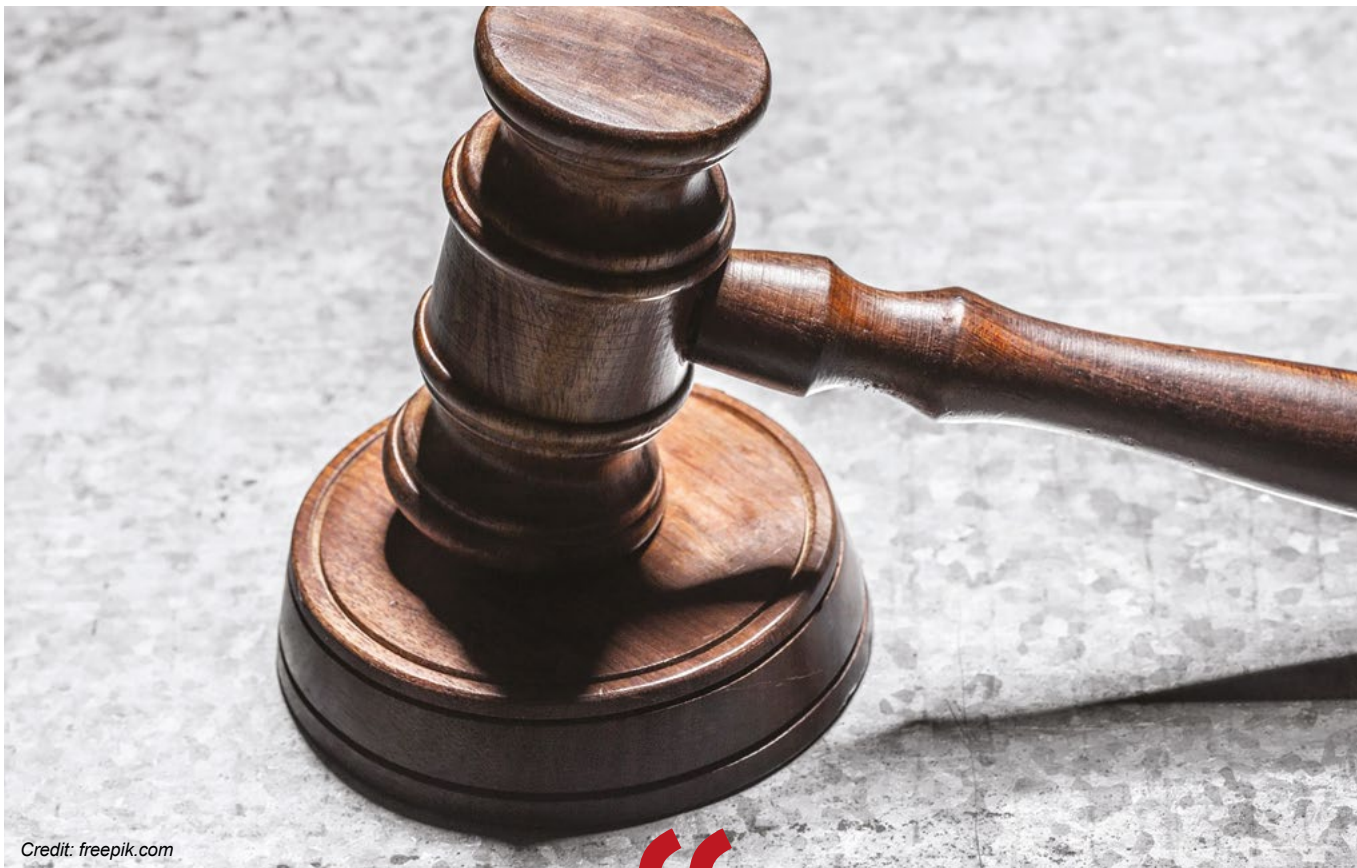
Credit: freepik.com

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As a Black person you just get this feeling of uncertainty every single time you're out and it's just-it's scary.

The Crown Prosecution Service and all the quangos that they operate are all self-adjudication. Imagine us on a scrutiny panel for the police! My point being is, to break the rules, you've got to know them. And I would suggest that the average Black person in this country does not study policing. They study the impacts of bad policing.

We need to get rid of all the bad apples, or the rogue police officers, we need them out. We need the police officers to be more accountable. We need them to be sanctioned and punished when they do something that is discriminatory, not moved on or promoted.

You know the police are there to serve the public and far too often, there are police officers who feel that their sole purpose is to protect each other instead of protecting the public and so we've got to change how these police officers think and how they act because they're contributing to the problem.

The way to get the change is to get people joining the police force. Because otherwise, we're not going to see the changes that we need today.

There are things systemically within policing that require change, and some of it is behavioural, we need to be transparent, we need to have things measured, and we need to ensure that people are held accountable for their actions. All of these three things need to be built into our policy and practices because actually, that's when you start building confidence within communities, and they start to trust you. Because they can see it's transparent, they can see what's going on.

The police relationship really is not good, there's still institutional racism there, although they deny it still. The whole idea of policing really is to keep minorities in their place.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

As in the case of the earlier question concerning perceptions of the criminal justice system, a small minority of 10% of respondents perceived the use of police stop and search as neither 'somewhat' nor 'very' unfair. Including the 11% who answered 'Don't Know' to this question would increase this 'not used unfairly' total to 21% of the total. And although a significant majority of 79% of respondents believe police stop and search is being used 'very' or 'somewhat' unfairly against Black communities, the 27% of respondents who answered 'somewhat unfairly' can be described as having a more equivocal, or mixed, view of this practice. The 11% who answered 'Don't Know' are clearly uncertain. Thus, without discounting the very clear message that comes from the self-evidently widespread dissatisfaction with police stop and search, the results can also be interpreted to indicate that perceptions are not monolithic. Instead, they are negative overall, but also mixed.

The reasons for these mixed views are, moreover, both subtle and complex. An important finding in this particular area – where we might have expected to find a more definite and unified body of opinion – is that explanations of the racism in the criminal justice system rely on quite sophisticated understandings of how social institutions work. For example, the following comment from an interviewee distinguishes clearly between 'crime', 'criminals' and the 'criminalisation' process – which is described as flawed because it derives from a false premise (that 'just being Black' = crime).

A similar view is expressed by another interviewee, who agrees that 'the way the police go around stopping and searching young Black boys' is 'disgusting', 'inhumane' and 'dehumanising', but reaches a different conclusion – that stop and search is not the problem in itself.

While the above commentator points to the 'negative stigma' surrounding stop and search, as a result of the racist manner in which it is commonly practiced, the tactic itself is nonetheless seen as essential to the maintenance of public safety – by removing weapons that would otherwise continue to circulate. Another interviewee approaches the problem of 'bad policing' from the point of view of how to reform the police forces from within – and in particular why hiring more Black police officers in and of itself is not enough, as this overlooks the complex internal dynamics of a racially divided society.

In this comment, like the others concerning systemic police misconduct, the explanations for both the 'problem' and the 'solution' clearly take institutionalised forces into account and offer complex accounts of social causality – in this case, for example, pointing out how structural racism can result in Black people having to 'prove themselves' by becoming less 'Black'. This account of how the successful acquisition of social power and status within established institutional hierarchies can affect identity and behaviour is differently evident in the following account by a Black magistrate of why he chose to become part of the criminal justice system himself, in an effort to challenge the historic links between racialisation, criminalisation and injustice.

This description by a Black magistrate of their own individual attempt to disconnect criminal justice from skin colour again emphasises a belief in the possibility of reforming a broken system. We could describe this as an attempt to 'de-institutionalise' the systemic racism of the criminal justice system, and in particular to challenging the perception of the unbreakable link between criminalisation and skin colour.

The following description by a Black police officer of how they were stopped and searched by their own crime squad – and why they empathise with the lack of trust in the police by Black communities – neatly summarises the dilemma of being a member of a community that is relentlessly criminalised whilst also wanting to combat crimes in that community, as a member of that community, and as a criminal enforcement officer who is themselves Black, and therefore suspect.

One of the strongest indications of ambivalence toward police and policing is evident in responses to Q91, asking whether the recruitment of more Black police officers would improve trust between the police and Black communities.

Credit: unsplash.com

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Black boys and Black men are seen to be savages according to the rules of white supremacy and they are criminalised from the time they are born. They are not criminals, but they are criminalised. In fact, Black men and Black boys are criminalised to fit the crime. The crime is not investigated to find out whether or not they've committed the crime. But just being Black is enough for some white police officers to make you suspect of that crime.

Although there is negative stigma surrounding it, if police do not do the stop and searches, and find these weapons, they're going to be out there. So it's better to be safe than be sorry. Honestly, it's better to be safe but I feel that the way police go around stopping and searching young Black boys especially, is disgusting, it's inhumane and it's dehumanising.

Representation is important but just part of a solution, because you might have a Black police officer that's going to treat Black people even worse, because they've got to prove themselves -- and that's going to be even more detrimental. So, you know, most Black people in positions of power will be told, told at some stage, some sort of a variation of leaving your blackness at the door in order to be able to progress.

I became a magistrate because I felt that if a Black man was going to prison, and I was responsible for him going to prison – as one of the judges, he was going because he'd been caught and he was guilty. He was not going because of the colour of his skin.

In terms of being Black and being [in the] police, I am conscious of who I am, what I represent in that space and the fact that there are community confidence and community trust issues. I'm not going to dismiss it as being nothing because that's people's lived experience. I don't change my locs or change my skin colour when I walk into a police building. So therefore, when I'm not in a police building, guess what? I'm Black, same way. The lived experiences of my community are similar to mine. You know, I've been stopped and searched in my car. I've been stopped and searched as part of the Crime Squad doing an operation to take some of the drug dealers off the street. I'd gone in my hoodie and Black jeans and was jumped on and identified as a drug dealer.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Tellingly, perhaps, the largest cohort of answers lies exactly in the middle of the scale, with 33% of respondents indicating that more black police officers 'might or might not' make a difference. This finding is matched on either side by nearly identical numbers of participants answering 'Probably yes' (23%) and 'Probably not' (20%). Out of line with this pattern is the significantly higher number of respondents who answered 'Definitely yes', which, at nearly 15%, is over twice the number answering 'Definitely not' (6%). In contrast to the figure with which we opened our discussion, of the 87% of respondents who distrust the criminal justice system, the number who feel it can be reformed, for example through the recruitment of more Black police officers, might seem high. However, this, and other 'shifting valences' in the overall data set regarding criminal justice and law enforcement, clearly indicate that perceptions in this area, while highly critical of the police, are possibly even more critical of bad policing.

SUMMARY

Whilst it is overtly clear that being racialised and criminalised by the police is a major concern of the Black British population, and that the law enforcement services are both highly distrusted and widely perceived to have failed to adequately engage with their own failings, both the quantitative and qualitative picture of how these problems are diagnosed elude simple characterisations. The complexity of causal reasoning offered by even a very small sample of the interviewees reveals not only a mixed picture with many different valences but a high degree of sophistication concerning the entrenched problems in the criminal justice and law enforcement systems. Especially given such detailed accounts of institutional power, it is not surprising a major message emerging from the research is the perception that the criminal justice system as an institution itself does not go far enough to address its own externally perceived racially biased inequalities. While a significant section of Black communities feels the police can be reformed, there is also a sense that the burden of proof to either explain their failings or change their practices should be viewed as a matter for the police to address if they require their relationship with Black communities to be one of fairness, equity, and impartiality. These are factors which must be seen as imperatives of effective policing. If what emerges clearly from collected data is that Black communities desire a better relationship with the criminal justice system, especially with the police, then this is also something the police are perceived to have failed to respond to adequately. ■
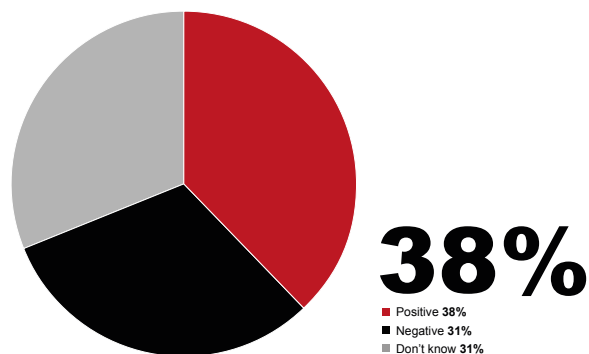
3.2 MEDIA & THE ARTS

Do you believe that advertising campaigns (such as TV ads, for example) are better at portraying Black culture than 10 years ago?

90%

- ■ The same or better **90%**
- ■ Worse **8%**
- ■ Don't know **2%**
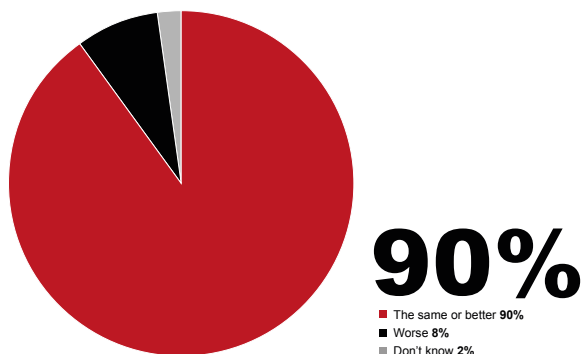
Do you view the music industry as a positive or negative medium for Black cultural expression in Britain?

38%

- ■ Positive **38%**
- ■ Negative **31%**
- ■ Don't know **31%**

Black British perceptions of British media institutions suggest widespread disappointment with what are perceived as entrenched patterns of systematic exclusion. This problem is compounded by the narrow ways in which Black people and communities are represented when they are included in mainstream media and entertainment, where they are often stereotyped and/or depicted solely as victims. Almost every BBVP participant expressed the view that British media agencies negatively depict Black women and men. Fewer than 10% of BBVP participants believe theatres and publishing houses are doing enough to encourage Black participation in their sectors. At the same time, media such as broadcasting, music, film and theatre are all viewed as formats in which Black British talent can thrive if given suitable opportunity. Despite the obstacles, there remains some enthusiasm for the possibilities of expression, transformation and community-building offered by the media, as well as some evidence of a tentative sense these are improving slowly.

In both qualitative and quantitative responses to questions about the role of the arts and media in society, our research confirmed that this is an area of considerable disappointment for many Black Britons.

From the content of the mainstream media to the staffing of newsrooms and the lack of change that characterises this sector, disappointment in the media is pervasive among Black Britons. So too is the experience of media racism, which is so normalised as to become at once ubiquitous and invisible.

At the same time, the power of the media to drive change remains a tantalising prospect from Black Britons, and some interviewees held out hope for more confident Black voices to be given greater access to the main media platforms.

Data from the survey also reveals consistent critiques of the media on a variety of issues. 96% of respondents thought Black men were depicted negatively in the media and 93% of participants believe the portrayal of Black women is negatively stereotyped. In terms of the Arts, only 5% of participants felt that theatres were doing enough to appoint Black artistic directors. Only 8% of respondents felt that mainstream publishing houses were doing enough to secure and promote Black authors.

Credit: Asier relampagoe studio

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Where is the story of the Black kid that came off the council estate who went to school, went to college, did night classes qualified as a solicitor and is now a barrister? Where is that story? You know when I, me and my mates, chew the fat about things like this and they say "don't be silly that story doesn't sell" but I say Billy Elliot sold!

It's abysmal. And it ranges from overt racism, you know, tabloid front pages that literally dehumanise Black people or immigrant groups from Africa and Middle East, to much more insidious stuff, like, you know, a white footballer buys his mum a house and it's really lovely if a Black footballer buys a house, it's like, outrageous and irresponsible. I think that the double standards, the unfair scrutiny that Black people are subjected to in the media, the ways in which Black people are set up [by] media platforms and expected to justify their humanity, the lack of diversity in newsrooms, the lack of representation of people with different lived experiences and perspectives actually creating media content, these are all things that have changed very little relative to where I would expect us to be now.

None of us really know the extent of media racism, because it's so pervasive. It's so normalised in media narratives and coverage, that sometimes you can't even see it. But it's always there, and a world without it would look very different.

I think that there is a bigger, more confident force within Black communities than people realise. Because we don't often have platforms like this that we can speak out. And we don't see our lives and our conversations, and our confidence enacted out on the main media platforms very often.

MEDIA & THE ARTS

Are Black theatre productions embraced by mainstream theatres?

61%

■ Somewhat no / Definitely not **61%**
■ Other **39%**
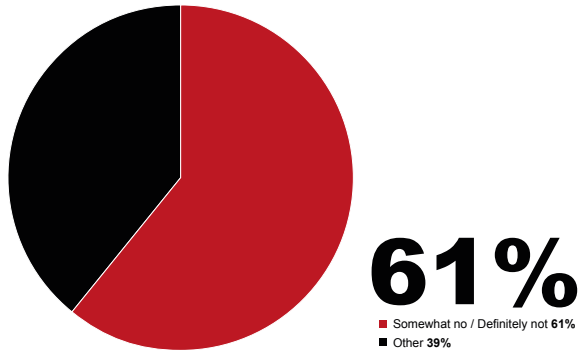
Are major publishing houses doing enough to secure and promote Black authors?

59%

■ Yes **41%**
■ No **59%**
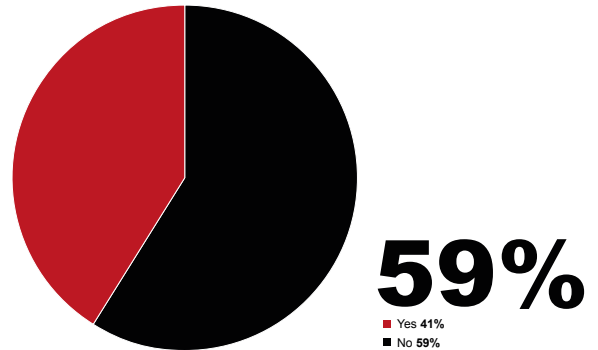
In only one area did we find a reverse trend, of greater confidence in the media, in relation to advertising, which 77% of the survey sample described better at portraying Black culture.

The music industry also fared better than theatre or publishing, with 38% of respondents describing it as a positive medium for Black cultural expression, as opposed to 31% who believed it was negative.

Although theatre was visited, or theatrical productions watched online, at least sporadically by close to 90% of the survey respondents, a majority of survey takers reported they felt theatre companies were 'not doing enough to appoint Black artistic directors in Britain'.

A slightly higher percentage of 61% felt that Black theatre productions were either 'somewhat' or 'definitely not' embraced by mainstream theatres.

Publishing houses were similarly viewed by majority of 59% as failing to sufficiently secure and promote Black authors.

How often do you visit the theatre or watch plays, in person or online?

Answer	%	Count
Once a week	2%	139
Once a month	6%	486
Every few months	32%	2673
Once a year	25%	2116
Every few years	24%	2029
Never	11%	925
Total	**100%**	**8368**

Are theatre companies doing enough to appoint Black artistic directors in Britain?

Answer	%	Count
Definitely yes	0.8%	74
Somewhat yes	5%	423
Somewhat no	20%	1692
Definitely not	34%	2841
Don't know	40%	3327
Prefer not to say	0.2%	22
Total	**100%**	**8379**

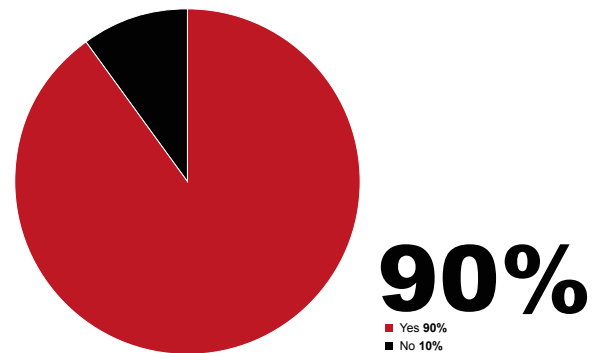*Credit: unsplash.com*

MEDIA & THE ARTS

Do you feel the UK film industry is representative of Black people and cultures?

81%

■ Representative **19%**
■ Not representative **81%**
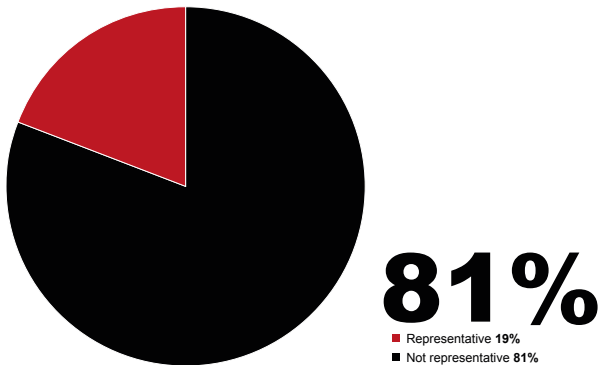
Do you think there is evidence of negative stereotyping of Black men and women in news coverage on TV and online?

90%

■ Yes **90%**
■ No **10%**

The percentage of survey respondents who felt the UK film industry was not adequately representative of Black people and cultures was significantly higher than in theatre or publishing, at 81%.

As noted above, widespread disappointment in the inability of mainstream media, television, film, theatre and publishing to adequately promote Black talent or represent Black lives and experiences was compounded by frustration with those images of Black people which were popularly represented, such as those depicting Black people as victims rather than as survivors.

Stereotyping of both Black men and women was another negative aspect of media representation more than 90 percent of survey respondents objected to.

For some interviewees, the negative aspects of the media are so pervasive it is not worth the fight to try and change them, or for that matter to even watch 'the next slavery movie' and instead to 'look after ourselves'.

For others, a more community-orientated approach to local media holds out the prospect of more positive alternatives.

Despite the odds, some interlocutors continue to advocate the creation of more media platforms for Black voices 'because the society we live in is still trying to adjust to the voices they're hearing'.

SUMMARY

Media and the Arts are sectors that are perceived by a majority of Black Britons to be not only failing Black communities and promoting negative stereotypes of Black men and women, but as particularly hostile and exploitative institutions to work in as well. These industries, in sum, appear to be seen by most Black Britons as sectors that are as toxic for Black talent to inhabit, as their offerings are harmful for Black communities to consume. Despite clear efforts to reform – and increasingly common references to 'blind' casting – theatre, film, television, publishing and the mainstream media are all depicted as sources of longstanding disappointment to Black communities. This disillusionment extends to the view that it may be better to avoid even watching 'popular' films depicting topics such as slavery that are produced by mainstream media platforms, and that developing alternative, smaller scale, more local and community focused media is a better use of time, resources and energy. ■

Credit: freepik.com

"

The way Black people are being represented, I can't lie, it looks like they're victims in a sense. I don't want to be seen as a victim. You know what I'm saying, I don't want you to go and say, "ah, bless your cotton socks!" It's not about that. But that's how for me right now, as a person watching it, we're being represented as victims, to an extent. To an older generation probably think, yes, we have been victims. That's why we speak about victims and all that, the Windrush and all these things, and I have generations of my family that went through that. But I don't see us as victim. I see us as people who have made it through that, and are levelling up.
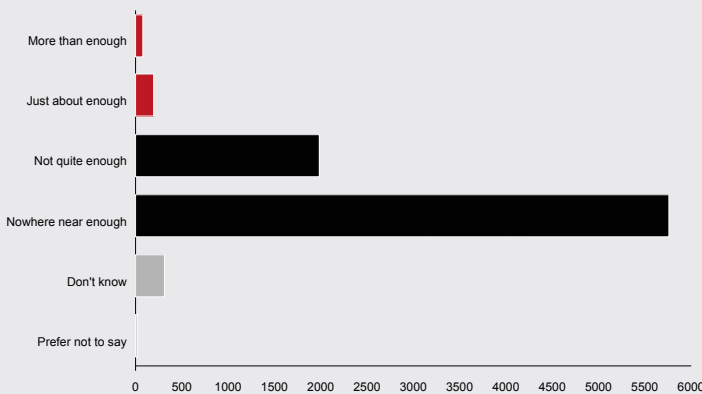
Black women are doing the work, but there is no reward. There is no acknowledgement of the reward, there's no respite it's constant, whether they do it as a career or not, whether they decide to go on TV or not, it always happens to you. And so I think the main thing we can do to keep momentum amongst us is to actually let the momentum die sometimes, or let us channel the momentum different ways, you know, like, momentum can still be had caring for the people in our communities, and practicing self-care, like radical self-care and like radical Black joy, and like, you know, not watching the next slavery movie for just to say you've watched it or just because you think someone will ask your opinion on it, so you have to watch it? It's like, so traumatic to have to do that. So yeah, I think the best thing we can do is look after ourselves, and not be pressured by the momentum too much.

In the 1970s there were not many - or any - Black broadcasters on the radio. That's a fact. There may be [...] people doing things and on and off. And then I got involved in a program on, on LBC radio. And it was community broadcasting. I mean, obviously, we were all volunteers. We didn't get paid for it. But I mean, the main thing is, I got involved in that. And, yeah, you know, I set the ball rolling, interviewing people from the community, doing different things, whether it's church, whether it's whatever, activism, I would, I would do that.
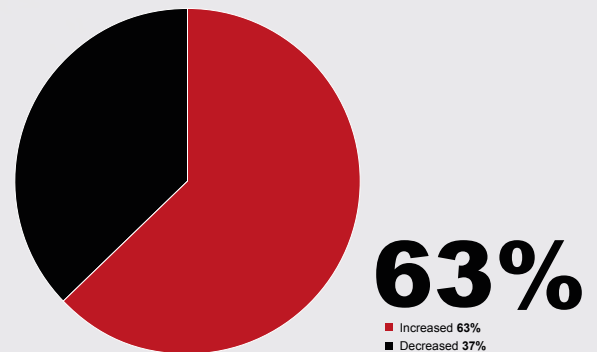
We use every single platform that is given to us and we keep reshaping, you know, the narrative. We should never be afraid, on whichever platform we're on, to challenge the status quo to call it out. Don't keep it in, don't keep it in, that will give you indigestion, and no amount of, you know, it's just not right. For the longest time, the voices we hear, the Black voices we hear, have always been there. But they were not given the platform in the media, to share their voices, to share their thoughts, to share their experiences. Yes, maybe more of that is being done now. But we're still at the stage where we need more voices, because we are not yet at the stage where those voices are effecting the changes, those changes are still taking a long time to come because the society we live in is still trying to adjust to the voices they're hearing. You know?

3.3 SPORT

Are those in authority doing enough to eradicate racism from sport?

Category	
More than enough	
Just about enough	
Not quite enough	
Nowhere near enough	
Don't know	
Prefer not to say	

(0, 500, 1000, 1500, 2000, 2500, 3000, 3500, 4000, 4500, 5000, 5500, 6000)

Do you feel that racism in sport has increased or decreased in recent years?

63%

■ Increased **63%**
■ Decreased **37%**

Research such as that conducted by Sporting Equals in 2020, based on hundreds of responses from sports players, coaches and administrators working in ethnically diverse sporting contexts, found high levels of racism affecting over 80% of non-white participants in these activities. Our research confirms that a major concern within the sample of Black Britons we surveyed is not only the continuing presence of high levels of racism but the inadequate response to this longstanding problem affecting sport. 93% of BBVP participants believe British sporting authorities have failed to do enough to combat racism in this sector. As with the other major areas of challenge described in this section of the report, the problem of racism within sport is seen to reflect deeply rooted, intransigent and persistent anti-Black prejudices that should not be tolerated in today's society, but nonetheless are often ignored or even implicitly condoned, and thus allowed to persist.

In both interviews and focus groups, as well as our survey, we invited BBVP participants to respond to questions about the intersection between Blackness and sport in Britain. Football is often held under spotlight regarding issues of race and racism due both to its openly racist fan culture but also its high level of popularity and prestige in the UK and globally. However, other sports ranging from cricket to gymnastics also act as key contexts for understanding the changing meanings of being Black and British today.

In addition to the 93% of BBVP respondents who believe that sporting authorities are not doing enough to tackle racism, 63% of respondents believe that racism in sport has increased in recent years.

Credit: drobotdean

SPORT

The strongest message from this part of the survey was the need to do more to combat both increasingly racism and a lack of action.

One of the strongest findings within the 'more needs to be done' theme concerns the role of social media. Here we found that 95% of respondents – in total roughly 8000 survey takers, including nearly everyone who answered this question – felt that social media companies were either doing 'not quite' (14.5%) or 'nowhere near' (79.24%) enough 'to help prevent racial abuse of Black athletes online'.

Are social media companies doing enough to help prevent racial abuse of Black athletes online?

95%

■ Not enough **95%**
□ Enough **5%**
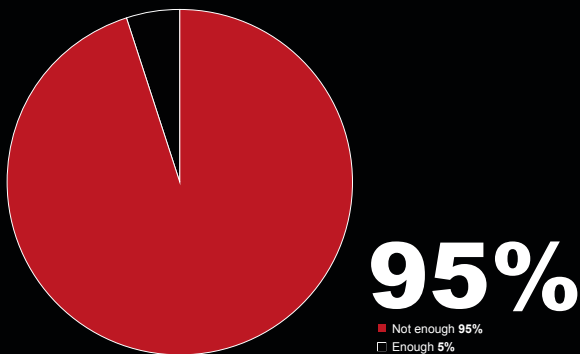
The problem of systemic racism within sport, its over-tolerance by sporting authorities, and its perpetuation by social media companies' lax procedures recapitulate the 'compounding effect' familiar from other sectors, whereby inadequate solutions tend to exacerbate, or even more deeply entrench, the problems they are allegedly intended to mitigate. A bit like bamboo, merely clipping back the most visible shoots can distract attention from the more invasive root system – or even stimulate more vigorous growth. Thus, the challenge posed by the high levels of explicit racism in sport is made even more difficult by the lack of adequate sanctions or enforcement measures to combat this problem, the absence of which not only further entrenches the problem but becomes a new expression of it. This may be one reason why, in spite of the clearly visible efforts of organisations such as the Football Association to crack down more vigorously on racism within their own rank and field, a majority (63%) of BBVP survey respondents perceive racism in sport to be increasing rather than diminishing in 2022.

Similarly, although the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the practice of taking the knee to show solidarity with social justice causes generally – as well as the high profile role of players such as Marcus Rashford in drawing attention to the racist abuse they were subjected to after the Euro 2020 final – appear in some ways to have created a climate that is more explicitly anti-racist, this influence too can be seen as double-edged.

Many BBVP participants expressed the belief that initiatives aimed at tackling racism in sport, whilst welcome, were too shallow and superficial, thus trivialising and marginalising a problem that in their view should – and could -- be taken much more seriously. Some respondents recommended that much heavier sanctions must be imposed on sporting entities if their stated objective to end racism in sport is to be taken seriously. Moreover, punitive measures should not only be limited to sports grounds and social media platforms, but should also address the racialised messages that are clearly embedded within mainstream sports coverage. Both interviews and focus groups confirmed the widespread perception amongst BBVP participants, for example, that the language used to define Black sporting figures within commentary and punditry is often littered with racialised subtexts that define Black sporting performance as bestial, savage and brutish. Participants noted that commentators rarely describe Black athletes as sophisticated, graceful, or skilful, instead implying an inherent and instinctive physical dominance.

It is indeed so cliché for Black athletes to be compared to animals that words are not even needed, the throwing of bananas onto pitches having become a routine worldwide practice. Young Black athletes regularly report uncomfortable scenes in locker rooms, as did young Black athletes interviewed for this research, who recounted vivid personal histories of experiencing racist abuse from other children as well as adults.

Ironically, in spite of being compared to animals and represented as quasi-human and anti-social (or both), Black athletes are much more commonly used by the media as spokespeople to address complex social issues such as poverty, social inequality and gang violence than their white teammates. This too was a pattern perceived by some participants in the research as racially discriminatory, and as yet more evidence of the impossible double-standards many Black athletes have to cope with.

"

We need stricter penalties. They need to start giving lifetime bans to fans who are racist to players because it's morphing and getting out of control. You know the FA (football association) is saying that they're kicking out racism of the game and saying they're doing this and that but nothing's happening.

We need stricter discipline, because when a Black footballer complains that someone has called them a racial slur, we need to find out how this actually happened. It's just horrible how today in the 21st century that Black players are still experiencing horrible racial abuse, disgusting racial abuse in a multicultural climate that that we that we live in. You're surrounded by successful Black people who play for your own club and country, how can you still be racist?

Just look at the hypocrisy in the recent England football match. Those taking the knee were booed by fans and then cheered Sterling when he scored a goal. That to me shows total confusion, and absolute cognitive dissonance. All he is to them is the vehicle that scored a goal because that's more important to them than his identity and humanity.

I do think that in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, sports are thinking differently about representation. But I want that to be deeper than just representation. Deeper, more about the systems that you use, the processes you use, how the talent pathways operate, how people in the talent pathways are supported, identify and support you through. And then at a grassroots level, ensuring there's access and there's inclusion of sport so people don't feel like 'Okay, I might, I might get to play this sport. But I'll never get through to the talent pathway because that's not what they do.' And that's partly about governance.

As well as having to deal with being the best athlete I could be, I had to deal with other things like being called monkey, and being called a cheat at competitions. How can you cheat in gymnastics?

The media use sports people or comedians as mouthpieces for our community. So when something serious like knife crime within Black communities hits the news, the media will turn to a Black footballer or a comedian to be an expert witness and offer solutions. That doesn't happen in other communities. Harry Kane or Jimmy Carr are not rolled out to speak about serious issues that happen in white society are they?

04
WELLBEING

Healthcare is a significant priority for many Black Britons but a deep sense of mistrust characterises Black British opinion of the national healthcare system. This is in spite of the fact that the NHS is a major employer of Black British staff.
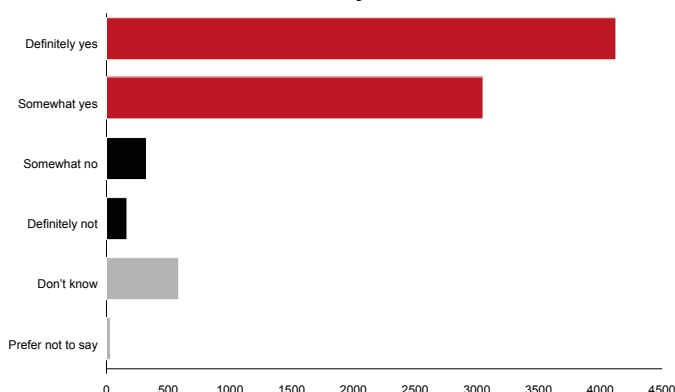
4.1 HEALTHCARE

For this section, we invited BBVP participants to respond to questions exploring perceptions of healthcare, wellbeing and the NHS and our findings are very similar to those reported in other recent studies of these topics. Like the recently published NHS Race and Health Observatory Review (2022), for example, our research also foregrounds the important message that it is not only Black healthcare workers and staff who remain subject to everyday racism from both colleagues and consumers of health services, but that Black patients also suffer from pervasive discriminatory practices and attitudes in healthcare settings. These findings are consistent with the data collected for the BBVP, which revealed that only 7% of participants in the research felt that Black people in Britain receive fair treatment from healthcare professionals.

The survey findings confirming very low expectations of fair treatment in the health services were elaborated in interviews in which participants described several of the reasons why they felt at once excluded from, and invisible within, the health service.

Negative perceptions of the health services were described by some interviewees as a direct cause of poorer health and healthcare within Black communities.

The dynamic of distrust in healthcare is mainly fueled by negative interactions between Black patients and healthcare professionals, and repeated instances of cultural insensitivities. In interviews and focus groups, BBVP participants repeatedly described racially discriminatory practices and encounters with anti-Black stereotypes. Our survey similarly confirmed this finding, with a significant majority of 87% of BBVP participants reporting that they expect to receive a substandard level of healthcare because of their race.

Credit: freepik.com

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My granddad went into hospital a couple of days ago and anytime he goes in I'm scared because I know medical professionals in this country do not look at Black people in the same way as they do white people. The health service wasn't built for us! Things like eating disorders are rarely associated with Black people and seen as a white issue, when the reality is that a lot of young Black people suffer from these challenges.

We need to be more mindful about our health if we are going to be taken seriously by the health service. We need to think about why Black women have so many miscarriages and why Black men don't go to the doctor? Black people are not encouraged to ask questions about their health. Our elders never questioned doctors enough. Whatever the doctor gave them they took it. We as younger people have to realise that these medical professionals are not beyond reproach and it's their job to answer the questions we ask.

Do you think Black people are more prone to substandard care in the healthcare system due to their race?

Category	Value
Definitely yes	~4100
Somewhat yes	~3000
Somewhat no	~300
Definitely not	~150
Don't know	~600
Prefer not to say	~30

HEALTHCARE

Notable concerns that emerged from collected data include the disproportionate rate of still-births and miscarriages amongst Black women. This finding correlates very closely with the recent Birthrights study of systemic racism within maternity care in the UK, which found that Black patients 'felt unsafe, were ignored and disbelieved, were subject to racism by caregivers … and were regularly dehumanised'. Echoing the 2021 'Saving Lives' Report on maternity care, which found that Black women were four times as likely white women to die in childbirth, the research for this project also found that fear, neglect, substandard treatment and an attitude of skepticism, suspicion or even outright disbelief contributed to the 'hostile climate' many Black patients experienced generally in medical settings.

For some interviewees, the unwelcoming nature of healthcare services in general for Black patients, as well as deficit of obstetric care in relation to Black communities, reflects a lack of adequate medical training and ignorance about the medical needs of different constituencies.

BBVP survey participants were asked whether they believe they are treated fairly by healthcare practitioners compared to white patients and the results clearly showed a substantial majority did not, with 85.52% of respondents answering either 'definitely not' (57%) or 'somewhat no' (28%). Compared to the 9% who answered 'definitely' (2%) or 'somewhat' (7%) yes to this question more than ten times as many respondents felt they were discriminated against on racial grounds than not, and nearly sixty times as many respondents felt this way compared to those who 'definitely' didn't. Put slightly differently, of the 8,282 people asked whether racial bias negatively affected their healthcare, only 125 answered that it definitely did not, in other words, a ratio of over 60 to 1. The size of this ratio reflects not only the multiple causes of poor healthcare for Black people (including discrimination by healthcare professionals themselves) but, again, as in other areas of our research, the data suggests a high level of concern about what is perceived to be the systemic and embedded nature of the problem. Here too, we see again the 'compounding' effects of anti-Black attitudes and perceptions, for example when the same health issue is seen differently in differently racialised contexts, or some health issues are not seen at all when they affect patients who are Black.

Indeed many factors derivative of a racially-unequal society were seen by BBVP study participants to have both direct and indirect, as well as cumulative and chronic, effects on health. For example, interviewees frequently addressed the multiple effects of social inequality on health, including not only poverty, unemployment, poor nutrition and inadequate housing but also the stresses caused by everyday forms of racial discrimination. As one interviewee described it, racism itself 'has a direct impact on your health', adding that this was also likely to be a negative health impact that would be invisible to many outside Black communities.

This comment echoes a strong theme in the data which is the many ways in which the multiple causes of poorer health within Black communities are perceived to be not only linked to, but further exacerbated by, negative perceptions of Black communities. Hence, for example, the perception that Black women have higher pain thresholds is linked to the lower levels of pain relief provided to Black women in labour, while similarly Black inmates in prison struggling with mental health challenges are perceived to be aggressive rather than being viewed more sympathetically and in need of help.

Anticipating the NHS health crisis and strikes in 2023, interview participants in the study also criticised the double standard during the coronavirus epidemic of 'clapping' the NHS to express support and appreciation while at the same time continuing to underfund the sector.

For members of Black communities who feel that the NHS is even more important to them and their families than it is for wealthier sectors of the population, whose healthcare needs are more likely to be prioritised, and who can afford to pay for services privately if necessary, proper healthcare is not simply a luxury or even a support service but a matter of life and death.

SUMMARY

Healthcare is described as a key concern by participants in the BBVP research, but it is not considered a safe, supportive or adequate environment by a large majority of respondents, 87% of whom reported that they expect to receive a substandard level of healthcare because of their race. Indeed, fewer than 1 in 60 respondents felt they were fairly treated within the healthcare system, which was largely depicted in the BBVP data as a hostile environment. This perception is reinforced by studies of health care sectors such as obstetrics which reveal death rates 4 times as high among Black women as their white counterparts. Explanations for these patterns, and for the sense of fear, misunderstanding and prejudice many Black Britons associate with the healthcare system, were largely focused on the systemic nature of racism across British society as a whole. Although it was felt that improvements could be made to medical education, and to diversity awareness within the health services, there was a high degree of skepticism about the difference such measures might make given the deep structural roots of the problem. ∎

> *They [the National Health Service] need to be investing money in more diverse programs. When it comes to Black women giving birth there's a lot of problems they have. Doctors don't know about that, because all they are taught about is the white body. Obviously, the body's the body, but we have different problems compared to them. So they need to actually be investing more on what some of our problems are.*

> *I do think being Black has a direct impact on your health, because what you are subject to as a Black person, I don't think your white counterpart can fully acquaint themselves or understand the reality of what you go through on a daily basis. And I think it does have an impact on your health, it can affect your confidence, it can affect your mood, it can affect your health, in the sense, your high blood pressure, cholesterol levels, diabetes, I think even your eating habits, because some people eat for comfort, because that's a coping mechanism for the racism that they've experienced.*

> *Even when it comes to mental health level in the prison system, if a Black person has a problem some see it as being aggressive. No, we just want to get our point across. But then if it comes to a white person it's like, "take it easy with him". In the prison system, a lot of white people self-harm. But if we (Black inmates) go to an officer and say we've got this problem, they're not taking us seriously. But if it's other [white] inmates, they're taking them seriously in everything they do.*

> *And it's so funny to me that like this year of coronavirus, everyone's been saying how much they love the NHS, but where was this robust energy when they were trying to shut down [the local] A&E five years ago? It was so hard to stand outside and do the Thursday night clap when the government aren't even willing to raise [the nurses'] pay grade enough that they can work the hours to support everyone that they need? Like it just so frustrating.*

> *We've been dealt such shitty cards, in terms of where we live and public health and like, access to all of these resources and access to private care and things like that so we don't really have a choice. My biggest fear is the people I love dying. That sounds very dramatic, but it is.*
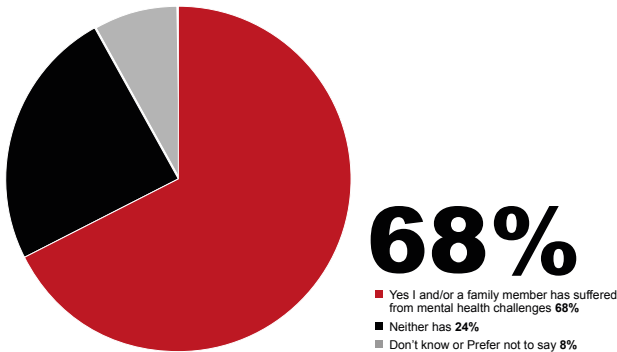
4.2 MENTAL HEALTH

Despite progress being made compared to previous generations, the topic of mental health remains an issue for many Black Britons that can be difficult to publicly acknowledge or even discuss at home. This pattern is of particular concern given that more than two thirds (68%) of the study participants confirmed that either they and/or a member of their family had struggled with mental health issues (with one fifth of respondents answering 'yes' to both). A related concern is that the everyday racisms experienced by Black people in so many aspects of their lives are inevitably a major source of emotional strain, psychological trauma and mental stress. A key theme emerging from the BBVP research on mental health is one of generational change. The stoicism of earlier generations who had to 'take it on the chin' is contrasted to the sense that times have now changed and are 'going a different way'. Mental health is widely acknowledged to be a major issue for Black people in Britain but access to support services are limited, and experiences of mental health care are often discouraging. 81% of BBVP participants feel mental health provision for Black people in Britain is inadequate.
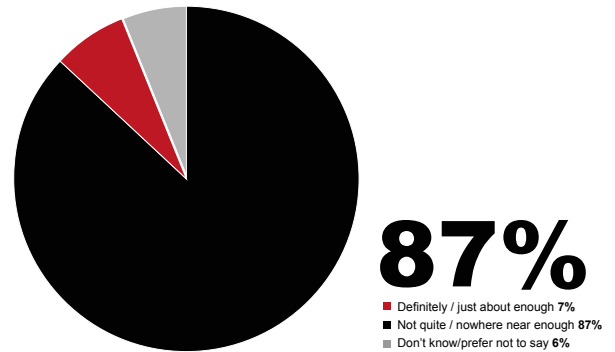
Credit: freepik.com

Have you or any members of your family suffered/or are suffering from mental health challenges?

68%

■ Yes I and/or a family member has suffered from mental health challenges **68%**
■ Neither has **24%**
■ Don't know or Prefer not to say **8%**

Do Black families discuss mental health issues enough, including generational or historical issues?

87%

■ Definitely / just about enough **7%**
■ Not quite / nowhere near enough **87%**
■ Don't know/prefer not to say **6%**

Black British youths are more willing to engage with mental health services than their parents and grandparents, and there is a sense that earlier generations had no choice but to cope without complaining or being seen to be 'weak'. Other reasons for being silent on matters of mental health include the risk of stigma, fear of becoming a burden, fear of being criminalised, a perception they will not be properly diagnosed or treated, and feelings of shame. These can all reinforce the widely-shared perception that individuals who openly acknowledge mental illness face numerous risks including ostracisation from friends and family, social exclusion, incarceration, misdiagnosis and unemployment. This perception sits ambivalently beside the simultaneous message from the study as a whole that simply being Black in Britain today can put you under excessive emotional, psychological and mental stress. Although nearly 70% of the BBVP research participants confirmed that they or members of their family had battled with mental health issues, 87% reported that mental health was not discussed enough in the home.

Despite more than two thirds of the survey participants confirming that mental health challenges had directly affected either them personally or a member of their family (or, for nearly 20%, both), the issue of mental health remains strongly associated with secrecy, concealment, silence and a kind of generational stoicism that is expressed as a strong reluctance to openly acknowledge or discuss mental trauma. As one interviewee summarised his father's veiled references to his traumatic experiences of growing up as a Black man in 1960s Britain, 'he doesn't really talk about it'.

The theme of generational differences in relation to discussing and experiencing mental health came up frequently in interviews and focus groups, and was also the subject of a survey question. In comparison to just over 7% of survey respondents who felt that Black families discuss mental health issues either 'definitely enough' (2%) or 'just about enough' (5 %), well over ten times as many participants (87%) answered that there was 'not quite' or 'nowhere near enough' discussion of these issues at home.

"

I think it's that, when we grew up, we never used to see our parents complain and all of this. Our parents just used to take it on their back [...] They'll just take it on the chin, like slavery we took it on the chin. So I feel like it's just embedded in us to take it on the chin [...] But I feel like we need to actually speak up about it and actually make sure things are going a different way.

My dad doesn't really talk about it (mental health). I look at him and think here's a Black man who lives on his own in his mid-50s, and I reflect on some of the conversations we've had together, and it's clear that he's got something going on. There's some mental trauma that he must've entailed growing up here as a Black man. The stories he tells me, I'm like, 'you should really talk to someone at some point Dad!' But I know he would never say a word.

MENTAL HEALTH

Interview and focus group data further clarified some of the individual factors contributing to this overall patterns, including a tendency to ignore mental health challenges even when they are clearly present.

The ideas that mental health is not something that affects Black people, that Black people have to just 'tough it out', or that mental health is more of 'a white people thing' were also mentioned as part of the messaging about this topic BBVP participants described receiving while growing up as children and young adults.

As noted above, 81% of participants considered mental health provision for Black people in Britain to be inadequate. The reasons for this response are similar to those described in the previous section exploring attitudes of Black Britons toward healthcare generally, including negative experiences of encounters with mental health services and professionals as well as fear of cultural insensitivity, misdiagnosis, or further unwanted institutional surveillance.
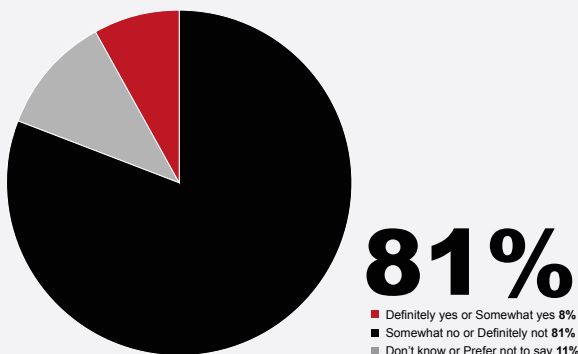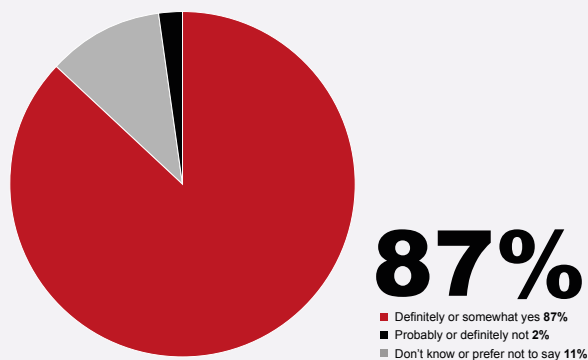
One area that stands out as of particular concern is the perceived misuse of psychiatric and mental healthcare diagnostic procedures coupled with unfair treatment of Black mental health patients. The finding, for example, that 87% of survey respondents answered either 'definitely' or 'somewhat' yes to the question of whether they 'feel there is a problem with misdiagnosis, over-medication, or unfair treatment towards Black people in the provision of mental health care' suggests a very high degree of mistrust in this area.

Especially given the high importance placed on mental health issues, combined with the increasing awareness of the need to be more open and forthcoming in discussing these issues, the high level of Black British distrust in institutional sources of mental health care is again evidence of a 'compounding' problem. The very source of help for those who may need it especially urgently is itself viewed with high levels of negativity. The finding that 2% of

Is the UK healthcare system suitably equipped to support Black people with mental health requirements?
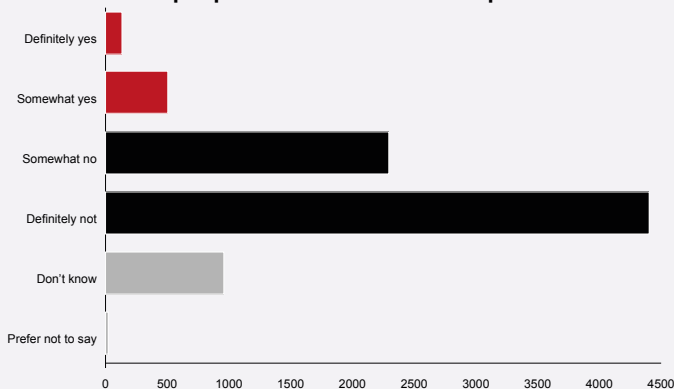
Do you feel there is a problem with misdiagnosis, over-medication, or unfair treatment towards Black people in the provision of mental healthcare?

87%

■ Definitely or somewhat yes **87%**
■ Probably or definitely not **2%**
■ Don't know or prefer not to say **11%**

81%

■ Definitely yes or Somewhat yes **8%**
■ Somewhat no or Definitely not **81%**
■ Don't know or Prefer not to say **11%**

survey respondents did not feel that mental health services' treatment of Black people is problematic is, arguably, evidence of the 'compounding' effects of systemic and structural racisms insofar as the endemic anti-Black racism that is so prevalent in so many sectors of contemporary British society is itself both stressful and literally sickening for Black Britons. The perception that the mental illness among Black Britons is more likely to be misdiagnosed, over-medicated or ignored is itself a further source of both stigmatisation and stress.

Given these overlapping layers of concern about mental health and the poor state of mental healthcare for Black Britons, it is nonetheless apparent that positive changes are originating from within Black communities, and that there is a clear sense of optimism about change in the future.

Interestingly, this is also a pattern we have seen in other areas of the research where high levels of disillusionment, disappointment, frustration, suspicion and fear are accompanied by optimism about change – often originating from within Black households, organisations and communities.

Credit: unspalsh.com

SUMMARY

Black Britons have become more willing to speak about mental health than in earlier generations. This is particularly true for Black youths who have transcended the stigma and taboos of the past, and are willing to engage with therapeutic and counselling services. BBVP participants often expressed the view that the trauma and victimisation Black people face is rarely acknowledged. Black women are more willing to speak on the issue of mental health compared to men, which may possibly be an issue tied to masculinities and the fear of exposing vulnerabilities. For Black communities, conversations among family members and associates about mental health is encouraged, albeit tempered by hesitancy to bring such issues to the attention of mental health professionals since it is believed that a small scale mental health issue or enquiry can easily escalate and lead to criminalisation. ■

I felt growing up mental health isn't something we spoke about really, My parents were supportive, but even when I was clearly having some sort of mental illness episode it was ignored.

There's a stigma about mental health from growing up. People used to laugh and say like 'Black people don't have mental health problems, that's a white people thing, we can just tough it out.

My twin (brother), he's kind of got some mental problems, but they don't diagnose him as depression or anything like that.

Like, but everyone's got mental health problems that this depends on how you deal with it. Like, I feel like Black men, especially youth, we feel like we have to be a certain way. Men don't cry, men don't do that. But there's certain, like, I feel like we are coming a long way, we are becoming better.

4.3 DISABILITY

74% of BBVP participants believe the needs of Black disabled people in Britain remain inadequately considered. Black people with disabilities suffer from increased rates of domestic and sexual violence and from being subjected to physical hierarchies in Black British communities that reinforce harmful stigmatisations and taboos. Black Britons with disabilities have multiple layers of needs that cannot be reduced to a single aspect of their identity.

For this section, BBVP respondents were invited to answer questions concerning the lived realities of living with disabilities in the UK. Disability is frequently under-recognised, and issues facing Black people with disabilities remain under-researched and largely absent from policy. In contrast, only 11% of the survey sample described themselves as 'definitely' unaware of the challenges of Black people living with disabilities (Q.17). This makes BBVP a useful medium of communication to offer evidence-based contributions to public knowledge about both perceptions of disability, and the causes of their low visibility generally.

Like the percentages of survey respondents who felt they were either 'definitely' (34%) or 'somewhat' (37%) aware of the challenges faced by Black people living with disabilities (Q.17), the BBVP survey also showed high levels of agreement that Black people living with disabilities 'are treated differently from Black non-disabled persons'. In contrast to fewer than 4% of respondents who claimed this was 'definitely not' the case, 72% (18 times as many) of respondents answered that it either 'definitely' (37%) or 'somewhat' (35 %) was (Q.18).

This same pattern, of a high awareness of disability as an issue in Black communities, was evident in the responses to Question 20. In contrast to 12% of survey respondents who felt that the disability challenges faced by Black people in Britain today were 'adequately considered by other people', three quarters of the survey sample (74%) felt they were not.

Data from interviews and focus groups revealed a wide range of explanations for the dual perception that disability is a major issue in Black communities, but one that requires much greater recognition, support and understanding. In part, the lack of recognition of the needs of Black disabled people is seen to result from a general neglect of disability issues, which in turn was linked by some interviewees to the fact that not all disabilities are visible, and that the 'emotional weight' of disability can be especially invisible to people with no experience enabling them to understand – or even perceive – it.

Another, somewhat different, and more specific, explanation for the invisibility of the disability challenges Black people experience points out the ways in which the 'emotional weight' of disability can closely resemble the experience of living in a racially hostile environment, with 'the weight of the world' bearing down all the time.

As was evident earlier in the data related to perceptions of mental illness, shame and stigma prevent issues about disability being more openly discussed – as does fear of social ostracism or abndonment.

As in previous sections of the research, a theme of slow but progressive change emerges from the data, for example in relation to question 19 asking whether Black people living with disabilities face more or fewer challenges than 10 years ago. To this question, roughly similar response rates were recorded for the Likert scale options of 'Much more' (20%), 'Somewhat more' (21%), 'About the same' (24%), 'Somewhat less' (15%), and 'Don't know' (18%). This mixed,

Do you believe Black people living with disabilities are adequately considered by other people?
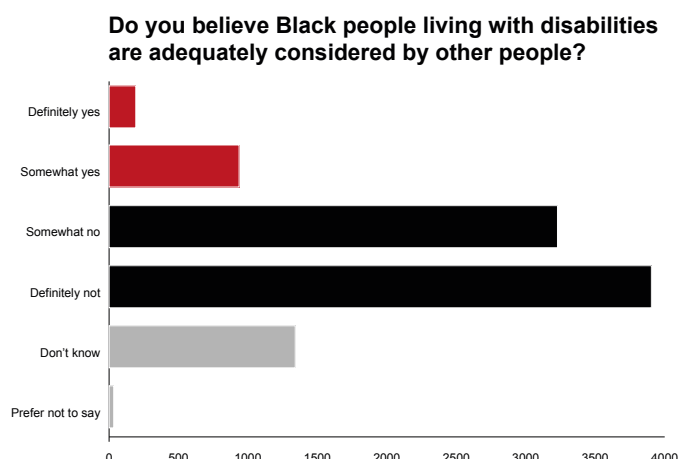
equivocal response to the question of change, which differs in its pattern from the much more definite majority views concerning the lack of adequate recognition, and severity, of the problem, indicates a clear perception of some change but on the whole a sense of inadequate progress in this area. In other words, what we do not see in addition to the definite sense of a serious problem is a definite sense there has been no progress in this area.

As in other areas of the research, the sense of slow or partial improvement in attitudes toward Black disabled people, alongside the equal if not greater response rate suggesting these changes are perceived to be either inadequate or even non-existent, is accompanied by characteristically complex accounts of the problem in interview data. As one interviewee explains in an anecdote describing his own changing perceptions of the problem, even the proposed solutions to better recognition of the disability needs of specific sectors of the population, such as children, can have the reverse effect of perpetuating the very stigma and disparities they are designed to mitigate.

SUMMARY

As with other areas of health and wellbeing, the BBVP research on attitudes toward and perceptions of disability clearly shows there is a sense that more changes are urgently needed. At the same time, a sense of slow progress is accompanied by a nuanced account of the complexity of the underlying problems both disability and attempts to mitigates its negative effects can engender. Valences within these voices include a sense of generational shift, a range of definitions of what disability entails, and, again as with other health-related areas, a perception that racial disparities themselves contribute to both the 'weight' of disability-related challenges, and their invisibility. ∎

Credit: getty.com/The Voice

The thing about disability that those who are uninitiated might not understand is that visible and non-visible disabilities, is the weight, the emotional weight of disability.

Growing up, you know a disabled Black girl; I lived a very sheltered life. You're extra aware; kind of like, microscopically aware of the differences between me, you and everybody else. And then you're just like, 'Ah, crap, the weight of the world is like falling on me!'

The theme that was there was that we don't talk about it was that it's something to be ashamed of and it's something that people will abandon you for, or you will die. Those are the messages that I had about disability and illness.

I used to work in a disabled theatre company. There were some really great practitioners there but gradually, I started to become disillusioned, because I was like, hold on, wait a second. This doesn't make sense. Why are the only children in this theatre company…why is it all disabled children? Why? Why are they separated? Why is it separate? This doesn't make any sense. How is it inclusive if no one is included? This isn't inclusive at all! This is not inclusive, this is separate, you're separating them and then you're using the fact that they're disabled to get money and funding.

05
WEALTH AND REPRESENTATION

5.1 FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Financial security is a key concern for participants in the BBVP survey, eliciting high response rates. In focus groups and interviews too, it's clear this is a significant issue for individuals of all ages, and for both men and women. Better money management, financial security and higher levels of financial literacy emerge as key elements in intergenerational relationships in both families and communities, as well as businesses. 96% of BBVP participants consider financial literacy to be a 'critical component' in the effort to secure greater financial security for Black British people in the future. BBVP participants feel that financial literacy among Black British communities remains low and should be incorporated into professional development settings instead of being learned individually – or not at all. Wealth-generation that also benefits the wider community and 'floats more boats' is favoured over more individualistic 'bootstrap' models of financial improvement. This also corresponds to a widespread distrust toward financial institutions and instruments, the benefit system, and wages – which are perceived to be part of a financial system which has historically both excluded and exploited Black people in Britain as well as elsewhere.
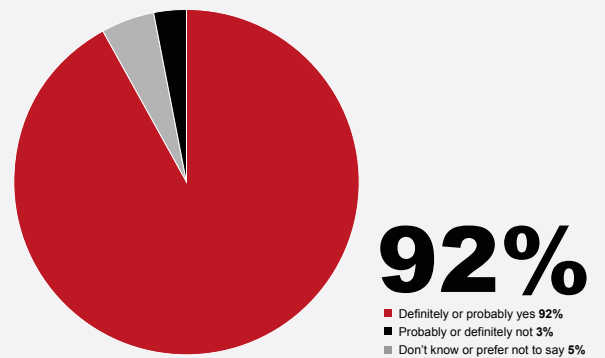
For this section, we invited interlocutors to reflect on the general financial realities that Black people in Britain face today, how they have been shaped by the past, and why they are important for the future. Historically, Black people in Britain have been financially resourceful – often by necessity in the face of overlapping levels of economic hardship. Well documented historical examples of Black Britons pooling their financial resources to create unofficial credit unions confirm the importance of strategic financial planning as a community priority. However, these methods are now considered outdated, and new opportunities for wealth building have increased in terms of their accessibility as well as their importance to both individuals and communities. The critical role of basic financial literacy about mortgages, educational loans and pensions remains high on the agenda of many Black Britons, as does the need to improve financial education and develop better money-management skills among younger generations. There is, at the same time, concern about the emphasis on individual wealth-generation at the expense of historically-deprived sectors of the population.

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Do you feel that financial literacy is a critical component of helping to build wealth within Black communities?
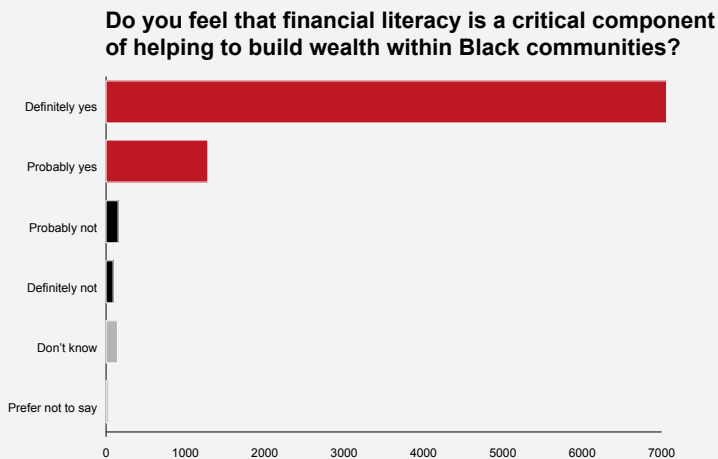
Do you think there is a generational wealth gap in Black communities compared to other racial groups?

92%

■ Definitely or probably yes **92%**
■ Probably or definitely not **3%**
▩ Don't know or prefer not to say **5%**

While, as noted above, very high levels (95%) of BBVP survey respondents consider financial literacy 'critical' to building more financially secure futures for Black Britons over half (56%) feel they do not know enough about money management, with 32% responding that they have 'not quite enough' and 24% 'nowhere near enough' understanding of money management and financial investing. Close to only 1% of respondents claim they either 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say' in response to this question suggesting it is an area of both high importance and relatively low indecision.

A similar pattern is evident in the responses to the question exploring perceptions of the 'wealth gap' affecting Black communities. Over 92% of respondents perceive that there is either 'definitely' (76%) or 'probably' (16%) a generational wealth gap in Black communities compared to other racial groups, with just 2% answering 'probably not' and 1% answering 'definitely not'.

Several strands combine to create a sense of urgency in relation to better financial skills. One is the perception that racial disparities in pay, benefits and pensions mean that Black people have to work harder for less in a system that excludes and penalises them. As one interviewee summarised it, the financial penalty of being Black in Britain increases over time.

For some interviewees, these patterns are so entrenched and systemic as to create a sense of fatalism about economic fairness and racial equality.

Interview and focus group data on the topic of economic inequality also reveal the familiar theme of not enough being done to address the underlying causes of the longstanding wealth, pay and benefits gap – unfairly penalising Black British workers, families and communities.

Again, some interviewees provided blunt assessments of the difficulty of achieving change (see right).

"

My parents expectation of me was to get myself a trade, and my mom would always say if you can manage to buy a property, buy your own house, and in addition, if you can buy another place to rent out you will do OK. You know, my mom was always about that, always having your own key to your own front door. That was massive with her. That whole thing, about having a key to your own front door. That way, no one can tell you any rubbish, because it's your house. If you keep paying the mortgage one day it will be yours and you can then pass it on to your children.

At recruitment stage, we are being paid less than white counterparts and evidence suggests that at promotion we either a) don't get promoted, or b) where we do get promoted, we're still not getting paid the same as white people. And what recently I found out [is that] a BAME person's pension will be different than a white person. Because if you're getting paid less at the start, then you're getting paid less right through [to the end of] your career.

You will never win, you will absolutely never win.

What we don't do enough of is we don't negotiate for race equality. We negotiate for terms and conditions; we negotiate for health and safety. So, we make sure that if people fall off a ladder that they have protection, we make sure that our pay isn't cut. What we don't make sure of is that there isn't massive discrimination in the workplace. We've got to incentivise, we've got to mobilise, and we've got to encourage trade unions to, to do this and give them the tools to actually do what we want, and to push companies to monitor race by pay and grade. You can't really understand pay disparities unless you understand grade disparities.

Black communities are disproportionately working class because of structural racism, because of all the decisions that are made in the past about, you know, keeping certain communities down.

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Another familiar theme is that of 'compounding effects' in the complex causal chains driving the Black wealth gap. Relating his personal experience of having acquired better information and knowledge about money management and financial opportunities in prison, one interviewee links the misperception of educational loans to the failure to perceive higher education as a viable option – thus linking financial literacy to the acquisition of cultural capital – and the foreclosure of this route to the attraction of 'quick money' instead.

Statements such as the one above depict a cumulative series of effects – not a single cause. They articulate the perception that certain patterns are entrenched because they are overdetermined by numerous prior factors that intersect and unfold over time. This perception of what could be described as the 'reproductive mechanisms' underlying racial disparities can feel directly personal, even though they are clearly understood to be institutional, systemic and structural. As one interviewee summed up his view of his own economic prospects as 'a Black boy growing up in East London', there are economic rewards to be gained through hard work, 'but you will have to work a little bit harder'.

The perceived causes of the financial penalty, deficit or 'price' for being Black are also explained in relation to the way Black-owned businesses are treated and the way economic growth is driven by processes, such as gentrification, that disproprotionately disenfranchise smaller and more vulnerable sectors of the economy.

This perception, like the earlier link between fear of educational loans and missing out on university, locates economic disenfranchisement within a larger socio-economic system in which racial disparities are the result of multiple factors. Analysing how these intersect was a key theme in accounts of how racialised economic penalties are perpetuated over time – in part by denying they exist to begin with.

Interviewees also expressed suspicion about the view that improvements in social mobility could be measured by individual success, rather than community uplift.

SUMMARY

Financial literacy and money management are important for a wide range of reasons to individuals, families, communities and businesses. However these are also issues that are seen as 'indexical' by many BBVP participants, insofar as the Black wealth gap and wage penalty are seen to reflect broader social patterns of racially-based disenfranchisement. As in other areas of this research, there is a sense of frustration that the longstanding 'ethnicity gap' in wages is not only being paid for by lower wages and pensions, but that not enough is being done to reverse these patterns. Again as is evident in other parts of the research, these complex problems require multi-causal explanations. This view is linked on the one hand to higher expectations for future generations who might have access to better financial skills and opportunities. But it is also linked to a sense of fatalism that problems are so entrenched and overdetermined that they are unlikely to change. ∎

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If you want stuff you've got to work for it and you will have it. Unfortunately, as a Black boy growing up in East London, you will have to work a little bit harder, but you can get it.

With gentrification we tend to sometimes see Black owned businesses literally being shoved out on mass.

Okay, let's focus on the UK. In London, there's a 3.2 billion pound ethnicity pay gap. There is no justification. It doesn't matter how much they try to sugar-coat this by saying there aren't as many Black people being promoted. Well, that is an issue in itself! At recruitment stage, we are being paid less than white counterparts and evidence suggests that at promotion, we either a) don't get promoted, or b) where we do get promoted, we're still not getting paid the same as white people. And what recently I found out, and I should have known this, is that a BAME person's pension will be different than a white person. Because if you're getting paid less at the start, and then you're getting paid less right through… And Black women are penalised twice by the gender pay gap and the ethnicity pay gap.

Since I've come to jail I've learnt about mortgages, the right to buy, even going to university. A lot of people think that when you go to university you're going to get into mad debt. No, you only have to pay a certain amount every month after you earn a certain amount. It's like an extra tax bracket. So, let's say you're paying 20% on tax, cool, after you earn a certain amount, you're only paying 23% because of your uni degree. So if you're taught these things, you can actually [say to yourself] I want to go uni and I'm going to study this, I'm going to put my time and effort and dedicate [yourself to] doing certain things. But because we're not taught these things, we're just thinking, ah uni, you're gonna get into mad debt, getting a job is hard, I'm never gonna get a house [so you're thinking] how can I make money quick?

So social mobility is really about the idea that, you know, we, as individuals, you know, we escape our circumstances, you know, we rise above them, and we become successful, we become upwardly mobile, you know, get that house, you know, get that car, and, and leave the rest of the community behind and then be held up as, you know, as a shining example of how the country is moving forward. What we should be aiming for is community uplift, which is, you know, the rising tide floats all boats.

5.2 BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE

BBVP participant opinion on the challenges facing Black-owned businesses and enterprise in Britain is divided and reflects a similar mixture of hope for improvement alongside pessimism about future change to that described in the previous section on finance and wealth. 41% believe lack of access to funding from financial institutions is the biggest obstacle faced by Black-owned businesses, 34% view the main obstacle to be inadequate support from Black communities, and 25% perceive management of Black-owned business as the key challenge. What is clear is that BBVP participants acknowledge multiple obstacles as limits to the success of Black businesses in Britain, and yet also see this avenue of social, economic and political change as critical to improved future opportunities and quality of life for Black people in Britain.

For this section, we asked study participants to respond to questions about the role of Black businesses and enterprise in the UK. 41% of respondents felt Black-led businesses face disproportionate difficulty in securing investment from financial institutions or accessing other sources of funding. Participants who were interviewed suggested that initiatives such as Black Pound Day should be more strongly encouraged as profitable ways to support Black owned businesses as well as the local economy. But participants also perceived limits to such measures given the historic complexity of the underlying obstacles to the success of Black-led enterprises in the UK. Enthusiasm for support of Black-owned businesses is high: 94% of respondents answered that they 'Always' (25%), 'Often' (36%) or 'Sometimes' (32%) 'make an extra effort to support businesses that are Black owned'. Fewer than 6% claimed either 'rarely' (4%) or 'Never' (1%) to do so (Q.50).

Interview data offered more detailed descriptions of the ways in which racially prejudiced attitudes are perceived to influence bank decisions, for example in relation to start-up loans for Black entrepreneurs.

As in the workplace, where 97% of survey respondents felt they had 'to compromise who they are and how they express themselves to fit in at work' (Q55), Black business owners experienced pressures to 'fit in' with white standards of both self-presentation and business strategy in order to secure the financial resources necessary to establish themselves.

Three quarters of the respondents to question 53 asking whether 'Black entrepreneurs are taken seriously by investors and financial institutions' answered negatively, that they either 'definitely' (31%) or 'somewhat' (43%) did not. Nonetheless, rates of self-employment and engagement with entrepreneurship among Black Britons have risen significantly in the past decade. More than 50% of the respondents answered positively when, asked whether 'setting up your own business is a more likely road to success than working for someone else' (Q.49), with 38% answering 'definitely yes' and 25% 'probably yes'. Like the finding in our discussion of the workplace and employment, many Black workers perceive self-employment as the only way to avoid the racial stratification they encounter at work. Data on Black business and entrepreneurship also point toward this solution in the face of the continuing unacceptability of being 'unapologetically Black'.

BBVP respondents were conscious of the need to support Black-owned businesses, but this support also comes with expectations. 24% of respondents called upon Black owners to be more diligent and professional in running their businesses, especially in terms of customer service and 25% of respondents identify financial management as another obstacle restricting the success of Black businesses.

34% of respondents said that securing support from their community was an additional challenge, but an imperative for business success. Interview data confirm that community suport for Black owned businesses can play an important role for the community, and for consumers as well as entrepreneurs.
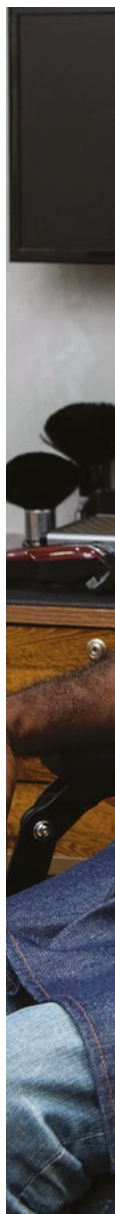
SUMMARY

Black businesses are seen as an important avenue for investing in a better future, and financial resources, expertise and support are viewed as critical to ending a significant generational wealth gap affecting the Black Britons. A major obstacle for Black entrepreneurs is negative attitudes from investors and banks, with a significant majority of 3 out of 4 survey respondents expressing the view that Black businesses and business people are treated unfairly by investors and financial institutions. Community support for Black owned businesses is viewed positively but seen as a limited means of redressing entrenched racial disparities. For some Black entrepreneurs, a sense of having to fit in with white culture and expectations compromises their ability to market 'unapologetically Black' brands and products. Others are led to the conclusion that self-employment and creating your own business is ' a more likely road to success' given all of these obstacles. ∎

What do you believe is the biggest challenge in helping Black businesses to thrive?
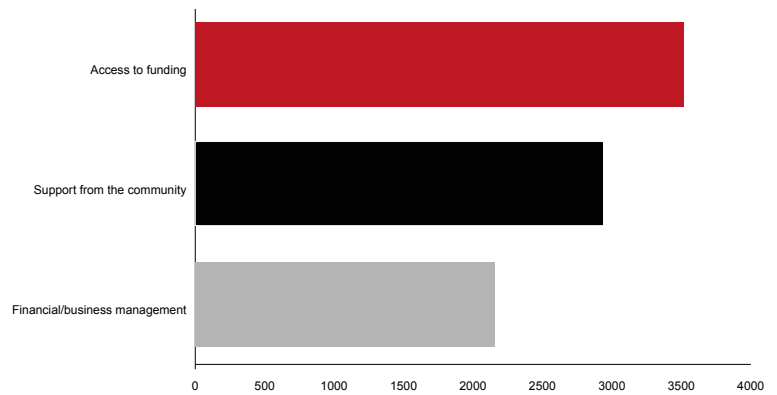
I had a massive struggle trying to get backing to get my business off the ground. I remember going to the bank with a watertight plan all mapped out. When I spoke to them on the phone it was encouraging and seemed straight forward but when arrived for the appointment everything changed. They turned me away. I applied again to the same bank but different a different branch but this time went to the appointment with my assistant who was white and did all the talking and was successful, that says it all!

Almost it's like this: we have to prove ourselves before really given any sort of opportunities. Like if I were to apply for a business loan and I have to have a meeting with the bank, why must I act and not be my true self? Why must I almost have to change my mannerisms? Just so that they take me seriously? Why can't I go there as an unapologetically Black man and say yeah this is my business plan; this is my brand and it's unapologetically Black, without having people be taken aback. I'm trying to grow my business without having to cater towards White people. In order to establish myself, I want to be unapologetically Black right from the get go so that it will grow with my brand. So I'd say it's definitely a problem.

You know, I follow Black Pound Day, I think it's great, but I think eventually we need to make the money that will actually transform our community. You know we need go to corporations and get corporate money to fund what we need rather than just having a pound day.

I 100% believe supporting Black businesses is a very good idea. Because as Black people, we don't really support each other as much as we should […] I don't care for designer labels – Gucci, Louis, all of that -- they weren't made for us. Why am I going to spend my money on someone who doesn't support me? I'd rather spend it on somebody who wants to support me. At the end of the day, we have got to push ourselves to do better.

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5.3 POLITICS

Three out of four BBVP survey respondents describe themselves as interested in UK politics, although 94% of BBVP participants believe the UK government is not taking sufficient action on behalf of Black Britons. Six times as many respondents do not believe local politicians are responding to the issues facing Black people as those who do. A low but significant percentage of 20% of survey respondents feel Black politicians can address the needs of Black Britons effectively, but at the same time encourage the British government to reduce spending on enquiries and reports on race that are largely unrepresentative of Black British own experiences. BBVP participants celebrate the work of some Black British politicians, but feel that their parties do not sufficiently allow them to advocate for race-related issues to the extent that they would like. Interview data in particular suggest a high level of discontent with the current government.

BBVP participants' answers to questions concerning the nature of Black engagement with the British political system confirm that this is a key area of concern, and a topic on which tentative hopes and expectations collide with largely negative perceptions of government and politicians. The findings of the BBVP indicate that disenchantment with British politics is exceptionally high and widespread across all components of the survey sample. The Windrush scandal is frequently highlighted as a primary impetus for distrust in the British political system. However, other compounding factors clearly amplify this distrust, including some of the measures allegedly intended to mitigate it, such as repeated government surveys on racial disparities that insist they are either minimal, overestimated, or both. A strong message is that participants perceive government commissioned reports on the persistence of racial disparities in Britain as inauthentic and unreliable, and as contributing to the failure to more substantially address the deep social, political and economic roots of racial stratification. This has left a groundswell of disappointment, and reinforced low expectations of what British party politics can offer Black British citizens in the future. As a result, participants expressed a call to curb spending from the public purse on conducting enquires and reports that fail to engage with Black people by presenting findings that are largely unrepresentative of their experiences.
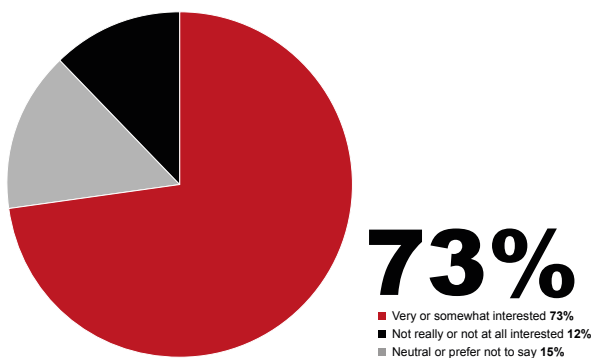
Despite the low expectations expressed about British politics and politicians, as well as political parties, BBVP participants nonetheless expressed significant interest in British politics. Six times as many survey respondents described themselves as 'somewhat' or 'very' interested as those who claimed to be either 'not really' or 'not at all' interested in UK politics.

Part of the reason for high levels of interest in mainstream politics and political parties despite what appears often as a barely contained despair about their failures and in-built cynicism, may be explained by some of the interview responses describing the visceral and enduring importance of hard won political victories despite the overwhelming obstacles.

Disenchantment with the current government is strongly reflected in the data, according to both quantitative and qualitative indicators. As noted above, 94% of BBVP survey respondents do not believe the UK government is taking sufficient action with regards to the issues facing Black people. In contrast only 1% believe they are 'definitely' doing so, with another 3% offering an optimistic 'somewhat yes' response. Even the most generous amalgamation of the Likert 'positive' scores, including half of the 'somewhat nos' yields a ratio of 4 times as many negative to even partially or minimally (or ambivalently) positive responses.
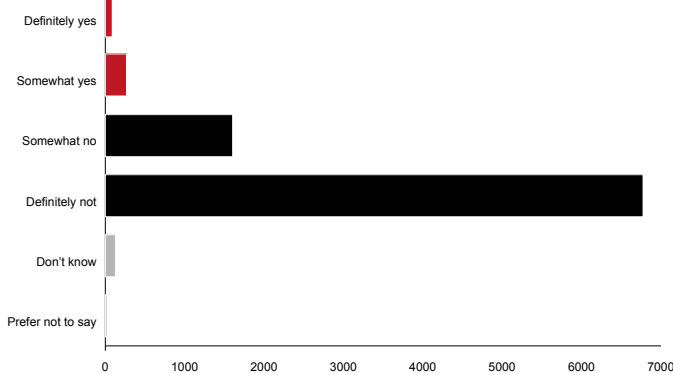
Are you interested in UK Politics?

73%

■ Very or somewhat interested **73%**
■ Not really or not at all interested **12%**
■ Neutral or prefer not to say **15%**

Do you believe the UK Government is taking sufficient action with regards to issues faced by Black people?

Definitely yes	
Somewhat yes	
Somewhat no	
Definitely not	
Don't know	
Prefer not to say	

(Horizontal axis: 0, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, 6000, 7000)

> *So as much as all of us can take what we know into places where we influence, so whether it's schools, the workplace, in the boardroom, we have to continually be that voice. So, whether or not the overall organisation, whether it's a political party or company decides to shift, if you don't open your mouth to say something, you're not giving them any reason to change, you're giving them the reason to push things down, you know, the long road. But you have to say something.*

> *The Equality Act itself was built on the Racial Relations Amendment Act, which came from the death of Steven Lawrence and that Act was built on the Racial Relations Acts of the 1960s, which came out of the uprisings. So these laws have been hard fought for, you know, for over 50 years, you know, blood literally, and sweat and tears have actually gone into that. And now, you know, you've got this government who are just junking it.*

> *The last Labour Race and Faith Manifesto wasn't really attached properly to the main Manifesto, but that's not the matter, one of the policy aims within it was the elimination of racism within the labour market, in employment. Now, the word elimination, is a pretty important word. You're abolishing racism!*
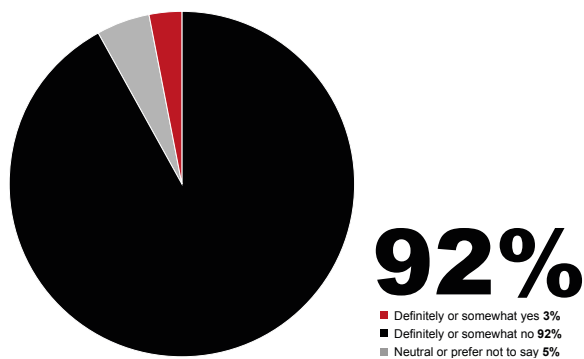
POLITICS

Interviews highlight not only disenchantment with the current government but anger at its hypocrisy and back-sliding on key issues.

There is also a sense that the opposition has failed to fully articulate a convincing path forward.

BBVP research participants celebrate the work of some Black politicians but equally acknowledge that these figures have an uphill struggle in terms when advocating for race-related issues and are often constricted by the very same parties of which they are members. Compared to just over 3% of survey respondents who either 'definitely' or 'somewhat' feel there are enough Black Members of Parliament (MPs), 92% (thirty times as many) feel there are either 'definitely' or 'somewhat' not.

The sense of there being not enough Black MPs is compounded by the awareness of their limited powers. Nonetheless, an optimistic percentage of more than 22% of BBVP survey respondents feel Black politicians 'have the capability/power to address the needs of Black people in Britain'.

Are there enough Black Members of Parliament (MPs)?

92%

■ Definitely or somewhat yes **3%**
■ Definitely or somewhat no **92%**
■ Neutral or prefer not to say **5%**

Overall, do you feel Black politicians have the capability/ power to address the needs of Black people in Britain?
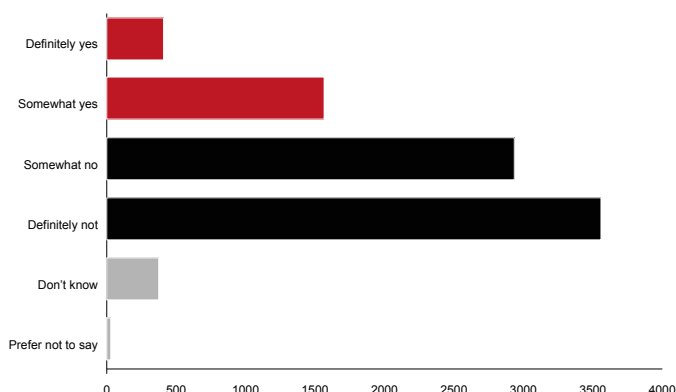
But these people that we've got now, they're something different altogether. And we're not even having a proper debate about who they are, or what they are doing, which is basically a post-Brexit project, which is actually seeing Britain as primarily a white country, a country that they control. And that adheres to their view of the world, which is why we see this full performative art of, you know, every time somebody takes the streets you have people so circling over Winston Churchill statue. This is their worldview, this is what they want. And, you know, Tony Sewell is part of that, and I don't know whether he sees it or not, but either way, whether he sees it or not, he is part of it.

You have Boris Johnson, with his 2020 Race Commission Report saying that structural racism does not exist. I'm thinking, well, we weren't expecting anything different from a man who calls Black people pickaninnies with watermelon smiles, right? For a man who referred to Black Lives Matter protesters as thugs. Right? Were we expecting anything else? And of course, you have the token Black man, who is the face of it. This is slavery-101 mentality. This is exactly what they did back in the day and are still doing today.

To me, the nature of modern politics is not conducive for structural change. In the last 100 years, the Conservatives have been in power for 80 years. So, any socialist principles, 20 years out of the last 100. So, that says to me that politics, it's basically any Black person that subscribes to conservative philosophy. And even us Black people that do identify with socialism, they're not kind of African socialists. They're dealing with challenging colonial values and stuff like this. So, politics is politics, but they aren't necessarily irrelevant and they should be brought to account, but once again, we don't have political education do we? Where do people learn about politics, and race? They don't.

No matter how many, no matter how many Black millionaires, you've got the racialised carve up of the political system. You either fall into line with a two or three party system.

Black politicians interviewed the research describe the fine lines they felt they had to negotiate in terms of being fully representative of the needs of Black people, as this being 'too Black' often prompts repositioning from colleagues.

Part of the reason more Black British MPs are seen to be needed is in order to offset the perception that Black MPs who support Black British concerns are 'just doing Black issues'.

BBVP participants view high profile transformational initiatives such as Operation Black Vote to be effective in helping to offset the historic distrust of Britain's Black voters, and encourage them to have a greater say in British politics. However, despite its notable successes, no single initiative can repair an entire political system, and many BBVP participants feel that more needs to be done to promote Black engagement with British politics. Recruiting Black councillors into local civic leadership remains a key obstacle.

Overall, and as with other sectors of the research, the British political system is perceived both as a source of ongoing racial disparities and a symptom of longstanding patterns of racial stratification.

SUMMARY

As in other sections of our report, interview and survey data present a mixed and somewhat contradictory picture of Black British attitudes toward politics, including politicians, the government and government agents, the electoral system and the main political parties. Despite very high levels of disappointment with the government's performance in relation to the Black population in Britain, and low levels of expectations of politicians, survey respondents nonetheless described high levels of interest and participation in both mainstream politics and political life more generally. Similarly, although expectations of Black politicians are also low, the reasons for this appear to be somewhat more forgiving, in that there is a strong undercurrent of hope that Black MPs could do more in the future to bring about important changes. Interview data from Black politicians reflects similar ambivalence and there is a strong sense that alternative political avenues are as essential to effective future change as mainstream political parties and procedures. ■

> *Being a Black MP there are more expectations of you. I remember the advice I was once given when I became an MP was not to be too Black. I was told that by a number of people. Not just Black or White advisors but both. You don't want to be seen as having a chip on your shoulder if you just do Black issues.*

I've got a lot of respect for Operation Black Vote, and they're filling a gap, but they're not funded that well, So, they have had success with shadowing schemes, they've got about 50 Black magistrates sitting on benches right now and councillors in local civic leadership as a result of going through that scheme, schemes. Helen Grant from the Tories came through that scheme, so it has had success in terms of getting more Black representatives in. My criticism, if I had one, is that it's a form of outsourcing for political parties; they should all be doing those schemes as a matter of course, all the time.

I think unless we're going to get the buy in from the government, it's going to be a very, very difficult climb up. The government is saying we can't even talk about historical issues that had an impact on us as Black people, we can't even speak honestly about it, how the hell are we supposed to have an impact on children? But one of the things that I'm delighted about, is this new generation of youngsters coming through. These youngsters now, they're more brave and bold than what we were.

When it comes to voter registration, I feel that the solution to the under registration of Black communities is for the state to value democracy, and realise that democracy doesn't always come for free and that in order to have legitimacy, you know, for democracy, which is basically a higher turnout rate and a higher registration rate, that sometimes, you know, you have to put a little bit of cash into local authority, electoral registration department[...]we live in a very transient population that moves about, particularly in the inner cities and so called inner cities, there's all sorts of reasons why people are not on the electoral register.

The United Kingdom is not a model of racial equality for any country whatsoever. How can we possibly progress where we are regressing, visibly regressing! How is it the Windrush scandal that got the Home Office held to account for being institutionally racist last year a model for racial equality? Or it is it the police who were found to be institutionally racist 20 years ago, following the Stephen Lawrence inquiry? Are they models for racial equality?

CONCLUSION:
WHY INTOLERANCE IS NO LONGER TOLERABLE

Data from this study drawn from a combination of qualitative and quantitative sources, and undertaken on an unprecedented scale, unequivocally confirms the persistence of unacceptable levels of anti-Black racism and injustice across every sector of British society. In schools, hospitals, workplaces, courts, polling stations and on sporting fields Black Britons experience acute levels of discrimination that are documented here in stark percentages that will rightly shock and dismay many readers. In contrast, these disquieting statistics will come as no surprise to readers who have experienced such dehumanising levels of bigotry and discrimination as part of their ordinary everyday experience – and in many cases from childhood – in modern Britain. However these disturbing numbers are received, it remains a fact that thousands of Black Britons who participated in this study reported abysmally low expectations of health care workers, the criminal justice system, politicians, publishers, teachers, employers, bankers and their government. The overall results are consistent across a huge range of activities from sport to school and from employment to entertainment.

At the same time, and of equal importance, is the undercurrent of faith in social institutions and the political process that also emerges from the data, for example in the high levels of interest in politics despite minimal expectations, and praise for teachers, politicians and judges who have changed the system – or at least tried to make things better – despite its ongoing failings. The belief in an improved future is particularly strongly manifest in the exceptionally high levels of belief in the value of financial improvement – both individually and in families and communities, and across the generations. Again, tellingly, and consistently across several different sectors of activity, the sense that Black people might well be better off forging their own path than trying to fit into existing structures also stands out as a strong theme in the data.

This theme of not really belonging in British society is one of the starkest and most concerning findings from this research overall, and points to a critical problem for the mainstream as well as Black Britons. What does it mean that so many – roughly 1 in 6 -- Black Britons do not feel comfortable identifying as British? What does it say about mainstream British society that more than a third of young Black Britons are uncertain whether they will remain here?

Another strong, and closely related finding is the strikingly frequent theme in the data that not enough is being done to challenge a situation that should be considered self-evidently unacceptable and wrong. This finding is accompanied by the implication in much of the data that the intolerance, bigotry and discrimination faced by many Black Britons is made worse by the fact that it is obviously tolerated, rather than being seen as wholly unacceptable in today's society. Indeed, the implication is that although experiencing racism is a violation of dignity and fairness in itself, there is a simultaneous sense that it is somehow OK, to be expected, normal – or even acceptable – and this implied sense of both inevitability and taken-for-grantedness adds yet another layer of alienation. As our unusually comprehensive data demonstrate so clearly, these everyday alienations and injustices add up – and not only cumulatively, or in the aggregate, but also in what we refer to as a 'compounding' – or mutually reinforcing -- manner. The compounding effects of experiencing racism, while also witnessing the lack of response, and absorbing the implication that such discrimination is the status quo, reflect a painful truth – which is that one of the main reasons racism is so widespread is that it is so widely tolerated.

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To the extent this report can play a role in forcing a much needed national conversation about why this is so – why racism is so accepted, and seemingly acceptable, and why so many readily available solutions to combat systemic racial injustice remain ignored -- we hope it can put these questions squarely on the table. The fact that racism is so normalised in the UK that 90% of young Black people state they expect to encounter it growing up should precipitate serious national reflection and conversation alongside many other of this report's key findings. Ours is by no means the first report to document the extent of everyday racism encountered by Black British people across virtually every sector of contemporary social life. We are not the first to point out that available solutions are not being implemented, nor that the failure to do so reflects a lack of genuine will to change. The data in this Report documents many patterns that are well established including the serious failures of the criminal justice system as well as the pervasive extent of structural, or institutionalised, racism in the UK.

Without question, however, the views and voices of the more than 10,000 Black Britons who contributed so enthusiastically and insightfully to this research have created a unique opportunity to stop, listen and learn – and to begin a serious conversation about the many questions of fairness, decency, equality and human dignity raised in this report. We need, moreover, to continue to ask the difficult questions documented in each of the 16 chapters. We need to continue to listen, to discuss, to find out more and to establish the Black British Voices Project as a major national research platform to inform the process of change. We need to state clearly that intolerance has no place in a modern, inclusive and progressive society. This is a message we all need to be focused on until it is no longer a message that is needed. Until then, we need the voices in this report to be joined by as many others as possible, so that the message that intolerance is not acceptable becomes effective action and not just words.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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