



over

YOUNG AND BLACK

**THE YOUNG BLACK EXPERIENCE OF
INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN THE UK**

OCTOBER 2020

FOREWORD

The Young and Black report exposes the true nature of what it is like to be a young Black person growing up in the UK today. As the steering group behind the report, we created safe spaces where the Black community could come together to share their experiences – and that they did.

The narrative of this report shows the shocking, depressing and frank nature of what it is like to be young and Black. Over 500 people shared their experiences with us and it is safe to say that society has not progressed as far as what the activists that came before us would have hoped.

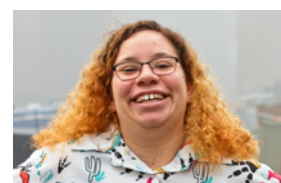
The report highlights that this is not just the action of individuals but it is institutions themselves that are perpetuating a culture of prejudice, discrimination and exclusivity. What struck us most was the sheer level of acceptance but also exhaustion in the Black community, for people so young to be so tainted by this. It is time those with a platform, resource and power did some heavy lifting to make society fairer.



Adele



Bose



Emily



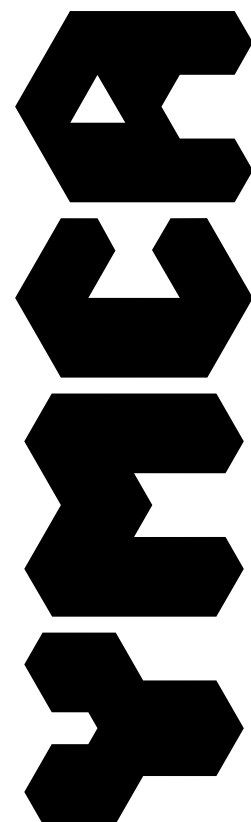
Noel

YMCA is the oldest and largest youth charity in the world and we have played our part in the Black History movement here in the UK. From housing the first of the Windrush generation and being the founding place of 'The League of Coloured Peoples' in 1931, to today where we keep inclusivity at the heart of what we do.

It is time to turn the marches and banners into real long-term systemic change and that is what we hope this report will do.

Adele, Bose, Emily, Noel

Members of the YMCA Youth Advisory Group



#YOUNGANDBLACK

This report responds to a call out from the #YoungAndBlack campaign, founded by UK Youth, Diana Award, My Life My Say and activist Jermain Jackman. The campaign calls on organisations to use their expertise and collaborate to proactively listen to the voices of young Black people.

#YoungAndBlack is a campaign which aims to truly illuminate and create safe spaces for young Black people to share stories, connect and highlight their personal experiences of being young and Black in Britain today, while also encouraging active listening across society.

BACK YOUTH ALLIANCE

This report was created with support from the Back Youth Alliance, a coalition of youth sector organisations working together to provide a voice with, and for, young people.

INTRODUCTION

While racism against young Black people has always been an important issue worth investigating, recent events have emphasised the need to investigate how young Black people experience institutional racism in the UK. These include the cases of police brutality in America in 2020, the worldwide protests that followed and the proliferation of the Black Lives Matter movement.

In response to these events, this investigation was co-designed with the Youth Advisory Group from YMCA England & Wales, and explores how young Black people experience institutional and systemic racism in the areas of: education, employment, crime, health and finance. The report highlights the main areas of institutional racism that young Black people experience, and provides recommendations on how to address racial inequality.



METHODOLOGY

In this report, YMCA combines qualitative and quantitative data obtained through focus groups and a survey investigating young Black people's experiences of institutional racism in the UK.

Based on pre-existing data on education, employment, crime, health and finance, the focus groups were chosen as part of the methodology to enable deeper analysis and provide additional context to established data.

Each focus group was co-facilitated by the Youth Advisory Group and took place online via Zoom. These sessions included 5–10 young Black people aged between 16–30 years old. The focus groups concentrated on the areas that YMCA works in, namely education, employment, crime, health, finance and welfare.

In addition to this, the survey (conducted by Survation between 15–23 September 2020 with a sample size of 557 Black and Mixed ethnicity young people aged between 16–30 years old) indicated and provided evidence for the scale of the areas of institutional racism this report focuses on.

To supplement the survey and the focus groups, further workshops were held with the Youth Advisory Group to gain their perspective on possible solutions to various examples of institutional racism.

The Youth Advisory Group made significant contributions to this report as they co-designed the entire project and worked extensively to co-facilitate the research process and develop the recommendations included in this report.

DEFINITIONS

INSTITUTIONS

This report defines ‘institutions’ in the context of society and community. Therefore, the term ‘institution’ refers to major social systems or structures which organise the primary social practices, roles, and relationships within a culture.¹ This report focuses on the institution of education (which includes schools, colleges, and universities), health services (which includes NHS Services), the Police, and employment as an institution.

BLACK

This report defines Black as people who identify with one or more of the following demographics: Black African, Black British, Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black African and Mixed White and Black Caribbean.

INSTITUTIONAL/SYSTEMIC

This report defines institutional/systemic racism as “the way the institution or the organisation may systematically or repeatedly treat, or tend to treat, people differently because of their race. So, in effect, we are not talking about the individuals within the service who may be unconscious as to the nature of what they are doing, but it is the net effect of what they do.”²

YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people in this report are defined as people aged between 16–30 years old.

¹ Hodgson, What are institutions? Journal of economic issues Vol 40, Issue 1. 2006 (Published online 2016).

² Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, The Stephen Lawrence inquiry: report of an inquiry. Stationery Office, 1999.

KEY FINDINGS

1 | YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE EXPERIENCE RACISM BOTH IN SCHOOL AND WORK.

95% of young Black people report that they have heard and witnessed the use of racist language at school, and 78% of young Black people reported hearing and witnessing racist language in the workplace. Young Black people said that they expect to experience racism because of the colour of their skin.

2 | YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE FEEL THE NEED TO CHANGE TO BE ACCEPTED IN SOCIETY.

70% of young Black people have felt the need to change their hair to be “more professional” at work or school. Policies or implicit standards at schools and workplaces risk causing cultural erasure for young Black people if they feel prevented from being their authentic selves.

3 | YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE FEEL RACIAL STEREOTYPES COULD NEGATIVELY IMPACT THEIR ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT.

49% of young Black people feel that racism is the biggest barrier to attaining success in school, while 50% say the biggest barrier is teacher perceptions of them – e.g. being seen as “too aggressive.”

4 | YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE FEEL THAT EMPLOYER PREJUDICE AFFECTS THEIR CHANCES OF GETTING A JOB.

54% of young Black people feel bias or prejudice at the recruitment stage (e.g. their names on CVs) is the main barrier to going into employment. 50% of young Black people feel that the lack of diversity was a barrier to gaining employment, while 52% feel it is because of a lack of diversity in leadership.

5 | YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE SAID THEY DO NOT TRUST THE POLICE TO ACT FAIRLY TOWARDS THEM.

64% of young Black people worry about being treated unfairly by the Police, and 54% do not trust the Police to act without prejudice and discrimination. 55% of young Black people worry about being falsely accused of a crime.

6 | YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE SAID THEY DISTRUST HEALTH SERVICES.

27% of young Black people report a lack of trust in the NHS as a barrier to maintaining good physical health. They also felt health professionals invalidate their need for mental health support as a result of the racism they encounter.

7 | YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE FEEL THEY FACE FINANCIAL INSTABILITY BECAUSE SOCIETY IS EXCLUSIVE AND PREJUDICED.

41% of young Black people attribute housing instability to the lack of employment and unstable employment. They felt that their ability to get a job was linked to their financial stability but this was hindered by employer bias and experiences at the Job Centre.

EDUCATION

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE'S EXPOSURE TO RACISM AT SCHOOL

95%

OF YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

**hear racist language or
witness racism in school.**

95% of the young Black people we spoke to have witnessed or heard racist language at school overall. 75% of young Black people claimed it was of a higher frequency as they heard or witnessed racist language ‘sometimes’, ‘regularly’ or ‘all the time’. There are differences in frequency of hearing or witnessing racism by gender: 51% of young Black males report this occurring ‘all the time’ in school, compared to just 4% of young Black females.

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE FELT THAT ADDRESSING RACISM IN SCHOOL IS DIFFICULT BECAUSE THEY FEEL THAT RACIST LANGUAGE IS COMMONPLACE.

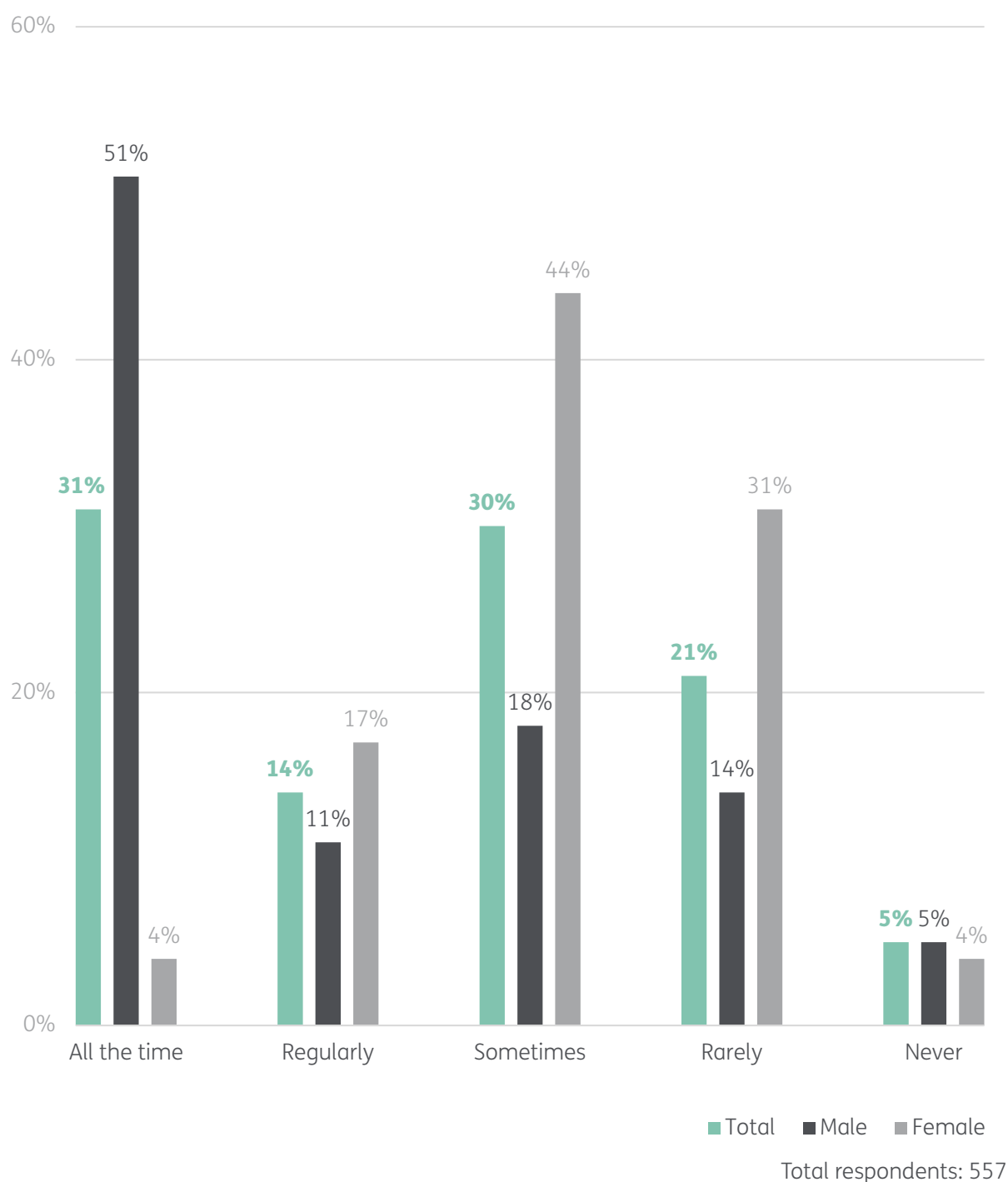
In the focus group on education, young Black people said that they expect to hear and experience racism because of the colour of their skin. Young Black people shared experiences of other White students telling them in the presence of teachers that “Black skin is not desirable”, and shared experiences of other students calling them derogatory names. Young Black people

felt that racism could be veiled as a joke and shared their experiences of hearing what they described as “subtle racism”, whereby students and teachers would joke about stereotypes associated with young Black people. The focus group also found that young Black people felt that addressing racism in school is difficult because they feel that racist language is commonplace.

Responses from both the survey and focus groups suggest a prevalence of racist language in schools, both explicitly and implicitly. To ensure a safe space for young Black people, schools must ensure robust policies on reporting and ramifications for the use of racist language.

CHART 1

HOW OFTEN DID/DO YOU HEAR RACIST LANGUAGE OR WITNESS RACISM IN SCHOOL?



BARRIERS IN EDUCATION FOR YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

Young Black people in the focus group on education felt that teacher–student interaction is a major aspect of a young person’s experience at school and that if teachers have negative perceptions of them it impacted their time in education. This was supported by the findings in the survey where, half of young Black people (50%) believe that teachers’ perceptions of them are one of the biggest barriers to their achievement in school.

50%

**OF YOUNG BLACK
PEOPLE BELIEVE
THAT TEACHERS’
PERCEPTIONS OF
THEM ARE ONE
OF THE BIGGEST
BARRIERS TO THEIR
ACHIEVEMENT
IN SCHOOL.**

In the focus group on education young Black people shared that in British society, the definition of a ‘Black boy’ or ‘Black girl’ has already been decided. Young Black people felt that society typically views them as “the class clown” or “underachiever”. As a result, young Black people explained that some teachers automatically view young Black people as “less capable”, “unintelligent” and “aggressive”. Other young Black people in the focus group spoke of instances where they

had achieved academic success, and teachers told them that they are “surprised at their success” or that they are “rare”, emphasising that they should be proud because their success is not common among young Black people.

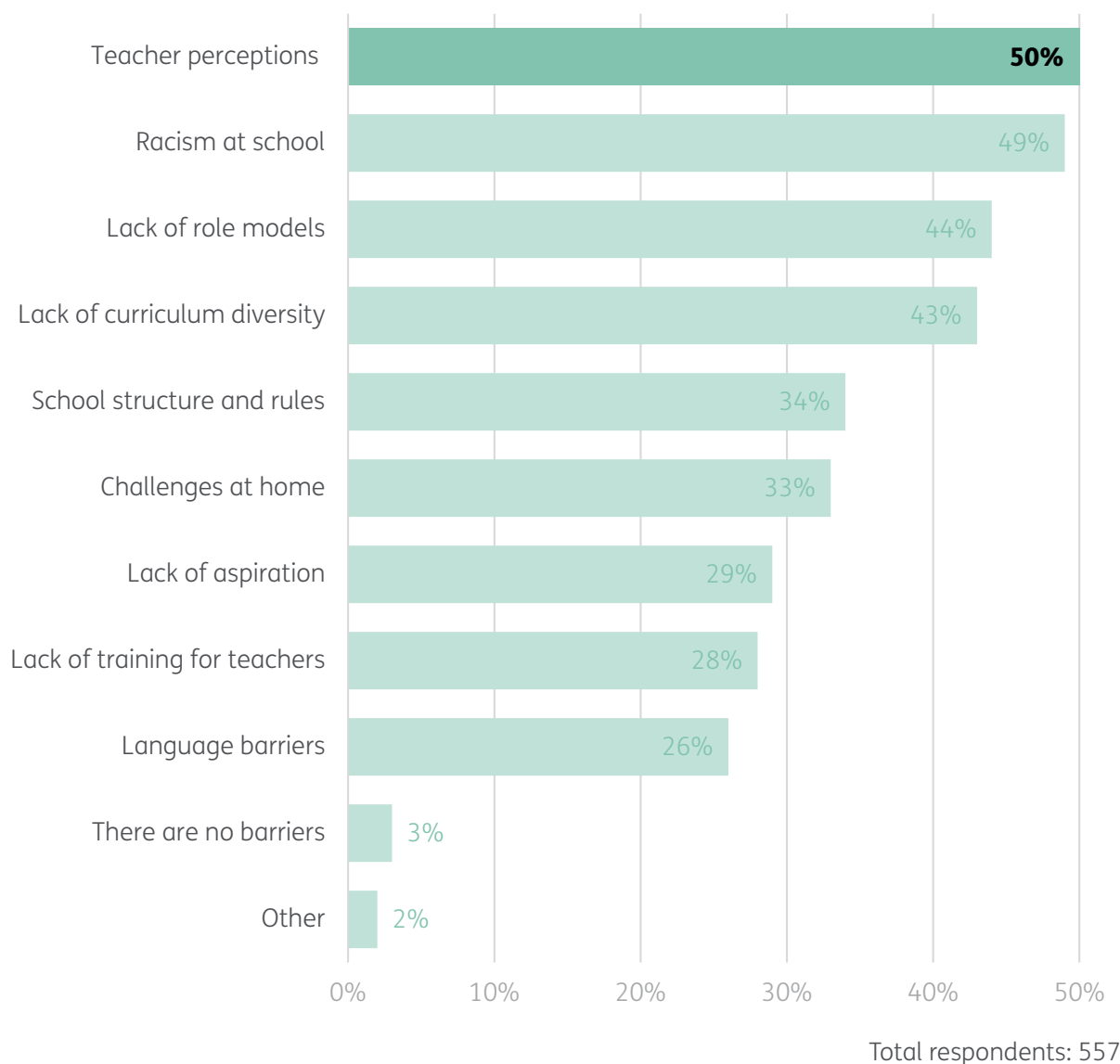
Young Black people also shared instances where despite their academic attainment, they were placed in the lowest ability groups in school. These ability groups sometimes determined the tier of exams young Black students were entered into, which had the possibility of capping the highest available GCSE grade before they had even taken the exam.

The young Black people also felt that the role of a teacher is to empower, motivate and educate the student in order for them to reach the best of their abilities – yet, the experiences shared in the focus group indicated instances where they were disempowered.

Young Black people felt that they are more likely to be expelled, which is mirrored in national data. UK Government statistics on pupil exclusion and ethnicity display that Black Caribbean pupils were around three times as likely to be permanently excluded than White British pupils (0.29% compared with 0.10% respectively), and around twice as likely to receive a fixed period exclusion (10.1%) compared with White British pupils (5.2%).³ Young Black people in the focus group on education felt that this higher exclusion rate could be linked to false perceptions teachers have of them.

These experiences expressed in the survey and focus groups indicate that the stereotypical views that are potentially held by some teachers of young Black people could be a barrier to their academic attainment.

³ GOV.UK, [Ethnicity facts and figures: pupil exclusions](#). 27 January 2020 (updated 4 September 2020).

CHART 2**WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE ACHIEVING IN SCHOOLS?**

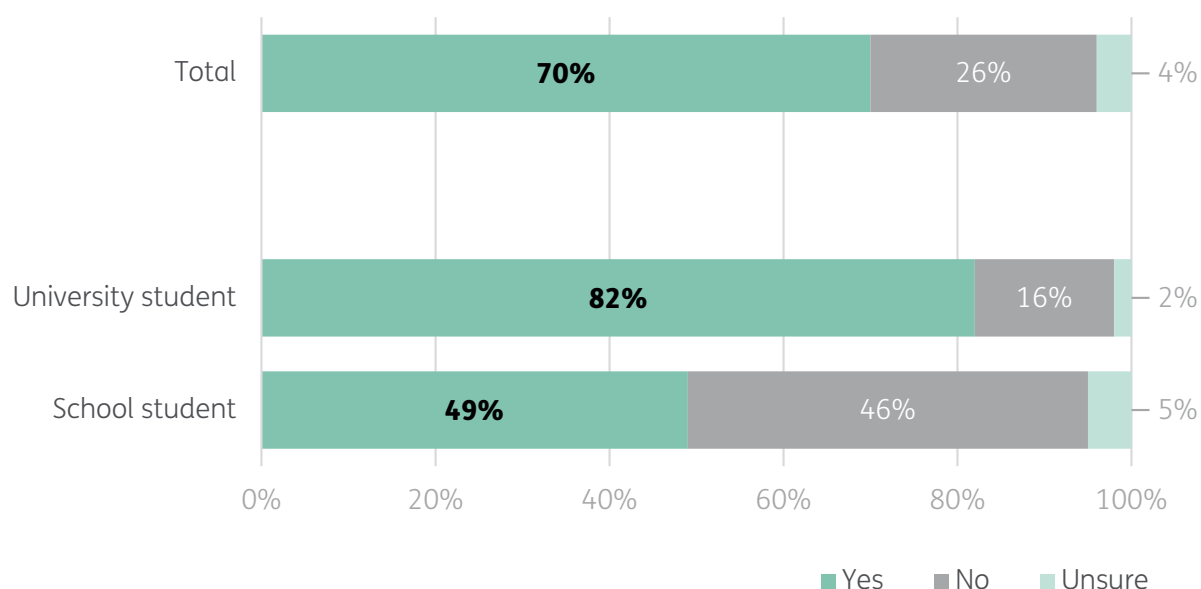
THE IMPACT OF RACISM ON YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE IN EDUCATION

Of the respondents to the survey that are currently in school, 49% indicated that they felt they had to change their hair to be seen as more 'professional'. This rose to 82% of young Black university students who also stated that they had felt the need to change their hair at work or school.

The focus groups on education found that young Black people felt as though they had to change the texture of their hair and alter the way it naturally grows to be accepted in school environments. They expressed that because of this, they sometimes felt uncomfortable at school. They shared their experiences of teachers suggesting that Black afro-textured hair is “untidy” and “needs to be brushed”, while young Black men spoke of hair policies at school being “just another form of racism” by not being inclusive of young Black people. The focus group felt that the perceived standard of appropriate presentation was not inclusive of them, as they shared that they were often penalised for the appearance of their hair because of a failure to “comply” with the appearance policies. This sometimes resulted in teachers publicly making an example of young Black people, or arranging to meet formally with their parents.

CHART 3

HAVE YOU EVER FELT THE NEED TO CHANGE YOUR HAIR TO BE MORE ‘PROFESSIONAL’ AT WORK OR SCHOOL?



Total respondents: 557
 School Students: 114
 University Students: 318

EDUCATION SUMMARY

The survey on education indicates that 95% of young Black people are exposed to varying levels of racist language while at school. In the focus groups, young Black people shared experiences of other students who were directly racist towards them in the presence of teachers, who did little to address the situation. Young Black people also felt that because of their skin colour, they expect to witness and experience racism.

Based on how young Black people felt about policies in school, comments from the focus group suggest that policies on ‘professional’ and/or ‘appropriate’ presentation in schools may not be inclusive, and less likely to recognise Black hair types. With that being said, it was inferred that policies guiding appropriate presentation are tailored towards Western ideals, creating barriers for young Black people to be themselves or comfortable in themselves at school. The focus groups revealed that young Black people feel judged and scrutinised because of their natural appearance. This judgement of appropriateness has also in cases been internalised by young Black people, whose experiences as shared in the focus groups suggest that they often feel their natural hair type is unprofessional and untidy because of the school regulations in place.

Lastly, young Black people in the focus groups felt that teachers label them as “unintelligent” and “aggressive.” Young Black people also felt that because teachers perceive them to be aggressive, this results in more young Black people being excluded.⁴ These barriers could negatively impact the educational experience of young Black people, and could put them at an academic disadvantage, which could in turn affect their futures.

⁴ GOV.UK, [Ethnicity Facts and Figures: Pupil exclusions](#). 27 January 2020 (updated 4 September 2020).

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1

We recommend that school trusts, governing bodies, headteachers and school staff should review their policies through the lens of race and ethnicity, to ensure that they are inclusive, especially where it relates to image and presentation.

2

We recommend that schools embed anti-racist education throughout a student's academic journey to proactively combat racist language in schools. School leaders should consider opportunities across the curriculum, and not just standalone lessons, assemblies or celebration of Black History Month.

3

We recommend that the Department for Education incorporate Black writers and academics in the National Curriculum to ensure young Black students have inspirational academic role models.

4

We recommend that school leaders provide unconscious bias training for all staff at all levels.

EMPLOYMENT

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE'S EXPOSURE TO RACISM AT WORK

86%

OF YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

have heard and witnessed
racist language in the
workplace.

Regarding racist language in the workplace, 86% of young Black people with experience in the workplace have heard and witnessed racist language. 65% of young Black people claimed it was of a higher frequency as they heard or witnessed racist language ‘sometimes’, ‘regularly’ or ‘all the time’.

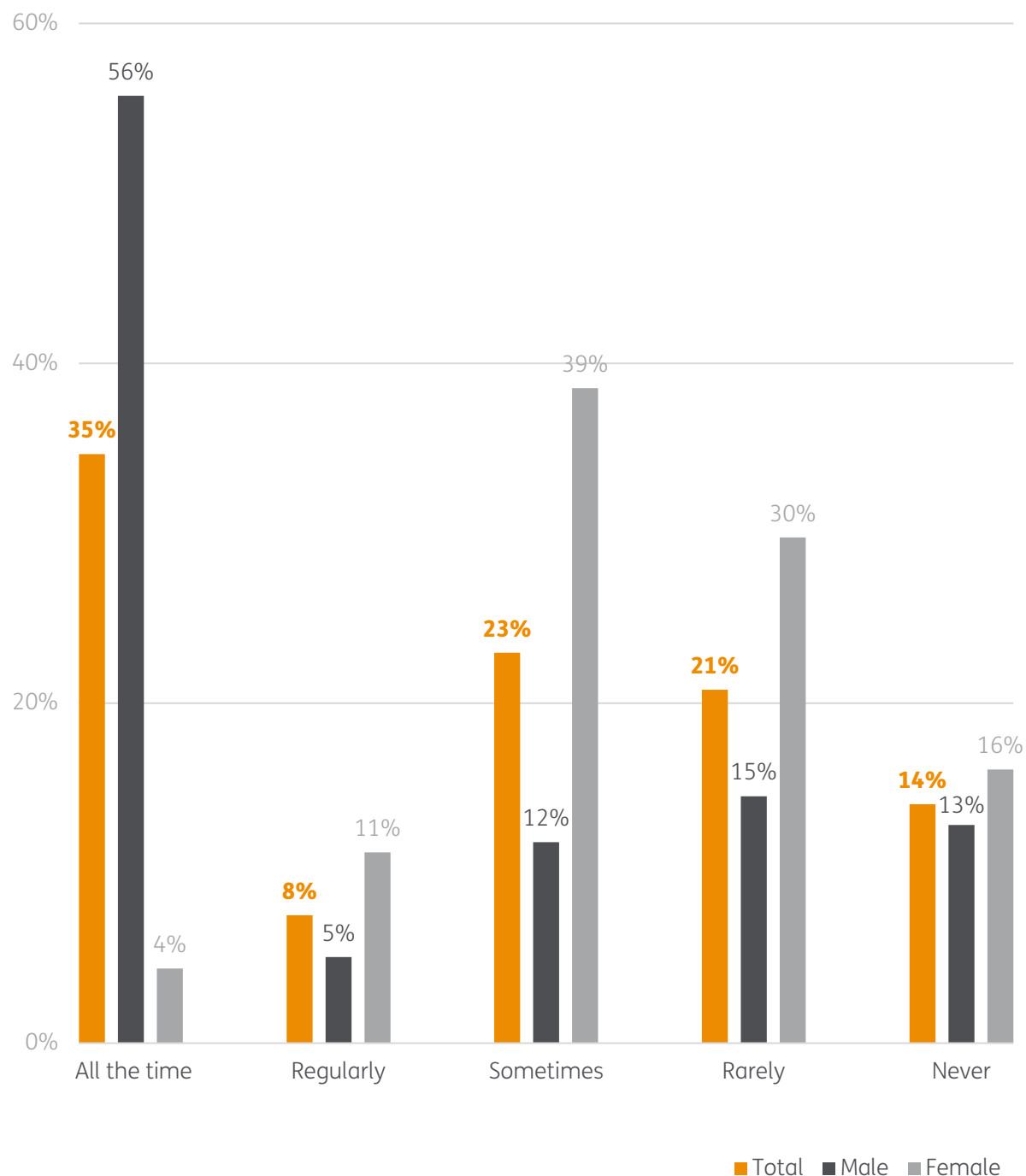
**WORKPLACES CAN
BECOME GROUND
FOR BOTH
EXPLICIT AND
IMPLICIT RACIST
LANGUAGE.**

Chart 4 displays the difference in the experience of racist language in the workplace between young Black males and young Black females with experience in the workplace, where the former heard and witnessed racist language in the workplace notably more frequently than the latter (56% and 4% respectively).

In the focus groups, young Black people explained that they experienced colleagues informing them that they were “surprised that they have been promoted” and, in some cases, were told by other colleagues that they “would not get a promotion” and to instead be “grateful for the position of being employed in the first place.” If young Black people feel that they are not supported in the workplace, this could impact their confidence at work. Essentially, the findings here can echo the conclusions drawn from the statistics on education: workplaces can become ground for both explicit and implicit racist language.

CHART 4

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU HEARD RACIST LANGUAGE OR WITNESSED RACISM IN THE WORKPLACE?



Total respondents: 505
(Excluding those answering
“not applicable” to the question)

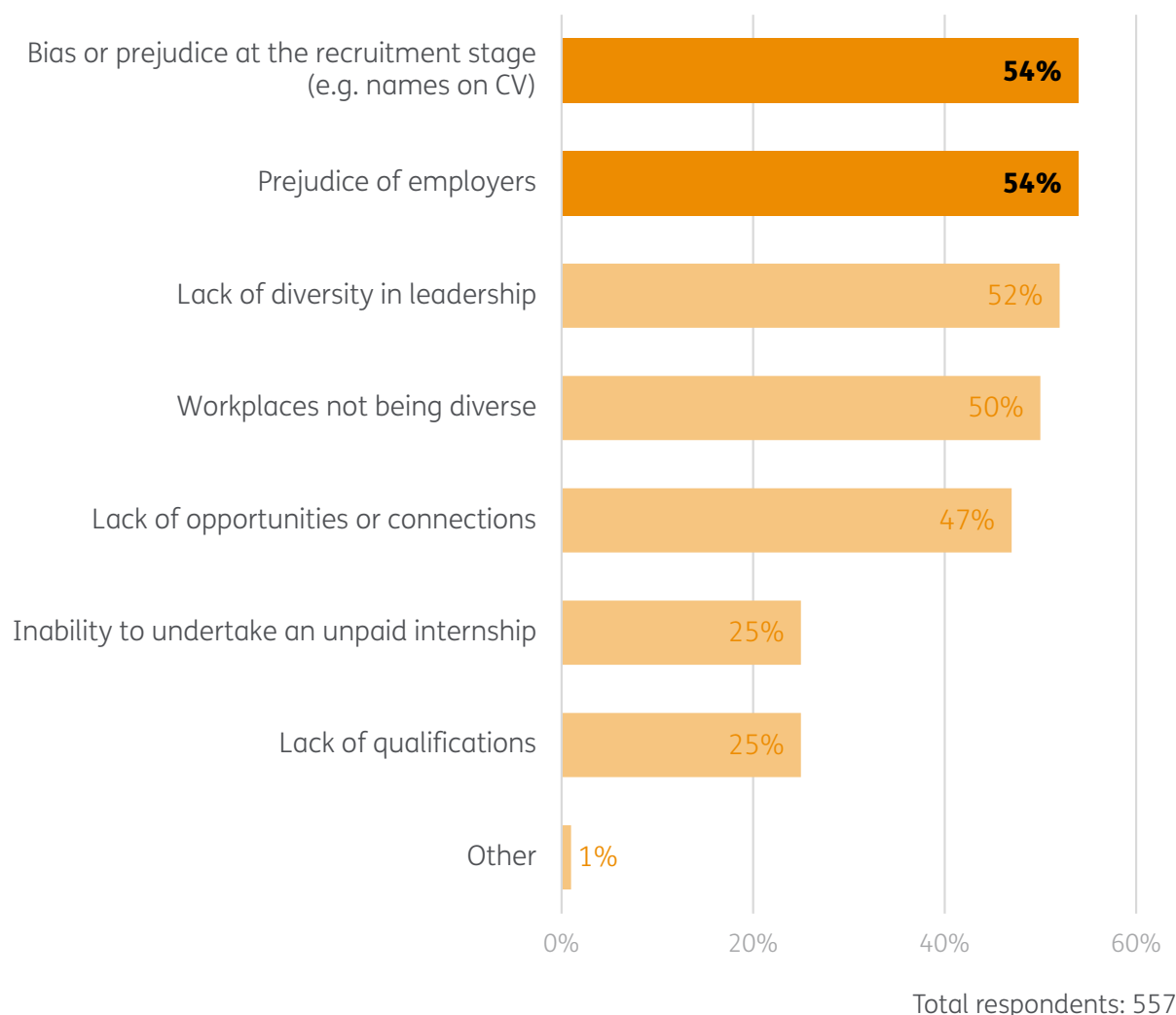
BARRIERS IN EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

As seen in Chart 5, young Black people who completed the survey said that they felt the top four barriers to employment are bias or prejudice at the recruitment stage (e.g. names on CVs) (54%); prejudice of employers (54%); lack of diversity in leadership (52%); and workplaces not being diverse (50%).

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE FELT THAT THEY ARE ALWAYS CONSCIOUS ABOUT HOW THEY ARE PERCEIVED BY OTHER EMPLOYEES, AND ARE OFTEN MADE TO FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE AT WORK.

In the focus group on employment, young Black people shared that for them to be successful in the workplace, “they need to work twice as hard” as White people, which was something their parents had also reaffirmed. Young Black people also shared that they felt the need to be exceptional just “to get a seat at the table”. Furthermore,

they shared that they have come to accept that their chances of career progression are slim, and that it can often rely on the number of Black people that are in leadership positions at organisations. Alongside the stereotypes that employers and other colleagues may have of young Black people, young people shared that these barriers to progression mean that while in the workplace, they ensure that they do not act in ways that align with stereotypes about young Black people. Young Black people shared that they distance themselves from “stereotypical behaviour”, such as speaking loudly or using slang with their peers to be accepted. Overall, young Black people felt that they are always conscious about how they are perceived by other employees, and are often made to feel uncomfortable at work.

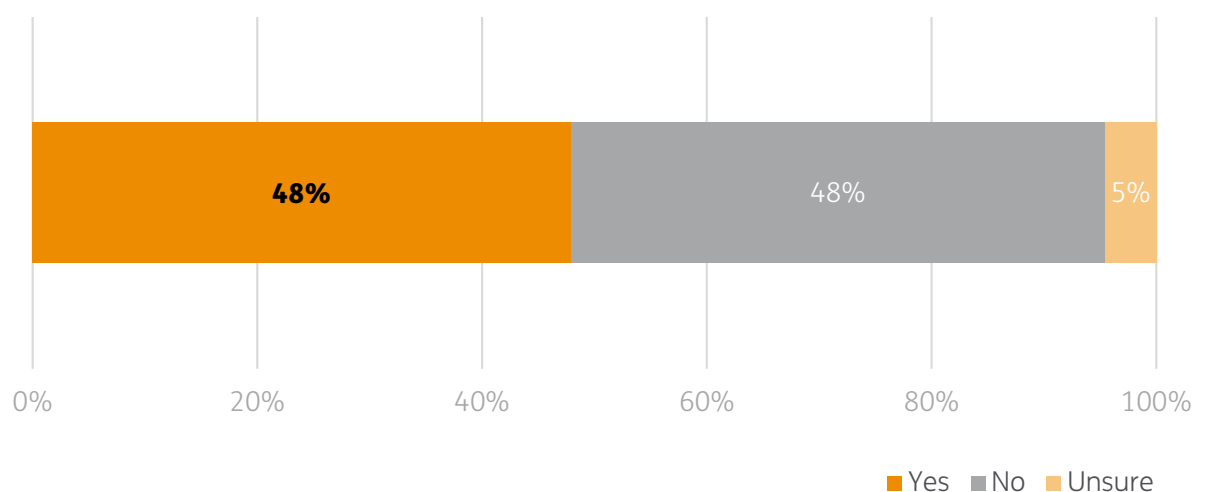
CHART 5**WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS FOR YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE GOING INTO EMPLOYMENT?****THE IMPACT OF RACISM ON YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE IN EMPLOYMENT**

Young Black people worry about employment bias, in particular that prospective employers will have a negative perception of them because of their name. Almost half (47%) of young Black people with experience of applications expressed that they felt the need to change their name when doing so. This suggests that they are aware that there could be prejudice based on ethnicity when looking for work.

In the focus groups, young Black people said that “maybe employers did not want Black people, or they are not looking for us”, and recounted experiences of using a name on their application form that did not indicate their ethnicity or, in some cases, their race. The young Black people also went on to explain that because their first name or surname may reflect their ethnicity, they feel that their application form may be under more scrutiny and so they feel it has to be perfect to be potentially considered. They also described the experience as understanding that “employers are looking for a reason not to give me the job, and because I am Black, I need to be on top of my game.” Young Black people mentioned that their parents had faced the same challenges in gaining employment that they do today, suggesting that for them, not much has changed in the years since.

CHART 6

HAVE YOU EVER FELT THE NEED TO CHANGE YOUR NAME ON AN APPLICATION FORM?



Total respondents: 549
(Excluding those who answered “Not applicable” to the question)

EMPLOYMENT SUMMARY

The research into young Black people's experience of institutional racism in employment suggests that racist language is commonplace in working environments and echoes the conclusion found in the investigation into racism in education. This is supported by accounts given by young Black people, during the focus group on employment, as they shared negative racial statements they have overheard and/or assumptions that have been directed at them. Further to this, young Black people shared that they often police themselves so as to not come across in a way that feeds into stereotypes of them as a group. They feel the need to do this in order to fit in.

In 2018, the Race Disparity Audit found that “Black people had the highest unemployment rate out of all ethnic groups.”⁵ There are of course various socioeconomic drivers and disparities behind this, and one factor discussed by the focus group was prospective employer bias; they believed that this bias had a role in the disproportionate levels of unemployment experienced by Black people more widely. Further to this, systemic racism in employment has led to young Black people being overlooked when seeking work. As a result, young Black people in both the focus group and survey expressed feeling the need to change their name on application forms to hide their ethnicity in the hope of increasing their chance of securing employment.

The findings for employment conclude that employers are responsible for removing, what can be deemed as, potentially discriminatory practices to diversify workforces and remove barriers to entry for young Black people.

⁵ Cabinet Office, [Race Disparity Audit: summary findings from the ethnicity facts and figures website](#), October 2017 (revised March 2018).

EMPLOYMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

5

We recommend that employers should actively review their recruitment practices at advertising, application, shortlisting and interview stages to assess the diversity of candidates. They should also regularly assess the retention and experiences of current Black members of staff.

6

We recommend that employers should introduce work events that celebrate and educate staff on diversity and culture.

7

We recommend that where possible, 'blind' CV selection should be used by employers across all workplaces. Details of employee names, race and/or ethnicity should not be seen by prospective employers.

8

We recommend that where this is not already in place, employers introduce mentoring and development schemes for young Black people that encourage and prepare them for leadership roles.

9

We recommend employers have a zero tolerance policy on racial discrimination in the workplace which is regularly reviewed and assessed for effectiveness of people to confidently report incidences.

10

We recommend that employers encourage unconscious bias training for all leaders and recruiting managers.

CRIME

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE'S
EXPOSURE TO RACISM IN RELATION TO CRIME

55%

OF YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

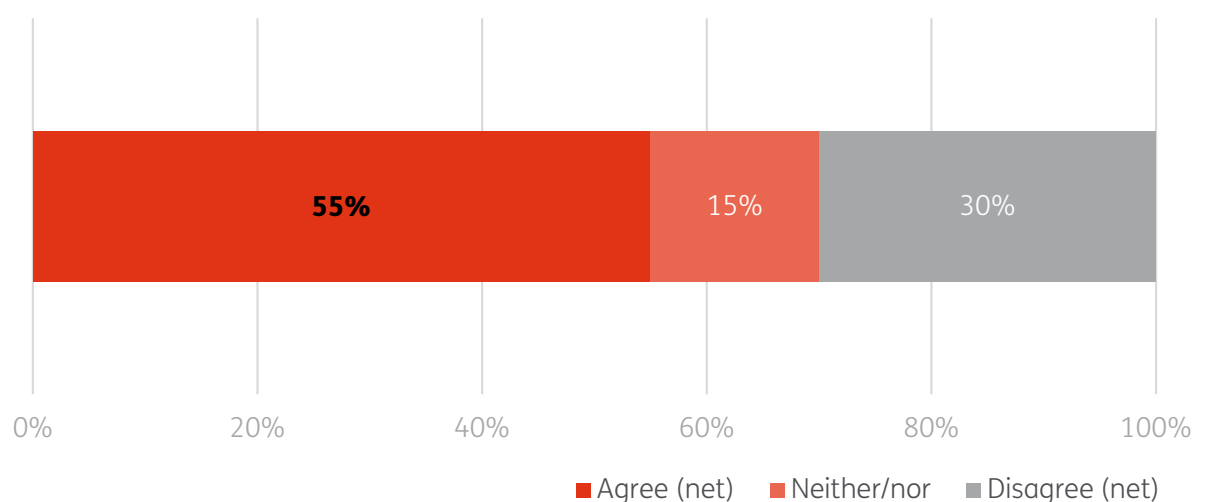
worry about being falsely
accused of a crime they
did not commit.

There is a history of challenges with Black communities in the UK and the criminal justice system. The most recent report on Black people and the Criminal Justice System found that Black people experience the highest rates of arrests, being charged and prosecuted in England and Wales.⁶

More than half of the young Black people (55%) who completed the survey are worried about being falsely accused of a crime they did not commit. This worry was discussed in the focus group on crime, where the young Black people spoke about a general perception that Black people are seen as criminals and delinquents, they felt that the Police in particular treat them as “all the same”. Furthermore, young Black people in the focus group felt that they may not be treated as individuals by the Police but rather, they are largely perceived as a homogeneous group that are often discredited.

CHART 7

HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT? “I WORRY ABOUT BEING FALSELY ACCUSED OF A CRIME.”



Respondents : 557

⁶ Ministry of Justice, Black, Asian and minority ethnic disproportionality in the criminal justice system in England and Wales, November 2016.

BARRIERS FOR YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE ENGAGING WITH POLICE

More than half of the respondents to the survey (54%) do not trust the Police to act without prejudice or discrimination and in contrast, only 29% do have trust. This is in line with UK Government figures which report that young Black 16–24-year-olds have less confidence in local police than their White peers.⁷ Moreover, the attitude of young Black people not having confidence in the Police is also evidenced by the 50% of young Black people surveyed who indicate they do not trust the legal system to deliver justice; inversely, 29% do have trust in the legal system to deliver justice.

**ALMOST
HALF OF
YOUNG BLACK
PEOPLE WORRY
ABOUT BEING
STOPPED AND
SEARCHED BY
THE POLICE.**

The focus group on crime felt that the Police appear to be “lazy” and are “unwilling to engage with the community they serve by actually investigating crime.” Young Black people feel that the Police find it easier to blame criminal activity on what is deemed as the stereotypical young Black person, and stated in the focus group that “the Police use us as scapegoats.” Young Black people also

referred to examples of young Black males in particular being accused of stealing mobile phones when in actual fact this was not found to be the case.

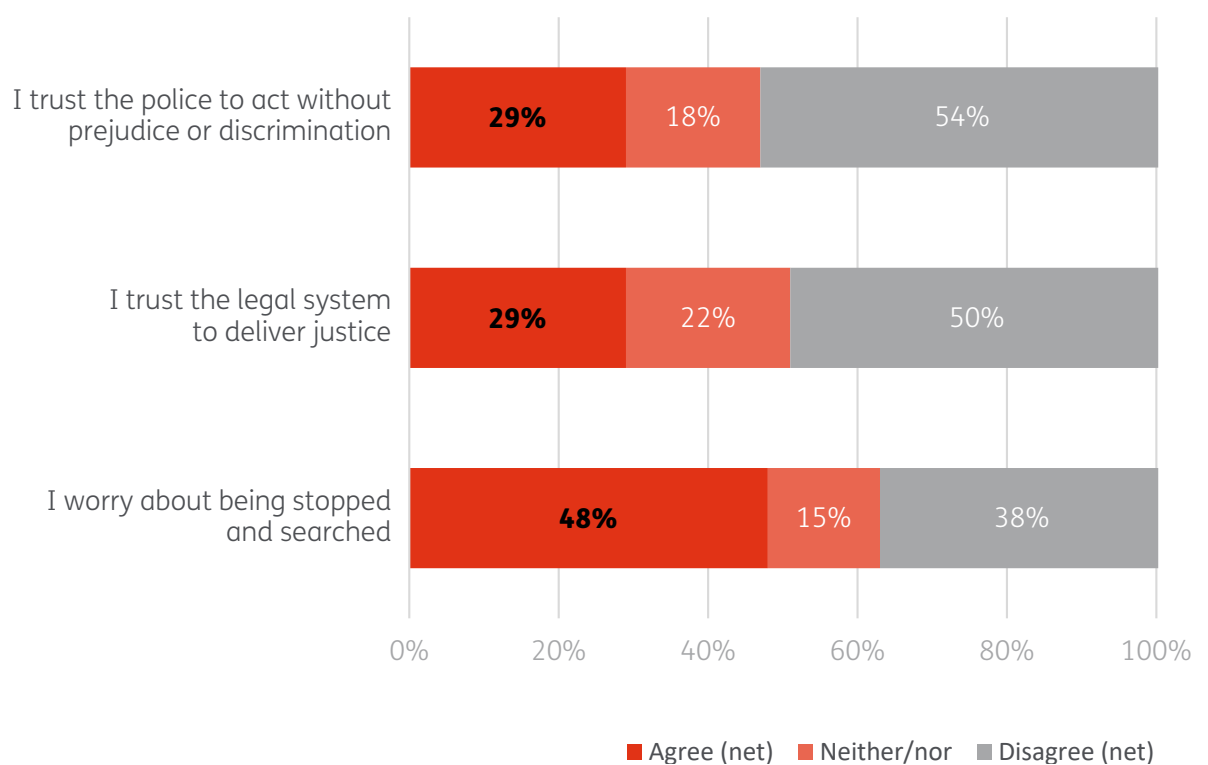
⁷ GOV.UK, [Ethnicity facts and figures: confidence in the local police](#). 4 March 2020 (last updated 30 September 2020).

Almost half of the young Black people (48%) who completed the survey worry about being stopped and searched by the Police. UK Government figures show that Black people are almost 10 times more likely than White people to be stopped and searched (38 out of 1,000 compared to 4 out of 1,000⁸). The focus group highlighted that some young Black people had been stopped and searched when with their White peers, but their White peers were not searched along with them.

Other young Black people shared that although they had never engaged with the Police, they worry about how they are viewed because of the colour of their skin, especially as they have seen the Police “parading” their power over young Black males. Further to this, 64% of young Black people in the survey said that they worry about being treated unfairly by the Police.

CHART 8

HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?



Total respondents: 557

⁸ GOV.UK, [Ethnicity facts and figures: stop and search](#). 19 March 2020 (updated 14 September 2020).

CRIME SUMMARY

Based on the survey results and the experiences that young Black people have shared, respondents feel that the stereotypical and negative perceptions that are generally held about them heighten their chances of being accused of a crime they did not commit. Young Black people felt that they are often judged on their race and suggested that this could be an inherent expectation for them to be criminals.

Young Black people are more likely than White people to be stopped and searched. The reality of this and the experiences of both their communities and peers feeds into distrust among young Black people of the Police and the legal system.

The relationship between young Black people and the Police has been tumultuous historically, with the after-effects long-lasting in both communal histories and development of practices and procedures. For young Black people today, the ways in which Police engage with them is doing little to build trust within the entirety of the legal system.

CRIME RECOMMENDATIONS

11

We recommend that the Police work with other agencies to monitor use of Knife Crime Prevention Orders and Stop and Search Powers, to ensure they are not disproportionately used against young Black people.

12

We recommend that the Police should engage proactively with outreach programmes to build trust with communities, utilising Local Community Safety Partnerships, youth workers and Violence Reduction Units.

13

We recommend that funding into youth services in high crime areas is increased to ensure all young people have a safe place to go and a trusted adult to speak to.

14

We recommend unconscious bias training should be built into the induction process of new police officers and refreshed on an annual basis.

15

We recommend that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services gather data on individuals targeted by Stop and Search. This should be reported to the Home Office on an annual basis and investigated to continually monitor the potential disproportionate impacts of Stop and Search on communities.

16

We recommend that the Home Office develop Statutory Guidance on the use of Stop and Search, Knife Crime Prevention Orders and the proposed Serious Violence Reduction Orders to ensure that the police force understand the correct application of these powers.

HEALTH

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE'S EXPOSURE TO INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN HEALTH SERVICES

When asked about what was a barrier to good physical health, 27% of young Black people said it was because they distrust the NHS. Young Black people said that they worried about being misdiagnosed in hospitals because they feel there is a general unawareness of how different diseases affect Black people. Young Black people felt as though they are continuously let down by health professionals who they feel are uninformed and may have limited knowledge in terms of caring for Black patients in comparison to other ethnic groups.

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE SAID THAT THEY WORRIED ABOUT BEING MISDIAGNOSED IN HOSPITALS BECAUSE THEY FEEL THERE IS A GENERAL UNAWARENESS OF HOW DIFFERENT DISEASES AFFECT BLACK PEOPLE.

Young Black people referenced the Mind the Gap handbook that has recently been introduced into various medical schools. The aim of the handbook is to educate health professionals and the general public on how clinical signs appear on Black skin. Young Black people in the focus group felt disappointed that this had taken until 2020 to materialise. The focus group shared that this perpetuates the feeling that Black people are an afterthought across state institutions.

Young Black people in the focus group also highlighted there may be an increased risk of death that could be caused by a lack of awareness among health professionals. The young people referenced the finding that Black women are five times more likely to die in childbirth⁹ than White women. Young Black people felt that their care and outcomes in health services should have parity with their White peers.

⁹ Maternal, Newborn and Infant Clinical Outcome Review Programme, [Saving lives, improving mothers' care: surveillance of maternal deaths in the UK 2012–14 and lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland confidential enquiries into maternal deaths and morbidity 2009–14](#). December 2016.

In the focus group on health, young Black people felt that their individual and shared experiences of racism negatively impacted their mental health, and can impact their outlook on life. The 2016 Race Disparity Audit reported that adults from an Indian background reported the highest average ratings out of 10 for life satisfaction (7.81), feeling that things they do in life are worthwhile (7.90), and happiness (7.75), whereas adults from a Black background reported the lowest ratings for these three measures (7.22, 7.65, 7.35) and adults from a White background edged towards the higher end (7.72, 7.89, 7.54).^{10 11} This highlights the negative feeling that Black people can have towards life, and their general perception of how their life is progressing. Young Black people also shared that the instances of police brutality circulated on social media and the heightened awareness of racism in 2020 resulted in them feeling drained and anxious.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BARRIERS TO MAINTAINING GOOD PHYSICAL HEALTH?

27%

LACK OF TRUST IN THE NHS

Total respondents: 557

¹⁰ Cabinet Office, [Race Disparity Audit: summary findings from the ethnicity facts and figures website](#), October 2017 (revised March 2018).

¹¹ ONS, [Personal well-being in the UK: July 2017 to June 2018](#). 28 November 2018.

BARRIERS FOR YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE IN HEALTH SERVICES

Previous research shows that Black adults were more likely than adults in other ethnic groups to have been sectioned under the Mental Health Act in England.¹² Young Black people from the focus group felt that White patients are given more patience and time to be heard and understood, while for Black patients (especially Black male patients), health professionals are more likely to view them as ‘aggressive’, and because of this they felt Black patients are more likely to be sectioned.

In the focus group on health, young Black people shared experiences where GPs and doctors ignored their requests for pain medication. Young Black people felt that the denial of pain medication stems from false beliefs and inaccurate assumptions about Black people. They gave historical examples of enslaved Black people undergoing operations without the use of anaesthetic because of the false belief that Black people are stronger than other ethnic groups. This is a view that the young Black people we spoke to believe is still held today by people working in health services.

¹² GOV.UK, [Ethnicity facts and figures: detentions under the Mental Health Act](#). 26 May 2020.

THE IMPACT OF RACISM ON YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND THEIR EXPERIENCES IN HEALTH SERVICES

In the focus group, the main message outlined by young people was that racism made them feel like they were going 'crazy', especially when strangers would make comments about them in public or stare in intimidating ways. Furthermore, young Black people felt that their associated feelings of anxiety and paranoia were disregarded by people working in health services such as GPs who invalidated their need for mental health support due to their experiences of racism.

The young Black people in the focus group shared the damaging effects that racism has on their mental health. They felt that the racism they experienced in all areas of life, particularly in education and employment, caused feelings of paranoia, mental exhaustion and mild depression. Young Black people felt that they overthought daily activities and found themselves questioning whether their friends were laughing at them or with them at many points in their friendships.

These comments reflect previous research conducted by the Mental Health Foundation which found that in the general adult population, Black women were the most likely to have experienced a common mental disorder such as anxiety or depression in the last week, and Black men were the most likely to have experienced a psychotic disorder in the past year.¹³

¹³ Cabinet Office, [Race Disparity Audit: summary findings from the ethnicity facts and figures website](#). October 2017(revised March 2018).

HEALTH SUMMARY

Overall, racism has damaging effects on a young Black person's mental health, and young people have shared that especially with the increased social media circulation of the brutality faced by Black people across the world, they find they are mentally drained and experience heightened emotions such as paranoia, and anxiety. In the focus group on health, young Black people felt as if GPs invalidate or downplay their need to receive mental health support caused by racism they experience, and also felt that the staff working in health services could contribute to the poor mental health that young Black people experience.

Young Black people felt that health professionals may not be as understanding and hold unconscious bias towards Black patients, which could in turn influence how health professionals generally treat or diagnose them. More specifically, young Black people felt that unconscious bias could contribute to the amount of Black patients who are sectioned and detained under the Mental Health Act in comparison to other ethnic groups. Additionally, young Black people responded to the statistic that Black women are five times more likely to die in childbirth than White women, and said that they felt that their health should be treated with parity by health professionals.

HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

17

We recommend that the Department of Health and Social Care increase funding into the research of conditions disproportionately affecting Black people.

18

We recommend that the NHS commissions a review that looks at the outcomes and experiences of Black people within health services.

19

We recommend that the Department of Health and Social Care creates specific funding for targeting public health messages into Black communities.

20

We recommend that the NHS ensures that medical standards include knowledge and understanding of ailments that specifically affect Black people.

21

We recommend that all patient-facing NHS workers undertake cultural competence training.

22

We recommend that funding for both preventative and crisis mental health services is increased and targeted towards young Black people.

FINANCE

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE'S EXPOSURE TO FINANCIAL INSECURITY

Two-fifths (41%) attribute ‘lack of employment’ as one of the main reasons why housing instability exists among young Black people, and 41% also thought that ‘unstable employment’ was a key barrier. The survey also finds that 43% of young Black people think that the need for Black families to receive additional finance from the state is due to unconscious biases of employers. These statistics are supported by the employment section of this report; this suggests that employment is key to housing and financial stability among young Black people.

BARRIERS TO FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

In the focus group on finance, young Black people felt that financial education is linked to both ethnicity and class, and also felt that class is mainly determined by employment. Young Black people also felt that Black people who are constantly overlooked when applying for jobs are potentially in a position where they cannot make informed decisions about their finances because they are constantly trying to make ends meet. Where parents or guardians do not make informed decisions about their finances, young Black people shared that this negatively impacts their decision making in finances too. One participant in the focus group on finance stated that “our parents cannot pass on what they do not have, and much of what they do not have is because of the systems in place.”

The survey shows that 27% of young Black people thought housing instability existed because of an inability to find or save a rental deposit. The findings from the focus groups could suggest that if families do not have savings or make good financial decisions, they would be unable to support their children with helping towards a rental deposit, where perhaps in other communities, families might provide financial support.

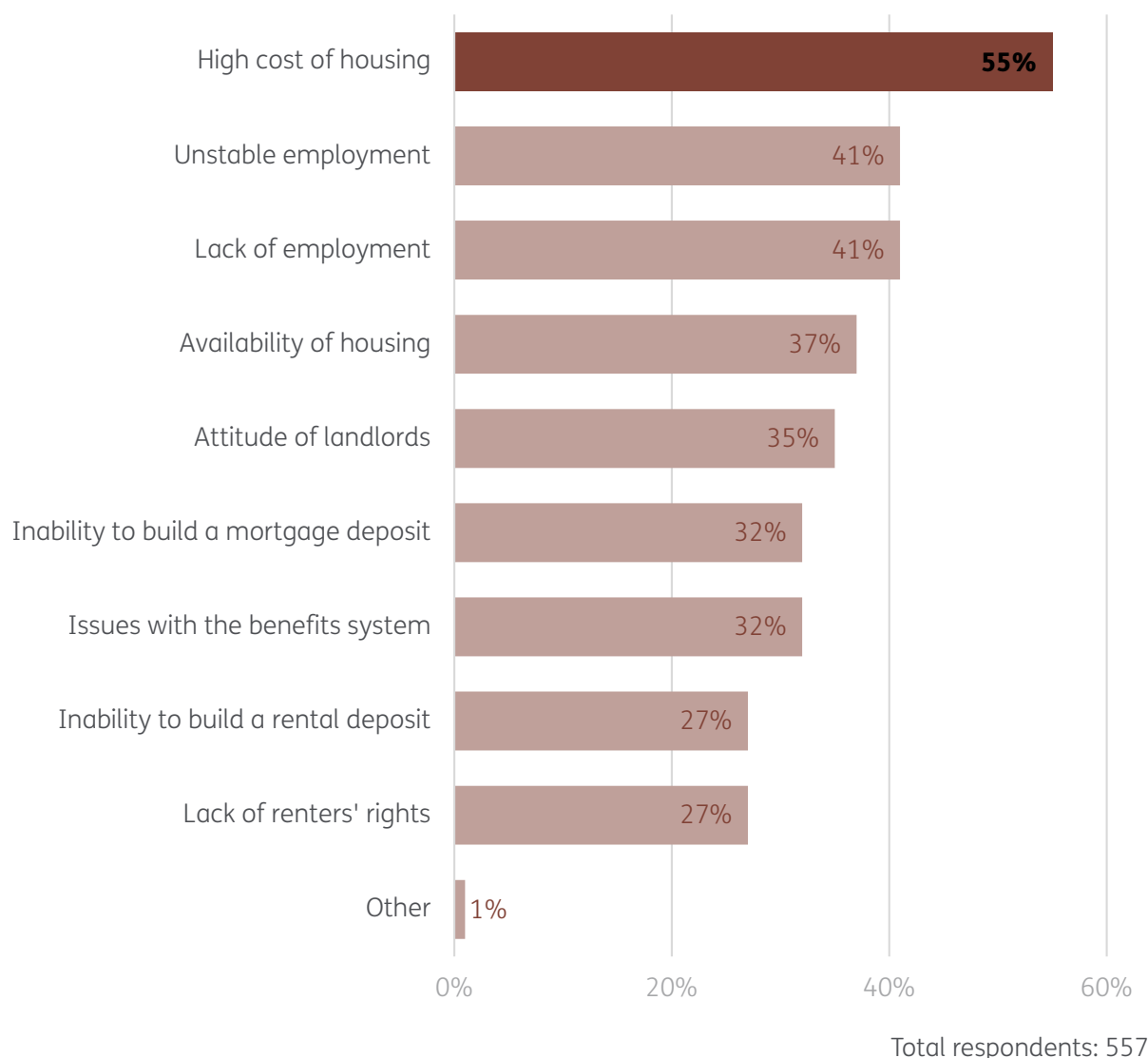
IMPACT OF FINANCIAL INSTABILITY FOR YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

58% of the respondents from the survey indicated that they or their family had received welfare benefits (e.g. Universal Credit or Housing Benefit) and this arguably could be seen as a result of employment instability. Indeed, national data found that among all ethnic groups, Black families were the second-most likely to receive income-related benefits (29%, second only to Bangladeshi families at 32%).¹⁴

A third (32%) of young Black people stated in the survey that they felt issues with the benefits system was the reason housing instability exists. In the focus group, young Black people felt that when they used the Job Centre, staff members appeared to be condescending – a young Black woman said she felt like “employees of the Job Centre think that I am uneducated.” Young Black people felt that “racism fuels a cycle of survival, and as a young Black person, you learn to survive in a society that is not built to accommodate your existence.”



¹⁴ GOV.UK, [Ethnicity facts and figures: State support](#). 15 August 2019.

CHART 9**WHY DO YOU THINK HOUSING INSTABILITY EXISTS?****FINANCE SUMMARY**

The findings suggest that young Black people experience increased financial hardship and are less able to build their lives and establish themselves independently because of the added barriers that exist within employment, financial education and welfare support. Racism experienced within employment has a collateral effect on other areas of life, primarily affecting finance and housing stability.

FINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

23

We recommend that the Department for Education develop financial education as part of the National Curriculum. In addition to this, we recommend that the Department should run an awareness campaign aimed at increasing financial education of young people.

24

We recommend that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government commission a review on housing instability within the Black community.

25

We recommend that all Job Centre frontline staff are encouraged to attend unconscious bias training.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report was to investigate how young Black people in the UK experience institutional racism. The report found that:

YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE

experience racism both in school and work.

feel the need to change to be accepted in society.

feel racial stereotypes could negatively impact their academic attainment.

feel that employer prejudice affects their chances of getting a job.

said they do not trust the Police to act fairly towards them.

said they distrust health services.

feel they face financial instability because society is exclusive and prejudiced.

Young Black people experience prejudice and bias in education, employment, within the criminal justice system, in health services and in finance. Further to this, the prejudice that young Black people experience in these areas of society places them at a disadvantage. This report goes some way to evidence that young Black people experience institutional racism, which makes life difficult for a young Black person living in the UK. To improve the lives and experiences of young Black people in a meaningful way, systems embedded within institutions must be reviewed and changed.

This report concludes with a quote taken from one of the focus groups that contributed to this research. It is a fitting description of what institutional racism is, and how it feels as a young Black person living in the UK, and it is a quote that we hope sparks lasting change.

“EXPERIENCING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AS A YOUNG BLACK PERSON IN THE UK FEELS LIKE BEING ATTACKED FROM ALL DIRECTIONS, FROM EVERYTHING YOU BELONG TO. IN ALL AREAS OF YOUR LIFE, AND FOR REASONS OUTSIDE OF YOUR CONTROL, YOU FEEL LIKE YOU’RE CONSTANTLY LOSING.”

THANK YOU

YMCA England & Wales would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the survey or focus groups which form the foundation of this report. We’d like to extend a special thank you to the BAME members of the YMCA Youth Advisory Group who co-designed this report, and the E8 group for guiding the process and collating the findings.



YMCA ENGLAND & WALES

10-11 Charterhouse Square

London EC1M 6EH

Charity number: 212810

For more information about this research,
please contact: policy@ymca.org.uk

ymca.org.uk



YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

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HEALTH & WELLBEING

TRAINING & EDUCATION