

Response to the Call for Evidence on Ethnic Disparities and Inequality in the UK

January 2021

A joint response from academics, politicians, professionals and organisations who come from and represent the East Asian and South East Asian communities in the UK.



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SIMETRICA Jacobs

Kanlungan
Empowering Filipino Migrants

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Introduction

This response focuses on disparities, inequalities and racism experienced by the East Asian and South East Asian population in the UK. East Asia is comprised of China; Japan; North Korea; South Korea; Mongolia; and Taiwan. South East Asia includes Brunei; Burma (Myanmar); Cambodia; Timor-Leste; Indonesia; Laos; Malaysia; the Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; and Vietnam. We also include their diasporas, including British East and South East Asian people, many of whom have been born here, or had family in the UK for several generations. In this report we refer to these countries and regions collectively as **ESEA**. ESEA people in Britain are one of the fastest growing 'ethnic' groupings, with the highest percentage of international students (ONS, 2011).

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Government's call for evidence on this important issue. We are responding to questions 1-5, 7, 8 and 10. All of the authors and contributors are of ESEA descent and live in the UK. We draw on our experiences of racism and discrimination in the UK and our research in this area and we provide supporting evidence wherever possible (from a range of sources including Government data, national surveys, academic research and news publications). We also provide a number of key recommendations for the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and the UK Government.

Organisations

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) www.lse.ac.uk

University College London (UCL) www.ucl.ac.uk

City University of London www.city.ac.uk

Simetrica-Jacobs are global leaders in wellbeing and social value analysis. Simetrica-Jacobs conducts research for governments and private sector organisations on the drivers of wellbeing and the social impact created by policies and projects. www.simetrica.co.uk

End the Virus of Racism is an anti-racism campaign group formed in May 2020, with the aim of raising awareness of and tackling racism faced by East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) people in the UK. We are building the UK's first non-profit organisation with the primary purpose of preventing and seeking justice for racism faced by ESEA people in the UK. www.endthevirusofracism.com

besea.n (Britain's East and South East Asian Network) is an organisation that strives for positive media representation of ESEA people in the UK. besea.n aims to tackle negative representation by holding government and media institutions to account, providing educational resources to individuals and organisations, pushing for current and inclusive language, shining a light on BESEA talent and businesses and establishing a network of ESEA people to share knowledge and resources. www.besean.co.uk

ESA Scotland is Scotland's first non-profit dedicated to mobilising democratic civil participation of East and Southeast Asian (ESA) people in Scottish society. ESAS aims to empower under-represented ESA communities through advocating 'social inclusion', 'active citizenship' whilst offering practical support and signposting. www.esascotland.org

Kanlungan is a registered charity consisting of several Filipino community organisations working closely together for the welfare and interests of the Filipino and other migrant communities in Britain. www.kanlungan.org.uk

Asian Leadership Collective CIC strives to increase and amplify leadership representation of East and South East Asian communities within companies and organisations across professional sectors in the UK. We support and encourage allies in their journey for inclusivity and equality; providing a safe space for learning and engaging with the ESEA community. www.asianleadership.co.uk

SEEAC (Southeast and East Asian Centre) is the first UK organisation working to explicitly provide support to members of all Southeast and East Asian communities. It works with diverse members of ESEA communities, but particularly with the most vulnerable and under-represented members of the migrant community.

Responses to questions in the call for evidence

Q1. What do you consider to be the main causes of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK, and why?

It is important to highlight that all forms of racism and racial discrimination affect ESEA people in the UK in many different ways. ESEA is a diverse region with different cultures and histories, and the needs and experiences of ESEA people in the UK differ significantly.

History of ESEA racism and discrimination

There is a long history of structural racism and discrimination against ESEA people in the UK (McHugh, 2014¹; Adamson et al 2009²; Yeh 2014³; BBC⁴ ⁵). For decades in the UK, ESEA people have experienced hate crimes; racial profiling; racial abuse; poorer health outcomes than white people; discrimination in schools and universities; fewer opportunities for career progression and discrimination in the workplace⁶; differential and biased treatment by police; and severe under-representation in all walks of life in the UK including in media ⁷, arts and culture, education, business leadership, sport, Government and politics⁸. This starts at a young age in the UK, with severe levels of bullying and physical and verbal abuse of ESEA pupils in UK schools,⁹ which is not treated seriously enough.

Increasing ESEA racial abuse

Racial abuse has also dramatically increased during Covid-19, as people in the UK and other countries like the US have apportioned blame for the disease on China and anyone who is racialised as Chinese¹⁰. [Fernand de Varennes](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, reported that politicians and groups were exploiting fears surrounding the disease to scapegoat communities, particularly Chinese and other ESEAs, leading to a rise in violence against them. An Ipsos Mori poll found that [1 in 7 people](#) in the UK intentionally avoid people of Chinese origin or appearance. Numerous incidents were reported of ESEAs being [assaulted](#), [having their jaw broken](#), [having their clothes torn off](#), [being spat on](#), and [having their restaurants vandalised](#). In May 2020, the UK police reported [a 21% increase](#) in anti-East Asian hate crimes to the House of Commons. Data from the London Met show that such hate crimes tripled in the first quarter of this year and doubled in the second quarter as compared to previous years. Data on hate crimes towards people of Chinese ethnicity show a tripling in the current months, suggesting no relief in the burden of hate crime on our communities¹¹. Elsewhere in the country, the picture has been similar. The Midlands police reported a doubling of hate crime towards ESEAs¹². The Essex police found a staggering 56% of hate crimes recorded between March and September 2020 were directed towards the East Asian community, a 75% increase compared to the same period last year¹³. This is a significant problem for the UK since the ESEA population is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in this country¹⁴.

Lack of diverse data collection, limited by categorisation

Lack of data hampers policy action to address racial injustices against ESEAs. There is a severe lack of data in the UK for ESEA people as ethnicity data is too narrow and limiting, as ESEA people either have to choose 'Chinese', 'Asian' (which merges ESEA people with other South Asian groups) or 'Other' when completing surveys. This is a symptom of wider

¹ <https://cers.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/97/2015/01/Racialisation-of-East-Asians-in-Australia-.docx.pdf>

² <https://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/hidden-from-public-view-racism-against-the-uks-chinese-population/r/a11G00000017zMilAI>

³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2014.859288>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-30538929>

⁵ <http://halfandhalf.org.uk/dr.htm>

⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf

⁷ A recent study showed that East Asian actors are both under-represented and badly represented in UK TV and film. <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/east-asian-actors-are-severely-under-represented-on-tv-according-to-major-new-research>

⁸ <https://thecolourofpower.com/>

⁹ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/chinese-students-uk-report-increased-racism-and-discrimination>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/aug/29/far-right-using-coronavirus-as-excuse-to-attack-chinese-and-south-east-asians>

¹¹ <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/covid-19-dashboard/>

¹² <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/hate-crimes-against-chinese-japanese-18640695>

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/477639009391463/posts/1002720100216682/>

¹⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11>

systematic discrimination and under-representation of ESEA people in the UK. It assumes that all groups within the ESEA community are homogenous and experience the same levels of discrimination. The result is that evidence on racism and disparities for ESEA people in the UK is hard to come by, but data and studies do exist.

In fact, the data tells us that people of Chinese heritage in the UK reported the highest levels of racism in 2020 (You Gov, 2020¹⁵). This is not just due to the effects of Covid-19 either; in 2017, the Guardian reported that Chinese people in the UK reported the highest levels of racial harassment¹⁶. These studies focus on Chinese people because of the aforementioned lack of data for ESEA, but there is no reason to believe why these high rates of discrimination would not affect other ESEA groups as well.

We believe that racial and ethnic disparities for ESEA communities in the UK arise due to systemic racism and severe under-representation of ESEA people in positions of power.

Under-representation of ESEAs in UK senior positions

Indeed the **Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities**, the very organisation which has submitted this Call for Evidence, is a clear case in point: the Commission does not include a single person of ESEA heritage and the 10 questions posed to the public are very much centred around issues faced by Black and South Asian communities in the UK (for example, there are no questions in relation to the treatment of overseas students in the UK; self-harm and bullying; and there is no discussion of hate crimes towards ESEA people during Covid-19). In a study conducted by the London School of Economics (forthcoming in early 2021) on race in the UK, we found that only 11% of a large sample of BAME people in the UK (n=2,100+) felt that the Commission was inclusive and diverse enough, with people of Arab and ESEA descent most likely to rate the Commission as not being diverse enough. Furthermore, no ESEA people are part of the management for the Government Equalities Office and no ESEAs are part of the Greater London Recovery Board. Until only two weeks ago, no ESEAs were present on the government's Equality and Human Rights Commission. These are systematic and continuous acts of omission and serve as evidence of the severity in under-representation of ESEA people and communities, even at the highest levels of Government decision-making in this country.

More widely, the *Colour of Power 2020* report, which looks at the representation of BAME people in the UK's most powerful institutions (covering Government, the private sector, education, sport, and charities), finds that only 4.7% of the 1,099 most powerful positions in the UK are filled by non-white individuals¹⁷. The statistics are even worse for ESEA people. Only three senior positions of power in the UK are held by ESEA people (in leading consultancy firms and in education). Whilst there are some ESEA people in Government positions none are deemed to be in powerful positions according to this report and there are also no ESEA people in positions of power in the media in the UK. Altogether ESEA people only fill 0.27% of the most powerful positions in the UK, which is far below the proportion of ESEA people in this country (this is around 1% but even this is a severe under-representation because of the aforementioned problems with ethnic reporting data in the UK). A recent study by YouGov on racism in the UK¹⁸ found that, across all ethnic minority groups (not just East Asians), the majority of people felt that East Asian people were under-represented in politics, journalism, TV, scientists and experts, sports, and industry and business leadership.

Institutional racism

Institutional structures that lead to under-representation of ESEA people leads to racial stereotyping, a poor understanding of the nuances and needs of different ESEA backgrounds and a complete lack of knowledge of racism and racial disparities faced by ESEA people. This starts at an early age in the UK schooling system and goes all the way through to higher education (University of Surrey¹⁹). For example, a study by Nishimuta (2008²⁰) found that a high number of Japanese students in UK universities (84%) report experiencing racial discrimination and Brooks (2017²¹) finds that references to British East Asian students in the media tend "to have a racial undertone" and that attitudes to learning amongst British East Asian parents were also subject to criticism in the UK media, with continued reference to the

¹⁵ <https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/6pg6w1fadp/YouGov%20Racism%20BAME%20June%202020%202.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/19/chinese-community-reports-highest-proportion-of-racial-harassment-in-britain>

¹⁷ <https://thecolourofpower.com/key-findings/key-findings/>

¹⁸ <https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/6pg6w1fadp/YouGov%20Racism%20BAME%20June%202020%202.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/07/170711092657.htm>

²⁰ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13691830701708692?journalCode=cjms20>

²¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1315857>

‘pushiness’ of this group in regards to academia. Brooks concludes that British East Asians are singled out for negative coverage in the UK media and press more than any other minority ethnic group.

Brooks notes that overseas East Asians are recognised as an important source of income for UK universities and are now keeping our universities alive economically. However, from the experience of our academic contributors of teaching in universities, ESEA students are constantly at risk – they suffer chronic stress and anxiety, self-harm, targeted robbery, sexual abuse, and sexual health issues. There is significant stereotyping of ESEA students amongst teaching staff in regards to participation, learning abilities, personality and characteristics. Targeted support for ESEA students is required all the way through the education system in the UK.

There is a lack of ESEA teachers, and absence of ESEA issues in the national curriculum and ESEA pupils are often treated as a homogenous group who are expected to succeed academically and who do not need any support. This is the well-known Model Minority stereotype, which ESEA people do not accept, and which has been fiercely criticised (Yeh, 2014). The Model Minority stereotype distracts from wider issues of racism and disparities faced by ESEA people and results in ESEA communities being completely ignored in discussions regarding race and inequalities in the UK.

Inclusive ESEA representation in the UK

Institutions in the UK need to be more inclusive of ESEA people and need a more in-depth understanding of the different cultures, histories, challenges and needs of ESEA communities in the UK. This, we believe, should start in the educational system, but there is also an urgent need for significantly more ESEA representation in positions of power, especially in Government and law-making authorities. Tied to this we recommend more mentorship and sponsorship programmes for ESEA people so that they are able to progress in various institutions in the UK. There is a well-established literature in the US and Australia on the Bamboo Ceiling and the barriers to ESEA people progressing in the workplace. This literature and its recommendations need to be taken on board, addressed and, consequentially, implemented in the UK^{22 23}.

We also recommend an immediate change in the way that ethnicity data is administered and collected in the UK to have a much fuller representation of ESEA ethnic groups (for example, separate reporting categories for ESEA people).

Finally, an independent and diverse Commission and Enquiry should be established to look at racial disparities and racism towards ESEA people in the UK with an immediate focus on racism during Covid-19.

Q2. What could be done to improve representation, retention and progression opportunities for people of different ethnic backgrounds in public sector workforces (for example, in education, healthcare or policing)?

As set out in our response to Question 1, ESEA people suffer from the lowest levels of representation in jobs of power including public sector jobs. Again, data is an issue here but it is clear from everyday life that there are very few ESEA teachers and ESEA people in the police force in the UK.

ESEA pay and grade disparity

There is a more substantial number of ESEA people in healthcare jobs especially people from the Philippines who, alongside people from India, make up the largest group of foreign staff in the NHS (House of Commons, 2020²⁴). The next largest ESEA groups in the NHS are Chinese, Singaporean and Japanese but their numbers are far fewer. Despite the larger number of the workforce coming from ESEA backgrounds, ESEA staff tend to be in low paying, low grade jobs rather than in senior management positions, as reported by the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard Report (September 2020). This also tends to be the case in jobs for ESEA people employed in the education sector. From the personal experiences of some of the authors who have worked in the civil service, there is also a clear lack of ESEA representation in senior civil servant positions and in politics more generally.

²² <https://www.russellreynolds.com/insights/thought-leadership/shattering-bamboo-ceiling-addressing-asian-american-under%E2%80%93representation-c-suite>

²³ <https://www.harpercollins.com/products/breaking-the-bamboo-ceiling-jane-hyun?variant=32122926039074>

²⁴ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7783/>

Greater ESEA representation across all levels of companies and institutions needed

Overall, ESEA people are very poorly represented in public sector jobs and certainly in senior public sector jobs with power. There are clear problems because of this - firstly, the returns to education (the level of salary associated with every additional year of formal education) for ESEA people tend to be lower because they are stuck in low grade jobs (Friedman and Krackhardt 1997²⁵ and forthcoming LSE research paper). Secondly, with reference to the public sector, the lack of ESEA representation leads to the exclusion of ESEA people's needs, opinions and presence in public debate and in policy making which exacerbates racial and ethnic diversities for ESEA people.

This, we feel, is in large part due to racial stereotyping of ESEA people as meek, submissive and quiet employees who are not leadership material and are better suited to technical positions or menial jobs (Hyun, 2005²⁶). Indeed, there is scientific evidence from behavioural studies that shows that when ESEA people attempt to progress or become a threat in the workplace, their white counterparts become aggressive and develop negative thoughts about ESEA people (Berdahl and Min, 2012²⁷). These behaviours are embodied in the concept of the Bamboo Ceiling, a term first coined in the US to describe the processes and barriers that serve to exclude ESEA people from executive positions on the basis of subjective factors such as "lack of leadership potential" and "lack of communication skills" that cannot actually be explained by job performance or qualifications (Hyun, 2005). This issue is prevalent across all Western societies – for example, in Australia, 10% of the population is Asian, but only 1.4% of senior positions in the country are filled by Asian people, which is similar to the *Colour of Power* report findings.

Furthermore, discrimination of ESEA people also occurs as the job application stage. Studies show that having an ESEA name significantly reduces one's chances of being invited to a job interview (by around 50%) leading to the recent phenomenon of 'name whitening' amongst ESEA graduates²⁸.

The damaging model minority stereotype is dangerous and has reinforced ESEA people to falsely believe they are not discriminated against, making them hesitant to speak up when there is an issue, which further exacerbates the problems of the Bamboo Ceiling and under-representation (concerns by ESEA people that their complaints won't be taken seriously – see our responses to questions 7 and 8 below – is another reason why they may not feel comfortable in reporting incidents of racism). Evidence from the US shows that ESEA people experience the highest rates of racial discrimination at work (31% for ESEAs compared to 26% for African Americans), but that due to cultural and stereotyping pressures, of all cases of racial discrimination that are formally reported and taken to court in the US 83% are by African Americans and only 3% are by ESEA.

Recommendations

A tremendous amount of action needs to take place to make public sector jobs and especially senior positions more inclusive of ESEA people in the UK. We recommend the following:

- Better data generally on ESEA people and specifically on ESEA people in the UK workplace.
 - We need data that monitors the number of ESEA people in work in the UK and their positions.
 - A study on pay and grade of ESEA people in the UK is an urgent requirement.
 - Any wage gaps and discrepancies between experience and qualifications on the one hand and salary and seniority on the other for ESEA people must be addressed in the public sector.
- Leadership programmes developed for ESEA employees to recognise their contributions and to help them progress in organisations; addressing ESEA specific entry into market and career progression
- Representation of ESEA staff, interests, needs, and inclusion in case studies in diversity training. ESEA people are often completely ignored in any type of diversity and inclusion training.
- Greater diversity in hiring policy in the UK to properly include ESEA people.
- Where used, employment quotas should fully incorporate ESEA perspectives and people.
- Many companies have dedicated support groups for Black and South Asian staff, but all too often, ESEA staff are ignored. They are not recognised as a minority group, nor are they provided support groups in the workplace. Public sector organisations should lead the way by creating ESEA support and employee resource groups for staff. These

²⁵ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0021886397333004>

²⁶ https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Breaking_the_Bamboo_Ceiling.html?id=VOGs9NXG0kAC&redir_esc=y

²⁷ <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Prescriptive-stereotypes-and-workplace-consequences-Berdahl-Min/1e46ecaa000a7a653275a62c592ccf20a266d3ba>

²⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/17/jobs-search-hiring-racial-discrimination-resume-whitening-callbacks>

groups must be aware of the different issues faced by ESEA employees in the workplace. Support groups for ESEA people must allow ESEA people to properly report incidents of racial discrimination in the workplace in the confidence that their complaint will be taken seriously and in the same serious manner as complaints made by other ethnic minority groups.

Q3. How could the educational performance of school children across different ethnic and socio-economic status groups be improved?

The majority of the teaching staff in UK schools are white British - in 2018, [85.9% of all teachers in state-funded schools in England were white British](#) (out of those whose ethnicity was known). Children from diverse cultural backgrounds cannot be adequately supported if there is a lack of diversity among the teachers and senior staff responsible for their education. In addition, resources should be made available - in different languages if possible - for parents and families, in order to better engage them in their child's school life. Similarly, mental health services - ideally provided by someone who can be culturally sensitive to the needs of children from different backgrounds - should be more readily available.

Bullying and harassment

Bullying based on race or ethnicity is still a major issue in schools. In 2019, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) said that racial abuse and bullying of children had risen by one-fifth since 2015-16, [driving some children to attempt dangerous skin-whitening measures to avoid abuse, including children from Chinese backgrounds](#). Additionally, since the coronavirus outbreak in 2020, charities such as Kidscape and Young Minds have urged schools to educate pupils around the facts and context of the pandemic, in a bid to curb pandemic-related bullying of children of ESEA heritage²⁹.

Due to the persistent 'model minority' myth surrounding ESEA people, students are often seen as 'passive', 'quiet' and 'hard-working', or [lacking in critical thinking](#), which often results in bullying incidents being underreported or not taken seriously. [Studies also show that ESEA pupils are often over-assessed by their teachers](#), which means that they are less likely to be seen as needing pedagogical, behavioural or mental health support. Support and programmes to address bullying of ESEA children at school need to be developed.

Grants and scholarships should be created for ESEA children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the UK.

Q4. How should the school curriculum adapt in response to the ethnic diversity of the country?

The current school history curriculum does not include the history of any ESEA countries including those that were previous colonies. Topics covered under history of empire include the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition, and the Indian independence movement. It's important for students to understand the impact of colonialism and British-ESEA relationships and how they have shaped the world today, particularly in terms of the UK's ethnic diversity. It is also important to include the history and culture of British ESEA people and how they have shaped and contributed to this country. The school curriculum should be adapted to cover more topics geographically including ESEA countries and cultures, and particular emphasis should be placed on the impact of colonialism and experiences of exploited and marginalised people. This is critical now with a fast-growing ESEA population in the UK.

Q5. How can the ways young people (in particular those aged 16 to 24 years) find out about and access education, training and employment opportunities be improved?

This year has seen cuts in funding for youth services of [up to 70% in less than a decade](#), with parts of England and Wales receiving nothing in terms of funding from local government, according to the YMCA. Youth services such as youth centres, community centres and sports and arts initiatives are critical for young people's access to information as well as key services. Many community groups and services that used to exist for ESEA youth either no longer exist or have been

²⁹ <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/coronavirus-teach-children-about-outbreak-to-stop-bullying-schools-told>

defunded. Additionally, it's important to note that youth from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds face different issues, hence the need for specific youth services based on ethnicity, with better funding initiatives and specific scholarship programmes for ESEA youth.

Q7. How could inequalities in the health outcomes of people in different ethnic groups be addressed by government, public bodies, the private sector, and communities?

The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minority groups in the UK has shown that there are significant issues of racial discrimination in the UK.

Mistreatment and misconduct towards ESEA community – NHS and healthcare

Due to the lack of national data, we do not know how many people from ESEA communities have suffered from Covid-19, but we do know that a disproportionate number of ESEA healthcare workers have contracted and died from Covid-19. More than 20% of NHS staff and more than 30% of nurses who died from COVID19 are Filipinos. Documents from structured interviews, focus group discussions and surveys held by Kanlungan Filipino Consortium with health and care workers showed that Filipino workers have been singled out and pressured to work in dangerous settings without proper PPE and risk assessments. This has also been an issue prior to the pandemic, with nurses from ESEA countries like the Philippines, Japan and China reporting that they have been pressured by their managers in the NHS to take on a disproportionate number of risky or dangerous tasks within hospitals, which they often accept, for fear of losing their visas and right to stay in the UK if they don't.

Lack of resources and ESEA specific barriers to healthcare

More generally, our work with ESEA communities has revealed that many people from ESEA communities avoid visiting GPs and the NHS and end up foregoing treatment. This is for numerous reasons including language barriers (and a lack of interpreters) financial or work constraints; a hostile environment; a lack of trust in GPs and the NHS and complex system.

There are also many health-related issues that ESEA communities do not feel comfortable talking about and hence do not seek help for, such as sexual health, self-harm, and gender/domestic violence.

Recommendations

To address these issues, the Government needs to better support ESEA communities in the UK by:

- Collecting better data on health for different ESEA communities and healthcare workers.
- Launching an independent enquiry to understand why an unequal number of Filipino healthcare workers have died in the NHS during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study should also assess whether other ESEA NHS staff have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19.
- The Immigration Health Surcharge should be permanently removed for all overseas non-EEA healthcare workers.
- The NHS and healthcare institutions to have an in-depth understanding of the issues that affect the health of ESEA people. Specialist and tailored health support needs to be provided to ESEA communities.

Q8. What could be done to enhance community relations and perceptions of the police?

Hate crime and racism – mistrust of police resources

A common theme and complaint among ESEA victims of racist and hate crimes is that the police do not take their cases seriously enough, often refusing to recognise the crime as a racially-motivated act, and do not provide enough support (Adamson et al., 2009). This leads to mistrust of the police and an under-reporting of racist and hate crimes to the police.

Micro-aggressions and intent - gas lighting

As set out by Yeh (2018³⁰) trivialising incidents of racism, whether as a crime, in schools or in workplace settings, is unlikely to happen to any other ethnic group. Racism and discrimination against ESEAs are overlooked and the victims are

³⁰ <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/how-young-british-east-southeast-asians-engaging-politics-belonging/>

often asked to have a sense of humour about it or told that it does not constitute true racism. The sentiment is that racism and micro aggressions towards ESEA communities are not that serious. Due to legacies of the British Empire, the hegemonic discourse of race in Britain has failed to encompass the range of racisms experienced by those falling outside the 'Commonwealth' category, which includes ESEAs.

Lack of representation in the police force

A problem that confounds and exacerbates this mistrust is the fact that ESEA people are severely under-represented in the police force at all levels. A category described as 'Other including Chinese' (an ambiguous category which is problematic in and of itself) makes up 0.7% of the police but 1.7% of the population. This is in line with all other ethnic minority groups who are also under-represented in the police force, whilst whites are over-represented (93.1% of the police force vs 86% of the population)³¹.

Recommendations

We recommend the following to improve ESEA relations and perceptions of the police in the UK:

- There should be a concerted drive to increase the number of ESEA people working in the police force, including in senior roles and especially where there are large ESEA populations, such as in London and Liverpool.
 - This will require tailored employment drives that engage with ESEA students and communities.
- Much more needs to be done by the police to encourage ESEA people to report crimes, especially those of a racist nature.
 - ESEA people need to be able to trust the police and feel that their cases will be taken seriously.
 - This starts by ensuring that the police treat all racially motivated crimes and hate crimes with the same gravity; the tendency for the police to take a more relaxed view about racist incidents and crimes towards ESEA people must stop.
 - Providing language interpreters wherever required for ESEA people when reporting crime.

Q10. Can you suggest other ways in which racial and ethnic disparities in the UK could be addressed? In particular, is there evidence of where specific initiatives or interventions have resulted in positive outcomes? Are there any measures which have been counterproductive and why?

As mentioned throughout this report, it is important to recognise that ESEA is an incredibly diverse region with people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. As a consequence, ESEA people face different forms of discrimination both in the workplace as well as in wider civil society. However, this shared experience creates the opportunity for public organisations, private companies and society as a whole to share 'best practice' and knowledge sharing on the most effective ways to tackle racial and ethnic disparities in the UK. We can all do much more to not only acknowledge the problem but also take decisive action to share and encourage others to change to ensure that future generations do not encounter the same obstacles that we do now.

Collaboration, allyship, diverse representation

One way to put this into effect is by organising a yearly UK-wide summit that brings together leading businesses, public sector organisations, initiatives and other leaders in the field to discuss what action they have taken to close the opportunity gap for all ethnic minority groups in their sectors and report what has been particularly effective. We strongly recommend the inclusion and full participation of major public organisations such as the BBC, NHS, UK Civil Service, Local Authority Councils, the territorial Police Services (including the London MET), and the Crown Prosecution Service as well as leading private sector firms in the UK financial services, legal, retail and accounting sectors. This forum would not only serve as a knowledge sharing exercise and a public display of addressing racial and ethnic disparities in the UK but also build accountability and pressure for action to be taken in each and every business, institution and setting. Each summit will provide the opportunity for objectives to be discussed, policies to be scrutinised and targets set in order to properly monitor and review progress. ESEA people from different cultures and backgrounds must be properly represented at this summit and indeed any future discussions on race in this country; we cannot have another situation where an entity or

³¹ <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/police-workforce/latest#by-ethnicity-police-officers>

group like the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities completely excludes ESEA people, opinions, experiences and voices.

Much like the global efforts to further gender equality and the ongoing endeavours to urge large multinational corporations to take meaningful action on climate change, the first and most vital step in the march towards eradicating racial disparities is an acknowledgement that there is a problem, and if not properly addressed and fixed, the problem not only damages the ethnic minority community in question but also society as a whole. For example, the BBC's unhelpful early COVID-19 coverage overwhelmingly featured ESEA people in the UK, giving the false impression that only people in these communities contracted and then passed on the virus which undermines societal cohesion and effectiveness in the fight against the proliferation of the virus. Equally, on a more complex level, the alarmingly high and disproportionate mortality and morbidity rates of NHS staff from ethnic minority backgrounds - caused in part by over-representation in lower socio-economic groups and lower-band key worker roles (NHS England) - decreases vital resources in our health services when they are needed the most. We call on this Commission to take the lead and mobilise collective action to ensure that the UK properly reflects the rich diversity of 21st century British society where race-based inequality is firmly a relic of history.

Consultancy with ESEA groups and non-profits

A yearly summit to promote action will not be enough to stem the tide of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK, particularly in regard to ESEA discrimination. Therefore, in addition to the recommendations set out in our responses above, we call on the Commission to strongly urge private and public sector organisations to regularly consult with ESEA groups and initiatives (e.g. End the Virus of Racism, besea.n, Kanlungan, Asian Leadership Collective) in order to better understand the challenges faced by ESEA people and to draw on effective practice.

Celebration of ESEA history and contributions to the UK

We also call for the UK Government to establish an ESEA History and Heritage Month in the UK to celebrate our culture, history and contributions to the UK and also to highlight our struggles. This would be similar to Black History Month and Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Online and social media protection

The power and reach of social media should be harnessed to highlight effective initiatives directed at improving ESEA representation and to coordinate responses from the ESEA community when direct action needs to be taken. For example, much more needs to be done to protect the ESEA community from online abuse and harms (companies like Instagram and Facebook do not treat racist language towards ESEA people with the same gravity as racism towards people of other ethnic backgrounds³² We need zero-tolerance of direct racism and discrimination on social media platforms and also require large multinational companies such as Amazon and Netflix to remove derogatory 'yellowface' from their marketing, products and film and TV. Flagrant racism on this scale is offensive and hurtful but seems to be tolerated more and taken less seriously than when directed at other ethnic minority groups (e.g. 'blackface'). Simple action along these lines will go a long way to reduce the level of discrimination and direct racism experienced by ESEA people and to further the UK's mission to be an inclusive country of equal opportunity and representation.

Finally, the UK Government must oppose all forms of racism including towards ESEA people. We urge the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities to invite the authors of this response and their respective organisations to present evidence to them on racial discrimination and disparities for ESEA communities in the UK and to be included as part of the debate on racism and ethnic disparities in this country going forward.

³² <https://www.theverge.com/2020/2/4/21121358/coronavirus-racism-social-media-east-asian-chinese-xenophobia>