

Evidence Review on racial disproportionality and youth violence

Background

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) has commissioned The University of Greenwich to review the evidence on racial disproportionality in youth violence. The review aims to:

- 1) summarise the extent of racial disproportionality in different parts of the youth justice system and for key factors for involvement in violence;
- 2) assess the evidence on drivers of racial disproportionality;
- 3) scope the range of interventions that aim to reduce racial disproportionality and assess the evidence to inform a future systematic review.

These aims have been sub-divided into five specific research questions that we will focus on addressing. These are:

1. What is the extent of racial disproportionality in different parts of the youth justice system?
2. What is the relationship between racial disproportionality and the risk and protective factors known to be associated with youth violence?
3. What is known about the drivers of racial disproportionality in a young person's journey through services and systems?
4. What evidence is there for the effectiveness of interventions and approaches that are designed to address institutional discrimination and racism?
5. What evidence is there for the effectiveness of interventions delivered to individuals to reduce the impact of the experience of racism and discrimination.

This is a literature-based project. Also, because of previous evidence of disproportionate treatment (e.g., Lammy, 2017), this review proposes to focus on those of Black and Mixed heritage. For the purposes of this review, we will consider young people to be those from

age 10 (criminal responsibility) to age 25, and we will prioritise data and evidence from the United Kingdom.

The focus of this review is the youth justice system, but we propose to include evidence from the adult justice system and other areas (e.g., health, education, economics) and then translate this to the youth justice system.

What is the extent of racial disproportionality in different parts of the youth justice system?

The purpose of this component of the study is to examine the extent of racial disproportionality in the various steps of the youth justice system. This may include stop and search, caution/arrest, remand decisions, decision to prosecute, plea decisions, convictions, sentence type, sentence length and outcomes while in youth custody (adjudications, employment education, use of force, positive entries).

The aim will be to identify the levels of disproportionality at the various stages but we will also highlight at what stages the evidence or data does not exist.

This evidence review will focus on 'official' reports and documentation such as:

- a. Ministry of Justice
- b. Sentencing Council
- c. Home Office
- d. Google Scholar (citations of Lammy review)
- e. YJB
- f. ONS
- g. Crown Prosecution Service
- h. Others?

Procedure

We will document the websites searched and the reports/data obtained. All relevant papers and data will be collected and stored in a shared Dropbox folder.

Output

The output of this section will be a brief report detailing the extent of racial disproportionality in different parts of the youth justice system which will include our approaches and the searches conducted (for replicability purposes). We are also aiming to

create an interactive excel form that will have estimates of the level of disproportionality embedded. This so that the impact of the various points of disproportionality can be visualised and the cumulative effects can be seen. This will also show the cumulative impact of reducing disproportionality.

What is the relationship between racial disproportionality and the risk and protective factors known to be associated with youth violence?

What is known about the drivers of racial disproportionality in a young person's journey through services and systems?

What evidence is there for the effectiveness of interventions and approaches that are designed to address institutional discrimination and racism?

What evidence is there for the effectiveness of interventions delivered to individuals to reduce the impact of the experience of racism and discrimination.

The above four research questions are clearly separable, but we believe that the best approach to address these is through one large data collection exercise. This is because our preliminary investigations have suggested that the content of many of the research contributions in this area may speak to multiple research questions. For example, in her study of the disproportionate treatment of 30 children by the police (4 of whom were Black) in the US Feinstein (2015) found that the interactions that Black youth had with police were qualitatively different than those of White youth. This included Black youth reporting being regularly arrested by the same police officer more often and the fact that the police were, generally, more lenient with White youth in decisions about arrest. It was also suggested that the police targeting of Black youth resulted in the labelling of them as 'criminals' which risked a self-fulfilling prophecy and subsequent increased criminal activity and a reduction in engagement with education and employment.

While based on a very small number of individuals this research paper provides some evidence about how police contact may influence risk and protective factors (i.e., reduction in engagement with education and employment), and the drivers of disproportionate treatment (i.e., police targeting of Black youth leading to increased criminal justice contact, self-identification as a 'criminal' and potentially greater criminal involvement). This paper also provides some limited evidence about policies or approaches that might reduce racial disproportionality (i.e., reducing police discretion/ police officer rotation).

Therefore, we would propose to conduct one large replicable data capture exercise and screen all papers based on the extent to which they speak to each of the four research questions.

1. We will search the following academic databases:

Databases
Academic Search Premier
APA PsycArticles
APA Psychinfo
CINAHL Plus with Full Text
Education Research Complete
E Journals
Education Resource Information Centre
Humanities International Complete
Medline
Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection
Teacher Reference Centre

2. We will hand search the most relevant journals (e.g., Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice)
3. We will search the 'grey' literature. For example, reports by
 - a. Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality
 - b. Zahid Mubarak Trust
 - c. Action for Race Equality (ARE)
 - d. Runnymede Trust
 - e. Catch 22
 - f. Howard League for Penal Reform
 - g. Others
4. We will hold a consultation with Community Partners with the aim of identifying additional reports or literature

We believe that the 'grey' literature and the research provided by community partners will be particularly important. This is because, traditionally, there has been limited and

inconsistent funding of these organisations which means there may be important work that has not been publicised.

Procedure

We will develop and agree search terms for the academic databases and refine these based on the searches returned.

Proposed search terms:

Racism*; discrim*, disproportional*, racialise*, minorit*,

AND

crim*, Offend*, viol*, just*

We will refine these based on the results returned.

We will obtain all the articles returned in our searches and review their abstracts. If, on the balance of probability, they speak to any of the four research questions they will be obtained, and the citation will be recorded on an Excel spreadsheet maintained on Dropbox.

While we originally intended to evaluate the research collected based on traditional methodological quality our community partners have assisted us to see that this will bias the results. Because Black-led organisations and organisations that address discrimination and racism have typically been de-prioritised and under-funded they will be unlikely to have been academically evaluated. However, we believe that these organisations hold the key to understanding the impact of racism and discrimination and also are the knowledge holders when it comes to understanding how to address this. For this reason we proposed to evaluate this material using system mapping to understand levels of community embeddedness, reach, sustainability, amongst other characteristics.

Outputs

There will be three outputs from this component of the research.

1. An accessible summary report of no more than 25 pages which details the evidence that speaks to the four research questions.
2. A full technical report that details the approach and full results.
3. An Excel database of all studies and their evaluation.



4. An interactive Excel spreadsheet that illustrates the cumulative impact of disproportionality.