



House of Commons
Women and
Equalities Committee

Race Disparity Audit

Third Report of Session 2017–19

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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Women and Equalities Committee

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Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

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Summary

The Race Disparity Audit is a world-leading programme to identify, collate and present existing data on outcomes by race and ethnicity across public services. Our inquiry focused on the first phase of the Audit, exploring the process by which it was compiled, the resulting website and how the Government intends to proceed based on the results.

The Prime Minister's stated objective for the Audit is that it be "an essential resource in the battle to defeat ethnic injustice". We welcome the Audit as a ground-breaking initiative that allows ordinary people to access a range of data about ethnicity for the first time and as a marker of intent to reduce disparities. It required a significant amount of time and engagement with stakeholders and brought together data from across the Government machine through data sets that varied hugely in character. We heard praise for the website that houses the data and for the process by which it was produced.

In the process of compiling the data sets, the Race Disparity Unit discovered a lack of consistency in how data is collected across Government. It is clear that public services are not currently collecting ethnicity data in a streamlined fashion and that some agencies are not collecting data at all. For these reasons, it is often difficult to make comparisons over time and between data sets, and a lack of detail in some areas can make disaggregation and effective analysis challenging. The ability to disaggregate is essential for understanding the roles that geography, age, gender, social class and poverty play in creating poorer outcomes for some people than for others.

Clear and measurable plans are needed for improving the consistency and robustness of the data and turning it into a set of cross-government priorities for action to reduce the disparities shown by the Audit. Action has already begun in some areas, and we look forward to seeing the results of the 'explain or change' analysis that is being conducted by individual departments. Civil society has a vital part to play in addressing deficits in and interpreting the data.

The Cabinet Office has been exemplary in its approach to the Audit so far. It should continue to work with departments and the rest of the public sector to deliver change, according to priorities set by the Government. By doing this, the clear commitment to tackling injustice made by the Prime Minister when she launched the Audit can be realised

1 Introduction

The Race Disparity Audit

1. The Race Disparity Audit is a review conducted by the Government to identify and collate existing data on outcomes by race and ethnicity across the public sector. It was a flagship policy launched by the Prime Minister in August 2016, following on from the themes of her speech on the steps of 10 Downing Street on becoming Prime Minister. At the launch, she said that she would “stand up [...] against injustice and inequality” and laid out her plans, saying:

Today, I am launching an audit to look into racial disparities in our public services that stretches right across government. It will highlight the differences in outcomes for people of different backgrounds, in every area from health to education, childcare to welfare, employment, skills and criminal justice.

This audit will reveal difficult truths, but we should not be apologetic about shining a light on injustices as never before. It is only by doing so [that] we can make this country work for everyone, not just a privileged few.¹

The press release issued by the Cabinet Office at the same time specified that “findings from this Audit will influence government policy to solve these problems”.² As the Audit progressed, it became clear that the Government’s plan was both to publish a website showcasing the data sets it had identified and to use that data to begin to address any disparities that were found within it.

2. The Audit has been conducted by a specialist unit, the Race Disparity Unit, working from within the Cabinet Office to locate all the data sets that the Government holds in relation to ethnicity and to identify any gaps or inconsistencies in that data. The results were presented on a dedicated website, Ethnicity Facts and Figures, published in October 2017.³ It included over 130 data sets from sources across Government and the Office for National Statistics covering the six ‘domains’ of:

- Crime, justice and the law;
- Culture and community;
- Education, skills and training;
- Health;
- Housing; and
- Work, pay and benefits.

1 Cabinet Office, [‘Prime Minister orders government audit to tackle racial disparities in public service outcomes’](#), accessed 12 March 2018

2 Cabinet Office, [‘Prime Minister orders government audit to tackle racial disparities in public service outcomes’](#), accessed 12 March 2018

3 Cabinet Office, [‘Ethnicity Facts and Figures’](#), accessed 20 April 2018

3. Each domain contains numerous data sets for a variety of outcomes, including, for example, employment rates, educational attainment for a variety of age groups, GP satisfaction rates and internet use. Among the findings drawn from the data by the Government were that:

- White British and White Irish pupils who were not eligible for free school meals were around twice as likely to attain A* to C grades in maths and English GCSEs as those who were eligible;
- Around one in 10 adults from a Black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Mixed background were unemployed, compared to one in 25 White British people;
- Home ownership was most common among households of White British, Indian, Pakistani, and Mixed White and Asian origin; it was substantially lower among African, Arab, and Mixed White and Black African households; and
- Black men were almost three and a half times more likely to be arrested than White men.

4. The Government, on launching the website, committed to a programme of ‘explain or change’ in relation to the disparities revealed by the Audit. When the website was launched, Rt Hon Damian Green MP, then Minister for the Cabinet Office, told the House:

When significant disparities between ethnic groups cannot be explained by wider factors, we will commit ourselves to working with partners to change them.⁴

The Government told us in January 2018 that it was “getting the Whitehall machinery into action”,⁵ having used the Audit as a “starting point”.⁶ It has stated that action is already being taken to reduce disparities in the fields of justice, education and employment, and that it is taking steps in individual departments to identify priorities.⁷ We explore this work in further detail in Chapter 4.

Our inquiry

5. As the Prime Minister has stated, some of the findings of the Audit are “uncomfortable”⁸ and some have been known for some time.⁹ We wanted to look at how effective the Audit and the data behind it will be as tools to move society further along the road to equality. We focused on three main aspects of the Audit: the usefulness and robustness of the data included in it, how the Government should co-ordinate its response to the findings and what the future policy priorities should be.

6. We launched our inquiry in November 2017. We received 27 written submissions from third-sector organisations, academics and think tanks, and held three oral evidence sessions with policy analysts, race equality experts, lawyers, the Equality and Human

4 HC Deb, 10 October 2017, [col 182](#) [Commons Chamber]

5 Q120

6 Q118

7 Q122

8 Cabinet Office, ‘[PM words at Race Disparity Audit launch: 10 October 2017](#)’, accessed 12 March 2018

9 Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#)), para 9; Black South West Network ([RDA0024](#)), para 10; Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)), para 19.

Rights Commission and the Office for National Statistics, before hearing from the Director of the Race Disparity Unit and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon David Lidington MP. We are grateful to all those who contributed their expertise to the inquiry.

7. Those who submitted evidence generally welcomed the Audit as a promising initiative that was well-coordinated and transparent.¹⁰ Some witnesses were concerned about the comprehensiveness of the data, an issue discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.¹¹ Most argued that the Audit should be the start of a coordinated, robust response from Government to begin to close disparities.¹² A range of views on how the Government should respond is discussed in Chapter 4. The Race Disparity Unit in the Cabinet Office was commended for its broad programme of consultation with stakeholders, and the relationship between Government and civil society is discussed in Chapter 5.¹³

10 See for example, The Coalition of Race Equality ([RDA0014](#))

11 Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)); Roma Support Group ([RDA0007](#))

12 See for example: Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)); National Black Police Association ([RDA0004](#));

13 See for example: The Coalition of Race Equality ([RDA0014](#))

2 The Ethnicity Facts and Figures website

8. In October 2017 the Government published the first results of the Race Disparity Audit on the ‘Ethnicity Facts and Figures’ website.¹⁴ The initial release was of 130 data sets, of which 20 were new data that had not previously been published. The Government told us that it had identified 300 data sets across departments, agencies and from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which could be analysed by ethnicity, but that not all of these had been analysed by the time the website went live because of variations in quality and depth.¹⁵ The Ethnicity Facts and Figures website is intended to be a permanent resource; it is planned that measures included in the first release will be updated, and more measures will be added over time.¹⁶

Figure 1: The homepage of the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website

GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures
Ethnicity in the UK Background

BETA This is a new service – please send your feedback to ethnicity@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Ethnicity facts and figures

In the UK, 87% of people are White, and 13% belong to a Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic group.

Use this service to find information about the different experiences of people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. It gathers data collected by government in one place, making it available to the public, specialists and charities.

View data on ethnicity by topic

<p>Crime, justice and the law Policing, crimes, courts, sentencing, prisons and custody</p>	<p>Culture and community Arts, digital, museums, libraries, volunteering, transport, local area and neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Education, skills and training Schools, exclusions, further and higher education, apprenticeships and where people go after leaving education</p>
<p>Health Physical and mental health, preventing illness, quality of care, access to treatment, patient experiences and outcomes</p>	<p>Housing Home ownership, renting, social housing, homelessness and housing conditions</p>	<p>Work, pay and benefits Employment, unemployment, pay and income, benefits, business and the public sector workforce</p>

Usability of the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website

9. The Government has received widespread praise for the user-friendly layout of the website, which allows experts and non-experts alike to use the data.¹⁷ The website contains clear information about what the limitations of the data are¹⁸ and what is being measured in each data set.¹⁹ Professor Shamit Saggarr of the University of Essex told us that the

14 Cabinet Office, ‘[Ethnicity Facts and Figures](#)’, accessed 12 March 2018

15 Cabinet Office ([RDA0022](#)) para 7

16 Cabinet Office, [Race Disparity Audit: summary findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures Website](#), October 2017, p 5

17 Policy Exchange ([RDA0010](#)); Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)); National Black Police Association ([RDA0004](#)); Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#));

18 Dr Saffron Karlsen ([RDA0019](#));

19 Q17

website was a “great start” with the potential to be a powerful tool for citizens seeking to hold the Government to account by presenting “comparative information to citizens and consumers in general”. He argued that:

We do that in this country to a considerable extent. [...] We do have this in things like Ofsted and parents using parent power and transparency to find out who is doing well—which school locally is underperforming when it should be doing better and which school is overperforming when our expectation is that it should be doing less well. They can hold schools to account. I see this as part of that.²⁰

10. The high quality of the data sets on the website was also noted. Iain Bell of the Office for National Statistics told us that:

Much of the data in the audit is already published in individual departments, and it is published often with the badges of national statistics or official statistics, which are designed to provide reassurance to users of the statistics that these are done in line with the UK Statistics Authority code of practice and are of high quality.²¹

11. The Ethnicity Facts and Figures website is a welcome development in transparency and accessibility of data on inequalities facing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in the UK. The website has been positively received for its presentation, clarity and level of usability.

Commentary on the website

12. The Government decided, when developing the website, not to include any attempt at commentary explaining the reasons for the various disparities shown by the data. After consulting with stakeholders, it was decided that the website should show “plain facts and key commentary information” but with “no causal analysis”, as “this was interpreted by many users as trying to ‘explain away’ disparities.”²²

13. The evidence we heard was divided on whether such analysis should have been included in the website. Some felt that any analysis could risk introducing “political persuasions” into the narrative around the statistics.²³ Others, however, said that publishing analysis on the website was important to show that the Government was “not producing data just for the sake of producing data”.²⁴

14. The aim of the website is to provide high-quality data in a single resource and we agree that detailed commentary could be seen to compromise its impartiality. Other organisations and researchers may use the same data to reach different conclusions to those of the Government, and that is an important component of accountability. The aims of providing an accurate resource and of comprehensive analysis are not mutually exclusive, but the analysis should not obscure the statistics. We will consider the issue of analysis and next steps in Chapter 4.

20 Q18

21 Q108

22 Cabinet Office ([RDA0022](#)), para 6.

23 Richard Norrie, Q21

24 Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Q21, Q22, Q57, Q85

Analysis across data sets

15. Allowing data sets to be combined in new ways would be a valuable enhancement to the website. Professor Saggar gave the example of data sets which show the destinations of graduates after university, which are not currently set in the context of graduates' family circumstances. Being able to combine statistics on family backgrounds with those about graduate destinations would allow the Government to understand whether disparities arise from ethnicity, class or other factors, a question that cannot at present be answered from the published data.²⁵ Some argued that an ability to analyse the data by socio-economic status would assist in understanding the causes of disparities,²⁶ while others wanted the ability to explore geographical variations in the disparities revealed.²⁷ There are, however, considerable challenges to being able to cross-tabulate data sets in this way. One of the key benefits of the Audit is to allow statisticians across Government departments to work together to make this possible in the future.

The future of the website

16. The Government has already pledged to maintain the website and to add data sets to it over time. This was also a recommendation made to us by stakeholders,²⁸ who stated that being able to see how the disparities change would significantly benefit both policy-makers and researchers.²⁹ At present, however, more than half of the data sets identified by the Government while conducting the Audit are not presented on the website. We await confirmation of when these will be released. Non-Governmental sources are not included on the website. While the Government is clear that the Audit was intended to provide data rather than analysis, some argued that the inclusion of data sets from outside Government such as peer-reviewed academic studies and surveys could help to give a clearer picture of the reasons for disparities.³⁰ At this stage we are not persuaded of the necessity of such a change to the aim of the website, which would dilute the objective of providing transparent factual information.

17. Significant effort has gone into collecting and publishing the data on the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. We welcome the commitment from the Cabinet Office to continuing to expand the published data sets. The Cabinet Office should publish a schedule for the addition of new data sets to the website and planned updates to the data already held on the site. We recommend that particular efforts are put into ensuring that data sets are robust enough to be comparable, including over time, and that regional variations can be seen. In future, the Government should consider including non-governmental sources of data in this resource.

25 Q11

26 Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)); Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)).

27 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)); The Mayor's Fund for London ([RDA0013](#)).

28 Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#)), para 14; Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)), para 7; Housing Learning and Improvement Network ([RDA0016](#)), para 4; Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)) para 2; Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([RDA0005](#)), para 2.

29 Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)), para 14; Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)) para 26.

30 Q4; Q29; Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)), para 14; Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)) para 11.

3 Data collection and data standards

18. The Audit’s remit was to collect, process and present existing public-sector data sets held by central government. This included data collected in the course of delivering services (such as GP registration or criminal justice convictions), known as administrative data, as well as surveys and other research conducted by Government. No new statistics were produced and non-Governmental sources were excluded.

Table 1: Types of data sets captured in the Race Disparity Audit

Type of Source	Sample/whole population	Recorded by individual/third party	Example
Survey	Sample	Individual	Crime Survey for England and Wales
Administrative Data	Whole Population	Third Party	Criminal Justice Statistics
Individual Registration	Whole Population	Individual	Jobseekers Allowance Claimant Count

Source: Cabinet Office, ‘[Ethnicity Facts and Figures](#)’, accessed 20 April 2018

19. As the Government begins the task of analysing the results of the Audit and working to “explain or change”, it is crucial that the data contain sufficient richness to ensure that departments can account for all relevant factors, and that it can be broken down meaningfully.³¹ Data sets must be consistent and reliable if they are to be used to understand the impact of policy decisions on the ability of people from ethnic minorities to access and benefit from public services.³² Such an understanding is not only necessary for meeting the Government’s stated aim of developing “ambitious policy responses” to the Audit.³³ It is also essential for fulfilling the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires public service providers to have due regard to the need to promote equality and eliminate discrimination; this depends on being able to see how and why outcomes for different service users may differ.³⁴

20. Part of the challenge for the Race Disparity Unit was that the data sets were not standardised in their collection methodology, ethnicity classifications or the level of detail that they contained. The Audit has revealed a significant lack of consistency in data collection across government departments, which makes comparisons challenging.

31 Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#)), para 8; Housing Learning and Improvement Network ([RDA0016](#)), para 4

32 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)), para 27

33 Cabinet Office ([RDA0022](#)), para 55

34 Race Equality Matters ([RDA0015](#))

Ethnicity classifications

21. Witnesses strongly impressed upon us the importance of having standardised classifications of ethnicity across Government bodies and beyond.³⁵ Interpretation across data sets on different topics and across departments and agencies relies on using the same classifications.³⁶

22. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes guidance on which ethnic classifications to use, based on the ‘18+1’ model (18 ethnicity categories plus ‘other’) employed in the 2011 census. Iain Bell of the ONS highlighted the current problem:

What became apparent through the Race Disparity Audit is something that was known, but it shone a light into this area: that many different organisations have yet to align to the latest ONS classifications for the 2011 census, and of course we are now coming up to the 2021 census.³⁷

Box 1: The 18+1 classification used by the 2011 Census

White
 British
 Irish
 Gypsy or Irish Traveller
 Other White
 Mixed/Multiple ethnic group
 White and Black Caribbean
 White and Black African
 White and Asian
 Other Mixed
 Asian/Asian British
 Asian
 Pakistani
 Bangladeshi
 Chinese
 Other Asian
 Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
 African
 Caribbean
 Other Black
 Other ethnic group
 Arab
 Any other ethnic group

Source: Office for National Statistics

35 Professor Steve Strand ([RDA0020](#)); Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#)), para 22; Roma Support Group ([RDA0007](#)), para 15; Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([RDA0005](#)), para 3.1; Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#)), para 27.

36 Q109

37 Q97

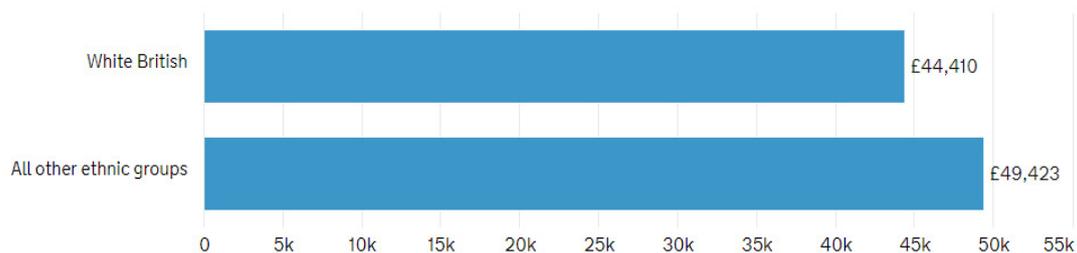
23. The Audit revealed that numerous data sets were using no more than six categories: Asian, Black, Chinese, Mixed, White and Other. In some cases, the disaggregation was restricted to White British and all Other (or BAME) groups.

Figure 2: An example of restricted disaggregation on the ethnicity facts and figures website.

Deposits paid by first-time buyers by ethnicity

Location: England
 Time period: 2014/15 and 2015/16 (combined)
 Source: [English Housing Survey](#)

Average deposit paid by first-time buyers, by ethnicity



Source: Cabinet Office, '[Ethnicity Facts and Figures](#)', accessed 20 April 2018

24. These broad classifications do not help to identify disparities because there can be large in-group differences. Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation gave the example of education, where an 'Other' category would include both Chinese and Indian students and black Caribbean students—groups which have very different patterns of attainment at GCSE.³⁸ Professor Steve Strand similarly argued against high-level aggregation of ethnic groups into "Asian/Black/White groups".³⁹ Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups pointed out that they are often omitted from statistics even where more detailed categories are used.⁴⁰ Since the launch of the website, the Race Disparity Unit has been adding detail to many of the data sets that initially had only two ethnic classifications. This is a welcome development.

25. *The Government, led by the Cabinet Office, should adopt the same categories as are used in the Census as the minimum standard for data collection on ethnicity across Government departments, and work with individual departments to ensure that this happens in all official data sets and administrative data in the public services for which they are responsible. At present this means using the '18+1' categories, but should the categories change for the 2021 Census, the Cabinet Office should take advice on how best to ensure comparability of data sets over time.*

26. *The Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Office for National Statistics should work together to provide updated guidance for public bodies, service providers and employers on how to collect consistent ethnicity data and how public sector bodies should use that data to assess their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.*

38 Q16 (Dr Weekes-Bernard of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

39 Professor Steve Strand ([RDA0020](#))

40 Friends, Families and Travellers ([RDA0008](#)); Roma Support Group ([RDA0007](#)).

Refining ethnicity measures

27. Even when detailed ethnicity categories are used, differences between or within groups are not always fully revealed. Dr Weekes-Bernard argued that factors such as country of origin and English language ability add important additional layers of understanding.⁴¹ Professor Shamit Saggat of the University of Essex endorsed this view:

The solution to this is to try to find a way of having both, as it were, as a way of explaining disadvantage or exclusion. Ethnicity is really important, but being able to say where people are born, for example, in addition to their ethnicity, is even better. Some bits of the data sets we use allow us to do that, but many do not.⁴²

Andy Shallice of the Roma Support Group spoke about how important this is in identifying groups that are hidden by the current 'ethnicity' classification, citing the lack of classification for migrant Roma on the census as an example. Our predecessor Committee identified this problem in its inquiry into Employment Opportunities for Muslims, where witnesses spoke of the dangers of using ethnicity as a proxy for faith groups and also the difficulties of addressing inequalities when little is known about a group other than their religion or ethnicity.⁴³

28. Also of concern is that only some of the data sets on the website are broken down by gender or age, and geographical breakdowns are inconsistent. For instance, GCSE results are broken down by local authority, gender, eligibility for free school meals and type of school,⁴⁴ whereas students achieving three A grades at A-level is broken down by ethnicity only.⁴⁵ This means it is not possible across the board to identify whether inequalities predominantly affect one gender, one age group or one geographical area, or whether other characteristics are affecting outcomes. For Professor Saggat, such detail was essential to data analysis:

I always stick to the rule of the three Gs: gender, generation and geography. For example, the labour market circumstances of a first-generation Pakistani woman living in Greater Manchester are often very different from a second-generation Indian male living in suburban London. [...] They are completely different stories, and yet both are ethnic minorities in the UK today. One is at the top end of the labour market doing fantastically well and so on, on average, and the other is mostly not. You want to do that, otherwise you will say, 'These are two south Asian people who have the same experiences.' Actually, they don't—not at all.⁴⁶

41 Q14

42 Q14

43 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of session 2016–2017, [Employment Opportunities for Muslims in the UK](#), HC89, paras 36–40

44 Cabinet Office, ['Ethnicity Facts and Figures: GCSE Results \(attainment 8\) for children aged 14 to 16 \(key stage 4\)'](#), accessed 3 May 2018

45 Cabinet Office, ['Ethnicity Facts and Figures: Students aged 16 to 18 achieving 3 A grades of better at A level'](#), Accessed 3 May 2018

46 Q7

This was also a challenge that our predecessor Committee observed in relation to Employment Opportunities for Muslims, where women's inactivity in the labour market showed marked variations between groups depending on their migration status, English language skills and ethnicity.⁴⁷

29. Nonetheless, we recognise the challenge of statistical reliability when breaking down data into subgroups, especially when the sample sizes are small or where data collected during the course of public service delivery (administrative data) does not include the necessary detail. As Dr Richard Norrie of Policy Exchange pointed out, there is also a risk of breaking down data so far that the results are no longer reliable. He explained that “the more you cut into the data, the smaller the number of observations you will have, and so the noisier the estimate will be,” meaning the greater the margin of error will be in the data.⁴⁸ Dr Norrie used the example of the adult psychiatric morbidity survey, which showed that 17.7 per cent of black women may have a common mental health condition. However, the sample size was such that this number could actually be as low as 9.6 per cent or as high as 30.5 per cent. Such results, he argued, are of limited use to policy makers.

30. The solution, in our view, is that all data sets should allow for basic disaggregation, which can then be used by the Government in its analysis and published on the Equality Facts and Figures website. Where the data sets are not yet robust enough to be broken down by age, gender, region or other relevant factors, addressing this should be a priority.

31. We note that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also launched an Audit into all the data it collects across the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.⁴⁹ An initial report on ethnicity data was published in April 2018, and it echoed many of the concerns that we heard throughout our inquiry about ethnic classifications, geographical reach and the current limitations on intersectional analysis.⁵⁰ We hope that this additional audit will add to the knowledge already acquired by the Government and will further assist in evidence-based policy-making.

32. The commitment of the Prime Minister to ending racial disparities in outcomes and public services, and the central role taken in this exercise by the Cabinet Office, together provide an opportunity for co-ordinated action to improve data collection and data standards on ethnicity and outcomes.

33. We recommend that the Government publish an action plan to improve the consistency and robustness of the data it collects on the basis of ethnicity, to be implemented within 12 months. In the longer term, the Government should ensure that key data can be disaggregated to allow factors such as gender, age, region, socio-economic status and religion and belief to be taken into account alongside race and ethnicity.

47 Women and Equalities Committee, Second Report of session 2016–2017, [Employment Opportunities for Muslims in the UK](#), HC89, para 47

48 Q7

49 Office for National Statistics, [‘The Gender Data Gap’](#), accessed 20 April 2018

50 Office for National Statistics, [‘Inequalities data audit: focus on ethnicity’](#), accessed 20 April 2018

4 The policy response to the Audit

34. The Prime Minister’s objective for the Audit was for it to be a central resource for departments to use in battling injustices linked to race and ethnicity. In order to achieve this objective, the Government will need to demonstrate that it has produced a coherent cross-governmental analysis of the data in the Audit. The Government’s resources are by necessity finite, and it will need to make considered choices about its priorities and the best way of focusing its efforts to achieve the overall aim.

Explain or change

35. The Government has committed to taking action to address disparities revealed by the Audit that cannot be explained by factors other than ethnicity.⁵¹ This includes activity by the Department for Work and Pensions with employers on diverse workforces, traineeships and vocational training, work by the Ministry of Justice on implementing the recommendations of the Lammy Review of the treatment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in the criminal justice system, and a review of exclusions being conducted by the Department for Education.⁵² David Lidington, Minister for the Cabinet Office, explained how he, as the new Minister responsible, saw this decentralised approach working in practice:

[we] would expect departments—taking account of the Prime Minister’s priority here—to work within their respective areas of responsibility, sometimes taking particular initiatives in response to the findings of the Audit, and sometimes using the Audit findings to influence the development of streams of work that they were doing anyway, to provide for more effective policies.⁵³

36. Sado Jirde of the Black South West Network argued that the kind of disparities revealed by the Audit are “multidimensional”, cutting across more than one department.⁵⁴ As such, analysis needs to look beyond the immediate responsibilities of individual departments. Clinks and the Young Review, for example, explained that criminal justice “inherits many disparities in outcomes [...] from the failure of other areas of public policy—for instance the care system, mental health services or the education system.” This meant that looking at data regarding race and the criminal justice system in isolation risked “interpretations which ignore the societal causes of people’s contact with the system and instead fall back on deterministic racialised stereotyping.”⁵⁵

37. An individual departmental approach risks creating policy in isolation rather than taking multiple factors for disparities into account. Such policies are likely to be less effective. Although action by individual Government departments will be essential to achieving an effective response to the Race Disparity Audit, many of the most significant disparities will need to be tackled through cross-departmental action.

51 HC Deb, 10 October 2017, [col 182](#) [Commons Chamber]

52 Cabinet Office ([RDA0022](#)) para 54

53 Q12

54 Q76 (Sado Jirde, Black South West Network)

55 Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#)), para 32

Coordination and accountability

38. Critics of the decentralised approach emphasised the need for coordination and accountability. Sunder Katwala, Director of the think tank British Future, argued that:

The priority should be to have a lens at the state of the nation level that asks which [disparities] are most worth public money and resources, either because they have the biggest or most shocking gaps, or because they are the areas in which we can make changes.⁵⁶

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) called for a “comprehensive, coordinated and long-term” race equality strategy that would set out the Government’s priorities and be used to “lever actions across government to drive improvements, and develop a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on progress.”⁵⁷ The National Black Police Association argued that without such a strategy the Audit would be “meaningless”.⁵⁸

39. Clinks and The Young Review wanted to see a focussed set of priorities as part of a cross-government strategy. They saw a clear role for the Cabinet Office “in drawing together departments to identify areas of cross-over and support and to ensure that departments are making sufficient progress”.⁵⁹ Sunder Katwala similarly wanted to see a longer-term strategy, led by the Cabinet Office and flexible enough to allow for different policy priorities to be the focus at different times. He explained:

There will be the most progress in the departments that would have made progress if we had not done the Audit, because in education, crime and justice they have thought about this a lot. The Cabinet Office really needs to drive that across Government. The Department for Environment will not have thought about it, so we do not know whether there is something very important there.⁶⁰

40. The Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, acknowledged his department’s role in ensuring that the findings of the Audit are acted on, but confirmed that responsibility for creating plans and delivering them will rest with each department in its own policy area.⁶¹ He told us that he intended to create a new interministerial group on racial disparity, supported by the Cabinet Office, “to ensure that each Secretary of State and department is addressing those things that fall within their areas of responsibility.”⁶² He was, however, reluctant to commit to a cross-government strategy, arguing that “the choices ultimately in policy terms are ones for Secretaries of State in their own departments” and that:

Through the inter-ministerial group we seek to remind—that word sounds a bit too weak—Secretaries of State that this is something to which the Prime Minister personally attaches a very high priority, and to ensure that they are continuing to work on this.⁶³

56 Q64

57 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#))

58 National Black Police Association ([RDA0004](#))

59 Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#))

60 Q72

61 Q121

62 Q124

63 Q124

41. Each Government department should publish its own ‘explain or change’ analysis of the Race Disparity Audit, setting out a timetabled plan for action and including cross-departmental analysis and action where necessary. However, we see the Cabinet Office’s role as much more than simply to “remind” departmental ministers of their responsibilities. A coherent cross-government approach is needed to demonstrate the best use of Government money in tackling the most important disparities.

42. It will take time to identify, understand and design policy responses to the disparities revealed by the Audit. If the Government is serious about achieving real change, it will need to set priorities for action, and remain accountable for the results. A cross-departmental strategy would enable us to measure progress in the battle to defeat ethnic injustice. Central coordination was successfully exercised by the Cabinet Office in producing the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. Such coordination also will be necessary in the future to ensure accountability and transparency as work progresses to tackle the disparities revealed.

43. *In order to enable us to hold Government to account in defeating ethnic injustice, we recommend that a cross-government race equality strategy be developed. This strategy should formalise the role of the Cabinet Office and the inter-ministerial group in enforcement, co-ordination and oversight of Government departmental plans to close the disparities revealed in the Audit. The strategy should:*

- *be developed by departments alongside the Cabinet Office;*
- *bring together and examine the ‘explain or change’ analyses and conduct oversight of the actions of individual departments’ plans;*
- *identify actions that cut across more than one government department, and ensure that mechanisms exist for departments working together on their implementation; and*
- *set out indicators of progress for each 12-month period, with quarterly progress reports required from individual departments.*

44. *The inter-ministerial group has the potential to provide the kind of high-level oversight that is needed, but its work needs to be informed by subject-specialist input on data collection and analysis and on race equality. We recommend that the Office for National Statistics be invited to attend the inter-ministerial group as observers to provide advice to the group.*

Priority policy areas

45. Our call for evidence asked for views on what the Government’s policy priorities should be following the Audit. The evidence we received was not unanimous. David Green of Civitas argued that there was no need for action to correct ethnic disparities as they were not “the consequence of white discrimination”. He argued that:

They are simply what you would expect if you compare racial groups, because racial groups contain all sorts of people who differ in all sorts of ways, and the outcomes will inevitably be different.⁶⁴

Consequently, he argued that any action should focus on those most in need regardless of ethnicity.⁶⁵

46. This was not a widespread view. More commonly, organisations and individuals made the case for priorities reflecting their area of expertise. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation argued that dealing with unemployment is key to resolving many of the disparities as “one of the drivers for high poverty rates in some minority ethnic households is either high rates of unemployment or over-concentration in low paid work.”⁶⁶ This was backed up by analysis provided by Professor Yaojun Li.⁶⁷ Unite the Union also argued for a focus on employment,⁶⁸ as did the Mayor’s Fund for London, a charity supporting young people in education and employment,⁶⁹ and the Coalition of Race Equality suggested that employers collect diversity data annually about their workforce and provide better support for BME jobseekers.⁷⁰

47. The Coalition of Race Equality also highlighted education and housing as priority areas.⁷¹ In education, they cited school exclusion, a concern shared by Friends, Families and Travellers who argued for action to address the “shockingly low” attainment of Gypsy and Traveller pupils.⁷²

48. Clinks and the Young Review argued that the situation of people from BME communities within the criminal justice system was one of the most pressing policy issues for the Ministry of Justice and Government more widely. This was because criminal justice is “where many disparities in other areas of public policy converge and conflate, and this combined with the current pressures on our prison and probation service combines to create toxic levels of inequality”.⁷³ They pointed to the Lammy Review on the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system as providing “clear and actionable recommendations to address the racial disparities it highlights”.⁷⁴

49. The response to the Lammy Review, as well as other areas of activity in the Departments for Education and Work and Pensions highlighted by the Government upon the launch of the Audit, were begun before the Audit was complete rather than as a response to it. The Government must be able to demonstrate that it is taking action based on new knowledge from the Audit, or it will risk the Audit being seen as only a paper exercise.

50. *Evidence submitted to us, and the data in the Audit itself, highlight several areas of disparities that need to be addressed by the Government as priorities. The work that has begun as a response to the Lammy Review in the area of criminal justice is welcome and should be continued. In addition, race disparities in educational attainment, employment outcomes and housing status need to be prioritised. We expect the relevant departments to develop effective action plans for dealing with these priority areas.*

65 Q64

66 Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([RDA0005](#))

67 Professor Yaojun Li ([RDA0023](#))

68 Unite the Union ([RDA0006](#))

69 The Mayor’s Fund for London ([RDA0013](#))

70 The Coalition of Race Equality ([RDA0014](#))

71 The Coalition of Race Equality ([RDA0014](#))

72 Friends, Families and Travellers ([RDA0008](#))

73 Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#))

74 Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#))

51. Later in 2018 the Equality and Human Rights Commission will publish a new edition of its 'Is Britain Fairer?' analysis, which will suggest further priorities from the evidence gathered in its equality measurement framework, and which the Government will also want to consider in further developing its response to the Audit.

5 Civil society engagement

52. The Race Disparity Unit has been applauded for the way it consulted widely with a range of stakeholders during the process of designing the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website:

The consultation included roundtable discussions with NGOs, public service providers, local government and academics. The research was carried out with members of the public from a range of ethnic and demographic backgrounds, as well as experts in research and statistics, and government policy officials and analysts.⁷⁵

Asked how often the Race Disparity Unit was engaging with stakeholders to shape the data collection work and updates to the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website, the Unit's Director Marcus Bell replied:

Extensively and all the time is the answer. We try to make a point of that in terms of how we do this work, engaging with lots of voluntary organisations, but also members of the public.⁷⁶

53. This engagement, the Cabinet Office told us, has helped “to identify questions of public interest and concern, and to understand how to present simple and clear formats online, in a way that makes sense to users.”⁷⁷ The Coalition of Race Equality agreed that the Audit was “both well done and generally well received” as a result of the way in which the Government “sought to collaborate in a meaningful way with race equality NGOs, academics and national public sector bodies such as the EHRC.”⁷⁸

54. Such collaboration will also be important in taking forward the policy responses to the Audit, given the current shortcomings in many data sets, including ethnicity classification and comparability across data sets. Sado Jirde of the Black South West Network felt strongly that change should be driven by community engagement and should come from a deep understanding of local variations in need.⁷⁹ Such variations may not be apparent across all the data at present.

55. The Minister agreed with the importance of engaging civil society organisations as part of the solution:

Civil society I see as important partners, and it may well be, as for example in the pilot projects on employment, that we conclude that working more effectively with civil society on the delivery of public services, for example on the mentoring of people, is the best way to address the disparities that the audit has revealed.⁸⁰

The Race Disparity Unit has demonstrated the value of working with civil society organisations as policy partners rather than solely as potential service providers.

75 Cabinet Office ([RDA0022](#)), para 4

76 Q145

77 Cabinet Office ([RDA0022](#)), para 4

78 The Coalition of Race Equality ([RDA0014](#))

79 Q69

80 Q146

56. Engagement by the Race Disparity Unit with stakeholders and users of data, including those representing black and minority ethnic groups, has been exemplary. As the response to the Race Disparity Audit develops and new policy priorities emerge, equally high levels of engagement with civil society are required.

57. *The Race Disparity Unit should continue its existing positive engagement with stakeholders, and provide the inter-ministerial group with regular summaries of the views of those stakeholders, with a particular focus on the views of black and minority ethnic groups.*

58. *Each department, while conducting its explain or change analysis and later when implementing its actions to address disparities, should be working closely with an existing or dedicated stakeholder group that includes individuals from race equality organisations and grassroots groups.*

Conclusions and recommendations

The Ethnicity Facts and Figures website

1. The Ethnicity Facts and Figures website is a welcome development in transparency and accessibility of data on inequalities facing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in the UK. The website has been positively received for its presentation, clarity and level of usability. (Paragraph 11)
2. Significant effort has gone into collecting and publishing the data on the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. We welcome the commitment from the Cabinet Office to continuing to expand the published data sets. The Cabinet Office should publish a schedule for the addition of new data sets to the website and planned updates to the data already held on the site. We recommend that particular efforts are put into ensuring that data sets are robust enough to be comparable, including over time, and that regional variations can be seen. In future, the Government should consider including non-governmental sources of data in this resource. (Paragraph 17)

Data collection and data standards

3. The Government, led by the Cabinet Office, should adopt the same categories as are used in the Census as the minimum standard for data collection on ethnicity across Government departments, and work with individual departments to ensure that this happens in all official data sets and administrative data in the public services for which they are responsible. At present this means using the '18+1' categories, but should the categories change for the 2021 Census, the Cabinet Office should take advice on how best to ensure comparability of data sets over time. (Paragraph 25)
4. The Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Office for National Statistics should work together to provide updated guidance for public bodies, service providers and employers on how to collect consistent ethnicity data and how public sector bodies should use that data to assess their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. (Paragraph 26)
5. The commitment of the Prime Minister to ending racial disparities in outcomes and public services, and the central role taken in this exercise by the Cabinet Office, together provide an opportunity for co-ordinated action to improve data collection and data standards on ethnicity and outcomes. (Paragraph 32)
6. We recommend that the Government publish an action plan to improve the consistency and robustness of the data it collects on the basis of ethnicity, to be implemented within 12 months. In the longer term, the Government should ensure that key data can be disaggregated to allow factors such as gender, age, region, socio-economic status and religion and belief to be taken into account alongside race and ethnicity. (Paragraph 33)

The policy response to the Audit

7. An individual departmental approach risks creating policy in isolation rather than taking multiple factors for disparities into account. Such policies are likely to be less effective. Although action by individual Government departments will be essential to achieving an effective response to the Race Disparity Audit, many of the most significant disparities will need to be tackled through cross-departmental action. (Paragraph 37)
8. Each Government department should publish its own ‘explain or change’ analysis of the Race Disparity Audit, setting out a timetabled plan for action and including cross-departmental analysis and action where necessary. However, we see the Cabinet Office’s role as much more than simply to “remind” departmental ministers of their responsibilities. A coherent cross-government approach is needed to demonstrate the best use of Government money in tackling the most important disparities. (Paragraph 41)
9. It will take time to identify, understand and design policy responses to the disparities revealed by the Audit. If the Government is serious about achieving real change, it will need to set priorities for action, and remain accountable for the results. A cross-departmental strategy would enable us to measure progress in the battle to defeat ethnic injustice. Central coordination was successfully exercised by the Cabinet Office in producing the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. Such coordination also will be necessary in the future to ensure accountability and transparency as work progresses to tackle the disparities revealed. (Paragraph 42)
10. In order to enable us to hold Government to account in defeating ethnic injustice, we recommend that a cross-government race equality strategy be developed. This strategy should formalise the role of the Cabinet Office and the inter-ministerial group in enforcement, co-ordination and oversight of Government departmental plans to close the disparities revealed in the Audit. The strategy should:
 - be developed by departments alongside the Cabinet Office;
 - bring together and examine the ‘explain or change’ analyses and conduct oversight of the actions of individual departments’ plans;
 - identify actions that cut across more than one government department, and ensure that mechanisms exist for departments working together on their implementation; and
 - set out indicators of progress for each 12-month period, with quarterly progress reports required from individual departments. (Paragraph 43)
11. The inter-ministerial group has the potential to provide the kind of high-level oversight that is needed, but its work needs to be informed by subject-specialist input on data collection and analysis and on race equality. We recommend that the Office for National Statistics be invited to attend the inter-ministerial group as observers to provide advice to the group. (Paragraph 44)
12. Evidence submitted to us, and the data in the Audit itself, highlight several areas of disparities that need to be addressed by the Government as priorities. The work

that has begun as a response to the Lammy Review in the area of criminal justice is welcome and should be continued. In addition, race disparities in educational attainment, employment outcomes and housing status need to be prioritised. We expect the relevant departments to develop effective action plans for dealing with these priority areas. (Paragraph 50)

Civil society engagement

13. Engagement by the Race Disparity Unit with stakeholders and users of data, including those representing black and minority ethnic groups, has been exemplary. As the response to the Race Disparity Audit develops and new policy priorities emerge, equally high levels of engagement with civil society are required. (Paragraph 56)
14. The Race Disparity Unit should continue its existing positive engagement with stakeholders, and provide the inter-ministerial group with regular summaries of the views of those stakeholders, with a particular focus on the views of black and minority ethnic groups. (Paragraph 57)
15. Each department, while conducting its explain or change analysis and later when implementing its actions to address disparities, should be working closely with an existing or dedicated stakeholder group that includes individuals from race equality organisations and grassroots groups. (Paragraph 58)

Formal minutes

Wednesday 23 May 2018

Members present:

Mrs Maria Miller, in the Chair

Tonia Antoniazzi Eddie Hughes

Angela Crawley Jess Phillips

Vicky Ford

Draft Report (*Race Disparity Audit*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 58 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned till Wednesday 6 June 2018

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 20 December 2017

Question number

Dr Richard Norrie, Demography, Immigration and Integration Research Fellow, Policy Exchange, **Professor Shamit Saggar**, Professor of Political Science and Public Policy, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, **Andy Shallice**, Policy and Information, Roma Support Group, **Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard**, Policy and Research Manager, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[Q1–43](#)

Wednesday 17 January 2018

Nicola Braganza, Barrister, **David Green**, Director, Civitas, **Sado Jirde**, Director, Black South West Network, **Sunder Katwala**, Director, British Future.

[Q44–91](#)

Wednesday 7 February 2018

Melanie Field, Executive Director, Corporate Strategy and Policy Wales, Equality and Human Rights Commission, **Emma Rourke**, Director of Public Policy Analysis, Office for National Statistics, **Iain Bell**, Deputy National Statistician, Office for National Statistics.

[Q92–116](#)

Rt. Hon David Lidington CBE MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office, **Marcus Bell**, Director, Race Disparity Audit, Cabinet Office.

[Q117–152](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

RDA numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Black South West Network ([RDA0024](#))
- 2 Bright Blue ([RDA0012](#))
- 3 Cabinet Office ([RDA0022](#))
- 4 Catholic Association for Racial Justice ([RDA0009](#))
- 5 Clinks and The Young Review (joint submission) ([RDA0003](#))
- 6 Dr Pete Jones ([RDA0001](#))
- 7 Dr Saffron Karlsen ([RDA0019](#))
- 8 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([RDA0011](#))
- 9 Friends, Families and Travellers ([RDA0008](#))
- 10 Housing Learning and Improvement Network ([RDA0016](#))
- 11 Institute for Research into Superdiversity, University of Birmingham ([RDA0021](#))
- 12 Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex ([RDA0018](#))
- 13 Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([RDA0005](#))
- 14 National Black Police Association ([RDA0004](#))
- 15 Nicola Braganza ([RDA0026](#))
- 16 Office for National Statistics ([RDA0027](#))
- 17 Policy Exchange ([RDA0010](#))
- 18 Professor Gary Craig ([RDA0002](#))
- 19 Professor Steve Strand ([RDA0020](#))
- 20 Professor Yaojun Li ([RDA0023](#))
- 21 Race Equality Matters ([RDA0015](#))
- 22 Roma Support Group ([RDA0007](#), [RDA0025](#))
- 23 The Coalition of Race Equality ([RDA0014](#))
- 24 The Mayor's Fund for London ([RDA0013](#))
- 25 UK Data Service ([RDA0017](#))
- 26 Unite the Union ([RDA0006](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Report	Fathers and the workplace	HC 358
Second Report	The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government	HC 356
First Special Report	Ensuring strong equalities legislation after the EU exit: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 385
Second Special Report	Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the UK: Government and Office for National Statistics Responses to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 426