

Waking up to the realities of racism in the UK

New data reveals the extent to which prejudice and discrimination are embedded in British society

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By Gary Younge



Black and Asian Britons have faced discrimination in education and healthcare, according to a YouGov poll, and there is anger at police stop-and-search tactics © FT montage; Getty Images; PA

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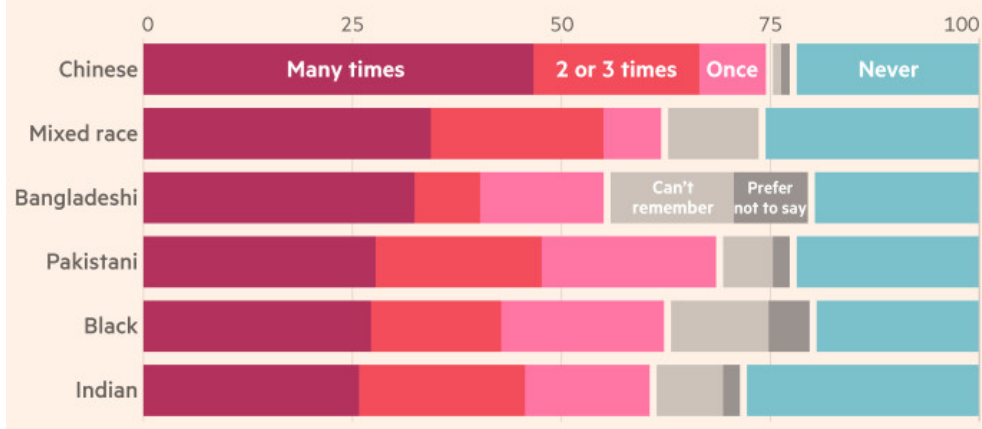
[...]

Black people, and other minorities, do not have the luxury of a passing interest in racism. It is their lived reality. A YouGov poll of black, Asian and minority ethnic Britons surveyed over the past two weeks reveals the extent to which prejudice and discrimination is embedded in society.

5 It found that two-thirds of black Britons have had a racial slur directly used against them or had people make assumptions about their behaviour based on their race. Three-quarters have been asked where they're "really from". (When I once told a man I was born in Hitchin, he asked, "Well where were you from before then?").

Racism in the UK is neither fleeting nor indirect: many non-white Britons have had a racial slur said to their face on several occasions

Has someone ever said a racial slur to you directly? (% giving each response)



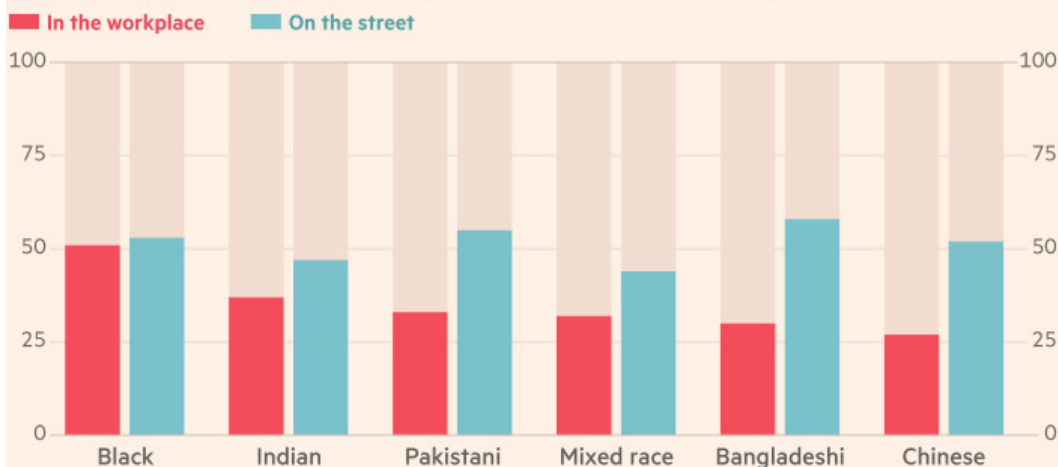
Source: YouGov © FT

10 More than half say their career development has been affected because of their race, or that they have had people make assumptions about their skills based on their race; about 70 per cent believe the Metropolitan police is institutionally racist; and the proportion of black people who have been racially abused in the workplace (half) is almost the same proportion as those who have been abused in the street.

15 Little wonder then that two-thirds of black people polled think there is still a “great deal” of racism nowadays. This is not a substantial difference from the three-quarters who say they think there was a great deal around 30 years ago. [...]

Black Britons are equally likely to have experienced racism in the workplace as on the street

Have you personally ever experienced racism in each of these locations? (% saying yes)



Source: YouGov © FT

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The solemn declarations of intent and solidarity that flooded from corporations and governments will leave us drowned in a sea of racial-sensitivity training unless they are followed up by the kind of thoroughgoing change and investment that seeks to genuinely tackle inequalities in everything from housing and education to recruitment, retention and promotion. That costs money and takes guts; it means challenging power and redistributing resources; it requires reckoning with the past and taking on vested interests. [...]

“If there is no struggle there is no progress,” argued the American abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”