



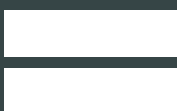
Developing a national barometer of prejudice and discrimination in Britain

Executive summary

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Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

Foreword from our

Chief Executive



Rebecca Hilsenrath

Chief Executive of the Equality and
Human Rights Commission

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Hilsenrath".

How many times in the past year has someone shown you a lack of respect because of your race, impairment or sexual orientation? Would you feel comfortable if an immigrant lived next door, or if your boss had a mental health condition? These are some of the questions we asked in the first national survey of prejudice for over a decade – and often the answers are surprising.

Almost 3,000 people across Britain talked to us about their experiences of prejudice and their attitudes towards different groups. Forty-two per cent of all respondents said they had experienced prejudice in the last year, with this figure being higher among minority groups. This is a matter for concern, particularly as the survey also found that some people think efforts to provide equal opportunities for particular groups have 'gone too far'.

Our work is framed by the principle that if everyone gets a fair chance in life, we all thrive. We therefore need to understand the nature and extent of prejudice and discrimination in Britain in order to tackle the barriers that are holding people back. This requires having robust data on people's attitudes towards others and on people's experiences of being disrespected, patronized, bullied or treated less well because of their race, sex, impairment or any other protected characteristic. By understanding the attitudes that underlie discrimination, we can ensure that efforts to tackle it are more likely to hit the mark.

We are therefore calling for the UK Government to fund a regular national survey, the findings of which would form a barometer showing the current state of prejudice and discrimination in Britain. This report sets out a workable model that could be carried forward by others. We also need social researchers, civil society and NGOs to continue to develop and test this set of questions with other protected groups, especially those who are hard to reach, to provide a comprehensive picture.

As part of our programme of work in this area, we have already examined the links between attitudes and behaviours, and worked with partners to strengthen our knowledge on 'what works' to tackle prejudice and discrimination. We will shortly be launching our three-yearly review of the state of equality and human rights in Britain. 'Is Britain Fairer? 2018' will be an important counterpart to this survey, allowing us to see where prejudiced attitudes towards certain groups may be holding them back in life.

Taken together, these reports are a significant contribution to our bank of evidence on how people in Britain live and work together. We will use this data in our own work, and we hope policy-makers in general will use it in theirs – in order to drive lasting change. Britain has a proud history of tackling intolerance and prejudice and we must ensure that we continue to lead the way as we leave the European Union. We believe that justice, freedom and compassion should be the traits that define our nation into the future.



Executive summary

This is the first national survey of prejudice for over a decade. It measures prejudice and discrimination in Britain experienced by people with a wide range of protected characteristics: age, disability, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.

Our report demonstrates the value of using a national survey of this type to measure prejudice and discrimination in Britain and to set out a benchmark for future surveys. The purpose of this research is to help establish a national ‘barometer’ for monitoring changes in the attitudes and experiences of the general population.

We were commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to design and run a national survey of prejudice, using a consistent set of measures across a range of protected characteristics. We surveyed 2,853 adults in Britain using the NatCen Panel surveys and carried out an additional survey to target minority groups that may otherwise not be well represented in the survey.

Our approach provides new insights into the form and prevalence of prejudice and discrimination in Britain. Measuring these issues in a consistent way across protected characteristics groups and across England, Scotland and Wales, gives us a uniquely recent and comparable overview. It enables us to look across a range of measures to paint a meaningful picture of the prejudice affecting a particular protected characteristic, rather than looking at individual measures on their own.

Although it does not yet provide a picture of prejudice and discrimination for all protected characteristics – which would require a larger and further-developed survey – it sets out a workable model for a future national instrument for monitoring these issues in Britain.

This report provides an overview of what we have found out about people’s experiences and expressions of prejudice in Britain.





Experiences of prejudice

and discrimination

- 42% of people in Britain said they had experienced some form of prejudice in the last 12 months.
- Data from the combined representative panel survey and boost sample data indicated that experience of prejudice was higher in minority groups. This should be interpreted with some caution because of methodological differences from the main survey. In the last year:
 - 70% of Muslims surveyed experienced religion-based prejudice
 - 64% of people from a black ethnic background experienced race-based prejudice
 - 61% of people with a mental health condition experienced impairment-based prejudice, and
 - 46% of lesbian, gay or bisexual people experienced sexual orientation-based prejudice.
- Ageism can be experienced by people at any age. In line with previous research, a higher proportion of British adults reported experiencing prejudice based on their age (26%) than on any other characteristic.

Attitudes

- Nearly three-quarters of people in Britain (74%) agreed that there should be equality for all groups in Britain, but one in ten (10%) people surveyed disagreed.
- More people expressed openly negative feelings towards some protected characteristics (44% towards Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, 22% towards Muslims, and 16% towards transgender people) than towards others (for example, 9% towards gay, lesbian or bisexual people, 4% towards people aged over 70, and 3% towards disabled people with a physical impairment).

- A quarter expressed discomfort with having a person with a mental health condition as their boss (25%) or as a potential family member (29%). Around one-fifth of respondents said they would feel uncomfortable if either an immigrant or a Muslim lived next door (19% and 18% respectively), and 14% said they would feel uncomfortable if a transgender person lived next door.
- Around a third of British adults felt that efforts to provide equal opportunities had gone 'too far' in the case of immigrants (37%) and Muslims (33%). In contrast, nearly two-thirds thought that such efforts had 'not gone far enough' for people with a mental health condition (63%) or people with a physical impairment (60%).

Developing a national barometer

We have identified some examples of how this survey generates useful insights when used as a complete set of measures:

- People's perceptions of the seriousness of discrimination in Britain in relation to different protected characteristics did not match levels of personal experiences of discrimination. For example, more than half (54%) thought that the issue of discrimination based on age was not at all or only slightly serious, despite more British adults reporting experiences of prejudice based on their age (26%) than any other protected characteristic.
- People's resistance to improving equal opportunities was greatest towards those groups considered to be less 'friendly' and more 'capable' (such as Muslims and immigrants) and least in relation to those considered less 'capable' but more 'friendly' (such as disabled people).
- Prejudices are likely to be quite specific, and there are differences in the ways that people express their prejudices towards people with different protected characteristics. Although similarly low numbers of people expressed negative feelings towards disabled people with a physical impairment and those with a mental health condition, fewer people were comfortable with the idea of having a person with a mental health condition as their boss or neighbour compared to a disabled person with a physical impairment.
- The form and prevalence of prejudice may differ across regions of Britain. For example, the percentage of respondents who expressed negative feelings towards Muslims, immigrants and Gypsies, Roma and Travellers was lower in Scotland than in England.

Our report identifies a set of measures that can be repeated regularly to create a consistent evidence base on the form and prevalence of prejudice and discrimination in Britain. The survey can be adapted and extended to assess specific additional aspects of prejudice and discrimination, as well as affected groups and areas of life not covered in this report. The ongoing development of the survey measures is essential to ensure it remains an accurate, relevant and useful tool for seeking to understand prejudice and discrimination in Britain.

Contacts

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EASS

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