

# Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK: call for evidence

## Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

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## **About this consultation**

The Government has recently set up The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, with the aim of looking at inequality in the UK. The Commission has launched this consultation focusing on the following key areas: education, employment, health and crime and policing to understand why disparities in society exist.

## **Introduction**

Age UK is a national charity that works with a network of partners, including Age Scotland, Age Cymru, Age NI and local Age UKs across England, to help everyone make the most of later life, whatever their circumstances. In the UK, the charity helps more than seven million older people each year by providing advice and support. It also researches and campaigns on the issues that matter most to older people. Its work focuses on ensuring that older people have enough money; enjoy life and feel well; receive high quality health and care; are comfortable, safe and secure at home; and feel valued and able to participate.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Commission's consultation to explore why inequalities exist in the UK.

Older BAME people have overlapping identities, for example being an older Asian woman. Often meaning they face multiple inequalities that compound each other, which are often exacerbated by one another. It is important to recognise the effects of different identities on older BAME people's experience of inequality.

According to the 2011 Census, 8% of people aged 60+ in England and Wales are from BAME communities, compared to 14% of the total population.<sup>i</sup> Although the age structure of minority ethnic groups is younger than the white British population it is set to grow; with the ethnic population in England and Wales aged 65+ estimated to reach 2.7 million by 2051.<sup>ii</sup> It is vitally important to understand the needs of these communities, and recognise diversity when designing policy.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK there has been significant evidence that shows people from ethnic minority communities have been more at risk of the worst consequences of Covid-19 than the white population. The latest ONS data shows that all ethnic minority groups (except the Chinese community) have higher rates of death involving Covid-19, with black Caribbean men aged 65+ having the highest rates of deaths at 1097.35 per 100,00 almost 2.3x higher than white men aged 65+.<sup>iii</sup> Even when taking account for socio-economic disadvantage, pre-existing health conditions, disability and deprivation they don't fully account for the disparities in the additional risk of death from Covid-19 for ethnic communities. The factors that lead to increased risks of both catching and dying from coronavirus for older BAME people are driven by the structural racism and resultant inequalities that older BAME communities in the UK experience across their lives.

## **Key points and recommendations**

- The Government should develop a plan to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, which is fully reflective of the diversity of BAME people within British society.
- To fully understand the impact of inequalities on older BAME people, improvements must be made to data collection methods. This should include all protected characteristics so analysis can recognise the different identities that many people possess. It is important to recognise that older BAME people are not one homogenous group.