

# Who experiences ethnic and racial harassment?<sup>1</sup>

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## Key findings

Using data from the largest household panel survey in the UK, Understanding Society (2009 –), we present the prevalence of experiencing ethnic or racial harassment in the last 12 months among ethnic minorities. The key findings are that

- Ethnic minorities are most likely to experience ethnic and racial harassment and anticipate it in streets, shops and public transport.
- Chinese men and women, Pakistani men, Indian-Sikh men, Indian-Muslim men and Bangladeshi women are more likely to report such experiences than others – around 15%.
- For most ethnic groups, twice as many people anticipate or fear harassment than actually experience it, with the exception of black Caribbean and black African groups.
- Women are more likely than men to feel unsafe and avoid places, but men are more likely to report actually experiencing ethnic and racial harassment.
- These patterns persist after account for contextual factors that vary across ethnic groups.
- The likelihood of experiencing ethnic and racial harassment is lower for those living with a higher proportion of their own ethnic group members after taking into account area level deprivation.

## Location of ethnic and racial harassment

We find that ethnic minorities are most likely to both anticipate and actually experience ethnic or racial harassment in public places. The most likely place is on the streets followed by shops and public transport (see Figure 1). A recent report based on the Home Office figures on hate crimes and offences found a seasonal spike during the summer months of June-August (Deveine 2016). As people are more likely to be outside during the summer months this spike is consistent with our findings that harassment is more likely to happen on the streets, shops and public transport.

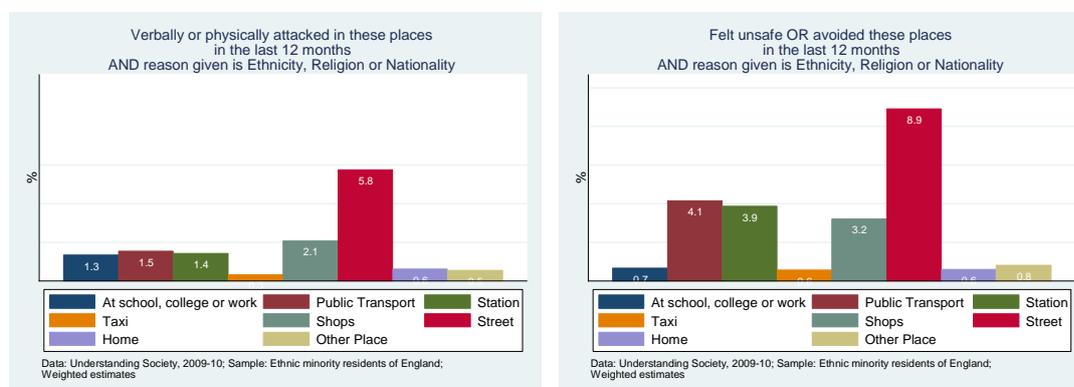


Figure 1: Location of ethnic and racial harassment

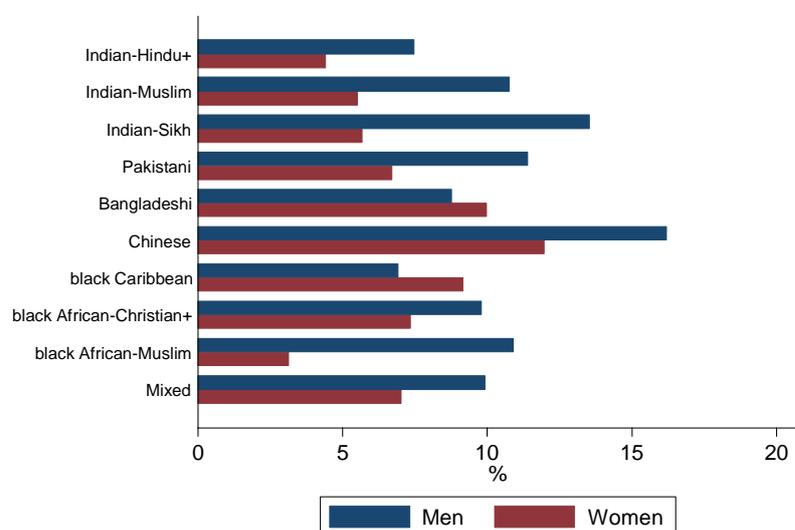
<sup>1</sup> This is part of an ongoing project that was funded by the Economic and Research Council under the Secondary Data Analysis Initiative scheme (EBC4800).

## Prevalence of ethnic and racial harassment<sup>2</sup>

Over the period of 2009-2014, we find that between 10-20% of men and women across ethnic minority groups in England report having been physically or verbally attacked at a public place because of their ethnicity, religion or nationality (See Figure 2).

For most ethnic groups, men were more likely to report experiencing such racist attacks which is possibly because women in most ethnic groups are less likely to be employed and hence less likely to be at public places. As black Caribbean women have higher employment rates than men in that group, it is not surprising that they report higher prevalence rates. But Bangladeshi women, who have very low employment rates, were also more likely than Bangladeshi men to report experiencing such acts.

We find that across ethnic groups and sexes, Chinese men and women, Pakistani men, Indian-Sikh men, Indian-Muslim men and Bangladeshi women were more likely to experience ethnic and racial harassment than others – around 15%. Since the last survey in 1993, ethnic and racial harassment has decreased slightly (2-4 percentage points) for most ethnic groups. This decline is more marked among the most established minority group – black Caribbean – who also have the highest proportion of age 60+ adults: reports of ethnic and racial harassment are down 10 percentage points for black Caribbean men and 5 pp for black Caribbean women.<sup>3</sup> As older and retired individuals are less likely to be in public places the sharp decrease in prevalence rates for black Caribbeans is not surprising.



Data: Understanding Society, 2009-10; Sample: Ethnic minority residents of England  
Weighted estimates

**Figure 2:** Was physically or verbally attacked in the last 12 months in public transport, shops, street, other places and the reason was Ethnicity, Nationality, Religion

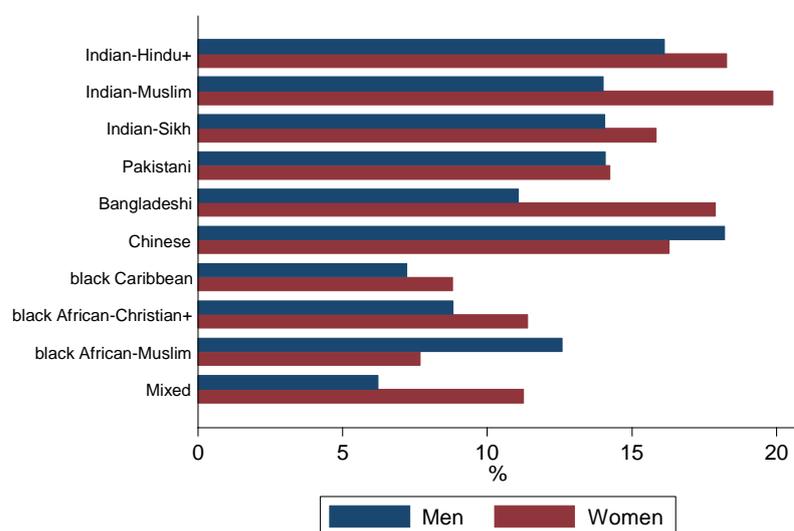
<sup>2</sup> *Ethnic or racial harassment:* We code a person to have experienced ethnic or racial harassment if they say they have been insulted, called names, threatened or shouted at or physically attacked in a public place<sup>2</sup> in the past 12 months and given the reason for that to be their ethnicity, religion or national identity.

<sup>3</sup> The comparison figures are from a study based on the data from the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities (1993-94), had found similar prevalence rates for ethnic minorities (see Virdee 1998).

## Prevalence of FEAR of ethnic and racial harassment<sup>4</sup>

Even if a person does not experience ethnic and racial harassment, they may still be fearful of racist attacks if their family members, neighbours or others in their extended social network have such experiences. This fear may impact their quality of life if they avoid or feel unsafe in public places. We report the likelihood of such *anticipated* ethnic or racial harassment. Feeling unsafe and avoiding places may have detrimental effects on men and women's labour market participation, social interactions, physical activity and finally on their mental health and wellbeing (as we found in an ongoing research).

We find that women are more likely than men to feel unsafe or avoid public places across most ethnic groups with the exception of Chinese and black African Muslim groups. For most ethnic groups, with the exception of black Caribbean and black African groups, reports of avoidance or feeling unsafe in public is twice as common as reports of actual harassment.



Data: Understanding Society, 2009-10; Sample: Ethnic minority residents of England  
Weighted estimates

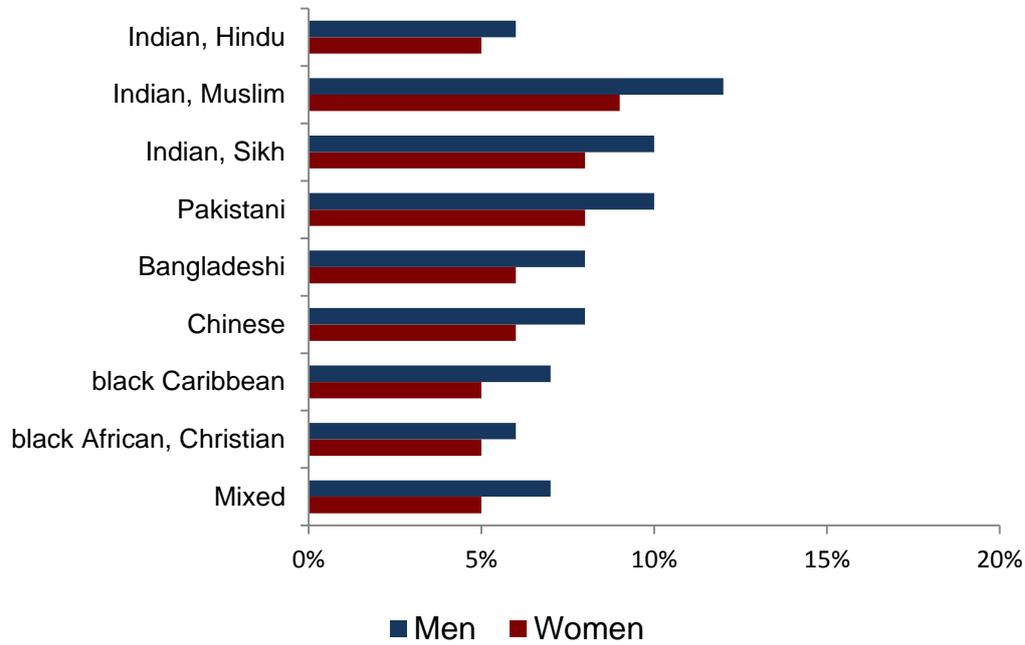
**Figure 3:** Avoided or felt unsafe in the last 12 months in public transport, shops, street, other places and the reason was Ethnicity, Nationality or Religion

## Likelihood of experiencing ethnic and racial harassment

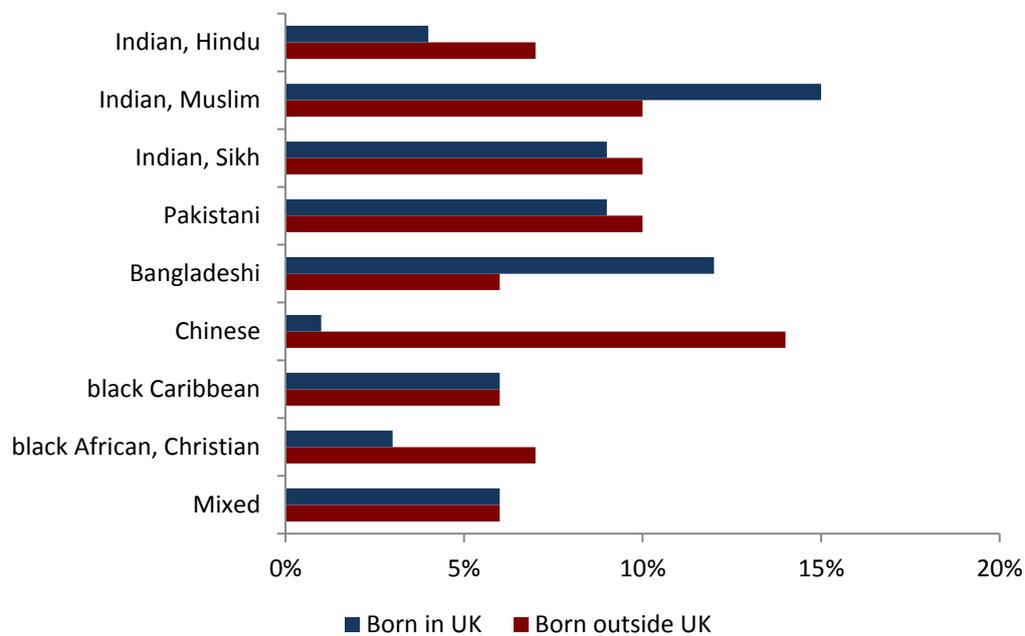
The likelihood of experiencing ethnic and racial harassment in public places is conditioned on coming into contact with people of another ethnicity. Thus, it is not surprising that those who live in areas with a higher proportion of their own ethnic group members are less likely to experience ethnic and racial harassment. Women and those who are retired, who are less likely to be in public, are also less likely to report such experiences. After accounting for such factors, however, we still find that the probability of experiencing ethnic and racial harassment across ethnic groups is between 5-12% and men are more likely to report such experiences than women (See Figure 4).

<sup>4</sup> *Anticipated (or fear of) ethnic or racial harassment:* We code a person to anticipate ethnic or racial harassment if they say they have felt unsafe or avoided a public place in the past 12 months and given the reason for that to be their ethnicity, religion or national identity.

We also find that a higher percentage of UK born Bangladeshi and Indian Muslims report experiencing ethnic and racial harassment than their foreign born counterparts. This is not the case for the other groups (see Figure 5).



**Figure 4:** Predicted probability of experiencing ethnic and racial harassment by ethnic group and gender, after accounting for contextual factors which vary across ethnic groups



**Figure 5** Predicted probability of experiencing ethnic and racial harassment by ethnic group and country of birth, after accounting for contextual factors which vary across ethnic groups