

# Press release: Prime Minister launches world-leading project on impact of ethnicity on everyday life

The Prime Minister will challenge society to “explain or change” disparities in how people from different backgrounds are treated, as the government publishes the findings of a ground breaking audit of public services.

Launching the new ‘Ethnicity Facts and Figures’ website today (Tuesday 10 October), Theresa May will host a discussion round the Cabinet Table involving key stakeholders at Downing Street.

She will tell them the audit will become an “essential resource in the battle to defeat ethnic injustice” which must be confronted at all levels of society – from central government to local communities.

The new website – a first of its kind in terms of scale, scope and transparency – contains thousands of statistics covering more than 130 topics in areas including health, education, employment and the criminal justice system.

Key findings include:

- employment rates are higher for white people than for ethnic minorities across the country, with a larger gap in the north than in the south (13.6% compared to 9%)
- education attainment data shows there are disparities in primary school which increase in secondary school, with Chinese and Asian pupils tending to perform well and White and Black pupils doing less well, particularly those eligible for free school meals
- ethnic minorities are under-represented at senior levels across the public sector

The website will be a permanent resource, with new datasets being added over time. A specialist unit, run from the Cabinet Office under the First Secretary of State Damian Green, will consider and co-ordinate the government’s work.

Opening today’s roundtable, the Prime Minister is expected to say:

People who have lived with discrimination don’t need a government audit to make them aware of the scale of the challenge.

But this audit means that for society as a whole – for government, for our public services – there is nowhere to hide. These issues are now out in the open. And the message is very simple: if these disparities cannot be explained then they must be changed.

Britain has come a long way in my lifetime in spreading equality and opportunity. But the data we are publishing today will provide the definitive evidence of how far we must still go in order to truly build a country that works for everyone.

The Prime Minister ordered the audit shortly after taking office, as part of the agenda she set out in her first speech on the steps of Downing Street to tackle injustices in society.

This builds on her work as Home Secretary – where her reforms of stop and search have led to continued falls in the unlawful use of the powers. In the year ending March 2016, the number of stops and searches fell by 28 per cent.

Yesterday (Monday 9 October), the Prime Minister visited the Dunraven School in Lambeth, where she met sixth form students who spoke candidly on the issues which had affected them and their hopes for the future.

She told them:

It was really important and helpful to hear your views on your education and the careers you want to follow, as well as the experiences of your friends and family in a whole range of areas from stop and search to mental health, to how different people are treated at work.

What I hope this audit will bring is a change in attitude so that everyone is treated equally, no matter what their background, and this is never a barrier to getting on in life.

By bringing this information together in one place for the first time it will shine a light on the issues we are facing. We must now work together as a society to find solutions.

The government has worked with hundreds of stakeholders across the country over the last 12 months. Today's roundtable marks the beginning of the second phase of that work once the website is live.

Welcoming publication of the audit, ahead of today's meeting Simon Woolley, director of Operation Black Vote, said:

The findings from the Race Disparity Audit presents us with a real opportunity to make transformative change in tackling persistent race inequality.

Yes, some findings make uncomfortable reading, but unless these things are laid bare we can't begin to resolve them.

Over many years the Prime Minister has shown a real desire to grapple with the scourge of racism including confronting high levels of BAME Stop and Search, BAME deaths in police custody and now this.

Alongside publication of the report, the government launched a programme of work to tackle some of the disparities identified in the audit.

In employment, the Department for Work and Pensions will take action in twenty targeted hotspots. Measures in these areas could include mentoring schemes to help those in ethnic minorities in to work, and traineeships for 16-24 year-olds, offering English, Maths and vocational training alongside work placements.

And in the criminal justice system, the Ministry of Justice will take forward a number of recommendations made in the recent Lammy Review, including:

- developing performance indicators for prisons to assess the equality of outcomes for prisoners of all ethnicities
- adopting an 'explain or change' approach to ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system
- committing to publish all criminal justices datasets held on ethnicity by default
- and working to ensure that our prison workforce is more representative of the country as a whole, holding leaders to account for improving the recruitment, retention and progress of ethnic minority staff

And in schooling, the Department for Education will take forward an external review to improve practice in exclusions. This will share best practice nationwide, and focus on the experiences of those groups who are disproportionately likely to be excluded.

Further announcements on future government work will follow in the coming months.