

Race Disparity Unit Commended for Pandemic Research

- The Cabinet Office's Race Disparities Unit has been awarded an ONS Research Excellence Award at Research Capability 2021
- The winning project used secure data to report on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority groups
- This research led to a series of government interventions to protect ethnic minorities from infection and mortality from COVID-19

Following their work to identify and tackle the health disparities caused by COVID-19, the Race Disparity Unit (RDU), part of the government's Equality Hub, has been awarded a Research Excellence Award by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

This winning research from the RDU has connected data providers and researchers, identifying new risk factors for different ethnic groups, leading to a series of government interventions to protect ethnic minorities from infection and mortality from COVID-19.

In total, five teams of researchers have been recognised at Research Capability 2021, an event held by the ONS, which recognises outstanding, innovative research carried out using ONS secure data or data managed by ONS on behalf of others.

The Programme Award was accepted by Vasileios Antonopoulos, Head of Analysis and Briefing at the RDU, on behalf of the organisation.

Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, said:

"I am very proud of my officials for their hard work over the last 18 months. The research by the Race Disparity Unit has supported life-saving innovations in our COVID-19 approach, including a communications campaign to dispel myths about the virus and the vaccine.

"They've supported the Government in tackling dangerous disinformation and collaborated with trusted partners to promote confidence in the vaccine.

"Our commitment to build back fairer, leaving no one behind means this government will do everything it can to address the long-term impacts of the pandemic on ethnic minorities, and others disproportionately affected, in our post-COVID recovery strategy."

Deputy National Statistician and Director General for Data Capability, Alison Pritchard, said:

"This project was singled out by the judges as exemplifying the quality of research possible in a time of crisis and required close collaboration between government and academia.

“Leading to several instances of targeted government support to address disparities for ethnic minorities during the pandemic, this project demonstrated how data-driven insight can deliver positive outcomes and have an immediate impact on policy.”

Professor Keith Neil, an independent advisor to Government on the COVID-19 work, said:

“After reporting of a high risk of deaths from COVID-19 amongst ethnic minorities the Race Disparities Unit was quick off the mark to investigate this issue.

“This critical work has had a huge impact on disadvantaged groups during an unprecedented time. It has the potential to build upon existing research on inequalities for effective action in the future.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The ONS Research Excellence Award recognises and celebrates outstanding, innovative research carried out using ONS secure data or data managed by ONS on behalf of others in our Secure Research Service. The research must deliver a public benefit to the UK while protecting data confidentiality.

Some ways the Government has addressed low vaccine uptake by ethnic minorities during COVID include:

- The NHS has allocated over £7 million of additional funding to local sustainability and transformation partnerships to enable targeted engagement in areas with health inequalities and with communities that are not vaccine confident.
- The 60 local authority areas participating in the Community Champions scheme recruited over 4,650 individuals within two months of operation, who are now playing a vital role in combatting misinformation and driving vaccine uptake.
- Providing local health leaders with comprehensive data on vaccine uptake among those most at risk from COVID-19 within their areas, allowing them to take targeted action.
- Creating a national bank of resources, shared via a Vaccine Equalities Connect and Exchange Hub, which is giving local areas access to translated materials, multimedia and other resources that are being used to improve vaccination confidence.
- A multi-channel communications and media campaign, including use of celebrities such as Nadiya Hussain (to encourage vaccine take-up amongst British Bangladeshi audiences) and Sir Lenny Henry (to encourage uptake among Black groups).