



# BAME communities

*Covid-19 briefing note: November 2020*

*This series of briefings address issues that are emerging in the UK as a result of Covid-19 that impact on the work of community investment. In each one, we have brought together available evidence to help you think about and plan future strategies and how resources can be directed. This briefing covers BAME communities.*

## The current situation

According to the 2011 Census, 14% of the UK population came from a BAME group, with 7.5% coming from Asian ethnic groups, 3.3% from Black ethnic groups, 2.2% from mixed or multiple ethnic groups and 1% made up of other ethnic groups.<sup>1</sup>

## Health impacts

Early data showed that BAME people made up over a third of those admitted into intensive care following the outbreak of the virus.<sup>2</sup>

The risk of death from Covid-19 is also higher amongst BAME communities, with people up to two times more likely to die from the virus than white British people.

There are certain ethnic groups that have been most severely impacted. The excess death rate has been much higher within the Pakistani (2.8 times expected), Bangladeshi (3 times expected), black African (4.5 times expected), and other black (7.3 times expected) communities.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons for BAME communities being disproportionately impacted have not yet been conclusively proven. It seems likely the higher death rates are caused by a confluence of pre-existing factors.

The proximate cause is that BAME people are simply more likely to be infected by the virus. For example, black people have been found to be 3.4 times more likely to test positive than white British people, while South Asian people are 2.4 times more likely to test positive.<sup>4</sup>

Housing is a major cause of this. BAME people are more likely to live in overcrowded homes, increasing risk of transmission and making self-isolation difficult. 30% of Bangladeshi, 16% of Pakistani and 12% of

## Social housing and BAME communities

Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are far more likely to live in social housing than their white British counterparts.

Between 2016 and 2018 17% of households in England lived in social housing. 44% of Black African, 41% of Mixed White/Black African, and 40% of Black Caribbean people live in social housing.

33% of Bangladeshis and 32% of Arabs also live in social housing.<sup>14</sup>

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black households experience overcrowding. The figure for white British households is 2%.

Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups are more likely to live in multi-family households. Bangladeshi, Indian and Chinese households are particularly likely to have people over 65 living with children under the age of 16.<sup>5</sup>

Another key driver of higher infection rates amongst BAME communities is employment in frontline roles. BAME people are overrepresented in sectors such as transport, health, and social care<sup>6</sup>, in roles where working from home is not possible and interaction with people is unavoidable.

Socio-economic factors have also been identified as potential drivers for higher infection and hospitalisation rates: high levels of poverty and in-work poverty, deprivation, poorer underlying health, higher levels of long term health conditions, and lower engagement with healthcare services.<sup>7</sup>

## Economic impacts

BAME communities have also felt the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately. In the early months of the pandemic employment for BAME people fell 4.6%, compared to 1.7% for non-BAME people. BAME people are also less likely to have been put on the government's furlough scheme.<sup>8</sup>

BAME people are more likely to work in sectors that have been hardest hit by the virus and the national and regional lockdowns. 15% of workers in sectors that have shut down are from a BAME background, compared to 12% of all workers.<sup>9</sup>

BAME workers are 18% of the transport and storage sector and 15% of the accommodation and food services sector, two of the sectors that have seen the largest numbers of job losses during the pandemic.<sup>10</sup>

BAME people are also being particularly impacted by the end of the furlough scheme. YouGov found that 22% of furloughed BAME workers ultimately became unemployed, compared to the average of 9%.<sup>11</sup>

## Useful indicators in the Social Value Bank

[The Social Value Bank](#) is useful for housing providers looking at indicators which disproportionately impact BAME communities, such as health and mental health.

These values can be used to assess if a housing providers is having the same impact with their programmes for BAME groups compared with non BAME groups.

For example, a housing provider might be improving mental health in 50 people overall but only 5 of these are from a BAME background.

These insight can then be used to develop different or more tailored approaches for BAME communities.

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## Overcrowding and quality of housing

BAME households are generally larger than white households, housing an average of 3.1 people compared to 2.3. While only 6% of the white population is classified as overcrowded, between 15-30% of BAME households are overcrowded. In London, three quarters of overcrowded households are from a BAME group.<sup>12</sup>

BAME households are more likely to wait longer for a housing offer, to be offered poorer quality homes, and flats rather than houses.<sup>13</sup>

## Language

People with English as a second language (ESL) face barriers to accessing services, both from housing associations and other community services. Information about issues with services, and the support to which residents are entitled, is less likely to reach those with ESL. Digital exclusion is also higher amongst BAME customers, often due to language issues.

## Cultural familiarity

Participants from HACT's recent research report with A2Dominion into support for BAME communities reflected that there are some residents and communities that come from countries very different to the UK.

Cultural differences can make life in the UK difficult, especially accessing services and support if you don't understand how to navigate specific systems, or the cultural context around them.

## Disenfranchisement

Many BAME people have negative experiences of interacting with institutions and large organisations, according to a recent HACT and A2Dominion research report.

For older people, this can be an experience built up over decades of frustrating interactions, creating a lifelong sense of disenfranchisement.

## Community Insight datasets

There are numerous datasets in Community Insight that can be used to identify demographics in a particular area:

- White ethnic groups
- Mixed ethnic groups
- Asia ethnic groups
- Arab ethnic group
- Other ethnic group
- Non-white ethnic group
- Migrants
- Overcrowded housing

[Book a demo or find out more](#)

## Further reading:

[Gov.uk](#)

[Housing Diversity Network](#)

[Race Equality Foundation](#)

[Runnymede Trust](#)

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This is a structural issue, which has its roots in decades of BAME people being discriminated against, treated unfairly, or not been listened to by large institutions and organisations.

## Youth engagement

Young black men in particular lack services and support. This is only going to become more pressing off the back of the Covid-19 pandemic. Young black men are likely to experience particularly bad outcomes from the pandemic in the medium and long term, since they fall into two of the categories most negatively impacted: BAME people and young people.

## Capacity of community organisations

There are many community organisations that do great work for and with BAME communities in their areas. Unfortunately, the capacity of these organisations tends to be low. They are often small, and may be partly, or even fully, volunteer based. This places limits on the scope of their work, particularly under current operating restrictions.

## What does this mean for social housing?

BAME people are more likely to live in social housing (see sidebar) than the rest of the population, making the issue of BAME people suffering from the pandemic a significant one for social housing providers.

Social housing residents will likely need support to confront the medium- and long-term damage caused to physical health, mental health, and economic prospects.

It will be vital to support residents who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, who are disproportionately likely to be BAME. This may be through the expansion of existing education, skills and training programmes, or the development of new forms of support,

Find out more about HACT's research report with A2Dominion, 'BAME Perspectives: a review of A2Dominion support for BAME communities'

Contact Will Howard at [will.howard@hact.org.uk](mailto:will.howard@hact.org.uk)

## Get involved:

If you'd like to get involved in the Centre's Black History Month working group, contact Adam Chester, [adam.chester@hact.org.uk](mailto:adam.chester@hact.org.uk)