



Co-POWER Consortium on Practices of Well-being and Resilience in
BAME Families and Communities

CoDE Centre on the Dynamics
of Ethnicity

Pandemic

Policing in the UK

Join Co-POWER and
CoDE in a webinar
to discuss our
findings on what
policing during
Covid-19 reveals
about state racism
and its implications
for public health law
and guidance.

JUNE 16 • 5:30 PM TO 7:00 PM

Session breakout

1. Introduction
(5.30 to 5.45 pm)

2. Presentation of findings from
both projects
(5.45 to 6.15 pm)

3. Discussion with the audience
(6.15 to 6.45 pm)

4. Conclusion
(6.45 to 7.00 pm)

Co-POWeR: Consortium on Practices of Well-being and Resilience in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Families and Communities (<https://co-power.leeds.ac.uk/>)

Project Summary

Two viruses – COVID-19 and racial discrimination – are currently killing in the UK (Solanke 2020), especially within BAMEFC who are hardest hit. Survivors face ongoing damage to wellbeing and resilience, in terms of physical and mental health as well as social, cultural and economic (nonmedical) consequences.

Co-POWeR investigates the combined impact of these viruses on practices for wellbeing and resilience across BAMEFC in the UK to create an holistic idea of vulnerabilities damaging BAMEFC.

Research Stream (Work Packages) Overview

WP1: Emergency Powers investigates these vague COVID Act powers to understand their impact on practices of well-being and resilience across BAMEFC.

WP2: Children, Young People and their families investigates significant implications for children/young people in BAMEFC (Carter 2020) who experience COVID-19 negatively due to disproportionate socio-economic and psychosocial impacts on their families and communities (ADCS 2020).

WP3: Care, Caring and Carers investigates the interaction of care, caring and carers within BAMEFC to investigate how to increase the well-being and resilience of older people, and paid and unpaid carers.

WP 4: Physical Activity and Nutrition will investigate improving resilience and well-being by tackling vulnerability to underlying health conditions (cardiovascular disease, obesity) in BAMEFC, which may have contributed to the disproportionately high severity of illness and deaths from COVID-19 (PHE Report 2020).

WP5 Empowering BAMEFC through Positive Narratives channels research from WP1-4 to coproduce fiction and non-fiction materials tackling the vulnerability of BAMEFC to 'mis infodemics' (IOM 2020): multi-level misrepresentation, linguistic and cultural miscommunication, that undermines understanding of the public health crisis and marginalises BAMEFC.

The Co-POWeR Academic Team





A large ESRC funded project looking at racial and ethnic inequalities in times of crisis

WP9: Policing

Strand 1: police institutional killings and Black death

Strand 2: racially minoritised experiences of policing during the pandemic

Scarlet Harris, Lisa White, Patrick Williams, Remi Joseph-Salisbury

Advisory Board: Roxy Legane, Joe Sim, Griff Ferris, Deborah Coles, Joanna Gilmore, Will Mason, Liz Fekete, Jas Nijjar, and Rebekah Delsol.



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Official Data on the disproportionate use of emergency powers on BAME communities

NPCC 2020: The UK National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) report showed that Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for breaching of the Coronavirus Act regulations were issued at a rate of 1.6 times higher to people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds compared to white people.

Home Office 2021: There was an increase of 24% in stop and searches for the year ending in March 2021 with 1 in 5 being used on male minority ethnic teenagers. Overall, "males aged 15-34 from a BAME background account for 32% of stop and search in the year ending March 2021, despite only comprising 2.6% of the population."

"...it was a bit mind boggling that the Police would be pushing the use of this power [Stop and Search] in a time when they should have been socially distancing. So what we saw was in March to May increase in stop and search last year [2020] in the height of the pandemic and that really did undermine any positive relationship that black Asian ethnic minority communities had with the Police because they felt like the Police were putting them at risk of the virus by coming up to them and engaging with them unnecessarily."
(Member of police monitoring group, 5th August 2021)

1. Poorly framed and specified rules

- The emergency powers were framed without reflection upon the known social, economic, housing and health inequalities in play before the pandemic.
- Greater vulnerability of racially minoritised groups led to their stigmatisation.
- The police identified difficulties arising from poor specification of the emergency powers - causing operational difficulties.
- In the context of longstanding police racism and distrust, poor specification further enabled arbitrary policing decisions.

“It was really difficult to make sure officers understood the difference between legislation and guidance and understood what things they could give notices for and what was just guidance.” (Member of UK police, 7 September 2021)

2. Material barriers to following Covid-19 guidance

- Furlough was applied unevenly, with poor understanding by employers in low-paid sectors such as cleaning.
- Very visible police presence at playgrounds and parks made these spaces uncomfortable for some racially minoritised young people.
- The wider White community was more inclined to adopt a ‘policing’ approach in their interactions with racially minoritised people.

“... there are so many instances even before the pandemic but also especially during the pandemic and so on, of black and brown people stopped and fined and so on. During lockdown, I used to go and walk by the sea every day, take a walk and stuff and I would see people sitting actually on the benches on the seafront in Brighton and think, hmm, good, but maybe if I do this it's not good, it's not great, maybe I should just walk briskly like an exercising person, like a clearly exercising person, because I'd be courting problems if I sit and drink coffee like other people.”
(Antiracist activist, 19 October 2021)

3. Widespread loss of trust

- Highly publicised failures of government during the pandemic.
- Understanding of the disproportionate and arbitrary policing of rules on racially minoritised groups led to distrust of health guidance.
- Racially minoritised groups sought out alternative sources of information and guidance considered more trustworthy.
- Police services reported their concern of undermined relationships of cooperation with racially minoritised communities.

“The Coronavirus Act kind of almost made the whole country, um, give a lot of power to a lot of people to do a lot of things based on Covid so it was almost like at the very height of it, it was almost like you could almost use Covid to do anything.” (Member of local council, 8 October 2021)

4. Loss, grief and arbitrary implementation of Covid-19 rules

- Racially minoritised groups now understand more clearly the unevenness of the extent of loss and ongoing impact of the pandemic.
- Respondents express an urgent desire to ensure stories of the pandemic from below are recorded and captured.

“You saw this mix of the hyper surveillance and the use of these powers just because it helped even further control against young people. You saw the powers used as a real means to come down aggressively on people, Covid not respected at all for actual community members.” (Member of police monitoring group, 9 November 2021)

“... young people from BAME backgrounds suffered bereavements much more ... so something like 25% of the 200 hundred [who answered our survey] reported bereavement compared to 7% of white young people.”

(Member of health and social care services in London, 29 October 2021)

A threat to public safety: policing, racism and the pandemic

Scarlet Harris, Remi Joseph-Salisbury, Patrick Williams, Lisa White
Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE)

The research

The research aimed to:

- to explore the experiences of racially minoritised people who encountered the police during the Coronavirus pandemic;
- to highlight the factors that initiate encounters between the police and racially minoritised people and communities in this context;
- to explore how and to what extent the pandemic shapes such encounters.

Research conversations with 22 racially minoritised people who had *an encounter* with police between December 2020 and April 2021.

8 women, 14 men

Ages 19 – 62

Across England

Findings fall into three broad areas:

New police powers and racist policing

Covid transmission and public health

Navigating and managing police encounters

New police powers and racist policing: 'It's like giving a golden ticket'

Lockdown conditions provided fertile ground for the (re)articulation of racist policing.

New powers were used inconsistently and inaccurately, and often alongside other longer standing powers and pretences.

Increased police powers exacerbate the harm to Black communities and other racially minoritised communities.

Policing interlocks with structural inequalities elsewhere: racially minoritised and working-class people more likely to be in the street and therefore at risk of police contact.

"Everything is heightened more, isn't it, your pressures, your habits, your edges, things that normally would distress you and worry you is going to be heightened now in Covid... it's almost giving like a golden ticket to kind of go out there in Black communities and just ridicule us... they manhandle us, they verbally attack us, they treat us like animals" (Kalifa).

"...don't forget, this isn't recently, this is a long history you know... this isn't just now, and that doesn't change the issue that the police got carried away in Covid, but we've already got a long history of racial abuse from the police in our Black community anyway" (Kalifa).

Covid transmission and public health: 'One rule for you, one rule for us'

Police officers consistently failed to use PPE or observe social distancing regulations, leading to a risk of transmission and infection from Covid-19, and associated trauma.

This challenges police claims 'officers and staff are strictly observing PPE guidance when in contact with members of the public' (NPOCC, 2021: 2)

Question the extent to which policing in the context of Covid is in the interests of public health

'[p]olicing risks social health and security when it is used to solve social and health problems' (Dewey, 2021: 61).

"you haven't got a mask on; this isn't social distance" (Kieran).

"the whole irony of it and the whole illogic of it is the fact that obviously, breach of Covid regs is inherently meant to be a public health response, and it's just completely illogical that for them, a public health response involves sending like 40 to 100 police officers into an area, kettling people, using PAVA spray and then putting loads of people in police stations and in custody where obviously the risk of transmission is going to be higher... So, it's just so obvious to us, this has got nothing to do with public health. This is just about the police being able to shut down protests. That's the reality of it, because if it was a genuine public health response, then what they're doing right now, wouldn't make sense" (Hafsa).

Navigating and managing police encounters 'Becoming the hostage negotiator'

The pressure to de-escalate falls on the public rather than the police, who often seemed to escalate encounters.

The ability to deescalate may be particularly constrained for racially minoritised people.

Some drew upon expressions of social class, or professionalism

Others used their phone to record encounters, which was seen to have several advantages as well as risks.

"They're trained in de-escalation apparently... like you don't de-escalate, you just bring more violence and harm. You drag [the] community across the floor, you're dragging young people, you're punching young people. Like what are you doing?" (Fola).

Key points...

The government made a decision to place policing at the centre of its response to the pandemic.

this is consistent with the direction of travel in mainstream politics, though it didn't have to be this way.

As anti-racist activists and commentators forewarned, increased police powers impacted most harshly on minoritised communities.

This should raise an alarm with the passing of the *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act* and other entrenchment of police power.

The question is: how do we develop political imaginaries and alternative infrastructures so that ongoing and future crises, environmental, economic and political, may be responded to differently?

References

Dewey, J. 2021. The Solution is the Problem: What a pandemic can reveal about policing, IN Ryan, M. J. (Ed.) 2021. COVID-19: Volume II: Social Consequences and Cultural Adaptations, pp. 61-71

NPoCC. 2021. PPE national guidance: Explanatory notes for police managers, NPCC and NPoCC, available at: <https://www.polfed.org/media/16655/npocc-operation-tallappe-national-guidance-explanatory-notes-2422021.pdf>

Key Policy Recommendation

1. Recommendation

To enhance trust in public authorities, the police should not have any role in enforcement or monitoring of compliance with public health law and guidance, which should be developed through consultation with people of all ages across B.A.M.E families and communities and translated into relevant community languages as they appear.

2. Who should take the action

The Ministry of Justice and public health authorities

3. Rationale

Given existing disproportionate policing of people from B.A.M.E families and communities strengthening police powers reduces trust in all public authorities and undermines the overall effectiveness of laws introduced to deal with public health crises such as the pandemic.



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To start the discussion:

**Data from Co-POWER's survey with 1,000
respondents across the UK (2022):**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, trust in official health guidance and the UK government has dropped, with those agreeing they have low trust in Official Health Guidance going from 11% to 32%, and those agreeing they have low trust in the UK government going from 23% to 38%.



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Reports, news, events

- [Launch of Co-POWeR's policy brief at Westminster](#)
(15 June 2022)
- Conference paper: [Co-POWeR at the XIV Spanish Congress of Sociology 2022](#)
(01 July 2022)
- [Co-POWeR's final conference at Leeds & online](#)
(14 and 15 July 2022)
Information will be available closer to the date.
- [UK Government Covid-19 Inquiry 2022 — Terms of Reference](#)
- [Baroness Hallett recommendations on the Inquiry's Terms of Reference](#)
- Report: "[A threat to public safety: policing, racism and the Covid-19 pandemic](#)" by CoDE
- Runnymede briefing: ['A Collision of Crises: Racism, Policing, and the COVID-19 Pandemic'](#) by CoDE