

Standing Together: The health impacts of the racist riots on communities, one year on



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Executive summary: Key findings and recommendations

This report lays bare the immediate and enduring health impacts of 2024's racist riots on local people, communities, and grassroots organisations across Great Britain. The findings paint a stark picture of the toll taken on mental and physical health, particularly among racialised communities and those on the front lines of community support.

The research is based on testimony from over 50 community organisations working across England, Scotland and Wales at the sharp end of tackling health inequality, including in the neighbourhoods where the racist riots took place, who between them work with tens of thousands of local people every year.

Key findings

1. The health impacts of the racist riots on local people affected were immediate and serious, particularly in terms of stress, anxiety and fear.
2. The health impacts have also been longer-lasting, exacerbated by an increasingly hostile environment for racialised communities in the year since the racist riots. For some people, the long-term impact of threat and dread, hyper vigilance, and stress is contributing to physical health problems as well as worsening mental health.
3. Little has changed for the better, and a lot has got worse, at a national or local level in relation to the conditions that led to the racist riots. The increasingly hostile environment, driven by disengagement, social media-fuelled misinformation and harmful political rhetoric, is causing and accelerating racist violence and hate in many local communities across Great Britain.
4. The austerity policies of previous governments, the ongoing impact of Covid-19, and the cost-of-living crisis affecting many communities, are cited as creating the conditions for dissatisfaction and anger. Many noted that *"austerity is pitting different groups against each other"*, fuelling a desire to *"take it out"* on people who are seen as different, and *"scapegoating migrants for country's economic problems"*.
5. The impacts of the racist riots have been felt by people right across Great Britain, especially in communities experiencing some of the highest levels of poverty and health inequality, both where the riots took place and where they were prevented or avoided.
6. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of the grassroots organisations we heard from think people they work with are 'likely' or 'very likely' to experience racist hate crime and violence in the near future – indeed, many told us this was 'ongoing daily'. Only 4% thought it was 'very unlikely' in their area.

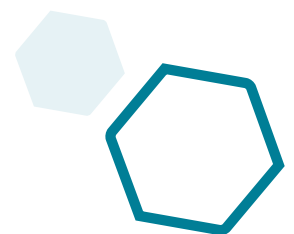
7. Racialised communities, and people experiencing other forms of discrimination and marginalisation, including people with learning disabilities, have been particularly impacted by the racist riots.
8. Many respondents highlighted the impact on Muslim girls and women, who have experienced a combination of Islamophobia, racism and misogyny, resulting in verbal and physical attacks, humiliation, fear, anxiety, being scared to leave home or let their children go to school.
9. Many young people, particularly those from racialised communities, have experienced negative impacts at school and in public spaces – leading to increased isolation in their homes.
10. The health impacts on staff and volunteers in grassroots organisations operating at the front line have been highly damaging, and many are facing direct threat to personal security because of the services they provide. This, in turn, will affect the services they can provide to those who need them most.
11. In places that avoided racist riots last summer, the crucial importance was noted of partnerships involving locally trusted, grassroots community organisations working with institutions such as schools, the police, and local councils, and health services.

Recommendations

Through the testimony and conversations with local organisations working with tens of thousands of local people across Great Britain, we heard about many areas which they felt contributed directly or indirectly to racist violence and increasingly hostile environments, and suggestions, if action were taken, that would help to improve the situation.

In some cases, there was a strong link made between the issues respondents were raising and their proposed solutions. These are listed below as recommendations requiring further immediate discussion with the government departments and other decision-makers that are likely to have responsibility for implementation.

These recommendations have been checked with community groups to ensure that the recommendations and report are reflective of both their concerns and suggestions for improvements.



Recommendations	Who should take the lead
<p>1. Full recognition of the immediate and longer-lasting mental and physical health impacts of racist violence, including the ongoing impact of the 2024 racist riots.</p> <p>This should result in a specific strategy and resources to support people affected and into the type of prevention which communities are saying prevent racist riots in their area.</p>	<p>UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government</p>
<p>2. Supporting Race Equality Foundation's calls for the implementation of a public health approach to violence prevention and the development of coordinated multi-agency national and local responses to the threat of serious violent disorder.</p>	<p>Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID, England); Public Health Scotland, Public Health Wales</p>
<p>3. Working upstream to address some of the known causes of anger, disengagement and health inequalities, including poor housing, poor jobs/ no jobs cycles, and low income, as means of improving life satisfaction and health outcomes.</p>	<p>Cross-departmental focus within UK, Scottish and Welsh governments on health inequalities, and a 'health in all policies' approach; regional mayors; and local authorities</p>
<p>4. Tackle anti-immigration and hate rhetoric pushed by those in public office.</p>	<p>The UK Government to strengthen the House of Commons Code of Conduct for members of parliament, which that outlines expected standards of behaviour; Strengthen Standards in Public Life principles</p>
<p>5. Support the Race Equality Foundation's calls for the promotion of media literacy programmes and countering disinformation and misinformation.</p>	<p>UK Government (Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS), Department for Education (DfE)), Scottish Government (Learning Directorate), Welsh Government (Education and Skills)</p>
<p>6. Investment in community development which creates stronger collective purpose, vision and activities within communities, which has a cohesive and health protective factor (as evidenced by People's Health Trust's longitudinal work on collective control).</p>	<p>UK, Scottish and Welsh governments; devolved authorities such as regional mayors, and local authorities; trusts and foundations</p>
<p>7. Work with communities to develop plans for the housing of asylum seekers and refugees locally to ensure there is appropriate infrastructure and support to aid early integration.</p>	<p>UK Government (Home Office)</p>
<p>8. Development of accessible support services for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) staff who are managing the prevention and aftermath of volatile racist, antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime and violence. This should include access to practical risk management support, as well as access to mental health support for staff.</p>	<p>UK government (DCMS), Scottish Government (Directorate for Safer Communities), Welsh Government (Communities Directorate); trusts and foundations</p>

Part 1: Context and methodology

In the days and weeks after the racist riots that took place in 27 towns and cities across the UK between 30 July and 7 August 2024, People's Health Trust brought together members of our Network of grassroots community experts working at the frontline of inequality, marginalisation and discrimination, to understand the impact on them and the communities they work with. Our CEO, John Hume wrote more about this [blog](#) a few days later.

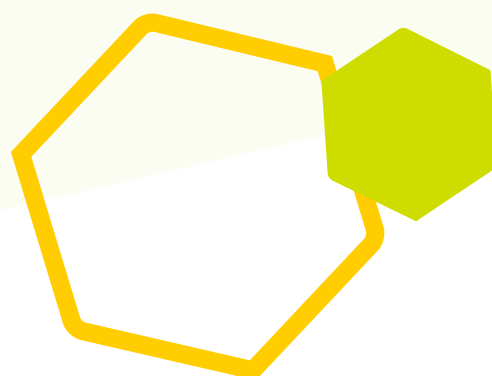
What we heard then, and again now (through testimony gathered from convening roundtables, conducting interviews and based on survey responses) from over 50 grassroots organisations working in communities directly affected by the racist riots across Great Britain, is stark: Fear, trauma, the detrimental impact on mental and physical health, increasing isolation, and a breakdown of fragile hard-fought for community cohesion as a result of the racist riots.

We know from our regular engagement with our community of grassroots organisations over the last year that the root causes of racist hate and violence are far from tackled. The conditions that led to the racist riots last year are as palpable as ever, and in many areas the situation has deteriorated further.

Some groups of people in communities were and remain more likely to be affected by the racist riots than others – including people seeking asylum and refugees, Muslims, people with learning disabilities, and racialised communities. These groups are also more likely to experience significantly worse health outcomes, and this is further exacerbated by the increasing fear of hate crimes, discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

Many we heard from described it as 'when, not if' racist riots would occur again, with the majority telling us that the people they work with locally are 'likely' or 'very likely' to experience racist violence in the near future.

Therefore, if we are to understand the conditions that led to these events, the impacts on people's health, and the ways that racist violence like this can be prevented from happening in the future, it's vital to hear directly from people working on the front line in communities across Great Britain – both where the racist riots occurred, and where they were prevented or avoided. That is what this report seeks to do.



Who was involved in the racist riots, the law-and-order response, and the rise in hate crime in the aftermath

On 29 July 2024, three girls – Alice da Silva Aguiar, Bebe King, and Elsie Dot Stancombe – were murdered by a teenager who forced entry into their dance class in Southport in the northwest of England. Six other children and two adults were also attacked and seriously injured. Misinformation about the attacker's identity spread quickly online. He later pleaded guilty and was subsequently sentenced to life in prison. This tragedy was widely referenced by some involved as perpetrators in the racist riots, and in parts of the media, as a catalyst for the violence that followed.

Between 30 July and 7 August 2024, [an estimated 29 anti-immigration demonstrations and racist riots took place across 27 towns and cities across the UK](#). The House of Commons Library report on the police response to these events states that “many of these were violent, with participants attacking mosques and hotels housing asylum seekers. Known far-right activists promoted and attended the riots.”

[Research](#) examining who took part showed that “the majority of people charged in connection with the unrest were local to the disturbances in which they were accused of taking part. Three-quarters lived within a 5-mile radius. Well over half of those charged with offences – most commonly violent disorder – came from the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods. Suspected rioters were also far more likely to live in areas with high levels of poor health. More than a third (36%) came from the 10% of neighbourhoods with the worst self-reported health levels.”

The law-and-order response in the weeks after the racist riots was swift. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) stated that by 30 August 2024, [1,280 people had been arrested for their involvement, with 796 people charged](#). It also said that the police had “identified hundreds more suspects in connection with the disorder”. By 2 September 2024, [the government said 570 people had been brought before the courts](#). This was the most significant disorder in the UK since the 2011 riots.

[Recent data showed there was a 25% rise in the numbers](#) of religious hate crimes in the year leading up to the riots, in particular antisemitism and Islamophobia. Hate crime reports to the Crown Prosecution Service from the police [rose by 23% in one quarter](#) in the three months when the riots took place. Since last summer, further racist violence and hate crime has occurred in many parts of the UK, including in several parts of Northern Ireland.

Who is this report for?

As a charity, we are privileged to work with our Network of over 500 expert organisations working with communities in all parts of Great Britain experiencing social and financial disadvantage, at the front line of addressing health inequality, marginalisation and discrimination. By regularly engaging with this group on this and many other topics, we are able to draw together dynamic and real-time insights into the realities on the ground.

This report aims to shine a light on their reality of racist violence and hate, including the impacts on their health during and since the racist riots last summer, and bring forward early recommendations that require urgent action from across political and institutional power-holders at local, regional and national levels.

We hope this report will be read by a wide range of stakeholders across the UK. First and foremost, we hope that the report is read by the communities who contributed views and insights, and that they feel it reflects the complexity and diversity of their perspectives. We also want this to reach:

- Community leaders and community organisations
- Local councillors
- UK, Scottish and Welsh government officials
- Police Fire and Crime Commissioners
- Regional mayors
- Local authorities
- Ministers, parliamentarians, assembly members, and other elected officials across the UK
- Public health bodies in England, Scotland and Wales, and other health professionals
- Think tanks and civil society organisations
- Academics

This report has findings and recommendations relevant to all these audiences. Only a comprehensive and collective response will achieve a path to addressing the systemic and pervasive issues described.



What did this research aim to find out and what was our approach?

This research, supported through a partnership with the [Kurt and Magda Stern Foundation](#), aimed to find out what has happened in communities since the racist riots – both in places where these occurred and in places where they didn't – particularly for people most affected. Specifically, we wanted to understand the effects on people's health and wellbeing. We also wanted this research to help identify solutions to reduce the likelihood of such events in the future and address the conditions that led to them, taking into account important work carried out to date, such as that by [Race Equality Foundation](#) with many collaborating organisations.

In June 2025, a survey was co-created with members of our Network, other expert organisations and academics. The network comprises experts working with communities on the front line of health inequality and poverty. We also brought together Network members from different regions of Great Britain in a focus group, and held 1-1 conversations with others, to understand the issues in more depth. All responses are anonymised in the final report.

Who did we hear from?

We heard directly from over 50 expert grassroots organisations from across Great Britain¹, who all work at the front-line of poverty, health inequality, marginalisation and discrimination. Between them, these organisations work with tens of thousands of local people every year in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (often in the top 10% of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation), and many people have an intersection with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Many people were affected directly and indirectly by the racist riots last year, both within and beyond the places where they occurred. Therefore, we sought views from partners across Great Britain, whether or not they are based in a place where one of the racist riots took place. Over a third of responses received were from organisations working in communities where a racist riot occurred last summer, with most others based in places where riots were avoided or prevented but which were nevertheless affected.

Responses to our survey were primarily from people who have day to day responsibility for running these organisations, which are on average small, with few or no staff, and an average turnover of less than £100,000 per year. Individually and collectively, these organisations represent a vital lifeline for the people they serve, often emerging directly from an immediate need in the neighbourhood they work in, led by people who live there.

¹ The Trust's charitable objects extend to Great Britain, and do not cover Northern Ireland. However, we hope that this report will be useful to communities and decision-makers in Northern Ireland, and we have taken careful consideration of reports from the recent racist violence in the country.

Many of the responses we received shared direct quotes and case studies given with permission by local people. In total, these responses therefore represent a real-time, direct and unfiltered views of people in places affected by the racist riots of last summer.

Around three quarters of responses to the survey were from organisations and communities based in England, with the remainder evenly spread across Scotland and Wales.

In compiling the report, we are aware that there are many sections of the community who could be affected by racist violence and hate crime whose voices are not wholly represented in this report. We do not claim this report to be the definitive position of all people affected, rather it is a reflection of those who responded – namely organisations who represent communities more generally and those who support specific sections of the community.

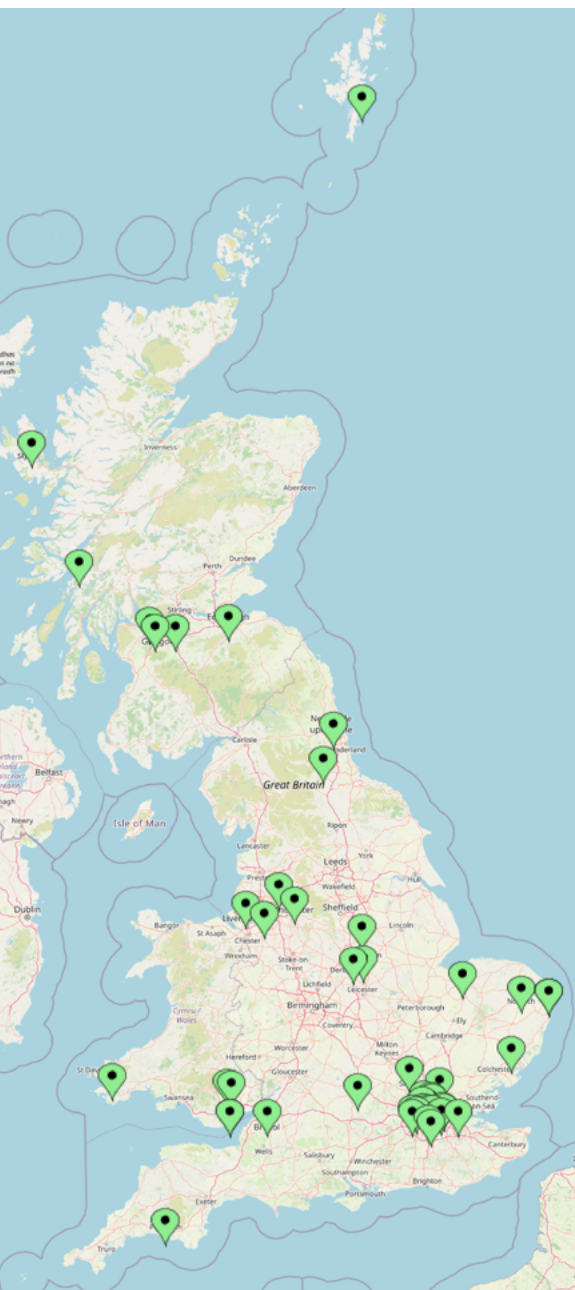
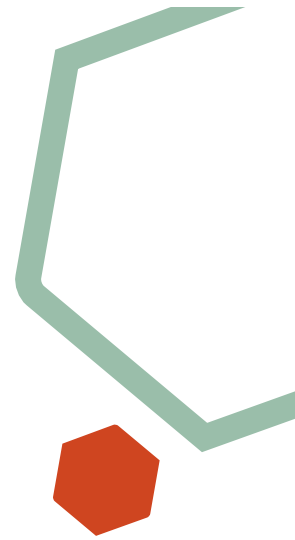


Figure: Map showing approximate location of organisations we heard from across England, Scotland and Wales

In early July 2025, we brought together a group of leaders from community organisations in England, Scotland and Wales along with Kurt and Magda Stern Foundation to share our emerging findings and recommendations. These contributions, and additional testimony from 1-1 interviews, added considerable depth to the survey data.

We heard powerful testimony of the important role the education system plays in ensuring that children and young people have an opportunity to learn and discuss migration; the important contribution of migration and people of colour to British life and values; and the way in which the history of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade is taught and shapes our past, present and future.

We heard about the fact that the racism as a term didn't fully cover Islamophobia and how this specific hate crime has a disproportionate impact on Muslim women and girls. We heard about the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on communities, which has increased deep rooted isolation for many people, mental health problems, mistrust for some, and disconnect from pathways to employment. We heard the critical nature of digital and social media literacy, including analysis and critical thinking as tools to combat misinformation.

We also heard about the vital importance of effectively designed and evidence-based local services that meet the needs of all in communities and avoid a perception of being for some groups of people to the disadvantage of others.

The additional context and insights are incorporated into this final report.

What were the conditions that gave rise to the racist riots?

An increasingly hostile environment, driven by disengagement, social media-fuelled misinformation and harmful political rhetoric, is causing and accelerating racist violence and hate in many local communities across Great Britain.

Many grassroots community organisations we heard from referenced their community's disengagement and disillusionment with national politics due to what have been seen as years of broken promises across more than a decade of austerity, *in combination* with inflammatory rhetoric and anti-immigration policies, which are perceived as either thinly veiled or overt racism. They also told us this has been amplified and exacerbated by an exponential rise in online misinformation and abuse, which has seemingly been uncontrolled by platforms or regulators.

This is entirely consistent with the conclusions of the Race Equality Foundation, which noted in its [report](#) on the racist riots that:

“Little has been done to confront the serious deeper issues the riots exposed: a climate of escalating racialised hate, Islamophobia spread by leaders and the media alike, anti-migrant rhetoric, economic marginalisation with the persistence of gendered violence, and institutional failures to prevent or respond effectively to such events. All these factors contributed to a toxic environment in which violence against minoritised ethnic people and communities was inevitable.” (Race Equality Foundation, 2025, ‘Understanding the Racist Riots of 2024 and what should be done’)

The austerity policies of previous governments, the ongoing impact of Covid-19, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis affecting many communities, are cited as creating the conditions for dissatisfaction and anger.

Many noted that “austerity is pitting different groups against each other”, fuelling a desire to “take it out” on people who are seen as different, and “scapegoating migrants for country’s economic problems”:

“[Our area has] a high level of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, drug and alcohol misuse and agitators are capitalising on their sense of hopelessness...[The] lack of housing, oversubscribed schools and healthcare services, deepening and widening inequality of wealth in this country, along with the cost-of-living crisis, have further exacerbated tensions.” (Community arts organisation, Northwest England)

One housing grassroots organisations based in different parts of England summarised the views of many when they indicated that austerity was the cause, but there is very real displacement onto racialised communities who are perceived by some to be the problem:

“Too many people are struggling to gain even a minimum standard of living – a home that’s safe to live in, enough food and energy to heat their homes – let alone wider important areas like community, arts and meaningful connections. In these conditions, people who seek division and peddle hate find more people who are willing to listen. They are providing an answer that is wildly and obviously wrong, but unless we reach people, bring them together and provide more compelling answers, then our fear is that support for such movements will grow. Often this will take the form of overt violence and discrimination – people attacked or spat at in the street, people’s religious clothing pulled down, verbal abuse.” (Housing rights organisation, England)



Many referenced particular politicians and their increasingly hostile political rhetoric as part of the conditions that led to the racist riots, particularly via social media:

“We have an MP who uses his social media page to post several times a day things that stir up hate. He talks about things like mass deportation and makes really harmful claims about migrant men committing crimes. This kind of messaging just adds to the fear and tension in the community as there is a part of the community that agree with him and think now they can stand beside him.” (Advice and training service, location withheld)

“Anti-immigrant rhetoric at national [political] level has made it “OK” to blame immigrants for the lack of adequate public services.” (Advice and advocacy service, location withheld)

“The current political climate is assisting in the creation of a them and us state.”

Support service for people with learning disabilities, London

Some communities told us they were more insulated and able to prevent or avoid racist riots because of their immediate local context, often attributed to particularly strong solidarity or the rurality of a place.

“Small community means everyone knows everyone. You cannot be anonymous here so if you were to be racist or to attack someone/their business etc, you cannot run far without being found and without people knowing and calling you out on.” (Support service for disabled people, Scottish island)

Some of those in places that avoided racist riots last summer noted the importance of partnerships involving local community organisations working with and institutions such as schools, the police, and local councils, as well as community events:

“We have been working in our community for over 10 years to help them come together and in doing this we see how people care for each other. We don’t have a perfect community but we hope that providing spaces for people to talk helps clear some of the myths and discuss concerns and we need to do more of this.” (Community development organisation, East Midlands, England)

“The riots were prevented from escalating locally because of strong community leadership and local organising, including faith and youth groups, early intervention by grassroots organisations, providing safe spaces and de-escalation, and efforts to promote inclusion and solidarity, especially among young people.” (Homelessness charity, North London)

Do community organisations think the people they work with will experience racist hate crime and violence in the near future?

According to the grassroots organisations we heard from, little has changed for the better, and a lot has got worse, at a national or local level in relation to the conditions that led to the racist riots.

Nearly two-thirds (62%) think people they work with are 'likely' or 'very likely' to experience racist hate crime and violence in the near future – and many told us this was 'ongoing daily'. Only 4% thought it was 'very unlikely' in their area, and these organisations are based in rural Wales and Scottish islands.

A quarter of those we heard from think racist violence is 'very likely' in the near future. Nearly all of these were in England. Some cited the recent events in Northern Ireland as evidence **"that community cohesion is very fragile and urgent action is needed everywhere in the UK."** (Advice and training service, east of England)

“Very little has changed in the past twelve months – I believe the country is still a ‘powder keg’ awaiting the next situation where difficulties will arise again.”

Volunteering and employment service, southeast Wales

“I think a sticking plaster has been put in place and is highly likely to be ripped off at some point!” (Community development organisation, North east England)

The reasons given for the view that further riots were likely were multifaceted. Many cited the political rhetoric **“remains deeply divisive”** (Community gardening organisation, Northwest England) across all parties and, as a result, **“racism is now more open.”** (Mental health organisation, East Midlands, England)

Some felt that the government's response last summer was focused on law and order, but that **“The underlying racism and causes of community dislocation and inequality have not been addressed.”** (Housing rights organisation, England and Wales)

“The main policy response to the riots focused on criminal justice responses to suppressing violence rather than acknowledging and addressing deeper systemic issues and divisions within our communities.” (Community gardening organisation, Northwest England)

Some referenced wider, global events as playing a part in racism, hate crime and racist violence, particularly the rise of antisemitism and Islamophobia:

“The Jewish community has seen an unprecedented growth in racially induced hate crime...Over half those accessing our support give antisemitism as one of the factors for their poor mental health.” (Mental health charity, Northwest England)

“Far right groups and Islamophobia is on the increase fuelled by the ongoing conflict in the middle East.” (Education and skills charity, London)

Who has been affected by the racist riots?

The impacts of the racist riots have been felt by people right across Great Britain, especially in communities experiencing some of the highest levels of poverty and health inequality, both where the riots took place and where they were prevented or avoided.

Racialised communities, and people experiencing other forms of discrimination and marginalisation, have been particularly impacted by the racist riots:

“People from ethnic minority groups because they are all classified as immigrants because of their ethnic background.” (Counselling and psychotherapy service, London)

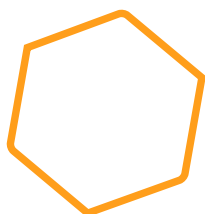
“Asylum seekers are most affected as they are so vulnerable, didn't have choices or anywhere else to go, and were very visible in the hotels.” (Community gardening organisation, Northwest England)

“The refugees were frightened that they were going to be attacked.” (Community support service, East of England)

People with learning disabilities and autism with an intersection with race or ethnicity were reported to have been impacted, and family members expressing concern about their safety:

“The immediate effects were anxiety and paranoia. Our members with learning disabilities and/or autism were told by their families not to come to our activities because they were scared that they would be racially abused by members of the public.”

Volunteering and employment service, southeast Wales



“One of our learning disabled colleagues was told by his father not to look at people and to keep his head down at all times.” (Learning disabilities charity, West London)

“Our members are autistic and have learning disabilities. They are likely targets of victims of hate crime particularly if they come from an ethnic minority background.” (Autism and learning disabilities charity, North London)

“We work with vulnerable Adults with Learning Disabilities. They have not been directly affected by racist riots but such events (and seeing such events on the TV and pictures media) causes anxiety and even fear. It is often very hard for our vulnerable community to understand or rationalise events around them/or what they might see in the media... resulting in people feeling unsafe or frightened that it is ‘coming for them’.” (Grassroots performing arts company, Southeast of England)

Several told us they feared for the people they work with because of existing vulnerabilities, such as asylum status, disability and homelessness.

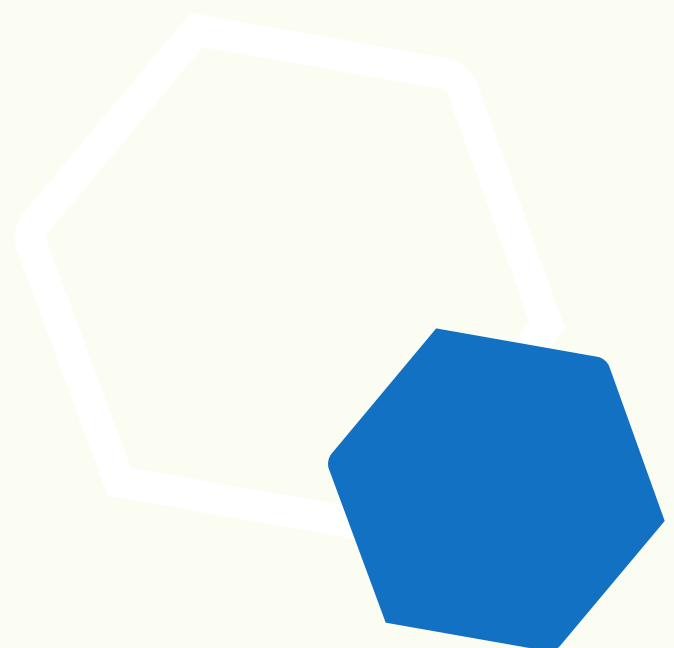
Fear and tension were prevalent and particularly difficult for people who have an intersection of being disabled and being a person seeking asylum. As one person told one of our grassroots respondents:

“When the riots were going on, me, an asylum seeker, disabled, I need to go out from the home. If I stay in, my condition is going to worsen. People ask me to go inside as I’m vulnerable, if someone hits me I can’t do anything because of my disability. We have lots of tension in our minds. We need to go outside. If I stay at home they win.” (Community gardening organisation, Northwest England)

Others mentioned the intersection with homelessness and precarious accommodation, which hugely exacerbated people’s vulnerability to attacks:

“Ten [of the people we work with] were sleeping rough at the time of the racist riots taking place in other cities after being evicted from Home Office accommodation, having been granted refugee status. We urged the local authority to find temporary/ emergency accommodation for them because of the national context and increased far right activity locally. It was disappointing that the local authority was not proactive and that it took them some time before agreeing to provide emergency accommodation.” (Advice charity, East of England)

“Destitute asylum seekers were identified as particularly vulnerable as very reliant on services that then closed due to the riots.” (Community gardening organisation, Northwest England)



Many respondents highlighted the impact on Muslim girls and women, who have experienced a combination of Islamophobia, racism and misogyny, resulting in verbal and physical attacks, humiliation, fear, anxiety, being scared to leave home or let their children go to school:

“We noticed straight away that the Muslim women who come to our centre were really affected, they seemed more anxious and uncomfortable.” (Women’s support charity, East of England)

“We have seen Muslim women who have been attacked, [people have] removed their head scarves, insulted and humiliated them. Families have been attacked in their homes and people frightened for their lives.” (Education and skills charity, London)

“We had a group of Muslim girls and women who were racially abused in a local leisure centre by mature Caucasian women who just because they were wearing modest swimming clothing were shouted at “dirty Arabs” “you are disgusting”.” (Sports and wellbeing charity, London)

“The local Muslim women and children are not accessing green spaces due to fear and intimidation.” (Women’s support charity, Southwest England)

“Some of the Muslim ladies didn’t want to go out, were scared to leave their homes or let their children go to school. There is still a lot of fear and concern of being judged and discriminated against.” (Women and girls support service, East of England)

Case study

“A group of young Muslim female volunteers – aged 17 to 21 – who wear the hijab reported a significant decline in their mental health and overall wellbeing. Many of them were previously active in their communities, attending college, supporting local events, and helping to deliver outreach projects.

However, after the riots, they became fearful of carrying out normal daily activities. Several girls avoided public transport altogether, stopped walking alone in their neighbourhoods, and became increasingly withdrawn – choosing to stay indoors and limit their movements. Some began to skip college or volunteering sessions due to anxiety and fear of verbal or physical abuse. They described being hyper-aware of their surroundings, constantly scanning for danger or anticipating unprovoked attacks simply for being visibly Muslim or perceived as foreign. This group also reported heightened feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and a loss of trust in their community’s safety.

The psychological toll – living in constant fear and altering their daily lives – has had a lasting impact on their confidence, independence, and ability to engage with public life. Our organisation continues to provide emotional support, safe spaces, and reassurance, but it is clear that the effects on these young women’s health and wellbeing are deep and ongoing.”

Grassroots advice and advocacy service, London

Part 2: The health impacts of the racist riots at the time and in the year since

People in local communities

The health impacts of the racist riots on local people affected were immediate and serious, particularly in terms of stress, anxiety and fear.

Nearly all community organisations we heard from that work with people affected by the racist riots told us that these events had a direct and immediate impact on mental health, whether or not riots took place in their local area.

This centred on “**stress and concern**”, “**fear**”, “**increased anxiety**”, “**confusion**”, “**depression**” and “**mental trauma**.”

While stress and anxiety were reported by organisations working with both racialised communities and white British communities, it was notable that the impact on racialised communities was in many cases described in a way which would suggest they were more severe, with many “**frightened they will be targeted due to their race and colour**” (Disabled people's charity, Southeast England) amid “**a rise in Islamophobia, racism and anti-immigrant issues. This is affecting mental health issues, particularly in targeted groups.**” (Older people's charity, Scotland)

Case study

“A 34-year-old Muslim woman and mother of two experienced severe trauma during the race riots in Barking and Dagenham. Her home was targeted with racial slurs and vandalism, leaving her family feeling unsafe. Following the incident, she developed anxiety and struggled with panic attacks, avoiding public spaces and community events. Despite support from local organisations, she reported feeling isolated and fearful, highlighting the long-term emotional toll such violence can have on Muslim communities.”

Community development organisation, East London

Anxiety and fear arising from the racist riots has caused an increase in isolation and an inability to undertake everyday tasks:

“This then leads to people not going out – including not seeking help when they need it” (Advice charity, East of England) and “missing important appointments/unable to access support due to fears of travelling alone on public transport.” (Community development organisation, Scotland)

“I was scared to go out. I wear a headscarf. Stayed home. It wasn't good to live in fear. What's coming the next minute? I can't go out to the park.” (participant of community gardening organisation, Northwest England)

It also was impacting on families as a whole, not just individuals:

“Women from minorities [sic] communities are not accessing green spaces, they are being isolated in their homes often in highrise flats with no outside access. Their children are learning that green spaces are bad.” (Women's support charity, Southwest England)

For local people with existing poor mental health, or with intersecting learning disabilities and neurodivergence, the racist riots further exacerbated these.

Some stopped attending services because they were “concerned they may find themselves in a difficult/risky situation.” (Performing arts charity, north of England)

An organisation that works with people with learning disabilities in west London told us that in the weeks after the racist riots:

“There were a lot of cancellations from people with learning disability who usually attend our services. One of our regular attendees is a wheelchair user who usually travelled by bus, but now uses dial a ride (which is a more complex system) because a member of her family didn't want her to be on the bus because of the increased risks to her.” (Service supporting people with learning disabilities, London)

For others there was an exacerbation of PTSD or other trauma symptoms linked to experiences of conflict that was the basis for their seeking asylum in the first place:

“They had to re-live the trauma from their experiences fleeing war and violence.” (Arts and wellbeing organisation, Northeast England)

Case study

“I was attacked on the bus. I kept quiet. A woman aged 70+, she should have known better, telling me: ‘It's my country’. Dealing with racism is very tough. Have to calm myself, keep quiet, give her space, wait for her to say sorry. The woman apologised to the bus driver when she got off, but not to me for what she had said.”

Participant of community gardening organisation, Northwest England

Case study

“M.Z., a 39-year-old refugee from Afghanistan residing in [east London borough], experienced significant mental health deterioration following his exposure to racially motivated riots in Central London. While working as a delivery driver on the day of the unrest, he was caught in a hostile and violent crowd targeting ethnic minorities. The traumatic experience triggered psychological distress, including panic attacks, intrusive flashbacks, hypervigilance, nightmares, and chronic anxiety particularly around the safety of his children. He was referred to [our charity], where he received individual trauma-focused therapy. He is currently managing his mental health with prescribed medication, though he continues to suffer from residual symptoms of trauma.”

Counselling and psychotherapy service, London

One community organisation we heard from was working in Southport, who told us that the impact of the racist riots was particularly acute:

“The incident and riots actually occurred in our participants’ streets, and they claim this will definitely be a traumatic childhood experience for them – especially since some of the participants were related to the girls involved in the Southport incident, or had relatives who were friends with the families, attended their schools, or lived in their neighbourhood. This has led to a physical withdrawal among the young people, with a reluctance to practise the independence they should now be displaying and celebrating. They stated that their main peer social interactions during this time occurred within our project, and they did not feel safe interacting outside of it.” (Community arts organisation, Northwest England)

Health impacts have also been longer-lasting, exacerbated by an increasingly hostile environment for racialised communities in the year since. For some people, the long-term impact of “threat and dread, hyper vigilance, and stress” (Housing rights organisation, Scotland) is contributing to physical health problems as well as worsening mental health. For many people seeking asylum and refugees, it was retraumatising.

“[There have been] longer-lasting effects of the racist riots on local people’s health: Chronic anxiety and hypervigilance, especially in public spaces. Long-term depression and low mood, particularly among victims of direct abuse. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in some individuals.”

Homelessness charity, North London

“The long-term effects on this will be an increase in mental health conditions like anxiety, OCD and depression, and physical conditions that arise from those like autoimmune conditions.” (Housing rights organisation, England and Wales)

“Decline in physical health linked to prolonged stress (e.g. headaches, high blood pressure).” (Homelessness charity, North London)

Several responses mentioned the impact on young people, particularly those from racialised communities, who have experienced negative impacts at school and in public spaces – leading to less socialising and increased isolation.

“Young people feel less inclined to be publicly visible, are much more inclined to stay at home and not be actively involved in our community.”

**Community arts organisation,
Northwest England**

Others mentioned that this was impacting on their experience within school, including “an increase in racialised bullying” (Community development organisation, Scotland), with some “keeping children and young people at home for fear they would be attacked” (English language school, London), and others reporting “fights due to racist remarks in school settings and outside school.” (Community health organisation, Northwest England)

Case study

“Recently turned 18-year-old young people we are working with in [town directly impacted by the racist riots] – who have only just started going out– is that their non-white friends are experiencing racist behaviour from doormen... One girl shared an incident where she was verbally racially abused by grown men twice in one week. This occurred within the same month as the [racist riots]. This has heightened her anxiety.”

Community arts organisation, Northwest England

Staff and volunteers in grassroots organisations

The health impacts on staff and volunteers in grassroots organisations operating at the front line have been highly damaging, and many are facing direct threat to personal security because of the services they provide. This, in turn, will affect the services they can provide to those who need them most.

The mental health of small voluntary organisations has been a concern we've voiced for many years. Over the last two decades – heightened by austerity, the pandemic and other major events such as the racist riots last year – these grassroots charities and voluntary organisations have become increasingly relied upon as a vital source of support for some of the most vulnerable people in society. As a result, staff and volunteers are often under considerable pressure and strain to meet ever-increasing demand, and this frequently takes a toll on their mental and physical health.

Many told us that the health of their staff and volunteers had been directly affected by the racist riots, particularly in terms of mental health due to increased “anxiety”, “insecurity”, and “fear, for themselves and their communities but also for what these riots were a symptom of and what might come next.” (Housing rights organisation, England and Wales)

One noted that their staff and volunteers were experiencing a wide range of health impacts, including:

“Emotional exhaustion from supporting traumatised community members; heightened stress and anxiety, particularly for staff from minority backgrounds; fear for personal safety, especially when working in public or frontline roles; reduced morale and increased burnout, affecting team wellbeing and capacity; and mental strain from managing rising demand for support with limited resources.” (Advice and advocacy service, London)

Small organisations working in a local community are often based there, with staff and volunteers recruited from the neighbourhood. As one stated: “Our staff and volunteer team include many from black and racially minorities communities and those with personal experience of seeking asylum so this was especially hard for them.” (Community gardening organisation, Northwest England)

Many grassroots organisations are facing direct threat to personal security because of the services they provide. Several told us they had to make specific changes to working patterns and service provision because of safety concerns for their staff and volunteers.

“We had to change our working hours as staff were worried about their and women’s safety at night, so we no longer operate in the evenings.” (Women and girls service, East of England)

“We had to make the difficult decision to close due to risks to our members whilst travelling to the project...Our team kept in touch with all members by phone, and accompanied particularly vulnerable people to essential appointments.” (Community gardening organisation, Northwest England)

“We are a women-only organisation and feared for our safety. Some staff complained of being stressed and worried, and would leave in twos.” (Advice service, East Midlands, England)

“We had to rearrange things as some volunteers were scared to support us physically, especially during the summer months, due to fears of travelling through certain areas.” (Community arts organisation, Northwest England)

Case study

“Everyone felt more worried than usual about their own safety and the safety of friends, family, community. Our organisation is registered with the IAA [Immigration Advice Authority]. Some immigration advisers elsewhere in the country were directly targeted. There was a day when threats were made on social media to target charities supporting asylum-seekers and refugees. We had to take down our website; we also closed the office for the day where action against charities was threatened. Our Board of Trustees met to discuss safety arrangements (working from home patterns and office work). The local police contacted us directly to reassure us and urge us to report any suspicious activity.”

Grassroots advice provider, East of England region

A small number of organisations told us about challenges delivering their services because of community tensions arising with people they work with who were expressing racist views on their premises. One organisation based in Scotland told us:

“We serve a poor, predominately white working class community and they have been in our services expressing racist views and when staff and volunteers challenge this they say that we are curtailing their free speech.” (Community café, Scotland)

Another, based in an English town, told us:

“It has been shocking to hear some discriminatory comments amongst our members but equally reassuring to hear other members using this as an opportunity to educate and explain. Once these conversations are out in the open it is immensely satisfying to watch peer learning in action and helping people challenge discriminatory beliefs and assumptions they had previously held.”
(Community arts organisation, Northwest England)

Case study

“At a recent recruitment event we held here in [our Welsh town], I was asked quite openly by a potential participant if we worked with ‘black or Pakistani’ people. Whilst taken aback I replied that we offer volunteering, training and employment support to everyone and anyone that wants it, to which I received the response – ‘well I won’t be coming then.’”

Employment and training service, South Wales

Part 3: Summary and recommendations

This research, conducted in 2025 a few weeks before the first anniversary of the racist riots of July and August 2024, reveals a serious impact on the health of local people, and a palpable sense of fear, in communities across Great Britain.

Nearly all of those we heard from have been directly affected by the racist riots in the year since they took place, whether or not they occurred on their doorstep.

These communities live and breathe the conditions that led to the racist riots every day. For most, these conditions have deteriorated further, despite the initial swift law-and-order response. There was incredible insight and understanding from communities affected that the impact of austerity over more than a decade, and the ongoing costs-of-living crisis, makes for fertile ground for the misinformation, hate, and anger for many people in their neighbourhoods and that particular groups are used as scapegoats.

The impacts of the racist riots were felt by many people in communities across Great Britain – both where they took place and beyond. Some groups of people were impacted more directly and severely – racially minoritised people, especially Muslim girls and women, people with a learning disability (particularly those with an intersection with race or ethnicity), refugees and people seeking asylum – all of whom are among those likely to experience the poorest health and earliest death as a result of systemic social and financial inequalities.

The health impacts reported are especially stark – with respondents describing the physical and mental health severely harmed by the racist riots and the ongoing conditions that led to them – including trauma, mental ill-health, fear, anxiety and isolation.

This is why our principal recommendation is for full recognition of the immediate and longer-lasting mental and physical health impacts of racist violence, including the ongoing impact of the 2024 racist riots.

This should result in a specific strategy and resources to support people affected and into the type of prevention which communities are saying prevent racist riots in their area.



Recommendations	Who should take the lead
<p>1. Full recognition of the immediate and longer-lasting mental and physical health impacts of racist violence, including the ongoing impact of the 2024 racist riots.</p> <p>This should result in a specific strategy and resources to support people affected and into the type of prevention which communities are saying prevent racist riots in their area.</p>	<p>UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government</p>
<p>2. Supporting Race Equality Foundation's calls for the implementation of a public health approach to violence prevention and the development of coordinated multi-agency national and local responses to the threat of serious violent disorder.</p>	<p>Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID, England); Public Health Scotland, Public Health Wales</p>
<p>3. Working upstream to address some of the known causes of anger, disengagement and health inequalities, including poor housing, poor jobs/ no jobs cycles, and low income, as means of improving life satisfaction and health outcomes.</p>	<p>Cross-departmental focus within UK, Scottish and Welsh governments on health inequalities, and a 'health in all policies' approach; regional mayors; and local authorities</p>
<p>4. Tackle anti-immigration and hate rhetoric pushed by those in public office.</p>	<p>The UK Government to strengthen the House of Commons Code of Conduct for members of parliament, which that outlines expected standards of behaviour; Strengthen Standards in Public Life principles</p>
<p>5. Support the Race Equality Foundation's calls for the promotion of media literacy programmes and countering disinformation and misinformation.</p>	<p>UK Government (Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS), Department for Education (DfE)), Scottish Government (Learning Directorate), Welsh Government (Education and Skills)</p>
<p>6. Investment in community development which creates stronger collective purpose, vision and activities within communities, which has a cohesive and health protective factor (as evidenced by People's Health Trust's longitudinal work on collective control).</p>	<p>UK, Scottish and Welsh governments; devolved authorities such as regional mayors, and local authorities; trusts and foundations</p>
<p>7. Work with communities to develop plans for the housing of asylum seekers and refugees locally to ensure there is appropriate infrastructure and support to aid early integration.</p>	<p>UK Government (Home Office)</p>
<p>8. Development of accessible support services for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) staff who are managing the prevention and aftermath of volatile racist, antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime and violence. This should include access to practical risk management support, as well as access to mental health support for staff.</p>	<p>UK government (DCMS), Scottish Government (Directorate for Safer Communities), Welsh Government (Communities Directorate); trusts and foundations</p>

Part 4: Calls to action

Community organisations have powerful ideas for how to address the health impacts, risks and challenges of racist violence, and are clear that the burden cannot and must not fall on them to resolve this national, regional and local challenge. It's essential that all in positions of power work in partnership to do so. It's up to our leaders and institutions to work with communities to bridge these divides and invest in communities, to avoid further harm in the future.

We will continue to work with our network of grassroots organisations across Great Britain and do what we can to support, convene and amplify their experiences and expertise to people in power.

If you are a parliamentarian, we encourage you to:

- Recognise the immediate and long-term health impacts of racist violence
- Use our research to engage with your communities and constituents
- Ask a question in parliament citing this research
- Propose a Westminster Hall debate about the health impact of racist violence
- Draw from this report as evidence in a discussion at an APPG
- Propose an inquiry in a Select Committee about the health impact of racist violence
- If you are interested in holding a roundtable in your local area, we would be glad to be involved and we can encourage members of our network from your area to join
- If you would like to hear more about our findings, have a member of our team present our work, or hear directly from grassroots community organisations, please contact us today at Enquiries@peopleshealthtrust.org.uk

If you are a decision-maker in government at a local, regional or national level, we encourage you to:

- Recognise the immediate and long-term health impacts of racist violence
- Consider the implications of the findings in your strategies, policy-making and commissioning decisions
- Learn from these findings to increase the effectiveness of service provision at a regional and local level
- If you would like to hear more about our findings, have a member of our team present our work, or hear directly from grassroots community organisations, please contact us today at Enquiries@peopleshealthtrust.org.uk

If you are a funder, philanthropist or corporate organisation, we encourage you to:


- Recognise the immediate and long-term health impacts of racist violence
- Join us in this collective goal of Standing Together with communities affected by racist violence
- Partner with us to support grassroots community organisations working at the front line of addressing racist violence and health inequalities
- If you would like to hear more about our findings, have a member of our team present our work, or hear directly from grassroots community organisations, please contact us today at Enquiries@peopleshealthtrust.org.uk


About People's Health Trust


People's Health Trust has been working with people living in communities experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation across Great Britain for over a decade. Our goal is to stop people dying too young because of avoidable inequalities in wealth, housing, education, and work. Our focus is on supporting communities at a grassroots level to find vital and timely solutions to tackle the causes of poor health.


Since 2011 People's Health Trust has distributed £133 million to 3,605 local projects reaching over 775,000 people.




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