

Racial Equality Since Devolution: Divergences, Outcomes and Frontiers



Devolution Without Evidence

More than 25 years after devolution, no systematic UK-wide study examines its impact on racial equality outcomes.



Fragmented Data

Information remains scattered across jurisdictions, preventing effective policy development and comparative understanding.



Emerging Risks

New frontiers like AI governance and climate adaptation threaten to replicate historical racial disparities without proper oversight.



Policy Preferences

Political and public discourse on race lack robust, comparative evidence, often presuming UK approaches prevail.

Evolution of Race Equality Legislation

1998: Devolution Begins

1

Scotland Act 1998 and Government of Wales Act 1998 establish devolved powers with partial equality responsibilities across jurisdictions.

2

2000: Race Relations Amendment

General duty on public bodies to address racial disparities introduced across England, Scotland and Wales.

2010: Equality Act

3

Harmonised anti-discrimination laws and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) implemented UK-wide, with specific duties varying by jurisdiction meaning there is no *single* PSED across the UK..

4

2016-2017: Expanded Powers

Scotland Act 2016 and Wales Act 2017 expand devolved powers for equality considerations, enabling more distinctive approaches.


2021-2023: National Strategies

5

Wales launches Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (2021) and Scotland renews Race Equality Framework (2023) each committing to Antiracist outcomes. UK Government Inclusive Britain strategy, (2022) replaces 'institutional racism' with 'fairness'.


Research Questions and Impact Framework

Structured Around Three Core Workstreams

 **Divergences**


Q1: Where have legal and policy approaches diverged?

Q2: How is post-colonial racial diversity integrated into contemporary ideas of national belonging in Scotland and Wales?

 **Outcomes**

Q3: Do racial disparities in education, employment, housing, and criminal justice vary across England, Scotland, and Wales?

Q4: How do policy actors understand and respond to these disparities in practice?

 **Frontiers**

Q5: Is race equality being effectively integrated into climate adaptation strategies?

Q6: Does the governance of artificial intelligence reflect any accumulated learning?



Community of Practice

Regular facilitated sessions convening representatives from UK and devolved governments alongside civil society partners to support learning.



Expert Advisory Group

Offering strategic guidance and international perspectives, while maintaining practical applicability to UK policy contexts.



Policy Summits

Co-organized public events that bring practitioners, policymakers, and community representatives together for direct engagement with research findings. These summits will facilitate cross-jurisdictional learning in each context.



Comprehensive Outputs

Policy briefs tailored to practitioner audiences, interactive comparative maps visualizing jurisdictional differences, accessible data visualizations highlighting key disparities, peer-reviewed academic articles contributing to scholarly debates.

Indicative Outcomes and Data according to Social Domain

Employment

Outcomes: England: Employment rate for White categories 77%, Pakistani/Bangladeshi 61%, Black African 8% unemployment. Scotland: Similar trends, but ethnic minority employment slightly lower. Wales: Smaller minority population; patterns similar to England.

Coverage: UK-wide

Relevant Data Sets: Labour Force Survey (LFS) - Annual Population Survey (APS)

Education

Outcomes: England: Asian students outperform at GCSEs; Black Caribbean students face higher exclusions and lower access to Russell Group universities (6%). Scotland: Less pronounced disparities, but Black and Pakistani students face barriers in higher education. Wales: Smaller sample size; patterns align with England.

Coverage: England (NPD), UK-wide (HESA)

Relevant Data Sets: National Pupil Database (NPD) - HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) Data

Housing

Outcomes: England: Overcrowding among Pakistan and Bangladeshi households (30.9%) and Black households (26.8%) compared with White households (8.3%). Scotland: Overcrowding persists, though data is less detailed. Wales: Similar trends to England.

Coverage: England (EHS), Scotland (SHS), Wales

Relevant Data Sets: English Housing Survey (EHS) - Scottish Household Survey (SHS) - Welsh Government Housing Statistics

Criminal Justice

Outcomes: England and Wales: Black individuals are 9 times more likely to be stopped and searched and 3 times more likely to be arrested than White individuals. Scotland: Disparities in treatment reported, though stop-and-search is less frequent compared to England. Wales: Data included in England and Wales statistics.

Coverage: England & Wales (MOJ), Scotland (SCJS)

Relevant Data Sets: Ministry of Justice Race and Criminal Justice Statistics - Stop-and-Search Data - SCJS

Frontier Policy Analysis: Climate and AI



Data Gaps & Bias

Fragmented data collection methods in climate assessments often obscure racial disparities in environmental vulnerability. Similarly, inherent biases in AI training data lead to discriminatory algorithmic outcomes, disproportionately impacting racialized communities and perpetuating existing inequalities.



Vulnerability Patterns

Racial minorities face heightened environmental vulnerability, exemplified by the Urban Heat Island Effect. 97% of Black and ethnic minorities in urban areas are four times more likely to lack green spaces. AI-driven data collection and surveillance can further exacerbate these vulnerabilities for marginalized groups.



Policy Integration Challenges

National climate strategies (e.g., UK Climate Change Risk Assessment) often fall short in explicitly addressing racial disparities in adaptive capacity. Integrating racial equity into AI governance frameworks is also challenging, requiring policies that proactively mitigate algorithmic bias and protect vulnerable populations.



Governance Solutions

Robust governance frameworks are crucial for both climate and AI to ensure equitable outcomes. This includes prioritizing racial equity in climate adaptation, promoting accountability and transparency in AI decision-making, and establishing ethical guidelines for AI design and deployment to ensure justice for all communities.

Mixed-Methods Approach

Workstream 1: Policy Mapping & Analysis

Legal and policy mapping across devolved nations, including deep dives into equality strategies, race audits, and public sector duties. We're using bibliometric analysis to track how race is framed across government documents and academic literature—tracing how different governments define problems, set priorities, and allocate responsibility.

Workstream 2: Quantitative & Qualitative Evidence

Analysis of national datasets including the Labour Force Survey, National Pupil Database, and crime statistics. Crucially, we're conducting approximately **60 interviews with policymakers and practitioners** to explore how disparities are understood and experienced within the system.

Workstream 3: Frontier Policy Analysis

Examination of climate and AI strategy documents to identify where racial justice is missing. Approximately **20 expert interviews** will explore both risks and opportunities for inclusive governance in these emerging fields.

Community of Practice

Regular dialogue bringing together policy actors from UK, Scottish, and Welsh governments, alongside civil society organisations like the Runnymede Trust and CRER. This creates a space for reflection, learning, and co-production of findings.