



North East
Anti-Racism
Coalition

TOWARDS ANTIRACIST FUTURES:

Exposing racism in the North East



North East
Anti-Racism
Coalition



NEARC REPORT

Foreword

The findings in this report are stark, but they're not surprising. People across our region have been saying the same thing for years: racism isn't rare here. It's routine. 78% of respondents said racism is an everyday or regular issue, and 69% believe it's getting worse. These aren't just statistics. They're people's lives, the lives of our neighbours, our colleagues, our friends.

We're writing this at a moment when the political climate in the North East feels more charged than it has in a long time. Divisive rhetoric is creeping into mainstream spaces.

Economic pressure is pushing communities apart instead of pulling them together. People who took part in this research named it clearly: the language of some politicians, the spread of misinformation, and the rise of hostile narratives are fuelling racism across our region.

But racism isn't only about big political forces. It shows up in the small, everyday moments where someone chooses to look away instead of stepping in.

78%

78% of those who completed the survey felt that racism was either an everyday or regular issue in the North East, and 69% felt that racism was getting worse.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST FOREWORD



North East
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Over the past year, we've seen several deeply worrying racist attacks - including violent incidents in Horden, Sunderland and Middlesbrough - where Black and Brown residents were targeted simply for being visible in public. These attacks didn't come out of nowhere. They sit within a wider pattern of hostility that this report documents in painful detail.

And then there are the moments that don't make the news. A young woman told us about being verbally abused on a bus. The abuse was loud. It was public. And yet no one stepped in. Not the passengers. Not even the driver. She was left to carry that fear and humiliation alone. Her experience mirrors what many people described in this report, where 33% said they had experienced racism on public transport and where so many spoke about feeling unsafe in places that should belong to all of us.

This is the North East we have to face - not because it reflects who we are at our best, but because it reflects what we've allowed to go unchallenged.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST FOREWORD

And still, there is hope here. After the 2024 riots, people came out to protect mosques, support neighbours, and clean up streets. Communities showed up for one another. Many residents - of every background - refuse to let hatred define this region.

This hope sits at the heart of NEARC's vision: that the North East is a place where diversity is celebrated, inclusion the norm, and everyone feels safe and valued. But that future won't appear on its own. It needs action, especially from those with power.

Our region is built on connection. People look out for each other and pull together when it matters. It's a place we're proud to call home, and proud that others have chosen to make their home here too. There's strength in knowing you belong, that people have your back and that everyone deserves to be treated with fairness and respect. Racism pushes people to the side when they should be feeling our famous welcome.

So to leaders in local authorities, education, health, policing, transport, business, and the voluntary sector, this report isn't just a record of harm. It's a responsibility.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST FOREWORD

You'll read that:

73% of people who experienced racism didn't report it to the police, often because they believed nothing would happen.

Racism limits access to education, employment, housing, healthcare, and public services, the very systems meant to support people's lives.

80% said racism affects mental health, and 88% said it affects wellbeing and confidence.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST FOREWORD

These issues won't shift through reading this report and goodwill alone. They require structural change, political courage, and a commitment to antiracism that is active, visible, and consistent.

We're asking you - as decisionmakers, employers, educators, and public servants - to read this report with honesty and urgency. Neutrality in the face of racism is not neutral. It protects the status quo. And the status quo is harming people.

We're also asking every reader, no matter your role, to hold onto one simple truth: Racism is not inevitable. It's a choice. And so is antiracism.

The young woman on the bus deserved better. The people attacked in Horden, Sunderland and Middlesbrough deserved better. Everyone in this region deserves better.

We can and should do better. NEARC's Become the Bridge campaign aims to mobilise and empower organisations to take meaningful action within their systems and practices to challenge racism.

You can join the movement today!
Become The Bridge North East Anti-Racism Coalition.



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST FOREWORD

We would like to thank Professor Peter Hopkins and his team for their sterling work in listening to and recording our voices across the North East. Thank you to the people with lived experience and decision makers who attended our five round tables (police, health, education, work and employment, women and girls), where we deeply discussed the recommendations and the required actions. Thank you to all our volunteers at NEARC who freely give up their time to work towards a fairer and stronger North East. Finally, our heartfelt thanks also go to all the individuals and organisations that took the time to complete the survey and to send in submissions. Well done and thank you.

Let this report be a turning point, not just in understanding the scale of racism in the North East, but in committing to the work required to end it.

Ngozi Lyn Cole and Jill Baker
Chairs, North East AntiRacism Coalition (NEARC)

NEARC REPORT

Racism in the North East

The North East Anti-Racism Coalition (NEARC) collaborated with Newcastle University to conduct a survey and collect evidence about the nature and extent of racism in the region. This survey was live between June and August 2025.

The survey attracted 639 valid responses. This included responses from all North East postcode regions (DL, DU, NE, SR and TS). The respondents include a diversity of ages from teenagers to the early 80s (just over 1% were under 20, 12% in their 20s, 25% in their 30s, 26% in their 40s, 21% in their 50s, 14% 60 or over), ethnicities (51% white British, nearly 20% Black, 15% Asian, 3% Arab and 5% mixed race), faiths, and genders.

78%

78% of those who completed the survey felt that racism was either an everyday or regular issue in the North East, and 69% felt that racism was getting worse.

NEARC REPORT

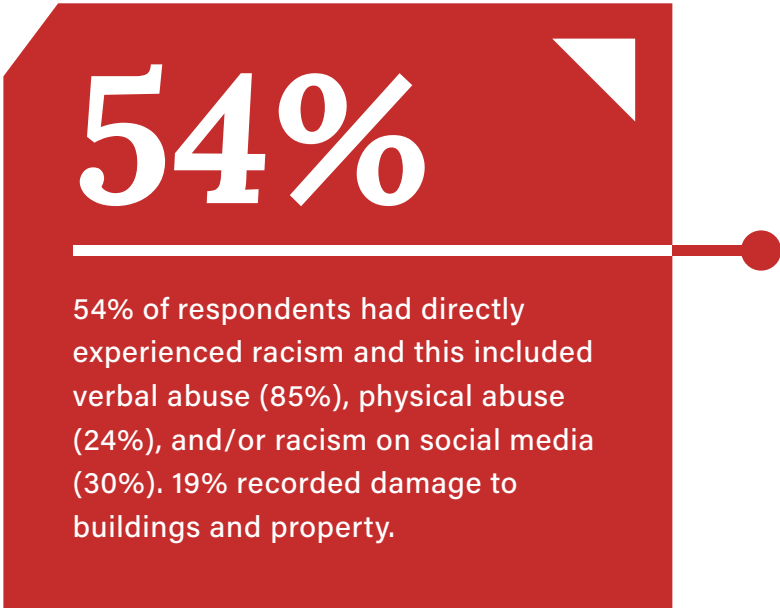
Racism in the North East

Written responses to our call for evidence were also received from The Angelou Centre, Connected Voice, WWIN's Findaway team, International Community Organisation of Sunderland, Northumbria Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, Represent Women and Sunderland City Council.

69%

In terms of ethnicity, 69% said that you are at higher risk of experiencing racism if you are African, 54% said Arabic, and 49% said South Asian.

What form does racism in the North East take?

A red rectangular box with a white triangle in the top right corner. The text '54%' is written in large white font. A white horizontal line is positioned below the percentage. A red line extends from the right side of the box, ending in a red circle.

54%

54% of respondents had directly experienced racism and this included verbal abuse (85%), physical abuse (24%), and/or racism on social media (30%). 19% recorded damage to buildings and property.

The submission from the Northumbria Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner observed different types of racism in the North East including Islamophobia, antisemitism, and anti-refugee sentiment and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland noted that "race hate crime remains by far the most reported strand of hate crime in Cleveland" with reports being highest in the Middlesbrough area. The International Community Organisation of Sunderland reported racism against Central and Eastern European migrants. Sunderland City Council confirmed that racism takes many forms including "verbal abuse, physical attacks, and online hate. Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment."

What form does racism in the North East take?

Martin Lindsay, the Senior Investigations Reporter for BBC North East and Cumbria also shared data from FOI requests that had been submitted to police forces across the country. Combining the data from Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria Police forces and comparing Aug 23-Jan 24 with the same period a year later, racial hate crimes had increased by 35.2%, religious hate crimes by 22.4% and racial or religious violence by 20.3%. These increases were well above the average for England across all police forces.



Where does it happen?

From our survey, we found that most racist incidents took place in the street (62%), in a shop, restaurant or pub (43%) and on public transport (33%). Half the respondents had experienced racism at work, 26% at school, and 13% at college or university. This is supported by the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner who observed that racism takes place across the region and in many different places and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland noted:

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“In terms of reported race hate crime in Cleveland, the key areas this takes place is the Night Time Economy, in fast food establishments and against taxi drivers, and care settings, with a particularly high level of offending in Roseberry Park mental health facility where perpetrators are patients within the hospital.”

— Office of the Police and Crime
Commissioner for Cleveland

Where does it happen?

WWIN's Findaway team noted that it occurs across the region but especially in deprived communities, and Sunderland City Council noted that it takes place "across a wide range of settings, including public spaces such as streets, mosques, and shops, as well as online platforms, schools, workplaces, housing, and healthcare environments." They also noted that one of the main "'hot spots' for racism are linked to mental health hospitals with staff suffering abuse from patients." Reference was also made to racism being experienced by "shop owners, taxi drivers and takeaway owners."



Other key findings

- 73% of respondents had family members, friends or colleagues who had experienced racism (14% said no to this) and the most common form this took was verbal abuse (92%), on social media (37%) and/or physical abuse (30%).
- 21% referred to damage to property and buildings. 44% of respondents had a fear of experiencing racism, and 44% had altered their behaviours as a result of experiencing racism or due to a fear of experiencing it.
- 73% felt that racism had an impact on educational outcomes, 84% on employment opportunities, 68% on access to public services, 65% on access to healthcare, 80% on mental health and 88% on wellbeing and confidence.
- In terms of factors that increase racism, 81% selected print media, with 79% broadcast media, 91% social media, and 88% the language used by some politicians and other public figures.



73%

73% of those who had experienced racism did not report it to the police.

Policing

Survey respondents were asked if they had reported racist incidents to the police and also, if not, what the reason was for not reporting. In terms of reporting incidents to the police, 73% of those who had experienced racism did not report it to the police. 10% said they had, and 17% said they had but not on every occasion. Around half of the respondents who said they did not report the incident to the police provided an explanation for this. By far the most common response was that the police “would not bother” and that the incident being reported would not be taken seriously. Examples of responses include the following:

“I didn't think the police would come”

“The police aren't interested.”

“I didn't think it would be taken seriously”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST POLICING

Within such responses, some said they thought the police were too busy, others said that they would receive a crime reference number and nothing more, with others saying they feel that addressing racism is not a priority for the police. Some also felt that the police were racist and so did not see any point in reporting incidents to them. Related to these responses, a number pointed out that they lacked the evidence needed to report racism with some pointing to the challenges of “proving” that an incident occurred.

There were several respondents who said they did not report to the police as they were concerned about the consequences such as being targeted at work or in drawing unwanted attention to themselves in their local area. As one respondent said:

“

“I feared that the incident could escalate, and therefore, I refrained from reporting it due to concerns for my safety.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST POLICING

Added to this, some also referred to incidents not being serious enough to warrant reporting or only happening on one occasion. A small group of respondents also felt it was better to move on and either said they were too busy to be bothered about reporting or felt the issue would drag on and they preferred to live a “quiet life”.

Often it was a combination of issues that led to people deciding not to report. Consider this response:

“

“Its a pointless exercise they wont do anything and it creates more tension and difficulties for me making me feel even more unsafe.”

And a longer response from a different person:

“

“People often ask, “Why didn’t you report it to the police?” And the truth is — because nothing ever comes of it.

You report racism, and it's either dismissed as not serious, downplayed, or never followed up on. You’re made to feel like you're overreacting or imagining it. You leave with no justice, no support — and often, even more frustration.

And here’s the harder truth: many of us don’t trust the police, because we’ve seen or experienced racism from officers themselves. Whether it's being treated differently during a stop, ignored when we ask for help, or spoken to with an attitude, you feel like they’re not there for you — not really. You feel judged before you've even opened your mouth.

So what’s the point of reporting something when the very system that’s supposed to protect you is part of the problem?”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST POLICING

Feedback was collected by Connected Voice about the police response to the summer 2024 riots. Their feedback notes that the “police were very good with community reassurance, being out visibly in communities and dealing with potential unrest. They came to mosques and business places, to talk to people.” There was also a sense that the police played a role in “keeping violence out while giving space for protest”. However, “there is a perception that police are not recording hate incidents as a hate incident when they are reported in.” The tough sentences that were handed out were perceived to have helped “stop the violence however the fear and intimidation has not stopped.”

On 7th July 2026, a roundtable was hosted by Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner with senior representatives from the three North East police force areas (Cleveland, Durham, and Northumbria) to discuss the recommendations below and agree on shared actions.



Recommendations:

- All organisations should provide regular training to educate people about reporting processes.
- The police should encourage reporting through a public campaign which includes types of crime (e.g. hate crime, victimisation, intimidation), details of how to report race-based crime including what happens once a crime is reported, and examples of action (to evidence effectiveness of reporting).
- The police should engage regularly in training on race-related hate crime to make sure that it is understood, taken seriously and followed up.
- All Police forces and Offices of the Police and Crime Commissioner should develop clear action plans to tackle racism across all their work.
- All Police forces and Offices of the Police and Crime Commissioner to continue to work towards building greater levels of trust with local communities.
- All North East police forces should continue to share best practice in seeking to address racism.

Education



73%

73% felt that racism had an impact on educational outcomes and so were concerned that black and minority ethnic pupils and students were being restricted from reaching their full potential as a result.

26% of survey respondents referred to experiences of racism at school, and 13% at college or university. The Office of Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that racism takes place in schools and educational settings. Racism is an issue across all forms, types and levels of education in the North East with respondents referring to racist incidents in educational contexts, including in the classroom, lecture theatre and seminar room, as well as in the playground, and on the way to and from educational institutions:

“Children facing racism even in primary schools from reception to year six.”

[Racism] “Stops some of the children go to school, fearing that they get badly bullied.”

“Racism in the North East creates an unsafe environment for BIPOC residents. I particularly see the impact on students at Newcastle University who have been terrified by the nearby riots against Muslims.”

“Racism is getting worse in the NE of England, because I am a student at Teesside University, and I normally face and endure it almost everyday.”

“

“My son lived in a shared house and witnessed his house mate become withdrawn and very upset after a couple of racism incidents (approx 2 years ago) whilst socialising in the evening in Newcastle city centre. His house mate was an Indian student completing a Masters at one of the local universities and was verbally assaulted whilst out in the local bars. He is a gentle, kind man and took the assault very personally. He has since returned to live in India although he had intended to try to work in the UK post-education. Racism largely influenced his decision to return to India.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST EDUCATION

Many of the survey respondents expressed concern about the lack of education which in their view led to an increased likelihood of people being racist. Many pointed to the need for those who are racist to be educated about the problems this creates. WWIN's Findaway team, for example, noted that "we also see the impact of poor education around topics such as immigration, racism, and Britain's colonial past. Without this understanding, harmful stereotypes go unchallenged, and empathy is harder to build." Others pointed to the need for people to speak up against racism and to be better informed about how to do this. Sunderland City Council noted that it is important to "embed anti-racism into school curriculum at an early age" and the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner referred to the need for "comprehensive education" that "disrupts myths and misinformation, leading to more positive attitudes towards diversity. Awareness campaigns equip individuals and communities with the skills to recognise, resist and respond to hate speech and discrimination."



Recommendations:

- A North-East anti-racism in education group should be established to include relevant senior educational professionals to inform local practice challenging racism, based on identified local needs.
- If they have not already done so, all North-East educational establishments should develop their own anti-racism strategy.
- The government needs to introduce a required system for recording and reporting of racism in schools, colleges and universities. The North-East anti-racism education group could advocate for this, and there may be ways of enabling this at a local level.
- All initial teacher training providers should integrate and embed anti-racism into their curricula.

Work and employment



84%

84% felt that racism had an impact on employment opportunities and the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner made an important point about “discrimination in employment and other services” noting that “black and minoritised groups often face barriers in recruitment, retention and progression within workplaces”.

Furthermore, they note that “in some cases, people from black and minoritised groups despite being qualified for more skilled work end up in lower paid or more manual roles, where they may not be afforded the same protections from racism and discrimination that they might have in higher salary/professional roles.” They also pointed to many such groups being slow to update equality and diversity policies.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Deeply connected to experiences of discrimination, 9% of respondents felt that racism generated the challenge of worse education and employment opportunities in the North East. There was a marked difference in the rates of identification of this challenge between white and non-white respondents. 4.8% of white respondents and 28% of non-white respondents felt that racism generated worse education and employment opportunities in the North East. A general theme through these responses is that racism “leads to less access to education and jobs”, and that people subject to racism will not receive equal access to opportunities to progress in their education and career. The racism inherent within the asylum system was also raised as a specific concern.

Responses included mention of challenges “in getting and maintaining well paid jobs” and a “lack of opportunities” for people subjected to racism in school and employment contexts. Several respondents noted the multifaceted impacts of racist discrimination in education, employment and beyond:

“

Racism limits access to fair housing, education, promotions, and leadership roles. People are sometimes overlooked not because of what they can’t do — but because of what others assume about them”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

This was noted to be down to institutional biases and personal impacts of experiencing racism at school and at work, with one respondent noting “the adverse effect of the mental health and wellbeing of people who face discrimination”. Another connected the “unequal access to education, jobs, and housing” to the belief that “racism can also damage mental health, leading to stress, anxiety, and depression”. Also noted was a lack of diversity in workplaces in the region causing problems for minority communities.

On 16th June 2026, VONNE hosted a roundtable focused on work and employment issues at Newcastle Building Society in central Newcastle upon Tyne to discuss and agree on the recommendations outlined below.

Recommendations:

- All employers in the North East should take steps to action the 20 recommendations outlined in the North East Chamber of Commerce report about promoting anti-racism in North East businesses.
- Specific attention should be given to the needs of young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds in seeking access to employment.



ENHANCING YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH ADDRESSING RACISM

- 1 Commit to the journey of anti-racism.
- 2 Demonstrate leadership on diversity and inclusion.
- 3 Embed diversity within your business strategies, plans and initiatives.
- 4 Make promoting anti-racism a shared priority.
- 5 Collaborate with others who share your commitment.

WORKPLACE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 6 Encourage workplace conversations about race, ethnicity and discrimination.
- 7 Adopt a zero-tolerance policy to racism.
- 8 Commit to frequent training on race, ethnicity, and discrimination.
- 9 Only work with high-quality training providers.
- 10 Communicate widely about your commitment and learning.

RECRUITMENT

- 11 Nurture your talent pipeline within Black and minoritised ethnic communities.
- 12 Proactively advertise opportunities to encourage diversity.
- 13 Provide accessible information about your business.
- 14 Eliminate bias within your application process.
- 15 Commit to diversity on interview panels.

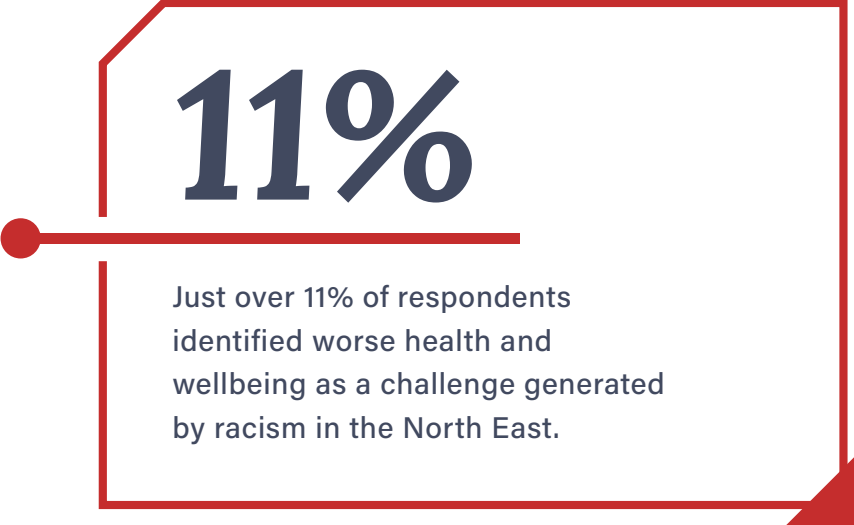
RETENTION, PROMOTION, AND PROGRESSION

- 16 Reduce barriers to opportunity for people from Black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds.
- 17 Provide equitable access to promotion, progression, reward and recognition.
- 18 Commit to supporting the careers of Black and minoritised ethnic colleagues.
- 19 Establish a staff network focused on fairness and inclusion.
- 20 Prioritise inclusion and belonging.

Health and wellbeing

68% of survey respondents felt that racism had an impact on their access to public services, 65% on access to healthcare, 80% on mental health and 88% on wellbeing and confidence.

There is a significant difference between white and black and ethnic minority respondents. 17.4% of black and minority ethnic respondents and 4.9% of white respondents identified worse health and wellbeing as a challenge generated by racism. Among these responses were indications that racism negatively impacted respondents physical and mental wellbeing with some noting depression and anxiety relating to fear of physical or verbal abuse, the effects of systemic racism, plus community division.



11%

Just over 11% of respondents identified worse health and wellbeing as a challenge generated by racism in the North East.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST HEALTH AND WELLBEING

“

“[Racism generates] Isolation which impacts mental health and overall wellbeing.”

“

“[Racism has] A negative impact on mental health, poverty, confidence, community cohesion, and reduces overall happiness and wellbeing.”

“

“[Racism generates] barriers to jobs and housing, increased social isolation, and poorer mental health among minorities”

“

“Racism can lead to a deep sense of isolation and disconnection. It creates barriers to employment, education, and social participation. People may feel pressure to downplay their cultural identity or avoid drawing attention to themselves in order to “fit in.” This affects mental health, self-esteem, and overall wellbeing.”

“

“Being treated differently — especially in your workplace, school, or local community — can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression. It can feel exhausting to always be on guard or to prepare for someone’s prejudice.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST HEALTH AND WELLBEING

One respondent went further, saying these challenges were compounded the longer they were left unattended: "It makes minority groups feel unsafe in their communities, health inequality (sic) lead to more health issues unaddressed in these communities."

This negative impact on mental health and wellbeing was also linked by a number of participants to inequalities in accessing health care through the NHS.

“

"Accessing safety and justice is one major issue. Black women facing domestic or sexual abuse are often disbelieved or unsupported, with policing and legal systems that don't recognise their realities. Health inequalities are also stark, with systemic racism contributing to poor outcomes, especially in maternal care."

“

"Racism impacts healthcare workers daily and as such it creates a healthcare system which is poorer quality because diverse voices are not heard."

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Sunderland City Council reported that they had “heard of staff within the NHS being subject to racism from other staff members and from patients”, and the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner noted:

“We are also aware that the healthcare sector has a high number of employees from black and minoritised groups and our insights suggest that they also face a significant level of racism and hate in the workplace.”

This is important as recent research shows that 69% of Muslim healthcare workers reported experiencing Islamophobia (e.g. Khanji et al, 2025).

Moreover, some respondents also pointed to the challenges of structural and institutional racism such that:

“I have seen for years how racism effects the career opportunities and rewards of people from marginalised groups. Doctors from those groups are more likely to be investigated for alleged poor practice.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST HEALTH AND WELLBEING

NEARC are aware that the NHS regularly produces a Workforce Race Equality Standard Reports (WRES) to monitor the ethnic diversity of staff across roles, in board membership, and to monitor ethnicity for those experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from patients and colleagues.

Recommendations:

- All hospitals and medical centres should train staff on how to tackle racism.
- All hospitals and medical centres should engage in a poster campaign to educate potential victims about what to do if they experience racism and to inform potential perpetrators about what action would be taken to address their behaviour.
- The NHS should continue to produce regular Workforce Race Equality Standard Reports (WRES) and to take an active role in monitoring and challenging racism.
- All Hospital Trusts and Medical Centres should develop and implement an anti-racist plan.



A photograph of a yellow and black train at a station platform. The train is on the right side of the frame, with its front end visible. The platform is on the left, with a yellow safety line. A large red text box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title 'Public Transport' and a paragraph of text. The background shows the station's glass and metal structure.

Public Transport

For a third of the respondents who had directly experienced racism, this has occurred on public transport, and almost 70% of those who had directly experienced racism were women. For those who had a close family member, friend or colleague who had experienced racism, a quarter said this took place on public transport. The Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner noted that racism takes place on public transport and Connected Voice consulted with their Haref Network and noted that “people are scared to use public transport and feel unsafe on it” and “hate crime on the metro system is rife, stories were shared of regular incidents”.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST PUBLIC TRANSPORT

This is supported by previous research that found that racist and Islamophobic incidents were a frequent experience on public transport leading some to choose to use their cars instead of travelling by public transport (Hopkins, Clayton, and TellMAMA, 2020). Respondents referred to direct experiences of racism on public transport or witnessing other passengers or public transport staff being subjected to racism:



"People feel afraid to go to certain areas alone or use public transport, particularly the Metro. I spoke to someone last year and they said they experience racism almost daily on the Metro."

"riots/comments/conversations I hear/abuse on buses and metro"

"The metro and public transport are rife with racism, perhaps this needs to be addressed?"

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST PUBLIC TRANSPORT

A fear of using public transport or going out in public spaces led some to choose to stay home. This was particularly the case during, and in the period after, the summer 2024 riots as reported by several survey respondents and Sunderland City Council. People reported feeling scared of being on public transport, being in public space, and using their cars to get to work. One person responded that it was “the first time in my life that I had felt fearful about directly experiencing racism”. As a result, respondents reported altering their plans and avoiding certain areas and activities.

Recommendations:

- All transport providers in the region should train their staff on how to manage racist incidents.
- All transport providers in the region should engage in a poster campaign to educate potential victims about what to do if they experience racism and to inform potential perpetrators about what action would be taken to penalise them.
- Active bystander training should also be promoted more widely to help educate those who witness racist incidents on public transport.



Housing, communities, and community division

10%

10% of respondents mentioned that racism in the North East creates a culture of fear and lack of safety as they go about their daily lives in their local neighbourhoods and communities. Many respondents referenced this as an aftermath of the summer 2024 riots. Some examples of responses include:

“

“Since the riots I’ve been scared to go places and walk in the street. People much more openly hostile.”

“

“To me racism creates the sense of being othered and simply feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood. I am a woman of colour and have been shouted out multiple times while out on street. I was just walking on a pavement on all occasions, once while with my baby in a pushchair. I am afraid of being shouted at again, or being physically attacked.”

“

“People are scared to go out, I can't mix in my community.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY DIVISION

10% of responses mentioned racism creates a feeling of isolation, an unwelcoming environment and barriers to integration. Examples of responses includes the following:

"Individuals feeling "put down".
People made to feel as if they are not welcome here."

"non acceptance of different religions /culture"

"outdated values being accepted as banter and creating an unwelcoming atmosphere for those new to the area."

"Racism is causing isolation in our black and ethnic communities. When these issues are reported they do not get taken seriously. For example when I reported to the police I was asked "what did you do to provoke them?"

"I sometimes don't feel a sense of belonging despite giving my best to the community that I love so much."



21%

21% of those who completed the survey felt that social division and misinformation were the main problems they saw racism creating.

This was the most common theme amongst answers when asked 'What are some of the problems you see racism creating in the North East?'. Examples of responses included:

“

“Racism enables people to spread misinformation, to perpetuate stereotypes and unconscious bias. It creates a sense of 'us' and 'them'.”

“

“Division is 'stoked' and this leads to a lack of community and social cohesion.”

“

“Misinformation, misunderstanding and mistrust, further entrenching and exacerbating stereotyped and bias views about Black, Brown and Asian people. Escalation of inappropriate racists behaviours without addressing them or consequences.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY DIVISION

Many respondents referenced unequal employment opportunities, slow progression, as well as inequalities in accessing various services. In terms of abuse, 12% of respondents mentioned that it increases instances of hate and verbal abuse. Examples of responses includes the following:

- “I heard many times on the street (go back to your country) when people heard my Polish language.”
- “I have also witnessed two white boys call 2 Muslim girls chimpanzees and imitating an Indian accent.”
- “People of colour, especially those perceived to be Muslim, asylum seekers or refugees, are increasingly facing verbal abuse and hostility in public spaces.”
- “Racism will also impact our day to day lives - I’ve been called “p****”, “dark”, and treated as an outsider even though I was born here. Incidents are increasing and make the streets more unsafe.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY DIVISION

The Office of Northumbria Police and Crime noted that “in other services such as housing, we have heard reports of landlords/letting agents refusing tenants based on race, religion or perceived immigration status. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits such practices, but enforcement and awareness remain inconsistent.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY DIVISION

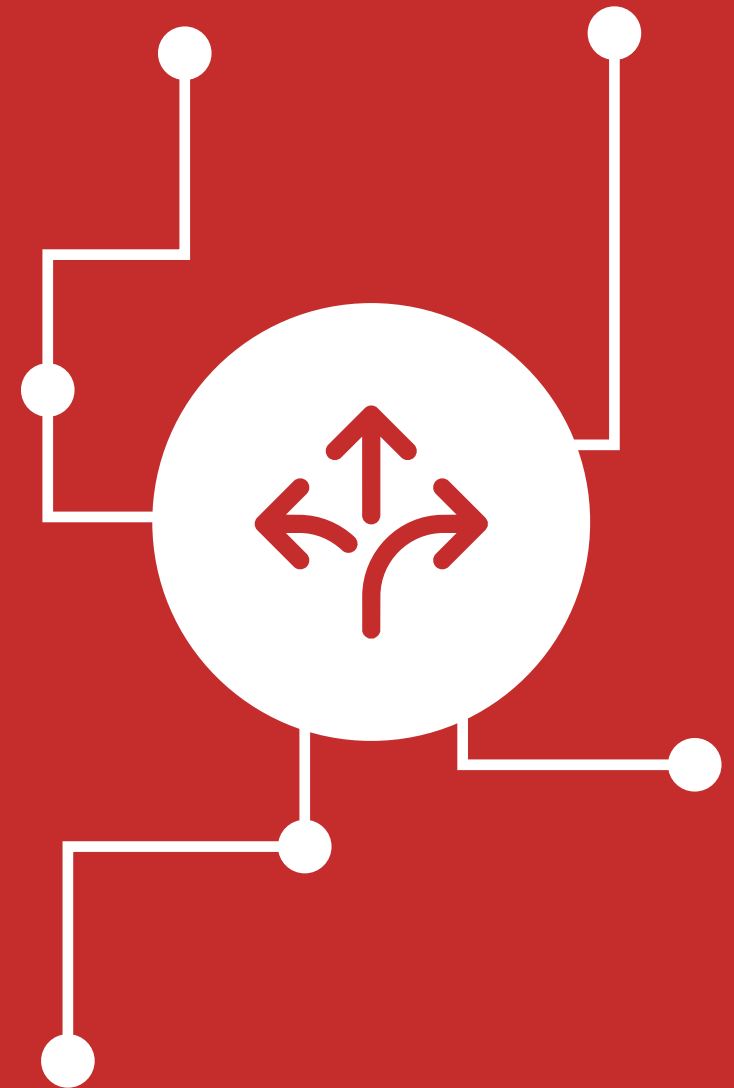
Just over a quarter of the survey respondents felt that racism generated community division. Of this figure, 27% of white respondents and 22% of black and ethnic minority respondents perceived community division as a challenge generated by racism in the North East. Respondents reported feeling that divisions were growing between ethnic groups and that this problem was getting worse. For example:

“

“It creates division in communities and an uncomfortable place to live for victims of racism. I imagine victims are constantly looking over their shoulders wondering if someone is going to be racist or not.”

“

“It causes division in society and creates an atmosphere of fear. Both for those who may be subjected to racism but also for those who believe that Global Ethnic Majority people are a threat.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY DIVISION

“

“Racism in the North East undermines social cohesion by deepening divisions between communities and fuelling mistrust. It reinforces negative perceptions of the region as intolerant or unwelcoming, which can discourage integration and investment. As tensions grow, everyday interactions between different groups become strained, making it harder to build meaningful relationships. This widening gap damages local unity, isolates marginalised communities, and threatens the inclusive identity many residents are working hard to promote.”

Recommendations:

- A local campaign against misinformation (North East Against Racist Misinformation (NEARM)), focusing on issues such as housing and communities but also adaptable to other issues should be introduced.

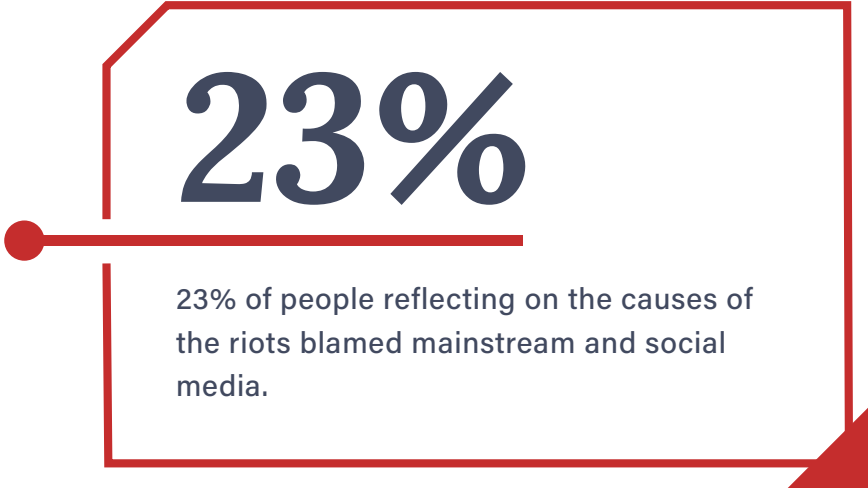
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“Looking at crime types, the black population is more likely to be a victim of almost all crime types. Rates are more than double the white rate in relation to theft, criminal damage & arson, public order and robbery.”

— The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

Mainstream and social media

In terms of factors that increase racism, 81% selected print media, with 79% broadcast media, 91% social media, and 88% the language used by some politicians and other public figures. 23% of people reflecting on the causes of the riots blamed mainstream and social media. This is closely connected to misinformation. Noted in these responses is how “social media algorithms and right-wing traditional press” come together to influence a narrative. Regarding social media platforms, respondents noted “the lack of social media control and appropriate management by tech companies” as a contributing factor for “the almost instant sharing of inaccurate, aggressive and inciteful information”. Responses focussing on mainstream and social media often blamed them for spreading misinformation.



23%

23% of people reflecting on the causes of the riots blamed mainstream and social media.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST MAINSTREAM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

17%

17% of those that completed the survey felt the racism was being impacted in the North East as a result of division caused within mainstream media, as well as social media hate.

These respondents all felt racism was either staying the same (14%) or getting worse (86%) – with (social) media hate/division being cited as the main reason for this. Examples of responses included:

“

“Media fuelling further class divide and tribalism, causing an "us" & "them" mentality and scapegoating people different to them as a reason for their socioeconomic problems.”

“

“Racism and abuse online (specifically related to social media pages and online news articles covering the North East) has become much, much worse over the past few years.”

“

“I think we always had racism but social media has made it more visible”

“

“The comments I see on Facebook are much worse today than they used to be a year ago. I see disgusting comments about immigration and the Nigerian and Bangladeshi community in Sunderland.”

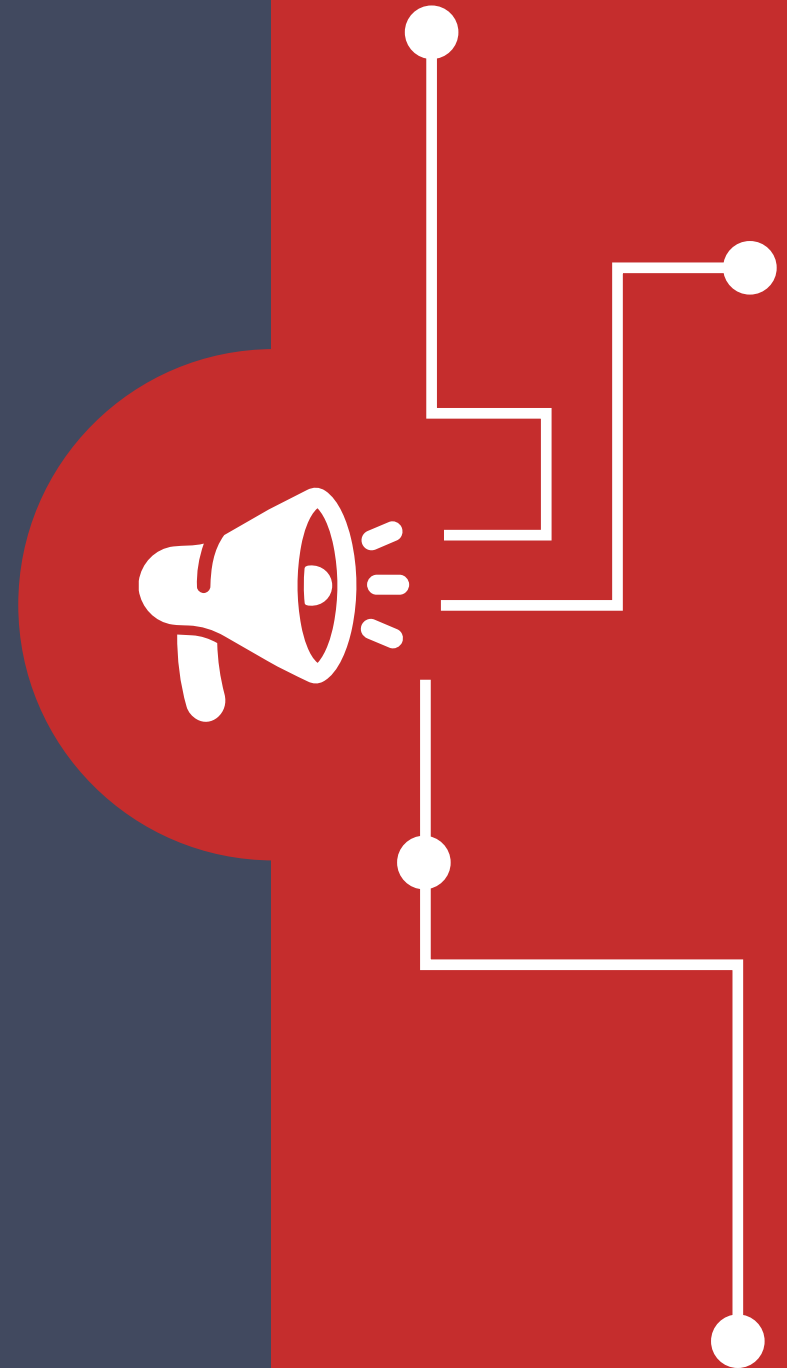
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“I feel that the media creates divides, it labels ethnic minority groups, it publicises and makes out that the rise in particular crimes is due to immigrants, social media sites are full of false information saying immigrants are given loads of money and brand new iPhones and unfortunately a lot of people do not fact check information.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST MAINSTREAM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

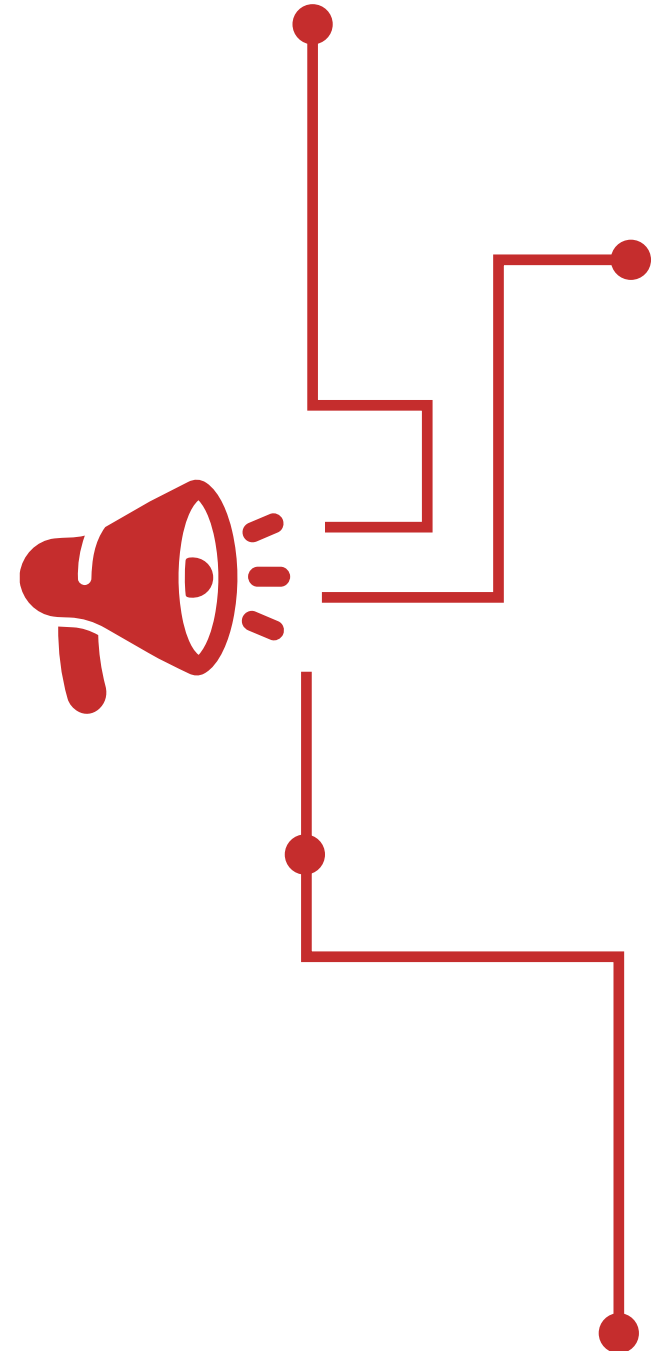
WWIN's Findaway team supported this noting that "media platforms and social media algorithms play a dangerous role by amplifying dis and misinformation and racist content, creating a deeply divided and misled public rhetoric." Sunderland City Council also referred to the challenges of "misinformation, including through social media" and "negative reporting in the media re immigration."

The most common reflections on the causes of the 2024 riots was that misinformation spread on mainstream and social media was to blame with over a quarter of respondents noting this. Some respondents felt the media portrayed a picture of asylum hotel residents "which isn't a true reflection of the reality", with another stating that "this is what happens when misinformation and hate is spread and when prejudiced language is normalized by politicians and via social media". Others felt it was "certain politicians and social figures". Another respondent believed that misinformation was used to "drive the increase in nationalism in the country".



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST MAINSTREAM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Furthermore, It was noted there was a lack of misinformation about the Southport attack and migration meant that: "It wasn't just far-right extremists. Ordinary people joined in, fuelled by lies spread online and fear stoked by sensational media". Also, it was noted there was a lack of narrative countering misinformation: "there are not many positive stories including asylum seekers and refugees broadcast widely, how they aim to give back, and aim to have purpose in this country".



Politics and politicians

11%

11% of respondents mentioned that the rise of populist political parties and negative political discourse has had an impact on racism in the North East. Some responses include:

- “Xenophobia is made acceptable by populist politicians, who cleverly avoid stating their racism directly, but xenophobia is widely shrouded as protecting jobs, burden on the tax payer, health services, education and housing.”
- “The worsening of racism in the North-East is no better illustrated than by the vast increase in support for the likes of Nigel Farage and his party, Reform UK, and also Tommy Robinson.”
- “With the rise of more right-leaning politics in the UK and across Europe, racism and bigotry are on the increase. As people are hit by the cost of living, asylum seekers and refugees are often blamed for a lack of resources and living standards.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

Across the survey responses, concern was expressed about rising levels of xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric with many pointing to far-right political parties and negative political messaging being the key sources of this. 13% of people reflecting on the causes of the summer 2024 riots blamed a growth in right wing politics, with one respondent feeling “the right-wing political parties - Reform UK - orchestrated the riots”.

Respondents felt that misinformation spread on mainstream and social media was coming from the political right, with one noting that “the far / extreme right wing caused this by spreading misinformation and disinformation online about the so-called immigration status of the suspect”. The Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner also point to the activities of far-right groups and the political rhetoric as being an important catalyst for rising levels of racism. Connected Voice noted that people wanted “local MPs to acknowledge what was happening, and a visible response in communities, and also from local councillors in their own areas. It was felt this was missing in Newcastle.” They also noted that it was important for all public sector organisations to take up an anti-racist agenda.

POLLING STATION



Recommendations:

- All North East MPs and other elected representatives should avoid mainstreaming very far-right ideas that embolden and platform the far-right.
- All North East MPs and other elected representatives should regularly acknowledge the challenge of community relations and the importance of promoting anti-racism.



Women and girls

The International Community Organisation of Sunderland referred to barriers experienced by women from Central and Eastern Europe in accessing health and social care and the survey data pointed to fear being a key factor in the lives of many women from ethnic minority backgrounds who chose to stay home or avoid spending too much time in public due to concerns about experiencing racism.

This was further supported by the Angelou Centre (2025) report about the impacts of the 2024 riots on women and children from black and minority ethnic groups. Sunderland City Council reported that during and after the riots "many of our ethnic minority communities felt apprehensive and fearful to go about their everyday business, particularly Muslim women and girls. Husbands/fathers/brothers were escorting them to work because they were afraid to take public transport."



27%

27% of survey respondents felt that the risk of experiencing racism was higher for women and 31% referred to a headscarf and headcovering as a key factor that posed a higher risk.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Across the responses, there was a clear recognition that racism – and its many forms – is highly gendered and that women tend to be more vulnerable than men to experiencing racism. WWIN's Findaway team noted with respect to the summer 2024 riots that:

“

“From our experience and what we have heard as an organisation, many of these women continue to live in fear as a result of the hostility they face. The main perpetrators can include far-right activists and politicians who exploit community tensions under the guise of "protecting women and girls," as well as ordinary residents who have been misled or radicalised by harmful media messaging and political rhetoric. Additionally, racism is reinforced by systems and institutions that fail to properly support or protect minority communities, further entrenching inequality and exclusion. In the VAWG sector we see this most commonly for women fleeing domestic abuse who have no recourse to public funds. At WWIN we do all we can to ensure equitable support, and often fund refuge ourselves, however with rapidly reducing reserves this situation feels unsustainable and this is cause of significant concern for the organisation.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner noted that following the summer 2024 riots, of the 91 arrests in Sunderland of those, 38 were subject to a prior domestic abuse report."

Represent Women were eager to see great acknowledgement of the specific challenges facing women, including during periods of unrest. They pointed out that women continue to participate in the school run, caring responsibilities, shopping and travel to work, often despite significant concerns about their own safety.

The Angelou Centre and Represent Women hosted a roundtable event on 24th March 2026 to reflect on this research and its recommendations. This event included representatives from across the women and girls' sector in the North East. There was widespread agreement that action is urgently needed to address the racism and discrimination experienced by women and girls.



Recommendations:

- All initiatives to address racism in the North East should pay particular attention to its gendered nature.
- All initiatives to address racism in the North East should recognise the different ways women experience and respond to racist violence.
- All initiatives to address racism in the North East should adopt an approach informed by intersectionality.
- Work to strengthen coordination and communication with women's organisations so they are more strongly positioned to respond during crises.
- Ensuring women's safety and lived experiences are reflected in emergency planning and recovery efforts.
- All anti-racist policies and strategies should recognise the vital role of women's organisations and the distinct challenges women face during periods of community tension and unrest.
- Immediate steps should be taken to action all of the recommendations of the Angelou Centre Stories of Colour report.



AREA 1: WOMEN'S SECTOR

- i. Structured development of an anti-racist and human rights practice to rebuild cohesion and integration; build collective confidence and promote the duty to recognise and respond to all forms of racism including intersectional and gendered forms of racism. This should include co-produced resources, promote peer-led empowerment circles and training for staff and service users.
- ii. Development of a digital empowerment education programme that addresses digital exclusion, racial and domestic violence and abuse, and recovery for Black and minoritised victim-survivors. This should include consultation with service users, training and the development of a strategic 'digital inclusion' plan.
- iii. A submission to the forthcoming CEDAW examination of the UK, on the gendered impact of the far-right riots collaboratively produced by the Resist Network and others in the VAWG sector incorporating the Angelou Centre's Stories of Colour research findings.

AREA 2: SCHOOLS & EDUCATORS

- i. Anti-racism curriculum and training: Local areas should co-create anti-racism educational content for schools, involving education specialists and Black, minority and migrant women and focusing on gendered forms of racism and intersectional discrimination. This must include teacher training on handling disclosures of abuse and harm and fostering inclusive environments and support for student-led initiatives on anti-racism.
- ii. Specialist counselling for children and young people: The funding and resourcing of appropriate counselling services for Black, minoritised and migrant young people affected by the riots, racial discrimination and trauma. Embed these within schools and create more youth centres to reduce barriers to inclusion and equality of access and engagement.

AREA 3: LOCAL & STATUTORY BODIES

- i. Policy making and community initiatives must move away from relying on decision making processes that prioritise so-called community and religious leaders. Far from representing women's interests, many of these leaders actively work to deny women access to their right to safety, public resources and local decision making power
- ii. Publish a review of the local statutory responses to the riots: Northumbria PCC, alongside local authorities and community partners, should publish a review of their response to the 2024 and ongoing riots, capturing and highlighting gendered racism and the related experiences of Black and minoritised women in particular.
 - a. The review should address the intersection of racism with misogyny and socio-economic exclusion, ensuring that no one falls through the cracks in regard to social justice and equality.
 - b. The review should identify key learning outcomes, provide positive examples of good practice, and propose a forward-looking recovery and rebuilding plan based on challenging all forms of racism and hostility – especially towards migrants.
 - c. The focus must be on equality and inclusion and aim to remove barriers to inequality, develop and strengthen future responses to racism and rebuild community trust, especially among Black, minoritised and migrant women.

AREA 3: LOCAL & STATUTORY BODIES (CONT.)

iii. Strengthen public safety through community-led partnerships and audits: Northumbria Police Community Engagement Officers should work in close partnership with local grassroots women's groups, to develop and lead on collaborative projects such as safety audits of public spaces, particularly of areas where women and children experience higher levels of racial and sexual abuse and harassment. These audits must lead to tangible improvements, including better lighting, increased CCTV coverage, and the prominent display of signage affirming zero tolerance for race hate crimes and misogyny. Initiatives must ensure that public environments are visibly safe and inclusive of groups most at risk of racism and sexual violence.

iv. A review of the North East Combined Authority's (NECA) transport plans and board membership should take place to ensure that there is an improved in-depth understanding of the prevalence of gendered forms of racism in their plans on regional public transport and the need to include a coherent anti-racist and anti-misogyny strand to NECA's future policy making and strategic plans.

Fear of experiencing racism

Some respondents referred to a general culture of fear in which ethnic minorities and migrants are scapegoated for any socio-economic challenges. This was supported by the findings of the Angelou Centre (2025). Many also talked about a fear that their lives were being restricted and that it was risky to go about their lives as normal and to mix in their local community:

“

“People are frightened of the unknown and they become more closed off, rather than embracing what someone who looks or speaks differently might offer.”

“

“Fear. Often of the unknown again I think this is something new to lot of people up here and there is a little bit of trepidation, again exaggerated by the media and right wing politicians.”

“

“People who experience racism will be feeling afraid and more reluctant to integrate.”

1/4

Nearly a quarter of respondents reported a fear of experiencing racism.



“

This must be so difficult living in a place where at times you must fear to be out in public or be out alone.”

“

“Going out, taking a bus, being in a group, engaging in a public service are all affected by how people treat you and race features in it. Some folk, women especially, are withdrawing more because of negative experiences. When they have children, those children are having their lives restricted.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST
FEAR OF EXPERIENCING RACISM

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

FEAR OF EXPERIENCING RACISM

Respondents also shared personal experiences of experiencing fear in public space and fear for their children's and community's safety. For example:

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“Safety, being treated as equals. (As a Black woman) the colour of my skin is always on the agenda when ever I enter a room. Not feeling part of a community fully and excluded from white eurocentric events and discussions.”

“

“Fear of being out in public, job discrimination, being targeted for issues that they aren't responsible for.”

“

“Children suffer racist abuse and attacks in schools here causing challenges in education”

“

“Concerns over experiences at work and school and how this impacts on mental/emotional health”

There were also respondents who noted that fear had an impact on integration, community cohesion, mental wellbeing and access to social services. One respondent put it in stark terms that they are “terrified of encountering a racist”.

Trust

Included within these responses is mention of distrust, “on both sides” between communities because of racism and the riots of 2024. Also noted was an element of distrust in the justice system that “perpetrators are not reprimanded for racist actions”. This results in a feeling of cautiousness:

“

“Not knowing how you will be perceived or what someone's response will be to you and whether you will be accepted is scary and anxiety provoking.”

This lack of trust was noted to be particularly challenging in smaller ethnic minority communities as “calling out racism can make you a target or lead to social or professional backlash”. Consequently, “this silences people, making it harder to report discrimination or challenge systemic issues.”

5%

5% of respondents noted distrust as a challenge generated by racism in the North East and the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner referred to a “lack of representation and understanding in public institutions.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST TRUST

In order to try to develop trust, the Office of the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner noted:

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“Having high profile figures such as the PCC challenge the rhetoric both locally and nationally around immigration and community cohesion is very important. The three regional PCCs are working with North East Migration Partnership to develop a myth buster resource challenging the misinformation currently circulating in relation to asylum and migration.”

The mythbusting resources are now available.



Social inequality

Some respondents felt that social inequality is a challenge generated by racism in the North East with some pointing to the economic inequality across the region being made worse by racism, and that blame for economic and social inequality was being put onto ethnic minorities.

“Racism gives ordinary people a culturally acceptable mechanism to blame others for the inequalities we all face in this region. It creates the conditions for riots to ignite.”

“The north east is already such a deprived area in the UK and I think racism adds an extra barrier for targets of racism.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Within these responses, many of the social and economic inequalities felt across the country were being heightened by the cost-of-living crisis were regarded as having a lot of impact in the North East. One respondent connects these inequalities to racism directed towards asylum seekers and refugees:

“

“The current environment regarding asylum seekers and refugees continues to be affected by generational racism, which is being fuelled by the political propaganda perpetrated by the previous and current government, poverty, cost of living crisis and ignorance of other cultures and the belief that somehow ones ethnicity should be of more value than another.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Sunderland City Council noted “The cost-of-living crisis which coincided with increased economic hardship and social exclusion, particularly in areas like Sunderland, has also played a significant role in fuelling resentment and division.” Likewise, some survey respondents also felt that racism exacerbated already existing socioeconomic divides in the region. These responses linked racism and community division to some areas of the North East experiencing poverty and deprivation. The division perpetuated by racism was felt to make addressing these existing problems harder. For example:

“There is a divide being created as migrants move into lower socioeconomic areas and some people who have grown up there seem to feel threatened by this, and create an us vs them mentality. This is being stoked by the media.”

“I think that it's creating further division in an area that already experiences issues such as poverty and deprivation.”

“

“It prevents us from making the most of a diverse culture, it pits us against each other which is often in the interest of those with power. The government focussing on migrants as a problem for example, shifts focus away from other areas where the government may be blamed. It means we have a lack of employees in the NHS or other industries which have traditionally been supported by migration. It puts off international students and businesses from investing in our region.”

“

The Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner also referred to the challenges of “socio-economic deprivation and lack of social and community cohesion”.

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“Lack of community cohesion, it stops working class people particularly coming together to address issues that affect them because it keeps the white working class for the white working class rather than for all ethnicities. Lack of opportunities for people who aren't white. It makes it harder to have productive conversations.”

Social isolation

Overall, respondents thought that racism had the impact of preventing people coming together across cultures, with significant impacts on people's sense of place. For example:

“[Racism] Prevents local people from coming together in the community, people feel they have to stick with their own community who they can know and trust.”

“Racism can cause people to feel isolated, unsafe, or unwelcome in their communities.”

Furthermore, these impacts have a noted impact on trust between communities:

“Racism can create distance between communities, breaking down trust and shared understanding.”

“Sense of isolation: Feeling excluded or targeted makes it harder to build a sense of belonging or trust within the community.”

10%

Nearly 10% of respondents felt that community isolation was a challenge generated by racism in the North East. 6.2% of white respondents and 12% of black and minority ethnic respondents felt this was a challenge generated by racism and Sunderland City Council reported this to be one of many factors that have led to increasing experiences of racism.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST SOCIAL ISOLATION

It was noted in some responses that people from ethnic minorities may feel greater isolation from the wider community in the North East due to relatively lower diversity compared to other regions in the country. This may be particularly harder felt in the region's smaller towns. For example:

- “One of the biggest challenges is isolation. Unlike more diverse regions, many towns in the North East lack significant representation of ethnic minorities, which can leave people feeling alone, hyper-visible, and constantly "othered.”
- “People feeling socially isolated especially in the smaller villages/communities.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST SOCIAL ISOLATION

Like other themes in the survey responses, community isolation was rarely mentioned on its own. Some responses that tied community isolation to other factors include:

“Racism can lead to a deep sense of isolation and disconnection. It creates barriers to employment, education, and social participation. People may feel pressure to downplay their cultural identity or avoid drawing attention to themselves in order to “fit in.” This affects mental health, self-esteem, and overall wellbeing.”

“This isolation is often paired with subtle, everyday racism—being followed in shops, ignored for job opportunities, or treated with suspicion in public spaces.”

Within these responses about community isolation, it was also noted that racism makes it “hard to feel a sense of belonging or community”. It was also noted that community isolation and feeling like you do not belong makes it harder to build “trust within the community”.



The summer 2024 riots

The Office of the Northumbria Police
and Crime Commissioner noted:

“

“The Summer 2024 riots in our region started in Sunderland with large scale disorder in the city centre and then mosques and places of worship were also targeted. The riots were initially believed to have been started by a number of people from outside of the area; however further analysis would suggest that in fact many of those identified are local to the area. The Sunderland riots were a direct result of false and misinformation shared on social media following the tragic murders in Southport. Statistics suggest that nationally over 40% of the those charged with offences linked to the riots were known to police as domestic abuse perpetrators. Locally there were 91 arrests in Sunderland of those, 38 were subject to a prior domestic abuse report.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

THE SUMMER 2024 RIOTS

Sunderland City Council noted that the riots have “deeply impacted local communities, with incidents including mosque attacks, racist graffiti, and abuse aimed at individuals. These events have left many ethnic minority residents feeling fearful, anxious, and hesitant to leave their homes ... we heard some very impactful stories from colleagues who were barricaded in the Mosque, fearful for their own safety, colleagues who were afraid to go to work, children frightened to school.” Whilst most of the direct issues connected with the riots were in Newcastle and Sunderland, Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner stressed that “it is worth noting however that at the time, there were understandably increased tensions and concerns right across Northumbria.” Moreover, the Office of the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner observed:

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“Fear of crime and discrimination has remained with victims long term, with many changing their daily habits and being less likely to leave their homes unaccompanied, or indeed leave their homes at all.”

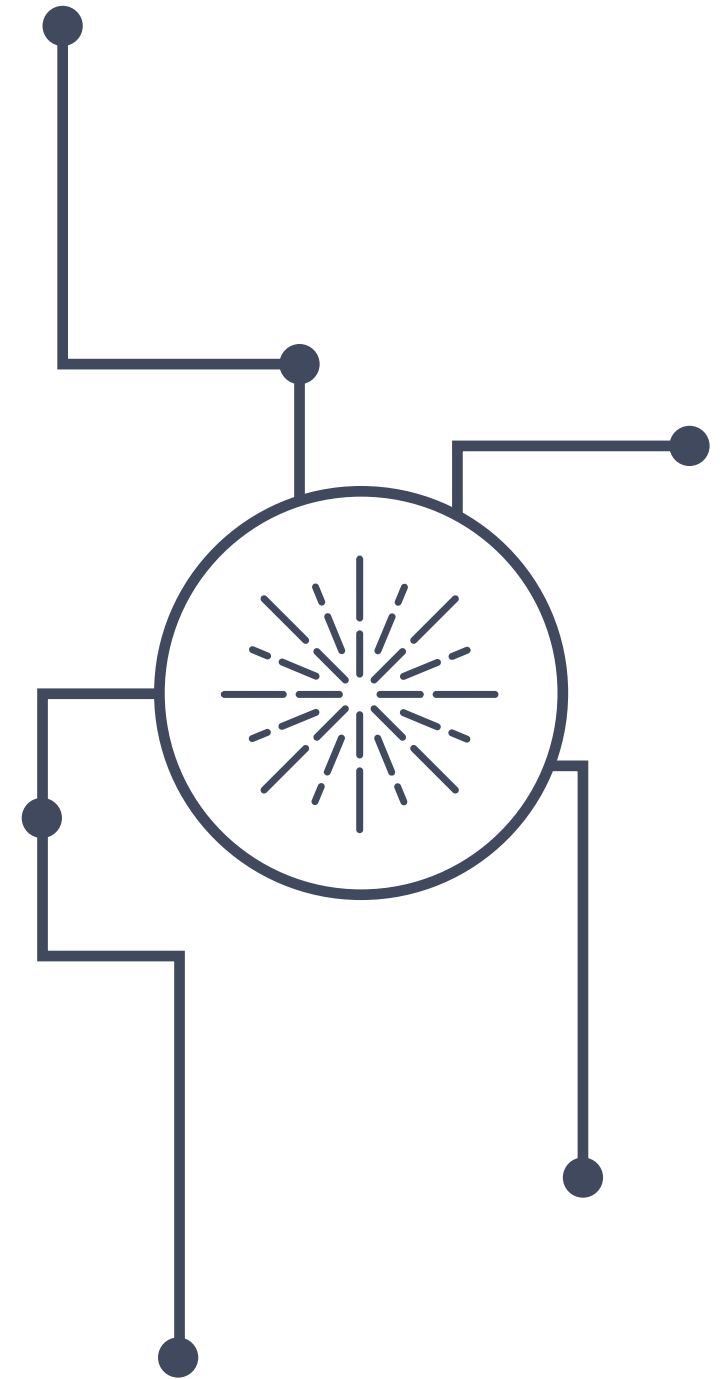
NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST THE SUMMER 2024 RIOTS

Some respondents also shared their experiences during the 2024 riots. One experience noted frequently was witnessing or being subject to racist abuse. 30% of respondents reported this experience during the riots and afterwards. This happened at work and in their children's schools. One respondent noted that their experience during "the riots made our lives as Sri Lankan British citizens worse". Importantly, it was noted that racist abuse experienced during the riots was not isolated to that period. Another respondent stated that "for Black and racially minoritised communities... They were the culmination of rising tensions, unchecked racism, and years of being ignored or dismissed by local institutions". As a result of racist abuse and instances of racist violence against places of worship, a couple of respondents reported protecting mosques.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST THE SUMMER 2024 RIOTS

As a result of experiencing racist abuse of the fear or experiencing it, many people reported staying home and 40% reported this as their experience during the riots. One stated they did not step out of their “house at all because of the fear of being targeted for having brown skin”. Another reported having to stay indoors with their family “after being verbally abused”. Further responses reported the difficulty in having to explain this isolation to children who could no longer go outside: “The only reason I didn't experience racism then was because we stayed locked up indoors in fear. I couldn't let my children out either. It was awful having to explain to them what was happening”. Similarly, other responses stated that they “vastly restricted my movements and isolated myself at home due to safety concerns especially for my young children”.

People that did leave their home remained cautious, with one respondent noting: “Myself and my family couldn't walk the street without watching our backs. We had to resort to moving around in pairs and groups. It was horrific”.



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

THE SUMMER 2024 RIOTS

In contrast to staying home, a handful of responses detailed experiences of leaving the region for safety (6%). Those who reported doing this largely did so for their children's safety, with one taking their children to a friend's house "far away from the riots". Another reported sending their family away from their family home. The Office of the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner pointed out that "for those who were new to the UK, the riots have, in some cases, fundamentally changed their view of the UK as a safe and supportive place to live."

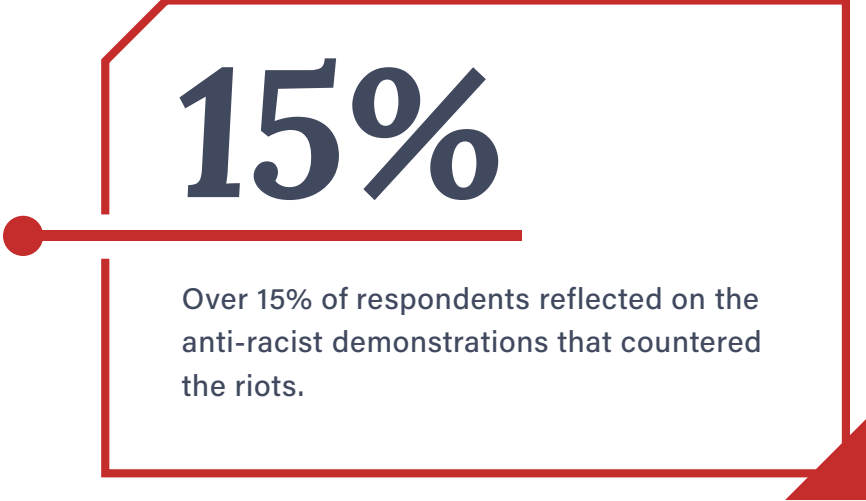


16%

For people who were working during the riots, 16% reported a poor experience from their workplace in response to the riots. They reported feeling that their workplace responses were too slow and that not enough was done to support employees who may have been targeted by the riots.

Communities coming together

Many believed “it was great to see Newcastle come out in huge numbers against racism” and that “when non-racist people stuck together it quietened the racists”. It was not just the large demonstrations of people that were mentioned. Outside of Newcastle, people were reassured in Sunderland “by the way some members of the community rallied to clean up after the riots and support others”. This was also noted in Middlesbrough where “hundreds of volunteers from all walks of life and businesses to help and clean up”. People felt pride in the region for such displays of solidarity and many felt it was a positive experience attending them. It was noted by several responses that “this showed the strength and compassion that still exists in the region”.



15%

Over 15% of respondents reflected on the anti-racist demonstrations that countered the riots.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST COMMUNITIES COMING TOGETHER

The Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner observed “notable displays of unity” given “grassroots anti-racist rallies attracted large crowds to stand in solidarity, with participants from diverse backgrounds calling for peace and justice.” Although many people felt positively about these demonstrations of solidarity, many also felt “that more needs to be done to stamp [racism] out” in the region. Additionally, it was felt that these displays must come with change. For example, “it was heartwarming to see the counterprotests, but we need more white people recognising their role in calling out racist behaviour”.

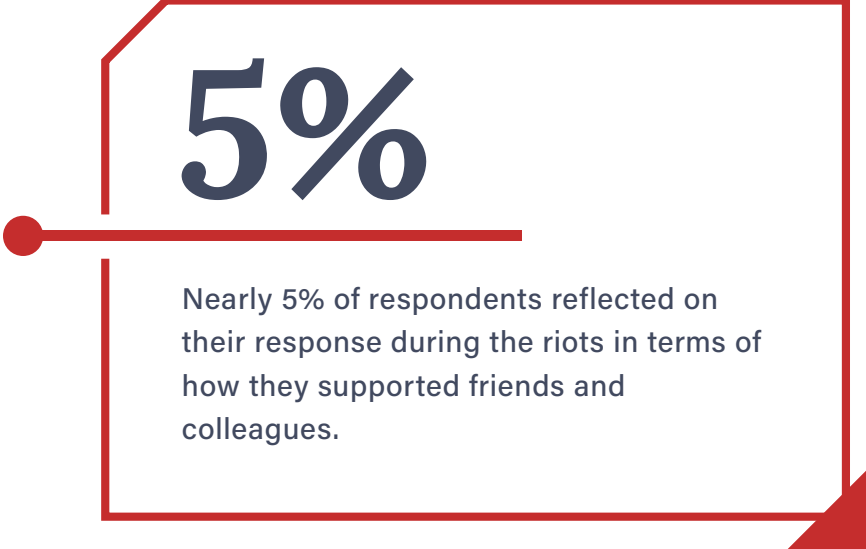
Likewise, the Office of the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner observed that “there has been evidence of communities coming together to support each other. In the days following the riots many residents of all diversities were involved in the clean-up operation, with many feeling very strongly that they wanted to demonstrate to people of colour that Cleveland was not a racist place.” It was also noted that victim support services were proactive and the OPCC provided support through the “Riot Compensation Scheme, through facilitated workshops for claimants.” Furthermore, they noted that “Partnership working in Middlesbrough in particular was very effective in agencies coming together to work collectively to tackle the aftermath of the disorder.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST COMMUNITIES COMING TOGETHER

One person drove their colleague home who didn't feel safe because of the riots, and another looked after colleagues who were too afraid to go to work. A staff member at a university reported providing lifts to and from a work placement for a student living in halls of residence. Additionally, respondents noted providing support for friends who were troubled by the events of the riots.

Despite some pride in the region for displays of solidarity, around 5% of respondents noted their response to the riots as being one of shame. People reported that "it made me feel ashamed to be from the North East and from the UK". One person from Hartlepool reported being ashamed their hometown "was one of the first places that the riots broke out". Some felt shame at the fact that the North East was getting national attention because of the riots and felt it was "very sad for the region to be portrayed in this way".



5%

Nearly 5% of respondents reflected on their response during the riots in terms of how they supported friends and colleagues.

The impacts of the riots

The Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner outlined the following impacts from the summer 2024 riots:

PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

Our insights suggest that many black and minoritised individuals report heightened feelings of unsafety in their lives. This includes increased anxiety and a reluctance to engage in normal activities such as using public transport, visiting shops, or attending community events. Contributing to a breakdown in community cohesion. Months after the riots, many individuals reported persistent fear, sleep disturbances and a sense of being unwelcome in public spaces. This was particularly acute among children and young people. The psychological toll manifested in increased demand for support, counselling and mental health services.

TARGETED VIOLENCE

In the immediate aftermath of the riots some mosques in Northumbria were vandalised or targeted with hate graffiti and physical attacks, especially during prayer times. Leaving people fearful of attending.

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

THE IMPACTS OF THE RIOTS

ALTERED ROUTINES

People told us they adapted by avoiding certain areas, changing travel routes, not attending work or critical medical appointments as well as limiting outings after dark. Parents reported keeping children home from school or not attending community centres to reduce exposure to potential violence.

COMMUNITY COHESION

The riots in the summer of 2024 led to deepened racial and community divisions in North East towns like Sunderland. Many pre-existing interracial and interfaith partnerships, often spearheaded by voluntary and community groups, experienced escalated tensions, as some local groups, charities and their volunteers felt isolated, threatened and unsafe in the aftermath.

SERVICE DISRUPTION

Community organisations, particularly those supporting migrants and refugees, had to suspend in-person activities or close entirely for safety. This disrupted access to essential services like legal aid, language classes and mental health support; with some service users reluctant to engage at the time and continuing to be worried even after the riots and disorder subsided. Some groups managed to continue their work online, but digital exclusion meant vulnerable individuals were left without support during a critical period."

Addressing racism

Survey participants were asked to share their ideas about what they think works when it comes to addressing racism. The most popular responses included:

Events that celebrate diversity – examples referred to include events like the Mela, forum theatre (for white people to learn how to call out racism), cultural information/exploration in schools, and other such events that bring people together and generate conversations across difference.

Attending to the media sharing misinformation – the focus here was on the strong sense that the sharing of misinformation needed to be stopped, and that the media should focus less on ethnicity if not relevant to the crime. Some also suggested that there should be serious ramifications for misuse of social media with others still arguing that the benefits of immigration need to be discussed and promoted.

Zero tolerance approaches - this was about being open and outspoken, about not covering up racism, about having robust systems for reporting, consequences for the media misreporting and misrepresenting issues, and harsher sentences on perpetrators.

In addition to this, responses also mentioned using a shared humanity approach, tackling wealth inequalities, using education to counter prejudices as well as focusing on politicians, schooling and multi-agency working.

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ADDRESSING RACISM

Examples of the kinds of activities, events, or initiatives mentioned in responses included:



LOCAL INITIATIVES

Education on ethnicity and celebrating and learning about cultures; community Iftars and events; inter-cultural and inter-faith gatherings



ACTION BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Active responses via email to challenge racism; offer safe space to colleagues; call it out in conversations



TRAINING

Local writing group for people from all backgrounds; Learning how to safely challenge negative myths and stereotypes; anti-racism training at work

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST ADDRESSING RACISM

Those submitting written responses to our call for evidence also pointed to several steps they are taking to address racism. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland noted that “Tackling hate crime is a key priority for the Police and Crime Commissioner in his Police and Crime Plan” and observed that:

“Following the riots a workshop was held with the community and partners to scope appetite for creating a Cleveland Strategic Hate Crime Partnership. This was wholeheartedly supported, and the partnership now meets quarterly, chaired by the PCC with a community member acting as Vice Chair.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST ADDRESSING RACISM

Membership of the group includes OPCC, Police, Housing, Local Authority, Fire, CPS, Probation, Youth Offending, VCSE sector (through Voluntary Development Agencies), community representatives (through Independent Advisory Groups chairs).

The partnership focuses on raising awareness about hate crime, preventing it through education and early intervention, tackling it through effective enforcement and through improving the support to victims. The Partnership wants to focus on measuring success through increasing reports – raising awareness, reducing repeat victims, and increasing positive outcomes.



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

ADDRESSING RACISM

Northumbria Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner referred to their Commissioners Community Fund (which committed £100,000 to communities following the riots), their increased capacity in victim support services, and their Specialist Hate Crime Support Services as well as community engagement and enhanced Reporting Centre. They also recommended several steps be taken to overcome racism:

SUPPORT FOR GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

that foster integration, celebrate diversity and provide safe spaces for dialogue and support. This will help build bridges between communities, fostering integration and a sense of belonging. Empowering communities to design and develop their own initiatives that are appropriate for their local needs will result in more relevant, successful and sustainable outcomes.

Recommendations

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

disrupts myths and misinformation, leading to more positive attitudes towards diversity. Awareness campaigns equip individuals and communities with the skills to recognise, resist and respond to hate speech and discrimination.

IMPROVED REPORTING MECHANISMS AND REFERRALS TO SUPPORT

Accessible and trusted systems encourage victims and witnesses to come forward, leading to more accurate data on hate incidents. Effective services provide emotional, legal and practical assistance, aiding recovery and empowerment.

Recommendations

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

involving those most affected by racism ensures that interventions are relevant and responsive to real needs. Regular consultation and feedback also builds confidence in institutions and fosters a sense of shared ownership over solutions.

CORPORATE COMMITMENT

Continued efforts to address unconscious bias and increase diversity in public services leads to fairer treatment and outcomes. Diverse leadership and staff in institutions improve decision-making and reflect the communities they serve.

Recommendations

Connected Voice also made several useful suggestions including working with white communities to address racism, the importance of sharing solutions, the need for additional learning, including supporting staff to be trauma informed, and the need to support people and to provide information about how to report incidents. It was suggested that funding is needed to cover the costs that are currently borne by volunteers and that funds should support empowerment of individuals. It was also noted that “people wanted funding to improve the physical security and add CCTV to community centre and buildings” and funding to support “community groups with wellbeing and resilience activities” would be useful.

ADDRESS MISINFORMATION

Rapid and robust response to misinformation and hate speech, particularly online and in the media, with clear communication from trusted leaders. Swift action against false or hateful content reduces its impact and reach, especially online. Clear, accurate communication from trusted leaders’ counters fear and confusion, reinforcing social cohesion.”

NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

ADDRESSING RACISM

Sunderland City Council reported on several initiatives including a Youth Engagement & Community Healing Project, strengthening Interfaith collaboration, Community Gardens Project, Community Sports Days, Conflict Awareness & Civic Mediation Programme, Intergenerational Community Food Project with Sunderland College, social enterprise in Schools, Headteachers and School leaders conference, and other community engagement initiatives. Sunderland City Council also noted that “local authorities and the NHS should enforce a zero-tolerance approach to racism”, and that:

“

“we need to focus on what we have in common rather than continuously talk about our differences. We need to facilitate opportunities for people from different background to come together in a non-threatening environment. We need safe spaces for people to talk without being labelled, to explore differences and create understanding between and amongst communities. This approach will hopefully break down barriers and help people appreciate the value we can bring to a town/city no matter where we come from.”



NEARC | RACISM IN THE NORTHEAST

ADDRESSING RACISM

WWIN's Findaway team made the point that it was important to be "active bystanders", to speak "out against discrimination" and to promote inclusion by "building connections across different communities, listening to lived experiences, and supporting local anti-racist initiatives". They emphasised the importance of organisations being accountable and the need for "meaningful public education". They also noted:

“

“Policymakers and public institutions must take responsibility for challenging and regulating harmful narratives that fuel racism. Stronger policies are needed to hold social media platforms and news outlets accountable for spreading misinformation, hate speech, and racially charged content. Regulatory frameworks should require these platforms to remove or flag harmful content quickly and transparently, while promoting accurate and inclusive representation. The contributions of migrants must be publicly acknowledged and celebrated to counter scapegoating. Political empowerment must also be prioritised so that communities can better understand the root causes of social issues and actively participate in shaping solutions through democratic processes. Lastly, regeneration and investment must be inclusive and equitable, ensuring that development benefits not only city centres but also marginalised communities. Together, these structural changes can foster a more cohesive, empowered, and anti-racist society.”





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NEARC REPORT

Racism in the North East

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To cite this report:

Hopkins, Peter, Elaydi, Amar, Smith, Heather and Szkwarok, Renzo, (2026) Towards antiracist futures: exposing racism in the North East. Newcastle University: North East Anti-Racism Coalition.

Written submissions to the call for evidence

Angelou Centre

Connected Voice

WWIN's Findaway team

International Community Organisation of Sunderland

Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner

Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland

Represent Women

Sunderland City Council.

Racism in the North East



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