

Study shows some black men face discrimination on a weekly basis

August 24 2016, by Jared Wadley

Others being afraid of you as you walk by. Shopping in a store and being followed by an employee. Being verbally assaulted with racist words or threatened.

These are instances of "everyday discrimination" that are experienced by a broad cross-section of black men. According to a new University of Michigan study, black men who have had contact with the [criminal justice](#) system are especially likely to report these events, including the more severe examples of everyday discrimination.

The majority of research on discrimination against black men—both in general and among those who have had contact with the criminal justice system—focuses on what are termed "major" occurrences, such as being unfairly fired from a job, denied bank loans, or being stopped and harassed by police or security personnel.

Everyday discrimination, in contrast, represents less overt forms of intolerance and [unfair treatment](#) (e.g., being treated with less respect) that occur during commonplace social encounters.

"Everyday discrimination represents less serious forms of discrimination but are still common and impactful on individuals," said Robert Joseph Taylor, the Harold R. Johnson Professor of Social Work and the study's lead author.

Taylor and colleagues used data from the Institute for Social Research's

Survey Research Center along with the Program for Research on Black Americans. A national sample which included more than 1,200 African-American men answered questions about everyday discrimination from February 2001 to June 2003.

The men included those who have never been arrested, those who have been arrested but not incarcerated, and those who had a previous history of criminal justice intervention and incarceration (i.e., reform school, detention, jail or prison). Instances of everyday discrimination included: being treated with less courtesy, perceived as not smart, being perceived as dishonest, being insulted and being threatened or harassed.

About 1 in 5 black men reported that people acted as if they were better than them on a daily or weekly basis. Roughly 10 percent reported that people acted as if they were afraid of them, they were treated with less courtesy or they were seen as not smart on a daily or weekly basis.

Another significant finding revealed that 1 in 10 black men said they encountered physical or psychological threats at least a few times a year.

Black men who had contact with the criminal justice system were more likely to report various types and more serious forms of discrimination compared to those who have not been involved in the criminal justice system, Taylor said. For the former group, this could pose other problems, especially in situations in which they are threatened or harassed.

"These more serious types of discrimination are important because they could potentially escalate to verbal or physical altercations or other problem behaviors that could potentially result in being remanded to custody, particularly for violations of probation or parole," said Taylor, who also directs the Program for Research on Black Americans at the Institute for Social Research.

Across the board, younger [black men](#) reported more instances of everyday discrimination than did older men. Further, in several instances, criminal justice contact did not predict instances of everyday discrimination.

Irrespective of whether they had contact with the criminal [justice system](#), African-American men experienced comparable types of unfair treatment in terms of others perceiving themselves as better, experiencing less courtesy, and receiving less respect, Taylor said.

Taylor collaborated with Reuben Miller, U-M assistant professor of [social work](#); Dawne Mouzon, assistant professor at Rutgers University; Verna Keith, professor at Texas A&M University; and Linda Chatters, U-M professor of social work and public health.

The findings will appear in a future issue of the scientific journal *Race and Justice*.

Provided by University of Michigan

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