

COVID lockdowns exacerbated racist policing in the UK, say experts

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The nationwide coronavirus lockdowns and enhancement of police powers have disproportionately harmed communities of color, according

to a new briefing paper by the Center on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) at The University of Manchester.

[A Collision of Crises: Racism, Policing and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[shows that in response to the](#)

[pandemic](#), the UK government introduced unprecedented police powers under the Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations and the Coronavirus Act (2020). But according to CoDE, the policing of the pandemic reflects historical patterns, resulting in the greatest impact on racially minoritised communities, with new police powers adding to and exacerbating pre-existing forms of racist policing.

"The last year has seen the crisis in policing meet and interact with the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic," said lead author Dr. Scarlet Harris, Research Associate at CoDE. "Emerging research findings point to the dangers of further empowering [police forces](#) in this context, and to the impact on racially minoritised communities in particular. This briefing paper sets the scene for our full report, which will be published in July."

A Collision of Crises is part of CoDE's ongoing study from the perspective of people 'policed' during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on in-depth online research conversations with racially minoritised individuals, the research asks what the current context means for those at the sharp end of policing in England and Wales.

Racial disparities are evident in official data on the use of force, stop and search, Fixed Penalty Notices and the enforcement of Section 60, as highlighted in widespread media reports of excessive policing across public settings. Campaigners have expressed concern that the widespread misinterpretation and misuse of Schedule 21 has so far had a disproportionate impact on Black and minoritised individuals.

Despite a drop in [crime rates](#) as the first lockdown came into effect, stop and search practices 'surged,' more than doubling in May 2021 compared with the previous year, while a staggering 21,950 searches of young Black men took place in London during the first period of lockdown. Black people in London were 'up to over 11 times' more likely to be stopped than white people.

"Although the briefing paper gives an insight into the racist patterns of the policing of the pandemic, the full report will look beyond the statistics and will draw on first person accounts from people of color to consider the harm and trauma caused by policing. These experiences cast serious doubt on the extent to which the policing of the pandemic has been in the interest of public health," Dr. Scarlet Harris, Research Associate at CoDE.

More information: Collision of Crises: Racism, policing, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/projects/CoDE

[%20Briefings/Runnymede%20CoDE%20A%20Collision%20of%20Crises%20FINAL.pdf](#)

Provided by University of Manchester

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