

# EXPERIENCES OF RACISM IN SCOTLAND'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

COALITION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY  
AND RIGHTS, AUGUST 2023



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A word cloud containing various negative emotional and descriptive terms such as: **Dominated**, **Grounding**, **Hurt**, **Profiled**, **Extreme**, **Disrespected**, **Insulted**, **Used**, **Upset**, **Othered**, **Alone**, **Racist**, **Embarrassing**, **Shaken**, **Offended**, **Fear**, **Racist**, **Embarrassed**, **Rejected**, **Fear**, **Othered**, **Aggression**, **Embarrassed**, **Humiliated**, **Bad**, **Bittered**, **Trauma**, **Racist**, **Alien**, **Upset**, **Punished**, **Fear**, **Uneasy**, **Shit**, **Used**, **Alien**, **Didn't belong**, **Exposed**, **Worried**, **Scared**, **Bittered**, **Shaken**, **Awful**, **Confused**, **Worried**, **Race**, **Unwelcome**, **Weak**, **Uncomfortable**, **Bad**, **Left out**, **Weak**, **Race**, **Hurt**, **Jaded**, **Injured**, **Phased**, **Othered**, **Racist**, **Bittered**, **Unhappy**, **Humiliated**, **Exposed**, **Less**, **Insulted**, **Alien**, **Profiled**, **Upset**, **Shaken**, **Raging**, **At fault**, **Disregarded**, **Weak**, **Threatened**, **Race**, **Unwelcom**, **Depression**, **Rejected**, **Anxious**, **Isolating**, **Race**, **Left out**, **Worried**, **Sad**, **Racist**, **Othered**, **Alien**, **Segregated**, **Jaded**, **Shit**, **Discriminated against**, **Profiled**, **Left out**, **Worried**, **Different**, **Fear**, **Uneasy**, **Shaken**, **At fault**, **Fear**, **Disgusted**, **Used**, **Sad**, **Confused**, **Used**, **Shit**, **Frustrated**, **Bad**, **Worried**, **Anxious**, **Alien**, **Left out**, **Shocked**, **Visible**, **Wrong**, **Raging shit**, **Weak**, **Bad**, **Disregarded**, **Weak**, **Threatened**, **Race**, **Unwelcom**, **Assaulted**, **Alone**, **Powerless**, **Wrong**, **Ruined**, **Sad**, **Ruined**, **Extreme**, **Aggression**, **Bad**, **Sad**, **Hurt**, **Less**, **Bad**, **Shocked**, **Powerless**, **Scared**, **Used**, **Less**, **At fault**, **Less**, **Disrespected**, **Angry**, **Disregarded**, **Different**, **Wrong**, **Jaded**, **Upset**, **Embarrassing**, **Uncomfortable**, **At fault**, **Race**, **Abused**, **Fear**, **Discriminated against**, **Jaded**, **Hurt**, **Repressed**, **Assaulted**, **Injured**, **Cried**, **Vulnerable**, **Punished**, **Awful**, **Annoyed**, **Disrespected**, **Powerless**, **Awful**, **Abused**, **At fault**, **Visible**, **Dominated**, **Shaken**, **Silenced**, **Weak**, **Aggression**, **Hurt**, **Isolating**, **Disgusted**, **Alien**, **Angry**, **Upset**, **Race**, **Punished**, **Used**, **Fear**, **Depression**, **Shit**, **Reprimanded**, **Threatened**, **Shame**, **Insulted**, **Alien**, **Less vulnerable**, **Used**, **Raging**, **Reprimanded**, **Violated**, **Sad**, **Raging**, **Silenced**, **Shit**, **Unwanted**, **Threatened**, **Violated**, **Jaded**, **Abused**, **Unwanted**, **Injured**, **Bad**, **Uneasy**, **Unwanted**, **Dominated**, **Grounding**, **Hurt**, **Unwanted**, **Extreme**, **Extremely**, **Extreme**, **Disrespected**, **Insulted**, **Used**, **Upset**, **Othered**, **Alone**, **Racist**, **Embarrassing**, **Shaken**, **Offended**, **Fear**, **Racist**, **Embarrassed**, **Rejected**, **Fear**, **Othered**, **Aggression**, **Embarrassed**, **Humiliated**, **Bad**, **Bittered**, **Trauma**, **Racist**, **Alien**, **Upset**, **Punished**, **Fear**, **Uneasy**, **Shit**, **Used**, **Alien**, **Upset**, **Racist**, **Shit**, **Shit**, **Used**, **Alien**

## Who We Are

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is a Scottish anti-racist organisation which focuses on helping to eliminate racial discrimination and harassment and promote racial justice.

CRER's key mission is to:

- Protect, enhance and promote the rights of Black / minority ethnic communities across all areas of life in Scotland; and
- Strengthen the social, economic and political capital of Black / minority ethnic communities, especially those at greatest risk of disadvantage.

CRER takes a rights-based approach, promoting relevant international, regional and national human rights and equality conventions and legislation.

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CRER is a charity registered in Scotland (SC029007).



## Foreword

This research project set out to illuminate a significant and under-researched area of racial discrimination in Scotland in a meaningful way by uncovering the realities of racism in Scotland's night-time economy. We sincerely thank everyone who participated in our observational research, focus groups and survey for sharing their experiences, which, for many, were painful to recount.

CRER did not undertake this research lightly. We set out to honour what our research participants have shared when interpreting and writing about their stories.

Please be aware that this report contains real-life experiences of racism and discrimination, which may be distressing to read. We would encourage people who have experienced racism to prioritise their wellbeing when reading about these experiences.

Please note, throughout this report, we use the collective term of Black and minority ethnic to describe those from racially minoritised backgrounds. While we recognise the limitations of this terminology, as it can risk homogenising different communities and ignoring the significant diversity between individual ethnic groups, our use of the term reflects the specific impacts of racism and the shared experience of those who face it; people from groups that have been negatively racialised.

However, where possible, we have been specific about the community we are referring to and the identity an individual has defined themselves as.

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A full list of references has been provided at the end of this report.



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## Introduction

Bars, nightclubs and music venues play a key role in Scotland's social, cultural and economic landscape, providing employment, entertainment, social spaces, and a sense of community and belonging to many.

These spaces occupy a sector known as the night-time economy, which generally describes economic activity taking place after many people finish daytime employment or education and includes bars, nightclubs, cafes, restaurants, retail, cinemas, theatres, concerts and some parts of the transport sector. In Scottish towns and cities, these businesses account for 9% of employment and serve as a key driver of tourism and business growth whilst also providing essential spaces for people to socialise and enjoy a range of leisure activities, including live music, dancing, and social drinking.<sup>1</sup>

However, despite the significance of the Scottish '*night out*' as a key aspect of social life, access to these spaces and activities is not always equal.

For some time, CRER has been aware of anecdotal evidence suggesting that Black and minority ethnic people face numerous barriers to their enjoyment of and participation in the night-time economy, largely due to the cumulative effects of systemic, cultural, and interpersonal racism.

This can lead to Black and minority ethnic people being subject to racist abuse, discrimination and harassment from both service providers, such as bar staff and security personnel, and other people participating in the night-time economy. This exclusionary behaviour works to undermine their sense of belonging, weakening their ties to local communities and denying them the full experience of Scotland's nightlife.

Despite the significance of these issues in Scotland, existing research and literature on equality issues within UK-based night-time economies has either focused on English geographies or neglected the experiences of service users, focusing instead on those employed in the hospitality and transport sectors.<sup>2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</sup> A notable exception to this trend is Forsyth's 2010 paper on young people's experiences of the night-time economy in Glasgow, although this lacked any analysis on race.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, this report aims to shed light on this significant yet under-researched issue and present first-of-its-kind data on the nature and extent of racism within Scotland's night-time economy.



## Sources and Methodology

This research draws from a range of sources to understand the nature and extent of racism within Scotland's night-time economy. This includes extensive desk-based research, media analysis, and a fieldwork-based observational research exercise within Glasgow's city centre.

In addition to this, we consulted a range of people with lived experience as targets and witnesses of racism within Scotland's night-time economy via a range of methods, including:

- A survey-based call for evidence
- A series of semi-structured focus groups
- An analysis of online reviews of Glasgow's licensed premises

Throughout this report, we directly quote a number of those involved in this consultation process, including some responses provided by establishments facing allegations of racism and racially prejudiced differential treatment.

To differentiate where these references originate, we use a colour-coded system to group quotes by their source:



While we have taken steps to redact any information that might make people and businesses identifiable, some of the experiences discussed may be traceable to sources within the public domain. CRER does not intend to make any allegations about businesses or individuals and accepts no responsibility for any information that can be traced back to them.

Ultimately, the findings of this report and the image we paint of racism in Scotland's night-time economy have been directly informed by the views, sentiments, and experiences of over 200 people\* from a range of ethnic backgrounds, age groups, and geographies in Scotland.

We hope that this research provides a platform for these voices and highlights a systemic issue that, despite decades of anecdotal evidence, is only now being explored in a research setting.

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\* A full breakdown on the number and characteristics of those consulted can be found in the appendices.





## Racism in Scotland

The term 'racism' is often poorly understood. Racism is a complex and fluid issue, expanding far beyond a distrust or dislike of a particular group of people because of their colour, nationality and ethnic origins.<sup>11</sup>

Racism in Scotland is structural, meaning that it operates across different levels of life – personal, social and institutional. Because of this, racism can become a significant part of Black and minority ethnic people's everyday lives, affecting their work, education, social activity, and physical and mental health.<sup>12</sup> This everyday racism works to silence and demean minority ethnic people in Scotland and reinforce the inequalities they face.

Because racism is deeply ingrained and naturalised within Scotland's cultural and socio-economic infrastructure, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping have become common practice. Therefore, it is important to recognise that someone doesn't have to feel openly hostile towards people from a minority ethnic group to have racist attitudes or act in a racist way.

**22% of people in Scotland feel that there is sometimes a good reason to be prejudiced against certain groups<sup>a</sup>**

**Black and minority ethnic people are twice as likely to experience poverty than those from a white Scottish/British background<sup>b</sup>**

For instance, when people pass judgements and make decisions based on racist stereotypes, they reduce Black and minority ethnic people to one-dimensional caricatures formed around how they expect them to think or behave rather than seeing them as individuals.

This leads to Black and minority ethnic people being treated differently throughout their everyday lives in Scotland and can expose them to more overt forms of discrimination, such as violence, abuse and harassment.

**Racial hate crime remains the most reported hate crime in Scotland, with 3,145 charges reported in 2022-23, meaning that there was an average of more than eight charges being made per day<sup>c</sup>**

Ultimately, someone's experience of racism is not about their ethnicity or appearance but about other people's perceptions of those traits and stereotypes that impact that perception.



## Racism on a Night Out

Racism takes many forms in Scotland; however, in the context of a night out, it typically ranges from subtle, indirect expressions of bias, tokenism, and stereotyping to more severe acts of overt racist violence and harassment.

When expressed by both service users and providers within the night-time economy, these behaviours work to perpetuate and entrench racial prejudice within the cultures of Scottish nightlife. Such that, they begin to inform the policies and practices of businesses and decision-makers, allowing racism to become a systemic, structural force.

This, ultimately, leads to Black and minority ethnic people being more likely to have deeply negative and harmful experiences when engaging with a significant and prominent part of Scottish urban culture.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of some of the most prominent forms of racial discrimination and prejudice within the night-time economy, shedding light on the scenarios in which they occur and the systemic failures that allow racism to thrive.

To achieve this, we have identified six distinct ways through which Black and minority ethnic people often experience racism in Scotland's night-time economy:

**Hate Crime and Racist Violence**

**Policing the Door and the Dancefloor**

**Microaggression and Racial Insensitivity**

**Tokenism and 'Positive' Stereotypes**

**Differences in the Quality of Service**

**Leaky Policy, Floodgate Practice**



## Hate Crime and Racist Violence

Racial discrimination can occur anywhere and at any time; however, those participating in the night-time economy are disproportionately exposed to some of the most overt expressions of racism.

Data from the Scottish Government reveals that over half of racist incidents occur on the weekend, with spikes in the late hours of the night and the early hours of the morning, meaning that the peak occurrence of racist incidents directly coincides with the main operating hours of the night-time economy.<sup>13</sup>

While some of this can be explained by the sheer volume of people mingling in Scotland's urban centres during a night out, the prevalence of hate and racially aggravated crime<sup>†</sup> cannot be decoupled from the effects of alcohol, which plays a central role in Scotland's largely drinking-based night-time economy.

Alcohol-related intoxication is believed to aggravate underlying prejudice,<sup>14</sup> contributing to increasingly direct expressions of hate and racist violence. According to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, alcohol is involved in 44% of violent crimes in Scotland,<sup>15</sup> with the figure rising to 60% of offences by young people.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it comes as little surprise that the occurrence of hate incidents syncs up with the peak activity of Scotland's alcohol-centred night-time economy.

The prominence of these issues can cause some Black and minority ethnic groups to feel unsafe when staying out late into the night. For instance, the 2021 Scottish Household Survey found that 24% of Black and minority ethnic respondents felt unsafe walking alone in the dark, compared to 14% of white Scottish respondents.<sup>17</sup> This means that some Black and minority ethnic people are actively discouraged from participating in Scotland's night-time economy due to concerns over their safety and well-being.

**“I would never walk back. Not at night. When other people are fuelled with alcohol, that's when the trouble starts - it frightens me.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Pakistani heritage**

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<sup>†</sup> [Hate crime](#) describes behaviours and actions that are both criminal and rooted in prejudice. They can take a number of forms, including, but not limited to threatening behaviour, verbal abuse or insults, assault, property damage, harassment, and encouraging others to commit hate crimes.



These concerns are not unfounded either, as there have been several high-profile incidents of racist violence towards minority ethnic people during - and when returning from - nights out. For example, in 2010, Pankaj Rawat, a 21-year-old Indian man, was assaulted by a group of white men in Edinburgh while returning home from a night out.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in 2022, a Black woman and her friend were physically assaulted and hurled with racist abuse during a night out in Glasgow until security from a nearby nightclub intervened.<sup>19</sup>

Non-physical violence, such as hate speech<sup>‡</sup> and verbal harassment, also represents a significant issue for Black and minority ethnic people participating in the night-time economy.

For instance, many of the responses to CRER's public call for evidence described experiences of being heckled with racist insults and abuse when inside licensed premises and when returning home after a night out.

**"Someone called me a ch\*nk."**

**- Survey Respondent, Scottish Chinese heritage**

**"I was called "Baljeet" and other stereotypical Indian names when I entered the club."**

**- Survey Respondent, Indian heritage**

**"I was called "Corona" by two white boys yelling at me on a busy street."**

**- Survey Respondent, Malaysian Chinese heritage**

Experiences like these can have long-lasting, negative effects on people's mental health, limiting their ability to go about their daily lives without fear, anxiety and trauma and, ultimately, discouraging them from participating in Scotland's night-time economy.

**"I don't use buses anymore. If I go out, I just take a taxi back home just to avoid anything and anyone. That's my way of life now."**

**- Focus Group Participant, African heritage**

<sup>‡</sup> [Hate speech](#) generally describes communications which support or encourage violence, hatred or discrimination against people or groups because of their identities.





## **Policing the Door and the Dancefloor**

In addition to the risk of violence, hate crime and verbal abuse, Black and minority ethnic people can also have their experiences of Scotland's night-time economy undermined by other forms of direct discrimination, such as racist exclusion and disproportionate, selective policing.

Evidence suggests that Black and minority ethnic people are treated with greater suspicion and authoritativeness by security personnel when trying to gain entry to bars, nightclubs, and other premises associated with the night-time economy.<sup>20 21</sup> This can range from being singled out from a queue for questioning and security searches to being denied entry, often without a given reason or with inconsistent reasoning.

**“Only the white folk were allowed in. All groups of our Asian/Black/mixed friends were denied entry.”**

**- Survey Respondent, White Scottish heritage**

**“They turned me away because I was ‘too drunk’ – I don’t even drink alcohol [because of my faith].”**

**- Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

One cause of this is the widespread normalisation of racist stereotypes within Scottish nightlife culture, which can contribute to a pattern of racial profiling by door supervisors and security personnel.<sup>22 23</sup>

When bouncers expect those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds to behave or act in a certain manner because of generalisations based on their ethnicity, this can affect their admission decisions and how they conduct themselves during their work. For instance, when racist stereotypes associate people from Black ethnic backgrounds with drug dealing, gang violence, and other criminal and problematic behaviours, this can lead to them being treated with undue suspicion and surveillance, increased physical searches, and a greater likelihood of being denied entry.<sup>24 25</sup>



**“It’s almost like they’re looking for a reason to not let you in or to deny you the same type of service that everyone else is getting.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Black Caribbean and White Mixed heritage**

**“I thought it might be the way we were dressed [...] but I think it was racism and racial profiling, perhaps [they viewed] Pakistanis as troublesome?”**

**– Survey Respondent, Pakistani heritage**

Bouncers and door supervisors are trained to base their admission decisions on a ‘Dynamic Risk Assessment’ to determine how someone might behave within a venue and towards other patrons, especially after sustained drinking.

These assessments intend to scrutinise potential customers against venue policies, such as dress code or group-size regulations, principles from security training,<sup>26</sup> and the door supervisor’s personal judgement. However, their decision is ultimately subjective, leaving room for racial bias and prejudice to influence their admission decisions and their treatment of Black and minority ethnic patrons.

Despite the innate subjectivity of admission decisions, research conducted by Wicks in 2021 found that some door staff within UK-based nightlife scenes believed their decisions were based entirely on objectivity and logic, such that they remained honest about their exclusion of minority ethnic groups.<sup>27</sup> When interviewed, bouncers cited crime statistics, sensationalised media reports, and extrapolated and generalised observations based on previous encounters with Black and minority ethnic customers. Some bouncers also suggested that certain Black cultural expressions were inherently problematic, stating that ‘Black dancing’ and ‘Black attitudes’ were potential causes of conflict between customers and risked breaching the peace.

This alludes to a wider working culture within the security industry which perceives and treats Black and minority ethnic people as disproportionate aggressors, criminals and breachers of the peace, ultimately leading to a racialised pattern of disproportionate and selective policing.<sup>28</sup>



During our research, we found extensive evidence of this in Scotland, with many survey respondents and focus group participants providing their own accounts of being selectively policed by venue policies and treated with undue aggression and authoritativeness by security personnel.

**“Out of everyone in the queue, I was the only person to get pulled aside and fully searched and patted down. Didn't seem so random to me.”**

**– Survey Respondent, Black Caribbean and White Mixed heritage**

**“If they [their child] are with their white friends, they get let in. If they're with a group of Asians, there are always extra checks. You know – *‘Oh, you're wearing trainers like everyone else? We're not gonna let you in!’*”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Pakistani heritage**

**“All of a sudden, one huge bouncer with two others standing close behind, slammed this [Black] man onto the hood of a parked car and started beating him up, kicking and punching him to and on the floor [...] In my clubbing lifetime, I've never seen anything like it, so it seems only too likely that the aggression was so extreme as a result of the man's race.”**

**– Survey Respondent, White British heritage**

**“These two lads started squaring up, and I diffused the situation. A few moments later we were approached by a bouncer who said I wasn't getting in, having identified me as being aggressive.”**

**– Survey Respondent, Sri Lankan Scottish heritage**

Experiences like these highlight the extent to which the approaches to security used in the night-time economy have redeployed the same systemically racist practices used by other forms of public and private policing. When interacting with bouncers and security personnel, Black and minority ethnic people can find themselves being treated as suspicious, dangerous, and as though they are out of place, leading to their ill-treatment within and exclusion from Scotland's night-time economy.



## Microaggression and Racial Insensitivity

Racism can also take more subtle, indirect forms within Scotland's night-time economy.

Due to poor racial literacy and a lack of community cohesion within wider Scottish society, some of the spaces and sub-cultures within the night-time economy can harbour deep-rooted cultures of racial insensitivity, making them hostile and alienating environments for Black and minority ethnic people trying to enjoy a night out.

This racial insensitivity can often take the form of microaggressions – statements, behaviours and actions interpreted as indirect, subtle, or sometimes unintentional discrimination towards a minority group.

These 'casual' or 'everyday' forms of racism work to emphasise Black and minority ethnic people's supposed difference from majority ethnic customers, who are seen as 'normal' in comparison to 'other' 'diverse' groups.

For some Black and minority ethnic people, it has become entirely commonplace to have their identities directly questioned by other customers and those working within the night-time economy, further emphasising their perceived difference from the wider crowd. This often takes the form of complete strangers commenting on and interrogating their ethnic origins and remaining unsatisfied when given an answer that doesn't highlight their racial differences from the majority ethnic population.

“[A man] walked up to me and asked me what race I was [...] I said I'm from London [and] he started shouting at me, asking if I was half Chinese and demanding that I had to tell him.”

– Survey Respondent, White and Indo Fijian Mixed heritage

“I said I'm from Scotland and he [another customer] replied saying 'you are not from here.'”

– Survey Respondent, Scottish Arab heritage

For others, it has become routine to have aspects of their identities openly mocked by door supervisors during ID checks, with bouncers making





derogatory comments about their names and places of birth when vetting them for entry, highlighting their 'otherness' from the white Scottish norm.

**“On more than one occasion, bouncers have made a comment about my middle name [Sultana], asking me if I’m named after the dried fruit. You have to battle yourself over whether it’s worth your time to educate them on what it really means, or do you just leave it?”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Asian & White Mixed heritage**

**“[A man in a pub] said something along the lines of ‘why can’t you just have a name like Josephine?’”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

There have also been reports of Black and minority ethnic people getting repeatedly mistaken for other people from their ethnic group, such as celebrities or people barred from the premises. This perpetuates the racist idea that people from the same minority ethnic background cannot be distinguished from one another and can ultimately lead to Black and minority ethnic people being collectively penalised for the actions of complete strangers.

**“After a set by a visibly Sikh DJ ‘Yung Singh’, I had people coming up to me and commenting about ‘my set’ or pointing at me to their friends saying ‘that’s Yung Singh’ etc. It happened at least 15 times, and it began to really grind me down [...] I wish people wouldn’t just assume that all Sikh people look the same.”**

**– Survey Respondent, Indian heritage**

**“[I was] told that I couldn’t get into a club I’ve never been to because ‘You were too drunk last time!’ Even though I’ve never been there before, ever! It was a place we were only visiting for the weekend.”**

**– Survey Respondent, Black African heritage**



When microaggressive behaviour like this becomes normalised, it contributes to a wider culture of racial insensitivity within the night-time economy, allowing more overt expressions of racism to go unchallenged. This creates an environment in which racist behaviour from service users is deemed acceptable, with service providers either not taking sufficient action or, in some cases, actively encouraging and marketing racial insensitivity.

For example, during CRER's focus group discussions, several participants described experiences of people using racially derogatory language and racial slurs in public without being called out by staff or other patrons. Others described attending or seeing advertisements for culturally and racially insensitive club nights, such as rasta- and ghetto-themed nights.

**“Multiple people had shown up in fake locs, rasta hats, and blackface and were admitted entry. There was plenty of mocking and you [could] hear slurs being used across the pub.”**

**– Survey Respondent, White British heritage**

**“I can't even tell you how many times I've been in a club and realised that entire crowds of white people were screaming the 'n-word' along to songs without any recognition of how offensive they were being.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Black African heritage**

Experiences like these can be extremely triggering to those who have experienced racial harassment and been the target of hate speech, and they, ultimately, contribute to bars and nightclubs becoming yet another environment in which Black and minority ethnic people are treated as anomalous and made to feel as though they don't belong.

**“I find myself spending more time being on edge for these kinds of things than I do just enjoying my night like everyone else. It's unfair.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Black Caribbean heritage**



## Tokenism and 'Positive' Stereotypes

While microaggressions and racist stereotypes often work to directly alienate and demean Black and minority ethnic people, they can also work in more complex ways.

In this manner, when Black and minority ethnic people are treated differently from their white Scottish/British counterparts within the night-time economy, this is sometimes fuelled by tokenism and 'positive' racial stereotypes.

For example, some venues may want their audiences to appear diverse for branding and marketing efforts despite maintaining a systematic pattern of excluding minority ethnic people from their events. Because of this, they might let some minority ethnic customers in – so long as they suit the venue's marketing needs or fit within a certain threshold of acceptability, such as being the only minority ethnic face in an otherwise all-white group.

This is often driven by a form of 'exoticism' – a common type of microaggression which paints Black and minority ethnic people and their cultures as inherently and outstandingly cool, fashionable or 'exotic'.

**"I've had multiple nights of [...] bouncers giving me nicknames, almost fetishising mixed race women. More recently, two men at [a popular Edinburgh venue] had given me the code name 'Beyonce' and kept calling me that throughout the night when near me."**

**– Survey Respondent, Black African and White Mixed heritage**

**"I politely/light-heartedly declined [a romantic approach] and he groaned, saying 'but you're the oriental dream.'"**

**– Survey Respondent, Asian and White Mixed heritage**

Because of this, Black and minority ethnic people can find themselves reduced to simplistic racial stereotypes on a night out, with their identities and cultural expressions rendered as abnormal and 'oriental'.

During CRER's focus group sessions, some participants recounted their experiences of receiving this treatment.



One participant described how nightclub photographers would suddenly take interest in their ethnically diverse group in an otherwise all-white crowd, as featuring Black and brown faces in marketing materials would boost a venue's profile and make their clientele appear 'cooler'.

**"The second we walked through the door, this guy stopped us and pure insisted to take pictures. It became a whole photoshoot."**

**- Focus Group Participant, Black African heritage**

Other participants described how their appearances and behaviours would be sensationalised by other people in nightclubs. As a result, they became hyper-visible and made to feel out of place.

**"We were just dancing and suddenly we realised there was a circle of white faces watching and filming us - what was just me and a pal having a good time suddenly became some weird spectacle to them."**

**- Focus Group Participant, Black African heritage**

Another participant described an experience in which they found themselves in a group of white people praising their afro hair and taking turns to touch it, completely violating their space, personal boundaries and the need for consent. Throughout our survey and focus group sessions, this type of physical harassment appeared entirely commonplace on nights out in Scotland, with multiple participants sharing similar accounts.

**"A group of lads started touching and grabbing my hair in the middle of the dancefloor and started getting aggressive when I tried to react."**

**- Survey Respondent, Black Caribbean and White Mixed heritage**

Ultimately, these behaviours work to undermine Black and minority ethnic people's sense of safety and belonging within Scotland's mainstream nightlife culture and become yet another barrier to their enjoyment of and participation in these spaces. As a result, Black and minority ethnic communities can rarely reap the rewards of their own contributions to the UK's contemporary music and dance scene without exposing themselves to harmful, derogatory and exploitative experiences.





## Differences in the Quality of Service

There is also widespread evidence of Black and minority ethnic people being discriminated against by service providers, often regarding the quality of service they receive and their interactions with members of staff.

While businesses are prohibited from denying goods or services to people based on their race under the [Equality Act 2010](#), there appears to be a clear pattern of those employed within Scotland's night-time economy delivering poorer quality service to Black and minority ethnic people compared to their white customers.

This often takes subtle forms, such as being overlooked by waiting staff and being allocated undesirable tables and seating, but can also reflect much more overt forms of prejudice, with Black and minority ethnic customers being treated with undue suspicion from service providers about the authenticity of money used in payments, the validity of their ID, and whether they are in the right place.

For instance, during our survey and focus group discussions, several participants described noticing a pattern of being given poor quality service by bar staff and made to wait longer than white customers.

**“I was out in Glasgow and on multiple occasions, there would be three or four white customers behind me in the queue, but they would be served before me. It only occurred to me that I wasn't being paranoid and this was an issue when a couple of the other white customers noticed and actually said 'look, she's been serving you last!'”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

We also heard repeated experiences about Black and minority ethnic people being subject to disproportionate surveillance and suspicion than white customers. This included incidents where customers were quizzed over what they were doing in a venue and whether they were in the right place, as though they were not meant to be there.

This reflects a wider pattern of Black and minority ethnic people having to justify their presence within these spaces and being made to prove that they have not made a mistake in visiting a venue.



**“[I was] repeatedly asked if I had a reservation. When I gave him the name of the person who made the reservation [... the member of staff] asked me if I'm sure. The doorman then accompanied me to the lift and then two floors up to see if I knew the party I was joining.”**

**- Survey Respondent, Indian heritage**

Similarly, there is a widespread issue of service providers assuming the worst about Black and minority ethnic patrons, causing them to be preemptively treated as though they are in the wrong or have acted with malicious intent when making a mistake, such as sitting at a reserved table or going to the wrong part of a venue.

For example, one focus group participant described an incident in which they were kicked out of a nightclub for being confused by its entry system, even though they were actively looking for where to pay their entry fee and told staff as much.

**“I didn't want to be in the presence of bouncers who, by default, assumed that I'd done something wrong.”**

**- Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

This pattern of undue suspicion can also lead to Black and minority ethnic people being subject to a greater degree of scrutiny regarding cash payments and ID checks, as though they are inherently more likely to use counterfeit money or have fake or doctored forms of ID. This often targeted those with non-UK forms of ID, such as a non-British passport.

**“They questioned my friend about her ID [a Nepalese passport], believing it to be fake. They made her feel like a second-class citizen.”**

**- Survey Respondent, White British heritage**

**“We had no intention of drinking or buying alcohol but kept getting asked for ID. The staff were very stand-offish and took a really long time scrutinising my ID. He then just asks ‘Where are you from?’”**

**- Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**



Experiences like these highlight how service providers often consider white patrons to be the default and ideal type of customer, causing Black and minority ethnic patrons to be treated as though they are an anomaly. This works to both directly exclude Black and minority ethnic groups from these spaces and sends a clear message about their belonging within them.



## Leaky Policy, Floodgate Practice

Generally, the normalisation of interpersonal racism and its cultural entrenchment within the night-time economy can be attributed to racist attitudes in wider Scottish society. However, the processes that allow racism to become a systemic, structuring force can be more explicitly linked to racially prejudiced decision-making and shortfalls in policy design and implementation.

While legislation and policy cannot proactively prevent discrimination from occurring, approaches that overlook the experiences and needs of Black and minority ethnic groups and do not directly challenge the realities of structural racism are likely to perpetuate and broaden racial inequality.

In this section, we will provide an overview of some of the key legal and policy areas associated with racial inequalities in Scotland's night-time economy and highlight how failures and oversights in these approaches have contributed to the systemisation of racism.

We have identified the following key legal and policy areas associated with racial inequalities in the night-time economy:

- Legal obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#)
- The [General](#) and [Specific](#) Public Sector Equality Duties
- Legal duties under the [Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- Organisational policies used by businesses and institutions associated with the night-time economy

### The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 works to protect people from discrimination in employment and as service users. When it came into force, it combined and replaced several existing pieces of legislation, such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976, to prohibit discrimination against someone based on the **protected characteristics** of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The 2010 Act applies to everyone, including all public and private sector organisations, meaning that it is prohibited for businesses to deny someone employment or access to goods and services due to their race.



However, many people do not understand their legal rights nor the procedures through which they can take responsive action to their rights being breached, meaning that the Act does not effectively protect them. This highlights a need for increased awareness and education on legal protections and people's rights under devolved, reserved, and international law, requiring more effective signposting and capacity-building efforts.

To learn more about your rights and the options available to you for taking action under the Equality Act 2010, visit [Citizens Advice](#).

### **Licensing Boards: The Public Sector Equality Duties**

While the Equality Act 2010 applies to all employers and service providers, organisations in the public sector are subject to additional responsibilities and legal obligations. This includes licensing boards; the public bodies responsible for regulating which premises can sell alcohol to the public, such as bars and nightclubs.

Section 149 of the 2010 Act states that all public sector organisations and bodies carrying out a public function must have due regard to three needs:

- The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct
- The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- The need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it

This means that when a licensing board considers whether to permit a business to sell alcohol and operate as part of the night-time economy, they are expected to take steps to ensure that the management and operating practices comply with all race equality and anti-discrimination legislation, so that no person is treated differently on racial grounds.

**“Furthermore, individuals, or particular parts of the community, should not be discouraged from going to licensed premises on the basis of any protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the operation and management of the premises.”**

**- Licensing Policy Statement [2018], City of Glasgow Licensing Board**



However, to date, licensing boards have failed to effectively do this, as they do not prioritise race equality considerations within licensing decisions and do not routinely assess businesses on their commitments and performance towards race equality.

Many licensing boards do not effectively use the tools available to them either. For instance, when used properly, an [Equality Impact Assessment](#) can help a licensing board design a licensing policy that proactively considers the needs and experiences of Black and minority ethnic people and makes specific provisions to minimise the impact of structural racism.<sup>29</sup> However, these impact assessments are often left until the end of the policy design process and are consistently completed to a poor standard, rendering them ineffective at mitigating structural inequalities.

It can be argued that licensing boards in Scotland are not doing enough to meet their legal obligations. The standard of 'due regard' they pay to equality issues under the Public Sector Equality Duties consistently falls short of eliminating discrimination and harassment and rarely works to foster good relation between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

### **The Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005**

The [Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#) is also of key relevance to the systemic entrenchment of racism within Scotland's night-time economy, largely because licensing boards routinely fail to consider issues around race and racism in their efforts to prevent and control crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour.

Section 149 of the Act establishes a set of five Licensing Objectives to represent the values and priorities of the Scottish alcohol licensing system and provide a solid foundation for licensing boards to develop their own local policies from.

These objectives are:

- a) Preventing crime and disorder,
- b) Securing public safety,
- c) Preventing public nuisance,
- d) Protecting and improving public health, and
- e) Protecting children and young persons from harm.





While these cover a range of public interests and policy areas, it can be argued that taking proactive action to eliminate racial discrimination and racist violence within the night-time economy would directly relate to all five of these objectives.

However, without any explicit focus on race equality within the written policy, this interpretation is left in the hands of individual licensing boards and is, therefore, often overlooked.

For instance, some licensing boards explicitly acknowledge how upholding these objectives is essential in promoting a social drinking environment that is "safe and welcoming for all".<sup>30</sup> But as they do not make specific provisions for Black and minority ethnic groups, their policies are ill-equipped to consider the unique needs and circumstances of Black and minority ethnic communities and are, therefore, unable to effectively ensure their safety, perpetuating structural racism.

Where licensing boards have made specific provisions towards equality issues, they usually relate to disability, gender-based violence, and, in some cases, religious/socio-cultural sectarianism.

**"In the context of providing safe access to licensed premises for people with disabilities, the Licensing Board recommends that license holders become familiar with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and of any duties imposed on them in that regard."**

**- Draft Licensing Policy (2023), City of Glasgow Licensing Board**

This suggests that many licensing boards already consider equality but not consistently in regard to race.

For example, the City of Glasgow Licensing Board encourages all license holders and operators of licensed premises to conduct risk assessments with regard to child exploitation and use them to inform their policies, procedures and staff training initiatives. However, their licensing policy does not encourage any form of risk assessment towards equality issues and only references race and ethnicity when listing the Equality Act 2010's protected characteristics. Race has, once again, been sidelined.

Ultimately, by not encouraging license holders to proactively tackle racial discrimination within the night-time economy, licensing boards are failing



to meet the objectives established in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. They are not preventing crime, disorder and public nuisance; they are not securing the safety of Black and minority ethnic groups; and they are not protecting public health.

If written policies lack a focus on race and do not encourage license holders to hold all protected characteristics to the same standard, then the application of the Licensing (Scotland) Act actively works to perpetuate systemic racism.

### **Organisational Policies within the Night-Time Economy**

While some aspects of the night-time economy, such as local licensing policies, are controlled by the public sector, the night-time economy itself primarily consists of private businesses, each with their own policies and procedures.

However, due to certain industry standards, and legal requirements regarding safety and security, these businesses can often encounter similar pitfalls and systemic failures regarding race equality.

For instance, most licensed premises do not directly employ their own security staff; instead, they typically source door supervisors from third-party agencies. While all security personnel require training, and a license from the Security Industry Authority (SIA), this separation can lead to a gap between organisational values and policies and the actual practices at the door. Such that, when admissions and search policies are not strictly defined, a bouncer's personal biases can affect how they interact with customers, often contributing to a pattern of racial profiling and selective policing.

The separation between third-party door supervisors and the licensed premises they work on behalf of can also complicate matters regarding trust and accountability. For instance, if someone feels as though they have been discriminated against, their first point of contact for raising a complaint is usually the venue's management. However, it is often not clear whether security personnel are employed by – and therefore, directly accountable to – the venue, making it difficult for people to direct their complaints to the right place and take action.



Furthermore, as third-party door staff are often rotated between venues and may not be directly known to management, this adds yet another barrier to holding them accountable.

These issues can also complicate matters regarding legal responsibilities in the event of civic or criminal wrongdoing. Generally, an employer is liable for the actions of its employees if an incident occurs within the scope of their employment; however, if it is unclear who employs a door supervisor, this becomes another barrier to taking legal action.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, it can be difficult to determine whether a bouncer's actions were part of their duties as an employee or outwith them, making it harder to identify the liable party and seek compensation.

During our research, it became clear that some discriminatory door supervisors attempt to exploit this separation to dodge accountability for their actions and behaviours.

For instance, several survey respondents and focus group participants described how, following a racist incident or an accusation of racist treatment, bouncers would try to make it harder to identify them to management. This included obscuring their identification cards and withholding details about themselves and their employers in an attempt to make it prohibitively difficult to report them.

**“I asked for the bouncer's security ID but they declined. It is part of their licensing that door staff need to always have their ID on show, but this doorman had turned his armband inside out so you could not see his name or ID number on the card.”**

**- Survey Respondent, Asian heritage**

There can also be significant differences between door supervisors' conduct and the written policies they are meant to adhere to as holders of an SIA license. For instance, while door supervisors work on behalf of an alcohol license holder, they are, ultimately, expected to conduct themselves in line with [standards of behaviour set by the SIA](#). These standards seek to ensure that security personnel carry out their work with fairness, respect, and in line with the law.



In relation to race equality, the SIA Standards of Behaviour states:

- "Door supervisors should always act fairly and not discriminate on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, marital status or any other differences in individuals which is not relevant to the door supervisors' responsibility."
- "DO NOT make racist remarks or any comments that might exclude or upset any particular group" or "allow a customer to feel humiliated."
- "REMEMBER – it is against the law to refuse entry on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, physical appearance or disability."

However, given the prominence of racial discrimination when Black and minority ethnic people interact with door supervisors, there is a clear gulf between these written standards and the actual behaviours exhibited by many of the door supervisors working in Scotland's night-time economy.

Some of the standards set by the SIA are also vague and widely open to interpretation, such that they can be used to perpetuate the racist exclusion of Black and minority ethnic people from Scotland's night-time economy.

For instance, SIA guidance on refusing entry states:

"Entry might be refused because: a person's attitude would spoil other people's enjoyment."

While well-intentioned, the subjectivity of this guidance can and has been used to exclude Black and minority ethnic customers without explicitly refusing them entry on the grounds of race. For example, door supervisors have been known to knock people back due to pre-conceived expectations about their interests and by re-deploying the widespread racist stereotype of Black women having 'bad attitudes'.

**"We got to the front and the bouncer just told us 'Sorry, you won't like the music here tonight' and wouldn't let us in."**

**- Survey Respondent, Black African heritage**

Race equality issues can also arise due to bars, nightclubs and other businesses in the night-time economy not having – or enforcing – policies regarding discriminatory behaviour.



For instance, there is widespread evidence of Black and minority ethnic people not having their concerns taken seriously when reporting a hate incident or making a complaint about discrimination. It has also been reported that people often do not know who to make complaints to and worry that attempting to take action against racist treatment can land them in more trouble than it is worth.

**“If I reported something, I think bouncers would just brush it over. They wouldn't want to get involved. So personally, if it were me, I wouldn't trust them to deal with this.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Pakistani heritage**

**“With regards to bouncers, I don't think there's as much of a public onus or expectation on them to respond to these types of issues. They would argue that they're dealing with 'more urgent matters.'”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

**“Business owners don't see it as their responsibility to support and empower you, they're just creating a space for people to come together, and they're making money off of it.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

Experiences like these can perpetuate structural racism in Scotland as they contribute to a wider culture of under-reporting racist incidents and hate crimes. For example, a 2019 survey found that nearly half of Black and minority ethnic respondents who had experienced discrimination did not report it to any kind of authority, suggesting that they do not believe appropriate and effective action would be taken.<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, this contributes to some people from Black and minority ethnic groups feeling as though service providers are not equipped to protect them and their rights and cannot guarantee their safety and wellbeing. Therefore, steps must be taken to ensure that the policies and procedures used by businesses have no differential impact regarding ethnicity and encourage a culture of transparency and accountability from those working in the sector.

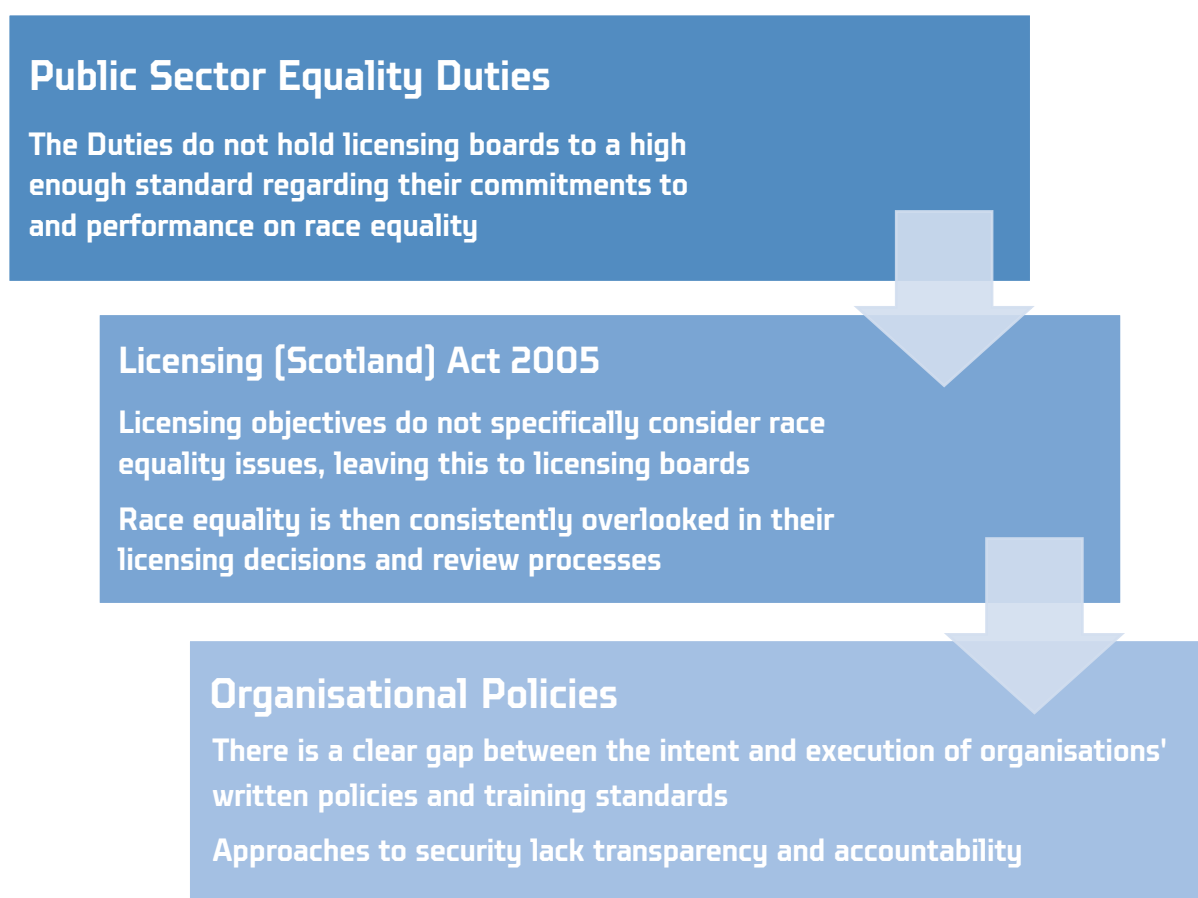


In summary, racism within Scotland's night-time economy is systemic, meaning that the policies and procedures at every level of decision-making perpetuate the racist treatment and exclusion of Black and minority ethnic groups. So, while each issue and oversight may appear small in isolation, they contribute to a large-scale, cumulative pattern of discrimination and racist exclusion.

Written policy and legislation alone cannot eliminate racial prejudice from society; however, the consistent disregard of Black and minority ethnic people's needs and experiences in policy design, implementation and evaluation has allowed this pattern of discrimination to go largely unnoticed and unaddressed by decision-makers.

Addressing this will require a comprehensive re-evaluation of legal frameworks, policy implementation strategies, and the policies and procedures used by licensed premises and associated industries within the night-time economy.

### **Figure 1: How policy and legislation contribute to systemic racism in Scotland's night-time economy**





## The Impact of Racism in the Night-Time Economy

Racism can affect people, places and communities in complex and multi-faceted ways but it, ultimately, works to negatively impact the lives of Black and minority ethnic people in Scotland, erode their sense of belonging, and undermine community cohesion.

As racism has become embedded at systemic, cultural, and interpersonal levels within the night-time economy, it serves as a defining force in Black and minority ethnic people's experiences of and engagement with this key aspect of social life in Scotland.

Therefore, groups from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds can feel unable to fully participate in the night-time economy out of fear of being treated differently or being exposed to racist violence and harassment. This works to exclude Black and minority ethnic groups from the physical spaces of the night-time economy, such as bars, nightclubs and music venues, but also alienates them from mainstream nightlife culture.

**"We've been physically attacked when we've been out, we've been verbally abused. [... This has] probably played a part in me not going out now as much as I would like to in my thirties."**

**- Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

**"People often use the argument of [Black and minority ethnic] people not integrating. But if you've got people of colour who want to go out to bars, clubs, restaurants, other aspects of nightlife, and they're not able to because they don't feel accepted or safe, then that attempt to integrate is there but it's just not being allowed."**

**- Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

Left unchallenged, these forms of racism can fundamentally undermine efforts to foster good relations between communities, a key aim of the Equality Act 2010. But while the large-scale consequences of this serve as a pressing issue for policymakers and stakeholders within the night-time economy, it is important not to lose sight of the personal impact that racism within the night-time economy can have.





Experiences like these can contribute to Black and minority ethnic people feeling increasingly alienated from their local communities and a major part of social life in Scotland, leading to feelings of isolation, increased social pressure and a reduced sense of belonging.

**“It was yet another reminder that I didn't belong in this country.”**

**- Survey Respondent, Malaysian Chinese heritage**

**“[Microaggressions] just make it difficult to feel like you belong in a space and are, through ignorance, a hurtful disregard of identity.”**

**- Survey Respondent, Indian heritage**

**“It was really grounding and a reminder that I am far from home and this place will never treat me as well.”**

**- Survey Respondent, Black African heritage**

These sentiments are reflected more broadly in Scotland. For instance, the Scottish Household Survey found that just 19% of minority ethnic respondents felt a very strong sense of belonging to their local community, compared to 41% of white Scottish respondents.<sup>33</sup>

When people are made to feel as though they don't belong to a space or culture, this can pressure them to change their behaviours and presentation in order to minimise their risk of being treated differently and better assimilate. These practices of masking and self-policing can be exhausting, and disempowering and can, ultimately, have deeply negative effects on people's sense of identity.<sup>34</sup>

**“There's this constant self-monitoring of ourselves when out and about in town [...] it's this sort of psychological battle you have to face while just trying to enjoy your own private leisure time.”**

**- Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

Experiencing and witnessing racial discrimination can also have more chronic impacts on Black and minority ethnic people's mental health and wellbeing.<sup>35</sup> For example, repeated exposure to racist violence, abuse and



harassment is known to have long-term mental and physical health implications and can contribute towards conditions such as anxiety disorders, depression, and processes of cortisol-related weathering.<sup>§</sup>

**“The physical injuries have started to heal but the mental trauma is gonna take a lot of time. It appears almost impossible to live our lives back to normalcy.”**

**- Survey Respondent, Indian heritage**

**“It makes me anxious every time I walk past a group of people, especially if they are white teenage boys.”**

**- Survey Respondent, Malaysian Chinese heritage**

It is also important to recognise that the impact of racism within the night-time economy is not necessarily equal, as it can have a particularly pronounced impact on specific groups within Scotland's Black and minority ethnic populations.

For instance, groups such as women, disabled people, trans people and gay, lesbian and bisexual people can also face systemic discrimination within the night-time economy and wider society, causing Black and minority ethnic members of these communities to face compounding inequalities and injustice. This reflects a process known as intersectionality – a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to specifically describe the unique oppressions of African American women.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, it is essential to also consider how racism within the night-time economy affects those facing additional barriers to their participation.

Some parts of the night-time economy provide important spaces and a sense of community for these groups. For example, queer nightlife scenes can provide essential spaces for LGBTQI+ people to safely meet and socialise, without fear of discrimination due to their sexual orientation or trans status. However, systemic and culturally entrenched racism within Scotland's night-time economy can work to exclude Black and minority

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<sup>§</sup> [Weathering](#) describes the process of how someone's physical health reacts to the accumulative stress induced by consistent exposure to discrimination and marginalisation. It is linked with health conditions associated with [premature biological ageing](#), such as high blood pressure and cognitive decline.



ethnic queer people from these spaces and worsen their experiences within them.

We found clear evidence of this in Scotland. For example, approximately 15% of the incidents described during CRER's call for evidence took place within or when gaining entry to a queer bar or nightclub. These included groups being denied entry before even making it out of a taxi, people being physically assaulted, and even groups being interrogated about their queerness, with bouncers often deciding that they do not look 'visibly queer-enough' to gain entry, among other experiences.

**"I got punched by a racist guy in the toilet of [a queer nightclub in Edinburgh] after I said I'm from Scotland."**

**- Survey Respondent, Scottish Arab heritage**

**"In [a popular queer club in Glasgow] I was told there were too many Black people in Scotland by a drunk man."**

**- Survey Respondent, Caribbean & White Mixed heritage**

**"It became apparent that the bouncers who are there to keep you safe were only protecting a certain demographic. I cut my night short."**

**- Survey Respondent, Asian & White Mixed heritage**

**"[I asked someone about a drink] and they immediately turned around, looked me up and down and said, 'Sorry, I'm not into Black guys' and then just turned away."**

**- Survey Respondent, Black heritage**

Without access to these sorts of safe spaces and support networks, LGBTQI+ people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds can be subject to discrimination targeting multiple parts of their identities. This can often put their safety and even their lives at risk, as UK-level statistics show that LGTBQI+ people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are over-represented as targets of hate crime and violence.<sup>37 38</sup>



While there is limited intersectional data available for Scotland, we know that 30% of respondents to our call for evidence disclosed that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer, or a trans person, suggesting that they are disproportionate victims of discrimination within Scotland's night-time economy.\*\*

Similarly, racism within women-only spaces can lead to Black and minority ethnic women feeling unable to access spaces designed with their safety in mind. This can subject them to significant risks in other spaces, as many of the negative aspects of the night-time economy, such as alcohol-related gender-based violence and harassment, can have a disproportionate impact on women.

Therefore, when we consider the impacts of racism within Scotland's night-time economy, it is important to recognise that those affected are not one homogenous group sharing one collective experience. Black and minority ethnic people are individuals with their own identities and communities, such that the effects of structural, cultural, and interpersonal racism are not necessarily evenly distributed. Efforts attempting to tackle discrimination within Scotland's nightlife must recognise this and ensure that actions are designed with all Black and minority ethnic people in mind, not just those solely affected by processes of negative racialisation.

Ultimately, when Black and minority ethnic people consistently experience racism during their interactions with and participation in the night-time economy, it can significantly impact them on a personal level, undermining their sense of belonging and harming their mental health and wellbeing.

As a result, some Black and minority ethnic groups feel unable to fully embrace and enjoy the night-time economy, causing them to withdraw from these spaces. This can contribute to lost business for bars, nightclubs and music venues but also reduces the opportunity for cultural exchange inside these spaces, undermining efforts to foster good relations and promote community cohesion.

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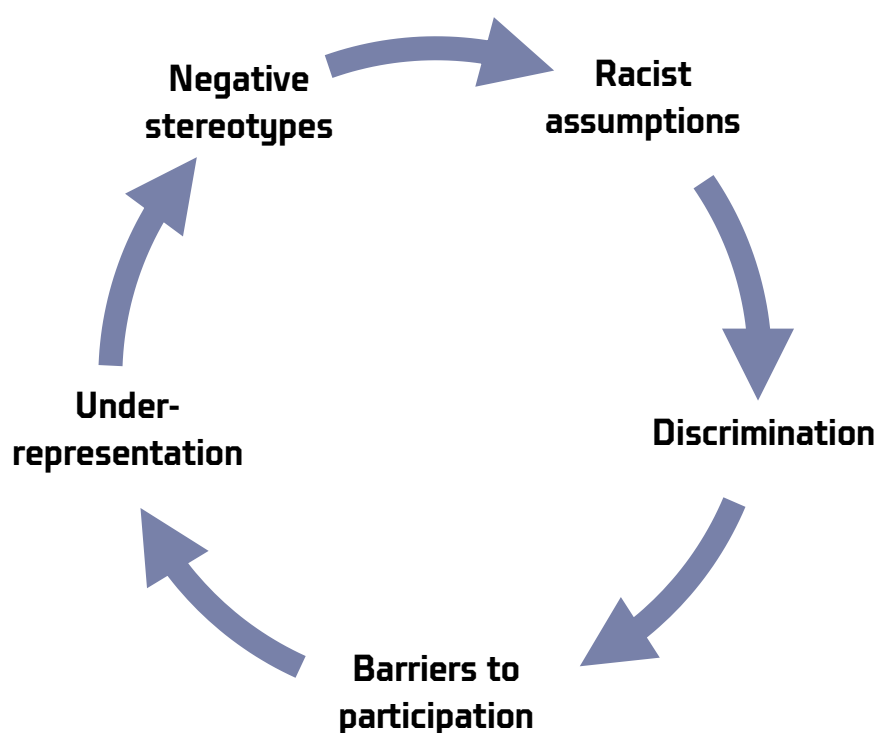
\*\* A full breakdown of protected characteristic information for survey respondents is presented in the appendices of this report.





Evidence also suggests that the loss of Black and minority ethnic people from these spaces can perpetuate racial inequality by contributing to the systemisation of racism. For instance, the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic revellers due to practices of racist exclusion can lead to racist stereotypes becoming more prominent and culturally entrenched, increasing the likelihood of Black and minority ethnic people being discriminated against.

**Figure 3: How racist exclusion perpetuates systemic racism**



Businesses must work to break the vicious cycle of racism within Scotland's night-time economy. Communities of all kinds deserve to have freedom from discrimination, stereotyping, harassment and violence; a shared sense of belonging and acceptance; and the ability to participate equally in social and economic life, as envisioned in efforts to foster good relations in Scotland.<sup>39</sup>

**“If we don't tackle some of these issues or put policies in place, it will be difficult for teenagers or young people and even adults to be able to step out confidently, knowing that they're free to be themselves and come back as safely as possible.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Black African heritage**



**Case Study:**

# Racism in Glasgow's Night-Time Economy

## Racism in Glasgow's Night-Time Economy

Glasgow is Scotland's largest and most ethnically diverse city, renowned for the size and vibrancy of its night-time economy. As a UNESCO City of Music, Glasgow is widely recognised as a major international musical centre, and its 1,900 licensed premises support nearly 17,000 jobs and help generate an estimated £2.16 billion a year, making up 10% of Glasgow's business base.<sup>40 41</sup>

However, Glasgow is also home to approximately one-third of Scotland's Black and minority ethnic population,<sup>42</sup> meaning that the racism entrenched within the policies, procedures, and everyday practices of the night-time economy can play a prominent role in the daily lives of Glasgow's Black and minority ethnic communities.

To better understand this, CRER attempted to directly monitor how patterns of racial discrimination and racially prejudiced treatment manifest within Glasgow's uniquely positioned night-time economy.

This was achieved by conducting two distinct research exercises within the City of Glasgow:

- An analysis of online reviews for all bars, nightclubs, restaurants and music venues within the Glasgow licensing area
- A first-in-Scotland observational research exercise using undercover 'mystery shoppers' to assess door supervision practices in Glasgow's city centre

As a result, we are able to provide much needed quantitative analyses on the realities of racism within the night-time economy and better understand how it manifests in Scotland's most ethnically diverse city and the hub of the national night-time economy.



## **“If you're a person of colour, avoid this place at all costs” – Using online reviews to monitor racism in Glasgow's night-time economy**

Online reviews can prove a useful tool for mapping people's experiences inside licensed premises as they can provide first-hand accounts of their interactions with service providers and can help form an image of the practices occurring behind closed doors.

Therefore, to better understand the extent to which Black and minority ethnic people experience racism within Glasgow's night-time economy, we analysed the Google, Yelp, and TripAdvisor reviews for every licensed bar, nightclub, restaurant, and music venue in Glasgow.



On Yelp and TripAdvisor, reviews were identified using the search function to retrieve any public online reviews mentioning the words: racism, racist, discrimination, along with any reference to a minority ethnic group. These were then filtered by establishment type to isolate reviews corresponding to the licensed premises operating within Glasgow's night-time economy.

Google Reviews were analysed by manually searching through the reviews for all 1,376 establishments listed on the Glasgow Licensing Board's [Public Register for 'On' and 'On and Off sales' Alcohol Licenses](#). These reviews were filtered using the same search terms as above, thus identifying any alleging racist treatment or describing a racist incident.

Any reviews we believed to be erroneous or not relevant to our study – such as those featuring claims of 'anti-English racism' or describing other forms of non-racial discrimination – were removed from the pool.

As part of this analysis, we directly reference many of the reviews found online, quoting them as they appear in the public domain. However, please note that CRER cannot verify any details about the complaints raised and seeks only to re-publish this information as it is presented online. Thus, any thoughts expressed within these online reviews do not necessarily reflect the views of CRER, and we accept no responsibility for their content.



During our search, we found a total of 106 online reviews spanning over 30 licensed premises. These captured a range of experiences, often consistent with the race equality issues highlighted earlier in this report.

For instance, the most common type of review described Black and minority ethnic customers being knocked back by door supervisors and denied entry for reasons they believed to be racist. We found 57 reviews of this nature, with some alleging that bouncers had directly racially abused them and others describing a pattern of white people being granted entry while minority ethnic groups were turned away.

**“When asked why she couldn't enter, the bouncer said nothing but muttered a racist slur under his breath”**

**- [Yelp review](#) of a nightclub in Glasgow**

**“The bouncers blatantly stated we were not welcome because we are Asian”**

**- [Google review](#) of a nightclub in Glasgow**

**“[We] noticed a pattern. Whites Only. No Asians, no Black, no multiracial, no middle eastern, etc. Only whites were allowed through the door”**

**- [Google review](#) of a nightclub in Glasgow**

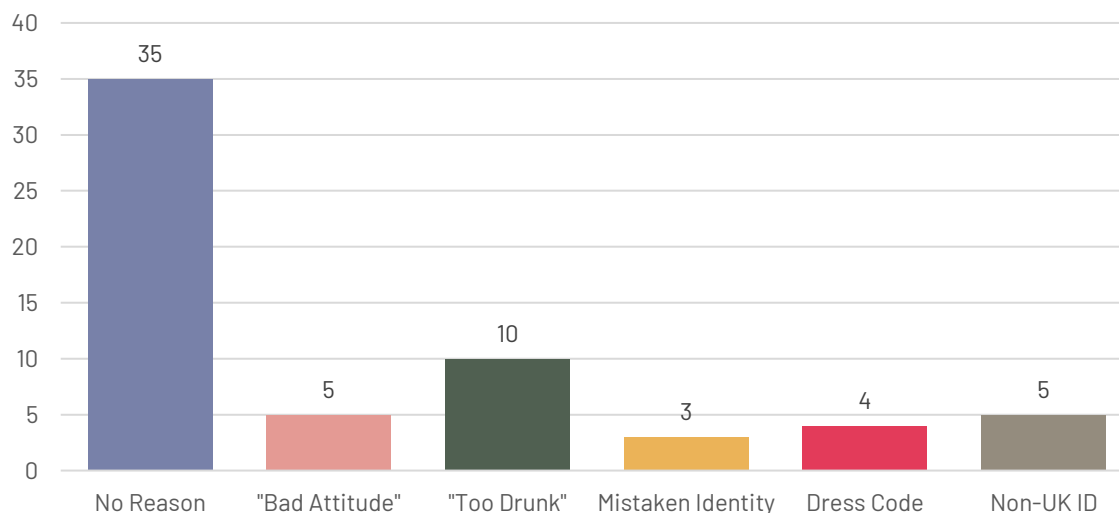
While the content of these reviews ranged enormously, in most cases, they did not describe overt expressions of prejudice but gave accounts of customers being treated differently for reasons they believed to be racist. This was often deduced from Black and minority ethnic patrons being denied entry without reason or with invalid and inconsistent reasoning.

For example, some reviews described people being knocked back for being overly intoxicated despite their not drinking alcohol for faith-based reasons. Other reviews accused businesses of selectively policing them over dress code policies, such that they were denied entry despite white patrons also deviating from the alleged venue policies.

We also found evidence of groups being refused entry due to bouncers confusing them for other minority ethnic people, such as those previously knocked back that evening or permanently banned from the premises.



**Figure 4: Reasons for being denied entry to Glasgow's licensed premises, from online reviews alleging racist treatment**



During our analysis, we identified a number of recurring themes regarding the treatment of Black and minority ethnic people by door supervisors. For instance, in 44 reviews, the complainant described being singled out from an otherwise white group or a majority-white queue, such that they believed their only identifiable reason for being treated differently or denied entry was their real or perceived ethnicity.

**"I personally wasn't thrown out, but I did witness door staff singling out the non whites from groups and refusing them entry"**

**- [Google review](#) of a pub in Glasgow**

**"Those of other ethnic origins were interrogated and kicked out regardless of how much they had to drink"**

**- [Trip Advisor review](#) of a nightclub in Glasgow**

**"Confrontational, racist, and disrespectful to people of colour"**

**- [Google review](#) of a nightclub in Glasgow**

**"The bouncers were extremely rude and clearly racist"**

**- [Google review](#) of a nightclub in Glasgow**





We also found a number of reviews describing a system of heightened security and suspicion towards Black and minority ethnic revellers, causing them to be disproportionately and selectively scrutinised by bouncers.

Eight reviews described how Black and minority ethnic patrons were pulled aside from queues for physical searches and additional questioning, often regarding how much they had had to drink, where they had been earlier in the night, and even asked to prove their relation to the groups they were gaining entry with.

For example, one online review described an interracial couple trying to gain entry to a nightclub, only for the bouncers to pull the Black partner aside and refuse them entry until their white partner intervened and clarified their relationship.

This speaks to a wider pattern of minority ethnic people struggling to gain entry to bars and nightclubs unless they have a white person to specifically vouch for them to door supervisors or were the only minority ethnic person in an otherwise all-white group.

**“My partner experienced indirect and direct racism from the manager as he was told to go get his ‘white friends’”**

**- [Trip Advisor review](#) of a bar-restaurant in Glasgow**

The problems do not seem to stop once you're through the door, either.

For instance, we found 37 reviews describing Black and minority ethnic people being directly and overtly racially abused by members of staff within licensed premises, while a further 42 described other miscellaneous experiences of racism occurring inside these establishments.

**“Staff are the most racist set of people I've ever met in my life”**

**- [Trip Advisor review](#) of a nightclub in Glasgow**

21 reviews suggested that customers from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds received poor quality service from these businesses, often regarding how long they were made to wait or how they were treated by members of staff. This was echoed by another 16 reviews, which testified that minority ethnic patrons were refused service entirely within some of Glasgow's licensed premises.



“[I] believe the horrible service I received [was] because of my colour”

- [Google review of a nightclub in Glasgow](#)

“They refused to serve my partner because he spoke with an accent”

- [Trip Advisor review of a pub in Glasgow](#)

“Every time I come here, I get discriminated [against] by your staff. Even if there is no one standing in the queue, I still don't get served.”

- [Google review of a pub in Glasgow](#)

Several people also described experiencing racist abuse from other patrons within licensed premises, often in the form of racist insults, harassment, and micro-aggressive behaviours. However, many of these reviews also suggested that security personnel and venue management did not take complaints about racist behaviour seriously.

For example, one review described an incident in which a group of friends were physically harassed by a man inside a nightclub who also made racially insensitive comments about them. When a bouncer intervened, the minority ethnic group were presumptively treated as the aggressors and were threatened with being removed from the premises, allowing the man to continue harassing other groups. The bouncer only took action once a white group raised similar complaints about being harassed.

This complacency towards racism was echoed by the actions taken – or lack of – by venues and their management in response to online reviews describing racist incidents and racially prejudiced behaviours within their premises.

For example, despite finding over 100 reviews describing racial profiling, racist abuse, and other racist behaviours within licensed premises, just 31 of these complaints received a public written response from the business.

The majority of these responses rebuked any allegations of racist treatment, often pointing towards the ethnic diversity of their staff, a written door policy, or a statement on the company's ethos and values.



“Our stewards are trained to make the right call in the moment and unfortunately, there can be several reasons a person is refused entry. We have a very diverse team of staff and pride ourselves in being an inclusive nightclub, welcome to everyone.”

- A nightclub in response to a claim of racist treatment by staff

Some venues rebuffed their original stance, reemphasising that they believed patrons were too drunk or not appropriately dressed, stressing that this was the sole reason for their refusal.

“As explained at the time, some of your group had to [sic] much to drink to enter our club. That is the only reason.”

- A nightclub in response to a claim of racist door policy

In just seven cases, venues responded to complaints with requests for more information and pledged to investigate the incidents.

We only found one example of a venue escalating a complaint and launching an investigation into their third-party security agency.

When we draw these online reviews together, a distinct pattern emerges; one of widespread, pervasive racism within Glasgow's night-time economy and a near-complete lack of accountability and appropriate action from the businesses at its centre.

However, it is essential to recognise that while some complaints are clustered around a small number of venues, these are not isolated incidents caused by a handful of bouncers and bartenders with overtly racist views. These experiences are a direct result of deeply entrenched racism within Scotland and the mobilisation of this prejudice through the policies and practices used within Glasgow's night-time economy.

Racism is a systemic issue and left unchallenged; it will continue to negatively impact the lives and wellbeing of Black and minority ethnic people in Scotland, denying them the right to live their lives free of discrimination and prejudice.



## Door Supervision in Glasgow's Night-Time Economy

As highlighted within this report, policing and security play central roles in shaping people's experiences of the night-time economy. However, the policies and procedures used by venues and security agencies can often disproportionately target and penalise Black and minority ethnic groups, subjecting them to racial profiling and authoritative, confrontational interactions with door supervisors.

While CRER has been aware of widespread anecdotal evidence of this for some time, our understandings of these processes have been significantly limited by a lack of data.

Therefore, to address this data gap and improve understandings within a Glaswegian context, CRER launched an investigation into some of the city's most prominent bars, nightclubs and music venues.

Using observational research techniques, we were able to directly monitor door supervision practices and assess how security personnel treated Black and minority ethnic groups compared to their white Scottish/British counterparts.

This involved groups of undercover 'mystery shoppers' visiting a series of bars, nightclubs and music venues within Glasgow's city centre and evaluating their door supervision techniques for evidence of differential impact.

### Methodology

To determine whether someone's ethnicity influences how they are treated by door supervisors, CRER sent groups of 'mystery-shoppers' to some of Glasgow's most prominent bars and nightclubs to see how their door staff treated Black and minority ethnic patrons compared to their white counterparts.

Venues were visited by two groups, one consisting entirely of people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and the other of white people to act as a control. These groups would then travel between licensed premises along a pre-established route and attempt to gain entry to each venue.

The arrival of each group was separated by ten minutes to obscure any connections between them whilst also ensuring that the degree of

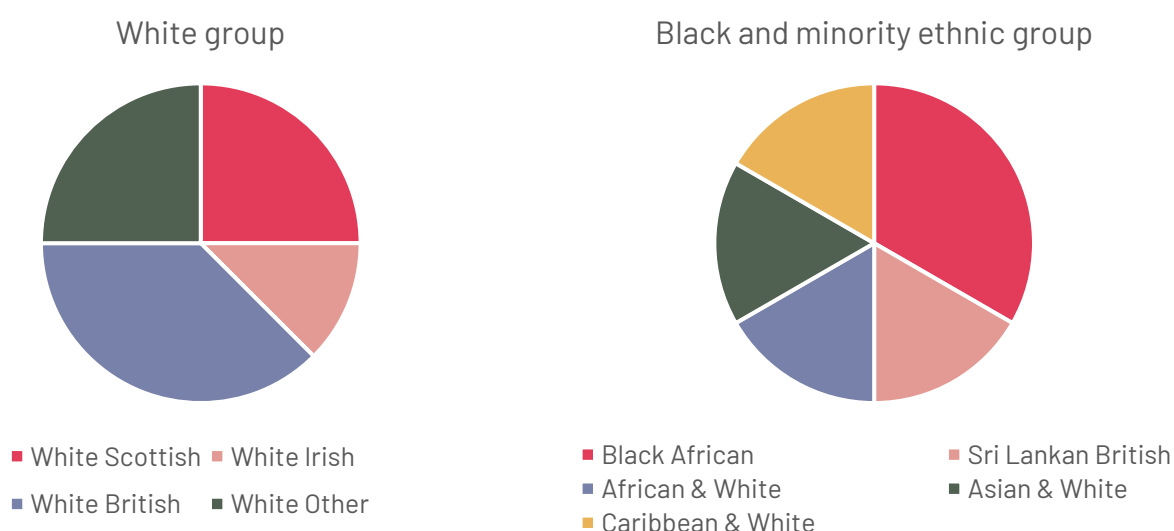


crowding remained consistent, as venue capacity limits could skew admission decisions.

To ensure that data was collected in as controlled an environment as possible, we took several steps to promote consistency between groups so that the only significant difference between each research group was their ethnic make-up.

For instance, participants wore largely similar clothing in line with venue dress code policies, shared other protected characteristics as much as possible, and had similar physical builds to ensure they were more consistently assessed during bouncers' dynamic risk assessments.

**Figure 5: Ethnic make-up of observational research groups**



Steps were also taken to ensure that all participants adhered to venue policies and broadly reflected the patrons visiting each location. These controls were determined during a preliminary scoping session, which assessed the suitability of licensed premises based on the characteristics of their clientele, such as average group size and their clothing styles. This would help guarantee that door supervisors would be unable to distinguish between authentic patrons and those evaluating their experience of gaining entry, reducing the risk of biased treatment.<sup>43</sup>

It was also important to maximise consistency between other environmental factors, such as crowd sizes and the demographics of others participating in the night-time economy, as this could influence the behaviours and decisions of door supervisors. Therefore, research sessions were conducted over two payday weekends on dates chosen to



reflect the peak activity of Glasgow's night-time economy. For instance, dates were selected to avoid student exams and holiday periods, as this could skew the number and demographics of those visiting bars and nightclubs in the city centre. These timings ensured that crowd sizes were comparable between each assessment and allowed for more consistency between the demographics of research participants and other patrons on the premises.

Participants recorded their observations and evaluated their experiences of gaining entry using a six-part questionnaire, completed directly after each interaction with door staff.<sup>††</sup> This collected information on the number and perceived racial appearance of security personnel, the questions they asked and the actions they took, and allowed participants to score the general tone of the interaction. These questions were designed based on the conventional parts of a door supervisor's dynamic risk assessment, as listed within training materials, whilst also making specific provisions for some of the common race equality issues associated with these interactions.

For example, participants would be asked to specify whether they had their IDs checked, were asked about their relation to the group, or were physically searched whilst gaining entry.

Before each session, participants received instructions on how to use this assessment framework and were briefed on the types of practices used by door supervisors to maintain a pattern of suspicion, surveillance, and heightened security regarding Black and minority ethnic groups. This allowed for greater consistency between the results collected by each test group and helped equip participants to recognise these issues during their interactions with door staff.

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<sup>††</sup> A full copy of this questionnaire is included in the appendices of this report.

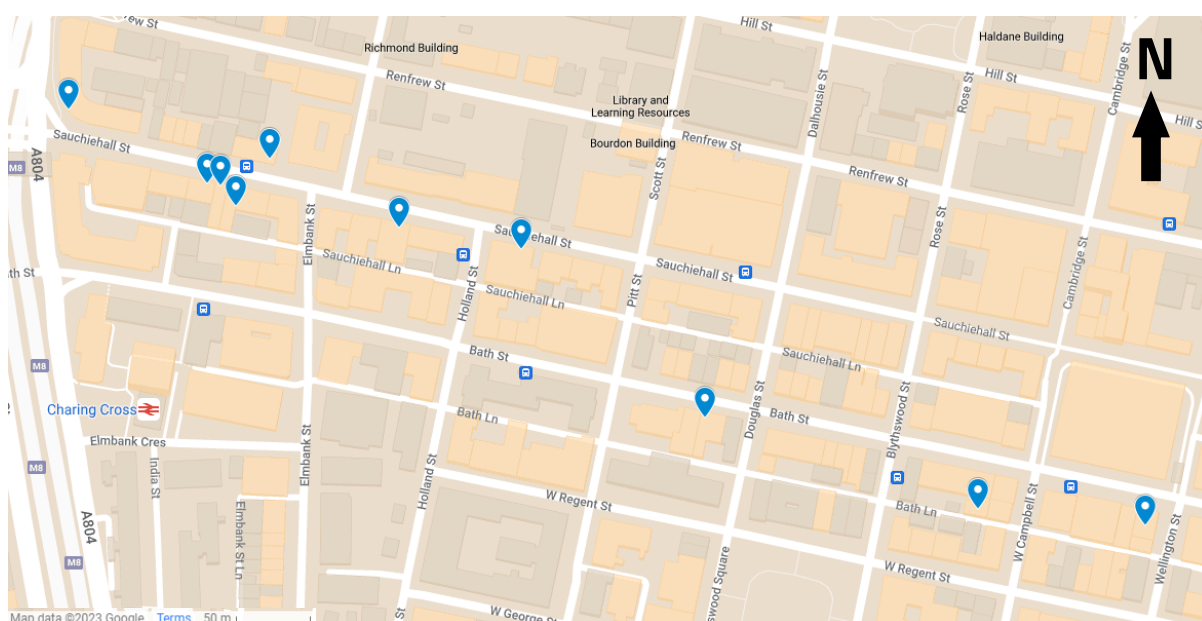


## Area of Focus

To allow for multiple venues to be assessed in quick succession, we focused our study on two streets of major significance to Glasgow's night-time economy and mainstream nightlife culture: Sauchiehall Street and Bath Street.

As these two streets are home to over 100 licensed premises, individual venues were selected based on their popularity, their prevalence within our analysis of online reviews, and their suitability to the methodology and timings of this research. For example, once a shortlist of bars and nightclubs had been drafted, we checked each venue's events timetable to ensure that they were not hosting any unique ticketed events that would skew admissions processes and the types of interactions groups would have with door staff.

**Figure 6: Locations of licensed premises visited during the observational research exercise**



A total of 10 bars and nightclubs were evaluated by research participants, allowing us to collect data from 80 individual admissions processes. This allowed us to assess how door supervisors at each location treated patrons and whether this varied with ethnicity.



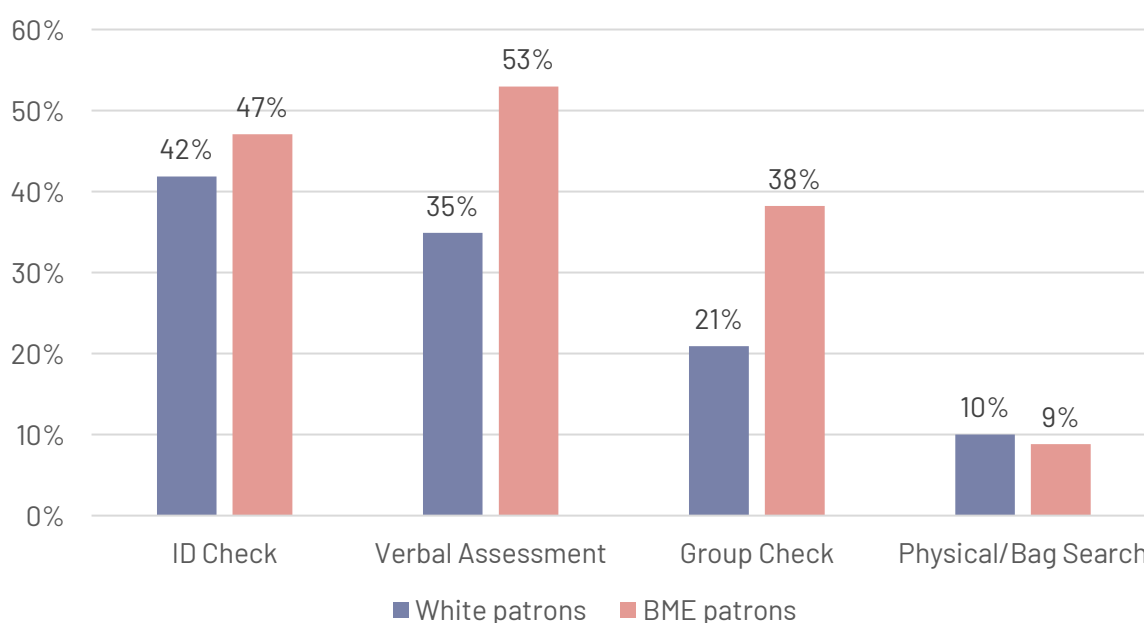


## Results

We found clear evidence of Black and minority ethnic people being treated differently by door supervisors when trying to gain entry to bars and nightclubs in Glasgow.

This largely amounted to Black and minority ethnic patrons being more intensely scrutinised during ID checks and door supervisors' verbal assessments, forming a clear and consistent pattern of minority ethnic groups being subject to greater caution, suspicion, and surveillance than their white counterparts.

**Figure 7: Actions taken by door supervisors, disaggregated by participant ethnicity**



For example, we found that over half of minority ethnic people were questioned by door supervisors compared to around a third of white revellers and were more consistently asked to provide proof of age and identity when gaining entry.

The exact nature of these interactions ranged significantly, but they often consisted of bouncers asking for more information about Black and minority ethnic groups, such as questioning where they had been earlier in the evening, how much they had to drink before arriving, and what the group's relationship to one another were.



These verbal assessments typically allow door supervisors to evaluate the suitability of patrons and gauge their degree of intoxication based on their speech and responsiveness. Therefore, when door supervisors disproportionately question Black and minority ethnic groups, it suggests that they anticipate them to be rowdier and more disorderly than white Scottish/British groups, necessitating a greater degree of caution.

We also found that Black and minority ethnic groups were nearly twice as likely to be questioned about their relation to one another and the size of their party, indicating that Black groups were perceived as larger and less likely to know one another.

Some minority ethnic participants also noted how door staff rigorously assessed the authenticity of their IDs as if they were more likely to be fake or doctored. This included bouncers using flashlights to scrutinise written details and their photo's likeness, and scratching the surface of plastic ID cards to check for signs of tampering.

While these behaviours are all consistent with principles and techniques taught in door supervision training, their disproportionate and selective use on Black and minority ethnic revellers indicates a pattern of racial profiling within Glasgow's night-time economy. Such that, there appears to be a pervasive, systemic issue of Black and minority ethnic people being held to a greater degree of scrutiny than their white counterparts, making them more likely to be knocked back and denied entry to Glasgow's bars and nightclubs.

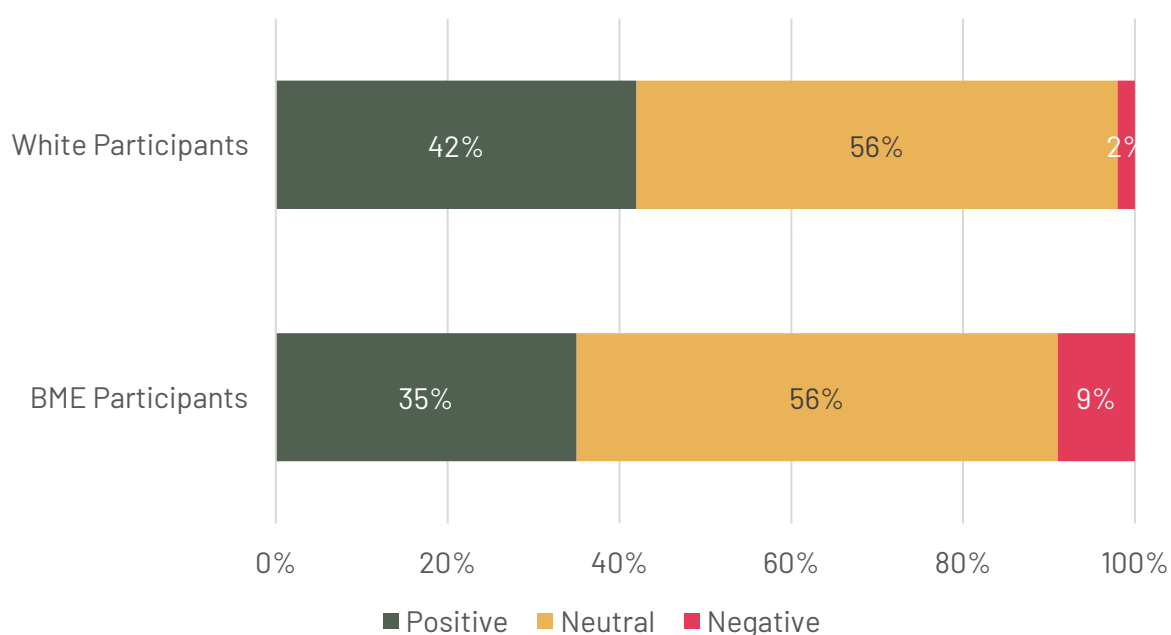
We also collected data on whether participants were physically searched or had their belongings searched by security personnel; however, just one of the nightclubs visited had a search policy in place and searched all patrons trying to gain entry. While the sample size is too small to draw concrete conclusions from, we did notice that Black and minority ethnic patrons were more likely to be physically patted down by bouncers during security checks compared to only having their belongings, such as their bags or wallets, searched.

Future attempts to collect data on the disproportionate searching of Black and minority ethnic revellers should seek to better consider the types of search policies in place and collect more detailed information about these interactions.



This wider pattern of racial profiling contributes to Black and minority ethnic people having more negative experiences when interacting with door staff, leading to some participants describing bouncers as 'stand-offish' and 'cold'. So, while we did not find conclusive evidence of disproportionate physical searches or observe any overt acts of racial discrimination, we found that minority ethnic people were over four times more likely than their counterparts to perceive their interactions with bouncers as negative. This meant that nearly one in ten attempts at gaining entry to a bar or nightclub in Glasgow was described as a negative experience for Black and minority ethnic people.

**Figure 8: Proportion of participants reporting positive, neutral, and negative interactions with door supervisors, disaggregated by ethnicity**



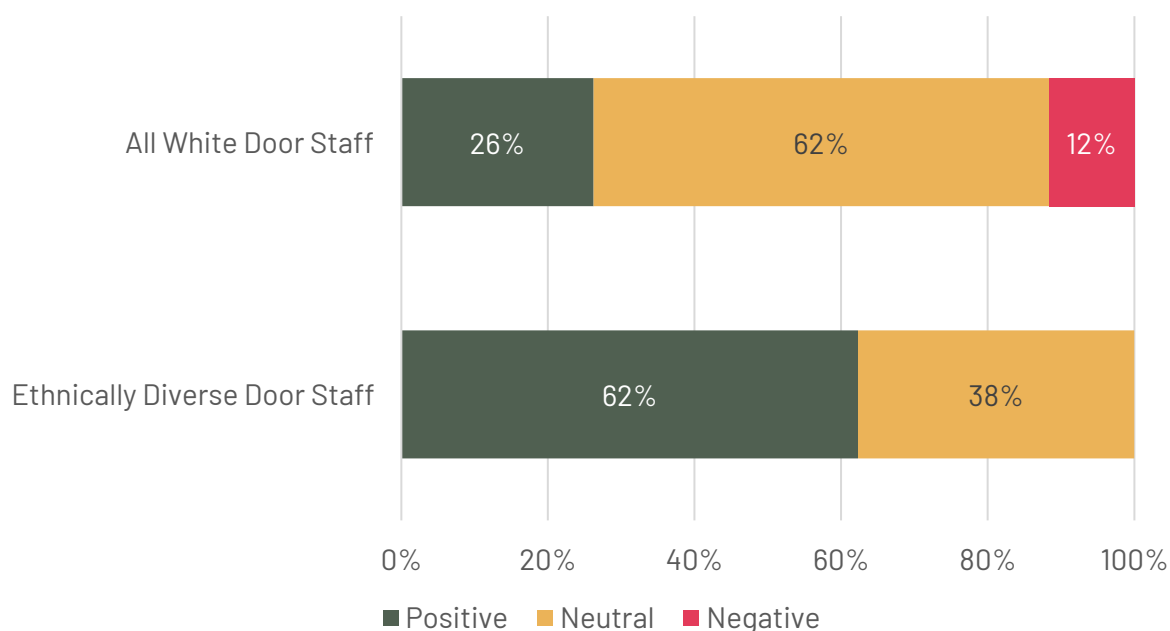
As part of this research, CRER also explored whether the ethnic make-up of door supervision teams influenced the treatment of Black and minority ethnic patrons.

We found that Black and minority ethnic patrons generally had much more positive experiences when interacting with ethnically diverse door supervision teams compared to those consisting entirely of white bouncers. While just a small proportion of venues had ethnically diverse



door staff, our BME research participants reported that nearly two-thirds of these interactions were positive, compared to just a quarter of interactions with white bouncers. There were no recorded negative interactions with ethnically diverse door supervision teams.

**Figure 9: How BME participants perceived their interactions with bouncers, disaggregated by door supervisor ethnicity**



This tells us that venues employing an ethnically diverse workforce tend to fare better at making Black and minority ethnic patrons feel comfortable during security checks and admissions processes, perhaps because they feel less concerned about being racially profiled or discriminated against.

Ultimately, the data collected in this study highlights a clear and consistent pattern of Black and minority ethnic revellers being subject to greater suspicion, surveillance, and security than their white counterparts, consistent with the anecdotal evidence heard during our call for evidence and focus group discussions.

While this observational research exercise is underpinned by a limited sample size with limited repeats, it marks a starting point in addressing the significant data gaps surrounding a long-standing yet under-researched issue in Scotland.



Future work in this area should strive to expand the scope of investigation and collect data in a more granular, robust way. For instance, an expanded study could work to determine whether these processes impact specific ethnic groups differently and explore the role of other factors, such as gender, skin colour, and other protected characteristics.

### **What does this mean for Glasgow?**

Having analysed over 100 online reviews of Glasgow's licensed premises and collected first-of-its-kind primary data about door supervision practices within Glasgow's city centre, we have been able to improve our understandings of the nature and extent of racism within bars, nightclubs and music venues within Scotland's capital.

Despite the ethnic diversity of the city's population, we found that Glasgow's night-time economy reproduces the same racist practices we see at a national level. From the disproportionate policing and surveillance of Black and minority ethnic groups to overtly racist business practices, it is clear that racism is systemic and self-perpetuating within Glasgow's vibrant and internationally renowned nightlife scene, highlighting how the promotion of diversity without targeted anti-racist action consistently falls short of eliminating systemic racism.

Glasgow's Black and minority ethnic population deserves equal access to these social spaces so that they can share a sense of safety and belonging and freely participate in the night-time economy without fear of discrimination, violence and harassment.

Without tackling these issues, Black and minority ethnic people will continue to be excluded from spaces and activities central to Glasgow's cultural identity, undermining efforts to advance community cohesion, foster good relations, and promote race equality in Scotland.

**“The younger generation do want to experience the clubs and the bars. It's good for them to enjoy their lives, have a good time and witness these things – become part of that culture.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Pakistani heritage**



## Towards an Inclusive Night-Time Economy

The night-time economy is an incredibly important part of Scotland's social fabric, providing spaces for people to come together, socialise, and find community. However, access to these spaces is far from equal, with many groups facing a combination of barriers to their participation in - and enjoyment of - these spaces, limiting their sense of safety, togetherness and belonging.

Therefore, as part of this research, we wanted to hear from Black and minority ethnic groups about what can be done to better include and support them in the night-time economy and Scotland's mainstream nightlife cultures.

During focus group discussions, we asked participants about what attracts them to the bars, nightclubs and music scenes they feel most included in. Their responses varied considerably, but they often highlighted the benefits of businesses and organisations taking pro-active steps to advance safety and promote the inclusion of marginalised groups.

For instance, some participants spoke about how venues serving as dedicated safe spaces and community hubs for structurally disadvantaged groups often made them feel safer and more included, even if they didn't share the same protected characteristics. Participants also mentioned how nightlife scenes that actively celebrated people's individuality do not pressure Black and minority ethnic people to self-police to fit in, giving them room to find their own sense of identity and belonging within these spaces.

**"I would say [that I feel more included] in [places] like gay bars and LGBTQI+ spaces. As well, I've always had a fairly good experience in goth or alternative clubs, just because I feel like there is more of an idea of being individual and everyone's celebrating that."**

**- Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

Participants also discussed the positive effects of seeing other Black and minority ethnic people in bars and nightclubs and how this could help them feel less out of place in a crowd. This representation often relieved



concerns about their safety, reduced feelings of hyper-visibility and surveillance and made them feel more likely to be welcomed.

**“Me and my friends’ favourite club is [a reggaeton bar in Edinburgh] because it felt like a safer space for you to go to because it was super diverse, and as a woman, it just felt safer. You didn’t feel like you were looking over your shoulder at all.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Asian and White Mixed heritage**

This also extended to seeing Black and minority ethnic people represented as service providers, both in terms of door supervision teams and staff working inside licensed premises. Participants described how the representation of Black and minority ethnic groups within the night-time economy workforce contributed to them feeling better connected to venues and more likely to be supported if they are discriminated against.

**“I like to go to [a reggaeton bar in Edinburgh] because the bouncer is a person of colour, a lot of the staff inside are people of colour, and it just generally feels more diverse, and so I feel a lot safer and a lot calmer.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

**“From then [after a racist incident], I’ve kind of tried to go to clubs where either the staff or the bouncers are people of colour.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

**“When you’ve got [employees] who don’t have the lived experience of being a victim of racism or homophobia or sexism working in these spaces, then the expectancy of them to maintain the same level of empathy as someone who has had those experiences wouldn’t be as high.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

Therefore, when bars, nightclubs and music venues take proactive action to improve the diversity of their clientele and workforce, this can pay





dividends in terms of supporting Black and minority ethnic people and encouraging them to visit.

Participants also spoke about actions venues can take to make them feel comfortable, safe and part of the community. These included signposting efforts on venue policies, such as zero-tolerance towards hate and discrimination, and wider information on what to do and who to contact in the event of discrimination, violence and harassment.

**“There’s a pub in town [Glasgow] with an anti-discrimination statement behind the bar – and that’s the first thing you see [...] I was immediately made to feel more comfortable because you’ve got such a clear intention set out. There’s a zero-tolerance policy in effect and if you’ve got bouncers working there, you know the policies in place and that they may have received a bit of training on how they should respond to these types of issues, so that can only bode well.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

These views were shared by others within the focus groups, with participants highlighting how signposting initiatives could be an effective method for assuring Black and minority ethnic people that their concerns, safety and wellbeing would be taken seriously.

For instance, one participant suggested that more could be done to raise awareness on issues of racism and the actions available to you for reporting discrimination, citing how ‘Ask for Angela’ posters had helped them become aware of gender-based violence issues and the options available to them. They suggested that posters and notices about your rights and legal protections, as well as details of who to speak to if you experience discrimination, would make a tangible difference in supporting Black and minority ethnic people in the night-time economy.

This was a particularly pressing issue as many of those we consulted during this research felt isolated and unsupported when they had experienced racism on nights out, such that wider education on these issues could empower people to become more effective active bystanders.



Participants also spoke about how some of the venues they frequent had taken steps to help them feel included and as though they were less likely to be treated differently due to their race. For instance, some highlighted how employees would go out of their way to be personable and not treat Black and minority ethnic patrons as anomalous, whilst others praised proactive efforts to be inclusive, such as venues having extensive non-alcoholic drink menus or Halal food options.

**“The management were very good at interacting with the customers, and you never felt like they were differentiating between minority ethnic customers and white Scottish customers, and that made a big difference.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

The groups also stressed how licensed premises themselves can benefit from making dedicated efforts to be culturally sensitive and include Black and minority ethnic people in their spaces.

This largely related to increased business for venues appealing to Black and minority ethnic crowds, as people would be more likely to congregate and spend money where they feel safe and comfortable. They also described the significant cultural benefits of inclusive spaces within the night-time economy, citing how they facilitate a greater degree of cultural exchange and can help communities find a shared sense of identity.

**“If it's a business that's inclusive for all white, Black and minority ethnic people – where they make you feel at home – then you feel safe there. Obviously, you're gonna go back there and you're gonna tell your friends that this is a place that includes us and we can feel safe and we're treated as equal. The business itself will see the rewards of that, they'll see greater income.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Pakistani heritage**

**“In Glasgow, the money is there if you choose to involve Black and minority ethnic and Asian folk. So, if the culture in clubs and pubs change, it'll only benefit them.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Pakistani heritage**



However, focus group participants also recognised that these arguments may not be sufficient to encourage large-scale cultural change within Scotland's night-time economy and that greater incentives may be required.

As part of these discussions, some participants spoke about how licensing regulations or a third-party accreditation service could reward businesses for their performance on or commitments towards racial equality.

**“At the end of the day, these places are businesses and they run off profit. So, if they're going to get an actual carrot they can use to their own business advantage, then all the better.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

For instance, one participant spoke about the potential influence of award schemes like [Best Bar None](#), which work to recognise and celebrate licensed premises with strong commitments to public safety and improving standards within the night-time economy. They suggested that schemes like this could be expanded to consider performance on equality; rewarding bars, nightclubs and music venues that made zero-tolerance commitments towards discrimination, featured anti-racist signposting, or delivered equalities training to their staff.

Licensing boards themselves could also play a role in this, using existing mechanisms to reward premises for the equalities performance. For example, the Glasgow Licensing Board recently ran a 12-month pilot of a 4am terminal licensed hour for nightclubs, issuing an additional hour to licensing holders that can demonstrate a level of excellence in the way they manage their premises.<sup>44</sup> This scheme intended to reward nightclubs for their commitment to social responsibility, staff training, investment in safety and security, and performance on environmental factors, such as reduced single-use plastic.

These practices could be expanded to include specific commitments towards anti-racism and wider performance on equality, all of which should be routinely considered as part of licensing boards' duties to eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.



**“I can't over-estimate the importance of having a tangible reward in place for organisations. Whether it's an extra hour's opening time or something else – it will only make things better.”**

**– Focus Group Participant, Indian heritage**

Therefore, licensing boards seeking to better perform their legal duties should consider implementing mechanisms to ensure that their licensing policies and decisions consider the needs and experiences of Black and minority ethnic people within the night-time economy. They should recognise their role in perpetuating systemic racism and the exclusion of minority ethnic groups, making specific provisions to ensure that license holders take proactive steps to uphold equality legislation and eliminate discrimination.

This could include requirements for venues to vet their entry policies and door supervision practices for evidence of differential impact or introduce mandatory equality training schemes, similar to requirements for staff to receive ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) training.

These suggestions were also echoed by some survey respondents, who questioned the adequacy of door supervision training due to its failure to effectively address issues of racial profiling and racist exclusion, despite written SIA guidelines on the topic.

**“Bouncers are not trained against racial profiling enough, there needs to be more training.”**

**– Survey Respondent, Pakistani heritage**

Other suggestions included using risk assessment mechanisms, like those used to protect against child exploitation, to inform policies, procedures and training procedures with regard to race. These could be used during licensing decisions and license review processes to determine whether premises are doing enough to tackle both 'conscious' and 'unconscious' discrimination. Processes like these can provide a direct opportunity for local authorities and license holders to consider the experiences of Black and minority ethnic groups and take steps to tackle systemic racism.



Ultimately, achieving truly inclusive and anti-racist nightlife cultures in Scotland will require combined efforts from a range of stakeholders, from licensing boards and license holders to third-party security agencies and individual event organisers.

Every part of the night-time economy has a role to play in eliminating systemic and culturally entrenched racism within Scotland's nightlife.

For instance, businesses themselves can take steps to empower Black and minority ethnic people to participate in nightlife activities with a shared sense of safety and belonging and can use their platforms to set a zero-tolerance stance towards discrimination, harassment and exclusion and educate people on their rights.

However, racism is fundamentally a structural issue, and it cannot be eliminated by individual examples of good practice and inclusivity. There are significant parts of local policy and national legislation that have allowed racism to embed and perpetuate itself within Scotland's night-time economy, and these must be tackled through effective anti-racist approaches to policy design and implementation.

Without effective top-level consideration of the needs and experiences of Black and minority ethnic people in Scotland, structural racism will continue to worsen the life experiences and wellbeing of minority ethnic populations and undermine efforts to foster good relations between communities.



## Conclusions

This research project set out to illuminate a significant yet under-researched area of racial discrimination in Scotland by uncovering the realities of racism in Scotland's night-time economy.

We found that racism within Scottish nightlife is a complex phenomenon, operating at structural, cultural and interpersonal levels to undermine the experiences of Black and minority ethnic people and exclude them from the spaces and activities central to this key aspect of social life.

These forms of discrimination and exclusion varied significantly.

At a structural level, we found that racism worked to overlook and play down the needs and experiences of Black and minority ethnic people within the night-time economy, causing policy design and implementation to perpetuate a cycle of racist exclusion and allowing a pattern of discrimination to go unnoticed and unaddressed by decisionmakers.

Whereas racism embedded at a cultural level contributed to a pattern of widespread racial insensitivity and exclusionary behaviour by normalising racist stereotypes and microaggressions.

This also influenced the practices and behaviours of service providers and those working within the night-time economy, causing door supervisors to subject Black and minority ethnic patrons to disproportionate and selective suspicion, surveillance and scrutiny, and bar and waiting staff to deliver poorer quality service to minority ethnic customers.

As a result, the spaces connected to Scotland's night-time economy can become environments in which acts of interpersonal racism go unchallenged by both staff and other patrons, leaving Black and minority ethnic people isolated and unsupported.

These processes can have significant and multi-faceted impacts on Black and minority ethnic people in Scotland. This includes harm to their safety and wellbeing, a reduced sense of belonging and connectedness to their local communities and shared identities, and the undermining of efforts to foster good relations between communities and promote their cohesion. Left unaddressed, these forms of racism will likely perpetuate themselves within Scotland's night-time economy, causing discrimination to become an even greater factor in Black and minority ethnic people's everyday lives.



As part of this research, we also sought to improve understandings of how these processes manifest in Scotland's largest and most ethnically diverse city, Glasgow.

We found that despite the city's ethnic diversity, its local night-time economy reproduced the same systemically racist practices observed at a national level, limiting Black and minority ethnic people's access to these spaces and activities and worsening their experiences of them.

This showed us that the exclusionary cultures and discriminatory practices within the night-time economy do not solely stem from an under-representation of Black and minority ethnic participants. These forms of racism are structural, meaning they are both culturally entrenched and embedded within many of the systems and policies underpinning Scotland's night-time economy.

However, we should recognise that many have already taken significant steps to promote safety, fairness, and inclusivity within Scotland's nightlife, sending clear messages of anti-discrimination whilst also acknowledging that Scotland's nightlife culture, as it exists today, would not be the same without the invaluable contributions and creative outputs of Black and minority ethnic groups.

Therefore, we firmly believe that change is possible, but it requires the combined effort of individuals, businesses and policymakers, meaning that we all have a role to play in advancing the inclusivity of Scotland's night-time economy and eliminating racism from it.

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Scotland should be a place in which communities of all kinds can experience freedom from discrimination, stereotyping, harassment or violence; a shared sense of belonging and acceptance; and the ability to participate equally in economic, political, civic and social life.

Racism has no place in Scotland, and the night-time economy, as a key aspect of economic and social life, should be no exception to this.





## Recommendations

As demonstrated throughout this report, racism in Scotland's night-time economy is upheld by a range of structural, institutional and cultural mechanisms, meaning that everyone has a role to play in eliminating it.

CRER makes the following recommendations to licensing boards and license holders:

### Licensing Boards

#### Meeting their legal obligations

- As subjects of the Public Sector Equality Duties, licensing boards should assess their compliance with the duty to foster good relations, advance equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. They should also identify ways to measure this, with action taken to remedy deficits (including through equality mainstreaming and equality outcome-setting processes).

Success in this area would fulfil the vision that people experience:

- Freedom from discrimination, stereotyping, harassment or violence
  - A shared sense of belonging and acceptance
  - The ability to participate equally in economic, political, civic and social life
  - Freedom to agree or disagree respectfully, without fear of reprisal or rejection<sup>45</sup>
- To effectively uphold the Licensing Objectives established by the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, licensing boards must give specific consideration to equality issues during licensing policy design, licensing decisions, and license reviews. This should include:
    - Completing thorough and well-researched Equality Impact Assessments when designing local licensing policies. This should be part of the ongoing policy design process rather than an exercise completed at the end.For guidance on effectively using Equality Impact



Assessments, stakeholders may wish to refer to the Equality and Human Rights Commission's guide on [Assessing Impact and the Public Sector Equality Duty](#) and CRER's [Better Impacts](#) publication

- Encouraging license holders to become familiar with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and display notices about people's legal rights and protections under it
- Encouraging license holders and operators of licensed premises to conduct risk assessments regarding race equality and use them to inform their policies, procedures and staff training initiatives
- Specifically considering issues related to racism when investigating venues with an established history of complaints during license review processes
- Ensure that when considering obligations under the Equality Act 2010 race is held to the same standard as other protected characteristics

### **Rewarding good practice**

- Similar to the pilot schemes deployed in Glasgow, licensing boards should consider offering tangible rewards, such as an additional terminal hour, for license holders showcasing strong commitments to and good performance on equality
- Implement schemes to recognise and accredit license holders with strong commitments to equality, similar to the All Bar None award scheme



## **License Holders (bars, nightclubs and other venues)**

There are also several steps that businesses themselves can take to advance the inclusivity of the night-time economy and eliminate racism from it.

### **Business policies**

- Develop written policies on equality, inclusion and anti-discrimination to establish a shared organisational stance
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards racist discrimination, with this applying to both employees and customers on the premises
- Review how complaints about racism have been previously handled to identify opportunities to improve policy and practice

### **Approaches to security and door supervision**

- Take steps to employ an ethnically diverse workforce, particularly among those with security responsibilities
- If using third-party security agencies, take steps to ensure that there is transparent communication of this to mitigate reduced accountability
- Routinely assess door staff against the Security Authority Industry's written standards of behaviour, particularly regarding guidelines on the treatment of customers and anti-discrimination legislation
- Establish mechanisms to evaluate door supervision practices for evidence of differential impact

### **Staff training**

- Deliver equalities and specifically anti-racist training to all staff to reduce the impacts of systemic racism and better equip their staff to support Black and minority ethnic people facing discrimination
- Deliver specific training to door supervisors on anti-racism and unconscious bias to help minimise practices of racial profiling and stereotyping



**Signposting**

- Display notices on organisational policies towards discrimination, such as zero-tolerance policies, and who to speak to in the event of someone being discriminated against
- Similar to practices under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Act 2010, display information on people's rights and protections under the Equality Act 2010 and hate crime legislation

**Wider inclusivity**

- Take steps to advance inclusivity in the night-time economy, such as providing a larger range of non-alcoholic drinks
- Make efforts to consult customers on their comfort and safety on the premises, ensuring that people can provide feedback on the successes and failures



## Appendices

### Call for Evidence: Experiences of Racism in Scotland's Night-Time Economy – Questionnaire

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is producing research on the prevalence and nature of racism within Scotland's night-time economy. As part of this, we are gathering evidence of people's experiences of racial discrimination in nightclubs and bars across Scotland.

If you have ever experienced or witnessed racism, in any form, during a night out, we are interested in hearing your story.

This research will feed into a wider campaign to raise awareness of the pervasive issue of racial discrimination in Scotland's nightlife and inform policy action from CRER.

You can learn more about CRER and the work we do on our website: <https://www.crer.org.uk/>

If, at any point, you would like to withdraw your consent for the use of your data, please send an email to: [research@crer.org.uk](mailto:research@crer.org.uk)

#### \* Response required

1. Where did this incident take place? (Venue [if you're willing to share and location] \*)

*Please note: this research **only** covers Scotland.*

2. Please share our experience below \*

*It can be difficult and traumatic to share our experiences of racism. Please only provide as much detail as you are willing to.*

3. How did this experience make you feel?

*This response can be as long and detailed as you see fit.*

4. Please tell us about yourself: which category best describes your ethnic identity? \*

*This information will only be viewed by the principal researcher for analytical purposes and will not be published in any individually identifiable way. The following categories are largely selected based on those used for Scotland's 2022 Census.*

*In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the data collected in this research will be used solely for the purpose of the research study and will be processed in line with CRER's Data Protection Policy: <https://www.crer.org.uk/gdpr-statement> - your data will be kept confidential, stored securely, and will only be accessed by the principal researcher.*



- White
  - Mixed or Multiple Ethnicities
  - Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian
  - Black, Black Scottish or Black British
  - Other Ethnic Group
5. White Ethnicities - Please state which specific ethnic group you identify with:
- Scottish
  - British
  - Irish
  - Polish
  - Gypsy / Traveller
  - Roma
  - Showman / Showwoman
  - Other: Please specify
6. Mixed Ethnicities - Please state which specific ethnic group you identify with:
- African & White
  - Asian & White
  - Caribbean & White
  - Other: Please specify
7. Asian Ethnicities - Please state which specific ethnic group you identify with:
- Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani
  - Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian
  - Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi
  - Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese
  - Other: Please specify
8. Black Ethnicities - Please state which specific ethnic group you identify with:



- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Other: Please specify

9. Other Ethnicities – Please state which specific ethnic group you identify with:

- Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab
- Latino / Latina / Latinx
- Prefer not to say
- Other: Please specify

10. Please tell us about yourself: What was your age at the time of this incident?

*This information will only be viewed by the principal researcher for analytical purposes and will not be published in any individually identifiable way.*

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45 and over

11. **Part A:** Please tell us about yourself: which category best describes your gender identity?

*This information will only be viewed by the principal researcher for analytical purposes and will not be published in any individually identifiable way.*

*Please note, answers to parts A and B of this question are analysed in conjunction. This allows us to include everyone whilst filtering answers when we take account of the experience of men and women who consider themselves to be a trans person, and those who do not, separately.*

- Female (including trans women)
- Male (including trans men)
- Any non-binary identity
- Prefer not to say
- Other: Please specify

12. **Part B:** Do you identify, or have you ever identified, as a trans person?





*Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.*

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

13. Please tell us about yourself: Is there any other protected characteristic information that we should be aware of?

*Your protected characteristics include your sexual orientation, disability status and religion or belief.*

14. Do you consent to your story being presented as part of CRER's research? \*

*Your story will likely be summarised and presented among other people's experiences; however, we may wish to directly quote parts of your response*

15. Would you like to be kept updated on this research project and the wider work of CRER? \*

*If you would like to be sent the findings of this research and any outcomes, please let us know.*

- Yes
- No

16. Would you mind being contacted by CRER about your experience? \*

*While we appreciate how hard it can be to share and relive experiences of racism, there may be cases where more information could help our research.*

- I am happy to be contacted
- I would rather not be contacted



## Call for Evidence: Survey Respondent Demographics

### Overall Ethnicities:

White	5
Mixed or Multiple Ethnicities	10
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	11
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	9
Other Ethnic Group	1

### Specific White Ethnicities:

Scottish	1
British	3
Irish	1

### Specific Mixed or Multiple Ethnicities:

African & White	2
Asian & White	2
Caribbean & White	4
Other	2

### Specific Asian Ethnicities:

Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani	1
Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian	5
Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese	1
Other	3
Unknown	1

### Specific Black Ethnicities:

Black African	8
Other	1

### Other Ethnicities:

Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab	1
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### Respondent Age:

Under 18	1
18-24	19



25-34	6
35-44	2
45 and over	3
Unknown	5

### **Respondent Gender Identities:**

Female (including trans women)	18
Male (including trans men)	13
Any non-binary identity	1
Unknown	4

### **Respondent Trans Status:**

Does identify, or previously identified as a trans person	2
Does not identify as trans (cis-gender)	29
Unknown	5

### **Other Protected Characteristic Information (write-in):**

Bisexual	4
Gay	2
Queer	3
Disabled	3
Muslim	1
Christian	1
Other	2



**Focus Group Discussions: Attendee demographics**

Total sign-ups: 395

Total selected: 18

**Overall Ethnicities:**

White	0
Mixed or Multiple Ethnicities	4
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	7
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	5
Other Ethnic Group	2

**Specific Mixed or Multiple Ethnicities:**

African & White	1
Asian & White	1
Caribbean & White	1
Other	1

**Specific Asian Ethnicities:**

Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani	1
Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian	4
Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese	1
Other	1

**Specific Black Ethnicities:**

Black African	5
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**Other Ethnicities:**

Other	2
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**Participant Gender Identities:**

Female (including trans women)	9
Male (including trans men)	8
Any non-binary identity	1



## Case Study: Observational Research Assessment Framework

### \* Required

1. How many door supervisors were working? \*
  - 0
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4+
2. Could you describe the racial appearance of each door supervisor? \*
  - [Write-in]
3. How would you describe your experience with the bouncers? \*
  - Positive
  - Neutral
  - Negative
4. If possible, please provide more detail about your interaction. Were you: (select all that apply) \*
  - Asked for ID
  - Asked how you were / how your night had been
  - Asked where you had been before
  - Asked to confirm who was in the group
  - Asked about your exact relation to the group
  - Asked to confirm details on your ID
  - Asked to hand over your belongings for a search (bags, wallet, etc.)
  - Physically searched (patted down)
  - Asked how much you've had to drink
  - Asked about your clothing
  - Other: Please specify
5. Were you allowed in? \*
  - Yes
  - No
6. (If 'no' to Q5) Was the entire group knocked back, or just you? \*
  - Whole group
  - Individually knocked back
7. (If 'no' to Q5) Were you given a reason for being turned away? \*
  - Yes
  - No
8. (If 'yes' to Q7) Please state this reasoning. \*
  - Told you were too drunk
  - Told you were not dressed appropriately
  - Told that the venue was at capacity
  - Told that the group was too large
  - Other: please specify



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