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Description automatically generated**CRER Shadow Report submission to the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – United Kingdom 5th Monitoring Cycle 2022**

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) works to eliminate racial discrimination and promote racial justice across Scotland. Through capacity building, research and campaigning activities which respond to the needs of communities, our work takes a strategic approach to tackling deep rooted issues of racial inequality.

CRER has experience of anti-racist work covering areas such as community engagement and empowerment, research and resource development, practical training and equality mainstreaming support for organisations. CRER takes a rights based approach, promoting relevant international, regional and national human rights and equality conventions and legislation.

CRER was pleased to have the opportunity to attend the online meeting with members of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as part of their state visit to the UK. The following written submission provides content and evidence on the key issues CRER feels the Committee should be aware of.

**Framework/Strategies**

The Race Equality Framework for Scotland[[1]](#footnote-1) sets out the Scottish Government’s approach to promoting racial equality and tackling racism and racial inequality between 2016 and 2030. The Framework is based on the priorities, needs and lived experiences of Scotland’s minority ethnic communities, with expertise contributed by the public and voluntary sectors and academia.

The Race Equality Action Plan 2017-21, which sat underneath the Race Equality Framework for Scotland, was published in December 2017.[[2]](#footnote-2) Following the end of this action plan, the Scottish Government published an Immediate Priorities Plan in September 2021.[[3]](#footnote-3) This plan is a short-term delivery mechanism and will be followed by a new action plan designed to meet the goals and visions of the Race Equality Framework for Scotland in 2023.

The Scottish Government published the strategy ‘Improving the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021’ in 2019.[[4]](#footnote-4) Due to the impact of Covid-19, the timeline to complete actions within the plan was extended by 18 months.

**Community Cohesion and Safety**

Racism and prejudice are still significant issues in Scotland and represent a disproportionate amount of hate crime cases. Over the last 10 years racially motivated crime has been the most reported hate crime in Scotland. 3,107 charges relating to race hate crime were reported in 2021-22[[5]](#footnote-5), remaining at a level higher than all other hate crimes added together and representing 55% of the total.

Anecdotal evidence continues to suggest that racist incidents and racist hate crime are under-reported, with victims choosing not to report due to a lack of trust in the police and justice system, confusion surrounding the process, and feeling desensitised to harassment.

The presence of overt racial hostility in Scotland is perhaps most seriously exemplified by the presence of far right groups.[[6]](#footnote-6) Over the years, far right activists in Scotland have consistently re-branded and attempted to define themselves outside the confines of the wider UK far right. For example, National Action linked activists formed Scottish Dawn (which was quickly proscribed under anti-terrorism legislation) and former British National Party members have previously campaigned in Glasgow's Local Authority elections as the Britannica Party. More recently, former Britain First leader Jayda Fransen, a convicted hate criminal, stood in the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections.

Far right terrorism concerns have grown in recent years in Scotland, with the numbers of far right terror suspects referred to Police growing from 23 in 2018 to 39 in 2019.[[7]](#footnote-7) In 2019-20, 21 far right suspects made up the largest proportion of referrals to the Prevent anti-terror programme in Scotland, well over twice the proportion of those with alleged ties to Islamist terrorism. Once assessed for suitability, the proportion of Prevent interventions related to the far right in Scotland is four times higher than those related to Islamist ideology.[[8]](#footnote-8) In one of the most high profile cases, a neo-Nazi who planned to bomb Scottish mosques was jailed for life in 2018.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Whilst a small minority of extremist individuals are involved at this level, it must be recognised that far right recruiting tactics and propaganda do not exist in a vacuum. The central messages about threats to safety, economic stability and cultural life that they use to create fear and defensiveness amongst the majority ethnic population are often reflected in everyday social dialogue, as well as the mainstream media.

Within the recent context of the Covid-19 pandemic, reports indicated that there was aggressive and violent behaviour against some Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, including but not exclusively those of Chinese origin or appearance.[[10]](#footnote-10) A misinformed perception also emerged that certain BME groups were not adhering to lockdown policies, which fueled further racial discrimination and stigmatisation.[[11]](#footnote-11) The impact of wider events on community relations shows the strong need for preventative responses to hate crimes.

Scotland has very little formal policy on community cohesion, and what it does have is largely part of responses to hate crime. Policies have a strong focus on encouraging hate crime reporting, and less on the development of preventative approaches and community cohesion work which engages the majority ethnic community. The lack of focus on community cohesion across both national and local policy in Scotland is a challenge that needs to be urgently addressed.

There are significant issues surrounding community belonging and Scottish identity in relation to race equality. Evidence shows that minority ethnic people are less likely to feel a strong sense of belonging to their local area. In 2012, over three-quarters (78 per cent) of white adults in Scotland felt a very or fairly strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, compared to non-white minority ethnic people at 62%.[[12]](#footnote-12) By 2019, these figures remained largely unchanged (78% of white adults feeling a very or fairly strong sense of belonging compared to 61% of minority ethnic people).[[13]](#footnote-13)

**CRER recommend the Committee note and investigate the lack of focus on community cohesion across both national and local policy in Scotland.**

**Education**

Attainment data tends not to show disadvantages for most minority ethnic groups. Data on achievement for levels related to literacy and numeracy in primary schools shows strong performance rates for BME pupils, and this continues through to secondary school.[[14]](#footnote-14) On leaving school, BME pupils tend to have achieved higher level qualifications.

However, this is not the case for Gypsy/Traveller pupils for whom educational outcomes are among the worst in Scottish education, with fewer qualifications gained, lower attendance rates, higher exclusion rates and fewer individuals progressing to positive destinations.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Pupil exclusion rates by ethnicity were previously published, but no longer appear to be published so an up-to-date analysis is not possible. Previous data had suggested that exclusions may be a particular issue for Gypsy/Traveller pupils. In 2017, Gypsy/Travellers had the highest exclusion rate at about double the average rate (27 exclusions per 1,000 pupils compared to 53 per 1,000 pupils).[[16]](#footnote-16)

In recent years, the ethnicity of pupils in Scotland has changed with the number of BME pupils increasing significantly. In the period from 2006 to 2019, the number of pupils from a Bangladeshi, Chinese, other Asian or mixed ethnic background roughly doubled, whilst pupils from an Indian or Black African or Caribbean background more than doubled.[[17]](#footnote-17) Pupils from a Pakistani background have also increased, making up 2% of school pupils in 2019, up from 1.3%.[[18]](#footnote-18)

However, as the number of BME pupils in Scotland’s schools has increased, minority ethnic teachers have remained significantly underrepresented in Scotland’s schools. In 2008, 0.9% of the teaching workforce in primary schools and 1.9% in secondary schools came from a minority ethnic background.[[19]](#footnote-19) There has been negligible progress over time; in 2019 1.2% of the teaching workforce in primary schools and 1.9% in secondary schools came from a minority ethnic background.[[20]](#footnote-20)

This compares with a minority ethnic population of 4% in Scotland according to the (now significantly outdated) 2011 Census and is also far lower than the percent of BME pupils in Scotland’s schools. Minority ethnic teachers are also underrepresented in promoted posts - 0.5% and 0.9% in primary and secondary schools respectively in 2019.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The Scottish Government had been trying to tackle this issue through the Teaching in a Diverse Scotland agenda, the final report on which was published in 2021.[[22]](#footnote-22) However, given the continued low number of BME teachers, it seems likely this work needs to be re-visited to identify what has been achieved, where the gaps are and, crucially, what more needs to be done.

Another area in which there is the potential for progress is diversity within the school curriculum. Currently, many young people are missing out on opportunities to learn about the diverse histories, heritage and cultures of Scotland, including Scotland's role in empire, colonialism, slavery and migration.

This led CRER to call for an amendment to Curriculum for Excellence to ensure that pupils would learn about Scotland's historical role in empire, colonialism and transatlantic slavery, and the diversity of Scottish society in the past. Petitions with thousands of signatures have shown widespread support for change, especially amongst young people themselves.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Following this, the Scottish Government’s Race Equality and Anti Racism in Education Programme was established.[[24]](#footnote-24) CRER are involved in this programme of work and look forward to seeing the impact of it.

High educational attainment in minority ethnic groups is coupled with a range of negative factors and experiences related to racism and structural discrimination which impact their experience in education. Racism and bullying research has highlighted the widespread existence of both subtle everyday racism and overt racism within schools, impacting pupils and teachers.

In the Scottish Parliament Equalities and Human Rights Committee’s 2017 inquiry into bullying in schools, teachers reported that bullying based on race is the most frequent type of prejudice-based bullying.[[25]](#footnote-25) The inquiry also uncovered serious concerns about inconsistencies in teachers’ understanding of (and responses to) prejudice-based bullying.

CRER research in 2012 and 2018 on racist incident reporting in schools identified significant weaknesses in policy, a lack of coherence across Scottish Local Authority areas and insufficiencies in recording and monitoring of racist incidents in schools.[[26]](#footnote-26) There is no mandatory national approach to recording and monitoring of prejudice based bullying incidents, with data voluntarily collected at local levels but not reported nationally. This makes it difficult to provide a baseline or analysis of change over time. A recent FOI found that between the 2017/18 and 2019/20 academic years there were 2,251 instances of racism in schools.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Accountability for the welfare of minority ethnic young people is urgently needed, at both local and national level. This has led CRER to call for a mandatory, Scotland-wide approach to monitoring and reporting on racist incidents and prejudice-based bullying in schools.

In 2019, the Equality and Human Rights Commission published a report on racial harassment in universities in the UK, including Scotland.[[28]](#footnote-28) The report found that racial harassment is a common experience for students and staff at universities, resulting in both students leaving their studies and staff leaving their jobs. Most students and staff do not report racial harassment and universities do not have a clear picture about much of the racial harassment that is taking place. Following the Commission’s report, the University of Glasgow investigated racism on their campus, finding that half of minority ethnic students had suffered harassment.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Early years education and childcare research has suggested that access to appropriate childcare provision may be an issue for some BME families. Linked to this, there is a current underrepresentation of BME individuals within the Early Learning and Childcare workforce; data from 2018 suggests that only 1% of the workforce are from BME backgrounds.[[30]](#footnote-30)

**CRER recommend the Committee investigates the low numbers and percent of BME teachers in Scotland and queries what more could be done. Additionally, as part of their work, the Committee could look into the Scottish Government’s plans to monitor and tackle racist incidents and prejudice-based bullying.**

**Employability, Employment and Income**

High educational attainment does not translate to labour market advantage for minority ethnic people; employment rates in Scotland are significantly lower for BME groups compared to white majority ethnic groups.

The employment rates for minority ethnic people have consistently remained under the rates for white people and have improved very little since 2004, with no increase since reaching a rate of 60%.[[31]](#footnote-31) For white groups, the employment rate has remained fairly constant at around 73% for the whole sixteen-year period.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Access to employment is a particular issue for BME women. There has been little difference for employment rates for minority ethnic women since 2004, remaining substantially below both BME men and white women.[[33]](#footnote-33) For BME women, gender inequalities intersect with racial inequalities, resulting in higher rates of unemployment. Barriers BME women face in employment include racism, discrimination and prejudice when applying for a job and in the workplace, including in relation to promotional prospects.[[34]](#footnote-34) Caring roles can also affect BME women's ability to do paid work.

Young BME people are less likely to be in employment than their white counterparts. In 2020, 7% of BME 16-19-year-olds were in employment compared to 19% of white 16-19 year olds.[[35]](#footnote-35) The rates in 2019 and 2018 are almost identical, confirming a trend over the last five years since the first data is available.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Patterns of lower employment in this age group can partially be attributed to a higher proportion of BME young people in education. However, this lower employment rate persists after the age young people generally leave college and university. Statistics show that the gap in the employment rate for minority ethnic people was largest for ages 16 to 24 (26.1 percentage points), followed by ages 25 to 34 (25.3 percentage points) with lower rates for older groups.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Unemployment and underemployment are relatively high for BME groups, including for BME graduates. Recent statistics released in 2020 on post-graduation destinations highlighted disparate outcomes for BME graduates compared to white graduates in Scotland. CRER analysis found BME graduates in Scotland are less likely to go into full time employment and are up to three times more likely to be unemployed compared to white graduates.[[38]](#footnote-38)

In relation to public sector employment specifically, the Scottish Parliament Equality and Human Rights Committee’s 2020 inquiry report on race equality, employment and skills clearly demonstrated that public bodies had some way to go in understanding and tackling racial inequalities.[[39]](#footnote-39) Its conclusions stated:

* Despite all the mechanisms or tools at the disposal of public authorities, including their responsibilities under the public sector equality duty (and the Scottish specific duties), the ethnicity employment gap remains unacceptable and much more needs to be done to reduce the ethnicity pay gap and occupational segregation
* Chief Executives and senior leaders within public authorities must demonstrate leadership in this area. It is two decades past the time for acknowledging there is work to do. Now is the time for concerted, definitive action to be taken

Access to modern apprenticeships in Scotland currently reflects inequalities in the labour market. In recognition of historically low levels of participation, a target was set to increase the percentage of BME modern apprenticeships starts to 5.1% by 2021. This target has not been met, with the latest statistics showing that 3.4% of modern apprenticeships starts were from a BME background.[[40]](#footnote-40)

The attractiveness of modern apprenticeships to certain BME groups may be a factor in low participation, however, the lack of open recruitment of many positions and routine discrimination should also be considered against the low percentage of BME young people attaining positions. Substantial progress is needed for modern apprenticeships to be open and accessible to people of all ethnicities in Scotland.

Recent data from Social Security Scotland shows that minority ethnic people made up 8% of applications in 2020. Within this the largest group is ‘Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British’ accounting for 4% of total applications. There continues to be lack of data and research around access to other benefits for BME groups in Scotland (Social Security Scotland administer a small number of benefits). It is unclear whether, and to what extent, minority ethnic groups are under-claiming benefits. Further, the impact of Universal Credit on minority ethnic groups in Scotland is unknown.

Although there is considerable diversity between and within different minority ethnic groups, on average, children from minority ethnic communities in Scotland are more likely to be in poverty.

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets interim child poverty targets to be met in 2023-24, with final targets to be met by 2030. One of the interim targets is that fewer than 18% of children are living in families in relative poverty in 2023-24 (reducing to fewer than 10% by 2030). Scottish Government current projections suggest that this interim target will be met.

However, less than two years from this milestone, the latest statistics show that 48% of children in BME families were living in relative poverty, suggesting this target will not be met for BME children.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Child poverty results directly from household poverty, which in turn results from individual poverty. BME people in Scotland are twice as likely as white Scottish/British people to be in poverty. [[42]](#footnote-42)

High BME poverty levels persist (and look to be rising) despite various policy commitments, including the inclusion of minority ethnic families as a ‘priority group’ within Scottish Child Poverty strategies. However, the implementation of such policies is not always clearly visible. Similar patterns, where racial poverty inequalities are acknowledged and actions set but not implemented, can be seen throughout the period since devolution.

**CRER recommend that the Committee investigate how the Scottish Government are ensuring that child poverty and poverty strategies include action specifically focused on minority ethnic communities.**

**Health**

In many cases there is a lack of adequate data over time in relation to health and ethnicity in Scotland. CRER research in 2020 highlighted that for the Health outcome of the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework, no ethnicity data is currently published on Equality Evidence Finder.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Health indicators such as health risk behaviours, healthy life expectancy, healthy weight, active travel journeys, physical activity and premature mortality had no ethnicity data despite often having information available by age, disability, gender, SIMD and urban-rural classification.

Data availability is also a significant problem for understanding mental health inequalities in relation to race. In 2021, the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland produced a report ‘Racial Inequality and Mental Health in Scotland’, with one finding being that information on ethnicity was repeatedly not recorded or reported, with relation to people being treated for mental illness and to staff working across mental health services.[[44]](#footnote-44) Additional findings from their report included:

* Differences in how the Mental Health Act is applied across communities in Scotland. Risk to oneself and/or to others is one of the criteria that must be met for authorising involuntary treatment. Risk perception is impacted patient’s ethnicity. More people who were Black or of mixed or multiple ethnicity were perceived as a greater risk to themselves and others, whereas all categories of white people were more often perceived as a risk to themselves
* Gender interacts with race on risk perception; 48.4% of Black women were perceived as of risk to themselves and others versus 33.8% of white Scottish women
* Participants described a constant drip of micro-aggressions that impacted on their mental health and their sense of belonging in Scotland
* Participants, in particular refugees, raised that they had difficulties in accessing treatment. Additionally, for refugees who did have contact with mental health services, some did not feel that their stories were understood and at times, believed
* One third of staff who provided details of experiences of racism reported that they had colleagues who had been racially abused. Seventy per cent of staff acknowledged gaps in training. Staff reflected on the inadequacy of a ‘one-off’ diversity and equalities training module

Additionally, while there is a considerable stigma surrounding mental health in general, people with mental disorders within certain BME groups can be particularly stigmatised and discriminated against (both within and outside of their communities).

Scottish Health and Ethnicity Linkage Study (SHELS) is one of the main sources of information about ethnicity and health in Scotland, linking census data on ethnicity to health datasets. Studies from SHELS have shown, for example, that:[[45]](#footnote-45)

* Pakistani men and women had the highest rates of hospitalisation and death due to heart attack
* Chinese men and women, other South Asian men and Pakistani women have substantially higher rate of hospitalisation for liver disease
* Compared to the white Scottish population, the highest rates of hospital admission for respiratory conditions were in Pakistani males and females and Indian males, whilst the lowest rates were seen in Chinese males and females

Additionally, SHELS data has demonstrated that 23 years after the introduction of the UK’s national breast screening programme, the uptake at first invite is substantially lower for almost every BME group in Scotland, particularly for Pakistani and African women.[[46]](#footnote-46) Research shows that women who attend breast screening at first invitation are more likely to attend for subsequent screens. The consequent ethnic inequity in the extent of preventable cancer mortality may be marked, especially for Pakistani and African women.

In 2017, it was reported by NHS Health Scotland that Gypsy/Travellers had low rates of outpatient appointments, hospital admissions, accident and emergency attendances, cancer registrations and maternity hospital admissions.[[47]](#footnote-47)

There was a disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on minority ethnic groups in Scotland. Public Health Scotland reported in 2021 that there were significantly increased Covid-19 hospital admissions and deaths among BME populations compared to white Scottish people.[[48]](#footnote-48) There is growing consensus that the fundamental cause of these adverse pandemic outcomes for BME groups is rooted in longstanding, pre-existing socioeconomic and health inequalities, including those driven by discrimination and racism.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Warnings about research identifying susceptibility to infectious disease amongst particular minority ethnic groups were made in Scottish Executive’s 2002 Equality Scheme.[[50]](#footnote-50) This was tragically echoed in the dramatic health inequalities exposed by the pandemic in 2020. Despite the known issues of racial inequalities in health, at the onset of the pandemic, Scotland’s health policy environment was unprepared.

In 2020, the Scottish Government set up an Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity (ERG). The ERG’s remit was to provide advice and guidance on ways to change systemic issues, improve data on ethnicity and reduce Covid-19 risks.

The ERG provided recommendations to the Scottish Government on both systemic issues and improving health data.[[51]](#footnote-51) Systemic recommendations included encouraging diversity in employment, tackling poor quality housing and overcrowding and creating inclusive public health messaging. The report on improving health data and evidence had 14 recommendations, including linking health data to the census, documenting ethnicity in CHI records[[52]](#footnote-52), monitoring workforce data in the NHS and social care sectors and reporting data by ethnicity when ethnicity data is available.

**Many of the ERG’s recommendations are not new, and some have appeared in various reports over time. CRER recommends the Committee investigate meaningful action taken in relation to the ERG’s recommendations on health.**

**Housing**

Racial disparities in housing have persisted for decades - housing deprivation is not exclusive to BME groups, but the persistence of racial discrimination means that such groups are at greater risk.

BME people in Scotland are generally underrepresented in the social housing sector and rates of housing ownership are lower for BME groups than the white population. Analysis of the last census showed BME people were more likely to live in flats, and of those who lived in rented accommodation they were more likely to be renting privately than from a social landlord.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Individuals living in private rented housing are more likely to be in poverty than those residing in other tenure types and low-income households are especially vulnerable in the private rental sector.

The underrepresentation of BME people in the Scottish social housing sector has been attributed to a number of barriers, including institutional discrimination. Factors such as waiting times, local connection points and discretionary allocation of houses all play a part.[[54]](#footnote-54)

One of the key steps that could be taken to improve minority ethnic people's housing situation is to increase access to social housing. This has led CRER to campaign for an amendment on Local Housing Strategies to require local targets for access to social housing for minority ethnic groups, with monitoring requirements on progress towards meeting those targets.

The Scottish Government has acknowledged that more action must be taken to improve housing outcomes for Gypsy/Travellers with issues including the availability of sites and substandard accommodation. Housing to 2040, the Scottish Government’s first long term national strategy for housing, states that they would make up to £20 million available over 2021-26 in order to renovate and improve standards on existing sites and enable the building of new sites.[[55]](#footnote-55) It was, however, reported this year that so far none of this fund has been spent, with campaigners stating they have been waiting decades for improvements.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Data from 2016-2019 demonstrated that a significantly higher proportion of households with a minority ethnic highest income householder were overcrowded (7%), compared to households with a white Scottish/British highest income householder (2%).[[57]](#footnote-57) This suggests that racial inequalities in overcrowding are persistent.

The poor quality of housing and surrounding neighbourhoods is another significant issue faced by minority ethnic individuals, including access to key facilities. Data has shown higher rates of disrepair for minority ethnic households.[[58]](#footnote-58) Higher rates of disrepair in the private rented sector combined with the higher prevalence of this tenure for minority ethnic households is suggested to be a likely contributor to these higher rates of disrepair. Housing conditions have been suggested as one of the possible explanations for the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BME groups, showing how vital data in this area is.

Research on migrant communities in Scotland found evidence of substandard accommodation, including unsafe living conditions, poor furnishings and inadequate heating.[[59]](#footnote-59) Poor living conditions were also found among asylum-seekers and refugees, with high-rise flats identified in research as inappropriate for families with young children and those with disabilities or long-term health conditions.

The Scottish Government has control over housing as a devolved power, however it has little remit over asylum related housing which largely remains reserved for Westminster. However, the change in housing policy during Covid-19 to use hotels as accommodation for people in the asylum system should be raised. This potentially endangered people during the Covid-19 pandemic and removed people from locally based social networks and support. The policy has had particularly devastating impacts in Scotland: one asylum seeker tragically took his own life whilst in hotel accommodation and, additionally, there was the tragedy at Park Inn Hotel where an asylum seeker was killed and six people were injured.[[60]](#footnote-60)

There is little consistent evidence on homelessness amongst BME communities in the current Scottish context making trends difficult to identify. However, the limited data and research suggests that BME individuals in Scotland may be more likely to become homeless. In relation to statutory homelessness, in 2018/2019 2728 BME people in Scotland made a homelessness application (approximately 7.4% of total applications).[[61]](#footnote-61) This represents an increase of approximately 11% from the previous year.

Lack of effective data collection and small sample sizes mean reliable data is lacking in home-related policy areas, particularly focusing on family units; reliable and up-to date evidence that differentiates by housing tenure is an essential first step towards solutions to inequality in housing for BME people.

**CRER recommend the Committee investigate the Scottish Government’s plans to end racial disparities in housing, with particular attention on action related to access to social housing.**

**Participation and Representation**

There are lower levels of participation among minority ethnic communities compared to the white British majority ethnic community in a range of activities which contribute to individual and social development in Scotland.

The 2021 elections to the Scottish Parliament saw an increase in the number of candidates from BME backgrounds, which was reflected in the number of BME elected MSPs. There was six BME MSPs elected, including for the first time two BME women. One of those woman, Kaukab Stewart, was also the first BME women to stand for election in the Scottish Parliament in 1999 – which shows just how long this progress has taken to come about.[[62]](#footnote-62) Before this election, just four people from BME backgrounds had been elected as MSPs.

In 2019, a report from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission found that there was under-representation in terms of race among Scotland’s Councillors.[[63]](#footnote-63) The report also found that parties who were taking action to improve the diversity of elected candidates were mainly focused on promoting the representation of women and that racism was reported as a barrier to participation in local government. After the 2022 Council elections, CRER analysis found that there were approximately 31 BME Councillors. This represents about 2.5% of the total, suggesting more remains to be done to improve the diversity of local Councillors.

The diversity of membership within political parties in Scotland is currently unknown. Monitoring of equality data is a critical first step to achieving racial equality, however most political parties do not collect or report this data.

Many minority ethnic communities are not represented at all in local or national politics. Scotland must continue to improve the representation and participation of BME communities in politics, and increase the influence these communities have in Scotland’s public life. Improving this requires increasing BME participation in the Scottish political arena, which in turn requires increasing BME membership in parties. Political parties monitoring the ethnicity of their membership and reporting on this would be a crucial step forward in this process.

There is a lack of data regarding the participation and representation of minority ethnic communities in several spheres of public life. However, the data that exists shows that minority ethnic communities are under-represented in political, governance and decision-making structures, as well as in other areas of public life. There are barriers connected to institutional and personal racism that limit the participation and representation of minority ethnic communities.

**CRER recommends the Committee look into how the Scottish Government are expanding BME participation in various spheres of public life including politics, arts and culture, sport and decision-making bodies.**

**Conclusions**

CRER would like to acknowledge the areas in which the Scottish Government has shown a commitment to improve equality and reduce racial discrimination. There have been positive moves such as the recognition of minority ethnic families as a priority group within anti-poverty strategies, the welcome setting up of the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity and initial moves to improve diversity of the curriculum in schools.

However, an issue in every policy area is a lack of ethnicity data which makes identifying problems, trends and solutions difficult. The most pertinent recent example which demonstrated the fundamental importance of such data, is the initial failure to be able to identify whether BME groups in Scotland were at an increased risk of Covid-19.[[64]](#footnote-64)

There are remains a disconnect between high level commitments to anti-racism and people’s everyday experiences in Scotland. There is a need for structural and systemic solutions to institutional racism, as well as a greater evidence base on racial inequalities and more robust policy making based on what works.

CRER welcome the opportunity to contribute this response and look forward to seeing the Advisory Committee’s Fifth Opinion on the UK.

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2. Scottish Government (2017) [Race Equality Action Plan](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-race-equality-action-plan-2017-2021-highlight-report/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Scottish Government (2021) [Race Equality: Immediate Priorities Plan](https://www.gov.scot/publications/immediate-priorities-plan-race-equality-scotland/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Scottish Government (2019) [Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021](https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-lives-scotlands-gypsy-travellers-2019-2021/) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (2022) [Hate Crime in Scotland 2021-22](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/about-copfs/reports-and-statistics/hate-crime-in-scotland-2021-22/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Investigative journalists at The Ferret have published several exposes on [the far right in Scotland](https://theferret.scot/scottish-defence-league-nazi-terror-groups-banned/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [Far-right fanatics on rise in Scotland as number of police alerts increase](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/rise-far-right-fanatics-flagged-21266042). Daily Record, 13th January 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Police Scotland (2020). [Prevent Referral Data](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/q10lkni2/prevent-referral-data-2019-20.pdf), Scotland, April 2019 to March 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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10. BBC News (2021) [Covid in Scotland: People are treating us like the disease](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-56113045) ; Scottish Alliance of Regional Equality Councils (2021) [Experiences of Chinese, East and South-East Asian Communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Scotland](https://sareconline.wordpress.com/2021/04/07/experience-of-chinese-communities-in-scotland-project-reports/) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ando Glaso (2021) [The Roma, COVID-19, and Lockdown Impact](https://www.andoglaso.org/covid-research) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [Scottish Household Survey Data Explorer](https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-scottish-household-survey-data-explorer/) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Scottish Government (2019), [Revised ACEL 1819 Tables and Charts.](https://www.gov.scot/publications/achievement-curriculum-excellence-cfe-levels-2018-19/) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
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