



Black Mental Health Conference 2026

The Black Man's Burden: The Crisis in Black Mental Health

Insights: Mental health experiences of Black people in the UK

This is a small selection of relevant research findings. Black people's experiences of mental health and mental health care in the UK cannot be explained by a few statistics alone. There are also gaps in the available data. A fuller picture is explored in a resource which will be shared with all attendees, and is available via the QR code at the end of this document.

Structural racism and inequality

2

times as likely
to live in
poverty

Structural racism shapes key determinants of mental health, including poverty, housing, employment, and access to resources. 47% of Black children in the UK live in poverty, compared to 22% of White children.ⁱ Children growing up in poverty are 4 times more likely to experience mental health difficulties.ⁱⁱ

Interpersonal racism and racial trauma

Personal experiences of racial discrimination, including racist incidents, microaggressions, vicarious or intergenerational trauma, and chronic stress related to racism, can significantly impact mental health, increasing the risks of experiencing mental ill health and racial trauma.ⁱⁱⁱ

Mistrust of mental health services

In a survey of over 10,000 Black British people, 87% felt that there is a problem with misdiagnosis, overmedication, or unfair treatment towards Black people in the provision of mental health care.^{iv}

87%

express some
mistrust of
MH services

More likely to enter treatment at crisis point

Black people are less likely to access mental health support via their GP and instead are more likely to come into mental health services through crisis care. Black people are also 40% more likely than White people to access mental health support via the criminal justice system.^v

More likely to experience enforced treatment

3.8

times higher
detention
under MHA

Black people are 3.8 times as likely as White people to be detained under the Mental Health Act, and 7.7 times as likely to be subject to a Community Treatment Order.^{vi} Black men are also more likely to have longer stays in hospital than White men.^{vii}

More likely to be diagnosed with serious mental illness

Black people in the UK are 3 times as likely as White people to be diagnosed with schizophrenia, and also much more likely to be diagnosed with other Serious Mental Illnesses.^{viii}

3

times higher
diagnosis of
schizophrenia

Calls for change

Researchers and campaigners who have explored these issues call for changes including:

- **Action to increase trust in services:** for example, embed anti-racist practices; build partnerships with community organisations
- **Improve service design:** for example, meaningful co-production to redesign services, addressing power imbalances and delivering person-centred, culturally appropriate care
- **Address systemic barriers:** for example, cross-sector collaboration to address structural inequalities shaping mental health

References:

- i [‘Poverty in the UK: Statistics’](#) – House of Commons Library (May 2026)
 - ii [‘Poverty and Mental Health: Challenges and Opportunities for Children and Families’](#) – BBC Children in Need, Centre for Mental Health (2024)
 - iii [‘Research Roundup: Racism, Mental Health and Trauma’](#) – UK Trauma Council (March 2022)
- See also: [‘Racism and Mental Health’](#) – MIND, and [‘Causes of PTSD & C-PTSD – Racial Trauma’](#) – PTSD UK (web resources; accessed May 2026)
- iv [‘Black British Voices Project’](#) – University of Cambridge, I-Cubed, The Voice (August 2023)
 - v [‘Racial Disparities in Mental Health: Literature and Evidence Review’](#) – Race Equality Foundation (2022)
 - vi [‘Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures, 2024-2025’](#) – NHS Digital; (September 2025)
- Detention rate: Black people: 256.7 / 100,000 people; White people: 66.8 / 100,000 people.
- CTO rate: Black people: 58.7 / 100,000 people; White people: 7.6 / 100,000 people.
- vii [‘The state of health care and adult social care in England 2023/24’](#) – Care Quality Commission (October 2024)
- “For every 100,000 men receiving care for their mental health in hospital, 100 Black men had stays in hospital longer than 60 days compared with 25 White men who had the lowest length of stay.”
- viii [‘Estimated prevalence of severe mental illness in England: Report’](#) – Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (April 2026)
- Schizophrenia prevalence: Black ethnic group: 0.98%; White ethnic group: 0.35%.
- SMI prevalence: Black ethnic group: 1.95%; White ethnic group: 1.2%.

A fuller report exploring a wider range of research findings and experiences will be shared after the conference, and can be accessed here:

