Racism in Scottish Social Work:
a 2021 snapshot

July 2021

SASW

The professional association for
social work and social workers

Foreword

The Scottish Association of Social Work, part of BASW UK, is the largest professional association for social workers in Scotland.

Our key organisational aims are:

● Improved professional support, recognition, and rights at work for social workers.
● Better social work for the benefit of people who need our services.
● A fairer society.

Towards the end of 2020, we set out to explore the prevalence of racism in social work in Scotland. We wanted to know who experiences racism, who perpetrates it and what its impact is. We want to share evidence arising from this piece of research with the sector in a bid to identify and understand the issues.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

People who experience racism are not a homogenous group. As such there is no one word or phrase to describe them. Just as 'white' does not adequately describe the myriad of variations in origin and backgrounds of people who might be racialised as such, neither do frequently used terms such as 'BAME' or 'people of colour'. The term BAME relates to Black, Asian and Minoritised people or communities, although the M is often used to refer to Minority. For the purposes of writing this report we will use the groupings Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) people and White people. We acknowledge these umbrella terms are unsatisfactory and do not provide an accurate reflection of the characteristics of the people who they attempt to categorise. For an in-depth discussion of language and terms see Dacosta, Dixon-Smith & Singh (2021).

Data in this report should be regarded as qualitative and a 'snapshot' taken at two different points in time – November/ December 2020 and March 2021. However, what we have found provides a crucial insight into the experiences of BAME social workers and students in Scotland.

This report was published during the second year of the Covid 19 pandemic. There is strong evidence to show that the pandemic has affected BAME people more negatively than white people.[1] Despite a recent report which denies the existence of institutional racism in the UK,[2] the evidence contained here adds further weight and detail to the assertion that racism exists and is experienced by individuals in Scotland. Moreover, racism exists within a profession which purports to embrace values antithetical to the prejudice and exclusion inherent in racist beliefs and actions. We know that there are pockets of positive work taking place to address and bring attention to these issues across the profession and across the UK. BASW UK is currently undertaking work on equalities and diversity including anti-racism which compliments this small-scale Scottish exploration.

We extend our deepest thanks to all those who contributed to this report. Our amazing group of advisors with lived experience of racism in social work, came together to facilitate the roundtable, and are harnessing their energy and passion to help make social work in Scotland truly anti-racist. Gratitude goes to Toyin Adenugba and Laura Joya for their input to the design of the survey. We would also like to acknowledge everyone who completed our survey and who participated in the roundtable, those with lived experience and allies alike. Many shared painful, distressing experiences and we value the time and emotional energy it took to do this. We hope this report can go some way towards avoiding further experiences of that nature.

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[1] https://theconversation.com/yes-there-is-structural-racism-in-the-uk-covid-19-outcomes-prove-it-158337
[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf

Summary of Findings

This report provides evidence that:

- Racism exists within social work in Scotland.
- Racism is experienced in both employment and educational settings, from colleagues, managers and people who use services.
- The impact of racism on BAME social workers is significant.
- When racism is reported it is rarely dealt with in a satisfactory way.
- Racism experienced within social work is harmful both to individuals and to the profession.

Definition of racism

The Oxford Dictionary defines racism as, "Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minoritised or marginalised."[3] However, this definition does not explain what is meant by 'prejudice' or 'discrimination', or the myriad of ways in which racism operates. It does not offer any framework for understanding the impact racism has on those who experience it. The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) identifies better ways to understand racism[4] and suggests:

"Without a clear understanding of race and racism, even the most well-meaning efforts are likely to fail. This frustrating situation can only be reversed if institutions are willing to change their paradigm on race equality." CRER (2016)

A post-racial Britain?

CRER's report refutes the view that Britain is 'post-racial'. Post-racial would mean that racism is no longer an issue of fundamental importance, implying that it has been solved. This ignores the very real impact of structural racism, and the interaction between race and other inequalities such as class, socioeconomic status, disability, and gender. Woven into this is the often-heard perception that racism is less of an issue in Scotland than in other parts of the UK. This report, based on the experiences of our contributors, provides clear evidence that racism is very much in existence in Scotland.

"To understand racism, we…. need to acknowledge that it exists in all institutions and right across society." CRER (2016)

Racism in social work

Coupled with the 'racism isn't an issue in Scotland' perspective is the belief that 'racism doesn't exist in social work'. At the core of the profession of social work lie respect, a duty to challenge discrimination, recognise diversity, and to treat people with compassion, empathy, and care [5]. We all agree that racism has no place amongst these values of human rights and social justice. However, could it be that the assumption that all social workers have this value base as a foundation, creates a situation where racism is potentially invisible and/or ignored? Racism can be embedded in the systems we all work in, and we cannot assume that social workers are immune to the impacts of this.

"Put simply, the decisions made within institutions reflect the preferences, priorities, social norms, perspectives and needs that the decision makers share. If a majority of those decision makers are from the white majority population (not to mention usually male, able-bodied etc.) then the institution will evolve to suit that type of person, creating gaps and barriers for everyone else. This is how institutional racism puts minoritised ethnic people at a disadvantage."
CRER (2016)

Prior to conducting our survey and roundtable, we were hearing anecdotal accounts of social workers experiencing racism not only from some of those they support, but also from colleagues, supervisors, and educators. Part of our aim in asking social workers to share their experiences was to begin to unpack the myth that racism does not exist in social work settings, and to find out what happens when colleagues or people using services behave in racist ways to social workers. How are structures and processes in our systems protecting workers and serving to minimise the painful impact on them?

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[3] www.lexico.com/definition/racism
[4] https://864a82af-f028-4baf-a094-46facc9205ca.filesusr.com/ugd/7ec2e5_3326ce0c802a4bf8a5ec7f023a6cdae1.pdf
[5] www.basw.co.uk/about-basw/code-ethics

There is a growing body of writing about racism in social work, and demand for change.[6] Themes have emerged, which include a lack of diversity among social workers, particularly noticeable in senior management positions. This has implications for the way social workers from different backgrounds feel included within the social work profession. BASW UK's Advice & Representation Service, which supports social workers in conflict with their employers or regulators is representing high levels of newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) who identify as BAME.[7]

"If you can't see yourself reflected in the profession, what does that mean for your confidence and sense of belonging ……. When we say that we are committed to equality and diversity, how is that reflected in what (and who) is visible in the profession?" Reid & Maclean (2021)

Intersectionality

"Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects."[8]

Social workers, like all members of society who experience racism, can also face discrimination or oppression due to other identity characteristics. These include gender, religion, marital status, sexuality, disability. Multiple forms of disadvantage can compound and impact on a social worker's experiences in the workplace. As such, we must apply an intersectional lens in any work we undertake to challenge racism.

Current events

In May 2020 racism returned to the top of many agendas following the very public murder of George Floyd by a police officer in the United States. This was followed by a resurgence in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement across the globe. The term 'institutional racism' re-surfaced, defined in the 1999 report into the death of Stephen Lawrence as:

"The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racial stereotyping"[9]

More than 20 years on, many organisations began to make renewed commitments to acknowledging, better understanding, and addressing racism.

What do we know about racism in Scottish social work?

During November and December 2020, we surveyed social workers and social work students across Scotland to gauge views about the extent and nature of racism in social work. The survey was promoted on SASW's social media channels and ebulletin with an invitation to social workers, members, and non-members to share widely. It was also sent directly to Chief Social Work Officers (CSWOs) in each of the 32 local authorities.

In total, our survey received 97 responses. We asked respondents how they would describe their ethnic origin (see Table 1). Most respondents (56) classified themselves as white British. 30 were from people

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[6] www.basw.co.uk/resources/psw-magazine/psw-online/anti-racism-social-work-struggle-real-and-you-are-part-it
[7] www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/02/23/black-ethnic-minority-disabled-practitioners-face-disproportionate-difficulties-passing-asye-says-basw
[8] *"Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later".* 8 June 2017.
[9] www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-stephen-lawrence-inquiry

Table 1

Ethnicity of respondents
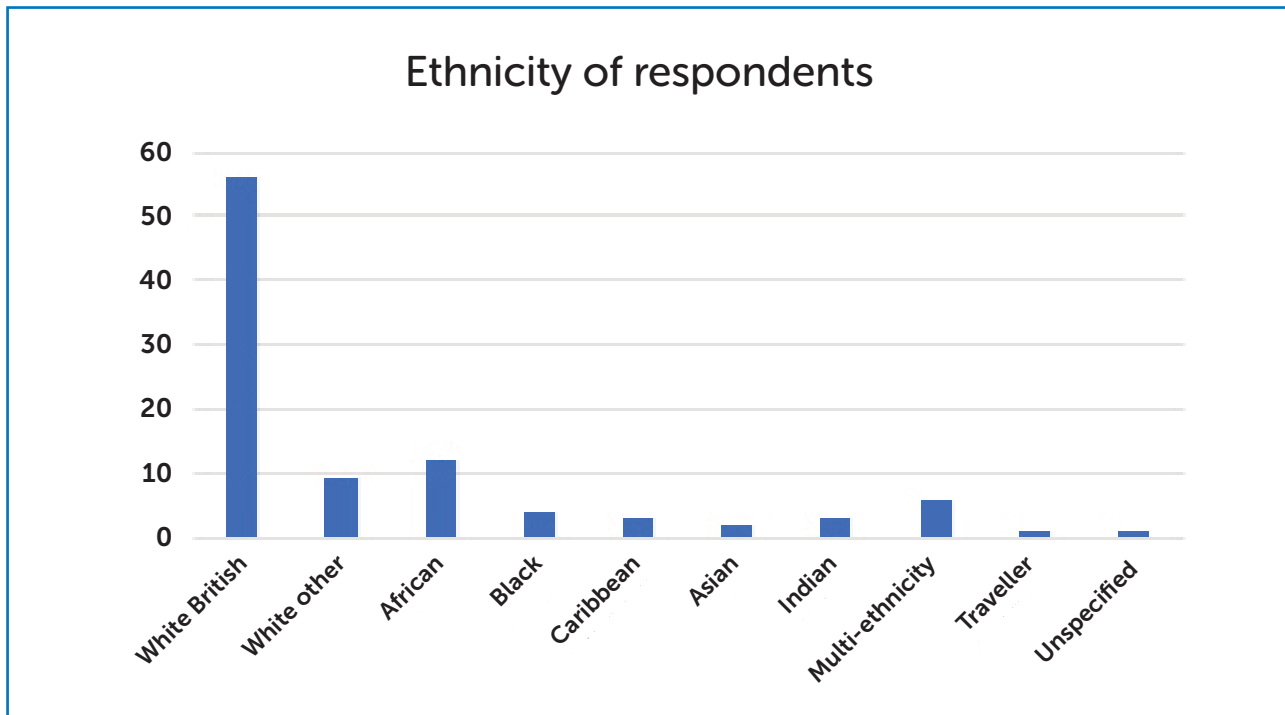
categorised as BAME, including African, Asian, Indian, Caribbean and mixed heritage. 9 responses were from people who classified themselves as white (not British) including European, American, and Australian, another from a Scottish Traveller and one person who chose not to specify their origins.

We followed up the survey with a roundtable event in March 2021, on the topic of 'Challenging Racism in Social Work in Scotland.' This was facilitated by a group of BAME social workers based in Scotland, with support from the SASW team and BASW's Anti-Racism Lead for Scotland and UK Equality and Diversity Lead. The initial findings of the survey were presented to the group followed by small discussion groups facilitated by members of the advisory group. These groups consisted of social workers, students, and managers. Facilitators took notes of the responses. There was additional opportunity for participants to comment, in the form of an online application. Discussions were centred around three key questions:

● What are the key issues in relation to anti-racism in social work?
● What can SASW and other organisations do to tackle racism on a higher level?

● What can social workers do on an individual level?

Below is a summary of the responses to the survey questions, followed by further evidence gathered during the roundtable. It is important to note that while the main focus of the survey was on racism, it also created an opportunity to describe broader forms of prejudice and discrimination. Some of the comments around this are included in this report and are being incorporated into SASW's broader work around equality, diversity, and inclusion.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Experience of Racism, Prejudice and Discrimination

Survey Question: Have you experienced racism or prejudice at work, in education or in practice placements? Can you tell us about it?

45 respondents to the survey reported having experienced some form of racism, prejudice or discrimination (RPD). Of those, 19 self-reported as white and 26 as from a BAME background (see Table 2). White respondents reported experiencing RPD due to disability, caring responsibilities, gender (being female), age, religion, sexuality, and accent/language. Those from the group of BAME respondents all reported experiences of racism.

Table 2

Experience of racism, prejudice and discrimination

19

26

■ White respondents   ■ BAME respondents
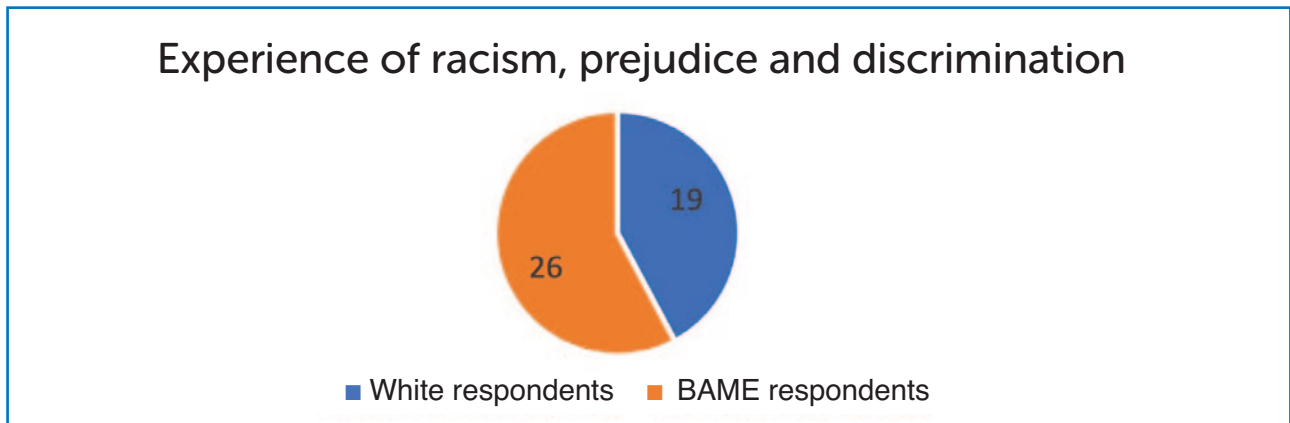
Examples of racism, in workplaces and education and placement settings, included:

- name calling.
- being overlooked for career development opportunities.
- having higher workloads than white counterparts.
- being viewed as aggressive rather than assertive.
- unwelcomed touching of hair or 'positive' comments relating to skin colour.
- assumptions that they will like certain types of music (hip hop or reggae).
- people refusing to touch things they had touched.
- comments that they could not be understood due to accent.
- assumptions they are less qualified due to their colour (for example, a support worker rather than a social worker).
- not being taken seriously or seen as less experienced or professional.
- intimidation and harassment.
- an implication that one smells.
- requests by people who use services to have a white social worker.

Most reported incidents referred to colleagues, managers or educators. 31 respondents in the white category had not experienced any RPD, but this was the case for only 3 respondents in the BAME category. 16 respondents reported not to have experienced it directly themselves, but to have witnessed others' experience of RPD. Of those 16, 15 were white and one was from a BAME background (see Table 3)

Table 3

Experienced and witnessed incidents

	White respondents	BAME respondents
Experienced incidents	19	26
Not experienced incidents	31	3
Not experienced but witnessed	15	1

Legend: ■ Experienced incidents ■ Not experienced incidents ■ Not experienced but witnessed
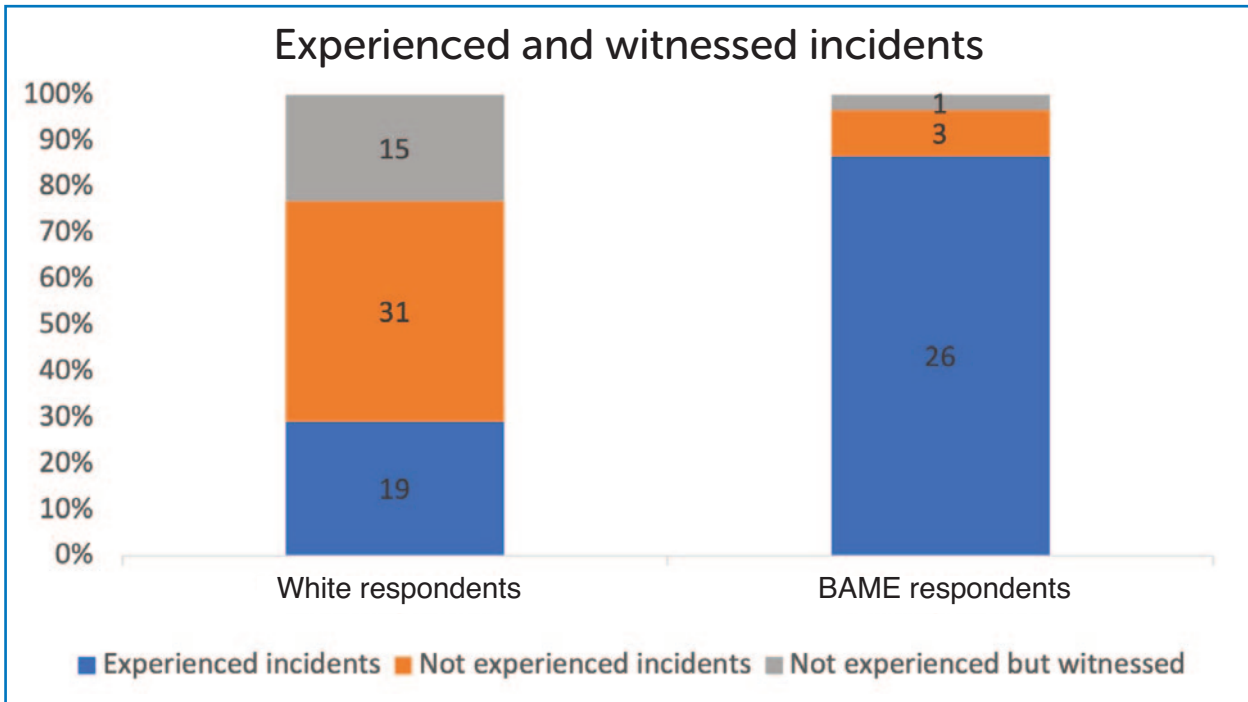
Reporting of Racist or Prejudicial Incidents

Survey Question: If you have reported racist or prejudicial incidents, what was the response?

Table 4 shows a breakdown of responses from BAME and white respondents.

Table 4

Have you reported racist or prejudicial incidents?

	Reported	N/A	Not reported
BAME respondents	18	3	10
White respondents	13	33	22

Legend: ■ BAME respondents ■ White respondents
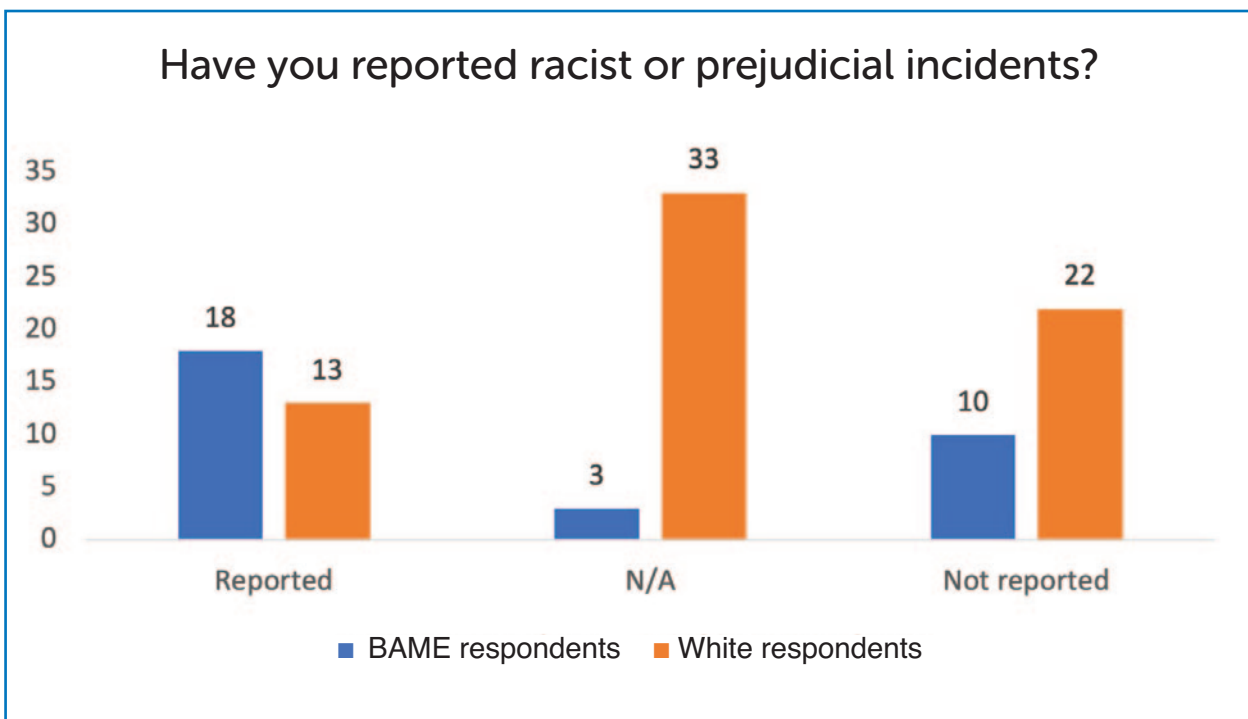
A number of comments were received about responses to reports of incidents. Some of those from BAME respondents are below:

"Apologies and not much else as yet. Promises to be more mindful in the future."

"Nothing I was aware of, it disappeared into a vacuum."

"I don't think it will yield any positive results. By the time I weigh the risks involved, I prefer not to report anything formally."

"I have never reported it because this is a daily struggle. If I had to report all the incidents, it would be daily. You just learn to toughen up and keep it moving."

"Ignored it and assumed the perpetrators are either ignorant of it or mean."

"I have not reported any incidences, however if there was an incident I would feel comfortable in reporting this and feel it would be validated."

"I have reported racist or prejudicial incidents at varying points in my career and when working with different authorities, not only in my working life but in my personal life. I would not recommend this anymore as I have been victimised and harassed for my actions, and my character has been exposed to all sorts of negative accusations to indicate that I was the problem. All of which have impacted on my confidence and identity."

"I was only taken off the case by my link worker."

"My management have dealt appropriately with situations where other professionals and families have been discriminatory towards me or my practice by having discussions with them."

"White managers all colluded against me and victimised and harassed me."

"They played it down, turned it on me."

"It gets worse. Prejudiced people are full of hate. They are clever enough not to make racial slurs openly. They just become nasty and isolate you and take their gossip underground."

"Mixed response from dismissive to the case being taken from my caseload. Did not feel appropriate to challenge attitudes within student placement setting as the student is in a vulnerable position."

"I reported a racist incident by a client towards me. I was advised by my supervisor that the client was abusive to everyone and suggested that the racist element carried no additional weight."

"I've been told on numerous occasions that it's just part of the job and that I shouldn't be offended. I've been told that it's no worse than someone commenting on gender or weight. I've been told that I should use my social work skills to overcome any feelings and to work with clients that refer to me as a darkie etc."

"It is sometimes very hard to prove indirect racist comments/behaviours."

"There was a good initial response (colleague was investigated) but unfortunately not much came of it – a year later, he was caught still making similar comments. He still works with the department to this day, despite also making homophobic and misogynistic comments too."

Comments from white respondents included:

> "I reported it and it took years to fight and challenge. Would never do it again. Nobody is interested."

> "I had to report a racist threat from a client. I felt my line manager was very supportive at this time. I was disappointed that my employer could not take matters further in this respect. I had to report this directly to the police, I think employers and professional bodies would have protocols in place for this incident."

Overall, responses do not reflect an environment in which people feel safe and supported to raise concerns about racism or prejudice. Comments demonstrate that, in most cases, reports of racism or prejudice are not dealt with satisfactorily. This has led some people to decide not to report at all or has served to prevent future reporting. When racism goes unreported, due to a belief that nothing will be done, the extent of the problem is not brought to the attention of those in a position to act. A dismissive attitude by employers was often mentioned. A sense of power differential was evident, perhaps exacerbated for those still in education. In addition, the perceived lack of awareness and understanding amongst educators, employers, and colleagues of the impact of racism further increased the effect of racism on those experiencing it. There is a lack of confidence amongst BAME colleagues to use reporting structures, which should be credible and robust, ensuring a safe environment in which to raise concerns.

White privilege, unconscious bias and racism in social work institutions and cultures

Survey Question: How aware do you think social work employers and educators are of white privilege, unconscious bias, and racism in Scottish institutions and cultures? In your experience, are anti-racist values emphasised?

The answers in the table below are separated into two groups: those from BAME and white respondents.

Table 5

How aware do you think social work employers and educators are of white privilege, unconscious bias, and racism in Scottish institutions and cultures?
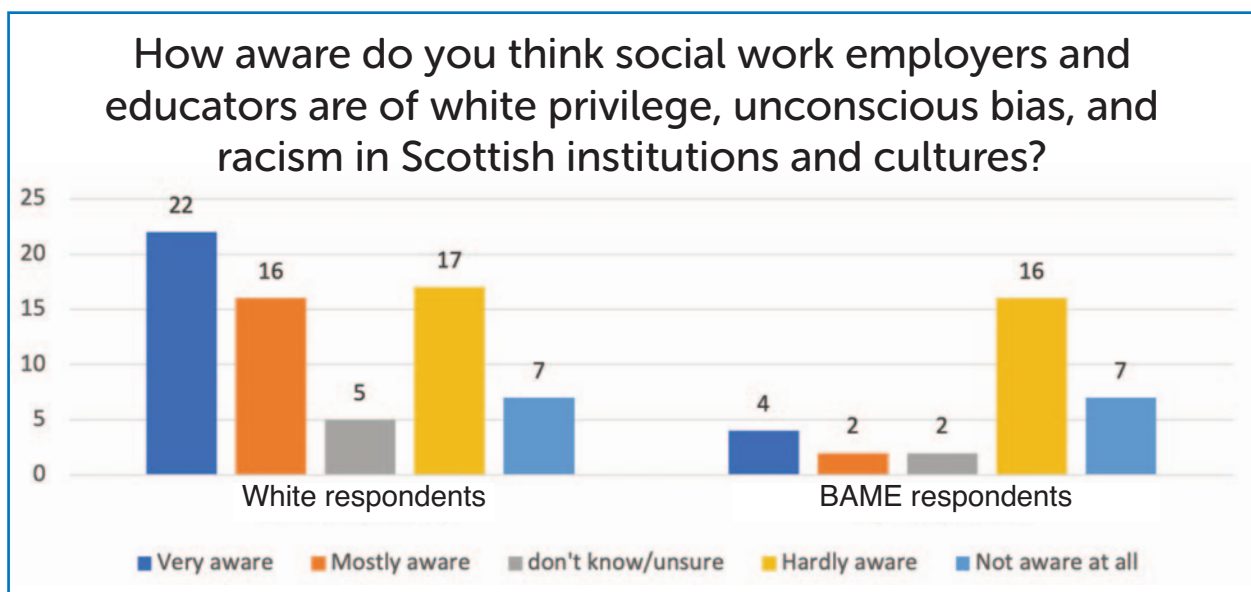
Below are some of the comments made by people in the BAME group of respondents:

"Values are taught within classes for brief periods, but problematic views are not checked, challenged or addressed. Within white dominant spaces, the unconscious bias is often completely missed, as people are still very blind to it. When challenged, people are overly defensive/dismissive of pain caused on the basis of 'not being/seeming racist'."

"Some lack knowledge about it, some know about it and sweep it under the carpet, and some know that if they speak out, they will become a target."

"We as black people can't expect white people in power to ever understand racism."

"There is some focus, but Scotland has a relatively small ethnic minoritised population and I think that this sometimes leads to some complacency, and assumptions that racism is not as significant a problem in Scotland as England. I think it differs in Scotland to England in some ways. There is less organised racism eg overt right wing political discourse on the inclusion of immigrant and minoritised ethnic communities. And yet underlying that there is, in my experience, lots of overt and poorly disguised everyday racism which is not properly acknowledged or tackled. Scotland has a long way to go on this and acknowledgement needs to be the first step."

"It's very difficult to know the extent of how aware they are of these issues because it is a subject that is NOT talked about."

"I think that there is some level of awareness and commitment, but often not a space for the reflective practice necessary to consider and unpick unconscious bias or challenge racist practice."

"I do not think that white privilege is necessarily acknowledged explicitly and can be a difficult issue for a non-white practitioner to raise. In my experience, anti-racist values are not as yet emphasised in the social work arenas I work in in Scotland, but there is willingness to try to understand."

"I believe there is a focus on being colour blind and this is considered as a stand in for anti-racism attitudes."

Comments from the white people in the group included the following:

"I think the UK's colonial history needs to be discussed more and in that context issues of race and racism need to be addressed. I feel that white British people have not been educated enough about the history of their country, the history of exploitation of other countries and people by the UK. Very few people have reflected on the history of the UK which in my view has contributed to biased views as a result of lack of knowledge. The experiences of black and ethnic minoritised people in the UK should be discussed more to raise awareness of issues of racism people face everyday."

"I think at times careless and thoughtless language is used and I don't see anti-racist approaches being meaningfully led."

"In all honesty I am struggling to answer this question....I am white but do not feel I am more privileged whatsoever in my workplace, but then is it because I am white I do not notice?"

"Since I have been a social worker, I cannot recall this ever being spoken about."

"I feel that a conversation about racism and especially white privilege is significantly lacking."

"The workforce appears to be increasingly de-politicised."

"I think anti-racist values are tokenistic and barely a tick box exercise."

From these responses it appears that BAME and white social workers agree that an explicit focus on anti-racism in workplaces is missing. At best, it is tokenistic, but racism, white privilege and unconscious bias are not an integral part of the structure, and an understanding of the impact is not evidenced amongst employers.

"White privilege, racism and hidden bias are socially constructed, and will reduce the more we actively challenge them." CRER (2016)

Creating Equal, Diverse and Inclusive Workplaces and Education Settings

Survey Question: What in your opinion needs to be done to create and sustain more equal, diverse, and inclusive workplaces and education settings?

Multiple answers were received to this question (see table 6 for the themes of the responses).

Table 6

What needs to be done?

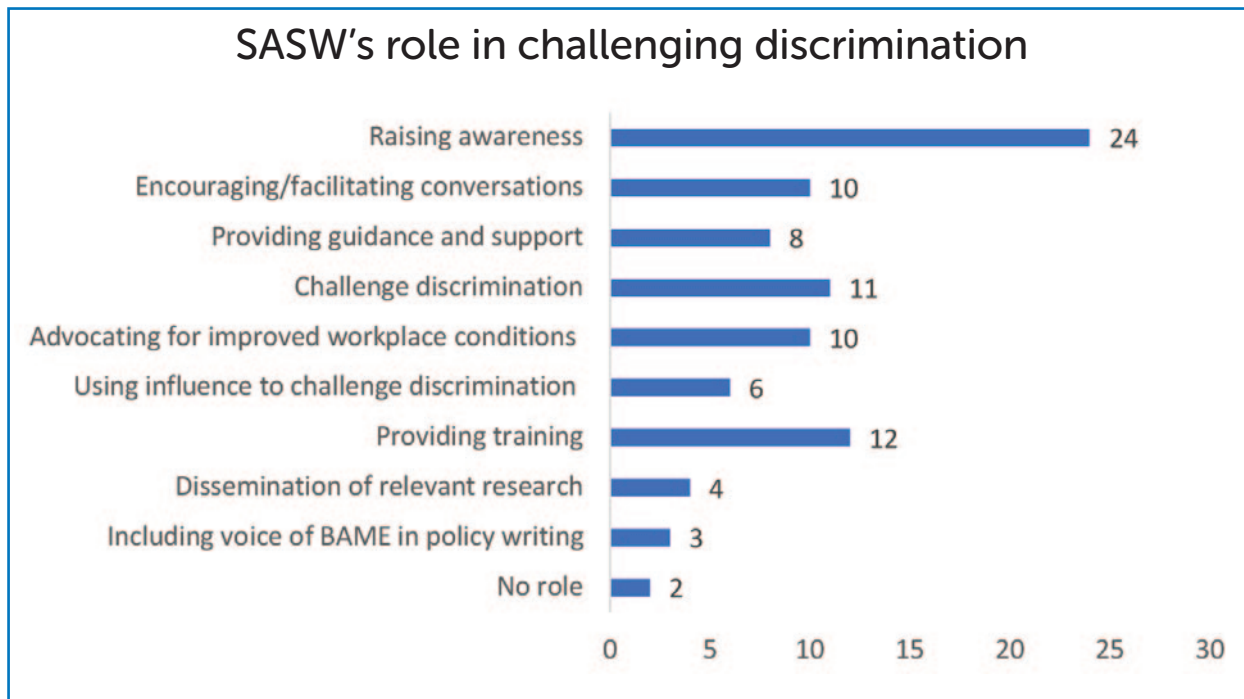| Theme	Count
Further training and education	38
Challenge racism	8
Raising awareness	11
More conversations about racism	19
Stronger reporting/support mechanisms	11
Listening to people with lived experience	9
Increase diversity in SW workforce	20
Critical reflection on history of colonialism	3
Diversity in senior positions	11

Clearly, social workers have thoughts about and should have input into decisions about how to improve inclusion and diversity. Training and education ranked the highest priority, with open conversations and increased diversity also identified as areas for change.

SASW's role in challenging discrimination

Survey Question: How do you see the role of SASW, as your Professional Association, in challenging discrimination?

Responses are displayed in table 7.

Table 7

SASW's role in challenging discrimination

Category	Value
Raising awareness	24
Encouraging/facilitating conversations	10
Providing guidance and support	8
Challenge discrimination	11
Advocating for improved workplace conditions	10
Using influence to challenge discrimination	6
Providing training	12
Dissemination of relevant research	4
Including voice of BAME in policy writing	3
No role	2

Comments accompanying responses to this question include:

"SASW appears to have acknowledged that there is a problem and as such, they are working towards finding a resolution. I am encouraged to see SASW taking the lead in challenging discrimination which they have not done in the past...... I am quite proud of their efforts."

"SASW workforce must be diverse. SASW must recognise the many challenges BAME workers Face by virtue of their ethnicity. They must assess whether ethnicity has a bearing in any complaint levelled against a BAME worker. Formulate training to make non BAME workers aware of their unconscious biases"

"I think SASW can be a key voice in challenging discrimination. Conversations can be facilitated through this body, and current research and thinking can be disseminated via SASW."

"I have read their material and advice which I find very helpful. I also feel confident that there is such representation where we can express our views and share the negative experiences that we have encountered at work."

"I think SASW needs to be very vocal about discrimination and it should be a priority."

Responses suggest that social workers see the professional association as having a role and influence in addressing the issue of racism in social work. This came out most strongly in terms of awareness raising and training, but clearly there is also an appetite for direct challenge. Support and guidance can take place on an individual level through BASW's Advice and Representation Service, but also on a broad level through opening up conversations that identify and confront racism and encourage others to do the same.

The anti-racism roundtable

In the roundtable, discussion centred around three key areas. Responses for each of the areas are summarised below.

What are the key issues in relation to anti-racism in social work?

BAME workers are not represented among social work lecturers or within social work leadership

The burden for challenge is often placed on the victim.

Racism in social work is not a new issue, it has been around for a long time, but has been met with silence and ignorance.

Managers are not always supportive when their staff experience/report racism, and individuals reported being left to deal with this on their own or use their 'social work skills' to navigate it.

Concerns about emotional well-being and exhaustion appear to be high amongst BAME students and social workers. The burden of living with racism, without adequate support, is emotionally exhausting.

BAME social workers seem to have higher and more complex caseloads than white counterparts.

Among white contributors, there was an acknowledgement that they might unintentionally overlook racist behaviour due to unconscious bias or 'white privilege', and that awareness-raising and reflective spaces are necessary to ensure white people can truly be allies.

Anti-racism is not placed high on the social work education curriculum, meaning social workers of any background are not equipped to deal with racism or support those experiencing it.

BAME students appear to experience difficulties in education and placements, disproportionate to the experience of white students. These experiences of racism and discrimination can lead to a high dropout or fail rate for BAME students.

Examples of direct racism were shared including name calling, allegations of smell, a refusal to touch what a BAME person had touched.

Institutional racism appears to be prevalent in higher education, and it is challenging to call it out due to 'smoke screens and mirrors.'

BAME social workers are given a higher percentage of BAME service users.

What can SASW and other organisations do to tackle racism on a higher level?

Have a loud and prominent voice in calling out racism. Bring the prevalence to the attention of leadership and the workforce.

Make sure anti-racism is firmly on the agenda in each arena where policy is being developed and implemented.

Training/ awareness raising.

Create a supportive BAME network and demand anti-racist education within training and post-qualifying settings.

Create a culture of reporting and challenge, with tools and frameworks to support this.

Challenge organisations to examine their structures and policies in relation to inclusion and anti-racism. This includes SASW itself.

What can social workers do on an individual level?

Learn to be truly anti-racist and an ally to BAME colleagues.

Challenge and educate colleagues.

Initiate open conversations within your teams.

Demand training within organisations, and systems for reporting and addressing.

These responses, which reflect many of the comments made in the survey, provide strong evidence that racism is a current issue experienced by students and the workforce. Significant improvements must be made to the way racism is understood, responded to, and addressed. The findings highlight a passion amongst social workers from all backgrounds to bring about positive change, with the support of organisations, including SASW.

What SASW is doing

We have drawn on both sets of findings to inform our strategy going forward. So far, we have

SASW

The professional association for social work and social workers

- Committed to working on an anti-racist strategy in this business year to develop a rolling action plan for the next three years.

- Created and delivered the survey at the end of 2020.

- Held the roundtable event in March 2021.

- Co-opted a member of the BAME social workers group to a voting position on the Scotland National Standing Committee while actively seeking more diverse experience across our Committee.

- Written to Universities and Social Work Employers calling for anti-racism to be a central and explicit feature in social work education and workplaces. This was in March 2021, in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and as part of the Social Workers Rise against Racism campaign.

- Published regular special bulletins to members, to raise awareness of developments in relation to issues of equality and diversity, including racism, and action being taken.

- Developed an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion section on our website[10] to keep members informed.

- Approached the SSSC to partner on issues of racism in the workforce.

- Begun to establish links with Scottish universities who are working on anti-racism in their social work programmes. The University of Edinburgh, together with SASW and CRER is planning an event for Black History Month 2021 celebrating the contributions of BAME social workers in Scotland.

Our strategy around anti-racism and all other forms of oppression will be informed by the views of our members and by working closely with two of the newly appointed BASW UK Equality and Diversity Leads. This will allow us to respond flexibly to address both how we make SASW more inclusive and diverse and how we address structural inequalities more broadly in the social work community.

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[10] www.basw.co.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion-hub

What SASW plans to do – being a critically reflective organisation

SASW is committed to continued action to address the concerns raised in this report. We have a role, alongside many other key stakeholders, to highlight and respond to the exclusion and damaging effects of racism. We do not hold all the answers or levers for change but we will keep talking and reflecting and will partner with our members and stakeholders, to end racism within social work.

To achieve our aims, we are actively considering the following questions, which tie into the objectives of the wider organisation (BASW UK). These will inform our strategy going forward and help us to critically evaluate our progress.

SASW Staff & National Standing Committee

1. How will we support and promote recruitment of staff and National Standing Committee (NSC) representatives from diverse backgrounds?
2. How should we embed an EDI approach and demonstrate this across all the work SASW does?
3. How will we promote and make use of learning and development opportunities, within BASW and beyond, for staff and NSC members?
4. What do we need to do to ensure continued development of strong links to the BASW EDI Advisory Group which reports directly to BASW Council on matters relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion?

Leadership

5. Working with other organisations on strategies to increase diversity amongst social workers and in leadership, how can we encourage and retain a more diverse workforce across Scotland?
6. How will SASW support initiatives within the leadership and organisational sector, such as the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) and the Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework?[11]
7. How do we partner with others to increase representation amongst BAME social workers in leadership positions, and address the barriers which might prevent promotion?

Social Work Practice and Education

8. What does meaningful action look like, and how can we identify and take action to address structural inequalities in organisations?
9. What will it take to ensure that social workers and students can raise experiences of racism with confidence they will be supported, and appropriate action taken?
10. What do we know about the experiences of BAME students, and how should we work with universities and placement providers to address their needs?
11. What are the key development opportunities we should deliver or promote to support social workers in Scotland to challenge and overcome oppression at work?
12. Is there an appetite for a SASW BAME network, and how might we support members to create this?
13. How do we ensure that issues identified by BASW's Advice & Representation Service and the Social Work Professional Support Service (SWPSS)[12] inform constructive communication so that social workers experiencing racism can access the support and guidance they need?

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[11] www.gov.scot/policies/race-equality/scotlands-race-equality-framework
[12] www.basw.co.uk/social-work-professional-support-service

Stakeholder Influencing & Campaigning

14. How will we build and maintain relationships, listen to and consult effectively with members, other organisations, educational establishments, and people with lived experience?

15. What is SASW's role in working with stakeholders across the sector to ensure accurate and useful EDI data is collected and used to action change?

16. How should we support stakeholders in raising awareness and lobbying around inequalities to encourage increased diversity?

Overarching all these action questions we must also consider:

● How should we measure progress?
● How will we hold ourselves to account and support change across the sector to achieve a fairer society?

Conclusion

We can all agree that social work must be a profession that welcomes people from every background, and that has clear, fair structures to promote inclusion and equality. The SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers state that any form of discrimination is unacceptable and should not be condoned by workers or employers.[13] The evidence in this report suggests that this is not yet a reality for all social workers and students in Scotland and that systemic change is needed.

We know that racism, and the trauma it causes, have no place in social work. We must listen, bring to the fore and speak about experiences of racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination. Anti-racist actions need to be clearly visible across the social work profession. Open conversations about race in all settings, together with workforces that are diverse and inclusive, and strong messages from leadership, will help foster environments in which social workers from all backgrounds will flourish and feel they belong.[14]

Understanding why and where racism exists is necessary to change the situation. Underpinning social work training must be an understanding and awareness of the multitude of backgrounds students come from, the history of colonialism and racism in our society, how different layers of oppression intersect, and how that impacts on social workers themselves and on those we support.

Social workers from Black, Asian and Minoritised communities must not be expected to resolve racism, exclusion, or discrimination on their own. As the Professional Association, SASW will continue to listen to and support people with lived experience of prejudice and work towards educating and equipping all of us to eradicate racism. We will support those who are white to become real allies and to promote and strengthen anti-racism across all social work settings in Scotland.

"IN A RACIST SOCIETY, IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE NON-RACIST, WE MUST BE ANTI-RACIST." ANGELA Y. DAVIS

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[13] www.sssc.uk.com/the-scottish-social-services-council/sssc-codes-of-practice
[14] www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf

References & Resources

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