



# COVID IN COLOUR

**The experiences of young Black and  
People of Colour Scots during the pandemic**



**This is a  
movement.**

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# FOREWORD

My name is Ashleigh and I am the lead youth ambassador for the COVID-19 report by Intercultural Youth Scotland.

IYS is a charity that is led by its youth. From its youth workers and volunteers, to the young people. Their opinion is what builds and makes us work. Together we are fighting for our voices to be heard and changes to be made.

IYS has been working closely with young Black and People of Colour (POC) Scots in Edinburgh before and throughout the recent pandemic. We aim to give young people a chance to express themselves as well as help to expose the problems they currently face in Scottish society. Our goal at IYS is to help Scotland support and praise the diversity it contains.

**The creation of a safe environment where Black and POC Scottish youth can express their feelings was a crucial part of our development as a charity. The IYS team is especially trained on race equality and youth work, fighting to break down cultural barriers and build better futures.**

Black and POC youth already experience great hardships and challenges when it comes to “normal” society, many of which have previously been covered in Intercultural Youth Scotland's Insight report from 2019. The arrival of COVID-19 presented an extra battle for many across Scotland. With schools being closed, young people's futures were left in the hands of their teachers.

During the same period, many Black and POC youth were exposed to great amounts of emotional distress due to the trauma associated with the catalysing factors of the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement.



The normalisation of sharing videos of people in the same communities as yourself being murdered had a significant effect on many people and the young people were no different. The lack of regular socialisation or means to escape the online community - which at the time was abuzz with traumatic imagery – coupled with the uncertainty surrounding their grades contributed to exacerbating negative feelings and anxiety of the young people.

Our youth workers and volunteers take racism and inequality very seriously and our aim has always been to provide Black and POC youth the same opportunities White youth receive. We carried out this research as a listening tool, to create a resource that truly tells what the impact of these uncertain times has been on our Black and POC youth communities.

**We will not allow our voices to remain as background noise any longer.**



Teachers, as well as people in positions of power, need to be aware that their attitudes towards learning children can have a direct and notable impact on the young person's potential to achieve. If the youth sense any kind of prejudice, they are much more likely to disengage which reinforces the loop of underachievement in Black and POC communities.

More effort needs to be put in to remove this toxicity from learning environments and encourage the growth of a healthy diverse society. Which is why we will keep on fighting.

**From our work we wish to see a society where Black & POC youth thrive  
and this cannot be done if we face an audience with closed ears.**



**Racism is a long ongoing battle, but it is a battle we are prepared to fight.  
The fight starts with us, the young people. What we want to see in our future,  
we must first see in ourselves, therefore we need to do what is right and  
stand up against racism in all its forms.**

**Together, we can build futures not walls.  
Together, we can do this.**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Even prior to lockdown, a majority of respondents (63%) had experienced or witnessed racism at their school. Moreover, almost half (45%) feel that they have less opportunities than their White counterparts and that this disparate access to life opportunities has been highlighted by the impact of the pandemic.**

4 out of 10 respondents (41%) reported that they have had access to counselling services and almost 5 in 10 respondents (46%) felt that they can talk to their teachers about their concerns.

Access to social support (e.g. teachers, counselling services, friends), whether for academic purposes or to help with their mental wellbeing, acts as a protective factor that buffers young people against anxiety brought about by the uncertainty of the pandemic. Further, in light of the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement, it is vital to acknowledge the deleterious psychological, physical, and emotional consequences of race-based stress and provide appropriate response and services.<sup>12</sup>

More than a third of respondents (34%) felt they are coping well with the challenges of the lockdown, whereas a quarter (26%) felt they are not adjusting well. Further, 6 out of 10 respondents (59%) reported that the lockdown has affected their motivation and crippled their ability to progress with school work.

More than a third (37%) have reported feeling uncomfortable with the increased police presence during the pandemic and during the protests on the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

Also, a majority of respondents (54%) have reported feeling worried and scared by data that shows the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and POC. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a legal impetus enshrined in Scots law which recognises the individual's fundamental human rights.<sup>11</sup> Articles 2 of the UDHR mandates that no distinction shall be made on the basis of race, colour, and national or social origin, among other things, with regards to basic rights and freedoms. Health care providers, schools, and law enforcement agencies. (e.g. police) are social institutions which should uphold these basic human rights without discrimination.

Employment and work conditions are also social determinants of health. The vast majority of respondents (57%) have expressed concerns about their family or guardian losing their jobs and struggling financially.

Half of the participants (50%) reported that they were able to access their school materials through the Internet without disruption; However, the vast majority (75%) expressed difficulties in continuing their learning outwith the classroom environment.



An overwhelming majority of respondents (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that the best solution to exam cancellation was to ask teachers to predict students' grades. This vote of confidence given by students to their teachers has been put in stark contrast with the Scottish Qualification Authority's (SQA) initial decision to downgrade almost 40% of recommended grades, effectively dismissing teachers' evaluations of their students. Moreover, the SQA cut Higher passes by more than 15 points for students in the most deprived areas, in contrast to a cut of 9.8% for students in the most well off areas<sup>14</sup>.

As a result of the nationwide student protests against the downgrading which disadvantaged young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds the most, the SQA reversed the downgrading. While this decision was welcome, it is worth noting the relative absence of race, and the prevalence of class, in the rhetoric of inequality which led to the reversal. Intersectionality should always be at the heart of such discourses and the failure to appropriately address the impact of racial bias in teacher estimates indicates that the needs of Black and POC young Scots remain at the margins.<sup>15</sup> While the SQA did not release information on ethnicity and race, intersections of ethnicity, poverty and migration status raise significant concerns that Black and POC students were disproportionately affected by the current results. Consistently gathering more data on each protected characteristic should be a priority in order to assess and mitigate intersectional levels of disadvantage.<sup>11</sup>

40% of respondents aged 15-18 did not believe that being a young Black student or a Student of colour will put them at a disadvantage when teachers will predict their grades. However, a significant proportion of respondents (34%) in this age group did believe that this will impact the teachers' assessment. Moreover, 26% of respondents aged 15-18 chose the 'neutral' statement, perhaps because they were unsure if their ethnicity plays a part in teachers' perceptions of their abilities - a form of psychological manipulation termed 'gaslighting'.<sup>16</sup> This in turn points to the insidious and often invisible ways in which racism operates in daily life. The effect of racial bias in predicted grades is confirmed by analysis of the data in the SQA 2020 Equality Impact Assessment (which is from 2019), which shows that the highest level of under-estimation occurred in Black and POC groups.<sup>11</sup>

Almost half of the respondents (47%) who were 15-18 years old believed that they will be disadvantaged when their grades are predicted because the SQA's moderation of teacher estimates relied solely on the historic exam performance of schools. In other words, if a school had a low percentage of A's in previous years, this would affect a young person's ability to receive an A regardless of their individual merit, as their schools' past exam results might determine the percentage of A's, B's & C's the school is allowed to award. Moreover, more than a third of respondents (34%) in this age group stated they were neutral, which could indicate their uncertainty regarding the matter. These concerns were very much confirmed when the SQA first published their results and before they reversed them due to protests by students and various organisations.<sup>10</sup>

Over half of the respondents (56%) did not think that universities will consider potential biases influencing predicted grades for Black and POC students. A quarter of respondents (25%) chose the 'neutral' statement, which again could be interpreted as stemming from their uncertainty.

Finally, the unexpected cancellation of exams due to Covid-19 is especially troubling given that more than half of the respondents (55%) aged 15-18 stated that they did not have a backup plan in case they do not receive the grades they expect.



**This is a  
movement.**

Intercultural Youth Scotland is a youth-led movement dedicated to supporting young Black and young People of Colour to share, grow and succeed in their personal lives, at school and at work.

We focus on improving the representation and participation of disengaged young people by overcoming barriers to participation and consultation in youth services, wider communities and politics.

We bring together unheard Black and POC youth voices in Scotland to take collective action for social justice and sustained impact. We broaden horizons and offer direct, specialist support and vital pathways for young people who face barriers to success.

Intercultural Youth Scotland works towards a holistic engagement with young people, connecting them through their interests, supporting them into bright futures and fighting for them to have a seat at the table for the decisions that shape their lives.

**These engaging activities come together to grow confidence and self-belief with the purpose of creating a new generation of activism for the benefit of all.**





## The Anti-Racist Educator

Founded in 2019, The Anti-Racist Educator is an online learning platform led by a collective of educators of colour based in Scotland and working toward building an education system that is :

- **equitable**
- **free from racial injustice**
- **critically engaged with issues of power, identity and privilege.**

A valuable tool for all those seeking to improve their racial literacy, The Anti-Racist Educator website includes a blog with multiple contributors of colour; a podcast with interviews of various activists and collaborative discussions; a glossary of key anti-racist terminology; anti-racist reading lists; school resources and more.



**This is a  
movement.**





# INTRODUCTION

This report sheds light on the overall wellbeing of young Black and People of Colour Scots during COVID-19. It highlights the heterogeneous nature of young people of colour - a result of intersectional identities and a constellation of experiences.

According to data published by the Office for National Statistics on the 7th of May 2020, the risk of death involving coronavirus among Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic people (BAME) was significantly higher than that of those of White ethnicity.<sup>1</sup> Focussed solely on England and Wales, the analysis found that Black people were four times more likely to die from COVID-19-related factors than their White counterparts. Furthermore, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people were 1.8 times and 1.6 times at greater risk than White people, respectively. In Scotland, preliminary data published by the National Records of Scotland on COVID-19 related deaths registered by 14th of June 2020 suggest that South Asian ethnic groups were almost twice as likely to die from COVID-19 related factors than in the White ethnic group.<sup>2</sup> However, ethnicity information in the death registration process is not mandatory and almost a tenth of deaths involving COVID-19 registered till the 26th of April did not record ethnicity which limits the scope of evidence.

The explanation as to why BAME people are at greater risk from COVID-19 is complex: Higher unemployment rates, lower savings and wealth, overcrowded accommodations, and high concentrations of BAME people living in urban areas with high levels of multiple deprivation are among some of pre-existing and unaddressed racial inequities which exacerbate the consequences of COVID-19.<sup>3,4</sup>

The conditions in which people live and die are shaped by social structures and processes; systematic health and socioeconomic disparities are perpetuated by social norms, policies and practices that create an unequal distribution of and access to necessary resources.<sup>5,6</sup> Access to healthcare, social welfare services, education, and the conditions of homes and communities are social determinants of health which, if equitable, can lead to flourishing lives. If unequal, it can lead to blighted development and a weaker society.

Racist hate crimes against Southeast and East Asians living in the UK have exponentially risen due to COVID-19.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese community in the UK has been dealing with increased experiences of xenophobia, stigmatisation, and racial discrimination related to the coronavirus.<sup>8</sup> Police Scotland suggest that there was a reduction on the number of reported hate crimes during the earlier phase of the lockdown restrictions - this can be attributed to the strict physical distancing measures; however, they expect to see a rise in incidences of race hate crimes, particularly towards minority ethnic communities as we ease further from the lockdown.<sup>9</sup>

We are concerned not only on the impact of COVID-19 on young Black & POC Scots health and mental wellbeing, but how it can influence their life opportunities given the likely recession ahead. A particular concern is the decision of the UK government to cancel exams and determine the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) examinations according to predicted grades by lecturers and their schools' historical performances. As a result, about 75,000 Scottish pupils had been affected by the moderation system with their grades being downgraded due to schools' previous performances, disproportionately affecting young people from the most deprived areas.<sup>10</sup> More recently, Education Secretary John Sweeney announced for all downgraded awards to be withdrawn with results based solely on teachers' judgement.<sup>8</sup> Yet, even with this mandate, the grades of young Black & POC Scots are in peril due to implicit racial bias and structural racism perpetuated in the school setting.<sup>11</sup>

**In response, 12 youth Anti-Racist and Pro-Black Ambassadors from Intercultural Youth Scotland led a consultation report involving 63 young Black and POC Scots aged 16 and over. The research was conducted via an online survey during the COVID-19 lockdown (May - June 2020) and aimed to explore Black and POC young people's experiences and perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on their academic achievements and mental wellbeing and its potential effects on their life opportunities.**





# OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Based on the results of this survey, Intercultural Youth Scotland, The Anti-Racist Educator & SAMEE have created a set of recommendations for school staff, policymakers, government officials, parents, and anyone involved in the lives of young Black and People Of Colour Scots and children.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN SCOTTISH SOCIETY :**

Currently, young Black & POC Scots have feelings of fear or insecurity toward social institutions built to uphold their basic human rights (e.g. police, school, healthcare).

**Every institution needs to be held responsible for addressing institutional racism, for reducing racial inequalities and for challenging racism in all its forms.**

**Ensure an equitable distribution of resources and access to services.**

**Provide race-informed and culturally responsive services** (e.g. race-informed and culturally response counselling especially during the pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement)

**Culturally appropriate youth work & positive destination support** has a significant impact and importance for Black young people and young people of colour. In order to understand the extent to their needs and be supported it is vital to get direct insight from youth workers with lived experiences who have recent experience of effective Black & POC youth engagement. This issue is currently hugely under resourced in Scotland.

**Offer more opportunities** for apprenticeships, studentships, university scholarships, and activities that cater specifically to Black & POC Scots in order to build wider social connections.

**The consequences of increased police presence during lockdown for young Black & POC Scots must be addressed.** Specifically, young people were scared to leave their houses and access open community spaces due to fear of prejudice, racial profiling and racial treatment from authorities. As a result, they had limited opportunities to exercise and socialise, which further affected their mental health. Now that the lockdown has been lifted and students have returned to school it is also important to note that police presence in schools can make BME students feel threatened, criminalised and stigmatised.<sup>17</sup> Social institutions such as the police should uphold basic human rights and freedom without discrimination and without striking fear in certain populations.

**There is an underrepresentation of Black people and POC, their experiences and the particular issues they face in reports and studies, including those pertaining to the implications of Covid-19.** This leads to an underrepresentation of voices and concerns in public health and social policies. Funded population-level research into their experiences is needed. Most importantly, such research needs to engage and incorporate the **participation of young people**, especially those who experience intersectional forms of marginalisation.<sup>18</sup>

## **LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN SCOTTISH EDUCATION :**

### **Policies that address racial inequities are warranted.**

Good practice examples include anti-racist policies that address interpersonal student racism and implement institutional commitment to anti-racism<sup>13</sup> and recruitment and ongoing support of BME teachers.<sup>11,19</sup>

**Improve racial literacy and mandate training to unlearn implicit racial biases** and develop awareness of how racism operates in school for teachers, education leaders and policy-makers<sup>17,20,21</sup>

**School curriculum should reflect an anti-racist perspective and students should be engaged in anti-racist pedagogy.**<sup>11</sup>

**Clearer communication between education institutions (SQA, individual schools, etc.), parents and pupils is vital.** More tailored support is required for communities of colour, especially those facing intersectional levels of marginalisation.

**Education institutions such as the SQA should work to gather ethnicity data more consistently and rigorously.** It is important to then use such data to critically analyse the presence of racial bias in exam estimates and of racial inequalities more broadly.<sup>9</sup>

## **SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCOTTISH EDUCATION IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 :**

**Students should have the opportunity to contest their final SQA results,** including the bias involved in teacher estimates, in an accessible way as well as to sit exams at a later stage.

**Schools should be transparent about how predicted grades were calculated.**

**The SQA and Universities should take into account that teachers' predicted grades might have been biased** so as to disadvantage students according to race, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, migrations status, inter alia.

**All education stakeholders need to prepare for equitable alternatives for possible future exam cancellations.** Such alternatives should mitigate any additional disadvantages faced by marginalised groups.

Considering the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black & POC communities, **appropriate risk assessments and race-informed, culturally-responsive youth work support for pupils back at school** should be carried out and revised according to the changing context of the pandemic.



# “THE NAME GAME”

# THE POWER OF TERMINOLOGY AND THE LANGUAGE USED IN DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING P.O.C

**The young people preferred to use the term young Black and People of Colour Scots in recognition of the fact that we must be aware of the language surrounding People of Colour (POC) and any work affecting them.**

**Terminology like BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) although used widely in policies, has sometimes been described to be reductive. Moreover, the use of the term ethnic minority as a description of all non-white people, introduces a power dynamic between the “white majority” and the “non-white minority”.**

However, for consistency, we retained the use of the term BAME when referencing other studies and reports that made use of this terminology.



**While no singular acronym can act as an umbrella for all People of Colour, changing the language surrounding our identities can allow us to see ourselves as equal and uplifted individuals as opposed to a struggling underclass.**



## LIMITATIONS

**As is the case with all small-scale studies conducted within tight timeframes, there are a number of limitations to the report. Due to the small sample size, we cannot claim any degree of representation for and generalisability towards the wider Black and POC youth population living in Scotland. Further, due to the relatively small number of participants, we opted not to disaggregate the findings further into ethnicity and gender**

A total of 73 survey entries were logged. However, since our focus was on reporting the experiences of Black and POC young people and we were not trying to compare their experiences to young people of White ethnicity, we removed 8 respondents who identified as 'White British' 'White Scottish' or 'only White'.

A total of 63 participants from age 15 to 25+ years old completed the online survey related to their academic and mental wellbeing during the lockdown (40 identified as female, 15 identified as male, 6 identified as non-binary, while 2 preferred not to disclose).



**After the initial analysis, the findings were shared with the Anti-Racist and Pro-Black Ambassadors and they participated in the joint discussion about the implications of the findings and explored how the report could influence future policies and programmes aimed at Black and POC young people.**

# METHODOLOGY

**Participation is a fundamental right of all young people - Black, and People of Colour (POC) youth are no exception.**

There is a chronic underrepresentation of Black and POC youth in studies and policies that directly affect their lives. This often means that policies, services and practices designed to lead to more positive social and health outcomes are ill-informed and therefore ineffective.

To account for this, they must be acknowledged and empowered as fully fledged social actors, who actively shape their own life course, communities and societies.<sup>5</sup>

It is crucial that the young people are actively engaged in the decision-making and the easiest way to do this is through collaborating with them in research.

12 of Intercultural Youth Scotland's youth Anti-Racist and Pro-Black Ambassadors participated in the planning, designing, implementation, dissemination, and feedback phases of the study.

They identified topics and themes about COVID-19 and how it affected their lives and Intercultural Youth Scotland's team alongside the Anti-Racist Educator team, helped evaluate and develop the topics into an online survey.

Convenience sampling was used to recruit 63 Black and POC young people during the COVID-19 lockdown to explore their experiences and their perceptions about the impact of the pandemic on their academic and mental wellbeing, including its potential effect on their life opportunities.

Due to the limited space of the report we have decided to retain 29 questions in the results section and moved the rest to the appendix section.

**The survey contained 38 open and closed questions about:**

**- THEIR EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL BEFORE LOCKDOWN**

**- GENERAL WELLBEING DURING LOCKDOWN**

**- ACCESS TO FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORT DURING LOCKDOWN**

**- PREDICTED GRADES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

There are certain questions that are relevant only to respondents aged 18 below (e.g. SQA grades). These questions are marked with an (\*) and had only included data from respondents 18 years old and below.

The questions are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. Some questions with thematic similarities to other questions were moved to the appendix. The online survey was completed by accessing the IYS website. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to data collection.

A total of 63 young Black and POC Scots participated. Table 1 describes the ethnicity of the respondents, Table 2 provides a breakdown of their gender, while Table 3 disaggregates the respondents by age group. The appendix provides further description of the sexual orientation, and religions of the respondents.

Table 1. Aggregated ethnic groups

| <b>Simplified ethnic group</b> | <b>No. of respondents</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Asian</b>                   | 8                         |
| <b>African/Black</b>           | 41                        |
| <b>Mixed</b>                   | 9                         |
| <b>Other (including Arabs)</b> | 5                         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>63</b>                 |

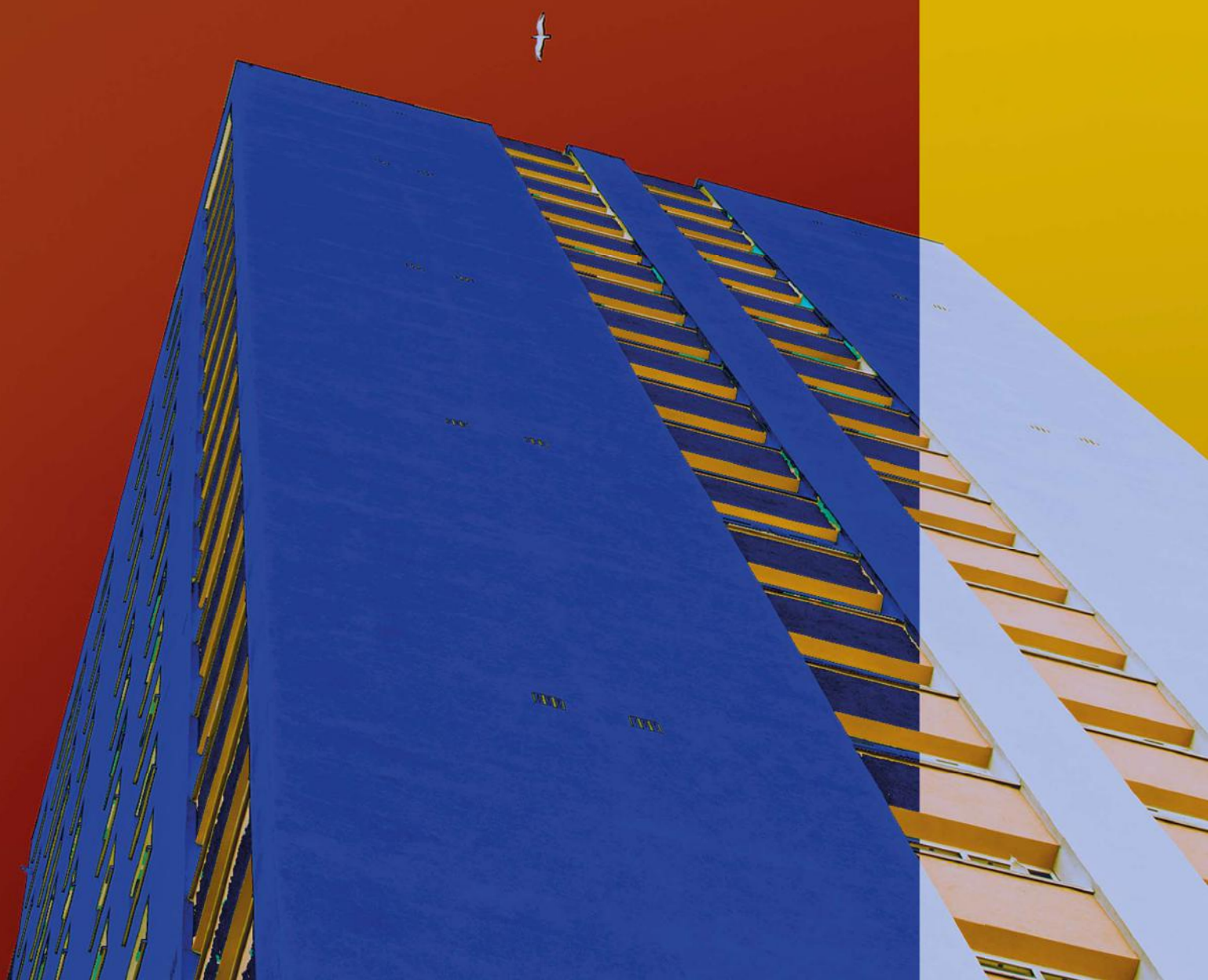
Table 2. Gender

| <b>Gender (n = 63)</b>   | <b>No. of respondents</b> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Female</b>            | 40                        |
| <b>Male</b>              | 15                        |
| <b>Non-binary</b>        | 6                         |
| <b>Prefer not to say</b> | 2                         |

Table 3. Age group

| <b>Age group (n = 63)</b> | <b>% of respondents</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>15-16</b>              | 14                      |
| <b>16-18</b>              | 59                      |
| <b>19-21</b>              | 17                      |
| <b>22-25</b>              | 3                       |
| <b>25+</b>                | 7                       |

# RESULTS





## GENERAL WELL-BEING DURING THE LOCKDOWN

1.

More than a third of respondents (34%) expressed agreement or strong agreement with the statement 'I am coping well mentally with the challenges of lockdown', whereas more than a quarter (26%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.

*'I feel anxious about everything that has to do with school and my future and I feel anxious about the constant attacks against my community in different parts of the world during this crisis. I am exhausted of being exhausted.'*

2.

As a response to the statement:

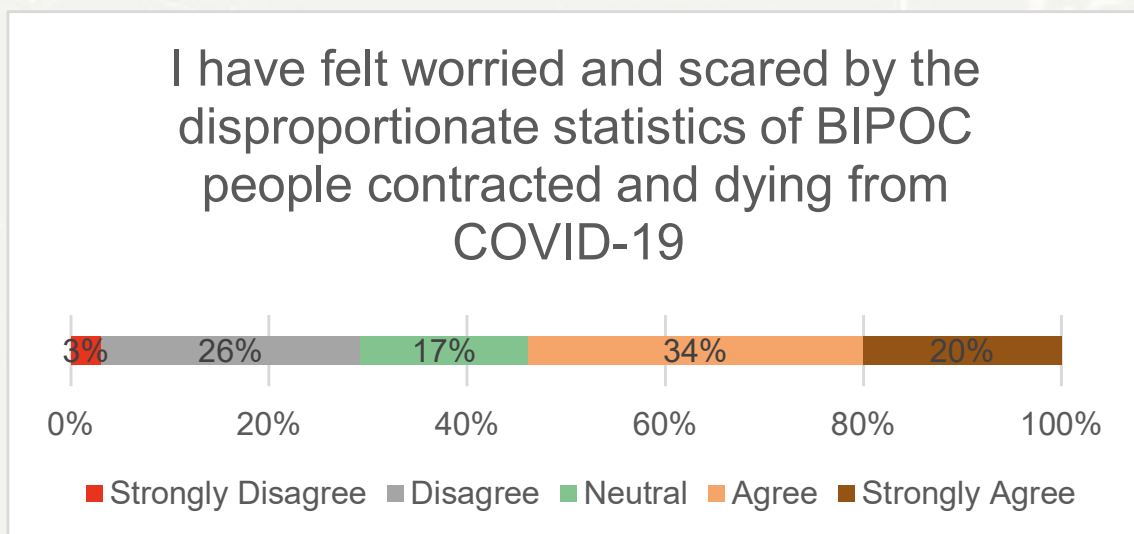
**'I have access to a safe outdoor space during lockdown'**

31% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. While more than a quarter 28% answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.

3.

A majority of respondents (54%) expressed agreement or strong agreement with the statement:  
**'I have felt worried and scared by the disproportionate statistics of Black and POC people who have contracted and died from COVID-19'**

Whereas 19 respondents reported otherwise (29%).



4.

More than a third of respondents (37%) have reported feeling uncomfortable with the increased police presence during the increased lockdown phase of the pandemic, whereas about a quarter (26%) expressed disagreement of strong disagreement. The question was discussed in the context of overwhelming incidences of police brutality during protests on the killing of George Floyd.

5.

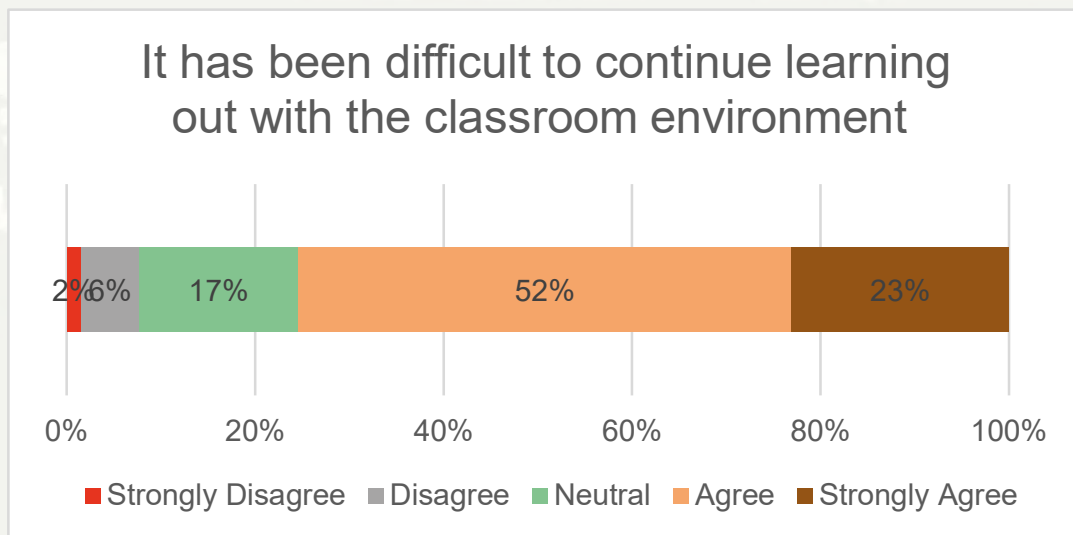
An overwhelming proportion of the respondents (59%) reported that the lockdown has affected their motivation and ability to progress with coursework. On the other hand, 21% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

6.

The vast majority, or three-fourths of the respondents (75%) expressed agreement or strong agreement with the statement:

**'It has been difficult to continue learning outwith the classroom environment'.**

On the other hand, 8%, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. However, we cannot discern further what difficulties the respondents have encountered in working outside the classroom environment.



7.

Half of the respondents (50%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement:

**'COVID-19 disruption has had an impact on my ability to access the internet and learning materials'**

While a fifth of the respondents (20%) either agreed or strongly agreed.

8.

A large proportion (39%) of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement:

**'I have been given sufficient work to continue my studies at home'.**

While almost a third (30%) either agreed or strongly agreed. However, we cannot discern further if it is too much or too little work.

*'I've had moments of extreme uncertainty because of not knowing how to proceed with future plans. Since I was in sixth year and have made plans to go to a university, I haven't received any additional work from high school and have been very unmotivated in the house to do any work. I get scared and insecure about my knowledge of the crisis we're currently in because no one really knows what's going to happen.'*

\*9.

As a response to the statement:

**'I have received pressure from my parents or guardian regarding my future plans because of predicted grades',**

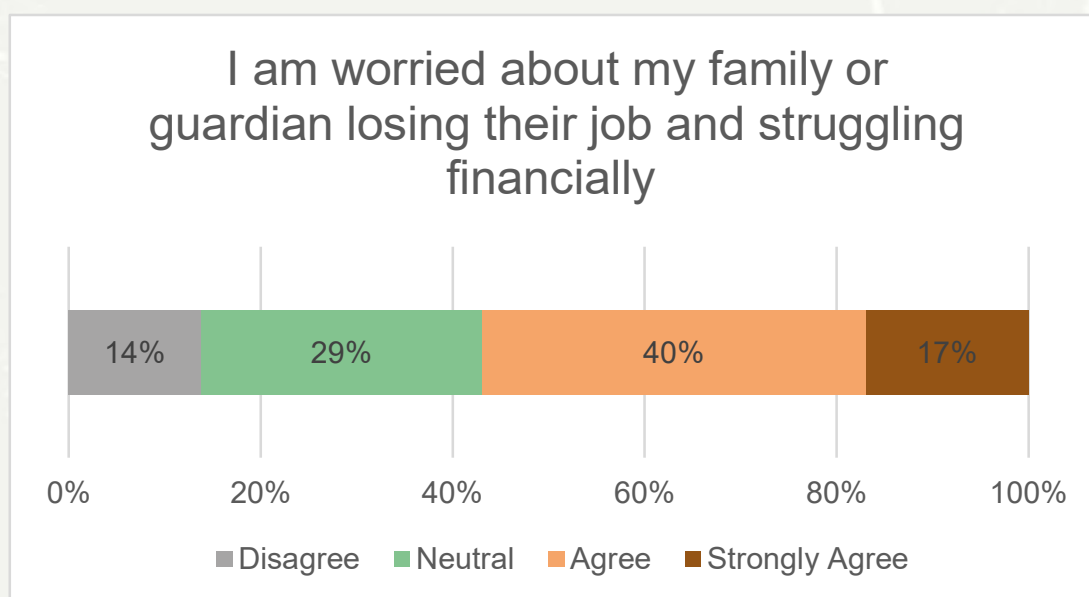
more than half (55%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement while 8% expressed agreement or strong agreement.

10.

The majority of respondents (57%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

**'I am worried about my family or guardian losing their job and struggling financially'**

Whereas 14% disagreed with the statement.



I DONT KNOW ITS HARD, CAUSE YOU ARE TRYING TO  
HAVE THE MINDSET OF LIKE THINGS ARE CHANGING.  
AND THINGS ARE CHANGING, COMPANIES ARE  
PUTTING THINGS IN PLACE. BUT LIKE JUST FROM  
SEEING IN MY OWN FAMILY, IT'S KINDA HARD. LIKE  
CONSTANTLY GETTING REJECTED EVEN THOUGH  
YOU'RE FULLY QUALIFIED. LIKE NO-ONE IS GONNA  
TURN ROUND AND SAY :  
'IT'S BECAUSE YOUR A BLACK WOMAN' ARE THEY?  
BUT YOU KNOW IT'S AN UNDERLYING FACTOR THAT  
YOU CAN'T TECHNICALLY PINPOINT.





## ACCESS TO FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORT DURING THE PANDEMIC

11.

In relation to accessing support from teachers during the lockdown, 33% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement:

**'I feel it is critical to have a good relationship with your teacher in this situation'.**

Whereas 27% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

\*12.

Almost half of respondents (47%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement:

**'I have a member of staff at school I can talk to and seek advice from throughout the lockdown.'**

Conversely, 34% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

\*13.

Similarly, although 3 out of 10 respondents (35%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

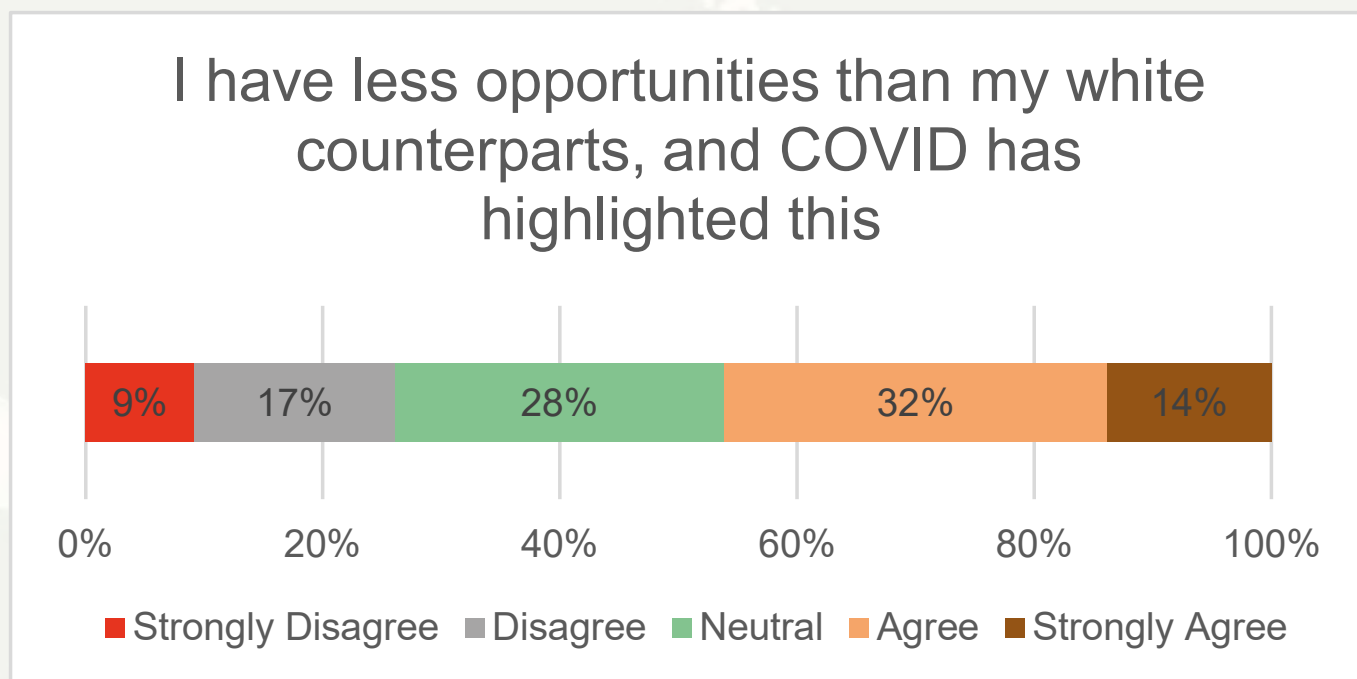
**'My school has provided me with adequate support and guidance throughout the lockdown'**

3 out of 10 respondents (30%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.



#### 14.

Strikingly, almost half (45%) of the respondents felt that they have less opportunities than their White counterparts and that this disparate access to life opportunities has been highlighted by the impact of the pandemic. On the other hand, 18 respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed (26%).



#### 15.

4 out of 10 respondents (41%) reported that they have had access to careers counselling services since the disruption of the lockdown while almost a quarter (24%) report otherwise.

**'I have received little to no support from teachers - I am expected to be an adult now and all of a sudden have many responsibilities'**



**'I don't really have friends and the little I have, I am not able to see them so my relationships with people are going to be affected.'**



**\*16.**

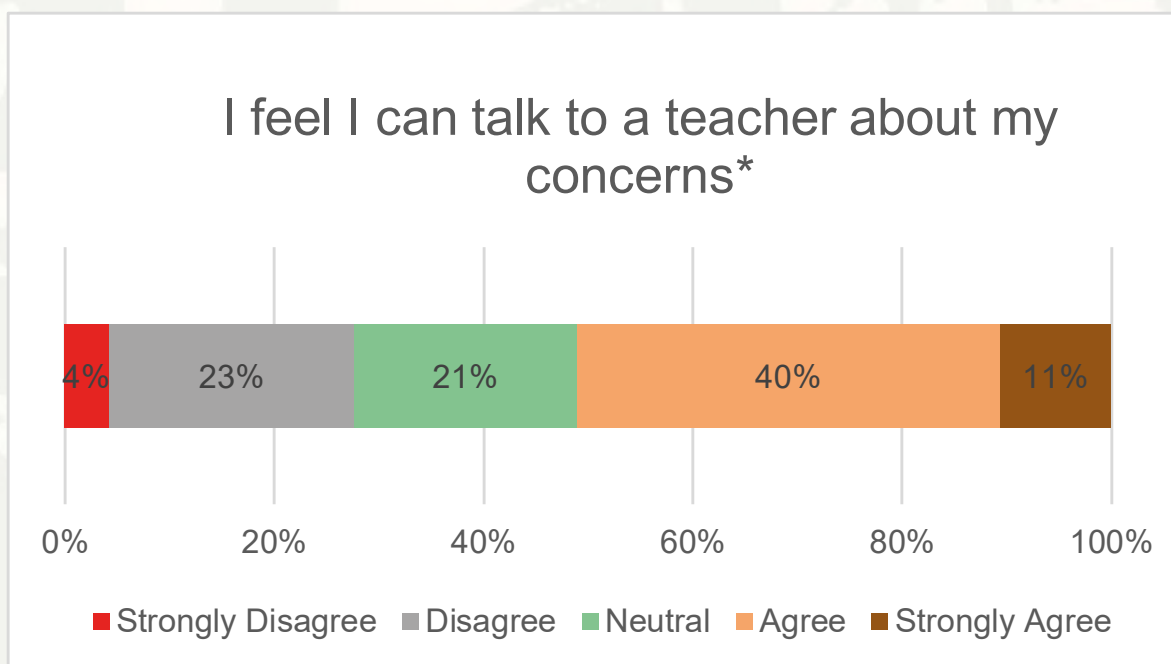
Half of the respondents (51%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

**'I feel I can talk to a teacher about my concerns'.**

For example, one respondent shared positively that:

*'I have received support from my careers advisor and guidance teacher throughout the UCAS process'*

However, a quarter of respondents (27%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.





WITH STANDARDS OF WHAT YOUR SUPPOSED TO  
ACT LIKE, LOOK LIKE AND STRESS LIKE ITS JUST  
REALLY DIFFERENT FROM MY HOUSE HOLD. MY HOUSE  
IS SO DIFFERENT FROM MOST OF THE PEOPLE AROUND  
ME IN SCHOOL, SO YOU'RE JUST COMING IN WITH A  
DIFFERENT MINDSET AND ATTITUDE SO IT CAN MAKE  
IT DIFFICULT TO RELATE TO CERTAIN PEOPLE AND  
GROUPS... NOONE IS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO MAKE  
YOU FEEL LIKE AN OUTSIDER, BUT YOU OBVIOUSLY DO.



## EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL BEFORE THE LOCKDOWN

17.

Four out of ten respondents (40%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

**'I believe my race, ethnicity, and/or skin colour plays a role in relationships I have formed with teachers'.**

Conversely, less than a quarter (22%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. However, we cannot discern from the question if it is a positive or negative relationship.

18.

**A majority of respondents (63%) reported that they have experienced or witnessed racism at their school.**

19.

In response to the statement:

**'I have witnessed Black and POC students being treated more harshly in the classroom'**  
more than a third (35%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. While almost a quarter (23%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed.



**‘It’s not easy to maintain a positive mindset especially due to the media’s constant negative portrayal which causes stress and anxiety for your future.’**



**‘Personally, I’ve just been thinking a lot about the world and my experiences as well as others and I can’t see myself being able to return to school happy or comfortable at all’**

## PREDICTED GRADES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

20.

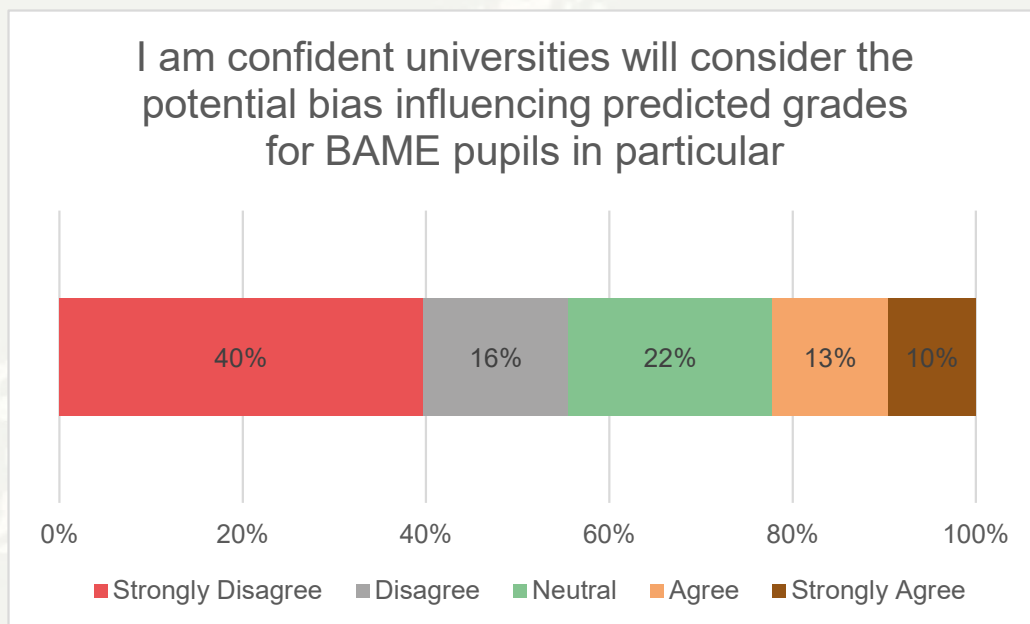
Strikingly, 68% of respondents believe that their education is at greater risk than their White counterparts due to COVID-19 disruption. 10% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

21.

Moreover, more than half of the respondents (56%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement:

**‘I am confident universities will consider the potential bias influencing predicted grades for Black and POC pupils in particular’.**

A little over a fifth of respondents (23%) agreed or strongly agreed and a similar proportion (25%) were neutral.



22.

Response to the statement:

**‘I am sure the SQA will consider that teachers may be biased when predicting grades’** was evenly split, with 33% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and 33% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

\*23.

Almost half of the respondents (47%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

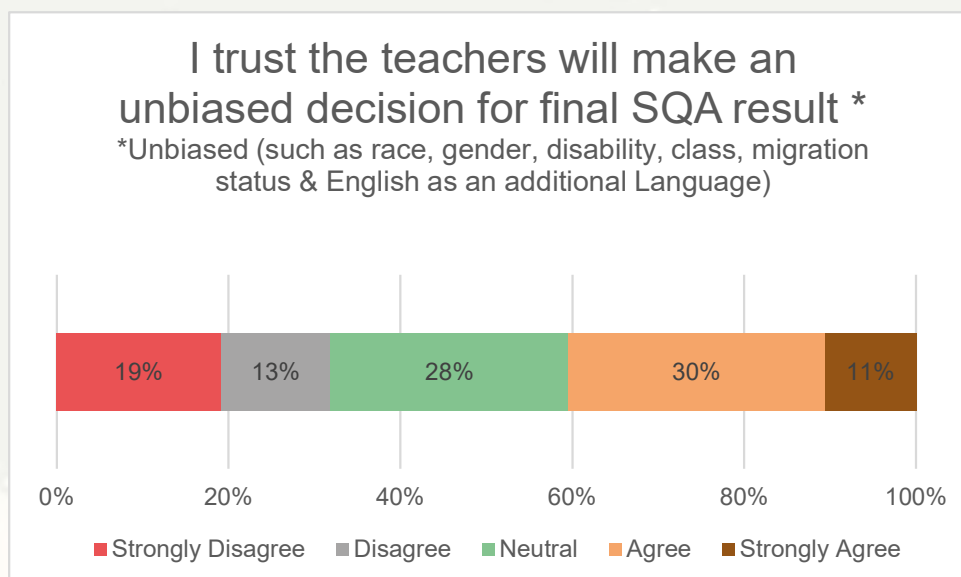
**‘I believe I will be disadvantaged when my grade is predicted because my school’s past exams results might determine the percentage of A’s, B’s & C’s their allowed to award.’**

Almost a fifth of respondents (19%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. More than a third of respondents (34%) were neutral.



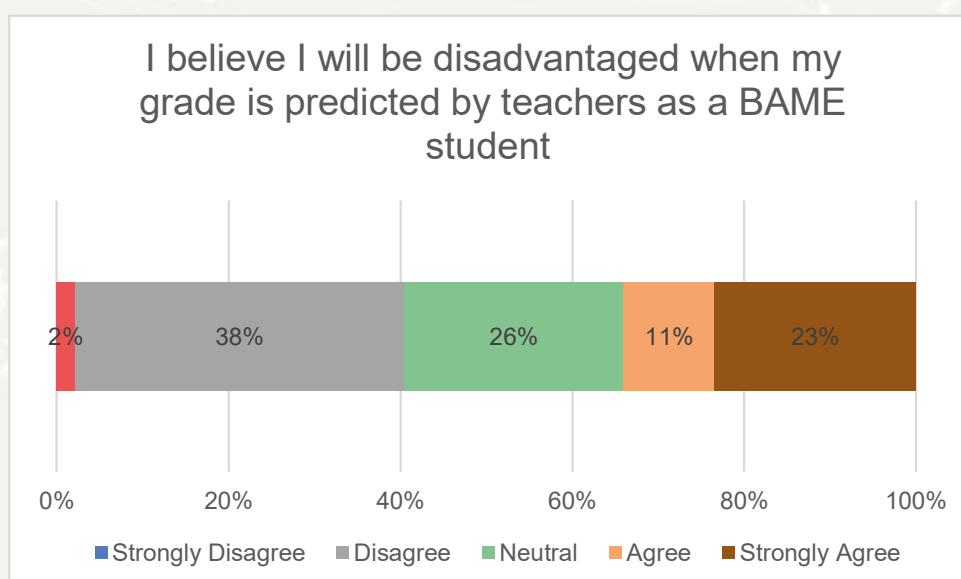
**\*24.**

When asked whether they trust their teachers to make an unbiased decision for their final SQA result (where unbiased meant disregarding categories such as race, gender, disability, class, migration status and English as an additional language), 41% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 32% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, 28% of respondents were 'neutral', perhaps because they were unsure whether teachers' decisions on their SQA will be biased or not.



**\*25.**

Although 40% of respondents did not believe that being a Black and POC student will put them at a disadvantage when teachers will predict their grade, 34% did believe this was true. Additionally, 26% percent responded "neutral", perhaps indicating that they were uncertain on whether this is true or not.



26.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (91%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

**'I believe asking teachers to predict students' grades is the best solution to exam cancellations'**

Only a small proportion (6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. One respondent wrote :

*'Some teachers in particular will take this as an opportunity to get back at students they didn't particularly like'.*

\*27.

45% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:

**'I feel confident that my teachers were able to get a sense of my true potential before the lockdown.'**

15% of respondents disagreed with the statement and none strongly disagreed.

As one respondent elaborated:

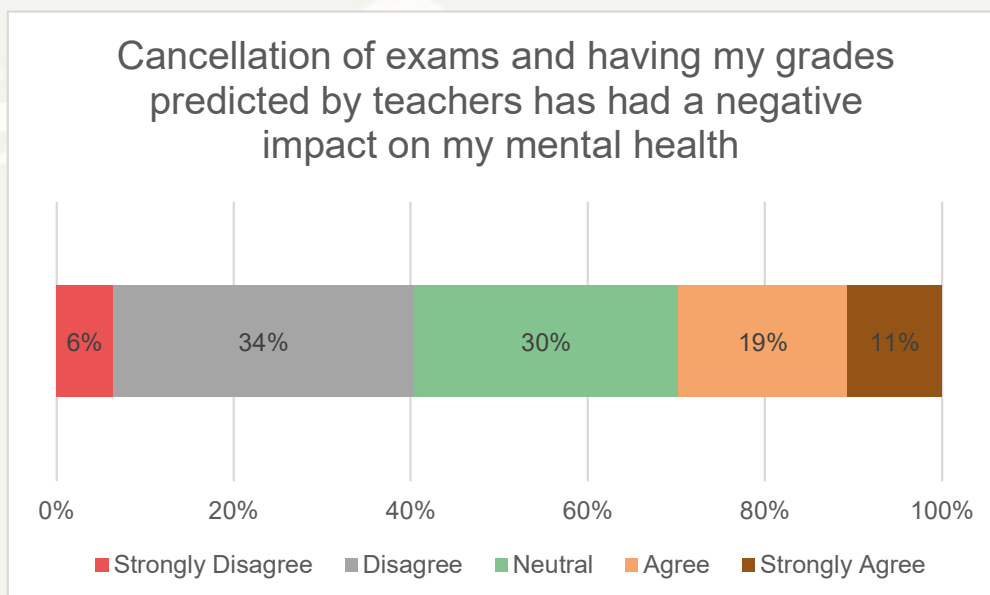
*'I believe I can achieve so much and try my best but I've never really had good relationships with teachers for them to see my true potential and how hard I work and I didn't feel comfortable telling them about my Health issues regarding me staying off or being late because I didn't feel they cared at all.'*

40% of respondents were neutral, perhaps because they were uncertain if this was true or not.

\*28.

While 40% of respondents did not feel that the cancellation of exams and having their grades predicted by their teachers has had a negative impact on their mental health, 30% of respondents felt the opposite.

*'Having someone basically predict your future rather than me getting to claim and decide it for myself has got to be one of the worst things ever. Almost doesn't even feel real'.*



\*29.

More than half of the respondents (55%) stated that they did not have a backup plan in case they do not receive the grades they expect, whereas a quarter of respondents (25%) stated that they did.

**I AM DISAPPOINTED IN THE GRADING SYSTEM OF THE SQA AND THE TEACHERS. I WAS GRADED LOWER THAN WHAT I HAD EXPECTED, ESPECIALLY IN ONE OF THE SUBJECTS I KNEW FOR A FACT THAT I WOULD BE GETTING A GOOD GRADE.**

**AS A RESULT OF THIS, MY CHANCES OF EVEN GETTING TO THE ESTIMATED GRADES I NEEDED WERE LIMITED WHICH HAS LED TO A REJECTION OF ADMISSION ONTO THE COURSE I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO DOING IN SEPTEMBER. SOME OF MY CLASSMATES WHO WERE GRADED BETTER BUT DID NOT HAVE ALL ESTIMATED GRADES GOT ONTO THE COURSE. I AM VERY SHOCKED ABOUT THIS OUTCOME AND HAVE BEEN PANICKING EVER SINCE BECAUSE THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME FOR ME WHICH I DON'T WANT TO MISS. I ALSO DON'T HAVE ANY BACKUP PLANS BECAUSE I HAD PUT MY ALL IN GETTING THIS COURSE. THE SQA AND ALL THE TEACHERS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN GRADING NOT ONLY ME BUT OTHER STUDENTS SERIOUSLY NEED TO LOOK INTO THIS AGAIN AND RECONSIDER ALL THEIR DECISIONS.**













# THIS IS A CALL TO ACTION.

**We have to make sure that the year of 2020 is a  
decisive moment for change.**

2020 has been a year of harrowing events that have affected all of our lives. The impact of the past 6 months on Black & POC young people has been serious and troubling. These events; COVID-19 and the murders of innocent Black people, created a chain reaction, a new sickness, bringing to light some of the oldest, deepest inequalities in our society.

The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement against the backdrop of COVID-19 only exacerbated the need for specialised mental health support for Black & POC young people - alongside systemic changes within education and employment. We can be sure that intersectional young people with aspirations are going to be buffeted by the recession that is already upon us and getting more severe by the week.

**The data and reports are there,  
but unfortunately very few read them.**

There is evidence that Black and People of Colour often have reduced access to housing, healthcare and fewer career options. All while receiving inferior treatment in all aspects of daily life.

**Mental health issues, racism, digital exclusion and poverty** are disproportionately felt by young Black and POC people. A significant concern raised by Ethnic Minority National Resilience Network to the Scottish Government.

In tandem with this, we again feel the need to put emphasis on the importance of bringing young Black and Brown voices to the forefront. Youth Expert groups such as Intercultural Youth Scotland's Anti- Racist & Pro Black Ambassadors, need sustainable platforms in which they contribute to not only expert reference groups on Covid and ethnicity, but every aspect of their future.

There is a real pressing need to ensure specific focus is given to the mental health needs of Young Black and POC Scots. We need to find a mechanism for IYS Ambassadors to speak with Scottish Government and in turn help shape next steps.



**We have to make sure there is a meaningful and genuine cultural change on this topic.**

Organisations and partnerships such as Intercultural Youth Scotland, The Anti-Racist Educator, the Scottish Association of Minority Ethnic Educators and the Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland are key to make sure that sectors examine their policies and scrutinise their internal cultures. Scottish Government and Public Services claim to be committed to a human rights-based approach which means engaging directly with affected communities and organisations on issues which affect them directly.

As the leading Scottish force in bringing the voices of Black and POC young people into decision-making, relevant to their lives;

**We are here to bridge the gap between policy and practice.**

In our view, Scotland needs a systemic review into racism - one which is led by lived experience, similarly to the Independent Care Review. Scotland must understand and learn from history and take forward a national approach to tackle structural inequality and at pace. We believe this will lead to some much needed discussion on the issues that matter most to Black and POC young people in Scotland, such as culturally appropriate youth services and a greater diversity within policy and decision-making at both a local and national level.



**Khaleda Noon**

**Chief Executive - Intercultural Youth Scotland**



**Afrika Priestley**

**Lead Anti-Racist & Pro Black Ambassadors**



**Amy Allard-Dunbar**



# IYS ACTION PLAN.

At IYS, we are moving ahead in forming solutions through our work with Scottish Government.

The foremost of these will be our **Restless Natives employability programme.**

This programme is designed to tackle some of the systemic issues facing young Black and POC scots through in-depth and personalised support into careers, education & equitable futures.

From one to one support with CV writing and mapping out next steps, to building direct links to culturally proficient employers and work experience. We aim to break down the barriers that keep young people of colour from the futures they want to forge.

This program is currently being rolled out with a vanguard of partner schools. However, we are hoping to secure funding to expand the program to support Black and POC school leavers across all of Scotland into positive destinations.

For more information on the restless natives program, visit our website:

**[www.interculturalyouthscotland.org](http://www.interculturalyouthscotland.org)**

# RESTLESS NATIVES







# APPENDIX I - RESPONDENT PROFILE

Since the focus of this report was to explore the experiences of young Black and people of colour Scots, eight respondents who identified as White only were not included in the analysis.

The following tables demonstrate the characteristics of the 63 respondents.

## Ethnic group

| <b>Simplified ethnic group (n = 63)</b> | <b>% of respondents</b> |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Asian</b>                            | 12.3                    |
| <b>African/Black</b>                    | 64.6                    |
| <b>Mixed</b>                            | 13.9                    |
| <b>White Minority Ethnic</b>            | 1.5                     |
| <b>Other (including Arab)</b>           | 7.7                     |

## Gender

| <b>Gender (n = 63)</b> | <b>% of respondents</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Woman</b>           | 64.6                    |
| <b>Man</b>             | 23.1                    |
| <b>Non-binary</b>      | 12.3                    |

## Religion and belief

| <b>Religion and belief (n = 63)</b>  | <b>% of respondents</b> |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Christian (including Church of Scotland, Catholic, Protestant, and all other Christian denominations)</b> | 60                      |
| <b>Hindu</b>   | 1.5                     |
| <b>Muslim</b>  | 15.4                    |
| <b>No religion (e.g. atheist)</b>  | 9.2                     |
| <b>Other/ prefer not to say</b>  | 7.7                     |
| <b>Sikh</b>  | 6.2                     |

## Sexual Orientation

| <b>Sexual Orientation (n = 63)</b> | <b>% of respondents</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Heterosexual/ straight</b>      | 87.7                    |
| <b>Bisexual</b>                    | 4.6                     |
| <b>Gay/lesbian</b>                 | 3.1                     |
| <b>Other/ Prefer not to say</b>    | 4.6                     |

## Disability

| <b>Disability (n = 63)</b>       | <b>% of respondents</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>No</b>                        | 95.4                    |
| <b>Unsure/ Prefer not to say</b> | 3                       |
| <b>Yes</b>                       | 1.5                     |

## APPENDIX II – ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

1. A quarter (25%) of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'There was a high number of Black and POC students in my year at school' while 38% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.
2. A majority of the respondents (60%) report an equitable treatment similar to their White peers prior to lockdown. However, 7 young people (11%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement. However, we cannot deduce further whether the treatment was favourable, unfavourable, or objective.
3. More than a third of respondents (36%) report that they felt supported during the lockdown. Unfortunately, a great proportion (31%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.
4. The majority of respondents (64%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'My family and/or guardian does not fully understand the Scottish school system', whereas 15% reported either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.
5. In response to the statement 'My practical learning has been affected by the lockdown; for example: no one has been there to support me when I have faced difficulties learning new things', almost a third of respondents (31%) expressed agreement or strong agreement, while 29% expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.
6. 44% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'I am concerned about my predicted grades'. However, 27% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.
7. 39% of respondents felt confident that their teachers do not think they are lazy and not hardworking. Nevertheless, 25% of respondents felt the opposite.
8. 39 respondents (62%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'My home environment has allowed me to adapt well to working and studying from home', while only 7 respondents (12%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.
9. The vast majority of respondents (62%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I feel confident that my prelim grade will reflect on my exam grade', while almost a third of respondents (28%) were neutral and a small proportion (11%) disagreed.
10. Only 41% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was fair to use their prelim results as a baseline for their predicted grade, while 31% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Importantly, we cannot deduce from the question whether the respondents meant that their predicted grade should not be based on their prelim results at all or whether they meant that they did not wish other factors other than the prelim results to affect their predicted grade.
11. In response to the statement 'In previous exams my prelim grades reflected my final exam results' was evenly split, with 41% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing and 41% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. One respondent stated clearly: 'My preliminary grades have never reflected my exam results'

12. A significant proportion of respondents (40%) felt that the SQA and their school were not transparent and clear about how their grades were going to be predicted. One respondent wrote: 'We've been given mixed messages about grades- I am yet to know how they are going to carry out these 'predicted grades'. Conversely, a slightly larger proportion (41%) felt the opposite.

13. 44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'I believe my academic ability will be underestimated by teachers because of my race, ethnicity and/or skin colour when they are predicting my grades', while 23% of respondents disagreed and 32% of respondents were neutral.

14. 41% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: 'I am worried about the long-term impact of COVID-19 on my education and future employment', while 29% agreed or strongly agreed.

15. \*\* A little over a half of respondents (51%) were worried about the social implications of starting college or university this year whilst social restrictions are still in place, specifically not being able to meet fellow students or teaching staff. More than a third of respondents (36%) were neutral and a little over a tenth of respondents (13%) were not worried about this issue.

\*\*This question was added to the survey shortly after launching it. As a result, it has been answered by 61 respondents (compared to 63 respondents who answered all of the survey questions).

16. \*\* An overwhelming majority of respondents (74%) have not considered deferring their offer for college or university to next year due to Covid-19 and the prospect of remote learning. Less than a third (26%) have considered this course of action.

\*\*This question was added to the survey shortly after launching it. As a result, it has been answered by 61 respondents (compared to 63 respondents who answered all of the survey questions).



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**This piece of work could not have been accomplished without the hard work put in by all parties involved :**

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| - The IYS leadership team | - Khaleda Noon       |
| - David Chukwujekwu       | - Chad Lance Hemady  |
| - Thalia Thereza Assan    | - Mélina Valdelièvre |
| - Dr Kevin Guyan          | - Khadija Mohammed   |

**Most importantly, we would like to thank our ambassadors, who continue to inform our every move towards creating a real cultural shift and positive futures for the young Black and POC Scots.**

Ashleigh Zimunya, Danny Cliff, Deborah Alhassan, Ebo Anyebe, Shylet and Ife Adediji.



SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION  
OF MINORITY ETHNIC EDUCATORS  
**samee**

**This is a  
movement.**

The  
Anti-Racist  
Educator