

Integration and the drivers of racism

Research shows that racism is an ever-present challenge in the UK. Although figures have fluctuated in recent years, the percentage of people who describe themselves as prejudiced against people of other races is higher than it was in 2001, according to the British Social Attitudes survey.

There is a need for renewed emphasis on the politics of cohesion. To be countered effectively racism and intolerance must be understood in their social context. This means understanding how social disadvantage and racial injustice, alienation and disempowerment lead to divisive social relations.

The report *Integration, disadvantage and extremism*, produced by researchers from the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) and Birkbeck, University of London, has explored different aspects of integration, social cohesion and drivers of extremism.

Leading academics and experts provide evidence on the structures of disadvantage which create grievances in British society, on the drivers and extent of different forms of extremism, and on the processes of integration emerging from the experiences and aspirations of minority populations..

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Key findings

- Policy on racism, integration and cohesion must take into account racial justice, social mobility and social justice, rather than tackling intolerance and extremism in isolation.
- Strategies for combating specific racisms (for instance antisemitism or islamophobia) are effective only by working collaboratively and sharing best practice.
- A selective approach to integration which only targets 'problem minorities' promotes division over cohesion. Targeted social policy measures need to form part of a whole-community approach.
- Locally devolved strategies are insufficient to build more integrated communities; a national strategy for integration is needed.
- Anti-discrimination law will need to bring the needs of minorities into mainstream society and instil a duty on public authorities to promote equality and cohesion.
- Vigilance against 'hard' forms of racism should be extended to include 'soft' forms of intolerance that are more widespread. Community spokespeople and politicians have a responsibility to promote evidence-based open discussion and debate.

Policy relevance and implications

- Policy strategy on integration and cohesion has to address fairness and barriers to social mobility for both minority ethnic and white working class populations, to reduce the potential for intolerance and extremism.
- A national strategy for integration in local communities should be developed - setting out detailed, concrete actions and a robust methodology for measuring progress.
- Britain's robust body of anti-discrimination law must be maintained and strengthened to ensure that the needs of minorities are given equal weight as other groups, and emphasise social cohesion as a public priority.
- Inflamed debate on integration can build up grievances and encourage racism, and politicians need to recognise this by being careful in language and delivery – for instance taking care to present information correctly and avoid generalisations such as 'Muslim communities' or 'white working class communities'.



BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The report *Integration, disadvantage and extremism* provides an overview of different aspects of integration and social cohesion. It builds on presentations from a House of Commons symposium hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism and organised by the ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) and Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, Birkbeck, University of London.

Web: www.pearsinstitute.bbk.ac.uk/assets/Uploads/PDFs/Integration-Disadvantage-and-ExtremismMay2014FINAL.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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The Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society (COMPAS) is an ESRC-funded research centre within the University of Oxford, studying a range of global migration processes and phenomena.
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