



Coronavirus Your Experience Matters: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities

June 2020

Healthwatch Central West London is asking people about their experiences of the coronavirus outbreak. Our survey, [Your Experience Matters](#) is based on comments received during late March and mid-April 2020. This briefing sets out a top-level overview of what we have heard so far.

We are currently conducting a more thorough analysis of what residents have told us about their experiences. The survey is still live, and we are continuing our engagement work through focus groups and other ways.

This document is based on **over 200 responses** from residents of Westminster, RBKC and neighbouring boroughs. This data does not include findings from additional work that Healthwatch Central West London is currently carrying out with BAME communities and seldom heard groups in Westminster and RBKC.

In this briefing we compare the experiences of respondents who identified their ethnicity as BAME (28) with White/White British respondents (138). BAME backgrounds include: Arab, Asian / Asian British, Black / Black British, Gypsy, Roma or Traveller, Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups/ British multiple ethnic groups.

For this analysis we have excluded responses from people who did not specify their ethnic background (33).

Our top-level analysis of our survey data suggests that there are significant differences in how BAME and White/White British (W/WB) communities have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most respondents from BAME backgrounds are between the age of 35 and 54 (59% compared to 22% for W/WB respondents); unsurprisingly given the age range, many of them are parents, carers and people in work.

Overall living situation - Difficult factors

Housing and neighbourhood

36% of BAME respondents said that it was ‘difficult’ or ‘very difficult’ to stay indoors during shielding or self-isolation. This compares to 10% of W/WB responses.

“I have a child who had severe learning disability and is on the spectrum, so he cannot understand why is there such a change to his routine and why needs to stay in this small flat instead of his big school. We need to shop for food more than other families because of my son, but he cannot cope with shopping and does not understand social distancing, so we rely on help from others. My son also had ADHD which makes is very challenging for him to stay at home and not engage in physical activities.”

“Living in a tiny housing association flat has pushed me to the brink of depression. I share my space with a selfish and difficult partner who is uncooperative. I also have problems with a neighbour who has broken the lockdown rules several times, cause chaos in the house and has the police out several times. Then there is the stress of not knowing if I have a job to go back too. The conflicting advice from this incompetent government has made the situation unbearable.”

Finances

14% of BAME respondents said that they are unemployed compared to 3% of W/WB respondents.

Health

A higher percentage of respondents from **BAME groups (57%)** told us that they have a long-term health condition, mental health condition or a disability, compared to 36% of W/WB respondents.

During self-isolation, respondents from BAME communities mostly used their local pharmacy, family and GP for support. While this is comparable to their W/WB counterparts, the percentage of negative outcomes (‘not helpful’) is much higher in BAME communities.

“GP not easy to get a conversation with unless if you to raise a complaint. They're using Dr IQ app to access spots and meds. Very flawed “MyGP” seems a superior app. Our PPG weren't consulted about its use. [I] asked for an online PPG to be convened to discuss support for patients yet it hasn't been done.”

“GP surgery horrible towards my grandma not helping her with her health as she’s old and vulnerable.”

50% of BAME respondents delayed seeking help with health concerns during the coronavirus outbreak; this was 23% for W/WB respondents.

“I was worried that there I would be putting my children at risk if I take them to the A&E or to any appointment.”

“I was planning on booking a GP appointment to see what medications I might be prescribed for ongoing MH disorders but did not make the appointment due to fear of overwhelming the NHS and fear of contracting the virus in GP surgery.”

Social Care

Compared to W/WB respondents, people from BAME groups were four times more likely to tell us that they are carers.

Shielding and Vulnerable People

39% of BAME respondents received a letter asking them to shield in comparison to 18% of W/WB respondents; another **21% of BAME respondents** thought they should have received it, compared to 4% W/WB respondents.

“Other families with children who have same needs like my son were sent letter! My son also has ASD, ADHD and Epilepsy which make him even more vulnerable.”

Impact on mental health and wellbeing

50% of BAME respondents felt that changes to the way they live their life during the coronavirus outbreak had impacted on their emotional and mental wellbeing ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’. This compares to 25% in W/WB responses.

“It definitely has an impact on my mental wellbeing. I notice people more and worry every time I go out, is this person going to spit on/at me. Why are they not covering their mouth when they cough. All this never bothered me before but now it is.”

“I have been in a very low income before, now it will be much more difficult. It is also hard to find help and when I call benefit offices, I cannot get through. I sometime stayed on waiting for more than 45 minutes. I try to find mental help as well, they only said that they are very busy. I only had 2 to 3 session, then that's it.”

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“This has had a detrimental effect on me. I've been in tears every single day. Stress levels have gone through the roof. It's only a matter of time before I become seriously ill due to the uncertainty of the situation.”

“Increased loneliness and anxiety. Worries about my family, the future, my job, relationships.”

Communication

46% of respondents from BME backgrounds said they found ‘very easy’ or ‘easy’ to understand information about how to keep safe during coronavirus outbreak; this compares to 75% of W/WB respondents.

“The government keep on sending out conflicting information so now I don't trust what they say. Plus, there is so much fake news.”

“Messages have generally been confused. The media has also sensationalized events in a way that distorts the effects of Covid, adding to anxiety.”

If you would like more information, please get in touch

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Our Advice, Guidance and Information on COVID-19 for residents can be found here:

<https://healthwatchcwl.co.uk/coronavirus/>