

Press release: Justice Secretary pledges commitment to tackling racial inequality in the Criminal Justice System

The Lammy review, published in October, found evidence that people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds have a worse experience of the CJS. David Lammy's findings included striking statistics which show starkly the work that will be required to address this deep-rooted problem – this includes the fact that BAME men and women represent 25% of prisoners, despite making up just 14% of the population.

David Lammy made a range of recommendations, including that data should be published and analysed regularly on ethnicity and the CJS, and that deferred prosecution models should be explored further.

The Justice Secretary today pledged to take forward work around each of the 35 recommendations – making clear that action had been taken on several already – and went even further by challenging all parts of the criminal justice system to seek out further opportunities to challenge race bias.

While some of the changes will take longer to achieve than others, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has already made progress on several recommendations. For example, prison governors have been asked to immediately implement the recommendation to establish a diverse forum in prisons to review the use of force. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice has met several recommendations by publishing data that has never been compiled or released before on race bias in the CJS. This includes a breakdown by ethnicity of parole board hearing outcomes and the educational background of offenders, linking with data held by the Department for Education – and the MoJ will take every opportunity to keep adding new data.

Today's response builds on the work already announced by the Prime Minister earlier this year when she published the Race Disparity Audit. The Prime Minister challenged society to "explain or change" the disparities which were uncovered.

Academics, campaigners and think-tanks will have an open invitation to scrutinise data on race bias. Where the MoJ cannot explain discrepancies in the way different groups are treated – it will make reforms to address them.

Where a recommendation in the Lammy review cannot be implemented in full or exactly as recommended, further work will be carried out and an alternative approach will be found that achieves the same aim.

The Ministry of Justice also committed to doing everything possible to encourage and support other organisations to take action to meet their

specific recommendations.

Justice Secretary David Lidington said:

This Government is committed to exposing injustice wherever it exists. Where we cannot explain differences in outcomes for different groups, we will reform.

Effective justice simply cannot be delivered unless everyone has full confidence in our Criminal Justice System.

This is the very first step in a change of attitude towards race disparity that will touch on every part of the criminal justice system for years to come.

Ministers have also started discussions with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime about piloting a deferred prosecution scheme in the capital.

Work will be driven forward by a new Race and Ethnicity Board, made up of the key partners in the CJS responsible for implementing the Lammy recommendations. The Board will work with external stakeholders to inform and encourage challenge on its progress. Extensive publication of data will ensure the Ministry of Justice and partners across the CJS are held to account for reducing race bias.

Notes to Editors:

- The Government's response to David Lammy will be published on the Ministry of Justice web page on Gov.UK at 9.30am on Tuesday 19 December.
- The Government's 'Ethnicity Facts and Figures' website can be found at <http://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk>