

# Parent and child experiences of racism affect whole family's mental health, according to new briefing

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**BRIEFING 62**

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**

**CENTRE FOR**  
**MENTAL**  
**HEALTH**

**A CONSTANT BATTLE:  
EXPLORING THE INTERGENERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF  
RACISM IN THE UK**



Credit: King's College London

A new briefing released today, "[A Constant Battle](#)," finds that racism has far-reaching impacts on parents, their children, and the relationships between them. Based on IoPPN research with both parents and teenagers from U.K. racialized communities, the briefing finds that both past and present experiences of racism can affect mental health across generations of a family.

The study provides more evidence that [racism](#) has a profound and negative impact on a person's mental health. One participant described the daily fight against racism as "a constant battle that knocks you." Parents referred to the "heavy" sadness of seeing their child experience racism at school, and one participant described "always [being] in that high-stress sensitive state because you're always being triggered." Another participant referred to the heightened fear for themselves and their family caused by racist threats on social media following England's loss at Euro 2020.

A constant battle finds that daily experiences of racism also influence parent-child relationships, with parents attempting to limit their children's exposure to racism and having to answer their children's questions about racism.

The briefing calls on the government to commit to tackling all forms of racism through a cross-government strategy. It also says that the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England should fully resource work with racialized communities to design more racially equitable mental health support.

"There are cascading effects in families following experiences of racism—impacting parenting, [parent-child relationships](#), and [family](#) mental health. Parents and teenagers shared their first-hand knowledge and experiences through this research. Teenagers described growing up in British society that is biased against them and their parents, which

they hope will change.

"Meanwhile, parents grappled with the reality that racism impacts their children, after generations of battling for change, and that their children must learn to adapt and cope. Our work documents urgent need for action by policymakers, teachers, mental health practitioners and researchers, who can help alleviate the burden on families facing racism," says Dr. Yasmin Ahmadzadeh, postdoctoral research associate at King's IoPPN.

Kadra Abdinasir, associate director of policy at Center for Mental Health, said, "We know that racism harms people's mental [health](#) and can have a lasting impact. This research builds on earlier studies demonstrating the trauma racism causes, while also highlighting the shared and distinct experiences of parents and teenagers in the U.K. Like other forms of trauma, racial trauma requires a deep understanding and action from a broad range of practitioners and policymakers to better protect and support those affected."

The research is the culmination of the TRADE Project (Transmission of experiences of Racism, Anxiety and Depression in families), which has been reviewing existing research and talking with [parents](#) and adolescents whose communities have historically experienced racism to better understand how experiences of racism can affect [mental health](#), and how these negative experiences can transmit between generations.

Provided by King's College London

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