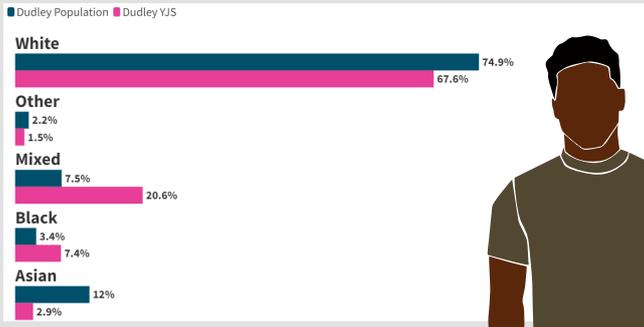


# Over-representation of minority ethnic young people in the Youth Justice System

The vast majority of children are not involved in the YJS. However, of this small amount, a disproportionate amount are from Black and Mixed Race backgrounds.



## Voices of Dudley youth

We interviewed eight young males who had some involvement in the YJS and shared their experience and thought on what contributed to their involvement in the YJS.

### Mental health

Despite six of the boys being referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, none had received any intervention for mental health issues. The boys varied in their willingness to discuss mental health. Some found a "supportive partner" who helped them "open up and discuss issues" and some boys said they "deal with it".

"[My] problems weren't classed as mental health, more behaviour."

Minority ethnic people are 40% more likely to access mental health services via the criminal justice system.

### Racism

All participants had experienced racism, mostly from school where they felt "stereotyped".

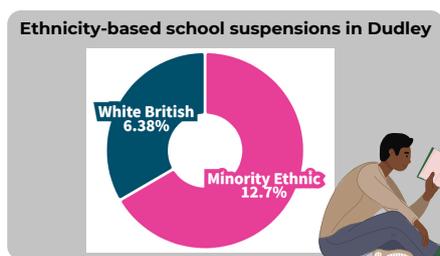
The boys also experienced racism from the police and felt targeted by 'stop and search'.

Stop and Search Rates  
**27.2** /1000 Black people  
**5.6** /1000 White people

Source: Stop and Search Rates (GOV.UK, 2023)

### Education

Five of the eight boys we spoke to have disengaged from education to some degree. One boy doesn't attend school to avoid "racism" from teachers.



### Opportunity

The participants said there is a lack of "things to do". Research supports that there is a lack of activities that cater to the needs of minority ethnic youths.

## Digging deeper

A focus group of professionals discussed the challenges and opportunities for change.

### Survival

Poverty, safety and protection lead to a feeling of a need to "survive". Young people may feel the only way to "survive" is to resort to criminal activity.

### Role models

"Lack of positive role models" from minority ethnicities. The group very strongly felt that "strong black leaders" and mentors are needed to listen to and guide young Black and Mixed Race boys.

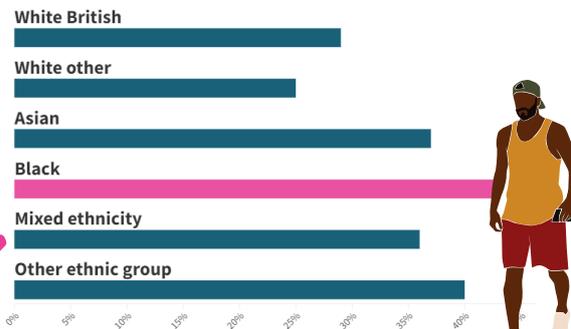
### Identity

Masculine and racial identity can come from personal role models and public figures. The focus group suggested "manhood training" that includes "masculine identity, racial identity and cultural competence" and challenges and supports young boys to develop a positive identity and goals.

### Activity

The group said there is a lack of things to do for young people. Evidence suggests there is a link between lack of activity and criminal behaviour and sports-based interventions can improve youth offending.

Ethnicity of less active 5-16 year olds in the Black Country.



## Possible solutions

- Mentorship for positive change**  
 A mentor scheme that is tailored to the needs of Black and Mixed-race boys to support positive decisions.
- Inclusive education**  
 Implicit bias training should be implemented to address the disproportionate number of minority ethnic children excluded from school.
- Active opportunities**  
 Positive activities that cater to the needs of Black and Mixed Race children should be developed.
- Adopting success**  
 Services should work together to form a steering group that addresses the needs of Black and Mixed Race boys. Interventions should be based on evidence to ensure success.