

# Reducing barriers to reporting public sexual harassment to the police – towards procedural justice for racially minoritised vulnerable young women and girls

Examining how a lack of procedural justice presents barriers to racially minoritised young women and girls reporting public sexual harassment to the police.

## Key details

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<b>Police region</b>	North East
<b>Collaboration and partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">All About Respect in the Community Network, York</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre</a></li></ul>
<b>Level of research</b>	Professional/work based
<b>Project start date</b>	May 2023
<b>Date due for completion</b>	December 2024

## Research context

This project builds on the team's [recent research report](#) on racially minoritised young women and girls' experiences of Public Sexual Harassment (PSH), which found that a lack of procedural justice partly explained a reluctance to report PSH to the police.

Procedural justice is 'the perceived fairness of the procedures involved in decision-making and the perceived treatment one receives from the decision-maker' (Murphy 2015, p. 54). Research suggests that procedural justice matters much more to youth than adults since issues of mutual respect figure prominently in young people's interactions with adults (Murphy 2015). Yet young people, and specifically, racially minoritised young people, are often on the receiving end of dangerously prejudicial and dehumanising policing (Nordberg and others 2016). Young women and girls perceive structural racism as endemic within the police service (Sundaram and others 2022). This diminishes any hope for procedural justice when reporting PSH and other forms of gender-based sexual violence.

There is a need to better understand and address how a lack of procedural justice in policing contributes to and causes vulnerability among racially minoritised girls and young women, by acting as a barrier to reporting incidents of PSH.

This collaborative research project will co-produce workshops on PSH with people who have experiences of being policed. The workshops will form part of police training, in alignment with the North Yorkshire Police Commissioner's objectives to address gender-based violence by listening to all women and girls, including those from under-represented communities.

The project aims to enhance perceptions of procedural justice and reduce barriers to reporting PSH among racially minoritised vulnerable young women. It will do this by working together with racially minoritised female-identifying youth to co-produce evidence-based training workshops for police officers, which will then be pilot-tested.

## Research methodology

The project will seek to answer three research questions

1. What is the evidence on what works in reducing barriers to reporting PSH and enhancing perceptions of procedural justice among vulnerable and racially minoritised populations?

To better understand the evidence on what works in reducing barriers to reporting public sexual harassment for vulnerable populations, the research team will conduct a rapid evidence review. This review will focus on barriers to reporting incidents of public sexual harassment to the police for racially minoritised girls and young women. It will look at what works to reduce those barriers and

promote a sense of greater procedural justice.

2. What changes do racially minoritised young girls and women want to see in the way that police officers handle reports of PSH, and what are the practical implications of this?

We will co-design workshop training materials together with racially minoritised young women and girls (aged 16-22) from varied racial, ethnic and faith backgrounds. This process is designed to empower racially minoritised young women and girls to shape the direction of the project and final methodology that will be used as the team works together to co-produce training materials for the police.

3. Is our new police training an effective approach to instigating changes in:
  - a) police officers' attitudes toward racially minoritised young girls and women who report PSH incidents
  - b) police officers' commitment to and practice of procedural justice?

We will conduct a small pilot test of the workshop materials with police officers and examine changes in police officers' attitudes, knowledge, intentions and actions as it relates to procedural justice for racially minoritised vulnerable young women and girls reporting PSH.

## Research participation

The research project is looking for youth and police officers to participate in co-production and training activities.

Youth can take part on focus group sessions in April 2024 to provide feedback on workshop design.

Police officers can sign up to take part in the piloting of the workshop in October–November 2024.

Please contact Trish and Nadia via email at [share-it-project@york.ac.uk](mailto:share-it-project@york.ac.uk) if you are interested in participating in the research study.

## References

Murphy K. (2015). 'Does procedural justice matter to youth? Comparing adults' and youths' willingness to collaborate with police'. *Policing and Society*, 25(1), pp 53–76.

Nordberg A and others. (2016). 'Exploring minority youths' police encounters: A qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis'. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 33, pp 137–149.

Sundaram V and others. (2022). ['Everything is racialised on top: Black and minoritised girls' and young women's experiences of public sexual harassment in the UK'](#). Plan International, UK [accessed 19 April 2024].

## Additional resources

- [Reducing Barriers to Reporting Public Sexual Harassment to the Police: Towards Procedural Justice for Racially Minoritised Vulnerable Young Women and Girls](#)