



## **CEC Special Report**

# **Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate**



**MAKE  
WORK  
BETTER**

**GMB CONGRESS 2025**

**CEC SPECIAL REPORT**

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## List of acronyms

APEX	Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff
BRO	Branch Race Officer
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BNP	British National Party
CEC	GMB Central Executive Council
DEI/EDI	Diversity, Equality and Inclusion
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
GMWU	General and Municipal Workers' Union
GRASP	GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and more identities inclusive
NHS	National Health Service
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PHV	Private Hire Vehicles
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
TUC	Trades Union Congress

## **Summary of policy adopted**

- GMB is determined to build a truly anti-racist trade union that tackles antisemitism, Islamophobia and all other forms of racism and hatred head-on. Hate, Racism and Fascism stand against every aspect of GMB.
- An equitable anti-racist society cannot be achieved without our workplaces being anti-racist . We must be actively anti-racist in the workplace, empowering all GMB reps to tackle racism and hatred wherever they find it.
- We must advance anti-racism and anti-fascism in our workplace organising, bargaining and campaigning agenda through education and training, organising support and solidarity actions.

## **Tackling racism at work today**

- GMB to campaign to ensure our members' employers monitor, log and appropriately act on race/religion related incidents or concerns raised within the workplace and share these with reps to be jointly addressed.
- Employers must be required legally to address discriminatory behaviours as part of their safety management systems by expanding Sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act to explicitly cover discrimination by managers, employers, and third parties.
- Employers should work with GMB representatives when seeking to implement training for staff in workplaces that promotes anti-racism, such as training in equality, diversity and inclusion.

- The Labour government must deliver on its proposal for legislation that will give stronger protections from pay discrimination for ethnically diverse workers and introduce mandatory pay gap reporting for ethnicity and disability. Labour should also ensure that voices from all ethnically diverse backgrounds are properly heard in drafting this legislation.
- Because of the weakness of enforcement of the law we will need strong, inclusive trade union organisation in every workplace to push employers into upholding the law everywhere GMB members work.
- GMB will continue to collect research on instances of racism and discrimination across all sectors to help with our understanding of the types of issues our members face at work. It is important that we understand how we should always have an intersectional understanding of discrimination.

### **Building an anti-racist trade union**

- GMB has a zero-tolerance policy for incidents of racism and hate against our members, in line with existing GMB policy and rulebook commitments
- GMB should expect that all members properly reflect our union's values in their behaviour in the workplace and beyond so as not to bring the union into disrepute, in line with GMB rules and procedures set out in our Union's Rulebook.
- GMB to ensure our principles and values of safety, dignity and unity for all are well publicised in the workplace so that everyone knows what we stand for and that GMB values the contributions of all its members.
- GMB to continue positive action programmes to promote opportunities for ethnically diverse members to participate at all levels of the GMB, such as the GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme (GRASP)

- GMB reps must be the champions of our members rights and dignity. They must be empowered to recognise racism and hate whenever they see it, challenge it, and stamp it out of the workplace.
- Through the GMB Comprehensive Education Review, we will establish a training module for all who formally carry out union duties covering core aspects of anti-racism. Regular training updates, via regions, to meet reps' ongoing training needs will be important.
- GMB to further develop the No Place for Racism Toolkit to provide GMB reps with additional tools for recognising racism and hate at work, challenging it and ending it.
- Action to ensure our Branches and Branch Race Officers are active and effective in promoting diversity, with guidance and support and opportunity to connect and engage with their ethnically diverse membership.
- Through the GMB Comprehensive Education Review revise and develop how our core delivery of education and training supports becoming an anti-racist union. Regular updates, via regions, to meet reps' training needs as and when will also be important
- GMB will also work to build link networks between areas of our ethnically diverse and non-diverse membership to promote solidarity and mutual understanding of our members' experiences
- GMB to establish a 'Building Workplace Unity' Initiative where Regions and National teams can work collaboratively together to address emerging issues of division amongst workers that are, or could, affect the safety or quality of GMB members' work, in line with the Union's organising agenda.

### **Building an anti-racist movement**

- GMB is a proudly anti-racist and anti-fascist trade union. In line with our Rulebook we must be ready to stand united and ready challenge it wherever it is found.

- The rise of racism and the far-right is an existential challenge to trade unions. The rise of the Reform UK party has often been regarded as a 'gateway' to far-right politics, and reports are that Reform is gaining ground amongst voters who are trade union members.
- GMB will play a leading, visible role in opposing the far-right in our communities alongside other trade unions, anti-fascist and anti-racist organisations whose aims match our own. Here GMB's unity is not the only source of strength; but also our regional democracy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 GMB is determined to build a truly anti-racist trade union that tackles hatred in all its forms head-on. Hate, Racism and Fascism stands against every aspect of what GMB is for. By deepening our understanding of how they manifest in the world of work and beyond, our union can do more of what we do better. Hate, Racism and Fascism stand against every aspect of GMB.
- 1.2 Since 1889 our union has been proudly made by members from all backgrounds, be it ethnicity, faith or appearance. All have in common their class as workers who generate so much wealth and good yet see so little of them in return in an unequal, capitalist society. An equitable anti-racist society cannot be achieved without our workplaces being anti-racist.
- 1.3 This is why GMB exists – to make work better for our members, no matter who they are. Yet work is still not better for many members precisely because who they are, or who they are perceived to be remains a basis which employers and our unequal society discriminates, exploits and even causes harm to them.
- 1.4 In 2025 our Black, Asian and other members of ethnically diverse backgrounds are still more likely to be subject to bullying, harassment and insecurity at work. Increasing hatred on an intersectional level towards women, LGBT+ people, disabled people, Jewish, Muslim and other groups comes as the far-right grows in strength politically.
- 1.5 During last summer's riots, GMB members were affected by scenes of violent attacks on workplaces holding those perceived to be of Asian background, Islamic faith or seeking asylum in the UK from abroad. Those riots particularly showed how a renewed firm, visible, and proactive stance against Islamophobia and Muslim hate is needed to ensure no member is unsupported or left behind.
- 1.6 This must not happen again. Our Union will respond and be part of solutions that help bring working-class communities together after years of government policies putting profit before people. This requires a zero-

tolerance for hatred and racism but also its root causes: inequality and insecurity in our society.

- 1.7 This CEC Special Report comes 22 years after the publication of the Dr Elizabeth Henry Report into race equality within the GMB. This Special Report is not an update or replacement of Dr Henry's recommendations which remain above-all our guide for how GMB becomes a fully inclusive and anti-racist union.
- 1.8 Instead, this CEC Special Report proposes practical policies to empower all GMB representatives to tackle racism and hatred wherever they find it in making work better for our members. Without this, we cannot achieve our aims that the Henry Report sets out. In doing so, the Special Report's chapters will seek to deepen our understanding of racism and hate today at work and how to tackle it, including through good practice from GMB's own history and by upholding our union's oldest motto: 'Unity is our Strength'.

## **2. GMB history: persistence and progress**

- 2.1 First known as the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union, GMB was founded as a 'new union' in every way that counted. It was designed to bring the maximum number of people together – to unite rather than to exclude, as the earlier craft unions had done, anxious to preserve the secrets and exclusivity of their trades.
- 2.2 Multi-ethnic and multi-cultural (on the grounds of their different religions), the gas workers found it natural to make common cause with others marginalised and exploited by the twin evils of capitalism and empire.
- 2.3 At Beckton Gasworks, the membership came from diverse backgrounds: men from the Black Country in England rubbed shoulders with Irish and Italian immigrants. Women who worked in the yards and were taken into membership, on an equal basis, at the founding of the union. Our Union's 'pioneers', the gas workers were open about their intentions to forge a new distinctive Socialist culture at work and politically with a collective will to



fight and win which came from their experience of the world of work and relationship to the means of production.

### **Combating hate and the far right head-on**

- 2.4 Wherever the far right reared its ugly head – often with the encouragement of bad employers – our union's members were there to help, to challenge, and to win in the name of collective humanity.
- 2.5 The Great Depression of the late 1920s–30 saw the far Right attempting to capitalise upon impoverishment with their own blend of racial hatred and ultra-nationalism, that fed upon desperation, the impulse to scapegoat, and a poverty of ideas.
- 2.6 British fascism (in the form of Moseley's Blackshirt movement) was confronted by our union's members at the battles of Cable Street and Stockton. Ben Rubner, general secretary of the Furniture Makers' Union organised the protection of London's Jewish community from the 1930s through to the 1950s and beyond, as the owners of furniture businesses made common cause with criminal gangs and Moseley's antisemitic thugs in order to try and break the solidarity of our members. Prominent in the anti-fascist counter-demonstrations of the mid-1930s were also the tailoring unions which became part of GMB, in particular London Number 2 branch carrying the London Trouser Makers' Union banner at its head.
- 2.7 GMB members answered the call to fight against rising fascism in Europe too. Wilf Jobling – fresh from organising grassroots members to oppose the Means Test in the North East – joined the International Brigade and fell at the battle of Jarama.
- 2.8 Henry Fair, from Southern Region, saved the children of Czechoslovakian Socialists from the Gestapo and was instrumental in establishing the Kinder Transport that rescued hundreds of Jewish children from almost certain death at the hands of Hitler's regime. Dennis Donnini, a branch activist from County Durham, the son of Italian immigrants, joined the British Army to fight fascism and became the youngest recipient of the Victoria Cross during the Second World War at barely eighteen years' old.



**Banner of the Trouser Maker Union, one of many local unions based around London's Jewish community now part of the GMB family**

- 2.9 The leaders at the top of our Union also took a stand at the time. Will Thorne, GMB's founder and by that point a Labour MP, wrote impassioned pleas and spoke in parliament, urging that the League of Nations should rally to assist the people of Ethiopia when they were invaded by Mussolini's fascist armies. Charles Dukes, the union's general secretary, protested against the detention of trade unionists in Austria.

#### The Battle for Barking – GMB members driving the BNP out in 2006-09

- 2.10 Many of these figures in our union's history took their stand collectively without the intention or knowledge that they would be remembered historically for it. They did what they saw was right by their colleagues, their communities and their class. As such we cannot ask them about what lessons apply today and can only draw our own conclusions.
- 2.11 However, GMB does have examples of the current generation in our union taking this stand when the time came. It was the racist 'British National Party' (BNP) in the mid-2000s which saw several councillors elected to Barking and Dagenham Council and a higher platform to spread its false, hateful and divisive narrative that migrants were 'taking over' jobs and housing in Britain – prior to the BNP's later successful campaign for a seat in the Greater London Assembly, one which was rooted in islamophobia.
- 2.12 GMB B11 Branch members at the time noted how racist language had "seeped into local life" and became so normalised at the time in the

workplace and community and that even some shop stewards were considering voting for the BNP, with one steward off-duty even wearing a party badge at the local council election count.

- 2.13 Senior reps in the Branch knew that it needed to 'get its own house in order' before it could fight back against the BNP in workplaces and the community. Through working with organisations like Hope Not Hate, GMB ran closed-session anti-racist education talks for local reps and members which held difficult conversations that challenged head on the far-right's narrative and persuaded reps and members not only to see through the BNP's lies, but to join the branch in fighting back including by holding stalls at community events and joining demonstrations organised by anti-far right groups.

### **A Union enriched by our diversity**

- 2.14 After 1945, membership in our predecessor unions began to grow in the number of workers who migrated from Caribbean countries to deliver our National Health Service (NHS) and rebuild the country from the rubble of war. Many sacrificed their connection to families at home in Caribbean countries badly hit by economic strife due to Britain's colonial wrongs. Many aboard the ship Empire Windrush became health care workers looking after the post-war generation as they set up their lives in the UK.



**Alvin Christie, GMWU workplace rep (now GMB)**

- 2.15 Even before the arrival of the Windrush Generation, Alvin Christie had volunteered – as a skilled engineer – to help the war effort in and remained, becoming this union's first Afro-Caribbean shop steward.

2.16 Having helped to win the war, Alvin Christie stayed in Britain to help win the peace. A dedicated Socialist, he possessed a big and winning personality, and a talent for creating and repairing machinery. A true trailblazer, he gave a lifetime's service to Liverpool's burgeoning Afro-Caribbean community and to what is now GMB's North West & Irish Region.



**APEX members (now GMB) on strike at Grunwick, 1976**

2.17 When the predominantly Asian workers at the Grunwick photo-processing firm, in London, went out on strike, in the summer of 1976, demanding their dignity, our union moved immediately to take them into membership. The struggle of Mrs Desai and her sisters and brothers became the stuff of nightly TV bulletins, as the notorious Special Patrol Group and the Metropolitan Police lashed-out against the picket lines, and the shadowy Freedom Association – a Hard Right grouping – bankrolled the employer and fed a new ideology of neoliberalism into both the media and the mainstream of the Conservative Party.

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*"We have shown that workers like us, new to these shores, will never accept being treated without dignity or respect. We have shown that white workers will support us."*

***Jayaben Desai, 1978***

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2.18 The disparity in physical size and strength of the Grunwick women, when contrasted with the police and the bosses, was not the case when it came to their courage and resolve. They were, truly, the lions and GMB's chief battle honours have been won when it has fought, thought, and acted as a

lionheart in accordance with its founding Socialist principles of social and economic democracy, solidarity, and anti-racism.

- 2.19 Similar scenes of exploitation of South Asian workers but also their courage to fight back were played out in 1992 when 19 Burnsall workers went on strike in Smethwick, in what is now GMB Midlands Region in 1992.
- 2.20 At the heart of this strike was freedom to join a union, equal pay for women earning £30 less a week for doing the same work as well as issues of racial equality, long hours, low pay and exposure to hazardous chemicals at work. In a display of worker solidarity no matter their background, it was the sacking of an asthmatic white manual worker at Burnsall for “breach of discipline” because he refused to work a weekend on grounds of ill-health that sparked the strike of majority South Asian women in solidarity.
- 2.21 Burnsall strikers were attacked on the picket lines with knives, iron bars and wooden staves by scab labour brought into work by the employer. One union official was given police protection following threats to his family. Against such odds the strikers decided to end their picket after 12 months, they continued their fight for justice through successful tribunal claims supported by GMB.

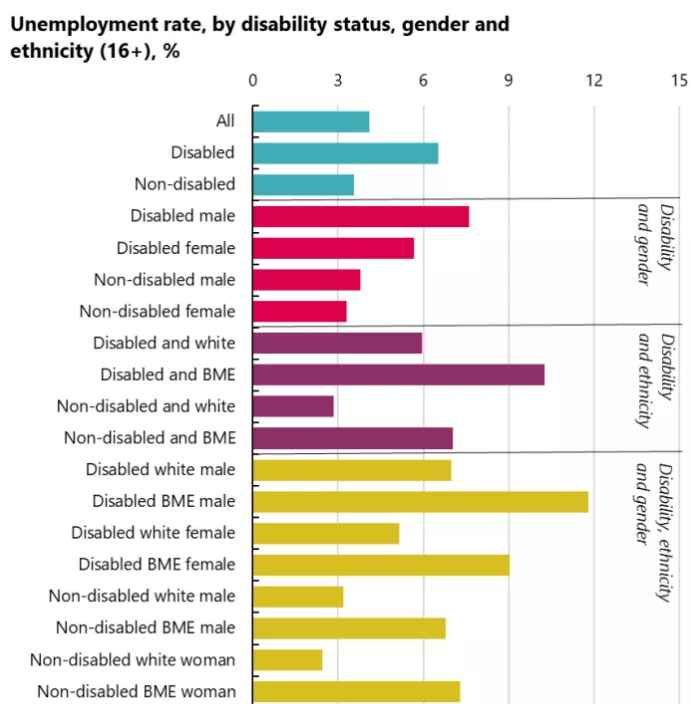
### **3. Racism and hate at work today**

- 3.1 To ensure GMB makes work better for all workers, we must deepen our understanding of discrimination, harassment and inequality experienced by workers from ethnically diverse backgrounds and those targeted for hate.
- 3.2 Unions have a lot of evidence available to us about the state of the workplace for workers from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Much research – from the TUC and elsewhere – has captured what work looks like today, including experiences of direct racist harassment and discrimination.
- 3.3 Further, ethnically diverse workers’ experiences of struggling to earn well, to be safe at work, to access training and progression can be difficult, and to reach the legal bar or evidence as directly discriminatory on an individual level.

- 3.4 However, research uncovers patterns of poor work experiences which point to the entrenched bias which devalues migrant and ethnically diverse workers across UK workplaces. We will provide a summary of research together with sources – including research considering the intersections of ethnically diverse members' protected characteristics. This will reveal the impact at work of not only racism, religious prejudice, anti-migrant sentiment but also sexism, ableism (anti-disabled prejudice), homophobia and transphobia on ethnically diverse workers.

### **Poor experiences of work: Accessing Work, Harassment and Discrimination**

- 3.5 We will continue to collect research on instances of racism and discrimination across all sectors to help with our understanding of the types of issues our members face at work. Often our ethnically diverse members are experiencing heightened discrimination if they also have another protected characteristic. This is why it is important that we understand how we should always have an intersectional understanding of discrimination.
- 3.6 An example of why considering these intersections is vital is the chart below of unemployment by three protected characteristics. It reveals the multiplying obstacles faced by those with multiple protected characteristics: disabled Black and minority ethnic (BME) workers face an unemployment rate more than three times that of non-disabled white people:



Source: TUC analysis of Labour Force Survey Q3 2023-Q2 2024

- 3.7 It is particularly striking that disabled BME men are the most affected in these unemployment statistics, nearly a quarter more than BME women, and their white male counterparts.
- 3.8 A 2022 study by Woodhead, Stoll et al. found that Black midwives, nurses, and healthcare assistants often fear reporting discrimination due to concerns about career repercussions or disrupting team dynamics.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.9 TUC research also shows that in the UK: *“Black LGBT workers experience, for the most part, similar unacceptable levels of bullying, harassment and discrimination compared to white LGBT workers. [However] Black LGBT workers were far less likely to say they were open with everyone at work about their sexual orientation compared to their white counterparts (28% vs 39%). Black LGBT workers are more likely than their white counterparts to report being bullied due to gender identity or expression (9% vs 6%). Black LGBT workers were more likely to report being excluded from work related meetings, conversations or social events, which they felt was due to their LGBT+ identity (5% vs 3%)”*<sup>2</sup>
- 3.10 Further to this we welcome the work undertaken by the TUC Black Women and Sexual Harassment Advisory Group brought together to understand the challenges that black women face at work. In their report *Black women's*

*experience of sexual harassment in the workplace*<sup>3</sup> there were key findings such as

- 65% of respondents their survey reported experiencing sexual harassment of some form, with high rates of unwelcome verbal sexual advances, unwanted touching, or sexual jokes.
- 35% of respondents said they had experienced negative, gender-based attitudes that diminish women in general, or Black women specifically
- 51% of respondents said that their experience of sexual harassment had a negative impact on their mental health. 36% said they felt less confident at work, 27% felt isolated at work and 22% said that their experience had had a negative impact on their performance at work.
- Data gathered on racism at work showed that 73% of respondents had been bullied or harassed, with 53% reporting that they had been subject to racist remarks or racist comments made in their presence.
- 58% of Black women who experienced sexual harassment did not report it to their employer, with 38% of respondents telling us they did not think it would be taken seriously if they did report it.

3.11 Across the trade union movement there are concerns about the mistreatment and exploitation of workers within the **nursing and social care sector**, which has a high proportion of ethnically diverse and migrant workers. According to the Royal College of Nursing, some unscrupulous employers have been charging fees in dubious contract arrangements and visa provisions for working in the UK and providing sub-standard accommodation.<sup>4</sup>

3.12 GMB also found that our own members in social care setting have been subject to racist verbal abuse from clients and residents they work with. We are also dismayed by recent announcements from the government regarding the scrapping of care visas which is potentially catastrophic for the sector. The whole sector is utterly reliant on migrant workers – yet we still have more than 130,000 vacancies across the country. We need workers



in our care system to be treated with dignity, respect and to be paid properly. With reactionary immigration policies we are doing no favours to workers already in these roles, overstretching their workloads and not improving their pay.

- 3.13 In the NHS The report on Discrimination by Appointment<sup>5</sup> concluded there was a substantial difference between the likelihood of ethnically diverse and white staff being appointed from shortlisting across the NHS – and that it was much more likely than white staff would be appointed from interview than ethnically diverse staff.
- 3.14 In the study *“Racism and food delivery platforms: shaping migrants’ work experiences and future expectations in the United Kingdom and Chile”*<sup>6</sup> the authors found that migrant workers to the UK ‘perceived platform work to be a way of avoiding forms of racism in the formal economy’. Migrant workers have undoubtedly helped the growth of the gig economy, taking on precarious employment and what we have described as bogus-self-employment. This appeared to live up to expectation in the UK in this study, however, since this was published the UK saw racist violence on our streets where food delivery and private hire drivers were targeted.

### **The Weakness of the Law – Equality Act 2010**

- 3.15 Why is the current situation in the workplace so poor? In large part, this is due to the implementation of equality law, with a body of law enacted but not enforced.
- 3.16 The Equality Act 2010, passed by the Labour government headed by Gordon Brown, was a consolidating piece of legislation that drew the provisions of the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and three major statutory instruments protecting against discrimination in employment on grounds of sexual orientation, age, and religion or belief into a single Act.
- 3.17 The Act strengthened legal protections on paper, but crucially, the body charged to uphold the Act, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, does not have enforcement powers of the extent of sister regulators, such as the Health and Safety Executive. EHRC cannot directly prosecute where

employers or organisations breach the Act, though it can bring Judicial Reviews against public bodies, undertake investigations, issue unlawful act notices and require employer action plans under certain circumstances. The power of the EHRC during the 2010–2024 Tory-led governments was limited by significant real-terms cuts in its budget and reductions in staff numbers.

- 3.18 This has created a situation where public sector bodies are generally aware of their duties under the Equality Act, and will attempt compliance as far as possible, though even this has degraded due to the toxic effects of austerity economics.
- 3.19 In the private sector, compliance with equality legislation tends to depend on:
- The size of the employer
  - The resources available to the employer
  - The perceived public relations damage of non-compliance
  - The political affiliations of the employer.
- 3.20 Because of these factors, to a large extent compliance with most parts of the Act is left to individual workers bringing claims to Employer Tribunals or threatening to do so. The ability to do this relies on individuals' knowledge of their rights, ability to access legal support (very often through unions), and ability to deal with the very significant emotional toll which bringing claims can have.
- 3.21 This does not mean that equality legislation does not have value. When used to its fullest extent, it assists in promoting fairness, preventing discrimination and harassment, and fostering inclusive societies. It can protect individuals from unfair treatment based on the nine protected characteristics and ensure equal opportunity and access to services, employment, and public functions, by enshrining these concepts in law.
- 3.22 Recent months have seen targeted political attacks on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the USA. These have been justified on the grounds that such programmes are divisive, unnecessary, and prioritise identity over performance.

3.23 The reality is that the opposite is true. As this report shows, there is still a strong need for powerful and enforced law to redress intersectional social injustices and provide equality for all workers.

3.24 However, GMB members cannot rely on the law alone for protection. The best way to force change in the workplace, to demand and achieve equality, is to make the union as inclusive as possible, bring every worker into membership, and leverage our collective power and strength to force change.

3.25 We can only achieve this by organising our workplaces, using every available opportunity.

### **Proposed changes to equality law in 2025**

3.26 In 2024 the Labour Party general election manifesto committed to a Labour government bringing in measures to strengthen equality law. These are in addition to other measures in the Employment Bill which will benefit all workers including ethnically diverse workers, such as abolishing the three-day waiting period for Statutory Sick Pay.

3.27 The Employment Bill is expected to bring in stronger requirements to prevent the scourge of sexual harassment, which is targeted more often at ethnically diverse women, and stronger protections against all kinds of unacceptable harassment including racist harassment by third parties (e.g. customers and clients).

3.28 A new Equality (Race and Disability) Bill is expected in 2025. The government is, at the time of writing in Spring 2025, consulting and surveying unions and employers about this. It is expected to include:

- making ethnicity (and disability) pay gap reporting mandatory for employers with over 250 workers
- measures to strengthen protections against pay discrimination for ethnically diverse (and disabled) workers

- enacting Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010, which allows for 'dual discrimination' claims: claims that someone who discriminated against because of a combination of protected characteristics, for example ethnicity and sex (e.g. being a Black woman)
- strengthening the Public Sector Equality Duty

3.29 The UK Government is also looking at possible legal measures around pay transparency (e.g. publishing more information about pay and pay structures) and equal pay audits.

3.30 GMB welcomes these new parts of the law which could help make work better for ethnically diverse workers – but as stated in the section above, because of the weakness of enforcement of the law we will need strong, inclusive trade union organisation in every workplace to push employers into upholding the law everywhere GMB members work.

### **Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting**

3.31 Congress rightly carried policies on addressing the pay gap between white and ethnically diverse workers and has called for reporting of it the same as Gender Pay Gap Reporting. Although the reporting of pay gaps by employers doesn't by itself reduce pay discrimination, GMB believes that once larger employers are forced to reveal how much lower ethnically diverse staff are paid on average, it will be easier to hold them to account over their pay gaps.

3.32 The proposed Equality (Race and Disability) Bill by this government is currently consulting on the matter of Ethnicity (and disability) Pay Gap Reporting, to which at the time of writing, we are responding to. GMB will be calling for this to be mandatory for employers with more than 50 employees in the consultation. In addition, we will also be calling for action plans to be mandatory for employers to take action to reduce the gap.

3.33 It is essential that this type of pay inequality is addressed. From pay rates analysed in 2022 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)<sup>7</sup> it was found that:

- *Black, African, Caribbean or Black British employees earned less (£13.53) median gross hourly pay than White employees (£14.35), which has been consistent since 2012.*
- *After holding personal and work characteristics constant, to provide an adjusted pay gap based on a like-for-like comparison, we find that UK-born White employees earn more on average than most ethnic minority employees.*

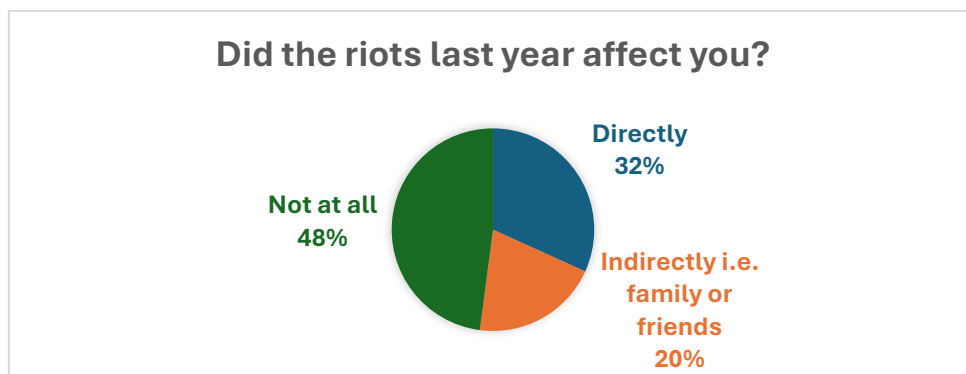
3.34 Even in retirement it has been found that there is an enormous pensions gap. According to research conducted by LGIM in 2022, the average pension pot for an ethnically diverse person is less than half of that of the average pension pot of a white British person (£52,333, and £114,941 respectively), with the median being less than a third of a white British person (£13,000, and £44,000), with nearly 7 in 10 of the ethnically diverse LGIM study participants having no pension pot at all. According to this study having low incomes meant that there was not enough spare income to save and that the COVID19 pandemic had severely affected their finances and the stress that it incurred. There was also mistrust in workplace pensions, seen as riskier options.

### **Unsafe work**

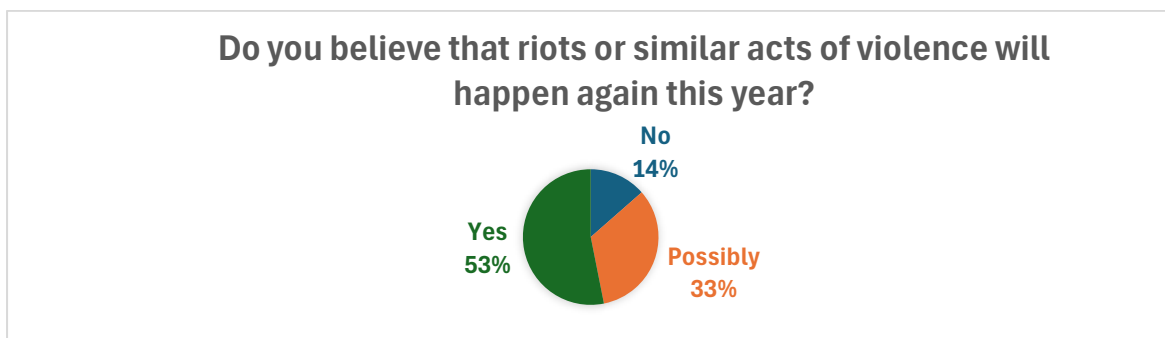
3.35 Racism in the workplace is a serious health and safety issue, affecting both mental and physical well-being. Employers have a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to protect employees and those affected by their work activities. This includes assessing risks and implementing measures to minimize harm. Given the current climate, the risk of violence and aggression towards global majority workers is heightened, requiring continuous reassessment and action.

3.36 Racism harms mental health, which in turn affects physical well-being. All forms of discrimination constitute workplace hazards that must be addressed. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the rioting that occurred in the UK in the summer of 2024, and in the subsequent response from employers large and small.

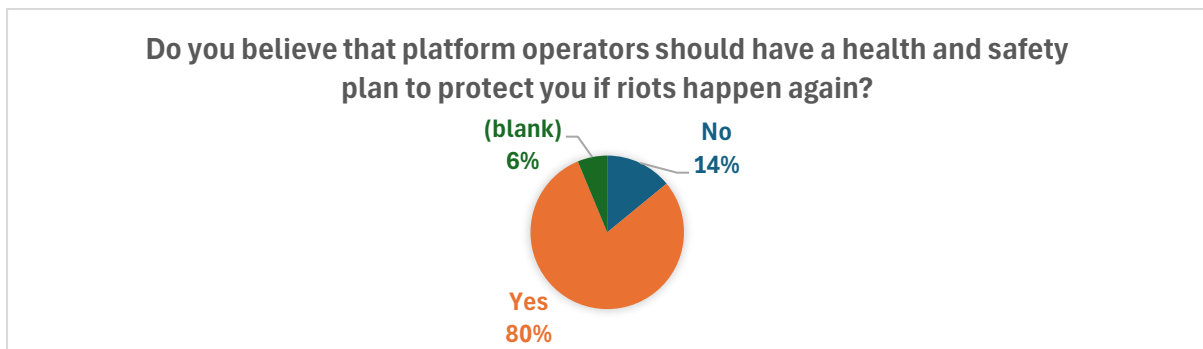
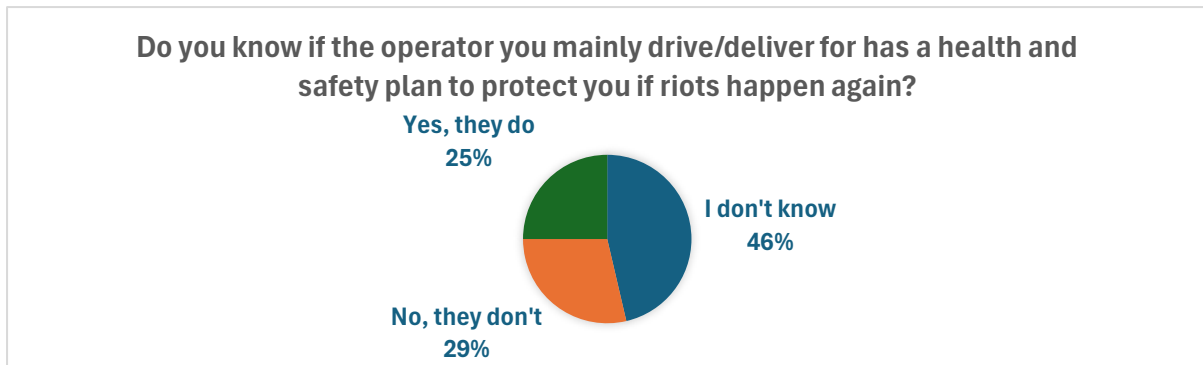
- 3.37 In summer 2024 we saw workers being attacked by racist rioters because of their (perceived) ethnic background or faith. This must not happen again.
- 3.38 In a recent GMB survey of our **private hire and taxi members** we asked questions regarding their safety concerns, their views on the platforms or apps they book work through, and their thoughts on how GMB can best support them.
- 3.39 When asked if the riots last year affected them respondents told us;



- 3.40 Member testimony within this survey gave distressing examples of direct violence, including items being thrown at their vehicles such as eggs and rocks, and racist language. Members told us they didn't feel safe to work therefore did not go out and even removed their PHV markers on their cars to reduce the risk of them being vandalised. They also told us of family members who had been physically attacked based on their perceived ethnicity and religion. For some members this period of time was perilous to the point they feared for their lives – that they were going to targeted for violence.
- 3.41 When asked if they believed that riots would happen again respondents said;



- 3.42 When asked questions regarding their platform operator health and safety plans our members responded with the following;



- 3.42 We will need to work with our members and the platform operators to ensure that should there be further violence and street disruptions akin to 2024, that workers have plans in place which ensure their safety. This is integral to the work our private hire and taxi, and courier activist committees.

## COVID 19

- 3.43 During the pandemic, it was quickly identified that ethnically diverse workers were dying disproportionately to white workers. The faces appeared in media for all to see, with our reps and members living the real stories on the frontline in their workplaces. With anecdotal evidence that racial discrimination was the cause of increased death rates, ethnically diverse staff from across GMB came together to develop a strategy to tackle this grave injustice, supported by various teams in the process.
- 3.44 Members were surveyed on their experiences, to build a picture of the risks and practices different ethnic communities were exposed to. From this, we learnt:

- Over half had not received an Individual Risk Assessment, which were often inadequate when conducted
- Ethnically diverse workers were overrepresented in roles where it is difficult to socially distance
- 1 in 4 were not receiving the PPE they require
- Employers and management were failing to address safety concerns
- Vulnerable workers were not being shielded

- 3.45 To protect members, an individual risk assessment tool was developed alongside a range of supporting documents to help workers enforce their rights with their employer. Over 100 reps were trained to use the tool and developed strategies in their workplace to ensure their members got the protections they needed. Members could use the tool themselves, assessing their risk level and then producing letters to their employer to gain protections such as shielding or suitable PPE and to address their safety concerns.
- 3.46 GMB worked alongside academics, think tanks, political allies and wider community groups to lobby the government for changes, based on the lived experiences of our members. Our campaigns were instrumental in securing sick pay, shielding for vulnerable workers, suitable PPE, and various health and safety protections.
- 3.47 During the second wave of the pandemic, although still present, there was a significant reduction in the gap between deaths in ethnic communities and white British ones. Campaigns like GMB's ensured that measures within an employer's immediate control were taken, which improved outcomes nationwide.
- 3.48 What the pandemic did expose, was that societal inequalities cost lives. It demonstrated how work and health are intrinsically linked; how racial inequalities present in the workplace and how safety can be the difference between life and death. GMB as a trade union has a key role in tackling these workplace injustices and can evidently save lives by doing so.



Why isn't racism covered under health and safety law?

- 3.49 In 2022, the TUC published *Health, Safety & Racism in the Workplace*, highlighting the disproportionate impact of racism on workers' well-being. The report, based on frontline workers' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, details workplace discrimination—including bullying, harassment, and lack of advancement opportunities. It underscores the damaging effects on mental health and workplace culture and calls for systemic action to combat racism, improve inclusion policies, and support affected workers.
- 3.50 Nearly 20 years earlier, the HSE commissioned *Ethnicity, Work Characteristics, Stress and Health* (2005), which concluded that fostering an inclusive, supportive workplace could reduce stress and psychological harm. However, HSE took no meaningful action.
- 3.51 Despite clear guidance on risks affecting disabled, older, and pregnant workers, HSE still fails to acknowledge racism as a workplace hazard. Searching for 'racism' on its website yields only references to policing bodies.
- 3.52 This oversight has likely led to preventable harm for thousands, if not millions, of workers. A STOP Hate UK blog highlights the severe mental health impact of discrimination, which can lead to trauma, depression, anxiety, social isolation, financial struggles, and even suicidal thoughts.
- 3.53 Creating an inclusive environment where employees feel safe to speak up is essential for workplace safety. A 2017 Penn State study found that Latino farmworkers in Texas often continued working while injured due to fear of discrimination and job loss. When workers feel pressured to endure unsafe conditions in silence, workplace injuries go unreported.
- 3.54 As part of campaigning on health and safety and equality, Congress calls for employers to:
- Be required legally to address discriminatory behaviours as part of their safety management systems by expanding Sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act to explicitly cover discrimination by managers, employers, and third parties.

- Work with GMB representatives when seeking to implement training for staff in workplaces that promotes anti-racism, such as training in equality, diversity and inclusion. There have been issues in our members' workplaces regarding the quality of some such programmes delivered but working with union representatives can help ensure that they are of high standard and bring the workplace together. GMB rejects calls on employers to scale back or end such programmes, which many large companies in the United States are doing out of fear of political punishment by the Trump administration and conservative groups.
- GMB calls on the Labour government to deliver on its proposal for legislation that will give stronger protections from pay discrimination for ethnically diverse workers and introduce mandatory pay gap reporting for ethnicity and disability. allowing discrimination claims to be made on a combination of protected characteristics. Labour should ensure that voices from all ethnically diverse backgrounds are properly heard in drafting the legislation.

<b>Employer obligations to tackle health and safety risks from racism at work</b>	
<u>Physical risks</u>	<u>Mental health risks</u>
<p>Racist behaviour, even without direct physical threats, constitutes a form of violence and aggression. Employers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record all racist incidents and threats to identify risk hotspots.</li> <li>• Update risk assessments to reflect recent incidents.</li> </ul>	<p>The fear of racist violence and aggression can severely impact mental health. Employers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct mental health risk assessments with a focus on global majority workers.</li> <li>• Implement best practices using HSE Stress Management Standards, particularly in areas</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure workers in high-risk areas have safe means of escape, beyond public transport, which may be unreliable in emergencies.</li> <li>• Prevent workers from operating alone in dangerous areas unless a guaranteed safe escape route is in place.</li> <li>• Recognize that workers have a legal right under Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 to remove themselves from serious and imminent danger.</li> </ul>	<p>of relationships, change, control, and support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide additional support for workers in high-risk roles.</li> <li>• Recognize the cumulative mental toll of racism and ensure affected employees receive appropriate assistance.</li> <li>• Refer employees to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) where available.</li> <li>• Utilize resources such as MIND's guidance on racism and mental health.</li> </ul>
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## 4. Building an Anti-Racist trade union, tackling hate head-on

- 4.1 Based on the conclusions reached in all previous chapters, this chapter proposes practical and structural action the Union could take to advance anti-racism and anti-fascism in our organising, bargaining and campaigning agenda, through:

- **Education and training**
- **Organising support**
- **Solidarity actions**

- 4.2 There are four key levels where GMB can make sure that every face and faith has a safe and dignified place at work:

### What members should expect from GMB

- Zero-tolerance policy for incidents of racism and hate against our members, in line with existing GMB policy and rulebook commitments.

- GMB to ensure our principles and values of safety, dignity and unity for all are well publicised in the workplace so that everyone knows what we stand for and that GMB values the contributions of all its members.
- Continue positive action programmes to promote opportunities for ethnically diverse members to participate at all levels of the GMB, such as the GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme (GRASP).

### **What GMB should expect from members**

- GMB's Zero Tolerance Policy is clear on the obligations of all members to respect and uphold the rights and dignity of others.
- GMB should expect that all members properly reflect our union's values in their behaviour in the workplace and beyond so as not to bring the union into disrepute, in line with GMB rules and procedures set out in our Union's Rulebook.

### **The role of GMB Reps**

- 4.2 GMB reps must be the champions of our members' rights and dignity. They must be empowered to recognise racism and hate whenever they see it, challenge it, and stamp it out of the workplace.
- 4.3 GMB Reps establish **workplace unity** through their regular engagement with members and developing relationships based on trust and confidence. This allows reps to build an understanding of the collective concerns and issues, organise and campaign on those issues and ensure that our members' rights are protected, and their concerns are progressed.
- 4.4 To better empower our reps, GMB will:
  - Through the GMB Comprehensive Education Review establish a training module for all who formally carry out union duties covering core aspects of what anti-racism, why it is needed and what being an anti-racist organisation means. This includes regular training updates, via regions, to meet reps' ongoing training needs.

- Further develop the No Place for Racism Toolkit (developed in response to violent racist attacks during Summer 2024 riots) to provide GMB reps with additional tools for recognising racism and hate at work, challenging it and ending it.
- Campaign to ensure our members' employers monitor, log and appropriately act on race/religion related incidents or concerns raised within the workplace and share these with reps to be jointly addressed.

### **The role of GMB Branches**

- 4.5 Branch Race Officers can play a key role in ensuring a strong unified approach across the union to improving our understanding of racism and how it divides us and prevents us from achieving the most powerful and sustainable workplace organisation we can in GMB.
- 4.6 Through working together, respecting and protecting each other we can defeat racism by making workplaces safe spaces for every worker and every member of the GMB family.
- 4.7 Branch Race Officers are crucial in our fight for equality because they can:
- Improve the branch race awareness
  - Increase the level of racially diverse branch membership
  - Help branches to organise and campaign against racism in the workplace.
- 4.8 To ensure Branch Race Officers are best supported in their fights for race equality, GMB will:
- Develop the Branch Race Officers Network that not only provides postholders with guidance and support but also the opportunity to connect and engage with other BRO's, sharing ideas and supporting each other in struggle and success.
- 4.9 We also need more branches to reach out to their membership promoting inclusion and making sure there is no place for racism in our branches, workplaces, or communities by:

- Engaging with members of ethnically diverse background and encouraging participation in branch activities
- Electing more dedicated Branch Race Officers and supporting them to be dynamic leaders on race matters
- Ensuring that Branch Development Plans incorporate organising and campaigning on race equality and promoting diversity. The Union will also support branches and reps in workplaces with less diversity in terms of workers' ethnic backgrounds to evaluate how they can promote diversity and union values.

### **The role of the whole union**

- 4.10 Becoming an anti-racist union can only be achieved through coordinated, collaborative and sustainable long-term work across the whole Union.
- 4.11 The Dr Elizabeth Henry recommendations set course for much of how we achieve this aim. But we cannot truly be an anti-racist union if we are not promoting anti-racism and countering hate and division where our members are – the workplace.
- 4.12 To do so, this report proposes actions for that GMB as a whole will:
- Through the GMB Comprehensive Education Review revise and develop how our core delivery of education and training supports becoming an anti-racist union. We will seek to include initiatives such as high standard equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training to empower GMB representatives, convenors and officers, to recognise, understand and combat all forms of racisms and how they each manifest. Regular updates, via regions, to meet reps' training needs as and when will also be important.

- Enhance and sustain engagement with our established race networks to increase ethnically diverse member involvement in the union and strengthen their feedback on race related issues or concerns.
- GMB will also work to build link networks between areas of our ethnically diverse and non-diverse membership to promote working-class solidarity and mutual understanding of our members' experiences.
- Establish a 'Building Workplace Unity' Initiative where GMB Regions and National GMB teams can work collaboratively together to address any emerging issues of division amongst workers that are, or could, affect the safety or quality of GMB members' work, in line with the Union's organising agenda, including:
  - Tackling employers' discriminatory treatment of workers on basis of their ethnicity or religious background
  - Raising awareness of GMB Officials and workplace reps to key phrases, arguments or material in the workplace which may indicate that there are concerning beliefs and behaviours against GMB values, and how to address these through education and constructive conversation.
  - Overcoming practical difficulties in recruiting and organising migrant workers into GMB, e.g. language barriers.
  - Tailored education, training and resources for GMB Reps on particular areas or issues relating to equality, anti-racism and tackling hate relevant to their workplace – including training in 'holding difficult conversations' with members, particular strands of combating racism and hate e.g. Islamophobia and on how to counter far-right narratives in debate, the media and online.

## **5. Building a truly Anti-Racist movement, tackling hate head-on**

- 5.1 GMB is a proudly anti-racist and anti-fascist trade union. In line with our Rulebook we must be ready to stand united and ready challenge it wherever it is found.
- 5.2 The rise of racism and the far-right is an existential challenge to trade unions. The rise of the Reform UK party has often been regarded as a 'gateway' to far-right politics, and reports are that Reform is gaining ground amongst voters who are trade union members.<sup>8</sup>
- 5.3 In most cases, union members who are openly supporting Reform UK will not hold racist or far-right beliefs themselves. And we know more than anyone how our members feel the same economic frustrations used by the Reform to convince workers of the age-old lie that their enemy is another worker with a different skin colour, nationality or faith to them.
- 5.4 However, Reform UK is amplifying racist and far-right forces in our society which this report shows our own union has helped to beat back several times in our past. Multiple election candidates from Reform have spread Islamophobic, antisemitic and pro 'Tommy Robinson' content online.<sup>9</sup>
- 5.5 Our union will respond, and the wider trade union movement is discussing its response too, but as a trade union it is what we do in the workplace that will be most decisive at countering the rise of the far-right before it's too late.
- 5.6 When deindustrialisation, underemployment, insecure work and real wage stagnation are allowed to wreak havoc on our communities by past governments, the far-right's narratives of division go unchallenged. Tory and Reform politicians may be electoral opponents for now but both seek to convince workers that collective hope and action gets us nowhere. Any GMB member who has stood up for, or stood with their colleagues at work knows that the opposite is true.
- 5.7 As this report shows, we have defeated racism and fascism before and we can do it again. When the politics of hate has been successfully pushed



back in the past it has been when anti-racist and anti-fascist efforts have been closely linked to the struggle against economic inequality and for working-class solidarity.

- 5.8 While we will lead that struggle most effectively in the workplace, GMB will also play a leading and visible role opposing the far-right in our communities alongside other trade unions, anti-fascist and anti-racist organisations whose aims match our own. We will stand together to challenge racist and fascist agendas, and protect the values we hold dear.
- 5.9 History and recent events show that the threat posed by far-right agendas of hate and division and the opportunities to tackle them will vary in different localities across the UK. Here GMB's unity is not the only source of strength; but also our regional democracy.
- 5.10 GMB Regions will therefore be best able to lead on how we respond, including which external groups GMB Regions wish to affiliate or partner with in this work. Regions have historically worked closely with Hope Not Hate (e.g. campaign against the BNP in Barking in 2006–2009). Some GMB Regions and the TUC more widely have and continue to mobilise a strong presence for demonstrations, campaigns and initiatives against the far right called by Stand Up to Racism and other organisations."

## **Our Mission**

- 5.11 This report has sought to bring together our union's history and our commitment to our ethnically diverse members who still fight racism, discrimination and inequality day-in-day in the world of work and beyond. It seeks to underscore the integral part that ethnically diverse people have played and continue to play at the heart of GMB and the wider labour movement.
- 5.12 This report also seeks to be a rallying point for all of our members as working people against division and hate. GMB members know that none of us can prosper when our fellow workers are being discriminated in the workplace, nor if our communities are divided. Events at home and abroad

continue to remind us that there are forces determined to divide working people. GMB is determined to unite us.

- 5.13 The report seeks to be honest of the challenge GMB has ahead, and the need for deeds not just words in living up to the values we have enshrined in our rule book and the expectations of our members who join GMB on the understanding that we are committed to fighting for their equality, safety and justice no matter who they are.
- 5.14 This report is the start of our response, rooted in what we do best – make work better. It seeks to be a timely contribution to our aspirations of becoming a truly anti-racist union, which in doing so, can help us to achieve our founding aim in 1889 of a world of beauty, freedom and equality for all of our members.

## **Appendix 1: A GMB Guide to staying safe when attending counterprotests against the Far-Right**

While health and safety laws do not cover participation in protests or public events unless mandated by an employer, members should take precautions to ensure their safety:

- ✓ **Inform someone of your whereabouts and expected return time.**
- ✓ **Fully charge mobile phones before attending.**
- ✓ **Review your legal rights and know where to find legal support (Organisations like [Liberty](#) provide 'Know Your Rights' information)**
- ✓ **Travel in groups when possible.**
- ✓ **Avoid wearing clothing with organizational logos or slogans.**
- ✓ **Keep campaign materials hidden until necessary.**
- ✓ **Consider not taking a banner with poles which are difficult to conceal and move quickly while holding. If you are caught up in a physical confrontation, the police may regard the poles as potential weapons and confiscate the banner.**
- ✓ **Do not engage with anyone who you think you will be protesting against before you arrive, including shouting slogans. You have no idea what is around the corner.**
- ✓ **When you are at the counterprotest, look out for the stewards who are managing the event. If they say leave, leave immediately in the safest way possible.**
- ✓ **There may be trained legal observers present. Look out for them in case you need support. Information about legal observers can be found here: [What is a Legal Observer?](#)**
- ✓ **At the end of the event, leave the protest and try to do so in groups. Once the event is over, do not linger.**
- ✓ **If you intend to socialise after the event, do not do so in the vicinity of the protest action as you may possibly go to the same place as those you are demonstrating against.**
- ✓ **When you know you are completely safe, let the people you informed about your intentions know that you are safe and sound.**

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## References

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<sup>3</sup> TUC, 'Black women's experience of sexual harassment in the workplace', 27 November 2024 [Black women's experience of sexual harassment in the workplace | TUC](#)

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