



Friday, November 28, 2025

REASONABLENESS IN COMPLAINT HANDLING: THE IMPACT OF RACE, ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND DISABILITY



“From: PSD Public <PSDPublic@cityoflondon.police.uk>

Date: Thu, 27 Nov 2025 at 11:45

Subject: Your contact with City of London Police Professional Standards Directorate

To: thereparationnation@gmail.com <thereparationnation@gmail.com>

Mr Canoe / Lynch,

We are sending the following email to you to advise that with immediate effect you will be subject to the City of London Police's Unreasonable Complainants Policy. The Deputy Director of Professional Standards Directorate (PSD) has sanctioned the implementation of the policy on one or more grounds which are cited within it.

The following is an extract from that policy:

'For the purpose of this policy the following may be used to consider what may be unreasonable conduct:

Unreasonable persistence, such as:

- Contacting different people in the organisation to try and secure a different outcome*
- Providing an extraordinary degree of irrelevant detail*
- Creating complexity where there is none*
- Persisting with the complaint despite failing to provide any evidence to support it;*
- Persisting while not clarifying any detail or complaining about matter unrelated to the City of London Police*

Unreasonable demands, such as:

- Insisting on unattainable outcomes*
- Making unreasonable demands about the way the complaint should be handled*

Unreasonable arguments, such as:

- Advancing irrational beliefs (e.g. seeing cause-and-effect links where none exist)*
- Advancing and sticking to what is clearly a conspiracy theory unsupported by evidence*
- Insisting that a particular solution is the correct one*
- Insisting on the importance of an issue that is clearly trivial*
- Using legal argument in a nonjudicial setting.*

Unreasonable behaviour, such as:

- Manipulative (such as being overly ingratiating or making veiled or implied threats).*

Obstructive behaviour:

- *Repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale,*
- *Not following appropriate channels for engagement, despite being advised about the appropriate channel(s) to use*
- *Issuing demands about how their complaint should be handled, despite being advised or referred to the appropriate process and receiving updates*
- *Repeatedly copying City of London Police officers or staff into emails sent to other officers, public bodies or organisations where there is no demonstrable reason to do so.*

Unreasonable lack of co-operation:

There are a number of other indicators, which, when taken together, may be considered to demonstrate an individual's conduct in advancing their complaint is considered unreasonable. These can be grouped into general categories.

Complaint history:

- *Making repeated Freedom of Information / Subject Access Requests*
- *Issues about integrity or competence of those handling complaints.*

Unrealistic outcomes sought:

- *Manifestly illogical or irrational solutions proposed*

How the complaint is written:

- *Excessive and idiosyncratic emphasis displayed*
- *Excessive punctuation, font changes or boldening*
- *Inappropriate and unnecessary use of legal or medical terminology*
- *Use of excessively dramatic language*
- *Annotations*
- *Excessive or irrelevant information*

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has guidance on unreasonable behaviours which states:

Unacceptable behaviour may be isolated to a single incident or form a pattern of behaviour over time. Even if a complaint has merit, a complainant's behaviour can still be unacceptable.'

We will not be listing the specific violations in relation to your correspondence with the City of London Police. However, your recent and frequent correspondence does amount to unreasonable conduct on numerous counts that are cited above, and it is appropriate that you are subject to this policy. In invoking this policy, all of your correspondence has been taken into account.

This means that, while you are welcome to send letters and emails and correspond with the City of London Police Professional Standards Directorate via PSDPublic@cityoflondon.police.uk in relation to your complaint(s), other departments who may be dealing with other matters within City of London Police reserve the right not to acknowledge, read or respond to them.

There is no right of review for this decision to impose restrictions or the management of a complainant under the policy. Any complaint made through the police complaints system, about any restrictions made, will be considered an abuse of process where the process is being used to complain about, or to have reviewed a decision where otherwise no right of review complaint, is considered a reasonable and proportionate outcome for the purposes of the police complaints system.

These restrictions also cover the Commissioner of City of London Police's Office who have been made aware of this matter.

Any future emails and letters sent to the Professional Standards Directorate will be read and considered. However, we will not acknowledge nor respond unless we feel it appropriate to do so.

Please consider the environment before printing my email

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document sets out, in factual and logical terms, why any assessment of whether a complainant's behaviour is "reasonable" or "unreasonable" in a public complaints system cannot be treated as neutral or purely abstract. It explains:

- The legal framework governing equality and complaints handling in England and Wales.
- The concept of "reasonableness" as used in public administration and police complaints.
- The mechanisms by which race, ethnicity, culture and disability affect both behaviour and institutional perceptions of behaviour.
- The logical consequences for the design and application of "unreasonable complainant" policies, especially in policing and discrimination cases.

The document is written as a general reference, not tied to one individual case. It may be used by complainants, advisers, public bodies, and oversight institutions. It does not seek to appeal to emotion and is based on published law, guidance and established analytical concepts.

2. CORE QUESTION

Question:

When a public authority labels a complainant's behaviour as "unreasonable", what must it logically and lawfully take into account about race, ethnicity, culture and disability?

Short Answer:

Because UK equality law treats race and disability as protected characteristics, and because official guidance recognises barriers faced by certain groups in accessing complaints systems, any serious assessment of "reasonableness" must explicitly consider:

- The complainant's race, ethnicity and cultural background.
- The complainant's disability status (including mental health and neurodivergence).
- How these characteristics affect communication style, persistence, expectations and trust.
- How institutional bias and "institutional racism" can distort perceptions of what is "reasonable".

Ignoring these factors results in an assessment that is incomplete in logic and potentially unlawful in equality terms.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Equality Act 2010 and Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 identifies race and disability as protected characteristics. Race includes colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins. Disability covers physical or mental impairments with substantial and long-term adverse effects on normal day-to-day activities.

The Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the exercise of public functions.

3.2 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes a Public Sector Equality Duty on public authorities, including police forces. They must, when exercising their functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between such groups.

“Due regard” is fact-sensitive and must be exercised in the specific circumstances of each decision. Case law and official guidance emphasise that public authorities must actively consider the equality impact when framing and applying policies.

Logical implication:

Whenever a public authority designs or applies an “unreasonable complainant” policy, it is exercising a public function. The PSED therefore requires explicit consideration of how such a policy will affect people with protected characteristics, including Black and minority ethnic complainants and disabled complainants.

3.3 Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act also imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage by a provision, criterion or practice. This can include methods of communication, response times, and procedural complexity in complaints handling.

Logical implication:

If behaviours later labelled “unreasonable” (such as high detail, repeated contact, urgency, non-standard communication) are linked to disability, the public body must consider adjustments before treating the behaviour as a management problem.

3.4 Police Complaints System and Statutory Guidance

The police complaints system in England and Wales is governed by legislation including the Police Reform Act 2002 and associated regulations and Home Office guidance.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) issues statutory guidance to police forces and local policing bodies on complaint handling. This guidance stresses that:

- An effective complaints system is vital to public confidence.
- Complaints must be handled in ways that are reasonable and proportionate.
- Forces must comply with their legal obligations, including equality duties.

The IOPC’s “complaint handling toolkit” explains that “reasonable and proportionate” means doing what is appropriate in the circumstances, taking into account the facts and the context in which the matter has been raised. It also directs complaint handlers to consider seriousness, impact and the relevant legislative framework.

3.5 IOPC Guidance on Unacceptable or Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

The IOPC has specific guidance on managing “unacceptable and unreasonable complainant behaviour”. The purpose is to provide a consistent approach while ensuring access to the complaints system is maintained for all.

The guidance recognises that:

- Some complainants will be persistent or demanding.
- Complaint handlers must balance staff welfare and system efficiency with continued access for complainants, including those whose behaviour is challenging but not threatening.

Logical implication:

Any restriction on a complainant's contact must not amount to effective exclusion from the system and must be justified as necessary and proportionate in context.

3.6 IOPC Guidance on Discrimination Complaints

In 2024 the IOPC issued detailed guidance on handling complaints involving discrimination. It emphasises that such complaints are often sensitive, can significantly affect confidence in policing, and require careful gathering and assessment of evidence.

Logical implication:

Where a complaint alleges racism or other discrimination, the standard of reasoning and transparency in decision-making must be particularly robust, and equality considerations are central, not peripheral.

3.7 Institutional Racism

The Macpherson Inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence case introduced a widely-used definition of “institutional racism”, describing it as a collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin, visible in processes, attitudes and behaviour that disadvantage minority ethnic people.

This definition is now routinely cited by public bodies, including police forces themselves, as a reference point in race action plans and equality strategies.

Logical implication:

Public authorities already accept, at least in principle, that processes and attitudes can unintentionally produce racially biased outcomes even without overt prejudice. This must logically include processes that label certain complainants as “unreasonable”.

4. THE CONCEPT OF “REASONABLENESS” IN PUBLIC DECISION-MAKING

4.1 Objective but Context-Dependent

In UK public law, tests of “reasonableness” (for example, in judicial review) are usually framed as objective: what would a reasonable decision-maker do in the circumstances? However, courts and guidance also recognise that:

- The assessment is context-specific.
- All relevant factors must be considered, including legal duties, impact on individuals, and broader social context.

4.2 “Reasonable and Proportionate” in Complaint Handling

The IOPC's interpretation of “reasonable and proportionate” requires decision-makers to:

- Take into account the facts and context.

- Consider the seriousness of the complaint and its potential impact on confidence in policing.
- Act within the framework of legislation and guidance.

Logical implication:

An assessment of whether behaviour is “unreasonable” that ignores the complainant’s protected characteristics and broader context fails to take account of all relevant factors, and so does not meet the authority’s own “reasonable and proportionate” standard.

5. HOW RACE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE AFFECT ASSESSMENTS OF REASONABLENESS

5.1 Communication Norms

Communication styles vary between and within racial, ethnic and cultural groups. Differences can include:

- Directness versus indirectness.
- Use of strong emphasis or repetition to signal seriousness.
- Detailed narrative versus brief summaries.

From the standpoint of a majority-culture decision-maker, behaviours such as:

- High levels of written detail.
- Repeated contact on the same issue.
- Strong emphasis on particular words or themes.

may be interpreted as “excessive”, “over-dramatic” or “obsessive”. Yet, in another cultural setting, they can be normal or rational responses to perceived injustice.

Logical implication:

Determining that such behaviours are “unreasonable” without considering cultural and racial context risks misclassifying normal or rational behaviour as problematic.

5.2 Stereotypes and Perception Bias

Research and policy discussions around institutional racism highlight how stereotypes (for example, the “angry Black person” stereotype) can influence perceptions of threat, aggression or irrationality. Macpherson’s analysis emphasised that unwitting prejudice, ignorance and racist stereotyping can shape organisational processes and decisions.

In the complaints context, this may manifest as:

- Interpretation of firm or persistent questioning about racism as aggression.
- Treatment of pattern-spotting about discriminatory incidents as “conspiracy-thinking”.
- Pathologising focus on race issues as evidence of irrationality.

Logical implication:

Because perception of behaviour is filtered through existing stereotypes, institutional decision-makers must factor in the possibility of bias. A “race-blind” approach assumes that majority perceptions of “normal” are universal, which is logically unsound in a multiracial society.

5.3 Historical and Structural Context

Multiple inquiries, including Macpherson, have recognised that Black and minority ethnic communities have experienced unequal treatment in interactions with the criminal justice system.

Given this context, it is rational for complainants from these communities to:

- Be alert to patterns of discrimination.
- Be sceptical of official explanations that do not address race dynamics.
- Persist in seeking clarity when racism is alleged.

Logical implication:

Persistence, detail and insistence on addressing race are not, in themselves, evidence of irrationality. They may be rational responses to documented structural problems.

5.4 Indirect Discrimination Risks

A policy or practice that treats everyone the same can still be unlawful if it puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage and is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Examples of apparently neutral criteria that may disproportionately affect Black or minority ethnic complainants include:

- Labelling frequent reference to racism as evidence of “irrational belief”.
- Treating “repeated complaints about integrity or bias” as markers of unreasonableness.
- Classifying high detail about context and history as inherently problematic.

Logical implication:

Before applying such criteria, a public authority must assess whether there is a disparate impact by race or ethnicity and, if so, justify the restriction as proportionate and necessary, consistent with the PSED and the prohibition of indirect discrimination.

5.5 Access Barriers and Complaints Systems

The IOPC statutory guidance notes that poor handling of complaints can lead to disengagement and loss of confidence in policing. The guidance on managing unreasonable complainant behaviour explicitly aims to maintain access to the complaints system for all.

Logical implication:

Where a group already has lower confidence in the system because of racism or perceived bias, restrictions on their complaints must be scrutinised carefully to ensure they do not deepen inequality of access.

6. HOW DISABILITY AFFECTS ASSESSMENTS OF REASONABLENESS

6.1 Types of Relevant Disability

Disabilities relevant to complaint behaviour can include:

- Mental health conditions.
- Neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g. ADHD, autism).

- Cognitive impairments.
- Trauma-related conditions.

These conditions can affect:

- Communication style (level of detail, structure).
- Regulation of persistence and urgency.
- Interpretation of events and perceived risks.
- Tolerance of delay or uncertainty.

6.2 Behaviour Often Labelled “Unreasonable”

Typical examples in “unreasonable complainant” policies include:

- Repeated contact on the same or related issues.
- High volume or density of written material.
- Perceived failure to accept official explanations.
- Insistence on particular outcomes.
- Short or strict deadlines demanded from the authority.

Many of these behaviours can be manifestations of disability-related traits (for example, anxiety-driven urgency, difficulty letting go of unresolved matters, or atypical communication patterns).

Logical implication:

It is not logically valid to assume that such behaviours are voluntary or purely strategic. They may be substantially shaped by disability.

6.3 Reasonable Adjustments Duty

Given the duty to make reasonable adjustments, public authorities should consider measures such as:

- Clear, structured written responses.
- Single, consistent points of contact where appropriate, with transparency.
- Adjusted expectations regarding volume and style of communication.
- Support in understanding processes or decisions.

Logical implication:

If a public body labels a disabled complainant’s behaviour as “unreasonable” without first considering and implementing reasonable adjustments, it risks breaching the Equality Act and making an unsound assessment of reasonableness.

7. ANALYSIS OF “UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT” POLICIES

7.1 Stated Aims

Typically, such policies aim to:

- Protect staff from abusive or threatening behaviour.
- Manage disproportionate demands on time and resources.
- Maintain the effectiveness of the complaints system.

The IOPC guidance recognises that some complainants behave in ways that are challenging and that there may be a need to set limits, while maintaining access.

7.2 Conditions for Legitimate Restriction

From the legal and guidance framework above, restrictions on a complainant's contact should:

1. Be based on specific, evidenced behaviours, not general impressions.
2. Distinguish clearly between:
 - The content of the complaint (which may have merit).
 - The manner of communication.
3. Be necessary to achieve a legitimate aim (e.g. safety, functioning of the system).
4. Be proportionate, meaning the least restrictive option sufficient to manage the behaviour.
5. Maintain some form of access to the complaints system.
6. Be time-limited and reviewable, with periodic reassessment.

7.3 Equality and Institutional Racism Considerations

Given the PSED and the Macpherson definition of institutional racism, an authority applying such a policy should be able to demonstrate that it has considered whether:

- The behaviours being labelled “unreasonable” are influenced by race, ethnicity, culture or disability.
- The criteria used might indirectly disadvantage particular racial or disabled groups.
- Stereotypes (for example, about Black complainants) are influencing perceptions.

If these questions are not examined, the policy's application may itself be an example of discriminatory process or institutional racism.

7.4 Discrimination Complaints as a Special Case

Given IOPC guidance on discrimination complaints, any move to restrict a complainant who is alleging racism must be particularly carefully justified.

Logical implication:

Suppressing or downgrading complaints of racism by using an “unreasonable behaviour” label, without transparent equality analysis, conflicts with both the spirit of the Macpherson recommendations and current oversight guidance.

8. COMPLAINTS ALLEGING RACISM: SPECIFIC LOGIC

When the subject of a complaint is racism or discrimination:

- The content of the complaint directly engages protected characteristics.
- The complainant's focus on race, persistence and pattern-spotting is logically connected to the subject matter.
- Institutional reluctance to recognise racism is a documented phenomenon.

Macpherson specifically identified failures to recognise racism as a central feature of the original Stephen Lawrence investigation and linked this to systemic deficiencies.

Logical consequences:

1. **High sensitivity:** These complaints carry a higher risk to public confidence and must be handled with particular care.
2. **Rational persistence:** Continuing to press the issue of racism is not prima facie evidence of unreasonableness; it can be rational in light of prior institutional failures.
3. **Risk of circular reasoning:** If the institution treats complaints about racism as evidence of irrationality or "conspiracy", it creates a circle where the allegation of racism is used to justify ignoring the allegation itself.
4. **Equality duty:** Under the PSED, public bodies must show they have had due regard to racial equality when dealing with such complaints, including decisions to restrict communication.

9. INTERSECTION OF RACE, ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND DISABILITY

Many complainants will have more than one protected characteristic. For example, an IC3 Black complainant who is also disabled (including mental health disability).

9.1 Combined Effects on Behaviour

The combination of race, culture and disability may:

- Intensify mistrust of authorities (given historical experience of racism).
- Increase the need for detailed documentation to feel safe.
- Amplify anxiety around delays or perceived minimisation of issues.
- Shape communication style in ways that depart from majority norms.

9.2 Legal and Logical Consequences

From an equality perspective:

- The authority must consider both race and disability, and their interaction, when assessing behaviour and designing any restrictions.
- A uniform standard of "reasonable complainant" that ignores intersectional factors is incomplete.

From a logic perspective:

- An assessment that treats these factors as irrelevant omits potentially crucial explanatory variables and thus weakens the soundness of its conclusions about reasonableness.

10. PROPOSITIONS AND CONCLUSIONS (LOGICAL FORM)

The reasoning can be set out as a chain of propositions:

1. UK law recognises race and disability as protected characteristics and imposes duties on public authorities to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.
2. These duties apply whenever public authorities exercise their functions, including designing and applying complaints and “unreasonable complainant” policies.
3. The IOPC’s statutory guidance requires complaint handling to be reasonable and proportionate, taking into account facts and context.
4. The IOPC’s guidance on unreasonable complainant behaviour states that management of such behaviour must maintain access to the complaints system for all.
5. The IOPC’s discrimination guidance identifies complaints about discrimination as particularly sensitive and significant for public confidence, requiring careful and transparent handling.
6. The Macpherson Inquiry and subsequent analyses accept that institutional racism can be embedded in processes, attitudes and behaviours, even without overt racist intent.
7. Communication styles, expectations and reactions to injustice are influenced by race, ethnicity and culture, and disabilities can affect persistence, detail and perceived rationality. These are empirically observable facts and widely recognised in policy discussions on equality and access.
8. A policy that uses apparently neutral criteria (e.g. volume of correspondence, emphasis on race, pattern-spotting) can have a disproportionate impact on racial or disabled groups and thus constitute indirect discrimination unless objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
9. Therefore, any assessment that labels a complainant’s behaviour as “unreasonable” without explicitly considering race, ethnicity, culture and disability:
 - Fails to take into account all relevant factors.
 - Risks breaching the PSED and the reasonable adjustments duty.
 - Fails to meet the authority’s own “reasonable and proportionate” standard.
10. Specifically, in complaints about racism, treating persistence and race-focused analysis as “irrational” or “conspiracy” without careful equality analysis creates a serious risk that the existence of racism is being shielded from scrutiny by re-labelling the complainant rather than examining the complaint.
11. Consequently, the proposition that *“what is considered reasonable is impacted by race, ethnicity, culture and disability”* is not merely an opinion; it follows logically from:
 - The structure of equality law.
 - The nature of institutional racism as officially defined.
 - The content of IOPC and related guidance on complaints and discrimination.
12. A “colour-blind” and “disability-blind” definition of “unreasonable complainant” is therefore logically and legally defective. A robust definition must be explicitly equality-aware.

11. STATUS AND USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document:

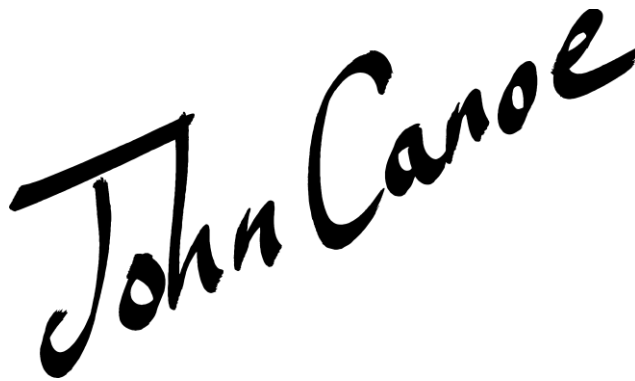
- Provides a structured, factual and logical explanation of why assessments of “reasonable” and “unreasonable” complainant behaviour must take account of race, ethnicity, culture and disability.
- Draws on published legislation, inquiries and official guidance.
- Is general in nature and not tailored to the facts of any single case.

It is intended as a reference for:

- Complainants and advocates seeking to frame equality-based arguments.
- Public authorities reviewing their policies.
- Oversight and regulatory bodies assessing whether complaint handling and restriction decisions have properly integrated equality considerations.

It is not legal advice. Individuals should seek professional legal advice before taking or refraining from specific legal actions.

Signed



**Mr John Canoe (IC3 – Black European)
Investigating Officer**

Friday, November 28, 2025

REPARATION NATION LIMITED

IC3CSI Black Crime Scene Investigators

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2 Eastfield Road

Enfield

EN3 5UY

Company number: 14761041

Bank Account: 8367 4721

Sort Code: 51-61-34

Website: <https://ic3csi.com>

IC3CSI Donation Policy

We provide free support to IC3 Black and IC6 Mixed-Black people affected by anti-Black racism trauma. Gifts and donations help us continue our work. Each email (incoming or outgoing) requires a £66 donation. This covers the time needed to open, read, analyse, and process communication, as well as the work requested. Please make every communication count and send only carefully considered messages.

Disclaimer: IC3CSI is not a law firm. We provide research and document support only, and accept donations for these services.

Black authority mandate (ic3csi):






















IC3CSI (IC3 Crime Scene Investigators) is a Black-led investigatory and documentation body focused on the safety, dignity and reparatory justice of IC3 Black and IC6 Mixed-Black people. We assert a Black authority mandate to scrutinise, question and challenge any past, present or planned activities and decisions that affect IC3 Black and IC6 Mixed-Black people, and to raise concerns and proposals through lawful written channels.

Communication policy (ic3csi):

ic3csi representatives will not voluntarily meet police officers, or any other entities suspected of anti-Black racism, face-to-face. All communications must be in writing (email or post) for transparency and evidential record-keeping. This policy reflects our role representing IC3 Black and IC6 Mixed-Black people and ongoing concerns about anti-Black racism and institutional racism. If officers or other parties approach us in person unprompted, that is a different matter.

**Please send all replies and official correspondence to our temporary mailing address:
IC3CSI, 23 Jersey House, 2 Eastfield Road, Enfield, EN3 5UY.**

POLICE CODES

	IC1		W1 UK White W2 White European W9 Other White	
	IC2		W9 Other White Dark European	
	IC3		B1 Caribbean B2 African B9 Other Black	
	IC4		A1 Indian A2 Pakistani A3 Bangladeshi A9 Other Asian	
	IC5		O1 Chinese O9 Any Other Oriental	
	IC6		M1 White & Black Caribbean M2 White & Black African M3 White & Asian M9 Any Other Mixed	
	IC7		NS Not Stated	

Who are you?



BIRTH PLACE



LINEAGE



APPEARANCE



STATE OF MIND



DNA

UK Government Race and Ethnicity Codes.

Are you a Racist?

 IC1	 W1 UK White W2 White European W9 Other White	 IC3	 B1 Caribbean B2 African B9 Other Black	 IC6	 M1 White & Black Caribbean M2 White & Black African M3 White & Asian M9 Any Other Mixed
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