

## Ground-Breaking Research Debunks Jury Myths

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Juries in England and Wales are remarkably representative of local communities, research at the University of Birmingham has concluded.

The Jury Diversity Project has found that the process for summoning juries does not discriminate against Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups and that a fair and representative section of BME communities are called to and serve in virtually all Crown Courts in England and Wales.

The study, Diversity and Fairness in the Jury System, was carried out for the Ministry of Justice by the University of Birmingham. The findings of the four-year project have discredited many of the myths surrounding juries in England and Wales.

The project found that there were no differences between black and white minority ethnic people in responding positively to being summoned for service and in almost all courts BME groups are not significantly under-represented amongst those summoned for jury service, or amongst those who serve.

Notably, racially-mixed juries' verdicts do not discriminate against defendants based on their ethnicity, even though some jurors in some cases do show leniency towards defendants with a similar ethnic background.

Dr Cheryl Thomas, Director of The Diversity Project, said: "Many widespread and long-held assumptions about who does jury service present an unflattering picture of those who decide the most serious criminal cases in this country. But the reality is that jurors closely reflect the diversity of the local community in Crown Courts throughout England and Wales, and that this diversity on juries results in unbiased verdicts for both ethnic minority and White defendants."

Researchers also found that there was no mass avoidance of jury service among the British public and that juries are not made up those who are socio-economically less important or by those who were not clever enough to avoid being called.

Crucially, there was no evidence to suggest unwillingness to do jury service or any particular lack of trust in the fairness of the jury system among the BME community or the British public in general.

Lord Falconer, the Justice Secretary said: "While concerns about the representation of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds on juries will continue, this study goes a long way towards dispelling myths about how juries operate and will help to maintain and sustain public confidence in juries and the jury system."

Researchers will now look at whether all-White juries discriminate against defendants based on race.

ENDS

### NOTES TO EDITORS

This research was carried out using a ground-breaking approach using case simulation with real jurors as well as examining real life verdicts of actual juries.

The report can be found at: [www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research.htm](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research.htm)

Dr Cheryl Thomas is available for interview. Please contact the University Press Office on 0121 414 6029 / 07920 593946

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