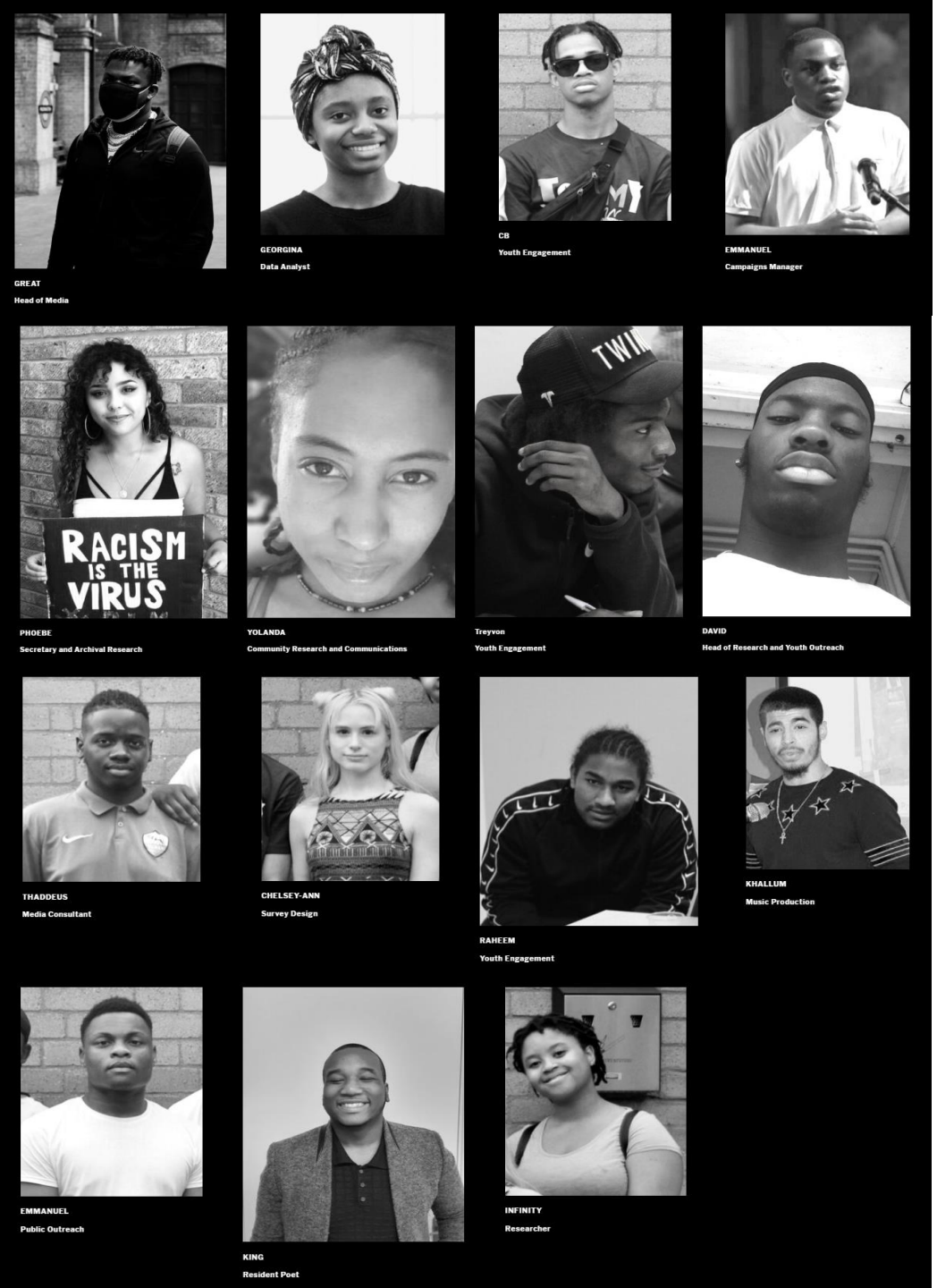
POLICING IN HACKNEY

CHALLENGES FROM YOUTH IN 20

Findings from Participatory Action Research conducted by ACCOUNT.

ACCOUNT

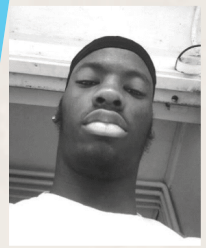


ACCOUNT

- Youth-led police monitoring project based at Hackney CVS.
- Started in 2012 as a Young people's Stop and Search Monitoring Group.
- Since 2019 expanded its role to concern all things related to policing and community safety

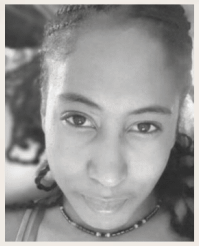
ACCOUNT

Core Research Team



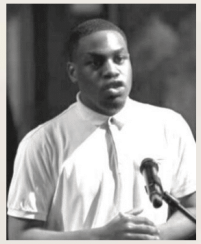
David Smith **Focus: Accountability**

David Smith is the head of research and youth outreach at Account and youth leader at Hackney CVS. David was responsible for designing, leading and carrying out the research project that makes up this report. Born and raised in Hackney, he has a passion for educating and giving hope to young people in his borough. He has been published on issues in policing such as Live Facial Recognition Technology.



Yolanda Lear **Focus: Trust**

Yolanda Lear is responsible for Community Research and Communications at Account. Yolanda was responsible for analysing data around 'Trust' for the following report. Yolanda is an accomplished spoken word artist and poet and has written publications on the death of George Floyd, racism, and deaths in custody in the UK.



Emmanuel Onapa **Focus: Trauma and Policing**

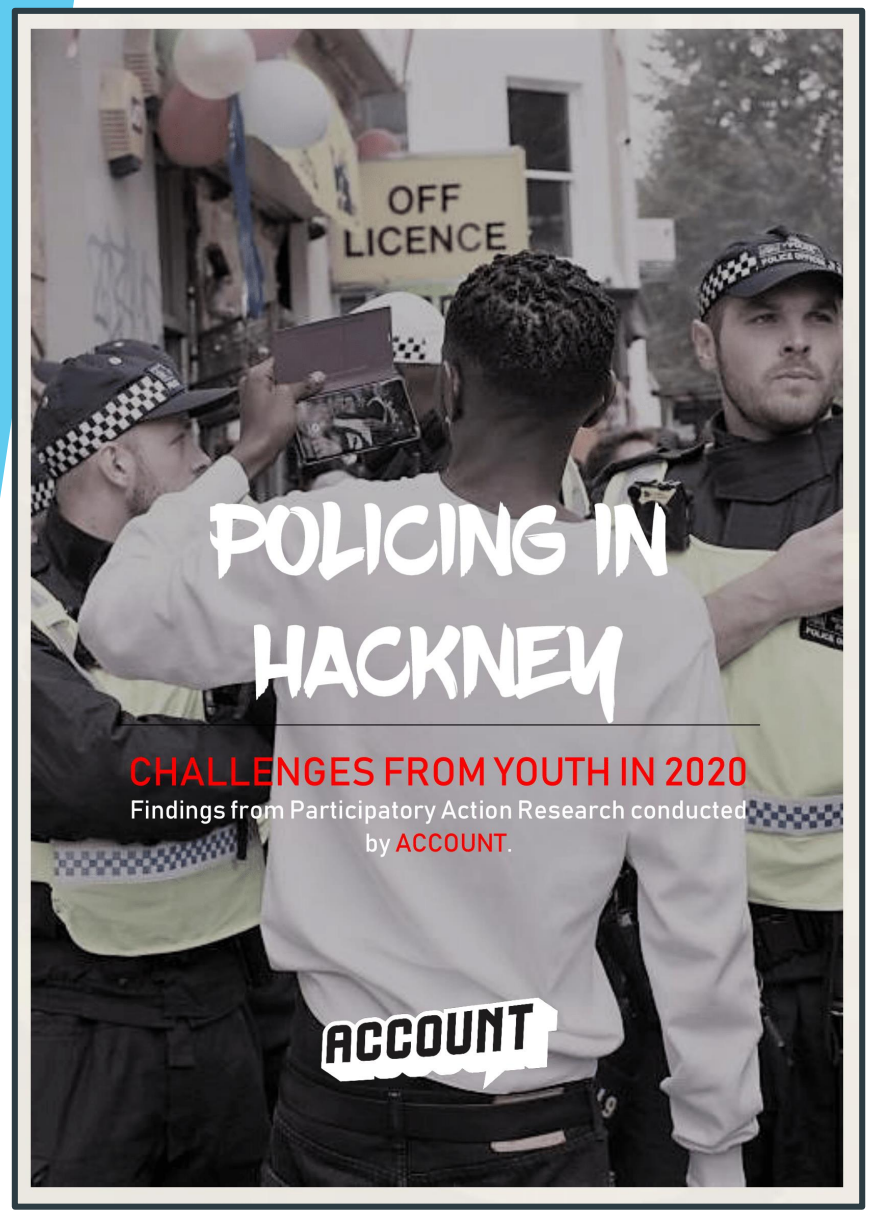
Emmanuel Onapa is the Campaigns manager at Account, youth leader at Hackney CVS and undergraduate student in Politics and International Relations at the University of Exeter. He has published work on activism, racism and social justice in publications such as the Fabian Review. He currently chairs the Hackney Young People's Stop and Search monitoring group run by Account.

Infinity Agbetu **Focus: Policing and Educatio**

Infinity Agbetu is a Researcher at Account and undergradua student at Goldsmith College, University of London. Witl the following report Infinity was responsible for research the education system and its relation to mental health policing. Infinity was also responsible for data handling coding from the start of the research project.

Background to Research Project

- Began research design as a group July 2019
- Recruited young people to work with from across Hackney
- Carried out extended interviews
- Analysed statistical data
- Presented early findings at Community Resilience Partnership in September 2019



Structure of Report

- Report structured around a series of ‘challenges’ to policing raised by young people

Section 1: **Trauma**

Section 2: **Trust**

Section 3: **Accountability**

Section 4: **Policing and Education**

1. Trauma

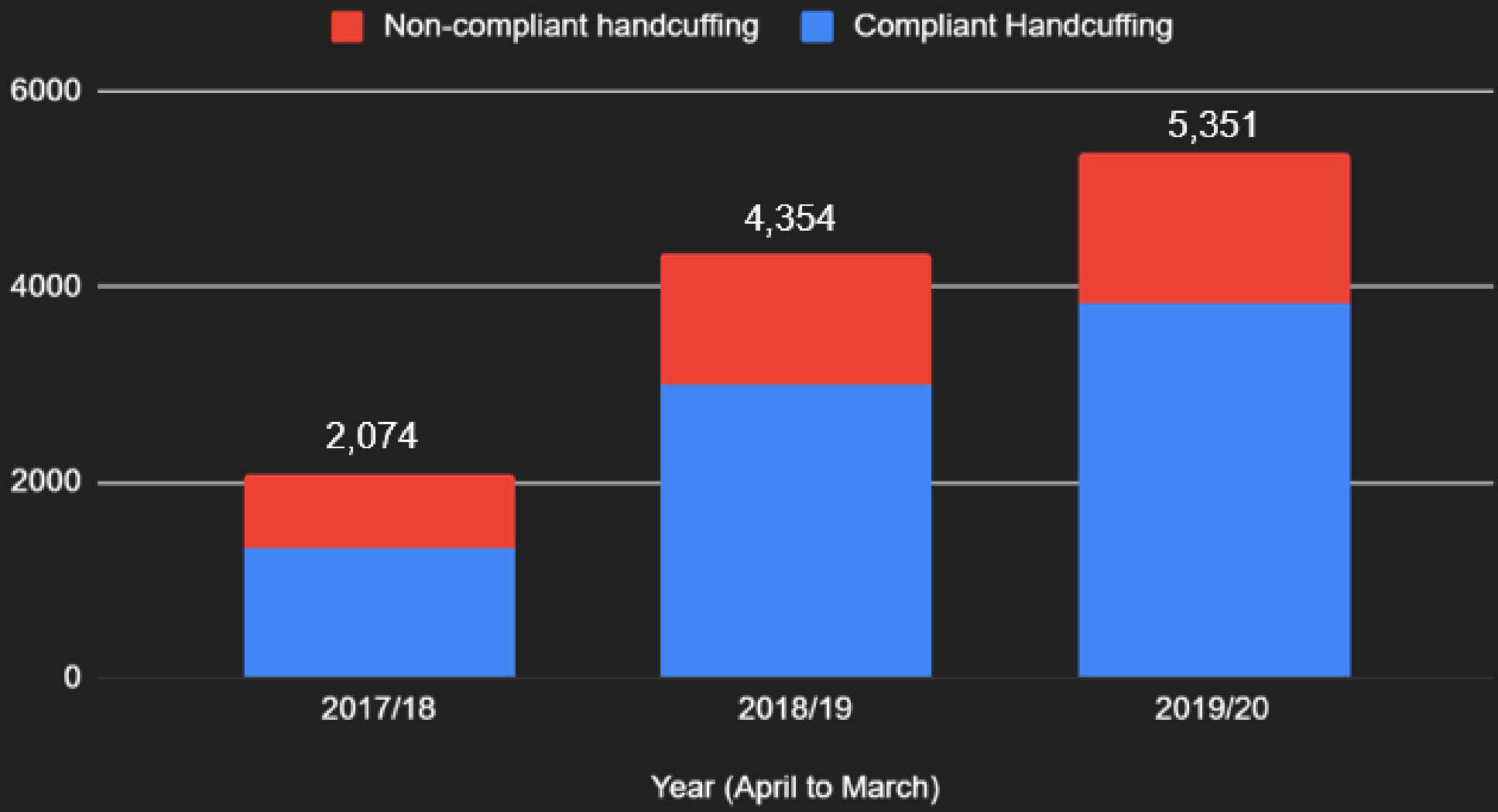
- Asked young people to describe their experiences of interactions with police
- Focused on impact on sense of identity, mental health, feelings of belonging
- In many cases negative interactions led to **trauma**

Trauma (Use of Force)

- Use of force, especially **handcuffs** led to feelings of powerlessness, exclusion and/or humiliation:

"But where they came up to me they asked me a question, then as I pulled out my hand, they just handcuffed me. It was just liked, have you even told me why I'm getting handcuffed? It came like a shock… I'm just thinking, What am I getting handcuffed for? Then it was just that it was mad. It was kind of degrading, yeah. … I mean, I still reflect on it. Sometimes like rah that happened, And knowing the person *I am*, like really?"
Toyin, 19 years old

Use of handcuffs has increased by 158% in Hackney in the last 3 years



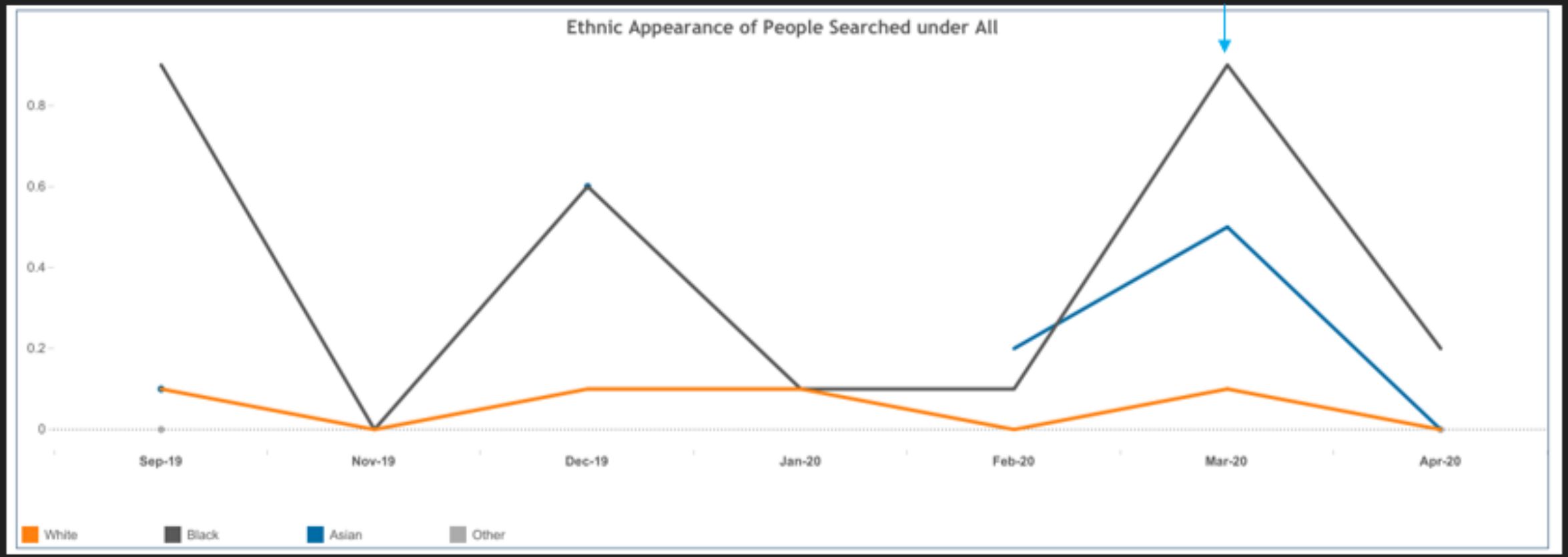
Source: Metropolitan police use of force dashboard

Trauma (Racial Profiling)

- Many young people described their belief that they were singled out because of their race for disproportionate or excessive treatment
- Many young Black men in particular believed they were stereotyped as gang members by police from a young age
- For some, this had a traumatic impact on their sense of identity

> **Darius:** One time my brother was fixing his bike, he had a spanner in his hand... This time police would go there and say, 'yo, this is a gang' and what not. That was those type of days.
> **Interviewer:** How old were you then?
> **Darius**: Like 11, 12. Now they hopped out the car now. This was my first time getting stopped and searched, like 'Oh, you got a weapon on you!' like, how is this a weapon, he's fixing his bike? And they was like 'ah, stop right there'. Like three of them jumped out the car now, was searching man, then, I think it was the day after. Everyone's all going home, they're searching man again. Literally bruv - we was thinking *what!?*

In March 2020 Black people in Hackney were 9 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people under Section 60 powers



Source: Met Police Stop and Search Dashboard

2. Trust

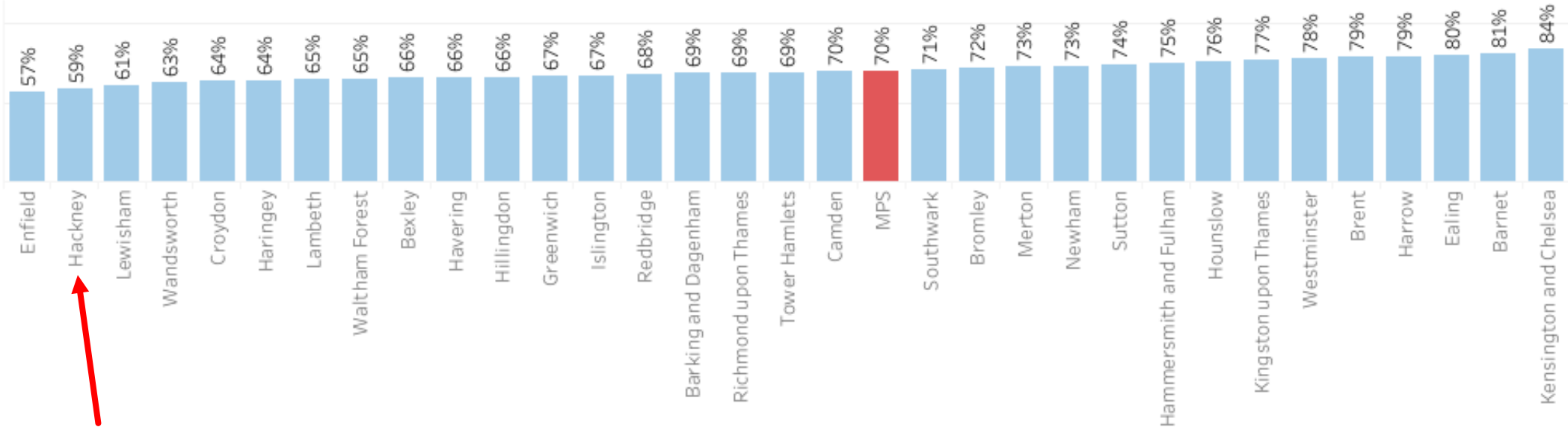
- Why is trust in police low in Hackney?
- Do young people trust the police for help?

Trust

Borough level data

Measure Agree the police can be relied upon to be there when needed **Date** March 2020

Public Perception responses to "Agree the police can be relied upon to be there when needed" by borough (Rolling 12 months to March 2020)



Source: MOPAC

Trust: Summary of key findings:

Nearly all the young people we spoke to had problems with trusting the police.

Key issues included:

- Fear of criminalisation: ‘if you go to them for help they’ll most likely flip it on you’.
- Complaints about efficiency or effectiveness: ‘Police are useless, they wont be there. They can’t handle situations.’
- Beliefs handed down by elders. This was often based on historic incidents with police going back to the 1970s and 80s

Trust: Summary of key findings:

All of those we spoke to with low trust could point to examples of personal experience.

- Witnessing police ‘provoke’ situations
- Seeing violence from police, often TSG
- Being wrongfully stopped and searched

> “For me, they [police] have been good to me, they haven't disrespected me. I've seen them disrespect other people though, that's one reason why I don't really like them. The way they treat people is not right, needs to change, seriously… I think they feel like they're in America or something. The way they're treating people, it's different. Back in the day, I know they were still beating people and that but when I was younger there was more respect for the police in the community. They were not grabbing up people and dashing them on the ground.”

Trust: Summary of key findings:

Many young people stated that they would not call on police to help them.

- Often the case that young people would not call on police for help, even in a dangerous or violent situation
- Led many young people to ‘take matters into their own hands’

Interviewer:
would you still have the same thoughts now about police, like would you call on them, would you call police?

Lloyd: Nope, I would go about my business, if I call police, next they’d try and say, yeah I was there when that incident was happening. I'd be like 'I just called you? what you talking about?’ I'd just do my thing…

3. Accountability

- Key issues raised that young people are not able to hold police accountable
- High profile incidents like the Rashan Charles case in 2017 – with perception that police ‘got away with it’, have lasting impact, especially in Black community
- Trust in complaints system low among young people

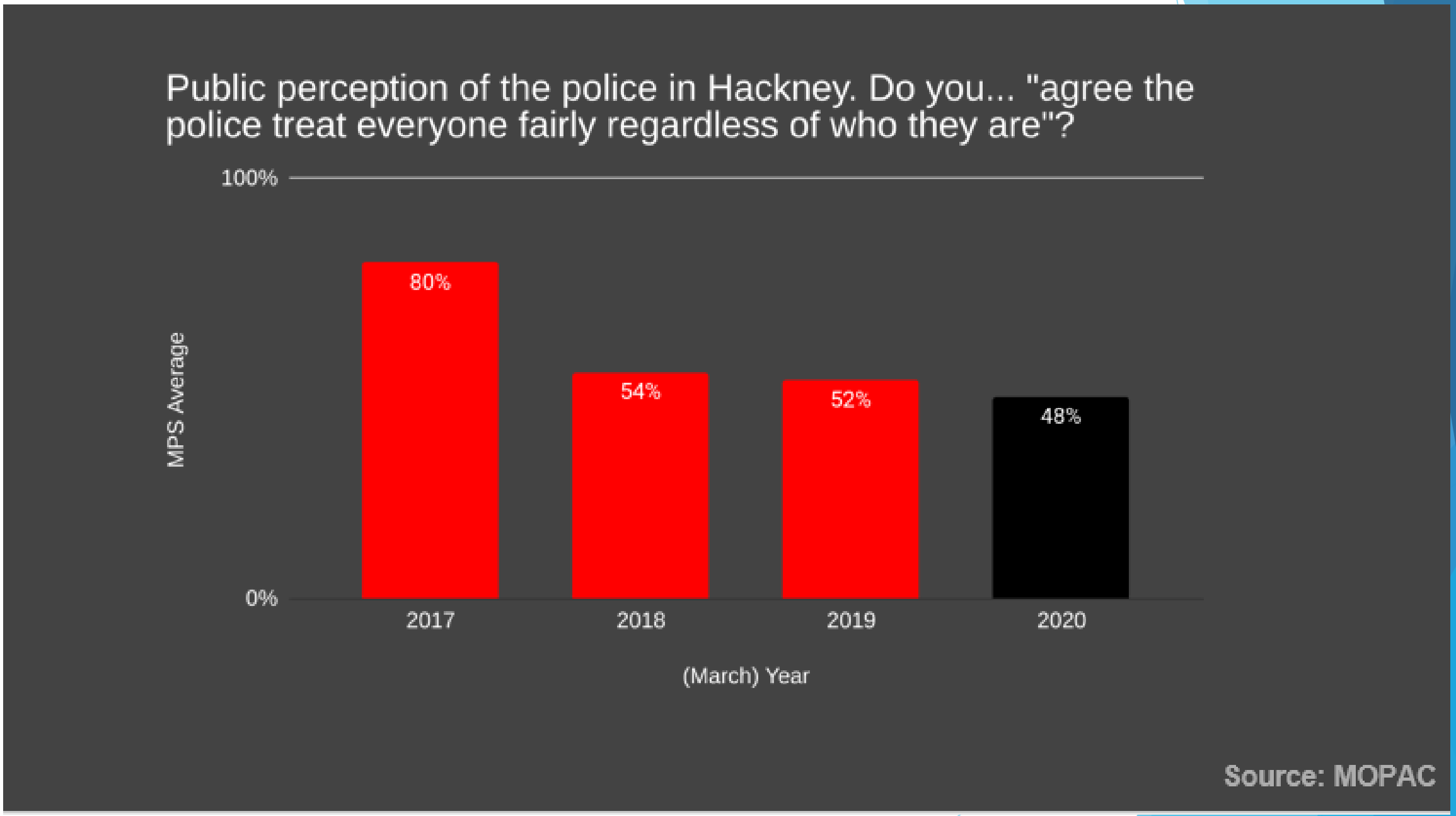
Accountability – Rashan Charles case

- In July 2017 Rashan Charles died after swallowing a package following police contact with an officer from the Territorial Support Group on Kingsland Road
- Immediately after the incident the Independent Police Complaints Commission [IPCC] (now the IOPC) recommended that the officer be suspended whilst an investigation was being carried out
- The Metropolitan Police chose to ignore this advice and allowed the officer to remain in position
- Death highly traumatic for many young people in Hackney

Accountability – Rashan Charles case

- Memories and stories of police ‘getting away with it’ do not fade from memory easily.
- These high profile independents set the tone for young people when thinking about whether complaining to the police is worthwhile.

Toyin: Sometimes it feels like everyone's in cahoots except from your people-dem, you get what I mean? They’re all in unison to attack you , and all against you, they don’t want nothing for you.


Public perception of the police in Hackney. Do you... "agree the police treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are"?
100%
0%
MPS Average
80%
54%
52%
48%
2017
2018
2019
2020
(March) Year
Source: MOPAC

Accountability – History

- Work at Hackney Archives reveals that this problem goes back generations
- Historic cases including Colin Roach (1983)

Accountability – Complaints System

- Many young people do not trust the complaints system – do not trust police to investigate their own complaints
- Many young people find reliving trauma via complaining to be impossible

“One of them stood on my head and pressed, damage to my knees, after the police station I went to a hostel… I was slumped on the bed for time because the pain, the adrenalin, had gone, and the pain was just there, physical and mental pain. I could not move for like a whole weekend… When white people were like 'you should report' I wanted to tell them *‘I don’t want to step in side a police station EVER AGAIN’, I don’t* want to step foot inside there I don’t wanna talk to a policeman, I don’t wanna *look* at a policeman, I don’t want a policeman to talk to me , *I don’t wanna deal with them*, and this is like right after the incident, so they're telling me to go in there and fill in a report, but the police station is known for their brutality, and they expect me to go down there, its fucking bullshit. …*They’re* [Police] *taking the piss,* they don’t understand, nobody wants to complain, do you know how much of a stressful thing it is to fill out a form about a traumatic experience, people that have been raped barely want to fill out forms, why would I? Someone that’s dealt with physical pain from a multitude of people with zero support, why would I go through that again, to write it down, for police to question me about it, it’s a piss-take, I never want to deal with it again.” **Ayodeli, 18 years old**

Recommendations

Recommendations
Central East Basic Command Unit (BCU)

- Significant improvements needed in use of body worn cameras (BWC)
- Fundamental changes needed to develop effective transparency and accountability around racial disproportionality
- BCU needs to sign up to the Home Office Best Use of Stop and Search (BUSS) scheme.
- Handcuff usage and its impact on community relations needs independent evidence-based evaluation.

Recommendations
Hackney Council and Partners

- Funding for mental health support for victims of police misconduct
- Funded, representative, effective and independent community scrutiny panels needed to evaluate police complaints
- More funding to support local spaces for ‘emotional amnesty’. Safe spaces for communities to heal from collective trauma and rebuild trust.
- Extra independent support needed for young people making complaints against police.

Recommendations
Met Police

- Independent evaluation of tactics, role and effectiveness of Territorial Support Group. Review training, recruitment and impact on community relations.
- Met Police need to deliver a meaningful public apology for historical trauma caused to communities and families from deaths in custody incidents. Where appropriate, cases should be reopened.
- Met Police need to comply with recommendations given by the IOPC during misconduct investigations.