

Black and Ethnic Minority Communities, Immigration and Asylum in Wales briefing



**Updated March 2021
by Gethin Rhys**

Background

The 2011 census indicated that over 95% of the Welsh population was white. The census also indicated the presence of a growing number of some black and ethnic minority communities in Wales. Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales and Evangelical Alliance Wales have worked together to ensure that the voices of black led churches are heard especially on the Welsh Government's Faith Communities Forum.

Black and Ethnic Minority Communities

The realities revealed by Covid-19 have shaped the conversation around racial justice. The [socio-economic report on BAME Covid-19 deaths in Wales](#) following a review led by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna in June 2020 revealed a complex pattern of long-standing disadvantages. An [analysis by the office of National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) showed that in England and Wales, people from a black ethnic background were at greater risk of death from Covid-19. The risk for black males has been more than three times higher than white males and nearly two and a half times higher for black females than white. The Ogbonna Report highlighted issues of concern such as long-standing racism and disadvantage, the lack of BAME representation within decision making processes and how many of the issues of concern had been highlighted in the past but not addressed in any systemic or sustained way. The report offered more than 30 recommendations.

Immigration Issues

A Wales [Position Paper on Migration](#) was published in March 2020 highlighting the need to reduce or remove the £25,600 salary threshold

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for a work visa and signposting the need for distinctive Welsh policies. While the UK's new [points-based immigration system](#) does allow some 'trading' of a lower salary against, for example, a specific job offer or qualifications, this threshold remains high given [wage levels in Wales](#). The seasonal agricultural workers scheme will have a limited effect in Wales because demand for workers in Wales is all year round.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Wales has welcomed asylum seekers through the Home Office dispersal system receiving almost 7% of the UK total. Wales has also welcomed refugees under the UK Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement scheme and Vulnerable Child Resettlement scheme, some of whom have been sponsored by community groups including churches and other faith communities.

Wales has pioneered long-standing initiatives such as the Welsh Refugee Doctors Training Scheme (WARD) initiated in 2002 which currently has some 100 retrained doctors able to work in the NHS. Strategic priorities are now filtered through the [Nation of Sanctuary - Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan](#). The Nation of Sanctuary concept was initiated by the churches in Wales.

European Citizens

Faith communities alongside other partners in Welsh civic society have sought to ensure that the rights of European citizens living in Wales are upheld. The Welsh EU Citizens Rights (EUCR) project seeks to support the 80,000 European citizens living in Wales. Advice has been offered to those who need to apply for EU settled status. In 2020, the Bevan

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Foundation highlighted feedback from EU citizens and stakeholders highlighting a lack of awareness of the Welsh support provision, confusion caused by misinformation and face-to-face information and advice sessions being stopped due to Coronavirus.

Further Information

The [Wales Strategic Migration Partnership](#) provides an overview of immigration matters in Wales and has published several informative reports. Cytûn: Churches Together in Wales is a partner organisation.

Questions for candidates

1. Should Wales be able to set its own priorities for immigration, separate from those for the rest of the UK? If so, what should they be?
2. How will you tackle the health inequalities revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic?
3. Do you support the notion that Wales should be a nation of sanctuary? If so, what further practical steps should be taken to welcome refugees to Wales?

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Contact

We would like to know how this guidance was useful and what should be added or changed for future publications.

If you have questions, suggestions or comments please write to:

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