

Landmark report calls for urgent reform to tackle racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination in cricket



27th June 2023, London, Cricket must urgently reform to address deep rooted and widespread institutional, structural and interpersonal discrimination across the game, finds a landmark report today published by the [Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket](#) (ICEC).

More than 4,000 people responded to the ICEC's Call for Evidence which was supplemented by primary research, literature reviews, written and oral evidence from hundreds of individuals, counties, women's regional teams and wider organisations linked to cricket.

With one in two respondents experiencing discrimination in the game, the report, **Holding Up A Mirror To Cricket**, lays bare the extent of game-wide failings, to reveal:

- **Racism is entrenched in cricket.** The game's structures lead to racial disparities and discrimination, and the ICEC heard many examples of stereotyping, exclusion and racist behaviour.
- **Women are marginalised and routinely experience sexism and misogyny.** The women's game is treated as subordinate to the men's game, and women have little or no power, voice or influence within cricket's decision-making structures.

- **There is little to no focus on addressing class barriers in cricket.** Private schools dominate the talent pathway, there is scarce provision of cricket in state schools and there are substantial cost barriers faced by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- **The complaints system is confusing, overly defensive and not fit for purpose.** There is profound mistrust, victims and those accused of discrimination are not properly supported and people are simply not reporting, for fear of victimisation and concern that no action will be taken. All too often people are suffering in silence.
- **The systems in place to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) require significant improvement.** There is game-wide confusion about how the regulatory system works, with a lack of rigorous EDI standards. The ECB's dual role of promoter and regulator creates the potential for conflicts of interest.

Cindy Butts, Chair of the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket says;

“We had unprecedented access to cricket which provided us with a unique opportunity to hold a mirror up to the game. Our findings are unequivocal. Racism, class-based discrimination, elitism and sexism are widespread and deep rooted. The game must face up to the fact that it's not banter or just a few bad apples. Discrimination is both overt and baked into the structures and processes within cricket.

“The stark reality is cricket is not a game for everyone.

“Whilst there has been commendable and significant progress in the women's game, women continue to be treated as second-class citizens with unequal access, pay and treatment. The England Women's team are yet to play a Test Match at Lord's, the home of cricket!

“87% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi respondents, 82% of Indian respondents and 75% of Black respondents to our survey told us they have experienced discrimination, which is simply unacceptable.

“If you attend a state school, you're less likely to have access to cricket and have the same opportunity to progress in the game as your private school peers. For those who do 'make it' we were saddened to hear they were sometimes subjected to class-based discrimination. Cricket needs to urgently level the playing field.

“We did encounter encouraging examples of good practice and there are many who work tirelessly across the game and who want to see positive change. From the outset, we as a Commission shared a collective desire to see cricket emerge as the most equitable and inclusive sport in the country. To achieve this ambition a report of this kind must necessarily focus on the problems in order to identify the solutions. Our findings will make for difficult reading, but change will not happen if denial and defensiveness persist.

“We want to congratulate the ECB for setting up a truly independent commission to examine equity in cricket; many would not have been brave enough to do so. We have confidence in the ECB's new leadership and their ability to take our recommendations forward - the proof will be demonstrable change. The game must now lean into the uncomfortable truths and commit to reforming cricket's culture, structures and processes. This is the only way to make cricket genuinely a sport for all.”

Established by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to examine discrimination and inequity where it exists and identify opportunities to tackle the problems, the **Holding Up a Mirror to Cricket** report acknowledges there have been sizeable improvements in the ECB's approach to EDI, particularly since 2018. The [Inspiring Generations](#) strategy, including the [South Asian Action Plan](#) (SAAP) and the [Transforming Women's and Girls' Cricket Action Plan](#) (TWGCP), deserve real credit, and have had a positive impact across the game.

The ICEC sets out 44 recommendations to transform the game's culture and, in some cases, to redesign the systems that govern and operate cricket. As an essential first step the ICEC recommends the ECB makes an unqualified public apology for its own failings and those of the game it governs.

The apology should acknowledge that racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination have existed and still exist, and recognise the impact on victims of discrimination.

It should include a direct apology for the ECB's and the wider game's historic failures in relation to women's and girls' cricket and its failure to adequately support Black cricket in England and Wales.

Additional key recommendations include:

- There should be a fundamental overhaul of the professional women players' pay structure. The women's game should have equal representation to the men's game throughout English and Welsh cricket's governance structure, including membership of the ECB and representation on its Board and committees.
- The ECB must develop an action plan to revive Black cricket, through financial support and targeted programmes in local communities.
- The ECB must develop a game-wide strategy to remove class barriers.
- The entire talent pathway structure should be overhauled to make it more meritocratic, inclusive, accountable and free of direct costs by 2025. Furthermore, counties must proactively expand their search for talented players to include people who come through 'non-traditional' routes.
- A new regulatory body, independent of the ECB, must be established to increase trust and confidence in the regulatory process and address concerns around conflicts of interest as the ECB is both a promoter and regulator of cricket.

- The ECB should reform the complaints process across the game to ensure everyone has confidence in the system and that complaints are handled fairly.

The ICEC understands the ECB has committed to publishing a response to the report and its recommendations within 3 months. The full report can be accessed here <https://theicec.com/>.

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