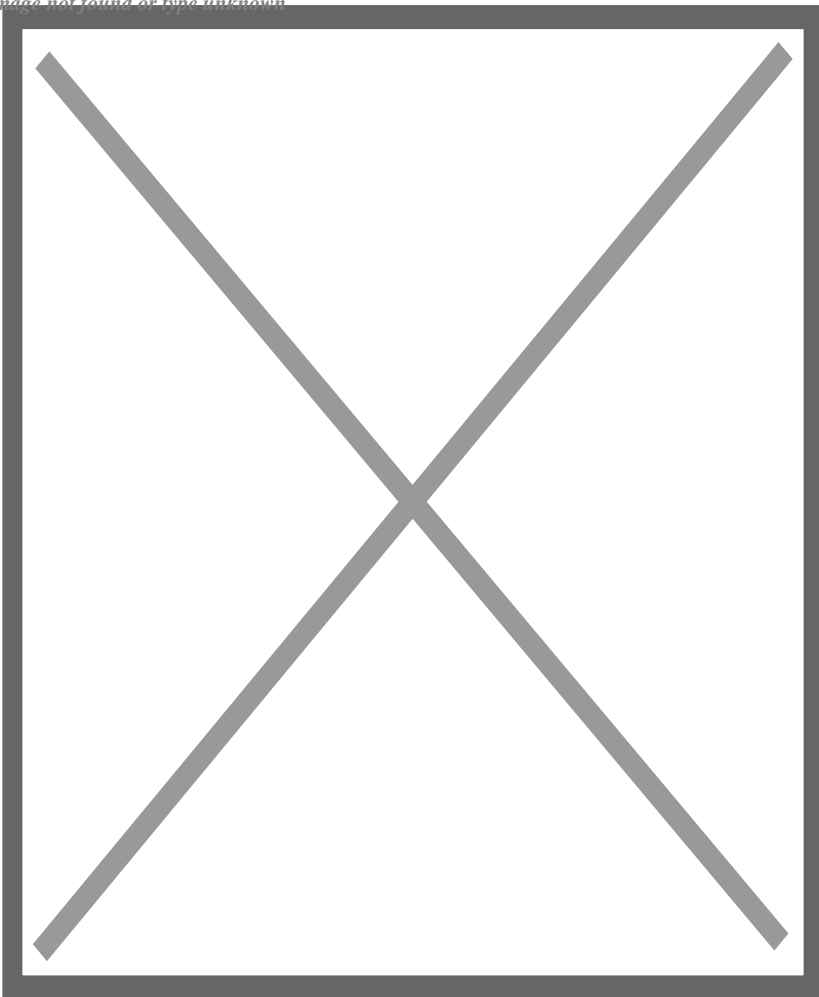


Report finds London's Met Police racist, misogynist and homophobic

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Independent review was commissioned after a young woman was raped and killed by a serving officer.

London, March 22 (RHC)-- Britain's biggest police force is institutionally racist, misogynist and homophobic, according to an independent review commissioned after a young woman was raped and killed by a serving officer. The Metropolitan Police Service, which has more than 34,000 officers, must "change itself" or risk being broken up, the report published on Tuesday said.

It has failed to protect the public from officers who abuse women, organisational changes have put women and children at greater risk and female officers and staff routinely experience sexism, the report added. It found that there are racist officers and staff and a "deep-seated homophobia" exists in the organisation.

The review by Baroness Louise Casey, commissioned in the wake of Sarah Everard's murder, is "rigorous, stark and unsparing," she said. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley said he accepts the "diagnosis" of prejudice in the force, but would not use the term institutional because he views it as politicised and ambiguous.

Baroness Casey said she was disappointed that he would not accept the term, but said she will wait to see what action the force takes in the coming weeks and months. The finding that the force is institutionally racist echoes that of the Macpherson Inquiry in 1999, which took place after Stephen Lawrence's murder and the abject failures in how the Met investigated his death. Lawrence, 18, bled to death after being stabbed by a gang of white youths in an unprovoked attack while waiting for a bus in southeast London in April 1993.

Five people were initially acquitted of the crime after a police investigation became so bungled it led to Macpherson. Since then the force has remained largely white and male, the review found. The Met was also accused of homophobia over the failure to stop serial killer Stephen Port after he took the life of his first victim and went on to murder three more men, but force bosses denied there was an issue.

"It is not our job as the public to keep ourselves safe from the police. It is the police's job to keep us safe as the public," said Casey, an expert on victims' rights and social welfare who led the review. "Far too many Londoners have now lost faith in policing to do that."

The 363-page report also found that violence against women and girls has not been taken as seriously as other forms of violence. It said there is widespread bullying in the Met, with a fifth of staff with protected characteristics – for example, race, sexuality or disability – being victimised.

"Female officers and staff routinely face sexism and misogyny," the report said. "The Met has not protected its female employees or members of the public from police perpetrators of domestic abuse, nor those who abuse their position for sexual purposes."

"Despite the Met saying violence against women and girls is a priority, it has been treated differently from 'serious violence.' "In practice, this has meant it has not been taken as seriously in terms of resourcing and prioritisation."

The report concluded there are "systemic and fundamental problems in how the Met is run" and the problem with the force is not its size but "inadequate management."

The review made 16 recommendations and said the changes need to be made by the Met, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the Home Office to "create a radically improved new London Metropolitan Police Service."



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