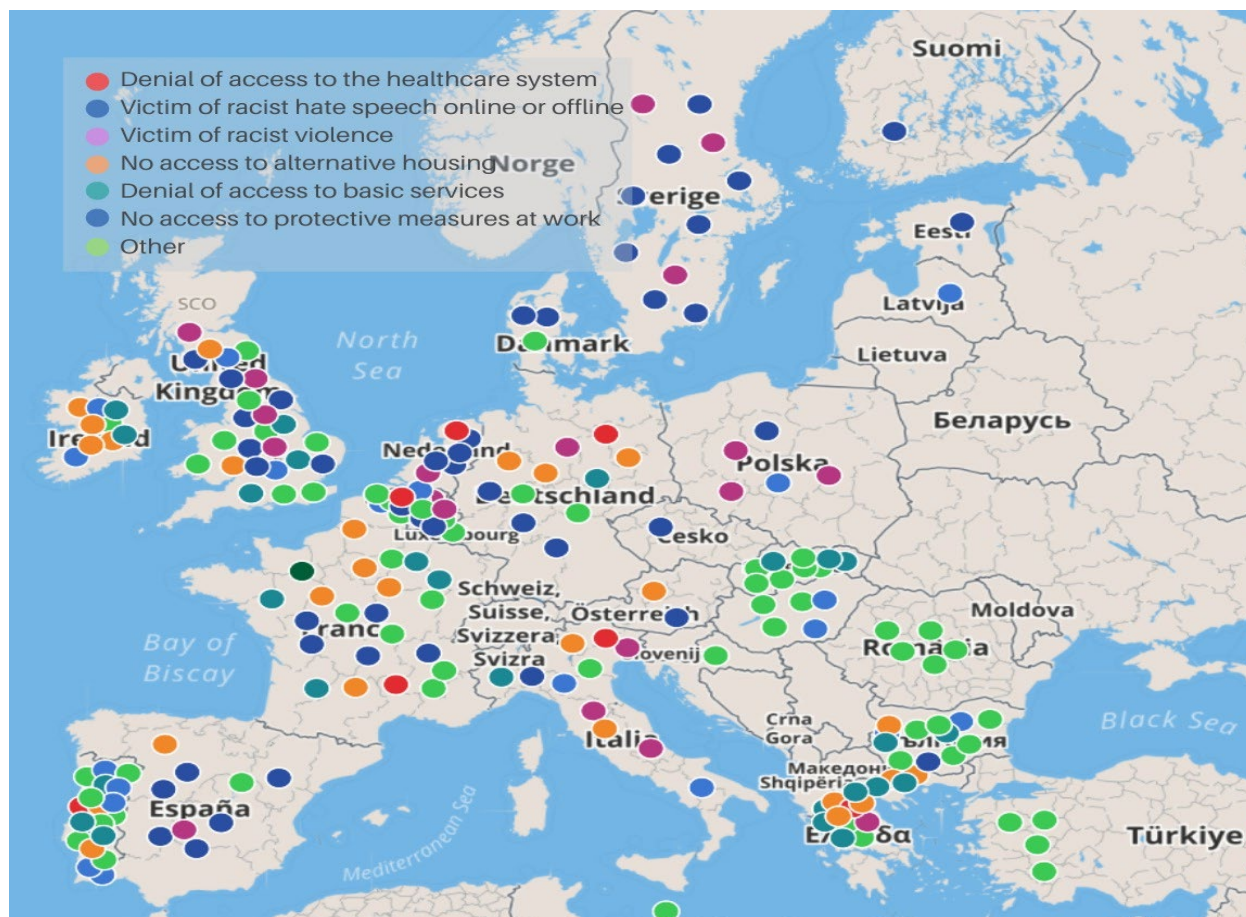




## Impact of COVID-19 on racialised communities: Key findings

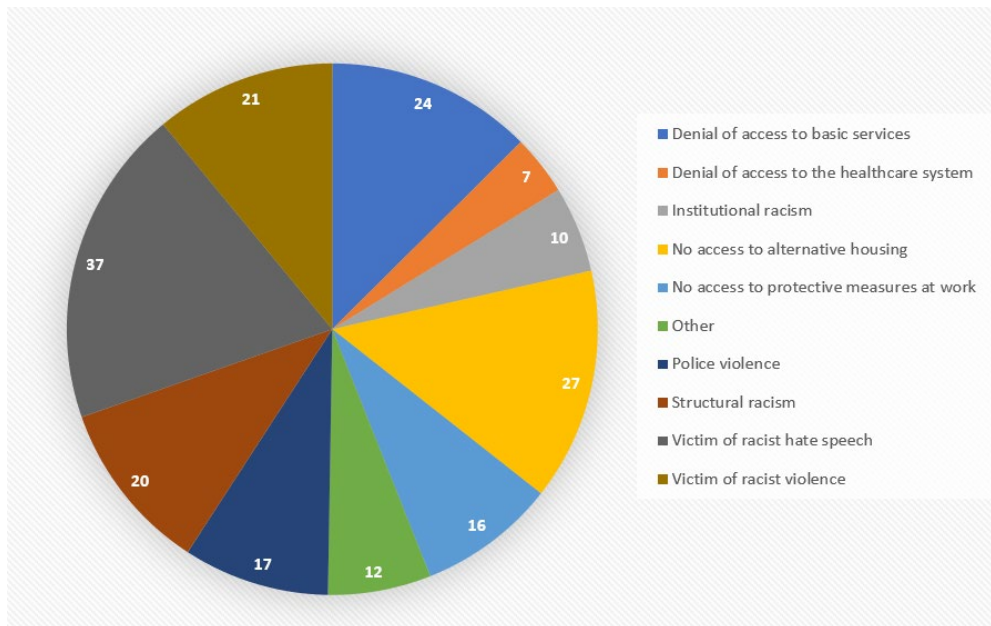


The map seeks to demonstrate how COVID-19 impacts the fundamental rights of racialised groups in Europe by gathering media reports and individual cases reported by NGOs of violation of these rights.

The map displays 191 cases collected between January and April 2020, which are divided into the following categories:

- 1) denial of access to the healthcare system;
- 2) no access to alternative housing during the confinement measures (e.g. shelter for asylum seekers, eviction of Roma);
- 3) denial of access to basic services during the confinement period (e.g. access to electricity, water);
- 4) no access to protective measures at work during the confinement period;
- 5) police abuse

6) victim of racist hate speech online or offline; victim of racist violence;



It is important to note that the research is non-exhaustive and the icons are placed in the country where the cases took place but not in the exact location/city. Unfortunately, violations are not always reported and only the most serious cases tend to be reported by the media. Nonetheless, the following findings could be observed in the data collected:

### Housing & access to basic services during the confinement period

Housing was one of the most common challenges experienced by racialised groups in the context of COVID-19. These groups often live in overcrowded places where it is nearly impossible to keep the advised distance from one another – be it in multi-generational households or reception centres for asylum seekers. In refugee camps, there are many instances in which they do not have access to water to wash their hands and are not able to comply with the hygiene measures in order to contain the spread of the virus.

In Greece, the situation in the reception centers has been particularly worrisome and a target of criticism, considering the high number of people living in extremely poor conditions which do not allow social distancing. The situation in the Moria, for instance, has been considered a “ticking-time-bomb” since the pandemic started, given that “8,000 people are staying in a facility built for 3,000”<sup>1</sup>. It was reported that

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-52095552/coronavirus-protecting-yourself-in-a-migrant-camp>

about “500 residents share one shower, while 160 share a toilet”<sup>2</sup>. Civil society have urged governments to transfer the residents of these overcrowded and unsanitary camps to places where hygiene and distancing measures can be followed.

The Roma community faces similar issues. There are several Roma settlements in which there is no sanitation or running water, and social distancing is not possible due to large families sharing the same small houses.

In addition to the poor living conditions, Roma people can also be disproportionately affected by lockdown measures. In Bulgaria and Slovakia, settlements were put under compulsory quarantine, which is a violation of human rights unless “governments can justify that these measures were lawful, pursue a legitimate aim, are proportionate to that aim and are not discriminatory”<sup>3</sup>.

### Increase in police brutality and racial profiling

Police abuse has risen and become a dangerous – and sometimes lethal – trend since the lockdown measures to contain the coronavirus were implemented in some countries. There are reports of violent clashes between the police and residents of suburbs in France<sup>4</sup> and Brussels as well as arbitrary checks to enforce lockdown measures<sup>5</sup>. Such checks are clear instances of racial profiling and in some cases led to use of disproportionate force against people from racialised groups<sup>6,7</sup>.

There are also cases in which individuals were shot by the police for allegedly disobeying a police warning and/or lockdown measures<sup>8</sup> or died during incidents of this nature involving the police<sup>9,10,11</sup>.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has raised concerns about this issue, stating that it is unlawful for the police to shoot someone “for breaking a curfew because they are desperately searching for food”<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/news/covid-could-turn-moria-camp-into-ticking-time-bomb-aid-organisations-warn/?utm\\_source=EURACTIV&utm\\_campaign=83e99bf395-](https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/news/covid-could-turn-moria-camp-into-ticking-time-bomb-aid-organisations-warn/?utm_source=EURACTIV&utm_campaign=83e99bf395-The Brief COPY 01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c59e2fd7a9-83e99bf395-114740919)

[The Brief COPY 01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c59e2fd7a9-83e99bf395-114740919](https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/news/covid-could-turn-moria-camp-into-ticking-time-bomb-aid-organisations-warn/?utm_source=EURACTIV&utm_campaign=83e99bf395-The Brief COPY 01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c59e2fd7a9-83e99bf395-114740919)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0121562020ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thelocal.fr/20200420/police-clash-with-residents-in-paris-suburbs-amid-lockdown>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/bruxellespantheres/posts/1415803641925638>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bx1.be/bruxelles-ville/la-police-accusee-de-violences-sur-un-migrant-soudanais-a-bruxelles-une-enquete-ouverte/?theme=classic>

<sup>7</sup> <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/04/24/video-of-romanian-police-beating-roma-causes-outrage/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/suspect-killed-in-turkey-after-disobeying-police-warning-35841>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.leparisien.fr/hauts-de-seine-92/villeneuve-la-garenne-le-motard-blesse-dans-un-accident-implicquant-la-police-porte-plainte-20-04-2020-8302545.php>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.brusselstimes.com/all-news/belgium-all-news/105972/man-19-dies-fleeing-from-coronavirus-check/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/beziers-un-sdf-decede-apres-son-interpellation-une-enquete-ouverte-09-04-2020-8296806.php>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25828&LangID=E>

## Racist speech as a scapegoat of hatred against minorities

Since the early months of the spread of COVID-19, people of Asian background have been victims of racist speech online and offline. The offences are mostly in the same line, blaming Asians for the COVID virus and its spread in Europe. For example, Jessica, a Malaysian girl living in Tallinn fell victim to racist hate speech attacks on a tram due to a fear of the corona. “You, chinese, you bring the virus” was shouted at her. She was wearing a mask for her and everyone’s else protection and instead, she was treated with prejudice and ignorance.

The same context also brought the Roma people to the spotlight, particularly by Eastern European politicians and impartial media, who seem to be using the pandemic to advance biased agendas and discriminate against Roma<sup>13</sup>. It is claimed that Roma people can be a security threat, given their life style and lack of discipline<sup>14</sup> - a clear example of institutional racism.

There have also been several reports of racist violence. Many have reported being spat on, punched in the face or have been thrown garbage in combination with racist insults. As previously indicated in ENAR’s yearly Shadow Reports, it seems that racist speech fuels violence in the context of the Covid pandemic and has a ripple effect. It not only affects the individual but also the community they represent.

## Structural racism in employment and healthcare

The pandemic has exacerbated considerably the inequalities and vulnerabilities of groups which have been experiencing them for decades. In the UK, for instance, covid-19 has highlighted not only the inequalities faced by black and ethnic minority health workers but also the fact that black and ethnic minorities were disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus<sup>15</sup><sup>16</sup>. They, as well as Roma people, frequently work in informal, low-paid and precarious jobs or are key workers, which does not allow them to self-isolate or work safely from their homes.

Undocumented migrants are one of the most affected groups by the pandemic. They do not have access to the formal job market and are not entitled to any type of governmental social protection. They were among the first to lose their jobs due to the coronavirus. One of the ENAR’s members in Portugal reported several cases of migrants who became unemployed and are unable to pay their rent, monthly bills or buy food.

In addition to this, undocumented migrants are afraid of seeking medical care because they fear being reported and deported to their countries of origin<sup>17</sup>. While this is not a new fact, not being able to access healthcare gains new and serious dimensions during the pandemic – and can cost lives.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/bulgarian-officials-exploiting-fear-of-covid-19-to-discriminate-against-roma>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/8320602>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/coronavirus/exclusive-bme-nurses-feel-targeted-to-work-on-covid-19-wards-17-04-2020/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/coronavirus/exclusive-bme-nurses-feel-targeted-to-work-on-covid-19-wards-17-04-2020/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/coronavirus-undocumented-migrants-deaths-cases-nhs-matt-hancock-a9470581.html>