

*Race and opportunity in
Britain:
Finding common ground*

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**British
Future...**

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I. Introduction

Race and opportunity in Britain: How can we find common ground?

We need to talk about race. We each bring to it our different experiences of living in this increasingly diverse society. That can make it challenging to talk about race in ways that find common ground, and which can promote positive change.

The anti-racism protests of last summer have created a clear expectation of change on race. Most ethnic minority Britons saw those protests reflecting their concerns, especially that change needs to speed up on race and fairness in Britain. That anti-racist movement was not made up of ethnic minorities alone – it mobilised many black, white and Asian Britons, especially among the young. But the protests were contentious too. Everybody who engaged with them, especially online, felt so. That included the toxic responses from a noisy, racist fringe. But the range of different views included many reasoned critiques, too, between competing ideas of how to tackle racism and discrimination in Britain today.

Talking it through, with people in different parts of the UK, we often found responses were not binary. There is a broad consensus, across ethnic groups, that Britain isn't America on race – as long as that argument is not used to dismiss the challenges that Britain faces too. But views differ more – by geography, between different groups, and across generations – on the balance between the progress we have made, and how much still needs to change to achieve fair treatment.

This rising next generation, increasingly diverse, grew up in increasingly mixed-race classrooms. Black and Asian Britons born in this century certainly face less racial prejudice and experience wider opportunities than those who disembarked from the Windrush three-quarters of a century ago. But their test is not whether they will face fewer barriers than their parents or grandparents did in the last century. Rather, there is a rightful, impatient expectation that the pledge of equal opportunities in Britain must now be redeemed in full. The strategy for change must now answer that question – by setting out the practical agenda for equal opportunities in Britain that is felt to be fair to everyone.

Language matters when we talk about race

Social norms against racism and overt prejudice are stronger than they were a generation or two ago – so there is a widely shared sense of dismay when toxic racism on social media goes unchecked, putting that progress in doubt. If language matters, it is a good principle to try to talk about ethnic difference in a way that makes

sense to those that we are talking about. Talking about “BAME people” fails that test. Almost nobody thinks of their identity like that. If we replace words with seemingly ever-changing acronyms, many people are left unsure what we are talking about, or become more anxious about being able to talk about race, for fear of saying the wrong thing.

Because identity can be very personal, hunting down a label that everybody agrees on will prove a quixotic quest. In an ideal world, many people would prefer fewer forms asking us to tick which ethnic box we want to put ourselves into. But, in the real world of Britain in 2021, most people recognise that a commitment to equal opportunities for all depends on measuring progress. That may be why this research found that most Black, Asian and ethnic minority Britons take a fairly pragmatic view about which terms make sense in particular contexts. It would help, however, if we did more to differentiate statistical data from language about identity – and to explain the purposes for which it is being collected.

Most people see tackling barriers to equal opportunity by race and by class as important – but the two can be set up in opposition to each other. Politicians, policy-makers and civic advocates for race equality all have an interest in avoiding a stale polarisation. How the case for breaking down barriers is made can make an important difference – so that the language that is used about opportunity, advantage and privilege can help or hinder the effort to engage a broad coalition for race equality.

There is now an expectation that talk will turn to action

Increasing our confidence in how we talk about race matters – but we must also do more than just talk. If there are different instincts about how we talk about race, there is an opportunity to command a broader consensus when the agenda for change becomes proactive and practical. There is a strong public appetite for stronger action against hate crime, both offline and online; broad support for efforts to promote greater contact, across ethnic and social class lines, by all schools; for increased scrutiny to tackle discrimination or bias in recruitment for jobs; and broad support for the principle that Britain’s growing ethnic diversity should now be reflected at the top table in our most significant institutions.

Removing statues can divide opinion, beyond the most egregious cases, but recognising the Black and Asian contribution to our national story can unite. There is an enormously broad consensus for teaching Empire fully – including all of its controversies and complexity – as a foundation for understanding how we came to share this society today.

The polarised reactions in recent weeks to the allegations of racism made by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, in a televised interview with Oprah Winfrey, have illustrated the ongoing potential for race to be an issue that divides people. Yet whether race unites

or divides will depend on how the public conversation is led, and whether we are willing to work harder to find the common ground. As the Race Commission prepares to make its recommendations to government, it has the opportunity to begin that debate. In an increasingly diverse Britain, that will be a challenge for all of our institutions, from politics and business to education and civic society, to move beyond words to action.

2. About this research and methodology

These new research findings demonstrate several potential drivers of an increasingly contested public conversation around race and opportunity in Britain. Yet the findings also identify a way forward to unlock a new social consensus about the future of race relations and equal opportunity in Britain.

The attitudes research does find broad inter-ethnic consensus about foundational aspects of race, opportunity and integration, including opposition to prejudice and a commitment to equal citizenship and equal opportunity. There is common ground, in principle, about what we should be aiming to achieve as a society and a significant degree of consensus about what has helped improve race relations, such as greater social contact in schools and legislative frameworks to prevent discrimination.

There is also some degree of consensus on race relations in Britain – which are widely considered to be quite good locally, with a more mixed national picture – and on some of the barriers that remain to realising equal opportunities today, depending on how they are framed and explained. At the same time, different life experiences and contrasting perceptions of the status quo underpin some significantly different views – particularly about how much would need to change in order for ethnic minority citizens to experience equal opportunities and fair treatment by institutions in Britain.

The research finds significant gaps in perceptions, between ethnic minority and white majority citizens, on how far progress has been made towards achieving fair chances for people across ethnic groups. The extent to which institutions of political, economic and cultural power treat all citizens fairly is not equally felt. But this gap is often as much intergenerational as it is a gap between majority and minority groups. There are significant differences, by age and education, geography and politics, within the white majority, as well as different experiences within different sections of minority communities. The importance of trying to do more to bridge these divides was often articulated in our discussion groups by those holding different views, alongside a recognition that this could be difficult to achieve in practice.

This presents significant challenges to efforts to establish a consensus, either across generations or across ethnic groups, about the future for race equality in the UK. How we talk about race has the potential to polarise views, but the research also finds greater consensus about what needs to change, the constructive approaches to achieve it and the type of practical leadership that government could offer.

The way in which political leaders and other public voices talk and act on race will affect whether we see increasing polarisation in our society, across generations, between different geographies

and between those from majority and minority ethnic groups; or whether we can unlock the latent consensus around a constructive agenda for race equality, fair chances and equal citizenship in the UK's increasingly diverse society.

Methodology

This research project sought to examine public attitudes on issues that relate to race and integration, exploring the views and perceptions of citizens from ethnic minority and white majority backgrounds. It was commissioned and funded by the Cabinet Office to inform the Independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. British Future held full editorial control of the research, so the content of this submission reflects the views of the think-tank.

The research explores the following areas:

- Current perceptions of opportunity in British society – including what has contributed to progress towards equal opportunity, and the most significant barriers today.
- Experiences and perceptions of fair and unfair treatment in education and employment and key services, such as policing, healthcare and housing.
- Experiences of discrimination, prejudice or hate crime – and how to tackle this.
- Perceptions of shared identity and integration challenges, locally and nationally.
- Views of national and local government responses to race equality and integration.
- Perceptions of activism, including the Black Lives Matter movement, and of previous local and national efforts to advance race equality and promote good relations.
- Understanding and attitudes to terminology and data collection in the race debate, including terms such as 'BAME'.
- Priorities for policy change and practical action – seeking ideas for how to find a common ground consensus on race equality, and policy agendas that can attract broad support from all ethnic groups.

The research was conducted in two phases.

The first phase took place in October-November 2020 and included original attitudes research, including deliberative research with participants from Croydon (aged under 35), Coventry and Wolverhampton, and West Yorkshire, who took part in small group discussions in which half of the participants were white British and half were from ethnic minority backgrounds, with equal numbers of male and female participants. The recruitment was designed to include different experiences by education, social class, ethnic

group and political views among both white British and ethnic minority participants.

A nationally representative poll of 1,088 white British and 1,000 ethnic minority respondents was carried out by Number Cruncher Politics., with fieldwork from the 9th to 17th October 2020.

The poll results include demographic breaks, including ethnic group, nation and region, education, housing tenure and country of birth, as well as by past political vote in the 2019 General Election and the 2016 EU referendum. The poll breaks include information by sub-groups, with 469 Asian, 268 Black and 201 mixed race respondents, reporting the responses from Indian, Pakistani/Bangladeshi, Chinese and other sub-groups. This enabled indicative reporting of significant differences between some different minority groups, depending on the sample sizes involved.

Phase Two took place in January-February 2021. Seven further online deliberative groups were held, using the same recruitment criteria as the first phase, with participants from Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire; Cardiff; Glasgow; Leicestershire; Lewisham, South London; the north-east of England (Greater Newcastle, Sunderland and Northumberland); and Preston, Lancashire.

A second nationally representative poll was conducted by Number Cruncher Politics from 15 January to 14 February 2021, with an expanded sample of 2,000 ethnic minority UK adults and 1,501 white UK adults. This provided information about the attitudes of larger sub-group samples, including 525 black and 373 mixed race respondents; 344 Indian, 192 Pakistani and 118 Bangladeshi participants; and 145 people of Chinese ethnicity.

For reasons of space we have not published full tables of the nationally representative research findings in this report. These are, however, available in full on the Number Cruncher Politics website (<http://www.ncpolitics.uk>), with topline findings available to download from the British Future website (www.britishfuture.org).

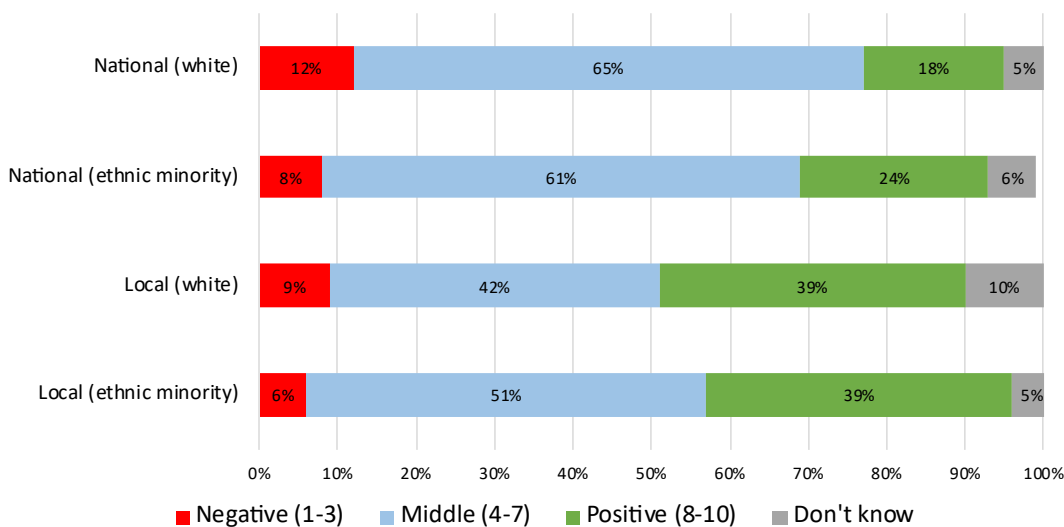
Part One: October 2020 research

3. Foundations: perceptions of race relations in Britain today

There is more confidence about relationships between ethnic groups locally than nationally – a perception shared by white and ethnic minority respondents.

White British respondents were slightly more likely to hold a very negative view of inter-ethnic relationships, with 12% of white respondents and 8% of non-white respondents giving it a score of 3 or lower on a 10-point scale for relationships between different ethnic groups. Some 3% of white British respondents, 2% of black respondents and 1% of ethnic minority respondents chose the lowest possible score.

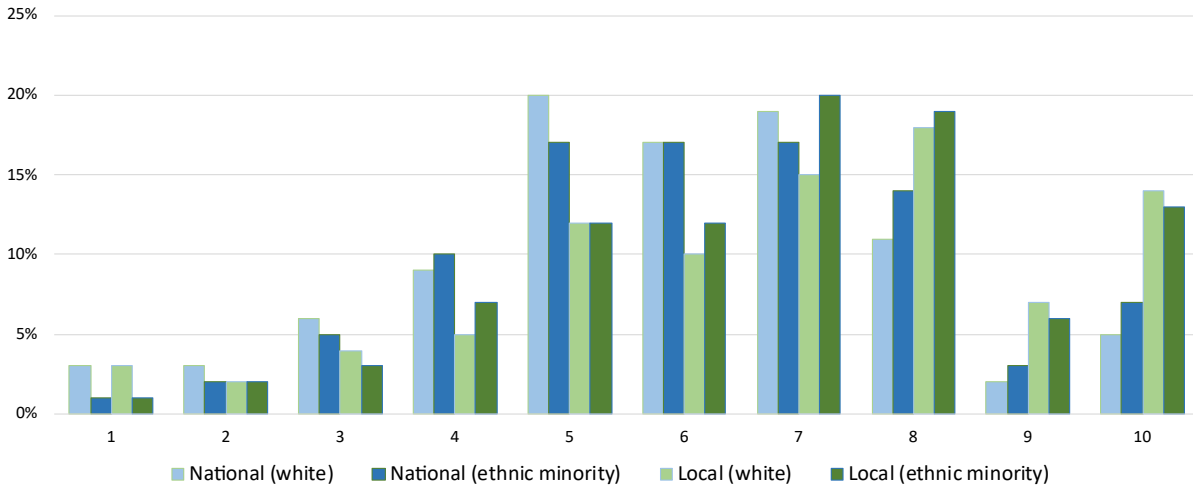
Figure 3.1: How well do people of different races and ethnic backgrounds get on – in Britain today, and in your local area? (1 is very badly, 10 is very well)



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

One-sixth of respondents gave the highest possible score of 10/10 for local relationships, with similar shares of white British (14%) and ethnic minority (13%) respondents. Some 5% of people gave a 10/10 score for inter-ethnic relations nationally, with ethnic minority respondents (7%) slightly more likely than white respondents (5%) to do this. Older ethnic minority respondents reported the most positive views of race relations in Britain overall.

Figure 3.2: How well do people from different ethnic groups get on – in your area and nationally?

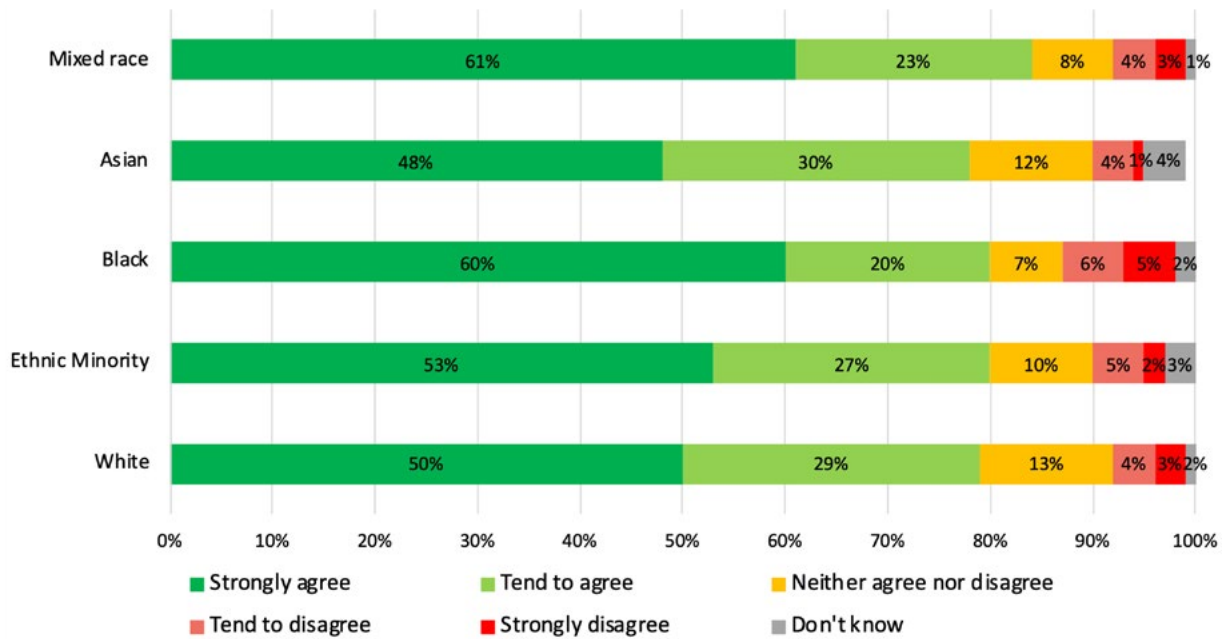


Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Pride and prejudice

There is a broad and settled social consensus on Britain being a multi-ethnic society in which those of different backgrounds are seen to have equal citizenship. However, 7% of respondents actively disagreed with this foundational aspect, rising to one in five people being on the fence about this.

Figure 3.3: “Black and Asian people born in Britain are just as British as white people born in Britain.”

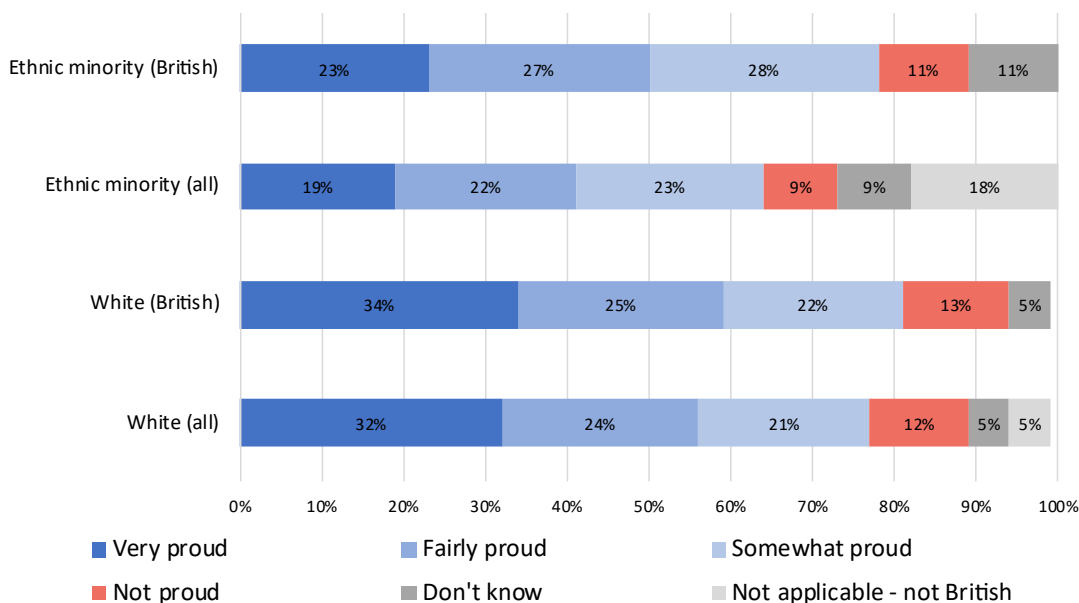


Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults

There are relatively narrow demographic differences on this question. Only 7% of the over-65s and 8% of non-graduates rejected the claim that minorities have equal citizenship. Having no inter-ethnic contact was a significantly more important predictor of rejecting equal citizenship than age, education or political viewpoint – with 16% of white respondents with no inter-ethnic contact disagreeing that British-born minorities count as equally British. (For a few respondents, “disagree” may not have reflected a rejection of equal citizenship, but rather a perception that this principle is not yet sufficiently recognised. Among the 7% of ethnic minority respondents who said they disagreed with the statement, around half gave other responses which supported anti-prejudice norms and action to tackle racism. This was also the case for a small proportion – around a quarter – among the 7% of white British respondents who said they disagreed with this statement. However, most respondents saying “disagree” gave other responses which were hostile to efforts to advance race equality, suggesting that most respondents gave their own view of the question, rather than their perception of other people’s attitudes).

The understanding that British identity and citizenship are multi-ethnic is reflected in responses to questions about pride and patriotism. Some 78% of British ethnic minority respondents say they are proud to be British, along with 81% of white British respondents. A third of white British respondents and a quarter of ethnic minority British respondents said they were “very proud” to be British. (11% of British ethnic minority respondents are not proud of being British, along with 13% of white British respondents).

Figure 3.4: Which of the following best describes how you feel about being British?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Who faces prejudice?

The research found a broad inter-ethnic consensus about which groups in British society are more likely to face prejudice and discrimination. This is important as an inoculator against efforts to stir up inter-group tensions and grievances using ‘whataboutery’ claims in which perceptions of prejudice against ‘my’ in-group are combined with scepticism or indifference about prejudice faced by other groups.

Table 3.5: For each of the ethnic and religious groups listed, please say how much prejudice, if any, there is against them?

White/Ethnic minority perceptions %	A lot	A little	Hardly any	None	Don't know
Muslim	41/52	31/22	11/10	7/7	10/10
Black	25/44	37/28	19/10	9/10	10/8
East European	22/21	38/41	20/17	10/11	10/11
Asian	19/31	32/39	18/12	10/9	10/9
Hindus	14/16	34/37	24/21	12/11	15/15
Sikhs	14/16	34/37	24/21	12/11	15/15
Jews	12/18	28/31	28/24	18/12	14/15
Chinese	10/18	30/38	31/20	16/11	13/13
Mixed race	9/9	33/36	31/28	15/14	12/13
White British	9/4	17/10	27/28	37/46	10/12
Christians	8/7	16/14	33/32	30/35	13/11
Atheists	4/4	10/13	30/28	35/33	20/22

Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults

There is, however, a significant divergence in perceptions of anti-black racism, with almost twice as many people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds perceiving high levels of prejudice against black people. White respondents are more likely to see this as broadly similar to prejudice against Asians, East Europeans and other groups, while ethnic minority respondents felt anti-black prejudice was more prevalent. Some 69% of Black respondents saw “a lot” of prejudice against Black people, among 44% of ethnic minority respondents overall. Three in ten Indian respondents (30%) saw “a lot” of prejudice against black people, which was closer to the white British score (25%) than the average among ethnic minority respondents.

Previous research suggests that this inter-ethnic gap in perceptions of anti-black prejudice is not a product of the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, though these have increased the salience of anti-black prejudice. There was a similar gap in 2018 research (by

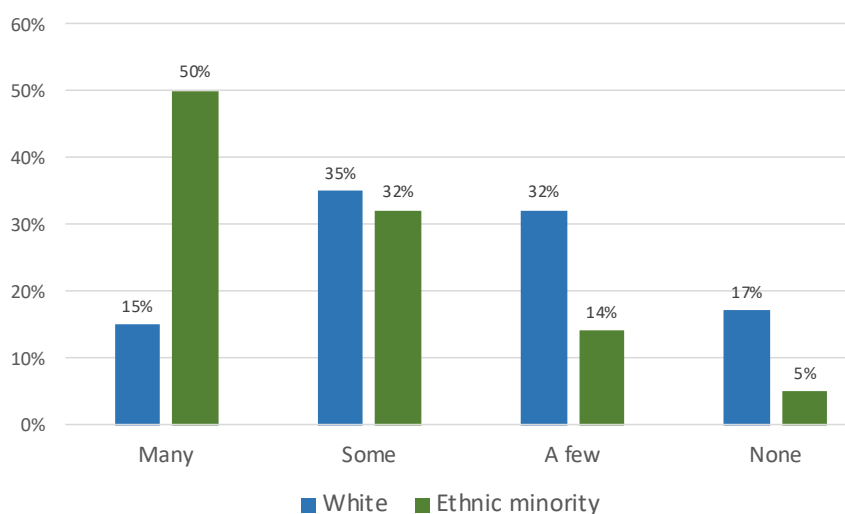
Survation for British Future) asking a similar question, with 20% of white respondents and 38% of ethnic minority respondents perceiving “a lot” of prejudice against black people in that survey.

There is a broad public perception that Muslims are among the ethnic or faith minority groups to face the most prejudice and this finding is repeated across several independent studies. This perception also aligns with research into which overt and casual prejudices risk finding more ‘mainstream’ appeal, including reach among those who try to maintain anti-prejudice social norms generally. There is strong evidence that the scale of casual anti-Muslim prejudice is one of the most significant challenges in community relations in the UK – though this finding can also be viewed as a constructive indicator of public recognition of this challenge.

Some 9% of the white respondents saw ‘a lot of prejudice against white people’ in Britain, while 4% of the ethnic minority respondents agreed with this. This shows that racialised majority grievances, such as the claim that ‘reverse racism’ is the predominant form of racial prejudice in Britain today, have a niche appeal, considerably narrower than in the United States. However, the tenth of the population who hold this view are key targets for far right extreme groups.

Contact with people from a different ethnic background

Figure 3.6: Thinking of your friends, neighbours or work colleagues that you are in regular contact with, how many are from a different ethnic background to you?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

This was a snapshot of people’s self-reported levels of social contact, primarily to enable analysis of the relationship between

social contact and attitudes towards race and integration. The survey did not attempt an in-depth account of different spheres of contact – professional and social – or seek to verify people’s reported contact.

One in six white respondents self-reported no regular inter-ethnic contact. The most significant factors were age and geography: 27% of white respondents aged over 65 self-reported no significant inter-ethnic contact, compared to 7% of those aged under 24. There are lower levels of ethnic diversity in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, where the proportion of white respondents reporting no significant inter-ethnic contact ranged between 21% and 24%; that figure was 20% in the north of England, 16% in the midlands and 17% in the south of England. Just 3% of white respondents in London reported having no significant inter-ethnic contact. One fifth (20%) of non-graduates and 13% of graduates, among the white British respondents, reported no significant inter-ethnic contact.

How far did those with different levels of contact hold different attitudes?

White British respondents who had no inter-ethnic contact were more pessimistic about race relations in the UK, and considerably more likely to fall outside the broad social consensus on foundational norms of equal citizenship and anti-discrimination. They were twice as likely to disagree with the statement ‘Black and Asian people born in Britain are just as British as white people born in Britain.’ Some 16% of white respondents with no inter-ethnic contact stated that they disagreed with this – compared to 7% among all white British respondents. Another 16% said they neither agreed nor disagreed.

However, 65% of those with no inter-ethnic contact did accept this foundational social norm, though only 32% ‘strongly’ agreed with the statement, compared to 50% of the white British respondents overall. The causal links between more inter-ethnic social contact and confidence about ethnic diversity is likely to run in both directions, but it should not be assumed that most of those with little or no inter-ethnic contact (including for reasons of geography) hold prejudiced views. Pluralities of those with no inter-ethnic contact were supportive of the policy proposals that have broad inter-ethnic support, but with higher levels of indifference to the topic.

Having no regular contact was lower (5%) among ethnic minority respondents, unsurprisingly, given the overall demographics of the UK, though 19% of ethnic minority respondents reported either “a few” or no regular contacts across ethnic lines. The demographics of the ethnic minority respondents with low or no contact were fairly even across demographic groups, though lower for Black British people than for other ethnic minority groups.

Attitudes towards issues of race equality were more evenly held across ethnic minority respondents with different levels of inter-ethnic contact than among white respondents. The most significant difference was that ethnic minority respondents who reported the highest level of inter-ethnic contact – having “many” friends, neighbours and colleagues from different ethnic backgrounds – were distinctly stronger supporters of and participants in the anti-racism protests. This group was more likely to support (+9) and strongly support (+8) the protests and were also more likely to have personally engaged (33%, four points higher than the ethnic minority average) or to have talked about the anti-racism protests with friends and family (67%).

This correlation looks likely to reflect intergenerational shifts in views about race and opportunity. Younger, British-born respondents with higher education have stronger expectations and often more critical views on race issues than first-generation migrants to the UK, while often having a greater degree of inter-ethnic contact in education and work than their parents or grandparents did. White British respondents reporting the highest levels of inter-ethnic contact were also considerably more supportive of efforts to advance race equality, again suggesting that different patterns of contact across generations plays a role in the gaps between generational attitudes.

Ethnic minority participants with the highest self-reported levels of inter-ethnic contact were also considerably more likely to see race relations in Britain as better than in the USA (63%), being twice as likely to think this as those with little or no inter-ethnic contact (31%). This was partly because low contact respondents were much more likely to say they did not know about this. The survey results also suggest that ethnic minority respondents with the least inter-ethnic contact are more often fatalistic about prospects for change, and more likely to be disengaged from politics.

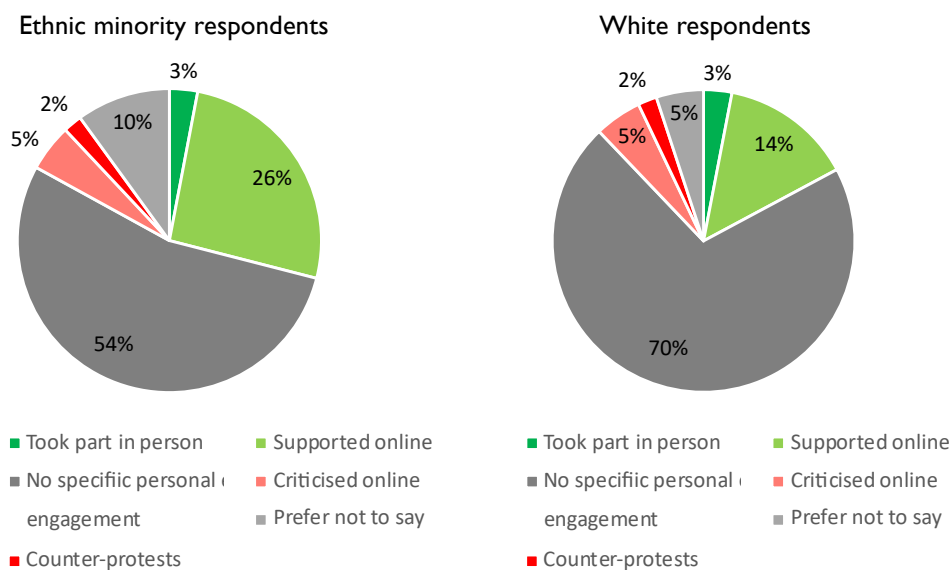
4. Responses to the anti-racism protests of 2020

The attitudes research shows that the anti-racism protests this summer had a very broad level of public salience and engagement – with a different balance of engagement and response across different ethnic groups, and different generations.

Participation in the anti-racism protests

About a third of ethnic minority respondents to the survey said that they had personally engaged with the protests – primarily by supporting them online (26%), with 3% attending events in person. One in six white British respondents (17%) engaged supportively with the protests, with 7% reporting that they were personally engaged in criticising the protests.

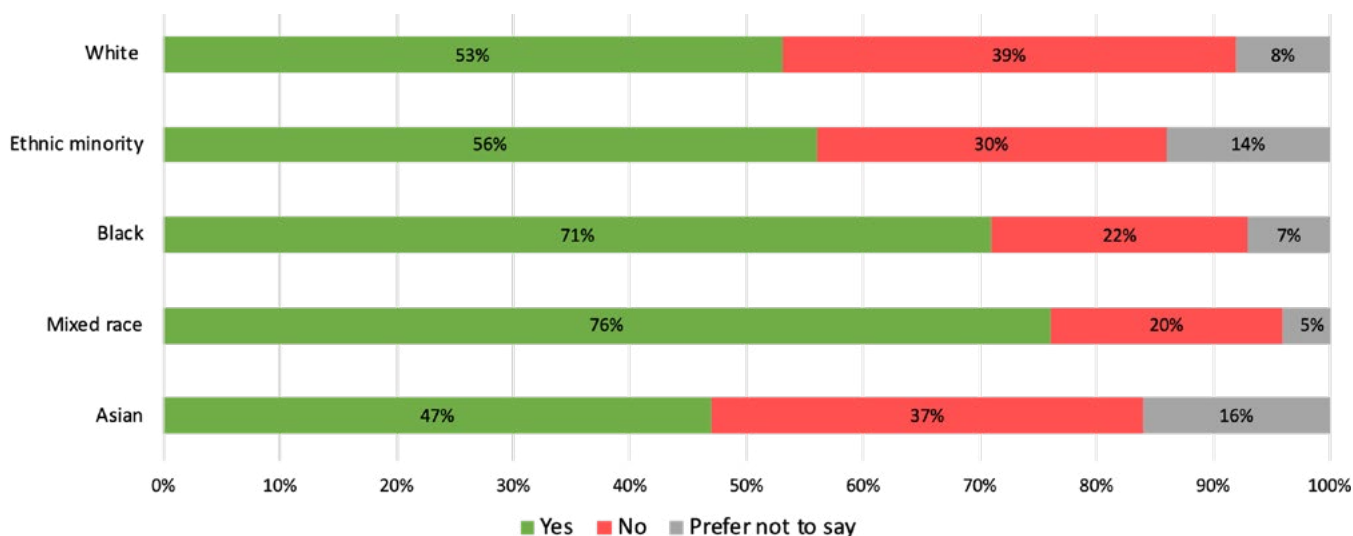
Figure 4.1: Did you take part in the Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Most respondents across majority and minority groups reported that they had talked about the anti-racism protests with friends and family, rising to 7 out of 10 black British respondents.

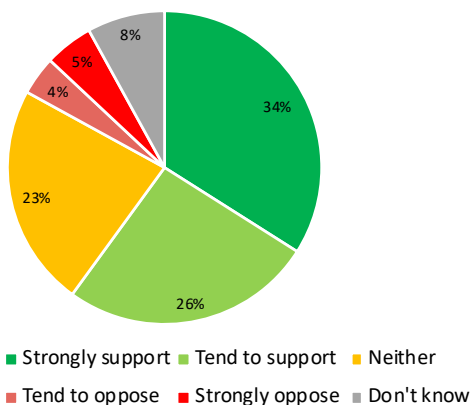
Figure 4.2: Did you talk to friends, family and colleagues about the anti-racism protests?



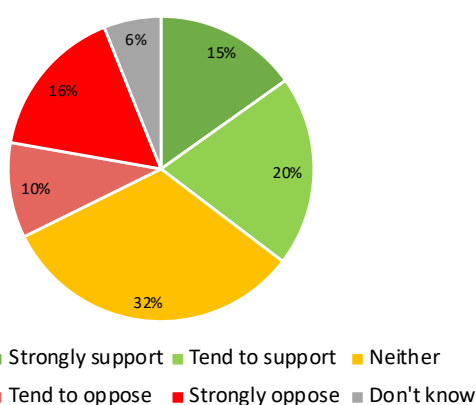
Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Figure 4.3: Did you support or oppose the Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests?

Ethnic minority respondents



White respondents



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Some 60% of ethnic minority respondents supported the anti-racism protests, rising to over 70% of Black respondents, along with majorities of Asian, mixed race and other ethnic minority groups. Black people – around 3% of the population – make up under a quarter of ethnic minorities. This breadth of support from ethnic minorities partly reflects solidarity with the Black Lives Matter message, and a clear sense that broader concerns about racism and disadvantage across groups were also reflected in the protests.

“I was proud of black people and other races that stuck together. It’s something that’s been happening for a long time, forever. So it was kind of about time and it was going to happen and I think it’s good that people are now standing up and there’s a lot of solidarity. Its just sad because it’s taken, you know, 400 years perhaps for things to look like they’re starting to possibly change”.

– Black female participant, Croydon.

“Me and my friend, my black friend from school, we did a lot of sharing on Instagram as well. We got stories from people in our school that had experienced racism, to spread awareness, with other people that we know from school. It’s not an issue that is only down to black people to raise awareness of. That’s not how it should be at all, it has to be everyone’s issue for there to be change in the making.”

– White British female participant, Croydon.

White British opinion of the protests was much more evenly balanced between support and scepticism, with 35% of people supporting the protests, and one third of people holding neutral or mixed views, and a quarter saying they were moderately (10%) or strongly (16%) opposed. There were significantly different views across different generations – being younger, going through higher education and having high levels of inter-ethnic contact were all associated with significantly higher levels of support for the anti-racism protests.

“Initially, it was very shocking. But then I just sorted of turned the TV off, because I just felt it was just more the media just portraying negative things. And it was obviously during a time where every day was about COVID. And again, negative, you know, negativity going into lockdown, things like that. I thought it was just more negativity. And, you know, just watching that day in day out, which obviously stemmed a lot of, you know, the marches and things like that, which again, was back towards COVID-19. And all of that seems just a mess – and you do want it to be fair. But I just sort of wanted to bring myself away from all of that.”

– White British male participant, West Midlands.

Five views of Black Lives Matter protests of 2020

The polling and deliberative research suggests there are at least five significant views of the Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests among the public.

Strong supporters: Saw the protests as an urgent, long overdue wake-up call to action. This view is held most strongly by black British participants, and by young graduates across all majority and minority groups. Many in this group saw the specificity of anti-Black racism as the distinctive and core message of the protests, within and beyond a broader argument about race equality. Those groups who were most strongly supportive of the protests can also be more sceptical about whether change will result from them, fearing tokenistic responses by institutions.

“For me personally, I personally don’t understand why it’s even a debate. Why is Black Lives Matter even a debate in the first place? Why should we even have to say that?”

– Black male participant, Croydon

Moderate supporters: This group sees the protests as bringing new energy and salience to race, seeing opportunities for how this can be turned into sustainable institutional changes, but potential risks if the debate becomes excessively polarised. Often a greater emphasis on anti-racism, race equality and equal opportunities across groups.

Fence-sitters: A large section of the population – a third of white respondents and a quarter of ethnic minorities – say they neither agree nor disagree with the Black Lives Matter protests. In deliberative research, those taking this view often started by seeing the protests primarily through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. Strong sympathy for George Floyd is often combined with a contrast between Britain and America, though this can be combined with a recognition that more needs to happen in Britain. Those on the fence about the protests emphasise their commitment to equal opportunities and anti-discrimination, while being sceptical about the focus on a specific ethnic group.

“As long as it’s done in the right way, it can be powerful, and if it’s creating the image that it wants to create, then, absolutely, I don’t have a problem with that, if people feel strongly that they need to protest to make a change. But if you overstep the line, if they feel that

there's a divide, then you don't want to create a bigger divide. So you just want to keep it nice and peaceful, to bring harmony to this situation."

– White British male participant, Croydon

Mainstream critics: A quarter of the white British respondents say they were opposed to the Black Lives Matter protests, along with one-tenth of ethnic minority respondents, and 5% of black people. Critics include those supportive in principle of equal opportunities, but critical of the Black Lives Matter movement which they perceive as being more divisive than unifying. Disorder and violence at the fringe of protests, and the later focus on statues as a key issue, are seen as verifying this. Often combined with advocacy of a colour-blind approach to equal opportunities, with more emphasis on how far Britain has come on race than on what remains to be done. Arguments that the BLM group has a Marxist or far left agenda are less well known, except among the highly politically engaged, though it is a theme of online criticism.

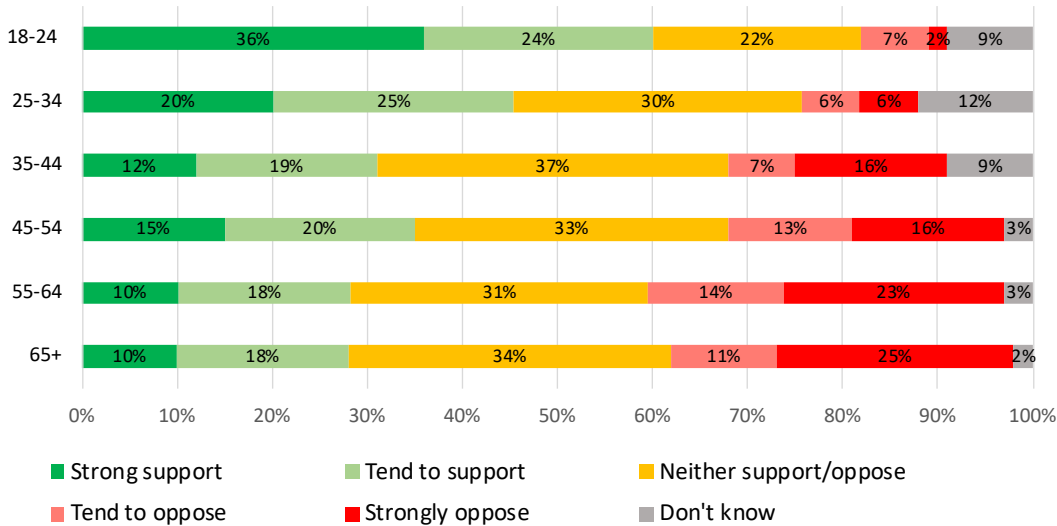
Toxic critics: Some of the most vocal opponents are motivated by racial 'them and us' grievances and sometimes by explicitly prejudiced views. This group is significantly over-represented in online discourse, which is a source of polarisation, and influences perceptions among supporters of the protests about the motives of critics. Almost all participants who had engaged with the issue online reported seeing racist responses to Black Lives Matter, as well as robust disagreements between people with different views that did not involve racism.

The generation gap

The 60% level of support from white British 18-24 year olds matched the aggregate ethnic minority support – and was slightly higher in this poll than the level of support from ethnic minority respondents aged over 55, though behind the 80% level of support from young adults from an ethnic minority background. Both younger and older participants in the deliberative research had noticed these inter-generational dynamics, and reflected on what they meant.

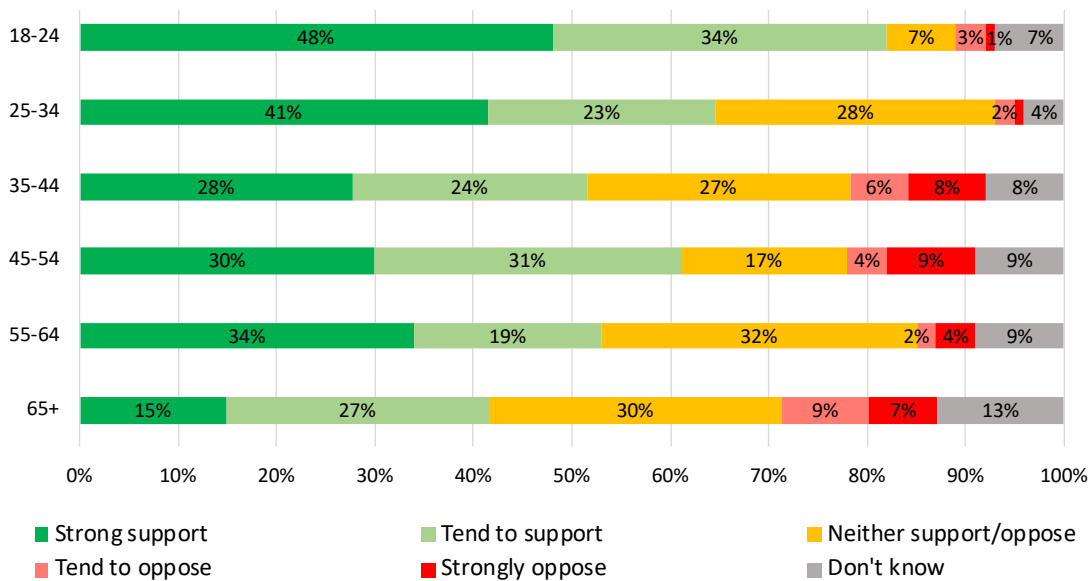
Figure 4.4: To what extent did you support/oppose the Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests in the UK?

White respondents:



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults.

Ethnic minority respondents:

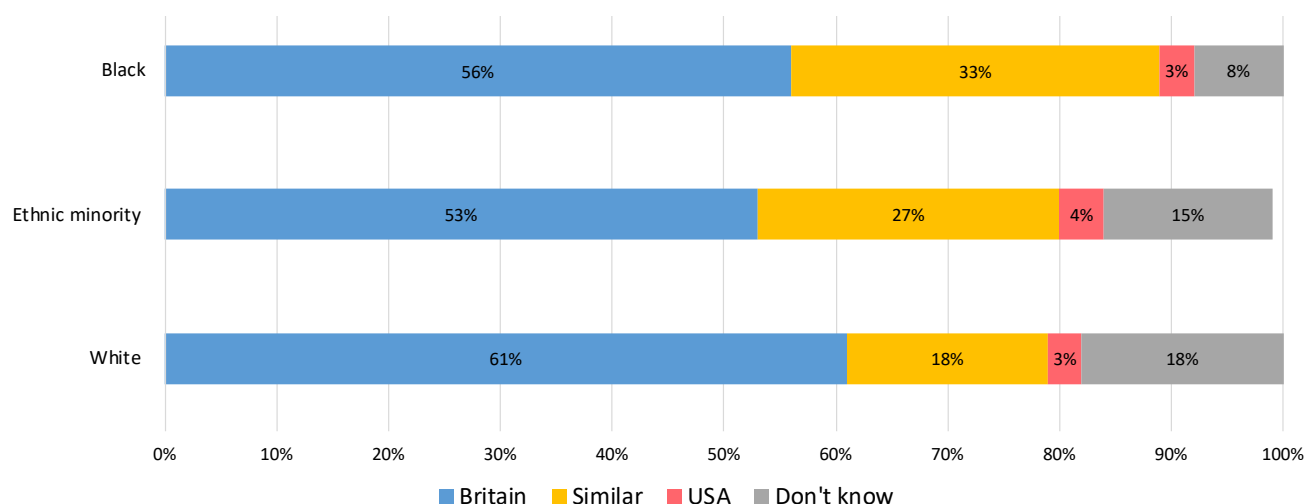


Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,000 BME adults.

Those with high levels of inter-ethnic contact were most likely to support the protests and to participate in them. Some 53% of white respondents who report having “many” regular inter-ethnic contacts supported the protests, with 34% saying they actively supported the protests, in person or online. There was also considerably higher support from ethnic minority participants with high levels of inter-ethnic contact than with low levels of inter-ethnic contact.

Britain and America

Figure 4.5: Are race relations better in Britain or the USA – or similar in both countries?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

“I mean who couldn’t be shocked by what happened to George Floyd? I couldn’t watch the footage, I couldn’t even look at a photograph of what happened to him. And I found it so shocking. And so I do understand the reaction to it. The anger to the way he was treated. But I sort of wish that people were more empowered, rather than just having to protest using marches.”

– White British female participant. West Midlands.

“I felt the media twisted it to downplay it a lot. Oh, well, it’s America’s problem. So are we just going to ignore the fact that we also have this institutionalised racism here?”

– Black male participant, Croydon.

“I think Britain is different from America. Yes, the police have issues here, but we don’t have that issue in the same way as in America.”

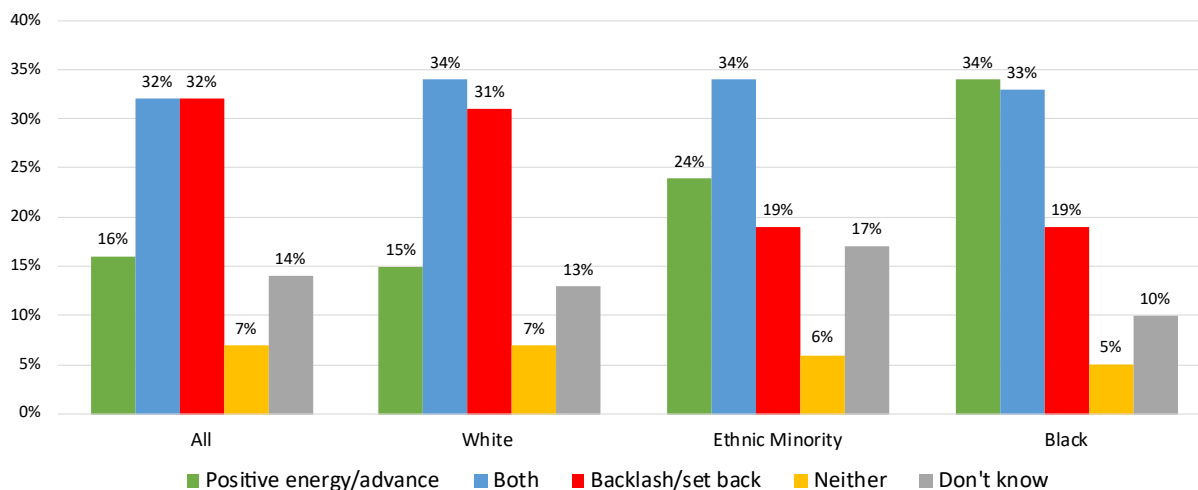
– Black female participant, West Midlands.

Protest legacy

This October 2020 poll reports a somewhat reduced level of public support than most surveys during the summer found, when support ranged between 42% to 50% overall (including two-thirds of ethnic minority respondents). This may well reflect more of a perception of Black Lives Matter being a more contested argument than it was in the summer, soon after the killing of George Floyd. This was a significant theme of the deliberative discussions, particularly reflecting participants’ experience of social media discussion.

Figure 4.6: Did the anti-racism protests...

- Primarily generate positive energy that can advance race relations?
- Primarily generate a backlash effect that could set back race relations?
- Generate both positive energy and a backlash effect?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

“I think the media has a large part in it. I don’t think they portray positive images on the news in the papers or on Twitter, about the march, I think they have a way of sensationalising it and firing the groups of people up with the language they use. I think that is a big part of what divides people.”

– Asian female participant, West Midlands.

“I had two friends that had a real falling out over it. Like you said, somebody has shared a post about Black Lives Matter. And somebody came back with ‘All lives matter’. They were two good friends to start with. And then I think there’s about 100 comments on the post, though most of them were between these two dads, and it got really heated. And I definitely thought neither of them would have got as aggressive over it as what they were doing online if they had been talking about it. A few people did try to calm it down a bit. But neither of them were having it because they were so adamant that their view was correct.”

– White British female participant, West Yorkshire.

“I have argued back on social media. And sometimes you want to give up. But I’m not giving up anymore, I have to make people aware. It can be tiring when you get ‘all lives matter’. So I will say back, I’m not saying all lives don’t matter. I’m just saying Black Lives Matter, too. So I’ll try to just give some knowledge to people. So if you do see me on social media and it comes across as rude, please don’t get upset. I’m just trying to defend myself because I have got tired of just letting everything go.”

– Black female participant, West Yorkshire.

“One of my friends on Facebook, she’s Asian, and she had an argument with a few of her white friends, and we all used to work together. And I think it was an image of a horse being hit. So people started arguing about this horse. One group was saying, that shouldn’t have happened. It should be a peaceful protest. And other people were saying, but the majority were there for the peaceful protest, and then there’s a minority who cause trouble. Then the arguments carried on, it just escalated, and you can hear it on your friends’ timeline. I do think a lot of that was based on the media reporting.”

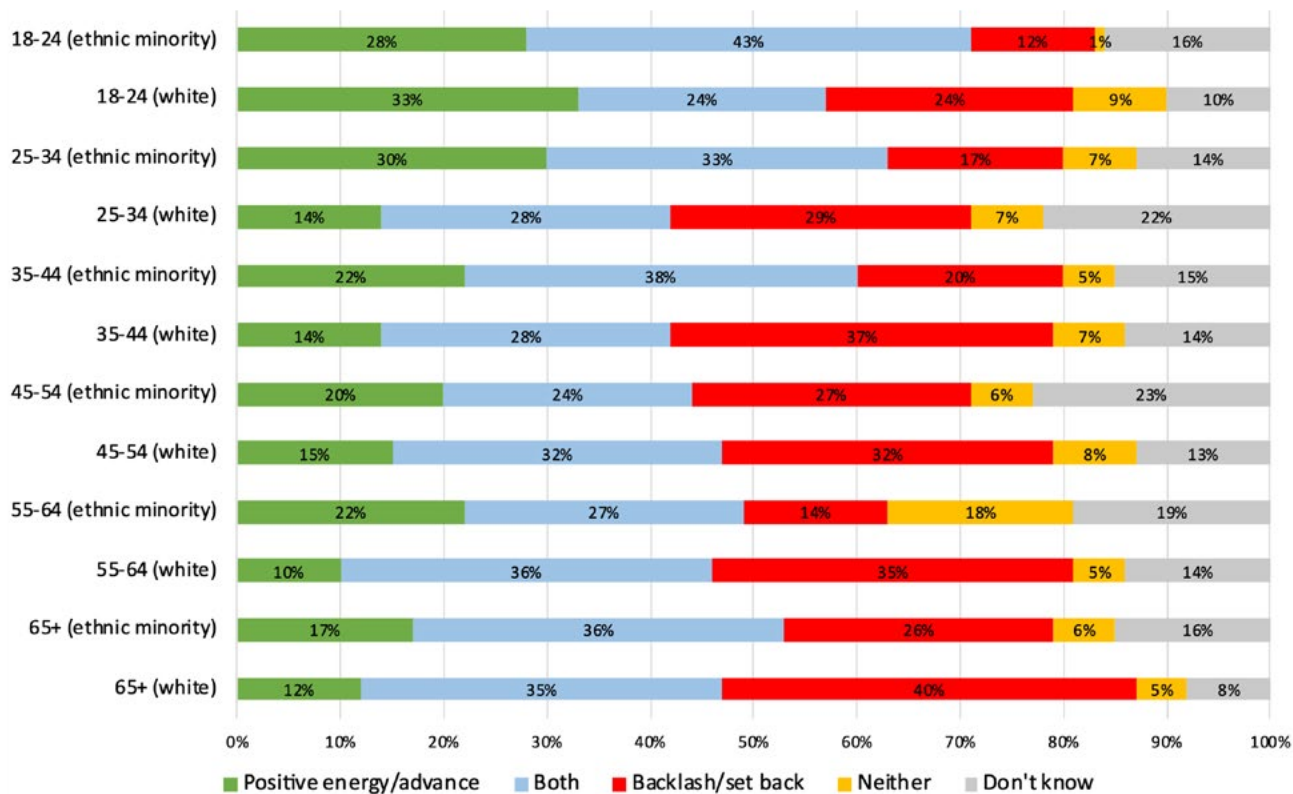
– Asian female participant, West Midlands.

Impact and legacy of the protests

In the poll responses, the balance of expectations of the impact and legacy of the protests differs by generation – with more expectation of positive change from most respondents aged 18-24, among both ethnic minority and white British respondents, married with a recognition that race has become a more contentious topic. Older participants, both white and ethnic minority, tilt more towards prioritising concerns about handling divisions and polarisation about race, though this is combined with a fairly broad recognition that there is also potential to generate a positive difference. None of the age groups hold monolithic views. In the deliberative research, the centre of gravity of the younger Croydon group was somewhat more pessimistic about the prospects than their contemporaries in the quantitative poll.

Figure 4.7: Did the anti-racism protests...

- Primarily generate positive energy which can advance race relations?
- Primarily generate a backlash effect that could set back race relations?
- Generate both positive energy and a backlash effect?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

The legacy of the protests and expectations about the future: deliberative groups

“I didn’t see the point in the protests. Because it isn’t making a difference. It has happened before, and after they have another protest, the same situation happens again.”

– Black female participant, West Midlands.

“I would like to see it lead to change. But it’s a hard thing to change people’s minds and opinions and how they see the world. And so I think it’s just one of those things where people now know, a lot more people are aware of the issue. And I just don’t know if there’s that many people’s opinions that have been changed, necessarily”.

– White British male participant, West Yorkshire.

“I think it’s very mixed, isn’t it? At the time, that was a lot of negativity to keep on top of negativity. And that was really difficult. But I think there are positive examples of change. There was a story about a black lawyer, who was seen as being the defendant rather than the judiciary. But that was allied to a story about the judiciary, working to increase representation of black people within it.”

– White British female participant, West Midlands.

“I think small steps are being made. It has opened some eyes. Where I work, there have been little things already, probably that should already have been there before – like emails going out, and surveys of employees. So maybe we will see big corporate businesses demand a little change in terms of what people think and how they behave towards others.”

– Mixed race female participant, West Yorkshire.

“Its too early to say because BLM has only been active for, what was it, just three months ago. So I see that companies are trying to do the diversity thing. But the diversity is you pull one black person and then you say you’re diverse where you’re not. I mean, diversity is about how you actually embrace everyone, for the qualities they have, not just for the skin tone. So I think it’s a bit too early to say the companies are changing towards that. I guess you’ll see the results of that in about two years, three years.”

– Black female participant, West Yorkshire.

“I have not really been involved in it. So I don’t know too much about how the progress will work. But I feel that it might work a little bit better in England than America, just because it doesn’t seem to be as violent or divided here.”

– White British female participant, West Yorkshire.

Attitudes to the Black Lives Matter protests in 2021

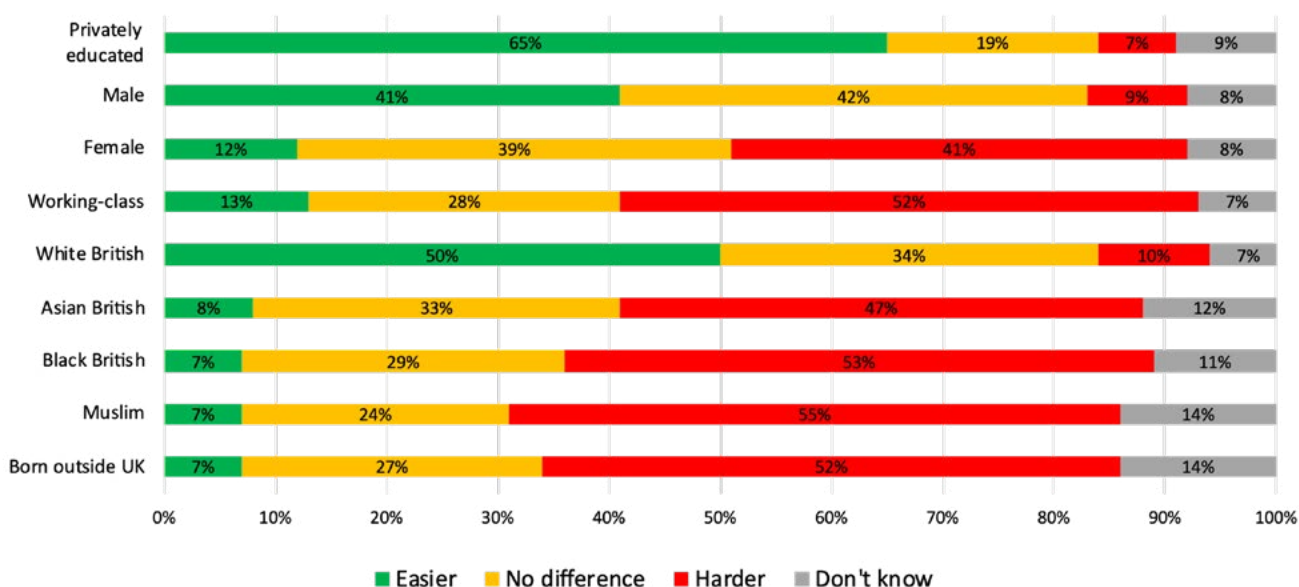
In our second wave of nationally-representative polling for this project in January-February 2021, we asked respondents again about their levels of support for the Black Lives Matter protests. The topline findings were broadly the same as those analysed here. Among white respondents there was 40% support and 26% opposition, with 30% saying they neither supported nor opposed the protests. Among ethnic minority respondents there was 58% support (32% 'strong support') and 11% opposition, with 23% of ethnic minority respondents saying they neither supported nor opposed the protests. Within the ethnic minority sample, support remained strongest among black respondents, with 70% saying they supported the protests (44% strongly) and just 6% opposing the protests, with 19% of black respondents saying they neither supported nor opposed the Black Lives Matter protests.

Full data tables on this question (and all others) from the October and February research can be downloaded from www.ncpolitics.uk or www.britishfuture.org.

5. Opportunity, privilege and disadvantage: how language matters

The research findings capture the general public perception that there is considerable “levelling up” work to do to secure equal opportunities in Britain today. The widest consensus is that there are social class and educational barriers to fair chances.

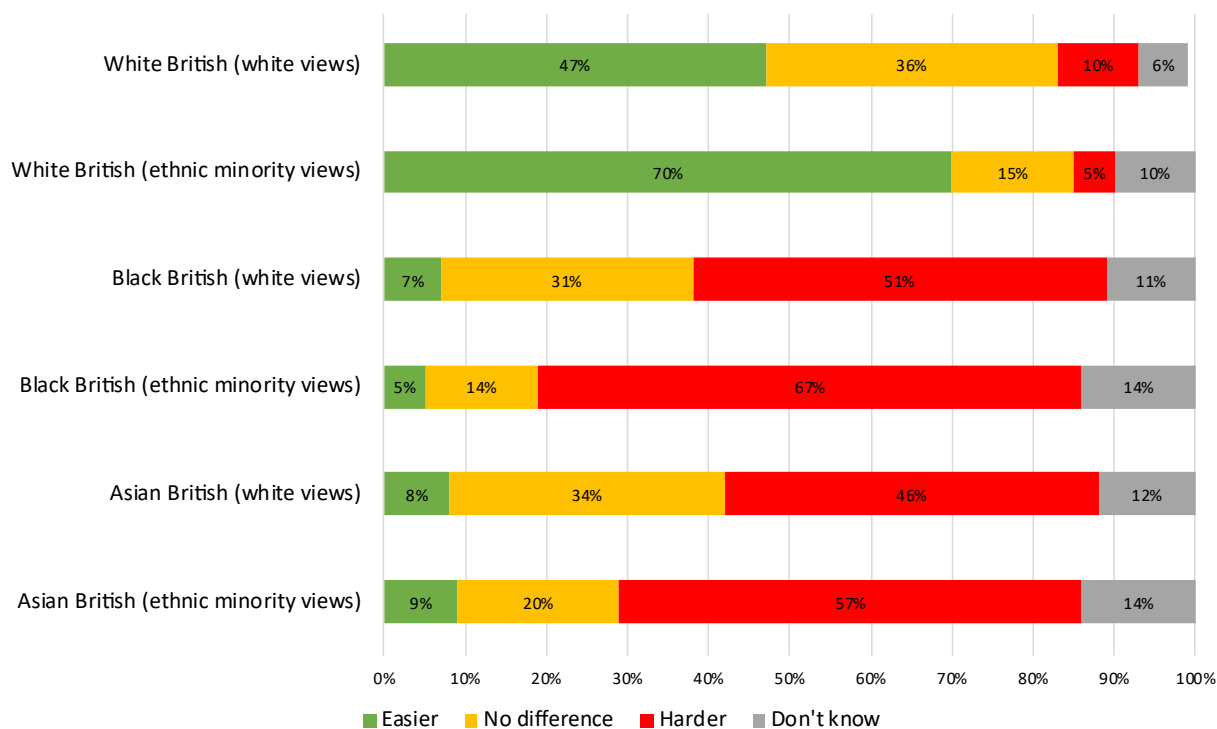
Figure 5.1: Is it easier or harder to get on in Britain if you are...



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

On equal opportunities across ethnic groups, there is a shared perception that both black and Asian people face more hurdles than the white British, with most ethnic minority respondents seeing a starker contrast than many white British respondents.

Figure 5.2: Is it easier or harder to get on in Britain if you are...



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

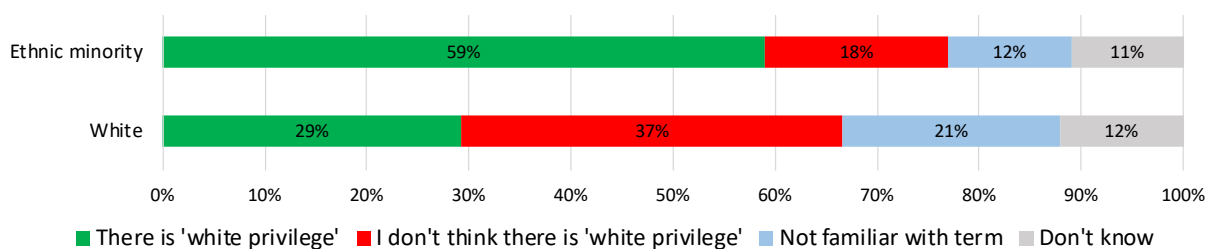
This finding would appear to present an opportunity to secure a broad consensus for an equal opportunities agenda which links ethnic and social class disadvantage, but attitudes are highly sensitive to how such a public argument is framed.

How the argument about “white privilege” divides opinions

The idea of “white privilege” polarises opinion between ethnic groups. Ethnic minority respondents think ‘white privilege’ exists in Britain by a wide three to one ratio of 59% to 18%, shared across all ethnic minority demographic and political perspectives.

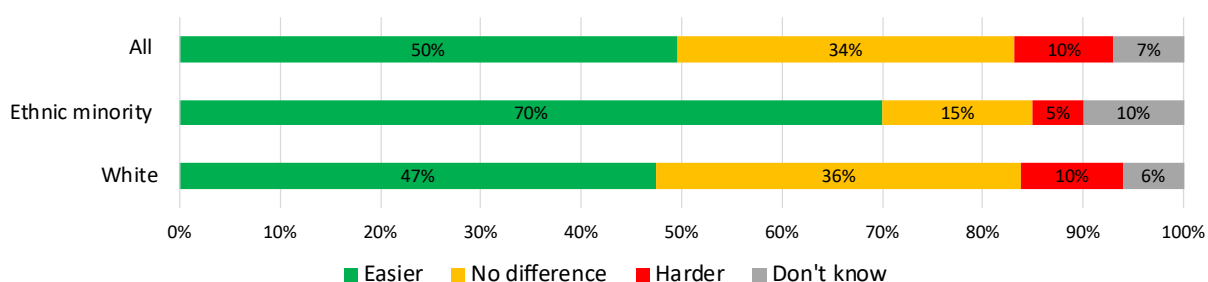
White respondents were much more sceptical – with 37% saying white privilege does not exist in Britain, and 29% saying that it does. Yet at the same time 47% of white British respondents agreed with the statement that “it is easier to get ahead in Britain today if you are white”. This suggests that the inclusion of the word “privilege” is as or more important as the substantive claim about opportunity and advantage in reducing support for this concept. This was reflected in deliberative discussions of the term.

Figure 5.3: 'There is white privilege in Britain.'



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Figure 5.4: Is it easier or harder to get on in Britain if you're white British?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

“I just want people to actually know, that white privilege exists and that affects what takes place in companies. So I feel like now that more people are aware. For me, the basic case is understanding that it exists and obviously, white people, sorry for saying it like this, why white people do get more opportunities. And people need to realise that’s been taking place for a long, long, long time. People need to be aware, or how can we change this? So for you to be able to change something you need to have the knowledge of what it is.”

– Black female participant, West Yorkshire.

“I don’t think it is white privilege. I think it is white rich privilege. I think there’s a difference. I think it’s because like I say, I work in education, and that’s why white boys are one of the most disadvantaged now in society. So the term is just too generic. It doesn’t fit all circumstances. I think that there is a term for privilege, which is rich.”

– Asian female participant, West Midlands.

“I suppose there is white privilege but there is white disadvantage as well. And that doesn’t come across when the term white privilege is used. So I suppose that can be quite divisive. It all seems to be part of this movement creation, using this terminology.”

– White British female participant, West Midlands.

“I think what it means is that you’re given a different ride through life, and that there are things that you don’t need to think about, compared to somebody who doesn’t have those same advantages. But I do think it’s a very American phrase, and I think it does provoke dispute. Maybe it needs tweaking, so that people could recognise it and say, yes, that part is true.”

– White British female participant, West Midlands.

“From conversations I’ve had, with maybe like my parents or elders, I think they could have this perception that white privilege automatically means that you are going to have an easy life as a white person. It’s about the things that won’t happen to you because you’re white that would happen to you if you’re black. So the fundamental definition is absolutely correct. But it’s been very much made out in the media and social media that it’s now more of a derogatory thing that has been kind of twisted, and used to divide white people.”

– White British female participant, Croydon.

Two-thirds of white respondents and three-quarters of ethnic minority respondents, in our nationally representative poll, were familiar enough with the term ‘white privilege’ to offer a view about whether it exists or not in Britain. Some 21% of white respondents and 12% of ethnic minority respondents indicated they were unfamiliar with the term. Once we include Don’t Knows, 35% of white respondents and 21% of ethnic minorities did not express an opinion about whether ‘white privilege’ exists in Britain.

The polling did not ask respondents how recently they had become familiar with the term, but the deliberative research included a number of participants who either remained unaware of the term, or who had come across it over the last few months, when its profile and salience in public discourse has been much higher. It was considerably more familiar to the south London participants, and to younger participants across the groups.

“When it comes to the term white privilege, I hadn’t heard about it until my Dad asked me about it a few weeks back. He had heard it and he didn’t understand it. It was coming across to him as a bit offensive. So he asked me if I knew what it meant. I didn’t know the term, so I did a bit of research into it. I found out it has been a term has been used for quite a while now. We had quite a long chat about what it could mean, and I tried to explain to him what I thought it was trying to say. I could tell he was trying to speak to me in as neutral a way as he could. He was just quite wary of the term. It was one of those things where he wasn’t sure where to go with how he felt about it.”

– Younger white British male participant, West Yorkshire.

“That’s not a phrase that I think people I know would use. So it’s probably more from TV and social media and stuff like that. I definitely think it is a thing that exists. But I haven’t really heard people talk about it in that way.”

– Black male participant, West Midlands.

“I came across it when it was mentioned in a training course I did at work a couple of weeks ago. But I didn’t know it before. Maybe it’s been around in America for ages but I only just heard about it. I think two things are going on here. One thing is people are saying some people face disadvantage, because they’re not white. And the other point here is that maybe sometimes white people aren’t aware that other people might face that disadvantage, because they’re in the majority, so that doesn’t affect them.”

– Mixed race female participant, West Yorkshire.

“I’ve never heard of it before. Listening as we’ve started chatting about it, I sort of guessed what it could be about. But I don’t know if it would do any good, if it’s a positive thing for it to have a label? Maybe it is because it’s not something that I’m involved in. I work in a very small company, there’s only three of us there. So it’s not something I would come across on a daily basis.”

– White British female participant, West Yorkshire

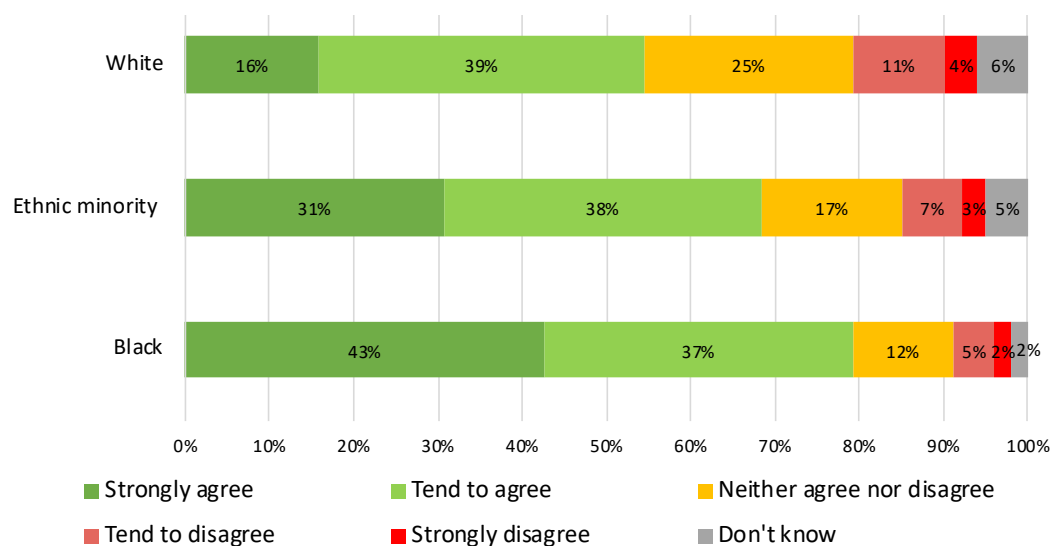
In contrast to the inter-ethnic divide over the idea of “white privilege”, there is a broad inter-ethnic consensus that “Black and Asian people in Britain face discrimination in their everyday lives” – by a 69% to 10% (+59) margin among ethnic minorities and by 54% to 15% (+39) among white respondents. This has a somewhat broader reach among ethnic minorities than the idea of “white privilege” does – though it makes a more significant difference among white British respondents, securing a plurality across all demographic and political viewpoints, while the idea of white privilege divides white British respondents by politics, education and age.

Table 5.5: Attitudes to 'white privilege'

	There is white privilege in Britain (agree)	It is easier to get ahead if you are white (agree)	It is harder to get ahead if you are black (agree)	Support lost through 'privilege' framing with this group
Ethnic minority	59%	70%	67%	11%
White	29%	47%	51%	18%
Black	76%	80%	80%	4%
Indian	52%	69%	63%	17%
Mixed	61%	69%	68%	8%
UK-born ethnic minority	62%	69%	66%	7%
Foreign-born ethnic minority	58%	73%	68%	15%

Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Figure 5.6: 'Black and Asian people face discrimination in their everyday lives in Britain today.'

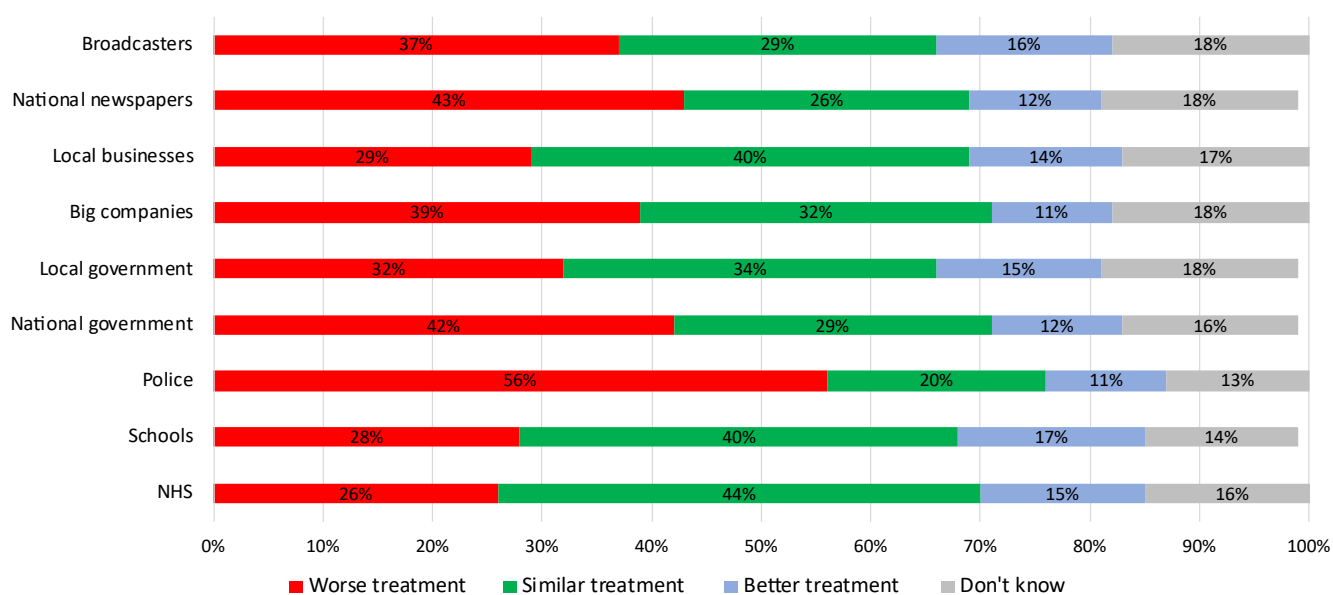


Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Institutional reputations for fair treatment

The research found significant gaps, between ethnic groups, in perceptions as to how far institutions treat ethnic minorities fairly. The NHS (59%), schools (57%) and local businesses (54%) narrowly secured a majority among ethnic minority respondents as having a reputation for treating ethnic minorities fairly overall. Up to a fifth of ethnic minority respondents said ‘don’t know,’ adding to a mixed, sceptical perspective on institutions.

Figure 5.7: Do these institutions treat ethnic minorities better, similarly or worse than they treat white people, overall? ‘ (Ethnic minority views)



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020, n = 1,000 BME UK adults.

By contrast, a majority of white British respondents felt that each of these institutions does tend to treat ethnic minorities similarly to white people, except that the police (47%) fell short of securing a majority among white respondents. This perception gap was widest between white and black respondents to the survey, with black respondents consistently holding more sceptical views of institutions than the aggregate ethnic minority score.

Table 5.8: Thinking about the following institutions, would you say that they tend to treat ethnic minorities better, similarly or worse than they treat white people overall?

	Tend to treat ethnic minorities worse – white British responses	Tend to treat ethnic minorities worse – ethnic minority responses	Tend to treat ethnic minorities worse – Black British responses	White/ Black gap on institutional fairness
NHS	12%	26%	35%	23%
Schools	15%	28%	42%	27%
Police	38%	56%	70%	32%
National government	24%	41%	51%	27%
Local government	18%	32%	40%	22%
Big companies	23%	39%	53%	30%
Local businesses	15%	29%	37%	22%
National newspapers	26%	43%	52%	26%
Broadcasters	16%	37%	47%	21%

Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

“I don’t know if it’s because I’m not from a different background at all, so it’s not something that comes up. Normally, I don’t often hear anything about race. You know, I don’t know anybody that’s got problems with it. Maybe I am naïve, but I just thought that everybody got the same opportunities, and that it wasn’t really down to a racial divide.”

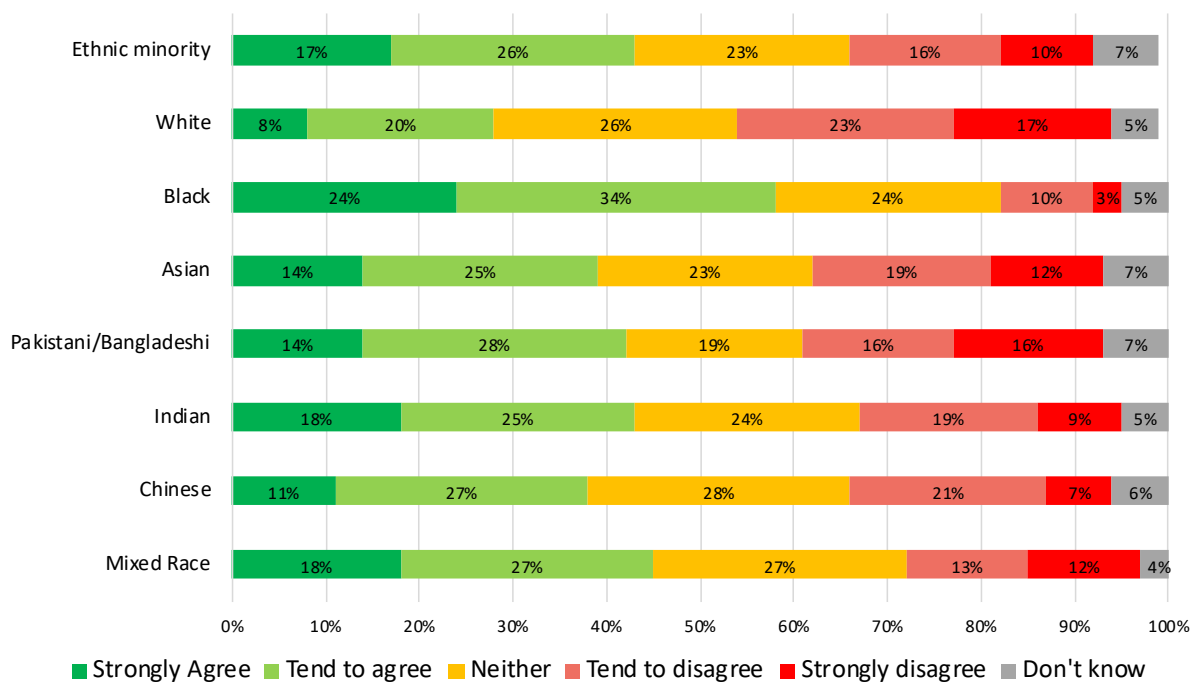
– White British female participant, West Yorkshire

Contrasting perceptions: is Britain systemically racist?

This challenge was again starkly illustrated in the later February 2021 research, when respondents were asked to respond to the proposition that ‘Britain is systematically racist’. This divided opinions. White respondents disagreed with the statement, by 40% to 28%. However, a plurality of ethnic minority respondents (43%) agreed with the statement, with just 21%

expressing disagreement. This included a majority of Black British respondents, of whom 56% agreed and just 18% disagreed; while 38% of Asian respondents agreed. The median white British and ethnic minority respondents, however, were on the fence.

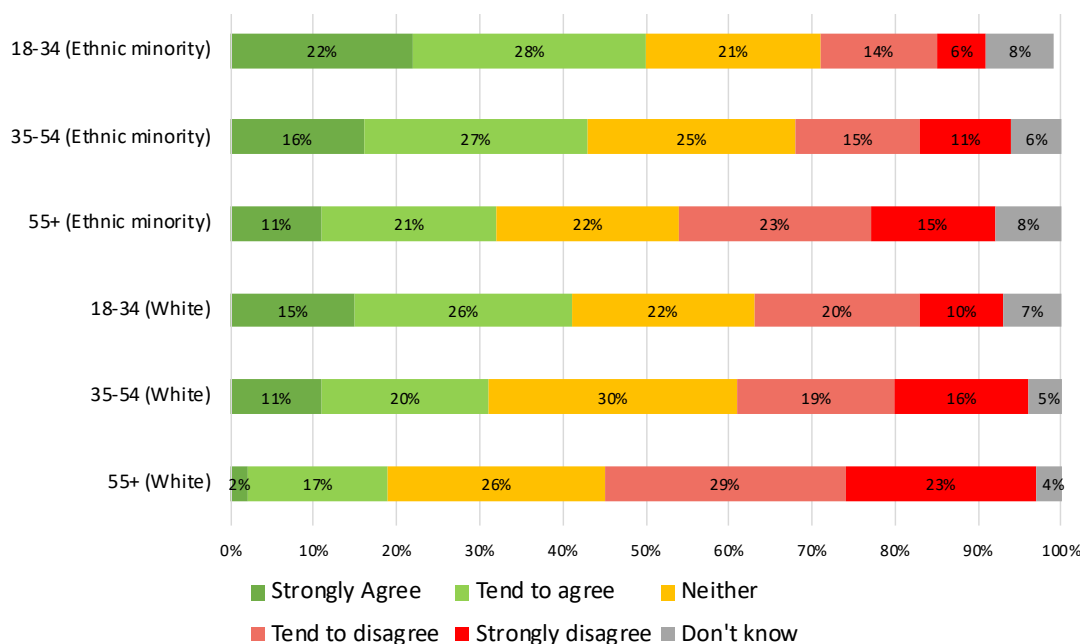
Figure 5.9: “Britain is a systematically racist country.” (Ethnicity)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME adults.

The contrasting perspectives between generations, however, were captured by there being net agreement from white respondents aged under-35, but net disagreement among ethnic minority respondents aged over 55.

Figure 5.10: “Britain is a systematically racist country.” (Age)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME adults.

Challenges for efforts to forge a consensus in polarised times

These findings present several important challenges for public policy and for political and civic leadership in a multi-ethnic liberal democracy. There are several reasons why a broad social consensus for race equality should be an active and explicit goal of policy-makers.

An account of equal opportunities which had a broad appeal and resonance with the majority ethnic group – but which was perceived as incomplete or inaccurate by most ethnic minority citizens – would fail a legitimacy and fairness test. This would also come under increasing pressure over time, given the rising share of voice and power of ethnic minorities within an increasingly diverse society, and would polarise opinion between generations.

So an account of race equality which makes sense to Black, Asian and mixed race citizens is necessary, but it will not be sufficient to entrench fair chances in a liberal multi-ethnic society. While campaigns for race equality can and should seek to shape and lead opinion, not simply follow it, securing a cross-ethnic consensus is necessary to secure and entrench change. Entrenching social norms against prejudice and discrimination as ‘settled’ depends on these making sense to most people in society.

A shared account of how race equality can also play a valuable role in defusing a politics of competing grievances, where minority needs would always risk being traded-off or sacrificed. However,

a common ground agenda faces considerable challenges in acknowledging contrasting starting points. It would depend on making a clear case to majority audiences that significant challenges and gaps remain, and to minority audiences that there is a credible commitment to addressing the barriers that remain. However, there is also evidence from this research that a latent consensus for a constructive and proactive race equality agenda can be unlocked.

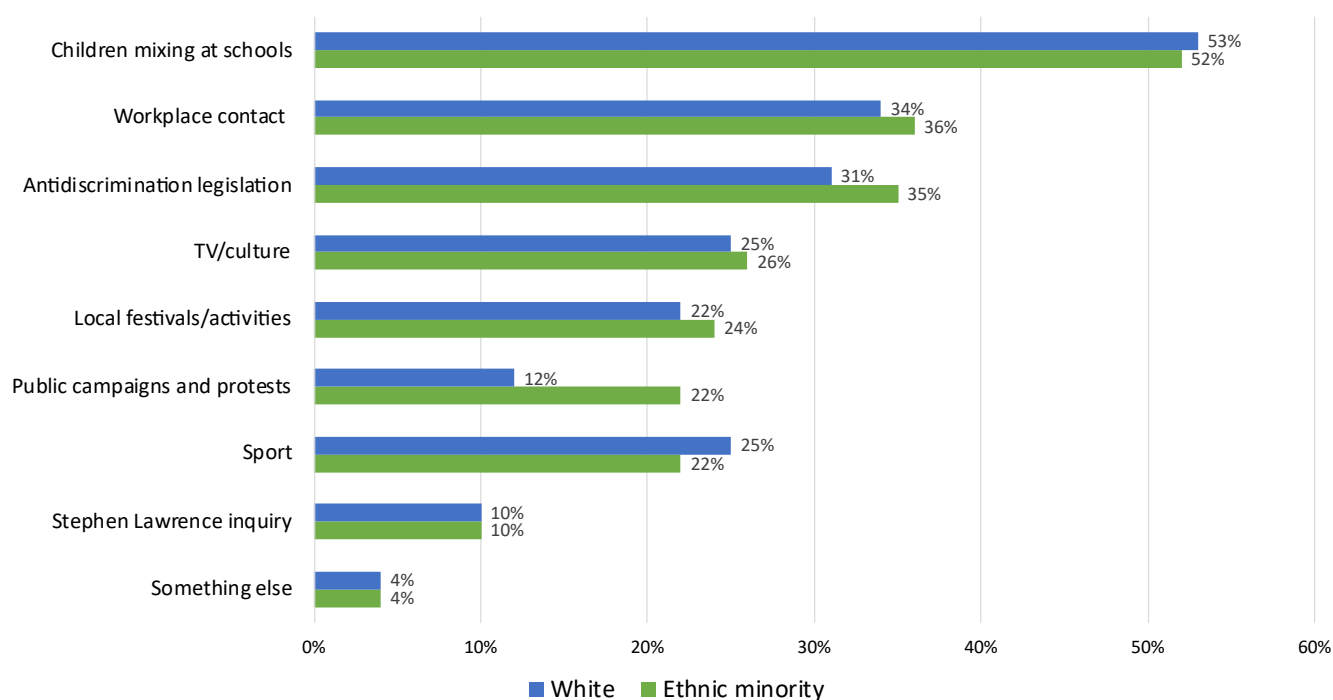
6. Finding common ground on race equality

This research has shown some significant gaps – between different ethnic groups and across generations – in responding to different ways of talking about race. Yet there is considerably more scope to find a broad common ground consensus if the agenda for change becomes constructive and practical.

What has made change happen in the past?

There is a considerable degree of inter-ethnic consensus on the most significant drivers of positive change – with a majority of respondents selecting children mixing in schools, ahead of workplace contact and legislation against discrimination. Ethnic minority respondents were somewhat more likely to cite campaigning and protests as drivers of change than white respondents, who were slightly more likely to nominate sport as having made a positive contribution. Yet this broad consensus on the story of some of the drivers of past change may offer some useful opportunities for an account of how to use this as a platform to address the barriers that remain.

Figure 6.1: What has made the most positive difference on race?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

“Maybe if it starts in primary school, because I do not think that they’re racist when children are young – I think it’s as they get older that people tend to form racist opinions. They seem to mix a lot easier, the younger that they are, and they just seem to be more accepting. I just feel that – not just race, but with disabilities, and with anything – children, I feel that they accept people for who they are. And they don’t judge until they’re older.”

– White British female participant, West Midlands.

“I think I have seen some progress. The university I went to was very multicultural, where everybody had the same opportunities. It’s the same sorts of jobs, following on from that, that those people are now in. So from my point of view, that’s how I have seen progress.”

– White British male participant, West Midlands.

Shared views of the impacts of Covid

The attitudes research found broadly similar views of the ways in which the Covid pandemic had influenced race relations, with most people seeing it as increasing public awareness of the positive contribution of ethnic minorities to the NHS.

Ethnic minority respondents showed a somewhat higher awareness of ethnic disparities in the health impacts of Covid. About a third of people saw a risk of increased tensions between groups over social distancing. There were similar levels of concern about this, and about the spreading of conspiracy theories, across majority and minority groups.

Table 6.2: Cross-ethnic agreement on impact of coronavirus

	White	Ethnic minority
“Covid has increased public awareness of the contribution of ethnic minorities to the NHS and public services.”	Agree 55% Disagree 9% (+46)	Agree 62% Disagree 10% (+52)
“Covid has shown that health inequalities between ethnic groups need greater attention.”	Agree 48% Disagree 21% (+27)	Agree 60% Disagree 9% (+51)
“Covid has increased tensions between different ethnic and faith groups over social distancing rules.”	Agree 34% Disagree 21% (+13)	Agree 37% Disagree 21% (+16)
“Covid has been exploited by extreme groups to spread divisive conspiracy theories.”	Agree 48% Disagree 12% (+36)	Agree 46% Disagree 17% (+29)

Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

How to find common ground on history and identity

History and identity have been the subject of a high profile and often polarised public debate. This survey did find that proposals to remove statues divide opinion. It will take time, engagement and dialogue to discover common ground on these emotive and symbolic issues. That may be more likely if the debate becomes less binary, finding nuance between the polar positions of ‘protect the statues’ versus ‘tear them down’; and also if it expands beyond a narrow focus on what to remove to explore what we should recognise instead.

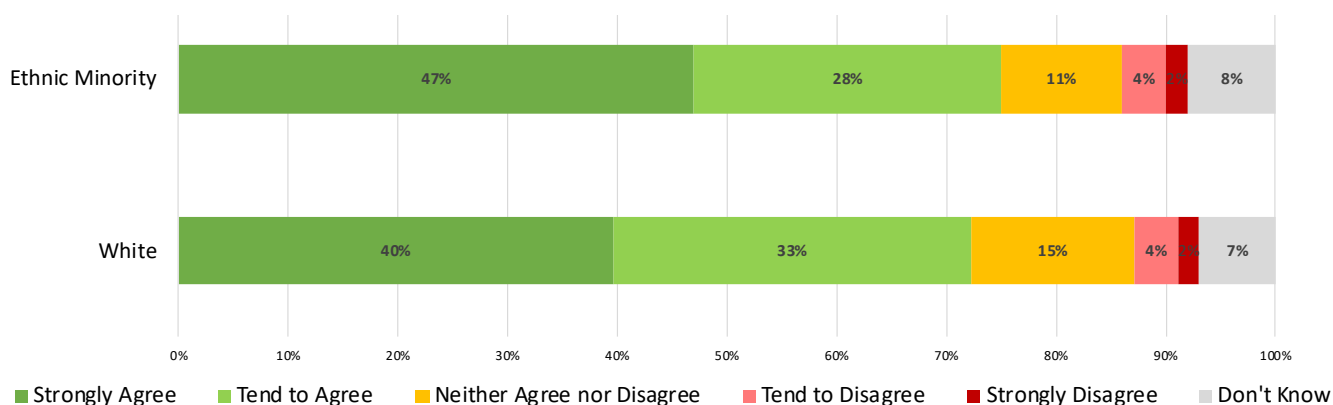
Table 6.3: Attitudes toward the removal of statues

	White	Ethnic minority
Many public statues put up in the past should be removed, when they recognise people involved in Empire or slavery	15%	30%
Only a few statues put up in the past – eg those with a major role in slavery - should be considered for removal to museums	27%	25%
No public statues put up in the past should be removed, because of their links with Empire or slavery	43%	23%
Don't know	16%	22%

Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Yet the research finds considerable potential for a more constructive public conversation over how to understand our shared and complex history, and do more to recognise ethnic minority contributions to this, with a consensus on the importance of teaching the complexity and controversies of Empire in schools.

Figure 6.4: “It is important that the history of race and Empire – including its controversies and complexity – are taught in British schools.”



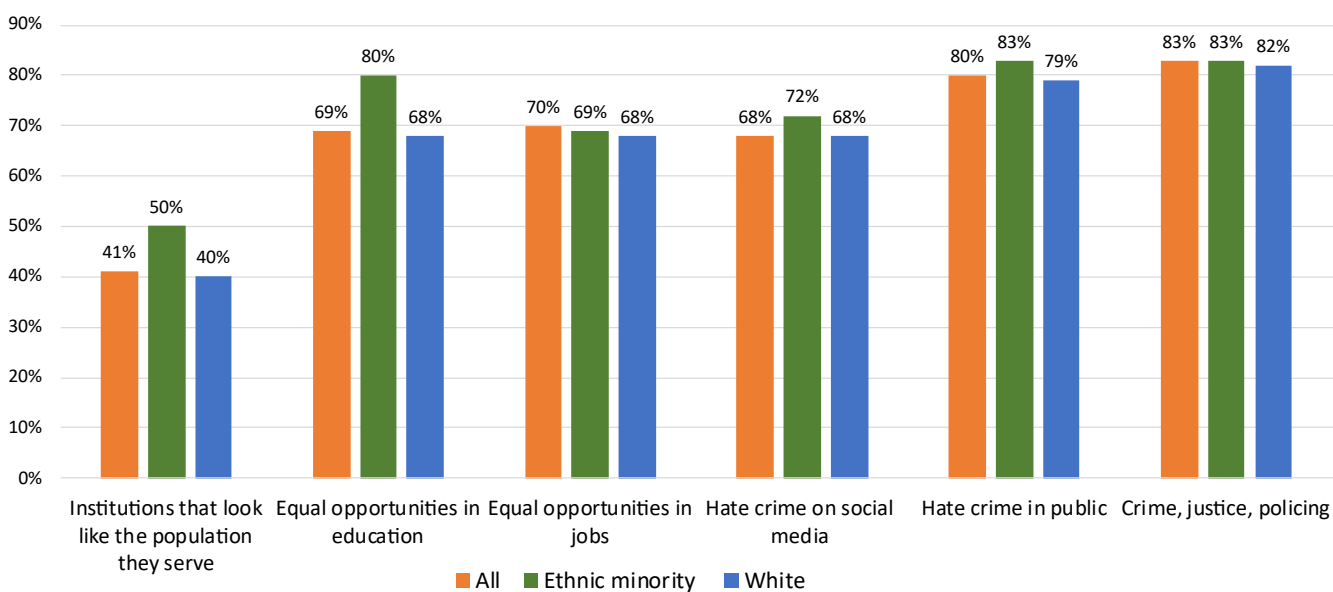
Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

There is a very broad public consensus on the value of doing more to recognise the black and Asian Commonwealth contributions to the Second World War. Eight out of ten people agree that doing more to recognise the Commonwealth contribution in the Second World War would be a positive way to promote understanding of the shared history of today’s multi-ethnic Britain, with similarly broad support among ethnic minority (76%) and white British (78%) respondents. 3% of people disagree with this proposal.

Priorities for government action

Participants were also asked about what the new Race Commission should prioritise.

Figure 6.5: For each of the following, please say whether it should be a government priority?



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Participants in the deliberative discussions often emphasised the links between all of these issues.

“Education is a starting ground for people. So you know, you get out of it what you put in. So I think that’s the best place to focus equal opportunity on.”

– White British male participant, West Midlands.

“I put health and education, and also social contact. I think that helps with good relations. And I hope other things will follow from that.”

– White British female participant, West Midlands.

“It was an impossible choice. Actually, seeing it written down makes you realise all of the areas that need to be addressed.”

– White British female participant, West Midlands.

“As number one, I put in hate crime as well and on social media. I’ve seen quite a lot of it to be honest with you. And I just think there shouldn’t ever be a platform for that.”

– White British male participant, West Yorkshire.

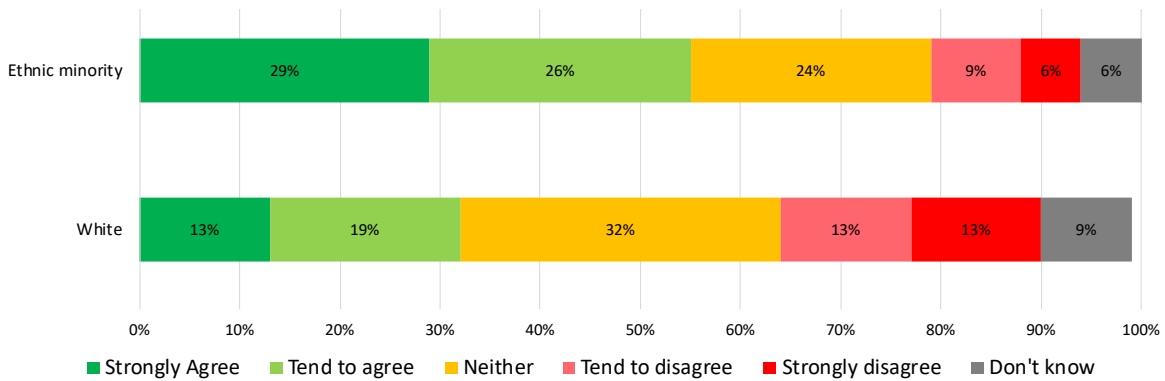
“Institutions. So that people are actually seeing people from different backgrounds. That really makes sense at this moment.”

– Mixed race female participant, West Yorkshire.

Consensus on proposals for policy change – except on quotas

The idea of adopting measures such as quotas generally divided respondents. A narrow majority of ethnic minority respondents saw this as an attractive approach, along with a third of white British respondents, while a significant number of respondents were ambivalent about this as a general principle. Quota-style proposals appear likely to both reflect and reinforce the gaps in perceptions about opportunity and disadvantage. They are seen as having potential, given a pressing need to narrow significant gaps, by a large number of ethnic minority respondents. But they also generate objections that this is too crude a way to narrow opportunity gaps fairly, given the complex pattern of opportunity and disadvantage across social class and ethnic groups.

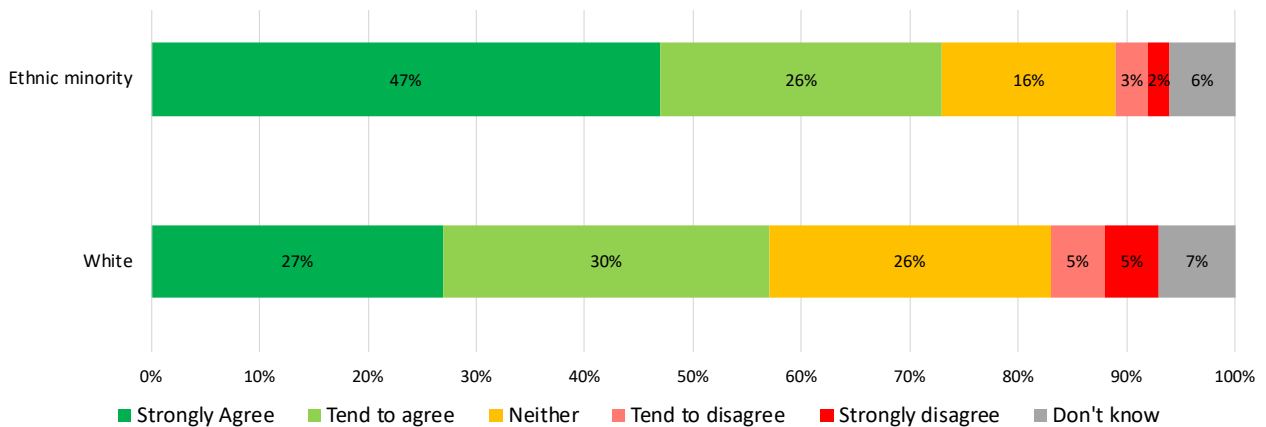
Figure 6.6: “Measures such as quotas, all ethnic minority shortlists, or similar, should be used to get more ethnic minority representation in top jobs.”



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

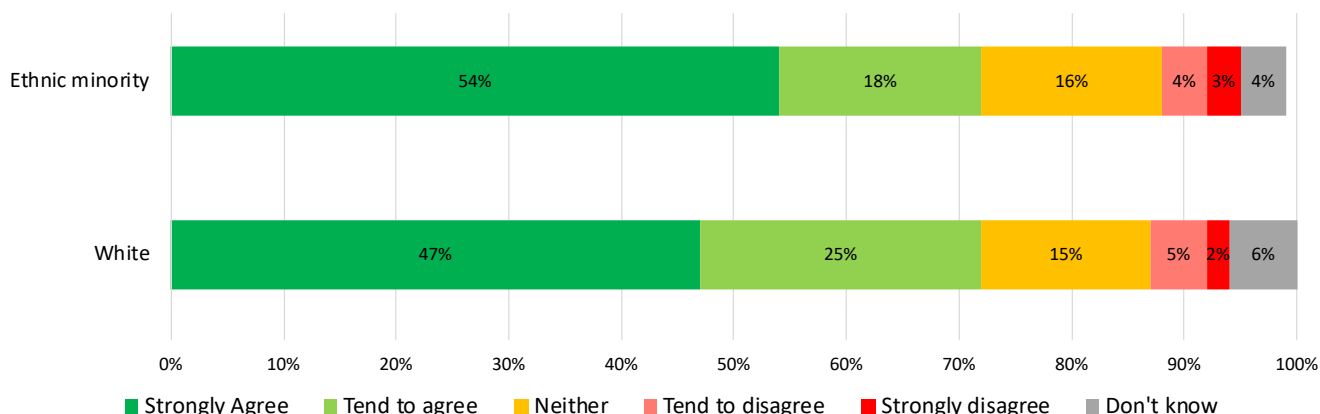
But the attitudes research shows the potential to secure a broad consensus across ethnic groups with a constructive policy agenda for change.

Figure 6.7: “Big companies should commit to monitoring applications to ensure candidates from different ethnic backgrounds have a fair chance of getting an interview.”



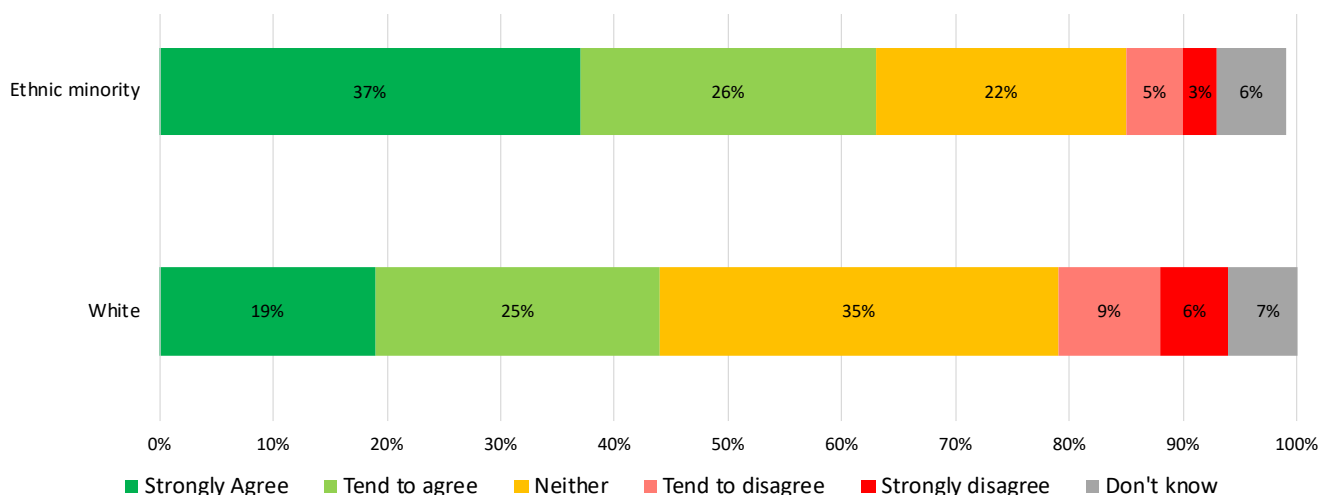
Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Figure 6.8: “Social media platforms should take stronger action to remove hate speech.”



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Figure 6.9: “All boards of major companies, NHS Trusts and large charities should include somebody from an ethnic minority background.”



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

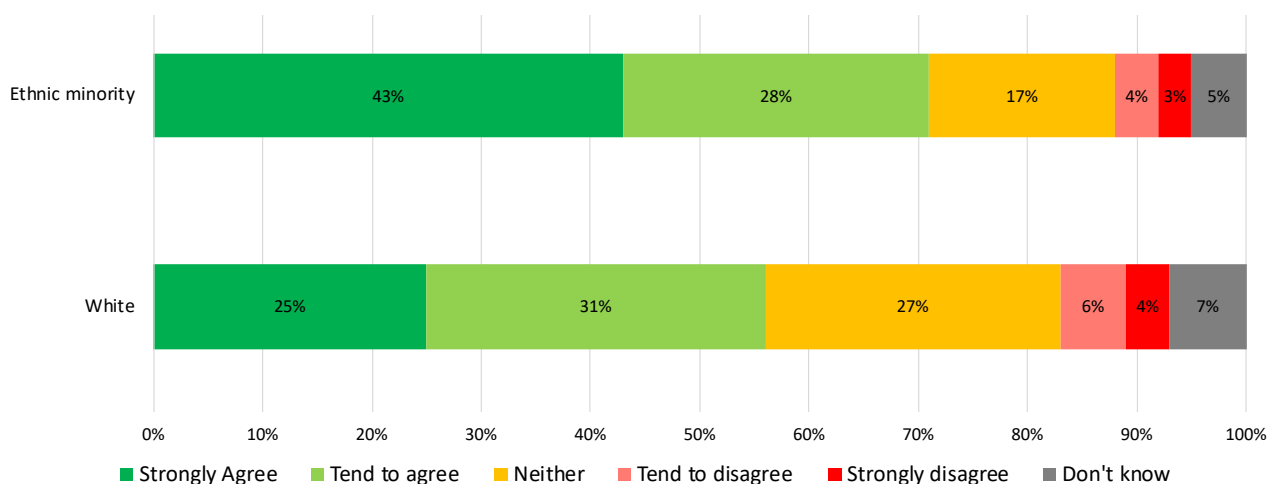
“My husband, who is white, what he does is if he reads any racist comments, he reports them. He was reporting a lot of racist comments about the protests, so there was that negative reaction from some people too.”

–“Your husband is like King Canute, trying to hold back the tide. I have read some of the stuff that was sent to David Lammy, as a politician, that he gets from trolls. Some of it is just so utterly vile.”

– Discussion between (Asian female and White British female) participants, West Midlands.

There is a broad consensus in support of all schools ensuring that their pupils have significant contact across ethnic and social class lines. There would be a number of ways in which schools could do this. It could be mandatory for governing bodies to consider practical strategies to ensure they are achieving this, alongside the active promotion of school twinning and the expansion of existing projects to link schools with different intakes, such as those conducted by the Linking Network.

Figure 6.10: “Every school should ensure its pupils have significant contact across ethnic and social class lines.”



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Public views on finding common ground

We concluded the deliberative discussions by asking participants what they would do to try to strengthen common ground on race and opportunity in Britain.

“You have to get a lot of different opinions and getting lots of different people involved. I think it stems from smaller changes first. So, if you see someone treated unfairly in your work place, you would challenge it. You don’t just sit back, and think it is not my problem.”

– Asian female participant, West Midlands.

“My Dad is white so I’ve got black family and white family. We are all going to be mixed race in the future. It is what it is. Now I’m for Black Lives Matter forever but when my black grandpa is saying you need to bring a black man home – he even used to say ‘you need to keep the black in the blood,’ which is the most ridiculous thing to me. What is that going to bring to the family? That’s not going to make me happy. Either way round, those stereotypes are a cultural thing – but I feel like my generation, me and my cousins, we don’t think like that anymore. If you see the young generation out, the majority of them are mixed race now. That’s what’s going to happen. It happened to my parents, so my grandpa can’t ask me to only go out with black boys. So I think that is just the minds changing.”

– Black female participant, West Yorkshire.

“The most typical view is probably one that my own dad even said to me, and that was that, okay, we know you’re gay, you don’t have to keep reminding us. And which is why, even though in some ways, I hate going, I go to certain Pride events for that reason. So that’s why I think when it comes to BLM, and racial issues, I don’t know if the notions are exactly comparable, but why wouldn’t we have something like a pride event, for being black, or being from an ethnic minority background. Then obviously, coming from the white majority, myself, I’d actually love to go, and I think lots of my friends would. If that was actually the case, that could be the most fun event I’ve ever been to.”

– White British male participant, West Yorkshire.

“You have got Greta Thunberg leading the school strikes for climate change. There’s nobody that I could say is a figurehead, that represents this, outside of parliament. There isn’t a non-politician that I can point to that is trying to address this and bring people together. I don’t think you can pick someone, it is for whoever to appear. I think it’s important that there are lots of voices being heard. And those voices are discussing with each other. I don’t know – it might be Lawrence Fox and his new party and David Lammy. Get them in the same room to talk about it.”

– White British female participant, West Midlands.

Part Two: February 2021 research

7. Do we talk too much or too little about race?

We need to keep talking about race in Britain and our research for this report asked participants in both the discussion groups and nationally representative polling about their views on Britain's current race debate.

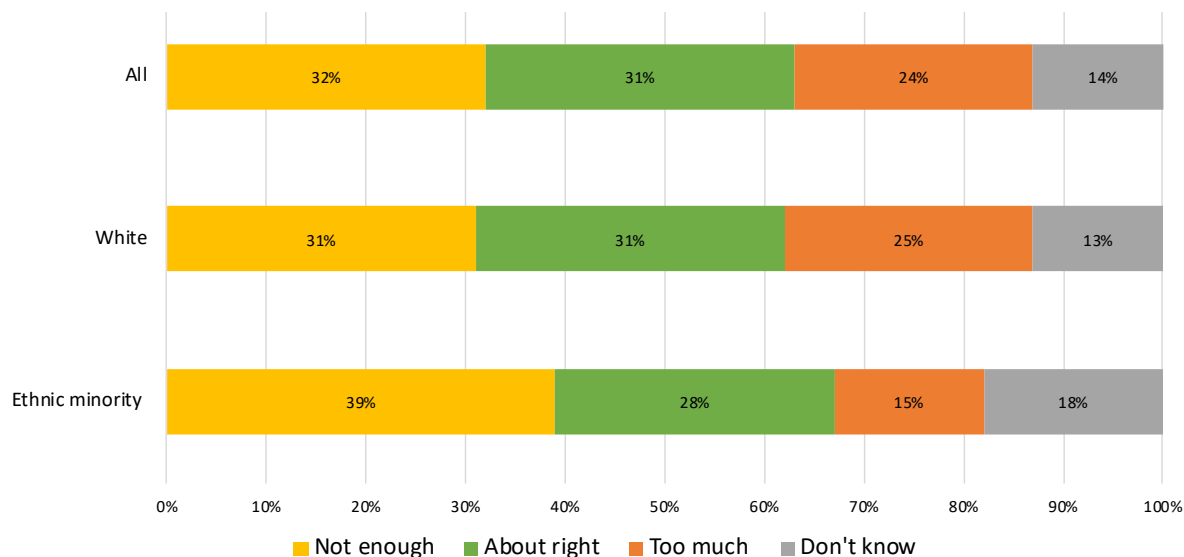
We found that around a third of people (32%), rising to four in ten people (39%) from an ethnic minority background, feel that we don't talk about race enough at present. Another 31% feel that we have the balance right and talk about it 'about the right amount'. A quarter of people (24%) disagree: they feel that we already talk about race too much. That sentiment is shared by only 15% of ethnic minority Britons.

Figure 7.1: 'Do we talk too much or too little about race?'

"We have tended to not talk enough about issues of race in British society."

"We have tended to talk too much about issues of race in British society."

"We talk about the right amount about issues of race in British society."



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Those headline figures mask significant variation by ethnicity and by age. Younger respondents aged 18-34 – among whom responses from ethnic minority and white people are virtually identical – are much less likely to feel that we talk about race too much. Only 14% felt that race was over-discussed, compared to the 24% average across the UK.

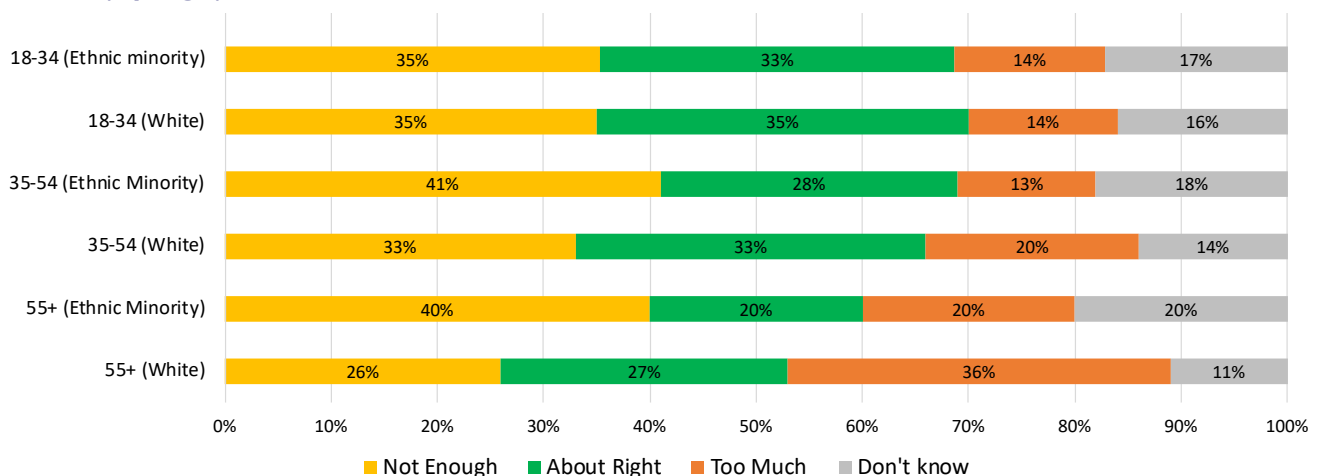
“Because we’ve never really had these conversations about race and inequality, last year’s Black Lives Matter protests really stood out and, especially with young people, they were desperate for it to create change. We’re really tired of this discrimination. So, I’m happy that we did have these conversations.”

– Asian female participant, Preston.

As respondents get older there is greater divergence by ethnicity in how people feel about the UK race debate. White people aged over 55 felt most strongly that we talk about race too much, with 36% feeling this way, compared to a quarter (26%) of white over-55s who feel we don’t talk about race enough. Older people from an ethnic minority background, however, are twice as likely to feel that race is under-discussed than to say we talk about it too much. Four in ten ethnic minority over-55s (40%) say we don’t talk about race enough, while only 20% feel that it gets too much airtime.

This ethnicity gap is less pronounced among those aged 35-54. Ethnic minorities in this age group are the most likely to feel that we don’t talk about race enough (41%), with a third (33%) of white people their age in agreement.

Figure 7.2: Do we talk too much or too little about race? (By age)

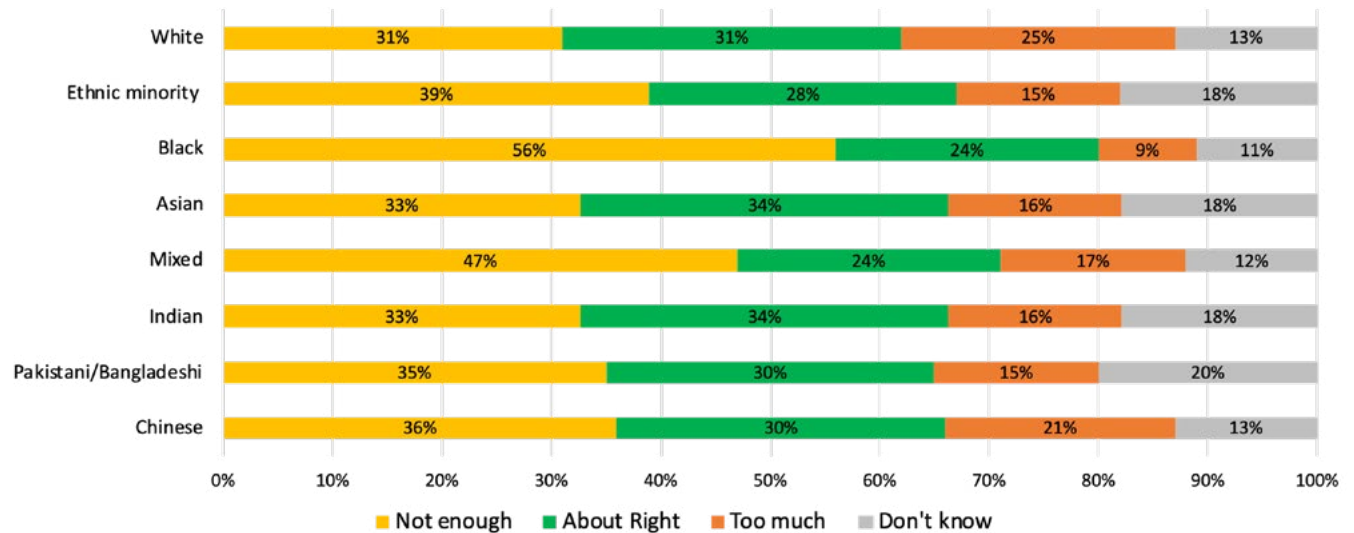


Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Opinions about Britain’s public debate on race vary, too, between different ethnic minority communities. Black people feel much more strongly that we do not talk enough about race in Britain, with a majority of black respondents (56%) saying that race is under-discussed. Just 9% of black people in the UK say that we talk too much about the issue. Mixed race respondents also feel more strongly that race is not discussed enough, with nearly half (47%) sharing this view.

Asian respondents, however, are just as likely to feel we talk about race ‘about the right amount’ (34%) as to feel we don’t talk about it enough (33%). Some 16% of Asians say we talk about race too much.

Figure 7.3: Do we talk too much or too little about race? (By ethnic group)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

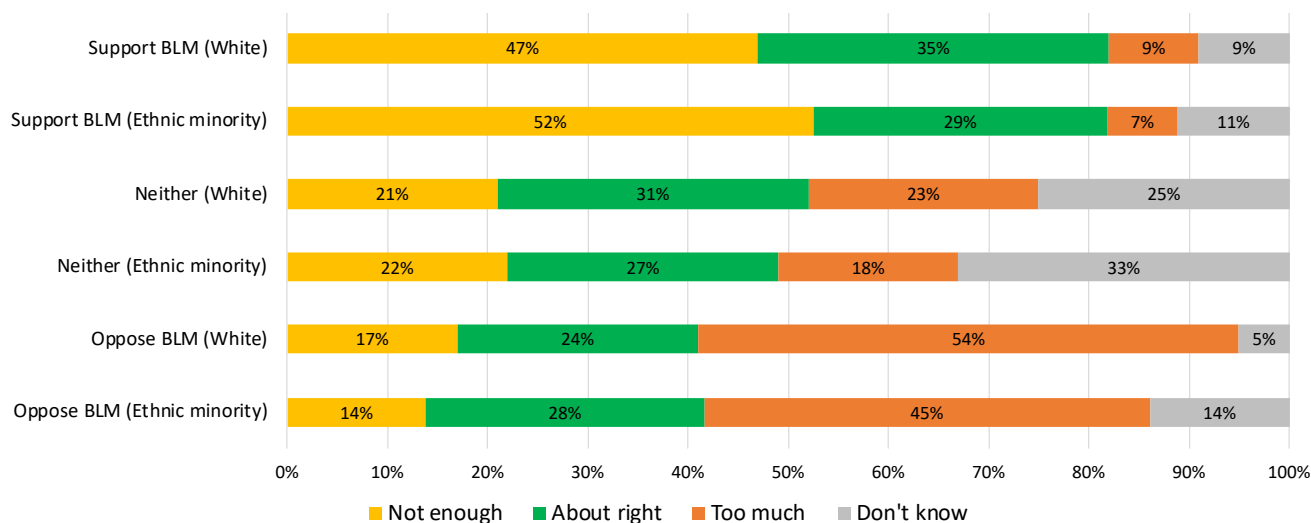
As one might perhaps expect, there is a clear correlation between attitudes to the race debate and people’s opinions of the Black Lives Matter protests. Those who supported the BLM demonstrations, regardless of their ethnic background, are much more likely to feel that we don’t talk about race enough in Britain, with 52% of ethnic minority BLM supporters and 47% of white BLM supporters saying that we don’t talk enough about race. For them, the protests of 2020 were a vital wake-up call to a society that was ignoring this issue. Those who were opposed to the BLM protests felt the opposite way, with 54% of white respondents and 45% of ethnic minorities saying we talk too much about race.

“I think the last six to nine months, since Covid and George Floyd in America, its brought race to people’s minds. And before that it wasn’t really spoken about – it’s only after recent events that we’ve spoken about black people and our health, or how we interact with the police.”

– Black female participant, Bucks and Herts.

While this illustrates the way in which the Black Lives Matter protests polarised opinion, there was a middle group too – about a third of white people and a quarter of ethnic minorities – who remained on the fence about the protests and uncertain about our public debates on race. One third of this ethnic minority ‘fence sitter’ group answered ‘Don’t know’ to the question of whether we talk too much or too little about race.

Figure 7.4: Do we talk too much or too little about race? (By support for BLM)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Participants in our groups also discussed the nature of public debate on race and whether we talk too much and too little about the issue. While we heard a range of views, there was a clear desire to strike the right balance and a shared sense that this is an issue that we need to talk about. Many also expressed a more pragmatic view that talk alone does not get us very far unless it leads to action.

“I think there’s a fine line. You want to talk about it but you don’t want to talk about it so much that it all becomes about race, when there are other factors to consider too.”

– White British female participant, Bucks and Herts.

“I think the balance is right when it comes to talking about it. Where the balance is wrong is doing something about it. We’ve been talking about it since the 70s. And maybe it’s not as bad as it was then, but it’s not a whole lot better. People are more aware of it now. But we’re still not doing enough about it. We need less hot air and more action.”

– White British male participant, North-East.

“I think, because my generation is more social media oriented, you get a lot of noise about it, but you don’t often find out what the government is doing in response to that noise. The government needs to be more open about what they are doing so that we can realise that they are hearing what we’re saying.”

– Mixed race female participant, North-East.

8. Beyond ‘BAME’: What’s in a label?

The second phase of the British Future research sought to explore and unpack several distinct aspects of the debate about ethnic identity and ethnic data, which can often be conflated.

- How much understanding is there of terms like “BAME”?
- Which aggregate terms are preferred, or seen as legitimate, if and when an aggregate term is being used?
- Which terms are seen as broadly acceptable, particularly by ethnic minority respondents? Which terms are seen as irrelevant or unacceptable?
- Is any aggregate term for minorities still valid, or is it now out-of-date?
- Which types of ethnicity data are seen as important and relevant, or irrelevant, and do perceptions of what is legitimate and useful differ across groups?
- What are the views of Black and Asian respondents on specific relevant terms? How far does the prioritisation given to different types of data, (eg, ethnic group, national origin and faith group) differs between the larger minority groups?

The deliberative research, with mixed groups of white and minority participants in seven locations, sought to further illuminate these questions, particularly exploring tensions between the utility of data and the risks of categories which pigeon-hole people.

Key findings:

- There is patchy public awareness of terminology: around 4 in 10 people are confident they know what “BAME” means. 3 in 10 ethnic minorities (30%) do not know it at all.
- Public opinion is fairly evenly split on whether aggregate terms are still useful or are now outdated, with (mildly) different views across and between different minority groups.
- The BAME concept is neither embraced nor widely rejected by most ethnic minority Britons. “Black Asian and Minority Ethnic” is seen as acceptable in context by 6 in 10 ethnic minority Britons (with a third actively favouring it) and actively opposed by around 1 in 6.
- In deliberative research, we heard a clear preference for “Black Asian and Minority Ethnic” spelt out, over an acronym or word ‘Bame’ – for reasons of both public comprehension and in recognising and respecting pluralism within minority groups.
- The term ‘ethnic minority’ secured somewhat broader legitimacy and narrower opposition as an aggregate term, being acceptable to 7 in 10 ethnic minorities and opposed by 13%.

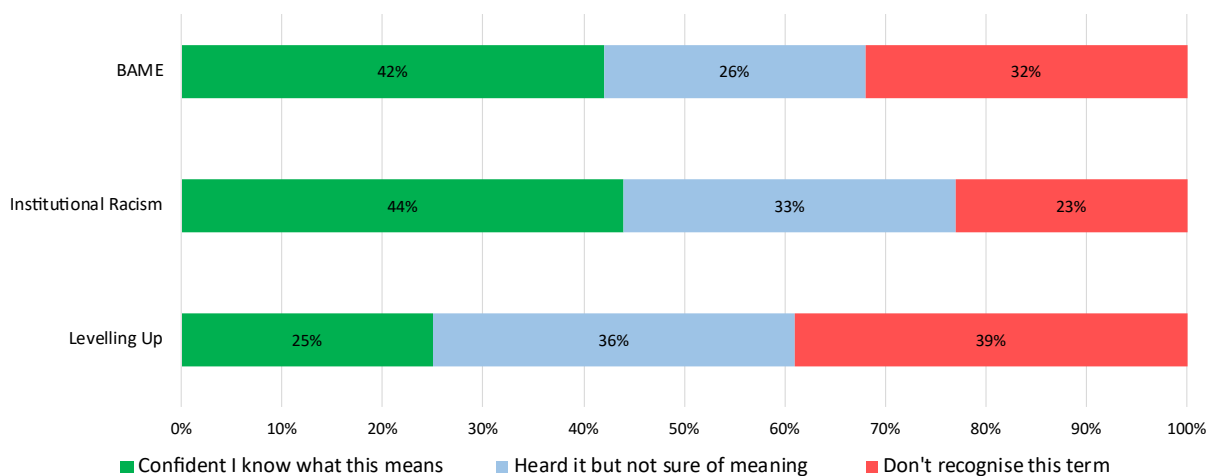
- In deliberative research, the key issue was about context: the purpose for which such terms are used. Many people feel cross-pressured on ethnic data. A strong intuitive preference for less box-ticking is in tension with a recognition of why data matters. Only a small minority of around 1 in 10 of the public are opposed in principle.
- There is broad majority support, especially when there is clarity about how data is being used to strengthen equal opportunities, in a way that is fair across groups. This includes broad consent for ethnic pay gap reporting, for example.

The research suggests a public appetite for a clearer distinction between data collection and the use of identity terms. ‘Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic’ or other synonyms retain pragmatic consent (albeit without affection) as a data category. There is a strong preference for identity terms to reflect people’s own sense of identity, and for more effort to emphasise the shared identities which bridge individual group identities of different kinds.

Public awareness of the term “BAME” is mixed

Just over 4 out of 10 people are confident of the meaning of “BAME” while a third of people have never heard of it.

Figure 8.1: How far are you familiar with the following terms...



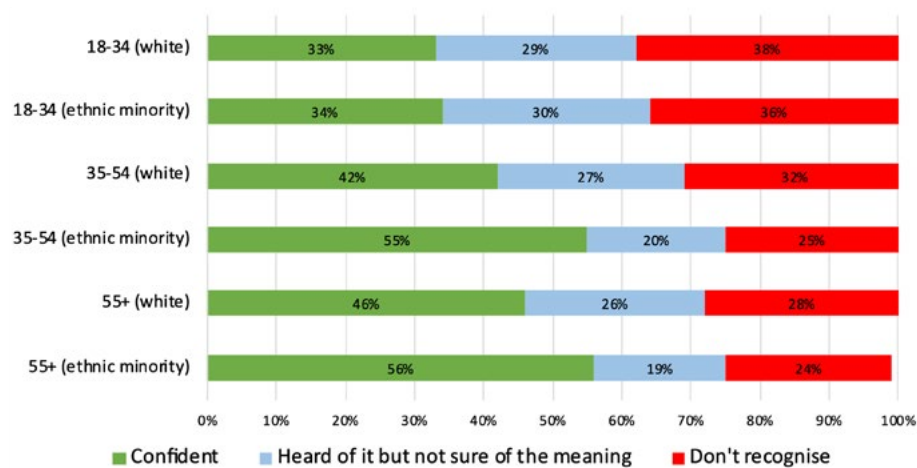
Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

This pattern was reflected in the deliberative groups, which included participants with a strong knowledge of the terminology and current debates about it, several participants who were unaware of it (all but one of the group in Glasgow had never heard it before), and several people who were somewhere in between.

The poll methodology did not check what those who said they were confident of the meaning thought that it was. Some deliberative group participants had the gist of the topic, but without knowing the precise acronym. “It is about equal opportunities – maybe it is British and African Multicultural Equality,” was the first potential meaning given in Leicester by somebody who said they knew the term. The first attempt in Cardiff was “Black African Muslim Ethnic.” Other participants in both groups were closer to the actual definition – though the A in BAME was given both as “And” (“Black And Minority Ethnic”) as well as “Black Asian Minority Ethnic”.

However, the research found that knowledge of the term “BAME” was considerably lower among young people compared to older people. Only a third of under-35s were confident that they knew what it meant. A majority of older respondents in the poll thought they understood the term.

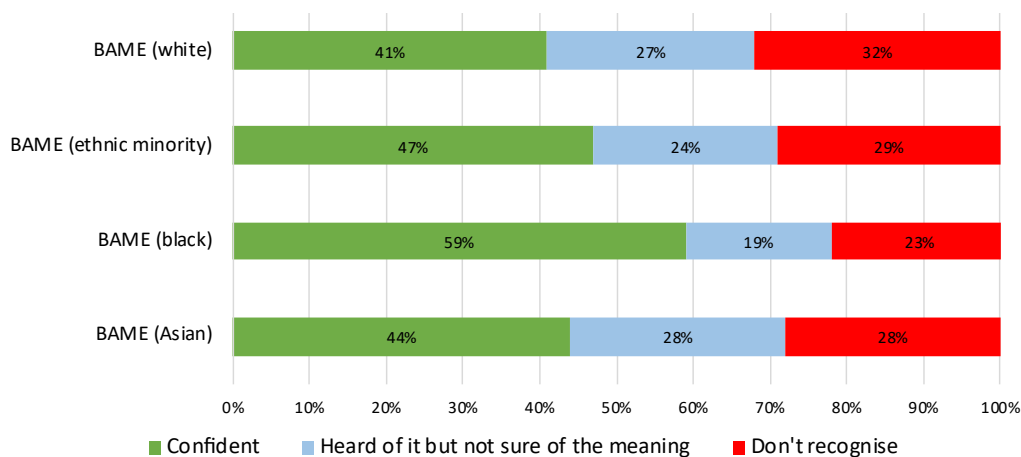
Figure 8.2: How familiar are you with the term BAME? (By age/ethnicity)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Black respondents are also considerably more familiar with the term than Asian or white respondents.

Figure 8.3: How familiar are you with the term BAME? (By ethnic group)

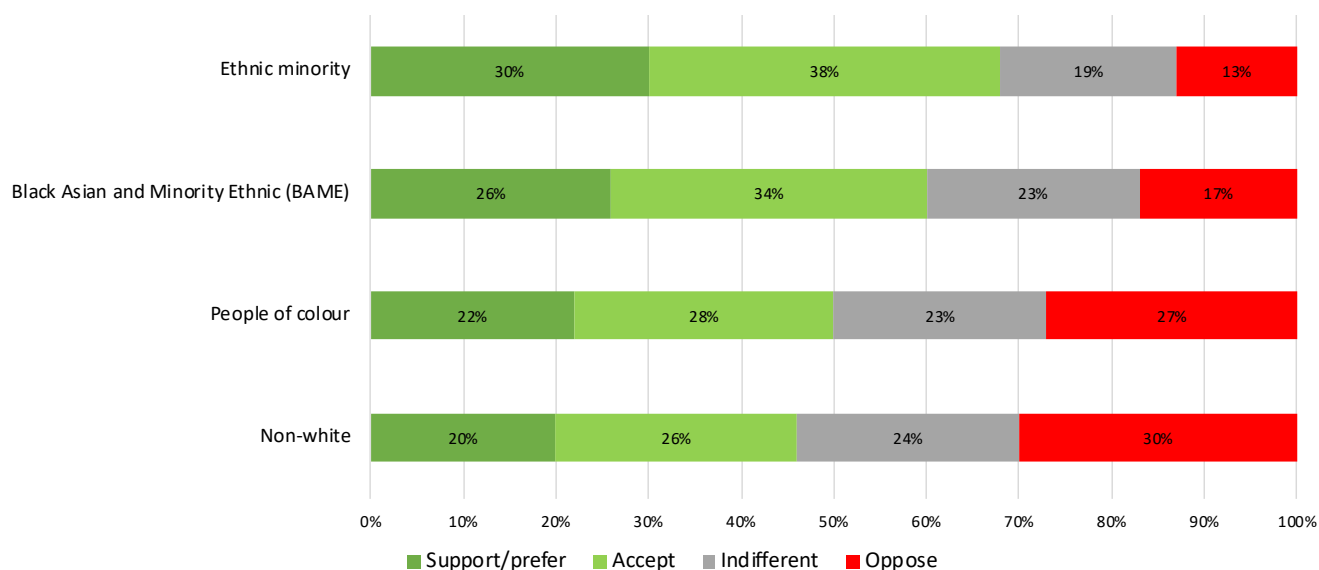


Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Pragmatism about umbrella terms

The polling for this project suggests that the level of outright opposition to the term “Black Asian and Minority Ethnic” (BAME) may be narrower than some recent media discourse has suggested. Six out of ten ethnic minority respondents see it as an “acceptable” term, while only one in six regard it as a term they would actively oppose. At the same time, only around a quarter of ethnic minorities chose to say it was their preferred term that they were keen to support. There was narrower support and slightly more opposition to importing the American term “people of colour” although half of ethnic minority respondents found the term acceptable, with others divided equally between indifference and opposition. The term “non-white” scored highest for disapproval, at 30%, though there was still a plurality who approved of the term, again suggesting that attitudes towards aggregate terms tend to be pragmatic, with many participants appearing to see them as descriptive factual terms about ethnic demographics, rather than attempts to capture people’s sense of personal identity.

Figure 8.4: How do you feel about the current terms being used in discussions of race and ethnicity in Britain? (Ethnic minority responses)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 2,000 BME adults.

The deliberative groups gave a range of reasons for a pragmatic approach to the use of an aggregate category, such as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic, primarily to do with the significance of collecting data for research and policy purposes.

“People of different ethnic minorities, they don’t take up even close to 50% of the UK population. So you cannot use a statistic or a word to enclose everybody. It is still a minority. So it does need a box, and it does require something to define it. There is nothing derogatory intended about it.”

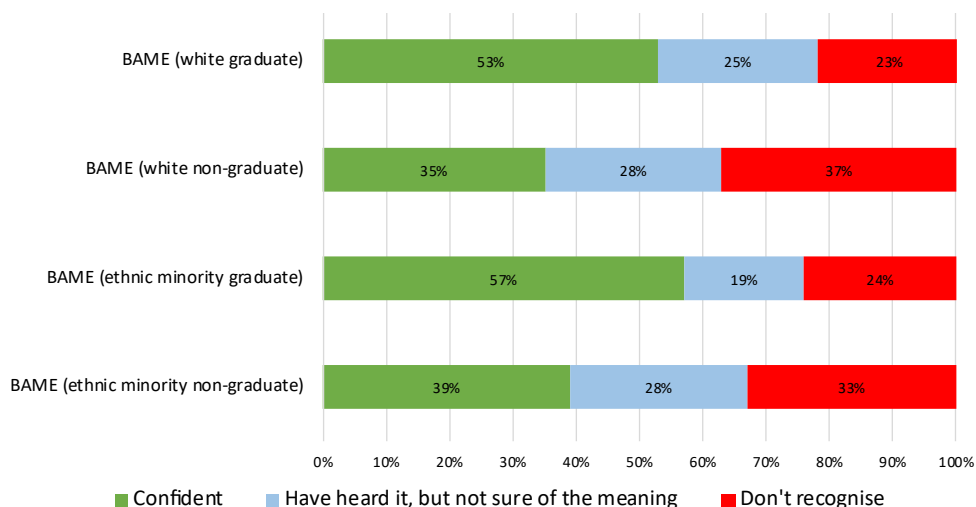
– Asian male participant, Glasgow.

A graduate-level debate about ethnic terminology

The BAME term is familiar to a majority of people – white or ethnic minority – who attended university, but most non-graduates, across ethnic groups, are not confident of its meaning. There are also a significant number of graduates who are unsure of what the term means.

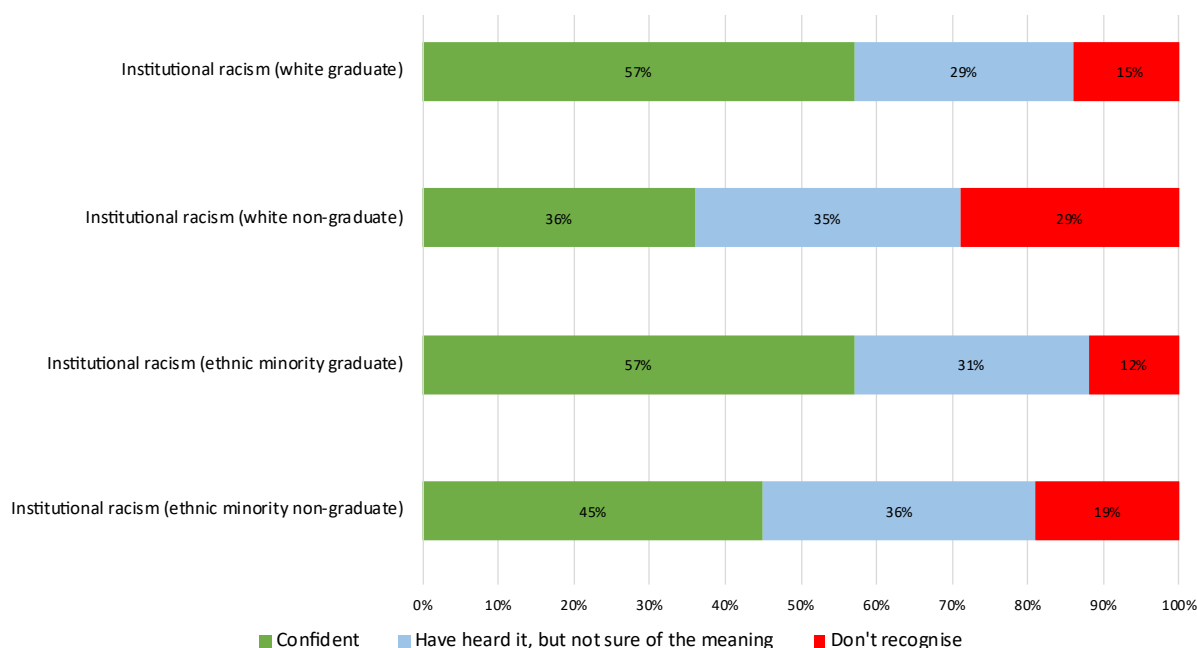
There is a similar pattern of recognition, by education, of the term “institutional racism”, though almost half of non-graduates from a minority background are confident of the meaning of this term, along with a third of white non-graduates.

Figure 8.5: How familiar are you with the term BAME? (By education/ethnicity)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Figure 8.6: How far are you familiar with the term “institutional racism”?



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

The London (Lewisham) group discussion was distinct, because several participants were aware of the broader debate in the media, institutions and politics about whether “BAME” was now an outdated term. This was rarer outside London, though individual participants in both Cardiff and Preston reported that this was a theme currently under discussion in their own organisations or networks.

Groups in other regions tended to understand “BAME” as a new term, which was being introduced, rather than a pre-existing term that was now under pressure, reflecting the fairly low salience and reach of the current debates about terminology. Outside London, several participants reported that they had heard the phrase for the first time during the Covid pandemic, so that one or two believed that the term had originated during the pandemic. The debate about ethnic labels is a topical and live one in specific sectors and professions – particularly the media, arts and culture, and civic society, and in some larger workplaces – but it is a much bigger theme among the highly engaged than it is among the general public. People do take a view about the pros and cons of different types of identity and data label when asked, but the research shows more pragmatism and some indifference to this debate than is currently reflected in media, civic society and political discourse.

“I have come across it during Covid – where there has been a higher rate among the ethnic communities, and I am very curious to know what might have brought that about.”

– White British female participant, North-east

“Its quite a lazy umbrella term that just lumps so many people together – that you are either in the majority group, or you are Other.”

– Black female participant, Lewisham

“I have come across the term, because I have been involved in community work. But I had not come across people saying that they had issues with it.”

– Asian male participant, Cardiff

“We were called coloured, then minorities, then Black and Minority Ethnic, and now it will be something else. All this labelling and labelling is separating human beings. With this one, BAME, we don’t own that name. So how can we have something that we don’t own? So I am against this term. As youth workers, we want to drop the term. There is a campaign going on at the moment for us to drop BAME from all of our publicity and stuff: ‘Stop calling us BAME’. We want communities where we can be white, black, white, mixed race and everybody lives together. But we don’t we don’t like this word BAME.”

– Asian male participant, Preston

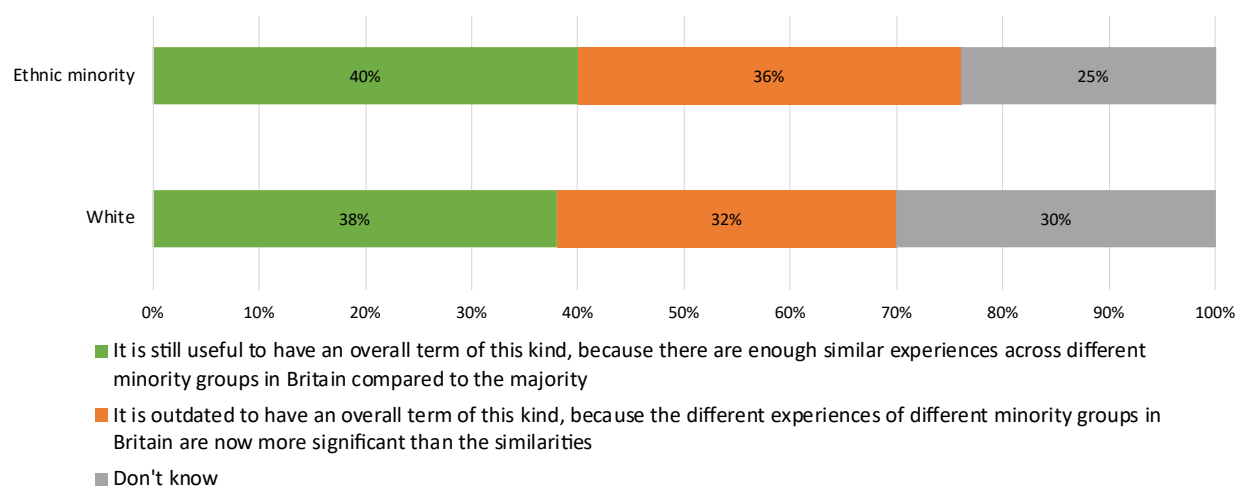
“I work in the arts. This has become a very hot topic at the moment. We’re all getting training, as everybody likes to throw training around at the moment, because we are all stuck indoors. What I would like to say is that I think it is a real shame that we feel the need to label everybody and everything. We’re all just people. At the end of the day doesn’t matter. Colour, creed, race, sex, whatever. We are just people. But I think we have become real sticklers for labelling.”

– White British female participant, Cardiff

Is an aggregate term now out-of-date?

The polling research found mixed views on the emerging debate about whether or not there is still value in having an aggregate term to compare the position of ethnic minorities to that of the white majority, or whether this is no longer relevant, because of the different experiences of different minority groups.

Figure 8.7: There are different views as to whether or not it is useful for public, media and policy debates to discuss ethnic minorities as a whole, as well as more specific minority groups. Which comes closest to your view?

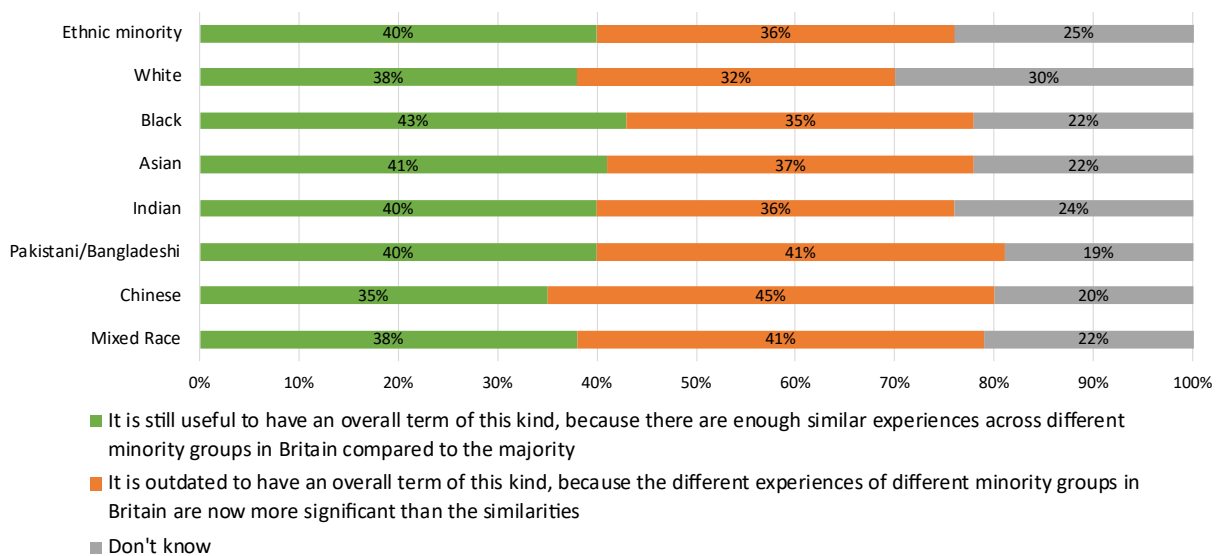


Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

The deliberative groups were asked this, though some participants may have found it a slightly abstract or technical question. There was a consensus in the Leicestershire and Lewisham groups, which had the most familiarity with ethnic diversity over time, that an umbrella term for ethnic minorities as a whole was out-of-date. Participants in other areas appeared to find the question of the dilemma and potential tension between collecting data and categorising people more accessible than the question about whether or not an aggregate term remains valid.

There were mixed views about this, in the polling, across all ethnic groups, with Black and white participants a little more likely to see the value of an aggregate term. As might have been anticipated, the British Chinese respondents and those of mixed ethnicity were on balance more sceptical of the relevance of an aggregate category (though this was a fairly small sample of British Chinese respondents).

Figure 8.8: There are different views as to whether or not it is useful for public, media and policy debates to discuss ethnic minorities as a whole, as well as more specific minority groups. Which comes closest to your view? (By ethnic group)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Two older ethnic minority participants in the Leicestershire group were among those who had not heard the term ‘BAME’ prior to this discussion. On hearing the definition, they suggested that the term “ethnic minority” had well been understood for many years – so could not see the point of changing it to this unfamiliar piece of ‘jargon’. However, other participants (white British) went on to suggest that the use of the word ‘minority’ was out-of-date, particularly in a city like Leicester, since it was among the first cities in the UK where there was no longer any ethnic majority group.

“Using the word ‘minority’ encourages a lack of respect – that these people are of a lesser status. It is meant to be a number – but it can have the wrong connotation.”

– White British female participant, Leicestershire.

Dilemmas of ethnic data collection – aversion but pragmatism

A number of groups felt that there was too much focus on ethnic data – and wanted this to be collected and used less, except if there was a clear rationale. This was a feature of the discussions in Glasgow, Leicester, Preston and the North-East. Every group saw a strong rationale for the NHS to collect ethnic data where there was a health need to do so. It was also seen as useful for the census to provide a statistical snapshot of the whole country, and of specific places like Leicester.

But some were sceptical of the frequency with which ethnic data was sought by other organisations, asking why it was needed in applying for jobs.

“I would have it for hospitals and the GP – if there is a specific need. But why do we have to give the ethnic background in an application for a job. We are all supposed to be equal – so where is the equality in doing that?”

– Asian male participant, Leicestershire.

“It could become a tick-box exercise the other way to – if an organisation thinks that we have to be seen to be being diverse. And then they may not appoint the right person for the job.”

– Asian female participant, Leicestershire.

“Data is literally just numbers, numbers pertaining to a piece of information. So when we’re talking about and collecting information via data, but people feeling as though they’re being put in boxes, sometimes the data has to be taken with a pinch of salt. I was 36 last week; I was 35 the week before. I may be in a different category but I am still the same person. But we will always need the data and data will always need to be collected. But there are bigger questions to ask too, such as what we learn from our response to Covid. And those are questions that we need to answer as a country, as the whole body of people, rather than separating it all out into different minority demographics.”

– Black female participant, Lewisham.

“The problem here is, if you’re actually going to address inequality, seriously, then you need some way of measuring your progress in reducing that inequality. And you need some way of recording your outcomes. If you are serious about addressing racial discrimination, then you have to have some way of monitoring the effect of your actions. That means recording people who are from the minority ethnic communities. So, with the best of intentions, but you are dividing society into two groups, the white indigenous population and the black and minority ethnic population. And if you try to level the two up, unfortunately, you have to divide them up. You may disagree with the term Black and Minority Ethnic, but if you want to say, we are going to try and level up society so that every member of it has an equal opportunity, unfortunately, you have to find some way to measure your progress.”

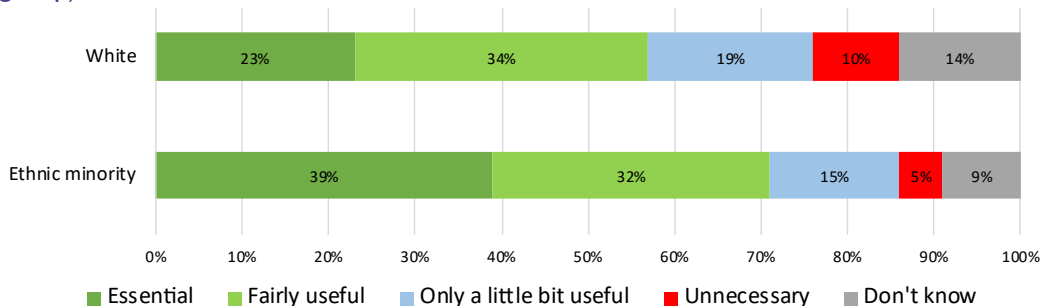
– White British male participant, Preston.

In the representative polling, there was broad public consent for the collection of different levels of data and a broad cross-ethnic consensus on this.

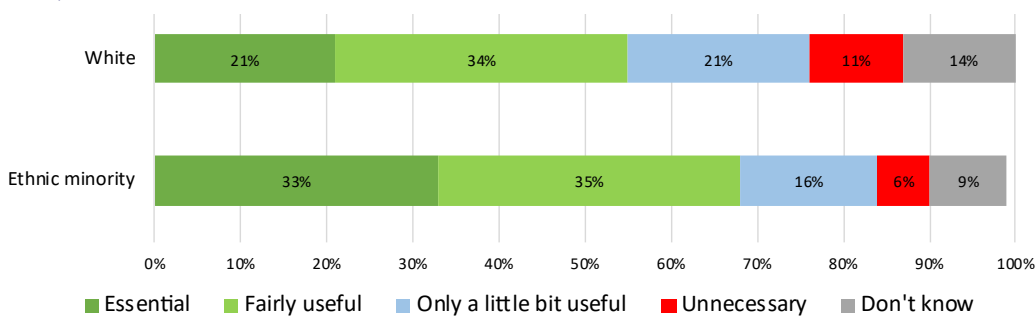
Opposition to data collection on ethnic grounds is a narrow minority – of around one in ten white respondents, and a smaller proportion of ethnic minorities – reflecting a broad level of pragmatic consent for the UK tradition of seeing ethnic data as a relevant tool of research and policy analysis, in contrast to the philosophical objection to this categorisation in several continental European countries, such as France.

Figure 8.9: How useful or not useful do you think collecting statistics in these areas is for research/policy?

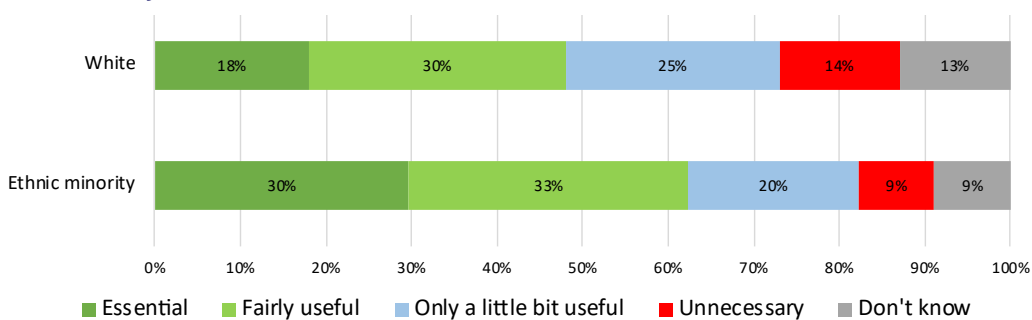
Data covering all ethnic minorities (compared to the white majority group)



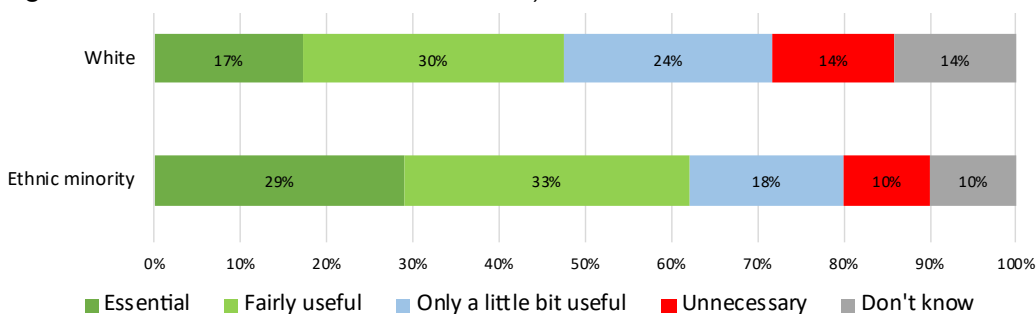
Data on different broad minority groups – such as Black, Asian, Mixed Race, White



Data on people from different faith groups – eg Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish



Data on national origins/family heritage (eg Bangladesh, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, Trinidad, Poland, Ireland, etc)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

“Speaking as a white male, I have only come to find out about it through the press and Coronavirus. But I think it is helpful in understanding the reports that are coming out, statistically, and what needs to be done about that.”

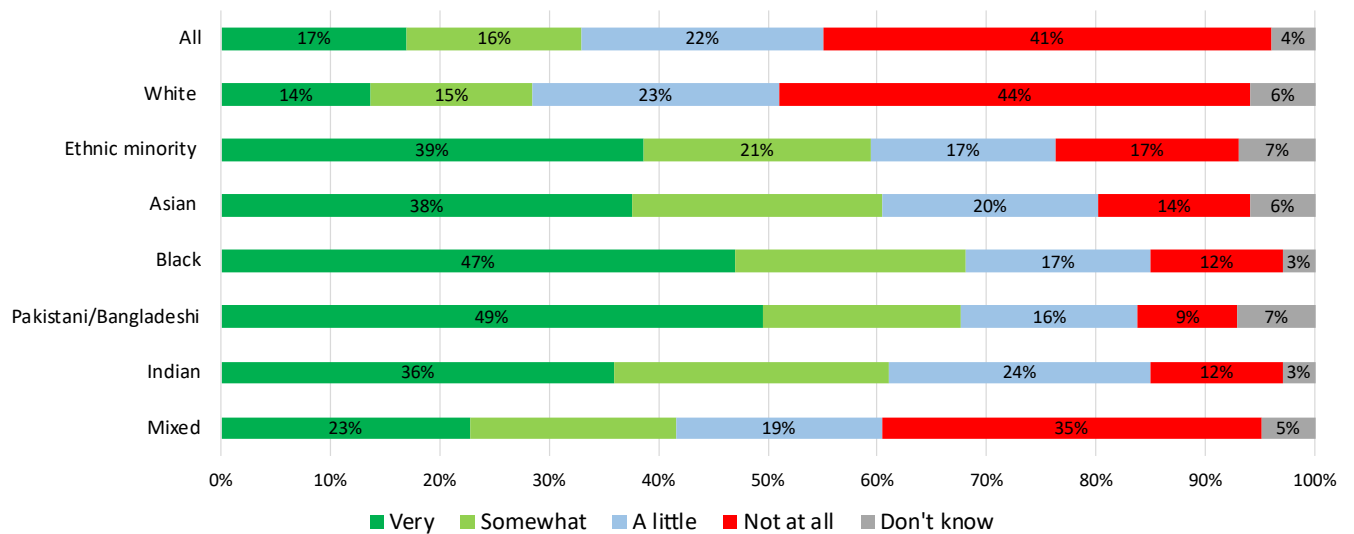
– White British male participant, Buckinghamshire.

“I can see that we do need to get some information and data. So I would choose the broad ones – are you white, Black or Asian? That seems enough to work with”.

– White British male participant, North-east.

Ethnic minority respondents placed slightly more value on data overall, with white participants being less likely to see the value of national origin and faith data, though there was a plurality of white respondents in favour of doing this, along with a majority of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds. This partially reflects the considerably stronger identification and relevance of faith for ethnic minority over white British respondents, captured in the attitudes research.

Figure 8.10: How important, if at all, is religion or faith in your life?

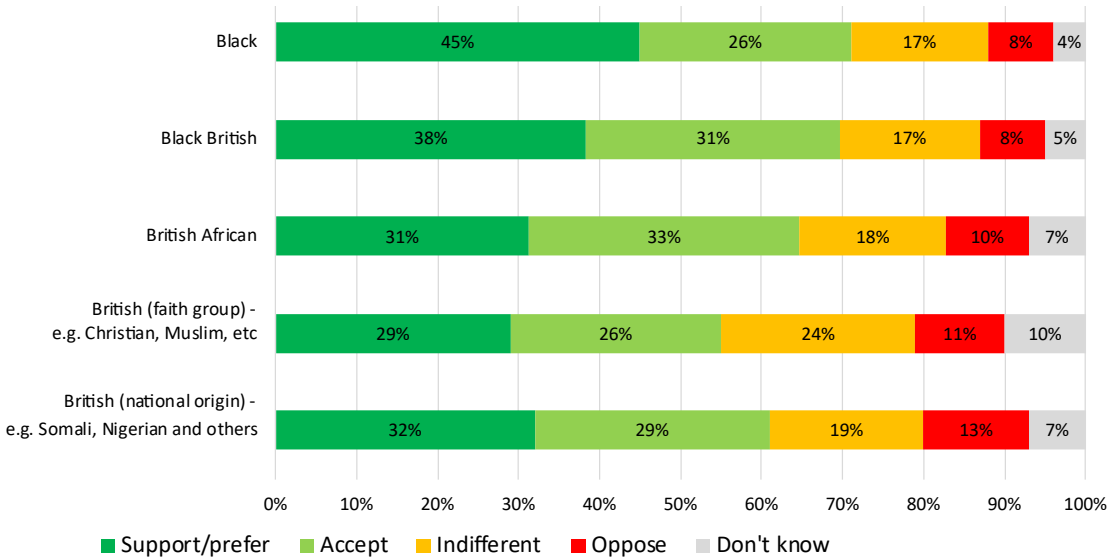


Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

The attitudes research also asked black respondents and Asian respondents about whether more specific identity terms were approved, acceptable or unacceptable. This shows that there is widely felt legitimacy of broad ethnic group terms, when relevant. There were mild differences between black and Asian preferences, with national origin and faith identity terms having broader approval among Asian than black respondents, though with the overall contours of opinion being somewhat similar across groups.

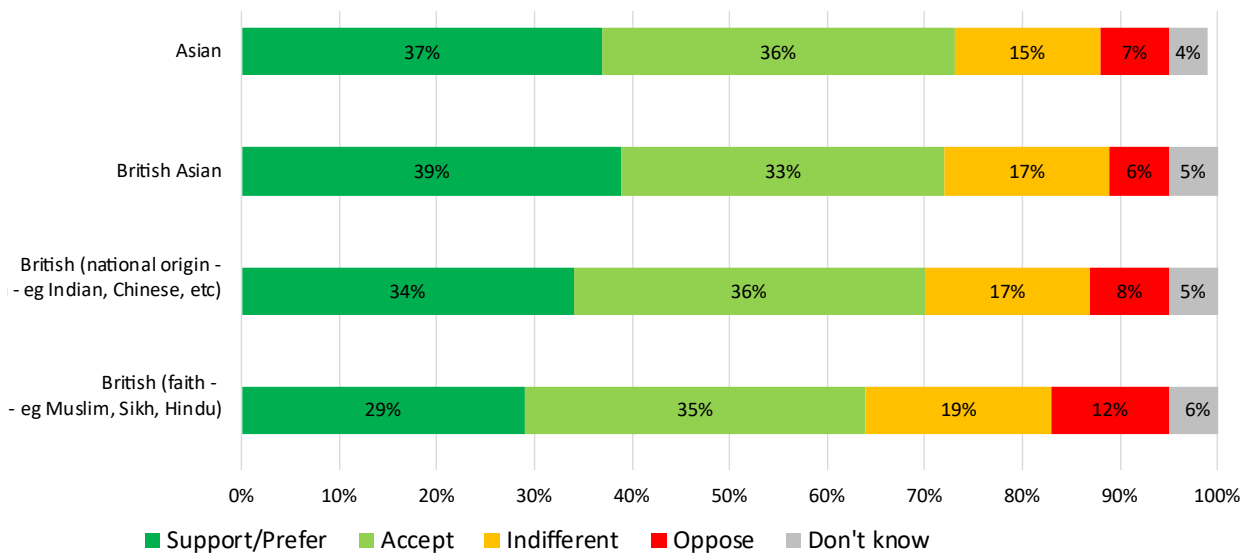
Figure 8.11: How do you feel about these terms?

(Asked to Black respondents only)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 525 black UK adults.

(Asked to Asian respondents only)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 983 Asian UK adults.

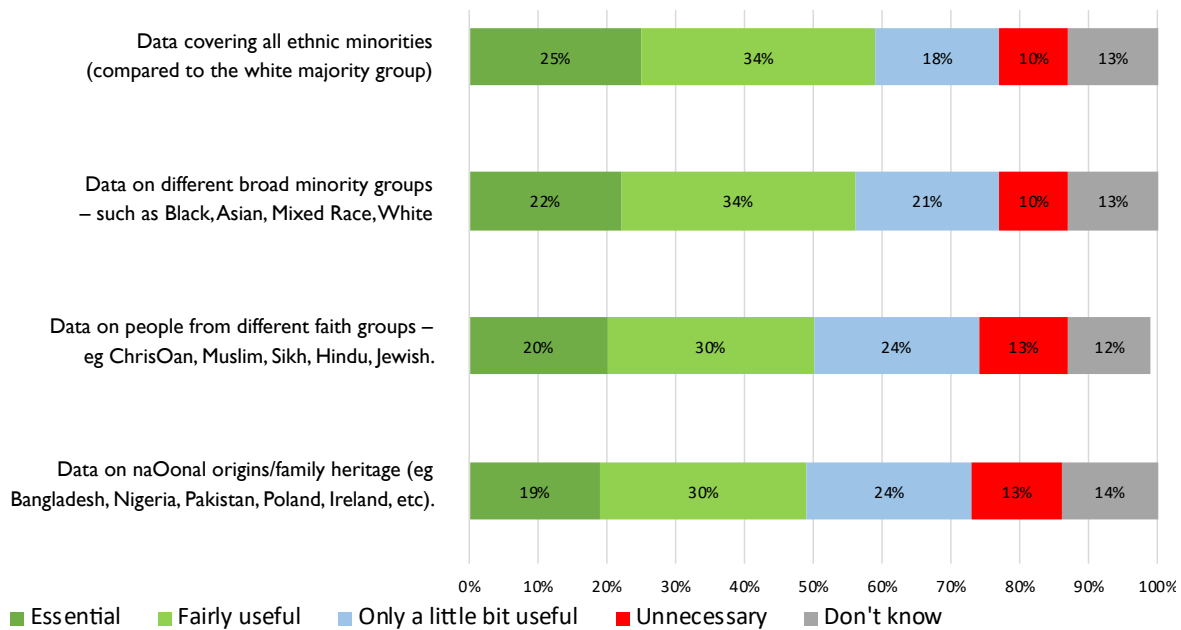
What matters is what the data is used for

Later in the deliberative discussions, members of the groups that had opposed the collection of ethnic data by employers spoke in favour of a proposal for ethnic pay gap reporting, because this could increase transparency and bring about fairness. This was the case in Glasgow, Leicestershire and the north-east group. So the discussions captured the tension between the instinctive dislike of forms and ethnic categorisation, alongside supporting the use of such data in practice where it can pursue particular fairness outcomes – perhaps placing a greater premium on explaining why such data is being collected and what it will be used for.

Asked to comment on a list of potential types of data that might be collected, participants in several groups questioned the relevance of parental educational status – and were confused as to why this could be useful, including wondering if this could be a reason to discriminate against candidates for roles on the basis of background. Those with experience of working in education explained that it was most likely to be collected in schools or university admissions as a way to try to expand access to higher education. Again, these exchanges demonstrated the value of trying to communicate the purpose and motive for collecting and using data in order to secure public trust in its legitimacy.

The polling attitudes evidence reflects the pragmatic approach to data collection for a relevant purpose, despite the aversion to categorisation by ethnicity.

Figure 8.12: How useful do you think collecting statistics in these areas is for research/policy? (All UK findings)



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

“Statistics to do with ethnicity can be useful. So for example, in health, regarding certain diseases. Or whether there are any ethnic minority people in the top board level roles. But what do we do with that data? That data needs to be passed to the government to make changes. There is no point collecting numbers or statistics, just for the sake of it just to write a report. You need to implement changes. The UK is a progressive country so it is good that organisations collect data. But it is what you do to act on the data that is the most important aspect of this.”

– White British male participant, Lewisham.

Differentiating between identity and data terms

The deliberative research also got to hear the reactions of people who were encountering terms like BAME for the first time, during the group discussion. Some participants said that they specifically objected to the use of “Bame” as a word, while words spelling this out could be useful in the correct context, primarily as a statistical term.

“I would say that term, BAME, it can be used to decipher data and statistics – but do not use it outside of that boundary. Because that is when it has a negative connotation.”

– Black female participant, Lewisham.

“It doesn’t sound great. That would be my first reaction. What? What are we now? So I don’t like the term personally. And it will all change again. My children are mixed – Chinese and white, in fact ginger, which could be another minority group. Where do they fit into this?”

– Chinese female participant, North-east.

“I had not heard the term ‘BAME’ before. But to me, it seems silly. What is wrong with just using the actual terms, which puts into your head that this is talking about several different types of Black and Asian and ethnic minority people? But if you just ‘Bame’ it up into one category, you just kind of forget that we do have different kinds of categories within that. So no, I don’t think we should just put anyone in that box.”

– Asian female participant, Glasgow.

“If it’s necessary, for example, in hospitals, and certain illnesses affects certain races more so. But I feel it can be unnecessary – when I see the B A M E, I think for me it is a bit degrading and it categorises you. White people don’t have a box to fit in. You don’t call them white, you just call them people. I have my own identity. I am British Indian. So why does someone else have to put me in a box drawn by someone else to label like who I am?”

– Asian female participant, Preston.

Another concern expressed by participants was that the changing of language about race could make it difficult for people to know what they could and could not say, or how to talk about issues of opportunities and integration without causing unintentional offence.

“I get really concerned about what to call anybody now. You don’t want to offend anybody, and it would be good to use the terms that people prefer, but if we don’t know what that is, and then it just keeps on changing.”

– White British female participant, north-east.

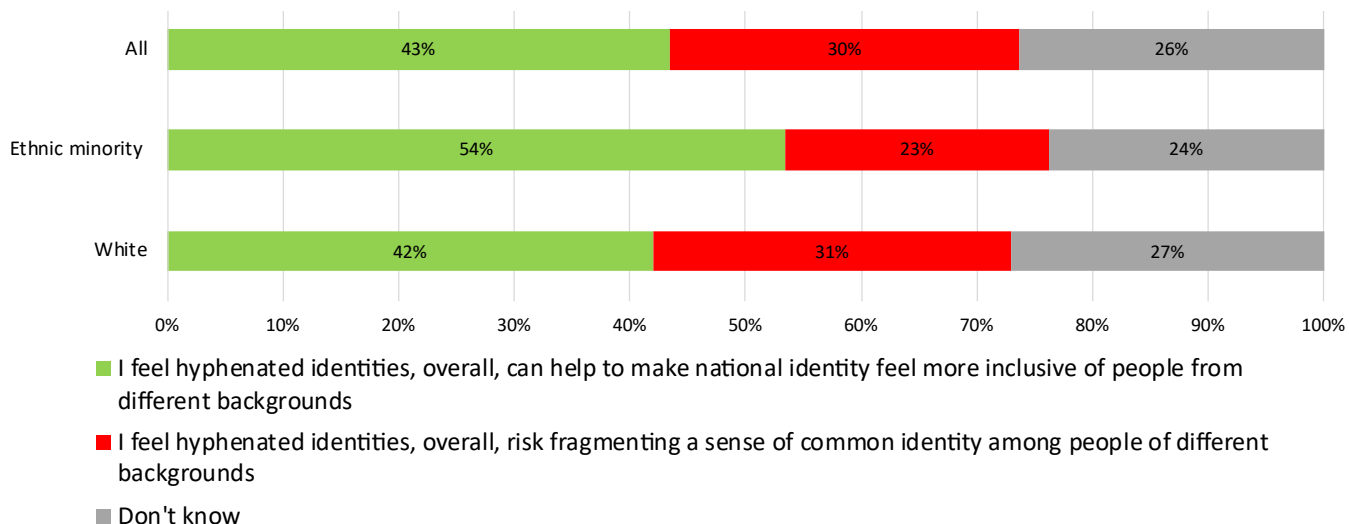
Towards the end of the Leicester discussion, one of the British Asian participants who had not been familiar with the ‘BAME’ term prior to the discussion offered his perspective on the identity labels which could be encouraged.

“We should say ‘British Indian’, ‘British Muslim’, ‘Black British’ and so on. Because we are all part of this United Kingdom. What this “BAME” says is that you are part of something completely different and separate. This makes us part of something together. So instead of saying ‘Indian’ or ‘Pakistani’, let’s say British Indian, instead of Indian or Pakistani, is a way to show that we are all part of something together”

– Asian male participant, Leicestershire.

This contribution reflected a finding in the attitudes research where – on balance – the use of hyphenated identities were seen as more likely to be a positive driver of inclusion, rather than a source of fragmentation. White and ethnic minority participants in the deliberative research articulated the arguments for both of these positions, with different views reflecting personal experience and different ways of striking these balances. The attitudes data shows that the balance of ethnic minority opinion is towards seeing hyphenated identities as a potential route towards a shared British identity rather than a barrier to it.

Figure 8.13: Some people use hyphenated identities to describe themselves, for example Black-British, British-Asian, Irish-American and so on. Which of the following comes closest to your view?



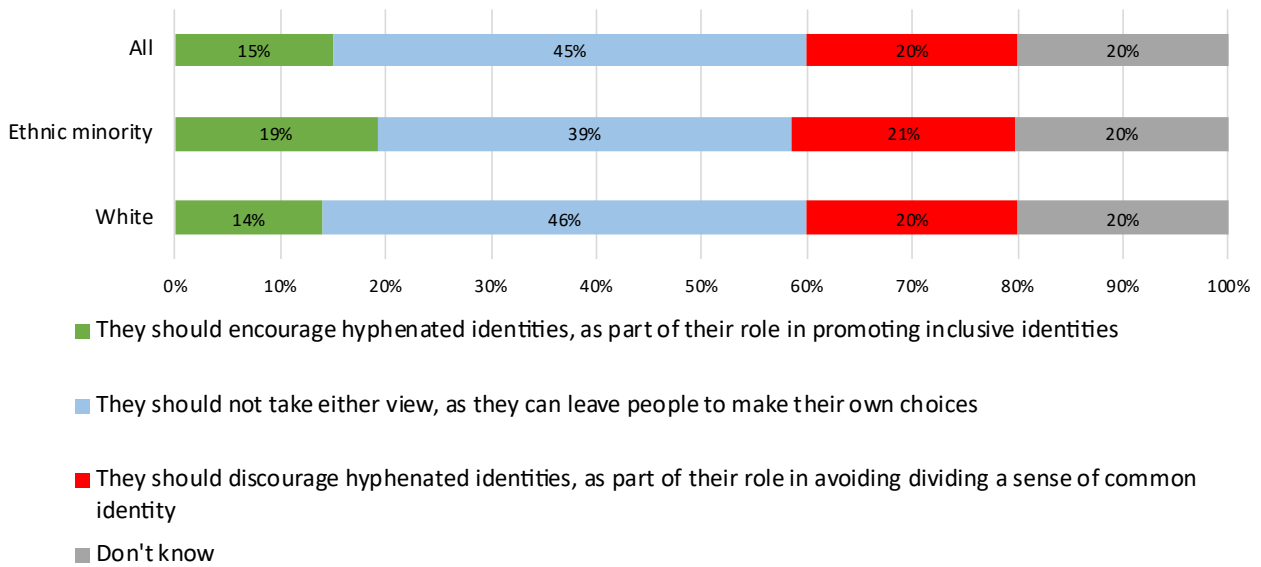
Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

“I do think it needs reworking, but I think it needs to be a community led thing, not a sort of task for saying, Okay, well, we’ve broken you down now into 30 subsections, rather than four. I think it needs to be more like a conversation about how we adjust it.”

– White British male participant, Lewisham.

There is also a broad consensus that government should not take a highly prescriptive approach to people’s sense of identity, and may be better off letting people make these choices for themselves about how they combine different aspects of their personal identity, such as national heritage or faith identities, with a shared British citizenship identity, which the government is widely seen as having a legitimate role in promoting.

Figure 8.14: Should the government and institutions encourage or discourage the use of hyphenated identities?



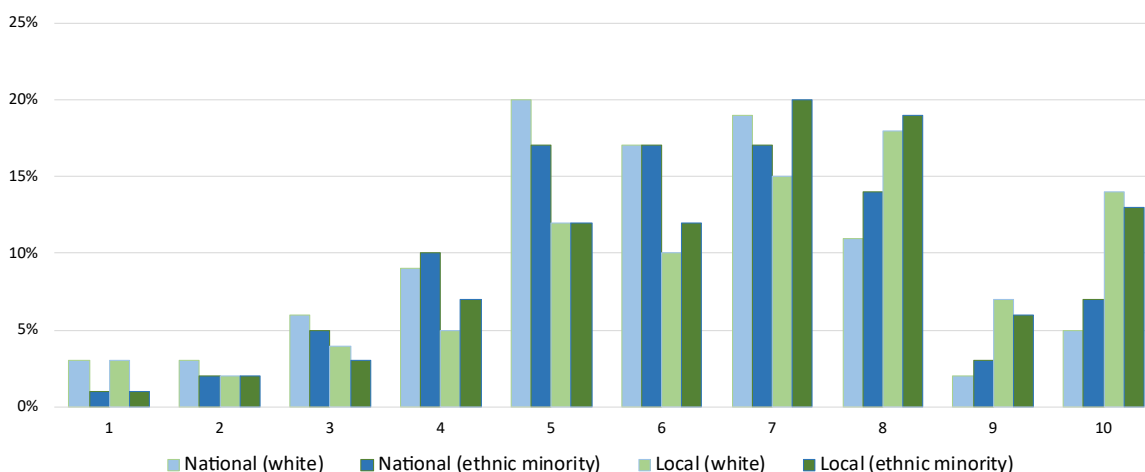
Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults

9. Getting it right locally: findings from the deliberative research

Greater confidence about local, rather than national, race relations is a strong feature of British attitudes towards race relations today. This is a pattern across all nations and regions of the UK, shared across ethnic majority and minority groups. This national research finding was strongly reflected across the local discussions held in seven different locations, each bringing together groups in which half of participants were from ethnic minority backgrounds and half were white British.

Local pride was an especially strong feature of the discussions in Glasgow, Leicestershire and Preston, with ethnic diversity and good relations across groups considered to form part of a shared local identity that mattered to those from the minority and majority groups. Participants in Cardiff and Lewisham in London saw significant differences in the confidence and lived experience of the Welsh and English capital cities, compared to other areas in England and Wales. The group held with participants from Buckinghamshire also saw it as a place of comparatively good race relations, but did not relate this as strongly to a place-based local identity.

Figure 9.1: How well do people from different ethnic groups get on – in your area and nationally?

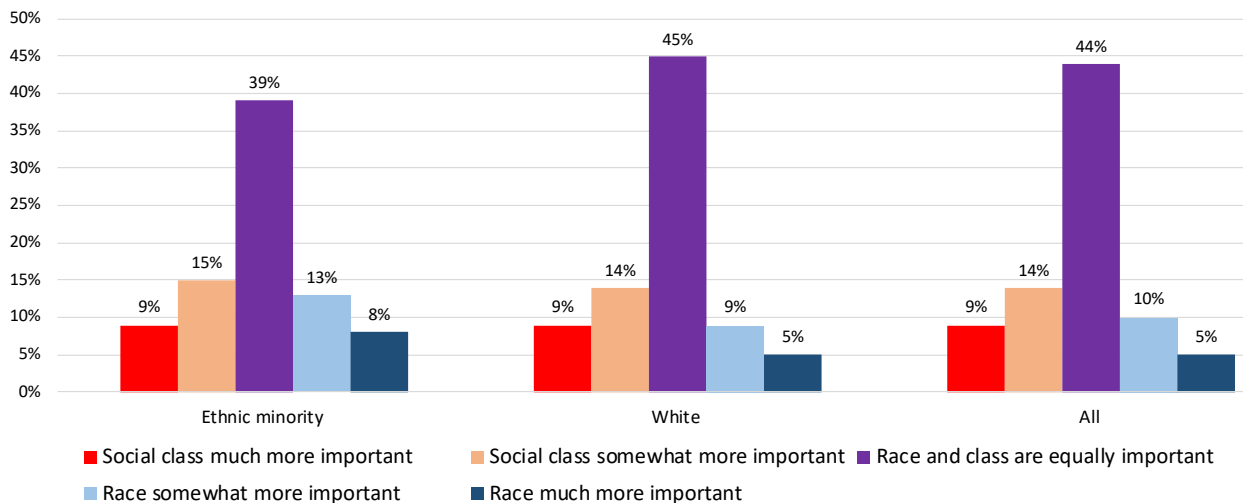


Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

Along with levels of ethnic diversity, views about economic pressures and social class were significant factors in framing different conversations about race and fairness in Britain across the different group locations. There was a considerably stronger emphasis on social class barriers to equal opportunity in the north-east of England and in Cardiff than there was in the south of England, in south London and Buckinghamshire. The Preston,

Leicestershire and Glasgow groups tended to see race and class as of equal importance to equal opportunities, reflecting the dominant view in the nationally representative polling.

Figure 9.2: Thinking about racial and class background, which do you think people’s outcomes in life depend on more?



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

In our discussions with each group we asked them to rate local relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds on a 1-10 scale, with 1 very poor and 10 very good. Participants were then asked why they gave this score, as a way in to a broader conversation about race relations locally. The table below shows the average (mean) scores given by each group, along with brief summaries of whether participants considered race or class to be a more important driver of inequality; their top priorities for the government; and views on race terminology, such as the term ‘BAME’. We have also included short summaries of the conversations in each group, highlighting areas of regional difference.

Table 9.3: Overview of deliberative group discussions across nations and regions

Location	Local race relations (average)	Is race or class a more important barrier?	Top priorities for government action on race	Discussion of BAME
Bucks/Herts	8.0	Equal (4/8) Class (3/8)	Opportunities for young people; education.	Over half aware of BAME; data is essential but take care with language
Cardiff	8.4	Class (7/8) Equal (1/8)	Education; opportunities for young people	Low/mixed awareness of BAME; sceptical about data except for clear purposes.
Glasgow	6.6	Equal (4/8)	Action on hate crime/social media; equal opportunities in jobs and young people	Only 1/8 had heard of BAME; use words rather than acronyms. Data for specific purposes.
Leicestershire	7.4	Equal (8/8)	Education; young people; hate crime and social media	Half of group aware of 'BAME'; Go beyond aggregate term, and 'minority' is out-of-date now too. Would prefer to scrap most data collection, but also favoured ethnic pay gap reporting
Lewisham	7.44	Race (3/8) Equal (3/8)	Education; Crime, justice, policing.	Aware of term and debate about it; umbrella term is out-of-date but data is essential for policy and progress.
North-East	8.0	Class (5/7) Equal (2/7)	Action on hate crime and social media; Crime, justice and policing	Half aware of BAME term. Sceptical of data categorisation, but exceptions included census, health and ethnic pay gaps.
Preston	6.8	Race (3/6) Equal (2/6)	Education; opportunities for young people; promote social contact	Mixed awareness of BAME; BAME is Othering; talk about minorities as British Indian, British Pakistani.

Summaries of group discussions

Glasgow

Participants shared a strong sense of confidence in Glasgow as a welcoming place for people of all ethnic backgrounds.

“The people of Scotland are very welcoming. Glasgow is quite hospitable – and more courteous than other parts of the UK.”

– Asian male participant, Glasgow.

This was a view shared by ethnic minority and white participants, with contrasts drawn with other areas of Scotland and also with England. The contrasts across Scotland reflected Glasgow’s greater familiarity with ethnic diversity over time, but also the practical experience of there being more amenities for ethnic minorities, including places of worship and foodstuffs, than was the case in other Scottish cities. This broadly shared sense of pride in Glasgow’s approach to diversity was combined with suggestions that more could be done to extend and promote positive contact.

“I don’t think we do mix as well as I would like it to be mixed. There is some ignorance on both sides – it is not just the Scots towards the minorities. I find it can be both ways.”

– White British female participant, Glasgow.

The Glasgow participants felt that there was probably more racism in England than Scotland. A couple of ethnic minority participants had personal experiences of living in England. Asian participants also felt that ethnic minorities might choose to stick to their own groups more in England than they did in Glasgow: an anecdotal example, of a British Bangladeshi friend who had moved to London, was used to illustrate this point.

In contrast to their accounts of experiencing the diversity of Glasgow – in education, work and social life – only one member of the Glasgow group was familiar with the term ‘BAME’. So it was quickly agreed that the few seconds saved by not saying the term in full would be pointless, especially if many people might not understand the topic as a result. Other members of the group intuitively felt that the use of an acronym could seem dismissive or insulting, with comparisons made to racial epithets, though participants agreed that the purpose of this term was different.

In common with other groups, there was a discussion about the pros and cons of making people tick boxes to categorise themselves. Once someone in the group made the point that it was mainly about the value of having data, since it would be impossible to challenge discrimination or monitor progress without collecting statistics, this view commanded a clear consensus among participants, who agreed that it was a good idea to collect statistics for the legitimate purpose of promoting equal opportunities.

Fairness

“We are slowly getting there – but we are still a fair bit away. Look at how long it has taken to secure more equal opportunities for women.”

– White British male participant, Glasgow.

The group felt that the principle of fairness for all was important, but thought it would prove challenging to integrate approaches to social class and to race, as well as to gender. While these would sometimes overlap, there could often be different kinds of barriers to equal opportunity, such as language barriers or stereotypes about those from minority groups. These could be different from barriers relating to social class and education, and could require different responses.

The group felt there were still problems of discrimination when people apply for jobs. Several participants linked this to sectarian bias and prejudice in Glasgow. Some participants said that this had been a significant problem, which had reduced over the years, while others cited examples of its being an ongoing issue, reporting experiences of friends being asked whether they supported Rangers or Celtic in a job interview. However this concern, about the persistence of sectarianism as a source of bias from some employers, was also combined with a belief that social class could be less of an issue in Glasgow, “Which doesn’t have as much of a class system, compared to Westminster and London,” according to one participant. “The further south that you go, class and wealth will then have more of an impact,” they explained.

Ethnic minority participants in the Glasgow group were also among the more confident respondents (across locations) in feeling that they would mostly expect to be treated fairly in job applications and interviews, and in having opportunities to progress in the workplace. One Asian participant suggested that public sector approaches and clear rules and policies for recruitment helped to entrench fair practices for candidates, while suggesting that the private sector could be a different story, with a more mixed picture depending on the policies, the personnel and the workplace culture of different organisations.

This confidence about a gradual opening-up of opportunities for progression at work was combined with personal experiences of how organisations could have limited practical experience of dealing with ethnic and faith diversity in the workplace, leading to some awkward experiences. One Asian Muslim women expressed her pride in having secured promotion to a senior role in the private sector, particularly since she had been told by several people that her organisation and sector would have a ceiling for both ethnic minorities and women, which she had proved wrong. She also reported that it had been easier to combine prayers with work once remote working began, after the organisation had initially struggled to address what was a new issue to them.

“This has been one of the advantages of working from home during lockdown – because I have that flexibility. Before, there had been nowhere suitable in the office. We had been told we could pray in the fire exit area, but that was stopped – because it was a fire exit, so it was not appropriate. We had taken it up with HR, to find an alternative, but because there are only a few of us, that didn’t seem to get anywhere. So that is just a small example of where it would be nice to get that little bit more voice. I did mention this to my manager as being a positive for me of working from home, but I then got a call from another colleague who said that they just wanted to let me know that ‘stopping to pray was obviously fine – as long as that time is being made-up’. And I really didn’t think was something that they needed to tell me”.

- Asian female participant, Glasgow

Lewisham, South London

This South London group combined strong confidence in race relations locally with a sober view of how much further there is to go to secure equal opportunities across races in the UK. Gentrification was a theme raised by both white and ethnic minority participants in Lewisham, which did not come up in groups outside London. This was associated with a reduction of diversity in highly diverse areas, and economic pressures on ethnic minority communities. There was also a desire to see more positive interaction between those from different backgrounds.

Participants clustered around seeing race as more of a barrier than social class, or giving equal weight to the two. While acknowledging there had been progress in the long run, the discussion focused mainly on the barriers that remained. It was felt to be important that government prioritised both race and class disadvantage, as it could not be seen to choose between them for fairness reasons. The group saw several advantages in strategies that combined them, though there are distinct challenges too in specific policy areas for race and class disadvantage.

“James Caan had to change his name. Why would a Pakistani-origin businessman change his name to an English name? He knew his name was going to hold him back.”

- Asian male participant, Lewisham.

“I think they can do a two pronged approach to it. I don’t think they need to pick and choose. If they were doing that, it would be prioritising one group over another, and that could not be a good look for a government.”

- White British male participant, Lewisham.

The Lewisham group had the most familiarity with terminology in debates about race – with “BAME” being a familiar term to most participants, from workplace settings and public debates about race. The Lewisham group did not like the “BAME” term and, more broadly, felt that a shift away from an umbrella term was now overdue, because of the different experiences and barriers for different groups in education and jobs. This was the only group where most participants began with a prior awareness of currently contested debates about the most appropriate terminology about race.

“Its quite a lazy umbrella term that just lumps so many people together – that you are either in the majority group, or you are Other.”

– Black female participant, Lewisham.

This group’s strong concern with barriers and progress to equal opportunities meant that they wanted to differentiate between the collection of data – which they thought was important for measuring progress – and the use of identity terms, which could often be out of date, and which were best left to individuals to define for themselves.

“We always need data. It is just numbers.”

– Black female participant, Lewisham.

Compared to other discussions, this south London group often demonstrated the highest level of engagement with the public debate about issues of race equality, but often had the least optimistic perspective about the current rate of progress, partly reflecting a higher expectation of what equal opportunities required. The group put the highest priority on opportunities in education, and on crime and justice, but the overall mood was for sustained and concerted action on all fronts. Stronger teaching of the history of race and Empire was a theme that energised the group, as one important foundation for a confident and shared identity.

Leicestershire

This group, drawn from both the city of Leicester and the surrounding county, had a familiarity and confidence about ethnic diversity, seeing this as a settled, positive feature of Leicester, which they felt was more confident about these issues, through the lived experience and familiarity of ethnic diversity, than many other places in the UK.

“Everyone seems to get on well – and I think we are quite well known for that too.”

– White British male participant, Leicestershire.

“I feel we are a lot more adapted and we are a welcoming place. I don’t know the rest of the country well – but from what I see on the news and social media, there are more problems elsewhere.”

– White British male participant, Leicestershire.

“I think we have been a success of multiculturalism and tolerance. I have been here forty years. In the last four or five years, I do think there has been more tension. I put it down to politicians and political parties, who can divide communities when they are seeking votes from one community or another.”

– Asian male participant, Leicestershire.

The Leicestershire participants were universally of the opinion that social class and race were of equal importance – while noting different features in both directions. They did see some persistent barriers to equal opportunities – such as ‘who you know’ networks of people inside organisations, when it came to high-ranking jobs – but voiced confidence that individuals could progress and overcome those barriers. The group had a clear sense that ethnic barriers had reduced over time and expected them to continue to do so – citing greater contact and understanding between younger generations, and also the growth of mixed relationships. We heard that progress had seemed more difficult in recent years – with austerity and the impact of political divisions after the 2016 referendum. However, the Covid pandemic had seen people come together more.

Participants in Leicestershire wanted governments to pursue fairness on both race and class – but felt there would be challenges in seeking to fuse these agendas, believing there were different dynamics for different issues. At the same time, they felt that strong action on equal opportunities across social classes would have a significant impact for ethnic minorities, due to the history of discrimination in Britain, meaning that minority groups had been catching up over time.

“It seems as though there was a lot of discrimination against the first generation. We are still playing catch up and so it’s still not right. So, if you could solve class, and equal opportunities, you would find you would have made quite a lot of difference to the issues on race.”

– White British male participant, Leicestershire.

“I think we are getting there – but we are getting there slowly. I think schools have a big role to play. Parental responsibility is important to attitudes too.”

– White British female participant, Leicestershire.

While only half of the group had been aware of the term BAME, there was a strong consensus in the Leicestershire group that an umbrella term for ethnic minorities as a whole was out-of-date, and a preference to use terms that stressed the connections between different majority and minority groups.

“Using the word ‘minority’ encourages a lack of respect – that these people are of a lesser status. It is meant to be a number – but it can have the wrong connotation.”

– White British female participant, Leicestershire.

“We should say ‘British Indian’, ‘British Muslim’, ‘Black British’ and so on. Because we are all part of this United Kingdom. What this “BAME” says is that you are part of something completely different and separate.”

– Asian male participant, Leicestershire.

The Leicestershire group were sceptical of the frequency with which ethnic data was collected, and wanted this to happen less, except when there was a clear rationale.

“I would have it for hospitals and the GP – if there is a specific need. But why do we have to give the ethnic background in an application for a job. We are all supposed to be equal – so where is the equality in doing that?”

– Asian male participant, Leicestershire.

They agreed that the NHS should collect ethnic data – and that it was useful for the census to provide a statistical snapshot of the whole country, and of specific places like Leicester. However, later in the discussion, members of this group were in favour of a proposal for ethnic pay gap reporting, because this would increase transparency and bring about fairness, despite having wanted employers to cease collecting such data.

On future priorities, there was a strong convergence on equal opportunities in education, and for young people, as the main priorities, with more apprenticeships and vocational schemes seen as one key to this. The group viewed social media as a problem that did need more action – seeing a lack of challenge to widespread racism and abuse online. Participants had all seen significant efforts by schools and faiths locally to promote positive inter-faith relations in Leicestershire, and felt more could be done to promote positive contact. A greater understanding of history – with an honest and balanced account of the history of Empire – was seen as an important foundation for shared identity in Britain today. Asked whether we talk too little or too much about race, or should talk about it differently, the Leicestershire group coalesced around the idea that ‘we talk too much about race as a negative thing – and as a blame-game – and not enough about it as a positive for society’.

“We talk a lot about negatives. Let’s focus on the solutions – rather than blaming each other.”

– Asian male participant, Leicestershire.

“We need prevention rather than cure. It’s a long game – but we need to close the gaps, and ensure everybody understands and respects each other.”

– White British male participant, Leicestershire.

North-east of England

The north-east of England group, drawn from across Greater Newcastle, Sunderland and Northumberland, had a strong sense of the region as welcoming and friendly, though with some challenges from a small minority with racist views. The lower levels of ethnic diversity in the region were seen as a potential advantage in avoiding patterns of segregation, though participants did not feel they were well placed to talk about what was happening elsewhere. One participant saw Covid as generating more tension, with specific concerns about whether members of the growing Orthodox Jewish community in Gateshead were following the Covid lockdown rules.

Ethnic minority participants in the north-east perceived more barriers to opportunity in senior roles, compared to everyday jobs, and in some professions rather than others. The north-east group placed considerably more emphasis than other groups on the risks of tilting the balance too far with a risk of discriminating against white candidates if there was too much focus on ethnic data in organisations. This was linked to concerns about opportunity and social class. One participant gave an anecdotal example of a candidate whose parents had not been to university, and wanted to study medicine, but had struggled to secure interviews, contrasting this with a black school-mate whose father was a doctor, who had quickly secured a place to study medicine. Because they felt these candidates were probably equally strong, they perceived admissions to study medicine as having a bias in favour of a candidate with a family link to the profession.

The north-east group was distinct in seeing social class as a stronger factor now in equal opportunities than race, while ethnic minority participants in the north-east group saw both factors as of equal importance. Participants in the north-east group were sceptical that race and class could be combined, seeing some overlap, mostly seeing these as being two important sets of challenges that would need distinct approaches. Their perception was that governments would now prioritise race – because the issue was high profile and there was pressure to act on race (which they felt was legitimate and important), so were concerned about the risk that the social and economic pressures arising from the pandemic would have too low a priority.

“I’m not 100% convinced that politicians would see social class as an issue, because politicians predominantly seem to come from one or two classes. When was the last time you saw a working class politician high up enough to make a difference? For me, I think race will always come first over social class because it’s easier, in inverted commas, and more visible.”

– White British male participant, North-east.

Half of the group were unaware of the term “BAME”. Other participants thought it might have been coined during the Covid pandemic, since they had first heard the term in the last year. Ethnic minority participants (who tended not to have heard the BAME term previously) did not like it and did not see why it was necessary to introduce new and unfamiliar terms for ethnic diversity. White participants also felt that the changes in terminology had a damaging effect, exacerbating anxiety about how to talk about issues of ethnic diversity in a way that was respectful and would not cause offence, without knowing what different terms were now in use.

The north-east group had a strong intuitive preference for scrapping the use of tick-boxes and ethnic data where possible – something voiced as strongly by the ethnic minority as the white participants. However, views about how far to take this shifted as participants talked about the utility of data to inform policy and practice. This case was thought especially strong in health, and relevant for understanding equal opportunities (as long as this did not become a quota-style system of who should be appointed for any particular role). The group discussion therefore converged towards a distinction between the collection of statistics for a clear purpose – such as in the census and in policy research – alongside a shift towards placing more emphasis on the identities people share (such as being British) across ethnic and faith groups. Companies reporting on ethnic pay gap data, alongside gender pay gap data, was seen as potentially useful information, despite this group’s aversion to collecting data that could put people into separate boxes.

“Statistics are important. I see a value in every piece of data if you understand how you are using it. It is really important for science and medicine, and for knowing the patterns of opportunities. I do believe in data-gathering. But we should not be talking about people and labelling them.”

– Mixed race female participant, who was a statistics student, North-east.

The north-east group was almost unanimous in choosing stronger action on hate crime as their top priority for the future, along with crime and justice. There was a strong consensus that toxic content on social media was going unchallenged – from personal experience and news coverage. Participants welcomed footballers raising this issue – citing Alan Shearer’s comments on how long this had been going on – since this might get noticed where the general public could not get their voice heard.

“There’s far too many keyboard warriors out there. The worse that happens to them is they get a slap on the wrist from Facebook or Twitter. But nothing is going to get done over the internet, they’ll just set up another account under another name and continue.”

– Asian male participant, North-east.

Participants also had examples of encountering racism face to face. One ethnic minority group participant, with a relative in the police force, said that his experiences with the general public were different. A British Asian participant who works as a taxi-driver suggested there was a significant difference between online and off-line spaces. People with racist views are more cautious in the real world, where it was thought likely that bystanders would step in if somebody crossed the line, but feel disinhibited as “keyboard warriors”. This had become a bigger problem during a lockdown. Participants felt that sanctions were weak and ineffective: they wanted to see effective bans from platforms and enforcement by the police of the worst offenders to change the sense of impunity online.

The strength of the group’s focus on prioritising hate crime online may have implicitly reflected their understanding of tackling overt racism as being the key challenge in race equality. This issue also enabled the north-east group participants to articulate the strength of their commitment to upholding anti-racism norms in modern Britain. This aligned with the north-east group’s overall perception that laws, policies and processes for equal opportunities are largely in place now (and should not tilt the balance too far towards risking introducing a pro-minority preference).

On how we should talk about race, the group found a consensus around the idea that “the balance is right in talking about it – but where the balance is wrong is doing something about it.” They felt that “everybody has been talking about race. There has not been a lot of action.”

Cardiff, South Wales

The Cardiff group were confident about the quality of relationships between ethnic groups, reflecting both the identity of Wales and the capital’s greater experience with diversity over recent decades.

“You do get more diversity in capitals. Its where people tend to migrate to.”

– White British female participant, Cardiff.

“I do think it has changed over time. I have relatives who are mixed race – and when we were just going out playing together as children, often people would just stare – because they had just never seen that before, white children playing with black children. While there is more to do, I do think that is what is different. Most people are used to diversity here now.”

– White British female participant, Cardiff.

“One colleague in a call centre said to me: ‘you’re the very first ethnic person I have met’. This was in 2012. I was not quite sure what I was supposed to do with that.”

– Mixed race male participant, Cardiff.

“The deeper that you go into the Valleys, then there is less diversity and less experience. And I think it can be a source of misunderstanding if you are not around people who are different from you on a day to day basis.”

– Mixed race male participant, Cardiff.

On fairness, Cardiff participants saw social class and education as the more significant challenges, particularly when it came to senior roles in organisations.

“I just think if you’re from working class, it is harder for you to work your way up to the top regardless of your race. Because if you think about it, the richest person in the world and in the UK isn’t white. He’s Indian. So I don’t really think it matters about race. It matters about your class in the economy.”

– White British female participant, Cardiff.

“Actually, we are not there yet. It’s changing. It is going slowly in the right direction. But there is a lot further to go still.”

– White British female participant, Cardiff.

Half of the group said that they were familiar with the term “BAME” while half of the participants had not heard of it. Apart from one participant working in arts and culture, the group had not heard much debate about the right term to use.

“I have come across the term, because I have been involved in community work. But I had not come across people saying that they had issues with it.”

– Asian male participant, Cardiff.

The Cardiff group had a strong focus on equal opportunities for young people, emphasising the importance of education and jobs as the key focus for a fairness agenda. A further theme was the importance of social contact between groups, with concerns expressed that the absence of tensions could be combined with more positive contact. Sport was cited as an important focus for greater contact between groups and an effective way to break down barriers. The value of contact was commonly felt among participants from different backgrounds, as was the importance of education. The prevalence of racism on social media offered clear proof that there was more to do to challenge and tackle prejudice, despite progress over time on relationships between groups and equal opportunities.

“There are a lot of keyboard warriors out there. And it does hurt to see that – that that is what they think of you as a person, because of the ethnic background that you are from. And I can be surprised to see somebody saying something like that – and think you could be living in the next road and that is what you think of people like me.”

– Black female participant, Cardiff.

Preston, Lancashire

Pride in Preston stood out as a shared foundation in this discussion, in which white and ethnic minority participants shared a sense of significant, if incomplete, progress over the decades in the reduction of racism and a greater understanding between those from different ethnic groups. This positive account of race relations reflected an implicit comparison with other towns and cities in the north-west having a stronger sense of social distance or segregation between groups.

“For one of the northern cities, I think we do quite well when it comes to race relations.”

– Asian male participant, Preston.

We were told that relationships between groups in Preston were considerably less distant and less tense than they had been ten or fifteen years ago – and that this had resulted from active efforts from local institutions, in education, faith and sport. More ethnic diversity in the local council at a leadership level was also seen as symbolising gradual progress over time. A white British participant talked about the active work of local mosques to engage with the schools, and having a positive experience of taking part in an open day as a family. There was praise among British Asian participants of the active efforts of the local football club to engage across communities.

“It is the work that our predecessors and elders have done that made that progress. It didn’t just happen by itself. I remember how Preston North End reached out to schools with free tickets. I remember those free tickets. And I think that is part of why we didn’t have big problems with racism on the terraces here in Preston. They wouldn’t boo players now if they take the knee. And, if they did, it would be the away fans and the Preston fans would boo them.”

– Asian male participant, Preston.

“They do all rub along quite peacefully with each other, but I do think that we are all still separate communities, living in the same city.”

– White British male participant, Preston.

A consensus on an absence of inter-ethnic tension was combined with a broad appetite for a greater effort at sustained inter-ethnic contact, voiced similarly by ethnic minority and white British participants. A proposal that abolishing all faith schools could make this happen sparked disagreement. Those who felt that faith-based education was legitimate, and valued by both minority and majority groups, shared a view that more positive contact was important.

The Preston group saw ethnic and social class issues as closely connected. On balance, participants felt that progress towards equal opportunities on race was proving more challenging, though there was a desire to bring the issues together.

“I think there probably is discrimination against minority candidates in jobs – more as you get up towards the top jobs.”

– White British male participant, Preston.

“I am not for battling my average next-door neighbour, who is white. I want us to work together to challenge the elites.”

– Asian male participant, Preston.

A couple of ethnic minority participants used the language of “institutional racism” to talk about what needed to change. When asked how they understood this term, it was described as institutions failing in their duty to provide an equal service to those of different ethnic backgrounds, combined with a failure to act on known disparities until, for example, it had taken the murder of Stephen Lawrence for the scale of the problem in policing to be acknowledged. Ethnic minority participants did not feel that enough had changed since. A younger Asian female participant described the case of a 12-year-old girl, Shukri Abdi, who was drowned near Bury. The lack of police interest in properly investigating what had happened reflected, she felt, a different level of attention because of the ethnic and faith background, leading to efforts by young people to raise the profile of the case.

“That is institutional racism – that the police aren’t digging into that case. If you compare that to Madeleine McCann, where there has been so much attention for so many years, it is very different.”

– Asian female participant, Preston.

Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire

This group was recruited from a range of different locations in Buckinghamshire, including a couple of participants from neighbouring Hertfordshire, from places with different experiences of both lower and rising levels of ethnic diversity.

“In our little village, we have a family from Syria, quite a large family, move into the road. They are probably the most welcome people in the whole road, so I would say ten out of ten, locally.”

– White British male participant, Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire.

White British participants tended to see the area as taking rising ethnic diversity in its stride and handling this well. Ethnic minority participants were more likely to perceive local levels of diversity as being comparatively low, while sharing the view that there was a general commitment to good relationships across ethnic groups.

Participants agreed on the principle of equal opportunities – but disagreed about how much progress there had been to date towards securing it. White British participants saw significant progress over time, while ethnic minority participants felt that there was more

work to do before aspirations of equal opportunities reached the top of organisations. The suggestion that there was a risk of tilting the balance towards positive discrimination towards minorities was discussed – and challenged – with the proposal that name-blind recruitment could deliver fair outcomes for everybody (see extract of discussion below).

One participant was attracted by the case for scrapping all ethnic data collection, on the grounds that we are all British, but was persuaded by others that this could be a necessary “means to an end”, particularly in health services, or in tracking progress towards equal opportunities.

The group focused on opportunities in education, including apprenticeships and vocational opportunities, and in young people as their top priority, seeing this as the area in which action to address social class and ethnic barriers could come together. The group was enthused by the idea of promoting a shared sense of British identity, across all ethnic and faith groups, with a stronger emphasis on the history of Empire being seen as central to this. After a discussion as to whether this would be as relevant to less diverse areas, the group supported the idea that it was important for the future for it to reach the whole country, not to be seen as something relevant only to cities with the highest levels of ethnic diversity.

“I think the key to this is consistency – and teaching it right across the country. Yes, there are areas that might not be as diverse now, but 10 or 20 years down the line, they may well be more diverse. And then you might have school-children in that area who have become adults that don’t really understand people of other faiths and ethnicities – so I think it should be consistent and be done everywhere.”

– White British male participant, Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire.

The discussion ended with a conversation of how we talk about race. This generated mixed views of the value or legacy of Black Lives Matter protests – including that a tragic event in Minneapolis had little to do with Britain, or that it had become an important moment to raise issues that needed to change in Britain too. Here it was felt that issues in crime and policing and equal opportunities were different – often “more subtle” than in America, but requiring attention too.

“How would you know if you were speaking about it too much – or not enough? I guess the answer to that now would be for people with power – like the government – to communicate effectively what they are going to do. I think, over the last year, people have been very vocal that they want change. So I think the logic is that is now for government to really effectively communicate what they are going to do, to show how they have heard that.”

– White British male participant, Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire.

How close are we to equal opportunities in Britain? Discussion between participants in Buckinghamshire

“I think that we’ve got a little way to go. And I think unless you’ve experienced it, you might be quite naive to think that never happens. I do think ethnic minorities probably have to work a little bit harder to get certain jobs. If you look at certain organisations, the higher up the ladder you go, the less you tend to see ethnic minorities. Could it be their ability to do the job or not? Who knows. But I do think there is sometimes this type of unconscious bias against ethnic minorities. You could say the same for women too. So I would say that ethnic minorities do have to work very hard to get up to the top and so I don’t think we are there on equal opportunities yet.”

– Black female participant.

“I would agree with that. At work, at the moment, all of our inclusion and diversity team are actually white so I think that is perhaps telling about how inclusive and diverse we currently are. So I have worked in companies, where you get up to management – and then it is pretty much all white above that. And you do occasionally see one or two people get through, but I do think the ethnic minorities do still have to work harder to get there. So while a lot of people might think we are there now, I think we are nowhere near yet. I would say we are probably still at a four or five out of ten.”

– Mixed race female participant.

“I definitely take into consideration what others are saying here. My opinion is as a white male, I certainly think the organisation that I work for is well represented among different ethnic groups, particularly within the senior management. Even perhaps to be controversial, I think there is a hyper-sensitivity around employing people and that people will look to employ people who have a different ethnic origin. I am not saying it is a negative thing but I have heard of instances where people of a different ethnic origin have been chosen over others, because they are of a different ethnic origin. And I guess it could be a positive thing to try and boost diversity within the organisation. But personally, I do feel like we have made progress. And I do feel that we as a country have worked hard. And I think if you look at senior positions within government, like the Mayor of London, for example. So I think we are working hard and that there is definitely an awareness among everyone of ethnic diversity when it comes to employment.”

– White British male participant.

“What I would say to that, as a black woman, is that I don’t want to be a tick box. If I can’t do the job, don’t give me the job. But I do want a fair chance to get the job. So what I feel is that in recruitment, we should all be numbers. So I should be 8679, or some nonsense like that. I think when people are recruiting, we all should be a reference number, we shouldn’t be a name.”

– Black female participant.

“I think we’ve certainly come a long way. I think that these things will just take a few years, maybe, for people to reach the more senior position. In my organisation, I’m seeing a lot more people being hired from different ethnic groups as well. So naturally, it would just take a few years to reach the more senior position and see it rise up. So maybe it’s not something that is going to happen overnight – but I do think we are probably on the right track.”

– White British female participant.

10. Talking about race and fairness: consensus for change

After each identifying their own top thematic priority for government action, participants were asked to respond to some more specific possible proposals. The framing of these ideas was that a Race Commission was due to make recommendations to government – and so there had been “speculation about some of the types of things that it might recommend.” So participants would have seen the invitation to discuss these specific proposals largely as a question about whether government should adopt these ideas.

These proposals were also tested in the second wave of national opinion polling, with a sample of 2,000 ethnic minority and 1,500 white participants.

(1) Identity and history in education

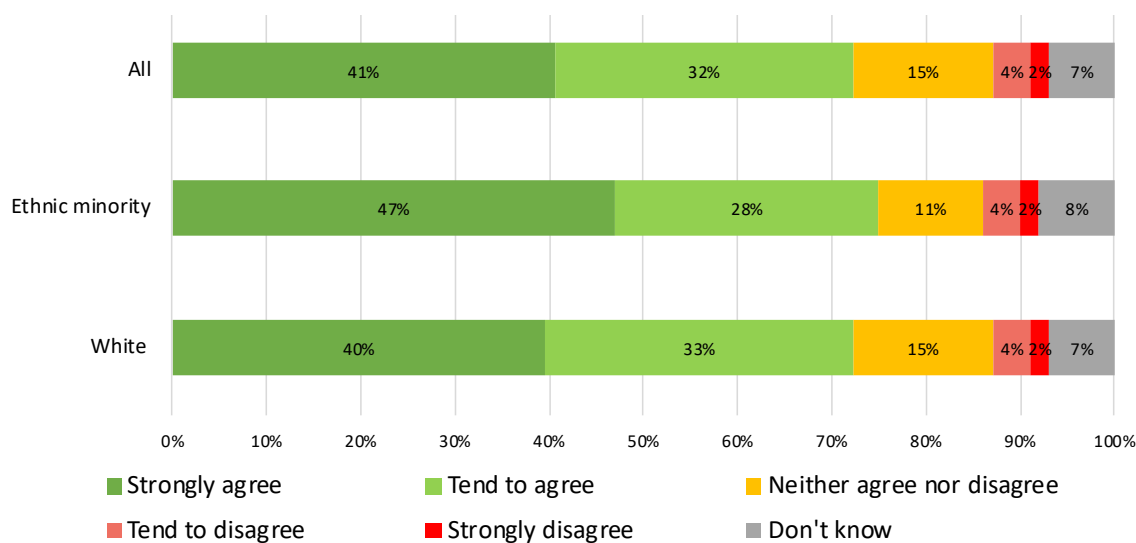
Proposal:

Promote a shared knowledge of Britain and its history for children as part of their school education – including all ethnicities and faiths, and all nations and regions of the UK.

There was broad support and some enthusiasm about this proposal, across all seven discussion groups, which aligns to the breadth of public support captured across groups in the poll.

Different participants interpreted the value of this proposal in different ways, or emphasised different elements of how this would be done. Participants were especially supportive of the theme of engaging with the history of Britain, including Empire, which was widely endorsed as an idea by participants who may have had different perspectives on other issues.

Figure 10.1: “It is important that the history of race and Empire – including its controversies and complexity – is taught in British schools.”



Fieldwork conducted 9th-17th October 2020. n = 1,088 white UK adults; 1,000 BME UK adults.

The **north-east** group felt that schools had already been doing this for quite a long time, particularly around religious education giving children an understanding of the different major faiths – but felt there could be a greater focus on understanding the history of Britain, including the history of diversity in Britain, with participants highlighting the ethnic minority contributions to the Second World War as a theme that merited more attention.

Many of the **Leicestershire** group had personal experience of a significant effort by schools to engage pupils in the ethnic and faith diversity of the local area – but still believed that more could be done to promote social contact between those of different backgrounds. Participants saw a case for a stronger emphasis on history.

The **Lewisham** group were enthusiastic about the proposal of promoting a shared sense of what it meant to be British. We were told that there needed to be more focus on including black and ethnic minority groups into history lessons that went beyond Black History Month as a special occasion each year. White British as well as ethnic minority participants in the south London group wanted to see more engagement with ‘the gritty stuff’ that is part of the story of Empire and slavery. Those involved in education see representation in books and literature as important in terms of aspiration and future opportunities.

The **Buckinghamshire** group wanted a more diverse account of contributions to British history but discussed whether this would be as relevant to parts of the country where they might only be one or two ethnic minorities in a class. Other participants said that the point is that it needs to be done everywhere.

Participants in **Preston** talked about the need for history – and discussed whether doing this would be a source of cohesion or division.

The **Glasgow** group was enthusiastic about this proposal. Asked whether this would involve a different approach in Scotland, several participants thought that the point was that it needed to be something that happened UK-wide. (Participants did not refer to the framework of devolved government in answering this).

“We need to hear about the dirty, dark, gritty parts of British history. Rather than the British being the saviours and the British finding this land and that land. I think we need to hear the gritty things that we heard about the Germans and the Holocaust.”

– Black female participant, Lewisham.

“I always say we need to improve our education system in terms of the British Empire, because I don’t think there’s a continent the British Empire hasn’t touched. But I didn’t really learn anything about it. Maybe the curriculum now is slightly different. But I think we need a wide, holistic account of what our history really is, what the foundations of the country are and where we came from.”

– Asian male participant, Buckinghamshire.

“I think the key to this is consistency – and teaching it right across the country. Yes, there are areas that might not be as diverse now, but 10 or 20 years down the line, they may well be more diverse. And then you might have schoolchildren in that area who have become adults that don’t really understand people of other faiths and ethnicities – so I think it should be consistent and be done everywhere.”

– White British male participant, Buckinghamshire.

Would teaching about the Empire be divisive? An exchange in Preston

“At school, we only learnt about World War Two and like the Cold War. And I think that British history, like the British Empire, is one of the most important topics to learn. I had friends who took history in college, and they were saying, Why did they have to actually pick the subject in order to learn about, you know, the British Empire? And we didn’t get taught about any of this in high school, and I think it should be on the syllabus, I think the government should make it a part of the curriculum ... I don’t think it should be controversial.. As long as they’re given all the facts and the right information, it shouldn’t be controversial. It’s history, it’s what happened, we should know about it. We should learn about it. There shouldn’t be any reason for them to hide all this from us.”

“I think it is opening a can of worms. I think there’s a reason that the history of the British Empire isn’t commonly taught. Firstly, it’s too divisive. And secondly, if you’re going to teach anybody the history of the British Empire as a step towards increasing community cohesion, then I think you have really got your work cut out there.”

“Sometimes it’s going to be uncomfortable. And if you’re not comfortable with being uncomfortable, you can’t really live in a democracy. If it is a democracy, then teach the history, warts and all. Everything has to be on the table. How can we move forward as a nation without addressing what happened in the past? Take Windrush. We are still having to fight about Windrush. And when people say migrants came over here to take the jobs, take the women, take the money, yet we were asked to come and rebuild this country. Our grandfathers fought in the wars. We had lost more Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs who fought for the British Army than any other nation across the world. This is what a true history needs to represent.”

(2) Employment

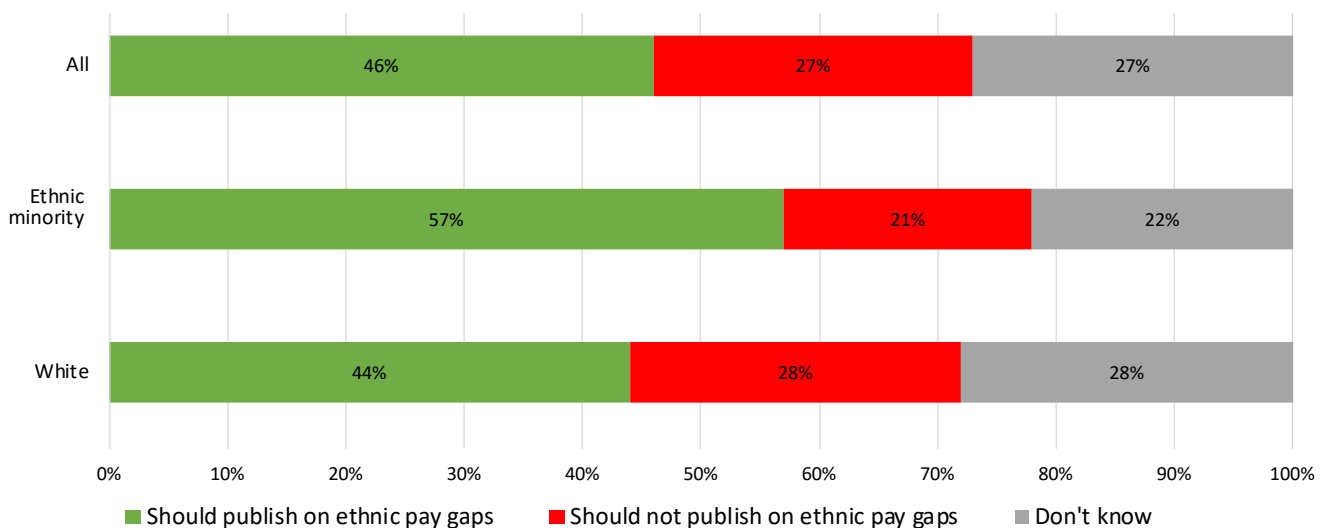
Proposal:

Companies should publish data on ethnic pay gaps.

Publish an up-to-date public database of employers who lose racial and religious discrimination cases.

Reporting on ethnic pay gaps was broadly supported, across most of the deliberative groups. This included support in several groups that had just been vocal and sceptical about the purpose of collecting data by ethnicity, illustrating that significant sections of the public may feel cross-pressured on issues of ethnic data between the principled case against categorisation and the practical value of doing so. The deliberative discussions reflected the poll finding that ethnic minority participants were intuitively more in favour, on grounds of transparency being helpful, with a minority of white British participants somewhat more likely to worry about potential unintended consequences of the proposal.

Figure 10.2: Should companies publish data on ethnic pay gaps – or not?



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

Ethnic pay gap reporting was broadly supported in Leicestershire – though one participant suggested that the nuances could be lost, if people did not understand the context of progression into senior roles. Participants wanted to go beyond reporting with a stronger focus on enforcement mechanisms if there were illegal practices (such as paying people from different groups differently for the same job).

The Buckinghamshire group were in favour of this proposal, with some participants saying they had experience of this happening in the organisations that they worked in.

On ethnic pay gaps, the intuitive response of the north-east group was that if it was being done for gender, it could be a good idea for it to be done for ethnicity too, though other participants felt that they did not know enough about the topic to have a clear view about it.

In Preston, participants took different views of this proposal. There was support on the grounds of transparency and opposition on the grounds that it would distort decisions about pay and progression, which could end up being too influenced by ethnicity rather than meritocracy. There was a perception that this had been a problem with the approach to ethnicity in the workplace in the United States.

“I think the problem here is the law of unintended consequences ... I think it would certainly distort the wage structure within a company if they had to make that public.”

– White British male participant, Preston.

“I am part of an inclusion and diversity group at work. And they are starting to do this now – they are collecting the data. And it will be an anonymous data-set. So I think that is an essential step.”

– Asian female participant, Buckinghamshire.

“You may need to account for the differences – like years and experience in the role and education level and so on. So that’s more data that you need. But if you accounted for all these things, then I can’t see any reason why you wouldn’t want this data, because that could zone in on if there was a discrepancy for ethnic minorities. Because if you have two candidates with the same experience, same education background, then there’s no other reason, but ethnicity, that would be in play.”

– Asian male participant, Buckinghamshire.

“I just wonder if you get these statistics. And then the companies would just raise the pay by however much, and that will kind of be it. But if we’re looking for real change, maybe something a bit deeper might need to happen, as opposed to just upping the pay for the sake of it just so it looks good on the website.”

– White British female participant, Buckinghamshire.

Database of employers who lose racial and religious discrimination cases

There were mixed views about this proposal. It could be useful, if pursuing this proposal, to set out clearly how it would link up what is already put into the public domain about tribunals and discrimination cases. That might mitigate some of the concerns expressed about this being received as controversial and potentially polarising.

In the **North-east** group participants said that they were torn about the idea of a data-base of employers who lost discrimination cases. This could be a “minefield” and controversial, but could also have a useful effect on information. But other participants felt that cases that were lost were already likely to have been reported in the media, making this less of a dramatic change or proposal.

There were mixed views in **Leicestershire** about the idea of such a database. Participants suggested that there could be unintended consequences – such as an unwillingness to take the risk of hiring minorities – so that this became a divisive or controversial issue.

The **Buckinghamshire** and **London** groups were more confident than other groups about greater transparency around companies that lose discrimination cases being a positive suggestion, with participants noting that tribunal outcomes were already in the public domain. However, in Lewisham it was suggested that larger companies with well-funded lawyers could circumvent this accountability by ‘paying people off’ to avoid losing cases. It was felt too that there ought to be visible data on who companies promote to higher positions to increase accountability in career progression. Other Lewisham participants raised the ideas of using technology to reduce individual bias in job interviews, and name-blind CVs (even though this was only effective up to the interview stage), which was also a proposal made in Buckinghamshire as an important way to reduce one source of bias.

“Companies will find a way around publishing what they need to and actually, from my own personal experience, I’ve had that as well. So, they will pay you off. And then they don’t have to publish anything about that. So, you know, they can do that quite easily and find legal ways around that.”

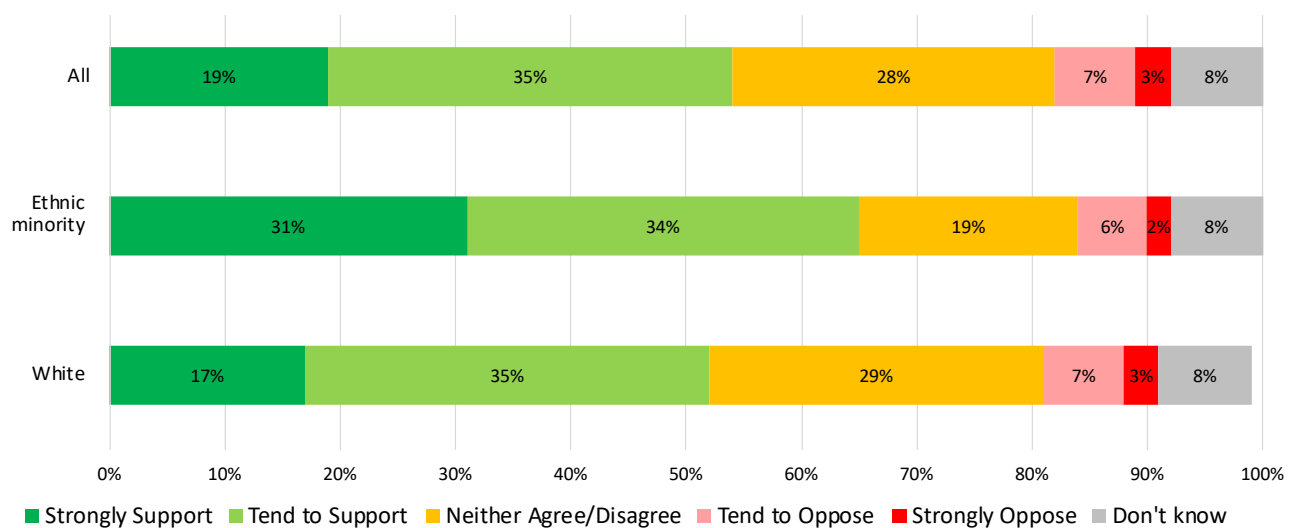
– Asian female participant, Lewisham.

(3) Health and society

Proposal:

Set up a new health inequalities unit in the Government, so that the NHS can take action to reduce health inequalities and discrimination.

Figure 10.3: “Introduce a new health inequalities disparities unit, to target the most at risk or vulnerable communities.”



Fieldwork conducted 25th January-14th February 2021. n = 1,501 white UK adults; 2,000 BME UK adults.

There was broad support for the health inequalities proposal – though several participants said that they were surprised to hear that there was a significant issue with health inequalities in Britain, while other participants found this a familiar issue, which they had heard discussed during the Covid pandemic.

On health inequalities, a number of **Leicestershire** participants said they did not understand that there was a big problem here – especially because the NHS was there for everybody. But, in discussing this, participants cited specific issues that they had heard about, including discrimination against midwives and nurses. Covid had brought out some issues about health issues across society, through this group did not seem to have heard much specifically about ethnic disparities during Covid.

North-east participants intuitively felt that the existence of the NHS meant that there were unlikely to be major issues of health inequalities in the UK today – since free healthcare makes this one of the areas of society where access is fairest and most equal. One or two participants had heard the issue of ethnic disparities during

the Covid pandemic. This was associated with more recent reports of low take-up of vaccines among minority groups, leading to the suggestion that more education of minority groups about health issues might be important.

In **Buckinghamshire**, participants said that they had heard about health inequalities during Covid, so supported a higher level of focus on this.

Some participants in both the **Glasgow** and in the **Cardiff** groups felt that the pandemic had led to a higher awareness of health inequalities, and a rethinking of social status in society more generally, though were not sure how far this would last beyond the pandemic.

The **Lewisham** group also appeared to have a higher awareness of public discussions of ethnic disparities over Covid than some other groups – and so the need to focus on health inequalities beyond the pandemic made intuitive sense to this group as an important priority for government, with ethnic disparities in Covid-19, diabetes rates and deaths from childbirth cited as important reasons to focus on this.

“Some of you may have heard in the news over the last few weeks about black women who are five more times more likely to die during childbirth – there’s the childbirth issue. There’s also the Covid issue.”

– Black female participant, Lewisham.

“I read a statistic in America, I think, where the doctors, the way they treated patients, that they doctors perceive black patients to have less pain than white patients. But, obviously, everyone feels pain as pain. So if there are discrepancies like that, then they need to be looked into.”

– Asian male participant, Buckinghamshire.

11. Conclusion: Let's talk about race

This year of the Covid pandemic and the Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests has been an extraordinary one for the salience of race in Britain. Previously, both public policy and the public conversation on race had often been sporadic, responding to major national or international events before fizzling out. The growing ethnic diversity of the UK – and the advances in education and public life that have given ethnic minorities more voice, presence and profile – make it more likely that race will require sustained attention in the future.

This public attitudes research captures some key challenges for policy-makers in setting out a roadmap for a sustained race agenda for the 2020s. The pattern of opportunity and disadvantage has never been more complex. There are also contrasting experiences and perceptions of what has and has not changed on race. While rising ethnic diversity has felt fast for many people, and overt prejudices have been in long-term retreat in our society, progress towards equal opportunities has felt stubbornly slow for black Britons in particular.

Without clear political and civic leadership, there will be drivers towards a more fragmented and polarised public conversation about race – unless there are successful efforts to find common ground, with a particular need to bridge the sharply contrasting perspectives across generations. These inter-generational dynamics present challenges not just for policy-makers in national government, but also for many institutions over the next decade, particularly given the demographic profile of Britain's growing ethnic diversity. Ethnic minorities make up one-sixth of the population, one-third of those in primary school, one-quarter of new graduates entering the workforce – and just one-sixteenth of those in the most senior positions in institutions of economic, cultural and political power.

Race can involve some difficult conversations. But many institutions are going to need to become more confident in talking about it, especially in seeking to enable those with different experiences and starting-points to find common ground. This research captured public awareness of those tensions and fissures, and an appetite for a greater effort to promote dialogue to bridge the generational and geographic divides.

There are significant challenges on race and opportunity in this country, but Britain is not America. Most people would like to move beyond arguments about language and identity towards a clear, constructive agenda for practical change. There is a public appetite for a future approach to race that is inclusive, constructive and practical, if we are to advance equal opportunities in ways that are fair, and felt to be fair, by everyone.

12. Acknowledgements

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The polling was carried out by Number Cruncher Politics. We are grateful to Matt Singh for his expertise and advice, and his commitment to carrying out representative sampling of minority groups in a rigorous and effective way. The inclusion of ethnic minority views in opinion polling and attitudes research could make an important contribution to a better-informed public conversation on race in British society. We hope that the growing ethnic diversity of Britain and the increased salience of race will catalyse faster efforts to make this an industry-wide norm, so that ethnic minority views cease to be invisible when reporting the attitudes of Britain in the 2020s.

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Sunder Katwala

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About British Future

British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank and registered charity, engaging people's hopes and fears about integration and immigration, identity and race. These debates, from EU migration and refugee protection to integration and combating prejudice, can seem noisy and polarised.

Securing political consent for policy change requires public support. British Future has developed a unique, in-depth understanding of public attitudes, uncovering the common ground on which people can agree. Our long-term aim is a country where we are no longer 'Them and Us' but rather a confident and welcoming Britain, inclusive and fair to all.

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