



# **The Democratic Participation of Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Voters in the UK**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Professor Maria Sobolewska** is a specialist in the voting behaviour and electoral participation of ethnic minorities. She has published widely on issues around political participation and has advised many third sector organisations and parliamentary committees on this topic, most recently the House of Lords Select Committee on the 2013 Electoral Registration and Administration Act, as a specialist adviser.

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## FOREWORD

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The UK Democracy Fund was set up to work towards a healthy democracy in which everyone can participate and where political power is shared fairly. The Fund is particularly concerned about those demographic groups that are under-represented in our democratic system. These include voters of Black and Asian as well as other minority ethnic origins, young people, private renters and the vulnerably housed, and lower-income voters. Over the Fund's first phase it has become increasingly clear that we have limited understanding of, or data on, the registration and turnout behaviours of the different ethnicities and nationalities least likely to participate. There is some, mostly now dated, evidence that different ethnic groups do not register and participate at the same rates as people who identify as White British. This report aims to both update our understanding of what the existing evidence shows, but also further enrich this data from a purpose-designed poll about democratic participation among ethnic minority groups.

The findings of this report are designed to support campaigners, civil society organisations and the Government to more effectively target their efforts at these groups. This research will also help us build a community of funders and others willing to work together to tackle political inequality.

Jessica Kennedy, Director of UK Democracy Fund

Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (JRRT)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This report aims to gather all available evidence about democratic participation levels for ethnic minority and marginalised immigrant groups in the UK. We define democratic participation as taking part in the electoral process and therefore focus on the two stages of this process in the UK – registering to vote and turning up for elections.

Democratic participation of ethnic minority people and immigrants in the UK is a significantly under-researched area. Underfunding for this complex and expensive research is the primary reason.

As a result, most of the high-quality sources with good coverage of these communities are now more than a decade old, as newer literature relies on smaller qualitative studies and analyses of aggregate relationships between ethnic compositions of neighbourhoods and registration and turnout. There is also uneven coverage of different ethnic and immigrant groups.

The available data point consistently to the existence of large gaps in electoral registration for minorities and immigrants, but these differ by origin. The percentage of individuals not registered to vote ranges from 39 per cent for EU migrants and 25 per cent for Black African minorities, to only 14 per cent for people of Indian heritage, in comparison to the baseline of 11 per cent under-registration rate for White British.

Electoral registration appears to be the main area of concern for democratic participation, as once non-White ethnic minority voters are registered, the turnout gaps are smaller. These range from almost no significant gap between minorities and the White British majority (through validated, but dated, measures) to around 10 per cent gap according to various other estimates.

There are no current estimates of turnout among EU immigrants that are sufficiently robust to include. There are also no current studies into whether the 2013 electoral registration reform has adversely impacted ethnic minority and immigrant-origin voters.

## **Electoral registration**

Existing research on electoral registration consistently points to a group of obstacles that are either specific to ethnic minority and immigrant people, or that are not specific but ethnic minority and immigrant people are more likely to share.

The specific obstacles pertain predominantly to immigrants and include lack of knowledge of the language, of eligibility, and of the system of registration.

For many EU immigrants another crucial obstacle seems to be the 'myth of return', which leads to the poor take-up of British citizenship, thus limiting these immigrants' eligibility to vote and preventing a sense of involvement in British politics and state. Acquiring citizenship is difficult and expensive, compounding the problem.

The relative difficulty of registering to vote in the UK is particularly important for immigrants, many of whom come from countries with automatic voter registration.

The non-specific obstacles which immigrants and ethnic minorities are nonetheless more likely to experience paint a picture of socio-economic marginality. Ethnic minorities and immigrants are over-represented among social groups least likely to register to vote – frequent movers, renters and people in lower-paid occupations.

Our bespoke poll of ethnic minorities, which was in the field in January 2021, has confirmed that it is electoral registration which is the first significant obstacle to participation, and that it particularly affects women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, as well as those with citizenships eligible to vote in the UK, but who do not hold British citizenship.

Once we accounted for under-registration, our poll showed few significant differences in turnout levels across different ethnic groups.

The main obstacles to electoral registration in our bespoke poll again confirmed the existing research findings – lack of knowledge of eligibility and unstable housing are the main obstacles to being registered to vote, followed by socio-economic marginality.

Our respondents had fairly low levels of knowledge of the registration process, and one third of the respondents who were not registered were not sure how to do so. However, those who were registered had said they found the process fairly easy.

## **Turnout**

Despite the relatively small turnout gap for ethnic minorities, once under-registration is considered, there is a strong pattern in most existing studies that socio-economic marginalisation remains a key obstacle to voting in elections.

Many studies show that levels of attitudinal engagement are very high among ethnic minorities, including a sense of duty to vote. However, young ethnic minority people feel that they have no influence over politics, an attitude often linked to lack of participation.

Lack of encouragement to vote from mainstream political parties might be a significant factor for those minorities, particularly for those who do not live in co-ethnic neighbourhoods, and for EU-migrants a very low level of naturalisation is a concern.

Our bespoke poll of ethnic minorities confirmed much of what we already knew about factors behind participation gaps, with socio-economic marginalisation the most significant obstacle to full participation.

We were also able to update our understanding that political attitudes of ethnic minorities indicate good levels of integration, with only the younger minorities showing signs of dissatisfaction with politics, in line with attitudes of younger White British people.

Looking at the South Asian women who were registered to vote, we also found that the gender gap among South Asian origin groups was closed. This suggests that it is registration and not turnout that is the main hurdle for this under-represented group.

We again found that minorities who were UK citizens had higher levels of turnout, again confirming that there might be a relationship between the formal citizenship status and the sense of involvement in the UK's politics and future. Encouraging and easing access to citizenship might be a powerful way of improving immigrant integration.



Existing research also consistently points to some common factors that are associated with higher democratic participation that could be leveraged to counteract the obstacles. However, the studies available are correlational, and causality is assumed rather than proven, as no known experimental research aimed at ethnic minorities and immigrants is yet available.

The main factors positively associated with higher democratic participation are related to engagement within neighbourhoods that might have a lower proportion of co-ethnic residents, and with religious organisations and groups.

This was confirmed by the finding from our custom poll as few ethnic minority respondents received political mobilisation from formal organisations such as political parties or ethnic associations. Most had to rely on personal networks, and targeting this area might make a big difference to ethnic minorities' participation.

Data gaps were identified in the literature on the effectiveness of various interventions – few studies of Get Out The Vote (GOTV) interventions conducted in Western democracies look at immigrants and ethnic minorities, and one US-based analysis suggests that the impact of GOTV interventions might be different for minority communities, resulting in increased ethnic disadvantage in electoral registration.

The findings of this report have led to the formation of three kinds of recommendations. The first are to do with filling the shocking data gaps in this area, the second are to do with ease of registering to vote and of acquiring citizenship, and the third set of recommendations are aimed to help target any interventions by organisations working to improve the levels of democratic participation.

The recommendations of this report are targeted at regulators, researchers, and civil society organisations who work on, and have responsibility for, ensuring equal and high levels of participation.

## **Recommendations**

Our recommendations are based on both the review of existing literature and on the results from our bespoke survey. They are grouped into three categories – recommendations aimed at statutory bodies responsible for democratic participation, recommendations that might be useful for campaigners and organisations working to increase participation, and recommendations for researchers and research organisations working in this area.

### **Recommendations aimed at statutory bodies responsible for democratic participation:**

Statutory bodies should:

#### **1. Make the process of participating in elections easier.**

Making it easier to register is particularly important in the face of evidence that it remains the main obstacle to voting for many eligible residents of ethnic minority origin.

The planned reforms to how we vote will introduce another step for many who do not possess a suitable photo ID, and who will have to apply for the new voter ID card. Although it is welcome that this photo ID is designed to be free of charge, having this additional step will increase the overall difficulty of the process.

##### **1.1 The Government should revisit plans to automatically register attainers.**

This would make the single biggest impact given the younger age of ethnic minorities.

##### **1.2 The Government should issue information on eligibility to vote to migrants who arrive on non-tourist visas.**

#### **2. Lower the cost of acquiring British citizenship and consider the pathway to citizenship as a tool for immigrant integration, not a reward for it.**

Full political integration of immigrants will increase the sense of belonging and having a stake in the country.

Political integration of immigrants also increases public confidence and thus helps achieve social cohesion.

Citizenship is an important step in facilitating this, and current high monetary barriers to access are not consistent with the broader anti-radicalisation strategy, which has been based around the premise of well-integrated communities.

### **3. Make more funding available to conduct high-quality research into ethnic inequalities in democratic participation.**

There has not been a thorough assessment of the impact of the most recent electoral law reforms on the groups with protected characteristics, including ethnic minorities. The Cabinet Office has conducted a series of under-funded, poor-quality studies, and the Electoral Commission was not able to include a sufficient sample of minorities in their high-quality assessments.

#### **3.1. Feed more research funding through the main UK Research Councils.**

This would enable researchers to pick up slack when the official research is lacking.

#### **3.2 The Government should consider funding another large-scale survey of democratic and civic attitudes to replace the cancelled Citizenship Survey, or fund an ethnic minority and immigrant booster for the ongoing Community Life Survey, and enrich its civic and democratic participation content.**

## **Recommendations for campaigners and organisations working to increase participation:**

Campaigners and organisations should:

### **4. Target campaigns and interventions towards ethnic minority women, younger people and newer migrants.**

This is based on the evidence that these groups are particularly marginalised in registration process and voting.

**5. Work with organisations already proven to have a positive impact on mobilisation.**

This is likely to increase the effectiveness of any interventions, so should be one of the main parts of any strategy in this field.

For ethnic minorities places of worship are particularly promising.

While working in areas where ethnic minorities and immigrants are concentrated is likely to be effective and cost-efficient, some thinking is needed to consider how to reach those who live outside of these areas.

**6. Deliver campaigns focused on frequent movers and renters.**

These are all likely to positively impact immigrants and ethnic minorities, so should form part of the strategy to engage these groups.

Within this, working with estate agents, landlords and housing charities might be a fruitful, if thus unproven, way to reach frequent movers and renters.

Further, identifying and collaborating with organisations that already work on increasing democratic participation of renters might be an effective addition to already existing campaigns.

**7. Deliver campaigns focused on improving knowledge of eligibility, and of the process.**

This is based on the evidence that lack of knowledge of eligibility, and of the process, are the most prominent causes of participation gap after unstable housing.

**8. Deliver campaigns aimed at increasing sense of belonging and investment in British society among newer migrants.**

The evidence shows that an increased sense of belonging and investment can increase democratic participation, so these should be considered as part of the broader strategy to encourage participation.

Campaigns in minority and migrant languages could be particularly important as they would complement the existing campaigns from the Electoral Commission (that are predominantly in English).

**9. Invest in evaluations of work on the ground, and 'what works' field experiments.**

These types of experiments (run with academic oversight) are absolutely necessary as there is no data on whether the usual interventions work as well, or even at all, for ethnic minority or immigrant mobilisation. Failure to engage directly with this question might actually result in the deepening of participation inequalities, as some US-based research suggests.

Use of aggregate data for these types of evaluations is counter-productive as it cannot detect any such differential effects for ethnic minorities or immigrants.

**Recommendations for researchers and research organisations working in this area:**

Researchers and research organisation should:

10. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) should make use of the proximity between the last general election and the 2021 Census and ask the Electoral Commission to secure the existing marked-up registers for an extended period, so that their analysis of registers can also cover the issue of turnout.

This would address one of the major data gaps, which are very difficult for academic research alone to fill.

11. Those conducting existing Get Out The Vote-type experimental studies should include, in their design, the ability to detect differential effects on ethnic minorities and immigrants.

12. Research Councils UK should work with academics to try to recognise, and address, the major data gaps on the democratic participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants.

## INTRODUCTION

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*"The existence of political equality is the fundamental premise of democracy."*

Dahl, 2006.

The concern with unequal participation in elections between the White British majority and those from ethnic minority and immigrant backgrounds dates to the 1980s and reflects a broader concern with equality and the quality of British democracy. Ethnic minority Britons and many immigrants have been granted generous political rights compared to many other democracies yet, in many cases, they are not exercising these rights. This leads to their effective exclusion from the electorate and is the first step towards their interests not being represented. Given the wider socio-economic marginalisation of these groups, this is an under-representation they can ill afford.

Perhaps the best illustrations of the dangers of political exclusion come in the form of the two recent constitutional referendums, the 2014 Scottish Independence and the 2016 EU Membership referendums. In the first case, the franchise was extended to all Scottish residents, which included a significant proportion of internal migrants from the rest of the UK. In the latter, voting was restricted to those who were eligible to vote in general elections, which left out the vast majority of internal EU migrants. Although this is conjecture, the relative sizes of these internal migrant groups map well onto the results of the referendums – Scotland might well have voted to leave the UK if its immigrant residents were disenfranchised, and the UK might well have voted to stay in the European Union if EU migrants had the right to vote (Sobolewska & Ford 2020).

Most will agree that a participation gap is harmful to those groups which are excluded from electoral politics and that to address this problem we must correctly identify the reasons for its existence, as well as effective remedies. This is harder than it should be, as research in this area is relatively scarce and, as this report will show, largely outdated. It is particularly shocking, given that the legal framework around voting changed in 2014 and despite the

Government identifying ethnic minorities as particularly vulnerable in the face of these changes, that no new research specifically aimed at these groups has been conducted.

This report is designed as a much-needed summary of what research is currently available and includes a custom poll of ethnic minority Britons that aims to update some of the fundamental findings. The in-depth analysis of the existing evidence will help us identify the research priorities for the future, as well as to provide some recommendations for those working with minority and immigrant groups to close the participation gap.

## **Aims of the report**

- Understand the electoral participation behaviour of voters from different ethnicities and nationalities less likely to vote, including both steps of the process – electoral registration and turning out to vote.
- Understand the obstacles to registering and voting.
- Map what is known about factors which facilitate registration and voting, as well as those which mitigate participation gaps for different groups with a view to making practical recommendations.
- Recognise and highlight research gaps.

## **Focus and coverage**

The focus of the report is on those ethnic minority and immigrant British residents who are entitled to vote but are widely known to be participating less than their White British counterparts. Inevitably, this excludes many smaller groups, about which not enough is known, and some large groups which do not have the relevant political rights. Unusually, as most countries require immigrants to naturalise to gain full voting rights, the UK grants certain categories of non-nationals full political rights, not on the basis of bilateral agreement (like in the case of Spain, which has such agreements with some Latin American countries), but unilaterally. This unique legal situation is a result of historical legislation from 1948, which

conferred citizenship status on all British subjects, which at that time included Irish and Commonwealth citizens. Despite the fact that many of these countries have become republics and thus ceased to be headed by the British Monarch, and as British nationality law evolved, the voting rights of those countries' citizens were never changed. As a result, citizens of Ireland and countries that are members of the Commonwealth are eligible to vote if they normally reside in the UK.

Other immigrants have more limited eligibility to vote, which differs according to their country of origin and level of election, but also varies across the different territorial units within the UK. See Information Box One for who is eligible to participate in which elections in the UK.

The main groups we will therefore focus on are non-White minority groups, as defined by the 2011 Census, and immigrants from the EU, with a special interest in those who come from Central and Eastern Europe as these migrants experience racialisation and greater marginalisation in the UK. 'Ethnic minority'<sup>1</sup> is a contested term and statistical categories lag behind how groups define themselves and understand their identities, but given the overall shortage of research into this area, looking at the groups most commonly included in studies is the only option we have.

The main four groups<sup>2</sup> we will focus on will be:

- People of South Asian heritage (particularly those more marginalised groups with origins from Bangladesh and Pakistan),
- People of Caribbean heritage,
- People of African heritage,
- EU citizens who experience marginalisation or are from racialised minorities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Given our focus on ethnic minorities we will use the term 'ethnic minorities' and 'minorities' interchangeably throughout the report.

<sup>2</sup> Some ethnic minority groups are much under-researched, and so will be largely excluded, such as Traveller communities, or Arab-origin Britons; while others might be mentioned rarely, if they are included in the relevant study, such as Chinese Britons.

<sup>3</sup> Some White immigrants not considered marginalised or racialised are West European migrants, or White migrants from majority White Commonwealth countries such as Canada, New Zealand or Australia, or White immigrants from the USA.



Each of these groups is extremely internally diverse, and they have divergent histories and socio-demographic profiles in the UK. Some of the most relevant must be outlined in advance, as they will have an impact on their rates of electoral participation.

The first factor to note is that many of the non-White ethnic minority groups are also immigrants. It is near impossible to discuss minorities' electoral participation without considering immigration status, and many of the main groups of ethnic minorities in Britain, as defined by the Census, are still growing significantly as a result of migration. The exception to this is the Caribbean-origin minority, as migration from the region is now very small, and the changes between the 2001 and 2011 Census show that the growth of this group has been due to births, and not migration. The groups that continue to grow most significantly through migration are Asians (particularly from India and China), and Black Africans (CODE 2013). Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities experienced significant immigration-related growth, but births in the UK are the main driver of growth for those minorities. As a result, there is a large variation between ethnic minority groups in terms of how many of them are migrants. The mixed ethnicities group is only 20 per cent migrant, with the majority of this group being UK-born.

Although we do not have more fine-grained data on EU immigrants that are of particular interest for this report, we can look at the White Other group, which contains the immigrants from EU countries. The analysis of change in group sizes between 2001 and 2011 indicates that the vast majority of growth in the White Other group was due to immigration, and only a small proportion has been driven by births. In the aftermath of the 2016 EU Membership Referendum, EU migration started to shrink rapidly. Therefore, it is possible that we will see a reversal of this pattern of population growth through negative net migration (ONS Migration Statistics Quarterly Report: August 2020).

The relative sizes and internal diversity of each of these groups also have to be noted and kept in mind when analysing the existing data and trying to reach generalisable conclusions about their political engagement. It is also important to consider the circumstances which led to migrating to Britain in the first instance, which differ not only between groups but also within groups. While Caribbean-origin residents began arriving in Britain from the late 1940s, most South Asian migrants started arriving almost 20 years later, and African migrants later

still. This has an impact on what proportion of each ethnic minority group in the UK has been born in Britain, has citizenship, and has relevant knowledge of the country and its political system.

Another source of diversity of relevant experience is the route through which immigrants arrived in the UK. African and Indian migration is more likely to be through education, as they come to study at British universities,<sup>4</sup> than immigration from Pakistan or Bangladesh, for example. Within the British Indian group, a sizeable proportion immigrated from East Africa, and as refugees, instead of the more usual economic and family reunion migration from India. Most of the ethnicities that the British Census group together thus mask enormous diversity.

Some of the Indian or African-origin Brits are further divided by religion, with African communities being mainly Christian or Muslim, and British Indians are split still further into Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and smaller religious groupings such as Christians or Jains. Although Indians are the largest ethnic minority group (2.4 per cent of the population of England and Wales at the last Census), given this diversity they might not feel part of a single cohesive community, unlike minorities with Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin who are more homogenous both in terms of religion and route of migration.

Needless to say, groups such as 'African', or 'White Other' – the latter of which include the Central and East European migrants who are of interest to this report – cover multiple nationalities, so despite being very sizeable groups (African at two per cent of the population of England and Wales at the last Census; and White Other at 4.4 per cent) there is little internal cohesiveness. Generally, the literature fails to engage sufficiently with this diversity (often because of cost and other feasibility concerns) and so this must be remembered as one of the main limitations of this report.

Despite the enormous variety of origins, histories of settlement in Britain, cultures and religions, one of the commonalities that many ethnic minorities share is their geographical concentration in cities and large towns. Despite this, all ethnic minority groups apart from

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<sup>4</sup> Although some more recent immigration reforms have made it harder for overseas students to remain in the UK after completing their course, this used to be a popular route of settlement for some groups.

Pakistani and Chinese Britons have spread out geographically between the 2001 and 2011 Census (CODE 2012). This trend has multiple relevant outcomes – firstly as we will show later, living near co-ethnic neighbours is good for minority groups' participation. Secondly, minorities who do not live in concentrations may sometimes be left out of political campaigning, and given that minorities are increasingly spreading out geographically, this is potentially increasingly consequential (Maxwell 2012). Finally, although groups spread out, they usually leave their co-ethnic enclaves to live in other diverse areas. The result is greater mixing, and what can be called super-diversity, rather than spreading entirely evenly across the country.

All of this means that any practical research-based advice for campaigning among minority communities need to be adjusted to a reality far more complex than the research allows for.

### ***Information Box One***

#### **Eligibility to vote in the UK for non-British nationals**

##### **Commonwealth and Irish citizens**

These nationals are eligible to vote and stand in all the UK elections, on the condition that they are resident legally. The residence does not have to be permanent, so citizens from these countries can vote if they are on work and student visas (they need Leave to Remain, not Indefinite Leave to Remain).

As a result, these immigrants have full political rights, without the need to obtain citizenship.

##### **Citizens of EU countries**

This section does not cover citizens of Cyprus and Malta, as they are also members of the Commonwealth, and Ireland (see above).

Citizens of the EU countries have different voting rights in different part of the UK, reflecting the devolution of franchise legislation.

In England and Northern Ireland these nationals can vote in local elections only, following the UK leaving the EU and thus no longer holding European Parliament elections. They have to be over the age of 18 and registered to vote.

The voting rights of EU nationals are not currently guaranteed and were extended to the 2021 local elections on an ad-hoc basis, so might change in the future. To date, the UK signed longer term bilateral agreements guaranteeing these rights only with a handful of EU countries: Poland, Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg.

In Scotland and Wales, EU nationals legally resident can vote in local and Scottish Parliamentary and Senedd Cymru elections. They also they need to be over the age of 16, not 18.

##### **Other nationals**

Citizens of the other countries not in the two above categories have different voting rights in different part of the UK, reflecting the devolution of franchise legislation.

In England and Northern Ireland they have no right to vote in any elections.

In Scotland and Wales all foreign nationals legally resident can vote in local and Scottish Parliamentary and Senedd elections.

## METHODOLOGY

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### Phase One

The first phase of the project involved evidence gathering, based on published and unpublished sources, both official and academic. Academic publications were found in peer-reviewed journals, as well as in books (edited volumes and monographs) and unpublished PhDs. PhD theses are peer-reviewed and thus are often high in quality, but under-utilised, sources of evidence and some of these provided useful qualitative studies of smaller groups. Besides academic sources, we drew also upon official reports and policy literature, including submissions to some recent parliamentary reports. The Runnymede Trust, The Electoral Commission and the Cabinet Office, in particular, all published relevant reports in the last decade. Some of these were not all targeted towards minorities, but all include important pieces of discussion of minorities, or at least discuss factors that disproportionately affect minorities.

This collection of evidence is designed to be as thorough as possible, but omissions are inevitable, particularly of unpublished PhD theses (as the UK does not have a national register). The aim here is to develop a synthesis of existing knowledge and identify any significant gaps.

### Phase Two

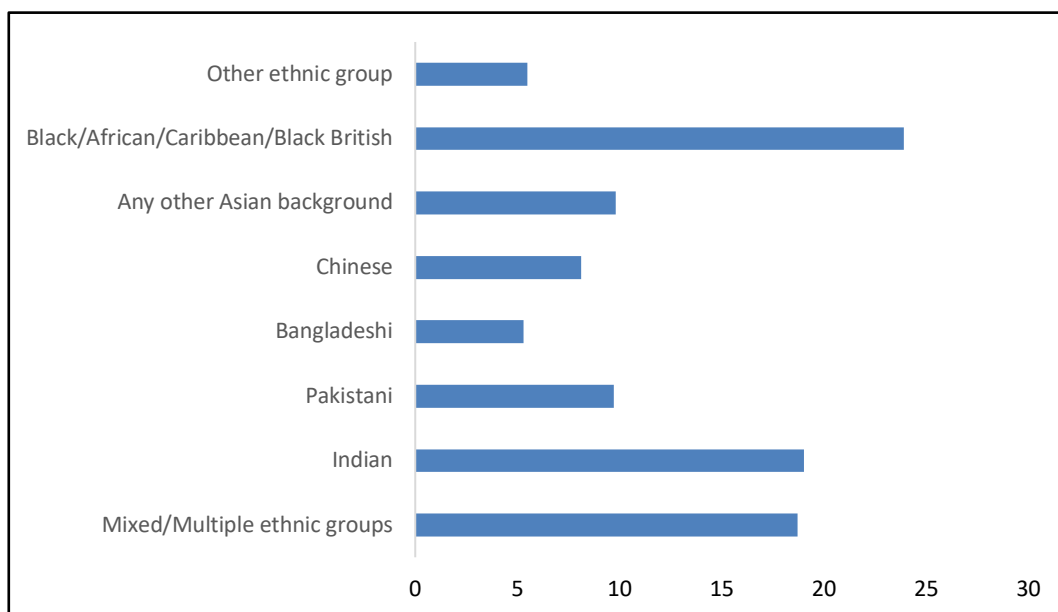
In the second phase we designed a small battery of questions for an ethnic minority public opinion poll to update our understanding, given the research gaps identified in the first phase. The results are presented in Part Two of this report.

The poll has been conducted online, in English only, by Number Cruncher Analytics, using their bespoke technique. This is based on drawing samples from both existing online panels of respondents, and from so-called 'river sampling', which samples and polls respondents immediately, without attempting to recruit them onto a long-term panel. In the case of ethnic

minorities this sampling technique is designed to adjust for the usual over-sampling of particularly well integrated and engaged respondents, as well as those born in the UK. Although this poll does not match the quality of a probability survey – which remains the gold standard in terms of representativeness but also remains prohibitive in terms of cost – it is an improvement on some of the other samples available, which are predominantly reliant on panels of respondents only.<sup>5</sup> The achieved sample size was 1000 respondents of non-White minority origins, with the ethnic group breakdown presented below in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1 Proportion of respondents from each ethnic minority group**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



Our initial assessment of the sample is that it includes a good proportion of those who were born abroad and from all social classes, is geographically well spread (avoiding London-centrism) and includes a good proportion of respondents from all age groups but the very oldest (reflecting the younger age profile of minorities). It also does not seem to over-represent Conservative-leaning minority voters.<sup>6</sup> Like other similar online polls, it contains fewer respondents with low educational qualifications, who do not speak English and have no interest in politics.

<sup>5</sup> The British Election Study Online Panel for example.

<sup>6</sup> See Ford et al. 2015 for the description of this problem in online sampling.

To analyse the results of this poll we used the bespoke weights prepared by Number Cruncher Analytics. These are designed to further rebalance the sample to match the demographic profile of the ethnic minority population, as known from the ONS.

## **PART ONE – SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING RESEARCH**

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### **Overview**

Research into the democratic participation of minority ethnic groups and immigrants in the UK is relatively scarce. This is especially the case at the individual level (voters themselves) rather than at groups and organisations seeking to mobilise and represent ethnic minorities and immigrants. Due in part to the relatively small size of the British electorate with minority ethnic origin or with a direct experience of immigration – at the 2005 General Election it was estimated at five per cent (Fieldhouse, et al. 2007) – the academic literature on democratic participation was also small, and also usually focused on cities, particularly those areas where these groups are concentrated (Anwar 2001, Saggar 2000). In the 2000s, there were only a few studies on this issue (Anwar, 2001; Electoral Commission 2005, Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2007, 2008; Fieldhouse et al. 2007, Saggar 2000, 2004) and since 2010 there has been a small rise in the number of studies, in line with the rise in the proportion of the electorate with minority ethnic origin or immigration experience (estimated at 11 per cent in 2017 (Martin and Khan 2017)). Looking at the state of the field since 2010 for this report, we have identified 21 published academic articles, four books, three book chapters, four unpublished doctoral monographs and 21 official reports, predominantly by or for the Electoral Commission and the Cabinet Office, which all engage with minority political participation to some extent (although at times ethnicity is discussed alongside a range of other factors).

Perhaps even more striking is that many of these more recent publications, both academic and official, still rely on outdated, or unrepresentative data. While there have been some more recent qualitative studies, especially on a smaller scale, studies have more frequently used large representative quantitative datasets which are now at least a decade old, such as Citizenship Surveys and the Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES). Even the newest smaller quantitative polls, such as the Electoral Commission's Winter Tracker ethnic minority boosters, are also almost a decade old at the time of writing. Commercial public opinion polling is generally thought to not be representative of ethnic minority populations and thus few polling companies publish ethnic breakdowns for turnout, but the IPSOS MORI reports



at each general election do include crude breakdowns by ethnicity (usually contrasting White British with non-White voters). Any available newer official or scholarly quantitative data on politics (such as the British Election Study) are not specifically designed to include ethnic minorities or immigrants, and as such cannot offer a reliable picture, with the notable exception of the Understanding Society survey which contains almost no politics questions, but has in recent years been asking about turnout at general elections.

This relative lack of new data and research on the democratic participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants is a result of multiple trends. These include the rising costs of conducting representative studies of these minority populations, simultaneous cuts to government-funded research into democratic participation and citizenship more broadly, and academic fashions that have largely led to the omission of this area of research from the three larger research fields: political science, immigration studies, and ethnicity studies. In mainstream political science, the relatively small proportion of minority and immigrant voters in a wider electorate makes this a fairly niche interest as the top scholars aim to explain more general voting and participation trends. Among immigration scholars, on the other hand, political integration is usually considered the least pertinent dimension of immigrant integration and therefore is rarely included in studies of integration that predominantly focus on socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects. Finally, for scholars of ethnicity, political disadvantage is similarly thought to be the least important form of ethnic disadvantage and is thus dwarfed in number by studies of education or employment inequalities.

As the costs of research into these hard-to-reach populations is much higher than the costs of studying majority populations, the reduced government funding is particularly consequential in two ways. Firstly, it has impacted direct investment in relevant data infrastructure, such as the (cancelled) Citizenship Survey financed directly through the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government respectively or ethnic minority booster samples for the Electoral Commission Winter Tracker polls. Secondly, indirect funding through research councils has been affected as the funding caps have not been raised in line with inflation for the main social science funding body, the Economic and Social Research Council. This has made large data investments such as the 2010 Ethnic Minorities British Election Study impossible.

This synthesis therefore presents a picture of scant and largely outdated evidence, and identifies the major data gaps which need addressing. It is organised in two parts. The first part covers existing – although as indicated above rather outdated – evidence around levels of democratic participation. We will first discuss the issues around electoral registration, as a prerequisite to voting, and then turn to voting itself. Given that most ethnic minority and immigrant groups have a history of either under-registration, lower turnout, or both, this will be a crucial background to the second part of the synthesis, which will focus on explaining both obstacles to participation and possible ways to encourage it.

Since the literature on registration and turnout is even scarcer than the broader literature on non-electoral forms of civic participation, we will extend the analysis of obstacles to participation to non-electoral forms. There is ample research supporting the notion that electoral and non-electoral participation share many precursors and impediments, and so extrapolating some of these is warranted. Therefore, this part of the synthesis will be organised around the three principal theoretical mechanisms that enable both types of democratic participation – motivation, resources, and mobilisation.

Motivation describes attitudes that are predictive of participation and range from those that indirectly contribute, to those directly related, to voting. Some of the indirect attitudes covered are a sense of belonging, political trust, efficacy and satisfaction with democracy. These have been shown by research from Britain and elsewhere to correlate positively with turnout, but also other forms of participation in politics. The directly relevant attitudes will include a sense of duty to vote and interest in the results of the elections, in politics more broadly, as well as a sense of identity with political parties. All of these motivate participation and can be impacted by an experience of immigration, a sense of rejection by the ethnic majority group, and age – given minorities' and immigrants' younger age profile this might be a relevant explanatory factor.

Resources refer to the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary to participate in politics. Language abilities can be particularly relevant to immigrants, but having knowledge of the registration process is also especially crucial in the UK context, given its relative complexity and the still-recent change in its administration. Other knowledge and civic skills usually discussed in explanations of voting include knowing how to find out where to vote, how long

the polling station is open, and who to contact to find things out (and thus the relevant skills such as writing letters). Other resources that are usually associated with voting are socio-economic and impact the ability to participate in terms of costs and efforts involved. As such, the over-representation of minorities among lower-paid employees, under-employed workers, and frequent house movers can all contribute to additional barriers to participation. Finally, an important factor in the UK context is having access to a National Insurance (NI) Number which is required to register, especially given that immigrants who settle in the UK through a family reunification route and are economically inactive might not necessarily register for NI. While there is an exemption procedure in place, it does increase the difficulty of the process and will require greater skills. Since under the previous system there was no requirement to submit NI Numbers, and electoral registration was conducted by a head of household who was likely to be its most knowledgeable and interested member, the role of resources is likely to have increased since 2015.

Finally, the third mechanism, mobilisation, is a heading that gathers together all of the factors which relate to the encouragement that individuals receive to register and vote. It has long been established that one of the main predictors of voting is having been asked to do it (Verba and Nie 1996), and here we will present both evidence that ethnic minority people and immigrants are less likely to be asked to vote by mainstream actors such as political parties, as well as what can be done about it. In particular, we will focus on the importance of ethnic organisations and places of worship, but also some informal co-ethnic networks, as these are important actors filling the gap in mobilising these groups to participate.

Each of these three headings will summarise available literature, bringing out both the generalisable conclusions and the specific factors that affect different ethnic groups or immigrants from particular backgrounds.

## **Electoral registration**

Electoral registration is the first administrative step required to participate in elections. Unlike in most European democracies, in the UK individual voters have the legal responsibility to register themselves. However, residents in the UK are prompted to update their registration

status by their local authorities through the annual canvass, and there is a notional fine for not providing details to the local Electoral Registration Officer, making the system of registration a little more of a hybrid one. This results in higher levels of registration than in some countries where individual registration is not assisted in any way (like in some US states) (Wilks-Heeg 2012). Nonetheless, the high rates of under-registration for some groups discussed below highlight that this system is not working equally well for everyone and is leaving some eligible voters excluded from the political process.

The consequences of exclusion from the Electoral Register are potentially very significant. The most obvious one is the inability to cast a vote, which might particularly affect low interest and low information voters. Such voters might initially remain unaware that there is an election, and what the deadline to register is, and as they become more interested and perhaps motivated to vote later in the campaign, they are unable to change their mind if they have missed the deadline. This scenario is much more likely following the 2014 reform, which replaced the annual household registration with the requirement to register individually (see Information Box Two for more details). Annual household registration prompted registration more successfully than the current annual canvas, as the process could be done by returning the household form attached. In contrast, the annual canvas prompts unregistered residents to go online, or request the form from the local council, thus introducing another step to registering. This left registration much more tightly related to elections – the evidence from the British Election Study shows that most people register in the few weeks before the election and not in the first autumn after their details have changed (House of Lords 2020). This makes the scenario in which deadlines are missed much more likely, and there is no quick workaround for this issue. As the deadline for registrations is deemed necessary to allow the Electoral Registration Officers to verify the identity of the applicants, and to offer a postal vote which requires more turnaround time, this is becoming a serious issue.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It is not an insurmountable problem for EROs. Some US States allow on the day registration, and such reforms have been suggested before, but so far have been roundly rejected in the UK.

### ***Information Box Two***

#### **Registration reform**

The 2013 Electoral Registration and Administration Act changed the way British electors had to register to vote. It was a part of a wider electoral modernisation project, aimed at improving the accuracy of Electoral Registers. It removed the traditional procedure of sending out a Household Registration Form, that was to be completed by the head of household, and introduced an individual duty to register. It also introduced a need to provide an NI Number as an additional proof of identity to the usual date of birth and nationality.

Individual registration is encouraged online, but paper forms are available from the local council. There are also forms available in the main ethnic minority languages.

Finally, in place of sending the annual Household Registration Form, the local Electoral Registration Officer sends an information form, which can be checked for registration details but cannot be returned in order to register. In the face of evidence that the electors find this change confusing (House of Lords 2020), the Government is planning to reform this further.

These reforms came into effect in 2014, but the first register affected was the 2015 December register, as this was the first register that did not include electors who failed the authentication process by comparing their details to existing databases (mostly those held by the Department for Work and Pensions) and did not respond to the local council letter informing them they needed to re-register.

Not being registered also presents other difficulties for the excluded individual, such as poor access to credit, as credit companies use the registers to verify the identity of borrowers. But, in areas that suffer from general lower levels of registration, this also impacts the ability of MPs to serve their constituents. Parliamentary constituency boundaries are set based on electoral registers, a process aimed at delivering near-equal sized constituencies in order to

protect the principle of 'one person, one vote'. Given the well-known geographic variation in registers' completeness, some constituencies are in effect hugely larger than intended (Wilks-Heeg 2012). As these parliamentary seats are also likely to suffer from additional social problems, like deprivation, the workload for the MPs who represent such seats is likely to be much greater.

Despite its importance, registration receives very little academic attention (Wilks-Heeg 2012). Since the 2000s,<sup>8</sup> most of the available research into this form of engagement has been conducted by the Electoral Commission and more recently, the Cabinet Office. These studies usually rely on polls and qualitative research, as well as some analysis of aggregate trends (see Information Box Three), which makes them useful in understanding the reasons for, but not always the levels of, under-registration of certain groups. The few scholarly studies that cover this area rely either on the British Election Study (see Information Box Four), which does not have an ethnic minority oversample and thus is only useful as a comparison with other, minority-focussed sources or the now-outdated EMBES from 2010, which was designed to cover the five largest non-White minority groups but has not included immigrants. This study has been one of the most influential and widely used in the area as it is useful for both establishing levels of, and for explaining the reasons for, under-registration.

However, the study with the most coverage and the best source for establishing levels of registration (although also outdated) has been a sample drawn from the 2011 Census. Although not entirely free from quality issues, especially in cities where its coverage is lower, it is nonetheless the best quality dataset that contains enough ethnic minority and individuals of immigrant origin to be taken as broadly representative. We will therefore start with this source, to give an idea of what levels of under-registration different ethnic and immigrant minority groups experience and how the different demographic characteristics relate to registration.

The ONS data has compared a sample of individuals from the 2011 Census, which is the most accurate snapshot of the population in England and Wales, with the concurrent Electoral

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<sup>8</sup> A relative flurry of research in 1990s has been caused by the Poll Tax reform causing a mass drop in registrations, and thus some increase in academic attention to the consequences of this drop for measures of turnout (Johnston and Pattie, 1997; Pattie et al. 1996, Swaddle and Health, 1989) and the parliamentary constituency boundary issues (Heady et al. 1996).

Registers (Electoral Commission 2014). The results showed that all immigrants and ethnic minority groups apart from Irish immigrants are relatively under-registered by comparison to the White British group. The Black minorities of African origin had the largest registration gap, whereas British Asians of Indian origin had a considerably smaller one, so much so that the gap between the White British and Indian categories has no statistical significance. Among immigrants, however, EU immigrants are the most under-registered with more than 30 per cent estimated to be missing.

### ***Information Box Three***

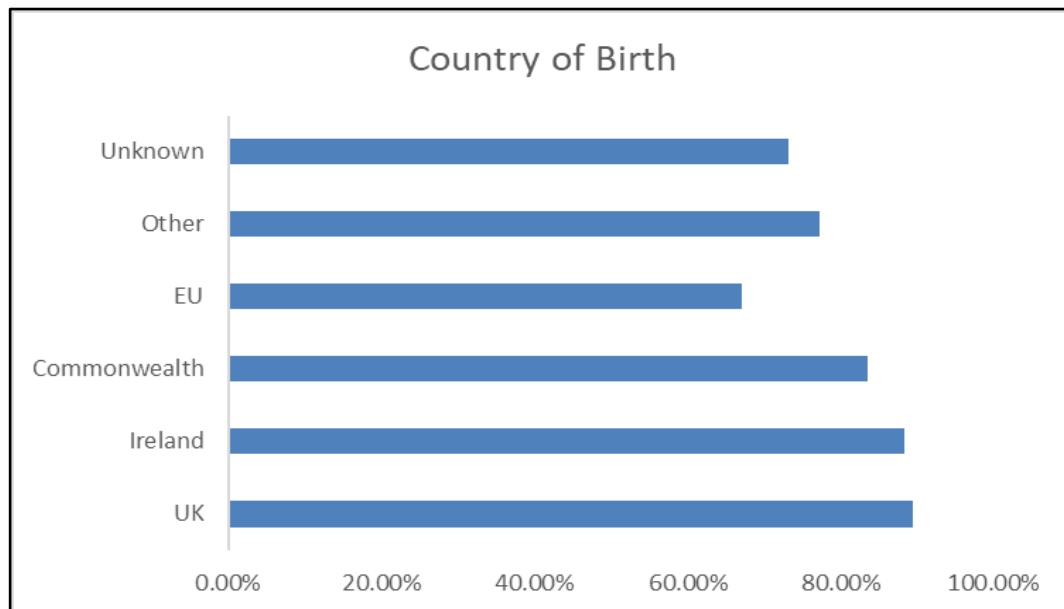
#### **Why are standard surveys and polls unrepresentative of ethnic minorities and immigrants?**

The standard, high-quality surveys conducted to be representative of the general British population can include the correct proportion of ethnic minority or immigrant respondents if they have large enough samples. However, because minorities and immigrants are less likely to answer surveys, and are only a relatively small proportion of the general public, the numbers of minority and immigrant respondents are still very small, usually too small to conduct meaningful statistical analysis. This is particularly an issue if we want to split minorities further into different groups. Furthermore, because ethnic minorities are not evenly spread across the country, it is down to luck how many of the areas where they live will end up in the sample.

As a result, many of the usual polls and surveys end up with the kinds of ethnic minority respondents who are not representative of the wider minority population – they are better integrated, live in less diverse areas and are more likely to be born in the UK than the average ethnic minority person. This means that they are usually more likely to vote Conservative, for example, and might have other unrepresentative attitudes and behaviours, making it hard to generalise from these samples to minorities as a whole (see Janta Lipinski et al. 2015 & Martin 2018). This is why surveys and polls need special booster samples, but these are expensive, and often hard to do well.

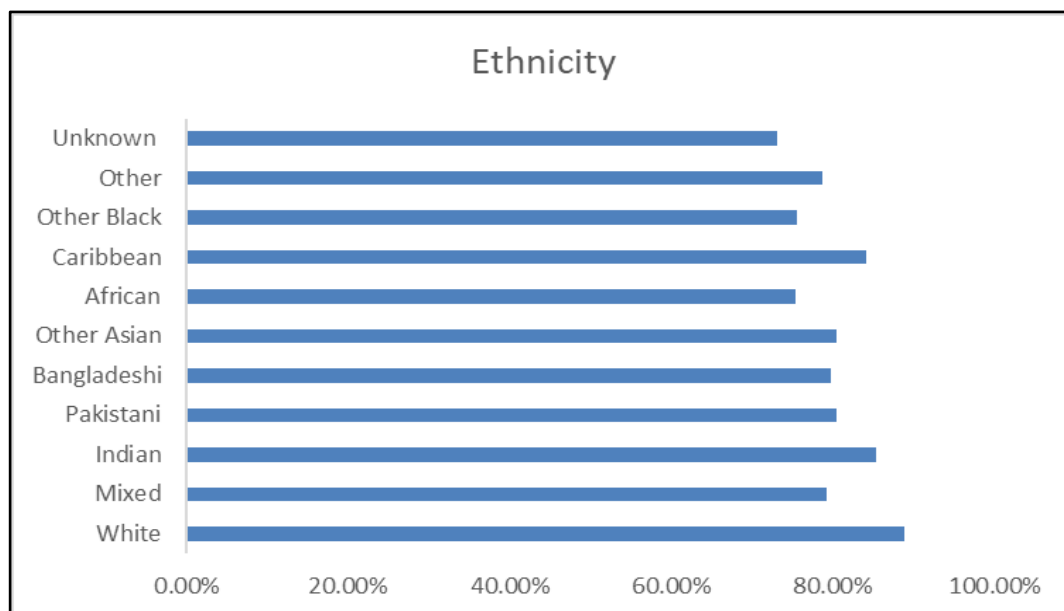
**Figure 1.2 Estimated electoral registration rates by country of birth**

(source: Electoral Commission 2014)



**Figure 1.3 Estimated electoral registration rates by ethnicity**

(source: Electoral Commission 2014)



The ONS census data allows for some explanatory analysis, which shows that newer immigrants are most likely to be missing from the registers and that, over time, registration increases (Electoral Commission 2014). In fact, length of residence in the UK has been the most significant predictor of registration, trumping all other predictors. The next best

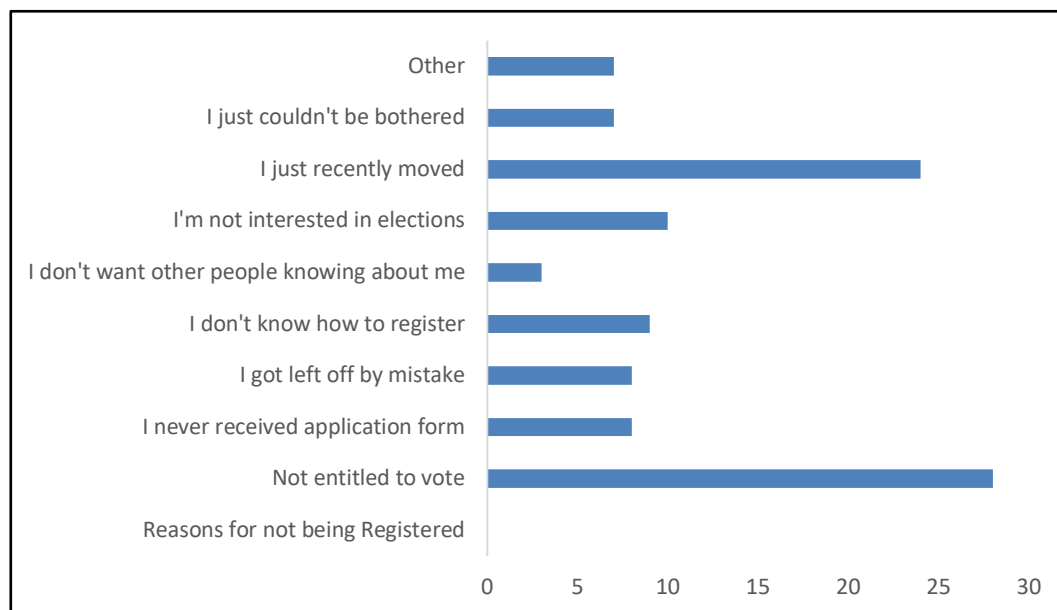


predictors of being missing from the register were all related to housing – living with someone not related, renting and having moved in the last year. All of these are experienced at much higher rates by younger people and immigrants.

A very similar picture emerges from the analysis of the second most representative study available, the EMBES, which is one year older than the ONS analysis and thus even more out of date. As we indicated above, this study is only representative of the five largest non-White minority groups and did not cover White immigrants. This study also included a larger number of explanatory factors, going beyond demographics and into some attitudinal reasons behind the registration gap. As the figure below shows, when asked, minority ethnic respondents named not being eligible because of lack of British citizenship and having recently moved as the two most frequent causes of not being on the register. This reflects the ONS analysis although, given the sample, many of the minority respondents who thought they were not eligible clearly were (as most were Commonwealth citizens). This theme of lack of knowledge, which we will come back to later, continues with nine per cent of respondents reporting that they did not know how to register. Finally, around 16 per cent had not registered because of lack of interest or will.

**Figure 1.4 Reasons for not being on the Electoral Register by EMBES respondents**

(source: Ethnic Minority British Election Study 2010)



Note: figure shows percentages of respondents naming each reason; multiple reasons could be named.

Given the 2014 reform of electoral registration procedure,<sup>9</sup> it might come as a surprise that the most under-registered groups were not included in evaluations of the reform. These groups were included in the Government's own impact assessment (Cabinet Office 2013) and were identified as at risk as a result of the reform by the Electoral Commission (2013), and in Parliament (House of Commons 2014). In the evidence given to the latter, the tendency of women of ethnic minority origin to rely on their husbands for filling out the household registration form was highlighted as a possible source of risk (Sobolewska and Heath 2013), as was lack of access to the now required date of birth for those whose birth certificates were lost in the partition of India (ibid). Difficulties with using multiple names, and so unreliably reporting them to the different official agencies that is characteristic of some ethnic minority communities, was also acknowledged (ibid). We will come back to some other obstacles stemming from broader social marginalisation of minorities in the discussion of resources to participate on pages 40-45 of this report.

#### ***Information Box Four***

##### **Why is aggregate analysis problematic?**

Aggregate analyses sometimes find that an area where ethnic minorities live in large concentrations is more likely to have incomplete registers, or lower turnout (see Cabinet Office 2019). However, these areas have many other characteristics which may contribute to this that have nothing to do with minorities living there. They are urban places with high population churn, lots of people renting and living in high density housing, and they experience more deprivation. As a result, it might be non-minority people who live in these places that are missing from the registers, or are less likely to vote, as has been shown by Fieldhouse and Cutts (2008). As a result, aggregate analysis can only ever be indicative, and the only way to truly know whether minority individuals are missing from registers is to analyse Electoral Registers themselves (see Information Box Five).

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<sup>9</sup> Based on the 2013 Electoral Registration and Administration Act

### **Information Box Five**

#### **Validation of Census or survey data against Electoral Registers**

The best way of analysing the Electoral Register is to validate some other existing data against it. Usually, the British Election Study does this for each election, by checking (with their permission) whether respondents to post-election, face-to-face surveys are on the Register, and whether they have voted. The latter is checked against the marked-up register, which is held by local authorities for a year after the election. This is a labour intensive and costly operation but gives the most reliable information. The ONS has done a similar thing for registration (but not turnout, as it is out of sync with elections) following the 2011 Census, where they used a sample drawn from the Census and checked the names of respondents against the Electoral Registers (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). Other analyses of Electoral Registers are at the aggregate level, comparing the proportion of people of certain origin on the register with the proportion of people of this origin living in the area covered by the register (for example Gergs & Bulat 2020).

The best existing evaluations were conducted by the Electoral Commission (Electoral Commission 2016) by comparing the state of the electoral registers in December 2014 and 2015 using a survey based on a sample<sup>10</sup> that was designed to be nationally representative. Sadly, the numbers of minority and immigrant respondents were too small to draw any statistically valid conclusions on the effect of the reform on these groups. However, they confirm registration gaps persisted after the reform, showing that Black (76 per cent) and Asian-origin (80 per cent) voters were registered at lower rates than White Britons (85 per cent). Samples were too small to look at sub-categories beyond Black and Asian, but the authors cite previous surveys which show that Caribbean-origin voters are registered more than Black African voters, as are Indian origin voters compared to those from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds.

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<sup>10</sup> This research is based on a probability survey of 6,027 addresses, across 116 local authorities, with survey results then checked against local registers. Similar results based on similar methods were reported in 2019.

The additional evaluative research conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2019 again failed to employ a suitable research design and instead relied on the very unreliable aggregate analysis (see Information Box Four). An additional problem with the Cabinet Office report is that it groups all the non-White minority ethnicities together. Nonetheless, the results of both studies indicate that, at the very least, the situation has not improved, with the registration gap persisting for areas with high ethnic minority concentrations.

A more sensitive aggregate-level analysis of electoral registration has been conducted for EU citizens in 2019 by an organisation named The 3 Million (Gergs & Bulat 2020).<sup>11</sup> The analysis compares the proportion of individuals within a given local authority area who were born in a current EU member state (with the exclusion of Malta, Cyprus and Ireland which have extended voting rights due to colonial links with the UK, see Information Box One) to the December 2019 percentage of registered voters in the same district in who were also originally from Europe.<sup>12</sup> These data were collected by the ONS, who provide reliable estimates of nationality at the local level and the proportion of these estimates on the local Electoral Registers. The authors don't provide an overall estimate of the registration rate of EU migrants nationwide, although do they provide a comprehensive list of results for each local authority which they looked at in a separate data release associated with the report. In the report itself, they provide a list of the local authorities which have the largest 'gaps' between the percentage of EU migrants residing in the area, and the percentage share of EU citizens on the local electoral register. Whilst being a fairly crude measure of under-registration, the proportion of EU registered voters was consistently lower than the proportion of EU citizens living in the area. The difference was substantial in several cases (for example, the proportion of registered voters in Sevenoaks who were also EU citizens was 2.6 per cent, whereas the percentage of the local population who were EU citizens was 9.2 per cent).

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<sup>11</sup> This research has also been funded by JRRT.

<sup>12</sup> To our knowledge the ONS has not published similar calculations for Commonwealth citizens at the same time.

## **Turnout**

Having registered to vote, the next step in taking part in elections is to turn out to vote. In this section of the report we will address what we know about the levels of turnout of different ethnic minority groups and immigrants. Even though turnout is generally studied more frequently by political scientists than registration, it is less frequently subject to official statistics at the individual level. Thus, the only two gold standard sources of statistics of turnout are aggregate results (published alongside election results) for the fairly large geographical areas that are parliamentary constituencies, and the validated individual-level turnout measure offered by the British Election Study (BES).

Both these sources are usually insufficient in establishing ethnicity gaps, however. First, the aggregate statistics only offer a correlation between a constituency's turnout levels and its ethnic diversity (see Information Box Three), which cannot tell us whether turnout differentials discovered this way are due to White British voters behaving differently in highly diverse places, or minority voters themselves (Fieldhouse et al 2008). As such, any conclusions based on aggregate analysis are a conjecture (see Information Box Four). Secondly, the BES is not representative of ethnic minorities, and the face-to-face survey which is validated against the marked up electoral registers (see Information Box Five) usually has very small numbers of ethnic minority respondents.

As a result, these analyses lack statistical power and prevent any research into the differential turnout gap between specific ethnic origins. Given that, as we indicated earlier, the turnout gap usually assumed for minority groups is at least partially driven by their under-registration, all sources should account for levels of registration and not just analyse turnout against population proportions of minorities in society. This is virtually non-existent and the only existing data source that does this, and that is representative of minorities, is again the outdated 2010 EMBES.

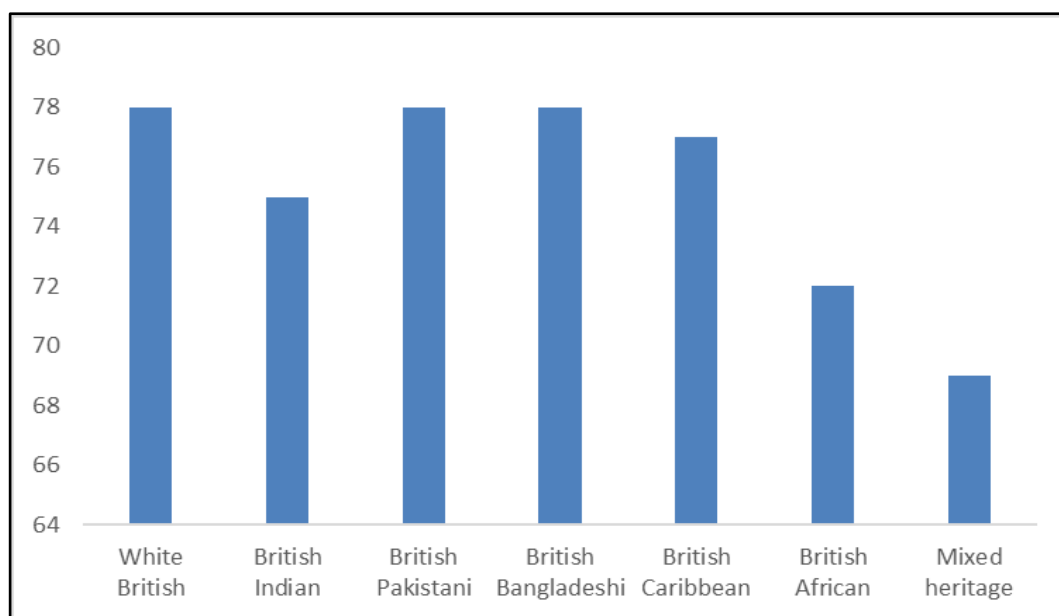
One additional difficulty is that the ubiquitous commercial political polls do not have ethnic minority booster samples, and thus are not representative for minority populations.

Therefore most do not publish breakdowns by ethnicity.<sup>13</sup> Although recently many pollsters have undertaken special ethnic minority sampling, the quality remains variable and existing comparisons between commercial polls and better-quality academic samples such as Understanding Society show issues still exist (Martin 2018).

The 2010 EMBES evidence of turnout differentials between ethnic minority groups, which takes into account electoral registration, and which has been validated against marked up registers, largely shows that after excluding those not registered to vote there is no turnout gap to speak of. The only two minority groups covered by this dataset that showed significantly lower levels of participation in elections were Black Africans and the mixed ethnicity group. The lower turnout among the mixed group is entirely explained by this groups' younger age structure and other demographics, while some differential in Black African turnout remains, even after controlling for this groups' higher likelihood of being an immigrant (Heath et al. 2011, 2013).

**Figure 1.5 Percentage of those registered to vote who voted in the 2010 General Election, validated against Electoral Registers**

(source: Heath et al. 2013)



<sup>13</sup> The exception is IPSOS MORI, which does publish ethnic breakdown for turnouts. It consistently shows a 10 percent gap, but this number is problematic both because there is no further breakdown by specific ethnicity and, as with other data, their surveys are not designed as representative of minority groups. On the plus side, however, they do account for electoral registration in their estimates.

The data showing a lack of any significant participation gap between White British and British Asian communities are backed by the analysis of Electoral Registers. The first of these analyses can be thought of as gold standard, but is even more dated than the EMBES survey, as the last such exercise dates from the 2001 General Election. Fieldhouse and Cutts conducted this research by looking at British Muslims, who predominantly come from Pakistani and Bangladeshi origins, and used a sample of 97 electoral wards containing just over 570,000 voters, of which just over 54,000 were Muslim. The analysis shows that Muslims were indeed significantly under-registered in Britain, but just as the EMBES suggests, turnout among registered Muslim voters was no lower than the wider electorate (Fieldhouse and Cutts 2008).

More recent evidence, but based on less reliable self-reported data (as people tend to over-report having voted), comes from two sources. First is the IPSOS MORI general election reports, which still show turnout gaps despite accounting for registration. The MORI data shows a 12 per cent gap in 2015 between the White British and a pooled ethnic minority sample, and an 11 per cent gap in 2017 and 2019 (IPSOS MORI 2015, 2017, 2019). This source also does not disaggregate different ethnic origins and does not use a purpose-designed ethnic minority sample, and so it cannot be thought of as representative of the minority population. For this reason, a better source might be the Understanding Society survey, which has an oversample of minorities and immigrants and does disaggregate different ethnic origins. However, this is only available for the 2017 General Election, and the turnout levels are presented as bands to adjust for statistical uncertainty (but not over-reporting). It shows that turnout for South Asian groups seems to be still in line with the level for White British citizens, but electoral participation for both Black British groups lags behind. The specific bands for 2017 are 74–91 per cent for South Asians, 51–85 per cent for Black Caribbean and Africans, and 82–83 per cent for White British (Martin and Khan 2019).

Mostly because immigrant groups which do not fall into the category of non-White ethnic minorities are largely not entitled to vote in general elections unless they acquire citizenship (see Information Box One), and even then remain less numerous in the electorate, little

research exists on the turnout of White immigrants. One of the studies that does exist,<sup>14</sup> conducted by the University of Warsaw, looks at Polish migrants. It uses a sample of 916 Poles who had been residing in the UK (or Ireland) long enough to apply for citizenship. The sample was not entirely representative of Polish citizens currently residing in the UK, but was stratified by age and region according to official estimates of Britain's Polish population. 31 per cent of respondents reported having voted in at least one local election in the past, which would represent a significant gap, but this study does not seem to adjust for registration (Fanning et al. 2018).

Therefore, for most EU migrants, while we know that they are under-registered to vote, we cannot comment on whether they vote less, more, or at the same rates as the majority White British population once we account for this shortfall.

## **Factors affecting democratic participation**

Having established the levels of electoral registration and participation, we now turn to what predicts, encourages, and potentially discourages democratic engagement among minority groups and immigrants. Following the classic model of Verba and Nie (1972), used to explain the participation of racial minorities in the United States (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995), we divide these factors into three broad groups. These are: resources, which largely cover time, money and skills needed; mobilisation, which covers the issue of recruitment and encouragement from others to participate; and motivation, which groups psychological and attitudinal predictors of participation, from trust in the system to interest in politics and specific political issues.

We will discuss each group of factors in turn, summing up the existing literature, and highlighting evidence gaps when the literature is outdated, fails to cover important issues, or

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<sup>14</sup> Another study of Polish migrants, which we nonetheless hesitate to include, is the Centre for Population Change report from 2019 which looked at turnout level of Polish migrants at the Scottish Independence Referendum 2014. This study by contrast shows a very good level of political engagement and turnout, but because it is an opt-in survey this cannot really be a reliable estimate. The quality of this study is very poor as it reports the results of an online survey of 245 Polish migrants currently living in Scotland, which was distributed by Polish community organisations, businesses and online networks in Scotland. This is therefore a small sample of dubious representativeness and does not represent a useful gauge of turnout levels.



fails to cover certain ethnic and migrant groups. Where it is possible, we will draw some practical conclusions as to what might work as an intervention to increase levels of participation.

## **Resources**

The basic resources needed for political participation are time, money and skills.

While voting might not be a very expensive form of participation, unlike donating to political causes or parties, or buying ethical consumer goods, an individual's financial situation impacts the likelihood to vote indirectly, particularly through housing. Housing type and stability are amongst the main predictors both of electoral registration and subsequently turnout. Among those under-registered, people in rental accommodation and frequent movers are significantly over-represented according to all available sources we reviewed. The well-known housing inequalities among ethnic minority groups and immigrants is likely to therefore underlie to an important degree their registration inequalities. They also make it hard to disentangle the relative effects of ethnicity, immigration and housing in aggregate research (Cabinet Office 2019). On the flip side, any intervention aimed at encouraging and enabling frequent movers and renters to register is likely to have some effect on electoral registration levels of minorities and immigrants.

Interventions aimed at frequent movers and renters made in the past have predominantly included prompting to change and update registration status when other services that movers might access are used. This would include the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, HM Revenue and Customs or General Practitioner services (House of Lords 2020, James and Bernal 2020), but could also include privately-owned services such as estate agents, household utilities or banks.

There are two main reasons why housing type and stability impacts registration and turnout, and both have high relevance to ethnic minorities and immigrants. First, renters are much less likely to have roots in the community they live in. This is crucial for minorities as they rely on communities for political education and mobilisation, and because they might need it

more. Immigrants who do not have roots in their communities might also not feel a sense of investment, belonging and efficacy, all of which are necessary for participation and all of which will be discussed later in more detail. For people already marginalised through the experience of migration or exclusions based on racial prejudice, lack of roots will exacerbate any existing propensities to disengage.

Second, housing instability also presents more mundane obstacles to democratic participation by creating an administrative burden to re-register under a new address, and even finding out where the new nearest polling station is. Although the annual canvas is designed to prompt newly-moved voters to update their address, for many this might not be sufficient, or come at the right time before the election, given that it is only done once a year.

Renters and frequent movers are often also likely to live in houses of multiple occupation and flats. This makes receiving post addressed to 'the Occupier' more difficult, and in-person canvass from both Electoral Registration officials (Mitchell 2018) and party campaigners at the time of the election, harder. Both renters and movers are therefore also less likely to vote, even if they are registered under the correct address (Andre et al. 2017).

Time is the second resource needed to participate in politics. Again, voting is not usually thought of as a time-intensive form of participation, and in the UK voters who might not have time on election day are encouraged to use postal or proxy voting. However, there is the additional time investment needed to not only register to vote online but also potentially to find out about it in the first place. This might be particularly difficult for immigrants generally, but more specifically for those coming from countries with automatic voter registration, which is most EU countries. Lack of automatic registration to vote is therefore recognised in some sources as an obstacle to registering (Ziegler 2019).

The final principal resource needed for participation is having the necessary skills to do so. This is by far the largest category of obstacles to voting and registering to vote and has special implications for immigrants and ethnic minorities. For immigrants, in particular, the first significant skill is language proficiency. Although registration forms are available in languages other than English, covering many of the most commonly spoken languages amongst ethnic minorities, the lack of English might make the process of finding these forms and even

knowing the need to and how to register harder. Less than fluent English might of course impact other relevant abilities, such as access to political campaign materials, or discussions.

In the case of some British Asian Muslim communities, lack of English skills can also mean that women and younger members of the community are disenfranchised, as the community leaders who speak English at times vote instead of them or instruct them how to vote (Akhtar 2015, Sobolewska et al. 2014). The stealing of the vote is a sensitive area and there are no reliable estimates of how frequent this form of disenfranchisement is. However, it seems that in areas where there are significant concentrations of Muslim voters of Asian origin, these are frequent enough to make them a common theme in qualitative research in these communities. Some research, specifically aimed at this fraudulent voting, finds that the hierarchical and strongly patriarchal community structures called *biraderi*, understood as kinship and extended family networks, are still operating in some areas of the UK (Sobolewska et al. 2014, Hill et al. 2015).

In principle, these networks have arisen specifically to alleviate some of the shortage of resources required to participate in UK politics. Co-ethnic networks would provide access to relevant knowledge and help and therefore enable participation amongst people with poorer English, like women who came to join their UK-based husbands and who did not engage with the labour market, or more recent immigrants. Yet, because of the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of these networks, they have at times transformed from a helpful resource into oppressive regimes, excluding and disenfranchising those with poor English, women and younger generations, who are construed as having to follow the elders in their community in the way that they vote, or at an extreme who are expected to hand over their vote altogether (Sobolewska et al. 2014).

More general research into the political participation of young Muslims in the UK often mentions these networks in the context of younger generations of British Muslims rebelling against these influences, and trying to reclaim their own engagement (Akhtar 2015, O'Toole & Gale 2010). Clearly there is room for other community groups and civic society organisations to help fulfil the role of these networks in helping newly arrived immigrants with poorer English in a way that offers a chance to those who may be excluded by the more traditional networks. Aiming to work with South Asian women and young people to empower

them is likely to be impactful, but no research is available on any interventions in these communities.

Apart from language, another important skill needed for registering and voting is relevant knowledge. Here, as we already mentioned, the UK has a relatively complex system which comes as a surprise to many immigrants, whose home countries were automatically registering them to vote. Knowledge of eligibility is another obstacle. As we explained in Information Box One, many immigrants in the UK have access to some voting rights without needing to acquire citizenship first. In this respect, the UK is very generous with granting many immigrants access to political rights relative to conventions in other countries. Yet, both qualitative and quantitative data in the sources we reviewed has indicated that many immigrants do not know about their eligibility (Heath et al. 2013, Khan 2015, Bulat 2020, Bulat & Dzvingozyan 2020) and some sources accuse the Electoral Commission of not doing enough to inform the public on this aspect of elections (Ziegler 2019). There is no general overview of how many local authorities address this issue through their Electoral Registration Officers, but this is certainly an area where civil society organisations can play an important role. Again, little is known on the effectiveness of any interventions aimed at raising awareness of eligibility, as there are currently no relevant studies.

Election-specific knowledge is also very important. The Electoral Commission's Winter Tracker polls from 2012 and 2013, which had ethnic minority booster samples, show that ethnic minorities are slightly less knowledgeable about registering and voting than the general population, a finding that echoes the 2010 EMBES findings. Minorities were less likely to know what they need to register and vote, and this question will be revisited later as we reproduced some of these now outdated data sources in our bespoke poll of minorities (see Part Two of this report).

Finally, other resources that are pertinent to registering and voting (that do not fall under the three usually discussed in the literature) are resources that are useful in confirming one's identity. Having access to these is far from universal, and there is some evidence that this is especially true for ethnic minorities and immigrants (Sobolewska and Heath 2014). The Winter Tracker survey that the Electoral Commission runs for ethnic minority booster samples in 2012 showed that ethnic minorities reported less ease in finding documents

needed, although at the same time minority respondents also felt more positive about the requirement to provide this extra identifying documentation. They were also more likely to say that it would make them *more* likely to register, possibly as a result of added security (Electoral Commission 2012).

Again, just as was the case with more recent quantitative evidence on levels of registration and turnout, we are missing newer data on the causes of under-registration and possibly participation. As a result, the discussion of lack of resources to participate is also based predominantly on non-representative sources, or sources that may be representative but are outdated.

This is particularly consequential for the discussion around the proposed changes to legislation which will require photo ID to be presented at polling stations. While some argue that the requirement will amount to US-style voter suppression,<sup>15</sup> we do not have the evidence to support the assumption that minorities will be particularly negatively affected. On one hand, the relative difficulty in finding documents to register, as discussed above, indicates that additional documentation might present further difficulties. We also know that some minorities report inconsistency of names and dates of birth on their documents (Cabinet Office 2019). This is generally caused by the use of multiple names which are not always included in the same selection, in the same order or in full on all documents. Further, for some of the older Asian-origin Britons who arrived after the Partition of India in 1947, and for those immigrants who came as refugees, dates of birth might not be known. Any discrepancy between name or date of birth on electoral registration and the photo ID on the polling day is likely to result in a denial of vote, and we know from figures of postal rejection in areas of high concentration of British Asian voters that this is already a difficulty these minorities face when voting<sup>16</sup> (Sobolewska et al. 2015).

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<sup>15</sup> These arguments are usually made by journalists and campaigners, see for example <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/feb/28/using-photo-id-in-british-elections-will-harm-democracy-say-us-civil-rights-groups>; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/12/the-guardian-view-on-the-voter-id-bill-cynical-and-hypocritical>

<sup>16</sup> Although the Electoral Commission has conducted photo ID pilots to assess if they would have a negative impact on turnout, as ever the study was not designed to test systematically for ethnic differences. However, some locations included in the pilots had high levels of residents from South Asian origins and in a couple of those Electoral Commission did find that Asian voters were less likely to arrive at the polling station with the correct form of ID (EC 2019).

On the other hand, immigrants as a whole, both of White and minority ethnic origin, are likely to have access to a passport, which would count as a valid photo ID at the polling station. Given their cost, some White British people who are not travelling abroad might choose not to have a passport. This is supported by the available official statistics – the ONS estimated at the last Census in 2011 that 17 per cent of the population did not hold a passport. Assuming that the second most common official photo ID would be a driver's licence or a travel pass, both of which are relatively costly to acquire (apart from free travel passes for those who qualify for the state pension), it might be the case that poverty, rather than ethnicity or immigration status will be more of an obstacle to voting once the photo ID becomes a requirement. Although the Government is proposing to alleviate this by introducing a free voter card, this also will introduce another administrative step in an already comparatively complex process of voting. Any such additional step is likely to result in some people finding it harder to negotiate another form, or feeling that it is not worth their time, and for immigrants and ethnic minorities this might be additionally impacted by the same obstacles that make registration difficult for them – lack of knowledge and insufficient command of English.

This seems to be confirmed by a survey conducted on behalf of the Cabinet Office in March 2021, which identified no statistically significant gaps between ethnic minorities and the White British group in their possession of photo ID, but did identify a small gap between regions, those with degrees and those without, and those who were unemployed and those in employment (Cabinet Office 2021). Although there are some methodological concerns around whether a survey of this sort can reach more marginalised voters,<sup>17</sup> the patterns are nevertheless likely to be indicative, even if the size of the gaps is likely to be larger in the actual population.

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<sup>17</sup> It was a large sample of over 8000 voters, based on landline and mobile phone contact, and advertised as a survey on politics in voting. As a result it is likely to have recruited more interested and engaged individuals, like similar surveys of its' type, and would exclude anyone who does not have a mobile phone. On the plus side this survey contained an ethnic minority booster sample to increase numbers and representativeness of the survey for this important group. For details see [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/984918/Photographic\\_ID\\_research\\_headline\\_findings\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/984918/Photographic_ID_research_headline_findings_report.pdf)

## **Motivation**

Attitudes usually associated with higher participation in electoral politics can be divided into two broad types – attitudes towards politics and democracy in a broad sense, and engagement with particular political issues and topics. Attitudes in the former category are definitely better researched in terms of existing academic literature on ethnic minorities and immigrants, because they are often used as indicators of the political integration of immigrants. The most commonly discussed attitudes are a sense of national belonging, satisfaction with democracy, trust in government and politicians, a sense of efficacy, a sense of duty to vote, and interest in politics. Less often included is an identification with a political party, despite the fact that this attitude is a very strong predictor of electoral participation. All these have therefore been covered to a degree by existing evidence, which will be synthesised in this section.

Research is less abundant in the area of ethnic minorities' attitudes on specific issues that might help to mobilise them to vote. On the whole, the scant evidence points to ethnic minorities not holding different attitudes to the general public (Sobolewska 2005, Heath et al. 2013) and the only example of a distinct political interest that might impact levels of participation is the perception of racial discrimination (Heath et al. 2013, Sanders et al. 2013, Ehsan 2019). The perception that racial discrimination is a widespread problem, or a problem affecting the chances of success for ethnic minority people, has been linked to increased political participation in the US, but generally to decreased participation in the UK (Sobolewska et al. 2015, Martin 2017). This effect is possibly underpinned by another finding, which is that perceptions of discrimination among ethnic minorities undermine a sense of belonging in the wider society (Maxwell 2006, Leszczenski et al. 2020), something that usually predicts participation. Thus, it seems that the perception of discrimination feeds into a broader sense of alienation from politics (Martin 2017).

As a result, we will focus on two main political motivations in this subsection – a sense of belonging, and political alienation. Both combine multiple attitudes which are either crucial to encouraging engagement, or preventing involvement, in British politics.

Feeling a fundamental sense of investment in the politics of a country to which one thinks they belong is strongly associated with political engagement. For immigrants, this sense might take a while to develop, as their country of origin persists as a key source of belonging and identification. For ethnic minority groups, this sense might be challenged by the perception that the host society rejects their claims to belong and denies them their status as full and equal members.

Notwithstanding this possibility, most of the non-White ethnic minorities in Britain have been shown to have strong levels of belonging (Heath et al. 2013, Maxwell 2006), based on both the EMBES from 2010 and on the basis of Citizenship Surveys from the 2000s. Levels of belonging are thought to be of more concern among newer immigrant groups, particularly the most recent A8 migrants from the EU, who often cling to the idea of returning to their home country (Ryan 2015). Existing literature predominantly focuses on Polish immigrants, who came after the EU expansion in 2004, and shows that those who do not identify as British offer this as a direct reason for not voting (Scuzzarello 2015), while those who think they might stay in the country longer-term do feel a sense of belonging and a stake in the country's future, and thus are more likely to engage in voting (Piętka-Nykazaa et al. 2016).

The contrast between ethnic minority Britons' sense of belonging and the European migrants' one is particularly stark when we look at what can be thought of as an ultimate measure of belonging – the rates of naturalisation of immigrants. Such comparative analysis of citizenship uptake by immigrants from the Commonwealth and immigrants from the EU was undertaken in 2018 by Rob Ford,<sup>18</sup> and shows that while Commonwealth immigrants became British citizens at varying rates, these were high across the board, ranging from 85 per cent in the case of residents hailing from Kenya to 57 per cent for those coming from India, and the lowest rate for Nigerian migrants was definitely an outlier at only 47 per cent. However, even this lower rate dwarfs comparable figures for EU migrants. Apart from German citizens who are clearly much keener on acquiring double citizenship, the rates of naturalisation for other EU countries rarely exceeds 10 per cent and for the A8 arrivals, including the largest

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<sup>18</sup> Based on 2017 Annual Population Survey, conducted by ONS.



Polish group, it is well below that – only four per cent of British residents from Poland had British citizenship in 2017 (Ford 2018).

Although the rates of naturalisation have gone up for EU citizens following the 2016 Brexit referendum, as a result of the referendum outcome undermining the legal entitlements of EU migrants in the UK, they still lag behind those of Commonwealth arrivals, at 16 per cent in 2019 (Fernández-Reino and Sumption 2021). This is partly to do with the length of time migrants from these different regions have been in the UK, with Commonwealth migration generally having a longer history, and partly to do with the sense of status security that being an EU citizen used to bring, but which clearly persists for more developed and richer countries of the EU.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly the worries about legal status and the kind of treatment they might receive in Britain are by far the most important considerations of acquiring citizenship, but although naturalisation might encourage a sense of belonging, it is not the only route available. The literature names multiple sources of identity and belonging, from being able to speak the language and having secure housing and employment, to having social contacts and family in Britain (Rutter et al. 2008, Ryan 2015).

Although the sense of identification with Britain is fundamental for migrants to develop a sense that they have a stake in British politics, the other motivating attitudes are equally as crucial. These are often examined together as they are related, with those scoring high on all of these measures thought to be engaged citizens, and in the context of migrants usually considered 'well integrated',<sup>20</sup> while those scoring low are often deemed alienated from politics. These attitudes are satisfaction with democracy, a sense of duty to vote, interest in politics, and political trust.

Generally speaking, most literature examining levels of political engagement and alienation of ethnic minorities finds that levels of engagement are very high – and in many instances

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<sup>19</sup> In fact the rates of naturalisation are lowest for the immigrants from the richest countries such as the US. The report also names costs of application, English language requirements as obstacles and the situation in sending country and fear of discrimination in Britain as important negative reasons for taking up citizenship (Fernández-Reino and Sumption 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Sobolewska et al. (2017) found that immigrants who have voted were perceived as better integrated by the British public, indicating for the first time that political integration is important for these perceptions, in the field usually dominated by studies focusing exclusively on socio-economic integration.

higher than the general population. Here the two main sources of quantitative data are, as ever, outdated, but both confirm this finding. The first one is the series of Citizenship Surveys, conducted on behalf of the Home Office<sup>21</sup> in the 2000s, analysed extensively by Rahsaan Maxwell. Maxwell shows that levels of political trust among British South Asian minorities far exceed the average levels in British society (Maxwell 2010). The second available source, the 2010 EMBES, confirms this is also true for other ethnic minority groups, and further shows that satisfaction with democracy is higher for minorities.<sup>22</sup> These are not small effects, but on average around 15 percentage point differences. Even though there are some differences between groups, especially with people of Asian origin exceeding levels of trust and satisfaction compared to people of Caribbean descent, even those lower trust/satisfaction groups were less politically alienated than White British (Heath et al. 2013).

An extremely similar picture emerges when the levels of duty to vote are compared. This item was only asked in the 2010 EMBES, and the familiar pattern is that South Asian British people had a much higher sense of the duty to vote, with well above 90 per cent of respondents with this heritage agreeing that it is every citizen's duty to vote. Although only 85 per cent of Black Caribbean origin respondents also agreed that this was the case, this still exceeded the sense of duty among the White British respondents, which was below 80 per cent (Heath et al. 2013).

Evidence of such low levels of political alienation certainly explain why turnout in elections is not markedly lower among ethnic minorities than the general population, after registration levels are taken into account. Yet, not all is entirely rosy, with interest in British politics markedly lower among most minority ethnic groups. Only British Africans had higher levels of political interest than the White British in the 2010 EMBES, whereas there was no meaningful difference between White British and British Indian respondents. Respondents of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin tended to have much lower levels of interest. The level of interest in Britain actually correlated with interest in politics of the sending country (for those

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<sup>21</sup> Before being taken over by DCLG. In total there are five biennial surveys (although the last two are continuous survey spanning two years), all of which have ethnic minority boosters, and which ended in 2011.

<sup>22</sup> The comparable White British figures come from the 2010 British Election Study face to face post-election survey, with which EMBES shared a large proportion of the questionnaire.

respondents who were immigrants), thus indicating that lower levels of interest might actually originate in the home countries and not be specific to Britain (Heath et al. 2013).

This pattern of importing political attitudes from the sending country to Britain is certainly observable for some of the EU migrants that the literature has investigated. Polish immigrants in particular have been highlighted in this context as having especially low levels of political trust, which originated with their distaste of Polish politics and politicians (Rutter et al. 2008).

### ***Information Box Six***

#### **Integration Paradox**

A lot of research into British ethnic minorities has found a curious paradox that minority people born in Britain have lower levels of engagement in British politics, and lower estimation of it, than their immigrant parents. This is partly caused by the fact that those minority individuals born in Britain are much more similar in their views and attitudes to other British people, including majority White Britons, than to their parents. And, given that young White British people are much more alienated from and disenchanted with politics than most immigrants, this results in ethnic minorities also rejecting politics in greater numbers (Maxwell 2010).

The second cause however is the fact that minority people born in Britain perceive greater racial prejudice, mostly because they expect to be treated the same as the White British, but are not. This clash between their expectation and reality makes them more sensitive to discrimination than their immigrant parents or grandparents were, as immigrants often expect some 'penalty' in the host society and have lower expectations for themselves. This has been observed in the US (Portes and Zhou 1993) and in the UK (Maxwell 2012, Heath et al. 2013, McAndrew and Voas 2013, Ehsan 2019).

## **Mobilisation**

Whatever the personal resources, or pre-existing levels of motivation to participate, research consistently shows that being asked to participate can make a real difference. For ethnic minorities and immigrants it is often the case that the usual mechanisms of political mobilisation through mainstream political parties fail, and ethnic or immigrant organisations must step in to fill the void. Some of these organisations are informal, some are more formalised, and many are not explicitly political (such as places of worship). Yet they fulfil a vital function in asking minority and immigrant groups to participate. This seems to work and might explain why turnout gaps are generally smaller than expected for many minority groups, and this finding offers a real opportunity for these organisations to increase their impact by including electoral registration, and not just voting, in their outreach activities.

Before we discuss the types of formal and informal organisations that can engage minorities in politics, we will first outline very briefly the literature on what kinds of interventions might work, and why they work. The brevity of this section reflects our gaps in understanding, especially with little systematised knowledge of whether minority and immigrant voters respond similarly or differently to political mobilisation messages and techniques compared to the majority population.

In the traditional studies, the best quality evidence comes from Get Out The Vote field experiments. The general consensus from these studies seems to be that, in the US, personal face-to-face contact is better than postal contact, although evidence also shows that this might not work in Europe (Bhatti et al. 2018), and studies focussing on the UK also suggest that personal contact might deliver smaller effects than in the US (Townesley 2018). In cases of contact initiated by mailing and phone calls, personalised messages consistently outperform mass and impersonal messages (Arceneaux 2006, Arceneaux & Nickerson 2009, Nickerson 2006, Stollwerk 2006, Green & Karlan 2006, Ramirez 2005).

The second area of consensus is that social pressure works well. Experiments using messages that suggest high turnout rates among neighbours,<sup>23</sup> and to a lesser extent those

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<sup>23</sup> Some US studies also use social pressure in the form of promising to check if a person voted (Green et al. 2015), this is not possible under the current GDPR legislation in the UK, and likely would be judged unethical.

evoking social norms, are generally better at mobilising political activity than messages focussing on issues (Enos et al. 2013). Partisan messages might work for those with party identity (Foos & deRoos 2017) and evoking the closeness of an election can be effective (Dale & Strauss 2009). However, it is generally agreed that the method and style (face-to-face, and personalised) is more crucial than the content of the message (Enos et al. 2014). That the impact of social pressure is most effective points to an important fact that voting is frequently a result of communal discussion and deliberation, rather than individual decision making. This is well documented using survey data. Individuals who engage in political debate, and who go to vote with other members of their household, are more likely to vote than those who do not engage in these social aspects of voting (Fieldhouse & Cutts 2018 2020).

At the time of writing there are no published studies of this sort that look specifically at either the minority, or immigrant-origin, populations in the UK. However, evidence from the US suggests that the interventions used in these experiments might be less effective in mobilising more marginalised voters (Enos et al. 2014). Although Enos et al. found that African Americans were receptive to experimental interventions in some studies, Michelson and Bedola (2014) found that there is heterogeneity among different ethnic immigrant groups. They compare the effects of 15 interventions among US-born and naturalised Latino and Asian Americans and find that GOTV treatments work for native-born but not naturalised Latinos, while the opposite is true for Asian Americans. This highlights that a one-size-fits-all approach to mobilisation is unlikely to be true for the different groups in the UK as well.

In a modern party democracy, the first and foremost route to political mobilisation is through political parties, who canvass voters and encourage them to vote (and to vote for them) during election campaigns. Sadly, existing research on party activity among ethnic minority voters indicates that this method of mobilisation is not working. Although once again the data is outdated, Sobolewska and colleagues (2013) use the 2010 EMBES, political campaign spending, and a survey of election agents' data to show that minority voters received much less contact from political parties during the election campaign in 2010. They find that this was the case even after accounting for individual and local area characteristics, such as living in a safe seat, which could otherwise explain this lack of contact. The one thing that explained this relative lack of contact with ethnic minority voters was the residential concentration of

such voters. While parties campaigned hard in areas where minorities concentrated, and targeted minority voters specifically in these areas, the many ethnic minority voters outside of such areas were left with little to no contact. These findings would explain why research has found that some ethnic minority groups have much higher turnout rates in areas where they are concentrated (Fieldhouse & Cutts 2008). Since increasing numbers of ethnic minority voters live in areas where they do not form a significant proportion of the population (Simpson & Finney 2009), this will become a growing problem.

This problem is also very likely to not be limited to political parties. Many voluntary sector organisations trying to increase electoral participation focus their activities on areas that are particularly diverse, mostly for practical reasons. Reaching individuals of a particular ethnic background is easier in areas where they are concentrated, and it is also cheaper to target such neighbourhoods. Fewer volunteers or staff will be needed to reach more individuals, and less time will be spent travelling and even looking for target individuals. Yet, as the Sobolewska et al. study concludes, 'it also raises further questions about the representation of ethnic minority interests outside the constituencies and the communities in which their voices are already heard.'

The documented impact of informal networks ranges from the more structured impact of kinship (extended family) to even more diffuse social circles. The kinship networks, which predominate in minority groups of South Asian origin, emerged as a political influence in 1970s Britain specifically to address the administrative difficulties of participating and increasing the electoral impact of South Asian voters (Garbaye 2005). Sobolewska et al. note that even in more recent times, they fulfil a very important function of filling in the void left by relative lack of contact from mainstream political parties. However, the darker side of this useful function is that clearly in areas where they operate, parties no longer have an incentive to contact ethnic minority voters directly and they delegate campaigning, and mobilising to vote, to those kinship networks. As these networks are not under public scrutiny in a way that more formal organisations are, this can lead to certain perversions of politics – from engaging in fraudulent practices, to suppressing participation by members of the community traditionally thought to be subordinate, such as women and young people (Sobolewska et al. 2015 and for younger generations fighting to set themselves free from kinship politics

see also Akhtar 2015, O'Toole & Gale 2010). For the younger generations fighting to set themselves free from kinship politics see also Akhtar 2015, O'Toole & Gale 2010). The effectiveness of these networks, despite the potential problems, is the most likely explanation behind the generalised finding that living among co-ethnic voters is a significant predictor of voting on both the aggregate (Fieldhouse & Cutts 2008) and individual levels (Heath et al. 2013). The source of this effectiveness is poorly understood, but there are two potential mechanisms. One is the simple finding that proximity matters in a spatial sense, and that people who lived with a voter were more effective in persuading them to vote, according to Galandini & Fieldhouse (2019). The second mechanism relates to homophily, with co-ethnic respondents being more effective mobilisers of turnout for all ethnic groups, although to a different extent (Galandini & Fieldhouse 2019). This is further confirmed by qualitative findings that show some ethnic minority groups are not mobilised to the same extent through informal co-ethnic networks (Galandini 2014).<sup>24</sup>

However, just as was the case with increased campaigning activity and specific ethnic targeting by political parties, described above, this leaves ethnic minority and immigrant voters who do not live in areas of high ethnic density to be potentially forgotten. Organisations that offer a source of social contact and networking, which attract members in a way that is not quite so geographically limited, and for purposes other than politics, might avoid the problems of mobilising those voters who are already more likely to vote (such as those living in geographic concentration). Out of these, ethnic organisations and places of worship are at the more formal end, while kinship and social networks are less formal. Research has shown all of them to have a significant impact on minorities' political participation, and many impact electoral participation directly.

Multiple studies identify a positive effect of places of worship on turnout. McAndrew & Sobolewska (2015), Moutselos (2020)<sup>25</sup> and Oskooia & Dana (2018) focus on Muslim communities in Britain, and show that attending a mosque is a positive predictor of turnout, while Sobolewska et al. (2015), Galandini (2014) and the Democracy Club (2016) all show this can be the case for other ethnic minority places of worship. This last study also includes some

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<sup>24</sup> The qualitative findings suggest that co-ethnic networks appear to be more ostensibly linked to political participation (both electoral and non-electoral) for Somalis than Ghanaians.

<sup>25</sup> This is the only available quantitative source that does not rely on 2010 EMBES.

exceptions to this, as well as illuminates the reasons why places of worship mobilise voters. Many places of worship offer direct encouragement to vote, and many offer a form of social capital, which generally increases levels of resources necessary to vote (Sobolewska et al. 2015). This confirms a lot of US-based research which dubbed places of worship 'schools of democracy'. However, some places of worship strive to be apolitical, and these fare worse at mobilising their faithful to turn out in elections. This has been found to be particularly the case for the British Hindu community (Sobolewska et al. 2015).<sup>26</sup>

Much less is known about the ability of other ethnic organisations to mobilise ethnic minority voters, mostly due to a lack of research. Heath et al. (2013 based on the 2010 EMBES) and Pilati and Morales (2017 based on a LocalMultiDem survey), suggest that whilst involvement in 'ethnic' organisations is broadly positively associated with civic participation, this is not the case for specifically electoral participation. Pilati and Morales (2017) also argue that the effect is much stronger for forms of participation that are more related to immigration issues, whereas there is less of an association with more generalised forms of participation.

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<sup>26</sup> Places of worship also increase non-electoral political participation: McAndrew and Voas 2013, McAndrew and Sobolewska 2015, Sobolewska et al. 2015.



Figure 1.6. Summary table of different factors and if they are positive or negatively associated with participation

	Negative impact on voting	Negative impact on broader political participation	Positive impact on voting	Positive impact on broader political participation	Minority or immigrant specific	Notable data gaps
<b>Resources</b>						
<b>Stable housing</b>	-	-	Yes, those who own or long term rent are more likely to be registered and vote than frequent movers	-	-	No data on disproportionate impact on minorities and immigrants exists.
<b>English language proficiency</b>	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes	-
<b>Knowledge of eligibility</b>	Yes	-	-	-	Yes, particularly immigrants from Commonwealth countries	-
<b>Knowledge of electoral processes</b>	Yes	-	-	-	Yes	No data on the impact of the 2014 electoral registration reform.

<b>Access to relevant documents</b>	Yes	-	-	-	There is some data on poorer access to NINO, but not photo ID	Survey used to assess access to photo IDs might not be of sufficient quality.
<b>Motivation</b>						
<b>Sense of belonging</b>	-	-	Yes	Yes	Yes, especially for EU migrants, and those without citizenship	Survey data on EU migrants is nearly non-existent, and often poor quality.
<b>Satisfaction with democracy (plus trust and efficacy)</b>	-	-	Yes	Yes	-	-
<b>Perception of discrimination</b>	Yes	-	-	Possibly	Yes	Survey data now outdated.
<b>Sense of duty to vote</b>	-	-	Yes	-	-	-
<b>Mobilisation</b>						
<b>Political parties' campaigning</b>	-	-	Yes	-	Minorities receive less contact, especially if they do not live in concentration	Last available research is outdated.
<b>Places of worship</b>	-	-	Yes, but not all (for	Yes	Yes, as minorities and	Most recent research focuses on mosques only, wider ranging research outdated.

			example not Mandir)		many immigrants are more religious	
<b>Ethnic organisations</b>	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	Little is known on their impact on voting, due to lack of research.
<b>Co-ethnic networks</b>	Yes, might exclude some women and younger voters if structured as patriarchal 'biraderis'	-	Yes, might help mobilise votes, and certainly increase registration	-	Yes, particularly among South Asian immigrants and minorities	-
<b>Personal networks</b>	-	-	Yes	-	-	
<b>Get Out The Vote campaigns</b>	-	-	Yes	-	Yes	There is no evidence these work for minorities, and some evidence from the US that they might not.

## **PART TWO – UPDATING EVIDENCE WITH NEW MINORITY POLLING**

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### **Overview**

Given the lack of more recent quantitative evidence on electoral registration and voting, we designed a new poll of ethnic minorities to update some of the findings summarised above.

Because of the costs and difficulties of surveying minorities (see Information Box Three), this poll suffers from similar problems as some of the existing efforts included in the analysis presented in Part One. Our poll, as with most polls of this type, contains respondents who are a little more well-educated and interested in politics than we think is representative of wider society. Nonetheless, it was very good on the wide range of ages, social classes, regions (with just around 40 per cent resident in London) and immigration backgrounds. We used weights provided by the pollster throughout the analysis, and because the sample had good coverage of all these variables, we can be quite positive that we did not see any substantial weighting anomalies (such as weighing up categories with very few respondents in them). The quality of the sample is reflected in the fact that party support responses more closely resemble those in representative probability surveys (such as Understanding Society) than other commercial polls, which were shown to over-represent Conservative-leaning ethnic minorities (Ford et al. 2015).

Regardless of this, we have to be careful when extrapolating from the proportions presented below to the wider population. We also must bear in mind that much of the research which has been described as the gold standard in Part One of this report used validated registration and turnout figures, and we were unable to do so. Turnout, in particular, can be over-reported, and so validating reported turnout against a marked-up Electoral Register improves the data quality enormously (see Information Box Five for details).

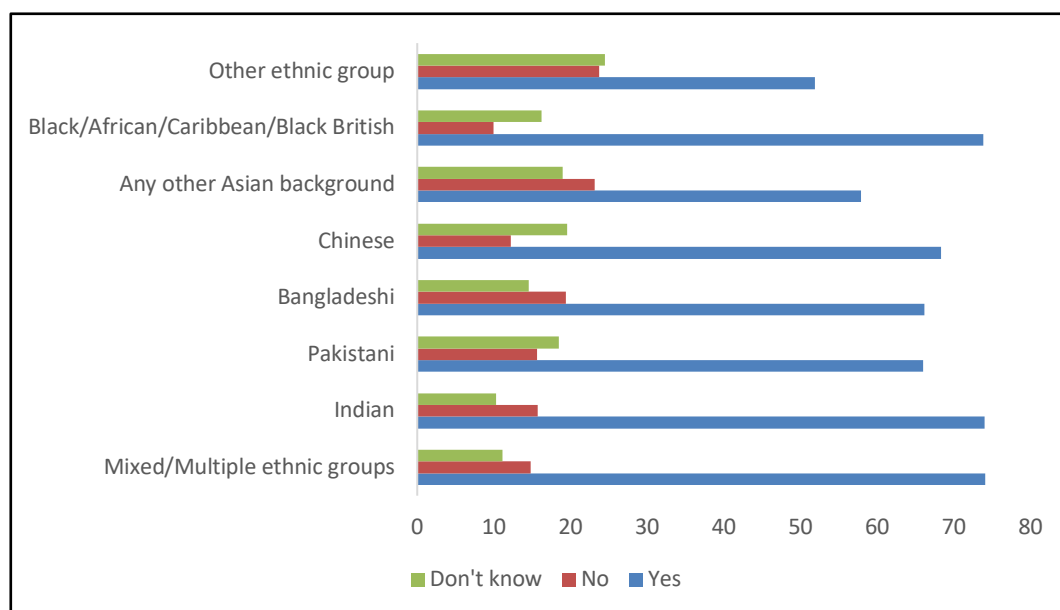
## Electoral registration

Even despite the over-representation of those more politically engaged, many of our respondents were either not registered to vote, or simply did not know if they were registered. By comparison, British Election Study data usually report levels of registration above 80 per cent, including for ethnic minority respondents. The tendency of minorities to be under-registered was identified by the 2010 EMBES as well as the 2011 Census, and our data suggest that this under-registration appears to be persisting.

Reported registration levels are presented in Figure 2.1. British Indians are the group with the highest rate of registration, as was to be expected from existing literature. Black respondents were registered at similar levels (74 per cent), although sadly there is no further split between African-origin and Caribbean-origin respondents. All other Asian backgrounds reported lower rates of registration, varying between 58 per cent and 68 per cent. Given that the existing literature showed that Pakistani and Bangladeshi Britons who lived in ethnic concentrations were very highly likely to register to vote (Fieldhouse & Cutts 2008), this is worrying. It might indicate, if true, that individual registration may have undone the benefits to living near co-ethnic neighbours, and any political mobilisation that this may have helped with.

**Figure 2.1 Are you registered to vote?**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



Those who were registered reported that, on the whole, they found the process easy – 70 per cent said that it was very easy, 28 per cent fairly easy, and only two per cent found it fairly hard. Finding documents also did not present many difficulties with very small proportions of respondents saying that it was fairly hard to find documents (2.5 per cent) and none reporting that it was very hard. There were some very small differences between groups in how easy they have found it to register and find documents, but they were not significant.

In addition to refreshing our knowledge of registration levels, we also wanted to know who was less likely to be registered, or to be unsure if they were registered or not. We included some of the main factors identified in Part One of the report in our questionnaire, to see how we can update our understanding of electoral under-registration among minorities. The reasons given for not being on the register by our respondents were similar to those given in 2010 by the EMBES respondents. In 2010, the main reasons were not being eligible (28 per cent) and having recently moved (24 per cent) and these two reasons were also the most important in 2021 (see Figure 2.2), with almost 40 per cent of our respondents reporting not being eligible. Not knowing how to register and not being bothered were also reasonably popular choices, as was not being interested in elections, but as with 2010 they were much less frequently cited than concerns of eligibility and having recently moved. However, we added a new option of not knowing that one *had* to register, and this also proved a popular reason with respondents. Worryingly, the proportion of respondents who had privacy concerns was higher than it was in 2010, although because of the different methods and sampling between the two surveys we cannot interpret this difference. The number of respondents who were not on the Register (and therefore were subsequently asked to select reasons for this) was too small to split them into different ethnic origins in a meaningful way.

**Figure 2.2. Reasons why not on Electoral Register, weighed percentages**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)

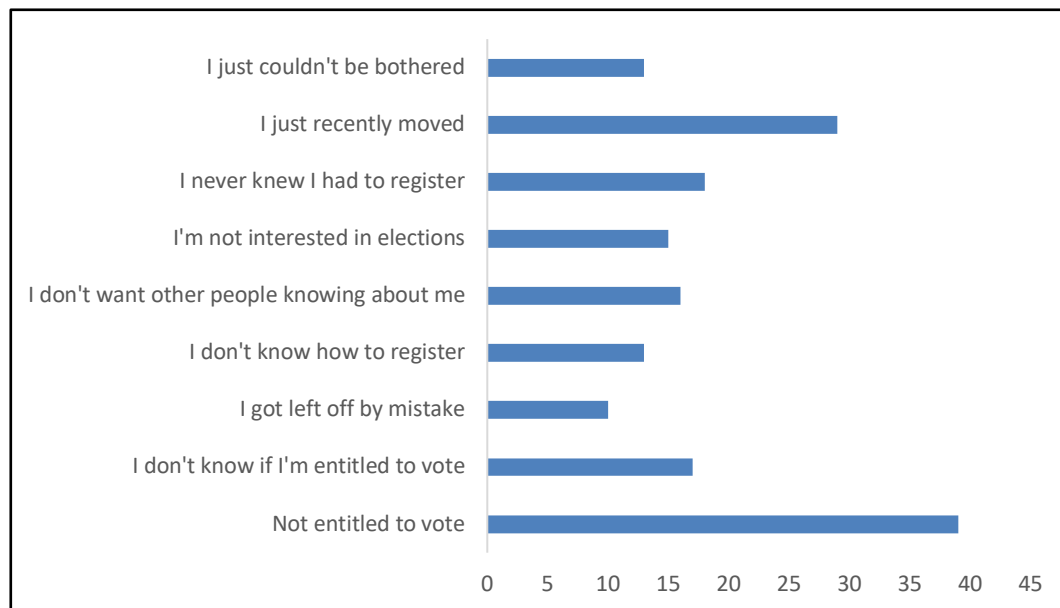
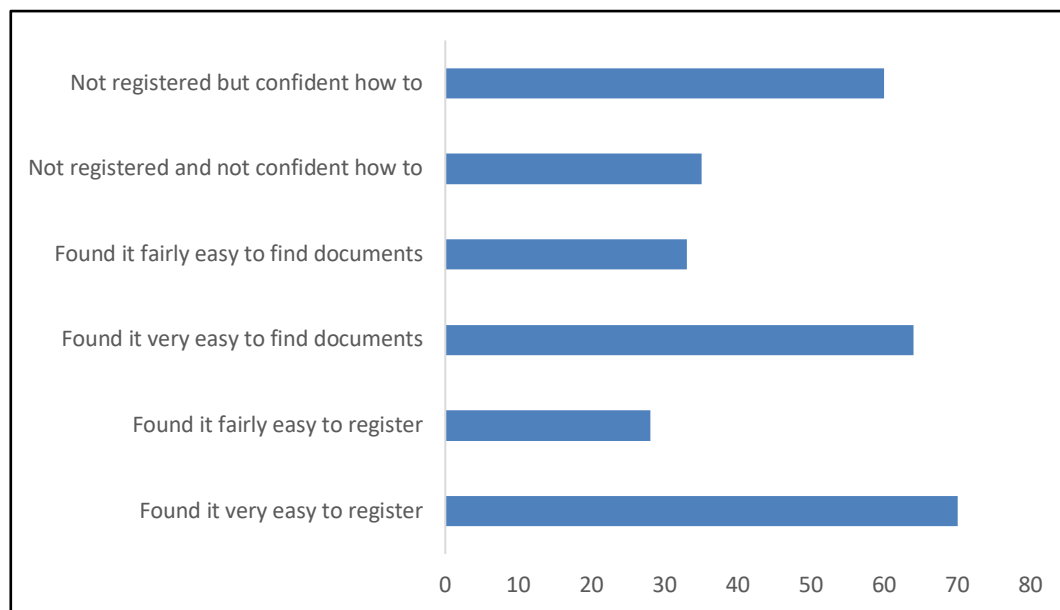


Figure 2.3 shows levels of registration alongside perceptions of how difficult the process is. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given how many respondents selected lack of knowledge as one of the reasons for not being on the Register, few of our respondents who were not registered said that they were very confident in knowing how to register to vote (14 per cent), but many agreed that they were fairly confident. So a majority, on the whole, felt confident. This still left a large minority of 35 per cent who were not confident in how to register should they want to, however. This varied by ethnicity, but because of the very small numbers involved we should be cautious in making too much of these differences and they were not statistically significant.

We did not have a measure of English language proficiency, because the poll was in English only and, for reasons of cost, we did not attempt to issue translations. Unsurprisingly therefore the vast majority of our respondents filled out the form in English. However, there were a few people who reported filling out their registration form in another language, and they, on the whole, found it easy.

**Figure 2.3 Registration by perceptions of registration complexity, weighed percentages**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



Despite the overall sense that it has been easy to register, and the sense of confidence among those who were not registered that they know how to do it should they want to, the levels of knowledge about registration were actually very low. This finding is not new, and not specific to ethnic minorities, as Electoral Commission research from 2013 has found that although knowledge was slightly lower among minorities, it was also shockingly low for the White majority. Despite the very small differences in knowledge, it arguably matters a lot more if groups who are significantly under-registered have very low familiarity with the process, and it is a lot less consequential for groups who are registered at levels of more than 90 per cent.

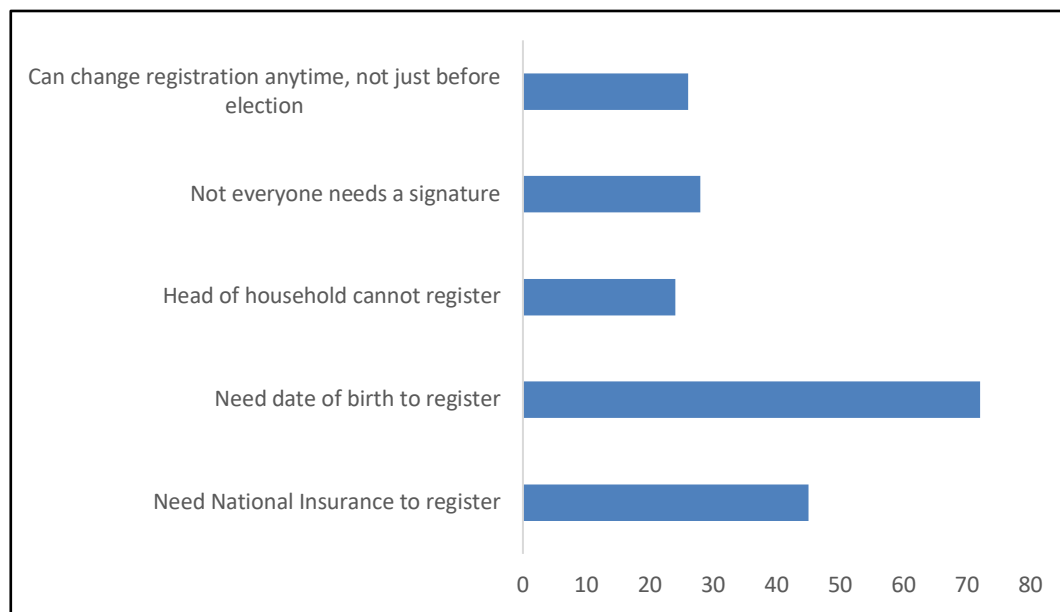
We have asked five questions on how to register to vote and found that for only one of these questions does a majority of our respondents know the correct answer. The other four questions left our respondents puzzled, with between 24 per cent and 33 per cent saying that they did not know which answer was correct, and between a further one third and half of the respondents choosing the wrong answer. Figure 2.4 shows the percentages who identified the correct answers for each of the questions. Perhaps the most worrying is the fact that despite the new individual registration system operating for more than five years,



only a quarter of respondents knew that the head of household cannot register other people living in their household anymore.

**Figure 2.4 Knowledge of the registration process (weighed percentages of those giving the correct answer)**

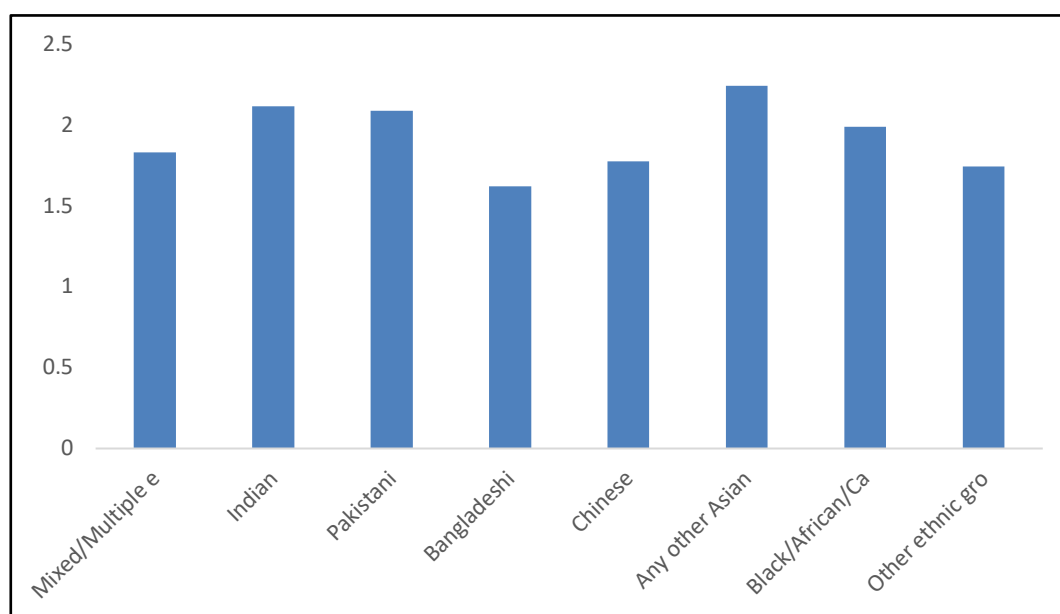
(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



Despite universally low levels of knowledge, with not a single respondent answering all five questions correctly, there were some differences between the different ethnic origins in our sample, and they were statistically significant. On average, Bangladeshi and mixed ethnicities respondents were able to identify fewer correct answers, while Asian other, and Indian origin respondents answered the most questions correctly. The average number of correct answers broken down by ethnic group is shown in Figure 2.5.

**Figure 2.5 Average number of correct answers, weighted percentages**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



We saw from the first part of this report, which reviewed the existing literature, that immigration, citizenship and other demographics matter for levels of participation, mostly because they have an impact on knowledge and engagement in UK politics. In our survey we have all of these data available about our respondents, and when we analysed them we saw a very familiar picture, with a couple of interesting findings.

Firstly, as is the case for the general population, we saw that class, education, and housing tenure all mattered for whether our respondents were registered to vote or not. Those with degrees, and those in middle-class jobs, were more likely to be registered, as were those who owned a house. Renters, as we well know from a lot of existing research, are significantly under-registered.

An experience of being an immigrant is also detrimental to registration, as we know, and we found it is not only a matter of eligibility. Our survey asked all immigrant minorities whether they were citizens of any country which qualifies for voting rights, including all Commonwealth citizens, and we found that citizenship status mattered hugely for levels of registration. Registration levels among those who were not eligible for full political rights on account of their citizenship were half the levels of those with Commonwealth citizenship.

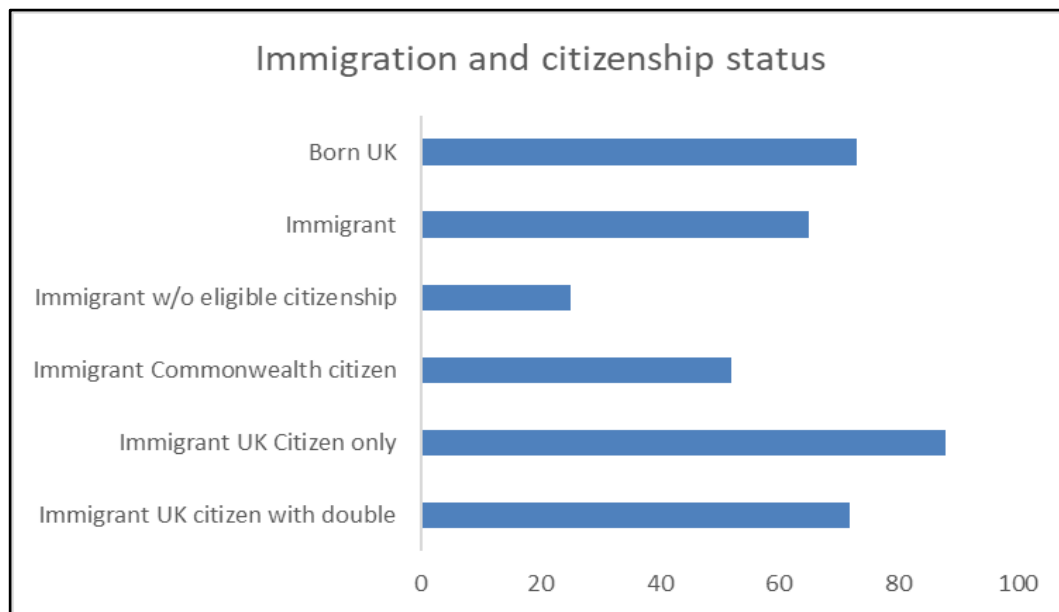
However, eligibility was not the only effect we saw with citizenship. While around 50 per cent of Commonwealth citizens reported being registered, people who had UK citizenship had much higher levels of registration. This suggests that the buy-in that acquiring citizenship imparts is significant. Furthermore, there was a significant uptick in registration for respondents with only UK citizenship (88 per cent), in contrast to those with double citizenship of the UK and another country (72 per cent). This also suggests that there might be a psychological effect of a greater buy-in for immigrants who only hold British citizenship.

Although it is possible that causality runs in the opposite direction and it is those with a higher sense of involvement that also invest in citizenship, the difference between dual citizens and those with British citizenship only suggests that it is unlikely to account for all of this relationship. This suggests that increasing their sense of investment in Britain might be a fruitful way to increase political engagement of immigrants, and by extension that making it easier to acquire citizenship could be a valuable reform. The worrying trend of the ever-increasing cost and difficulty of acquiring citizenship is almost certain to be counter-productive for immigrants' political integration.

The final two demographic predictors of registration that were of particular interest were age and gender. Age, as we know from existing research is a very important predictor of being under-registered. This was the same for minorities in our sample, with the youngest age group being the least registered (only 43 per cent) on average, and the older respondents having higher registration levels. What is important to take into account here is that ethnic minorities are on average younger than the general population, which might help to account – to an extent – for some of their electoral under-registration. The oldest age groups remained slightly under-registered by comparison to the known levels for the general population at 88 per cent, but the gap is much smaller.

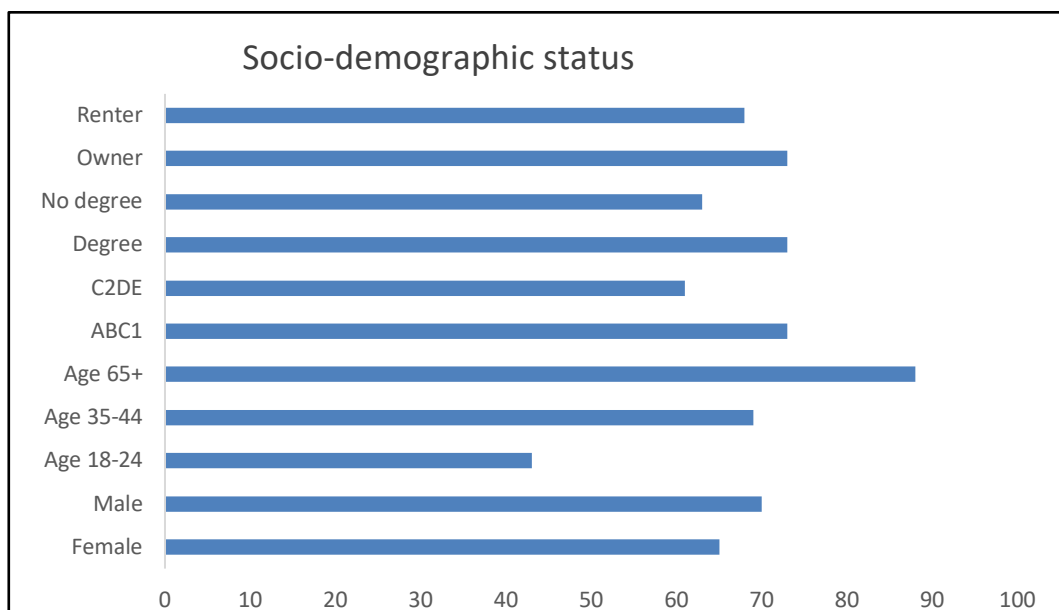
**Figure 2.6** *Per cent registered to vote by immigration and citizenship status, weighted percentages*

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



**Figure 2.7** *Percentage registered to vote by socio-demographic status, weighted percentages*

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)

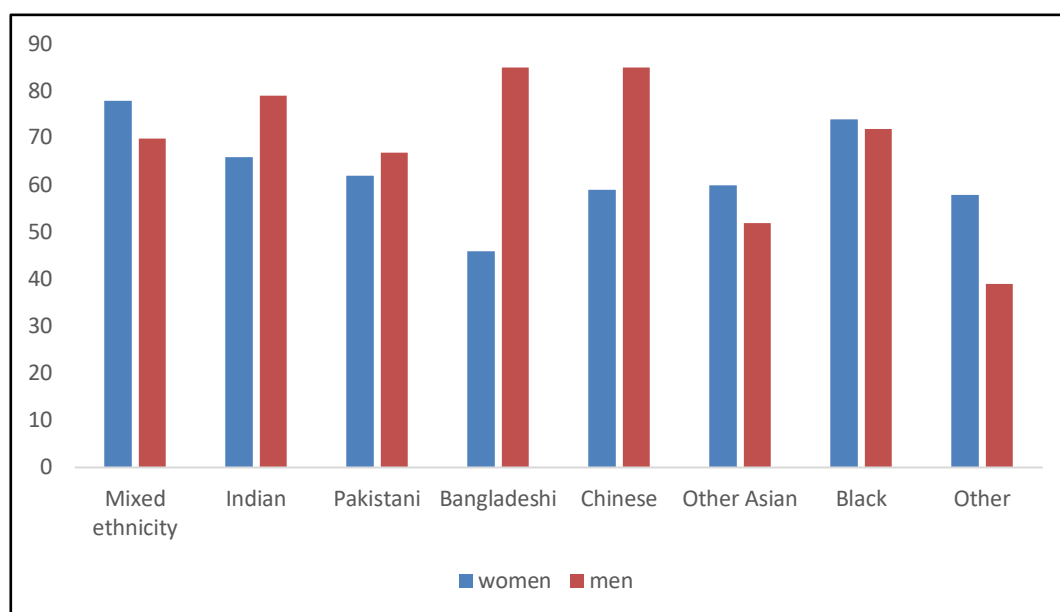


Finally, the last of our demographic predictors that we examined was gender. It is of special interest for ethnic minorities, because of the additional problems that women from some ethnic groups face, described on pages 33, 42 and 53 in the first half of this report. This is, as we discussed, partly to do with the more patriarchal nature of these ethnic migrant groups, particularly when they are first generation immigrants, but also a reflection of the fact that

for these groups men are usually the original migrants, and women tend to follow via family reunification. This can result in women being, on average, more recent migrants, having lower levels of English language skill and being less economically active, all of which can contribute to their additional exclusion. As we see in Figure 2.7, a lower percentage of women in our sample were registered in comparison to men (65 per cent of the former, and 70 per cent of the latter). In our next figure, Figure 2.8, we see if these gender differences varied by ethnic group, and although we found that for some ethnicities the gender registration gap did not exist, or went the other way, for South Asian and Chinese women it was fairly large and significant. It was largest for Bangladeshi women, where there was a 39 per cent gap, and Chinese women where the gap was 26 per cent. Indian women experienced a smaller 13 point gap, while Pakistani women in our sample saw only an eight per cent gap.

**Figure 2.8 Proportion registered to vote by ethnicity and gender, weighted percentages**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



## Turnout

The second main area of interest for this report has been turnout. To update our now rather outdated research described in Part One of this report, we also asked our respondents whether they voted in the most recent general election (which at the time was the 2019 General Election).

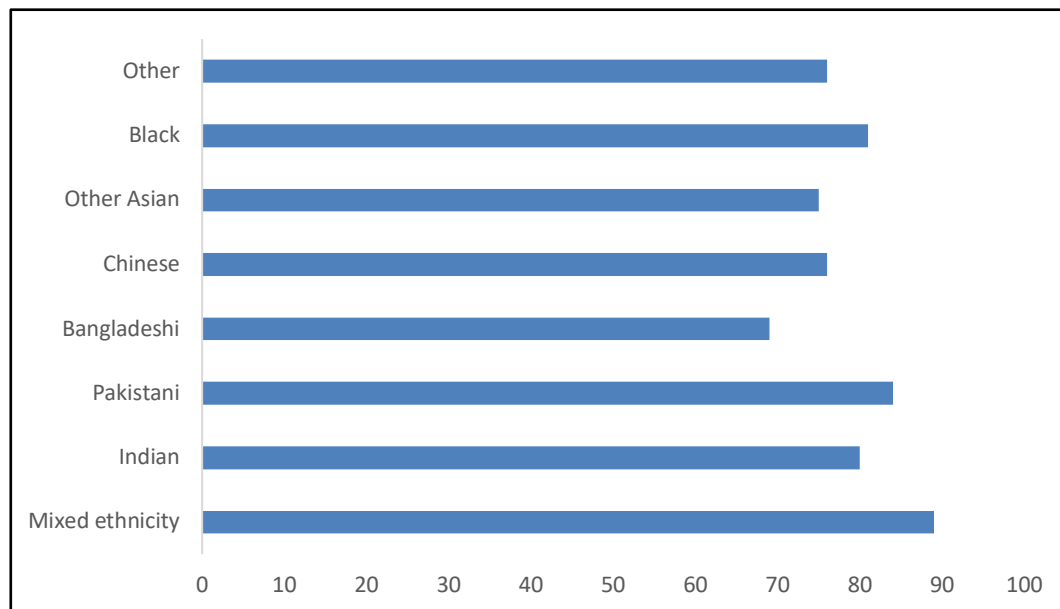
As we discussed in the context of existing older data (see pages 37 and 38), the reported turnout for ethnic minorities, unlike the validated turnout, shows ethnicity gaps. In the 2010 EMBES, reported turnout was fairly low at 60 per cent in comparison to the official turnout figure of 67 per cent for that election (House of Commons 2020). Given that people usually over-report turnout in surveys (89 per cent of the respondents to the British Election study reported having voted in this election), this would amount to a very substantial shortfall. However, following the finding from 2010 that electoral registration rates mostly explain this ethnicity turnout gap, we looked at whether this was also true for our sample. This certainly was the case as, having excluded people who said they were not registered, the overall reported turnout in our ethnic minority sample rose to 74 per cent. This confirms that registration is at least as big a problem in electoral participation of minorities as the decision to turn out to vote itself.

We also found that a small proportion of our sample was registered to vote, but ineligible to vote in general elections. This may have been because these respondents only had citizenship allowing them to vote in local elections. For example, if a person who is of African origin moved from France or Italy and resides in the UK as an EU citizen, they would be entitled to vote in so-called 'second-order' elections such as local elections, but not in general elections. A further minority of these respondents resided in Wales and Scotland where all foreign citizens can vote in local elections and so would be eligible to register. Finally, in some instances, our respondents might simply be wrong about being ineligible, due to lack of knowledge (discussed as a factor in Part One of this report). In either case, the number of those registered but reporting being ineligible to vote at general elections was small (50 out of 728 registered respondents), so for all the analysis from now on, we excluded those who were not registered to vote. This raises the overall level of turnout in our sample to 80 per cent.

Having established the overall level of turnout in our sample, we looked at the differences between ethnic groups. Figure 2.9 shows that although there are some differences between groups, most of them are insignificant. More of our respondents of Pakistani origin and mixed ethnicity respondents voted, whereas Bangladeshi respondents were the most likely to have abstained.

**Figure 2.9 Percent of each ethnic group who reported to have voted in the 2019 General Election, excluding those ineligible and not registered**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



As with registration, we looked at the series of demographic predictors of turnout, but we also looked at the impact of two other elements outlined in the literature synthesised in Part One of this report – motivation to vote and mobilisation.

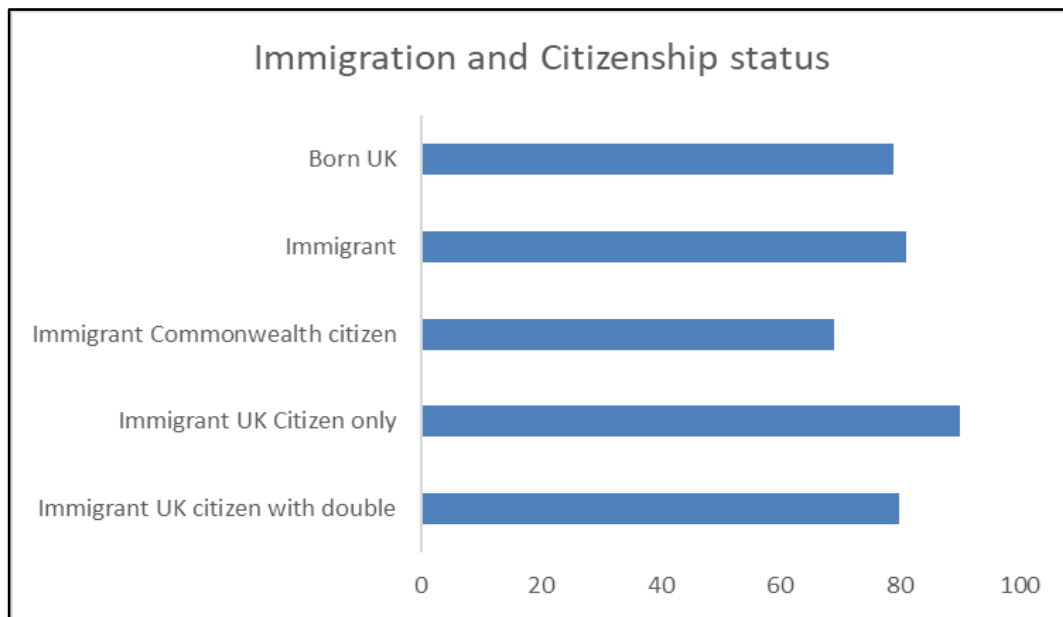
Firstly, considering the demographic predictors of turnout, we see a very similar picture to that of registration. People who rent their homes, those who have no university degree, those who are working class, and younger people are all less likely to have voted, just as they were less likely to register in the first place. This is a form of double-whammy effect; some of the individuals from these groups fall out of the political process at each hurdle.

Interestingly, the impact of being a first-generation immigrant is in the opposite direction with turnout than registration, suggesting that once an immigrant overcomes the administrative difficulty of registering, they happily go and exercise their right to vote. People who were born in the UK are of course on average younger, as we already noted, so it might well be the effect of age that makes them less likely to turn out. However, the effect of citizenship is in the same direction as it was with electoral registration – those with UK citizenship only were the most likely to turn out to vote, those with dual UK and other citizenship were slightly less likely, and finally those respondents who were solely Commonwealth citizens were the least likely to

vote. As with registration, this last group might be less aware of their eligibility to vote, but the difference between the two groups of UK citizens is likely to be a reflection of differences in how invested these individuals feel towards British politics. It is hard with the existing data to disentangle the possible reasons for this.

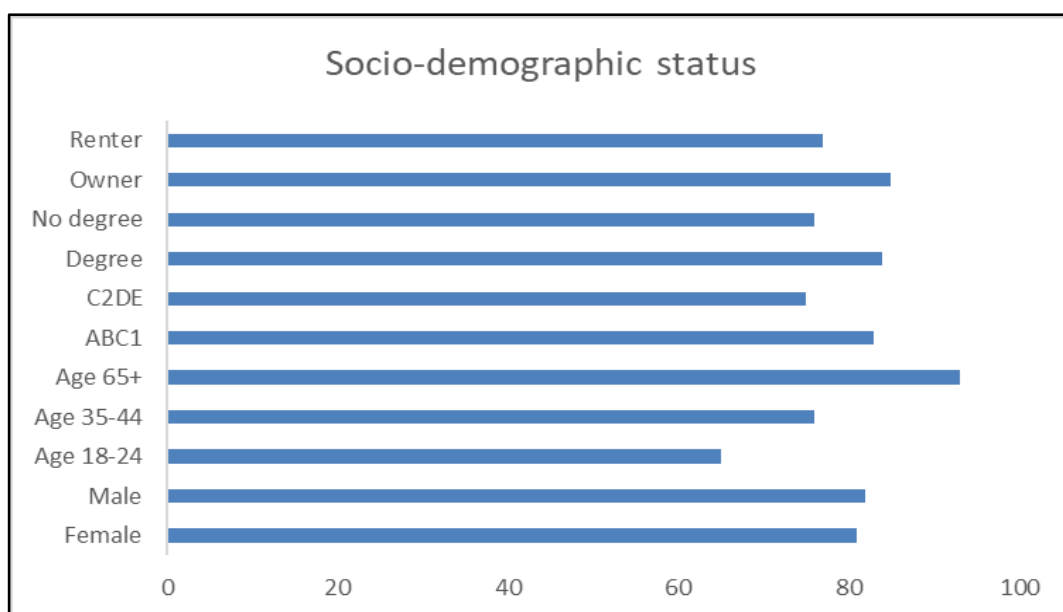
**Figure 2.10 Percentage of those who voted (excluding those ineligible and not registered) by immigration and citizenship status, weighted percentages**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



**Figure 2.11 Percentage of those who voted (excluding those ineligible and not registered) by socio-demographics status, weighted percentages**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)





## **Factors affecting democratic participation**

Secondly, we looked at some of the motivations to vote, which we discussed in the first part of this report, particularly the attitudes which are good predictors of politically engaged citizens. As we indicated before, in the context of migrants, those who score highly on these attitudes are usually considered well politically integrated, while those scoring low are often deemed alienated from politics. These attitudes are satisfaction with democracy, a sense of duty to vote and interest in politics.

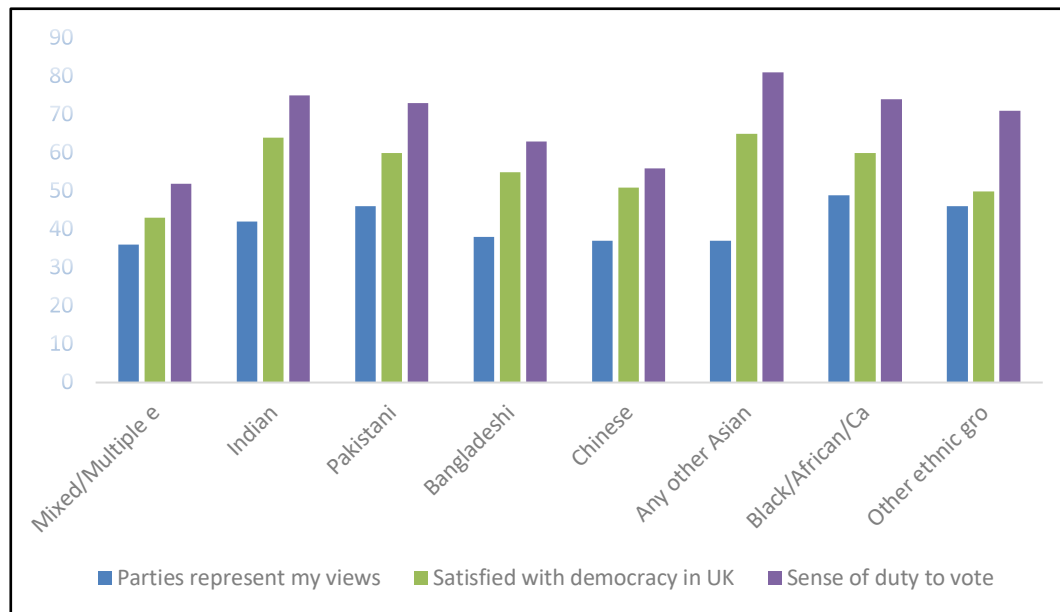
Satisfaction with democracy was measured by two different attitudes. The first was how satisfied respondents felt, the second was trying to expand on what satisfaction with democracy might mean in practise. Given that party democracy and representation are the main aspects of British democracy, we also asked respondents how well represented they feel by any of the British political parties. The distribution of answers to these two questions by ethnicity of respondents is presented below in Figure 2.12 which also includes a question about a sense of duty to vote.

What we see is that the sense of duty to vote was the strongest civic orientation for our respondents. Among all sub-groups a majority of respondents agreed that it was citizens' duty to take part in elections. Satisfaction with democracy was markedly lower, and the lowest of all was the perception that existing political parties represented our respondents. This picture is certainly not one of political alienation as for most groups, except the mixed ethnic origin group, a majority of people still felt satisfied with the way democracy in the UK worked. Since the mixed group is the youngest by far, it is not surprising that all of the civic attitudes are lower in this group, as it has been a well-known finding from the literature (see Information Box Six on page 44).

There are no notable differences between ethnic origins, with the exception of respondents of Pakistani and Black British origin being slightly more positive about the level of representation they receive from parties. These two groups are the heaviest Labour-leaning groups (Martin & Khan 2019) and clearly they are happy with the job that this party is doing for them.

**Figure 2.12 Per cent of respondents expressing attitudes associated with political participation, by ethnic group**

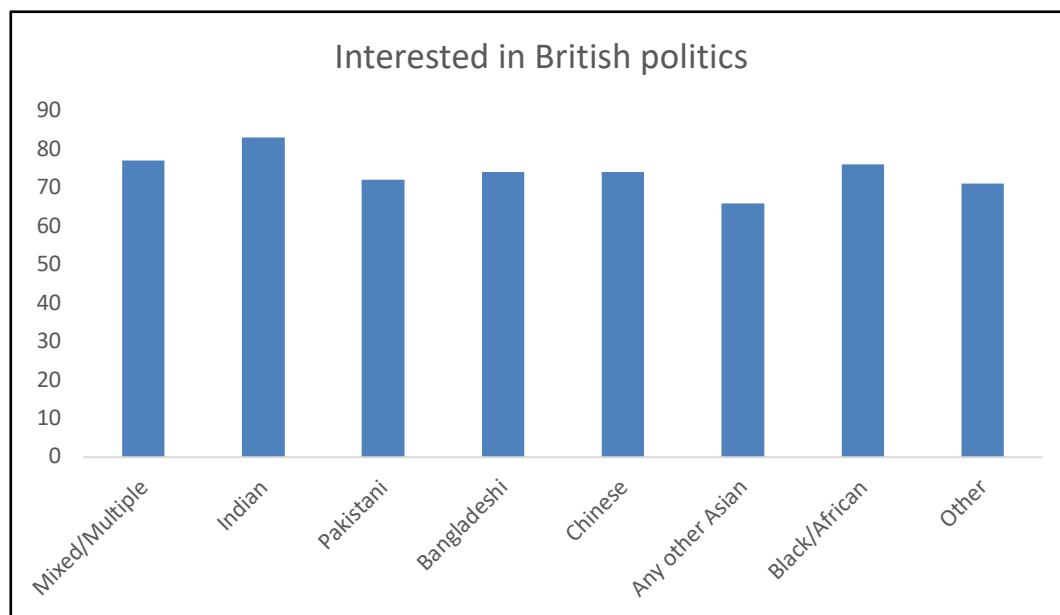
(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



We also asked about interest in politics, although this question is a little problematic for political polls and surveys (not only those aimed at ethnic minorities) as they tend to over-represent people who are interested. Partly, this is unavoidable, as those who express no interest in politics rarely feel like agreeing to taking part in a political survey. However, it does have an important implication, which is that we need to be even more careful in extrapolating from these data to the wider population. In line with these expectations, a large majority of our respondents expressed at least some interest in politics and again the differences between ethnic origins are very small and not significant.

**Figure 2.13 Percentage of respondents who said that were very or fairly interested in British politics**

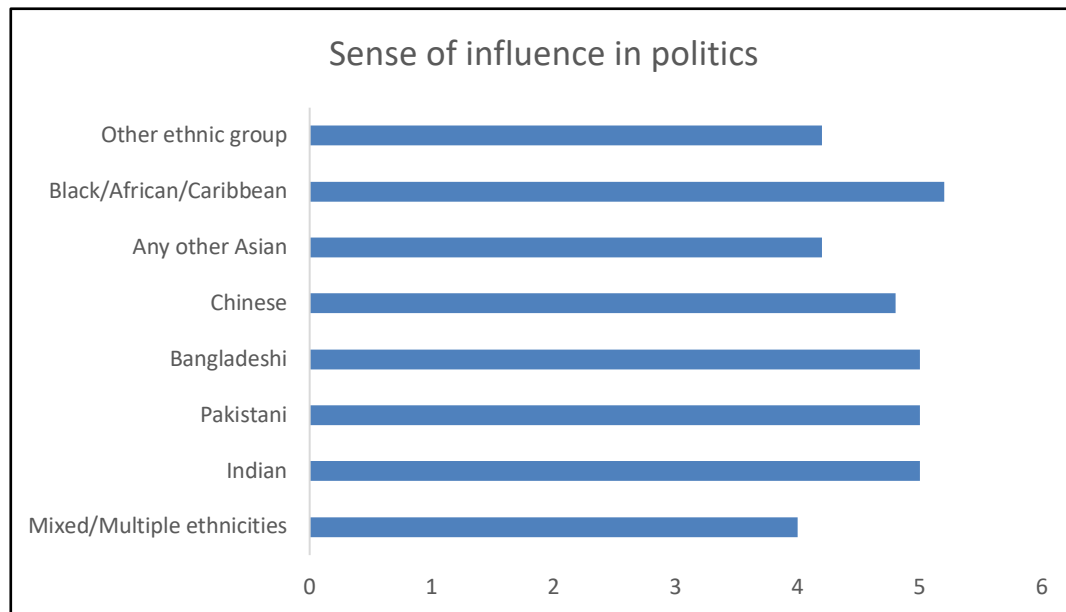
(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



We also asked whether our respondents felt that they had any influence in politics. This item was asked in a slightly different format to how it has traditionally been measured, as respondents were asked to say how much influence they felt by placing themselves on a scale from 0 to 10. The results below present the average response per ethnicity. Once again, most ethnic groups feel they have very similar levels of influence. Perhaps the only difference worth highlighting is that the younger, mixed ethnicities group has declared feeling less influential. This, combined with the fact that they also felt that parties did not represent them, that they had relatively low levels of satisfaction with democracy with high levels of interest in politics, should give us pause. Here is a group who, far from being disengaged, is nonetheless dissatisfied. This, combined with the findings of existing literature summarised in Part One once again shows us that younger ethnic minority Britons expect much more than, and are therefore more disenchanted with, what they get. Engaging and empowering these younger age groups will be an important part of any effort to increase the electoral engagement of minority groups in the UK.

**Figure 2.14 Mean sense of influence in politics, by ethnic group, with 0 = no influence and 10 = a great deal of influence**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



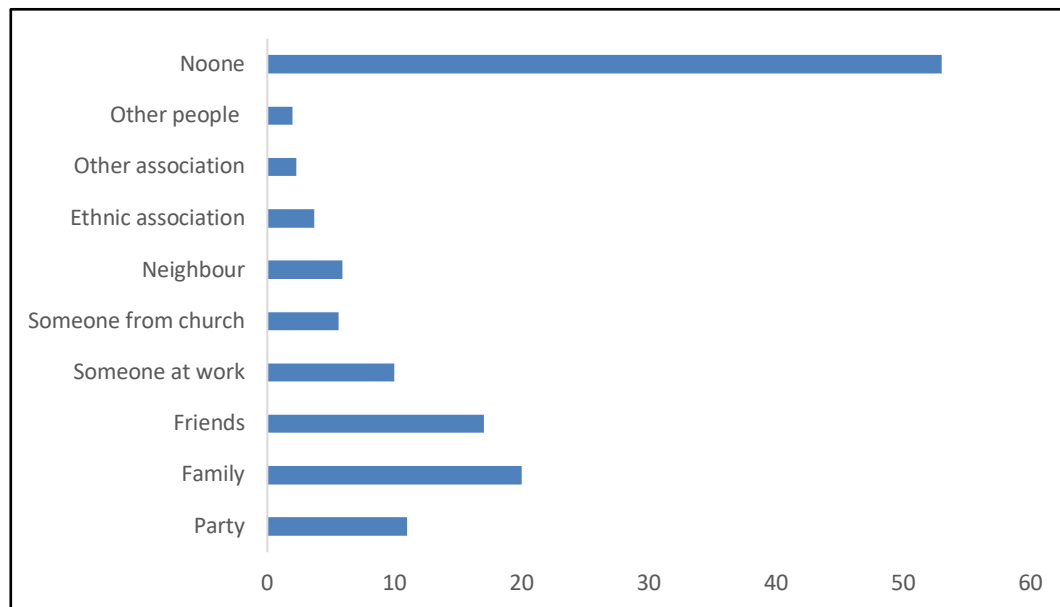
Sadly, we were not able to obtain the ethnic make-up of neighbourhoods in which our respondents lived. However, to update our understanding of the importance of mobilisation, and co-ethnic mobilisation in particular, we did ask whether anyone encouraged respondents to vote. Although these figures are probably an underestimation, given that the survey was fielded 14 months after the election, it nonetheless gives an interesting picture of the relative importance of the possible actors who can mobilise people to vote.

As with other sources of mobilisation, we saw no significant differences between ethnic groups in terms of how many sources of political encouragement they received. Out of those who received any encouragement to vote, and we must remember that the very low numbers of respondents who remembered any encouragement might be artificially low because of the survey timing, an average person received mobilisation efforts from two out of the possible nine sources. Only 22 per cent of those respondents who were encouraged received encouragement from one only source. Given what we know from Part One about the importance of being asked to vote, this represents a clear opportunity to increase the number of sources of encouragement.

Although the most important sources might not lend themselves to external influence, as most respondents relied on personal networks through friends, family and work, opportunities for civic organisations are clear.

**Figure 2.15 Who encouraged you to vote?**

(source: JRRT bespoke poll 2021)



The overall picture from our custom poll of the largest non-White ethnic minorities is that attitudes all indicate good levels of integration, and therefore little evidence of alienation. Turnout gaps, such as they are, are also – just like registration gaps – mostly related to socio-economic marginalisation. Although mobilisation is clearly needed, to compensate for this marginalisation, it may be insufficient. This is especially as party, which is the main source apart from personal networks, is not there. Neighbourhoods, places of worship and ethnic and other community associations and clubs are clearly the best targets for anyone trying to alleviate gaps in participation.

## CONCLUSIONS

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This report aimed to review and synthesise what is known about the democratic participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants in the UK, as well as update some of the knowledge with a new, bespoke poll commissioned by the JRRT.

The overall picture from the review of existing evidence is one of overwhelming data shortage, with no recent, high-quality, in-depth study of democratic participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants. The last academic study which meets this description, and which is now more than a decade old, still forms the basis of many more recent reports, academic articles, and PhD theses. Scholars who try to fill this gap usually have to rely on smaller, qualitative studies or commercial polls which do not generalise as well and are not representative of most minorities, or surveys that are focussed on other issues and have very few questions relevant to democratic participation. Official sources also come short, with no recent studies from the Electoral Commission over-sampling minorities or immigrants, and recent research from Cabinet Office relying on methodologically inferior aggregate data.

This situation of data shortage is true of even the largest ethnic minority groups but is much more acute for smaller ethnic minorities and immigrants who do not fall into the Census definition of non-White minorities. Even the very numerous groups such as Polish or other Central and Eastern European migrants are mostly studied through very small-scale non-probability surveys which are of unknown representativeness and quality, or qualitative studies. Some new efforts from The 3 Million, on updating our understanding of EU migrants' electoral registration, are very welcome in this context (even if they too rely on the less-than-ideal aggregate analysis). The lack of new data from official sources is particularly shocking, given that the Government's risk assessment before the implementation of the 2013 Electoral Registration and Administration Act identified ethnic minorities and EU migrants as particularly at risk from the reform. A proper official assessment is necessary and overdue.

The relative dearth of studies translates into an incomplete picture of explanatory factors behind registration and voting gaps, particularly in terms of how they might work differently for different ethnic and migrant groups. This is especially acute when it comes to the

experimental Get Out The Vote studies, widely recognised as the gold standard in terms of quality. To our knowledge, there are no studies of this kind that look at these groups particularly, although we note that the JRRT has recently funded one.

In a bid to fill the gap in our understanding of what contributes to the participation gap, and what might help to close it, in the second part of the report we analysed the bespoke poll of non-White ethnic minorities commissioned by the JRRT. This analysis updates the outdated studies by confirming the main reasons behind under-registration – frequent moving, lack of knowledge of eligibility, and lack of knowledge of the process of electoral registration itself (combined with not knowing that there is a need to register, because the need to register does not exist in most other countries).

Worryingly, we also discovered that there is a significant gender gap in registration, particularly among women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. We found no corresponding gap in voting, once they are registered, so it is clear that the exclusion from democratic participation is happening at this earlier, purely administrative, stage.

We also confirmed that the levels of political alienation are relatively low among ethnic minorities. Although studies of this kind tend to over-represent those who are quite interested in politics, this chimes in with other, more representative studies. The sense that voting is a duty is strong, as is satisfaction with democracy and other attitudes predictive of voting. As other studies showed, younger people of minority origins are more likely to be dissatisfied and alienated, but as others pointed out, this is most likely an outcome of successful integration given that these more critical attitudes are in line with White British young people (Maxwell 2012).

With the new, bespoke survey we were also able to confirm that socio-economic marginalisation continues to contribute to under-registration and not turning out to vote (as is the case with White British). Housing tenure and social class were both negatively associated with participation, and remain important areas of concern.

Finally, our new polling evidence contributed a new piece of the puzzle, which is the role that British citizenship plays in the levels of democratic participation. Although the UK is unique in granting very generous political rights to many of its post-colonial immigrants without the

need to acquire citizenship, having British citizenship does increase the chances of both registration and voting once registered. This complements the literature arguing that citizenship should be a means to immigrant integration and not, as is currently the case in the UK policy, a reward. This is a very strong argument for lowering the costs of the citizenship application significantly, as it has long been recognised it is currently prohibitive for many (House of Lords 2019).

Given our review of the existing literature, and the findings of the new, bespoke poll of ethnic minorities, we have drawn a number of recommendations.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Our recommendations are based on both the review of existing literature and on the results from our bespoke survey. They are grouped into three categories – recommendations aimed at statutory bodies responsible for democratic participation, recommendations that might be useful for campaigners and organisations working to increase participation, and recommendations for researchers and research organisations working in this area.

### **Recommendations aimed at statutory bodies responsible for democratic participation:**

#### **Statutory bodies should:**

##### **1. Make the process of participating in elections easier.**

Making it easier to register is particularly important in the face of evidence that it remains the main obstacle to voting for many eligible residents of ethnic minority origin.

The planned reforms to how we vote will introduce another step for many who do not possess a suitable photo ID, and who will have to apply for the new voter ID card. Although it is welcome that this photo ID is designed to be free of charge, having this additional step will increase the overall difficulty of the process.

##### **1.1 The Government should revisit plans to automatically register attainers.**

This would make the single biggest impact given the younger age of ethnic minorities.

##### **1.2 The Government should issue information on eligibility to vote to migrants who arrive on non-tourist visas.**

##### **2. Lower the cost of acquiring British citizenship and consider the pathway to citizenship as a tool for immigrant integration, not a reward for it.**

Full political integration of immigrants will increase the sense of belonging and having a stake in the country.

Political integration of immigrants also increases public confidence and thus helps achieve social cohesion.

Citizenship is an important step in facilitating this, and current high monetary barriers to access are not consistent with the broader anti-radicalisation strategy, which has been based around the premise of well-integrated communities.

### **3. Make more funding available to conduct high-quality research into ethnic inequalities in democratic participation.**

There has not been a thorough assessment of the impact of the most recent electoral law reforms on the groups with protected characteristics, including ethnic minorities. The Cabinet Office has conducted a series of under-funded, poor-quality studies, and the Electoral Commission was not able to include a sufficient sample of minorities in their high-quality assessments.

#### **3.1. Feed more research funding through the main UK Research Councils.**

This would enable researchers to pick up slack when the official research is lacking.

#### **3.2 The Government should consider funding another large-scale survey of democratic and civic attitudes to replace the cancelled Citizenship Survey, or fund an ethnic minority and immigrant booster for the ongoing Community Life Survey, and enrich its civic and democratic participation content.**

## **Recommendations for campaigners and organisations working to increase participation:**

### **Campaigners and organisations should:**

#### **4. Target campaigns and interventions towards ethnic minority women, younger people and newer migrants.**

This is based on the evidence that these groups are particularly marginalised in registration process and voting.

**5. Work with organisations already proven to have a positive impact on mobilisation.**

This is likely to increase the effectiveness of any interventions, so should be one of the main parts of any strategy in this field.

For ethnic minorities places of worship are particularly promising.

While working in areas where ethnic minorities and immigrants are concentrated is likely to be effective and cost-efficient, some thinking is needed to consider how to reach those who live outside of these areas.

**6. Deliver campaigns focused on frequent movers and renters.**

These are all likely to positively impact immigrants and ethnic minorities, so should form part of the strategy to engage these groups.

Within this, working with estate agents, landlords and housing charities might be a fruitful, if thus unproven, way to reach frequent movers and renters.

Further, identifying and collaborating with organisations that already work on increasing democratic participation of renters might be an effective addition to already existing campaigns.

**7. Deliver campaigns focused on improving knowledge of eligibility, and of the process.**

This is based on the evidence that lack of knowledge of eligibility, and of the process, are the most prominent causes of participation gap after unstable housing.

**8. Deliver campaigns aimed at increasing sense of belonging and investment in British society among newer migrants.**

The evidence shows that an increased sense of belonging and investment can increase democratic participation, so these should be considered as part of the broader strategy to encourage participation.

Campaigns in minority and migrant languages could be particularly important as they would complement the existing campaigns from the Electoral Commission (that are predominantly in English).

**9. Invest in evaluations of work on the ground, and 'what works' field experiments.**

These types of experiments (run with academic oversight) are absolutely necessary as there is no data on whether the usual interventions work as well, or even at all, for ethnic minority or immigrant mobilisation. Failure to engage directly with this question might actually result in the deepening of participation inequalities, as some US-based research suggests.

Use of aggregate data for these types of evaluations is counter-productive as it cannot detect any such differential effects for ethnic minorities or immigrants.

**Recommendations for researchers and research organisations working in this area:**

Researchers and research organisation should:

10. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) should make use of the proximity between the last general election and the 2021 Census and ask the Electoral Commission to secure the existing marked-up registers for an extended period, so that their analysis of registers can also cover the issue of turnout.

This would address one of the major data gaps, which are very difficult for academic research alone to fill.

11. Those conducting existing Get Out The Vote-type experimental studies should include, in their design, the ability to detect differential effects on ethnic minorities and immigrants.

12. Research Councils UK should work with academics to try to recognise, and address, the major data gaps on the democratic participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants.

## APPENDIX 1: REVIEW OF EXISTING SOURCES

Format	Author	Date	Title	Method	Topic
Article	Akhtar, Parveen	2012	<i>British Muslim Political Participation: After Bradford</i>	Interviews: Young Pakistani-origin Muslims in Birmingham (unspecified n)	Satisfaction with democracy amongst young Muslims, Biraderi networks.
Article	Bowe, Anica & Nicole Webster	2020	<i>Civic Participation of Black Caribbean Youth and Adults</i>	Survey Analysis: Citizenship Survey 2010 (Caribbean origin respondents)	Non-electoral participation, generational differences.
Article	Fanning, Bryan, Weronika Kloc-Nowak & Magdalena Lesinska	2020	<i>Polish migrant settlement without political integration in the United Kingdom and Ireland: a comparative analysis in the context of Brexit and thin European citizenship</i>	Survey Analysis: Bespoke survey of n=916 Poles living in the UK and Ireland	Social integration, political participation, turnout, naturalisation levels.
Article	Galandini, Silvia & Ed Fieldhouse	2019	<i>Discussants that mobilise: Ethnicity, political</i>	Survey Analysis: BES Online Panel (Wave 2)	Turnout, mobilisation, discussion networks

			<i>discussion networks and voter turnout in Britain</i>		
Article	Heath, Anthony, Stephen Fisher, Gemma Rosenblatt, David Sanders & Maria Sobolewska	2011	<i>Ethnic Heterogeneity in the Social Bases of Voting at the 2010 General Election?</i>	Survey Analysis: 2010 EMBES	Turnout & registration (self-reported and validated measures)
Article	Hill, Eleanor, Maria Sobolewska, Stuart Wilks-Heeg & Magdalena Borkowska	2014	<i>Explaining electoral fraud in an advanced democracy: Fraud vulnerabilities, opportunities and facilitating mechanisms in British elections</i>	Interviews: 35 interviews of mosque council leaders, leaders of community and religious organisations, local councillors and candidates, to one MP and one electoral official (24 being Asian/British Asian)	Voter fraud, Biraderi networks and the potential/risks that these networks have for democratic engagement
Article	Laniyonu, Ayobami	2018	<i>Police, Politics and Participation: The Effect of Police Exposure on Political</i>	Analysis of Aggregate level ward data & crime statistics	Turnout, political alienation of young ethnic minority citizens

			<i>Participation in the United Kingdom</i>		
Article	Martin, Nicole	2016	<i>Do Ethnic Minority Candidates Mobilise Ethnic Minority Voters? Evidence from the 2010 UK General Election</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Turnout, mobilisation, Biraderi networks and political discussion networks
Article	Martin, Nicole	2017	<i>Are British Muslims alienated from mainstream politics by Islamophobia and British foreign policy?</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Electoral and non-electoral participation, experience of racial discrimination
Article	Martin, Nicole	2019	<i>Ethnic minority voters in the UK 2015 General Election: A breakthrough for the Conservative party</i>	Survey Analysis: Understanding Society & BES Online Panel	Turnout, although the main focus is vote choice
Article	Maxwell, Rahsaan	2010	<i>Trust in Government Among British Muslims: The Importance of</i>	Survey Analysis: Home Office Citizenship Survey 2007	Political trust amongst migrant-origin groups, specific focus on

			<i>Migration Status</i>		religion & Muslims' trust
Article	McAndrew, Siobhan & David Voas	2013	<i>Immigrant generation, religiosity and civic engagement in Britain</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Political trust and civic (non-electoral) participation. Variation by religious group and cohort
Article	Moutselos, Michalis	2020	<i>Praying on Friday, voting on Sunday? Mosque attendance and voter turnout in three West European democracies</i>	Survey Analysis: Bespoke survey of Muslims (UK sample n=1,100, largely of Pakistani origin)	Turnout by political trust, religious attendance and group consciousness
Article	O'Toole, Therese & Richard Gale	2010	<i>Contemporary grammars of political action among ethnic minority young activists</i>	12 focus groups and 50 interviews of young ethnic minority activists from Bradford and Birmingham	Political engagement, generational differences, mobilisation from parties (or lack thereof)
Article	Oskooia, Kassra & Karam Dana	2018	<i>Muslims in Great Britain: the impact of mosque attendance on political behaviour and</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Religious attendance and religiosity, turnout, non-electoral participation



			<i>civic engagement</i>		
Article	Pilati, Katia & Laura Morales	2017	<i>Ethnic and immigrant politics vs. mainstream politics: the role of ethnic organizations in shaping the political participation of immigrant-origin individuals in Europe</i>	Survey Analysis: Bespoke survey (UK sample n=250, largely South Asians, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian living in London)	Civic vs democratic participation, role of ethnic organisations in mobilisation
Article	Piętka-Nykazaa, Emilia & Derek McGhee	2016	<i>Stakeholder citizenship: the complexities of Polish migrants' citizenship attachments in the context of the Scottish independence referendum</i>	Interviews: 24 interviews of Polish Migrants living in Scotland	Turnout (for the independence referendum), national attachment
Article	Sanders, David, Stephen D. Fisher, Anthony Heath & Maria Sobolewska	2014	<i>The democratic engagement of Britain's ethnic minorities</i>	Survey Analysis: BES and EMBES 2010	Turnout, viewing voting as a civic duty, political knowledge and political interest

Article	Scuzzarello, Sarah	2015	<i>Political participation and dual identification among migrants</i>	Interviews: n=40 interviews of Somali and Polish Migrants living in the UK	Turnout, particularly how national identity, naturalisation and political interest impacts migrants' decision to vote or not
Article	Sobolewska, Maria, Stephen Fisher, Anthony Heath & David Sanders	2015	<i>Understanding the effects of religious attendance on political participation among ethnic minorities of different religions</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Turnout and non-electoral participation, and how religious attendance relates to these outcomes
Article	Tatai, Eren & Renat Shaykhutdinov	2015	<i>Muslims and Minority Politics in Great Britain</i>	Review Article	This is a review article of Muslims' participation in democracy broadly defined, with a focus on turnout and registration
Report	Bulat, Alexandra & Nishan Dzvingozy (The 3 Million)	2020	<i>EU citizens' political rights in the UK Barriers to political participation and</i>	Online consultation of 60 EU migrants living in the UK.  Also reviews Electoral	Turnout and registration, alongside explanatory factors such as political knowledge

			<i>recommendations for better representation</i>	Commission data	
Report	Bulat, Alexandra (The 3 Million)	2020	<i>Rights &amp; Representation: What Young Europeans in London know and think about their rights and politics in the UK</i>	20 focus groups conducted in 2017. Respondents were young (17-30) EU migrants living in London	Political engagement (including, but not exclusively turnout and registration). Political interest.
Report	The Cabinet Office	2019	<i>Registering to Vote: Insights from Local Authorities and Civil Society Groups on registering people from ethnic minorities</i>	Interviews: 16 interviews of Local Authority employees or civil society with experience of attempting to register ethnic minority citizens	Registration, barriers to ethnic minorities registering to the same levels as White British citizens.
Report	The Cabinet Office	2019	<i>Atlas of Democratic Variation</i>	Analyses aggregate level data (ONS population estimates, census data and electoral data).	Registration according to ethnic concentration.
Report	The Electoral Commission	2013	<i>Electoral Commission 2013 Winter</i>	Survey Analysis: Bespoke survey of n=1,000	Registration levels, attitudes towards registration,

			<i>Research: BME Booster Survey</i>	ethnic minority Britons (not disaggregated)	reasons for not being registered.
Report	The Electoral Commission	2014	<i>Electoral registration in 2011: A study conducted by the Electoral Commission, Office for National Statistics and National Records of Scotland</i>	Survey and Census Analysis	Electoral registration (validated measure)
Report	The Electoral Commission	2016	<i>The December 2015 electoral registers in Great Britain</i>	Survey Analysis: Bespoke survey of n=6,027 Britons (breakdowns by Black and South Asian groups vs White British)	Registration levels (completeness of the register)
Report	The Electoral Commission	2019	<i>Completeness in Great Britain</i>	Survey Analysis: Bespoke survey of n=5,079 Britons (breakdowns by Black and South	Registration levels (completeness of the register)

				Asian groups vs White British)	
Report	The Equalities and Human Rights Commission	2018	<i>Is Britain Fairer?</i>	Survey Analysis: BES 2010  Review evidence from elsewhere, inc. Cabinet Office 2017	Registration and turnout (do not disaggregate between minority groups)
Report	Gergs, Carl & Alexandra Bulat (The 3 Million)	2020	<i>An analysis of EU citizens' political participation and representation in the UK</i>	Compares ONS estimates of the percentage of local authorities born in EU countries vs the completeness of the electoral register by nationality	Registration
Report	House of Commons Library Briefing Paper	2019	<i>Political disengagement in the UK: who is disengaged?</i>	Reviews existing data	Registration, turnout, wider civic participation, satisfaction with democracy and viewing voting as a civic duty
Report	IPSOS MORI	2015	<i>How Britain voted in 2015</i>	Post-election survey of approx. n=9,000 voters (with a single 'ethnic minority'	Turnout

				group, no further breakdown)	
Report	IPSOS MORI	2017	<i>How Britain voted in the 2017 election</i>	Post-election survey of approx. n=7,500 voters (with a single 'ethnic minority' group, no further breakdown)	Turnout
Report	IPSOS MORI	2019	<i>How Britain voted in the 2019 election</i>	Post-election survey of approx. n=27,951 voters (with a single 'ethnic minority' group, no further breakdown)	Turnout
Report	Khan, Omar (Part of the Runnymede Trust's Race and Elections Report)	2015	<i>Registration and Race: Achieving Equal Political Participation</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Registration
Report	Khan, Omar & Nicole Martin (Part of the Runnymede Trust's Election Briefing Report)	2017	<i>Ethnic Minorities at the 2017 British General Election</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010, Understanding Society 2017	Turnout and registration
Report	Mitchell, Joe (Democracy Club)	2016	<i>Who's missing, and why? Underrepresentation in voter registration,</i>	Reviews evidence from the Electoral Commission, Hansard and	Turnout and registration

			<i>candidacy, informedness and turnout</i>	IPSOS MORI surveys  Interviews: n=9 interviews from civil society groups	
Report	Piętka-Nykazaa, Emilia & Derek McGhee (The Centre for Population Change)	2019	<i>Polish migrants in Scotland: voting behaviours and engagement in the Scottish independence referendum</i>	Survey Analysis: Bespoke Online Survey of n=245 Polish Migrants living in Scotland	Turnout and registration, including the reasons why non-participation was so high (lack of political interest/knowledge, intending to return to Poland, etc).
Report	Ryan, Louise (Social Policy Research Centre)	2015	<i>Another year and another year': Polish migrants in London extending the stay over time</i>	Interviews: 20 interviews of Polish Migrants living in London	Broader civic participation, reasons for why some Poles remain in Britain for longer than intended
Report	Sobolewska, Maria, Stuart Wilks-Heeg, Eleanor Hill & Magdalena Borkowska	2015	<i>Understanding electoral fraud vulnerability in Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin communities in England</i>	Interviews: n=37 interviews of local community / political activists, drawn from 8 local authorities selected due to having incidents/allegations of electoral fraud.	Electoral fraud, ethnic kinship networks, and the way in which such networks potentially harm (as well as facilitate) democratic participation amongst women and the young within some Bangladeshi

					and Pakistani communities
Report	Wilks-Heeg, Stuart	2012	<i>Electoral registration in the United Kingdom A literature review for the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Programme</i>	Review of existing literature	Registration
Report	Ziegler, Reuven (Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: European University Institute)	2018	<i>Report on Political Participation of Mobile EU Citizens: United Kingdom</i>	Review of existing literature	Turnout and registration, alongside a discussion of which groups are eligible for different categories of political rights
Book	Heath, Anthony, Stephen Fisher, Gemma Rosenblatt, David Sanders & Maria Sobolewska	2013	<i>The Political Integration of Ethnic Minorities in Britain</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Addresses a wide array of factors pertaining to ethnic minority participation in Britain, including turnout and registration
Book	Maxwell, Rahsaan	2012	<i>Ethnic Minority Migrants in Britain and France:</i>	Interviews: n=340 politicians, public sector officials, academics, journalists and	Social integration, ethnic concentration and political mobilisation



			<i>Integration Trade-Offs</i>	activists from Britain and France	
Book (edited volume)	Peace, Tim (editor)	2015	<i>Muslims and Political Participation in Britain</i>	Varies by chapter	Voting, broader civic participation, generational differences in satisfaction with British democracy
Book	Sobolewska, Maria & Robert Ford	2020	<i>Brexitland: Identity, Diversity, and the Reshaping of British Politics</i>	Survey Analysis: BSA, BES (often in conjunction with Graduates)	Political identities, turnout (grouped with graduates)
Book Chapter	Akhtar, Parveen	2015	<i>Doubly disillusioned? Young Muslims and mainstream British politics</i>	Interviews: Young Pakistani-origin Muslims in Birmingham (unspecified n)	Satisfaction with democracy amongst young Muslims, Biraderi networks
Book Chapter	Fernandes, Francine	2015	<i>Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010	Voter registration, differences in reported vs validated registration between minorities and White British citizens
Book Chapter	McAndrew, Siobhan & Maria Sobolewska	2015	<i>Mosques and political engagement in Britain Participation or segregation?</i>	Survey Analysis: 2010 EMBES (Muslim Respondents)	Religious attendance and religiosity, turnout, non-electoral participation

Ph.D. Thesis	Borkowska, Magdalena	2017	<i>Essays on Political Integration of Ethnic Minorities in the UK</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010  Interviews: n=40 of Caribbean and Bangladeshi origin activists from Birmingham and Oldham	National identity and (non-electoral) political engagement
Ph.D. Thesis	Esham, Rakib	2019	<i>Discrimination, Social Relations and Trust: Civic Inclusion of British Ethnic Minorities</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010  Interviews: n=25 Ethnic minority citizens in Luton	Social integration, political trust and (dis)satisfaction with democracy
Ph.D. Thesis	Galandini, Silvia	2014	<i>Residential Concentration, Ethnic Social Networks and Political Participation: A mixed methods study of Black Africans in Britain</i>	Survey Analysis: EMBES 2010  Interviews: n=60 Black African Londoners (24 Ghanaians, 36 Somalis)	Ethnic concentration, turnout and non-electoral forms of participation
Ph.D. Thesis	Kloc-Nowak, Weronika	2015	<i>Childbearing and Parental Decisions of Intra-EU Migrants: A Biographical Analysis of Polish Post-Accession</i>	Interviews: n=19 Polish migrants living in the UK	Strength of migrants' ties to Britain, and the circumstances where (Polish) migrants intend to return to their country of birth

			<i>Migrants to the UK and Italy</i>		
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## APPENDIX TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE IN FULL

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Fieldwork : 28<sup>th</sup> Jan-3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2021, Number Cruncher Analytics

Standard demographics including country of birth available as standard

Three parts:

1. Citizenship and knowledge of eligibility

1.1 *Are you a citizen of:*

1. UK and no other country
2. UK and another country
3. Another country only- one of the countries of the Commonwealth or Ireland
4. Another country only- a country that does not belong to the Commonwealth

1.2 *As far as you know, is your name on the electoral register, that is, the official list of people entitled to vote, either at this address or somewhere else?*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

FILTER ON 1.2

[If 1 selected on 1.2]

1.3a *Was the form you filled in to register to vote, in English or another language?*

1. In English
2. In another language
3. Don't know

[If 2 selected on 1.2]

1.3b *If you wanted to register to vote how confident, if at all, are you that you know how to go about registering to vote?*

1. Very confident

2. Fairly confident
3. Not very confident
4. Not at all confident
5. Don't know

1.4 *What are the main reasons you are not on the electoral register? Tick all that apply.  
(randomised order, apart from don't know)*

1. I'm not entitled to vote
2. I don't know if I am entitled to vote
3. I got left off by mistake
4. I don't know how to register
5. I don't want other people knowing about me
6. I'm not interested in elections
7. I never knew I had to register
8. I have recently moved
9. I just couldn't be bothered
10. Don't know

FILTER ON 1.2

[If 1 selected]

1.5-1.7 *Thinking about the last time you registered to vote:*

- *how easy or difficult did you find it to register?*
- *how easy or difficult did you find it to provide the necessary documents to prove your identity?*

[if answered 2 on 1.3a]

- *if you used a form in a language that was not English, how easy or difficult was it to find the form?*

1. Very easy
2. Fairly easy
3. Fairly hard
4. Very hard

2. knowledge on how to register

ASK ALL

2.1. Please tell me if you think that the following statements about registering to vote in Great Britain are true or false.

1. In order to register to vote everyone must provide their National Insurance Number
  2. You can register by returning the household form that the Council sends in the autumn each year
  3. In order to register to vote everyone must provide their date of birth
  4. The head of household can register anyone living in their household.
  5. In order to register to vote everyone must provide their signature
  6. People can register to vote, or change their voting registration details such as those on where they live, only before the general election is scheduled
- [Options, true, false, don't know]

3. attitudes to voting/interest in politics/sources of political information.

ASK ALL

3.1 *Would you say that any of the parties in Britain represents your views reasonably well?*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

3.2 *On the whole, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way that democracy works in this country?*

1. Very satisfied
2. Fairly satisfied
3. A little dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied
5. Don't know

3.3 *How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in British politics?*

1. A great deal
2. Quite a lot
3. Some
4. Not very much
5. None at all
6. Don't know

a.4-3.7 *Please tell me how far you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.*

- a. It takes too much time and effort to be active in politics and public affairs.

- b. It is every citizen's duty to vote in an election.
- c. Most of my family and friends think that voting is a waste of time.
- d. I feel a sense of satisfaction when I vote.

- 1. Strongly agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly disagree
- 6. Don't know

3.8 *On a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 means a great deal of influence and 0 means no influence, how much influence do you have on politics and public affairs?*

- 0 No influence
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 A great deal of influence
- DK

3.9 *Thinking back to the most recent general election in December 2019, did you manage to vote?*

- 1. Yes, I voted
- 2. No, I did not manage to vote
- 3. I was not eligible to vote
- 4. Don't know, I don't remember

3.10 *Again thinking back to the recent general election in December 2019, did anyone, for example, a friend, a member of your family, or someone at work, try to persuade you to vote? (tick all that apply)*

- 1 Someone from a political party
- 2 Friend(s)
- 2 Family member(s)
- 3 Someone at work
- 4 Someone from your church or place of worship
- 5 Someone from your neighbourhood
- 6 Someone from your ethnic, cultural or religious association or club
- 7 Someone from another association or club
- 8 Other person(s)
- 9 No one tried to convince me
- DK



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