Discrimination, Prejudice and Cohesion – Intergroup relations among Black, Muslim and White People in Britain in the Context of COVID-19 and Beyond

Dominic Abrams, Fanny Lalot, Hilal Ozkeçeci, University of Kent
Jo Broadwood, Kaya Davies Hayon, Andy Dixon, Belong - The Cohesion and Integration Network

July 2022

Nuffield Foundation

University of Kent | School of Psychology

belong
THE COHESION AND INTEGRATION NETWORK

Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network is a charity and membership organisation with the vision of a more integrated and less divided society. Belong connects, supports and mobilises people and organisations across sectors and neighbourhoods via its digital platform, events, training programmes and resources to improve the practice and policy of integration and cohesion.

The Centre for the Study of Group Processes (CSGP) is based in the School of Psychology at the University of Kent. Founded by its director, Professor Dominic Abrams in 1990, CSGP is at the heart of the School's excellent international reputation for experimental and applied social psychological research on groups and intergroup relations. Its research includes topics such as prejudice across the lifespan, collective action, social influence, leadership, group decision making, and community and political psychology.

The Nuffield Foundation is an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social well-being. It funds research that informs social policy, primarily in Education, Welfare, and Justice. It also funds student programmes that provide opportunities for young people to develop skills in quantitative and scientific methods. The Nuffield Foundation is the founder and co-funder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and the Ada Lovelace Institute. The Foundation has funded this project, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the Foundation. Visit www.nuffieldfoundation.org

This report should be cited as: Abrams, D., Lalot, F., Ozkeçeci, H., Broadwood, J., Davies Hayon, K., & Dixon, A. (2022). *Discrimination, Prejudice and Cohesion – Intergroup relations among Black, Muslim and White People in Britain in the Context of COVID-19 and Beyond*.

doi: https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.95694

1. Executive Summary

This report draws on the evidence from the Beyond Us and Them project: our series of national and sub-national surveys examining perceptions and experiences of social cohesion across Britain between May 2020 and July 2021. This report draws primarily on the most recent of our surveys to examine unity and division between, and attitudes held toward, different groups in society. To better understand their distinctive experiences, the report explores perceptions of prejudice, experiences of discrimination and intergroup contact amongst Black, Muslim and White respondents. We then consider the implications for research and policy.

Our key findings are:

Perception of division and unity between different groups in society

Perceptions of division between different groups are generally quite common. Despite a sense of unity between different groups early in the pandemic, from the summer of 2020 onwards, at least a third of respondents perceived groups based on age, nationality or ethnicity as being in opposition or strong opposition to other groups in society. These perceptions can differ depending on vantage point. In relation to ethnicity:

- Over 40% of both Black and non-Black respondents perceive Black people as feeling opposed rather than united with others in the UK.
- Perceptions that Muslims feel in opposition to other groups, are significantly more common among non-Muslim respondents (47%) than among Muslim respondents (35%).
- Muslim respondents also perceive younger and older generations to be significantly more united than do either Black or White respondents respectively, though between 38% and 45% of people perceive the generations to be opposed or strongly opposed.

Perception of discrimination as a serious issue

People's perceptions of the seriousness of discrimination of almost all types increased during the summer of 2020. This is likely to reflect the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement following George Floyd's murder and the growing awareness of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on ethnic minorities and discrimination more generally.

- Discrimination based on race/ethnicity is perceived as being the most serious, and that based on age as being the least serious. This difference persists across all surveys.
- Black respondents regard discrimination based on race to be more serious than do Muslim respondents, who in turn regard it as more serious than do White respondents.

- Muslim respondents regard discrimination based on religion to be more serious than do Black respondents, who in turn regard it as more serious than do White respondents.
- Women regard discrimination based on race, religion or gender as being more serious than do men. This is true regardless of respondents' own religious or ethnic background.
- Black respondents are more likely than either Muslim or White respondents to rate gender discrimination as serious.

Perceptions of deprivation

We examined respondents' perceptions of the deprivation (defined as struggling more than others and having less access to resources) affecting different types of people in the place where respondents live. The acuteness of deprivation is perceived much more keenly by those directly affected.

- Half of all Black respondents perceive Black people as being deprived, and a quarter of Muslim respondents perceive Muslims as being deprived.
- However, White respondents are only a quarter as likely to perceive Black or Muslim people as being deprived. Black and Muslim respondents are also only half as likely to see one another's groups as deprived than their own.
- Across all ethnic/religious memberships women are about a third more likely to consider women as being deprived than do men.

Attitudes towards White, Black and Muslim people

Positive attitudes and emotions towards people from other social groups are often considered an important index of social cohesion. We measured such attitudes through a "feeling thermometer" where respondents indicate how cold or warm they feel towards a specific group.

- Our surveys show that attitudes toward Black people are consistently more favourable than those toward Muslim people, and that people feel more favourable toward older people than other groups, and less favourable toward migrants than other groups.
- White, Black and Muslim respondents, regardless of whether male or female, each feel warmer toward their own group than towards other racial/ethnic groups. Overall, the data reflect that there is greater positive emotion felt within than between different groups.

Experiences of discrimination

We also asked respondents about their experience of discrimination. The levels of discrimination reported by Muslim and Black respondents are extremely high. Our findings also show the intersectional nature of discrimination, in that vulnerability to discrimination becomes cumulatively greater the more protected characteristics one has.

- Four fifths (81%) of Black respondents, both male and female, report having experienced some form of discrimination in the last month, compared with about half (53%) of White and three quarters (73%) of Muslim respondents.
- There is a strong age gradient in experiences of discrimination, with 78% of the 18-24-year-olds reporting at least one experience of discrimination, whereas 44% of the 45-year-olds and older do so.
- Both younger and female respondents in our surveys generally report experiencing more discrimination than others. Gender and age discrimination are also avenues for other types of discrimination. Being young, female and Black or Muslim represents a very different set of experiences of discrimination than being White, male, middle-aged, or all three.

Intergroup contact between White, Black and Muslim people.

Because of the demographics of the UK and the distribution of ethnic minority people geographically, Black and Muslim respondents are much more likely to have intergroup contact (i.e. with members of religious or ethnic outgroups) than are White respondents. People's intergroup attitudes are more positive when they have had contact with members of those groups and we find the quality (positive experience) of contact to be nearly ten times more strongly linked to attitudes than is the simple number of those contacts. However, our research shows that positive experiences of contact are less likely among Black and Muslim respondents. than White respondents."

Policy Implications

The findings of this report demonstrate how much more work is required if society is to ensure equality of treatment and inclusion across ethnicity, religion, gender, age and other protected characteristics. Divergences of perception can serve to undermine consensus about the extent and seriousness of the problems and support for measures necessary to address them.

One of the most powerful ways of breaking down stereotypes, reducing prejudice and helping us to understand the experiences and perspectives of others is through rich and positive interactions between members of different groups. We also need public dialogues which prioritise listening to and understanding others. This work can and should be strengthened through policy, through strong equalities practices, through institutional support and shared purpose.

In particular, we recommend:

1. **Greater urgency and commitment to the task of tackling discrimination and increasing diversity and representativeness across public life.** This should include action to:

    a. Systematically evaluate the equalities and cohesion impact of strategy and policy at national and local levels.

    b. Proactively tackle the social and physical barriers to inclusion of minority communities and under-represented groups.

2. **Strengthening policies, programmes and initiatives that help to build meaningful connections between people from different backgrounds and across the spectrum of society.** We can build on good examples in the following spheres:

    a. Education and youth provision: we should provide children and young people with greater opportunities to form connections with people from different societal groups, through increased support for school linking programmes and other initiatives that open up these possibilities.

    b. Employment and the workplace: the workplace is somewhere we are more likely to connect with people from different backgrounds. National and local government and civil society should work with employers to make more of this opportunity, building on existing diversity and inclusion initiatives.

    c. Neighbourhoods: we need more programmes to support places, spaces and activities at a neighbourhood level to prioritise social mixing and social cohesion, taking on board the success of such initiatives funded through the Government's own Integration Area Programme.

3. **We must seek to foster public spaces and forms of public dialogue (online and offline) that encourage and enable people to listen to and discover more about the experiences and views of others.** This should include a focus on:

    a. Events and activities that bring people together in collective experiences with a shared narrative at a national level. These should include those that tell the story of the huge contribution of minority ethnic communities to British society.

    b. Fostering better disagreement, through working with social media to build platforms that support calmer public debate, and through funding for initiatives that provide safe spaces for civil public dialogue.

2. Introduction

2.1 Cohesion and intergroup relations

People often think of social cohesion as the extent to which people get along together and support one another (good relations). Cohesion is a social glue that enables people to act together, to be part of a shared group. People's sense of cohesion within their communities is known to be an important buffer against adversity, helping to promote resilience. Moreover, as some of our previous work has shown, people living in places that invested in social cohesion before the pandemic showed greater signs of resilience in forms such as trust in others, more positive intergroup attitudes and higher levels of social activism and volunteering.[1]

A fundamental part of human psychology is that we see the world in terms of categories, and therefore we view other people and ourselves as members of different social categories and groups. The associated images, stereotypes and narratives create the meaning we associate with these different group memberships. The categories and meanings are also the vehicles for prejudice and discrimination (as well as many more positive phenomena). Prejudice refers to the extent to which people devalue one another based on their perceived memberships of different social categories or groups (Abrams, 2010).[2] Discrimination refers to unjustifiable negative behaviour (actions towards or decisions about) a group or its members that unfairly disadvantages members of that group. Both prejudice and discrimination have important social implications, leading notably to experiences of social rejection and exclusion and also harm to people's mental well-being in forms such as increased anxiety, increased depressive symptoms and negative well-being. Discrimination also impacts the economic and health outcomes of individuals and groups with disadvantages experienced in educational attainment, health care, employment and earning potential over a lifetime.[3] There are many group characteristics that are associated with discrimination, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

It is tempting to believe that if we can simply mobilise good will and kindness towards others, this may eliminate prejudice and discrimination. Unfortunately, however, it does not automatically follow that good relations within a community means that there are lower levels of prejudice towards out-groups (groups to which people feel they do not belong, and whose characteristics or objectives may contrast or conflict with those of their own groups). Indeed, it is helpful to distinguish the strength of people's relationships within communities from their positive or negative attitudes towards out-groups. Thinking about the different ways that these two elements (good relations and prejudice) may combine offers a more nuanced perspective on the complexity of achieving social cohesion. Figure 1 illustrates this in the form of a taxonomy.

1 Abrams, D., Lalot, F., Broadwood, J., Davies Hayon, K., & Platts-Dunn, I. (2020). *The Social Cohesion Investment: Local areas that invested in social cohesion programmes are faring better in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic*. https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/resources/the-social-cohesion-investment-local-areas-that-invested-in-social-cohesion-programmes-are-faring-better-in-the-midst-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/. doi: 10.22024/unikent/01.02.84003.

2 Abrams, D. (2010). Processes of prejudice: Theory, evidence and intervention. *Equalities and Human Rights Commission: Research Report 56*. London, EHRC. ISBN 978 184206 270 8. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-56-processes-of-prejudice-theory-evidence-and-intervention.pdf.

3 Marmot, M. (2020). Health Equity in England: the Marmot Review 10 Years On. BMJ, 368. https://www.bmj.com/content/368/bmj.m693. doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m693.

Figure 1. Forms of cohesion

		Prejudice	
		Low	**High**
Good Relations	**Low**	**Benign Indifference** Atomised, disengaged community, unconcerned about others	**Malign Antipathy** Fragmented, discontented, disengaged community hostile to both internal and external rivals or enemies
	High	**Harmonious Cohesion** Cohesive, engaged community, open and flexible	**Rivalrous Cohesion** Cohesive, engaged community but is competitive towards subordinates, rivals, enemies

The way good relations and prejudice combine has implications for the forms and levels of discrimination that may arise. We can imagine an ideal situation, of *harmonious* cohesion in which people share a tolerant, engaged, open and flexible community or group that is supportive of its members but also welcoming and receptive to others. In some, and perhaps many cases, however, people who are living in a particular place may be primarily concerned with their own personal or family lives without much care for others around them, a condition of *benign indifference* which has both the potential to result in neglect of others in need, or perhaps to be mobilised toward socially positive or negative engagement if circumstances change. In this case, the absence of prejudice does not necessarily mean a lack of discrimination by indirect or unintended effects.

When conditions are hard and/or resources are scarce, the absence of good relations within communities and groups may also create the conditions for more generalised suspicion and prejudice to arise. People feel fragmented, disconnected, disengaged, and become hostile both to others within or from outside who are perceived as rivals, threats or enemies. This can be thought of as a state of decay that generates *malign antipathy*, or general distrust. Its manifestations may include unwillingness to follow rules and laws, prejudices against outsiders, increased levels of crime, hate behaviour and so forth.

Finally, prejudice and discrimination can be intense even in areas where people are strongly engaged with their community or group because they are in a state of *rivalrous cohesion*. The community or group feels united, but it is in a competitive or hostile relationship with other communities or out-groups. In summary, three of the four quadrants in this taxonomy point to situations where groups may become subjected to prejudice, discrimination, or both. The challenge for society is to move beyond benign indifference, to reduce malign antipathy, and to prevent the harms that can flow from rivalrous cohesion. If we are to move towards harmonious forms of cohesion we need to tackle prejudice and discrimination and build good relations with and between in-groups and out-groups. Consequently, a crucial aspect of understanding societal cohesion is to gauge people's experience and perception of relationships between different social groups.

During crises, groups often come together in a spirit of unity and cooperation, which our research also shows was the case in the early days of the pandemic. The response of local communities has been well documented, as they mobilised to set up food deliveries, prescription delivery services, and social support groups for the most vulnerable. However, this inspiring sense of togetherness was not the end of the story. Importantly, as the pandemic continued we also saw signs of deepening divisions and intolerance toward some minority groups both nationally and at a local level. This ranged from blaming young people and some minority communities for not observing restrictions, to pointing the finger at other countries for 'introducing' new variants. Other events, such as the murder of George Floyd and the activities of the Black Lives Matter movement also affected people's attention to differences between groups. We tracked the evolution of these intergroup perceptions as the pandemic unfolded.

2.2 The research

The Beyond Us and Them research project is a collaboration between Belong - the Cohesion and Integration Network and the Centre for the Study of Group Processes at the University of Kent, supported by funding from the Nuffield Foundation. Our research has asked: *How are relationships between individuals, communities and society adapting and reshaping in the face of this pandemic?* Between May 2020 and June 2021, across different parts of Britain, we collected more than 39,000 responses in a series of 8 on-line surveys. Rather than a single national survey we addressed the survey to specific places or areas, or types of people. The series began with surveys of people living in different nations of the UK (Scotland, Wales and one part of England - Kent), and a further six samples each from different local authority areas within England that had prioritised social cohesion and been supported by extra investment to do so shortly before the pandemic (Blackburn with Darwen, Bradford, Calderdale, Peterborough, Walsall and Waltham Forest). A further survey was directed at people who were already strongly engaged in community activities. From December 2020 (wave 6 in the series), we added surveys in 4 metropolitan areas (Greater London, West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West of England) and in these we oversampled Black and Muslim people in order to ensure quota samples large enough to capture their experiences reliably.

We also conducted repeat focus groups and one-to-one semi-structured interviews in our sample areas over the course of the pandemic, conducting 61 focus groups and 256 one-to-one interviews in all. The four main interviewers were all women and included people from different ethnic backgrounds and one who identified as having a disability. For more detailed information on methods and sample sizes, please refer to the appendix of this document and our main project report, Beyond Us and Them: Societal Cohesion in Britain through Eighteen Months of Covid-19.[4]

4 Abrams, D., Broadwood, J., Lalot, F., Davies Hayon, K. and Dixon, A. (2021). *Beyond Us and Them: Societal Cohesion in Britain through Eighteen Months of Covid-19*, https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Belong_SocietalCohesion_Report_V5.pdf. doi: 10.22024/UniKent/01.02.92899. Further technical information on sampling is provided in https://kar.kent.ac.uk/83389/

In this report, we focus particularly on attitudes towards and experiences of Black and Muslim people, and then consider the implications for research and policy. Owing to multiple factors, the pandemic has disproportionately impacted people from ethnic minority backgrounds.[5] However, there is an absence of large-scale research focused on Black and Muslim people's experiences of the pandemic. Muslim people have been accused in some areas of being responsible for COVID-19 outbreaks and have been targets of hate crime.[6] We think it is particularly important to understand how the social dynamics, engagement with wider community and political systems, and patterns of volunteering/key working in this part of the population may or may not differ from others.

By the autumn of 2020 it was already clear that particular minorities were suffering higher levels of infection, hospitalisation and death than others, SAGE had set up a subgroup (SAGE-Ethnicity) to address these differences in health outcomes. Yet the pandemic was also having a bearing on social relations affecting ethnic minority groups, with examples of stigmatisation and scapegoating being reported regularly, as well as the increased public awareness of racial discrimination following the murder of George Floyd . Because we wanted sufficient statistical power to capture some of these ethnic and faith-based differences in perceptions and experiences, the Nuffield Foundation enabled us to add boost samples of Black and Muslim respondents.

At the same time, the Black Lives Matter movement has gained much greater attention and support across the UK, especially from diverse groups of young people. Although there is debate regarding the reasons for ethnic differences in mortality and hospitalization due to COVID-19, less attention has been paid to assessing impacts on the perceptions and self-perceptions of Black and Muslim people in response to both media coverage and government actions.

2.3 Timeline of data collection

The main data for this report are from the final part of a series of surveys and interviews collected between 25th May 2021 and 28th June 2021. During this period, the UK was under lockdown restrictions due to a surge of the Delta variant. On 14th June, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a delay to the final lifting of coronavirus restrictions, dubbed "freedom day" by the media and originally scheduled for 21st June 2021. The government's roadmap for easing restrictions was delayed to 19th July in order to allow a larger proportion of the population to be vaccinated. On 26th June 2021, the then Health Secretary Matt Hancock resigned his post after it was discovered he had broken social distancing rules with one of his aides. Amongst other controversies, the government increasingly faced accusations of adopting a 'one rule for us and other approach for them' approach to government guidance.

5 Katikireddi, S. V., Lal, S., Carrol, E. D., et al. (2021). Unequal impact of the COVID-19 crisis on minority ethnic groups: a framework for understanding and addressing inequalities. *J Epidemiology & Community Health*, 75, 970-974. doi: 10.1136/jech-2020-216061

6 Rahim, Z., (2020). In the latest sign of Covid-19-related racism, Muslims are being blamed for England's coronavirus outbreaks. *CNN*. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/06/europe/muslims-coronavirus-england-islamophobia-gbr-intl/index.html

Where the report compares the specific experiences of people who described themselves as White, Black or Muslim, we draw on waves 6-8, which include the 'boost' sampling of Black and Muslim respondents. For example, in wave 8 these analyses included 6919 White respondents, and 612 who described themselves as Black but not Muslim, and 622 who described themselves as Muslim but not Black. We excluded from the analyses 892 respondents (10.9%) who either had overlapping ethnic memberships or did not fit into any of these three categories (e.g. were mixed, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller, other, or one of the 5 Asian options but not Muslim). The number of exclusions reflects the diversity to be found in the large metropolitan areas but even with these quite large sample sizes, the numbers within any one excluded category were too small to be used for comparative analyses for this report. We fully appreciate that the experience and situation of these individuals is very relevant for understanding cohesion and intergroup relations, and that there is more to be discovered from a more fine-grained analysis of the relevant evidence. Their data are included in analyses used in our other reports on different topics[7].

7 For example, in the West Midlands Combined Authority, 2.2% described themselves neither as White nor Black, and while 10.2% described themselves as Asian, only 5.5% described themselves as Muslim. UK Census statistics indicate the 16.8% of those who report their ethnicity as Black also say they are Muslim, and 10.1% of those who are Muslim also report their ethnicity as Black. Consistent with this, across the metropolitan areas prior to the addition of boost samples, only a few respondents were both Black and Muslim (wave 6: n = 8; wave7: n = 13; wave 8: n = 20) and are not included in the analyses so as to avoid ambiguity. See also our second technical report: Abrams, D., Lalot, F. & Ozkeçeci, H. (2022) *'Beyond Us and Them' Technical Update: Demographics and Sample Characteristics Across 8 waves of surveys 2020-2021.* https://kar.kent.ac.uk/95180/

3. Our Findings

3.1 Perception of division and unity between different social groups

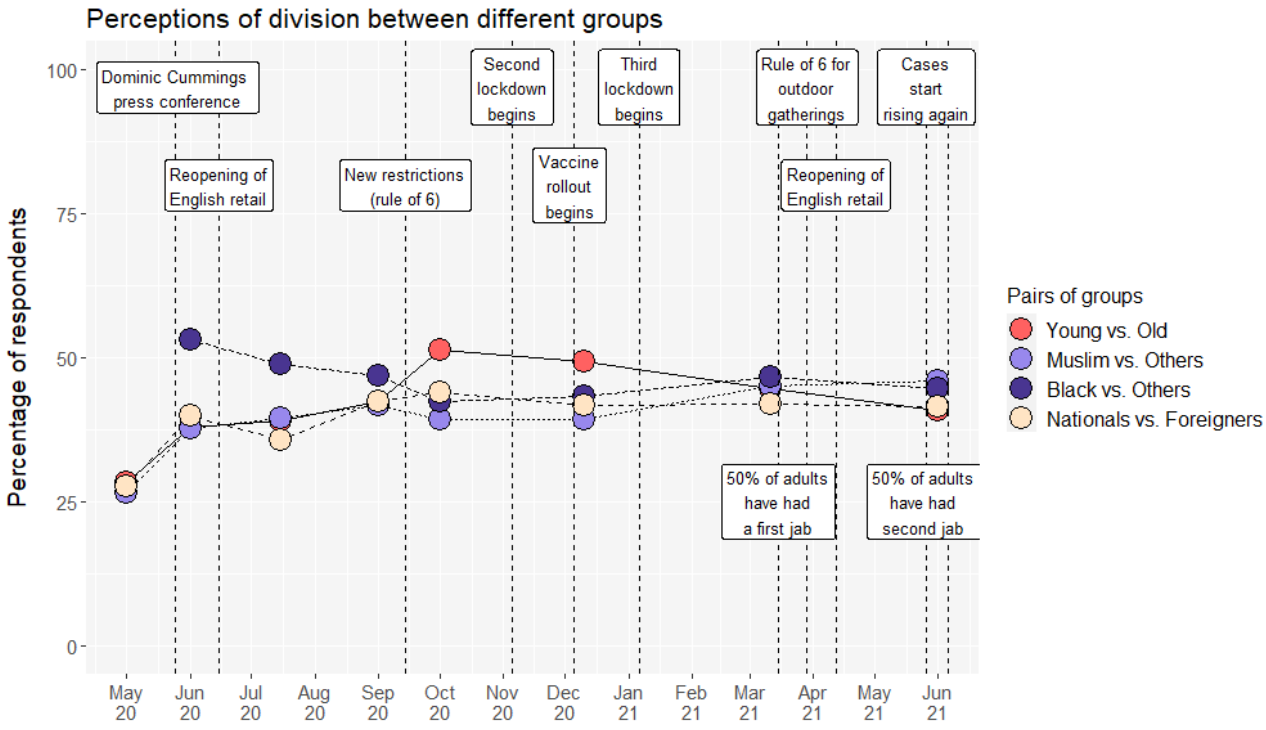
In our earlier reports we noted that across Britain the period up to the 2019 General Election had concluded in a high level of division between different social groups, not just those who did and did not support Brexit, but also between generations, countries of the UK, ethnic groups and others. We explored, for various groups and relevant comparison groups (e.g., 'young people versus older people', 'Muslims versus other groups'), whether respondents thought each feels "united with or opposed to ("against") each other in any way". Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who perceived groups as being in opposition or strong opposition to other groups in the UK.

By May 2020, two months after the first national lockdown, there was a strong sense of cross-national unity, and this perception was consensually shared across all social groups. By the early summer of 2020, however, divisions had re-emerged. Differences were perceived as largest between Black and others in the UK, perhaps reflecting the wider public's greater awareness of unequal treatment of Black people following the murder of George Floyd on 25th May 2020. It seems likely that the perception of opposition between Black and other people in the UK then reduced as more and more cross-group solidarity was shown in the protests and campaigns rejecting racism across the country.

However, Figure 2 also shows that during the autumn and winter of 2020 a sense of opposition had grown between younger and older people, subsiding gradually from the spring of 2021. This seems likely to have reflected differing experiences and changing awareness of the distinctive impact of the pandemic on different parts of the population. Notably, as perceptions of age opposition subsided, there was a corresponding gradual increase in perceptions of opposition between Muslims and others.

Perhaps the key message from Figure 2 is that, regardless of whether we examined perceptions of division across age groups, ethnic groups, religion, or by nationality, well over 30%, and as many as 45% in some cases, of respondents perceived groups to be opposed or strongly opposed to others. This reflects a significant challenge for ensuring social cohesion and cooperation across different groups in UK society.

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents who consider each pair of groups to be opposed or strongly opposed to each other, from May 2020 to June 2021



Note. To ensure comparability across waves, community activist and Black and Muslim boost sample respondents are not included in this analysis. Means are adjusted for demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, social status, religious affiliation, and political orientation), ensuring comparability across waves. In the questions presented to respondents, 'others' is stated as 'other groups', 'Nationals vs. Foreigners' is presented as 'UK citizens versus foreigners who already live in the UK'.

3.1.2 Who perceives more unity or division?

The following analysis, using data from wave 8, tested for differences in the responses made by Black, Muslim and White respondents after adjusting for individuals' age, political orientation and subjective socioeconomic status. Future work will examine the data at more granular levels.

As shown in Table 1a, Muslim respondents perceived Muslims to be significantly more united with others than was perceived by either Black or White respondents respectively. Whereas only about a third of Muslims felt their group was in opposition to others, nearly a half of Black and White respondents thought Muslims were in opposition to others.[8]

In contrast, Table 1b shows that Black, White and Muslim respondents were similarly of the view that Black people were in opposition to other groups (between 40% and 45% agreeing). However, it is interesting to note that Muslim respondents were less likely to perceive opposition and more likely to perceive unity between Black people and other groups, though not significantly so.[9]

For comparative purposes we also examined how these respondents perceived relations between older and younger people. As shown in Table 1c, Muslim respondents perceived younger and older generations to be significantly more united than did either Black or White respondents respectively, though between 38% and 45% perceived them to be opposed or strongly opposed.[10]

Table 1a Perception of Muslim people as being united with or opposed to others in the UK

	White respondents	Black respondents	Muslim respondents
United	12.1%	17.2%	29.9%
Neither	41.0%	35.2%	35.1%
Opposed	46.9%	47.7%	35.1%

8 Analysis of covariance on differences in White, Black and Muslim respondents' perceptions of Muslims as being in opposition or unity with other groups: $F(2, 1702) = 6.33$, $p = .002$, $n2p = .007$.

9 Analysis of covariance on differences in White, Black and Muslim respondents' perceptions of Black people as being in opposition or unity with other groups: $F(2, 1742) = 1.80$, $p = .17$, $n2p = .002$.

10 Analysis of covariance on differences in White, Black and Muslim respondents' perceptions of younger and older people as being in opposition or unity with each other: $F(2, 1801) = 4.88$, $p = .008$, $n2p = .005$.

Table 1b Perception of Black people as united with or opposed to others in the UK

	White respondents	Black respondents	Muslim respondents
United	15.5%	14.7%	26.2%
Neither	38.5%	44.1%	33.1%
Opposed	45.9%	41.2%	40.7%

Table 1c Perception of young people as united with or opposed to older people

	White respondents	Black respondents	Muslim respondents
United	13.4%	11.0%	21.8%
Neither	45.7%	44.1%	40.6%
Opposed	40.9%	44.9%	37.6%

Taken together this evidence reveals two things. First, a third or more of people from White, Black and Muslim backgrounds perceive that Black and Muslim people feel their groups are in opposition to others in society and that younger and older people are also in opposition. Second, Muslim respondents are more likely to perceive unity between all of these groups than are Black and White respondents.

3.2 Perception of discrimination

We explored how much people believe discrimination towards different groups matters by using a measure from the 2017 EHRC benchmark survey of prejudice in Britain. This asks "how serious do you think the issue of discrimination against people is, because of: (people's gender, age, race or ethnic background, religion or religious beliefs, presence of a physical or mental health condition, and financial circumstances)", with answers ranging from 1 = Not at all serious to 5 = Extremely serious. To put these scores in context, if the average score is 3.0 or above it indicates that half or more of the population regard discrimination towards that group to be at least somewhat serious.

Across these characteristics and over time, average scores tended to be either slightly above or below the scale midpoint ("somewhat" serious). When our surveys began, in May 2020, it was a time of national feeling of togetherness, which may have reduced people's concerns about discrimination. Following the murder of George Floyd in late May 2020, there was an increase in public perceptions of the seriousness of discrimination in June 2020. This is likely to have reflected the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and growing public awareness that the pandemic was deepening existing inequalities, particularly through its impact on ethnic minorities.

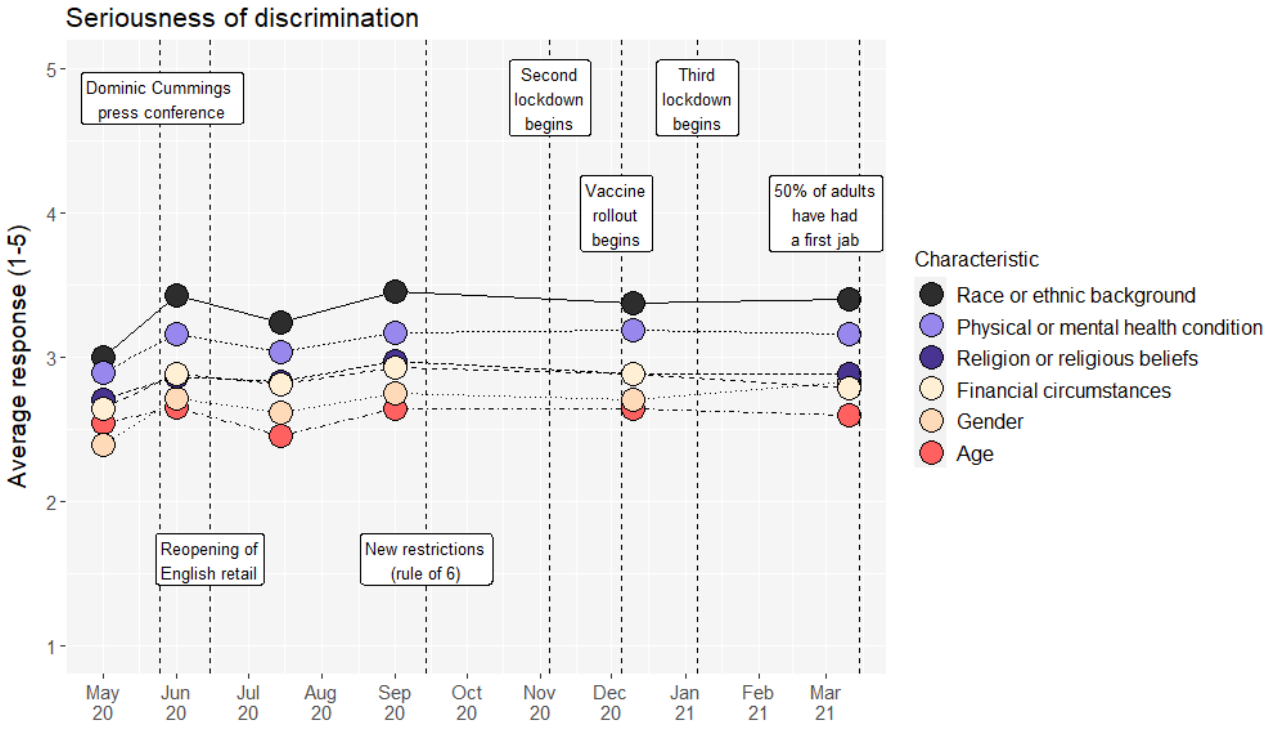
However, it is interesting that the perceived seriousness of discrimination increased for all protected characteristics from June 2020, suggesting that people had become more aware of discrimination as an issue in general. This reflection held true in our qualitative work as well, where respondents frequently commented on the impact the pandemic was having on existing inequalities in the UK for people from a range of different ethnic minority backgrounds. Significantly, this heightened awareness of the inequalities ethnic minority groups faced was often linked to the Black Lives Matter movement. However, respondents attributed higher mortality rates to a range of different reasons including roles as frontline workers.

> *"The Black Lives Matter thing revealed inequality there and also many Asians, more Asians and Black people dying because of COVID because they are the frontline workers"*
>
> (Metropolitan area focus group, April 2021)

Beyond this broader picture, there were also persistent differences in the relative seriousness people ascribed to discrimination against each characteristic. Discrimination based on race or ethnic background was consistently rated as the most serious with average scores around 3.5, showing and sustaining an understandably larger increase than others following the murder of George Floyd. Discrimination based on physical disability or mental health conditions was also rated as serious with average scores around or above the scale midpoint (3.0). Other forms of discrimination were consistently rated as being less serious, with average scores below the scale midpoint. In decreasing order of perceived seriousness these were discrimination based on religion or religious beliefs, on financial circumstances, on gender, and finally on age.

The picture may be more complex when we consider that many Muslims face discrimination based on both ethnicity and religion, and so it is interesting that public perception differentiates the seriousness of the reasons for discrimination. It is noteworthy that two other categories that intersect with ethnicity and religion, namely age and gender, are not widely regarded as serious axes of discrimination, and that these perceptions therefore indicate a lack of public awareness of the actual extent or widespread impact of these forms of discrimination.

Figure 3. Perceived seriousness of discrimination against people with different protected characteristics, from May 2020 to March/April 2021



Note. To ensure comparability across waves, community activist and Black and Muslim boost sample respondents are not included in this analysis. Means are adjusted for demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, social status, religious affiliation, and political orientation), ensuring comparability across waves.

3.2.1 Who perceives discrimination to be more serious?

This report is primarily examining ethnicity and religion. However, tackling discrimination involves achieving a consensus across different groups about the extent and seriousness of the problem. The intersection between ethnicity/religion and gender is therefore also important. Because gender cross-cuts all other characteristics equally, we chose to focus on intersections between ethnicity/religion and gender in this part of the report. Building more cohesive communities involves finding ways to ensure that people are equally concerned about tackling prejudice against all groups within that community. We examined intersectionality with gender using data from the penultimate survey (Wave 7).[11]

Women generally face more discrimination than men, but does being a woman simply add to, or perhaps accelerate discrimination associated with ethnicity and religion? Moreover, if the public regard sexism to be less serious than racism, does racism find avenues for expression via disproportionate sexism toward minority ethnic group members? The following analysis examines how Black, Muslim, male and female respondents perceived the seriousness of discrimination based on ethnicity, religion and gender.

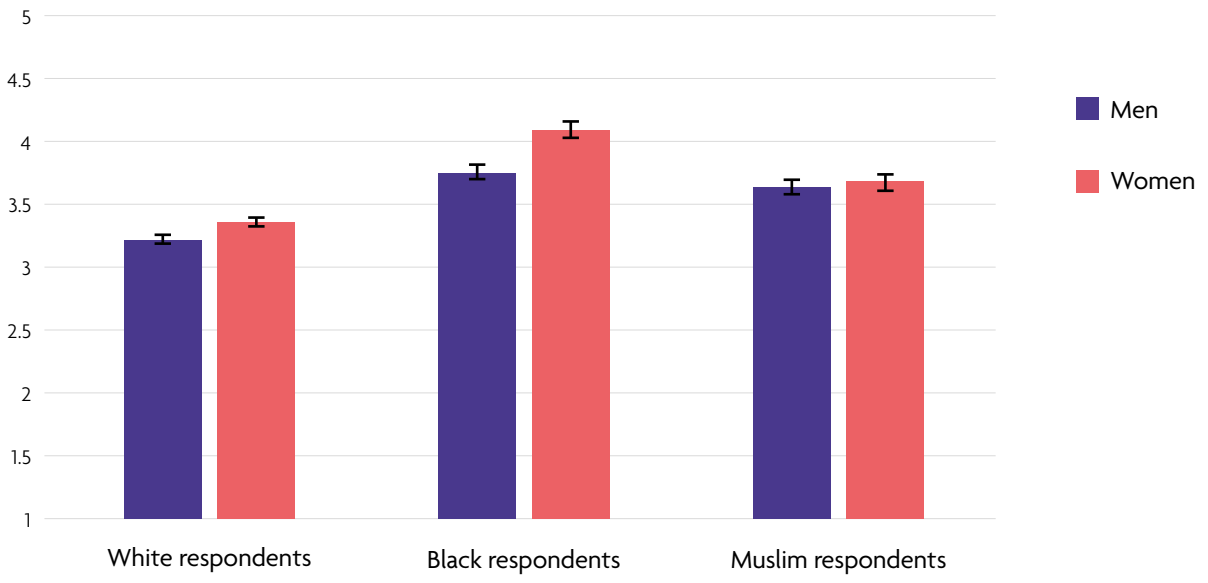
If people were equally aware of the impact of discrimination against different groups then people's own group membership should not affect their perception of seriousness. But given that those who experience discrimination are more likely to be aware of its seriousness, we might expect that being a member of any group that experiences heightened discrimination could be sufficient to sensitise people to discrimination against all groups. If that were the case we could expect that respondents who were Black, Muslim or female would be more likely than others to perceive discrimination based on all three categories (ethnicity, religion and gender) as a serious issue.

A different possibility would be that people may be acutely aware of discrimination against their own group(s) but do not extrapolate their perceptions of seriousness to other groups. In that case, their perceptions of seriousness would only be elevated in the case of their own group and not other groups. For example, being Black, would increase perceptions of seriousness of discrimination against Black people, but not perceptions about other groups.

11 Using data from Wave 7. Analyses of covariance treated gender and ethno-religious category (White-Muslim-Black) as factors, and controlled for respondents' political orientation, age, and subjective status. The sample for analysis included 6771 White, 530 Black, and 497 Muslim respondents of which 3513 were men and 4536 women and proportionate distribution within ethno-religious categories.

Figure 4 below shows average perceptions of the seriousness of discrimination based on race or ethnicity. It shows both significant differences between Black, Muslim and White respondents' perceptions and between men and women's perceptions. Black respondents perceive greater seriousness than either Muslim or White respondents. Muslim respondents also perceive greater seriousness than White respondents. Regardless of their own ethnicity, women perceive race and ethnic discrimination to be more serious than do men.[12] This pattern reflects some support for both of the possibilities described above. Ethnic/racial discrimination is regarded as more serious by all three 'minority' categories, but more so by members of the category that is most directly affected.

Figure 4. Perceived seriousness of race/ethnicity based discrimination among White, Black and Muslim men and women.

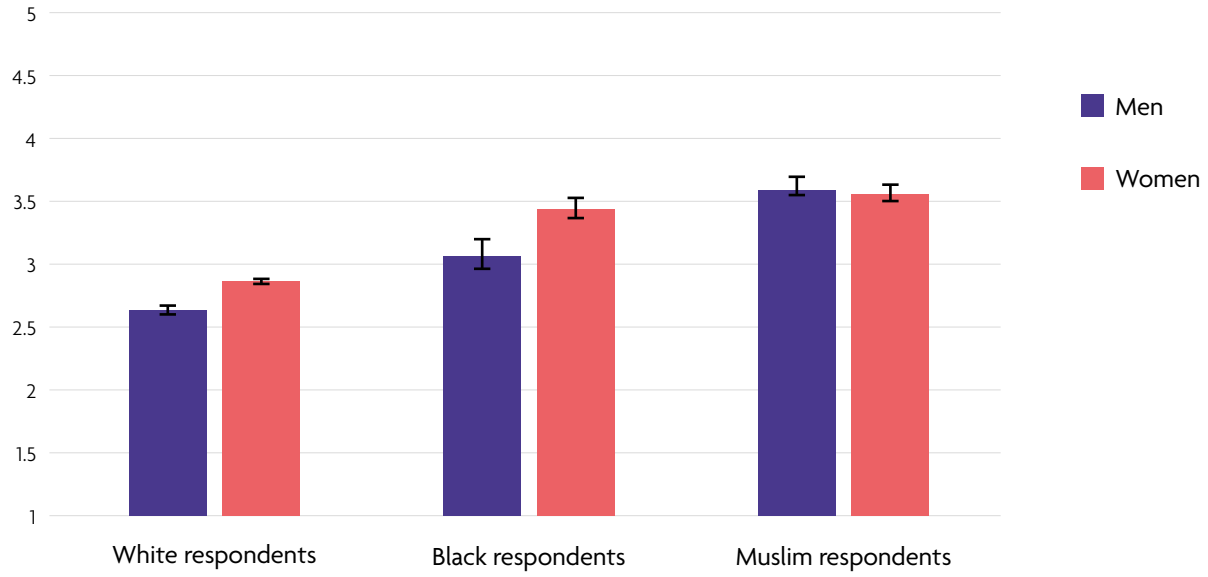


Note. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean (SE).

12 Analysis of covariance, adjusting for age, political orientation and self-ascribed socioeconomic status showed significant differences due to respondents ethno-religious category, $F(2, 7786) = 88.15$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .022$, and gender, $F(2, 7786) = 13.62$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .002$, but not the interaction between the two, $F(4, 7798) = 2.78$, $p = .062$, $n^2_p = .001$.

Figure 5 below shows a similar, but not identical pattern, in the case of perceptions of religious discrimination, though it is noteworthy that Muslim men and women have more similar perceptions than do White or Black men compared with White or Black women.[13] By comparison with Figure 4, it is notable that ethnicity is more focal and distinctive for Black respondents, so that they perceive ethnic discrimination to be more serious than religious discrimination whereas Muslim respondents perceive both forms to be equally serious.

Figure 5 Perceived seriousness of religion-based discrimination among White, Black and Muslim men and women.

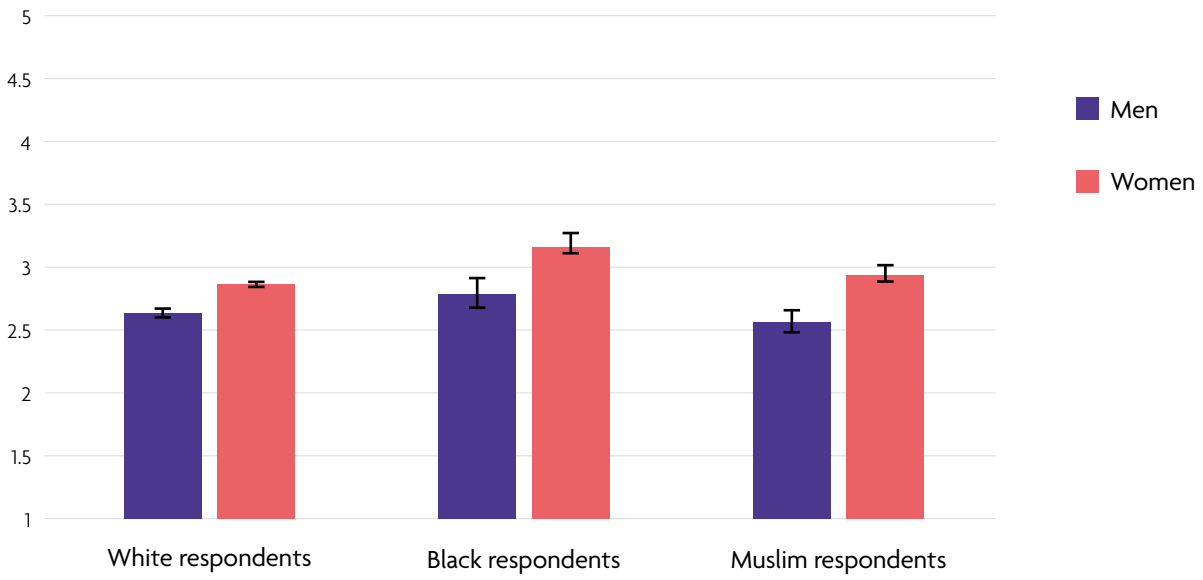


Note. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean (SE).

13 Analysis of covariance, adjusting for age, political orientation and self-ascribed socioeconomic status showed significant differences due to respondents ethno-religious category, $F(2, 7786) = 142.18$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .035$, and gender, $F(2, 7786) = 9.74$, $p = .002$, $n^2_p = .001$, but not the interaction between the two, $F(4, 7798) = 2.24$, $p = .106$, $n^2_p = .001$.

Finally, as can be seen in Figure 6, a consistent picture emerges when we look at perceived seriousness of gender discrimination. Women, regardless of whether White, Black or Muslim, perceive it to be more serious than do men. However, it is also the case that Black respondents perceive gender discrimination to be significantly more serious than do Muslim or White respondents.[14]

Figure 6 Perceived seriousness of gender-based discrimination among White, Black and Muslim men and women.



Note. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean (SE).

Taken together, these findings reveal there are cumulative rather than multiplicative effects of belonging to multiple groups that face discrimination. For example, a Black woman is likely to perceive both gender and ethnic discrimination to be more serious than would a white man. A Muslim man is likely to perceive religious discrimination, but not gender discrimination, to be more serious than does a White man. Notably, people do not fully generalise the sense of seriousness of discrimination against their own group to their perceptions of seriousness of discrimination toward other groups. There seem to be social or psychological obstacles to people's perspective taking across different groups and categories. These differences in perspective may make it more difficult to reach consensus on the impact of prejudice and discrimination and therefore the policies required to address them.

14 Analysis of covariance, adjusting for age, political orientation and self-ascribed socioeconomic status showed significant differences due to respondents ethno-religious category, $F(2, 7786) = 13.43$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .003$, and gender, $F(2, 7786) = 45.44$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .006$, but not the interaction between the two, $F(4, 7798) = 2.03$, $p = .132$, $n^2_p = .001$.

Amongst White men, given the relative complacency about the seriousness of discrimination affecting others, and their predominance in positions of power, work needs to be done to ensure they gain greater insight into the perspectives of other groups in society. More broadly, it is necessary to build greater cross-group solidarity in recognising and tackling prejudice and discrimination of all types. Members of minority groups do regard discrimination as more serious in general, but they still accord greater seriousness to the discrimination directed at their own group than that against others.

3.3 Levels of deprivation affecting different groups

In the March/April 2021 survey, we ask respondents to indicate which 3 groups they believe were currently most deprived (i.e. relatively disadvantaged) in the UK. The question does not necessarily imply discrimination or prejudice, but instead focusses on economic circumstances, inequalities and vulnerability. A harmoniously cohesive society would be one in which people are positively responsive to the needs of others, regardless of which group or category of people is involved. The intergroup dimensions become especially important because perceived division and unity may revolve around these economic differences. Economic deprivation, both absolute and relative, is known to be a factor that motivates people to work collectively for change (sometimes through protest). Such motivation may emerge amongst members of disadvantaged groups themselves, but also amongst others working in solidarity on their behalf. Therefore, understanding why intergroup relations across society may be more unified between some groups and more divided between others, requires analysis of the extent to which different groups are perceived to be particularly deprived relative to others.[15]

We asked: "Sometimes particular groups are more deprived than other groups, for example due to their age, sex, ethnicity, religion, but also occupation, education, or place where they live. When you think about the people in the place where you live, which group(s) would you say are the most deprived, compared with others? Please select up to 3 groups from the list below". We provided a list of 31 different groups (e.g., women, transgender people, Muslim people...) and also the option to indicate yet a different group. Respondents selected the 3 groups (in no specific order) they believed were the most disadvantaged.

As noted in our main report, respondents most frequently identified people who are homeless, on low incomes, refugees and asylum seekers as most deprived. Sixteen percent of respondents included Black people, 6.5% included Muslim people, and 6% included women in their top three. When we counted the numbers of respondents selecting each group, Black, Muslim and Women ranked 5th, 14th and 15th out of the 31 groups. For the present report we went on to examine whether these perceptions differed depending on respondents' ethnicity/race, religion and gender by comparing how White, Black and Muslim men and women perceived deprivation amongst those three groups.

15 Abrams, D., Travaglino, G.A., Grant. P., Templeton, A., Bennett, M., & Lalot, F. (2020). Mobilising IDEAS: The Identity-Deprivation-Efficacy-Action-Stress Model and the Scottish Referendum. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 59, 425-446. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12355; Hässler, T., Ullrich, J., Bernardino, M., et al. (2020). A large-scale test of the link between intergroup contact and support for social change. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4, 380–386. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-019-0815-z; Thomas, E. F., Zubielevitch, E., Sibley, C. G., & Osborne, D. (2020). Testing the Social Identity Model of Collective Action longitudinally and across structurally disadvantaged and advantaged groups. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 46 (6), 823-838. doi: 10.1177/0146167219879111.

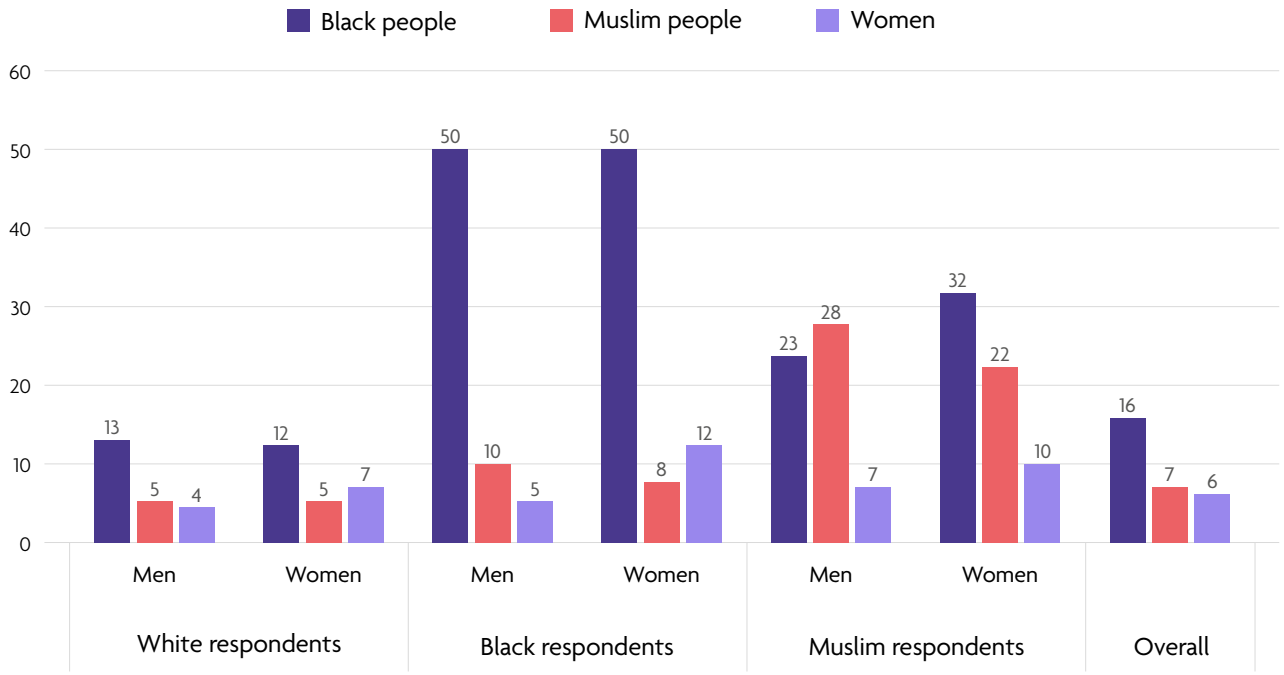
As can be seen in Figure 7, there were striking differences in perceptions. These mirror perceptions of the seriousness of discrimination; each group regarded their own group's situation as being more deprived than was perceived by others. Women were more likely to say that women are deprived than were men. Muslims were more likely to say that Muslims are deprived than were either Black or White respondents. The largest discrepancy is that Black respondents were five times more likely to say that Black people are deprived than were White or Muslim respondents. Equally notable is that white respondents were about half as likely as Black or Muslim respondents to select Black or Muslim people as being among the most deprived groups.

As with perceptions of seriousness, minorities were most aware of deprivation affecting their own group. We found one exception to this pattern. Muslim women were more likely to perceive that Black people are deprived than that Muslims are deprived.

Overall, the qualitative research reflected the findings in our quantitative surveys, with respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds being most aware of the deprivation affecting their own group and often drawing directly on their own experiences as a reference point. For example, one Black male respondent from Manchester commented on the inequalities he had experienced in the workplace.

> *"I think people have got to tackle these inequalities, it's that, you know, it's a disgrace that there can be as much as, you know, there could be as much as £20,000, um, difference between the wages of someone Black as against somebody White, you know, for doing similar types of work, it's like, we will not be progressed through a work, you know, stream, you see the people who you've trained take up the jobs, that you, you know, ahead of you"*
>
> (Metropolitan area one-to-one, 18.05.21)

Figure 7. Percentage of respondents who select Black, Muslim or Women as being among the 3 most deprived groups in the UK.

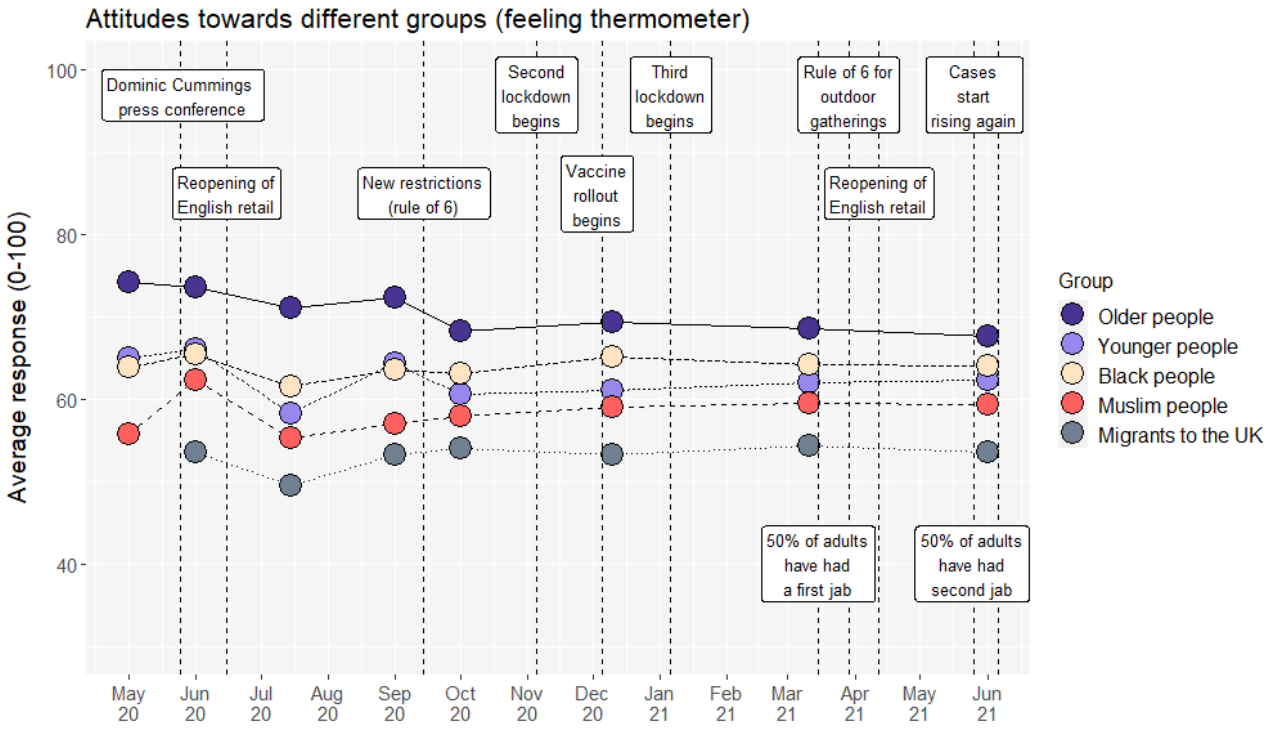


3.4 Intergroup attitudes on a feeling thermometer

Positive attitudes and emotions towards people from other social groups are often considered an important index of social cohesion and the potential for future cohesion, since they facilitate good relations between people of different backgrounds. A common and quite straightforward way to measure such attitudes is through a "feeling thermometer" where respondents indicate how cold or warm they feel towards a specific group, on a thermometer ranging from 0° (extremely cold) to 100° (extremely warm). Figure 8 below shows changes over time in people's attitudes towards young people, older people, Black people, Muslim people, and migrants to the UK (the latter being an aggregated index including legal and illegal immigrants, asylum seekers and seasonal workers).

People's overall expressions of warmth may reflect their general sense of goodwill, while differences in their feelings of warmth toward different groups reveal their preferences and priorities. Figure 8 shows that, across time, people generally express some degree of warmth (scores over 50) towards most groups. Indeed, the overall average temperature appears fairly constant over time. However, there are also large differences in feelings towards different groups and there were fluctuations particularly between the spring and autumn of 2020.

Figure 8. Attitudes towards various groups through the "feeling thermometer" measure from May 2020 to July 2021



Note. To ensure comparability across waves, community activist and Black and Muslim boost sample respondents are not included in this analysis. Means are adjusted for demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, social status, religious affiliation, and political orientation), ensuring comparability across waves.

Respondents were consistently warmer towards older people (defined as aged 70+) than any other group. Warmth toward older people dropped markedly between August and October 2020, then remained fairly constant after that. People's initially very high warmth towards older people during the early months of the pandemic might reflect the intense media focus on older people being at higher risk than others and on the restrictions in care homes that were increasing their isolation and loneliness. It is quite typical for sympathetic (warm) attitudes to be expressed towards stereotypically dependent groups,[16] as is well established in social attitudes in the UK.[17]

16 Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878-902, doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878.

17 Abrams, D., & Houston, D. (2006). *Equality, Diversity and Prejudice in Britain Results from 2005 National Survey*. Report for the Cabinet Office Equalities Review October 2006, https://kar.kent.ac.uk/4106/1/Abrams_KentEquality_ Oct_2006.pdf

If we take warmth towards older people as a high watermark in terms of people's potential to feel positive toward any group, we can consider departures from that level as a possible indicator of apprehension, indifference, intolerance or potential hostility. For example, warmth towards younger people (defined in the survey as those aged 18-30) is consistently lower than towards older people, a difference that was accentuated in July 2020, at which time various news reports were highlighting some young people who were not adhering to restrictions.

This was borne out in our qualitative research, where intergenerational tensions did seem to peak during certain periods and in areas with high student populations. Nonetheless, our qualitative evidence revealed that some interviewees did express a lot of sympathy for how the pandemic was affecting younger people in particular.

> *"I think because in my local community, it's very student heavy. And, and, on the one hand, students have been scapegoated a lot for the increased spread of the virus, which in one respect is fair, and in another respect is really unfair. And I think it's kind of built a feeling of just kind of mistrust between the residents and the students. And, you know, there was a lot of people talking about, oh, we don't want the students to come back, they're going to start spreading the virus again. And then when they did come back, they were just scapegoated completely. And I think it built a lot of tension. And, but it also, it, it also meant that the students had a really, really rough time of it"*
>
> (Metropolitan area focus group, 21.04.21)

Warmth of feeling towards Black people and Muslims, and to a lesser extent migrants and younger people increased in June 2020 possibly reflecting the issue of racism being brought to wider public attention by the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd. The subsequent dip in warmth toward all but older groups in July, may have reflected adverse media reports criticising BLM protests for non-adherence to restrictions, but feelings towards all these groups then recovered somewhat and remained fairly consistent over the course of the year.

Our surveys revealed that Muslim people remained one of the groups towards which other people have the least favourable attitudes. Only migrants to the UK elicited cooler feelings, reflecting pre-pandemic narratives on immigration and suggesting that perceptions of cultural (symbolic) and economic (material) threat remain as likely drivers of differences in levels of prejudice toward different groups.

Two things stand out in these data, one being that levels of prejudice did not shift much overall across the entire year, and the other is that the differences in feelings of warmth towards each group and category remained relatively stable, so that people's differing levels of warmth towards different groups persisted.

3.4.1 Intergroup attitudes of Black, Muslim and white respondents

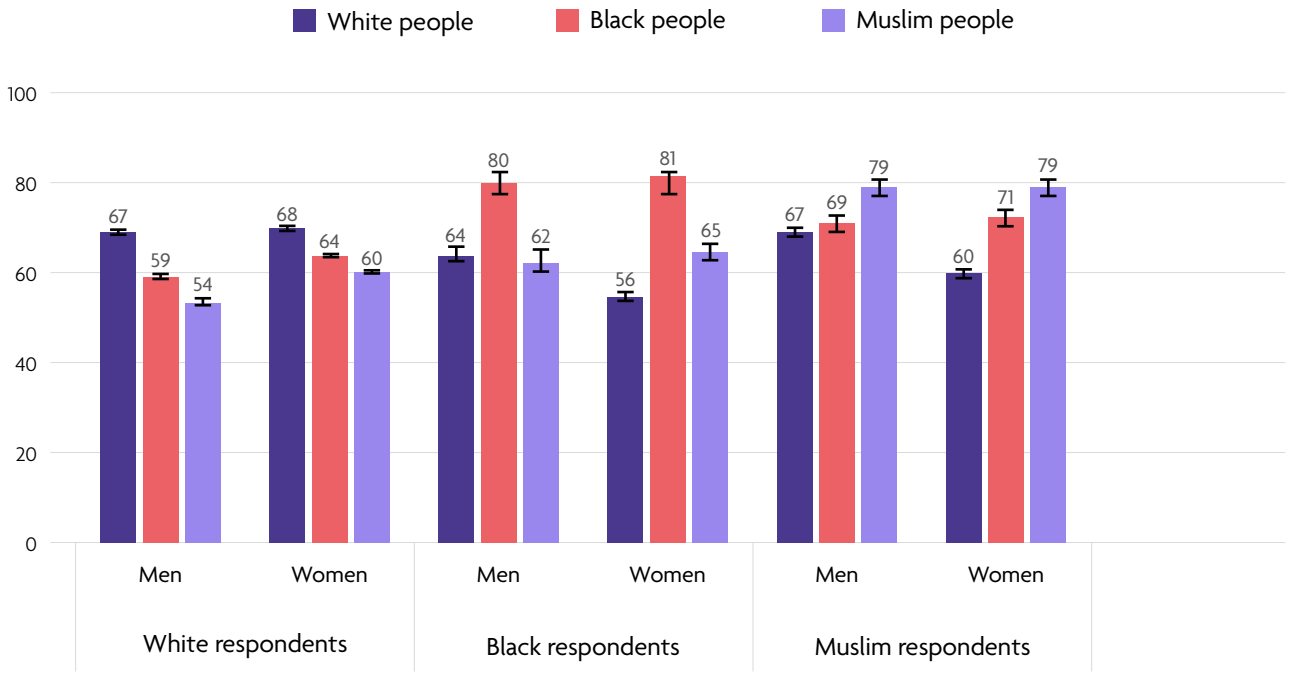
In the analysis that follows we examine attitudes of respondents who self-described as White, Black or Muslim towards each of those three categories, comparing men and women in each group. We statistically controlled for other demographic factors (age and socioeconomic level). We use the data from June 2021 (wave 8), which included 6399 White (2974 men and 3907 women), 589 Black (179 men and 427 women), and 601 Muslim respondents (212 men and 405 women).

In Figure 9, the first thing to note is that all average scores were above 50, meaning positive sentiment prevailed between all groups. Warmth towards other groups ranged from 54 to 81, but White, Black and Muslim people each expressed significantly more warmth towards their own group than towards either of the others. Black and Muslim respondents showed much stronger warmth towards their own group (close to 80) than did White respondents. One explanation for this is the considerable heterogeneity of the category 'White' as well as its larger size, both of which militate against a uniform attitude.[18] A further possibility is that White people may feel less comfortable expressing strongly positive feelings toward other White people given the context of awareness of racism. But it might also reflect White people's subjective lessening of differences between their own and other ethnic groups. Differences that are powerful and salient to those minorities may appear less consequential and perhaps even unworthy of attention among majorities. For example, our qualitative research revealed some minority group participants' feelings that their experiences of racism and discrimination were better understood by members of their own group than by those who do not experience these as a part of their lived reality. One Black male respondent from Greater Manchester stated:

> *"And you know, it is that thing of, you know, if you think you're a bit bored and fed up right now of talking about racism and all its impact, imagine what it feels like for somebody who's still got to feel it every single day, what I have, it's not going anywhere away from me; I'm still going to be experiencing that tomorrow, the day after, you know"*
>
> (Metropolitan area one-to-one interview, May 2021)

18 Analyses of covariance revealed effects of ethno-religious group membership on feelings towards White ($F(2, 7532) = 32.28$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .008$), Black ($F(2, 3681) = 96.66$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .050$) and Muslims ($F(2, 3681) = 114.44$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .059$). There was a significant interaction between ethno-religious group membership and gender only for feelings towards White ($F(2, 7532) = 17.03$, $p < .001$, $n^2_p = .005$), indicating the feelings of male and female Black and Muslim differed.

Figure 9. Attitudes measured using the feeling thermometer towards White, Black and Muslim measured held by male and female members of those groups (June 2021)



Note. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean (SE).

It is also important again to note that there is not always a strong connection between feeling thermometer scores and discrimination. For example, majority group members have more power and opportunity to discriminate against minority members. Moreover, differences in feelings towards in-groups and outgroups may reflect loyalty or positive group identity, not necessarily antipathy towards an outgroup. Overall, the findings show that positive feelings are stronger within than between these different groups, reflecting that cohesion, particularly amongst Black and Muslim vis-à-vis White people involves a more clearly intergroup dimension.

3.5 The experience of discrimination among White, Black and Muslim people

We asked respondents about their own experience of discrimination on the basis of various characteristics in March/April 2021. Focusing on the 4 metropolitan areas and including our boost sample of Black and Muslim people, the analyses included 4684 respondents (3803 White, 471 Black, and 410 Muslim respondents, all of whom identified with only with one category (e.g., Black or Muslim but not both).

We asked: "In the past month, how often has anyone shown prejudice against/treated you unfairly because of each of the fo–lowing? - your age, your gender, your race or ethnic background, your religion or religious beliefs, any physical or mental health condition, impairment or illness you may have, your sexual orientation, your financial circumstances, your accent (way you speak), the type of work you do, where you live), from 1 = Not in the last month, to 5 = Almost all the time."

Given that we had asked about a short (1 month) time period as well as constraints on contact arising from social distancing and other COVID-19 restrictions on behaviour and movement, we expected low rates of self-reported experiences of discrimination overall. Therefore, we analysed data using a simple threshold of whether respondents had experienced at least one episode of discrimination during the past month, versus no episode. Despite the short time period and limits on social contact 56% reported at least one such experience.[19]

In our main report, Beyond Us and Them – Societal Cohesion Through Eighteen Months of COVID-19,[20] we note that there is a strong age gradient in experiences of discrimination. 78.3% of the 18-24-year-olds reported at least one experience of discrimination, whereas 44.3% of the 45-year-olds and older did so. This age gradient is certainly an important problem for society[21] and it pervades all social groups, however it is not the central focus of this report and so we focus primarily on ethno-religious and gender intersections.

Amongst White respondents, 52.8% reported at least one experience of discrimination and women were a quarter more likely than men to do so (58.3% and 45.6%, respectively)

Experiences of discrimination were substantially higher amongst Black and Muslim respondents. Nearly three quarters (73.4%) of Muslim respondents and four fifths (81.0%) of Black respondents had experienced some form of discrimination in the preceding month. Muslim women reported greater rates of discrimination (77.3%) than did Muslim men (67.1%). Amongst Black respondents, however, percentages were similarly high amongst women (80.8%) and men (81.4%), probably because of a 'ceiling effect', i.e. little room for further difference.

19 A logistic regression investigated the likelihood of having experiencing discrimination (coded 1 = experienced discrimination, 0 = did not). The analysis showed a main effect of ethno-religious group membership (Wald's $\chi^2(2) = 33.86$, $p < .001$) revealing that White respondents were less likely to have experienced discrimination than Black and Muslim respondents, whilst these two did not differ from one another. There was also a main effect of age with greater discrimination reported by younger respondents ($\chi^2(1) = 11.08$, $p < .001$). There was finally a main effect of gender, with greater discrimination reported by women ($\chi^2(1) = 5.54$, $p = .019$). However, none of the interaction terms between the predictors was found significant (all $p > .18$).

20 Abrams, D., Broadwood, J., Lalot, F., Davies Hayon, K. and Dixon, A. (2021). *Beyond Us and Them: Societal Cohesion in Britain through Eighteen Months of Covid-19*, https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Belong_SocietalCohesion_Report_V5.pdf. doi: 10.22024/UniKent/01.02.92899.

21 Bratt, C., Abrams, D., & Swift, H. J. (2020). Supporting the old but neglecting the young? The two faces of ageism. Developmental Psychology, 56, 1029-1039. doi: 101.1037/dev0000903.

Overall, we detected an additive impact of respondents' ethnicity/faith, their gender and their age. Black and Muslim respondents were more likely to report having experienced discrimination than white respondents; younger people more likely than older people, and women more likely than men.

The levels of discrimination reported by Muslim and Black respondents are extremely high, consistent with their perceptions of the greater seriousness of religious and racial discrimination. Black people's reports of experiencing discrimination seems discrepant with the relatively warm feelings expressed towards Black people by non-Black people on the feeling thermometer. The discrepancy highlights even more strongly that some avenues of discrimination (e.g. systemic or less conscious) may be far more apparent to those affected than to those actors, agents or bystanders who are not. Earlier we noted the cumulative effect of different personal characteristics whereby individuals with more protected characteristics are more likely to be subjected to discrimination. This echoes other recent findings on the role of intersectionality,[22] and our evidence shows that it is younger Muslim women (85%) and younger Black women (89%) who most frequently reported experiencing discrimination.

3.6 Intergroup contact

It has been long proposed in social psychology that contact between members of different groups (under certain conditions) can help reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict. The contact can be direct (where people interact with each other directly); indirect (knowing people who have friends from out-groups); or contextual (knowing that other people from your in-group have mixed friendship groups)[23]. Social media platforms such as Facebook now play an important role in contextual social contact.[24] In our research we examined contact (in any form) with acquaintances or friends to assess intergroup contact between Black, Muslim, and White people.

Researchers have highlighted the importance of both quality (positive and friendly/negative or unfriendly) and quantity (frequency or number of people) of intergroup contact for reducing prejudice. In March/April 2021 (wave 7), we assessed the quality and quantity of contact between Black, Muslim, and White respondents.[25]

22 Weldon, S. (2008). Intersectionality. In G. Goertz & A. Mazur (Eds.), *Politics, Gender, and Concepts: Theory and Methodology* (pp. 193-218). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511755910.009.

23 Vazzali, L., & Stathi, S. (Eds.) (2017). Intergroup contact theory: *Recent developments and future directions*. New York: Routledge; see also Talk Together report (p28) at https://together.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Our-Chance-to-Reconnect-1.pdf

24 Christ, O., Schmid, K., Lolliot, S., Swart, H., Stolle, D., Tausch, N., Al- Ramiah, A., Wagner, A., Vertovec, S., & Hewstone, M. (2014). Contextual effect of positive intergroup contact on out-group prejudice. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(11), 3996-4000.

25 Randomly selected subsets of respondents were asked about their contact with a specific group (young people, older people, people with a disability, and migrants to the UK, Black people, or Muslim people). No Black or Muslim respondent was asked about their own group. Black and Muslim respondents were also asked about their contact with White people. Quality was assessed with two items (contact was positive/ friendly) and scores ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*. Quantity was assessed with a single item asking how many people from the outgroup the respondent knew, from 0 = *No acquaintances* to 10 = *10 or more acquaintances*.

Table 2

	Quality of contact (1-5)		Quantity of contact (0-10)	
Outgroup contact with...	Male respondents	Female respondents	Male respondents	Female respondents
Black people	3.96	4.15	4.77	5.11
Muslim people	3.86	4.03	4.40	4.41
White people	3.88	3.82	8.14	7.97

Note. Means are adjusted for age and socioeconomic level.

Table 2 shows the mean scores on quality and quantity of contact. Quantity of intergroup contact with White people is much higher amongst non-White people (averaging 8.05) than vice versa. Non-Black respondents reported more contact with Black people (4.94 on average) than non-Muslims did with Muslim people (4.41). This in part reflects that the population is predominantly White, which greatly increases the chances of having contact with a White person for Black and Muslim people. However, it also means that the nature of intergroup contact is psychologically and socially different for White and non-White people. For most White people (apart from those who live in diverse cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester), it is likely that their contacts with others are relatively rare and probably quite salient. For non-White people, their contacts with White people are more common, by virtue of the fact that they are a minority.

Encouragingly, respondents overall reported that the quality of their contact with members of other groups was positive, with mean scores around 3.9 to 4 on the 5-point scale. However, there is an asymmetry in these experiences. Not only were non-White people having more contact with White people than vice versa, but the quality of that contact tended to be lower. More concretely, White respondents reported having occasional but quite positive experiences of intergroup contact, whereas Black and Muslim respondents reported more frequent, but less positive experiences of intergroup contact. This finding is consistent with other research which shows that members of majority groups tend to experience contact more positively than do members of minority groups because of an array of factors that may make status differences or visibility more salient for the minority members.

Across these differences, female Muslim and Black respondents reported less and lower quality of intergroup contact than did males. This perhaps echoes the earlier evidence that discrimination is also more likely to be experienced by women and so they may be more avoidant of, and likely to experience such negative encounters.

We conducted further analysis to examine whether respondents' intergroup contact was associated with their intergroup attitudes. Previous national and international findings on the positive effect of intergroup contact shows that people who report higher quality and quantity of contact with a particular outgroup also

express more positive attitudes towards that group, and that there is a positive causal connection between contact and favourable attitudes toward outgroup members. The connection can also be part of a virtuous cycle where better contact leads to more positive attitudes, which in turn encourages more contact.

In the cases of attitudes both towards Black people and towards Muslims, the intergroup contact of others with members of those groups explained around 33% of the variance in positive attitudes towards the group. However, and again consistent with international research, we found that quality was a much more important factor. In fact, the connection between positive attitudes and quality of contact is 9 to 10 times greater than that between positive attitudes and quantity of contact.[26]

Contact is only part of the explanation for why some individuals have more favourable attitudes than others, but it is something that can be achieved through a wide variety of methods and so is a very important route for addressing those other reasons and developing better cross-group understanding.

26 A regression analysis for attitudes towards Black people showed a strong positive effect of quality of contact ($t(984) = 20.82$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .56$) and a positive although more modest effect of quantity of contact ($t(984) = 2.75$, $p = .006$, $\beta = .07$). Similarly, a regression analysis for attitudes towards Muslim people showed a strong positive effect of quality of contact ($t(4175) = 42.03$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .55$) and a positive but smaller effect of quantity of contact ($t(4175) = 4.15$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .05$).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this report demonstrate how much more work is required if society is to ensure equality of treatment and inclusion across ethnicity, religion, gender, age and other protected characteristics.

We began by identifying that a contented and positive society would be characterised by 'harmonious cohesion' but that there are at least three ways in which intragroup and intergroup relations may combine to undermine harmonious cohesion. In June 2021 we observed that 64% of respondents thought the UK was growing more divided, and only 16% thought it was growing more united . Our focus groups identified economic and racial inequalities, alongside north versus south tensions, and divergence between England and the devolved nations, as key drivers of perceived division. The evidence therefore suggests that 'rivalrous', rather than 'harmonious', cohesion is a more typical situation in modern Britain.

Added to this is the impact of inequalities. During the pandemic, pre-existing inequalities between socio-economic groups and regions have become more apparent to the public, and, in many cases, these inequalities were exacerbated. Living in more deprived areas, working in high-risk occupations or insecure employment, and living in overcrowded conditions placed some groups and minority ethnic communities at much greater health and economic risk from COVID-19 than others. This report serves to highlight additional social risks in the form of exclusion, prejudice and discrimination. Equality is a necessary foundation for a cohesive society and therefore unequal treatment, as much as unequal income or health, poses considerable challenge, not just to individuals, but also to social cohesion.

The government's Levelling Up White Paper sets out an ambitious plan to tackle geographical inequalities, but geography is only one part of the story. How levelling up is implemented and developed needs to pay close attention to building strong communities whilst reducing and avoiding rivalrous cohesion, especially if different regions and groups are placed in competition with each other for resources.

We need to consider the social cohesion of society as a whole in order to guard against greater fracture and division. Just as individuals can be protected and strengthened by being part of a supportive community, so different communities, places, and regions of the UK are likely to be better protected if they are concerned for one another. Both national and local government have an important role to play in this by ensuring leadership and narratives that emphasise our interconnectedness and interdependence. Indeed, there are good examples of local authorities that have achieved this through framing a story of a local place where pride, inclusion and belonging for all is celebrated.[27] The findings of this report serve to underline how necessary this is.

In a single month between May and June 2021 a strikingly large majority of the Black and Muslim people we surveyed had at least one direct experience of discrimination, and those who were young and female were most likely to have done so. And this at a time when many lockdown restrictions were still in place and social contact was therefore limited. Furthermore, awareness of these experiences is not shared equally across society.

27 Broadwood, J., Abrams, D., Lalot, F., & Davies Hayon, K. (2020). *Beyond Us and Them: Policy and Practice for Strengthening Social Cohesion in Local Areas*. https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Belong-Policy-Paper-March-2021.pdf.

Our findings show that White people generally perceive discrimination based on race or ethnicity to be serious, but less so than do Black and Muslim people. Similarly, men perceive discrimination based on gender to be less serious than do women. Our evidence on perceptions of discrimination indicate at best a situation of 'benign indifference' when it comes to other groups' experiences of discrimination. These divergences of perception can serve to undermine consensus about the extent and seriousness of the problems and support for measures necessary to address them. Under the wrong circumstances, this can lay the ground for more serious intergroup divisions.

Revealing and understanding such gaps is therefore important: it provides context for some current debates, including so-called 'culture wars', which often reflect the consequences of lacking shared perspectives. Our evidence points to the need for those with lived experience of discrimination to be listened to and for the cumulative effect of multiple discrimination for some groups and communities to be recognised and addressed.

However, there are positive foundations to build on: Research by others has found that the British public are weary of being at odds with each other and desire greater unity.[28] Some categories of migrant (particularly 'illegal immigrants' and 'asylum seekers') have over the past decade or so tended to be viewed negatively or as a threat, but there are signs that attitudes towards immigration have become more favourable in recent years; recently three out of four people supported giving refuge to those fleeing war or persecution.[29] Our own findings also give cause for optimism because, although there were variations in levels of warmth towards different groups, overall levels of warmth were at the higher end of the scale indicating that there is a foundation of positive attitudes and goodwill in the public towards other groups on which to build.

One of the most powerful ways of breaking down stereotypes, reducing prejudice and helping us to understand the experiences and perspectives of others is through rich and positive interactions between members of different groups. Our research in common with other studies found that contact is generally experienced more positively by majority groups than minority groups. This has implications for work to support intergroup contact in that it needs to be undertaken in a locally sensitive way, and with an emphasis on the quality of the interactions. Our research echoes the findings of others in that the quality of intergroup contact (i.e., the warmth and meaningfulness of interaction) is 9 to 10 times more important than the quantity of intergroup contact (i.e., the incidence and length of interactions).[30]

However, such contact does not necessarily 'just happen'. Even before the pandemic, research showed that large numbers of people in Britain are relatively segregated from those of a different ethnicity, socioeconomic position or educational background from them[31] and the pandemic is likely to have exacerbated this lack of contact. Increasing the diversity of our institutions has an important role to play; it can build connections between people from diverse backgrounds and foster an inclusive sense of identity and belonging. The

28 More in Common (2020). Britain's choice: Common ground and division in 2020s Britain, https://www.britainschoice.uk.

29 Rolfe, H., Katwala, S., & Ballinger, S. (2021). *Immigration: A Changing Debate*. London: British Future. https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Immigration.A-changing-debate.pdf.

30 De Coninck, D., Rodríguez-de-Dios, I., & d'Haenens, L. (2021). The contact hypothesis during the European refugee crisis: Relating quality and quantity of (in) direct intergroup contact to attitudes towards refugees. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 24(6), 881-901. doi: 10.1177/1368430220929394.

31 The Challenge (2019). *British Integration Survey* 2019. https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/the-british-integration-survey.pdf

implementation of measures in the government's Inclusive Britain policy paper[32] to increase diversity in the judiciary and on school governing bodies is a good starting point. However, tackling discrimination requires us to address the ways that discrimination and segregation arise in particular contexts as well as institutionally.

Finally, our findings show that people tend to under-estimate or discount the seriousness of discrimination faced by groups that they don't belong to. If we are to begin to address this, we need public dialogues which prioritise listening to and understanding others. Yet, too much of our public dialogue, and the formats in which it is conducted, serve to polarise conversation, leading to lower levels of empathy and reduced willingness to listen to others. As we have seen from our findings, Black and Muslim people are less likely to experience intergroup contact positively. If we are to build to a more cohesive society, we need to consider much more seriously and urgently how we create the conditions for different groups to mix with confidence and ease. Enabling people from different groups to connect through positive shared experiences can be a powerful vehicle for countering prejudice, working towards greater equality, and establishing greater trust.

Therefore, this work can and should be strengthened through policy, through strong equalities practices, through institutional support and shared purpose.

In particular, we recommend:

1. **Greater urgency and commitment to the task of tackling discrimination and increasing diversity and representativeness across public life.**

   This should include action to:

   c. Systematically evaluate the equalities and cohesion impact of strategy and policy at national and local levels, listening to those with lived experience of discrimination and recognising the cumulative effect of multiple discrimination for some groups.

   d. Proactively tackle the social and physical barriers to inclusion of minority communities and under-represented groups, including the extent to which they feel represented by elected representatives, in local and national institutions and in leadership positions in statutory agencies.

32 UK Government (2022). Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/inclusive-britain-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities.

2. **Strengthening policies, programmes and initiatives that help to build meaningful connections between people from different backgrounds and across the spectrum of society.** There are good examples in the following spheres that could be built on:

    a. Education and youth provision: we should provide children and young people with greater opportunities to form friendships and relationships with people from different societal groups, including intergenerationally and across different geographical areas. This could mean increasing support for school linking programmes, such as the excellent Schools Linking Network, enhancing the ability of the National Citizen's Service to foster these kinds of connections, as well as supporting targeted and well proven programmes to tackle prejudice and stereotyping, such as the work of the Anne Frank Trust.

    b. Employment and the workplace: for many of us, work is where we are most likely to meet and connect with people from different backgrounds. National and local government and civil society should work with employers to make more of this opportunity, building on existing diversity and inclusion initiatives. Businesses demonstrated an appetite and energy during the pandemic to foster closer connections with local communities and recent research by Belong found some strong examples of this.[33] However, much more could be done to enable business to play this role, for example by incorporating actions that build social cohesion within social value frameworks used in the course of public procurement.

    c. Neighbourhoods: we need more programmes to support places, spaces and activities at a neighbourhood level to prioritise social mixing and social cohesion. The Government's own Integration Area Programme is an excellent example of how relatively modest amounts of funds can bring substantial individual and community level benefit[34]. This programme should be further developed in other areas and as a part of the Levelling Up strategy. Practical examples, drawn from the Integration Areas and other local authorities, of local policies and strategies that have been successful in supporting social cohesion have already been detailed elsewhere[35] as a part of the Beyond Us and Them research project.

33 Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network (2022). *Everybody's Business: the role that business can play in supporting cohesive communities*. https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Everybodys-Business-business-cohesion-report-FINAL-.pdf.

34 Abrams, D., Lalot, F., Broadwood, J., Davies Hayon, K., & Platts-Dunn, I. (2020) *The Social Cohesion Investment: Local areas that invested in social cohesion programmes are faring better in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic*. https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-Social-Cohesion-Investment-Final-2.pdf

35 Abrams, D., Broadwood, J., Lalot, F., & Davies Hayon, K., (2021). *Beyond Us and Them: Policy and Practice for Strengthening Cohesion in Local Areas*. https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/resources/beyond-us-and-them-policy-and-practice-for-strengthening-social-cohesion-in-local-areas/. doi: 10.22024/UniKent/01.02.92936.

3. **We must seek to foster public spaces and forms of public dialogue (online and offline) that encourage and enable people to listen to and discover more about the experiences and views of others.**

    a. Events and activities that bring people together in collective experiences with a shared narrative at a national level – such as big sporting events like the Commonwealth Games and community celebrations like The Great Get Together and Thank You Day – can play an important part in this. In particular, we need more initiatives that tell the story of the huge contribution of minority ethnic communities to British society. For instance, British Futures' Remember Together Project celebrating the role of Black and Asian service men and women during the second world war, and the celebration of inclusion and diversity that we saw in the England team's campaign for the Euros 2022.

    b. We need to learn to disagree better, working together to maintain and preserve our social relations, and recognising our interconnectedness and interdependence. This is partly about leadership. We need leaders at every level with the capacity, skills and confidence to navigate difficult conversations on contentious issues ensuring that a diversity of views and voices are heard. It is also about the platforms we have for public dialogue. Government and social media companies should consider how social media platforms can serve to enable better disagreement, and calmer, less toxic, public debate. We would also echo a recommendation in the Talk Together report for funding to support grassroots initiatives that strengthen democratic values and provide safe spaces for civil public dialogue[36].

As we write, new challenges are arising: the cost-of-living crisis and war in Europe threaten our recovery from the pandemic, and climate change remains an ever present and pressing reality. In order to meet these challenges, we need to build a society that is resilient and that can adapt to seize opportunities, to support those who are most vulnerable, and to ensure that the diverse voices and communities that together make up the UK are heard. If the pandemic showed us anything, it demonstrated our absolute interconnectedness and interdependence on each other, as well as giving us glimpses of the potential that can be realised when communities and social connections are mobilised. Strengthening relationships, between different groups and communities and across regions and nations of the UK will be crucial if we are to emerge from the pandemic a stronger, fairer and more cohesive society.

36 /together (2021). *Our chance to reconnect: Final report of the Talk/together project*. Available at: https://together.org.uk/Our-Chance-to-Reconnect.pdf

Appendices

Appendix – Sample sizes and demographics for the discrete White, Black and Muslim subsets in analyses

More detailed comparisons between the demographics of the survey samples and national Census figures for relevant populations are provided in a separate technical document: https://kar.kent.ac.uk/95180/

	March/April 2021 (wave 6)		March/April 2021 (wave 7)		June 2021 (wave 8)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Overall						
Gender						
Male	3369	44.53%	3878	43.40%	3683	41.00%
Female	4197	55.47%	5049	56.60%	5297	59.00%
Undisclosed	40	-	61	-	65	-
Age						
18-24	1295	69.07%	1014	11.50%	1127	12.70%
25-44	442	23.57%	3624	41.00%	3455	38.80%
45+	138	7.36%	4192	47.50%	4320	48.50%
Undisclosed	9	-	158	-	143	-
Subjective socio-economic status M (SD)	4.59 (1.30)	-	4.34 (1.31)	-	4.27 (1.33)	-
Total	7606	100%	8988	100%	9045	100%

White respondents						
Gender						
Male	3004	45.65%	3129	44.70%	2974	43.20%
Female	3577	54.35%	3868	55.30%	3907	56.80%
Undisclosed	32	-	44	-	38	-
Age						
18-24	476	53.97%	578	8.40%	590	8.70%
25-44	280	31.75%	2596	37.50%	2399	35.20%
45+	126	14.29%	3745	54.10%	3821	56.10%
Undisclosed	2	-	122	-	109	-
Subjective socio-economic status M (SD)	4.55 (1.30)	-	4.39 (1.32)	-	4.30 (1.33)	-
Total	6613	100%	7041	100%	6919	100%
Black respondents						
Gender						
Male	170	32.95%	177	32.70%	179	29.50%
Female	346	67.05%	364	67.30%	427	70.50%
Undisclosed	3	-	1	-	6	-
Age						
18-24	398	76.69%	121	22.60%	135	22.50%
25-44	111	21.39%	294	55.00%	324	54.10%
45+	10	1.93%	120	22.40%	140	23.40%
Undisclosed	7	-	7	-	13	-
Subjective socio-economic status M (SD)	4.74 (1.29)	-	4.18 (1.23)	-	4.25 (1.29)	-
Total	519	100%	542	100%	612	100%

Muslim respondents						
Gender						
Male	195	41.58%	207	40.50%	212	34.40%
Female	274	58.42%	304	59.50%	405	65.60%
Undisclosed	5	-	4	-	5	-
Age						
18-24	421	88.82%	171	33.70%	225	36.50%
25-44	51	10.76%	288	56.80%	331	53.70%
45+	2	0.42%	48	9.50%	60	9.70%
Undisclosed	None	-	8	-	6	-
Subjective socio-economic status M (SD)	4.97 (1.25)	-	4.08 (1.27)	-	4.08 (1.31)	-
Total	474	100%	515	100%	622	100%

Note. Subjective socio-economic status is measured on an 8-point scale (status ladder), a higher rung (higher score) representing a higher subjective status.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all of our research participants for taking their time and for generously sharing their thoughts and experiences. The Nuffield Foundation for generously supporting the research. All of our local authority and civil society research partners who have provided feedback, and members of our advisory panel from the Centre for the Study of Group Processes 'Grouplab' for their discussion and comments on the report, and for further specific detailed comments from Martha Newson, Jonathan Bowman, and Nikhil Sengupta.

Thanks also to our designer Max Randall who has designed and produced all of our publications and this report.

Belong – The Cohesion and Integration Network is a charity and membership organisation with the vision of a more integrated and less divided society. Belong connects, supports and mobilises people and organisations across sectors and neighbourhoods via its digital platform, events, training programmes and resources to improve the practice and policy of integration and cohesion. Jo Broadwood is the CEO of Belong and Co-investigator for the Beyond Us and Them research project. Andrew Dixon is Partnerships and Product Manager at Belong. Until May 2022 Dr Kaya Davies Hayon was Research and Development Manager at Belong, she is now lectures at the Open University.

The Centre for the Study of Group Processes (CSGP) at the University of Kent was founded in 1990 to consolidate the School's excellent international reputation for social psychological research into group processes and intergroup relations. The Centre includes a thriving international research community, involving twelve tenured academic staff, as well as its research fellows and PhD students. The Centre attracts visits and research collaborations from major international researchers, many of whom have formal affiliations with the Centre. The University of Kent is a leading UK university producing world-class research, rated internationally excellent and leading the way in many fields of study. Our 20,000 students are based at campuses and centres in Canterbury, Medway, Brussels and Paris.

Professor Dominic Abrams is the Director of the Centre and Principal Investigator for the Beyond Us and Them research project, Dr Fanny Lalot is Co-investigator, postdoctoral researcher at Basel University, and honororary scholar at Kent. Dr Hilal Ozkeçeci is a research assistant in the project and member of the GroupLab at Kent.

The Nuffield Foundation is an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social well-being. It funds research that informs social policy, primarily in Education, Welfare, and Justice. It also funds student programmes that provide opportunities for young people to develop skills in quantitative and scientific methods. The Nuffield Foundation is the founder and co-funder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and the Ada Lovelace Institute. The Foundation has funded this project, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the Foundation. Visit www.nuffieldfoundation.org

You can find out more about the Beyond Us and Them project here.