

Race Equality, Language and Terminology Consultation Report



Contents

Introduction and Context	2
Summary: Guidance and Recommendations on Language and Terminology	3
Method	4
Sample	4
Key Survey Findings	6
The Use of Collective Terminology	6
Preference of Terminology	7
Qualitative findings	8
Detailed Findings	10
The Use of Collective Terminology	10
Preference of Terminology	12
List of Alternative Suggested Terms	18
Closing remarks	19



Introduction and Context

The London local government Tackling Racial Inequality programme¹ is a collaborative, pan-London structure that aims to support boroughs in their existing activity to address racial inequality and drive regional action to improve inclusivity and tackle racial injustice across our organisations. The programme has, and continues to, deliver a range of activities to profoundly impact the sector. To contribute to this mission, the programme has been exploring issues around language and terminology, particularly concerning the use of the acronym 'BAME' to individually and/or collectively describe our colleagues and friends within our organisations².

To engage meaningfully with our programme priorities, it is important to have the correct framework and language to reference Black Asian and Multi-Ethnic individuals and communities and to engage under-served communities in a language that is meaningful to them. Language is a powerful tool and crudely conflating diverse groups erases identity and leads to broad decision-making that does not recognise the ethnic disparities in the UK.

In the last couple of years, there has been wide discussion around terminology, race, and ethnicity. Whilst previously, public policy in the UK normalised the use of the acronym 'BAME' or 'BME' to refer collectively to groups of ethnically diverse people. More recently there has been scrutiny of the collective acronym. The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement and the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 on some Black and Asian and Multi-Ethnic communities have highlighted that collectivism is rarely fit for purpose. It is impossible to divorce our actions from the language we choose, and therefore, conscious language is a powerful tool for addressing injustices.

The programme's 'Demonstrating Leadership Working Group' set out to establish a partnership narrative around language and terminology through the lens of racial equality that advocates for the disaggregation of 'BAME', proposing that we must refer to our communities at the most granular level possible, where appropriate. In contexts where collectivism is appropriate (typically data collection and analysis), the working group wanted to understand participants' views on different collective terminology and its use for and amongst Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic groups.

This narrative aims to guide local government organisations and is grounded in the perspective that conscious language and terminology are important components of any race equality journey:

- They are central to understanding and challenging historical, societal, and political perspectives.
- They can reflect institutional and systemic attitudes.
- They are tools that represent how people and groups want to be seen or how they identify; equally, they can be used to indicate how others view those groups.

Unsurprisingly, the findings reflect that the use of language and terminology is not a simplistic subject. Diversity in the UK goes beyond ethnic backgrounds and expands into other demographics, as well as cultural diversity and diversity of thought. Considering this, the report aims to capture and appreciate the complexity of individuals and communities within our organisations. The research did not extend to members of the communities that we represent.

This consultation recognises the work of the UK government's own Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and the NHS Race and Health Observatory consultation report on 'The Power of Language'.

¹ <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/race-equality>

² In line with the research findings, the report uses the terminology 'Ethnically Diverse' and 'Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic' interchangeable to represent the preferred terminology of our participants and to represent the importance of adaptive language

Summary: Guidance and Recommendations on Language and Terminology

Building on previous research and public sentiment, the Tackling Racial Inequality programme does not support the use of the acronym 'BAME' or 'BME'.

- Collective terminology should always be spelt out to avoid abstraction.
- Ethnic groups should be ordered alphabetically in charts, tables and lists with 'other', and 'unknown', as the final category.
- Always use capital letters when referring to ethnic groups.

Overall, the respondents are not comfortable being categorised by a collective term that encompasses all backgrounds except White British. If collectivism is necessary, 'Ethnically Diverse' and 'Black, Asian & Multi-Ethnic' are the overall preferred terms. However, the qualitative responses of the research have allowed the programme to develop four guiding principles on language and terminology rather than prescribe particular terms:

1. Specificity

Be as factual as possible when referring to, presenting conclusions or findings, and making recommendations for ethnically diverse groups. It is recommended to avoid vague terminology that is all-encompassing and collective terminology should never be used for convenience.

2. Context

Only use collective terminology where necessary and be guided by the context of the situation and the content of the work reported on. If the context is not decisive, then use the preferred collective terms outlined in this report or use language interchangeably to reflect the complexity of individual and community identity.

3. Empowerment

Recognising that language is a powerful tool, choose terminology that centres on empowerment and positivity. This allows us to challenge historical labelling that infers marginalisation and discrimination, particularly avoiding the term 'minority'.

4. Choice and transparency

The value of choice is important for those who are typically referred to by collective terminology. The recommendation is to always engage groups and recognise their right to choose as well as the overall challenge in establishing a consensus on collective terminology. The approach to language and terminology should always be open and transparent and tailored to reflect the unique attitude of each organisation, community or individual. Therefore, the approach must recognise that within organisations groups and individuals will have different preferences. For example, staff networks may self-refer using different terminology than the organisational guidance recognises.

Our qualitative findings have allowed us to develop the above four guiding principles. However, it is important to recognise that language is constantly evolving and adapting. The scope of work around language and terminology will continue to progress and evolve to reflect the most recent sentiments.

Method

The survey ran between 10 June and 22 July 2022 and received 903 responses spanning London's anchor institutions including; local government, health, police, fire and the voluntary, community and faith sector. The survey was mix-method collecting quantitative data for respondents' sentiments on the use of collective terminology and their positive and negative preferences of a list of nine collective terms that were provided, as well as allowing participants to suggest alternative terminology. The survey also collected qualitative responses to supplement their answers and describe their thinking and perspectives.

The nine terms included in the survey are listed alphabetically below:

- Black and Brown People
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
- Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
- Ethnically diverse
- Global Majority
- Global Racial Majority
- People from ethnic minority backgrounds
- People of Colour
- Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised.

The qualitative questions are outlined below:

- Please share your comments on your preferred choices
- If you have selected option 'other', please detail the terminology below and outline the reasons for your preferred choice
- Please share your comments on your negative preference(s)
- If you have selected option 'other', please detail the terminology below and outline the reasons for your negative preference
- Please include any general comments on the above or comments on challenges around language and terminology more broadly

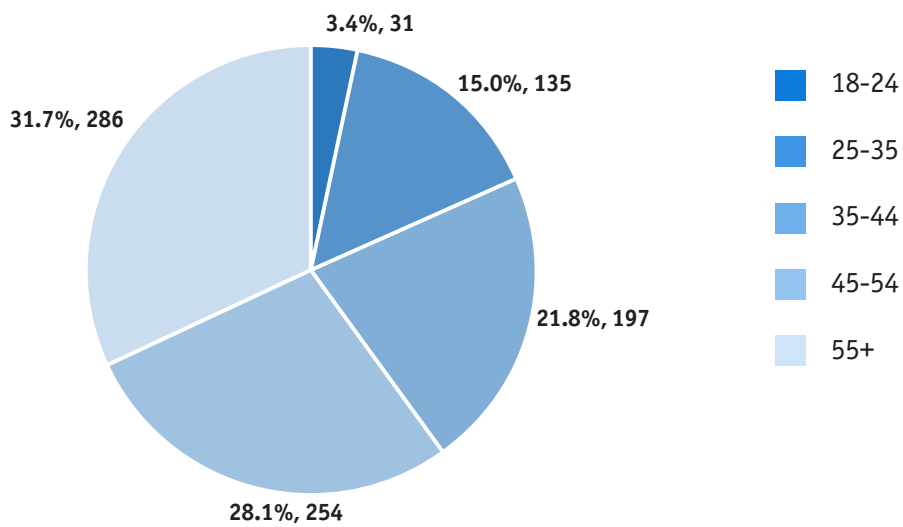
Sample

The survey collected 903 responses. The survey captured data from respondents around age, sector and ethnicity.

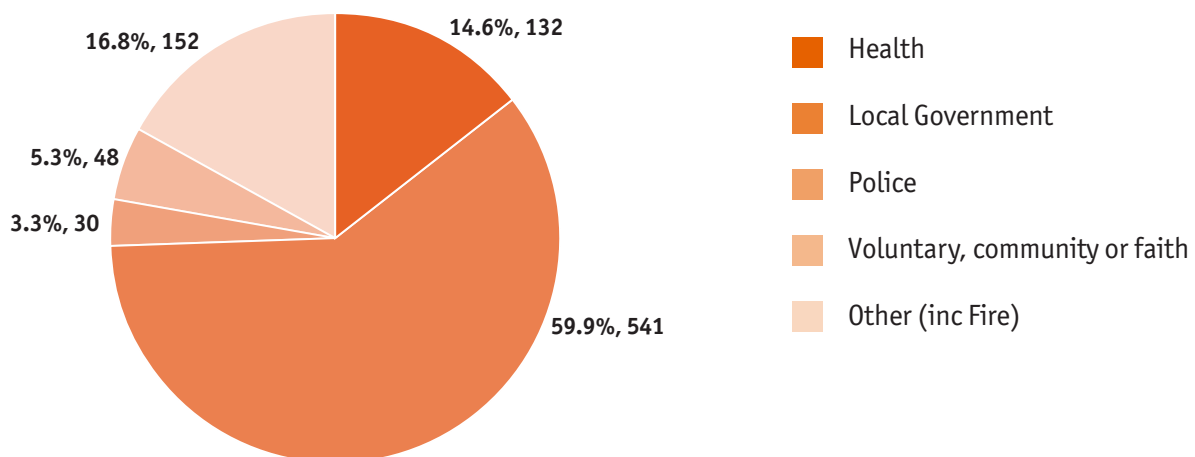
- The majority of respondents were aged 45+ (59.8%)
- The majority of respondents worked in local government (59.9%)
- The majority of respondents were from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British backgrounds (52.0%).



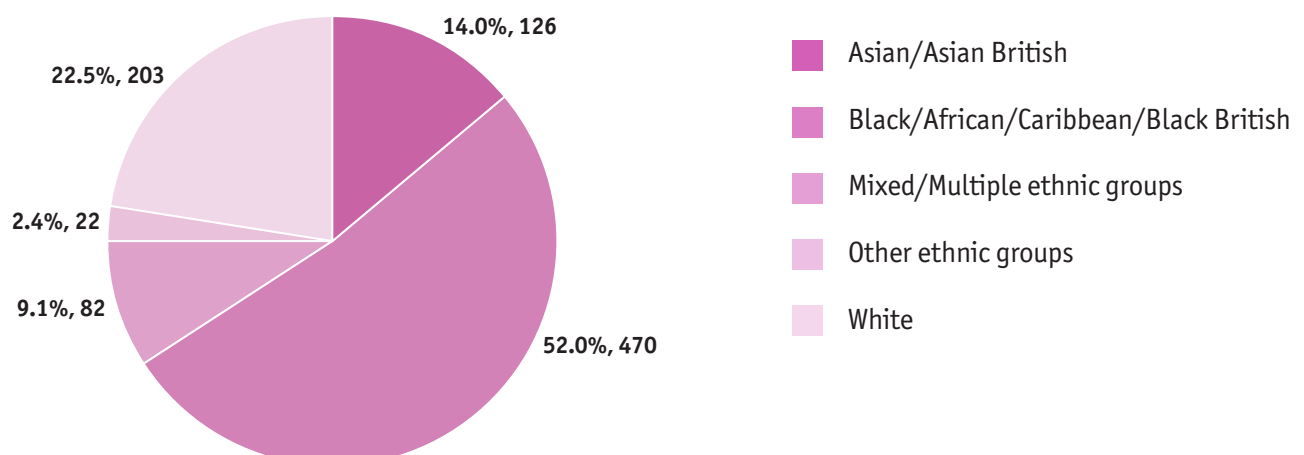
Age of Respondents



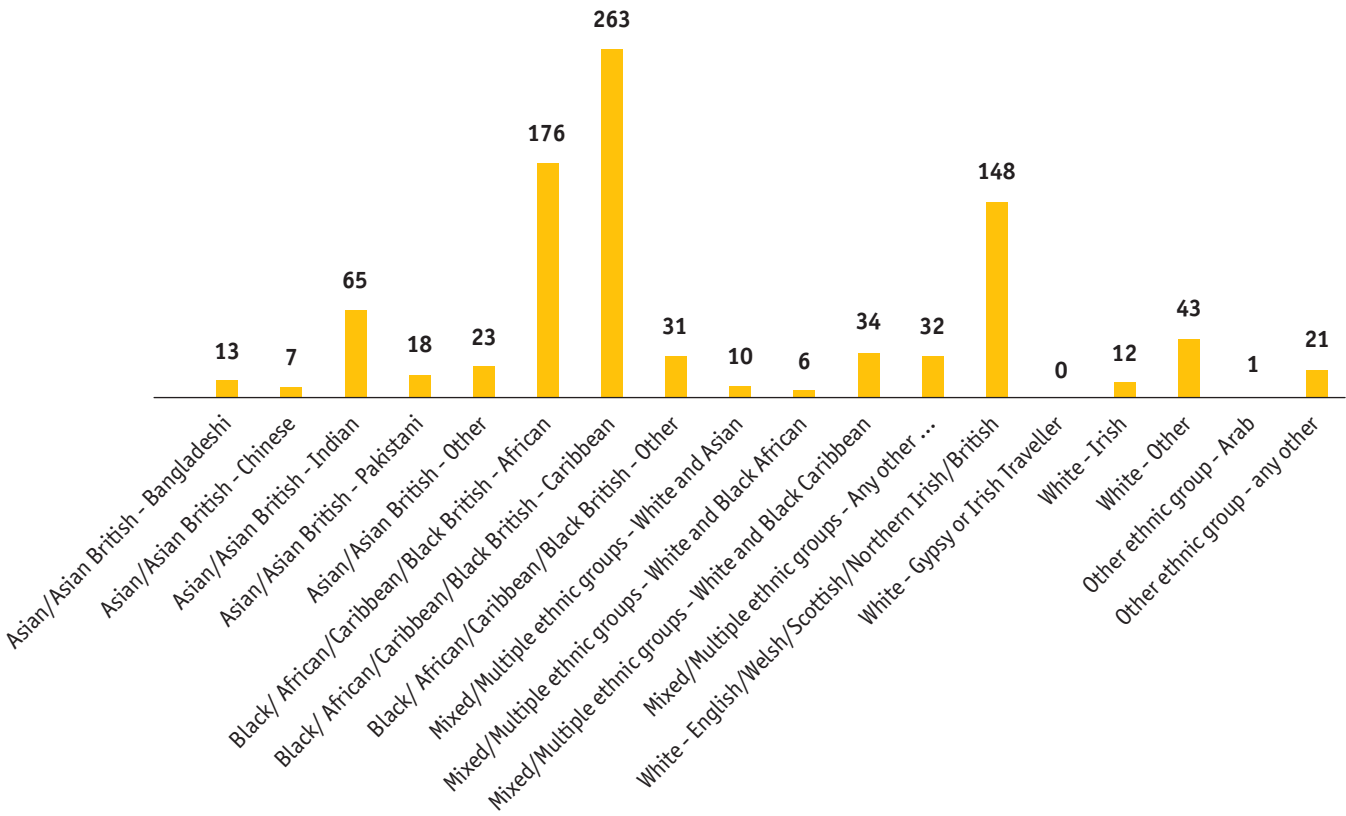
Sector of Respondents



Ethnic Group of Respondents



Ethnic Group (Granular)

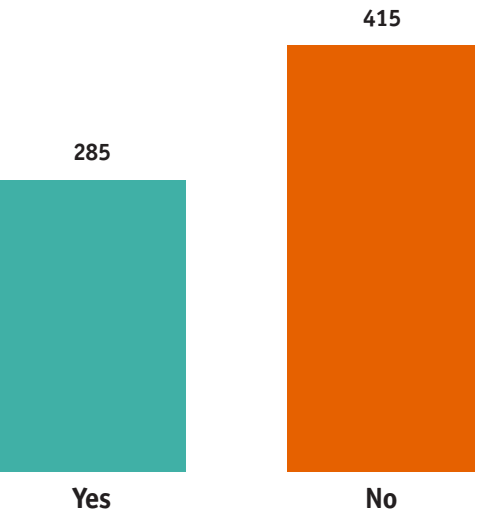


Key Survey Findings

The use of collective terminology

Respondents who identified as Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic are not comfortable being categorised by a collective term that encompasses all backgrounds except White British.

Are you comfortable being identified as part of a collective term that includes all people who are not White British?



Preference of terminology

Analysis of responses determined that the terms with the highest **positive preference** are:

- 1. Ethnically diverse (394)
- 2. Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic (309)
- 3. People from ethnic minority backgrounds (278)
- 4. People of Colour (274)

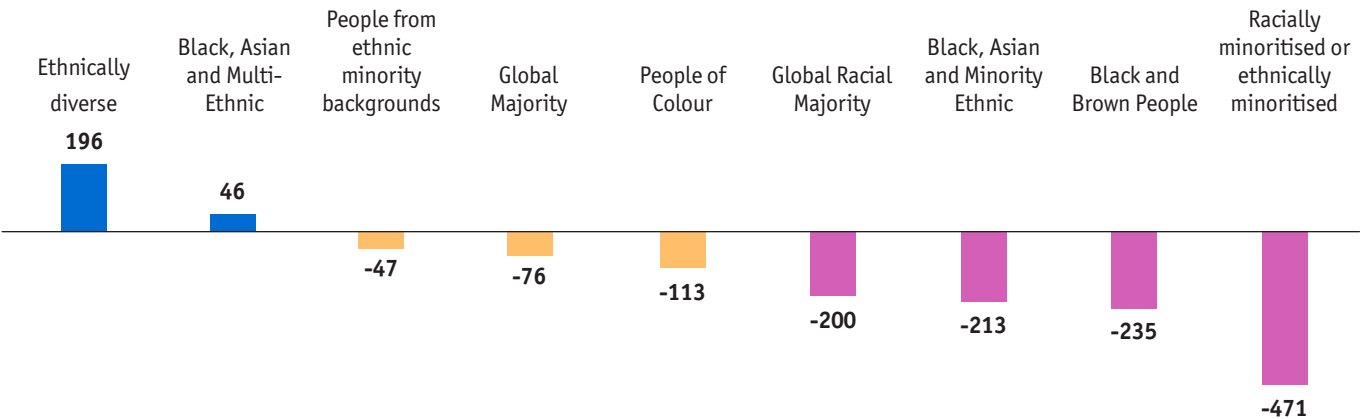
Analysis of responses determined that the terms with the highest **negative preference** are:

- 1. Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised (549)
- 2. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (437)
- 3. Black and Brown People (418)
- 4. People of Colour (387)

When combining the positive and negative preferences, **only two terms emerged with a net positive preference:**

- 1. Ethnically diverse (+196)
- 2 Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic (+46)

Summed preference



Qualitative findings

This section of the report outlines some of the pertinent qualitative findings which shaped and contributed to our four developed principles on language and terminology:

There was a strong sentiment that collective terminology should be avoided wherever possible. In particular, Black, African, Caribbean and Black British respondents emphasised that overarching categorisation does not account for individual lived experiences.

“Call me what I am...We are a collective but also have very distinct and nuanced differences”

“The issue of ‘grouping’ is inherently flawed in that it fails to allow for cultural nuances.”

“I just want to be called as an individual excluding my race as I am an individual and I do and achieve things on my own merits, not on my race and I am truly not ashamed of my race but proud.”

In line with public scrutiny of the collective acronym ‘BAME’ or ‘BME’, many respondents preferred to void the acronym:

“The world is not full of white people and then everyone else – which is what the term BAME suggests.”

Participants felt that commonly used collective terminology is often Eurocentric and implies a power dynamic, which would not be necessary for a non-racializing system. There was a strong discontentment with the term ‘minority’ which implies discrimination and marginalisation, and a recognition that often the groups referred to by this terminology is in fact the global majority. This sentiment was particularly reflected in Local Government employees.

“Being referred to as a minority feels oppressive like I am less than or less powerful.”

“Minority already implies a majority/superiority concept... We have been minoritised and that speaks to the inequality and inequity that exists for us in society.”

Where possible, respondents prefer terminology that is factual, geographically accurate and specific, recognising that even empowering collective terminology is too vague to capture identity:

“Global majority/Global racial majority – is too vague and intangible.”

“Terms like ethnically diverse don’t even resonate and mean nothing to me... [it] fails to identify my uniqueness as a Black person in a society that seeks to marginalise and misrepresent me.”

There were varying opinions on the use of the word “Black”, whilst some consider that it has been reclaimed by the Black community others felt that it has become a culturally loaded term that is reductive. The latter view was shared by other ethnically diverse groups, which preferred to avoid any reference to skin colour.

“I would want to be called Black – I am not a minority, I am not Brown. Black with a capital B is about our lived experiences, it is not about the colour of my skin.”

“I’d prefer to be identified not as a colour but as a human being with defining and distinguishable identifiers”.

“My use of the term ‘Black’ is used more with the understanding of that is how I am labelled, and other people will understand it rather than it being something which I think of as part of my identity.”

There was also a recognition that collectively terminology which emphasises the colour of people’s skin, excludes white ethnic groups who are minoritised in the UK.

“Black & Brown People/People of Colour can exclude people from marginalised/underserved ethnic groups who do not have... what is considered ‘colour’ in their skin.”

If collective terminology is necessary, many participants indicated a preference for language that is empowering:

“The terms I have highlighted are a truer and more positive representation of the reference given to black and brown people.”

“What we now need is to empower ourselves with language which resets us on a level playing field.

It's not about being a minority or majority, it's about a person's identity."

The value of choice and open engagement was important to many respondents:

"It may not be possible to have an all-encompassing term. How people identify is a personal choice and there are many different backgrounds in the UK and across the world."

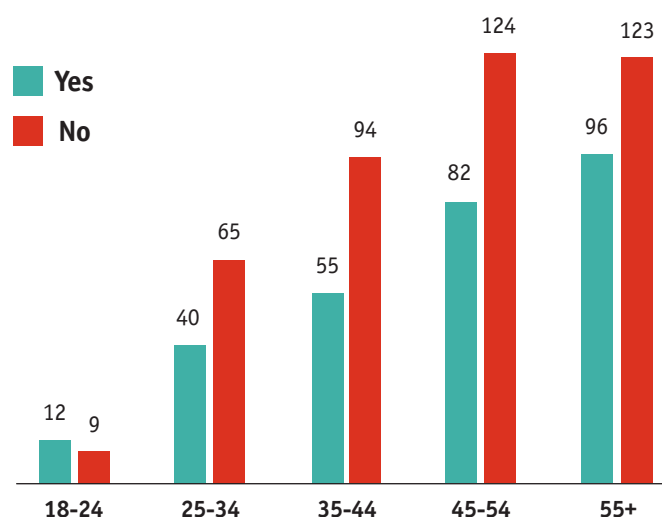
"[The world is] complex - so many people use different things in different spheres and platforms. Who decides on what is used? I want it to be my choice"



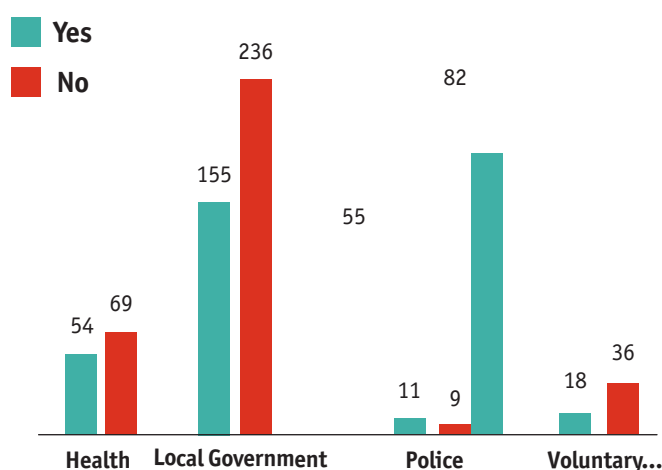
Detailed survey findings

The use of collective terminology

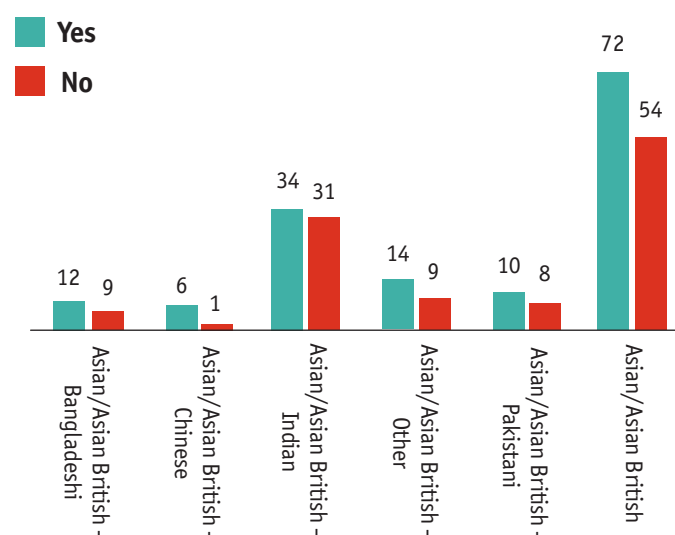
Scope of a collective term - Age



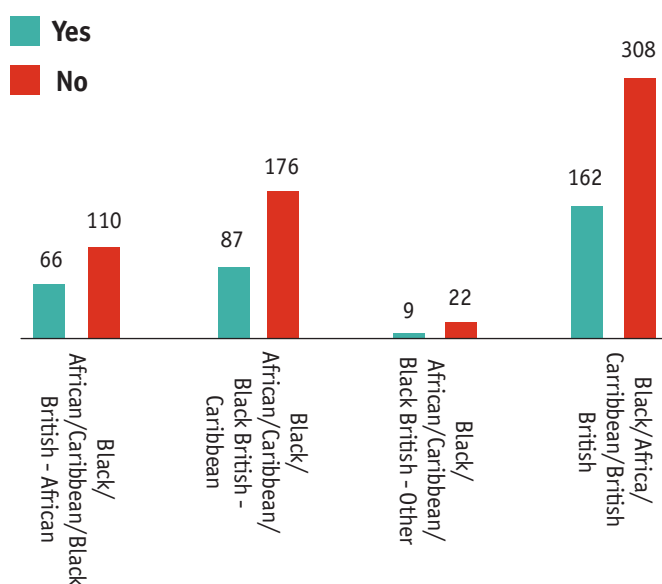
Scope of a collective term - Sector



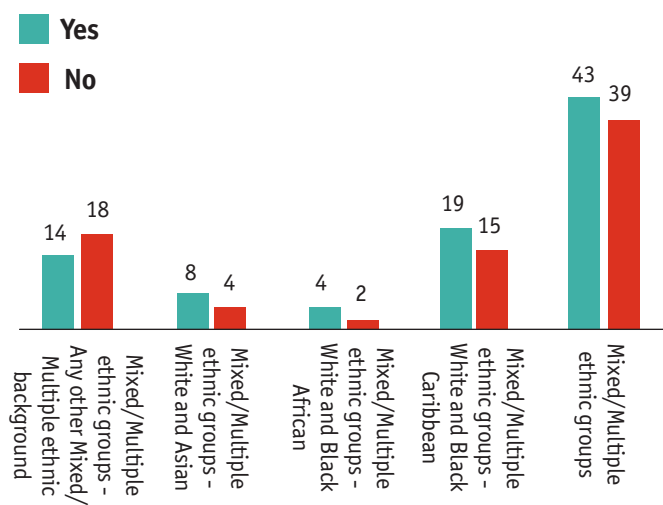
Scope of a collective term - Asian/Asian British



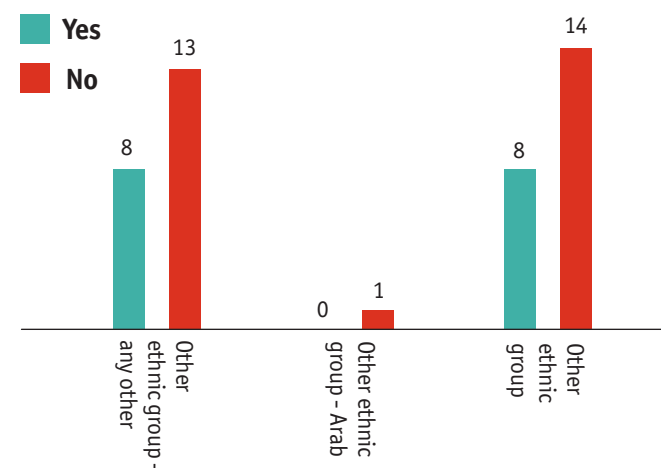
Scope of a collective term - Black/African/Caribbean/Black British



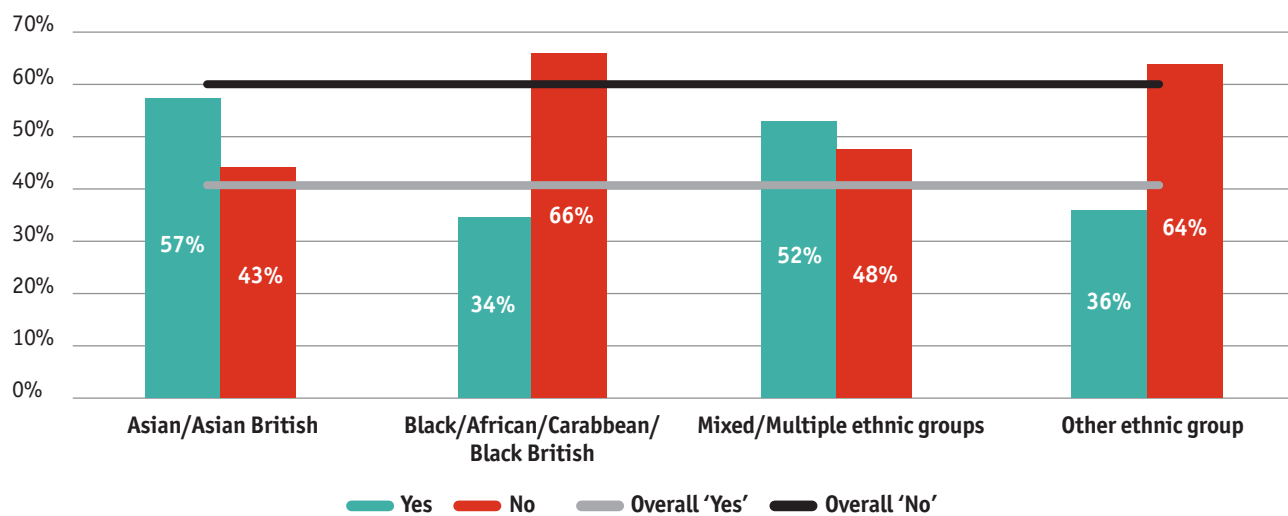
Scope of a collective term – Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups



Scope of a collective term – other ethnic groups



Scope of a collective term – ethnic groups



Preference of terminology

AGE

POSITIVE Preference (Ranked)	8-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
	1	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse
	2	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
	3	People of Colour	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People from ethnic minority backgrounds
	4	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Global Majority	Global Majority	Global Majority

NEGATIVE Preference (Ranked)	8-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
	1	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic/Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised/ People of Colour	People of Colour	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
	2	Black and Brown People	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	People of Colour	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised
	3	Global Racial Majority	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Black and Brown people
	4	Global Majority	Black and Brown People	Black and Brown people	People of Colour

SUMMED Preference (Ranked)	8-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
	1	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse
	2	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People of Colour
	3	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Global Majority	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
	4	People of Colour/ Global Majority/ Black and Brown People	Global Majority	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	People from ethnic minority backgrounds

SECTOR

POSITIVE Preference (Ranked)	Health	Local Government	Police community or faith sector	Voluntary,	Other
	1	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse
	2	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People of Colour
	3	People of Colour	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic
	4	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Global Majority	Global Majority	People from ethnic minority backgrounds

NEGATIVE
Preference
(Ranked)

	Health	Local Government	Police community or faith sector	Voluntary,	Other
1	People of Colour	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Black and Brown People	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
2	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Black and Brown People	People from ethnic minority backgrounds/ People of Colour	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black and Brown People/Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised
3	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic/ People of Colour	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic/Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
4	Black and Brown People	Global Racial Majority	Global Majority	Black and Brown People	People of Colour

SUMMED
Preference
(Ranked)

	Health	Local Government	Police community or faith sector	Voluntary,	Other
1	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Global Majority	Ethnically diverse
2	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	People of Colour
3	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	People of Colour	People of Colour	Global Majority
4	Global Majority	Global Majority	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic/Global Majority/Global Racial Majority	Global Racial Majority	People from ethnic minority backgrounds

ETHNIC GROUP

POSITIVE Preference (Ranked)	Asian/Asian British	Black/African Caribbean/Black British	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	Other ethnic groups	White
1	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse/ People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Ethnically diverse
2	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	People of Colour	People of Colour	People of Colour	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
3	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic/ Global Majority	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
4	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Global Majority	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic/Black and Brown People/ Global Racial Majority	People from ethnic minority backgrounds

NEGATIVE Preference (Ranked)	Asian/Asian British	Black/African Caribbean/Black British	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	Other ethnic groups	White
1	People of Colour	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Black and Brown People	Black and Brown People/Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised
2	Black and Brown People	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Global Racial Majority	Global Racial Majority
3	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Black and Brown People	Black and Brown People	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Global Majority
4	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	People of Colour	Global Racial Majority	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic/ People of Colour	People of Colour

SUMMED Preference (Ranked)	Asian/Asian British	Black/African Caribbean/Black British	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	Other ethnic groups	White
1	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse	Ethnically diverse
2	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Global Majority	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
3	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People of Colour	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic/ Global Majority/ Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	People from ethnic minority backgrounds
4	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	People of Colour	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	People of Colour	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic



ETHNIC GROUP (GRANULAR)

Ethnicity	Positive preference	Negative preference	Summed preference
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	Ethnically diverse	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Ethnically Diverse
Asian/Asian British - Chinese	People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic/Global Majority	Ethnically Diverse
Asian/Asian British - Indian	Ethnically diverse	Black and Brown People	Ethnically Diverse
Asian/Asian British - Other	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic	People of Colour	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	Ethnically diverse	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised/ People of Colour	Ethnically Diverse
Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British - African	Ethnically diverse	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Ethnically Diverse
Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British - Caribbean	Ethnically diverse	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Ethnically Diverse
Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British - Other	Ethnically diverse	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Ethnically Diverse
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic backgrounds	Ethnically diverse	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Ethnically Diverse
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	Ethnically diverse	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Ethnically Diverse
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African	Ethnically diverse	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic/ Black and Brown People /Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised/ People of Colour	Ethnically Diverse
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean	People of Colour	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	People of Colour
Other ethnic groups - any other	Ethnically diverse/People from ethnic minority backgrounds	Black and Brown People	Ethnically Diverse
Other ethnic groups - Arab	Ethnically diverse/People from ethnic minority backgrounds/Global Majority	Global Racial Majority/ People of Colour/Black and Brown People/Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Ethnically Diverse
White - English/Welsh/ Scottish/Northern Irish/ British	Ethnically diverse	Racially minoritised or ethnically minoritised	Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic
White - Irish	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Black and Brown People/ Global Majority/Global Racial Majority	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
White - Other	Ethnically diverse	Black and Brown People	Ethnically Diverse

List of alternative suggested terms

170 respondents choose the option 'other' when selecting their preferred terms and 35 respondents chose the option 'other' when selecting their negatively preferred terms. The commonly chosen terms are summarised below:

PREFERRED CHOICES

African, Asian and Minority Ethnic
Diasporan
Only reference specific ethnicities, e.g. African, Asian, Caribbean, Nigerian etc.
African, Asian, Arab & Mixed Heritage
African, Caribbean, Asian and Multi-Ethnic
Black, Asian & Ethnically Diverse people
Black, Asian and other ethnic communities
Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities
Black, Asian, Middle Eastern and Minority Ethnic
Culturally & ethnically discriminated against people
Culturally diverse
Ethnically and culturally diverse
Global Ethnic Majority
Global South Diaspora
'Heritage' – preferring terminology that references heritage rather than groups
People of racially protected characteristics
Political Black
Under-represented groups/ people
Underserved groups/ people

NEGATIVE CHOICES

Black
BIPOC
Racially diverse
Coloured

Closing remarks

This report highlights that there is no agreed or shared approach to collective language, whether that be eliminating its use or selecting the most appropriate collective term for the context. For some, particular collective terms are empowering and reclaim aspects of identity, whereas for others collective terminology from its conception has clouded the richness of identities in the UK.

The findings do indicate that some terms are more palatable than others, and perhaps more importantly some terms are significantly less palatable than others. However, the report highlights that there are differences in preference between demographic and sectors. Moreover, it is important to recognise that certain terminology has more socialisation than other terminology, and language is a constantly evolving domain which means no one term can ever be held up as the most appropriate.

Therefore, the findings of this research have led to the development of principles around language that should be used to inform and encourage conversations around language and terminology within organisations ensuring that is always intentional and meaningful for the intended audience. This is merely the beginning of the conversation.

This Tackling Racial Inequality Programme consultation was initiated by the Demonstrating Leadership Working Group. The research was carried out by London Councils. If you have any queries or would like more information please contact:

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