RACISM AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Findings from the Evidence for Equality National Survey

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Contents

List of figures, tables and boxes

Figures

Tables

Boxes

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James Nazroo is Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester. His work on ethnic inequalities in health has led the field in demonstrating the importance of both socioeconomic inequalities and experiences of racism and racial discrimination. It has also provided novel findings on early life effects, generational differences, ecological effects and the positive effects of ethnic density. His publications in relation to ageing have advanced our understanding of the patterns and determinants of social and health inequalities, as well as the health and wellbeing outcomes of retirement

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Acknowledgements

Note on the figures

Table 2.3 and Figures 4.1, 4.3, 6.1 and 7.2 have been published in a font size smaller than our house style. To see full-sized versions of these figures, please visit https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/ethnic-inequalities-in-a-time-of-crisis.

To find out more about CoDE, EVENS and how to access the EVENS data see www.ethnicity.ac.uk

Ethnic identities

Magda Borkowska, James Nazroo, Nissa Finney and Joseph Harrison

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Key findings

Ethnic identity is important to people alongside a strong sense of belonging to British society but standardised measures of ethnicity do not fully capture the complex ways that people describe their ethnicity.

- The free-text ethnic identity responses demonstrate that the standardised ethnic categories do not allow people to accurately express complex ethnic origins and migration experiences; they exclude identities from certain parts of the world and subnational, place-based identities.
- Ethnic identity is important for most people from minority backgrounds. This is especially true for those from Black African, Black Caribbean, Pakistani, White Irish and Jewish backgrounds. Ethnic identity is the least important for White British people, followed by people from White Eastern European, White Other, and Mixed White and Asian backgrounds.
- Religious belonging varies considerably across ethnic groups. People from Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African, Arab and Indian backgrounds most frequently report having a religion. Those from White British, Mixed White and Asian, and Mixed White and Black Caribbean backgrounds most frequently declare having no religious affiliation.
- Strong religious attachment is more common when people identify with minority religions and when there tends to be a consistency between ethnic identity and religious affiliation.
- Most people from ethnic minority backgrounds participate in practices linked to their ethnicity or religion. White British are the least likely to report participation in such practices, followed by White Irish and White Eastern Europeans. Eating food associated with one's ethnic or religious background is the most popular practice across ethnic groups.
- A sense of belonging to British society is very high across all groups. A particularly high sense of belonging is reported by those from Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Black African, Black Other, Arab, Jewish and White British backgrounds. A strong sense of belonging to English, Scottish and Welsh societies is somewhat less common among people from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to those from a White British background.

Introduction

In the UK, we have become used to filling in ethnicity classification forms for a range of administrative purposes and are commonly offered a standardised set of categories derived from the census. The use of a common set of categories has the advantage of tracking ethnic and racial inequalities over time, offers consistency across datasets and enables comparisons with the population census. However, there is a risk that much is missed by the standardisation of ethnic categories. For example, we cannot accurately capture the increasingly diverse, changing population using the limited number of standardised ethnic categories. We also do not know how strongly people identify with their ethnic, racial, national or religious groups and what these identities mean for them in everyday life.

This chapter explores articulations of and attachment to ethnic and religious identities. Additionally, the sense of belonging to British, English, Scottish and Welsh societies is examined across ethnic groups. This is possible with the Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) data because, in addition to including standardised ethnic categories, EVENS enabled people to describe their ethnic identity in their own words and to indicate how significant ethnic, religious, national and subnational identities were to them. The survey also asked them about their everyday practices related to ethnic and religious identifications. By examining responses on ethnic identification, we can reflect upon what is (and is not) captured by standardised ethnic group categorisation.

Theoretical conceptualisations of ethnicity acknowledge that ethnic identities are socially constructed and shaped by many factors, including ancestry or country of origin, skin colour, religious beliefs, culture and language (Aspinall, 1997). Most importantly, however, ethnic identity also refers to a subjective sense of belonging to a particular ethnic community. Similar to other group identities, the sense of belonging to an ethnic group is a dynamic and fluid process rather than a fixed construct. Just like other group identities, it is also highly context-dependent and relative to a frame of reference as outlined by social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Over time, there has been a growing recognition among researchers that ethnic identity is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond simple self-identification with a particular ethnic identity label. To measure such a complex construct across different ethnic groups, Phinney (1992) developed a widely used multidimensional psychological scale, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, which comprises three main subscales: (1) self-identification and the extent of positive feelings towards one's group; (2) the extent of having a developed, secure ethnic identity; and (3) participation in activities associated with one's ethnic identity. The questions included in EVENS tap into domains (1) and (3).

Having positive ethnic and/or religious identities might be associated with many practical and emotional benefits. There is a general agreement that positive attachment to ethnic identity is likely to increase psychosocial functioning, that is, it might positively affect psychological wellbeing and self-esteem, and can protect members of ethnic minority groups from the negative consequences of experiencing racial discrimination (Roberts et al, 1999; Umaña-Taylor, 2011). For minority groups, participating in ethnicity- and/or religion–related practices might provide a safe space for people to interact with others, build a positive sense of self and foster a sense of belonging. Furthermore, religious institutions have long served as hubs of social and civic life as well as places offering practical advice and charitable activities. As noted by Nicholson (2018), for migrant communities, churches, mosques, gurdwaras, temples and synagogues play a particularly important role for connection and practical support in a new country.

Ethnic and religious identities not only constitute building blocks of self-concept but are also used as social markers (Kapadia and Bradby, 2021), which affect how group boundaries are defined and used in a society. For example, in the UK, the ethnicity classifications have been introduced with the intention of better understanding and monitoring social inequalities among different social groups that share common origin/ancestry (Williams and Husk, 2013). However, it is important to acknowledge that such ethnicity categorisations are defined and to some extent imposed by the more powerful 'majority' on the less powerful 'minority' (Nazroo and Karlsen, 2003). This means that, in part, minority ethnic identities become constructed in response to externally defined ethnic groupings. The use of such categorisations can in turn marginalise certain ethnic minority groups.

The process of categorisation makes groups more or less visible and situates them within debates on integration, social cohesion and British values. Every few years, the debates on the national identity crisis resurface, especially in the context of growing ethnic and religious diversity and immigration (Finney and Simpson, 2009). Feelings of belonging to the national community are generally believed to have many positive consequences, including greater social cohesion and a sense of solidarity. Focus on cohesion and solidarity has characterised government reports on diversity in recent years (see, for example, Casey Review, 2016). Such discussions led to the turn against policies of multiculturalism and the emphasis on shared national values as underpinning integration. This has resulted in policies such as more demanding citizenship tests and mandatory citizenship ceremonies, with the aim of ensuring the 'successful integration' of naturalised citizens. The ideology behind and the success of such practices have been contested (Byrne, 2017), but the appetite for practices that intend to facilitate a common sense of British identity and belonging have remained popular in political discourse. For example, since 2014, schools in the UK have been required

to introduce the active promotion of British values into their curricula (Department for Education, 2014).

Despite concerns about a low sense of national belonging among ethnic minority groups in political and media discourses, academic studies have consistently shown that ethnic minority people feel strongly attached to British society and do not perceive incompatibility between their ethnic and religious identities and British values (Nazroo and Karlsen, 2003; Finney and Simpson, 2009; Maxwell, 2009; Manning and Roy, 2010; Demireva and Heath, 2014; Nandi and Platt, 2014; Karlsen and Nazroo, 2015). Research has also found strong sense of belonging among ethnic minority groups to local areas (see Chapter 6). These findings suggest that people do not tend to perceive their national, ethnic and religious identities as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary.

Given the inevitable limitations of the standardised ethnic identity classifications for accurately reflecting how people understand their ethnic identities, in this chapter, we reflect on key ways of describing ethnicity used by respondents outside the predefined ethnic categories. By doing this, we aim to better understand which aspects of ethnic identity are missing in the existing classifications and what additional ethnicity categories should be considered in the future to better reflect the diversity of the UK population.

The first empirical section of this chapter gives an overview of the common types of ethnic identity articulations expressed by EVENS participants in the free text responses. It also reflects on the consequences of growing ethnic diversity on the existing standardised classifications. The second section focuses on the questions concerning the subjective importance of group identities. In particular, it asks the following questions: how important are ethnic and religious identities to people? Are there substantive differences in the strength of attachment to ethnic identity among people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds? How much do people engage in practices related to their ethnic backgrounds? Finally, the last section explores sense of belonging to British society across different ethnic groups and compares it to the sense of belonging to English, Scottish and Welsh societies.

How do people describe their ethnic background?

This section provides a snapshot of the ways in which respondents described their ethnicity in response to an open-ended write-in question which asked: 'How would you describe your ethnic background in your own words?' All answers were classified into one of three categories: 'standardised ethnicity articulation', 'non-standardised ethnicity articulation' or 'non-engagement'. 'Standardised ethnicity articulation' category includes people who described their ethnicity using the same words that are used in the standardised ONS ethnicity categories. 'Non-standardised ethnicity

articulation' includes people who expressed their identities using either non-standardised conceptualisations of ethnicity (that is, they referred to concepts other than race, ethnicity, religion or nationality) or used different language from the language used in standardised ethnicity categories. Finally, the 'non-engagement' category refers to respondents who did not engage at all with the open-ended question.

Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of the types of ethnicity articulations for the 21 standardised ethnic groups used in the EVENS. First, it can be noted that the majority of respondents in most ethnic groups did engage with the open-ended ethnicity question and provided at least a short, written description of their ethnic identity. Second, for most ethnic groups, those respondents who provided an answer were likely to use standardised concepts and language to describe their ethnic identity. This relatively high consistency between the write-in ethnicity articulations and the standardised ethnicity categories – shown in the 'standardised' segments in Figure 3.1 – is likely to reflect that most people in the UK are very familiar with administrative ethnicity categories, which are conventionally used for monitoring purposes in almost all public service settings (including health, education and employment). However, a substantial proportion in each ethnic group expressed their ethnic identity in a non-standardised way. The highest proportion of non-standardised articulations was found among people from Jewish, White Eastern European, White Gypsy/Traveller and Chinese backgrounds, and those who classified themselves as belonging to various 'Other' ethnic groups (Figure 3.1).

The common complexities expressed by those who used non-standardised articulations often reflected their complex ethno-racial origin and/or migration journey(s). As expected, the complexities of ethno-racial origin were particularly highlighted by those who chose different variations of 'Other' ethnicity categories. Some of those who chose 'Any other ethnic group' pointed out that their ethnic origin was simply missing from the ONS classification. For example, as illustrated by the first two responses in Table 3.1, people from the Americas currently do not have more specific ethnicity categories to choose from. Other responses indicated that the 'Any other' standardised ethnicity category often includes people with complex ethno-racial origins who think of themselves as British. Similar reasoning might be applied to other examples presented for 'Other Arab', 'Other Asian' and 'Other Black' categories, where the respondents refer to their complex (usually non-White) ethnic origins, but also highlight that they generally see themselves as British. The two responses shown in Table 3.1 from respondents who selected the 'Other White' category demonstrate different types of commonly mentioned complexities: (1) the fact that people's migration journeys and, in particular, the experiences of forced migration and persecution are important reference points for ethnic identity

Ethnic identities

FIGURE 3.1: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WITH STANDARDISED AND COMPLEX ARTICULATIONS OF ETHNICITY, BY ETHNIC GROUP

Note: Weighted percentages. Base: Full sample. N=12,685

Legend: Non-engagement | Standardised | Complex

Ethnic group	Non-engagement	Standardised	Complex
White Irish	11	66	23
White Eastern European	22	35	42
Gypsy/Traveller	13	46	41
Roma	12	70	18
Jewish	17	39	44
Any other White background	27	36	38
Indian	43	42	16
Pakistani	43	43	13
Bangladeshi	45	39	15
Mixed White and Asian	63	19	18
Chinese	62	3	35
Any other Asian background	60	13	27
Black Caribbean	38	44	18
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	51	35	14
Black African	45	36	19
Mixed White and Black African	50	32	19
Any other Black background	39	46	15
Arab	50	26	23
Any other mixed/multiple background	52	21	27
Any other ethnic group	53	11	36
White British	16	73	11

TABLE 3.1: EXAMPLES OF COMPLEX ARTICULATIONS OF ETHNICITY, BY ETHNIC GROUP

Ethnic group	Examples
Any other ethnic group	• I would describe my ethnic background as "Latina", which personally, I think of it as a mixture between South American and European people. Usually I don't see any option that I feel describe my ethnic background when I am asked to record my ethnicity, it seems like they forget of the people from the American continent.
	• I am a member of the confederated tribes of the Siletz Indians. What some describe as a Native American. I am not an "other-other" as described on this survey, or on NHS forms. Natives from N. America, S. America, and Australia are completely ignored by the NHS.
	• I am Turkish, but my mother is of Tatar descent and my father immigrated to Turkey from Greece where he was part of a Turkish speaking Muslim ethnic minority.
	• I am born in Kenya, great great grand parents from India, brown skinned but of African origin. However I consider myself British.
Other ethnic group: Arab	• I am Middle Eastern. I came from an Arabic speaking country located in Africa and I am Muslim.
	• I'm ethnically Iraqi. Both of my parents are Iraqi and I was born there. I came to the UK at age 1 so I also identify as British.
Other ethnic group: White	• My ethnic background is complex due to political persecution and exile of some of my family members from previous generations from their native country.
	• Cornish, not British not English.
Other ethnic group: Asian	• My parents are Sri Lankan and me and my brothers we were born in Italy so we are Italian. Before 5 years my mum applied for Italian passport and we are Italian officially now.
Other ethnic group: Black	• My ethnic background is Sierra Leonian and Jamaican.
	• Black British of African Caribbean, Arab and Irish heritage.
Other ethnic group: Mixed	• Indian Pakistani mixed
	• Black British of African Caribbean, Arab and Irish heritage
	• South Asian and Iranian heritage
	• I am half white, my other half is Malagasy, however I come from the Merina tribe, which is from Indonesia
	• Mix European and native Brazilian

formation; and (2) the importance of subnational, place-based identities. The quotes presented for the 'Other mixed' category remind us that the standardised 'Mixed' categories solely focus on a mix with 'White'.

These examples already provide a hint that those who classify themselves into different variants of 'Other' ethnic groups have parents and grandparents born in different parts of the world. Country of family origin is often used in the construction of standardised ethnicity categories (for example, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian are used in the ONS classification), but they do not incorporate multiple origin countries. The EVENS sample provides a very good illustration that even in a single country context, such as the UK, people identifying with a particular ethnic group can originate from a wide range of countries (see Figure 3.2). The EVENS sample comprises individuals originating from 155 countries, which highlights the diversity of the UK ethnic minority population.

How attached do people feel to their ethnic and religious identities?

The importance of ethnic identity

Despite the difficulties and complexities of defining ethnicity, many people feel that their ethnic background is an important part of their self-definition. EVENS asked respondents to assess on a scale from 1 (very important) to 4 (not at all important): 'How important is your ethnic background to your sense of who you are?' Previous literature suggests that both gender and age are likely to shape how strongly people identify with their ethnic and national identities (Warikoo, 2005; Huddy and Khatib, 2007; Ali and Heath, 2013; Karlsen and Nazroo, 2015; Nandi and Platt, 2020). Given this, all the results presented in this chapter adjust for the age and sex of respondents (unless otherwise specified).

In line with the existing literature, we find that all ethnic minority groups have a stronger attachment to their ethnic identities compared to the majority, White British population (as illustrated in Figure 3.3). Black African, Black Caribbean, Pakistani, Irish and Jewish people report the highest attachment to their ethnic identity: over 90% say that their ethnic background is very or fairly important to their sense of self. Lower percentages of people who classify themselves as belonging to different Mixed groups (58-79%), in comparison to the Black (85-91%), Asian (77-91%) and Arab (81%) groups, report a strong attachment to ethnic identity. Among White groups, the Jewish (94%) and White Irish (92%) groups have the highest percentage that feel that their ethnic identity is important to their sense of self, followed by those from Gypsy (90%) and Roma (70%) backgrounds. Only around 58-59% of those from the White Eastern European and White Other backgrounds share that view.

FIGURE 3.2: ETHNIC GROUP IDENTIFICATION, BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH
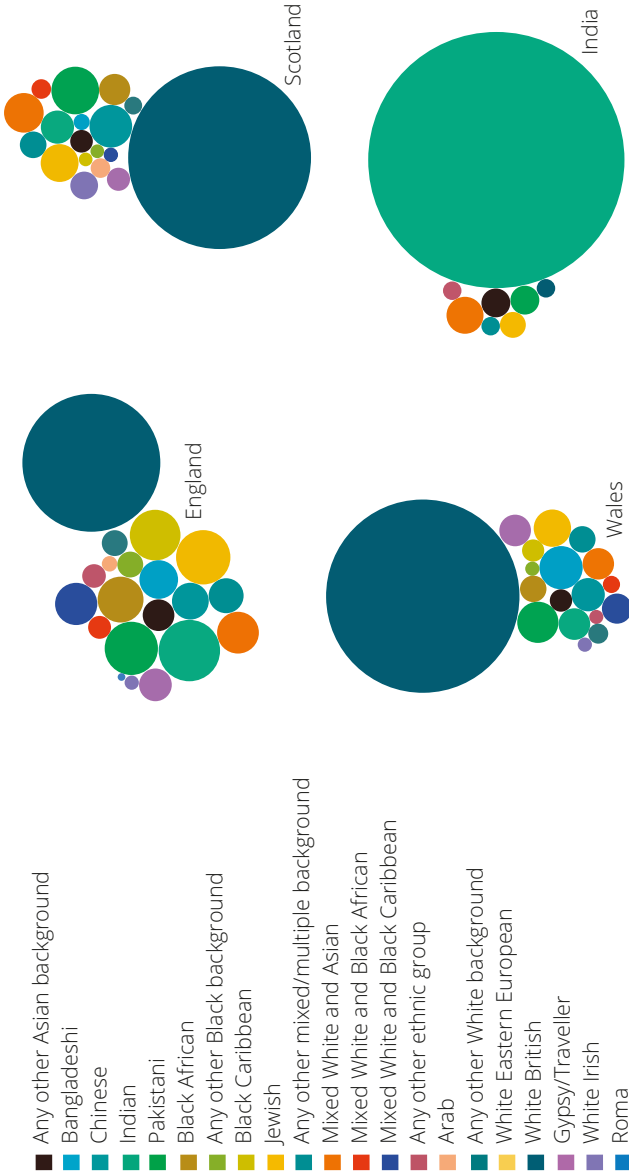
Any other Asian background
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Indian
Pakistani
Black African
Any other Black background
Black Caribbean
Jewish
Any other mixed/multiple background
Mixed White and Asian
Mixed White and Black African
Mixed White and Black Caribbean
Any other ethnic group
Arab
Any other White background
White Eastern European
White British
Gypsy/Traveller
White Irish
Roma

The figure shows, for selected countries of birth of EVENS respondents, their reported ethnic group identification: within each country of birth, circles showing ethnic group identification are proportionately sized. The figure represents 8,384 respondents born in England, 718 born in Scotland, 517 in Wales, 412 in India, 263 in Nigeria, 188 in China, 186 in Poland, 156 in the USA, 87 in South Africa, 75 in France, 48 in Northern Ireland, 43 in Australia and 39 born in Brazil.

FIGURE 3.2: ETHNIC GROUP IDENTIFICATION, BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH (continued)
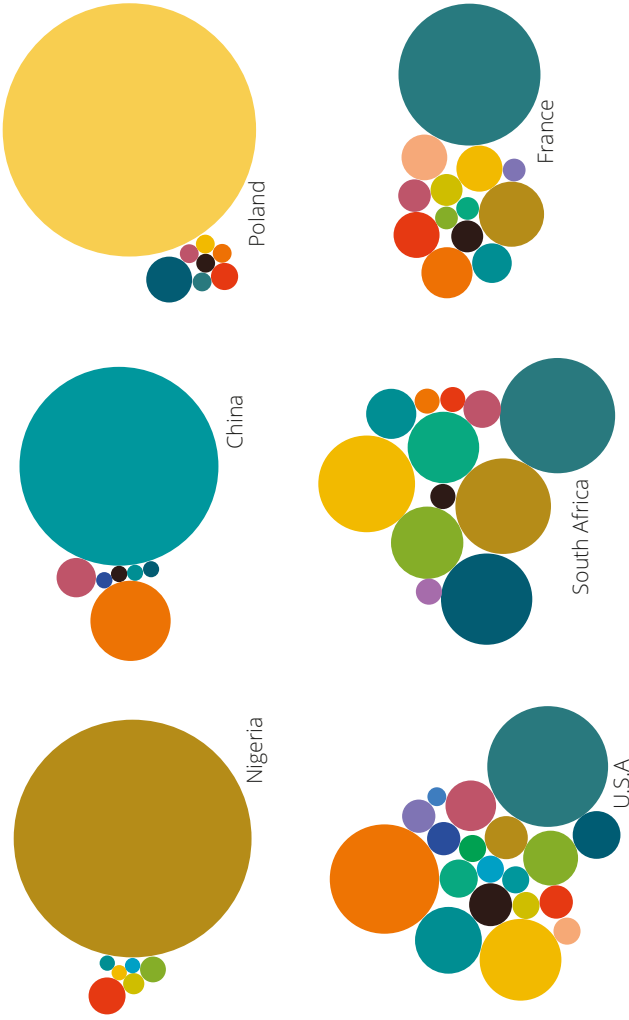
Poland

France

China

South Africa

Nigeria

U.S.A

The figure shows, for selected countries of birth of EVENS respondents, their reported ethnic group identification: within each country of birth, circles showing ethnic group identification are proportionately sized. The figure represents 8,384 respondents born in England, 718 born in Scotland, 517 in Wales, 412 in India, 263 in Nigeria, 188 in China, 186 in Poland, 156 in the USA, 87 in South Africa, 75 in France, 48 in Northern Ireland, 43 in Australia and 39 born in Brazil.

(continued)

FIGURE 3.2: ETHNIC GROUP IDENTIFICATION, BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH (continued)
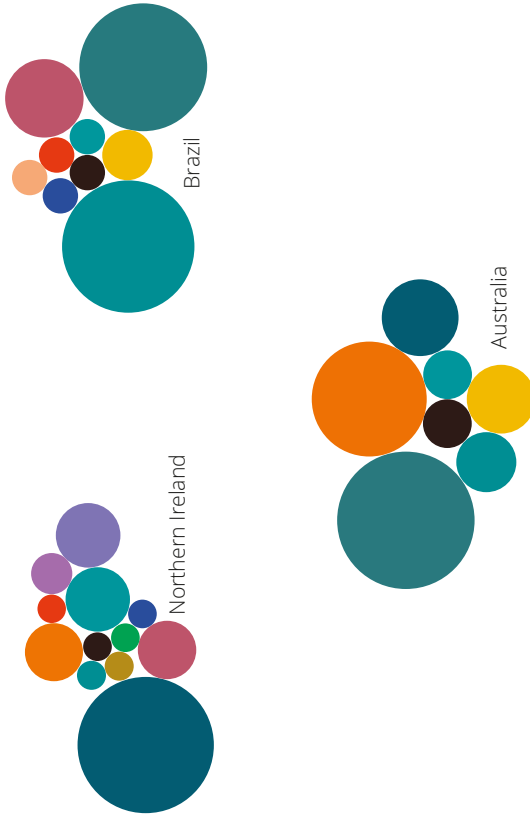
The figure shows, for selected countries of birth of EVENS respondents, their reported ethnic group identification: within each country of birth, circles showing ethnic group identification are proportionately sized. The figure represents 8,384 respondents born in England, 718 born in Scotland, 517 in Wales, 412 in India, 263 in Nigeria, 188 in China, 186 in Poland, 156 in the USA, 87 in South Africa, 75 in France, 48 in Northern Ireland, 43 in Australia and 39 born in Brazil.

● FIGURE 3.3: PROBABILITY OF EXPRESSING IMPORTANCE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY, BY ETHNIC GROUP ●
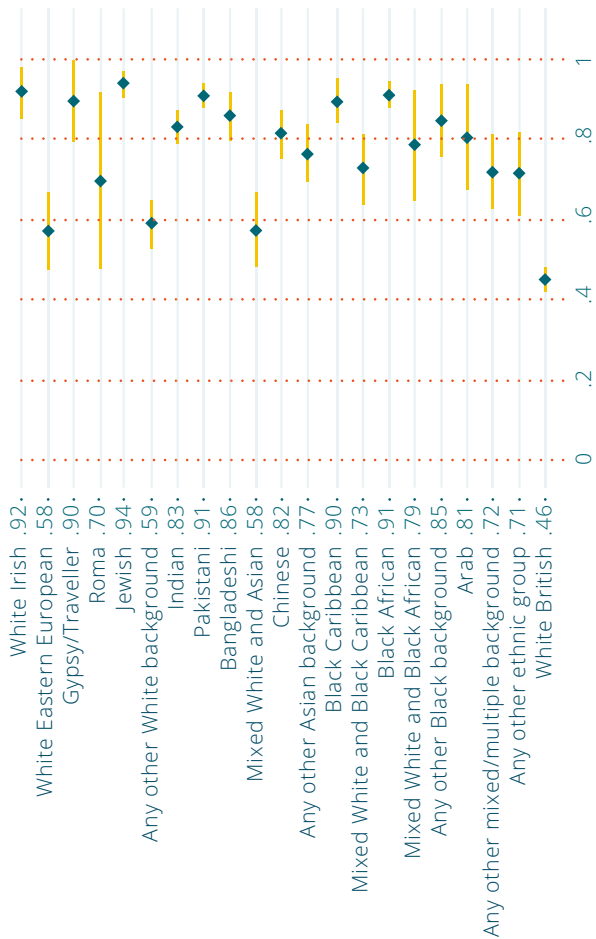
White Irish .92·
White Eastern European .58·
Gypsy/Traveller .90·
Roma .70·
Jewish .94·
Any other White background .59·
Indian .83·
Pakistani .91·
Bangladeshi .86·
Mixed White and Asian .58·
Chinese .82·
Any other Asian background .77·
Black Caribbean .90·
Mixed White and Black Caribbean .73·
Black African .91·
Mixed White and Black African .79·
Any other Black background .85·
Arab .81·
Any other mixed/multiple background .72·
Any other ethnic group .71·
White British .46·

Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'Very or fairly important' to the question 'How important is your ethnic background to your sense of who you are?', adjusted for age, age squared and sex. 95% confidence intervals shown. N=12,816

41

Interestingly, British and foreign-born individuals report similar levels of attachment to ethnic identities (the results are not shown here), suggesting that the importance of one's ethnic background is not something that is only felt by the foreign born, but is a significant part of self-definition regardless of migrant generation.

The importance of religious identity

In EVENS, religious attachment is measured by the following question: 'How important is your religion to your sense of who you are?' Four options are provided to choose from (very important, fairly important, not very important and not at all important). The results show a large variation in the levels of religious affiliation among ethnic groups. As shown in Figure 3.4, people from Mixed, White British, Other White and Chinese backgrounds most frequently report having no religious affiliation. Within other ethnic groups, there tends to be a consistency between religious affiliation and ethnic identity. For example, over 80% of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Arab people in EVENS identify as Muslim, while nearly 80% of the Black African, nearly 70% of the Black Caribbean and nearly 70% of the Black Other groups identify as Christian. As mentioned earlier, Jewish people are treated as a separate ethnic group in the EVENS classification.

   We observe that those who identify with minority (non-Christian) religions, especially when there tends to be a consistency between religious affiliation and ethnic identity, tend to be more likely to report having a strong attachment to their religion. Figure 3.5 shows that those who identify as Muslim and Jewish are the most likely to report strong attachment, followed by those who identify as Sikh, Hindu and Other: more than 7 in 10 people who identify with these religions feel strongly attached to their religion. In comparison, about 5 in 10 Christians and 6 in 10 Buddhists report a strong attachment to their religion. Figure 3.6 shows that a strong religious attachment is reported by over 80% of people from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Arab, Black African, Other Black, Jewish, Gypsy/Traveller and Roma groups, and over 70% of those from Black Caribbean and Other Asian groups. This is likely to be associated with a stronger consistency between religious affiliation and ethnic identity among these groups and with the more prominent social role of Black churches in the case of Black communities.

How much do people engage in practices associated with their ethnic and/or religious background?

EVENS included three questions assessing how much people engage in practices that are linked to their ethnic and/or religious identities: 'How

● FIGURE 3.4: RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION, BY ETHNIC GROUP ●

Note: Weighted percentages. Base: Full sample. N=12,816

Legend: No religion | Christian | Buddhist | Hindu | Jewish | Muslim | Sikh | Others | No specific answer

Ethnic groups: White Irish, White Eastern European, Gypsy/Traveller, Roma, Jewish, Any other White background, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Mixed White and Asian, Chinese, Any other Asian background, Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Black African, Mixed White and Black African, Any other Black background, Arab, Any other mixed/multiple background, Any other ethnic group, White British

FIGURE 3.5: PROBABILITY OF EXPRESSING IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION, BY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
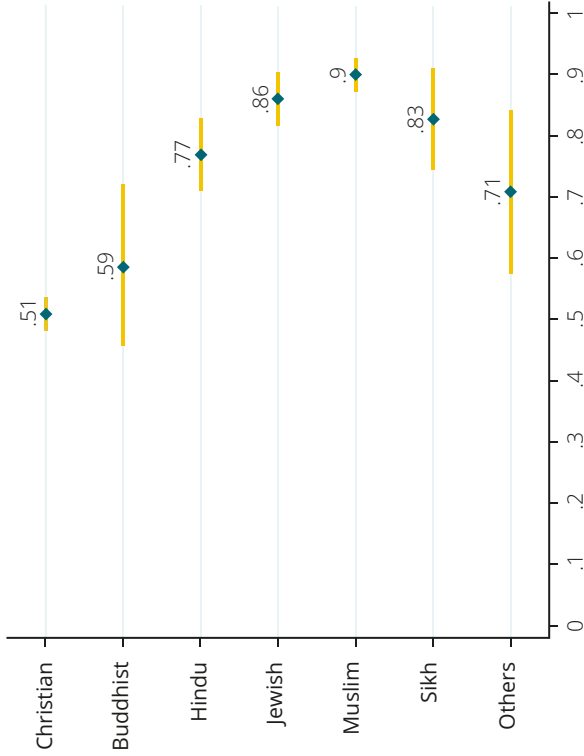
Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'Very or fairly important' to the question 'How important is your religion to your sense of who you are?', adjusted for age, age squared and sex. 95% confidence intervals shown. Base: Respondents who reported having religious affiliation. N=8,119

● FIGURE 3.6: PROBABILITY OF EXPRESSING IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION, BY ETHNIC GROUP ●
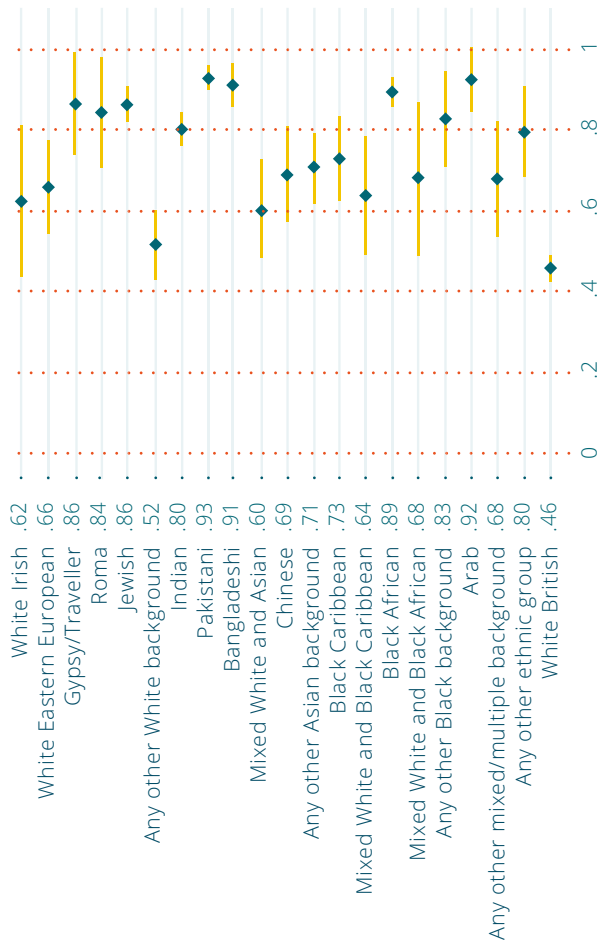
White Irish .62
White Eastern European .66
Gypsy/Traveller .86
Roma .84
Jewish .86
Any other White background .52
Indian .80
Pakistani .93
Bangladeshi .91
Mixed White and Asian .60
Chinese .69
Any other Asian background .71
Black Caribbean .73
Mixed White and Black Caribbean .64
Black African .89
Mixed White and Black African .68
Any other Black background .83
Arab .92
Any other mixed/multiple background .68
Any other ethnic group .80
White British .46

Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'Very or fairly important' to the question 'How important is your religion to your sense of who you are?', adjusted for age, age squared and sex. 95% confidence intervals shown. Base: Respondents who reported having religious affiliation. N=8,119

often, if at all, do you wear clothes or something that shows a connection with your ethnic identity or religion?' 'How often do you participate in activities that are connected with your ethnicity or religion?' 'How often do you eat food that is associated with your ethnic background or religion?' Eating food linked to one's ethnic or religious background was the most prevalent practice across ethnic groups – on average, 40% of respondents reported that they regularly eat specific types of food linked to their ethnicity or religion. Only 10% reported they regularly wear specific clothes and 14% regularly participate in activities, related to their ethnicity or religion. Due to the high prevalence of food-related practices, we classified responses into 'participation in any practices (including food)' and 'participation in practices other than food'.

As shown in Figure 3.7, regular participation in any form of practice connected with ethnicity or religion varies considerably across ethnic groups. People from certain White ethnic groups, such as White British (35%), White Irish (35%) and White Eastern European (42%), tend to participate at lower rates than people from non-White minority groups. Interestingly, White British people are the least likely to report participation in any type of activities, including food, which suggests that engagement in ethnically specific practices is less relevant for those who are not members of a minoritised, or racialised, group. Ethnic groups for whom we observed strong religious attachments are also among those most likely to participate in non-food-related activities associated with their ethnic background or religion (Bangladeshi: 69%, Pakistani: 68%, Jewish: 64%, Black African: 57%, Arab: 55%, Gypsy: 56% and Roma: 49%). Although the EVENS does not explicitly ask what kind of practices people participate in, it might be that many respondents thought of activities associated with practising their religion. In contrast, people who identify as Other White (14%), White Irish (17%), Mixed White and Black Caribbean (20%), and White Eastern European (20%) were the least likely among ethnic minority groups to engage in ethnicity or religion-related practices other than food.

How strongly do people feel a sense of belonging to British, English, Scottish, Welsh society?

EVENS asked people to assess, on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), 'to what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally feel a part of British society?'. The respondents living in different constituent countries were also asked equivalent questions about their sense of belonging to English, Scottish and Welsh societies depending on their place of residence. We find that the vast majority of people (between 72% and 95%) from all ethnic backgrounds (with the exception of

FIGURE 3.7: PROBABILITY OF REGULAR ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH ONE'S ETHNIC BACKGROUND, BY ETHNIC GROUP

Note: Yellow dots show predicted probabilities (adjusted for age, age squared and sex) of responding 'Always/frequently' to the question 'How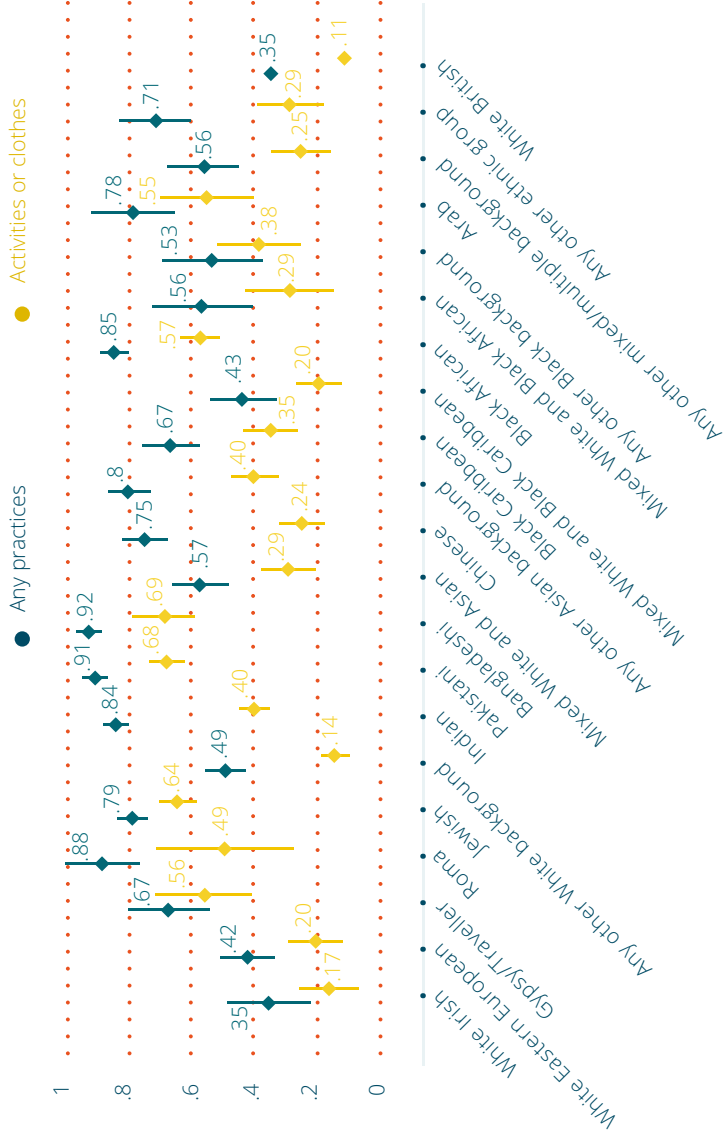 often, if at all, do you wear clothes or something that shows a connection with your ethnic identity or religion?' and/or responding 'Always/frequently' to the question 'How often do you participate in activities that are connected with your ethnicity or religion?' and/or responding 'At least 1–2 days a week' to the question 'How often do you eat food that is associated with your ethnic background or religion?'. Green dots include answers to questions on clothes and activities only. Base: All respondents. N= 11,865 (any practices); N=12,601 (clothes/activities).

Roma – 33%) report having a strong sense of belonging to British society (as illustrated in Figure 3.8). Interestingly, the likelihood of reporting positive belonging to British society was highest for some of the groups who were also most likely to express strong sense of attachment to their ethnic identity, including the Arab (95%), Jewish (93%), Indian (92%), Pakistani (92%), Bangladeshi (92%), Black African (90%), and Black Other (89%) ethnic groups. For people from Black Caribbean (78%), Gypsy (79%) and White Irish (76%) ethnic groups, the likelihood of reporting positive belonging to British society was slightly lower compared to the likelihood of having a strong sense of attachment to their ethnic identity. On the contrary, White Eastern European (86%) and White Other (77%) people, for whom we observed a relatively low sense of ethnic identity, reported a strong sense of belonging to the British society.

Across all ethnic minority groups (with the exception of Gypsy and Roma), the likelihood of having a strong sense of belonging to English, Scottish and Welsh societies was lower than the likelihood of having a strong sense of belonging to British society (Figure 3.8). However, the patterns of attachment to the constituent nations were not uniform across all minority groups. The most pronounced differences between the likelihood of having positive attachment to British and to English societies were noted for the Black Caribbean, Bangladesh, Indian, Pakistani, Other White and Arab groups. Among ethnic minority groups, the smallest difference between affiliation to a British or an English identity was observed for the Eastern European, Chinese, Gypsy/Traveller and Roma groups, and the likelihood of having a positive sense of belonging to British and to English society was essentially the same for the White British group. Nevertheless, the differences between belonging to British and to English society were relatively small and the majority within each ethnic group felt that they were part of British and part of English society, with the exception of the Roma group. Similar patterns were found in relation to the sense of belonging to Scottish and Welsh societies (these are not shown here).

Discussion

The detailed questions on multiple aspects of people's ethnic, religious and national identities included in EVENS allow us to better understand the importance of different types of ethnic, religious and national identities. The inclusion of an open-ended write-in ethnic identity question illustrates how people tend to think about their ethnicity when they are not bound by predefined categories.

As shown by the analysis of the free text responses, the majority of people articulate their ethnic identity using phrases and expressions typically used in the standardised ethnicity classifications. This can be attributed to the

FIGURE 3.8: PROBABILITY OF FEELING PART OF BRITISH AND ENGLISH SOCIETY, BY ETHNIC GROUP
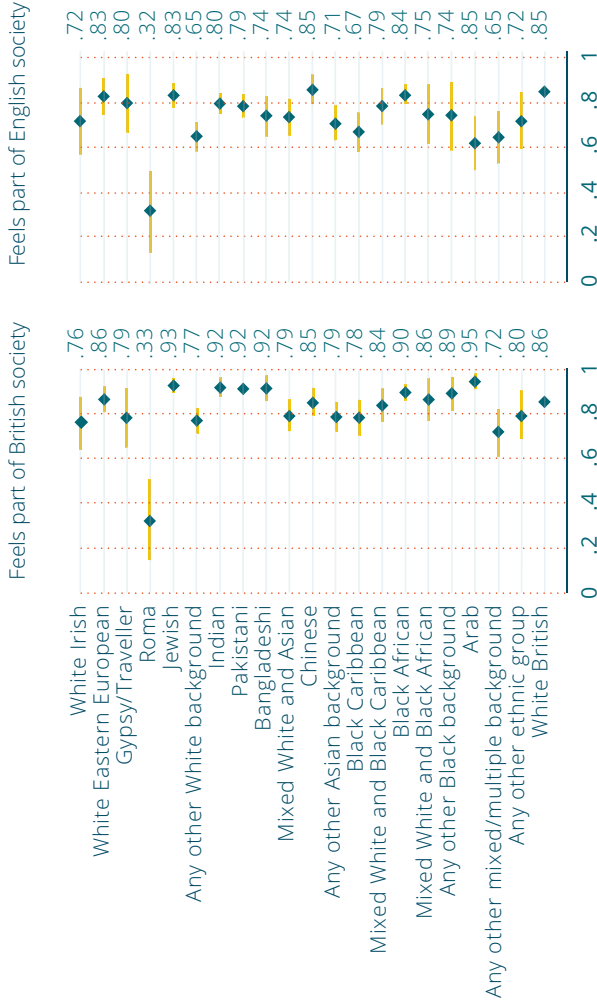
Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities (adjusted for age, age squared, and sex) of responding 'Strongly agree or Agree' to the question 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally feel a part of British society?' and to the question 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally feel a part of English society?'. Base: All respondents. N=12,266 (British Society); N=10,304 (English Society)

widespread use of such classifications, which in turn affects how people conceptualise ethnicity. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the sample used non-standardised ethnicity articulations that included references to the complex migration journeys and multicountry and multiracial origins that are not possible to capture in existing classifications. Such articulations of ethnic identity are often present among those who classify themselves into various 'Other' standardised ethnicity categories. The growing diversity of the UK population, which in turn results in increasingly complex patterns of family and migration backgrounds, is likely to make existing standardised ethnicity categories less able to accurately capture meaningful ethnic identities over time. Changing migration patterns means that new, sizeable groups from non-traditional origin countries are not accurately represented in the official ethnicity classifications. Another limitation of standardised ethnicity categories highlighted by textual responses is the lack of non-White Mixed ethnicities. The nature of standardised classifications also limits people's ability to express their identity in non-racialised terms or to use subnational definitions of ethnic identity. The focus on demographic heritage of standardised ethnicity classifications, although useful for monitoring purposes, limits individuals' ability to express subjective ethnic identities. Such rigid categorisation can sometimes create frustration among those who do not feel comfortable with putting themselves into predefined ethnicity categories.

This chapter has also shown that despite the challenges of defining ethnic identities, especially in standardised, fixed terms, most people report strong attachment to their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Ethnic identity is particularly important for those from the Black African, Black Caribbean, Pakistani, White Irish and Jewish backgrounds, and the least important for those from White British, White Eastern European and White Other groups. Religious identity is important for higher proportions of people who identify with minority religions and for people for whom there tends to be a consistency in religious affiliation and ethnic identity – for example, for people from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African, Arab and Jewish groups.

Although an explanatory analysis of why the importance of ethnic identity is more prevalent among certain groups is beyond the scope of this chapter, we can speculate about some of the possible explanations based on the past literature. Some of the commonly identified determinants of the strength of ethnic identity include: prevalence of ethnic discrimination (Gilroy, 2013; Rumbaut, 2005), cultural distance (Nesdale and Mak, 2003), community involvement (Maehler, 2022) and parental socialisation (Phinney and Chavira, 1995; Xu et al, 2004). Experience of ethnic discrimination, in line with social identity theory, is likely to increase the salience of ethnicity to one's self-concept. Non-White groups are particularly at risk of experiencing

racism, which in turn structures how they view their own identity and how having such an identity shapes their interactions with others (Karlsen and Nazroo, 2002b). Greater perceived cultural distance to the ethnic majority might affect the development of a strong ethnic and/or religious identity through positive and negative mechanisms. Positive mechanisms include increased motivation to preserve one's own cultural heritage and the development of a positive distinctiveness based on group belonging (Turner, 2010), whereas negative mechanisms might be associated with experience of greater prejudice from the majority group (Ford, 2011). Greater involvement in ethnicity and/or religion-related practices has also been shown to be correlated with ethnic identity development during adolescence and adulthood (Hardy et al, 2011).

People from those ethnic minority groups that have a high prevalence of strong attachment to their ethnic identity are also highly likely to report a strong sense of belonging to British society. This is the case for those from the Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, Chinese, Black African, Black Other, Arab and Jewish groups. For some of these groups, these patterns are in line with the existing evidence (Demireva and Heath, 2014; Karlsen and Nazroo, 2015; Nandi and Platt, 2014). However, for others, such as the Arab and Jewish groups, EVENS provides the first large-scale evidence on their subjective sense of attachment to ethnic and national communities.

EVENS also provides the first evidence on the patterns of ethnic, religious and national belonging among a nationally representative sample of White Eastern European people. We have learned that people from the White Eastern European group tend to express a strong sense of belonging to British society, but less so to their ethnic identity. Interestingly, they are also among a few groups who are almost equally likely to report a strong sense of belonging to a British as well as an English national community. These patterns are likely to reflect the role of whiteness in the construction of British and English identities, as well as lower levels of ethnic discrimination among most of the White minority groups (see Chapter 4).

We also note that people from the White Roma, Gypsy, White Irish and Black Caribbean ethnic groups are less likely than other ethnic groups to have a strong sense of belonging to British society compared to their strength of attachment to their ethnic identity. Some of these patterns might be associated with ethnicity-related discrimination, although a formal analysis on the impact of discrimination on the strength of ethnic and national attachments is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, previous literature did find that perceived discrimination is a major factor affecting the strength of British identity among ethnic minority individuals (Maxwell, 2009; Karlsen and Nazroo, 2015).

The lower likelihood of having a positive sense of belonging to English rather than British society among people from ethnic minority backgrounds,

particularly those at higher risk of experiencing racial discrimination, might be explained by the difference in the racialisation and inclusiveness of these two national identities. The construction of Englishness is based more on the 'ethnic' than the 'civic' concept of identity (Leddy-Owen, 2014). As a consequence, Englishness is more likely to be defined in terms of ancestry and Whiteness, whereas Britishness is more linked with political community boundaries and citizenship.

In sum, despite some differences in the strength of belonging to British society, the overall picture coming from the analysis of the EVENS data is a positive one. We see that the overwhelming majority of people across (almost) all ethnic groups feel a strong sense of belonging to the national community. Furthermore, it seems that having a strong attachment to one's ethnic identity often goes hand in hand with the strong sense of belonging to British society.

Box 3.1: Ethnic identities: measures and methods

All the results presented in this chapter are weighted by the propensity weights available in the EVENS dataset. The sample includes all EVENS respondents aged 18–65.

Predicted probabilities are based on logistic regression models adjusted for age (measured in years), square term of age, and sex. Predicted probability can be interpreted as the likelihood that person x gave answer y, while taking into account that men and women and people of different ages have different likelihoods of giving answer y.

Variable coding:

Write-in ethnic identity: All textual responses are coded based on the words used by the respondent into one of three categories: non-engagement (lack of valid response); standardised ethnicity articulation (all words used by the respondent correspond to words used in standardised ethnicity classifications) and non-standardised ethnicity articulation (at least some words used by the respondent differ from those used in standardised classifications).

Strong/fairly strong attachment to ethnic (/religious) background includes people who said they ethnic (/religious) background is very or fairly important to their sense of who they are.

Strong/fairly strong sense of belonging to British (English/Scottish/Welsh) societies includes those who said they strongly agree or tend to agree that they feel part of British (English/Scottish/Welsh) society.

Regular participation in practices (including food) refers to people who said that they regularly participate in activities or wear clothes (always or frequently) or eat food (every day or most of the days) associated with their ethnic background.

Regular participation in practices (excluding food) refers to people who said that they regularly participate in activities or wear clothes (always or frequently) associated with their ethnic background.