RACISM AND ETHNIC INEQUALITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Findings from the Evidence for Equality National Survey

Edited by
Nissa Finney, James Nazroo, Laia Bécares,
Dharmi Kapadia and Natalie Shlomo

First published in Great Britain in 2023 by

Policy Press, an imprint of
Bristol University Press
University of Bristol
1–9 Old Park Hill
Bristol
BS2 8BB
UK
t: +44 (0)117 374 6645
e: bup-info@bristol.ac.uk

Details of international sales and distribution partners are available at
policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4473-6884-7 paperback
ISBN 978-1-4473-6885-4 ePub
ISBN 978-1-4473-6886-1 ePdf

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Cover design: Andrea Pazos
Front cover image: Andrea Pazos
Bristol University Press and Policy Press use environmentally responsible print partners.
Printed in Great Britain by CMP, Poole

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Notes on contributors

Andrea Aparicio-Castro is a PhD candidate in Social Statistics at the University of Manchester (UoM) and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She is also a scholar of the ESRC North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership and a Cathie Marsh Institute research member. She graduated as an MSc in Social Research Methods and Statistics from the UoM, and as a Specialist in Statistics and Sociologist from the National University of Colombia. Her career has focused on applying quantitative methodologies in social sciences, specialising in data integration, imputation of data, multilevel and hierarchical modelling, and forecast from a Bayesian perspective.

Laia Bécares is Professor of Social Science and Health in the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, King's College London. Her research interests are in studying the pathways by which the discrimination and marginalisation of people and places lead to social and health inequalities across the life course, with a specific focus on racism and heteronormativity as systems of oppression. She is a member of the ESRC Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE).

Neema Begum is Assistant Professor in British Politics at the University of Nottingham. Her research uses mixed-methods approaches to analysing British ethnic minority political attitudes, voting behaviour and political representation. She was formerly a research associate at CoDE, where she analysed ethnic minority representation in UK local government. She has also conducted research on ethnic minority voting behaviour and immigration attitudes in the 2016 EU referendum, decolonising the university curriculum and ethnic minority women's political activism.

Magda Borkowska is Senior Research Officer at the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex. She has conducted research on inequalities experienced by ethnic and immigrant minorities, social cohesion, civil society, neighbourhood effects and political attitudes. In her research she primarily uses quantitative, longitudinal approaches to study life course outcomes. She previously worked in the Policy Unit of Understanding Society (UK Household Longitudinal Study), where she frequently collaborated with government departments researching gender inequalities in labour market outcomes, immigrant integration and residential segregation.

Ken Clark is Senior Honorary Research Fellow at the Department of Economics and a member of the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity at the University of Manchester. He is also an IZA Research Fellow. His published work is broadly in the area of labour economics, where he specialises in the analysis of employment and wage differentials between different ethnic and immigrant groups. As well as being published in academic journals, his work has contributed to considerations of the best policies to improve labour market equality for government and other policy makers.

Daniel Ellingworth is Researcher at CoDE at the University of Manchester, working on the design and analysis of EVENS. His previous work has focused on crime and criminal justice, addressing patterns of repeat victimisation and area crime rates, and the evaluation of a range of offender interventions.

Nissa Finney is Professor of Human Geography at the University of St Andrews. She has published and taught widely on ethnic inequalities, residential mobility and housing, neighbourhood change and segregation. She is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, former Chair of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) Population Geography Research Group, member of the ESRC Centre for Population Change (CPC) and a founding member of CoDE. On ethnic inequalities, her work has brought new understandings in population scholarship, evidencing differential opportunities and experiences of ethnic groups in residential choices, underlying processes of racism and discrimination, and policy narratives that marginalise groups and places.

Joseph Harrison is Research Associate at CoDE. Alongside this, he is studying for a PhD at the University of St Andrews. His research uses quantitative methods and longitudinal data to focus on Pakistani immigrants and their descendants in the UK and Norway, particularly relating to their family dynamics and health. Previously he has worked as a research assistant at Stockholm University Demography Unit (SUDA) from where he also graduated with an MSc in Demography. Before that, he studied Economics and International Development at the University of Birmingham.

Hannah Haycox is ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow at The University of Manchester where she is researching racial inequalities, refugee resettlement and multi-scalar policy governance. Her previous work as Research Assistant with CoDE at The University of St Andrews provided an intersectional approach to lived experiences of housing policy and practice, including its racialised, classed and gendered impacts. She has been the recipient of several prestigious prizes, including the Presidential Doctoral Scholar Award for future global leaders of research. She has disseminated policy

recommendations to high-quality academic journals, UNHCR, media outlets, cross-parliamentary groups and non-governmental organisations.

Emma Hill is Research Fellow in Geography and Sustainable Development at the University of St Andrews, where she is working on an ESRC-funded project on the racialised dynamics of post-pandemic housing practices in the UK. She was previously a Research Fellow on the JPI ERA Net/ Horizon 2020 Governance and Local Integration of Migrants and Europe's Refugees (GLIMER) Project in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh, and completed her PhD in Cultural Research at Heriot-Watt University, for which her doctoral thesis was awarded the 2017 MacFarlane Prize. She is an associate editor for the *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* journal, a steering committee member for the Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNet) and a Trustee for the Maryhill Integration Network (Glasgow). Her research interests include the postcolonial dynamics of South-North migration in former colonial centres.

Dharmi Kapadia is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Manchester and a member of CoDE. She is a mixed-methods researcher with interests in racism, mental health and illness, stigma and older people. She has also conducted research in ethnic inequalities in women's use of mental health services and socioeconomic inequalities in suicide, and has also undertaken work looking at ethnic inequalities in the labour market and the role of social networks in poverty for different ethnic groups.

Angelo Moretti is Assistant Professor in Statistics at the Department of Methodology and Statistics, Utrecht University. He is a survey statistician and an elected member of the International Statistical Institute (ISI). He has conducted research in small area estimation under multivariate generalised mixed models, survey calibration, mean squared error estimation based on bootstrap approaches, and data integration methods (statistical matching and probabilistic record linkage). He is also interested in applications related to understanding geographical differences in social exclusion, crime and public attitude indicators.

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

and later life employment, and he has also developed and tested theoretical models of class that more accurately capture socioeconomic position in later life. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and the founding Director of the ESRC Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity.

Nico Ochmann received his PhD in Economics from the University of Manchester in February 2021 with the dissertation title 'Essays in immigration economics'. His areas of interest are immigration, ethnicity, labour, micro-econometrics and causal inference. He has been with CoDE since September 2020. He holds an MSc in Applied Economics from Montana State University, Bozeman, and a BSc in Economics from the University of Washington, Seattle. He has worked as an economist in the US, Canada, Germany and the UK.

Natalie Shlomo is Professor of Social Statistics at the University of Manchester. She is a survey statistician with interests in adaptive survey designs, data linkage and integration, non-probability sampling designs, statistical disclosure control and small area estimation. She has written a diverse range of publications in both survey statistics and the social sciences. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in the UK, an elected member of the ISI and a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society.

Michaela Šťastná is Research Associate at CoDE. She is a PhD student at the University of St Andrews, researching family complexity and children's outcomes in relation to family resources. Her research focuses on in-depth life-course measures of family complexity using advanced quantitative methods, and on early childhood outcomes, especially mental health. She holds an MSc in Attachment Studies from the University of Roehampton and a BSc Psychology from Birkbeck, University of London.

Harry Taylor is Research Associate in the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine, King's College London, and formerly of CoDE. He received his PhD in Social Statistics from the University of Manchester in 2022. His primary research uses quantitative methods to explore ethnic inequalities in health. He has also conducted research into misinformation and vaccine hesitancy for the Alan Turing Institute. Prior to his doctoral study, he worked in spend analysis and logistics consultancy, investigating applications of AI techniques to business problems, among other projects.

Acknowledgements

We extend sincere thanks to all those who took part in the EVENS Survey. We hope that you see some of your stories in the pages of this book and that the evidence here and in the EVENS dataset will be part of the movement to effect change.

The EVENS researcher team at CoDE were unfailing in their dedication to this project. They worked with exceptional skill, imagination, tenacity and collegiality. Sincere thanks to Andrea Apricio-Castro, Neema Begum, Magda Borkowska, Daniel Ellingworth, Joseph Harrison, Angelo Moretti, Nico Ochmann, Michaela Šťastná and Harry Taylor. You are fine researchers indeed.

We are grateful to our CoDE colleagues for encouragement and for providing such a rich environment for scholarship. Thankyou to Emma Tsoneva and Hazel Burke for keeping the project mechanics running smoothly. Thankyou to CoDE Director Bridget Byrne and Co-Director Claire Alexander for your ongoing support for EVENS.

The EVENS Voluntary and Community Sector partners brought such energy and enthusiasm for this project and reminded us throughout of the fundamental motivation for producing evidence for equality. Thankyou to Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS), Business in the Community, Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales, Friends, Families and Travellers, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, the Migrants Rights Network, the Muslim Council of Britain, NHS Race and Health Observatory, Operation Black Vote, the Race Equality Foundation, The Runnymede Trust, The Stuart Hall Foundation and The Ubele Initiative.

Words of Colour, led deftly by Joy Francis, produced the superb EVENS design and branding and led the strategic communications through survey recruitment with drive and dexterity. Thankyou.

The Ipsos team who managed the survey implementation were wholly committed to producing high quality data, and with eagerness to develop the innovative aspects of EVENS. It was a pleasure working with you.

Thanks go to the University of Manchester Ethics Committee for their careful consideration of the EVENS project and for their responsiveness to the many amendments to the ethics application.

We thank those who gave comments on drafts of this book particularly Bridget Byrne, Stephen Jivraj and Georgia Haire.

Thank you to Andrea Pazos for the cover design and production of tables and figures and for never hesitating in responding to the many and varied comments from the EVENS team.

We are obliged to Shannon Kneis, Anna Richardson, Annie Rose and colleagues at Policy Press/Bristol University Press and Newgen Publishing for careful work to bring this book to fruition.

We acknowledge the UK Data Service for providing the platform for EVENS data access and for user support.

The EVENS project would not have been possible without funding from the UKRI Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). EVENS was funded via the CoDE grants 'Exploring racial and ethnic inequality in a time of crisis' (ES/V013475/1) and 'The social, cultural and economic impacts of the pandemic on ethnic and racialised groups in the UK' (ES/W000849/1).

Heartfelt thanks go to all those who promoted the EVENS Survey and have supported the broader project. NRF is grateful for the Riverside hideaway which provided a haven for overseeing the project (as well as a break from home schooling during lockdowns); and to Alan, Freya, Laurie and Xander for always findings ways and enthusiasm for what needed to be done. LBS is thankful for the support and love from Teo, Nuria, Tati, and abuela.

Nissa Finney, James Nazroo, Natalie Shlomo,
Dharmi Kapadia, Laia Bécares
St Andrews, Manchester, London
November 2022

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

9

Political participation and Black Lives Matter

Magda Borkowska, Neema Begum, Nissa Finney and Joseph Harrison

Key findings

Despite experiencing adversities, ethnic minority people report relatively high levels of political trust and continue to have high levels of political engagement indicated by interest in politics and political party affiliation.

- In relation to pandemic management, people across all ethnic backgrounds are more likely to trust the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and local mayors than the UK Parliament.
- Among ethnic minority people, the lowest levels of trust in the UK Parliament are reported by those from the Black Caribbean group, and the highest by those from Black African, Arab and Chinese groups.
- Most ethnic minority groups (with the exception of Roma, Gypsy/Traveller and White Eastern European groups) report higher levels of political interest than the White British group.
- People from the Roma group are the least likely to report having a political party preference, while the White Irish group has the highest proportion of people who identify with a political party.
- The distribution of political party preferences varies considerably across groups. Among ethnic minority people, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean people report the highest support for Labour. Conservatives gain the highest share of Jewish and the lowest share of Black Caribbean votes. Highest levels of support for the Liberal Democrats are found for White Eastern European, Chinese, White Irish and White other groups.
- The highest support for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is reported by Black Caribbean, Black African, and Arab groups; people from Roma, Gypsy/Traveller and White Eastern European groups are the least likely to support BLM.

Introduction

This chapter examines ethnic differences in the levels of political trust, political party preferences and attitudes towards BLM during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that ethnic inequalities in health and some labour market outcomes were exacerbated during this time (see Chapters 5, 7 and 8), but there is little evidence on what happened to the levels of political trust and other political attitudes. This is of interest because of the crucial role of political trust for crisis management (Devine et al, 2021; Jennings et al, 2021; Zahariadis et al, 2021; Busemeyer, 2022; Goldstein and Wiedemann, 2022; Weinberg, 2022). The effectiveness of government restrictions and guidelines in relation to health protective behaviours (such as social distancing, self-isolation, vaccination and restrictions on travelling) requires trust in the government and policy makers at the national, regional and local levels. This chapter exploits the high granularity of ethnic minority categories available in the Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) to compare political attitudes (including trust in different levels of government) across different ethnic groups at the time of the COVID-19 crisis. This is not only the first large-scale study on political attitudes of British ethnic minority groups during this period, but also the first large-scale survey evidence since the 2010 Ethnic Minority British Election Study.

Political trust

Political trust during the COVID-19 pandemic is usually assessed based on general population surveys with insufficient numbers of ethnic minority people for interethnic comparisons. This is an important gap in the literature because of potential implications of political trust for public behaviour and the differential impact of the pandemic on ethnic minority groups. For example, we know that some ethnic minority groups experienced particularly adverse health outcomes (see Chapter 5). Health protective behaviours such as vaccination or social distancing are some of the exemplar measures that are crucial for mitigating the higher risks of infection and complications from COVID-19. Political trust is one the key correlates of vaccine acceptance and compliance with other government-imposed measures (Han et al, 2021; Weinberg, 2022). Therefore, from the policy perspective, it is vital to understand whether there are significant interethnic differences in political trust, which could affect people's choices in relation to health protective guidelines. Given the long history of systemic ethnic discrimination (Byrne et al, 2020), which was acutely felt during the pandemic, we might expect that the levels of trust in government among ethnic minority people could be quite low. On the other hand, we know

that historically ethnic minority groups expressed relatively high levels of political trust (Maxwell 2010a; Heath et al. 2013).

The general population studies (Davies et al, 2021) show that political trust fluctuated during the pandemic period, with heightened trust observed around the first lockdown, and the subsequent decline of trust to pre-pandemic levels. In relation to interethnic differences, there is little evidence on the levels of trust of ethnic minority groups in Britain during this period. At the time of writing, we found only two studies which addressed political trust question across ethnic groups: the evidence from the YouGov poll (Abraham, 2021) as well as from the five UK cohort studies (Parsons and Wiggins, 2020) suggested that ethnic minorities have lower levels of trust in the UK government than White British people.

Political interest and participation

Survey data on ethnic minority political participation is increasingly outdated. The Ethnic Minority British Election Study (EMBES), the largest representative quantitative survey of ethnic minority political behaviour, was conducted in 2010. The existing work tends to focus on ethnic differences in voter registration, voting turnout and political party choice, with somewhat less attention paid to political interest.

Historical trends show that there tend to be lower levels of registration to vote in elections among some ethnic minority groups, particularly the Black African group, 25% of whom are not on electoral registers compared to 11% of White British people (Sobolewska and Barclay, 2021). However, turnout in elections for ethnic minorities tends to be similar to the White British population (after accounting for under-registration). Ethnic minority people also do not lag behind in terms of levels of political interest or having a political party affiliation (Heath et al, 2013). Traditionally, all ethnic minority groups have expressed consistently high support for the Labour Party. For example, in the 2017 general election, the Labour Party gained 77% of the ethnic minority vote (Martin and Khan, 2019).

While ethnic minorities have generally been found to be more left-leaning and supporting more liberal parties, the Labour Party has also been credited with bringing in different forms of anti-discrimination legislation, including the 1965 Race Relations Acts and its successors. This does not mean that Labour has a blemish-free record in terms of supporting ethnic minority rights. The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act further reduced the rights of Commonwealth citizens to migrate to the UK and recently Labour has been criticised for tolerating the anti-Semitism of some of its prominent members. The controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003 has also resulted in a significant loss of ethnic minority support for Labour.

Arguably, however, out of the main political parties, the Labour Party has been perceived as relatively sympathetic towards ethnic minority rights. On the contrary, the Conservative Party has been deemed more hostile towards ethnic minority and immigrant groups. Notable examples include former cabinet minister Enoch Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech criticising Commonwealth migration to the UK and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher referring to Britain becoming 'swamped' by immigration. Former Prime Minister David Cameron's modernisation of the party in the 2000s aimed to move the Conservative Party away from its 'nasty party' image with a concerted effort to bring greater diversity among Conservative candidates and to appeal to ethnic minority voters, particularly the Indian group. Indeed, support for the Conservatives has increased slightly in recent years among the Indian group, who were also the most pro-Brexit ethnic minority group in the 2016 EU referendum.

Due to small sample sizes, the existing studies generally examine patterns of political behaviour of five broad ethnic minority groups (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean and Black African), with almost no evidence on what these patterns look like among other ethnic groups. In this chapter we present the first evidence on political party preferences across 21 ethnic minority groups. We also take advantage of the wide coverage of EVENS to compare political party preferences for ethnic minority and majority people across England, Scotland and Wales. The time of the COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique opportunity to see how sensitive political attitudes are to the unfolding crisis situation. The 'rally around the flag' hypothesis suggests that in a time of crisis, people tend to support their political leaders more. On the other hand, the government's failure to address the uneven impact of the pandemic on ethnic minority groups could create a sense of grievance and political apathy.

Attitudes towards BLM

The COVID-19 pandemic has coincided with the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis in the US in May 2020. The ensuing BLM protests around the world placed racial inequalities firmly in the spotlight. Thus far, little has been known about the extent to which different ethnic minority groups in Britain support or oppose the BLM movement. As expected, the limited evidence that exists shows higher levels of support for BLM among ethnic minority people compared to White British people. However, given the strong focus of the BLM movement on police discrimination based on skin colour, it is not clear whether the level of support across different ethnic minority groups should be similarly high. The poll by Ipsos MORI conducted in 2020 shows that about 47% of White British respondents support the BLM movement compared to 75% of those

who identify as ethnic minorities (Ipsos MORI, 2020). The same poll also reports that the highest support was among those who identified as Black (81%). Similar interethnic differences across broadly defined ethnic groups were found in the US. The 2020 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (Parker et al, 2020) shows the highest level of BLM support among Black respondents (about 86%), followed by those from Hispanic (77%) and Asian (75%) backgrounds. In the same survey, the level of BLM support among White Americans was around 60%. Younger respondents (irrespective of ethnic background) also reported more positive attitudes towards BLM than older ones.

This chapter brings new evidence into our understanding of political trust and political attitudes during a global health crisis. In the next, empirical section, we first look at the patterns of political trust in different levels of government (national, subnational, mayoral and local) and examine how they compare across ethnic minority groups. We then turn to questions on the levels of political interest and political party support, and in the last section, we examine levels of support and opposition towards the BLM movement. In the final section of the chapter, we discuss our results in the context of past trends and reflect on what they mean in view of the ethnic minority experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ethnic differences in political trust across levels of the UK government

The EVENS survey asked all respondents to what extent they trusted the UK Parliament in relation to its management of the coronavirus outbreak. Those living in Scotland and Wales were also asked how much they trusted the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly respectively in their management of the coronavirus outbreak. The last question in relation to trust considered those living in local authorities with directly elected mayors and asked how much they trusted their mayor in terms of handling the COVID-19 outbreak. Figure 9.1 shows the likelihood that people would generally trust the UK Parliament in handling the pandemic for each ethnic group in EVENS.

All ethnic minority groups (except for Black Caribbean) expressed more trust in the UK Parliament's ability to handle the pandemic than the White British group. Overall, approximately 35% of White British respondents said they generally trust Parliament in terms of managing the pandemic. This figure dropped to 34% when we adjusted the predicted probability of trust for age and sex composition of the White British group. The highest levels of trust (over 60%) were reported by those from Arab (72%), Black African (72%), Chinese (68%), Other Asian (64%), Any other (62%) and Indian (61%) ethnic groups. Some of the white groups (Jewish, White Irish and Other White) and some of the mixed groups (White and Black African,

FIGURE 9.1: TRUST IN THE UK PARLIAMENT IN RELATION TO ITS MANAGEMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BY ETHNIC GROUP

Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'A lot or a fair amount' to the question 'How much do you trust the UK Parliament in relation to its management of the coronavirus outbreak?', adjusted for age, sex and month of interview. 95% confidence Intervals shown. N=12,785

White and Black Caribbean, and Other mixed) expressed somewhat lower levels of trust (around 40%) compared to other ethnic minority groups. Interestingly, White Eastern European people had much higher levels of trust (around 56%) compared to the Other White group. The lowest probability of trusting the UK Parliament (31%) was reported by those from a Black Caribbean background, but the difference between Black Caribbean and White British groups was not statically significant (at 95% confidence level).

The large geographical coverage of EVENS allows us to compare broad patterns of trust in the UK Parliament between different constituent countries of Britain. Figure 9.2 shows the percentage of people from non-White British and White British backgrounds living in England, Scotland and Wales who declared they generally trust the UK Parliament. Among White British respondents, the level of trust was significantly higher in England (37%), compared to Scotland (24%) and Wales (27%), whereas among ethnic minority respondents the level of trust was very high in both Wales (61%) and England (52%) and somewhat lower (41%) in Scotland. Although the nominal difference between ethnic minority trust in England and Wales seems substantial (nine percentage points), it was not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

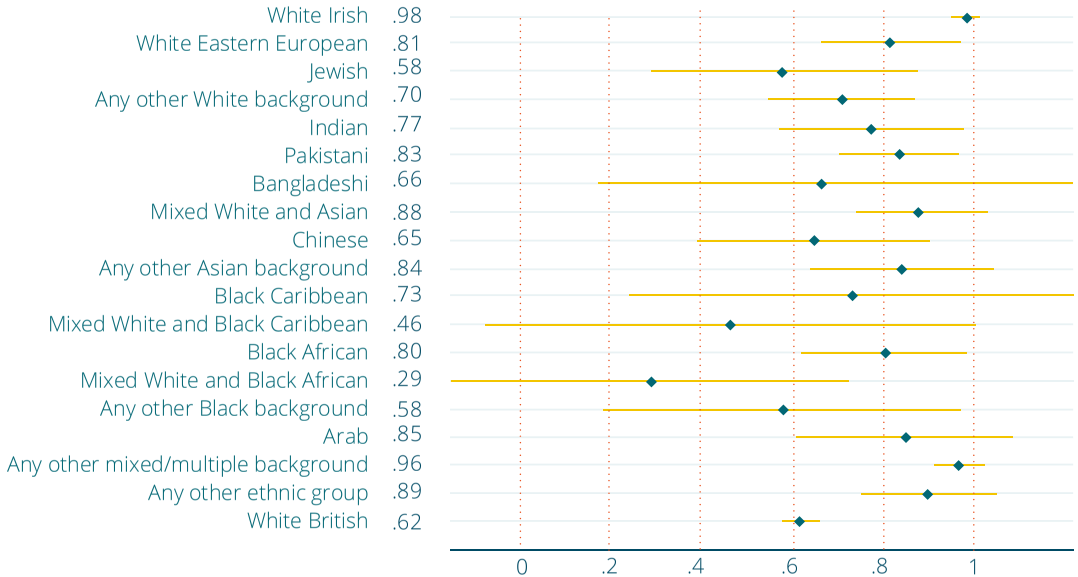
With respect to trust in devolved governments, the evidence from EVENS suggests that people from both White British and ethnic minority backgrounds are much more likely to trust the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly than the UK Parliament. For most ethnic groups, the level of devolved government's trust is over 60%. Figure 9.3 and Figure 9.4 report predicted probabilities of having trust in the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, respectively. We report the results for all ethnic groups. However, the smaller number of respondents in Scotland and Wales means we cannot confidently make detailed interethnic comparisons in these two UK countries and, instead, we only comment on broad patterns of trust among ethnic minority and White British groups. Similar to the levels of trust in the UK Parliament, ethnic minority people show higher levels of trust in their devolved governments than the White British group, but the difference between ethnic minority and White British with respect to a regional level of trust is much smaller than that for trust in the UK Parliament.

Our final question on political trust considered trust in local mayors. As shown in Figure 9.5, people from most ethnic groups are somewhat more likely to trust their local mayors than the UK Parliament, but less likely to trust the mayors than the devolved governments. Among White British, around 50% of respondents said they generally trust their mayors, which is about 15 percentage points more than levels of trust in the UK Parliament and about 10 percentage points less than levels of trust in the Scottish Parliament or the Welsh Assembly. Similar to other types of political trust, most ethnic minority groups have more trust in their local mayor than

FIGURE 9.2: REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE LEVEL OF TRUST IN THE UK PARLIAMENT IN RELATION TO ITS MANAGEMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, ETHNIC MINORITY RESPONDENTS COMPARED TO WHITE BRITISH RESPONDENTS

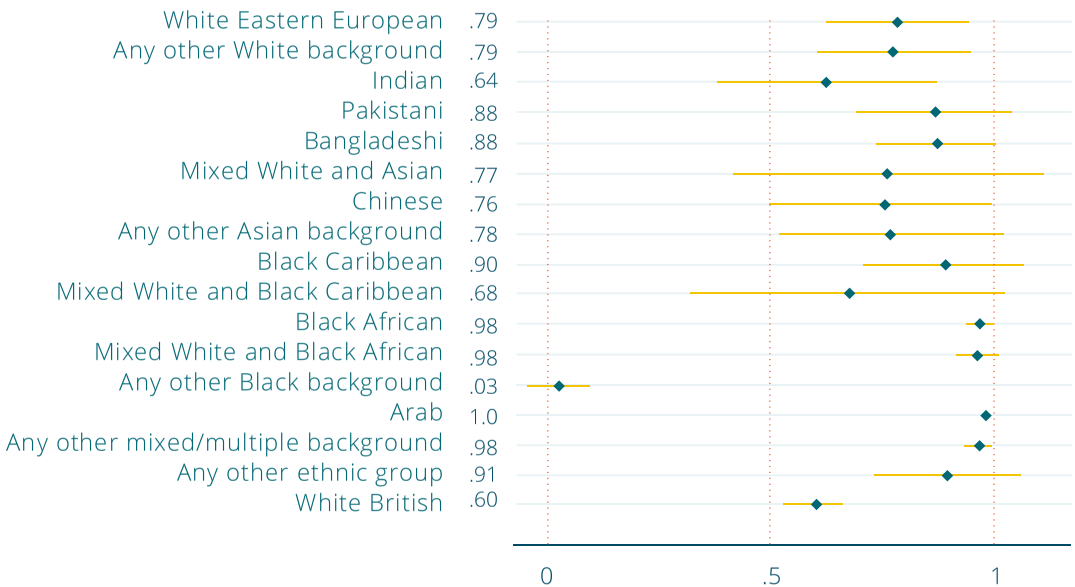
Note: Weighted percentages of responding 'A lot' and 'Fair amount of trust' to the question 'How much do you trust the UK Parliament in relation to its management of the coronavirus outbreak?' England: N=10,830; Scotland: N=1,038; Wales: N=782

FIGURE 9.3: TRUST IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT IN RELATION TO ITS MANAGEMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BY ETHNIC GROUP



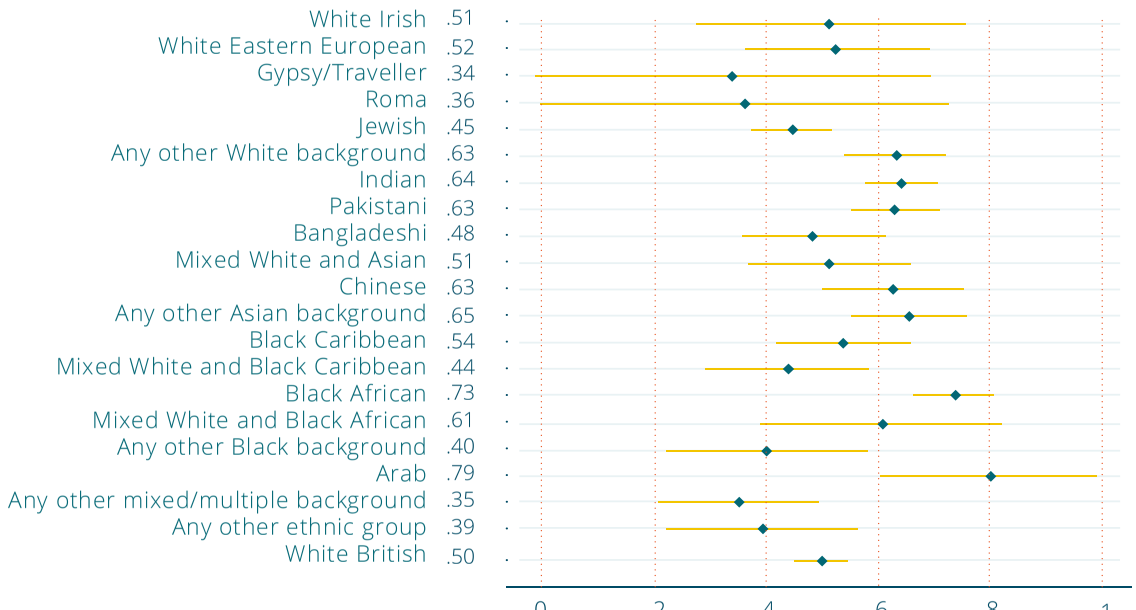
Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'A lot' and 'Fair amount of trust' to the question 'How much do you trust the Scottish Parliament in relation to its management of the coronavirus outbreak?', adjusted for age, sex and month of the interview. 95% confidence Intervals shown. N=1,035

FIGURE 9.4: TRUST IN THE WELSH ASSEMBLY IN RELATION TO ITS MANAGEMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BY ETHNIC GROUP



Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'A lot' and 'Fair amount of trust' to the question 'How much do you trust the Welsh Assembly in relation to its management of the coronavirus outbreak?', adjusted for age, sex, and month of the interview. 95% confidence Intervals shown. N=775

FIGURE 9.5: TRUST IN THE LOCAL ELECTED MAYOR IN RELATION TO THEIR MANAGEMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, BY ETHNIC GROUP



Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'A lot' and 'Fair amount of trust' to the question 'How much do you trust your elected [named area and mayor] in relation to their management of the coronavirus outbreak?', adjusted for age, sex and month of the interview. 95% confidence intervals shown. N=5,519

their White British counterparts. Somewhat lower levels of trust in local mayors were reported by the Gypsy/Traveller, Roma, Other mixed, Other Black and Any other groups, but the difference between these groups and the White British group was not statistically significant. However, we need to note here that in our sample, those who answered the question about trust in local mayors had a high proportion of London-based respondents, which means the results might not be generalisable to all local authorities with directly elected mayors.

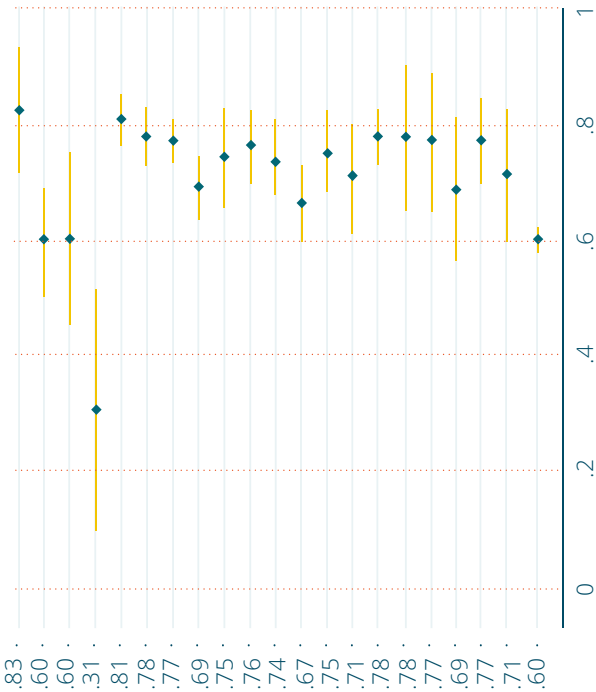
Ethnic differences in political interest

Interest in politics is a key dimension of democratic engagement. EVENS asked respondents 'How interested would you say you are in politics?', measured on a scale from 1 (Very interested) to 4 (Not at all interested). On average, as shown in Figure 9.6, between 60% and 80% of respondents reported being at least fairly interested in politics (when the age and gender composition of different ethnic groups was accounted for). The level of political interest was the lowest among the Roma group (31%) and the highest among White Irish (83%) and Jewish (81%) groups. Those from Eastern European and Gypsy/Traveller backgrounds had the same levels of political interest as the White British group (around 60%), whereas all other ethnic minority groups (except Roma) were more likely to report being interested in politics.

Ethnic differences in political affiliation

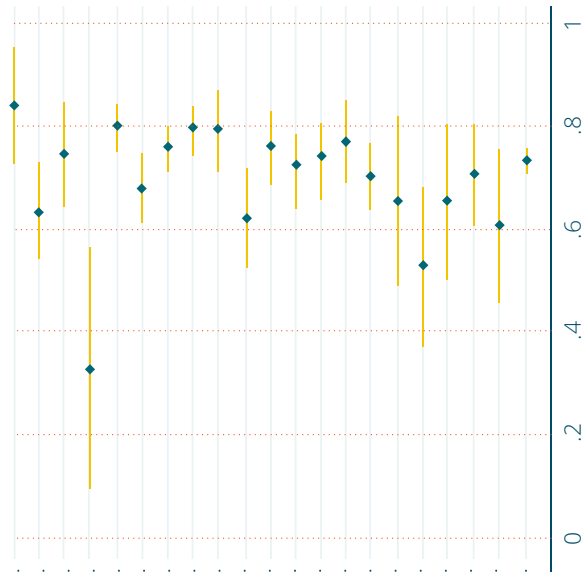
With respect to political party preferences, the EVENS respondents were asked 'If there were a UK general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?', with an option to choose from seven main UK political parties, specify an 'Other' party, indicate a lack of political party preference, a lack of voting intention or declare an ineligibility to vote. In this analysis, people who self-identified as ineligible to vote were excluded. Figure 9.7 shows the likelihood that people from different ethnic groups expressed a political party preference. On average, between 60% and 80% of respondents indicated having a political party preference, which is similar to the proportion of people who reported having at least a fair amount of political interest. Relative to the White British group (73%), a higher proportion of people from White Irish (84%), Jewish (80%), Pakistani (79%) and Bangladeshi (79%) backgrounds declared having a political party affiliation. In contrast, a relatively low proportion of people from the Roma (33%), Other Black (52%), Any other (60%), White and Asian (62%), and White Eastern European (63%) groups reported a political party preference.

FIGURE 9.6: POLITICAL INTEREST, BY ETHNIC GROUP



Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding 'Very' and 'Fairly interested' to the question 'How interested would you say you are in politics?', adjusted for age and sex. 95% confidence intervals shown. N=12,411

FIGURE 9.7: POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION (ANY), BY ETHNIC GROUP



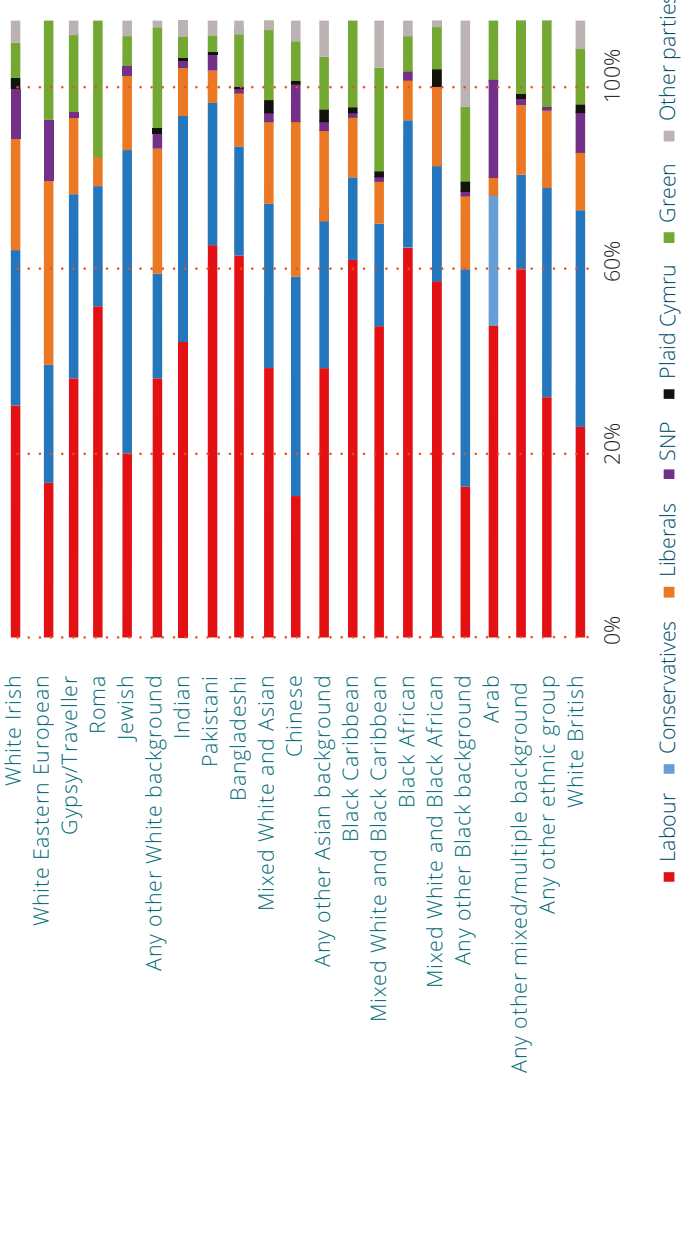
Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of expressing preference for a (any) political party, adjusted for age and sex. 95% confidence intervals shown. N=12,220

Figure 9.8 considers how patterns of political party preferences differ across ethnic groups. It shows that Labour still garners the majority of the ethnic minority vote, although there is a significant variation across groups. The highest support for Labour (over 60%) is found among Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black African and Black Caribbean groups, whereas the lowest (30% or lower) is found among those from Chinese, Other Black, White Eastern European and Jewish groups. In our sample, the White British vote is split evenly between Labour and the Conservatives, with 35% of respondents supporting Labour and 35% supporting the Conservatives. Support for the Conservatives is the highest among those from a Jewish background (50%), followed by Indian (37%), Chinese (37%) and Other Black (36%). Liberal Democrats can count on a significant proportion of the White Eastern European (30%), Chinese (26%), Other White (20%) and White Irish (18%) vote, whereas the Greens do best among those from Roma (21%), Other White (17%), White and Black Caribbean (17%), White Eastern European (16%), Black Caribbean (14%) and Gypsy/Traveller (13%) backgrounds. The ability to observe clear, distinctive patterns of political party preferences among those from Roma, Gypsy/Traveller, Jewish, White Eastern European and Chinese groups is unique to EVENS. Previously we had very little evidence on political party preferences of these ethnic groups.

Ethnic differences in political affiliation across the constituent countries of Britain

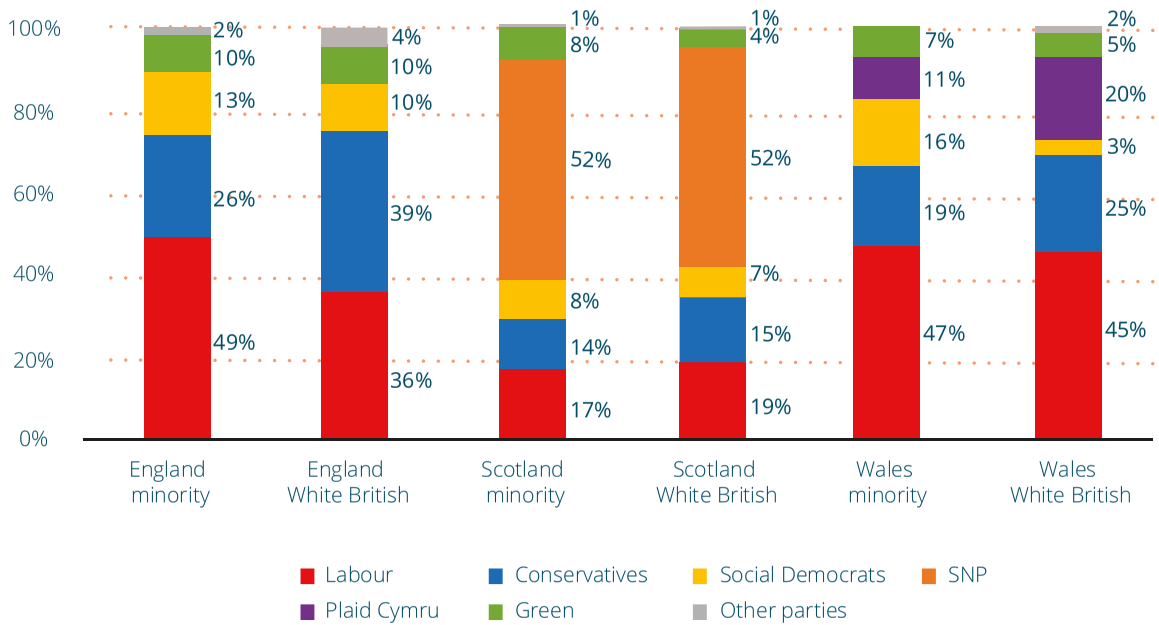
There are stark differences in political affiliation between the White British majority and ethnic minority voters in the constituent countries of Britain, as shown in Figure 9.9. In England, ethnic minority people have much higher support for Labour compared to the White British majority (49% versus 36%), whereas in Scotland and Wales, both ethnic minority and White British people report similar levels of Labour affiliation. Support for the Scottish National Party (SNP) among ethnic minority voters is also on a par with the White British majority in Scotland (around 52%). As expected, there is a generally lower level of Conservative support in Scotland (14-15%) and Wales (19-25%) compared to England (26-39%) among both White British and ethnic minority people. Liberal Democrats in Wales turn out to be a more popular choice among ethnic minority groups compared to White British voters (16% vs 3%), whereas in England and Scotland, this is on a par with the White British majority. In contrast, support for Plaid Cymru in Wales is much lower among ethnic minority (11%) compared to White British (20%) voters. The Green Party fares better with minority voters (8%) in Scotland compared to the White British (4%) majority.

FIGURE 9.8: POLITICAL PARTY PREFERENCES, BY ETHNIC GROUP



Note: Weighted percentages. Base: People who reported having any political party preference. N= 8,767

FIGURE 9.9: DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL PARTY PREFERENCES BETWEEN ETHNIC MINORITY AND WHITE BRITISH RESPONDENTS IN ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES



Note: Weighted percentages. Base: All who reported having any political party preference. England N=7,323; Scotland N=792; Wales N=525

Ethnic differences in support for BLM

To shed light on the BLM support across different ethnic groups in Britain, EVENS asked 'To what extent do you support or oppose the Black Lives Matter movement?', measured on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly support) to 5 (strongly oppose). Figure 9.10 reports the predicted probabilities of supporting the BLM movement for people from different ethnic groups. On average, a little over half of the White British respondents (55%) declare support for the BLM movement. With a few exceptions, the level of BLM support among ethnic minority groups is considerably higher. Particularly strong support is reported by those from Black Caribbean (78%), Black African (78%), Arab (78%) and White Irish (78%) groups, followed by those from Pakistani (77%), Indian (76%) and Bangladeshi (73%) backgrounds. People who identify as Jewish, Chinese, those with different mixed backgrounds and those who belong to Any other Black groups report somewhat lower levels of support (between 57% % and 70% declare they support BLM). People from Roma, Gypsy/Traveller and White Eastern European backgrounds are the least likely to support BLM, with estimates ranging from 28% to 41% for people from these groups, which is significantly less than the estimated level of support among the White British group. Importantly, however, most people who do not support BLM report neutral attitudes. The opposition towards BLM is generally low, especially among ethnic minority respondents (Figure 9.10). The highest proportion of people who oppose the BLM movement is found among those from Roma, Jewish, White Eastern European, Any other and White British backgrounds (between 20% and 35%).

Discussion

EVENS provides unique evidence on ethnic differences in political attitudes during the turbulent time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter has shown that, despite continuous experience of disadvantage, most ethnic minority people report higher levels of trust in national, regional and local governments compared to White British respondents. We do not find evidence of political alienation of ethnic minority people in relation to other indicators of political engagement such as interest in politics and having a political party affiliation. Similar to the measures of trust, most ethnic minority respondents score higher on our political engagement measures than their White British counterparts. This, however, does not mean that people from ethnic minority backgrounds are indifferent to ethnic discrimination. The support for the BLM movement is very high across most ethnic minority groups, which can be interpreted as a strong voice against experienced injustice.

FIGURE 9.10: SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION FOR BLACK LIVES MATTER, BY ETHNIC GROUP

Note: Chart shows predicted probabilities of responding chart shows predicted probabilities of reporting 'Strongly support/oppose' and 'Tend to support/oppose' to the question 'To what extent do you support or oppose the Black Lives Matter movement?', adjusted for age and sex. 95% confidence intervals shown. N=12,200

Political trust

Consistent with pre-pandemic periods, we find that, during the COVID-19 crisis, ethnic minority people tended to trust the UK Parliament more than White British people did. The patterns of political trust for six broad ethnic groups (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, Black African and Mixed Black/White) sampled in the EMBES 2010 survey (the last nationally representative UK survey of ethnic minorities' political attitudes) are similar to those found in EVENS. In both surveys (conducted 11 years apart), Black Caribbean and Mixed Black/White groups were less likely to trust the UK Parliament than Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African groups. In 2010, however, the level of trust among the Black Caribbean and Mixed Black/White groups was lower than the level of trust among the White British group, whereas during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was on par with the White British group. It might be that, during times of crisis, even the sceptics tend to have more faith that political leaders will act responsibly in order to manage a global health threat. The notable differences in the levels of trust between different ethnic minority groups might to some extent reflect the differences in experiences of racism and discrimination (see Chapter 4). Unsurprisingly, perceptions of institutional discrimination and trust in democratic institutions often go hand in hand (Maxwell, 2010b).

Existing research points to two factors that can be used to interpret the relatively high levels of political trust among Arab, Chinese, Other Asian, Jewish and White Eastern European groups. First, a significant proportion of people from these ethnic groups are foreign-born and the literature suggests that immigrants tend to express more favourable opinions about the quality of democracy and its institutions in their new country (Maxwell, 2010a, 2010b). Second, a sizeable proportion of people from these groups are likely to be born in countries with less well-functioning democracies than the UK (at least according to commonly used measures of quality of democracy such as polity2 [Teorell et al, 2020]). We can speculate that their positive opinion of the UK Parliament might be a relative one, as comparison is made between government performance in their origin countries and the performance of the UK government. The rationale for the relatively high level of trust reported by those from Gypsy/Traveller and Roma backgrounds is less clear, given that both groups have been traditionally politically marginalised and, for these reasons, we would expect them to have relatively low levels of trust. To date, however, we have had no quantitative evidence on political attitudes of these groups and further work in this area is undoubtedly required.

The generally higher level of trust in devolved governments reported by EVENS respondents is in line with the existing evidence from the polls (ONS, 2022; Scottish Government, 2022; YouGov, 2022). However, what

is interesting here is that the higher levels of trust in the Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly are equally, or even more so, felt by ethnic minority respondents as the White British respondents. None of the quantitative surveys to date was explicitly able to compare the levels of trust in central and devolved governments for White British and ethnic minority groups. The EVENS finding of elevated political trust for some ethnic minority groups warrants further investigation.

Political interest

This chapter has shown that ethnic minority people were slightly more likely than White British people to be interested in politics. This is generally in line with the past evidence from the 2010 EMBES (Heath et al, 2013), as well as more recent evidence from the 2021 Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust bespoke poll (Sobolewska and Barkley 2021). However, we note some differences compared to previously reported patterns. The 2010 EMBES showed that people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds were somewhat less likely to be interested in politics than White British people, whereas EVENS suggests that all ethnic minority groups (that were included in both surveys) reported similar or slightly higher levels of political interest than White British people.

A few explanations can be posited for these differences. First, the higher levels of political interest among ethnic minority people found in EVENS might be due to the age and generational composition of the EVENS sample compared to the EMBES 2010. Over the past 11 years, immigration patterns and demographic momentum have meant that the proportion of ethnic minority people born in the UK has increased, which could have affected the relative patterns of political engagement across ethnic groups.

Second, the EVENS ethnic minority sample is slightly younger than the EMBES sample; due to the online nature of questionnaire completion, it is likely that some of the least politically engaged young respondents were not covered in the EVENS sample, as it is generally expected that political interest and the likelihood of completing online social surveys are positively correlated. Finally, it is also important to keep in mind that the 2010 EMBES asked respondents two separate questions about interest in 'British politics' and interest in 'home country' politics, whereas EVENS asked about interest in 'politics' more generally. It is unlikely that this would have a major impact on the patterns of responses, as Heath et al (2013) have shown that interest in 'home country' and 'British politics' go hand in hand, suggesting that people who are politically engaged tend to follow political debates in multiple country contexts.

With respect to the political interest of groups that are not usually the focus of political research largely due to the previous lack of quantitative

data, those from Jewish and White Irish backgrounds are the most likely to report at least a fair amount of interest in politics. On the contrary, those from Roma, Gypsy/Traveller and White Eastern European backgrounds tend to be the least interested in politics. Despite the lack of a direct source of comparative survey data for these groups, plausible interpretations can be made for the observed patterns. For example, some of the common correlates of political interest include high levels of education, a high sense of belonging to the country and having citizenship or voting rights. These reasons could help us understand why people from Jewish background are likely to report relatively high levels of political interest (as shown in Chapters 3 and 8, Jewish people have some of the highest levels of education and a sense of belonging to British society across ethnic groups). A relatively high education level (see Chapter 8) and the privileged access to voting in the UK elections (Johnston, 2021) among the White Irish group might also partially explain why White Irish people are more likely to report positive political interest. On the contrary, the socioeconomic marginalisation of Roma and Gypsy/Traveller groups can be linked to higher levels of political alienation.

The Eastern European case of relatively low levels of political interest is a novel and interesting finding from EVENS. On the one hand, the traditionally low naturalisation rates of migrants from the post-2004 EU accession countries (Fernandez-Reino and Sumption, 2022) as well as generally low levels of political trust and political participation in Eastern European countries (Hooghe and Quintelier, 2014; OECD 2021) provide plausible reasons for why we could expect low levels of political interest among this group. On the other hand, in the post-Brexit reality, one could expect that the increased political salience of immigration, especially from the Eastern European EU countries, together with the recent increase in citizenship applications made by Eastern Europeans (Fernandez-Reino and Sumption, 2022), could have led to heightened political interest among this group. The results from EVENS suggest that the actual political interest of this group is somewhere in the middle – Eastern Europeans are equally as likely to be politically interested as White British people, but less likely to be interested than other ethnic minority groups (except Gypsy/Traveller and Roma groups).

Political affiliation

High support for the Labour Party among ethnic minority people has traditionally been attributed to the idea of 'linked fate', which can be broadly understood as a belief that the fate of one's ethnic group affects individual life chances. In other words, when people feel they are not getting their fair share of resources because of their ethnicity, they are more likely to vote in order to further their interests as a group rather

than just as individuals. For example, Dawson (1994) found that in the US, African Americans vote for the Democrats because it is the party they associate with promoting the interests of Black people as a group. As members of a discriminated ethnic minority group, their fates are 'linked' to one another, which results in a shared political agenda. Similarly, the idea of 'relative ethnic deprivation' (Vanneman and Pettigrew, 1972) is linked to ethnic minority voter support for left-wing parties that have traditionally promoted policies to provide welfare and equalise society socioeconomically. Higher support for the Conservatives among the Indian group, for example, has been attributed to them having a weaker sense of relative ethnic deprivation (Heath et al, 2011).

The EVENS analysis in this chapter has demonstrated the continuing trend of historically low support for the Conservatives among Black Caribbean people. The policing of Black communities under the Conservative governments (2010–22) as well as the Windrush Scandal (Byrne et al, 2020) are factors that might have contributed to the continuation of this trend. The relatively high levels of support for the Liberal Democrats among the Chinese, White Irish, White Eastern European and White Other groups may be related to their pro-EU membership stance and relatively pro-immigration position (Liberal Democrats, 2019).

The analyses presented in this chapter reveals new patterns of political affiliation across ethnic minority groups. In the absence of other recent evidence or polling the interpretations are rather speculative and further research on ethnic differences in voting motivations is needed to complement the EVENS analysis.

BLM

The findings on the high levels of support for BLM across ethnic minority groups (with the exception of the Roma and Gypsy/Traveller groups) can be interpreted as an expression of past and contemporary experiences of racism and discrimination (see Chapter 4) and the levels of perceived ethnic inequalities in the UK. Historically, levels of police discrimination have been arguably highest among the Black Caribbean group, which also tends to report the highest perceived levels of ethnic discrimination (Maxwell, 2012; Heath et al, 2013; see also Chapter 4). On the other hand, White Eastern Europeans usually report some of the lowest levels of ethnic discrimination, with Chinese and Jewish people situated somewhere in the middle. Those from a White Irish background, despite being less exposed to ethnic discrimination (see Chapter 4), tend to express relatively a low level of political trust, which together with their longstanding ambiguous position as both ethnic insiders and outsiders (Walter, 2001) might help to explain why they might be particularly sensitive to racial injustice matters.

The influence of country of origin is also likely to play a role in support for BLM, especially among immigrants. Given that all Eastern European respondents in EVENS are first-generation immigrants, their low level of support for BLM might reflect the relative absence of racial equality discourse in most Eastern European countries and a relatively high prevalence of xenophobic attitudes in these countries (Eurobarometer, 2019). However, the relatively low levels of support for BLM among the Roma and Gypsy/Traveller groups are somewhat more difficult to interpret. On the one hand, these groups have been highly marginalised and exposed to ethnic discrimination, including discrimination by the police, so one might expect that the BLM movement should particularly resonate with their experiences. On the other hand, they might have a sense of being forgotten, given that the incidents of police violence against people from Gypsy/Traveller and Roma backgrounds are rarely picked up by the national media and, even if they are, public outrage in response to such reports seems to be much quieter. Furthermore, the relatively low level of political interest among these groups suggests that they are generally more disconnected from political debates, which might affect their level of engagement with the BLM movement.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that in the time of COVID-19 crisis, most ethnic minority groups in Britain expressed relatively high levels of political trust in central and devolved governments in relation to pandemic management. This might be somewhat surprising given the hardships experienced by ethnic minority people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most ethnic minority groups also express equally high or higher levels of political interest compared to the White British group and do not lag behind this group in terms of having political party affiliation. However, the level of support for different political parties differs significantly across ethnic groups. Some of these patterns, such as generally high levels of support for the Labour Party among ethnic minority people, are in line with the long-term trends; other findings, such as a relatively high level of support for the Conservatives and/or the Liberal Democrats among Chinese, Jewish, Any Other Black, Eastern Europeans, White Irish and White other groups, represent the first quantitative, nationally representative evidence on political party preferences for these groups. For the first time, we are also able to show comparative statistics of political engagement and political trust for the Gypsy/Traveller and Roma groups. We find that Gypsy/Traveller patterns of political engagement and trust are generally similar to those of other ethnic minority groups, but that people from a Roma background feel particularly politically alienated. We also find that not all ethnic minority people are equally likely to support the BLM movement – those from Roma, Gypsy/Traveller and

White European backgrounds tend to feel less positively about the BLM. Although the descriptive findings in relation to the political engagement differences of the groups about which we knew very little are illuminating in their own right, further work is needed to uncover the key drivers and mechanisms behind these apparent differences.

Box 9.1: Political participation and Black Lives Matter: measures and methods

All the analyses in this chapter use propensity score weights, which have been implemented using the svy package in Stata 16.

Figures 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7 and 9.10 report predicted probabilities based on logistic regression models adjusted for age and sex (all models) and month of the interview (models of political trust). This is to account for the fact that these demographic characteristics are strongly associated with political attitudes and behaviours. However, in most cases, the models adjusted for the respondent's age and sex do not alter the differences between ethnic groups observed when no demographic characteristics are controlled for. Given that levels of political trust fluctuated considerably during the pandemic (Davies et al, 2021), accounting for the month of survey completion is particularly important in the models of trust compared to other political outcomes that are less time sensitive. The predicted probabilities can be interpreted as the predicted proportion of people who reported outcome y (that is, trusted the UK Parliament), after respondents' age and sex were taken into account.

Figures 9.2, 9.8 and 9.9 report weighted percentages for ethnic groups without any additional adjustments.

Variable coding:

Trust in the UK Parliament/Scottish Parliament/Welsh Assembly/local mayor is based on the following question(s): 'How much do you trust the UK Parliament (GOV01)/ Scottish Parliament (GOV02)/Welsh Assembly(GOV03)/local mayor (GOV04) in relation to its management of the coronavirus outbreak? 1. A lot; 2. A fair amount; 3. Not very much; 4. Not at all.' Responses 1 and 2 are coded as (1) 'generally trusting' and responses 3 and 4 are coded as (2) 'generally not trusting'.

Political interest is based on the following question: 'How interested would you say you are in politics? (GOV05) 1. Very interested; 2. Fairly interested; 3. Not very interested; 4. Not at all interested.' Responses 1 and 2 are coded as (1) 'generally interested in politics' and responses 3 and 4 are coded as (2) 'generally not interested in politics'.

Political party affiliation is measured by the following question: 'If there were a UK general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for? (GOV06) 1. Labour; 2. Conservatives; 3. Liberal Democrats; 4. Scottish National Party (SNP); 5. Plaid Cymru; 6. Green Party; 7. Reform UK (previously known as the Brexit Party); 8. Other (please specify); 9. I would not vote; 10. I am not eligible to vote; 11. Don't know; 12. Prefer not to say.' Respondents who self-identified as non-eligible are excluded from the analysis. Those who replied 'don't know' or 'would not vote' are coded as (0) 'no political party preference'. Respondents who chose any political party are coded as 1 'Has political party preference'.

Support for Black Lives Matter is based on the following question: 'To what extent do you support or oppose the Black Lives Matter movement? (BLM01) 1. Strongly support; 2. Tend to support; 3. Neither support nor oppose; 4. Tend to oppose; 5. Strongly oppose.' Responses 1 and 2 are coded as (1) 'generally supports BLM' and responses 4 and 5 are coded as (2) 'generally opposes BLM'.