

# **Briefing for the Equalities Panel on needs assessment for ethnic minority people living in, studying in, or working in Cambridge**

## **Introduction to needs assessment**

In 2021, Cambridge City Council commissioned Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum (CECF) to undertake a needs assessment for ethnic minority people living in, working in, and/or studying in Cambridge.

The needs assessment covered topics around:

- Access to services
- Participation in social and cultural events in the city
- Wellbeing - including questions on impacts of Covid-19, overall health, including mental health, and loneliness
- Educational and employment opportunities in the city
- Safety – including experience of discrimination and hate crime

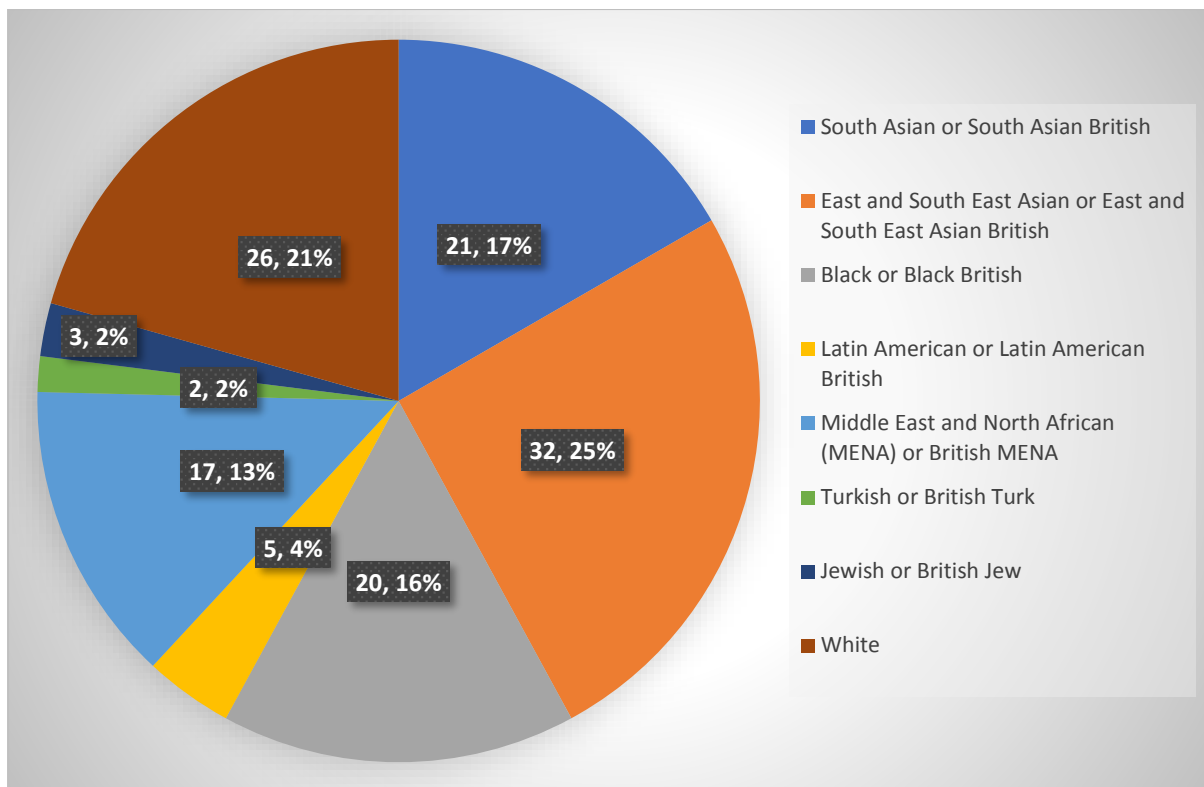
The research findings will inform Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum services and Cambridge City Council's equalities strategy (the Single Equality Scheme).

There were 132 responses to the survey and although most responses were completed online. Some 29 responses were completed face-to-face. Some of the support CECF provided for people completing the paper-based version face-to-face was to help people for whom English is a second language or people with low literacy in understanding the questions. The wording of the questions took cultural sensitivities into account and avoided the use of jargon.

## **Key statistics on who completed the survey**

### **Ethnic origin, background, or heritage**

CECF aimed to get a balanced number of responses from different ethnic communities, including those communities that have been historically marginalised. Here is the breakdown by ethnic group of people completing the survey:



Under these broader categories above for ethnic backgrounds people were asked to identify their ethnicity, background, or heritage. The most common answers (and ethnicities where there were more than five respondents were:

- African – 17 respondents (13%)
- Arab – 13 respondents (10%)
- Bangladeshi – 10 respondents (8%)
- Chinese – 25 respondents (19%)
- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British – 9 respondents (7%)
- Indian – 6 respondents (5%)
- Latin American – 5 respondents (4%)
- White European – 10 respondents (8%)

### Other characteristics of respondents

- Most respondents (35%) were from the north of Cambridge (Arbury, Kings Hedges, Chesterton and Orchard Park), followed by the Southeast for 30% (areas of Cherry Hinton, Petersfield, Romsey and Teversham).
- There was a broad spread of household income amongst respondents to the survey. The most common income bracket was £25,000 to £34,999 (15% of respondents). The second most common answer on income bracket was £60,000 to £99,999 (14% of respondents) followed by £0 to

£4,999 (13% of respondents). However, nearly a quarter or 24% of respondents had low income in the £0-14,999 range.

- 64% of respondents were in employment and 31% were economically inactive (of which 33% were unemployed).
- Respondents tended to be highly educated. For most people the highest level of education was degree or equivalent (31% of respondents). This was followed by postgraduate masters or equivalent (27% of respondents) and then doctoral degree or equivalent (16% of respondents).
- 14% of respondents were an asylum seeker or refugee.
- Most respondents owned their home (46% of respondents). The second most common answer was private rented for 23%, followed by council housing for 19%. If you included Housing Association as it is also Social Housing, then the figure would be 34 or 26%.
- Most respondents were aged between 40-54 (43%) or 25-39 (29%).
- 14% had a disability.
- 63% were married or in a civil partnership and 37% were not.
- 47% of respondents had children and 7% cared for other dependents.
- 76% said they were female and 24% said they were male. When asked a follow up question “If you prefer to use another term, please specify here” there were no answers.
- (92%) shared they were heterosexual and 7% were either bisexual, gay or lesbian.

## Key findings

### Access to services

- 58% of respondents had contacted or used **Cambridge City Council services** in the preceding year.
  - For people contacting the council, there was a large spread of income. Of ethnic groups with the lowest incomes, 53% of African respondents had contacted Cambridge City Council and 46% of Arab respondents. Chinese people had the highest incomes and 60% had contacted the council.
  - The most common contacts were to the waste and council tax services.
  - 21% of contacts were rated as ‘very good’, 40% were rated as ‘good’, 28% as ‘satisfactory’, 6% as bad and 4% as ‘very bad’.
  - The most common ethnic group to access council services was English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British people (78%), suggesting that ethnic minority communities have more barriers from accessing our services or lack confidence and knowledge about accessing services. Bangladeshi people were the next most likely community to contact the council – for 70%. *Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum’s*

*Race Equality Service has also found that the community or diaspora that came out as the main one consistently assisted or supported through their service during 2022-2023 was the Bangladeshi, comprising of over 60% of the beneficiaries and 85% of the work for the South Asian category. 14% of all total beneficiaries helped, with 33% of all total work completed being for this community. There was a consistent trend towards help with energy and food needs for most of the beneficiaries, together with issues around accessing benefits and social housing, education – children and school – health and general welfare needs.*

- People were asked about access to other public sector services in the preceding year.
  - People were invited to rate their experiences of using other public services: 26% said 'very good', 31% 'good', 27% 'satisfactory', 13% 'bad', and 4% 'very bad'.
  - The most accessed service was people's GP for 46% of respondents, followed by Addenbrookes Hospital for 33%.
  - Respondents were also invited to comment on whether anything might make it easier for them to access public services and the most common response was needing interpretation or translation support.
- People were asked which non-public sector services they accessed, and the most common response was Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum (35% of respondents), followed by Cambridge & District Citizens Advice (12%).
- 23% of respondents had experienced food poverty over the preceding 12 months and 23% had experienced fuel poverty over the preceding 6 months. Most commonly people got support from Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum with food and fuel poverty. People were also asked whether the food met their health or cultural requirements and whether they got support they needed, most did, however small numbers answered no.
- As there has been an increase in online services, we asked respondents how confident they were in looking up information or completing forms online. Whilst 77% were confident or very confident in looking up information online, 23% were not very confident or not at all. Those most likely to not feel confident were Arab, Bangladeshi, and African respondents (in that order). People shared that they could not access IT due to lack of confidence in using IT and language barriers.

### **Participation in social and cultural events in the city**

- Respondents were asked if they take part in any social and cultural activities/celebrations in the city and 55% said yes. Those who said yes were disproportionately found in higher income brackets.
- People were asked which social and cultural activities/celebrations they attend out of a list. People were most likely to attend International Women's

Day events/activities (86%), followed by Chinese New Year (23%) and then Black History Month (20%).

- The least well attended events and activities were South Asian History Month, Disability History Month and LGBTQ+ History Month.
- Seventeen people had attended the Mela.
- Finally, respondents were asked how they felt about social and support activities for ethnic minority communities in the city and 61% said they would like more activities.

## Wellbeing

- 29% felt that their mental health had been negatively impacted by Covid-19. When asked how, the most common responses related to isolation and loneliness.
- People were asked questions to indicate levels of social connectedness before and after Covid-19. The responses demonstrated that even before Covid-19, many people felt disconnected from others in different ways, but findings showed that Covid-19 exacerbated these issues.
- Especially notable was that 85% answered no to the statement that it was easy to make friends before Covid-19. 76% answered no to having similar interests with people they knew, 31% felt that they could not call on family and friends for help and support. 23% wanted to do more activities with other people.
- 129 people answered the question on whether they had a hospital appointment or operation delayed or cancelled as a result of Covid-19, and 26% said yes.
- Of those using public services people were invited to share their experiences. Negative comments mostly related to difficulty of accessing healthcare services. Although the survey for this report was undertaken towards the end of 2021, there are still issues locally for ethnic minority communities' access to healthcare. *The "Access to Healthcare in Cambridge" survey carried out in February and March 2023, by CCVS supported by CECF, also identified that 45% had experienced issues in accessing healthcare services in general over the previous year (over 50% of survey respondents were from non-White backgrounds).*

## Opportunities in the city

- Low numbers of people felt comfortable applying for jobs in different sectors. This was even the case for those that people answered yes to feeling comfortable with applying for jobs in including the voluntary and community sector (61%), Cambridge City Council (52%) and Education (51%). People were most likely to answer no to feeling comfortable with applying for jobs in the Police (50%), Fire Service (50%) and in Transport (42%). People's

reasoning for feeling uncomfortable (in order of commonality of responses) related feelings that they lack appropriate skills or qualifications, language barriers, and lacking trust in the public sector.

- Amongst respondents, there tended to be correlation where having higher qualifications meant higher income levels, and vice versa:
  - 75% of respondents from an East and Southeast Asian or East and South East Asian British background had a postgraduate masters, doctoral degree or equivalent education level. They also had the highest incomes with 24% earning between £60,000 to £99,999 and 28% over £100,000 (this was especially the case for Chinese respondents).
  - On the other hand, people from a Middle East and North African (MENA) or British MENA background were disproportionately likely to be unemployed, on incomes under £15,000 (especially Arab people) and have A Levels, NVQ, Diploma or equivalent as highest qualifications.
- However, for Black respondents there was not a correlation between high income and high education level: as 37% had a degree or above (or their equivalents) but 25% were unemployed, and they had the lowest earnings out of ethnic groups (especially African people).
- 25% of respondents had experienced discrimination within at least one of the following contexts: their place of work, study, or volunteering. Answers given sharing the experiences of discrimination in these three contexts demonstrate the huge impact on people's daily life given the amount of time people spend in work, and the significant impact that this has on workplace progression and access to other opportunities.
- 38% of respondents had a drop in income due to Covid-19.

## Safety

- 22% shared that they had experienced hate crime in the last two years. The ethnic groups most likely to experience hate crime were Chinese people (40%) and White Other European people (30%). *Local statistics from the Police also showed that in September 2021 there was a significant spike of hate crimes relating to a specific spree of criminal acts affecting the Chinese community. Moreover, the latest community safety assessment for the city found that there were 344 police-recorded hate crime offences in Cambridge over 2021-22, a 12% increase on pre-pandemic levels, below the 46% increase observed nationally over the same period.*
- Hate crime experienced by respondents to the survey might not just have been motivated by hatred towards their ethnicity: 56% of bisexual, gay or lesbian respondents had experienced hate crime and 30% of disabled respondents. However, the most recent UK-wide statistics (for 2021/22)

demonstrate that most hate crime is racially motivated (70%). Does this reflect Cambridge as above too?

- Of those who had experienced hate crime in our survey, only 29% reported it. People had mixed experiences of reporting hate crime and those who commented on their experience felt that not much was done to address it.
- People were asked why they did not report hate crime and answers reflected:
  - That people felt they would not have a positive experience of reporting it. Related to this, some felt it would not make a difference, would not be treated as a priority and others were mistrustful of the police.
  - They did not feel they had enough evidence for a report to make a difference or felt the incident not to be significant enough.
- 8% of respondents said they did not feel safe on streets of Cambridge during the day and 49% said they felt unsafe at night. People commonly shared that better/more lighting would help them feel safer, and some people mentioned greater police presence. Many respondents mentioned avoiding unsafe situations like certain areas, going out at night, or going out very often due to safety concerns. Some respondents shared that hate incidents had made them feel unsafe.

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**Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at Cambridge City Council**

**June 2023**