



Information, Motivation, Representation

Minority Ethnic Participation in the 2012 Scottish Local Government elections

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For further information on this project and our on-going work in relation to increasing minority ethnic participation in Scottish political structures, or on the wider work of CRER, please contact:

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Section One – Introduction

Turnout at elections in Scotland in recent years have demonstrated a consistent trend downwards. This has been noticeable across the different voting contexts; however there is a marked contrast between those elections considered most important, i.e. Westminster and Holyrood; and those seen to be in the second level such as the European Parliament and Local Government elections.

Scottish Local Government elections in recent years have been held on the same day as the Scottish Parliament elections, therefore benefiting from the increased turnout of those elections, although also being challenged by the lack of profile given to them. Following the problems of the 2007 Scottish Parliamentary elections, where spoilage rates reached nearly 14% in some areas, the decision was made to decouple the Local Government elections, moving them to take place on their own in 2012.

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)¹ undertook a small scale research study with minority ethnic communities, to explore their experiences of participating in political and democratic life in Scotland and to suggest possible ways to increase the level of participation. This report builds upon the work undertaken by CEMVO Scotland² in their Inclusive Democracy Project (IDP), which published its final report in 2010 exploring some of the issues in greater detail. An additional CRER report, looking at the experiences and views of minority ethnic candidates in the 2012 elections accompanies this report and is available from the CRER website.

This report outlines the background heading into the 2012 elections; the views of minority ethnic people on the importance and relevance of the elections and wider democratic participation; and offers some suggestions for ways that democratic structures and political parties can engage more genuinely and effectively with minority ethnic communities. In addition, there is a specific focus on young minority ethnic people (aged 16-18) in order to explore the challenges and opportunities which exist in terms of encouraging greater participation on their part in the democratic processes of the country.

A note on terminology

The term 'minority ethnic' (ME) has been used in this report. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) is a term that is also used frequently in research and writing around this area. The term 'non-white' is also used at times – people from white minority ethnic groups have not been included in this study. In completing the questionnaires, participants were left free to self-define their ethnicity rather than having to conform to pre-determined ethnic groupings.

¹ www.crer.org.uk

² Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations, www.cemvoscotland.org.uk

Section Two - Background

The population figures for Scotland's minority ethnic population are out dated, with the 2001 census the most widely used resource until the results of the 2011 census are made public. The census of 2001 indicated that the non-white population in Scotland stood at 2.01% of the Scottish population, significantly lower than the 7.9% which the UK population demonstrated³. The minority ethnic population in Scotland tends to be widely dispersed, with communities present across the country but often in small numbers. Whilst there is a population hub in the metropolitan Glasgow area, there are not equivalent contexts to the minority ethnic population clusters of English cities such as Birmingham, Bradford and London.

Previous research (e.g. Purdham et al, 2000⁴) outlined differences between minority ethnic communities in terms of electoral participation. While there had been a presumption that all minority ethnic communities had lower connection to and participation in democratic and electoral processes, the research found that there was considerable variance amongst communities, with the Indian community more likely to vote than others. This research, although technically UK-wide, was primarily focussed on England and therefore required a Scottish exploration.

The Inclusive Democracy Project (IDP) undertook research and outreach in this area, culminating in a report (Cooke, 2010⁵). This report explored the experiences of the minority ethnic population in Scotland, with particular focus on the Chinese community (Scotland's second largest but traditionally most disconnected community); and minority ethnic young people. Both of these groups were seen as posing particular challenges to participation, and so it was useful to explore their experiences and views in more depth. Both of these groups did indeed demonstrate higher levels of disconnection than the general minority ethnic population, with some similarities (e.g. irrelevance of process and parties) and some differences (e.g. lack of democratic heritage in the Chinese community; move towards single issue focus amongst young people) in terms of barriers experienced.

On top of this, a lack of elected role models was highlighted as a concern for both the general minority ethnic population and the specific groups examined. Heading into the 2012 Local Government elections there were 10 non-white Local Councillors from a total of 1,222 across the country, representing 0.8% of the total. Clearly this represented a significant under-representation of the minority ethnic population in Scotland; however the information also demonstrated a further layer of under-representation. All of the

³ Office of the Chief Statistician, 2004, *Analysis of Ethnicity in the 2001 Census: Summary Report*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

⁴ Purdam, K. et al, 2002, *Voter Engagement amongst Black and Ethnic Minority Communities*. London: Electoral Commission

⁵ Cooke, J., 2010, *Inclusive Democracy Report*, available at <http://www.cemvoscotland.org.uk/cemvosfiles/publications/idp.pdf>

representatives were male; all were from the Scots Pakistani or Scots Indian communities; and despite Scottish minority ethnic communities having higher proportions of young people than the white Scottish population, all bar one were over the age of 50. This is heightened by the other strands of democratic representation in Scotland, where the one minority ethnic MP and two minority ethnic MSPs are male and members of the Scots Pakistani community⁶.

Alongside the lack of diversity in the ethnicity and gender of the elected representatives, there was also a significant lack of geographic distribution. Over half of the elected Councillors in Scotland were in Glasgow, meaning that only 5 of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities had minority ethnic representation. Of Scotland's cities, Dundee was the only one other than Glasgow to have any minority ethnic Councillors, with the capital Edinburgh having no representatives. Furthermore, the MP and two MSPs were also elected from Glasgow.

Section Three outlines the responses received to the questionnaire, and allows for a new analysis of the barriers to participation which were identified by respondents. Building on this, Section Four identifies some possible areas of work where these barriers can be challenged and changed.

⁶ Although the MP and one of the MSPs are from a younger demographic than the previous sole minority ethnic MP and sole minority ethnic MSP

Section Three – Questionnaire responses

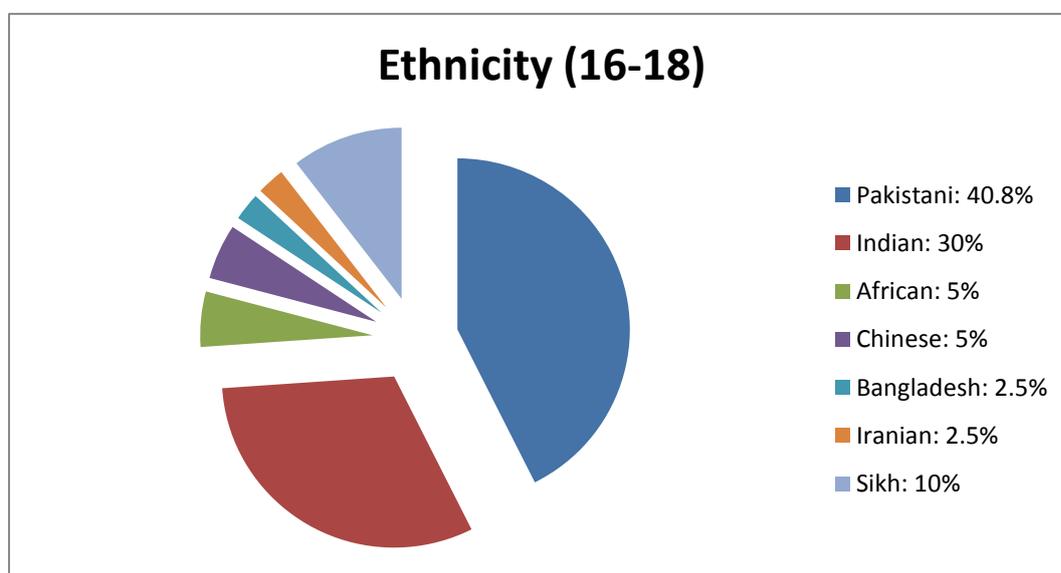
In total 204 questionnaires were completed, with respondents from across the Glasgow area. Of these, 40 were in the 16-18 cohort (19.6%); and 164 were in the general cohort of age 19+ (80.4%).

Significant differences were observable from the questionnaire responses, demonstrating the challenges and opportunities which exist for engaging both young people and the wider minority ethnic population of Scotland.

It is worth noting that the 16 – 18 category did contain a number of respondents not yet legally old enough to vote, and therefore some of the questions (i.e. are you planning to vote at the election?) were not relevant to them. However, as they both represent voters of the near future, and may possibly be given the opportunity to vote in the proposed referendum on Scottish independence, it was useful to include their responses in the analysis.

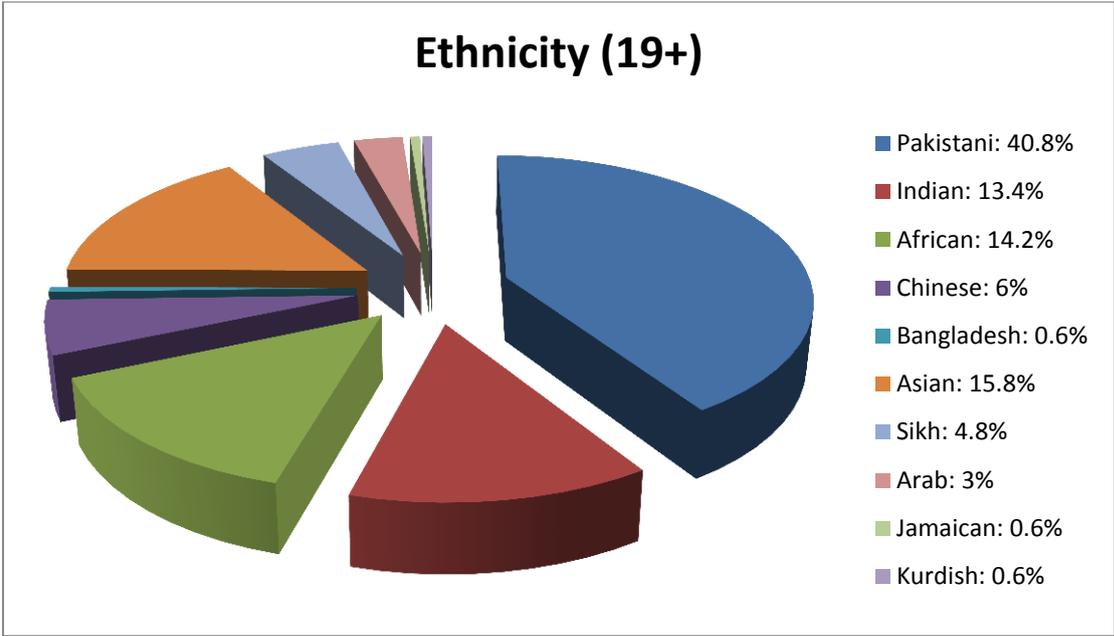
Pie Charts 1 and 2, and tables 1 – 3 below highlight the ethnicity, age and gender of the respondents in both the 16-18 and 19+ cohorts:

Ethnicity⁷:



(Pie Chart 1)

⁷ As indicated in the introduction to the report, this was left to self-definition



(Pie-Chart 2)

Age:

| 16-18 | 19-30 | 31-45 | 46-64 | 65+ |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 19.6% | 19.1% | 37.7% | 20% | 3.4% |

(Table 1)

Gender:

| 16-18 group | |
|-------------|------------|
| Male 45% | Female 55% |

(Table 2)

| 19+ group | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Male: 50.6% | Female 49.4% |

(Table 3)

2012 Local Government elections

There was a marked contrast in the awareness levels of respondents. 89.6% of respondents in the 19+ category indicated an awareness of the May 2012 elections; however this figure dropped to 50% for the 16 – 18 cohort.

93.9% of respondents in the 19+ group were registered to vote, with 95.5% of those registered to vote planning to use it in the 2012 Local Government elections. In contrast the 16 – 18 group had 40% of its members registered to vote (with the caveat that 47.5% had indicated that they thought they were too young to register), with 93.8% of those registered indicating that they were planning to vote.

These figures suggested that awareness of the elections and registration to vote was indeed higher amongst the older cohort, as would be anticipated; but that those younger people who had registered to vote and were able to do so seemed very likely to make use of their vote.

For those in the 16 – 18 group, reasons for not voting included a lack of interest (“Don’t have time”; “No interest in politics”) and a lack of information (“Don’t know where the polling station is”; “Don’t know how to fill in a ballot”).

In terms of how they were planning to use their vote, 59.1% of the 19+ group had already made their mind up over which party they were going to support, in contrast to 25% of the 16 – 18 group. In both groups those who had indicated that they already knew who they were going to support largely split their support between the Labour Party (16 – 18 40%; 19+ 38%) and the Scottish National Party (16 – 18 20%; 19+ 32%), with limited support for other parties. This broadly reflected the nationwide results as a split between the two parties, and the trend in recent years for minority ethnic communities to split their vote more than they had traditionally done. 35% of the 19+ group who supported the Scottish Labour Party indicated that this was because they had always voted for them, reflecting the traditional connection between the minority ethnic population in Scotland and the party, with policy being another draw. For the SNP, attractive policy was the main draw for 25% of the 19+ group, with the specifically Scottish focus of the party (including their support for independence) the next biggest reason.

Political Parties

51% of the 19+ group indicated that they were interested in politics. In stark contrast, 75% of the 16 – 18 cohort indicated that they were not interested in politics. Indeed, the 22.5% who gave a positive response still indicated that this interest was on an occasional or partial basis.

For the 19+ group, the key reasons given for lack of interest in politics were a lack of time; a lack of belief in the policies of the political parties; and a belief that politics was irrelevant due to all of the parties being the same. For the younger group, a lack of understanding as to how the system worked was listed as the key reason; followed by a view that politics was irrelevant.

In terms of associating with a particular party, there was an even split in the 19+ cohort between the Labour Party and SNP (29.2% each), with the Greens interestingly the next most popular. There was an ethnic difference in this cohort, with a higher proportion of the Scots Pakistani respondents indicating an association with the SNP; and a higher proportion of the Scots Indian and Scots African respondents indicating an association with Labour⁸. 62.5% of the 16 – 18 group indicated that they did not associate with any of the parties, with the SNP being indicated by 15% of the group, and Labour by 7.5%.

Some minority ethnic respondents who associated themselves with the Labour party made the following comments:

“I believe in their policies for minority ethnic communities”

“In my view, with this party things were better”

“They seem more in line with Islamic principles of social and environmental justice”

“I feel Labour is more likely to listen to migrants’ issues”

While those that associated themselves with SNP, commented on the following:

“They have the best policies for the community”

“I like their policies and vision for Scotland”

“It seems to have better policies which are more suited to me as a Scottish resident”

“Because their policy is good with minority ethnic people and agree with the Referendum (for Independence)”

For those that associated themselves with the Green party, their comments included:

“Because I feel strongly that we are all responsible for the welfare of the planet”

“They focus on climate change among other issues”

⁸ An interesting situation given the traditional link between the Pakistani community in Glasgow and the Labour Party; and the recent efforts of the SNP in Glasgow to break into this community

10.3% of the respondents from the 19+ group indicated that they were members of a political party, with no one from the 16 – 18 group members of a political party. As highlighted by the pie chart 3 below, for those who were members, Labour was the most common (52.9%) followed by the SNP (35.2%) and then the Conservative party (5.8%).



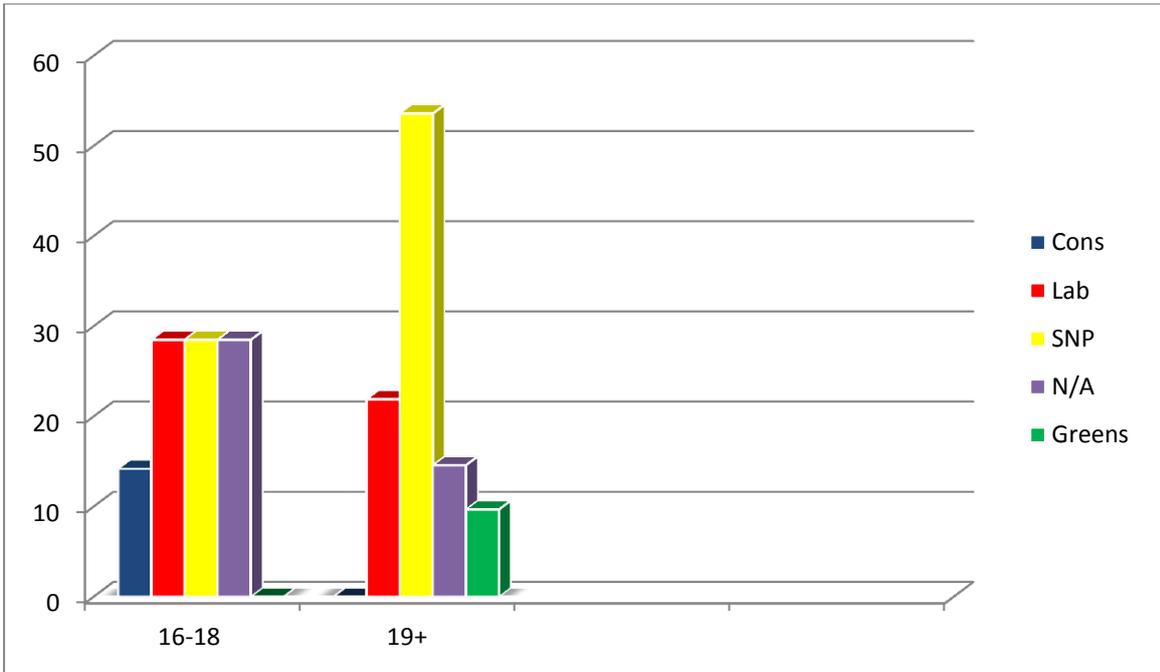
(Pie Chart 3)

For all of these parties, belief in their policy was listed as the main reason, although the Labour Party support for minority ethnic communities was also highlighted by a couple of respondents.

3 of the party members highlighted that they had experienced racism within their party, primarily through biases in the selection process. Given that minority ethnic people remain significantly under-represented as political candidates and representatives, this does not lend itself to improving that situation.

Majorities of both cohorts indicated that they would not consider joining a political party, however this still meant that 25% of the 19+ group and 17.5% of the 16 – 18 group indicated that they would consider joining a party, representing an opportunity to engage participants in political party structures. Out of the 25% of the 19+ age group that indicated that they would consider joining a political party, 75.6% were male and 24.4% were female.

Again, consistent with previous answers, policy proved to be the main motivator for all respondents who expressed an interest in joining political parties. In terms of which party they would join, Chart 1 below highlights that the SNP were the most popular for the 19+ cohort, with 53.6% of those who would join SNP versus 21.9% for Labour and 9.7% for Greens, with 14.6% who stated they would consider joining a party not indicating which party they would consider joining. For the 16-18 cohorts, Labour and SNP were split at 28.5% with 14.2% for Conservatives and 28.5% gave no answer after indicating that they would consider joining a political party.



(Chart 1)

For those who were not willing to consider joining a party, lack of time was the issue for over half of the 19+ cohort; with apathy about the potential for impact being the most common reason for the 16 – 18 group, and second most common for the older group.

In sharing what they felt political parties could do to increase the participation of minority ethnic people, responses from the 16 – 18 group were very evenly split between increasing the amount of information available; increasing the levels of representation of minority ethnic in the specific parties; and hosting more events targeted at minority ethnic young people.

For the 19+ cohort, increasing the visible representation of minority ethnic people within parties (alongside increasing their genuine engagement in the parties) was the main suggestion from the respondents, with 55.7% of the responses connected to this area, as well as increased direct engagement with diverse communities at minority ethnic events. Policy remained a significant factor in increasing the attractiveness of the parties, as well as increasing the amount and type of information available to voters. Interestingly, several respondents also indicated that they felt political parties should be focussing on supporting young people to become more involved, as they were the next generation. Some of the comments included the following:

“Get involved in local ethnic minority events”

“Have more minority ethnic candidates / MSPs / MPs”

“Approach members to promote the need for more minority ethnic members “

“Gain confidence of those minority ethnic that are interested in the party”

“Meet in social venues other than pubs “

“Engage with them, listen to them and address the issues that are of a concern to them”

“Have more policies for minority ethnic communities”

“Maybe a campaign on Asian channels on TV might be useful “

“Talk about issues affecting BME communities is one thing, actually offering solutions and actioning them is something else”

“Hold more surgeries in places where minority ethnic people reside “

“Allow us to be candidates at elections”

“Explain what they offer us (minority ethnic)”

“Information about party political processes – e.g. how to join, etc.”

“Clear differences between parties”

“Minority ethnic elected members must know that they have been given their position in their party partly due to their links to minority ethnic groups. They must learn to serve their groups – listen to their concerns and report them back to the party in order to find solutions.”

“If they felt that they belonged and were wanted in this country then they may consider wanting their opinions being heard.”

“Create more role model politicians from a BME background who they can look up to”

“Parties need to become more approachable”

“To diminish racism and favouritism”

“Parties need to be more relevant to minority ethnic individuals and listen more to their concerns”

“Register a party specifically for minority ethnic”

For increasing minority ethnic participation in voting, increasing awareness and improving the information available was the key factor for both cohorts, particularly targeting young people and through schools. Respondents indicated that there should be a broad range of resources available both in advance of the election and on the day, in order to make the process easier. It was suggested that this could include programmes of voter education, and also more consideration of the location of polling places to include areas of high minority ethnic concentration, such as places of worship. Some comments included the following:

“A better understanding of democratic processes, etc”

“Increase awareness of their need to vote to make changes”

“Hold meetings in minority ethnic areas “

“Politicians to be genuine, accepting, empathetic and admit that world politics affects local politics “

“If people can’t see change as a result of using their vote they will simply not vote”

“Interest in politics has to percolate down the family – e.g. through discussions in the home”

“Raise awareness through campaigns and posters and announcements and through integration “

“Door to door with someone from local community”

“More consultations with minority ethnic women about what needs to change to allow them to be more active”

“Inform as many minority ethnic people as possible in their own languages“

“Increase number of meetings with minority ethnic leaders and communities “

Building on this, the increased distribution and impact of information was identified as the key factor for both cohorts in terms of increasing participation in politics in general. This included ensuring that different forms of information was available to minority ethnic communities, as well as ensuring that community leaders, including religious figures, were educated on the importance and functions of politics. Representation and participation of minority ethnic people was also highlighted as crucial to increasing participation, with respondents commenting that seeing people like them involved in the process was crucial for encouraging their participation. There was a degree of cynicism about the reality of the

mainstreaming agenda, and a belief that it was primarily an excuse for side-lining minority ethnic concerns, which was heightened by the perceived lack of involvement of minority ethnic people in democratic structures. The following are some of the comments that were made:

“Listen to what we need and what racist hassle we face on a daily basis”

“Have more young people included at early age”

“Educate the imams and other religious leaders about the importance of knowing what individual parties stand for”

“Some people believe that their individual vote doesn’t count for anything and whatever will be, will be. They have a fantastic view of the world and feel they can’t change things, they need to understand that they can.”

“More education about politics from school age, then people from their own communities talking to them about the importance of politics “

“More Black / minority ethnic politicians in the public eye”

“Easy usage of political language”

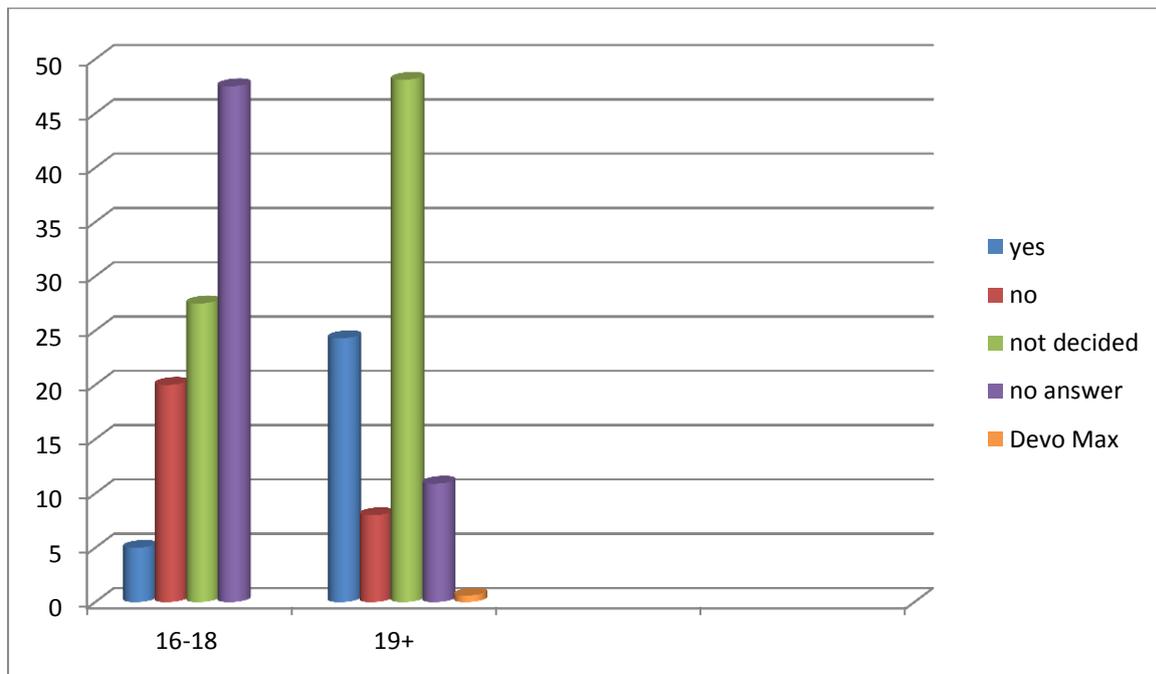
“Raise awareness about what politics is and how it affects local people”

Scottish Independence

As one of the key areas of political discourse in Scotland, the questionnaire included a section on the proposed 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. 42.5% of the 16 – 18 cohort indicated that they planned to vote, while 86.5% of the 19+ cohort were planning to vote in that referendum. Currently the voting age is set at 18, however the Scottish Government has indicated support for reducing the voting age in the referendum to 16 – this would open the vote up to all of the respondents to the questionnaire, and was supported by several respondents.

As chart 2 below show, 27.5% of the 16 – 18 cohort indicated that they had not yet made up their mind as to how they would vote (47.5 % did not give an answer), as did 48.1% of the 19+ cohort (10.9% gave no answer), suggesting that the question is still very open in the minority ethnic community. Although the numbers responding in both groups were not high, within the 19+ group a larger number indicated support for independence (24.3% to 15.8%) whilst in the 16 – 18 group a larger number were opposed to independence (20% to

5%) – a surprising reversal of what is commonly presumed about the different age groups. What is also interesting is that out of the 48.1% of the 19+ cohort that had not yet made up their mind as to how they would vote, 29.1% of them associated themselves with Labour, 25.3% with SNP, 1.2% with Conservatives, and 5% with the Greens, suggesting that party association at this stage is not a definitive factor on how they will vote in the proposed Referendum, and that people have yet to be persuaded or convinced by both sides of the debate⁹.



(Chart 2)

17.5% of the 16 – 18 cohort felt that Scottish independence would make a difference to the lives of minority ethnic people. In contrast, 45.1% of the 19+ cohort felt that it would make a difference, although they indicated that this difference could be both positive and negative, and many respondents in both group felt that it was difficult to tell the impact that independence would have on either the country or minority ethnic communities specifically, again suggesting that both sides of the constitutional debate have work to do in convincing minority ethnic people about how to vote in the proposed referendum.

⁹ This corresponds with Reform Scotland’s polling on the question of Devo Max, where a quarter of SNP supporters preferred the Devo Max option to independence. Available at <http://reformscotland.com/index.php/publications/details/1453>

Race Equality

Respondents were asked to indicate one thing which they felt their Local Authority (in this case Glasgow City Council) could do to promote or address race equality. For the 16 – 18 cohort, work in schools addressing racism and bullying; and greater provision of opportunities for young people (both in terms of facilities and connections) were identified as key areas which would benefit from input from the Council.

For the 19+ group, there was a potentially conflicting desire expressed between on the one hand increasing the representation of minority ethnic people in Council posts and elected positions; and on the other hand to stop singling out minority ethnic people as different, and instead ensuring that all hiring and appointments were on the basis of ability. This was expressed most clearly in the contrast between a comment suggesting that the Council should have a quota for the number of minority ethnic people employed; and one which suggested that the question of ethnicity should be removed from application forms. Increasing awareness was also identified by several respondents, but was considerably behind the focus on representation and employment. The following are some of the comments that were made:

“More training & jobs for minority ethnic people”

“Improve understanding of racial bullying”

“Support refugees in terms of housing”

“More minority ethnic people in managerial posts”

“Increase English language provision so that people can become self sufficient in accessing services themselves and getting jobs that pay better than the Asian small shop & restaurant, without having to rely on minority ethnic organisations”

“Educate all their employees to treat all people equally. There was an incident with a refuse collection man who doesn’t lift our bin if it is not outside our gate, but will do so for our white neighbours”

“Ring fenced funding for addressing race equality”

“More panel discussions on race equality at schools, universities, and events”

“Hold events that involve and engage a mix of minority ethnic communities and Scots”

“Giving funding to specialized services for minority ethnic communities”

Section Four – Suggestions for action

The data collected from the questionnaires indicated that there were some key issues recurring for minority ethnic people in regards to lack of information, motivation and representation which acted as barriers to their participation. Within these areas, it is possible to identify possible opportunities for engaging minority ethnic people in order to increase the diversity and impact of democracy in Scotland.

This engagement is crucial if Scottish democracy is going to truly inclusive and open. 75% of the 16 – 18 cohort indicated that they were not interested in politics. If a reason to become interested is not demonstrated to them, the future health of Scottish democracy will suffer. The young people in the questionnaire, and indeed the older group as well, demonstrated that the need for information, motivation and representation are intrinsically linked and all three require support to have an impact on overall levels of participation.

In the section which follows, some initial ideas for activity, arising from the suggestions of the respondents themselves, are proposed. However further work is required to fully explore how these could be implemented in practice and how entities such as the political parties can be supported and encouraged to uphold their responsibilities.

Information

There is a broad level of disconnect from political and electoral processes in Scotland, as evidenced by the IDP report and others; the low turnout for local and national elections; and the decline in political party membership. A recurring theme raised by the questionnaire respondents was the importance of demonstrating the role that politics and democracy plays in Scottish life. By sharing technical knowledge (i.e. how the structures function) and motivational knowledge (why they are important), participants can be supported into becoming more active political contributors. 16.4% of respondents to the questionnaire from the 19+ cohort indicated an interest to take part in a shadowing scheme¹⁰, a resource which offers a great way of increasing the knowledge and motivation of minority ethnic people. Making more opportunities like that available would increase the chance of involving minority ethnic people in the political system.

Creating opportunities for politicians and political parties to meet and engage can be a positive way to break down barriers. It allows parties to share their policies and ideas with minority ethnic communities, celebrating successes with them; and it also allow the communities to challenge and encourage parties in their efforts, sharing with them the priorities that they have. This can be supported and developed (although not replaced) by

¹⁰ CRER run an annual political shadowing scheme, with up to 15 minority ethnic participants per year. Training is provided, following which individual participants shadow MSPs and/or Councillors, gaining a thorough exposure to the work of elected politicians in Scotland.

producing appropriate literature for different communities, translating into community languages where appropriate and developing targeted materials in relation to the issues or priorities raised.

Participation is based on an understanding of how and why the system works, and without it minority ethnic communities (and indeed the wider population of Scotland) will fail to engage with the democratic structures in place. The suggestion raised by questionnaire respondents of training community and faith leaders offers one suggestion of how this could be achieved, by involving key network builders and influence shapers within minority ethnic communities. This has to avoid simply focussing on traditional community leaders (who sometimes represent only themselves, are usually all male and can be off putting or irrelevant to younger people) but should act as opportunities to spread information and understanding in a community relevant fashion.

Motivation

Building on increased understanding of how the processes work, organisations and political parties need to increase the motivation of minority ethnic communities to get involved. This will be fuelled by demonstrating that the views, needs and ambitions of minority ethnic communities are relevant and being listened to; and by giving minority ethnic people a chance to shape the policy and debates which are taking place.

Scotland is in the midst of the largest constitutional debate in centuries around the proposed referendum on Scottish independence, and the minority ethnic people responding to the questionnaire have shown that there is a significant proportion of undecided voters amongst their communities. This would represent an ideal opportunity for both sides of the independence debate to genuinely engage with the minority ethnic population of Scotland, offering them a vision of what the UK or an independent Scotland would offer to their communities and the wider population.

Likewise, there is a proportion of the respondents who would consider joining political parties, but who are waiting for them to actively approach them. At a time when political parties have generally been experiencing decreasing memberships (the SNP for several reasons are currently bucking this trend) this offers an opportunity for recruiting new members. In order to do this, the political parties have to demonstrate a genuine commitment to issues of importance to minority ethnic communities; whilst also treating minority ethnic members and supporters as equal partners in policy development and party functioning.

The findings of the questionnaire (located as they were in Glasgow) demonstrated that the SNP's campaign to win votes from the Pakistani community in the city has had some success, and has helped to support their growth in Glasgow politics. However this focus has

been very specific, leaving other minority ethnic groups excluded. Likewise Labour's offer to minority ethnic communities has been focussed on traditional areas of support in the Pakistani and Indian communities, again missing out on other potential benefits such as by engaging with the African community. All of the parties need to examine how they engage with minority ethnic communities in order to increase their impact and discourse, and further work exploring their attempts to date and suggesting ways to be more successful in future would be beneficial.

Representation

The success of minority ethnic people in becoming representatives, either as elected officials, employees of local authorities, or within political parties, remains a crucial area for achieving racial equality. The psychological and cultural impact of seeing people from their community in positions of authority cannot be underestimated, and in particular is crucial for encouraging greater involvement from disconnected groups such as young people or the Chinese community.

There have been signs of improvement at the recent local government elections, however these remain behind the level that the minority ethnic percentage of the population would suggest; and largely lacking in diversity in terms of the different minority ethnic groupings or gender balance.

Political parties need to do more to increase the representation of minority ethnic people, and local authorities need to demonstrate that minority ethnic people have the same access to employment and promotion that other people do. There is a debate within the minority ethnic population, demonstrated in the responses to this questionnaire, as to how this should be achieved, with some supporting quotas and positive action to improve the situation; whilst opponents believe that what is needed is for minority ethnic people to be treated exactly the same as the rest of the population.

Tying into the previous suggestions around information and motivation, it is important that resources are created which can support minority ethnic people in increasing their opportunities to serve as representatives. Some of these should come from political parties, and could include information packs for minority ethnic members outlining ways to become involved, translated materials, running their own shadowing schemes (and in particular, encouraging their elected politicians to make themselves available as mentors for shadowing opportunities) and other positive action measures. At the same time minority ethnic focussed organisations should be finding ways to facilitate greater participation of minority ethnic people as representatives. Examples of this is the work include CEMVO Scotland's initiative to promote vacancies on statutory and voluntary sector boards (thus

opening up new opportunities for minority ethnic people to share their skills and experiences at a higher level) and CRER's own political shadowing scheme.

Treat as individuals not minorities

As previously mentioned, it was suggested by some respondents that there is a need to treat minority ethnic people interested in politics in their own right as individuals, rather than focussing on their ethnic background. If there is a perception of minority ethnic communities or individuals being treated different or being offered special treatment, it can be used to undermine their own success.

The respondents to the questionnaire, and the previous IDP research, identified that minority ethnic communities do face specific challenges around language and participation; however it also emphasised that the communities also encountered many challenges which were shared across society and transcended ethnic boundaries. By ensuring that minority ethnic people are supported as individuals, and earn progress through their own efforts, it can be argued that they will be able to achieve more than by being appointed or forced through the system. However to be able to get to this stage they need to have access to a level playing field and given the support and resources available to everyone else.

Creating ways for minority ethnic people to connect across ethnic boundaries would offer opportunities for them to develop support structures and resources for their involvement, and would facilitate a greater participation on their part. Many of the barriers encountered by minority ethnic people, particularly minority ethnic young people, are identical to those experienced by their peers in the majority community – apathy, irrelevance of politics, lack of understanding; and opportunities to create shared solutions, such as the Scottish Youth Parliament, should be encouraged and supported.

Section Five – Conclusion

From this report it is possible to see that there are positives to be celebrated in the minority ethnic population. Significant proportions of the 19+ cohort were aware of the 2012 Scottish Local Government elections; registered to vote; and planning to use their vote. Respondents were full of ideas of how participation could be increased amongst minority ethnic communities, demonstrating that there is a largely untapped resource available for improving Scottish democracy. And the interest in the referendum on Scottish independence, coupled with the large number of undecided voters in the questionnaire, demonstrates that the minority ethnic population of Scotland is waiting to be engaged in the constitutional debate.

However, this does not exclude the challenges which also arise in the report. Minority ethnic young people, like young people in the wider community, remain disconnected and apathetic about politics. Political parties are seen as irrelevant to many minority ethnic people, and indeed can appear to be working against their interests rather than trying to support them. The continued under-representation of minority ethnic people in the structures of democracy sends the signal that this is still an environment which can function quite happily without minority ethnic participation.

The opportunities to improve this situation are highlighted by the minority ethnic respondents themselves. More work is required to increase the awareness of minority ethnic people about political and democratic systems and structures in Scotland – both how they work and the impact that they have. Furthermore, political parties need to become proactive in reaching out to all minority ethnic communities in Scotland, not just those in which they identify a narrow and immediate electoral benefit. The two sides in the debate over Scottish independence need to ensure that this debate is one which is taking place in all of Scotland's languages and dialects, bringing in the full diversity of Scotland's population.

Scotland's minority ethnic population, diverse and evolving in its own right, is a key element of the country's future success and prosperity, and the political parties and democratic structures need to grasp this opportunity. To do so, they will require the support of voluntary sector organisations and, crucially, the minority ethnic communities themselves.

Only then can a vibrant, inclusive democracy be truly realised.

Appendix – Questionnaire

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Survey of Minority Ethnic people exploring barriers to civic, democratic and political engagement</p> |
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1. Are you aware of the local council elections in May 2012? Yes / No
2. Are you registered to vote? Yes / No / Don't know (please tick) if your answer is "no" or "don't know" could you explain why?
3. Are you not registered to vote because you don't know how to? Yes / No If "yes", you can download a voter registration form on www.glasgow.gov.uk
4. Will you be voting in the May local council elections? Yes / No if your answer is "No", could you please tell us any reason (s) why you will not be voting?
5. If you are planning to vote, have you already decided which party / parties you are going to vote for? Yes / No If "yes", which party or parties will you be voting for?
6. If your answer to (5) above is "yes", are you able to tell us the reason (s) why you have decided to vote for this particular party?
7. Are you generally interested in Politics? Yes / No If "No" can you explain why you are not interested?
8. If your answer to Q7 above is "Yes" – would you be interested in CRER's political shadowing scheme? Yes / No If "Yes", you can find out more on www.crer.org.uk
9. Which political party (if any) do you most associate yourself with?

Please tell us why you associate most with this particular party?

10. Are you a member of a political party? Yes / No If "No" go straight to **Q14** and onwards. If "Yes" please answer **Q11, 12, 13** and **Q15** onwards

11. Which political party are you a member of?

12. Could you tell us why you chose to join this particular party?

13. Have you ever experienced any racism by the party machinery, or by members of the party? Yes / No

If "Yes," please tell us of the racism that you have experienced

14. Would you consider joining a political party? Yes / No

If "Yes", which party would you join and please tell us why? If "No", why not?

15. What do you think political parties can do to attract more minority ethnic members?

16. What do you think needs to be done to increase the participation of minority ethnic people in:

A. Democratic / voting processes

B. Politics in general

C. Political Parties

17. Do you plan to vote in the planned Referendum for Scottish Independence in 2014? Yes / No If "No," please tell us any reasons why you will not be voting:

18. If you plan to vote in the 2014 Referendum, are you able to tell us how you plan to vote – Yes / No / or don't know yet (please tick). Please explain your answer more fully:
19. Do you think Scottish Independence will make any difference specifically to the lives of minority ethnic people living in Scotland? Yes / No please explain your answer more fully:
20. If there is one thing that the City Council could do to promote or address race equality, what do you think that would be?
21. What is your ethnicity? (please describe)
22. What is your age group? 16-18 19-30 31-45 46-64 65+ (please tick)
23. What is your gender? Male / Female (please tick)
24. Please tell us the first part of your post code:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

