

Inclusive Democracy

A research and IDP programme report by Jamie Cooke



*“Just because you don’t take an interest
in politics doesn’t mean politics won’t
take an interest in you.”*

—Pericles, 430 B.C.

Acknowledgements

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We would like to express our enormous thanks to The Electoral Commission for supporting the Inclusive Democracy Programme. We also thank all the participants who kindly contributed to the completion of questionnaires for the research.

We would also like to thank all participants and elected members who attended the IDP events as your involvement ensured the success of the Programme. Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to the groups and organisations that worked in partnership with us in running some of the IDP events.

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Executive Summary

Context

- Participation in democracy in Scotland has been falling alongside the rest of the UK, with underlying downward trends in voting and political party membership.
- It has been postulated that this disconnection will be more profound for EM communities, who encounter specific barriers in addition to those encountered by the homogenous community.
- Purdam et al (2002) undertook research on behalf of the Electoral Commission which examined the participation of ethnic minority (EM) communities in the electoral process. However, this was primarily focussed on England.
- Key differences exist between EM populations in Scotland and England, with the Scottish EM population a smaller percentage of the total population. In addition, ethnic make-up of Scotland's EM population is in different proportions to England.
- The EM population in Scotland is not represented appropriately in the democratic bodies. Scotland has no EM MEPs, one MP, no MSPs and 10 councillors, all of which are below the EM population level.
- Of the elected representatives, all are male and all are members of either the Pakistani or Indian communities.

The IDP

- Funded as part of the Electoral Commission's Partnership Grants scheme and designed to raise awareness of civic, democratic and

electoral systems amongst Scotland's EM population; and from this to increase participation.

- The IDP worked with over 1,900 people across Scotland
- The key set of targets had been exceeded, with a diverse group of participants having their awareness of the structures and decision makers increased
- A variety of decision makers have participated in the IDP, including a broad range of elected representatives from Scotland's main political parties and democratic structures alongside other decision makers.
- The participants in the IDP contributed to debate and discussion about EM involvement in civic, democratic and electoral processes, and the best ways to overcome barriers.

Findings

- There is a widespread feeling that politics and democracy are irrelevant to the day-to-day concerns of people. Furthermore politicians are seen as being a 'class' apart, with 'normal' people unable to contribute to the process due to the requirement for specialised technical language and knowledge.
- The under-representation of EM people in the democratic bodies acts as a barrier to participation, both by giving a visual indication that EM people do not 'belong' in the body; and by making it difficult for EM people who are elected and who subsequently stand out. In addition there is a feeling that EM representatives are held to different and more exacting standards than other representatives.
- Political parties are seen as disconnected from the population, with membership not seen as a desirable situation.
- Despite many improvements which were greatly welcomed, language and the availability of translated materials still remain as one of the key barriers. Participants welcomed opportunities to engage with the process in their own community languages.
- Within the research there were two specific groups explored in more detail. The first of these, the Scottish Chinese community, demonstrated most of the feelings outlined above, but to greater degrees than other communities. Furthermore, there were particular cultural barriers in place for this community which made

participation harder.

- The second group, EM young people, primarily focussed on the disconnection from formal civic and political life, with political participation not seen as appealing or as public service. In addition, there were barriers in place due to the lack of parental example in regards to participation and voting.

Implications

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- EM people in Scotland encounter many of the barriers to participation, such as apathy and disconnection from the process, which are also encountered by the homogenous community. It is therefore vital that efforts are undertaken to organise events which are open to all members of society, ensuring shared solutions to these universal problems.
- However, EM people encounter a range of barriers in addition to these – furthermore, these barriers are different for specific ethnic groupings. Thus, there is a fundamental need for corresponding events targeted at specific ethnic groupings which can be culturally and contextually appropriate.
- Language is a major barrier, so the range and quality of interpreted materials and support must continue to increase.
- Distribution of materials must also improve, with more targeting towards appropriate community organisations and places of worship.
- The electoral process presents numerous challenges for people for whom English is not a first language. It would therefore be beneficial to actively work to increase the number of EM people working in polling places on election day. In addition, the presence of support staff in polling places should be made permanent.
- More work needs to be carried to increase the number of EM representatives, with political parties working to ensure that EM people feel valued within their party apparatus.
- The increase of knowledge amongst EM people is a vital way of increasing EM participation and representation in politics.
- Shadowing schemes should be supported and increased to allow EM people, particularly young people, to learn more about the workings of politicians and the systems they operate in.

- Political parties should ensure that their EM members have access to education about how their internal democracy works so that they are best able to be involved. In addition, political parties should consider introducing 'buddy systems' for new members (which would be applicable to all new members, not just EM people).

Introduction and Background

1.1 - Research Background

Public participation in the civic, democratic and electoral processes of Scotland and the UK has been falling in recent years – this has become evident in terms of decreasing membership of political parties; overall lower turn-out rates for the various elections; and more research findings exploring the disconnection between the electorate and those who represent them. Much discussion and academic commentary has been spent trying to identify the reasons behind this phenomenon. Regardless of this, if barriers do exist for all communities then it would follow that disadvantaged communities would be affected by these and indeed could potentially face additional barriers.

In 2002, the Electoral Commission commissioned a research report exploring this issue for ethnic minority (EM) communities (CEMVO¹ Scotland's use of the term EM is explained in section 1.3), entitled *Voter Engagement among Black and Minority Ethnic Communities* (Purdam et al, 2002). The research explored the findings of two MORI surveys conducted in May and June of 2001, alongside a review of existing literature. From this, the report outlined research priorities for further investigation.

The research found that there were considerable differences between communities within the EM population, which meant previous generalisations were now untenable. In the past, a general perception that all EM communities were uninvolved in the democratic processes existed. This research highlighted that people of Indian origin were more inclined to vote

1 Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations

than members of other South Asian communities. It also showed that people from the Caribbean, Black African and Chinese communities were least likely to vote. This demonstrates that “Policy responses should reflect the diversity of the BME population” (Purdham et al, 2002, p.7), instead of attempting to fit all of the communities into one approach. As the report concludes, “[in] any public information campaigns that are initiated, the focus should be on ensuring relevance to the particular groups within those communities” (Purdham et al, 2002, p.49).

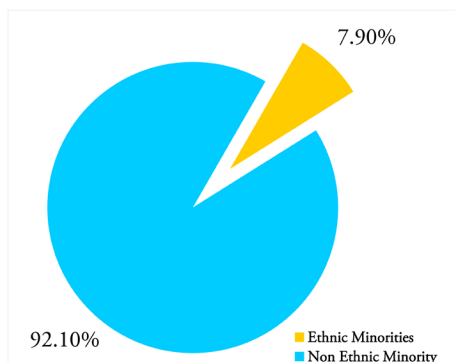
The report highlighted various factors which impacted upon the likelihood of EM people using their vote. These included low registration rates; lack of connection to political parties; apathy; and a lack of belief in the efficacy of voting. All of these factors combined present barriers to their participation and, whilst they are not insurmountable, they certainly make the process more challenging for some EM communities.

1.2 - Context to the Research

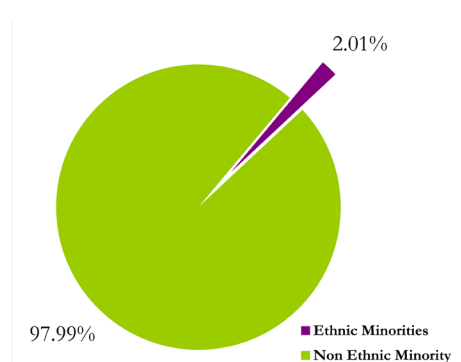
Purdham et al (2002) included data from across the UK, but the discussion focussed mainly on the English context. The distribution and make up of the EM population in Scotland is significantly different to that in England and Wales, and across the UK as a whole, making democratic outreach and research specifically located in a Scottish context vital. This is the opportunity that the Inclusive Democracy Project (IDP) provided, with a national scope and ability to react to Scotland’s unique context and situation.

The 2001 Census found that ethnic minorities represent 7.9% of the UK population; in contrast to this the Scottish EM population only make up 2.01% of the Scottish population. Much of the EM population in Scotland tends to be dispersed and in generally small numbers, with subsequent impact upon the creation of social networks for EM communities and the growth of supportive contexts for EM participation in civic and democratic processes. Although the metropolitan Glasgow area has a significant EM population, Scotland does not have the same range of EM population hubs as England does with cities such as Leicester, Bradford and, of course, London.

(Left) 2001 Census: ethnic minorities in the UK.



(Right) 2001 Census: ethnic minorities in Scotland.



Looking beyond the demographics of the EM population, it is evident that the EM population in Scotland is currently under-represented across all of the elected bodies. Currently there are 11 elected EM representatives across the main democratic structures affecting Scotland (European Parliament, UK Houses of Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Local Government). This figure is composed of 1 MP from 56 (1.8%) and 10 Local Councillors from 1,222 (0.8%). Sadly the one MSP elected for the first time to the Scottish Parliament in 2007 died during the course of the IDP – this still only represented 0.8% of the MSPs. All figures are below the Scottish EM population as recorded in 2001.

In addition, all of these elected representatives are male and all are members of either the Pakistani or Indian communities. Despite nearly all EM communities in Scotland having higher proportions of young people than the homogenous community, all of the representatives bar one are over the age of 50.

There has been limited evidence of changes in terms of the number of candidates standing for Scottish Local Government. There was an increase at the 2007 elections in comparison to 2003, with the proportion of unsuccessful candidates from non-white backgrounds increasing from 2% to 3.2% (Scottish Government Social Research, 2008, p. 25). However, the number of successfully elected EM councillors across Scotland remained stable at nine², with six of these coming from Glasgow (Baston, 2007, p. 62) – in addition the two elected female EM councillors in Scotland both lost their seats at that election.

Sadly Bashir Ahmad MSP³ passed away during the writing of this report. In the Scottish Parliamentary elections of 2007 he had been elected as the first EM MSP, and it is to be hoped that he will be followed in due course by other EM representatives.

The one EM Member of Parliament (MP) in Scotland, Mohammed Sarwar (Labour) was initially elected in 1997 for the Glasgow Govan constituency, with the elections in 2001 and 2005 seeing him successfully returned (latterly for the Glasgow Central constituency following boundary reorganisation). He was both the first EM MP elected for a Scottish constituency, and the first Muslim MP to be elected in the UK⁴. Although the number of EM MPs for the UK as a whole has slowly increased over the most recent elections, at the

2 An additional EM councillor was elected in a December 2009 by-election

3 Member of the Scottish Parliament

4 Glasgow also bears the record for being the first place in Britain to elect a Muslim representative, with Bashir Maan elected as a councillor in 1979.

current rate of change it has been estimated that it would be 2080 before the House of Commons became representative of the ethnic diversity of the UK⁵. To date, Scotland has not had an EM Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

It is important to note that certain bodies have small numbers of members and therefore representation is not strictly about the percentages of EM representatives they have. However, the absence of EM representatives in a body does present a visual sign to EM people in Scotland that members of their communities are not directly involved in their activities. Fundamentally, it poses the question as to whether a democratic body can be representative if significant proportions of society appear to be uninvolved in its workings.

Following the publication of the report, the Electoral Commission introduced a new funding stream of *Partnership Grants* to support democratic engagement projects amongst disadvantaged communities, including EM communities. Between 2006 and 2007 a total of 19 awards were made, funding innovative projects across the United Kingdom.

One of these projects, funded from 2007 to 2010, was the IDP run by CEMVO Scotland. This project was designed to raise awareness of civic, democratic and electoral processes amongst Scotland's EM population; and from this to increase their participation⁶ in the existing structures. The IDP (the workings of which will be discussed in more detail in Section 2) comprised of three elements – Learning Events, Outreach Events and complimentary applied research. This report details the findings of the IDP, both from the delivery of Scotland-wide events and from the qualitative and quantitative research which was undertaken.

All findings and recommendations in this report are of CEMVO Scotland and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Electoral Commission.

1.3 - Terms of Reference

CEMVO Scotland has an organisational policy of using the term ethnic minority (EM) to refer to the sector and community as a whole, whilst using the term 'homogenous' to refer to the non-EM population. EM stands in contrast to the term Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) which is also

5 CRE (2007)

6 It should be noted that in general 'participation' is used in this report to refer to active involvement in the formal mechanisms of democracy in Scotland, such as voting, political party membership and standing for election.

commonly used. The term 'Black' is a specific political concept over which there has been growing debate in terms of its suitability – using EM rather than BME retains the acknowledgement of the shared experiences of minority communities in the UK; reflects the diversity which is present within the communities in regards to religious, linguistic and cultural differences; and also includes members of minority ethnicities who may be predominantly, or partly, composed of white members – for example, members of some of the Eastern European nations with whom CEMVO Scotland works on a variety of projects.

In general during the collation of this report, participants were left free to self-define their ethnicities – for example, this was an open question in the questionnaire. However, for the purposes of statistical analysis it is useful to group respondents together in broad categories, allowing for greater samples. To this end, the researchers utilised Scotland's New Official Ethnicity Classification (Wishart & Macniven, 2008) for the purposes of categorisation.

It is worth noting that the findings and discussions in this report are primarily focussed on non-white EM communities. This is because the white EM communities in Scotland (e.g. Polish and other Eastern European communities) were not involved in the research in significant enough numbers to be included for the purposes of research. Work with these EM communities is a growing field for CEMVO Scotland, and future reports may be better placed to research the experiences of white EM people in Scotland.

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The IDP

2.1 – The Goals of the IDP

The IDP was designed to raise awareness of civic, democratic and electoral processes amongst Scotland's ethnic minority communities; and from this to increase participation in the existing structures by those communities through the full spectrum of available methods. These goals were created in direct response to the highlighting of barriers which CEMVO Scotland had encountered in the ongoing work that the organisation carries out with a wide-ranging network of EM groups across Scotland.

It was vital in creating a project of this nature that it possessed the scope to work with as diverse a range of Scotland's EM communities as possible, ensuring that the knowledge and skills could be accessed by a large number of people. As such, a three year project was constructed, to run from 2007 to 2010, which would have a Scotland-wide focus. The IDP was designed to be targeted at all EM communities and groups in Scotland, however additional work was also put in to focus on the inclusion of section of the EM population who are even harder to reach, such as asylum seekers and refugees⁷ and isolated women who experience specific challenges to participation.

In addition to these groups, a deliberate focus was introduced to the IDP on the Chinese Community in Scotland and Young People from the EM population. These groups were included as they were seen as being key examples of under-

⁷ As many refugees and asylum seekers come from Commonwealth countries, they possess the right to vote once they have received leave to remain. Those who originated from countries which did not possess this right still proved to be active contributors to the project, sharing their own often very in-depth and challenging experiences of politics with fellow participants.

represented and under-participating demographics. The Chinese community is the second largest EM group in Scotland (in contrast to the UK as a whole where it is the fifth largest) and is dispersed across the country, yet appears to have very little contact or involvement with the political processes. In contrast, there is a significant body of research to indicate that young people of all communities are disconnected from the democratic structures, for example being less likely to vote. Within the scope of the IDP it was therefore a key area of interest to examine this disconnect, and to explore whether the experiences of EM young people matched that of their peers in the wider community.

Over the course of the three year project a target of 1,215 participants was set. Further to this, targets were included to cover a number of key learning areas and to allow accurate assessment of the IDP's impact:

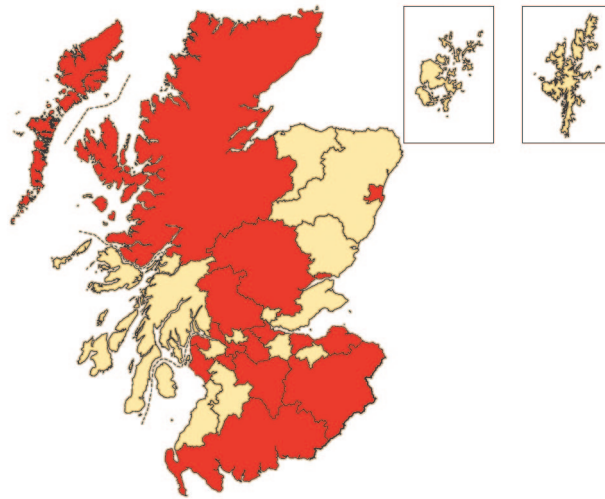
- Increase awareness of 1,215 EM people of civic, democratic and electoral processes
- Increase the engagement of 1,215 EM people with decision makers
- Increase the number of EM people using their vote
- Increase the awareness of 1,215 EM people of how local, national and European democracy is organised
- Develop an increased understanding of existing barriers to participation
- Develop a permanent and evolving resource of skills in the EM population

To meet these targets, the IDP comprised of two distinct educational elements, Learning Events and Outreach Events, complimented by a third strand of applied research.

At the close of the project, 84 events had been held (18 Learning Events and 66 Outreach Events) attended by a total of 1,908 participants. This total was considerably above the target of 1,215 which was set at the beginning of the IDP, representing a considerable achievement for the project. As can be seen from the image above, IDP events had occurred in 18 of Scotland's 32 Local Authority areas⁸, although participants had also attended from other neighbouring areas.

8 Coloured red

In red are 18 of Scotland's 32 Local Authority areas, where IDP events had been held.



These events included participants:

- from 37 self-defined ethnic groupings;
- from both rural and urban locations;
- across the full range of age groups;
- who were refugees and asylum seekers;
- who self-defined as having a disability;
- born in the UK and also those who arrived from another country.

This broad range of participants ensured that the IDP was a truly national project, and that the findings contained within this report were obtained from a cross-section of Scotland's diverse EM population.

2.2 – Evaluation

Evaluation is crucial to a project of the nature of the IDP to ensure that targets are being met and resources utilised most effectively. Within the IDP session, two part evaluation forms, developed and refined over the course of the project, were used at Outreach and Learning Events in order to collate data on participants' experiences of the project. A copy of this form is contained in Appendix 1.

The first part of the form was completed prior to the session beginning, allowing for assessment of the knowledge and confidence which participants brought to the sessions. Following the session's conclusion the second part of the form was completed in order to facilitate comparison – the initial questions were the same as those asked at the beginning, with some short additional questions collecting demographic information and views on how the sessions could be improved.

Collection of evaluation forms should a consistent increase over the life of the project. Year One saw a 67% completion rate; Year Two 88%; and Year Three hit a high of 91%. This increase was a result of the Officers ensuring that participants completed forms before leaving and marked a success for the project.

2.3 – Specific Targets

In regards to the specific targets that had been set at the beginning of the project, figures demonstrated that the IDP had been tailored to meet them.

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Increase the awareness of 1,215 ethnic minority community members of civic, democratic and electoral processes, so that they gain increased confidence in taking part in all aspects of political decision making.

This first target is composed of two components. In the first part, all 1,908 participants were provided with access to a wide range of materials and educational resources which served to increase their awareness and knowledge of civic, democratic and electoral processes. Sessions were organised to cover a range of topics, with some specifically focussing on a particular body (i.e. the European Parliament in the run-up to the 2009 European Parliamentary elections) whilst others were been more general in nature, exploring democracy in Scotland and the UK in all of its forms. All sessions covered aspects of electoral registration and voting, and all were situated within a local context, ensuring that participants could see the relevance of the bodies and representatives to their day-to-day lives.

In regards to the second part of the target, namely increased confidence, the evaluation forms demonstrated that 74% of participants felt an increased confidence in their knowledge of civic, democratic and electoral processes following attendance at one of the IDP events. Over the course of the project this gives a grand total of 1,417 which when coupled with the fact that all 1,908 participants had been provided with access to a very wide range of materials designed to raise awareness exceeds the target.

Of the 26% who did not indicate an increase in their confidence, the majority indicated that they felt that the systems involved were too complex for them to discuss or debate. Therefore although they did *know* more by the end of the session, they still did not *feel* confident to talk about it to others. One of the crucial aspects of the IDP was therefore to ensure that safe environments were created in which participants felt comfortable in discussing these issues. This was one of the key factors in the organising of the Outreach Events, as their very nature allowed for the events to be very specifically tailored to the needs of the groups and individuals concerned. However, it was also utilised

in the Learning Events, in order to facilitate robust and open debate. Over the course of the IDP numerous discussions were held which helped to contribute to this report and to the wider work of the Project itself.

Increase the engagement of 1,215 ethnic minority community members with people who make decisions, such as MSPs and local councillors, and consequently, increase their involvement in lobbying and democratic activities.

One of the key ways in which the IDP sought to meet this goal was by involving elected representatives in events. The involvement of elected representatives from across the democratic spectrum of parties and elected bodies was greatly welcomed by both participants and representatives themselves as an opportunity to increase connections between them and to make the individuals concerned more 'real' to the participants.

45 elected representatives attended IDP events, with members of all of Scotland's main political parties⁹ having attended over the course of the project. This meant that 962 participants had had a direct contact with one or more of their local representatives at an IDP sessions. Of the sessions where elected representatives were not present (for reasons outlined below), 356 participants had indicated in their evaluation form that they would be more likely to contact elected representatives in future, giving a total of 1,318 participants demonstrating increased engagement with these decision makers.

In addition to elected representatives, particular focus was made to include a wider scope of decision makers, including council officials, NHS officials and Electoral Returning Officers. In particular several events were held in partnership with Local Authorities and other Voluntary Sector organisations. This multi-agency partnership working allowed the IDP to contribute to the provision of services across the country, with many Local Authorities in particular being very keen to work closely with the project in order to provide appropriate support and education to their own citizens. This breadth of expertise (most widely utilised at the Learning Events due to their nature) made the events very relevant to participants, and also allowed the IDP to address a wider range of issues than just specifically political factors.

Representatives were not invited to all of the Outreach Events as their

⁹ For the purposes of the IDP the main parties were considered to be those with representation in the Scottish Parliament – this covers the SNP, Scottish Labour Party, Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, and the Scottish Greens.

involvement would not have been appropriate for every situation. For example, certain refugee and asylum seeker groups composed of members with little or no educational background – the involvement of an elected representative at that point would not have been beneficial to what the participants were looking to gain from the session. Likewise a session with the ASSECS group in Glasgow was held at 9pm on a Saturday evening – not an easy time to get a politician to attend! However, it proved useful to return to some of these groups, once they had received the initial information relating to civic, democratic and electoral structures from a first Outreach Event, and to involve an elected representative in the second event as an opportunity for expanded knowledge and involvement.

Increase the number of ethnic minority communities registering to vote, and increase their likelihood of voting at local and national elections.

The importance of electoral registration and voting was central to the events organised within the IDP. The Officers ensured this by providing and explaining relevant resources at every event (i.e. Electoral Commission “How to Vote” resources, registration forms etc); by involving local Registration Officers at some of the Learning Events who explained the registration process within a local context; and by giving presentations which covered both the mechanics of voting and registering and the importance of doing so in regards to impact upon participants’ lives and communities.

On the evaluation forms used at the events, participants were asked “*Following today’s session are you more likely to use your vote?*” The majority of respondents (73%) indicated in the affirmative to this question, indicating that 1,389 participants left the sessions more likely to vote than prior to its commencement.

For those who answered negatively, the main reasons given were either because they did not have the right to vote and therefore could not utilise the information that they had received at that time (although many indicated a desire to do so as soon as they were able); or that they were already regular voters and would continue to be so in future (being therefore not ‘more’ likely to vote, but equally likely).

Increase the awareness of 1,215 ethnic minority communities of how local, national and European democracy is organised and how decisions are made.

As with the first of the targets described, all 1,908 people who had participated in the IDP at the time of writing had received information about how the different structures worked and how they could interact with them. Presentations

were given which provided overviews of the existing democratic bodies in Scotland¹ as well as in-depth insights to specific bodies as appropriate. For example in the run-up to the European Parliamentary elections in 2009 several events were held which specifically focussed on the European Union and particularly the Parliament, using these as a relevant context to promote discussion. This was further heightened by involving elected representatives from these bodies to share their experiences and insights. Finally, use was made of the available resources and outreach teams of the different bodies so that their expertise could be made available to the participants.

Delivery was important as the different audiences were starting from very different backgrounds. Whilst some sessions were quite complex with the issues they explored, others used games and activities to make the subject less daunting. This did not reduce the impact of the sessions – discussions about what democracy is and how we expect our representatives to behave and act were vibrant and challenging in every session.

In the evaluation forms, over 70% of participants indicated that they felt either comfortable or very comfortable about their awareness of the subject, demonstrating the positive impact which the IDP had made on their knowledge and awareness. Furthermore, one of the most frequent comments made in feedback (including that of some elected representatives as well!) was “I thought I knew a lot about this subject, but I’d never heard x before”, demonstrating that the IDP programme was able to cater to participants whatever their background level of understanding.

Develop an increased understanding of the barriers for ethnic minority communities in engaging in civic, democratic and electoral processes and identifying effective approaches to increasing participation.

The key means of meeting this target was through the undertaking of research with the EM communities of Scotland, of which this report is the conclusion. The research element of the IDP proved to be a very useful component, which allowed EM people in Scotland to feel that they were making their voice heard and contributing to making the system more accessible to everyone. There are a number of suggestions as to ways that existing barriers could be overcome and which would promote greater participation and ownership of democracy in Scotland contained later in the report.

Opportunities were given at IDP events for discussion and debate about the challenges and barriers which EM people in Scotland encounter and this helped to demonstrate to the audience the importance of the topics being explored.

Develop a permanent and evolving resource of skills and knowledge within marginalised communities of democratic and electoral processes.

This aspect of the IDP proved harder to assess than some of the other targets. The initial plan had been for the Learning Events to act as opportunities for information to be delivered by the IDP Officers to the management and staff of EM organisations, and in turn to cascade from them onto their service users. However this proved to be more difficult in reality. Instead of the organisations themselves cascading the information on to their users, they often requested that the IDP Officers organise Outreach Events with their organisations in order to carry out that function for them. This has proven to be a useful way for the IDP to work closely with a range of groups and to ensure that the information given out has been correct and in depth.

However, despite the difficulties, it is possible to highlight some of the permanent resources which have been developed and distributed. The Report will be the main aspect of this. The research is a reflection of the thoughts and experiences of EM people across Scotland and therefore belongs to them. Its publication will allow them to assess the current situation in Scotland and to work to improve the levels of participation amongst their communities. In addition to the research, the information used during the events has also been widely distributed to participating organisations and beyond. Copies of the presentations and resources (from a range of sources such as the Electoral Commission, Scottish Parliament and UK Houses of Parliament) have been passed on so that organisations have easy access to the information should they wish to follow up the sessions that were delivered, and certainly some of the groups have done so.

Participants were also aware that the IDP was an ongoing project and were therefore able to contact the Officers for support. A good example came following the Outreach Event with the EM group at Govanhill Housing Association in Glasgow. The group decided that they would like to arrange the attendance of their local councillors at their next meeting, and contacted the Outreach Officer for advice and support in doing so – this did not entail the Officer arranging it for them, as they were keen to develop these skills in their own right, but meant that in the first instance they could ensure that they were going about things in the right way. This demonstrated that the IDP team represented an available and ongoing resource for this group, and was replicated with other organisations.

2.4 – Learning Events

Learning Events were designed to be run as ‘mini-conferences’ organised on a regional basis with six events held over the course of a year. Generally

they followed a half-day structure which included a wide range of inputs on different topics, including:

- Democratic structures in Scotland
- The working of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government
- The 2009 European Parliamentary elections
- Electoral registration

The regional focus of the Learning Events varied from year to year, in order to ensure the widest geographic coverage possible. Year One targeted the Central Belt; Year Two Glasgow and the West, Aberdeen and the Highlands; and Year Three turned its attention to Edinburgh and the East, Fife, The Borders and South of Scotland.

The initial intention had been for the six events to be held as two events in each of the three targeted regions. These two events would be interlinked, so that participants would attend both and gain increased knowledge from the two events and the subjects covered therein. However, this turned out to not always be a practical approach. With many of the time and resource constraints that EM voluntary sector organisations face, committing to one event was a considerable achievement, but two would have been too difficult. Therefore many of the Learning Events operated as stand alone events, covering as many of the different topics as possible with no requirement for attendance at a further event.



Learning Events involved the participation of a wide range of elected representatives from across the main political parties of Scotland, with all of the parties having been involved across the Learning Events. This participation allowed participants to meet and question their representatives; and allowed

representatives to develop contacts with elements of their constituencies which they sometimes believed to be harder to reach. The involvement of the representatives, along with that of other speakers from bodies such as Local Authorities, Joint Valuation Boards, the Electoral Commission and the various Parliamentary bodies, was welcomed by participants as a particularly useful element of the programme.

The Learning Events were primarily targeted at the staff, board members and volunteers of EM voluntary sector organisations, with the intention that these would then take the information that they had learned and cascade it back into their own organisations and the clients they worked with. However, in many situations this turned out to not be the case, as participants did not feel confident enough to discuss the information with their clients and colleagues. This turned out to present opportunities for the IDP as many of these groups were therefore interested in arranging Outreach Events with their organisations to allow the IDP Officers to handle the responsibility of delivering accurate and appropriate information.

2.5 – Outreach Events

Outreach Events were designed to compliment of the work of the Learning Events by delivering the information to the grassroots of the EM voluntary sector. Events were directly targeted at specific groups, allowing the material and information to be specifically focussed on the context, understanding and interests of the group concerned. In particular, this allowed groups with lower levels of educational history to participate and interact with the information, which they would have struggled to do with the more formal aspects of the Learning Events, and expanded participation beyond staff and board members of organisations to also include clients and service users.

Unlike the Learning Events, the Outreach Events did not have an annual geographic focus, instead being free to respond to interest wherever it presented itself. This flexibility of focus (combined with the flexibility of being able to hold the Outreach Events as and when suited the groups concerned) meant that harder-to-reach groups, such as those working with asylum seekers and refugees, could be included in events held on their terms and in contexts appropriate to them. As mentioned in Section 2.2, Outreach Events were sometimes held in response to requests from groups who had had staff members attend a Learning Event and wished further information to be provided for their clients and staff; however many of the Outreach Events involved groups who had not had any other contact with the IDP.

Events covered a wide range of topics and approaches, depending upon the group involved. For some groups with little or no educational backgrounds, games and activities (for example from the Democracy Cookbook) were

utilised to deliver information at an accessible level. For other, more politically literate groups topics were explored at a more in-depth level, including sessions focussed on the reality and possibility of serving as elected political representatives. In that event and many others local elected representatives were invited to participate, giving participants the chance to have an intimate and relaxed opportunity to get to know their representatives. Elected representatives were not involved in every Outreach Event as this would not have been suitable in every context, however those groups who did have representatives participate highlighted that these had been positive interactions, with some groups going on to develop relationships with the representatives.

2.6 – Research

Through the work of the Learning and Outreach Events, significant opportunities were presented to discuss and explore the feelings and experiences of Scotland's EM communities in regards to the barriers (or otherwise) which they had encountered in regards to participating in the civic, democratic and electoral life of the country. One of the objectives of the IDP had been to document these experiences in order to give an insight into what was needed to increase the participation of under-represented communities, and therefore space was given during all of the Year One and Two Learning Events and several of the Outreach Events to conduct focus groups.

With the wealth of information which was being collected through this process, it was decided to supplement and deepen this by conducting complimentary quantitative research, through the use of a questionnaire¹⁰ which explored many of the issues directly raised by IDP participants.

After the creation of the questionnaire and its pilot with a small test group, the questionnaire was distributed to EM groups and individuals across Scotland. Following this distribution period, 254 eligible questionnaires were returned which were subsequently analysed. The statistical data obtained was used to further expand upon the information from the IDP events, together providing the basis for this report.

As a further exploration of the issues, a small number of semi-structured interviews were carried out with a range of individuals from the EM population – these included elected representatives past and present; community activists; and people working in statutory bodies, all of whom had very specific experiences of interacting with the civic and democratic bodies in a more detailed way. Whilst it would be possible to create a report in itself which focussed solely on the wealth of personal experiences which they provided,

¹⁰ Appendix 2

their contributions have been utilised to compliment the other data, affording a further level of reflection on the structures and their impact on the lives of EM people.

2.7 – Good Practice and Lessons Learned

The breadth of the IDP's reach and the diversity of participants who took part in it gave opportunity for processes and practice to be refined and developed.

As outlined in Section 2.2, one of the key lessons learned was the importance of enforcing completion of evaluation forms. At sessions, particularly Learning Events, it proved very easy and common for participants to leave during a talk without completing a form. Likewise some participants would promise to post the form in at a later date – almost without fail this subsequently did not happen. At the sessions where food was being provided (which covered the majority of the sessions) a useful tactic was found to be requesting a completed evaluation form before food could be taken. Whilst this may sound a harsh approach, it did prove successful in increasing the willingness of participants to complete their forms!

In regards to the evaluation forms themselves, they were refined over the course of the first two years of the project. At first they were quite a simple one page form which, whilst easy to complete, did not allow for the collection of much information. By developing a two page 'before and after' form the Officers were able to collect a greater deal of comparative information, allowing for greater analysis. The forms did prove tricky at points, particularly for sessions where interpreters were being used, however as an overall tool the greater quantity of information proved invaluable.

One of the biggest challenges that the IDP faced was in competing with the other demands on the organisations' time, particularly in the light of the economic turbulence which left many EM voluntary organisations fighting for survival amidst uncertain funding. The fact that the IDP was able to offer a complete package of expert knowledge and speakers, catering, administration and venue hire costs meant that hosting an IDP session did not represent a strain on the organisation's time or resources, a fact which was greatly appreciated by the participants.

2.8 – Next Steps

The IDP has proven to be a success, exceeding targets whilst remaining under-budget. Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the IDP's impact and contribution to the EM population in Scotland and numerous organisations expressed a desire to see the project continue to run indefinitely.

Unfortunately the Electoral Commission are no longer funding democratic outreach work and therefore the IDP finished in early 2010. Whilst CEMVO Scotland is committed to the provision of democratic outreach work for the EM population in Scotland which it serves, the tough funding climate means that finding sources to support a new project is a challenging task.

It is to be hoped that the organisations and individuals who have participated in the IDP will utilise the knowledge and skills that they have developed to interact with and shape the Scottish civic and democratic landscape. Certainly this report represents a resource which can be used for discussion, debate and action, and potentially could form the basis of a future piece of work.

The lack of confidence in regards to political involvement which was expressed by many participants in the IDP remains a substantial barrier to the EM population playing an increased and active role in Scotland's civic and democratic life, and it can only be hoped that similar democratic education programmes will be created in future and will be able to build upon the start made in the IDP.

Findings

3.1 Introduction

The work of the IDP and the findings obtained through the questionnaire which was produced and distributed allowed a wide range of different topics to be identified and discussed with participants. This section explores some of the key issues which arose for the EM people who took part in the IDP in all of its aspects, primarily by participating in events and/or completing questionnaires, with the subsequent two sections exploring the specific experiences of the Scottish Chinese community and of EM young people in Scotland respectively.

3.2 - Lack of Relevance and Connection

For many of the people who participated in this report, politics and democracy is seen as a disconnected process, removed from the priorities of daily life. This disconnection reflects two important issues which combine to remove people from participation in the political processes – a technical element which excludes those who do not have experience of the relevant terminology; and an irrelevance of political discourse to daily life.

The technical aspect is a reflection of the *professionalisation* of politics, a trend which has been identified and speculated upon by a variety of political commentators and researchers (i.e. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 1995; Beckman 2006; Cairney 2007). Politicians appear to be concerned with far-reaching issues and concepts which are framed in exclusive technical language, which isolates ‘outsiders’ not rooted in this environment.

One of the strengths of the British political system has been its openness to a wide spectrum of social classes and backgrounds – MPs come from both privileged and less-privileged backgrounds (Cracknell 2005). However, a recent trend has been for greater numbers of ‘professional politicians’ who

operate as a separate class of their own (Jun 2003).

Whilst it is beyond the remit of this report to fully explore the implications of professionalisation it is important to note that it does present as one barrier for EM participation, particularly in areas such as participation in a political party or standing for election. However even beyond these strands it represents a challenge for voters when it comes to choosing who to give their vote for – if they feel that their choice is limited or they are unable to follow the discussions and ideas being put forward, then they may be less likely to vote. It is particularly relevant for older people who may not have the knowledge of the relevant political terms and concepts. Culturally EM people in Scotland, particularly those who were not born and/or educated in the UK, may not be coming from a democratic tradition, and may therefore not possess some of the skills and experiences which a professionalised political system takes for granted.

The second aspect, irrelevance, is one that was expressed by numerous participants in the IDP. Politicians are seen to be fixated on issues which ‘ordinary’ people are not concerned with on a day-to-day basis – fiscal policy, constitutional issues etc. Meanwhile, people expressed a belief that the daily processes that they were engaged with remained untouched by political decisions.

One of the key aims of the IDP was to provide educational input which increased the understanding amongst the EM population that everything is affected by political decisions. However, this feeling of irrelevance is one that is widespread into the wider population, limiting the appeal of political engagement as an unnecessary and unimportant constraint on time.

3.3 - Representation

Further to the disconnection highlighted above, there is the readily identifiable barrier of the lack of representation of EM people in political structures, a point which was highlighted by IDP participants, in the questionnaire and in the interviews conducted. As outlined in Section 1, the current situation in Scotland leaves the EM population underrepresented in all of Scotland’s democratic structures. The first EM person was elected in Scotland in 1979 for the city council in Glasgow – progress since then has been piecemeal, with the first EM MP elected in 1997 and the first MSP in 2003, all three elected in Glasgow.

As noted previously, the small number of representatives for some of these bodies does mean that representation equal to the percentage of the population would necessarily be the answer, however the visible lack of EM representatives does impact upon the opportunities for and willingness of

EM people to participate, as elected representatives present a very visible reflection of a community's involvement in a structure.

In addition to this, having no representatives who directly share their experiences (particularly in something as visible as race) means that anyone who does get involved has to play the role of pioneer. This is a daunting and isolating role which can present numerous challenges for the individuals concerned, and indeed serves to put many eligible candidates off in the first place.

One person who was interviewed for the Semi-Structured Interviews shared their own thoughts about the pioneering role and its challenges:

“When you are one of the first in a role, it can be very difficult. But a friend reminded me to think about the first rains after the hot summer. The rain will not start to fall until a few rain drops have broken from the cloud. These rain drops may well be scorched against the hot earth, but they are necessary to prepare the way for the greater number to follow. That is also the role of EM people in politics – you run the risk of getting burnt by the hostile reaction, but by doing so you pave the way for others to follow.” (Participant, Glasgow)

Representation also has knock-on effects for the more general interaction of EM people with the established systems and structures of civic life, in regards to how they interact and communicate with their Local Authority and its constituent departments. The lack of representatives from their community can present a barrier, particularly for community members who may have little or no English, or for whom there may be particular cultural contexts in operation. As with employment more generally, it is important for there to be visible signs in establishments that EM people are welcomed and involved in the structures if they are not to be seen as unrelated to their lives. An all white male establishment can present an environment which is not open to EM people, and which can be off putting to them – both in regards to standing for election or for more general dealings.

The lack of representatives from EM communities means that Local Authorities miss out on some of the experience and cultural wealth which is present in the communities that they represent and are poorer because of that – they also may find their task harder to undertake if they lack connections to sections of the community they serve.

For EM people who are successful in standing for election, and indeed for being elected, one of the most common reports has been of the exceedingly high standards which they must work to. As a participant explained in an interview, “it is not enough to be as good as the other people, as an Ethnic Minority you have to be better” (Participant, Glasgow).

It was reported that EM people felt that there were different standards in place for them in comparison to white colleagues. For example, one interviewee reported that their attendance at Council meetings was effectively compulsory, as their absence would always be noticed and commented upon. However, white colleagues frequently missed meetings without comment, a reflection of the higher standards the EM Councillor had to work under because of the fact they stood out in the composition of the Council due to the colour of their skin. This places a great strain upon EM representatives. They are placed in a position whereby any perceived mistakes or slip-ups can be held against them for a long time and where any allegations made against them can be perceived as guilty until proven innocent, in a reversal of common standards.

Due to the lack of appropriate levels of EM representation, it is also the case that EM representatives can end up being involved in activities and campaigns which cover communities living well outside their own constituencies. If a representative is seen as being a representative for a particular community (either racial or religious) then they will be contacted with queries and concerns from members of the same community across the country, and indeed beyond in many cases.

This can be a positive situation, allowing the representative to be involved in helping their communities or working on issues which are important to them, but it also increases their workload to a greater degree than colleagues who may be predominantly focussed on the constituency they directly represent. In addition, it can leave the representative open to allegations of having their community as a priority, to the detriment of their constituency.

This is heightened by the fact that in situations where there is sometimes a tendency for other non-EM representatives and the officials of the body to 'pass on' EM issues to the representatives from the EM community. This does a disservice to the EM representatives and the wider community – EM representatives are not elected to solely represent EM communities, and non-EM representatives are there to represent everyone in their constituency.

3.4 - Political Parties

It is not in the remit of this report to fully examine the efforts of the political parties in seeking to engage EM people, both in joining and then in participating in the workings of the party. However, as an issue which was raised during the research, it is important to explore the fundamental issues which arise for EM people.

Political party membership is falling amongst the general public - from the heights of the 1950s, when the Conservative party could claim a mass membership of around 3 million (Addison, 1999), to the contemporary

situation where the Conservatives have a membership of around 270,000, with the other parties smaller again. The most recent *Audit of Political Engagement* found that 4% of their respondents had donated money or paid membership fees to a political party, and 3% had taken an active part in a political campaign (Hansard Society, 2008, p.19). The level of response rate amongst the EM respondents to the IDP questionnaire was 3.5%, which is therefore similar to the Audit's findings. However, the IDP questionnaire had a smaller sample and therefore the findings are not as transferable.

There are a number of reasons behind this trend in declining party membership, which is noticeable in other Western democracies (although Britain seems to show a more marked decline), with single issue groups filling some of the vacuum, and it would seem apparent that these reasons have an impact on EM communities as well as other communities. However, additional issues exist for EM people that act as barriers for them joining, and more crucially actively participating in political parties.

Due to the decline in party membership, many parties now have memberships which are older. This presents a potentially daunting atmosphere for EM people to join, as it is highly likely in many constituencies that they may be the only EM person at the meeting. Whilst the other members may be very welcoming (and the participants in the research who were members of political parties did not indicate otherwise) it can still be off-putting to stand out so clearly in a meeting. This is further compounded for EM people who are female and/or young people, again often underrepresented categories of political party membership (at least depending upon the political party and geographic location).

In addition, political party membership can be about much more than simply joining a particular party and attending local meetings. Members often wish to be involved in the inner workings of the party, helping to formulate policy; to be active participants in party democracy, standing for positions; participating in campaigning; and of course becoming candidates for election by the general public. All of these can be much harder for EM members, either by feeling uncomfortable about being the sole member of a particular community, or by encountering latent racism from fellow members.

A general feeling reported by participants in the research was that political parties could, and should, be doing much more to support and encourage EM people both to join and to be active members. If EM people felt more welcomed and wanted in political parties then they may be more likely to choose to join them. In addition, it is important that parties seek to engage all EM communities, not just specific ones. As one participant said, "Political parties don't seem to care about people from my community – they want my vote and they want my money, but they don't want to listen to what I have to say!" (Participant, Falkirk)

Several participants remarked that they felt that certain communities were being targeted due to being electorally useful, whilst other communities, particularly smaller or more self-contained ones, were largely ignored. This alienates both EM and homogenous communities if they feel that there is a bias towards certain groups, and acts as a barrier towards people participating.

Additionally, for the groups who are being targeted, it can be very disappointing and disillusioning for them to be courted for their votes and then abandoned once elections are completed. Relationships between political parties and EM people and communities have to be open and sustained, with both sides working together.

3.5 - Language and Resources

One of the most crucial findings of the IDP, which was raised repeatedly at events, in interviews and in the questionnaire, was the barrier presented by language and culture to EM people looking to participate.

For many in the EM population, particularly those of older generations, English is not their first or main language of communication. Even for some who have been in the country for a considerable period of time, their linguistic abilities may still be limited, particularly when confronted with the technical language which is used for describing and explaining political and electoral activities. These descriptions require not just understanding of specific terms, but in addition need an understanding of the concepts which they encapsulate.

As highlighted earlier in the report, politics in the UK uses much terminology on the assumption that it is commonly understood. However terms such as democracy and politics are not only potentially complex technical terms but are also open to different definitions, shaped by cultural context and personal approach. For many people who have learnt English as a second or additional language, terminology such as this may be both unusual and unsettling, even if they are fairly confident in their day-to-day usage of English.

Authorities have undertaken work to overcome some of these barriers, with resources made available in a variety of languages and for a variety of topics. The Electoral Commission have produced a large variety of leaflets, and the response to their use in IDP events was very positive. Bodies such as the Scottish Parliament have also invested considerable effort and money in producing resources exploring the function and history of the body, and these have proved very useful in helping to explain information to EM people in a more accessible manner.

However, there are still crucial areas which have been identified by respondents where appropriate resources are still lacking.

Firstly, layout and accessibility of the polling place on election day was an area which many participants identified as requiring further changes. For example, participants reported that they “felt lost on the day” (Participant, Glasgow) and “embarrassed to ask for help – I would look stupid” (Participant, Edinburgh). This left some EM voters unsure as to whether their vote counted.

For EM people who choose to utilise their vote, the polling place can be a daunting environment. Resources in the polling place are in English and polling day staff, whilst generally very helpful and competent, lack training in working with specific EM issues. The rules which are in place to protect impartiality in the voting process can make the process more complex for EM people who are possibly struggling with the language, especially as it limits the ability of their family or friends to assist them in the polling booth.

Provision is made to support people with disabilities, but not specifically those with linguistic issues (Electoral Commission, 2007). Whilst in theory voters could ask for either the Presiding Officer or an appropriate Companion to assist them, they would be required to prove their need to the Polling Station staff. This is obviously potentially embarrassing – it is also something which is not clearly explained to people who might be in that situation.

In the polling stations themselves, there is printed material made available explaining how to cast a vote, including the details on the voting form itself. Materials are produced in different languages; however their use is reliant upon the decision of the individual presiding officers. There is not data available as to how many polling places used the translated materials; however participants in the IDP reported that many of them did not see any materials, even in areas with long established EM populations.

Voting information sent out to people in advance of the election (or along with their postal votes) is likewise in English, restricting the accessibility of the material for certain segments of the population. Even when translated material is made available, it is not always suitable for the people concerned. One participant (Glasgow) gave the example of leaflets being distributed in Punjabi. Whilst he welcomed this decision, he pointed out that Punjabi varies considerably between different communities, making one version potentially unintelligible to members of a different Punjabi speaking community (or at the very least more difficult to understand). Furthermore, many people may speak Punjabi without being able to read it – this is a similar situation for other languages such as Mandarin as well. For these people, making written materials available in Punjabi, whilst well-intentioned, does not help them in understanding what to do. Rather, spoken interpretation would be required in addition to the provision of written materials.

In addition to these linguistic barriers, the fact that some EM communities experience isolation from the main sectors of society has a negative impact

upon their ability to interact with the structures in place.

In the research, this was identified as a key issue by the African community respondents to the questionnaire. Being isolated from other structures makes it difficult for them to identify sources of support should they be looking for answers to questions. Unlike some communities (for example the Pakistani community) which are often found in areas with a significant number of members of their community, African respondents identified that they are often more isolated, with fewer organisations or community members in the area, particularly if they do not live in Glasgow.

This isolation for EM people, particularly if they may be newer arrivals in the UK, can make it very difficult for them to access support or advice of any type – this is doubly difficult if the advice is relating to politics and elections, which people around them may not be familiar or comfortable with explaining.

Chinese Community

4.1 - Irrelevance

A recurring theme during the research was that members of the Chinese community viewed politics and democracy as being irrelevant to their lives. As discussed in Section 3.2, there is a disconnection between the general public and the political processes in comparison to previous generations; however this disconnection is markedly higher amongst the Chinese community. Of 90 respondents to the questionnaire who identified as being members of the Chinese community, 74 (82.2%) indicated that they do not always vote at elections – this contrasts strongly with the overall findings for all of the EM groups, where 54.7% indicated that they do not vote at every election. A majority of those who said that they did not vote at every election (51.3%) stated that this was due to a lack of interest in the process, reflecting a belief that the process did not impact significantly upon their lives.

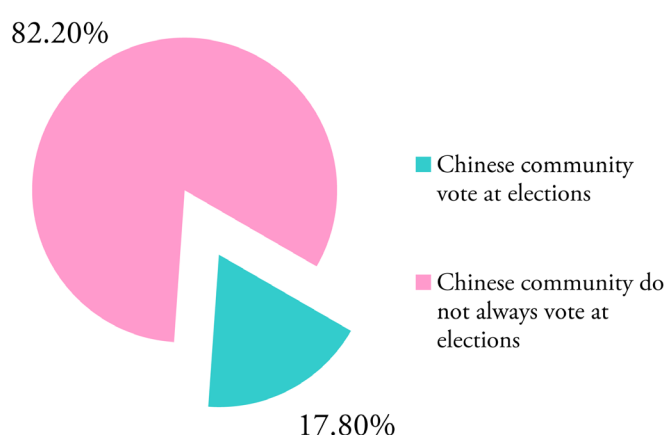
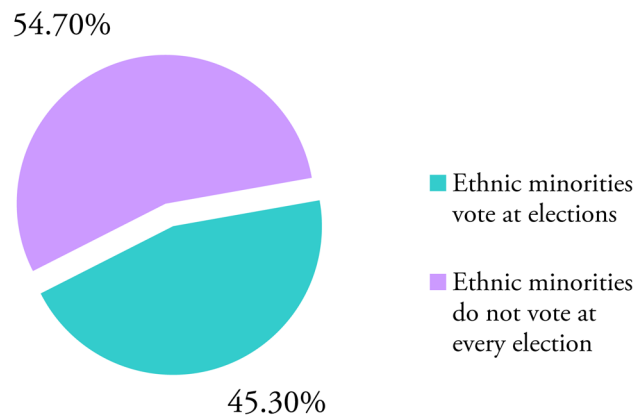


Chart showing over 82% of the Chinese community who do not always vote at elections.

Chart showing over 54% of all ethnic minorities who do not vote at every election.

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Participants frequently highlighted that it made no difference to them who was 'in power'. Statistically EM communities are more likely to be self-employed with this reflected in the Chinese community who have the second highest percentage of self-employed people amongst the different communities in Scotland (Office of the Chief Statistician, 2004).

With a focus on their own communities and businesses, the political representation that the community received was viewed as having little or no direct impact on day-to-day life. "It doesn't matter to me who is my politician, they don't change my life. Labour, Tory – I haven't noticed a difference as to who is in power" (Participant, Glasgow).

In common with other EM groups, very few of the Chinese respondents indicated that they have a positive or very positive view of politicians. With such a low prevalence of positive views, it is not surprising that members of the Chinese community in Scotland reported very low levels of participation with the systems which are in place. Negative views of politicians do not encourage people to consider involvement in politics as a worthwhile or commendable choice for life.

Very few members of the Chinese respondents reported being members of organisations or active participants in the functioning of democracy. All of this further deepens the disconnection between the Chinese population of Scotland and the people who represent them.

A positive finding which contrasts with these is that 33 of the respondents would, if suitably motivated about an issue, do 'something' about it, with the biggest response being to contact their elected representatives. Indeed more respondents said they would hypothetically contact their elected representatives than had done so in reality which implies that there is potential for members of the Chinese community to be more actively involved in the processes than they currently are, if it could be demonstrated to them that

there was an important reason to do so. It cannot be presumed that Chinese people (and indeed members of other EM communities) will participate in democracy without there being clear benefits to them and their families.

4.2 - Cultural Barriers

Members of the Chinese community identified several cultural barriers which interact with their participation in the democratic systems of Scotland, particularly in regards to voting. These issues play a crucial but often hidden role in preventing active participation, with people who are not members of the community often unaware of their influence.

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Electorally, one of the key barriers which exists for members of the Chinese community in Scotland is the lack of parental, and indeed community, example when it comes to using their right to vote.

In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of respondents indicated that they vote at every election, and responses from members of the community who participated in interviews and focus groups backed up this assertion. As one younger participant stated, “I’ve never seen my parents voting, so why should I think it’s worth bothering with?” (Participant, Glasgow).

It has been demonstrated through research that young people are more likely to vote if their parents are actively involved (Centre for Research on Vermont, 2000) and it is therefore not surprising that young people from the Chinese community, who may have little or no experience of seeing their own parents, friends or relations utilise their vote, do not see the electoral process as being relevant to their lives. Voting was described by one participant as “not being able to make a difference – it is too focussed on the collective and misses the needs of individuals” (Participant, Glasgow).

Along with this shared belief in the irrelevance of voting, there was also a shared distrust of the democratic process. Participants described their distrust of filling in forms, particularly ones issued by the authorities.

Some participants felt that this distrust came from the experiences of their parents and grandparents in China; whilst others felt that it was rooted in the barriers presented by language and the lack of appropriately translated materials.

Obviously voting requires people to register in advance – if members of the Chinese community do not trust the materials which they are sent and/or cannot understand them, then they will fail to register for their vote and thus will be unable to use it regardless of desire.

Participants also highlighted an additional cultural barrier at play for the Chinese community. It was explained that “for Chinese people, it is considered arrogant to put yourself forward for election – what’s so special about you that you deserve to be in charge?” (Participant, Glasgow).

This presents a major barrier towards encouraging members of the Chinese community to consider putting themselves forward for election. One of the stereotypical underpinnings of EM representatives is that they are elected to represent areas with significant numbers of their ‘own community’. However, if members of the Chinese community run the risk of alienation by considering standing for election, then they will encounter yet another barrier which can put them off what is already a difficult task.

Furthermore, as explored elsewhere in the report, the traditional and still main route into elected politics in most of Scotland is via membership and activity in a political party. As stated above, a small proportion of Chinese respondents were members of a political party, with political parties seen as being “not cool” (Participant, Glasgow) and “only making empty or impossible promises in order to win votes” (Participant, Glasgow).

The distrust of politicians reflects in a distrust of political parties and institutions. None of the Chinese participants at an Outreach Event in Glasgow were members of a political party. Moreover, none of them could imagine joining one for any conceivable reason.

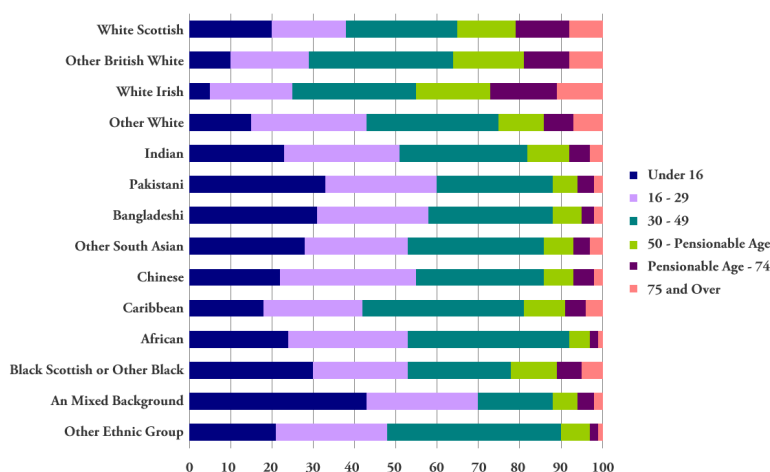
This belief that political parties are not a valid means of social change combines with statements that politics is not regarded as legitimate public service – “The system is full of corruption and bribery” (Participant, Glasgow); “It’s just a load of old men arguing – they don’t care about changing things” (Participant, Glasgow). This lack of respect for the potential of political service further reinforces the disconnect between the community and the structures, and reduces the chances of members choosing to actively engage and participate.

Young People

5.1 – Introduction

Young people statistically have the lowest rates of participation in electoral and democratic processes, with some research indicating that across Europe, voters under the age of 25 have a turn-out rate roughly 20% below the average (Fieldhouse, Tranmer & Russell (2007). The Electoral Commission estimates that in the 2001 General Election the under 25 vote was 39% in contrast to the national turn-out of 59.54%; and in the 2005 General Election it had fallen to 37% at the same time that the national turn-out had risen slightly to 61.4% (Electoral Commission, 2008).

The turn-out rates of EM communities is affected by this situation to a greater degree than the majority community due to the greater proportion of young people in many EM communities.



Graph of Scotland's age distribution by ethnic groups.

As can be seen from the table above, all of the non-white EM groups in Scotland (other than the Caribbean community) have over 20% of their

members under the age of 20. It is therefore beneficial to examine the barriers which EM young people may be encountering in order to increase their levels of participation in the democratic systems.

5.2 – Disconnection

The disconnection of young people from the formal civic, democratic and electoral processes in Scotland and the UK is an issue which has provoked considerable debate. As demonstrated in 5.1, young people as a group are less likely to use their vote in elections than other segments of the population. Likewise, the findings of the questionnaire for this report demonstrated that older respondents reported higher levels of participation in the forms explored by the questionnaire than the younger respondents.

The first key point to note is that none of the age cohorts reported above 50% of respondents being involved in any of the particular activities identified – indeed only completing questionnaires was above 20% of respondents. Young people often receive criticism for not being involved in the instruments of democracy and society; however this research indicates that they are reflecting a wider disconnection amongst society, which is more pronounced for younger members, rather than exclusive to them.

It is possible to clarify some of the barriers which existed to put them off “things that don’t matter to their lives” (Participant, Glasgow). One respondent in Glasgow explained:

“How can politicians understand the issues that affect me and other young people? They are all old men arguing about things that don’t matter – there are no young politicians to understand my life.”

The lack of young people as role models within the political system was also identified by other participants. Politicians were seen as “divorced from real life” (Participant, Glasgow), “full of empty promises” (Participant, Inverness), and “always jumping on bandwagons without being fully committed to the issues involved” (Participant, Glasgow). Crucially, politics was seen as being “not cool and not fashionable – why would anyone want to talk about it?” (Participant, Glasgow).

This disconnection from elected representatives presents a significant barrier to young people looking to participate in the formal structures of civic, democratic and electoral life in Scotland. If the representatives are seen as being removed from their lives and priorities, then young people will not associate them with being part of the solution, and will seek to find their solutions or answers in less ‘traditional’ manners. This in itself is not a problem as such, but obviously reduces the number of potential candidates

and activists engaging with the formal political system.

It has been argued that this is reflected in the growth of ‘single-issue’ groups at the supposed expense of traditional political parties. These groups focussed around one specific issue or topic – such as environmental issues etc – can seem appealing to a young person, and indeed a member of any age group, who agrees with the issue which is driving that particular group. Certainly membership of political parties has seen a drop over recent years and only 2.7% of the 14-25 cohort of questionnaire respondents identified as being members of political parties – if the 26-40 cohort is also included this percentage drops slightly to 2.5%.

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Political parties were identified as being “not interested in young people” (Participant, Inverness); “always fighting about things which don’t matter” (Participant, Glasgow); and “irrelevant to young people” (Participant, Glasgow). Young people interviewed expressed a lack of interest in political parties, and on several occasions explained that they could not imagine “any conceivable situation where joining a political party would be of interest to me” (Participant, Glasgow). It is not difficult to see why, with negative perceptions of political parties such as those expressed above, young EM people do not view political parties as legitimate representatives of their views and interests.

These feelings of disconnection are not unique to EM young people. Indeed, they reflect very accurately many of the issues identified by groups of young people from the majority community, such as those who participated in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned report of 2000 (White, Bruce & Ritchie, 2000). These young people identified many of the same issues of disconnection from political and democratic discourse as the respondents to this report did, with young people describing politics as irrelevant, boring and inaccessible.

5.3 – Cultural Barriers

The correspondence of the views of the young EM people who responded to this report and the views of the wider body of young people from all ethnicities demonstrates that for many EM young people they are more closely part of the wider community than their parents and preceding generations may have been, particularly if they have been born and educated in Scotland. They share many of the same issues and barriers that their white peers do, and therefore will respond to the same interventions that are required to increase their levels of participation and involvement.

However, this does not detract from the reality that young EM people believe that there are significant barriers in place which are particular to the EM population.

Language is the barrier most identified by all of the age cohorts who participated in the questionnaire, which raises a challenge to the assertion made that EM young people are more closely linked in to the society around them through their participation in the education system – after all, why would EM young people who possess English as their mother tongue perceive language to be the main barrier?

Participants in the IDP events provided a potential explanation for this finding. Young people who contributed explained that “barriers definitely exist for EM people, particularly older EM people who don’t speak English” (Participant, Glasgow). As one young person explained:

“There are not many things stopping me taking part, ‘cos I’ve been here my whole life. But for my parents and grandparents it’s really difficult, they don’t understand how things work here and can’t understand the forms” (Participant, Glasgow).

There is therefore the possibility that some young people were responding to the questionnaire in terms of barriers which exist for the wider EM community rather than for themselves. This might also explain why 15.1% of the 41-60 cohort believed that there are no barriers for EM people – participants in the focus group discussions explained that “the barriers are not there for the young ones – education lets them be part of what’s going on” (Participant, Edinburgh).

There are additional barriers which exist for young people in regards to the culture or ethnicity of which they are a member. EM young people possess multi-faceted identities reflecting the variety of influences and histories which shape their self-conception, and there can be tensions between these in regards to participation in formal structures.

The first of these barriers which was identified by a number of young people was the lack of parental example in regards to voting and other forms of participation in civic and democratic structures. Many EM young people highlighted that they had never seen their parents vote – as one young person explained “if my parents and grandparents have never voted, why would I think it’s important?” (Participant, Glasgow).

Parental example has been identified in research as one of the most crucial factors in the involvement of young people in democratic structures, with the children of active parents far more likely to be subsequently involved in civic and democratic activities (Centre for Research on Vermont, 2000). If young people from EM communities are less likely to see their parents or guardians actively participating in democracy, then they in turn will see their levels of participation negatively impacted upon.

There can also be barriers specific to certain ethnic groups which impact upon the participation of young people. As discussed in Section 4, within the Chinese community it can be considered arrogant to put oneself forward for election. It was also highlighted by one older participant in Glasgow that his initial entry into politics as a young person had been viewed with distaste by his family, because their cultural heritage in Pakistan did not see politics as a positive career choice.

These cultural barriers present significant challenges for young people from EM communities in addition to the other barriers which exist. It is still the case that EM candidates are more likely to be put up for election by parties in areas where there is a significant EM population, commonly of the same group as them (Saggar & Geddes, 2000). If the very candidature of the individual alienates their own community losing them a core element of their vote, then it can become very difficult to be elected. In addition, it can cause repercussions for the individual concerned within their community, which can be particularly off putting for a young person considering active involvement in political life and having to balance their desire to serve with the risks of alienation from family and community.

5.4 – Unappealing Public Service

As identified in 5.3, there are significant cultural barriers which exist for EM young people in regards to their cultural heritage and the influence of their communities. These barriers can be very difficult to overcome – in order to do so, young people need to believe that active involvement is worth the difficulties that may be potentially involved.

However, this recognition of the importance and appeal of public service has become lessened for many young people. This is reflected in the lack of respect or interest that young people responding to the research expressed for elected representatives:

Acting as a representative was not seen as public service, i.e. putting oneself at the service of the community, but rather was viewed as a career – and not a very attractive one at that. Young people described politicians as being “only interested in themselves” (Participant, Glasgow) and using their role “as a way to make as much money for themselves as possible” (Participant, Inverness). When discussing the salaries of politicians, there was a universal belief that “they are all over-paid, doing nothing to earn their money” (Participant, Glasgow). It is worth noting that this work was carried out prior to the MP’s expenses scandal which broke in 2009 – it can be hypothesised with a degree of conviction that this situation would have deepened the feelings of politics being a money making exercise.

Indeed, further examination of this topic found that young people believed that politicians were earning far more than they do in reality, with a group in Glasgow believing that Local Councillors earned a starting salary of over £100,000. When it was clarified that Local Councillors earned substantially less and that many had jobs had to have other jobs alongside their elected service, the young people concerned expressed an improved respect for the job that they were doing.

The lack of respect for the elected representatives conspires to reduce the likelihood of young EM people being interested in exploring this aspect of involvement in public life. The professionalisation of politics means that young EM people, in common with other EM people and indeed much of the population as a whole in the UK, view political life as being a highly specialised and exclusive activity, not open to the likes of them. Young people responding to the research outlined their belief that it is “difficult, if not impossible, for EM candidates to be elected – the UK population has a problem with the idea of EM people being ‘in charge’” (Participant, Glasgow).

Following on from this, the opportunities for EM people to stand for election are therefore lessened, and their chances of being successfully elected subsequently reduced. This then raises the “fear of rejection – standing for election runs the risk of losing, which is embarrassing” (Participant, Glasgow). Given these circumstances, many young people decide that it is easier to just not consider standing for election.

From the topics explored in this section, it can be seen that there are numerous barriers existing for young people which interfere with their opportunity to become active participants in the civic, democratic and electoral life of the country. Whilst EM young people, particularly those born and educated in Scotland, do not necessarily directly encounter some of the barriers which their parents and preceding generations encountered, this does not mean that they are not encountering different and equally challenging barriers.

Indeed, EM young people share the barriers which their majority community peers are encountering in regards to disconnection from formal political activity, with additional cultural barriers which compound these issues. The lack of interest and respect for public service in the form of elected representation removes this as a valid choice in the eyes of many young people – this is further confirmed for them due to the lack of other ‘young’ representatives, either EM or white.

Some recommendations for overcoming these barriers will be explored in the following section, but it is clear that work is needed in order to restore the role and importance of public service and active participation in the esteem of young people, encouraging them to use their voices and democratic rights to be active contributors to society’s functions.

Implications and Research Priorities

6.1 - Universal Problems

It is worth emphasising in the first instance that many of the issues raised and identified by the participants in this report are not specific to EM communities. The feelings of disconnection from the political process; the perceived irrelevance of civic, democratic and electoral participation; and the gulf between elected representatives and the communities they represent are issues which have become significant for all communities in the UK, and indeed in most Western democracies.

This is particularly true for many third or later generation EM young people, who do not encounter the language barriers which preceding generations did due to participating in the education system in Scotland. For these young people (as identified in Section 5) many of the issues of disconnection are identical to those of their peers in the homogenous community. Therefore, in regards to some of these universal issues, there is a requirement to look for universal solutions.

The Electoral Commission, amongst other bodies, has been undertaking and supporting programmes, such as the IDP, which are designed to raise awareness and participation in the civic, democratic and electoral structures which exist in Scotland. Within these programmes there must be a targeted attempt to involve elements of all communities. Shared problems such as apathy will be most successfully overcome if all sections of the population are engaged in the process of motivating participation, particularly in regards to young people. Solely providing events or sessions which are attended by members of the majority community miss out on opportunities to both increase social bonds through networking and experience building between

different communities; and furthermore miss out on experiences and suggestions which different communities can bring to the discussion.

Furthermore, the EM community is not a homogenous one. Sections of certain communities (most notably male members of the Scots Pakistani community) have been more successful than others in regards to participation in formal democratic structures through serving as elected representatives and being actively involved in political parties and movements. Other sections – women; the Chinese community; smaller and/or newer EM communities – have thus far been less successful, encountering in many cases different barriers than those that other EM communities face.

For some of these communities the challenges they encounter are similar to the issues which the majority community faces – such as lack of understanding and awareness of the role and function of the structures in place. Therefore, these communities (particularly those from English-speaking countries of origin) will benefit more from participation in events which involve members of both majority and minority communities – this would be particularly useful for members of the African community who identified isolation as being the key barrier they encountered.

6.2 - Specific Events

Alongside the suggestions in Section 6.1., there is still a need for programmes designed to raise participation that are specifically targeted at EM communities – both the population in its entirety and as individual ethnic groupings. This recognises the unique challenges which EM communities encounter *in addition* to the barriers to participation which the majority population faces. It also recognises that, particularly for older members of EM communities, language remains a significant barrier to their active participation and interest in the political sphere.

Organising events for specific communities allows said events to be completely sympathetic to the needs – cultural, religious and linguistic – of that particular audience. Ensuring that there is appropriately translated material available ensures that participants are able to fully interact with the information in a context which is more suitable for them. It also means that information presented can be tailored more specifically to the participants of that session – some groups will be more immersed in the information than others and so may be keen to take part in more in-depth presentations.

To ensure that these events are appropriately structured, it can be beneficial for mainstream organisations to work in partnership with EM community or intermediary organisations. These organisations are rooted in the cultural contexts of the communities they work with, and are therefore able to advise

mainstream organisations as to how best they can tailor their sessions to the requirements of the specific groups. They will be aware of cultural sensitivities which mainstream organisations may not be, and will be able to factor these in to the planning of the event.

For example, Chinese community groups can highlight the fact that for many Mandarin speakers in particular, there is a low level of reading ability – many of the participants may be speakers of Mandarin but not readers. This can obviously have crucial implications for the preparation of materials – a written campaign may be less useful than with other communities. It is therefore vital that mainstream organisations looking to fund engagement projects keep suitable EM organisations at the centre of their project, as the Electoral Commission has done in working collaboratively with CEMVO Scotland for the IDP.

6.3 - Language

The issue of language is obviously a specific issue which affects certain segments of the EM population of Scotland. As identified within the questionnaire, language is the major barrier for nearly all categories of the EM population – only young people and members of the African community did not list it as the main barrier, although both still acknowledged that it presented a barrier for other EM people.

The language barrier impacts on EM people in a variety of ways – reducing the confidence of EM people; lowering understanding and making it difficult to find information; preventing participation in existing structures; encouraging misunderstanding; highlighting prejudices. It is therefore crucial that work is undertaken to try and reduce this barrier and, even more importantly, to increase the availability of resources to enable EM people to develop their own understanding and participation.

Language is involved within every segment of the democratic process, and therefore must be catered for in a variety of ways.

In regards to the advertising of democratic and electoral participation, contributors to this report highlighted that much of the material is, in their experience, missing its intended recipients. The increase in the availability of interpreted materials is to be welcomed, and certainly a great deal of effort has been put in by various statutory bodies to ensure that their material is available in a wide variety of languages. However, if this effort is not being successful, then it will be a waste of resources and energy.

The key problem identified by participants is that language is a very flexible entity and therefore presents a variety of challenges. In many cultures,

language is primarily a spoken tool and there may be low levels of reading ability amongst members of that community. Therefore printed materials which are interpreted in that language may remain unintelligible to members of that community.

Secondly, there can be a wide variation within one specific language. For example, Punjabi is a widely spoken language with a large number of variant dialects. Although they are all derived from the same base language, there can be a great deal of difference between the dialects. Written materials produced in one dialect may be difficult to understand with speakers of another dialect, to the point of unintelligibility. Therefore, although agencies may be producing materials in certain languages, these materials may be missing the intended audience through cultural and linguistic subtleties.

The final key issue is that some languages may lack direct translations for technical terms – for example, democracy does not translate exactly into Mandarin. This obviously can have ramifications for the production of suitable materials. If concepts are only able to be translated in a vague sense, then there is no guarantee that the people reading the material will be receiving the information that is intended.

All of these issues demonstrate the need for agencies to work closely with community organisations who are able to advise clearly about the specific cultural and linguistic challenges which their particular community encounters. Events must be targeted directly at the communities, with materials displayed in appropriate locations. One recurrent recommendation brought up by IDP participants (and demonstrated through the successful hosting of IDP events) was for agencies to work closer with religious institutions, such as mosques, churches, temples and gurudwaras. For many groups, these institutions are the focal point for their communities and provide a great deal of social interaction, education and support. Bringing them on board for education and promotion campaigns would ensure that materials were brought to the attention of the relevant targets and were sensitive to the cultural sensibilities and requirements of that group.

6.4 - Electoral Participation

A key area where language represents a significant barrier is in regards to direct participation in elections in Scotland. Elections are language intensive and therefore present unique challenges to EM people for whom English is not a first language – or indeed who may not possess any English at all. The recommendations above cover some of the ways in which the promotion of elections and electoral processes could be improved, but there are specific recommendations that can be made in reference to the direct running of elections themselves.

Voting in person at the polling station on the day of the election remains the normal way of voting for the majority of the electorate. It is therefore vital that the polling place is as accessible as possible to ensure that all voters are able to access support and information as easily as possible.

For the introduction of the STV system for Local Government elections in Scotland (held in May 2007, on the same day as the Scottish Parliamentary elections) there was concern that voters might struggle with the new system. The measure was therefore taken to hire officers to assist voters on the day of the election, and these were present in polling places across Scotland. The assistance of voters on election day is carefully covered by legislation to ensure impartiality on the behalf of the polling place staff, and these assistants were able to work within the legislation in order to provide appropriate assistance.

It would be very beneficial to make these assistants a permanent aspect of electoral provision. The benefits of having personal assistance when attempting to cast a vote would be massive for EM people, as it would ensure that there is somewhere present who would be able to support them in the process. In particular, it would be very beneficial to increase the number of EM staff working in the polling places. This would provide a very visible sign to voters that the process is open to everyone, and might lessen the daunting nature of the experience somewhat. This could happen wherever there was interest, but could be particularly targeted to areas with recognised EM populations. Current provision includes measures such as putting up posters and information in the polling place in a variety of languages, and it would be very beneficial for the relevant bodies to ensure that these provisions are being fully utilised – whilst the issues identified in Section 6.3 need to be considered, ensuring translated materials are available would be supportive for EM people and demonstrate that their vote is as welcome as any other.

6.5 - Representation

There is no doubt that the lack of representation of EM communities has a serious effect on the interest of EM communities in participating in civic, democratic and electoral life. If EM people in Scotland look at the representative system which is in place and do not see anyone ‘like them’ then it can be very disheartening – it can make the system appear to be closed to them and therefore less relevant for their needs and interests.

It is therefore crucial that more EM people are encouraged to stand for election, and supported to ensure that more are successful in doing so. However, the means of doing this poses a challenge as to how best to approach the subject.

One suggestion which came up several times during the compiling of this report was that of EM Shortlists (EMS) for elections, working in a similar

fashion to the All Women Shortlists (AWS) which the Labour Party introduced as a means to increase the number of women being successfully elected. The AWS have been controversial and EMS would be even more so.

The success of AWS has been evident. Since their introduction the proportion of women has increased, although it is still incredibly low. The Labour Party, who are the only one of the main parties to have so far introduced the measure, have the highest proportion of female representatives as a direct consequence of the policy.

However, AWS have been very controversial and in certain high profile cases have led to the Labour Party losing 'safe seats' in protest at their decision to enforce an AWS on a constituency against their wishes.¹¹ This has led to some internal criticism of the policy due to the fact that only Labour adheres to it – some party members believe that the Labour Party is hampering its own electoral chances with no corresponding effort on behalf of the other political parties. This internal party feeling would potentially act as a barrier to the acceptance of EMS by the Labour Party and other parties.

Furthermore, there is a criticism of AWS as being 'undemocratic' in that they restrict the choice of the electorate by enforcing a limited pool of candidates upon them. This is related to the difficulty of choosing which constituencies or wards to enforce shortlists upon. In some circumstances the political parties in a ward or constituency choose themselves to request a shortlist, but in many cases it is the central headquarters of the political party which chooses them.

This would be a central issue with the introduction of EMS. One suggestion would be that they would only be introduced for constituencies with a designated percentage of EM inhabitants. However, this could reinforce the 'ghettoisation' of EM communities – EM representatives would only be elected to represent their 'own'. However, enforcing EMS on areas with little or no established EM population would raise its own issues, some racialised in nature. In addition, the question would have to be raised as to whether there would be quotas within quotas for each of the EM communities, or whether it would be considered a success if, as currently, all of the EM representatives were male members of one or two communities?

This report does not make a recommendation as to the appropriateness of the introduction of EMS. Whilst the utilisation of positive discrimination can have short-term benefits for under-represented communities, it can also raise as many issues as it solves. This is particularly true in regards to the area of political representation, where artificial manipulation of the candidates for an

11 I.e. Blaenau Gwent in 2005

election can lead to unpopular and potentially undemocratic situations. It is an issue which would require considerable investigation before implementation and, as in the case with AWS, would likely be up to individual parties' discretion as to whether to implement or not.

However, the expressions of support for the concept highlight that there is a demand for visible action on behalf of the political parties to address the under-representation of EM people. This could be met, at least in the first instance, by political parties committing to increasing representation by their parties to levels at the very least equal to the EM population of the UK. Positive action would allow EM people to assess parties on the basis of their commitment to appropriate representation, giving insights into how the parties viewed the contribution of EM people to their internal structure. Individual branches or constituencies could possibly be given the option of requesting EMS if they desired or considered it suitable for their constituencies – this would allow local EM people to be given the chance to stand for election with less opportunity for party headquarters to 'parachute' in chosen individuals (unless they were EM).

Supporting and encouraging shadowing and placement schemes, such as those being run in Scotland by organisations such as Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance (GARA) and Linknet Mentoring, would also be beneficial to increasing experience and confidence amongst EM people. Politics, as highlighted previously in the report, can be off putting to people as they worry that they do not have a grasp of either the language or specialist terminology used; or an understanding of how the systems work. Shadowing schemes give opportunities for different individuals to gain an insight into what the life of an elected representative entails and also an awareness of the key elements of political activity. This can be invaluable in raising the confidence levels of EM people, and motivating them to participate more fully in the systems which exist.

6.6 - Political Parties

Political parties play a crucial role in the democratic systems in Scotland – therefore they have a crucial role to play in increasing the proportion of EM people elected into office. As discussed in the previous recommendation, this requires efforts from them both to increase the number of candidates and elected representatives from EM communities; and to increase the involvement of EM people in their internal party democracy.

This is an area that would benefit from further research, as it has been out with the immediate scope of this report. It would be beneficial to examine the procedures for EM participation which the main political parties currently have in operation in order to evaluate their effectiveness. In turn, parties

could be both encouraged to improve any areas which required it and given support in how to do so.

One aspect which could be introduced would be in supporting new members who wished to attend meetings of their chosen political party. Attending a political party meeting can be daunting for anybody, but in the case of EM members is even more so – they are highly likely in most cases to be the only EM person attending the meeting and therefore automatically stand out. This would be further heightened in the case of EM young people and/or women, who represent other less common groups.

Political parties could introduce ‘buddy schemes’ to support new members in attending their first meetings. These could involve building up a network of existing members willing to act as supporters for new members. This support could entail accompanying them to a meeting; explain aspects of how the party functions; introducing them to other members; and introducing them to any specific support networks that existed within the party or affiliated organisations. These supporters would help to reduce any anxiety that might exist about joining a new organisation, and would be able to help new members from EM communities to settle in and get more involved in the life of the party. The process would also be applicable to other new members, especially from under-represented groups such as young people and women. It would not require a huge input from the political parties and they would benefit from creating a more welcoming environment for new members.

Furthering these steps, parties could ensure that there is more support in place for developing the skills of members so that they are more fully able to participate in the internal democracy of their chosen political parties. As mentioned in Section 6.5, the introduction of EM quotas for internal elections would raise the number of EM members contributing to policy development and therefore shaping the decisions made by their parties. However, in order to do so the introduction of quotas is not enough.

EM members also require support in the form of education and skill building in order to give them the capacity to participate fully. A presumption can be present that members automatically understand the inner workings of their political parties, however the processes involved can be arcane and off putting. This is heightened for EM members who may not come from a tradition of party involvement and therefore are potentially starting from a low base of understanding. By ensuring that new members have the opportunity to undertake education programmes which raise their ability to be involved, parties would benefit from more active and involved EM people in their organisations.

Conclusion

This report, through the work of the IDP, has provided an opportunity to explore the thoughts and feelings of EM people living in Scotland, serving to contribute to the base of knowledge which exists in relation to the participation of EM people. The experiences of the EM population in Scotland, living and operating in a different context than that in England, demonstrates that communities can and do become involved in the life of the nation they live in, whether they were born in Scotland or elsewhere.

However, it also demonstrates that there is a great deal of work still to do. EM communities encounter the same barriers that the homogenous communities do – apathy, disconnection, lack of knowledge. However, EM communities also encounter a variety of different and complex barriers which can impede their interaction with the processes of civic, democratic and electoral life. These barriers can vary according to ethnicity, age and cultural background, but are unified in making participation a challenge for some communities.

More work is needed to support Scotland's EM communities, developing opportunities for them to gain access to new skills, knowledge and confidence. These measures require input and effort by political parties, statutory bodies and communities themselves and will produce benefits over a period of time. Even more crucially, this must be a two-way process, with democratic structures actively working to make themselves more accessible to all of Scottish society.

Organisations looking to increase electoral participation must work to further improve the availability and distribution of information relating to elections, and indeed the electoral experience on the day itself. Voting can be a complex process, particularly in a country like Scotland which utilises so many different voting systems. This system is further complicated by the difficulties of the polling place, an environment which can be very off putting to people who may not have English as a first language. By increasing the

levels of support (both in the form of information posters and assistance on the day) this process can be made more understandable and accessible, therefore reducing barriers for some of the electorate.

Political parties must work to make themselves more appealing and open to the public. Whilst membership of a political party is not the only means by which to enter political life, it does represent one of the crucial components of the Scottish political system. Parties cannot view EM communities merely as blocks of votes for an election – instead, they must actively work to include and encourage all segments of the EM population within their parties, empowering them to play a role in developing policy.

Change is possible and, as this report has demonstrated, there is a real desire on the behalf of EM people in Scotland to be active citizens. However, this desire must be fuelled by the knowledge of how they can play a role within the system and what difference this role can play. EM representatives, who are still in most cases acting as pioneers in the representative bodies they are involved in, need to be supported and acknowledged as elected representatives in their own right, not just token gestures to the EM population.

Democracy is only truly in place when all members of the community are able to participate fully. Scotland has the structures and attitudes to include everyone; it is the distribution of knowledge and encouragement of groups on the fringes which is required. By ensuring that everyone living in Scotland, whether of an EM or homogenous community, is able to play a full and active role in Scottish civic and democratic life, the strength of Scotland's democracy will be sustained and increased.

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Appendix 1: Evaluation Forms

Inclusive Democracy Project Evaluation

Thank you for attending today's session. For evaluation purposes, we would appreciate it if you would complete this short form. All information is confidential and will be used for the assessment of the project – so please be honest!

Event:

Following today's session, how comfortable do you feel about your knowledge of:

How political systems in Scotland work?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Strongly Uncomfortable

How democracy in Scotland affects everyday life?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Strongly Uncomfortable

How you can become involved in the system?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Strongly Uncomfortable

From attending this session, are you:

More likely to use your vote?

Yes ☐ No ☐

More likely to contact an elected politician?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please tell us anything about today's session that you found useful

Please tell us anything about today's session that you think could be improved or changed

59

Please tell us a little about you:

Age: 16 – 25 ☐ 26 – 35 ☐ 36 – 45 ☐
46 – 54 ☐ 55 – 64 ☐ 65+ ☐

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Thank you for completing this form.

Jamie Cooke (Outreach Officer) and Dr Abha Rodrigues (Development Officer)
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The
Electoral
Commission

Inclusive Democracy Project

Pre-session Assessment

Thank you for attending today's session. Before we start, we would like to find out the level of knowledge you have about some of the aims which we are going to be covering today. This will help us to assess how successful the session has been.

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The form is anonymous, so please do not be embarrassed to answer honestly.

Event:

How confident do you feel about your knowledge of:

How political systems in Scotland work?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Strongly Uncomfortable

How democracy in Scotland affects everyday life?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Strongly Uncomfortable

How you can become involved in the system?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Strongly Uncomfortable

Have you previously:

Voted at an election in Scotland?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Contacted an elected politician?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Thank you for completing this form.

Appendix 2: Research Questionnaire

The questionnaire is anonymous. We will use data collected to help produce a report in 2009, which will outline the barriers encountered by ethnic minority individuals and organisations, and propose means for eliminating these barriers.

If you are completing this questionnaire manually, please circle answers where there is a choice.

Section 1 – Demographical Information

- cem o**
SCOTLAND

8. If no, how long have you been resident in the UK?

Section 2 – Voting

This section explores your knowledge and experience of the electoral process.

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1. Do you know if you are allowed to vote? Yes No

2. Did you vote at the last election? Yes No

3. Do you vote at every election? Yes No

4. If you do not vote, why is this?

5. For the last election, did you spend time following the debates in the run-up to voting? Yes No

6. Which medium did you follow?

Television

Radio

Newspaper

Internet

Other please specify:

7. Were you contacted by any parties and/or candidates?

Yes No

8. How comfortable did you feel with the voting process?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly comfortable	Comfortable	Neutral	Uncomfortable	Strongly Uncomfortable

9. Were you aware of the new voting system being used for the Council elections? Yes No

10. Have you used postal voting before? Yes No

11. What do you think about the level of information available about how voting works?

1	2	3	4	5
Far too little	Too little	Just right	Too much	Far too much

12. Do you think that there is discrimination contained within the voting system? Please explain your answer.

13. What do you think are the barriers for Ethnic Minority communities when it comes to voting?

Section 3 – Civic and Democratic Involvement

This section explores your experiences of participating in democracy.

1. Are you a member of a political party? Yes No
2. Would you consider joining a political party? Yes No
3. What could be done to make political parties more appealing to you?

4. Are you a member of a community organisation, such as a Community Council or Tenants' Association? Yes No
5. Have you ever completed a petition for any issue?

Yes No

6. Have you ever taken part in a protest or demonstration on any issue? Yes No

7. Have you ever contributed to a local or national consultation, e.g. one led by your Local Authority, Health Board or the Scottish Government? Yes No

8. Have you ever contacted an elected representative by attending their surgery, post, telephone or email? Yes No

9. Which local issue affects your daily life?

10. Which national issue affects your daily life

11. If you felt strongly about a local or national issue would you:

- a) Do some thing about it? Yes No
b) If yes, what would you do?

Section 4 - Political Knowledge

This section explores your knowledge of democratic structures in Scotland.

1. When you think of politicians, what is your general feeling about them?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly Negative

2. Do you know who represents you in your local Council?

Yes No

3. How do you feel about the work of the Council?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly Negative

4. Do you know how many MSPs directly represent you in the Scottish Parliament? Yes No

5. Do you know the names of any MSPs who represent you, and the parties (if any) that they are members of?

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6. How do you feel about the work of the Scottish Parliament?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly Negative

7. Do you know who represents you in the House of Commons in Westminster? Yes No

8. Do you know their name, and which party (if any) they belong to?

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9. How do you feel about the work of the Westminster Parliament?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly Negative

10. Do you know how many MEPs represent you in the European Parliament? Yes No

11. Do you know any of their names, or which parties they are members of? Yes No

12. What do you think about the work of the European Parliament?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Strongly Negative

Section 5 - Views

This section looks at some of your views and thoughts about politics in general.

1. What does the word 'politics' mean to you?

2. Can you think of something political which affects your daily life?

3. What does the word 'democracy' mean to you?

4. Do you think that particular barriers exist for people from ethnic minority communities when it comes to participating in civic and democratic life? Yes No

5. If yes, what are the barriers?

6. Do you think that politics is open for everyone to participate in? Yes No

7. Why do you think this?

8. What do you think needs to be changed about politics in this country to make it better?

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire.

Please return the completed questionnaire to: Jamie Cooke or Abha Rodrigues

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