#TELLYOURSTORY
because our stories matter

AKD · SPORT ENGLAND · sport Northern Ireland · uk sport world class success · sportscotland the national agency for sport · sport wales chwaraeon cymru
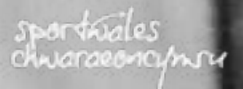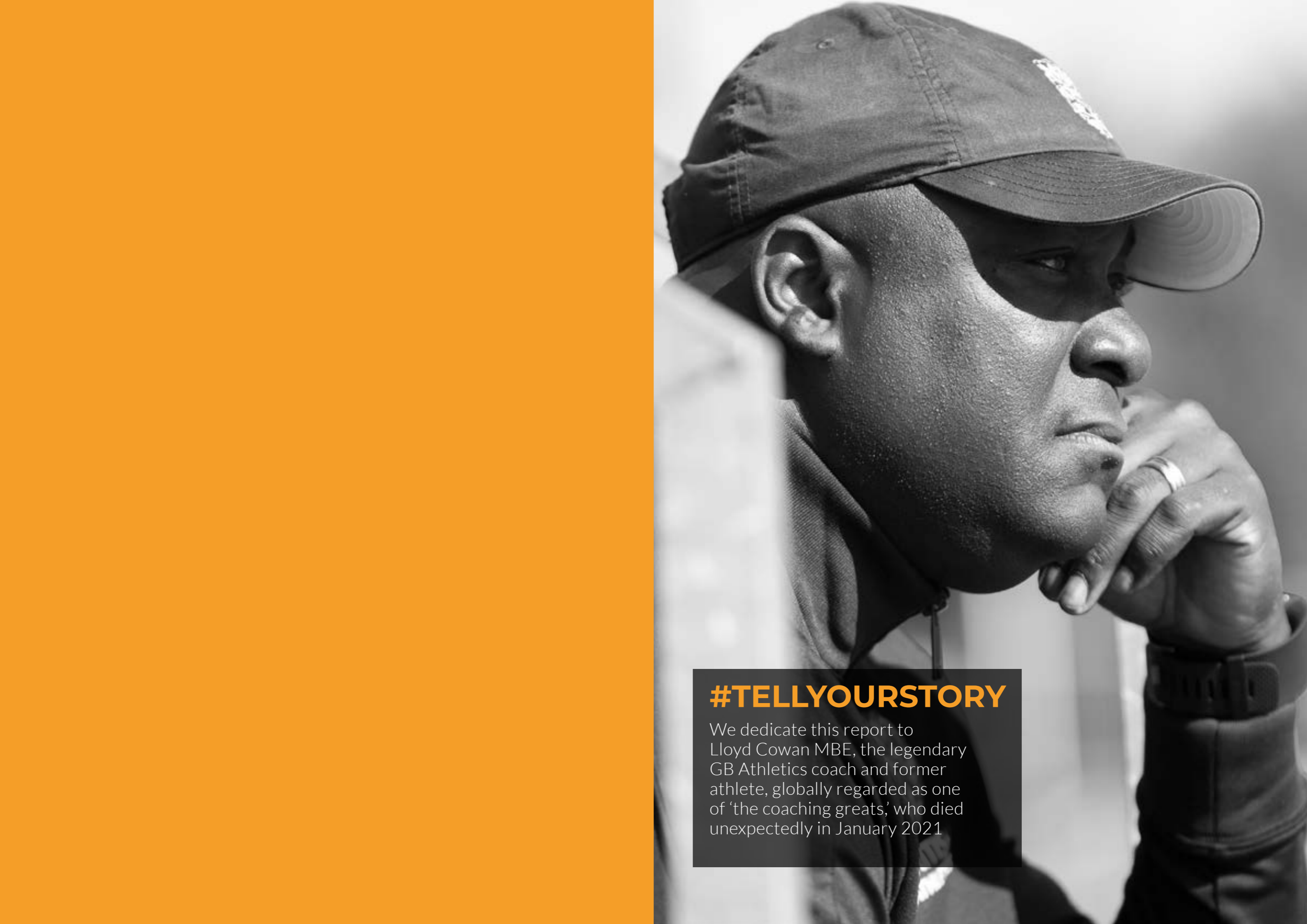
#TELLYOURSTORY

We dedicate this report to Lloyd Cowan MBE, the legendary GB Athletics coach and former athlete, globally regarded as one of 'the coaching greats,' who died unexpectedly in January 2021

TACKLING RACISM IN SPORT

Tackling Racism in Sport

This report provides a glimpse into the lived experiences of over 300 ethnically diverse participants engaging in sports and physical activities across the UK. The stories are broad-ranging and illustrate the everyday realities of grassroots participants and supporters, the Sport Workforce, elite performers and leaders.

Over eight weeks, AKD researchers encouraged participants, from a range of ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, located in cities, towns and villages to share their stories. Individuals representing 38 sports and physical activities, formed a collective voice in demanding change.

It is our view that the research outcomes scratch the surface of a pattern of attitudes and behaviours that alienate communities, stifle opportunities and repress the potential of ethnically diverse participants.

The lived experiences capture consistent accounts of verbal abuse, discrimination, othering and objectification. The report gives an insight into the psychological and social impact of these experiences from childhood into mature adulthood.

A lack of trust is the consistent theme. Participants expressed fatigue and exasperation that their stories are told in vain. Their experiences offer some explanation for the low levels of engagement in sport, and we call this lost talent.

Their response is a call to action for the UK Sports Councils and Governing Bodies to do something now.

We conclude in this research that to ignore and condone widespread negative practices will undermine any strategies that the Councils develop to encourage better inclusion and real change. Racism represses Britain's true sporting potential, and it must stop.

The solution lies in establishing trust, it will be a difficult journey and requires strong and decisive leadership.

PART 1
OVERVIEW

Part One introduces the background and context to the research, the research approach and methodology, and an overview of participation and representation. The section concludes, setting out why tackling racism in sport is so important.

Background and Introduction

Racism now is more subtle and difficult to evidence but is still hugely destructive. The data tells us that significant racial and ethnic inequalities persist in all the major social structures, including education, housing, healthcare, employment and the justice system. It is our view that the government's Ethnicity Facts and Figures website provides undeniable evidence. Sport is no different and also has a duty to ensure racism within its structures is acknowledged and acted against in compliance with the Equality Act 2010, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their race.

The five UK Sports Councils have jointly commissioned this lived experience study in their collective determination to have a sporting system which is genuinely inclusive and properly reflective of UK society.

- The study is one of two distinct pieces of work. The other focused on reviewing and analysing data around race and ethnicity in the Sport Workforce. The Councils' wanted to know:
- Whether across the sector, they and their organisations are doing enough to understand the issues and context they are trying to change.
- Whether the sections of British society and communities they aim to reach and engage with can trust them and their organisations to be part of the solution.
- Whether they and their organisations are doing enough to tackle the challenges in terms of actions and outcomes.

AKD Solutions have conducted a lived experience research project that provides:

- Increased understanding of the extent and impact of racism on individuals involved in sport and how it affects their lives and life choices
- Increased understanding of the above impact on sports generally, potentially resulting in lost talent, a diminished talent pool and other missed opportunities.
- A roadmap for building trust between Black and Asian communities and sports bodies, as an essential foundation for leading and achieving a racially inclusive sports sector.

1.1 The Research Approach

The research explored the main trends and patterns of the impact of racism on sporting lives. It covered the four UK home nations and included experiences from grassroots athletes to elite participants. The report presents an analysis of ten reoccurring themes and shared experiences.

The report is written in a tone that reflects the mood of the participants; these emotions were expressed in forums, in their uploaded narratives and in 1-2-1 conversations. The encounters were above all calm and reflective, and sometimes emotionally charged with anger, humour and despair.

Throughout this report, we have used quotes to illustrate the reoccurring themes. Most of these quotes have been broadly credited to ensure the anonymity of participants. Wherever possible we have indicated the sport and country of origin; however, where the level of participation is low, or the sport is niche we have totally anonymised the credits.

The research was commissioned and delivered within a tight timeframe of four months using a combination of outreach and engagement methods to ensure wide representation. The methods were driven by the UK home nations communications teams that included a strong social media presence and a dedicated website developed by the research team at AKD #TellYourStory. To ensure a diverse range of participants were fully engaged the social media presence was reinforced by traditional 1-2-1 communication, telephone outreach and cascade outreach methods.

Research Timeline

Stage 1	Communications Strategy and Launch
Stage 2	Virtual Outreach and Engagement approach
Stage 3	Launch of Forums
Stage 4	Launch of Story Uploads
Stage 5	1-2-1 Interviews
Stage 6	Analysis of Stories
Stage 7	Production of Final Report

1.2 The Research Questions

The research questions were designed to explore the patterns and trends in lived experiences and provide insight into the reasons for low participation and engagement in sports in ethnically diverse communities.

Three exploratory questions developed, informed by a rapid review of relevant academic research into the impact of race and racism in sport and recent research conducted by the Sports Councils into the low participation of ethnically diverse communities:

- What experiences (access, structures, attitudes, behaviours, interactions) impact access and engagement?
- How do these experiences impact engagement and potential?
- How do these experiences affect well-being and motivation?

1.3 The Research Methodology

Exploring the collective lived experience of diverse communities across the four home nations required a dynamic methodology. It was important to create interactions between the research team and participants that promoted trust and encouraged participants to express their authentic accounts. The methodology also had to provide a coherent structure for gathering stories and identifying patterns and trends.

Research Method

The research team used Storytelling as the overarching method to capture the authenticity of accounts. Story telling also provided a way to capture the meaning within stories and a format to compare participants' experiences for patterns and trends. In telling stories, participants reflected on their emotions and feelings providing readers with an opportunity to understand, connect and empathise with the experiences.

Representation

An ethnically diverse research team reflecting the diversity of participants and with the background and skills to empathise with participants created a safe and trusting environment.

The researchers were interested in capturing a diverse range of views including less heard or 'minority voices'. These included athletes who had left sport early due to their experiences, parents, the most excluded individuals and communities and representatives from the growing number of alternative groups and structures that have emerged and run parallel to mainstream activity.

The facilitators were encouraged to be open in sharing experiences, and to be conscious of their personal bias when facilitating.

Periodically throughout the storytelling phase, the facilitators were encouraged to share their reflections on the sometimes emotional experiences in reflection sessions held throughout the course of the research. These reflections also informed the analysis and findings.

Facilitating Forums and 1-2-1 interviews:

Individuals employ a range of coping mechanisms to manage the impact of day to day racism. These may include expressing anger and outrage, deploying humour and demonstrating defiance.

Reflecting on sometimes upsetting experiences can evoke any one or a combination of these emotions, and allowing emotions to range freely helped the researchers to fully understand of the impact of the experiences.

Participants were encouraged to tell their stories in any way they chose in response to three questions:

- Share your story of your early experiences in sport
- Share your experiences of racism on your sporting journey
- What should change?

1.3 The Research Methodology

Participation Methods

1-2-1 Interviews

These interviews explored participants experiences in detail and were used to examine and understand in more depth issues affecting disengaged communities and less heard voices i.e., LGBTQ+, parents, disabled participants and young people.

Forums

General forums were advertised on the #TellYourStory website and participants from across the UK were encouraged to attend.

Country specific forums were held in each home nation and explored racism through the eyes of women, disabled athletes, coaches, parents and the media.

Story Uploads

In recognition that not everyone is comfortable with group experiences, participants were also invited to upload their stories anonymously to the #TELLYOURSTORY website. They chose their preferred format; stories in spoken word, narrative accounts and other creative forms.

Due to time constraints and adherence to safeguarding requirements, under 18s were not invited to the general forums. The opportunity to upload a story enabled this age group to participate.

Data Gathering and Analysis

The range of data gathering methods broadened participation to include a wider geographical spread and seldom heard voices and thematic analysis techniques were used to identify common patterns and trends. A final "codebook" or analysis framework evolved, grouping experiences under four broad headings:

Individuals

Day to day interactions and their effect on an individual's self perception and self image.

Group

The impact of group dynamics on the individual.

Leaders and organisations

To what extent leaders and organisational structures support inclusion and participation.

Society

Participants reflections on sport in the context of wider society and the interrelation of issues such as representation, class, intersectionality, gender, and sexual identity.

Fig 1 – Analysis Framework: Racism in Sport

1.4 Engagement and Participation

Three hundred and twenty-five participants took part in the research. Individuals spanning many generations were drawn from towns, cities and rural areas and represented 38 sports disciplines. This allowed the researchers to establish patterns and trends reflecting a broad UK perspective.

Participant Breakdown: **Type**

Parents	Young People
Grassroots Coaches	Schools
Elite Coaches	Sport Workforce
Women	Sport Leadership
Allies	Media
Volunteers/Fans	LGBTQ

Participant breakdown: **Sports - 325 Respondents**

- Cycling
- Athletics
- Football
- Swimming
- Sky Diving
- Equestrian
- Sailing
- Dance
- Mixed Martial Arts
- Water Polo

- Tennis
- Basketball
- Archery
- Trail Running
- Bollyfit
- Squash
- Hockey
- Triathlon
- Handball
- Kick Boxing

- Badminton
- Netball
- Karate
- Running
- Boxing
- Taekwondo
- Volleyball
- Fencing
- Martial Arts
- Yoga/ Pilates

- Rugby
- Cricket
- Ju-Jitsu
- Gymnastics
- Rowing
- Golf
- Wrestling
- Hiking

Participation

Participants completed a short voluntary questionnaire prior to attending Forums, 1-2-1 interviews or uploading a story. Data was provided on a voluntary basis and as such the response rates vary. The data is presented to illustrate the breadth and depth of participation and broad conclusions are drawn where possible.

Countries

- England 78.9%
- Northern Ireland 5.7%
- Scotland 6.5%
- Wales 9%
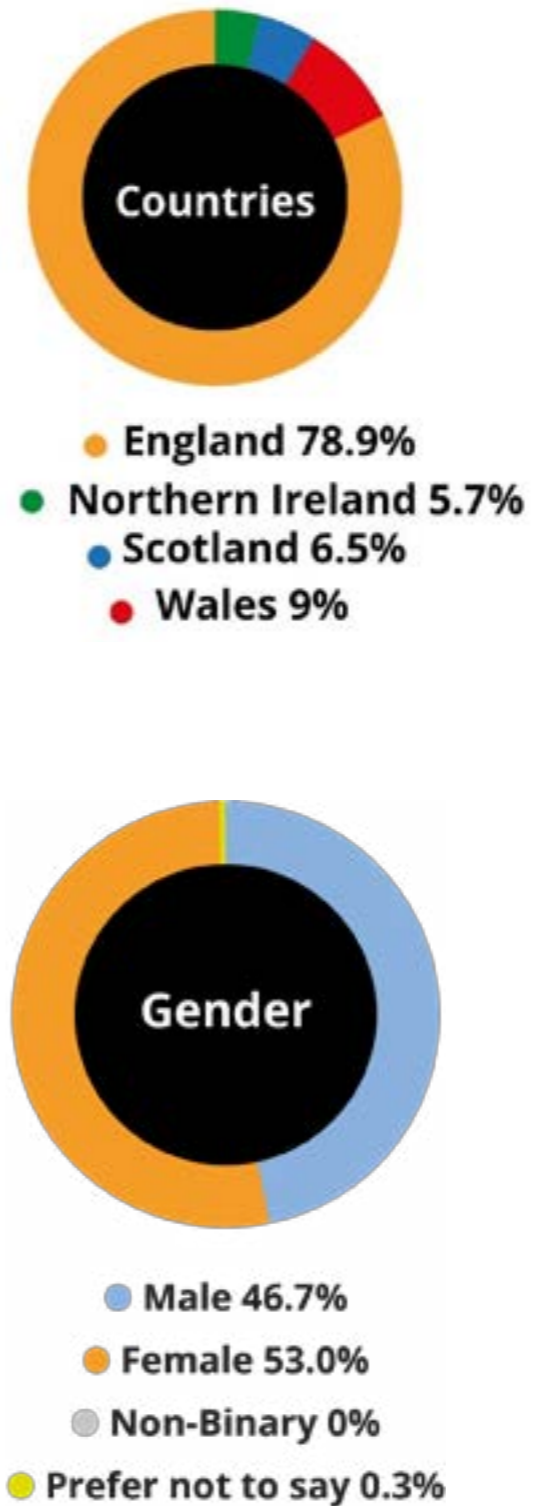
Engagement by Country
(325 Respondents)
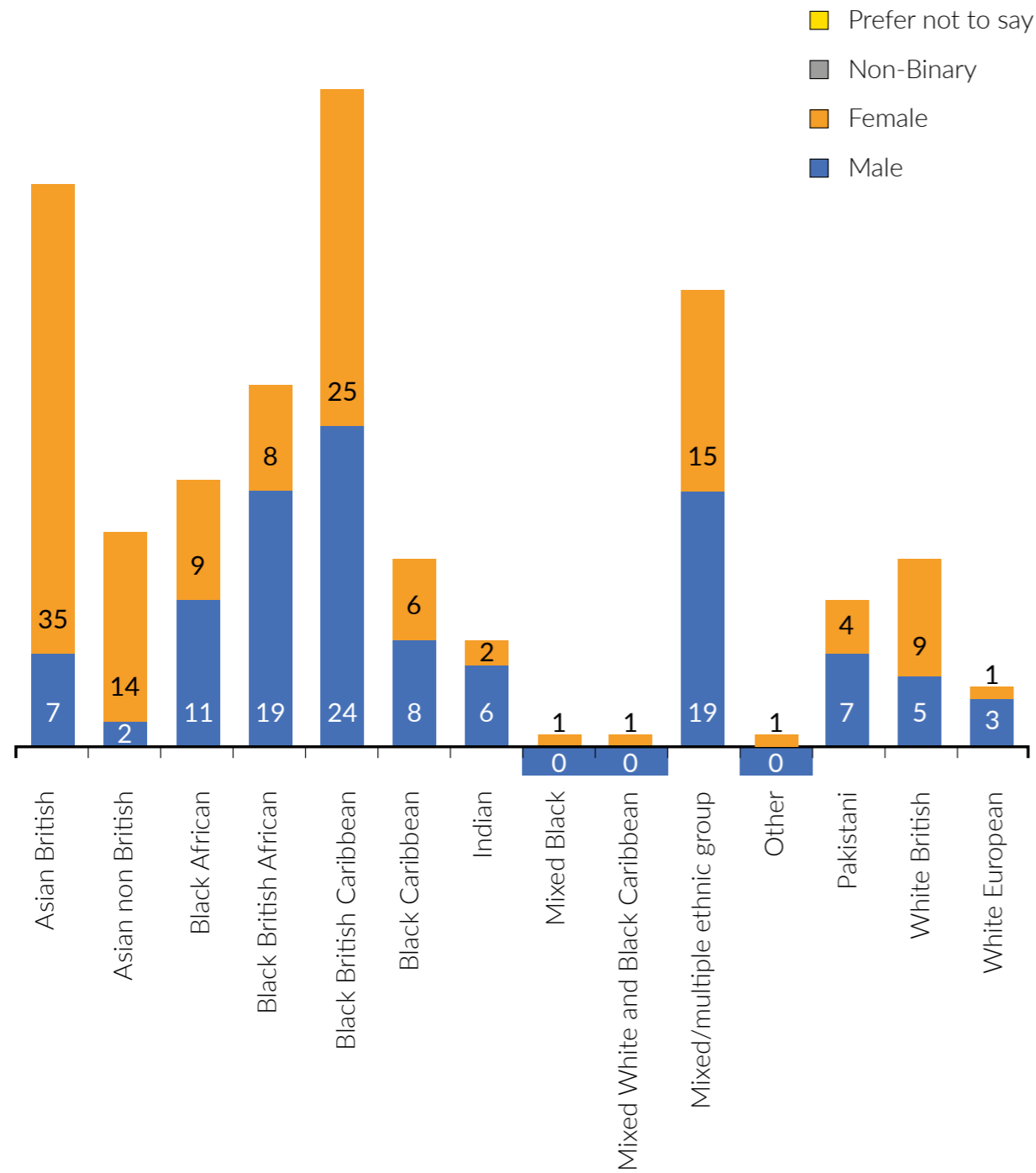
The engagement data illustrates the breadth and depth of the outreach and participation methods, and the resulting, wide-ranging representation at forums.

Gender

- Male 46.7%
- Female 53.0%
- Non-Binary 0%
- Prefer not to say 0.3%

Gender Identification
(291 Respondents)

Notably, women represent 53% of all participants and feature in responses across all ethnic groups and ages.

Gender Distribution Across Ethnicity
(291 Respondents)

Legend:
- Prefer not to say
- Non-Binary
- Female
- Male

Ethnicity	Male	Female
Asian British	7	35
Asian non British	2	14
Black African	11	9
Black British African	19	8
Black British Caribbean	24	25
Black Caribbean	8	6
Indian	6	2
Mixed Black	0	1
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	0	1
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	19	15
Other	0	1
Pakistani	7	4
White British	5	9
White European	3	1

Age Ranges (166 respondents)

Around 51% of participants responded to questions about age. Within this, 43% were under 40 years old and 31% fell into the 51 – 60 age category.

Age Range	% of Participants
91-100	
81-90	
71-80	0.6%
61-70	3%
51-60	31%
41-50	22%
31-40	18%
21-30	19%
11-20	6%
0-10	
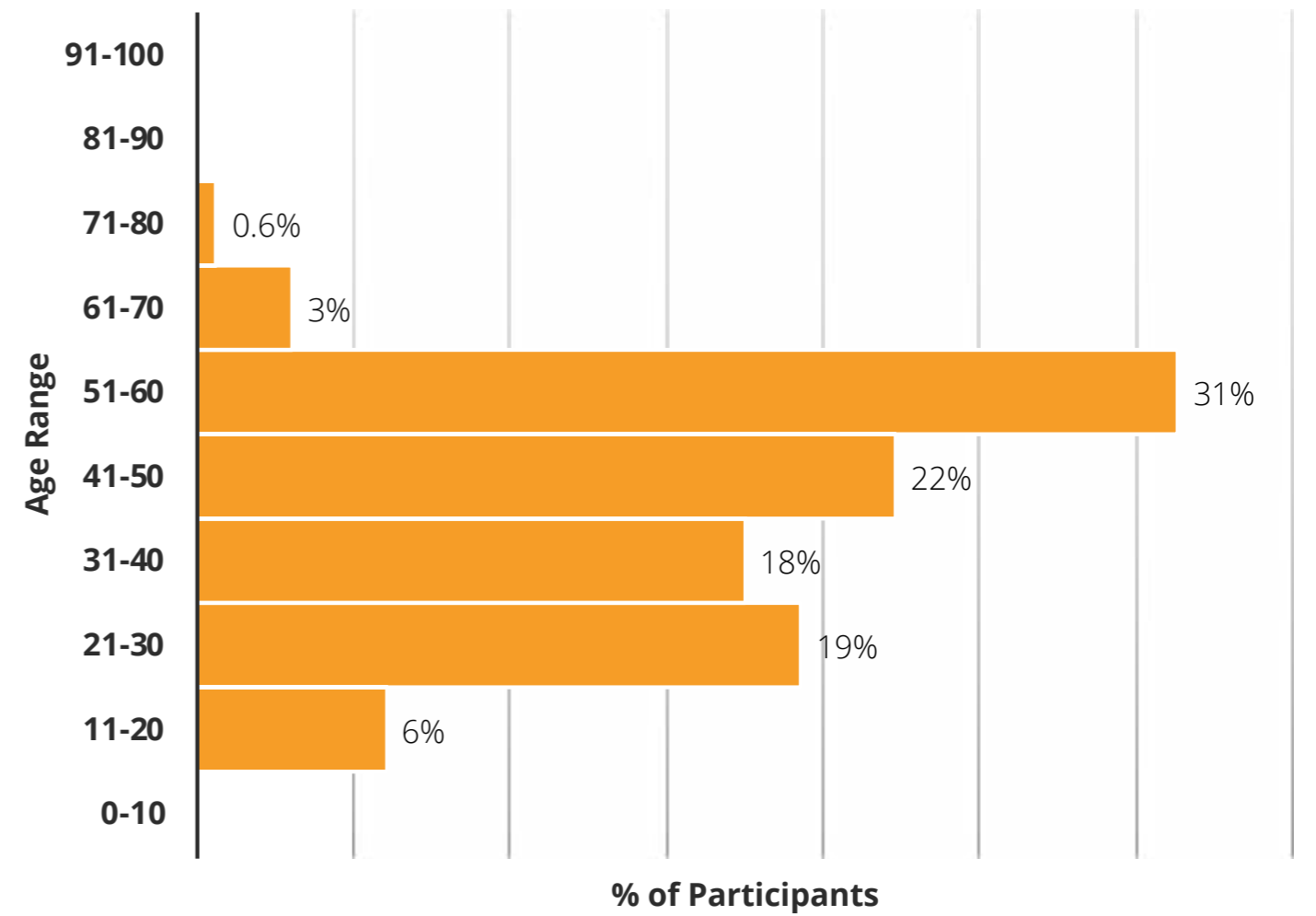
% of Participants

A wide and diverse range of sports are represented in the research. Football heads the table with 21% of participants involved, from grassroots and children's clubs to elite football and coaching.

319	Type of Sport
69	Football
16	Basketball
6	Dance
15	Cycling
19	Running
3	Karate
28	Cricket
8	Triathlon
5	Golf
19	Athletics
24	Netball
7	Ju-Jitsu
10	Boxing
1	Fencing
5	Archery
1	Hiking
26	Bollyfit
16	Swimming
2	Squash
3	Gymnastics
3	Equestrian
1	Mixed Martial Arts
2	Sailing
1	Volleyball
3	Martial Arts
3	Tennis
6	Rugby
2	Rowing
3	Hockey
3	Badminton
3	Handball
1	Yoga/Pilates
2	Kick Boxing
1	Water Polo
1	Horse Riding
1	Wrestling

How are you Involved in Sport now?

(188 Respondents)

- Active sportsperson that left sport early 4%
- Volunteer 3% ● Participant 21%
- Professional participant 8%
- Parent 6% ● Coach 32%
- Sports Administrator 19%
- Local Club Manager 3% ● Fan 4%

In recent years, the Sports Councils have issued commitment statements to show their determination to tackle racism in all its forms throughout their institutions and relationships. The Councils have individually carried out a range of research projects and programmes geared towards creating more opportunities for participation and inclusion of people from ethnically diverse communities to access, engage and compete in sport. Despite these interventions, the Councils recognise that significant and deep-seated challenges persist in sport in relation to racism and racial inequalities. They understand that a collective approach and response is also needed to address the issues across the UK sporting landscape.

In their brief, the Councils reflected that some of the work undertaken has been effective and some has not. Where there has been little or no progress, the reasons for failure have not been properly understood, explored or actioned; and where progress has been made, it may not have been wide or deep enough. The research contributes to developing a better understanding of the reasons for disengagement and poor participation and found that the feedback from participants of their lived experience falls under two broad categories.

The Psychological Impact & Intersectional Experiences

2.1 Psychological Impact

For millions of Britons, health, friendship groups and social relationships are influenced through our engagement with sport and physical activities. This includes our experiences during childhood of leisure activities and our choice of social groups. During adulthood, the impact of our sporting experience can have a bearing on life choices, academic pursuits, career pathways, progression and the ability to fulfil our potential.

We understand the physical benefits of sport and physical activity. We also know that negative or positive experiences in our formative years profoundly affect self-belief, self-efficacy and confidence into adulthood.

If sport can play such a powerful role in human development and potential for success, then the negative experiences of racism when engaging with sport must also impact an individuals' potential for the future.

2.2 Intersectional Experiences

In this research, we invited the stories of; grassroots organisations, women, the LGBTQ+ communities, parents, coaches, performance pathway and elite athletes, to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of racism inside these intersections. We also discussed the emerging themes and trends with representatives of the media and academia.

PART 2
THE IMPACT OF RACISM
UNIVERSAL THEMES

Part two explores the participants stories of the psychological impact of racism. Early sporting experiences help to shape our developing sense of self, confidence and agency. We explore feedback from participants.

The main trends are grouped into the following themes:

Identity
Wellbeing
Psychological Safety
Representation and Stereotypes
Media

Universal Themes

The disruptive events of 2020 had a profound impact across the world. The murder of George Floyd, the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the spontaneous and powerful response of many communities shifted our collective gaze, forcing all, irrespective of race or social class, to confront the extent and impact of racial injustice.

The onset of the Pandemic concluded the perfect storm, and the world took time to reflect and reset our thinking. During the summer of 2020, the response was an unprecedented outpouring of grief, anger and resentment followed by a universal commitment to change. This research and the following stories are a contribution to that commitment.

Three hundred and twenty-five stories were shared via social media, in face-to-face interviews and forums.

The stories were delivered with a mixture of emotions; sadness, frustration, humour, anger and defiance.

"You cannot invalidate my lived experience because it's my lived experience, it is valid, and it's relevant."

Participant

2.1 Identity

Participants talked passionately about their children's experiences. As children, school, family and community interactions significantly influence our sense of identity and belonging. Identity and participation in sports also play an important role.

How we interact with teams and how we are coached and led as individuals are important elements in developing a positive self-image, confidence and life skills.

Where young children experience racist interactions, these memories and emotions are carried into adulthood. During our research, we frequently heard mature adults moved by the traumatic experiences of their childhood.

We found that early life experiences helped to shape behaviours and attitudes in adult life. For some, the experience of racism built resilience and defiance, for others it undermined confidence and self-image.

In both circumstances, the experience had a damaging effect on wellbeing and in particular mental health. It has led to profound long-lasting impacts on social interactions, friendships, identity, self-image and the ability to navigate aspects of their social lives.

One participant used sport to manage the effects of racism as a young black child growing up in a rural town:

"I use running to manage my mental health. Growing up in a small town where no one looked like me, led to a lot of trauma. For 11 years I've dealt with it by putting on a pair of trainers and running, after my doctor said it would help me manage my depression and anxiety. It works."

Runner – England

Other contributors spoke of their shame that they had internalised many negative assumptions and perceptions and how deeply their coaches' comments impacted:

"We were fed a stereotype of Africans as primitive people with spears, so trying to get me to throw the javelin was almost insulting. I didn't want to be seen as the black person who throws the javelin, but I was good at it. So, I did it. But I never felt really great about it, frankly."

Runner – England

2.2 Wellbeing

Wellbeing is universally relevant and describes how we feel about ourselves; the quality of the relationships that we have with other people and our sense of purpose. Participants across all forums shared the feelings of being different or "other" as individuals, in 1-2-1 interactions, with coaches or participating in generic health activities such as Zumba or gym classes.

Positive wellbeing can be facilitated by allowing opportunities for learning, collaboration, connection, healing and recovery and enabling a sense of security and authenticity. When these developmental experiences are affected by negative interactions our wellbeing is challenged.

> "I can see retrospectively that a lot of these things, these confusions and contradictions that I might not have been wholly cognisant of, were feeding my emotional cycle on a daily basis."
>
> **Professional Footballer - England**

> " I can remember the coach looking at me and saying, 'Oh, well, if you're no good at sprinting, then what are you good for?', I was so embarrassed, and I was ashamed. I already had no self-esteem due to dealing with constant racism. And I remember thinking to myself, God, I can't even sprint. What am I good at? It was just something else that I was told I wasn't good at."
>
> **Runner – England**

> "He looked at me, with contempt. His look said, 'You're black, you're below me. I don't want anything to do with you."
>
> **Elite Athlete - interaction with a coach - England**

Some participants became acutely aware of their race the further up the sporting ladder they progressed. Others felt alienated, questioning their identity and ability in other parts of their social lives.

2.2 Wellbeing

It matters how often, and for how long, we experience positive emotions, such as pleasure and a sense of purpose, or negative emotions, like anxiety, anger and depression in response to encountering racism. We found that participants across our forums and 1-2-1s spoke less about microaggressions and in more depth about the extent and impact of full-on racist abuse.

Microaggressions are common throughout sport – often dressed up as banter or as an attempt to provoke the opposing team. The participants acknowledged that microaggressions occurred and that the constant referral to race as different or 'other,' the jokes and the asides have a cumulative impact.

A female basketball coach shared a typical experience of explicit provocation when arriving at a team event:

> "Competing in a very white area, they'd put on reggae music and ask if we wanted 'chicken at halftime' or apologise that they 'didn't have bananas' for the break."
>
> **Female Basketball Coach - England**

Participants reported that when these remarks were challenged it was they (the complainant) who received the negative response from coaches and referees.

The build-up of frustrations with officials ignoring the instances of racism could also lead to forceful reactions during team games. Commonly, participants were penalised for perceived aggression in response to racism directed at them during team sports.

A female basketballer shared her story of the team choosing to play with their hands behind their backs to avoid being penalised by the referee.

> "Unless you consciously rebelled against (the racism and stereotypes), it will define your choices as you move through life."
>
> **Professional Football Coach - England**

> "I trained two or three times a week, but when it came to picking me for competitions, even though I was better than the other kids, I'd still end up not being selected, I was always a reserve."
>
> **Hockey - England**

2.3 Psychological Safety

Safe spaces support good wellbeing because they intend to be free from bias, criticism, prejudice, discrimination, harassment and threatening actions. They can facilitate honest, transparent and authentic experiences and be the starting point for challenging stigma and creating positive relationships.
An unsafe space can threaten our sense of security. Participants told us that they looked for safety inside their sporting clubs and from coaches or team leaders and were disappointed that it was not offered.

We heard that black participants were welcome for the success of the team, but the negative stereotyping and objectification of abilities continued. There is a dissonance created when negative messages conflict with positive participation. This can cause stress, anxiety and depression, as participants struggle to reconcile these mixed messages.

The majority of stories relating to psychological safety were articulated by parents fearful of their children's interactions with coaches, clubs and team activities.

"When you join a club, you're looking for the coaching aspect and participation, but you're also looking for like-minded people you can connect with. Again, and again, I found that difficult, so I stopped going."

Participation at School - England

"They made no apologies for what they thought about Black boys and Black people, but they would still welcome us into the club because we were the ones winning all the trophies."

Basketball Parent - England

2.3 Psychological Safety - Parents and Young People

Across all forums and all Home Nations, participants expressed varying degrees of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable outside of the home. This was a recurring theme for parents.

Parents were wary of allowing their children to attend sporting events, training or team activities for fear of microaggressions, stereotyping and name calling.

"As parents we have to handle the disappointment. They don't realise that I'm looking around and I'm trying not to think about race. I'm trying to think, what was it you could do better?."

Parent - England

"The key thing for me is how black children are stereotyped within their sport."

Parent – England

"I sat down with my son early on to explain that he will experience some challenges because of his colour. And if he does come home and tell us about something that upset him, we talk it through and try and explain how he could handle it."

Professional Footballer - England

Not all parents have the capacity to be present during children's team sports and training activities. Those who could attend were often managing the fallout from their children's negative encounters, and preparing them for future disappointments, harmful experiences and rejection.

"During a briefing to young athletes, selected to compete internationally, a key member of the management team told them, 'not to swap their kit with other nations', adding, 'especially not the Kenyans, as you don't know what you could pick up from them'. Twice more, he 'jokingly' repeated his view.

"I was shocked and seething. I made a decision, which I regret, not to say anything on the day, but the following morning rang the team leader and expressed my disgust with the comments and anger that such racist tropes could be expressed to young and impressionable athletes and their parents in such a cavalier manner. The team leader said he too had 'felt uncomfortable' and that the perpetrator of the comments was known for his 'banter'. I made it clear that this was racism, not banter. Four years later the athletes still talk about it. The incident gave them 'permission' to perpetuate a racist view."

Parent of Elite Athlete at formal event - England

2.3 Psychological Safety - Parents and Young People

Parents told stories of accompanying young children to team sports and training, to find them pigeonholed, abused and stereotyped. We found this feedback consistently and widely across all sports and heard it from adults reflecting on their early experiences.

Parents described supporting and protecting their children from abuse, and the lack of backing from sports officials and teammates.

*"There was one time my son aged 14, was playing in an older age group against guys of 27, 28. He's a youngster and he's being called all kinds of names, 'black bastard, n****r etc.'*

"So, at the interval, I went to the umpire and said, 'You do know he's 14'. He said, 'Yes'. I continued, 'There's a code where you're not supposed to be swearing at youngsters under any circumstances. And it's a red card?' The umpire said, 'He's playing up age groups, so he's got to recognise that (racist abuse comes with the territory).'"

Parent – England

> *"My number one job is to empower and uplift my daughter at all times. She was the only black girl in her team. After (she was publicly humiliated by her coach), I let her know that everything that happened had nothing to do with her, that nothing she had done gave them cause to tell her she wasn't good enough."*
>
> **Participation at School - England**

> *"If you're black you're automatically pushed into sprinting because there's no way black people are going to be able to do long distance. I mean, that's a myth."*
>
> **Track and Field Athlete – England**

> *"There were tons of sports offered at my school, but some in particular were pushed to me because of my cultural background. There was an expectation that I do athletics. There was an expectation that I play basketball."*
>
> **Runner– England**

"Our children are internalising racism."

Parent – England

2.3 Psychological Safety – Responses

Participants were clear that Psychologically safe spaces are essential for children and young people to nurture a strong sense of identity and confidence. Environments perceived as challenging or unsafe feature in all aspects of life. Through interactions with others, participants developed the life skills to navigate them.

Young participants respond to their negative encounters in several ways; some, bolstered by their parents, developed a level of resilience, and determination to succeed:

Parents shared stories of explicit racism towards themselves and their children which, when challenged, was excused as banter.

> *"I was upset, but my mum said to me, 'If there's anything you want to do, you keep trying. Don't give up. You're going to show them you're the best.' That's how I was raised."*
>
> **Women's Forum Participant**

> *"I took my son to a football match. He was playing really well. I was standing on the side-line watching when a guy approached me, who I later found out was a professional football scout. He walked past and said, 'n****r' and then said, 'Oh no I was just testing to see how you reacted. I want to see how your son handles racism, based on how you deal with it."*
>
> **Parent of Young Footballer – England**

In adulthood, participants, now parents of children, became more defiant, participants reflected on feeling left without a place to work through the strong emotional reactions experienced as children. This often resulted in poor mental health –impacting on everyday life choices and participation in social activities.

Participants reported that these traumatic experiences contributed to leaving sport early and potential lost talent. The effects lasted into mature adulthood affecting self-efficacy and confidence.

Overall, participants expressed their concerns that spaces intended to nurture development, instead, negatively impacted identity and wellbeing. In these environments participants did not feel comfortable and welcomed into team activities and could not perform to their best capabilities.

2.4 Stereotypes

Participants consistently referred to negative stereotypes as powerful influences in their interactions with teammates, coaches and teachers. These stereotypes were often accepted as the norm and went unchallenged sending fixed and negative images of ethnically diverse individuals and communities and reinforcing damaging and untrue beliefs around abilities. Participants felt that this resulted in them being pigeon-holed into "black sports". They reflected on how the reinforcement of racial tropes through the media, in the ways young people are 'chosen' for sports, and in the choices coaches make when picking teams, causes harm to self-image and identity.

These "choices" are compounded by media reporting and dehumanising images of ethnically diverse participants. Adult participants relived their experiences of stereotyping at school, and parents shared stories of their children being overlooked in team sports and insulted on the pitch.

Many voiced their frustrations with encountering this type of abuse, and faced with a lack of options, some young people on elite performance pathways chose to leave their sport altogether.

> *"Looking at all the sports and running publications, you would see primarily skinny white people as the typical image of a runner, so if you were a little bit curvy, or a person of colour, you just weren't shown."*
>
> **Female Gymnast – England**

> *"Once I left school, I was done with team sports, not interested, and I'm still not interested. My experiences turned me off anything to do with being up against another person who'd be giving me a hard time because of my skin colour. I decided to do my own thing, not racing and not competing."*
>
> **Ex Elite athlete now a recreational runner - England**

> *"Talent wise, you can jump, you can catch, you can throw, you can turn, you can run fast. My white counterparts couldn't do all of those things, yet I was still the reserve."*
>
> **Netballer - Scotland**

2.5 Representation

Participants explained that poor or non-existent representation is damaging on many levels, impacting progression and maintaining existing unequal relationships. A lack of visible role models also reinforces negative stereotypes that underpins the myth that ethnically diverse participants have limited skills and abilities and can fulfil only a narrow range of roles.

> *"I think the fundamental issue here is, 'how do white leaders see and value black people?'. We know they value us as athletes; they kind of value our work in the community with young black people in terms of keeping black people out of trouble and changing lives. And that work has a huge value.*
>
> *"But they don't see us as leaders. They're not running leadership courses for black people from redbrick universities to accelerate them through the system to ensure that they're leading organisations. They're not doing that kind of work because they just don't believe it. They don't see it."*
>
> **Sports Media - Scotland**

Participants across all Home Nations shared examples of unrepresentative leadership. They observed that the absence of representation leads to decision-making that is unlikely to be in the interests of Black and Asian communities and sports participants. Participants noted that leadership, which is unrepresentative and unresponsive to complaints about governing bodies, teams and coaches, effectively deny the significance of racism within their structures. This was referred to as a "colour blind" approach, and participants discussed how this attitude towards racism encourages the continuation of inequality and division.

> *"If you make a complaint to someone who's never walked in your shoes, they're never going to understand it. It's easy to brush those things aside because they don't understand the lived experiences."*
>
> **Young Athlete – Scotland**

> *"It's about the recruitment of the right people into these organisations. National Governing Bodies and others are still hiring affluent white British males. I do question how they'll be able to tackle inequalities and truly understand their communities if they don't reflect and represent them."*
>
> **Sport Workforce - Northern Ireland**

2.6 Media

There are countless stories of the media's power to influence. Throughout the general forums, participants shared many observations about the impact of the mass media. We asked sports media professionals to share their reporting experiences and tell us about their career progression during two specialist forums. Their experiences mirrored those of the Sport Workforce, with a call for better representation and more diverse leadership within media institutions. Below, we have used the full account of a media executive reflecting on diversity within their industry:

"This is a business case, but white leaders treat it as a charitable act to work on diversity in the workplace. They say, ' I feel bad that we haven't got any black people here, so let's go into Tottenham or Brixton and find a kid that's got massive social issues and give them an entry level job. And then let's put that story on our website as a way of showing people that we really do care'. It's never, 'Let's go to Oxford or Cambridge and find the brightest black kid to become the next person who takes my job as a leader'. It is never that narrative because they don't think that black people exist who can do those things. And that's a big frustration of mine. The diversity within the black community is never really recognised. It's always anchored in this story of, 'We've got to help these people. We've got to lift them up.'

"As people of colour we've got to say NO, just recognise us, work with us in partnership and collaboration and then before you know it, 10, 20 years down the line, we'll just be part of the business. We'll have black women leading huge organisations and diversity will come about as a result of having diverse people at every level.

"In sports journalism, it's all about having a thoroughness editorially. So how do you come to the best decision on how to tell a story? How do you understand your audiences? If you have a team of people and no diversity within it, how can we expect them to understand a diverse audience anywhere in the country? They need to understand how they are communicating, how they can get the best, most relevant content to diverse communities.

"Just in terms of a logical way of doing business if I wanted to sell things to a group of people, I need to have the knowledge of those people around my business table. And if I don't actually have that expertise, how can I dream of trying to meet the requirements of the different people that we have in our communities?

"So, I'm pushing the business case for diversity. I tell senior leaders they need to make their business relevant to their audiences and be more thorough in terms of their decision-making right across the board."

Sports Media - England

PART 3
THE IMPACT OF RACISM
SPECIFIC THEMES

Part Three explores themes emerging from a series of specialist forums designed to give space to marginalised voices. These forums deepen understanding of the profound nature of racism when race intersects with other aspects of our identity and social lives.

Women Culture and Faith

Race and Class

Coaches

Access and Barriers to Engagement

3.1 Women, Culture and Faith

In five exclusive forums representing all Home Nations, women spoke to the researchers about their experiences of accessing and participating in sport and physical activity. In this intersectional space, experiences were interwoven with faith and culture. Women experience universal and multiple barriers in navigating social and community life and numerous challenges within the family home.

The "issues" shared reflect the issues of wider society. We found the shared experiences were consistent across age, cultural background, access to physical activities, specialist sport and elite performance pathways.

Their stories told in the intersectional space of gender, race, culture and faith offered further insight into the psychological impact of racism on women of colour.

Black, Asian and ethnically diverse women told us that navigating this space is emotionally draining. The images and stereotypes of women interchange but are always observed as negatives. Women are seen as aggressive, defiant participants, with ultrahuman, Amazonian qualities or timid, oppressed victims reluctant to integrate.

We were given numerous examples of where these stereotypes are used.

> *"You're swimming against the tide. As a five-year-old, not even recognising that from day dot, you're going against it."*
>
> **Parent of young Ballet performer**

An awareness of difference started for most sportswomen during their formative years. These casual experiences sat at a subconscious level in the psyche, helping shape identity and self-image and had a profound impact on confidence and motivation.

> *"Some of the tropes around us as black women are about our strength, I am sick of being strong, but we have to be in a society which is constantly trying to pull us down. I'm battling to keep that knee off mine and my children's necks."*
>
> **Netballer - Scotland**

> *"I think a lot of times people see me as 'aggressive.' I'm not, I'm just a straight talker."*
>
> **Elite Athletics Coach**

3.1 Women, Culture and Faith

As young children, participants could recall experiencing something that didn't feel right and concluding they didn't fit the expectations of their coaches and team leaders.

> *"I know I was taken out of that team at the last minute because I was black and I didn't fit the pretty little blond hair, blue eyes, very thin, very small look."*
>
> **Gymnast - England**

At school, female participants remember being stereotyped and directed into sports that would "suit them." Additionally, women felt sexualised and objectified.

> *"They were perving on the girls and women all the time, and I became conscious of what they did and their code words. If they saw someone, with large breasts, they would say their code words to each other across the board."*
>
> **Swimmer - England**

> *"Playing sport as a teenager I had to constantly challenge people's expectations of what sport I should be able to do being a black girl."*
>
> **Netballer - Scotland**

These experiences are compounded by the cultural expectation of communities and families.

At a societal level, Black and Asian women's experiences are negatively affected by casual sexism, microaggressions and the white male gaze of the media.

Participants in the exclusive women's forum described how the masculine culture that dominates some sports, and in particular women's football, stifles potential and progression. Participants questioned whether team choices were made based on attractiveness to the media rather than merit and competency.

> *"I was overlooked for the elite squad, even though I had done enough to secure a place. Then came back and had no one to speak with, not even my own coach, who was white. If I'm losing out in sport, how many others have missed out on opportunities because there's been nobody else that we can speak to about it?."*
>
> **Footballer - England**

3.1 Women, Culture and Faith

Women shared the emotional impact of being overlooked for team sports, the negative attitudes of their fellow team members and the sometimes overt aggressive racism of competing teams. This culture is reinforced by the media's negative representation of women of colour across all sports.

Muslim women's stories provided some understanding of their experience in public spaces. Overall, participants shared individualised occurrences of negative innuendos, microaggressions and exclusionary practices. We heard stories of body shaming, objectification, sexualisation and alienation.

> *"If you don't fit into their mould of being a helpless and defenceless (Muslim woman), then people aren't really interested because they don't know which box to put you in."*

Bollyfit Participant

> *"I lived in a predominantly white area. So, I never felt I fitted in. And I felt really sad as the trainer could have done more to engage the group.*
>
> *"Physical activity outside the house is just not for you. That's not what you're supposed to be doing. There are knock-on effects of that."*

Female Muslim participant

> *"I come from competitive swimming background. I can see the disbelief on white faces because as a black person I am not expected to be a good swimmer."*

Swimming Coach

Generational Responses

Researchers heard that negative images and stereotypes of women have not shifted much between the generations. In many ways, language is more subtle, and the use of dog whistle terminology and indirect dehumanising observations are more common.

3.2 Power Relationships - Race and Class

In the intersection of race and class, sport reflects the unequal structures that impact on ethnically diverse communities' opportunities. These experiences were shared by participants from all Home Nations.

We believe that Inequality is maintained throughout the school system affecting how children are channelled into sporting activities. Participants in our specialist Parents forum observed that in their sporting interactions and particularly in private school settings, parents were frustrated that negative perceptions still existed in choices around their child's participation, despite their best attempts to engage and hold the same class status as their team peers.

> *"Tennis, archery, swimming, these are sports where, if you come from a more affluent background and your parents have the time and the money, you can excel."*

Cricket - Northern Ireland

> *"My children played hockey but received far less attention and opportunities than the players who went to private schools. So that's where racism started to come in as well. My son had peers who weren't anywhere near as good as him but because he wasn't in that system he would get overlooked."*

Hockey - England

> *"I work with the young people who are asylum seekers and refugees, and mainly they live on five pounds a day. So it's not possible for them to buy a tracksuit or even shoes or socks or even very basic sports gear. And actually, they love football."*

Young Footballer - Northern Ireland

> *"It's about, your economic status rather than the talent or the skill."*

Elite Athlete – Scotland

> *"I wonder whether some of the governing bodies are afraid of inviting in people of colour with talent. Even though they say they want to progress the sport and be as inclusive as possible, I'm not convinced that's what they really want. What I'm saying is maybe they'd rather have a mediocre level of skill."*

Archer- England

3.3 Power Relationships - Coaches

The relationship between the coach and the team or individual is pivotal in gaining the best performance possible. This is true at any level of sport. Two exclusive coach forums explored these power relationships further.

For young participants, the attitude and behaviours of their coaches affected their confidence and motivation in early years. For elite athletes and those on performance pathways negative coaching attitudes caused participants to leave high level clubs or their sport altogether.

Participants reported anxiety and mental health issues as a direct result of coaching behaviours and practices.

Whilst some participants told stories of the impact of poor relationships with their coach, exclusion also exists for ethnically diverse coaches who told stories of unwelcoming environments, disbelief of the validity of skills and expertise and limited opportunities for career progression and access to top coaching roles.

> *"In a nutshell, I walked out of a first-class team because my coach was a racist and he had put me through hell for 18 months."*
>
> **Male Cricketer - Northern Ireland**

> *"I was the only black coach in the club. When I took the (white) squad to games, the opposition targeted my team because they didn't want a black manager to win. There were times when someone would come over and say, 'you monkey' to my face."*
>
> **Youth Football Coach - Wales**

> *"I was the head coach. A photographer asked me to step out of the photoshoot as if I wasn't part of the team."*
>
> **Male Cricketer - Northern Ireland**

3.4 Access and Barriers to Engagement

Representatives of alternative networks and structures set up in response to marginalisation from mainstream sports activity attended the forums. We found that these structures were responses to racism, replicating the actions of earlier generations.

Black and Asian Commonwealth citizens invited to the UK post World War II, arrived with optimism and hope to build better lives. Their experiences of rejection on the sports fields mirrored other aspects of their lives; an inability to find skilled work, invalidation of their qualifications, unwelcoming places to worship and alienating schools.

Earlier generations, defiantly self-determined, established systems and structures that could meet their needs and built safe and inclusive places to worship (Pentecostal Churches, Hindu Temples and Mosques) and opportunities to build on the education of their children (Supplementary and Saturday Schools).

The researchers spoke to representatives of alternative sports leagues and associations, established as safe spaces for participants to enjoy sport. These were in most cases newly emerging organisations formed for the same reasons that their grandparents' generation branched out, 70+ years ago.

The representatives were clear that these alternate organisations are formed because participants do not feel welcomed or understood inside traditional British structures. Many had joined existing majority white clubs and left in search of better representation after struggling to have their voices and opinions heard.

> *"I voted with my with my feet and left. Maybe I was a little bit naive, but I was very disappointed because I invested a lot of time in the club."*
>
> **Runner - England**

> *"The first thing we wanted to do was to be a community. We want to support each other but it's got to be a campaigning group. It's got to be something that drives change."*
>
> **Runner - England**

Generational Responses

"In the 1980s you had to be confrontational because there was absolutely no trust that those funders would give money to black people."

Sport Workforce - Wales

PART 4
THE HOME NATIONS

Part Four explores in more detail sports experiences in the Home Nations.

Around 80% of the stories we heard were from England. The research team anticipated an imbalance in representation of experiences due to the relatively high presence of ethnically diverse communities in England. However, the team found that the experiences shared were broadly the same across all countries. The home country nuances are illustrated throughout this section.

England

English Participants make up 79% of total responses to the research. In the following section we explore in more depth the themes that emerged from specialist England Forums.

Bias in Funding and Support Systems

In England specific forums, participants gave examples of perceived bias in decision-making and inequity in the grant funding structure. Black and Asian communities, groups and clubs felt poorly represented in terms of successful outcomes.

The researchers found that participants from ethnically diverse backgrounds were unaware of support networks and systems available to assist organisations with grants processes and funding applications. In some cases, groups felt that they were denied or prevented from accessing funds. We found that the perceived barrier to funding and support is experienced by grassroots organisations, elite athletes, coaches and teams.

Participants also suggested that capital funding does not always support the communities most in need. Participants who had knowledge of or worked in grant funding roles were sceptical of award systems and processes. They believe that grassroots clubs are overlooked in favour of groups able to navigate the funding systems due to stronger connections and historical relationships.

Experiences in Rural England

Rural experiences mirror those of major cities and towns. Participants from towns and villages experienced racism in more direct ways, language was more explicit, exclusion was common and the feeling of not being welcome is more intense.

> *"The idea that the countryside is a neutral space, just waiting to be populated by anyone who wants to go there is just absurd. Try and do anything out of the ordinary in the countryside and see what happens. Do it as a white, middle-aged man, and then try and imagine doing it as a teenage black girl with dreadlocks."*
>
> **Black Trail Runners - England**

Allyship

Allyship is defined as creating a climate in which people (leaders in particular) advance a culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people. In the context of inequality, allies leverage their privilege on behalf of others.

Allyship emerged as an important theme within England and Scottish forums, and this was explored further through an impromptu and well attended Allyship Forum, the majority of whom were England Participants.

Black and Asian participants and white allies discussed the importance of allyship as a mechanism for tackling racism. This was not an easy task for allies; at best many allies felt they were made to feel uncomfortable for airing their views, and at its most extreme, they were ostracised.

Black and Asian participants felt they were not always supported by their teammates and were unsure whether coaches could fully understand and support them in difficult and uncomfortable conversations about race.

> *"I took up the challenge (to be an active ally) because they are wrong. And I will continue to fight. If I lose my job, that's fine, quite frankly, because I believe in the right for everyone to take part. So, I will stand up and call racism out."*
>
> **Participant Ally Forum**

> *"We were met with a wall of uncomfortable silence, people feeling that they didn't know what to say. They wanted to help. They wanted to feel that they were doing something, contributing, but they didn't know how to."*
>
> **Participant Ally Forum**

> *"It's standing side by side. For example, if a black sports person is experiencing racism and their white counterpart says, "I'm with you, I'm fighting through this with you and will stand with you."*
>
> **Participant Ally Forum**

> *"Being an ally, can be isolating, You can be ostracised, and it can feel that you're on a lonely journey."*
>
> **Participant Ally Forum**

Participation

During our early research of relevant publications, we were interested in the Sport for All survey 2020. Its findings demonstrated that ethnically diverse communities are underrepresented in some sporting fields – such as walking, cycling and swimming.

We organised specialist forums to explore in greater detail the reasons for this lack of participation. In these forums for Swimming, Trail Running and Cycling, contributors gave some insight into the lack of involvement.

We found that issues of marginalisation and unwelcoming environments contributed to participants engaging less in these specific sports areas and in some cases, establishing alternative safe environments.

> *"I sometimes wonder whether some of the associations are afraid of inviting people of colour with talent. Maybe they'd rather have a mediocre level of skill and exclude people of colour, rather than say, right, let's be fully inclusive because we want our support to be the best."*
>
> **Black Trail Runners**

There are numerous alternative structures across the UK; some are well established, and some are newly emerging. The researchers noted from the participants' contributions that it is possible these groups are not represented in the surveys and mainstream data collection.

Wales

We developed a broad perspective for Wales from a number of in-depth, 1-2-1 interviews. However, our engagement does not fully reflect the rich, ethnically diverse communities of Wales, with their strong historical presence. The Pandemic, lockdown and Christmas impacted engagement.

We believe it was also difficult due to underdeveloped community networks. Participants expressed their research fatigue and cynicism with Sport Wales. They called for a strategy to strengthen relationships with community groups, allies and community connectors.

Diverse ethnic communities are very aware of the discrimination they feel inside sport.

The researchers conducted one specialist forum with school children who relayed their experiences and opinions on engaging in sport.

The younger generation is more acutely aware of inequality and difference within structures and the sporting activities themselves.

These encompass:

- The way in which they are treated differently in sport than their white peers
- How racism is condoned
- Experiences inside and outside of school
- Competitive environments in all situations.

"One of the reasons why we probably don't have many of our kids in mainstream clubs is because of parents' fear of racism, whether they've experienced it or heard it from somebody else."

Sport Workforce - Wales

"I've been at tournaments (witnessed racism), and I've argued with other members of staff. I've argued with referees, I've argued with representatives of Sport Wales, and they think you're just difficult. They think because I'm white, that I'm on their wavelength, or that I will automatically agree with what they're saying."

Teacher and Ally

Sectarianism

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, we considered racism in sport exclusively and within the historically and culturally specific contexts of sectarianism. We were reminded that current debates over race need to be informed by the long-term histories of sectarianism in these countries. In Northern Ireland and, to a lesser extent Scotland the intersection of these phenomena affects ethnically diverse communities. The Northern Ireland forum facilitator described it as a "third wheel". Historically, in both Scotland and Northern Ireland the impact of racism has been considered of secondary importance to sectarianism. In both Scotland and Northern Ireland participants felt the experience of racism is not acknowledged by sports structures.

We found that participants' experiences in Scotland and Northern Ireland are the same as those across the rest of the UK, but the interactions are intensified. Verbal abuse is more direct, and "othering" and alienation is more acute, this is due in part to the relatively small numbers and loose community connections. But it is also influenced by the political climate and culture, where participants believe conflict has frequently eroded levels of empathy and compassion. Conflict relationships are normalised and are played out in sport.

Scotland

In Scotland participation numbers were low, however, the stories represent the breadth of sport engagement including members of the Sport Workforce, volunteers, coaches, elite athletes and grassroots professionals. In addition to two Scottish forums, a forum involving young decision makers explored the experiences of young sports participants.

Participants on Scottish forums told us that ethnically diverse communities within Scotland are disengaged. There is enthusiasm to connect, but the existing outreach and engagement structures are inadequate.

Scottish Governing Bodies (SGBs) have taken a colour blind approach to community engagement and grant-making structures that fail to meet the needs of diverse communities.

Representation is vital at the grassroots club level and within sports administration structures and leadership. Engagement and connections with ethnically diverse communities are limited, and more representative and ethnically diverse staff are needed at all levels.

"Everybody says ethnic minorities, don't engage. We had a totally different experience because we were struggling to accommodate them. It's not like we're talking about new arrivals who can't speak English and don't understand the culture. It's absolutely rubbish."

Grassroots engagement project - Scotland

"For the past 10 years we've been fighting for an umbrella body for race, to mirror that of LGBT, gender, disability, etc. We need to support an equal agenda here."

Sport Workforce - Scotland

Where racism is experienced as the norm, communities either disengage or find alternative pathways.

Grassroots observers and administrators explained that alternative structures and leagues emerge as a response to alienation and behaviours/ practices at a club level.

Participants feared that the emergence of alternative groups is creating a parallel subculture with its own dynamics and economy and set out the case for an umbrella body – representing ethnically diverse voices.

Participants concluded that greater investment is necessary in grassroots infrastructures and sports pathways. Schools should be used as a pathway to improving engagement and involvement.

Sectarianism plays a role in the experience of ethnically diverse communities on two levels:

- The conflict of identity becomes tribal when race is used as a weapon between opposing sides.

- The sense of belonging and the potential to integrate is eroded when ethnically diverse communities feel a need to choose which "side" they support.

Northern Ireland

We found the communities of Northern Ireland the hardest to engage. Through a series of in-depth 1-2-1 interviews and several smaller group discussions, we pieced together the experience of racism for ethnically diverse sports participants. The Northern Ireland story of racism is nuanced by the long history of anti-Irish racism and the most recent struggles.

The forum facilitators heard stories of identity and trust; participants called for stronger networks and better support. The research team was told that tackling racism has only recently become a priority for Northern Ireland; the Northern Irish struggles have resulted in a fear-driven culture exhibiting violence and a loss of empathy and compassion for individuals.

Clashes between communities have resulted in a closed, single identity community exhibiting high stress and anxiety levels. This translates to how racism might be expressed.

The focus on Northern Ireland is community healing, but this does not include welcoming new ethnically diverse arrivals.

People of colour, who look different represent a threat to identity, and ethnically diverse sports participants told stories of being actively excluded from day-to-day activities, sporting structures and performance pathways. **These exclusionary practices are normalised.**

We spoke with community leaders and activists, sports coaches, administrators and elite athletes.

Allies commented that Northern Ireland has been a single race community for a very long time, and those from ethnically diverse communities found it hard to fit in. Some participants believed that their presence was only welcome to enhance funding opportunities.

Many felt that racism is blatant and unapologetic. There was a call for a body to connect people, as community identity is lacking unless participants identified with a particular side, Protestant or Catholic.

"When the system is challenged, the system doesn't move."

Ally and Sport Workforce

"Northern Ireland is divided, there are some areas that if you go there, you can't even wear a Gaelic top. You'll end up somewhere else in the wrong place. So, someone from an ethnic minority who doesn't know the language, doesn't know the culture will be scared."

Ally and Sport Workforce

PART 5
CONCLUSIONS

Poor engagement across sports activities, and a lack of representation within sporting structures has led the five UK Councils to commission this lived experience research.

The councils were united in their determination to provide a sporting system which is genuinely inclusive and properly reflective of UK society and wanted to understand:

- Whether across the sector, they and their organisations are doing enough to understand the issues and context they are trying to change.

- Whether the sections of British society and communities they aim to reach and engage with can trust them and their organisations to be part of the solution.

- Whether they and their organisations are doing enough to tackle the challenges in terms of actions and outcomes.

The Research team developed three research question to provide some answers to the Sports Councils questions:

- What experiences (access, structures, attitudes, behaviours, interactions) impact access and engagement?

- How do these experiences impact engagement and potential?

- How do these experiences affect well-being and motivation?

Over 300 members of the Sport Workforce, elite and grassroots participants provided insights into the impact of racism and the reasons for poor participation and representation. Their collective contributions have informed the recommendations and their response to the universal question "What should Change?" provides an outline for a road map to building trust.

Conclusions

The research approach aimed to identify the systems, structures, attitudes and behaviours that impact the individual and explored how these interactions affect motivation and group dynamics. Researchers heard stories of racism experienced in relationships between participants and their coaches and teammates and in their interactions with selection processes, grant funding systems and leadership structures. The research has found that these experiences impact on participants physical and mental wellbeing, causing a decrease in motivation, disconnect and a profound lack of trust in the sport system.

### Using the Impact Matrix to analyse the emerging themes.

Participants stories were analysed for patterns and trends across the spectrum of sport participation and the evolving "codebook" presented a structure for analysing the common themes and trends.

The matrix analysis allowed the researchers to group the emerging themes and identify how persistent exposure to negative experiences within sporting structures impacts on Black And Asian participants. The researchers found that over time these experiences diminish self esteem, wellbeing and motivation.

When individuals are also denied opportunity through systemic barriers to participation, we begin to understand why participants disengage from mainstream activities, leave sporting pathways early or establish alternative structures and sport leagues.

The Research concludes that Racism in sport impacts in four ways:

1. The direct impact on the Individual.

2. The experience of the individual when participating in groups.

3. The lack of commitment and acknowledgement in Leadership Structures.

4. The influence of societal issues on sporting structures and the attitudes and actions of individuals within them.
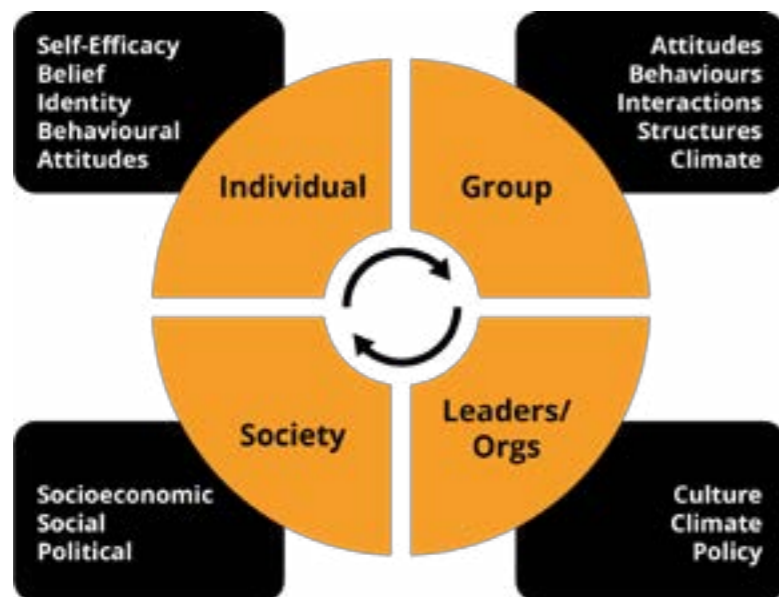
Conclusions

The impact on the INDIVIDUAL

The negative experiences of early childhood have an enduring impact on confidence, self-belief and identity, sometimes affecting participants ability to navigate other aspects of social life. Intersections of race, class, gender and sexual identity compound the impact.

The extent of lost potential, where talented young sportspeople choose to exit early or were denied access to team and individual sports at elite levels, is unknown. These stories were told by younger athletes today and older participants recalling their youth.

Parents detailed the experiences of their children – sometimes under the age of ten. These were the most challenging stories for the researchers to hear, as parents relived their anger and the frustrations of protecting their children from unwarranted racist abuse – often from adults.

What has changed is the nature of racism and we now see abuse and behaviours in different forms; once it was aggressive and physical, now it is nuanced with an emphasis on social media forums and platforms.

"From a generation where racial abuse was vitriolic and aggressive, physical and violent. And then you get to today's generation where the vast majority of it is words and keywords."

Sport Workforce - England

The impact on GROUP cohesion and group dynamics

Participants reported a mixture of experiences. Some enjoyed the camaraderie and support of team members. Others spoke of microaggressions; overt and covert racial abuse in interactions with their own teams and opposing team members.

Within less representative sports, we explored the motivations of parallel or alternative networks, associations and groupings. Participants in these networks tell us they are proactive responses to feelings of alienation in mainstream sport and physical activity structures. These alternative groups are thriving and deliver a strong message of the need for change in mainstream activities.

Black and Asian communities, groups and clubs are poorly represented in grant-making structures. The research found that these communities are also less likely to be aware of support structures that can help in accessing grants and funds. In some cases, groups claimed they were denied or prevented from accessing funds. This claim came from participants representing grassroots organisations, elite athletes and teams.

The research has demonstrated the importance of psychological safety. At an individual and team level, early experiences of racism, impact participants' engagement with sport and physical activities.

LEADERS and ORGANISATIONS -Their impact on individuals and communities

Team coaches are poorly equipped to deal with racist incidents on and off the pitch.

Interactions with team leaders, coaches, teachers and parents had lasting impacts on participants' self-image and self-belief. Elitist, traditional organisational structures are not representative of communities. They lack clear progression routes for ethnically diverse staff and the ability to engage with and understand the needs of ethnically diverse communities. Organisations adopt "colour blind" approaches; funding structures are not set up to engage and support Black and Asian grassroots organisations; funding mechanisms unconsciously favour organisations who can best navigate the application process.

Funding and support activities are subjective, driven by the values and aims of organisations. There is evidence within participants' stories that funding mechanisms do not reach the communities most in need. Capital funding appears to disproportionately favour organisations that respond well to written applications or are awarded on the strength of personal relationships.

The strength of ally relationships is key to developing inclusive structures, behaviours and processes free from bias. Allies told us that their efforts within organisations can be discounted, and at worst, allies themselves are marginalised.

SOCIETY

There is evidence in participants' stories that attitudes, behaviours and beliefs are influenced by the prevailing country culture and political climate. At a country level, culture and climate can impact authentic engagement, i.e., how outreach and inclusion activities are tailored to community needs.

Participants across all Home Nations reported that where Sports Councils promoted tokenistic or colour blind approaches, this undermined the capacity to respond to the needs of ethnically diverse people. In these circumstances, participation in sports activities continues to be low, and dropout rates are high.

There were also strong patterns and themes in generational experiences. In England, the experience of migrant communities in the 1970s mirrors the voices of young people today. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, countries with younger migrant populations, participants reported feeling detached from mainstream activities.

In much the same way as earlier migrant communities, today, participants' experiences of othering and objectification result in the growth of alternative structures or "parallel leagues" to build community-owned safe spaces.

The balance of psychological safety and competitive behaviours are aligned and not opposed. Historical alpha male and masculine approaches to coaching and development are becoming outdated and our participants reported feeling marginalised, stereotyped and objectified by these approaches.

Participants were clear that sport has a responsibility and a duty of care to look after the wellbeing of younger participants. Parents have a right to expect their children's wellbeing to be respected and supported whilst participating in sports activities.

"We were in the call room at a competition when I witnessed a white official let a white girl go to the toilet but refuse to let a black girl go, before the same race. They asked at the same time. The only difference was their skin colour."

Athlete - England

Conclusions

In the final analysis there are clear areas of interaction that support and develop (help) or diminish (hinder) the motivation of the individual:

What helps me?

Understanding my needs and nurturing my talent
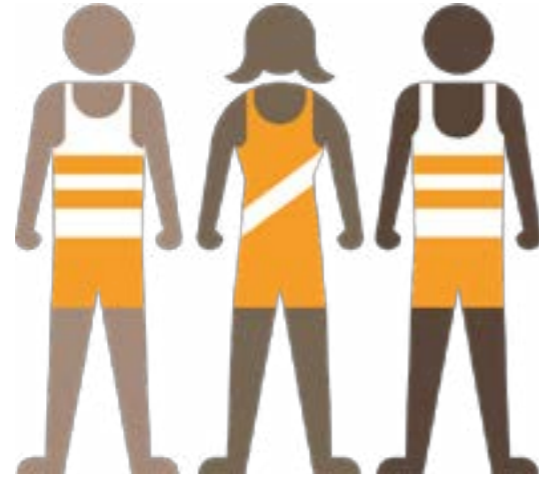
Creating safe spaces

Developing inclusive engagement strategies

Clarifying the role between Sports Councils and NGBs

Developing clearer funding and support structures

Allyship

Promoting anti-racist leadership practices

What hinders me?

Microaggressions

Stereotyping

Colour blind approaches

Lack of representation

Poor engagement

Barriers to access

PART 6
RECOMMENDATIONS

**From Grassroots to Podium
What Needs to Change?**

Solutions to some of the report findings are outside of the scope of this research and are the result of wider societal issues. However, sport can also provide the vehicle for change not just within itself but in wider society given its purpose, function and how much it matters to communities and individuals.

Recommendations

It is not enough to declare anti-racism. Building trust requires the commitment of leaders themselves and a joint commitment of the Sports Councils to leading a seismic shift in attitude and behaviours across the sporting landscape.

The research team are conscious that uprooting historical relationships and challenging deep rooted attitudes and beliefs are complex areas to tackle, however, they are central to change. The Councils have clearly demonstrated their commitment in jointly commissioning this research to understand more about the lived experiences.

Below we make a series of recommendations for the Sports Council to consider that provide the foundations of a road map to building trust. The recommendations are informed by the final analysis of the lived experiences and the answers to our final question posed to all participants in forums and 1-2-1 interviews - "What should Change?". The impact areas provide the structure for the final recommendations.

IMPACT AREA	RECOMMENDATION
Individuals	**Develop systems and approaches to increase the Sports Councils' understanding of the impact of racism on the individual.**
Groups	**Act to improve the experience of Black and Asian people participating in teams, accessing and navigating sports structures.**
Organisations and Leaders	**Provide the impetus for organisations to acknowledge and address the impacts of racism.**
Society	**Lead the way in tackling the attitudes and actions of individuals and organisations within sporting structures.**

> *"I put this to him very directly, I said, "Have you ever thought about doing a leadership programme to diversify all of the clubs and all of the governing bodies. Go out to all the universities, find the brightest black people, and accelerate them through to leadership positions.*
>
> *"So within five, 10 years, we're talking about 30-year-olds, 35-year-olds who have gone to Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Loughborough, Bristol, all the typical places that you would go and identify young, talented people from. They will then be leaders and in leadership positions. He said, That's cheating!."*
>
> **Sports Media - England**

Recommendations

1. Improve understanding of the impact of racism on the individual.

- The research illustrates the complex factors that impact an individual engaging in sport. These factors are influenced by wider political, social and economic circumstances.
- There are gaps in the research due to low participation from some groups particularly, members of the LGBTQ sports community and limited discussion around the interplay of race, class and socioeconomic circumstances. The Sports Councils would benefit from developing further insights in these areas.
- We recommend the Sports Councils consider a shift towards encouraging positive reinforcement as a model for individual and team development.
- We recommend further investigations are conducted to understand the full extent of sports impact on the psychological safety of participants, and measures are developed to ensure that the Sports Councils' responsibilities are delivered through its structures and activities.
- We recommend the Sports Councils develop online tools and programmes to support parents in understanding their rights and the responsibilities of sports bodies.

2. Improve the the experience of Black and Asian people participating in teams, accessing and navigating sport structures.

- Existing anti-racist interventions are not always enough or effective in sustaining change. We recommend the Sport Councils commit to developing new and creative ways to raise awareness of the significance and impact of racism across the Councils' internal structures, and in relationships with stakeholders and partners.
- We recommend the Sports Councils develop online tools and programmes to support parents in understanding their rights and the responsibilities of sports bodies.

> *"We were the victims of unconscious bias training, which was seen as a solution for every problem. I think it was about reinforcing institutional racism and those prejudices rather than resolving them."*
>
> **Sport Workforce - Scotland**

Recommendations

3. Provide the impetus for organisations to improve their structures, practices and representation

- We recommend that the respective Sports Councils introduce mechanisms and structures to guide the development of ethical, equitable and inclusive relationships with clear guidelines and sanctions.

- Consider specifically how racism influences strategic, and operational decision-making structures.

- We recommend that the role and relationship between NGBs, individuals and teams are explored further to determine the extent to which NGBs make decisions detrimental to the career prospects of individuals and teams and to explore further the potential to:

  - Develop and implement tighter and clearer rules regarding a code of conduct/governance for NGBs.

  - Establish an Independent and Impartial Investigatory Body with sufficient independence to monitor the activities and actions of NGBs in relation to diversity and inclusion and take action where misconduct is identified.

- Develop an Allyship strategy promoting equitable and fair structures and processes.

  - Cultivate healthy ally relationships within organisations to function as external pressure groups and support networks.

  - The Sports Councils are encouraged to build on the growing networks of allies that exist to support and champion anti-racist practices by facilitating interdisciplinary ally groups and networks.

- We recommend the Sport Councils and their partners exploit the leverage of Governing Bodies in economic and supply relationships to increase representation and embed sustainable development processes.

  - Recognise that some organisations will not be able to meet existing funding application requirements due to a lack of capacity or capability. Rethink the grant funding mechanisms and structures to encourage creative ways to apply for and monitor funding applications.

  - Refocus procurement relationships to ensure supply chains are required to meet representation aims and support the Councils' overarching aims of inclusivity and fairness.

4. Tackle the attitudes and actions of individuals within sport structures.

- Sport is a game changer in relation to tackling racial inequality. When sport shifts society shifts, and all sports need to acknowledge this. We recommend the Sport Councils lead the way in awareness raising, confronting inequalities, and being the model for change in society. We recognise that this is a huge task, but it begins with every leader and every ally standing up and doing the right thing.

- The Councils have already initiated this process by commissioning the Lived Experience research. The commitment is welcomed as a first step in the journey to establishing trust. We recommend this commitment is undertaken in partnership with Black and Asian communities, in particular, the contributors to this report.

Recommendations

The recommendations are set within a framework for organisational change that has developed from an analysis of the stories, observations and recommendations of participants. Change requires a seismic shift in the behaviours and practices across the sporting landscape including Sport Councils and their partners.

The ACE model provides the framework for tackling these deep seated issues and accelerating the journey. This model can be applied across the UK sports, joint strategies and within each Home Nation.

The ACE Model™

We refer to leaders as Architects of the future, and we recognise the desire that the Sports Councils have to create a more equitable future for all. Our model is evolutionary, not discounting what the Sports Councils do now but acknowledging that leaders need to be disrupted and disrupting to create change.

The model also recognises the urgency for change and has the most impact when rooted in acknowledging the influence of our historical past, the importance of working through conflict to establish truth and building a commitment to trust.

The core of the ACE model focuses on 3 themes: **ALLYSHIP, CHALLENGE, EXPERIMENT.**

Recommendations

Allyship

An ally is any person who actively promotes and aspires to advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.

Allies acknowledge they hold positions of privilege and actively leverage their privilege for those with less access.

Allyship will manifest differently:

Advocates will bring people into highly exclusive forums, will check and challenge invitation lists.

Sponsors will actively acknowledge others, making sure their contributions are properly understood and appreciated. They will provide stretch opportunities.

Upstanders stand up and challenge. When a remark is made, they will question and challenge, when they see discriminatory behaviour, they won't let it slide.

A **Confidante** is trustworthy and will listen and advise without judgment, even though the conversations could be challenging and uncomfortable.

Allyship should be intrinsic to leadership and not perceived or treated as an add on.

Challenge

If leaders will not challenge their organisations, then who will? Leaders cannot afford to be complacent about the structure, systems and culture they head.

They must constructively challenge the norms to ensure that they promote equity and inclusion. Leaders need to begin by holding up a mirror and challenging themselves by asking searching questions.

"What is my vocabulary when it comes to race?."

"Do I recruit in my likeness?."

"Do I perceive others as less than myself?."

Leaders must go to the perimeters of their sports, learn about the experiences of those on the margins and ask:

"Do our systems and decision-making enable or hinder people from diverse backgrounds participating?."

"Do our interactions, systems and processes consistently challenge ways of thinking and behaviour and the impact of words or actions?."

Recommendations

Experimentation

If we acknowledge that sport needs to be more equitable and inclusive, we must concur that normality needs to be challenged and disrupted. Leaders need to be brave.

Science is the art of discovery through experimentation. Performance improvements are not achieved by doing the same thing. They are realised through trying new things, making mistakes and learning and making (typically unexpected) creative breakthroughs.

This needs to be reflected not just in elite performance, but in the leadership of our sporting institutions.

Experiments mean leaders ask interesting questions about new possibilities, draw hypothesis and innovate.

Experimenting embraces risk, which allows leaders and others to try new things, make mistakes, but learn powerful lessons that can create greater opportunities for all.

Some examples of questions leaders can ask are:

- What if we invested in a Youth Centre in this area and introduced sports that are normally inaccessible to these communities?

- If we experimented with helping families struggling financially by providing equipment and travel, what would be the impact on them and the communities.

- If we brought new voices into our decision-making forums, would our discourse be richer and more expansive, and would our decisions be more equitable?

- If we looked at our sport through the lens of a young Asian woman, what would we see?

When developing our recommendations, we asked ourselves the following questions:

- Will this make a parent more confident that they are leaving their child in a safe and equitable space?

- Will this help people to feel valued and reduce the number who walk away from their dreams?

- Will people be confident that they are being treated fairly and equitably?

- Will people be given the space to optimise their potential and contributions?

- Will this help a talented young person whose parents do not have the financial means to support them?
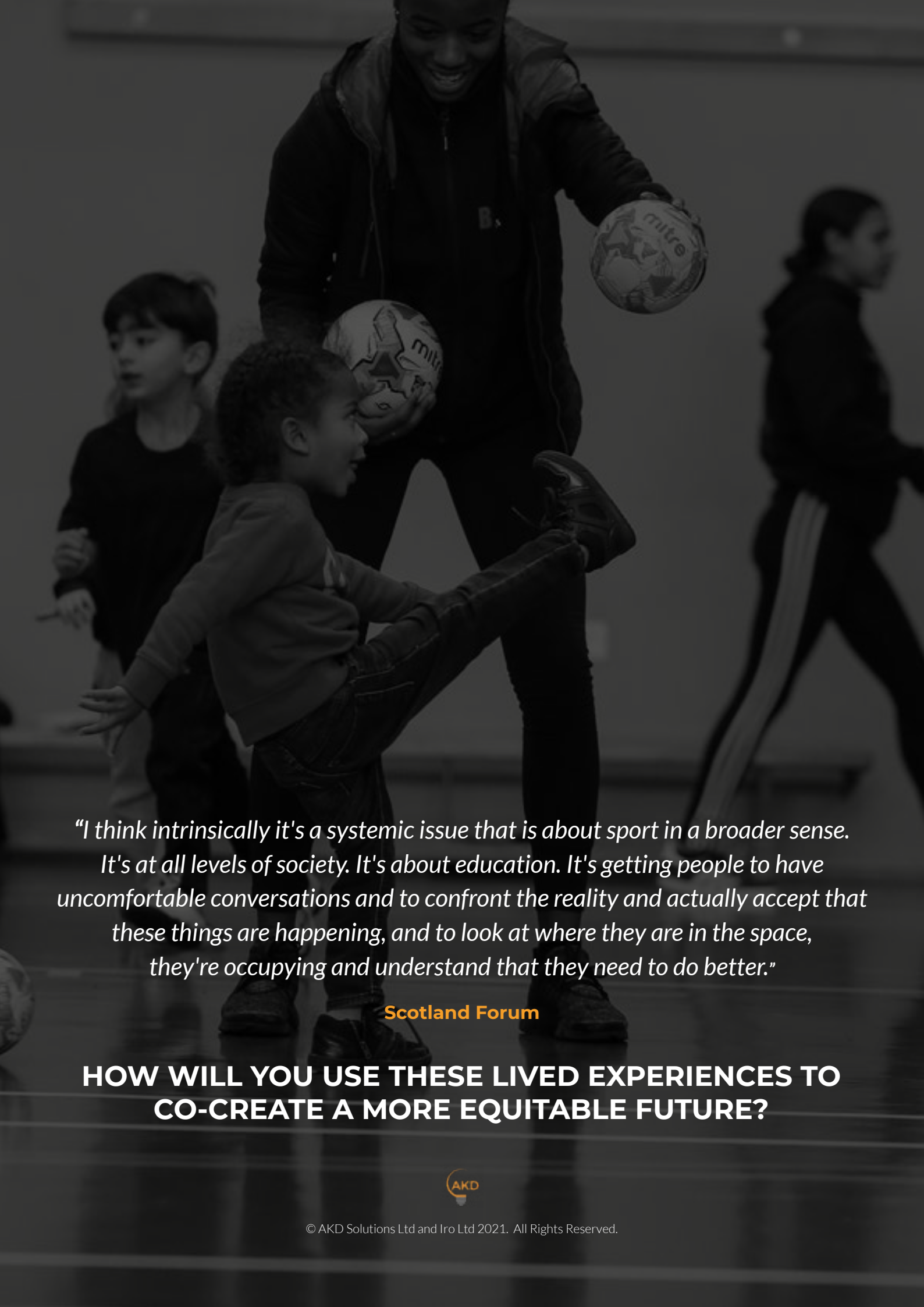
Acknowledgement

We want to acknowledge all of those who contributed to the project.

Firstly, thank you to all five Sports Councils for commissioning this research, recognising the need for it, knowing that there would be discomfort and remaining supportive and committed throughout.

To the most incredible team who conducted the interviews and forums and compiled all the information. A special mention to the associate and report author Heather David, who steered the process from start to finish. Ladi Ajayi your energy, experience and expertise was crucial. Ernest Simons, your photography is simply brilliant, and Kreativ Kingdom, thank you for your visual power and creativity.

But the biggest thanks is for all of the participants, parents, volunteers, officials, coaches and sports administrators who shared their stories. Your courage and support have enabled #TellYourStory to become a reality, and we believe it to be a game-changer for sport.

AKD
stimulating
brilliance

"I think intrinsically it's a systemic issue that is about sport in a broader sense. It's at all levels of society. It's about education. It's getting people to have uncomfortable conversations and to confront the reality and actually accept that these things are happening, and to look at where they are in the space, they're occupying and understand that they need to do better."

Scotland Forum

HOW WILL YOU USE THESE LIVED EXPERIENCES TO CO-CREATE A MORE EQUITABLE FUTURE?