

# Political Participation

*All BME groups surveyed were more likely than the general population to act as volunteers*



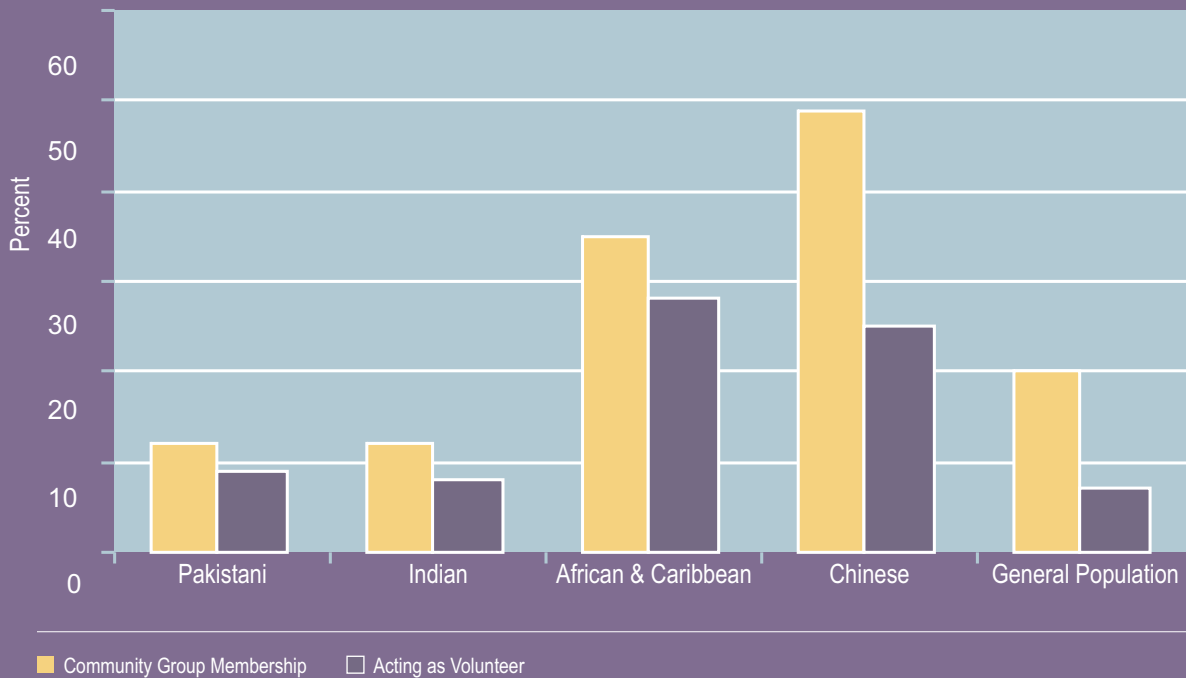
## Political Participation

**BME Politicians:** While Operation Black Vote keeps a record of BME MPs, MEPs and Peers, there seems to be no centralised record kept of BME MSPs and Black Councillors in Scotland. According to Glasgow Council's magazine, there are six non-White Councillors of a total of 78, representing 7.7% of Glasgow's Councillors, and there is only one MSP of BME origin.

[Source: Operation Black Vote]

**Volunteering and Community Groups:** The NHS Greater Glasgow BME Health and Wellbeing Survey recorded information about respondents' volunteering activities and membership of community groups. They found that all BME groups surveyed were more likely than the general population to act as volunteers, with people of African and Caribbean origin having the highest rate of volunteerism at nearly 30% of people surveyed, compared to roughly 8% of the general population. Regarding membership of community groups, the most active group was people of Chinese origin, of whom nearly 50% claimed membership, compared to 20% of the general population and 12% of respondents of Indian and Pakistani origin.

Community Group Membership/Volunteering.



[Source: NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde BME Health and Wellbeing Survey, 2005]

**Ethnic background of people standing for the 2007 local elections:** After the 2007 elections candidates from BME backgrounds were surveyed as to their experiences. While returns were not 100%, the following trends were noticeable:

- The percentage of BME councillors is representative of Scotland's population as a whole, at around 2%, or 14 councillors successful in the 2007 local elections. However, an unusually large percentage of these were from a mixed racial background. If these people are excluded, the picture becomes less representative: among the Scottish population, 1.9% have ethnic minority (excluding mixed) backgrounds, compared with 2.7% of unsuccessful candidates and 1% of councillors. Furthermore, while most of Scotland's ethnic minorities are represented among candidates, only candidates from Indian and Pakistani communities were actually elected to become councillors. Of these, all were male.
- Meanwhile, 26 unsuccessful candidates (3.2% of all unsuccessful candidates responding to the survey) stated that they came from non-white or mixed ethnic backgrounds. Of these, one stood as an Independent, four for the Conservatives, eleven for Labour, five for the Liberal Democrats, two for the SSP and three for Solidarity. The highest proportion of non-white unsuccessful candidates were of Pakistani background (ten in total).
- Since 2003, the proportion of responding unsuccessful candidates from BME backgrounds has increased from 2% to 3.2%, while the percentage of responding councillors of BME backgrounds has remained similar: 2% in 2003, compared to 1.9% in 2007.
- Eight of the 26 ethnic minority candidates stood in Glasgow. Other than Glasgow, only Fife had more than two candidates from a non-white ethnic background and many local authorities had one or none.

Ethnic background of unsuccessful candidates, councillors and the Scottish population, 2003 and 2007 (%)

Ethnicity	Unsuccessful Candidate %		Councillor %	Population %	
	2003	2007	2007	2003	2007
White	98.0	96.7	98.1	98.5	98.0
Mixed	Included in 'Other'	0.6	0.9	0.2	0.1
Indian	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.4
Pakistani	0.6	1.3	0.4	0.4	0.6
Bangladeshi	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Chinese	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2
Other Asian	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
Black - Caribbean	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Black - African	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.2
Black - Other	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1

Notes to Table

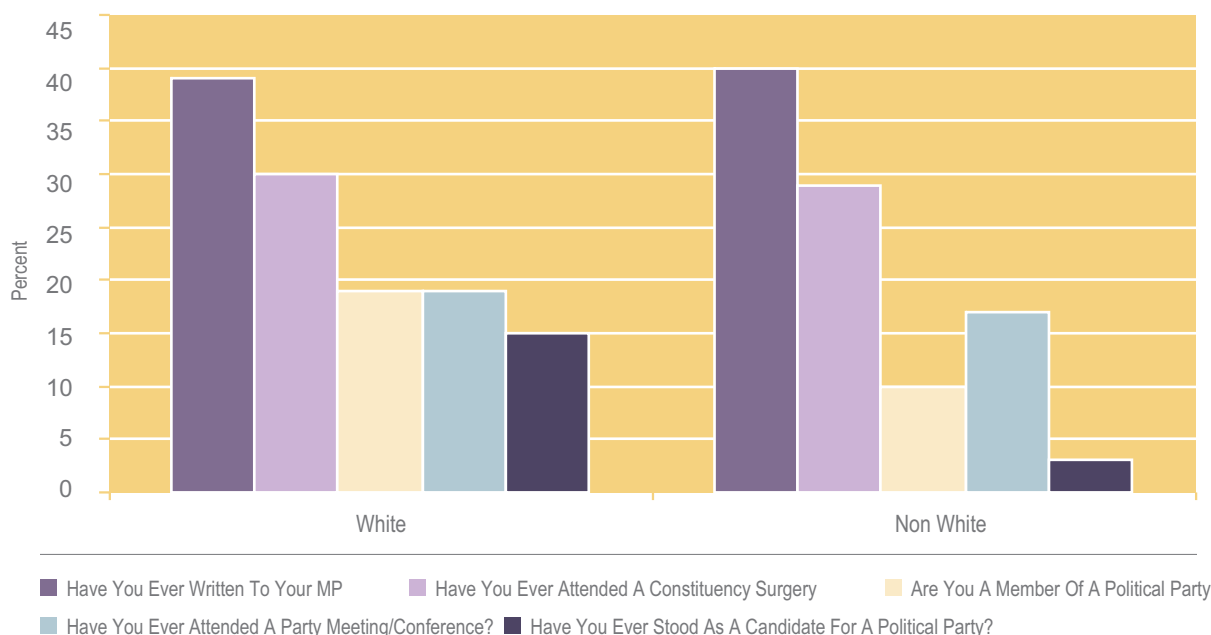
Detailed 2003 data for councillors is not available

Note: Figures for population from Scottish Executive (2007, p.9).

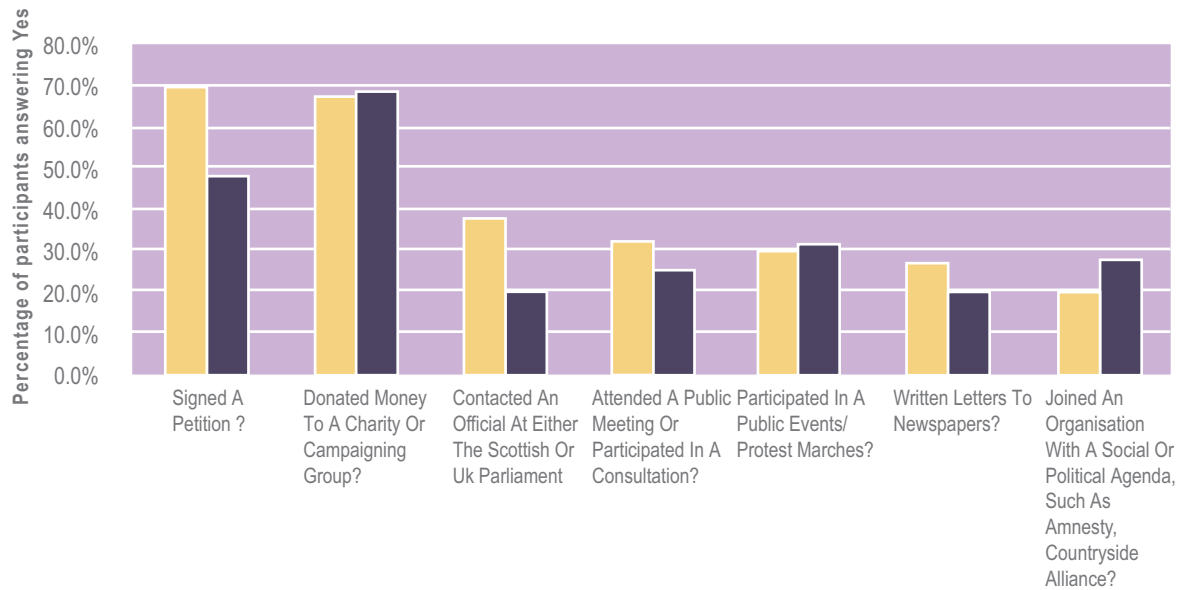
[Source: National Survey of Local Government Candidates 2007:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/05/01095851/4>]

**Political Participation:** Northumbria University’s Centre for Public Policy was recently commissioned by the Commission for Racial Equality (as was) to carry out a study on political participation and ethnicity in Scotland. This study has not yet been formally published, but GARA has permission from the study’s authors to reproduce some of its findings here. The most significant finding of the research was that, while the majority of those surveyed were registered to vote (78%), they were less likely to participate in politics through interaction with mainstream political parties: only a small minority interacted with parties other than at election time, and most felt that mainstream political parties were not representative of the wider population. However, there had also been an increase in involvement in civic and community activities. The study found that experience and fear of racism formed a barrier to political engagement, particularly among respondents of Pakistani origin, given the increase in Islamophobia. There was ethnic variation in what respondents identified as their most important political issue: respondents from White British, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds felt it to be education, respondents from Chinese backgrounds felt it to be economic growth, and respondents from Eastern European backgrounds felt it to be health. Too few people of African and Caribbean origin participated in the study to draw meaningful conclusions about their views.

Thinking about the ways in which you might get involved with a Political Party, could you tell me:



Thinking about other means of Participating in Politics, could tell me whether you have ever:



■ White ■ Non White

[Source: Political Participation and Ethnicity in Scotland, Northumbria University Centre for Public Policy/Commission for Racial Equality, June 2007]

