

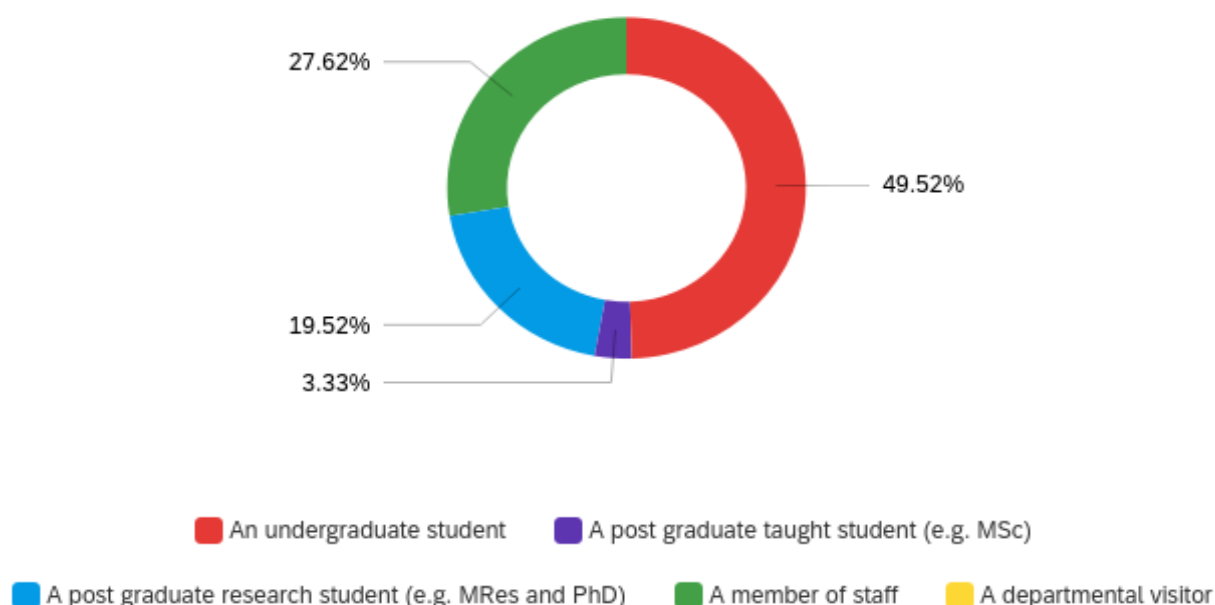
Introduction

Ireti Webb, Strategic HR Partner was asked to conduct a survey by the Department of Material's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Culture Committee with the aim of gathering information to identify anti-racism action that could be taken to improve the experience of Black members of our community. The questions were devised by the committee with some input from Ireti. The survey collected a mix of qualitative and quantitative data and was open to all staff and students within the department between 22 January and 19 February 2021.

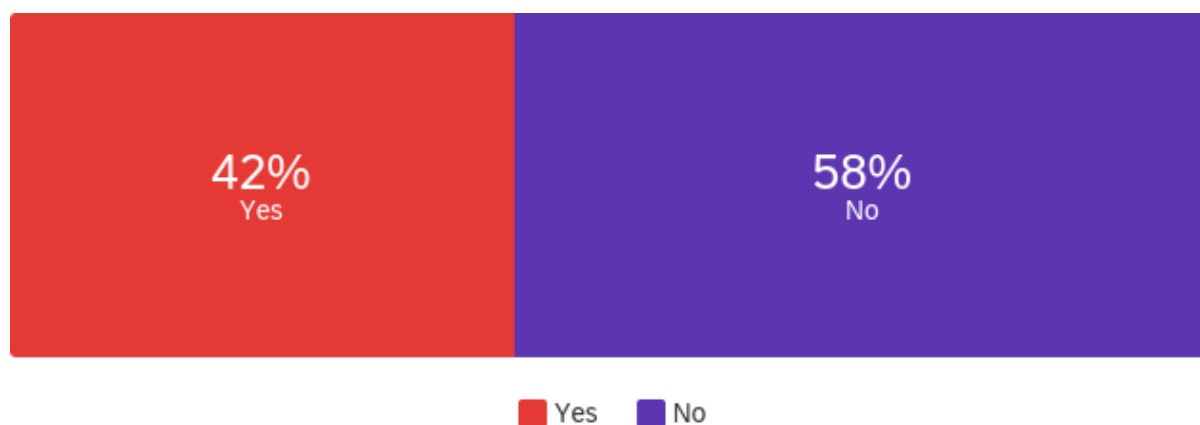
This report sets out the responses to the 24 questions within the survey, summarises the comments received and provides recommended actions that the Department can consider to address the key issues that have been raised.

Respondents

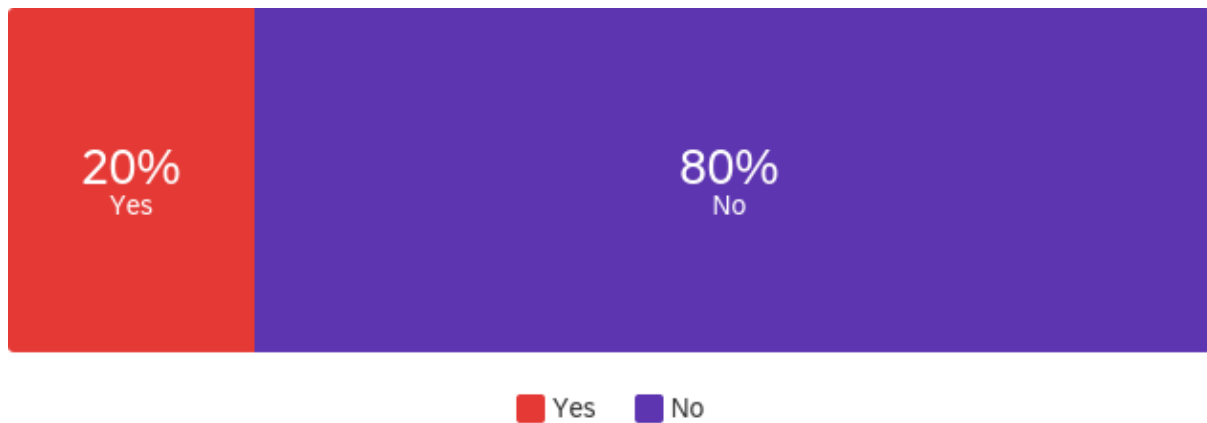
The department of Materials has around 186 staff, 434 UG to MSc students and 267 PhD students. **210** people completed the survey the majority being undergraduate students.



1. Do you identify as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)?



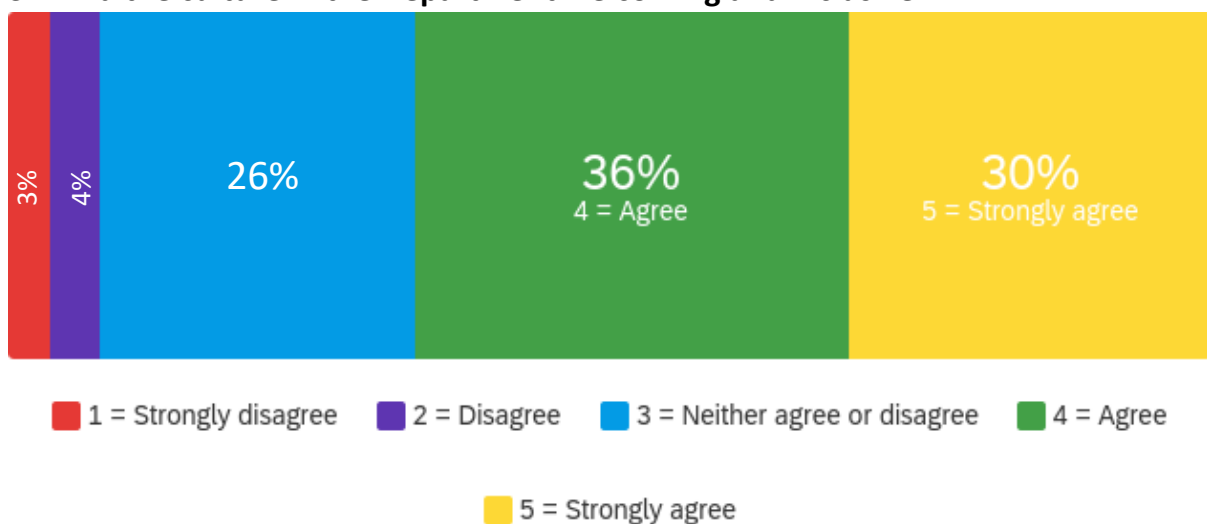
2. Do you identify as belonging to any other underrepresented minority group?



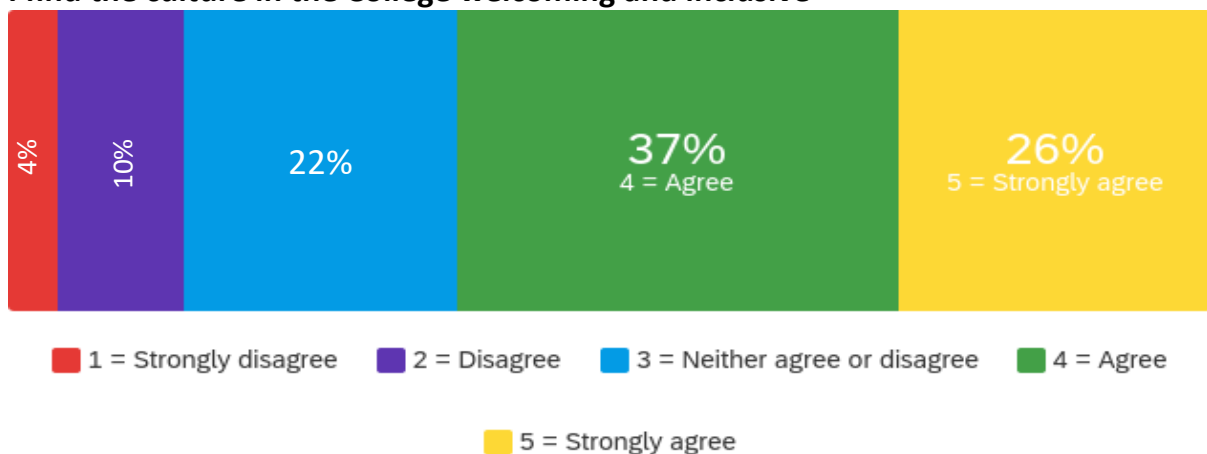
Of those who gave further information on which underrepresented minority they belonged to, the most popular was LGBT followed by specified ethnic groups, disability, and social class. Non-British white and political leaning were also stated.

Culture

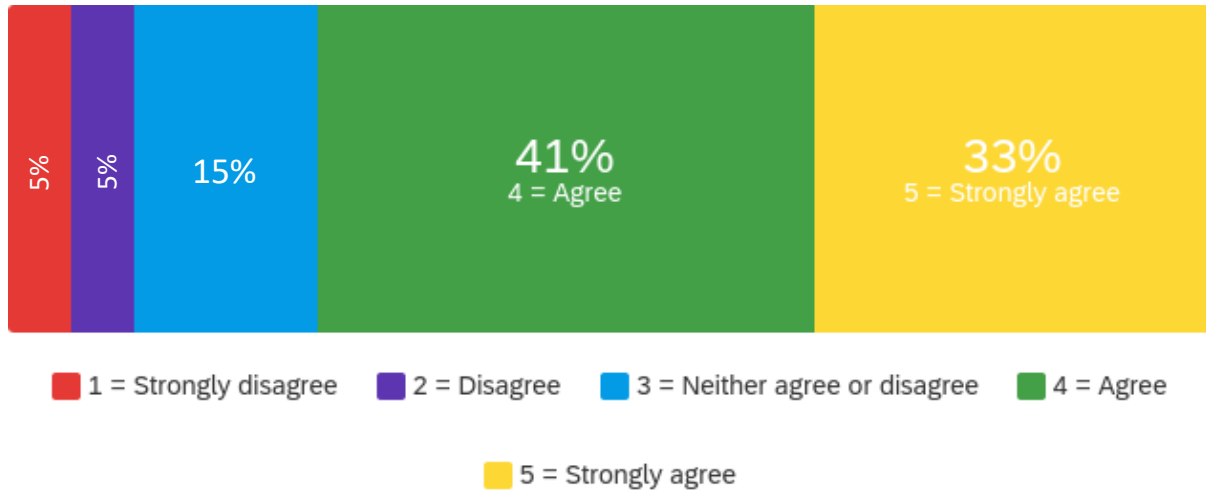
3. I find the culture in the Department welcoming and inclusive



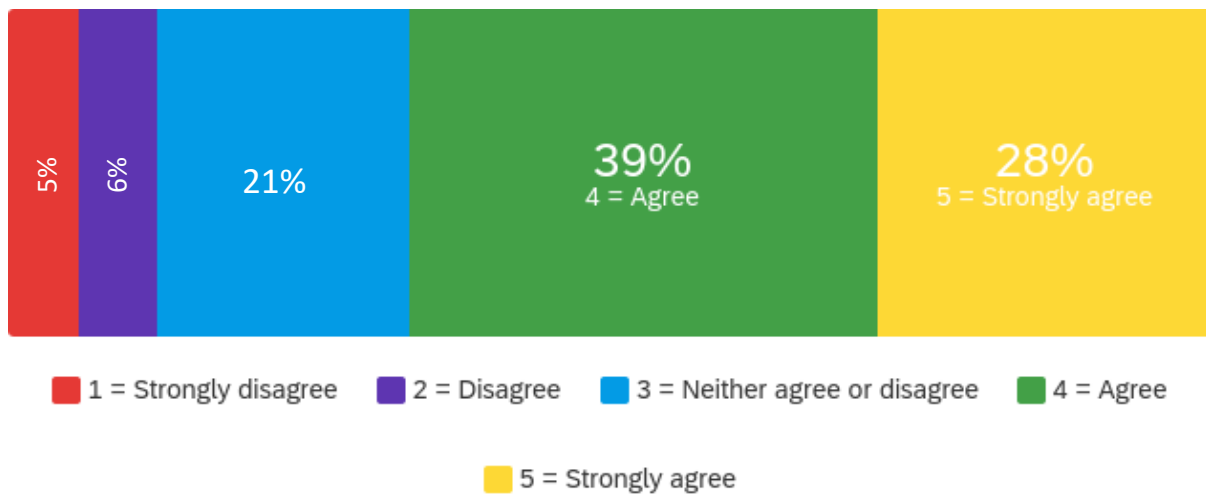
I find the culture in the College welcoming and inclusive



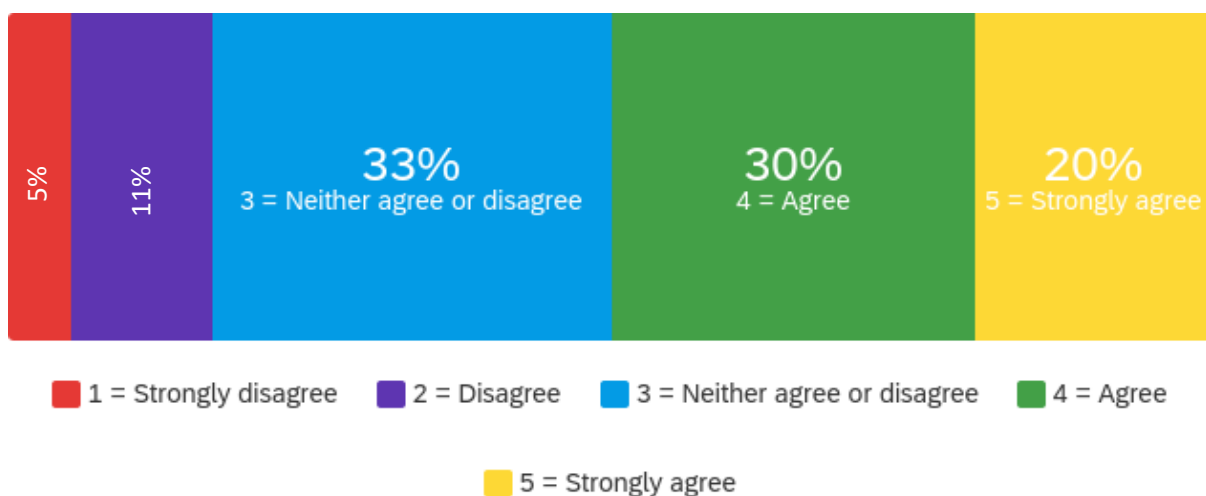
I am free to be myself while working/studying at Imperial



I feel my views and opinions are respected

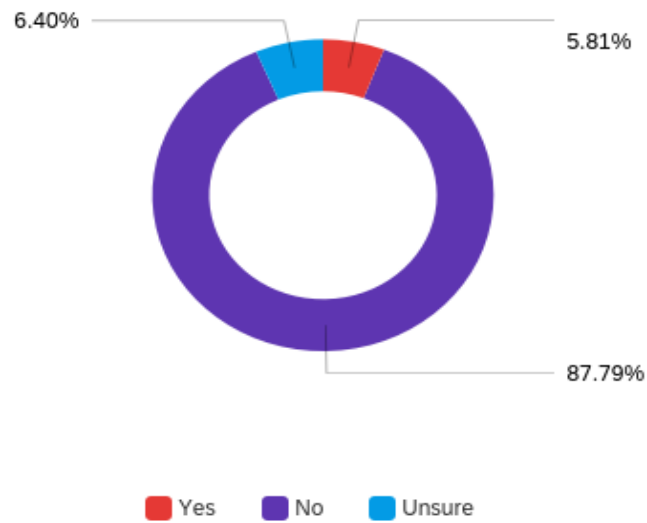


I feel decisions made address my concerns within the department

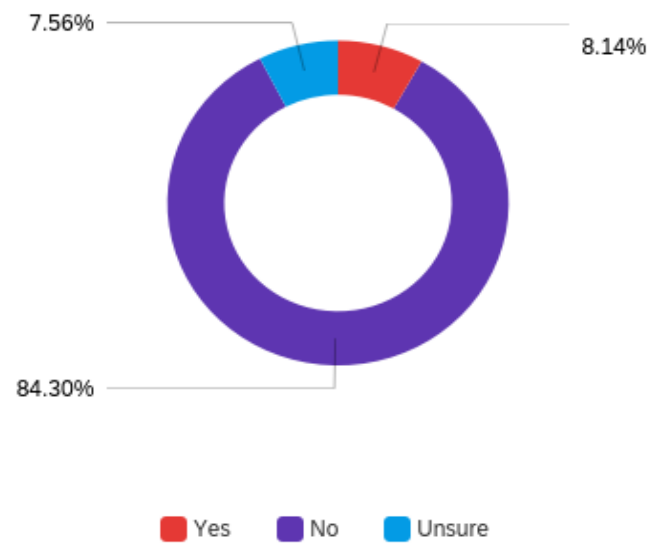


Experiences of Racism

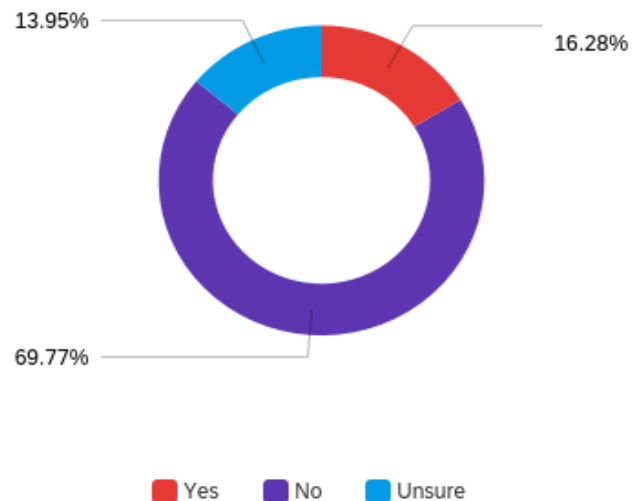
4. Have you experienced racism in the Department?



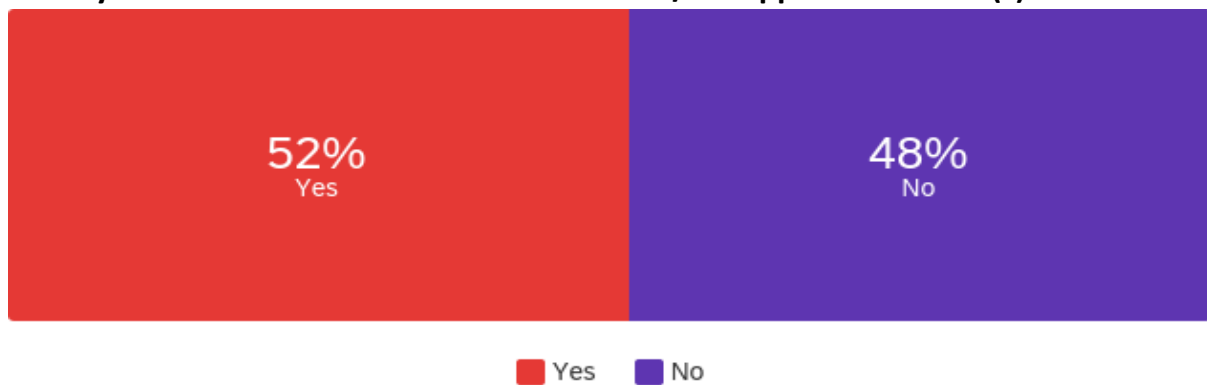
5. Have you experienced racism in the College?



6. Have you witnessed another person experiencing racism in the Department?



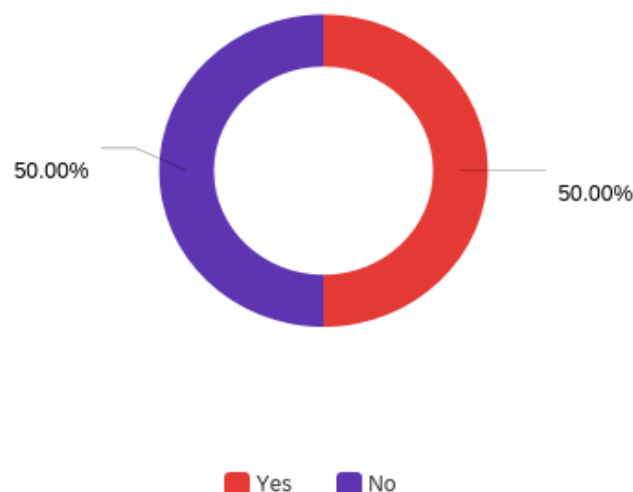
**7. When you witnessed and/or experienced racism in the Department or College
Were you able and confident to intervene and/or support the victim(s) of racism?**



Did you report this (or these) incidents?



8. Do you feel that your report resulted in meaningful change?



Themes from comments made on experiencing, witnessing or reporting racism.

Description of incidents – Incidents that could be categorised as racist, discriminatory, inappropriate jokes/comments or microaggressions were described.

Some commenters were unsure about whether incidents were indeed racism and in one response, that it was only after a very quick incident was over that they realised properly what had happened. One response mentioned that after an inappropriate comment was rightly called out by a lecturer, some students later discussed that there was nothing wrong with what had been said.

Commenters had experienced that sometimes certain peoples' comments/ questions are overridden/ not answered as their accents are thick/ difficult to understand. Student feedback has occasionally overstepped the mark when referring to the accents of teaching staff where English is not the first language.

Anti-Chinese rhetoric and imitation of strong Chinese accents was emphasised in a few comments.

There have been experiences of incidents being dealt with well by staff, support being offered and a feeling that racism would not be tolerated by senior staff within the department.

Cultural differences – It was suggested that some incidents are due to the ignorance of people from non-western cultures. A warning/ 3-strike system was suggested in such cases rather than punishment. Commenters also expressed that it is difficult to both constructively challenge racist behaviour and support the victim.

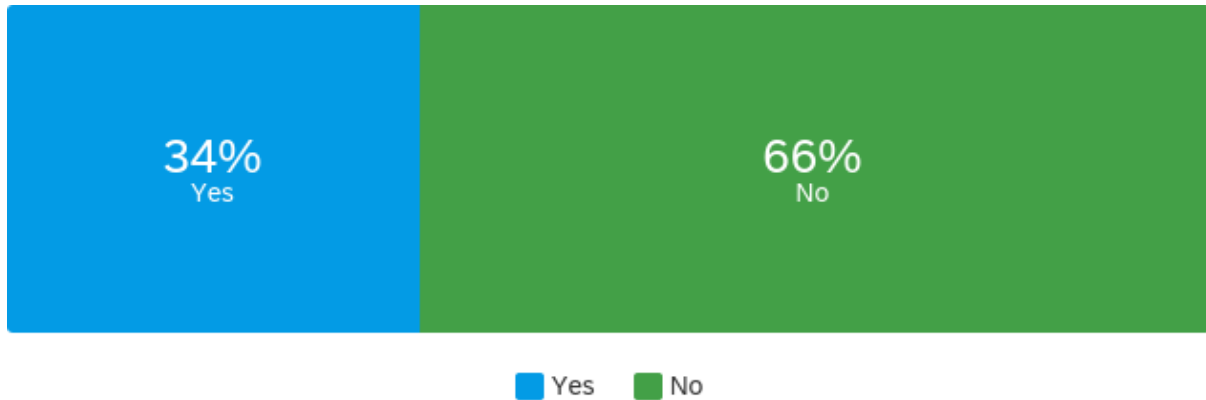
Incorrect focus - A view was expressed that other issues are being missed due to the focus on racism and that the focus of the survey is biased and not appropriate given that the College/London is not majority White. One person deemed the survey to be irrelevant whilst we are working remotely.

There is a need to talk about the different experiences of Asian subgroups in detail as problems and issues they experience are not represented.

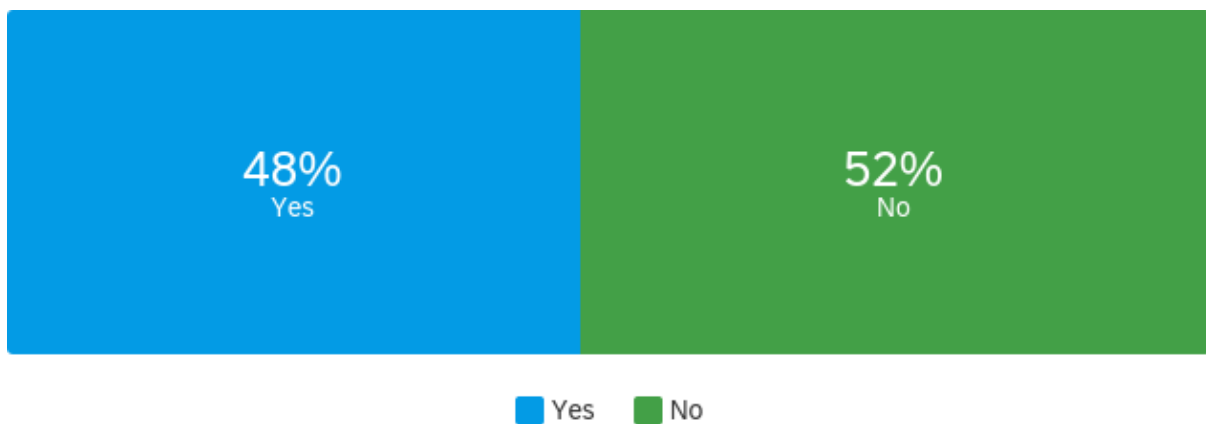
One participant questioned whether tuition fees for non-UK students being 3 times that of UK students is considered racism.

Training

9. Have you attended any active bystander training?



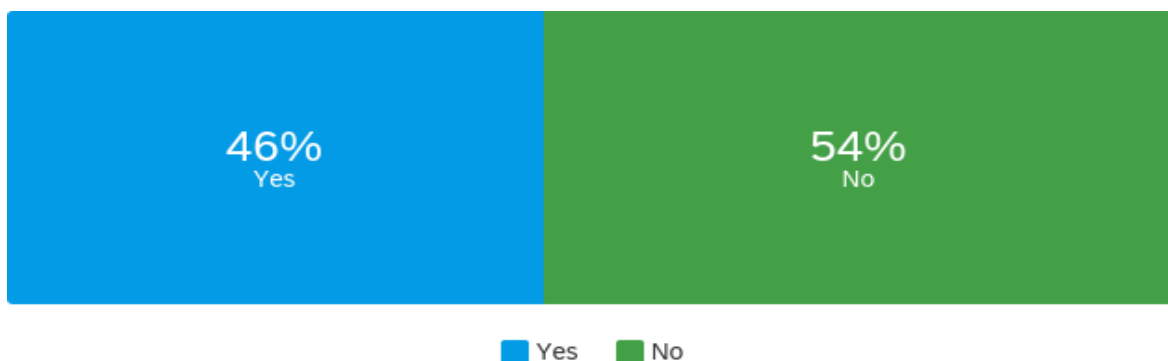
10. Have you attended a workshop or training course exploring bias and/or racism?



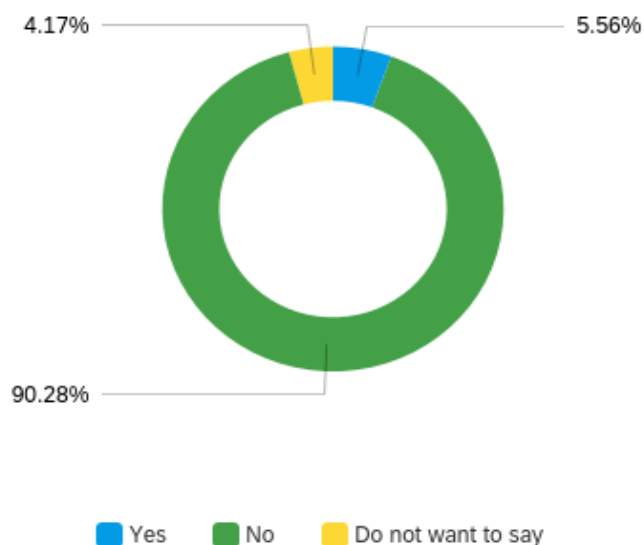
Reporting

11. Prior to starting this survey, were you aware of any of the following methods for reporting racism, harassment and bullying that exist in the college?

- [Report + Support](#)
- students- <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-support-zone/common-concerns/bullying-and-harassment/>
- staff - <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/engineering/staff/human-resources/have-your-say-campaign/>
- staff - <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/harassment/>



12. If yes, have you ever used them?



13. Thoughts about training and routes to report and address racism/abuse/harassment/bullying

Training – There were positive comments about experiences of the active bystander training and let's talk about race and overall the availability of training is welcomed. Some commented that the training was good for equipping witnesses with the skills to identify and act on racism.

There were several comments making suggestions about training including

- That there should be more mandatory training on the topic of inclusion/racism
- That there is not enough training for students and training for all new students on these issues should be explored. One comment said that evidence led training should be part of induction for all with this embedded within the culture. For staff, senior staff should attend, and the training should include feedback from students
- Unconscious bias training was criticised for not providing facts and only optical illusions. A student course on microaggressions was also criticised for being “dull” and causing many not to pay attention.
- More work is required, especially in regards Asian subgroups

A few respondents were not aware of the training that is available.

One commenter noted that very often training is given by trainers who do not fully understand the perspectives of the subject matter. The example given being, *“a white middle-class male, with an experience in a drinking culture, giving examples of victim of harassment is often insincere in the presentation of that information.”*

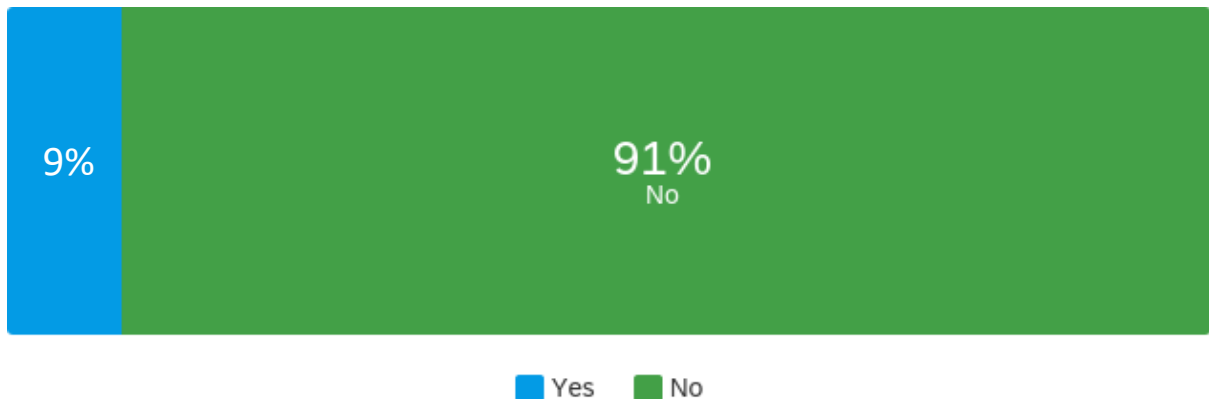
Reporting

- Reporting racism is difficult if it is not the obvious, in-your-face kind. It is hard to know how ‘serious’ an issue needs to be; who reads the report; what the outcome might be (for the individual, the person reporting, or more general action)
- Fear about reporting a senior person as they are too important to Imperial and will not be dismissed
- Comments described the complaints process as being “too high stakes”, “terrifying” and leads to the perception that “I am not protected”. One respondent stated, *“There seems to*

be no point as they always blame the victim here and try and tell us we are overdramatic. The thing is that we experience disgusting things but don't always have physical proof because we don't record everything with cameras 24x7 so if I don't have proof, I just feel I need to bottle it up."

- Routes for reporting need to be publicised more widely and frequently
- The College relies too heavily on formal processes and should invest more in informal or formal professional mediation. Also need a route to view patterns of behaviour.
- There is a lack of confidence in existing processes for dealing with complaints

14. Have you made any attempts to communicate with the department about racism or 'Black Lives Matter'?



15. Please describe how you feel your discussions were considered and addressed?

Respondents felt the discussions were addressed positively and quickly though one commenter experienced some problematic statements too. One commenter applied for a grant themselves in order to raise awareness about their own subgroup.

16. If you have not made any attempts to communicate with the department about racism or BLM, please tell us why (select all that apply)



Themes from comments on why participants did not communicate with department about racism or BLM

Not my place – comments from those feeling that it is not their place to do this due to them not being from a minority ethnic background or being educated enough on the subject. There is also a view that those who are impacted, and specialists should lead the conversation on this.

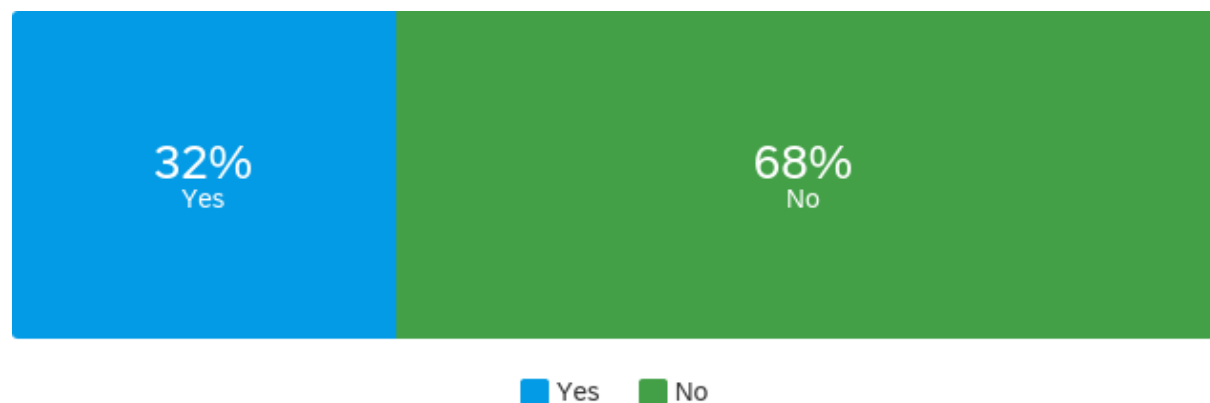
No awareness of racism being an issue – respondents had not witnessed or experienced racism themselves, were confused about what racism is or felt that the department/College had done well in highlighting issues of race swiftly and therefore no action required on their part.

Disagreement with BLM movement – Views expressed around the need to disassociate with the “Black Lives Matter” movement because of perceptions about previous actions they have engaged in, e.g. vandalism, murder and robbing. Also comments around not wishing to get involved with “politics”.

Trust – A lack of trust expressed in senior management at College level to make meaningful change. The view was also expressed that there are other barriers to education that individuals would prefer to invest time and energy to, also that other minority lives matter too.

Available Support

17. Prior to reading this question, were you aware of any resources that the College has in place to support members of the Black community?



Resources named:

- Imperial as One
- BME Officer
- Liberations Network
- ACS/Black student societies
- Scholarship for black students
- The website which has some links which are seriously questionable (maybe want to rethink which people you give a platform to) and also some (presumably) really useful resources
- Just the various societies that are available and the workshops on black history/ racism that they occasionally offer. This might count as the union though

18. Comments on resources available to support black people

Self-organised groups/networks can enhance wellbeing as they create a space where people can feel less isolated. There was some criticism that the College likes to have these groups but then does not listen to them or engage with the impacts on broader systemic issues.

A point was made that those who do not fall within the category of Black or BAME do not engage with emails/communications that mention this which means that these groups may not be benefiting from the resources available. With regards events, a suggestion was made that prizes connected to them might encourage greater attendance.

A suggestion was made that, rather than ethnicity targeted scholarships, these should be awarded based on socio-economic status which would then fairly target historically disenfranchised groups.

Although there is evidence of networks speaking up about Imperial processes impacting underrepresented groups, more can be done in terms of recruiting more underrepresented students and Academic staff and deliberately encouraging these groups to apply.

19. Comments and examples on whether there are systems or actions taken in the department/College that perpetuate systemic racism against students?

Accepting that the question assumes that systemic racism exists as a concept, there were several 'no' and 'unsure' responses to this question. The point was made that it is difficult to identify systemic racism with the example, *"why is your salary lower than someone with the same experience or you are not considered for promotion. Is it because of your background, education or colour of your skin?"*. One commenter said that they did not think that any actions are properly considered, and that institutional racism is massive in all institutions.

Systems or actions that may be having an impact that were highlighted:

- **Fees** indirectly have an impact because of differences in family background. There is a need for funding routes/support for black students. Creating and sustaining barriers to admission, especially based upon financial means, can have significant impacts on groups who are typically (but not always) of a lower socio-economic class.
- There is a need to **support** 'lone' students who do not have peers from similar backgrounds to improve their experience/inclusivity. We expect vulnerable students to represent all Black people in staff-student committees, and do not listen to them properly
- **Underrepresentation** across the student and staff body perpetuate systemic racism
- A culture of **differentiating students based on their home country/background** endemic in the UCAS system and which automatically biases against students from a genuinely underprivileged background was described.
- A lack of a strong anti-bullying policy, communication from the department on expectations and open discussions about issues.
- **Focus on A* grades on entry** - typically means that those that can afford good schools are likely to perform well and interview well. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have the predicted grades and thus don't even make a shortlist. Partly a result of UCAS tariff points and league tables driving decisions. We are unable or unwilling to admit talented students that have performed relatively poorly in exams.
- Projects requiring peer review disadvantage the less confident. Lack of confidence in discussions and expressing ideas is often due to a lack of confidence in the clarity of their English
- The lack of written notes can result in a disparity between students who are native English speakers as opposed to those for whom English is a 2nd or 3rd language.

- We have statues of the traders/beneficiaries of enslaved people outside our building.
- Having unpaid UROPs creates and sustains an academic Department which limits access to opportunity, and expectations of opportunity based upon wealth.

20. Comments and examples on whether there are systems or actions taken in the department/College that perpetuate systemic racism against staff?

Most responses said that there are no systems or actions that perpetuate racism against staff.

The examples provided by those who believe that this is an issue are:

- No role models amongst academic staff and very few black lecturers. This is cyclic in that the lack of diversity can discourage BAME academics from entering into/ continuing in academia. General underrepresentation across the student and staff body may perpetuate systemic racism.
- Pay gap and lack of representation of black people in the higher academic positions strengthens the belief that they are not good enough to get there.
- Majority white recruitment/assessment panels.
- The UKRI funding system is racist.
- I am conscious that the representation of minority groups, and particularly Black people, declines at every step of the academic career ladder. Whereas our support staff are far more diverse.
- SOLE student survey tends to empower students to be vocal in their prejudice against women and under-represented minorities.

21. Proposed solutions/actions from respondents to improve lives of ethnic minorities, especially black people

The key themes and specific examples suggested by commenters are set out below.

Stop Talking About Race

- Just treat people equally/like normal people/as humans
- Focusing on difference creates issues
- The assumption that all minorities are victims of discrimination and in need of extra help would annoy the non-minority commenter if they were BAME

Listening & Learning

- Create opportunities for inclusive social interaction on a level playing field (i.e. where job level and titles are not a factor)
- Increase awareness and take steps to ensure people can identify and call out instances of racism
- Ask BAME people, give them a voice and listen to them but do not give them additional labour/burden to fix the problems they did not create
- Have more frank and open discussions about racism
- Make BAME staff and students feel safe to talk about their experiences

Representation

- Feature minorities in advertising the department and use hiring processes that mitigate against bias
- Promote projects led by BAME academics and students. Showcase black researchers within the department, like what was done with the Women in Materials lecture series

- Push/ring-fence opportunities specifically for BAME/underrepresented groups to help level the playing field.
- Use longer shortlisting in recruitment exercises
- Promote diversity and the strengths that the department can gain from having a diverse staff and student body. Promote kindness and anti-bullying.

Reporting

- Raise awareness of and have an anonymised reporting and support method that people can be confident/safe to use
- Act against people that have been involved in racism/bullying and publicise actions to stop them from happening again
- Promote via department communications the need to support colleagues and be active bystanders when incidents are witnessed

Outreach

- Sort out access to education. Give extra support to encourage BAME students to apply to Imperial
- Automatically interview applicants from BAME groups
- Use schemes targeted at underrepresented groups and non-Russell group universities like the UROP scheme used by Biochemistry

Funding

- Give minorities funding to champion their own EDI campaign to enhance their CVs and address specific issues
- Support/fund pedagogical research into these issues, e.g. the ethnic minority access gap
- More scholarships

22. Proposed solutions/actions from respondents to improve culture with regards to addressing racism

Training

- Deliver microaggressions training to raise awareness of and address racial microaggressions that have been experienced.
- Raise awareness to address common areas of misunderstanding that can be taken badly
- Make a long-term commitment to addressing racism and promote the experiences of BAME people both in and out of the department to increase the motivation of all to help
- Repeat Active Bystander Training regularly

Promote Inclusivity

- Educate people about the benefits of diversity and inclusion
- Embrace, celebrate and welcome all cultures
- Address microaggressions as they occur in support of colleagues
- Embed discussing racism in the department's culture and look at ways to tackle sub-cultures within research groups to ensure the discussion takes place there too
- Discuss discrimination at annual away day in breakout groups
- Make sure people in power are not bullies or racist
- Frequent emails

Funding

- Deal with issues that affect lower income people more
- Address funding issues with UKRI
- Make Teaching Fellow job family line up with Research Fellow path
- Act on advice about the race/ethnicity gap

Events

- Talks/seminars to educate people on the topic
- Celebrate achievements of BAME people
- Showcase different traditions and cultural norms that only people who grew up around those cultures could know which may help to start eliminating some of the biases/stereotypes we hold about groups of people and reveal the beauty of the differences between us
- Activities to encourage “union”

Reporting

- Deal with reports in a way that will not make people reluctant to interact for fear of accusations of racism
- Clear route and way for outcomes to be communicated to the department
- Ensure justice is done
- Increase transparency of reports of racism
- A system of “apology, thank you and re-bonding” as opposed to current reporting, investigation and disciplinary processes
- Only investigate serious cases and treat others as an interpersonal issue

Conclusion

The department should be commended for seeking out the views of its community on the topic of racism. As only 24% of the department participated, many voices are unheard, however, these results reflect similar feedback across the College about the experiences of BAME and non-BAME people on the topic of race. The results show that racism and microaggressions have been experienced within the department and that, of those who participated, many do not feel equipped to address incidents when they occur. Most respondents have never engaged with the department about racism or BLM and of those, 41% say that they are not affected by racism. The survey also elicited several comments from non-BAME people indicating that they did not feel it is their place to speak up on the topic and some hold an idealistic view that we should stop talking about racism and just treat people equally. The fact remains that racism is an unpleasant reality existing in many forms and acts, not only through interpersonal assaults, but also through societal/institutional structures. It has a detrimental impact on many people’s everyday lives.

The 2021 Imperial as One commissioned report, the Race Equality Charter action plan, the new HR strategy (yet to be finalised and published), the Faculty’s People Strategy and feedback from Let’s Talk About Race conversations all contain recommendations that are similar to the proposed actions and solutions provided by respondents to this survey in **points 21 and 22 above**. It is recommended that the department carefully consider these proposals and take action as appropriate. The key themes and some example actions or links to work already underway are set out below for discussion by the department EDIC Committee.

Recommendations

1. Training/Education

- Provide learning opportunities outlining the basics e.g. what is racism, what are the benefits of a diverse institution, the importance of allies etc. Possibly engage EDIC providers of EDI training to run sessions within Materials
- Ensure all students are offered Active Bystander and Microaggressions training. A package of appropriate training is being developed within Chemical Engineering which may then be recommended across Engineering to meet this aim.

2. Promote an Inclusive Culture

- Organise listening and discussion opportunities e.g. EDI agenda items at departmental meetings, LTAR participation, Department Away Days
- Address Barriers to Diversity & Inclusion and set targets for what you want to achieve within the department. The Race Equality Charter action plan will provide College wide initiatives to engage with
- Promote and role model the Active Bystander ethos where we are all responsible for dealing with poor behaviour and so use one of the 4 Ds to address what has been witnessed and this does not need to be formal action.
- Balance seeking further info from BAME groups with not overburdening them with the responsibility to solve the problems. Consider reverse mentoring
- Carefully review the comments made in points 19 and 20 about systems and actions that may perpetuate racism

3. Recruitment

- The Race Equality Charter action plan will include several actions that will assist here including on panel make-up, recruitment materials, “know your pool”, data that can be used to make better decisions, relevant training and tools etc.
- Ensure all members of the community are aware of the department’s values in this area and make this a key criteria in recruitment decisions

4. Outreach

- Pay attention to and take action on the barriers to access to education/academia

5. Funding

- Consider the proposals made by respondents
- Try something radical, e.g. the funding schemes proposed

6. Events

- Use events to celebrate cultural diversity
- Use department newsletters to communicate values and priorities around D&I and celebrate success

7. Reporting

- Take racism seriously and deal with reports of racism appropriately
- Promote [Report + Support](#), already available to staff and will be launched for students in Summer 2021. A means of anonymous reporting which can lead to more informal and subtle interventions that is being called for. Reporting on ER case work numbers and outcomes will be available more widely soon. This will assist with the transparency point
- Equip those to whom reports are made with appropriate skills and knowledge so they can deal with these reports

Set targets for what you want to achieve as a department. Strategic HR and colleagues in Organisational Development are available to support the department in designing appropriate solutions in line with strategic priorities.