

Summary of TRARIIS research findings

INTRODUCTION

Commissioned by the five UK Sports Councils, below is a summary of findings from two pieces of research into racism and racial inequality in sport:

1. The Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University's review of existing data on racial inequality in sport
2. AKD Solutions' project to record lived experiences of racism in sport.

The document first presents overarching findings about the extent of racism and racial inequality in sport before summarising its nature against the "themes for action" identified by the sports councils.

BACKGROUND

Data review (SIRC):

A person's ethnic background is an important factor when considering physical activity.

There is evidence of inequalities being apparent in adults and children. These inequalities are apparent in physical activity, and specific sports as well as in elite sport.

Data from Sport England's Active Lives Adult survey shows that compared with White British adults, most ethnically diverse adults have lower odds of being physically active:

- 22% lower for White Minorities
- 35% lower for Black adults
- 45% lower for South Asian adults
- 49% lower for Chinese adults
- 42% lower for adults from other ethnic groups.

Lived Experience (AKD):

Across all forums participants from ethnically diverse backgrounds shared experiences of being made to feel different or "other" when participating in activities.

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

THEMES FOR ACTION

To provide a framework to respond to the findings of the research, the UK Sports Councils have identified five themes for action.

1 SYSTEM: What the research tells us

Data Gathering (SIRC):

People from ethnically diverse backgrounds in England are more likely to live in areas with higher levels of deprivation. Deprivation is negatively associated with participation in sport and physical activity. This finding suggests that the inequalities found in sport and physical activity are engrained in wider societal inequalities.

Lived Experience (AKD):

Participants observed a system that was often unresponsive to complaints of racism. This was referred to as a “colour blind” approach and participants discussed how this encourages the continuation of inequality and division.

Representatives of alternative sports leagues and associations took part in the research. These alternative networks and structures were set up in response to marginalisation from mainstream sport activity where ethnically diverse people did not feel welcomed or understood. Many had first joined existing majority white clubs and left in search of better representation after struggling to have their voices and opinions heard.

2 REPRESENTATION: What the research tells us

Data Gathering (SIRC):

In its 2019 Benchmarking Survey, Haysmacintyre found that amongst 24 NGBs from across the UK, the proportion of board members from ethnically diverse backgrounds was 4% - less than one third of their incidence in the wider population. In 2020, Perrett Laver surveyed 125 sports organisations funded by Sport England and/or UK Sport to establish the diversity of their boards. Results revealed that 7.9% of respondents identified as ‘BME’. Whilst the Perrett Laver suggests an improving situation, ethnically diverse people remain underrepresented on the boards of sports organisations in England and by implication throughout the UK.

Across the coaching workforce in professional football, research has found that people from ethnically diverse groups were 4.6% of the coaching workforce despite being 25% of the playing base and 14% of the wider working population.

Lived Experience (AKD):

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 and the perception that ethnically diverse participants have limited skills and abilities.

Participants across all Home Nations shared examples of unrepresentative leadership and 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.

3 WORKFORCE: What the research tells us

Data Gathering (SIRC):

Across the portfolio of jobs in sport measured by standard occupational classification codes, people from ethnically diverse backgrounds account for 7% of the workforce, which is half their incidence in the working population (14%). Representation is notably low for the influential roles of Sport Coaches, Instructors and Officials (5%) and Leisure and Sport Managers (6%).

Lived Experience (AKD):

Participants reported anxiety and mental health issues as a direct result of negative coaching behaviours and practices based on their race. Young participants reported that the attitude and behaviours of coaches affected their confidence and motivation in early years. For elite athletes and those on performance pathways negative coaching attitudes had caused participants to leave clubs or their sport altogether.

Exclusion also exists for culturally 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.

4 INSIGHTS: What the research tells us

Data Gathering (SIRC):

Further analysis is required in the following areas:

- Existing high-quality data sources
- The interplay of race, socioeconomic status and deprivation

The granularity of data between and within different ethnic groups needs to be improved

Lived Experience (AKD):

Further research into the lived experiences of ethnically diverse groups, undertaken by research professionals that have credibility with, and an authentic understanding of, those communities, is required to inform and improve what sport currently offers.

5 INVESTMENTS: What the research tells us

Data Gathering (SIRC):

When considering investments to encourage people from ethnically diverse backgrounds to be more physically active, success depends on much more than the nature of an intervention. Other fundamental ingredients include: who delivers the intervention and how it is delivered.

Lived Experience (AKD):

There is evidence within participants' stories that funding mechanisms do not reach the communities most in need. This was reported by participants representing grassroots organisations, elite athletes, and teams.

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.

Organisations adopt "colour blind" approaches that favour organisations who can best navigate the application process.
