

# Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Voluntary and Community Sector Rural Voice and Influence

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# Research Outline

- The research aims to identify the voice and position of the BME Community and Voluntary Sector in relation to: -
    - a) The rural community and voluntary sector as a whole
    - b) Local, regional and national policy makers and funders
    - c) Mainstream provision
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# Research Methodology

- Literature Review
  - 18 semi-structured interviews with BME led community groups in Cumbria, Hereford and Worcester, and the South West
  - 8 semi-structured interviews with strategic voluntary and statutory organisations in the above areas.
  - Participants were from a wide range of backgrounds, including African Caribbean, South Asian, East European, and South American.
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# Timescales

- The project was set up in November 2013
  - Interviews were undertaken from January to July 2014
  - A TSRC Working Paper and Briefing Paper will be completed in early 2015.
  - Findings of the project will be disseminated through TSRC networks, BME networks and participants.
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# Findings 1 - Population

- In comparison to some urban areas there is a lack of critical mass and very few people and/or groups in 'deep' rural areas, but rural BME populations have increased from 1% in 2001 to 3-5% in 2011
  - Despite small BME populations there is a wide diversity of backgrounds.
  - BME communities are not homogeneous – there is a 'scattering of ethnicities'
  - Distances and cuts to local transport and employment patterns are important factors in the capacity to organise.
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## Findings 2 - Organisation

- Often around individual as opposed to group advocacy, acting as a bridge between people and services
  - Focus on social and cultural activities
  - Many groups fragmenting and dependant on voluntary effort
  - Activity tends to be in urban parts of predominantly rural areas
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# Findings 3 – Strategic Context

- Disappearance of infrastructure, particularly RECs, and therefore loss of voice
  - Mainstream CVSs are also under-resourced
  - No links to established power bases/political systems
  - Funding is fragile and usually project specific
  - Big nationals seen as taking over – ‘ticking the boxes’
  - The activity is affected by local circumstances, including individual equality champions
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# Findings 4 - Racism

- Host community seen as ‘in denial’
  - Isolation exaggerates the effects
  - Schools often the earliest experience of racism
  - Not mentioned by all respondents – need to ‘keep one’s head down’ to survive? Also some areas apparently experience less racism.
  - ‘Black vote doesn’t matter to them’
  - ‘Black people don’t drink tea’
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# Findings 5 - Resilience

- Populations increasing and starting to organise
  - Some projects are actually surviving and developing, but there is a strong reliance on volunteers
  - Some projects engaging with host communities
  - The maintenance of cultural identity
  - Faith and interfaith organisations have an important role
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# Challenges and Questions

- Is racism 'worse'/different in rural areas to urban areas?
  - How do you organise when there is no critical mass?
  - How important are issues of wealth and class in relation to ethnicity?
  - How will statutory /voluntary organisations respond to changing rural populations?
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