

OUR SOCIETY: INTEGRATING BRITAIN'S COMMUNITIES

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By Dr Rakib Ehsan

Cover image: London, 2nd June 2022: People gather on The Mall for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations (by Jessica Girvan at Shutterstock – www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/london-england-2-june-2022-people-2163362799)

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About the Author

Dr Rakib Ehsan is a research analyst and writer, specialising in matters of social cohesion, race relations, and public security.

He holds a BA in Politics & International Relations (First-Class Honours), MSc in Democracy, Politics and Governance (Pass with Distinction), and a PhD in Political Science, all obtained from Royal Holloway, University of London. His PhD thesis, which was comprehensively sponsored by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), investigated the impact of social integration on the public attitudes of British non-white ethnic minorities.

Previously being a research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society (HJS) and a senior data analyst at the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), Rakib has also produced work for think-tanks such as Policy Exchange, Runnymede Trust and Intergenerational Foundation, as well as the Canadian independent security think-tank, the Mackenzie Institute.

Currently a columnist at *Spiked* and a regular contributor for *The Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph*, he has also written for *The Independent*, *The Scotsman*, *The Jewish Chronicle*, *UnHerd*, *The Critic*, *The Times*, *Red Box*, and *CapX*. A regular guest on GB News and TalkTV, Rakib has also featured on Sky News, BBC Newsnight, BBC Sunday Morning Live and ITV's Good Morning Britain (GMB). He has also made radio appearances for stations such as LBC, Times Radio, BBC Radio 5Live, BBC Radio London, and BBC Asian Network.

Establishing himself as a prominent British authority on matters of racial identity and social integration, Rakib has consulted influential UK parliamentarians and policymakers on issues surrounding race relations and community cohesion. He has presented evidence to both the UK Government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) and The White House's Covid-19 Health Equity Task Force (HETF).

Rakib's forthcoming book, *Beyond Grievance: What the Left Gets Wrong About Ethnic Minorities*, will be published by Forum in June 2023.

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Executive Summary

Following the Leicester disorders which spanned across August and September 2022, YouGov was commissioned to run polling on people's perceptions of community cohesion in modern-day Britain. With the online polling taking place 7-9 October 2022, a nationally-representative sample of 1,717 British adults was asked the following question:

"Do you think there should be more or less done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities in Britain, or is the right amount already being done?"

- Nearly half of the British public – 46 per cent – believe that more should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities in Britain.
- Nearly a quarter – 23 per cent – think the right amount is being done, with eight per cent being of the view that less should be done.

Based on 2019 General Election vote and 2016 EU membership referendum vote:

- A comfortable majority of Labour and Liberal Democrat voters believe that more should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities in Britain (71 per cent and 69 per cent respectively); this drops to 32 per cent for Conservative voters.
- More than one in ten Conservative voters – 11 per cent – believe that less should be done. This drops to one per cent and three per cent for Liberal Democrat and Labour voters respectively.
- 63 per cent of Remain voters believe that more should be done; this drops to 33 per cent for Leave voters.

The polling results suggest that there is a 'progressive versus conservative divide' on the matter of social cohesion in modern Britain – with the former more focused in intercultural exchange and interfaith understanding, with the latter tending to adopt a more integrationist position based on cultural assimilation into a common set of 'British values'.

The briefing concludes that:

- There should be a 'liberal-conservative compromise' on social cohesion – one which appreciates the value of intercultural knowledge exchange and interfaith dialogue, but also the need to integrate diverse communities into a common set of classically British values such as equality of opportunity, respect for the rule of law, and democratic choice. This can be broadened to include an acceptance of personal and social responsibility.
- Factors contributing towards the Leicester disorders include a failure of local political leadership to promote cohesion, poor integration outcomes among new and emerging communities in eastern parts of the city, the weakening of traditional faith-based authority, inflammatory disinformation pushed across social media, and the participation of 'out-of-town' troublemakers from other cities such as London and Birmingham.
- The general health of British democracy is being undermined by domestic political opportunism over foreign geopolitical disputes and subcontinental-style sectarianism. Highly important domestic issues such as the economy, healthcare, housing and education need to be re-prioritised in local political environments which are overly dominated by such international matters (which risks alienating white-British, working-class communities living in places such as Leicester).

1. Introduction

Britain, like all countries, is flawed and imperfect – but this does not change the reality that it remains one of the most successful examples in the world of a democracy which is both multi-racial and religiously diverse.

The conclusion drawn by a 2000 report published by the racial-equality think-tank the Runnymede Trust spoke of a multi-racial Britain which was relatively at ease with its demographic diversity. The publication of the 2000 Parekh report was a defining moment in the national discourse surrounding community cohesion in Britain. The leading author, the highly respected Professor Bhikhu Parekh, at the time confidently proclaimed that Britain had some of the best race relations in Europe – arguing that the idea that racism is widespread in British society was a “partisan and skewed” view.¹ Parekh, who chaired the 23-strong commission set up by the Runnymede Trust, concluded that Britain had a “much more relaxed” society than other multi-racial democracies such as France, Germany, and the United States.²

Much of this rings true today – with the core findings of the Parekh report being reaffirmed by the 2021 Sewell report published by the UK Government’s Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED).³ Britain has established itself as a ‘European leader’ on matters of social cohesion and economic fairness – especially over matters of race. Britain comfortably outperforms white-majority, multi-ethnic European countries such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands when it comes to the provision of anti-discrimination protections on the grounds of race, ethnicity, and religion.⁴ The 2020 Migrant Integration Policy Index reached the view that people who do suffer from discrimination in the UK can rely on some of the strongest equality bodies in the world.

However, there is no room for complacency when it comes to social cohesion in modern Britain. There remain ‘parallel communities’ in post-industrial towns across Northern England which have well-documented problems surrounding Islamist extremism – including Blackburn in Lancashire and Dewsbury in Yorkshire. The threat to community cohesion posed by intense forms of social segregation was flagged in both the 2001 Cattle and 2016 Casey reports – with little in the way of a meaningful government response.^{5 6} Indeed, a recent report by Policy Exchange referred to the public policy issue of integration as a ‘political orphan’.⁷

Demonstrating the influence of international events on domestic community relations, there have been considerable flare-ups in London during periodic escalations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More recently, the seemingly peaceful city of Leicester in the East Midlands witnessed forms of subcontinental-style sectarian violence and communal disorder which has now resulted in the

¹ Bentham, M. (2000), ‘Critics of a ‘racist’ Britain are misguided, says report’, *The Telegraph*, 8 October. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1369392/Critics-of-a-racist-Britain-are-misguided-says-report.html>, last accessed: 16 January 2023.

² Ibid.

³ Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021), ‘Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report’, March. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf, last accessed: 16 January 2023.

⁴ Link to MIPEX Anti-Discrimination Rankings: <https://www.mipex.eu/anti-discrimination>.

⁵ Home Office (2001), ‘Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team [Chaired by Ted Cattle]’. <https://www.belongnetwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/communitycohesion-cantlereport.pdf>, last accessed: 21 January 2023.

⁶ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2016), ‘The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration’, 5 December. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf, last accessed: 21 January 2023.

⁷ Cox, B., Goodhart, D., Kaufmann, E. and Webber, R. (2022), ‘Whatever happened to integration?’, Policy Exchange, 16 March. Available at: <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Whatever-happened-to-integration.pdf>, last accessed: 21 January 2023.

region of 150 arrests or interviews under caution and a number of weapons-related convictions. This has been accompanied by various skirmishes in London centred on Pakistani party politics, the Tigray region in Ethiopia and civil unrest in the Islamic Republic of Iran following the suspicious death of Mahsa Amini.

This briefing presents an overview of what the British public thinks on the quality of race relations and community cohesion in the UK. It also delves into existing public-attitudes research to build a picture of where the sharpest social and political tensions lie in modern-day Britain. This is followed by the presentation of results from a recent YouGov poll specifically commissioned for this briefing – exploring which sections of the British population are more likely to support the view that more needs to be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities living in Britain. The briefing concludes with an interpretation of the polling results and thoughts on the future of social cohesion in Britain.

2. Perceptions of current-day race relations in the UK

While the UK has established itself as a relatively successful multi-racial democracy, there are sharp racial differences in the perceived quality of current-day race relations. According to a January 2021 poll carried out by ICM Unlimited on behalf of the Henry Jackson Society think-tank, nearly three in ten people in the wider general population believe that Britain has a fundamentally racist society (29 per cent) – rising two-fold to 58 per cent for Black British people.⁸ While 41 per cent of the general public believed that UK race relations were in good shape, this dropped to 28 per cent for Black British people; and while four per cent of the wider British population were of the view that race relations were in very bad condition, this rose to 10 per cent for Black British people.⁹

From the HJS-ICM study, notable political divides in the wider general public emerged when it came to public perceptions of race relations. The majority of those who voted for the Conservatives in the 2019 general election – 53 per cent – believed that race relations in the UK were in good shape, with 15 per cent being of the view that they were in bad condition.¹⁰ Conversely, 33 per cent of Labour voters thought that UK race relations were in good shape, with 36 per cent thinking that they were in bad condition.¹¹ There are similar divides to report on the perceived impact of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement on UK race relations. While 23 per cent of Conservative voters believed that BLM had a positive impact on race relations, a majority – 52 per cent – thought the movement had a negative effect.¹² A comfortable majority of Labour voters – 64 per cent – believed BLM had a positive impact on race relations, with 16 per cent thinking that the movement was a negative influence.¹³

What was also discovered in the study was the degree of 'intra-Black animosity' which exists in modern-day Britain, which somewhat complicates the ongoing debate on race relations. Eight per cent of Black British respondents reported experiencing racial discrimination in the twelve months leading up to the survey – at the hands of another Black person. Highlighting intra-racial tensions, six per cent of Black African-heritage respondents reported having an unfavourable view of co-racial counterparts of Black Caribbean origin.¹⁴ Conversely, around one in six – 16 per cent – of Black Caribbean-heritage respondents reported having an unfavourable view of co-racial counterparts of Black African origin.¹⁵

When it came to effects of social integration, Black British respondents who were part of predominantly or exclusively co-racial friendship networks were more likely to think that UK race relations were in bad shape, have an unfavourable view of the white-British mainstream, and believe anti-Semitic conspiracy theories surrounding the control of the global banking system and global entertainment (and music) industry.¹⁶ It is worth noting that compared to the general population, Black British people are more likely to have an unfavourable view of Jews (6 per cent / 9 per cent), Buddhists (5 per cent / 10 per cent) and atheists (5 per cent / 10 per cent).¹⁷

⁸ Ehsan, R. (2021), 'BLM: A Voice for Black Britons?', *The Henry Jackson Society*, 24 February. Available at: <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BLM-A-Voice-for-Black-Britons-00000002.pdf>, last accessed: 16 January 2023.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

3. Relations between ethnic and religious minorities in Britain

An oft-overlooked fact in mainstream commentary on race relations and community cohesion is that some of the sharpest social tensions in modern-day Britain are between – and indeed within – racial and religious minorities. A report published by Hope Not Hate, focusing on the socio-political attitudes of British ethnic minorities, provides much food for thought over how we should view community relations in modern-day Britain.¹⁸

The online survey carried out by Focaldata found that twice as many 'BAME' people agree (40 per cent) than disagree (21 per cent) that there is more tension between Britain's different minority communities, when compared with tensions between white and non-white groups.¹⁹ It also discovered significant pockets of tension between different faiths living in the UK. Around three in ten Buddhists and Hindus (31 per cent and 29 per cent respectively) shared a negative view of Muslims.²⁰ Conversely, around one in five ethnic-minority Muslims have a negative view of Hindus and Jews (20 per cent and 18 per cent respectively).²¹

There is a wealth of research which suggests that levels of antisemitism within British Muslim communities tends to be higher than the wider general population. A 2017 study, published by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), showed that anti-Semitism within British Muslim communities was a serious cause for concern.²² JPR found that 27 per cent of British Muslims believed that Jews have too much power in Britain, compared with eight per cent of the general population. It also showed that 25 per cent of British Muslims believe Jews exploit the Holocaust for their own purposes, compared to 10 per cent of the general population.²³ According to the JPR study, compared to the wider general public, British Muslim respondents were more likely to think that Jews possess feelings of 'group superiority' over non-Jews (13 per cent and 28 per cent respectively).²⁴ A more recent study by the Henry Jackson Society, based on December 2019 polling orchestrated by Savanta-ComRes, showed that Muslims who were less well integrated into British society than others were more likely to believe that there is too much Jewish control in the spheres of politics, banking, media, entertainment, and arms manufacturing.²⁵

Tensions between religious groups is also reflected in how they perceive various threats posed by religious extremism. The Hope Not Hate/Focaldata 'BAME' survey study found that Muslims were more likely to see Jewish or Hindu extremism as a threat (both at 31 per cent), while Hindus were more likely to perceive Islamist extremism as a threat (56 per cent).²⁶ However, it is important to acknowledge within-group anxieties surrounding religious extremism. Roughly one in four in both Muslim and Hindu communities felt threatened by extremism within their own faith.²⁷

¹⁸ Hope Not Hate (2020), 'Minority Communities in the Time of COVID & Protest: A Study of BAME Opinion', August. Available at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BAME-report-2020-08-v3-00000003.pdf>, last accessed: 16 January 2023.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Staetsky, L. D. (2017), 'Antisemitism in contemporary Great Britain: A study of attitudes towards Jews and Israel', *Institute for Jewish Policy Research*, September. Available at: file:///C:/Users/rakib/Downloads/JPR.2017.Antisemitism_in_contemporary_Great_Britain.pdf, last accessed: 21 January 2023.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ehsan, R. (2020), 'Muslim Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Great Britain', *The Henry Jackson Society*, March. Available at: <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/HJS-British-Muslim-Anti-Semitism-Report-web-1.pdf>, last accessed: 16 January 2023.

²⁶ Hope Not Hate (2020), 'Minority Communities in the Time of COVID & Protest: A Study of BAME Opinion', August. Available at: <https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BAME-report-2020-08-v3-00000003.pdf>, last accessed: 16 January 2023.

²⁷ Ibid.

4. Public opinion: is more work needed on community cohesion?

Following the Leicester disorders, polling was commissioned for this independent briefing. YouGov, a member of the British Polling Council (BPC), asked a nationally-representative sample of 1,717 British adults (through an online survey which took place 7-9 October 2022) the following question:

“Do you think there should be more or less done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities in Britain, or is the right amount already being done?”

Figure 1: “Do you think there should be more or less done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities in Britain, or is the right amount already being done?”

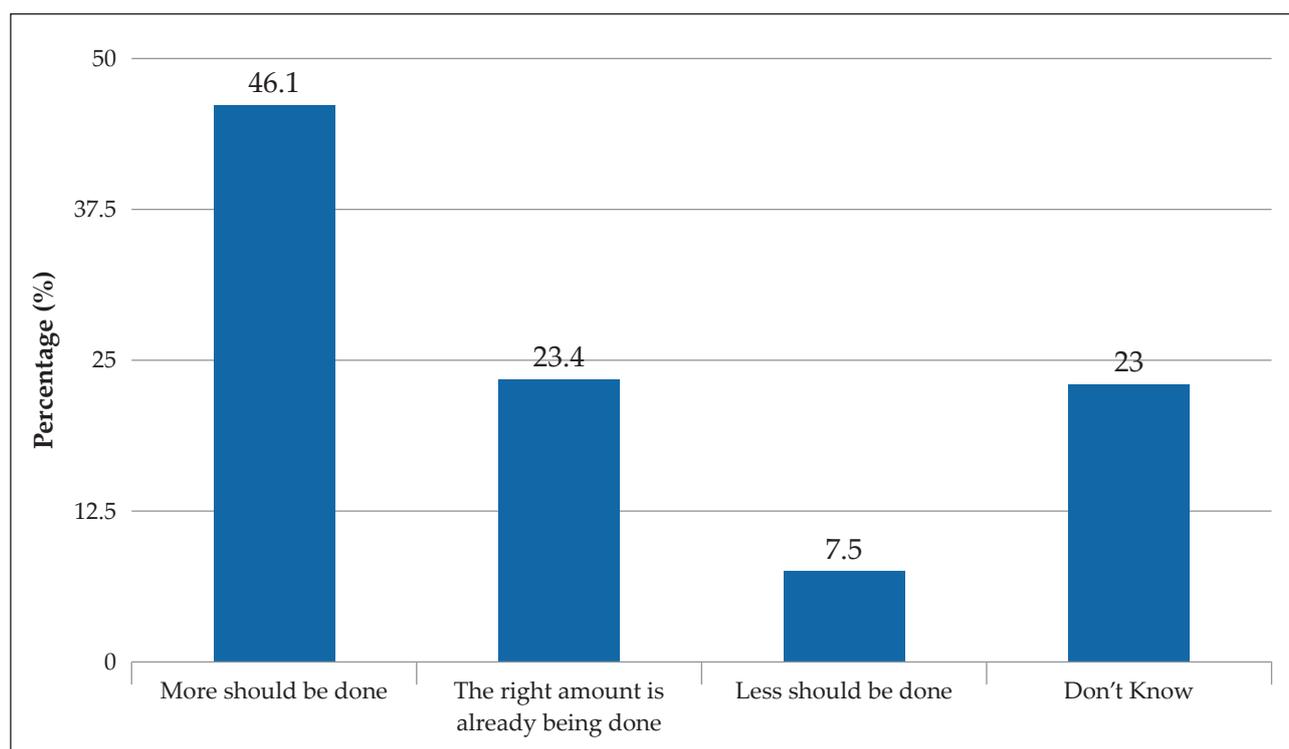
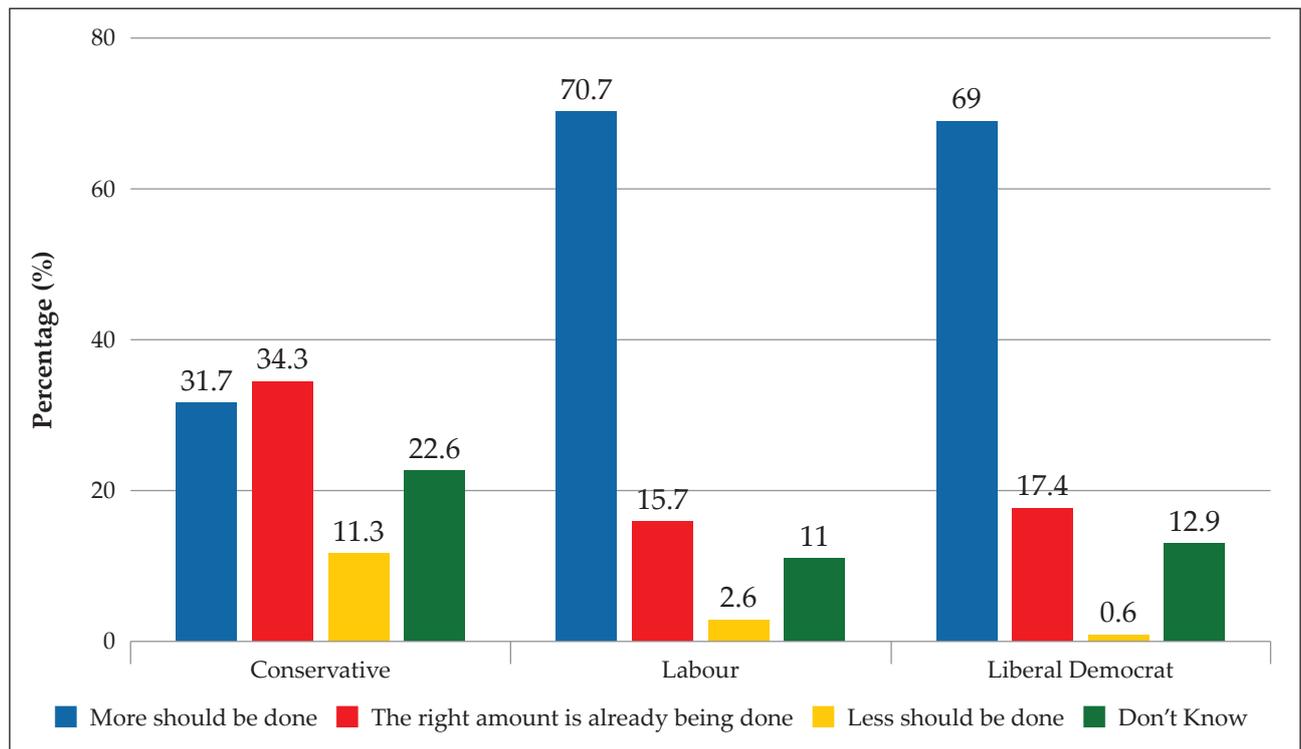


Figure 1 shows that nearly half – 46.1 per cent of the British respondents polled – believe that more should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities living in the UK. Around a quarter of respondents felt the right amount is already being done (23.4 per cent), with another 23.0 per cent responding “don’t know” to the question presented. In the survey, 7.5 per cent of British adults believed that less should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities.

Figure 2 shows that seven in ten respondents – 70.7 per cent – who voted for Labour in the 2019 general election believe that more should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities. The corresponding figure for those who voted for the Liberal Democrats in the last general election is marginally lower at 69.0 per cent. Under one in three respondents who voted for the Conservatives in the last general election believe that more should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities – 31.7 per cent.

Under one per cent of Liberal Democrat voters – 0.6 per cent – believe that less should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities, with the corresponding figure for Labour voters being 2.6 per cent. Over one in ten people who voted for the Conservatives in the last general election – 11.3 per cent – think that less should be done on this front. Over one in three

Figure 2: 2019 General Election Vote Choice



Conservative voters believe the right amount is already being done when it comes to strengthening relations between different ethnic and religious communities in Britain – 34.3 per cent. This drops to 15.7 per cent and 17.4 per cent for Labour and Liberal Democrat voters respectively.

Figure 3 shows that more than six in ten respondents who voted for the UK to remain in the EU (63.2 per cent) believe that more should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and

Figure 3: Vote choice in the June 2016 UK Referendum on EU Membership

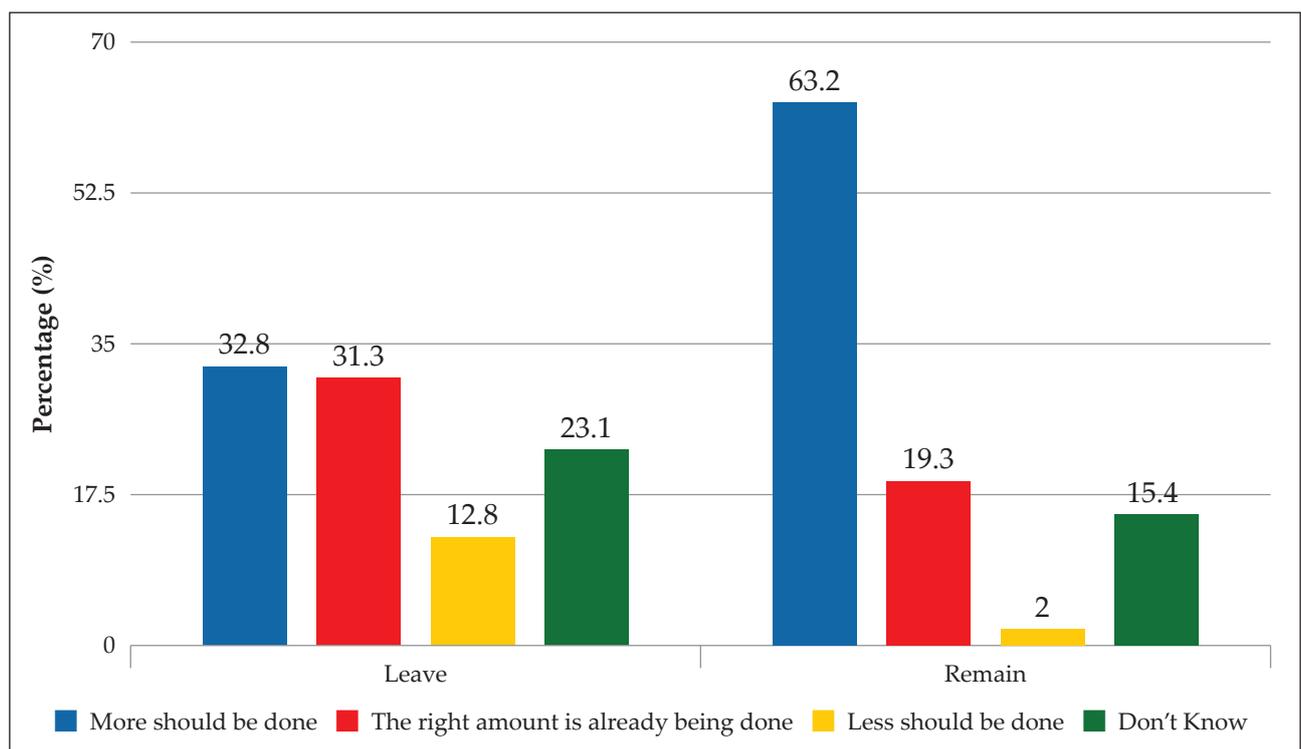
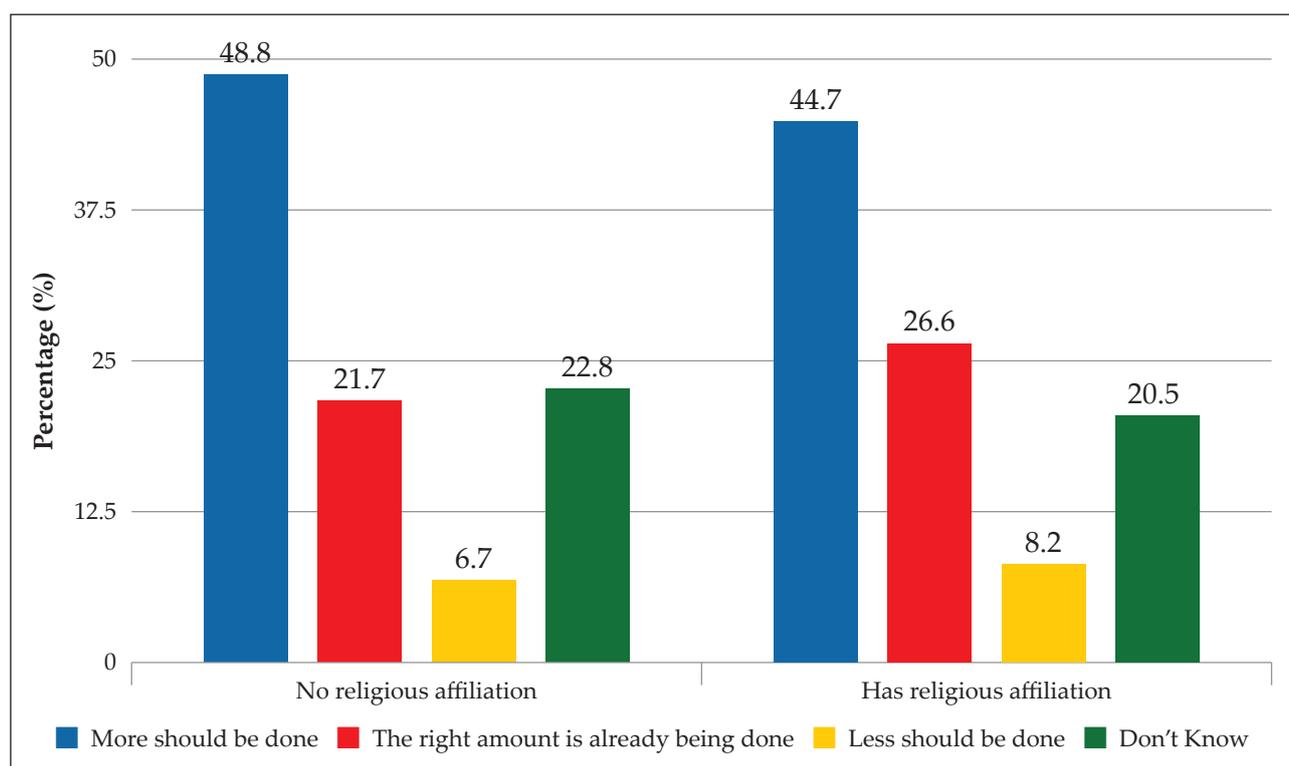


Figure 4: No Religious Affiliation vs Has Religious Affiliation

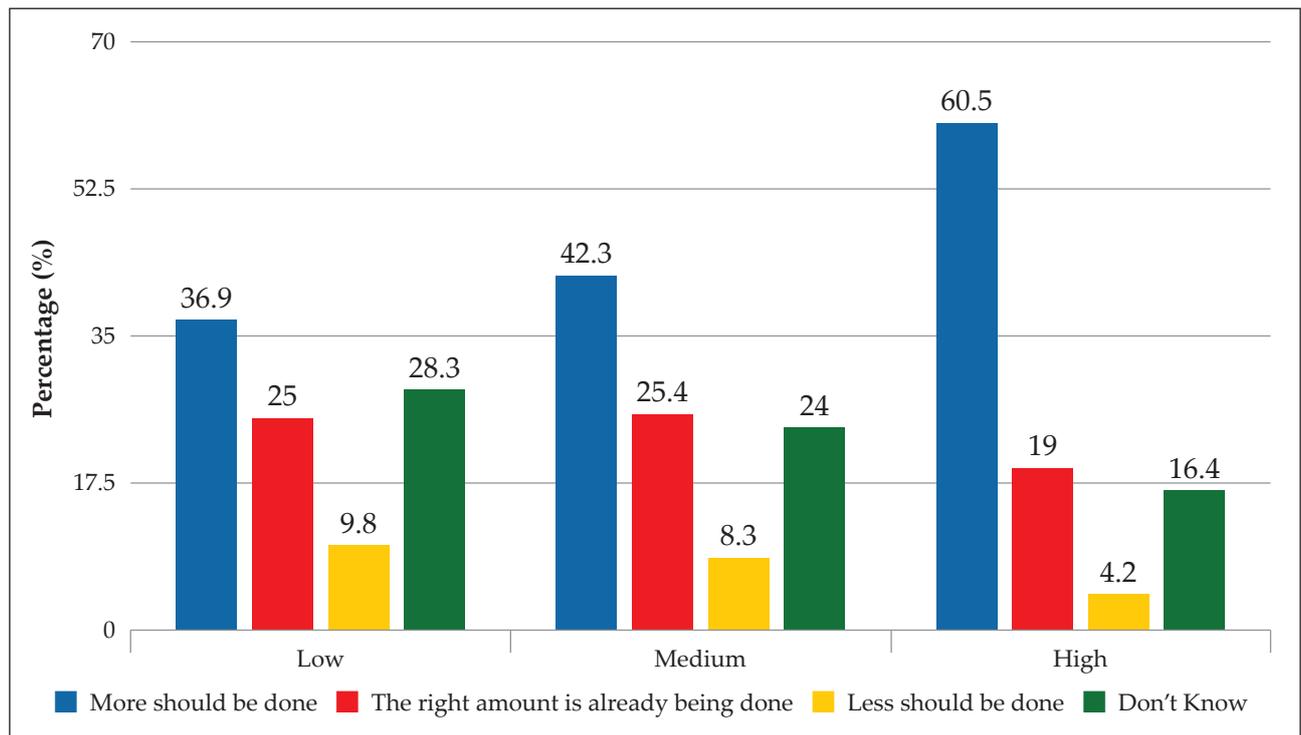
religious communities in the UK. This drops to 32.8 per cent for those who voted to leave the EU – a difference of more than 30 percentage points. While under one in five Remain voters believe that the right amount is already being done (19.3 per cent), this rises to more than three in ten for Leave voters (31.3 per cent). While one in fifty Remain voters believe less should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities (2.0 per cent), this rises to around one in eight for Leave voters in the survey (12.8 per cent).

Figure 4 shows that there are only modest differences between those of no religion and those who have a religious affiliation. While 48.8 per cent of respondents of no religion believe more should be done to strengthen relations between ethnic and religious communities, this drops to 44.7 per cent for those who report a religious affiliation. Over one in four respondents who report having a religious affiliation – 26.6 per cent – believe that the right amount is already being done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities. This drops to 21.7 per cent for respondents of no religion. While 6.7 per cent of respondents of no religion believe less should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious minorities, this rises to 8.2 per cent for those who report having a religious affiliation.

Figure 5 shows that over six in ten respondents educated at a high level – 60.5 per cent – believe that more should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities.²⁸ This drops to 42.3 per cent for those with a medium level of educational attainment, and even further to 36.9 per cent for those with a low level of education. While 4.2 per cent of highly-educated people believe that less should be done on this front, this rises to 8.3 per cent for those with a medium level of education. Nearly one in ten people educated at a low level – 9.8 per cent – believe that less should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities living in the UK.

²⁸ In the YouGov survey, those categorised as having a 'high' level of education include people who are at least degree-educated, or above (such as Master of Science [MSc] and PhD). Medium is A-level or further/higher educational qualifications below the level of a degree. Low is GCSE, O Level or equivalent, or no formal qualifications.

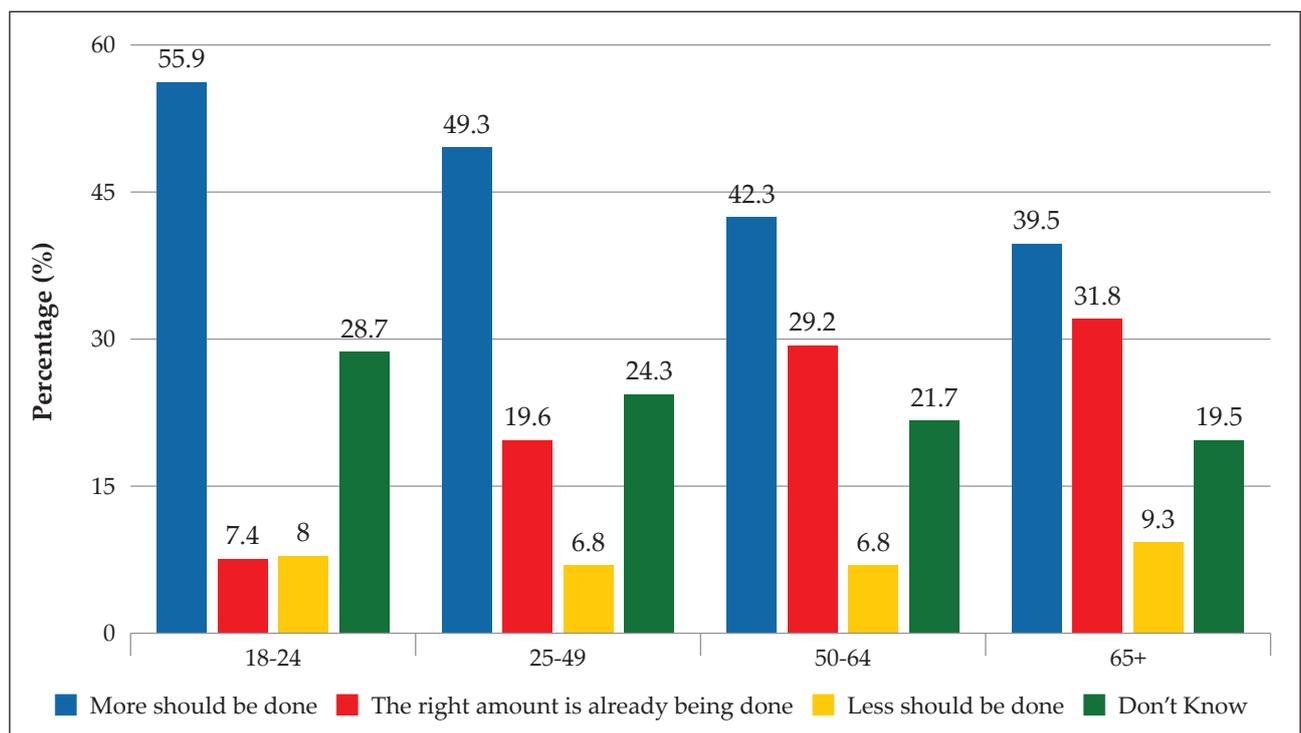
Figure 5: Education Level (Low, Medium, High)



In the YouGov poll, under one in four respondents – 23.9 per cent – with no formal qualifications believed that more should be done to strengthen relations between Britain’s different ethnic and religious communities. For those who are at least Masters-educated, this increases by nearly 50 percentage points – 73.6 per cent.

Figure 6 presents an overview of survey responses based on four age groups: 18-24 years, 25-49 years, 50-64 years and those who are aged 65 years and above. The majority of British adults surveyed

Figure 6: Age Group (years)



who were aged 18-24 years believed that more needed to be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities (55.9 per cent), with nearly half in the age group 25-49 years following suit (49.3 per cent). This drops to 42.3 per cent for the age group 50-64 years, and even further to 39.5 per cent for respondents aged 65 years and over.

Over three in ten respondents aged 65 years and over – 31.8 per cent – believed that the right amount is being done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities. This figure drops going through the lower age groups, all the way down to 7.4 per cent for those aged 18-24 years. The oldest age group in the analysis, aged 65 years and over, are most likely to believe that less should be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities living in Britain – nearly one in ten (9.3 per cent).

5. Summarisation of October 2022 YouGov poll on community cohesion

The YouGov polling in October 2022 – shortly after the Leicester disorders – shows that younger, ‘progressive’, Remain-leaning, higher-educated voters in Britain are the most likely to believe that more needs to be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities.

The comfortable majority of those who voted for the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats in the last general election, as well as those who voted to remain in the European Union in the June 2016 UK referendum, believe that more needs to be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities. This is also the case for those who have a high level of educational attainment. Conversely, older, Conservative, Brexit-facing, lower-educated voters are notably less likely to think that more should be done to strengthen relations between Britain's ethnic and religious communities.

There are a number of factors that feed into such political and cultural divides. There is a possible geographical effect at play, with younger progressive voters being more likely to live in urban areas characterised by higher levels of ethnic and religious heterogeneity. It is perfectly plausible that certain groups of voters, by virtue of living in more demographically diverse localities, are more aware of, and exposed to, social tensions along ethnic and religious lines. This could result in an increased likelihood of such groups believing that more needs to be done to cultivate social cohesion in modern-day Britain – a direct outcome of living in parts of the country where ethnic and religious tensions are more of a problem.

It is worth noting that younger sections of the British population are more ‘hyper-diverse’ than older age groups in terms of race, ethnicity and religion. Indeed, the fastest-growing ethnic category in the wider British population is mixed-race people. The number of British people who said they have a mixed-ethnic background almost doubled between the census of 2001 and 2011 to about 1.2 million people – 2.2 per cent of the overall population. The latest 2021 Census data shows that this has grown to 2.9 per cent of the population of England and Wales.²⁹ Demographic realities mean that younger people may be more directly exposed to social tensions in their day-to-day life and have a greater personal stake in strengthening community cohesion – especially when compared to older people who are notably more likely to be ethnically white-British and live in relatively homogeneous surroundings.

A particularly interesting dynamic which emerges from the polling is that groups which are more likely to view Britain's diversity as a positive feature of modern life are more likely to believe that more needs to be done to strengthen relations between ethnic and religious communities. This suggests that many younger progressive British voters do not necessarily hold an uncritical view of diversity – not believing it to be an unadulterated social good nor an unquestionable source of national/local strength. There appears to be a general acknowledgement that more needs to be done to build stronger forms of social cohesion in multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-faith Britain.

Meanwhile, those who voted in favour of Brexit in the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership and voted for the Conservatives in the 2019 general election, are far less likely to believe that more needs to be done on this front. This could be down to a relative lack of exposure to ethnic, racial and religious tensions as a result of living in more ethnically, racially and religiously homogeneous neighbourhoods across a swathe of rural localities, provincial towns and post-industrial districts. Therefore, such voter groups have less of an immediate personal stake when it comes to the

²⁹ Office for National Statistics (2022), ‘Ethnic group, England and Wales: Census 2021’, 29 November. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021>, last accessed: 30 January 2023.

government investing more resources in strengthening relations between different ethnic and religious communities.

Another plausible explanation is that the 'integrationist Right' believe that the focus should not be so much on strengthening relations between ethnic and religious communities, but actively promoting the integration of ethno-religious minorities into 'British values'. While the liberal-left view of 'integration' may be based on ideas of community cohesion rooted in intercultural exchange, interfaith activity and appreciating differences, the conservative-right view is that strengthening social cohesion is best secured by integrating ethnic-minority communities into a common British moral-cultural standard based on equality of opportunity, respect for the rule of law, freedom of expression and appreciation of democratic choice. Therefore, the emphasis is not so much on cultivating stronger relations between different ethnic and religious communities, but integrating them into a cohesive whole which is defined by a clear set of classically British values and principles.

6. Conclusion

Britain remains one of the most successful examples of a multi-racial, ethnically-diverse and religiously-heterogeneous democracy in the modern world.

Post-WWII immigration has witnessed the arrival of millions of migrants from various parts of the world, including former British colonies in South Asia and Africa as well as ex-communist Eastern European countries, that have made the most of the educational and economic opportunities offered to them in one of the most tolerant, pro-equality and anti-discrimination places in the world. However, the immigration-induced diversity has brought its challenges – including the importation of sectarian divides, communalistic tensions and foreign geopolitical disputes.

While much more work is needed to understand the social, political, cultural and economic factors which fed into the Leicester disorders, there are clearly identifiable trends which are in need of major attention. This includes the 'communalisation' of the local socio-political climate – where there has been a growing focus on Indo-Pakistani geopolitical tensions surrounding Kashmir and the controversial prime ministership of Narendra Modi in India.³⁰ Other problems involve difficulties in integrating 'new and emerging' communities in deprived eastern parts of the city,³¹ as well as the breakdown in relations between traditional faith-based leadership and younger males (which has left an 'influence vacuum' which is being occupied by divisive social-media personalities peddling ultra-religious identity politics in the online space).³² Along with the circulation of inflammatory disinformation on social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram,³³ tensions in Leicester were directly exacerbated by 'out-of-town' agitators from major cities such as London and Birmingham.³⁴

Polling shortly after the Leicester disorders suggests that nearly half of British people believe that more needs to be done to strengthen relations between different ethnic and religious communities living in Britain. There is a 'liberal-conservative' compromise which can be made on social cohesion in the wider interests of the country. There is certainly scope for greater levels of intercultural knowledge exchange, interfaith dialogue and ultimately taking pride in the rich tapestry of peoples that make up multi-ethnic, post-WWII Britain – this can appeal to younger British citizens of a 'liberal-left', outward-looking disposition. But this can be complemented with the overarching objective of integrating Britain's diverse communities into a cohesive whole which is harnessed by a shared moral-cultural standard – one rooted in equality of opportunity, respect for the rule of law, freedom of expression and appreciation of democratic choice. This can be broadened to include the acceptance of personal and social responsibility – thereby appealing to older conservative 'protectionists' who belong to the Brexit-facing 'integrationist Right'.

Moving forwards, it is vital that integration no longer remains a 'political orphan' in British politics. Robust forms of moral political leadership across the spectrum are required to tackle 'troubled neighbourhoods' characterised by ethno-religious diversity, material deprivation, low social trust

³⁰ Patel, A. (2019), 'Leicester reacts to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Indian election win', *Leicester Mercury*, 31 May. Available at: <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/leicester-reacts-prime-minister-narendra-2924886>, last accessed: 22 January 2023.

³¹ Nagesh, A. (2022), 'Leicester disorder 'not exclusively' Hindus and Muslims – police', *BBC News*, 26 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-63038691>, last accessed: 21 January 2023.

³² Ibid.

³³ Kansara, R. and Saeed, A. (2022), 'Did misinformation fan the flames in Leicester?', *BBC News*, 25 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-63009009>, last accessed: 30 January 2023.

³⁴ Patel, A. (2022), 'Police name men charged over east Leicester disorder with 158 incidents under investigation', *Leicestershire Live*, 23 September. Available at: <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/police-name-men-charged-over-7622466>, last accessed: 30 January 2023.

and high levels of political disaffection. Central government and local authorities must work together in developing 'neighbourhood plans' – involving civic institutions that can help to cultivate inclusive 'place-based' identities – to minimise the risk of such areas descending into sectarian violence and communal disorder.

National, regional and local politicians all have a responsibility to prioritise domestic 'bread-and-butter' issues that concern people of all races, ethnicities and faiths – whether it is the cost-of-living crisis, employment security, training opportunities, availability of affordable family-friendly housing, quality of healthcare provision, teaching standards at schools, or tackling anti-social behaviour in communities. Local political ecosystems in England which are overly focused on international feuds in faraway regions of the world, risk alienating working-class, white-British communities from the democratic process. If elected representatives of different party colours continue to exploit foreign geopolitical grievances and subcontinental-style sectarianism in the name of personal gain, they risk destabilising their own local communities and undermining the broader health of British democracy.

