

Community Relations in Oldham 2005

Findings from the “*You and Your Community*” Survey

Introduction

Oldham Council and Oldham Primary Care Trust commissioned the “You and Your Community” survey of community cohesion and health from Mori North in 2005.¹

This briefing summarises key findings relating to community cohesion in Oldham in 2005, and how this has changed since a previous survey in 2003.²

Summary of key findings

- The “You and Your Community” Survey provides strong evidence of improvements in attitudes towards community relations and diversity between 2003 and 2005 – for example in the proportion of residents who believe that people from different backgrounds can get on well together. The proportion of people with negative attitudes has declined markedly.
- The proportion of respondents who think that their neighbourhood is not a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together has dropped substantially since 2003, though many people still feel they ‘do not know’ or can ‘neither agree nor disagree.’
- Encouragingly, attitudes are much more positive among young people which bodes well for the future of the Borough. The findings suggest that this is linked to experience of interaction with people from different ethnic backgrounds, which is also much more prevalent among younger people. This suggests that initiatives which promote positive interaction may have an important role to play in further influencing the development of positive attitudes towards diversity and integration.

¹ A brief discussion of the survey and its methodology is included in Appendix 1.

² In 2003, Oldham Council conducted a postal survey on the views of members of its Citizens Panel on community cohesion. Members of the Panel are volunteers, and samples drawn in this way tend to have more positive views than those drawn using samples drawn at random. This means that the trends identified in the briefing will tend to under-estimate the extent of positive change. Improvements to question wording and design also limit comparability between the 2003 and 2005 surveys.

How have attitudes changed since 2003?

Overall, comparison of the 2005 *You and Your Community* survey results with those of the 2003 *Citizen's Panel on Community Cohesion* indicates a substantial overall improvement in both residents' attitudes towards ethnic difference and residents' perceptions of the state of race relations in their neighbourhood.

Changing Attitudes to Difference

In 2005 *You and Your Community* participants were asked:

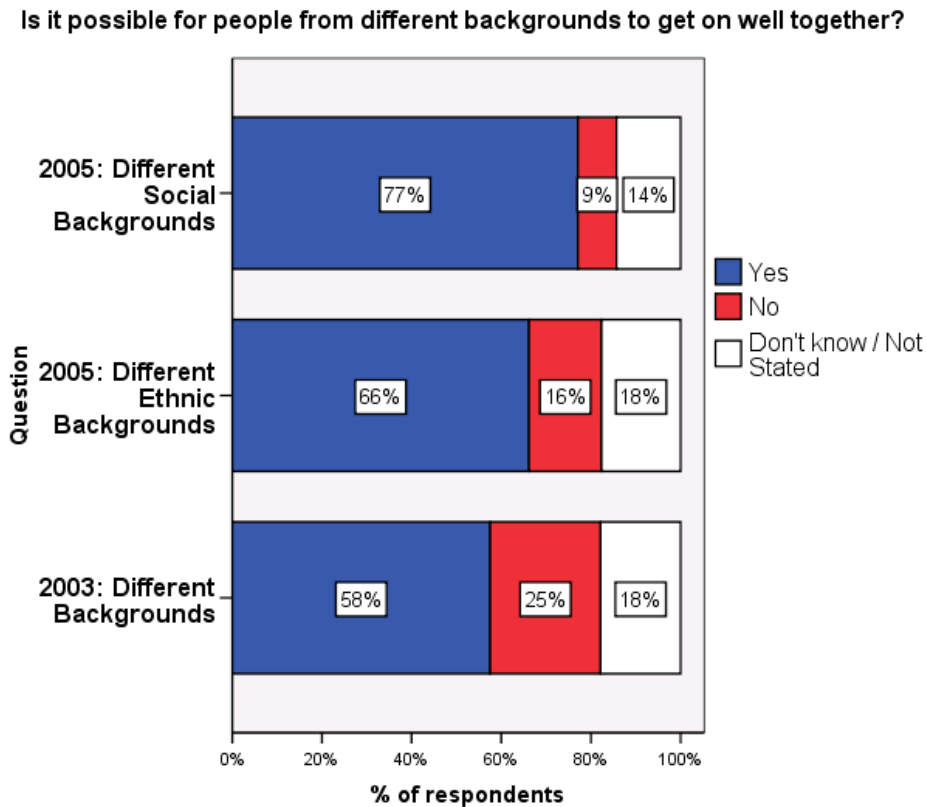
- Do you think it is possible for people from different social backgrounds to get on well together?
- Do you think it is possible for people from different ethnic backgrounds to get on well together?

The 2003 Citizen's Panel questionnaire asked a more general question, "Do you think it is possible for people from different backgrounds to get on well together?" In 2005, 66% of residents thought it was possible for people from different ethnic backgrounds to get on well together and 77% thought it possible for people from different social backgrounds to do so. Overall, therefore, Oldham residents are more confident that people of different social backgrounds can get on well together than they are that people from different ethnic backgrounds can get on well together (see Figure 1).

Comparing the 2005 figures with those for 2003 question it is clear that – with respect to both differences in ethnic and social backgrounds – the proportion of residents who agree that people can get on well together has increased while the proportion that disagree has decreased substantially. Given that the 2005 questions were more specific than the corresponding question in 2003, this suggests a marked positive shift in attitudes.

Attitudes towards living in neighbourhoods containing a mix of different people have shown a similar improvement. In both 2003 and 2005 residents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed that "Having a mix of different people in my neighbourhood (or local area in 2003) makes it a more enjoyable place to live."

Figure 1 Can people from different backgrounds get on well together?

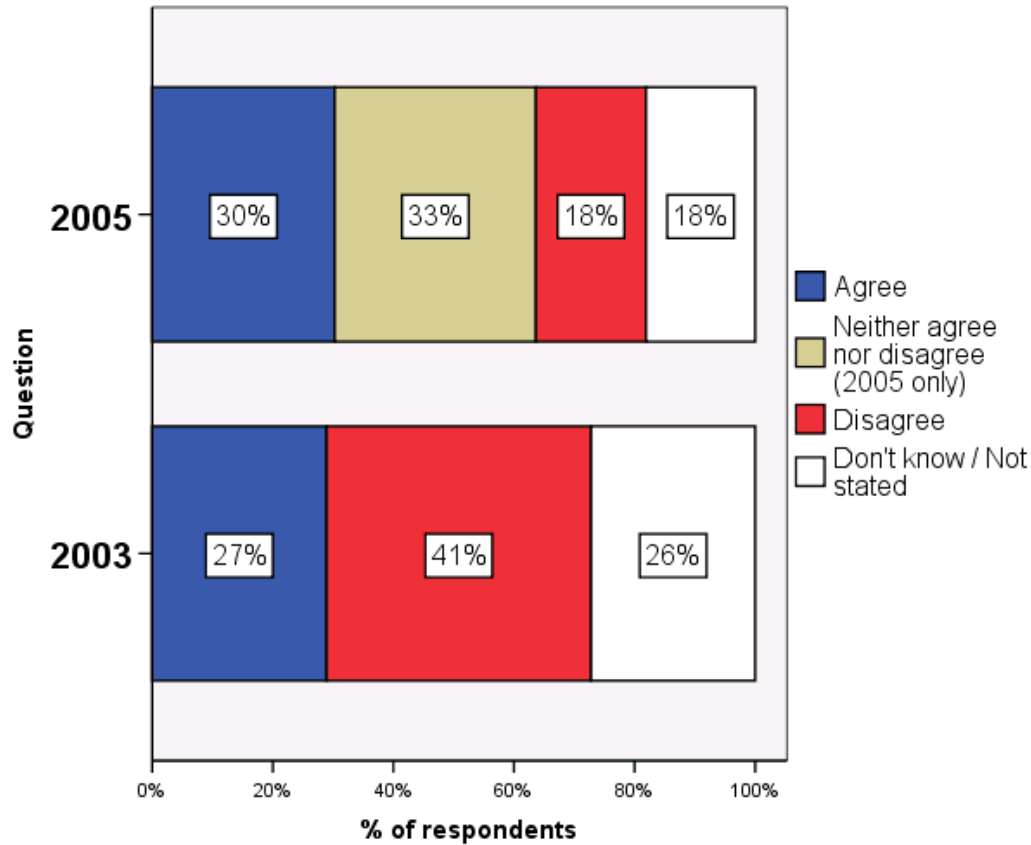


Methodological differences (and the inclusion of a 'neither agree nor disagree' category in 2005) complicate direct comparisons. Nevertheless, two key observations may be drawn from Figure 2. Firstly, although the percentage of people who agree that "having a mix of different people in my neighbourhood makes it a more enjoyable place" has changed very little, the proportion who actively disagree has declined considerably since 2003.³ Secondly, many more Oldham residents now agree than disagree that having a mix of different people in their neighbourhoods makes it a more enjoyable place to live. In 2003, those residents who agreed were substantially outnumbered by those who did not.

³ If the decline in the proportion of respondents expressing disagreement was solely due to the provision of a 'new 'neither agree nor disagree' category, a similar reduction would be expected in the percentage of residents expressing agreement.

Figure 2 Attitudes to mixed neighbourhoods

Having a mix of different people in my neighbourhood / local area makes it a more enjoyable place to live.



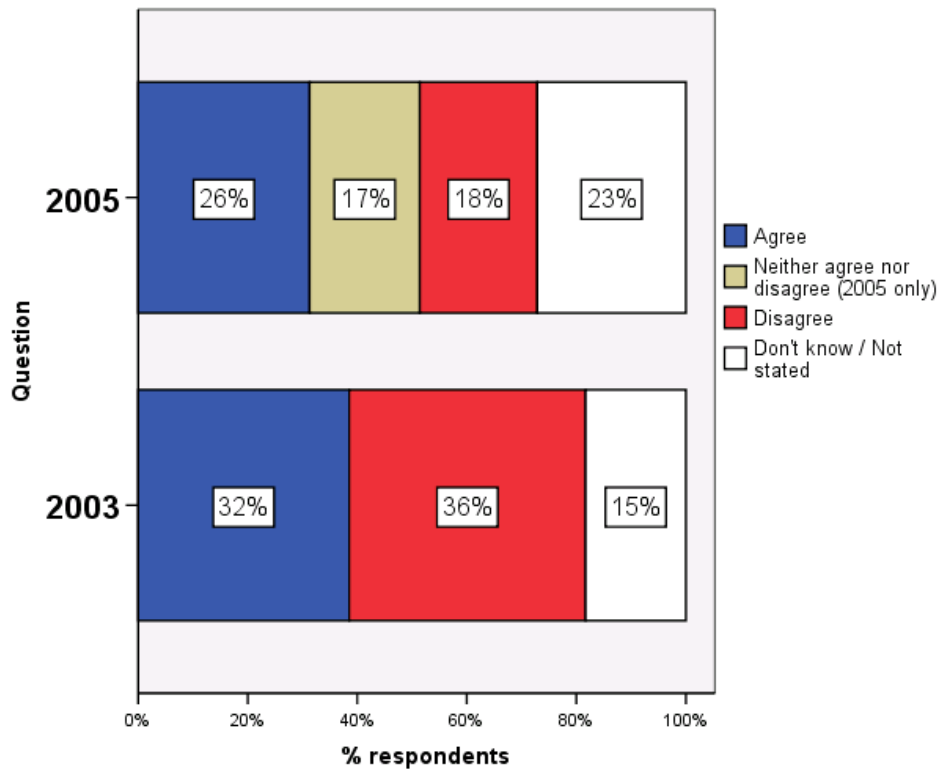
Changing Perceptions of Community Relations in the Neighbourhood

The 2005 *You and Your Community* survey asked residents how well they thought people from different social and ethnic backgrounds got on together in their neighbourhood. Residents were also asked whether or not they thought that ethnic differences between people were respected. In addition residents were asked to provide information about the level of intergenerational, ethnic and social tensions in their neighbourhoods.

Figure 3 shows residents' perceptions of whether people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together in their neighbourhood. While there has been a slight drop in the proportion of people who agree that their neighbourhood is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together, by far the largest decrease is among those who disagree that people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together. Many people appear to be undecided: in 2005, 23% of respondents either did not know or did not give an opinion and a further 17% neither agreed nor disagreed. This option was not offered in 2003.

Figure 3 Neighbourhood relationships

My neighbourhood is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together



Less than one quarter (24%) of respondents thought there was a 'great deal' or a 'fair amount' of inter-ethnic tension in their neighbourhood, and a very similar proportion (23%) thought there were comparable levels of intergenerational tensions.

Attitudes and social interaction

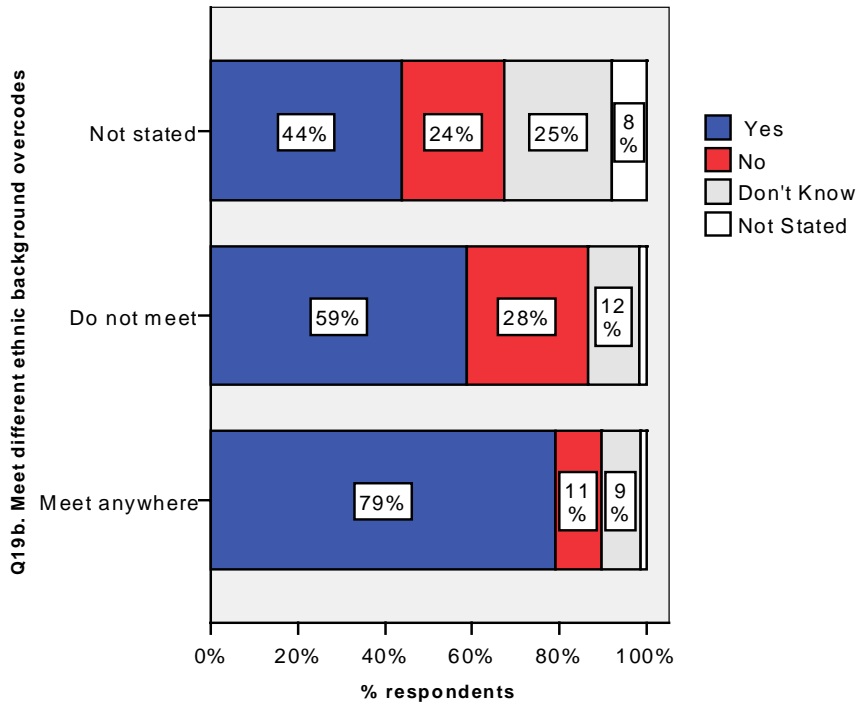
Respondents were asked whether or not they meet on a regular basis with people from different ethnic background, age, and from different social backgrounds. Overall, 63% of respondents said that they meet regularly with people from a different social background; 89% said that they interact regularly with people from different age groups and; 60% responded that they regularly interact with people who have a different ethnic background than themselves.

As is shown in Figure 4, people who regularly interact with others of different ethnic backgrounds are more likely to think that it is possible for people from different ethnic backgrounds to get on well together. Among those who regularly meet people from a different ethnic background, about 80% agree that people from different ethnic backgrounds can get on well together. Among those who do not meet different people regularly, less than 60% agree that people of different ethnic backgrounds

can get on well together. This highlights the importance of experience of interaction in shaping people’s attitudes and perceptions.

Figure 4 Social interaction and attitude to race relations

Do you think it is possible for people from different ethnic backgrounds to get on well together?



In a similar way, respondents who interacted regularly with people of a different ethnicity were almost twice as likely as those who did not to agree that “having a mix of different people in my neighbourhood makes it a more enjoyable place to live.”

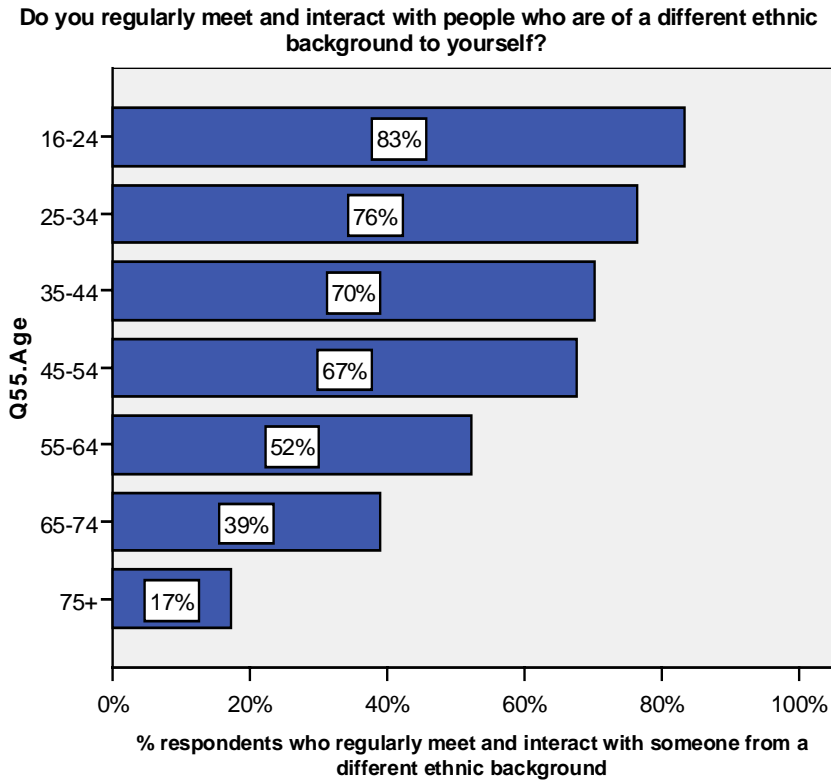
Social variations in attitudes and patterns of interaction

There are significant variations within the Borough’s population in relation to attitudes and patterns of social interaction.

Age

A much larger proportion of younger than older people interact regularly with people of a different ethnic background to themselves. Figure 5 shows that most younger people (83% of 16-24 year olds) meet people from other ethnic backgrounds on a regular basis, and that the proportion falls steadily with age. Relatively few older people aged 75 or over (17%) meet and interact regularly with people of an ethnicity other than their own.

Figure 5 Social interaction and age

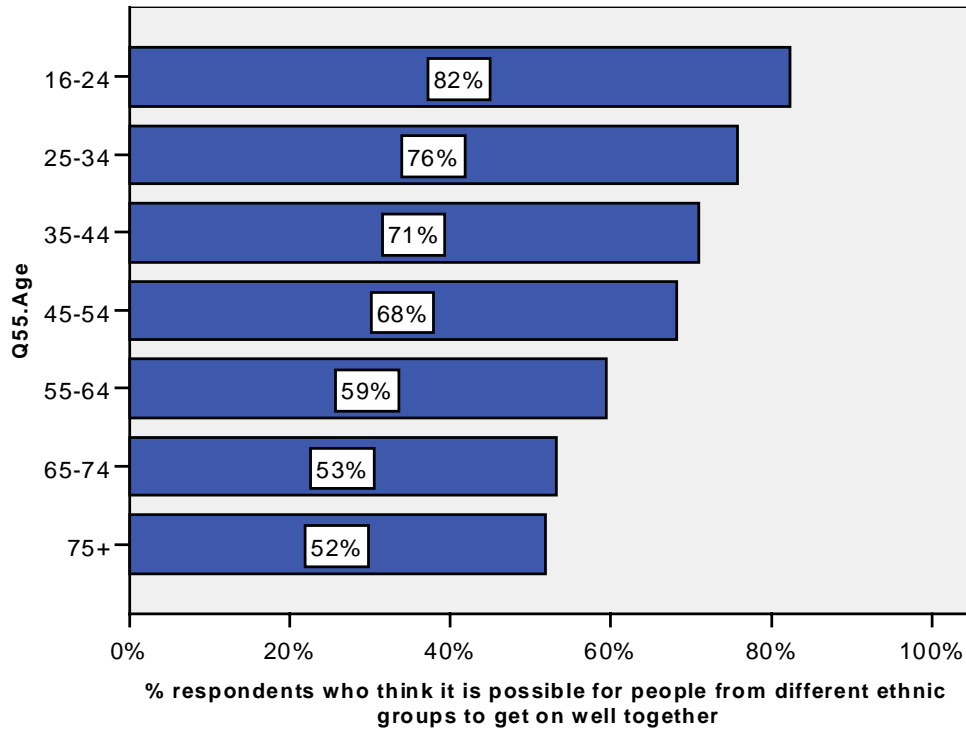


Cases weighted by pwtward

Figure 6 shows a similar age-based progression in the percentage of people who believe that people from different ethnic backgrounds can get on together. Taken together, these findings strongly suggest that actual experience of interaction has a key role in shaping people's attitudes. Also, there appears to be a positive generational shift in progress, with younger generations being both more likely to meet people from different ethnic backgrounds and more likely to be positive about people getting on together.

Figure 6 Can people from different backgrounds get on together by age?

Do you think it is possible for people from different ethnic backgrounds to get on well together?



Cases weighted by pwtward

Ethnicity

Oldham residents who are part of the Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other ethnic minority communities are more likely than white residents to meet and interact on a regular basis with people of a different ethnic background to themselves. Figure 7 shows that between 70% and 80% of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other BME residents do so as compared with 58% of white people.

Figure 7 Social interaction and ethnic group

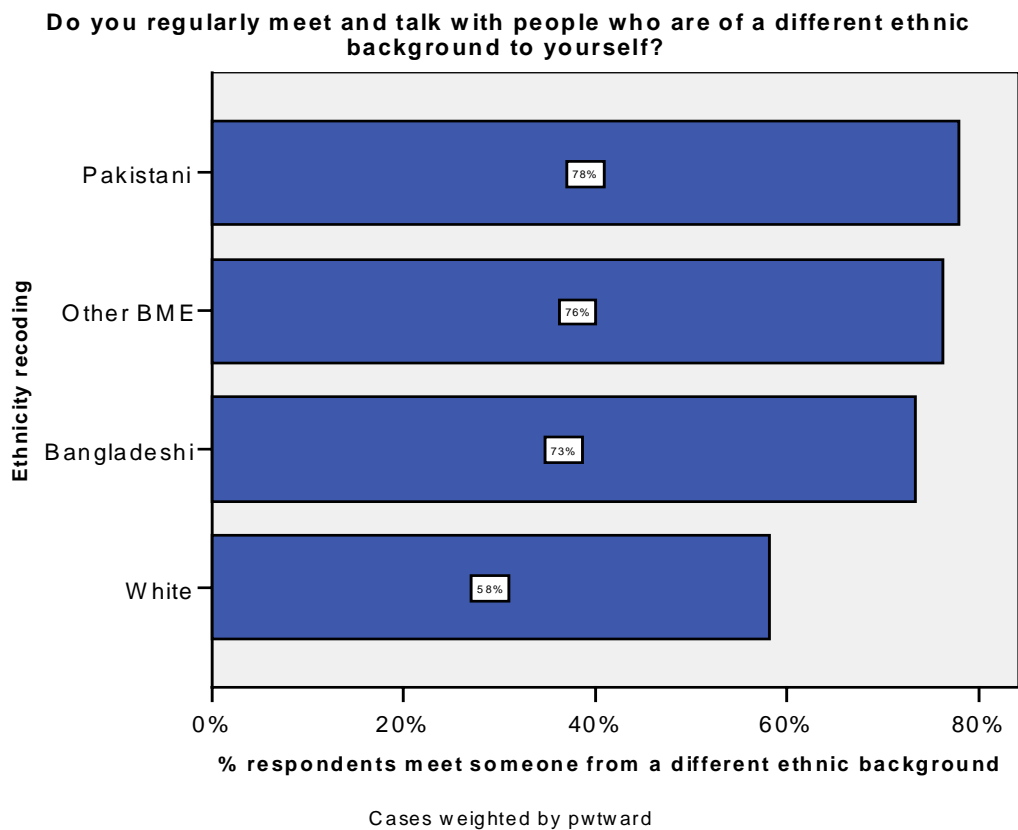
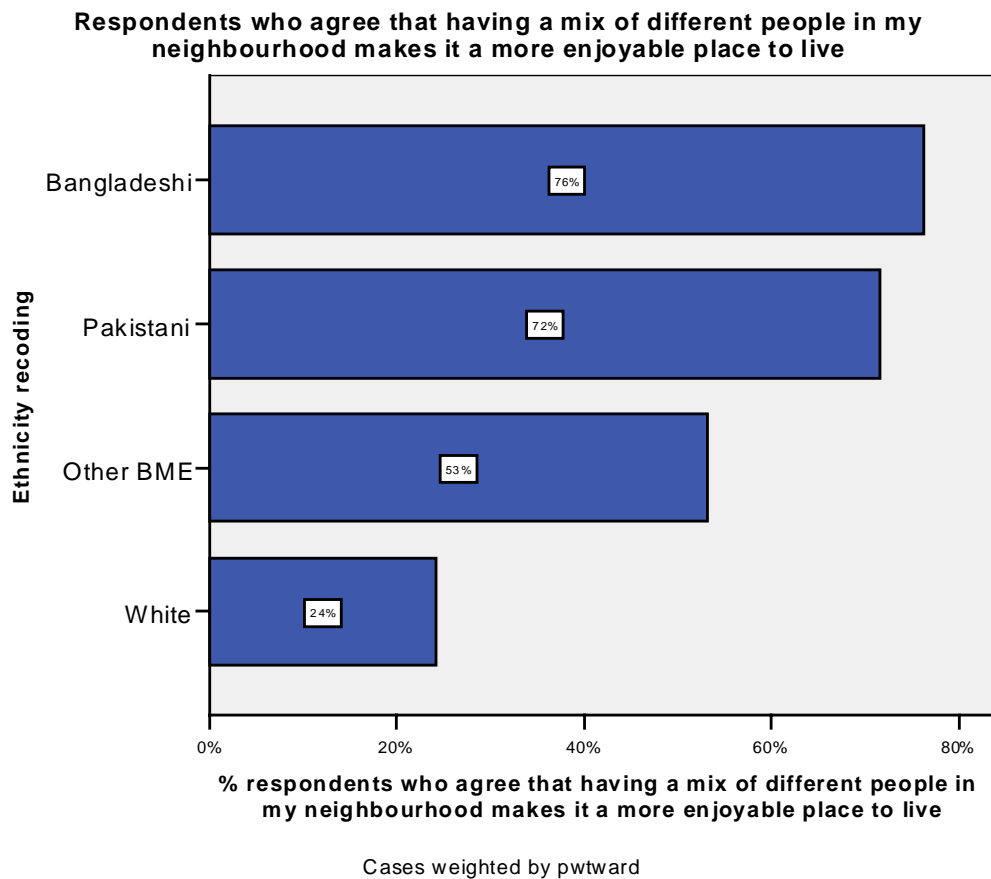


Figure 8 Attitudes to integration by ethnic group



As with younger people, an increased experience of social interaction is associated with more positive attitudes towards diversity. People of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage are most likely to agree that having a mix of different people in their neighbourhood makes it a more enjoyable place to live.

Religion

Since Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage people in Oldham are predominantly Muslim, it is not surprising that Muslim respondents were similarly the most likely to agree that “Having a mix of different people in my neighbourhood makes it a more enjoyable place to live.” Almost three-quarters (73%) did so, as compared with one quarter of Christians (25%) and those with no religious affiliation (24%). This confounds negative stereotypes of Muslims as people who are unwilling to mix with people from other faiths.

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Appendix 1

About the *You and Your Community* Survey

Survey Content and Purpose

The Oldham 2006 *You and Your Community* survey on community cohesion and healthy lifestyles covers a wide range of topics including:

- neighbourhood satisfaction and perceptions of neighbourhood change;
- community involvement and volunteering;
- attitudes and relations among people of different ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds;
- perceptions of community relations;
- confidence in public institutions and access to community facilities;
- general physical and mental health;
- alcohol and tobacco use, diet and exercise behaviours;
- demographic characteristics

Oldham MBC and Oldham PCT jointly commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct the survey in order to establish detailed and reliable baseline measures around community cohesion and health. These measures support Oldham's Local Area Agreement and provide a detailed evidence base for policy development in these areas. The survey also provides a strong indication of changes in community relations since 2003.

Methodology

The survey used a mixed methodology with the following components:

1. A random postal survey of 6000 residents aged 16 years or over. The Postcode Address File was used as the sampling frame and the sample was stratified by ward. The survey was posted on October 19th 2006 and was followed by two scheduled reminders. The cut-off for returns was December 16th 2005.
2. A random postal survey of 3200 residents aged 16 years or over, using the same sampling frame, questionnaire and reminder schedule. The survey was posted on December 19th 2005. The cut-off for returns was February 10th, 2006. This element was used to boost the achieved sample size.
3. Face-to-face interviews using the same questionnaire as the postal survey, adapted for face-to-face administration. These were used to ensure a robust response among groups that are harder to reach with postal methodologies. Interviewer starting points were chosen randomly within Census Super Output Areas with higher populations from Black & Minority Ethnic groups. In total, 435 interviews were achieved as shown below:

- Older (aged 45%) BME women – 87 interviews;
- Older (aged 45+) men – 99 interviews (23 from BME backgrounds);
- Younger (aged 16-24) men – 117 interviews (67 from BME backgrounds) and;

2264 residents responded to the postal survey (a response rate of 24%) with a minimum of 100 postal responses achieved in every ward. Including face-to-face interviews, the total achieved sample was 2697. Table 1 shows the responses to both waves and the overall confidence interval (assuming 95% confidence level and a 50/50 response split)

TABLE 2 : DISTRIBUTION AND RETURN OF QUESTIONNAIRES				
Wave	Sent Out	No. Received	% response rate	Confidence interval
Postal survey	9,320	2,262	24%	+/- 2.1%
Face-to-face interviews		435		
Total		2697		+/- 1.9%

Analysis

Results from the different elements of the survey were combined for purposes of analysis. To adjust the results to be representative of the population of the Borough, weighting was carried out at ward level for age, gender and ethnicity based on Census 2001 figures reapportioned to the 2004 ward boundaries. Weighting is the process by which the data are adjusted to reflect the actual population of the borough. Weighting is used to overcome the bias against the under-represented groups of residents in the achieved responses. A 'weight' is a factor applied to the answers of each respondent according to which area they live in and their age, gender and ethnicity.