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Public Perceptions of Inequality in the UK

Summary of key findings from the
qualitative research

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1. Methodology and objectives

Primary qualitative and quantitative research was commissioned to support the strand of the IFS/ Deaton Review of Inequalities addressing “public attitudes to inequalities”, to explore:

- people’s awareness and concerns about different types of inequality in society, including how they conceptualise their own identities in relation to these issues;
- the extent to which they personally support structural explanations for inequality, and why – as well as what other explanations they offer to account for inequalities in society; and
- what manifestations of inequality are of most and least concern to them, and the drivers of this.

In order to do this, qualitative research was designed to take an exploratory approach, as well as to dig beneath surface opinions to uncover the values and beliefs, often rooted in personal experiences, which underpinned participants’ responses. In addition, the research was designed to complement findings from a recent survey (‘Unequal Britain’) ¹ conducted by Kings Policy Institute.

Twelve online discussion groups with the general public were therefore conducted between 20th April – 19th May 2021 across a range of locations in England, Scotland and Wales. Primary sampling quotas were set on location, age and SEG, and additional quotas on ethnicity, disability, work and caring status. Relevant attitudinal questions were also asked at recruitment stage to ensure individuals with a range of views were incorporated. Selection of the groups was determined by a sample matrix, agreed with the IFS in advance of the fieldwork, and shown below.

Group	Location	Age	SEG	Other quotas
1*	South of England: Watford	18-34	ABC1	At least 4 from ethnic minority groups across each regional area (not including Scotland and Wales).
8*	North of England: North of England	35-64	C2DE	
2	South of England: Watford	35-64	C2DE	A range of educational level and occupation across the sample (for example, at least 8 self-employed).
3	South of England: Stevenage	65+	C2DE	
7	North of England: North of England	18-34	C2DE	
9	North of England: North of England	65+	ABC1	At least 5 in receipt of Universal Credit.
4	Midlands: Birmingham	18-34	C2DE	
5	Midlands: Birmingham	35-64	ABC1	At least 5 with a registered disability.
6	Midlands: Birmingham	65+	ABC1	
10	Scotland: Edinburgh	18-34	ABC1	A mix of household status, including carers.
11	Scotland: Glasgow	65+	C2DE	
12	Wales: South Wales	35-64	ABC1	

* These were pilot groups – research materials were reviewed and refined after these initial discussions.

¹ <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/research-analysis/unequal-britain>

Each discussion group consisted of 5-6 participants and lasted 90 minutes. Deliberative research techniques² were employed in the research design to support engagement and reflection on the complex topic at hand. Group discussions were transcribed and analysed by the research through the application of a thematic codeframe to the dataset, supported by team discussions about the evidence generated.

Given that this research addresses public attitudes, it is important to set out some key contextual issues which impacted the findings. The timing of the research was important in terms of **specific high-profile political incidents** which occurred during the fieldwork period, such as the controversy over the Prime Minister's refurbishment of his residence in Downing Street³. These incidents influenced participants' 'softer' attitudes and views on inequality. The research was also conducted in the **broader context of the pandemic**, and although public concerns about the pandemic had broadly reduced since the lockdowns of 2020, concern about the virus and its impact on society was nonetheless widespread⁴ and impacted participants' perceptions of inequality. For example, discussions around income inequality were linked to different impacts of the pandemic on those in stable vs 'gig economy' work, or those whose livelihood had been affected by the pandemic. A further context was the wider landscape of the **decline in trust in politicians**, accounted for in much recent polling work from Ipsos MORI⁵, which impacted on perceptions of the participants' views on 'political voice' or 'having a say' in public life.

Methodical challenges also presented an important context, notably the **complexity of the issue under discussion**. Polling research has demonstrated that powerful misperceptions are widely held about income inequality, notably related to the highest paid groups in society⁶, and our published work for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on public attitudes to poverty has demonstrated the tensions in conceptualisations of inequality relating to language, approaches to measurement and their underpinning beliefs around desert⁷. These issues proved salient in this research: participants were not knowledgeable about key evidence about inequality of outcomes in society, its impacts and its implications. Conceptually, participants shifted between addressing inequalities of opportunities, inequalities of outcomes, and issues of discrimination in their discussions. 'Path dependence'⁸ also played a part in this: some participants felt that inequalities in society were inevitable and they struggled to articulate how or why such phenomena occurred. Given this context, deliberative research techniques⁹ were employed in the research design to support engagement and reflection on the complex topic at hand.

This document presents **key findings from the qualitative discussion groups**, with each point itemised and, where possible, **supported with verbatim evidence from one of the groups**. Verbatim quotes are attributed by gender, age, region and social class, all data collected at the point of recruitment of participants. Thematic areas covered in this summary are: spontaneous views and concerns about inequality, beliefs about life chances, and views on geographical inequalities, educational inequalities and political voice. A full report from the qualitative research covering these topics will follow in October 2021.

² Deliberative research focuses upon participants' viewpoints after they have been presented with the opportunity to 'deliberate' the issue(s) in question

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56878663>

⁴ <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/ipsos-mori-issues-index-april-2021>

⁵ <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/trust-politicians-falls-sending-them-spiralling-back-bottom-ipsos-mori-veracity-index>

⁶ <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/money-misperceptions-and-personal-finance>: the public think that one in ten (10%) earn more than £150,000 a year when in reality just 1% do. And, when told what percentage of the population this top income group makes up, the public significantly underestimate what they contribute to income tax; on average we think they pay in 10% of all income tax paid, when in fact, this 1% contribute 28% of all income tax

⁷ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/public-attitudes-towards-poverty>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Path_dependence

⁹ Deliberative research focuses upon participants' viewpoints after they have been presented with the opportunity to 'deliberate' the issue(s) in question

2. Spontaneous views and concerns about inequality

2a. Age was an influential factor, with divergent views on inequality among younger (aged 18-34 years) and older people (over 35s)

Younger participants tended to have a greater awareness of inequalities, notably those relating to identity, such as race, gender, class, sexuality and age, and were concerned about inequality in society from the outset of the discussions.

“From starting [out] being an eighteen-year-old starting off in life ... if you're treated in a particular way due to inequality that impacts you ... potentially for the rest of your life and ... you might not be able to empower yourself to do anything about that.” *Female, 18-35, Midlands, C2DE*

Older participants tended to be more concerned with inequalities relating to access to services, notably in health, and typically expressed less initial discomfort about inequality.

“Why has everything got to be a flat line? Why can't some people be up here, and some people be down there? That's life.” *Male, 35-55, South of England, C2DE*

2b. Views on what mattered in terms of inequality typically drew primarily on personal experiences

Participants typically spontaneously shared concerns about inequalities which related to their own personal experiences. This was extremely common, with participants sharing issues relating to inequality which had been meaningful in their lives over a long period of time (for example, experiences of racial inequality for those from ethnic minority backgrounds) or other more recent personal concerns.

“I think the younger people and disabilities [are more important] because my daughter was born with a hearing problem, so she's got a bit of a disability and I know that affects her everyday life” *Female, 65+, South of England, C2DE*

2c. Only a few participants were well-informed about inequalities which fell outside their personal experiences

A small number of participants entered the discussion groups already well-informed about inequalities, spontaneously suggesting issues addressing wider structural inequalities. Typically, these more informed perspectives were presented by participants from ethnic minorities, who were often articulate and knowledgeable about structural inequalities, as well as those whose professional lives had brought them into close contact with a particular type of inequality (e.g. through working in frontline services).

“The division between those who control ninety per cent of the wealth of the country [and those who do not], it's becoming much more stark ... I'm quite political, so I'm aware of these things, but an awful lot of people aren't aware of them” *Male, 65+, Scotland, C2DE*

2d. Participants were most concerned that households with low incomes were most heavily impacted by inequality. They were also concerned with inequalities affecting women and ethnic minorities

This concern was raised across all ages, regions and social groups, demonstrating that inequality was, initially at least, strongly conceptualised in terms of wealth inequality. The strong views on this –

alongside widespread sympathy for those struggling on low incomes in discussions on who is affected by inequality – conflicted with less sympathetic views of people receiving welfare support, which were held simultaneously by many participants in the research.

Participants also consistently raised concerns about women’s experiences of inequality, particularly in relation to the gender pay gap, sexual harassment, sexual assault and divisions of domestic labour during the pandemic. Many participants, of all ethnicities, also raised concerns about the treatment of ethnic minorities in society. Participants commonly shared the view that those from ethnic minority groups were more disadvantaged than those of White ethnicity in society, presenting examples such as disadvantages in seeking employment, and in health outcomes

2e. The conduct and media treatment of public figures created awareness of certain types of inequalities

The news agenda was influential on people’s views, with participants’ choices of news articles about inequality often reflecting headline news stories concerning high-profile figures in public and political life, e.g. Boris Johnson and the redecoration of No. 10 Downing Street. At the point the research was conducted, these stories had created high levels of awareness of racial inequalities and wealth inequalities.

“Meghan [Markle] is very much compared to Kate [Middleton] ... and I think there's a big difference in the way they're treated and the way they're perceived in the media.”

Female, 35-64, South of England, C2DE

2f. Inequality was typically viewed as a ‘fact of life’, especially by older participants

There was a widespread belief among participants that all societies were ultimately unequal, and British society was therefore no different. Participants, nonetheless, varied in how comfortable they were with inequality in society being inevitable. Some tried to address this by suggesting that some inequalities could be tackled, whereas others were intractable. Many participants noted that the inescapable phenomenon of the lack of choice over where you were born and to whom was the biggest influence of unequal outcomes in life. This fact was acknowledged by many participants as a driver of inequality, but participants struggled to consider its implications – for example, whether this led to advantages being conferred to a large or small number of people, and what that meant for those who were less advantaged. Discrimination was also acknowledged as one of the drivers of inequality – but was felt to be just as inescapable as the economics of life in the UK and the issue of where and to whom you were born: another “fact of life” which was difficult to challenge.

“I think there's some people that are just very fortunate enough to be born into nice families and opportunities ... But I don't think that's, like, a big majority of people.”

Female, 35-64, South of England, C2DE

2g. Inequalities were felt to be interlinked, and felt to extend beyond solely material impacts on people’s lives

Discussions about education led to comments about how access to good quality education and support influenced broader life chances and employment opportunities: these and many other types of inequalities were seen to be connected. Participants commonly raised mental health issues, stress and low self-esteem as examples of the personal impact of inequality, as well as issues that might feed the ‘vicious circle’ of inequality once entered into.

“[Some say] 'my parents haven't got this and that, so I can't have that,' so they don't push themselves and it's just an ever-going cycle of just unfairness and inequality, basically.

So, unless you get that chance to escape, you're basically stuck in it."

Male, 35-64, C2DE, South of England

2h. Home ownership and inheritance were seen as key engines of inequality – and participants hoped to achieve both as a bulwark against the impacts of inequality

Home ownership was commonly cited as the most important manifestation of inequality in the lives of individuals. Tellingly, participants citing owning a home as the critical factor dividing the 'haves' from the 'have-nots' – quality, affordability and stability of housing tenure were not raised as issues of concern relating to inequality.

"If someone hasn't got the money, they can't afford the housing, and if you haven't got reasonable housing, you're permanently suffering." *Male, 35-55, Midlands, C2DE*

Also linked to this was the perception that it was important to accrue wealth to pass on as an inheritance to the next generation. In the discussions with the public, it was implied that this inherited wealth would serve as a protective factor for the next generation against the uncertainty and potential insecurity caused by inequality in society.

2i. Participants struggled to reconcile their comfort with wealth inequality with their desire for a certain level of 'fairness' in society

In general, participants' broader desires to meet the aspirations of a capitalist society (i.e. through home ownership and inheritance) came into conflict with what they perceived to be 'fair', and they found this conflict difficult to square. Participants typically expressed the view that they were comfortable with people accruing wealth, which they often felt was a reward for hard work. Yet they also wanted a world that was 'fairer', were uncomfortable about inequality affected others detrimentally and did not make the link between wealth inequality and other types of inequality.

"I don't mind if people can afford expensive clothes. It doesn't matter if they've got better houses, better clothes, better cars. Who cares? What really upsets me is when that has a negative effect on people. It's only matters where the inequality really starts to affect other people." *Female, 35-64, South of England, C2DE*

2j. The pandemic was felt to have exacerbated existing inequalities, meaning that inequalities are deepening

Participants were quick acknowledged that pandemic had had a profound impact on inequalities, both bringing many social problems to light and entrenching existing inequalities. These issues were noted in relation to wealth inequality, gender equality and educational inequalities in particular.

"Around lower income households having to use their savings and borrowing more during the lockdown whilst richer families are actually saving money because they're going out and planning trips abroad ... richer people [are] getting richer, whilst poorer people [are] getting poorer and getting into more debt."

Female, 35-64, South of England, C2DE

3. Beliefs about what influences life chances

3a. Individual motivation and having a supportive family were widely considered to be the most important factors in explaining differences economic and social outcomes for individuals.

This was widely felt to be the case even when discrimination was acknowledged as a factor. Older participants placed strong emphasis on personal responsibility and the role of the family in explaining why individuals either remained in or moved out of poverty.

“Everybody has an equal opportunity at the start. The road that they take is sometimes mapped out for them or sometimes they can jump ship and just be different to the norm”
Male, 35-64, South of England, C2DE

“A family, a stable family unit is crucial, your environment is absolutely crucial to your formation in the future ... if you are interested in your children, you brought these children into the world, you have got the greatest responsibility to actually start their grounding for the future” *Female, 65+, Midlands, C2DE*

3b. Ethnic minority participants felt that discrimination played a greater role in explaining economic differences

Ethnic minority participants typically reported that they had experienced racial discrimination personally in education and work: for older ethnic minority participants, this included being denied opportunities due to racism. Some ethnic minority participants felt their experiences of racial discrimination were a spur to greater levels of personal determination, while White participants in the groups (notably among older participants) were quick to read other participants' experiences of overcoming discrimination as narratives which illustrated the importance of individual motivation.

“Discrimination does, like, play a part in things and people do experience discrimination a lot but if you just experience it and just give up then that's down to your will power and motivation.” *Female, 18-34, Midlands, C2DE*

3c. Many participants believed that the UK functioned as a meritocracy, leading them to tolerate inequality

Participants who held these views typically felt that opportunities to succeed in life were open to all, and cited the UK's education system as the prime example of this. Participants who held these views also tended to feel that individuals who had worked hard deserved to have more than others, and that this was a strong benefit of a meritocratic society. There was an unwavering belief among this group that while structural factors play a role in people's experiences of inequality, it was ultimately up to the individual to improve their life chances. Opposition to welfare support often accompanied these views and was particularly strong among older participants, who saw state support as a disincentive to work.

“Life is probably unfair, and you've got to take the chances that are offered to you. I mean, we're offering education and everything to people. If they don't take it, they get the consequences at the end that they won't get a job.” *Male, 65+, South of England, C2DE*

3d. Participants citing structural explanations for inequality were unconvinced that the UK was meritocratic and very concerned about wealth inequality

These participants were far fewer in number than those who believed the UK was meritocratic. They felt

that while people may theoretically have equal opportunities in areas such as education and employment, this was not how society functioned in practice, citing barriers such as low aspirations around education among those from lower socio-economic groups, and children from these groups lacking the space at home to study.

“I think wealth is key to that, because why should 1% or 2% of the population have so much wealth when so many other people are really struggling? We don't all have the same opportunity to actually get a foot on that ladder.” Male, 35-64, South of England, C2DE

3e. Being presented with facts about inequality changed some participants' views

Deliberation on evidence about inequality of outcomes brought research participants closer to its implications – the impact on wider society, as well as their locality and friends/ family. By way of example, sharing and discussing evidence about unequal outcomes in society led some participants to feel shocked and upset at the impact of inequalities they had previously not been aware of, challenging their existing beliefs that everyone in society had access to the same opportunities. Participants who had encountered similar evidence through their own research also expressed horror and discomfort with the type of society this presented to them.

“I think it's a terrible statistic. It scares the heck out of me... Because it's basically saying that people that are poor, their children aren't doing so well, and I just find that horrific and I want to know why?” Female, 65+, South of England, C2DE

Nonetheless, other participants were reluctant to attribute poor outcomes for some groups in society to factors such as structural inequality of opportunity or discrimination. They continued to feel that inequality was ultimately due to a lack of motivation, a lack of suitable support from families, or simply down to bad luck. There was also some scepticism about the evidence presented in deliberative elements, often linked to a lack of trust in politicians – for example, concerns that statistics presented were similar to the “kinds of things politicians say”.

4. Views on geographical inequalities

4a. Participants acknowledged inequalities between different regions, notably the ‘North-South divide’ and differences between urban and rural regions

There was some spontaneous discussion of differences between regions, although this was not a key concern for participants in comparison to other types of inequality. Differences between regions were described in terms of access to services, particularly in health, and also with regard to employment opportunities.

“In Birmingham, we’ve got some of the best hospitals that are about, so we are extremely lucky. But there are other areas, such as Cornwall [where services are scarce] ... so it doesn’t matter if you’re rich or you’re poor, if you’re not in the right area for the health services to provide you the treatment that you need, that’s it.” Male, 65+, ABC1, Midlands

4b. “Hyper-local” inequalities – differences within regions – were typically of greater importance to participants

Participants commonly raised concerns about the economic opportunities and the quality of services in local areas, making comparisons between areas of high deprivation and more affluent areas in their locality. They noted that better services – notably schools, but also health services – were available in more affluent areas. This “postcode lottery” was felt to be a very salient type of inequality in participants’ lives, one which was very tangible to them and felt to be important in its influence on outcomes in education, health and employment.

“In Britain we should all have access to education, but even in [names town in South of England] you can find that... the schools are very, very different. And the opportunities that those schools provide are very, very different.” Female, 35-64, C2DE, South of England

4d. Participants were very aware of – and acted on – differences between local schools

Participants were highly aware of differences between local schools but varied in their views as to whether this constituted a type of unfairness, even though this was widely recognised as an inequality. Many participants were of the view that, for example, moving to a better area to access a better school was justifiable if a family had worked hard and therefore earned that right – indeed several participants in the research reported that they had done exactly this to ensure better opportunities for their children. A small number of participants noted the consequences this approach had in terms of differential opportunities and outcomes for children.

“The ones that can’t move, they’re not going to have as good a future as the other kids... The ones that can afford to go to the better area and the better school, they’ll probably get on better in life than the poor people that are stuck.” Male, 65+, C2DE, Scotland

It is notable that this strong awareness of differences in educational outcomes among local schools is not consistent with participants’ widespread views that the UK’s educational system was largely meritocratic, as expressed in point 3c.

4e. Participants were concerned about differences between local hospitals

Access to good quality local health services was an issue that participants felt strongly about across many of the groups, notably among older participants with experience of a health condition. Concerns were described at a hyper-local level, rather than regionally, again labelled a “postcode lottery”.

“We’re meant to be the affluent South, but if you go into [one local] hospital you wouldn’t believe that. All us know about [this] hospital.” *Male, 65+, C2DE, South of England*

4f. Participants were aware of – and acted on – regional inequalities in employment opportunities

Concerns about regional inequalities in employment were raised in the groups, mostly by graduates that were looking to secure employment. Improvements to travel infrastructure outside London (such as HS2) were considered a counterbalance to the weaker employment opportunities outside the capital, allowing participants to take advantage of better job opportunities in London.

“The goal would be to get a job in London and then just live in Birmingham [commuting using HS2]. So, I’d get paid more and my rent, my house and wage and all that stuff would be cheaper.” *Male, 18-34, C2DE, Midlands*

4g. Regional inequalities in housing costs were a cause of concern

As noted in point 2h, home ownership was a big concern for participants and participants were aware of regional differences in housing costs. Many recognised that house prices were higher in London, but generally felt this was acceptable because it reflected the higher cost of living in London and the attendant higher salaries. Participants widely recognised local differences in housing affordability and sought affordable areas to live in. Participants also expressed concern about the prevalence of second homes in some areas, pricing out local residents.

“Various locations can be changed by people coming in ... in the Lake District there’s the village of Grasmere that, there are no local people actually live there anymore because they just can’t afford the housing. So, it’s entirely holiday homes or lets.”
Male, 65+, C2DE, Birmingham

5. Views on educational inequalities

5a. Inequalities in education were seen as important and influential in people's lives

Participants in the research frequently alighted on educational opportunities as a key influence on people's life chances and the key opportunity for individuals to demonstrate their motivation to succeed in life (see point 3a). A failure to grasp these opportunities, either through lack of individual motivation or lack of suitable support from family, was widely felt to lead to poor outcomes in employment and other aspects of life, such as mental health and self-confidence.

“If children get the right education anybody can make what they can out of themselves. It wouldn't just be people that have had more money put into their education.”

Female, 65+, C2DE, South of England

5b. Many participants were believed education was a 'level playing field' and were entirely comfortable with the existence of both selective and private schools

Paradoxically, although participants widely acknowledged the importance of education (point 5a) and the differences in outcomes between schools in their area (point 4d), it was a widespread view that the quality of education was consistent across different types of schools – or at least that it was consistent enough not to confer an advantage to some over others. Several participants expressed the view that private or selective schools did not necessarily offer better opportunities, and others felt strongly that those who were able to send their children to such schools deserved to, perhaps underpinned by a sense that inequality was an inescapable fact of life (point 2f) or that it was acceptable in society.

“If you want to send your kid to a private school, I'm not worried about that, but they should all be given the same opportunity... If you're going to say to me that at private school you get better teachers then I will disagree with that because they all go to the same college to become teachers.” *Male, 65+, C2DE, South of England*

Some cited the prevailing importance of individual motivation (see point 3a) regardless of the quality of schools, noting that in their experience motivation was a stronger indicator of success than attending a good school – a view in conflict with that expressed by many in point 4d.

“At the end of the day, it was still down to themselves to get the grades, and pass the test and things like that, and there are still people that weren't interested in that. [Some pupils] were more interested in doing drugs and all sorts ... So, I don't think there's any difference. I think it's down to yourself.” *Male, 18-34, C2DE, South of England*

5c. Some acknowledged structural inequalities in education – either from personal experience or through familiarity with the relevant data

A minority of participants in the research linked differential outcomes among local schools explicitly with inequality and found this unacceptable. These participants either drew on personal experience in drawing these conclusions or believed in structural explanations for inequalities in society.

“I knew people who went [to a school in a more deprived part of town] and they didn't do as well as I did ... because it was a higher calibre of education and stuff because it was in the richer area compared to the poorer area.” *Male, 18-34, C2DE, Midlands*

5d. Financial support from family members was viewed as crucial in supporting educational opportunities

Many participants noted that financial support played a crucial role in engendering good educational outcomes, for example through private tutoring and supporting children through higher education. As with point 5b, many participants were comfortable with this as they felt that such families deserved these opportunities through their hard work, and/ or because they were resigned to this type of systemic inequality.

“My daughter will be sitting an 11+ exam in September and obviously if you want them to do well at that, you just have to throw money at tutors and things. I think that shows a bit of an inequality because... some children get more of an opportunity to do well at an exam than others will.” Female, 35-64, South of England, C2DE

5e. Social connections were seen as key factor in educational success.

Those participants who expressed concerns about the existence of private schooling tended to cite the social networks that such schools created as a source of inequality in society. They argued that these schools presented alumni with lifelong benefits which others could not access – the ‘old boys’ network’. This was a particular concern of younger participants, who were concerned about how this affected their job prospects.

“If you meet some really good people while you’re at school or university... you can pick up on those connections and that will help you through business. You’re seeing it every minute being brought up with Boris Johnson and Dominic Cummings and whatever”
Female, 18-34, South of England, C2DE

5f. The impact of the pandemic in highlighting educational inequalities was widely acknowledged

Although many participants believed the education system was meritocratic, several noted that some serious educational inequalities had come to the fore during the pandemic. They cited concerns such as access to online learning and the provision of school meals during holidays, as highlighted by Marcus Rashford.

“If you were in a private school you were getting a much better education during the pandemic than the people who in poor areas didn’t even have a laptop between four or five children ... and also weren’t getting proper meals or food because... the government was loathe to reinstate free school meals.” Male, 65+, South of England, C2DE

6. Inequalities in access to political power and ‘voice’

6a. Participants felt that they were not well represented in institutions of power and authority.

Politicians were widely perceived to be deeply out of touch with ordinary people. Participants attributed this to power they held as politicians, but also linked it to the idea that politicians all came from distinct social class that was already wealthy and well-connected. Participants typically felt similarly about national and local politicians alike.

“They’re all very well educated, financially-backed, private-educated people. They would know what it’s like to have to do two or three jobs to make ends meet.”

Male, 35-64, Midlands, ABC1

6b. Younger participants felt strongly about diversity in public life

Younger participants stated the importance of ethnic diversity in the police to support the fair treatment of ethnic minority citizens. Older participants felt that class and geographical area were important characteristics to be represented, particularly in Parliament. There was a feeling that better representation would lead to greater fairness in society because politicians from similar backgrounds to their constituents would speak knowledgably on their behalf. Paradoxically though, they did not acknowledge some (if not a majority) of MPs were drawn from a wide social background, viewing them as broadly disconnected from the communities they were elected to represent.

“They’re so different from the life that I lead and, you know, they have to go into Parliament and debate on these things like free school meals and it means nothing to them really to say “we don’t want to give free school meals” and they go home and feed their children.” *Female, 35-64, South of England, C2DE*

6c. Participants were frustrated at the lack of transparency in decision-making and lack of accountability in public life

There was a strong sense that politics is a ‘closed shop’, leading to widespread apathy among participants towards acts of public participation, such as voting. Participants felt that elections did not provide ordinary people with a platform to make themselves heard. Furthermore, there was not much optimism among participants that this situation could change because they felt those in power acted in their own interests rather than for the wider good.

“[Politics] may affect businesses day-to-day and how we interact with those services and law, but in general I don’t think anyone’s kind of like “oh I need a voice because it’s going to change something”. It falls on deaf ears. Like it’s going to change something. It won’t.”

Male, 18-34, South of England, ABC1

6d. Participants in Scotland and Wales expressed a similar sense of disconnect to those in England

When asked how representative they thought politicians were in general, participants in Scotland and Wales focused on their perceptions that the UK Government was dominated by ministers who were wealthy and privately-educated. However, they did not mention a lack of Scottish or Welsh

representatives in the UK Government, indicating that they did not feel unrepresented in terms of national identity, but rather felt unrepresented along economic lines similar to participants in England.

“Well, at the moment it’s public schoolboys, isn’t it? It’s the Eton sector are the most represented, they’re ruling the country.” *Female, 35-64, Wales, ABC1*

6e. Some participants noted that a lack of ‘voice’ within a group or community could become self-perpetuating over time

Some ethnic minority participants felt that first-generation immigrants in the UK were less likely to have a voice in public life. Based on the attitudes and experiences of older family members, they felt that first-generation immigrants have ‘settled’ for what they have in terms of access to housing and employment, and that challenging these views was proving to be difficult for the next generation as they had internalised this passivity.

“I come from an immigrant family. I feel like people that are from different countries, there is a stigma around where they live, and where they work. I feel like, I’m not saying we don’t have a say, but I think we’re judged easily and I think maybe we don’t fight for what we want as much because we feel like we don’t deserve it.” *Female, 18-34, Scotland, ABC1*

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Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partnership

By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos MORI endorses and supports the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commits to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation. We were the first company to sign up to the requirements and self-regulation of the MRS Code. More than 350 companies have followed our lead.



ISO 9001

This is the international general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994, we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



ISO 27001

This is the international standard for information security, designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos MORI was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018

Ipsos MORI is required to comply with the UK GDPR and the UK DPA. It covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.



HMG Cyber Essentials

This is a government-backed scheme and a key deliverable of the UK's National Cyber Security Programme. Ipsos MORI was assessment-validated for Cyber Essentials certification in 2016. Cyber Essentials defines a set of controls which, when properly implemented, provide organisations with basic protection from the most prevalent forms of threat coming from the internet.



Fair Data

Ipsos MORI is signed up as a "Fair Data" company, agreeing to adhere to 10 core principles. The principles support and complement other standards such as ISOs, and the requirements of Data Protection legislation.

For more information

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About Ipsos MORI Public Affairs

Ipsos MORI Public Affairs works closely with national governments, local public services and the not-for-profit sector. Its c.200 research staff focus on public service and policy issues. Each has expertise in a particular part of the public sector, ensuring we have a detailed understanding of specific sectors and policy challenges. Combined with our methods and communications expertise, this helps ensure that our research makes a difference for decision makers and communities.

Ipsos MORI

